



topological media lab a transversal machine

Sha Xin Wei

Canada Research Chair, Critical Studies of Media Arts & Sciences

Director, Topological Media Lab

Associate Professor, Faculty of Fine Arts

Concordia University. Montréal

menu

- 1 What's at stake?
- 2 Thick experiments in the wild
- 3 TML as laboratory + atelier
- 4 Context: recherche-cr ation policy
- 5 TML as a transversal machine

what's at stake?

experimental philosophy

what's at stake:
? what is the human ?

what's at stake:

~~? what is the human ?~~

how to human?

ethico-aesthetic play

event

gesture

tissue (molecular) politics

art all the way down
put concepts in play:

“human” “machine”

“interaction” “program” “rule”

“information” “memory” “linguistics”

“game” “market” “design” “industry”

“body” “ego” “citizen”

...

putting in play: morphogenesis

Stengers

Petitot

Thom

Deleuze

Guattari

Simondon

Foucault

Whitehead

Spinoza

Leibniz

Heraclitus

...

thick experiments in the wild

whole, dense, palpable, shared experience

built environment as space of experiment

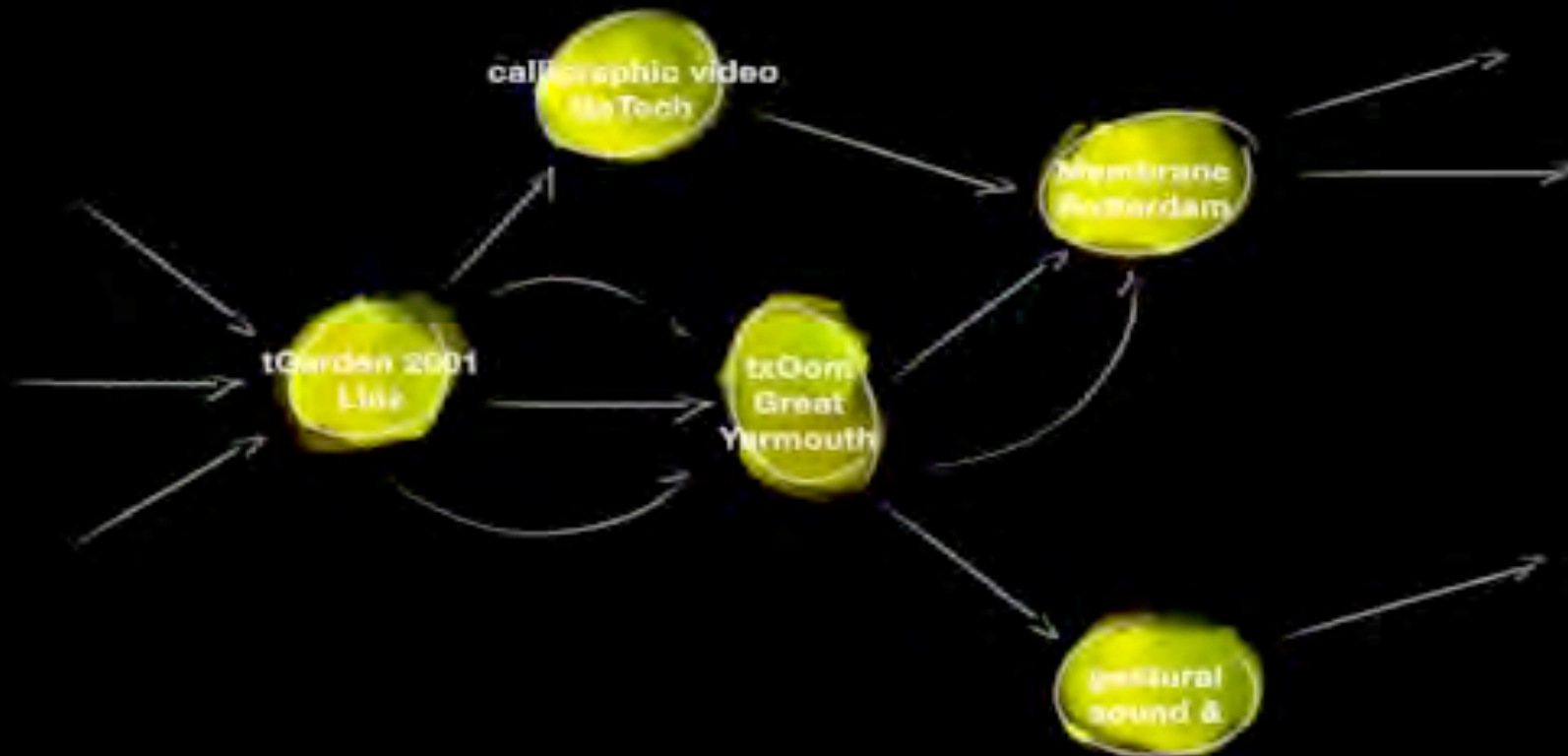
events in public → art research

Art in Public / Research in University

Dual Network

Field Experiments

Research



topological media lab = laboratory + atelier

**CONSTITUENT
CRAFT
(techné)**

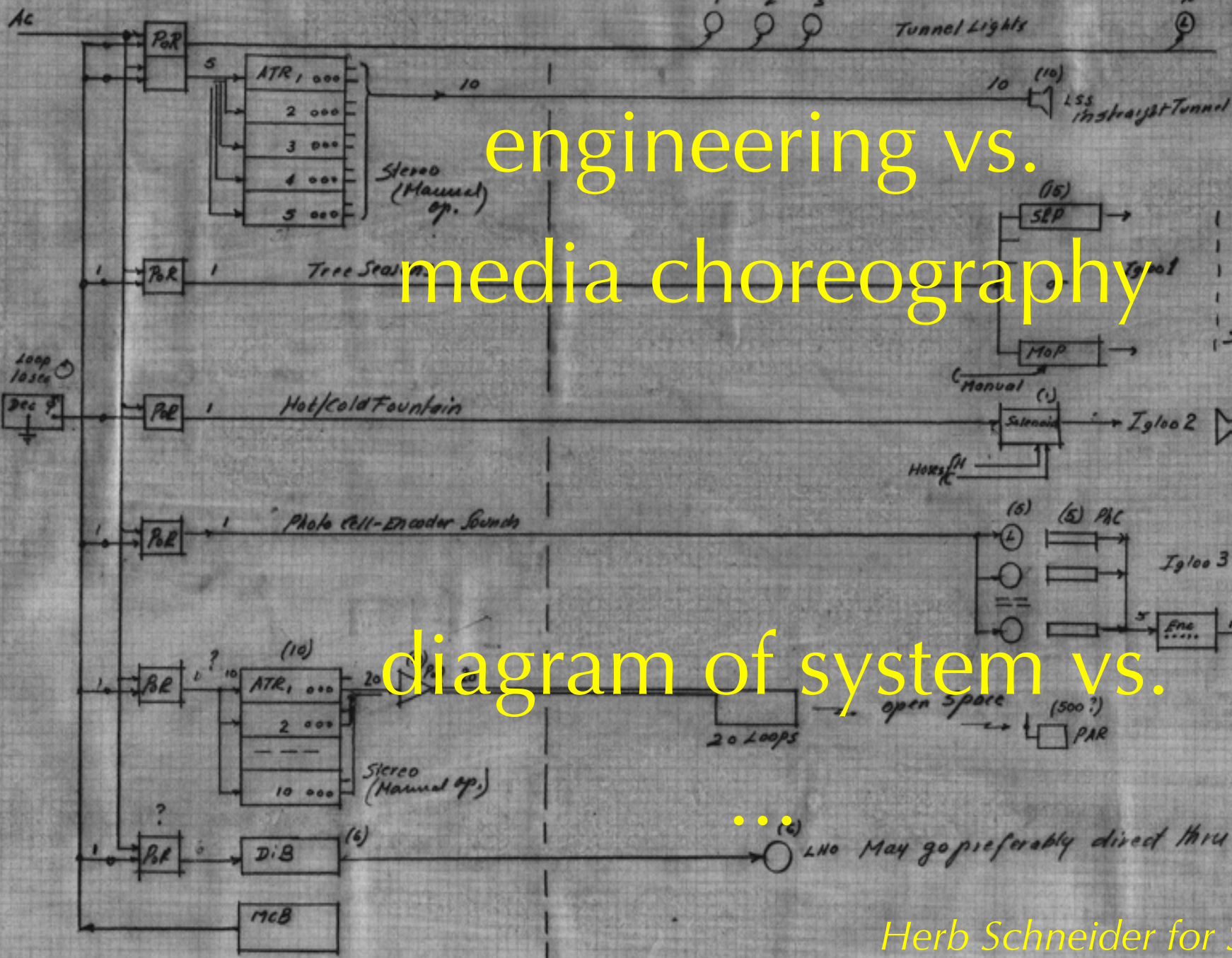


core:
continuous approaches
to

materiality
agency
gesture
process

STEVE
10/5/66 NA

CENTRAL STAGE
CONTROL



engineering vs.
media choreography

diagram of system vs.

a) Necessary? or just use the diffused light from stage and house lights.
b) Use as source of power for all other functions?

(15) Screens

Herb Schneider for Steve Paxton

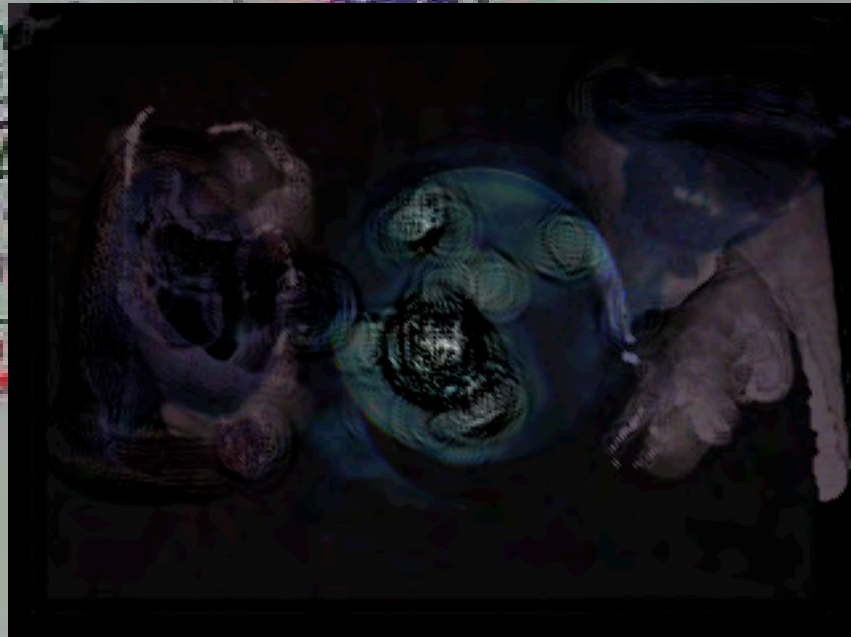
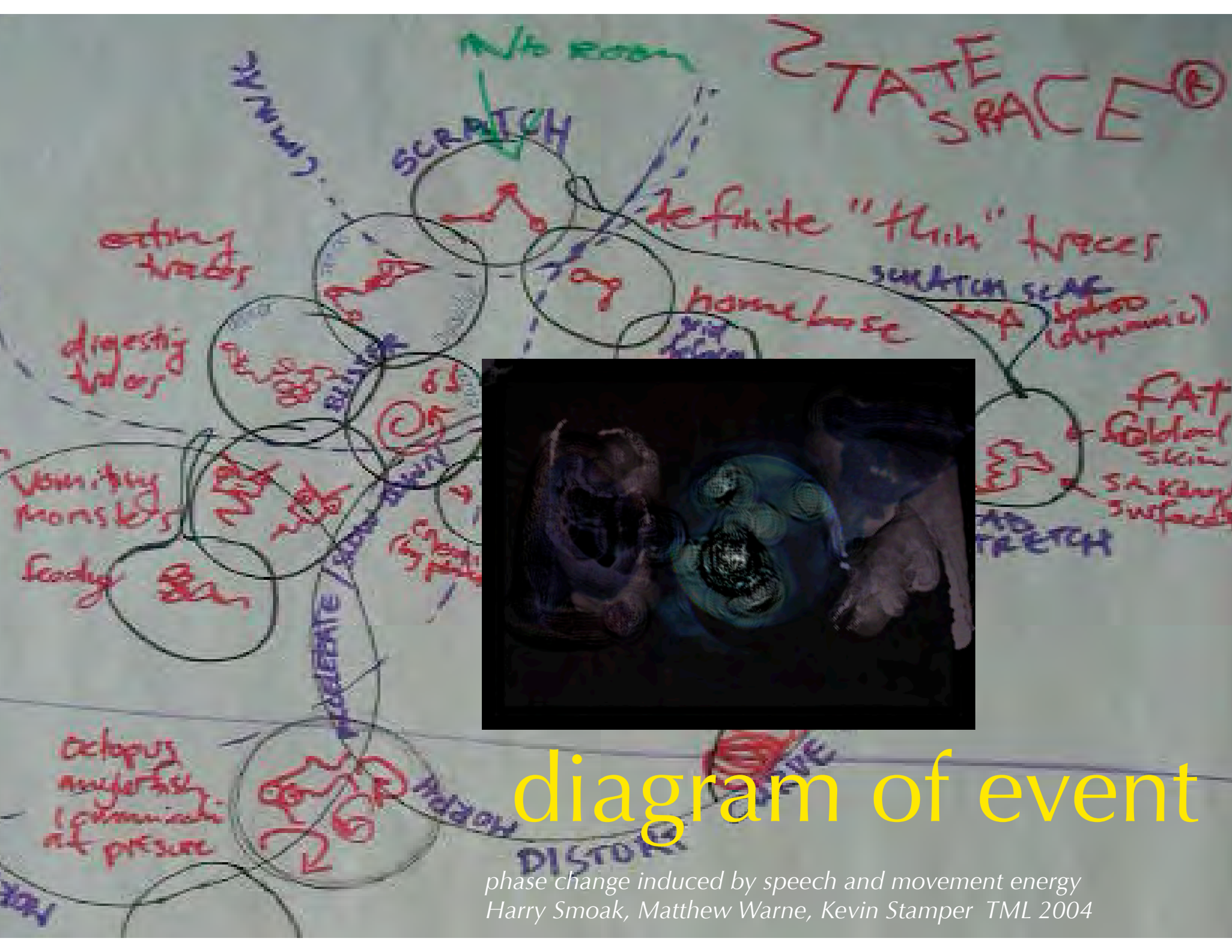


diagram of event

phase change induced by speech and movement energy
 Harry Smoak, Matthew Warne, Kevin Stamper TML 2004

experiments in lab

Ouija: Calligraphy



◦ composite gesture: body movement, live painting, realtime video, June-July 2007 Hexagram Blackbox



vivesection architecture

Workshop on pneumatic structures & hacked toys
October 2006

Patrick Harrop

Prof. Architecture, U Manitoba

Ted Krueger

Assoc. Dean, Architecture,
Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute



contrapuntal buildings

A photograph of a modern building at night, viewed from a low angle. The building's facade is dark, but the windows are illuminated from within, creating a grid of light. The building appears to be composed of several levels, with the upper levels being more prominent. The lighting is a mix of warm yellow and cool white, creating a dramatic contrast against the dark sky. The overall mood is architectural and urban.

Blink!

*Maroussia Levesque, Sebastien Speier, Harry Smoak, Erik Conrad et
Engineering Visual Arts, Concordia, May 2006*

applications:
movement arts
and architecture

movement arts &
responsive environments

THE SEBALD PUPPET GROUP
INVITES YOU...

magic and alchemy

with Mark Sussman
performance studies
pageant, table top theatre, animated objects, Great
Small Works

2006 - present



Day 4 - 12-12-08
Camera 1 - Tape 1

Frankenstein's Ghosts



Frankenstein's Ghosts

A stage performance featuring seven people seated in a row, each holding a piece of paper. They are positioned in front of a large, dimly lit stage. A large, ethereal projection of a ghostly figure, possibly a creature or a person in a white sheet, is cast onto the back wall behind them. The scene is lit with dramatic, low-key lighting, creating a somber and mysterious atmosphere. Several tall, thin poles with small lights at the top are visible on the stage.

Resynthesized movement & sound. Blackbox Dec 2008. Montanaro, Blue Riders, TML
* Paul Bendzsa, Milan Gervais, * Pam Reimer, * Liselyn Adam; + dancer Leal Stellick*

architecture & responsive environments

Shanghai eArts: E-Sea



*Pneuma + TML, P. Hasdell, P. Harrop, J. Bolchover, Sha X.W.
October 12-23, Shanghai Century Plaza*



photocells tracking sun

Shanghai eArts: E-Sea

Pneuma, IML, P. Hasdell, P. Harrop, J. Bolchover, Sha X.W.
October 12-23, Shanghai Century Plaza



2000 sheets CNC card

Shanghai eArts: E-Sea

Pneuma + TML, P. Hasdell, P. Harrop, J. Bolchover, Sha X.W.

October 12-23, Shanghai Century Plaza



Shanghai eArts: E-Sea

LED network

*Pneuma + TML, P. Hasdell, P. Harrop, J. Bolchover, Sha X.W.
October 12-23, Shanghai Century Plaza*

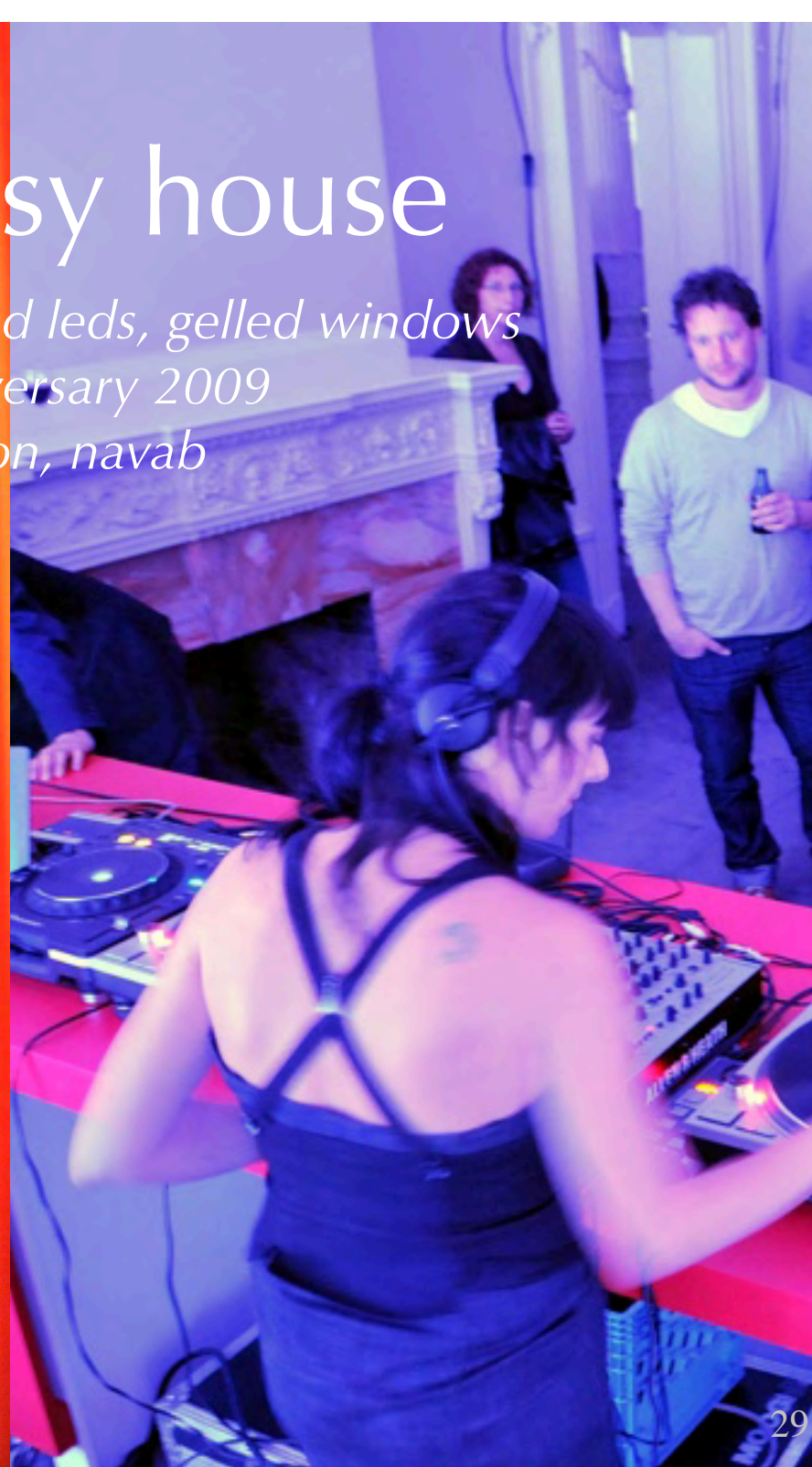
canadian centre for architecture



*dmx animated led light panels
nuit blanche 20th anniversary 2009
tml: sutherland, sutton, navab*

cca shaughnessy house

*external lighting from dmx animated leds, gelled windows
nuit blanche 20th anniversary 2009
tml: sutherland, sutton, navab*



macro context: recherche-cr ation

Qu bec 2000

Canada 2003

Hexagram Concordia 2003-8

Québec

Fonds de recherche sur la société et la culture (FQRSC)

to fund research by university-based artists:

"les activités ou démarches de recherche favorisant la création ou l'interprétation d'oeuvres littéraires ou artistiques.... Dans le cadre de ce programme, l'interprétation est analogue à la création et ne peut être comprise comme une démarche intellectuelle d'analyse d'une oeuvre ou des réalisations d'un créateur."

Québec recherche-création

sustained creative practice

new production

step: a disciplinary development

fresh knowledge / technique

new forms of expression -> new
style, materials, techniques,
technologies used

education of students

increased recognition of
interlocutors in arts & letters

add to cultural heritage

Une démarche de recherche-création en arts et lettres repose sur l'exercice d'une pratique créatrice soutenue; sur une réflexion intrinsèque à l'élaboration d'oeuvres ou de productions inédites; sur la diffusion de ces oeuvres sous diverses formes. Une démarche de recherche-création doit contribuer à un développement disciplinaire par un renouvellement des connaissances ou des savoir-faire, des innovations d'ordre esthétique, pédagogique, technique, instrumental ou autre. Ces activités doivent contribuer, du point de vue des pairs :

au développement de chacune des formes d'expression, à la condition que les oeuvres, la démarche suivie, le style, les formes d'expression, la technologie ou le matériau utilisé, les modes de présentation, le répertoire ou le style d'interprétation offrent un caractère d'évolution, d'originalité, d'innovation ou de renouvellement par rapport à l'état présent du domaine spécifique;

à la formation des étudiants, particulièrement ceux des cycles supérieurs;

à une reconnaissance accrue des intervenants dans le domaine des arts et des lettres;

à l'enrichissement du patrimoine culturel québécois, canadien ou international.

[e Comité d'étude sur le financement du secteur des arts et lettres

Québec recherche-création

eventual possible public presentation
(not art production)

- La **recherche-création** (RC) est toute activité ou démarche de recherche favorisant la création ou l'interprétation d'oeuvres littéraires ou artistiques, de quelque type que ce soit, répondant à toutes les exigences de l'excellence et **permettant une présentation publique éventuelle**.
- Les **chercheurs-créateurs** sont les membres réguliers du corps professoral d'une **université québécoise** dont la tâche implique des activités de création ou d'interprétation tels les écrivains, les cinéastes, les vidéastes, les scénaristes les acteurs, les compositeurs, les interprètes, les metteurs en scène, les dramaturges, etc.
- La **recherche-création** (RC) est toute activité ou démarche de recherche favorisant la création ou l'interprétation d'oeuvres littéraires ou artistiques, de quelque type que ce soit, répondant à toutes les exigences de l'excellence et **permettant une présentation publique éventuelle**.

Canada federal research/creation

*"The term research/creation is gaining currency both in Canada and internationally. Until recently, **university- and college-based artists** had been treated as research "outsiders"— an exotic, and perhaps even a suspicious [sic], breed. Until the FQRSC in Quebec began funding research/creation in 2000, we were the only university sector excluded from the spectrum of funding programs intended for university research and researchers. A few hardy artist-researchers managed to piggyback elements of their research programs on Strategic grants in other disciplines—usually by suppressing important aspects of their activity and describing their practice in language (or with emphases) developed in very different disciplines.*

*While artist-researchers were able to apply to the **Canada Council**, this was often also awkward, either because the assumptions and setting at the university are different than those for independent artists (student mentoring, for instance) or because university artists were seen as intruding on the very slim percentage of the Council funds available for independent artists' projects. At the same time, university artist-researchers are increasingly involved in interdisciplinary initiatives that cross university disciplines and may also include the participation of artists and organizations beyond the university. For these and other reasons, there is a growing recognition that artist-researchers have something very vital to contribute to the contemporary university research community"*

Canada federal Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council

Alternatives: An environmental scan was conducted to identify similar programs in Canada and abroad. Aside from initiatives by the [FQRSC], there is no comparable program in terms of total investments in research/creation projects (\$13.4 million), size (an award value of up to \$250,000 per project), scope (nearly 100 individuals from a wide range of artistic disciplines funded during the five-year pilot phase), and tenure of funding (three years).

Survey responses echoed the lack of comparables, but cited provincial government, university, and federal government sources as potential (though not equivalent) resources.

Hexagram

70 university-based researchers

arts, some engineering

Concordia University

Université de Québec a Montréal

later

CIRMMT McGill

individuals **U de Montreal**

O(10m) CAD

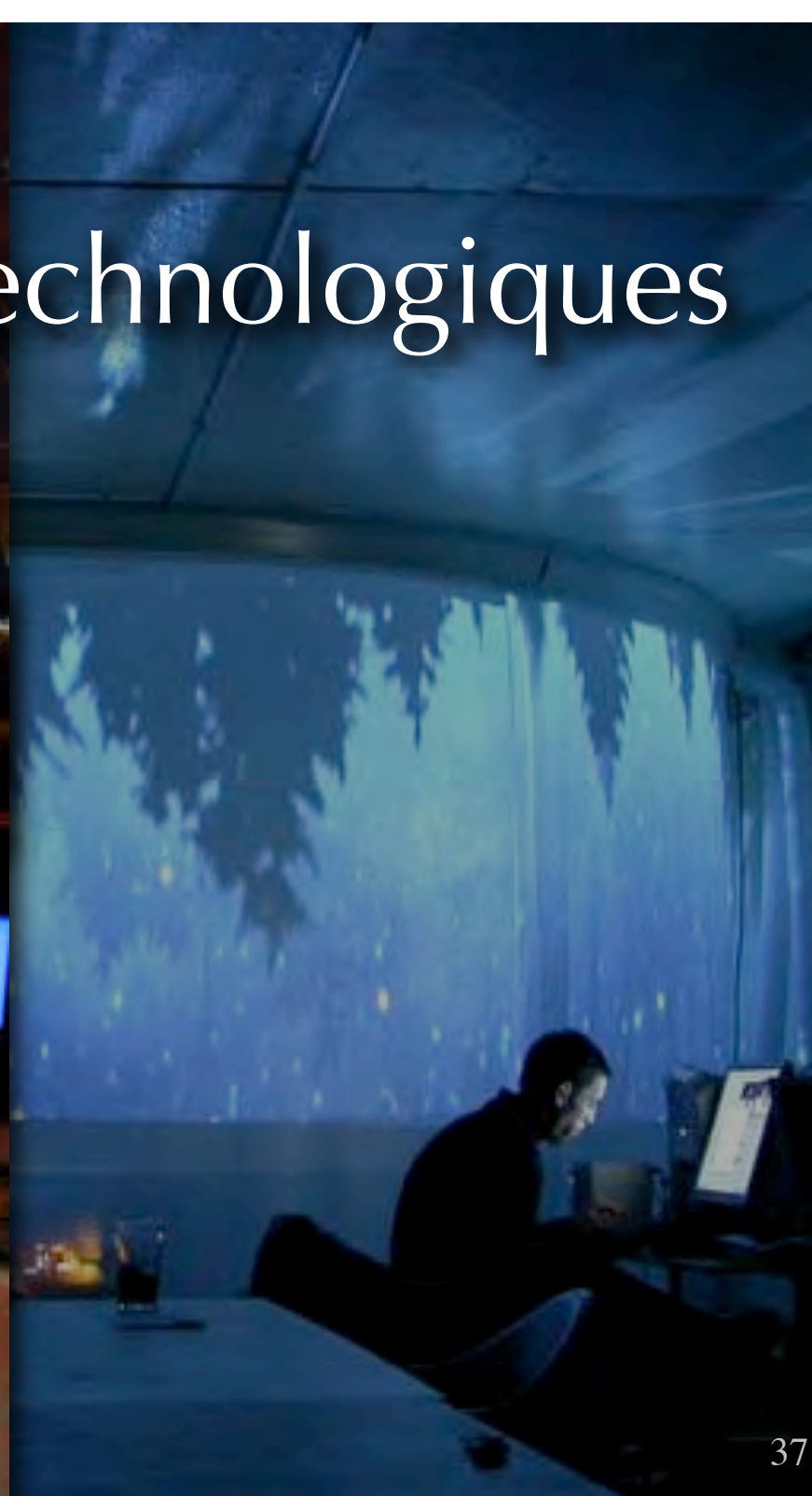
Concordia, Engineering/Visual Arts
opened 2005

La Société des arts technologiques



PNV © T SHI

QUARTIER
DES SPECTACLES



tml as a transversal machine

experimental philosophy

speculative, adventure (Stengers)

appear as

artistic research

technological research

not art production

apparatus (Barad; Foucault/Agamben)

experience (Gendlin, Maturana-Varela, Whitehead...)

thick transversality

substantial in every intersected domain of practice

examples:

WYSIYG sounding weavings

OUIJA collective and intentional movement

Memory+Place (David Morris, philosophy)

how do people affiliate with the lab

60+ affiliates in 5 years

current:

3 paid core R&D team (c/art)

5 (17) interdisciplinary PhD's

2 (+2) computer science Masters

2 undergraduates (arts)

**Students, Scholars, Artists
Who have passed through or
worked with the Topological Media Lab**

Georgia Tech 2001-2005

Concordia University 2005 - 2007

lab as protected space

bring prior skills

parallel studies

~one-year reciprocal commitments

apprenticeship model: roles ...

lab as protected space

bring prior skills

parallel studies

~one-year reciprocal commitments

apprenticeship model: roles ...

intern

understudy / apprentice

experimentalist

composer-author

mentor

roles

intern unlearning
cognitivism, ego-art,...

understudy / apprentice learning
instruments (code),
technique... (values??)

experimentalist
art ≠ art research ≠
engineering ≠ philosophy

composer-author defining research questions

mentor

visiting peers

reminder: what does tml produce?

publications

cultural artifacts (videos, installation-events)

engineered instruments / systems (not tools)

people with creative research experience

knowledge and reputation capital

elastic family of resemblance in interest and form
protected from disciplinary filters
(amoeba/yeast, not opensource)

reputation capital

citation practice

domain-dependent co-authorship norms

mathematics and humanities citation detail

material citation (vs. design / art “originality”)

unbounded archive

n+1 collaboration ethos

group reputation capital

first-cite, then stone soup:

free use of code or media or material from a TML project in subsequent TML project

provisos:

must name individual source (**even in matter | code**);

first creator must be credited in public before her/his work goes into stone-soup inside TML.



Παντα το πυρ επελθον κρινει και καταλεπσεται.
Fire is the ravisher of all things. Heraclitus