Laura Kavanaugh and Ian Birse : Instant Places

In creating the diverse body of work known as Instant Places our desire is to implicate the receiver in the process of creation. When we present a performance or generative installation our aim is to make an instant place, an image/sound world in which the engagement of each individual with the present moment generates meanings that are unique to that person's experience.

For the first decade of our work together the art was often made on location, in hotel rooms, craigslist sublets and presentation spaces. We approached place as process; the source images and sounds relating to location in ways that remained ambiguous. In the same way that one pixel in an image of the Eiffel tower may be identical to one in an image of the Statue of Liberty, the found object we photograph on the street in Buenos Aires may be indistinguishable from one we photograph in Tokyo. But the process of finding that object would be different in each case, exposing us to chance experiences any one of which has the potential to change the direction of the work or add another layer of subjective framing. This nesting of frames is integral to Instant Places: where is the edge of the artwork, the location of the outermost frame?

We began creating performances and installations as a team in 1997, and from 1997 to 2002 traveled from our Calgary base throughout Canada and Europe, making installation and performance works for festival venues and art galleries. During these projects we began integrating projected image sequences generated by programs we built using beta versions of early VJ software, and would often make a new work in a three- or four-day window leading up to a performance. Highlights from that period include projects for the Kassel Documentary Film Festival, BACKUP festival (Weimar), LEM Festival (Barcelona), LOGOS Foundation (Belgium), and the Audio Art Festival (Krakow).

During 2003—2004 we made Instant Places on location at centres across Canada, continuing to work with compressed time scales as we recorded and edited location images and sounds and prepared performances in intense bursts of action we experienced as extended improvisations. Presentations included the experimental sound

festivals Festival International de Musique Actuelle Victoriaville, Open Ears in Kitchener, Dangerous Currents Vancouver, the Guelph Jazz Festival, and artist-run spaces in Chicoutimi, Victoria, Halifax, and Moncton. During this period we made SL0WERTHANLIGHT, a solar power audio/video environment for the AMAAS Conference in Grande Prairie, and the self-generating installation and performance environment BEELINE for the Images festival in Toronto.

For three months in the fall of 2004 we made a series of performance and installation works in Australia: EAST IS EAST during an installation residency in a fading wheat-belt town near Perth, and performances for Tura New Music, Electrofringe Newcastle, and experimental performance venues in Sydney and Brisbane. In these works we began using MAX/MSP/Jitter to create personal software instruments for the realtime digital transformation of images and sounds in networked environments.

2005 saw us extending our work with Max/MSP as we created installation/performances at the Western Front (Vancouver), Neutral Ground (Regina), the Mountain Standard Time festival in Calgary, and made a site-specific soundwork for MIDI-controlled carillon bells at Edmonton City Hall.

During the fall and winter of 2006/2007 we crossed Canada with a media artlab called Removable Room, arriving at the west coast in February to make The Fortress of History for the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria and OPERATOR, a noise opera at the Western Front. In September and October 2007 we were based in Ontario for public projection projects at the LOLA festival in London and the Guild Inn, Scarborough.

From a base in Tokyo we spent February—April 2008 presenting performance/installations at centres across Japan, and travelled to Chicago in May to make MOVIE PALACE, a series of intermedia works centred on the historic Congress Theatre building. In September 2008 we presented a public projection project in Toronto entitled CITIZEN, video transfigurations of snapshot portraits of residents, and premiered HEAD! SMASHED! IN! BUFFALO! JUMP!, a performance for 12 speaker sound array and live video at SoundPlay 2008. October 2009 saw the realization of Bright Moments, a generative public

projection work commissioned by the City of Kitchener.

In 2009 we spent five months realizing residency projects in New York and Argentina/Uruguay, returning to Canada to create INSTANT PLACES : CANADA CODE, a commission for the 2010 Olympics. Since then we have created installations of generative art for the Peterborough Art Gallery (October 2010), Interaccess, Toronto (September 2012), and The JNAAG in Sarnia (February 2013), as well as mobile broadcasting projects in July 2013 for Sound Symposium, St. John's, and Truck Gallery's CAMPER in Calgary.

A review of our generative video commission for the Art Gallery of Peterborough in September 2010 described the installation as "fine variations on the abstraction and reconstruction of the representational", a phrase that evokes the polar flux of our aesthetic investigations: blending the physical and virtual, aligning indeterminacy and intention, reading between the lines of document and fiction.

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