SMSlingshot

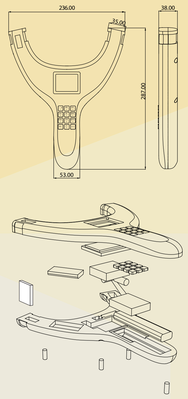
A Shared Encounter in Urban Space

Introduction

Interaction design is increasingly situated beyond the desktop and demands new approaches, if it is made for Urban Space.

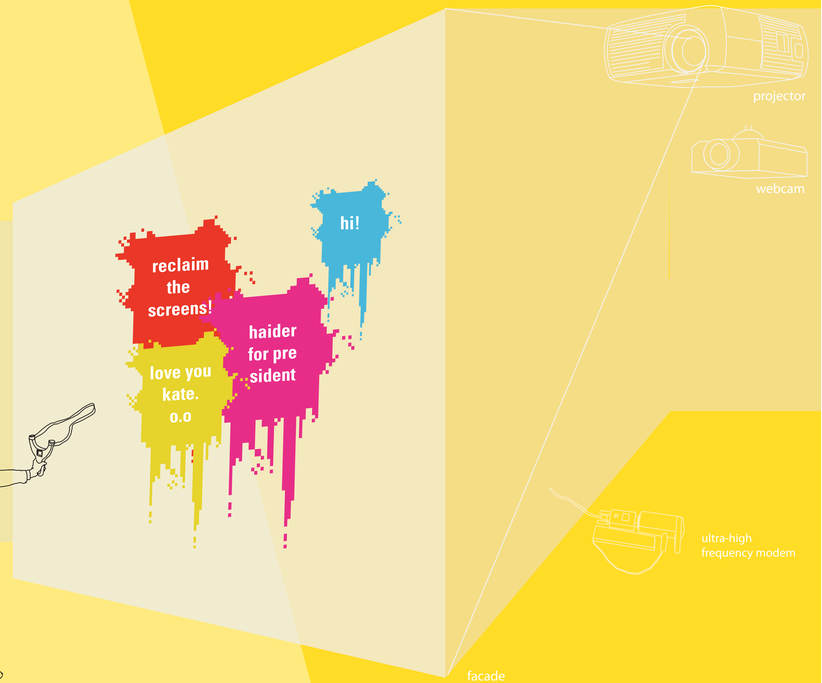
Public and semi-public spaces add new challenges in terms of interaction theory, technology and sociology.

SMSlingshot is an interactive unban installation (also named a Shared Encounter) and research vehicle that helps to explore these new challenges.



Technology

built to shoot personal messages to media façades.
Wooden case equipped with ultra-high frequency radio, microprocessor, laser and batteries, phone-sized wooden and leather keypad.



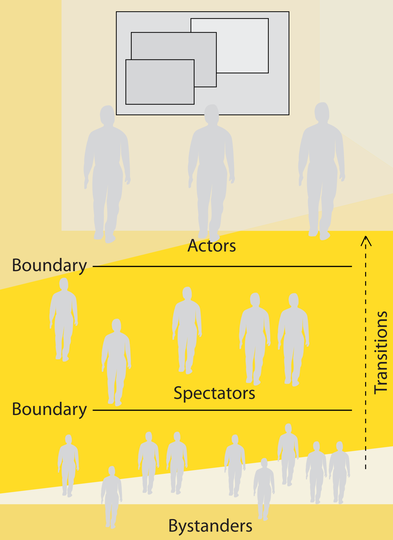


Figure 1 Users in Public Space [3]

Theory

Orchestrating the elements of Shared Encounters needs special sensitivity.

Performer

active role. One or more performers may be in control of the content, 'flow' and 'pace'.

Participant

a former performer with knowledge about the installation.

Observer / Spectator

engaged with content. Neither actively manipulating it nor interacting with performers.

Bystander

has no strong interest in the installation and its content.

Environment

often linked to the context. Many technologies work well in the lab, but don't cope well with dynamics of urban space.

Context

social, cultural and conceptual placement.
E.g. festival, travel, commuting context, temporal, historical, political aspects ...

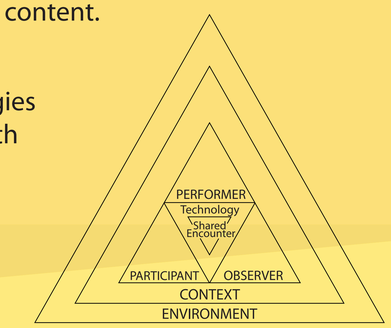


Figure 2 Performance Triad Model [1]

Informal Observations

Observers and bystanders can easily infer what is happening from cues:
shape of the interaction device, visual appearance of the coloured splat, gesture of the performer, the affordance of the device, simulated physical behaviour.

Stepping in the performance space means pressure for the performer, but like Brignull & Rogers[4] also observed, composing a message in a semi-hidden way seems to take the pressure away.

Former participants and observers gathering around the performer often give support by suggesting statements resulting in less pressure and in social encounter.

SMSlingshot works best, when 'positioned' in the periphery, as a dérive.

Channelling, or transitions, as Finke[3] calls it, should be designed in a way so that the installation draws bystanders in.

Usually forbidden action (throwing colour bags against walls) attracts people to participate.

Conclusion

Orchestrate available elements in a way that makes performers' interaction easily understandable for others .

Creating meaningful interactive systems in the dynamics of urban space is technically challenging and results often in a technological heterogeneous overall system.

Physical interfaces make the performers interactions more meaningful for others than intangible interfaces.

The association between interface and digital content needs to be as clear as possible.

Future Work

Currently it is unclear how the environment and context influences the installation's meaning and if there are environmental or contextual patterns that can be designed upon.

My future work will investigate the role of the environment and context to find out how to integrate human computer interaction tightly to the urban space.

References: (1) Sheridan, J. G. et al. Understanding Interaction in Ubiquitous Guerrilla Performances in Playful Arenas. (2) Reeves, S. et al. Designing the spectator experience. (3) Finke, M., et al. Lessons Learned : Game Design for Large Public Displays. (4) Brignull, H., Rogers, Y. Enticing People to Interact with Large Public Displays in Public Spaces. Displays.

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