

## **The experience of “relation-scapes” in the Hyperkinetic kayak (2009)**

When entering the space of the interactive installation *Hyperkinetic kayak*, made by Danish artist Jette Gejl Kristensen, the visitor is invited to explore an augmented reality constructed *both* in physical transmission-contact with the movements of a real body *and* in relation to an actual ecosystem in Greenland. The installation creates a real-time interaction between an analogue sensation of kayaking and a simulated 3D experience based upon the local temperature of Quaanaaq, situated in the west-coast of northern Greenland. This transmission between the bodily movements of the rower and the changing sea-scape of the digitally augmented local site is made sensuous by means of the visual 3D configurations of depth into the augmented space and outward into the real installation space consisting of the kayak and the viewers. So the rower is able to perceive the interaction between her own body-movements with the kayak paddle and the augmented spatial movements as a transmission of energy that comes close to a real rowing experience. This experience is strengthened by the sound-scape of melting ice recorded in Greenland and by the changing resistance in the paddle that matches the performance of the rower to perform in front of, underneath or over the changing configurations of icebergs. But another experience is also added to this experience of an interface between actual and virtual spaces and movements.

In my case I became aware of this a couple of days after I had first tested my skills in the kayak as the sensation of the rowing experience suddenly manifested itself in the midst of a lecture when presenting a powerpoint. I have never experienced this kind of involuntary bodily recollection of an interface after playing a wii-game, and it certainly did not occur either after the experience of seeing James Camerons *Avatar* that same week. The experience of kayaking had been tracked into my memory by way of the body, and the sensation of recollection made me aware that the Hyperkinetic Kayak differed from other 3D or real-time transmissions between actual and virtual space. This artwork offered a visual interpretation of the interfacial space (covered by the sensor and the computer's interactive response) between my body-motion and the on-line representation of motion on the screen. The visual interpretation that actually generated a link between my sensory

perception and my thought was the lines and stuffing of colors within the grids of the icebergs that became active and hit the 3D glasses when 'passing through' in the kayak. Those non-representational interpretations actually made the 3D installation aesthetically fulfilling in a way rarely experienced in digital interfaces. The 3D depth out of the screen and toward the perceiving body has obtained an aesthetic interpretation that makes sense.

I consider this work and its haptic ability to touch the body and eyes of the beholder to be a good suggestion of an expressionistic digital aesthetic more focused on the creation of encounters, relations and intensities between the canvas/ screen and the observer than in creating efficient representations and interchanges. Jette Gejl's interpretation of the relation-scapes (cf. Erin Manning, 2009) between 3D virtual spaces and analogue movements makes her *Hyperkinetic Kayak* outstanding in establishing a link between classical expressionistic art and new media art.

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