

ASSIGNMENT 2

The projects which most moved me were “World, Membrane and the Dismembered Body” and “Desire of Codes” by Seiko Mikami, “N-Chant” by David Rokeby and “Robotic Chair” by Max Dean, Raffaello D’Andrea and Matt Donovan.

I found “World, Membrane and the Dismembered Body” extremely interesting because, in this case, the role of software is making the human perceive him/herself in a different way. In this work, the visitor enters an echoless room, in which a computer and some measuring devices amplify the sound of the body’s internal organs. Usually one thinks that the use of software is something completely alien to human life and perception, but it was interesting to see how a software could show humans a new way of perceiving themselves.

In the installation “Desire of Codes”, a software is still giving humans a new perception of themselves, but the conception of the work is very different. The installation consists of a room full of surveillance cameras with lights which follow the visitor’s movements and other tools which mirror an information oriented society. This is the general theme, together with the ambiguity between a data body in a virtual world and a physical body in a real world.

I am fond of this project because it really mirrors our reality and everyday life, but it manages to make it more meaningful. In the installation space we recognize all of the devices we see, but seeing them all together makes us feel watched and uncomfortable, whereas it is normal to see a surveillance camera in a shopping mall. Furthermore, seeing these objects in an installation space, and playing with sound and lights, has a very strong impact and gives a new interpretation of our normality.

“N-Chant” by David Rokeby is very fascinating because it shows a community of computers, simulating group dynamics in humans. In a room full of devices, these communicate with each other. In absence of outside stimulus, the computers, linked by a network, interact with each other, sharing associations. They find a way to their equilibrium. When an outside stimulus is present - when a visitor enters the room - this triggers a stimuli and the state of mind of the group of computer changes, interacting with the visitor.

This project to me is extremely poetic, because software is simulating human behavior and dynamics. It’s beautiful to see how one visits a media art installation, which consists of a room full of computers, and still can empathize with it.

Another project which I find in a way similar to “N-Chant”, is “Robotic Chair” by Max Dean, Raffaello D’Andrea and Matt Donovan. The installation is very conceptual and very effective. It is a robotic chair, which at one point falls apart and then puts itself back together. I think this could become a symbol of our time. A chair, an inanimate everyday object, can come to life through the use of software and can simulate a ancestral human behavior such as falling apart and getting up again.

My personal experience with software is unconsciously very strong, because I was born in mid 1990ies. I moved a lot with my family when I was young, communication softwares were crucial for me to keep in contact with my friends and I see this becoming more and more fundamental in my life.

When I started university, I started seeing software in a different way, I started using my computer and spending time on modeling softwares and seeing how life could be modeled and altered very quickly with a computer. I am now having my first experiences with coding and it feels very alien at first - like when learning any new language - but I strongly feel it captures the society of our time and it can really mirror some aspects of it very deeply, because it speaks the same language.