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in the Interactive Arts

ART AND CONSCIOUSNESS IN THE POST-BIOLOGICAL ERA
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CONSCIOUSNESS *reframed* 5

ABSTRACTS

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CONSCIOUSNESS reframed 5

art and consciousness in the – post biological era

Abstracts

Abstracts of the Proceedings of the Fifth International CAiiA Research Conference held July 2–5, 2003 at the University of Wales College, Newport.

Roy Ascott, Editor

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Abstracts

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Preface

Welcome to the Fifth International Conference of Consciousness Reframed. Last year the meeting was hosted in Perth, Western Australia. This year we are back in Caerleon where the Conference was first convened in 1997. Throughout this series of conferences a consistent level of excellence, originality and insight has been maintained in the papers presented – a clear indication,
I believe, that the issue of consciousness in the arts, and the significance of science and technology in this context, is of dynamic relevance to contemporary theory and practice.

The issues signalled in these abstracts, together with the many submissions to previous conference proceedings, provide a rich exploration of what I refer to as the *technoetic* principle in art, and, taken as a whole, constitute a valuable archive of the ideas that are informing emergent fields of transdisciplinary theory and practice. Many perspectives can be brought to bear on the technoetic, post-biological condition of art, and whether they are poetic, scientific, spiritual, ethical, or social, they occupy a place at the cutting edge of our 21st century's aesthetic adventure. Matters of mind, and the navigation, and perhaps eventually explanation, of consciousness are of cardinal significance to both art and science, just as they have always been at the very centre of the search for knowledge and our exploration of the numinous in previous, even archaic, cultures.

If one were to seek a rubric that comprehensively defines our ambition for these conferences it could perhaps be found in the *I Ching*, that most ancient compendium of noetic understanding. The hexagram *Ting*, the Caldron, as eloquently translated by Richard Wilhelm, refers to "the cultural superstructure of society. Here it is the wood that serves as nourishment of the flame, the spirit. All that is visible must grow beyond itself, extend into the realm of the invisible". I take the wood, in our modern world, to be technology, and the realm of the invisible, to be our intellectual destination.

I believe I speak for a large and growing constituency when I thank the contributors to the present conference for the important and stimulating contributions they bring to the understanding and advancement of this complex and evolving field.

We are all extremely grateful to Kay Bosanko-Sheady, our brilliantly organised and endlessly resourceful conference manager, for the tireless and detailed care she brings to every aspect of the conference. She has been at the administrative heart of every conference from the start, and I would not have effectively realised this series without being able to rely on the total professionalism and enthusiasm she has always committed to it.

Roy Ascott

Conference Convenor
Director Centre for Advanced Inquiry in the Interactive Arts

Adriana de Souza e Silva

From MUDs as Space to Space as a MUD – cell phones in Art and Public Spaces

Keywords: Hybrid Space, Cell Phones, Multi-User Environment, Interface, Mobility

Cell phones transform our experience of space. The emergence of new mobile technology devices such as cell phones, PDAs, laptops, and wireless technologies create a new manner to connect to the Internet. First, they are responsible for a novel generation of cyberspace nomads – people who are always connected and who connect while moving through physical space. Therefore they transform both concepts of virtual and physical. Moreover it is possible that what we understand by Internet will also change due to the use of these technologies. Consequences can be also observed on social and communication relationships. During the last decade, connection to the Internet was achieved mostly by means of a desktop computer and cables connected to the telephonic network. These interfaces caused virtual space to be considered disconnected from physical space. Today, we identify a hybridization of space since virtual is coming closer to physical.

This paper argues that mobile phones virtualize space by enfolding distant contexts into the present context. Either via voice or Internet connection cell phones change the perception of geographical distances and

promote ubiquitous connection while one moves through space. At first this paper discusses how the emergence of a mobile and smaller interface to connect to the Internet is responsible for a hybridization of space, blurring borders between physical and digital. Then, the act of moving through physical space is compared to the experience of inhabiting a virtual environment, since it is possible to connect to people who are not present but even tough change the nearby context. Traditionally multi-user environments have been seen as spaces – sociability places, which in order to be inhabited needed to be taken apart from physical space. On the other hand, urban space starts to become a multi-user environment when a new mobile interface brings virtual space into public space, changing the way people perceive space and interact with each other. The isolation of cyberspace in the last decade required users to create avatars in order to design the body across the screen. Since one could not really be at the other side, it was necessary to represent the physical body. Now nomadic technologies bring virtual closer to physical, and people become walking avatars, moving constantly between both instances.

Finally, art is going to be used as a context to illustrate the passage from virtual to hybrid. Specifically for this study, works from Brazilian artists are going to be analyzed. The first piece is a 3D multi-user environment called "Imateriais", which was presented at the event with the same name produced by Itaú Cultural in São Paulo (1999). For the second phase, emphasis is given on artist Giselle Beiguelman, who develops works with nomadic technologies and interventions in public spaces. Of all the countries in Latin America, Brazil is leading in cell phone penetration. Therefore, it is a very representative country concerning the hybridization of space in Latin America.

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