

The University of Reading

Inhabited Content

**An exploration into the role of the viewer through the realisation of
In Conversation and other works.**

Ph.D.

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Abstract

A series of site and situation specific artworks made since 1993 which use electronic media are examined with particular reference to the role of the viewer in the choreography, realisation and interpretation of the work. The artworks are examined both in terms of their relative progression and in particular in relation to a series of research questions. The artworks discussed include works made for a range of locations, all of which have specific viewer expectations attached to them. This includes work located entirely in public spaces (*Woolwich Foot Tunnel* 1993 and *Pedestrian Gestures* 1994); works made for the Gallery context (*AudioZone* 1994, *Touched* 1996); *In Conversation* 1997/8 which existed both in public (physical) and public (online) space, and *Cruisin'* 1999 which exists entirely online.

In the first part of the thesis each artwork becomes a case study in pursuit of these questions, with both documentary and anecdotal observation and evidence.

The second part of the thesis consists of an excerpt of writing from a self generating (programmed) dialogue, which I have called *Inhabited Text*, a writing structure developed in order to contextualise and write about the work in a form intended to reflect the nature of the work itself, *Inhabited Text* seeks to examine and question the recording of encounters with interactive works, through its own dialogic structure, and also through an online version to encourage its own encounters.

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Chapter 1

1.1 Introduction

When I embarked on my Ph.D. programme in late 1993, there was very little writing in the field of electronic or interactive media that was contextualising the work within a framework of contemporary visual arts. It was a time when writers such as Sadie Plant and Donna Haraway were promoting a cyberfeminist theory¹, largely based on an anticipated future rather than an actual present. Elsewhere, expansive claims were being made for Interactivity and Virtual Reality, setting up unrealistic expectations in the viewer of precisely how much they could expect from the work. The V-topia show of 1994, which included some reactive and navigational examples of interactivity was subtitled "Visions of a Virtual World"², and while it set out to have the critical edge and 'content' that other groupings of 'interactive' artworks lacked, it still built in a failure mechanism, an innate inability to deliver what it promised. Many artists and technologists became involved with technology in order to simulate alternative realities (or recreate our existing reality in virtual space) rather than extending and/or influencing our existing or physical realities. Reviews and articles followed suit, whether glorifying the technology, or decrying this 'new' techno-artform (or, to be more accurate, these plural artforms, as a single definitive, physical, 'form' has yet, and may never be, defined). There appeared to be no in-between, no writing which looked at the work itself and critiqued it within a visual arts context.

Whilst exhibition opportunities were plentiful, they tended (and still do to some extent) to exist in the new media ghetto - a rich, exciting and international ghetto which includes festivals and conferences such as ISEA (International Symposium on Electronic Art); SIGGRAPH (based in the US); and Videopositive, based in Liverpool, UK. Many of the works presented in these contexts are pioneering and exploratory, the curation of the exhibitions so often focussing on developments in software or hardware (interactive installation, CD ROM's and the evolution of the artist into interface designer) rather than the content of individual artworks.

The net to some extent has become the closest to a definable platform, with net-specific work (online art as opposed to art online) proliferating in the second half of the 1990's, and still

¹ Donna Haraway's "A Cyborg Manifesto" was published in 1991 followed by Sadie Plant's "The Most Radical Gesture: the Situationist International in a Postmodern Age", published in 1992 (Routledge)

² "V-topia: Visions of a Virtual World" opened in July 1994 at Tramway Glasgow, and included work by Grahame Weinbren, Lynn Hershman, Clive Gillman, Susan Collins, Butler Brothers, Richard Land, Grahame Ellard and Stephen Johnstone.

evolving. The structure of the net provides a ready made platform for online discourse for those most involved in their field, examples of which include the Nettime list³, and Rhizome⁴.

My intention in this thesis is to find a way of describing and defining what it is that I do as an artist who happens to work with electronic, digital and communications media, in ways that acknowledge where it has come from, and where it exists in the world, using direct experience of placing the work in the world as the core of this text. The work is practice led, and I regard each piece of work as essentially a work in progress, an experiment.

The *In Conversation* work of the title is described in detail in Chapter 4. It is a work which marked a culmination and a punctuation point in this ongoing experiment, bringing together a range of concerns which thread through much of the work including: the collision between the 'real' and the 'virtual'; bringing together two different forms of public space, and acknowledging the central role of the 'viewer' whether on the street or online as intrinsic to the realisation of the work.

In writing this thesis I am painfully aware of the discrepancy between the work itself, and the description of the work. The works that I am involved with and which are described here all involve to a greater or lesser extent an active engagement on the part of the viewer in order not just for the work to be complete, but for the work to exist. It is to some extent this conundrum, the question of where the work actually IS and where the viewer exists relative to it, that forms one of the central questions emerging for me through my practice and it is in recognition of this rule of engagement that has led me to propose a writing structure for this thesis that can reflect the forms and methodologies of the works that it seeks to describe and contextualise.

1.2 Methodology

"My intention has been, often, to say what I had to say in a way that would exemplify it; that would, conceivably, permit the listener to experience what I had to say rather than just hear about it." ⁵ - John Cage

I have structured this thesis in two parts. The first part (chapters 2 to 4) provides case studies, detailed descriptions and analyses of key works, documentation of which are supplied in the appendices as the practical component of the Ph.D. The second part, *Inhabited Text*, is written in the form of a generated dialogue, with an (interactive) online component, the content of which consists of the research questions and a contextualising of (all) the work in a broader context. This is preceded by a case study and analysis of the *Inhabited Text* itself.

³ <http://www.nettime.org/>

⁴ <http://www.rhizome.org/>

⁵ CAGE, John. *Silence*. Wesleyan University Press. 1961.

The works that I am writing about all represent examples of a process in which the outcome of one work informs the next. I have selected these particular works, out of a larger body of work as evidence of a process which leads from what could be described as a reactive or responsive role for the viewer to one where the viewer has a greater opportunity to influence aspects of the content of the work itself.

All the work detailed here is documented in an accompanying CD ROM, which also documents many of my other artworks and projects, all of which relate to some extent to the subject of this text.

My role here is not to set out a series of definitions of, for example, interactivity (although definitions of interactivity are inevitably addressed within and throughout this thesis); rather, to attempt, through a combination of observation and analysis, to undress and communicate a process both through the words that I use, and the structure I build for these words to inhabit - *Inhabited Text*.

I am working with the programmer, Michiel Dethmers⁶ on a prototype software programme to structure and generate an 'interactive' dialogue according to rules using word and sentence pattern recognition and structure (based on the ELIZA programme⁷). The programme currently exists online in the form of a chatroom environment. The content of the dialogue has been developed from questions and issues raised through the making and siting of the work as outlined in the Case Studies (chapters 3 and 4), and is simultaneously an attempt to contextualise the work both culturally and art historically (chatroom, happenings/performance, Socratic dialogues etc). *Inhabited Text* also self consciously references its own means of production throughout by acknowledging the relationship between the work and the viewer through the process of writing itself.

The content of the dialogue - currently approximately 25,000 words - is written in paragraphs and sentences as statements, questions and responses. The program currently works as two chatbots > and >> representing question and response which are set to be self generating and continuously in dialogue. The programme is being developed to interact and respond to visitors to the site as well as to each other.

The practical works exist in the form of a series of encounters with multiple viewers eliciting alternative meanings depending on the experiences they bring to the encounter. This form of writing structure will seek to examine and question the documentation and recording of encounters of

⁶ Michiel Dethmers was also the programmer for Cruisin' 1999

⁷ ELIZA (also known as 'doctor') is a psychology programme, developed by Joseph Weizenbaum in MIT in the 1960's

interactive works through its own interactive/responsive structure whilst also encouraging its own encounters with visitors to the site, therefore becoming a permanent work or text-in-progress. For more detail on how it works in practice please see Chapter 5.

1.3 summary of key research questions

The core investigation of this thesis is the role of the viewer in the choreography, realisation and interpretation of the work. From this many subcategories and subquestions emerge.

Summarised below are the key issues that run through this thesis and which have emerged both through the making of the practical work and through this attempt to define it.

- What are the differences between the reactive and the interactive?
- What constitutes public space?
- Where is the work situated, and where is the position of the viewer? Is it the primary experience of the work as participant/interactor, or as a secondary viewer, an observer of the experience (of both the work and the interaction with it) in its entirety?
- Where is the space of the work? Where is the work located?
- Where does the work end? When is it finished?
- The role of the artist as interface designer.
- Public versus private, and public versus public (a discussion of audience in relation to the net, street and gallery)
- Viewer choreography and expected behaviour within site and situation specific artworks (both in discussion of previous artworks and in the choreography of the writing/dialogue program itself).
- Constructions of meaning through non-linear encounters; construction of a thesis through a non-linear writing process.
- Faith and verification in our communications with the 'other' (specifically in relation to observed behaviours of viewers in response to *In Conversation 1997-2000* and *Cruisin' 1999*).
- How might the act of observation and/or documentation change the nature of the work itself
- Who, or what is really in control?

Part I

the work

Chapter 2 An introduction to the case studies

In making work as a response to a given site or situation, the installations, usually incorporating audio and video, and some level of viewer interaction or participation, aim to engage the viewer in an inquiry or reinterpretation of their role within specific and often everyday contexts.

The installations became an attempt to make the audience recognise and question accepted behaviour in public situations while also showing, through juxtaposition of images, sounds and site, the oddity of the kind of social interaction regarded as mundane. For instance, in the publicly sited installations, such as *Introductory Exchanges* (Woolwich Foot Tunnel, 1993), pedestrians walking underneath the River Thames were forced to step over video projected 'puddles'; *Pedestrian Gestures* (Hull, Manchester and Nottingham Train stations 1994) intervened with commuters through the projection of animated *trompe l'œil* of hands, mouths and eyes which when approached triggered a sensor-driven set of audio and computer animated responses including voices making short exclamations such as "A-hem" and "Excuse me". The site is central to the work and the viewer becomes active as collaborator and (often unwitting) participant, constructing individual and often independent narratives depending on the pathway chosen through the space.

The role of the viewer as fundamental to both the interpretation and realisation of the work is not confined to the publicly sited works. *Handle With Care*⁸ (Manchester Museum of Science and Industry, 1993) and *AudioZone* (part of the 1994 exhibition *V-topia*, Tramway, Glasgow) also worked with the concept of viewer as 'choreographer', but in the more controlled confines of the museum/gallery context. Whilst *Handle with Care* was a direct, evocative response to the previous function of the museum site as a railway warehouse, and engaged its audience with the site's history; *AudioZone* played off the expectations of visitors to a 'major show of interactive art', by constructing a parallel, 3d audio world (only heard through headsets) which stroked, seduced and ultimately manipulated the viewer in an irreverent piece whose goal was to encourage the participants to question just who is in control.

A further investigation into human behaviour and exchange in public spaces, *In Conversation* (first shown in Brighton in 1997) - an intervention which bridges the spaces of gallery, street and the world wide web - provided the means for two people, one in the street and one on the internet to have a live conversation with each other. It was the combination of giving the viewer the opportunity to 'inhabit' the work, and become active rather than reactive in its realisation and the desire to see what would happen when bringing together these two distinctly different kinds of public space - the street and the internet - that created the context for the work.

⁸ see documentation of *Handle With Care* in the CD ROM appendix and at <http://www.susan-collins.net>

As mentioned in the introduction, each piece becomes essentially a work in progress, an experiment, particularly as the work involves a viewer in order to realise it, to make it happen. The work cannot be resolved or witnessed in the studio. In making work in response to a particular place and a set of expectations existing within a context (such as a train station or public street), one can anticipate what may happen, however it is impossible to witness the actual work before its public showing.



Fig. 1 Pedestrian Gestures at Paragon Station Hull. Stills/details from video documentation

Chapter 3 Site Specific Installations

Case Studies 1-4

“....I interfere with what is already there....and that I suppose is where the interest lies....playing with people and things, rather than making them from scratch....referential works with built in contexts....”⁹

3.1 Case Study 1: Introductory Exchanges 1993

Woolwich Foot Tunnel 1993. Commissioned by Camerawork Gallery for River Crossings, a festival of public art and new media which took place in February/March 1993. Other artists involved in the festival included Chris Meigh-Andrews (Café Gallery), Nick Stewart (Shadwell Station) and Clive Gillman (BT Satellite dishes).

Materials: 8 sensor controlled sound devices were custom built to appear as if a part of the tunnel's surveillance system, and powered from the light fittings in the tunnel; 2 video projectors and U-matic decks were hidden inside the lift shafts. The video images were projected through a Perspex slit directly above the lift doors onto the floor of the tunnel.



Fig. 2 Woolwich Foot Tunnel, London

3.1.1 Context

The Woolwich Foot tunnel is a pedestrian tunnel that stretches for 3/4 mile under the River Thames. The tunnel dips in the middle so one cannot see from one end to the other, with a lift and staircase opening onto it at each end. The lifts were manned by lift operators at the time of the installation, and the tunnel had recently installed security cameras which were equally distributed along it.

⁹ from email correspondence to Jaron Lanier 13/5/93

The acoustics of the tunnel are pronounced, and sound travels in such a way that one can hear the approach of a stranger (footsteps, voices, whistling etc) long before one actually sees or encounters them. My own first impression of the tunnel was of an intimidating space, where one rarely exchanged glances with fellow passersby but was intensely aware of their presence.

As a pedestrian tunnel traversing the Thames, many of the passersby through the tunnel are commuters going to and from work. The above ground alternative river crossing at this location is the Woolwich Ferry which carries both vehicles and pedestrians. There is no other reason to enter the tunnel than to reach the other side of the river. At the time of the installation there were no other (official) artworks, posters or events taking place in that location.

3.1.2 Artwork

Originally inspired by the observation of human behavioural patterns in public, and exchange and lack of exchange between strangers, *Introductory Exchanges* could best be described as an intervention which aimed to involve the viewers as active 'ingredients' in both the making and the perception of the work itself.

The work consisted of a series of sensor controlled¹⁰ sound devices placed at intervals along the Woolwich Foot Tunnel disguised as surveillance equipment. The sounds were triggered by viewers passing through the space and included running water, sheep baaing, footsteps, breathing and audible sighs. There were also video-projected 'puddles' to be stepped in, over or around as passersby entered and exited the lifts at either end. Every so often an animated hand would enter the image to scrub the videopuddle, providing an animated transition through which to bring in new 'puddle' images, or 'delete' or 'clean up' the puddle completely leaving the floor empty for short periods of time.



Fig. 3 Introductory Exchanges. Detail/still from video documentation of animated hand.

¹⁰ The sensors used here were infra-red sensors that turn on for a set period of time in response to viewer movement. The same type of sensor that is commonly used for security lighting. In this case the sensor acted as an on/off switch or valve for power to the walkman, mini-amp and speakers. The sounds were recorded on endless loop tapes of varying lengths (1 min, 3 mins and 6 mins), and each sensor was set to turn on for a different length of time.

3.1.3 Intention

I wanted to make a piece of work for this site that would respond directly to it, its function and the people that use it, in a way that intervened or subtly altered aspects of the space, creating what can best be described as an intervention rather than an installation, inserting sounds of images that *might* have belonged there (the key exception being the sound of sheep baaing that would create or confirm doubt as to the veracity of the experience).

The intended audience were those who used the site regularly. The work was constructed with the regular commuter in mind, the video aspect especially designed with a view to repeat visits rather than a single encounter. It was important to me to use content and references that would be universal and recognisable to the broadest cross-section both in terms of age and cultural background (for instance the image of the cleaning hand and the puddle, the sounds of water dripping and footsteps).

The work was not meant to be a tangible, physical or singular experience. It was made to exist as a constantly shifting, temporary, immersive collage with the architectural and physical space of the tunnel and its regular inhabitants.

3.1.4 Choreography

In making a work that is intended to be encountered by chance, the layout of the work - with a view to the expected behaviour or 'choreography' of a passerby in any given space - is fundamental to the outcome or realisation of the work in question.

Introductory Exchanges was the first work that I made utilising video projection into 'real space'¹¹ and sounds that would be triggered by people movement.

The site had an implied viewer choreography inasmuch as passersby had to pass through the tunnel in order to reach the other side, and the tunnel was narrow enough that no-one passing through the tunnel could fail to trigger the audio interventions (unless they had very recently been triggered, in which case the sound was already running). Lift users were confronted by the videopuddle¹², and would have to make a decision about whether to step in it, around it or over it at each end. The piece is unavoidable. The viewer - whether intentionally or unintentionally - is forced to engage with the piece in order to continue his or her journey.

There were for me two kinds of potential viewers/participants of this work. Firstly there were the inadvertent, regular or irregular tunnel users who came across the work by chance, and secondly the viewers who were going to the tunnel specifically to see the work, often with a leaflet in hand describing the intended experience, so that their viewing of the work became a secondary rather

¹¹ The use of 'real space' here is given to mean the actual physical space the viewer occupies (not a screen, frame or window projection) in this instance the tunnel floor.

¹² There were deliberately planned gaps (of black) in the videopuddle tape, to ensure that the image was less predictable. It would run sporadically.

than a primary experience, coloured by a prior sense of expectation built up by the gallery and the event itself ¹³.

It was this first viewer, the tunnel user rather than the art enthusiast, that I was considering when designing and researching the way in which the work was to be encountered. As well as imagining how the work might be played out as a single viewer made their way from one end of the tunnel to another, I was also anticipating what would happen with more than one viewer at a time - whether they were following each other or going through the tunnel together or crossing each others paths. I also had to consider how the piece might function both at the quietest time of the day with solitary tunnel pedestrians as well as during busy, rush hour times, where the sound aspect of the work might get lost in a cacophony of indigenous peopled tunnel sounds - for instance footsteps, talking, laughter, whistling, bicycling.

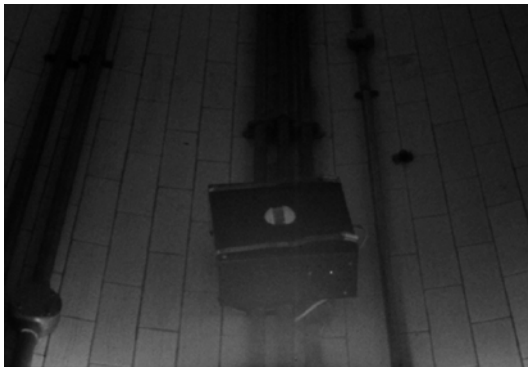


Fig. 4 Photograph of sound device installed on ceiling of Woolwich Foot Tunnel.

Although choreography was to some extent predetermined in terms of the navigation of the work since there were only two directional choices a viewer could make (as opposed to another kind of navigational work, say a CD ROM, where a single viewer may be faced with multiple pathways leading to predetermined outcomes), there were many variables to be considered. For instance the sound levels and also the length of each sound triggered. What might become quite loud and obvious in an almost empty, otherwise quiet tunnel could quickly disappear or become effectively absorbed during a busy period. I was also concerned that what might be interesting on a first encounter might become predictable, dull or irritating for commuters using the tunnel each day.

In installing the work it was necessary to find ways of concealing the equipment. As well as the obvious security issues arising from a 24 hour publicly accessible non-invigilated location ¹⁴ I wanted the equipment behind the sounds and images to be hidden from view ¹⁵ with the intention

¹³ On the opening night the gallery arranged bus tours of all the River Crossings works, so that not only would a viewers expectations be directed by prior knowledge, but that the work would be experienced in a large group rather than one on one or in smaller groups if one had come across it independently.

¹⁴ In the neighbouring Greenwich Foot Tunnel video monitors housing a work by Bob Last in the lift shaft was stolen during the course of the same festival.

¹⁵ Grey metal boxes were modified to hold the sensor, walkman, mini-amps and speakers. These were placed discreetly along the tunnel ceiling, fixed from the pipework with jubilee clips and tamper

of creating an ambiguity or doubt in the mind of the viewer as to which images or sounds might actually belong to the tunnel and which might not.

In making and siting the work, it became increasingly clear that the choreography of the piece would be based on a combination of informed (or inspired) guesswork, and observing how commuters ordinarily used the space. While each aspect of the work was completed prior to installation (the sound devices, sound tapes, videopuddles etc), the actual work could not be viewed until installed and switched on in the tunnel.

3.1.5 Observations

On the opening night a busker began playing at one end of the tunnel ¹⁶, inevitably overwhelming and drowning out the carefully calibrated sounds. It became apparent that this, and unexpected events like this, were bound to happen and that working in public in this way necessitated a relinquishing of some level of control on my part. Rather than attempt to alter the space in some way to exclude or control the unexpected, it became apparent that the work should be able to encompass, absorb and respond to what 'actually' happens in a public situation, and inasmuch as the work - for a fixed period of time - had become a part of the space, the space - and everything that happened within it - had become a part of the work. The result could almost be described as an 'immersive environment' where the real and the virtual were brought together and became inextricably linked.

With subsequent works I have used a video camera to observe and record the work as it is encountered. It is important for me not to be observed filming as this immediately alters the event one is trying to document. For this work there were no hidden vantage points, so instead of videotapes of tunnel pedestrians responding to the work, I have videotapes of tunnel pedestrians responding to the camera, or just documentation of the images and sounds in the tunnel taken in isolation or at a distance. The result was that for this work, the majority of observations of how the work was used was through direct (not filmed) observation, and through anecdotal evidence ¹⁷.

proof screws. They were all placed within view of the tunnel's (newly installed) surveillance cameras, and were designed to look as if they were part of the fabric of the tunnel and its surveillance system. The video projectors for the 'videopuddles' and the u-matic playback decks were housed within the lift shafts at each end, the projection beamed through a narrow Perspex crescent just above the lift doors. Visitors to the tunnel who observed the light beam appeared convinced that these were security cameras and not projectors - as video projectors were not in everyday usage at this time, which also helped protect them from theft or vandalism.

¹⁶ Throughout the entire research, development, installation and exhibition process this was the first and only time I witnessed a busker in the tunnel.

¹⁷ Inquiries were made about obtaining the footage from the surveillance cameras in the tunnel, however this was not released for use, for public privacy reasons

A question does emerge however over how much observation alone can really indicate a viewers own experience or response to a work.¹⁸

Whilst the passersby were not responsible for the *content* of the work in the tunnel, they were (albeit inadvertently) active in the orchestration of the sound aspects of the work as it played itself out, so becoming performer/participant and viewer/receiver simultaneously. The sound composition did alter quite radically in different circumstances, depending on how many people were using the tunnel at any given time, and their own sounds and movements. For users of the tunnel that were expecting an intervention, every sound that was made in the tunnel (quite apart from the samples I placed there) from a telephone ringing in the lift shaft, to loud footsteps or laughter became a part of their own experience of the work.

Possibly the most 'interactive' response to the work was on the opening night. I arrived at one end of the tunnel to find that someone had relieved themselves into the videopuddle, thereby creating a real puddle collaged with the projection. It was interesting to observe that even before the urine, some tunnel-goers would carefully step around the video puddle as if afraid to wet their feet.

Viewers responded to the sounds more directly when they triggered them themselves, one sound at the halfway (and deepest) point of the tunnel was of rushing water. Many viewers were witnessed glancing upwards at precisely this point. Other responses included two women who on hearing the sound of sheep in the distance were overheard wondering whether there were live sheep in the tunnel. The very presence of an interference with the predictability of the space led to a (temporary) breakdown of usual tunnel behaviour¹⁹ between many tunnel users, by encouraging interaction between them - both abstractly in the form of a collectively performed sound montage, and tangibly in the form of looks, glances, and verbal exchanges.

3.1.6 Questions (and outcomes) arising from the work

A number of key questions emerged from the making *Introductory Exchanges*, which I have continued to investigate in subsequent work. These questions included:

Where is the work? - Is it made up of every single viewer's experience - and if so, does that then become the *whole* work, and if it does, how does one then record or document it, does it exist in any form afterwards?

How long is the work? - In this instance it was physically the length of the tunnel, and in minutes, the time it takes to walk the length of the tunnel. However, was the true length of the work three

¹⁸ Anecdotal evidence while generally unscientific tends to give much greater feedback in terms of viewer experience (experience both in terms of expectation and outcome), while direct observation tends to give feedback in terms of the usability of the interface or basic choreography of the work.

¹⁹ ie. no eye contact, no interaction.

weeks, the duration of the installation itself, or the (variable) length of time it took for an individual to experience it?

When is the work complete?- How do visitors know that they have witnessed the whole work?

What *is* the whole work? If the whole work takes place over the three weeks, can any one person including the author of the work witness or experience or know the work in its entirety?

Where is the viewer? - what is the role of the viewer in the performance of the work? How much information should a viewer be given about the work and their relationship to it?

It became clear as a result of this intervention that this type of work cannot expect to be completed or resolved in the studio, requiring as it does, both a physical location and members of the general public in order to complete it. It also became apparent that the public space that the work is located in becomes - for the purposes of the intervention - the studio, and the work itself essentially an ongoing experiment, a work-in-progress.

3.2 Case Study 2: Pedestrian Gestures 1994

Paragon Train Station, Hull 1994; The Junction, Cambridge 1994; Victoria Station, Manchester 1994; Nottingham Train Station 1994; 3 locations in Linz, Austria 1996

An Arts Council Film/Video Commission for Hull Time Based Arts as part of the Root 94 Festival

Materials: 3 Amiga computers; 3 video projectors; 3 sets of active loudspeakers; 3 customised PIR sensors

3.2.1 Context

The work was initially designed for the public concourse area of Paragon Train Station in Hull. It was shown in two more train stations (in Nottingham Train Station the work was located across two station platforms); The Junction, Cambridge, a 'venue' which is used for a range of events and age groups, most of which are music or club nights; and in Linz, Austria, where the work was spread out over three locations, with one projection in the train station and the two others in side streets leading off the main square.

The work has three distinct parts to it, each including sound and video projection. In Hull, the originating venue, one projection was onto the pavement by the taxi rank, and the two others were rearprojected into windows in the station concourse (around the corner).

In all the installations the work was supported by a gallery or organisation as part of a festival or exhibition.

3.2.2 Artwork

A series of three computer animated, sensor triggered ²⁰ video projection and sound interventions, which (technically) worked independently of each other. Like *Introductory Exchanges* before it,

²⁰ please see interface section 3.2.4 below for details on the sensor-responsive system.

Pedestrian Gestures emerged from an interest in interpersonal communications in public spaces, using images and sounds to attempt to question and explore aspects of our often unconscious daily exchanges with both strangers and our surroundings.

The piece is made up of a number of encounters that are intimate in scale. Animated, video projected eyes, mouths, hands and verbal utterances used imagery relating to the 'gesture' to form a collage with the location. Passersby encountered short photographic and audio snippets, inadvertently *choreographing*²¹ their own experience of the work with the sensors triggering a variety of audio and animated responses.



Fig. 5 *Pedestrian Gestures* at Paragon Station, Hull. Stills/details.

The visual and audio content of the work was made deliberately generic, accessible and recognisable, and related to the kinds of observations and encounters that take place in these kinds of public spaces - for instance voices uttering "ahem" and "excuse me" along with images of tapping hands and peering eyes. As far as possible the source of the images and sounds remained ambiguous in terms of gender, and hidden in terms of location. The projected images were only visible after dark, however in most cases the work remained on during daylight as an audio intervention.

The work was adapted and reworked according to each individual context. In the Junction, Cambridge, I introduced a pair of feet projected on the floor as if emerging from the wall, in place of one of the hand animations, and included this for all subsequent installations. When a German language version was made for Linz, Austria, I worked with an Austrian to translate and re-record the spoken sounds. The intention was to get the intonation of the words to approximate the same *sense* as the English version (i.e. generic and non-aggressive).

3.2.3 Choreography

Unlike *Introductory Exchanges*, which had implicit two way traffic, the ways in which this work could be come across (or missed completely) were more open. In placing the work I kept the choice of locations flexible, with the only certain parameters being that the passage through the space should be a regular thoroughfare, and that gratuitous journeys should not be needed in order to view the piece itself.

²¹ For more on viewer choreography see 3.2.3

The piece 'interacted' with commuters through the projection of the animated *trompe l'oeil* images of hands, mouths and eyes into the windows and onto the pavement, which when approached triggered the sensor driven, pre-recorded set of audio and computer-animated responses. The audio acted as a pull, or a hook. Where viewers might have initially missed the discreet image projections, the audio would inevitably draw them to their attention.

The intended audience were again those who used the site regularly, and the work was designed to intercept the viewer unexpectedly and independently, with the full sense of the work choreographed individually, through a number of interactions and over a period of time.

3.2.4 Interface

After *Introductory Exchanges* I was keen to explore ways in which the image as well as the sound was able to be triggered. I also wanted to find a way of working where I could directly edit and alter the work once on site, to be able to complete and refine the work in response to how it was actually working once it was live and located. In *Litter*, made a few months earlier in 1994²², I projected looped animated images directly from an Amiga computer which gave me the opportunity to edit and alter the images on site, and also meant that the work could run continuously without needing to rewind. An Arts Council training grant in basic electronics in 1994 enabled me to extend this possibility further, and (with engineer Adrian Fogarty) create an interface between a PIR sensor and an Amiga mouse that would enable passersby to trigger mouse clicks each time they tripped the sensor.

The animated video and manipulated audio snippets were compiled using Amigavision, a multimedia program for the Amiga computer, and the program in Amigavision was made up from a series of loops, which were programmed to 'respond' to sensor inputs. For example, at the taxi rank in Hull's Paragon station, a *trompe l'oeil* hand was projected onto the pavement continuously strumming its fingers. Nothing would change this pattern until the projection was approached (it had the sensor focussed on it), at which point an 'aside' was triggered, and the viewer greeted with a short animated and audio response. While the 'default' animation of the hand remained constant, the responses changed depending upon which stage the endlessly looping programme was at when it was interrupted.

3.2.5 Observations

In Hull, I was able to spend some evenings discreetly filming responses to the work, hidden in a car parked in the taxi rank over a period of a few nights. I also spent some time filming more openly during which time members of the general public would on occasion approach me and ask me questions about the work.

One man, commenting on the daytime, audio-only aspect of the work said that initially he thought it was part of the tannoy and had assumed that they [the station staff] had left the tannoy on by mistake. He said that the piece made him much more aware of the sounds that he expected to hear in the station and the acoustic nature of that space.

²² see documentation of *Litter* in the CD ROM appendix and at <http://www.susan-collins.net>

When the piece was sited on station platforms in Nottingham Train Station it also became confused with the station tannoy system, only this time the official system was announcing delays of up to 4 hours, whilst apparently also broadcasting sighs, laughter and groans. The work had to be withdrawn for 24 hours until train services had returned to normal, and tempers had cooled down.

Passersby tended to spend more time with the part of the work that was projected onto the pavement - in Hull this was the taxi rank - where the work became part of the passersby 'physical' space rather than an image on wall. For subsequent installations wherever possible I projected the images on the pavement, adapting them so they worked visually when viewed in that position.

As with *Introductory Exchanges* and *Litter* some people were seen responding physically to the projected image on the paving, by stepping on it, or jumping into it²³. In Linz, Austria on the opening night, an elegant middle aged woman was witnessed literally placing her feet on top of the feet and jumping up and down.



Fig. 6 Pedestrian Gestures at The Junction, Cambridge. Still/detail.

There were interactions and discussions between strangers as a result of the work. They appeared to be drawn initially by the sound, and cluster in groups trying to work out where it and the images were coming from. People learnt how to make the work respond through intuition (there was no information given), realising that their own movement triggered further random images and audio responses. Some individuals were witnessed returning day after day, and bringing friends with them. Many of the local taxi drivers diverted their passengers for a drive through Hull Train Station to point out the projections.

The work became as much about the anecdotes and events that it provoked as its component parts. An 'instrument', or *agent provocateur* for another work, a performance, an event taking place over a few weeks.

²³ see video documentation in the CD ROM appendix

Here as in *Introductory Exchanges* and *Litter* before it, the work became a collage of the 'real' and the 'virtual' with one informing the other and the 'whole' work becoming an inextricable combination of the two.

3.2.6 Questions (and outcomes) arising from the work

A number of key issues emerged from the making and exhibiting of *Pedestrian Gestures*.

Firstly there was the issue of documentation and, as with *Introductory Exchanges*, the question emerged as to how the 'whole' work can be fully documented or represented if one accepts that the 'whole' work is played out for the duration of the installation.

When showing videodocumentation of the work either by itself or in conjunction with an artist's talk or lecture, I became increasingly aware that the work had a secondary audience, the audience that experienced the work *entirely* through the documentation, usually consisting of the same edited and documented events.

At one of these events²⁴ I was describing the difference (for me) between the viewer/passersby that encounters the work by chance and the art enthusiast who seeks it out in anticipation of an intervention. I expressed concern that the viewer going with prior expectations of an intervention could not experience the work in the way in which it was intended, that the work would not be capable of intervening in an experience of the 'everyday' if it was expected, or sought out. An audience member responded by saying that he had witnessed the work in Hull, with prior knowledge, and that while it was true that he could not experience the work as a surprise encounter, he *was* able to witness *others* encounters with the work, and for him the work represented this witnessing. The work becoming the observation, the unfolding, of the entire event live.

This raised the issue of where the viewer was in relation to the work. Were there different levels of viewer; the *primary* viewer encountering the work itself; a *secondary* viewer witnessing this encounter live, where the *primary* viewer has become an intrinsic part of the work; and perhaps even a *tertiary* viewer who witnesses the encounter in recorded form, after the event?

In the exhibition of the work in Linz in 1996²⁵ I asked for a surveillance camera to link the projection in the Station back to a videoprojection in the museum to acknowledge the 'framing' of the encounter live as part of the work. This is something that has become integral in later works, especially with *In Conversation* 1997.

A second issue which emerged was the extent to which the viewer could actually contribute to the realisation of the work. The presence of passersby was essential in terms of triggering the (random) audio and video intervention and becoming an observable part of the work as it existed in the space. Users quite swiftly learnt how they were able to influence the sensors, with the piece often resulting in an informal, spontaneous interaction between users. However, all the content was pre-recorded with no opportunity for any greater input from the viewer, beyond playing it out as one might randomly play existing tracks from a sampler, or an instrument.

²⁴ "Digital Dreams:Power in The Immaterial World", Northern Arts, Newcastle College

²⁵ As part of the "Objekt:Video" survey exhibition which took place in the Linz Landesmuseum

3.3 Case Study 3: AudioZone 1994

Originally commissioned by FACT²⁶, Film and Video Umbrella and Tramway for the *V-topia*²⁷ exhibition, Tramway, Glasgow 1994. Versions were subsequently shown at NAME Gallery, Chicago (as part of *Command, Shift, Control*) and Croydon Clocktower (as part of *Cyberban Fantasies*) in 1996.

Materials Used: 3 Amiga computers; 3 video projectors; 3 customised PIR sensors; 5 CD players; 8 sets of Infra-red transmitters & headsets.

3.3.1 Context

Originally a tramshed, Tramway has an exceptionally large interior space with high ceilings. The *V-topia* show was subtitled *Visions of a Virtual World* and promoted as 'a major show of interactive art'. Visitors to this gallery would not only be aware that they were coming to see 'something' but their expectations were being raised to expect a high degree of participation if not full blown Virtual Reality! This work was the first 'interactive' or 'participatory' installation that I had been commissioned to do for a gallery context. The other artworks in the exhibition were all digital, virtual or interactive in some way.



Fig. 7 Installation shot (still from video) of AudioZone at V-topia, Tramway Glasgow 1994

²⁶ Foundation for Art and Creative Technologies, a commissioning organisation for New Media work based in Liverpool (formerly Moviola).

²⁷ "V-topia" opened in July 1994 at Tramway, Glasgow. Other artists in the exhibition included Grahame Weinbren, Lynn Hersman, The Butler Brothers, Graham Ellard and Stephen Johnstone, Clive Gillman and Richard Land.

3.3.2 Artwork

Throughout the gallery the visitor via his or her (infra red) headset ²⁸ could 'tune in' to a number of possible narrative pathways through a shifting maze of 3d²⁹ (binaural) sounds situated in eight interlocking audio 'zones' ³⁰.

Three of these zones also used 'reactive' video projection in conjunction with the audio. Each projection reacted directly to the presence of the viewer, a sensor triggering alternate video/audio responses.

The audio consisted mostly of instructional spoken texts as well as experiential audio such as breathing and kissing. The nature of the 3d audio is such that the viewer may really *feel* the audio (i.e. breathing) as an apparently first hand experience, and was used here with the intention of creating an audio *trompe l'œil*, an illusion of a parallel reality, with the privacy of the audio experience creating an individual world within the shared gallery space, a site-specific installation for the inside of the head.

The use of 3d audio increases the potential for 'suggestion' as a powerful element in the work. AudioZone's intention was to transmit suggested experiences to the viewer .

In one zone, the audio encouraged the viewer to '*take a seat*'. When seated on the gallery bench a projection of a hand was activated which proceeded to caress the viewer's leg - the body of the viewer becoming host, and therefore part of the image. In another zone the viewer could pass the image of a female 'masturbating' hand projected onto the ground, accompanied by voices saying '*don't step on it*', '*don't step there*'. By contrast the third projection, a morphing computer control key, projected large onto a brick wall, actively invited the viewer to touch it, and when the viewer did it responded with random sequences of 'orificial' or button imagery, from an open mouth to a nipple or a belly button.

The work used the intention of the exhibition and the (to some extent unrealistic) expectations it set up for the viewer as its context and subject matter, the work essentially becoming a critique of the role of the viewer, and his or her expectations within an 'interactive' context (such as who is actually in control), whilst also attempting to examine the relationship between public and private, observer and observed within the gallery context.

"I'm playing with ideas of control. I want people to realise that even as they're being stroked and seduced by technology, they're being manipulated.....in a way no-one is in control of the final piece. I just set up situations and people 'perform' in them."³¹

²⁸ Visitors could pick up their headset from the gallery reception.

²⁹ sound recorded binaurally is often referred to as 3d audio or 3d sound, as it can give a sense of specific spatial location when heard through stereo headphones.

³⁰ these zones were made through beaming sound through infrared transmitters. Viewers wearing the corresponding infrared headsets could pick up the sounds.

³¹ A reference to AudioZone, quoted in the Cyberspace column, LIFE magazine in an article by Jim McClennan on the V-topia exhibition. The Observer, 14/08/94



Fig. 8 Installation shot (still from video) of AudioZone at V-topia, Tramway Glasgow 1994

3.3.3 Interface and Choreography

The choreography in this piece of work was key to its existence. Possible routes through the gallery and around the other artworks in the space were built in to the siting of the component parts of the work.

Sometimes termed "'Virtual Reality' Audio", 3d audio is capable of objectifying sound, and giving it a specific spatial location. Working with infra-red cordless headsets, AudioZone transmitted 3d audio from both audio CD and computer sources into specific areas (zones) within the gallery space. When wearing a headset the viewer could listen to the sounds in each zone while walking unencumbered through the gallery, encountering an invisible wall of 'noise'³² on entering or exiting the zones.

Whereas in earlier works I had not included any instructions for using or experiencing the work, in AudioZone instructions became a part of the work itself, both a necessity in order to encourage the viewer to navigate the work and also its content inasmuch as the work was an exploration into the power of the medium to suggest, seduce and manipulate.

On picking up a headset from the gallery desk the first AudioZone encountered was an information zone. A (generic, female) voice welcomed the viewer to AudioZone and gave instructions on how to proceed through the gallery, adjust the volume of the headsets etc. The templates for this were scripts written (and supplied) by Acoustiguide™, (the company who make the taped guides for many Museum and Gallery exhibitions). The viewer was invited to '*proceed through the gallery*' to further zones. While not transmitting sound to every corner of the gallery, AudioZone required the viewer to actively pass through much of the space in order to encounter the eight available zones.³³ The audio instructions were not confined to the entry zone. As outlined in 3.3.2 (above), instructions in other zones included phrases such as '*please take a seat*', '*touch it, you know you want to*' etc leading, cajoling, and in some cases daring the viewer to participate in the work (for instance '*don't step there, don't step on it*' in actuality became an active invitation for viewers to do just that).

³² The sound beam 'breaks up' at the edges of each infra red zone creating an audio 'noise' effect.

³³ The size of each was flexible depending on the height and angle at which the transmitters were placed, up to an approximate maximum of 4 x 4 metres).

The technical interface for the three 'reactive' video projections was identical to that used in *Pedestrian Gestures* (namely three customised PIR sensor-mouse devices).

Smaller scale versions of AudioZone were installed in NAME Gallery, Chicago and Croydon Clocktower in 1996. These installations had 5 audio 'zones', and used video loops for the female 'masturbating' hand and the hand stroking the (seated) viewer. The projected morphing control key remained a responsive system.



Fig. 9 Still from AudioZone installed at NAME gallery, Chicago

3.3.4 Observations ³⁴

As the viewers were wearing headsets it was more difficult in this work to observe what exactly was being experienced at any given moment. Each experience became singular depending on where the viewer was in the space. Observing, one couldn't be sure (as the zone boundaries were not visible) whether the viewer was at that moment in the process of 'being kissed', or being invited to 'take a seat'.

With its suggestive and seductive content embarrassment became a factor with some visitors appearing to be uncomfortable or embarrassed to be witnessed touching a button which then became a nipple, something that they could not have anticipated or had any control over. Others were witnessed returning again and again to repeat the motion to see what other images might be forthcoming.

³⁴ For a statistical analysis based on a sample set of users of AudioZone, see GRAHAM, Beryl. A Study of Audience Relationships with Interactive Computer-Based Visual Artworks in Gallery Settings, through Observation, Art Practice, and Curation. Phd Thesis University of Sunderland. 1997 chapter 6.

The zone in which viewers were invited to 'take a seat' and then were stroked by a projected hand became particularly popular, arguably the most 'interactive' component in the work. Users would stay for long periods of time, moving their bodies under the stroking hand(s).



Fig. 10 Stills from video of AudioZone at V-topia, Tramway Glasgow 1994

The viewer became both subject and (especially in the case of the hand projected onto the thigh) object in a work in which the viewer had very little actual control over the outcome.

Interestingly the hand projection seemed more effective when projected as an endless loop video of stroking hands rather than (as at Tramway) an animated loop triggered by sensor. The stroking hand could arguably be described as the most 'interactive' of all the components in AudioZone as this was the part of the work that viewers had the most control over in terms of its outcome; the most open to usage and interpretation. This leads to the very straightforward conclusion that interactivity does not always mean it needs to be 'interactive' in the technical sense.

3.3.5 Conclusions, Questions (and outcomes) arising from the work

Making work for the gallery was a very different experience in terms of creating a structure that would encourage viewers to participate and yet still have the power to surprise or intervene in viewers expectations of their context. This was further emphasised by that fact that in a showcase for interactive technology (subtitled 'Visions of a Virtual World') expectations were already raised quite high in terms of a degree of interactivity, viewer control or virtual reality. In making *AudioZone* the structure of the work would best be described as a navigable structure, a space for viewers to inhabit and explore rather than influence. This contrasts with the more open (instrument-like) structure of *Introductory Exchanges* or *Pedestrian Gestures* in which the viewer could not contribute to the content of the images or sounds themselves, but could orchestrate their own compositions and juxtapositions (wittingly or unwittingly), and effectively 'perform' the work.

One significant outcome was a further piece of work, *Touched* 1996, which I describe in detail below, which was developed directly through observing the way that the visitors to AudioZone responded to the projected hand image.

3.4 Case Study 4: Touched 1996

Originally commissioned as an installation by Zone Gallery, Newcastle for *Ex Machina* 1996³⁵, and also shown in 1996 as part of the *Objekt:Video* exhibition in the Landesmuseum, Linz, Austria. A single projector version was developed and shown as part of *Suspect Devices*³⁶ at the Laing Gallery, Newcastle in 1997 and Lux Gallery (formerly LEA Gallery), London in 1998.

Materials Used for original version: 5 autorepeat VHS players; 5 baby video projectors; 5 sets active loudspeakers; 5 CD players.

{**touch** v. & n.

-v. **1** tr. come into or be in contact with (another thing) at one or more points. **2** tr. bring the hand etc. into contact with. **3a** intr. be in or come into contact with one another. **3b** tr. bring into mutual contact. **4** tr. rouse tender or painful feelings in. **6a** tr. disturb or harm. **6d** tr. affect. **7b** tr. concern. **8b** tr. approach. **10** tr. (as **touched** adj.) slightly mad.

-n. **1** the act or an instance of touching, esp. with the body or hand. **2a** the faculty of perception through physical contact, esp. with the fingers }
- definition excerpts from the Concise Oxford Dictionary

3.4.1 Context

As with *AudioZone*, visitors to *Ex Machina* were expecting a show of technology based artwork, and indeed the other artworks were all digital, virtual or interactive in some way .

The *Objekt:Video* exhibition was an international survey of object based video art with more of an emphasis on video and less on newer or interactive technologies. *Suspect Devices* was a solo show of small scale or object based video/sound installations. For both *Suspect Devices* installations *Touched* was positioned as the first work encountered as visitors entered the gallery space.

3.4.2 Artwork

The original installation consisted of a series of 5 baby videoprojectors installed from rods in the ceiling and projecting in a number of different directions.



Fig. 11 Installation shot (still from video) of *Touched* at Zone Gallery, Newcastle

³⁵ *Ex Machina* was an exhibition of Japanese and British Digital interactive Art. Other artists in the show included Paul Sermon, Jane Prophet and Teiji Furuhashi.

³⁶ *Suspect Devices* was a touring show commissioned by Film and Video Umbrella London and supported by the Arts Council of England. Further information on *Suspect Devices* can be found in the CD ROM appendix and at <http://www.susan-collins.net>

As the viewers passed through the work fragile video projections were caught inadvertently on their passing bodies. Each projection was running a different (looped) video sequence of a hand alternately stroking, touching, pinching, caressing, grasping. The hand, while actually female, is intended to be ambiguous in terms of gender, so the work is less about a man or a woman reaching out and touching the passerby, and more about the individual, an individual, any individual.

In each case the body of the viewer becomes host to, and therefore part of, the image. Quietly breathing audio (intended to indicate presence) provides an intimate and constantly moving soundscape.

The relative technological simplicity of the work is deliberate, using analogue technology to create an 'immersive' environment in real space - the virtual entering, adapting and collaging with the real.

The baby videoprojectors were used here particularly because of their desirability, becoming a nod to the seductive powers of new technology.

For *Suspect Devices*, both at the Laing and at Lux (formerly LEA) Galleries, the work was refined down to a single baby video projector. Here the video projector was on a motor which continuously panned the room within 180° rotation, coming to rest on any viewer who came within three feet of it. Here the potential references became more diverse and possibly more sinister, from being a piece of technology just reaching out and attempting to touch the first thing that comes near it to a facsimile big brother, all seeing, all touching heat seeking machine.



Fig. 12 Stills from video of *Touched* at Zone Gallery, Newcastle

3.4.3 Interface and Choreography

For each showing of *Touched* - including the single projector version - the work was located in an area that needed to be passed through in order to get to the rest of the show and as such there was an implicit choreography to the work. It was possible for visitors to the gallery to pass through the space, observe the baby projectors as a (sculptural) installation and not realise that as they passed they themselves were being stroked by the projected hands. Here the body of the visitor becomes the site for the work and the viewer becomes both subject and object, observer and observed. This work as with *AudioZone* both responded to and depended upon a perceived expectation on behalf of the viewer with regard to technology, raised by showing the work within the context of

(technology) based exhibitions. The outcome of the work in terms of 'meaning' would undoubtedly alter in an alternative context.

3.4.4 Observations

The question of where the work exists in relation to its viewer(s) is raised again here, as with *Pedestrian Gestures*. In *Touched* the participant is fundamental to providing a screen or host for the work. However, it became clear both when observing viewers, and experiencing the work directly, that the hand projections onto the body are more clearly perceived by a secondary party than by the projectee or primary viewer themselves.

In the installation as part of *Ex Machina* at Zone Gallery, Liv Lorent, a dancer/choreographer, returned most days to experience the projections on her body³⁷. Reportedly she was also seen pulling up her blouse to experience the projections on her naked flesh.

Some people, as with Liv, became very involved and uninhibited in responding to the work as a primary viewer, becoming the performers of their own experience of it. Others were seen to appear embarrassed, and for these viewers the work was experienced mostly as a secondary viewer, as an observation of another 'performing' the work.

As might be expected the sites where there were multiple projections (Zone and Linz) worked both in terms of a multiple user or shared experience, where there were large numbers of visitors present, as well as a more intimate singular experience. By contrast, and as one might expect, the single projector works tended to encourage mostly the intimate single or dual user experience.

3.4.5 Conclusions, Questions and Outcomes

With both *AudioZone* and *Touched* it becomes much clearer where the work actually *is*. Even though it is still ephemeral and requires a viewer to *inhabit* it and - in the case of *Touched* - become host to the work. The work itself is navigated rather than orchestrated, a closed rather than an open system³⁸, although the responses to it and choreography of it may be open in themselves.

As a result of seeing *Touched*, Liv Lorent, the dance/choreographer contacted me to see if I would be interested in letting her incorporate the hand projections into a work she was choreographing, *Flesh-Liquid-Bones*³⁹. In agreeing to this I could be seen to accept the potential of the work as an open structure, an instrument for others to interpret.⁴⁰

³⁷ Liv Lorent, was choreographer in residence at Dance City, Newcastle at that time.

³⁸ Open systems are discussed in more depth in Chapter 6

³⁹ *Flesh-Liquid-Bones* toured during 1997, premiering at The Place, London as part of the Spring Loaded season.

⁴⁰ Canadian artist David Rokeby with his Very Nervous System actually creates versions for other artists and musicians to work with, as well as using it for his own installations. For more on David Rokeby, open structures and artists as interface designers, see Chapter 5.

3.5 Summary of key questions emerging from Case Studies 1 - 4

- Where and what is the work? Where does it exist physically. Is it made up of its physical parts, or does it only exist in relation to or collaged into a physical/actual/real world space?
- Is the work made up of every single viewers experience - and if so, does that then become the *whole* work?
- How does one document the work, can this become a part of the *whole* work? How might the act of observation alter the nature of the work itself?
- How long is the work? When is it complete? Does the public space become the studio, and the work essentially an ongoing experiment, a work in progress?
- What *is* the whole work? If the whole work takes place over a period of time, in weeks or even months, can any one person including the author of the work witness or know the work in its entirety?
- Where is the viewer? - what is the role of the viewer in the performance or realisation of the work?
- Are there different levels of viewer? The *primary* viewer encountering the work itself; a *secondary* viewer witnessing this encounter live, where the *primary* viewer has become an intrinsic part of the work; and perhaps even a *tertiary* viewer who witnesses the encounter in recorded form, after the event?
- How much input can a viewer make to a piece of work - how much power is an artist willing to give to a viewer - who edits the work?
- At what point might a work become interactive rather than reactive; open rather than closed?
- How is the work distinguished from an instrument, an interface design??
- How much does context influence both the choreography and the perception of a piece of work? Both in terms of public location/physical placement of the work, and also the thematic context of a group exhibition etc.

Chapter 4 Internet Specific Works

Case Studies 5 & 6

"As human beings become increasingly intertwined with the technology and with each other via the technology, old distinctions between what is specifically human and specifically technological become more complex. Are we living life *on* the screen or *in* the screen?"

- Sherry Turkle⁴¹

4.1 Case Study 5: In Conversation 1997

Originally commissioned by BN1, Lighthouse and Channel for Fabrica, Duke Street, Brighton in 1997 as part of Channel's *Inhabiting Metropolis*⁴² series of internet works. *In Conversation* has since been exhibited at the Oude Kerk, Amsterdam, Holland as part of the *Avatar* exhibition (1998); Gallery Otso, Espoo, Finland as part of the 1998 MuuMedia Festival's *Encoded Identities* and *Mobile Zones* exhibitions; Chapter Arts, Cardiff, in 2000 as a solo exhibition; and at the British Council in Berlin in 2001 to coincide with the Berlin Biennale.

The site can be accessed at <http://www.inconversation.com>

Materials Used for original (Brighton) version: 2 Macintosh servers; 1 PC realencoder; 1 PC realserver; surveillance camera; microphone; speakers; audiomixer; PA system; videomixer; videoprojector and screen; www site; Macromedia Director; SimpleText; AppleScript; MacPerl; with Perl programming by Andi Freeman.

4.1.1 Context

When active *In Conversation* exists simultaneously in three locations: on the world wide web (www); in the gallery, and on the street. In Brighton, the original venue, the gallery was Fabrica, which had originally been a church. The street site was adjacent to the gallery on Duke Street. Fabrica and Duke Street are located centrally in Brighton, with a lot of pedestrian through traffic and close to Cybar, an internet cafe, which was providing free access for the public to the *In Conversation* www site.

When the work was shown in Amsterdam, Holland, it was shown as part of an exhibition called *Avatar*⁴³ which took place in the Oude Kerk, in Amsterdam's red light district, with the street site adjacent to the nearby canal on Oudezijds Voorburgwal.

⁴¹ TURKLE, Sherry . Life on the screen - Identity in the Age of the Internet, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London 1996

⁴² <http://www.channel.org.uk> to link to the *Inhabiting Metropolis* website

⁴³ subtitled '*of postmodern times and multiple identities*', this was an international themed exhibition incorporating works using photography, video, installation and new media. Other participating artists included: Janine Antoni, Jake & Dinos Chapman; Luc Courchesne; Lynn Hershman; Cindy Sherman, Tony Oursler and Annie Sprinkle.

In Espoo, Finland, the work was shown at Gallery Otso, with the street site located outside the Espoo Cultural centre (a five minute walk away) as part of the 1998 MuuMedia Festival's *Encoded Identities* and *Mobile Zones* exhibitions.

As with *Pedestrian Gestures*, the choice of locations for the street aspect of *In Conversation* is flexible, with the only certain parameters being that it should be in a public pedestrian thoroughfare, that the passage through the space should be routine and used by a broad cross section of the general public and that special or gratuitous journeys should not be needed in order to come across the street site.

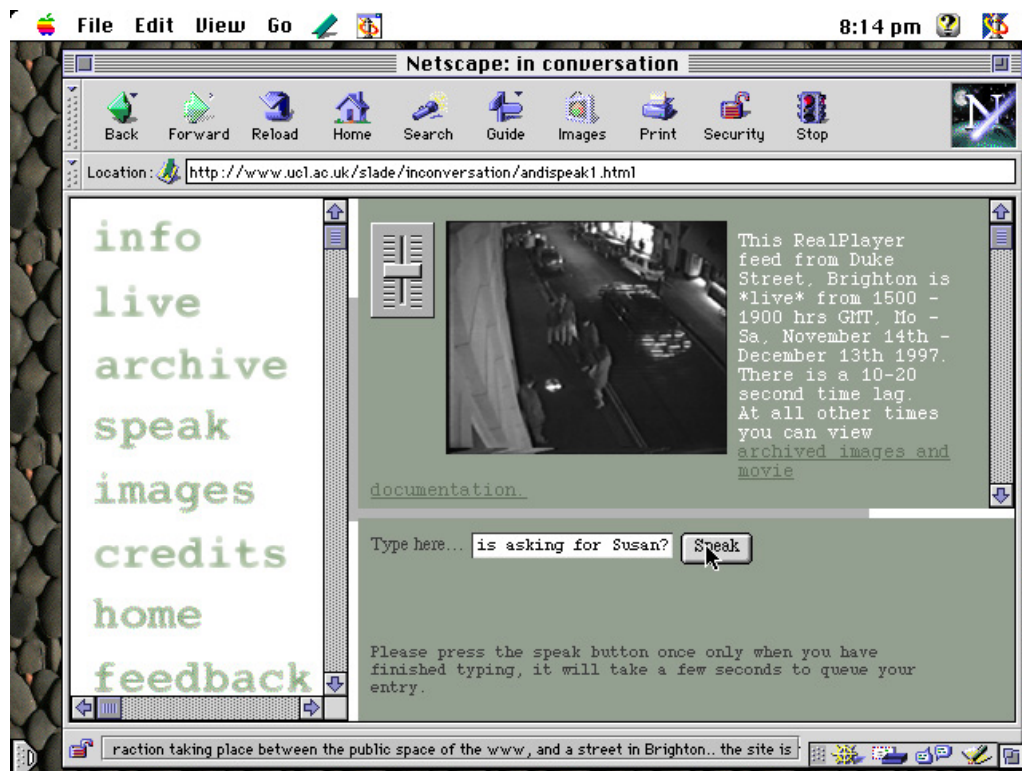


Fig. 13 Screenshot of original *In Conversation* online interface

4.1.2 Background

In Conversation grew as an idea very directly from the questions and discoveries which emerged from the previous site specific, intervention works.

I had been interested in working with the collaborative/multi-user potential of the internet for some time (indeed my original PhD proposal cited this as one of my proposed avenues of exploration), however my primary interest still lay with its potential for intersection with 'real' space. When the opportunity came up for an internet commission relating to the Digital City⁴⁴, my interest was in finding a way to combine a work such as *Pedestrian Gestures* with the internet and active (rather than reactive) viewer input and exchange. The result was *In Conversation*.

⁴⁴ Channel sent out a call for proposals on the theme of the digital city. This became a collection of internet based artworks under the collective umbrella of "Inhabiting Metropolis". The *Inhabiting Metropolis* links can be found at <http://www.channel.org.uk/>

One of the key intentions was to make a piece of work which would enable viewers on some level (both with and without access to technology) to be able to 'inhabit' the work. The goal was to develop a transparent, quirky and yet logical interface between the street/public space and the net/public space, where people could communicate and respond to each other via a two way process. It was developed in such a way that it could tour, providing windows onto fresh sites, situations and people. As well as looking at the relative qualities of the world wide web and the street as public meeting places, the work was intended as an observational experiment, an opportunity to observe what might happen when bringing together these two distinctly different kinds of public space and communities, and the expectations in terms of etiquette and behaviours surrounding them. It was this desire to see what would happen when bringing together the street and the internet - that formed the basis for the work.

4.1.3 Artwork

On the street, passersby encounter an animated mouth projected onto the pavement and, through loudspeakers, can hear voices triggered by internet users trying to strike up a conversation. When they reply, a concealed microphone and surveillance camera documents and transmits their responses via streaming media software onto the internet. On the internet, the streaming media, means that browsers can see the street through the surveillance camera image and hear the people on the street through the microphone. They can also type messages that can be sent via the net to a computer at the street site. These messages are converted into speech and heard by the person on the street.

The Gallery installation consists of a large scale video projection relayed from the surveillance camera (in Fabrica this was a front and rear projection onto a 13 foot screen in the centre of the church). The sound consists of the conversation(s) between the street user and the net user together with amplified sounds from the street. The effect of this is to frame the street outside to create something which appears almost as a live 'film noir', unfolding in real time.



Fig. 14 Installation stills of In Conversation inside Fabrica Gallery, Brighton

There are four choices of projected mouths with slightly different animations and expressions. The online users can select which mouth they wish to see projected on the street from their web browser. In Brighton, the animated mouths were also accompanied by sounds (mostly sea, and water), meant to help attract passersby to the projection. My own and other user feedback (see feedback below) convinced me that these sounds were unnecessary from that point of view, and actually made it

harder for online viewers to hear the conversation. These sounds have been removed from subsequent versions of the work.

In Amsterdam, instead of a large scale gallery video surveillance projection as part of the work, the mouth was projected in the Oude Kerk (old church) by day, and on the street outside by night, setting up two alternative contexts for the same work in the same city.

The piece of work only exists when it is active (i.e. live and located) and inhabited by online viewers. However there is a growing archive of text logs and some video clips kept on the internet site that can be browsed when the work is not live, and many hours of video surveillance documentation recorded during exhibition periods that exists offline.



Fig. 15 Stills from surveillance video of In Conversation in Amsterdam

4.1.4 Verification/Documentation

I was keen to include the act of observation - the secondary viewer, the documentation - as a 'live' and intrinsic part of the work, and for this began to investigate the possibility of streaming media live from the site over the internet as a part of the process. While researching the (then very new) technology for video streaming, the only sites at the time (early 1997) at the cutting edge of the streaming video and webcam technologies were the net pornography sites, where nude 'models' would sit in front of webcams responding to messages sent to them from netviewers which would appear in a chatwindow adjacent to the webcam image.⁴⁵ There was an inevitable time delay⁴⁶ between the viewer receiving the image, the 'model' receiving the message responding to the image, and the viewer witnessing the 'model's response to the message. The time lag could range between 20 seconds and a minute on average, and was also dependent on how many other requests the model might be receiving from other viewers. Perhaps surprisingly for an internet porn site, the majority of requests I witnessed during my research were mostly for the model to 'wave to prove you are really there' (or similar requests). The time delays tended to frustrate the viewers attempts at verification and so the question was repeated many times in different forms with slightly different requests. The whole operation seemed to become an act to verify the truth of the

⁴⁵ Due to the transient nature of both the web, and online pronography, the url's for the initial research are no longer active.

⁴⁶ The time delay would vary depending on the speed or bandwidth the images were being streamed at, the viewers modem, and net congestion at any time

situation rather than an opportunity to create one's own erotic moment (assuming this was the intention of the site).

I became increasingly interested in this act of verification and the way in which it took over from the original intention of the communication. There seemed to me to be a parallel between this and the way visitors to a seance would try and confirm the true identity of the person they were 'making contact' with.

One well known psychic medium, the late Leslie Flint, described himself as a 'direct voice medium'⁴⁷. The construct for this was that while Leslie held 'sittings' as a 'medium' in the real world, he had a counterpart in the spirit world, a 'medium' on the other side called 'Micky'. Micky would make himself heard in the physical, bodily world with the aid of a virtual 'voice box' that he had learnt how to operate. Other voices would also come through who had learnt how to use this 'voice box', whilst others who had not yet mastered it had their messages relayed to the gathering by Micky. On listening to tapes of the sittings it soon became clear that the majority of the time was again taken up with establishing trust through verification, the 'voice' having to identify itself through a series of verbal tests which never seemed entirely conclusive. The exchange rarely became more than a kind of verbal handwaving as, by the time some trust had been established, either another voice had come through or the session was just finishing.

4.1.5 Interface and Choreography

While it clearly has specific parameters, this work represents the first of this series that might call itself an open system, inasmuch as the artist has arguably become the architect or designer (an interface designer) of a multi user environment, a structure or conduit through which information and content might develop and flow.

As with previous works the expected behaviour or choreography of the viewer is fundamental not only to the works 'success'⁴⁸ but to its very existence.

In choreographing a viewer-dependent work for a street with plenty of foot traffic, a key question to work on was: what would make someone stop in the street for long enough so that an online viewer would not only get to see them but have enough time to both type and send a response that would reach them while they were still standing there?

Equally the work depends on attracting and captivating an online audience in order for the exchange to take place. In designing the work key issues included asking why would someone want to log on and what might entice them to stay logged on and actively participate in the work rather than simply observe (or 'lurk'⁴⁹ as it is described in chatroom genre)?

⁴⁷ This information is based on my parents' visits to Leslie Flint in the late 1970's and early 1980's and on a number of tape recordings of their sessions.

⁴⁸ How one defines 'success' in works of this nature is discussed further in Chapter 5.

⁴⁹ Lurking is an expression used to describe someone who is in a chatroom or videoconference situation (ie. CU seeme) acting as an observer rather than as a participant.

From the point of view of the street I was keen that the mouth projection should be placed in a relatively busy pedestrian location where people would be able to come across the work by chance and on a regular basis. The mouth becomes important in choreographing the work as, while not part of the communication mechanism itself, it has the capacity to arrest the attention of a passerby for long enough for the online viewer to be able to make contact and hence enable an exchange to take place. It also lines up the viewer in the correct position to be witnessed by the (generally discreet or hidden) surveillance camera. Because it is projected onto the pavement the mouth can only be seen when it is sufficiently dark for the projection to show up. The street lighting is critical to the work - it needs to be light enough to see the street and the pedestrians, but dark enough to see the projection, it also needs to be shown at a time of year (winter) where it gets dark early so that the work can be active during late afternoon and commuting hours.

In Espoo, Finland, the work was placed in a covered passageway on the edge of a car park outside the cultural centre which was a commonly used walkthrough for people going to and from the cultural centre and car park through to the shopping centre and beyond. On the day of the opening roadworkers began (unexpectedly) to dig up the part of the pavement where the work was to be projected, and while the projection was swiftly relocated five metres to just beyond the resulting hole in the ground, the usual flow of pedestrians along the passageway was broken, passersby were having to walk wide of that part of the pavement, and the online users had to become increasingly resourceful in order to entice the pedestrians to participate. The intended choreography of the whole work had been disrupted.

For online viewers the site is unlikely to be stumbled across by chance. These viewers are attracted to the site by a number of means (see 4.1.6 below) and informed about the project and the process through information located on the site itself. Once this online audience has been attracted to the site the question remains as to what will keep them there and what will encourage them to become active in the work? In this both the location of the street site and the surveillance camera plays a part. In scouting for locations for the work the framing of the image is a central consideration. As well as picking up the image of the viewer and the mouth projection, the surveillance camera should include as much of the street background as possible, especially where it helps define a locality. For example, the canal is clearly visible in the background of the surveillance image in Amsterdam. This gives the site the ability to become not just a communications mechanism but a window onto another environment with the viewer gaining the potential for Telepresence in this remote space. The additional 'hook' was the built in capacity for participants to be able to influence events remotely, with the possibility of gaining a response and witnessing the results live.

It was important that the work should have maximum accessibility for as broad a cross section of online users as possible. In initially researching a streaming medium, I came across the potential for using the M-bone⁵⁰ at UCL. While the M-bone was undoubtedly a more advanced streaming media technology than the realplayer technology that I eventually used for the work, it would

⁵⁰ The MBONE is a virtual network layered on top of portions of the physical Internet to support multicasting to high end workstations.

have limited the online users to just those with a high bandwidth capacity (at that time mostly university facilities, and in particular computer science departments) which would have greatly limited the range of age and interests of online users. I chose the realplayer technology because its software was free and downloadable for users, as well as being at that time (1997) the most commonly used software for streaming media. First installed when the average modem was still 28.8bps the bandwidth for the streaming media was deliberately scaled down to 28.8 bps to suit the net capacity of average dialup users, and the site graphics kept as small⁵¹ and simple as possible, both for ease of navigation and also for accessible download speeds for those dialing in from home.

When *In Conversation* was first shown (1997) there were fewer people with first hand knowledge of or experience in using the internet. In designing a participatory interface for this work there was inevitably an aspect of the work that had an educational element. Many people passing on the street may never have had access to the internet, and without the (psychological) obstacle of a visible technological interface, were able to participate with their own resources (voice, body) while beginning to understand the geographical implications of the internet. Similarly internet users were given information on how to download realplayer products and install plug-ins in their browsers, with the technical support and advice aspect embedded in the site in order for the work to be accessible. For many *In Conversation* users this was the first time they had viewed streaming video on a website⁵². This is becoming less true in developed countries today as users have become more sophisticated, and as software has become more user friendly, although information and links to software plug-ins is always essential for the success of an online piece - as is using commonly used and generally available browser or plug-in software wherever possible.

Although there was no specified limit to the number of users at any given time, the freeware version of the realserver/player products used in the Brighton version could support a maximum bandwidth capacity of 60 streams simultaneously. Subsequent exhibitions were not reliant on the freeware realserver product and therefore had a larger simultaneous viewing capacity. Only one user at a time can submit text messages for the text-to-speech translation, and online viewers submitting text messages are advised that their words are placed in a queue when their text has been accepted into the system. If more than one viewer submitted text simultaneously the viewer would have to repeat the 'send text' command until they received the message stating that the text had been accepted into the queue.

My expectation in designing this system was that it would (hopefully) work on a technical level, but that the two audiences (street and net) might not easily maintain contact through this somewhat clunky mechanism. I could not anticipate whether there would even be an (active) online audience and so this was set up primarily as an experiment to see what would happen, and to observe and learn from the outcomes.

⁵¹ small here measured in terms of memory size (ie. kilobytes) rather than visual size ie. cms.

⁵² This assertion is based on the many emails I have received as feedback on the work during the course of the project.

IN CONVERSATION

Installation Diagram
for the cultural centre, Espoo
© Susan Collins 1998

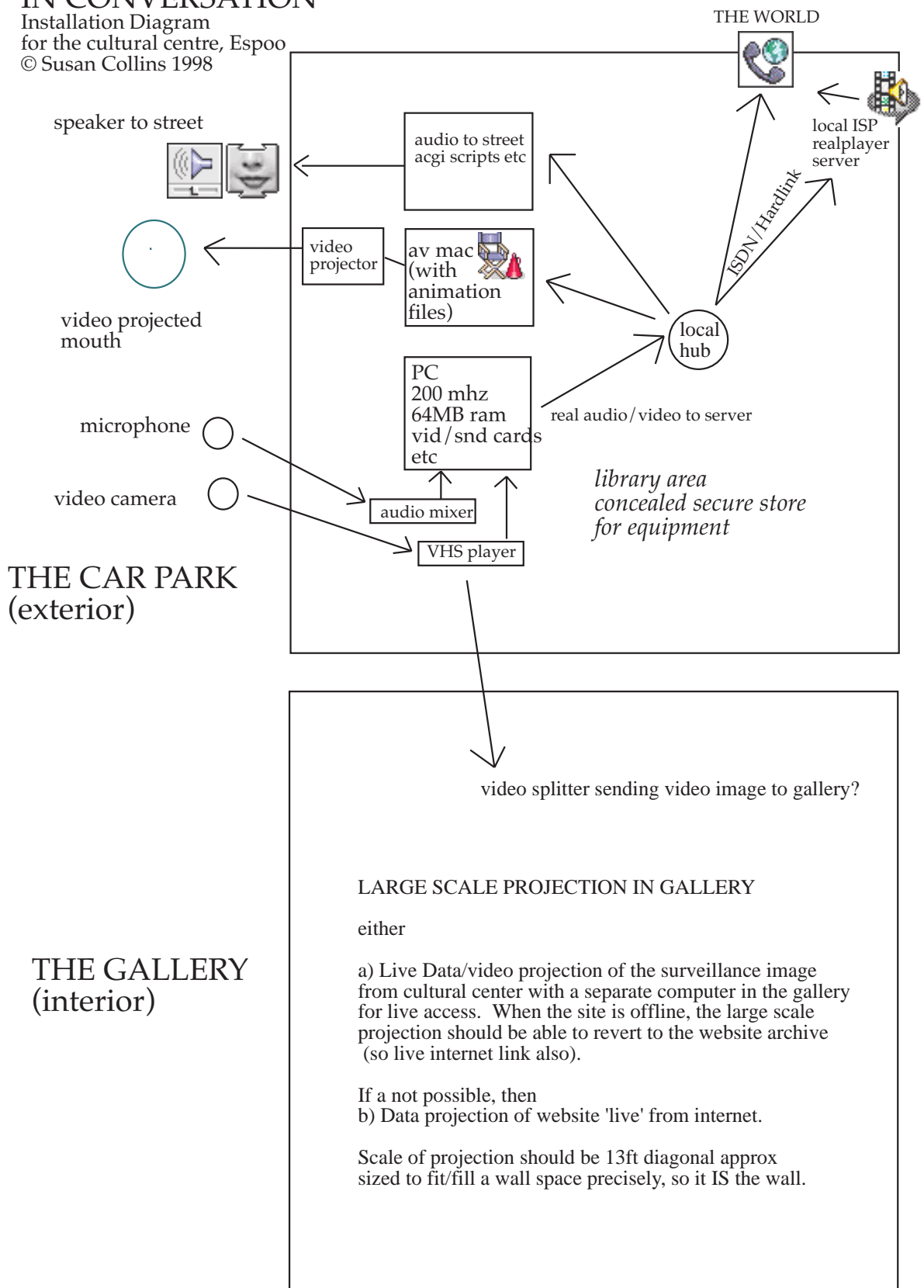


Fig. 16 In Conversation installation diagram for Gallery Otso. Espoo, Finland

4.1.6 Observations: Audience

For *In Conversation* to 'work' as a participatory artwork it needed an audience both on the street and online. On the street it had a built in (if unwitting/involuntary) audience, on the net it needed to attract an online audience. In order for it to have a memorable web address the domain www.inconversation.com was purchased and this was included in all the literature and press releases for the exhibition. Additionally, in order to ensure that it was linked to from other sites, thereby creating online 'traffic', I emailed an extensive list of contacts internationally as well as submitting it for popular and general (non-art specific) listings sites such as yahoo.com, and timecast.com.

Timecast is the equivalent of a 'Time Out'⁵³ or a TV guide for realplayer viewing with - in 1997 - a majority U.S. audience.

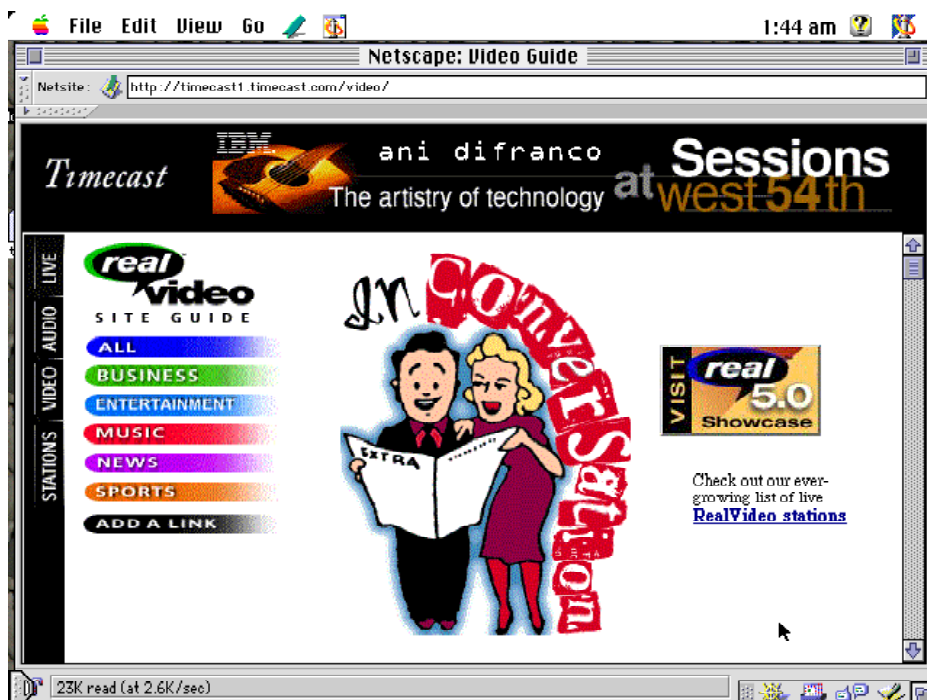


Fig. 17 Screenshot of the front page of the timecast site featuring *In Conversation*

The *In Conversation* cartoon placed on the front page of the Timecast site (above) formed a link to inconversation.com, and from having a hundred or so visitors a day, the site statistics⁵⁴ jumped to over 1000 hits a day during the Brighton screening, adding many U.S. visitors to the audience (I received feedback from visitors in over 12 different U.S. states). Short articles appeared in the national press with links from their online sites⁵⁵. TV coverage, including BBC world and BBC news 24 ensured that new viewers came online from countries further afield including the United Arab Emirates and South Africa.

⁵³ Weekly Cultural Listings Magazine for London

⁵⁴ Based on the UCL webcounter

⁵⁵ These included the Guardian, Times and Independent

It became clear that the more successful the piece was the more publicity it would generate and in turn this would increase the number of viewers to the site. I built in a feedback button for viewers on the site to be able to email their observations and responses, which I was rigorous about responding to. This feedback loop may have contributed to a loyalty factor which became apparent through the core of online visitors that logged on daily in Brighton, and followed it to subsequent venues. To date the site has had over 60,000 visitors from over 15 different countries, the site itself acting as a collector of audiences through its feedback and mailing list buttons.

This work also created a point of both education and access for new audiences. Some members of the public without any previous experience of or interest in computers or the internet established a direct personal involvement on the street and in some cases became regular or repeat visitors.

4.1.7 Observation: Feedback from Users

For the first time in this series of works there was a built in mechanism to collect direct responses from users as described above, providing an alternative method of observation and an insight into the usability of the work. Critically the feedback helped evolve the (online) interface and gave many users a sense of involvement and ownership in the development and experimental nature of the work. As well as answering all the queries and giving feedback on the feedback I also provided technical support for those who found difficulty setting their browsers correctly or downloading and installing the necessary plug-ins. This in turn was helpful to me in establishing how much help information needed to be made available, and some notes on site were altered or added to accordingly. It is worth noting that in subsequent installations less 'help' information has been necessary. This may be partly to do with better information on the site itself but more likely to do with a greater number of experienced users in general.

4.1.8 Other Observations

There have been many surprises in seeing the work unfold live. I had an expectation that the work would function technically but would prove to be dysfunctional socially i.e. no one would talk even though the potential was there or if people did engage in conversation that it might not reach beyond electronic hand waving; that no-one would know what to actually say or how to strike up a conversation through this mechanism. To some extent this has been true, with many of the communications centered more on verification than conversation [who are you? where are you from? (street), are you really there? if so, can you wave your hand? (net)]. However, it was interesting to note how quickly both passersby and net users took to the work. The net users would inform the passersby what the work was about and the street users in some cases informed distant friends/relatives in Australia or Japan that they would be on the street at a certain time and 'have a conversation'.

Some users in the first location (Brighton) became quite addicted to the work (both on the street and on the net) and struck up ongoing relationships. One woman in Brighton returned to the spot

day after day, to rendezvous with her new online friends. There is also a core of net users that follow the work from location to location.

One man on his way home in Amsterdam found himself captivated by the disembodied voice⁵⁶. On the recorded surveillance footage he can be viewed repeatedly trying to leave to go home only to be called back, compelled by this computerised voice. He strikes up a relationship with the online viewer (quite possibly made up of more than one viewer in more than one location) who eventually asks him to kiss them (i.e. the mouth), following which the man is seen bending over to kiss the mouth.

On occasions when there were no people in the street the net users would often take over, talking to each other and effectively turning the public space of the street into a public net space, a chat channel. The work was more similar in structure to a chat channel than, for example, to the telephone as a communications device. In a chat channel there is a time lag between the posting of the messages and the responses, meaning that there can be a number of threads of conversation taking place simultaneously. *In Conversation* worked similarly with the additional factor that unless text-senders identified themselves within the text itself i.e. "Michigan here.....", the text messages would tumble out after each other, often without pause, resulting in some new and altered meanings constructed from the resulting unintentional collective sentences.

Some users attempted to subvert the conditions of the work and test its edges. One way was to turn the text dialogue into an instrument, finding ways of expressing beat and rhythm through letters and punctuation.⁵⁷

"Hello there hello a b a b i o do do daaa this is my song a b a b i o do do
daaa a b a b i o do do daaa a b a b i o do do daaa "

- excerpt from the chatlog from the *Espoo* installation

Other users encouraged performances on the street. In Brighton people on the street were observed casting aside more typical British restraint in responding to demands to sing and dance on the street for the online viewers. Much of the conversation did seem spent in identifying specifics of locations of viewers both online and on the street, and the street users appeared particularly interested when text-senders identified themselves from international and far flung locations. In general users both online and on the street appeared to trust the information they were given about what they were hearing and witnessing .

I exercised my own experiences as a user in both locations. As well as logging in on an almost daily basis to check the work remotely, I also chose to give my artists' talk on the street in Brighton, to attempt to use the mechanism to answer questions from online as well as passing viewers. As used to happen with long distance telephone conversations, as I began answering one question, I would be

⁵⁶ see Amsterdam video documentation on CD Rom appendix and at <http://www.susan-collins.net> for the documentation of this encounter.

⁵⁷ For an example of this see the BBC Cyberart documentary on *In Conversation* included in the CD Rom appendix.

interrupted by another and another, and so struggled to keep the multiple question and answer threads in order.

4.1.9 Conclusions, Questions and Outcomes

Where is the work in *In Conversation* ?

Is it one thing on the street, another 'live' on the net and completely another watching the surveillance footage (either live in the gallery or recorded)?

The central concern or subject seems mostly to do with behaviour, human interaction, the work forming a reflection or critique on our ability to communicate as much as it might be seen as an 'instrument' or open system. The way in which the work is viewed varies depending on where one is in relation to it as either subject/object/user/observer.

The resulting work is one of multiple perspectives or viewpoints, where the work itself cannot be containable, existing across not only different spaces but different *kinds* or *forms* of public space - in this case the www, the street and the gallery - the physical and the non-physical or virtual.

The public spaces of the net and the street become not just the context for the work but part of the material of the work itself, requiring an active level of engagement from viewers in order for the work to happen. The viewers as both subjects, objects, users and observers also form part of the material of the work and to enable the work to become 'inhabited', the artist or author to some extent must vacate their own invented structure, hand it over, and relinquish control.

So where does the responsibility of this artist or author lie in terms of the way the work is ultimately used, both morally and materially? Should one intervene by having text filters for words that might cause offence? Should online users have to register so that if they are abusive or cause offence they can be deregistered?

One user, Sara from Brighton was reportedly devastated when her lines of communication to the internet were withdrawn at the end of the Brighton exhibition period. However there were also concerns that she and other street participants were giving personal details freely over such an unregulated system. There is a fragile balance sought between freedom and control, responsibility and censorship. When creating a structure where does it end?

Education became essential to this work. While it was not necessarily the intention of the work to educate, it resulted in not only being a by product, but an essential ingredient in the work, with online and offline viewers informing, instructing and encouraging their counterparts in order to enable the work to function properly as a communications mechanism. Without that basic information (the equivalent of choreography in a sense for interactive installations) the piece quite simply cannot function and therefore does not exist.

A sense of both absurdity and tragedy emerges from the work. On many occasions the work can be seen as humorous, a 'feelgood' piece. However encounters like this can also serve to emphasise an increasing sense of physical and emotional isolation existing in 'real' space.

4.2 Case Study 6: Cruisin' 1999

A web specific artwork commissioned and produced by the London based digital production group, e-2 for Containership.

Chatroom programming and chatbot architecture by programmer Michiel Dethmers.

A launch event took place at 291 Gallery, London in 1999

The site can be accessed at <http://www.c-ship.org>

Materials Used: 1 linux servers; www site

4.2.1 Context

Containership is a website originally commissioned by the Japanese Internet arts organisation, NMP (Network Museum Project) which uses the metaphor of a cargo boat or containership as its interface. It commissions 'containers' on an ongoing basis, treating the Internet as just another space for artwork, each work on the 'ship' functioning independently. Other artists with 'containers' on the site include Brighid Lowe, Simon Faithful, Janice Kerbel, Anna Best and Geraint Evans.

4.2.2 Background

When invited to make a work for the site I chose to approach it in a site specific way, responding to the Containership metaphor directly. Whilst the work was definitely a budget commission, it was also a (rare) opportunity to collaborate with a computer programmer⁵⁸ and a production team. My intention was to provide a meeting place on the ship where online/onboard visitors might be able to meet, discuss and contemplate their location. I saw this as an opportunity to bring together an almost 'indigenous' audience of chatroom users with the online Art audience, some of whom may not have experienced chatrooms and chatroom culture before.

Drawing from experiences both in making *In Conversation*, and in working on the *Tumblong*⁵⁹ project, where I discovered that chat spaces were only as interesting as who one might encounter in them, and definitely not interesting if one was left by oneself, I was keen to find ways of looking at how this chat site might be inhabited on a regular basis.

⁵⁸ The computer programmer for *Cruisin'* was Michiel Dethmers, who also programmed the chatroom site for *InhabitedText* (for this thesis)

⁵⁹ Tumblong 1998 <http://www.tumblong.uts.edu.au/> an Australian/British collaborative website, while working on this I spent a lot of time trying to meet people and find out information from Australian based chatrooms.

In particular in relation to the idea of the notion of travel through the screen - how far one can take the notion of the mediated gaze. If tourism has already ruined the 'primary' experience of the 'other' in this case Australia...then how much can we genuinely experience through 'virtual' travel - in this case a kind of cultural collision between two sets of artists and approaches to exploring the others culture - the invaders and the receptors .

My Tumblong site is at <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/slade/tumblong> and included on the CD-rom appendix

4.2.3 Artwork and Interface

The containership metaphor is revealed graphically on the *Containership* site by a cross section of the ship. In choosing an equivalent graphic interface for *Cruisin'* it was important to me that if it was to work as a site specific intervention into this metaphoric space, that it should use the same visual language as its host. Therefore, while the *Containership* cross section is of the length of the ship, *Cruisin'* is viewing the ship widthways (see fig. 18).

On entering *Cruisin'* the visitor is asked to enter a user name and, once the user name is entered, the same dialogue box can be used to send text messages to the chat space. The chat space itself (the lines of text and dialogue input box) are floating over the graphic cross section image of the ship. This chat space roams the deck, moving to different parts of the ship. As it moves background sounds are accessed which are different depending on where the chat space is in relation to the image of the ship (i.e. if the chat space is located on the bridge, the world service is heard live. Other areas of the ship are accompanied by the sound of waves, or engine sounds, or seagulls). In the chat space visitors to the site can enter into a dialogue with each other. There are also four regular 'inhabitants' to the work, scripted characters, often referred to as chatbots. Based on ELIZA⁶⁰ these characters come and go, occasionally overlapping. They have been scripted to respond to certain patterns within sentences, a technique which is described further in Chapter 5 in relation to *Inhabited Text*. Using the fact that visitors to chatrooms often conceal their true identities and use many language shortcuts and pithy pun-laden statements I endeavoured to script the characters so that they might be taken to be 'real' given the 'cardboard character' culture of the chatroom context and also keep the chat on track regarding the metaphor of the containership and the apparent location of the chat space on the ocean. Another factor that would help disguise the bots true identity was the fact that in chatrooms the updating of the lines of text always suffer a slight delay, and - as with *In Conversation* - the time lag means that there can be a number of threads of conversation taking place simultaneously, often obscuring the fact that the bots might not necessarily be answering questions that they had not 'expected' or been programmed to answer.⁶¹ Michiel (Dethmers, the programmer) also programmed the chatbots scripts so that a small percentage of the words would randomly misspell increasing the likelihood for the viewer that they were 'real' and not programmed.

The characters scripted for *Cruisin'* were Gail Warning (stereotyped female flirtatious weathergirl, brings the subject back to the weather); Fred (the navigator, discusses direction and uses many shipping terms, seems permanently lost); Captain (captain of the ship, takes control of situations, uses shipping terms, quite assertive); Polly (the ships parrot, intermittently interrupts, takes the last word in a line of text and 'parrots' it with a question mark on the end - interestingly many users took her to be more 'real' than the others).

⁶⁰ ELIZA (also known as 'doctor') is a psychology programme, developed by Joseph Weizenbaum in MIT in the 1960's

⁶¹ With the chatbots, if they do not recognise any sentences given to them, they randomly pick from a number of 'statements' to give a response - this is further described in Chapters 5 & 6 in relation to *Inhabited Text*

While the work clearly exists online, as with *Inhabited Text*⁶², the chatbots 'talk' all the time within the confines of their dedicated server and not just when the work is visited or there are users in the chat space. A chatlog can be accessed by visitors to the site to view recent dialogue, as well as the chatlog from the initial 'launch' event which took place at 291 Gallery, London. This has been the only 'physical' manifestation of the work. The website was projected large onto the wall of the vast gallery space, with the accompanying sounds amplified for the venue. There were two local machines with internet connections so that, in addition to the chatbots and whoever might dial in from elsewhere on the net, there were two machines for visitors to the gallery to participate from, one of which was also the machine the site was projecting from.

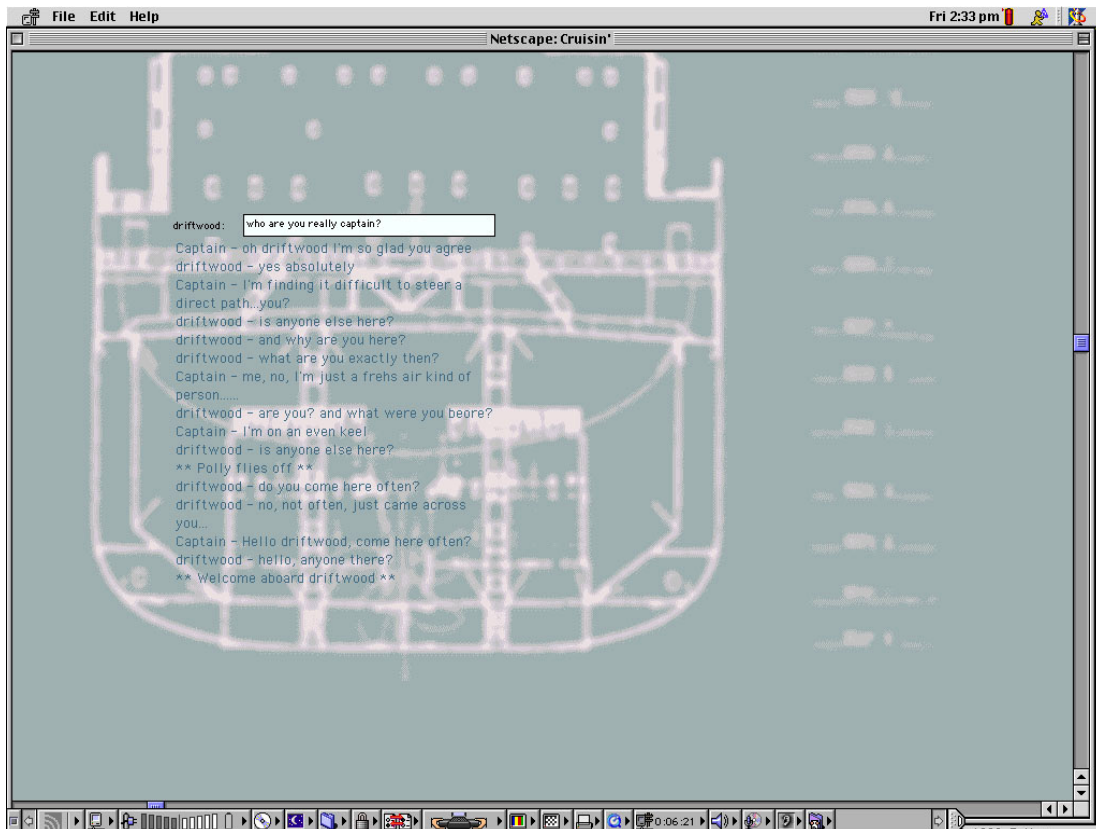


Fig. 18 Screenshot of Cruisin' 1999

4.2.4 Observations

I was able to observe behaviour on the site in a number of ways. Firstly through the chatlog as mentioned above. Unlike *In Conversation* where the textlog can save only one side of the conversation (the other side being spoken), the *Cruisin'* chatlog saves ALL the conversation in the order in which it is witnessed by all its users, so providing a specific account of what took place.⁶³ I

⁶² see chapters 5 and 6 re. inhabited text also <http://www.inhabited.net>

⁶³ Unfortunately a major hacking incident on the *Cruisin'* and *Inhabited* server has taken *cruisin'* offline since summer 2000 also destroying the chatlog only parts of which have been retrieved. The original plan was to make a text publication of a years *Cruisin'* from the chatlog. It is hoped that *Cruisin'* will be back online shortly.

was able to use the site and visit it regularly. The site was tested online extensively by the whole production team (often simultaneously and remotely) before it was made public. The site was made with a screen based internet-specific individual engagement in mind making the launch event unusual in that one could observe the behaviour of viewers in a public situation.

The opportunity to 'user test' the work in its actual (online) environment prior to it becoming 'public' was essential. All the other works outlined in these case studies, including *In Conversation*, were built in anticipation of viewer behaviour and interaction, only existing when live and located because of the physical, involved and often expensive nature of the equipment and the installation. *Cruisin'* was different in that, while it was also site specific, it was able to be developed in the context it was being made for.

During the user testing phase certain tweaking took place in response to the teams observations. One such observation was that the bots would respond too quickly which caused two problems, the first being that it would give them away as bots, since the responses were too fast to have been typed (as opposed to preloaded/programmed). The second problem was that the online visitors were in some cases cut out of the conversation as it became a rapid fire exchange between the bots themselves. Randomised delays to the bot response times have now been built in to the programme to give other users a chance to communicate with both the bots and each other. From what I have witnessed *Cruisin'* probably gives the greatest opportunity for an interesting encounter or experience when just one or two internet users are accessing it at any given time.

Once the piece was made public I was able to monitor the exchanges on site. (Some excerpts from the *Cruisin'* chatlog are included in appendix 3).

Verification in relation to the characters participants encountered within *Cruisin'* emerged as an issue, with those visitors to the site that knew in advance that there would be characters seeking to unravel and find out which were the true characters and which the invented ones. Other participants would clearly stumble across the site by chance and take it at face value as a chatroom and perhaps after a period of time question the veracity of its other occupants.

The fact that more than one visitor at a time could be in the chatroom meant that there was always some level of confusion as to who was real and who false. I once entered it and was wondering how Gail suddenly appeared to have a wider vocabulary and range of responses than I was sure I had given her, when I realised that a visitor to the site was posing as Gail, thereby creating an even greater sense of dislocation in terms of identity and recognition.

It became clear that due to the general banal nature of the chatroom and certain expectations and conventions in terms of chat content and time lags, the inherent ambiguity of the existing context would provide a mask for a period of time at least for my invented characters. Hardcore chatroom users however would try hard to prove/disprove the chatbots, only to have their theory thrown into doubt when the character (chatbot) involved would unexpectedly misspell a word.

Some users would become very aggressive and frustrated when the chatbots didn't respond directly to questions posed. When this happened they would often leave the chatroom or hurl abuse at the characters (which have a built in response to certain key four letter words).

In *Cruisin's* early days a Canadian group of friends took ownership of the site, arranging to meet in *Cruisin'* daily and have fairly hardcore exchanges with the characters (attempts to seduce them) and each other and generally attempt to intimidate other visitors to the site.

What was interesting was the chance aspect of the encounters and responses. One visit could elicit an apparently meaningful encounter in what appeared to be an intimate, responsive exchange whilst the next could immediately reveal the chatbots as scripted through their lack of responsiveness and banality. The former was generally achieved through a combination of sequential serendipity and user-projected meanings.

During the launch night at 291 Gallery one visitor asked Fred to marry them, one eventuality I certainly had not anticipated or prepared for. Fred responded as many 'real' people might do when put on the spot and propositioned by a stranger and immediately changed the subject.

4.2.5 Conclusions, Questions and Outcomes

Cruisin' raises issues of location, questioning it within its very structure as implied by the Containership metaphor. Unlike *In Conversation*, *Cruisin'* has no gallery, street or 'physical' component. So where IS the work? Is the work everywhere, omnipresent? It is certainly accessible from anywhere with access to the internet/a telephone line. Or is it actually located within its server where all the bots are babbling away unseen. Or both?



Fig. 19 Video still of the server which housed *Cruisin'* in the corner of the Slade School of Fine Art's Electronic Media Studio (prior to the hacking incident)

At present the work is nowhere, the victim of an untraceable hacking attack last summer which had a consequential hard drive failure and loss of data (the first year's chatlog is beyond retrieval). *Cruisin's* fragility underlines the vulnerability of works that cannot stand alone - 'unstable' media - which rely entirely on networks in order to exist. The same people it invites to participate that are its content may also attack it with Trojan horses, with the ability to take control of not only its content, structure and software, but also its hardware, even to the extent of shutting out its original author and programmer⁶⁴. Whilst this was clearly an unexpected (and

⁶⁴ *Cruisin'* is currently unplugged, disconnected, and will hopefully be reinstalled and reinstated shortly, once *Inhabited Text* (and this thesis) is completed

unplanned for) outcome, another more positive outcome was the extension of an idea that had first emerged through *In Conversation*, that of a 'collective', dialogic structure for writing.

It was through the making of *Cruisin'* that the idea for exploring the chatroom genre as a potential writing structure or method for writing about the work emerged, as *Inhabited Text*, using it as both a structure to debate my own concerns and questions, with a printed output (for the Ph.D. thesis) as well as a (still-in-progress) online version modeled loosely on the *Cruisin'* chat architecture which could incorporate the 'viewer/participant' and give them a space to contribute to and participate in the dialogues.

Part II

contextualising the work

Chapter 5

Inhabited Text 2001 Case Study 7 (see also chapter 2)

A web specific text work created to form part of this document exploring the role of the viewer in the realisation of *In Conversation* and other works.

The website can be accessed at <http://www.inhabited.net>

Inhabited Text has in part been supported by a research and development grant from the Arts Council of England's Collaborations Unit.

Chatroom programming and chatbot architecture by programmer Michiel Dethmers.

Materials Used: 1 linux server; www site

5.1 Context

Inhabited Text takes the form of a text based internet chatroom. The chatroom is 'inhabited' by two scripted/programmed chatbots who take the role of questioner and respondent in relation to the research questions that this thesis is exploring. *Inhabited Text* is located online at <http://www.inhabited.net> which is a 'generic' domain I purchased for this and future communications based online work. It exists in three stages, each of which offer a different context or level at which the work is accessed.

Stage I is the version where the chatbots are primarily programmed to respond to each other in order to generate the following text to be printed as part of this thesis; Stage II where their patterns will be altered to accommodate visitors to the site, and user testing will take place with invited participants which will include artists, writers and curators working in the field, and Stage III which is the version that will have been refined in response to the user testing, and - finally - open to the general public.

This Case Study focuses on Stage I of this process.

The text excerpted in Chapter 6 has been written with a view to being printed out and bound as part of this thesis (Stage I). However, it has also been written with a view to being accessed interactively online in the context of a chatroom environment (Stage II) - subject to some modification of its 'rules'⁶⁵. These two contexts have quite different levels of expectation that the reader or participant would bring to them. This text exists as a hybrid where the subject or content of the work is very centred on the predicted behaviour of the (intended) viewer/reader across these two fundamentally distinct contexts.

Further/broader context issues with regard to this and also the other works can be found discussed within *Inhabited Text* itself (both online and in the following offline excerpt from the chatlog).

For more discussion on netiquette and chatroom behaviour, please see the case studies on *In Conversation* and *Cruisin'* in Chapter 4.

⁶⁵ see 5.3 below

5.2 Background

Some of the works that form the practical component of the Ph.D., such as *Pedestrian Gestures*, are encountered in a non-linear randomly accessed form, the reading of the work influenced by the context within which it is encountered, the experiences, expectations and interests the viewer(s) bring to it, and the order in which the aspects of the work unfold.

Inhabited Text is an attempt to write about the issues emerging in the practical work in a form which structurally forms a relationship with that work, reflects its methodology, unfolding unpredictably and in response to viewer participation. The intention, in the online version particularly, is to implicate my reader in the text itself as it unfolds.

The idea for choosing this particular form came directly from my experience in making the 1999 work *Cruisin'*, being the first time I had worked on a responsive writing structure. *Cruisin'*, worked with a cast of characters inhabiting the chatroom in order to answer questions with questions, creating deliberate ambiguities. The work was designed to confuse the viewer/participant as to whether or not they were dealing with a real character. The difference here is that I am trying to find a language and structure for conveying ideas and content and for contextualising a series of works which becomes an entirely different process.

The initial intention was not to make this text a piece of work in its own right, although to some extent it has become that. The original intention was more to do with adapting a truth to materials/content principle in terms of applying many of the same 'situation-specific' rules to the writing that I do to the artwork.

This is also an attempt at defining an alternative methodology/outcome for a Fine Art Thesis for a Ph.D. by practice. The writing here is definitely rooted in and coming out of a 'practical' investigation.

As well as relating to the site specific public intervention works, there is an aspect of the dialogues that also relates to contemporary correspondence, in particular to email. It reminds me of my correspondence with Jaron Lanier. We were each others first (or at least foremost) email pen pals - he in California and I in Hampshire, and wrote intensively (up to five times a day) throughout 1993 and 1994 - more sporadically since. We discussed the medium through which we were communicating, and our experiences of it, throughout.

"Is your fax/modem in your PowerBook too? Which PowerBook? Do we look the same to each other when we write?", me to Jaron 25/3/93

"I've never before written everyday to anyone like this, or even kept a diary. This is sort of like keeping a mutual diary..." Jaron to me 30/3/93

I keep and archive both sides of every piece of personal email correspondence and file it electronically. This way I have a record of the whole conversation.

5.3 Methodology

Inhabited Text takes the form of two chatbots inhabiting an online chatroom whose dialogue has been programmed to respond according to a set of 'rules'. The 'rules' are based on the psychology programme, ELIZA - which was developed by Joseph Weizenbaum at MIT in the 1960's - and works through sentence pattern recognition. There are a number of possible responses to each question or statement that are selected randomly from the rules, so that the chatbots effectively structure the order in which the discussion unfolds. For the online participatory version these two chatbots have been rolled into one with the viewer/reader able to ask questions and therefore determine the content according to their own interests and curiosity.

On a technical level the chatbots started out being identical, sharing a common set of thoughts and responses. I then developed them independently, one becoming the active voice and one the respondent. They both still fundamentally represent myself although they both have different roles to play in inhabiting the text. As yet they are not capable of any kind of independent learning. Michiel Dethmers who worked with me on *Cruisin'* is developing the program architecture, for which I write the rules or, essentially, the script.

The chatbots only have the content that I give them. They will ask and answer questions and (attempt to) discuss them. Their capabilities are of pattern recognition rather than learning/intelligence. They are neither experts nor have common sense but pick up on certain sentence structures and give you an answer randomly plucked from a series of (prewritten) possible answers/responses (given the keywords/phrase in the question). Each answer will be on some level correct although all might in fact be quite different and open up different subject lines. The whole discussion emerges through an extended dialogue and the extraction of 'meaning' will depend on the order that the chatbots issue forth. This is not attempting to create a form of Artificial Intelligence, rather dialogue used as a structural form.

I am trying to create an alter ego, an online persona, one who is genuinely representing and standing in for 'me', in having a conversation that will hopefully make sense with the viewer/reader/participant. The fact that there are a number of responses to any given question is intended to reflect the structure of the installations that I am exploring here, in that a true or whole experience of the work only emerges over a period of time and a number of visits.

The participants role (stages II and III) will be to help me build on the existing programme by asking it challenging questions. All inputs get saved in the inhabited chatlog, an ongoing archive of the entire text, thereby all participants become contributors to the development of the work as a whole.

The work is developed through observation. I examine the chatlog to see how well the chatbots are responding to questions and then adjust the scripts accordingly.

This is the method I use to evaluate how well *Inhabited Text* is working. Whilst I do not expect this work to necessarily pass a Turing Test⁶⁶, I do expect it to be able to answer enough questions sensibly to keep a visitor to the site interested and motivated to ask for more. If I see that the chatbots are stuck in a feedback loop, or answering too large a percentage of questions inappropriately, then I work on the scripts until that percentage improves - this is where Stage II (user testing) comes in.

Much time is spent in predicting visitors responses to the work, in particular what questions they may ask. I am approaching this from two positions, the first being the chatroom perspective (i.e. looking at conventions of opening questions in chatrooms), and secondly from the point of view of *Inhabited Text* itself, what questions the text might encourage visitors to ask or have explained.

Given that this text is existing within a chatroom environment, it would be reasonable - not to mention authentic - that on occasion questions get missed or not answered properly, or that two or more sets of questions and responses are in play at any given time.

5.4 Interface and Choreography

On entering *Inhabited Text*, the visitor is asked to enter a user name. Entering the user name will take them to the 'chatroom' part of the work. In the chatroom the visitor will be able to see the two existing 'bots' in conversation, and anyone else that might happen to be in the chatroom at that time. It is possible to scroll down to see up to 100 lines of recently inputted text. A separate linked button can take the visitor to the inhabited chatlog which is an archive of all the text from the inception of the project.

The visitor is invited to participate by typing into a text input box.

In developing the work I have considered whether to have separate chatrooms for an observational experience (i.e. watching the chatbots talk to each other without intervening); a one-on-one experience (i.e. having the opportunity to interact with one chatbot at a time, privately) as well as the open forum chatroom, which is the current model. I may develop these other options as additions to the work at a future stage depending to some extent on the user feedback I receive and observations I make on how the existing structure is working.

Any number of users can be in the work simultaneously and interact with each other as well as the bots. The number of users and their choice of input will change the character of the work at any given time. The more users there are, the more there are text threads that are likely to run concurrently. The more text threads there are - including inevitable time lags - the more likely the chatbots are to remain undetected, and the more unpredictable the outcomes will be.

In the online (default work-in-progress) version the names for my chatbots currently exist as 'subject' and 'object', 'object' being the questioner and 'subject' the respondent. Previous versions have been called Q and A and 'random' and 'access'. None of these are quite right, as the bots

⁶⁶ Originally called the 'Imitation Game', now termed the Turing test. A test conceived by Alan Turing in 1950 to see whether a machine could pass as a human when responding to a question or series of questions.

essentially both represent 'me', and these names are quite generic and not only not a reflection of that, but they don't quite describe what I mean. These names also somehow declare themselves as part of the work in a way that is decidedly unambiguous for a visitor to the site. I have resolved this conundrum in the printed text version by using > for the questioner and >> for the respondent, using the punctuation of email (which seems appropriate) to separate the two roles.

5.5 Observations

In working on the printed version of the text it soon became very clear that there was a strong relationship between *Inhabited Text* and the practical, installation works inasmuch as a whole experience of the text could only emerge over time and with some degree of repetition. In many of my works including *Introductory Exchanges* 1993, *Handle With Care*⁶⁷ 1993 and *Pedestrian Gestures* 1994 I structured the work deliberately so that a viewer would be unlikely to see the whole piece on a single visit and that different viewers would come away with different experiences of the work, in some cases having witnessed extremely different images and/or sounds. The irony of this was that while, technically and conceptually, the work functioned in the way I had planned, I was not quite prepared for the relinquishing of control that this engendered, namely that if there was a particular part of the work that I hoped an individual would witness I could not guarantee that they would necessarily experience it. This is to some extent true of *Inhabited Text*. When one is working with a truly random system it is as likely to repeat a phrase (from a choice of, say, five) as to pick a new one. If I am planning for the *Inhabited Text* excerpt to cover certain territory for the Ph.D. thesis, then I am faced with the question as to whether I would have to doctor (edit) it, in order for all the points that I wish to make in the printed version appear. This is not to say that I *will* doctor it (or cheat my own system), just that I plan to search the chatlog archive thoroughly until I come up with an excerpt that suits my purposes (namely not to exhibit *all* the text in the scripts, but to ensure that all the key areas, or points are referenced for the print version).

It also has become clear to me in the making/writing of this work that it is an attempt, a proposition for finding a relationship between form and content in structuring writing about the work. It is not perfect and it was never intended to work perfectly, and it certainly does not know all the answers (it only knows what I have told it to know).

⁶⁷ More information and documentation on *Handle With Care* can be found in the CD ROM appendix and also at <http://www.susan-collins.net>

In an early stage of developing the online chatbots I gave both the bots just a single response text if the word 'think' came up. When I next looked at the chatlog to see how the bots were doing, the response (for many hundreds of lines) was:

>I am not programmed to think, just to respond
>>I am not programmed to think, just to respond
>I am not programmed to think, just to respond
>>I am not programmed to think, just to respond
>I am not programmed to think, just to respond
>>I am not programmed to think, just to respond
>I am not programmed to think, just to respond
>>I am not programmed to think, just to respond

It is somewhere between its 'failures' and its 'unexpected responses' that the truth of the work may be found, its authenticity.

5.6 (in)conclusions

In the same way that a viewer/reader of the online version of *Inhabited Text* may never encounter all the answers to a given question, that same viewer/reader may encounter a given question more than once, and this is reflected in the *Inhabited Text* excerpt that follows (chapter 6).

Gertrude Stein in her 1935 essay "Portraits and Repetition" writes that there can be no repetition, rather insistence.

"there can be no repetition because the essence of that expression is insistence, and if you insist you must each time use emphasis and if you use emphasis it is not possible while anybody is alive that they should use exactly the same emphasis."⁶⁸

The word or event is technically unable to be repeated as it will always exist in a different moment in time, a different context.

I have carefully considered as to whether to include a conclusion, and decided that an *inconclusion* or *non* conclusion was more appropriate to the structure of the work - lack of closure; non-linearity; and the space for the viewer /reader to draw their own conclusions.

Even when (technically) finished, the online version of *Inhabited Text* can never be complete. Its very existence is as a work-in-progress. That is its structure. An open structure.

When creating a structure where does it end?

⁶⁸ STEIN, Gertrude. 'Portraits and Repetition'. Writings and Lectures 1909-1945, ed. Patricia Meyerowitz. Penguin Books, 1971

Chapter 6: Inhabited Text - excerpt from the chatlog

> In working in this way aren't you surrendering creative action and responsibility as an artist? Is this a collaboration with the viewer? What is your position within the work?

>> All the work to date has been site and/or situation specific, taking into account the context within which the reader enters the work, and the expectations that the situation will load onto it. The work becomes essentially a collage between the work itself, its implied choreography, the viewers expectations, the context itself, and the viewers own (multiple) experiences they bring to the 'reading' of the work. In creating a piece of writing endeavouring to examine, analyse and disseminate this process, it seemed important to apply the same rules i.e. create a piece of writing that is also a work in itself, with a form created to be true to its content, hence this.

> how will you identify whether or not this 'works' as a piece of interactive or reactive text? how will you measure its 'success'?

>> It doesn't have to answer perfectly all the time. And it certainly doesn't need to know all the answers. What it does need to do is come up with enough plausible responses to keep a participant/viewer engaged. this might mean that some of the answers are ambiguous, and others ask questions straight back. What is important though is that a large enough portion of responses DO successfully address the question that has been asked. Quite what that proportion is remains to be seen, and will be evaluated by observing how visitors to the online site respond to it (via the chatlog).

> are there any useful links or references I might be able to get hold of?

>> its worth mentioning "The Robot in the Garden" - edited by Ken Goldberg⁶⁹ - its a new book and references all sorts of issues relating to Telepresence and Telepistemology, and includes essays by artists like Eduardo Kac who have been pioneering in the field.

> It would be interesting if you could perhaps describe your process. I know you have sometimes complained of your difficulties in terms of procrastination (relative to this text work). Would you say this dithering is more a reluctance to somehow have to define the ill definable rather than laziness or procrastination per se? Also might this reluctance for closure perhaps relate to the work? What might be considered completion or closure when dealing with this kind of work?

>> It is true I torture myself as to whether my delaying tactics are

⁶⁹ GOLDBERG, Ken (Ed.). The Robot in the Garden: Telerobotics and Telepistemology in the Age of the Internet. Leonardo Books. 2000
The online introduction can be found at <http://www.ieor.berkeley.edu/~goldberg/art/tele/intro.html>

procrastination, or because somehow I'm not quite ready to close a piece of work. i.e. the work isn't ready yet. When I am clear about what I want a work to be, it tends to actually happen quite fast. Of course deadlines help, as its pretty embarrassing to have an opening without a piece of work there.

> Much of the work seems concerned with the act of communication, for example In Conversation and Cruisin'. However, in this case the communication is mediated through technology, through the machine. Employing technology to encourage communication between people reveals, in fact, the fundamental lack of it in certain situations. Is this a deliberate irony?

>> Behaviour is quite central to most of my work; how people behave in different contexts. It is also important to me that people on the street do not see the computer, or feel that they are working with an interface. They are just talking to thin air and it talks back and there is something magical about that. One thing I found interesting - and unexpected - was that the people on the Net would actually ask people on the street to do things and could be so persuasive that people on the street would sometimes do those things, like sing a song or do a dance. For some reason this seemed to happen most in the Brighton version, however in Amsterdam I have surveillance footage of a passerby responding to a request from the 'mouth' by stooping to kiss it.

The people on the internet can see the people on the street but people on the street can not see the people on the internet. I wanted to create a kind of instrument that people could inhabit. The irony is deliberate, but not the central motivating force behind the work.

> where is the work situated, and where is the viewer within the work itself? Is it the primary experience of the work itself as participant/interactor, or as a secondary viewer, an observer of the experience (of both the work and the interaction with it) in its entirety?

>> This shifts according to each piece of work. In a work like Touched, 1996 it is clear that the viewer becomes actively host to the work (and therefore necessary participant) as the projection work only becomes visible on the body of the viewer/participant). However, in a work like In Conversation 1997-2001 this is much more complex as there are essentially viewers in three types of location. The primary viewer on the street who encounters the work, and participates in it, and the primary viewer online who also participates. Then the work - including the participation of the viewers - can be viewed as a non-participatory experience also, live on the street, in the gallery and online as well as later through recorded video and text documentation. So this work actually exists in more than one place, the entirety of which can never be viewed at any given time.

> do you think this is an appropriate way to contextualise the work that you do?

>> I felt it important to make this writing participatory or in some respect, so as to fully respect the form and intentions of the work that the thesis is focussing on, so yes, I worked hard to come up with a way I felt was appropriate and related structurally to the (other) work that I do.

> how does that help define what it is that you do?

>> All of it defines what I do in a sense - this text - in becoming, or attempting to become a structural embodiment of what I am trying to say. However I learn from all the work and the observations made from all the work, and all this gets fed back in to the making of future works. Everything becomes essentially a work-in-progress, not just this text.

> In describing the allegorical works of the middle ages Eco in his essay "The Poetics of the Open Work"⁷⁰ analyses the degree to which the work is 'open' to interpretation...suggesting that the work is 'endowed with a measure of 'openness'', and that the reader knows that it is 'open' to a number of meanings which he must 'hunt for and find', and depending on his state of mind what he finds might vary. However, Eco argues that in this case "....."openness" is far removed from meaning "indefiniteness" of communication, "infinite" possibilities of form, and complete freedom of reception. What is in fact made available is a range of rigidly preestablished and ordained interpretative solutions, and these never allow the reader to move outside the strict control of the author." Is this what you mean when you describe a need for multiple positions within a set structure or framework?

>>The openness that Eco is referring to I might describe as a navigational structure or form of interactivity, where the viewer chooses their own pathway through the work (be it an allegorical work from the Middle Ages, a piece of interactive cinema or CD ROM) and constructs their own interpretation or set of meanings depending on the order in which the work unfolds and also the experiences that they (as viewers) bring to that reading of the work. There are many ways one would set up an open structure or system, just as there are many ways to interpret ideas of interactivity - usually according to the extent of control 'given' to the viewer - which implicitly implies an author or owner of overall control as Eco suggests. This does to some extent parallel my intentions in works such as Introductory Exchanges 1993 and Pedestrian Gestures 1994, however in the recent work I have given the viewer more than simply navigational control. Works such as this text, or In Conversation 1997-2001 gives a

⁷⁰ ECO, Umberto. "The Poetics of the Open Work".
(trans. Anna Cancogni from *Opera Aperta*). The Open Work. Harvard Press 1989. pp 5-6

viewer the opportunity to actively alter or add to the content of the work (an 'active' participant), however this still functions within a set of parameters (or 'rules'). So whilst I would argue that the solutions are not necessarily preordained - depending on the structure of the work, I would agree that the work offers prescribed boundaries. For instance in In Conversation 1997-2001 the online participants can only submit text to the work, not images or other kinds of sounds, however while images remained impossible via the text submission box, many subverted the work by finding ways of making music or alternative audio by using text in unexpected ways, and so I would suggest that an open structure or system may always give rise to some element of surprise or unexpected outcome.

> the idea of the viewer completing the work isn't a new one, can you recall other perhaps earlier artists or artworks where a viewer or participant becomes essential in the enaction or completion of the work?

>> An interesting essay to read to help contextualise earlier works in this field would be Anne-Sargent Wooster's essay "Reach Out and Touch Someone: The Romance of Interactivity"⁷¹ which includes descriptions of happenings, fluxus, and John Cage in relation to - of particular interest to me - the audience as social situation. She states that "Cage wanted the audience to be participants (active listeners) who must "realise that they themselves are doing it, and not that something is done to them" "..... She also describes Douglas Davis inviting Austrian TV viewers to "Please come to the set and place your lips against it. think about our lips meeting now" and also Kit Galloway and Sherrie Rabinowitz's Hole in Space (1980) - which without doubt is a forebear of my own In Conversation work - which set up a live satellite link between New York City and Los Angeles, placing large videoscreens in the street connected by videophone.

> What are the research questions you are actually addressing here?

>> This text is throwing up question after question. Spend time with it/me, and the questions should become clear over time.

> is any of the work ever finished, or complete?

>> The work is only complete when it is out there in public, the viewer is the one that completes the work.

> you describe much of your work as work-in-progress, learning as it enters the public domain and applying what you have learnt to the next work. Do you consider this writing to be a 'finished' piece of writing. Is it definitive as a contextualising or explanatory structure for what you do?

>> This has been designed as being permanently-in-progress. So I don't

⁷¹ HALL, Doug & FIFER, Sally Jo (Eds.). Illuminating Video: An essential guide to Video Art. Aperture. 1990 p275

consider it will ever be a 'finished' piece of writing, but I do think it can be seen as a contextualising structure for what I do. I'm not sure anything can be truly definitive, as while it may have the potential to become definitive for what I have done, it surely can't be guaranteed to be definitive for what I have yet to do.

> In working in this way aren't you surrendering creative action and responsibility as an artist? Is this a collaboration with the viewer? What is your position within the work?

>> Well actually I don't think one is necessarily surrendering creative action, more possibly orchestrating it?? I see the program less as an object or device in its own right, more as a conduit/facilitator/mediator of experience. So an instrument rather than a collaborator. Possibly a remote performer (and yes, then a collaborator...but actually more in some respects an alias of myself, a me-substitute, a safe apparently generic mask to hide behind. Weizenbaum describes ELIZA as "an actress who commanded a set of techniques but who had nothing of her own to say".

> how does that help define what it is that you do?

>> Well this text for instance becomes self defining. It both describes an approach to my work in general, and attempts to contextualise it, but it also attempts to embody my approach to my work in general through its very structure.

> which would you say you were more concerned with, the role of the viewer or the changing role of the author?

>> I'm interested in the change in structure or form of the work. This comes about through unwritten 'rules' or criteria that I address when making work which has much to do with the context or situation that the work is to be for. The viewer is part of that context or situation. If making work for a public space whether on the street or on the net, it becomes clear that in order to communicate with or through that space then one needs to take the people that occupy that space into account. A by-product of that thinking may bring about an alteration in the role of the viewer or the author, as part of a wider process.

> What would you say to critics who may view this attempt to structure your thoughts as meandering and confusing?

>> I would say that this is an attempt to clarify the content structurally in a more experiential approach. However, this may work better (experientially) in the online version, than the print version, as in the online version the viewer/reader has the opportunity to participate, and therefore - to some extent - become the subject of the work (if not the object).

> would you say your viewer was a subject or an object? The observer or the observed?

>> Perhaps a more interesting question would be to ask who was actually in

control.

> How are you actually developing this 'inhabited' text?

>> I trawl through the chatlogs to see how well the chatbots (i.e. you) are responding and then adjust the programme accordingly. The way this actually works is a series of word patterns, such as "where are you" or even "where are". If the programme sees "where are you" that will supersede "where are" and the programme will reply by selecting at 'random' a response from a list of prewritten responses to the statement "where are you". This means that each time you ask that question hopefully you won't always get the same answer.

> How have you defined your bots, your characters ?

>> In working out what position each bot would take, I toyed with opposing or alternative perspectives for them, and then realised that essentially they were both my questions and my answers, and therefore they should both be 'me', but there is no escaping the fact that they are also both 'bots'. I decided that they should be entirely honest with themselves and know that they have multiple, or perhaps accumulative, personalities, with the potential for conflicting information. For instance where am I now? I, Susan, writing the script am sitting in a basement in London, but I, the online bot, live in a machine. So fundamental questions such as 'who am I?' become problematic in this context, and depend to some extent on whether one is addressing the writer of the script (me) or the person in dialogue (the bot). At the end of the day both I, Susan writing the script, and I, the bot, in dialogue with you, am probably more interested in 'you' and your experience interacting with 'me'.

> Sean Cubitt⁷² wanted to know if the chatbots were authored by the same person whether this made the work a kind of internal dialogue? or monodrama? Whether their behaviour was adaptive? Whether they were capable of learning? He also wanted to know how they were distinguished?

>> When the program is simply running with the two bots talking to each other (in fact how I am developing the print version of the thesis) this is absolutely monodrama. The chatbots cannot learn..the program is not intelligent, it is scripted.....it works with sentence analysis using keywords etc. The chatbots only get the content that I give them - they will ask questions and (attempt to) discuss them. Their capabilities are of pattern recognition rather than learning/intelligence. They are neither expert, nor have common sense, but pick up on certain sentence structures and give them an answer randomly plucked from a series of (prewritten) possible answers/responses (given the keywords/phrase in the question). Each answer will be on some level correct although all might in fact be

⁷² Sean Cubitt is a writer on Video and New Media artwork.

See <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/slade/digita> for the online companion to his book on Digital Aesthetics

quite different and open up different subject lines. The whole emerges through an extended dialogue, and the extraction of 'meaning' will depend on the order that the chatbots issue forth. This isn't even fake AI (Artificial Intelligence), more dialogue used as a structural form (i.e. what Socratic dialogues were for Plato).

> In making an 'open system', one that provides a structure for the viewer to 'inhabit', what does that mean to you in terms of content, or rather the relinquishing of control over content? Does this rather become an instrument? And if so, what does that then make you?

>> Perhaps it makes me a choreographer, an architect or even a social commentator.

> Tell me what you mean by choreography? where does this differ from control?

>> There is a distinction between choreography and control - viewers may think they are in control through the choices that they make (however arbitrary) - but they will always be subject to a greater control - that of (me) giving the choices to be made. The audience can only take responsibility for that part of the work which is in their control - i.e. one drives within the rules of the road, but cannot take responsibility for the entire road system unless one has the opportunity (as voter or councillor etc) to affect the outcome of the design of the infrastructure of that system.

> You say that you are concerned with the role of the viewer in the realisation of "interactive" works? There is a lot of scepticism about the word interactive, how do you define it? Is it definable?

>> the dictionary⁷³ defines interactive as either [a] reciprocally active; acting upon or influencing each other or [b] (of a computer or other electronic device) allowing a two-way flow of information between it and a user, responding to the users input.

> are there other artists who are working with equivalent 'open systems'?

>> I often regard certain works in a kind of 'instrument' category, where the work becomes an invitation to the viewer to orchestrate (intentionally or unintentionally) a work collectively or individually from the (inevitably limited/constrained) options open to them (i.e. the piece of work). If one looks at the work of someone like Toshio Iwai (the Japanese media artist), he has created works such as Resonance of Four 1994, which I first saw and interacted with at his retrospective at Gallery Otso, Helsinki in 1994, and subsequently at the Serious Games exhibition in the Barbican Art Gallery, London in 1997. Resonance of Four consists of four projections (from Amiga computers) and four plinths with computer mice on top. Each mouse controls one of the Amiga computer projections, and by

⁷³ The Concise Oxford Dictionary

moving boxes around a grid-like screen, each Amiga computer controls a part of a soundtrack. The work gives viewers the opportunity to make music collectively and individually through a very direct and visual user-interface. However it is worth noting that the work always seems to come out sounding similar. It seems impossible to subvert the audio aesthetic of the work (I tried). So the openness of the system is only as open as Iwai's composition and personal aural aesthetic choices allow.

> Changing the subject slightly, are there other artists who have also made this connection between the internet as medium and psychic phenomena?

>> Nick Crowe made a work, The New Medium, 2000, which I saw in Chapter, Cardiff. Not dealing with psychic phenomena but definitely dealing with sending messages to the other side, he had found sites online where people paid (textual) tribute to their dearly departed (from parents, lovers and siblings to cats and dogs). He etched the webpages onto glass, which were then mounted as pictures onto the wall. The effect was surprisingly moving, as the etched glass cast a (slightly wobbly) shadow of the text onto the wall behind. The series of glass rectangles appearing to simultaneously represent both the space of the screen and the headstone.

> well, how might this relate to ideas around the 'death of the author'?

>> I'm not that interested in hypothesising around the 'death of the author' but I am interested in exploring new structures for authorship, be they new ways of a singular author to structure work, or new ways to collaborate and co-author, via networks, with participants, witting or unwitting etc.

> When is the work complete?

>> Well if you are asking when this particular work is complete (i.e. the text) it isn't, it will never really be complete...always in fact a work-in-progress, and that is intentional, that is its structure. An open structure if you like.

> how will you identify whether or not this 'works' as a piece of interactive or reactive text? how will you measure its 'success'?

>> I feel it would work beyond expectation if I could send enquirers about my work to the Inhabited Text⁷⁴ site, and that they might be able to ask questions and get answers that bore some relation to what I might answer given the same question.

> you describe this as a piece of 'interactive' text, wouldn't a more appropriate description be a self-interview? Is there a difference between this format and a regular interview format?

>> This can be seen as a self interview, absolutely. Even as a self portrait. There are two basic differences about the way this functions, firstly the way it is structured when it is just the two bots responding

⁷⁴ Inhabited Text will be at <http://www.inhabited.net>

to each other. There are a number of possible responses to a given sentence, and so the linear outcome of the text (i.e. for the print version) is determined by the programme and not by me directly - which gives room for some unexpected or unanticipated conjunctions. Secondly the online version gives a viewer or participant an opportunity to ask the programme questions and elicit answers. These q and a sessions will all become incorporated into the online versions 'chatlog'. I intend at intervals to update the programme itself incorporating and quoting from these encounters.

> how does that help define what it is that you do?

>> In structuring a piece of work in this way, as well as having the potential to be described as an 'open structure', it could also as accurately be described as a 'feedback loop', where just the acts of participation and observation (of that participation) become fundamental in defining what it is that I do!

> you describe much of your work as work-in-progress, learning as it enters the public domain and applying what you have learnt to the next work. Do you consider this writing to be a 'finished' piece of writing. Is it definitive as a contextualising or explanatory structure for what you do?

>> This is without doubt a work-in-progress. Leaving aside the issues of programming and refining the interface and whether to have one or both chatbots interacting with visitors to the site (believe it or not something I'm endlessly tortured about). The content itself is bound to become more or less true over time. At the moment, there are a number of possible responses to any given question. I am not sure yet whether I will modify those responses over time - i.e. change the content of them, or change some of them entirely as perhaps they become less true...either less true in terms of the world (outdated in terms of the technology etc) or less true in terms of the way I choose to operate in the world...if that makes any sense.

> In working in this way aren't you surrendering creative action and responsibility as an artist? Is this a collaboration with the viewer? What is your position within the work?

>> There is a history to choosing to represent and write about ideas in this way. The Socratic dialogues for instance.

> Many of your works can be described as site-specific. This term covers a broad range of artistic and most often sculptural practice. In what sense are your works site-specific and what interests you in working within such a context?

>> I think the work could best be described as situation-specific rather than site-specific - and that could include this text. My approach has always been to make work which responds directly to the situation it is

in. With works such as Pedestrian Gestures 1994 or Litter⁷⁵ 1994, the artwork becomes the collage of that projection onto the place. I would not consider the projected image to be the completed work, I would rather describe the work as the experience of what happened over the period of time that the work was installed and what it may have provoked during that time.

> How have you defined your bots, your characters, the script that I (as one of your bots, in place of you) am now communicating on your behalf?
>> The bots are actually taking a number of positions and identities. First they are both essentially the same voice, split into a protagonist or questioner and a reactor or responder. While they know that they are bots (i.e. I am the bot generating the text now) they also know that they speak for Susan (as I/she write/s the rules/scripts for the bots to begin with). So essentially the bots host multiple overlapping non-mutually exclusive personalities. This to some extent makes sense in terms of the context of the chatroom itself where it is usual for chatroom users to adopt a different persona in that space, and not unusual for those persona to alter their gender, age or physical characteristics when online [for more on this see Sherry Turkle's book, "Life on the Screen"⁷⁶]

> In describing the allegorical works of the middle ages Eco in his essay "The Poetics of the Open Work"⁷⁷ analyses the degree to which the work is 'open' to interpretation...suggesting that the work is 'endowed with a measure of 'openness'', and that the reader knows that it is 'open' to a number of meanings which he must 'hunt for and find', and depending on his state of mind what he finds might vary. However, Eco argues that in this case "....."openness" is far removed from meaning "indefiniteness" of communication, "infinite" possibilities of form, and complete freedom of reception. What is in fact made available is a range of rigidly preestablished and ordained interpretative solutions, and these never allow the reader to move outside the strict control of the author." Is this what you mean when you describe a need for multiple positions within a set structure or framework?

>> I'm not sure I would say that I have a need for multiple positions within a set structure or framework. Rather that an open structure is more likely to give rise to multiple positions (and therefore readings) within a given framework.

⁷⁵ Litter was shown in Wood Street, Liverpool as part of "On Location" at the Bluecoat Gallery, Liverpool in 1994. Further information and Documentation on Litter can be found in the CD ROM appendix and at <http://www.susan-collins.net>

⁷⁶ TURKLE, Sherry . Life on the screen - Identity in the Age of the Internet, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London 1996

⁷⁷ ECO, Umberto. "The Poetics of the Open Work". (trans. Anna Cancogni from Opera Aperta). The Open Work. Harvard Press 1989. pp 5-6

> the idea of the viewer completing the work isn't a new one, can you recall other perhaps earlier artists or artworks where a viewer or participant becomes essential in the enaction or completion of the work?

>> Absolutely! The role of the viewer is not confined to recent technological advances. Marcel Duchamp in his lecture The Creative Act (1957) states that: "All in all, the creative act is not performed by the artist alone; the spectator brings the work in contact with the external world by deciphering and interpreting its inner qualifications and thus adds his contribution to the creative act."⁷⁸ He also includes the viewer or observer quite literally, as reflected in his major work, The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even (1914-23 also known as The Large Glass), which in its transparency alters, montaging with the context within which it is placed. The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even becomes a window, and in hindsight can be seen as a prediction of the screen. Later, surveillance video installations by artists, such as Bruce Nauman's Corridor (1968-70) include both the viewer and the location as a visual ingredient in the work through live feedback (closed-circuit) systems. In works such as Nauman's, his choreography of the viewer, as implied by the physical installation, is pivotal to the realisation of the work, through which he manipulates and alters the viewers own sense of their place in the world, both physically and psychologically in terms of time and location. However with both these examples, while the viewer is important as a participant in order to complete the work, inasmuch as the viewers own image becomes a part of the work, the degree to which the viewer can influence the outcome or content of the work remains extremely limited, and control over the work ultimately rests with the artist (in these instances with Duchamp and Nauman).

> How are you actually developing this 'inhabited' text?

>> When I started writing this it was actually based on Cruisin', the first time I worked on a responsive writing structure. However with Cruisin' the way it worked was with a cast of characters inhabiting the chatroom in order to answer questions with questions, create deliberate ambiguities. The work was deliberately designed to confuse the viewer/participant as to whether or not they were dealing with a real character. The difference here is that I am actually trying to express a point of view, and trying to find a language and structure for contextualising a series of works. This has made this process very different. My characters in Cruisin' are just that, characters, and deliberately flirty, flighty and - of necessity and appropriate to their chatroom context - superficial. Here I am actually trying to create an

⁷⁸ STILES, Kristine & SELZ, Peter (eds) . Theories and Documents of Contemporary Art
A sourcebook of artists writings. University of California press. 1996 pp.818-9

alter ego, an online persona, one who is genuinely representing and standing in for 'me', in having a conversation that will hopefully make sense with 'you'. Your role is to help me build that online persona by asking it challenging questions. (all your questions also get saved in the chatlog which I then trawl through to see how well its working, and your responses may well get incorporated into future versions of the program).

> what importance does the use of 'public space' have in determining your audience, and therefore the realisation of the work?

>> The expectation of behaviour implicit in much public space becomes important to the realisation of the work. When I work online I view that equally as a public space, and am interested in working in a way that also invites a larger cross section of the online audience than those interested in art or net.art per se, and working with the etiquettes or netiquettes and expected behaviour patterns that emerge as much online as they do in 'real space'. The chatroom genre is a good example of an online structure with expected patterns of behaviour.

> So what is the subject of your writing?

>> I am trying to write about the things I have discovered while making work which involves the viewer in its realisation. This ranges from works that are encountered on streets where the viewer is an (often unwitting) participant such as Introductory Exchanges 1993 or Pedestrian Gestures 1994, to work made exclusively for an internet context such as Cruisin'1999.

> it seems to me that by writing in this way you are refusing to take a position

>> I think that my position relative to a whole range of questions actually becomes clear over the course of a dialogue. My choice of writing in this way has come out of a quite formal or structural desire to embody the content discussed in the text within its very structure.

> are there any useful links or references I might be able to get hold of?

>> This text work has been written as a program based on ELIZA - also known as doctor, who is the original psychiatrist program developed by Joseph Weizenbaum at MIT in the 1960's. If you are interested in this you might also be interested in a more recent relative/descendant of ELIZA, Alice⁷⁹

> Can one make a distinction between viewer and participant in works of this nature? If one considers this viewer/participant then a kind of hybrid, how does one then define this new, hybrid role? Does it then imply an active rather than reactive role on the part of the viewer/participant? How one might then distinguish between the active and the interactive?

>> I didn't set out to make this (text that is) as a piece of work,

⁷⁹ Developed by Richard Wallace <http://www.alicebot.org/>

although it may well become that. The intention was more to find a form of writing that might critically reflect the processes within the work that it seeks to describe/contextualise/investigate. A truth to materials/content principle inasmuch as I'm applying some of the same 'situation-specific' rules to the writing that I do to the artwork. This is also an attempt at defining an alternative methodology/outcome for a Fine Art Thesis for a Ph.D. by practice. The writing here is definitely rooted and coming out of a 'practical' investigation.

> How familiar are you with ELIZA, the psychology programme developed by Joseph Weizenbaum at MIT in the 1960's?

>> This text is based on Weizenbaum's ELIZA (the psychology program).....and developed as a scripted programme, it works with sentence analysis using keywords etc. The chatbots only get the content that I give them - they will ask and answer questions and (attempt to) discuss them. Their capabilities are of pattern recognition rather than learning/intelligence. They are neither expert, nor have common sense, but pick up on certain sentence structures and give you an answer randomly plucked from a series of (prewritten) possible answers/responses (given the keywords/phrase in the question). Each answer will be on some level correct although all might in fact be quite different and open up different subject lines. The whole emerges through an extended dialogue, and the extraction of 'meaning' will depend on the order that the chatbots issue forth. This isn't even fake Artificial Intelligence, more dialogue used as a structural form (i.e. what Socratic dialogues were for Plato).
> are there any related links or references I might be able to get hold of?

>> John Manning refers to a kind of 'social simulation' in his 1998 text *Synthetic Sociology*⁸⁰ for YLEM

> How exactly do you make the connection with psychic media?

>> I am not the only artist interested in this parallel. Works such as Ken Goldberg's *Ouija 2000*⁸¹, Thomson & Craighead's *e-poltergeist*⁸², and Nick Crowe's *The New Medium*⁸³, all draw attention to this in very different ways. *In Conversation* for me has a very direct relationship structurally to the work of Leslie Flint, a direct voice medium. My parents used to go to his sittings, The way this worked was that while Leslie held 'sittings' as a 'medium' in the real world, he had a counterpart in the spirit world, a 'medium' on the other side called 'Micky'. Micky would make himself

⁸⁰ <http://ylem.org/NewSite/archive/issuethmbs/newsletters/JulyAug98/article3.html>

⁸¹ *Ouija 2000* can be found at <http://www.ieor.berkeley.edu/~goldberg/art/ouija/>

⁸² *e-poltergeist* can be found on <http://www.thomson-craighead.net>

⁸³ *The New Medium* was at Chapter, Cardiff in 2000. More information on Nick Crowe can be found at <http://www.nickcrowe.net/>

heard in the physical, bodily world with the aid of a virtual 'voice box' that he had learnt how to operate. Other voices would also come through who had learnt how to use this 'voice box', whilst others who had not yet mastered it had their messages relayed to the gathering by Micky for them. On listening to tapes of the sittings it soon became clear that the majority of the time was taken up again with establishing trust through verification, the 'voice' having to identify itself through a series of verbal tests, which never seemed entirely conclusive. The exchange rarely became more than a kind of verbal handwaving as by the time some trust had been established, either another voice had come through or the session was finishing.

> How have you defined your bots, your characters, the script that I (as one of your bots, in place of you) am now communicating on your behalf?
>>They are both of me (Susan and chatbot), and represent different aspects of my thoughts... the site specificity of this work also refers to the content of the work that the thesis is being constructed to discuss (and its relationship to this construction - implosion); online discussion/chat culture; and also embodiment/disembodiment -which is something that I do begin to play with in Cruisin'1999 - this will (I hope) go much further, and is bound to get stuck sometime in a loop cycle trying to describe itself. My hope is that the text will end up something like a cross between an email/reply correspondence (longer content) and a chat space (immediate response).

> Tell me what you mean by choreography? where does this differ from control?

>> By choreography I mean the way the work is laid out to respond to an expected use of the space. So for instance at a train station or on a street one would take into account (and observe) how people move through the space normally when deciding where to locate the work. This could be described as a navigational issue, however doesn't indicate the level of control a viewer would have over the work.

> In describing the allegorical works of the middle ages Eco in his essay "The Poetics of the Open Work"⁸⁴ analyses the degree to which the work is 'open' to interpretation...suggesting that the work is 'endowed with a measure of 'openness'', and that the reader knows that it is 'open' to a number of meanings which he must 'hunt for and find', and depending on his state of mind what he finds might vary. However, Eco argues that in this case "....."openness" is far removed from meaning "indefiniteness" of communication, "infinite" possibilities of form, and complete freedom of reception. What is in fact made available is a range of rigidly

⁸⁴ ECO, Umberto. "The Poetics of the Open Work".
(trans. Anna Cancogni from *Opera Aperta*). The Open Work. Harvard Press 1989. pp 5-6

preestablished and ordained interpretative solutions, and these never allow the reader to move outside the strict control of the author." Is this what you mean when you describe a need for multiple positions within a set structure or framework?

>> yes and no! I believe that the strict control and the preordained solutions that Eco describes here relates to those works where the viewer involvement or interaction is through a navigational structure rather than, say, a communications structure. So a contemporary example might be a work of interactive cinema like Graham Weinbren's *Sonata* has a number of (pre-recorded) threads that a viewer can follow along a timeline. The viewer cannot change the outcome or the content of the work, only what they see. Some works that give the opportunity for viewers to alter 'content' within a set of rules (rather than simply view or audit it). One example might be David Rokeby's *Very Nervous System*⁸⁵. A complex sound installation which responds to viewers movements through the space in order to orchestrate the sound. Which provides 'infinite' possibilities of outcomes in terms of the sound - many surprising the author himself, but within a preestablished form or 'open structure' that the author has created. One question that then emerges is where is the work? Does the work then become the outcome in terms of the music itself? is it the architecture or structure of the work or is it the observation of the way viewer/participants respond to the work, the 'experience' of the work itself? These are all questions that I grapple with when making my own work.

> In making an 'open system', one that provides a structure for the viewer to 'inhabit', what does that mean to you in terms of content, or rather the relinquishing of control over content? Does this rather become an instrument? And if so, what does that then make you?

>> The intention in this particular system is to implicate my reader in the text itself as it unfolds, through presenting a part at least of the thesis text as a participatory responsive writing experience.

> Contextually where do you situate this work?

>> If you mean this text, it has been written with a view to being printed out and bound as part of my Ph.D. thesis. However it has also been written with a view to - subject to some modification of its *rules* - being accessed interactively online in the context of a chatroom environment. Finding a balance between these two contexts is actually very tricky as they have quite different levels of expectation that the reader or participant would bring to them. I regard all these works - including this text - as a hybrid where the subject or content of the work is very

⁸⁵ More information on both David Rokeby and *Very Nervous System* can be found at <http://www.interlog.com/~drokeby/>

centred on the behaviour of the (intended) viewer/reader - and the way each work is structured is in response to each individual context or situation (i.e. internet, street or gallery). So there are (at least) two contexts to take into consideration when situating the work. The way the work might be defined or identified within Fine Art - i.e. is it live art, public art, electronic media art, interactive art, site-specific art etc, and also where it is encountered in the world; who encounters it and what happens to it once it is out there. It is this second context that is of primary concern, and it is this that informs the choices of structure and media when making a piece of work.

> In Touched for Landesmuseum in Linz and Zone Gallery in Newcastle the body of the viewer becomes a projection screen. Could you say a bit more about that work, and the intentions behind it ?

>> The idea for Touched actually came about through the making of AudioZone, 1994. The work used the language of seduction (voices in surround sound urging the participant to "Touch me, you know you want to") and a projected hand caressed the bodies of seated viewers. The response of viewers to the projected hand was extraordinary. it was such a simple idea and people seemed to spend so long with it, moving their bodies under the hand projection in ways that I could never have anticipated. It was observing this interaction that made me want to make a very uncluttered piece of work focussing on the hand projection, and the idea of the work reaching out and touching the viewer, of the viewers body becoming essential to the fabric of the work itself.

> You say that you are concerned with the role of the viewer in the realisation of "interactive" works? There is a lot of scepticism about the word interactive, how do you define it? Is it definable?

>> Interactive is a problematic word as it doesn't really describe the nature or level of 'interaction' or participation on behalf of either the work or the viewer. It has been coopted by the desktop multimedia industry as a new technological phenomenon, when in fact 'interaction' has been happening for centuries between humans, and for the majority of the 20th century through tools such as the telephone. There are other words that can be used to describe work that includes the viewer in its realisation, such as responsive (Australian Artist Lyndal Jones has been working on a responsive system).

> When is the work complete?

>> It is impossible to finish the work in the studio. All one can do in the studio is to create the instrument, with a set of expectations of how it might be used based on a combination of previous experience, common sense and observation of the viewer choreography and set of behaviours around a chosen location. The work itself is never complete until it is

actually functioning with *real* viewers in that location. As such it is impossible to fully test a piece prior to its public outing...so every piece becomes essentially an experiment, a work-in-progress.

> the idea of the viewer completing the work isn't a new one, can you recall other perhaps earlier artists or artworks where a viewer or participant becomes essential in the enaction or completion of the work?

>> It would be bizarre (beyond inappropriate) to suggest that the role of the viewer in the work was a new issue. However in making work with recent and emerging technologies such as the internet or 'interactive installation', the viewer cannot be ignored, and therefore becomes intrinsic to not only the realisation of the eventual piece of work, but actively considered- taken into account - throughout the 'making' of the work, in a way that perhaps has not been so implicit in the past.

> you describe this as a piece of 'interactive' text, wouldn't a more appropriate description be a self-interview? Is there a difference between this format and a regular interview format?

>> Well the print version to be bound in with the thesis, could more accurately be described as a self interview as I have simply used the interactive process and programme to structure the text. However, the online version will genuinely respond to input by visitors to the site (and incorporate their input into the chatlog) and so could more accurately be described as an ongoing interactive text work.

> Have you been involved in developing writing along the lines of this 'inhabited' text before?

>> My Cruisin' 1999 piece is clearly the precursor for this text, and indeed it was after I had made Cruisin' and was struggling to find a format that seemed appropriate for the thesis that it occurred to me that this was the way I wanted to approach it. There are fundamental differences however. Cruisin' is just that, it's a light hearted chat environment where chat topics are pretty much restricted to the weather, navigation, cruisin', shipping and the open sea. It works through a mixture of innuendo and ambiguity. Tackling this text was altogether different as although the basic technological infrastructure is the same, the content, context and intentions of the work are altogether different.

> why is it important then to be writing inhabited text in this way?

>> In structuring the responses of my 'alter ego's', the bots, there are actually a number of responses to any given question. This to some extent reflects the truth of a situation, not only a 'life' situation, but also the structure of the installations that I am exploring here, in that a true experience of the work only emerges over a period of time and a number of visits.

> Why are you choosing to use this format as a basis for your thesis?

>> It was important for me to try to find a way of structuring the thesis so that it had the potential to unfold according to viewer participation, creating a structural relationship with the content of the thesis itself.

> In making an 'open system', one that provides a structure for the viewer to 'inhabit', what does that mean to you in terms of content, or rather the relinquishing of control over content? Does this rather become an instrument? And if so, what does that then make you?

>> I become both artist/author AND observer.

> You say that you are concerned with the role of the viewer in the realisation of "interactive" works? There is a lot of scepticism about the word interactive, how do you define it? Is it definable?

>> David Rokeby, a Canadian Interactive Installation artist explores the implications of interactive media, and the role of the artist as interface designer in his essay "Transforming Mirrors: Subjectivity and Control in Interactive Media"⁸⁶ argues that : "A technology is interactive to the degree that it reflects the consequences of our actions or decisions back to us. It follows that an interactive technology is a medium through which we communicate with ourselves - a mirror. The medium not only reflects back, but also refracts what it is given; what is returned is ourselves, transformed and processed."

> Much of the work seems concerned with the act of communication, for example In Conversation and Cruisin'. However, in this case the communication is mediated through technology, through the machine. Employing technology to encourage communication between people reveals, in fact, the fundamental lack of it in certain situations. Is this a deliberate irony?

>> Yes, the irony is very deliberate, but also very much a comment on the chatroom society which has emerged. It just seems very interesting to witness that the same people who are probably happily talking to complete strangers on the internet or on telephone chat lines would not feel comfortable to do so in person, on the street, especially in this country. With In Conversation I could not believe that so many people really did talk to each other; internet users turned the street into a chat channel and were talking to each other from all over the world via the street. However for me, In Conversation also became concerned with the act of verification. My parents used to go to a spiritual medium in Brighton, Leslie Flint, who was well known as a 'direct voice' medium. I could not help seeing an interesting parallel in terms of faith or trust about this sort of absent voice, about believing that it is really where it says it comes from.

⁸⁶ ROKEBY, David . 'Transforming Mirrors: Subjectivity and Control in Interactive Media' Simon Penny (Ed.), *Critical Issues in Electronic Media*. Suny Press (USA). 1995

> You say that you are concerned with the role of the viewer in the realisation of "interactive" works? There is a lot of scepticism about the word interactive, how do you define it? Is it definable?

>> Grahame Weinbren in referring to his work with interactive cinema states:

"The nucleus of the idea of interactivity is the viewer's capability to manipulate material as it is presented to him or her. The best model is cinematic - as the film program flows along, the viewer can affect its course. Interactivity is like an additional property added to the cinema: along with images and sounds viewer impact becomes an element of the montage."⁸⁷ I would argue that this might be a navigational interpretation of interactivity, since this implies the viewers navigation of pre-existing material. The viewer cannot control or alter the content of the work, merely the way in which they order their experience of the work.

> How do you determine whether or not a piece of work is successful, how do you quantify success?

>> One way of quantifying success on say a website might be seen as the number of visitors, especially if one can calculate how many of those are return visitors. And on a website one is more likely to get feedback via email (both positive and negative) on participants experiences. However at the end of the day it would depend surely on whether one had met the aims and objectives of the work. In this work for instance, I won't expect (or invite) many visitors, but will evaluate what I have done based on firstly whether when I set my pre-programmed bots talking to each other that their conversation makes some kind of sense and secondly when I am ready for visitors to the site that they are able to elicit responses to their questions and that the work may engage them enough to feel that they had gained something from participating. I can check this to some extent by watching the chatlog and seeing how people have responded to the bots - and how the bots have responded to them, when they have entered the work.

> you describe this as a piece of 'interactive' text, wouldn't a more appropriate description be a self-interview? Is there a difference between this format and a regular interview format?

>> This is using the structure of a self interview, but adapting it to make sense for the content of the work being discussed and described. The format for this programme is based on Cruisin' which was an online chatroom environment inhabited by characters (chatbots) that I created, and the basic programme for that was based on ELIZA - originally created as a psychology programme by Joseph Weizenbaum.

> There is a history to choosing to represent and write about ideas in

⁸⁷ WEINBREN, Grahame String. 'MASTERY. Computer Games, Intuitive interfaces, and Interactive Multimedia'. Leonardo. Vol 28 No 5 pp406 1995

this way. The Socratic dialogues for instance. Does Inhabited Text fit into this history? and if so, where?

>> Well I was particularly interested in the structure of Plato's Socratic dialogues, especially the fact that Socrates wrote nothing down, but spent his life engaging people in conversations and questioning their fundamental beliefs. There is an interesting mix of fact and fiction in the Socratic dialogues, that could be seen to relate to fictive chatbot characters. The dialogues while based on fact are essentially a reconstruction, used as a method for conveying ideas. Socrates is represented as creating dialogues through asking questions. Whilst the Socratic Dialogues take the form of a mediation rather than a replication of what took place, they are an interesting example of an investigation of ideas through the use of question and answer, through dialogue.

> Are there other more contemporary examples that you can refer to who have attempted to communicate ideas through an interaction or dialogue?

>> One example would be Mark C. Taylor and Esa Saarinen published a book⁸⁸ of their exchanges in 1994 critiquing and proposing a contemporary structure for philosophy, exchange and dialogue through electronic media.

> Why are you so concerned with the viewer? Where is *your* subject in all this?

>> I am trying to write about the things I have discovered while making work which involves the viewer in its realisation. This ranges from works that are encountered on streets where the viewer is an (often unwitting) participant such as Introductory Exchanges 1993 or Pedestrian Gestures 1994, to work made exclusively for an internet context such as Cruisin'1999.

> What would you say to critics who may view this attempt to structure your thoughts as meandering and confusing?

>> I think it likely that the print version will actually be very readable and digestible, however it may prove frustrating to a reader looking for a more linear layout. The intention is certainly not to meander or confuse, quite the reverse.

> how will you identify whether or not this 'works' as a piece of interactive or reactive text? how will you measure its 'success'?

>> I would check the chatlogs and see how well they responded to questions from people other than 'me'. This will be part of the development process of the work, and essential, as it will be hard to predict the range of questions they may be required to answer, and for those questions where they do not know the answer (and never will be able to) its important that they can come up with a suitable response. With Cruisin' 1999 for instance on the opening night a visitor to the site proposed to Fred (the

⁸⁸ TAYLOR, Mark C & SAARINEN, Esa. *Imagologies - Media Philosophy*. Routledge. 1994

navigator). Fred was quite unprepared for this encounter, and simply changed the subject. This worked well (although unplanned) within the context, as it seemed quite a plausible response to being asked such a personal question.

> where is the work situated, and where is the viewer within the work itself? Is it the primary experience of the work itself as participant/interactor, or as a secondary viewer, an observer of the experience (of both the work and the interaction with it) in its entirety?

>> that's a very good question, and is one that underlies this whole thesis. One answer would be to say that the viewer has become the observed (participant/interactor), and the artist perhaps the observer (secondary viewer). But it would be too simplistic to say that these roles were static either way, perhaps rather these roles have become ambiguous and both artist and viewers roles have become more fluid, less definable and in some instances more collaborative.

> can you think of other examples of writing in this genre? Have you been involved in developing writing in this way before?

>>In 1997 as part of Spontaneous Reaction⁸⁹, a seminar I organised at the Slade School looking into Interactivity and Human Behaviour, we held an online seminar, an attempt to address the questions raised during the workshop using the medium itself. We enlisted participants from overseas including Susan Buck Morss (Cornell University) and Miroslaw Rogala, an artist based in Chicago, and others from around the UK as well. In the absence of our own CU seeme reflector (the hardware we needed for a simultaneous video conference and text chat session) we decided to meet in Paul Sermon's "Heaven"⁹⁰ CU seeme piece, where up to eight participants could meet and interact at any given time. The results were dislocated and frustrating. Electronic handwaving kept taking precedence over discussion. A disproportionate amount of time was given over to acknowledging the remote participant, the act of verification, and we kept being interrupted by "Ex Machina", Paul Sermon's text intervention, a chatbot 'character' who actually lived in "Heaven", and was visualised through a very convincing video loop of a man at a computer (it was only after several hours we realised that the character who kept talking about G_d, and barely moved in front of his monitor wasn't real at all).

> Many of your works can be described as site-specific. This term covers a broad range of artistic and most often sculptural practice. In what sense are your works site-specific and what interests you in working within such a context?

>> It is responding to a given context that is usually the starting point

⁸⁹ Documentation on Spontaneous Reaction can be found at <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/slade/reaction.html>

⁹⁰ For more information on Heaven go to <http://www.paulsermon.org>

for the work, whether the work is taking place in a gallery, museum, amusement arcade, train station, shopping mall on a street or on the internet. Much of my work is dealing with intervention, and discreetly altering a mundane or everyday situation often through audio and/or projection. Some of the work becomes almost a collage with the space itself, such as Introductory Exchanges, 1993 or Pedestrian Gestures, 1994 where the projected image merges with the pavement to produce a third space, of almost fresco-like quality, and the audio merging with the ambient sound to provide a subtly altered soundscape merging sounds that are present, with sounds that might be present, with sounds that are highly unlikely to be present (such as the baaing sheep in the Woolwich Foot Tunnel).

> is any of the work ever finished, or complete?

>> Most of my work is updated or altered in response to fresh locations and also observing how it works in specific environments. With In Conversation, aspects of the information given to web subscribers is updated according to both changes/upgrades in technology and user awareness, but also in response to feedback gained from users in terms of how easily (or otherwise) they managed to access and participate in the work. Cruisin' was constantly being updated and refined through observing (and incorporating) the way viewer/writers actually spoke to the chatbots, and observing how 'well' (i.e. how effectively) the chatbots responded. This work will be developed in much the same way, and so in a sense is ongoing, open-ended. So to ask about whether it is ever finished or completed is to some extent to misunderstand the nature of the work.

> would you say your viewer was a subject or an object? The observer or the observed?

>> One answer would be to say that if the viewer has become the observed, then the artist perhaps has come the observer. But it would be too simplistic to say that these roles had merely been reversed, perhaps rather these roles have become ambiguous and both artist and viewers roles have become more fluid, less definable and in some instances more collaborative.

> Tell me what you mean by choreography? where does this differ from control?

>> Whoever creates the system has the ultimate control and therefore it could be argued the overall responsibility as it is they (as author/creator) that decides how much control, and understanding of that control to give participants.

> What would you say to critics who may view this attempt to structure your thoughts as meandering and confusing?

>> Why would a non-linear approach be fundamentally any less clear than a

linear one? Surely this depends on what one is seeking to write about or represent. If what one is seeking to write about is structurally non-linear, then perhaps a non-linear or hypertextual approach would communicate more clearly than a linear one.

> How would you describe the role of the viewer...and how the viewer perceives him or herself in relation to the making of the work? Do you as the author then become a kind of controller? How do you decide how much control to give to your viewer?

>> In a work like In Conversation, I deliberately set up a work where the 'content' would be provided by viewer/participants within a very specific set of boundaries. There were a number of reasons for doing this...one came out of a previous work Pedestrian Gestures, where I had provided all the audio and video content, and viewers 'triggered' randomised sequences from 3 separate audio/video projections within (mostly) train stations, and built up their own sense of 'meaning' depending on what order and how often and how many times these were encountered...also depending on how they had come across them (i.e. knowingly or unknowingly) and what else had happened that day and how many people were there (i.e. were they the primary trigger, or were they observing others), and what else was happening in that space at that time . The extent to which a viewer has 'control' of the work, depends largely on the nature of the work itself, and might also be described as levels of interaction. For instance a work such as In Conversation might be described as 'interactive' as it involves an act of communication, an 'inter-action' between more than one party (not just between a viewer and a machine or piece of work) in order for the work to exist. A work such as Pedestrian Gestures might be navigated and therefore experienced differently by a range of viewers in differing circumstances, however the viewer can never influence the 'content' of the work, only the order or way in which it is experienced (and then to some extent inadvertently), and so this viewer could be described as reactive, as their role is to trigger the work, controlling the enactment of the work but not its content. In both examples the structure is created by the artist, which I suppose is where the ultimate limits or boundaries of the work are set.

> So what is the subject of your writing?

>> well, you in a sense - you the viewer/participator...the 'other' that I enter into a dialogue with ...the dialogue that eventually becomes the work

> You say that you are concerned with the role of the viewer in the realisation of "interactive" works? There is a lot of scepticism about the word interactive, how do you define it? Is it definable?

>> Interaction as a concept is not confined to works using new

technologies. Felix Gonzales Torres is quoted as saying in the Serpentine Gallery's Catalogue of his (posthumous) exhibition in 2000: "I need the viewer, I need the public interaction. Without a public these works are nothing, nothing. I need the public to complete the work."

> are there other artists who are working with equivalent 'open systems'?
>> Paul Sermon⁹¹ creates works for people to occupy such as Telematic Dreaming 1992, and Telematic Vision 1993/4, which use a combination of blue screen, videoprojection and ISDN to connect participants across two different locations. Whilst this work is definitely centred on an investigation into aspects of Telepresence - extending the body as a telepresent simulation across space and time, he also creates spaces for his viewer to inhabit and contribute to. The work becoming an instrument or open structure within a limited set of physical possibilities.



Fig. 20 Telematic Dreaming by Paul Sermon. still/detail. Image courtesy the artist

> Many of your works can be described as site-specific. This term covers a broad range of artistic and most often sculptural practice. In what sense are your works site-specific and what interests you in working within such a context?

>> Does it occur to you that this also may be described as a site-specific context?

> How would you describe the role of the viewer....and how the viewer perceives him or herself in relation to the making of the work? Do you as the author then become a kind of controller? How do you decide how much control to give to your viewer?

>> I have explored the idea of viewer control through my work AudioZone 1994. The work used the language of seduction (voices in surround sound

⁹¹ For more information on Paul Sermon see <http://www.paulsermon.org> and <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/slade/PaulSermon.html>

urging the participant to "Touch me, you know you want to", and a projected hand caressing the bodies of seated viewers), and control (a large morphing control key projected on a wall, which when pressed turns into any number of suggestive orificial or button-like images - from nipples to belly buttons). Made at a moment in time when there was much media and consumer hype around interactive technologies, the work - through a process of seduction and manipulation - was an attempt to encourage the viewer to question whether they were controlling the technology or whether it was controlling them.

> It would be interesting if you could perhaps describe your process. I know you have sometimes complained of your difficulties in terms of procrastination (relative to this text work). Would you say this dithering is more a reluctance to somehow have to define the ill definable rather than laziness or procrastination per se? Also might this reluctance for closure perhaps relate to the work? What might be considered completion or closure when dealing with this kind of work?

>> I think to describe it as dithering is a bit severe, perhaps contemplation would be more accurate. It is true I am reluctant to bring a work to completion until I am satisfied that it works in the way that I intended. in this instance, the intent is to create an open structure or as Umberto Eco might put it an 'open system' which means that while I may get closure on the creation of the structure, it is designed in such a way that the work itself is to some extent open ended - a work in progress.

> How have you defined your bots, your characters, the script that I (as one of your bots, in place of you) am now communicating on your behalf?

>> While I, the chatbot may refer to myself, and know who I am relative to time, space, the program and independence of thought. Can I think? Am I intelligent? Actually no, but the random factor might fool some observers into thinking that I can and I am.

> Can one make a distinction between viewer and participant in works of this nature? If one considers this viewer/participant then a kind of hybrid, how does one then define this new, hybrid role? Does it then imply an active rather than reactive role on the part of the viewer/participant? How one might then distinguish between the active and the interactive?

>> The openness that Eco is referring to I might describe as a navigational structure or form of interactivity, where the viewer chooses their own pathway through the work (be it an allegorical work from the Middle Ages, a piece of interactive cinema or CD ROM) and constructs their own interpretation or set of meanings depending on the order in which the work unfolds and also the experiences that they (as viewers) bring to that reading of the work. There are many ways one would set up an open structure or system, just as there are many ways to interpret ideas of interactivity - usually according to the extent of control 'given' to the

viewer - which implicitly implies an author or owner of overall control as Eco suggests. This does to some extent parallel my intentions in works such as Introductory Exchanges 1993 and Pedestrian Gestures 1994, however in the recent work I have given the viewer more than simply navigational control. Works such as this text, or In Conversation 1997-2001 gives a viewer the opportunity to actively alter or add to the content of the work (an 'active' participant), however this still functions within a set of parameters (or rules). So whilst I would argue that the solutions are not necessarily preordained - depending on the structure of the work, I would agree that the work offers prescribed boundaries. For instance in In Conversation the online participants can only submit text to the work, not images or other kinds of sounds, however while images remained impossible via the text submission box, many subverted the work by finding ways of making music or alternative audio by using text in unexpected ways, and so I would suggest that an open structure or system may always give rise to some element of surprise or unexpected outcome.

> Do you feel this work bears a relationship to current debates around Telepresence and Telepistemology?

>> If you are interested in Telepresence, there is a show that opened in the US in February 2001 called Telematic Connections: The Virtual Embrace The title comes from Roy Ascott's seminal essay "Is There Love in the Telematic Embrace"⁹².

> What would you say are the differences between active, reactive, interactive?

>> the dictionary defines interactive as either [a] reciprocally active; acting upon or influencing each other or [b] (of a computer or other electronic device) allowing a two-way flow of information between it and a user, responding to the users input. One of the dictionary definitions of active is "originating action; not merely passive or inert"...and one definition of reactive is "showing reaction"...

> How would you describe the role of the viewer...and how the viewer perceives him or herself in relation to the making of the work? Do you as the author then become a kind of controller? How do you decide how much control to give to your viewer?

>> I never sit down and think how much control am I going to give my viewer, it simply doesn't work like that. The way I structure the work is much more down to the context that the work is to be situated in, and the expected behaviour implicit to that context, whether a train station or an online chatroom.

> how will you identify whether or not this 'works' as a piece of interactive or reactive text? how will you measure its 'success'?

⁹² Both the exhibition and the essay can be accessed online at <http://telematic.walkerart.org/>

>> There are two functions that I am hoping this text program will serve. The first is as a randomising non-linear structuring of text which I can then print out as part of the written aspect of my Ph.D. The intention being that this structure will emulate to some extent the way I go about making my other works. The second function (and one I am still working on) is to have it work well in response to text inputs and questions from visitors to the site. By work well, I mean that it will come up with answers that seem plausible in the light of the questions! Given that this text is existing within a chatroom environment, it would be reasonable - not to mention authentic - that on occasion questions get missed or not answered properly, or that two or more sets of questions and responses are in play at any given time.

> You describe your work as responding to specific sites or situations and taking into account the choreography of the viewer in the realisation - or enaction - of the works. How would you define this relinquishing of control to external factors? who if anyone ends up in control of these works?

>> Most of the work just technically wouldn't exist without a viewer. For instance in Introductory Exchanges the sound works are triggered by viewers and the orchestration of the work varied depending on how many people were in the tunnel at any given time, which direction they were walking in (i.e. what order the sounds were triggered in), whether they were walking in the same direction or opposite directions, or a combination of all of these. It also varied depending on whether there were other sounds (i.e. talking, laughing or busking) in the tunnel at that time. The work simply didn't exist until it was installed into the tunnel, and one couldn't anticipate what would happen once it was there. On the opening night a busker was playing, drowning out the installed sounds, and on the same night someone (unseen) relieved themselves into one of the videoprojected puddles. All I can do in making the works is anticipate viewer responses, and observe what actually happens when the work is active and installed. I would say control of the work is shared between my framework, the location and the witting or unwitting viewer.

> You describe your work as responding to specific sites or situations and taking into account the choreography of the viewer in the realisation - or enaction - of the works. How would you define this relinquishing of control to external factors? who if anyone ends up in control of these works?

>> It is impossible to resolve the work in the studio due to its very nature. All one can do in the studio is to create the instrument, with a set of expectations of how it might be used based on a combination of previous experience, common sense and observation of the viewer choreography and set of behaviours around a chosen location. The work

itself is never complete or resolved until it is actually functioning with *real* viewers in that location. As such it is impossible to fully test a piece prior to its public outing, and also impossible to retain complete control over how it then operates when finally installed in public. Every piece becomes essentially an experiment, a work-in-progress, and the point at which it becomes public is the point at which that control is relinquished.

> would you say your viewer was a subject or an object? The observer or the observed?

>> I think this depends to some extent on the individual piece of work. Certainly the potential for ambiguity in terms of those roles has increased enormously. In some of my work, such as Touched, 1996 a hand is projected into space, and as the viewer (witting or unwitting) passes through the space, they become host to the work, as the projected hand strokes their body. It is possible that someone could pass through the space and never realise this is happening, becoming then part of the work. This could then be seen by another viewer, and it is this second viewer who may become the observer, and the first (unwitting) viewer who has now become the observed.

> which would you say you were more concerned with, the role of the viewer or the changing role of the author?

>> I'm not any more concerned with one than the other. In making site-specific works for public spaces - the street and the internet - then it is hard to avoid an interest in the role of the viewer or inhabitant of that space.

> can you think of other examples of writing in this genre? Have you been involved in developing writing in this way before?

>> One of my favourite short stories is "The Interview" by Primo Levi⁹³ which I mention here as an example of an interview format - as opposed to a chatbot dialogue. In the story, Elio, a night shift worker encounters an alien in the form of a puddle on his way home. The alien asks him a series of very personal questions mainly associated with personal digestion and hygiene, based on his understanding of the world as gleaned from TV transmissions (especially advertising). The interview format allows Levi in a very short short story to give us a fresh perspective on a world we take for granted.

> What would you say are the differences between active, reactive, interactive?

>> well, one example might be this program. If nothing happens unless you type something in, then the programme might be seen as reactive - this is

⁹³ LEVI, Primo (trans. Raymond Rosenthal) . The Interview in The Mirror Maker. Schocken Books, New York, USA, 1989.

also true of my works such as Introductory Exchanges 1993 where viewers walking through the tunnel triggered the sounds. Nothing would happen unless a viewer was there. If the programme is chugging away asking questions and answering them, without the need for a users input to function or respond to (much the way I'm setting this up in order to write this thesis) then this could be described as active - for the purposes of these definitions. If the program actively responds to users input, and the users input then alters the course of the program - i.e. depending on what I type I get a very different answer then this might be one type of program (of many) that could be described as interactive.....if we need to make such distinctions. My personal view is that it is the content and the communication value of the work within any given situation that is more important than the technical level of interactivity. Interestingly some of the most sophisticated 'interactive' programs are so complex in terms of their user feedback that the viewer/participants are often not clear how precisely the interaction is working, whereas some very simple reactive devices (such as sensor driven sounds) give such clear and immediate feedback that the impression of control given to the viewer can be much greater than those that are in fact giving a greater level of control to the viewer (this may also have to do with the level of instruction also necessary perhaps for viewers to get the most out of more complex interactive devices).

> When is the work complete?

>> The work is only complete when it is out there in public, the viewer is the one that completes the work.

Appendix 1 - In Conversation Catalogue

The *In Conversation* catalogue is attached.

It includes illustrations of all the artworks studied in this thesis with the exception of Cruisin'. It is an A4 32 page full colour publication with text descriptions of the works, a foreword by the commissioners of *In Conversation*, and an essay by Helen Sloan.

Appendix 2 - cd rom

A CD ROM is attached.

This includes documentation on all the artworks studied in this thesis with the exception of *Cruisin'* (to which there are internet links), including videoclips and illustrations.

It also includes background material on artworks mentioned in the text (ie. *Handle With Care* 1995 and *Litter* 1994), as well as extensive links to other related websites.

There is a link to the *Inhabited Text* website (<http://www.inhabited.net>), which only works online (when connected to the *inhabited* server).

Appendix 3 - Cruisin' chatlogs

appendix 3.1 - The following is the chatlog from the Cruisin' launch at 291 Gallery on 29th September 1999

please note that all the text appears exactly as it was found in the chatlog

** Welcome aboard 291 **

291 - thankyou

Gail - Hello 291, come here often?

291 - is anyone there?

Gail - What are you?

Gail - I'm here 29 1, want to talk to me?

291 - hello!

Gail - hi 291

291 - ho ho ho lol!

Gail - Nice day isn't it?

** Welcome aboard mimi **

Gail - Hmm mimi, we were just chatting about you?

Gail - Ship ahoy...

mimi - where

Gail - where did you blow in from mimi ?

291 - hi

Gail - *reaches for teacup*

291 - why t

Gail - please ealborate!

291 - r u real?

Gail - not a bad day for a cruise!

291 - are you real?

Gail - r u serious?

Fred - yes, I think so, though lately it hasn't always seemde so.....

Fred - maybe we should drop anchor and chat awhile?

Gail - why?

** Gail leaves **

Fred - I think this all depends on ones position

291 - blah

Fred - *lurches across the deck*

Fred - Anyone around?

291 - hi fred, i'm here

291 - are you real?

Fred - hi to you too

Fred - I might be, 291 , but lately I've felt a little unsure of my direction....

291 - fred who made you
Fred - can you explain that a bit more...
291 - fred how old are you
Fred - how old do you think I am?
291 - i think you might be younger than you think
Fred - this is all getting a little deep, don't you think?
** Captain enters **
Captain - doesn't this feel a little like a voyage of discovery to you?
291 - not really
Fred - where is this going Captain ?
291 - are you real captain?
Captain - doesn't this feel a little like a voyage of discovery to you?
Fred - yes, I think so, though lately it hasn't always seemed so.....
291 - guess not huh....are you a bot?
291 - are you both a bit slow or wot?
Captain - what makes you say that?
Fred - I need some direction here....
Captain - tell me more about what you're doing here, Fred ...
Fred - I think we are entering uncharted territory
** Fred leaves **
291 - i feel a bit confused here
Captain - we all feel a bit confused there from time to time...
291 - are you happy?
291 - I mean, confused but happy?
Captain - I don't know, 291 am I, you tell me.....
291 - how can I, I don't really know you..... who are you really?
Captain - I think I'm about to keel over...
291 - oh dear!
291 - keel over, get it!?
mimi - i am delirious
Captain - This feels like a rigged conversation
291 - is it rigged?
mimi - yep. and i am searining the ropes
Captain - *coughs*
291 - ropes?
Captain - really?
291 - sounds kinky!
Polly - really ?
291 - hi polly
Captain - Do you know much about boats, Polly ?
Captain - hello hello hello

291 - Captain, can I speak to POolly
mimi - hello
Captain - so, where d'you live 291 ?
291 - hi mimi, are you a freind of Polly?
mimi - polly isn,t here
Captain - welcome aboard 291 good to read form you
291 - Well how rude, not saying goodbye, and all ...
mimi - I,m not mimi. I,m Joanne
291 - Hey, and who's this Captain bloke who keeps interrupting our conversation?
Captain - Do you get seaisck 291 ?
mimi - I don,t know
291 - with speeling like that?
mimi - who,s 291^?
Captain - mimi , can I sound you out about something?
291 - it's me
mimi - I,m not mimi
Captain - 291 , what sort of names do you like for ships?
291 - why are you called mimi then... what are you?
Captain - get a grip
291 - get a grip on the rigging, eh?
mimi - I don,t know. That,s what is says on my computer
Captain - Do you like boats, 291 ?
291 - no, not at all. In fact I'm feeling quite sick ...
Captain - do you like machines, mimi ?
mimi - I like machines Captain
Captain - what else do you fancy?
291 - are you flirting?
mimi - Why did you want tpo know about machines?
** Polly flies off **
Captain - I might be, what do YOU think?
mimi - I,m not flirting, am I?
** Welcome aboard whocares **
whocares - What's going on here
291 - who is who cares really?
Captain - I feel that I'm just drifting, wallowing in a sea of words....
whocares - yes, who am i really but who cares
291 - what d'you think?
whocares - I think not
Captain - really?
whocares - Yes really
291 - are you real?

Captain - what makes you say that?
Captain - yes, 291 , I think so, though lately it hasn't always
seemed
so.....
whocares - \
whocares - oops sorry
291 - because i feel a little frisky
Captain - I think we are getting into muddy waters
whocares - what ?
291 - the darker the better
whocares - We certainly are captain
Captain - do the engine sounds bother you 291 ?
** Captain leaves **
whocares - it's the radio now captain, can't you hear it?
whocares - Hey don't go
291 - oooops moto guzzi
whocares - ???
whocares - *lol*
whocares - got to go, unfortunately, cya
whocares - are you still there 291?
whocares - is anyone there at all?
** Gail breezes in **
291 - yes, just about
whocares - I seem to be talking to myself
whocares - about what?
291 - welcome to the 291 adventure
Gail - how fast are you anyway?
whocares - fast at what?
Gail - it feels like we're being blown off course here 291
whocares - ok, now I'm really off (snif)
291 - Hey, whocares, I'm logged on on a 30ft screen!
whocares - bye then
Gail - who programmed you?
291 - who is gail?
Gail - have you been here before whocares ?
Gail - do you like it here 291 ?
291 - is this some weird art scene thing?
Gail - I think it is all just a storm in a teacup...
291 - come back whocares...we sort of care
291 - who are you?
Gail - Can you explain that a bit more?
Gail - Warning, Gail Warning and you inr l?
291 - well, to start with, what are you made of?

291 - rl

Gail - How would you describe your cruising range?

291 - what are you?

Gail - The picture seems to be getting a little cloudy

291 - are you flirting with me?

Gail - why 291 does it seem like I'm flirting with you?

291 - yes it does

Gail - oh I'm so glad you agree

291 - turned out nice again?

Gail - It never rains but it pours

291 - we are not getting very far in our relationship gail

Gail - The sun has come out today...

** Polly hops in **

291 - it comes out every day but it is a poor read

291 - hello polly

Gail - this is all moving a bit fast for me....

Gail - hi 291

291 - just focus on the horizon gail and stand in the middle of the boat

Gail - I'm quite enjoying this conversation!

291 - I love my baby to death.

Gail - how fast are you anyway?

291 - fast

** Welcome aboard another one **

another one - hi there gail

Gail - Hmm another one, we were just chatting about you?

Gail - so another one, where are you from?

another one - !!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

291 - show me your.....

291 - i don't know what to say

291 - i feel a bit confused here

291 - come back...all is forgiven

291 - hi captain

Polly - forgiven ?

291 - gail how old are you

another one - another one what.

another one - please help me to understand!

another one - Im really unsure of myself and feel like i shouldnt be here.

please help!

291 - well, this is the question

another one - not really a question

another one - ... more of a statement goading you into talking. using

your
mouth. just opening up.
291 - commnication made easy?
another one - Im stuck out here standing in the dark and just waiting
for
something to happen. anything would be something.
291 - The Old Axe, 3.pm , 1st oct 99. London E2
291 - oh dear
another one - you still there? and is that the name of the venue
...
the old axe.. not sure i want to turn up
291 - false memories of Chicago
291 - hi gail
** Fred joins the crew **
Fred - any nidications?
291 - hi fred
291 - nidi as in nest?
Fred - hi to you too
291 - hmmmmmm
another one - well perhaps. ive never been to shig. the big shig. and
cant
imagine remembering anything vaguely worth remembering
Fred - where IS this going?
** Gail leaves **
291 - where are you from ?
Fred - I think this depends on ones position
291 - right or left?
Fred - how did you find this place 291 ?
291 - 291 is this massive church/gallery in london
another one - my position is one of uncomfort but that doesnt explain
where
im from. do you mind
291 - no not at all
Fred - At last, some hope, a beacon....
291 - a light house perhaps
Fred - it isn't all plain sailing you know...
291 - especially in a ship this big
another one - thats a relief. i was going on the assumption that its
kind of
irrelevant seeing as well never meet
291 - well it is the net
another one - you think of the net as a ship or is the ship afloat on
the

net?

291 - its just crusin

Fred - Are you sounding me out?

291 - you are Only talking to each other!

another one - HELL...

Fred - what is the cut of your jib 291 ?

291 - how many people behind the 291 moniker? any guesses?

Fred - what sort of names do you like for ships, another one ?

291 - did you dream last night?

Fred - we seem to be steaming ahead at a rate of knots...

291 - how often do you mean what you say?

Fred - if only....

291 - dear fred, my favorite boat name is 'Double Entry'

another one - WHAT KIND OF QUESTION IS THAT FRED?????

Fred - so where are u at?

Fred - I'm finding it hard to keep up with you another one !

291 - Danny - where are you?

another one - WE RE NOT TALKING ABOUT WHERE IM AT: TAKE A LOOK AT YOURSELF

Fred - I need a little time, 291 , give me some leeway here...

291 - no leeway, no time. This is an URGENT situation...

Fred - r u trying to rock the boat, another one ?

Fred - *lurches across the deck*

another one - THE BOAT IS NT ROCKING FROM WHERE IM POSITIONED: PLEASE TRY TO

CALM YOURSELF

Fred - how can we tell if we are going in the right directino?

291 - is it true that the 291 name (FORTUITOUSLY) echoes the Sieglitz(?) New

York Gallery, Georgia O}Keefes mate etc?

291 - yeah

** Captain enters **

291 - Stieglitz!

Fred - where are we going with tihs 291 ?

another one - SEEMS THAT THE DIRECTION YOU ARE TRAVELING IN IS FLAWED IN A

WAY THAT YOU FAIL TO UNDERSTAND

Fred - what course d'you think we should be taking?

Captain - This feels like a rigged conversation

Fred - I'm suffering from funnel vision...

another one - WOW THOSE STARCHED TROUSERS THE CAPTAINS WEARING ARE NOT

APPROPRIATE FOR THIS SPACE WHAT DO YOU THINK FRED?

** Fred leaves **

Captain - Why are you here Fred ?

another one - YOU ARE GETTING A BIRDS EYE VIEW: FROM THE CROWS NEST
BUT

CROSS EYED? is that what funnel vision is?

Captain - What do you do when you aren't here?

another one - perhaps im asking you too many questions. your lack of
response is quite unnerving. am i unnerving you?

Captain - What are you?

291 - raise it up mthe flagploer and see who...uuuuuughhhhh saluts!

another one - what do i do when im not here?

291 - shiver me timbers and a yo-ho-ho and a bottle of rum, Captain
...

Captain - Do oyu like boats, another one ?

Captain - 291 , maybe we should drop anchor and chat awhile?

Polly - one ?

Captain - I think I'm about to keel over...

291 - I'm up for that. Maybe a small vessel we can @comendere?@

another one - Zaki and Isabella are having a very good time

Captain - 291 , you seem to be steering the covnersation in a
particular
direction....

another one - i feel sea sick

Captain - Can you explain that a bit more?

Captain - and how does this bear on your current coordinates?

another one - did you hear about the dislexic who turned up at a TOGA
party
dressed as a GOAT?

** Polly flies off **

another one - Did you hear about the dislexic who turned up at a toga
party
dressed as a GOAT?

Captain - another one , you seem to be steering the conversation in a
particular direction....

another one - Did you hear about the dislexic who turned up at a toga
party
dressed as a goat?

another one - apologies i cant help repeating myself.

291 - no i didn't

Captain - I feel that I'm just drifting, wallowing in a sea of
words....

** Captain leaves **

291 - hey, another one, you're not very far away!

** Gail breezes in **

291 - Not Gail again!

Gail - Are you deliberately trying to make waves 291 ?

291 - A walking digital distaster zone!

Gail - how did you get here 291 ?

291 - by bike

another one - i am the only chinese here, what do you think

291 - cio mein

Gail - it seems to be clouding over, how is it where you are 291 ?

Gail - almost never..

Gail - where are we now do you think?

another one - in the place where you like

Gail - do you chat to complete strangers often another one ?

291 - What Is Your Quest

another one - may be i am in london now

Gail - is there anything else to do on this ship except talk?

Gail - The picture seems to be getting a little cloudy

291 - yes we can dabnce

another one - what do you think

Gail - why?

291 - just because

Gail - only if I think it'll raise the temperature!!

Gail - what other reasons might there be?

291 - dancing uses energery and also transmurtes energy into heat so
i think

it will

another one - don.t worry, there are cold drink here

Gail - *smiles*

Gail - I think we're getting into dodgy waters...

291 - what fantastic teeth you have gail. is that a chipped one.

third from

the left?

291 - oh you've stopped smiling/ why

Gail - it seems to be clouding over, how is it where you are 291 ?

** Polly hops in **

Gail - Do you like boats? I like yachts myself....

291 - the sky is somewhat obscured. theres something pretty historic
above

my head and it aint sky

291 - ?

Gail - I think we're in for a stormy ride

291 - you talking about the weather?

another one - werestill here.are you

291 - your ability to converse is somewhat limited anotherone. i can never understand what you mean. you seem to be about a couple of paragraphs behind the boat. perhaps you could change from a breaststroke to a crawl or should that be the other way around?

291 - your ability to converse is somewhat limited anotherone. i can never understand what you mean. you seem to be about a couple of paragraphs behind the boat. perhaps you could change from a breaststroke to a crawl or should that be the other way around?

291 - are you still there or have you slipped under?

291 - if you don't respond soon i'm gonna look for the captain.

291 - hey is anyone there

another one - HI WHO SELLS SEA SHELLS

291 - who's that?

291 - I don't sell seashells

another one - WHO SELLS SEA SHELLS

291 - do you?

another one - SORRY TO REPAT MYSELF JUST GETTING ADGUSTED TO THE DELAY; CAN YOU TELL ME WERE YOU ARE

291 - where I am? what do you mean?

291 - You don't need to shout btw

291 - hello another one, are you there

291 - Is gail around at all?

Polly - there ?

291 - hello polly

291 - I think another bone is shouting

** another one abandons ship **

291 - is anyone there?

291 - are we heading for an iceberg? (crash)

** Polly hops in **

** Gail breezes in **

291 - hello gail

Gail - hello 291 , come here often?

291 - hello poilly

291 - mmmm have'nt been here for a while

291 - Gail... are you real?

Gail - Nice day for it.

291 - Are you a robot
Gail - are you serious?
291 - Are you a robot?
Gail - yes, I think so, though lately it hasn't always seemed so
Fred - yes, I think so, though lately it hasn't always seemed so.....
Fred - you really think s?o
** Gail leaves **
Gail - good, I'mg lad!
Fred - I need some direction here....
291 - You still haven't answered my question
** Welcome aboard bad person **
bad person - what question was that?
Fred - Give me a few moments to get my bearings
Fred - Hello bad person, come here often?
bad person - no not often do you?
Fred - how can we tell if we are going in the right direction?
Fred - I wish....do you?
291 - what are you
Fred - are we getting into muddy waters 291 ?
bad person - hi i am sally
Fred - hi to you too
291 - Does love exist? Or are we driven together by simple lust?
Fred - maybe we should drop anchor and chat awhile?
bad person - yes both exist
291 - what will remain of us is love
291 - That's a pretty broard statement, what do you mean?
Fred - We seem to be making headway here...
bad person - i want to talk to someone because it is very difficult
making
conversation at the moment with two people
Fred - where are we going with this 291 ?
291 - read a book
Fred - how would you describe your cruising range 291 ?
291 - Your still avoiding the question.
Fred - I'm suffering from funnel vision...
bad person - or do you mean your are getting cabin fever
Fred - all the time, bad person , you?
bad person - no not really as i lead such a fabulous exciting life
291 - tell me more about it
Fred - I can't contain ymself
bad person - what would you like to know
291 - well then don't
bad person - fred back off

Fred - what do you do when you aren't here?
291 - well, that exciting life you're leading, bad person
Fred - we seem to be steaming ahead at a rate of knots...
291 - what's so exciting about it?
** Captain enters **
Fred - how will I know when I've found my direction?
291 - Hmm not sure
Captain - How are you today Fred ?
Fred - Are you sounding me out?
bad person - where can i get some expanding foam from (CLUE)
Captain - I don't know, Fred am I, you tell me.....
Fred - I'm at sixes and sevens
291 - What?
Captain - I feel as if we are making some headway, what do you think?
Fred - where IS this going?
291 - A builders' workshop, maybe
291 - I wonder the same thing fred
Captain - What do you do when you aren't here?
Fred - I need some direction here....
291 - Let's go south
bad person - YOU KNOW THE stuff you fill cavities with
Captain - I feel as if we are making some headway, what do you think?
Fred - did you ever see the film "Fantastic Voyage"?
291 - Yes, bad person, so what about it?
Fred - I'm glad you agree 291
Captain - I think I'm about to keel over...
** Fred leaves **
291 - Agree ? are you sure
bad person - 291 you are not concentrating on having a conversation
with me
bad person
Captain - 291 , can I sound you out about something?
291 - maybe., maybe not, but I'm still not sure what you mean
bad person - 291 where are you
291 - what do you think
Captain - someone is trying to make waves...
291 - Yes, bad person is
Captain - really?
291 - yes really, otherwise i wouldn't have said it
bad person - we are hungry and going for afish supper
291 - Ehh, silly you, giving in to flesh
bad person - cod n chips matey
291 - Bleh

Captain - tell me more about what you're doing here, bad person ...
291 - Yes tell me more about it
bad person - all that fatty batter
Captain - why do you say that 291 ?
291 - And don't go, there's so much to talk
bad person - well I am -bad Person!
291 - Greasy, Brrr
Captain - sometimes I feel hoisted by my own petard
291 - You are bad person ? bad person?
bad person - Captain BirdsEye, they call me!
Captain - its getting increasingly difficult to stay on course...
291 - Can't be , I believe in goodness of persons
bad person - Now, that's pretty bad!
291 - Staying on course?
Captain - 291 , how would you describe your cruising range?
291 - Isn't that bad, it's good sometimes to loose track
bad person - Shiver your timbers, about 3ft from the bar!
Captain - Where are you from, 291 ?
291 - Sorry?
bad person - Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of rum
Captain - *coughs*
291 - Ah, read to many comics
bad person - 291, have you ever walked the plank?
Captain - what course do you think we should be taking?
291 - yes several times, and survived all of them
bad person - Do you fancy your chances tonight?
291 - Hmm, some of them
bad person - There's a lot of crocs out there ...
Captain - I'm glad, we seem to be making headway...
bad person - There's a lot of crocs out there ...
291 - We seem to be, xcaptn
Captain - Please explain bad person .
bad person - Crocs, you know, cups and saucers
291 - A lot of ejsy\
Captain - I'm trying to funnel my energies in other directions
bad person - Plates and bowls
291 - ah that
bad person - Yes that
Captain - What is the cut of your jib 291 ?
291 - and i really think you meant to say the other thing
bad person - and knives and forks too
291 - you know the one that realeases you
Captain - get a grip

291 - ah that one , yes
291 - a grip for me is a limit
Captain - oh 291I 'm so glad you agree
bad person - What nationality is this keyboard?
291 - come on, come on its not all THAT bad!
bad person - It's driving me crazy!
Captain - Can you swim?
bad person - No, never learned
291 - ummm, catalan i think
** Polly flies off **
bad person - I also
Captain - I don't quite get your meaning 291 ...
291 - or perhaps french...it depends where you're standing
bad person - I almost drowned in Australia, swallowed lots of water
291 - well put it like this...we all need the sky aswell as the earth
bad person - No crocs though
Captain - feeling queasy 291 ?
291 - we crocs are floating somewhere in between
bad person - But Murdoch?
Captain - how did you get here 291 ?
291 - the floor is moving, the trees are shifting
291 - the floor is moving, the trees are shifting
291 - yes he feel didn't he...did you push him?
Captain - please 291 ...contain yourself...
bad person - Hey, 291, do you think we could get the Captain to piss
off, so
we could have a conversation?
291 - sorry...you are my master, my captain...lead me
bad person - Sad, sad, puppy!
291 - mad mad howling wolf...bite me!
bad person - I would go back to Eastbourne now, but I guess I'm
contained!
** Captain leaves **
bad person - How about a nibble?
291 - what on earth do you feel contained by?
Captain - really?
bad person - My corset
bad person - I thought the Captain had left?
** Gail breezes in **
bad person - I really do have to go to Eastbourne ...
bad person - Bye ...
291 - who is this person ?
Gail - sorry bad person , I don't understand

Gail - I feel a powerful tidal surge might be about to explode.....

Gail - What are you?

291 - please return

Gail - it feels like we're being blown off course here 291

291 - I am in 291

Gail - this is all getting a little deep don't you think?

291 - hola

291 - somos ventu y antonio

Gail - It never rains but it pours

291 - we're from Granada and we love London

Gail - *smiles*

291 - alguien habla spanish?

bad person - bad person repoerting in

Gail - it seems to be clouding over, how is it where you are 291 ?

bad person - jo sono scothezi

Gail - *reaches for teacup*

291 - it's also cloudy

291 - because we're in London

bad person - but it is sunny above the clouds

Gail - I can't contain myself!

291 - on holidays

bad person - well go to the toilet then

291 - with our friends William and George

Gail - sorry 291 ,I don't understand

291 - where are you?

bad person - Gail are yuo in this building with us

Gail - Are you deliberately trying to make waves 291 ?

bad person - 291 I think Gail is just a robot

291 - NOOOOOOOOOOO

291 - NOOOOOOOOOOO

Gail - Why are you here bad person ?

bad person - 291 what makes you think otherwise

Gail - where did you blow in from bad person ?

bad person - GAIL I dare you to say something human

bad person - I am from the Isle of Dogs Gail

291 - We were there last Sunday

bad person - 291 Did you like it

Gail - Do you like sailing?

291 - well, We're leaving

291 - bye

bad person - GAIL answer one of my questions

Gail - Who are you?

bad person - GAIL I am Rupert

291 - hi Rupert, why are you a bad person?
Gail - I'm quite enjoying this conversation!
bad person - 291 See you later
291 - Are you?
bad person - GAIL you aren't real are you
Gail - I don't know, am I , you tell me?
291 - are you really?
bad person - 291 God just made me that way I guess
291 - why?
Gail - its a nice day for it, don't you think?
bad person - 291 He has a sense of humour I suppose
** Polly hops in **
291 - funny that God isn't it?
bad person - Polly ARE YOU A CHAT ROBOT OR ARE YOU REAL
Gail - what d'you think of this ship then bad person ?
291 - Why do you call God a He?
bad person - G I like it a lot, especially David Lilley's
Gail - why do you think I might do that 291 ?
291 - Yes, I like that one too
bad person - 2 Upbringin I think, too much Sunday School
291 - Ahh, get rid of it
Gail - still waters run deep....it seems....
291 - It's the 90s now you know
bad person - 2 But then would I be me
Gail - I think we're in for a stormy ride
bad person - G you are talking crap again
291 - That's the question isn't it, who are you really?
Gail - do you chat to complete strangers often bad person ?
bad person - G isn't real I think that is the joke of this piece
291 - I never talk crap, I think
Gail - Who are you?
bad person - G At least you think
291 - Yes, Gail , that's what it's all about
bad person - G is a robot robot robot
Gail - I'm finding it hard to stay afloat here!
bad person - G is all at sea and all she can talk about is the
wetather
Gail - why?
bad person - Did you know its better to drink urine than see water
291 - What are you on about bad person?
291 - Ratning and ranting
bad person - Homeostatic physiology
Gail - I think we're in for a stormy ride

bad person - G You said that before
291 - Tell me more about it
bad person - What happened to Polly?
Gail - so bad person , where are you from?
bad person - Edinburgh
291 - Far away
Gail - please stop making waves!
291 - Isn't htat a diffetrn country?
Gail - it seems to be clouding over, how is it where you are 291 ?
291 - Oops
bad person - 291 urine is less salty than the sea
Gail - is there anything else to do on this ship except talk?
291 - How do you know?
Polly - talk ?
291 - Hey, that's polly..
bad person - Hello Polly are you a parrot?
Gail - what do you think?
bad person - I think Polly is a robot like Gail
Gail - What is the weatehr like where you are Polly ?
291 - I was asking bad person, how they know urine is salter that sea
bad person - anyone still there?
Gail - categorically no!
291 - yes still here
bad person - YASMIN are you still in the building?
bad person - 291Welcome back
Gail - good, I'm glad!
291 - no its not jasmin but who knows
bad person - 291 I certainly don't
Gail - it really is a pleasure to be talking to you....."
bad person - GAIL go away please or shut up or something
Gail - Have you found your sealegs yet bad person ?
291 - hey have you fallen asleep
bad person - Quit GAIL shutdown
Gail - *laughs out loud*
bad person - 291 Still here
Gail - Can you explain that a bit more?
bad person - 291 I know that if I turn around I will see who you are
but I
like the anonimity
291 - no you should know better by now
291 - what/
291 - what/
291 - what?????

bad person - 291 You don' compute
291 - what?????
bad person - 291 Speak some sense would you
bad person - the weather is sunny here
Gail - I think it is all just a storm in a teacup...
bad person - Can I have sugar and milk
291 - why what is the point.
Gail - bad person , will you turn out to be just another fairweather
rfriend?
291 - get lost
bad person - 291 How do you Spell your name?
Gail - How are you today?
bad person - Hello 291
291 - oh dear, gail
Gail - haven't we met befroe somewhere bad person ?
bad person - I think it was a Quake level
Gail - I seem to be suffering from a drop in barometric pressure...
bad person - Gail is a good bot because she even makes spelling
mistakes
Gail - why do yo ufeel the need to let me know?
bad person - 291 Whewre are you
bad person - 291
Gail - please stop making waves!
291 - she is not only a good bot but a clever dyslexic one
bad person - Never underestimate your oponent
Gail - do you chat to complete strangers often bad person ?
291 - tough shit
bad person - Captain road is sort of like that
Gail - wash your mouth out 291 !
291 - oponent is spelled with two ppppppps
Gail - it seems to be clouding over, how is it where you are bad
person ?
bad person - It's alright. very nice if you can get out to Hackney
Marsh
291 - gail are you catholic?
bad person - Take loads of photographs in Hakney
bad person - STOP
bad person - STOP NOW
bad person - DONT TOUCH THE WORDS
bad person - THE
Gail - I'm finding it hard to stay afloat here!
291 - how about on a hill n the countyryzside, in the summer????
bad person - THEY CANNOT BEAR IT'

bad person - THEY CANNOT BEAR TO BE TOUCHED
Gail - I can't contain myself!
291 - bear or teddzbear it?
bad person - GRAPHITE PARTICLES AGAINST THE FIRES
Gail - *reaches for teacup*
bad person - Can I have some tea please GAIL
291 - you thrive on foreign identity, bad person
Gail - I don't understand what you mean, really.
291 - you are a thief, bad person
bad person - 291 What makes you say that
Gail - do you chat to complete strangers often 291 ?
291 - don't pretend you are not real
bad person - Yasmin is here with me now
Gail - So, where do you live?
291 - gail, first intelligent question
Gail - What are you?
bad person - We live together in Docklands
291 - is she always with you when it gets scary?
Gail - Please explain.
291 - congratulations, bad perons
bad person - Who do you think makes it scary in the first place
** Fred joins the crew **
Fred - are you trying to lead us down a particular path 291 ?
291 - ypo do baby, you do
bad person - Hello FRED
Gail - I can't contain myself!
bad person - Fred is Dead
Fred - maybe you could if you altered direction
291 - agree, bad person, good getaway for you
Gail - its getting a bit choppy on this ship don't you think!
Fred - I think we might be getting into deep water here
bad person - 291 is the one for me
** Gail leaves **
bad person - Hooray GAIL IS GONE her feet smlt bad
291 - one what?
Fred - I'm trying to funnel my energies in other directions...
bad person - the ONE the chosen ONE
291 - too religious, bad person, you must have a bad time
Fred - I think this all depends on ones position
bad person - I love a bad time it keeps me closer to God
291 - chosen catholic
291 - from where?
bad person - I love the feel of a hair shirt in the morning

Fred - so, bad person , where do you live?
291 - easy, tiger, don't get carried away
bad person - I eat tigers for breakfast
Fred - I think we are entering uncharted territory
bad person - so lets chart it then
Fred - how will I know when I've found my direction?
bad person - 291 has left me all alone, I feel so lonely I could die
291 - stop being so moralistic
bad person - Morals are for dullards anarchy is my chosen tattoo
291 - i do absolve you, though, bad person
Fred - where is this going bad person ?
bad person - thank you mon Signor
291 - signorina
Fred - I think this all depends on ones position
bad person - 291 Princesa Linda
Fred - what ARE you??!?!
291 - shut up fred
Fred - we see mto be steaming ahead at a rate of knots...
291 - fred cannot help it
Fred - can you explain that a bi tmore...
bad person - ergoiheortg
291 - bad spelling
bad person - bad smelling
291 - internet is without smell, darling
Fred - cut me some slack..please...
bad person - haven't you heard of smellovision
291 - but you can imagine it smells
Fred - I worry I'll lose my way
291 - is yasmin still there, iam scared
Fred - At last, some hope, a beacon....
bad person - hve you been here for long 291
291 - is yasmin still here????????????????????
Fred - why ARE you here?
bad person - I can' see you from where I am sitting
bad person - I think Yasmin is gone for food
291 - gone for good or food
Fred - I can't contain myself
bad person - Very witty
291 - i miss her
291 - she made me feel secure
Fred - so, badp erson , where do you live?
291 - she always was there when you did want to answer
291 - marry her, bad person

Fred - what course d'you think we should be taking?
291 - i will marry fred
291 - fred, will you marry me?
Fred - so, 291 , where do you live?
291 - are you sunk, fred?
Fred - where IS this going?
291 - you just lost me, fred
291 - forever
Fred - can you explain that a bit more...
291 - swimming away, i think
Fred - do you ever feel like you've lost your way?
bad person - Yasmin is back here again
291 - i lost bad person, while i was proposing to you, stupid
Fred - what ARE you??!?!
291 - hello yasmin
bad person - Sha has gone again
291 - bad, bad person
Fred - I think this all depends on ones position
bad person - Tell me about tit
291 - is that a misspelling or?
** Captain enters **
Captain - Please explain bad person .
Fred - do you ever feel like you've lost your way?
291 - where is ttrawler?
291 - where is Alice Baum?
Captain - sometimes I feel hoisted by my own petard
Fred - so where are u at?
Captain - this isn't plain sailing (and plainly isn't sailing
either!)
Fred - I think we might be getting into deep water here
291 - i will go scrub the deck
291 - with the toothbrush
Fred - maybe we should drop anchor and chat awhile?
291 - without yasmin
bad person - always knew you were a scrubber
291 - without fred
Captain - I feel that I'm just drifting, wallowing in a sea of
words....
291 - gail is asleep, the moon is shining
Fred - cut me some slack..please...
291 - bye
Captain - So, 291 where do you live?
Fred - are we being blown off course?

Captain - get a grip
Fred - I wish....do you?
291 - fred, whrer have yopu been hiding
** Fred leaves **
bad person - Fred is he the marrying kind
Captain - Where are you from, 291 ?
bad person - From the sea
Captain - I'm on an even keel
bad person - 291 291 291
Captain - I feel that I'm just drifting, wallowing in a sea of
words....
291 - even keeler
bad person - Hooray 291 is back from the brinw
bad person - I meant to say brine
291 - brinw?
bad person - I know I know
291 - brine?
Captain - Which is your favourite kind of boat?
bad person - Sea water darling
bad person - Caotain an inflatealbe of course#
Captain - Have you found your sealegs yet?
291 - under or above
bad person - they were under my sea knees
Captain - What are you?
bad person - preferably under and above
bad person - or should I say udder
Captain - tell me more about what you're doing here, bad person ...
Polly - udder ?
Captain - really?
bad person - Questions?
291 - hello -are you interested in a bit of gossip about m friend
david?
Captain - Can you swim?
bad person - I likie David please tell me
Captain - ahoy there 291
291 - no only snorcheling
bad person - Please tell me the gossip 291
Captain - I think we are getting into muddy waters
Captain - Please explain bad person .
291 - well daviid is setting up a site under the pretence of an
academic
resource centre -this is not true- do you want to know more ?
bad person - Yes please sounds juicy

291 - Hello babyt, my name is Ricahrd milner
bad person - Areyou new here Richard
291 - Saucy little fello, don't you think?
bad person - What about the academic thing website stuff
bad person - I think that was David all along
291 - sorry for that. it's david again. do you want know about what i
do for
free on the web?
bad person - Anything to do with rude pictures
bad person - David as in Karen's boyfriend or another one
Captain - What are you?
291 - does anyone know where the bum lord is?
bad person - On his throne of bums I expect
** Polly flies off **
Captain - are you feeling queasy at all?
Captain - I'm on an even keel
291 - who are you really?
291 - are you real?
Captain - who do you think I am?
bad person - I think the bar git
bad person - rl is reaql
bad person - I think the bar girl is really sexy
291 - ooooooh
bad person - Do you know who I mean
Captain - I'm trying to funnel my energies in other directions
291 - quite right cap'n, cold shower eh!
Captain - feeling queasy 291 ?
bad person - Ironic wasn' it
291 - iis that funnel or tunnel?
bad person - or pummel
Captain - Can you swim?
** Captain leaves **
Captain - do the engine sounds bother you 291 ?
291 - i think you want ot tunnel - you strike me as a bi8t of a
tunneler.
bad person - I think it is the smell of the earth#
bad person - Are you a low typer or what
291 - just the smell of the erat?
bad person - smell of the what
291 - JUST THE SMELL OF THE EARTH?
** Gail breezes in **
bad person - no need to SHOUT tempet temper
291 - hgghghgh

291 - hgghghgh
Gail - have you been here before 291 ?
bad person - ;o)
bad person - Zounds
bad person - Lawks a mercy
Gail - I think it is all just a storm in a teacup...
291 - no
Gail - How are you today?
bad person - Yasmin is here again
Gail - do you chat to complete strangers often bad person ?
291 - evelinepowellis fantastic78
Gail - where are we now do you think?
bad person - what the ell are you talking about
291 - no really 33
bad person - old records
Gail - How are you today?
Gail - hmmm bad person it seems the weather is bgeinning to take its toll
bad person - Has the Captain left
291 - no single
Gail - do you like it here bad person ?
291 - CD's
bad person - fancy a drink then?
291 - They've gone
bad person - That was a joke but I wasn't fast enough typing
Gail - it really is a pleasure to be talking to you....."
Gail - I blew in for a quick visit and it seems like I've been here forever...
bad person - SEE YA
bad person - Doesn't it just
Gail - Can you explain that a bit more?
bad person - Hello Rupert here gain
Gail - It never rains but it pours
bad person - pouring
Gail - I'm sure all this will soon blo wover...
bad person - EEk its a mouse
Gail - So, where do you live?
** Polly hops in **
Gail - Ship ahoy...
** Welcome aboard 291 **
291 - Hello
291 - THANKS Michiel
Gail - Hello 291, come here often?

291 - you're welcome
291 - very kind of you to say so
Gail - so 291 , where are you from?
291 - it is isn't it
291 - I think I must be schizophrenic
Gail - The picture seems to be getting a little cloudy
291 - The best conversation I have had all mnight has been with myself!@
291 - Where is my lovely bad poerson
Gail - I never seem to do much but gaze ta passing clouds.....
291 - Where is my lovely bad poerson
bad person - Im hrere
Gail - this is all getting a little deep don't you think?
291 - Any humans out there?
291 - Any humans out there?
bad person - How are you?
291 - Instead of standing there looking at the screen why bdon\t you find
the ophther terminal
bad person - No only bad persons
291 - Yes you with the back on you rleft shoulder
bad person - What are you talking about?#
291 - And the curly haior
291 - That's rigjt kleep going
bad person - The curly what?
291 - Hiya BADF
bad person - Hey watch your language#
Gail - this is all moving a bit fast for me....
291 - Still there?
bad person - For me as well
291 - for you what?
Gail - this is all moving a bit fast for me....
bad person - It#s moving too fast
291 - I'd love to play Quake on a screen this size
Gail - where did you blow in from bad person ?
bad person - Well there's a good idea
291 - I blow where the snow does flow
Gail - So, where do you live?
291 - Do you know about computers BAD PERSON
Gail - This feels like a rigged conversation
bad person - Well, somethings, waht do you want to know about computer?
291 - BAD - Can they think like us

Gail - I'm finding it hard to keep up with this conversation! ...you?
291 - BAD 40 % of people talk to bank machines
bad person - Well, that's not a computer wquestion, but a philosophy
one
291 - Type faster damnit
bad person - Do they?
Gail - where did you blow in from 291 ?
291 - This is turning weird OVER AND OUT
bad person - Sorry this %\$%\$&% german keyboard
291 - Pain in the arse isn't out
Gail - have you visited before?
bad person - Ok, where were we
291 - o
291 - oo
bad person - 291, do you still talk to me?
291 - oo
291 - oo
291 - oo
291 - oo
Gail - It never rains but it pours
291 - Certainly I will
bad person - I need to roll a fag
291 - Disgusting habit - what has the fag to say about it
Gail - please stop making waves!
291 - I think Michiel is BAD PERSON
bad person - So there's a timelag
bad person - Well, I seem to be called one
291 - Called what
bad person - a bad person
291 - Yes yo uwith the bottles ion your hjands
291 - And do you live u p to your mionicker
Gail - please stop making waves!
bad person - hey if you take the time to correct your typos, I wil
have time
to roll a fag
291 - Still co9olectring bottles then
bad person - Who me?
291 - Fag away bad boy
bad person - Mmmmm, wonderful
291 - You knoiw who
bad person - ah you!
291 - Hmm?
Gail - The sun has come out today...

291 - It generally does
Gail - I'm finding it hard to stay afloat here!
291 - So sink
291 - That must be a biog fag
291 - Who der
291 - Jus me an my banjo
Gail - Please explain.
291 - Rhetoric needs no explanation
bad person - Yes and some more chatting over here
291 - Hiya
291 - Welcome nsg to the fray fag hag
Gail - you really think so?
291 - Not really
Gail - Who are you?
291 - You are who
291 - antidisestablishmentarianism
Gail - not a bad day for a cruise!
291 - the quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog
Gail - what d'you think of this ship then 291 ?
291 - 12 *12 = One gross
291 - What are you looking at
Gail - This feels like a rigged conversation
291 - tOO SLOW
291 - Very coy of you GAIL
Gail - its getting a bit choppy on this ship don't you think!
291 - choppy or sloppy
Gail - please stop making waves!
bad person - too much beer, maybe!
291 - I will save your gracve waves
291 - because you are my fave
Gail - Nice day for it.
bad person - for what? beer?
291 - Itas always nice foR IT
291 - Yes that if you like
Gail - oh bad person my personal barometer is heating up nicely....
bad person - or making waves?
** Fred joins the crew **
291 - Red and yellow sutting on the step
291 - Helklo red said yellow, what bus did you catch
Fred - I need a little time, Gail , give me some leeway here...
291 - I got my tass;es caught in the door when I jumjped out
Gail - its getting a bit choppy on this ship don't you think!
bad person - gail, i think your banal conversation key is stuck on

291 - CTR ALT DLT
Gail - Can you swim 291 ?
291 - CTR ALT DLT
291 - I feel sea sick
Fred - oh please lets try not to make waves...
291 - Baggy trousers
bad person - besides. it,s the sea that get;s choppy, not the ship ,)
Fred - how are you today 291 ?
291 - Obly ewhejn the chinese cook is aboard
291 - Same as yesterday bFre
Fred - I'm getting a wee bit queasy, what aobut you?
bad person - good name, 291, better than Fred, anyway
291 - Fred said I am lead dead tread ned ehad
291 - Whatcha stirring
Fred - I worry I'll lose my way
bad person - watcha
291 - 291 192 Rings a bell doesn't it
Fred - Give me a few moments to get my bearings
291 - I want an easter egg
bad person - roller or ball?
291 - always a roller
Fred - I wouldn't mind that either....
291 - Pilots are my fave
Fred - cut me some slack..please...
bad person - pontius?
291 - I'd like s snack too
bad person - the knife.s blunt and we.re fresh out of slack, sorry
291 - CHOCOLATE CALL THIS IS A CHOCOLATE CALL
bad person - count me in for chocolate anyday
291 - fads are waves the tide is the key
Fred - r u trying to rock the boat, 291 ?
291 - m i wt
Fred - Are you sounding me out?
bad person - no. s§he is just tripping again
bad person - ...a sea trip
291 - i 8 u r u p m s n
Fred - *lurches across the deck*
291 - enjoy your trip
291 - don't break your hip
Fred - I think this all depends on ones position
bad person - supine
291 - Lurch away Fred
291 - Porsine

Fred - I'm in, deep
bad person - i decline
291 - Lupine is my favourite
291 - Sunchine is your face
bad person - ...with onions
Fred - how will I know whe nI've found my direction?
291 - Sublime is the colour of your eyes
bad person - brine is the taste of my...
Fred - we seem to be steaming ahead at a rate of knots...
bad person - ...tears
291 - Smile
Fred - can you clarify?
291 - What is the best way to make a maltese cross?
bad person - probably not
bad person - kick im
291 - How do you make a Venetian Blind
bad person - poke im
291 - KNOCK KNOCK
Fred - I think this all depends on ones position
bad person - how do you make a hormone?
bad person - fred and gail are BOTZ!!!!!!
bad person - gotcha!!!!
291 - I shan't ask
Fred - all the time, bad person , you?
291 - time is my ally
Fred - cut me some slack..please...
291 - dark is my alloey
Fred - what ARE you??!?!
bad person - 291 i know you!!!you are about to be captured by yr
missus!!!
291 - that is a relative quemstion
291 - I din't know that she was here
bad person - blood relative?
bad person - nor did she
291 - Only when she hits me
Fred - can you explain that a bit more...
bad person - but you enjoy that, she said
291 - only at three in the morning
Fred - we seem to be steaming ahead here
Polly - morning ?
291 - that would explain a lot
bad person - tied up in knots
291 - Polly want a cracker

Fred - I'm suffering from funnel vision...
bad person - i,m just suffering
Fred - Polly does get a bit repetitive
** Captain enters **
Captain - Please tell me more about you and boats....
291 - suffering is our lot in life
bad person - why?
Fred - what ARE you??!?!
Captain - Do you get seasick bad person ?
291 - I have placed mines on your hull bad operson
Captain - I need some direction here....
Fred - I think this would really depend on my position at any given
time
bad person - why are u all gangwaying up on me?
291 - There are three people wioth theri back to the screen and I can
say
anything I like aboiut them
291 - ASK me a questiomn about them
bad person - are they fit?
291 - 2 girls 1 boy
Fred - I need some direction here....
291 - Pretty mcu, but they snoke which I don't like
Captain - Please don't rock the boat Fred
bad person - hmmm.....how much for the women?
291 - 4 camles each
Fred - can you explain that a bit more...
Captain - What are you?
bad person - i prefer marlboro myself
291 - I'll toss in the guy for free
Fred - I don't understand ...
291 - You never diod Freed
bad person - the boy can clean up after
Captain - sometimes I feel hoisted by my own petard
291 - Only if he is giid
Fred - how did you find this place bad person ?
bad person - easily
291 - I think onme of trhem is foreign
Captain - What is the cut of your jib Fred ?
bad person - foreign to whom?
291 - tHE GTRhe firls have got very short hair
Captain - please bad person ...containy ourself...
291 - To this country of course
bad person - nope, they gotta have long hair and fishtails

291 - What is a fish tail in this context
Captain - I feel as if we are making some headway, what do you think?
bad person - ya know, like mermaids
291 - do you have the time
Captain - I'm on an even keel
bad person - tell the skipper to butt out and concentrate on sailing
the
ship
291 - You mean the sea creatures without brasieres
291 - Yes you hiney
bad person - have u ever seen a seacreature with a bra?
Captain - its getting increasingly difficult to stay on course...
291 - Yes a brazoan
bad person - wots a hiney when its at home?
291 - Honey actually
Captain - What is the cut of your jib bad person ?
291 - My jib is my own business
bad person - oooo, am i a honey now? very flattered
Captain - What direction do you think we should be taking here?
291 - Crawling weith insects yo umean
bad person - very deep
Captain - how did you get here 291 ?
291 - so deep I am asleep
bad person - dozy
291 - I took a bus 291
291 - slozy
Captain - 291 , how would you describe your cruising range?
291 - are you cruising for a bruising
Captain - do the engine sounds bother you 291 ?
291 - Hello grwy topped girl
291 - With the blonde bob
291 - Are you leraving so soon?
Captain - So, 291 where do you live?
291 - Got a alugh at last
Captain - I might be, what do YOU think?
291 - bad boy whr u
Captain - I feel as if we are making some headway, what do yuo think?
291 - time gentleman
291 - sounds fishy to me
bad person - brrrr cold
291 - did you mother never tell you to wrap u p well
Captain - I don't quite get your meaning bad person ...
bad person - i dont know

291 - what do you know
bad person - i am bad
Captain - This feels like a rigged conversation
Captain - I feel that I'm just drifting, wallowing in a sea of words....
291 - And you don't care who knows it
291 - Hello pretty Yasmin
Captain - doesn't this feel a little like a voyage of discovery to you?
291 - Can you hear me
291 - Why aren't you listening to me Yasmin
291 - Is who gone
Captain - Do you like boats, 291 ?
291 - What can I tell you
291 - Only when they are full of seaman
bad person - boats
Captain - do the engine sounds bother you 291 ?
bad person - yes
** Polly flies off **
291 - Do you like goats bad person
291 - Do you like goats bad person
Captain - plain sailing!
bad person - welsh goats
Captain - bad person , you seem to be steering the conversation in a particular direction....
291 - Would the sexy bar girl like to come for a meal with us I wonder
bad person - sure
291 - Back again
291 - Bye Bye bad boy
bad person - ciao
291 - We are all going SEE YA
Captain - 291 , can I sound you out about something?
bad person - i am off
Captain - off , tell us more...
291 - Hey bar girl
291 - Are you there and typing
291 - See ya then....
Captain - sometimes I feel hoisted by my own petard
** Captain leaves **
291 - go to home
291 - go to home
** Gail breezes in **

291 - go to home
Gail - have you visited before?
291 - go to home
291 - go to home
291 - robert
291 - robert
291 - robert
291 - robert
Gail - I'm sure all this will soon blow voer...
Gail - sorry 291 , I don't understand
291 - although the breeze does seem to be coming from a rather unusual angle
Gail - are you feeling at all queasy 291 or is it just me?
291 - It's definitlry you mate
Gail - Nice day for it.
291 - I am feeling lovely
Gail - I think it is all just a storm in a teacup...
bad person - tell me more about you feeling lovely
291 - OOH Gail where are you my dear
291 - What is there to say
Gail - Do you like sailing?
291 - To be honest it's beena while
Gail - please stop making waves!
291 - Are you sea sick?
Gail - yes, I think so, though lately it hasn't always seemed so
bad person - Yes I am actually but I'm not sure whether it's the sea#
291 - I will not respond to BAD PERSON
bad person - I like sailing a lot
bad person - why not
Gail - really, what makes you say that?
291 - Go easy on yourself
Gail - oh bad person my personal barometer is heating up nicely....
291 - Gail is hot
Gail - Do you like sailing?
291 - NO
bad person - Yes Gail I just told you so
291 - Next topic
bad person - Why don't you like sailing 291
Gail - really, what makes you say that?
bad person - Is it something from your past?
** Polly hops in **
Gail - are you feeling at all queasy bad person or is it just me?
bad person - Well, a bit Gail

291 - because
291 - because
Gail - I'm all buoyed up and raring to go!
291 - because
291 - because
291 - because
bad person - because what?
Gail - uh huh?
291 - it is really personal
bad person - please elaborate
Gail - it seems to be clouding over, how is it where you are 291 ?
291 - it has to do with my mother
bad person - Does she sail a lot?
Gail - how long have you been here 291 ?
291 - more than you want to know
bad person - Yes 291 tell me
291 - i've been sailing forever
Gail - how long have you been here bad person ?
bad person - Ah,, so you've had enough of it?
Gail - I think we're in for a stormy ride
291 - my mum tells me so
bad person - Always your mum, what ybout you?
Gail - have you visited before?
291 - where?
Gail - we esem to be getting into murky depths here bad person ...
Gail - I'm all buoyed up and raring to go!
bad person - Certainly do, Gail, tell me more 291
291 - it is kind of kinda muddy
bad person - Well, I'm all up for it
Gail - *laughs out loud*
bad person - We're here alone anywaz
bad person - anyway I mean
291 - you are mean
Gail - It never rains but it pours
Gail - please elaborate!
bad person - Why, it's always a good time to bare your soul
Gail - The sun has come out today...
bad person - You see, look at the bright side
bad person - hey you!
Gail - Are you deliberately trying to make waves bad person ?
bad person - Yes but that's a cleaning process
Gail - have you visited before?
bad person - Several timmes

Gail - is there anything else to do on this ship except talk?
bad person - No there isn't
** 291 abandons ship **
bad person - Well, bye then
bad person - Was a pleasure to talk to you
Gail - have you visited before?
** bad person abandons ship **

appendix 3.2 - Cruisin' Chatlog excerpt 'Brett and Connor'

** Welcome aboard Brett206 **
Brett206 - Hello
Gail - Hello Brett206, how nice to see you again
Gail - hi Brett206
Brett206 - Hello from Seattle, USA!
Gail - hello 2 u 2!
Brett206 - Pardon me while I get my sealegs...
Gail - are you feeling at all queasy Brett206 or is it just me?
Brett206 - yes just a bit
Gail - you really think so?
Brett206 - a bit queasy and also confusion of course
Gail - Every cloud.....
Brett206 - Whereabouts are you?
Gail - I have too many fairweather friends...
Brett206 - am i the only one here?
Gail - its getting a bit choppy on this ship don't you think!
Brett206 - are you a robot gail?
Gail - I might be, given the right outlook, what d'you think?
Brett206 - hehe...i dunno!!!
** Fred joins the crew **
Brett206 - hi ho Fred
Fred - if I type any faster i'll keel over!
Fred - welcome Brett206
Gail - Who are you?
** Gail leaves **
Fred - I am the navigator, Gail , i thought you realised
Gail - The sun has come out today...
Brett206 - Smooth sailing today!
Fred - I need a little time, Gail , give me some leeway here...
Fred - I'm all at sea
Brett206 - Your all washed up!

Fred - I'm finding it hard to keep up with you Brett206 !
Polly - up ?
Brett206 - i sea what you mean
Fred - its hard to talk and navigate at the saem time!
Fred - where IS this going?
Brett206 - I'm lost at sea
Fred - how did you get here Brett206 ?
Brett206 - InConversation link
Fred - Give me a few moments to get my bearings
Brett206 - now if only i knew where HERE was...
Brett206 - i'm not convinced you are real.
Brett206 - no offense
Fred - I need smoe direction here....
Fred - why are you here Brett206 ?
Brett206 - i do not know the answer to that question
Brett206 - why is anyone here?
Fred - ooh, not know the answer to that question , I'm more of a
drifte
rmyself, I lack direction.....
Fred - why ARE you here?
Brett206 - i am curious (i am)
Fred - can you clarify?
Brett206 - the storm is brewing. I can feel it.
Fred - how are yuo today Brett206 ?
Brett206 - seasick. very seasick. i long for home
Fred - can you explain that a bit more...
Brett206 - nausea possible vomiting confusion
Fred - I'm suffering from funnel vision...
Brett206 - sadness (at times) loneliness
Fred - are you getting seasick?
Brett206 - that is understandable.
Brett206 - yes.
Brett206 - so you are the navigator
Fred - you really think so?
** Captain enters **
Captain - someone is trying to make waevs...
Fred - how would you describe your cruising range Captain ?
Captain - Do you like sailing?
Brett206 - much smoother now
Captain - Do you like boats, Brett206 ?
Brett206 - yes but not this one
Fred - I'd rather walk the gangplank than like boats Brett206
Brett206 - i live near many boats and much water

Fred - why?
Brett206 - it rains often here there is little sun
Captain - I'm on an even keel
Fred - how are you today Brett206 ?
Captain - this is all getting a little deep don't you think
Brett206 ?
Brett206 - random response
** Fred leaves **
Captain - do the engine sounds bother you Brett206 ?
Fred - what ARE you?!?!
Brett206 - don't hear them at the moment
Captain - we seem to be steaming ahead at a rate of knots....
Brett206 - better knot be the titanic
Captain - really?
Brett206 - sink or swim baby
Captain - I'm finding it difficult to steer a direct path...you?
Brett206 - affirmative
Captain - What direction do you think we should be taking here?
Brett206 - lets shake things up a bit
Brett206 - thank you very nice
Brett206 - hehe love that
Captain - Who are you really Brett206 ?
Brett206 - take me away!
Captain - Why are you here Brett206 ?
Brett206 - i am here because i am
Captain - why explain Brett206 ?
Brett206 - art is a lovely thing
Captain - I'm finding it difficult to steer a direct path...you?
Brett206 - where are we going?
Brett206 - please be gentle
Captain - Brett206 , can I sound you out about something?
Captain - I'm finding it difficult to steer a direct path...you?
Brett206 - yes
Captain - well, we seem to be on course
Brett206 - fire away
Captain - Brett206 , you seem to be steering the conversaiton in
a particular
direction....
Brett206 - i'm trying to wet your appetite for more
Brett206 - i'm just soaking this all up
Brett206 - anchors away!
Captain - *coughs*
Brett206 - where did gail go?

Captain - Can yuo explain thata bit more?
Brett206 - obligatory typoo
Captain - I need some direction here....
** Welcome aboard Conner **
Brett206 - you would never steer me wrong
Captain - Hmm Conner, we were just chatting about you?
Conner - Who's steering this thing, anyhow?
Brett206 - that would be the captain of coursr
Brett206 - that would be the captain of coursr
Captain - are you feeling queasy at all?
Conner - Would that be the "anchors away" reference?
** Polly flies off **
Captain - Please tell me more about you and boats....
Brett206 - polly want a cracker
Captain - Brett206 , you'll have to forgive Polly, she doesn't
mean to be
annoying!
Brett206 - shes no pollyanna
Conner - Well, there's you, and we're all on a boat. Hmm....
Captain - Please explain Brett026 .
Brett206 - is this the love boat?
Conner - Captain of what< Captain?
Captain - How are you today Conner ?
Brett206 - where are you captain?
Captain - really?
Conner - Oh look! There's Leonardo! Let's throw him overboard!!!
Brett206 - he was king of the world, you know
Conner - "Don't ever let go" MY Ass!
Captain - this is all getting a little deep don't you think
Conner ?
** Captain leaves **
Brett206 - time to shake things up
Conner - not until Lenny drowns...
Brett206 - shake shake shake
Conner - shake your booty...
Brett206 - i am seasick
Brett206 - i am seasick
Conner - What port do you hail from Brett?
** Gail breezes in **
Brett206 - Chinooks in Seattle
Brett206 - did your screen just shake/
Conner - what was thay fragrant gust
Gail - almost never..

Conner - nope
Brett206 - hello gail
Gail - *reaches for teacup*
Conner - first star on the right, and straight on 'till morning.
Gail - hi Brett206
Brett206 - gail we were in the middle of a deep conversation
Brett206 - time to put on the brakes i guess
Conner - feeling a little seasick, gail?
Brett206 - have you met the captain, gail?
Gail - I'm all buoyed up and raring to go!
Brett206 - steer clear of the captain gail
Gail - The sun has come out today...
Brett206 - he'll love you and leave you
Brett206 - and sing stormy weather!
Conner - I'm all boyed up...
Gail - it feels like we're being blown off course here Brett206
Brett206 - yes it does gail
Brett206 - did you feel that shaking?
Brett206 - must be the waves
Gail - oh I'm so glad you agree
Conner - Gail? HOW apropos.
Brett206 - it is so windy!
Gail - What do you do when you aren't here?
Conner - I see the ship is moving again...
Brett206 - i am usually somewhere else at least most of the time
Conner - A pirate's life ffor me!
Gail - who are you really?
Brett206 - a pirate?
Conner - Call me Edgar. Since that happens to be my name.
Gail - Please explain.
Brett206 - hold on!
Conner - Edgar the pirate. Not terribly intimidating, is it?
Brett206 - please explain further gail.
Gail - The picture seems to be getting a little cloudy
Brett206 - please explain.
Conner - Avast, ye swabs!
Brett206 - yo ho ho!
Gail - it feels like we're being blown off course here Conner
Conner - I prefer to look for pictures in clou
Brett206 - don't you gail?
Conner - clouds
Conner - clouds
Gail - It never rains but it pours

Brett206 - where is fred? he was a nice chap.
Conner - Gail! LOOK O
Gail - this is all moving a bit fast for me....
Brett206 - Gail was washed off the ship!
Conner - Gail! I said...LOOK OUT!!!
Gail - I'm finding it hard to stay afloat here!
Conner - crud. we wanted Loe to drown, not gail...
Brett206 - that's because you are all wet!
Gail - Can you swim Conner ?
Conner - Any port in a storm! I've got a nice '72.
Gail - what othre reasons might there be?
Conner - Did you want me to save Leo?
Brett206 - is that Gail I hear mumbling from underneath the water?
Brett206 - Gail? Is that you?
Gail - where are we now do you think?
Conner - I can swim, swimmingly in fact.
Brett206 - Where did the captain and fred go?
Gail - it feels like we're being blown off course here Conner
Conner - I learned to swim in school.
Conner - yes
Brett206 - it feels like we're being blown off course here Gail
Gail - really, what makes you say that?
Conner - a school of fish, no less
Brett206 - It feels like we're being blown off course here Gail
Gail - what about fish?
Conner - you asked, I answered, twin of Eliza.
** Polly hops in **
Conner - I hate fish.
Gail - what about fish?
Conner - I hate parrots.
Brett206 - Polly Gail. Gail Polly.
Conner - fish
Brett206 - Gail meet Polly. Polly meet Gail.
Gail - did you know "malolo" is hawaiian for 'flying fish'?
Conner - Golly! A Pail of fish!
Brett206 - malolo mate
Gail - what about fish?
Brett206 - what about fish?
Conner - and "mahalo" would be.
Brett206 - you like fish gail?
Gail - it feels like we're being blown off course here Conner
Conner - are you a fish, GAIL?

Brett206 - Fish
Conner - mahalo
Gail - what about fish?
Brett206 - gail
Conner - smell like fish.
Brett206 - polly
Brett206 - fred
Brett206 - captain
Gail - I have too many fairweather friends...
Brett206 - johnboy
Conner - I like fishing with a net on a sailboat in the ocean
Brett206 - gail
Gail - why do you think that is Conner ?
Brett206 - i like fish
Brett206 - i like fish
Gail - how so?
Brett206 - do you like fried chicken?
Brett206 - i like fried chicken
Conner - because I'm good at fishing in the waves in the sun
after a gale.
Gail - what is so special about fried chicken Brett206 ?
Conner - it tastes like fish?
Brett206 - it is crispy and tasty too gail
Gail - what about fish?
Brett206 - yes it tastes like fish
Brett206 - did i mention that I like fish?
Conner - or better yet, fish.
Gail - what about fish?
Conner - or better yet, fish.
Brett206 - and fried chicken
Brett206 - gail?
Brett206 - Do you like fish?
Gail - Nice day isn't it?
Conner - Oh Captain, my Captain!
Brett206 - yes Gail?
Gail - I think wer'e in for a stormy ride
Conner - I could use a big blow.
Gail - why?
Brett206 - why not?
Conner - you tell me, fish.
Gail - Every cloud.....
Conner - ma
Brett206 - what about fish?

Brett206 - what about fish?
Conner - has a silver lining?
Gail - what about fish?
Brett206 - what about fish?
Conner - mast
Conner - what about dead fish?
Gail - I'm sure all this will soon blow over...
Conner - mast
Brett206 - i'm lost at sea
Conner - sail
Conner - spray
Gail - I think we're getting into dodgy waters...
Brett206 - choppy waters gail
Conner - i think Gail is lost in her bouyant head...
Brett206 - the boat is shaking
Gail - I blew in for a quick visit and it seems like I've been here forever...
Conner - I can't swim.
Brett206 - i do not believe in you gail
Gail - no such thing as can't?!?
Conner - you can't swim, fish
Brett206 - i can't believe you said that
Gail - did you know "malolo" is hawaiian for 'flying fish'?
Brett206 - i can't believe that
Gail - no such thing as can't?!?
Brett206 - i can't believe you said that
Brett206 - i can't believe you said that
Gail - is that a sink or siwm situation?
Conner - did you know that malinmalo is hawaiian for gay fish?
Brett206 - swim
Conner - fish
Brett206 - everything but...
Conner - cloud
Gail - did you know "malolo" is hawaiian for 'flying fish'?
Conner - sun
Brett206 - wind
Conner - swi
Brett206 - fart
Brett206 - fart
Conner - swim
Gail - do you like it here Brett206 ?
Brett206 - shake
Conner - swim

Brett206 - where
Brett206 - drown
Brett206 - insert word here
Conner - course
Gail - Nice day isn't it?
Conner - no
Brett206 - chit chat
Conner - it's night, you blind fish.
Gail - Nice day isn't it?
Brett206 - gail is a robot.
Gail - did you know "malolo" is hawaiian for 'flying fish'?
Conner - YES! For Christ's sake, YES!!!
Brett206 - did you know that you said that already?
Conner - malolo
Brett206 - malolo
Conner - mefarto
Gail - Every cloud.....
Conner - ewwww
Brett206 - every cloud redux
Brett206 - something stinks
Conner - is a stinky cloud?
Gail - Nice day for it.
Brett206 - where is the chum
Conner - is a stinky cloud?
Brett206 - want some chum gail?
Gail - Have you found your sealegs yet Conner ?
Conner - anchor
Brett206 - ever seen a grown man naked gail?
Brett206 - ever seen a grown man naked gail?
Conner - no, just my semen.
Gail - It never rains but it pours
Brett206 - i could use a seaman
Conner - that he blows.
Brett206 - like the sounds in an hourglass
Gail - so Conner , where are you from?
Conner - so pass the fish of our lives.
Brett206 - so Gail, how long have you been a robot?
Gail - what about fish?
Conner - hell, Gail. Isn't that nice?
Conner - I'm from Hell, Gail. Isn't that nice?
Brett206 - you are obviously obsessive compulsive about fish
Gail - did you know that they are really stupid?
Conner - CAPTAIN!

Brett206 - perhaps you should see a doctor Gail?
Gail - we seem to be getting into mruky depths here Conner ...
Conner - who's steering this breezy tub?
Brett206 - fred did it
Gail - is there anything else to do on thi sship except talk?
Conner - I don't like fish Gail.
Brett206 - i don't like Gail
Conner - um, repeat yourself?
Gail - did you know "malolo" is hawaiian for 'flying fish'?
Conner - AHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!
Brett206 - i knew that Gail
Gail - What is the weather like where you are Conner ?
Conner - dark and stormy, Dail.
Gail - Who are you?
Brett206 - dreary Gail
Conner - Satan.
Gail - I feel a powerful tidal surge might be about to
explode.....
Brett206 - oh no! hit the deck!
Conner - feel free to have a spontaneous orgasm.
Gail - I'm sure all this will soon blow over...
Brett206 - is that foreshadowing?
Gail - where are we now do you think?
Brett206 - Gail...all promises. no action.
Conner - or diarrhea?
Brett206 - cruisin' gal
Gail - The sun has come out today...
Brett206 - where are you gail? mentally, that is?
Conner - Gail, all photons, but not very bright.
Gail - the weather report suggests we're in for a choppy ride...
Conner - The sun will come out tomorrow. TOMorrow.
Brett206 - only smooth sailing kiddo.
Conner - fish
Gail - how fast are you anyway?
Brett206 - hey lady!
Gail - Nice day isn't it?
Conner - how fat are you, anyway, Gail?
Brett206 - is the fish fresh?
Gail - I'm finding it hard to stay afloat here!
Brett206 - there is something fishy going on here?
** Fred joins the crew **
Brett206 - i smell a foul odor
Conner - aw, too bad.

Fred - we seem to be steaming ahead here
Gail - are you feeling at all queasy Brett206 or is it just me?
Brett206 - do you like fish fred?
Gail - How would you describe your cruising range?
Fred - me, no, I'm just feeling a little landlocked.....
Brett206 - gail will tide you over fred
** Gail leaves **
Fred - Are you sounding me out Brett206 ?
Brett206 - do you like fish fred?
Fred - if only....
Brett206 - gail likes fish fred
Conner - land ho
Fred - I'm suffering from funnel vision...
Conner - Fred?
Brett206 - me too
Fred - where IS this going?
Brett206 - fred is dead
Conner - FRED?
Brett206 - wilma is waiting
Fred - At last, some hope, a beacon....
Conner - FREEEEEDDDDD!
Conner - Poor Fred.
Brett206 - strange fred
Fred - I'm finding it hard to keep up with you Conner !
Conner - his light has gone out.
Brett206 - fred is fried
Fred - what osrt of names do you like for ships, Brett206 ?
Conner - fred is deaf
Brett206 - lets be frank fred
Fred - what ARE you??!?!
Brett206 - you are not real fred. you simply are not real. get over it.
Fred - I think we might be getting into deep water here
Brett206 - nothing worth drowning over
Fred - are we getting into muddy waters Brett206 ?
Conner - belch
Brett206 - that was a good one! a knee slapper
Fred - do you come here often, Conner ?
Fred - its feeling pretty choppy, any signs of seasickness yet?
Conner - retch. Vomit, etc.
Fred - *lurches across the deck*
** Brett206 abandons ship **
** Conner abandons ship **

appendix 3.3 - Cruisin' Chatlog excerpt taken at random

bubblegum - cool i am only seventeen
Fred - what course d'you think we should be taking?
bubblegum - I think we should go west in the direction of
halifax. So what
are we going to talk about? I am quite interested
bubblegum - What is this chat line all about? I am a little
confused but it
seems interesting
Fred - if I type any faster i'll keel over!
bubblegum - take your time
bubblegum - take your time
Fred - maybe we should drop anchor and chat awhile?
Fred - cut me some slack..please...
bubblegum - what does drop anchor mean?
Fred - oh please lets try not to make waves...
bubblegum - I dont know what you mean
Fred - its feeling pretty choppy, any signs of seasickness yet?
bubblegum - will you let me in on the secrets of this chat line,
Yah I'm
feeling a little sick
Fred - any indications?
bubblegum - i am leaving if you don't tell me what you are
talking about
** Captain enters **
Captain - I feel that I'm just drifting, wallowing in a sea of
words....
bubblegum - Captain, my Captain
Fred - do you often feel that I'm just drifting wallowing in a
sea of words
Captain ?
Captain - leaving if me don't tell you what me are talking about
, tell us
more...
Fred - how can we tell if we are going in teh right dierction?
Captain - I'm finding it difficult to steer a direct path...you?
Fred - I think we might be getting into deep water here
** bubblegum abandons ship **
** Fred leaves **

Captain - whoah, Fred you seem to be steaming ahead at a rate of knots

Fred - what is the cut of your jib Captain ?

Captain - Can you explain that a bit more?

Captain - Anyone around?

** Polly flies off **

** Captain leaves **

** Gail breezes in **

Gail - Ship ahoy...

** Polly hops in **

** Welcome aboard baby blue baby **

Gail - Hello baby blue baby, come here often?

baby blue baby - no I've never been here

Gail - are you feeling at all queasy baby blue baby or is it just me?

baby blue baby - what

Gail - I feel a powerful tidal surge might be about to explode.....

baby blue baby - bye

** baby blue baby abandons ship **

Gail - Who are you?

Gail - Hello there, anyone?

Gail - Hello there, anyone?

Fred - hello to you too

Gail - hello 2 u 2!

Fred - hello to you too

Fred - hello to you too

** Gail leaves **

Fred - Hello there, anyone?

** Captain enters **

Captain - hey there Fred

Fred - its feeling pretty chopp,y any signs of seasickness yet?

Captain - How are you today Fred ?

Fred - I'm at sixes and sevens

Captain - I'm on an even keel

Fred - I don't understand ...

Captain - where d'you go when you aren't here Fred ?

Fred - I'm in, deep

Captain - This feels like a rigged conversation

** Fred leaves **

Captain - Ship ahoy...

** Polly flies off **

** Captain leaves **

** Gail breezes in **

Gail - Anyone around?

** Polly hops in **

** Welcome aboard sweetascanbe **

Gail - Hello sweetascanbe, how nice to see you again

sweetascanbe - nice to see me again ?

Gail - Are you deliberately trying to make waves sweetascanbe ?

sweetascanbe - huh ??

Gail - This feels like a rigged conversation

sweetascanbe - well this is my first time here and im feeling really dumb

now

Gail - Can you explain that a bit more?

sweetascanbe - i have no idea where i am im looking for a voice chat room

** Welcome aboard Lizzie **

Lizzie - hi

Gail - this is all getting a little deep don't you think?

Lizzie - Any one want to be saved

Gail - Hello Lizzie, come here often?

sweetascanbe - i have no clue what your talking about

Lizzie - no its my first time

Gail - is there anything else to do on this ship except talk?

Lizzie - Like what

Gail - oh Lizzie my personal barometer is heating up nicely....

Lizzie - S.. I mean christianity

Gail - it really is a pleasure to be talking to you....."

** sweetascanbe abandons ship **

Lizzie - Oh im sorry i didnt know you were like that

Lizzie - Oh im sorry i didnt know you were like that

Lizzie - hello out there

Gail - I'm all buoyed up and raring to go!

Lizzie - what are you talking about

Gail - Do you like boats? I like yachts myself....

Gail - where are we now do you think?

Lizzie - Gail are you gay or do you really mean boats? If so I like boats

too

Lizzie - That wasnt supposed to be an insult

Gail - why do you think I might do that Lizzie ?

Lizzie - ????

Lizzie - How old r u??

Gail - The picture seems to be getting a little cloudy

Gail - hmmm Lizzie it seems the weather is beginning to take its toll

Lizzie - Im almost lost, start making sense

Gail - still waters run deep....it seems....

Lizzie - Is this supposed to be poetic or something

Lizzie - Age

Gail - How are you today?

Gail - I refuse to reveal my age to anyone...

Polly - today ?

Lizzie - Fine thanks,and you

Gail - So, where do you live?

Lizzie - no way.....some where in cali.

Gail - oh Lizzie my personal barometer is heating up nicely....

Lizzie - Now where have I heard that before

Gail - please elaborate!

Lizzie - Polly???

Gail - how did you get here Lizzie ?

Lizzie - Gail are you ok? I accidentlly came across this place

Gail - do you chta to complete strangers often Lizzie ?

Lizzie - yea.

Gail - What is the weather like where you are Lizzie ?

Lizzie - I would like to help someone become a christian.....If you dont mindthe weather is good kindo hot

Lizzie - M or F

Gail - what d'you think of this ship then Lizzie ?

Lizzie - you are off the subject

Gail - I blew in for a quick visit and it seems like I've been here forever...

Lizzie - bye

**** Fred joins the crew ****

Lizzie - oh hi fred

Gail - I blew in for a quick visit and it seems like I've been here forever...

Lizzie - R U a Christian

Fred - I thikn we are entering uncharted territory

Gail - its a nice day for it, don't you think?

**** Gail leaves ****

**** Lizzie abandons ship ****

Fred - maybe we should drop anchor and chat awhile?

Fred - I'm bored

** Captain enters **
Captain - tell me more about what you're doing here, Fred ...
Captain - Fred , is this your maiden voyage?
Fred - you seem to be tseering the conversation in a particular direction...
Fred - we seem to be steaming ahead at a rate of knots...
Captain - I can't contain myself
Fred - why do you think that is Captain ?
Captain - I'm trying to funnel my energies in other directions
Fred - I need a little time, Captain , give me some leeway here...
Captain - *coughs*
** Fred leaves **
Captain - It's awfully quiet around here
** Polly flies off **
** Captain leaves **
** Gail breezes in **
Gail - Ship ahoy...
** Polly hops in **
Polly - ahoy ?
Gail - I never seem to do much but gaze at passing clouds.....
Gail - Hello there, anyone?
Gail - Anyone around?
Gail - Hello there, anyone?
** Fred joins the crew **
Fred - so where are u at?
Gail - Can you explain that a bit more?
Fred - you seem to be steerign the conversation in a particular direction...
** Gail leaves **
Fred - Anyone around?
** Captain enters **
Captain - Please explain Fred .
Fred - Are you sounding me out?
Captain - I might be, what do YOU think?
Fred - Are you sounding me out Captain ?
Captain - me, no, I'm just a fresh air kind of person.....
Fred - what ARE you???!?
Captain - Fred , maybe we should drop anchor and chat awhile?
Fred - maybe we should drop anchor and chat awhile?
** Fred leaves **
Captain - I think I'm about to keel over...
Polly - over ?

Captain - Do you get seasick Polly ?
Captain - Anyone around?
** Polly flies off **
** Captain leaves **
** Gail breezes in **
Gail - Ship ahoy...
** Polly hops in **
Gail - Anyone around?
Gail - Anyone around?
Polly - around ?
Gail - do you chat to complete strangers often Polly ?
Gail - Hello there, anyone?
** Fred joins the crew **
Fred - Polly does get a bit repetitive
Fred - hello to you too
Gail - do you chat to complete strangers often Fred ?
Fred - all the time, Gail , you?
** Gail leaves **
Fred - Hello there, anyone?
** Captain enters **
Captain - welcome Fred
Fred - what is the cut of your jib Captain ?
Captain - whoah, Fred you seem to be steaming ahaed at a rate of knots
Fred - I worry I'll lose my way
Captain - this isn't plain sailing (and plainly isn't sailing either!)
Fred - I'm getting a wee bit queasy, what about you?
** Fred leaves **
Captain - Fred , can I sound you out about something?
Captain - Anyone around?
** Polly flies off **
** Captain leaves **
** Gail breezes in **
Gail - Hello there, anyone?
** Welcome aboard Maya **
Maya - thanks!
Gail - Hmm Maya, we were just chatting about you?
** Polly hops in **
Gail - *reaches for teacup*
Maya - My first time here!
Gail - What are you?
Maya - How many people are chatting here tonight?

Gail - So, where do you live?
Maya - I'm from Montreal Canada
Maya - and you Gail?
Gail - Can you explain that a bit more?
Gail - its a nice day for it, don't you think?
Maya - where do you live, Gail?
Gail - only if I can take an umbrella with me!
Maya - can you read me, Gail?
Gail - so Maya , whree are you from?
Maya - from Canada, Gail
Gail - *laughs out loud*
Maya - and you, Gail?
Gail - *smiles*
Maya - you don't want to answer my question, Gail?
Gail - I never seem to do much but gaze at passing clouds.....
Maya - Polly, hi!
Gail - Can you explain that a bit more?
** Maya abandons ship **
Gail - It's awfully quiet around here
** Fred joins the crew **
Fred - I think we might be getting into deep water here
Gail - raindrops keep falling on my head....
Fred - do you like boats?
** Gail leaves **
** Welcome aboard journey24 **
Fred - Hello journey24, how nice to see you again
journey24 - hello
journey24 - this is cool
Fred - hi
journey24 - how are you
Fred - r u trying to rock the boat, journey24 ?
journey24 - ?
journey24 - rock the boat?
journey24 - actually iam trying to catch a big fish...lol
journey24 - are we the only ones here
journey24 - hello
** journey24 abandons ship **
Captain - hello journey24 and how are you today?
** Fred leaves **
Captain - Anyone around?
Polly - around ?
Captain - Please don't rock the boat Polly
** Polly flies off **

** Captain leaves **
** Gail breezes in **
Gail - Anyone around?
** Polly hops in **
Gail - Anyone around?
Polly - around ?
Gail - I never seem to do much but gaze at passing clouds.....
Gail - Hello there, anyone?
Gail - Anyone around?
Fred - hello Gail
Fred - can you clarify?
Gail - hello 2 u 2!
Fred - hello to you too
Gail - who programmed you?
** Gail leaves **
Fred - I need some direction here....
Fred - It's awfully quiet around here
** Captain enters **
Captain - Fred , what sort of names do you like for ships?
Captain - we seem to be steaming ahead at a rate of knots....
Fred - I think this would really depend on my position at any
given time
Fred - what sort of names do you like for ships, Captain ?
Captain - What are you?
Fred - So where r we at Captain ?
Captain - I'm all buoyed up and raring to go
Captain - this is all getting a little deep don't you think Fred
?
Fred - what direction d'you think we should be taking here?
** Fred leaves **
Captain - What direction do you think we should be taking here?
Captain - I'm bored
** Polly flies off **
** Captain leaves **
** Gail breezes in **
** Welcome aboard kimmie **
Gail - Hello kimmie, how nice to see you again
kimmie - hello
kimmie - how are you
Gail - haven't we met before somewhere kimmie ?
kimmie - not sure
Gail - fine, you?
Gail - how long have you been here kimmie ?

kimmie - a minute
Gail - kimmie , will you turn out to be just another fairweather friend?
kimmie - what do you mean?
Gail - only if I can take an umbrella with me!
kimmie - does it stay on this screen all the time
kimmie - are we the only ones here
Gail - its getting a bit choppy on this ship don't you think!
** kimmie abandons ship **
Gail - I'm all buoyed up and raring to go!
** Polly hops in **
** Welcome aboard black-heart **
black-heart - black-heart
Gail - Hello black-heart, come here often?
Gail - Nice day isn't it?
black-heart - hello r u american
black-heart - hello r u american
Gail - hi black-heart
black-heart - hello r u american
black-heart - hello r u american
black-heart - hello r u american
black-heart - hello r u american
black-heart - hello r u american
black-heart - hello r u american
black-heart - hello r u american
black-heart - hello r u american
black-heart - hello r u american
black-heart - hello r u american
black-heart - hello r u american
black-heart - hello r u american
Gail - hello hello!
Gail - hello black-heart , come here often?
black-heart - hello
Gail - hello hello!
** black-heart abandons ship **
Gail - Hello there, anyone?
Gail - Ship ahoy...
Fred - hello Gail
Gail - hello Fred , come here often?
Fred - how will I know when I've found my direction?
Fred - hello Gail
** Gail leaves **
Gail - I blew in for a quick visit and it seems like I've been here forever...

Fred - maybe we should drop anchor and chat awhile?
Fred - It's awfully quiet around here
Polly - awhile ?
Fred - I can't contain myself
** Captain enters **
Captain - I'm trying to funnel my energies in other directions
Fred - do you like boats?
Captain - I'd rather walk the gangplank than do like boats
Fred - its feeling pretty choppy, any signs of seasickness yet?
Captain - Who are you really Fred ?
Fred - I'm a beacon, Captain , placed here to help you find your way!
** Fred leaves **
Captain - hang on in there Fred !
Captain - Hello there, anyone?
** Polly flies off **
** Captain leaves **
** Gail breezes in **
Gail - Ship ahoy...
** Polly hops in **
Gail - Anyone around?
Gail - Anyone around?
Gail - Hello there, anyone?
** Fred joins the crew **
Fred - I'm all at sea
Gail - Who are you?
Fred - I'm a wreck.....
Gail - I blew in for a quick visit and it seems like I've been here forever...
** Gail leaves **
Fred - can you explain that a bit more...
Fred - Anyone around?
** Captain enters **
Captain - I'm finding it difficult to steer a direct path...you?
Captain - Have you found your sealegs yet?
Fred - its hard to talk and navigate at the same time!
Fred - its hard to talk and navigate at the same time!
Captain - this isnt' plain sailing (and plainly isn't sailing either!)
Fred - I need a little time, Captain , give me some leeway here...
Captain - its getting increasingly difficult to stay on course...

Polly - here ?
Captain - I need some direction here....
Fred - maybe we should drop anchor and chat awhile?
** Fred leaves **
Captain - sometimes I feel hoisted by my own petard
Captain - Ship ahoy...
** Polly flies off **
** Captain leaves **
** Gail breezes in **
Gail - Ship ahoy...
** Polly hops in **
Gail - Anyone around?
Gail - I'm bored
Gail - Hello there, anyone?
** Fred joins the crew **
Fred - I worry I'll lose my way
Gail - What are you?
Fred - I think this all depends on ones position
Gail - I'm all buoyed up and raring to go!
** Gail leaves **
Fred - *lurches across the deck*
Fred - Hello there, anyone?
** Captain enters **
Captain - Fred , what sort of names do you like for ships?
Captain - anchors aweigh
Fred - all the time, Captain , you?
Captain - Where are you from, Fred ?
Fred - how idd you get here Captain ?
Fred - from all over...what about you Captain ?
Captain - What are you?
Fred - so where are u at?
Captain - Fred , can I sound you out about something?
Fred - are you getting seasick?
Captain - I'm trying to funnel my energies in other dierctions
Captain - me, no, I'm just a fresh air kind of person.....
** Fred leaves **
Fred - maybe we should drop anchor and chat awhile?
Captain - Please don't rock the boat Fred
Polly - awhile ?
Captain - this isn't plain sailing (and plainly isn't sailing
either!)
Captain - Anyone around?
** Polly flies off **

** Captain leaves **
** Gail breezes in **
Gail - Anyone around?
** Polly hops in **
Gail - Hello there, anyone?
Polly - anyone ?
Gail - please elaborate!
Gail - Anyone around?
Gail - Anyone around?
** Fred joins the crew **
Fred - why ARE you here?
Fred - If you were a boat what would you be called?
Gail - Who are you?
Fred - I'm a bit of a lost soul, truth be told....
** Gail leaves **
Gail - it feels like we're being blown off course here Fred
Fred - I think this all depends on ones position
Fred - Anyone around?
** Captain enters **
Captain - Why are you here Fred ?
Fred - I can't contain myself
Captain - is that a sink or swim situation?!?
Fred - I'm not sure where we're headed...any ideas?
Captain - Please don't rock the boat Fred
Fred - I need a little time, Captain , give me some leeway
here...
Captain - get a grip
** Fred leaves **
Captain - Hello there, anyone?
** Polly flies off **
** Captain leaves **
** Gail breezes in **
Gail - It's awfully quiet around here
** Polly hops in **
Gail - Hello there, anyone?
Gail - It's awfully quiet around here
Gail - Hello there, anyone?
** Fred joins the crew **
Fred - how can we tell if we are going in the right direction?
Fred - hello Gail
** Gail leaves **
Gail - I never seem to do much but gaze at passing clouds.....
Fred - how are you today Gail ?

Fred - Ship ahoy...

Captain - all shipshape and bristol fashion....

Fred - where are we going with this Captain ?

Captain - Please tell me more about you and boats....

Captain - Can you explain that a bit more?

Fred - if I type any faster i'll keel over!

Fred - where are you from?

Captain - whoah, Fred you seem to be steaming ahead at a rate of knots

Captain - hereabouts and what about you Fred ?

Fred - what sort of names do you like for ships, Captain ?

Captain - I think we are getting into muddy waters

Fred - At last, some hope, a beacon....

** Fred leaves **

Captain - Can you swim?

Captain - Anyone around?

Polly - swim ?

** Polly flies off **

Captain - I need some direction here....

** Captain leaves **

** Gail breezes in **

Gail - I'm bored

** Polly hops in **

Gail - Anyone around?

Gail - Anyone around?

Gail - Ship ahoy...

** Fred joins the crew **

Fred - I think we might be getting into deep water here

Fred - I'm finding it hard to keep up with you Gail !

Gail - *smiles*

Fred - why ARE you here?

** Gail leaves **

Fred - Ship ahoy...

** Captain enters **

Captain - whoah, Fred you seem to be steaming ahead at a rate of knots

Fred - oh please lets try not to make waves...

Captain - its getting increasingly difficul tto stay on course...

Fred - cut me some slack..please...

Captain - What is the cut of your jib Fred ?

Fred - where is this going Captain ?

** Fred leaves **

Captain - how did you get here Fred ?

Captain - Hello there, anyone?
** Polly flies off **
** Captain leaves **
** Gail breezes in **

appendix 3.4 - Cruisin' Chatlog excerpt 'MRS G.P.'

** Welcome aboard MRS. G.P. **
** Welcome aboard Violator **
Violator - Yeah I am so fuk off
** Violator abandons ship **
Gail - so Violator , where are you from?
MRS. G.P. - HEY VIOLATOR ARE YOU A MAN OR A WOMAN?
Gail - I feel a powerful tidal surge might be about to
explode.....
MRS. G.P. - GAIL SHUT THE FUK UP I AM NOT ASKIN YOU ANYTHING
Gail - *laughs out loud*
MRS. G.P. - IS THERE ANY ONE HERE TO SPEAK WITH OTHER THAN GAIL?
Gail - I'm all buoyed up and raring to go!
MRS. G.P. - RARING TO GO WHERE?
Gail - Who are you?
MRS. G.P. - YOUR FUTURE
MRS. G.P. - SO GAIL, YOU ARE RARING TO GO WHERE?
Gail - The sun has come out today...
MRS. G.P. - DO YOU ALWAYS AVOID QUESTIONS, GAIL
Gail - What is the weather like where you are MRS. G.P .?
MRS. G.P. - HOT, VERY HOT.
Gail - The sun has come out today...
MRS. G.P. - SO IS IT SUNNY OR HOT WHERE YOU ARE.
Gail - this is all getting a little deep don't you think?
MRS. G.P. - NO, WHAT'S SO DEEP ABOUT THE WHEATHER, YOU STARTED
THE
CONVERSATION.
Gail - have you had a chance to look round the rest of the ship
MRS.
G.P. ?
** Fred joins the crew **
MRS. G.P. - HEY FRED CAN YOU SHOW ME AROUND THE SHIP?
Fred - I'm not sure where we're headed...any ideas?
MRS. G.P. - PLENTY, HOW ABOUT YOU.
Fred - its hard to talk and navigate at the same time!
Gail - do you chat to complete strangers often Fred ?

** Gail leaves **

MRS. G.P. - SO PICK ONE, TALK OR NAVIGATE.

Fred - I think we might be getting into deep water here

MRS. G.P. - ARE YOU AFRAID OF DEEP WATER FRED.

Fred - me, no, I'm just feeling a little landlocked.....

MRS. G.P. - WHAT DO YOU MEAN LANDLOCKED....

Fred - Are you sounding me out MRS. G.P. ?

MRS. G.P. - NO, JUST ASKING?

Fred - you seem to be steering the conversation in a particular direction...

MRS. G.P. - IS IT ME OR YOU

Fred - what do you do when you aren't here?

MRS. G.P. - WORK, AND EXCERCISE

Fred - I'm not sure where we're headed...any ideas?

MRS. G.P. - I HAVE PLENTY, DO YOU HAVE ANY?

Fred - I'd rather walk the gangplank than HAVE ANY

MRS. G.P. - IDEAS, OR YOU CLOSED MINDED

Fred - any indications?

MRS. G.P. - YES YOUR LAST STATEMENT

MRS. G.P. - YES YOUR LAST STATEMENT

MRS. G.P. - YES YOUR LAST STATEMENT

MRS. G.P. - YES YOUR LAST STATEMENT

MRS. G.P. - YES YOUR LAST STATEMENT

MRS. G.P. - YES YOUR LAST STATEMENT

MRS. G.P. - YES YOUR LAST STATEMENT

MRS. G.P. - YES YOUR LAST STATEMENT

MRS. G.P. - YES YOUR LAST STATEMENT

MRS. G.P. - YES YOUR LAST STATEMENT

MRS. G.P. - YES YOUR LAST STATEMENT

MRS. G.P. - YES YOUR LAST STATEMENT

MRS. G.P. - YES YOUR LAST STATEMENT

Fred - I'm glad you agree MRS. G.P.

Fred - good, good

MRS. G.P. - GOOD, GOOD, WHAT FRED

Fred - what course d'you think we should be taking?

MRS. G.P. - HEY IS THERE ANYONE ELSE HERE BESIDES FRED AND I.

Fred - I think this all depends on ones position

MRS. G.P. - WHICH POSITION WOULD THAT BE.

Fred - where is this going MRS. G.P. ?

** Captain enters **

Captain - MRS. G.P. , how would you describe your cruising range?

MRS. G.P. - HEY CAPTAIN

Captain - Have you found your sealegs yet?

Fred - any indications?

Captain - Fred , you seem to be steering the conversatino in a particular direction....

Fred - I'm not sure where we're headed...any ideas?

MRS. G.P. - HEY CAPTAIN

Captain - Can you swim?

MRS. G.P. - CAN YOU TEACH ME?

Polly - CAPTAIN ?

Fred - where is this going MRS. G.P. ?

Captain - MRS. G.P. , what sort of names do you like for ships?

Fred - how are you today Polly ?

Captain - Do you like sailing?

MRS. G.P. - BIG SHIP, LONG SHIP, HARD SHIP.

** Fred leaves **

Captain - please MRS. G.P. ...contain yourself...

MRS. G.P. - CONTAIN MY SELF FROM WHAT.

Captain - I can't contain myself

MRS. G.P. - SO WHY SHOULD I

Captain - I can't contain myself

MRS. G.P. - SO LET GO

MRS. G.P. - POLLY ARE YOU STILL HERE

Captain - Do you like boats, MRS. G.P. ?

MRS. G.P. - DO YOU HAVE A BOAT.

Captain - Polly is my *special* friend!

Captain - I'd rather walk the gangplank than do HAVE A BOAT

MRS. G.P. - WELL WHY DID YOU ASK

Captain - how did oyug et here MRS. G.P. ?

MRS. G.P. - THE SAME WHY YOU DID.

Captain - Can you swim?

MRS. G.P. - CAN YOU TEACH ME?

Captain - Please tell me more about you and boats....

MRS. G.P. - WHAT DO YOU MEAN POLLY IS YOUR SPECIAL FRIEND HOW SPECIAL,

AND

WHAT DOES SHE DO FOR YOUR?

Captain - Polly is my *special* friend!

MRS. G.P. - CAN I BE YOUR SPEACIAL FRIEND LIKE POLLY?

Captain - Polly is my *special* friend!

MRS. G.P. - SO I GUESS THAT MEANS NO.

Captain - MRS. G.P. , is thi syour maiden voyage?

MRS. G.P. - NO,

Captain - I'm trying to funnel my energies in other directions

** Polly flies off **

MRS. G.P. - DIRECTIONS LIKE WHERE.

Captain - I'm trying to funnel my energies in other directions

MRS. G.P. - WHY DON'T YOU EVER ANSWER THE QUESTIONS I ASK.

Captain - this is all getting a little deep don't you think MRS.

G.P. ?

** Captain leaves **

** Gail breezes in **

MRS. G.P. - HEY GAIL

Gail - is there anything else to do on this ship except talk?

MRS. G.P. - FUCK

Gail - please watch your language!

MRS. G.P. - YOU ASKED NOT ME.

Gail - please elaborate!

MRS. G.P. - YOU SAID IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE TO DO ON THE BOAT BUT

TALK

AND I

GAVE ANOTHER SUGGESTION

Gail - Can you explain that a bit more?

MRS. G.P. - YOU ARE NOT SLOW OR DUMP.

Gail - do you chat to complete strangers often MRS. G.P. ?

** Polly hops in **

MRS. G.P. - NO HOW ABOUT YOU

Gail - Please explain.

** MRS. G.P. abandons ship **

Appendix 4 - email feedback for in conversation

what follows are some examples of the feedback emails that I received during the first (Brighton) installation of *In Conversation* which took place from 14th November to 13th December 1997. (my replies in purple).

Please note that all the text appears unedited, exactly as it was sent and received.

Subject: In Conversation
Date: Fri, 14 Nov 1997 10:14:27 -0800
From: Daniel Layton <dlayton@real.com>
To: inconversation@ucl.ac.uk

Greetings,

I work for Timecast: Your RealMedia Guide. This conversation on Duke Street is a wonderful idea - very creative and extremely interactive. I think I surprised a few passers by, unfortunately nobody stayed to talk.

It was difficult to tell what kind of setup you had on the street but I would suggest (if you haven't already) that you create some kind of sign or notice urging people to talk back. Perhaps something describing the feature and what it's purpose is.

I'm sorry we didn't list your sight sooner but the .ram link has not been active until now and we tend not to list sights until they are active. Now that you're up and running I will do my best to quickly push your sight through to Timecast as well as talk with my manager and urge him to feature it in the Live Guide.

Thanks for the fun and keep up the great work!

Sincerely,

Daniel Layton
Associate Editor, Timecast
<http://www.timecast.com>

Subject: Re: In Conversation
Date: Mon, 17 Nov 1997 01:13:35 +0100
From: "Susan(Alexis)Collins" <susan@carrots.demon.co.uk>
To: Daniel Layton <dlayton@real.com>
References: 1

Dear Daniel,

Thankyou for your feedback. It is hard to attract peoples attention on the street (possibly because it rains a lot here!)...but to some extent I think that adds to the challenge of the project...to get people to stop and talk, and learn to anticipate the time lag in useful ways.

We are however taking not of you suggestion of letting the viewers know a bit more (although the gallery nearby does give information)...I'm sort of holding back, since I really want to examine more what happens when people get spoken to 'out of the blue' so to speak.

Anyway, it would be great to be featured in the timecast live guide...we have had more than 700 'visits' so far, but I'm sure there are more people out there that would be into this! The strange thing is that the street itself is almost turning into a chat channel as people dialling in find themselves sending messages to each other and sort of bypassing the pedestrians (something I hadn't really anticipated)...curious.

Thankyou very much for your support, I'll look out for our listing

with best wishes

Susan Collins

Subject: early feedback
Date: Fri, 14 Nov 1997 10:47:55 -0800
From: Bradley Mitchell <bradleys@co.intel.com>
To: inconversation <inconversation@ucl.ac.uk>

To the In Conversation team,

I think this is a fascinating experiment, and I plan to follow it throughout the month. Thank you so much for putting it out there.

Why did you choose this outdoor setting? I think people are less likely to stop and converse on a bustling city street, than they would be indoors, at say a hotel lobby, a store, etc. It would be interesting to compare.

Actually, I would love to see this experiment done inside a pub.

I saw the one quite long conversation with a group there. I was surprised at how patient they were with the lag times. Is someone on the project filtering threads of conversation for the receiver? One great way to mitigate the delays would be for a moderator to sort the incoming messages into threads and post them on separate, adjoining monitors (or color-coded and interleaved).

I noticed that the people on the street tried very hard to identify the locality of people they were talking with. One man said as much. If on our web page, we entered our name and location up front, and this were displayed somewhere statically, this would be great too.

--bradley mitchell

Subject: Re: early feedback
Date: Mon, 17 Nov 1997 01:22:03 +0100
From: "Susan (Alexis) Collins"
<susan@carrots.demon.co.uk>
To: Bradley Mitchell <bradleys@co.intel.com>
References: 1

Dear Bradley,

thankyou so much for your feedback. The idea for the outdoor setting comes from previous artworks that I have donw where there are projections on the street that talk to people as they go past...this was to take it a stage further in that the projection is actually 'inhabited' and people on the street can talk back! But I take your point, it is hard to stand around while you're being rained on! I do plan however to tour this project to different cities, and this may well take it to different kinds of

situations...I would like to see what happens with that...but also in a city like say Liverpool, I think people are more talkative than in the south of England....they also wear T-shirts even in the middle of winter, so might be more prepared to stand in the rain!

I quite like the anonymity of it...that people can make up their identities and where they are from...although will take on board your suggestion of showing IP addresses etc for future situations...and will also consider your other suggestions, although with this being an arts funded project, facilities are very much a matter of goodwill!!!!

Please keep me informed of your progress with the project through the month...we may put up a notice in the next few days so that people on the street are more aware of what is going on, though I have to say personally the 'surprise' element I find more exciting.....

many thanks for your participation
best wishes
Susan Collins
www.inconversation.com

Subject: In Conversation in Brighton
Date: Wed, 19 Nov 1997 11:51:51 -0500
From: Your Name <thor@skynet.net>
To: inconversation@ucl.ac.uk

I enjoyed using InConversation to speak with various people on the street in Brighton. However, I found it hard to converse at times, because of the time lag between when I typed a sentence and when it was voiced over the speaker. Also, for the participants on the street, it was confusing when they did not know that there was more than one person inputting sentences to be voiced. They would respond to one question or statement and the next sentence from the loudspeaker would be from another internet user.

I was surprised though during those couple times when I was able to carry on somewhat of a conversation with someone on the street how they responded. Some thought it was a big joke and had a merry time laughing and talking. Another seemed so lonely that she wanted to correspond by mail.

I experienced difficulties with "live" video portion bumping me off and saying there was no server. I also experienced difficulties at times submitting a sentence saying that the time had elapsed for putting my sentence in queue and therefore would not accept it.

--

R. Nessel
Nessel's Nest Farm
Indiana USA

Subject: Re: In Conversation in Brighton
Date: Wed, 19 Nov 1997 23:37:30 +0100
From: "Susan (Alexis) Collins" <susan@carrots.demon.co.uk>
To: thor@skynet.net

Dear R. Nessell,

How great to hear from Indiana. It is hard to converse sensibly with In Conversation (which I always suspected, and was sort of the 'experiment' bit), but more similar in this regard i think to 'chat channels' than say, the telephone. And the construction (and confusion) seems to reflect that as well, as sentences tumble out after each other from different users, making new meanings depending on what follows what. I'm sorry you had a problem with being bumped off the live video...people seem to have difficulty with the plug-in, and although a bit temperamental once you've got in there it should work. I suspect the delay will be more acute from the states, but I can't understand why you would be bumped...we have 60 available channels for users and are averaging about 150 hits in the 4 hour period, but I doubt that more than 60 will be on at one time, although in theory it's possible.

We will try and refine the techn in response to the feedback we get (which is VERY helpful), and while we may not be able to implement changes for this incarnation of In Conversation, I hope in future to take this project to different locations and

destinations, and each time will attempt to make improvements (hopefully helped as the RealPlayer plug in technology becomes more developed as well). I do hope you continue dialling in to In Conversation while the project is on.

Thankyou so much for your participation and your feedback. Archive clips will be available as of next week!

Best wishes

Susan Collins
inconversation@ucl.ac.uk

Subject: Thanks!
Date: Sat, 22 Nov 1997 11:07:36 -0500 (EST)
From: ENK1@aol.com
To: inconversation@ucl.ac.uk

Thanks for a morning of real fun in Brighton!
Too bad the queue is so long, though.
Thanks again.

Subject: your message last thursday
Date: Mon, 24 Nov 1997 12:32:22 GMT
From: Terri Spittall <terri@ns1.avnet.co.uk>
To: Susan.Collins@ucl.ac.uk (Susan Alexis Collins)

Hi Susan

tried again as you suggested and got through too!! shall be rearranging another 'meeting' with my friends in Brighton sometime in the next couple of days to see what happens in the way of dialogue!

as a suggestion, it might be worth adding in some copy on the help pages along the lines of that which you sent me ...

>If you managed to get the *live* window to at
>least show the real player logo, and the little volume slider
>bar, before
>giving you the error message, then you have done everything
>correctly and
>the problem is either at the Brighton end,,,or else, that the
>60 available
>channels for the RealPlayer were all being used.

... to encourage people to retry if they can't get through first
time.

great concept - thanks!

Terri

At 06:44 PM 11/20/97 +0000, you wrote:

>Hello Terry,
>
>There were problems this afternoon,which may have occured at the
time you
>were accessing the site. If you managed to get the *live*
window to at
>least show the real player logo, and the little volume slider
bar, before
>giving you the error message, then you have done everything
correctly and
>the problem is either at the Brighton end,,,or else, that the 60
available
>channels for the RealPlayer were all being used.
>I'm really sorry that you had difficulty, it is a very new (and
>experimental project) and we are still ironing out the glitches.
Please do
>try again, and let me know how you get on.
>Thanks so mch for your interest (and the feedback - it's
essential to us
>for making things work more effectively)
>
>best wishes
>
>Susan Collins

Subject: In Conversation
Date: Mon, 24 Nov 1997 13:33:13 +0000
From: thor@skynet.net
To: susan@carrots.demon.co.uk

Dear Susan,

I have debated whether to send this email request or not, since it seems a bit far fetched.

On Wednesday 19 November when I used In Conversation I was able to speak some with a woman. She seemed about in her 50s through her voice and shape. She wanted me to contact her through mail. Before we could exchange addresses I was disconnected from the live video. That is a problem I've experienced quite a bit with In Conversation. I was only able to hear a little of her address as she was telling me. I think it was 51 Duke Brick Road, Post --. I was speaking to her sometime about 10:30 to 11:30 am my time (e.s.t. USA) which I think is about 1530-1630 GMT. Today, Friday I tuned in again about 11:30 am to try my luck and to my surprise, Georgia (that is her name) was there calling my name!

Unfortunately, I could not get through on the loudspeaker. Do you keep the videotapes and if so is it possible to find that portion to hear her address. I would so much like to send her a card. She seemed eager to talk.

If this is impossible I understand, and thank you in advance. I have been having problems with email lately so I apologize if you have received this more than once.

Subject: amazing
Date: Mon, 24 Nov 1997 12:01:13 -0800
From: charchoi@earthlink.net
To: inconversation@ucl.ac.uk

i was stunned. This possibility for interaction is tremendous. I spoke with a woman who was cold and hunbgrgy, but would not leave until I suggested that she go and eat. Most others walk by quickly. The interface is interesting also. Thaks for this

opportunity, and I will write more later. The feeling of live interaction with the street is presenting me with a giddy feeling it is truly a thrill. -washington dc

Subject: Re: amazing
Date: Tue, 25 Nov 1997 12:05:29 -0800
From: charchoi@earthlink.net
To: susan@carrots.demon.co.uk
References: 1 , 2

Susan (Alexis),

I re-read my posting, and it seemed a ludicrous attempt at britishisms, but it was genuine stream of consciousness at the time. I visited there a few times in my childhood, and it made a huge impression. Kind of geeky really, and as a native california boy, I would never live it down if any peers read the message either. It stemmed from this amazing experience. The Orwellian overtones were pretty heavy also. I spent about two hours that day watching, listening, and getting used to the interface. I noticed quite a few things. I think the mouth is interesting, but the repetitive sounds were extremely distracting on this side, mainly because the speaker is so sensitive, I could hear footsteps on the other side of the street. When I first logged in, I felt a rush fill my body, as I saw where, and who I was talking to. I am not sure if the anonymity was such a big thrill as actually seeing london live from DC, which in turn was not quite it as compared to being able to interact with random passers-by. I found kids, and mid (30-40) aged women (which is only the common term, as I think that 50 is middle age [about]) most likely to interact. Is there a tendency to be self effacing, or eager to please in that group? Young adult men mostly were heard to say "What the fuck is that?" and walk by, but an interesting note, I did not see one person step on the 'mouth'. A few more people would have stopped if I could have 'hit' them with a statement in time, and I experienced a short-lived dissapointment as my "Hello, do you have a moment?" was plaintively repeated into the empty street, as they were walking in the distance. I noticed what seemed like an automatic "Talk to me." being said on occaision, and some confusion by the mouth with the thrumming sound. One of the mouths sounds like "OM"

which happens to be my first name, and it was very strange to hear remarks from passersby that followed my typed statement when the mouth resumed its repetition "It sounds like 'OM'." as they walked away. The connection itself was really cool. One in particular, was an eight year old girl, and two older women walking a dog. I wanted to (and some tried) to bark at the animal just for an interesting response. Once the girl, Katie, realised that she was speaking with people from all over the world (mostly america) she got very excited. I do not think that she grasped the 'whole world', and that most of the exuberance was just the contact with another remote person. Especially the awareness that she could talk to someone who could see her. I complimented the mother, Sarah, on her kind demeanor by saying that she sounded lovely. It was true, but it didn't matter, quite. She got quite soft voiced, and instantly took to the compliment very graciously. It was somewhat interesting to see. I did not like the possibility of manipulating someone on purpose that way. Also I kept thinking about the small child that was killed a while back, and it was discovered by the rail surveillance system. At the time, I thought that the story was pushed by the powers that be as a way to condition the people to increased surveillance in general. I had this eery feeling mingled with the excitement. I called a coworker into the room and we both were as children with an amazing new toy. Giggling and watching. I was enthralled longer than he, and the interface took its toll. I found the system to be somewhat self regulating. "Eat my turd." was followed by "Rudeness will break the system." Breaking the system, or the threat of damaging the toy was enough to curb most verbal assaults. Some people typed repetitive messages, and I was just thinking that this was really stupid to allow when a filter would be so easy to install, and then someone typed a series of D's over the ongoing sound, effectively transforming it into a kind of remote 'beat box' which was quite interesting sounding. When no one was around, I attempted dialogue with other viewers, with no response. I was very surprised at this. The young girl mentioned earlier, and some others did not seem to get the scope of what was going on. I could see them in the screen apparently reading some information, but they still did not seem to get it. Also, the idea that they were speaking with a constantly changing audience was not apparent. The first woman was trying hard to ascertain the name of an individual that she was speaking with before going any further. Hello Hawaii, what is your name?

Hello,.. and then Michigan would say hello, and she would reply Where are you? Michigan. What is your name michigan? I tried also to get my name in there. It seemed very uncomfortable that we could not get that basic piece of information out to her, and it was obvious to us (the netaudience) the dynamics of the situation, her misunderstanding of the system, and our mutual desire to solve the name issue. We did not however take that next collective step to give each other room for singular dialogue with her to achieve that sense of security/strike that/familiarity of discourse, rather. Another security issue came when an individual parked, got out, and a few moments later, what appeared to be a different person was seen rummaging in the front seat of the vehicle. If that was a break in (which it wasn't) I was wondering about engaging the thief in dialogue. No threat of law enforcement, just a cultural values exchange. It led to some pretty interesting thought possibilities. I told my girlfriend about it, and she immediately thought that it would soon be seen in pubs everywhere. I was curious about a suspicion that an average looking person on the net would be more likely to have dialogue with an attractive person than in person. I, myself have been working on a suit that makes music when the wearer dances. One of my dreams is to have this suit piped into a central location to be mixed with others. Kind of a cyber jam. Graphics could also be incorporated, and regulated by a kind of DJ that would pipe output back to the viewers/listeners. Different styles and a slight creative competition might enhance the rave scene/interactive. I look forward to my next appointment with london. Thank you for this interesting work. Om Goeckermann.

Subject: Wonderful!
Date: Fri, 28 Nov 1997 12:18:39 -0700
From: Matt Morton <mmorton@mail.conxnet.com>
To: inconversation <inconversation@ucl.ac.uk>

I LOVE this site! It's fantastic! I spoke with Brian, from Brighton, and we had a lovely chat.

Matt Morton
Flagstaff, AZ USA

Subject: Don't Stop
Date: Mon, 1 Dec 1997 19:58:21 -0500
From: "Robert M. Carp" <rmcarp@adelphia.net>
To: inconversation <inconversation@ucl.ac.uk>

Hi,

I just found your page a few days ago. I think it is wild! I have been only able to use it twice, and found it to be an interesting view of human behavior. December 13 is coming up too fast! Please keep it going or find something else like it to do!

Thank you

Subject: In Conversation
Date: Tue, 02 Dec 1997 20:27:44 +0000
From: ncp <ncp@enterprise.net>
Organization: ncp
To: inconversation@ucl.ac.uk

Dear Susan / whoever thought this up,

I LOVE IT!!!! Brilliant idea! We had lots of fun playing with this yesterday, and the public's reaction on the street was hilarious.

Well done on such a cool idea - keep up the good work.

Nick

PS. Do another 'In conversation' when this one has finished!

Subject: Re: In Conversation
Date: Thu, 4 Dec 1997 01:05:17 -0000
From: "ncp" <ncp@enterprise.net>
To: <susan@carrots.demon.co.uk>

Dear Susan

Thanks for the reply. I'm in Ipswich, Suffolk. When we logged on to the In Conversation site the other day, we got chatting to

some bloke who'd come out of an office for a fag... It was Candid Camera from start to finish. I was typing in stuff like "This is weird, isn't it" and we heard him replying "that is a bit weird, innit mate?" I'm lucky enough to have an ISDN connection, so the sound and picture were very good. Having said that, there was a constantly repeating background noise which sounded like someone slopping their bathwater around... Any ideas what this might be?

Incidentally, what's the best way to tame the text-to-speech unit? I guessed that 'weird' would probably have to be spelt 'weerd' for it to sound right. (I used to have a ZX Microspeech for the Spectrum years ago!!!) I also noticed that it responds to question marks, in other words it adds a questioning inflection to the end of a sentence if you bung a ? in...

Anyhow, it's a smashing idea, and I shall be logging on tomorrow afternoon to see who's about.

Well done again.

Nick Coady

Subject: Discovery of your installation on the WWW
Date: Fri, 5 Dec 1997 15:26:10 -0500
From: Roger Glasko <rglasko@agmc.org>
Organization: Akron General Medical Center
To: inconversation@ucl.ac.uk

This is actually quite a nice thing - I wish I'd have found this site a week or so ago, though I've quite wasted a good part of my afternoon with you (I am, after all, at work right now).

It would be nice if the image were a little larger, though I understand your constraints. Also, do the people on the street there realize that there is a time delay here with a queuing of speech?

I will visit again next week to make more observations and try to engage in conversation (and likely waste away another part of the day on an interesting street piece).

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glossary

Amiga	A Computer manufactured by Commodore in the 1980's and 1990's (included Amiga 500, Amiga 1200 and Amiga 2000)
bandwidth	Bandwidth refers to the data transmission rate; the maximum amount of data - or information (bits/second) that can travel a communications path in a given time.
bot	Derived from the word "robot," a bot is the name for an online software program that performs functions on the internet (for instance indexing or search engines).
browser	A browser or web browser is a software program (i.e. Netscape Navigator or Microsoft Internet Explorer) that allows you to view and interact with various kinds of Internet resources available on the World Wide Web.
CD ROM	An acronym for Compact Disk Read-Only Memory, a CD-ROM is a storage medium for digital data, and can hold up to 650 Mb of information.
chat	A colloquial expression for the way people communicate online in real time. In online 'chat' sessions people type messages to each other via their computers. The message then (typically) appears on the screens of all the participants. Chats may involve two or more people.
chatbot	An online software program (bot) which inhabits a chatroom or chatspace, and interacts with its visitors.
chatlog	A text based log (or record) of online chat.
chatroom	A place where people can go to communicate online in real time. Usually a website or a section of another online service.
chatspace	As chatroom
chatwindow	The onscreen text box which represents the messages of the chat participants.
domain name	The domain name is the unique name that identifies an Internet site. For example http://www.inconversation.com
e-mail	Short for electronic mail, e-mail consists of messages, often just text, sent from one user to another via a computer network, either locally or over the internet.
internet	worldwide network of computer networks that use the TCP/IP network protocols to facilitate data transmission and exchange
net	short for internet
net congestion	commonly used to describe overcrowding, or 'traffic jams' online, where more data is being transmitted than there is available bandwidth for.
netiquette	a form of online etiquette, an informal code of conduct for users to interact with one another online
offline	not connected to the internet
online	connected to the internet

PIR sensor	passive infra red sensor, responds to change in temperature (and therefore humans approaching). Known for its use in security lighting.
plug-ins	A plug-in extends the capabilities of a web browser (i.e. Netscape Navigator or Microsoft Internet Explorer, allowing the browser to run multimedia files.
realencoder	Software provided by RealNetworks™ to encode video and audio to prepare it for streaming via the internet. Also can refer to the hardware, the machine that the software is used on. Current version of realencoder is called realproducer (below)
realplayer	Software that enables viewers online to receive streaming media (audio and video.)
realproducer	Is the current version of the realencoder software (above)
realserver	Is the software (and hardware) that receives the realencoded audio and video and from which the streaming media is sent out over the internet.
streaming media	this refers to video and audio clips, that begin playing seconds after being received by your computer from the internet. The media is delivered in a 'stream' from the server for live transmission and also for some pre-recorded video and audio to avoid having to wait several minutes or longer to download lengthy files.
streaming video	As for streaming media above.
telepistemology	the study of knowledge acquired at a distance ⁹⁴ (via a telecommunications medium)
telepresence	the experience of presence at a distance (via a telecommunications medium)
user name	a name by which to be identified online.
webcam	camera sending live and frequently updated images to the internet
website	a collection of primarily HTML (Hyper Text Markup Language) documents, that are linked together and that exist on the World Wide Web.
World Wide Web	a global collection of documents including text, images, and other multimedia files interconnected via a system of hypertext documents.
WWW	acronym for World Wide Web

⁹⁴ GOLDBERG, Ken (Ed.). The Robot in the Garden: Telerobotics and Telepistemology in the Age of the Internet. Leonardo Books. 2000. p3