

UNMAKEABLELOVE

...Abode where lost bodies roam each searching for its lost one. Vast enough for search to be in vain. Narrow enough for light to be in vain. Inside a flattened cylinder fifty metres round and sixteen high for the sake of harmony...
(Beckett, 1972, p.7)

Samuel Beckett's *The Lost Ones* (1971/1972) like works by Kafka and Borges, creates a fictional and somewhat fantastic circumstance of constraint and deprivation. He populates a cylindrical space with two hundred abject and languishing humans whose culture seems to be organized according to an elusive order. The narrative agency in *The Lost Ones* has been described as a 'disembodied artificial intelligence' (Schwab, 2000, p.61). One can imagine its denizens as inhabiting a posthuman space, the last vanquished humans secluded in a capsule that is, like a nautilus, organized according to a 'self sufficient cosmogony, which has its own categories, its own time, space, fulfilment and even existential principle' (Barthes, 1972, p.65).

Mediated by the narrative voice, the subliminal inscription of affect onto the body of language exert an intense appeal to the senses, evoking visualizations of bodies moving through or frozen in space, tactile sensations of heat and cold, sounds of clashing bodies and rustling dried skin (Schwab, 2000, p.62).

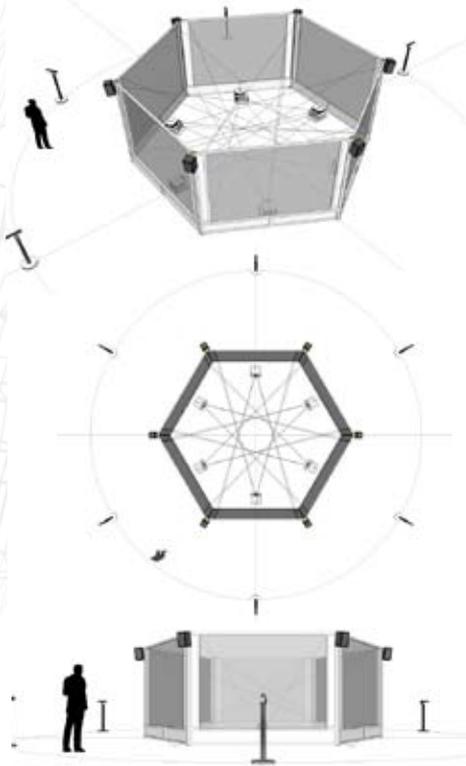
UNMAKEABLELOVE is a reworking of Beckett's initial investigation that focuses and makes interactively tangible, a state of confrontation and interpolation between our selves and another society that is operating in a severe state of physical and psychological entropy. UNMAKEABLELOVE advances the practices of algorithmic agency, artificial life, virtual communities, human computer interaction, augmented virtuality, mixed reality and multimedia performance to engage 'the body's primordial inscriptions' (Schwab, 2000, p.16).

It locates Beckett's society of 'lost ones' in a virtual space that represents a severe state of physical confinement, evoking perhaps a prison, an asylum, a detention camp, or even a 'reality' TV show. In UNMAKEABLELOVE the inhabitants of the cylinder remain oblivious in their condition, and we the viewers of their world, with our probing torch lights and prying gaze, are positioned as the 'other', forced to experience the anomalies of a perceptual disequilibrium that implicates us in this alienated narrative.

We need machines that suffer from the burden of their memory
(Lyotard, 1991, p.22)

In elucidating the existential quandary to which *The Lost Ones* are subject, Beckett is scientific in the exactitude of his description of their environment and their behavior. Therefore these descriptions are capable of being analyzed and coded into software algorithms that computationally animate virtual representations of his characters. In UNMAKEABLELOVE these virtual representations then become the seemingly self-motivated narrative agents of Beckett's scenario, who inhabit an amalgamated real/virtual architectural enclosure called Re-Actor.





Re-Actor is a five-meter diameter hexagonal construction with six rear projected screens and stereoscopic 3D viewing using twelve projectors, passive Polaroid filters and glasses. UNMAKEABLELOVE uses six torches, mounted in front of these screens, to enable the visitors to peer into the virtual world. The virtual light beams generated by these interactive torches intersect and illuminate the computer-generated figures that inhabit its virtually represented interior.

To more explicitly articulate the conjunction between the real and virtual spaces in this work, when the viewer's virtual torch beams penetrate through the container they can illuminate other viewers who are standing opposite them on other sides of the installation.

This augmented reality is achieved using infra-red cameras that are positioned on each screen pointing at its respective torch operators, and the video images are rendered in real time onto each viewer's screen so as to create the semblance of illuminating the persons opposite them.

The resulting ambiguity experienced between the actual and rendered reality of the viewers' presences in this installation, reinforce the perceptual and psychological tensions between 'self' and 'other'. The dramatic and kinesthetic confrontations between the real and virtual generated by UNMAKEABLELOVE's strategies of embodied interactive simulation directly engage the presence, agency and complicity of the viewer.

References:

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Gabriel Schwab, 2000, 'Cosmographical Meditations on the In/Human: Beckett's *The Lost Ones* and Lyotard's 'Scapeland'', *Parallax*, 2000, vol. 6, no. 4. pp.58-75

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© Sarah Kenderdine and Jeffrey Shaw 2008
 Directed by Sarah Kenderdine and Jeffrey Shaw
 Modeling and animation: Conor O'Kane
 Software: Scott Ashton
 Systems integration: Yossi Landesman
 Motion Capture Lab, Deakin University: directed by Kim Vincs
 Motion capture technician: Daniel Skovli
 Motion capture artistic directors: David Pledger (NYID) Sarah Kenderdine, Jeffrey Shaw, Jean Michel Bruyere
 Motion capture actors: Gerard Van Dyck, Dianne Reid, Fiona Cameron
 Architecture: Re-Actor (© 2008 Sarah Kenderdine, Jeffrey Shaw)
 Projectors: F20SX+ kindly sponsored by Projectiondesign, Norway
 Production Partners: Museum Victoria, the UNSW iCinema Centre and EPIDEMIC.



Re-Actor

© Sarah Kenderdine and Jeffrey Shaw 2008
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 Engineering design and realization: Nelissen Dekorbouw
 Projectors: F20SX+ kindly sponsored by Projectiondesign
 Production Partners: Museum Victoria, the UNSW iCinema Centre and EPIDEMIC.

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