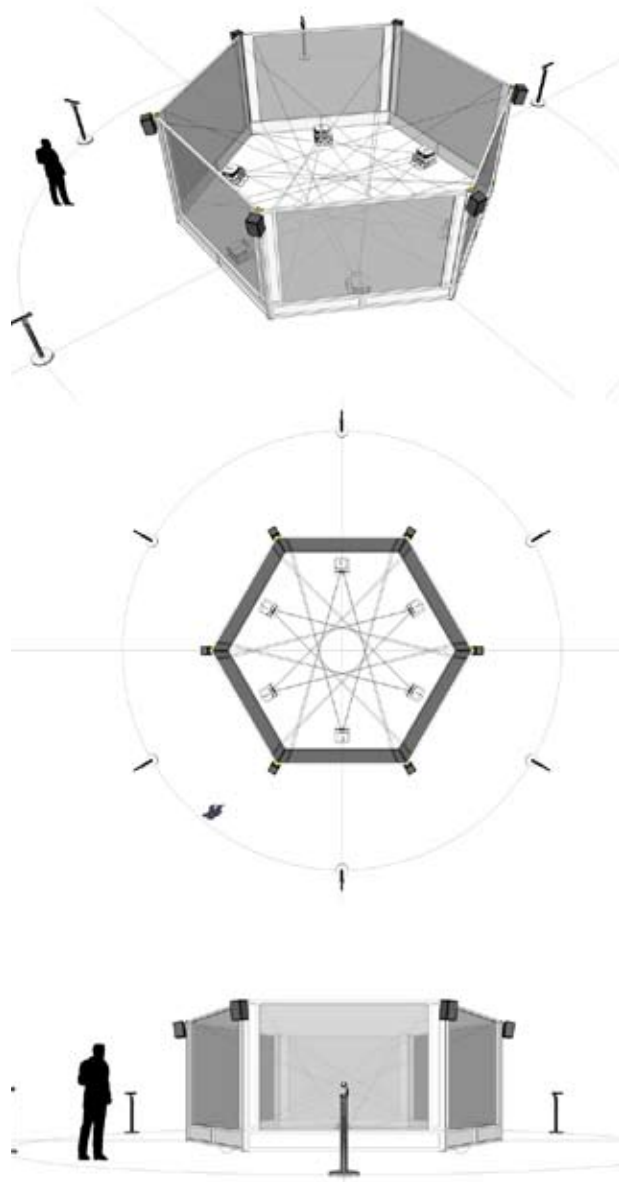




UNMAKEABLELOVE



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...the condition of the human at its ultimate vanishing point...
(Schwab, 2000, p.73).

Samuel Beckett's *The Lost Ones* (1971/1972) opens with stage directions for an eerie scene, evoking, in postmodern abstraction, a space resonating with Dante's Purgatorio:

...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)

The Lost Ones, like works by Kafka and Borges, creates a fictional and somewhat fantastic circumstance of constraint and deprivation. As if under a microscope it studies the resulting existential delirium of its inhabitants' lives. Minutely constructed according to geometrical shapes and measurements, Beckett's populates a cylindrical space with two hundred abject and languishing humans whose culture seems to be organized according to an elusive order, if not an unfamiliar harmony, the principles of which have yet to be discovered. 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 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 revisioning 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 in a polyaesthetic (Lyotard) experience 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 an extreme 'reality' TV show.

In UNMAKEABLELOVE the inhabitants of the cylinder are oblivious to 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. The resulting ambiguity and complicit agency in UNMAKEABLELOVE reinforces a perceptual and psychological tension between 'self' and 'other' generated by the works' mixed reality strategies of embodied simulation that intricately engage the presence, agency and complicity of the viewer. '

There must be no let up, no vacuum in the audience's mind or sensitivity...no distinct divisions, no gap between life and theatre
(Artaud, 1985, p.84).

As in the Purgatorio, gloominess and indifference' periodically lead to 'zeal and fervent affection', and now and then Beckett's vanquished resurrect to perform vain attempts at copulation. In UNMAKEABLELOVE, lovers are caught in desiccated bodies whose 'hampering effect on the work of love' condemns them to perform a grotesque spectacle of 'making unmakeable love' (Beckett, 1972, p.37).

Re-Actor

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

The technological infrastructure specific to UNMAKEABLELOVE is Re-Actor, a five-meter diameter hexagonal construction with six rear projected screens and stereoscopic 3D viewing. UNMAKEABLELOVE uses six torches, mounted in front of these screens, to enable the visitors to peer into the virtual world.

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'.

David Porush in 'Deconstructing the machine: Beckett's *The Lost Ones*' (1985) perceives the cylinder as an enormous cybernetic machine controlled from some outside source. In UNMAKEABLELOVE 'control' is both illusive and made more explicit. Participants operate through the sensorium of interaction with Re-Actor, its inhabitants and each other.

The space that opens:

...facilitates the emergence of hitherto unimagined visions and sensations that exert a unique appeal to the senses and generate an intense cathexis
(Schwab, 2000, p.73).

The interactive scenarios in UNMAKEABLELOVE become a space for the:

...emergence of the unthought, the impense, in form of an imaginary posthuman from which we may finally intuit the vast expanse of the human...a form of soul-making that continually reconfigures the boundaries of the human and its primordial imprints
(Schwab, 2000, p.73).

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UNMAKEABLELOVE

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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
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<http://unmakeablelove.org>

projection design
HIGH PERFORMANCE PROJECTORS