



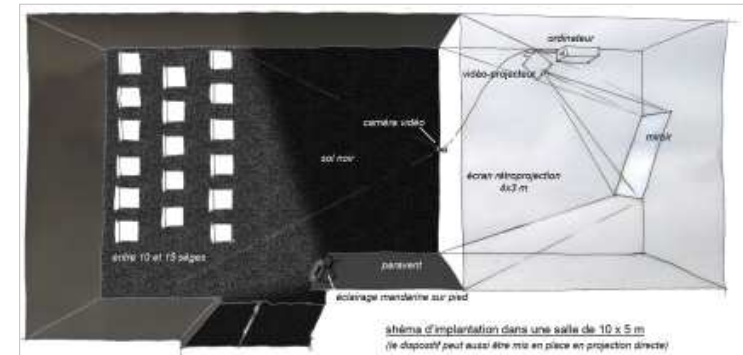
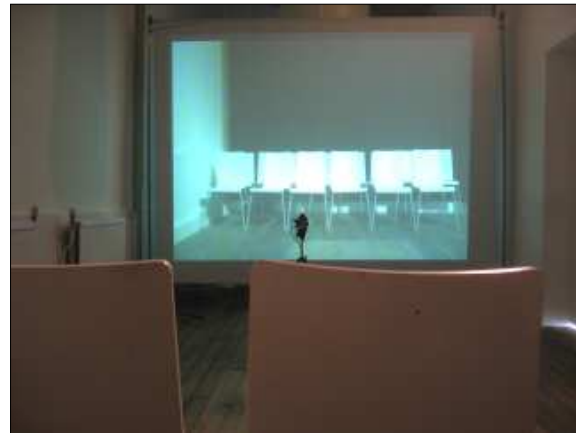
“is it here ?”

“is it here ?” is an interactive installation that explores the theme of identity through representation. At first, it looks like a video projection: a blank screen, few seats are there and, surprisingly, a tripod with a video camera directed at the audience. When people are seated, the mirror image of the empty room fades in. After a while, the spectator begins to realize that his *own image* is revealed when he moves, but vanishes when still. Spectators start moving, playing with one another representations. Other still images and films are progressively introduced in an attempt to shift from awareness of *bodies* to consciousness of presences. The process at first narcissistic becomes progressively poetic and visual. Each spectator becomes the actor of a collective abstract image, other : this image as an extension of bodies, themselves extension of thoughts. This image yet remains fragile and ephemeral. *Is it possible that it is us ?* Suddenly the machine stops; the image is gone. *Is it here ?*



Like in my previous computer works, “*is it here?*” tries to avoid the fascination for technology, all the while using it as a tool to produce forms that can be identified but that will never reproduce identically (in other words a paradigm of life). What is new here is the attempt to deal with interactivity. I used to perceive interactivity as one major reason for the techno-fascination: one individual pretending to control his own satisfaction through the machine, with minimal involvement. Here, I attempt to overcome this difficulty by having the interface reside in a collective image of people, thus bringing out enough questions, without apparently emphasizing the matter of technology.

Technical aspects



A small room is equipped with a projection system, ideally from the rear. A dozen seats face the screen. The video camera is wired to the computer and captures the image of the audience. The computer program processes real-time the video source by combining it with other recorded images, either still or video. The algorithm analyses locations and movements of the spectator modifies the various images at hand, the result being projected to the screen.

The project requires a PC (minimum dual core) with a good graphic card (dual-head display), ability to install Linux, Pure Data and the author software, a video acquisition card preferably with S-Video input and Linux compatible, DV camera or industrial DCAM, video projector (2500 lumen minimum, throw factor~1.5), relevant cables and a room at least 10m long, with roughly 15 seats.

A preliminary stage of the project was developed in 2007 including software development. *s-ici?*, a first version was presented to the public in December 2007 during “*All the stage variations*”, the festival organized in Montbéliard (France) by **[ars]numerica** (former CICV). A second version was shown in Paris at Bastille Design Center in June 2008.

Scenario

“is it here?” is also a process, more of a poetical than a narrative essence. Each spectator is a part of the process as if he was in the film. Below is sketched the base scenario, as shown in June 2008. There is no sound continuum, but at the end, a light bulb bursts: the machine stops. Total duration is 16 mn. Texts are available in French and English.



At the beginning, a room, a blank screen

and a video camera too!



It starts with two intertitles¹

if there is nobody

there is nothing !



The mirror image of the empty room slowly fades in



After a while movements are revealed



The still image of the audience, as recorded at the very beginning, fades in. Movements seem to bring bodies back to life.

¹ all intertitles are available in English and French; they can easily be translated in any language



The text *"is it a game?"* is revealed by movements of the audience, then the intertitles *"They watch at themselves This way, things would be absolutely certain... their eyes thus locking their bodies onto a surface their own surface !"* and then *"a compulsory exhibition"*

The audience is invited to exchange seats.



Superimposes then : **self !** moving with **the other**, frozen.



The image of a projector beam sweeps across the audience, depending on its movements. Each individual is tempted by attracting focus on self or by collaborating with others to enlarge the beam.

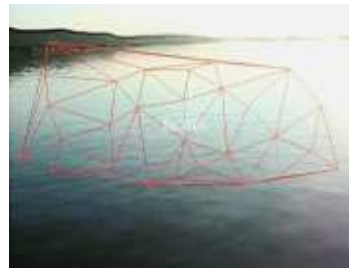


The figure becomes less realistic (color, the room vanishes)



A network of lines appears, connecting the spectator bodies together :

"them, there " might become *"us"*.



The background vanishes. The moving network remains then superimposed to the video of a river.



"to be an image"
The still image of lone character in the room, actually a self-portrait of the author.



The action of spectators progressively erases both text and character.



“or otherwise being propelled into time”



Again, a river, which quietly flows. The video locally freezes where the audience is moving, as if there was sedimentation of time.

“eyes getting lost”

“losing desire”



“what makes the screen ?”

An old movie seems to be projected inside the bodies :

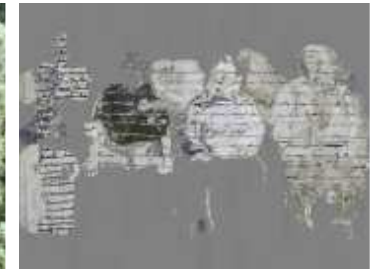
- Cinema should not be confused with its medium.

- Utopia is within us



Willows

There is some wind over trees under the action of the audience, who start performing experiments, e.g. if one stops moving, then the forest becomes still.



The projected image becomes more complex. Over the abstract background, various materials are mixed: woods, manuscripts... The outcome remains ephemeral.



Traces of present, now remain on the background. There is some accumulation of those traces, possibly resulting in a composition.



The video of turbulent red fluid is mixed with the spectator's image, as if they were burnt or petrified.



The composition freezes for a while into something that could be seen as a painting.



A light bulb suddenly bursts: a loud noise of broken glass seems to come from behind the screen.



The image of the audience becomes blurred and in slow motion, eventually flimsy and still. *“is it here?”* fades in very slowly. The audience decide when it is really finished.