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▶ **To cite this version:**

Ricardo Atienza, Gabriel Bérubé, Aurore Bonnet, Damien Masson, Jul Mcoisans. RefleCT/Xion from enaction to “daily enaction”. 4th International Conference on Enactive Interfaces. Enactive07/Enaction_in_Arts, 19 - 24 novembre 2007, Grenoble – France, Nov 2007, Grenoble, France. 315-317 p. halshs-00379458

**HAL Id: halshs-00379458**
**https://shs.hal.science/halshs-00379458**

Submitted on 28 Apr 2009

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Recherche
1563
"Ambiances
Architecturales
& Urbaines"

CNRS CENTRE NATIONAL DE LA RECHERCHE SCIENTIFIQUE

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école nationale
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2007

Pour citer ce document :

**ATIENZA, Ricardo ; BERUBE, Gabriel ; BONNET, Aurore ; MASSON, Damien ; McOISANS Julien.** RefleCT/Xion from enaction to "daily enaction". In : L'Acroe (Association pour la Création et la Recherche sur les Outils d'Expression) 4th International Conference on Enactive Interfaces. Enactive07/Enaction_in_Arts, 19 - 24 novembre 2007, Grenoble – France. 6 p. [en ligne] disponible sur http://acroe.imag.fr/enactive07/ consulté le 14 février 2007.

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Pour consulter le catalogue du centre de documentation : http://doc.cresson.grenoble.archi.fr/pmb/opac_css/

Dernière mise à jour : 2007

**RefleCT/Xion**

**from enaction to "daily enaction"**

*Ricardo Atienza, Gabriel Bérubé, Aurore Bonnet, Damien Masson, Julien McOisans*[*].

« En-action in arts », Grenoble (November 2007).
http://acroe.imag.fr/enactive07/downloads/Enactive07_Catalogue-Fr.pdf (p.24)
http://acroe.imag.fr/enactive07/downloads/Enactive07_Proceedings-LQ.pdf (p.315/317).

The concept of enaction deals with a bodily experience, an action knowledge. The body-in-movement is not a pure figure of action. It is, first of all, interaction with our environment that reveals us the limits of our own bodies and also the qualities of the space that surrounds us.

The traditional approach to enaction was by notion of "interface", however the purpose of this approach is not to point out the tension that exists between body and space but rather the possible devices and mechanisms that can act upon this relationship. This interface comes in the form of any tool manipulated by the hand, to acquire more complex technical expressions, thanks largely to computer equipment. The concept of enaction is thus translated in terms of inter-relation between man and machine. This interface (man / machine) is dedicated sometimes to emphasize certain qualities of a space but also to the creation of a virtual space that is superimposed on the physical context.

In contrast to these 'indirect' modes, there exists a primitive and direct enaction, that of the bodily experience of space. The interrelationship of man and machine is replaced by the simple interaction between man and space. By moving, touching, listening, watching and feeling, the body 'understands' and decodes knowingly and reads extensively its surroundings. Browsing an area is the first condition of any appropriation. Some senses allow us 'to touch by distance' but others require a direct contact - our skin, the last frontier before the world, is an essential gatherer of information about our environment. The body's motor acts offer us a dynamic reading of our environment where its sensitive variations (thermal, aerolics, light, sound, smell…) stimulate our perceptions and reveal the various possible readings of a space.

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The concept of walking is a fundamental idea of this proposal: walking to and within a space; walking senses in motion, walking as a daily experience that teaches us balance, orientation, intuition, intent and our interpretation of space. Our 'ordinary' experience is composed of an infinity of enactive fragments. Our daily life is a continuous apprenticeship by the body of its surrounding space.

The various works of the exhibition propose to reveal the ordinary experience of walking to the visitor, to make one aware this ordinary experience of interaction between body and space.

***The experience of everyday life***

Despite being a widely-used concept, enaction is an important characteristic of everyday life. Thus our approach is aimed to focus on this very ordinary experience of space that one might call "daily enaction".

Our proposal uses some ideas inherent in a broad range of CRESSON's research dealing with "ambiance". The field of architectural and urban atmospheres, which crosses disciplinary boundaries by surrounding simultaneously perceptible social and built space, focuses on the ordinary perception of the architectural and urban environment in order to understand different manners of "dwelling" in it. Therefore, our theoretical approach, which underscores the installation created at the Fort de la Bastille, focuses on the sensory interactions between human beings and the "world" they experience daily.

These interactions are numerous and encompass the perception of oneself, of others and of the built and non-built environment simultaneously. Questioning such multiple interactions as well as everyday sensory experience provides a way to understand enaction in its ecological perspective by focusing on the "middle ground" that exists between built forms and human behaviour. One way of revealing this 'in-between' is proposed by James J. Gibson in his pragmatic notion of "affordance" which deals with the possibilities for action allowed by space and objects, however we have chosen to focus on the "effects" that qualify it.

The "intermediary concept" (Amphoux, 2001) of effect is a useful means for describing what happens between phenomena and perception. By emphasizing the fact that people co-produce effects while they are acting in an environment and by considering the sensations (and not only the perception), this notion rejects any consideration of the "middle ground" phenomena and perception in terms of causal relations. Thus we have chosen to focus on the sensory effects that structure an individual's perception of space in order to question their "daily enaction".

Erwin Straus (1935) proposed to understand perception by defining it by way of the dialectical link that exists between sensations and movement. We have chosen to focus our attention on the act of walking as a way to reveal enaction in the mundane experience of space. Subsequently our purpose is to turn the ordinary into the extraordinary through the common act of walking. For this we propose to look at the "ambiance" of the space, then our process will focus on the possibilities for subtle alterations, which would help a visitor to become aware of their acts. We then propose to implement some very simple systems, which will both alter some sensory properties of the space and react to the visitor's presence. "Reflection", understood both as visual reflection and mental reflection, is the principle that guides this implementation.

***Suspended space, textured space, reflecting space…***

Practically, working on "daily enaction" through the principle of reflection supposes to imply some means that reveals and "reflects" the interrelation between the body and the space. This interrelation reveals itself through sensible effects; with the aim of becoming aware of those ordinary effects we need to emphasize them, to accentuate what is simply usual in our daily experience.

In order to call attention to those ordinary effects we manipulate the physical context supposed to produce them: perception of space and time will be slightly deformed while the body moves in it. This kind of "amplified" or even "interfered" consciousness is induced through three different actions: working ground-textures, modelling the space through suspended textiles and light materials, reflecting and manipulating image and sound of corporal movements.

The experience of the ground textures mainly reveals the physical aspects of walking: learning through walking. By covering the ground with different materials (pebbles, dead leaves, strips of wood or metal, etc.), a consciousness is evoked through the kinesic experience itself, but also through the 'sounding' of the visitor's steps. Another aspect of the exhibition, and the visitor's movement within it, is suggested by the textures (chalk) they leave in their path by way of footprints. Footprints, rubbing, creaks, rumblings and echoes generated by steps invite the visitors to investigate the relationship with the ground on which they walk. The textural effects experiences tend to reveal it as a fundamental substance of our environment.

The implementation of suspended textiles is to work on the organisation of the space in different ways. Partitioning without creating solid, rigid walls, adding depth and various levels in which the visitors immerse themselves. The density, transparency or reflectivity (tulle, lycra, rhodoïdes, mylar, etc.) allows successive dimensions of projection and lightning to alter the perception of the space itself.

Textiles are also used as supports to projection of real time captured images of the visitors. These projections are based on the phenomenon of reflection; reflection of ourselves, of our body-experience, reflection of the image of our movements. But in order to emphasize this self-experience, this reflection is worked as a deforming or moving mirror : Larsen, delay, distortion, echo, … describe some of the effects used. The idea of these effects (visual, audible, tactile, olfactory…) works according to the principles of incongruity and amplification of reality, allowing the visitor to understand that their actions have an effect on what they perceive, beyond the immediacy of the principle action / reaction.

***Walking enaction for a "mise en abyme"***

Contrary to this recent perspective about the definition of enaction, which puts forth the idea of an interaction between man and machine, we opted for a more literal approach that combines people and their environment. The setting, a place we can experience in our daily actions, is projected and amplified by simple means. Conceived to be a link through different enactive installations, our aim was to try to construct a kind of "enactive path" between them.

Working in the CRESSON laboratory principles, that advocate an interdisciplinary, qualitative approach, *in situ*, the notion of atmosphere ("ambiances") becomes a base in the analysis and design of the project. The idea is to reveal the slight changes incurred by some of the trivial actions of the visitor in order to raise awareness of these phenomena. Passing through the space, senses, searching for information, will be exacerbated by the surprising and mysterious data that they acquire. Then, walking becomes a new means for the discovery and the understanding of our environment.

With only a few equipment and some little technological devices that permit us to work with sonic and visual effects, we have found a simple way to introduce the visitor into the "world of daily enaction". In their strolling, the visitors will find a place that make them feel like they are, at the same time, actors and a spectators of their surrounding by their simple ordinary movements.

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***Présentation de l'installation :***

**RefleCT/Xions**

Avec l'installation interactive *RefleCT/Xions*, l'équipe du laboratoire Cresson propose de porter attention à la relation qui s'établit entre l'homme et l'espace qu'il habite. Le parcours proposé, articulé par les différentes œuvres de l'exposition, offre l'opportunité de révéler l'expérience ordinaire des interactions homme/espace. Ce parcours met l'accent sur «l'énaction au quotidien». Par là même, il a pour intention de rendre extraordinaire l'expérience ordinaire en jouant sur les effets sensibles qui structurent la perception de l'espace. Pour cela, l'ambiance du lieu a été travaillée grâce à des dispositifs simples (acoustiques, lumineux, aérauliques...) qui modifient subtilement l'environnement du visiteur en réaction à sa présence. Suivant les idées de réflectivité (effet miroir) et d'amplification sensorielle, s'élaborent tout au long du cheminement dans l'exposition, des déclinaisons d'effets de diffraction, déflection, *delay*, réverbération, rémanence, *larsen*... qui, en révélant le mouvement même du corps dans cet espace, viennent questionner l'attitude perceptive du visiteur-acteur, interroger le passage de la réflection à la réflexion.

**Laboratoire Cresson**

Collectif d'enactivistes œuvrant au sein du laboratoire Cresson (UMR 1563 CNRS / MCC «ambiances architecturales & urbaines»), leur objectif est de proposer une contextualisation de questionnements interdisciplinaires au croisement de l'architecture, des sciences humaines et des sciences pour l'ingénieur.

La notion d'ambiance, qui ouvre à la fois sur des phénomènes physiques et culturels, leur sert d'outil de base à des expérimentations *in situ*, afin de questionner les interactions et les inter-relations qu'un lieu et ses caractéristiques entretiennent avec la perception et l'imaginaire du public.




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