

Deep Walls

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Interactive Art Submission

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Description

Deep Walls creates a projected cabinet of cinematic memories. Within each of 16 rectangles, the movements of different viewers within the space are projected, played back over-and-over, and reduced into the space of a small cupboard. Initially, when a viewer or viewers move into the larger rectangle of the entire projection, their shadows begin to be invisibly recorded, and one box within the projection (the eventual destination of the current movements) is cleared out. When all of these viewers leave the larger frame, their shadows are re-played within that smaller, single box, looping indefinitely. Thus the work presents memories of the space, organized and collected into a flat cinematic projection.

The work explores the nature of collections – how individual objects gain in symbolic meaning, while losing literal meaning, through organization, repetition and display. By collecting the viewers' own shadows, the work examines how collections reflect the collector.

Rhythmically, the work presents a complex temporal relationship between cinematic loops. Each smaller collected shadow-film has the precise duration of its recording. A single item in the collection might anywhere from a few seconds to several hours. The temporal, musical relationship between the sixteen frames becomes extremely complex, like Brian Eno's tape loop experiments, always looping individual recordings, yet presenting a unique whole – the repetition period for the entire work can be on the order of days or even months.

The work is particularly inspired by the surrealist films of Jan Svankmajer and the Quay Brothers and the sculpture of Joseph Cornell. In these works, small bodies and obsessive organization of objects into drawers and cabinets symbolically represent interior, psychological and spiritual states. The rational process of organization only serves to bring out an unconscious irrationality. The in-progress name of the piece is a design pattern by architect Christopher Alexander. His admonition to architects is to build the walls of homes thick, so that cabinets, drawers and windows can perforate the interior space, providing areas to store, display, slice through and ultimately provide more meaning within the home.

Technical Execution

Deep Walls is realized using a data projector, video camera and computer running custom software. The computer reads input from the camera, processes the camera image and generates a synthetic output image to the projector. The screens are projected onto a custom made screen, 60" x 80". Visitors may move within five feet of the projection, but are blocked from standing any further from the screen by stanchions and rope. Any number of visitors may engage with the work simultaneously.

