

WSS

reconnoitre

(a networked virtual environment constituted through user search requests)

tom corby/gavin baily

<www.reconnoitre.net>

Reconnoitre is part of an ongoing series of works concerned with our experience of the network as a 'bizarre_scape' –an interlocking appendage to the urban environment with a high metabolism whose boundaries are continuously re-shaped; accreting and thickening under the influence of powerful social and commercial forces.

While Reconnoitre can be considered as a browser in that it allows the user to access web sites and display the material contained on them, it is less concerned with displaying material coherently as with representing browsing as a behavioural activity.

Functioning as a kind of dysfunctional browser operating in the face of the ubiquitous 'add to shopping basket' button it seeks to enunciate our access to information as a 'journey of surprises' reinstating the pleasure of browsing as technologically experienced *dérive* (drift) in its own right-an ambient grazing of text, fragmentary, and absorbing.

How it works

The work consists of a downloadable client search engine and a 3D browser environment/program. The work may be shown as a projected installation (see diagram and video) or displayed on a standard monitor and keyboard setup

The user is able to input search term requests directly into the browser environment by typing a request after the flashing cursor on the screen This activates a web spider agent that hunts the Internet searching for material matches associated with the search request.

Once matches are found the returned material is represented in the 3D environment. The user can decide to display the results as either the URL's , web page text or the 'meta tags' associated with the search 'hits'.

The returned search material is endowed with physical behavioural characteristics-including entropy (the search results have a life span and eventually decay) and repulsion and attraction which allows emergent interaction to occur between different represented search term results. The resultant constellations of form are emergent, fluid and unpredictable.

It is possible for several searches to coexist in the virtual environment simultaneously allowing for a spatio-temporal overlaying of search term requests within the same environment. New search requests can be made by the user at any time.

Once the search results are reconstituted in the environment the user can interact with the material by navigating the 3D environment, pausing and freezing individual search terms and deleting individual search terms.

Tom Corby/Gavin Baily 1999



reconnoitre

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download from www.reconnoitre.net (170kb)

contents

- 1 x CD disk containing high resolution Tiff images of the authors,
- 1 x VHS video
- 1 x publicity image (on CD)

As mentioned in the technical details the work requires a high powered open gl Graphics card in order to run smoothly. If you do not have access to such a card for the purposes of assessing the application you may run it on a normal PC but it may run slowly.

Because of this we have included a video of the work being used, so that you may have a good idea of how it functions in its ideal configuration.

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Ideal equipment requirements-1 Computer, 1 digital projector, fast Internet connection and modem

In the event of space or equipment restrictions the work can also be shown using a standard monitor and keyboard setup.

Computer Specification (preferably a DELL PC)	
CPU	500 P111 (min)
Graphics Card	*3D labs oxygen GMX 2000 high end graphics card
Ram	256 (min)
OS	Windows NT v.4
Internet connection	3 button mouse, standard keyboard fast modem or ISDN Speakers for sound output

- we can only guarantee that the project will run successfully, using the graphic card detailed in the technical data sheet. Other graphics cards may produce unpredictable results (freezing, crashing etc.). In the event of the work being selected for exhibition we can supply the graphics card for the duration of the exhibition.

Ideal space requirement for installation
Wide, height and depth of room 5.5 meters x 3.5 meters x 6 meters Projector hangs from the ceiling for projection Screen -either 3x4 meters or no screen directly on a smooth white wall. One plinth or table to support keyboard and mouse and hide the CPU of the computer. (see illustration)
Comments
1 Projector to display environment (either Sony, Barco or Electrohome) True Colour 1280 x 1024 resolution. 80hz 80khz frequency RGB inputs