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The Desert Dreams a Mirage (Silicon
Remembers Carbon)

A 4 meter by 3 meter video image is projected from above onto a bed of sand. Walkways half a meter wide form a frame around the image. The interior of the image is completely black. A speaker hangs in each of the four corners above head height. Four modified infra-red sensors register the amount of movement occurring along the four sides of the image. Two cameras look across the image from opposite corners at floor level, registering movement only if someone in the installation steps onto the sand and begins reflecting the light of the projected image.

The images are of water, fire, earth and air. These images were all drawn from urban contexts (street puddles, barbecues, sidewalks, public beaches, etc.) and stored on two identical video disks. The sounds are primarily the actual urban ambiances recorded along with the images.

When one enters the empty installation, a single video clip is playing out across the sand. Most likely the image is of water (beach waves, water under a bridge in Toronto, passers-by reflected in the canals in Hamburg, shadows and reflections in street puddles...) The image creates the illusion of depth, the sand sinks underneath it. It is not clear that the "screen" is sand. People look around then reach surreptitiously reach down through the depth of the image to the dry sand.

Movement along a walkway is sensed by one of the infra-red sensors which sends an analog voltage roughly representative of the amount of movement. This signal causes a second image from the other disk to be dissolved in along the side where the movement took place. (If one walks all the way around the image, this second image, melting into the first, follows one's motion). The second video clip is selected by a program from the possible clips on the disk based on the side of the frame where the current movement began. Fire spreads across water, the sidewalk floods, shadows and reflections of people emerge out of the flames, or from the waves.

If one steps into the image, reflecting light back to the cameras, the movement seen by the cameras generates the sounds of water (as though one is walking through waist-high water). The Desert Prints a Mirage, intended to balance the various levels of interaction so that no one aspect of the interaction would dominate the others.

It was not important to me that the interactors understood these interactions. The interaction was necessary to create a certain experience for the interactor; interactions that are not registered consciously can often more powerfully shade the experience than those that are explicit, understood and so no longer "experienced".

The work is designed to put the work in a set of relationships with the work; each relationship establishes a zone for possible interaction. The image is projected onto the ground. This raises several possibilities, most particularly, the

possibility of stepping into the image. It also asks us to imagine the space in the images in an unconventional way (relative to TV viewing).