

For the Jury:

Other levels of interaction in *The Desert Dreams a Mirage*

Explicit interaction has always, for me, been a way of exploring and representing the many implicit interactions that fill our daily lives. I am increasingly finding that making the interaction explicit, while satisfying on one level, often serves to further hide the real-world interactions that I am interested in examining or illuminating. With *The Desert Dreams a Mirage*, I intended to try 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 viewer 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).
- The image is very large and very close. The raster lines are clearly visible. People in the installation found themselves cooperating with the illusion by slightly unfocussing their eyes.
- The walkways around the outside form a frame. The 'frame' is the boundary that establishes the division between artworks and public space. The walkways are narrow. One must walk carefully to avoid an encounter with the image. If one of a group of people took the plunge and stepped into the image, the others tended to respond as though a taboo had suddenly been broken.
- If one enters the image, one casts an RGB (red-green-blue) shadow (hard to see in the documentation), exposing the illusion of the video image, enumerating the true elements of the phenomenon. (The show that this work was commissioned for was about the four elements (Fire/Earth/Water/Air) in the context of New Media.)
- The makeup of the screen (sand) is unconventional so there is an immediate desire to determine its nature. Visitors surreptitiously bent down to reach through the illusion (generally of flowing water or fire) to encounter the dry sand.
- Steps into the image leave footprints on the sand. The footprints can be perceived away, disappearing into the illusion. They can sink below the image as marks on a riverbed. They can be a challenge or grant permission to enter the image. They distort the image. Every step into the image subtly changes the screen on which the projection is projected. Every interaction leaves its mark and modifies slightly the experience of later visitors.

These relationships were accompanied by the two relationships of interaction engineered through a computerized interactive system, as described on the video documentation.