

THINK ABOUT THE PEOPLE NOW (THINK ABOUT THE MEDIA NOW)

The Monday after the Remembrance Day Ceremony in Whitehall, London, I was faced by the media announcement of a mans 'protest' which took him into Whitehall where he covered himself in petrol and set light to himself whilst running towards the Cenotaph. The media coverage varied from the colourful sensationalism of the Sun to The Times concern of how distressed the Royalty were by the event. The papers read as follows:

"This was the horrifying moment when a young demonstrator turned himself into a human torch in London's Whitehall yesterday. He doused himself in petrol and set himself ablaze as the Queen led the Remembrance Day Ceremony at the nearby Cenotaph. Shocked crowds saw a sheet of flame flare from the barefoot protester. He was seriously ill in hospital last night." - Daily Mirror 12/11/90.

"Cenotaph protest: the scene in Whitehall yesterday as a young man set himself on fire during the traditional Remembrance Day two-minute silence. The Man doused himself with petrol. The official party, which included the queen, appeared unaware of the incident." - The Times 12/11/90.

"They had come to remember the victims of war. But as they stood in silence the horror of human pain shattered their peace. Women screamed, wept and collapsed in terror as a young man engulfed in 10 ft of flames ran through the crowd and jumped a barrier - running toward the Queen and other royals. He had doused his head and body in petrol and with a flick of a cigarette lighter turned himself into a fireball shouting: *Think about people now.*" - Today 12/11/90.

At the time I had no idea that this event could filter its way into my work. What interested me initially was the extreme media blackout which followed. Only the tabloid newspapers covered the event, with the exception of small mentions in the more formal papers. Nothing was reported the following day in the newspapers or on the television. Soon after the event I started working with the development of Hyper Media - one of the latest technological advances to organise data into a network of interlinked files, enabling users to browse through a computer system by selecting icons that lead to images, text and further icons. I discovered with careful planing that this method of data organisation can lead to the simulation of an environment narrative.

The work I am now pursuing is essentially simple in its formal presence and technical achievement. It is therefore the subject matter that I am dealing with that makes this piece of work unique. The user of this Hyper Media Remembrance starts at Westminster Tube Station, by moving the Joy-stick in desired directions the user can travel around Whitehall through animated scenes of video footage. The paths often cross over allowing the user to swap paths and enter other referential analogies to this dimension of reality, which I see as influential to the overall concept. Diagrammatic information and newspaper coverage is always at hand by selecting icons that appear throughout the walk. In a sense one may never discover the event that takes place at 11am during the two minutes silence. However, they may hear an ambulance go past, or hear someone else mutter some horrified words. Through the users cause and effect of decisions made they could find themselves in any one of sixty four positions around Whitehall, including the choice of setting fire to themselves. The accountability of the users position within the Whitehall environment during the incident represents the conflicting perceptions of the event. The cause and effect nature of the program lends itself to the concept of social construction, each user has the potential to carry out this task. This work could also be termed 'A Moment in Time'. The work is essentially about being in the wright or wrong place (Whitehall) at the wright or wrong time (11am - two minutes silence), depending on the user decision.

The Hyper Media environment forms one half of this installation. The programme is projected onto a screen by a video projector, on the reverse side of this screen another video projection is being made. Scrolling text will be projected onto the screen (50 point characters, moving horizontally across the screen from right to left) directly from a real time conversation between network users from around the world. I will be sending and receiving text messages in an open access conversation between users of the European Academic Research Network (EARN). While a scrolling interface will be sending the E- Mail messages from my terminal directly to the video projector. The networking discussion will centre on the incident that took place in Whitehall and will address the ambiguity and media blackout of the whole event. This side of the screen/installation will be titled - THINK ABOUT THE MEDIA NOW.

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