

Pollstream

by HEHE, 2002

Pollstream is an intervention in environmental ethics. It creates a series of environments and processes to monitor and localise pollution at the very same time that it is produced; to conceptualise oneself as responsible – collectively and individually – for our emissions. As consumers our default position is one of disengagement – we rely on others to clear up our mess, to hide it in landfill, for example, or toxics inside our body. And the abstraction of inescapably globalised pollution, escalating beyond the control of any individual nation state, can easily undermine a sense that localised actions are worthwhile or effective.

Pollstream, using visual, kinetic and sonic technologies, undermines these typical defences of disengagement by speeding up the normal time it takes for our actions in and on the environment to have consequences. Across a number of projects, a sense of constant rather than delayed feedback is created. Thus, in its final form, color coded communal information is projected onto the vapor of a power plant that is visible to all residents. The movement of the green vapor emission changes size to show levels of energy being consumed at any given time; the chimney becomes a community measuring tape, a shared canvas. Nuage Vert is the ultimate aesthetisation of pollution, while seeking to draw critical attention to it. It becomes a sign of wonder, a spectacle; a space is opened up for the spectator.. Could they become mesmerised by a beauty that is, literally and metaphorically, a smokescreen? Will they retreat to making this (terrible) beauty another defence?