

P R E S S R E L E A S E

Ars Electronica: "Peoples' Portrait"

"Peoples' Portrait" is a global networked, intercontinental public art project that is displayed on large-scale projection screens around the world.

On March 3rd 2006, once again, the "Peoples' Portrait" will be featured as a cornerstone project to light up the opening night of one of the world's premier art festivals, the Adelaide Bank Festival of Arts in Australia. Thousands of miles away, Beijing, Linz, Seoul, and New York City will resonate in tandem to create a global picture of peoples' portraits.

"Peoples' Portrait" harnesses the internet as a dynamic vehicle for creating global portraits of people rendered in real time and displayed instantly around the world. Eight will be installed in Adelaide, Australia; Beijing, China; Linz, Austria; New York, USA; and Seoul and Daejeon in South Korea, to allow people to take their own portraits. New York based new media art institution Eyebeam will be the web portal for the project. Public video walls, including the world's largest digital display system in Times Square, as well as museums and galleries will join forces to display the portraits in chorus. Time and space collapse in this transcendent moment of empowerment and of the elevation of subjectivity hitherto unimaginable.

Background:

The project also actively investigates the aesthetics of portraiture in the

information age and globalization with regards to speed and scale. How would a public, fluctuating environment dramatically alter our notion of portraiture as the depiction of a fixed moment in a private arena? How would the drawing out of a personality magnified at such a scale affect the very nature of portraiture? How would a work of art in the age of internet regain an aura that once faded owing to mechanical "re-produceability"? And how would data bytes and transmission speeds behave as substitutions for brush and paint to realize a pictorial space?

In bringing about a self-endorsed, powerful and uplifting impact realized through technologically produced artifacts in relation to the dynamics of virtuality and reality, speed and time, local and trans-local, "Peoples' Portrait" attempts to extend the discourse about the art of portraiture in the tradition of "open art" and challenges visual perception at large. The project questions the notion of interaction and authorship and expresses a humanist concern in the age of technological supremacy.

"Peoples' Portrait" first debuted in October 2004 simultaneously in nodes around the world during Singapore's SENI Art and the Contemporary Festival, Multimedia Art Asia Pacific and the Dutch Electronic Art Festival 2004. The Whitney Museum of American Art's portal to Internet art, artport, and the Media Center for Art and Design in Barcelona were the web portals for the project.

The artist:

In his own art practice he is more interested in the nuances of interpreting neon signs than displaying the currents of electricity. He co-directs the Millennium Dialogue: Beijing International New Media Arts Exhibition and Symposium, and is on the board of the curatorial committee of the 13th Inter-Society for the Electronic Arts Symposium (ISEA2006). Zhang Ga has taught for many years at the MFA Design and Technology Program at Parsons School

of Design and Pratt Institute, and is guest professor of Information Art of the Academy of Arts and Design, Tsinghua University, China. Zhang Ga studied at the Central School of Fine Arts in Beijing and University of Arts in Berlin (UDK) and holds an MFA from the Parsons School of Design in New York City.

PEOPLES' PORTRAIT (2006 Installation)

Conceptualized and produced by: Zhang Ga

Advisors: Dave Jenssen (Reuters), Roger Yu (New York Institute of Technology), Sven Travis (Parsons School of Design), Frederick Jules (Professor Emeritus), Soh Yeong Roh (Art Center Nabi)

Curators: Julianne Pierce (The Adelaide Art Festival), Nina Colosi (The Project Room, A Movable Feast), Tamas Banovich (Postmasters Gallery) Lu Xiaobo (Tsinghua University) Soh Yeong Roh/Dooeun Choi (Nabi Art Center), Gerfried Stocker (Ars Electronica Center)

Production assistance: Department of Communication Arts, New York Institute of Technology, MFA Design and Technology, Parsons School of Design

Coordinators: Funda Kivran (New York), Huang Shi (Beijing), Gerold Hofstadler (Linz), Brianne Meldrum (Adelaide), Dooeun Choi (Seoul)

Server Side Scripting: Ossip Kaehr (firstGate)

Software and Hardware Engineering: Marc Lin, Frank Lin, Randy Sarafan

Web Site Design: Marc Lin

Graphic Design and Visual Effects: Rita Jules, Funda Kivran, Tia Ji Young Kim, Rahul Spall, Randy Sarafan

Presented in Adelaide by the Adelaide Bank Festival of Arts 2006

Presented in New York City by the Adelaide Bank Festival of Arts 2006, Project

Room, A Movable Feast, and Postmasters Gallery

Presented in Seoul by The Art Center Nabi

Presented in Linz by Ars Electronica Center

Presented in Beijing by the Academy of Arts and Design, Tsinghua University
and Beijing Cubic Art Center

Times Square Mega Digital Display System Sponsorship: Reuters North
America Headquarters, US

Times Square Kiosk Location Sponsorship: Times Square Visitor Center, US

Adelaide Location Sponsorship: Harris Scarfe, AU

Seoul Location Sponsorship: SK Telecommunication, KR

Linz Location Sponsorship: Museum of the Future, Ars Electronica Center, AT

Beijing Location Sponsorship: Beijing Cubic Art Center, Dashanzi Art District,
CN

Special thanks:

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