

## **Centre for Metahuman Exploration Project Paradise**



Project Paradise is a telepresence installation which enables two isolated participants to interact with each other by projecting themselves into a remote "paradise". Each participant will "inhabit" the body of a remote human avatar to engage in "physical" interaction with the other participant. This interaction will occur through telerobotics, live video, and audio conversation between participants.

Visitors to the installation will control the mechanically augmented human avatars to act in the remote environment. Live video will return first person perspective of this environment. Through the empathy invoked by the human avatars, Project Paradise will extend traditional telepresence to engage in the sending and receiving of human will and emotion.

### **Installation**

The installation consists of two aluminium isolation booths at separate corners of the space, and a third chamber in the center of the space. The three will be connected by video and phone cabling. Each isolation booth will ring like a telephone. This will beckon exhibit patrons into the booths. The isolation booths will contain a video monitor and a touch-tone telephone. After answering the telephone, participants will receive a brief introduction and instructions. They will then experience "Paradise".

### **Paradise**

The remote site, a cylindrical chamber in the center of the room will contain a lush synthetic garden that is only visible on the video monitors inside the isolation booths. Visitors to the booths will experience this garden and its contents through their human avatars. They will touch the grass, pick up the flowers and fruits, and interact physically with others. Though paradise and the cyborgs are only a few feet away, the audience may only experience them through telepresence and video mediation.

### **The Cyborg Surrogate Self**

The Cyborg Surrogate Self extends the literary/artistic notion of emotional communication into the realm of telepresence through the creation of the empathic avatar to act as a first person emotional sensor/effector.

The objective of telepresence is to experience a remote location without being there, often through the use of telerobotics and communications technologies. Though suitable for remote labor, inspection and exploration, such remote experiences often lack sensory input and emotional content to make them believable as "real" experience. To provide adequate sensory input is primarily a technical challenge, however, to provide emotional content requires the projection of the feelings of the observer to connect with objects and beings at the remote site. This emotional connection may then augment sensory input provided by purely technical means. This relationship has precedents in history:

— The everyman character in fiction, allowing the audience to project themselves into a story by visualizing themselves in everyman's situation.

— Astronauts in space. There are few scientific reasons to send humans to the moon, but many cultural ones. When Neil Armstrong uttered the famous words "One small step for a man, one giant leap for mankind", the astronaut represented all of humanity.

An experience of remote emotional connection requires an avatar through which a remote user may project and receive emotional content from the remote site. This avatar must afford control to the remote user, yet personify the user in order to convey feelings of empathy. Ideally this empathic avatar would be part human, to convey emotion, and part machine, to respond to user control. This mechanically augmented human is the Cyborg Surrogate Self.