

Tammy Knipp Case Study 309



Objective/Description

The installation consists of two identical structures, each measuring 11,5'H x 3'W x 3'D. The viewing perspective requires the participants to lie on their backs (in a vulnerable position) on simulated creepers and roll beneath a suspended two foot black box (encased with 19" video monitors.) The invitation accommodates viewing for two participants — each having an individual zone. By altering the viewing perspective (a non-traditional approach), an element of curiosity is created. The only way to view and experience the piece is to place oneself in a vulnerable position, involving an element of risk — physical, social and psychological. The objective of CASE STUDY 309 was to synchronize the video imagery with that of physical kinetic sensations — kinesthesia.

Observation/Research

Hapticism. The sculptural contraptions took a life form all their own. The structures became instigators for enticing and facilitating a "social happening" — borrowing the term "happening" from Allan Kaprow. Participants and viewers were guileless subjects from an observational perspective, a view whereby human behavior and social interaction could be analyzed in real time. Interestingly, the art work required participants and viewers to exchange roles. The direct experience actually caused the participants to become an even more knowledgeable viewer. In other words, the haptic experience began with a curious viewer leading to an active participant, then returning to the role of the viewer. This secondary viewing leads to a more sophisticated observational role. It is from this "haptic perspective" where most self-learned meaning is then constructed. These many perspectives create an experiential embodiment of body and mind — which I term hapticism. The description of hapticism is akin to the somatic in which we learn principally through the physical body itself. I refer to hapticism as experimental interactive art which utilizes kinetic methods to produce a reality virtually perceived by the haptic learner.

Humor & Laughter. During the exhibitions. CASE STUDY 309 revealed that within a gathering where social and communication barriers exist, the uniting language appeared to be

that of humor and laughter. This observation reflects examples from anthropology, researched by Jacob Levine, claiming, "There is nothing so completely shared as laughter".

Patrizia Keith-Spiegel, a researcher in the psychology of humor, suggests there are four elements deemed by many theorists as necessary (though not sufficient) to appropriate conditions for the experience of humor and laughter: the element of surprise; the element of shock; the element of suddenness; and the element of unexpectedness. With the use of bizarre video imagery, absurd kinetic devices and senseless tactics of danger, I was able to produce these 4 elements in CASE STUDY 309. These elements enhanced the haptic experience and created the appropriate conditions for social interaction.

Play: When challenging psycho-social issues such as social pretentiousness, embarrassment, insecurities and guarded boundaries, it was important in each CASE STUDY I produce to maintain a light-hearted perspective, engendered by play — the ability to laugh at oneself and with others. According to Sutton-Smith, a researcher in the psychology behaviour, "Play gives the individual the opportunity to engage in social learning without the fear of experiencing repercussions".

Selective Stimuli. The tactic (optimum selective stimuli diverting the experience the expected with the unexpected) was used to maintain a level of novelty and arousal to alter the audience's expectations and perceptions in CASE STUDY 309. Research indicates that an environment designed to minimize stimulus input is not something we generally seek out.

Disorientation: A stimuli tactic employed in CASE STUDY 309 was "disorientation", defined as overwhelming or conflicting stimuli that complicates the brain's correlation of the information. The brain consequently sends false input to various senses, thus altering perceptions. CASE STUDY 309 drew from the experience of disorientation as participants lay on their backs. In the vulnerable position, disorientation confusion was made available to the participants' perception.

Technical Description

First, the Arion Programmer was used to produce a time-line of electronic signals (pulses) — purpose, to control the on/off power switches for the external devices. After the audio / video editing was completed, these electronic signals were recorded onto the right audio channel of the video tape. Second, the video tape was transferred to a HI-FI stereo format- purpose, to separate the audio channels. The left channel transmitted the audio sound, the right channel transmitted the signal.

The Arion Auxiliary Controller was used in the installation for the playback. The controller was connected to the HI-FI stereo VCR deck — via the right audio channel. Electronic relay boxes were also wired to the Arion Auxiliary Controller. When the video tape was in the play mode, the controller detected the electronic signals — sending the signals to the appropriate relay box. The relay box converted the signal into an electrical charge thus activating the appropriate external kinetic device. The recording of the electronic pulses onto the video tape made it possible to synchronize the physical sensations with that of the video imagery.