

Pixelspaces 2003

Sensory Environments – Immaterial Interfaces

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The Ars Electronica Futurelab's symposium entitled *Pixelspaces—Sensory Environments—Immaterial Interfaces* focuses on a field of concentration of the lab's current work and simultaneously on an area in which the classical performing arts have of late displayed certain tendencies bringing them in closer proximity to leading edge media art. On the basis of current projects and concepts that can be subsumed within the thematic range defined in the symposium's title—for example, Joachim Sauter's work on the opera *The Jew of Malta* (Opera Biennale Munich), Klaus Obermaier's *Dave* (Ars Electronica 2002) and installations like Justin Manor's *Key Grip—Pixelspaces 2003* will be scrutinizing artistic and technical production methods. In doing so, the symposium will also be looking into the question of the extent to which institutions in the traditional arts such as musical theater and dance are indicating their readiness to take into account the media-aesthetic implications of this development or are even capable of doing so. Moreover, Klaus Obermaier's current project entitled "Dance and Media Performance Fusions" [DAMPF, see p. 301], an interdisciplinary project dealing with the (performance) stage as a sensory environment, makes available a forum in which theory formation and practical experimentation blend into real performances. *Pixelspaces 2003* will complement them by providing basic research in the sense of relevant experience in artistic and technical practice.

Parallel to demonstrations of interest on the part of the arts—represented first and foremost by dance companies and the theater (understood in the broadest sense)—it is technology itself that nurtures and supports this process of convergence through availability on one hand and through the accompanying feasibility (of the concepts) on the other. Nevertheless, for media art on the technological leading edge, the most important reason for the relevance of the traditional arts' increased interest in new systems that has accompanied this greater feasibility is that it signals the emergence and acknowledgement of a media-specific way of doing art. Speaking in favor of this view is not only the very fact of the use of these means but also that the means themselves determine the content which is being taken into account by their use. Thus, what is called for first of all is competence in media art, and this is simultaneously the source of the challenge and the problems.

Media-aesthetic competence has not remained without influence on the contents presented at classical venues. This is presumably so to an even greater extent than is the case with a conventional set designer, who implements his skills not only as a structural engineer, interior designer etc. following the instructions of the director but also in collaboration with him in the process of making an impact upon what transpires on stage and thus its aesthetic. This is inherent in the constitutive nature of media. For the fusion being addressed through DAMPF, the model of the traditional partnership between direction and set design will be the minimum precondition—with, in accordance with their nature, new consequences. Through projects like *Gulliver's Box* (Adrian Cheok, Hirokazu Kato, Ars Electronica Futurelab) [see p. 326], *Can you see me now?* (Blast Theory / Mix Media

Lab), *Key Grip* (Justin Manor) [see p. 330] and *co.in.cide* (Heimo Ranzenbacher, x-space & Ars Electronica FutureLab) [see p. 332], these consequences are gaining entry into the discourse of DAMPF.

For this reason, *Pixelspaces 2003* is also investigating the potential effects of an upload of physical programming environments on classical forms of representation and performance spaces, and is thus simultaneously attempting to formulate approaches to a theoretical figure (for instance, in the type of music as movement of sound in time) that are necessary as references for the aesthetic process of coming to terms with performance spaces that are new for both partners.

