

Smile: Formaggio con Zueso



network installation - photographic exhibition - interactive kiosk



Arts & Humanities
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Leicester
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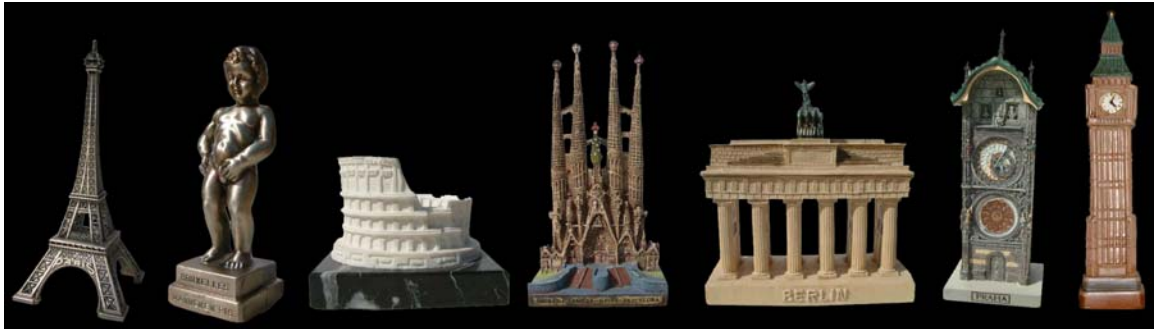
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THE CITY GALLERY

Smile: Formaggio con Queso

network installation – photographic exhibition – interactive kiosk



An examination of 21st century travel, holiday memento and the pitfalls of not keeping a straight face

Smile: Formaggio con Queso looks at the performance and ritual of the smiling process by documenting tourists documenting themselves around the relics and attractions of Europe.

Back in June 2004, over a two week period, seven European capital cities were visited in an attempt to investigate both tourism and the rituals of being a tourist. Central to the project was the capturing of the smiling process performed by tourists for the camera; that preparatory moment before and after the 'cheese' drops from the lips. Armed with a digital camcorder, minidisc recorder, still camera, pen and diary, a mass of material was captured and collated, edited and placed in a database for a digital installation that recreates the experience of almost being there.

...a few comments

'Hypnotic. Mesmerising. Where did the last hour go?' Rich, 39

'I think it's a lovely idea, the whole exhibition. I like the whole idea of it being interactive'. Robin, 18

'I loved all the Paris stuff, been there twice and love it, brought back good memories. This has made me want to travel around Europe!' Lorna, 24

'I loved the moving images, really liked the Eiffel reflection. The smile by the Moore's, Liverpool made me laugh out loud.' Elaine, 46

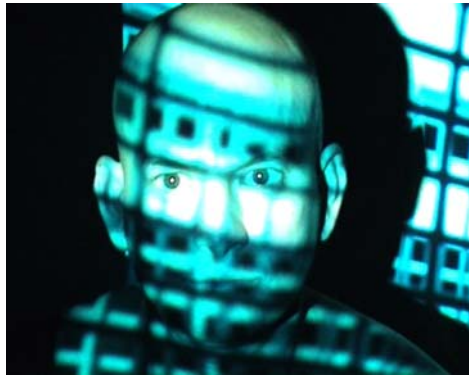
'Great exhibition and gave me lots to think about as a photography student.' Joanne, 33

'You've made me believe computer programmers could possibly become artist's too! Great work – a wonderful collection of stuff.' Mark, 31

'A tonic compared to the British Art Show. Excellent!' Anne, 52

'A cool thingy to behold!' Louis, 13

Artist's Information Pack



Stuart Simpson
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- Artist CV

Smile: Formaggio con Queso:

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4. Educational Programme
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Stuart Simpson Artistic Statement



My practice has been constantly evolving and has taken a variety of forms including theatre, film score, song, internet performance and digital installation. My current interests lie in the creation of databases consisting of video, sound composition and spoken dialogue for the production of randomly configured digital art. The computer network system, surround sound technology and digital projection are the means through which the work is realized and experienced.

My work interrogates the familiar; the everydayness of the vernacular. From the performance of the smile for the holiday-snap, the study of memory and emotion in the family album to the day-to-day existence of living with neighbours, the work is accessible and engages on many levels.

Each piece of work contains a random element and through the re-combination of the components used, new meanings are made. It is the meaning making process that I am interested in, particularly how sound can change the meaning of the visual. The methods used for gathering material are auto/ethnographic and the use of the field trip and the documentation of anecdotes are essential to the work. The use of real life narrative has become the hallmark for each of my investigations. The exploration of new technology and its use in the presentation of its components is simply the vehicle.

Stuart Simpson – CV

International artist Stuart Simpson has worked in a variety of forms including theatre, film score, song, internet performance and digital installation. His current interests lie in the creation of databases consisting of video, sound composition and spoken dialogue for the production of randomly configured digital art. The computer network system, surround sound technology and digital projection are the means through which the work is realized and experienced. His work investigates the familiar from the performance of the smile for the holiday-snap; family photography, shopping and food; spirit guides and mementos; to the day-to-day existence of living with neighbours. His work is accessible and engages on many levels.

EDUCATION

Doctorate in Art and Design at Nottingham Trent University, UK 2003 – 2007 (award pending)
Post-graduate Certificate in Research Methodologies, Nottingham Trent University 2003 - 2004
MA in Contemporary Arts (Distinction) Nottingham Trent University, Nottingham 2000 – 2002
BA (Hons.) in Performing Arts (First Class) DeMontfort University, Leicester 1998 – 1999
Higher National Diploma in Performing Arts at Charles Keen College, Leicester (1996 – 1998)

AWARDS

Arts Council England Smile: Formaggio con Queso touring support (2007)
Creative Leicestershire Bursary Award (2006)
Arts Council England Smile: Formaggio con Queso R&D for touring Ireland (2006)
Arts Council England 4Walls - project funding (2005)
Arts and Humanities Research Council award (2003 - 2006)
Arts Council England Smile: Formaggio con Queso - project funding (2004)

COMMISSIONS

Spirit Guides for Life (2007) R&D - The Bonington Gallery, Nottingham, UK
4Walls (2006) Commissioned by the City Gallery, Leicester, UK
Smile: Formaggio con Queso (2006) Commissioned by the City Gallery, Leicester, UK

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

Smile: Formaggio con Queso (January 2008) Bonington Gallery, Nottingham, UK
Smile: Formaggio con Queso (August 2007) Belltable Arts Centre, Limerick, Ireland
Smile: Formaggio con Queso (April 2007) Garter Lane Arts Centre, Waterford, Ireland
3Piece Suite (April 2006) the City Gallery, Leicester, UK

FORTHCOMING SOLO EXHIBITIONS

Smile: Formaggio con Queso (April - May 2008) Dunamaise Art Centre, Co. Laoise, Ireland
Smile: Formaggio con Queso (June - July 2008) The Courthouse, Co. Wicklow, Ireland
Spirit Guides for Life (October 2008) Phoenix Arts, Leicester, UK

EXHIBITIONS & FESTIVALS (2006 – 07)

4Walls (Dec 2007) The Ruskin Gallery, Cambridge (The Sitting Room)
4Walls (Dec 2007) Flux festival, Clonakilty, Cork, Ireland
4Walls (Oct 2007) AKI, Academy of Fine Arts in Enschede, Netherlands (The Sitting Room exhibition)
4Walls (July 2007) Deviant Festival (Projection Gallery), Sweden
4Walls (July 2007) Winchester Gallery, Winchester School of Art (The Sitting Room exhibition)
4Walls (July 2007) Artradio, Cornerhouse, Manchester
4Walls (May 2007) Futuresonic 07(SoundNetwork), Manchester
4Walls (Feb 2007) The Projection Gallery / Seven Seven Contemporary Art, London (Projektar)
4Walls (Jan 2007) The Permanent Gallery, Brighton (The Sitting Room Exhibition)
4Walls (Nov 2006) Alsager Arts Centre (The Sitting Room exhibition)
Smile: Formaggio con Queso (Nov 2006) TULCA Contemporary Arts Festival Galway, Ireland
4Walls (Nov 2006) The Big M, (ISIS Arts) Woodhorn, UK
4Walls (Nov 2006) Liverpool Biennial, (The Projection Gallery)
4Walls (Nov 2006) BBC Big Screen, Manchester

FILM AND VIDEO SOUNDTRACKS

St. Paul's: Vocational Learning (2007) Mehul Desai
The Worlds Worst Chat-up Line (2007) Rob Gee & Steve Friendship
Laughing Fit (2006) Steve Friendship
Tonight (2006) Mehul Desai
Local Democracy Project (2005) Steve Friendship
Used (2005) Mehul Desai
Coda (2004) Steve Friendship
Jigsaw Out-takes (2002) Max Q Productions
Everyone's got Half a Brain (2002) Collaboration with Steve Friendship
Let's Eat Hair (1999) Collaboration with Zoe Van-der-Veldt.

THEATRE

Insecticide (2000) Writer, composer, designer and performer (Phoenix Arts, Leicester / LMU, Leeds)
Trifle (1999) Laurielorry. Director, composer and performer (Leicester)
Are You Sitting Comfortably? (1998) Laurielorry. Deviser and performer (St Andrews Church, Leicester)
Dinner (1998) Mass Productions Ltd. Performer / deviser (The Guild Hall, Leicester)

TEACHING PRACTICE & YOUTH WORK

Creative Practitioner for Creative Partnerships – Sparkenhoe School, Leicester (2007)
Visiting lecturer for School of Fine Art (BA & MA), Nottingham Trent University (2005 / 2007)
ACTIVATE programme (Mantle Arts) providing artists with training to work in schools (2006)
Visiting lecturer Contemporary Creative Practice, Leeds Metropolitan University (2006)
Researcher in Residence at Guthlaxton College Leicester working with year 11 (2006)
Mentoring of HND Performing Arts students, Leicester College, Leicester (2006)
Music facilitator Wigston Youth Centre (1996) and drama workshop leader (1998 / 99)
Community musician with teaching experience in Leicestershire schools (1992-93)
Guitar tutor – private tuition

DOCUMENTATION WORK

Documenter for Cape UK / Creative Partnerships – current work at Riverside School, Leicester (2007/8)
National Review of Live Art Festival, Glasgow: 2003 / 2004 / 2005 / 2006 / 2007 / 2008
Radiator and Digital Cultures Symposium (2005) Nottingham
Priya Mistry, Agent (2005) The City Gallery, Leicester
Richard Hancock, Dermographia (2005), The Powerhouse, Nottingham
Stelarc, Muscle Machine (2003) 291 Gallery, London

CURRENT & PAST EXPERIENCES

Membership Secretary Performance Studies international, Roehampton University, London (2005 - 2007)
Archival assistant – Liveart Archive, Nottingham Trent University (2000 – 2006)
Digital support (websites / discussion lists / digitization) for the Performance Arts Digital
Research Unit, Nottingham Trent University (2000 - 2006)
A member of Mass Productions Ltd a professional theatre and contemporary performance company
(1999 - 2001) (Writer / performer / composer / designer)
Musician and recording artist based in San Diego, USA (1993 - 1996)
Songwriter / performer: National and European tours, record releases, radio sessions and TV (1989 –
1993).

References

Prof. John Newling Karl Wallace Kathy Fawcett
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1. The 'Smile' Installation



Photograph by Lisa Kelly

The 'Smile' Installation Synopsis

Stuart Simpson questions the meaning of simple, everyday experiences such as taking holiday snaps and the performance of the smile in *Smile: Formaggio con Queso* a digital installation. Simpson uses real life data collected from his own field trips for databases of video, sound composition and spoken dialogue through which he produces random digital art. The Smile installation, a triptych of projection and surround sound uses a computer network to house the database and computer programming to randomly select the sound and image components. His use of chance combinations generates new and unexpected meanings about modern life. *Smile: Formaggio con Queso* shows a slice of life caught by digital technology in which public and private lives collide. Combined with an exhibition of still documentation by photographer Lisa Kelly, visitors are also able to interact with the digital components of Smile and examine diaries, notes and maps from a field trip around Europe in the Smile Kiosk.



Belltable, Limerick, Ireland – July 2007



Garter Lane Arts Centre, Waterford, Ireland - May 2007



The City Gallery, Leicester – May 2006

2. Single Screen Interactive Kiosk

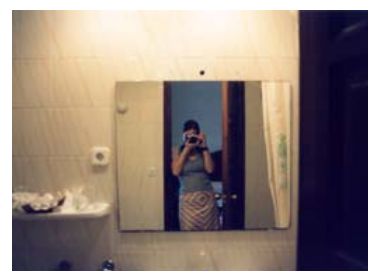
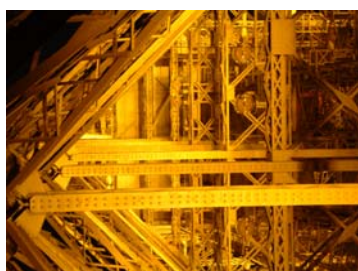
A kiosk has also been created to include all the meta-data. This consists of a single computer that contains all the database installation files along with maps, still images and texts written during and after the trip. The kiosk will essentially allow the public to 'play' with the components giving them the opportunity to explore different combinations reflexively. For most people the experience of each minute of sound and vision will be the first and last time they experience it. The installation piece will be constantly changing and will never be the same. However, the kiosk will allow the public access to the whole allowing the artistic process to become transparent.



The City Gallery, Leicester, UK – May 2006

3. Photographic Exhibition

Accompanying the installation is a photographic exhibition of images from the fieldtrip; its process, the participants involved and artistic responses to each of the locations and spaces. These photographs were created by Lisa Kelly who was also the production manager during the trip. The exhibition amounts to approximately fifty framed photographs of varying sizes; from A6 to 1A. Each framed image is referenced by the x and y co-ordinates on the map from where the image was taken. This meta-data is connected to each image and is accessed by inputting these co-ordinates into the search function of the kiosk. The viewer can obtain further information about each image such as where and when it was taken; visually seeing that data on maps contained within the kiosk database. This strategy is useful as an educational tool for groups of young people and adults alike.



4. Educational Programme

From out of the work there are a number of themes that educational officers can draw from, the majority revolving around activities that concern the ideas of travel and holidays. Previous programmes have engaged children through the making of sun hats, bag making, smiling, postcards and personal narratives of holidays. Below are some examples of workshops and talks that are artist run.

a) Artist's Talk

The artists talk would touch upon a number of methodologies that were used within the creation of the work

Smile: Formaggio con Queso exists within the context of the 'social' and examine the relationships that people have with each other, their memories and the documentation of these memories. It also examines how people attempt to make meaning of the world through what they see and hear. The artist's talk would elaborate on the themes being investigated by the work and also its inspiration. The talk would conclude by looking at the artistic use of technology such as computer networks.

b) Artist's Workshop

The workshop will be centred on the use of family photographs provided by participants and a short anecdote by each participant that relates to them. Each narrative of no more than two minutes will be recorded at the venue. Each participant will also be asked to provide a piece of music which they would like to incorporate as a soundtrack to their narrative. The workshop will look at the practical methods employed by myself for creating work using technology but also using everyday stories and objects. The workshop will go through the process of creating a piece of work that will exist on a DVD. However, the finished DVD will be no ordinary DVD as all the materials and components of slide show, narrative and soundtrack will be randomly configured. Each participant will have a copy of the DVD.

c) Workshop - in-house Teens

The 'teens' workshop will be a variation of the above. The group would be given a theme or location to explore (one that is close by to venue). Each participant would collect data/material in response to the theme/location using a basic digital capturing device. This would preferably be a mobile phone or camera. The workshop would examine simple lo-fi technology for the creation of digital art. The materials would be still or moving image with recorded spoken dialogues collected in situ. This workshop may need two sessions if there was not enough time. The second session would be the transference of the data to hard drive and a quick edit (if this had not already been done at home or school). The materials would be randomly configured using DVD technology.

d) Workshop - in-house Saturday Art Club for 8-13yrs

This workshop will be focussed on the exploration of found family photographs. Participants will be given a number of found photographs with which they have to create a possible narrative. What is being explored is how meanings are made when we look at images. What will be touched upon is basic semiotics of the image. The narratives will be recorded at the venue in the vein of the Artist's Workshop. Each narrative will be one minute in length. All the components will be digitized in preparation for a DVD which will randomly configure the components.

e) Workshop - in-house family workshop for parents and children of all ages.

The workshop will entail adults talking about their childhood through the use of family photographs. Children will likewise explore their family photographs and provide potential futures as adults. All the material will be written as narratives and recorded at the venue with the photographs providing a slide show. This will be placed on DVD.

5. Technical Information

Technical Descriptions

The installation has been designed to be maintained and managed by gallery staff who have limited or no knowledge of computer networks. Once the system has been installed by the artist start-up and close down procedures follow similar processes to starting up any basic software on the pc. During the past few exhibitions all members of staff (front of house / office staff) were fully briefed with how to turn the installation on and off.

The installation uses 4 p.c's that are networked via Ethernet cat5 cables and a switch. Three digital projectors are then connected to three p.c's whilst the fourth is the controller and which output's the sound components. This uses an external Creative X-Fi soundcard which is then connected to a 7.1 Creative Gigaworks surround sound system.

The kiosk has also been created to include all the meta-data. This consists of a single computer that contains all the installation files along with still images and texts written during and after the trip. The kiosk will essentially allow the public to 'play' with the components giving them the opportunity to explore different combinations reflexively. Also in the *Kiosk* space is a photographic exhibition of images from the fieldtrip; its process, the participants involved and artistic responses to each of the locations and spaces. The exhibition amounts to forty two framed photographs of varying sizes; from A6 to 1A.

Equipment provided by the Artist

Computer Network = 4 computers
External 7.1 surround sound card. 1 monitor, mouse and keyboard
7.1 surround sound speaker system
2 Digital projectors

Note:

The work can be shown as a triptych on a DVD and can therefore fit any moving image programme. Another available alternative is to exhibit the installation on DVD inclusive of the interactive kiosk and photographic exhibition.

Credit List

All still photographic images by Lisa Kelly
Network program and kiosk design Jon Knight
All other work – video, sound design, sound composition and overall conceptualisation by Stuart Simpson