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EXHIBITION PRESS RELEASE
Presence/Absence

ACM Multimedia, the premier international multimedia conference, in conjunction with **LASALLE-SIA College of the Arts** and with the support of Leonardo Journal, is pleased to announce "**Presence/Absence,**" a group exhibition of interactive multimedia art featuring 16 works by more than 30 international artists and their collaborators. The exhibition opens on Monday, 6th November and closes on Saturday, 12th November with a reception for the artists on **Tuesday, November 7** from **7:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m**. The gallery is open 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m every day.

For centuries, artists and philosophers have explored the notion of presence from multiple perspectives, considering its physical, psychological, and cultural dimensions. In that exploration, technology has played an important role, not only in the development of the tools used for the "representation" of presence, but also in defining it: from the revolution in painting brought by photography, to the new concepts of presence brought by technological advances in the last sixty years (virtual reality, telepresence, etc.). Such technologies, and in particular those that combine multiple media (video, images, computer graphics, audio, haptics), seem to increase "presence," questioning our embodied, singular sense of being in this world as the only way of positioning ourselves. That questioning is closely linked to cultural, social, and economic factors: presence can be used to reaffirm power or control structures; it can multiply our sense of being by erasing distance barriers and allow us to take on new, virtual identities, or it can be interpreted as leading to absence as in the belief in some cultures that photographs steal the soul.

Artists have worked with "technologies of presence", in traditional art for a long time. However, while the rapid spread of technology has brought unprecedented changes in the very basic notions of presence, advances in transportation have lowered costs and changed the physical landscape: those with enough resources are able to travel to be "anywhere" in short periods of time, and opportunities for the less fortunate have also opened up, allowing the unprecedented movement of people creating great challenges for humanity in the 21st century.
The exhibition consists of inter-disciplinary art works that address the issue of presence both in artistic and technological, but also, in political (migration, home, sense of belonging and identification) contexts.

The following artists are featured in the exhibition: **M. Arango, D. Birchfield, S. B. Davis, R. Jacobs, M. Watkins, M. Moar, J. Cox, C. Riddoch, K. Cooke, R. Hull, T. Melamed, A. Dunning, P. Woodrow, M. Hollenberg, M. Ciglar, P. Gemeinboeck, M. A. Krell, J. Nelson, H. Ogawa, N. Ando, S. Onohera, K. Olsson, T. Kawashima, M. Pichlmair, R. Renno, R. Marchetti, G. D. du Rau, J. Stenner, A. Kerne, Y. Williams, K. Takahashi, S.Sasada, Y.-C. Tseng, C.-H. Lee, Y.-C. Hsu, H. K. Yamakawa**

"Body Degree Zero" by **Dunning**, **Woodrow & Hollenberg** uses biological sensors to create a virtual presence of two participants. **Nelson**'s "Bomar Gene" creates a web of narratives in which the lives of several individuals can be discovered. **Takahashi & Sasada**'s "Diorama table" playfully mixes physical elements with virtual ones: virtual objects interact with objects placed on a table. **Active Ingredient and Middlesex University's** "Ere be Dragons" is a game for pocket PC that encourages exercise by mapping unknown territories to create a virtual landscape, controlled by GPS and the player's heart rate. **Tseng & Lee**'s "Immersing ME" also mixes the virtual and the real as images of viewers of the work are captured and divided into many pieces. **Gemeinboeck & Krell**'s work "Impossible Geographies 01" explores memory by interactively redisplaying complex combinations of video previously captured in the space. **Birchfield**'s "Interactions" mixes images and sounds from two virtual artists who compete with each other given user input. "KODAMA" by **Yamakawa** creates a world by capturing voices of the visitors to the installation and representing them as bubbles in a forest. **Renno, Marchetti & G. D. du Rau**'s "Non_sensor" subverts a magnetic position-sensing device using everyday electrical or metallic objects as impromptu tools of artistic expression. **Stenner, Kerne & Williams**'s "Playas" creates a virtual reality game environment from real and synthetic images of a New Mexico town. **Hsu**'s "Tangible Weather Channel" and "Small Connection" by **Ogawa, Ando & Onohera** use tangible media to experience remote presence, the latter creating an intimate communication channel with light and touch, while the former uses air and water to convey presence in the weather of a remote location. **Ciglar**'s "Tastes Like" does away with technology—the body itself serves as a conductor of electrons to generate audio-visual collages. "The King Has…" by **Olsson & Kawashima** solicits anonymous secrets via SMS and memorializes them on publicly displayed wooden tablets. **Pichlmair**'s "Seven mile boots" mixes physical space with the virtual world: as the wearer walks, wearing networked boots, she enters different internet chat rooms to overhear real-time conversations. **Arango**'s "Vanishing point" renders a map in which countries disappear if they are not mentioned in on-line news sources.

Works in the exhibition underwent a rigorous selection process by an international technical committee and by the curatorial committee: **Jeffrey Shaw** (University of New South Wales, Australia), **Yukiko Shikata** (NTT InterCommunication Center. Japan), **Eugene Tan** (LASALLE-SIA College of the Arts, Singapore) and **Alejandro Jaimes** (FXPAL, Fuji Xerox, Japan). **Andrew Senior** (IBM T.J.Watson Research Center, USA) and **Wolfgang Muench** (Lasalle-SIA College of the Arts, Singapore)
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