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COMMISSIONED BY: Bruce James

FROM MIKE LEGGETT © Total words commissioned:1000

Total words in this version: 1263 (Footnotes 162)

PIX: X2 can be supplied on disc:        Planet1.tiff
        Planet2.tiff Useage of these must be cleared with the artist
Brad Miller at COFA 9385 0888.

SUGGESTED TITLES(S): Review: Planet of Noise

Encountering (what turns out to be) the central space of Planet of
Noise is like entering the psychic space of an urban existence, with
the flak and shash that is the backdrop to our continuum, there in the
space contained by eyes and ears, screen and speakers. This is no
virtual space. It is the flat space that jangles us by day and night,
which rocks our senses with the artifice of colour and layout, which
entreats any suspension or suspicion with the sweet reason of word
play and tinker bells. It is the centre, off-set, re-centred, re-framed - so
that reason cannot function, so that the tension between gibberish
and illumination can be asserted. This is unsettling, this is unclear, this
bugs the question - "..is that all there is?"
The little orb revolves and circulates. No sapphire planet floating
shipshape in its solar orbit this one. Each time it is seen, it wears a
different coat of texture-mapped exotica. The interactor's mouse
chases it away! It will return, bouncing from the off-screen wall, the
ball with a dog, and imitate the actions of the bouncing ball, leading
the eye along the words - and then down the words, and then across
the words, and then ... away, somewhere. "Sunless: Planet of Noise.
Planet orbiting no sun. Spinning itself out of itself." This little orb is
actually the gateway forward through the exhibition, enabling one
'frame' and its associated sounds, to be replaced by the next. But,

without resisting the anthropomorphic metaphor, first you have to catch it as it darts around, learn its habits, anticipate its re-entry, ambush its intention. The caught jester. Clicking it moves you on - at a brisk pace past each 'frame', or in more engaged manner, with each one. At each interface the mouse rollovers (not rolls over) the on-screen text and triggers a female voice. She recites part or all of the phrase or saying. This is definitely not the well known phrase or saying encountered in the reference library (or even Channel Nine's Catch Phrase).

Brad Miller and Mackenzie Wark have collaborated to produce dimensional aphorisms: "High Fidelity: the complete relationship - to love and to lie; to be loved and deceived". At the appropriate rollover the voice reiterates: "to love and to lie; to be" as a coda of the original - until the mouse rolls off, returning some attention to the richly crafted backdrop. This is a visual backdrop with full stereophonic accompaniment, employing the full gamut of sampled and electro-synthesised loops, prepared with contributions from Jason Gee, Derek Kreckler and Brendan Palmer.

The visual backdrop over which each aphorism hovers is the digital equivalent of a medieval tapestry. These are mostly flat surfaces which have been texture value-added in Photoshop, (with some algorithmic conclusions to Mandelbrot's work on Fractals). There are also surfaces directly re-purposed from Miller's earlier seminal work, Digital Rhizome including the 'infini-d worm hole' three-dimensional forms that featured so centrally in that hypercarded piece. In an encounter with Rhizome, an early exploration of hypermedia (now called multimedia), it is soon realised that whilst the sequence is the unique result of how each interaction proceeds, the process of interacting is learnt to influence progress but not 'control' it. This is the case too with Planet.

However, the 'mazing' process of clicking outwards in a conceptual circle, attempting to plot 'landmark' images along the way in order to map the topography of the piece is not possible in the new piece, neither the other diffuser of subversive strategies - interpretation. These are given. As a list on the jewel-case cover and as Mackenzie

Wark's aphorism texts. Aphorisms are pithy sentences (wittily) expressing a precept or principle. Besides being economical with language they impose that moment of reflection which allows the individual readers personality to explore and extract a full meaning, if not several. Such interaction is at the core of Planet of Noise and is both the form and content of the work.[1] Extra-textuality dimensions are added to the aphorisms. Besides recitation, the mouse rollover might trigger a slogan ("..discovered!"), or a sound extract, events which sidle into the general ambience of the sound loop that runs behind the displayed words.

The events are of course the 'bites' which the doorstop journalist has made so famous - those ten-second sentences which summarise the situation, the position, the event; a speech, a disaster, a success, a discovery. Moments elevated by attention, by a framing, editing, honing process which digests the occurrence into its accepted category, ready for uncritical consumption. Digital mediums are perfect for doing this since each pixel, each fraction of a waveform is replaceable, removable - revisable.

To remove the photo-image from having a privileged relationship with truth is the implication here, by placing 'photograph as evidence' into the doomed archives of history and confirming the documentary and the photo-journals as works of creative endeavour.[2] Planet's word fields are separated from the backdrop by an aura, (actually called feathering in the Photoshop menu), bathing the typography in a supporting cushion of ethereality. Whilst words, backdrop, recitation, music, effects, your friendly playful bouncing ball AND the subtly changing indicators of the cursor icon itself float before your very eyes in off-centred profusion, your brain begins to engage with dimensions of meaning which extrude somehow behind the image at which you gaze. Meaning is returned to the subject. There is no link here, other than the metaphysical. No coded text which ejects the reader to another text on some other site on the other side of the world or another sector of the CD-ROM. Immersion here is sequential, following the predetermined path around the virtual gallery's hidden walls, formed as they are, invisibly, into ten rooms (or Zones) - Eden

Free Trade Zone; Republic of Sadness; The Military Entertainment Complex - which group each aphorism into an association with the reality of contemporary real-politik.

And the way out of each room? Back to where you started. Is the metaphor complete? Well no, remember we're dealing with a figure of speech here which places it's meaning clearly at your door. Stop? Well, not yet....

Notes

1. Derrick de Kirckhove, associate of McLuhan and now director of the Program in Culture and Technology at the University of Toronto, in his book, The Skin of Culture, employs aphorisms to different ends. In the book, one of De Kirckhove's concerns to direct us away from the literate ear and toward the associative of the oral ear. Indeed he uses an aphorism in doing so: "Our neglect of the ear may be one of the prices we have paid for literacy". Georg Lichtenberg developed the art of the aphorism in the 18th Century and devised one which shrilly warns: "There are many people who won't listen until their ears are cut off." 2. The contemporary clothing advertisement advertisement featuring the photo-manipulated Yalta conference news photograph, achieves what Stalin attempted to do unsuccessfully - when he ordered Trotsky touched out of all known group photographs. Of course the ad also demonstrates that exaggerated lies will succeed where slightly altered truth by concealment will fail. © mike leggett