

COMMUNICATING MOODS IN SPACE

The project is designing a virtual narrative space, which, combined with event scenarios, inspires collaborative creative processes and established a meaningful relationship between virtual space and reality. Scenarios are generated using the methods of traditional play and theatre-improvisation. Participators take on character-roles with a physical, rather than textual, mode of interaction, and exercise them in a non-realistic virtual environment. The design of character movement and possible ways of interaction draws on modes of expression in physical theatre.

Our approach was to find ways to do quick prototyping and testing of ideas in a virtual space. We strive at building general applications independent of the 3D platform used for the specific case rather than getting stuck in a certain game engine or technological generation. The focus has been on the constant dialogue between the concept and its form. For these purposes we were looking for a virtual environment to support: multi user environment, open SDK for application development, openness for character animation and behaviour control. In the first phase we chose Half-Life as test platform. We looked closer at two areas:

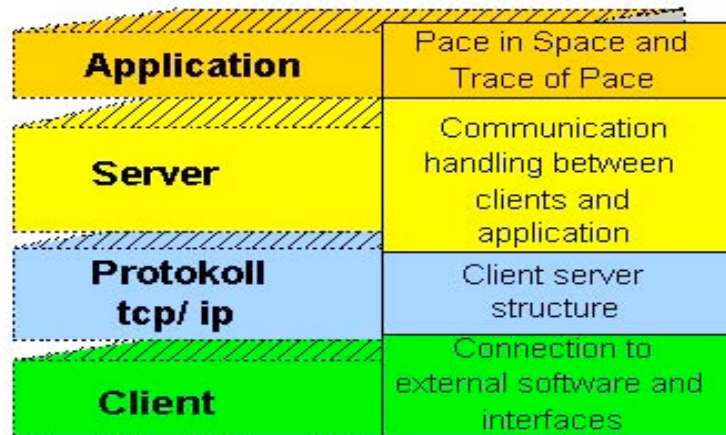
Pace in Space

How do we physically communicate and experience stories together in virtual space? How to create a virtual space that in a haptic sense inspires the pace in space.

Trace of Pace

How to define dynamic drama structures that allows the space itself to become an actor. In the role of actor the space may embody memories and let events and stories told integrate physically in space as trace of pace – the story and memories of actors pace as well as the space itself.

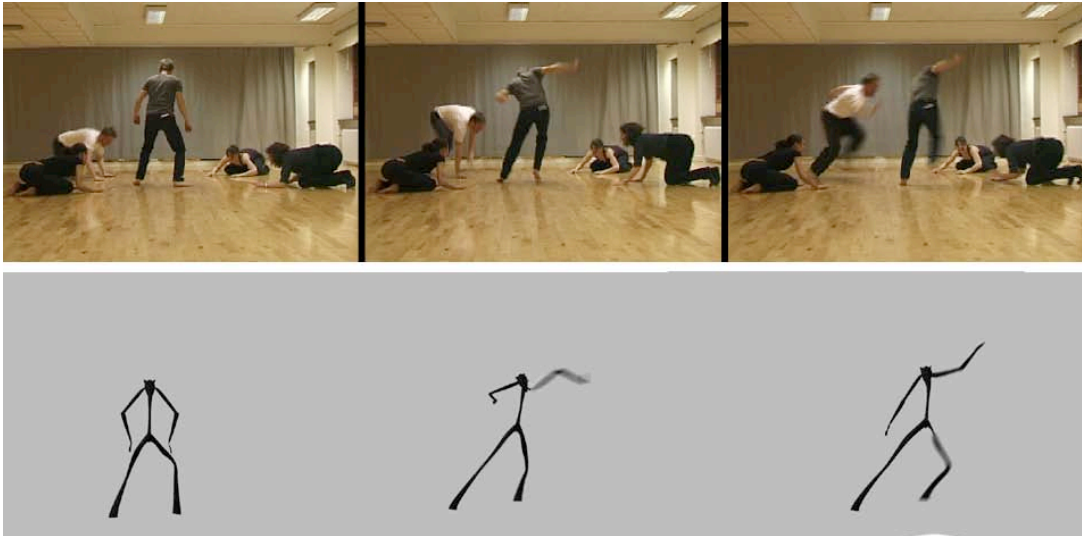
With a long-term goal of building a flexible and open application and not putting too much effort in Half-Life specific solutions, a Mixed Reality Platform was formulated. The aim of this platform is to create a flexible meeting point between physical and virtual space, an open environment and interface to different 3D engines as well as flexibility in relation to user interfaces. The platform consists of a protocol and a software package (API), based on the same protocol. The protocol is to handle positioning, movements in virtual and physical environments and support several input devices and systems - in the range from microphones to tracking systems.



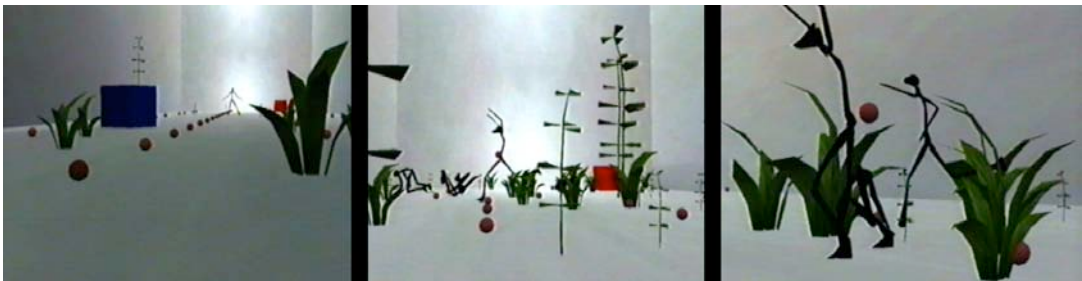
The dramaturgy aims to define ways of “fighting” for collaboration, identifying and developing alternative paths to creativity and shared story-making and other forms of narrativity. For implementation an old traditional tagging game called “Stone, Wolf and Lamb” was chosen in the first prototype. This game is implemented as a multi player computer game in Half-Life, where actors interact through their Roles in first person view. Specific for the chosen game is a constant change of Role. This gives the actor/ player different relation and point of view in the game played. This changing of roles also creates the circular dramaturgy where there is no winner.



Character movement is designed in the context of the game. Our mode of motion capture were by shooting live workshops in video, which was the raw material for the character animation.



The playground is a white rectangular space – narrow but with high roof staged by light and sound as ending in “heaven” and “hell” respectively. In the prototype traces are implemented for Role change and traffic in space. As examples implemented, a role change will place a plant to grow, creating a jungle over time. Movement in space as traffic will generate markers of different intensity and colour.



PARTICIPANTS

Concept and design Marika Kajo
Technical coordinator Lars Rauer
3D character models Michael Johansson
3D Space/ Half Life modeling Rickard Lundström
Drama workshops Kent Sjöström, teacher at the Theatre Academy of Malmö
Software package Johan Torstensson
Game software Per Larsson and Jens Henriksson,
Projects presented run at Space respectively Narrativity Studio, Interactive Institute in Malmö.

DOCUMENTATION

Kajo, Marika och Johansson, Mikael (2001): Common Playground, Proceedings cast01// Living in Mixed Realities, Conference on artistic, cultural and scientific aspects of experimental media spaces MARS_Exploratory Media Lab, Bonn, Germany

Kajo, M, paper presentation, (2001) IDEA '01 World Congress: Playing Betwixt and Between, Bergen Norway

Torstensson Johan Mixed Reality Platform Master work in Interaction Technology, Malmö University K3, Sweden

Larsson Per ; Henriksson Jens, Trace of Pace, Master project, Lund Institute of Technology /Multimedia, Sweden

CD CMS version 0.9 – CD prototyp of Half-Life Game on "Stone, Wolf and Lamb"-game