

Selected Works by Don Ritter 1993-2026



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### Additional online documentation

- documentary website: <http://aesthetic-machinery.com>
- video compilation: <http://www.aesthetic-machinery.com/compilation.html>
- detailed work documents for exhibitors: <http://aesthetic-machinery.com/documents.html>
- press kit: [http://aesthetic-machinery.com/documents/Ritter\\_Presskit.pdf](http://aesthetic-machinery.com/documents/Ritter_Presskit.pdf)
- online biography & exhibition history: <http://www.aesthetic-machinery.com/biography.html>



cover and above image: *Burning Too*, Run Run Shaw Creative Media Centre, Hong Kong. Don Ritter, 2016

## Biography

Don Ritter is a Canadian artist and writer who has been active in the field of media art since 1988. His interdisciplinary artworks and writings integrate fine art and digital media with aesthetics and ethics. Ritter's immersive video-sound installations enable audiences to direct their experiences through body motion or voice, and his live performances and media façades present ultra high-definition video projections controlled by live music, sound, or body gestures. His most recent work includes large architectural projections based on the symbolism of fire and water, and metal prints resembling road signs that convey issues of sustainability and ontology.

Ritter has presented exhibitions and performances in 23 countries at venues throughout North America, Europe and Asia, including SITE Santa Fe (USA), Winter Olympics 2010 Cultural Olympiad (Vancouver), Metrònom (Barcelona), Sonambiente Sound Festival (Berlin), Verona Jazz Festival (Italy), Exit Festival (Paris), Ars Electronica Festival (Linz), New Music America (New York City), and the Daegu Culture and Arts Center (South Korea). His most widely exhibited work is *Intersection* (1993), an immersive-interactive sound installation that has been experienced by over 700,000 persons in eight countries. During his performances of video controlled by live music, Ritter collaborated mostly with trombonist George Lewis, and also with musicians Nick Didkovsky, Amy Denio, Thomas Dimuzio, Ikue Mori, Geneviève Letarte, Ben Neill, Trevor Tureski and Tom Walsh. Ritter's prints and paintings are held in private collections in North America, Europe and Asia, and his work has received support and recognition from the Canada Council for the Arts, The Banff Centre (Canada), Pratt Institute (USA), ZKM (Germany), Ars Electronica (Austria), DGAertes (Portugal), the Goethe Institute (Germany), the European Union Culture Programme (EU), and City University of Hong Kong. In 2024 he received a Governor General's Award in Visual and Media Arts for Artistic Achievement (Canada).

Ritter completed his graduate degree in visual studies at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Center For Advanced Visual Studies, MIT Media Lab, and Harvard University's film department. His professors included German artist Otto Piene (MIT), documentary film-maker Richard Leacock (MIT), computer scientist Marvin Minsky (MIT), and film theorist Vlada Petric (Harvard). He has undergraduate degrees in fine arts and psychology from the University of Waterloo and a diploma in electronics engineering from NAIT. Prior to his academic positions, Ritter worked as a researcher and telecommunications designer for Northern Telecom/Nortel and Bell-Northern Research in Toronto and Ottawa. He held full-time and tenured professorships in art and design between 1989 and 2017 at Concordia University (Montreal), Pratt Institute (New York City), Hanyang University (Seoul, South Korea), and the School of Creative Media at City University of Hong Kong. Ritter maintained his art studio in Toronto (1988-1989), Montreal (1989-1996, 2017-present), New York City (1996-2005), Berlin (2006-2013), and Hong Kong (2013-2017).

## Burning Too • Hong Kong

architectural projection  
mapped 4K interactive video and sound with 4 HD projectors and 2 channel audio  
55 x 26m (180 x 85 ft) projection  
Run Run Shaw Creative Media Centre, Hong Kong  
ISEA2016 International Symposium on Electronic Art  
Don Ritter, 2016

web page and documentary video:

<http://www.aesthetic-machinery.com/burning-too.html>

exhibition document:

<http://www.aesthetic-machinery.com/documents/RitterBurningToo.pdf>

*Burning Too* consisted of video projections and the sounds of fire presented on the Run Run Shaw Creative Media Centre in Hong Kong. The crystalline-shaped building, designed by architect Daniel Libeskind, has a 55 x 26 m façade angled forward 62 degrees. A software was designed by Ritter to map and combine four HD video projections onto the angled façade of the building, enabling the imagery to appear as one unified Ultra HD (4K) video projection of fire synchronized with interactive sound.

*Burning Too* is a metaphorical depiction of humanity's long-standing relationship with fire.

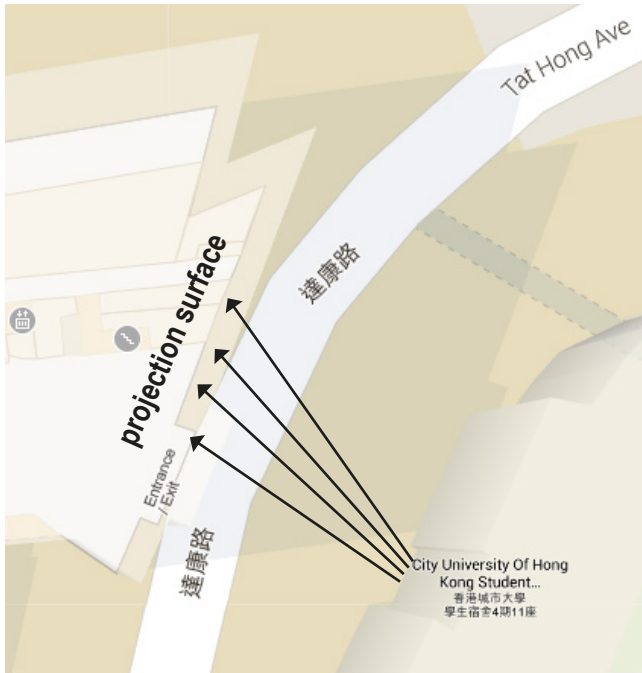
Don Ritter	director, video and sound, system design, programming and mapping
Cleo Song	production coordinator
Mitch Martinez	camera

Documentary photographs and video by Don Ritter, Luna Leung, and Ching Yung Yau.  
Assistants: Hao Li, King Him Fung, and Ching Yung Yau.  
Produced with assistance from City University of Hong Kong.

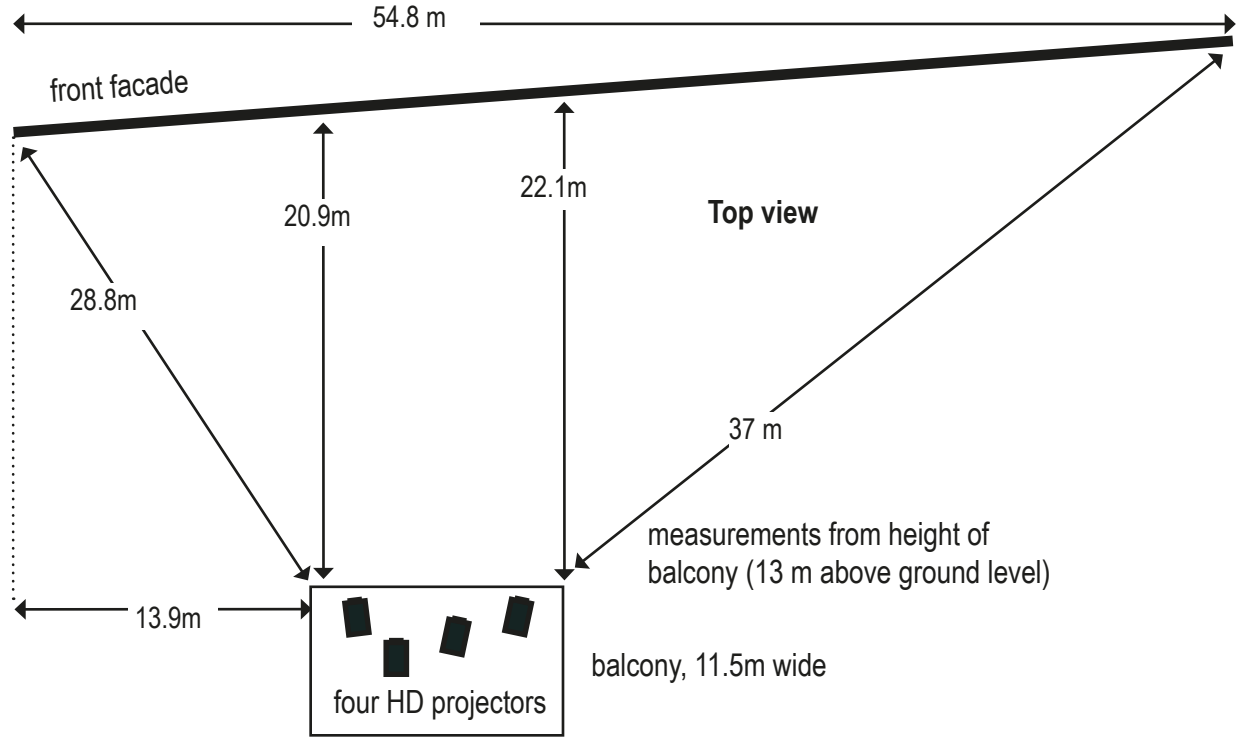




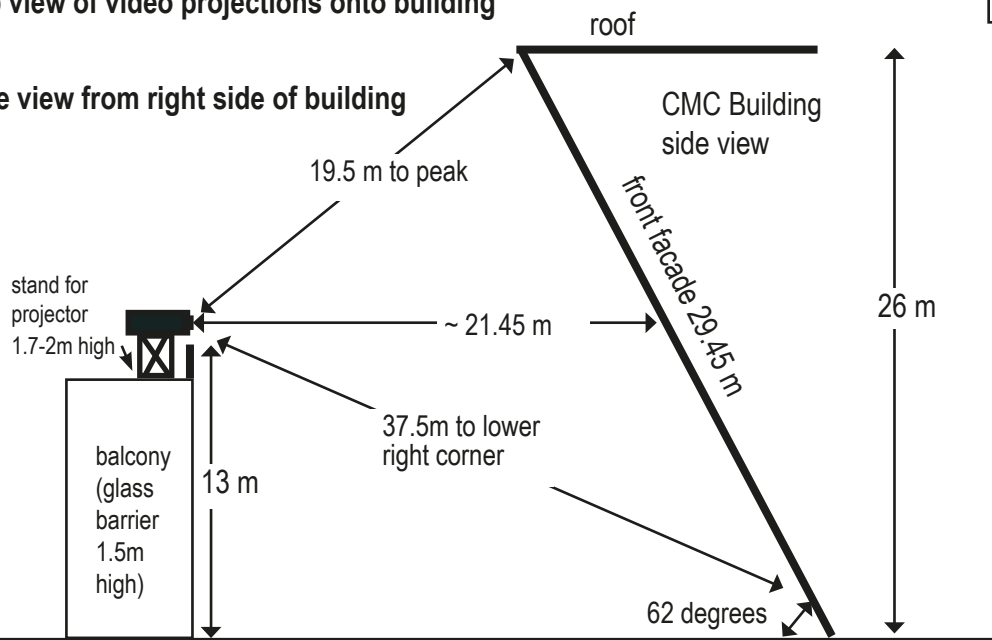
detail of *Burning Too* - Hong Kong, Run Run Shaw Creative Media Centre, Hong Kong



Top view of video projections onto building



Side view from right side of building





calibration of four projectors for Burning Too, Hong Kong

## Burning Too • Art Rock

architectural projection

mapped 6K interactive video and sound with 3 HD projectors and 6 channel audio

50 x 10 m (164 x 39 ft) projection

Cour Saint-Esprit, Saint-Brieuc, France

Don Ritter, 2017

web page and documentary video: <http://aesthetic-machinery.com/burning-too-artrock.html>

exhibition document: <http://www.aesthetic-machinery.com/documents/BurningToo-Artrock.pdf>

Burning Too is a metaphorical depiction of humanity's long-standing relationship with fire, depicted as a large-scale projection of slow moving fire with sound. Three full HD video projections cover three façades with fire and randomly occurring fireball explosions.

Don Ritter            director, system design and programming, mapping, video and sound editing

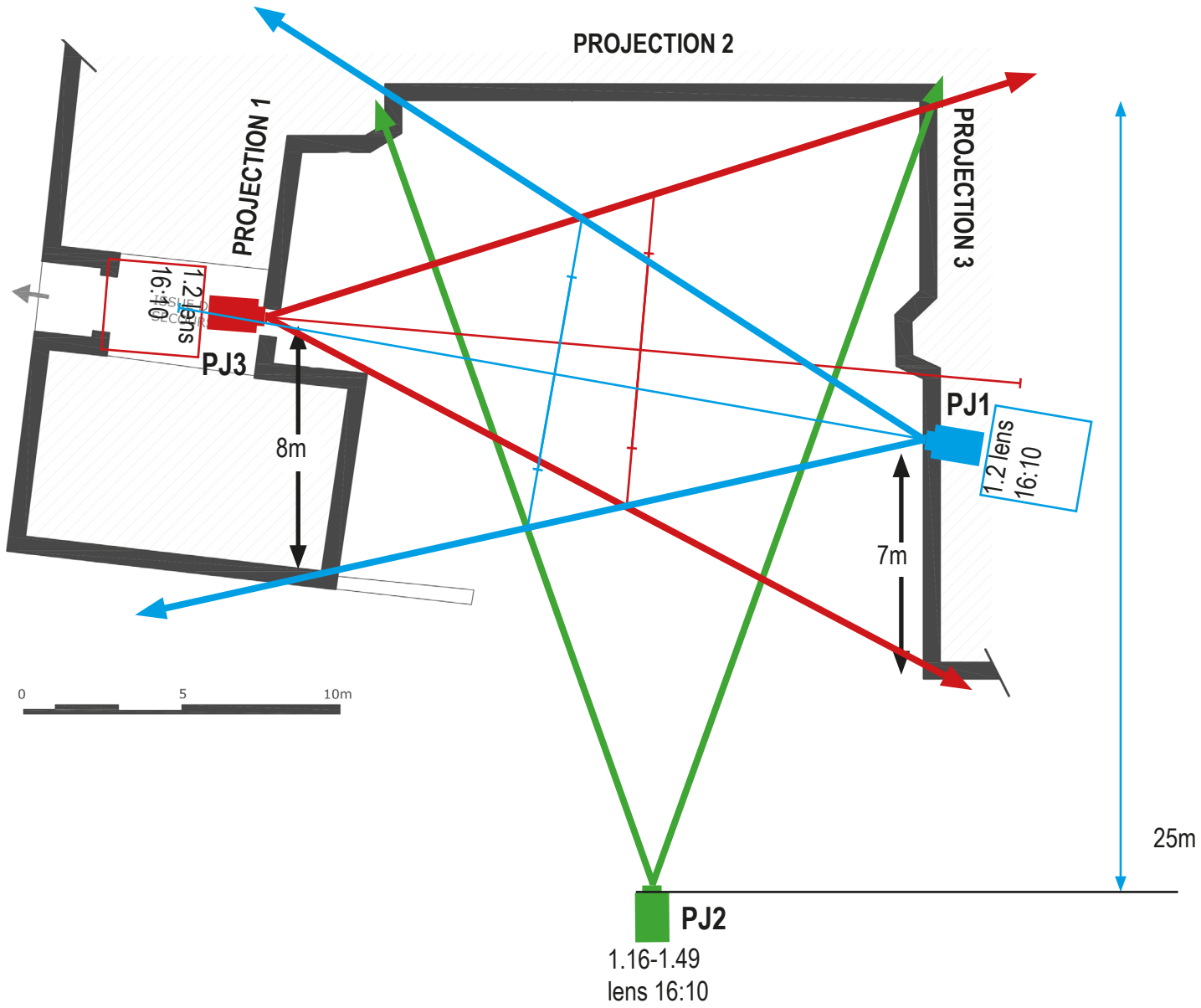
Mitch Martinez      camera

Produced and exhibited with support from Art Rock Festival /Association Wild Rose, France





*Burning Too*, architectural projection, Art Rock Festival, Saint-Brieuc, France



## Wet • Montréal

architectural projection  
mapped 4K video with 8 HD projectors  
105 x 29 m (345 x 95 ft) projection  
Pavillon Président-Kennedy (UQÀM), Montréal, Canada  
Don Ritter, June 1- August 22, 2018

web page and documentary video: <http://www.aesthetic-machinery.com/wet-montreal.html>

presented by the Partenariat du Quartier des spectacles, Montréal

Don Ritter      concept, video and sound editing  
Mitch Martinez      camera



Place des Arts, Montréal





Wet, architectural projection, Montreal, Canada

## Burning Too • Ars Electronica

architectural projection

mapped 2K interactive video and sound with 1 HD projector and 2 channel audio

23 x 10m (75 x 33 ft) projection

Post City Tower at Ars Electronica Festival 2016, Linz, Austria

Don Ritter, 2016

web page and documentary video: <http://aesthetic-machinery.com/burningtoo-ars.html>

Video projections of fire accompanied with sound cover the tower of the old postal building in Linz, a structure originally designed by architect Alfred Speer. The audio of the fire is determined by the visual activity of the fire, and the audio of the fireballs determine the distortions of the flames.

Don Ritter            system design and programming, mapping, video and sound editing  
Mitch Martinez      camera

Produced with support from City University of Hong Kong and Ars Electronica.



## For All The Museums That Forgot To Offer An Exhibition To Me

architectural projection  
mapped 2.5K video and sound with 4 HD projectors and 2 channel audio  
100 x 25 m (328 x 82 ft) projection  
Daegu Culture and Arts Center, South Korea, 2015  
Don Ritter, 2015

web page and documentary video:

<http://www.aesthetic-machinery.com/forgot.html>

Don Ritter	video and sound editing, mapping
Mitch Martinez	camera
Park Soyoung	curator

Exhibited and produced with assistance from Daegu Culture and Arts Center.





*For All The Museums That Forgot To Offer An Exhibition To Me*, architectural projection, Daegu Culture and Arts Center, South Korea

## Given

- series of five intelligent immersive video-sound installations
  - exhibited as an architectural projection or gallery installation
  - directed by public participants using body and hand gestures
  - 6K video projection with 4 channel interactive audio, variable size
- Don Ritter, 2020

- *Given* webpage with video: <http://aesthetic-machinery.com/given.html>
- exhibition document: <http://www.aesthetic-machinery.com/documents/these-essences-Ritter.pdf>

### description

*Given* enables the public to participate as symbolic characters within five chapters of a surrealistic narrative. One character wears a gas mask, another has a water-wheel for a head, and the third has a small gas burner for a head. Up to three persons can simultaneously use hand and body gestures to direct their characters to fly or walk within large projected environments of flowing substances:

*Given the water*  
*Given the mud*  
*Given the plants*  
*Given the fire*  
*Given the smoke*

*Given* provides an aesthetic environment of relationships that flow between the participants and the objects and substances depicted visually and metaphorically. Participants can influence the position, orientation, and shape of their own character, the other characters and the various objects in the environments: frame structures, fences, spinning blades, gas burners and air vents. Navigation by the participants is accomplished without any sensing devices attached to their bodies.

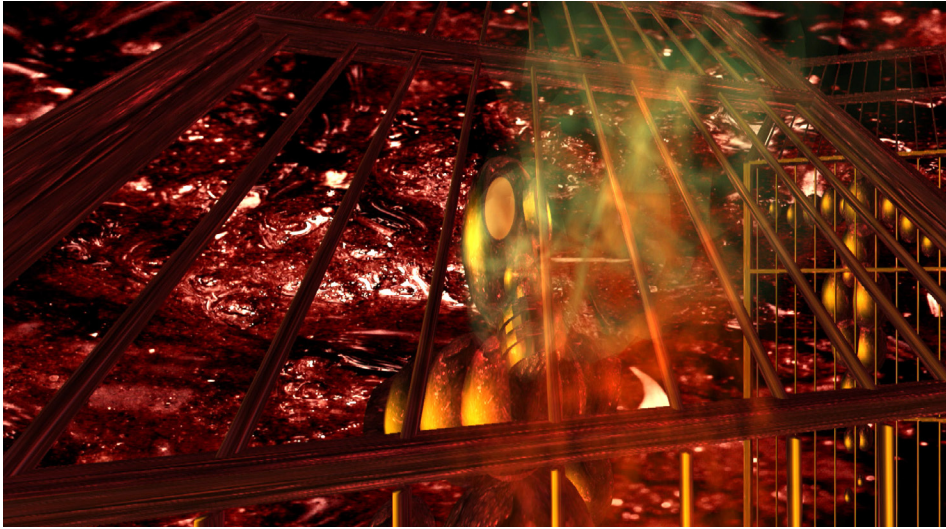
### exhibition configurations

- exterior architectural projection with interactivity: video and sound (optional) controlled by public
- exterior architectural projection without interactivity and sound (optional)
- interior gallery installation with interactivity,: video and sound controlled by public
- interior gallery installation without interactivity

Technologies within *Given* include natural user interfaces, full-body motion tracking, motion recording and playback, artificial intelligence, interactive 3D animation, inverse kinematics, 6K interactive multi-channel video, multi-channel interactive audio, and video projection mapping.



*Given the water* as architectural projection



Given the mud, visualization as architectural projection (105 x 29 m / 345 x 95 ft)



Given the mud, gallery exhibition, projection size: 11.6x2.5 m (38x8.2 ft)

## Character navigation, activation modes, and intelligence in Given

Participants control their characters using hand and body gestures while facing the projection and standing in one of three participation areas. The actions and visual features of the characters are determined by the control system through a continuous interpretation of the actions and physical characteristic of participants, including: 1. the sizes of the individual elements and overall height comprising a character are adjusted according to an analysis of a participant's height and limb sizes; 2. the actions and limbs of a character transform smoothly from a motion recording to the live motion of a participant (active mode); 3. after a person leaves an activation area, the associated character smoothly navigates back to its home position and waits for activation by another person (return home mode); 4. the overall form of a character changes after recognizing its close proximity to another character (nervous mode).

The information shown below describes the gestures required for activation and navigation of the different modes. The term 'person' refers to the human participant and 'character' refers to the 3D character controlled by that participant:



### active mode

- mode initiated when a person enters a participation area
- character's overall motion is controlled by person until they leave the participation area; character will change to home mode after a person leaves



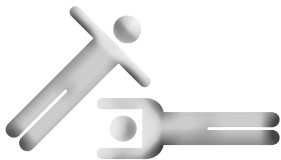
### initiate flying mode

- person holds both hands above head for two seconds while in home or landed mode



### end flying mode > initiate landed mode

- right hand held motionless for two seconds in any location ends the flying mode and changes to landed mode



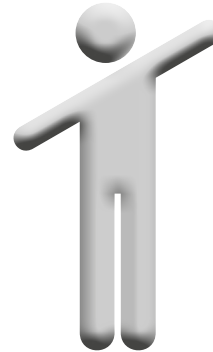
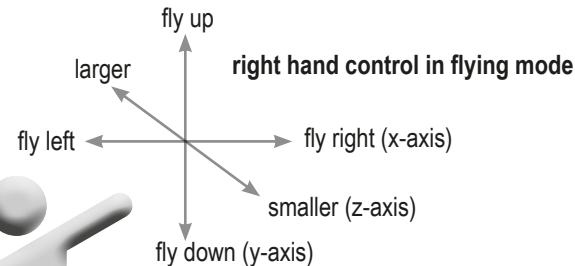
### nervous mode

- the various objects comprising a character will quickly shake and randomly change size when two or more characters are close to each other



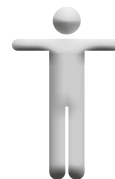
### home mode

- mode initiated when no person is within a character's participation area
- character's motion is a playback from previous recordings of a person's motion



### flying mode

- person directs flying of character along x,y and z axes using corresponding motion of the right hand
- character can be flown in front or behind other characters in 3D space (z axis)



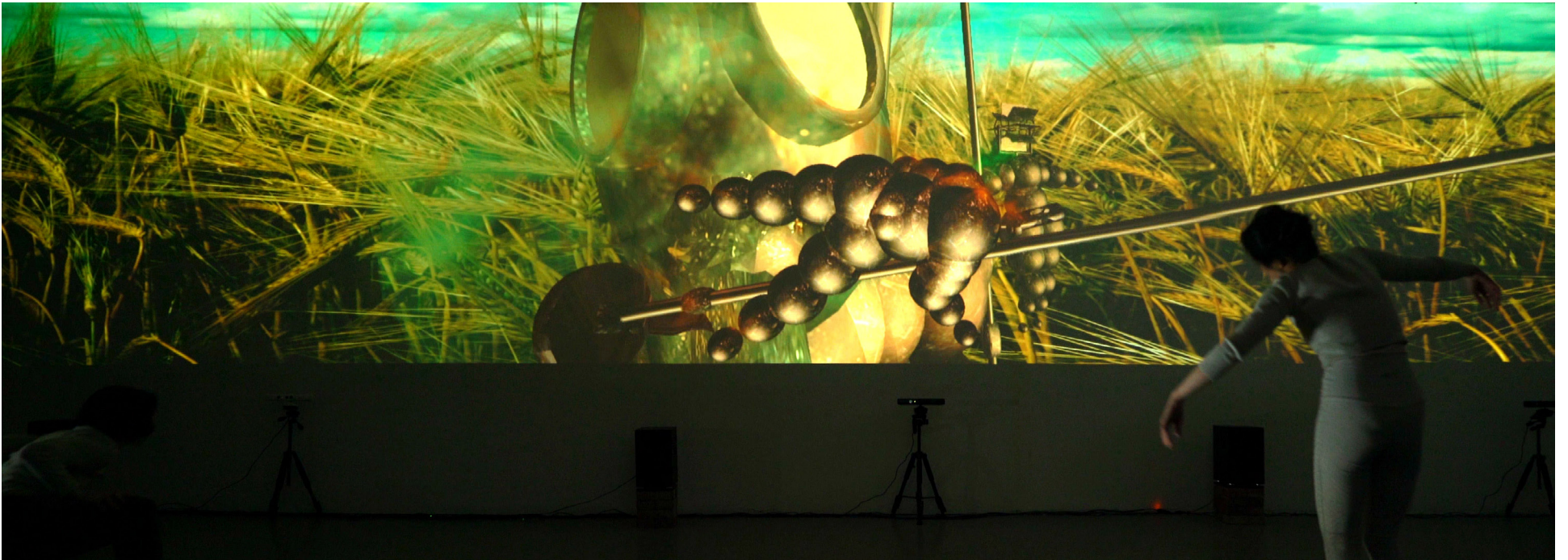
### landed mode

- character's motion controlled by person until person leaves the participation area
- similar to active mode, but character can be active at any location in the projection



### return home mode

- a character will fly back to its home position after its person leaves the activation area



Given the plants, gallery exhibition, projection size: 11.6x2.5 m (38x8.2 ft)



Given the smoke, visualization as architectural projection (105 x 29 m / 345 x 95 ft)



Given the smoke, gallery exhibition, projection size: 11.6x2.5 m (38x8.2 ft)

## Wet

video-sound installation  
mapped 6K interactive video and sound with 3 HD projectors and 4 channel audio  
17 x 4.5 m (56 x 15 ft) projection  
Musée d'art et d'histoire de Saint-Brieuc, France  
Don Ritter, 2017

*Wet* presents viewers with a large close-up of slow moving water that is occasionally interrupted with water bubbles and splashing. Water has symbolized various concepts since antiquity, including the first form of matter, and the source and potentiality of everything.

web page and documentary video: <http://aesthetic-machinery.com/wet.html>

exhibition document: <http://www.aesthetic-machinery.com/documents/Wet-installation-Ritter.pdf>

Don Ritter      director, system design and programming, mapping, video and sound editing  
Mitch Martinez      camera

Exhibition      Museum of Saint-Brieuc, France, 2017

Produced and exhibited with support from Art Rock Festival /Association Wild Rose, France





detail of *Wet* at Museum of Saint-Brieuc, France

## AN ICE HISTORY OF THE WORLD

video-sound installation or architectural projection  
4K video master, variable size (4x7m projection or larger, single or multiple projectors)  
video duration: 7:50 min, continuous looped playback  
Don Ritter, 2026

*An Ice History of the World* is a metaphorical narrative with ontological characters depicted as various flowing substances. Based on established symbolism, the slow moving imagery and sounds evolve into metaphors about being.\*

ice: nothingness  
water: birth and rebirth  
foam: fluidity of thought  
plants and trees: life and growth  
wind: change  
rice: humanity

\*ontological metaphor: "...an abstraction, such as an activity, emotion, or idea, is represented as something concrete, such as an object, substance, container, or person."

### exhibition formats

- screen based video or theatre projection (single projector format)
- gallery installation projection (single or multiple projections on single or multiple walls)
- architectural projection (single or multiple projections on single or multiple walls)

master video format: 4K, 10 bit ProRes, 29.97 fps (7:50 min duration)  
exhibition video format: 2K or 4K, variable codec, variable aspect ratio  
video projection width: 6-20m, projection height: variable

### documentation and media

2K preview/excerpts: <https://www.aesthetic-machinery.com/icehistory.html>  
2K preview/excerpts and full-length video: <https://www.aesthetic-machinery.com/icehistory-full.html>  
4K preview/excerpts: <https://www.aesthetic-machinery.com/icehistory-uhd.html>  
4K complete video link: [available on request](#)

exhibition document: <https://www.aesthetic-machinery.com/documents/icehistory-Ritter.pdf>

### credits

Don Ritter: cinematography, video and sound editing



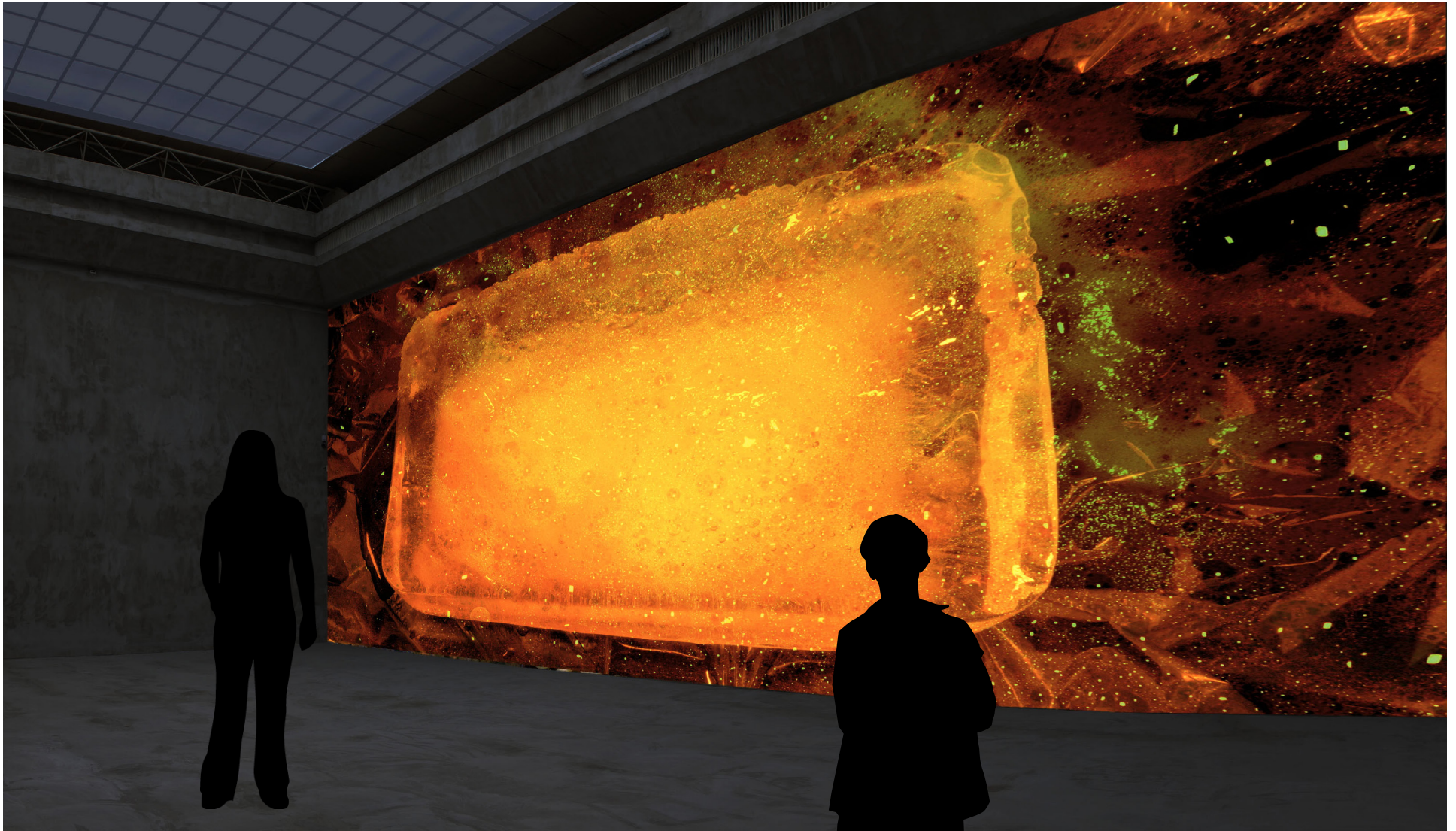
visualization as gallery installation: one projector--one wall



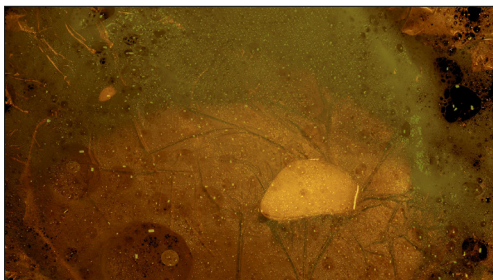
visualization as gallery installation: three projectors--one wall



visualization of installation with plant video



visualization of installation with ice video



## Projector configurations and technical requirements for gallery installation

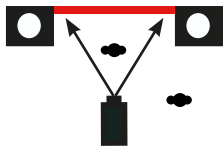
- projection wall: minimum 6 m x 3.8 m or more; projection should cover entire wall in height and width
- 1 or more high quality HD video projectors, dependent on configuration
- 2 or 4 channel audio system, dependent on configuration
- computer and mapping software can be provided by Ritter or exhibiting location

## configurations symbols

symbols:



### top view one projector--one wall configuration

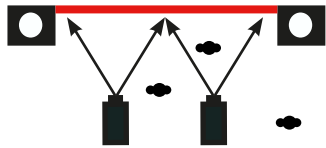


- requires one HD(2K) video projector or one UHD(4K) projector
- projector brightness to be determined by projection size
- projection width: 6-8 m (20-26 ft), mapped to wall size
- room depth: determined by projector lens
- projection surface: white painted wall or projection screen
- video playback device: computer provided one HDMI outputs and video mapping/blending software; may be provided by Ritter
- stereo 2.1 channel sound system with audio interface, and 2 full range speakers and sub woofer
- room depth: at least 50% more than projection width



overall aspect ratio: 16:9

### top view two projector--one wall configuration

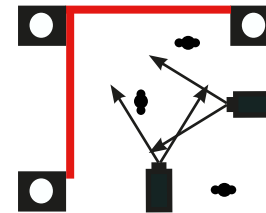


- requires two HD(2K) video projectors or two UHD(4K) projectors
- projector brightness to be determined by projection size
- projection width: 7-11 m (20-36 ft), mapped to wall size
- room depth: determined by projector lens
- projection surface: white painted wall or projection screen
- video playback device: computer provided two HDMI outputs and video mapping/blending software; may be provided by Ritter
- stereo 2.1 channel sound system with audio interface, and 2 full range speakers and sub woofer

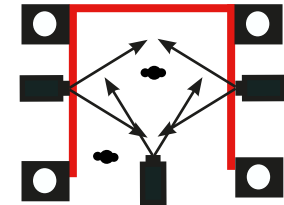


overall aspect ratio: approximately 16:6

### two projector configuration on two walls

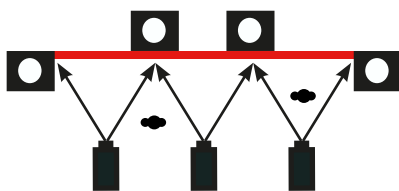


### three projector configuration on three walls (top view)

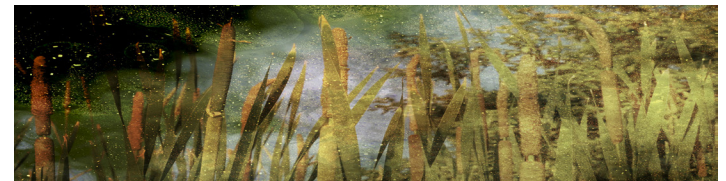


- combined projection width: 10-20 m (32-64 ft)

### top view three projector--one wall configuration



- requires three HD(2K) video projectors
- projector brightness to be determined by projection size
- 2.1 channel sound system: 4 full range speakers and sub woofer
- projection width: 10-20 m (32-64 ft), mapped to wall size
- projection surface: white painted wall or projection screen
- room depth: at least 70% of projection width
- video playback device: computer provided three HDMI outputs and video mapping/blending software; may be provided by Ritter



overall aspect ratio: approximately 16:4

## These Essences

4K metaphorical video with sound (7:16 min. continuous looped playback)  
project webpage: <http://www.aesthetic-machinery.com/these-essences.html>  
Don Ritter, 2022

A contemplative evolution of form and colour within various flowing substances,  
each corresponding to an ancient metaphor from antiquity.

These Essences = water(beginning) + mud(growth) + plants(living)  
+ fire(destruction) + smoke(transcendence)

video projection width: 5m to 50m, projection height: variable  
three exhibition formats available:

- screen based video or theatre projection
- gallery installation projection (single or multiple projectors)
- architectural projection (single or multiple projectors)

exhibition document:

<http://www.aesthetic-machinery.com/documents/these-essences-Ritter.pdf>

complete 4K video link: <https://vimeo.com/653297112>

visualization of gallery installation: <https://vimeo.com/686544598>

visualization of architectural projection: <https://vimeo.com/691219544>

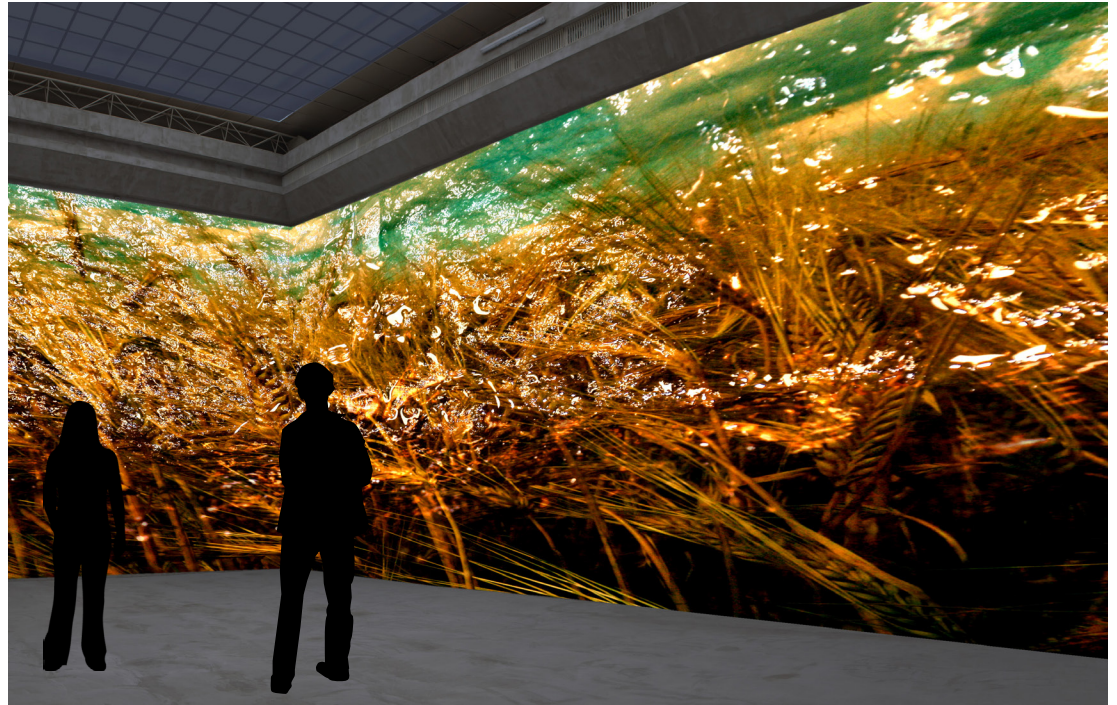
exhibition video format: 2K, 4K, variable codec, variable aspect ratio

credits: Don Ritter • camera, video and sound

Thomas Dimuzio • music "Hinge Map Ridge"

exhibition:

2022 Festival Internacional de la Imagen, Manizales- Bogata, Colombia.



*These Essences, visualization of gallery installation*





These Essences, visualization of architectural projection



## Intersection

interactive sound installation

dark room, 10 x 13m (30 x 40 ft) 4 lane version or 20 x 15m (60 x 45 ft) 8 lane version

Don Ritter, 1993 / 2019 reconstruction

web page and documentary video: <http://aesthetic-machinery.com/intersection.html>

exhibition document: [http://www.aesthetic-machinery.com/documents/Intersection\\_Ritter.pdf](http://www.aesthetic-machinery.com/documents/Intersection_Ritter.pdf)

Visitors encounter the sounds of 4 or 8 lanes of car traffic rushing across a completely dark space while a dimly lit exit sign on the other side of the room instructs them to venture into the random moving traffic. If visitors encounter a car in the darkness, it comes to a loud screeching halt with its engine idling in front of the visitor. When a visitor steps away from a stopped car, it quickly accelerates past the visitor and across the room, then it slowly fades out into the darkness. When a visitor remains in front of a stopped car for more than a few seconds, a continuous pile-up of cars is created with smashing sounds behind the stopped car. Hundreds of visitors can be in the installation at one time, each capable of affecting the traffic.

“Don Ritter’s art tells the story of what technology is doing to us every day. His work makes visible the invisible force-field of technology. In Heidegger’s sense, Ritter ‘presences’ technology. We are always being smashed by the freeway traffic of high technology. The overwhelming feeling is one of fear of the techno-unknown: chance bodies, chance sounds, chance accidents. Darkness hits, and you step off the curb. *Arthur Kroker, The Will to Technology and the Culture of Nihilism: Heidegger, Nietzsche & Marx*

“Intersection creates a space which pivots the viewer between sensations of empathy and tension, presenting an environment that is a metaphor for both modern life and its accompanying anxieties.”

*Bruce Johnson, Sound Symposium ‘94*

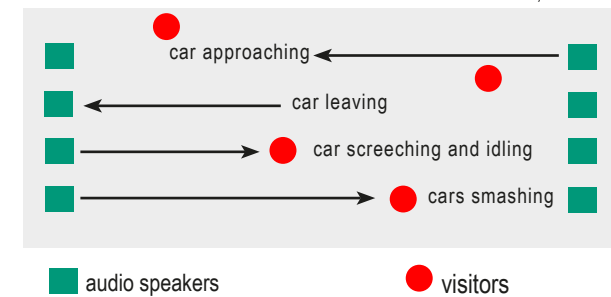
Intersection has been experienced by over 700,000 viewers in eight countries.

ZKM International Media Art Award Nomination, Karlsruhe, Germany, 2000

Comtec Art Anerkennung/Recognition, Dresden, Germany, 1999

### top view of installation

10 x 13m, 30 x 40ft



### exhibitions of Intersection

Wonderspaces, San Diego, USA. 2019

CAN Foundation/Space Can, Seoul, South Korea. 2011

Les Chants Mécaniques, Lille, France. 2007

SITE Santa Fe, New Mexico, USA. 2005

Exploratorium, San Francisco, USA. 2005

The Works Festival, Edmonton, Canada. 2004

Art Future 2000, Taipei, Taiwan. 2000

Exit Festival, Créteil, France. 2000

Via Festival, Maubeuge, France. 2000

Kunst Haus/Comtec Art, Dresden, Germany. 1999

Metronòm, Barcelona, Spain. 1997

New York Coliseum, New York City, USA. 1997

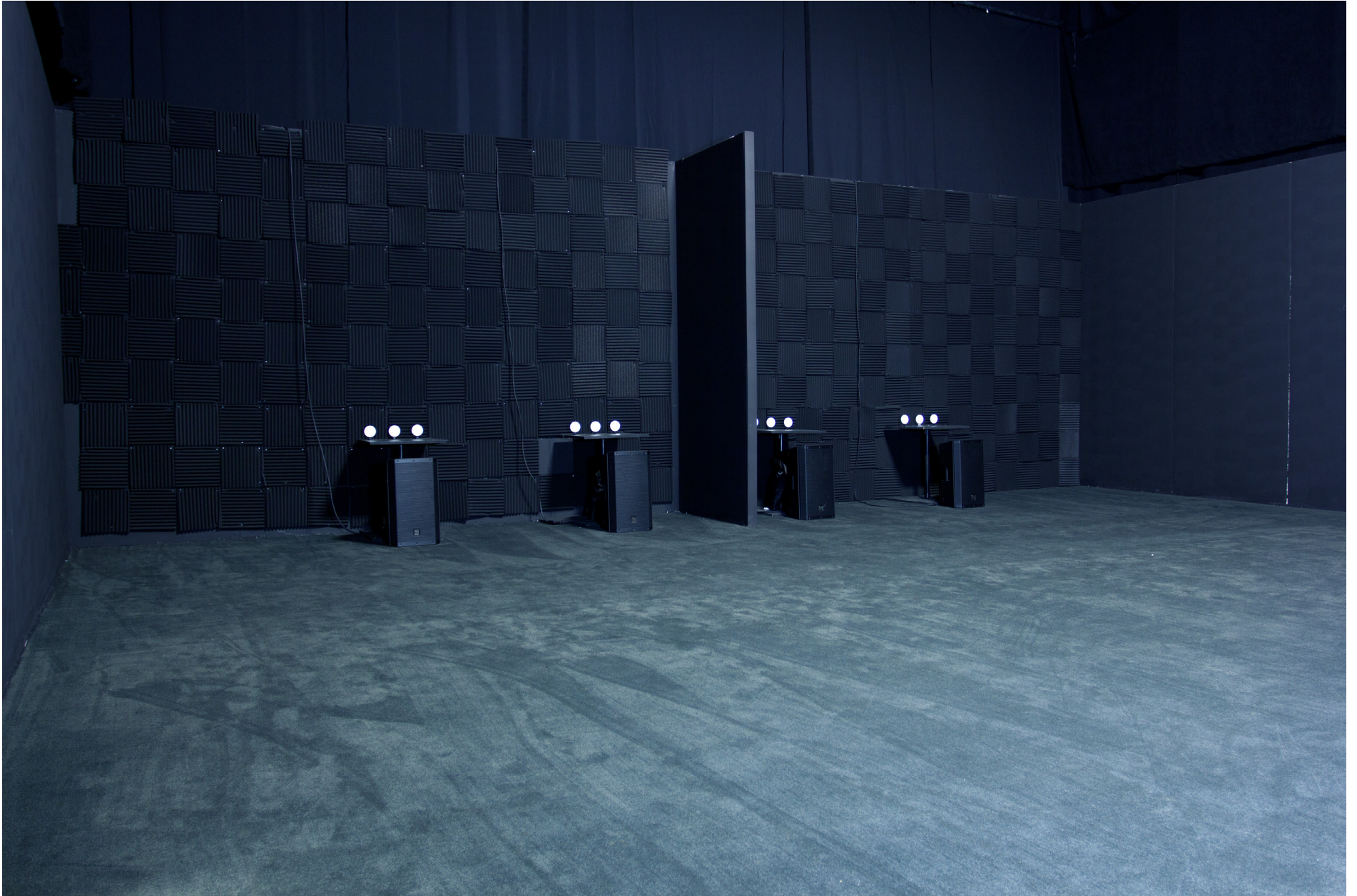
Ars Electronica Festival, Linz, Austria. 1996

Sonambiente Sound Festival, Berlin, Germany. 1996

Images du Futur, Montréal, Canada. 1995

Sound Symposium, St. John’s, Canada. 1994

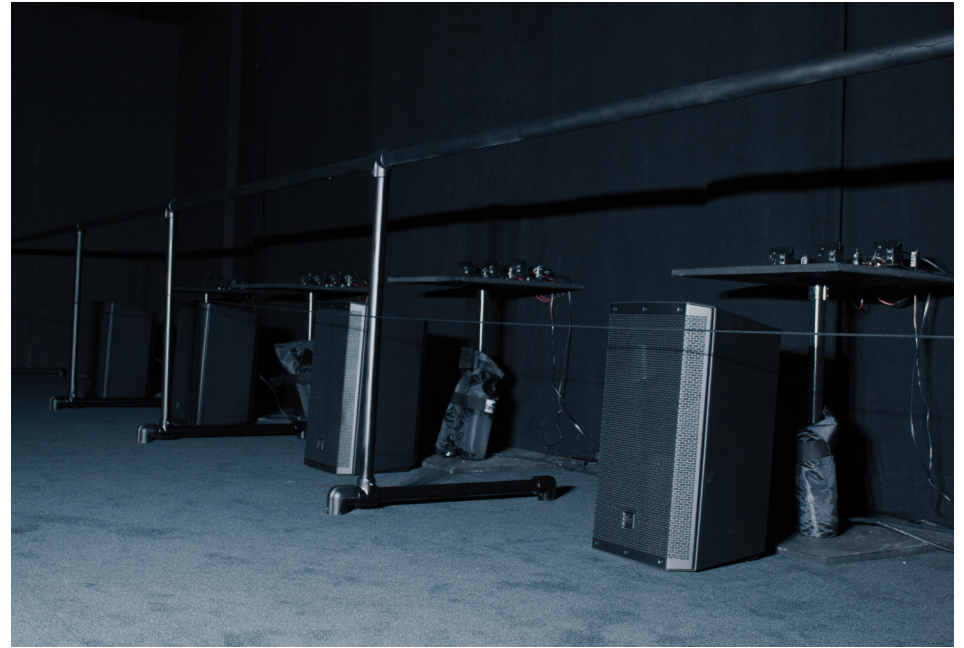
European Media Art Festival, Osnabrück, Germany. 1993



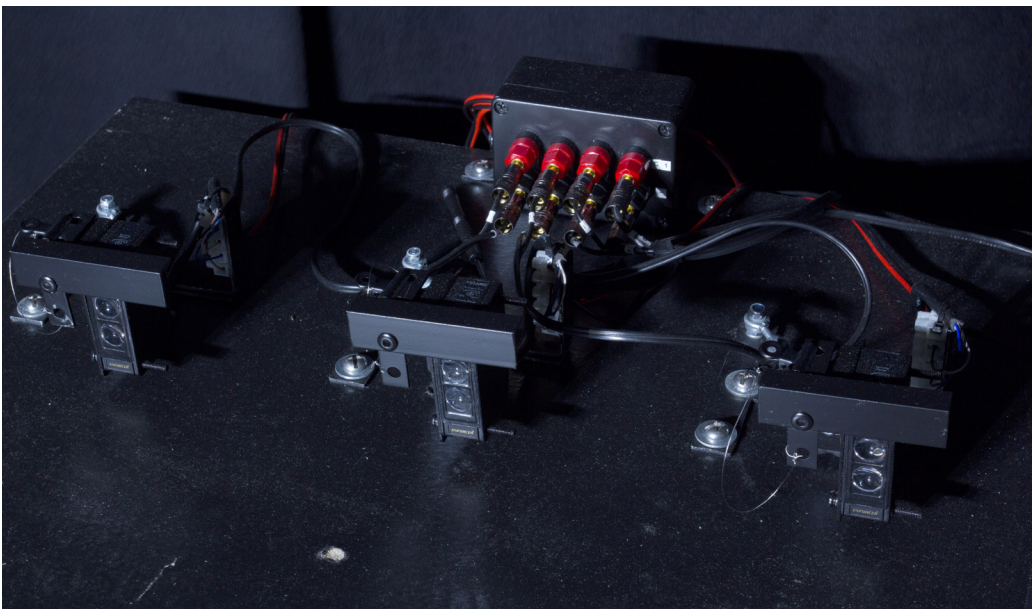
Intersection detail without barriers and lights on, San Diego 2019



equipment not visible in the darkness



barricades stop visitors from walking into equipment in the darkness



detail of infra-red detectors for one lane



detail of infra-red detectors, speaker, and barricade

**FLOOR PLAN 4 lane version**

MINIMUM SPACE: 8x8m(25x25ft)  
 MAXIMUM SPACE 15x15m(45x45ft)  
 CEILING HEIGHT: 3m(9ft) or greater

ENTRANCES: Two entrances/exits are required, located approximately at the locations indicated. Doors should open in the directions indicated and be equipped with a spring to close when not in use. A pair of doors is required on each entrance to stop light from entering.

LIGHTING: No lighting is required in the installation space. Two small illuminated exit signs should be placed inside at a location above the entrance. Signs should be illuminated from within by a low wattage light(5W).

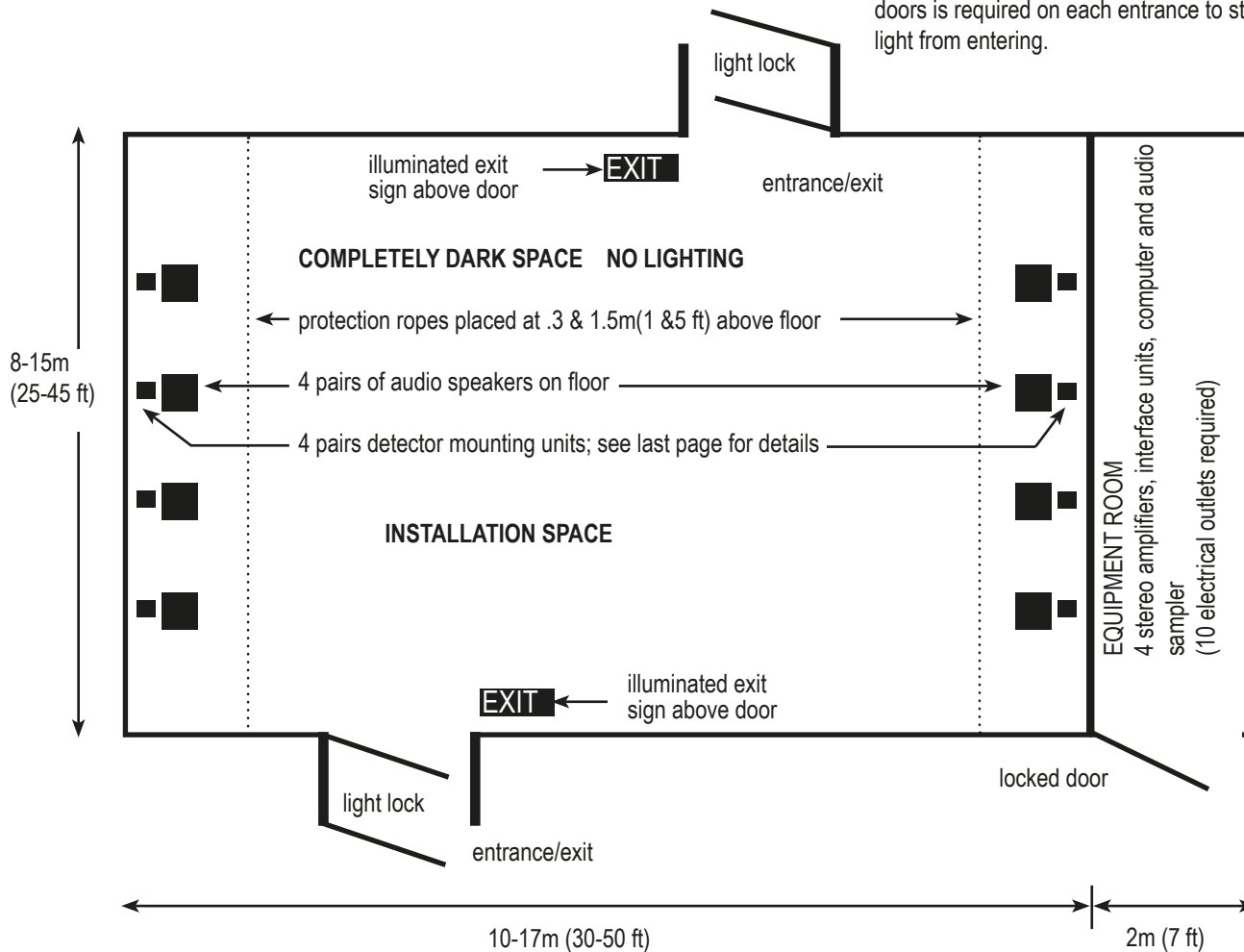
WALLS: Interior walls must be painted black or covered with black curtains. Walls should be covered in soft material or acoustic panels to restrict echo in the space.

DETECTOR MOUNTING UNITS: sturdy wood or metal mounting system required to hold 8 transmitters and receivers at approximately .7m(28in) above the floor. See last page for details.

PROTECTION ROPES: ropes, bars or fencing material must be located in front of the speakers and detectors to protect visitors from the equipment in the darkness. Distance from ropes to detectors must be at least 1m(3ft).

EQUIPMENT ROOM: This room should be equipped with electricity. Cables must run between the Equipment Room and Installation.

ELECTRICITY: required in the equipment room and at exit signs.



## Vox Populi

interactive video and sound installation

5 x 8m (15 x 25ft) single screen version; 13 x 15m (40 x 45 ft) three screen version

Don Ritter, 2005-2009

web page and documentary video: <http://aesthetic-machinery.com/voxpathuli.html>

exhibition document: [http://www.aesthetic-machinery.com/documents/Voxpathuli\\_Ritter.pdf](http://www.aesthetic-machinery.com/documents/Voxpathuli_Ritter.pdf)

A large video projection of a crowd yells “speech, speech” and encourages visitors to speak from a lectern equipped with a microphone, while a teleprompter on the lectern provides the text of historical speeches. When a visitor delivers a speech through the microphone, the text scrolls on the teleprompter, the crowd responds with varying degrees of hostility, support or ridicule, and the visitor’s speech is mixed with the screaming of the crowd through a sound system.

Within Vox Populi, anyone can adopt the role of leader and speak the words of Martin Luther King Jr, John F. Kennedy, George W. Bush, and others. Visitors are free to speak whatever they want through the microphone, but most read the speeches provided. The amount of confidence within the leader’s voice will control various aspects of the installation, including the specific response of the crowd and scrolling of the text on the teleprompter. If a leader speaks continuously for four minutes at a high volume and tempo, the crowd remains enthusiastically supportive.



SITE Sante Fe, USA



Art Gallery of Alberta, Edmonton, Canada



SITE Santa Fe, USA

**exhibitions of Vox Populi**

Mediations Biennale Poznan, Poland. 2010  
Kunsträume Burg Eisenhardt, Belzig, Germany. 2009  
ConcentArt, Berlin, Germany. 2009  
Galerija Kibela, Maribor, Slovenia. 2009  
Art Gallery of Alberta, Edmonton, Canada. 2006  
SITE Santa Fe, New Mexico, USA. 2005  
NAME Festival, Lille, France. 2005  
Jack the Pelican Presents, Brooklyn, USA. 2004

**selected reviews**

Indyke, Dottie (2005) "Surrounded By Art; SITE Santa Fe Show Makes Work Personal for Viewers,"  
Albuquerque Journal, September 23. USA.  
[http://aesthetic-machinery.com/documents\\_pdf/Ritter\\_DottieIndyke.pdf](http://aesthetic-machinery.com/documents_pdf/Ritter_DottieIndyke.pdf)  
Indyke, Dottie (2006) "Dana Schutz, Charles Long, Don Ritter." ARTnews. March. USA.  
[http://aesthetic-machinery.com/documents\\_pdf/ritter\\_artnews.pdf](http://aesthetic-machinery.com/documents_pdf/ritter_artnews.pdf)

## O telephone

8 channel interactive/intelligent sound installation, 6 x 6 m (20 x 20 ft) or larger

Don Ritter, 2007 / 2023 versions

web page and documentary video: <http://aesthetic-machinery.com/otelephone.html>

exhibition document: [http://www.aesthetic-machinery.com/documents/o\\_telephone\\_Ritter.pdf](http://www.aesthetic-machinery.com/documents/o_telephone_Ritter.pdf)

Visitors within *O telephone* experience a contemplative and collaborative sound environment comprised of ringing telephones and recordings of voices speaking 'om'. The installation recognizes various types of situations between the visitors and the phones, and responds with a corresponding multi-channel sound experience. Six modified 1960's telephones are arranged in a circle within a darkened room. Each telephone randomly invites visitors to pick up its handset through a distinctive ringing sound. If a viewer answers a ringing phone, a voice speaks 'om' through the handset and through the speaker in that phone. When multiple telephones are answered concurrently, the resulting voices combine and travel repeatedly (panning) through the answered phones, while dynamically adjusting the sound arrangement as viewers interact with the phones. The six telephones will eventually begin a random composition of panning voices if no ringing telephones are answered for an extended time, but this will stop when a viewer picks up a handset. The ancient symbolism of 'om' includes the sound of existence, the sound of the universe, and the sound that contains all other sounds.

### exhibitions of O telephone

NAISA, South River, Canada. 2023

Hermes' Ear Festival. Brno House of Arts, Czech Republic. 2009

Les Chants Mécaniques, Lille, France. 2007

Ballhaus Naunynstraße, Berlin, Germany. 2007

### selected reviews

Cseres, Jozef (2008) "Co ze se to dnes deje se zvuky v prostoru?"

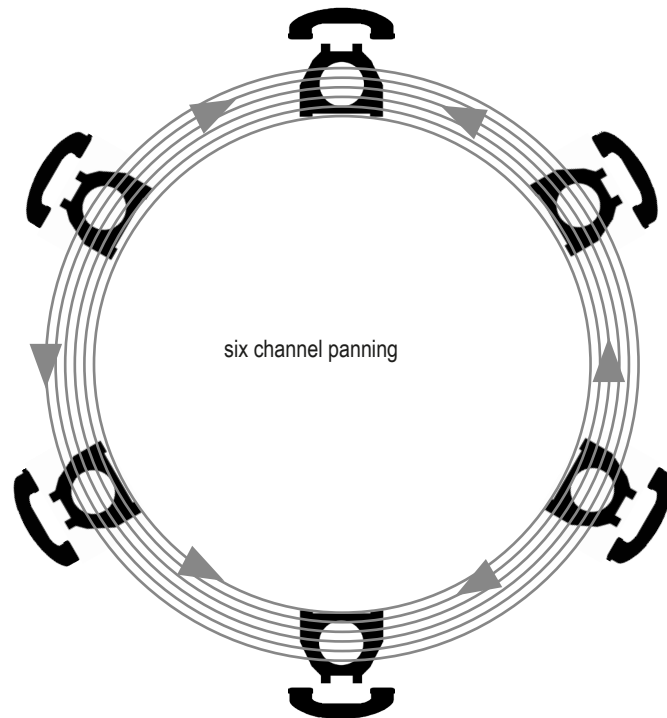
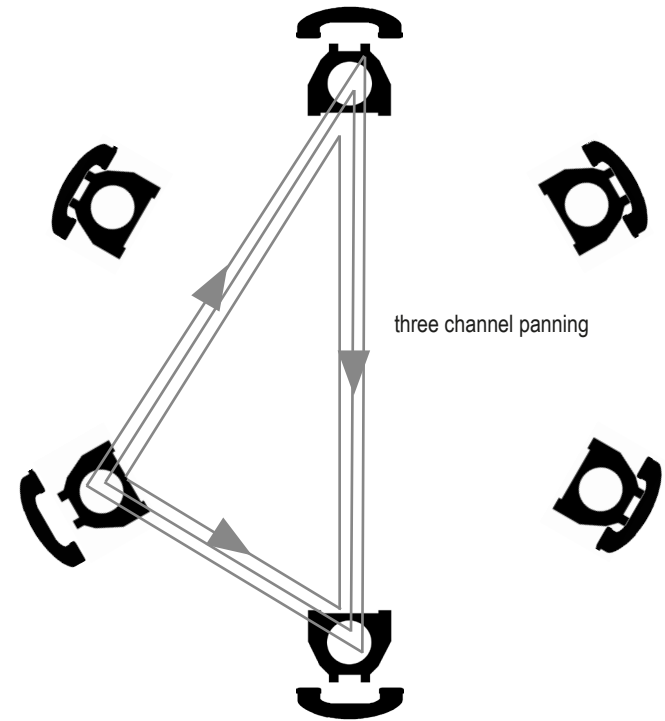
His Voice, #2. Prague, Czech Rep.

Debatty, Régine (2007) "o telephone" we-make-money-not-art.com. Berlin, Germany.

Cseres, Jozef (2006) "Don Ritter" Hermes' Ear.

Nové Zámky: Kassák Centre for Intermedia Creativity. Slovakia.





#### activity within O telephone

*silent mode (individual phone is not ringing):* An individual phone will produce a dial tone if its handset is picked up at this time.

*ring mode (individual phone rings after a random pause):* When in ring mode, a phone will produce an om sound after its handset is picked up while the phone is ringing. If more than one ringing phone is answered, the resulting om sounds will dynamically pan through all the answered phones.

*spontaneous composition mode:* If no phones are answered for three minutes, a new om composition will spontaneously begin with multi-channel panning. If any of the handsets are picked up at this time, all om sounds will stop and the phones will eventually go into ring mode. During spontaneous composition mode, the composition will stop every seven minutes and go into ring mode.

## Vested

interactive video-sound-light installation, 12 x 19 m (39 x 62 ft)

Don Ritter, 2010

web page and documentary video: <http://aesthetic-machinery.com/vested.html>

exhibition document: [http://www.aesthetic-machinery.com/documents/Vested\\_Ritter.pdf](http://www.aesthetic-machinery.com/documents/Vested_Ritter.pdf)

Visitors to the installation are invited to put on a specialized military vest and walk in front of a large video projection of well-known international buildings. As the vested person walks within the installation, they are able to navigate through panoramas of prestigious art museums, political buildings of the G8, ancient buildings, towers, or well-known churches and temples. The vested person is also tracked and illuminated by two green spotlights, while live video of the vested person is overlaid with the panorama. By pressing the red button on the vest, the person can trigger large explosions with sound. Vested is a social portrait of a Schadenfreude, of humanity's desire to be entertained by human tragedy.

### exhibitions of Vested

Cultural Olympiad, Winter Olympics, Vancouver, Canada. 2010

Move – New European Media Art, Halle-Saale, Germany. 2009

### selected reviews

Ravasani, Donya. (2010) "Terror als Kunst." Kulturzeit, 3sat TV broadcast, Berlin, Germany.

[http://aesthetic-machinery.com/videos\\_Kulturzeit.html](http://aesthetic-machinery.com/videos_Kulturzeit.html)

Kluszczyński, Ryszard W. (2009) "Don Ritter's Vested: Action and Responsibility."

[http://aesthetic-machinery.com/documents\\_pdf/Ritter\\_Vested\\_Kluszczyński.pdf](http://aesthetic-machinery.com/documents_pdf/Ritter_Vested_Kluszczyński.pdf)

Behnk, Judith (2009) "Move - New European Media Art." ART: Das Kunstmagazin,

[http://www.art-magazin.de/kunsti/23088/werkleitz\\_festival\\_halle](http://www.art-magazin.de/kunsti/23088/werkleitz_festival_halle)





*Vested*, interactive video-sound-light installation, Move – New European Media Art, Halle-Saale, Germany.

“Ritter’s installation applies technological mechanisms so as to reveal cultural, internalized ones that pretend to be the mechanisms of an individual free will. By unveiling them, he offers recipients an opportunity to overcome them.”

Ryszard W. Kluszczynski, Academy of Fine Arts, Lodz, Poland

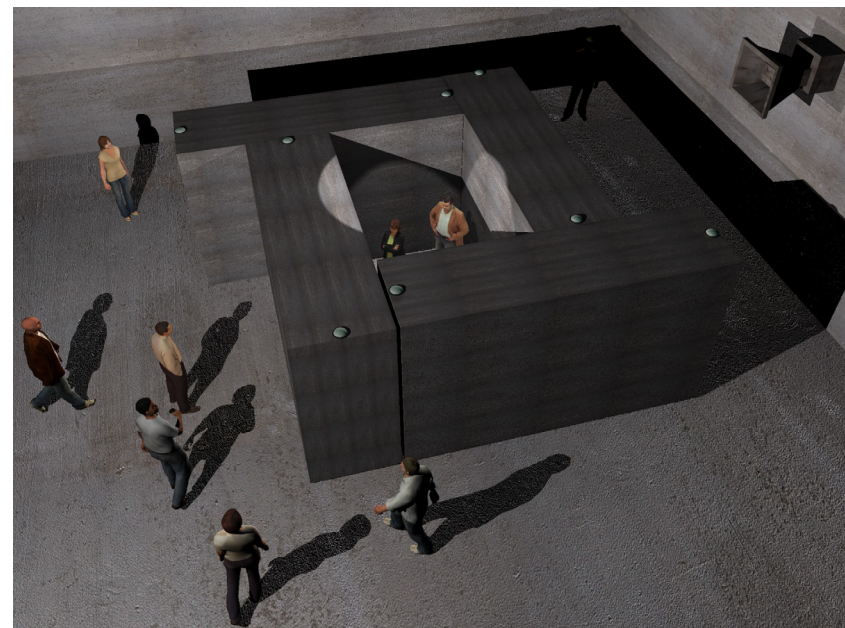
## Bunkered (Visualization)

interactive architecture installation, 15 x 15 m

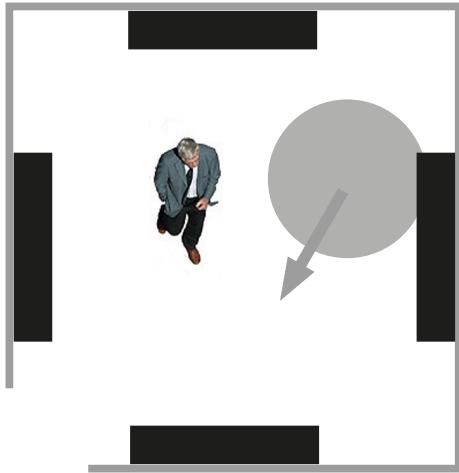
unrealized project 2011

Don Ritter

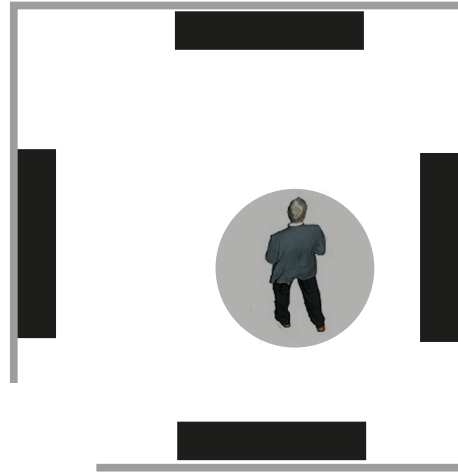
Visitors enter a large room that contains four inner walls, four horn audio speakers, and a spotlight slowly scanning the floor that creates a 5m moving circle of light. The spotlight will stop scanning if the viewers walk into its circle of light. If these viewers remain motionless for a few seconds, the four inner walls will slowly move towards them, accompanied with groaning sounds. If the viewers begin moving again, the moving walls stop their approach and slowly move back toward the borders of the room. If these viewers remain motionless in the circle of light for a few minutes, the moving walls will approach them until the viewers are completely enclosed within the four walls, accompanied with the sounds of air raid sirens playing through the speakers. Any motion by the enclosed viewers will cause the sirens to stop and the walls to move outwards. Viewers who are outside of the circle of light do not affect the motion of the walls.



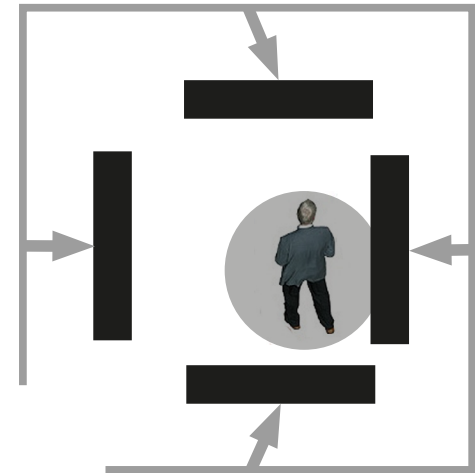
**Bunkered (Visualization): Activity within installation**



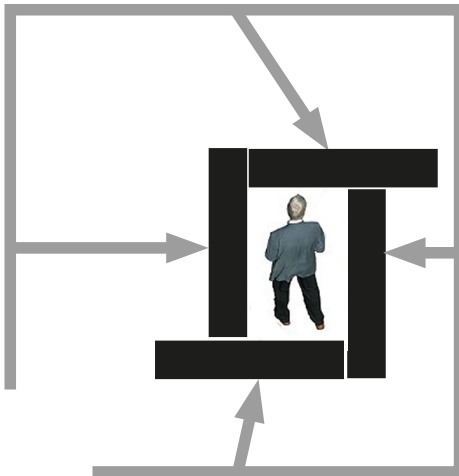
**search:** moving walls are in position against the actual walls of the room; the spotlight slowly scans the room if no viewers are within the active area (circular area created by a spotlight on the floor)



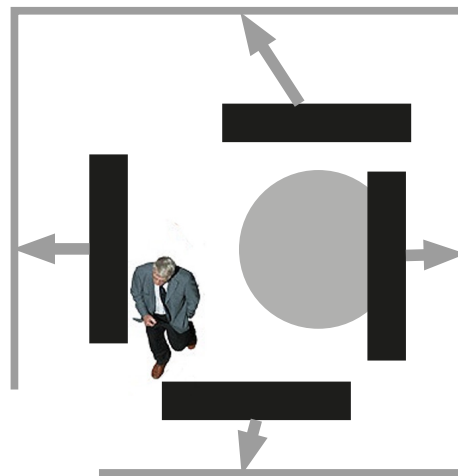
**find:** the spotlight stops scanning the room if one or more viewers are within the active area



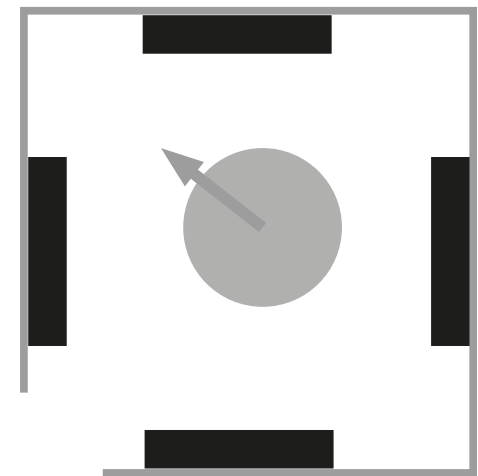
**approach:** the four moving walls move towards the centre of the spotlight if the viewers within the active area remain motionless; each wall provides a distinctive groaning sound



**bunker:** the moving walls will completely enclose the viewers, accompanied with the sounds of air raid sirens, if the viewers within the active area remain motionless for at least two minutes



**retreat:** the moving walls move toward the borders of the room if one or more viewers within the active area started moving



**search:** spotlight slowly scans the room

## Human Humans

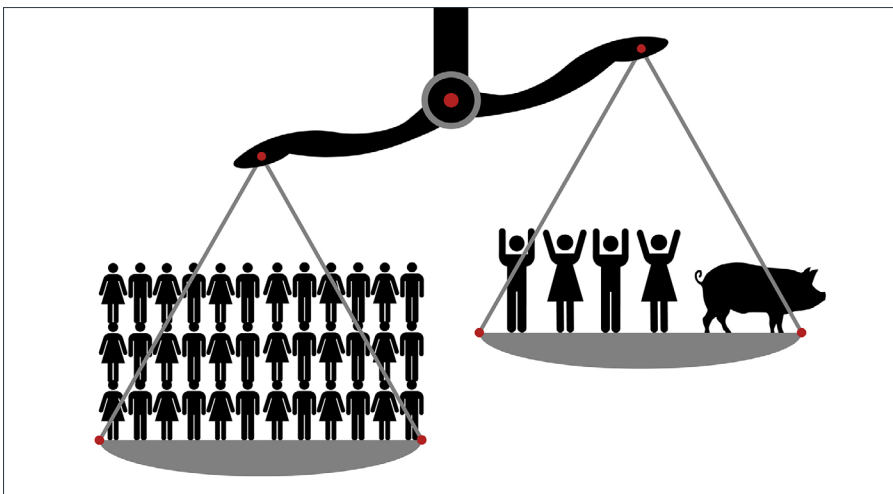
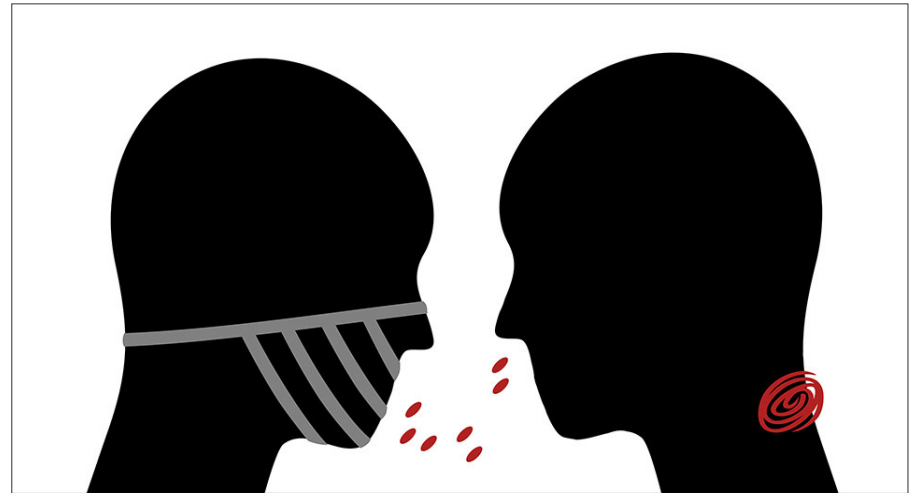
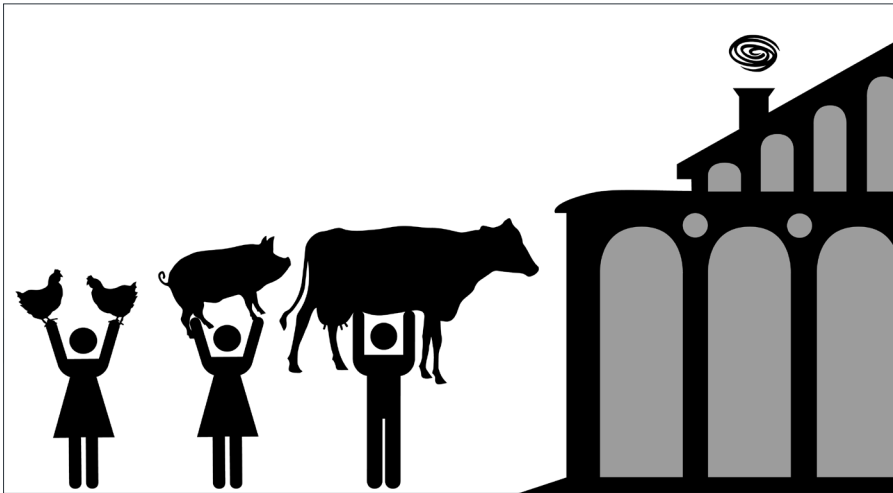
computer animation (2:45 min.)  
theatre projection or gallery installation  
Don Ritter, 2020

Don Ritter: concept, animation and sound editing  
Thomas Dimuzio: background music  
web page and video: <https://aesthetic-machinery.com/human-humans.html>

Human Humans is an ironic allegory about a pig, a cow and a philosopher. The animation is comprised of four short narratives, each having a visual style reminiscent of road signs. The animation and text allude to humanity's transformation from an agrarian lifestyle to a globalized existence based on consumerism, mass media, impudence, aggression and discrimination. Each narrative ends with a cow emblazoned with a prohibitive text message.

### Exhibitions

National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. 2024-2025



## Unnecessary Signage

38 silk screen prints on aluminum, QR codes, and online news media  
each print 41 x 58 cm 41 x 58 cm (16 x 23 in); edition of 50  
Don Ritter, 2015

exhibition document with complete print series: [http://www.aesthetic-machinery.com/documents/Unnecessary-Signage\\_Ritter-all.pdf](http://www.aesthetic-machinery.com/documents/Unnecessary-Signage_Ritter-all.pdf)  
web page and documentary video: <http://www.aesthetic-machinery.com/unnecessary-signage.html>

*Unnecessary Signage* resembles a series of metal road signs depicting humanity's struggle with morality and the human condition. The signs contain prohibitive instructions and pictographs referring to birth, childhood, love, marriage, parenting, social recognition, or death. Each sign is associated with an actual event that occurred within the last 30 years, such as a woman who murdered her husband eight days after their marriage (Do Not Push Husband Off Cliff During Honeymoon), or a man who was found alone in his house 15 years after dying (Do Not Be Too Disappointed When You Die Alone In A Dark Room). A QR code beneath each sign provides a link to an associated news article that viewers can access through their smartphones.

Exhibitions can include any number of prints from the series.

### Exhibitions of Unnecessary Signage

National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. 2024-2025  
University of Applied Arts, Vienna, Austria. 2016  
AlbumArte, Rome, Italy. 2015  
Siggraph-Asia, Kobe, Japan. 2015  
School of Creative Media at City University of Hong Kong. 2015





Run Run Shaw Creative Media Centre, Hong Kong, 2015

## Sustained Signage

Twelve silk screen prints on aluminum, each 41 x 58 cm (16 x 23 in); edition of 50  
computer animation in four sections (2:34 min. total, each section 30-40 sec.)  
Don Ritter, 2016-2017

*Sustained Signage* is an artistic project portraying the concerns of sustainability, including the destruction of the Earth through war, overuse of natural resources, global warming, and the exploitation of workers. The project consists of four short computer animated narratives and twelve silk-screen prints on metal, each having a pictographic style resembling road signs. The imagery and prohibitive text provide viewers with evocative narratives and ambiguous instructions, such as a pictograph of the Earth being cooked in a frying pan then followed by the text **DO NOT OVERCOOK YOUR PLANET IF YOU WANT TO KEEP EATING IT**. A warning for nuclear war is depicted as absurdly sized bombs exchanged between continents that obliterate

the Earth within seconds, then followed by the text **DO NOT IMAGINE A WORLD WITHOUT ONE**. The prints and animations have been exhibited at galleries in Vienna and Hong Kong, and the individual animation sections promoted through YouTube in Hong Kong, London, Los Angeles, San Francisco, New York and Toronto, where they were viewed 773,000 times.

webpage with animation: <http://www.aesthetic-machinery.com/sustained-signage.html>

animation on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCSH0bbHsqKWsBba6lbBpMQA>

exhibition document with complete print series:

[http://www.aesthetic-machinery.com/documents/Sustained-Signage\\_Ritter.pdf](http://www.aesthetic-machinery.com/documents/Sustained-Signage_Ritter.pdf)

### Exhibitions and screenings

National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. 2024-2025

Run Run Shaw Creative Media Centre, Hong Kong, 2021.

Balance-Unbalance conference, Rotterdam, Netherlands, 2018

University of Applied Arts Vienna, Austria, 2016





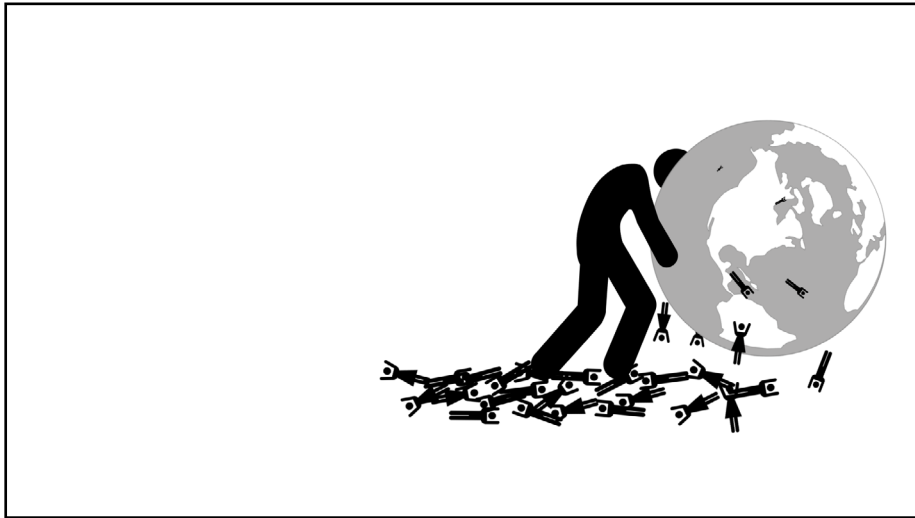
print from the Sustained Signage series



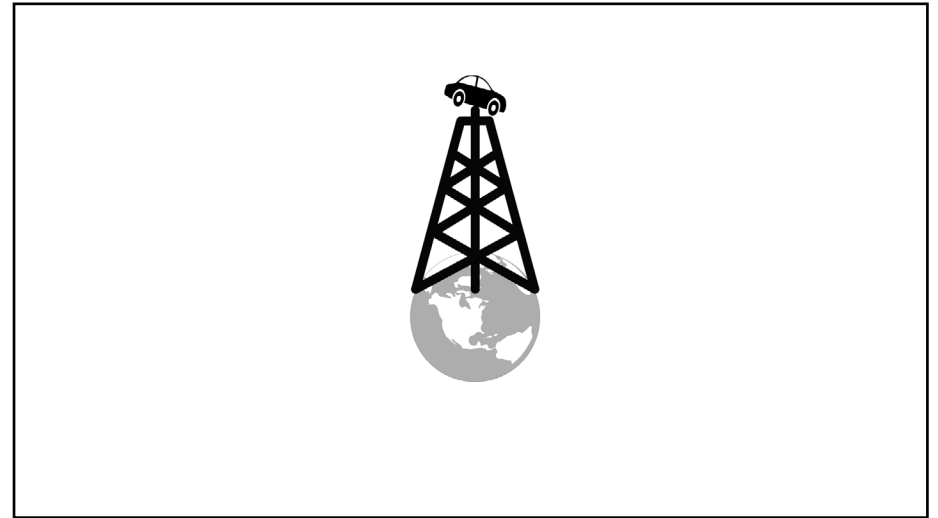
*Sustained Signage at University of Applied Arts Vienna with curator Harald Kraemer*

**Sustained Signage animations**

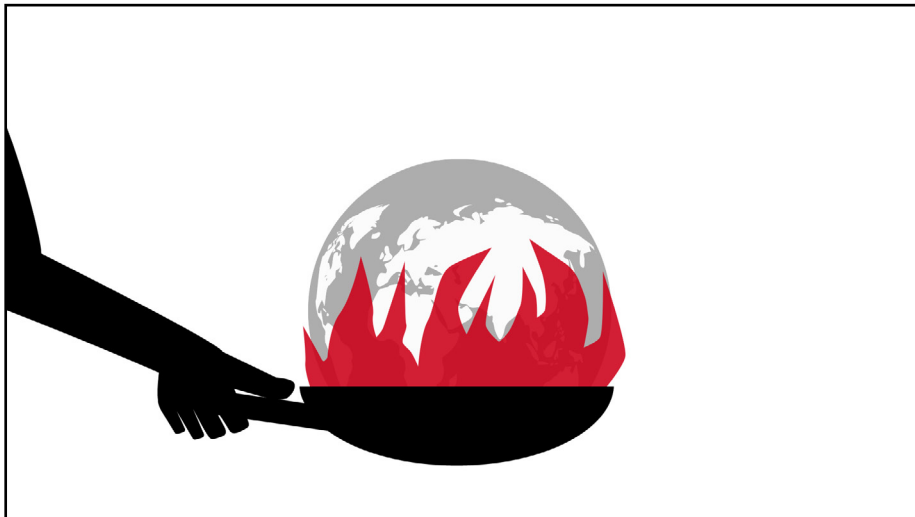
all animations online at: <http://aesthetic-machinery.com/sustained-signage.html>  
YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCSH0bbHsqKWsBba6IbBpMQA>



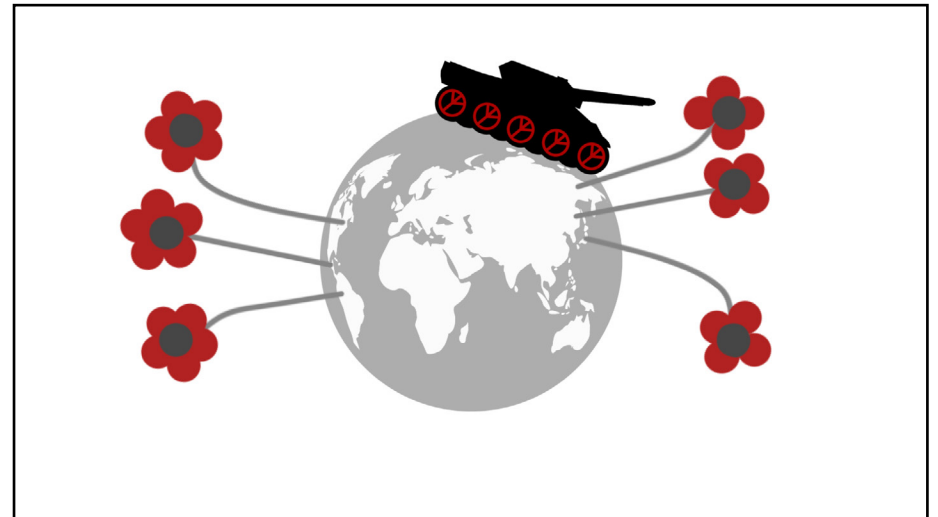
*frame from Sustained Signage #1 animation (0:42)*



*frame from Sustained Signage #2 animation (0:40)*



*frame from Sustained Signage #3 animation (0:44)*



*frame from Sustained Signage #4 animation (0:52)*

## Elephant Keyboard

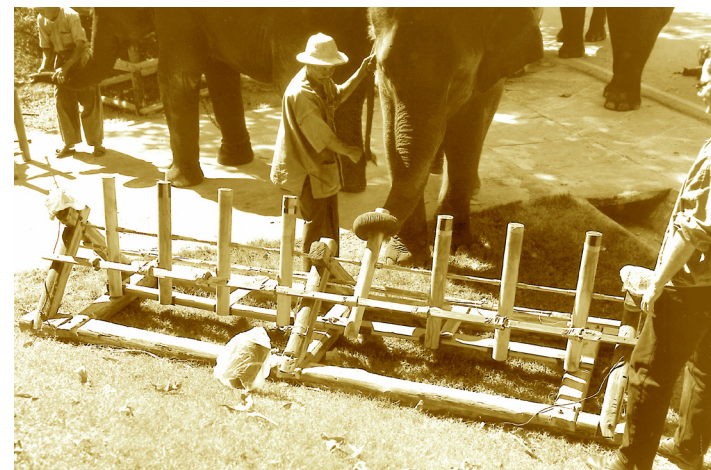
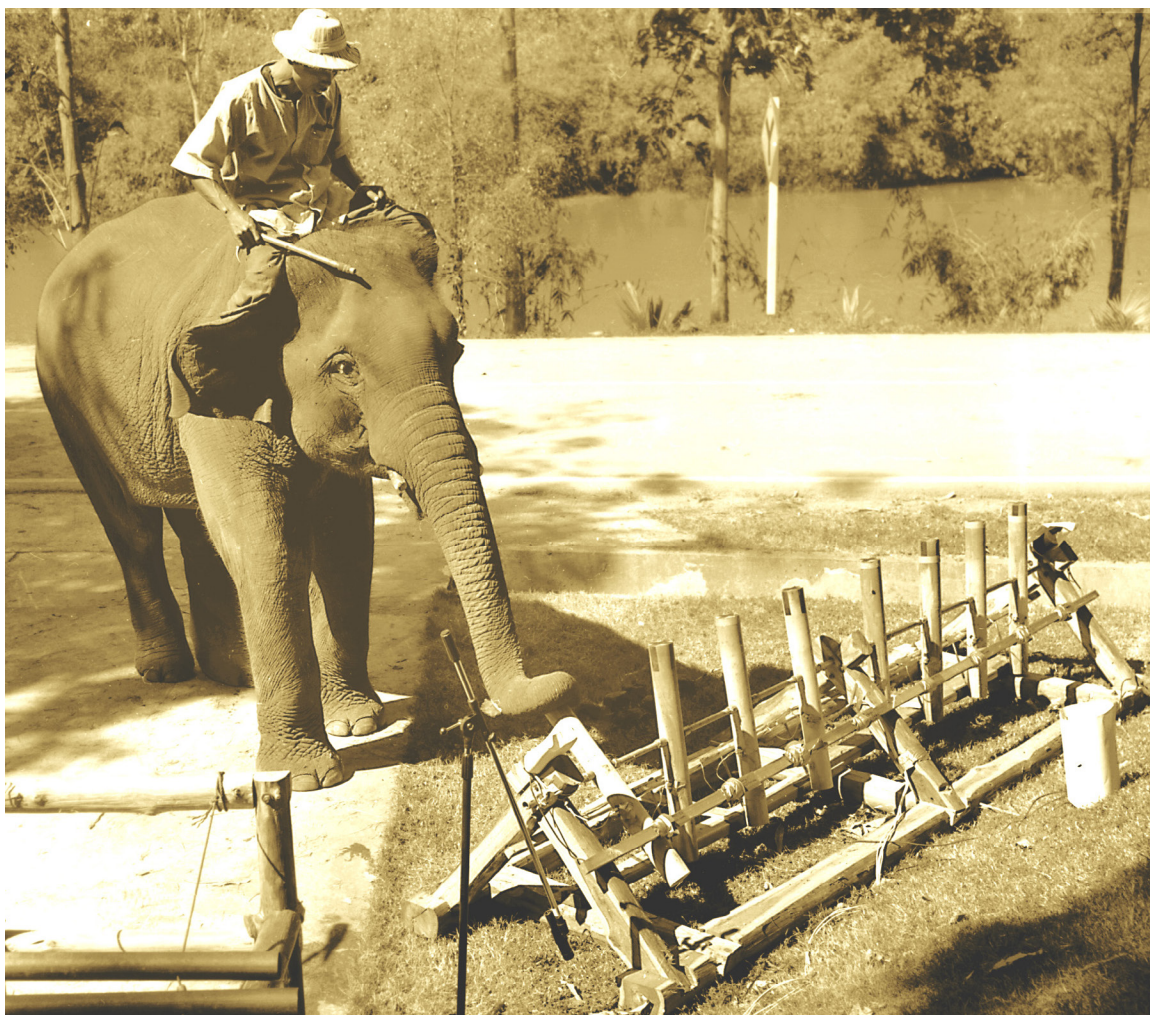
interactive music instrument for elephants

1 x 1 x 3 m (3 x 3 x 9 ft), 450Kg (1000lb)

Don Ritter, 2000

Thai Elephant Conservation Center, Lampang, Thailand

web page and online video: <http://aesthetic-machinery.com/elephant.html>



photos by Neil Budzinski



## Fit

interactive video & sound installation, 5 x 9 m (15 x 18 ft)

Don Ritter, 1993

web page and online video: <http://aesthetic-machinery.com/fit.html>

When a viewer moves in front of the projection and into the spotlight, the video projection of the aerobics instructor begins exercising to music. If a viewer stops moving, the instructor also stops exercising. If a viewer exercises non-stop, the music and the instructor's exercising will increase in tempo until an absurdly fast level is reached. Although the aerobics instructor is technically controlled by the physical motion of audiences, viewers discover that they are psychologically controlled by the instructor as they feel compelled to exercise progressively faster.

### exhibitions of Fit

Academy of Fine Arts, Krakow, Poland. 2008

Taipei Gallery, New York, USA. 1999-2000

New York Coliseum, New York, USA. 1997

Pratt Institute, New York, USA. 1997

SAM Museum, Osaka, Japan. 1994-95

Images du Futur, Montréal, Canada. 1993



## Orpheus

interactive software for controlling video through live music, sound or sensors  
written by Don Ritter, 1988-1996

*Orpheus* is an interactive software used in most of Ritter video-sound performances and installations between 1988 and 1996. He began writing the software in 1988 during his graduate studies at the MIT Media Lab in Cambridge, MA, and he continued its development until 1996. *Orpheus* provides real-time control of full-screen digital video through live and recorded music or sensors. The software used machine learning to designate real-time correlations between certain musical parameters, video sequences and visual effects. Trombonist George E. Lewis (NYC) and Ritter presented 20 video-music performances using *Orpheus* at international venues between 1988 and 1990, including New Music America 89 (NYC), Art Institute of Chicago, The Verona Jazz Festival (Italy), FIMAV (Victoriaville, QC), MIT Media Lab (Boston), Alternative Museum (NYC), A Space (Toronto) and The Kitchen (NYC). Their work is documented in the film, *On The Edge: Improvisation in Music* (1992), produced by Channel 4, London, UK

Orpheus performance video with George E. Lewis, 1989: <https://vimeo.com/366649431>  
Orpheus demo video, 1993: <https://vimeo.com/14206244>

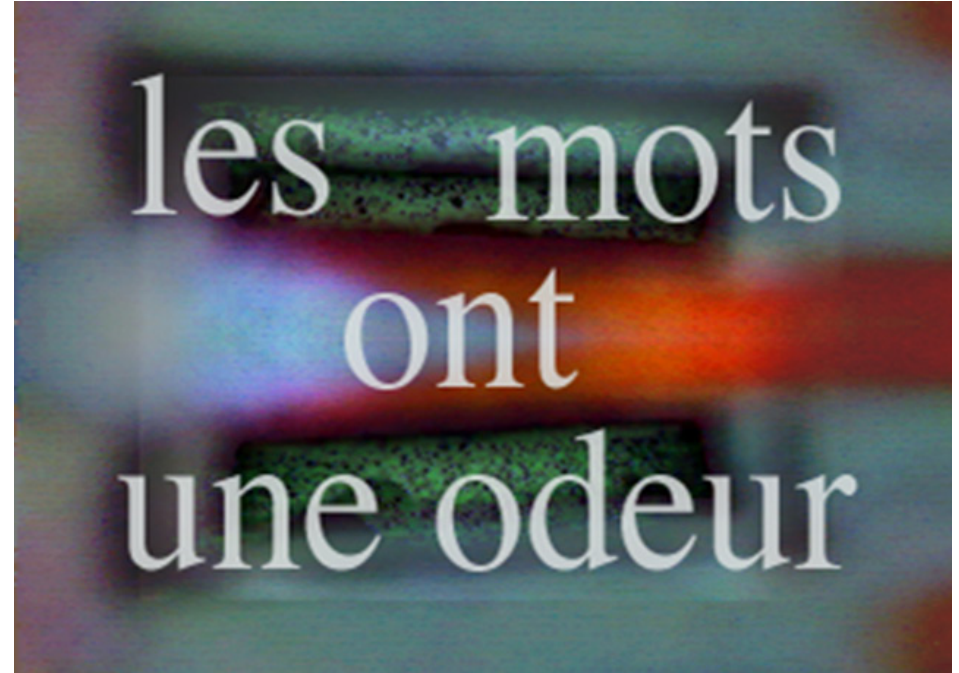
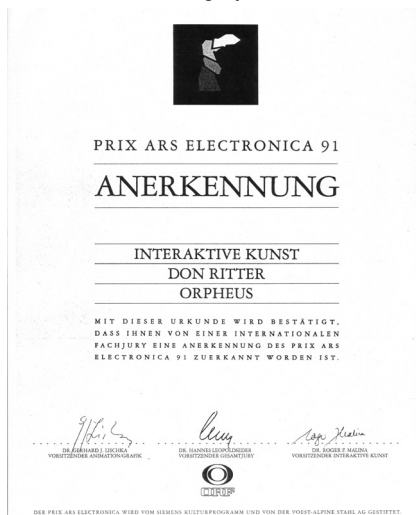
### selected writings about Orpheus

Rowe, Robert. (1993) Interactive Music Systems:

Machine Listening and Composing. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press. p.90-91.  
[http://www.aesthetic-machinery.com/documents/Orpheus\\_Rowe.pdf](http://www.aesthetic-machinery.com/documents/Orpheus_Rowe.pdf)

Ritter, Don (2013) "A Flexible Approach For Synchronizing Video With Live Music." in Live Visuals, Leonardo Electronic Almanac, MIT Press, Vol 19, No 3. p. 30-43.  
[http://www.aesthetic-machinery.com/documents/Ritter\\_flexible\\_approach\\_2013.pdf](http://www.aesthetic-machinery.com/documents/Ritter_flexible_approach_2013.pdf)

Prix Ars Electronica Honourary Recognition for Orpheus  
interactive art category, Linz, Austria. 1991



Oh toi qui vis là-bas! Orpheus performance, interactive video controlled by improvised singing  
Don Ritter: video Geneviève Letarte: text and voice Michel F. Côté: percussion  
Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, 1994 documentary video: <https://vimeo.com/38229752>

festival program 1990: Festival International Musique Actuelle  
Victoriaville, Canada. performance with George E. Lewis

**DIMANCHE 7  
17H00  
CEGEP  
12 S**

**GEORGE LEWIS, ÉTATS-UNIS  
DON RITTER, CANADA**

Une montagne d'humour qui prend plaisir à souffler dans sa tuyauterie comme s'il y puisait un grand rire naïf. Maître incontesté du trombone, qu'il sonne jazz, blues, contemporain ébère ou inopinément bruiteuse, GEORGE LEWIS est également une grande tête chercheuse.

Au long d'un parcours jalonné de nombreuses collaborations avec les plus grands noms du jazz (BRAXTON, LACY, MITCHELL, BAILEY), GEORGE LEWIS explore les rapports entre musique et technologie informatique. Qu'advient-il du son au moment où virevoltent les images de synthèse? Quel usage faire d'interfaces et logiciels transducteurs de tempus, hauteurs, volumes, intervalles, ... ?

Certains vidéastes informaticiens mettaient au point l'interaction de paramètres sonores et visuels. Parmi eux, un jeune artiste de l'animation vidéo, DON RITTER, créateur d'un système par lequel l'image digitalisée est synchronisée à toute forme de musique.

Leur rencontre allait donner lieu à une suite de performances impressionnantes où se conjuguent l'improvisation la plus brillante et des images à la DALLI projetées sur grand écran.

Une invitation à découvrir l'une des formes nouvelles que revêt la musique vivante entre les mains d'un géant du trombone et d'un spécialiste de l'animation par ordinateur.

**GEORGE LEWIS, USA  
DON RITTER, CANADA**

He may come across as a great chunk of humor who takes a lot of pleasure in blowing heavy laughter in his brass tubing. No one denies his virtuosity as a trombonist; he'll jazz, blues, contemporary or even Noise music. Yet, GEORGE LEWIS is also a musical thinker of the first order.

After having garnered a long list of credits with such luminaries as ANTHONY BRAXTON, DEREK BAILEY, STEVE LACY and ROSCOE MITCHELL, he has been developing a keen interest in the field of computer technology as applied to music. What does happen then, when



sound interacts with the swirling of composite images? How do these react when combined with computer software, tempo transducers, volume and interval controls amongst other hi-tech interfaces? A handful of specialists in the field of computerized video art have been elaborating such interactive procedures between sound and image. One of these pioneers, DON RITTER, has designed a system synchronizing digitally generated pictures to all forms of

music.

A meeting of minds was only to be expected, and both of these innovators have already given a number of impressive performances that give free reign to brilliant sonic and visual improvisations. This most unique encounter should not be missed for it bears the mark of a new advance in multi-media art, entrusted here in the hands of a trombone colossus and a wizard of computer animation.



**Stithy**, video-sound installation using Orpheus, 10x10 m  
Massachusetts Institute of Technology,  
Center for Advanced Visual Studies. Don Ritter, 1988  
web page: <https://www.aesthetic-machinery.com/stithy.html>

## Interactive video-music performances with George Lewis

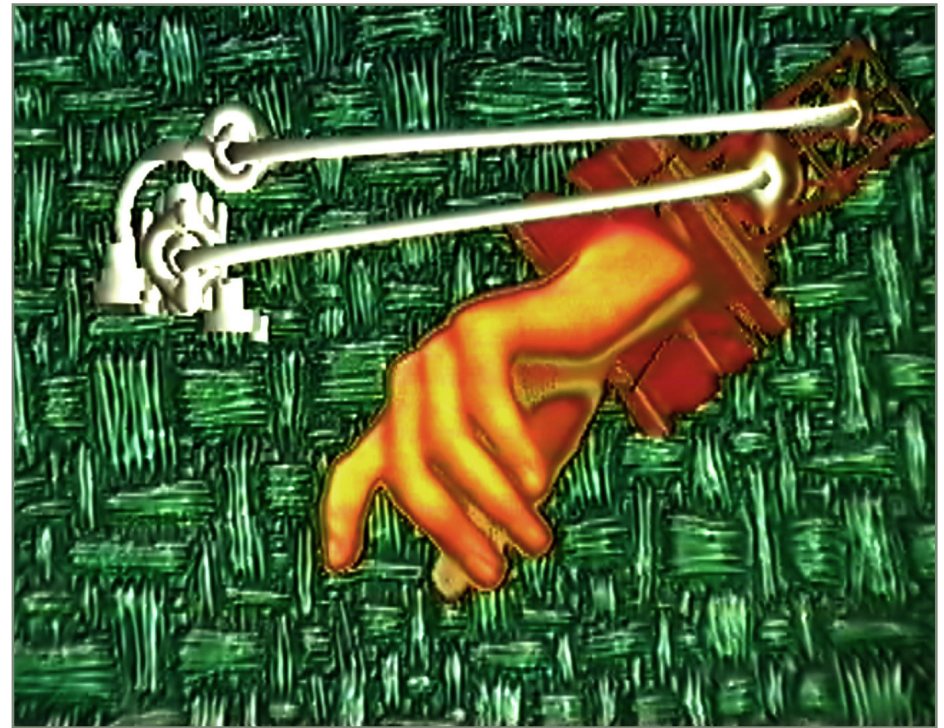
Between 1988 and 1990, musician George Lewis and Ritter presented over 20 interactive video performances controlled by Lewis' improvised trombone playing. Orpheus is an interactive video sequencing software providing real time control and synchronization of digital video with any form of live or sequenced music. The intelligent music listener within the software permits interactive control of video using a real time music categorization according to pitch, loudness, note duration, rest length and tempo.



George Lewis and Don Ritter, 1990

### selected interactive video-music performances by Ritter and Lewis

Art Institute of Chicago, USA. 1990  
Verona Jazz Festival, Verona, Italy. 1990  
The Kitchen, New York City, USA. 1990  
Festival International Musique Actuelle Victoriaville, Victoriaville, Canada. 1990  
Computer Music Festival, Seattle, USA. 1990  
A Space, Toronto, Canada. 1990  
New Music America 1989, New York City, USA. 1989  
Alternative Museum, New York City, USA. 1989  
Media Lab/MIT, Cambridge, USA. 1988



video frame from Andsum interactive video performance, New Music America 1989, NYC  
video documentation: <https://www.aesthetic-machinery.com/andsum.html>



Don Ritter, interactive video performance using Orpheus, Art Institute of Chicago, 1990



Ritter's studio, Berlin, 2008