Critical evaluation for the Spatialised Practices Unit (MDA3)

The complete documentation for the Spatialised Practices Unit (MDA3) and my process of research can be found on my web blog [www.machinatorium.wordpress.com] inside the sub-category MDA3.

As I have linked the Spatialised Unit with my Self-Negotiated Project (the same that I did before with the Hybridised Unit and the Collaborative Unit), the whole blog can be seen as an entire unit or separately by focussing on just one of the parts.

The timetable of production

The task

Within the Learning Agreement for this Spatialised Practices Unit (MDA 3) I set the task to consider the question of space and context for my MSN1-application, the Industrial Palace. My main aim was to create a completed piece of work that is ready to publish and present to an audience.

Although the basic idea is to show this work on a rotated screen within a wooden framework, I also wanted to continue reconsidering alternative ways to publish this application, for example as an interactive web-application or for a normal (non-rotated) screen if possible.

In addition to that I aimed to find a cabinet-maker to help me with setting up this framework. By this, the Unit has become a collaborative one as well.

As I had some problems during this Unit, this document will be a bit more elaborated and extensive.

Theoretical approach

The general research part of this Unit can be described as a continuing process of the previous Units (MDA1, 2, 3 and MSN1). As I was quite sure about the final outcome, I did not try to increase my awareness of similar projects and spatial solutions, but I was deepening the broad field of research for the Industrial Palace in general. By this, I came across some interesting projects and theoretical approaches also concerning space and context. So, similar to the other additional Units (Hybridised and Collaborative),
the research part could have been more detailed and intensive in general; but again, I decided to focus on
the practical outcome of this production and the continuing research for the whole project.

Concerning the preparation for the cabinet, I made an additional research-related approach. While
thinking about the look and gestalt of the final machine, I had a closer look at the style, the colours and
materials of the machines and technical devices from the 20s and 30s of the last century. By this, I had
the idea to make it easier for the cabinet-maker and me to create a framework true to the era.

Space & Display
There were three basic fields of interest or spatial approaches that I was working on within this Unit:


1. Online accessibility [The Industrial Palace online]
This part of the Unit was about the documentation or public presentation of my project in general
related to the question of how to publish this work. As I want to try to exhibit the Industrial Palace in
the future and tell people about this project, I was looking for an easy and easily accessible solution.
A from my point of view rather straightforward decision for that was the setup of a website. I bought
the domain www.industriepalast.com, placed a simple site on the server with all the necessary
information within a pdf-file that you can download.

As I said, this solution is rather simple, but effective. If anybody is interested in getting some basic
information about the project, I can send him/her the link to this site. In addition to that, you can
probably find the website while searching the internet. And the spatial part, the idea of exhibiting the
whole work, will continue and grow as the publication and display of my machine is just going to start
and hopefully will go on. So, therefore, the setup of a website was a necessary and effective step.

2. The Industrial Palace on a screen
The main problem for publishing the
Industrial Palace is the fact, that the ratio
for the screen is not the standard horizontal
format. The best way of showing the
application is within a vertical framework.
For an installation it is possible for example
to rotate a screen or to use a projector with
a mirrored output. But while thinking about
ways of publishing the work in the internet
or as an application for using on a standard
computer or television screen, it is necessary
to consider the fact that I can’t expect
people to rotate their screens.

In addition to that, the application of the
Industrial Palace was produced in a High-
Definition-Format with a ratio of 1920 x 1080 pixel for a HD screen. As there are lots of small elements
and some nice little animated parts within the machinery, it is a pity if you have to publish the work
only on a small screen or with the help of a projector that has a low resolution. By this, there is always a huge loss of the richness of detail and quality.

That is why, I had a look at ways of using a standard screen for an interactive application based on the question: What elements or frames are necessary to display the Industrial Palace on a normal screen? By this, I came to the conclusion that it is necessary to create a kind of screen layout with the possibility to focus, to zoom in into special parts of the body, to explore the machine. So, in addition to the interactive aspect of choosing a topic, there must be a second element to get closer to the different parts. Therefore, I began to set up a first series of draft drawings for a screen-layout containing different elements and parts for an alternative interactive handling of the machine. It was not about the style or character of the display but just a collection of possible layouts and solutions.

But within this more or less conceptual process of setting up a new way of displaying the work, I found out for myself that this approach is not suitable for this machine and its publication. On the one hand, by creating a new complicated interface with additional functions, the whole application looses the quality of being true to the era of the original poster. A too elaborated and software-based interface just does not fit. On the other hand, I am doubting the use and usability of a screen-based version. Of course, it could be interesting to publish the work online, so that everybody can enjoy my artwork just by starting the application on his/her own computer. But as there will be a huge amount of films and by this storage and large sized files, it is not possible yet, to make an accessible version for the web.

So, therefore, I developed a first prototype for a screen-based version, a draft version with some basic effects, but I decided not to continue working in this direction.

\\section{Installation & Exhibition}

\\subsection{Exhibition I – Lithuania}

I had a first possibility to exhibit this work from April 17th until May 8th 2009 during an exhibition, placed in the Šiaulių Dailės Galerija in Šiauliai, Lithuania. This exhibition was part of the daxma-exchange programme between the MA Digital Arts of the Norwich School of Art & Design and the Multimedia Arts of Siauliai University. As the topic for this exhibition was “LABORATORY” it was a good possibility to create a first, draft installation for the Industrial Palace application. By this, I created an extra button for the exhibition, because I did not want to bring the rotatable button with me to Lithuania and in addition to that I had to think about a way to present the work without a cabinet or any other framework.

In the end, the installation itself became a kind of Industrial Palace on its own with all the different technical parts and machines as a rotated projector, a computer, a sound-system and the new button. Nevertheless this exhibition was really helpful for me, not only to set up an exhibition but also of advantages and disadvantages concerning the interactive part of my machine and the way of presentation. If you are interested in a more elaborated critical evaluation of this exhibition there is a document on my
In general it was really nice to publish this machinery for the first time, to receive a feedback and to see people to interact with my work. As you will see in this document, there were lots of unanswered questions and problems that I had to solve. But by this, the whole exhibition was a helpful experience for future projects and developing spatial solutions.

**Exhibition II – Norwich**

While working and creating our artwork within the first term, a group of MA students including me, we had the idea to set up an exhibition on our own, a kind of in-between show of our current work. And after a long process of discussion and talking about this project, we came up with the following project:

**In Transit - An international and collaborative Exhibition**

Five international artists from Italy, Germany, Portugal and the UK, currently doing their Masters Degree at the Norwich University College of the Arts, set up a collaborative exhibition together. Presenting strong, authentic and original work, the artists deliver you an insight into their present practice, varying from painting, installation and sculpture to digital arts.

Starting on the 8th of July with an opening evening from 5 until 9pm, you are very welcome to have a look at their artwork and their projects in the Stew Gallery, until the 14th of July.

A special event is scheduled for the 11th of July to celebrate the opening of East International with the gallery staying open through the night.

For more information about this exhibition and the artists visit www.art-in-transit.org.

8th – 14th July 2009 [Closed on Sunday] | 12am – 7pm
- Opening: 8th July 5 – 9pm
- Special Event: 11th July 5pm – 1am [with Barbecue + Drinks + Music + Get Together]
- Stew Gallery, 40 Fishergate, Norwich, Norfolk, NR3 1SL

This exhibition and its close opening-deadline – which is more or less at the same time as this assessment – enforced me to focus on this Unit in depth by finishing the Industrial Palace project with a suitable outcome. Therefore, I started to look for collaborative partners again:

**Collaborations...**

For this Unit I decided to work together with other students in a collaborative way: On the one hand I had the aim to improve the sound-design with the help of David Indge, the sound-designer from the Film and Video Course (MDA3). My other collaborative partner was Paul Osborne, a student in the BA Visual Studies Course who was very interested in building a cabinet for my Industrial Palace.

Both collaborations did not work out very well. There were problems and difficulties while setting up the project. I will write out the results in the following paragraphs:

**Collaboration I – Sound**

The collaboration with my Sound-Designer David Indge continued within this Unit as well. When presenting the results of the Collaborative Unit (MDA2), there were still some little discrepancies between animation and sound, some mistakes and wrong connections. So, I already asked David at the end of the MDA2-Unit if he would be interested in continuing this collaboration and he agreed, also because he was using this project for his assessment at the same time. And again, David and I decided to organise this collaboration as efficient as possible.
Sadly, two weeks before this assessment, David had some problems with his software and he was not able any more to open the projects. He did not really know why, but he was trying to find a way to solve this problem for a while – without any success until two days before the opening.

When he finally sent the new files to me, it was too late to update the application for the exhibition. But at least, the sound-design is finished by now and in the end, this collaboration was very efficient and working out in a very good way.

Collaboration II – Cabinet
Paul Osborne, a student in the BA Visual Studies Course, was very interested in building a cabinet for my Industrial Palace. Shaun told me that he is a very skilful and precise worker and I was looking forward to talking and working with him. And within this first meeting he already had lots of great ideas and some advice of how to build and create the cabinet. And to be honest: It was rather helpful for me to talk to someone who has the knowledge and the skills of the construction and setup of a framework like this. In addition to that, Paul and I developed some first ideas about the style and the visual appearance of the construction and all the different elements that we have to consider (Sound, Ventilation, Hardware, Power supply, …). By this, I came across the general problem of finding the right equipment and hardware. But with the help of Shaun, I had the possibility to get a Mini Mac and a screen from the Art School.

The problem of this collaboration was that I did not meet Paul again after this first meeting for a long while. As all the steps of the cabinet setup were based on the size of the screen and the hardware in general, we decided to wait until all the equipment is available – and I have to admit: a bad decision. Paul had his final assessments as well, so he was working not only for this project but also for his own degree and I had to do plan and organise other projects as well. When it was clear that there will be an exhibition with my Industrial Palace, I started to contact Paul again to get this project started. But I just did not get in contact with him anymore. He replied to one of my mails that we still can achieve the goal to set up a cabinet, but after that he disappeared (probably for holidays after the end of the term). Three days before the opening of the In Transit exhibition, I still did not know if there will be any cabinet and how I could exhibit my work at all – a very pain- and stressful situation! And then, Paul just sent me a text-message that he cannot help me anymore because of another job that he had to do.

Confronted with this new situation, I had to find a quick solution. And I had to forget about all the previous work and ideas about how to improve the cabinet. I just needed an achievable and suitable framework for the opening. Sad, but the only way to get out of this mess: With the help of Shaun and Stephen from the Woodwork-Shop (that was open, although the Art School is shutting down all the facilities at the moment, which is annoying and not helpful at all for a fulltime-student), we set a simple and basic box for the screen and the Mini Mac with an additional plinth for the button. And to be honest: This simple and fast solution is working very well. I quite like the neutral simplicity of the current framework as there is no distraction from the animation at all. On the contrary! The feedback for the cabinet was great so far.

Finally, all the delays and the difficulties to get in touch with Paul caused lots of trouble. I probably should have been more demanding and organised, especially when the idea of our exhibition came up. But I relied on the help of my collaborative partner and was let down in a very annoying and crucial way. A sad, but helpful experience for the future. And right now I am not quite sure, if I will try to set
up a new cabinet at some point or if I will just keep this simple solution. I think this questions depends on how this project will continue and where I could exhibit or display this work again.

**Conclusion**

Concerning the theoretical approach and my results for the spatial display of my work, I think I developed some interesting and helpful thoughts and ideas. But, sadly my collaborative problems became more and more annoying and difficult at the end of this Unit, so that it was not easy to evaluate the outcome of this Unit.

Nevertheless I am glad to had the chance to exhibit the work and I am looking forward to displaying my work in Norwich. In addition to that, while working on this Unit, something really nice and surprising happened:

While working on this project, I received a quite surprising mail by a german designer, Thilo von Debschitz. He wrote to me because he found my MA blog about the Industrial Palace Project while searching the internet. Thilo was rather interested in my work as he is writing a book about Fritz Kahn, his life and of course his amazing work. Together with his sister they did a lot of research so far, scanned and digitalized loads of images and they want to publish a book this year during the big book fair in Frankfurt that takes place in October.

As there will also be a chapter about interdependency and reciprocation, Thilo asked me if I would be interested in participating with my digital Industrial Palace. And of course I am, that sounds great! I already talked to him and we started to swap ideas on how to get in contact. In addition to that, they also want to set up an exhibition at the beginning of next year in Berlin and also in New York (the places where Fritz Kahn lived and worked) with my digital application of Kahn’s machine of course. I just didn’t expected something like that. And it was great to meet someone who is as fascinated as me by Kahn’s artwork. I am still all excited about this opportunity and its further development…

So again: This project will continue and it was great to have the time and support within this course so far, to develop and realise my ideas!