Various sites
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This sixth International Symposium of Electronic Arts was remarkable for both the scale and the quality of its conference, exhibition and events. It marks the coming-of-age of electronic art based on a new relation to time, space and the artwork.

As Bruce Sterling pointed out in his presentation of the project Dead Media Studies, the obsolescence of the machine strengthens the idea of an art of the present, of immediacy. It calls into question a whole idea of art history and assigns conservation to the realm of archaeology.

This idea of temporality was also discussed by the panel on "emerging architectures" during which Julio Bermúdez and Debra Gondek-Becker presented a new approach to architecture whereby it is rethought from the viewpoint of its "entry" or access code, in terms of a quantum space in which different states of a given world can be saved and made accessible simultaneously in a kind of inter-realism.

This implies a new relation to the artwork, a desacralized art that is in life, an art that is part of the environment and an environment that is artistic. Two magnificent works stood out at ISEA.

Osmosis, Char Davies' virtual reality installation, comprised five "elements": a tree and its leaves, a clearing, water, the computer code and text (poetry, etc.). Movement was achieved using the body: leaning forward, backwards or sideways to move horizontally, breathing in our out to go up or down.

Osmosis is the "reality" of the Other's ideas and thought processes. Because it is not "realistic," this world is even more intensely present in its strangeness. We feel weightless, as if afloat. We are in the work (immersed, unable to withdraw, to move outside it) and the work is in us: we breathe it.

The essential movements of the body (breathing and balance) are the tools we use to apprehend the work. Our involvement as an actor is heightened by the fact that others can watch our movements through a translucent screen—like a puppet in a shadow play.

If Char Davies' work is gentle and dreamlike, Graham Harwood's Rehearsal of Memory is tough and violent. To make this interactive installation, Harwood worked with severely disturbed patients in a psychiatric hospital/prison who had committed serious crimes. He synthesized their stories in the form of a computer play known as the body, a ghost or spirit of the physical body, in a new electronic ritual.

In 1996, ISEA will be held in Rotterdam. The themes will be education, network art and Web design.

Michael Schlosser, involving mathematical chess combinations based on cellular automata, as well as communion by Isabelle Choinière, in which the body of a dancer is confronted with the computer space of the body, like a ghost, or spirit of the physical body, in a new electronic ritual.

(2) Translated from a text by Graham Harwood accompanying the exhibition.