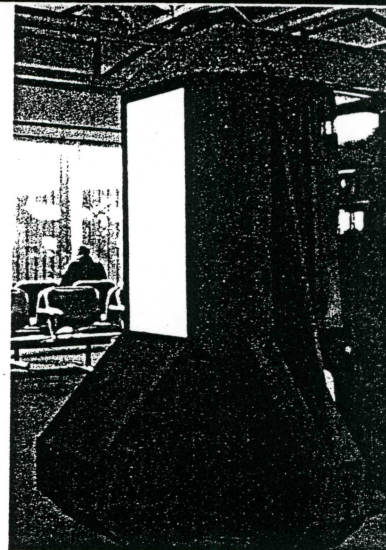


Passport Sized Interference, an installation involving two sites linked by live internet video, took place simultaneously at the Museum of Science and Industry, Manchester, UK and at the Ottawa Macdonald-Cartier International Airport from October 1 to October 31, 1996.



1. **Objects:** Two bunkers cum photoboos cum time machines with two-way surveillance.

They are also, to me, like blemishes or eruptions from the ground below, where here, ground is to be taken in a rounded sense to include both geophysical as well as discursive values. The vestiges of earth upon and about them work as traces, but also as camouflage. Either way the earth reinforces in a similar fashion insofar as earth elementally fortifies construction in areas both geophysical and symbolic. Of course, as blemish or eruption, the earth is like traces of skin broken away, and indeed there is a general sense of breaking away from earth literally and figuratively. The site locations (see 2. Locations) of the booths would seem to reassure this indication. However, as bunkers they are all the better dug in for it, and so not so much hailing from earth as fortified by it and lodged within it—using it, in effect. Either way it is a disruption of earth (ground).

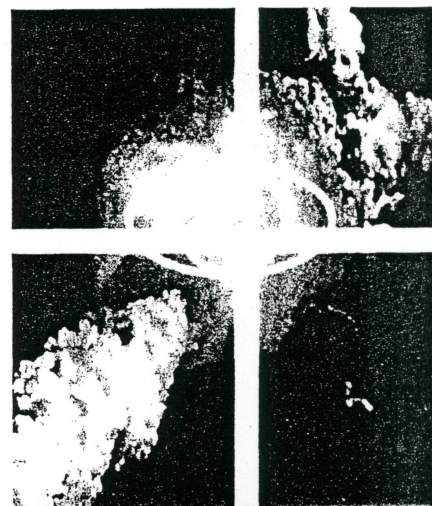
This disruption has a couple of trajectories (or consequences). It is at once the indication of a disruption unsolicited and damaging and a perpetrator of it in defense. In the service of earth (the concrete) it is an active/reactive machine engaged at some aggressive level with institutional abstractions, particularly around notions of space and time. The bunker, after all, is a martial housing (and this, then (?), would be a martial art).

Ground departure is shown as implicated with respect to motive, despite recent cybernetic rhetoric making similar departures with claims to structurally undetermined and non-implicit relations to ethics. Whether or not this latter claim is correct, probable or possible, it is to specific institutions who ride the wave of this discourse's euphoria that the piece is addressed. In those arenas, departure and flight from (the) ground is the occasion for a more efficient territorialization of communications and general socio-political management, made more fluid by embracing at a discursive level more ethereal notions of time and space while at a corporate level rutting for control of as many entry points and metering the duration of as much occupation as possible. The institutions *per se* remain vague, which is important to do; although there are specific sites (see 2. Locations) which belong to specific corporations, it is not, it would seem, about name-calling, so much as it is about the institutional machinery—or what might be oxymoronically called the corporate spirit—itself.

The object as photobooth is surveillance under the guise of narcissism. Like a trojan horse invited into expectation of self-gratification and the reassurance of presence, its

attacking force within hits with alterity and absence. Of course, this is done with a degree of humour. Or at least I find it funny. If you go into a photobooth and end up with someone else's photo, how do you feel about it? I suppose it could be cause for concern; it may even challenge your basic sense of identity. But what if the whole idea was to grab a print-out of the other person to begin with? The booth appearing to be a photobooth (although granted, a highly militant looking one) is a disarming feature of what in fact is an intrusion and theft of someone else's identity (so to speak). Of course persons in either booth can play tit for tat in this respect so the central agent (or agency) of surveillance is once again vague; and once again this is appropriate—at least insofar as it draws to my mind Foucault-like notions of individual internalizations of social surveillance/control/management mechanisms (eg. you are your own liquor control board, or you are at once prison, warden, guard and prisoner). Perhaps, then, the point is the readily acceptable level of amusement contained within the process of getting someone else on file (as it were). That is, the banality of it all bespeaks the degree to which a

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cynical relationship towards inhabiting space (to the very idea of presence) has become socially endemic.

The presentation of this relation remains as the bunker does interstitial inasmuch as it is at once the condition or consequence of an exterior program/agent/agency as well as a practitioner of the same strategy. It inverts the relationship of presence and absence (taking the strategy of digital territorializing which offers you a presence or comfort zone in emptiness and flipping it to secure the presence of that emptiness) at a structural level which results in an ideological exposé.

There is an inside view and an outside view. The interior is personal, presenting another body (if there happens to be one in the booth at the time), the outside one is contextual—presenting a view of your space superimposed within their space. Of course if no one resides in the booth at the time you look, you see your own space emptied—you see your context without your identity. This, as it turns out, may be a rather radical theory. Identity is not context bound/specific any more than context is identity bound/specific. When elements are freed up (so to speak) like this they become more fluid—and thence (it would seem) easier to manipulate (both for you and someone/thing else).

The object as time-machine is more circumstantial; it is a by-product of the booth as surveillance machine. It presents a view to another locale which in the logic of the piece as a whole presents an interstitial time frame—between an official and a technical time. Official and Technical are not the same here. They challenge one another, but perhaps they do so while also reinforcing one another. Officially, you look into

the future or the past; technically you look into the present (i.e. because the booths are located in different time zones and are crossed into one another—see 2. Locations). In this respect, the technical remains interstitial; it remains between time lines. It also manages geographical coordinates as copresent; it is the same space though its content shows a variable. You are both there and not there, you and someone else. And the space you are in is both where/when you are and where/when you are not. Officially, this is displacement; technically, it is fusion.

Time is as much subject to property rights as space. Perhaps the more unbounded by borders the globalization of communication pretends to be, the more specific, secured and local the borders actually are.

2. **Locations:** One in a museum of science and technology, the other in the departure lounge of an international airport.

The two locales are copresent within an official time zone difference of 5 hours. The booth as an installation/eruption within an archive (i.e. the museum)—granted by gatekeepers of this organization, presumably under the popular and highly coveted auspices of electronic interactive media art). Proprietary objects reflective of the past and which harbour promise for the future. Time as property. Time, therefore, as space. Time/space as a relation which begs narrative (and hence coherence, lineage, proprietorship).

The booth as an installation/eruption upon a flight platform (i.e. within the departure lounge of an international airport—

and of a capital city I would add). Sanctioned as is the other location by a municipal (local) directory serving an international (global) interest. The booths are physically located within these specific areas but they operate between them. This is appropriate inasmuch as the operations and functional relations of the institutions are both points of departure. In this respect their specificity as place is meant to be absent—it's about where they lead to. This structural obfuscation is borne by the booths as the burden of the locations.

Presence as appearance rendered as fiction is an operation which can serve interests motivated by gain using false premises (pun intended). Presence as so blatantly announced by the booths creates friction (over fiction). Of course, it is still made up (insofar as it is informed with any portance) but it differs in that its shifting operation—its occupation between spaces and times—highlights its present effects.

88 *Michael Boyce is a writer, videographer, musician, and media artist with a Ph.D. in philosophy, communications and political science. His interest lies in the dynamics of the relationships between the prosaic and poetic.*