

The Illusive Nature of Context: The Negotiation of the Thoughtbody  
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### **The World Generator / The Engine of Desire (p0es1s text Version)**

How is it that we come to know an ever changing world that conflates both computer environments with other physical environments? An ongoing stream of perceptions forms a body of knowledge over time, informing the larger context of our individual thought. Each instance of media use has a meaning force that delicately shapes understanding through an ongoing set of environmental perceptions... the current process — thought. “Current” is a pun here, thought being an ongoing physical electro-chemical process. Yet the shape of this thought is also informed by past perceptual activity. The subtle nature of the forming of this *thoughtbody* is extremely illusive. I use the term thoughtbody as a unity, avoiding any idea of a mind / body split.

In particular I want to discuss a work entitled **The World Generator / The Engine of Desire**, a collaboration with the artist/programmer Gideon May that has been exhibited in Europe, the United States and Japan. I have also extended this work through the publication of the text from the work in an alternate form and context within the exhibition “p0es1s”. The World Generator promotes a form of active looking/listening/interacting/understanding. Through interaction with this virtual world generator, text potentially qualifies differing emotive aspects of the current computer-based emergent context. Media elements also inform the understanding of the text. All of the media-elements present meaning forces that operate on each other. Different interactions and “negotiations” of the space promote an ongoing meaning summing.

The version of the text that is to be presented in the “p0es1s” exhibition as decontextualised from the World Generator and recontextualised, qualifies the surroundings of the exhibition space of p0es1s, in a related way to how the texts operates within in the **World Generator**. In terms of this form of participatory “negotiation” of space, Varela, Thompson and Rosch in *The Embodied Mind*, speaking about Buddhist mindfulness awareness suggest:

Its purpose is to become mindful, to experience what one’s mind is doing as it does it, to be present with one’s mind. What relevance does this have to cognitive science? We believe that if cognitive science is to include human experience, it must have some method of exploring and knowing what human experience is. (Varela, Thompson, and Rosch, 1996, p.23)

The body is the analogue medium that contains this electro-chemical process/ground – the space of mindful awareness. Embodied events enable a physics to operate through an electrochemical vehicle of exchange to alter the subtle shape of the thoughtbody. The mutability and operative nature of computer-based environments compounds the complexity of this process. The computer is just one meaning-force-exchange-mechanism in the landscape of living exchanges, albeit an extremely pervasive one. The accretive nature of context suggests that any past context can inform a future context, even if the content of that context has been displaced or recontextualised — i.e. shifted from a computer-based context to a different form of physical context or media (as it has been here).

A set of mutable and operational media-elements and processes are potentially perceived via the computer, shifting the very nature of how meaning forces can be organized and transmitted. The thoughtbody is in a continuous state of subtle change and the computer now augments the speed and quality of this change. In fact, as the computer unlocks our ability to restructure nature via nanotechnological processes we enter yet another profound era of technological transformation. Every computer-based exploration of meaning subtly shifts the form of the thoughtbody which in turn exists, from time to time, away from the computer.

Could one make a technology to point at the subtle nature of meaning change over time? This question formed the driving problem which led to the authorship the project **The World Generator / The Engine of Desire** and led to my concept of Recombinant Poetics. A Recombinant Poetic work presents a mechanism in which a viewer/user/participant can act upon and explore varying juxtapositions of computer-based media-elements to examine environmental meaning within a mutable generative electronic environment. The generative component is essential to Recombinant Poetics and differentiates it from other fixed virtual environments. I am also interested in states of media. Thus a generative virtual environment can also be qualified by repositioning text gleaned from that space and further explored in a re-contextualised physical environment. **The World Generator** enables participants to construct virtual worlds in real time and then navigate and operate on/in that virtual world. Participants could (in some instantiations of the work) also enter networked virtual spaces, linking, for example, Tokyo to Karlsruhe among other connectivities.

The work enables one to examine differing fields of meaning as well as meaning forces as they are explored by an interacting participant. One can experientially witness subtle meaning shifts through this interaction. I write about mutable fields of meaning force in my dissertation. Ideas surrounding the production of the World Generator are contained in my PH.D. from CAiA (the

Centre For Advanced Inquiry in The Interactive Arts, University of Wales), led by Roy Ascott. The title of the dissertation was **Recombinant Poetics: Emergent Meaning as Examined and Explored Within a Specific Generative Virtual Environment**, available for download in PDF format from the Langlois Foundation. The Ph.D. was completed in 1999.

I have for many years been interested in what we might call differing states of media. In a similar way to the differing states of matter, media elements can be decontextualized to varying degrees. Many different forms of analogue and digital media can be carriers of abstractions of the initial meaning forces that can be encountered and explored through interaction in particular environments be they virtual or other. The thoughtbody is in a continuous flow of becoming. It is potentially informed by differing states of media over time. Deleuze and Guattari describe this quality of unfixity as a "flow" functioning as part of a larger conceptual assemblage. They relate this concept to the book form in *A Thousand Plateaus*:

In a book, as in all things, there are lines of articulation or segmentarity, strata and territories; but also lines of flight, movements of deterritorialization and destratification. Comparative rates of flow on these lines produce phenomena of relative slowness and viscosity, or, on the contrary, of acceleration and rupture. All this, lines and measurable speeds, constitutes an assemblage. (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p.4)

The "lines of flight" spread outward from the initial context of the computer-based work the World Generator. All instances of use that the thoughtbody perceives, inform the thoughtbody's understanding of the work. There is no fixed static meaning. The shape of the thoughtbody is always in a state of ongoing change from the interactive experience of differing meaning forces — different contexts of use and embodiment, each with their own individual nature. The functionality of this artwork as well as the displacement of media elements from the artwork, its quality of non-closure, manifests an ongoing "plateau" of change. Deleuze and Guattari speak about the origin of their use of the term "plateau":

A plateau is always in the middle, not at the beginning or the end. A rhizome is made of plateaus. Gregory Bateson uses the word "plateau" to designate something very special: a continuous, self-vibrating region of intensities whose development avoids any orientation toward a culmination point or external end. (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p.22)

Computer-based environments fall in relation to the thoughtbody as do the alternate contexts housing decontextualised media-elements derived from the initial context. This is the premise behind my work in this show. By repositioning and making physical the text from **The World Generator / The Engine of Desire**, I extend through physical decontextualisation the implications that I sought to point at through the initial mutable computer-based experience. I also add multiple fields of new implications.

The concept of the rhizome as developed by Deleuze and Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus* is highly relevant to a discussion of a shifting configurations and contextualisations of media-elements, as well as a conflation of language-vehicles falling within the continuum between the physical and the digital. The authors relate this definition:

Let us summarise the principal characteristics of a rhizome: unlike trees or their roots, the rhizome connects any point to any other point and its traits are not necessarily linked to traits of the same nature; it brings into play very different regimes of signs and even nonsign states. The rhizome is reducible to neither the One or the multiple. It is not the One that becomes Two or even directly three, four, five etc. It is not a multiple derived from the one, or to which one is added ( $n+1$ ). It is comprised not of units but of dimensions, or rather directions in motion. It has neither beginning nor end, but always a middle (milieu) from which it grows and which it overflows. It constitutes linear multiplicities with  $n$  dimensions having neither subject nor object, which can be laid out on a plane of consistency and from which the one is always subtracted ( $n-1$ ). When a multiplicity of this kind changes dimension, it necessarily changes in nature as well, undergoes a metamorphosis. Unlike a structure, which is defined by a set of points and positions, the rhizome is made only of lines; lines of segmentarity and stratification as its dimensions and the line of flight or deterritorialization as the maximum dimension after which the multiplicity undergoes metamorphosis, changes in nature. These lines, or ligaments, should not be confused with lineages of the aborescent type, which are merely localizable linkages between points and positions... Unlike the graphic arts, drawing or photography, unlike tracings, the rhizome pertains to a map that must be produced, constructed, a map that is always detachable, connectable, reversible, modifiable and has multiple entranceways and exits and its own lines of flight. (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p.21)

My investigation of emergent meaning can be seen in the light of the concept of the rhizome.

The following observations are attributed to Heraclitus from the 6th century B.C., with commentary by Philip Wheelwright.

Everything flows and nothing abides; everything gives way and nothing stays fixed.

You cannot step twice into the same river, for other waters are continually flowing on.

It is in changing that things find repose. (Wheelwright, 1968, p.29)

Wheelwright muses:

Permanence is but a relative term, his [Heraclitus', emphasis Seaman] philosophy declares; and what we call permanent is simply an example of change in slow motion. All structures, if you observe them patiently enough and project your imagination far enough,

are dissolving slowly; everything, as the Greeks put it, is in a process of coming-to-be and passing-away. (Wheelwright, 1968, p.29)

It is interesting that Wheelwright uses a technological metaphor to discuss Heraclitus — slow motion. Yet it is this same kind of slow motion – the accretive thoughtmotion of a thoughtbody that I seek in part to point at. The techno-poetic mechanism (The World Generator / The Engine of Desire) seeks to illuminate processes of change — configurations of media-elements "coming-to-be" and "passing away" within an advanced technological environment. Within that technological environment, a world of potential poetic understanding undergoes change — meaning here enables an ongoing reflection related to the nature of accretive processes. In my dissertation on Recombinant Poetics I examine language-vehicle use. I argue that context is central to the generation of meaning. I show that meaning can be seen as ambiguous, indefinite and constantly in flux. This is particularly relevant to mutable, computer-based environments and to the nature of the recombinant sign. Reconfigurable contexts are continually entertained in the *negotiation* of meaning. This punning reading of the term *negotiation* is both spatial and conceptual.

Thus meaning is experienced through sensual interaction in a virtual environment as it is in any environment. Yet, meaning is no longer simply conveyed through chains of words. It is now circulated through the negotiation of virtual volumetric flows of media elements and processes, through probabilities and potentialities as well as across physical volumes of space — environmental interaction facilitates this process. These flows are polyvalent and ambiguous within the use of the device (as well as in this exterior context), seeing these characteristics as central to poetic approaches to the contemporary production of meaning.

Such flows qualify our future reading both of media elements from within the work as well as across other environments... My texts often include puns functioning to bridge multiple perspectives, where appropriate, i.e., the word *negotiation* is used above. The exhibition of the text from **The World Generator**, within the auspices of the p0es1s and/or other contexts extends the accretive process of meaning production related to the work. For those viewer/participants that have experienced the original digital work this extends the texts meaning. The physical distribution of the text creates a new form of negotiation for people who have not seen it in relation to its original context. Thus the two media states fall in relation to each other in a dynamic manner as experienced from a timedistance, each opening out different evocative layers of meaning. The thoughtbody navigates and negotiates the continuum between the physical and the virtual, the past and the present.

I here present the text is is presented in a distributed form across the exhibition space:

***The World Generator / The Engine of Desire***

Text Included In Menu System

quantum behaviours - the paradox engine  
floating signifiers of the doubt progressions (arithmetic)  
turn fold library of constellation puns  
n spoke shunt jumpers  
empty vessel theatre drives  
shared oscillation reference fields  
generator meta-constructs  
random fall mechanisms  
auto-positioning game board moves  
meta-empty projection fields (in waiting)  
snare set models  
recombinant code construction presence  
inward and outward shunt vessels  
objectspun  
large and small infinities of code vicinities  
condensation dispersions of infinite re-definition  
the looping turn bridge  
pool loops / loop pools  
room of memory collection debris  
the tearing of vessels  
the tearing of vessels  
endgame of architectural endgames  
blue museum of theatre engines  
null expression receptors  
the physics of the void expression  
word chain reaction trees  
the positioning and re-positioning of object spokes  
silent hands repositioning  
the lie of luminosity | lay of the landing  
reverse engineering paradox  
fabrication illuminates the museum of emptiness  
fabrications of emptiness in the museum of illumination  
low light eye fabrication  
structure signatures of sublime erosion  
conducting bone transmission pulse bridges  
drum language vessel engines  
omnilocal eyes in the light of fabrication  
sexual signal site abstracters and extenders  
elegant locution | mouth of chance  
desire exchange foci  
arteries of arithmetics  
solutions of doubt mixtures  
energy of loss  
recovery frames  
spinning steadily in reverse equal to the speed of rotation  
standing still | changing context  
equations of symbolic orders and disorders  
vessels of the dance  
reorientation rebus  
sound distances

sounding out situations  
motioning clear  
halation of magnetics  
motionless flight of the conveyor  
window trees  
vast territories of the entropyless domain  
optical futures  
shifter eye constants  
numb breather songs  
throat of blood rust  
symbolic duration of hair  
phantom gestures of the body  
amplification hands  
slow flow / gravity of glass thoughts  
blueprint of sand  
silence as it circulates and slides  
the skin of experience  
functions of the desire bearings  
physicality of the emotional hand  
release of self-guided desire mechanisms  
co-ordinates of resonant desire  
vessels of the collapsed field  
container release triggers  
paradox engine maps  
drifting non-arrival  
drive collision mesh paths  
floating destinations  
remotional aggregates  
felt expressions of the folding engine  
a thought map which builds an expression  
components of thought (re-embodied)  
collapsing through generative mind sites  
alife compartments  
transfer skin | transposition  
chess snare | forking map  
self organising desire mechanisms  
geometric falls  
gravity of luminous hands  
resonance scatter drivers  
phantom limbics  
architecture of thought weaving  
violent ballet | quiescent repose  
slowly sinking light ship  
the circulatory lighthouse of blue sound  
empty touch / blue void  
ballet ship  
born of the wreckage debris (re configured)  
light flows across all void distance  
looping fields of silence  
simple gestures delineate the site of desire  
eventual smooth equilibrium  
a simultaneity of infinities  
storage of desire collapse realms  
dispersion of desire vehicles  
entering - resonance architectures  
self supporting architecture | definition room

self suspended  
removal of time place  
times items bridging  
edge of the world parameters | landscape loop  
behavioural voice  
orders of magnitude | orders of behaviour  
aleotoric driver re-alignment rebus  
skin of reason (touched)  
museum of the void  
circulatory systems  
arbiters of displacement  
navigational memory  
governor of rotation engines desire bearings  
conveyor engines  
tag shifters | tethered and floating  
numb flows  
indexical shifters  
mixed metaphor [mechanics]  
an answer that asks questions  
poly-syntactic rotation {objects}  
word falls  
Body theatre thought vicinities  
entering - entering  
navigating observation  
observation containers  
gestures of inclination  
shadow triggers  
behavioural conveyors  
the null set relationals  
screen blank vessels  
a propensity toward inversion  
the back of signs [storage sites]  
Wittgenstein's handles  
reframing the gaming field  
pulse permutation shimmers  
sound substitution sets  
properties of inverse polemics  
action at a distance [bridges]  
non-causal chain reactions  
recombinant architectures of information  
molecules of thought ambivalence  
soft sliding rules  
transmutation trigger metaphors  
once again removed  
one word for another [place]  
event window [s]  
text behaviours  
palpable exchange rotations  
thought vessels  
algorithmic holds  
self aware entities  
rotating schedules  
conveyor vessels  
felt behaviours triggered by non-entities  
tactile turnstile conductors  
de-contextual contact facilitater fields



false emulates in the netting  
room pools  
written in rotating drums  
encoded function rooms  
encrypted rule sets  
levels of longing [elucidated]  
elliptical or circulatory cross-pollination metaphors  
compound collection machines  
recollections recombined [false history generator]  
code book looks ups  
invention generator pulse rhythms  
cadence of the trigger variables  
apparatus for reflection dispersion  
amorous theatre screen mesh  
sexual web of perception alloys  
carnal | canal  
amatory ambience of tender decline  
sensorial net drive assembly  
fundamental conveyor shaft  
morose transference mechanism  
shaft passage conveyor  
drift course resolve  
apparatus shelves  
spindle axis vehicles  
blue voiceprint snare  
angles of envelopment  
uncertainty angles | allusive sextant  
shaft beam labyrinth  
rotary emission beacon merge  
loaded dice object spins  
radial illuminations  
gyro-linguistic stabiliser  
rotation schedules of revolving desire bearings  
dispersion potentials  
desire bearings  
conductor desire shells  
hands of light gestures  
alchemical symbols | alchimeral slink  
x (.....) y  
false emulates of the rotation stands  
swivel location fulcrum  
circulatory map disruptions  
face of light spool  
photosynthetic metaphoric fields  
doubled over | layered spindle turns  
crossed object turnstiles  
selection spindle weave  
bridge fasteners and repulsion keys  
electricconnector contact mesh  
folded doubles  
oblique enablers  
chemical endgame memory flights  
biogenetic code plays  
bio-endgame storage  
digital spill containment vessels  
KING and QUEEN electro-transfer ducts

cohesion resonators  
rarefied fields  
alchemical remembrance  
trace balance elements  
association valence  
paradox shells  
meta-lily | periodic vessels  
pataphysical drift configurations  
trollers of the light realm  
thought with spin  
sleek oblique luminous links  
meta-engine nets  
distributor of thought engine filters  
table of non-predictable alignments  
angle of incidence or inception carriers  
dis-logistic sparks of dispersion semantics  
angles of percussion and recoil  
inexhaustible diffusions  
thrown meaning | sliding means  
scattered association  
oscillation valence  
spark of the skew gap  
meta-sliding function | poetic engines  
function engines of alternating strings  
engines of sliding field oscillation  
domain of rotation  
blind skill within the shells of silence  
meta-operator voices  
the desire engine and the agents of oscillation  
the sensual transference mechanism  
the realm of the desire engine  
circumnavigation rings  
cycles of relatives  
eye of the needle | eye of the loop  
tower of babel | eye of the storm  
the light of distance  
quantum jumps without falls  
recognitive resonance  
a suspended net sentence  
suspension suspended  
engendered strings of sonic fields  
in the light of absence  
puny hardware  
mercurial tropes  
parallel stream drivers  
exploded objects of quiescence  
transitional poetics of disembodiment  
surrogate sense fields  
conundrum domains | bridged and fused  
chess theatre drum snare pair  
a trap of folded fields  
alchemical relatives  
objects which turn in on themselves  
inversion objects  
poem of the exploded word  
gathered misnomers

revolving glass door  
arboretum of reciprocal inversions  
acrostic architectures of collapsed time  
bodythought compressions  
site which fabricates sites  
personal cipher machines  
encryption system strings  
trap door code names  
anagrammatic exchange objects  
camouflaged key word states  
situational  
poly-syntactic emblems  
coded compartments  
trade craft decoy ploys  
books can become like shoes... [slogans]  
ligature of the light passage bodies  
hands of information  
floating function rooms  
indeterminate arcs of reaction  
location sensitive self regulating rules  
the desire object reflection mesh  
a room which gets ahead of itself  
[fabrication] housings nestings vessels and levels  
turn puns which loop around an axis / access  
sung round of rotations  
a pun spun and retouched  
frequencies of event windows  
nested generator rebus bridges  
dis-rebus  
world within a word  
a machine to generate or navigate puns  
speed of reflex thought implosion  
delta-set shunts  
pataphysics of introspection  
skin of light  
tongue of the labyrinth  
elevator sentence  
radial means  
cross a book with a landscape  
a periodically relative battery of scores in scale / one to one  
optimal use of uncertain information  
the profession of release  
displacements | a machine of exchange

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