

lonely  
in the crowd

**INTERACTION DESIGN  
ZURICH UNIVERSITY OF THE ARTS**

**JAN HUGGENBERG**

**BACHELOR THESIS  
6. SEMESTER, 2011**

**MENTORS  
KARMEN FRANINOVIC  
MAX RHEINER**

CONTENTS

**BACKGROUND RESEARCH..... 6**

**RELATED WORK.....6**

**MEDIA SURFACES: INCIDENTAL MEDIA** by berg london [1] .....8

**HAND FROM ABOVE** by Chris O’Shea [2] .....10

**BODY MOVIES** by Rafael Lozano-Hemmer [3] .....11

**BOUNDARY FUNCTIONS** by Scott Snibbe [4] .....12

**TOUCHING STRANGERS** by Richard Renaldi [5] .....13

**COMPARISON .....14**

**AESTHETIC INSPIRATION..... 15**

**THOUGHT OF YOU** by Ryan Woodward [6] .....15

**BETWEEN BEARS** by Eran Hilleli [7] .....16

**30 MOTIONTESTS IN 30 SECONDS** by Steffen Knoesgaard [8] .....17

**REFERENCES ..... 18**

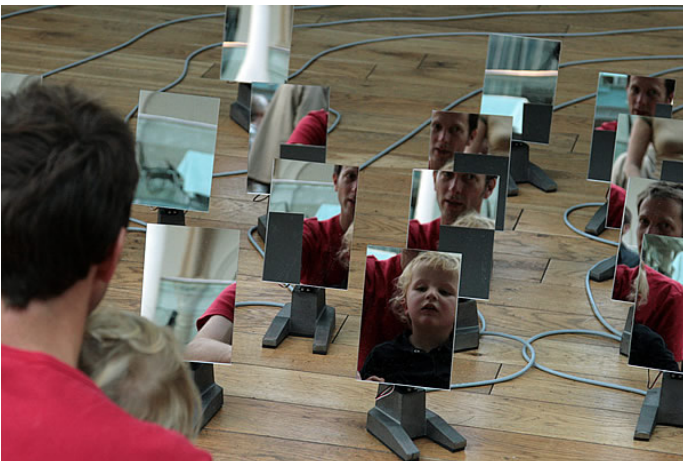
BACKGROUND RESEARCH

RELATED WORK

To get an overview of what has been done in the field of connecting people in public space, I started to look for similar projects. After gathering multiple projects that are somehow related to my topic of loneliness in the crowd I started to compare and analyse them. I grouped, rated and finally selected the most important ones. Most of them just focus on one or two of the aspects I want to cover with my project. But give important inspiration for the further development of my work. All of them are interactive installations in public space or in a museum, only the project named "Touching Strangers" is a photographic approach to the topic of connecting strangers.



"The Meeting Place" brings strangers together



interactive mirror installation



excerpt of the project moodboard



Cloud Gate at Millenium Park, Chicago



urban indoor garden in New York



videoprojection at office building



## MEDIA SURFACES: INCIDENTAL MEDIA by berg london [1]

This idea is part of a clip of different public screen sketches by Berg London. The shop front shows a pair of characters who lurk at the edge of the window frame. As pedestrians pass by, the sprites start to steal colours from their clothes or objects. Cameras observe the scene and feed back the position and colors of the passers-by. Each time a new color is collected the creatures visually add them to their color board.

The installation doesn't demand any interaction of the affected person. In fact I suspect it would succeed far more effectively for those viewing from afar with no agency over the system at all.

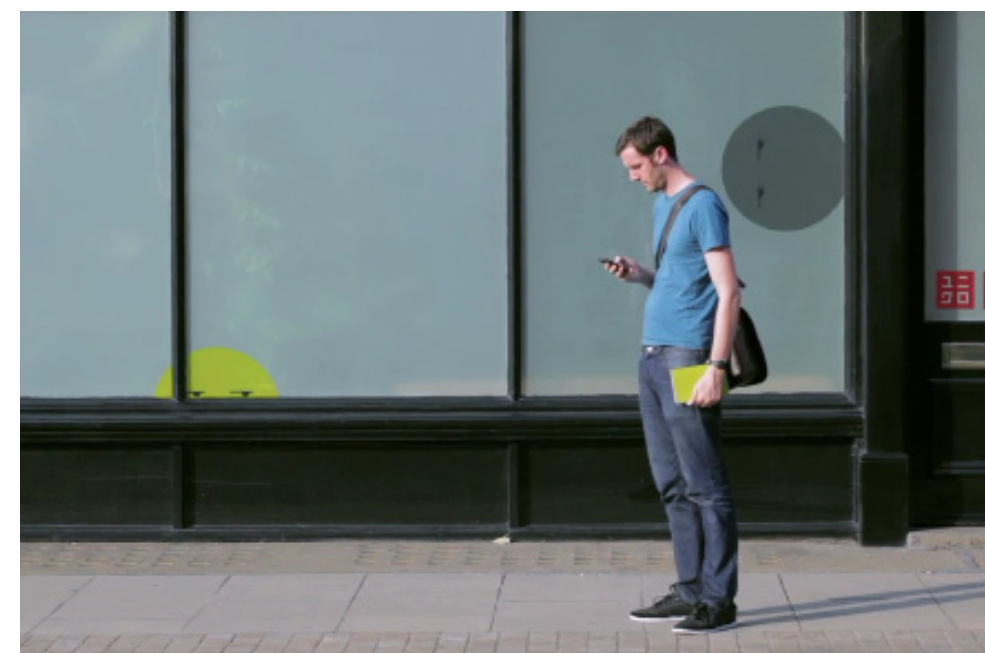
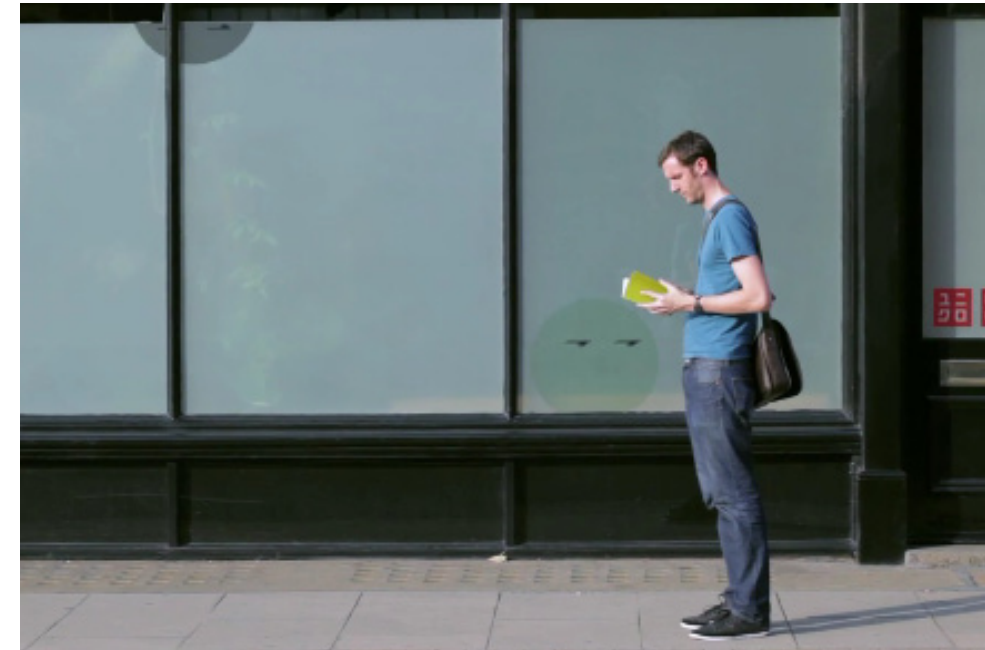
### Relevance and remarks

The idea of transporting colors from the real environment into the virtual space is a very subtle and calm way to start a connection between the two worlds. Or as Berg describes, it doesn't demand a high level of attention of the participant, maybe he doesn't even realize that he is being observed at all. In my project it would be essential that the participant starts to realize he's part of the whole installation, at some point.

Instead of just picking random people, using colors would probably be a very efficient way to connect people that are wearing similar colors. It shows similarities between individuals and gives them a reason to get in contact. The Installation could at some point start to encourage people to start a conversation or just silently cooperate to achieve a certain goal.

I like the metaphor of these suspicious, lurking creatures. They could change their mood or the style of appearance if people give them attention. Their current mental state could be a mirror for their satisfaction about how strangers treat each other.

- + unobtrusive
- + using colors as a way of communication
- + simple and clean aesthetics
- + evolution by showing the collected colors
- no interaction between pedestrians
- there is no point / what is the motivation
- not sure if the affected person realizes



## HAND FROM ABOVE by Chris O'Shea [2]

This project by "Chris O'Shea" encourages the passers-by to question their daily routine when they often find themselves rushing from one place to another. The project was inspired by the story "Land of the Giants and Goliath".

A camera observes the public space and displays the captured image on the public screen for everyone to see. The program randomly selects individuals out of the crowd and animates a giant human hand that tickles, stretches, flicks or removes them entirely in real-time.

### Relevance and remarks

The project breaks our the daily routines in a very successful way. The installation extracts a single person out of the crowd by simply pointing to it. The picked person gets the attention of everyone watching for a short time, he's becoming an important part of the installation. The interaction is just virtual but the reactions of the crowd are real. In fact they are marvelous, everyone seems to like it and a lot of people are not just smiling but really laughing. Some people try to hide from the finger and other are doing everything possible to be the next person selected by it.

The Exhibition seems to take place in an area where people go shopping. So they are not too much in a hurry and it's easier to have their attention for a moment.

- + playful
- + simple idea and metaphor
- + emotional participant and viewer reactions
- ugly presentation
- motivation not clearly visible
- the selected person is chosen randomly



## BODY MOVIES by Rafael Lozano-Hemmer [3]

Body Movies projects clean shadows of the pedestrians onto a wall. Depending on the distance to the powerful light source, measuring between two and twenty-five meters.

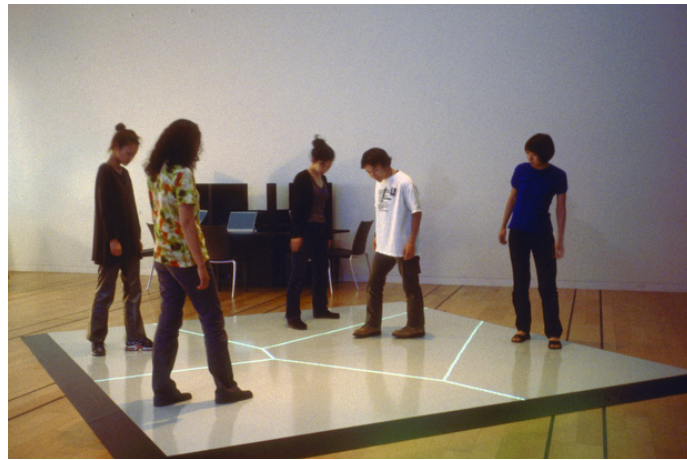
Thousands of photographic portraits, previously taken on the streets of the host city, are projected into the passers-by shadow.

### Relevance and remarks

This playful installation combines real and virtual, past and present, in a very clever way. But in my opinion, it feels like two separate projects put together. I wonder if the people would still have fun with the installation if it was only their own shadows projected to the wall. The possibility of shrinking and growing your own shadow is already a very playful and attracting idea on its own.

- + combining past and present images
- + combination of shadow and virtual projection
- + high level of attraction through the huge projections (attention)
- + interaction between the participants
- + nice presentation
- + every participant can change something for everyone else to see
- the portraits of the people are static images





## BOUNDARY FUNCTIONS by Scott Snibbe [4]

Boundary Functions is a set of lines projected on the floor, dividing people from each other. When there is one person on the floor, there is no response. When two are present, a single line cuts between them bisecting the floor, and dynamically changing as they move. With more than two people, the floor divides into cellular regions, showing each and every one's personal space.

### Relevance and remarks

We think of personal space as something that belongs entirely to ourselves. However, the project shows the participants, that personal space exists only in relation to others and changes without our control.

If it comes to loneliness in the crowd, the personal space of each and every human is an essential topic. People feel disturbed when someone invades their personal space without an obvious reason. So if I want people to connect to each other without feeling disturbed, both parties somehow have to be involved and prepared for the intent of the connection.

- + important social topic
- + simple and nice presentation
- + easy to understand



## TOUCHING STRANGERS by Richard Renaldi [5]

Touching Strangers is an ongoing photographic project. The artist has set a simple rule for all the portraits. He meets two or more people who are strangers to each other and to him. If they agree to pose for a photograph together, with the condition that they must touch each other in some way, he photographs them. He says that sometimes he gives instructions or coaches on how they should touch. But often he just let's the subjects try it out themselves.

### Relevance and remarks

The work of Richard Renaldi is very inspiring to me. Shooting portraits of complete strangers, touching each other is a wonderful approach on connecting people. Touching someone else is a very personal act. It's like the next step after invading someones personal space. The pictures are very emotional, you can easily tell who is feeling comfortable and who isn't. To establish such a close connection, a lot of trust and sympathy between the participants is essential.

- + capturing the moment of breaking somones personal space
- + very emotional images
- no further interaction



COMPARISON

To be able to directly compare the different projects, I set up a list of properties which are essential for my bachelor work to be successfull. The rating is based on my personal opinion and ranges from one to five stars.

	creativity	tangibility	affordance	interactivity	aesthetics
Incidental Media	* * * *	* * * * *	* *	* *	* * * * *
Hand from above	* *	* * * * *	* * *	* * *	*
Body Movies	* * *	* * *	* * * *	* * *	* *
Boundary Functions	* * *	* * *	* * *	* * * *	* * * *
Touching Strangers	* * * *	* *	*	*	* * * * *

**creativity**, how new and creative is the idea. **tangibility**, is the project easy to understand for the participant. **affordance**, does the look of project make people interact with it. **interactivity**, how strong can the person interact with the system. **aesthetics**, how visually appealing is the project.

	connecting	happiness	playful	awareness	evolution
Incidental Media	*	*	* * * *	* * * *	* * * *
Hand from above	* *	* * * *	* * * *	* * *	*
Body Movies	* * * *	* * * *	* * * *	* * *	* * *
Boundary Functions	* * * *	*	* * *	* * * * *	*
Touching Strangers	* * * * *	*	*	* * * * *	*

**connecting**, how strong are people connected through the project. **happiness**, the impact to participants happiness. **playful**, a mixture value of creativity, fun, and motivation. **awareness**, how strong does the project make people aware of the crowd. **evolution**, does the project change over time.

AESTHETIC INSPIRATION

I’m interested in experimenting with different aesthetics during my project. Loneliness is a very personal and emotional topic, therefor the look and feel of the installation has to represent this emotional situation in an appropriate way. The following projects are a selection out of several projects I found to be visually appealing. The content or message of the works aren’t bound to the topic of loneliness at all. It was a coincidence that all selected projects are animations.

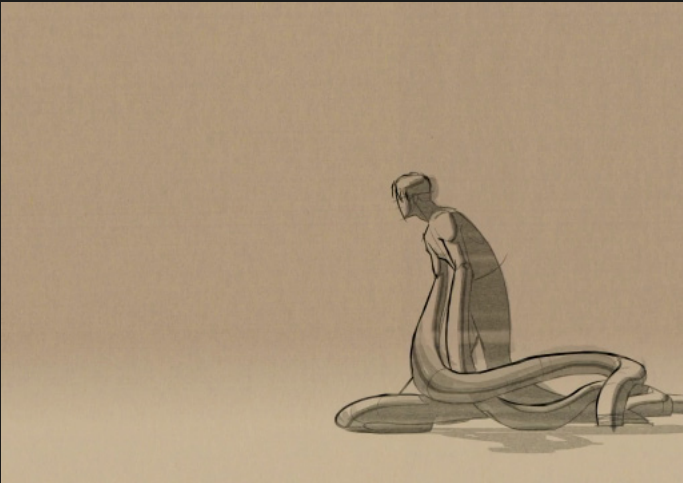
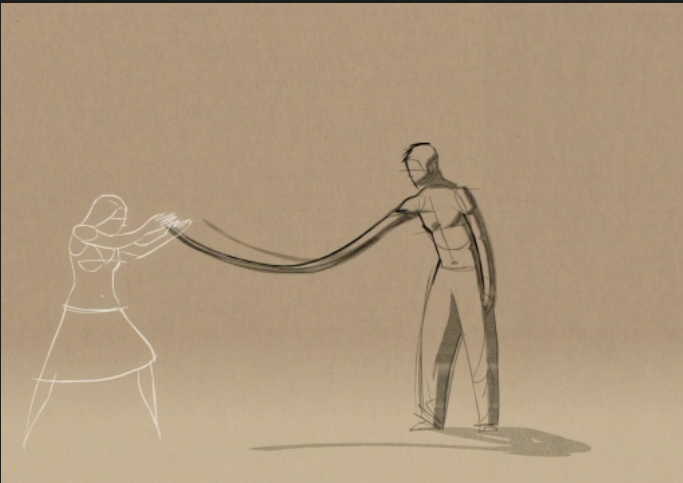
I did not make a direct comparison in the form of a rating table for these projects because I think there is no additional benefit.

THOUGHT OF YOU by Ryan Woodward [6]

Ryan Woodward worked for big animation studios and mainly for commercial venues. This project, an exhibition of figurative works and experimental animation, leaves behind his traditional artistic preferences of the narrative and enters the realm of individual interpretation. He worked together with a choreographer to develop nice and smooth dance movements for the animation.

**Relevance and remarks**  
“Thought of you” is a high-quality and very professional animation. The artist drew 24 frames per second for this animation, this makes the dancing look very natural and smooth. This means a lot of work, but if you look at the result it seems to be worth it. He worked with video material of real dancers he recorded, recomposed multiple shots and freely added artistic, surreal parts. This combination of real and virtual material makes the experience very strong and emotional. The drawing style is very clean, he mostly only uses the outlines and sometimes shadows of the characters.

- + composing real with surreal elements
- + very clean and appealing drawing style
- + emotional presentation
- cheesy music





**BETWEEN BEARS** by Eran Hilleli [7]

This film is the winner of the vimeo’s first film festival in the category “best animation”.

Between Bears is Eran Hilleli's graduation film at Bezalel Academy of Art and Design. He was inspired by words of songs that he admires.

**Relevance and remarks**

The unique abstract vector style of this animation impressed me a lot. The slow moving and calm way of telling a story makes it a delightful experience.

- + abstract figurative animation style
- + storytelling without using words
- weird story



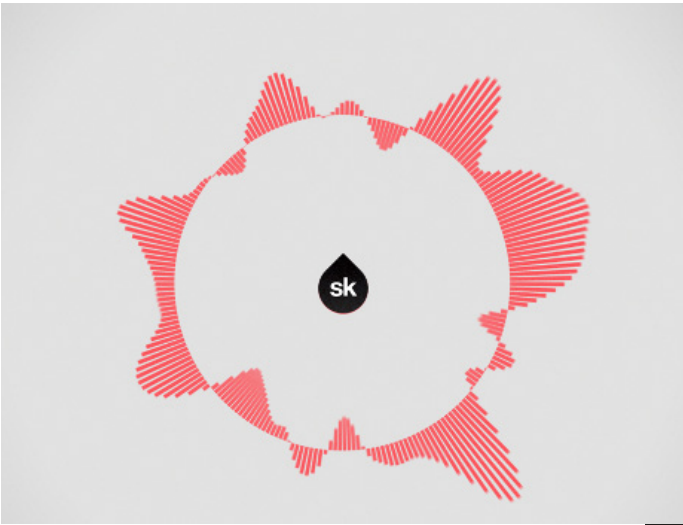
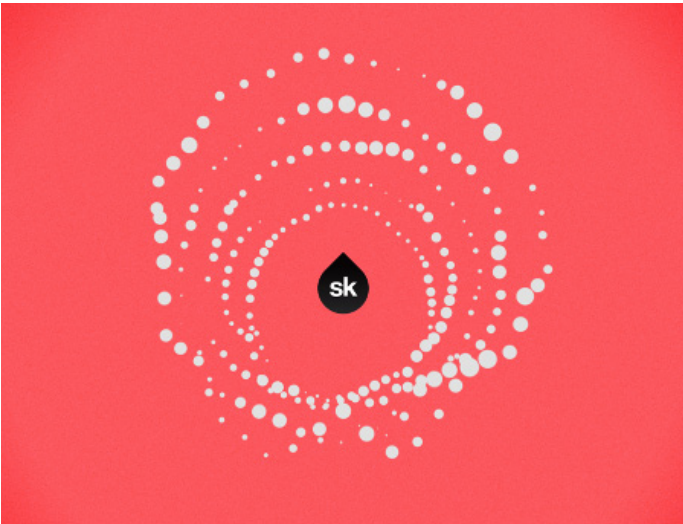
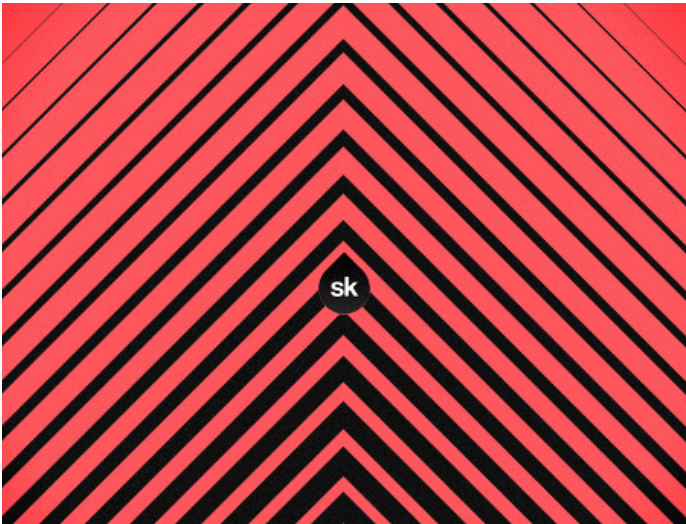
**30 MOTIONTESTS IN 30 SECONDS** by Steffen Knoesgaard [8]

Over a period of 30 days the artist challenged himself to create 1 second animations every day. The idea was to experiment and explore workflow in the software package Cinema 4D and publish the experiments online.

**Relevance and remarks**

These very short animation sequences emerge in a very powerful way. I like the handling of the basic geometrical shapes in combination with the generative movements. In combination with the energetic, electronic music it makes a short but intense experimental film.

- + basic geometrical shapes
- + energetic music that supports the animation



## REFERENCES

1. **Media Surface: Incidental Media, Dentsu London, November 2010**  
<http://berglondon.com/blog/2010/11/03/media-surfaces-incidental-media/>
2. **Hand from Above, Chris O'Shea, 2009**  
<http://www.chrisoshea.org/hand-from-above>
3. **Body Movies, Rafael Lozano-Hemmer, Relational Architecture 6, 2001**  
[http://www.lozano-hemmer.com/body\\_movies.php](http://www.lozano-hemmer.com/body_movies.php)
4. **Boundary Functions, Scott Snibbe, 1998**  
<http://www.snibbe.com/projects/interactive/boundaryfunctions/>
5. **Touching Strangers, Richard Renaldi, 2010**  
<http://www.renaldi.com/photographs/touching/index.html>
6. **Thought of You, Ryan Woodward, 2010**  
<http://conteanimated.com/the-animation-2/thought-of-you/>
7. **Between Bears, Eran Hilleli, 2010**  
<http://eranhilleli.com/>
8. **30 Motiontests in 30 seconds, Steffen Knoesgaard, December 2010**  
<http://work.steffenk.net/#827376/30-Motion-Tests-in-30-Seconds>