

Re: Southern Way McClelland Commission - Proposed Work

Title CYCLOPES or THE REALITY OF AN INSTANT

Collaborative art-science project researching the *meaning of perception* by using sensor technology and public screens embedded in bullet proof glass sculptures positioned within a typical urban traffic context

Description of the Proposed Work

Huge single eyes high on six transparent pillars will follow with their gazes random selected cars when driving by. The eyes are displayed on LED screens. With the support of traffic cameras and sensor technology, the eyes react individually on particular vehicles. The pillars are of various heights and are grouped like a gathering of giant people. They display the technical installation as part of the art work, thus showing how perception acquires meaning by exposing an apparatus of cognition. Furthermore CYCLOPES juxtaposes technology and human eyes, thus questioning the kind of reality emerging from human-machine alliances.

Artist Dr Elisabeth Weissensteiner

Developer of public art-science projects in Australia, Germany, and in Austria (see CV, and Recent Work).
For more insight in her theoretic background see attached preview of her upcoming publication.

Collaborating Partner

A/Prof Dr Stephan Winter (Spatial Information Science), Department of Infrastructure Engineering, The University of Melbourne.
Former project partner of Elisabeth Weissensteiner in the development and execution of the experiments of LOOK AT ME (see Recent Work).

Planning and Building

Jeph Neale, Jackman & Neale.

Former Construction Manager for several large art projects (among others, for Elisabeth Weissensteiner, for Robert Owen, and for Vicki Couzens and others, Common Ground Project at Birrarung Marr).

Size Various heights from 4.50m to 6m

Material Safety Glass or Anti Cyclone Glass by Prisma Glass, www.prismaglass.com.au, stainless steel scaffolding, LED screens, traffic cameras, motion sensors, moving images.

Suggested Location

Site A according to the Southern Way Commission Appendix

Explanation of the Proposed Work

The six Cyclopes are mythical creatures, giant, ancient and endowed with only one eye in the middle of their foreheads. According to the ancient Greek writer Hesiod they were siblings of Zeus and supplied the weapons which made Zeus invincible. Thus they can be seen as the first militia supporting a power shift, as Zeus ultimately overthrew his father Kronos to establish his own reign.

In our current society surveillance in its many forms is the basis of establishing, what reality is and what its power structures are. What cameras record is processed by data mining methods and then declared as reality, justifying opinions and political measures.

From a cognitive science point of view, reality is the outcome of the individual brain's work processing data of perception. Thus reality is not based on objective facts but on the production of meaning. Human observation is never continuous. Technological observation can be continuous, however, to make sense of all the data a selection as to be made, too. Therefore, what we see as reality is always based on instants, on snippets of individual observation, later assembled by someone in a story.

Our contemporary society employs its own Cyclopes. Erratically they emerge; they watch and record obediently. What kind of reality compilation are they supporting? What are the human brains behind these Cyclopes with their technology-brains? How do human brain and artificial brain interact? What kind of reality will be assembled under these conditions?

Thus the six CYCLOPES at the Southern Way touch on many issues:

- They literally lay open that reality is cognitively constructed from perception, by showing their "brain wiring".
- They let passers feel how ephemeral, yet intrusive, observation is for the observed, by following them with their gaze.
- They make power structures experiential through random interaction.
- They challenge the interaction of human brain and technological reasoning, by combining visible technology and moving human eyes.
- They make fun of our naïve faith in technology, by exposing surveillance technology.