

But Secretly We Thirst

Conceptual Backbone:

But Secretly We Thirst is an interactive installation using various types of media and their synthesis. The name comes from a poem by Herman Hesse, published as part of novel, *The Glass Bead Game: Magister Ludi*, a work for which Hesse received the Noble Prize.

The installation explores a phenomenon of human nature: need for sympathetic pain. When people suffer they ultimately want comradeship. They need to know that there are not alone. Once they affirm this, they instantly feel better. The degree of personal suffering is directly proportionate to measure of solitude.

Graceful as dancer's arabesque and bow,
Our lives appear serene and without stress,
A gentle dance around pure nothingness
To which we sacrifice the here and now.

Our dreams are lovely and our game is bright,
So finely tuned, with many artful turns,
But deep beneath the tranquil surface burns
Longing for blood, barbarity, and night.

Freely our life revolves, and every breath
Is free as air; we live so playfully,
But secretly we crave reality:
Begetting, birth, and suffering, and death.

Herman Hesse
The Glass Bead Game: Magister Ludi

Physical Design:

A small cube stands in the middle of a room. Measuring 30x30x30 cm. The panels are made of semi-transparent Plexi-Glass (25mm) with the bottom plane made of a one-way mirror. The top panel has a 15cm magnifying glass built in the center of the plane, allowing for a look inside, the only peephole to the installation.

The cube is mounted on top of a pedestal, made of white non-transparent plastic (30x30x100cm). Inside the pedestal there is the hardware components of the installation.

Inside the cube there is a living white mouse inhabiting the space.

Hardware Components:

The top cube has four (4) low intensity fluorescent lights, placed around the perimeter of the bottom plane and directed towards the center.

Also, in the sides of the cube four (4) directional speakers are built-in and facing inward.

Inside the pedestal, one (1) DV camera is positioned looking upward through the one-way mirror. It is connected to a PowerBook G4 Laptop running MAX/MSP software.

Also, inside the cube there is one (1) high-intensity camera flash that is in the stand-by position.

Interaction Design:

When the spectator comes to the installation it is in the stand-by mode:

- Fluorescent lights on
- Sound off
- Flash off
- One mouse inside

As soon as the viewer leans over the top plane to look through the magnifying glass the installation gets activated. The result is as such:

The camera positioned in the pedestal has two functions:

1. A photographic camera
2. A motion tracking device

As the viewer looks through the camera simultaneously takes a photograph and activates the sound/light of the installation. The result is as such: the flash goes off at pre-set intervals as long as the camera detects a shadow of the face above. The sound goes on which is extremely high-pitched noise sound-scape.

The mouse will therefore be jolted into panic both by light and sound. The camera will take a snap shot of the viewer in a warped, fish eye effect, observing the animal inside.

As soon as the viewer disappears from the magnifying glass the system goes into stand by mode again.

All snap shots will be stored by the main server and streamed over hosted server and projected in the remote location (preferably open public space such as square or meat market).