REMIXX.sur.RE

A youth new media project about the people and places of Surrey

surrey art gallery
surrey arts centre

REMIXX.sur.RE is the most inclusive and innovative youth new media exhibition yet attempted in Canada.

It is an artwork of artworks, using images, sound, interaction and software. Its database contains 700 digital photos, 30 digital video and animation clips, text in five languages, six customized songs and 260 audio clips – all created by Surrey youth. The custom-built software engine driving the exhibition, was designed to produce hundreds of thousands of sound and image compositions from this database. These "remixes" are interactive. They are generated live, on the fly, activated by the movement of visitors. In effect, REMIXX.sur.RE personalizes every visitor's visual and audio experience.

The exhibition is an extraordinary expression of diverse youth visions of the people and places of Surrey. It is an example of youth's sophisticated engagement with computers, and demonstrates digital art's capacity to reveal a new reality created by technology.

REMIXX includes digital content created by 96 youth from all of Surrey's communities. The exhibition production team (two youth digital art interns, a project coordinator, a collective of volunteer "documentary correspondents," and five mentoring artists skilled in media arts and technology) configured not only the presentation of the exhibition, but also its system of operation. The project was built during summer 2005, in the Gallery's TechLab. This space, purposed as the youth's digital media studio, became a hub of training, conversations, computers, conversation, emails, animating and coding (and some drawing and painting on the walls).

The version of REMIXX on view now, is the pilot project of a screen-based exhibit venue being developed by the Surrey Art Gallery. This gallery will support ongoing exhibitions of digital art by youth, for youth audiences.

About the screens, the sound and the drawing:
The two large flat screen monitors present on-the-fly remixing of video, animation and still photos. Another screen presents selected animations created by the youth team, originally built by modifying the original still images, or combining two videos. One of the small monitors show the title of the exhibition animated to demonstrate the concept of remix. On another is an animation of the names of all the contributors, constantly remixing so their order continually changes. On yet another monitor is video from a ceiling mounted web camera that captures the presence of visitors. Visitor's movements stimulate the speed and content of what they hear and see. The more you move, the faster it changes.

The REMIXX project uses localized FM broadcast technology to transmit its audio, in addition to the sound coming from the monitors. You can listen to REMIXX using wireless headphones available at the reception desk, or tune in your own receiver to hear the digital beats, songs and recordings of Surrey sounds, created and composed, mixed and remixed by youth.

The drawing on the glass behind the screens is a map of the database. All the images, videos, text etc. are coded based on these words. As the remix engine is activated, it searches through this inventory of content and creates the layers and mixes you hear and see, then moves on to a new grouping. The drawing recalls the look of the form of visual software coding used to build the exhibit: Pure Data.

Why does the exhibition use technology?
Mentoring artist, Henry Tsang says, *"We decided from the beginning that this was not going to be (another) slide show portrait of Surrey. After all, how could a predefined series of images with accompanying music represent an area with such a complex, rich and sometimes contradictory set of histories? And importantly, how would youth be reflected with their multiplicity of perspectives and experiences? As we worked on this "how," we realized that the original approach of using photographs submitted by Surrey school students needed to be augmented with more images as well as sound recordings, video, text and original music compositions, all made by local youth, of course. So we gathered more. Then we worked on how new meaning can be evoked through the combination and recombination and altering and shifting and overlaying of what we gathered. That was where the fancy computer programming kicked in. The REMIXX machine picks out, mixes up, blends, layers and serves on a high tech platter the tastes and textures of Surrey that are constantly evolving and changing. Just like this area and its people."*

What does REMIXX say about Surrey?
Fiona Lemon, coordinator of the REMIXX project says, *"The collaborative process fundamentally shaped the project's meaning and significance. The team was challenged to give expression to the enormous diversity of visions that emerged from the photographs, video and audio art-works. Youth explored concepts as diverse as family, respect and community; difference, rebellion and disconnection; culture, pop culture and modernity; and urbanization, nature, and sense of place. Instead of trying to define how youth perceive their community, REMIXX brings together ways of seeing and understanding Surrey. Different visions layer and*

recombine in order to create new meaning about Surrey's people and places. Surrey's youth are constantly seeking new ways to connect with and challenge the society in which they live. Youth involved with the project talked about the exciting potential of using technology to create a vision that would be different from what they saw as traditional representations of Surrey. Through REMIXX youth confirm they are up to the challenge of finding new ways to share their many perspectives and experiences."

How does REMIXX work?

Flash programmer, Jer Thorp explains the coding: *"For the Remixx project, we needed a lightweight program that could do two things: receive data from the cameras and from the sound analysis, and translate that data into compositions of text, photos, audio, video and animation. We created this program the Remixx Client, from the ground up, using Macromedia Flash. The result is an adaptive, XML driven media mixer. Using a custom XML schema, the Remixx team created a map of tags words or phrases that can be used to describe an image, a video, or a piece of text. For instance, an image of a streetlight might be tagged 'red', 'stop', and 'traffic'. The Remixx Client uses the links between these tags to create the compositions that you see exploring relationships between the media that can be both intentional and unintentional. The project uses 150 tags, 500 links, 700 images, 30 video clips along with text and audio clips to make an almost endless number of fascinating media compositions. Remixx, indeed."*

The project used open source software during project development to save costs. The programs include Pure Data for all audio processing and motion sensing, Audacity for audio editing, Filezilla for FTP Server and Client, Firefox for web browsing, Tight VNC for remote system administration and Open Office for documentation. Leonard Paul, who developed the overall technical architecture of the project, says this about the sound: *"It creates real time audio remix using three audio loop intensities which adapt to image and motion sensing input. There are 3 variations for each music loop, each containing multiple songs. The software has an automatic BPM (beats per minute) detection, beat detection and remixes the six adaptive music songs in real time with speech samples in synchronization over the music.* He goes on to say this about how the sensors work: *"The project uses real time motion detection with blob/centroid motion detection from multiple USB camera inputs. The detection system provides X, Y coordinates and size of motion to the clients. The motion sensing has sensitivity tuning to compensate for noise in the video signal to make the motion detection more accurate. The communication with Flash and Pure Data is a simple bi-directional XML message sent over TCPP/IP. The design is flexible in that up to 256 clients can run from the motion sensing server on separate machines for computational load distribution."*

REMIXX.sur.RE Exhibition production team:
David Chen, Youth artist in residence
Fiona Lemon, Project coordinator
Henry Tsang, Mentoring Artist
Jer Thorp, Mentoring Artist
Leonard Paul Mentoring Artist
M. Simon Levin, Mentoring Artist
Maimoona Ahmed, Mentoring Artist
Sylvia Grace Borda, Mentoring Artist

Digital Photography, Video and Animation Artists:
Adam Lee, Aman Nauhria, Amanda Davies, Amar Shikarpuri, Amrit Bhandal, Ana Asunio, Angini Sami, Audrey Castro, Baljinder Gill, Banisha Sull, Bonnie (Se Hyun) Kim, Brad Binkley, Brandon Bhajan, Cameron Gibson, Cesar Medina, Chelsea Meinkina, Connie Chen, Curtis Straker, Danaka Upham, Dave Singh, David Chen, Diana Huynh, Edric Dang, Emily Lampson, Fiona Lemon, Francisco Esperanza, Geeta Dayal, Gurveena Moor, Hardeep Gosal, Harinder Dhothar, Harleen Gill, Harman Badyal, Harmeet Lehal, Ijaz Housil, Inder Nirwan, Jannelle Rillorta, Jaquiline Zwiegers, Jasmin Mahee, Jazzmine Martinez, Jennifer Andrews, Jennifer Tjahjadi, Jeremy Rillorta, Joseph Kim, Joseph McKenzie, Josh Antillon, Karan Bains, Karen Singh, Kayla Ptolemy, Kaytie Kilgour, Kaytie Kilgour, Kelley Schultz, Kelsey Corbett, Khun Khun, Larissa Sidal, Leah Robinson, Leanne Lim, Lindsay Hunt, Lisa Vanthof , Luvdeep Mandaher, Maimoona Ahmed, Maninder Singh , Manleen Randhawa, Mary Ayoub, Maryam Ateffi, Michael Gudewill, Michael Tomboc, Miriam Severson, Natasha Maurer, Neil Hogan, Nicole Williams , Paige Dunn, Parminder Kailay, Paul Samara, Paul Wittal, Peter Panagiotou, Preet Grewal, Priti Grewal, Quinn Spicker, Rachele Ram, Rajbir Minhas, Rebecca Mumford, Richard Chohan, Sara Caissie, Sarah Jastrzebski, Shantel Hightower, Shaun Quail, Silvana Avignoni, Sonam Sekhon, Sukhdeep Sahota, Taryn Sudul, Tori Lockwood, Viknesh Hajirakar, Wassan Aujla, Zach Sapers, Zafirah,

REMIXX audio features original compositions with adaptive capacities by Inder Nirwan. Sound recording and editing by Mary Ayoub, Leonard Paul, M. Simon Levin and Emily Lampson. Youth Photo and Video correspondents and volunteers include: Mary Ayoub, Cesar Medina, Emily Lampson, Inder Nirwan, and Paul Wittal.

This project was initiated and produced by Liane Davison, Curator of Exhibitions and Collections at the Surrey Art Gallery

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