James Auger & James Loizeau
Interstitial Space Helmet

1 – Brief description of the project.
The hyper reality of the pixelated image and electronic speech is increasingly the means through which we present ourselves to the world through the use of web cams and telephones.

The proposed Interstitial Space Helmet sets up an experiment to explore the use of digital and electronic technology for local and closed network introspection and communication in an isolated environment.

The project will explore digital existentialism, narcissism, therapy and meditation by creating what is effectively a digital mirror or window for meeting or presenting the self in a digitised form.

Projected results expect that the space will provide a disconcerting and confrontational experience. Part of the experiment will include recordings and these will be presented as part of the project. The digital manipulation of individual users may also be recorded for a comparison of the physical and the perhaps more desired digital projection.

2 – How does your proposal go 'beyond convergence'?
The ISH explores a convergence between real and virtual space through the creation of a forced perception environment.
The ISH provides a portal into hyper reality through dislocation and digitally filtered relocation. The project explores the concept of convergence through the reversal of the protocol of a normally externalising or extrovert media. By using technology for introverted and limited communication the ISH aims to raise questions regarding the convergence of and virtual and physical space.

3 – How have you addressed the key relationship of public and private spaces?
The ISH project provides the possibility for privacy and solitude in any public environment acting as a portable haven in the urban landscape.

4 – Is your proposal a critique of the technologies of convergence, if so in what way?
The proposal speculates on the effects of increasing immersion into a technologically mediated, information culture. The project is not damming of technology, however it attempts to scrutinise the notion of technological convergence and comment on what may be sometimes considered as its banal application.

5 – How does your proposal relate to society and community?
The proposal explores the perception of virtuality by experimenting with virtual detachment. The device provides a mobile, virtual/physical space, which allows detachment in any physical environment. The project raises questions regarding virtual and physical connection exemplifying them through a confusion of the physical and virtual world.

The project explores the notion of virtual relations and how digital projections of ourselves may be altered. It explores the notion of the virtual as fiction.

6 – What audience or public does the proposal address?
The ISH was initially conceived as an urban shelter whereby information weary urbanites could retreat from the bombardment of communication. In this space, which provides complete solitude the wearer is confronted with the electronic self. It is in this solitary environment that the wearer can begin a narcissistic conversation with the digital representation. The device provides a venue whereby the digital reflection may be manipulated to suit the wearers preferred projection in this local virtual space. This is achieved through the manipulation of internal light sources in addition to contrast, colour, resolution etc.

This concept of the private, virtual meeting can then externalised in a limited manner, through a

hard-wired connection between two users. The manipulation of the digital self is still available and is how the other wearer will be perceived. Here the ISH provides a distraction free zone where the senses of communication are heightened by the removal of peripheral perception. The ISH sets out to confuse the concept of physical and virtual space by placing them together.

The device will be trailed in both public and private situations in order to accumulate information on its effects on users. Is it meditative or does it disconcert, will anxiety dissipate if it is used in a relaxed environment over a prolonged period?

The proposal requires experiential interaction and would be suited to a gallery environment. As a product it is intended to be of interest to the communications and other interactive industries.

7a. - Please indicate which of the issues, listed in the brief, your proposal responds to
To engage critically with the social impact of technologies on society.
and,
7b - how it addresses them.
By offering a solution to those who wish to escape the hubbub of the digital information terrain, the project explores the impact of omnipresence of communication devices on a technologically mediated society.
It offers a solitary space, a place to meet with the self and to explore electronic vanity. It also enables a closed network conversation where the enhanced fictional self may converse in a focussed manner with another user.
The project is not intended to provide a solution to the social impact of technology, but to question it through a proposal that promotes a debate on those technologies and their roles in the networked society.

Narrative potential will develop after the realisation of the project. How will the wearer react to a meeting with the digital self?
What type of behaviour the device will instigate?
What kind of user will enjoy the ISH?
How will people react in a space that permits virtual vanity?
Could the ISH provide an intermediary space for people who have become over dependent on the use of electronic communication?