

## PROBOSCIS: Private Reveries, Public Spaces – Responses to the Brief

### Julie Freeman Untitled

#### 1 – *Brief description of the project.*

The work has two elements, an interactive installation and a website. The installation consists of a cube approximately 20 meters square that viewers enter via a light-trap doorway. The floor comprises a giant touch screen – the user interacts as soon as they stand on or touch the floor. The walls and the ceiling are mirrored to reflect the animation and the participants in the room, creating an infinity box effect to invoke a feeling of endless connectivity possibilities.

In the installation, a user becomes a node joining a live peer-to-peer network as they enter the space. The user is tracked by a sensor system that converts the user's locality into data that represents a new peer joining an existing on-line network.

In the on-line version, connecting to the specific network and sending or receiving data is the only interaction required to generate activity within the community representation that is displayed. On-line users will not see the users in the installation space.

#### 2 – *How does your proposal go 'beyond convergence'?*

The work will seek to highlight the issue that technology is not just about being connected – it looks beyond hardware and physical infrastructure. It identifies that the infrastructure on which on-line communities rely is imperative, and has potential to be used more effectively by everyday users and developers.

The piece will also expand users' perceptions of their current technologies and ask them to consider the bigger picture.

#### 3 – *How have you addressed the key relationship of public and private spaces?*

The installation will aim to question users' perceptions of 'private' communications and expose the enormity and flexibility of computer networks. By expanding perceptions of what being connected via a certain type of network means, we can begin to question other networks and the way we use them. The outcome being a more effective way of transforming privately held information into public problem solving.

#### 4 – *Is your proposal a critique of the technologies of convergence, if so in what way.*

There is an increasing need to disperse, as well as gather, information via the digital communities. The world wide web is excellent as a repository for data to be gathered from, whereas the network topology known as peer-to-peer places equal emphasis on data sharing as well as gathering. Dispersal is important not only for maintenance within an existing range and the extension of that range, but also for the effective spread throughout the community of advantageous new ideas and information. The piece will encourage the user to think beyond convergence and to consider the notion of empowerment and capability within this dispersal system.

#### 5 – *How does your proposal relate to society and community?*

The concept is to look at the glue, the in-between stuff, that brings individuals together to form a community, and allows that community to share and retrieve data. The piece will aim to reveal patterns and behaviours that emerge from fluctuating usage of peer-to-peer networks. It may be possible to ascertain whether peer-to-peer networks become better (in the sense that data accessibility increases) and stronger (able to work more efficiently) the more users that are connected – that subscribe to being part of a whole. The proposed work will also attempt to educate the user by exposing the full complexities of the community joined when a user becomes on-line within a peer-to-peer network. Additionally, it will provide a window for watching the (usually invisible) process of the participant joining a digital community, therefore depicting the full resource that is available to that participant.

#### 6 – *What audience or public does the proposal address?*

All people that are interested in knowledge sharing, dispersal and retrieval.

*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  
to engage with the relationship between the physical and the virtual in public spaces  
to address how technologies are changing social interrelations in public spaces  
to explore how technology changes our concept of community

*and*

*7b. how it addresses them.*

The piece addresses these issues by exploring the relationship between individuals and communities. It suggests that, beyond the convergence of users', peer-2-peer networks empower members of their communities to disperse information and re-contribute to the wider community. By questioning this dually public/private role, users' perceptions of virtual communities and their social impact are expanded to reflect the true complexity of their interactions. The actual embodiment of this exercise within both an installation and online community reconnects the user to real space, reinforcing the importance of their individual influence on social and communal change.