cultural morphing

The Institute of Digital Art Vienna is planning a special project for April/May 2011. Our project called *cultural morphing* is about mapping and exploring the land route between Vienna and Shanghai. Nicolaj Kirisits and Klaus Filip, professors at the University of Applied Arts Vienna, will be the project managers.
A total of 12 artists will travel by train from Vienna to Shanghai, making several stops at some of the main cities en route. Each student will meticulously work out an artistic project, outlining various aspects of cultural transition experienced on the journey.

China as focus and destination for our project emerged because of the mutual, cooperative and oppositional state of digital art in China and Europe.
Europe and China are two antipodes in cultural history that have been in steady interchange but also developed differently and independent.
This cultural deviation is the starting point and inherent potential of our project.
Adequate to the technology of morphing, the realization of the individual artworks will be a consumption of the artistic interpretations of many keyframes on the track between vienna and shanghai.
Discrete material respectively individual data will be gathered by various technologies or distinct personal approaches. The diversity of about 12 different artistic treatments should lead to manifold results on the collective subject and to exciting presentations.

Here are some short excerpts of projects planned:

The Hairdo
an experimental short film by Viktoria Wöss

I am shooting a barber film. At each stop of the trans siberian railway to which we punch I visit a hairdresser and let me dress a traditional hairdo. Without understanding the local language I try to explain my request.
The video is filmed by myself using the available mirrors of the different locations and is mixed together in a barbershop story.
The project interests me in terms of the very often ridiculously random use of much cheaper supply of services in non European countries and to visualize a probably different understanding of beauty, taste and tradition.

running shadows
Heidi Trimmel

Following the assumption,that we will move along various cultural gradients on our way to Shanghai an examination scheme was defined to record these gradients with the help of various parameters twice a day at a precisely fixed hour.

1, Short videoclips, who show the same detail of the window, will be collected and assembled chronologically. They will show the varying artificial and natural landscape along the route.

2, „Ornamental Morphing" Ornaments and patterns on items used in daily life (Seat cover, curtains, table cloth, floor cover, dishes) will be photographed and overlay the videos. The assumption behind is that there will be a blurred transition from the „european" to the „asian" culture and that there is a relationship between the algorithmic genesis of ornaments and the prevailing mainstream culture.

3, On these pictures of the outer world text inserts will be installed. Each examination step the first heard, read and thought word of the artist will be noted. The first read word reflects the advertisements, official advices, newspaper headlines, commercial logos on products, which surround us constantly and thereby influence us conscious and unconsciously.

4, Finally questions will be asked in the train:
First the topic of the „Morphing tea culture" will be investigated. The assumption is: leaving the coffee drinking cultures slowly we will pass the alternatively black tea drinkers towards the exclusively black tea drinkers and via the butter tea drinkers to the oolong- and green tea drinkers.

Further on the assumption of the „Morphing Optimisms" along the question:„What is the weather like tomorrow?". The focus lies not on whether the weather will be sunny or cold but rather on how people formulate their expectations for the following day.

Finally the question who was the last nobel peace prize winner will be asked to explore the extent of public media censorship and personal media knowledge.

The result is a video, whose basic elements are short video clips who show the upper and lower right part of a train window or the field of view of the artist. Sound samples and interview elements, text inserts of official advices and headlines as well as the overlaying of daily life ornament will grow together to a moving image with superficially appears arbitrary but is densely filled with content.

rock, paper, scissors
JOA Knierzinger

On the journey - from Vienna to Shanghai - every person I encounter will be challenged to one round of rock, paper, scissors. In doing so the scissor, the rock and the paper embody the tool for understanding, observation and for a narrative which function is independent from locally spoken language - from west to east. At the exhibition of the project the recorded and documented outcomes of the "game" will be reconstructed by mechanic hands as a direct reference to the journey.

The project "Schere, Stein, Papier" raises questions whether locality and mindset make a different understanding of strategy and if the artist himself would change or develop a strategy to make the outcomes and experience of the project go in expected or unexpected direction – which perhaps could become the actual insight of the project?

Data Substratum
Confrontation of digital Plenty and analogous Few
Michael Johannes Muik

This is not a science project but an artistic project. I am collecting data, data of my direct neighborhood. With the usage of scientific and technical methods I am able to generate a tremendous number of digital data.

Therefore various sensors are mounted on a special spectacles that I am wearing. Temperature, air pressure, location, light intensity, acceleration, distance and speed could be measured and stored as digital data. Therefore I want to behave like an scientist!

The artistic goal is, to overcome the big distance between Austria and China, the speed of the train, the time and as well as the social and demographic differences and to transform it to a smaller, much more meaningful, scale. But would that be possible using this huge amount of digital data? Could those potential information translated into a realistic set up or would it just end up in making the absurdity of the recorded data visible?

That's why I want to compare the method of the digital data collection with an analogical method where data are immediately reduced during collection. Therefore I am using hammer and sickle as an connective element of the entirely project. In Austria, hammer and sickle are still part of the official emblem, in the former Soviet Union they were part of it till its collapse in 1991 and in China hammer and sickle are part of the communist party flag.

Perhaps, hammer and sickle are more suitable to collect data? I want to behave myself as an artist!

Interactive, granular AV installation and performative tool.
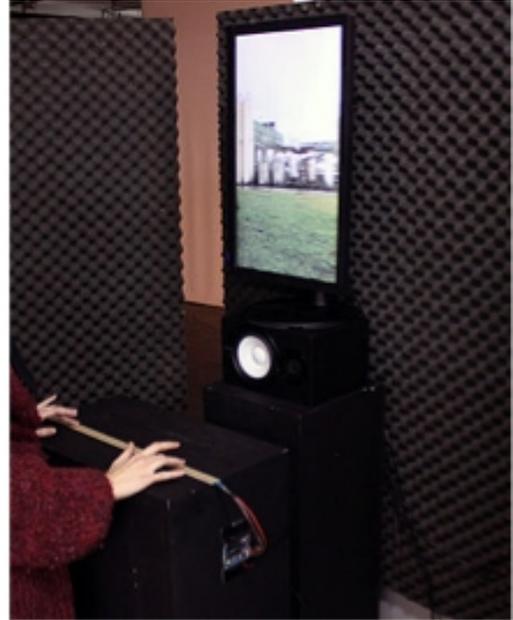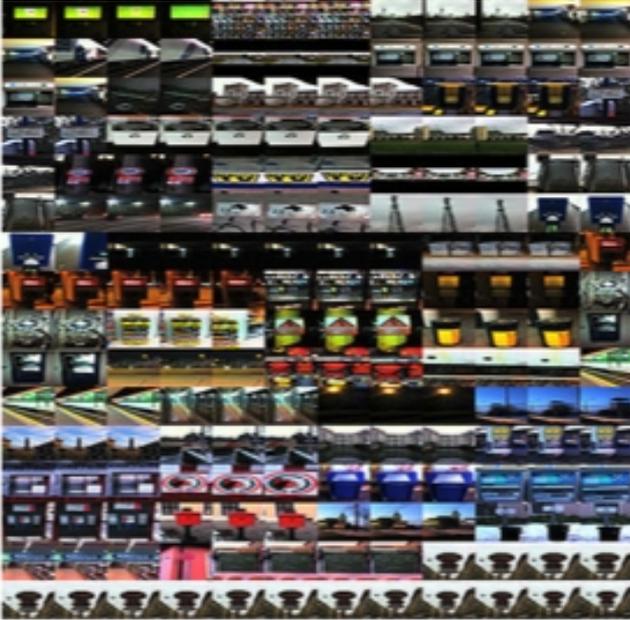
In Thai, the phrase „same, same, but different" is used to express and describe similarities. This piece of work concentrates on these similarities and focuses on the diminutive differences. The raw material for this installation consists of multiple audio- and videorecordings of different every day objects, public places and events. A strict manual of conduct dictates how to create the recordings. The position of the recording is e.g. 4m and 45° in front of a public telephone booth, 50m vis-à-vis a public building etc. The material extends from Vienna to Shanghai and will be put together to a short AV sample which can be modulated through interaction with a sensor. This makes navigation through the space-time of the travel possible. The used loops are 40-100ms long. Our normal perception is extended by the display of the material on a microscopic scale. This allows the user to compare various fragments of the journey intuitively. The data will be collected during the three week lasting journey through Austria, Czech Republic, Poland, White Russia, Russia, Mongolia and China.
iPhone4 (720x1280), display or projector (panel format), MAX/MSP/JITTER-Patch, Sensor(Hotpot 50cm), speaker Distance: 9000 km = 50cm ribbon controller = Distance Vienna-Shanghai