AUREOLE

1. Description of the project's concepts and ideas

"Aureole" is the working title of an interactive art, science and technology project, which aims to present a subjective and "poetic" interpretation of the Aurora Borealis otherwise known as the Northern Lights. While there are numerous photo and time based artworks already dedicated to this theme, the technological innovation of this project involves research, development and presentation of a "smart" luminescent textile with integrated proximity sensors and light fibers that will evoke an "*Aurora* effect" using atypical materials and methods. A primary aim of the *Aureole* project is to develop a scientifically based, yet audience friendly installation using novel materials. *Aureole* is developed as a real – time audio-visual installation, animated by its visitors in a specific "shamanistic" way. The installation consists of an enclosed space, where mirrored walls surround a centrally located rotating cylinder-like column covered by smart textile. When entering the installation space, nothing is visible in the dimmed light; the spectacle of the moving lights on the cylinder is initiated only through the physical movement of the viewer/visitor. The lights become visible first on the surface of the smart textile and then they are reflected on the mirrored walls. This effect is achieved by using proximity sensors discerning the visitors' movements.

2. Conceptual and design aspects of the installation

The design of the *Aureole* refers to the transposition of a natural phenomenon of huge dimensions into a limited gallery space. In real life the Aurora is outside the scope of human control - the lights in the sky have their own "life", speed, flow and intensity and they almost never stand still. Designing an interactive environment, where the viewer is affecting the outcome of the visual appearance of the lights seeks to invert this main characteristic.

The participating artists in this collaboration are researching the use of a "smart" luminescent textile that is able to produce the effect of movement. Since such materials are difficult to construct and also expensive, it is essential to work on achieving this effect in a visually intriguing and cost effective manner. The shape of the smart textile centre is symbolizing the infinity of the sky. The color and the flow of the lights are based on scientific source materials. Proximity sensors affecting the color and flow of lights,- the entire audio-visual environment created for this installation,- track each visitor's movement around the cylinder. The cylinder itself is installed on a "turntable-like" rotating device, introducing a speed factor, evoking the moving lights of the Aurora Borealis. As an additional option, an initial letter matching each color of the lights "draws" on a random selection of words from a dictionary corresponding to the movements of the visitors as they pass by, thus creating a "language", or synaesthetic code. These words pass through a cinematic screen located outside the exhibition space of the installation.

3. Aims and objectives of the installation

- Use the scientific and cultural background of the Aurora Borealis for an artistic purpose
- Integration of a "smart textile" for the purpose of creating an art installation

- Transform the physical space of the installation into a networked environment
- Explore the relationship between the movement of the visitors within physical space and its transformation into a networked spatial metaphor as a subjective or imaginary interpretation of the Aurora phenomenon in different locations
- Create a "language" of synaesthetic correspondences between movement, sound, words and abstract images responding to the gestures and bodily movements of the visitors as a form of real-time kinetic poetry

4. Partners and organizations involved

This project is currently being developed as collaboration between the Austrian Artist and Ph.D. Researcher Bettina Schuelke (the University of Lapland, Media Department, Faculty of Art and Design), Ph.D Researcher Veroniki Korakidou (Communication and Media Department of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Greece, New Technologies Laboratory), Dave Lawrence, sonic artist, composer, researcher in digital media and interactivity (Middlesex University, London UK) who will design a sound environment for this installation and with support from independent curator and artist Nina Czegledy (Canada-Hungary), Senior Fellow, KMDI, University of Toronto, Associate Adjunct Professor, Concordia University Montreal, Honorary Fellow, Moholy Nagy University, Budapest and Co-chair, Leonardo Education Forum, who has worked on the theme of the Aurora Borealis for more than ten years.

The *Aureole* project is developed within the framework of the e-MobiLArt Project of the EU Culture Programme 2007-13 (Universities of Vienna, Athens and Lapland). (http://www.media.uoa.gr/~charitos/emobilart/info.html

"An ultimate objective of the project is to build a community of artists, scientists, theorists, cultural operators, academic institutions and ICT-related companies which will continue to evolve and form new synergies after the completion of the project."(e-mbiLArt statement)

Aureole is also in collaboration with the Project partner from the Gallery 2B in Budapest, Hungary. http://www.pipacs.hu/2b/
"We believe that one of the possible ways of constantly developing and renewing culture is to create transitions between genres and to integrate exciting, novel experiments springing into existence on the borderlines between various fields of art." (2B Gallery statement)

4. Exhibition venues

Thessaloniki Biennale (State Museum of Contemporary Art), Greece (confirmed)
http://www.greekstatemuseum.com/ May 2009
Gallery of the Academy of Fine Arts in Katowitze in Poland (confirmed)
http://www.asp.katowice.pl/?lang=en Autumn 2009
Gallery 2B, Budapest, Hungary (confirmed)
http://www.pipacs.hu/2b/ Winter 2009
We are currently negotiating with different Venues in Vienna in order to place the project at its most effective and suitable surrounding.

Bettina Schülke is an Austrian Artist, Doctoral Researcher at the University of Lapland, Faculty of Art and Design, Mediastudies. Her research theme is “Transaction” (Phenomenology of Space and Time Dimensions). Schülke holds a Masters degree form the University of Fine Arts. She has exhibited widely at international venues like the De Winkelhaak Design Museum, Antwerp, BE; Kemi Art Museum; Lume Mediakeskus, Helsinki, FI; the MAK-nite (Museum of Applied Arts), Vienna, AUT. Her textile works had been presented at the Austrian Pavilion at the 8.th International Architecture Biennale in Venice, IT. She is teaching at the the University of Lapland and the Kemi/Tornio University of Applied Science, FIN.

Bettina Schülke