

WAYFARER

'Wayfarer is a live game space, where audience/players direct performers to explore and undertake a series of tasks in a real/projected building. Part exploration, part competition, part surreal thriller – this project allows the audience and performers to navigate new territories together.' Fiona Winning, Performance Space

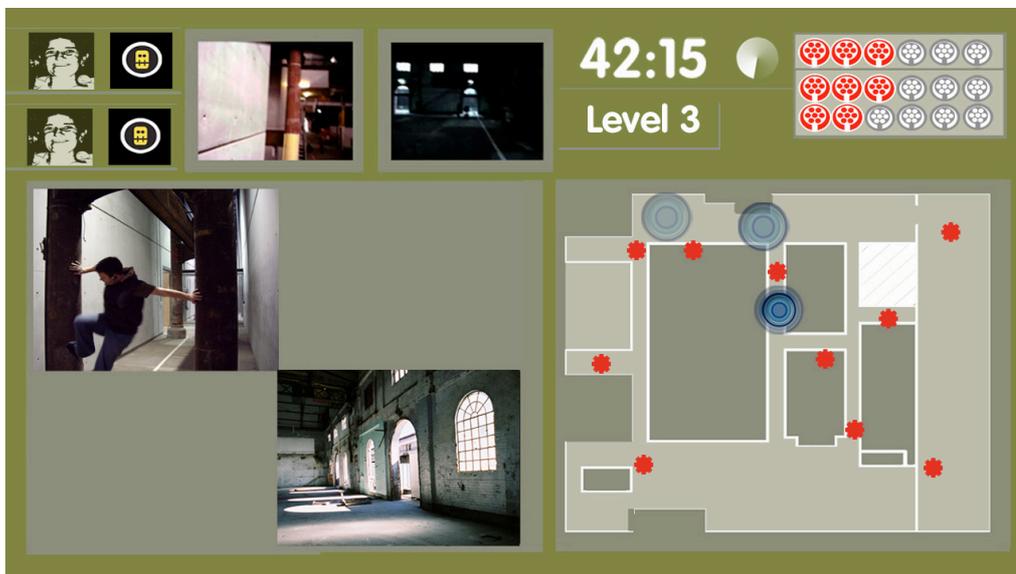
Wayfarer is a realtime game for 4 'players' and 20 audience members. It lasts about 30 minutes. The 'players' (performers) explore the interior of a mysterious building, while the 'audience', using voice instructions, directs them from outside the building. In teams of five, and isolated from other teams, the audience direct a specific player. The aim of the game is to uncover information about the site, through choreographic movement or voice interaction with the architecture and other players. The audience track their player through the Wayfarer software and this is projected on large screens outside the site. The game is a combination of simple rules that create high stakes, ethical dilemmas, strategy and improvised play. The player to finish first with a full matrix of 'content' about the site wins.

The Wayfarer software tool developed in MaxMSP, is the interface between the players, the audience and the site.

The software:

- Mixes (split screen) and displays streamed video and audio from the players body-mounted wireless cameras,
- Runs and displays the game time clock and game stages (scenes),
- Accepts and maps audience input data such as mass, movement or position
- Tracks and displays the actual location of each player in the site (locative data) and in relation to each other (relational data)
- Stores and displays multimedia content that performers uncover in the game

This output of the software is projected as on large screens outside.



Wayfarer is a fantastic nighttime event. It is a volatile, transdisciplinary synthesis of multimedia and live/virtual performance, urban choreography and neo-situationist strategies, gaming and gameplay.

Wayfarer is urban choreography – a live event for performers, audience and passersby, transforming space into place, reanimating the site: interventionist tactics

disrupt urban flows, bringing fresh perspective for locals and participants. *Wayfarer* is characterised by strategic play for many; by the way it provokes reflection on issues around community identity, urban environment, the mediated city. Performatively, *Wayfarer* is influenced by the urban action trend Parkour, in which players transgress the city's liminal and interstitial zones – laneways, rooftops, service areas. Participants explore the urban space through team-based, pathway-driven, highly energetic and stylised movement. In this way *Wayfarer* is akin to the way that companies such as the UK's Blast Theory and Australia's PVI collective and Gravity Feed deal with the intersections between virtual and real spaces and audience and performers.

Wayfarer has many elements of 'game play' - rules; time / event lines; a spectator role; an element of risk. Screen-based game aesthetics migrate to the performers' choreography and dramaturgy, and to the game rules devised in development, as well as the aesthetics of the projections. The *Wayfarer* software has tweakable parameters that allow for lots of flexibility in deciding how timeline, stages, audience and locative data work together to create a site specific performance.

In *Wayfarer*, the experiential qualities of play are foregrounded - the urban environment is the play space, and performers rely on the power of the audience to fictionalise and transform it. The *Wayfarer* experience demands intimacy, emotion and inter-subjectivity to shape it. *Wayfarer* may capitalise on audience anxiety and issues of control. What matters is how the players, audience and passersby relate to the site and to each other through the work. *It* is an event attuned to the city's flows and spaces, its preoccupations and blind spots. In this way it is strongly influenced by theories of urban architecture, adaptive reuse and the creation of civic spaces.

Wayfarer is informed by neo-situationist strategies. Revisiting early 20Cth phenomenology through a mesh of locative, digital and electronic technologies, participants gain new insights into their local topography, urban design, psychogeographies (personal sense of environment) and layered histories. How do we understand *ourselves* through the spaces we observe and inhabit? The city is defined by action, and space is a metaphor for consciousness. *Wayfarer* uses visceral affect to change the physiology and the consciousness of the players and audience. Both players and audience shift focus within the *Wayfarer* event-space – from the on-screen action to the collective performance of the audience, to glimpses of live performers as they break out of the virtual gamespace, to the immersive audio emanating from the speakers – creating an experience that refreshes subjectivity and shakes up social consciousness.

As the philosopher Paul Virilio noted: "Architecture is becoming a support for information...and, in a broader sense, a mass media support...". Virilio prompts us to consider how real and virtual, experiential and mediated, soft and hard are integrated in the "electronic gothic", imploding the polarity between live performance and the geo-political space it inhabits. *Wayfarer* is an opportunity to create an interactive, site specific work where we are not simply observers of the urban spectacle but are a part of it. With its dramatic, multiplicitous combination of live performance and projections, *Wayfarer* is an assemblage, a manifold space of flows and interruptions, visceral, semiotic and machinic, that invites us to perceive the urban site less as a hard material zone and more as anti-zoned and flexible, more responsive to the modern urban nervous system of information technology, axis of power and spectacle. Reality TV, surveillance, and the rapid, pernicious inclusion of large scale projected media in public spaces, bring with them a generative compulsion to voyeurism and exhibitionism. *Wayfarer* explores these themes through the site, the narrative elements and the multimedia design.

