

***[re]locate* and environmental storytelling**

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[re]locate takes the form of a responsive, multi-channel sound installation revisiting an ordinarily public 'place' that retains the traces of a deeply significant event; it is concerned with the processes involved in struggling to preserve the memory of the event whilst offering new insights. The idea for the artwork flows from the tragic events surrounding the racially motivated murder of 18-year-old Stephen Lawrence near a bus stop in south London in 1993, and the deep impact this has had both privately, for the Lawrence family, and publicly. The Stephen Lawrence case received widespread media attention following the damning conclusions of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry Report (Macpherson 1999) into the police handling of murder investigation and its subsequent lack of resolution.

Taking the notion of the daily routine of waiting at the bus stop as its starting point, the sonic artwork explores the disruption of the everyday to foreground the event once again, highlighting detailed elements that have particular resonances. On entering the space audience members assume the role of 'pedestrians' or 'passers-by', guiding the unfolding of the sonic 'story'. Depending on their movements within the installation, they unravel multi-layered 'story' elements, recounted from different perspectives or time frames of significance to the case. Essentially, the audience rediscover fragments that bear witness to the event that has long since past, but still demands closure.

[re]locate has been developed with Arts and Humanities Research Council funding through the Practice and Applied Route. The project has involved working with fifteen actors to develop the dialogue and 'action'; a field recording artist and sound engineer to experiment with simultaneous multi-channel recording, audio compositional techniques and spatial configuration, and a computer programmer to introduce responsiveness (using real time processing software and motion sensors) into the sonic environment. This creative approach to storytelling flows from a desire to explore the potential of computer-based interaction and non-linear forms as a mechanism for deepening audience engagement. Furthermore, it provides a rich and fertile ground for re-examining the multiple narratives associated with the case. As Janet Murray states:

The retracing of the situation from different perspectives leads to a continual deepening in the reader's understanding of what has happened, a deepening that can

bring a sense of resolution but one that allows for complexity of the situation and that leaves the moment of shock unchanged and still central. (Murray 1997: 136)

The decision to work solely with sound arises from an interest in its ability to articulate place and space, audience experience and to conjure up multi-sensory imagery in the mind of the listener. The privileging of sound over image offers a creative strategy for introducing a degree of ambiguity in the interpretation of events in keeping with the nature of the incident itself, which was sudden, unprovoked and short-lived. *[re]locate* has also been funded by Arts Council of England and London South Bank University, and is partnered by PVA MediaLab.

References

Macpherson of Cluny, W. "The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry". London: The Stationary Office, 1999.

Murray, J. *Hamlet on the Holodeck: The Future of Narrative in Cyberspace*. New York: The Free Press, 1997.