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Fashion, Mobility and the Tactical Imperative

Title	Fashion, Mobility and the Tactical Imperative
Subtitle	Not provided.
Lead-in / Abstract	Lead in: This paper examines fashion, networks, and the body, placing the wearable experience within a social, spatial, and temporal context. The projects presented are specific outcomes which examine public space and connectivity under the auspices of the "mundane" and the "everyday."
Participants and speakers	Doyle, Linda (IE) Moriwaki, Katherine (US)

Short biography of participants

Katherine Moriwaki is an artist and researcher investigating wearables, fashion, and the experiential resonance of technologically mediated urban public space. Currently a Ph.D. Candidate at the University of Dublin, Trinity College, her work has appeared in IEEE Spectrum Magazine, and has appeared in numerous festivals and conferences including Siggraph (2000), numer.02 at Centre Georges Pompidou (2002), Break 2.2 (2003), Ubicomp (2003), e-culture fair (2003), Transmediale (2004), and CHI (2004). She is a 2004 recipient of the Araneum prize from the Spanish Ministry for Science and Technology and Fundación ARCO.
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Full text**Introduction**

As technological curves continue to extrapolate along expected estimation, concurrent dialogues surrounding the appropriate use and context of integrated computing in everyday life is gaining attention. While the size and obtrusiveness of the machinery might decrease, its influence on our lives seems to loom larger, promising radical changes to personal identity and self presentation. The "always on, anywhere, anytime," accessibility and the "seamless" increase in productivity pushed for by commercial manufacturers, while admirable, typically fails to critically engage the emerging infrastructures and communicative models created by new technology. Instead, a myopic vision for the future exists when perspectives are narrowly channeled into specified application domains, edging out alternative potentialities of the technologically mediated experience.

In many design scenarios the unpredictability inherent in the everyday is seen as an obstacle, something to overcome and conquer; while social relations become schematized, requiring formalized sets of interactions and prescribed types of use. It is against this backdrop that the research presented stands in stark contrast to most typical interpretations of the "wearable experience." The projects and design concepts discussed are proposals, prototypes, and specific outcomes of speculative research which examine public space and connectivity under the auspices of the "mundane" and the "everyday," using garments and accessories as the active conduit through which to create network relationships. The habitual patterns and daily activities associated with urban life serve as the context for each project, providing an alternative views and experiences of the public space. These projects employ disruption and subversion to create cognitive fissures where openings for tactical appropriation and misuse can emerge, providing catalytic moments of awareness for the wearer.

Personal technologies and irrational attachments

RECOIL was inspired by dense urban environments and the micro-spaces people occupy during daily travel. Accelerated living within urban zones often cause many people to close themselves off to unexpected encounters and minute details in the environment. The current intense proliferation of digitally encoded objects and personal data devices creates a rich unexplored territory for social interaction and tragedy. The seed of the idea for RECOIL began as a hyperbolic scenario involving current preoccupations in interaction design research with limiting or containing inconvenience and interruption. One such scenario includes a world where successful suppression of unwanted daily distractions through digital technologies creates an atmosphere of such pre-planned sterility that the reintroduction of inconvenience becomes a new fad game for urban indigents. In this fictive circumstance RECOIL plays a central role, with major players surreptitiously erasing and corrupting others' data while haplessly attaching themselves to passerby.

As fictional scenario RECOIL represents a example of situations where efficiency and regulated control backfire. As a design prototype, RECOIL asks for public participation and use. In the recoil garments small, powerful magnets are embedded into everyday clothing, causing unexpected and sometimes uncomfortable physical connections between people and objects, introducing an element of unpredictability that challenges the wearer's personal body space by making unsolicited connections in unexpected, unwanted, and possibly inappropriate ways. As powerful magnets potentially have the ability to erase data contained in many memory devices, the concept of a "Data Free Zone" is forcibly introduced to any who encounter RECOIL. This can be seen as a relief of burden to public citizens, mired in digital technology or in another light as "Data Terrorism." Either scenario suits the aims of the project, which is meant to provoke, not solve problems, highlighting frictions and drawing attention to technological paranoia.

Due to the attractive force of the magnets embedded into the clothes, the garments seemingly respond to the environment and people with their own agency. Rather than allowing individuals to retreat back into their own territorial space⁴, RECOIL

asks the wearer to trust in the unpredictability of events one may encounter. When wearing the garments ordinary bodily movement is altered, creating a change in the physical self-perception of the wearer, resulting in the creation of a differentiated space, qualitatively changing and disrupting ordinary modes of interaction with the environment. While urban crowding causes the individual to withdraw, RECOIL forces involuntary engagement, creating a physical network of bodily configurations. It presents an estranged relationship³ with the environment and with public spaces, relying on pathology and urban anxiety to pull the wearer out into the world.

Unstable economies and urban fluctuations

Whereas RECOIL uses disruption to interrupt personal body space, Urban Chameleon and Inside/Outside subverts the usage of everyday objects through using garments and accessories as the canvas for environmental data display.

The Urban Chameleon is comprised of three skirts which are based along the themes of social interconnection. "Touch" changes visual properties when handled, alluding to the packed density of city environments and the unavoidability of contact in the crowd. "Speak" reacts to urban noise, trembling when subjected to the panoply of city life, and "Breathe" visualizes pollution and urban exhaust as it travels through the garment. These simple sketches represented ways in which the body might display environmental data on the body, creating the context and groundwork for Inside/Outside.

Inside/Outside explores the role of clothing and accessories as catalysts in perceptions of public space and the urban economy. The project looks at an everyday accessory, the handbag as a metaphor for information storage and retrieval. Just as a "regular" bag contains physical objects, the Inside/Outside bags collect digital objects. In this case, air quality and noise pollution levels are monitored, through custom electronics, driving an ambient display on the surface of the bag. At the same time, a data diary stores the environmental exposure over time creating a mapping of the city space according to environmental exposure levels. Through proximity and incidental co-location, Inside/Outside bags share the environmental data of their wearers, creating a mobile sensor network which can create contextually relevant, and location aware mappings of the city. The size and reach of each individual's map is dependent on personal mobility and the number of people the wearer has passed throughout their daily travels. Inside/Outside questions how everyday objects can be used tactically, to provoke power shifts in perceptions of public space, and explores the relationship created between possibly anonymous individuals.

Both Urban Chameleon and Inside/Outside ask whether providing alternative sensing mechanisms on the body might create subtle changes in the perception of the wearer, eventually causing changes in urban commuting patterns. The desirability of certain urban real estate might change as the result of readings from garments such as the ones proposed. Furthermore, preconceptions surrounding appearance and fashion could undergo transformation. For example, handbags and women's clothing are currently seen as frivolous fashion, evidence of feminine "girlishness" and impracticality, while masculine equivalents (such as the briefcase and business suit) retain the weight of clear-sighted purposefulness. A "perruque"² or playful inversion of stereotypical connotations of women's clothing and accessories includes integrating a function of utmost seriousness (pollution monitoring) into adornments which have been much maligned as a narcissistic egocentric preserve. Historically, women's groups played an integral part in environmental monitoring, establishing community clean up initiatives and environmental monitoring groups.⁵ Yet, when pollution monitoring is combined with flirty fashion, an entirely different image of "women's work" beings to emerge.

Socially fashioned networks: polyrhythms and the city

While RECOIL explores the tactics of pathology, and Inside/Outside and Urban Chameleon focuses on re-appropriated garments and accessories, Umbrella.net introduces a poetic interlude into the public realm.

UMBRELLA.net is a developing platform for exploring the coincidence as the catalyst for network formation. The project consists of a wireless mobile ad-hoc network (MANET) which is deployed when multiple people individually open their umbrellas in the rain. The aggregate effect creates a visual footprint of activity in a public space. The aim of the project is to deconstruct accepted notions of how networks

function by making them visible and only operable based on certain circumstances, as well as integrating network connectivity into common accessories, thus investigating how augmenting ordinary objects can lead individuals into new social engagement. Since ad-hoc networks spontaneously form and dissipate according to the amount of nodes present, they provide an ideal context for examining relationships based on proximity and chance conditions, creating a "point of intersection"¹ for the multiple rhythms present in the city. Like Canetti's crowd⁶ the disjointed flows of urban pedestrians become united for a brief and transitory moment into a single entity, which just as quickly disperses in a chimerical trace.

Conclusion

By situating the projects presented in the context of everyday life and habitual patterns, RECOIL, Urban Chameleon, Inside/Outside, and Umbrella.net seek to disrupt, engage, and question ordinary activity. While RECOIL creates experiential rupture, Inside/Outside seeks to integrate personally invested environmental data into the mental model of the city. Umbrella.net on the other hand takes an approach that creates both disruption, through spontaneous network formation, but also unity through illustrating an underlying and coincidental connection between individuals and the crowd. All of the projects take advantage of unpredictability and chance, turning perceived shortcomings of technology into key features in an application. In this way, the projects use the subversion and augmentation to suggest new perceptual modes for individual and social engagement.

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- 4. Hall, Edward T. *The Hidden Dimension: Man's Use of Space in Public and Private*. London: Bodley Head, 1969.
- 5. Hoy, S., *Chasing Dirt : the American Pursuit of Cleanlines*. New York ;London :Oxford University Press, 1995
- 6. Lefebvre, H., *Writings on Cities*. Trans. Eleonore Kofman and Elizabeth Lebas. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1996.

Related internet addresses

<http://www.coin-operated.com/scrapyard>
<http://www.kakirine.com>