

Handheld Histories as Hyper-Monuments Carmin Karasic, 2007

Artwork Description

"Handheld Histories as Hyper-Monuments" is an artwork that addresses historic bias and exploits media literacy through GPS and mobile computing technologies. This artwork is a collaboration by Carmin Karasic, Rolf van Gelder, and Rob Coshow, with special thanks to the HP mscapers team, Brett Stalbaum, and Jo Rhodes.

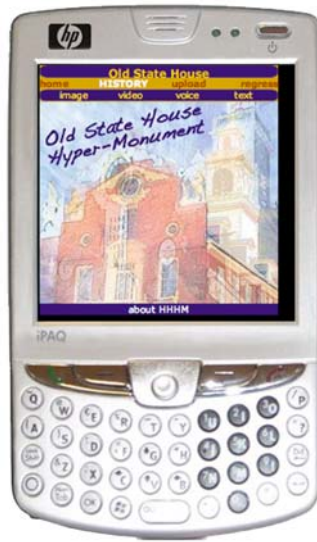
History is typically a story perpetuated as fact and published by the dominant social structures. Historic texts often skew event details to favor the victors, usually illustrated with drawings, paintings and photographs that support the victors' tales. The result is an interpreted history, filtered by the producer. This project constructs hyper-monuments at the sites of historic monuments. The intent is to create electronic monuments as symbols of lost alternative perspectives.

Given a prominent historic monument, shrine, location, etc., HHHM plays a location specific movie clip that regresses the present day image to a pre-urbanized vision for the specific location. For example, imagine your cell phone 'alerts' you near the Old South Church in Boston, MA. You 'answer' and see an easily identifiable photo of the Old South Church, just as it appears right there in front of you on the street. You press "Regress" and see the church morph through images that move backwards in history to a time when that location was at its natural, undeveloped state – natural wetlands.

Because of limited historic records, initial sites chosen for this project will be Boston monuments. Images displayed in HHHM will be movie clips based on archived history and related images uploaded by participants. When available colloquial anecdotes will be presented. Accompanying multimedia components will include a wiki style website with, images, videos, text, and audio downloads. Participants will be able to contribute text, visual, or audio content from the monument location via Windows Mobile enabled cell phones to the project website.

Boston, MA is an ideal initial location because of the city's rich history and technical resources. The Lion and the Unicorn on top of the oldest surviving public building in Boston, The Old State House, remind me that history is a tale of sorts. Teri Rueb's GPS based site-specific sound

installation, "Itinerant"¹, directly inspired my project. As one strolls through Boston public spaces holding an audio and GPS enabled palm pilot, Rueb's project 'plays' personal stories as audio clips told in location specific voices. My project will add a visual component, upload activity, and focus on sites of historic importance.



The project has obvious potential educational and tourist uses. It would also continue to expand via individual content contributions through the HHHM wiki style website. Ultimately, I want to create a type of digital disturbance in which voices from a forgotten history contact people passing through a hyper-monument. ...Perhaps a whispered rumor about an unresolved incident... The HHHM artwork serves as version 1.0 toward a future digital disturbance project.

Technical Description

Participants may browse the HHHM website via cell phone, smartphone, or computer. Mobile participation requires a video & GPS enabled cell phone with Internet access to send and receive multimedia data. GPS will track the mobile participants' location and when they enter a hyper-monument zone, the phone will offer location specific content options. Selecting the monument plays the regression video clip. Other options include downloading and uploading images or comments (video, photo, text or audio) about the monument. Custom php scripts will add the uploaded information to the HHHM database and website. Text entries will be available for wiki style editing. Information about the hyper-monument will be stored in a mysql database. The database will manage the GPS data, video clips, images, audio and text related to each monument.

"Handheld Histories as Hyper-Monuments" is a 2007 commission of New Radio and Performing Arts, Inc. for its Turbulence.org web site. It was made possible with funding from the LEF Foundation. This project will be featured during the Boston Cyberarts Festival, April 21-28, 2007, Tues-Sat 10am-6pm, at the Judi Rotenberg Gallery, 130 Newbury Street Boston, MA 02116 phone: 617.522.3856 email: kristen@rotenberggallery.com

¹ More information about Itinerant can be found at <http://turbulence.org/Works/itinerant>