

Title: **Monolith[s]**

by: Michael Takeo Magruder
with: Drew Baker (VRML programming) and David Steele (Java programming)
Medium/Format: Internet and installation versions
Date Composed: 05/2006
Size: various
Duration: infinite

Permanent URL: <http://www.turbulence.org/Works/monoliths/>
Requirements for Online version: PC with Internet Browser, Flash, Cortona VRML and Windows Media plug-ins
(Cortona for Mac does not support Flash, therefore PC viewing is recommended)



Artwork Description:

In *Monolith[s]*, temporal and spatial dimensions of the viewer's own immediate environment are absorbed and rearranged into a constantly evolving virtual realm in which icons of pre-history are juxtaposed with digitally complex refractions of how history materializes in the information age.

The core geometry of the artwork is defined by a set of Virtual Reality Modeling Language (VRML) files that generate a dynamic three-dimensional realm. The world and structures within it are formulated according to motifs and proportions of ancient architecture infused with fundamental mathematics of modern digital communication systems. Each genesis of the artwork's geometry is unique, as mathematical randomization is augmented by aspects from our own realities. Variables such as the time of day, the viewer's location on the Earth, and the position of the Earth around the sun are incorporated into the artwork, thus instilling into the realm functions of a rudimentary clock, global positioning system, and solar calendar.

Every day at 00:00GMT a Java servlet deconstructs the live BBC internet news service and creates a database containing the website's entire collection of news articles. From this database, 100 random news items (each represented by a text and an image file) are selected and used to create a server-side dataset that lasts until the next day. This dataset is called by Flash elements embedded within the VRML. These complex components, which are in a constant state of flux, overlay simple geometry and textures that evoke early virtual reality graphics, while the world's soundscape is constructed from an amalgamation of the BBC's live Internet radio service and spatialized sound loops.

Without whom:

Drew Baker + David Steele (programming) . Hugh Denard (discourse) . Jo-Anne Green + Helen Thorington (distribution) . Gregory Sporton (technology) . King's Visualisation Lab, Centre for Computing in the Humanities, King's College London (infrastructure)

Monolith[s] is a 2006 commission of New Radio and Performing Arts, Inc., (aka Ether-Ore) for its Turbulence web site. It was made possible with funding from the National Endowment for the Arts.

Exhibitions:

- 2006 Turbulence.org (launch)
VAD06 (Video & Digital Arts International) Festival : Girona, ES
- 2007 WEB3DART 2007, 12th International Conference on 3D Web Technology : University of Perugia, IT
WEB3DART 2007 : Takeaway Festival : Dana Centre : London, UK
12th International Media Art Biennale - WRO 07 : National Museum : Wroclaw, PL
FILE SÃO PAULO 2007 : SESI 10 : Internet + São Paulo, BR
Split Film Festival (New Media) : Split, HR
Peterborough Museum and Art Gallery (part of Addressable Memory solo touring exhibition) : Peterborough, UK

Reviews:

Valentina Tanni, Random, 13/06/2006
<http://www.random-magazine.net/2006/06/monoliths/>

Artist Information:

Michael Takeo Magruder

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CV: <http://www.takeo.org/cv.htm>

Artist Biography:

Michael Takeo Magruder (17.04.1974, USA/UK) is an artist and researcher based in King's Visualisation Lab, located in the Centre for Computing in the Humanities, King's College London. His practice explores concepts ranging from media criticism and aesthetic journalism to digital formalism and computational aesthetics, deploying Information Age technologies and systems to examine our networked, media-rich world.

Michael's work has been showcased in over 200 exhibitions in 30 countries, including *Manifesta 8: European Biennial of Contemporary Art*, Murcia; the Courtauld Institute of Art, London; *EAST International 2005*, Norwich; Georges Pompidou Center, Paris; Tokyo Metropolitan Museum of Photography, Japan; and Trans-Media-Akademie, Hellerau. His work also regularly appears in internationally-acclaimed New Media festivals such as *Cyberonica*, *CyNetArt*, *FILE*, *Filmwinter*, *Rencontres Internationales Paris/Berlin/Madrid*, *SeNef*, *Siggraph*, *Split*, *VAD* and *WRO*. His artistic practice has been funded by the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Arts Council England and The National Endowment for the Arts, USA. Michael has been commissioned by numerous public galleries in the UK and abroad and by the leading Internet Art portal Turbulence.org.

Michael's research focuses on the intersections between contemporary art, emerging technology and interdisciplinary practice. His writings have been widely published, with recent chapters appearing in books such as *Theatre without Vanishing Points* (2010, Alexander Verlag, DE), *Performing Technology: User Content and the New Digital Media* (2009, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, UK), *Virtual/Physical Bodies* (2008, Centre des Arts, FR) and *Die Welt als virtuelles Environment* (2007, TMA Hellerau, DE).

Michael received his formal education at the University of Virginia, USA and graduated in 1996 with a BSc (Hons) in molecular biology. He is a STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) ambassador for Thinktank Birmingham Science Museum and regularly lectures about interdisciplinary arts practice and the potentials of creatively blending art, science and technology.

For further information please visit: www.takeo.org.

Collaborator Biographies:

Drew Baker (UK) is a Senior Research Fellow within the Centre for Computing in the Humanities, King's College London. One of the founding members of King's Visualisation Lab, he has worked in the field of archaeological 3D visualisation and interpretation for over ten years. His specialisation is in the area of 3D modelling - specifically interactive web-based environments and constructs. His primary interest in deploying 3D and advanced technologies within cultural practice is to transform spectators into active participants through the utilisation of virtual worlds and artefacts. He is currently director of implementation for the Theatron III project funded by the Eduserv Foundation through which he is overseeing the construction of historic theatre sites within the emerging online platform of Second Life.

Drew is a long-standing collaborator of Michael Takeo Magruder, and since 2005 has led the 3D development on many art projects including:

- Changing Room v2.0, produced for Sonorities Festival of Contemporary Music 2010.
- (all)Time, 2010, produced for Digital Resources for the Humanities & Arts 2010.
- Vanishing Point(s), 2010, commissioned by Digital Humanities 2010.
- Changing Room v1.0, 2009, funded by Arts Council England for Eastside Projects, Birmingham.
- Data Double, 2009, funded by Arts Council England for Eastside Projects, Birmingham.
- Data_Plex (economy), 2009, commissioned by Rencontres Internationales Paris/Berlin/Madrid 2009.
- Data_Sea, 2009, funded by Arts Council England for Thinktank Birmingham Science Museum.
- (endless) Wall, 2008, commissioned by Rencontres Internationales Paris/Berlin/Madrid 2008.
- The Vitruvian World, 2008, commissioned by Turbulence with funds from the Andy Warhol Foundation.
- Rhythmic Space(s), 2007, commissioned by Trans-Media-Akademie Hellerau, DE for CyNetArt 2007.
- Data_Sphere, 2007, funded by the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation for the Addressable Memory exhibition.
- Monolith[s], 2006, commissioned by Turbulence with funds from the National Endowment for the Arts, USA.
- World[s], 2006, commissioned by Soundtoys.net with funds from Arts Council England.
- Data_cosm, 2005, funded by Arts Council England for the Net:Reality UK touring exhibition.

David Steele (14.08.1972, US) is a senior technical consultant based in Arlington, Virginia, USA innovating in progressive web programming and database architecture. He has been working with web technologies since the mid-nineties and was a pioneer in pairing cutting-edge clients to existing corporate infrastructures. His work has enabled a variety of advanced applications from global text messaging frameworks to re-entry systems for the space shuttle. He is currently involved in developing massively parallel database systems with unprecedented data rates and redundancy.

David has collaborated with Michael Takeo Magruder since 2005. During this period he has developed the complex programmatic structures for numerous artworks and installations including:

- Data_Plex (economy), 2009, commissioned by Rencontres Internationales Paris/Berlin/Madrid 2009.
- Data_Sea, 2009, funded by Arts Council England for Thinktank Birmingham Science Museum.
- The Vitruvian World, 2008, commissioned by Turbulence with funds from the Andy Warhol Foundation.
- Data_Sphere, 2007, funded by the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation for the Addressable Memory exhibition.
- Ghost in the Machine, 2007, created for Shrewsbury Museum & Art Gallery.
- Continuum..., 2007, commissioned by Oog online for the newspaper De Volkskrant, NL.
- Headlines..., 2006, commissioned by Oog online for the newspaper De Volkskrant, NL.
- Monolith[s], 2006, commissioned by Turbulence with funds from the National Endowment for the Arts, USA.
- {Transcription}, 2006, commissioned by the Courtauld Institute of Art for their East Wing Collection 2006/7.
- Data_cosm, 2005, funded by Arts Council England for the Net:Reality UK touring exhibition.