

# SALT LAKE

an installation by Tom Heene and Yacine Sebti  
a production of iMAL (Yves Bernard)

Brussels, September 2006



PDF DOCUMENT & DVD (pdf file + DVD video)

## INTRODUCTION

Salt Lake is a research project concerning the influence of information and the media on our everyday lives. The need to win the 'communications battle' encourages the commercial media, the authorities, institutions and individuals to swamp us with audiovisual material. We are presented with this visual, auditory and iconographical corpus as a single large archive, fully searchable, without intellectual, ethical or moral limitations, in a universal language to be interpreted and recycled by all. This accessibility stimulates reflection on a number of issues. Is the internet a simple window on the world as it is, or an image of the world as created by the internet and its users themselves? Does this complete access to material that has hitherto been kept secret or exclusive - at the same time beautiful and terrible to see - help us to build our own memories and through its duality create new personalities for us and our children? Do the media and the internet really influence our mental and physical states? 'Salt Lake' investigates these subjects. It is an 'immersive machine' that reacts to the spectators' physical presence as they enter this excess of audiovisual information. Salt Lake aims at causing indigestion, nausea, image overkill, so that the spectator will reflect on himself as he walks through media inferno.



## CONTROLLING THE MEDIA?

In our society images have become increasingly important, simultaneously with the rapid development of their ways of dissemination. Every day we are swamped with an excessive amount of audiovisual information, which is in our opinion turning into an audiovisual overload. It is slowly starting to blur or confuse our comprehension of the world. Mankind seems to orchestrate the image of man itself, whether the result be cruel or beautiful.

With 'Salt Lake' we wanted to create an environment which allows the spectator to become more aware of the images and sounds he otherwise absorbs unconsciously. We gathered all kinds of audiovisual representations of life on the internet and on television. With this found footage, we created an audiovisual database, which our installation uses as ammunition to bombard the spectator, who within five minutes gets to see what he would normally absorb in a week.

Thus we have chosen to put the spectator under a shower of audiovisual hyperconcentration, condensed and synthetic at the same time. The visitor is alone in the dark room. Images are projected on him and on the floor. In addition to this immersive shower, 'Salt Lake' reacts to the presence of its visitor, giving him the impression that he is being watched or followed by someone or something. By giving the audiovisual media this kind of responsive personality, we wish to encourage the spectator to wonder whether it is him who controls the media, or the media who control him.

We do not pretend that 'Salt Lake' is an answer to the questions concerning the use or abuse of the media. However, we hope that it can be a way for the spectator of creating a neutral mental place which allows him to have an overview of the massive amount of audiovisual information he is continuously submitted to. At the end of his journey through our installation our visitor is confronted with his own purified image, as if he were looking in a mirror, the surrounding scenery having disappeared and been replaced by emptiness.

Inside this white space the spectator sees his own moving black silhouette. It looks like an unidentified person in a white desert or on a salt lake, without any horizon or geographic references. This environment is where he can finally reflect on who he is and how he has to act, outside, in the real world of images and sounds.

## CINEMA OR IMMERSIVE ENVIRONMENT?

Given that we use recently developed digital tools, we are personally concerned with the debate relating to the classification of audiovisual work. We wonder which place 'Salt Lake' occupies within today's digital culture. The new digital tools we use help us to express our ideas on life and society, but also to create new ways of experiencing those ideas. They enable the spectator to interact with them in a different way.

The visitor of 'Salt Lake' takes an immersive shower. He walks through the images as they fall down and surround him. Sometimes he has the impression he is a part of the images.

'Salt Lake' could also be seen as a film. It consists of a series of sequences, almost like a classically written film script, increasing the level of stress towards a climax, making the images and sounds go from soft to hard and finally to cruel. The fact that 'Salt Lake' is installed in a dark room and submerged in a black environment enhances the feeling of watching a movie in a film theatre.

'Salt Lake' has also interactive elements which enable the visitor to link the different sequences of its script. In fact, it is the visitor who sometimes decides when a sequence stops and a new one starts. The machine uses graphical animations that push him to act instinctively and guide him through the dark room.

Since 'Salt Lake' is a combination of all these descriptions we often simply define it as a machine that uses image and sound, reacting to the presence of its user. To make its definition more complete (or complex) we could also state that it is an immersive environment on the borderline between a film experience and an interactive installation.

## SCENOGRAPHY

Salt Lake is an interactive installation for one person at the time. It is a personal experience: the visitor is completely alone in a completely dark space, isolated from the outside world.

In the first part of the scenario all visuals are projected on the floor. The visitor is walking on the pictures. He is part of them and he influences the audiovisual process with his body movements. His only spatial reference is the horizontal projection floor.

The second part of the scenario breaks dramatically with the first part. The images are projected on a vertical screen and all sound disappear.

All visual materials are black&white. The soundscape is quadraphonic.

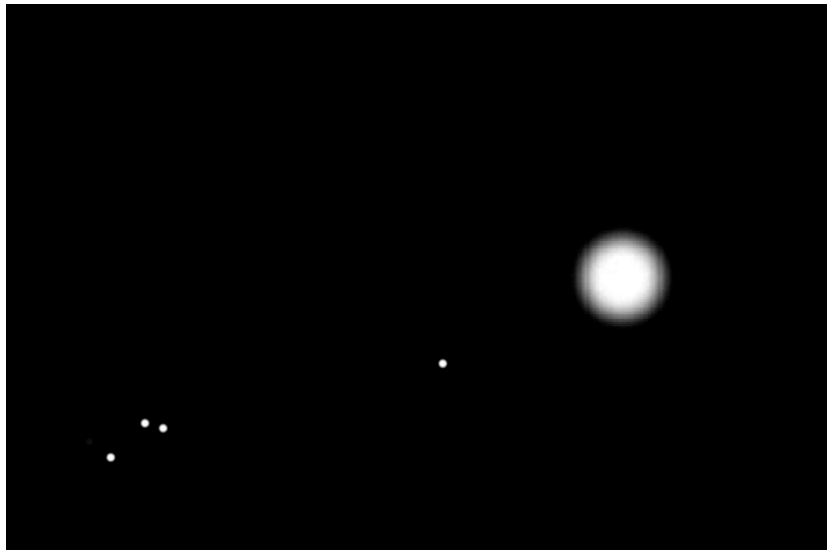
According to the interaction of the visitor the average duration of his journey is between 7 and 11 minutes. For a large public presentation, a waiting room is required.

## THE SCRIPT.

To explain what the visitor sees and hears when he enters the installation, we have made a description of the sequences he is subjected to. This is the scenario of "Salt Lake".

Seq.1. The visitor enters the installation. A little arrow on the black floor and a subtle beating sound shows him where to go. During his whole journey through "Salt Lake", video projectors will project images on the ground, on and around the visitor.

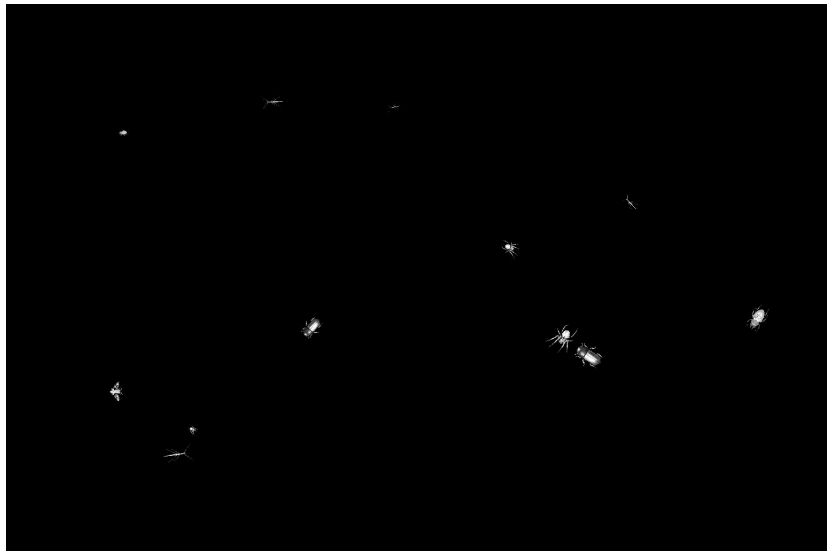
Seq. 2. Little white balls appear around the visitor. They fly towards a bigger glowing white ball that absorbs them. This "beating sun" reacts to the visitor's presence.



Seq. 3. A series of animated black and white pictures appear and disappear on the projection floor. They are basic representations (icons) of nature: earth, space, stars, animals, flowers, clouds, men, etc.



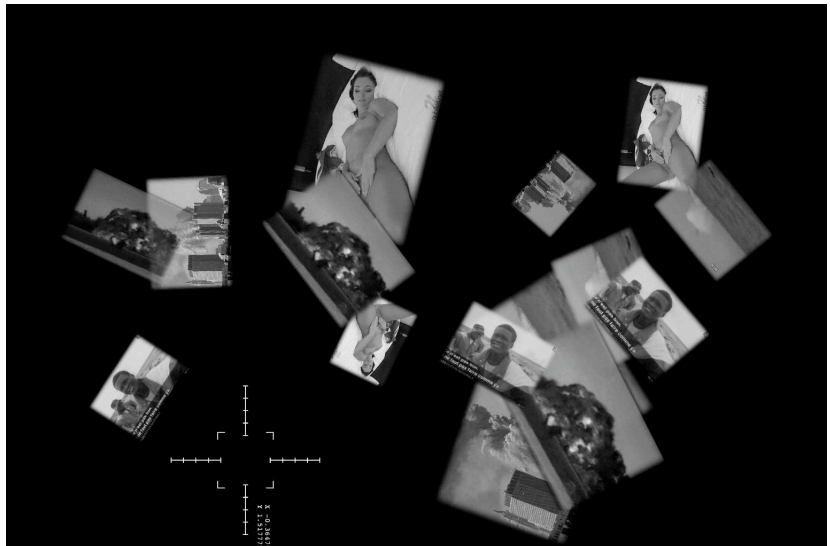
Seq. 4. Images of insects swarm around the floor. These little animals are afraid of the visitor and crawl away when he steps on them.



Seq.5. A circle of moving images appears around the visitor. Wherever he stands or walks inside the black room, this whirl keeps on surrounding him. These are images of vegetables, food, art and consumption, mixed with idyllic representations of couples, men and women in love.

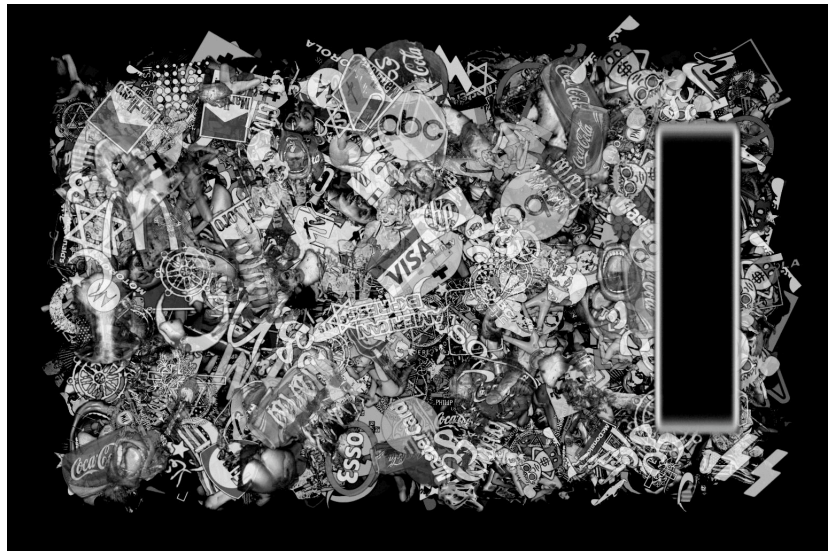


Seq.6. The whirl is replaced by a sight or viewfinder aiming at the visitor. At the same time, a series of videoclips is dropped around him with regular interval. When he walks around to look at the images, the machine follows him with the sight. The videos were found on television and on the net. They show people, consumption, war, prayer, accidents and disasters.





Seq.7. A shower of new pictures falls on the black floor. They are dropped in one big heap. Torn bodies mix with male and female pornographical bodies, logos or symbols of companies, institutions or ideologies, objects of consumption and arms for warfare. On this 'carpet' a window appears which allows the visitor to escape.



Seq. 8. In front of the visitor a wall lights up, completely filled with a white light projection screen. All images on the floor have disappeared and the audio space is totally silent. On the vertical wall, the visitor's black silhouette appears on a white background.

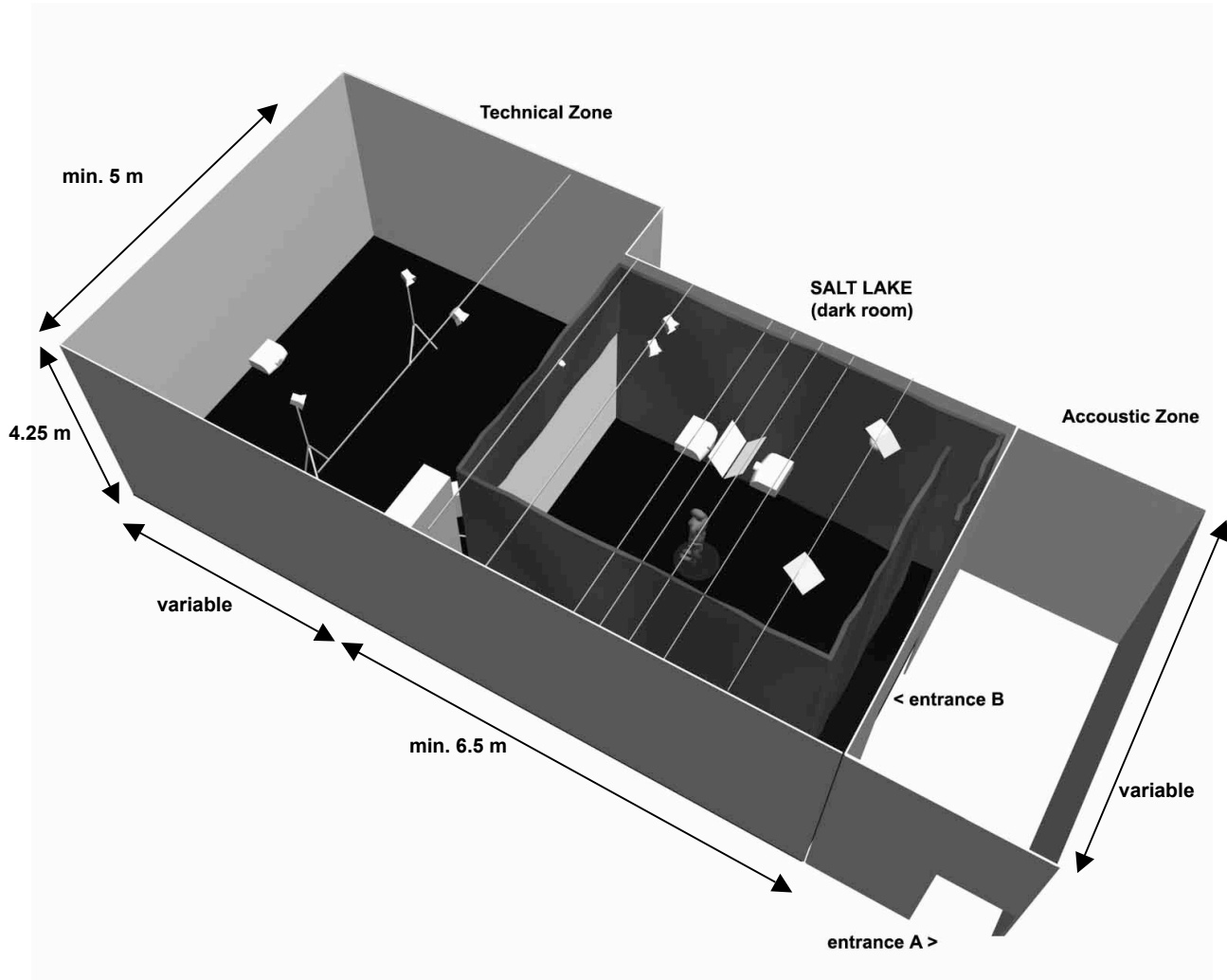


For the first time it is completely silent inside the dark room. The visitor notices that his silhouette isn't just his mirrored image because it does other movements, like slowly played echoes. It disappears to immediately come back.

Finally everything turns to black. The journey is over. The visitor can now leave the installation. Little white atoms lead the visitor towards the exit.



## TECHNICAL SET UP



- 'Salt Lake' needs 3 spaces: the Accoustic Zone, the Technical Zone and the actual projection space: the Salt Lake 'Dark Room'.
- The Salt Lake soundscape is very loud. The Accoustic Zone is needed to insulate the 'Dark Room' from the external waiting room where visitors are queuing. The measurements of this room are variable.
- The Technical Zone is needed to install computers, speakers and the video projector for the vertical screen. The measurements of this room can vary according to the throw distance of the video projector.
- The Dark Room is the zone – a black box - in which the spectator is actually submerged by 'Salt Lake'. The height of the technical ceiling is at minimum 4.25 meters, needed for hanging video projectors and reflecting mirrors to project on the floor, infrared cameras, infrared spots, active speakers and different cabling. The room has to measure at least 6.5 meters deep on 5 meters large. Projection is on the floor. It has to be covered in a dark material like black paint or carpet.
- Three walls of the 'Salt Lake' dark room have to be covered with black coton theatre fabric (MOLTON). The fourth wall is the white retro projection screen.

## TECHNICAL DATA

<b>ROOM MEASUREMENTS</b>		
Salt Lake zone + Technical space	min. 5x6.5x4,25m (WxLxH) + 5x5x4,25m	
Technical Ceiling	to hang fabric, projectors, speakers, etc	
Accoustic zone	to acoustically insulate Salt Lake	
Waiting room	to wait before entering Salt Lake	
<b>COMPUTERS &amp; SOFTWARE</b>		
Apple dual G5 – 2.7GHz	3D openGL visuals creation	iMAL*
Apple dual G5 – 2.7GHz	motion tracking & audio processing	iMAL*
Apple mac mini G4 or intel	silhouette processing	iMAL
<b>AUDIO</b>		
audiobox Motus firewire 8 channels	quadriphony	iMAL
2x 350 Watt speakers (on tripod)	channels 1 & 2 behind the screen	
2x 250 Watt speakers	channels 3 & 4 hanging on the ceiling	
amplifier & cables		
<b>CAMERAS</b>		
webcam unibrain fire-i	camera for motion tracking	iMAL
webcam unibrain fire-i	camera for silhouette recording	iMAL
mini-lenses wide angle	enlarge the viewfield for both cameras	iMAL
infrared filters	to only see infrared lighted person	iMAL
<b>VIDEOPROJECTION</b>		
2x projectors SANYO PLC-XU58	floor projection (3000 lum, wide angle)	iMAL*
1x projector Sharp	silhouette projection on screen (3500 lum)	iMAL*
Matrox dualHead2Go	to split the visuals over 2 projectors	iMAL
light beamshutter (automatic)	to cut the projector's light beam	iMAL
2x light mirrors (0.75mx1m)	to project from ceiling to floor	iMAL*
<b>INFRARED LIGHT</b>		
4x spots Computar IR	to illuminate with IR light the visitor	iMAL
1x spot 60LED IR	to illuminate with IR light the screen	Tom
<b>FABRIC</b>		
6x MOLTON (black coton) - 4x6m	to cover the walls of Salt Lake room	iMAL*
1x transparent screen - 2.7x5m	projection of the silhouette	iMAL
<b>SPECIAL CABLES</b>		
3x cables Fire Wire 10m + repeater	to connect the cameras	iMAL
3x cables VGA 20m	to connect the video projectors	iMAL
<b>Ethernet (LAN)</b>		
Hub and ethernet cables	to interconnect the computers	iMAL

iMAL: provided by iMAL

iMAL\*: iMAL can lend this equipment depending on exhibition conditions

## PROJECT HISTORY

Salt Lake, version 0.1 was shown at Nadine [Tani], Brussels, Belgium, during four days, from the 25th till the 28th of May 2006 (see DVD).

Salt Lake's next exhibition is scheduled in December 2006 at Théâtre Mercelis, Brussels, Belgium.

## CREDITS & CONTACTS

Concept & Realisation	Tom Heene & Yacine Sebti
Sound design	Charo Calvo & Yacine Sebti
Production	Yves Bernard, iMAL

With the help of Christoph Ragg and Bart Vandeput. Thanks to Nadine.be .  
With the support of the Communauté française de Belgique (The Salt Lake project proposal was awarded the Prix Multimedia de la Communauté française de Belgique in 2005).

### Contacts :

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[www.imal.org](http://www.imal.org)

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## DVD

The DVD proposes a video inside the installation from the point of view of a visitor and visitors' interviews shot during Salt Lake version 0.1 at Nadine, Brussels, May 2006.

The DVD proposes 3D technical drawings and some introduction texts (this text is also included as a PDF document).



## ABOUT THE AUTHORS & THE PRODUCER

**Tom Heene** was born in Ghent, Belgium on the 16th of august 1969, Tom has finished his studies at the Sint-Lukas Institute for Fine Arts in 1992, section Film & Video.

He has first worked as a production assistant in film and television business. Today, he works as a production manager or an assistant director for documentaries and short or feature films. Besides the organisation of these productions, he also works on his own projects.

In film, he has collaborated on different productions of directors e.a. Alain Berliner, Olivier Smolders, José Besprosvany, Frédéric Fonteyne, Philippe Falardeau and Jürgen Leth & Lars Von Trier.

In dance, he has made videos from and with Thierry Smits and has collaborated on performances using live dance video with David Hernandez or Pé Vermeersch. In 2004 he collaborates on "*Popsongs*", a solo dance of Melanie Munt, where he is at the bases of the concept of using "vivid lightning", which he develops with artist programmer Yacine Sebti. During 2004-2005, the performance has been showed the first time at *Tani [Nadine]*, followed by performances in Brussels at the *Theatre de L'L*, the *Maïs Festival*, the *Beursschouwburg* and the *CC Jacques Franck*, and in Paris during "*Les Plateaux*". The particularities of this "vivid lightning" have been explained to a panel of dancers during a workshop on new media, organised by *Contredanse* in 2004.

In the frame of the exhibition *XmedK Output Projects @ Nadine* in February 2005, he has collaborated with Agnes Bewer and Caroline Daish on the project "*Sofasogood*", an interactive environment using a sofa, image and sound.

Since 2000, Tom also collaborates with the British media artist Craigie Horsfield, with whom he has worked on "*here.now.conversation*" for *Brussels 2000*, on the summer project "*Johnny*" in the *Palais des Beaux Arts* of Brussels and on the installation "*El Hiero Conversation*" for the 2004 *Biennial of the Whitney Museum* in New York.

Tom is also a member of the RGB-Toysband. A band of performers, using small electronic toys being rearranged and manipulated as instruments generating sounds in public spaces.

Tom also hopes to produce a series of short films he has written during

these last years in collaboration with Stefan Maenen. In September he will participate in the co-ordination of a performances using new media gathering young artists in the Center For Contemporary Dance of Bucharest, during the French Speaking Countries Summit.

During 2005 and 2006, Tom presented different works in collaboration with Yacine Sebti. "*\_traces\_*", an interactive photographic walk through town was presented in Brussels, Amsterdam (Victorian Circus II) and Lisbon (Alcantara). And the first version of there new installation called "*Salt Lake*" was presented in may 2006 at *Tani [Nadine]*, in Brussels.

**Yacine Sebti** was born in Brussels , on the 22nd of march 1979, Yacine has had his baccalaureate at the Lycée Français of Casablanca in 1997. He has been a student in different Brussels based schools, at the ICHEC and the ERG, learning video and film practice and history. As a student or as a collaborator he continuously participates in workshops around recent software's like Max/MSP, Jitter or SoftVNS, given by Telcosystems (NL), David Rokeby 5CA), Jasch (CH), etc ...

Yacine was very young when he got interested in programming calculators, first as a way of creating useful tools, but also as the projection of an idea inside a machine. For a long time he used random functions as to generate automatic music in different environments like for example the language of the Hewlett Packard 48gx pocket calculator, and after that on pc or mac computers using Mathematica, Director and finally Max/MSP. This specific software has very extended possibilities concerning interactive ideas, which brought Yacine to replacing the "random idea" by the influence of the public's actions onto the production and programming of software.

Yacine is now mainly interested in the creation of environments where the public is pushed to a reflection on his relation with his own image, the "other", on time and on technology.

Yacine has his own installations but collaborates on a regular bases with different artists, as for example experimental filmmaker Pascal Baes, musician-sculpturer Frédérique Marbaix, or videomaker Tom Heene. He often works with Yves Bernard, founder of the Brussels based media workspace iMAL.

Most projects by Tom and Yacine are produced or co-produced by iMAL.

**iMAL** (interactive Media Art Laboratory), is a non-profit association created in Brussels in 1999. iMAL was founded by individual artists, media producers, interactive designers, software engineers, and by NICC (a Belgian association of visual artists) with the objective to support artistic forms and practices using computer and network technologies as their medium. iMAL provides opportunities for experimenting and producing media art projects, either through residences in the lab or through creative workshops. Besides production and education, iMAL maintains a laboratory and an artists' workplace with a resource centre (equipment, documentation) and organizes various public activities in the field of digital culture, such as exhibitions ("CONTinENT" in 2000, "F2F" in 2003, "Infiltrations Digitales" in 2004, "openLAB" in 2005), concerts, and performances in order to create critical, interdisciplinary encounters between the public, artists, technology, and society. iMAL works on three axes: creative workshops and the lab (the process), European or international collaboration (the network) and public events (the creative, participatory and critical appropriation by the public of technology in the context of the information society).

Through many years of various activities, iMAL invited many artists and media arts activists such as David Rokeby, Casey Reas, Jasch, 242.pilots (see the « Live at Brussels » DVD, Transmediale image awards 2003), HC Gilje, Kurt Ralske, Julien Maire, Scott Snibbe, Jean-Louis Boissier, Atau Tanaka, Antoine Schmitt, Mia Makela (Solu), Eric Singer, Nat Muller, Sher Doruff, Juha Huuskonen, Tuomo Tammenpaa, Chris Musgrave, Servovalve, Cécile Babiole,...

Yves Bernard is the director of iMAL. He is responsible for defining all iMAL activities (e.g. workshops, exhibitions, concerts/conferences). He produced or co-produced many interactive art projects such as White Square (2002) which have been widely exhibited.

More info on [www.imal.org](http://www.imal.org)



# DETAILED CV of TOM HEENE

## Digital Arts (since 2000 ...)

- "Labo.Mix", artistic coordinator, workshop & performances and new media, Brussels (june 2006) en Bucharest (sept 2006), Bureau International de la Jeunesse.
- « *Salt Lake* », responsive environment, installation in collaboration with Yacine Sebti & iMAL @ Tani [Nadine], Brussels, may 2006.
- « *\_traces\_* », responsive environment in collaboration with Yacine Sebti, a walk through town @ "Maison des Arts", Schaarbeek, Brussels oct 2005. "Victorian Circus", Brakke Grond, Amsterdam, april 2005. Festival "Alkantara, Close Encounters III", Lisbon, Juni 2006.
- « *openLAB* », coordination & scenografie, *laboratorium for digital technologies by iMAL*, 2005.
- « *Sofasogood* », responsive environment, in the frame of *XmedK Output Project* @ Nadine, in collaboration with Agnes Bewer and Caroline Daish, febr 2005.
- « *RGB~Toysband* », hacked hardware performance band, in public spaces since 2004.
- « *El Hiero Conversation* », consultant for Craigie Horsfield, multimedia installation, biennale of the Whitney Museum of Modern Art, NY, 2004.
- « *dance and new technologies* », workshop given by Contredanse, Brussels, 2004.
- « *Popsongs* », lightningconcept using computer, dance solo of Melanie Munt, in Tani [Nadine], Théâtre de L'L, Beursschouwburg, CC Jacques Franck, Brussels and at Les Plateaux, Créteil (Paris), 2004 and 2005.
- Videodirector and installation for choreographer Pé Vermeersch, improvisations in the icecellars, VUB, Brussels (Etterbeek). 2001.
- « *Johnny* », production manager, summerproject, expositions & installations, curator: Craigie Horsfield, 2000, Paleis voor Schone Kunsten. Collaboration on the performances of David Hernandez.
- « *here.now.conversation* », project manager, Brussels 2000 / Filmmuseum, new media installation, artistic manager: Craigie Horsfield, 2000.

## Film & Documentary (since 2000 ...)

- « *Nue Propriété* », production budgeting, Joachim Lafosse, feature film, 2006, Tarantula.
- « *Congorama* », production manager, Philippe Falardeau, fictie 100' (CA-B-FR), 2005, Tarantula & micro-scope.
- « *Le Cri de la Mulette*, coordination and digital conception, *175 jaar België* », by Patrick Bonté, performance in the Nationale Opera, 2005, iMAL & Communauté Française.
- « *L'Ultime Secret* », production budgeting, Bernard Weber, feature film in preparation, 2005, Climax Films.
- « *The Colour of Water* », production budgeting, Peter Broosens & Jessica Woodworth, feature film in preparation, 2004-2006, The Ice House.



- « *La Femme de Gilles* », production manager, Frédéric Fonteyne, feature film 100' (B-Lux-Fr-Ch), 2003, Artémis Productions.
- « *La Nanotechnologie* », 1° assistant director, fiction 26', Marc-Henri Wajnberg for the European Community, 2003, Wajnbrose.
- « *Kaléidoscope* », production manager, 2° series of documentaries, 52', for Arte France, 2003, Wajnbrose.
- « *The Five Obstructions* », production manager, Jörgen Leth & Lars Von Trier, fiction 100' (DK-B), Belgian Part, 2002, Wajnbrose & Zentropa Real.
- « *De Vreemde Man* », production manager, Peter Krüger, fiction 26', 2002, Inti Films.
- « *Nuit Noire* », 1° assistant director, Olivier Smolders, feature film 120', 2002-2005, Polygone & Parallel Productions.
- « *Kaléidoscope* », production manager, 1° series of documentaries, 52', for Arte France, 2002, Wajnbrose.
- « *Avenida Coyoacan* », 1° assistant director, José Besprosvany, fiction 15', 2001, Novak & Idea.
- « *Maigret & Le Fou de Sainte-Clotilde* », production manager, fiction 90' (Lux-F-B), 2001, Samsa Films & Artémis Productions.
- « *Petits Désordre* », 1° assistant director, Marie-Hélène Massin, fiction 15', 2001, Artémis Productions.
- « *Les Langues* », production manager, institutional, EUC, 2001, Wajnbrose.

## Education

- 2005 : XmedK, digital media and technologies, workshops organised by Nadine, *Looking Glass*, FoAM, supported by the *Flemish Audiovisual Funding*
- 2004 : Webdesign, html & Golive, organised by Nadine
- 1992 : Media Opleidings Centrum, Brussels, audiovisual animator
- 1992 : St.-Lukas Hoger Instituut voor Beeldende Kunsten, Brussels, degree in Film & Video (direction)



# DETAILED CV of YACINE SEBTI

## His Installations

- *Move*, interactive video
  - @ foam, Canal 20, Brussels dec 2003
  - @ ping! festival, Mallorca, july 2004
  - @ PleinOpenAir, Brussels, august 2004
- *Meet Somebody*, interactive video
  - @ Beurschouwborg, "readymade", Brussels, mai 2003
  - @ Dexia Arts Center, Infiltrations Digitales, Brussels, nov 2004
  - @ Médiatine, Brussels, feb 2005 (**Public Prize**)
- *Help me!*, multimedia installation
  - @ Dexia Arts Center, Infiltrations Digitales, Brussels, nov 2004
  - @ Beurschouwborg, festival "Subliminal", Brussels, jan 2005
- *Lola*, multimedia installation, in collaboration with Jan Dekeyser, Collette Huchard, Enzo Pezzella and Michel Jakar
  - @ Brigitinnes, Brussels, april 2005
- *Jump!*, interactive video
  - @ Parc à Mitraille, "temps des bourgeons", april 2005
  - @ Viper, Basel, Suisse, march 2006 (**official selection**)
- *Expérience Réactive aquatique ondulatoire*, interactive image, sound and water in collaboration with Frédéric Marbaix
  - @ Parc à Mitraille, "temps des bourgeons", april 2005
- *Un et un font trois*, video and orgue, in collaboration with Pierre Radisic and Walter Hus
  - @ Brigitinnes, Brussels, april 2005
- *\_traces\_*, interactive photographic 'walking' installation in collaboration with Tom Heene
  - @ Maison des Arts, Brussels, november 2005
  - @ Brakke Grond, "Victorian Circus II", Amsterdam, april 2006
  - @ Alcantara Festival, "Close Encounters", Lisbon, june 2006
- *Salt Lake*, immersive and interactif environment in collaboration with Tom Heene
  - @ Tani [Nadine], Brussels, may 2006

## Collaborations on performances

- *Popsongs*, solo dance with interactive light, by Melanie Munt, in collaboration with Tom Heene
  - @ Nadine, Brussels, march 2004



- @ Théâtre de L'L, Brussels, april 2004
- @ Les Plateaux, Maison des Arts de Créteil (Paris), sept 2004
- @ Dexia Arts Center, Infiltrations Digitales, Brussels, nov 2004
- @ Beurschouwburg, Brussels, nov 2004
- @ CC Culturel Jacques Franck, Brussels, mai 2004
  
- *Feedback Korps*, dance – programmed video, by Pascal Beas and Aï Suzuki,
  - @ Beurschouwburg, "readymade5", Brussels, jan 2005
  - @ ping! festival, Mallorca, july 2004
  
- *Polyscopic Noise*, dance & programmed video,  
by Melanie Munt, Antonin De Bemels and Gabriel Séverin
  - @ Beurschouwburg, festival "Subliminal", Brussels, jan 2005
  
- *Tröm*, Theatre / installation by Thomas Israël
  - @ Petit Theatre Mercelis, Brussels, febr 2005