

The Marcel network

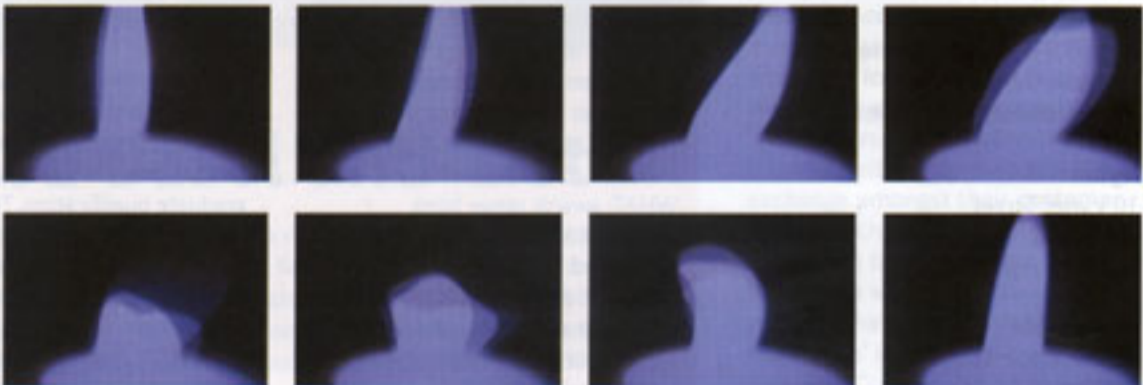
Stéphanie Delcroix delves into the future with Don Foresta and finds a 'utopia for lazy multimedia artists' in the Marcel network.

WORKING WITH NEW TECHNOLOGIES? Forget the prohibitive costs of touring expensive equipment, obscure customs legislation and international format problems. Imagine instead touring your show with the click of a mouse: everything is organised from your studio – from the first contact with the curator to projecting your multi-screen animation. High-quality equipment is awaiting you, ready to go. Ever dreamt of an artwork, which is influenced in real-time by an international audience – an audience constantly replenished as the earth revolves around the sun?

This is what Marcel has to offer. With Marcel, you can wipe out the miles between you and the audience: spectators from all over the world will see and become part of your piece. Your work could feature artists from five continents. You could opt for a twenty-four-hour project by asking artists to take over, one after another. Each hour or so, an artist living in a different time zone will intervene. Possibilities are multiple. Marcel opens the door to a new era of international collaboration.

The key to this opportunity is a network of organisations connected with high bandwidth. Don Foresta, the project coordinator, believes that "Marcel is a manifestation of a profound realignment in society, which is close to the changes which took place during the Renaissance". Pushing further the opportunity offered by the existing academic network, Marcel will create a platform for artistic and cultural experimentation. Underused university networks offer huge potential, capable of simultaneously streaming eight broadcast-level video channels and with the possibility of two-way interaction. The contributing organisations will provide the interface to exploit this potential. The concept is simple but the result is a worldwide connection: permanent, powerful and interactive.

Currently these connections link eight institutions. At each end, a space will be available for featuring online installations. The member organisations have started experimenting with interactive art projects. Tim Jackson's piece, a poetic installation where a candle's flame is influenced by the sound of drums carried by Marcel, is part of this trial period. Foresta thinks, "since the UK is so well equipped with networks, I expect the Marcel network to grow fast here. The trick is making sure institutions open up to artists." Marcel is being constructed at Le Fresnoy, France (see May INTERNATIONAL) and Wimbledon School of Art. A virtual faculty project will begin in November with a collaboration between the scientist Mandelbrot and the artist Jean-Claude Risset. Marcel's priority is to develop collaborations between art, science



Top: Gabriella Kardos and Don Foresta, OHM. Photo: Gabriella Kardos.
Bottom: Tim Jackson, Candle. Photo: Synth/Ops Research Group

and industry. It will provide a platform where artists, scientists and researchers can meet to exchange their expertise.

Marcel the network has a doppelgänger: Marcel the portal. Linking the members to one another, it will shadow the network by facilitating an online dialogue. Each institution manages one of its twelve categories, which cover subjects as diverse as 'Art & Industry', 'Art & Science', 'Electronic Art' and 'Research'. Innovative and intuitive, the 'Navihedron' developed by internet technology company Amaze permits visual navigation. This dynamic polyhedron formed of twelve interchanging nodes leading to twelve more nodes enables the user to plough through vast amounts of information in only a few clicks.

Let the world grow smaller.

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Marcel

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Amaze

www.amaze.co.uk

Wimbledon School of Art

www.wimbledon.ac.uk

Le Fresnoy

www.le-fresnoy.tm.fr