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**LEONARDO ABSTRACT SERVICES (LABS) 2008-2009
PERCEIVING EXPERIENCE: ACCOUNTING FOR THE ROLE
OF THE AUDIENCE IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF PERVASIVE
AND LOCATIVE ARTWORKS**

By Christopher James Fry

This practice-led study examines the role of audiences in pervasive and locative artworks. It critically examines claims made for the ability of pervasive and locative artworks to provide audiences with new, heightened and engaging experiences. It addresses the way in which the role of the audience is shaped by both the artwork and by the audience's perception of their experience.

A contextual survey of the field identifies the intention to actively engage audiences as central to the character of the pervasive and locative artwork. This engagement is commonly described using taxonomies of interaction and supported by theories of democracy and inclusion in the arts. The survey calls into question any inherent ability of pervasive and locative artworks, or the technologies they employ, to provide audiences with engaging experiences.

Several methodologies are critically evaluated including: ethnography, Creative Audience Studies and practice-led case studies. A methodological approach is devised which aims to account for the role of the audience as it is conceived of by the artist, modelled in the artwork and experienced by the audience. This involves the construction of artworks as critical models of the role of the audience, accompanied by a set of questions put to the audience.

The development of five artworks is described, each examining aspects affecting the audience's role. Interviews with the audiences of two artworks support a new understanding of the role of the audience that acknowledges the vital role of the audience's own understanding of the nature of the experience.

This study proposes a new understanding of audiences that will be of interest to practitioners in the field of pervasive and locative arts as well as those concerned with creating engaging experiences for the audiences of interactive systems.

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