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**LEONARDO ABSTRACT SERVICES (LABS) 2010-2011
MIXED REALITY ART AND THE GRAPHICAL USER
INTERFACE**

By Ian Gwilt

This hybrid (practice/thesis) examines the phenomenon of mixed-reality art through the form of the graphical user interface (GUI) as an emergent site of creative practice. Utilising three methodologies – the documentation of practice; a conceptual framing; and a series of personal experimental artworks – I explore the creative manifestation of the GUI. This is undertaken using the following terms: as a computer-based interface; as material artefact; and as augmented reality construct. The thesis builds a position around the idea that differing manifestations of the GUI aesthetic as represented in digital, physical and mixed-reality constructs can be used to examine the recent interest in the concept of ‘mixed-reality’ as a site of creative enquiry. The artworks that make up the documented practice element of this thesis represent an exploration into the visual language of the GUI through the above three terms.

Through this practice/thesis I will establish the premise that by creatively repositioning the GUI, it is possible to challenge our understanding and expectations of the conventional computer interface wherein icons no longer function as navigational devices and can be removed from the context of the computer desktop interface by varying scale, media and configuration. Moreover, that shifts in representation and form allow for the (d)evolution of the computer desktop metaphor back into object-based artefacts and hybrid configurations. In doing so, metaphoric ambiguities are created, which act as a lens for considering our relationship with computer technologies and the role they have taken in our social, cultural and creative environs.

In the final chapter of this thesis I describe in some detail a selection of my own works created over a six-year period between 2002 and 2008. Accompanying this written text is a CD-ROM, which contains additional documentation associated with these works. The concepts and works documented through the written thesis represent an original attempt to draw together and define current activities associated with the GUI as a creative site of enquiry or conceptual trigger for thinking through notions of mixed-reality art.

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