

QUICKSAND: the evidence

Interactive sound poetry installation
with sound artist Marianne Decoster-Taivalkoski
Nordic Institute for Contemporary Art (NIFCA)
Helsinki, June 2006

Empty but interactive space; four speakers; a video camera and motion-sensing software; evolving sound and language scapes triggered by human movement.

Visitors entering Quicksand find themselves triggering a flurry of dry particulate sounds. As they move the flurry accelerates, as they slow, the flurry slows. Sustained movement causes the crisp consonants to clump and group, forming morphemes, words, short phrases and eventually sentences conveying the dry facts of our contemporary world situation. As meanings emerge, it becomes clear that the coherence and outcome of the text are the physical responsibility of the "reader". With sustained or gradually accelerating movement the news seems to get better, and the tone more lyrical. If the mover slows, things seem to get worse and worse, until the whole space yields to a downward spiral and everything collapses back into meaninglessness and fragmentation. Only a real, attentive commitment of bodily energy can make a difference, and shift reality for the better. Social utopia comes with sweat and exhilaration.

I mean take bird flu	<i>a growing acknowledgement that something must be done</i>
I mean take hurrican katrina	<i>a proliferation of hopeful new models</i>
I mean take Wolfowitz at the World Bank	<i>de-centralization of the decision-making process</i>
I mean take the mass layoffs in the Finnish paper industry	<i>a bold new idea for indigenous businesses</i>
I mean take those mud slides in the Philippines last February	<i>a new generation immuned to alienation</i>

