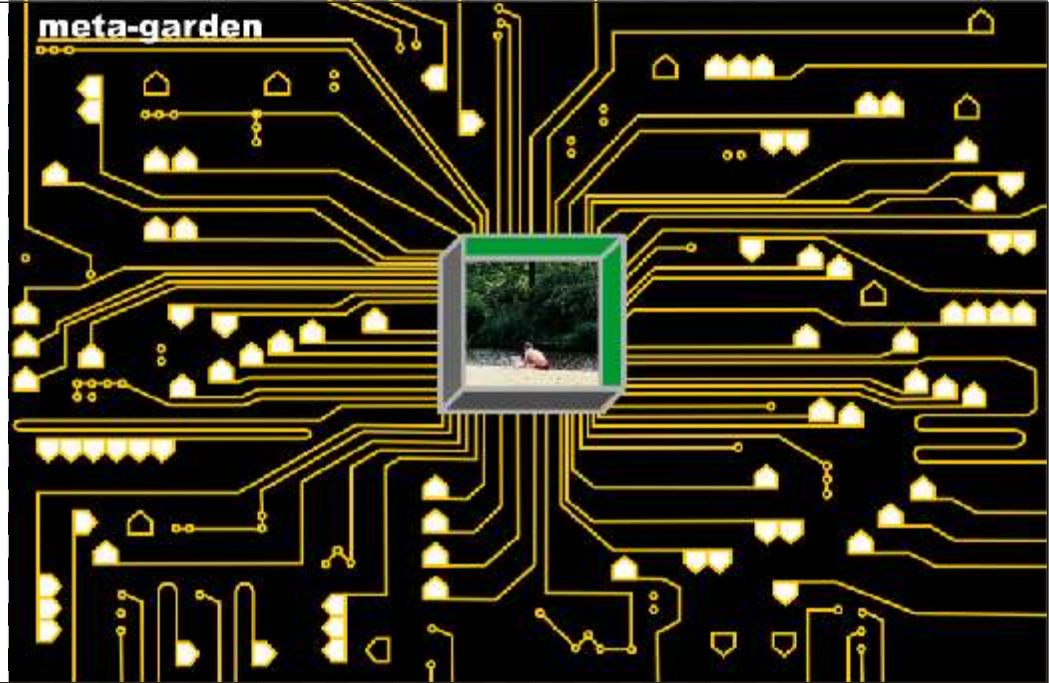


meta-garden



meta-garden [ram] residential area memories

fusedspace competition 2004

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Meta-gardens -- [ram] residential area memories

Meta-gardens, labyrinthine oases enriched with information, connecting our neighbourhoods through time and place. Voids within the urban landscape places for seclusion, contemplation and information, sanctuaries from ephemera and sources of knowledge.

The public domain is saturated by commercial signs and advertising imagery. Over 3000 commercial images enter our heads daily, in our contemporary cities advertisements and video display units scream at us from bus-stops, the radio and TV, in the subway, billboards etc. This coupled with the increasing privatisation of public space in our cities and our use of mobile communications are diminishing the possibility for chance encounters and new meetings, the true quality of urbanity. The places of chance and escape are diminishing.

The public domain today can be recognised as a place where one has the capacity to benefit from their relation to their neighbour near or distant; but within the contemporary urban societal structure you rarely gain a real opportunity to connect with your neighbours and the other people from your locality. In order to re-establish public space so it creates real connections between people we need to re-configure the traditional notion of public space as the space of body to body relationships to include body to mind and mind to mind.

My proposal seeks to create a place that can encourage physical and virtual meetings, foster debate and the transfer of information, while also providing an escape towards emptiness.



How can this manifest itself as a physical space within the meta-city?

The city today has many public spaces and gardens but few that physically engage with current urban processes and technologies. The meta-city is a place where data and information are now ubiquitous but exist without an address, without a physical location. The physical source of knowledge within the meta-city occurs within the meta-garden.

In the meta-garden data-bits are fused with a traditional element of our city, the enclosed garden. A new prototype emerges giving a contemporary reality to an ancient typology. The garden becomes a void within the intense city; a place for seclusion, contemplation and information; a sanctuary from ephemera, a source of knowledge.

The wall (information wall) provides the enclosure for the meta-garden. Each meta-garden has a specific relationship with its local context; every resident of the area gets a position within the garden. A portion of bits, information stored in the wall, accessible to all who visit the garden. The virtual and the natural combine creating environments enriched with the lives and memories of their locations residents, the city gains infinite histories.

The writing is on the wall

The wall acts primarily as a boundary element, protecting the garden from the city, providing enclosure and shelter. Secondly the external face creates a public space, it functions as a message board to the city, a meeting place, a place of debate, of play, residents of the locality can program how the wall acts to specific events. Images or text displayed on the wall can be debated by residents of the area online and in public, leading to greater social interaction, physically and virtually.

The external wall can also act as a meeting point for local residents with online communities around the world. Break-dancers in New York can now battle with opponents from Montevideo. An outdoor chess match can take place across the hemispheres. The wall also enables groups from oppressed regions across the world to get their message to a wider general public. The wall becomes the media.



The writing is in the wall

The wall encloses the meta-garden, a secluded labyrinthine oasis within the urban landscape. Its internal surface an interface. Each resident receives a number of bits, a marking on the wall denotes the position the information's address. How the bits are used is at the owner's discretion. It may contain a piece of music, a story, a video clip; a written document a piece of software, a game the list is endless. The data can be accessed, uploaded and modified by the resident through the internet, and downloaded by a visitor to the garden onto a portable device. The link between data and a neighbourhood address creates connections among neighbours but also prevents malicious content from being placed on the wall.

Visitors could enjoy the calm of the garden while also listening to a previous resident's stories or music from times gone by. Over time as residents move on to other places or eventually die, their memory remains in the garden. The garden becomes a living time capsule, a place that grows naturally and virtually every day.

In a universe of eleven dimensions it is becoming increasingly difficult to conceptualise our reality. In the meta-garden reality becomes grounded, nature and the seasons take shape before our eyes. Linear time ceases to exist, chronology is irrelevant all information that has gone before and all that exists now occupies the one moment, with man and the seasons. Architecture gains time (memory) as a dimension and we create emptiness within the congested public domain

