

Simon Blackmore,
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I make sculptural artworks that often have a low-tech aesthetic and draw influence from craft-based traditions such as green wood working, electronics and open source software. During the last few years I have been making a range of works that explore the relationship between physical space and abstract concepts of technological space, the tactile and the digital. Within these works, recognisable objects such as trees and boats have been adapted to reflect and interact with the invisible sub-structure of data that permeates our world.

Developed during a Visiting Arts-funded residency at Universidad de los Andes in Bogota, Colombia, *Web Stream Boat*, 2007, is a large physical interface in form of a boat, designed to navigate through live internet radio stations. This work is an attempt to make navigating through internet radio stations a rich sonic experience like navigating through the inlets of the Amazonas. The physical 'server' locations of the selected radio streams are mapped onto a 3D map of the world and are placed accordingly. This is presented to the audience as a projected view which offers a geographic/spatial context to the 'live' independent voices around the world. Within this work you can literally surf the web.

Travelling through technological space is a recurring theme within my work. In 2006 I made a surround sound audio piece called *Journey across the surface of a DVD*. In this work I used custom software to imagine what it may sound like to be shrunk to the size of a needle tip and follow a straight line across the surface of a static DVD. The resulting audio is something similar to pushing a needle abruptly across a spinning record. However, due to the impossibility of being able to physically do this with a DVD, the procedure has been carefully mathematically reconstructed, by analysing the structure of a DVD. In a sense the work attempts to turn the miniature landscape of a DVD surface into a piece of sonic land art

More recently as a Berwick Gymnasium Fellowship artist I developed a project called *Data Sculpted Trees*, 2008. The final installation consisted of a large wooden tree made from local oak logs transformed into spindles using traditional chair making techniques. The structure of this 'virtual' wooden tree was based on research into mathematical models for generating natural recursive forms and research into the global flow of data. An accompanying video/animation draws on the thinking behind the work and presents a range of seemingly disparate research areas, from the antiquated craft of turning green wood to why virtual trees look like they do.

The context of the work is often central to its interpretation. For the *Sprite Musketeer* project, 2001, I took a standard 1970s touring caravan and transformed it into a mobile viewing station. The caravan was driven through North Wales and the Lake District and placed at points along the road where the views alluded to those painted by artists such as J.M.W. Turner. Passers-by were invited into the caravan to admire the framed view.

Location is also central to the *Weather Guitar*, 2005, a robotic guitar player that responds to variations in weather conditions. Relying on the wind outside the building to generate music, the project is an attempt to draw parallels between scientific methods of measuring and quantifying the natural elements, and the romantic notion of the weather acting as a source of artistic inspiration.

This array of experiments / sculptures are brought together by an interest in exploring the relationship between technology and the physical environment, between formal structures and chance.

Aside from my work as an individual artist, I also work collaboratively with Antony Hall and Steve Symons. As the Owl Project we make sculpture, music and sound art, notably the Log1K, Sound Lathe, Sound Chair and iLog.

We take a craft-based approach to designing our own interfaces and objects. The result is a distinctive range of musical and sculptural instruments that critique human interaction with computer interfaces and our increasing appetite for new and often disposable technologies.

The iLog series is a reflection on our relationship with consumer technology. The design of each iLog strongly echoes contemporary products such as iPods and advanced mobile phones. These extremely developed complex products, with their plastic techno-packaging, seem modern and beguiling, but also appear craft-less and encourage a disturbing disposability.

By choosing wood as the main material for the iLog, Owl Project have extracted modern design principles but deflected it back to a traditional sensibility. This immediately raises questions about modern desire for disposable technology and nostalgia surrounding traditional crafts. The Owl Project have presented these works at galleries and festivals both nationally and internationally.