ABSTRACT

Liminal Labyrinth is a collaboration between Eric Souther and Dr. Kevin Ladd. It is both a public art installation and a psychological look at the interaction of bodies and religious behaviors in digitally augmented spaces.

The Labyrinth works as a spiritual tool that nearly all religions have had some association with winding patterns: Buddhist Mandalas, Native American Medicine Wheels, and Judaism “Tree of Life”. While the specific understandings and roles of these patterns differ across traditions, the labyrinth seems to be used as an aid in thinking about and understanding religion through embodied aesthetics.

Closely related to mazes, modern labyrinths typically are unicursal patterns. Instead of featuring multiple pathways and dead-ends common to mazes, the labyrinth has a single winding path leading toward a central open space and back out. Some argue that “sacred geometry” associated with labyrinths provides the ability to change the “energy” of the one who walks the pathway (Bloos & O’Connor, 2002).

Four projections will cover a 900 square foot circle to create an immersive and interactive labyrinth for participants to traverse. The labyrinth will respond and change based on the participant’s movement by triggering audiovisual responses. For instance, a ripple might appear under every footstep paired with a musical note. The augmented space should work to help guide the journey to the middle, focusing on calmer movements and colors when nearing the center.

DESCRIPTION OF GRANT-SUPPORTED ACTIVITY

I utilized the summer salary to dedicate my time to focus on my studio practice. I received a competitive Artist-In-Residence program titled Workspace Artist Residency at Squeaky Wheel Film & Media Art Center in Buffalo New York. I was there from August 8th through the 16th, 2016. I worked closely with a Waseque Qazi, a talented Game Developer in Buffalo, NY. Over seven days the game was built utilizing the HTC VIVE. In order to traverse a larger digital space with only a 15ft square physical space, we developed a way for you to rotate the world around you so that you can turn around and keep physically walking down the same path.

You can see a demo of the project here: https://vimeo.com/179707657

I used the FRG to articulate the support from IU South Bend in the writing of the New Frontiers in the Arts & Humanites Experimentation Fellowship that Dr. Kevin Ladd and I received in the late summer of 2016, to further the VR labyrinth into a physical 900 sq. ft. projection on the ground.

Grant Recipient, Project Title: Liminal Labyrinth, New Frontiers in the Arts & Humanities Experimentation Fellowship, Indiana University, PI: Eric Souther, M.F.A., Assistant Professor of New Media, co-PI: Dr. Kevin Ladd Professor of Psychology, awarded $14,988, Bloomington, IN.
PUBLICATION / EXHIBITION RESULTS

Later that year I was invited to come back for a solo exhibition of the project at Squeaky Wheel during the downtown Buffalo’s Curtains Up celebration in the theater district on September 16, 2016.

Liminal Labyrinth: [https://www.facebook.com/events/970974249677942/](https://www.facebook.com/events/970974249677942/)

GRATITUDE

I would like to thank my collaborator Dr. Kevin Ladd for his support and interest in collaborating, the Faculty Research Committee for accepting my proposal and giving me the time and support needed to further my creative agenda and my career. I would also like to thank Erika Zynda for their advice and guidance on the grant writing process, and my chair Michael Lasater for his support and guidance towards tenure.

Thank you,

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