FALLING
An interactive artwork for a real tree and its augmented shadow

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"Falling" is a minimalist and playful intervention on how to interweave physical and virtual realities. In the installation, a cone of light is projected onto a natural tree, casting the tree’s shadow onto the wall behind. From time to time, the shadow of a falling leave can be seen. Without further comment, a handle on a chain hangs down from the treetop.

When a visitor steps close to the handle to pull on it, her/his own shadow becomes part of the shadow play on the wall. When s/he pulls, a handful of leaves come falling down from the treetop - but only in the shadow’s reality.

"Falling" was created as a site-specific media artwork for an actual living tree, standing in an old building’s backyard. It was thus a temporary augmentation of that space, to be experienced in a real-world situation, without additional technological tools. The concept was devised from the impression that the tree seemed misplaced, and the whole backyard was just as lifeless and dysfunctional. The falling leave’s shadows introduce a metaphor to the cycle of life. The user’s shadow becoming part of the shadow play makes them, in a sensomotorical way, aware of their own presence within the backyard.

The framework topic of the student project was “Mixing Realities On Site”, which relates to the topic area that we are interested in artistically: a site-specific and spatial multimedia practice. We see a lot of potential in combining the disciplines of media art with the practice of creating site-specific works, as for example established within the context of fine art / installation art.

Keywords: Interactive Art; Augmented Reality; Site-Specificity; Media Art; Light Art; Installation.

1. TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION

The installation uses a natural tree, a projector, a laptop computer running the open source software VVVV, an Arduino board and a self-built switch that is connected to the chain and handle hanging from the tree top.

The projected video consists of two separate video loops, one for the inactive state (few leaves falling) and one for the active state (many leaves falling).

The dimensions of the installation are variable to some extent. The installation is ongoing as a loop.

1.1 Requirements

As the installation was conceived as a site-specific work, it has quite specific requirements, the main one being that it requires a (small) tree. If it is considered for acceptance, we would be happy to come and look for a suitable location or a way to adapt the concept to the given location characteristics. So far, the requirements for the installation are:

- A natural tree, with an ideal height of roughly 5 and 8 meters.
- Next to the tree, there should be a wall where the tree shadow becomes visible.
- A Full-HD-Projector with around 4000 Ansi-Lumens. The projector needs to be installed at a height of roughly half the tree’s height, to the side of it, with a distance of 5 to 10 meters.
- The switch has to be installed in the treetop so that chain and handle hang down from it.
- It must be possible for visitors to walk up right next to the tree, to pull on the chain.
- A cable needs to run from the treetop to where the laptop is situated. A VGA monitor
cable needs to run from the laptop to the projector.
• Projector and laptop need a 230V wall socket.

1.2 Equipment List

We would need the following equipment to be provided:

• A small tree.
• 230 V wall sockets and cables, multiplugs.
• A Full-HD-Projector, around 4000 Ansi.
• Basic power tools (saw, drill, screws, wood)
• A ladder.
• A lockable space to place the installation laptop in.

1.3 Desired Interaction

People from the audience become interested into the situation because there is simply a white cone of light projected onto a tree, with a single leave falling down occasionally from the tree’s shadow. Then they discover the strange handle hanging down from the tree, inviting them to go and try to pull on it. The handle needs no additional explanation. Once pulled, visitors see a handful of leaves falling down onto his/her shadow on the wall.

2. ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES

Florian Kühnle (*1981) is a designer, artist, engineer and educator. He has studied Film Sound at Postdam Film University ‘Konrad Wolf’ and Arts and Media at Berlin University of the Arts. He works with sound, image, moving image, computer code and space. He is currently employed as scientific assistant at BTK University of Art & Design, Berlin, in the Media Spaces program. http://www.larifon.de

Riccardo Torresi (*1987) is a media artist, architect and graphic designer. He has studied Architecture at the University of Ferrara and Media Spaces at the BTK University of Art & Design, Berlin. He works with graphics, illustration, space, photography and video. http://www.riccardotorresi.com

Figure 1: View of a visitor interacting with the work. He is pulling on the chain and handle that hang down from the tree top. The tree’s shadow on the wall releases several shadow leaves that fall to the ground slowly. Photograph by Riccardo Torresi.
3. EXTRA APPENDICES

3.1 Documentation of previous presentations of the work

The installation was presented previously during an event in Berlin in July 2015. Video documentation of the installation there can be seen under the following links:
http://www.larifon.de/home/falling
http://riccardotorresi.com/FALLING

3.2 Links to online examples of your previously created artistic work.

http://www.larifon.de
http://riccardotorresi.com