

SURFACE TEXT: Text as Surface in Immersive 3D Environments, by John Cayley



John Cayley:

For the lecture itself, I would like to use the audio transcription that I gave as for a talk for:

Beyond the Screen: Transformations of Literary Structures, Interfaces and Genres

International conference at the Cultural Studies Research Center 'Media Upheavals'
University of Siegen, Germany, November 20-21, 2008
Organized by Professor Dr. Peter Gendolla and Dr. Jürgen Schäfer

Play **diegetic.mp3**



You can download the mp3 of this talk by accessing the following URL (use right-click or Ctrl-click and save, I suggest): <http://webdrop.shadoof.net/diegetic.mp3>

The original abstract for this talk is copied below. This talk and subsequent thinking is being worked into an essay that I am more likely to call:

Drawn to Flatland, the gravity of the screen, or phenomenologies of inscription in media-constituted domains

Illustrative URLs referred to during the talk :

my essay on complex surfaces : <http://www.dichtung-digital.org/2005/2-Cayley.htm>

my essay on Saul Bass : <http://www.electronicbookreview.com/thread/electropoetics/dynamic>

stop-frame animation of the titles for North by Northwest :

http://www.notcoming.com/saulbass/caps_nxnw.php

examples of 'Cave Writing' are linked from : <http://writingdigitalmedia.org>

see esp. 'Glitch' : <https://wiki.brown.edu/confluence/display/wdm/Cave+Writing+Presentations> (It is possible, following instructions on this site, to download the current Cave Writing Editor and Previewer so as to be able to preview this material *on a machine with a good graphics card*).

--- the talk's original abstract ---

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John Cayley
Brown University, Literary Arts Program

When we address ourselves to digitally mediated writings practices, it is clear that the properties and methods of the surface of inscription are at issue. The inscriptional surfaces of digital media are complex, even when manifest as relatively passive 'screens' that emulate paper-like media. At the very least, these surfaces bear properties that reinforce the necessity for 'media-specific analyses,' as Katherine Hayles puts it. Related and corresponding complexities are demonstrable in what we may describe as the 'atoms' of inscriptional practice in digital media, the programmable difference-engines that leave their traces on just such complex surfaces. These features are, literally, 'spectacularly' in evidence when applied to writing for 3D immersive environments such as the three-wall Cave at Brown University, where new engagements with writing have been practiced experimentally and pedagogically since 2002. This presentation will report on recent writing and literary art practice in Brown's Cave with some reference to the critical and theoretical context that the author has been seeking to

provide for this variety of writing digital media. In particular, I will attempt to address the use of text-as-surface in 3D space -- text as, itself, a potential surface of inscription; text as a space for writing; and text as a prime delineator, a generative engine of 'virtual' (artificial, culturally-structured) space.

Lecture: Spring semester 2009