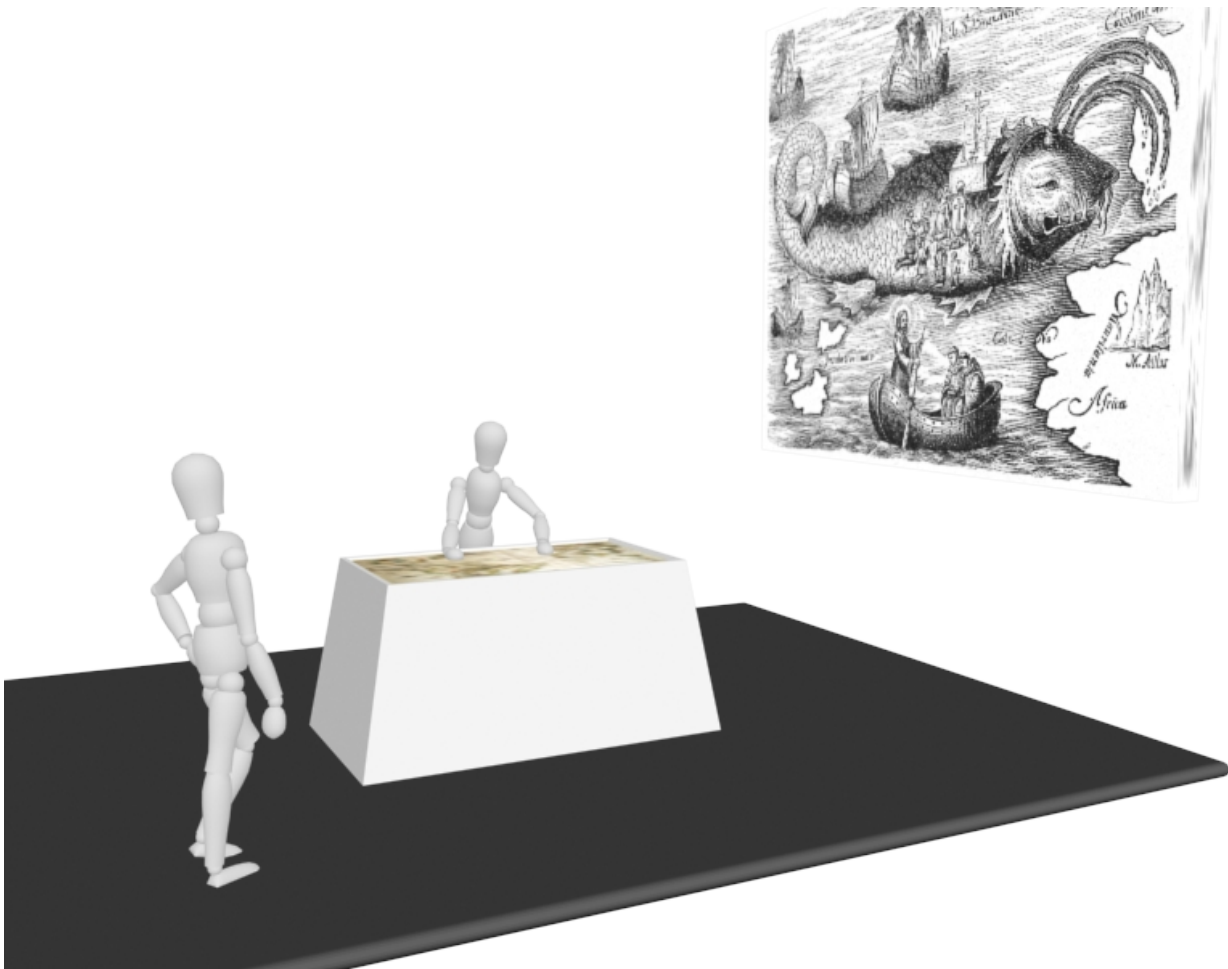# *Oceanus* Project
by
Paweł Janicki

Oceanus is an installation allowing to design individually an interactive narration based on variational scenario and an integrated authoring software tool created by the artist specially for the work. The idea of this installation, at the level of structure as well as at the level of the story, refers to the concept of navigating the sea and – in wider perspective – sea sailing. Notions such as, marking out the courses (navigating) and sea sailing, transposed into the media environment provide metaphors the installation is driven by. Those metaphors not only enable to travel across the universe of *Oceanus* but also a natural coexistence of the forms typical for linear narration,

associated with sequentially following events, and forms of interactive narration – related mainly to the modifiable structures, altered by choices and generative processes.
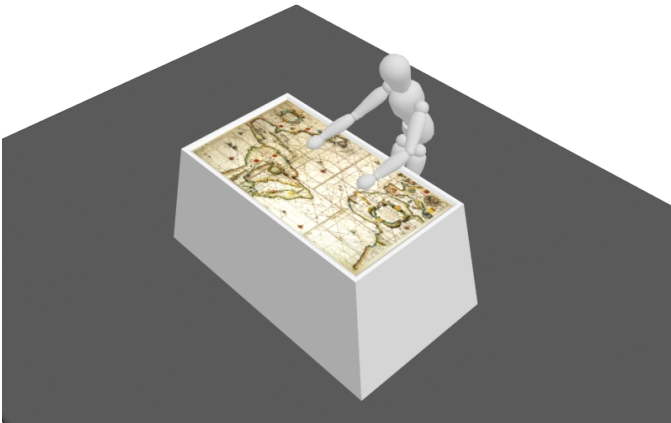
The physical arrangement of the installation (however narrative structure itself is independent from the physical components of the installation) consists of a large-format touch screen (or a matrix built with such displays) placed horizontally at a height allowing free access to displayed objects, selecting and moving them, and the use of other interface features. Large-format touch screen makes the installation accessible by multiple users simultaneously. As an alternative, two or more synchronized access points might be used, what would bring new opportunities of interaction between the users, as well as between the users and the software controlling the installation.

An important part of the installation is the second, vertical screen (digital projection driven by a beamer). On this screen visitors can track the linear, displayed as a single channel video, result of processes triggered by people manipulating the interface on the touch screen.
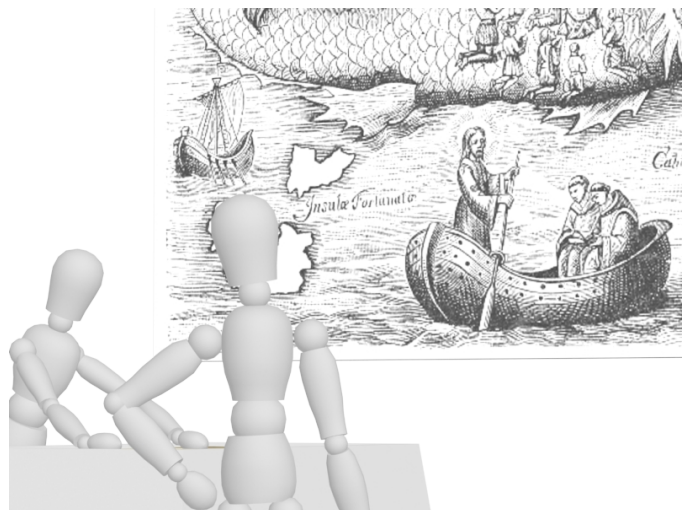
The principal metaphor of the installation's user interface is a nautical chart. The image being watched and controlled by the audience is inspired by the specific characteristics associated with sea cartography domain. Maps applied in the sea navigation have some unique features: first of all not only they are representing

the topography, but they also carry the possibility of designing, calculating and drawing courses of ships on them, and at the same time at much greater extent than any other maps, the are a record of human notions about the surrounding world and ourselves: old nautical charts were therefore equally representations of physical space and the space of imagination (hence, often contain descriptions and references to fantastic lands, creatures and phenomena).
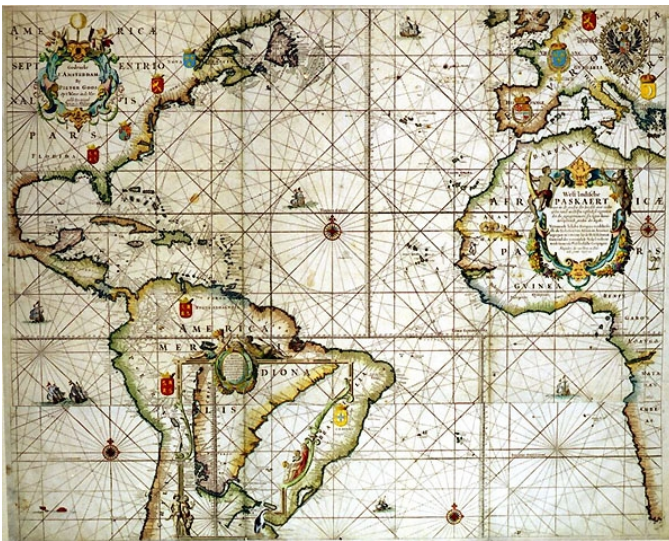

The possibility to draw on the maps and calculate the length of the route (in terms of spatial and temporal aspect) might be regarded as the structure of potential narration, which as a „source material" would use the reality itself and the narration's creators – the ship's course is nothing else, than a structure of the potential narration, which should be *played* after being marked out. Marking out courses for sea travels also appears to be surprisingly directly related to the world of the digital media: to the possibility of programming, designing and fixing tasks, threads and procedures, not to mention algebra and geometry, common to both worlds.

Issues associated with marking out sea routes brought to the language many expressions and metaphors (there's probably not too many other themes used more often for the construction of literary and colloquial sayings, such as a „compass", and it is worth recalling that the design of the clock has long been developed because of it's usefulness in the

maritime navigation). Hence the literary basis of *Oceanus* scenario is based on themes derived from literature and myths associated with the sea.

*Oceanus* Project by Paweł Janicki [http://paweljanicki.jp]
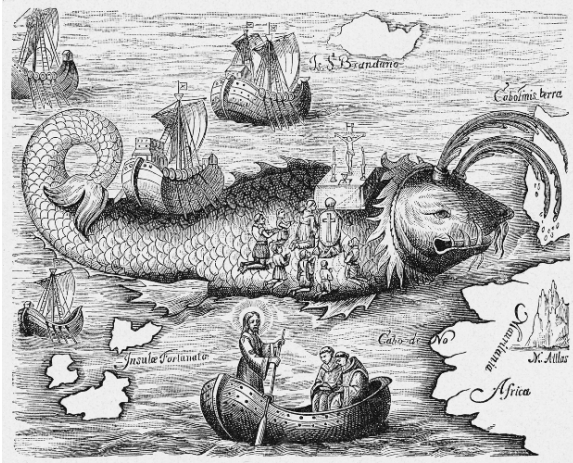
The World and European literatures are richly filled with themes related to sea travels. Starting from the Viking's sagas, the classic medieval texts, such as the anonymous, written probably in the 10th century in Lorraine, *Navigatio Sancti Brendani* (which is the base of the installation's scenario), to the contemporary maritime literature. Indeed, this literature genre has many features allowing a conversion of such texts to the form of interactive narrative: first of all, it is essential that the structures enabling to choose different paths of narration are already implicit in many of these texts, and they can be easily implemented in many other ones.

Software authoring tool: The Map

The Map is a system of creation and playback of interactive narrations - a prototype application came into existence as a result of the author's many years of experience in creating interactive projects exploring three major paradigms in the current media: timeline, modularity and code.
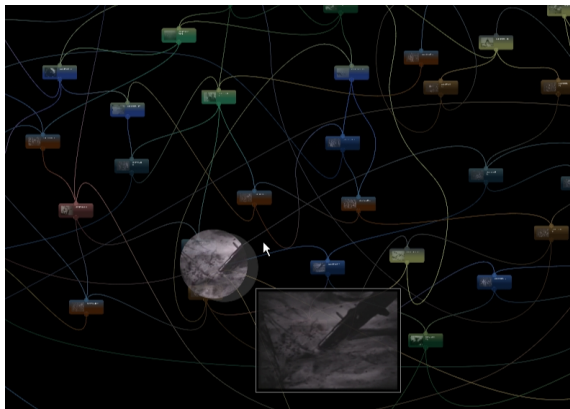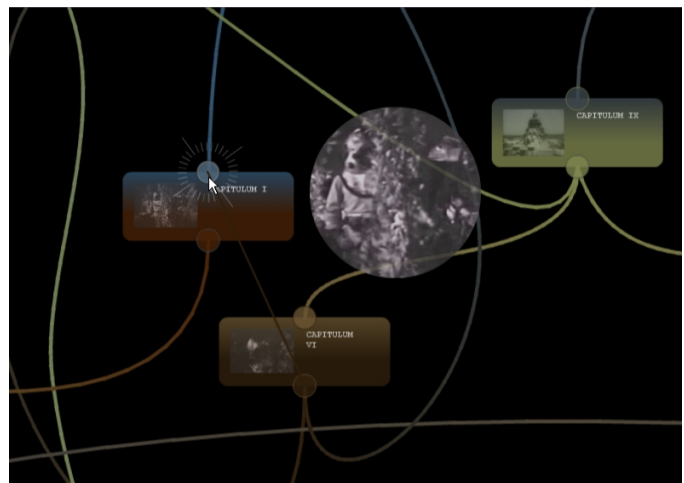
A special feature of The Map is the possibility to build structures that allow to make choices (interaction) in a manner typical to object-oriented systems (such as Pure-Data, or MaxMSP), but also including the aspect of temporal dependences and relations, structuring the narration by the collection of classic, narrative figures typical for linear

media. The Map is therefore a hybrid environment, modular and linear at the same time, and in this sense a unique formula, almost absent in the commercial and noncommercial software. Moreover, the possibility of re-coding parts of the software by the author, practically allows to go beyond the paradigms of graphical editing.

As an editing environment for designing the narrative structure, The Map is primarily a modular (object-oriented) system, but its specificity enables to connect dependence of space (location of components and connections between them), and time – the route outlined by the connection between the components can be traced and experienced – in a certain time (depending on the length of the route) – not „skipping" through hyper-links ignoring time and space, but mapping these two coordinates on which the road varies.

The Map is a multi-platform environment (PC, Mac, Linux), it also allows to publish projects on the Internet integrating them with web browsers. At the moment the prototype of the application is being used by its author and a few other artists in the number of projects.

Paweł Janicki: short bio

Paweł Janicki (1974) is an independent media artist and producer working in the field of media art, microsound aesthetics and algorithmic composition, is a creator of audiovisual interactive systems, installations and performances. He creates and continuously develops software tools and interfaces. Special place in his activity takes developing software according to his own projects – and broadly – creating his own media either sabotaging already existing solutions.

Oceanus Project by Paweł Janicki [http://paweljanicki.jp]

Among his realizations there are time-line based and interactive soundtracks commissioned for radio, television, interactive media, visual works (like a fractal for dimensional animation and and a number of title sequences and motion graphics); interactive works that are uneasy to classify, consisting of improvised sound, live programming, communication protocols, hacking. Janicki's musical projects have been presented in several publications showing the achievements of European experimental and electro-acoustic music scene, in addition he has worked in cooperation with many artists, as well as the IT industry and educational institutions, including the media faculties of the leading Polish art schools, like the Intermedia Faculty of The Art Academy in Poznań.
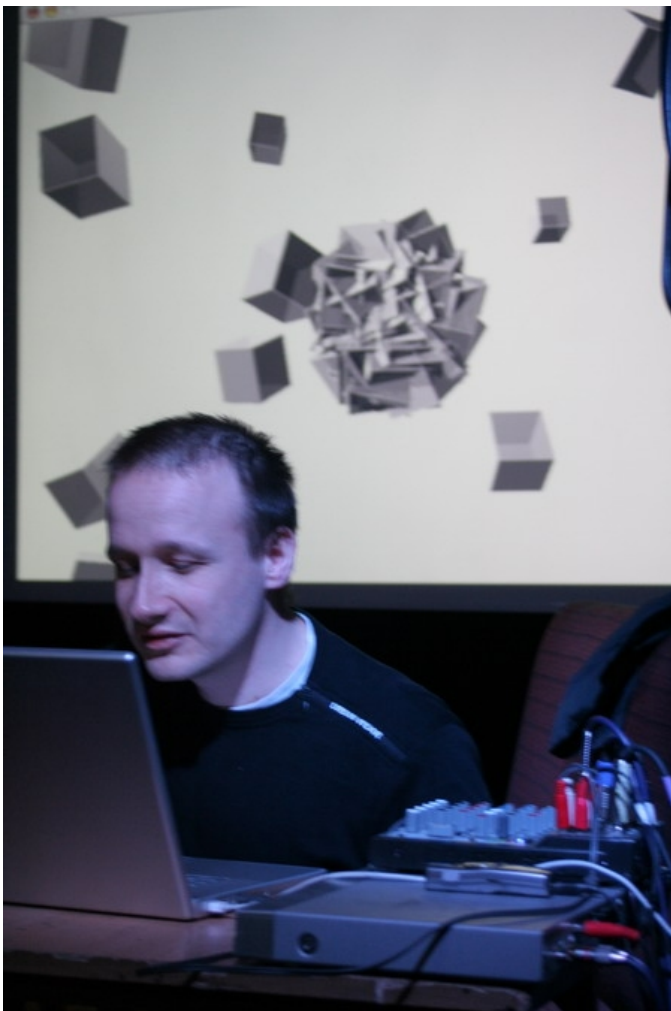
Janicki is associated with the WRO Art Center, where he currently directs the WRO Laboratory. His activities there are focused primarily on web applications, audio and sensory systems. Among the projects developed and realized at the WRO Laboratory under his direction, it is worth to mention the Interactive Playground exhibition, which was awarded by Poland's biggest daily paper Gazeta Wyborcza. He was also co-founder and longtime member of the well-known, collective Gameboyzz Orchestra Project exploring lo-fi aesthetic.

His musical net-performance Ping Melody was awarded by the Tokyo University Haramachida in 2004 the "netarts.org" Grand Prize, and gained a nomination for the Viper Festival in Basel. These and other projects by Paweł Janicki were presented at many prestigious festivals and events devoted to contemporary art, including the Ars Electronica, the

Transmediale, the Centre Pompidou and the International Media Art Biennale WRO in Wrocław.

The Society of Algorithm lists his net performances among the events crucial to the development of this genre of art.