

My Father's Song: Interaction Design Installation

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In *My Father's Song: Interaction Design Installation*, the choreographer and media artist invites participation and inclusion with digital media and contributes to a wider range of ways of appreciating and understanding intersections between tangible and intangible heritage. The installation juxtaposes large-scale public projection with private experience, and reflective content with the grandeur of nature, the elements, ancestry, and generation.

At Digital Research in the Humanities and Arts 2023, the nineteen layered video scenes were projected on three screens surrounding user/participants. Each user interacted with a Kinect Xbox making editing decisions in real time – drawing and overlaying cursive and block text poetry, changing video dimensions, and generating animated leaves from their fingertips. The installation code is programed in sixteen-minute cycles, each in a new, randomized order that reveals an array of visual stories. Altered by participant interaction, each immersive installation cycle is revealed anew. The work is never the same twice.

The artist created *My Father's Song* during a film and media artist residency at the Banff Centre in Alberta, Canada. Surrounded by the majesty of the Canadian Rockies, the artist became more keenly and specifically aware of a profound connection to nature. Looking out of the dining room window on their first early autumn evening, the artist was awed by the immense scale and beauty of her surroundings and, at the same time, by four small aspen trees in the distance with leaves turning yellow. The artist began thinking about the leaves turning in a larger context – the turning of the seasons, and turning as a poignant metaphor for how we are continually turning to the next moment, turning from generation to generation, turning into and becoming new selves, on our Earth, which is also turning.

At the Banff Centre, the artist's research included investigating how software code could mix, in real time, video with other digital elements via interactive participation. Conceived for projection in large-screen installations and exhibitions, *My Father's Song* considers ways participants' movements can combine with and alter the projected video scenes and

interactive text and animations to reveal personal narrative. The artist recorded and edited the nineteen video “poems” with themes that examine generation, scale, and nature’s elemental cycles: From clouds to mist, from snowflakes to water; from leafy aspens shimmering in the wind, to leaves falling and returning to Earth. User/participants can overlay two poems in block and cursive text – “My Father’s Song” by Simon J. Ortiz describes generational lessons; and “The Flap of the Wallet” by Jalal al-Din Rumi explores metaphors about nature and the elements to unveil the timeless beauty and mystery of life.

Instructions

Once the Kinect recognizes a user participant’s body, proximity to the device controls video size, and the user’s right and left hands are able to draw and control text color and pattern. The user’s hand and arm gestures in relation to the torso also control text and leaf animation size and screen location. The installation can be also viewed without interaction.