

Stelarc

Artist Statement and Biography

Artist Statement

A six-legged, pneumatically powered walking machine has been constructed for the body. The locomotor, with either ripple or tripod gait, moves forwards, backwards, sideways and turns on the spot. It can also squat and lift by splaying and contracting its legs. The body is positioned on a turn-table, enabling it to rotate about its axis. It has an exoskeleton on its upper body and arms. The left arm is an extended arm with pneumatic manipulator having 11 degrees-of-freedom. It is human-like in form but with additional functions. The fingers open and close, becoming multiple grippers. There is individual flexion of the fingers, with thumb and wrist rotation. The body actuates the walking machine by moving its arms. Different gestures make different motions – a translation of limb to leg motions. The body's arms guide the choreography of the locomotor's movements and thus compose the cacophony of pneumatic and mechanical and sensor modulated sounds.

Credits:

Concept and performance – Stelarc

Walking Machine:

Design/construction – Tom Diekmann, Stefan Doepner, Gwendolin Taube

Electronics and programming – Lars Vaupel

Technical Assistance – Joy Wagner

Manipulator:

Construction – Jan Cumberow

Programming – Ulf Freyhoff

Computer Simulation – Steve Middleton

Artist Biography

Stelarc

(This has been the artist's legal name since 1972)

Australia

b. 1946

Education

T.S.T.C (Art and Crafts), Monash and Melbourne Universities.

Present Positions

- Chair in Performance Art, School of Arts, Brunei University West London, UK.
- Senior Research Fellow and Visiting Artist in the MARCS Auditory Labs at the University of Western Sydney, Australia.

Biographical Notes

Stelarc is a performance artist who has visually probed and acoustically amplified his body. He has made 3 films of the inside of his body. Between 1976-1988 he completed 25 body suspension performances with hooks into the skin. He has used medical instruments, prosthetics, robotics, Virtual Reality systems, the Internet and biotechnology to explore alternate, intimate and involuntary interfaces with the body. He has performed with a THIRD HAND, a VIRTUAL ARM, a STOMACH SCULPTURE and EXOSKELETON, a 6-legged walking robot.

His FRACTAL FLESH, PING BODY and PARASITE performances explored involuntary, remote and internet choreography of the body with electrical stimulation of the muscles. His PROSTHETIC HEAD is an embodied conversational agent that speaks to the person who interrogates it. He is surgically constructing an EXTRA EAR on his arm that will be internet enabled, making it publicly accessible acoustical organ for people in other places. He is presently performing as his avatar from his SECOND LIFE site.

In 1995 Stelarc received a three year Fellowship from The Visual Arts/ Craft Board, The Australia Council and in 2004 was awarded a two year New Media Arts Fellowship. In 1997 he was appointed Honorary Professor of Art and Robotics at Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh. He was Artist-In-Residence for Hamburg City in 1997. In 2000 he was awarded an Honorary Degree of Laws by Monash University. He has completed Visiting Artist positions in Art and Technology, at the Faculty of Art and Design at Ohio State University in Columbus in 2002, 2003 & 2004. He has been Principal Research Fellow in the Performance Arts Digital Research Unit and a Visiting Professor at The Nottingham Trent University, UK. He is currently Chair in Performance Art, School of Arts, Brunei University, Uxbridge, UK. He is also Senior Research Fellow and Visiting Artist at the MARCS Lab at the University of Western Sydney, Australia. Stelarc's artwork is represented by the SCOTI LIVESEY GALLERIES in Melbourne.

Artistic Time-line (Selected)

- 1968-1970 Multimedia Performances.
- 1968-1972 Helmets - Put On and Walk, Sensory Compartments.
- 1970-1994 Amplified body events (EEG, ECG, EMG, bloodflow, kinetic angle transducers, position sensors).
- 1972-1975 Sensory deprivation events and body suspensions with harness.
- 1973-1975 Filming the inside of the body -16mm colour films of stomach (14 mins), colon (16m), and lungs (15m). Full body video X-ray scan (60 m).
- 1976-1994 Lectures and seminars on Evolution, Artificial Intelligence, Prosthetics and Robotics, Human-Machine Systems and Redesigning the Body.
- 1976-1981 Third Hand Project (a prosthesis as an addition to the body with grasp, pinch and wrist-rotation functions with a tactile feedback system for a sense of touch).
- 1976-1988 Body Suspensions with hook insertions into the skin in varying positions and different locations. First performed at the Maki Gallery, Tokyo.
- 1981-1994 Third Hand performances (laser eyes, muscle stimulators, sensor modulated sounds and interactive video).
- 1991-1994 Events with Motion Capture and Industrial Robot Arms.
- 1992-1993 Virtual Arm Project (a universal manipulator with DataGlove Control with a gesture recognition command language for extended capabilities).
- 1993 Stomach Sculpture (a self-illuminating, sound-emitting, extending and retracting capsule structure actuated by a servomotor and logic circuit).
- 1994 Muscle Stimulator System (for programmed choreography of body motion).
- 1995 Touch-screen interface for remote access and actuation of the body.
- 1995-1998 Fractal Flesh, Ping Body and Parasite internet performances.
- 1998 Construction of Exoskeleton, a 6-legged pneumatically powered walking robot whose leg movements were selected by arm gestures.
- 2000 Construction of the pneumatically powered Extended Arm which has an 11degree-of-freedom manipulator. First performed for Mutalogues in Avignon.

- 2000 Construction of the 6 degree-of-freedom Motion Prosthesis for Movatar, an inverse motion capture system. First performed for Cyber Cultures in Sydney.
- 2000-2001 Construction of the prototype Hexapod 6-legged robot at Sussex University. Unsuccessful prototype.
- 2002 Construction of the Prosthetic Head- an embodied conversational agent that speaks to the person who interrogates it. Completed in San Francisco and first performed for National Live Arts Review, Glasgow.
- 2002-2003 Construction of the Muscle Machine actuated by fluidic rubber muscle actuators at Nottingham Trent University. First performed in Gallery 291 in London.
- 2003 In collaboration with TC&A and Symbiotica, 1/4 scale replicas of the artist's ear were grown using both human donar cells, the cells of the He La cell line and mouse cells in Ljubljana, Perth and Melbourne.
- 2005 In collaboration with Nina Sellars, both artists underwent surgical procedures to extract 4.6 litres of biomaterial which was placed in an installation titled Blender. It has been shown for Teknikunst in Melbourne and at the Experimental Art Foundation In Adelaide.
- 2006 Partial Head and Walking Head were both exhibited at the Heidi Museum of Mondern Art in Melbourne. The aim of the Partial Head was to grow a layer of living skin over a scaffold which was a composite of a hominid and human face. The aim of Walking Head was an actual-virtual system where the mechanical movements of the walking machine actuated and modulated the behaviour of the face imaged on the LCD screen.
- 2008 Second Life site constructed with the assistance of Daniel Mounsey. Some of the artists projects are re-presented in a virtual form, but new interactive and immersive installations were made possible in SL.
- 2009 Second Life performances as my avatar and in collaboration with Daniel Mounsey have been done for SL and RL audiences in Berlin, Paris, Milan, Cambridge, Seoul, San Francisco and Melbourne.

Major Grants

- 1972,1981 The Myer Foundation, Australia.
- 1975,1976,1982,
1989,1994,1996 The Visual Arts / Craft Board, Australia Council.
- 2001 The Wellcome Trust, UK.

2002 The Arts and Humanities Research Board, UK.

2007 Australian Research Council- as part of the Thinking Head project.

Honorary Positions

1997 Professor of Art and Robotics, Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh.

2002 Doctor of Laws, Monash University, Melbourne.