

Low-Rez Stories/Solaris (1972-2010)

A video project

by Manuel Schmalstieg (Switzerland) and Kim Xupei (Hong Kong)

Synopsis

Low-Rez Stories/Solaris (1972-2010) is a video installation that confronts a scene from Andrei Tarkovski's 1972 Science-Fiction film *Solaris* (a long non-narrative sequence filmed on the urban highways of Tokyo) with a "remake" of the same highway track within *Google Streetview*.

Between 2008-2009, a vehicle manned by the staff of the Californian multinational has recorded the same highway tracks with automated panoramic cameras. The *Google Streetview* service, that has raised controversy and was banned in several European countries, makes this imagery accessible through the GoogleMaps and GoogleEarth services.

By this juxtaposition, the project aims to analyze the way in which a powerful representation of "the future" has been generated, both by a visionary film

maker and by a global corporation with undisclosed motivations, based on a simple naturalistic recording of Japan's post-war urban architecture. The project intends to work on several levels, involving both an analytical thought process and an emotional response from the viewer.

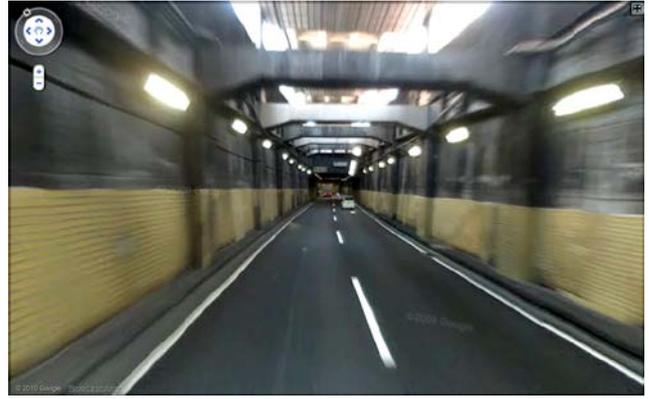
To help the viewer to engage with those multiple modes of perception, a layer of "subtitles" is complementing the images. Those subtitles are a raw transcription of the text comments that Internet users have posted on the (also Google-owned) *Youtube* webpage showing the original *Solaris* sequence, that has been uploaded by a user in 2007. The tone of the comments balances between factual, humoristic, emotional, and even poetic notes.



1. Still from the single-channel version.



2. Part of the multi-screen installation, still



3. Part of the multi-screen installation, still.

Display modes

Multi-screen installation

In this mode of presentation, the two sequences are juxtaposed in a **multi-channel video projection**, that combines:

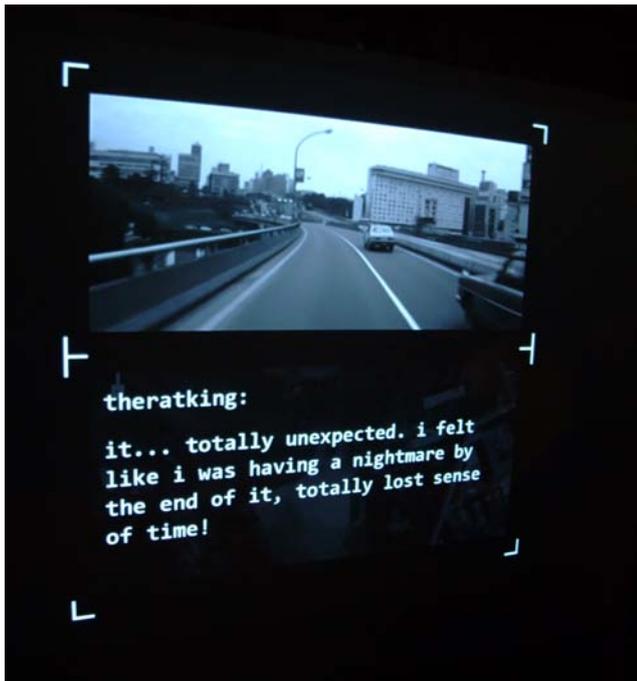
- The original imagery from Tarkovski's science-fiction movie (only the highway segment, the close-ups of the actors having been removed);
- The equivalent *Google Streetview* locations (screen captures that are animated as a video sequence);
- The geographic location of the current frame on the map of Tokyo;

- A text layer displaying the comments that *Youtube*-users have posted on the original *Solaris* highway sequence.
- An electronic ambient/dub soundtrack that enhances the cinematic flow of the images (using creative-commons-licenced sound sources).

The video installation is running in loop mode. The full duration of the loop is 11 minutes – this equates the time that is required to display the complete *Youtube* comments. Since users are constantly adding further comments, the duration will be approximately 15 minutes by January 2011. During this time, the original Tarkovski sequence (ca 3 minutes) is looped several times.



4. Still from the single-channel version.



5. Part of the dual-screen installation, NIFFF Festival, Neuchâtel, July 2010.

Single-channel version

In addition to the multi-channel installation version, a **single-screen version** has been produced in order to be screened in video programmes. The duration of this version is 4:15 minutes (this equates the duration of the Tarkovski sequence). The *Youtube*-subtitles have been stripped down to fit the shorter duration.

This single-channel version is provided in HD resolution (1920 by 1080 pixels, 24 fps). See *technical rider* for details.

Project background

This video piece is part of a large-scale project titled *Low-Rez Stories*, investigating the artistic potential of networked webcam feeds. This project has been under development since 2007 (initially under the work title *Null+Void*). After a long experimental phase, *Low-Rez Stories* was publicly displayed as a video installation at Dock18 (Zurich) in December 2009.



6. Part of the dual-screen installation, still.

Project history

Date: 2009, December 11th

Location: Dock18, Rote Fabrik, Zurich

First presentation of *Low-Rez Stories* as a 3-channel video installation.

Date: 2010, April

Location: ArtByGeneva Art Fair, Addictlab booth

Presentation of industrially produced prints on canvas, derived from webcam imagery from the *Low-Rez Stories* video archives.

Date: 2010, July 5th

Location: Neuchâtel Fantastic Film Festival (NIFFF)

First presentation of *Low-Rez Stories/Solaris (1972-2010)* as a **dual-screen installation**, in the frame of a video programme curated by the Centre d'art de Neuchâtel (CAN).

Date: 2010, July 16th

Location: Galerie Analix Forever, Geneva

First presentation of the **single-screen version** of *Low-Rez Stories/Solaris (1972-2010)*, in the frame of a video programme.

Biographic notes

Manuel Schmalstieg

Manuel Schmalstieg operates on the borderline between video, performance and software art.



After experimentation in the fields of graphic novel, animation film and audio production, he turns at the end of the nineties towards realtime video. His performances and installations have been showcased at Neue Kunst Halle St-Gallen, Plug.In (Basel), iMAL (Brussels), the National Museum of Skopje and the Bucharest Biennale.

From 2004 to 2007, he joins the staff of the new media facility *pôle art/media* at the university of arts Geneva (ESBA).

He is the co-founder of the *N3krozoft Media Group*, a cross-disciplinary technological think tank obsessed with paranoid reality distortions.

Kim Xupei

Born 1977 in Hong Kong, Kim Xupei works as programmer and code artist with the *N3krozoft Media Group*.



He is currently finishing his first auto-biographic novel, *Data Hammer*, planned for publication on Greyscale Press later this year.

Credits

Manuel Schmalstieg (concept, editing)
Kim Xupei (programming)

Thanks to:
Anna Popek (scenography advisor)
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