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The following text elaborates my active roles in the following:

**'Rengo' workshop with 'Aware' for 'International Symposium of Electronic Arts', Helsinki 2004.**

**Roles: Concept initiator, workshop co-designer, co-producer, co-ordinator, co-presenter.**

This workshop was elaborated as a sub-project of the AWARE platform [1], and involved different stages and different roles, in its collaborative design, execution, communication and presentation. A timeline is supplied below.

In the initial stages, the concept of 'rengo', which became the underlying basis of the resultant activity, was developed as an individual process. This conception was developed upon a collection of intuitions relating a historically precedent collaborative and creative practice - 'renga' or linked-verse poetry, with contemporary mobile messaging activity and mobile weblogs. Background reading in Haiku [2], creative writing, aesthetics, mobile messaging [3], plus concept development in the then nascent Aware project, elaborated a workshop model based on dispersed contribution by participants in an urban setting. The application to ISEA submissions in February 2003 was made as an individual, with a note that further collaborators would be involved. The application was updated and resubmitted by myself in September 2003, and was finally selected in March 2004.

Upon acceptance of the 'rengo' workshop proposal, production planning and workshop design began with John Evans, using Wiki-style online documentation while I was in residence at RIXC, Riga. In discussion, it was decided between us to stage the intensive part of the workshop process outside of Helsinki in a summer cottage, to build rapport among the group, and generate an intensive practical period of prototype usability exercises. A return visit to Helsinki at the beginning of May allowed me to make production meetings with ISEA producers and secure Media Lab support for the project. As shared production development, it was my task to seek funding support for specifically the summer cottage stage of the process, while John Evans searched for the suitable cottage, and transport. During this time, the presentation outcome of the workshop was decided, including consideration of the question: how to present the workshop to an ISEA conference audience, allowing the participants a presenting voice in the process.

After initial aims to work with a group of poets and creative writers (our project did not generate the necessary interest among that group), I wrote an open call of interest to attract interest among relevant student groups in the Helsinki area, including undergraduate students of UIAH, TEAK, and Helsinki

University departments - english literature, aesthetics, visual and communication studies. On reply, and due to my non-presence in Helsinki at that time, John Evans met personally and assessed the suitability of the participants for the workshop.

In collaboration with John Evans, the workshop process was designed. The workshop process was split into 3 sections: introductory sessions to be held at the Media Lab once a week (introducing each other, concepts and working methods). At this point, I took most responsibility for further research and communication of renga concepts and practice to be communicated to the workshop participants, while John Evans took full responsibility for communicating design methods and collaborative work processes. Other subjects were researched and presented to the participants collaboratively between the two of us. Introductory sessions were designed each week collaboratively in weekly reflective oral discussions and concept development, while technical developments, related to the 'Aware' platform was managed by John Evans. His role also included liason with Mika Raento (CONTEXT research group, University of Helsinki [4]) to arrange the desired mobile-device software for the workshop. As objective documentation of the workshop process, I arranged and negotiated for DV media documentation of the process by Kebede Mergia, the inhouse documentarist of Media Lab UIAH.

The second stage of the workshop was an intensive 4 day period at a summer cottage [5]. Consideration of practical matters (food, travel, accomodation) was part of the production role, aswell as continued communication with the group via SMS and email. This stage of the process was a combination of acting coodinator and co-designer with John Evans of 'bodystorming' prototype exercises, in response to each days activity, and that of personally acting benevolent host: making sure eating, tea/coffee, sauna sessions were maintained satisfactorily. During this period Sophea Lerner in the role of 'renga mistress' was invited to the summer cottage - to give lead and spark to the prototype exercises, particularly in relation to aspects of performativity.

On return to Helsinki towards the end of July, I mostly interfaced with the workshop participants, communicating and meeting each week, focusing upon engaging with the Arabia site, discussing and enacting the 'rengo walk' which was the collaborative 'performance' which the ISEA presentation a week later referred to. The final stages of the workshop process involved coaching and co-ordinating the workshop participants, and co-designing with John Evans the final presentation walk during the ISEA conference.

In addition, Markus Ort joined the ISEA production process from Köln, to collaborate with John Evans on the user interface and visualisation schematic of the 'Aware' platform [6]. During this time I was offering feedback to this design process. At this period I wrote the new 'Aware' text (history, about) sections for the new website.

On the 20th of August, the 'rengo' workshop process was co-presented to a local and international audience of the ISEA conference [7], led and

introduced by myself and John Evans, but including as co-presenters, 3 of the workshop participants. Due to the conversational nature of the ISEA presentation walk round Arabia, the audience present also contributed into the dialogue of the resultant work.

As a general comment to the whole process and reflection upon my role, as 'seed' initiator of the project, a pattern may be the passing on to others enthusiasm, incorporating and hosting other voices or roles in the process.

## 2003

**February** - AWARE project began in collaboration with John Evans, Markus Ort, and Aki-Ville Pöykiö. Initial 'rengo' concept developed individually for 1st ISEA submission deadline, and submitted at end of month.

**September** - 'rengo' workshop proposal updated and resubmitted to 2nd ISEA application deadline.

## 2004

**March** - Acceptance of 'rengo' workshop proposal in ISEA programme.

**April** - Online and remote co-production planning with John Evans. Media Lab equipment and funding sponsorship initiated.

**May** - Call of interest for participants posted to UIAH students, relevant academic teachers in targeted University departments, and TEAK. Decision to rent summer cottage confirmed for intensive section of workshop in July. 6 Workshop participants selected from 9 replies (1 cancels at end of month due to other commitments)

**June - July** - 5 weekly introductory sessions with workshop participants at Media Lab UIAH, Helsinki

**July 19th - 25th** - Intensive workshop at the summer cottage in Kemiö.

**July - August** - 3 weekly sessions with workshop participants engaging with Arabia site, including on 11th August the 'rengo walk' which is archived as material towards presentation at ISEA conference event. Markus Ort arrives at beginning of August to collaborate on information design and visualisation for Aware website.

**August 18th - 21st** - AWARE stall at ISEA conference, Lume gallery corridor, UIAH.

**August 20th** - 'rengo' presentation walk round Arabia site, during ISEA conference, with an audience of 12-18 people.

**September 2nd** - Social dinner event to mark the end of workshop process.

[1] <http://aware.uiah.fi>

[2] Kenneth Yasuda, Japanese Haiku: its essential nature and history, (Tuttle Publishing, Boston, 2001).

[3] Esko Kurvinen, 'Emotions in Action: a Case in Mobile Visual Communication', in Proceedings of the Design + Emotion Conference, (Loughborough University UK, 2002).

- [4] <http://cs.helsinki.fi/group/context>
- [5] <http://aware.uiah.fi/rengo/summercottage.html>
- [6] <http://aware.uiah.fi>
- [7] <http://isea2004.net/>