Experiential Design – Rethinking relations between people, objects and environments

• Paper / Proposal Title:
Revisiting the Dynamics of Air

• Author(s) Name:
Dr Malte Wagenfeld

• University or Company Affiliation:
RMIT University, Melbourne Australia

• Presentation Method. I would like to:
  i. present via pre-recorded film (with a written paper)

• Abstract (300 words):

My research and design practice concerns itself with our relationship to air and atmosphere and how designing with atmospheric phenomena can constitute a new design practice; one which I refer to as the Aesthetics of Air.

With our deepening awareness of human impact on global climate and the implications this holds, there has been a collective shift in the way we conceptualize air and atmosphere. We no longer think of it as part of the vast empty expanse of outer space; it is an indivisible part of our globe and our lived life, and how we deal with it has consequences.
In 2018 Jane Burry and I curated the exhibition ‘Dynamics of Air’ (RMIT Gallery Melbourne) which tapped into a growing international body of creative and scientific investigation into our relationship with, and experience of, air, atmosphere and climate. Dynamics of Air was a survey of twenty-eighth commissioned projects and investigations by leading designers, architects, artists and researchers.

In the proposed film and accompanying paper I will ‘walk through’ and discuss the ideas behind this exhibition with a focus on four installations which actively shaped the air, atmosphere and ambiance around them. Experiential environments in which visitors could explore the poetics of breath and dwell in nuanced shifts in microclimates, felt through the skin and inhaled through the lungs.

The exhibition was conceived of as a form of research lab, which brought together a broad community of practice to explore shared concerns: how we relate to, live with and understand air, climate and atmosphere and most of all how we design with and for it. I will reflect on the vibrant dialogue that was initiated and how these ideas and explorations can be harnessed to shape our lived environment and where this may lead to next.

• Author(s) Biography (200 words each):

Malte Wagenfeld is an Industrial Designer, curator, researcher, installation artist and academic whose explorative experiential installations, designs and texts have been internationally exhibited, distributed and published. As well as designing physical ‘things’ his research practice investigates how to design the ‘immaterial’, in particular the design of interior climates and immersive experiential environments, by exploring our sensory experiences of dynamic atmospheric encounters with air; breezes, humidity, temperature, sound, light and smell. Dr Malte Wagenfeld is Senior Lecturer of Industrial Design at RMIT University.

Recent projects include Outside_IN (2018) with Transsolar: an experiential environment of dual interacting atmospheres which morph at the edges to create a spectrum of transient microclimates. The exhibition ‘Dynamics of Air’ (RMIT Gallery Melbourne 2018), curated with Jane Burry: an international survey of commissioned projects by leading designers, architects, artists and researchers which explored the beauty, dynamics and sensuality of air in our built and lived environment, and its critical role in designing for a zero-carbon future. Instrument designs for the acclaimed ensemble Speak Percussion’s Polar Force (2018 – 2019): an internationally touring experimental live performance where natural phenomena are creatively manipulated to capture the sounds of the Antarctic polar regions in context of human interference and climate change.