The Illusion of Control

*Interactive Domains* shows the forest through the trees.

**INTERACTIVE DOMAINS**
By various artists
Wood Street Galleries // Downtown
Through Mar. 19: Phone 471-5605.

Last Wednesday morning, two teenagers stood in the middle of Montreal’s Mont-Royal Parc, spying on a family lunching, conversing with a man and his boombox and following various passersby on their strolls through the foliage. A seemingly peaceful day, except that these kids weren’t in Montreal — they were in the Wood Street Galleries participating in an installation that recreates the experience of voyeurism.

Luc Courschesne’s *Paysage No. 1* projects on a 360-degree screen scenes from the park, allowing “real” visitors to interact with virtual ones via four computer monitors that offer different courses of action. For example, when the man with a boombox samples some of his music, visitors can either encourage him to play on or change the station. One can chase a small girl through the trees or turn away to face another situation. It’s a very “choose-your-own-ending” type of game and those two teens, like most visitors, were caught between their fascination and frustration. They were able to choose what they saw but only within the limits of what the artist allowed them to see.

“I don’t like these choices,” kid A said to kid B, and they walked out. A funny scene considering how well the installation recreates the video game experience or,
CamillaLiebeck and ShonaAsbil's Test Rain.

Late Wednesday morning, watching television or the news. But surely do we really expect news as these kids did here. (Really do we even acknowledge our lack of shadows?)

Camilla Liebeck and Jenny Askwith's test live on camera. Rather than be projected onto a white wall, the text projected within the gallery's wooden frame, the letters moving against the wall, like words on a page. Participants try to read the poem by using their arms and heads to align the floating text. By doing so, we physically enter the virtual, imaginary space of the falling language and the act of creation, the act of writing itself.

"Language itself is a virtual world, a space of abstract sounds and symbols with a visual representation called text," write Jenny Askwith and Jenny Askwith. "We use constantly re-positioning language as we read, move and think.

Probably most every of the four works in Claudia Hart and the Video Poets' "Poetry of Movement" at the ICA, in which a crowd of computer-animated pig-men laugh, incrementally at some unseen spectacle. Visitors are prompted to press a virtual button that sets off the exaggerated sounds of a crying woman. The video for sounds speakers set in the back of the room as visitors are placed between the stage spectacle and the multi-system of pig that slowly moves accordingly. Hart successfully sets out to demonstrate the popular and commercial, and the (mis)use of language that accompanies both worlds.

As the pigs laugh and the woman enter our perspective, the video may upset our interpretation of the constructed emotionality. Therefore meaning is not static, it explores, but as we work through the work, that which we see leaves us higher than before. (Kat Sowade)

For his bio-project, Kari created a gene by translating a sentence from the Bible into DNA code, then recreated the Morse code into DNA base pairs using a computer program. In the experience on "narrative" aspects of DNA, which Kari projects as live sound in the gallery and online (genetic wastewater-processing).

Visitors to the dark exhibit — black walls with the original sentence, DNA pairs and Morse Code glowing upon them — can manipulate a light that will fire activities in the bacteria. The bacteria is then translated back into DNA, Morse and English — the meaning of the Biblical sentence has shifted.

Interaction, then, is necessary in order to set the work in motion, not merely experience it. I wonder if the teenagers understood this as they wandered through the galleries last week. Probably. These exhibits are strikingly accessible. The school-children might've missed the silence and the space, but the trade-off was worth it.}

for that matter, watching television or the news. But surely do we really expect news as these kids did here. (Really do we even acknowledge our lack of shadows?)