

## MOVE IT, MOTHERFUCKER!

*A criticism of the interactive installation that makes you move: RMR - Run Motherfucker Run by Marnix de Nijs.*

In his piece, Run Motherfucker Run (RMR), Marnix de Nijs invites the observer to become part of the artwork; to activate the artwork, and to make the observer turned participant, lose their breath.

Entering a dark room, I see a giant (5 X 2 metres) treadmill facing an equally large screen. The screen is flashing the letters "RMR" and the exhibit assistant invites me to climb onboard. Soon, I'm walking quickly, immersed in the world in front of me: a dark parking lot, music pounding in my ears, creating anticipation as I walk faster. Soon I can't help myself, I lose awareness of the exhibit assistant and the people who have gathered to watch me. I'm focusing on the screen ahead, and running, faster and faster, with a sense of recklessness, needing to see what comes next. Suddenly, the screen changes and I'm in the city, continuing my run in darkened city streets. The change jolts me back into 'reality' and I notice people standing around watching me run, I'm aware of my surroundings again and so I slow down and hop off the treadmill, breathless. My legs are strained and my heart is pounding in my chest, I'm breathing so hard I can barely hear my friend comment on the installation. Involving the body in artwork is exhilarating, bringing a sense of playfulness into art "viewing".

This combination of senses, of awareness of the body and immersion within a given context has been attempted many times. Typically arcade games try this: an endless assortment of boxing games, dance games, and cycling racing games exist but are not viewed as art, they are entertainment. What separates this piece? Marnix de Nijs challenges the participant, the artwork turns on only when a participant is engaged with it, the picture becomes clearer only by running faster. To enjoy this piece, you must be a participant; an observer of another participant might be interested by the screen ahead of them and the participant running but they are not truly experiencing the installation in the same sense.

Peripheral sensations are explored through interaction with the installation; participants gain a kinesthetic sense of velocity, acceleration and how their bodies are moving through time and space. This type of full immersion typically doesn't exist within traditional arcade games. Mocap Boxing, where the user puts on gloves and tries to match camera points within the arcade game doesn't achieve the connection effectively; Konami, famous for their interactive games including Dance Dance Revolution, Soccer, Rally Racing, and others, simply provide an interface between physical movement and on-screen activity.

Suspension of disbelief is the key element. RMR creates this suspension by involving nearly all the senses and letting the background fade away into the darkness of the room. Games which encourage physical movement, such as the Konami arcade games or even the Nintendo Wii still have the participant trapped in the real world, surrounded

by friends, with an ever-present environment of arcade or living room. The difference with RMR is the immersion into the massive screen. Virtual Reality experiences and games have tried to do this with the use of goggles and incapsulated rides. However these place the participant inside the designed world (goggles don't allow participants to see anything else) or physically being incased within a ride (DisneyQuest's CyberSpace Mountain in Florida). These have similar effects but the participant often doesn't have a choice in their actions, the ride goes on, and the VR goggles trap you in a world until you take off the goggles. What is interesting about RMR is that in my experience, the room faded away because of my immersion within the game. Since I was focused on it, and concentrating on running without sliding off the back of the treadmill, it was my own will that kept me within the designed world. The suspension of disbelief existed as long as I maintained it.

Changing the behavior of typical gaze-based art appreciation into a sensorial experience, one which does not rely on the participants ability to simply push a button and watch a show, (as many interactive installations seem to consist of) is a step forward. Enter Action at Aros, giving participants the opportunity to experience a fully immersive, interactive range of exhibits, (nearly all pieces made it past the push-a-button routine) and presenting something as intense and involving as de Nijs' work is a statement to the world of interactive art. Participants can immerse themselves in a full body experience in an artwork, distinctive from a video game (there is no objective present); not only experiencing art, but appreciating one's own body and senses in a whole new way; in an art gallery.