**Project name:** Surrogate Being

**Category:** Installation

**Artist:** Su Hyun Nam

**Abstract**

*Surrogate Being* is an interactive virtual environment that negotiates the discrepancy between memories and digital data of a nostalgic place to investigate affective possibilities in technology. Through the process of recreating the artist’s hometown in Korea in a 3D virtual space, she experienced the interplay between the objective, emotionless digital data and her affective memories of the place, and it allowed her to experience technology and computation in a meditative and affective way. The algorithmically generated digital images and memories are interwoven in the virtual space, and it invites audiences to explore and imbue it with their affective experience. In this way, this project explores an alternative way in which to include multifarious human experience and diverse perspectives in the computational process beyond the rule-based, logical approach.

**Background**

*Surrogate Being* is an interactive virtual environment that negotiates the discrepancy between memories and digital data of a nostalgic place. While virtually navigating her hometown in Korea through the panoramic view in online maps (such as Google Street View), the artist discovers that the digital data conflicts with the images she has reminisced of, yet evokes ineffable affective forces in mind. The achromatic 3D environment is a space for a provisional resolution of experiential observation, affective forces, and algorithmic information. It invites audiences to explore the virtual space and imbue it with their affective experience.

**Detailed Description**

My work embraces diverse perspectives and methodologies in technology to reexamine the traditionally male-dominated culture and society of technology. As adopting digital media to my creative practice, computational process becomes flexible and meditative beyond the canonical rule-driven approaches. Inspired from both the female programmer’s physical engagement of wiring in programming with early computers and the continuity and fluidity of analog signals, my work embodies multifarious human experience and includes diverse perspectives beyond the logical approach to computation and broadens the spectrum of digital media experience.

In this way, my art practice closes the gap between the computational process and the human experience and mind. *Surrogate Being* embodies my memories of a nostalgic place and my experiences to encounter digital data that conflicts with the affective image in my memories. While virtually navigating my hometown in Korea through the panoramic view in online maps (such as Google Street View), I discover that the digital data conflicts with the images I have reminisced of. In the process of creating the virtual space, I negotiate the discrepancy between mechanically generated online information and sentimental memories of my hometown, and the virtual environment becomes a space for a provisional resolution of experiential observation, affective forces, and algorithmic information.
This interactive installation invites audiences to control the virtual space with their body and the custom-designed interface. As audiences encounter the deconstructed landscape and approach to the image, it transforms into a navigable cityscape. Audiences can move back and forth to control the position and the speed of the camera in the virtual space. The physical position and movement of the custom interface, which audiences hold in their hands, change the direction of navigation in the scene. The virtual landscape is created in Autodesk Maya, and the interaction is designed in Unity and Arduino integrated with various sensors. This interaction and relationship of the virtual space and audiences represent my affective experience of dealing with the faded memories of a nostalgic place. While the interaction is not intuitive, it is clear that the image responds to the audience’s action. The memories are vague, yet they have strong affect connecting us to the place or object. Digitally embodied representation of my memories allows me to share this experience with audiences.

Link to videos: https://suhyunnam.com/Surrogate-Being
Bio

As an interdisciplinary media artist and researcher working at the intersection of art, technology, science, and philosophy, Su Hyun Nam explores her relationship to digital media with an artistic and meditative approach to computation. Her affective experience with technology, which emerged from the process of digital art making, is represented in various forms of media art projects. Her work, including an interactive video installation, 3D game art, and media performance, has been exhibited both nationally and internationally at venues from Spain, UAE, Greece, and Singapore to South Korea. Her community-based media art projects were recently showcased at Burchfield Penney Art Center and Hallwalls Contemporary Art Center in Buffalo, New York, and her papers have been presented at SIGGRAPH Asia in Japan and the International Symposium on Electronic Art (ISEA) in Colombia. Su Hyun Nam is currently an Assistant Professor in the Department of Transmedia at Syracuse University and a Ph.D. candidate in media study at SUNY Buffalo. She earned an M.F.A in art and technology studies from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.