

# Meeting Rituals & Shared Senses.

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**How do we trust as networking bodies?  
Do we need to see each other,  
or do we need to touch?**

When we meet and scan each other's identities, our senses are increasingly replaced by identification technologies such as social media filters and face recognition technologies. How can we design for sensitive embodied perception in mediated realities?

*Media extend our bodies in time and space, but they prevent us from touching.<sup>i</sup>*

In artistic and academic research we explore the themes of 'trust', 'reciprocity', 'privacy' and 'presence' in our current social eco-system of mediated realities. It is argued that *face to face connection, spatial embodied experience and touch*, are core components for reciprocity, social mirroring and trust – which are in turn the foundations of our social structures. In this context we build on concepts of media and social scientists (William J. Mitchell, Sherry Turckle, Paul Virilio, Arjen Mulder, Antonio Damasio, Caroline Nevejan). We further build on audience experiential feedback and reflective witnessing to create our participatory art works, such as in: *Paranoid Panopticon (collection ZKM)*, *Agora Phobia (digitalis)*, *Saving Face*, *Master Touch*, *Tele-Trust*, *E.E.G. Kiss*. Our work is inspired by art works of Lygia Clark, Rafael Lozano Hemmer, Valie Export and Peter Weibel, Sophie Calle, Marina Abramovic & Ulay, Dan Graham.

Ovid's<sup>ii</sup> myth **Echo and Narcissus** inspires the spatial-social set up of our performance installations, which we design as 'meeting places'. Ovid tells us about Narcissus and his self-image in relation to others. In this tragic, beautiful myth he **deconstructs** Narcissus's social, sensory and psychological perception, through mirrors, reflections, projections and echoes:

*When Narcissus sees his image mirrored in the water, he mistakes it for an other person. He falls in love and tries to connect with his reflection, by asking questions: "Who are you? Where are you? Can I hold you?" Invisibly from behind the trees, Nymph Echo (who secretly loves Narcissus) responds his questions. In her voice, echoing his own, Narcissus believes to hear the beloved person's voice in the water - responding his love...*



*Echo and Narcissus,*  
By John William  
Waterhouse, 1903

Although tragic, the myth shows the social self (and the identity) as a **sensory construct**:

- 1.) Narcissus feels present as a tangible body (kneeling in front of the water);**
- 2.) he sees a visual self image (his mirror-image in the water); and**
- 3.) he talks and hears his voice in conversation with others (echoed by nymph Echo).**

The myth poetically shows a *confused synthesis of senses*, to perceive the world and others: through seeing, hearing, touching.

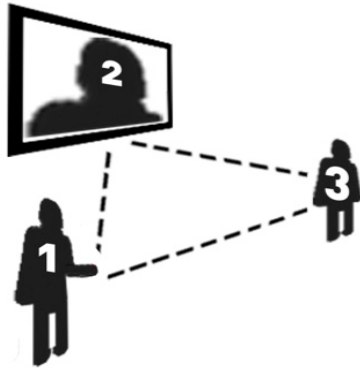
## Shared Senses

I am part of the networks and the networks are part of me...

'Disconnection' would mean 'amputation' - I link, therefore I am. <sup>iii</sup>

The *confused* 'synthesis of senses' in the myth of Narcissus, allows for social-spatial models to design our performances and installations - which we call Meeting Places.

In these Meeting Places we experiment with the experience of our *tangible body* in relation to our *virtual identities and digitized presence* on media screens.



**These social-spatial interaction models exist of 3 positions:**

- 1.) Participant
- 2.) Person on media screen
- 3.) Audience

**We invite the audience in all 3 positions, to experiment with new forms of meeting.**

The Meeting Places function as **artistic social labs** in city public spaces. Participants are invited as co-researchers in **meeting-rituals** for an embodied experience.

During the rituals, participants experiment with wearable and intimate interfaces to extend the private body with immersive technology for augmented human-networked interaction, using media screens, smart textiles, databases, E.E.G. measurements and face-recognition-technologies. With these technologies, audience members experience new forms of sensory perception through 'seeing', 'hearing', 'touching', 'reciprocity' and 'kinesthesia'.

## Can I kiss you online?

The meeting-rituals are hosted by the artists.

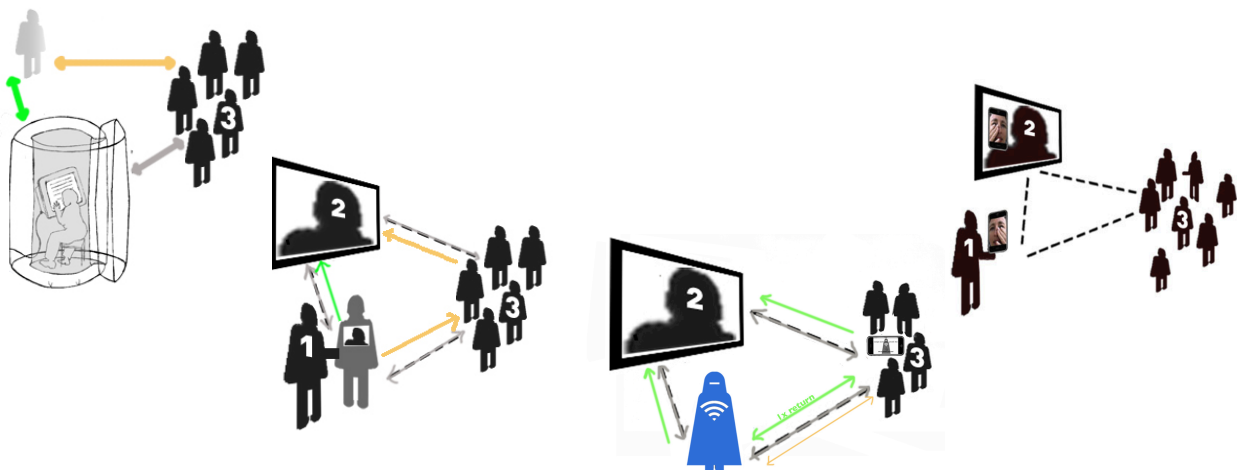
Each meeting ritual explores sensitive and intuitive ways for sensing the other's embodied presence and nearness in a digitized world. At the same time the rituals raise critical reflection on the ethical implications of intimate social-technological systems, with questions such as:

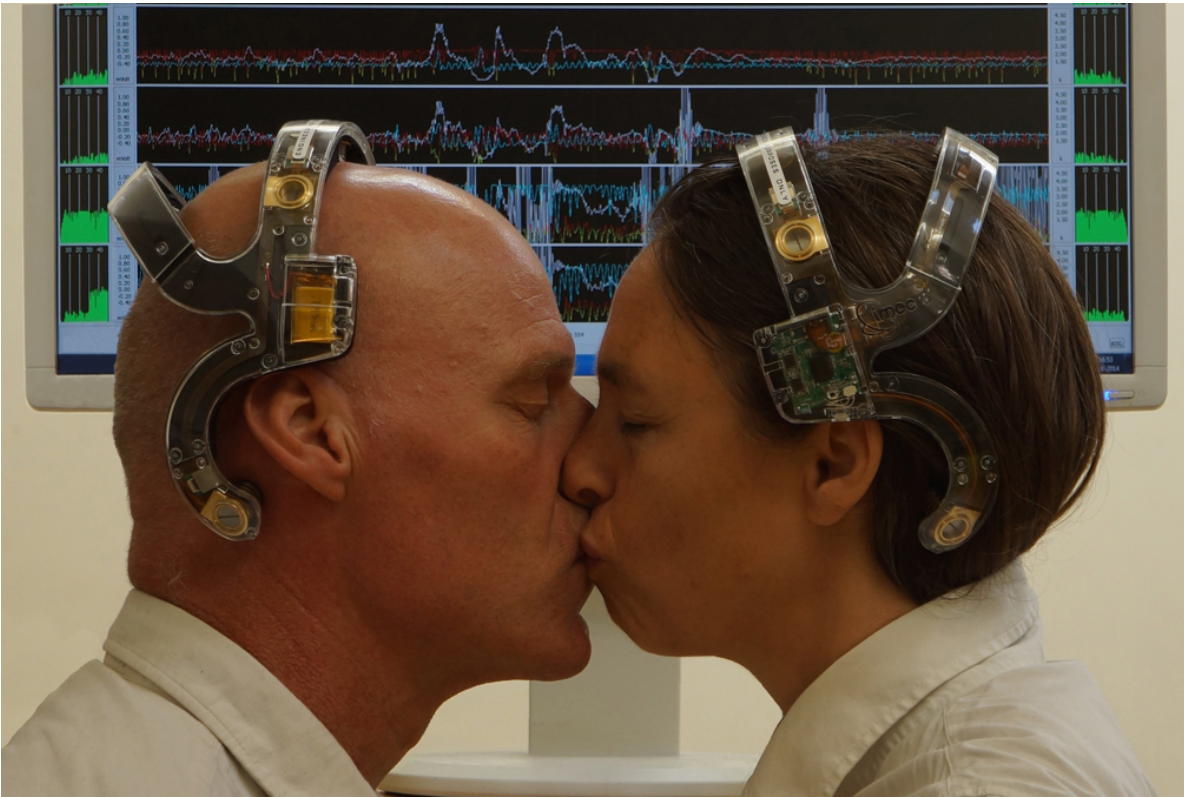
**Can we measure a kiss and what kissers feel together?**

**Can we transfer a kiss and it's intimacy online?**

**Can we save our private kisses in a database, to be used by others?**

**Can I touch you online?**





E.E.G. KISS by Lancel & Maat, 2014

<http://www.lancelmaat.nl/work/e.e.g-kiss/>

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<sup>i</sup> Over mediatheorie. Taal, beeld, geluid, gedrag, by Arjen Mulder, 2004.

<sup>ii</sup> Echo and Narcissus by Ovid, Book III of the Metamorphoses

<sup>iii</sup> ME++ The Cyborg Self and the Networked City by William J. Mitchell, 2003.