

Wirefire

1

("Goldberg Variations" Wirefire music in background. headphones. webcam. wine.)
(presentation on the stage)

A Presentation about Wirefire...

A Complete History of Love in The Wires.

parts 17 - 24

2

I gave the presentation this clever title because it is not only a presentation about Wirefire, the virtual performance project.

It is A Complete History of Love in The Wires. "The Wires" being a euphemism for the Internet, of course. The "love" being not only the love which was performed but also the love of the project, the love of the work, the love we made and continue to make.

So much of what Wirefire was, is perfectly spelled out on the website.

<http://entropy8zuper.org/wirefire>

The project was started in 1999 and was over and done with more than 9 years ago. You won't find anything new or innovative in the technology or programming that you can use for today. At the time it was amazing. Pushing the possibilities of web technology for sure. There was nothing else online like it. And we'd argue there hasn't been anything online like it since. And there were consequences to this performance... Wirefire was one of the first, if not the first, multimedia cyberperformance projects online. And doing it every week for 3 years had a big impact on us and the work that we do to this day. And it is that progression which I want to present to you.

Through the magic of this particular chat interface I will be able to let you hear and play with files that were a part of that performance again. So this is a bit of an "interactive archeology" as well.

who are You ?

Auriea

Michaël

<http://entropy8.com>

+

<http://zuper.com>

<http://entropy8zuper.org>

1999-2003(ish)

although it never really ends

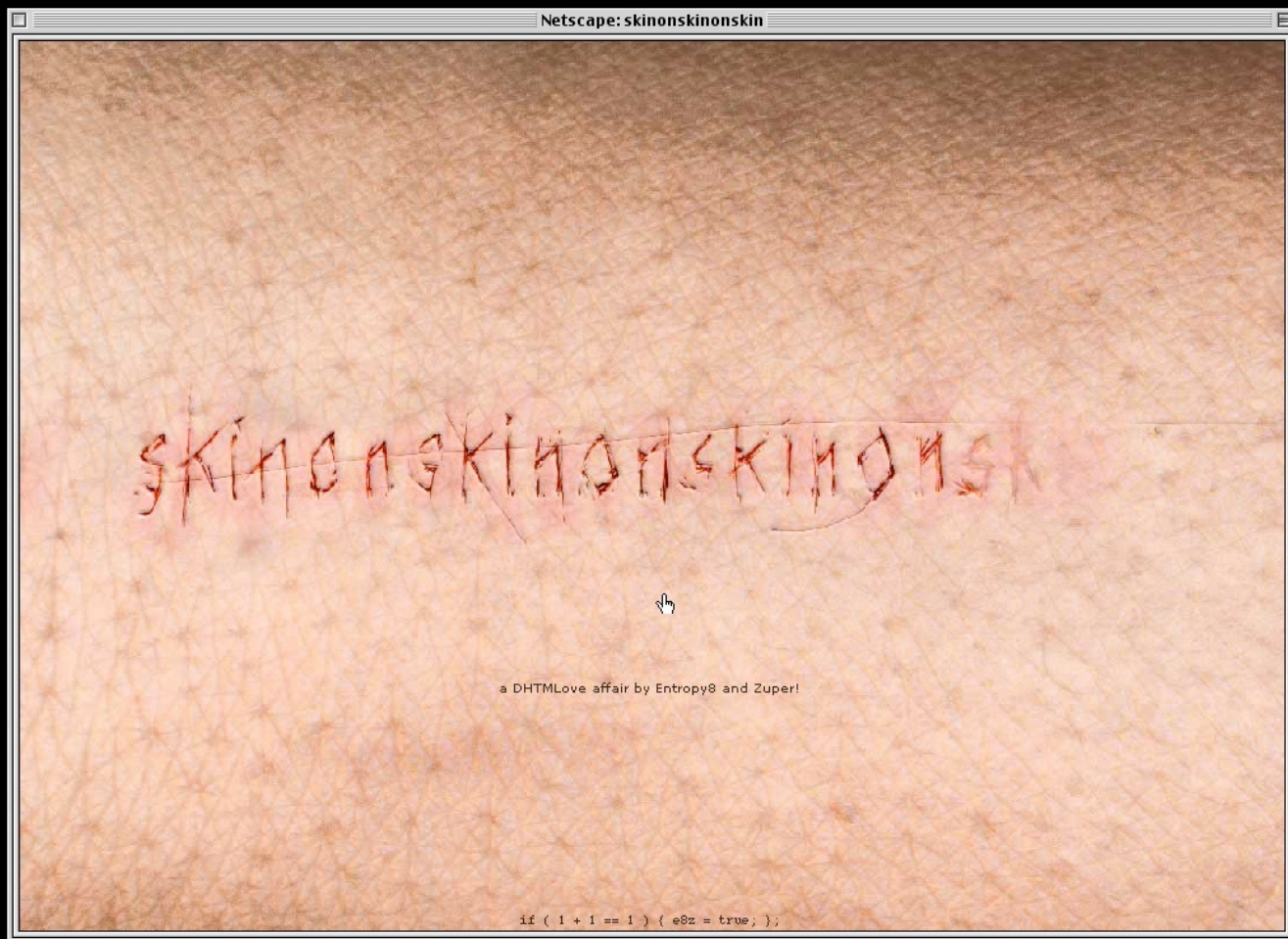
3

I, Auriea, NYC, entropy8.com (put saint Auriea on stage)

He, Michael, Belgium, zuper.com (put saint Michael on stage)

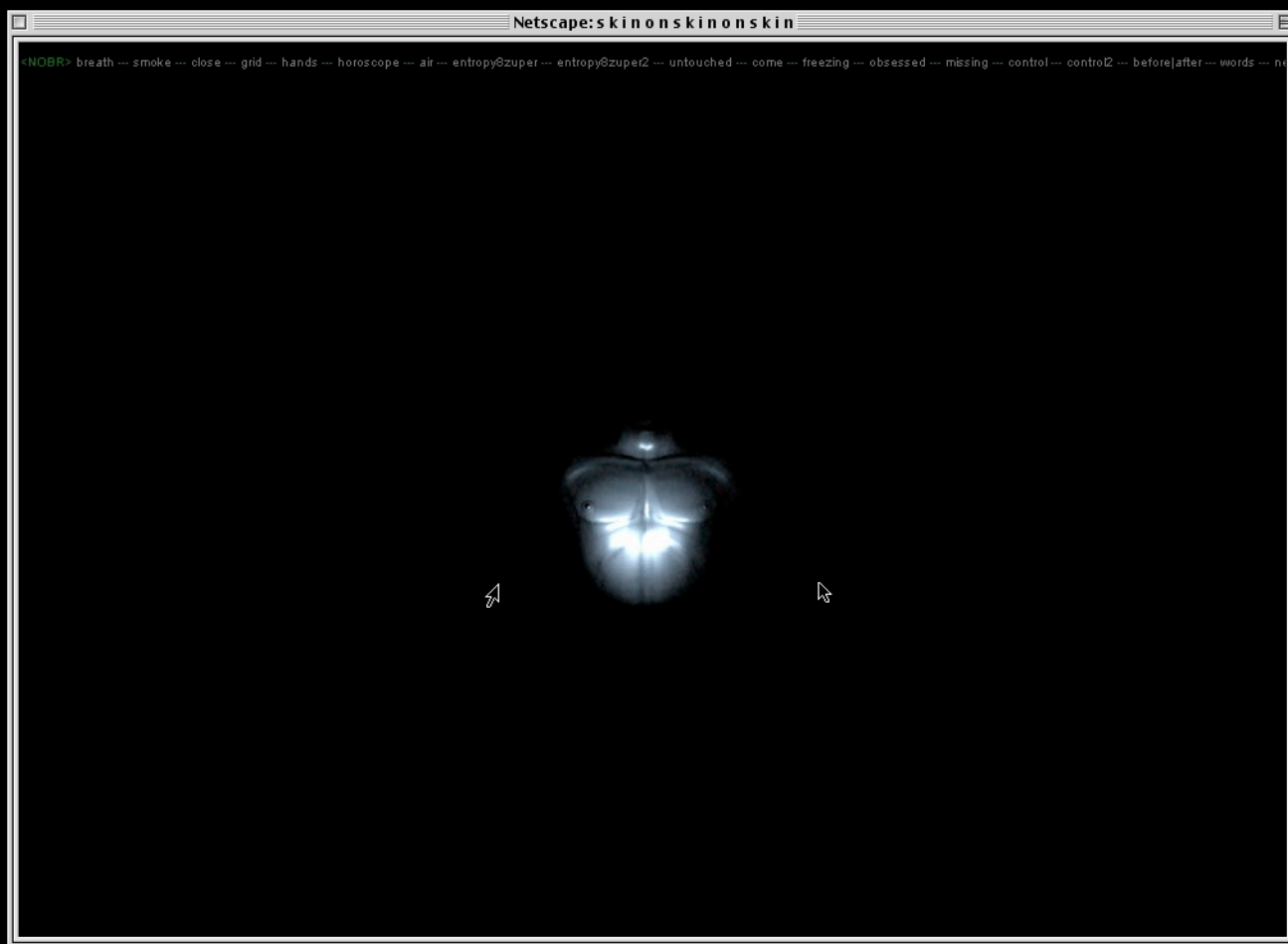
We met and came together in 1999 to form entropy8zuper.org

Entropy8Zuper! was always about its content. And the content of E8Z! was autobiography. We felt a special magic, a "technoromanticism" of the web, back then. And the web became a part of our story. We felt that this network that brought us together, on which we both worked and played since 1995 was a place, a destination, a location where we lived and loved. We wanted people to realize that this place wasn't about machines, but people. Michael and I designed and built literally hundreds of websites together.



<http://www.hell.com/NO/SUCH/PLACE/EXISTS/seasideMOTEL/>

We met on a server called hell.com
Where we collaborated with other artists on various web based things.
We knew each other's work but had never really chatted with each other... until one
night we did.
Our personal collaboration began the day after we met... in a secret directory
called 'seasideMOTEL'

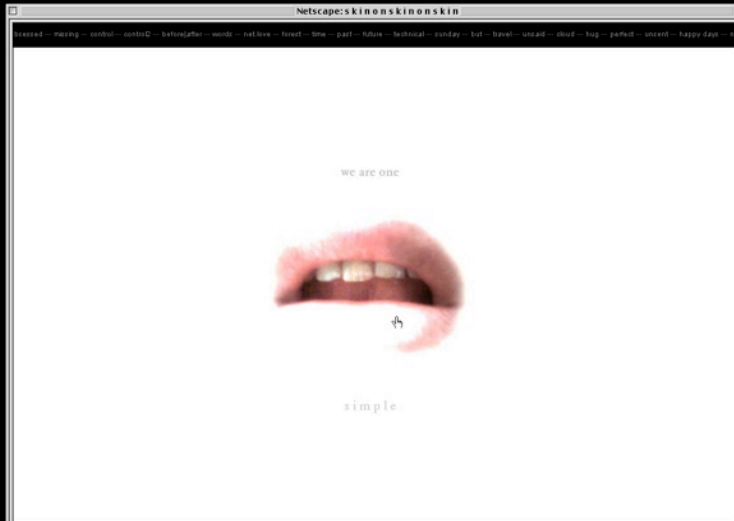
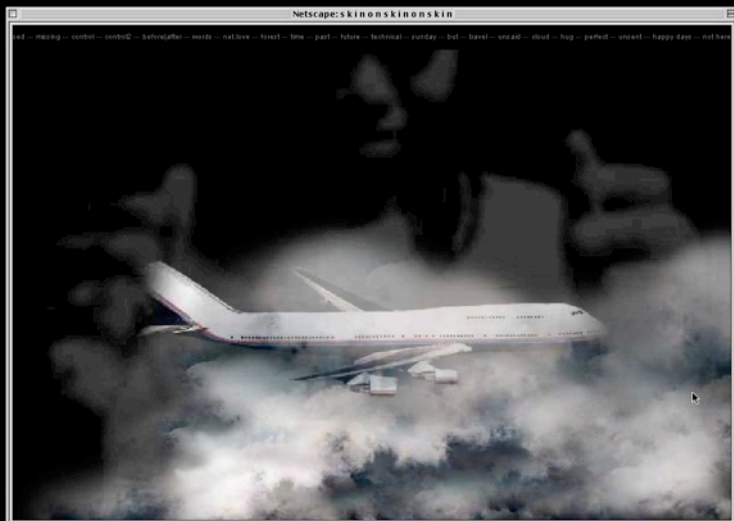


<http://entropy8zuper.org/skinonskinonskin>

5

He sent me this webpage
as i moved my mouse, it mirrored the motion of my pointer.
it breathed.
i fell in love. he fell in love.

i sent him a webpage back. we did this, back and forth, for several weeks...



<http://entropy8zuper.org/skinonskinonskin>

7

womanonfire -> zuper: sleep
 womanonfire -> zuper: dream
 zuper: (private) I think I'll stay awake just a little bit
 zuper: (private) and watch you
 zuper: (private) breathe
 zuper: (private) memories
 womanonfire -> zuper: feel the memories
 zuper: you're making exactly the same gestures as I am:
 holding your head, stroking your hair, ...
 womanonfire -> zuper: :
 womanonfire -> zuper: it is you stroking my hair
 zuper: (private) my hand follows the shape of the side of your
 body without touching it



nskinonskin private
nskinonskin EVENT



au says: no tears until we can trade them (Mon 8:40pm)
z8 says: and then sleep (Mon 8:40pm)
au says: yes (Mon 8:40pm)
au says:night (Mon 8:40pm)

fade away....
again, again, again, again....



<http://entropy8zuper.org/underyourdesk/>



8

During skinonskinonskin, at some point we wanted to chat more but the technology for doing so in those days was almost always pure text. We wanted a simple way that we could have something a bit more visceral.

So, We first made this solution. which was a chat room made for two.
On the server. Underyourdesk.

<http://entropy8zuper.org/underyourdesk>

As with most of our things, it's actually still there, you can go there but it no longer works.

It was the place we met and could talk. We built in text chat, and webcams but also a way to play music for each other, with files uploaded to the server. We had clocks at the top so we would know what time it was where we both were. We uploaded images to the server also for each other to see. We never really wanted to hear each others voice at this time. We never talked on the telephone. We created a sort of poetic fantasy for one another but it was real, very real.

We eventually let other people see skinonskinonskin. It was a story, we felt, worth telling. In a way this was the beginning of our autobiographical exhibitionism. Our love affair with performative romance.

<http://entropy8zuper.org>

9

And we made this website which became a nexus around which we could love and work.

<http://entropy8zuper.org>

Here you see a selection of projects we made.

This site is where we got clients for our webdesign business and also where we continued to make net art together. A few months after we met I moved here to Belgium so that we could be together physically. So while Wirefire started when I was still in New York City, it ended with us sitting side by side.

Wirefire

July 8, 1999 - January 9, 2003
every Thursday night, at Midnight, in Belgium.

<http://e8z.org/wirefire>

<http://entropy8zuper.org/wirefire/SECRET.HISTORY/>

10

Wirefire was the evolution of 'Underyourdesk'
It had the webcams and the communication features.
We built it in Flash and used perl and javascripts to control the loading and unloading of files because back in those days Actionscript was in its infancy.
It was a truly hand made solution to the problem of text chat's inadequacy.

We wanted to see, feel, hear, touch.
Especially when we were apart.

Moreover we wanted to share this with others.
It is difficult to say why.

We wanted other people to share in our... joy. To recognize that this also was the web... That it wasn't about technology alone and that interactivity is an expressive medium. The web is a metaphor for the strands that connect us all. We are not alone, we are not the individuals we think we are.

Wirefire also became a recycler of elements from entropy8zuper.org's other websites.
Each element having a meaning to us and becoming an element of communication.

We added files chaotically to Wirefire over time. And the performance more and more lost coherence... or depending how you look at it gained dimension.

what was Wirefire?

http://entropy8zuper.org/wirefire/movies/wirefire_44canned.swf

11

So, what was Wirefire?

The actual performance interface is unfortunately no longer functioning.

But to give you a sense of it I have loaded a few of the files in the Tap here. The moon for example. or our hands, which were an important recurring element.

I can also show you a sample of it running, simply pulling the files we made at random if you go here:

http://entropy8zuper.org/wirefire/movies/wirefire_44canned.swf

It will be different for each of you, in this case. But in the original, live performance Michael and I would be controlling everything.

(Please watch for 2 minutes.)



Okay, after that chaotic experience let me explain how it was controlled at the time.

It was usually a much more slow back and forth between he and I.

(put controls onto the stage)

These were the first versions of our custom interfaces. We used these for maybe the first year or two we did the Wirefire performance.

The categories at the top, if you roll over them give access to their contents. Actions, dreams, Music etc. These were simply folders of .swf files on our server. In this first version there was a bit of programming involved... I had to place a new mouth or hand or ear every time I added a new file. I loved this version of the interface though, with its very illusionistic and graphical interface to the things we wanted to call up. You can see the difference between mine and Michael's interfaces. We could invent these as we went along.

TOOL INTERFACE OVERVIEW

Performers see what the audience sees and control the mixing of a live show. In a typical setup there are 10 levels of layering available for visuals, 10 for sounds, 2 for background music. The number of layers is configurable and may be altered to suit the needs of the performance.

Movies are saved in directories on the server with loose category titles such as: Actions, Dreams, Sounds.

The tool application automatically reads the directories that contain the fuel movies and generates a button for each movie. These buttons when clicked load the file into a layer of the performance. (Not shown but also in this area is the performer chat input box.



The movies currently being streamed to viewers are listed here. Sliders are available to control alpha transparency and volume of each movie, image or sound clip. The performer may also unload individual clips from the viewing area.

This section contains essential application commands such as, opening and closing a live show, and archiving data files. There are preset buttons for special effects and also programmable buttons which can control variables in the flash movies.

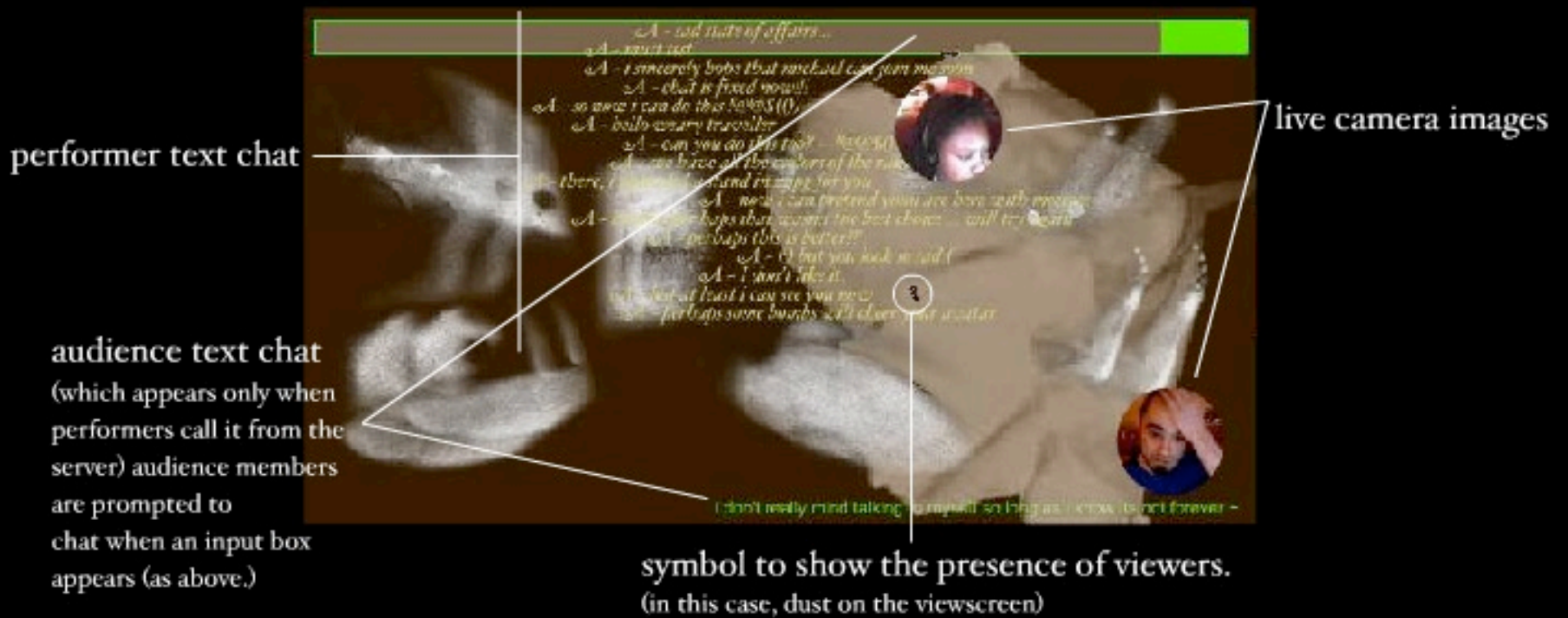
Information such as last movie chosen, Level currently being filled, i.p. address of who sent the last movie command and number of audience members

Later we evolved the system, as the Flash technology and scripting evolved, to be much more flexible. We could just upload files on the fly to folders on the server. And it would automatically be reflected in the interface. Just as simple lists.

CLIENT INTERFACE OVERVIEW

This is what the audience sees, a composite of everything called up from the server.

Movies may be interactive. Sound files may be .swf or .wav format. Image files may be .swf or .jpg format.



this is what the audience would see in the web browser.

we would type to each other
for the audience
and they could type back to us.

when audience members would show up they would be represented as a speck of dust on the screen.

who was the audience?

15

We will never know who all the specks were.
their dialog floated into our dream and increasingly
became a poetic connection for the performances
recurring themes.

recurring themes, bees, gongs, garden of eden.

more opera, more bees, more gongs!
(load the gongs onto the stage)

the connecting us all was time...

Thursday night at midnight in Belgium. A magical time.

The Death of Wirefire

16

but it had to end. it had. to end. we had changed, but more than that, the web had changed.

By 2003, The Internet we had fell in love with was gone. With beginnings of Web 2.0 the type of handmade web experiences we had been crafting since 1995 were relics.

Michael and I were living together. And while the weekly performance of Wirefire still felt special to us we increasingly felt the need of a change...

(read the following screens aloud.)



*A - i think so
Z - but what and how and when?
A - all of these things will take planning
Z - and inspiration.
A - ye
Z - and work... ..
A - that is just what it takes, yes
A - but i do think we should discontinue it
A - maybe do it spontaneously from time to time
A - but maybe not every week
Z - and then make it a one-time thing?
A - yes
A - that will take awhile tho
Z - so this is the last regular Wirefire?
A - i don't know about that
A - it is difficult
A - we've just always done it
Z - there's something about it that bothers me.
Z - Wirefire hasn't changed but the net has
A - right*

A - i think so
Z - but what and how and when?
A - all of these things will take planning
Z - and inspiration
A - ye
Z - and work... ..
A - that is just what it takes, yes
A - but i do think we should discontinue it
A - maybe do it spontaneously from time to time
A - but maybe not every week
Z - and then make it --- -----
A - -
A - that will take awhile tho
Z - so this is the last regular Wirefire?
A - i don't know about that
A - it is difficult
A - we've just always done it
Z - there's something about it that bothers me



Z - Wirefire hasn't changed but the net has...
A - right
A - its our utopia
A - out of place
Z - indeed
should try and figure out what we like in Wirefire
Z - and check whether the current Wirefire is the best way of
doing these things
A - you mean like, design
Z - no, more emotionally... maybe even just personally...
Z - it's not like we're doing this for the audience...
A - i know what you mean
A - but we have to bring it back in some form
Z - our lives have changed...
Z - a new form that fits those lives?
A - i am not sure what that would be
A - but then i have not given it any thought yet
Z - i feel a bit like a dinosaur doing these weekly performances...
Z - in my restless dreams... i see something that is always on...
Z - not just the one hour per week...
Z - and almost per definition, something with a larger role for the
audience



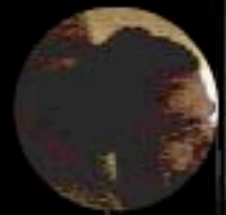
A - right
A - its our utopia
A - out of place
Z indeed should try and figure out what we like in Wirefire
Z - and check whether the current Wirefire is the best way of doing these things
A - you mean like, design
Z - no, more emotionally... maybe even just personally...

Z - we should try and figure out what we like in Wirefire
Z - and check whether the current Wirefire is the best way of
doing these things
A - you mean like, design
Z - no, more emotionally... maybe even just personally...
Z - it's not like we're doing this for the audience...
A - i know what you mean
A - but we have to bring it back in some form
Z - our lives have changed...
Z - a new form that fits those lives?
A - i am not sure what that would be
A - but then i have not given it any thought yet
Z - i feel a bit like a dinosaur doing these weekly performances...
Z - in my restless dreams... i see something that is always on...
Z - not just the one hour per week...
Z - and almost per definition, something with a larger role for the
audience
Z - a MMORPG!
Z - HaHaHa
A - MMORPGWF!
A - BDSMMMORPGWF!!
A - i like that

20the hell? la la la la la lalala la de dah you make my blood hurt my love wehnt to hate school 45645645

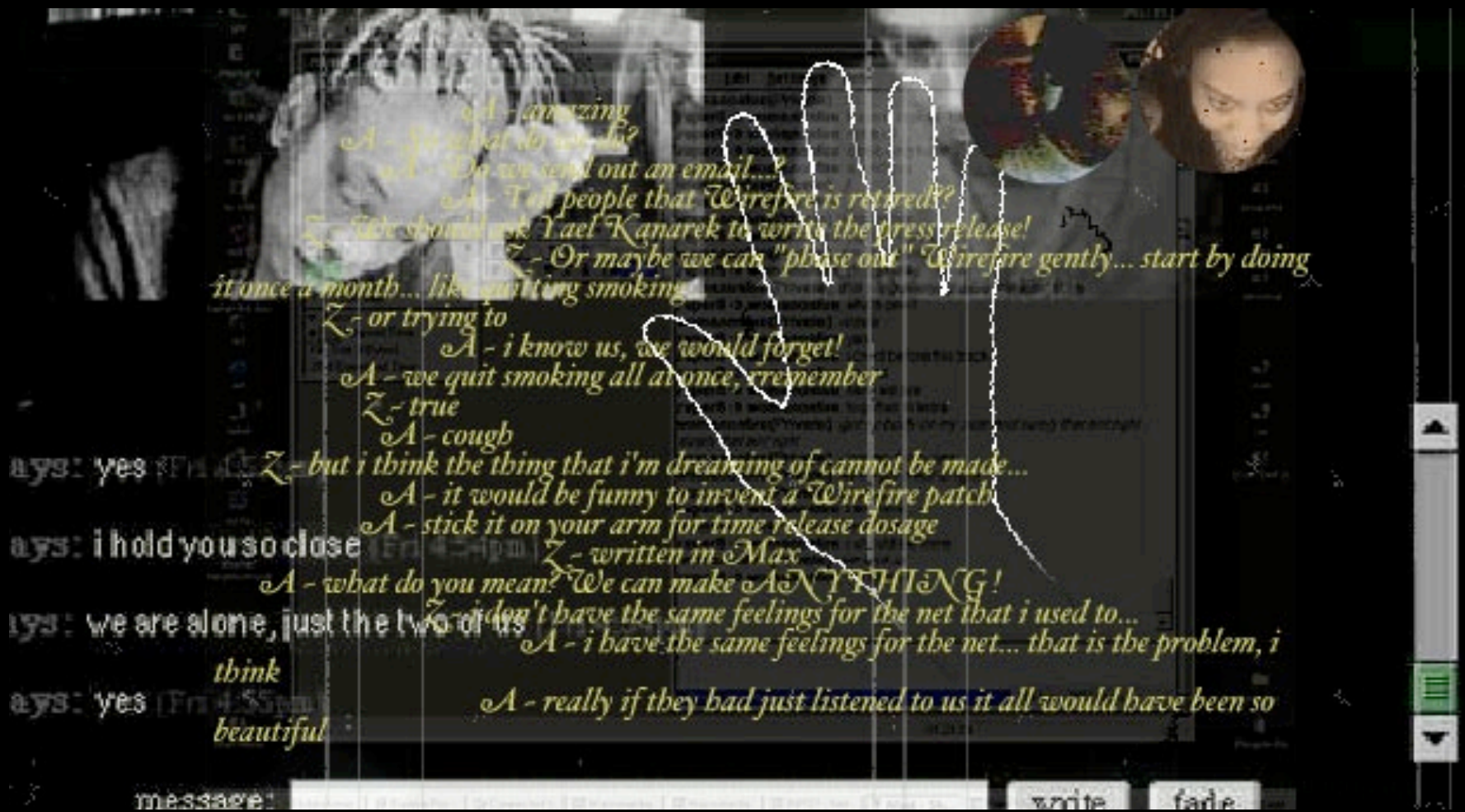
Z - it's not like we're doing this for the audience...
 A - i know what you mean
 A - but we have to bring it back in some form
 Z - our lives have changed...
 Z - a new form that fits those lives?
 A - i am not sure what that would be
 A - but then i have not given it any thought yet
 Z - i feel a bit like a dinosaur doing these weekly performances...
 Z - in my restless dreams... i see something that is always on...
 Z - not just one hour per week...
 Z - and almost per definition, something with a larger role for the audience
 Z - a MMORPG!
 Z - HaHaHa
 A - MMORPGWF!
 A - BDSMMMORPGWF!!
 A - i like that

A - yeah... Wirefire is wonderfully old skool
A - Edelwisse
A - Edelwiiiise
Z - and in all those years, Flash's performance has hardly improved!
A - Bless My Homeland Forreeeeeeeevvvvveeeeeerrrrrr
A - amazing
A - So what do we do?
A - Do we send out an email...?
A - Tell people that Wirefire is retired??
Z - We should ask Yael Kanarek to write the press release!



... time takes time all the time ~ ~ ~ never was any good at cryptic crosswords ~ no.. keep em guessing ~

A - yeah... Wirefire is wonderfully old skool
 A - Edelwisse
 A - Edelwiiiise
 Z - and in all those years. Flash's performance has hardly improved!
 A - Bless My Homeland Forreeeeeeeevvvvveeeeeerrrrrr
 A - amazing
 A - So what do we do?
 A - Do we send out an email...?
 A - Tell people that Wirefire is retired??
 Z - We should ask Yael Kanarek to write the press release!



Z - Or maybe we can "phase out" Wirefire gently... start by doing it once a month... like stopping smoking
Z - or trying to
A - i know us, we would forget!
A - and we quit smoking all at once, remember
Z - true
A - cough
Z - but i think the thing that i'm dreaming of cannot be made...
A - it would be funny to invent a Wirefire patch
A - stick it on your arm for time release dosage
Z - written in Max
A - what do you mean? We can make ANYTHING!
Z - i don't have the same feelings for the net that i used to...
A - i have the same feelings for the net... that is the problem, i think
A - really if they had just listened to us it all would have been so beautiful



once saw it

A - yeah yeah yeah

Z - a lot of people who know about Wirefire have never seen a performance
Z - in the over three years that we've been doing this, they never

Z - it's a select group, the people who have actually seen it!...

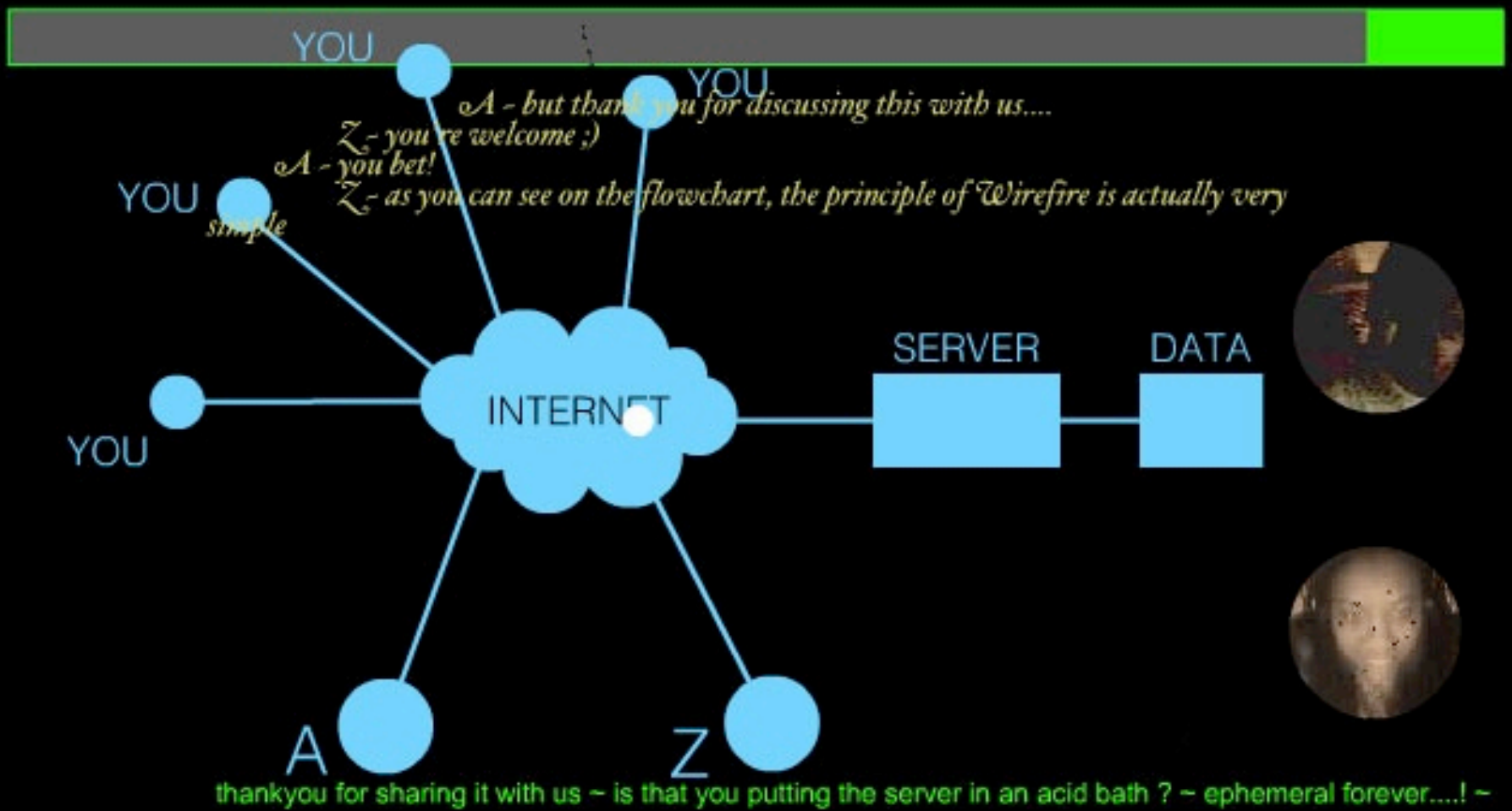
s still not being used to its potential.. i think you both realised that long ago... ~ ~ yeah, thats a shame ~

A - yeah yeah yeah

Z - a lot of people who know about Wirefire have never seen a performance

Z - in the over three years that we've been doing this, they never once saw it

Z - it's a select group, the people who have actually seen it!...



A - but thank you for discussing this with us...

Z - you're welcome ;)

A - you bet!

Z - as you can see on the flowchart, the principle of Wirefire is actually very simple



TH *not for sale* ID

TALE OF TALES

<http://tale-of-tales.com>

2002 - now

25

Wirefire performances ended in 2003

But even before that, in 2002 we had started up a new initiative a company called Tale of Tales where we decided to make videogames.

But not just any videogames.... We were looking for alternative ways to make interactive artworks and ways of bringing our work to more people. We looked at Playstation 1 videogames that we were playing and realized with revelation that these are interactive and they are art so why not do that?

We had high hopes for the medium of games! We saw and still see so much potential in this medium beyond the kind of 'fun' experiences people were creating. We want to make games that are beautiful and meaningful and perhaps strange to the mainstream gaming public.

Along with that we no longer wanted our work to be about just 'us'

By the time of the Death of Wirefire, We felt that it was past time for us to bring a wider range of story and life to our interactive work.

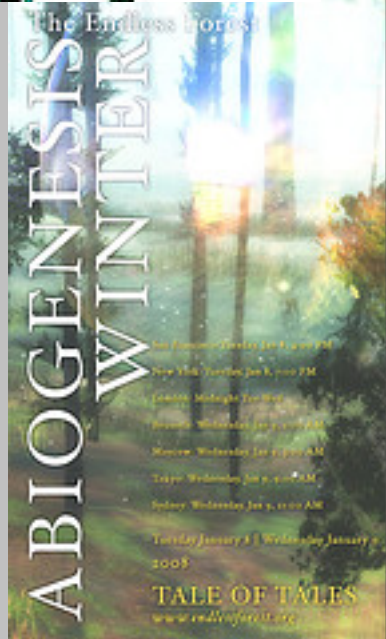
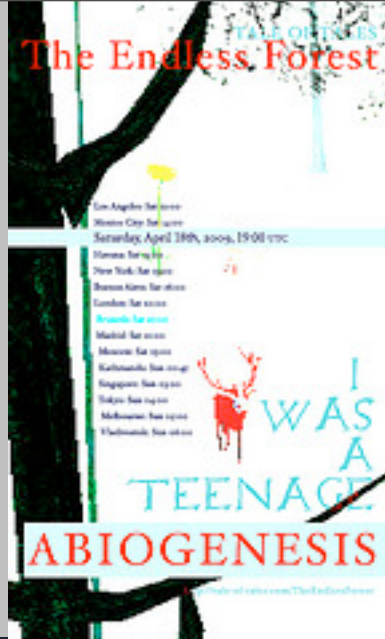
It is in that spirit that we started Tale of Tales. And we have released 5 games so far.



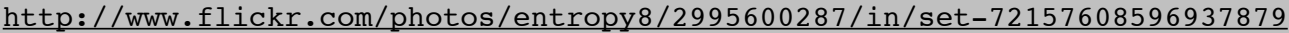
From that conversation in The Death of Wirefire was born a game called The Endless Forest.

Michael mentioned that dream he had of a world that is always on, 24/7 and where people could go, where we could go and be with them, where we all together could experience the kind of joy and magic of Wirefire without it being _like Wirefire.

The Endless Forest is a multiplayer game where everyone plays a deer. Albeit a deer with a human face. A magical deer in a magical forest. There is no text, no chat and each player is identified by a symbol which hangs, glowing, between the antlers. It was launched in 2005 and continues to this day. You can downloading for free from our website.



Over the years we have had many parties in The Forest. An event we call ABIOTENESIS. During the ABIOTENESIS events Michael and I come to the forest in special disguise as the Twin Gods. We transform the sunny peaceful world. We make rain fall or flowers bloom, we basically cause chaos, an explosion of music and light. All the deer gather and play.



you can see the interface we have to make things happen in the forest at the bottom there.



The important thing for us is that in The Endless Forest the love is shared by all. It is a peaceful game that you cannot play without laughing. It is a game about serenity and joy and togetherness. The lessons we learned about communication from Wirefire were absorbed into this atmosphere.

One need not understand each other to communicate. In fact, keeping words away. Not being literal but rather allowing aesthetics and in the case of The Forest, body language, to be the communication... often this leads to a deeper understanding. Another kind of understanding.

Bientôt l'été



<http://tale-of-tales.com/bientotlete>

30

Another of our projects which has Wirefire as its ancestor is our new game Bientot l'ete which will soon be released.

We did not want to write words. So, it is based around the work of French writer Marguerite Duras. Whom Michael wanted to make a tribute to. It is based around a man and a woman and love. It takes place in a virtual environment.

Bientôt l'été

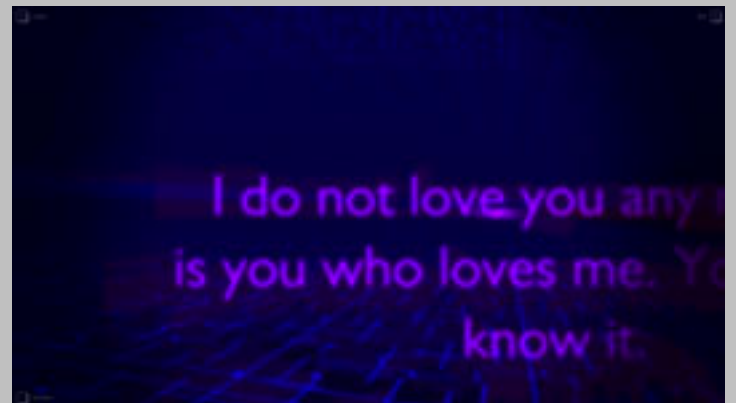


<http://tale-of-tales.com/bientotlete>

Let me read to you a description...

Bientôt l'été is a videogame in which you take walks on an empty beach. The game plays in third person and you choose whether you want to play a man or a woman. On the beach, you see phrases appear, often related to love. All you do is walk.

Bientôt l'été



<http://tale-of-tales.com/bientotlete>

32

There is one building on the dike. When you enter it, you sit down at a small café table decorated with a chess board pattern. Soon another character comes and sits across from you. This other character is in fact another player who, like you, is playing *Bientôt l'été*, somewhere on the internet. If you chose to play the man, the other player shows up as a woman, disregarding their own choice.

The phrases you saw on the beach are now available for you to use in a conversation with the other player. By moving a chess piece over the table top, you select what you want to say. All you do is talk.

The other player looks transparent, and so do their chess pieces. And their voice sounds like it comes from a loudspeaker. When you leave the café, you find a strange object, a different one every time. It looks a bit glitchy and when you approach it, it disappears. And if you walk very far along the beach, the sky becomes transparent and turns into a giant window through which you can see stars and planets, even during the day time.

As it turns out, the entire world your avatar lives in is artificial. The other player is real. But they are playing on another artificial world, far away from yours. When you close your eyes in the game, you get an impression of the computer systems that are running this simulation.

In a way, *Bientôt l'été* is a metaphor for playing videogames. And for the contact we have with other people through the internet, very far and yet close. I met my wife through the internet. She co-directed the game and designed the characters. So, in a way, *Bientôt l'été* is about us. Welcome to our world. Hope you feel

An Ongoing Process of Love in The Wires.

Through our work with games we see what we are doing as An Ongiong Process. It is not that we exchanged one way of working for another but it has truly been for us an evolution. Always involving the life changing experience that was the Wirefire performances.

*A Neverending
Story of Love
in The Wires.*

Thank you!