

## Genderbender, Smartstall, The Automatic Confession Machine

This presentation reviews three works: *Genderbender, Smart Stall* (exhibited in The Bridge: SIGGRAPH 96 Art Show), and *The Automatic Confession Machine* (exhibited in Machine Culture, SIGGRAPH 93).

*Genderbender 1.0*, loosely based on the Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI) (1974) and the Turing test for artificial intelligence, scavenges the trash heap of psychological testing in pursuit of the "Virtual Personality." It allows a user to self-administer a gender test of 20 masculine, feminine, or neutral traits. The Morph-o-meter and the Tile-o-matic give instant feedback on whether masculine or feminine characteristics predominate in the user's personality by morphing towards identifiably male or female visual representations and revealing the user's digitized image. Based on the user's input, the "psychologist" displays: "You are a man!" or "You are a woman!" or "You are androgynous!"

*Smart Stall* is the Master/Slave Duchampian Telecommunications Interface. It is conceived as an immersive, interactive theatrical experience inspired by Antonin Artaud's "Theatre of Cruelty." The user's motion triggers "orders" and "instructions" from an abusive semi-intelligent agent suffering from multiple personality disorder. In homage to Duchamp's avatar, R. Mutt, this installation looks like a public toilet stall, but it actually is a telecommunications terminal. Two non-functioning bathroom toilet stalls are equipped with digital white boards, which digitize handwritten graffiti and transmit the messages to remote stalls where the messages are projected. *Smart Stall* is especially interesting in light of Roger Penrose's lawsuit alleging that Kimberley Clark Corporation infringed a copyright when it sold toilet paper bearing the Penrose Tiling pattern, a demonstration of a class of non-computable problems that forms a key part of Penrose's argument that "human understanding and insight cannot be reduced to any set of computational rules."

*The Automatic Confession Machine: A Catholic Turing Test* is a stand-alone kiosk that resembles an automatic banking machine. Users must kneel and confess committed sins, after which they receive a printout indicating how many Hail Marys and Our Fathers must be said for digital absolution and silicon salvation. This work is inspired by Alan Turing's test for judging whether or not a computer can be said to think.

These three installations use technology to question our infatuation with the brave new world of AI, VR, and ubiquitous computing. They put users "on the spot" by requiring a commitment or a theatrical suspension of disbelief and forcing them to make choices that require examination of their own beliefs and biases. As Brenda Laurel has noted, the potential of the computer is "not in its ability to perform calculations but in its capacity to represent action in which humans could participate."

*Genderbender* can be viewed at the Transverse Worlds web site:  
<http://142.232.132.45.80/dedocs>

Users can go to confession at the Lightfactory web site:  
<http://www.lightfactory.org/artists.html>



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