ARTWORK ZONE 1 - The Concourse

ARTWORK ZONE 2 - The Platform

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Brunswick St Station
Client: Buchan Group
Date: September 07 - concept design
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The Concourse
Artwork Zone

foodcourt
front elevation
side elevation
plan

UAP
The Concourse
Keith Armstrong Proposal

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CONCEPT

Sounds of the Suburb is an animated, evolutionary artwork populated by life-like electronic ‘trains’ of text - each moving endlessly through a complex network of ‘tracks’ and ‘stations’ that dramatically snake their way through the Concourse. Each of these ‘trains of thought’ contains a street-wise idea about music - fresh from the ‘Valley’. These cultural ‘memes’ propagate and replicate themselves as they travel through the network, mutating, combining, cross-fertilising and adapting: writing - day in, day out - the constantly evolving Sounds of the Suburb.

If the Sounds of the Suburb is to be an integral part of the daily life of Brunswick Street then the public must feel a strong sense of ownership over it. This will be achieved by ‘embedding’ the work deeply within the new Concourse design and incorporating high levels of interactivity that are typically absent from public art practice. Instead of the artist imposing their ideas upon the site, everything about the Sounds of the Suburb is inspired, generated or scheduled by the mood, pace and qualities of the ‘Valley’ - ensuring it is as switched-on, surprising and inspirational as the people who use that site everyday.

This is because:

• The texts about music moving within the work originate from daily, public dialogue.
• The design of the tracking and stations around which bright lights fly, circulate and interact is designed from motifs of the QR network, musical waves and images of heartbeat/pulse waveforms.
• The speed, pace and content of these texts depend upon the key heartbeat of that site - the times of the QR trains constantly leaving and entering the station.
• The flowing movements of the public throughout the site are also pictured as ‘visual music’ on two video monitors set subtly into the station facades at each end of the ‘network’.
• The entire ‘score’ is tied together by dramatic sound wave graphics that wash across the concourse’s glassy surfaces.

This ‘mix’ is guaranteed to always evolve, always be fresh - always be as unique as the Valley and the rich diversity of people that make it so.

OVERALL DESIGN

The main component of the Sounds of the Suburb is a network of interconnected LED ‘Tracks’ and ‘Stations’ that form the ‘network’. ‘Tracks’ are single lines of blue/white LEDs that are punctuated along their length by ‘Stations’ - animated LED text displays that allow the text to be read as it scrolls through them. Each packet of text is represented by either a moving line of blue/white lights moving along a Track or by the text (that it contains) being revealed when it passes through a ‘Station’.

Once a packet of text is chosen from a database it works its way through the system finding a route to any outlet. When two texts meet on a single track they may bounce off each other or pass right through each other. If two texts meet in a ‘station’ they dissolve into a new, single text - that then moves onwards through the network.

Thousands of pre-written texts are held in a computer database and retrieved via software dependent upon the time of day and current level of train activity within the station. Peak hours generate lots of text packets whereas quiet, more relaxed times generate proportionately less. Text content also differs according to time of day - with more appropriate phrases for morning office workers, afternoon school kids or evening clubbers or pubbers.

The images from two tiny security cameras trained on the concourse and the platforms are processed via video synthesis software to create the ‘visual music’ images shown on the two LCD monitors inset above head height into the Concourse walls. These anonymous, painterly images depict the endless blurring of people and train movements, mixed with the texts. And then, as suddenly as they came, these images are softly wiped away by the finger-like traces of trains, allowing fresh new compositions to slowly emerge.
DETAIL OF MUSICAL MEMES/TEXT BEHAVIOURS

Whatever our cultural differences we all make music – it is elemental to our nature and we are born with a musical wisdom and appetite. Friedrich Nietzsche wrote, “Without music, life would be a mistake.”

‘Memes’ include patterns of sounds that people make and imitate, tunes and catch phrases. Just as genes propagate themselves in the gene pool by leaping from body to body, so memes propagate in the meme pool by leaping from brain to brain via processes of imitation.

Looking around the Brunswick Street the mobile phone, the Ipod, the newspaper and the magazine are everywhere – each fertilising and propagating ‘memetic’; ideas about music. Music has its own peculiar shared vocabulary. A brief flick through any of Brisbane’s street magazines reveal a host of favourites: Wild, pumping, crooner, passionate, party-vibe, juiced, indie, wild-eyed, red-hot, gritty, fresh, analogue, afro, wicked, swoon-worthy, brassy, soulful. Descriptions about music are often flamboyant and evocative. Tell me about an “otherworldy blend of 60’s beat pop, primitive R&B, weird folk and drifting avant-rock” and I get it. Remind me that “oysters don’t make pearls over the weekend” and I’ll probably agree.) Hard rock acts just don’t get ‘juicy’ whereas DJ sets don’t do ‘brooding dark-power metal’. Musical memes are present in all cultures and all types of music from opera to the classics. They resonate with in different ways that depend upon our cultural groupings and our openness to new ideas. Memes directly connect with what we imagine about what we hear - live - and experience on the streets of the ‘Valley’.

Therefore a diverse range of texts appealing to all age groups will be included to ensure the work is diverse, inclusive and multi-cultural. These will be divided into three (or more) categories

1. Sounds About Right – Music described in words
2. Sounds Familiar – First lines of well known songs (playing on your Ipod?)
3. Sound Advice – Famous quotes about music

Just like real world trains, these ‘train of thought’ texts will sometimes be long, other-times very short. All these texts will be decided well in advance of install and signed off by all parties.

Here are some possible examples. (The database will hold 5,000 texts).

‘SOUNDS ABOUT RIGHT?’
Music described in words
• A delicate little kiss on your earlobe
• Drifting avant-rock
• Darkwave
• Emucore
• Chinese opera
• Wall of sound
• Drunk on imaginary island air
• 70’s porno-funk

‘SOUNDS FAMILIAR’
First Lines of well known Songs (playing on your Ipod?)
• I don’t know which side I’m on, I don’t know my right from left, or my right from wrong (U2 – Two Hearts Beat as One)
• When your world is full of strange arrangements, and gravity won’t pull you through (ABC – The Look of Love)
• Un, dos, tres un pasoito pa’lante (Ricky Martin – Maria)
• Words are flowing out like endless rain into a paper cup. (Beatles – Across the Universe)
• If you search for tenderness, it isn’t hard to find (Billy Joel – Honesty)

‘SOUND ADVICE’
FAMOUS MUSICAL QUOTES
• “It’s much too late to do anything about rock & roll now” - Jerry Garcia/Grateful Dead
• “We don’t like their sound, and guitar music is on the way out.” – Decca on the Beatles
• “If songs could make you do something we’d all love one another.” – Frank Zappa
• “I don’t know anything about music, In my line you don’t have to.” – Elvis Presley
• “Most of us go to our graves with our music still inside of us...” – Unknown
• “Anything that is too stupid to be spoken is sung.” – Voltaire
• “Without music, life would be a mistake.” – Friedrich Nietzsche

Lost in the Milky Way, Smile at the empty sky and wait for, the moment a million chances may all collide (The Lightning Seeds – Life of Riley)
Color me your color baby, color me your car (Blondie – Call Me)
BEHAVIOURS OF THESE TEXTS ONCE MOVING WITHIN THE ARTWORK

Each of the chosen texts from the database will be tagged with a code that indicates characteristics. E.g.

• Agegroup (if relevant)
• Category
• Associated Music Types (e.g. Drum and bass, R&B, Rock and Roll, Classical)
• Era of Music
• Preferred Time of Day to show it

When two texts meet on a track these codes will be compared and three types of behaviours will then eventuate

1. **Close Match on Codes** – The two texts COMBINE to form a new text that exits in one of the two original directions. E.g. ‘deep house’ has connections to ‘drum and bass’ and ‘teenagers’ often tend to like ‘80’s music’.

2. **Moderate Match/Difference on Codes** – The two texts PASS THROUGH each other and continue in their original directions. E.g. Lovers of ‘symphonic classics’ would often avoid ‘hard rock’.

3. **Strong Difference in Codes** – The two texts BOUNCE OFF each other and continue in opposite directions from which they came. E.g. ‘Death metal’ lovers would normally be disinterested in ‘new age’ music.

**Further Text Characteristics**

• The incoming and outgoing movement of the trains, determined from the QR timetable, cause greater or lesser numbers and ‘energy qualities’ of texts. Trains arriving cause a flurry of texts whereas the pace slows down after they leave.
• The hidden texts, when moving down the tracks, animate like sound pressure waves, moving through a pipe.

**MAJOR ADVANTAGES OF THIS DESIGN APPROACH**

This type of dynamic public artwork is very different from traditional practices and therefore offers a number of very attractive advantages over fixed or non-evolving works.

• The presentation can be temporarily re-authored at future key moments to respond to major events such as the Valley Fiesta, the Brisbane Biennial of Music, or the Brisbane Writers Festival.
• This design can be ‘updating’ in the future as musical memes evolve.

• Brisbane has a number of public art projects that have previously attempted to use projection or other non-rugged formats. These have subsequently failed and been left turned off. The use of rugged, industrial technology with high ‘mean Time Between Failure’ ratings makes this design truly sustainable and reliable throughout long periods in harsh environments. This also ensures that the hardware and software will remain serviceable into the long foreseeable future.
artwork on front facade of concourse is interactive, creates interest and animates the space
Brunswick St Station

Client  Buchan Group
Date   September 07 - concept design

Artwork wraps around walls of concourse and interacts with people in the space
Brunswick St Station

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The Concourse
Artist: Keith Armstrong

LED lighting

lost in the Milky Way
artwork - typical operation

design of the tracking and 'stations' reference the rail network, musical waves and pulsating waveforms.

text about music, sound and daily, public dialogue move within the artwork

speed, pace and content depends upon the key heartbeat of the site – the frequency of trains leaving and entering the station and the flow of people through the entry

the entire 'score' is tied together by dramatic sound wave graphics that wash across the concourse's glassy surfaces.
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Artwork reflects Brisbane rail system

The Valley
The flow of people through the site create 'visual music' on two video monitors set subtly into the station facades at each end of the 'network'.

**Inventor:**
- stations 1.2m x 17m approximately
- tracking to 100m approximately

- LED track
- printing on clear vinyl

- Computronics text boxes
- Inset flatscreen monitor behind glass running VNS software - 'evolving painting' of crowd moving in space
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