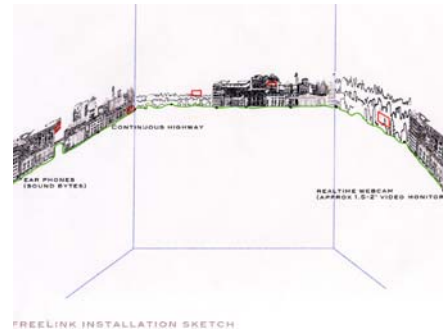


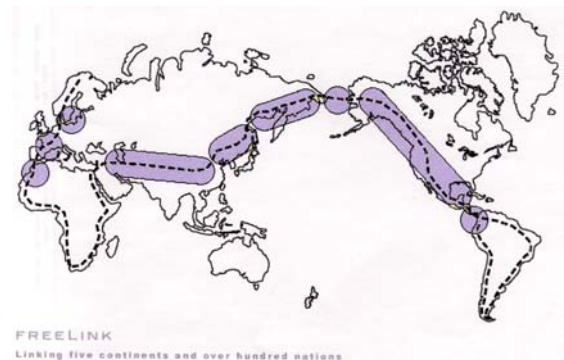
Judy Cheung: *freeLink*
April 15-July 2, 2006
In the TechLab

Artist's Project Statement:

A hypothetical construct, *freeLink* explores tele-transportation, social organization, public and private interaction and the desire to find secure ways to connect globally while maintaining distinct regional and cultural identities. Inspired by a 30 year-old engineering scheme--the Bering Strait bridge proposal to join Alaska and Siberia--the project represents a simulated environment, a virtual highway that transports passengers around the planet at the speed of light, without fear of natural disaster or terrorist attack. Experiencing the sensation of "beaming", as in *Star Trek*, voyagers are able to travel from continent to continent via one single, land based highway, navigating to each location and interacting with their surroundings through a combination of real-time webcam feeds, sounds, and light data. The work reflects the current sociopolitical consciousness while foreshadowing a utopian future--aspirations of freedom, equality, security, mobility, and speed.

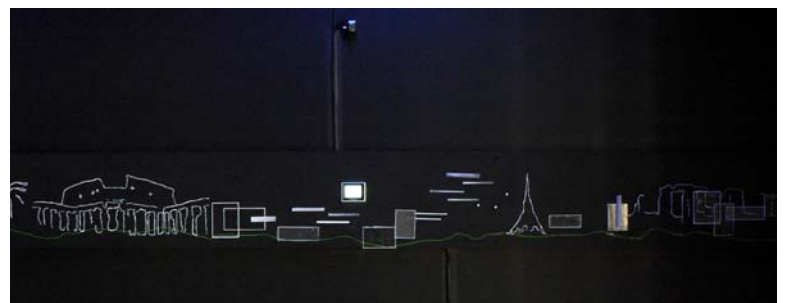


My art-making has involved a continuous inquiry into perceptual realities; examining ephemeral aspects of human activity evoked through transitory moments within the context of societal movements and urbanism. Issues of globalization and the notion of a non-place and non-view informing modern existence were realized in *skyLink* (2004), *Love is in the Air* (2003), and *Plastic Moment* ((2001). *freeLink* explores further the travel phenomenon, inviting participants into a sensory and experiential journey, blending data from real space and fictional space, and offering an alternative perspective to existing social paradigms.



Physical Description:

The virtual experience of a continuous highway will allow viewers to navigate the globe conceptually, traveling from region to region, continent to continent, and culture to culture with few constraints. The installation utilizes the four-sided room of the TechLab at the Surrey Art Gallery. Areas that represent cities, mountains, water, bridges and historical sites are rendered through shallow relief and wall drawings. Within these representations, direct images from



highway Webcams on mini video screens are mounted at intervals, indicating live traffic conditions.

There are five video screens, (live feed from Internet), five local webcams and two sets of sound that represent five major highway stops across the globe. The five webcams capture the viewer's image. The continuous highway appears on three walls as a thin glowing line.

When a viewer arrives at a location, his/her image is transferred from the webcam to the video screen. Simultaneously, images of highway traffic captured from the Internet will be depicted as a whirl of movement, as if assimilating the speed of light.



Subtle, brief traffic sounds are broadcast via the monitor speakers, and are heard when one moves close to the screen. Another set of sounds is broadcast throughout the room. Some of the sound data and highway footage is collected from actual sites and sources, and include automobile traffic, radio broadcasts, and conversations between people in transit. Dialogue may reflect current affairs pertaining to specific regions, and will provide viewers with a sense of place, adventure and interactivity.

Regional highway footage and sound data are collected from contributors around the globe. Subject matter and dialogue may change according to contemporary events and environmental conditions. Stories and incidents have been supplied by the artist and other contributors¹ -- a convergence of the real and unreal. The assimilated journey encompasses the past, present and the future, as in time travel depicted in science fiction.



About the artist:

Judy Cheung's art practice explores ideas of homogeneity, globalization and consumerism using the media of photography, video, film, text, sound and teleconferencing. She has exhibited across Canada, USA, Europe and Asia. Her work, *skyLink* is selected to be included in the Havana Biennial 2006. She received her BFA from the University of Calgary, and her MFA from Pratt Institute, New York. Currently based in Vancouver, Cheung is also active as a teacher and curator.

About the Surrey Art Gallery's TechLab

The Surrey Art Gallery is the only art museum in Canada with an ongoing commitment to supporting the production and presentation of digital artforms. The TechLab was specifically designed to serve as both an artist in residence studio as well as an exhibit venue for digital art. To learn more about TechLab programming, visit www.surreytechlab.ca

¹ Video Contributors to freeLink include: Melissa Liang: Australia; Hidehiro Watanabe: Japan (Asia); Colleen Sharpe: South Africa; Elena Feder: Bolivia (South America); Jinny M.J. Yu: Venice (Europe); Ernst Roschen: Moscow