PRESS RELEASE

Workshop and Round Table on CALLAS, the most advanced Research Project on man-machine affective interfaces

ART AND TECHNOLOGY, REACTING TO EMOTIONS: THE CALLAS PROJECT WILL ALLOW MUSEUMS AND INSTITUTIONS TO MAKE CULTURE MORE ENTERTAINING

Researchers from 8 European countries are finalising the technologies that will allow audience reactions to be detected, thus changing the traditional way of putting on performances. Gaining access to culture is transformed into a social experience and engages the visitor; new creative perspectives are simplified and made available for artists and entrepreneurs at reasonable costs.

Rome, 9 – 10 September 2009 – The CALLAS project, which is carrying out applied research on multimodal affective and reactive interfaces for Art, Culture and Entertainment, is now entering its final phase. It will be present with a number of demonstrators at the annual meeting of CIMCIM 2009, one of the most awaited international meetings which brings together experts on music, cultural operators and representatives of the major musical museums. The Musical Instruments Museum of the Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia (MUSA) will also host a follow-up workshop with demonstrations, presentation of new experiences, discussion and in-depth analysis during Round Table sessions.

Examples of implementations and performances will be shown, and the public will be able to directly experience the effectiveness of the CALLAS multimedia kiosks. Specifically, the MusicKiosk, prepared for Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia by XIM Ltd, and the Interactive Opera implementation prepared for Teatro Massimo di Palermo by Digital Video SpA, will be shown.

Not just music, but aesthetic experiences, like the "eTree", an augmented reality tree whose real-time growth patterns depend on the spontaneous attitudes of the spectators. Or performances in which the audience directly participates, such as "Galileo in Hell" originally shown at the Arcimboldi Theatre in Milan, produced by Studio Azzurro, in which the public interacts with the "shadows of the galaxies", or the "Flying Orchestra", also from Studio Azzurro, at the centenary celebration of the Santa Cecilia Orchestra in Rome, in which the orchestra conductor uses the perceived emotions which the spectators show for individual instruments to accentuate the performance of the orchestra. Or the "Virtual/Virtuosi" produced by the Helsinki Institute for Information Technology, in which an actor interacts with symbolic projections. Or next planned experimentations such as the one with Emotional Characters to be piloted at the Museo della Scienza di Napoli, prepared by Studio Azzurro.

The CALLAS event at CIMCIM is open to all, from specialists in the field to the general public, and will offer a possibility to directly interact with the results of this research and its use.

To enhance new creative communication tools, and facilitate their use

The challenge for CALLAS is to resolve upstream the interaction with complex technologies, providing to the user a creative and powerful platform which integrates the most diverse technological components, that is easy to use and forms a general tool to enrich all forms of art with an emotive interaction with its public.

CALLAS does not only aim at experimenting interesting technologies, but also at lowering the entry-level for new creative tools. Innovation requires agility and the ability to change together with accessible cost levels. This is in contrast with the chronic lack of funding of many museums and associations, whose mission is the diffusion of culture in all its forms. CALLAS replies to this need and removes some of the obstacles which have until now limited the possibility of undertaking new approaches towards the adoption of these artistic forms of cultural entertainment. Its use will allow sophisticated implementations to be produced without excessive financial investments. Small industries will be able to easily implement complex situations without detailed knowledge of the underlying scientific arguments. Artists will be able to work side-by-side with the software industry, with the end result of quickly producing artistic forms of high expressivity and impact.

Close-up on CALLAS

Co-financed by the European Commission, CALLAS is the most advanced research project in the area of man-machine interaction based on recognition of emotions. 18 international partners in 8 countries are involved, including universities and new media companies. The project is coordinated by ENGINEERING, the Italian Group which is leader in the area of Information & Communication Technology. The name of the project is inspired by the emotional approach to her art of the unforgettable Maria Callas.

CALLAS started work in 2006. By 2010, the technological platform which is at the basis of its versatility will become available in Open Source, that is freely accessible to those who wish to invest in it in order to generate artistic and technological works of art, or provide tools for communication in different fields of art and entertainment.

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CALLAS Partners:

Engineering Ingegneria Informatica (coordinator), VTT Technical Centre of Finland, BBC British Broadcasting Corporation, Studio Azzurro Produzioni, XIM, Digital Video, Humanware, Nexture Consulting, University of Augsburg, ICCS National Technical University of Athens, University of Mons, University of Teesside, Helsinki Institute for Information Technology, Telecom ParisTech, Scuola Normale Superiore, University of Reading, Fondazione Teatro Massimo, Human Interface Technology Laboratory.