

presence 2007

The 10th
Annual
International
Workshop on
Presence

October 25th-27th
Barcelona, Spain

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October 25 - 27
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Preface

It is my honour, as local organizing chair of this 10th Annual Workshop on Presence, to welcome you to Barcelona for what I am confident will be a very exciting event. We will enjoy a very interesting workshop with carefully selected papers, the company of a large number of active researchers in Presence, and a great context, our city. Success is thus assured.

I would like to take the occasion to tell you a bit about Peach. This coordination action, officially called Presence Research in Action and funded by the Future Emerging Technologies program of the European Commission, has as its main objective to support and stimulate the Presence community. As you know, Presence lies at the intersection of three research areas: Human Cognition, Human Machine-Interaction, and Machine Cognition. The goal of the field is to develop the science and technology for control of the very fabric of reality using digital media; reality is, in my view, constructed by our brains using sensory information and interaction. The wide span of disciplines required for progress is a potential barrier to the field. Peach is providing tools to achieve this integration, and offers support to other initiatives as well, like this one.

My own take into Presence will maybe surprise some of you, and for this reason I think it is worth sharing. I am a physicist. The first time I realized there was something profoundly mysterious about reality was when studying special relativity. Young Einstein dissected the concepts of time and space through simple analysis of basic phenomena, the first of which was perhaps the concept of simultaneity. He showed that if one assumes the speed of light to be constant and that every inertial frame of reference is an equivalent viewpoint of the universe, then events that appear to be simultaneous to some observers, won't to others. What a surprise!

After that rock fell, the old framework of our concepts of space-time dissolved. Other "rock-solid" concepts such as mass and particle turn out to be, upon inspection, nothing but models we construct from observation of the universe. Not to speak of quantum mechanics, which really starts by restricting the information we have access to from the universe. No more classical states, only probabilities. No more position and momentum: one or the other! No more reality, only measurements. And there you have it, reality is not what we thought it was. And who knows what it is? I personally believe only in information and my brain, which, non-coincidentally, is all I have access to. For this reason I think that work in Presence lies at the core of human knowledge, where we can learn a lot about ourselves and also about the universe, and deliver incredible technologies that have the potential of profoundly altering society while acting as a powerful tractor for research on human cognition, human-machine interaction technologies and machine intelligence.

Finally, I would also like to encourage you to participate in Peach through our working groups or WinGs, which I invite you to join. The next PEACH Working Group meeting is taking place here, in this workshop, mediated by some of the workshop Panel Sessions. One of the themes for the meeting will be the identification of Grand Challenges for Presence: key, visionary difficult projects of great impact in the field, which can help the community concentrate their efforts in one direction. If you have any ideas, please join us in the panel and visit and participate in <http://peachbit.org>.

I hope the information you exchange in this event will stimulate you, the next generation of Presence researchers and technologists. Have a great and profitable time in Barcelona.

Giulio Ruffini
September, 2007

About ISPR and the PRESENCE Workshops

The PRESENCE Workshops began with a small, informal gathering of scholars and professionals interested in presence theory and research in June 1998 in Suffolk England. Thanks to the hard work of conference organizers and the support of the growing presence community, the Workshops have been held each year since then and have retained their single track format and productive but informal and very pleasant character. This year marks the conference series' first decade:

PRESENCE 1998 - BT Labs, Suffolk, England

PRESENCE 1999 - University of Essex, Colchester, England

PRESENCE 2000 - Eindhoven University of Technology, Delft, The Netherlands

PRESENCE 2001 - Temple University, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA

PRESENCE 2002 - Universidade Fernando Pessoa, Porto, Portugal

PRESENCE 2003 - Aalborg University, Aalborg, Denmark

PRESENCE 2004 - Polytechnic University of Valencia, Spain

PRESENCE 2005 - University College London, UK

PRESENCE 2006 - Cleveland State University, Cleveland, USA

PRESENCE 2007 - Foment d' Arts, Barcelona, Spain

Following the 2001 conference, the International Society for Presence Research (ISPR) was founded to coordinate the annual conferences, sponsor other conference panels and events, and provide a variety of resources to those who conduct research, develop theory, write about, or simply are interested in, the concept of presence. The ISPR web site, at <http://ispr.info>, provides many of these resources (as well as a list of the organization's current Board of Directors). ISPR also sponsors the presence-l listserv (see ispr.info for details).

The ISPR Board is planning future international presence conferences, enhancing the resources it provides online, developing procedures to offer organizational memberships, and considering the development of a journal; look for announcements about all of these at ispr.info and on the presence-l listserv. ISPR exists to serve the presence community and we always welcome questions, comments and suggestions at help@ispr.info (or directly to me at lombard@temple.edu).

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<http://matthewlombard.com>
<http://ispr.info>

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