

*the distance between degrees*

*the distance between degrees* was intended to juxtapose the relentless scratching of an etch-a-sketch stylus with the apparent fluidity of digital drawing software in an effort to interrogate the boundary between physical and virtual space. My expectation was that the scribed lines on the etch-a-sketch screen would act as a window to the various ways that our passage into and out of virtual space is controlled by assumptions embedded in interface design.

When you engage *the distance between degrees* as a participant and create in virtual space, the system maps your actions in physical space. While the digital interface makes your physical actions disappear by eliminating the correspondences and contextual links between real world cause and virtual effect, the etch-a-sketch, with its continuous simplified line, reveals the invisible but real path traveled by the input device. The resulting sketch is a data rich topology of each and every one of your personal choices. The representational difference between your virtual drawing and *the distance's* physical sketch is a manifestation of your movement between these apparently disparate worlds.

While the anticipated relationship is exposed by the system, the persistence of the etch-a-sketch's stylus also reveals an additional, though far less obvious layer of entanglement. In developing this piece I came to realize something so inherent it was unexpected. In systems where spatial relationships between virtual and material space are to be constructed (i.e. sensory or tracking systems, robotic systems that incorporate telemetry or positioning, printing documents) a second layer of dislocation is needed. Added to the layer of discordance described above that permits, among other things, the ability to pass undetected through virtual space must be a second layer of temporary disjunction that permits users to circumvent the connections between the material and virtual, allowing one to also pass through physical space undetected. These departures permit users to realign the intended mappings between the material and virtual.

The distance between virtual space and its physical anchor is more hybridized and interwoven than often postulated; the hypothetical boundary is in flux. Our perception of digital space as fluid and detached is not a simple manifestation of the assumed polarity of these realms but rather appears, at least partially, dependant on the virtual's contingent relationship to the material. The expectant computer awaits not just instructions but gentle nudges, physical corrections that maintain the allusion of flow and continuity in virtual space.