Bodies in Play:
Shaping and Mapping Mobile Applications
May 19th – 22nd, 2005

"Banff Witch Project"

Design Objectives
Simultaneous real and virtual experience
Emphasizes the enjoyment of the real and physical
Toolset are comprised sounds that allow a connection to the physical environment
Creating a space for a narrative environment
Imagining an environment through sound
Ability to bring people together physically

Design inspiration:
The game is based on the Hansel and Gretel fairy tale and makes use of the tale's toolset
on which to map interaction and narrative.

Summary

A poor family finds themselves running out of food. The stepmother schemes to leave H
& G in the forest in order for them to get lost and starve. Hansel goes outside with the
light of the full moon: "The white pebbles that lay in front of the house glittered like
silver pennies" Bread is given to the kids to go out to the forest. Father takes them to the
forest and sets a fire to keep them warm. Gretel has the bread and Hansel has the pebbles.

The father leaves them there. Gretel is afraid. Hansel says: "Wait until the moon has risen
and then we can follow the pebbles." He has laid a trail of pebbles as they ventured into
the forest so that they can find their way back home. In the morning, the children find
their way back.

Hansel and Gretel, once again, are taken into forest by their father. Having no more
pebbles, Hansel leaves trail of breadcrumbs. He says to Gretel: "Wait until the moon
raises and then we shall be able to find our way back." The many thousands of birds on
the trail eat the breadcrumbs up. Having no remains of their trace, Hansel and Gretel get
lost deep in the forest and suffer from hunger and fatigue

In the morning, they come across a snow-white bird sitting on a bow "which sang so
delightfully" that they followed it to the gingerbread house. They begin to eat the
gingerbread. An old woman, the witch, comes out. Good food is set before them. They
think they are in heaven. The witch "has a keen sense like the beasts." She locks up
Hansel in a cage and fattens him up to prepare him for her meal. Gretel knows what's up.
Gretel pushes the witch into the oven. Gretel frees Hansel. Throughout the house there
are jewels and pearls that Hansel collects.

Game mapping:

- Players choose to be a character and establish a location. (Hansel, Gretel, or witch/ urban, forest, etc.)
- Once there are enough players, the game generates a cell phone call to the players in which the father, as narrator, guides them to the start.
- Players begin with 2 types of tokens: breadcrumbs (an unlimited number, consisting of little audio tones), and white pebbles (a limited number consisting of structural sound elements). The players use the tokens to lay sounds in the location in order to leave a trail which to follow back. Laying them down leaves a trail of sound. They are only stable if the frequency patterns of the environment mesh with the virtual sound. If they are dropped in the wrong place (ie frequency-mismatching) they may be eaten by birds.
- Players also have the capability to record their own breadcrumbs by using gesture and audio sampling.
- Players who are witches have a goal to attract as many children as possible. The witches leave a white bird as bait and also have control over the birds that eat the breadcrumbs.
- The white bird audio trails lead the children to the witch. The Hansel & Gretel players must follow this trail in order to advance in the game.
- Once the witch and Hansel and Gretel players are located together they engage in a kind of audio jamming; a kind of rock paper scissors game of matching and overcoming the other's sounds. Hansel and Gretel players have the opportunity to collaborate and trade or pool their audio files in order to overcome the witch. Soundscapes get more collaborative and complex. Which is the dominant soundscape?
- Hansel and Gretel aim to win the jewels. If they are successful, they must find their way back using the audio trail of breadcrumbs and pebbles in order to cash in their jewels for more breadcrumbs and pebbles.