

Concept Proposal (350 words max):

1. Landscape Design

For the Serpentine’s Augmented Architecture project, we are interested in developing and designing a New Computer situated alongside the body of a visitor that allows them to dip into a non-visual “landscape” parametricized against the existing physical landscape of the institution itself.

We are not interested in simply depicting 3D models in space, seen through the viewport of a phone. We deeply believe this is a self-limiting and depressing view of what it means to “augment” reality.

2. Specification of a Serpentine-specific New Computer:

“New Song Computer”

A “song” is a linear representation of a meaningful arrangement of music. A song has a beginning and an end.

What might a song with four dimensions look like? How might one navigate a song situated-against-and-reliant-upon the physical manifestation of space? What might a song sound like if it’s dependent on the position of the sun or the weather?

A New Song for the Serpentine has no play button, or means of controlling it through “an interface”. A New Song is controlled by the physical conditions surrounding the Serpentine such as the weather, the time of day, local noise pollution, and the amount of background radiation. A New Song is possibly modulated by the number of visitors, a visitors’ (global) X, Y, and Z coordinates on a set of planes overlaid over the whole of the Serpentine, and by the proximity a visitor has to a given work of art on the site.

A New Computer for the Serpentine is less “controller” and more “physical manifestation of the scrubber on a linear musical track”. This New Computer may consist of earbuds and a small physical module that interprets a visitor’s location, their

speed, the coffee they consumed that morning, etc. against sites or works of art located in and around the Serpentine. Navigating the Serpentine could be made akin to adjusting the EQ/Reverb/Compression/etc. of a song which has no real beginning or end and is constantly streamed and modulated by the totality of the visitors present.

“Aural AR” is beautiful in that it’s akin to space: Ambient in nature.

Rethinking Spatiality (100 words max):

Our urban environment is an expression of human needs and desires, situated within complex ecosystems. We want you to take the opportunity to consider how the city can be reinvented to produce new realities through AR. Speculations could play out through buildings, objects, games or interactions.

Our proposal intends to detach “AR” from the implication that “visual” reality is the primary site of digital augmentation. While there are many modes of “non-visual experience”, we find ourselves drawn to sound, which is both heard and felt (bass in the club).

What does the Serpentine sound like?

A slew of natural sounds assuredly accompany the site itself, yet we wonder what it may mean to modulate the aural landscape depending on one’s location and experiencing of space or art itself — perhaps certain spaces/artworks in the Serpentine sound more romantic or violent, calm or hard, bassy or twinkling.

Reinventing the City (100 words max):

AR challenges many of the constraints that have helped shape the way our cities look and function. In AR, ideas no longer need to be bound by space, time or even gravity. Your proposal should be driven by a reconsideration of these conditions in an environment that is non-physical.

Does the city need to be reinvented?

Does “Augmenting Reality” as currently implemented, mediated through tiny devices that constrain our view, actually contribute to the radical reinvention of the means by which a city communicates and produces reality to its inhabitants?

Our proposal to develop an aural hyperobject over the Serpentine is a gesture to the richness and explicit “self-augmenting” cities already actively participate in.

Rather than constrain visitors' sensing capabilities as they visit the galleries, we desire to facilitate the expansion of their awareness of how they modulate and "augment" their reality as they simply pass through space.

Reactivating the Site (100 words max):

The Serpentine is situated in a park filled with natural life and over 12 million visitors each year, in a global city: how you augment this context is important. Your project should have a degree of site-specificity within it.

Ideally, all people are able to access art as directly as possible. Unfortunately, as sites of veneration, art institutions are beholden to the safekeeping of historically/economically meaningful artworks.

Our proposal offers "a means by which participation in the art act and veneration of a cultural site can be interlinked" through a visitor's modulation of an aural hyperobject situated throughout the Serpentine galleries — a song everyone can play along with.

Using their (examples following) voices, multiplicity, crowding, distance and speed traveled while experiencing the Serpentine "as a work", visitors can alter the soundscape in an intimate and hyperlocal manner.

Misc thoughts, not included in above answers:

Most digital interfaces are designed around the visual capabilities a large subset of humanity is equipped with. AR interfacing is likewise often described in terms of “new visual affordances” we might “overlay” over the existing world.

We’re not interested in extending the already-tired metaphor of the “visual interfaces” generally used to access digital systems. We’re interested in the totality of the body as a site of “New Computation” and what it might mean to design computers that resist prioritizing the “visual stack” of sensory inputs over the rich array of senses we have at our disposal, or the possible senses (or sense-extensions) we may come to develop as a species.

It goes without saying, but “space” is more than the physical surroundings we find ourselves in. “Space” is the site upon which we inscribe experiences of which only a tiny fraction are visible —

What does a space feel like that’s been cried in? What residual matter is left in a space where acute love is repeatedly expressed across time?

Experiencing space is an already ambient act, and we find ourselves drawn to aural augmentation as a distinctly

The city is a system which constantly augments itself based on the presence of people and complex infrastructure it forms a superset over. If a city could speak to us, it would likely have a lot to communicate

One of our desires (among many) at New Computer Working Group is to literally speak to the city.

It's important to consider how the city currently produces reality to its inhabitants and visitors alike — through a variety of explicit and implicit signaling mechanisms (i.e. Signage telling you where to walk vs. knowing not to stop in the middle of the sidewalk in NYC), a city can broadcast its own affordances readily, right this moment.

Future city affordances must take into consideration these existing mechanisms in order to be of any practical use - an app notifying you to not stop in the middle of the sidewalk by flashing you a sign adds nothing to the city.

Museums that display artworks are constantly mediating their own representation(s) as “accessible cultural spaces” and “sites of interaction with art”.

Ideally, all people are able to access art as directly as possible: We want people to take a brush in hand and make marks on paper. Unfortunately, as sites of veneration, art institutions are beholden to the safekeeping of historically/economically meaningful artworks.