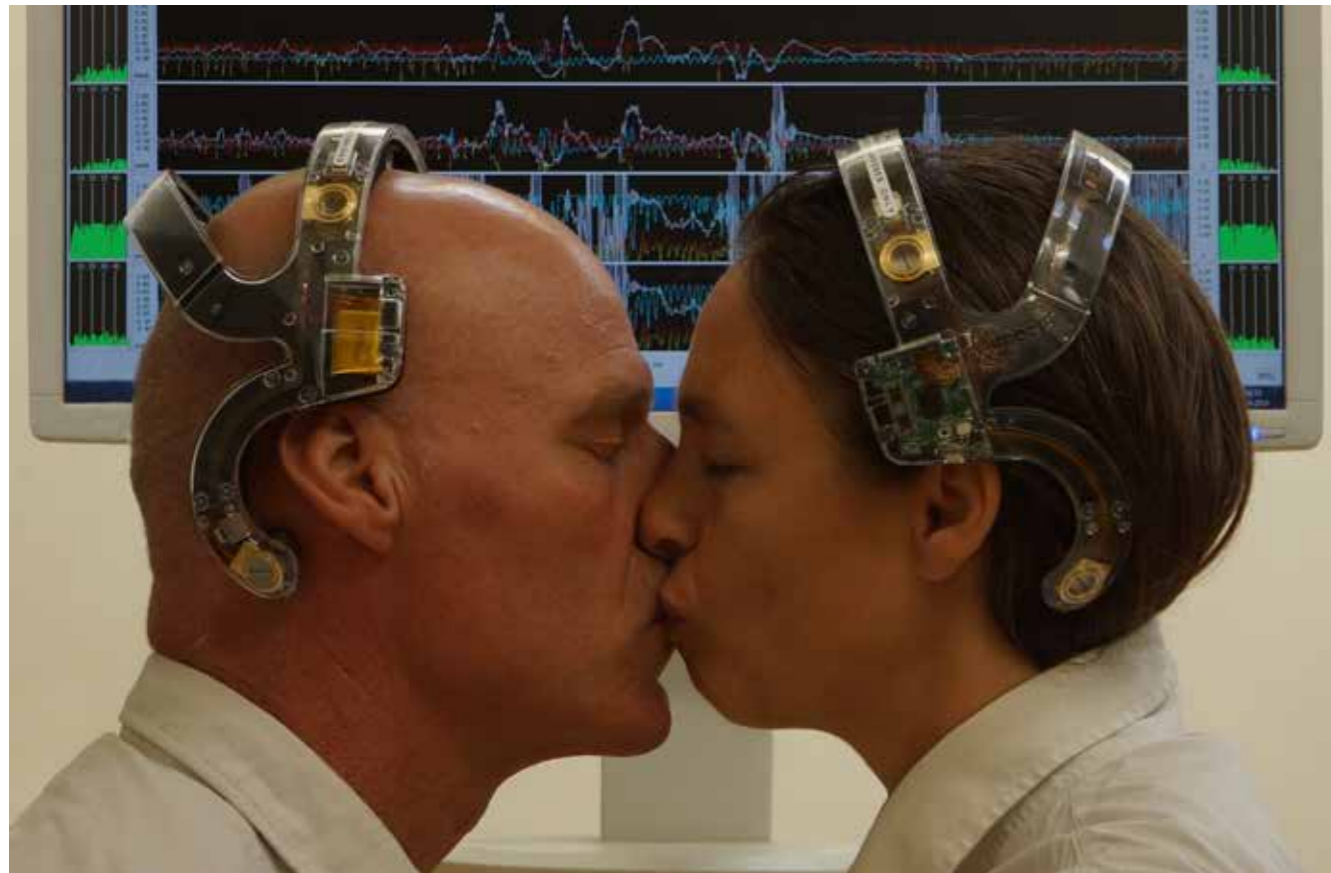# E.E.G. KISS

Karen Lancel / Hermen Maat

Artistic media:
Performance, installation
Primary sensory modalities:
Touch, Vision, Audio, Kinesthetics

A

Karen Lancel / Hermen Maat

E.E.G. KISS

A
While kissing, the kisser's
brainwaves are measured and
real time visible as streaming
E.E.G. data.

Photo: Lancel/Maat 2014; Eye
Film Institute Amsterdam/
Discovery Festival 2014

Can I kiss you online? Can we measure a kiss and what kissers feel together? Can we transfer a kiss and its intimacy online? Do we want to save our private kisses in a transparent database – to be used by others?

In E.E.G. KISS we explore how a kiss can be translated into data. In a poetic, electric environment for kissing and measuring, for synchronizing and merging, we research a new sensory synthesis for networked kissing.

A digital synesthetic kissing ritual
In E.E.G. KISS we deconstruct and turn around control technologies and sensory perception, to facilitate a new intimate kissing experience. Worldwide, in performances and live kissing experiments with E.E.G. headsets, we invite visitors to kiss. While kissing, their brainwaves are measured and visible in real time as streaming E.E.G. data. These data are projected around the kissers as an immersive environment, a "Kissing Cloud", creating an aesthetic and spatially immersive experience. All witnesses of the kiss are invited to be both voyeurs of the kiss and scanners of E.E.G. data.

The E.E.G. data are further translated real time to a music score. The music score is a translation of the kisser's heartbeat, and is audible for all participants as a soundscape. In this ritual, participants – both kissers and witnesses – share a trans-sensory experience of "kissing", "heartbeats" and "EEG/ECG data". All participants feel, see, hear and mirror a communal, networked kiss.

C
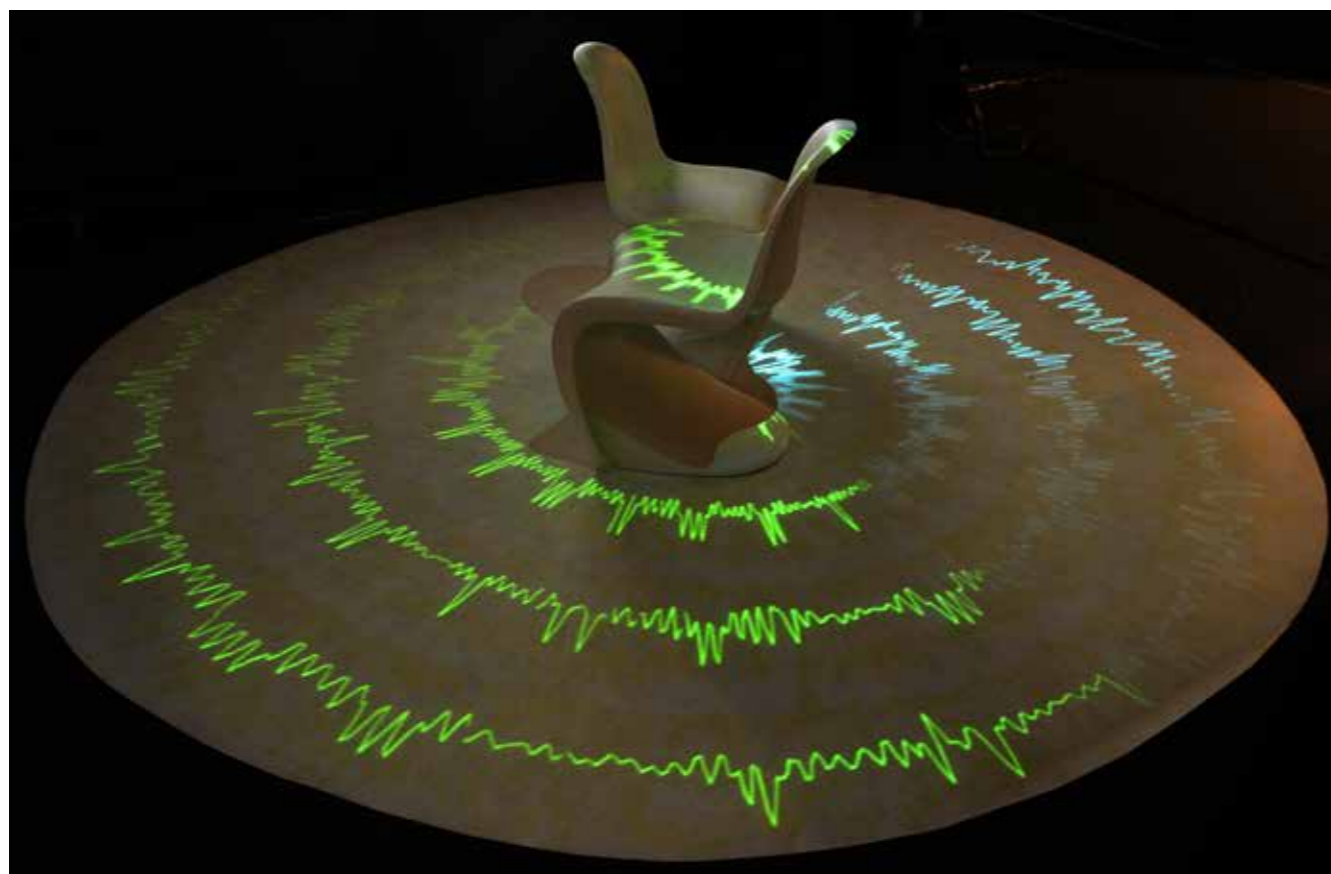
B

Karen Lancel / Hermen Maat

E.E.G. KISS

B
EEG data streaming, realtime projected around the kissers when they kiss; as an immersive environment, a "Kissing Cloud", creating an aesthetic and spatially immersive experience.

Photo: Lancel/Maat 2015; (At Gogbot Festival 2015 "Internet of Things/Theories of Future Visions")

C
EEG KISS participatory, shared ritual for a trans-sensory experience of "kissing", "heartbeats" and "EEG/ECG data".

Photo: Roy Te Lintelo 2015; (At Gogbot Festival 2015 "Internet of Things/Theories of Future Visions")

Intimacy and Big Data: critical reflections
A kiss is an obvious case of emotional interaction and synchronizing, spatial nearness, touch, sight, fluids, smell. When our kisses are being quantified, on what data-visualization design do we validate this interaction? Who is responsible for and who will benefit from our quantified kisses? And how can we trust our own kiss data? In E.E.G. KISS we invite participants to give meaning to the abstract, even mystifying E.E.G. data-visualization, based on the embodied memory of the kiss as a form of "intimate co-creation". We print these data as "a portrait of a kiss".

Art, Science & Technology
EEG KISS emerged from further artistic research that we conducted at Delft University of Technology in the context of Lancel's PhD trajectory (Promoters: Prof. Dr. Frances Brazier, Dr. Caroline Nevejan). Tele-presence technologies extend our bodies beyond biological boundaries in time and space, but prevent us from touching. To inspire and rethink sustainable socio-technical ecological systems, we connect automated technologies (shared bio-feedback and technical visual-haptic interfaces) to human acts of intimacy, tacit knowledge, sensory and aesthetic perception. In this way, we explore digital synesthetic "trust systems' based on holistic experiences. Our aim is a sensitive networked public space, with shared response-ability for the power of reciprocity and synchronizing through touching, breathing, kissing, dancing, sharing space and presence.
(Karen Lancel / Hermen Maat)

D

Karen Lancel / Hermen Maat

E.E.G. KISS

Notes on the E.E.G. KISS Project by Lancel/Maat. (Geert Lovink)
"When I kiss you, I can taste your soul." (Terri Guillemets)

One starting point for discussing Lancel/Maat's E.E.G. KISS project could be its contrast to the selfie. What's striking about the selfie cult is not so much the cultural and regional differences (as brilliantly documented in Lev Manovich's Selfie City installation) but the technological homogeneity of these selfie moments. The pressures on the subject-as-user to share the compulsive exhibition of the present with others results in a perverse

update of Vilem Flusser's apparatus concept in photography theory. What's expressed in the compulsive selfie is not just the template culture of the social media platforms and technical specifications of smartphone lenses and the (default) settings of their software, but also the victory of logistics, with its massive online services, broadband and data-centers that all "eat into" the image in an unconscious manner. Instead of the ego presence of the selfie, E.E.G. KISS presents us with a shift towards an inner experience with the other. Lancel and Maat's techno-performance of colliding wetware captures the intimate act of kissing in a time-based fashion. Their autograph of love emphasizes the social aspect: we never kiss alone. This is no auto-erotic kiss but a collective experiment that goes way beyond the self-centered exhibitionism that defines our social media age. The installation opens up a space of free interpretation. Despite the neuro-scientific look and feel, users have to be made aware that the produced graphs of their kiss do not contain an eternal truth. The displayed data are imagined intensities; never medical evidence of whatever. The data visualizations merely represent our obsessive techno-culture.

In an epic quest to invent new interfaces and tools that will help us to develop the visual language that defines our era, some artists are willing to take risks — not just with their reputation. They ask the question: what's a quantified kiss? The risk in the case of E.E.G. KISS is an obvious one and goes beyond the danger of being appropriated by "the system". What if our kisses are stored in databases against our will and analyzed by algorithms owned by banks that decide on home loan applications? An all-too-passionate kiss can indicate that the wild romance will end up in a dramatic divorce. A flat and boring kiss will transmit the same message. This puts the motive of the "stolen kisses" in another context. All too easily, networked data facilitate the most absurd readings into a situation.

Rebel souls will arise and claim that united spirits will never be documented. Why store an act of human intimacy in a machine, when the real issue is our acute loss of memory — of any experience. How can we train our bodies to, again, store our vital data? Instead of administrating the last remaining expressions of us, being human, artists arise against the technological elimination of our instincts. The quantified service artist is the problematic figure here, the willing researchers that smoothen out the clean agenda of the virtual sex industries. Instead, let's investigate together how the fluids, flowing together, can short-circuit our cynical architectures of power. As Billy Holliday said: "A kiss that is never tasted, is forever and ever wasted."