

CULTURE-CONSCIOUS DESIGN AND MUSEUM INTERACTIONS

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The Sacred World Research Laboratory has offered intersections between culture, crafts, design and user-interface technology and carved out new spaces in the fields of physical computing and culture-conscious product design.

Two of their projects illustrate how the interaction between technology and cultural domain go beyond just museum applications and creates new opportunities for cultures rooted in nature and mythology.

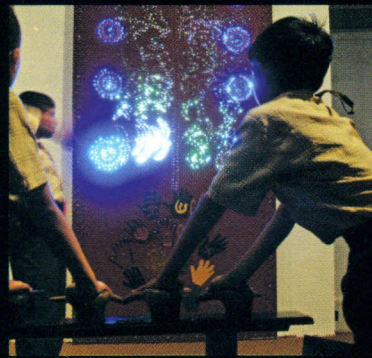
ETERNAL GANDHI MULTIMEDIA MUSEUM

The Eternal Gandhi Multimedia Museum, New Delhi, presents the historical and spiritual dimensions of Gandhi presented through touch, gesture, voice and breath-based interactions.

In the Museum, entire content is retrieved digitally. The language of physical interface is derived from classical symbols like the spinning wheel, turning of the prayer wheels, touching symbolic pillars, the act of hands touching sacred objects, collaboratively-constructed quilts, sacred chanting in the collective group, the satsanga and the touching and rotating of prayer beads. These tradition-based interactions inspire a rich panorama of tactile interfaces that allow people to access the multimedia imagery and multidimensional mind of Gandhiji. The technology developed does not merely scan Gandhian images but also extrapolates Gandhian ideals to newer domains of information technology and design.



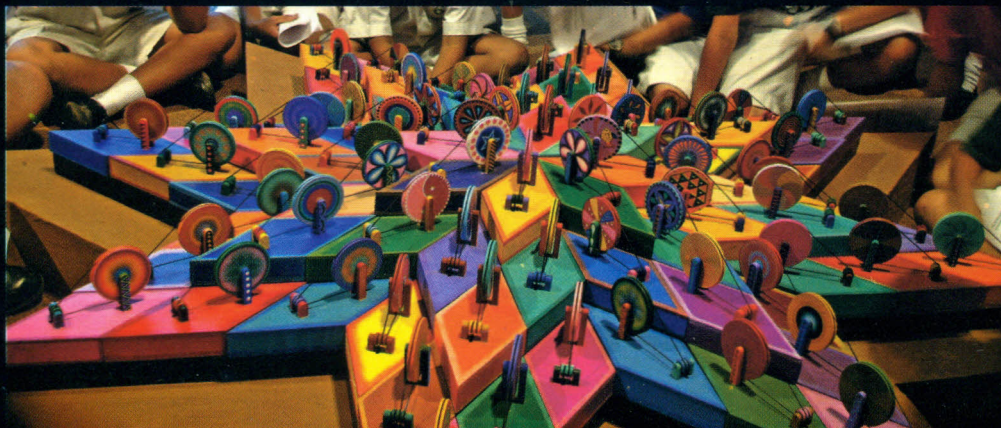
The E-Train installation captures the places Gandhiji visited by allowing the visitor access to the controls of the train. At each site, videos and animations explain the significance of the places in Gandhiji's life.



The Unity Quilt installation explores the Gandhian concepts of equality of religions. The quilt consists of two parts: the top part depicts the tree of life, a symbol found in all religious traditions. The interface part or the lower part depicts a representation of hands. By touching the hands, people can light up the tree, the symbol of life.



The E-Clock allows people to see Gandhiji's life mapped to the points on a clock. As the needle of the clock travels across the circle, events, documents and video footage of Gandhiji are played on a screen at its centre.



Charkha Mandala has a collection of small diamond-shaped Charkhas arranged in an interlocking pattern. This suggests the notion of collective power of individual action towards a greater common good. People spin interface Charkhas placed on the outside. This creates ripples of movement, and collectively they spin to a symbolic unity, which highlights the values of the collaborative spirit.

PLANET HEALTH MUSEUM

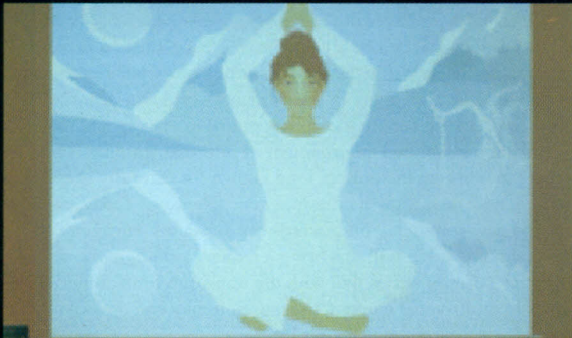
The Planet Health Museum, New Delhi, is an interactive museum that allows people to access and re-examine traditional knowledge systems of environment and health from the perspectives of Ayurveda and Yoga. New forms of computing hardware are explored to express Green design.



In the introduction to Ayurveda, installations allow people to explore the origins of traditional health practices, including the contributions of physicians such as Charaka and Susruta.



By clicking on physical icons of the ancient masters, people can play back videos showing the foundational principles of Ayurveda centred on the constituents of our psycho-physical self. The message is conveyed through animation and video commentaries. Vata, Pitta and Kapha are considered as the three constituents of our Psycho-Physical nature, based on combinations of the five elements. As a physician would diagnose diseases based on Vata, Pitta and Kapha personality types, this sculpture of a patient with embedded buttons allows people to see the diagnosis methods of Ayurvedic physicians.



The term Asana connotes 'seat' or 'stance' and in yoga implies a 'comfortable seat'. Its objective is to place the body in an easy attitude, not necessarily seated, or in a special position best calculated to promote the type of meditation without distraction. This installation consists of miniature sculptures of yogic postures on lotus leaves. By touching this sculpture, people can view the enactment of the posture by a Yoga master.

Acknowledgements

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Note

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In this installation interactive leaves allow people to understand the medicinal values of natural herbs. Touching on a leaf in the interactive table allows people to play back video recordings showing the herbs in natural settings and their benefits.

Ranjit Makkuni is a multimedia visionary, artist, designer, musician and the Director of the Sacred World Research Laboratory and Ranjit Makkuni & Bliss company. He has created a unique language for museum interactivity and expression, combining the finest in Asian hand skills based expertise and IT expertise.