Xerox' embedded technology: From fiction to science

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Leading Parc researchers are working in India at a specially set up lab with experts in robotic/embedded systems from the Indian Institute of Technology, designers from National School of Design, Ahmedabad, and National Institute of Information Technology. The network of museums including Indira Gandhi National Centre for Art, New Delhi, NGMA, Mumbai, and Asia Society, New York, are also part of the project.

The project was initiated eight months ago and an amount fo $300,000 has been invested in the project till now. Elaborating on the project,

Mr Makkuni explains, "The innovation shifts the documentation presentation paradigm from screen-based presentations to digital presentation in 3D — a richer and more dynamic form of surround sight and sound. The interface gadgets which when held in hand and touched, unfold the environment of Banaras — the Ghats, the temples, the Shivlings, the flowing river, the priests, the cremation points."

For Mr Makkuni, if "it was a unique example of how art, culture and technology converge on one platform", for me, it was simply 'communication beyond the desk top and mouse'. Here is how. On completion of the project, one can manipulate remote cameras and robotic arms in

Banaras. For example, manipulating a handheld box painted with a particular architechtural motif causes the Web-based camera in Banaras to focus on a temple constructed in similar architectural style.

Still other commands allow the user to virtually be in Banaras — take part in ceremonies and make offerings of flowers in the Ganges through telerobotics. Incidentally, the embedded system technology allows the use of Internet for communication.

The technology uses high-touch portals like the knowledge-egg, multimedia paper, wearable computing as also portals with embodied user interfaces like tilt-based browsing, gestural

interfaces and multi-level physical and virtual documents. There were architectonic space, backdrops, lighting systems, aroma, wind effects, expanding way beyond the boundaries of the screen.

The vision driving the project is the new information paradigm which would make computers a part of the social architecture, a part of everyday objects. The presentation will now travel to different cities in India as also to New York and Los Angeles next year. On completion of the project In September, CD-ROMS and palm documents would be launched as part of the project. The Crossing, will then finally move the technology from the labs to the people. ●