
Arctic Opening

2010

Project by fabric | ch

Funding: AMI, City of Marseilles (FR)

Location: Frioul Archipelago, Marseilles (FR)

Exhibited during the MIMI Festival 2010 (Marseille, FR)

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- Métis landscape, Arctic Mediterranean
 - Intertwining Mediterranean landscape and Arctic daylight
 - Remote day during the local night. A second day, tele-present through an artificial and LED-based “opening”
 - Channeled atmosphere
 - Architectural scientific expedition in a fictional future
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- Satellite Daylight interface and software



[Img. 1]



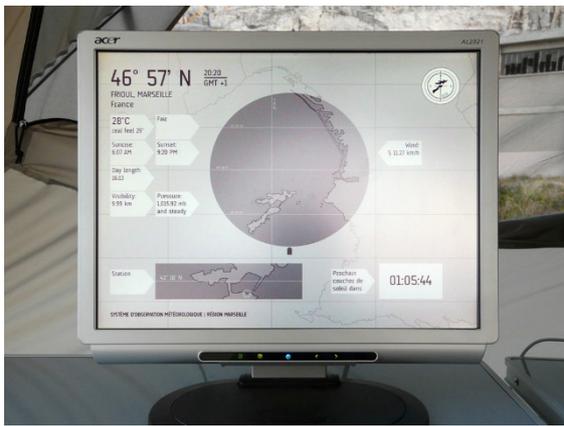
[Img. 2]



[Img. 3]



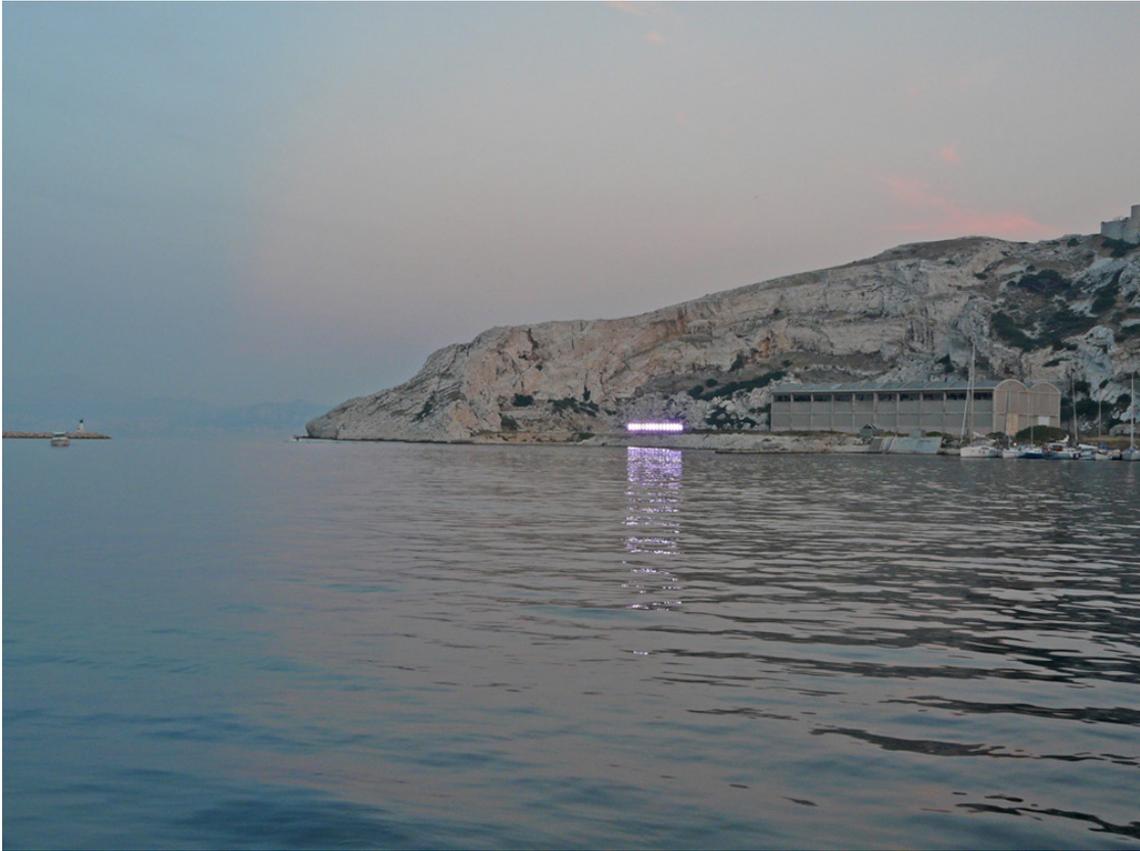
[Img. 4]



[Img. 5]



[Img. 6]



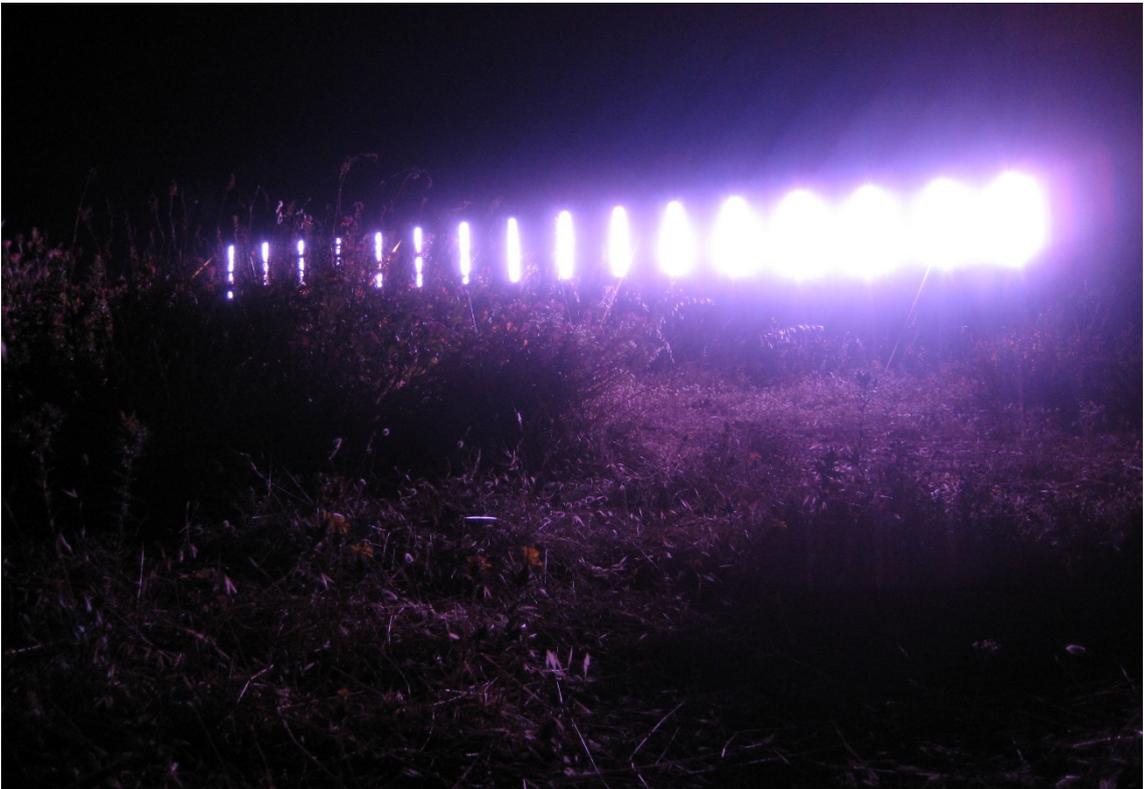
[Img. 7]



[Img. 8]



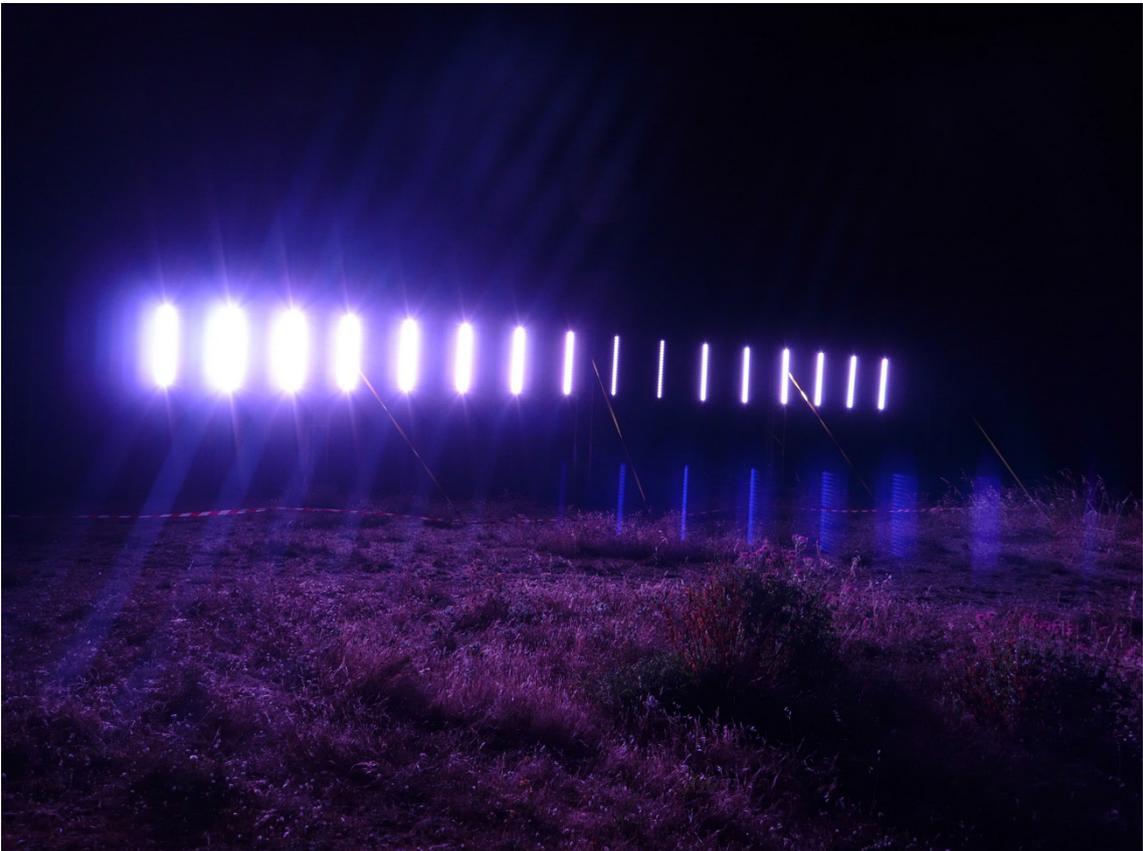
[Img. 9]



[Img. 10]



[Img. 11]



[Img. 12]



[Img. 13]



[Img. 14]



[Img. 15]



[Img. 16]

Image captions:

- [Img. 1] Snapshots of Arctic Opening standing beside the Mediterranean Sea, from inside the expedition tent and from the access trail.
- [Img. 2] Snapshot of a visitor at night under the arctic lighting, shot from inside the temporary tent.
- [Img. 3] Different views of the "base camp" and Arctic Opening's expedition tent. Leftovers of the week of work on site are still present for visitors and constitute the exhibition's installation. It includes two interfaces, two LED lights (continuous local control of the arctic daylight) lit 24/7, two boxes of material and the expedition's logo on a flag and on the tent (as well as, of course, the tent itself and the "opening" made from LED bars).
- [Img. 4] The Arctic Opening logo on the expedition flag.
- [Img. 5] Arctic Opening's interfaces and software in the tent, on the left (top, with expedition logo) and right screens (bottom). Phases #1 and #2 of the software analyses: on the left screen are displayed the existing weather conditions in Marseille (Frioul islands), wind orientation as well as the time remaining until the next sunset (when the distant arctic daylight and second day will become lit on the big LED display and visible again). On the right screen is displayed a North Pole top view (with cloud cover) and the Arctic Circle, with the "opening" circling at 69° 25' N latitude. The bottom of the interface shows the current overflow region that is analyzed and displayed on the big LED display in the nearby Mediterranean landscape.
- [Img. 6] Detail on the right screen interface (phase #2): cloud cover, luminosity and arctic daylight as reconstructed by the software and based on the public data transmitted from the Arctic.
- [Img. 7] A distant view of Arctic Opening, taken after sunset from the opposite side of the small harbor on Frioul Island (shuttle departure). On the right of the installation stands an industrial relic with its broken horizontal openings and rusty concrete.
- [Img. 8] Distant views of the installation, different times, and luminous strengths with light reflections on the sea.
- [Img. 9] Night views of Arctic Opening with Marseille's urban lightings and "Notre Dame de la Garde" in the background (on the top), as well as dramatic stone scenery, remains of a former quarry (on the bottom).
- [Img. 10] A close view of the Arctic lighting at night, with illuminated local flora in the foreground.
- [Img. 11] Detail. The front of the installation is illuminated horizontally by the strong LED bars, as in Arctic daytime, where the natural lighting is very horizontal and blinding.
- [Img. 12] A view against the light from within the mixed landscape.
- [Img. 13] The now "métis" flora illuminated by a distant day.
- [Img. 14] Flora, quiet flag, and strange luminosity (half night) in the back coming from the reflection in the moist air of Marseille illuminated at night.
- [Img. 15] Arctic Mediterranean: the landscape and expedition tent illuminated by a distant and continuously variable Arctic light.
- [Img. 16] The expedition tent at night: remnant of a fictitious expedition in a hypothetical future.

Txt

Arctic Opening

Each day, when night falls on our urbanized landscapes, in our cities, our streets or our ports, another day dawns, electric in nature. It is literally a "second day" which begins: an industrial or postmodern second day of neon signs; street lights; sodium, mercury or fluorescent lighting; and illuminated apartments and shop windows; one with night activities that we did not know two centuries ago.

Although today we no longer think much about it, as this "second day" is now part of the everyday life of city dwellers, this artificial light was a conquest: by fire first, then gas, and, more recently, electricity. This "fabricated" light permitted us first to extend artificially the day at night to illuminate the darkness, but also to transform our relationships with time, with landscapes and with space. It especially allowed us to exceed the given natural immemorial cycle of day and night induced by the rotation of the Earth itself, and thus to redefine architectural and urban spaces.

However, that day, which has become "perpetual," has interfered since the nineteenth century with our natural rhythms, producing dramatic changes: emancipated from the natural alternation of day and night, social habits and customs of inhabitants benefiting from this "discovery" found themselves immediately and irrevocably transformed. One began to live and work at night, to have fun more and more under artificial light, and sometimes, as compensation, to sleep the day away. One also began to design new architectures that did not require natural lighting anymore. In a few decades, artificial lighting altered profoundly the lifestyles of city dwellers, but not only humans: birds began to sing at night near the lamp posts, insects to swarm under the spotlights and stars to disappear from the urban night sky, opening the door to a strange, creolized world, combining now the local and the global, but deeply intertwining natural and artificial cycles. Losses and gains, then.

This new environment was also marked by the willingness of men to control the "randomness" or the "wildness," to take control of a growing number of factors and constitutive dimensions of their habitat. Today, this "second day," historically "industrial," is still often a day with monotone lighting, having essentially a functional goal (to see, to secure, to work, but also to read, to cook, and so forth). Mostly, it evokes nothing, and if it varies, it is to stay in a comfort zone preset unlike natural climates, which are constantly playing with the landscape to offer different uses and perceptions of the same environment. In addition, we are just beginning to take the measure of the energy cost of that enterprise and its participation in the global ecologically negative balance of humanity. Yet this environment, sometimes magical, sometimes disturbing, develops undoubtedly for us the poetry of shifts. Now, the challenge is to deploy these shifts, which combine

present, past and the possible future into a comprehensive reflection on our contemporary space and our consumption of energy.

Designed for the Innovative Music Festival (MIMI 2010) in Marseille on the Frioul islands, Arctic Opening does not aim to deny this "second day," but, instead, to amplify its positive, variable, and sensitive issues. Thus, Arctic Opening seeks to develop the potential of the imagination(s) of artificial illumination, while integrating new technologies and intelligent lighting cycles based on low energy consumption.

In a global environment, endlessly interconnected, which develops new forms of mobility, temporalities, and social behaviors at the crossings of time zones, this artificial day provides an opportunity for another kind of "day," simultaneous and distant: an imaginary or mediated "connection" with countries where, precisely and literally, at the same time, the sun is shining. Through satellite imagery and sensor data, it is now possible to imagine opening a "window" onto a sensitive and remote light whose intensity varies continuously, where the sky is sunny, then cloudy, then possibly sunny again. A window that "tele-ports" abstractly a remote atmosphere without physical mobility, without means of transport other than transportation data from there to here. A "mobile immobility."

With Arctic Opening, fabric | ch proposes to create such an "opening" on a large scale to another day: an artificial and sensitive light, revealing some geographical patterns, luminous and meteorological, across the globe (to the summer of one hemisphere corresponds the winter of the other; to the daylight, the darkness; to the perpetual light of a pole, the night of the other; and so forth). When night falls over Marseille, this "second day" gets up with its source somewhere north of the Arctic Circle, on the edge of the habitable zones (Hammerfest, Murmansk, Prudhoe Bay, Tuktoyaktuk, Igloolik, Clyde River, Scoresby, and so on), where once the ice melts, new navigation routes open and will open more and more in the future. Fed by light coming from regions, where, in this season, the horizontal light of the sun never sets, where sunrise and sunset mix, Arctic Opening reproduces the continuous modulation of the northern summer.

Composed of hundreds of light-emitting diodes (LEDs), this bright band of eighteen meters in length illuminates a rocky landscape, swept by winds. At sunrise, it reveals slowly a temporary installation of pipes, placed there to conduct this experiment in distant light. Erected near the vicinity of a military and industrial relic of the twentieth century, a tent hosting the instruments of control suggests a possible scientific expedition in an "hostile" zone.

The combination of light produced by this window and the Frioul islands' landscape produces a composite territory: Arctic Mediterranean, remote nocturnal day.

This combined area in mixed light is created purposely as a prospective environment, evoking the contemporary patterns of mobility, and crossing time zones, the fluxes and the networks, the artificiality and the mediatization, or indicating the strange topographic similarities between the arid Frioul islands and the Arctic regions where no tree grows. As if this temporary place in front of Marseille, illuminated by a light transported from the Arctic could become the distant, catastrophic and fictitious future of these northern territories: warmed by climatic

change, visited by boats navigating through new routes opened by melting ice, the shores of the Far North could begin to resemble those of the Mediterranean Sea. This environment would then combine itself as well, as people become increasingly mobile over time: a mix of here and elsewhere, future and present, material and immaterial.

Arctic Opening: mixed territories.

fabric | ch, July 2010.

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