

## David Cotterrell: Canal

Date: 15th April 1999

Dimensions(m):2.5, 3.0,

Materials:

CCTV plate camera, vision mixer & QT Video loop

A projection in the foyer of a Birmingham theatre, mixing images of visitors as passers-by along an hidden canal bank

Canal was commissioned in 1999 by Keith Williams Architects and the Birmingham Rep Theatre as part of a major redevelopment of the Centenary Square Complex in Birmingham. The piece, which was installed in the theatres foyer, was the first point of contact for visitors to the renewed space.

Interested in the relationship between the man-made canals, architecture and natural aspects of the city, Cotterrell worked to develop a new, performative vision for the theatre. Looped footage of the movement of clouds, reflected in the surface of the canal, was projected onto a 2m x 3m screen in the foyer, while a hidden CCTV camera filmed people in the space. The resulting work was informed by the people whose images appeared in it, changing according to the time of day or the performances scheduled.

The work has a clear performative aspect to it, creating a situation in which theatregoers playfully become participants in the work. While entering the building, they engage in the rediscovery of the covered up parts of the city. Canal is a subtle commentary on the complexity that is present below the architectural structure. It reverses the choice of superimposing a structure over the canal, and is a simple and elegant attempt towards an alternative coexistence between the theatre and its environment.



The live vision-mixed image Credit: David Cotterrell (1999)



The installation as viewed on the opening of the REP theatre Credit: David Cotterrell (1999)