Lux Agitat Molem: Exploring the relation between movement of light and people

Authors | Philip Ross, Indre Kalinauskaite

Philip Ross, designer at Studio Philip Ross, and ILI researcher Indre Kalinauskaite share an interest in the relationship between light and human behaviour. They created the light installation Lux Agitat Molem for the Glow-Next festival in Eindhoven to explore the question: Does light move people?

Lux Agitat Molem serves two purposes: To learn more about how light could influence the way people move through public space, and to engage the 60,000 Glow-Next visitors with this same question.

The stage of the installation is a 70m long walkway, paved with 1m x 2m tiles. Each set of two adjacent tiles is made into an individually addressable light pixel using a matrix of profile spots from above. Ross and Kalinauskaite designed dynamic light patterns that flow along the walkway, following the walking direction. Several specific light behaviours, motives if you will, were incorporated in the lighting patterns to entice people to deviate from their normal paths, consciously or not. For example, the whole flow of light would slowly move from one side of the walkway to the other, to see if people would move along with the light (or darkness), or light accents would suddenly change position to see if people would change their directional focus.

On a screen around the corner after the walkway, people could see camera footage of themselves walking along the 70m path amongst the changing light patterns. This allowed them to judge for themselves whether and how light moved them. Here they also discovered that the light patterns were synchronized with the musical piece La Moldau by Smetana. Playing the music along with the footage created an audiovisual experience that emphasized movements of both light and people, and helped people reflect on their movements in relation to light. The public enthusiastically discussed their own behaviors, indicating people were truly engaged with the topic. A qualitative exploration study by TUE Master student Anne Spaa showed numerous examples of people responding to specific light movements, changing their path, and helped to identify a first set of most effective light behaviors to influence people’s behavior or attract their attention. A quantitative study of the effects to check these first indications is underway.

But the possibility to do detailed analysis of visitor paths is not the most important result of this experiment. The value lies in the opportunity to create ‘light hypotheses’ and to evaluate them through observing a large stream of people who experience them. And these lessons in turn inform projects in the same field of interest, like for example, the De-escalate project running on Stratumseind. If you would like to learn more about this topic, you are welcome to contact the authors at mail@studiophilipross.nl or i.kalinauskaite@tue.nl

More info

See www.studiophilipross.nl for a presentation and movie of Lux Agitat Molem, and www.glow-eindhoven.nl for more info about Glow-Next.

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