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# Spring and Asura

Contributed by Deborah Turnbull  
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## General Information

Artist: Chris Bowman

Technologists: Alastair Weakley

Exhibition dates: 22 August - 30 September 2008

Open 10am &ndash; 5pm daily - Free with entry to the Powerhouse

## Background Information

Spring and Asura is a prototype artwork by Chris Bowman and Alastair Weakley. This interactive installation explores the relationship between natural phenomena and text extracts from the poem "Spring and Asura" written by Kenji Miyazawa (translated into English by Hiroaki Sato). The work is further explored through the recitation and chanting of the Heart Sutra, one of the most important of Buddhist sutras.

"Interconnectivity" is an important metaphor in Kenji's work. His poetry explores an indivisible unity between inanimate and animate phenomena and this installation acts as a metaphor for that interconnection. Spring and Asura features video recordings of natural phenomena that respond to where Kenji Miyazawa lived. These act as personal explorations and reflections on the poem and have influenced the development of the software system. Using motion capture software Spring and Asura explores the movement of light and shade within the video recordings of natural phenomena that in turn effects the movement of the text. This self-generating interconnected system therefore, creates an ordering and re-ordering of the poetry text.

Kenji Miyazawa is a household name that captivates the imagination of adults and children alike. Kenji's exploration into the subconscious and the "order of space-time" as told through a lexicon of poems, novels and "mental sketches" illustrate his life-long pursuit of understanding and creative interpretation of the human imagination and the living world. This rich terrain offers artists and intelligent software developers an expansive cognitive model on which to build an immersive interactive experience.

Chris Bowman is an artist, writer, director and teacher who works with film, and convergent media display systems. Chris has directed award winning films "Caged" 1983 (Oberhausen Film Festival) and "Passages" 1985 (J Walter Thompson Award) and more recently exhibited |GEO| Landscapes 01. in Beta\_Space at the Powerhouse Museum (2008). In addition Chris has an international profile as a production designer with over thirty film and television productions to his credit. Since 1992, Chris has taught in the Visual Communication Program in The Faculty of Design, Architecture and Building at The University of Technology Sydney. He is an active member of the Creativity and Cognition Studios and Centre for Digital Design at UTS. Chris has co-ordinated various multi-disciplinary, cross-institutional and industry based research projects that explore visualisation and interaction in virtual environment systems for museum and public spaces. In addition, he is currently researching how dramatic narrative systems can be mediated through immersive modes of interaction for networked 3D (stereoscopic) and 2D display environments. Chris has been the recipient of funding from the Australian Film Commission and the Australia Council for the Arts.

Alastair Weakley initially trained in Design & Technology at Loughborough University, Alastair worked for 11 years in industry as a product designer. He returned to the University in 2000, gaining an MSc in Information Technology and joined Creativity and Cognition Research Studio in 2002 as a research associate. Since arriving at University of Technology, Sydney in the Spring of 2003, he has been pursuing full-time PhD research submitting his PhD in 2006. The subject of the investigation is broadly concerned with the provision of Web-based support for groups of people engaged in creative work. Alastair's early investigations in this area centred around the concept of an online scrapbook aimed at assisting its users in assembling, organizing and sharing useful resources. A system was developed as part of Alastair's MSc project and future work will build on the experiences gained while developing and testing that prototype. Since submitting his PhD, Alastair has worked as a Senior Research Assistant for the Creativity and Cognition Studios at the University of Technology, Sydney.

#### Acknowledgments

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