

**Sessione Beni Culturali, 19 Ottobre 2006**  
**In collaborazione con Virtuality Conference.**



**Note sul relatore**

An interactive technology inventor, museum exhibit designer, and a researcher at the prestigious Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), Flavia established Sensing Places, a company dedicated to creating cutting-edge exhibition spaces. She has created these “interactive narrative environments” for museums, corporate headquarters, retail stores, theaters, theme parks, airports and cities around the world. Her emphasis is on natural interfaces, that through advanced computer vision algorithms and electronic sensors, allow people to freely interact with physical objects, digital videos, graphics, and light. She has designed museum installations for MOMA, SFMOMA and Milan’s La Scala Opera Theater. Flavia, holds six academic degrees, a PhD from MIT, and works as an interactive designer and technology consultant for large architecture studios and museums around the world. She has held seminars and lectures in prestigious museums and institutions such as the Louvre Museum in Paris, the National Library of Medicine in Bethesda, the Universities of MIT, Harvard, UCLA and UCI. Her interactive installations and scientific research have been publicized by the international press and television in eight different languages. Relevant citations are from: The Boston Globe, The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, Computer Zeitung, Berliner Zeitung, Le Monde, Liberation, La Repubblica, Il Corriere della Sera, La Stampa, Mediamente, Quark, TG3, e La Sette. An Italian born, she was nominated Knight of the Republic of Italy (“Cavaliere della Repubblica”), by the Italian president Carlo Azeglio Ciampi, in the year 2000, for her contributions to innovative communication of art and culture supported by new technologies.

**Abstract**

Flavia Sparacino, Sensing Places, USA

**Museums of the Future:  
From the Wunderkammer to Body-Driven Interactive Narrative Spaces**

New interactive and multimedia technologies represent a very powerful communication tool for museums today, allowing them to compete with other popular venues of entertainment like cinema or theater in attracting a wide audience. In mounting exhibitions, the new technologies offer three types of innovation. First: through augmented reality — produced by the use of computers, projectors and wearable computers — the museum can display (virtually) many more works than its exhibition space would otherwise permit. Second: thanks to digital video/audio and to 3D modeling and animation software, new technologies can help the works come to life by giving them the ability to speak directly to the visitor. Third: through the joint use of interactivity and instruments for analyzing how people move around the exhibition rooms, the museum can transform visitors from mere explorers of artwork in active orchestrators of the very experience at hand.

With this technology-supported communication method, based on the teaching principles of learning through construction and learning through play, the museum becomes more effective in getting the exhibition’s educational message across. It makes a deeper and more lasting emotional impression on the visitor while fostering a fuller comprehension of the works on display. Thus the new technologies turn the museum’s rooms into body-driven interactive multimedia narrative spaces. Synchronized projections on museum walls and on the private eye of wearable computers, audiovisual or 3D animation of various exhibition materials all join with the playful spirit of exploration made possible by interactive technologies to spark in the visitor a sense of wonder, curiosity, genuine interest in the objects on show. Unlike early

museums — called Wunderkammer or “room of wonders” — holding collections of items destined to awe the viewer, today's museums can take advantage of new technologies to create a sense of wonder not solely through the objects but, all the more so, through the tools used to display them. Paradoxically, for the sophisticated 21st century audience already amply bombarded by information, what sparks greater interest, emotion, surprise is the new means of communication, which in turn predisposes it for the playful learning experience at hand.

Lastly, the museum space enhanced by these new narrative tools based on innovative technologies resembles a stage set where the main characters are the objects themselves — a set complete with special effects and stage tricks expressly designed to delight the spectator, and keep his interest alive.

