Outside was an 'interactive' installation created by William Brent (UCSD) and myself using the texts from various lectures given at *Collision 2005*. Prior to the installation of the work, all of the included texts were read and recorded as audio, and subsequently 'cut' into smaller segments ranging in length from one sentence to two paragraphs. During *Outside's* residency (as an installation), these recordings were cycled through sequentially, sounded from a small speaker. If an audience member was interested in a topic or theme being discussed in the recorded audio at a particular time, they simply spoke the word 'interest' into the microphone and a related segment from one of the other recorded texts was articulated. In this way, the predefined segments formed an interconnected discursive network. The 'cuts' between segments were inaudible.

Physically, *Outside* occupied approximately 5' of space in a mid-size room for three days. The technology used consisted of a Macintosh computer, a small speaker, an audio interface, a microphone with stand, and accompanying cables. With the exception of the microphone and stand, these objects were all housed in small boxes wrapped in white paper inscribed with the featured texts. The sound levels were such that the text was clearly audible within a 10' radius, and so were not loud or dominant.

Outside was designed to be considered on two levels. First, the foreground, by which is meant that aspect of the piece that could be apprehended by an individual through direct interaction with it over a relatively short period of time. Second, the background, by which is meant elements of the work which unfolded over longer periods of time, and which were inevitable. This inevitability was a crucial distinction, as it represented the nesting logic of the work, or its structure. In *Outside*, we tried to enact a conflict of identity in the work between its foreground and its background. On one hand,

the foreground was fluid, playful, and interactive. In contrast, the background structure was rigid and monolithic. Through this conflict of identity in the work (and *of* the work) there emerged a tension of interpretation. In particular, the foreground level could generally be considered within the terms of antiformalist relational discourse, while the background level generally adhered to formalist principles of the autonomous (musical) artwork. The site of interpretive crisis enacted in *Outside* was the codependence of these mutually exclusive interpretive stratagies; the foreground level depended on the background in order to maintain its political agency, and the background depended on the foreground to answer the criticisms around authorship that it referenced. Through this codependence, the division between foreground and background was simultaneously deemed necessary and impossible. *Outside* was a paradoxical work, then, which simultaneously presented itself as a sovereign artwork and as an interactive and co-dependent one, fulfilling neither role.

One way that *Outside* called attention to this crisis of identity was through its failure to be 'successfully' interactive. The simplest example of this was the temporal lag between audience action and the technology's response in *Outside*, a lag that was exaggerated by the imperceptibility of the response when it finally did happen. This violated one of the central tenets of successful interaction, causing the audience to question whether the installation was functioning properly and preventing their immersion in the constructed environment. Since *Outside* presented itself as an interactive work, this violation impeded the clarity of its reception.

In another way, *Outside*'s interpretation as a multi-vocal artwork, where authorship is dispersed throughout the authors of the presented texts and the audience members who

interact with the texts, was severely limited by the prescribed relational network of the texts, where what constituted 'related' material was the strongest dictator of what material would be presented. Since these relationships were all determined beforehand independent of the audience' interaction, the result was disguised authorial control. In *Outside*, the disguise was not successful because the texts being used were highly personal to many of the audience members. The resulting possibility of recognizing the disguise (without being able to remove it) analogued the power exercised by the invisible author in many multi-vocal and interactive works where cultural, historical, and material differences can remain unexamined or hidden as a result of a text's multi-vocality. Although a text may include multiple voices that would seem to allow readers to form their own interpretations, they are still staged by authors who select different voices in order to make a point or create an impression. Here then again, *Outside* paradoxically relied for its 'meaning' on an interpretive strategy that it could not support.