

# Martin Rieser

## Labyrinth

The piece is based on the legend of Theseus and the Minotaur. It has already been shown at a number of international conferences and lectures, most notably at ISEA 1995 in Montreal, at ISEA 1996 in Rotterdam, and at the Oberhausen Short Film Festival in 1997. Written papers on the research were published in the journals which accompanied these conferences and in the magazine "Convergence" in 1997. Further presentations were made in 1996 at the Watershed Media Centre during the lecture series "The Story-telling Machine", and at the University of Wales Cardiff, Architecture Department in 1996. Visual work from the project has been exhibited in the Arcade Digital Printmaking exhibition in Brighton (at the CADE conference), Shortlife2 in Bridport, Dorset and various other venues during 1995-7. It was subsequently shown at F-stop Gallery in Bath 1997 and at the Pump Rooms in Cheltenham as part of the Festival of Literature 2000.

### **Labyrinth**

The installation comprises two parts, both fronted by large semi-transparent mirror glass. On one side the Labyrinth multimedia work is projected onto a large touchscreen inset in the glass and on the other a rotating shadowplay of shapes related to the myth, projects onto the mirror glass and the outside window. Pressure pads control the lighting and projections so that at first all the audience sees are multiple mirror images of themselves. On the floor a path made either of luminous material or small lights spirals away to the next exhibit. Pressure pads alter the lighting and launch the multimedia piece. Speakers connect direct to the computer.

### **Multimedia work**

In the living room of a "house" a fireplace and mantelpiece are flanked by bookshelves. On the walls are several framed pictures, and some family photos and postcards are propped on the mantelpiece. On the wall a photograph of the Red arrows stunt team in full vertical flight, another picture is of hang-gliding. On the coffee table a book lies open at the anatomy of a bird, a half-drunk glass of red wine (Bull's Blood) is standing by a bowl of black Greek olives. Nearby a child's maze puzzle lies abandoned and a Nautilus shell is placed for decorative effect.

If we zoom in on the mantelpiece we can see a postcard from Athens with a picture of

some ruins, a post card of a beach and cliff, a picture of an man, and daughter looking fairly stern. In another photograph a handsome and smiling young man is pictured .

Some of the books on the shelves have recognisable titles—ranging from “Myths and Legends of ancient Greece” to Fraser’s “Golden Bough”. Various knick-knacks are propped up, including a few British Museum replicas of Cycladic figures.

If any of the objects, pictures or photos are clicked they will lead to a dissolve into a dimly lit space, which is the dark ante-chamber to the colonnaded Labyrinth. Several sleeping figures are lying on the earth. One will stand, who corresponds to the symbol selected within the house, and start speaking earnestly while another figure connected by the dual poetic narrative will immediately stand up next to them and start to speak at the same time. QuickTime video and sound run in a continuous loop. We can alter the relative volumes of the two narrations by clicking on a favoured figure. Each figure will be brightly lit against a pitch-black background, so that two vertical QuickTime windows can be seamlessly blended on screen. Each figure begins by wearing a mask and ancient Greek costume The mask will dissolve leaving the talking face of each of the two protagonists. In the case of the Minotaur, the mask remains. As each protagonist talks, colour images will fade up between the two figures in illustration of, or in counterpoint to the narrative.

When a story or poetic duologue has been explored we can enter a new part of the Labyrinth. The Labyrinth itself is modelled on the palace at Knossos with Cretan columns and brightly coloured murals from the authors original artwork. It has several levels and was built as a 3D computer model. We can also follow an on-screen outline of the maze as we progress. We may encounter some of the protagonists again in our journey through the maze. We may return to the house at anytime by choice or automatically once the full narrative section is complete.

When we finally reach the centre of the Labyrinth we find fire , effigies, and objects from the house; accompanied by the sounds of a birth or sexual ecstasy or death.

## Example Text

Here Daedalus arrives in Cumae Italy after the flight from Crete, where Icarus has died in his climb toward the sun. He visits the Sybil for guidance, who counsels that he erect a temple to Apollo to atone for the death of Icarus.

### Daedalus

*Wings and rain  
A slow pageant spiralling to madness  
I remembered falling:  
Stars or something worse  
Smoking to the sea*

*I connect nothing  
On the shore*

*The god's eye blank,  
vengeful*

*The Sybil spelled in signs  
Hissing, urgent  
Engraved in madness*

*At Cumae I raised  
an architecture of atonement  
For my deep neglect*

*At Cumae I wept*

### The Sybil

*Under sea  
A body rolls and shift  
In strong currents  
Ambition and ecstasy curled in rictus  
Picked by fishes*

*Your care, your mind*

*The god turns away  
Ashamed*

*Locate your heart  
Open your armoured closeness  
Locate a centre*

*Build around the flame  
In tender stone*

*And calculate its beauty*