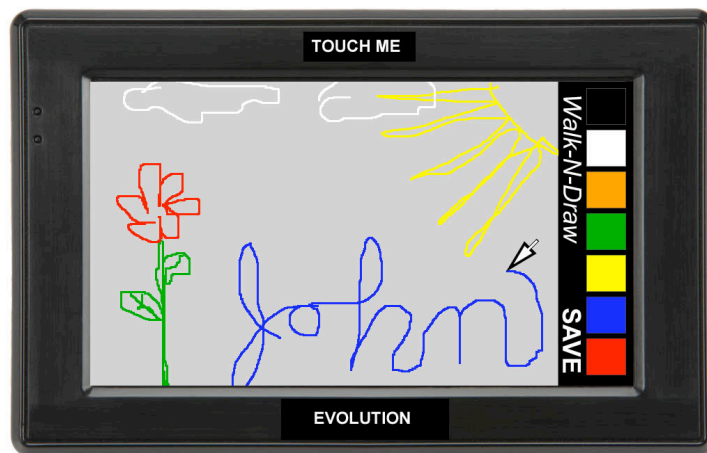# Playa Computer

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DESCRIPTION

Playa Computer is like a window into a virtual world that you carry around the playa. It is like a computer that requires you to walk to new places to run different programs. Some of these programs use your movement like a mouse; for example a video game or a paint program. Other programs encourage you to explore or encourage people to interact.

It is a community device. The hardware is within the budget of most burners. For $100-$150, a person will be able to buy a GPS car navigation system (useful in regular life) and download/install the playa computer software ahead of time. It may also be available as a kiosk art installation with devices to borrow.

Eventually, I want to start an online community of contributors with creative ideas for next year's software. The programming environment is simple enough for beginners, and I would like to include different levels for people to contribute. Grant money can elevate it to a project available to more than just my group of friends.

HISTORY

This is my third electronics device with a similar theme. It started in 2005 with a camp called "Vision Quest". You could spin wheels and go off on journeys. I loved the experience and returned the following year with a portable Vision Quest. It was like an electronic puzzle that asked people to go on a journey with an untold reward. People found me later with exciting stories of what they found on the way.

The following year, I built a more powerful computer and created a database with the entire event calendar. It used a compass and a sealed box that you tilted. I was close enough to see the potential, but the hardware was expensive, hard to assemble, and the software was tough to write. I came home with a list of ideas and a few people that want to contribute.

This is now the third iteration. Things are coming together in surprising ways, and I would like help in launching it to a wider audience. The hardware is cheap and widely available and it has a simple programming environment. I also have a close friend working with Playa Info developing the next generation online event calendar.

PHILOSOPHICAL INTENT

I want to create a device that people can download and bring with them to Burning Man that enhances the experience. Creating programs tied to specific places could encourage new social interactions and invisible things to discover.

It could also provide a new way for Burners to create art, interesting social experiments, and a way to collaborate outside of the event.

Finally, I want to foster the "learning" side of Burning Man. I like projects that inspire us with new ideas, explain the process so we can try it ourselves, and provide a platform to take our own ideas further.

DRAWINGS

TOUCH ME

THE MAN BURNS IN:

128 days, 5 hours,
12 minutes, 15 seconds

YOU ARE:

1,128.2 Miles from
Black Rock City

EVOLUTION

This is the $100 device that I am starting with. Note the stickers covering the logos.

Before the event, it could just count down minutes and miles.

TOUCH ME

menu
listen

EVOLUTION

Inside the city, it can launch programs as you go to different locations.

For example, it could deliver a tarot reading once you get near an artwork.
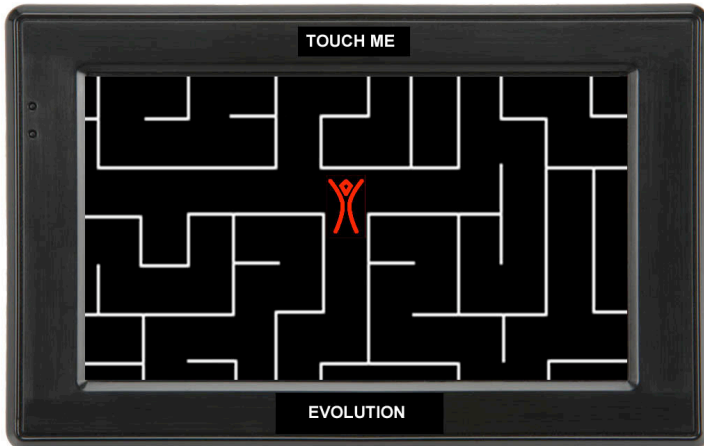
It is also time aware so it could launch another at sunset.

TOUCH ME

Walk-N-Draw

SAVE

EVOLUTION
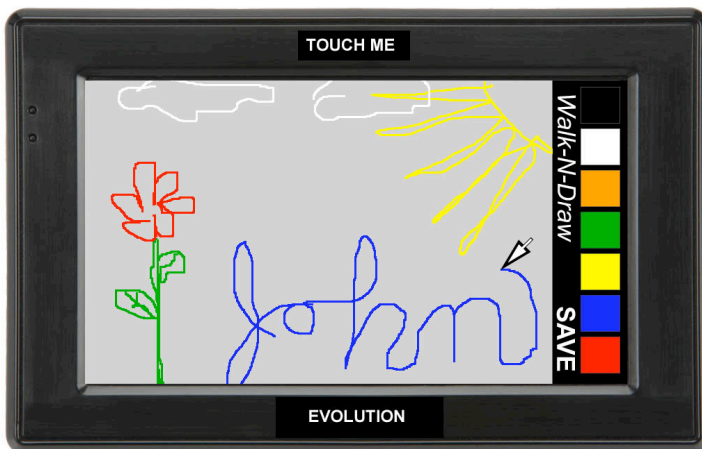
You could also interact with programs as the "mouse".

Imagine a paint program that turns a space on the playa into a canvas.

You can watch others draw pictures, or go at the same time trying not to bump into each other.
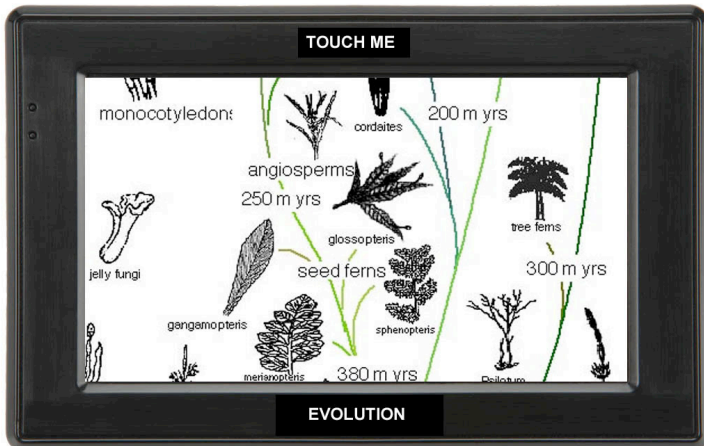
TOUCH ME

EVOLUTION

Other locations might have simple games like a maze on the ground that you navigate by walking around.

Would the ground begin to show the common paths?

TOUCH ME

EVOLUTION

The games could make you chase or run from things too.

This might be fun to watch or take turns playing.

TOUCH ME

monocotyledons

cordaites

200 m yrs

angiosperms
250 m yrs

tree ferns

glossopteris

jelly fungi

seed ferns

300 m yrs

gangamopteris

sphenopteris

merianopteris

380 m yrs

EVOLUTION

To keep with the year's theme, it could include an evolutionary tree.
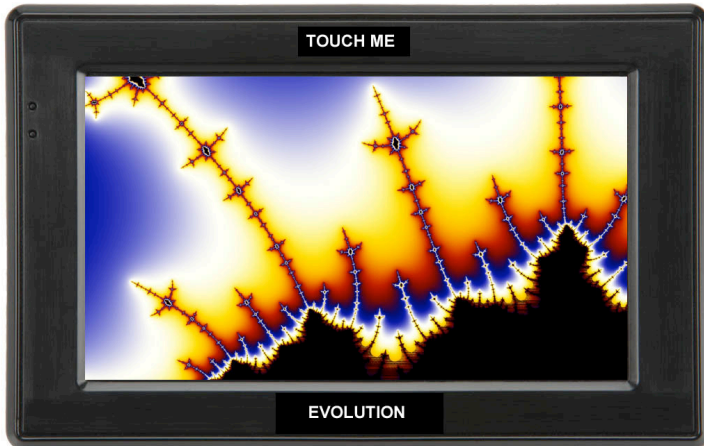
Walk to follow plants and animals through different eons and species.

This could also encompass the whole playa so certain locations could be associated with certain species.

It could also incorporate this year's audio tour of the artworks.

This might even be useful for helping artists determine their locations.

I originally envisioned this for night safety, but it might just be cool.

Imagine panning around an animated fractal as you walk around.

It might include other applications like an event calendar, navigation, bicycle dashboard, etc.

The goal is to build a community device where people contribute their own ideas into a shared device.

HISTORY

I loved Vision Quest camp in 2005. You would spin the wheels to get a task and a location. I did it every day.
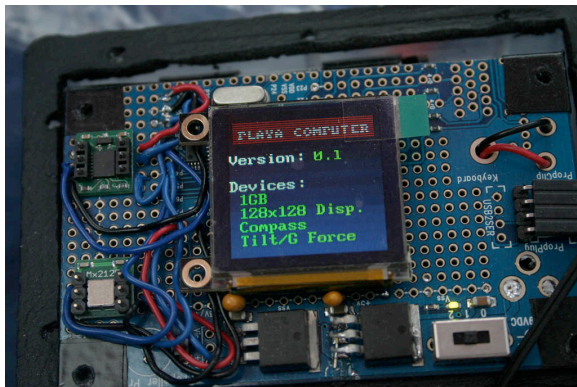
I left Burning Man wanting to bring back a portable version.

I learned how to make an electronic Vision Quest for 2007.

It had limited processing power, and bugs made it a puzzling and surprising.
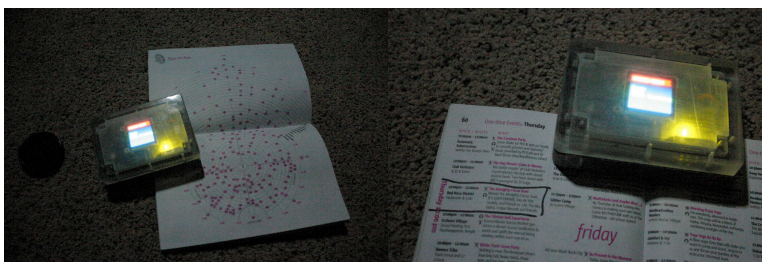
It worked very well and got me excited for 2.0.

The 2008 version had much more power and used a compass instead of a GPS.

I also downloaded the complete schedule of events.

Battery life was an issue, and the custom electronics took most of my time.

Here it is in the sealed case. Tilt sensors and the compass helped change modes.

The event calendar was particularly interesting.