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## Preface

“It is inscribed as on Pandora’s Box ... do not open ...passions ... escape in all directions from a box that lies open ...  
(Bruno Latour, ‘Opening Pandora’s BlackBox’, 1987.)<sup>1</sup>



Figure 1. *blackBOX* interface screen depicting Rochéle the Creole/Indian girl and Nina the Russian/ Greek girl

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<sup>1</sup> Bruno Latour, “Opening Pandora’s Black Box”, *Science in Action: How To Follow Scientists And Engineers Through Society*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1987, pp 1-17.

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<sup>2</sup> *Baglamas* from Holst op cit p70.

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<sup>3</sup> Image from *Templenet* <http://www.templenet.com/Orissa/konakona.html> [accessed 10 June 2005].

## Abstract

This study investigates and records the production of a digital media artwork *blackBOX: Painting A Digital Picture of Documented Memory*, generated through the media technologies of interactive multimedia, exploiting the creative potentials of digitally produced music, sound, image and text relationships in a disc based and online (Internet) environment. The artwork evolves from an imaginary electronic landscape that can be uniquely explored/ played in a non-sequential manner. The artwork/ 'game' is a search for the protagonist Nina's hybrid cultural identity. This is mirrored in the exploration of random, fragmentary and non-linear experiences designed for the player engaged with the artwork. The subjective intervention of the player/ participant in the electronic artwork is metaphoric of the *improvisational* tendencies that have evolved in the *Greek Blues (Rembetika)*, *Jazz*, and *Hindustani* musical and performative dance forms. The protagonist Nina's discovery of these musical forms reveal her cultural/ spiritual origins. As a musical composer arranges notes, melodies and harmonies, and sections of instruments, so too, the multimedia producer designs a ensemble of audio-visual fragments to be navigated. *Dance* also becomes a driving metaphor, analogous to the players movement in and through these passages of image/ sound/ text and as a movement between theories and ideas explored in the content of the program. The central concern is to playfully reverse, obscure, distort the look of the dominating/colonialist gaze, in the production of an interactive 'game' and allow the girl to picture herself.

One of my objectives is to explore the ways in which social research can be undertaken by the creation of an interactive program in the computer environment utilising interactive digital media technologies. The study reveals that, through the subjective intervention of the (player) *user*<sup>4</sup> with the digital artefact, a unique experience and responsiveness is produced with the open ended text. The work is comprised of a website <http://www.strangecities.net>; an interactive CD-ROM; a gallery installation; digital photomedia images; and a written thesis documenting and theorising the production.

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<sup>4</sup> The term *user*, while widely debated has been in usage from the 1980s to refer to the unique human interaction with the digital artefact, electronic screen work, and computer interface.