

# Pranesh Lal, *Ze·nith*, 2009

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New Zealand is known for its technological portrayal of statistics and information. From the innovative real-time portrayal of 3D America's Cup races to analogue on-field advertising in skewed perspective to heartbeats-per-minute of bowlers in one-day internationals, New Zealand viewers and audiences have come to expect layers of information. In Pranesh Lal's project entitled *Ze·nith*, he has considered the experience and expectation of the modern user.

With the incessant reinvention of new ways of presenting, the virtual world touches contemporary life in more ways than realised. These new ways of showcasing material provide endless opportunities for marketing, education, recruitment, the portrayal of products and the delivery of services. Having analysed existing models for virtual tours, Lal has developed a project that presents, showcases and leads a user through a self-led tour of what is on offer in the Music Department at the School of Media Arts.

Contemporary users have little regard for the technology behind the tools presented online. Beyond accessibility and ease of use, the magic of interactivity no longer provides a spark of awe, but rather users approach media with an embedded expectation of what it can/should provide. Today's portal-based websites are built on a modular framework that allow for a user to decide what he/she sees. Information is no longer presented in a linear structure. In the case of Lal's subject, objects which were formerly the bedrock of pre-tertiary decision-making are shared in their virtual counterparts; a CD is offered as downloadable mp3s, a tour of facilities is provided as a 3D interactive environment and what was once a newsletter is rendered as an RSS feed.

Not only does Lal's virtual showcase offer users the possibility to sample the department's offerings, but as a work it has far-reaching implications; it projects a vision of currency. His project is both a model and a challenge to organisations and businesses of what they will need to succeed in the years to come.

Andrea Wilkinson

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Senior Lecturer in Design, Graphic Design Co-ordinator  
School of Media Arts,  
Waikato Institute of Technology