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EXPERIMENTAL WIRELESS ART PROJECT ENABLES VIRTUAL GRAFFITI

ATHENS, Ga. – *Tagging*, a term used by graffiti artists to describe writing, is the name of a new project that will allow Internet users to cover downtown Athens with virtual graffiti. The project allows anyone using a wireless Internet-capable (WiFi) handheld device with a Web browser to select their location from an online map and use a stylus to "tag" images of surrounding buildings on handheld computer screen. The graffiti is then stored in a database and becomes part of the virtual cityscape of downtown Athens. As with traditional graffiti, each person may add to previous graffiti or create his or her own. The results are available for immediate viewing on the device and on the project's website, www.tagging.us. Virtual vandals will have their chance at tagging Athens when the project is completed near the end of September.



Kit Hughes tagging in Athens, GA

Tagging originated as a collaborative project launched by Ideas for Creative Exploration (ICE) and the New Media Institute, two interdisciplinary programs at the University of Georgia. Continuing the mission of using the wireless cloud over downtown Athens (also known as the WAGzone) as a test bed for emerging wireless technology, the two groups asked artists to develop works specifically for the wireless environment. Christopher "Kit" Hughes answered the call with this program for virtual graffiti. *Tagging* first debuted in demo form at the New Media Institute event *Go Mobile or Go Home* in April 2003. Since then, *Tagging* has grown into an extended research project supported by a summer fellowship from the Center for Undergraduate Research Opportunities (CURO).

Tagging is an art project straddling the genres of technophile net.art and visceral street graffiti; likewise, the technological underpinnings are serving as entertainment and research. The project integrates dynamic content with motion graphics on a foundation of database technology. These three areas are reaching mainstream use on the Internet but have not been fully explored in a wireless environment. While the primary objective of *Tagging* has been to serve as a work of art, the users of project will provide useful feedback regarding user interface preferences, bandwidth limitations, and the potential of location-based wireless technology. These participants will take a first-hand part in exploring the possibilities of these devices in the virtual cityscape of Athens. Research findings will be published in a report written by Hughes.

www.tagging.us