



# Sighing door

*Raspberri Pi and program, recorded sigh of Paul Sutherland, IR beam sensors, speakers.*

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My housemate, Paul, would acknowledge the presence of other people in rooms by sighing. Instead of saying hello, he would simply sigh. This is an understandable kind of acknowledgement. Why say hello every time someone you've already seen that day walks into the same room as you – especially when you're living together? The sigh, I felt, was Paul saying he was comfortable enough to relax while I was there.

The gallery I worked in for a long time had counters at each of the gallery entrances. The numbers they presented were wildly inaccurate, mostly because they counted people on the way in and out, and we never divided by two. It also counted the staff a lot as they went in and out over the course of the day. However, I believe there is a deeper problem with it – that numbers somehow indicated the success of the exhibition. There were shows hardly anyone attended that were far superior to one's it seemed the whole city turned out to see. It was a technique to try and identify and then capitalise on popularity.

I disliked the idea that every person's engagement with what was in the space was reduced to a number in our spreadsheet. I feel as if sighing is a much better response to the presence of someone in a room, just an acknowledgement, something subtle but appreciable that will put people at ease, putting all those techniques of sensing – of security and data gathering – to a better use.

Unfortunately, it was after I had finished this work that I remembered that the spaceship in Douglas Adam's *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* also had sighing doorways, programmed to have a "sunny and cheerful disposition". I suppose that this artwork is made with a different sigh, but a similar idea. Perhaps there is some deeper connection between doors and sighs, that the orifice of the mouth acts like the orifice of the door, and the release of air from the mouth is an acceptance of the slight displacement of air that you will cause as you walk through the door and into the room.

