We live in a culture of interactivity, but how did we get there? One thing is certain: it did not happen by cruising along some straight and well-paved Boulevard de l’Interaktivité, flanked by fancy computer shops. Rather, the culture of interactivity emerged from a maze of narrow, crooked, intersecting paths with frequent pitfalls and dead-ends. It was a trial and error affair. This lecture takes a closer look at this process from a media-archaeological perspective, demonstrating how elements of interactive media appeared, and were gradually integrated into various cultural formations. The late 19th century played a particularly important role in this process, leading not only to the appearance of proto-interactive technology, but also giving rise to discursive formations that influenced the development of interactive media.

Erkki Huhtamo is Professor of Media History and Theory at the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA), Department of Design | Media Arts. He holds a Ph.D. in cultural history, and has published extensively on media archaeology and media arts, lectured worldwide, created television programs, and curated exhibitions. In recent years his research has dealt with topics like the moving panorama, peep media, the archaeology of the screen, tactility in art history, and the emergence of mobile media. Huhtamo’s most recent books are Media Archaeology: Approaches, Applications, and Implications (co-ed. with Dr. Jussi Parikka, University of California Press, 2011) and a forthcoming monograph titled Illusions in Motion: An Archaeology of the Moving Panorama and Related Spectacles.