THE VIRTUAL MUSEUM
Frankfurt 1991

THE VIRTUAL MUSEUM is a three dimensional computer generated museum constituted by an immaterial constellation of rooms and exhibits. Its apparatuses are a round rotating platform on which is located a large video projection monitor, a computer, and a chair on which the viewer can sit. From this chair the viewer interactively controls his/her movement through THE VIRTUAL MUSEUM. Forwards and backwards movement of the chair causes forwards and backwards movement of the viewer in the museum space represented on the screen. Turning the chair causes a rotation of this virtual image space, and also a synchronous physical rotation of the platform. Thus the viewer moves, and is moved simultaneously in both the virtual and real environments.

THE VIRTUAL MUSEUM is constituted by five rooms, and all of which replicates an architectural simulation of the real room. This number of rooms is to some extent arbritary - the concept implies a single-room museum whose quantity of virtual exhibition rooms can be infinitely extended. The architecture of THE VIRTUAL MUSEUM reproduces the architecture of the real room in which the installation is located. This establishes a conjunction of the real and virtual spaces, together with the conjunction of the real and virtual modalities of travel that the viewer is given by this work. To make this explicit, the first room also shows a representation of the installation itself with its platform, chair, computer and video monitor. When first sitting down on the chair, the viewer faces both the real and virtual monitor screens. - at that moment the real and virtual realities are exactly aligned around the viewer. Then when moving through THE VIRTUAL MUSEUM the viewer in effect tranports himself out of this chair (*telepresence*) - and so can see the installation, with its now vacated chair, as an object outside of his virtual point of view. The other four rooms are consecutively entered just by passing though any of the immaterial walls of the room that the viewer is in. These rooms present themselves in a predetermined order, irrespective of the direction the viewer takes.

Using alphabetic and textual forms, each room contains its own specific virtual 'exhibits'. The exhibits in the first three rooms are referential to existing genres - painting, sculpture and cinema. The exhibit in the fourth room describes the particularity of a wholly computer generated environment - three moving signs ('A', '2', 'Z') are primary tri-colour light sources that themselves constitute the phenomenology of the room.

We see around us a world that is becoming increasingly museified. This tendency towards premature conservation may be relieved by a virtual museum architecture that is as provisional as the culture that it embodies. THE VIRTUAL MUSEUM delineates certain modalities of an interactive and virtual space. It locates the virtual space in a contiguous relationship with the real space, and establishes a discourse in that fine zone that exists between the real and the virtual - the 'infra-mince'.