



A play is a landscape, Gertrude Stein

The Narrative Landscape is a work created with a computer that has been conceived and developed to articulate a new interactive artistic form.

It allows the spectator to travel within a prepared digital database of images and sound, and so to make a personal scenography out of the process of viewing and listening to the work.

The installation of the Narrative Landscape consists of its computer hardware, a video projector which projects the digital image down into a large white screen (3m x 4m) on the floor of the gallery, and a joystick with which each spectator can manipulate sound and image.

Both sound and image are digitally recorded in the computer, and the audiovisual output is controlled by the use of the joystick. The spoken text and other soundtracks are connected to specific images, and in some instances just to specific areas within an image.

The action of the joystick gives visual movement in two ways – panning over the surface of an image in any direction, and zooming which progressively enlarges or reduces a chosen part of an image. At the points of extreme zoom-in and zoom-out the joystick generates a transition to a new image: a process which represents the idea of 'zooming through' to an image on another level (i.e. above or below the former image).

The Narrative Landscape is constituted by 28 images which are arranged in the following way: The first image is based on a satellite photo of the Earth over which has been superimposed an astrological map of the stars configured as Hebrew letters. This image is divided by a grid of red lines into nine areas, and each of these areas indicate the presence of an audio-visual 'story' which can be reached by zooming through the Earth image in that place.

Each of the nine stories is articulated by a group of three images which are arranged one below the other. These are also reached by the process of zooming through from one level to the next. Zooming through the lowest level (i.e. the third image) of a story returns the viewer to the original Earth image, in the same place it was left. It is here that the viewer can then travel to another of the nine areas, and zoom through to another group of three images that make up a story.

The nine groups of three images have all been structured in the following way:

– the first and uppermost image represents a place – it has the scale of an aerial image of a city or landscape;

– the second and middle image indicates the body – it has the scale of people and human situations;

– the third and last image indicates a sign – It is a symbolic construction of the themes expressed in the first two images of place and body.

All the images in this work have been made with a computer and are digitally encoded. As a result, the action of zooming into an image is also a process of increasing abstraction because the point of the original image become increasingly larger squares of colour. The resulting transitions between varying levels of abstraction and representation are one of the important formal aspects of this work.

Another consequence is that the viewer can construct an almost infinite number of new images from the data of the original 28 images. But this is not to express an ideology of a fragmentary reality

– at the point where coherence of an image has been reduced to a few large blocks, a new representation emerges which is its reflection and extension, re-affirming the whole.

The texts for this work, written by Dirk Groeneveld, were conceived as nine distinct stories, relating to the nine groups of images. Digital recording of each story into the computer allows real time interactive access to any part of the spoken text, so that the actual order of words and phrases is structured differently in relation to each image.

Thus, per group of three images, the first image carries its related story as it was written; the second image carries selected words and phrases from that story linked to words and phrases from other stories; and in the third image, the words and phrases of that story are heard in reverse order (from end to beginning).

Jeffrey Shaw

THE CITY

The city of man and woman is divided

Partition is a holy word
in this land
it is unspeakable
there are forms to show
the points of view
there are points of view
to show the city
there are men
taking you anywhere
we know these men
they look down on us
we live how we live
horizontally
never looking up
never looking down
we are proud of what we did
we raised these men
they are, still, our children
se we say, okay, once more
we live horizontally
and they giggle
old as they are
and we refuse them
the entrance of our city
how they live is not our burden
our burden
is to protect us
against the elements
of say
charm
sentimentality
motherhood they understand
they rarely shout
out loud
for instance
things like:
our column stands erect
come up and visit us
one day
no they are silent enough
they sit on the ledge
holding their knees together
hardly whispering
waiting for us to come up
and offer ourselves
they are children
wanting to become fathers
how silly of them
to think
we adored the idea of
having a father
after chasing our husbands
to the oasis
and showing them our shiny apples
they were unable to catch
they ran after
the catch
biting their own tail
puppies

toy beasts so
we threw them away
one day
clenched with arm-strength
we suffocated the bitches
after they gave us exactly one baby
we couldn't help it
the babies were all men
it didn't change our attitude

as they grew up
it showed
as they grew up
they stayed

we sent them away
they built a tower
erect
and there they sit
looking at us
night and day
no idea how or where they live from
they sat straight up in our laps
now they want to enter us
enlarge their vision
materialize the thought

we closed our gates once we close them now
they bit their tails
and it will stay that way.

One night the moon came in
through the window
he looked up with his bright eyes
broke the rope and escaped

When it was shown it was erect
intact it sat on a lap and stood out
the tower was amazement of a superior kind

do not point at the paint
do not point at the bird
do not point at a heart
point at soul in the province.

Pisa.

When it was shown it was erect
intact it sat on the lap and stood out
the province was amazed
the tower was superior

the simple fact of hands helping hands
and the glory of molding
a vision into flesh
was made stone in an instant

single out a person
single out a landscape
we need a thread
to hold it to the throne

the bird might fly the cage
the child will walk away
a caress is not enough
to show our gratitude

do not point at the cement
do not point at the paint
hold your breath in front of the baby
place the bird in his hands

he handled it with care
though frozen with fear it tried to escape
we wanted it in position
so we placed it on a lap

our days were wonderful
the sun shone as it had to
over our hands playing on the white canvass
a reluctant bird held with compassion

Our nights were spent awake
a trembling energy held us together
and body and warmth became one
a province of man in the state of woman

How could this bottle be held
without breaking
How breath stopped when it moved
deep within