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## THE NARRATIVE LANDSCAPE

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during '85/'86 also at Lantaren, Rotterdam; Siggraph, San  
Francisco; Moltkerei, Cologne; Festival des Arts Electroniques,  
Rennes, France.

The Narrative Landscape is a computer aided audio visual art work in which the use of specific digital techniques has enabled the creation of a new interactive art form where the spectator is able to 'travel' within a structured database of images and words, and so make a personal scenography of the process of viewing and experiencing the work. The spoken texts and images are digitally stored in a computer, and the spectator uses a joystick to control these. The image is seen as a large screen video projection on the floor of the gallery.

The action of the joystick permits visual movement in the followings ways - panning in any direction laterally over the surface of an image, and zooming in or out of a chosen part of the image which progressively enlarges or reduces it's detail. At the two zoom extremes, the joystick generates a digital transition to a new image - a process which represents the notion of 'breaking through' to another level.

The Narrative Landscape is constituted by 28 images, which are structured in a specific way spatially and conceptually. The first image is divided by a grid of red lines into nine areas. Each area is a path to a particular group of three other images and an accompanying spoken text. The spectator reaches these by zooming 'through' a chosen area in the first image. The three images in each group are arranged one below the other, and they are also reached by a further process of zooming through from one level to the next. Going through the third and last image of such a group returns the spectator to the original image where then another area and path can be chosen.

The nine groups of three images share a particular iconographic structure. The image on the first level represents a place; it has the scale of an aerial image of a city or landscape. The image on the second level indicates the body; it has the scale of human situations. The image on the third level carries signs that extends symbolically the themes expressed in the first two images of place and body.

Because all the images in this work are digital databases, the action of zooming into an image is also a process of increasing abstraction as the points (pixels) that compose the image become progressively larger blocks of colour. The interactive journey of the spectator between these varying levels of abstraction and representation is an important formal aspect of this work. An infinite number of variations and new images are created from the original data, and when travelling through one image layer to

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another, the new representation emerges at the point of complete abstraction of the other. Each spectator's manipulation of the joystick becomes a unique and idiosyncratic redefinition of the work as a whole.

The texts of The Narrative Landscape were written by Dirk Groeneveld and are conceived as nine distinct stories/poems relating to the nine groups of three images. The digital recording of these texts on the computer's hard disc allows real time interactive access to any part of the spoken text. The actual order of words and phrases has been structured differently for each image, and the spectator, when moving from one image to another, is at the same time selecting the particular set of words and phrases that is 'attached' to each image.

As a rule, the structuring of the spoken text in relation to each group of three images is as follows: On the first level the text is spoken as it was written. On the second level words and phrases from that text are mixed with words and phrases from texts that belong to neighbouring images. And on the third level the words and phrases of the original text are spoken in random order, i.e. from the end to the beginning. Thus the nine basic texts, relating to the nine groups of images, are each heard in three variations that relate specifically to each of the three images that constitute such a group.

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