

JEFFREY SHAW *virtual world voyaging*

REVOLUTION. 1990

IMAGO - international travelling exhibition (during 1990-93) of contemporary Dutch media art curated by Montevideo, under the auspices of the Netherlands Ministry of Culture.

Premier: Kunst-RAI, Amsterdam, May/June 1990

This work was inspired by, what appeared at the time to be the radical and unprecedented transformation of television into a mechanism for effecting revolution (Roumania, December 1989).

An interactive video disc sculpture. Components are a circular wooden platform on which is mounted a rotatable metal column and video monitor. Also a computer, video disc player and digital audio playback device.

The viewer can rotate the column and monitor in either a clockwise or ant-clockwise direction. A built in friction device gives this rotation significant resistance - real physical effort has to be made to rotate the monitor and the maximum speed is approximately one revolution in twenty seconds.

Two video disc and digital audio sequences were made, one for the clockwise direction of movement, the other for the anti-clockwise direction. The frame rate at which these audio visual sequences are played is directly controlled by the speed with which the viewer rotates the column/monitor. At maximum speed (one rotation in twenty seconds) the rate is 25 frames per second - at slower speeds of rotation the image frame rate is reduced (slow motion), and when the column not moved the image is still. The frequency modulation of the sound similarly ranges from normal, slowing down to silence when still.

1. Clockwise rotation: The video disc sequence shows one full rotation of a millstone grinding grain. The viewer, when turning the column, animates the rotation of this on screen millstone. The speed of the turning millstone is exactly synchronous with the speed that the column is turned by the viewer. Thus the viewer appears to be actually turning the millstone, as a virtual object on the monitor screen. The sound of the millstone is similarly modulated by the viewer's rotation of the column.

2. Anti-clockwise rotation: The video disc sequence contains 180 still images that refer to three centuries of revolutionary events. These images were originally created (using archive photographic material, digitally processed and transformed by 'paintbox' computer graphic techniques) for THE IMAGINARY MUSEUM OF REVOLUTIONS (1989), a project made in association with Tjebbe van Tijen. When the viewer rotates the column at full speed, these 180 images pass by in a 25 frame per second blur. When slowing down the rotation of the column, the images then pass in slow motion and become individually readable. And when the column is stopped, a particular image can be frozen on the screen. The sound track is of a revolutionary crowd, and its frequency is also modulated by the speed of rotation of the column.