

# JEFFREY SHAW *virtual world voyaging*

## INVENTER LA TERRE. 1986

Permanant interactive videodisc sculpture made for the Cite des Sciences et de Industrie, La Villette, Paris.

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The sculpture itself is composed of a chrome plated tubular column (60cm. diameter, 300cm. high), and a circular base (300cm. diameter, 15cm. thick) made of black terrazzo inlaid with brass signs which represent a Kabbalistic astrological map.

The column has an opening through which the spectator looks, two handles to control the movement of the column and the projected images, and a pair of loudspeakers for sound. Inside the column is a television monitor and an optical system of lenses and mirrors. When looking into the opening in the column, the spectator sees what is on the monitor screen as a large projected virtual image floating outside the column in the museum. By pressing the handles and rotating the servo driven column, the spectator can interactively control the movement of this virtual image.

Both sound and image are accessed from two video disc players under the control of a microcomputer which responds to the spectator's manipulation of the handles and column. The video material is designed in such a way that there is a 360 degree panorama representing six different symbolic sites in a landscape. The spectator travels in this panorama by rotating the whole column, and the panorama thus appears to float in the museum all around him as he moves his viewpoint.

Moving one way or the other in this panorama (each half degree turn of the column advancing the video disc one frame), the spectator can choose to visit any one of the six sites represented in this panorama by pressing a button on the column handle. Linked to each site is an approx. 3 minute long video sequence which takes the spectator on a visual journey that explores the specific theme that place represents. Once the sequence is over, the spectator is brought back to the panorama where he can then, by turning the column, choose another place to go to.

The title of this work "Inventer La Terre" (Invention of the World) refers to its central theme: the exploration of archaic, mythological and esoteric cosmologies concerning the creation and meaning of the world. The form of the sculpture itself represents a conjunction of contemporary technology with the memory of archaic structures like the Megalithic stones. The six symbolic sites in the panorama, and the six video sequences that tell their respective 'stories', are each concerned with a specific subject within the overall thematic concern of the work - the totemic world, primal creation myths, the stars and planets, the geometry of unity and diversity, esoteric earth forces, and the invention of fictional worlds.

The soundtrack is composed from fragments of ethnic music from traditional cultures. An extensive use of 3D image synthesis, digital image processing and digital post production techniques were used in the making of the visual sequences.