

PLACE - A USER'S MANUAL

Graz 1995

This work extends the tradition of panorama painting, photography and cinematography in the vector of simulation and 'virtual reality'. A rotating platform with three video projectors allows the viewer to interactively rotate his window of view around a large circular projection screen, and so explore a 3D virtual world constituted by an emblematic constellation of panoramic photographic landscapes. Moving texts are generated in this virtual world by the voice of the viewer, leaving traces of his presence there.

The installation has a 9m diameter and 2m high circular translucent white projection screen where the projected image can be seen on both the inside and outside surfaces. In the center of this space there is a 2.5m diameter round motorised platform on which there are the 3 LCD video projectors which project a 9m wide image and the Silicon Graphics computer. Also on the platform is a column with a video camera which constitutes the interactive user interface, allowing movement through the virtual scene as well as control of the rotation of the platform and of the projected image around the circular screen.

The projected scene is constituted by eleven panoramic cylinders in a simple landscape of ground and sky, which repeat themselves infinitely in all directions. Each cylinder is a texture map made from a panoramic photograph of landscapes made by the artist with a special panoramic camera in various locations (Australia, Japan, La Palma, Bali, France, Germany, etc.). Each of these panoramas in the virtual scene is the same size as the installation's projection screen which allows the viewer to move into any panoramic cylinder and place it's image exactly with the circumference of the projection screen, thus reconstituting the original camera view of the landscape as an immersive totality.

The ground on which these panoramas are positioned is marked by a diagram of the Sephirotic Tree of the Later Qabbalists, and the position of each panorama offers a relationship between the visual identity of its scenery and the signification of its particular location. The viewfinder on the interface camera offers an aerial view of this diagram and allows the viewer to see the exact position of the eleven panoramas.

A microphone on top of the interface camera picks up any sound that the viewer makes, and this triggers the release of continuously moving three dimensional sentences within the projected scene. These are citations from various well known authors discussing issues of place and language. These texts originate in the center of the screen and move at a constant speed leftwards, but their physical arrangement in the virtual space is very much affected by the kind of movements the viewer is making while they are being generated. These texts have a limited visual life span, becoming more and more transparent during five minutes until they disappear.