PETER D'AGOSTINO, DAVID TAFLER, VICTORIA VESNA:

Cyberspace: Configurations of Space, Memory and Language in the Electronic Arts

David Tafler: Meaning without mirrors: Mapping the Margins of Cyberspace.

Moving within a cybernetic world belies notions of the human body travelling through an electronic spacescape. In cyberspace, the horizon catches the mind indeed transcending the limitations of the body. Crossing this conceptual divide requires a radical language that articulates mental variations and possibilities without blocking them in space. Such a language will depart from many of the phenomenological standards currently used to trace virtual experiences.

Conventional notions of time and space have no meaning when moving through this new environment. Nevertheless, a one dimensional cyberspace seems unfathomable. Therefore, inside cyberspace schematics mask that world. Entry points become windows, electronic windows (CRTs, televisions) with a multi- dimensional facade. These portals translate the cerebral system into a sense oriented display. Eventually, the voyager sheds the constraints that have framed the imagination with the laws of the physical world.

This realization marks the real out-of-body revolution of cybernetics. It signals the end of cyberspace as an architectural construct and marks its beginning as a theoretical landscape. Information becomes commerce. Storage habitats require access platforms predicated on ethereal codes and signals. Coordinating the exchange of goods and services in the ether becomes a vital component of the material world. Materiality loses its meaning.

On this horizon, the scientist, artist, or theorist will depart from corpus paradigms when entering the ethereal matrix. Mathematical matrix models will replace turf maps when charting non-material investigations. This break with the past, ironically, draws the explorer back to a fundamental understanding of a world that predates the rise of Judeo-Christian thinking, and the glory of the Renaissance with its architectonic perspective.

In an earlier world, people lacked the stability of living within a comfortable space. No clear demarcation mediated the differences between an empirical science and a theological unknown. These people used their space, their light, the planet and the stars, as a fluctuating sign system through an unfathomable world.

Today, traces of the (Warlpiri, Pitjantjatjara, Pintupi, Arrernte, Alyawarre...) law remain. These civilizations offer an abundant resource for developing new tracking models for moving within cyberspace. All humans return to their nomadic roots when entering this cyber world. Requisite paradigm shifts require resuscitating latent frames of reference that will eventually lead to a new language. This revolution in thinking will have far reaching ecological implications.

Peter d'Agostino: VR as RV: an exploration of mind/environment. -

With the content and contextualization of new technologies shaping ever evolving perspectives of cyberspace, philosophical questions continue to emerge as to what is real and what is not, from Plato's Cave to this oxymoron called virtual reality. When foraging along the highways of electronic digital information, it becomes necessary to reframe and reconsider the inherent meanings and current uses of terms like virtuality, reality and actuality.

VR as RV is a new "critical virtual reality" (CVR) project intended to function as a metaphorical equivalent of CPR (cardiopulminary resuscitation)- a form of first aid for a dying body. In the context of a post-Cold War era, this work is an attempt to resuscitate a technological system that is still tied to outdated modes of an industrially based militarism. The theoretical framework for VR as RV incorporates Gregory Bateson's concepts of "an ecology of mind," and "mind/environment" with references to a superstring theory which postulates a ten dimensional universe with two parallel realities of four and six dimensions.

The critique inherent in this work is that recent hybrids of VR and online systems are creating hyper-theaters of the absurd, high- tech forums that are, ironically, analogous to the function and practicality of the "self contained comforts" of an RV (a motor home or caravan) :"Your recreational vehicle has been designed and engineered to provide youwith many self-contained comforts of home without having to be connectedto outside sources.... if operated within recommended procedures, [it]should provide you with many miles of virtually trouble free travel."

Charting this inversion of map and territory, VR as RV also addresses the erosion and possible reclamation of oral traditions that are firmly rooted in a past and still clearly manifested in the present. Alternative structures suggested by the multi-dimensional aspects of superstrings can also create links to indigenous cultures that may yield something beyond the sterility and predicability of a pervasive globally based high-tech culture.

VR as RV incorporates an immersive virtual reality installation that will be premiered at the Banff Centre for the Arts in August. An on-line component is planned for access on the World Wide Web during the ISEA Conference in Helsinki.

Victoria Vesna: The Wild West and the Frontier of Cyberspace

The spirit of the new frontier is still strong in the vast, yet unconquered spaces of the West Coast and the landscape itself prepares the humans inhabiting this land for making the transition to functioning within cyberspace. Driving down the freeway for hours daily develops an ability to parallel process movement through space and time with the higher thought processes functioning on a conscious level. The body is still, in a sitting position, with a simple task of automatic movement of the car and observing the few signs along the way while the subset of the mind operates. This is a form of active meditation that prepares one for navigation through cyberspace.

The vastness of the California landscape with all traces of history wiped out and the generic housing projects sprouting all over the place makes it impossible for one to internalize it and feel in control of it. When confronted with the artificiality of sites like Hollywood or Orange County and the immense surrounding spaces, it is easy to make the comparison to the newly evolving cyberscapes. These distances also necessitate the communication through the electronic space and it is by no accident that it was conceived in this part of the world where Silicon valley sits.

The inherent need to control nature manifests itself in the projection of visions of perfection that are in fact closer to a virtual world then that which is defined as virtual reality. Silicon, the same substance which is used in the production of chip technology, is used in redefining the human body, mostly women, and preservation of nature. Yet, when we delve deeper into the mysteries of the mind projected into the silicon chips, we once again return to the generative erotic—the Motherboard, the matrix. Here we find that the architects of the machine, no matter how unconscious, have left room for the feminine principle to participate in the creative process. Women are coming into the picture much later, but without any excess baggage of the past connections to war. The transmutation process involves the feminization of this mental space constructed by the masculine, inward looking mathematical process.

Using the installation "Another Day in Paradise," which is composed of three preserved, reconstructed palm trees (symbols of Paradise) with integrated monitors, I will explain the preservation process and compare the artificial geometries of the California landscape (and many similar new areas) which elide hidden indigenous patterns to the spatial relationships of cyberscapes under construction.