

## **Studio Azzurro**

### **A view from outside**

(notes for the staging of "Kepler's dream")

In his "Somnium", Kepler imagines to observe the Earth from the Moon. Both the narrating sense and the scientific value of his script use this didactic artifact as a starting point, and the philosophical sense of it is masked behind this expedient.

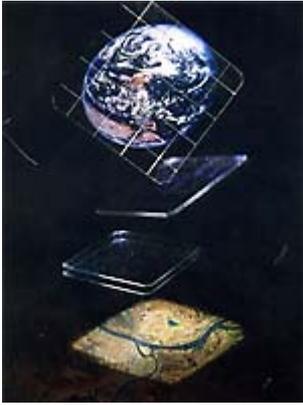
But what had been an efficient paradox towards the end of the 16th century should not be considered as such any more today.

With present technology, this extreme point-of-view, this hitherto only imaginable vision becomes practicable after all, the image of the Globe has become part of our daily life. The satellites have transformed themselves into our ocular prostheses, into an instrument of our collective self-portrait, or—if one prefers—into the total image of our "superficial" culture. Every day through the weather satellites, the military satellites, the geo-stationary satellites, in fact through a good part of those some sixty thousand objects of big and small dimensions that orbit around the Globe, we observe, control, and analyze the surface of our planet and we explore the emptiness of the Universe.

When these colored images are transmitted, esthetically digitized similar to pictorial "landscapes", these synthetic visions of the Earth and the Universe seem to be able to dominate the shape and the sense of these two things, but, simultaneously in our imaginary that restless feeling of infinity and of our microscopic presence is awakened: Two feelings in contrast.

And so, these views projected of us from beyond become looks scrutinizing also our interior, serving to identify and to define our new "Mask" of the universe.

There is another aspect to be noted: Many people think that magics and science, with the advent of the Modern Age, would have frontally clashed into each other, engaging in a fight without shelter and that finally science, as the more realistic and more in harmony with the universe, would have prevailed, pushing totems and sorcerers, alchemists and magicians to the margins of our civilized world. In fact, matters did not at all happen that way. Almost all scientists of the early period had their feet on two grounds at a time, Kepler himself, who was the most formidable investigator of the sky of all times, was at the same time a much sought-for astrologer and had grown up at the side of a mother accused of sorcery, ending up as a heretic and the son of a witch. This relation of coexistence between the two aspects, so much fought against by all the positivist culture, seems to reappear, surely not in its antique shape, but interlaced with what could be the summit of the evolution of rational thinking, in short - that technological world that expands from the hyper-real dimensions of videos to the simulated ones of the computers, from the far distance of the Explorers to the visitation of sub-atomic particles; all that virtual world we do not perceive with our physical senses any more, as the "visionary" physics already suggested, but that seems to be obviously existing. There is something magic in these instruments, but above all, there is something magic in the way we address them. There is a complexity of information, of sounds, an interlacing of vibrating chords underlying this matter, unifying it to the observer. From the universe produced in this relation, from the relation one creates it is possible to understand whether the thus transported messages will be kept secret. Underneath the surface of this new cosmology, there is evidence of other mysteries as fascinating as those one meets in the magic and mythical universes. And our universe today, is—in many respects—similar to the old magical universe.



"Traiettorie celesti", Video installation, for "L'amour de Berlin", Centre Culturel Cavaillon, July 6 1990

One last thing: The Earth has become quite small, contained in a screen, a new palpitating and mobile globe. It is the image of an immaterial world travelling at light speed, reaching space and being reflected there like in a mirror back to Earth. But together with the handful of data serving to compose this image, up there in space, a continuous stream of signals passes on packages, of communication, and information representing us, serving to put in relation man to man, substituting our actions and our movements: Powerful prostheses of our voice, our eyes, our thinking. "Human beings"—Marshall McLuhan wrote in 1965—"are subject to the immediate fascination of every extension of themselves reproduced in any material different from the one they are made of themselves ... Every invention or technology is an extension or an auto-amputation of our body."

Substituting our senses with the ones programmed by technology, any man risks becoming a member of the same tribe, and by exchanging frequencies for tribal Tom-toms as pre-announced by McLuhan, all of us would risk going along the road of total homologation.

But technology may also be the extension of our creativity, through a new poetry: We are trying to transform this Tom-tom into music, these images we try to bend to our expressive exigences. This is to underline the centrality—in the staging—of the live images from the meteorological satellites and the decision to put the whole on a timeless level, neither reconstruction nor futurization, with the intention to utilize Kepler's "Dream" as a dream of our own that cannot separate itself from the related events nor from the signs of our contemporaneity.

The possibility for the spectator is to put himself in the same point of view imagined by Kepler through the images transmitted live by this formidable surveying camera; of projecting oneself, with the own observation beyond the real and practicable context and to look for one's own point of view through this extraneous eye.

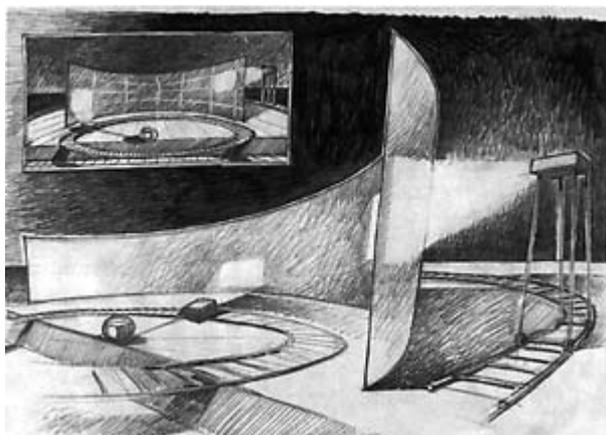
In the audience, two great ears attentively capturing and transforming into images the signs received from the atmosphere: two metal structures holding the parabolic antennas for satellite reception and the monitors conveying data and figures. They are also the towers of reference accessible to the actor, the singers and musicians, and the animating signals of a platform activated during the voyage from one planet to the other. On the scene, in two different orbits, we find rotating video projectors, inscribing their light signals, their information, their fragments of tales onto a great semi-circular screen embracing part of the stage. A screen not unlike the great cloth, in which Kepler finds himself enveloped at the end of his dream upon his return to reality.

Among these elements, the presence of various performers and of an orchestra as such, will move. The latter, in fact, is not collocated in the traditional position at the margin of the performance, but enters into the opera contributing - besides the musical execution -- in a significant manner to the development of the tale and interacting with the scenery and the

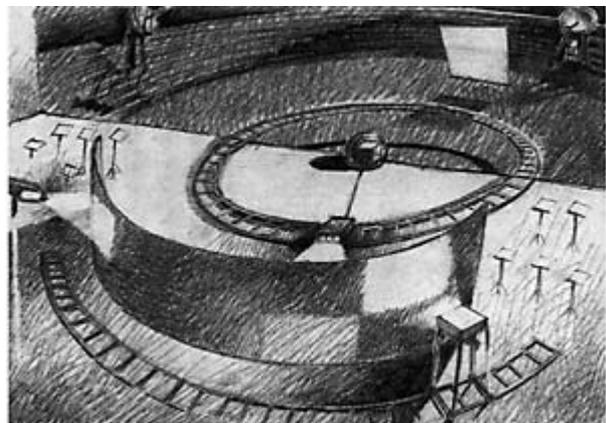
actor. The actor, with that touch of irony one would expect from a Demon, controls and illustrates this "planetarium" made also of men, thus revealing a "mask" of that universe all of his own.



Photograph from the Overture of "Kepler's Dream"



Design for "Kepler's Dream"



Design for "Kepler's Dream"

The opera is divided into six parts:

**INTRODUCTION:** The introduction to the tale develops along the most autobiographical parts of the "Somnium": the mother, the travels, the teaching by Tycho Brahe, the relation to magic. This part is filmed for two synchronized screens both inside and around Castel del Monte castle near Andria in Apulia (Italy), an octagonal construction built on the order of Emperor Frederic II of Hohenstaufen, mysterious and rich in astronomical, geometrical and mathematical implications.

**MAGIC FORMULAS:** Duet: "Notti senza fine ... (Nights without end ...)" The two singers come out of their protecting envelope.

NAVIGATION TOWARDS THE MOON: A radar leads us on this trip through the history of images of the world towards the most up-to-date.

THE VIEW: The Demon describes the characteristics of Levana, also referring to life on Earth, especially through the images from his digital iconography and the fragments of his reality, read from a zenithal point-of-view. We are zoomed in from an enlarged vision into a detail of a microscopic pixel that—with different colors—opens new chapters every once a while.

THE RETURN TOWARDS THE EARTH: "Girate e girate ... (Turn and turn ...)". Once again, the radar leads us on our trip back.

RETURN TO THE EARTH: As Earth appears to us after such an instructive voyage: The demon winds a cloth around his head while the computer transmits new images. The live cameras dissolve the figure of our guide into a simulated dimension.



### **TELESPAZIO in line with music**

Telespazio wanted to participate in this event staging the astronomic-musical opera "Kepler's Dream" by Giorgio Battistelli because Kepler, in his scientific dissertation written for admission to Tübingen University and from which this opera originates, has anticipated—be it in the literary shape of a "dream"—what has become reality today, and what the specific object of TELESPAZIO's activities is.

The observation of the Earth and the environment in general, in fact, has been rendered possible by satellites, the technology of which in its various aspects and applications is the center of Telespazio's interest.

Satellites have already become our "eye" enlarging the horizons of our knowledge and our culture. Telespazio, a society with the participation of the state group IRI/STET, is the exclusive concessionary of the Italian Ministry of Mail and Telecommunication for the realization and management of satellite-based telecommunication in Italy.

As the "only vector" to spatial systems (terrestrial stations and satellites) in Italy, Telespazio provides the necessary communication means for national and international communication concerns within the systems INTELSAT (for intercontinental services), INMARSAT (for mobile maritime telecommunication) and EUTELSAT (for European telecommunication).

In the fast and distinct evolution of the world-wide scenario of telecommunication, in particular of satellite-based systems, Telespazio aims both towards a consolidation of institutional activities and towards the pursuit of new commercial goals, in the fields of telesurveying, of in-orbit management of satellites and in all sectors concerning space systems within a field of strong international competition.

Telespazio is based in Rome, while its technical facilities are situated at the Centro Spaziale del Fucino, at the Stazione del Lario (Como), and at Scanzano near Palermo (Sicily).

Telespazio also manages the Laser Station of Matera for spatial geodesy for the Italian Space Agency.

In accordance with SIP Telephone Society, Telespazio is currently realizing a terrestrial network for the provision of numerical services via satellite, with small-size terminals for applications in social matters. Worldwide, Telespazio is the leading distributor of telemetrical services, and offers management and in-orbit control of satellites. These services are presently used by various Agencies and Corporations: The Italian Space Agency, the European Space Agency, INTELSAT, INMARSAT and COMSAT. Both the technological know-how and the capacities acquired in the field of study and experimental activities, permit Telespazio to participate in the most important spatial programs both at a national (ITALSAT) and international level (OLYMPUS, COLUMBUS, DRS, SAT 2, LASSO experiments).

Finally, Telespazio acts as the National Center of Tele-surveying, performing vectoring services and providing for the reception and preelaboration of data transmitted by the LANDSAT, SPOT, and MOS-1 satellites. The company is furthermore very engaged in Environmental Information, installing data bases that may be updated directly by satellite.