

interstitial

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"The Inbetween", MICA-TV 1990

Phantoms walk a tightrope on the invisible boundaries of the telecommunication matrix. Voices fade in and out, escaping from battery driven cellular phone conversations, only to be linked into the new party lines — a kind of uninvited techno-seance. Non-functional "interstitial" spaces of deconstructivist buildings are vector holding-pens for the lost souls of past-claimed territories — literal dead-ends. Inhabitancy is secondary to the allure of the camera — buildings built to be documented making them hyper-real; it is architecture that makes itself. Light and form trapped between the dead space and the moving; occasionally defined by the unexpected ... an image or a suggested narrative.

I cast my net by using a video 8 camera as a psychographic instrument in the Wexner Center for the Arts, at Ohio State University, designed by the architect Peter Eisenman. This mediated experience of going into every darkened nook and cranny, walking up ramps, encountering dead-ends, and framing his materials of metal, wood, glass, and stone which crisscross into right angles, led me to discover Eisenman's theory of the state of in-betweenness.

LED (light emitting diode) electronic signboards fluctuate between being the hawker and the soothsayer. Digital data runs in an accelerated bandwidth, functioning as an interface between the unconscious and the conscious states; not necessarily read, but as a visual continuum. Who is the author of these messages? Does it matter? Simulated music is omnipresent, piped into elevators, lobbies, rest rooms, and the workplace. Is the augmentation of visual and aural media to function as interference or the architect's attempt to create architecture as hyper-text?

Mirrors and glass windows will soon follow the fate of the typewriter, as liquid crystal screens are imagined to pivot and present HDTV fantasies of landscape and pleasure; in theory, for synaesthetic rationales, but most likely realized with commercial impetus. And what about our own reflections once the reflective surfaces are all replaced? It is the vampire curse — our images are no longer reflected but digitally captured by the camera and stored in the daily records of the building's life.

The building had the most advanced surveillance system that I had ever witnessed. Realizing that the Wexner did not own an art collection, I inquired why such an elaborate system was in place. I was informed that it was superintendence of the building, which at the time was empty.

Visibility becomes a trap — to exist is to be scanned — better to be a blur in between the scan-lines, than never scanned at all. We are the phantoms — our afterimages mark our passage. For the fun of it, the faces of celebrities or ethnic types are digitally superimposed

into one common being, appearing in fleeting moments on the big screen. This common being is the dream inhabiter of the new architecture. Do the buildings exist for us? We are "in" it, but like in the cinema, we see the buildings move like we see the pictures moving. These buildings are hybrid mechanisms where the technical engineer is the director; the architect, the producer; and the inhabiter, the editor.

Cinematic references abound as I experienced the architecture — Last Year at Marienbad, The Shining, The Haunting, the films of Peter Greenaway and Chris Marker, to name a few. Thinking about video I could only imagine it being used as a holographic experience within this context — personages appearing and disappearing in the empty spaces and wedges. To have greater understanding of whom these persons might be, I turned to the writings of Eisenman for clues. I asked him to make a selection of his writings, which he did (see references). The clues were all there.

But no matter, an occasional, unexplained phenomenon might occur. Some unknown image from a foreign source might bounce through space, be inadvertently picked up by a satellite dish and, for an evanescent second, layered into the simulated reality of the liquid crystal screen. Such occurrences will be heralded as the "visitations" — those that are lucky enough to experience the moment will be the "chosen". Cinema is not the only metaphor for architecture; this metaphor will play itself out as a conceptual discourse. Is it Virtual Reality? Hardly. Built architecture is still obsessed with seeing the dimensionality of objects and their divisions and will exist as a paradigm. However, there is an architecture that is not place-bound but has a projected sense of the "real", in between all that is cognitive and that which is cinematically imagined. The new metaphor is the computer. Architecture in theory has become increasingly non-linear: an analogue resuscitating the idea of spectacle. Computers are restructuring our mental environment — titillating us with great potential while presenting the possibility of unknown peril. Is this the goal of all great architecture? Or is it to clarify the interrelatedness of all "things" and cause them to interact, harmonize, and become seamless as one? Computers are designed to do this and to evolve as the information it is given evolves.

I discussed my ideas with my video collaborator Michael Owen. His ideas added another layer of interpretation. Recognizing that a story should be written, preferably a fictional one of a Gothic nature, I began to read stories as if they were architectures.

We are already immersed in the everyday phenomena of a new environmental soundscape: the computer hum, the fax churn, the mechanism of a surveillance camera, the digital pad entry code, the high frequency buzz — mantras for those that exist in the invisible architectures. A cybernetic infrastructure enables all of the technologies to interface. We cannot see the overall momentum of this interconnected system but when we sit down and address it we enter into a sensationless world of pure concept. We become the programmers and the architects. Threshold, upon threshold, of cybernetic feedback — so tightly interfaced that there really isn't any "space" at all. This is cyberspace, where the Inbetween State may be irrelevant. It is here where we are forced to navigate in our imaginations: cyperspace invites participation.

Through a recommendation we contacted the writer Susan Daitch, whose novel *The Colorist* examined the "symbiotic relationship between artist and art". We discussed how we might collaborate on a story for future adaptation to video. We sent her the video 8 material, the cinematic references, as well as the Eisenman papers that were the most illuminating in regards to this project. Within three days she sent us the story *Analogue*, which she wrote on the basis of the material sent, *The Postcard* by Jacques Derrida, Henry James's *The Turn of*

the Screw, and an essay on Edgar Allan Poe by Harold Bloom. She had never seen the building except in reproductions, and most of the reproductions were of the exterior of the building or of the grid that continues from the exterior into the interior space. I intentionally did not emphasize this Part of the building in my documentation but instead videotaped the unphotographed spaces of the building.

All that is real is mutable, and all that is experienced is stored, each evolutionary step a digital bit. Each bit has its own intrinsic value in the process of mutation; each bit has its own "aura". There are algorithms that simulate the way life works, relying on complex interactive systems programmed to teach the computer to build on the core architecture as originally designed. As software programming becomes more sophisticated, the possibility of crashing the computer decreases, the core architecture remains stable and representational spaces occur. This opens up the intrinsic dimensions of the matrix to form a new coordinate system and new space in which to explore.

Are there hackers of this new invisible architecture, taking advantage of its unique capabilities? Artists create ghost-traps, casting nets within the multi-modal interface technologies to capture sound, text, and image in ways that question the ontological aspects of our existence. Images can be found without an identifiable author and through a process of re-articulation become the artists' own — at least for the moment. Because the computer saves everything making it available for the next hacker to "find" an image, identify it, alter it and then move on. Every step in this evolutionary process is saved; unlike the conservator, removing layer upon layer of a painting, discovering multi-paintings in one, only to destroy each layer in the process. Arbitrary interventions in the computer during the image-making process are easy to introduce and difficult to detect. One inherent outcome of investigating the origins of an image within the computer matrix is the loss of all authorship, as we know it. Unlike appropriation, where the taking is making it one's own, the mutability capabilities of the computer redefines the act of appropriating an image — mainly because the image does not truly exist as a separate identity and refers to something other than itself; it is always in process. The image is seen on the computer monitor which, unlike video monitors is not interlaced; the image is not stable since it is constantly being refreshed. Those who are making images within the computer are collaborating with the software designer, as well as those who input data into the computer.

The adaptation of the story to the screen was a multi-layered process — to take the ideas inherent in the building, Daitch's story and then incorporate my memories of walking through the building with my camera. As I walked up the ramp, panning the camera up and down the ceiling, a blurred figure passed above on a bridge connecting two halves of the building. For a split second I had vertigo even though I was standing on the ground. In my dizziness I began to imitate the spiralling sensation with my camera, ending on a line that was patterned in the floor. I followed the line into a darkened, wedge shaped dead-end. Looking through the "noise", an image began to appear.

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