

**intelligent ambients — cyber art**  
**PETER WEIBEL**

Platon's cave model of the world is newly reinterpreted: the interface as curtain. If an observer steps up to the canvas, he is caught by a video camera. The analogue signals of the camera, recording the movements of the observer, are passed on to the computer where they are transformed into digital strings of signs, influencing the digital sign sequences of the cave painting stored within the computer. Both rows of signals are projected onto the screen by means of a data beamer. The observer, physically standing before the canvas viz rockface, yet virtually standing behind the canvas, is part of the rockface viz canvas. He is woven into the curtain, painted in within the cave painting itself. He becomes, virtually, an external observer who, from the outside, presses on against the rockface.



Peter Weibel/Bob O'Kane: DER VORHANG VON LASCAUX, interaktive Computerinstallation, 1993



Peter Weibel: ALLE TECHNOLOGIE IST FERNTECHNOLOGIE, 1994



Peter Weibel: DAS ALPHABET IST NOCH IMMER DIE BESTE KRÜCKE DER WELT, 1994.  
SATZBAU — BAUSATZ W1, 1988



Peter Weibel: Intelligente Produkte, Prodomo-Wien, 1994

Interactive computer and video installations, interactive television, CD-Roms, CDTV, CD-I, laserdiscs, musical instrument digital interfaces (MIDI), multimedia PC, virtual reality, hyper media, e-mail, glass fibre cables, video games, video phones, integrated service digital network (ISDN), cyberspace installations, intelligent facades and buildings — all these interactive image, text and sound-generating model worlds are built upon digital, silicon-based information technology and can be summarily referred to as Cyber Art. They operate with acoustic and visual information as the "new intelligent energy" of the 21st Century and thus cannot deny their origins from information theory and cybernetics, out of the history of optophonetic arts and kinetics. This exhibition and this book offer a first glimpse of the new Cyber Art direction in the arts and its interrelated original perspective of the evolution of technology. These artistic model worlds, ranging from cyberspace and virtual reality installations to multimedia-networks, demonstrate in an exemplary fashion the basic shift we are experiencing in our world at the end of the 20th Century - from a natural, self-organising environment towards an artificial environment possessed of artificial intelligence, from a passive surrounding towards an interactive partner. The interactive artistic worlds of Cyber Art point to the intelligent ambience of the future, those all-comprehensive, network-linked, artificial, intelligent environments which will emerge from the present digital Man-machine-media interfaces, from intelligent product ensembles and artificial prostheses.

They also throw new light on the evolution of technology, for they show that, unbeknown to ourselves, we are always handicapped and that we keep pushing forward the developments of technology in order to replace or strengthen missing or weak functions of our natural organs. The handicapped person, living with the aid of technical prostheses, thus becomes a role model, a model figure in the avant-garde of design and of the technological revolution.

The selection of works shows viable pictorial worlds, which react with the observer, relinquishing hidden information but also viable material worlds. The observer, moving through this exhibition, whose design, it is gratefully acknowledged, is by Fared Armaly, hears the sounds of the future. Psychoscapes and landscapes, furniturescapes and cityscapes blend, walls move by dint of the presence of the viewer, the surroundings are a part of the organism, the objects have a fuzzy borderline with their environs. Borderlines of the objects, fuzzy logic of the organisation, precision of the vague, and co-variance of the objects determine the aesthetic experience. This stimulation of consciousness with the aid of artificial senses and interfaces dissolves the prison of the environment and transforms the aesthetic experience into a cognitive one. With variable positions of the observer, variable zones of intersection with the world, variable layers of visibility, the conditions of postmodern life become overexposed and can be experienced with an almost hurtful clarity.

