

# EIKE BERG OTHERS



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# Cinematographic Being

## Symbolic Media and the Unconscious in Eike’s work – by Sándor Hornyik

At the core of Eike’s works is the question of the organization and nature of human knowledge and perception. His works navigate around these semantic centers with varying conceptual approaches and different genres, including video, installation, photography, computer art, and light art. His works share a focus on the element of change, usually examining on notions of the borderline or transgressions of borders: space and time, reality and abstraction.

Above all, Eike is concerned with the relationship between physical and virtual experiences and spaces. Underlying these explorations is the question as to what influence virtual representation and the medial communication of the world has on our experience. In this context, Eike’s works involve a fundamental kind of artistic research and reveal basic structures of this experience. Eike not only proves himself to be an experimental artist who engages with the various possibilities offered by different media and genres, but also as an artistic whose laboratory is the *conditio humana*.

# 13 Stages

## Milestones in the artistic progress

- Ufo (1992)
- The Tunnel (1993)
- Landing Place (1994)
- Virtuality Machine (1995)
- Divers (1995)
- INCREmental (1999)
- Golden Cage (2001)
- Utopia (2005)
- Cube (2008)
- Diary Entries (2010)
- Scan (2012)
- Alteration (2012)
- Munich Revisited (2015)

# Reviews

## Graphic CV

## Translation – Suggestion Fritz Stier, 2015

Eike Berg and Thomas Lür are two poetic media researchers who combine observation and knowledge with illusion, poetry and art.

## Preview Erika Deák, 2002

One of the fundamental directions of Eike’s art is the insistence on the natural, the given, as well as the desire to keep the applied technology human and tangible to a certain extent.

## About the Things Behind the Mirror Zsolt Kozma, 2000

I think about virtual space in the same way I think about real space. I’m interested in the properties, the parameters, the structure and how virtual space influences the viewer’s perception.

## Imprint

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## CINEMATOGRAPHIC BEING

“The Medium is the message.” Marshall McLuhan’s statement is gaining increasing plausibility.<sup>1</sup> Particularly as a result of major developments in information technology, the rapid advancements that have been made since McLuhan’s famous dictum of 1967, the medium has increasingly been in the spotlight. A medium shapes its content, our perception of the world, and even us as individuals. Besides McLuhan, theoreticians including Walter Benjamin and Friedrich Kittler<sup>2</sup> produced works of theory centred around the medium. Kittler is particularly relevant for Eike’s work, because he argued (through an examination of Jacques Lacan) that human language unconsciously adapts itself to the mechanisms of machines and media with which people work. So language is more technologically determined than psychologically, as Lacan believed, who considered the origins of language as having its roots in the big Other.<sup>3</sup>

In the 1930s, the early era of sound films, Walter Benjamin traces the technological sources of human language and speculates (following in the footsteps of Sigmund Freud) how the imagery in people’s minds and dreams could possibly be inspired by the imagery of celluloid films.<sup>4</sup> Kittler takes this a step further, arguing that not only our visual imagination but also our thought processes are influenced by the audiovisual media that we use.

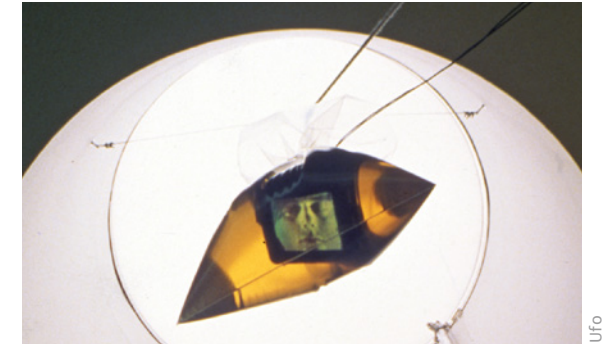
Eike’s works artistically explore this effect of the media on our world and on how we experience ourselves. They invite the viewer on a journey of discovery, into the very depths of media art and the role that the media plays in our experience of our selves and the world. The works function as an intelligent guide—much in the way Vergil accompanied Dante to hell and up into the crystalline heavens. Thinkers like McLuhan, Benjamin, and Kittler can similarly help us navigate Eike’s work, so, in my endeavour to explore below, we are doubly guided: theory takes us through the work, and the work takes us through a reflection on the media.

The artist structures his works around three concepts: *creatures*, *memories*, and *shapes*. These three groups do not follow a chronological order but have developed in parallel over the years. For the purposes of this text, this given framework is accompanied by a new perspective on each concept, in which creatures are viewed as *avatars*, memories as an *archive*, and forms as *structures*.

## AVATARS

Eike’s *creatures* are like *avatars*. They are medial representations of the individual, the subject. This is particularly evident in the installations *Divers* (1995) and *Ufo* (1992). In the early 1990s Eike intensively investigated the cultural and informational/technological problem of how physical bodies and spaces are transposed into virtual reality, that is how virtual avatars relate to the physical subjects that they represent.

The installation *Cube* (2008), which was nominated for the 2010 international Nam June Paik Award, deals with this problem of transfer. It shows a spider spinning its web. Eike filmed the spider, thus carrying the physical spider over into a virtual reality. In the installation the spider is projected in an upper corner of the room and its webs on the walls. This creates an optical illusion, which makes the web appear like a three-dimensional space, once again transforming a physical object into a virtual one. At the same time the dimension of time is brought into the work, since the different spatial elements of the walls show the web at a different point of construction. This web can be seen as a medial model of the world and also as an object of meditation, especially if one interprets the spider as a symbol of the artist, who weaves his web and creates spaces. Through the use of cube form Eike activates a traditional motif in modern art, whose symbolic form runs throughout his



Ufo



Divers (double)



Cube

works.<sup>5</sup> Ultimately, the cube and the square are fundamental motifs of modernism, which can be traced from Kasimir Malevich to Josef Albers and Donald Judd—and which Eike, a so-called ‘video artist’ revitalizes.

Further, the image of the spider illustrates the mechanisms of audiovisual media and specifically their immersive nature. *Cube* is both evocative and illusionistic. The installation shows the magician (the optical illusion) and the power of the image (the medial representation of reality), and simultaneously, also the naturalness of each. The world functions in the same way as the spider works (whether it embodies the critical artist or the affirmative medium): fast, goal-oriented, and pragmatic.

In contrast to *Cube*, the two early ‘video objects’ *Divers* and *Ufo*, present a different picture. These works do not create a web or network but perform an adaption. Eike succeeds in creating an analogy between the computer screen and the brain, which poses the question about the relationship between the avatar and the subject that it represents, or between this subject and the world in a more complex way than the installation *Cube*. With the television, as a sender and receiver of images, taking the place of the human brain, this supposedly self-creating organism is simply reduced to a medium of stored images. In the process he refers to Nam June Paik’s *TV Buddha* and also to Marshall McLuhan’s theory that technology is an extension of the body. However, Eike’s work has different implications

from these more optimistic forerunners from the 1960s, as implied by the degradation of the brain to a kind of information screen.

*Divers* also points to the immersive nature of audiovisual media, emphasising the negative connotations of diving into the virtual reality of the medium and conveying a sense of being trapped and imprisoned. At the same time, the problem of transfer from a physical space to a virtual one becomes evident, since the one does not completely correspond to the other. Thus the ‘dive’ or immersion at the beginning creates the effect of gradual suffocation or being forcefully pushed under water. The work thus points to how the individual is caught in the virtual world. The electronic system transforms a person into an audiovisual signal, removing any element of physicality. The work *Ufo* conveys this situation through a different image. Immersed in oil and showing a man’s face looking around, the *television him* is a physical object. Virtuality is associated with the fluid of the oil, in which a human can only survive if he puts on a (television) helmet and transforms himself into a sender and receiver of audiovisual signals. At the same time, *Ufo* does not make clear who or what the UFO actually is in this beautiful new world. Is it the human body or its technical burka? Or maybe the title refers to the indecipherable human spirit, which cannot be transcribed into code—or any other known language—without a loss of information?

This reduction of the human to an audiovisual signal leads to the ‘split’ personalities in the installations *Encyclopaedia* (1999) and *Telepathy* (2000). They both examine this reduction of the individual to an avatar in relation to questions concerning the fundamental relationship between the self (‘I’) and the Other and the construct of the subject itself, particularly in context of the developmental phase of the human psyche that Lacan called the mirror stage.<sup>6</sup> According to Lacan, this mirror phase is fundamental in the formation of the personality. It describes the stadium in a child’s psychological development in which it is able to recognise itself its own image in the mirror and thus not only learns to identify with the image but also to distance itself from itself and turn to the symbolical universe of language. This occurs with the new representation of its own body.

*Telepathy* addresses this problem; the artist appears on two facing monitors and tries to communicate with himself (or the great Other), whereby the work suggests that this kind of communication, ironically called ‘telepathy’ is actually possible. This indication of successful communication is optically underscored by the fact that the typical blue light from a television shines on the face of each figure, as if each version of the artist reflected his light onto his opposite—as if they were actually two different people. The two half-images of *Encyclopaedia* also suggest a successful coupling. The two pages of the encyclopaedic world (man and woman) do not unite in a literal sense, but they do attain a state of synchronicity—no small feat for man and woman.



Encyclopaedia



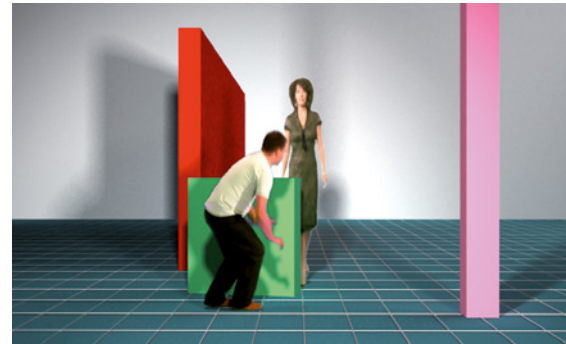
Telepathy

A later, large-format video installation titled *Temptation* (2010) leaves a much less optimistic impression. The man and the woman (played by Eike and Hungarian television moderator Nora Winkler) do not come together, because the man hides from the approaching woman. This is a failure of communication, caused by the man’s retreat—which makes room for psychological speculations. The work is also an experiment with the latest technology at the time. The video projections are based on computer-generated animations and

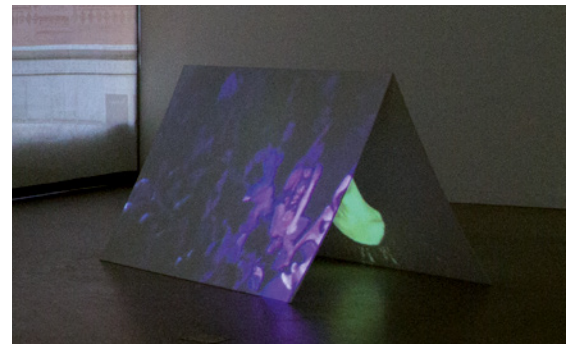
video material with multiple camera perspectives. The installation also contains two lightboxes, which show a summary of the story in stills, the key images of the protagonists in static poses, in this case the 'hiding' man and the 'searching' woman. At the same time, as objects the lightboxes mark a position in physical space, creating a link between simulation and viewer.

Eike's work rooted in the theme of *creatures* not only depicts interpersonal relations but also the relationships between the individual and the society. Among a number of works the one that conveys this most clearly is the installation *House of Cards* (2009), a parable about the relationship between the individual and the masses. Eike symbolises this relationship through a striking three-dimensional structure, a house of cards. The individual and the masses interact with and define each other, because the one cannot exist without the other: if one card is removed, the entire structure collapses. Although the edges of the cards come in contact with each other, the real connection or communication takes place in the viewer's consciousness.

The installation *Contraction* (2005) hones in on this same consciousness. It uses a video projection with as many tricks and illusions as *House of Cards*, but the form of the projection screen is more unusual. The eighth of a ball at first seems to replicate the surface of a hill seen in the film, taking the perspective of the film a step further and distorting it. At the same time, the shape also potentially refers to the human eye and the construct of vision.



Temptation



House of Cards



Contraction



Solid Line



Tuning

Thus the work *Contraction*—together with the much later installation *Solid Line* (2010), which extends the symbolic 'laws' of the sign into the realm of the real, of desires, and of appetites, through a boundary line—creates a connection to Eike's concept of structures and the series *Shapes*. Both works stem from the artist's personal experiences. *Contraction* is based on an observation of a uniformly clothed crowd of people streaming down hillside path that makes a broad curve. In the actual situation, the artist noticed how two figures separated from the

crowd to take a shortcut by walking straight across a field. In the video this pair is shown in close-up. In an extremely slow transition into a long shot the camera then discovers the crowd of people, whose destination and purpose remain open-ended.

A crowd of sorts is also featured in *Solid Line*, in this case a group of motorcycle riders—figures which certainly since Dennis Hopper's film *Easy Rider* (1969), have symbolically functioned as a longing for freedom. Unusual in the video is how these many individual freedom riders seem to be automatically coordinating themselves, like a flock of birds. They seemed to have accepted an unspoken rule that they are not to drive over the white dividing line on the road. Eike emphasises this symbolic barrier line, making it the X-axis of the video projection and thus giving it a spatial quality—much in the way that in *Contraction* he turns the projection screen into a hillside.

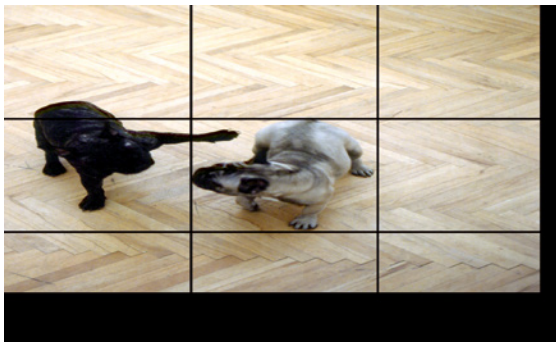
The installation *Tuning* (1999) reposes the question of the relationship between the individual and crowd, looking at the act of creation and the decay of the created from a technological perspective. In this context, the title gains particular significance, suggesting that the creator carries out a 'tuning', makes fine adjustment. By allowing the naked artist to disappear into the electronic nothingness of the blue-box when he assumes certain postures, this creator thereby not only regulates the movements of the actors but also the interface between the viewer and the blue screen.



Golden Cage



After Laika



From the Hip



A new chapter in virtual existence is suggested by the installation *Golden Cage* (2001), which demonstrates the autonomy of the virtual image from physical reality by translating the spatial coordinates of the figure shown into the proportion of the image. The result is an astoundingly subjective visual space that alienates and confuses viewers, because it runs counter to physical experience. All spatial information is carried over into virtual space in a way that is alien to the human senses.

This kind of transformation of space through the movements of a subject is also shown through a later work *After Laika* (2003) which focuses on a dog—like its namesake, the first dog in space, here a pioneer of the virtual realm. The manipulation of the visual space is also central to the video *From the Hip* (2006), which shows the artist himself in a dominating pose, as a kind of ‘Imperator Media Mundi’, who ‘zooms’ from the hip, using three remote controls to steer three cameras that film him from various angles. It thereby shows a figure who not only consciously alters the space of the image, but who also holds the reins in his hand and steers the attention of viewers onto himself.

## ARCHIVE

Memories and remembering only seem subjective, says Kittler. In reality, they are highly mediated and technologised. In other words, human memories are largely constructed through technology, i.e. machines. This is at least to say that, when people gather impressions through the help of technology, this technology structures the memory. Eike’s works related to the theme of the archive make reference to this, while demonstrating that bipolar systems like content-form, message-medium, body-soul, and mind-brain are too abstract to describe the phenomenon. This is particularly illustrated in the interfaces of human and technological systems, for example, in the relationship between the objective storing of data and subjective interpretation, i.e. the relationship between memory and the archive. The latter two categories are almost completely one and the same, because archives help construct memories, and memories are maintained on the basis of archives.

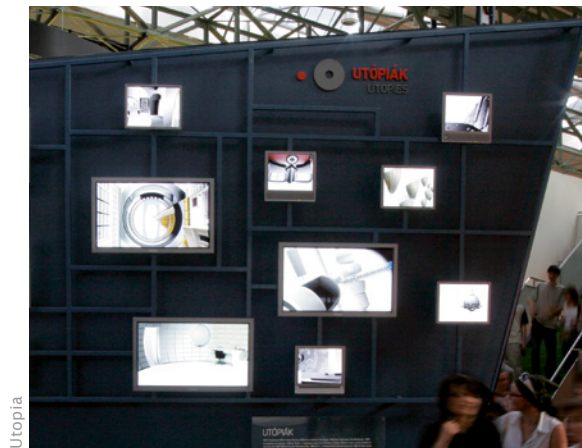
The interwoven nature of the two is made apparent in the work *Diary Entries* (2010), for example, which brings together memories captured with a video camera. It is not so much the individual moving images that encourage reflection but the presentation of the visual medium and the transparency of the technology, which becomes constitutive of the image. Whereas Walter Benjamin argues that individual dreams are pieced together from the visual repository of a culture



Diary Entries

(in particular from film, a novelty during his era), Eike’s work shifts this relationship, and through the presentation of his work in public space he enters his individual memories into the reservoir of the ‘collective unconscious’, as Benjamin calls this cache of images. The work thus emphasises the dependency of collective memory on individual components, namely the personal versions of historical events (in the case of this work the period of German reunification).

The video installations *Time Trap* (2009) and *Past Cuts* (2009) also show archives of formalised and animated images. *Time Trap* is based on a memory which is presented in a three-dimensional and clearly visible database, a uniformly ordered visual structure. *Past Cuts* approaches the topic from a distance: The beginning of the video shows numerous wind turbines, which on the one hand represent the individual and on the other the continuous advance of time. The “past cuts” then appear in segments of the screen outlined by the



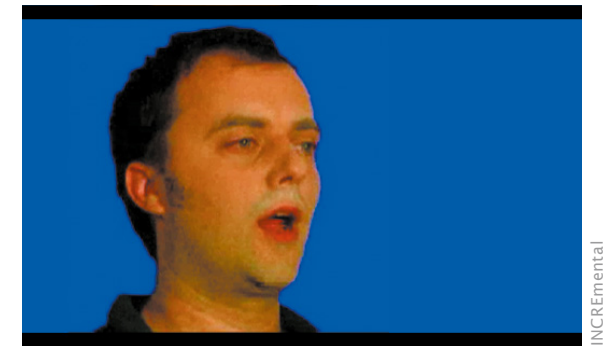
propellers of the turbines as “archive” images, moments from the past. Both works thus reflect the relationship between individual memory and objective time. By visualising a representation of historical time, the installation *Time Trap* shows what kinds of traps a belief in the objective writing of history present. In contrast, with its unique visual approach, *Past Cuts* points to a different danger in the construction of history: the generalisation of a personal or individual memory.

Certainly Eike’s most monumental, and perhaps also most striking archive is the installation *Utopia* (2005), which draws from, interprets, and archives the visual worlds of forty-three famous science-fiction films.<sup>7</sup> One sees giant cities, buildings, living spaces, modes of transport, and spaceships from films like *Planet of the Apes* (1968), *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968), *Star Wars* (1977), *Star Trek* (series premier 1966), *Total Recall* (1990), *Judge Dredd* (1995), *Contact* (1997), and *The Matrix* (1997). At the same time, the work incorporates found footage from films that do not stem from Hollywood, such as the Czech animated series *Krtek* (The Mole, first appeared in 1957), the Hungarian animated series *Mézga család* (The Mézga Family, first appeared in 1969) and the Soviet film *Solaris* (1972). *Utopia* questions the relationship between the present and the future, using old cinematic visions of the future as archaeological material in the process. It shows how the past imagined the future—a future that for us is often already a thing of the past—and enables us to compare these former prognoses with our memories of the past. Scenes turned into stills and rendered in grey-scale as digital graphics

show these future visions of bygone days; their appeal lies in the technical advances and scientific superiority of the present perspective.

The creative potential of these images is underscored in the computer graphics printed on aluminium of the work *Utopia Collection* (2006). Recalling paintings, these images diverge significantly from their originals. *Utopia* also shows the construction of a common optical unconscious as well as the creativity and critical potential of individual archiving processes. Above all, despite its abstraction (computer graphics) the work retains the power and political force of the original images.<sup>8</sup> Above and beyond serving as entertainment, Hollywood films legitimise the capitalistic world and its extrapolation of the future. In these films the future is constructed by multinational firms, within which people must learn to find their way—for better or for worse. Through an ironic take on this affirmation of capitalism, Eike’s works reveal this logic and the cultural logic of late-capitalist society.<sup>9</sup>

The installation *Private View* (2012) is the artist’s personal version of a film museum. It is compiled from twenty-five years of opening speeches, which, when compared reveal elements of continuity and alteration over time, as it unfolds through the artist’s role as an opening speaker at exhibitions he curated. In contrast, an impersonal and dystopian version of the artist is revealed in the computer-based work *INCREmental* (1999), which shows him “demoted” to the status of a counting avatar.



At first glance Eike’s avatar in *INCREmental* seems to just keep counting. When the work was exhibited the first time, the avatar began counting at one and counted for the entire period of the exhibition. Now with each new exhibition it keeps counting where it left off, making the fleeting quality of time palpable. At the same time, the counting figure somehow seems to be immune to the passage of time, because he himself never changes over time but remains the same. *INCREmental* illustrates the independence of the image from its original, of the sign from the signified. The relationship between the two is not based on similarity because it is not reciprocal.<sup>10</sup> Here the video technology displays its own potency—in connection with the computer. One does not necessarily have to listen to the counting of the artist in *INCREmental* like one would listen to an announcement in a train station. Instead, one could experience this new kind of self-portrait as a form of artificial intelligence, a super computer (like the faceless HAL in *2001: A Space Odyssey* or the humanoid-appearing protocol droid C-3PO



from Star Wars), who shapes the rhythm of time and history and who is just as much a living creature as an archive. But this shows that the boundaries between the two are not solid but porous. Crossing boundaries is also a characteristic of the medium video, which—in Kittler’s system—brings together two forms of media that store information (sound and image). The real strength of INCREmental, however, comes from the sound, since this is the only medium that can store a reality made of flesh and blood, says Kittler in reference to Lacan. His argument is a historical one. Sound is particularly authentic, according to Kittler, because in contrast to photographic film and writing made up of letters, early sound recordings were not digital but were scratched into a record in a seamlessly analog fashion.<sup>11</sup> Film marked the achievement of



Voices

a new technological stage, in which the imaginary power of images was united with the reality of sound. In the sound installation *Voices* (1993) the sound medium, magnetic cassettes, are part of the sculptural composition and are simultaneously used as an instrument. The recorded sound is repeatedly copied; the technology of the recording device and the sounds produced influence each other.

## STRUCTURE

The social construct of vision and the visual structure of knowledge, the history of the arts and computer science, lead at a certain point to questions of shape and form. This is also true of a journey through work by Eike that falls under the concept of ‘structure’. It describes a group of works defined by how the artist invests seemingly merely geometric forms with new meaning. He situates his work between physical and virtual reality, as particularly demonstrated by his use of light and shadow. Real objects and projections produce composite representations, which could be described as a kind of avatar.

In this sense the installation *Alteration* (2012), first shown in Budapest in the nave of an old church that now belongs to the Kiscelli Museum, does not show the individual but the make-up and structure of the human habitat. Various surfaces are projected onto the floor, while space is left between them for viewers to stand. An alternation of a sense of distance (zooming) and a change of focus in these structures gives viewers the impression of sinking into nothingness. Simultaneously dark spots keep appearing. At first, they seem like errors in the visual projection, but then join together forming new structures. Through constant movement and variations in sharpness of focus the video image seems to take on depth and a three-dimensional quality, which gives viewers the feeling of the floor being pulled out from under their feet. It thus becomes impossible for viewers to semantically decode the virtual reality with which they are presented.

The light installation *Proclamation* (2012) also incorporates points of light projected onto the ground. A grid of five by seven rows of lamps constitutes a primitive but monumental screen. These spotlights are points upward and can be controlled by viewers from a platform. Using the letters of the Latin alphabet, messages can be generated and sent up into the sky, like with a giant light-signal-machine. Whereas here light has the function of an information carrier, in another work, a laser installation, Eike consciously uses polarised light as a sculptural element. The installation *Don QuiXote* (1996) focuses light into a laser beam that bounces back and forth between the propellers of a series of wind turbines placed at a good distance from one another. In the context of an episode from Miguel de Cervantes’ novel in which the noble Don Quixote does battle with windmills because he believes them to be enchanted giants, the laser also seems to be engaged in a futile struggle that makes it seem like a ball tossed back and forth by the machines, rendering illusory any sense of autonomy from machines.

There are also other works by Eike dedicated to laser technology. These include the installation *Smoking Room* (2001) uses smoke and laser to demonstrate the three-dimensional scattering of the beam at light speed. In the installation *Scan* (2012) a laser beam is interrupted and fragmented by sharp-edged strips of metal, whose structure has military connotations. The metallic tones lend the ray of light its materiality.



Alteration



Proclamation



Don QuiXote

The installation *Virtuality Machine* (1995) is a machine for the production of virtual reality from light. Cubes made of semi-reflective glass infinitely reflect the light that is generated within by slowly pulsing light bulbs. Without any light on the inside, the cubes are simply mirrored shapes that reflect their surroundings. With the increasing brightness of the lamp within, however, the cubes become more and more transparent and the reflection on the inside becomes more apparent, so that cubes lose the character of solid bodies. Initially closed and non-transparent, the cube initially becomes a kind of screen, but with luminosity increasing, it loses its fixed contours, ultimately merging with the reflections of other cubes in a virtual space of light. This process and space have multiple semantic connotations, from their proximity to the biblical myth of creation ("Fiat lux," Genesis I, 3) to the construction of space through light in human perception and questions about the fundamental nature of the image.

The lightbox *Observation* (2010) illuminates a further aspect of the image and visual representation; it consists of two overlapping visual layers, a photo and a geometric abstraction of a scene with a surveillance camera rendered by the artist. In the image the viewers see the physical situation of the camera that is watching them and at the same time the transformation of this situation into an electronic image, as enabled by a camera. In this manner a fundamental allegory of image science is revealed, the observing observer, which Jean-Paul



Smoking Room



Scan



Virtual Machine 4.0



Observation I



You Are Here!



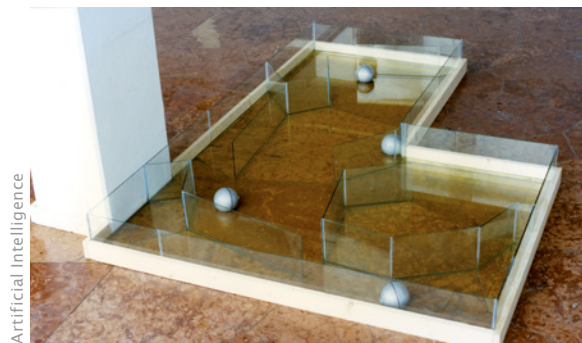
The Tunnel

Sartre (the look), Jacques Lacan (the fisher and the sardine can), and Michel Foucault (Panopticon) all discuss—a notion that addresses optical technologies from the perspective of authority and the exercise of power in the context of surveillance and punishment.

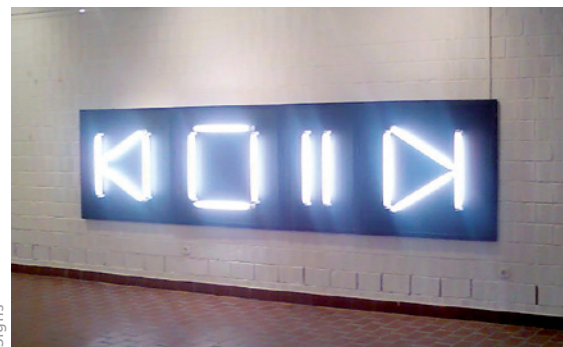
The installation *You Are Here* (2000) is also an abstraction of physical space. Neon tubes on the ceiling outline the plan of the exhibition space and mark the position of the viewer. This conveys a dual meaning in relation to orientation and illumination, while raising the question of the role of the viewer in this light-map. The installation *The Tunnel* (1993) recalls the fall of light in mythological and religious art, drawing associations with futuristic technology, such as the teleportation beams in *Star Trek*. This is all founded on a very simple idea: daylight is channeled into the exhibition space through pieces of rope hung closely together.

The meaning that is conveyed here in a material form is often also found in Eike's early works that are emphatically sculptural. For example, *Artificial Intelligence* (1996)—which (like *Virtuality Machine*, mentioned above) is part of the series 'Experiments with Virtual Reality'—consists of a 10-cm-high labyrinth filled with oil, in which balls move about. The balls seem to follow a will of their own, and recall famous experiments with rats in a labyrinth. The installation presents a conceptual parallel between experiments designed to test animal intelligence and those for testing artificial intelligence.





The image-objects from the series *Signs* (2005) consist of neon tubes shaped to resemble operating controls. They do not move but create an association with movement by including signs that refer to the commands “play,” “stop,” “fast forward,” etc. This introduces a double perspective for viewers. These extremely enlarged signs seem to directly address viewers in a way that encourages them to understand the individual movements in relation to their own bodies. At the same time, the viewers understand that these symbols belong to the realm of electronic images, to virtual reality. This inspires them to mentally establish a relationship between physical and virtual reality, a relationship



that is fundamental to many of Eike’s works. The early installation *Small Souls* (1992) divests these oppositions of any tension through its linear forms that glow in the dark—heating rods bent by hand into organic shapes. Through their intense red light and the warmth created in the exhibition space, the heating rods create an illusion of life.

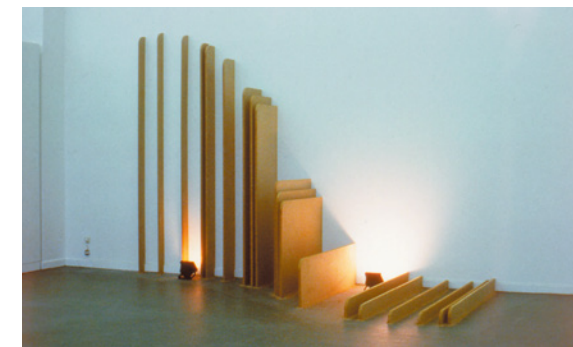
The installations *Sun* (1993) and *Heaven* (1993) point to a higher sphere. Using various large boards and a pulsing light source, *Sun* represents the spectral lines from the optical spectrum of the sun, which were discovered and systematised



by optician Joseph von Fraunhofer of Munich. The so-called Fraunhofer lines make it possible to draw conclusions about the make-up and temperature of stars, without physically measuring them. This play with the possibilities of visual representation points to the common elements of supposedly ‘hard’ science and virtual space, and thereby also questions the relationship between human understanding and its object. In the video installation *Heaven* the ‘heaven’

is a wooden beam structure, which depending on one’s perspective either seems to have fallen in on two monitors or is supported by them, referencing the mythical figure of Atlas. The monitors, whose screens are positioned facing upward, show the tops of heads filmed from above, and take on the function of avatars, which recite a poem with the title “Ich bin kein Gott” (I am no God). The questions of catastrophe or the salvation of the world cannot only be applied to humankind and its relationship to technology but also to the role of art: it is a victim of circumstance or a world-sustaining force.

Two additional site-specific works or groups of works by Eike—both of which have been shown in multiple versions—are the installations *Exterritoriality* (1993–96) and *Landing Place* (1994–95), which seem to pursue the question about the nature of art.<sup>12</sup> Both recall experimental works of Land Art. The installation *Exterritoriality* is a room that has been rebuilt so that it has no ‘doors’ or ‘windows’, and the viewer cannot look into the space because the walls are too high. This territory that is blocked off and cannot be looked into calls to mind the notion of ‘territoriality’ as developed by the French philosopher Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, who understand the term as referring to the establishment of borders and an adherence to certain rules of knowledge. For both, territoriality is an important mechanism of modernity. The downside of its structuring function is the displacement of creativity. As a counter measure, Deleuze and Guattari argue for ‘deterritorialisation’ as the most important critical practice, which—in



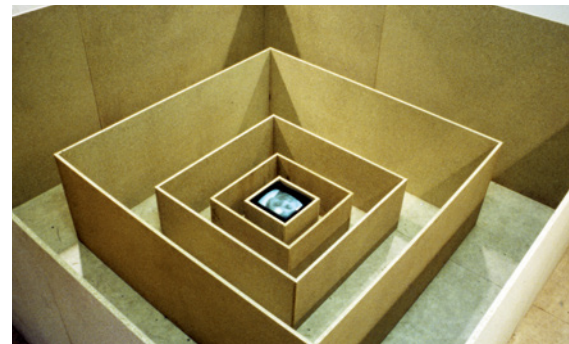


part inspired by the avant-garde—breaks down barriers and restructures knowledge.<sup>13</sup> Eike’s work also points in this direction, as an appeal to viewers who are shut out, ‘exterritorialised,’ and thereby wish to look behind the walls that keep them out and protect the territory.

This kind of shift in perspective is enabled by the installation *Landeplatz I* (1994). Although it also excludes the viewers, at a certain point it does allow them a look inside. From this position viewers see a television at the focal point of the installation. Facing upward, its screen shows the exhibition space and visitors during the exhibition opening. The work thus plays on sociologist Niklas Luhmann’s well-known concept of the observed observer, the second-order observer, and also refers to diminished value given to immediate sensual experience in modernity. According to Luhmann’s thesis, this is less and less trusted in favour of a mediated and medially transmitted perception; the immediate is viewed as uncertain, but what is recorded, medially communicated, and monitored by a controlling component is seen as more trustworthy. In *Landeplatz II* the television is replaced by spotlights arranged in a grid of uniform, cell-like spaces and projecting overlapping rhomboids of light onto the ceiling, so that in a metaphorical sense a ‘blind’ spot is created, a non-illuminated space.



Landing Place II



Landing Place I

At the core of Eike’s works is the question of the organisation and nature of human knowledge and perception. His works navigate around these semantic centres with varying conceptual approaches and different genres, including video, installation, photography, computer art, and light art. His works share a focus on the element of change, usually examining notions of the borderline or transgressions of borders: space and time, reality and abstraction.

Above all, Eike is concerned with the relationship between physical and virtual experiences and spaces. Underlying these explorations is the question as to what influence virtual representation and the medial communication of the world has on our experience. In this context, Eike’s works involve fundamental

artistic research and reveal basic structures of this experience. Eike not only proves himself to be an experimental artist who engages with the various possibilities offered by different media and genres, but also as an artistic experimenter whose laboratory is the *conditio humana*.

#### Footnotes:

- 1 Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media. The Extensions of Man* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1964). This book includes the legendary statement: “The medium is the message.” See also an ironic expansion on this idea: *The Medium is the Massage. An Inventory of Effects* (New York: Random House, 1967).
- 2 See also Friedrich Kittler, *Aufschreibesysteme 1800/1900* (Munich: Fink, 1985). The English title, *Discourse Network*, is very revealing, clearly pointing to the genealogy of Kittler’s thought as originating from Lacan. In relation to optical media, Kittler later expanded the discursive-analytical perspective from Foucault with Claude Shannon’s theories on computer science and Jacques Lacan’s psychoanalysis. See, *Optical Media*.
- 3 Friedrich Kittler, *The World of the Symbolic — A World of the Machine*, in *Literature, Media, Information Systems* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 130–46.
- 4 Walter Benjamin: *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* [German, 1935] (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2008). For a later interpretation of his concept of the “optical unconscious,” see: Rosalind Krauss, *The Optical Unconscious* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1993).
- 5 Lev Manovich, *The Language of New Media* (MIT Press, Cambridge, 2001). The title of one chapter, “The Database as Symbolic Form” obviously refers to the classic work of Erwin Panofsky, *Perspective as Symbolic Form* from 1927.
- 6 Jacques Lacan: “The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience” [1936] in *Ecrits* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1977).

- 7 On this work and on *Past Cuts* see: Csatlós Judit, *Die Archäologie der Gegenwart* [A jelen archeológiája] (2006), available under <http://exindex.hu/index.php?l=hu&page=3&id=365>. See also Kozma Zsolt, *Utopia – die Vergangenheit der Zukunft* (Utópia – a jövő múltja) (Műértő, 2006/6).
- 8 On the politics of images, see the work of W. J. T. Mitchell, which builds on Foucault and Guy Debord, showing how and how successfully the production of images served ideological purposes and the interests of the respective ruling classes. W. J. T. Mitchell, *What Do Pictures Want? The Lives and Loves of Images* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).
- 9 Working from the basis of Guy Debord and Daniel Bell, Fredric Jameson also wrote about the function of the cultural logic (largely in metaphoric terms, i.e. the past and history do not exist, whereas the present unfolds in the wake of the permanent future, which has become a kind of spectacle) of late modern techno-society as based on illusion and sensation. See: *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1992).
- 10 Friedrich Kittler, *Grammophon, Film, Typewriter* (Berlin: Brinkmann und Bose, 1986).
- 11 Nelson Goodman, *The Languages of Art* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1972).
- 12 On this work and the previously mentioned works see: Erzsébet Tatai, *Landeplatz* [Leszállópálya] (Budapest: Balkon, 1994/12).
- 13 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus. Capitalism and Schizophrenia* [1972] (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990).

Translation from German to English: Laura Schleussner; lector: Zsolt Kozma

This essay is published with the support of the National Cultural Fund of Hungary.



Eike Berg

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EIKE BERG  
OTHERS

13 Stages

Milestones in the artistic development



Eike Berg

## UFO

1992

1-channel video installation

without sound / small monitor,  
plastic-bag, oil, fixing elements;  
site-specific

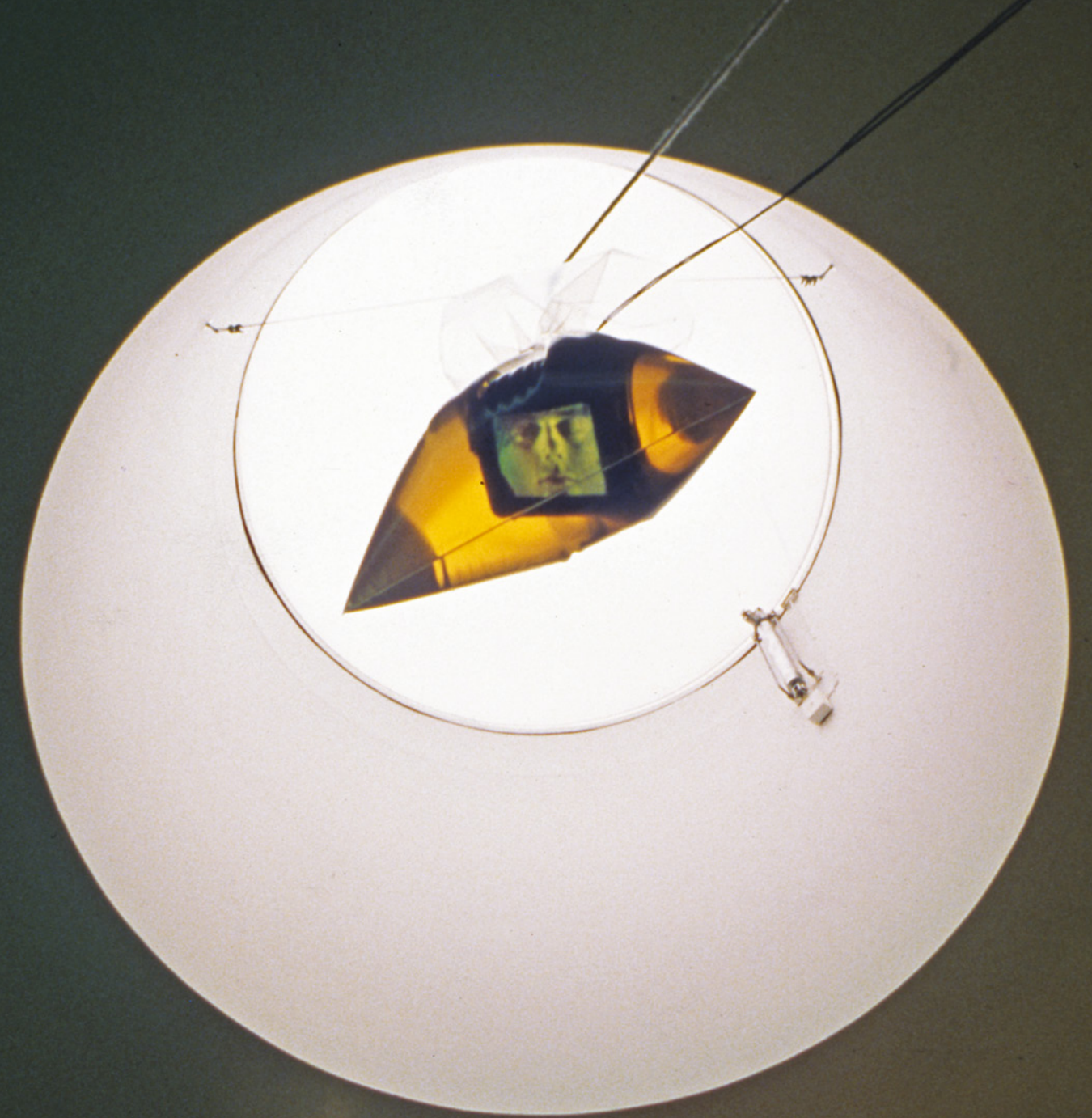
Thanks to:  
Denis Stuart Rose

The television, as a sender and receiver of images, taking the place of the human brain (...) Immersed in oil and showing a man's face looking around, the *television him* is a physical object. Virtuality is associated with the fluid of the oil, in which a human can only survive if he puts on a (television) helmet and transforms himself into a sender and receiver of audiovisual signals. At the same time, *Ufo* does not make clear who or what the UFO actually is in this beautiful new world. Is it the human body or its technical burka? Or maybe the title refers to the indecipherable human spirit, which cannot be transcribed into code—or any other known language—without a loss of information?

(from Sándor Hornyik:  
*Cinematographic Being*)



▲► 77. Autumn Show of Lower Saxony (Niedersächsische Herbstausstellung), Kubus, Hannover 1993





Eike Berg

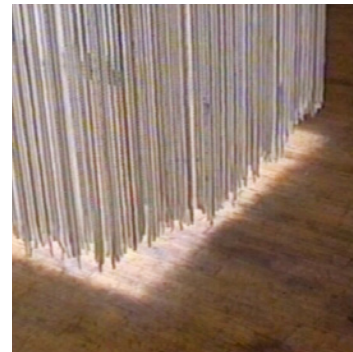
## THE TUNNEL

1993  
site-specific installation  
white rope, daylight

Thanks to:  
Péter Nagy  
Beáta Balázs

A curtain of ropes hangs around a skylight, concentrating daylight into a column. The colour of the light changes depending on the time of the day and the weather. The walls of rope can be penetrated, the installation is accessible, the visitor can “walk-in the light” – and has to leave the light after a while.

Daylight, which is normally readily available, along with the ambient light, makes visible all other objects and surfaces, and regains its own colour in the installation. It becomes alive through the alteration of its shades during the daily routine, and through the spatial bundling: from intensive blue at dawn to lucent white-yellow at noon. Light obtains volume by way of the ropes forming a permeable membrane around a block of light.



▲► *The Tunnel*, Les Etablissements de Phonographique de l'Est, Paris 1993 (solo)





Eike Berg

## LANDING PLACE

1994

site-specific installation;  
corrugated cardboard, monitor,  
video shots from opening

The digital version was  
reachable via telephone modem  
on the server *Digital Island* via a  
BBS (Bulletin Board System)

Programming:  
Zoltán Szegedy-Maszák

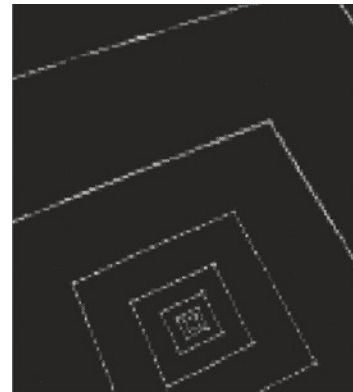
Thanks to:  
Tibor Várnagy

► Rolf Bier:  
*Anzeiger von Abläufen*  
(see „Reviews“)

► Zsolt Kozma:  
*About the things behind  
the mirror* (see „Reviews“)

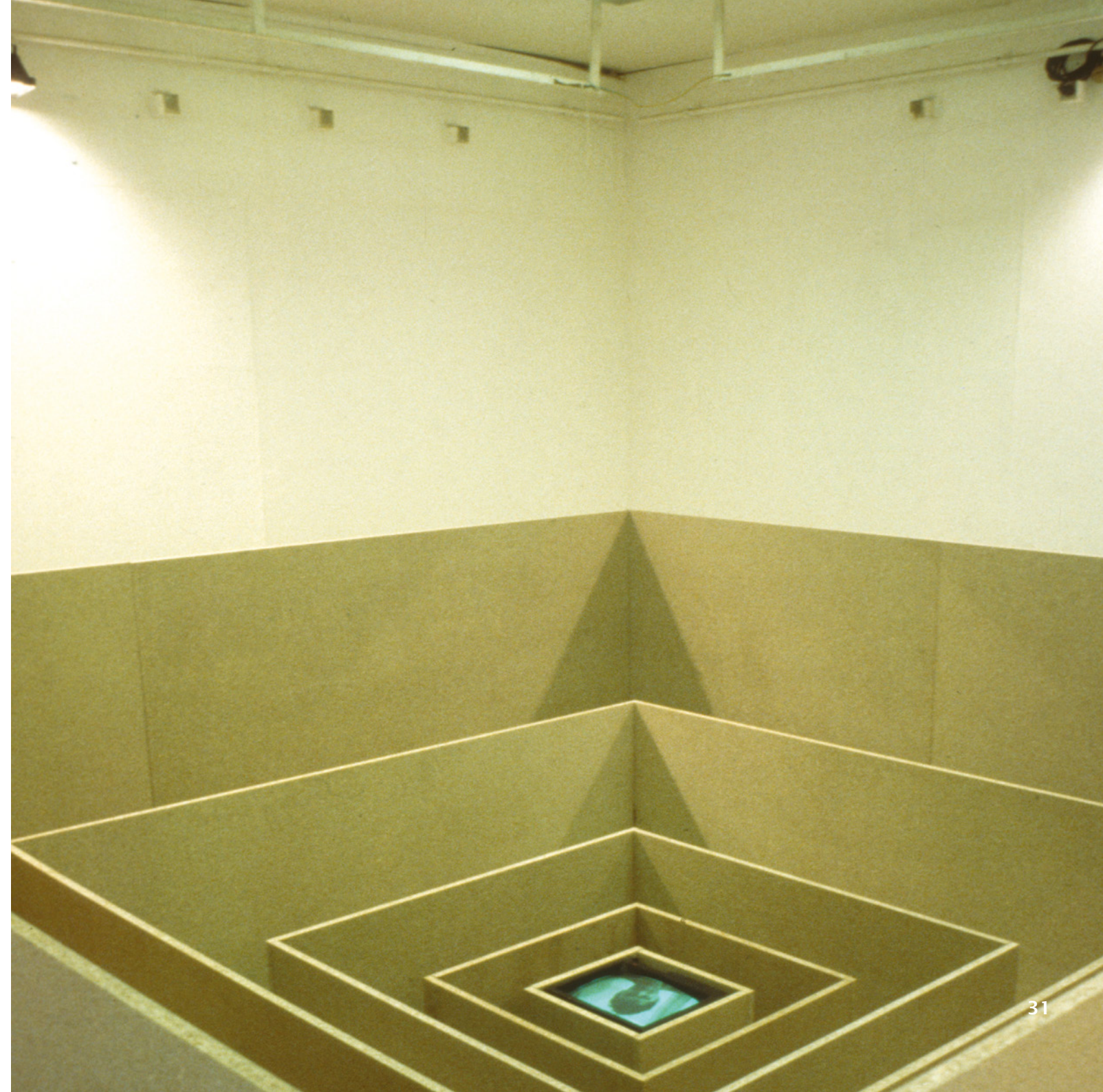
The squarish gallery space of *Landing Place* is segmented by a system of five open boxes made of chipboard. Their size and heights decreases exponential—the gallery wall is the largest box, the smallest one is a monitor in the centre. The screen shows a crowd of people filmed with a permanent and rapid in-and-out-zooming (taken during the exhibition opening). The pulsation of the zoom on one direction pushes the images vesicular outwards, in reverse it generates a suction effect that includes the entire space and dissolves the static borders of the boxes. The smallest unit of space develops the biggest power even it is in the farthestmost distance to the visitor who is blocked between the gallery wall and the outermost box.

„The virtual artwork *Landing Place* was a program that was reachable on a BBS server via telephone modem. It consisted of a graphic that grew by an additional rhombus with every call. I adopted the idea of the expanding rhombi in the site specific installation *Landing Place* in the Liget Gallery in the physical world.“

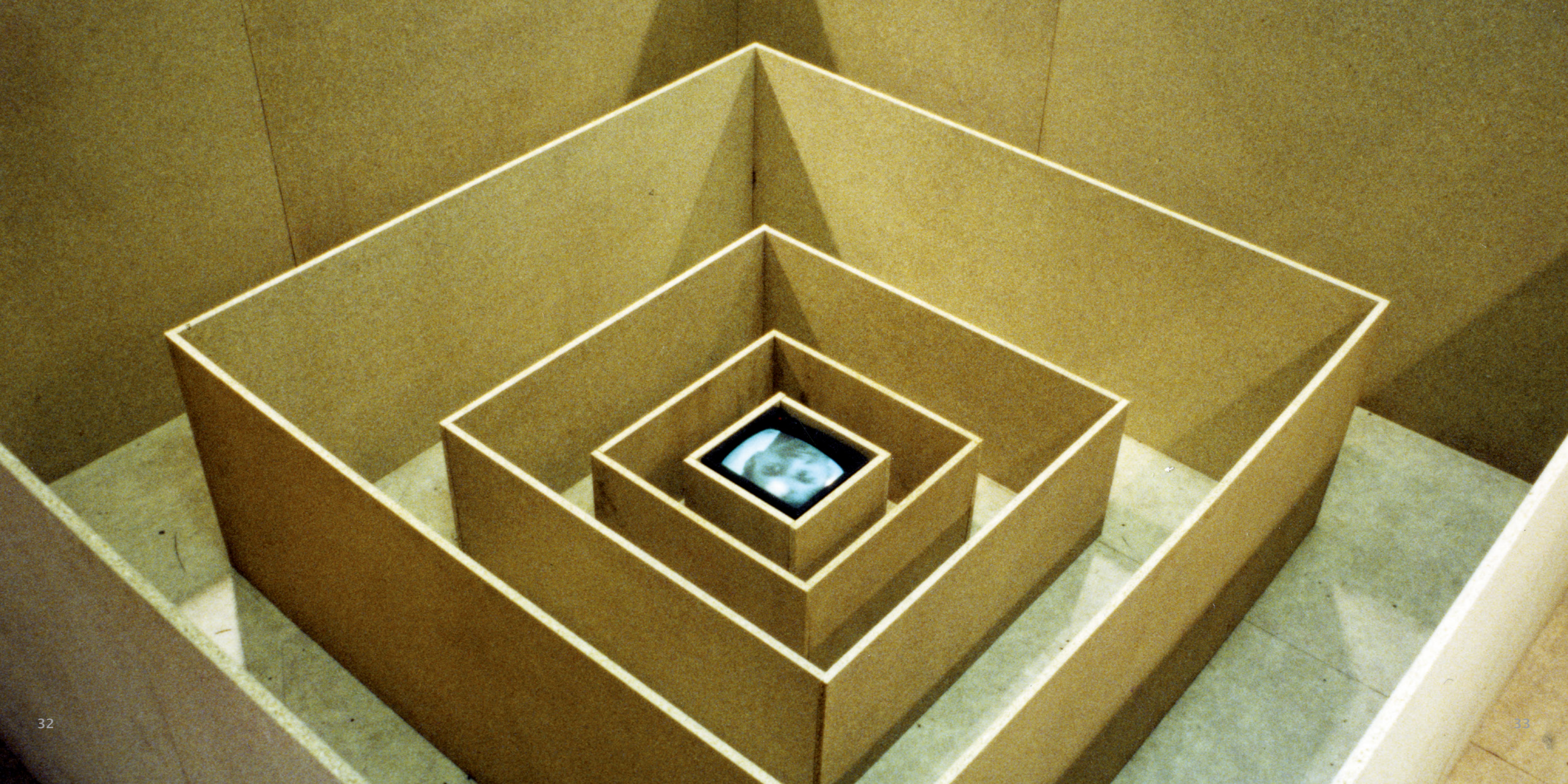


▲ *Landing Place*, Liget Gallery,  
Budapest 1994, exhibition  
opening with live video shots  
▲ digital version via BBS  
► *Landing Place*, Liget Gallery,  
Budapest 1994 (solo)

►► *Landing Place*,  
Liget Gallery,  
Budapest 1994 (solo)









Eike Berg

## VIRTUALITY MACHINE

1995  
light objects

cubes of half-transparent  
mirrors, 1 bulb in each one,  
dimmer, stands

**Versions 1.0 – 4.0**  
1–4 objects,  
120 x 40 x 40 cm each

**Version V (table + air)**  
standing respectively hanging,  
50 x 50 x 50 cm

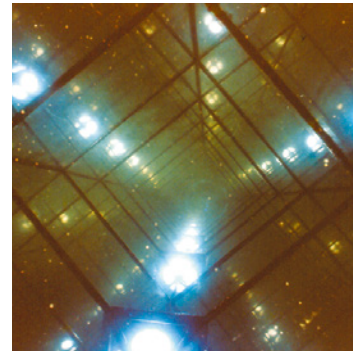
**Version 0.25s**  
wooden suitcase,  
30 x 40 x 18 cm  
Part of the project  
*De Valiga / Europertrain*

Thanks to:  
Balázs Beöthy  
Denis Stuart Rose

Cubes of semi-transparent mirrors with a slowly pulsating bulb inside. When the light is off, the surrounding space is mirrored in the surface of the cube.

With light inside, an endless structured space is created by mirroring the bulb into infinity. The mirrored, intangible space exists parallelly to the physical space. With the help of just one light bulb, a model of a metaphor, a model of a virtual space is created. By combining a diverse number of objects, an 'internet' can be built; structured by the size of the cube's sides, the mirrored spaces connect to each other, each of the art objects plays the role of a single 'monitor' in this network.

The work is part of the series Experiments on Real Virtuality (E) – computer art without computer.



- ▲ Inside view
- ▲ Version 1.0
- ▲ *Hungarian Contemporary Art*, Schloss Ottenstein 1995 (Version V-table)
- *International Computer Art Festival*, Narodni Dom, Maribor 1996 (Version 4.0)

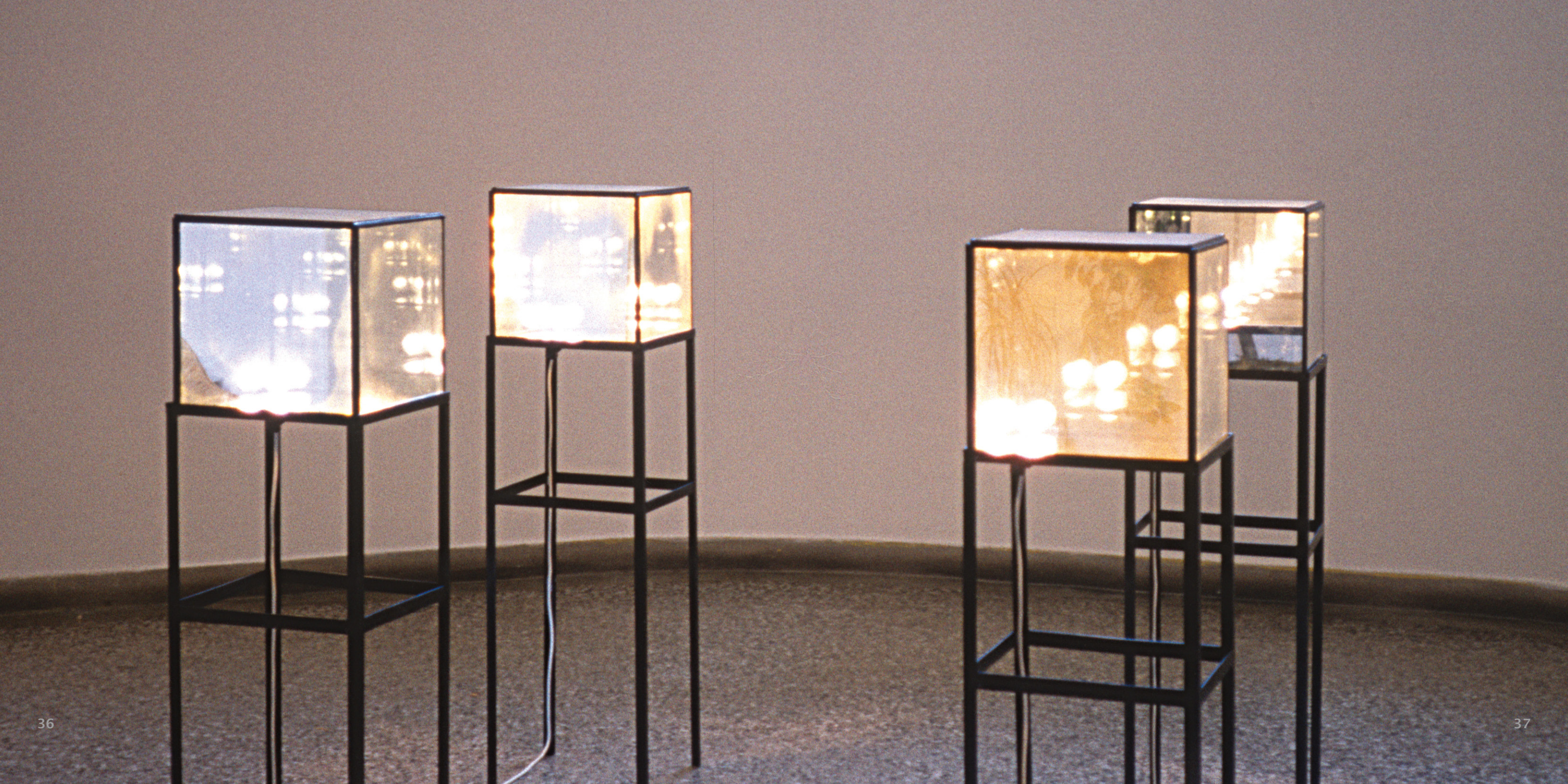
## YOU ARE HERE

2000  
site specific light installation, changing shape  
fabricated luminous discharge lamps

text









Eike Berg

## DIVERS

1995  
video objects  
monitors, glass, iron stands

*Divers*  
1–8 objects,  
150×30×30 cm each

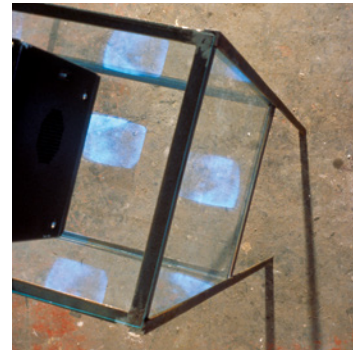
*Divers (Double)*  
2 monitors on one stand,  
150×60×30 cm

Thanks to:  
Denis Stuart Rose

►  
Ludwig Museum Budapest  
[www.ludwigmuseum.hu/mutargy/buvarok-double](http://www.ludwigmuseum.hu/mutargy/buvarok-double)

Two to eight small monitors with the screen facing downwards on a glass vitrine. On each screen a head is repeatedly submerged in water, screams during short emerges; the same tape played on the different monitors with time-delay, a site-specific composition originates.

“The work *Divers* could be interpreted as a documentation of an artistic performance as the videos present a “show” which has taken place in reality and which is then arranged into a dramatized installation. However, the performance in this case is not the completed artwork, merely one of its essential elements. *Divers* is a metaphorical depiction of power. First of all, the audience is “forced” to take up the position which is selected for them by the artist and from where the videos can be seen. Additionally, the choices of the viewer are limited: They can either watch the suffering of the “victims” or refuse to do so; undertaking action against said suffering is not an option. Therefore, through the artwork an occurrence which is encountered in everyday life becomes—almost therapeutically—an experience the audience can process and cope with.”





Eike Berg

# INCREMENTAL ( $X=X+1$ )

1999

computer based video

Duration: endless

Lingo scripting by briang

*Produced through the*

European Media Art Residency

*Commissioned by*

Hull Time Based Arts

*Supported by*

C3 Foundation Budapest

*Presentations until 2018:*

361046-445861

einRaum, Braunschweig, 2016

2605767-361045

Kunsthau, Viernheim, 2015

248200-260576

Artforum, Berlin 2004

187341-207364

Kunsthau, Hamburg, 2003

156240-187341

V2, Rotterdam, 2000

94587-133480

Kunsthalle Budapest, 2000

76333-94587

Postfuhramt, Berlin, 2000

10861-74650

Deák Gallery, Budapest, 2000

1-10860

Time Based Arts, Hull, 1999

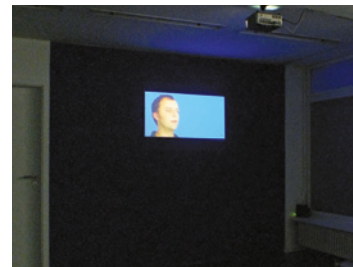
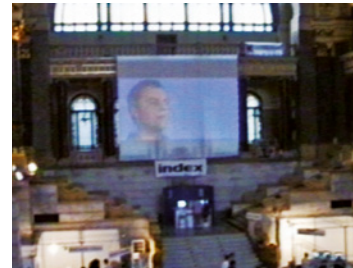
This endless film which is computer-based is a continuously evolving installation displaying a screen with a human head counting to infinity. (Andreas Broeckmann)

In contrast to the limited length of film recordings the work titled *Incremental* uses one of the unique possibilities of the computer: to control and assemble processes by way of programming or at random to develop an infinite number of new combinations.

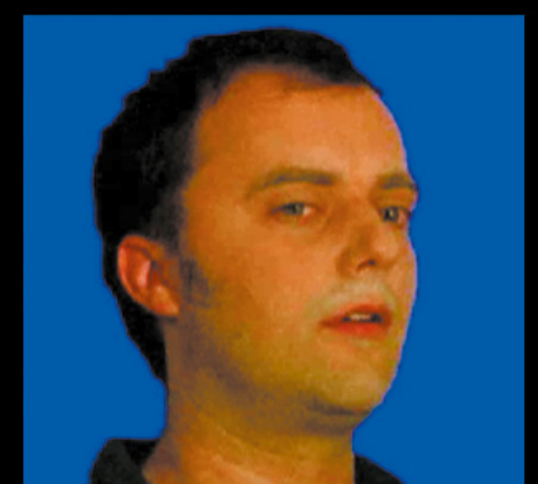
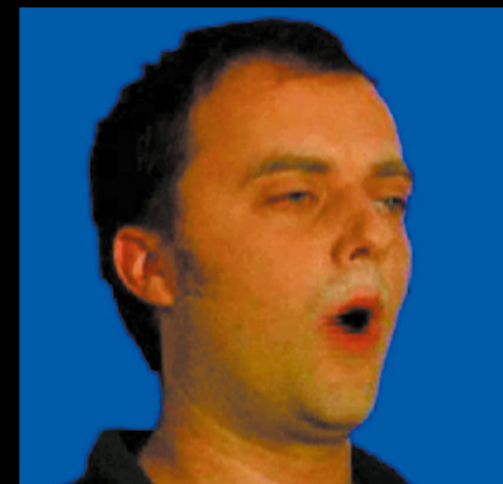
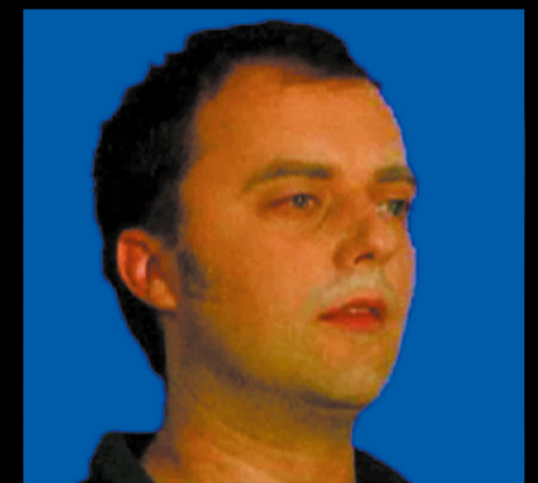
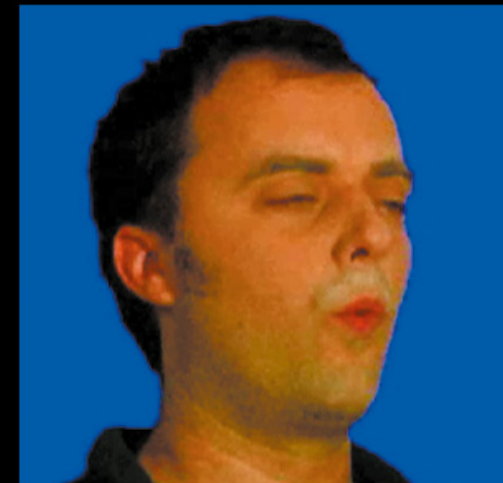
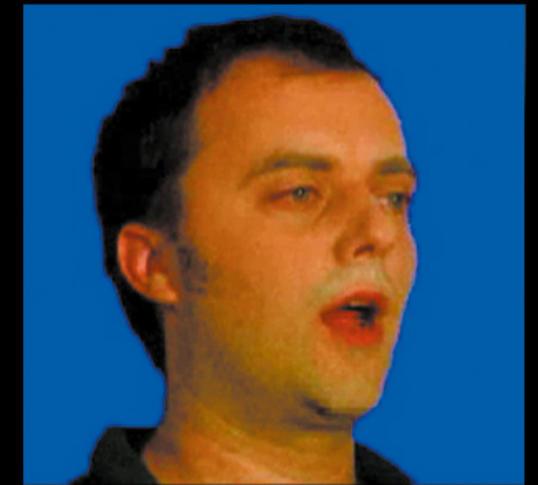
*Incremental* demonstrates the potential of the computer in visual arts. In the background, a program calculates the numbers one after the other to infinity ( $X=X+1$ ). On the screen the numbers are made visible and audible by a counting face.

The artwork stays in the viewer's present, who follows the increasing numbers, while the face—as the artist's avatar—features analogies to *The Picture of Dorian Gray*.

After each presentation the last number is saved. In the next exhibition the counting starts from that number, so the work is never the same.



- ▲ Museum of Ethnography, Budapest, 2000
- ▲ Kunsthalle Budapest, 2000
- ▲ Kunsthau Viernheim, 2015
- Videostills





Eike Berg

## GOLDEN CAGE

2001  
video installation  
approx. 180 x 90 cm, 2'40"

Thanks to:  
Caspar Stracke

A framed video screen bigger than life-size. A dancer fills the surface perfectly; the contours of his body touch each side of the rectangular frame in every moment. According to his position his body is stretched or even distorted into the picture.

The coordinates of the space are converted to proportions of the body, mixing the real and the virtual dimensions. The dance is not only a form of expression but also one of the most natural ways to explore space.

► Anikó Erdősi: *Here, Elsewhere*  
Balkon 4/2001, Budapest

*The moving body of the dancer is permanently touching all sides of the dark frame. The dance is rather slow at the beginning, but the choreography gradually accelerates. The body, depending on his position, stretches vertically or grows wider, sometimes even getting stuck within the frame. Our experience concerning the 3 dimensions of the everyday life does not help, we witness a new dimension, yet unknown to our senses. Is it possible that the virtual space is regulated by different spatial rules?*



▲ video stills  
► Goethe-Institut, Budapest;  
photo: Zoltán Kerekes



Eike Berg

## UTOPIA

2005  
multi-channel video installation  
18'38"

Thanks to:  
Gyula Várnai  
Balázs Fekete  
Attila Nagy and Ede Gaál  
(DNN Budapest)

This video is composed of scenes from 43 emblematic science-fiction movies and cartoons. At certain moments, all the whirling images freeze at the same time, their colours fade into metal gray, and the outlines of the spatial structures in each image become very distinct. We can see how filmmakers in the not too distant past imagined the future, we see its fragments, 'excavate' the scale models of unattained, unfulfilled utopias. From our position fixed in the present, we see illusions of the future through the past – looking at familiar fragments, we remember the things that have not come to be yet.

Most of us have our own memories of all or many of the scenes, and our familiarity with them makes us feel secure. As a result, the swarming of the thousands of images, the future that can be imagined in so many ways does not make us anxious—much to the contrary: the concreteness of the illusions comforts us. With the future filtered through the past, we come to feel nostalgia for it. We get the feeling that by remembering, by recollecting the images of the future, the future becomes tangible.

►  
Zsolt Kozma  
Műertő, Budapest  
June, 2006



▲ video stills  
► *House of Future*,  
Millenáris, Budapest, 2005;  
photo: Zoltán Kerekes  
►► *Vertikale*,  
Filmmuseum Frankfurt,  
2012/13

►► *Mediascape, a pas  
de Nam June Paik*, Nam  
June Paik Art Center,  
Yongin-si, Korea, 2010  
►► *Collection*,  
Pixel Galerie, Budapest,  
2006; photo: Zoltán  
Kerekes











Eike Berg

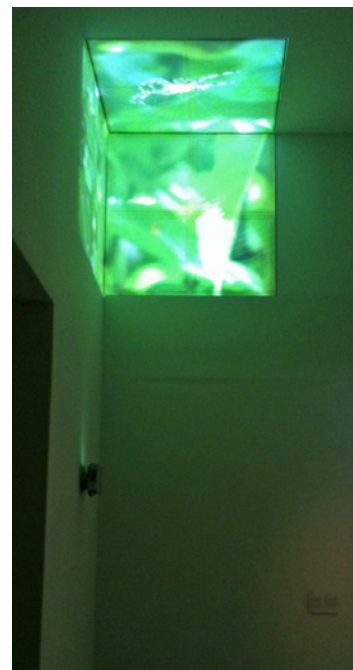
## CUBE

2008  
three-channel video installation,  
room corner  
6'00"

A spider spins its web on an apple tree. Three different phases of the process are projected at three spatial planes in a room corner. Altogether a cube appears. The simplicity of the well-known natural scene is complemented with architectural abstraction. The installation combines the power of unconscious nature with the symbol of human imagination as a strong emotional mixture. The images in the room's corner have the illusionistic effect of a Necker cube.

► See the text by Miklós  
Paternák on the next double  
page.

This work is supported by  
the National Cultural Fund  
of Hungary.



▲► Nam June Paik Award,  
Museum Kunst Palast,  
Düsseldorf 2010  
▲ Mediascape, a pas de Nam  
June Paik, Nam June Paik Art  
Center, Yongin-si, Korea, 2010





## ***Arachne and Optics***

Miklós Peternák

The video installation *Cube* comprises three parallel projections, six minutes long each. The square images are projected onto the upper corner of a room so as to form three seamlessly aligned faces of a cube. The tree projections feature the same footage, shifted in time like the voices of a canon, permutations of eternally changing constellations producing ever-renewing triptychs. Spectators see a corner of nature filtered through the artist's temperament: 21st-century digital naturalism in the corner of a room? A spider spins its web amidst the softly fluttering leaves of an apple tree. The web is finished, the spider is waiting. The story is simple and abides by the three cardinal rules of classic drama: unity of place, time and action. (...)

In Diego Velázquez's *The Spinners*, or *The Fable of Arachne*, the spokes of the spinning wheel in the foreground are invisible. Velázquez thus depicted optical perception, accurately painting the illusion. He visualised the rapid rotation by not painting the moving elements that attach the spinning wheel to its hub. The description and explanation of this phenomenon would be given by Michael Faraday almost two centuries later (*On a Peculiar Class of Optical Deceptions*), albeit without any reference to Velázquez: a beautiful example of how artistic attention precedes scientific attention. While in the meantime *Arachne* has metamorphosed into a spider and the spokes of the spinning wheel have turned into moving images, the illusion remains invariable.

Eike's spiders projected into the upper corner of the exhibition space form an illusory cube. Similarly to one of the very first simple illusory images, the Necker Cube, named after Faraday's contemporary, we can choose one of two possible views while watching it. We can either decide that we see a projection in a corner, corresponding to the real spatial conditions, or go with our brain that constantly wants to switch to another view, suggesting an unrealistic hypothesis according to which there is a cube protruding from the corner, its visible surface covered in colourful moving images. This ambivalence, these perceptible sensory options for two different views—as suggested by the title—consummate the coexistence of *naturalia* and *artificialia* in the work.





Eike Berg

## DIARY ENTRIES

2010  
video objects

34 x 27 x 8 cm each,  
0'05"  
open series

on display among others:

- ▷ *Translation – Suggestion*, Kunsthau, Viernheim, 2013
- ▷ *Quadratic Equations*, Kepes-Institut, Eger, 2012
- ▷ *Mediascape, a pas de Nam June Paik*, Nam June Paik Art Center, Yongin-si, Korea, 2010

This work is supported by the National Cultural Fund of Hungary.



Diary Entries presents 'preserved' video sequences in transparent cases on the wall. The scenes are from private S8-film and video footage by the artist. With a duration of 3 to 5 seconds, the single takes balance along thin line dividing the perception of moving and still images.

"The time-trapped moments of personal video footage appear in a setting where the selected sequences are distilled into artworks. The juxtaposition of Eike's objects Diary Entries and the installation Time Trap, the comparison of these two forms of presentation reveals even more directly the similarity of the processes and the results of archiving. Making the 'preserves' of memory, and turning experiences into art – another form of archiving.

The plexi boxes allow us to see the structure of the vehicle, the physical medium of the work, calling attention to the beauty, to the aesthetic of the structure itself, and also to the significance of the medium, to its indivisibility from the meaning. Philosophical but very clear and simple, and also playful at the same time."

Zsolt Kozma



▲ video stills  
► *Watchable and Unwatchable*, Kunstmühle, Szentendre, 2012;  
Foto: Endre Koroncz





Eike Berg

## SCAN

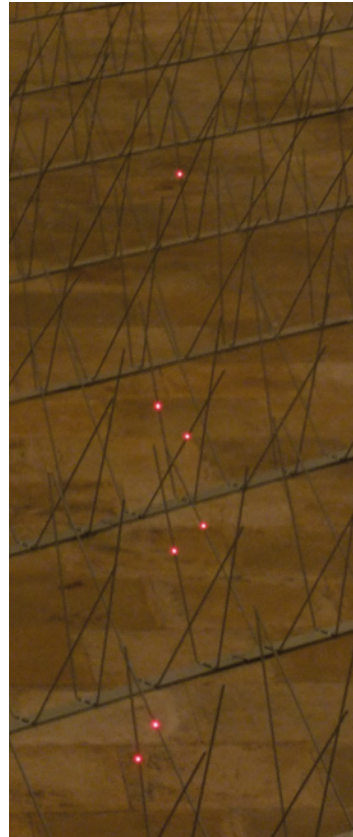
2012  
laser installation

metal needles, laser, rotating  
deflection unit

sound: András Szőnyi

A field of metal needles. It looks like human size bird spikes or antitank defence—an inaccessible, aggressive area. A strong red laser beam scans the weird scenery at the height of the ankle. Bouncing red flashes mark its path. A sound of amphoric tinkling lends consistency to the light beam.

The visitor is hypnotized by the victim's progression in the field and by the fascination of the play of light<sup>1</sup> at the same time. The regular repetition of the laser beam's movement and the puritanical mechanical character of the installation create a meditative pull. Together with the jingly sound it puts all senses under its spell.

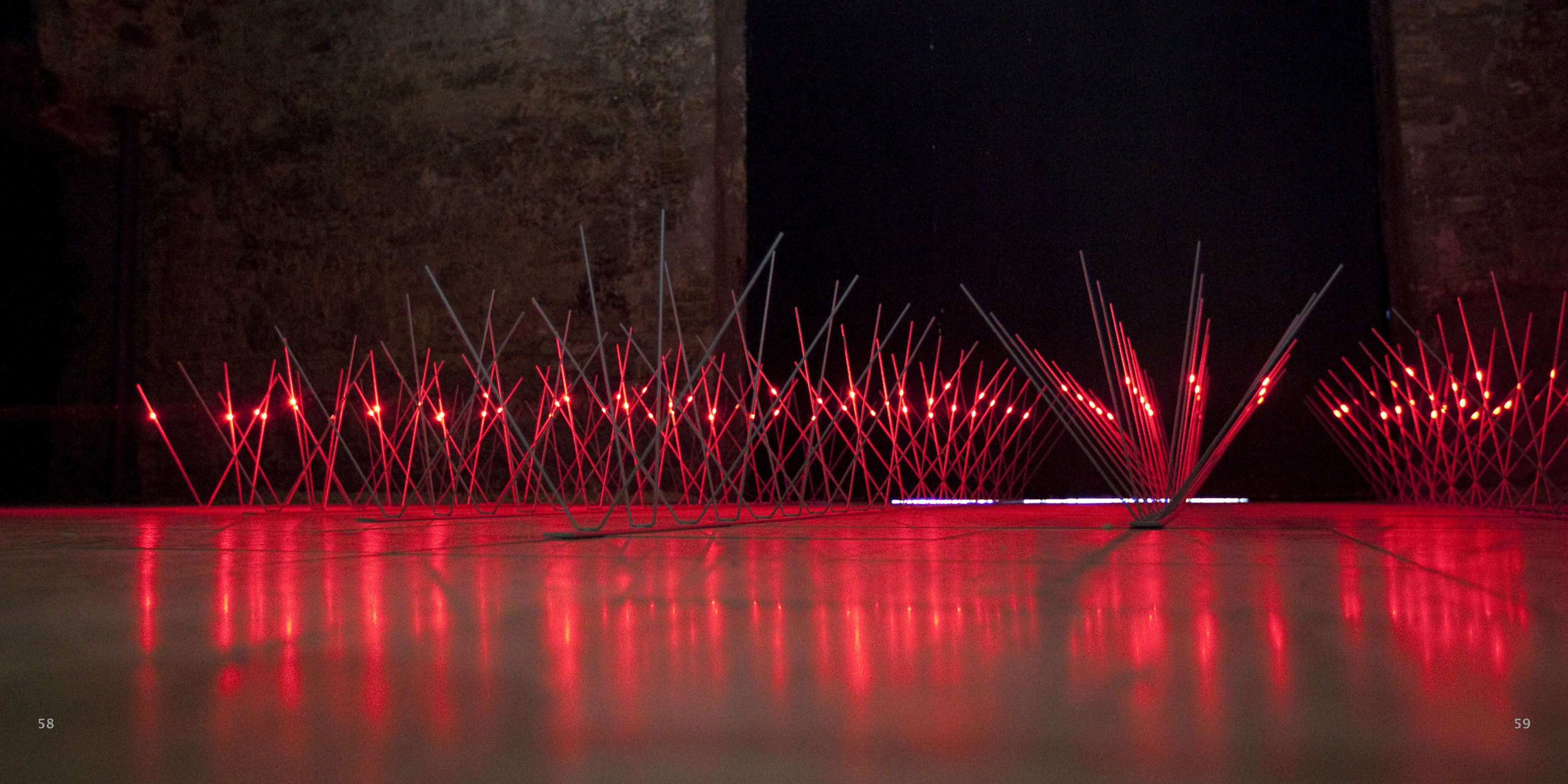


<sup>1</sup> Judit Csatlós, Műértő, Budapest 05/12

▲► *Alteration* (solo), Kiscelli Museum, Budapest, 2012; photo: Zoltán Kerekes









Eike Berg

## ALTERATION

2012  
multi-channel video installation  
with sound, site specific  
9'00"

music: András Szőnyi

The video installation *Alteration* is a nonlinear, rhythmical metaphor of infinity, in a visual implementation of permanent genesis and demise.

The projection shows a constantly altering stone surface. The changes result not only from zooming the camera and from the change of the degree of blurring but from the image as well. Black spots appear in the foreground of the image and connect cumulatively into a new structure. Pretended errors in the images turn into a new landscape.

For the viewer, the video image gains a deep spatial dimension. They get the impression of being pulled down by their feet.

This work is supported by  
the National Cultural Fund  
of Hungary.



▲ stills from the video  
► *Translation – Suggestion*,  
Kunsthau and Kunstverein  
Vierenheim (solo with Thomas  
Lüer), Vierenheim, 2015

►► *Alteration*, Kiscelli  
Museum, Budapest,  
2012; photo: Z. Kerekes  
►►► *Over the hills and  
far away*, Galerie Markt  
Bruckmühl, 2017













Eike Berg

## MUNICH REVISITED

2015  
Video with sound  
6'00", HD  
Music: Jarboe

(Part of the project *Earth Revisited*  
by the Leo Kuelbs Collection)

short Version (Revisited series)

## MUNICH\_REVISITED

2016  
Video without sound  
3'41", HD

Thanks to: Leo Kuelbs

*Munich Revisited* is a hypothetical retrospection into the present from another state of mind in the future. Memories re-appear and condense into short scenes of Munich in 2015. Is the disappearance of physicality and its transformation into virtuality and data an enhancement as part of the evolution of humankind?

The viewer sees a long avenue. There is an angry crowd in the foreground, tractors drive by, smoke rises. A demonstration of milk producers against Bavarian and German federal politicians. Cattle breeding is part of the strong "historical" collective self-image of the Bavarians.

The complex video material is abstracted in the vector graphic. Human perception simplifies and structures visual impressions because the brain is not fast enough to process all the details of a view in real time. It creates individual associations and shapes among the elements of an image. The continuous flow between the different states of abstraction generates a strong suction effect.



▲► video stills  
►► *Fading into the New World –  
Light Year 59*, Brooklyn Bridge,  
New York City, 2020;  
photo: Farkas Fülöp









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# EIKE BERG OTHERS

## Reviews

CV

Eike Berg

born 1966  
in Halle/Saale

Halle / Saale

Braun-  
schweig

Budapest

Freising near  
Munich

Drawing course as preparation for the studies at the art academy *Burg Giebichenstein* in Halle/Saale 1982

Abitur (A levels) 1986  
Studies of philosophy 1986-87  
Studies of visual arts and film at the Braunschweig University of Art (HBK) with Prof. G. Büttenbender, 1987-1992  
Meisterschüler 1993-94

Rudolf Wilke Award of the city Braunschweig 1995  
Artist-in-residence at the *Kunsthalle – Stiftung Henri Nannen* in Emden with the scholarship of Lower Saxony 1995/96

Artist-in-residence at the media art center *Time Based Arts* in Hull/England with the EMARE scholarship 1999  
Artist-in-residence at the art center *De Fabriek* in Eindhoven 2000

*Intermodem*, artist-in-residence, Museum Modem in Debrecen, 2008

Short list for the Nam June Paik Award, 2010

lives and works in Freising near München since 2012

Cofounder and curator of the gallery *Fisch* in Braunschweig 1986-91

Cofounder and director of the gallery in the *Trafó – Center for Contemporary Art* in Budapest 1998/99

Cofounder and curator of the art project *Videospace Budapest* 1999-2007

Cofounder and director of the gallery *Videospace* in Budapest 2007-2012

Director of *Schafhofs – European Center for Art Upper Bavaria* in Freising since 2012

Solo exhibitions (selection)

2017

- *Dicomposing World*, Erika Deák Gallery, Budapest
- *Some That is the Case*, (with Péter Forgács and Philipp Pocock), Reports from Badland, K41, Brüssel

2015

- *Translation – Suggestion*, Kunsthau and Kunstverein Viernheim (with Thomas Lüer)

2013

- *Alteration*, Gallery Anita Beckers, Frankfurt

2012

- *Proclamation*, Kiscelli Museum, Budapest

2010

- *SpaceBundee*, Busan / Korea (with Caspar Stracke and Jörn Zehe)
- *Trap*, Erika Deák Gallery, Budapest

2009

- *Collection*, Pixel Gallery / Millenáris, Budapest

2003

- *Subjective Space*, Allgemeiner Konsumverein, Braunschweig

Current information:  
eike.qxd8.com

Participations (selection)

2020

- *The Dead Web – The End*, Ludwig Museum, Budapest
- *Fading into the New World – Light Year 59*, Brooklyn Bridge, New York City

2018

- *The Formula of the Present (micro-retrospective): „Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants”, A Media Art and Media History exhibition*, C3 Foundation at New Budapest Gallery

2017

- *Territorien*, Kunsthalle Faust, Hannover
- *Faktor X*, Haus der Kunst, München
- *Children’s Tales? (continued)*, iMAL, Brüssel

2016

- *Light Year 17: Earth Revisited*, screening on the Brooklyn Bridge, New York

2012

- *Vertikale*, German Film Museum, Frankfurt (Main)
- *Quadratic Equations I+II.*, Kepes Institute, Eger
- *The Hungarian Magic Cube*, Kibbutzim College of Education, Tel Aviv

2011

- *Mediascape, a pas de Nam June Paik*, Nam June Paik Art Center, Yongin-si, Korea.

2010

- *Nam June Paik Award*, Museum Kunst Palast, Düsseldorf

2007

- *1-2-3: Collection in Focus*, Ludwig Museum, Budapest

2005

- *Softmanipulations*, Roxy Art House, Edinburgh

2004

- *Extended Views*, public spaces, Maastricht
- *Mediafactory*, Zsolnay Factory, Pécs

2003

- *Portrait*, Erika Deák Gallery, Budapest
- *Harakiri Bonbon*, Kunsthau, Hamburg
- *ARCO* (Erika Deák Gallery), Madrid

2002

- *Unstable Narratives*, hARTware, Dortmund

2000

- *Hungarian Sculpture*, Kunsthalle, Budapest

1996

- *15 Lux Maximum*, Eighth Floor Co., New York

1990

- *76. Niedersächsische Herbstausstellung*, Kunstverein, Hannover

# Fritz Stier

## TRANSLATION – SUGGESTION

Eike Berg and Thomas Lür are two poetic media researchers who combine observation and knowledge with illusion, poetry and visual arts. In an atmosphere of white-blueish dusk, unfamiliar images, disturbing sounds and voices arise in the spaces of the Kunsthaus. In the vaulted cellar — among others — red flashes fascinate and irritate at the same time. Behind the pretended scientific impressions, with abstractness in the details, time and again a quantum of poetry appears in the overall context. The continuous counting of Eike Berg (INCREmental) beside the supervised (!) sleepers of Thomas Lür transfer us rather to a neurology research department than to an exhibition.

Many of their artworks create an air of worrying experimental arrangements, also reinforced by the various setups of media technology — used splendidly by both artists. The viewer is inspired to follow the planted trace, and with the help of the proverbial analytic sanity, they are led to access the underlying meaning in the works. Indeed, a great deal of knowledge can be gained — the technical sophistication has made its contribution here and there.

At the same time, there is a poetical side to be discovered as well. At this point, an analogy with literary research comes into play: Heisenberg's uncertainty principle demonstrates the limits of text analysis. A concrete result is reachable by disassembling sentences and words, breaking them down to single characters that can be identified, sorted and counted. As a result, however, the primarily meaning of the text, the content, structure, dramaturgy and poetry gets lost.

Therefore, a certain degree of indefiniteness and haziness should be allowed in order not to lose the essentials of the works by Eike Berg and Thomas Lür. This is true of the single art work as well as of the entire exhibition, where the single pieces function as synapses and keep on the flow of communication with everything and everybody. It needs heedfulness on the part of the observer to enter into contact with this flow. One needs to find their way in the fields of haziness, in the always changing choreography between the works, and in searching for balance in all this. But it is worth the effort.

Eike Berg: INCREmental, Kunstverein, Viersen



Thomas Lür: Schläfer, Kunsthaus, Viersen

Eike Berg: Scan, Kunstverein, Viersen

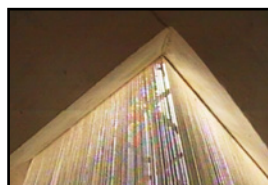




# Erika Deák

## PREVIEW

We see a nearly five-meter high column of sunshine. Among the white ropes, suspended around the roof window and hanging to the floor tightly side



by side, natural daylight streams into the room depending on the time of day, determining our sense of time and space. Already through this installation, *The Tunnel*, can the fundamental directions of Eike's art be traced. One of these is the insistence on the natural, the given, as well as the desire to keep the applied technology human and tangible to a certain extent. Eike wants to create rapport between the objects and the viewers; in this way his works also have a more spontaneous emotional impact besides the rational explanation.

His *Virtuality Machine* is basically a cube made up of semi-transparent mirrors. There is a bulb inside, the light of which slowly pulsates. When the



light is off, the viewer sees himself as if in a mirror. When it is on, the bulb is reflected within the cube, not once, but a hundred or a thousand times, endlessly, on each side, from each angle. It is as if we were in the Enchanted Castle at an amusement park—but not entirely, since the viewer of the cube is excluded from the space of reflection. It is

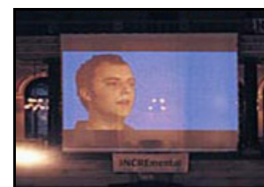
like a virtual space, constructed with the simplest possible technology. We would like to enter, but it is impossible, even if we see the mirrored space to penetrate into the real one.

As if a carrot were dangled before us, something is shown and something is not, and that is the most interesting thing about it. Eike merely sets the tone, leaving the viewer to decide how to continue. In all of his works Eike demonstrates very clearly that in fact we always see just one side, we are able to represent only one point of view; with this comes the realisation that in the world as in art, there are no absolute truths. The work *Escape* consists of a monitor, placed on a revolving base. On the screen a globe revolves at the same speed. Provided the visitor moves in synch with the monitor, he can see all sides; but he can see just one side in each moment, and never the whole globe.



Nevertheless, this realisation, instead of bringing satisfaction, results in more heightened curiosity, the desire of the individual interpretation of infinity.  $X=X+1$  is maybe the most banal, but at the same time the most honest work of the artist. It seems to be an endless film, in which Eike counts until infinity or until whenever, as it is impossible to count to something that does not exist. This might as well

be a metaphor for art; we strive, create and try to become Dorian Gray, but as we cannot see everything, we are unable to know or show every thing either. For all its technological complexity, the work's message is simple and human.



In Eike's case the application of technology does not mean that the medium itself is art; the technique remains a tool. For example he does not primarily use the computer to create images, but makes use of the infinite possibilities offered by the programs. On the stage of the installation *The Stage* a computer analyses the rhythm and distance of the steps of the dancers, and creates melodies on the basis of the incoming information. If somebody dances rhythmically for a longer period, complex rhythms and melodies are born; simpler steps result in a more modest sounds.



The 'humanization' of the applied technology is evident in other works as well, mostly when it is counterpointed by dance. Dance is the most ancient way of experiencing space. The dancer, often the artist himself, instinctively moves and steps about, of course, within his own borders, or the borders constructed by him. The *Golden Cage* reinforces the idea that borders exist, even if they are set up by the artist himself. Eike dances to music that

cannot be heard by the visitor, who can only fumble about in the silence, trying to solve the rhythm. The frame has been given, and if the dancer wants to move freely, he nearly has to sacrifice his very own body.

In spite of the fact that the figure is confined within borders, an immense sense of freedom emanates from this dance. We see a man dancing, who is experienced enough to set up his own borders. It is as if only the feeling and the understanding were important, as in Eike's case it is evident, which came previously. First comes the idea, the feeling and the experience, then followed by the choosing of the appropriate medium to formulate the message most precisely.



Eike's artistic self-confidence is rooted in the wide range of his work; he creates objects, photos, videos, installations as well as computer-works. In addition, he organises other artists's exhibitions, looking for ways to create the ideal exhibition. This should include many points of view and diverse statements. He has lived in Hungary for over ten years. He lives where he wants to, and does what he wants to. And it is precisely this sense of freedom which runs through his work.

Erika Deák, Budapest, Februar 2002  
(Primary publication in the catalogue  
*EIKE: 1992-2002*)

# Zsolt Kozma

## ABOUT THE THINGS BEHIND THE MIRROR

ZSOLT KOZMA: Do your work and your thinking about the media follow a consistent line of thought? Is it possible to discern how you made the progression from film and video to computer art?

EIKE BERG: Looking back, I can see that there was a process; each phase building upon the previous one. My work process is very slow - it can take one or two years, or more, for it to crystallize out the many tiny elements of my thinking process, and eventually there comes a point when it's possible to say that the piece is finished. As I've already said, I occupy myself with a great many different things. I find, in retrospect, that structures have always been important to me: structures of thought, physical structures, or the structure of the space; one could refer rather romantically to the "things behind the mirror". In my computer art, I place importance on thinking within the medium. Of course, I'm interested in a contemporary way of thinking as well, by which I mean, for example, the notion that in order to achieve the same effect that an art work did one hundred years ago, it's necessary to work with new structures which reflect contemporary conditions, or through a modern handling of the structures of old media.

After working with many different kinds of artistic forms (literature, music, drawing, etc.), I eventually came to the conclusion that film was my ideal medium, because it contains everything: pictures, word, sound, stories and so on. Later, however, I came to miss the concrete presence of something that I would describe as "being", a thing that the viewer can grab on to; the tangible presence of energy; the existence of things; this is how I came to the installation. I had often made use of lighting and video effects, but always as one element of the work, because the balance between all the objects as well as the relationship to the space of the installation is important.

In 1994, I produced my first computer piece, *Landing Place*. It was a program that was reachable on a BBS server via telephone modem. It consisted a graphics that grows by an additional rhombus with every call. I adopted the idea of the expanding rhombi in the site specific installation *Landing Place* in the Liget Gallery in the physical world. With this first work, the possibilities for "endlessness" that the computer processes and the notion that it can harbour an art piece that it transforms itself constantly, came to fascinate me. I think about virtual space in the same

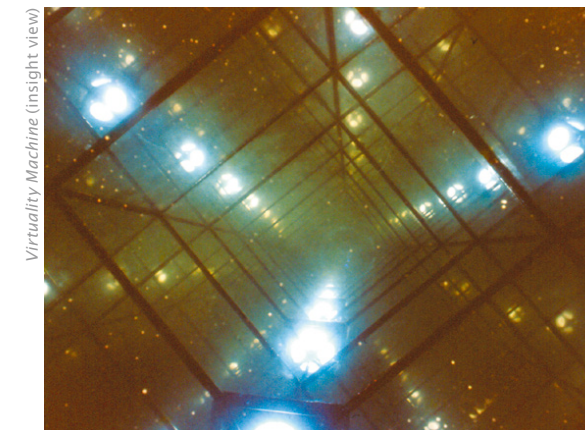
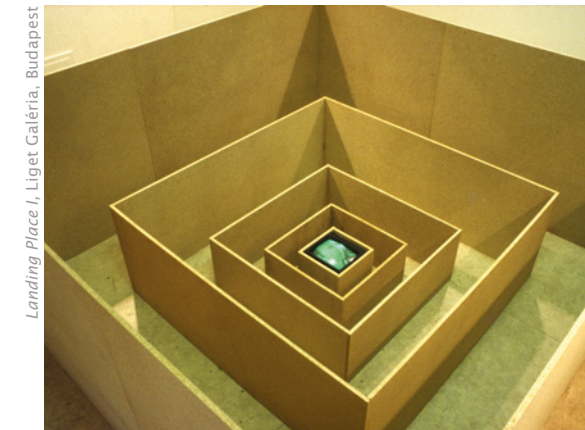
way I think about real space. I'm interested in the properties, the parameters, the structure and how virtual space influences the viewer's perception. The term "virtual space" is actually nothing new. It has always existed in arts, in other form, of course. An example would be the "space" in which a fairy tale takes place: This is a space that we cannot

enter because of the physical nature of our bodies, but which we can create and influence, in terms of what happens there, and into which we can look.

The *Virtuality Machine*, one of my works which demonstrate this principle, consists of a half-mirrored cube which contains a pulsating lamp. It is part of the series that I call "Computer Art without Computer". Video is also a virtual world, but not a limitless one, or to say it better, one that can't be adjusted anymore once completed. With the pulsating light in *Virtuality Machine* and the use of video, I can bring rhythm—time, so to speak—into the installation and show a number of perspectives at the same time.

*INCREmental* bursts this framework, in that the work changes constantly and never returns to any given state. This makes it a metaphor for computer art, because it wouldn't be possible in any other medium. The artwork shows moving images of the artist counting into infinity. The single numerals are video clips those are assembled again and again for every number. It keeps counting onwards with every exhibition.

Zsolt Kozma in conversation with Eike Berg  
(Translation from Hungarian, first publication in Műértő, Budapest, April 2000)





# IMPRINT

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The catalogue is dedicated to my daughters, Lola and Isabel.  
In memory of my mother, Brigitte Berg.

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