



ANNOUNCEMENT TO THE FIELD:

8:19:91

Subterranean Video
presents
Virtual Reality
Computer/Laserdisc
Interactive Video

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LASCAUX is a virtual reality art installation. Its purpose is to reflect humanity and inspire peace, respect and consideration. The contents of the piece is related to our civilization.

It celebrates innocence and examines human fault.
It explores future, present and past.
It speaks about love, fear and courage.

We decided to learn what is happening to our world.
We decided to learn what humanity is doing with itself.
We decided to make a video cave, like the ancient, painted caves,
to bring people today into awareness of our history,
of our relationship to nature, life and each other.

We are making this project to celebrate our civilization
and to proclaim our tradition of community through the eons.
At this time the work is in progress toward completion.

This project is a vessel of a message of peace.

Script: Virtual Reality Cave

In the gallery are two rooms: the Nave and the Sanctuary. The audience sits in the Nave and watches on video monitors through the eyes of the person who interacts in the Sanctuary. The Sanctuary is a private room for one viewer at a time, It is a dark room.

In the darkened room is a pool of light. In the light is a Chair, a Joystick and Virtual Reality Goggles.

Enter Dark Room. Enter Pool of Light.

Put on Virtual Reality goggles.

Visual is dark.

Looking around, small stone lamp is visible in niche on wall. A spot is on the wall. Pick up the lamp and another dot becomes visible. Move towards it and a row of dots leads off into the darkness into the cave. Sometimes it is difficult to follow the trail of dots. If you follow far enough you come to a large, lit hall with stone lamps on wall ledges illuminating giant paintings of animals. Side corridors lead off to other grottoes; at the opposite end the hall opens to a longer, wider tunnel, roofs and sides painted with figures. At the end are three dots.

If you stare at the paintings, they come to life and show you visions.

When you gaze on the fish, you become underwater with fish all around like at a salmon run. This is a fish event.

When you look at a cow, you find yourself in a herd with mooing snouts, tails, hooves, flanks all around you.

This is a cattle event.

Other events include sky, forest, waterfalls, lions, deer, bison, horse, bear and bird.

After each vision you are returned back to the cave.

These events are motion video and audio displayed in the goggles.

As one searches through the cave one may find images hidden in niches which lead to other sequences. These are interactive.

One of the hidden images is of a human being. When you interact with the image of the human, a figure appears in the cave initiating a secret, conveying a prophecy and greeting from real spirits. This may be observed only in the sanctuary, it is not perceived by those in the Nave.

Curriculum Vitae: Benjamin Jay Britton August 14, 1991

I believe that an artist's responsibility is to create work which spiritually sustains the society in which the artist functions. I was raised to appreciate the contributions of artists to our civilization's cultural development. Through my parents' guidance I learned that art is an expression of past cultural traditions, an interpretation of its own contemporary context, and a stimulation to growth and development in society. They facilitated and encouraged my education and involvement in the traditions of art. I was further influenced by my family's participation and study of numerous spiritual traditions.

Of all the artists I have studied, Henry Miller stands out particularly. For me, his work represents the manifest expressions of an individual contributing to society by exploring beyond the boundaries of his artistic medium and his culture.

Other artists who influenced my development are Jack Kerouac, Pablo Picasso, Marcel Duchamp, Alan Ginsburg, John Cage, Nam June Paik, Andre Breton, Josphe Beuys and Yoko Ono, among many.

At age eighteen I traveled around the USA. At that time, literature was my primary art medium. I studied and produced work independently. Encouraged by Miller's TROPIC OF CANCER and by Voltaire's CANDIDE, I joined the army to travel to Europe and to increase my understanding of lifestyles and worldviews new to me. I studied Czechoslovakian in Monterey, California, then travelled to work in Wurtzburg, Germany. In 1979 I was honorably discharged as a conscientious objector.

I continued to live and work in Germany, self-publishing literature and distributing it person-to-person as a street artist. Reading Marshall McLuhan, I decided to learn techniques of new media in order to reach larger audiences. I began to study film and video, returned to the United States and earned a Master of Arts Degree from the Goddard Graduate Program, producing videotapes, performances and installations, showing work in galleries, festivals and screenings, and gaining experience in working with audiences and producing public works.

In 1984, hoping to reach broader audiences I moved to San Francisco. Since then I have exhibited my work nationally and internationally in Prague, Plzen and Kostelec, Czechoslovakia, in Linz, Austria at the 1990 Prix Ars Electronica, and in New York at the New Museum of Contemporary Art. I have traveled to Los Angeles, Denmark and the Netherlands lecturing on interactivity in art. I have studied performance/video at the San Francisco Art Institute, earning a Master of Fine Arts Degree. I have developed skills in new media, and am embarked on my most ambitious, most engaging project; a study of human society on Earth which will culminate in the exhibition of a virtual reality video cave reflecting a view of the state of humanity.

I plan to complete this installation project in two years, and to show it in contexts which will avail serious critical review. I intend to develop new skills and to continue producing new art for the public. In time, I hope this work will contribute to peace and promote human understanding and consideration.

Benjamin Jay Britton
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Education

Master of Fine Arts, Performance/Video/Computer Arts,
San Francisco Art Institute, California, 1991
Master of Arts, Media Arts, Goddard Graduate Program,
Vermont College, Montpelier, Vermont, 1983
Graduate with Honors, Czechoslovakian Language Study,
Defense Language Institute, Monterey, California, 1979
Undergraduate Studies, University of Massachusetts/Amherst, 1977
University of Maryland/European Division, Nurnberg BRD, 1979
Massachusetts College of Art, Boston, MA, 1981
City College of San Francisco, San Francisco CA, 1984

Selected Works

1977 Friends - book of poems
1978 Assemblage - book of verse
1980 Voice from the Wellspring - book of essays
1983 Sisyphus - four minute videotape
Digital/Analog Interlude - five minute videotape
Uptown I&II - two sixty minute videotapes
1984 Miercoles Para Dos - eight minute videotape
Erste Nacht - fifteen minute videotape
1985 Root Three - fifteen minute videotape
1986 The Fruit of Chardin - sixty minute videotape
1987 Rezerrection - ten minute videotape
Nocturne Trouvee - video installation
1988 The Daily Ink - two minute videotape
1989 The Art of Television - book of essays re: video
1990 je suis (un readymade) - touchscreen television
Gotcha - video monitor installation
1991 Don't Shoot - touchscreen tv and videodisc
Instant Universe - thirty minute videotape

Work Presently in Progress as of August, 1991

LASCAUX, interactive virtual reality cave installation
Subterranean Video Presents, weekly public access tv show

Selected Exhibitions

San Francisco Art Institute, San Francisco CA 5/91
New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York NY 9-11/90
Prix Ars Electronica, Linz, Austria 9/90
Galerie Mladych, Prague, Czechoslovakia 9/90
Artists Television Access, San Francisco CA 6/90
Artspace, San Francisco CA 3/90
Subterranean Video, Anaheim CA 3/90
Norway Public Television, Norway 10/89
New Langton Arts, San Francisco CA 5/88
Boston Film/Video Foundation, Boston MA 1/87
Video Free America, San Francisco CA 9/86
San Francisco International Video Festival, CA 10/85
Mobius Performance Theater, Boston, MA 5/84
Institute of Contemporary Arts, Boston, MA 6/83