

# **Virtual Art**

**From Illusion to Immersion**

*Oliver Grau*

*translated by Gloria Custance*

The MIT Press  
Cambridge, Massachusetts  
London, England

## **Contents**

SERIES FOREWORD	viii
FOREWORD by Joel Slayton	xi
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	xiii
<b>Chapter 1      Introduction</b>	2
The Science of the Image	11
Immersion	13
<b>Chapter 2      Historic Spaces of Illusion</b>	24
Immersive Image Strategies of the Classical World	25
The <i>Chambre du Cerf</i> in the Papal Palace at Avignon	33
In Rome on Mount Olympus: Baldassare Peruzzi's <i>Sala delle Prospettive</i>	37
Immersion in Biblical Jerusalem: Gaudenzio Ferrari at Sacro Monte	41
Baroque Ceiling Panoramas	46
Viewing with Military Precision: The Birth of the Panorama	52
Barker's Invention: Developing the Space of Illusionistic Landscapes	56
Construction and Function of the Panorama	58
The Panorama: A Controversial Medium circa 1800	62
The Role of Economics in the International Expansion of the Panorama	65

<b>Chapter 3</b>	<b>The Panorama of the Battle of Sedan: Obedience through Presence</b>	90
	The Battle in the Picture	92
	The Power of Illusion, Suggestion, and Immersion	96
	Anton von Werner: Artist and Power Player	99
	Political Objectives	101
	The Panorama Stock Exchange	103
	With Helmholtz's Knowledge: "Democratic Perspective" versus "Soldiers' Immersion"	105
	Strategy and Work of the Panoramist	113
	L'Art Industriel	118
	The Rotunda	122
<b>Chapter 4</b>	<b>Intermedia Stages of Virtual Reality in the Twentieth Century: Art as Inspiration of Evolving Media</b>	140
	Monet's Water Lilies Panorama in Giverny	141
	Prampolini's Futurist Polydimensional Scenospace	143
	Film: Visions of Extending the Cinema Screen and Beyond	146
	Highways and Byways to Virtual Reality: The "Ultimate" Union with the Computer in the Image	161
	The Rhetoric of a New Dawn: The Californian Dream	168
	Virtual Reality in Its Military and Industrial Context	169
	Art and Media Evolution I	173
<b>Chapter 5</b>	<b>Virtual Art—Digital! The Natural Interface</b>	192
	Charlotte Davies: <i>Osmose</i>	193
	The Suggestive Potential of the Interface	198
	Aesthetic Distance	202
	The Concept of "The Work" in Processual or Virtual Art	204
<b>Chapter 6</b>	<b>Spaces of Knowledge</b>	212
	Knowbotic Research (KR+cF): <i>Dialogue with the Knowbotic South</i>	213
	The Virtual Denkraum I: <i>The Home of the Brain</i> (1991)	217

The Virtual Denkraum II: <i>Memory Theater VR</i> by Agnes Hegedues (1997)	231
<i>Ultima Ratio: For a Theater of the Media</i>	234
Exegetes of the Panorama: Benayoun, Shaw, Naimark	236
Mixed Realities	245
Virtual Reality's Dynamic Images	248
The Computer: Handtool or Thinktool?	255
<b>Chapter 7      Telepresence: Art and History of an Idea</b>	270
Telepresence Now!	271
Subhistory of Telepresence	278
“Teleistemological” Implications: Presence and Distance	285
<b>Chapter 8      Evolution</b>	296
Genetic Art: Christa Sommerer and Laurent Mignonneau	297
A-Volve	300
Artful Games: The Evolution of Images	304
A-Life’s Party	308
A-Life’s Subhistory	320
Transgenic Art	326
<b>Chapter 9      Perspectives</b>	338
REFERENCES	352
AUTHOR INDEX	402
SUBJECT INDEX	408