



RAFAEL LOZANO-HEMMER *Vectorial Elevation, Relational Architecture 4*, 2002
live webcast; version for the Basque City of Vitoria-Gasteiz and www.alzado.net; photograph by David Quintas

WOOD STREET GALLERIES
PITTSBURGH PENNSYLVANIA
MARCH 28 - MAY 17, 2003

CRITICAL_CONDITION
information atmospheres and event scenes

The wild speculations about immersive cinematic experiences unfolding in multi-layered hype(r)-narratives have largely proved futile. Predicated in the elusive symptoms of the "cinema of attractions" and the flawed subjectifications of programmed variables, most of the attempts have succumbed to excessive forms of ornamented spectacle with filmed sequences, often bombastic visual effects, and the abandonment of the audience except as a mass "chorus" of passive viewers. Indeed while the designing of this kind of super-cinema has grown in scale, it has largely lost sight of its potential not as an enormous, nearly anonymous, mass event, but rather as one that that can perform as an interface, one in which feedback and individual agency create a kind of anti-spectacle.

In Relational Architecture, the interface is more than just a portal into an illusion; it stands against illusion in favor of developing a unique relationship with a distributed public without losing site of either identity,

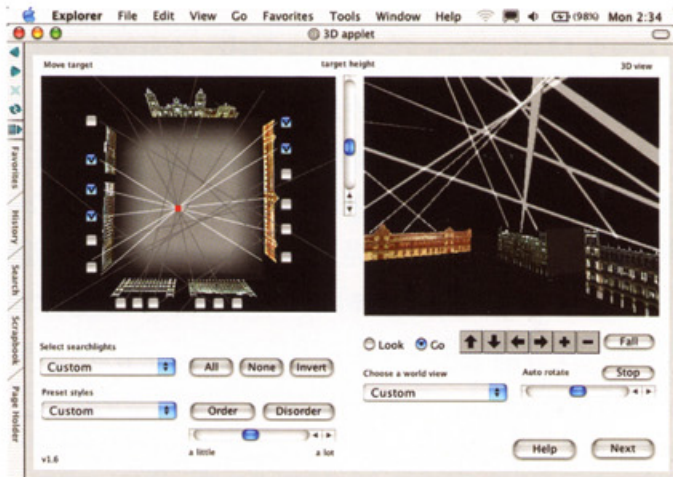
locality, or with the delicate meanings of interactivity. To do this in under the rubric of architecture is neither ironic or paradoxical. To transpose interior and exterior space, to reclaim the public square as a site of public discourse, of the social imaginary, of the "projection" of the public will, is an act at once defiant and compelling. To "write" into the surfaces of the sky, onto the exterior walls of buildings that stand as a repository of cultural history, to "write" the body into the "social text" of the physical world, suggests collisions of meaning that, on the one hand, embeds this work in specific histories (discussed in the marvelous interview that follows), and, on the other, extends from the passive confrontation of space into that of time (both historical and experiential).

In this sense, Relational Architecture is neither attempting to "build" consensus or to conjure up post-cinema. It is an evocation of the kind of social space in which active participation is not a by-product, but the driving force in the creation of dynamic agora in which every position is established in an open system that ruptures hierarchies and dismantles the notion that the public is an undifferentiated mass, the media not the harbinger of a utopian global village, interactivity not the opiate of shoppers.

In carefully balancing often vast spaces with individual actions, the works that have been developed by **RAFAEL LOZANO-HEMMER** conspire to reverse-engineer the looming, phantasmatic, or cultish extravaganzas whose effects were created to overwhelm the senses, to evoke false unity, or to provide a backdrop for mob rallies. Instead, Relational Architecture relinquishes the crowd in favor of the assembly. It simultaneously integrates the use of the net as more than a delocalized enclave and reconsiders it as an arena for communication rather than distribution.

Indeed, even the now vast literature on the so-called "architecture" of cyberspace invokes immateriality, event-scenes, information atmospheres, trans-localities, forms of transitional or experiential "space," and what might be called "haptic" rather than merely "optic" perspectives. Relational Architecture reminds us that our social spaces are never neutral, that they are inhabited by memories of all sorts, that ephemerality is not inconsequential, that interactivity is not merely a catchphrase for media art. It also proposes an "architecture" that will, in Virilio's wonderful phrase, "take place."

–Timothy Druckrey



RAFAEL LOZANO-HEMMER *Vectorial Elevation, Relational Architecture 4*, 1999-2000
(screenshot and detail) live webcast; version for Mexico City and www.alzado.net; photograph by Martin Vargas

