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***Home of the Brain (1990–92):* A networked VR installation as virtual exhibition of philosophers' thoughts**

The Virtual Reality installation *Home of the Brain* not only reflects the new medium but also the media discourse itself is exhibited here as a philosophical debate. The virtual environment features houses of philosophers represented as buildings of thought. They are dedicated to the ideas of Joseph Weizenbaum, Marvin Minsky, Paul Virilio and Vilém Flusser. Their opposing positions on digital culture become visible and audible as a battle of words – a heated debate. Statements, sentences and words build an interactive real-time landscape. With the help of the data glove, the visitor moves through this virtual discourse and literally dives into their thoughts. The audience observes this audio-visual scenario on a large projection screen. The navigator becomes the storyteller, while the audience takes on the role of the choir by commenting as in the theatre of antiquity. The theoretical discourse on new media, which normally takes place in books, is shifted into the virtual environment. Text fragments can be heard, like Vilém Flusser's quote: 'People are getting worse, but technology

is getting better. Minsky's view that there is no difference between the real you and your digital clone forms the narrative basis for the cognitive mood of virtual space' (Fleischmann and Strauss 1990). *Home of the Brain* is highly talkative and with its few text sources (4 × 4 text fragments) already allows a complex arrangement and combination of facts. Within texture maps of light, shadow and sound examples the navigator plays with the proportions of the objects. He acts weightlessly in a new-world brain of networked computers – in the *Home of the Brain*.

In principle, it is a nonlinear piece. The duration of the visitors' stay depends on their interest in the virtual environment and their ability to see stereoscopically. Quite a few said they had forgotten time.

HW-Plattform:

HP-workstation, Silicon graphics VGXT, Apple Mac 2, head-mounted display und dataglove of VPL Research (Jaron Lanier, Tom Zimmerman).

SW-Plattform:

Star UX 3D geometry, wavefront/softimage, inhouse radiosity rendering, VPL electric body data management. Output: SGI stereo-rendering.

The VR headset version of *Home of the Brain* is not available anymore. The work can be exhibited as a documentation with 3D slides, videos or pictures. *Home of the Brain* was further developed in the work *Murmuring Fields*.

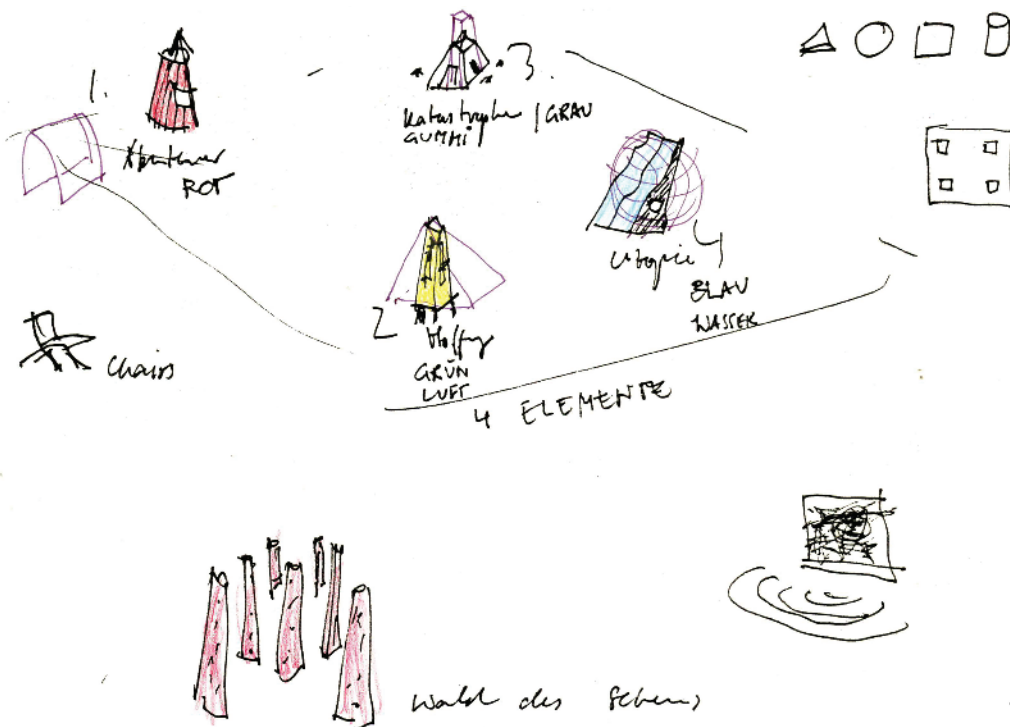


Figure 1: Monika Fleischmann and Wolfgang Strauss, *Home of the Brain*, initial sketch of philosophers' houses, hand drawing, 21 × 29 cm (1989). Courtesy of Monika Fleischmann and Wolfgang Strauss.

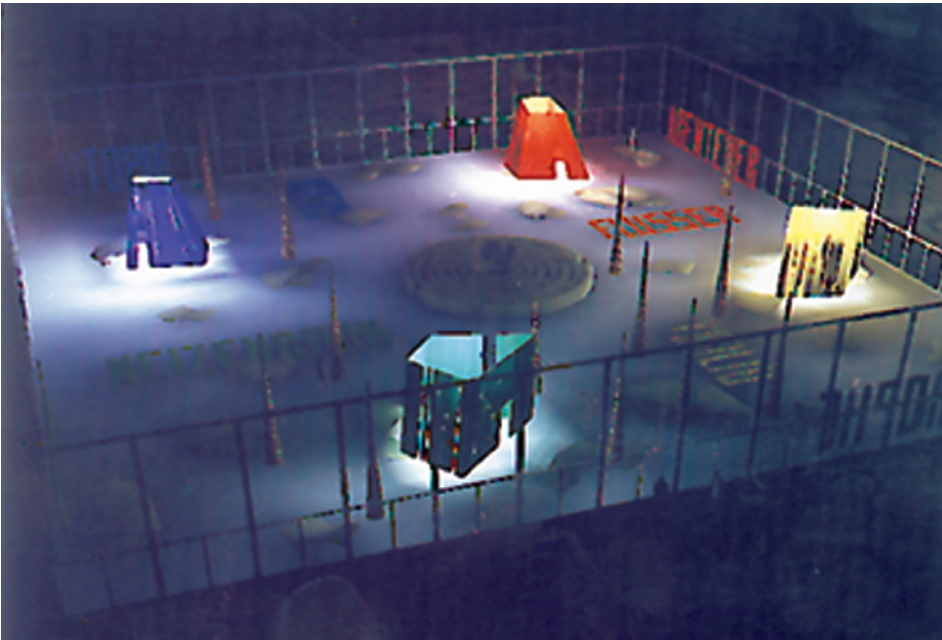


Figure 2: Monika Fleischmann and Wolfgang Strauss, Home of the Brain, 3D model with radiosity lighting in VR environment. Courtesy of Monika Fleischmann and Wolfgang Strauss.



Figure 3: Monika Fleischmann and Wolfgang Strauss, Home of the Brain, Minsky's house of utopia with text ribbons and rune panels. Courtesy of Monika Fleischmann and Wolfgang Strauss.



Figure 4: Monika Fleischmann and Wolfgang Strauss, Home of the Brain, Flusser's house of adventure. Courtesy of Monika Fleischmann and Wolfgang Strauss.

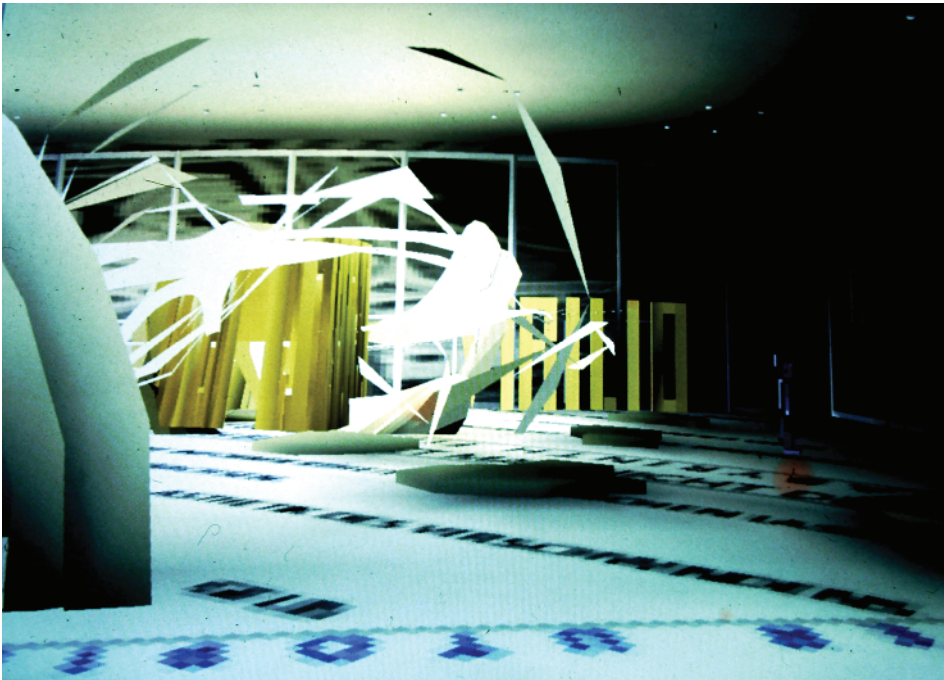


Figure 5: Monika Fleischmann and Wolfgang Strauss, Home of the Brain, Virilio's house of catastrophe. Courtesy of Monika Fleischmann and Wolfgang Strauss.



Figure 6: Monika Fleischmann and Wolfgang Strauss, *Home of the Brain*, *Cybernaut* with head-mounted display and data glove. Courtesy of Monika Fleischmann and Wolfgang Strauss.

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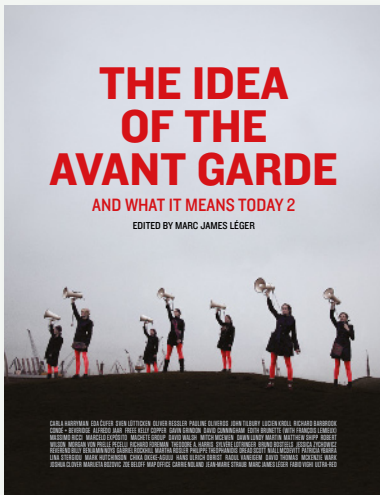
Text: © Monika Fleischmann, Wolfgang Strauss, Berlin, 8 October 2019.

Production: *Home of the Brain* was developed by Monika Fleischmann and Wolfgang Strauss, heads of Raumlabor at ART+COM. Cooperators: Edouard Bannwart, Dirk Lüsebrink, Uli Weinberg, Gavin Hodge, Hendrik Tramberend, Josef Speier. Supported by ART+COM e.V. and Deutsche Telekom and Berkom.

REFERENCE

Fleischmann, Monika and Strauss, Wolfgang (1990), *Home of the Brain*, Berlin: ART+COM.

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The Idea of the Avant Garde And What It Means Today, Volume 2

Edited by Marc James Léger

The concept of the avant garde is highly contested, whether one consigns it to history or claims it for present-day or future uses. The first volume of *The Idea of the Avant Garde – And What It Means Today* provided a lively forum on the kinds of radical art theory and partisan practices that are possible in today's world of global art markets and creative industry entrepreneurialism. This second volume presents the work of another 50 artists and writers, exploring the diverse ways that avant-gardism develops reflexive and experimental combinations of aesthetic and political praxis. The manifest strategies, temporalities and genealogies of avant-garde art and politics are expressed through an international, intergenerational and interdisciplinary convocation of ideas that covers the fields of film, video, architecture, visual art, art activism, literature, poetry, theatre, performance, intermedia and music.

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