

CIANT & Palác Akropolis:
ART AND PERFORMANCE IN VIRTUAL REALITY



eGaLab: **E**lectronic **G**allery and **L**ABoratory on the internet

eGaLab

- is an international project supported by European Commission within a CULTURE 2000 programme
- has been coordinated in a course of twelve months by International Center for Art and New Technologies in Prague (CIANT) located at Palác Akropolis (Praha, Czech Republic)
- efficiently joint experience and skills of three partnering organizations
 - i) CIANT (International Center for Art and New Technologies in Prague)
 - ii) CYPRES (Centre Interculturel de Pratiques, Recherches et Echanges Transdisciplinaires situated in Marseille, France)
 - iii) MIDE (Museo Internacional de Electrografia, art school, centre and museum in Cuenca, Spain)

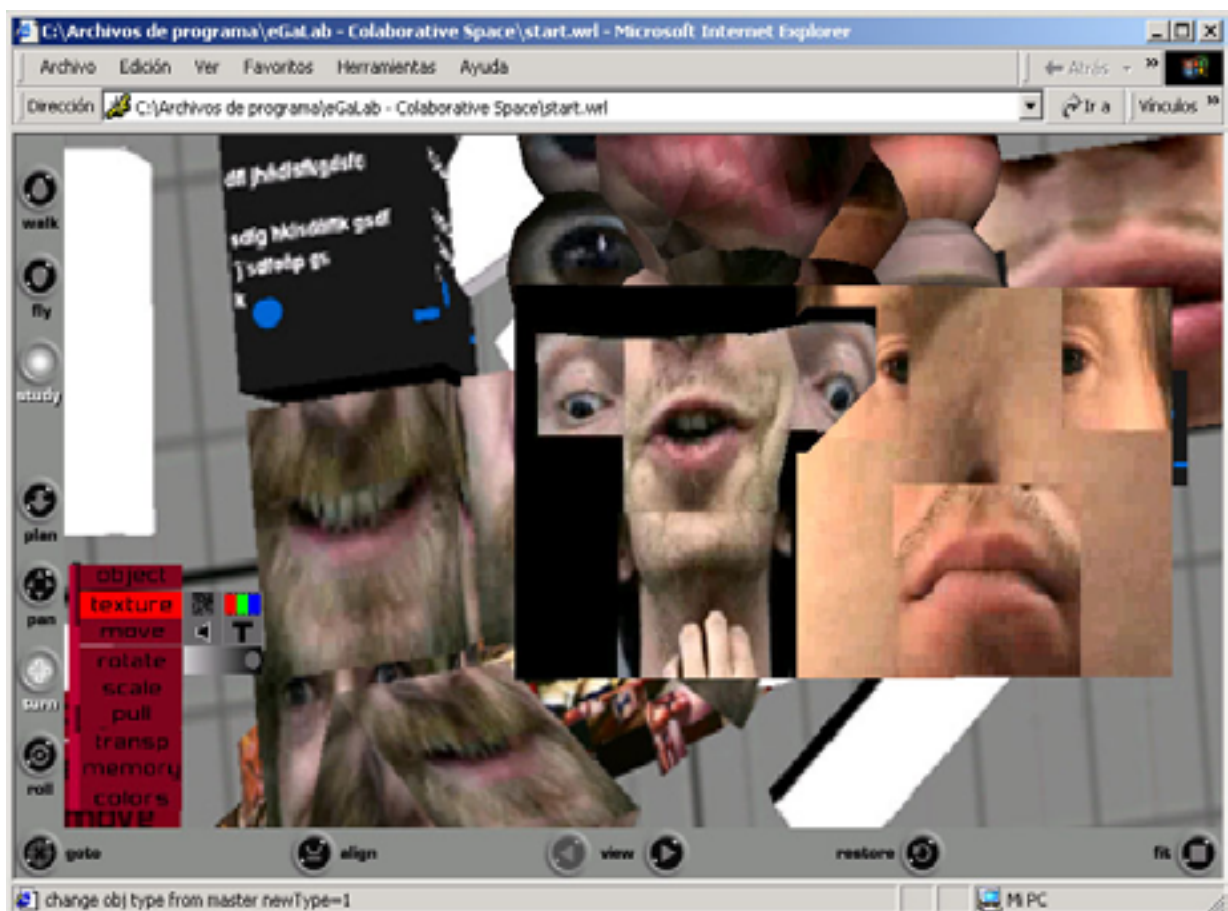
Context

The eGaLab project has become a prototype of novel artistic cooperation. Its leading idea is to demonstrate the potential of new technologies in art domain. Cultural sphere today has to reflect huge development of artistic concepts as well as increasing intervention of communication technologies. This shift inevitably brings along new evaluation of art creation process. The artists participating in our project have their background in various disciplines and moreover they have gained a unique technological support from the team of programmers. This crossing of approaches and competences is quite a new promise for the emergence of new art projects. The team work as well as collective authorship has become a grounding assumption for the success of the whole project.

The eGaLab project has primarily focused on the development of a shared three-dimensional (3D) multi-user platform on the internet, which now consists of two basic layers:

1. a set of creative tools used for the creation of virtual art works in the electronic laboratory and for the interaction with these works in real time.
2. a set of communication tools used for sharing of the audiovisual content in the electronic gallery and for the intuitive navigation in virtual space.

Today, eGaLab platform enables artists not just to present the part of their work already existing in the physical world, but also to create and to present completely new art works directly via the platform. By thus we have opened up a great scope of possibilities for the creation and presentation of new generation art works in virtual space (art works which depend since the initial phase of their creation on the electronic space and which ought to be presented in this space too).



The main benefits of the eGaLab project:

- a. We have developed, tested and by now try to establish a new platform (in the form of a shared, multi-user and collaborative world) designed for the creation, experimentation and presentation of the art works on the internet.
- b. We have enabled the groups of visual artists to work on the common projects (modeling, performance etc.) directly in the virtual space and real time.
- c. We organized a series of workshops based on the transdisciplinary cooperation and the teamwork art creation making use of new technologies in the cultural sphere.
- d. In the electronic gallery we mediate an internet access [www.egalab.net] to the virtual art works for the public in a new/intuitive way.

Our common idea to create due to a transdisciplinary collaboration of young artists and scientists an electronic gallery and laboratory for the digital art reflects foremost the alarming situation in the field of current creation and presentation of the art works in new media domain. The very common manner of artistic presentation in galleries and museums does not correspond to the timely art forms working directly with the electronic media (net.art for example). Although some galleries and museums enhance their own "on-line" presentation, still they mostly overlook the new media filed artists and their work. Even many internet galleries emerging especially for the progressive digital art, operate on the mere picture or text "clicking" principle; such navigation, however, is rather hostile towards the artists as well as public. What are we missing then? An intuitive access to the virtual worlds and communities oriented towards visual art and cultural collaboration. We have thus developed a novel type of gallery, combining and/or transforming the advantages of virtual space on the internet and traditional aspects of the artistic creation and presentation; and next a novel type of artistic laboratory (a shared virtual space) in a mode of the open platform designed for a common creation and experience exchange.

Particular innovation of the eGaLab project:

- we have pushed forward a new type of cooperation between artists from various fields and employed the programmers into the creation process
- we have enabled a direct intervention into the artistic performance on the stage from the external environment (for example, an artist in France can intervene into the action in Prague)
- we have put into operation a shared interactivity in virtual space (while so far it was only possible to be affected by interactivity locally, now everybody can immediately and commonly use the interactive qualities of objects and space on the internet)

- we have interconnected virtual and real space via implementation of high-end technologies including motion capture mechanisms
- for these new forms of artistic performances as well as object modeling in a shared virtual space we have developed appropriate software tools
- we have supported inosculation of traditional performance techniques of mixing video and sound with progressive computer techniques of space visualization

Methodology:

The eGaLab project methodology is based on an intense exchange of experience and the sharing of artistic as well as scientific competencies on the international level. We have successfully held the integrity in an extensive field of artistic agency and supported this process with computing research, which is by now a significant part of cultural and artistic projects in a new media domain. Unlike many technological research activities, which provide extremely narrow focus, in eGaLab project we have made it to deploy the scientists into the initial phases of art works creation and reciprocally the artists into the creation of tools for the creation itself, which is in context of European research highly positive and for sure quite an unusual feature.

Performance:

A part of the concluding presentation of the eGaLab project will be a performance demonstrating the possibilities of a shared virtual space for live artistic events. Interconnecting virtual reality, motion capture technologies and contemporary dance we shall present new forms of artistic performance using creative and communication tools developed within the project.





Programme:

March 28, 2003

- 11.00 a.m. : press conference with multimedia presentation of a virtual gallery and the work in the internet laboratory
- 12.00 a.m. : performance (*virtual reality, motion capture and contemporary dance*); demonstration of the interconnection with art centres in France and Spain: on-line interaction
- 12.30 a.m. : space for journalists` questions
- 1.00 p.m. : refreshment
- 2.30 p.m. : open discussion with artists and new media theorists (*project evaluation; possibility to explore an interaction and experiments in virtual reality*)
- 4.30 p.m. : refreshment in a Cafe Palác Akropolis
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- 7.30 p.m. : performance
- 9:00 p.m. : demonstration of a shared virtual space

March 29, 2003

- 11.00 a.m. : presentation of a shared virtual space (visitors can explore an interaction and experiments in virtual reality; discussion with artists)
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- 7.30 p.m. : performance

INFORMATION IN ELECTRONIC FORM INCLUDING PICTURES
YOU CAN FIND AT www.egalab.net/press.