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***Inherent Rights, Vision Rights: A Virtual Environment***  
**by Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun**

**Grazyna Szawlowski**

**A Thesis**  
**in**  
**The Department**  
**of**  
**Art History**

**Presented in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements**  
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## **ABSTRACT**

***Inherent Rights, Vision Rights: A Virtual Environment* by Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun**

**Grazyna Szawlowski**

My fascination with new technologies lies, in part, in their appearance to function invisibly, like unseen forces possessing miraculous and mysterious powers. My intention in this thesis is to explore these unseen forces, through Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun's 1991-92 virtual environment *Inherent Rights, Vision Rights*. The work *Inherent Rights, Vision Rights*, as part of the *Land, Spirit, Power* exhibition of 1992, made Canadian art "history" as it was the first virtual reality piece ever shown at the National Gallery of Canada.

In this thesis Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun's work *Inherent Rights, Vision Rights* (1991-92) is explored within the literature of postcolonial identity politics and contemporary theories of virtual environments and cyberspace. Yuxweluptun's longhouse in cyberspace is an invitation for the viewer to understand his Coast Salish culture through cyberspace immersion. The notion of interactivity with a total work of art merits an understanding that new technology is embedded in cultural and social contexts. The result of this new interaction between artwork and viewer (active participant), cyberspace is understood "as a discursive site of ideological struggles that define the relationship between new technology and the subjectivity of the active participant" (Kendrick 147). This powerful tool for Yuxweluptun permits him to expand and explore the issue of identity construction.

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## INTRODUCTION

In 1992 the National Gallery of Canada exhibited its first ever virtual environment. This work, *Inherent Rights, Vision Rights*, was created by Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun, an artist of First Nations ancestry.

Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun (b.1956) is a social activist artist who uses different media to rewrite a colonial Canadian history and to express contemporary history. As a First Nations artist Yuxweluptun provides a narrative of history shaped by his knowledge and experience as Native. One work in particular, *Inherent Rights, Vision Rights* (1991-92), presents Yuxweluptun's desire to communicate his history and to let people outside his Coast Salish culture experience it first-hand. Yuxweluptun veered from his habitual-large painting format to explore the possibilities of a virtual environment and the issues associated with this new technology. Yuxweluptun states:

It will take a real long time before we can get society to change its values. With technology, I found that it's a learning process. You look at it and you see that the equipment is turning back on itself. Dioxins -- we do not see that in virtual reality but that is reality. Technology is doing that to our habitat; it is important. That is power, that is real power. New technologies of 3-D glasses -- they were used in Oka. Pointed in our face culturally. They are looking for new tanks to purchase in this country and they have been brought up three times in this country -- twice on Indians.<sup>1</sup>

This thesis examines Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun's virtual environment. My intention is to provide an understanding of the complexity surrounding the creation and interpretation of virtual environment production. This work invites a consideration of the

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<sup>1</sup> Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun, "Discussion," *Virtual Seminar on the Bioapparatus*, eds. Catherine Richards and Nell Tenhaaf (Banff: The Banff Centre for the Arts, 1991) 64.

many definitions of virtual environment and cyberspace in existence. My discussion of Yuxweluptun's work will be structured within the literature of postcolonial identity politics and theories of virtual environments and cyberspace. I will assume that an expanded history merits a rethinking of identity.<sup>2</sup>

Yuxweluptun's work, *Inherent Rights, Vision Rights*, is described as a Coast Salish longhouse in cyberspace. The viewer becomes an active participant in the work because of significant interaction with it. Without the active participant, the longhouse in cyberspace would not exist. As a result of this new interaction between artwork and viewer (active participant) cyberspace is described as existing as the discursive site of ideological struggles that define the relationship between new technology and the subjectivity of the active participant.<sup>3</sup> The notion of cyberspace as a space for shifting the active participant's sense of self is a powerful tool for an artist such as Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun, one who is expanding and exploring the issue of identity construction. With the manipulation of this medium, the artist is able to subvert stereotypes, comment on basic human rights, and explore the effects of the Indian Acts. Furthermore, cyberspace "is a cultural conjunction of fictions, projections, and anxieties that exemplify the ways in which technology intervenes in our subjectivity."<sup>4</sup> Yuxweluptun is inviting the active participant to understand his culture through a virtual environment. The virtual

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<sup>2</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Random House, 1978) 55.

<sup>3</sup> Michelle Kendrick, "Cyberspace and the Technological Real," *Virtual Realities and Their Discontents*, ed. Robert Markley (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996) 143.

<sup>4</sup> Kendrick 143.

environment is not a "traditional" medium associated with artists of First Nations ancestry. The experience by the active participant is based on cultural conditioning, meaning that all experiences -- sensorial, emotional, physical, intellectual -- are culturally laden.

This introductory chapter will outline Yuxweluptun's biography and offer a basis for understanding the complexity of virtual environments.<sup>5</sup>

Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun was born in Kamloops into a family belonging to the First Nations Northwest Coast Salish culture. His father is from the Cowichan band and his mother is from the Okanagan band. At the age of eight, he and his family moved to Richmond. His formal art training began with drawing pictures of jet planes and portraits of Sitting Bull<sup>6</sup> in public school, and ended with his graduation from the Emily Carr College of Art and Design in 1983 with an honours degree in painting. These formative drawing and painting years provide clues to his understanding and respect for the history of First Nations people. The portraits of Sitting Bull were the beginning of Yuxweluptun's desire to rewrite North American history between the Europeans and First Nations people.

Since graduating from the Emily Carr College of Art and Design, Yuxweluptun has been involved with group and solo exhibitions nationally and internationally (see

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<sup>5</sup> Much to my regret, Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun was unobtainable during my research and writing of this thesis.

<sup>6</sup> A Sioux War Chief who led the winning battle against General George Custer at Little Big Horn, Montana in 1876.

Appendix 1). In addition, his work is in private and public collections throughout Canada, the United States, Germany, and Switzerland.<sup>7</sup>

Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun's "non-artistic" experiences throughout his childhood are important to consider, as is the idea that his upbringing hardly qualified as common for a young boy growing up in the early 1960s in British Columbia. He spent most of his youth in Richmond, which he describes as "a new ground for off-reserve natives"<sup>8</sup> and a stage for political activism. His political activism is not surprising considering he grew up in a household where his parents were actively involved with the North American Native Brotherhood and the Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs. Because of his parents' political activity, Yuxweluptun grew up attending meetings and waving signs at demonstrations with his parents.<sup>9</sup> He chose to embody his own activism in socially and politically charged art work. He assigned himself the responsibility of creating contemporary history paintings which "record the issues and events of right now."<sup>10</sup>

Yuxweluptun's strategy is to document and promote change in contemporary

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<sup>7</sup> Selected private and public collections: Canada Council Art Bank; Department of Indian and Northern Affairs; Walter Phillips Gallery, Banff; Philbrook Art Centre, Tulsa; Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin; Museum Tur Völkerkunde, Berlin; and Staatliche Museum, Bern.

<sup>8</sup> Robin Laurence, "Man of Masks: Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun's iconoclastic paintings blend tribal motifs with acid rock psychedelia," *Canadian Art* 12.1 (1995): 52.

<sup>9</sup> Charlotte Townsend-Gault, "The Salvation Art of Yuxweluptun," *Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun: Born to Live and Die on Your Colonialist Reservation*, eds Charlotte Townsend-Gault, Scott Watson, Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun (Vancouver: Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery, 1995) 8-9.

<sup>10</sup> Laurence 52.

Canadian history in large-scale paintings (from 54.2 x 34.7 cm to 233.7 x 200.7 cm). The Canadian history that his painted works explore deals with political, environmental, and cultural issues. His personal and socio-political experiences enhance this practice of documentation.

One example that epitomizes his concern with documenting and critiquing contemporary Canadian history is the painted work *Scorched Earth, Clear-Cut Logging on Native Sovereign Lands, Shaman Coming To Fix* (1991; figure 1). His concern with land claim issues is obvious in the self-explanatory title. This "surreal" painting depicts traditional three-dimensional objects such as storage boxes, [totem] poles, masks, and ceremonial bowls. The formal technique uses traditional Northwest Coast First Nations artistic elements: ovoids, u-forms, s-forms, and form lines.<sup>11</sup> The bright colours and strange anthropomorphic figures combine to portray a sparse three-dimensional landscape on a two-dimensional surface. Perspectival factors combined with the flatness of some elements produce a kind of illusionistic-reality that invites the viewer to enter the landscape. With the mixture of Coast Salish cosmology, Northwest Coast formal elements and the Western landscape tradition, Yuxweluptun can introduce non-Natives to his understanding of the land. Through the depiction of the Coast Salish spirit world Yuxweluptun anticipates an expanding respect for the land. Thereby he can document and promote change in contemporary Canadian history. He states to his viewing audience:

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<sup>11</sup> For more information in the classification of these formal elements see Bill Holm (in conjunction with Bill Reid) *Indian Art of the Northwest Coast: A dialogue on Craftsmanship and Aesthetics*, (Houston: Institute of the Arts, Rice University, 1975).

that the natural world is animate, that it generates powers to which humans can have access and that human use of the land is sanctioned by the appearance of spirits. In this lies the hope of salvation from a course of action that is destroying the natural world and ourselves along with it.<sup>12</sup>

The theme of protection/salvation of the land and the natural spirit world is apparent in many of his other works as well. He aims to make apparent "environmental destruction, corporate greed, government perfidy, and the pain of contemporary [N]ative existence"<sup>13</sup> here in Canada. Other examples of his increasing socio-political awareness are the works *Red Man Watching White Man Trying To Fix Hole In Sky* (1990) and *The Universe is so Big, the White Man Keeps Me on My Reservation* (1997) ( figures 2 and 3). Yuxweluptun adopted the same pictorial approach in these two large acrylic paintings as he did in *Scorched Earth, Clear-Cut Logging on Native Sovereign Lands, Shaman Coming To Fix*. These works also draw the viewer into his constructed phantasmic landscapes; and they too centre on a Canadian socio-political environmental content. According to Yuxweluptun, the ulterior motive in his large painted works is to promote an advocacy for change within Canada:

Within my lifetime there have been historical happenings in the Native communities in Canada. The Native is adapting and making changes occur. I document many of the events as I see them, for example, land claims, uranium mining, acid rain, Indian government, fish wars, etc. There is Indian news and I like to paint it.<sup>14</sup>

These works are dependent on the viewer -- through a common understanding of

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<sup>12</sup> Artist's File. Department of Northern and Indian Affairs. Indian Art Centre. October 1996.

<sup>13</sup> Townsend-Gault 12.

<sup>14</sup> Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun statement in his artist file at Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, Indian Art Centre, October 1996.



social, political, and cultural problems in Canada -- or Yuxweluptun's motives would not be recognized. Yuxweluptun has made his works easily understood through the imagery and the clarity of the titles. In Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun's only virtual environment work, *Inherent Rights, Vision Rights*, the viewer, in cyberspace, drives up to a longhouse in a Canadian landscape at night. The viewer walks into the longhouse and observes a Coast Salish ceremony taking place which includes dancing spirit figures, the crackling of a fire, Native drumming and animal sounds (figures 6 and 7). Yuxweluptun's virtual environment work expands the relationship between viewer and artwork. For example, Ken Pimental and Kevin Teixeira write in one of the leading books on virtual environments:

The more dimensions there are in art, the harder it is for people to make an essential initial connection to change their mind's eye so they can step into the art and let it carry them away. In its multisensory and therefore multichannel modes of communication, virtual reality allows for art environments such as *Inherent Rights, Vision Rights*, which asks us to see the world through a new pair of eyes; it provides multiple ways to actively discover the many possible meanings of both virtual worlds and the real world.<sup>15</sup>

The many possibilities which occur in virtual environments are repeated in the many definitions of virtual environments. "A computer-generated, interactive, three-dimensional environment in which a person is immersed"<sup>16</sup> is one definition of a virtual environment. One could further expand on this definition to include the benefits for a

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<sup>15</sup> Ken Pimental and Kevin Teixeira, *Virtual Reality: Through the New Looking Glass* (New York: Windcrest Books, 1993) 235.

<sup>16</sup> Steve Aukstakalnis, David Blatner, and Stephen F. Roth, eds. *Silicon Mirage: The Art and Science of Virtual Reality* (Berkeley: Peach Pit Press, 1992) 12.

visual artist: "virtual reality represents an entirely new and unexplored universe for creation. It's an art form in which shape, space, and time can be bent, and in which viewers can participate."<sup>17</sup> Along with these basic definitions of virtual environments, it is appropriate to say that these events actually occur in a terminal reality called cyberspace. In cyberspace the created image is no longer visually identified as a copy but as "the real thing," a lived experience. For the "real thing" to emerge, there has to be an interaction between the viewer and the computer terminal in cyberspace, this interaction instituting a virtual environment, with the viewer as an active participant.

However, on an incorporeal level, cyberspace can also be correlated with the notion of *mindscapes*.<sup>18</sup> Mindscapes are "thought experiments" to generate landscapes, new or extrapolated, meant to be realizations of "out there" mental thoughts. The mindscape derives from the notion that someone's mind is using its speculative power in hopes of reaching beyond the mind itself; to turn ghostly paradigms into solidly realized places where a person can act, interact, and ultimately grow is a theorem of the virtual environment.<sup>19</sup> Mindscapes also deal with the notion of "travelling without moving at all," which occurs when a person physically experiences a virtual environment. Mindscapes do not represent a place to which a viewer can physically go: "documents" - or virtual environments -- are made to indulge the desire to believe in places of other

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<sup>17</sup> Pimental and Teixeira 230.

<sup>18</sup> *Mindscapes* are, according to George E. Slusser and Eric S. Rabkin, geographies of imagined worlds. George Slusser and Eric Rabkin, eds., *Mindscapes: The Geographies of Imagined Worlds*, (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1989)

<sup>19</sup> Slusser and Rabkin, "Introduction: The Concept of Mindscapes," x.

worlds.

The creation of virtual environments and cyberspace allows the artist to explore his own mindscape and to expand on his imagined worlds:

In fact, cyberspace is a different kind of mindscape. I believe it to be more of what I call a memescape. A memescape is an electronic geography of memes: it is a 'plastic' here because memescapes are not closed geographies. They are in fact, open 'countries' (delineated by electronics) where interactions and matings between human and computer memes are welcome. Memescapes are essentially what cyberspace disperses and inlays in the human body.<sup>20</sup>

Cyberspace exists by way of a virtual environment: it can be defined as "a phenomenological structure of sensual and psychological experience that seems to belong to no-body."<sup>21</sup> Within cyberspace, the active participant and the artist possess the ability to control and create experiences together. These experiences can be considered in the area of *animism*:

In cyberspace animism is not only possible, it is implicit in the requirement that all objects have a degree of self-determination, or are controlled by an Other. Thus a measure of empathy is required in order to comprehend the behaviour of the entities one encounters. To the extent that any object may act as a front for a real person, its motives will have to be considered.<sup>22</sup>

This new relationship of the viewer having to manoeuvre in a virtual environment is a

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<sup>20</sup> Ollivier Dyens, "The Emotion of Cyberspace: Art and Cyber-ecology," *Leonardo* 27:4 (1994): 328.

<sup>21</sup> Alluquere Rosanne Stone, "Will the Real Body Please Stand Up?: Boundary Stories about Virtual Cultures," *Cyberspace: First Steps*, ed. Michael Benedikt (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991) 106.

<sup>22</sup> Marcos Novak, "Liquid Architectures in Cyberspace," Benedikt 240.

central point of investigation in this thesis. The importance of the virtual environment and the active participant is also understood as a problematic of interactivity:

There is a pervasive sense that a paradigm shift is under way and that subjectivity itself is in the process of transformation. Cyberspace is part of the shift in subjectivity as it presents the uncanny instance of agency that belongs to space. The virtual landscape is not just the ground or background or the landscape at which we look, . . . it cannily looks at us. It tracks our every move and constitutes itself as a display in response to the indices of intention, the vectors of body position, gaze, and motion -- that is, virtual space itself is *interactive*. The environment appears to be something "live" or animate, an agency 'that we cannot accept as subject or persona in the traditional European sense, and which nonetheless constantly demonstrates that it sees us without revealing itself.'<sup>23</sup>

As a link between the discourse of new technology and identity theory, Edward Said once designated an "imaginative geography and history" as that which helps "the mind to intensify its own sense of itself by dramatising the difference between what is close to it and what is far away."<sup>24</sup> The difficulty of creating distinct binaries of center and periphery is an underlying concern throughout this thesis. Yuxweluptun's positioning in the subaltern and his interest in the method of identifying the Other merits this statement. As Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun has written:

It is important for us culturally to be a part of Canada, but then we are segregated within Canada. The concept is not resolved yet of the place in society of Indians within this structure; you have off-reserve Indians, on-

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<sup>23</sup> Margaret Morse, "Nature Morte: Landscape and Narrative in Virtual Environments" *Immersed in Technology: Art and Virtual Environments*, eds Mary Anne Moser and Douglas MacLeod. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1995) 227. Margaret Morse cites: Friedrich Kittler, "A Conversation between Peter Weibel and Friedrich Kittler," *On Justifying the Hypothetical Nature of Art and the Non-Identicality with the Object World* (Cologne: Robert Fleck, 1992) 162.

<sup>24</sup> Said 55.

reserve Indians, urban Indians, downtown Indians. The infrastructures are there. It is a matter of working with people, using the technology.<sup>25</sup>

In this thesis, Chapter One will explore all aspects of the work *Inherent Rights, Vision Rights* exhibited in *Land, Spirit, Power* and its relation to the exhibition history of First Nations art at the National Gallery of Canada. This chapter will take into account Yuxweluptun's experience creating the work and his intentions for the virtual environment. Also, the importance of an active participant in virtual environment art will be discussed as a conclusion to Chapter One.

Chapter Two deals with the art historical idea of a "total work of art" and the contemporary understanding of interactive art. A definition and history of the terms "virtual environment" and "cyberspace" will be given to clarify and narrow the notion of a virtual environment being a total work of art. To support the understanding of interactive art, five documented experiences of a realtime immersion in *Inherent Rights, Vision Rights* have been transcribed.

In Chapter Three, *Inherent Rights, Vision Rights* will be explored as a tourist site. Supported by postcolonial theory, my intention is to describe Yuxweluptun as a post-modern ethnographer. I suggest that the active participant can be considered a "tourist." The active participant as "tourist" experiences a constructed aspect of a Coast Salish secret ceremony.

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<sup>25</sup> Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun, "Discussion" 64.

## CHAPTER ONE

### Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun: *Inherent Rights, Vision Rights*

According to Cynthia Goodman in *Digital Visions: Computer and Art*, it is difficult to determine the first time that a computer was used to make art. It was in 1965, however, that computer-generated art began to receive general public attention in Europe and the United States. First Nations artists using new technology have only received attention in the last few years. Their artwork, in the past, has been identified by the dominant discourse as a craft associated with spiritual ideas and identified as "primitivism." Daniel Francis writes "[I]f one side in the encounter enjoys advantages of wealth or power or technology, then it will usually try to impose its stereotypes on the other."<sup>1</sup> Accordingly, Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun disrupts the historic stereotype of First Nations' art created by the dominant discourse through his use of new technology, and the production of a virtual environment.

The first exhibition in Canada to display art work by artists of First Nations ancestry within an art-exhibition context (First Nations art had previously been exhibited, but in an ethnological context) was *Canadian West Coast Art: Native and Modern* exhibited at the National Gallery of Canada in 1927. According to Eric Brown, the Gallery's Director at that time, the works of art were put on display "to mingle for the first time the art work of the Canadian West Coast tribes with that of our more sophisticated artists in an endeavour to analyze their relationships to one another, if such exists, and

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<sup>1</sup> Daniel Francis, *The Imaginary Indian: The Image of the Indian In Canadian Culture* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 1992) 221.

particularly to enable this primitive and interesting art to take a definite place as one of the most valuable of Canada's artistic productions".<sup>2</sup> This exhibition introduced the painted work, ceramics, and rugs of Emily Carr to a viewing audience outside of British Columbia. Her paintings imbued with "Native" Northwest Coast content became popular and accepted as Canadian "high" art that could assist in promoting a national identity. Within this exhibition, the painted work of Carr and several other artists was juxtaposed with wooden pole carvings, cedar boxes, and Chilkat cloaks by un-named artists<sup>3</sup> (figure 8).

Eric Brown was correct on his assesment that First Nations art is one of the most valuable of Canada's artistic productions, but his use of the adjectives "primitive" and "sophisticated" is clearly indicative of the colonial context of the 1927 Exhibition.

After 1927, the next major exhibition of First Nations' art was in 1969. This exhibition was entitled *Masterpieces of Indian and Eskimo Art from Canada*, shown at the National Gallery of Canada and at the Musée de l'Homme in Paris. However, none of the artwork on display was contemporary. The *Masterpieces of Indian and Eskimo Art From Canada* exhibition also applied a particular modern aesthetic -- like the 1927 exhibition -- rather than an ethnographic approach to the art of these non-European

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<sup>2</sup> Eric Brown, "Introduction" Exhibition of Canadian West Coast Art: Native and Modern (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1927) 2.

<sup>3</sup> As a note of interest: The Vancouver of Art Gallery is exhibiting/juxtaposing the art work of Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun and Emily Carr in 1997.

cultures.<sup>4</sup>

It was not until 1982 that a major exhibition was mounted featuring contemporary First Nations works of art. This show, entitled *New Work by a New Generation* (at the Norman Mackenzie Art Gallery in Regina) was a decade ahead of the National Gallery of Canada in being an exclusive exhibition of contemporary First Nations art. The National Gallery of Canada, under the guidance of Contemporary Art Curator Diana Nemiroff, began collecting art by artists of First Nations ancestry in 1987. Then, five years later -- just in time for the acknowledgment of 500 years of colonization which began with Christopher Columbus' arrival in America -- the exhibition *Land, Spirit, Power: First Nations at the National Gallery of Canada* took place.

This major exhibition, which coincided with *Indigena: Contemporary Native Perspectives* at the Canadian Museum of Civilization, provided an alternative approach to recognizing First Nations art. This 1992 exhibition discarded the approaches of ethnography, anonymity, magic, and mystery: instead the approach involved issues of identity. The issues of identity involve political, cultural and artistic concerns. The two exhibitions -- *Land, Spirit, Power* and *Indigena* -- catalogued the art works not by community or ethnographic information, but by Western art institution standards, thereby denoting an appreciation for both the individual who created the art work and for the artwork itself.

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<sup>4</sup> Diana Nemiroff, "Modernism, Nationalism, and Beyond: A Critical History of Exhibitions of First Nations Art," *Land, Spirit, Power: First Nations at the National Gallery of Canada*, eds. Diana Nemiroff, Robert Houle, and Charlotte Townsend-Gault (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1992) 33.



Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun took part in both exhibitions. In the National Gallery of Canada's exhibition, Yuxweluptun's work *Inherent Rights, Vision Rights* made Canadian art history. His virtual environment of a longhouse in cyberspace was the first virtual environment ever shown by any artist at the National Gallery of Canada.

Since this showing of his virtual environment in 1992, the work has travelled to the Canadian Embassy in Paris, in collaboration with ART-EL in May of 1993 for a one-artist show. Then it was shown at the European Media Arts Festival in Osnabrück, Germany in October 1993 and in Madrid in February 1994. As well, it was shown in 1995 at the Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery in Vancouver, as part of the *Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun: Born to Live and Die on Your Colonialist Reservations* exhibition.

The work *Inherent Rights, Vision Rights* originated from two significant colloquia on new technology and art at the Banff Centre for the Arts. Art critic Jason Greenberg writes,

Amid all the rush to label and define new cyber-worlds and virtual experiences, we should not overlook that related forms of escapism and transcendentalism were around long before the advent of computers. . . 'virtual reality is the latest in a 20 000-year-old tradition of contriving illusional realities in which to withdraw, for sacred, educational or psychological reasons, from the flow of normal experience'.<sup>5</sup> Starvation and drug-enhanced vision-quests, the purification of the sweatlodge, repetitive monastic chanting, the frenzy of the whirling dervish, or the centuries-old practice of Zen meditation are just some of the archaic forms of experiencing nonspace. In ancient times these events -- moments we might now describe as 'zoning out' -- often connoted special occasions, holy ceremonies, and rites of passage imbued with extreme spiritual importance and cosmological significance. In contemporary times, the

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<sup>5</sup> Stephen Luecking, "Almost There: Sculpture in Virtual Space," *Sculpture* July-August (1994): 28-29.

experience of 'leaving reality' continues as a more pedestrian activity -- involving such mundane actions as driving the daily commute to and from work, watching TV, or shopping at the mall.<sup>6</sup>

This observation by Jason Greenberg is supported and reinforced by the writing of the artist Ahasiw Maskegon-Iskwew. According to Maskegon-Iskwew, virtual environments/reality are closely related to magic realism. Magic realism is used in this instance to describe a world of images linked by spirituality. According to Maskegon-Iskwew, "For tribal peoples, magic realism is the predominant theory of media art, especially time-based interactive work. . . . Magic realism is that place where colonized cultures fight Eurocentric language oppression with that same set of etymologies."<sup>7</sup> Virtual reality sanctions a new mode of expression: the expression of magic realism as a cultural force that can accommodate the exhibition of visions. However, according to Maskegon-Iskwew,

Cultures out of which magic realism arises are excluded from the sphere of virtual reality by its economics and its ownership by an inaccessible, developed world, academically focused hierarchy. The forces of academia may be the most culpable agent in this since they hold the reins of critical discourses that have failed and refused to recognize the crucial relevance of magic realism theory and practice to the most obvious parameters of virtual reality, never mind the more subtle potentialities.<sup>8</sup>

The association between the ideology of virtual reality/new technology and First

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<sup>6</sup> Jason Greenberg, "The Value of Going Nowhere: A Tale of Virtual Existence," *New Art Examiner* 24:1 (1996): 26.

<sup>7</sup> Ahasiw Maskegon-Iskwew, "Nehiyawewin and Virtual Reality," *Actes/Proceedings: 6th International Symposium on Electronic Art* (Montreal: ISEA '95, 1995) 186.

<sup>8</sup> Maskegon-Iskwew 186.

Nations cultures deeply imbedded within Shamanism<sup>9</sup> is the sensorial experience. The medium of virtual environments/reality provides an individual the opportunity to create a sensorial experience of her/his mindscape.

The creation of virtual reality, also known as a meta-medium of virtual environments, provided Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun with an opportunity to develop his ideas outside the practice of his established landscape painting and to deconstruct a stereotype fashioned by non-Natives. His involvement with virtual environments began in 1991 when Yuxweluptun took on the position of artist-in-residence at the Banff Centre for the Arts for an innovative ten-week *Bioapparatus* programme<sup>10</sup>. The intention of the *Bioapparatus* residency was "to expand the discourse around technology and culture"<sup>11</sup> through the bringing together of a multidisciplinary group. The residency was further intended to generate a liberal interdisciplinary discussion about the relevance of various technological art practices within social fields. In formulating the residency, the organizers from the Banff Centre for the Arts considered the definition of virtual environments to be a product of cultural, social and political practices that are already

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<sup>9</sup> The term *shamanism* is understood in this thesis as a religious spiritual phenomenon wherein the Shaman enters a trance during which the Shaman's soul takes the form of an animal helping-spirit and is believed to leave the body and descend to the underworld or ascend to the sky.

<sup>10</sup> The term *bioapparatus* was coined specifically for the residency program and it combines an understanding of particular philosophies of technology with theories about the technological apparatus, the technologized body, and the new biology.

<sup>11</sup> Catherine Richards and Nell Tenhaaf, *Virtual Seminar on the Bioapparatus* (Banff: Banff Centre for the Arts, 1991) 5.

firmly in place.<sup>12</sup>

In relation to the main premise of the ten-week residency Catherine Richards and Nell Tenhaaf organized a concurrent two-day seminar. The seminar -- which took place October 28 and 29, 1991 -- examined additional issues which were introduced, such as: a) the idea of machines as essentially social assemblages, b) the tool as a political site for shifts in the mediascape and its definition (the military, the American "world culture" and its media, the drug cowboys, medicine), c) the fictions of science and the science of fiction, d) "man"/machine interaction, cyborgs, boundary degeneration, and e) artists' definitions of machines: futurism, bachelor machines.<sup>13</sup> Also, the 58 participants<sup>14</sup> of the two-day seminar, along with the 21 artists and writers from the ten-week Art Studio and Media Arts residency, dealt with ten separate issues which derived from these five topics. The ten panels were as follows: 1) Natural Artifice: Is there any kind of defensible dualism between the concepts of natural and artificial? 2) Designing the Social: The social impact of technology is mediated by cultural difference. 3) Re-embodiment: Perception of the body is always mediated, yet there is also always something ineffable about it. 4) Perfect Bodies: Technology is used to enhance bodies and it is also complicit in creating notions of what the body should be. 5) Subjectivities: How are identity and sense of self shaped by the interrelationship between the body and technology? 6) Art

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<sup>12</sup> Richards and Tenhaaf 7.

<sup>13</sup> Richards and Tenhaaf 11.

<sup>14</sup> Some of the participants were; Char Davies, Jean-François Lyotard, David Tomas, Jack Butler, Kim Sawchuk, He Gong, and Derrick de Kerckhove.

**Machines:** Artists have been fascinated by machines for centuries. 7) **Cyborg Fictions:** Mythical and fictional elements are involved in the analysis of technology. 8) **Art in the Virtual:** What form will art practices take in the domain of virtual technology? 9) **Aural/Visual Space:** Spectator or viewer location can be examined in terms of perceptual space. 10) **The *Real* Interface:** The construction of human/machine interaction is shaped by preconceptions of reality.

One of the ideas that derived from these panels was that technology develops within existing frameworks which specify what counts as valid knowledge and how it can be obtained. The framework is in place long before the will or the resources are directed towards making a specific instrument: relational models are crystallized into technological objects. Creating a virtual environment provides the artist with an opportunity to manoeuvre subtly within existing cultural constraints. Thus, this medium of new technology can delude viewers into believing that what they are experiencing is a "replica" of real life. The *Bioapparatus* residency concluded that technology is not neutral but is imbedded in social and cultural contexts.

This position on technology in general underlies an approach to specific technologies such as virtual environment technology. Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun, as an artist involved with the residency, would probably have found it difficult to ignore the issues that derived from the conference. In a written statement the co-ordinators of the *Bioapparatus* seminar introduce the possibilities that exist within virtual environments. They write, "As our most recent form of representational technology, it raises questions about the construction of self (or subjectivity). It also challenges traditional thinking that

relies on a distinction between subject and object as it functions directly with the body's multi-sensory physiological thresholds."<sup>15</sup>

The expansion of the discourses around technology and culture, as well as the inclusion of multi-disciplinary issues, led the *Bioapparatus* residency programme into a longer-term project entitled *Art and Virtual Environments*, which began in 1992. It is interesting to consider that

the virtual environment sucks in its users with a power unlike any other medium -- unless we include under media the religious rituals and sacred dramas that once gave art works their context. The fascination of virtual environments recalls the linguistic root of the word 'fascination', which comes from the Latin (*fascinari*) and which refers to someone's gaze being drawn repeatedly toward the dancing flames of a fire.<sup>16</sup>

Perhaps like a Sxwaixwe Dancer being drawn to the fire and summoned to dance, this residency *Art and Virtual Environments* programme provided the ideal atmosphere for Yuxweluptun's project.

The concerns investigated by the *Bioapparatus* project were applied alongside the directed emphasis to an artistic use of virtual reality in the *Art and Virtual Environments* programme. Through this intense two-year programme, many possibilities arose for the artists and theorists involved in virtual environments. The programme began in March 1992 and by the end in March 1994 nine major virtual environments had been created. As a consequence of this laborious experience, the relationship of the viewer to the

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<sup>15</sup> Richards and Tenhaaf 7-8.

<sup>16</sup> Michael Heim, "The Design of Virtual Reality," *Cyberspace/Cyberbodies/Cyberpunk: Cultures of Technological Embodiment*, eds. Mike Featherstone and Roger Burrows (London: SAGE Publications, 1995) 68.

virtual environment work became a challenge and possibly the most important factor investigated by the artists and theoreticians involved.<sup>17</sup> A case in point: Mary Anne Moser -- the editor of the accompanying text *Immersed in Technology: Art and Virtual Environments* -- writes, "What is the artist's role precisely and how do aesthetic features of cyberspace relate to the viewer's experience and conception of the work? Who has access to the technology and how will they apply their power?"<sup>18</sup> In other words, the construction of the virtual environment and the positioning of the viewer in that environment creates a new relationship never before explored.

Accordingly, the technical features such as the physical aspect and the use of software by the artist created a new relationship between the active viewers/participants<sup>19</sup> and the virtual environment in Yuxweluptun's *Inherent Rights, Vision Rights*. With regard to this investigation, project participants conceived of the idea that as virtual technologies and applications develop, there will be a need to move beyond purely technical considerations. This move will include an active examination and adaptation to

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<sup>17</sup> The artists involved were: Will Bauer and Steve Gibson, Toni Dove and Michael Mackenzie, Diane J. Gromala and Yacov Sharir, Perry Hoberman, Ron Kuivila, Brenda Laurel and Rachel Strickland, Michael Naimark, Marcos Novak, Michael Scroggins and Stewart Dickson, and Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun. The theoreticians involved were: N. Katherine Hayles, Cameron Bailey, Nell Tenhaaf, Frances Dyson, Allucquère Rosanne Stone, Avital Ronell, Rob Milthorp, Jeanne Randolph, Loretta Todd, Margaret Morse, and Erkki Huhmato.

<sup>18</sup> Mary Anne Moser and Douglas MacLeod, "Preface," *Immersed In Technology: Art and Virtual Environments*, eds. Mary Anne Moser and Douglas MacLeod (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996) xxiv.

<sup>19</sup> *Active participant* is used in this paper to describe a viewer who requires physical action to enter Yuxweluptun's virtual environment. The physical action of pressing buttons and moving joysticks, as well as the sensory awareness of physical action within the virtual space contributes to the active participants awareness of entering cyberspace.

the changing nature of a contemporary technological art practice.<sup>20</sup>

In order to fully understand the complexity involved in the construction of a virtual environment, I will provide a synopsis of the technical aspects involved in this activity. This consideration is important due to the level of difficulty in creating a virtual environment five years ago.<sup>21</sup> Yuxweluptun needed a nine-person crew including a research analyst, a sound designer, a computer support specialist, and a technical support person.<sup>22</sup> However, Yuxweluptun retained artistic authorship by conceiving, directing and designing the virtual environment work.

The finished work consists of a plexiglass case over a computer terminal -- which houses an IBM 486 computer and a MacIntosh IIfx computer -- and an eye piece (which is called a "helmet" in computer programmers' jargon) which looks towards two Sony monitors. The work also consists of headphones, and two wooden stands with coloured push buttons with a joystick (figure 4). The combination of the physical technological components appears uninviting to the viewer -- as opposed to Yuxweluptun's large painted works.<sup>23</sup> However, the physical appearance of the work is not the significant

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<sup>20</sup> Moser and MacLeod xiii.

<sup>21</sup> As the medium of virtual environment becomes more advanced, many of the different approaches that have been developed will be ignored, abandoned, or forgotten.

<sup>22</sup> The production crew consisted of: John Harrison, Dorota Blaszcak, Douglas MacLeod, Douglas Smith, Raonull Conover, and Cathy McGuinness, from the Computer Applications Research Program; Mimmo Maiolo from the Walter Phillips Gallery at the Banff Centre for the Arts; and Chris Seignitz from Technical Services.

<sup>23</sup> It is important to note that in some of the installations and exhibitions of this work an audience viewing monitor was also provided. Therefore, the audience would be able to observe what the active participant is experiencing in cyberspace.



component of his construction of a virtual environment; the crucial formulation begins once the viewer is immersed in Yuxweluptun's virtual longhouse located in cyberspace, and becomes an active participant.

In order for the immersion in cyberspace to occur, the artist and his production crew also needed the assistance of software, in this case WorldToolKit from the Sense8 Company. The process consisted of scanning an image into the computer, applying WorldToolKit software and loading it into a Action Media DVI<sup>24</sup> graphic board from Intel. Next, Yuxweluptun (with the technical assistance of a programmer) reshaped the digital image into real three-dimensional space. With Yuxweluptun's piece, each element of the final image had to be scanned and then stored in the Action Media DVI graphic board. It seems Yuxweluptun was intent on not having an established path which was to be followed, so he created and scanned many images in order to accommodate many different viewers as virtual travellers voyaging through his longhouse. It should be noted that any final image is only - to use a cinematic term - one frame of his entire work.

When the visual images were complete, Yuxweluptun created the three-dimensional soundscape with the assistance of a sound technician. This process required a MacIntoshIIx computer with AudioMedia Board with a FocalPoint Chio and a Yamaha mixing board.

The physical aspect of Yuxweluptun's *Inherent Rights, Vision Rights* in a gallery space is evident, but not as important as the content of the experience in cyberspace. The

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<sup>24</sup> DVI is a commercial product name.

environment he created is a Northwest Coast longhouse set in a Canadian landscape during the night and hosting a Coast Salish secret society ceremony. *Inherent Rights, Vision Rights* is a manifestation of Yuxweluptun's aim to produce art which communicates his history to people outside the Coast Salish culture. He has said that he approached his piece from the "aspect of fear others have of Native people not understanding our spirit world."<sup>25</sup> The spirit world that Yuxweluptun speaks of is that of the Coast Salish secret society. Healing rituals and sacred masked dancing are part of the society. Yuxweluptun has shown that he is reluctant to even talk about these ceremonies, apart from saying that he has twice been cured of negative visions by a medicine man, from whom he has sought counselling to replace his negative thoughts with positive thinking.<sup>26</sup> However, in contradiction to the secret aspect of these societies Yuxweluptun "presents" a ceremony from the secret society for non-Native people to grasp. In *Inherent Rights, Vision Rights*,

Yuxweluptun depends on the spirit dancing of the Coast Salish, which he has *transmogrified*, partly *disguised*, *blurring* its translatability in order to protect its secrets, and partly heralded with some pride as being as good a subject as any and better than most for technological transfer.<sup>27</sup>

In other words, if Yuxweluptun did not state his intention for the work would the viewer understand what she/he is witnessing? Why does Yuxweluptun choose this subject

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<sup>25</sup> Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun, "Inherent Rights, Vision Rights," Moser and MacLeod 316.

<sup>26</sup> Laurence "Man of Masks" 55.

<sup>27</sup> Charlotte Townsend-Gault, "Translation or Perversion: Showing First Nations Art in Canada" 98. The italics are my emphasis.

matter? Is the "*transmogrifying, disguising, and blurring*" due to the early creation of virtual environments (figure 5)?

At the age of fourteen the artist was initiated into the Sxwaixwe<sup>28</sup> Secret Society of the Coast Salish, where he was honoured with the name Yuxweluptun - which translates into "Man of Masks" or "Man of Many Masks." Also, Yuxweluptun has been regularly taking part in the Blackface dance rituals for the last twenty years. According to Yuxweluptun, "I created *Inherent Rights, Vision Rights* to show people what is happening to me spiritually."<sup>29</sup> In the virtual environment the Sxwaixwe Secret Society longhouse is a created space which doesn't exist until it is experienced by the participant (figure 6).

Yuxweluptun states:

I use it to show a religious concept, to physically bring people into contact with a Native worshipping aspect of life, praying Indians - a way to bring others close to my heart so they can understand my belief system. What it is like being in a possessed state feeling rhythmic sounds in a longhouse, feeling sounds go through one's own self, feeling a spirit inside you.<sup>30</sup>

In response to Yuxweluptun's intention for the work "to show people what is happening spiritually," Loretta Todd writes:

Yuxweluptun does not want you to forget your body. Your identity is as intact here as it might be in the material world. Even as you glimpse how Yuxweluptun prays, in the longhouse with the spirit world present, you do not become Yuxweluptun nor a persona he has created through narrative.

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<sup>28</sup> According to Coast Salish mythology beliefs, *Sxwaixwe* is a supernatural being who descended from the sky to dwell at the bottom of a deep lake.

<sup>29</sup> Ken Pimental and Kevin Teixeira, *Virtual Reality: Through the New Looking Glass* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1993) 234.

<sup>30</sup> Yuxweluptun "Inherent Rights, Vision Rights" 316.

**You are yourself, and must own your feelings and your experience.<sup>31</sup>**

To experience Yuxweluptun's environment and enter cyberspace, the active participant must physically approach the work, place both hands on the wooden stands, and gaze through the helmet while wearing the headphones. As the active participant stands awkwardly at first, two coloured buttons allow her/him to "walk" forward or backward through the landscape. The joystick allows them to change direction from right to left, while also having the option to look up and down as they move. As the active participant experiences Yuxweluptun's virtual environment, she/he is unaware that the piece is actually two tiny video monitors pressed up against her/his eyes and displaying low-resolution electronically simulated colour images enhanced with sound through the earphones. This provides the viewer with the opportunity to take a walk though Yuxweluptun's landscape. The result is that the active participant feels effectively positioned inside this manifestation, rather than standing awkwardly before the two video monitors (figure 7).

Yuxweluptun's images can also be comforting in their embrace of Native spirituality and a transformative or ecstatic relationship to nature. It is tempting to see a parallel in the transformations between figure and land in his large painted landscapes, and dancer and viewer in his virtual environment, *Inherent Rights*, *Vision Rights* (which allows the viewer/participant to 'be' among the dancers around the fire in a longhouse). As a

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<sup>31</sup> Loretta Todd, "Aboriginal Narrative in Cyberspace," Moser and MacLeod 191.

comment on virtual environments and his cultural identity, Yuxweluptun states,

In our culture you do not have all these fibre optic things and it is quite an interesting mask that virtual reality has produced. I come from a tradition that was passed down in the West Coast. At the age of fourteen, I was given a mask and it had responsibilities that go with the culture. As the carriers of the mask, we took responsibility for all the people who were in this room to dance. We wanted to cleanse the floor, to protect them from this point of season to the end of the season -- I do not consider it magic, but I think the energy that we give to other people was quite an interesting position. I think I have seen a modern example of technology. In the longhouse, somebody built a fan under the ground and sent a tube to the fires we would have going. It was our longhouse and so we would have these other communities coming around, and we would get to standing beside that fire and the dancers would be dancing, then we would have our fire maker go over to that switch with electricity and turn it on, and poof! You have never seen so many dancers jump back. We had fun with this technology for a long time. We wanted to see what kind of response we would get. It is a different culture though. There are no cameras allowed in the longhouse, no film, no tape recording allowed. All those things have been changed. Modern technological changes were chosen by natives; these changes slowly integrated technological culture into the human culture in the longhouse. You adapt to it, you use it to a benefit in cross-cultural exchange, but still not everybody gets to go in the longhouses. It is still clear. I have only seen maybe half a dozen non-natives in there so far in my lifetime and I have been in there most of my life. It is different -- how you experience things in life.<sup>32</sup>

The personal history of Yuxweluptun -- including the influence of Western art -- have affected the production of his virtual environment. New technology and art have only been recognized as a discussion within the last thirty years, in which time advances in technology have also been astounding. Yuxweluptun's participation in two important colloquia at the Banff Centre for the Arts provided him with the methods and extensive possibilities to create a sensorial virtual experience for the active participant.

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<sup>32</sup> Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun, "Open Discussion - Day Two," *Virtual Seminar on the Bioapparatus*, eds. Catherine Richards and Nell Tenhaaf (Banff: Banff Centre for the Arts, 1991)110-111.

However, as a positive consequence, one of the critical issues that surrounds an artist's use of virtual environments is contradiction. The virtual environment is dependent on the interaction and participation of the viewer; however, the subjective identity of the viewer may be affected through the artist's control of the viewer's gaze: "the reality engine generates virtual worlds even when we think they are real. Who can be sure whether she is wearing goggles of a hidden simulator? Cultural programs, after all, code perception and cognition every bit as much as computer programs."<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Mark C. Taylor and Esa Saarinen, *Imagologies: Media Philosophy* (London: Routledge Press, 1994) virtuality 2.

## CHAPTER TWO

### A Cyberspace Sensorium: *The Total Work of Art*

In this chapter *Inherent Rights*, *Vision Rights* will be discussed within the framework of Gesamtkunstwerk, as well as of the ideas that surround the notion of interactive art. My intention is to consider the multivalency of the terms "virtual environment" and "cyberspace" in order to understand *Inherent Rights*, *Vision Rights* as a total work of art.

The creation of virtual reality programmes and the desire to create interactive artworks are really not that distant from the canon of art history. Historically, many artists have wanted the viewer to experience a work of art in a spiritual/religious way or as sensorial aesthetic enlightenment. Contemporary art and new technology aspire to the same ideals. For example:

Virtual reality creates a phantasmagoria whose precursors are not only radio, television and video but extend as far back as nineteenth-century magic lanterns, panoramas and dioramas. When wearing goggles and wrapped in a body glove, the world becomes a *gesamtkunstwerk* in which the distinction between reality and illusion dissolves.<sup>1</sup>

The production of virtual environments may finally present artists with the potential to create and share entire worlds which could previously have existed only within their own mindscapes.

With the introduction of the art historical notion of a total work of art, my intention is to connect the artistic practice of virtual environments to the discourse of art

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<sup>1</sup> Mark C. Taylor and Esa Saarinen, *Imagologies: Media Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 1994) virtuality 3.

history, through a discussion of Gesamtkunstwerk. Gesamtkunstwerk (projects in which several art forms are combined to achieve a unified effect) has been used to describe Gothic architecture, art creation during the Baroque period, Symbolist and Post-Impressionist ideas, the Bauhaus, and other twentieth-century art phenomena. The prevalent definition is an attempt to fuse different art forms into one work of art and to produce an alternative reality which would provide the spectator with an experience of aesthetic transcendence.<sup>2</sup> Richard Wagner's (1818-83) theatrical integrations of drama, music and spectacle are considered examples of Gesamtkunstwerk's expression of a complete or total artwork. The term was first used by Wagner in 1849 to "describe his concept of a work of art for the stage, based on the ideal of ancient Greek tragedy, to which all the individual arts would contribute under the direction of a single creative mind in order to express one overriding idea."<sup>3</sup> The three essential elements of Gesamtkunstwerk are: an admiration of craftsmanship, a hierarchical approach to the creation of meaning, and a metaphysics of structure as a multifaceted but closed totality.<sup>4</sup> The first element deals with the appreciation for the technical aspects of the work. Next, "a hierarchical approach to the creation of meaning" is understood as the desire to create a unique aesthetic experience. The third element draws in the requirement to surpass traditional art forms and encompass multi-media.

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<sup>2</sup> Jane Turner, "Gesamtkunstwerk," The Dictionary of Art ed. Jane Turner (London: Macmillan Publishers Ltd., 1996) 498.

<sup>3</sup> Turner 496.

<sup>4</sup> Helmut Draxler, "The Apollonian Moment: The Art of Günther Förg," The Print Collector's Newsletter 20:3 (1989): 85.



Before Wagner began documenting and applying his new-found philosophy, Philip Otto Runge<sup>5</sup> -- poet, painter, and art theorist -- believed that the future school of art must be a "connection between mathematics, music and colour" permeated with religious significance.<sup>6</sup> Runge also stated that the future school of art must combine all the various artistic 'sciences' with the study of general science and ideology in a unilateral approach to a pedagogy of art whose final goal is the creation of a total work of art.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, Runge stated that it can be illustrated "how a master with several friends and students could bring to light beautiful things if they united their studies as architects, sculptors, and painters."<sup>8</sup>

Gesamtkunstwerk was Wagner's idea of re-connecting the perfect trinity of poetry, music and philosophy. The result would be to create art which would teach a moral lesson by which civilization could live.<sup>9</sup> Richard Wagner alluded to Gesamtkunstwerk as a cultural aggregate within the artistic scaffold of musical drama: "It is to evolve from the 'inner necessity of nature'. It is to encompass all the creative and performing arts in the multimedia synthesis. It is to grow out of, exist in, and serve man

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<sup>5</sup> Philip Otto Runge (1777-1810) is a German Romanticist.

<sup>6</sup> Rudolf Bisanz, German Romanticism and Philipp Otto Runge, A Study In Nineteenth-Century Art Theory and Iconography (Dekalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1970) 39.

<sup>7</sup> Bisanz 75.

<sup>8</sup> Philipp Otto Runge. Hinterlassene Schriften (Hamburg: Perthes, 1840-1841) I, 158.

<sup>9</sup> Yolanda Liepa, "Gesamtkunstwerk," online  
<http://www.iacta.com/yolanda/gesamtkunst.htm> (10 23 1996)

in the totality of his physical and psychic environment."<sup>10</sup> As an example of the intent to go beyond the painted work of art, Wagner stated:

[T]hat which it reaches out for in honest effort, it accomplishes most perfectly only when it transfers its colour and its understanding of arrangement onto the living sculpture of the real dramatic performer; when it descends from canvas and plaster down to the tragic stage in order there to let the artist carry out on himself that which it has in vain sought to accomplish by amassing the richest means that lack real life.<sup>11</sup>

Wagner suggested that the ideal to this accomplishment would be anthropomorphic "landscape painting as the last and most perfect conclusion of all the visual arts, [it] will become the true soul of architectural and of dramatic staging."<sup>12</sup> In this century, the creation of cinema -- "not only its role of providing a seamless fusion of the visual and aural arts -- but also by providing for the spectator's complete emotional involvement"<sup>13</sup>-- may also be considered a form of Gesamtkunstwerk.

The desire to create Gesamtkunstwerk in the Romantic era is analogous to the motivation to produce present-day virtual environments. Virtual environments can be understood as representative of "an entirely new and unexplored universe for creation. It's an art form in which shape, space, and time can be bent, and in which viewers can participate."<sup>14</sup> Additionally, two underlying issues which consistently emerge in

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<sup>10</sup> Rudolf M. Bisanz, "The Romantic synthesis of the arts: nineteenth-century German theories on a universal art," *Konsthistorisk tidskrift* (Stockholm: Årgång XLVI/1975) 41.

<sup>11</sup> Bisanz 43.

<sup>12</sup> Bisanz 43.

<sup>13</sup> Turner 498.

<sup>14</sup> Ken Pimentel and Kevin Teixeira, Virtual Reality: Through The New Looking Glass (New (continued...))

writings about virtual environments are simulation and constructed reality. As Carol Gigliotti has suggested: "Rather than viewing these two issues as relatively new, and only connected with current technology, it is more helpful for our purposes to understand the design of present virtual-reality technologies as habitual involvements with goals that have been sought for centuries."<sup>15</sup>

Twentieth-century originators of virtual environments belong to marginal subcultures like science fiction, cyberpunk, and computer hacker culture, as well as to dominant institutions including NASA, computer companies, and the military. Researchers coined the term "virtual reality," and then promoted virtual reality as a paradigm shift for computers, and even for the whole of society to expand their knowledge and existence. The shift, though, was not into empty terrain: it was into such existing fields as entertainment, art, architecture, design and medicine. Today, entertainment centres exist with the intent of providing the individual with a virtual experience playing "shoot-'em-up and beam-them-down" video games.

Theoreticians and producers of virtual reality positioned virtual environments as a natural and inevitable outgrowth of the past by making connections to familiar values, ideology and myth.<sup>16</sup> They emphasized its unique advantages over other technologies, but packaged it in familiar cultural wrappings. They then projected virtual environment's

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<sup>14</sup>(...continued)

York: Windcrest Books, 1993) 230.

<sup>15</sup> Carol Gigliotti, "Aesthetics of a Virtual World," *Leonardo* 28:4 (1995): 289.

<sup>16</sup> Chris Chesher, "Colonizing VR: 1984-1992," June 1997, online <http://dhalgren.english.washington.edu/~don/Colonizing.html>

development into a utopian future. This utopian future involves ideas surrounding virtual sex (also known as dildonics) and the final thought that society will exist entirely within virtual worlds, with each individual "plugged-in" directly through the body. The documentation on this subject covers an entire spectrum from a pseudo phenomenological "New Age" approach to a purely technical scientific "NASA" approach. The diversity in documentation concludes that many different positions may be applied to undertake the exploration into an artist's virtual environment.

In 1963, Hugo Gernsback (science fiction writer) first introduced the notion of a virtual reality, but it was not until 1968 that virtual reality was explored experimentally by Ivan Sutherland.<sup>17</sup> From their collaboration of ideas it is understood that "the technology of virtual reality stands at the edge of practicality and at the current limit of the effort to create a communication/communion medium that is both phenomenologically engulfing and yet all but invisible."<sup>18</sup> Sutherland as the technological explorer of the virtual environment published an academic paper entitled "A Head-Mounted Three Dimensional Display" while he was pursuing his doctoral degree at Harvard University. The intention of his head-mounted three-dimensional display was to "present the user with a perspective image which changes as he moves."<sup>19</sup> This three-dimensional display dealt with the concept that "the objects in computer-

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<sup>17</sup> Michael Benedikt, ed., Cyberspace: First Steps (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1991) 11.

<sup>18</sup> Benedikt 11.

<sup>19</sup> Ivan Sutherland, "A Head-Mounted Three Dimensional Display," Proceedings of the Joint Computer Conference 33 (1968): 757.

generated space would not just be visible; they would be tangible. . . . Using the ultimate display, such 'physical' objects could be picked up, dropped, thrown, even moulded."<sup>20</sup> He wanted a display that could "literally be the Wonderland in which Alice walked in."<sup>21</sup> Sutherland's concepts deal with a new mode of existence which is neither actual nor imaginary, but rather a method which has been termed "virtual."

Twenty-one years later, and after these "head-mounted displays" had been made, the following definition of virtual reality/virtual environment emerged: virtual reality is "a computer-generated, interactive, three-dimensional environment in which a person is immersed."<sup>22</sup> Virtual reality began to be understood as an entirely new and unexplored universe for creation.<sup>23</sup> Moving beyond the ideas developed by Sutherland in the 1960s, some of the concepts have been further researched to include the importance of the role of the viewer. A virtual environment can be simply understood as a helmet-mounted display system which requires a user to perform a particular task for immersion to occur. Jaron Lanier is a leading researcher in the metaphysical and technological concepts of virtual environments and founder of a company called VPL Research. Lanier describes virtual environment:

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<sup>20</sup> Benjamin Woolley, Virtual Worlds: A Journey In Hype And Hyperreality (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1992) 55.

<sup>21</sup> Sutherland 508.

<sup>22</sup> Steve Aukstakalnis, David Blatner, and Stephen F. Roth, eds., Silicon Mirage: The Art and Science of Virtual Reality (Berkeley: Peach Pit Press, 1992) 12.

<sup>23</sup> Pimentel and Teixeira 230.

It's very hard to describe if you haven't experienced it. But there is an experience when you are dreaming of all possibilities being there, that anything can happen, and it is just an open world where your mind is the only limitation. . . . The thing that I think is so exciting about virtual reality is that it gives us this freedom again. It gives us this sense of being able to be who we are without limitation, for our imagination to become objective and shared with other people.<sup>24</sup>

With this statement, Lanier raises two issues pertinent to Yuxweluptun's virtual environment: the experience of an active participant, and of an artist using a dynamic new technology. A fascinating aspect of this new relationship is that it exists solely in cyberspace.

Cyberspace exists by way of a virtual environment.

The key metaphor for cyberspace is 'being there,' where both the 'being' and the 'there' are user-controlled variables, and the primary principle is that of *minimal restriction*, that is, that it is not only desirable, but necessary to impose as few restrictions as possible on the definition of cyberspace, this in order to allow both ease of implementation and richness of experience. . . . Cyberspace is thus a user-driven, self-organizing system.<sup>25</sup>

Within cyberspace, the active participant and the artist possess the ability to control and create experiences together. For instance:

In cyberspace animism is not only possible, it is implicit in the requirement that all objects have a degree of self-determination, or are controlled by an Other. Thus a measure of empathy is required in order to comprehend the behaviour of the entities one encounters. To the extent that any object may act as a front for a real person, its motives will have to be considered.<sup>26</sup>

Michelle Kendrick describes cyberspace as the discursive site of ideological struggles

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<sup>24</sup> Woolley 14.

<sup>25</sup> Marcos Novak, "Liquid Architectures in Cyberspace," Benedikt 234.

<sup>26</sup> Novak 240.

which define the relationship between new technology and the subjectivity of the active participant.<sup>27</sup>

Unfortunately, wherever the term cyberspace appears, it becomes the subject of speculation and controversy, as the discourse considers its function and future.<sup>28</sup>

Michelle Kendrick writes,

Cyberspace does not exist as a coherent, technologically created spatial arena but as the discursive site of ideological struggles to define the relationship between technology and subjectivity. In this sense, it is *both* an imaginary projection of the idealized *telos* of technologically mediated existence *and* the latest instance of the technological interventions in human subjectivity that, I argue, always have structured definitions of the human. Cyberspace, therefore, is a cultural conjunction of fictions, projections, and anxieties that exemplify the ways in which technology intervenes in our subjectivity.<sup>29</sup>

As a repercussion of the initial construction of virtual environments creating an imitation of an "actual reality" with technology, the present creators of virtual environments create using the act of simulation, not imitation. In other words, the thought of duplication results in an alternative: virtual environments are imaginative concepts "that, in their difference from real reality, evoke play and discovery, instituting a new level of imagination."<sup>30</sup> Consequently, the artist creating a particular "reality" for an

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<sup>27</sup> Michelle Kendrick, "Cyberspace and the Technological Real," Virtual Realities and Their Discontents, ed. Robert Markley (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996) 143.

<sup>28</sup> This idea will be further developed in chapter three.

<sup>29</sup> Kendrick 143.

<sup>30</sup> Mark Poster, "Postmodern Virtualities," Cyberspace/Cyberbodies/Cyberpunk: Cultures of Technological Embodiment, eds. Mike Featherstone and Roger Burrows (London: SAGE Publications, 1995) 86.

active participant can alter the condition under which the understanding of the self is formed.<sup>31</sup>

The allure of this new technology for the artist is to accomplish a "total work of art" and the allure for the active participant is the fulfilment of "a profound human desire: to transcend the limitations of body, time and space; to escape language, to defeat metaphors of self and identity that alienate and isolate, that imprison mind in solipsistic systems."<sup>32</sup> With the accessibility of this multivalent medium -- virtual environments -- the human desire to fly, to reach out, to touch, and to connect, affects the expansion of consciousness through a dissemination of presence.<sup>33</sup>

Furthermore, it is important to realize that virtual environments are "landscapes" that exist entirely within the memory of a computer and, which cannot be accessed until an active participant decides to immerse her/himself. High-powered hard drives generate and maintain an illusion of being elsewhere by utilizing various specialized tools and software to simulate the different avenues of human sensory input. "With stereoviews, three-dimensional (3D) sound and some form of navigation, entire worlds can be created."<sup>34</sup> The computer programs, hard-drives, and accessories of the computers establish the actual "physical" essence for cyberspace.

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<sup>31</sup> Poster 86.

<sup>32</sup> Poster 86.

<sup>33</sup> Roy Ascott, "Connectivity: Art and Interactive Telecommunications," Editorial, *Leonardo* 24:2 (1991): 116.

<sup>34</sup> Mike Goslin and Jacquelyn Ford Marie, "Virtuopia: Emotional Experiences in Virtual Environments," *Leonardo* 29.2 (1996): 95-100.



Therefore, events happening within cyberspace must somehow be managed by the co-creators -- the artist and the active participant. Interestingly, the artist *seems* to have taken a "back seat" to the immersing of the virtual environment, but the role of the artist is not as subverted as theory may suggest. In fact, the artist acquires an unbelievable amount of control: the cyberspace programme is an inactive text that is read and interpreted by the computer, which simply defines the potential reactive behaviour of the active participant in cyberspace. Each rendition of the programme by the computer is dependent on the actions of the participant and the reactions of the artist, who has anticipated possible circumstances and so has created different relationships for each rendition in the programme; hence the semblance of a collaborative effect. Cyberspace is essentially dependent on the active participant and the objectives of the artist.

The artist can use cyberspace as either space for radical liberation of the self from the body or as a space that simply evokes assumptions and values taken from Western philosophical thought.<sup>35</sup> The objective also incorporates the notion that the environment must become "real" for an immersion to take place.<sup>36</sup>

Correspondingly, in Yuxweluptun's virtual environment *Inherent Rights, Vision Rights*, he has given such restrictions an ideological significance by superimposing strict rules of movement onto his 'Native' virtual world, thereby demarcating his own territory

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<sup>35</sup> Kendrick 143.

<sup>36</sup> Meredith Bricken, "Virtual Worlds: No Interface to Design," Benedikt 369.

from the non-Native (Western) territory of cyberspace.<sup>37</sup> Yuxweluptun's domination over the interactive viewer thus invokes an exploration into the interactivity of art works.

An immersive environment provides the tools for a total work of art. The role of the viewer is evident in a historical analysis of art, where it may be understood that virtual environments have surpassed the historical understanding of the viewer as the participant. Meanwhile, the interpretation of *active participant* is supported through the understanding of participation as "an involvement on both the contemplative (intellectual) and the behavioural level."<sup>38</sup> Interaction, then, deals with the artist trying to stimulate a "two-way interaction between his works and the spectator, a process that becomes possible only through the new technological devices that create a situation in which questions by the user/spectator are effectively answered by the art work itself."<sup>39</sup>

It is impossible to discuss interaction-based art without speaking of the body and the space within which it is integrated. As an example, Char Davies -- a virtual environment artist -- writes,

. . . the very experience of being spatially-enveloped depends on having a centre-of-being. And for us, as incarnate beings, this centre is the body. It is only through the body that we can transcend the body. My concerns with the body in immersive virtual space are not with its objective representation, . . . but rather how the immersant's body is subjectively-felt, how the immersent senses his or her own interior body as a centre-of-

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<sup>37</sup> Erkki Huhmato, "Williamson Gallery," University of Lapland. (June 1997) online <http://www.artcenter.edu/exhibit/williamson.html>: 5-6.

<sup>38</sup> Frank Popper, *Art of the Electronic Age* (New York: Thames and Hudson Ltd., 1993) 8.

<sup>39</sup> Popper 8.

being within immersive space.<sup>40</sup>

Consequently, interactive art functions as a kind of philosophical instrument, enabling the active participant to experience something familiar, but as if entering an alien territory. The "immersed" active participant is able to investigate the world from a dynamic perspective. Even with the responsibility of experiencing something imaginative, the active participant provides the meanings -- which are culturally and contextually located -- and, in a sense, creates the work at the moment of interaction.<sup>41</sup> Therefore the artist merely provides the basic ingredients, sets up the situation, and then goes un-noticed, but retains the position as "creator" of his "landscape".<sup>42</sup>

As mentioned earlier, the experience of the active participant in virtual space relies on the element that a virtual environment significantly extends the sensory address of extant media to provide an alternate and manipulable space. The goal in virtual environments is complete sensory immersion: absorption of the senses in an environment where the active participant can project and physically interact with digital three-dimensional artificial worlds with the entire body. Through a complete sensory immersion, the active viewer/participant exists simultaneously on two planes: while one's objective body remains in the real world, one is also projected into a computer terminal reality. The sensory experience of the entire body entering a constructed space

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<sup>40</sup> Char Davies, "OSMOSE: Notes On Being In Immersive Virtual Space," Proceedings: ISEA '95 Montréal (Montréal: International Symposium of Electronic Art, 1995) 54.

<sup>41</sup> Huhmato 3.

<sup>42</sup> Huhmato 3.

parallels the subjectification of identity in the active participant:<sup>43</sup>

The technological real, therefore, describes the inextricability of embodied identity and technology in the construction of working fictions of subjectivity . . . the rhetoric of cyberspace, which (re)defines subjectivity in relation to technology and, simultaneously, creates an imaginary space, behind the computer screen, that both exploits and denies the reality of the technological real, the multiple interventions that compose an always provisional and dialogic subjectivity.<sup>44</sup>

Interactive art, according to Erkki Huhtamo, "functions as a kind of philosophical instrument, enabling us to experience something familiar as if entering an alien territory, to investigate the world - and ourselves - from a fresh perspective."<sup>45</sup> Real interactivity is always related to the idea of the 'interpersonal', something happening between human beings. However, difficulty arises when deciding what the condition of the interactive viewer is. With virtual environments the physical component constitutes the interactivity, yet the immersion within cyberspace produces another condition. What identification is required for the active participant? Terms like user, participant, and viewer are dominant in the discourse on cyberspace. On the other hand, Meredith Bricken writes that the term "user" among software developers "refers to the generic person who, at the end of the programming and interface design process, receives a software application geared to

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<sup>43</sup> When an active participant enters cyberspace, their identity changes depending on which identity is needed to experience and travel through cyberspace. This shifting of identity depends on the objectives of the artist. This will be further developed in Chapter Three.

<sup>44</sup> Kendrick 145.

<sup>45</sup> Huhtamo 5-6.

average human functioning".<sup>46</sup> Also, "participants" are active agents. In cyberspace, software tools create an original application, and participants take part in the co-creation of an environment.<sup>47</sup> Thus the term "active participant" will be adopted to refer to the viewer. To understand this term from the point of view of the active participant, it will be beneficial to look at five documented real-time experiences of *Inherent Rights, Vision Rights*.

The first experience is very much influenced by visual imagery and sound: a complete body sensory experience has been restricted for this first active participant:

...The crescent moon is high in the Canadian night sky. You cross the green forest floor to the red walls of a spirit lodge. As you draw closer, you begin to hear the drum beat coming from within the lodge. A coyote howls in the distance. Passing through the open door, the drumming grows louder. There's a fire burning in the centre of the lodge. Smoke escapes through the hole in the roof. You can hear soft, hypnotic chanting in time to the drum, but no one is here, just the totem obelisks, great blocks standing tall along the red walls, traditional spirit paintings sketched in vibrant colours. You move down the long room under the watchful eyes of the totems. The music stays by the door. You pass the fire and the moon peeks in through the hole in the roof. You come up to the great eagle totem. It reaches over your head up to the roof, beak pointed at the moon. Suddenly the lodge shakes with the cry of an eagle. The drumming and chanting continue by the door.<sup>48</sup>

Meanwhile, the second participant experiences a total sensory feeling, for the sensation of movement is the active participant's main and possibly only impression. The

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<sup>46</sup> Bricken 367.

<sup>47</sup> Bricken 367.

<sup>48</sup> Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun, "Inherent Rights, Vision Rights," *Immersed in Technology: Art and Virtual Environments*, eds. Mary Anne Moser and Douglas MacLeod (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1995) 316.

second active participant states:

This is very embarrassing. I have just walked through the back wall of Lawrence Yuxweluptun's spirit lodge. Right through, in fact, one of Yuxweluptun's paintings, which adorn the back wall. And now, to make matters worse, I've taken a wrong turn. I'm dangling in the void under the spirit lodge. And I'll be damned if I know how to get back up. Play with the clutch, a few turns of the head and straight up . . . through the fire and . . . uh-oh, too far. Now I'm floating above the lodge - staring at the moon, which stares right back. If I turn my head, I can see the tops of the welcome figures posted outside the lodge and the brilliantly coloured paintings that stretch across the landscape. Let's try this again. Down . . . not too quickly . . . level out . . . straighten up and, there, back on the floor.<sup>49</sup>

The third experience is described in an expression of self-awareness and a full bodily experience. The participant's entrance into cyberspace is overt. Yet as a comparison with the other documentations, her experience is "after-the-fact," not in real-time. The third active participant writes:

Once inside, the viewer experiences time. The time of walking from the outside to the inside. The time of listening to a dog. The time of hearing the roar of the fire as the wood burns. Time passes. And there is space. There is a door to enter, to define the outside of the longhouse from the inside. There are four walls and a roof. The smoke rises upward to exit out the smoke hole . . . You hear your feet along the small pebbles on the ground.<sup>50</sup>

The fourth person appears to have had prior knowledge of what to expect, because the active participant is very much aware of all the senses that can be touched by a complete immersion into cyberspace. This active participant began with an exclamation, then a description of what happened. He writes:

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<sup>49</sup> Chris Dafoe, "The next best thing to Being There," *Globe and Mail* [Toronto] 5 September, 1992: C2.

<sup>50</sup> Loretta Todd, "Aboriginal Narrative in Cyberspace," Moser and MacLeod 191.

**"A bee just went by!" Starting the device, you find yourself on an eerie, featureless plane. It is night. Strange animal sounds fill the air and music can be heard in the distance. Far away a low building is visible, and this seems to be the source of the music. As you navigate toward the building the music increases in volume and tempo. Flies buzz around your head. The music reaches a crescendo as you enter the longhouse. Ceremonial fires burn within, their smoke rising up through holes in the ceiling. Arranged around the room are large reproductions of Lawrence's paintings as on dividers in an art gallery. Leaving the gallery you are free to roam around outside, where animal and spirit images float in the sky.<sup>51</sup>**

**The fifth experience is documented by Douglas MacLeod, the Program Director for the Art and Virtual Environments Project at the Banff Centre for the Arts:**

**But it was the hyperreal sound effects . . . that made Paul's piece come eerily to life. 'The first time I heard the sound, it scared the hell out me,' he recalls. 'As you enter the program, you hear a car grind to a stop. The door opens, and flies start to buzz around your head just as they do in Northern Canada. You press the forward button on the mouse and move between these two huge totems, accompanied by the sound of footsteps in gravel. Overhead you hear a flock of birds and one of those small, single-engine planes. Inside the spirit lodge, you encounter creatures from Northwest Coast mythology. There are faces in the fire and a series of drummers that resemble totemic images and another creature called the Sneak-Up Figure that jumps at you and then darts away. One of the creatures, a grizzly bear with a mouse in its stomach, moves across the back wall so that you hear the sound of a grizzly coming toward you and receding as it goes past."<sup>52</sup>**

**The five experiences above are all different from one another. They range in interest from the sensory experience of vision and sound, to a self-awareness and interest in movement. Also, a concern with the passing of time within a constructed space is a common element that links the five experiences together. The sight of someone**

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<sup>51</sup> "Cyberconf4 documentation," January 1997, online  
<http://www.yes.net/generality/Articles/4Cyberconf.html>

<sup>52</sup> Mark Dery, "Art Goes High Tech," *ARTnews* 92:2 (1993): 81-82.

experiencing a virtual environment is the ultimate image of solipsistic self-absorption, because their movements and gestures are meaningless to those left outside. Virtual environments deceptively liberate the active participants to believe that they can play the role of "creator" of the imaginative "landscape" within the artist's created universe. Meaning, the artist is providing a framework for the active participant. The framework of the imaginative landscape has been created from Yuxweluptun's positioning within a First Nation's experience: that is, the history and present-time of Native life in Canada.

An important observation of the five documented experiences is the sensory immersion. Through theory, sensory immersion has been understood to have broad ontological implications. First, virtual entities are not representations.<sup>53</sup> It is understood that they do not re-present. The objects in cyberspace do not 'present again' something that is already present somewhere else; in virtual environments, the images and objects are the realities of that environment. Through interaction with virtual objects, the active participant becomes an entity within the virtual environment -- a constructed self according to the artist's intentions.

As a supporting statement of the immersion of an active participant, Frances Dyson writes,

The involvement of the participant in negotiating the virtual world via physically manipulated equipment makes it almost impossible to conceive of virtual space as anything other than real. . . . the actuality of the viewer's or participant's body becomes the map upon which the 'embodiment' of virtuality is verified. Together with the simulation of space, simultaneity, and involvement, the appropriation of the body of the viewer/participant

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<sup>53</sup> Heim, "The Design of Virtual Reality," Featherstone and Burrows 70.



**makes invisible and irrelevant the facts of technological mediation -- the objectifying, decorporealizing logic of vested technology is repressed.<sup>54</sup>**

**Virtual environments are affecting and altering the meaning of collective memory, history, and the future. This colonization of interior life, a result of the machinery of the production of desire engendered by an economy driven by consumerism, is producing a new dimension in the understanding of the construction of identity. Cyberspace is recognized as a new reality where technology actively -- but cautiously -- intervenes in the subjectivity of the active participant precisely to enhance lived experience.<sup>55</sup>**

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<sup>54</sup> Frances Dyson, "In/Quest of Presence: Virtuality, Aurality, and Television's Gulf War," Critical Issues in Electronic Media, ed. Simon Penny (New York: State University New York Press, 1995) 33.

<sup>55</sup> Kendrick 146.

## CHAPTER THREE

### **Ethnography and the AlterNative Identity of a Tourist.**

Marian Bredin writes, "Ethnography falls into a discursive tradition of narratives of difference in which stories about other cultures are also stories of the writer/reader's own culture."<sup>1</sup> In other words,

The ethnographic text is thus made possible only by certain historical, political, and epistemological contexts. The study of indigenous media, with its often uncritical appropriation of ethnographic discourse, must be located in reference to the historical specificity of this discourse and to the 'practical politics' of colonization and domination. The historical experiences of culture contact and conflict between colonizing Europeans and the aboriginal population of North America shape the ways in which First Nations communities today have appropriated and developed the forms of mass media.<sup>2</sup>

The representation of the Other created by the ethnographer was re-projected onto the colonized through formal education. From an authoritative position of power the dominant culture provided an "identity" for the Other. This in turn was the basis for stereotypes. Yet this re-projection of the Other onto the Other is a concept that post-modern ethnography may choose to adopt. James Clifford suggests the allegorical and redemptive subtexts of ethnography are in fact its very "conditions of meaningfulness."<sup>3</sup>

According to Marian Bredin:

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<sup>1</sup> Marian Bredin, "Ethnography and Communication: Approaches to Aboriginal Media," Canadian Journal of Communication -- Crossing Borders: Issues In Native Communications. 18.3 (1993): 302.

<sup>2</sup> Bredin 298-99.

<sup>3</sup> James Clifford, The Predicament of Culture (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988) 99.

For women, indigenous people, and other minorities, self-reflection is, on the one hand, always demanded simply by their divergence from patriarchal and colonial norms. On the other hand it is a luxury they cannot always afford in their texts since, by virtue of their often marginal academic positions, they are constrained by those same unreflexive norms.<sup>4</sup>

With this academic burden in place even before Yuxweluptun began his virtual environment, he had to adopt the role of post-modern ethnographer. The role of ethnographer parallels Yuxweluptun's intent in his painted works, in which he documents Canadian history from a particular position, as has been described in Chapter One.

The intention of post-modern ethnography is "to evoke . . . an emergent fantasy of a possible world of common sense reality, and thus to provoke an aesthetic integration that will have a therapeutic effect."<sup>5</sup> Through his construction of an illusionistic reality, Yuxweluptun evokes a ceremony from the Coast Salish secret society for cyberspace tourists. Yuxweluptun is challenging theoretical modes of representation. He uses new technology as a strategy to recover lost traces of the Other.<sup>6</sup> As Yuxweluptun has stated, "I can advance my culture in any way that I choose."<sup>7</sup>

Clifford suggests that a method of ethnography which can deal with many issues is a method of ethnography that responds to the twentieth-century predicament of being

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<sup>4</sup> Bredin 302.

<sup>5</sup> Stephen Tyler, "Post-Modern Ethnography: From Document to Occult to Occult Document," *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, eds. James Clifford and George E. Marcus (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986) 125.

<sup>6</sup> Bredin 307.

<sup>7</sup> Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun. online  
<http://www-mitpress.mit.edu/Leonardo/gallery/gallery291/curator.html> (March 6, 1996)

in, being between, and looking at cultures all at once.<sup>8</sup> Accordingly, this trend toward postmodern ethnography also results in producing new approaches to the representation of culture and the expression of a cultural identity.<sup>9</sup> Identity politics are understood as the sense of identity offered by association with groups that have suffered oppression on the basis of gender, race, class, or sexual preference. The consolidation of postcolonial theory and identity theory challenge the conventional belief that identity is present in the conscious mind, and this contests and questions identity as an accessible piece of self knowledge. Identity -- in postcolonial theory -- is described as being in ceaseless transformation due to the search for an "illusion" of wholeness and selfhood that is ultimately unattainable.

Jonathan Rutherford postulates his understanding of the cultural politics of difference by associating his ideas with the classic film *Lawrence of Arabia*. I would like to suggest the replacement of the word "desert" with "cyberspace." He writes,

To the Western European eye, the desert seems an uncanny space, its borders marking out a margin between the habitable and the inhabitable. Yet despite its strangeness it holds a seductive fascination. . . . Here lies the desert as a cultural metaphor: in representing the margins of our culture and the knowledge and values that underpin it, it is also the place of their undoing. . . . In the hierarchical language of the West, what is alien represents otherness, the site of difference and the repository of our fears and anxieties. . . . where one term is always dominant and the other subordinate, that our identities are formed.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Clifford 9.

<sup>9</sup> Clifford 9.

<sup>10</sup> Jonathan Rutherford, "A Place Called Home: Identity and Cultural Politics of Difference," *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, ed. Jonathan Rutherford (London: Lawrence and (continued...)

Yuxweluptun's works are categorized by Canadian art critics and cultural theorists as "acid rock psychedelia," "neo Native art" and "Native surrealist art."<sup>11</sup> These "constructed" categories and fabricated "identities" are easy to adopt because of Yuxweluptun's obvious emphasis on the visual imagery of the Northwest Coast in his artwork.

Difference is directly and immediately perceived through superficial differences of the body and voice — skin colour, eye shape, hair texture, body shape, language. Historically, and possibly even currently, these superficial differences are read as permanent signs.<sup>12</sup> Unfortunately, this results in constructing the *Other* within the fantasies of the self. In 1963, Franz Fanon wrote, "Colonisation is not satisfied merely with holding a people in its grip and emptying the native's brain of all form and content. By a kind of perverted logic, it turns to the past of the oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures and destroys it."<sup>13</sup>

In a general way, the "feature" of the body is a central quality of postcolonial writing. The body stands metonymically for all the 'visible' signs of difference and their varied forms of cultural and social inscription. Forms of cultural and social inscription

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<sup>10</sup>(...continued)  
Wishart, 1990) 9-10.

<sup>11</sup> Robin Laurence, "Man of Masks: Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun's iconoclastic paintings blend tribal motifs with acid rock psychedelia," *Canadian Art* 12.1 (1995): 53.

<sup>12</sup> The construction of the *Other* derives from a comparison to the self. However, the historical construction of the *Other* has been compared to a general Eurocentric identity. See Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Random House, 1978).

<sup>13</sup> Frantz Fanon, "On National Culture," *Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 1963) 170.

are often either undervalued, over-determined or totally invisible to the dominant colonial discourse. Stuart Hall defines cultural identity as being "subject to the continuous play of history, culture, and power" and as being at "the points of identification, the unstable points of identification or suture, which are made, within the discourses of history and culture."<sup>14</sup> Jonathan Rutherford comments,

Identity marks the conjuncture of our past with the social, cultural and economic relations we live within. 'Each individual is the synthesis not only of existing relations but of the history of these relations. He is a précis of the past.' Making our identities can only be understood within the context of this articulation, in the intersection of our everyday lives with the economic and political relations of subordination and domination. There is no final deciding logic that masters and determines this complex structuring of identity.<sup>15</sup>

For Hall, "the term ethnicity acknowledges the place of history, language and culture in the construction of subjectivity and identity, as well as the fact that all discourse is placed, positioned, situated and all knowledge is contextual."<sup>16</sup> Hall argues that everyone is "ethnically located and our ethnic identities are crucial to our subjective sense of who we are."<sup>17</sup>

Jonathan Rutherford writes, "The cultural politics of difference recognize both the independent and relational nature of identities, their elements of incommensurability and

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<sup>14</sup> Stuart Hall, "Cultural Identity and Cinematic Representation," *Framework* 36 (1989): 71-72.

<sup>15</sup> Rutherford 19-20.

<sup>16</sup> Stuart Hall, "New Ethnicities," *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, eds. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin (London: Routledge, 1995) 226.

<sup>17</sup> Hall "New Ethnicities" 227.

their politics' right of autonomy."<sup>18</sup> Nevertheless, other theorists, like Etienne Balibar, believe that there are no real identities, only identifications. Balibar suggests that *identifications* are to institutions, or other subjects by the arbitration of the particular institution. Thus,

Is it not significant that the notion of cultural identity is invoked by predilection in conjunctures of conflict or *crisis*? Identity is never a peaceful acquisition: it is claimed as a guarantee against a threat of annihilation that can be figured by "another identity" (a foreign identity) or by an "erasing of identities (a depersonalization). . . . namely that every identity that is *proclaimed* (with fanfare or in secret) is elaborated as a function of the Other, in response to his desire, his power and his discourse (which already represents a power over desire)?<sup>19</sup>

Despite the complexity and intensity involved with identity theory, Yuxweluptun's position within the Coast Salish society of British Columbia allows for the implementation of a postcolonial identity theory, approach/positioning, in discussing and understanding his works. The importance of the active participant to Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun's artistic production is evident in his use of cyberspace. Ostensibly, this work is dependent on the active participant -- through a common understanding of social, political, and cultural problems in Canada -- or his motives would not be recognized. Yuxweluptun partially controls the active participant through a particular "constructed view" in *Inherent Rights, Vision Rights*. To understand his "constructed view" it is beneficial to discuss the complications which occur in his virtual environment regarding the uneasy divide between the self and Other.

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<sup>18</sup> Rutherford 10.

<sup>19</sup> Etienne Balibar, "Culture and Identity (Working Notes)," *The Identity in Question*, ed. John Rajchman (New York: Routledge Press, 1995) 186-187.

One of the first complex concerns which occurs in the work is that navigation through cyberspace gives the active participant a sense of freedom. However, "this freedom only exists in relation to the established structure; it is a representation of freedom, a symbolic freedom."<sup>20</sup> The active participants' imagination can allow them to generate a seemingly complete world based on the limited information provided by the artist. This particular contradiction is apparent in all virtual environments. It is undeniable that Yuxweluptun's spirit lodge is constructed so that the active participant must navigate exclusively in the artist's world. This virtual environment fosters the illusion that the active participant is witnessing a secret society in the cyberspace longhouse, and herein lies the contradiction. The artist's intention is to present a ceremony from his secret society, allowing people from outside his culture to participate in his spiritual state, and yet the active participants likely come from outside the Coast Salish community, and therefore -- lacking the necessary culture -- they are unable to fully experience the ceremony they witness. This is made clear through documented real-time experiences where, for example, there is no mention of observing Yuxweluptun praying -- one of Yuxweluptun's prime objectives for the active participants.<sup>21</sup>

Furthermore, one must question how Yuxweluptun can present his spirit lodge within a virtual environment while stating that the Sxwaixwe Coast Salish Society is secret and is only accessible through traditional initiation. What is Yuxweluptun evoking

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<sup>20</sup> David Rokeby, "Transforming Mirrors: Subjectivity and Control in Interactive Media," Critical Issues in Electronic Media ed. Simon Penny (Albany: State University New York Press, 1995) 141.

<sup>21</sup> See Chapter two for five documented *Inherent Rights*, *Vision Rights* experiences.



through his use of a virtual environment, knowing that the majority of the active participants will be non-Native? The active participant must, in all probability, adopt the role or *identity* of the "constructed tourist"<sup>22</sup> while immersed in Yuxweluptun's virtual environment, gaining only contrived knowledge of the secret society. It is possible, then, to replace the term "active participant" with the label "tourist."

Kenneth Little's writing on the safari as being a constructed staging for the tourist can be applied to Yuxweluptun's *Inherent Vision, Vision Rights*. Little writes:

... Constructed stagings are informed by the logic of the perspectival gaze ... the tourists do what they came to do - to look in safety and with authority and ... to have the experience of their lives. This paradigm of the gaze separates the gazing subject and the looked-upon objects rendering the first transcendental and the second inert ... Here looking is reduced to the 'positioned point of view' of the subject-observer gazing upon ... a framed and staged object. It is a model picture that tourists see.<sup>23</sup>

The staging in Yuxweluptun's case is an ethnographic re-creation of the secret Sxwaixwe Society's spiritual ceremony, produced specifically for the viewer/tourist who is outside the Coast Salish society. For the active participant to actually experience any aspect of this secret society is difficult.<sup>24</sup> The viewer is immersed in a construct of the

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<sup>22</sup> In this instance, I have used the term tourist in the same sense as Kenneth Little in "On Safari: The Visual Politics of a Tourist Representation," The Varieties of Sensory Experience: A Sourcebook in the Anthropology of the Senses, ed. David Howes (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991).

<sup>23</sup> Kenneth Little, "On Safari: The Visual Politics of a Tourist Representation," The Varieties of Sensory Experience: A Sourcebook in the Anthropology of the Senses, ed. David Howes (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991) 154.

<sup>24</sup> Kenneth Little states "to the observing eye of the tourist, surrounded by the display, but excluded from it by the status of visitor, the safari remains a mere representation, a carefully ordered picture of some further reality." 157.

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personal identities are created through the active participants as agents.<sup>26</sup> This is not to say that the artist is using new technology to determine the social or personal identity of the active participant in any systemic, final manner. Through virtual environments, Yuxweluptun is forcing the active participant to recognize the complexity and materiality of subjectivity and cultural identity; but only through examining such complexity can specific sites of construction be understood.<sup>27</sup>

The relationship of active participant and new technology develops in cyberspace as a "space/landscape". The difference between cyberspace and non-cyberspace is that in the former, desire is no longer totally grounded in physicality. According to Louise Dompierre, in cyberspace there are no longer any rules except those which the active participants, individually, wish to carry over into the new space in order to adopt the "mask" which the artist provides.<sup>28</sup> And, indeed, rules are imposed on the active participants by the choices Yuxweluptun made while programming his virtual environment. In this way, Yuxweluptun has created a particular identity to be adopted by the active participant. Yuxweluptun erases the body, to invoke both implicitly and explicitly a philosophical tradition that insistently devalues the material in order to create

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<sup>26</sup> Michelle Kendrick, "Cyberspace and the Technological Real," Virtual Realities and Their Discontents ed. Robert Markley (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996) 146.

<sup>27</sup> Kendrick 150-151.

<sup>28</sup> Louise Dompierre "Introduction: On Hold -- Between Seduction and Disbelief," Press/Enter: Between Seduction and Disbelief, ed. Louise Dompierre (Toronto: The Power Plant - Contemporary Art Gallery at Harbourfront Centre, 1995) 41.

an idealized phenomenological self.<sup>29</sup> The only method to achieve the non-physical -- erasing the body -- is to use cyberspace as an instrument that prevents or modifies a course of action in the mind and body of the active participant. Cyberspace treats the active participant in a vaguely "holistic" fashion, not in the localized and multivalent ways in which real life assaults.<sup>30</sup> The simulation of experiences happening in cyberspace can benefit the psyches of active participants and influence their actions in non-cyberspace. As Jason Greenberg writes,

cyberspace offers a proactive engagement with the real because it is a testing ground -- the ultimate projecting tool -- where a person can take risks, role play, experience fantasies, and even reveal difficult secrets in a safe environment that is removed from reality. These experiences will invest knowledge, help train, and influence how individuals act in reality. They can engage in virtual behaviours and interactions they would never do in the real world.<sup>31</sup>

The artist possesses the ability to create fantasies solely for entertainment or "ethical" and political purposes of the active participant or the artist. Yuxweluptun dismisses the entertainment purpose even though the majority of the active participants will experience his virtual environment for entertainment only. In assuming that the active participants will not be "knowledgable" in the discourse of cyberspace, Yuxweluptun believes that the relationship between virtual environment and active participant creates a utopia of democracy, where the active participant ignorantly accepts

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<sup>29</sup> Kendrick 150-151.

<sup>30</sup> Kendrick 146.

<sup>31</sup> Jason Greenberg, "The Value of Going Nowhere: A Tale of Virtual Existence," New Art Examiner 24:1 (1996) 27.

that his/her reconfigured relationship is a place where the mutability of subjectivity leads only to euphoria and excess.<sup>32</sup> To direct the active participant, Yuxweluptun has implied that he has attempted to reinscribe the myth of the active participants' coherent identity that existed outside and prior to the immersion in a virtual environment. In the article "Cyberspace and the Technological Real," Michelle Kendrick writes,

[T]he discourse of cyberspace suggests that humans control the technological interventions that are constantly (re)constructing our subjectivity. In this respect, cyberspace, in imagining a spaceless, timeless, and bodiless 'presence,' simultaneously rewrites and disrupts traditional notions of subjectivity, calling attention to the coherence of subjectivity as a fiction, yet offering itself as the actualizing of that fiction. This repressed recognition places cyberspace in a precarious position -- it is always undercutting the coherent subject of Western metaphysics that it assumes and reinscribes as its conceptual foundation.<sup>33</sup>

In *Inherent Rights, Vision Rights*, the viewer is actively involved. Active viewers are to believe that they are acquiring secret knowledge and witnessing Yuxweluptun praying. As described previously, however, Yuxweluptun is simultaneously sharing, withholding, and maintaining control over his environment. Additionally, by creating a virtual space that gives the appearance of realism yet is constructed as being similar to a safari, Yuxweluptun has adopted the role of a post-modern ethnographer.

Edward Said once designated an "imaginative geography and history" as one which helps "the mind to intensify its own sense of itself by dramatising the difference

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<sup>32</sup> Kendrick 146.

<sup>33</sup> Kendrick 146.

between what is close to it and what is far away."<sup>34</sup> As a consequence of understanding cyberspace as a discursive site of ideological struggles which contend to define the relationships between subjectivity and technology, it is advantageous to recognize the multiple ways that technologies intervene in our cultural identities.<sup>35</sup> As Michelle Kendrick states, " it is to recognize the subject as context-specific and to see subjectivity as created in an always interactive environment, in which whatever we experience as true, real, and fundamental is inseparable from the technologies through which we are continually reinscribed."<sup>36</sup>

Presently, artists possessing such agency are able to influence reality and the active participants through these actions in cyberspace. By creating spaces for new identities the artist can articulate a new conjuncture in the politics of race and gender. At the same time, however, it is important to realize that cultures and identities can never be wholly separate, homogeneous entities.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Random House, 1978) 55.

<sup>35</sup> Kendrick 160.

<sup>36</sup> Kendrick 160.

<sup>37</sup> Rutherford 26.

## CONCLUSION

My fascination with new technologies lies, in part, in their appearance to function invisibly, like unseen forces possessing miraculous and mysterious powers. My intention in this thesis was to explore these unseen forces, through Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun's 1991-92 virtual environment *Inherent Rights, Vision Rights*.

Central to my investigation were issues of identity. Frantz Fanon has written that difference and identification occur with the superficial differences of the body and voice. At present, the potential to create a parallel world existing in cyberspace increasingly relies upon an ability to transform the "body" through reflexive self-identity.<sup>1</sup> Katherine Hayles writes that, "subjectivity is dispersed throughout the cybernetic circuit . . . the boundaries of self are defined less by the skin than by the response loops connecting body and simulation in a techno-bio-integrated circuit."<sup>2</sup> The embodied subjectivity in cyberspace takes on infinite possibilities, because constraints on the physical body and horizons of the flesh can be expanded.<sup>3</sup> "Despite the persistence of embodied physiognomies and notions of the 'true self' in contemporary social life, there is some evidence to suggest that the new technology is opening up the possibility of radically new disembodied subjectivities."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Mike Featherstone and Roger Burrows, "Cultures of Technological Embodiment: An introduction," *Cyberspace/Cyberbodies/Cyberpunk: Cultures of Technological Embodiment* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications Inc., 1995) 12.

<sup>2</sup> Katherine Hayles, "Virtual Bodies and Flickering Signifiers," *October* 66 (1993): 72.

<sup>3</sup> Featherstone and Burrows 12.

<sup>4</sup> Featherstone and Burrows 12.

George Legrady suggests that technologies:

... help us to shape the way we see, and, in the end, determine how we see. These inventions have resulted from choices framed by cultural beliefs to arrive at a particular view of the world that represents not the totality of human experience but a view locked within the limits of a fluctuating history.<sup>5</sup>

I have argued for a reading of *Inherent Rights, Vision Rights* which takes into account Yuxweluptun's right to self-representation. If, as Legrady suggests, new technology such as virtual reality helps us to shape the way we see, as well as determine the limits of our experience and understanding, then Yuxweluptun has the agency to bring about change in society. While it needs to be acknowledged that each immersion in cyberspace is unique and limited by the active participant's cultural formation, I believe that *Inherent Rights, Vision Rights* has the possibility of altering, challenging, and in some way affecting the active participant.

Other issues that need to be explored more fully, which I can only introduce at this time, are beyond the structure of this thesis. With regard to his work *Inherent Rights, Vision Rights*, it was written of Yuxweluptun: "Beyond borrowing from the traditional Western art forms, he positions himself at the very heart of white civilization by the appropriation of one of its essential features, its technology. And within this technology, virtual reality, one of its most recent developments."<sup>6</sup> Alongside Yuxweluptun's

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<sup>5</sup> George Legrady, "Image, Language, and Belief in Synthesis," *Critical Issues in Electronic Media*, ed. Simon Penny (New York: State University of New York Press, 1995) 187.

<sup>6</sup> Walter Phillips Gallery Press Release, "*Inherent Rights, Vision Rights* by Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun Produced by The Banff Centre for the Arts," Walter Phillips Gallery (Banff: The Banff Centre for the Arts, November 25, 1996) 1.



"appropriation" of new technology, he as Coast Salish is also confronted with the predicament of adopting Northwest Coast imagery.

Traditional imagery from the Northwest Coast is commonly "owned" by particular families and communities:

Ownership was bound up with history. Communities, families, individuals, and nations created songs, dances, rituals, objects and stories that were considered to be property, but not property as understood by the Europeans . . . History and stories belonged to the originator and could be given or shared with others as a way of preserving, extending and witnessing history and of expressing one's world view.<sup>7</sup>

While the incorporation of traditional formalist Northwest Coast elements in his large artworks is necessarily fabricated -- as are all works of art -- I am suggesting that Yuxweluptun's technique results in making his artwork more appealing to a non-Native audience. I believe that he is appropriating this familiar element of "Indianness" to ensure his meaning is perceived. Loretta Todd suggests that:

Appropriation occurs when someone else speaks for, tells, defines, describes, represents, uses or recruits the images, stories, experience dreams of others for their own. Appropriation also occurs when someone else becomes the expert on your experience and is deemed more knowledgeable about who you are than yourself.<sup>8</sup>

The practice of re-appropriation positions Yuxweluptun as a producer of revised history and an interpreter of contemporary Native politics. As Richard Hill writes,

[Lawrence] Paul [Yuxweluptun's] free use of traditional design elements makes him an exception in B.C. [N]ative art. But his work can be seen as 'part of an overall national move' among young Native artists in Canada. They are moving away from traditional forms 'partly as a reaction to

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<sup>7</sup> Loretta Todd, "Notes on Appropriation," *Parallelogramme* 16.1 (1990) 26.

<sup>8</sup> Todd 24-26.

stereotypes people have about traditional [N]ative art.<sup>9</sup>

In conclusion, Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun's resistance to hegemonic knowledge and his advocacy of cultural autonomy manifest themselves through his strategy of finding a way to share, withhold, and maintain control of the knowledge of Coast Salish society. Yuxweluptun has produced a virtual environment which immerses the participant in a particular experience -- a cyberspace longhouse -- which may affect understanding of First Nation's people.

Cyberspace -- "as a discursive site of ideological struggles that define the relationship between new technology and the subjectivity of the active participant"<sup>10</sup> -- poses some important challenges. While the idea of another reality is a techno-utopian fantasy, the creation of powerful stories with different values in a technology as immersive as a virtual environment can provide important cultural options.<sup>11</sup> There exists a complex mystery that surrounds the creation and interpretation of virtual environment production. I have come to the realization, through the agency of Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun and his virtual environment *Inherent Rights, Vision Rights*, that an "imaginative history" justifies a rethinking of identity.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Eve Johnson, "Lawrence Paul," *Vancouver Sun* 21 March, 1985: B.

<sup>10</sup> Michelle Kendrick, "Cyberspace and the Technological Real," *Virtual Realities and Their Discontents*, ed. Robert Markley (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996) 143.

<sup>11</sup> Sara Diamond, "Electro-Nomads -- Or an Interactive Society?" *Border/Lines* 33 (1994): 41.

<sup>12</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Random House, 1978) 55.

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## Appendix 1

### Exhibition History of Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun

#### Group Exhibitions:

- 1995      *Who Speaks For The Rivers*, Derek Simpkins Gallery of Tribal Art, Vancouver, British Columbia
- 1994      *Toponimias*, Fundacion la Caixa de Madrid, Madrid, Spain  
*Art and Virtual Environments*, Walter Phillips Gallery, The Banff Centre for the Arts, Banff, Alberta
- 1993      *Northwest Native American and First Nations Peoples' Art*, Western Art Gallery, University of Washington, Seattle, Washington  
*Legacy of Survival: The Arts of the Shuswap (Secwepemc) and Contemporary Canadian Native Art*, Kamloops Art Gallery, Kamloops, British Columbia  
*European Media Arts Festival*, Osnabrück, Germany
- 1992      *Land, Spirit, Power: First Nations at the National Gallery of Canada*, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, Ontario (travelling exhibition)  
*Indigena: Contemporary Native Perspectives*, Canadian Museum of Civilization, Hull, Québec (travelling exhibition)  
*Canada's First People: A Celebration of Contemporary Native Visual Arts*, Toronto, Ontario (travelling exhibition sponsored by Syncrude Canada Ltd.)  
*New Territories 350/500 Years After: An Exhibition of Contemporary Aboriginal Art of Canada*, Maison de la culture Mercier, Maison de la culture Notre-Dame-de-Grâce, Maison de la culture Côte-des-Neiges, Maison de la culture Rosemont - Petite Patrie, Montréal, Québec (travelling exhibition)
- 1991      *Lost Illusions: Recent Landscape Art*, Vancouver Art Gallery, Vancouver, British Columbia
- 1989      *Native American Expressions of Surrealism*, Sacred Circle Gallery of American Indian Art  
*Documents Northwest: The Poncho Series*, Crossed Cultures Seattle Art Museum, Seattle, Washington  
*Native Artists from the Northwest Coast*, Ethnological Museum of the University of Zurich, Zurich, Switzerland

- Art Against Racism: Fear of Others*, The Round House Community Arts Council, Vancouver East Cultural Centre, Vancouver, British Columbia (travelling exhibition)**
- 1988      ***Spirits For The Lubicon*, Wallace Galleries, Calgary, Alberta**  
***ON, Im Schatten der Sonne: Zeintgenossische Kunst der Indianer und Eskimos Kanadas*, Berlin, Germany (travelling exhibition)**  
***In The Shadow of The Sun*, Canadian Museum of Civilization, Hull, Québec (travelling exhibition)**
- 1987      ***Third Biennial Native American Fine Arts Invitational*, The Heard Museum, Phoenix, Arizona**
- 1986      ***Images and Objects IV*, British Columbia Festival of the Arts, Prince George, British Columbia**  
***Ascending Culture*, Department of Indian and Northern Affairs Indian Art Centre Collection, Hull, Québec**  
***What is Native Art?*, University of Tulsa, Philbrook Art Center, Oklahoma**  
***Third Annual Juried Art Exhibition*, Robson Square Media Center, Vancouver, British Columbia**  
***Arts Umbrella Auction*, Vancouver, British Columbia**
- 1985      ***Second Annual Juried Art Exhibition*, Robson Square Media Centre, Vancouver, British Columbia**  
***Arts Umbrella Auction*, Vancouver, British Columbia**
- 1984      ***Warehouse Show*, Vancouver, British Columbia**

**Solo Exhibitions:**

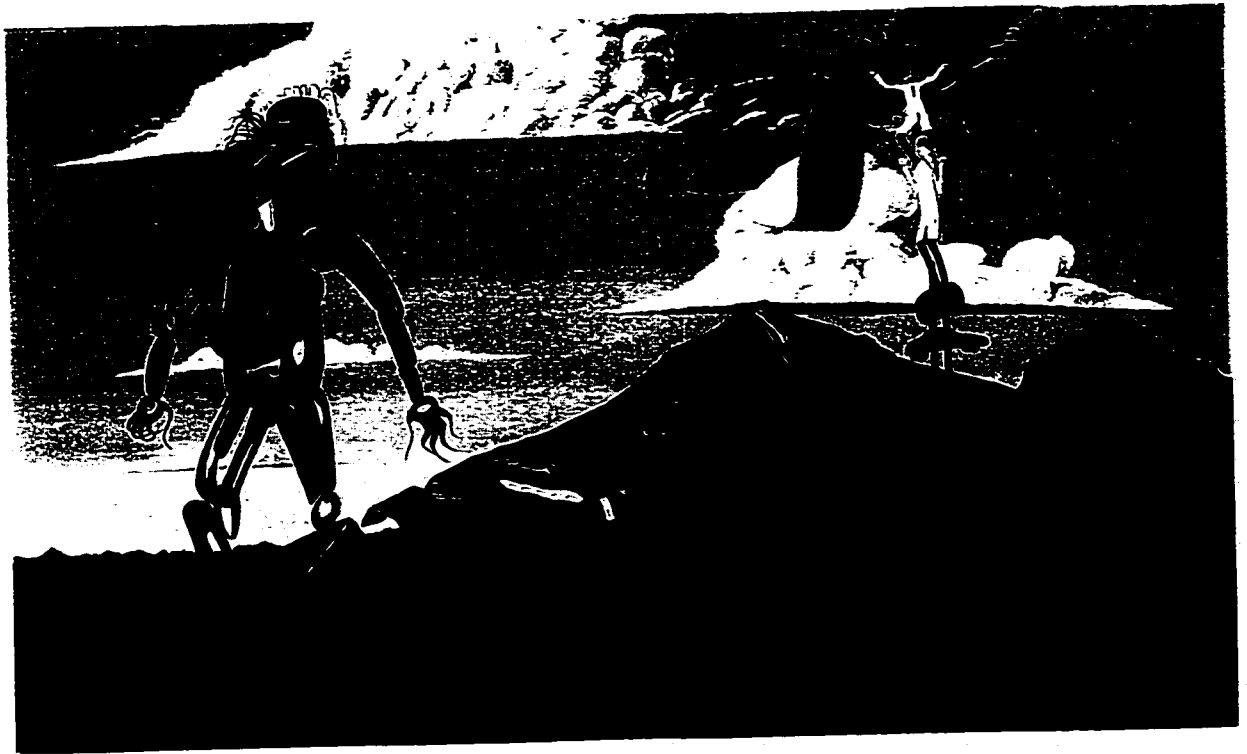
- 1995      ***Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun: Born To Live and Die on Your Colonialist Reservations*, Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery, Vancouver, British Columbia**  
***Man of Masks*, Gallery of Tribal Art, Vancouver, British Columbia**
- 1993      ***Inherent Rights, Vision Rights: Virtual Reality Paintings and Drawings*, Services Culturels de l'Ambassade du Canada, Canadian Embassy Paris, France in collaboration with ART-EL**
- 1987      ***National Native Indian Artists Symposium*, The Sir Alexander Galt**

**Gallery, Lethbridge, Alberta**

- 1986**      *Lawrence Paul, Bent Box Gallery, Vancouver, British Columbia*  
*Art Off Main, Downtown East-Side Festival, Vancouver, British Columbia*
- 1985**      *Lawrence Paul, The Bent-Box Gallery, Vancouver, British Columbia*



Figure 1. *Scorched Earth, Clear-Cut Logging on Native Sovereign Lands, Shaman Coming to Fix*, (1991) Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun, acrylic on canvas 196.6 x 276.5 cm



**Figure 2. *Red Man Watching White Man Trying to Fix Hole in Sky*,  
(1990) Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun, acrylic on canvas, 142.2 x 226.1 cm**



Figure 3. *The Universe is so Big, the White Man Keeps Me on My Reservation*,  
(1987) Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun, acrylic on canvas, 182.9 x 228.6 cm



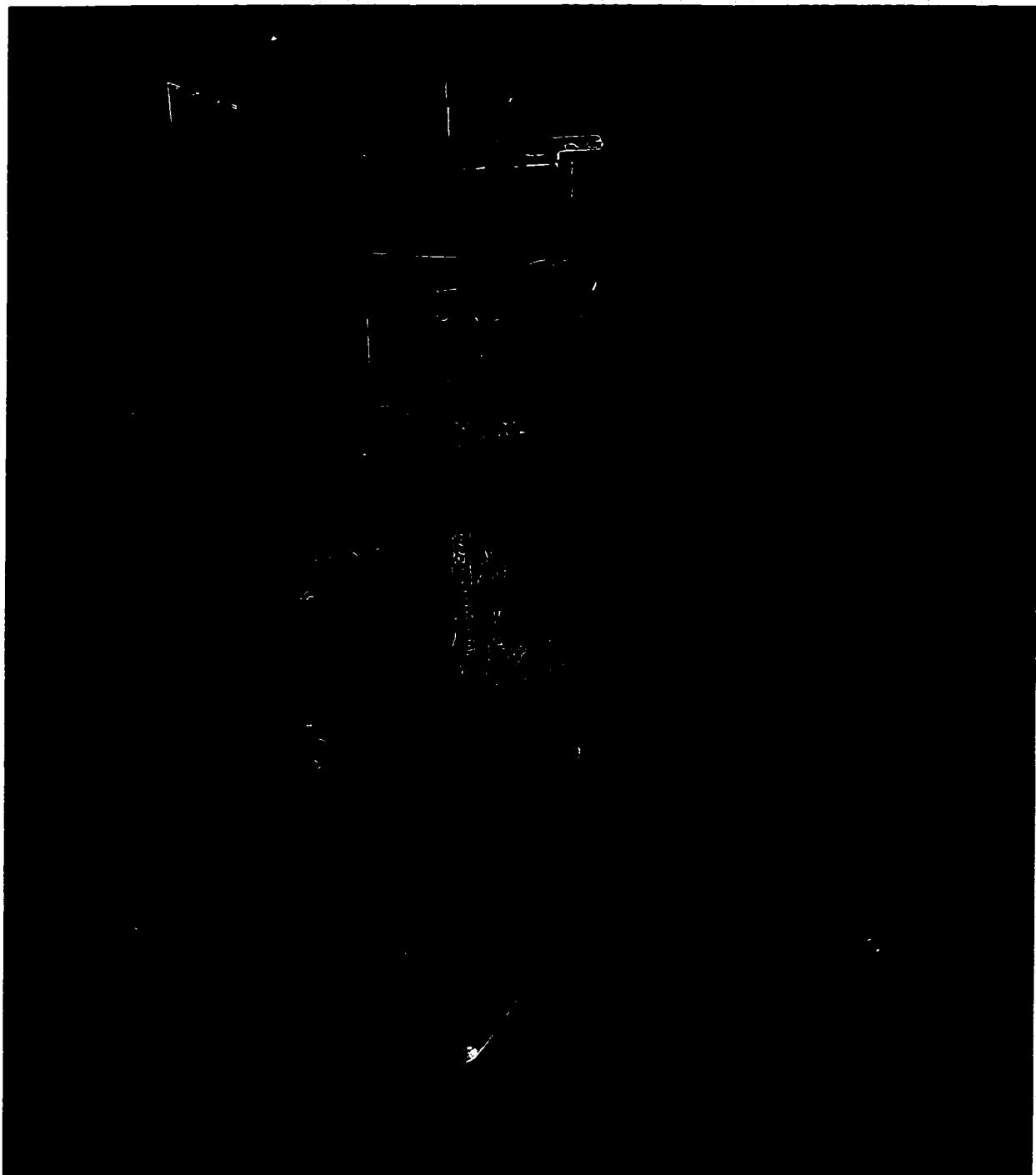


Figure 4. *Inherent Rights, Vision Rights*,  
(1991-92) Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun, installation view

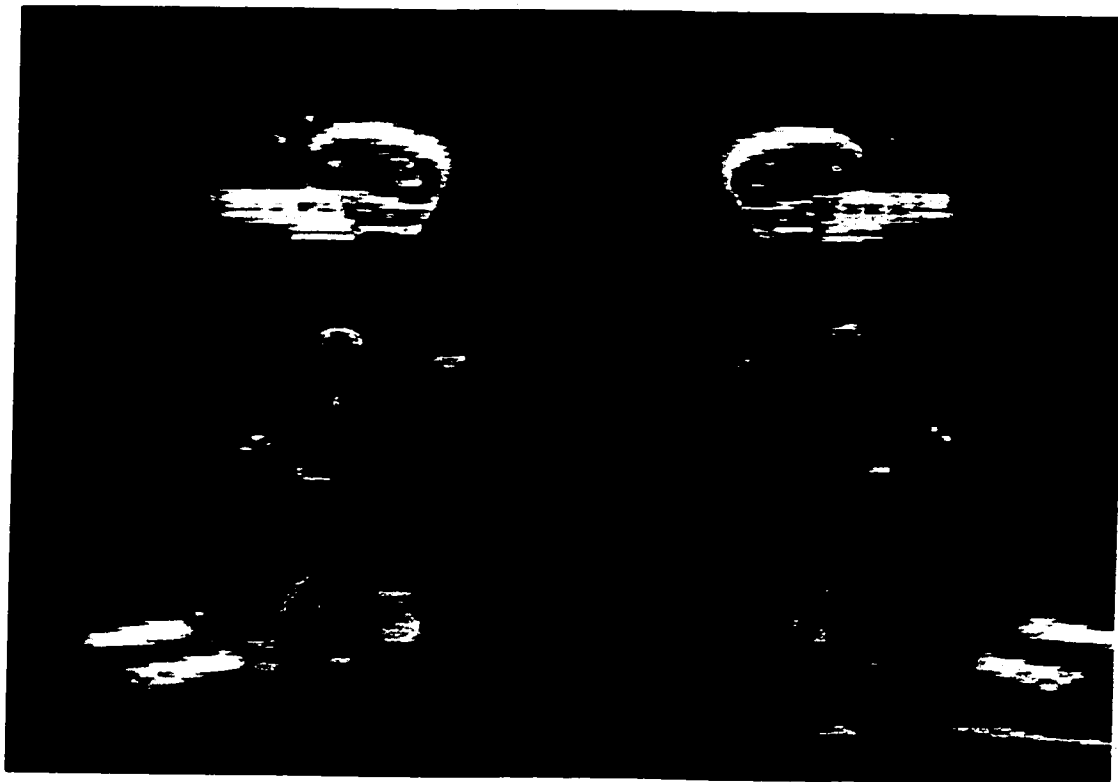


Figure 5. *Inherent Rights, Vision Rights*,  
(1991-92) Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun, frame grab of the dogs standing guard at the back

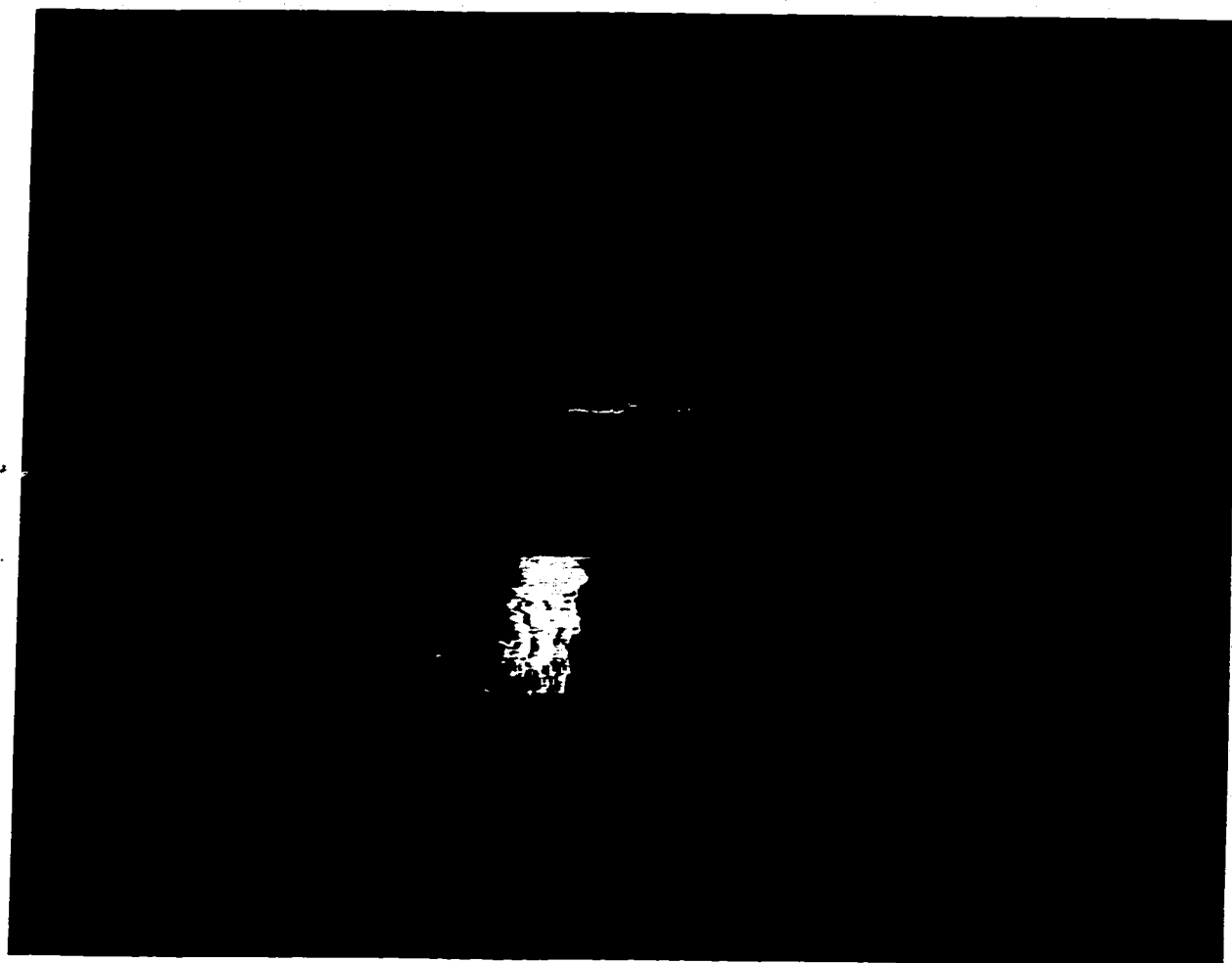
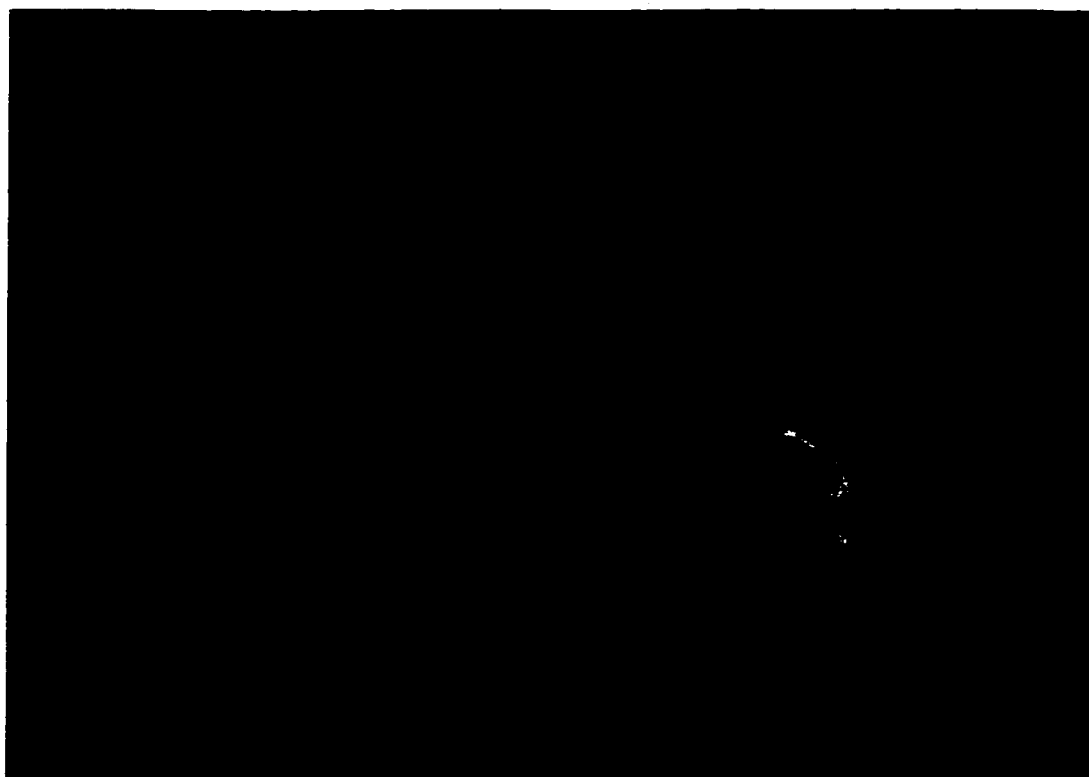


Figure 6. *Inherent Rights, Vision Rights*,  
(1991-92) Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun, frame grab showing dancers inside the longhouse



**Figure 7. *Inherent Rights, Vision Rights,***  
**(1991-92) Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun, frame grab of dancers in the longhouse**

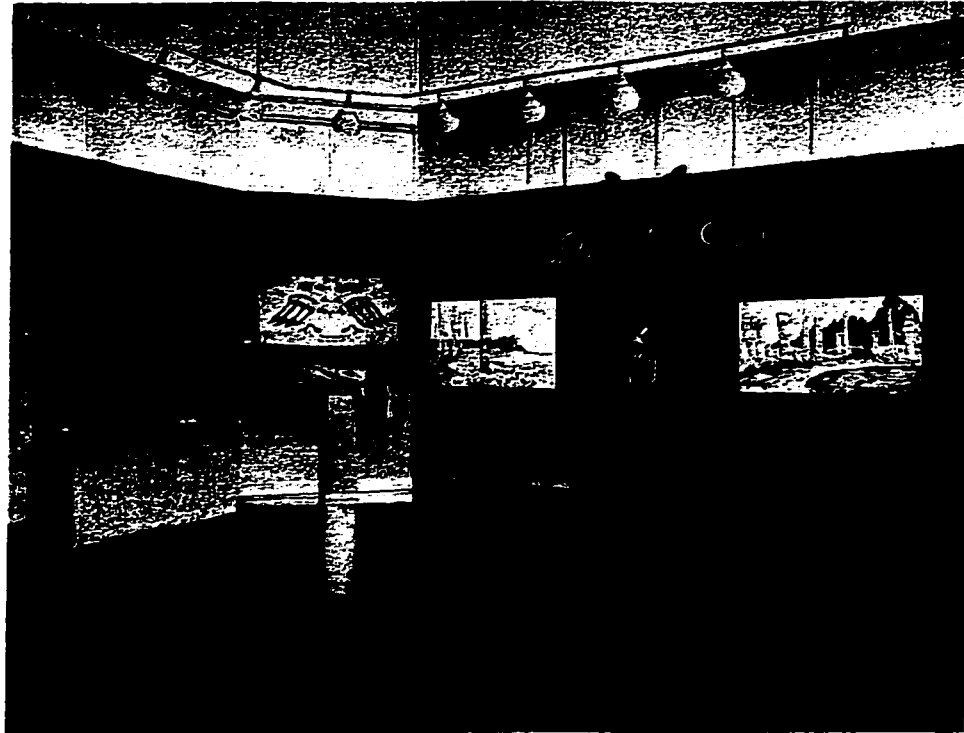


Figure 8. *Exhibition of Canadian West Coast Art: Native and Modern*,  
(1927) National Gallery of Canada, installation photo