

# The Camera and the World: New Works by Tamás Waliczky

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Tamás Waliczky is among the few artists who have been working with and thinking about the computer for many years, long before it became fashionable -- and this depth of involvement can be clearly seen in his works. In the new pieces -- "Landscape," "Sculptures" and "Focus" -- the strategies which were already central to "The Garden" (1992), "The Forest" (1993) and "The Way" (1994) are further developed and the new ones are being deployed, yet, taken together, these six works look like different experiments undertaken within a single research paradigm. That is to say, all of Waliczky works are the result of a single aesthetic investigation systematically being pursued by the artist.

Computer forces us to re-invent every one of the traditional aesthetic concepts, forms and techniques. What used to be a well-mapped territory now became one big white spot. Image and viewer, narrative and montage, illusion and representation, space and time -- everything needs to be re-defined again. In his works Waliczky systematically maps out an important part of the new post-computer aesthetic space. It is the part where new ways to structure the world and new ways to see it meet. The interactions between the virtual camera and the virtual world -- this is the main subject of Waliczky's aesthetic research.

Waliczky thus is neither a virtual filmmaker who works only with images nor an virtual architect who works only with space. Rather, he can be described as a maker of virtual documentaries. In every one of his works, he creates a world structured in a unique way; and then he documents it for us. In "Landscape," it is the world where the time was frozen. In "Sculptures," it

is the world consisting from three-dimensional time-sculptures. In "Focus," it is the world whose ontology was derived from the basic quality of a digital image -- its organization as a number of layers.

In his concern with ordering every world according to its principle, Waliczky can be also compared to ancient cosmologists. Each of his worlds establishes a cosmology of its own, a unique logical system which governs all of the world's elements. For instance, if in "The Forest" the world is like a mechanical clock or a system of planets, with all the elements continuously moving according to a complex set of rules, in "Focus" the world is immobile, the spatial relationships between all the elements being fixed once and for all. Therefore, although all of Waliczky's works are concerned with the same aesthetic problematic, they are also fundamentally different from each other, because each world is organized according to its own unique principle.

One of the trajectories in computerization of culture involves gradual translation of elements and techniques of cinematic perception and language into a decontextualized set of tools to be used as an interface to any data. For instance, in the last decade the camera model derived from cinema became as much of an interface convention as scrollable windows or cut and paste function. It became an accepted way for interacting with any data which is represented in three dimensions -- which, in a computer culture, means literally anything and everything: the results of a physical simulation, an architectural site, design of a new molecule, financial data, the structure of a computer network and so on. As computer culture is gradually spatializing all representations and experiences, they become subjected to the camera's particular grammar of data access: zoom, tilt, pan and track.

In the process of this translation, cinematic perception is divorced from its original material embodiment (camera, film stock), as well as from the historical contexts of its formation. If in cinema the camera functioned as a material object, co-existing, spatially and temporally, with the world it was showing us, it has now become a set of abstract operations. Waliczky's works refuse this separation of cinematic vision from the material world. They

reunite perception and material reality by treating the camera and the world as parts of a single system.

In Waliczky's earlier films, rather than simply subjecting the virtual worlds to different types of perspectival projection, the artist modified the spatial structure of the worlds themselves. In "The Garden," a child playing in a garden becomes the center of the world; as he moves around, the actual geometry of all the objects around him is transformed, with objects getting bigger as he gets close to him. To create "The Forest," a number of cylinders were placed inside each other, each cylinder mapped with a picture of a tree, repeated a number of times. In the film, we see a camera moving through this endless static forest in a complex spatial trajectory -- but this is an illusion. In reality, the camera does move, but the architecture of the world is constantly changing as well, because each cylinder is rotating at its own speed. As a result, the world and its perception are fused together.

In each of the new works, the camera and the world similarly function as parts of a single gestalt, creating an effect which is larger than the sum of the individual parts. And even more than before, Waliczky's virtual camera operating not only as a tool of perception but also as a tool of epistemology, putting its author within a modern artistic tradition which includes such filmmakers as Sergei Eisenstein and Dziga Vertov. In fact, without the operations of the camera, the structure of the world would remain hidden for us. Thus, Waliczky's cosmologies are distinctly post-cinematic: their structure can only be revealed by actions of a virtual camera. In "Landscape," without camera's movement we would not be able to discover that when time is stopped, the result is not simply an interruption in the familiar structure of our world but a creation of a new one, distinctly different. In "Sculptures," the camera passes through time-sculptures at different speeds and angles, revealing new time and space relationships which otherwise would remain invisible. And finally, in "Focus," we ourselves are handed over camera's controls (focus and depth of field) to uncover the space whose topology corresponds to a network of human relations. In Waliczky's

aesthetic universe, the camera and the world can't exist without each other, and their interactions always result in new and surprising discoveries.