

# Books of Change: *Meditations on Metamorphosis*

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*"You cannot step twice into the same river."*  
— Heraclitus

*"Tempora mutantur, et nos mutamur in illis. Times change, and we change with them."*  
— Anonymous

*"The philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point is to change it."*  
— Karl Marx

*"Naught may endure but mutability."*  
— Percy Bysshe Shelley

Books of Change is an interactive installation that seeks to be both entertaining and thought-provoking. It encourages participants to meditate on the scope of their personal voyages through time and to contemplate the contributions they make in directing its course, both as individuals of a particular species and as members of a society organized around specific cultural practices. Each of us occupies a unique situation in the large-scale drama of evolution, and together we all make an impact on its future course. The purpose of Books of Change is to invite users to reflect on their dynamic and symbiotic relationship with our environment, both locally and universally. It is also designed to challenge us to think about our links with the rest of intelligence, and in the process to confront practical issues of moral and political responsibility as well as philosophical issues about the nature of consciousness. As we perch on the chaotic cusp of the third millennium, Books of Change reminds us that change is constant. It asks us to take a long look back to our cosmic origins to contemplate our insignificance and to take a long look forward to an uncertain future to contemplate our potency. The installation plays on the

themes relating to our animal origins as well as our intellectual achievements. It poses questions about the relation between culture and nature and the impact of machines on the course of evolution. It also stimulates thought about how our civilization is changing through the increasingly rapid implementation of intelligent technology. It invites us to survey both the ephemeral and the eternal effects of our progeny. Computers are our playthings but also our assistants. Digital technology heightens the ephemerality of images, but also enhances their ability to open new vistas to knowledge and understanding.

Books of Change also aims to amuse. It offers intriguing and humorous metamorphoses on site and provides a printed version for the participant to take away for future fun. Most people are familiar with computerized metamorphoses only on impersonal subjects played across the implacable television screen. Here the user can interject herself into the process. She is able to straddle two key frames and morph herself between them. A memorable transformation can be output as hard copy in the form of a flip book. The experience brings together several entertaining activities in a computer installation: playing with pictures of one's self, bathing in the recent proliferation of morphs in movies and TV, and sharing funny flip books with friends. Morphs are becoming hackneyed purveyors of special effects and advertising pitches. This installation aims to personalize them in a way that invites contemplation of deeper issues.

## Hardware

- Macintosh
- Video camera
- Laser printer
- Quadra 950

## Software

- Gryphon Software

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