Projecto ESE

(Electronically Simulated Environment): An Interactive Virtual World of Ancient Aztec Temples in a Sculpture Garden plus a Contemporary Mexican and Chicano Museum

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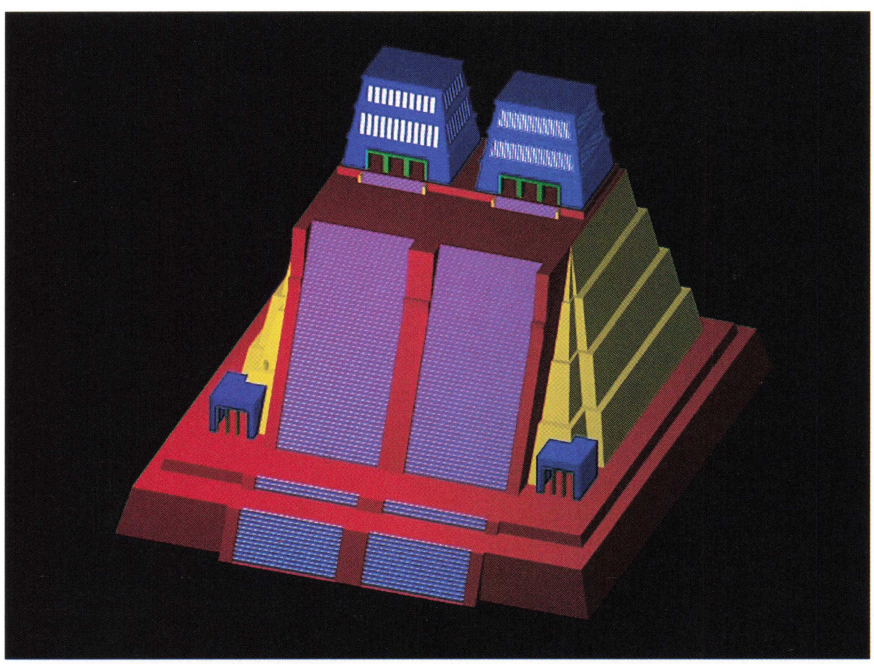
Projecto ESE is an electronically simulated architectural/landscape "walk-through" space: a virtual reality world of ancient Aztec temples and a contemporary museum of Mexican and Chicano art, design, and culture. Projecto ESE creates a sense of audio and visual immersion, giving the viewer an idea of the scale and sound of the ancient sites and the richness of contemporary Mexican and Chicano culture. The walk-through can be directed by the user through the computer-generated environment, and viewers will be able to manipulate both visual and audio components within the temple enclosure.

How the Material will be Presented

Cyberface 3, LEEP Systems' virtual reality (VR) workstation, will be used to present the virtual world of Project ESE with the display mounted on an articulated mechanical arm. Members of the audience standing in line will see on a monitor what the "immersed" viewer sees in the virtual software. As the line moves forward, each person will experience the visual and audio virtual world, interacting with this world by means of a virtual wand. Approximate time for each individual to complete the walk-through is two to three minutes.



Hardware and Software

- Intel-based PC architectures, Cyberspace Developer's KIT, Virtual Environment Navigator, Cyberface 3, High Performance video adapters, 3D Studio, AutoCAD, LightWave, Animator Pro.

Bilingual project staff will be available to assist the audience in and out of the VR workstation, to brief and debrief participants, and to discuss the social and cultural implications of Projecto ESE. The viewer will travel from the ancient city of Tenochtitlan at the height of the Aztec Empire to modern Mexico City's Zocalo, which grew up on the site of Tenochtitlan. The museum of contemporary Mexican and Chicano art, design and culture, located in a giant sphere in the VR Zocalo, will allow the viewer to experience another kind of bridge between the past and the present. It consists of one big gallery; other galleries in the museum are "closed, due to lack of funding."

The visual and audio information created in cyberspace software allows the study in detail of various aspects of preconquest sites: structure, shape, scale, hieroglyphs, sculptural motifs, urban design, the meaning of light and shadow, and the world of sounds both inside and outside the temples.

Arte Chicano and Projecto ESE

Projecto ESE will create in the viewer a sense of visual and audio immersion in an electronically simulated architectural/landscape "walk-through" space—a virtual reality world of Arte Chicano. Projecto ESE includes both indigenous geometric shapes and forms and sound elements: voice recordings, pure sine wave tones and native flute music arranged in non-linear form.

Arte Chicano is widely perceived as being tied only to traditional Mexican imagery and sixties political icons. In reality, it has a much broader conceptual and international base. Chicano artists are intellectual and aesthetic migrants endeavoring to create polarities and/or syntheses of widely divergent cultures, whether technological or social. In Projecto ESE, our aim is to create crossroads in a computer-generated environment for the convergence of abstraction and representation,

and to do this in a socially relevant framework. Through technology, we are able to connect with the past in an almost physical way: to ascend, descend, and circumnavigate in a past culture.

We have chosen the great city of Tenochtitlan, hub of the Aztec Empire, on the shores and islands of Lake Texcoco, as the site of the first of Projecto ESE's virtual worlds. Tenochtitlan flourished between 1325 A.D., and its conquest by the Spaniards in 1521. It is the work of the architects and sculptors of the vanquished city that the viewer will see in the virtual world. Rather than presenting Tenochtitlan in simulated granite and marble, we have chosen to use primary colors, in part to make the site more vivid and enticing for children to explore. This world will embody concepts as abstract as a fractal fountain and as concrete as a temple, and make sound an integral part of the virtual world.

The second of Projecto ESE's virtual worlds is the Zocalo of present-day Mexico City, where the cathedral and the national palace occupy the exact site of Tenochtitlan. This will allow the viewer to journey along a then-now continuum, arriving ultimately at the third virtual world of Projecto ESE, a Mexican/Chicano Museum. This museum and its surrounding sculpture garden have been conceptualized in accordance with the "Quinto Sol"—the five spheres of Aztec cosmology. It hovers above the virtual Zocalo, about 20 stories high.

Future evolution of this project includes scientific visualizations of remedies for the fragile ecosystem of Mexico City. Our present aim, however, is to inspire the viewer's imagination, bringing each user into an interactive environment to manipulate both the visual and audio components of Projecto ESE. The user's focus on a particular point of interest will depend on the associations the user brings to Projecto ESE. It is hoped that many of the users will be sensitive to the cultures of the Americas, and therefore, by interacting with Projecto ESE, will experience interactive world-building as art.

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