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All web-links in this document are 'clickable' and will open in a web browser window (you need to have this option installed in your local *Acrobat Reader*). Some links may have disappeared when you try them (that's the ephemeral character of the Internet).

The original 1999 **website of the Unbombing project** can be found at

<http://imaginarymuseum.org/UBW/ubw01a.html>

This PDF-file can be downloaded from that same page

<http://imaginarymuseum.org/UBW/UBWproject.pdf>

An overview of the **Unbombing database** content is also available in PDF format

<http://imaginarymuseum.org/UBW/UBWdatabase.pdf>

A related project, **Mapping Human Violence** has several web pages at

<http://imaginarymuseum.org/MHV/index.html>

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**Edith-Ruß-Haus für Medienkuns/Media Art  
WORK STIPEND July – December 2004**

**Applicant**

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**Curriculum vitae: education, exhibitions, projects**

- Born 1944, studied sculpture in den Bosch, Milano and London (1961-1966).
- Environments, happenings, expanded cinema, inflatables Italy, Netherlands, Belgium, England (1966-1968).
- Founder/curator of documentation centers on art, technology and society and modern social movements, Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, University Library Amsterdam, International Institute of Social History (1968-1998).
- Urban action projects, and interactive installations based dramatization of historical information, Imaginary Museum of Revolution, Orbis Pictus Revised, Neo-Shamanism (1974-1998).
- Lectures and writings on urban questions, media-history, memory, mapping (1990-2003)
- Studies on 'literary psycho-geography' (in period 1977-2001)
- Development of digital data system for content-driven media-projects: Ars Memoria System (1988- until now). Details see page 9-10...

**Project Proposal**

UNBOMBING the world, 1911-2011

one century of aerial bombing of humans and human habitat.

A social memory system for the victims of the use of air power; for the survivors; for new generations. A high-tech low-tech installation that has both a local architectural space existence as a non-local Internet presence. A project developed in stages. Proposed stage: putting the German experience in global perspective. An interactive installation dramatizing historical information, to reflect on the past, to reshape the future, a way to both remember and forget, a way to forgive and reconcile (details page 2-7)

**Other Comments**

Background information on the Unbombing project (database) available at my website <http://imaginarymuseum.org/UBW/ubw01a.html>

Additional visual materials on earlier projects and links to on-line texts via <http://imaginarymuseum.org/>

**List of Enclosed Materials**

- Detailed description of project proposal (page 2-7)
- A3 size visual overview of original Unbombing project 2001
- Example of earlier work, catalogue ICC/NTT Portable Sacred Grounds (Tokyo) on Neo Shaman project +4 A3 prints of details of that installation. (1997-1998 with Fred Gales)
- Example of earlier work, publication of project proposal for an Imaginary Museum of Revolution (1988-1991, with Jeffrey Shaw, Hans Derks and Gideon May)

## **PROJECT PROPOSAL** (concept)

### **UNBOMBING THE WORLD**

1911-2011

#### **one century of aerial bombing of humans and human habitat**

A social memory system:

for the victims of the use of air power;  
for the survivors; for new generations;

about the perpetrators of planned destruction;  
their motives, their decisions, their casualties,  
and opponents of bombing in their "own" camp.

Showing ways of reconstruction,  
Memories of once was  
and the fading of this urban and rural amnesia  
caused by the impact of bombs.

Using personal stories,  
in and outside the framework of 'national history',  
allowing for 'multiple truth'.

Putting local experiences in a global context,  
showing scale and magnitude of destruction,  
allowing a view on both micro and macro level.

Trying to document the different, and sometimes conflicting,  
estimates of the number of victims,  
for each place and period of aerial bombing.

Humanizing these statistics  
by linking them to personal stories,  
giving opportunities for comparisons  
beyond the usual dichotomies of war discussion.

An interactive installation dramatizing historical information  
to reflect on the past, to reshape the future,

**a way to both remember and forget,  
a way to forgive and reconcile.**

*The Unbombing project is a mega project that only can come into existence through a step by step development. The proposed step for this stipendium is to put the German bombing experience in a global context. The recent discussions in Germany on the representation of the aerial bombing triggered by the lectures and publications of W.G. Sebald (Luftkrieg und Literatur; 1999) and Volker Hage (Zeugen der Zerstörung, die Literaten und der Luftkrieg; 2003), and new researches on the targeting of German civilians like the study of Jörg Friedrich (Der Brand, Deutschland im Bombenkrieg 1940-1945; 2002) were much needed. Necessarily these studies and debates of a nation that starts to allow seeing itself also as victim, not just as perpetrator, was German-centric. This research and debate has revealed many sources that were somehow hidden, forgotten and also added new reminiscences of the bombing terror by German language authors, both established and newcomers.*

By including these German experiences in the global Unbombing data-set, it will be made possible to view such new and old insights also in a non German-centric, global context.

## **PROJECT PROPOSAL** (physical and network form)

The installation has three main elements:

- High-tech information interface
- Low-tech information interface
- Web-interface

... symbolizing the act and effect of aerial bombing ("we will bomb them back to the stone age" to quote a USA air force officer during WW II), the installation will have both low-tech and high-tech elements. The project also functions on a local (physical) level in an architectural space and in non-local, in web-space.

### **high-tech interface/office desk**

The planning, executing and experiencing of aerial attacks is shown through a standard metal office desk with four or six filing drawers and an office chair on wheels. The desk-top has several flat LCD-monitors embedded that show both textual and image data. The navigation through the data is done by sliding the empty drawers outward and inward. A choice for a specific bombing event can be made by placing a simple and very basic (iconic) airplane model on a sense area of the desk-top. Further navigation through individual experiences from planners, decision makers and perpetrators and the victims down below, can be done by moving the airplane model left and right, up and down. In a first version there will be text and image materials, later versions may have also dramatized quotations from personal experiences as can be found in diaries, letters, novels, poetry and the like. The sound can be reproduced either individually through directional sound, or through ambient sound (for instance from the desk).

### **low-tech interface/rubbing stones**

Bombing impact aerial photographs of cities/areas will be engraved in stones, like small grave stones. The names and dates of these bombed cities/areas (in different scripts when needed) will also be engraved in the stones. These stones are laid down around a glowing cauldron with charcoal. Sheets of white paper are hanging on special stands. The public can take the paper and charcoal and make

rubbings of whole stones or combine details of several stones on one sheet. These sheets can be taken home. There are hand washing sinks standing in the same space for cleaning the dirty hands afterward.

### **web-interface**

All the data of the 'Unbombing project' will be permanently put on-line. Similar searches as with the desk-interface can be made by using virtual navigation elements. The public is asked to help extend the data-collection. Also editorial and translation groups will be organized through the Internet. The database will contain both "local" languages and English; it will be tried to have all the core-elements translated, possibly by volunteers. The on-line Unbombing database will also have links to libraries and archives that store the material cited, and links to on-line resources. There will be a policy of digital archiving of on-line sources, when there will be a chance that such sources will have only a short existence on the Internet. It will be tried to find a permanent digital storage for all this data.

### **WORK-PLAN**

for the stipendium period July-December 2004

There are three main stages:

1. Content research, system development and digital collection of documentary materials (quotations, images, maps);
2. Bringing collaborative database on-line and stimulating public participation in content research/collecting;
3. Interface study of the 'filing drawer table' and the 'aerial damage rubbing stones', making of proto-types.

During phase-1 I plan to visit several libraries and archives in Germany, starting with the North Western region. I will add materials to the database and improve the digital collecting methods (refining my content collection and managing system, Ars Memoria System). I will consult German experts. Materials entered will be in several languages, but mainly German.

Phase-2 can start when the programming of on-line adding to the data-collection has been done and when a sufficient amount of examples have been entered. The minimal amount for Germany will be 300 data-sets, and an equal amount for examples from other countries/regions. Also editorial/monitoring groups need to be formed to (de)select the material and control the sources and the quality of the materials added by "the public". There is already a data collection of 50 bombing-incident sources with literally quotations of personal experiences, mainly about Germany and Japan.

Phase-3 will need technical help with devising and building the desk interface (moving drawers for navigating through the database, embedded LCDs in the table top and X-Y-Z sensors for airplane model and positional sensors for the office chair. Possibly local Poly-technical; schools or universities can be involved in some details of this research.

## **ORIGIN OF THE PROJECT**

### **fire-bombing of Tokyo**

Arriving for a media-art conference in Tokyo in 1995 and crossing for the first time through this immense city on the elevated train, made me wonder why there were so few signs of any older buildings and other urban structures. When it was explained to me that big parts of the city had been burned down by the American bombardments at the end of the Second World War, I felt ashamed that I did not know, that I had mainly thought about the fate of Hiroshima (80.000) and Nagasaki (60.000) hit by atom bombs, but was ignorant of the greater catastrophe - as far as number of victims goes - of the fire bombing of Tokyo (80/150.000). Later I learned that all major Japanese cities (66) had been bombed, with only three exceptions: Kyoto, Yokosuka and Kokura.

### **Enola Gay discussion**

1995 was also the year in which the dropping of the atom bombs on Japan in 1945 was commemorated and even more so debated, with one of the triggering events the discussions that arose around a proposed exhibition in the Smithsonian Institute of Technology in the USA of the air plane that dropped the atom bombs: the Enola Gay. It was also the time that the use of the Internet and the participation in electronic discussion lists was booming. So the debate about the atom bomb and the bombing of Japan in general, did get an international character, involving many participants from all sides of the globe, most from Japan and the USA. Who was right or wrong? The debate seemed to be locked in the split between two nations, losers and winners.

### **dramatizing history**

This made me decide to widen the discussion and I started to research all instances of aerial bombing, wherever in the world, using a wide variety of sources. From the beginning the research results were databased. I used methods developed for earlier historical media-art projects like the Imaginary Museum of Revolutions (1988-1991, a project undertaken with the Australian media-artists Jeffrey Shaw, the Dutch historian Hans Derks and the programmer Gideon May). This included a world wide inventory of 'revolutionary moments' over the past three centuries, documenting the ways in which these revolutions had been commemorated in statues, personal histories, iconography and songs. It was one of the projects in which different media are used to 'dramatize historical information' (some other subjects have been prison experiences, appropriate technology, urban development of Amsterdam and shamanism).

### **over one million of death**

The first findings of the aerial bombing research were posted on the Internet and suggestions for new additions of bombings, from all over the world, were added. Three years later, in 1998, the database had grown to several hundreds of towns, villages and other identifiable places that had been bombed with - intended or not - people victimized, houses, other buildings and cultural objects damaged or destroyed, land burnt, flooded or poisoned. My estimate in the beginning of 1999 were that there had been over 1 million of death and 1000 km<sup>2</sup> of vanished town-scapes (the damage to rural areas in Indochina and Korea has still to be inventoried). There are many detail studies on specific wars and countries in regard to aerial bombing, but, after a few years of research, I did not yet find a study that gives such an overview on a global scale.

The first known bombing use of airplanes started during the Italian Turkish War of 1911 in Libya, there was some bombing of cities by Zeplins and airplanes during the First World War. The British empire started to "police" resistance in far away colonies (Afghanistan, Mesopotamia, Somalia) with air planes during the inter-bellum, later joined by the secret Luftwaffe attacks in Spain and open aerial war by Italy on Ethiopia and by Japan on China.

The Second World War saw a shifting of targets from the military battle field to what, at first, was called 'economic targets' and, later, deviated to anything on the ground that could be put to fire from the air, torching of whole cities became standard procedure, ending in an atomic apotheosis.

The amount of bomb-tonnage thrown after the Second World War, mainly by the United States, exceeds many times the total tonnage thrown down during the Second World War. This was not anymore declared inter-state war but often started as 'crises' that needed to be 'contained' but nevertheless ended with historical names as Korea War and Vietnam War. Air power has been a major military instrument in these "crises". Now rural areas instead of cities were covered by 'carpet bombing', defoliation and the like. A clear inventory of the number of direct and indirect bombing victims in Korea and Indochina does not exist, and one may wonder if human lives in these regions of the world were not worth counting (it must be several hundreds of thousands deaths!).

The last years saw Afghanistan, Kuwait, Iraq, Chechnya, Ex-Yugoslavia, Sudan, and many more, under aerial attack, and it may be considered to also add the suicide air plane attack on the World Trade Centre in New York (as the database for the rest shows an existing 'Pax Americana' with no aerial bombing in the United States and Canada and almost none or very little in Middle and South America). In military terms there has been a shift to "precision air power" with "mercifully low casualty rates", nevertheless every regular watcher of tv-news knows the military term 'collateral damage'. For those who died it does not matter whether the attack was on purpose or by mistake, and for those who mourn such victims there is little or no comfort in the fact that the lost of their dear ones was "un-intentional".

### **cities rising from their ashes**

This study on aerial bombing did link with my long time involvement (from 1968 onward) with citizens actions related to urban development, and studies of urban questions, including different approaches to reconstruction of cities damaged by wars. The often conflicting issues of tradition and modernity, reconstruction or demolition, differences like between the ways of rebuilding of Warsaw and Rotterdam, or Nurnberg and Berlin, became a separate element in the study of aerial bombing. This led to the idea of towns, cities and other places rising from their ashes, the idea of 'unbombing', undoing what bombs have done.

In January 1999 the concept for the 'Unbombing project' was finished and published on my website.

### **literary psycho-geography**

Another historical and artistic research combined with the Unbombing project: a long term study on 'literary psycho-geography', how the influence of the (urban) space on the mind (and the reversal from the mind on the space) finds its expression in literature (any kind of expressive writing). This psycho-geography



study started in Amsterdam in 1977 and has been used in different exhibitions and installations. In the year 2000 and 2001 I received a fellowship from the Japan Foundation to extend my study and make a comparative study of how time space and mood of Edo/Tokyo and Amsterdam are reflected in literature. A stay of over half a year in Tokyo (with Tokyo Gedai Academy multi-media department) made it possible to include also the study of literary texts (mostly in English translations) describing the aerial bombing of Tokyo: the fire storms, the devastated city that remained, the process of rebuilding, and the feelings of 'urban amnesia'.

### **ars memoria system**

From the beginning it has been clear that the gathering of the wanted information is a task far beyond the capacity of one person. Only by fully using the potential of the Internet community to help to gather, organize the needed content, it can be done. Such a collaborative process needs a well organized system of references, a formalization of how books are quoted, pictures are scanned, normalized geographic names, and their concordances on maps, etc.. The last three years I have worked on developing standards and routines to construct and manage databases, and digital dictionaries to be able to realize projects like 'Unbombing' under the name: Ars Memoria System. In this system I have brought together my experiences as a librarian and curator at the University Library of Amsterdam and the International Institute of Social History over the period 1973-1998, and the learning process of making interactive multi-media educational and artistic media works since 1986.

## **BIOGRAPHY**

### **study**

1961-1966 sculpture Kunstacademie/Den Bosch, Academia di belli Arti di Brera/Milano, St. Martins School of Art/London.

### **projects/works/exhibitions**

1967-1968 Sigma Projekten, environments, expanded cinema, happenings Amsterdam, Rotterdam, London, Knokke le Zoute, with a.o. Jeffrey Shaw, Willem Breuker, Theo Botschuijver, Musica Electronica Viva.

1967-1969 Study for a Documentation Center on Art, technology and Society (Sigma Centrum, Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam).

1973-1998 founder and curator of Documentation Center for Modern Social Movements at the University Library of Amsterdam and International Institute of Social History.

1985-1990 Europe Against the Current, a network for alternative, radical and independent information carriers from Iceland to the Soviet Union; networking activities, database of contacts, traveling exhibitions (Amsterdam, Milano, Hamburg, Bologna). First international manifestation took place in September 1989 in Amsterdam with 350 participants from 21 different countries, just before the fall of the Berlin wall. Web page on <http://imaginarymuseum.org/ETS/ETSeng.html>

1988-1991 Imaginary Museum of Revolution with Jeffrey Shaw, Gideon May and Hans Derks (Filmhuis Den Haag, La Villette Paris, Brucknerhaus Linz). Web page <http://imaginarymuseum.org/IMP1/index.html>

1991-1996 Orbis Pictus Revised, a historical installation on the visualization of the world for children starting with Comenius, with Milos Vojtechovsky and Rolf Pixley (ZKM/Karlsruhe, National Museum Prague, Society for Old and New media Amsterdam). Web page <http://imaginarymuseum.org/OPR/OPRWAAGE.HTM>

1997-1998 Neo-Shamanism an interactive historical installation with 16 ways of the shaman, two different versions, Dutch and Japanese, with Fred Gales and Rolf Pixley (Tropen Museum Amsterdam, Intercommunication Center NTT/Tokyo). Web page.. scroll to end of <http://imaginarymuseum.org/IMP1/index.html>

2000 Info Arcadia (exhibition on information systems) (centrum voor Beeldende Kunst Den Haag).

2000 Paradox of Traceless Art, a visual lecture series first performed for Doors of Perception Amsterdam. Web page <http://imaginarymuseum.org/PTA/index.html>

2000-2001 Comparative study on literary psycho-geography (mapping time space and mood) of Edo/Tokyo (fellowship of Japan Foundation supported by new media department of Tokyo Geidai of Masaki Fujihata and the School of Architecture of Hosei University Tokyo, urban anthropologist Jinnai Hidenobu). Web page <http://imaginarymuseum.org/LPG/Litpsy91.htm>

2003-2004 Mapping Human Violence a study project and seminar at the Piet Zwart Institute in Rotterdam (post-graduate media-design). For details see <http://imaginarymuseum.org/MHV/index.html>

**publications** (about, a selection)

- "Actie, werkelijkheid en fictie in de kunst van de jaren '60 in Nederland"; Museum Boymans van Beuningen; Rotterdam; 1979; happenings, Sigma Projekten, Continuous drawing from London to Amsterdam; p.113-116, 120-124.  
- "Jeffrey Shaw – a user's manual"; Edition ZKM/Cantz; 1997; Continuous Film, Sigma Projekten, Imaginary Museum of revolution: p.60-63, 66-73, 122-125.  
- "Uncanny networks"; Geert Lovink; MIT Press; 2002; interview: "We no longer collect the carrier but the information – on movements, archives, and media memory"; p.96-103.

**publications** (own texts & visuals, some recent examples + web version links)

-1995 "Follow the trail of visions, look at the sky and redraw the maps..." (visual article on mapping, myth and metaphor for Japanese urban question magazine) 10+1; no4; autumn issue; p.177-189; the original text in English exists in a web version: <http://imaginarymuseum.org/MAP/0maptit.htm>

-1996 "Ars Oblivivendi, about the construction of social memory"; in "Mimesis the future of evolution"; Ars Electronica festival 96; Springer Wien/New York; p.254-261. Web version  
<http://www.iisg.nl:80/%7Eevt/tijen01.html>

-1999 The Arts of Oneself, eighteen observations on personal memorabilia"; in Artintact no 5; Cantz Verlag; 1999; p.95-112. Web version  
<http://www.iisg.nl:80/%7Eevt/tijen03.html>

- "The Paradox of Traceless Art"; in "interarchive, archival practices and sites in the contemporary art field"; Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther Konig; 2002; p.410-415. Web version  
<http://imaginarymuseum.org/PTA/index.html>

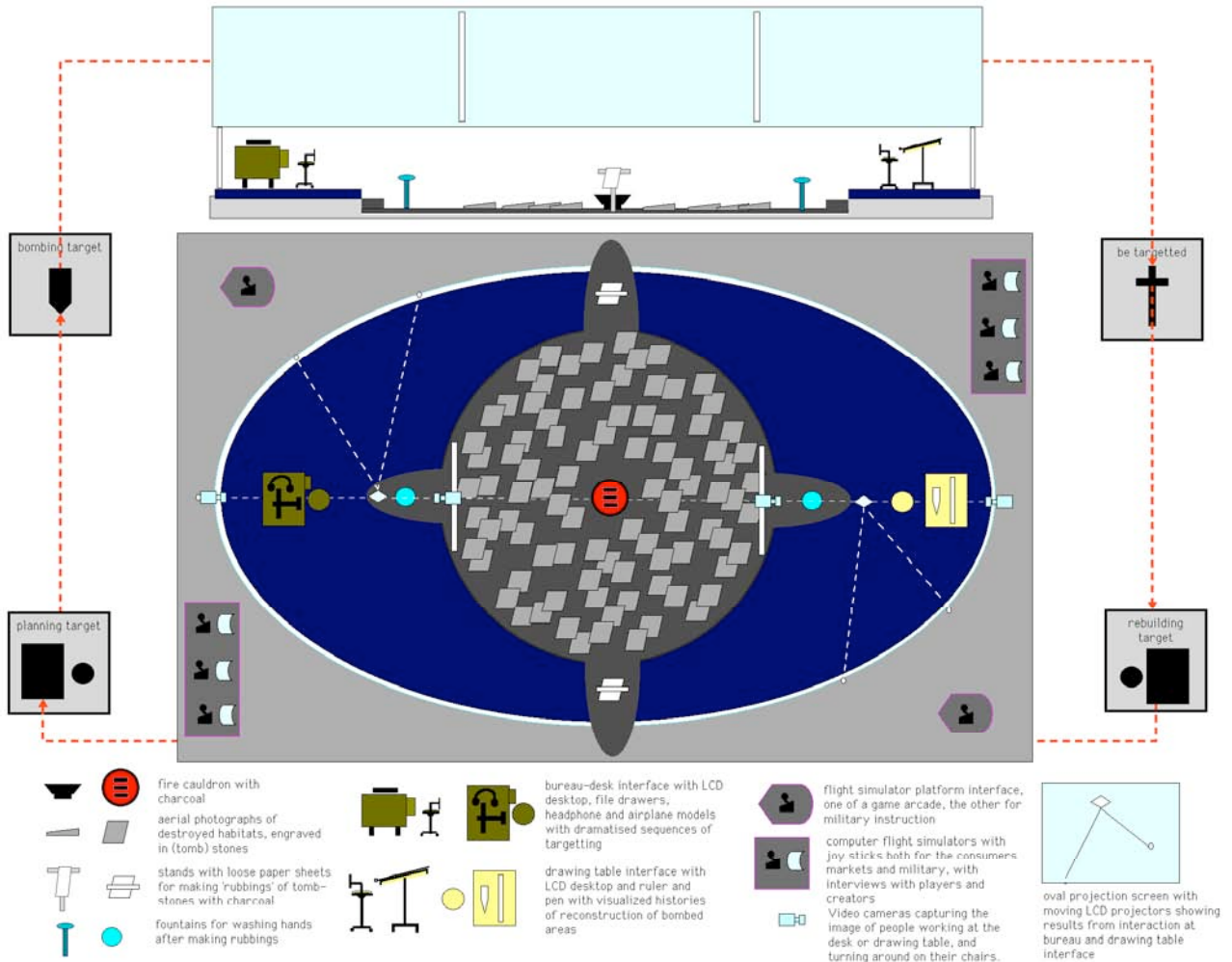
- "A Panorama of Pre-Cinematic Principles"; in "Future Cinema, the cinematic imaginary after film"; Jeffrey Shaw/Peter Weibel editors; The MIT Press; p.18-25. Web version  
<http://imaginarymuseum.org/PCP/index.html>

# UN-BOMBING THE WORLD 1911-2001

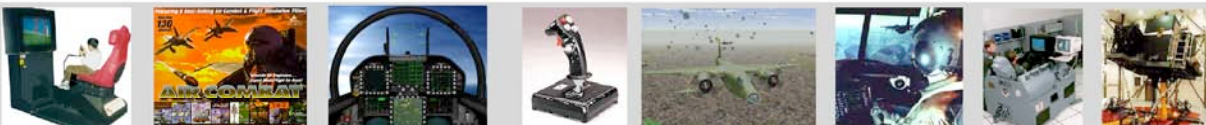
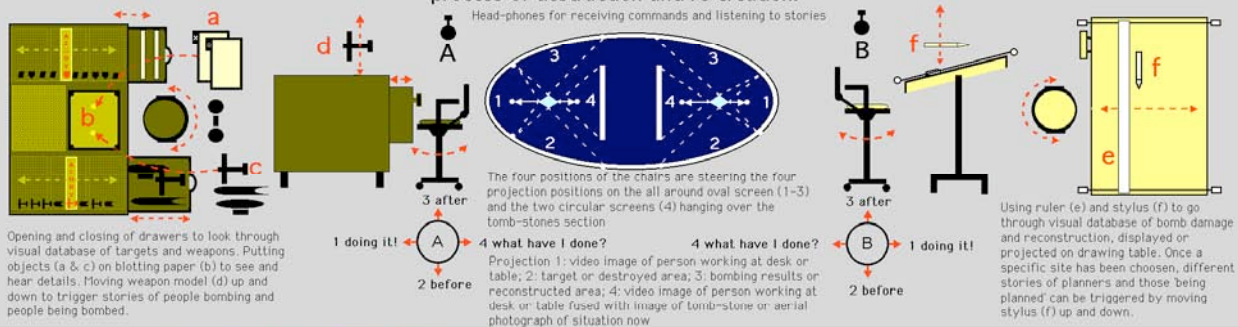
ninety years aerial bombing of human habitat  
an installation on the history and future of planned destruction and reconstruction



Bureaucratic procedures of choosing targets can lead to the actual destruction of human habitat. High technology is used to bomb people back into the depth of a new stone age. Images of this destruction, frozen in engraved tomb stones, can be personally captured. Rubbings made with paper and charcoal can be taken home. Before proceeding to the other parts of the installation you can wash your hands 'in innocence'.



There is an inescapable relation between the targeting and destruction of human habitat and the reconstruction afterwards. However devastating and cruel the attack, none of the towns bombed by modern technology have been wiped off the surface of the earth definitely. The office-desk and the drawing-table are the two symbols that stand at the beginning and end of this process of destruction and re-creation.

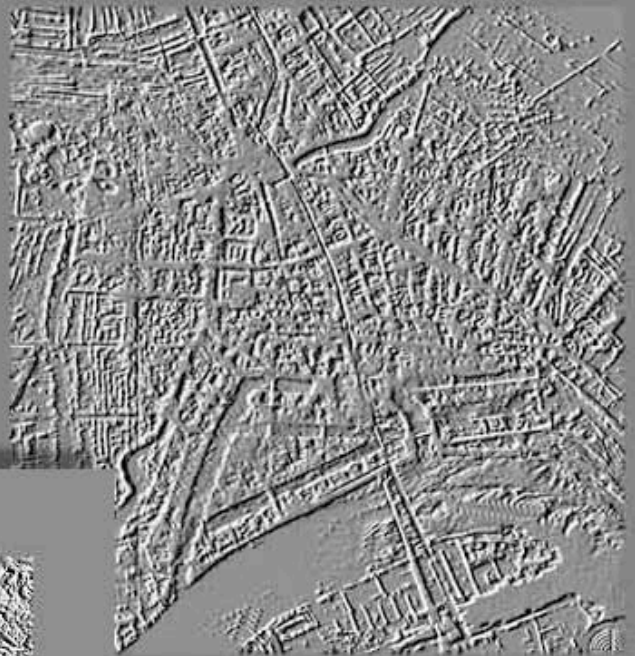


The difference between playing war using an arcade or home game and real war has diminished greatly by the miniaturisation and computerisation of both military and consumer electronics. Desk-top war as entertainment, or for real, has become a reality. Human victims seem to have no importance, neither in these simulation games, nor in real life.

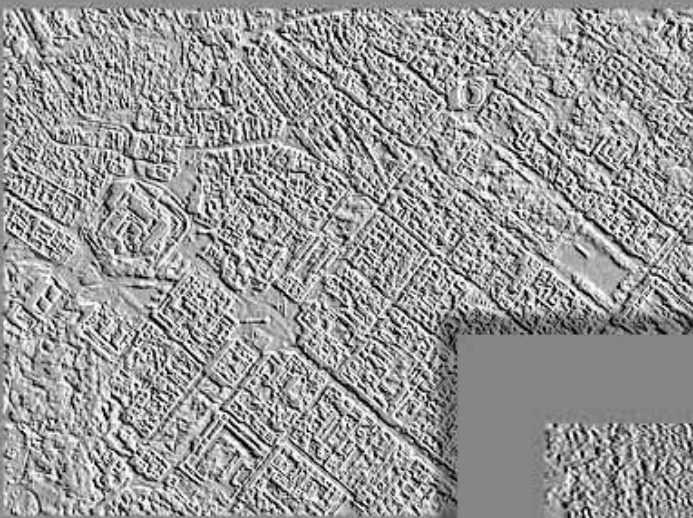




GUERNICA



ROTTERDAM



DARMSTADT

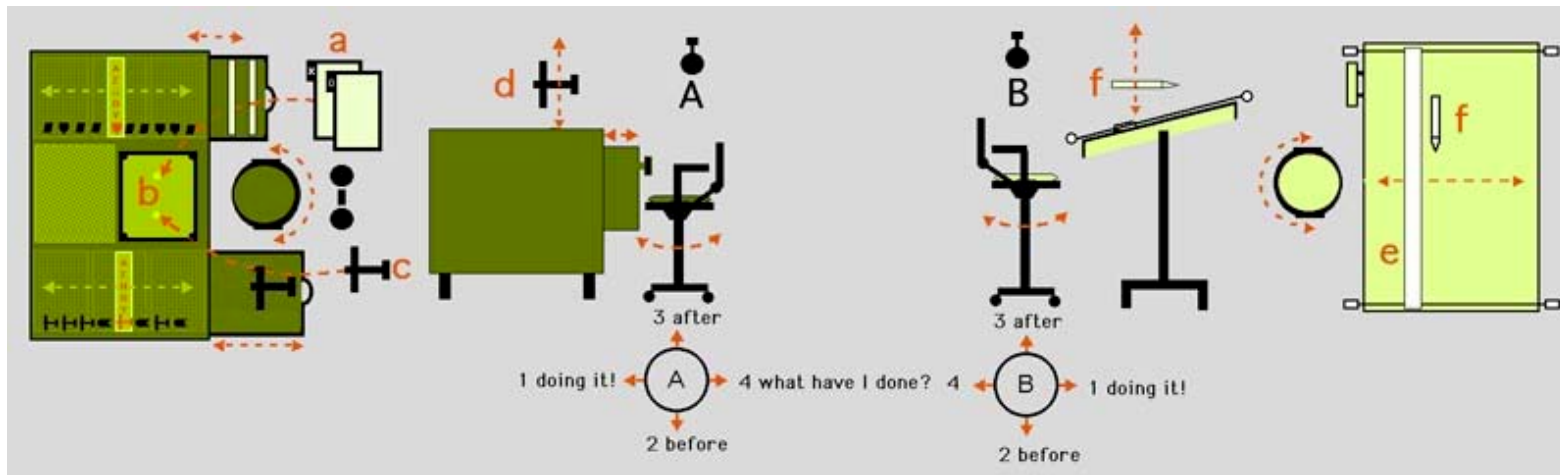


HIROSHIMA



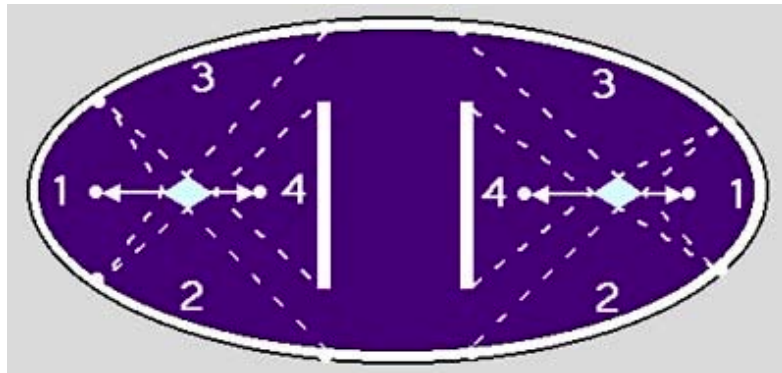
## desk interface

There is an inescapable relation between the targeting and destruction of the human habitat and the reconstruction afterwards. However devastating and cruel the attack, none of the towns bombed by modern technology have been wiped of the face of the earth definitely. The office-desk and the drawing-table are the two symbols that stand at the beginning and end of this process of destruction and recreation.



Opening and closing of drawers to look through visual database of targets and weapons. Putting objects (a & c) on blotting paper (b) to see and hear details. Moving airplane model (c/d) up and down to trigger stories of people bombing and people being bombed. Stories can be heard by headphone (A)

Using ruler (e) and stylus (f) to go through visual database of bomb damage and reconstruction, displayed or projected on drawing table. Once a specific site has been chosen, different stories of planners and those being planned can be triggered by moving stylus (f) up and down. Stories can be heard by headphone (B).



The four positions of the chairs steer the four projection positions on the all around oval screen (1-3) and the two circular screens (4) hanging over the tombstones section

Projection 1: video image of person working at desk or table; 2: target or destroyed area; 3: bombing results or reconstructed area; 4: video image of person working at desk or table fused with image of tombstone or aerial photograph of the scene today

Sitting at an office desk with drawers full of files with the names of target cities and target areas. Going through these files, taking out one, opening it and study the details. Opening the other drawer of the desk and going through the arsenal of possible weapons. Choosing the right weapon that belongs to how the chosen target fits in space and time. Bombing the target and turn around on your office chair, looking to what was there before and what after. Having the opportunity to turn away from the desk, asking yourself: "what have I done?"

Sitting at the drawing table of the urban planner, making an inventory of the war damage, thinking up new plans, deciding what to keep, what to knock down after all. Turning your chair, looking at what was before, at what came after, maybe turning around and ask yourself: "what have I done?".

By pointing a hand size symbolic model of an aeroplane up and down, the visitor can listen to narrated fragments from those who were bombing and those who have been bombed.

In a similar way, at the drawing table, the visitor can listen to stories of both the planners and the ones that have been planned, by moving a special drawing pencil up and down over the table.