The VIRTUAL TRANSFER or the "Renaissance" of dramaturgy in Multimedia

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ABSTRACT

Since 1998 the Swiss National Museums are in a phase of reorganization and modernization. Part of this process will be the renovation of the first Swiss National Museum (Schweizerisches Landesmuseum) in Zurich. Founded more than a hundred years ago as a symbol of national identification in order to preserve the cultural inheritance, the museum in the 21st century is confronted with more extensive tasks, new challenges and goals. The New Swiss National Museum - the final reopening is planned for 2013 - will become an urban center linking the traditions of the past with the challenges of the future. These goals are reflected in the objectives of VIRTUAL TRANSFER MUSEE SUISSE, a vision of interaction and communication with our visitors and users. It aims to be a strategy for direct communication in 5 languages (German, French, Italian, Romansh and English) and works as a sort of "online agency" for the Muséa Suisse Group. Unlike the flood of information in the web, the VIRTUAL TRANSFER offers the opportunity to rediscover the charm and charisma of the objects in the collections, their history and their impact on the viewer. The author Harald Kraemer - involved in the planning and realization of the VIRTUAL TRANSFER MUSEE SUISSE - will give valuable insights into the prototype on CD-ROM and the further development of this exceptional project on the web. The VIRTUAL TRANSFER MUSEE SUISSE is being set up on behalf of the MUSEE SUISSE Group by die *lockere* gesellschaft – TRANSFUSIONEN, a well-known company for innovative media in museums.

Keywords:

a New National Museum for Switzerland, Virtual Transfer instead of virtual museum, integrative museum, interactivity, knowledge transfer, creativity of visitors

Facing to existing mostly print-layout-oriented and data-oriented Museum Web-Sites the VIRTUAL TRANSFER occupies a special place in the museum worlds of cyberspace and virtual museums. The term *Virtual Museum* is used inflationary. Virtual Museums are "en vogue" nowadays and part of the strategy has been to keep distance to these flood, so the VIRTUAL TRANSFER was born. Why? A transfer is a process of transmission.[1] This can be a movement in real space (e.g. a bustransfer) or in virtual space (e.g. news on TV or using Google) or a symbolic transfer (e.g. money transfer) or an interspacial or intramondial transfer between the real world and the virtual world. No transfer exists without transformation and transfers between the virtual world and the real world are a process of transformation. By crossing the different transfer-levels we are growing on our defiances. And this is the best condition to learn and discover our specific relationship to the world we are living in. A Museum is untold in its wealth of collected experiences of life.[2]

But to communicate this richness to the visitor, especially the user, a leaded navigation is necessary. Interactivity are the multiple choices of digital one way streets and in the most cases interactivity is more interpassive than interactive. The secret is to understand that real interactivity grows out of the actuality of an action.[3] It is the productivity that leads us to the creation of reality and the meaning of perception. Not the navigation is responsible for my choice. My preferences, my associations and last not least my own history lead me through the contents. Only a manyfolded dramaturgy which allows different levels of deepening for the different usergroups. Not all of these contents are for everyone, but everybody has the chance to find something for him or herself. The navigation should be content and this means: Using interactivity in Multimedia is the way to control the creativity of your user.

The strategy of the VIRTUAL TRANSFER has been developed by the experiences of two formerly projects. In 1998, "VIENNA WALK DEMO", the prototype of an interactive film on DVD-ROM produced by Science Wonder Productions, was a futuristic vision of real interactivity and an intelligent knowledge transfer in the field of cultural heritage-tourism-ecommerce.[4] VIENNA WALK has shown that the relationship between navigation and information has changed. An intelligent navigation can lead through the world of ..... and can be part of the content at the same time. In another project, the CD-ROM "ART AND INDUSTRY" produced 2000 by Transfusionen this synergetic effect between content, navigation and communication with the visitor has been tested successfully on the kiosk systems in an exhibition show about the founding of the Museum of applied Arts in Vienna.[5] Combining the architecture of the building, the artifacts and the Multimedia kiosk systems, the visitors has been confronted with different levels of interactivity supporting an innovative transfer of knowledge about the cultural heritage of the pluralism of styles and the age of Historicism. Starting with the Great Show in London 1851 and ending with the "Halbzeit der Moderne" 1910 the navigation-line of the main story is in a chronological order following the story of the formerly "Museum for Art and Industry" and allow via sub-lines the deepening through single topics (e.g. The influence of oriental style, Vienna – center and suburbs). The second main part about Historicism and the pluralism of styles and has a different navigation. Concerning the democratic pantheon of the different styles (e.g. neogothic, japonism) the navigation shows them all, so that no style comes into prominence. So the user learns through the navigation that you can understand history linear and chronological in a single-line order, following event by event as well as a complex network of reciprocal influences co-existing at the same time.

The VIRTUAL TRANSFER is not a digital collection, not a portal, not a virtual museum, but a vision of interaction and communication with the museum visitors and users. It aims to be a strategy for direct communication in 5 languages (German, French, Italian, Romansh and English) and will work from Spring 2004 on as a sort of "online agency" for the Musée Suisse Group.[6] Unlike the flood of information in the WWW, the VIRTUAL TRANSFER offers the opportunity to rediscover the charm and charisma of the objects in the collections, their history and their impact on the viewer. Places and stories that can be explored interactively, a choice selection of objects, highly personalized forms of address, successful dramatic scenes presented in multimedia

form, all give the users a strong stimulus, bring them inspiration and in this way activate their own creativity. And it is not a virtual substitute for the Swiss National Museum. It will help in developing experimental strategies for interactive transfer, and as effective publicity will attract ongoing interest and a high degree of awareness during the planning phase of the New National Museum.

So the Virtual Transfer is a labyrinth of experiences, an inspiration ahead of information, a rediscovery of the charm and charisma. The objects of the museum collections became the narrators and the stories the have to tell are part of our own life. This impact on the viewer allow the interactivity to activate his own creativity. Facing to the danger of art historian gibberish in exhibition catalogues or the accumulation of boring facts the dramaturgy of the Virtual Transfer has been planned to be humorous, intelligent, thrilling, inspiring, many-sided and full of marvelous stories and wonderful journeys.

Fig. 1: VIRTUAL TRANSFER, Introduction

Fig. 2: VIRTUAL TRANSFER, Sitemap

The architecture of the VIRTUAL TRANSFER MUSEE SUISSE contains:

chamber of marvels

The chamber of marvels include *masterpieces*, *favorite items* and *curiosities* and allow us to use different strategies and dramaturgies in the presentation of the object. This can be an inner monologue spoken by a female voice from the off reflecting her mood facing to an object (e.g. the Neolithic Gynaecomorph container). Or following an inner dialogue of the two halfs of a person discussing the positive and negative aspects of his future with himself (e.g. Langobardic foil cross). An invitation for a discovery or contradicting a message (e.g. "Death is not of long duration.") or an alienation (e.g. the facts about a mail carriage shown as a second hand car advert) are some of our other strategies.

combinations

Every word is linked with an object, but the combination between two or three different words help to create new associations:

1. game = horse with wheels

1. game + 2. costume = chess game in the style of Louis XIV.

1. game + 2. costume + 3. automate = musical mechanism of a tennis play around 1900

picture albums

The picture album (e.g. "Dragons, mermaids and other strange beasts") is a collection in the collection, an exhibition on a meta-level and allows us to combine interesting and curious objects from all the different collections. The 60 objects are described by categories (mermaids, dragons, daemons, griffins etc) and attributes (Which beasts have their origin in Christian mythology? Who is a good teacher? Who is strong and powerful?).

anecdotes

These are audio adventures and a visualization of screenplays, fairy-tales or poems. In the module "Join Mark Twain in storming the peak of the Rigi and send us a happy end from there" we have illustrated a mountain climbing anecdote of the famous American Mississippi pilot by using historic photographs of the early alpine tourism period. Or a graphical animation by using unusual objects like forks and bells in the famous screenplay "Herakles and the stable of Augias" by Friedrich Dürrenmatt.

learning course

To find out the difference between ideal and reality we used an Playmobil medieval jousting tournament and complain it with the real medieval objects and the Codex Manesse. The combination of the well known Playmobil knights and the relics of the Middle Ages create a special atmosphere of fascination and invite the user to discover more about that time, the culture and the behaviour of the people. Especially the "MINNE love affair", a rendezvous between a knight and a maid, read and spoken in Middle High German language with subtitles in our recent language is most impressing for children and adults.

quiz and game shows

Both are helpful tools to support the different modules. In the Web Preview Edition on CD-ROM we have combined the quiz about the learning course with a fight between two knights.

online exhibitions and research projects

are also part of the activities of the VIRTUAL TRANSFER. Virtual limited-duration *online exhibitions* on inter-disciplinary and abstract topics make it possible to discuss current problems and to achieve a high level of attention from the public, as well as offering scope for cooperation with colleges, academies and universities. The basis for *research* is provided by actual research projects such as those being carried out by the Department for Conservation Research. This module aims to give visitors an insight over a longer period of time into the progress of scientific research. This may be the restoration of a painting as Hans Ernis famous 90 m long and 5 m high wall painting "Die Schweiz, das Ferienland der Völker" from 1939 or an archaeological excavation, the

reconstruction of the meaning of an excavation, or an introduction into specific museum activities such as making an inventory. Collaboration with the research departments of universities will be allowed for, as will getting schools involved. Both will mention relevant literature and show selected links relating to the questions raised.

witnesses

Witnesses are observers in time and space. This module gives reports by historic, fictive and living eyewitnesses:

The story of the invention of the historic *Notzimmer* (knockdown furniture with 4 chairs, 2 beds, 1 table, 1 wardrobe, dishes and cutlery in case of need) is told by the daughter of Mauritius Ehrlich and visualized by a newsreel from 1945 and two trick films. Thinking about his own fate – Ehrlich had to leave Vienna 1938 as a Jewish refugee – he constructed this famous Notzimmer to help others. The interview with his daughter ends with an appeal to help. With this personal background the user will get more information about the Swiss asylum policy in the years 1933-1945 and as well as web links to the Refugee Agency of the United Nations (UNHCR).[7]

Fig. 3: VIRTUAL TRANSFER, Witnesses: The Notzimmer of Mauritius Ehrlich, trick film No. 1

Or as a second example: the fictive eyewitness on *Memento Mori*. 550 years after his death (1456) the formerly mayor of the city of Berne in Switzerland, Rudolf von Ringoltingen, is talking in our days why he has spent a lot of money to shorten his time in the purgatory.

Fig. 4: VIRTUAL TRANSFER, Witnesses: Rudolf von Ringoltingen is speaking about his time in purgatory.

Or the last witnesses are reflecting about the *Trottinett*, a Swiss kickboard prototype. Seven youngsters – professional kickboard-hell drivers – give us an introduction in the fascination of their daily life. It may look funny in our days, but don't forget that these constructions in some years will be documents of our time concerning objects of the Swiss National Museum collection.

Fig. 5: VIRTUAL TRANSFER, Witnesses: A young kickboard driver is speaking about his passion.

The *archives* of the VIRTUAL TRANSFER serve as an instrument for documentation, a listing of developing activities, and as indexes. They are organized as follows:

- - systematically following the modules of the VIRTUAL TRANSFER
- - by languages, with versions in German, French, Italian, Romansh and English.

The VIRTUAL TRANSFER is not a Virtual Museum or just an information gateway. It is more like a lens filtering the essence as well as the stimulating value of these objects and understands itself as a powerful strategy for high-quality knowledge transfer. By realizing the project the museum team will be able to learn a lot about the real needs of their visitors, the real ones and the virtual ones. The keywords to establish a homogeneous dialogue with the visitors are communication, participation and feedback.
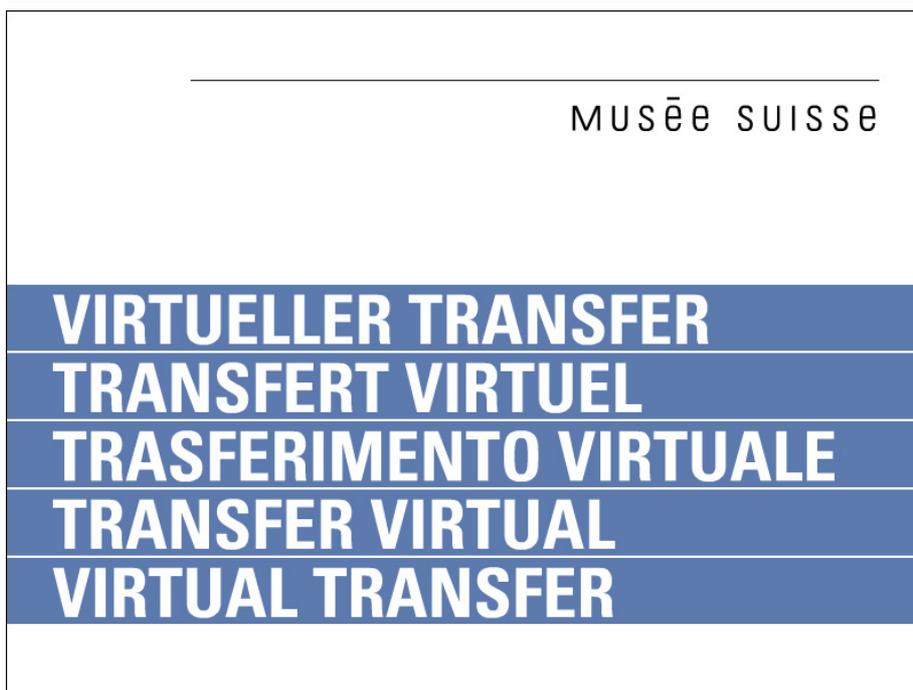
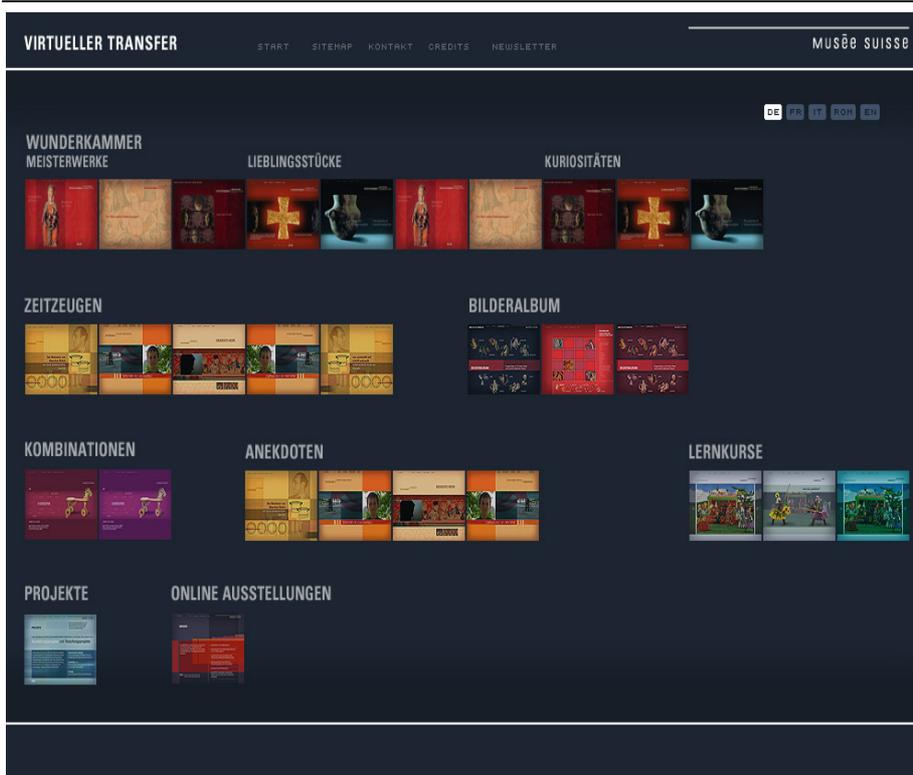Fig. 1: VIRTUAL TRANSFER, Introfilm of the prototype on CD-ROM

Fig. 2: VIRTUAL TRANSFER, Sitemap

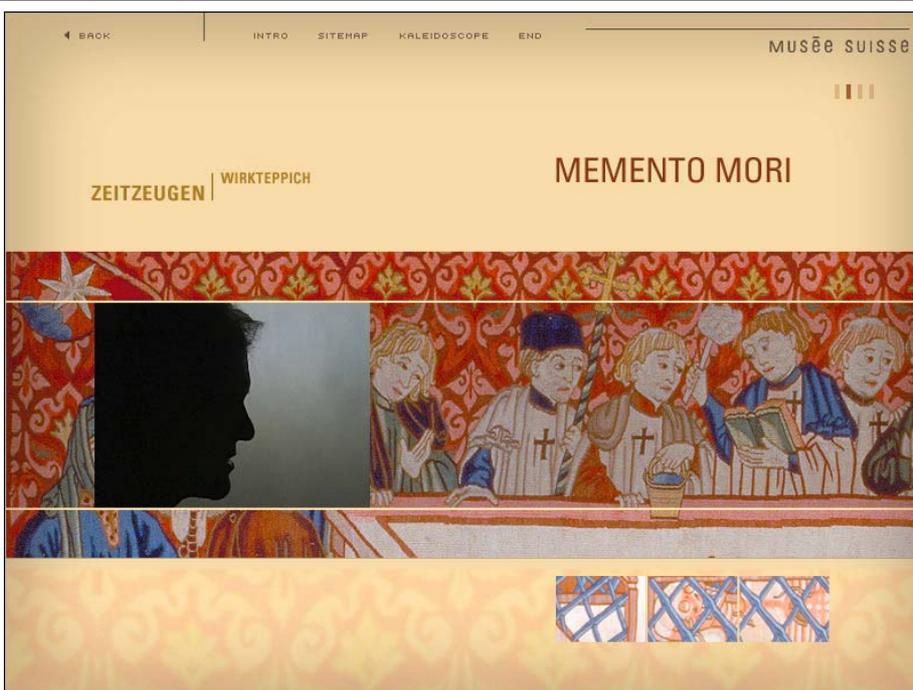Fig. 3: VIRTUAL TRANSFER, Witnesses: The Notzimmer of Mauritius Ehrlich, trick film No. 1

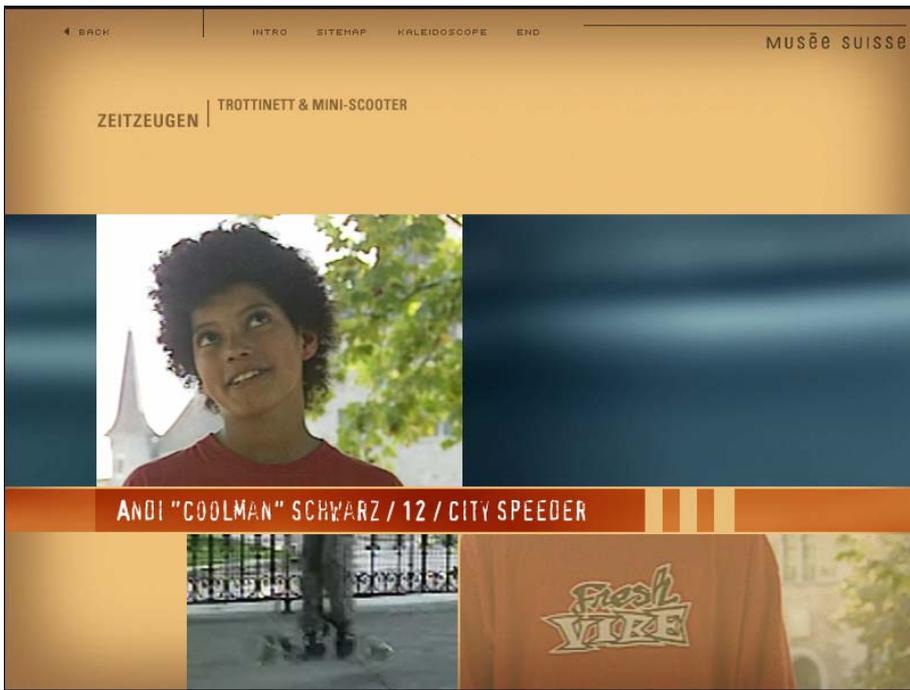Fig. 4: VIRTUAL TRANSFER, Witnesses: Rudolf von Ringoltingen is speaking about his time in purgatory.

Fig. 5: VIRTUAL TRANSFER, Witnesses: A young kickboard driver is speaking about his passion.