

KARMA / cave

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Interactive, stereoscopic VR (Virtual Reality) environment, Ars Electronica Festival 2004

Developed for the “Cave” @ Ars Electronica Center, Linz, Austria, where it is now part of their VR collection. KARMA / cave is a procedurally driven environment, where the user can interact with humanoid 3D characters by means of a very reduced set of actions: either by grabbing or dropping them. A spectator can walk around merely studying the unfolding scenes and tableaux, or act upon it by grabbing or throwing the virtual characters. The work is intimate by means of the stereoscopic “real” 3D quality of the characters, making one feel like one is sharing the same space with them. Their behavior is dark, even grim, though finally, towards the end, the characters seem to exude some sense of peace and weightlessness. One could say KARMA / cave starts from a moment of unreal death and from there, “post mortem” so to speak, becomes a site of the undead, an amusement park in the dark of sorts, a behavioral training ground, the characters, frozen in a perpetual moment of loss of control, creating an uncomfortable sense of relatedness to them. Karma is incidentally the name of the physics simulation unit within Unreal Tournament, a multi player computer game. Karma in UT or similar “3D real-time engines” describes the simulation of physical laws like gravity & kinetic forces.