

Maya Vonmoos

Digital
Energy

KEHRER

Introduction Guido Magnaguagno

Even those who know the contemporary art scene suspect a contradiction in the term "computer-generated art". They don't think a machine, in particular a black box, is capable of an independent pictorial language free of technique and technology. So "computer art" is regarded as cool, sterile, even soulless. It has not yet made a space for itself even in the most advanced art markets and art fairs. Even the most curious collectors are still hesitant. This, although, as with photography's and video's entrance to the world of art, it is foreseeable that the new, comparable technological revolution will establish itself as a matter of course in the image production of this epoch. And it will do so to a more fundamental degree and in a more radical way. As so often, harbingers can be seen outside the realm of art: in the natural sciences, in pioneering research from biotechnology to the Saturn expeditions. Harbingers are the transformations from analog to digital forms of production and mediation, the shift from the haptic to the virtual experience of space. Such epochal changes have always been mirrored – with various delays – in the visual arts; and sometimes artists have had effects on such processes with their own findings of images. In recent years and currently, the exchange between natural scientific knowledge and electronic music has advanced much further – since Edgar Varèse. The fine arts need to catch up, if they don't want to atrophy into interior decoration. When the achievements of photography and video film intruded upon the domain of the wall picture, it took years of perception, acknowledgement, and indeed digestion. Now computer art, whose design is endlessly more time-consuming and complicated without the apparatus of the game or advertising industries, awaits its necessary public breakthrough.

An artist like Maya Vonmoos still belongs to the lonely avant-garde. She gained her head start in the environs of New York, by reading what comes from Silicon Valley, and by visiting the Pratt Institute of Arts, where she learned to work with the most advanced computer programs. As a "fille de l'éphémère," which she was called as early as 1980 at Geneva's Ecole des Beaux Arts, she advanced with her later expansive, colorful metal installations to artistically occupy virtual space. After a short detour in interactive sculpture, from 2000 on the computer became her ideal and matter-of-course working instrument. Unlike interactive network art, she has always used it as a "medium of a new painting." All her animated films and digital pictures are self-generated in contrast to video productions – and this is a decisive contrast. This means they are constructed as if out of nothing, completely artificially, and thus stand virtually in time and space and matter. Their pictorial objects, their story, colors, and lights follow their own laws. Thus, the artist has her own visual ABC, her own computer-generated building blocks. The process of its production is extremely

time-consuming. But at the same time, it offers immense flexibility – a whole new realm of visual experience, a still completely unexhausted and perhaps inexhaustible wealth of forms and contents. We stand at the beginning of a pictorial revolution, an expansion of the optical into the corresponding spatial experience of the micro- and macrocosm. It is no coincidence that Maya Vonmoos is interested in the history of science and is familiar with the innovative fields of media technology and natural sciences. She has a flair for development, for metamorphoses. She creates new species and knows her Darwin. No wonder one of her main themes is titled "l'histoire naturelle." After three short exercises in which she tested her pictorial language in contexts from the erotic to the political, in 2005, with "Morning Glory," she made a successful computer-generated animated film that also processes her personal experience. Like a portraitist or genre painter. And she proved that the computer, too, can tell a story in which emotions going beyond simple "game" aesthetics can be differentiatedly shaped and definitely felt in the shifts of flowing pictorial language and literary tone registers. A commission, won in a competition at the end of 2005 and executed in 2006, for a new technology production building, unique in the world, designed by Herzog & de Meuron for the Basel health-care company Roche, was a real stroke of fortune. Her project "Absolutely Spring" satisfied the commissioning parties as an adequate form for expressing the juxtaposition of the technologically far-advanced production process and its pictorial equivalent and transparency. Furthermore, to integrate it in various parts of the building, in the plant itself and its representation. With this work, the artist was able to play the whole computer-technological register and at the same time develop her pictorial language in a way that also meets the visual needs of the staff. The optical diversity, the brilliant coloration, the repeating flow of images, the principles of transformation and metamorphosis in her work correspond highly to the material and intellectual processes of biotechnology, of *natura naturans*, an artificially created "second nature." This philosophy, inherent in the project, is supported by a palette of aphorisms from famous natural scientists, philosophers, and poets in an interactive sound installation in the entrance hall, where their knowledge, presented in single sentences, can be called up in an anonymized, trilingual form by a physical triggering act. In connection with the main film, "Absolutely Spring," natural history thus takes on a strong presence and sketches the scope of action of the future by means of the glories of the past. Maya Vonmoos' computer-generated films and digital paintings radiate an unexpected benison of images. And enliven the pictorial spring of computer art.



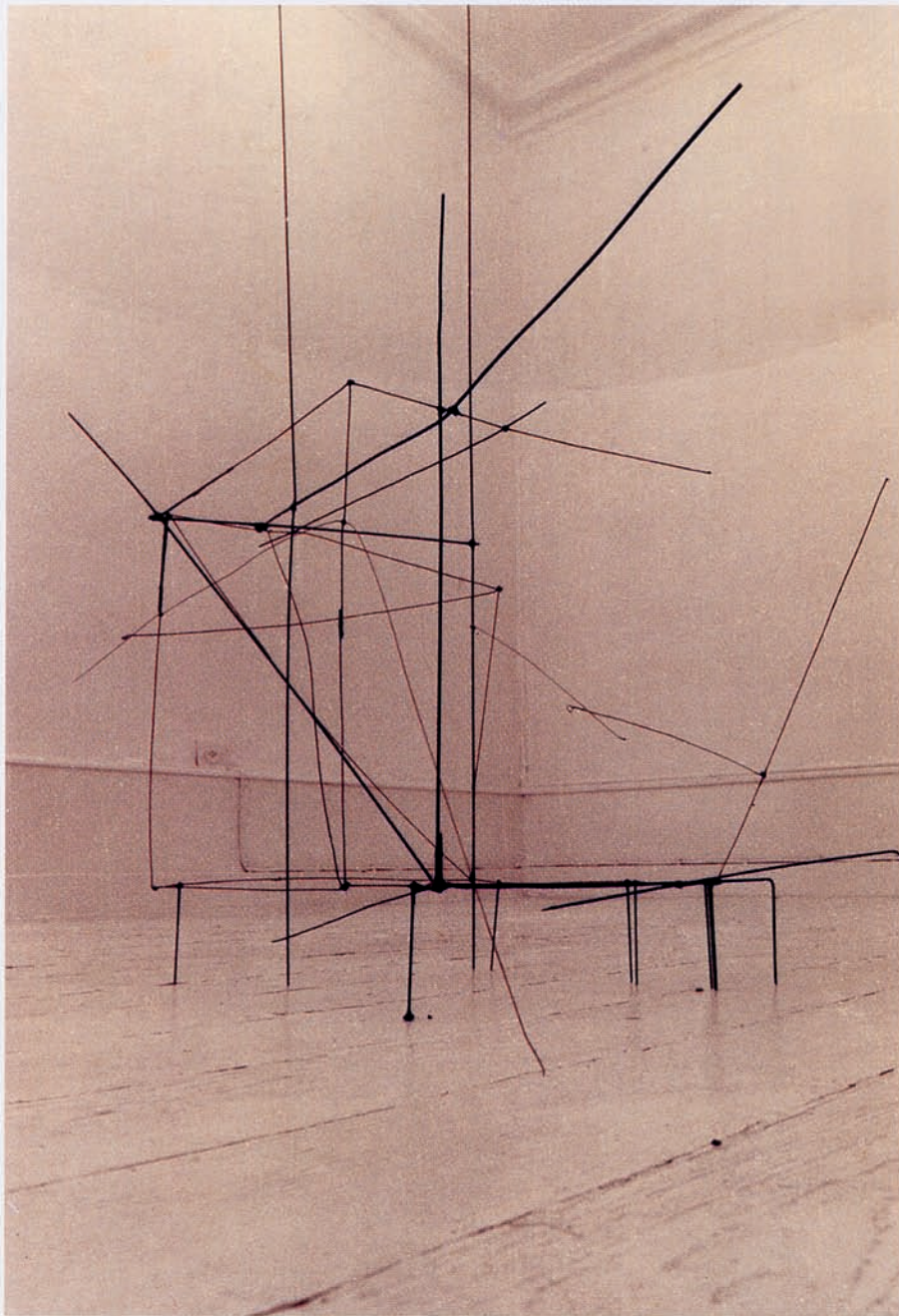
Succulent Plant, 2007, computer-generated image, dimensions variable.

Nichts ist dem Geist erreichbar als das Unendliche. Novalis

Blick zurück

Von den Transformationen und Jalas zur computergenerierten Kunst

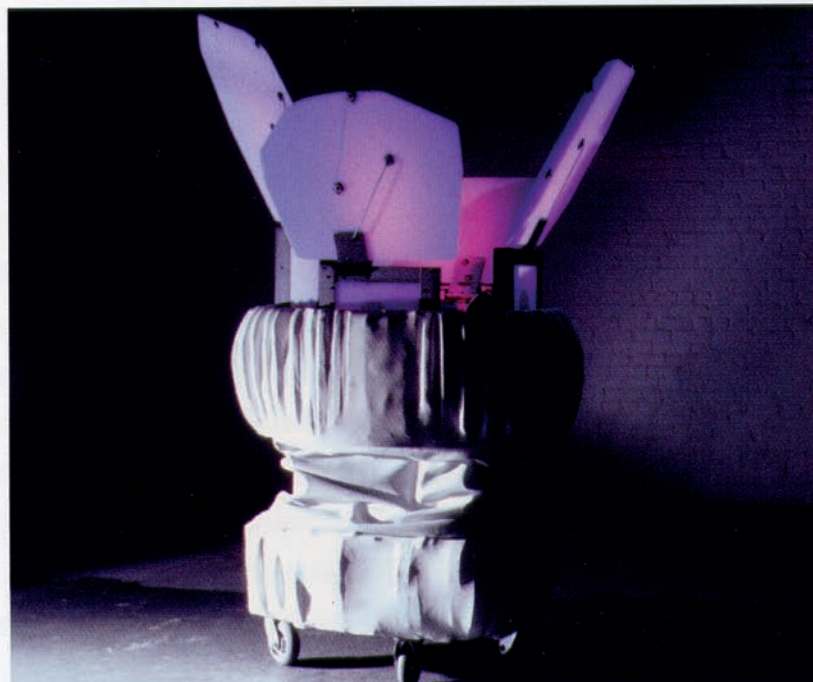
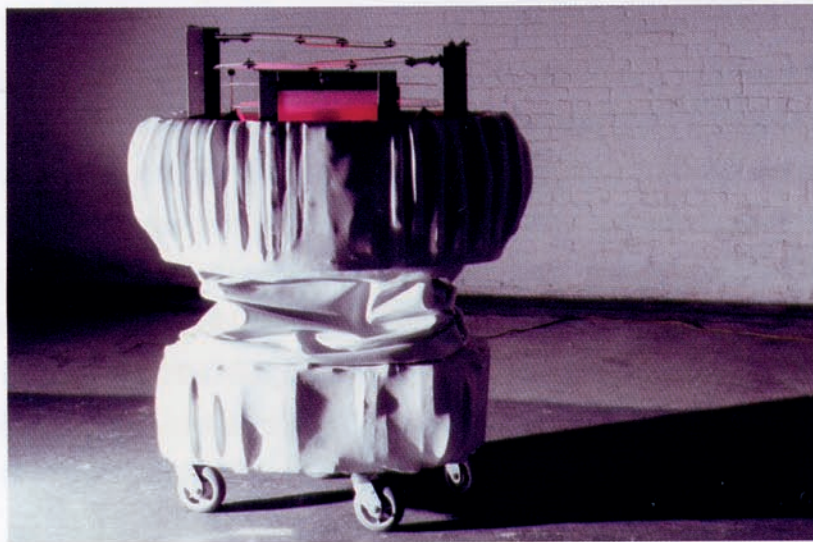
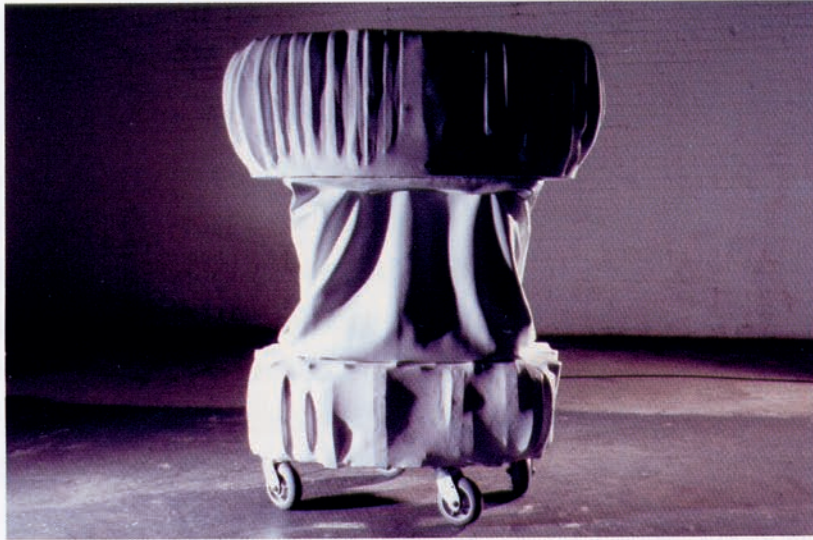
Dominique von Burg



Sensorium, 1981, soldered steel-wire, 90 x 70 x 60 cm.



Stargazer (Transformation sculpture), 1998, galvanized slotted steel angle, plywood, plexiglass, winch, steel wire, ball bearing blocks, stainless steel, casters, 168 x 81 x 86 cm.



Caterpillar (Jala sculpture), 1999, steel, aluminum, thermoplastic sheet, acrylics, wood, vinyl, mechanical systems, DC motors, sonar sensor, microcontrollers, electronic components, audio device, chromatic LED lights, 230(open) x 120 x 76 cm.



Flower Narcissus (project "Absolutely Spring"), 2006/07, computer-generated panel pictures, printed on aluminum, each: 68 x 119 cm. Installed in the area of the goods elevator at the Roche Biotechnology Production Center in Basel, Switzerland.



Emma Flower (project "Absolutely Spring"), 2006/07, computer-generated panel pictures, printed on aluminum, each: 68 x 119 cm. Installed in the area of the goods elevator at the Roche Biotechnology Production Center in Basel, Switzerland.



The earth, indeed all nature's elements, are of an invisible, spiritual nature and have souls. Paracelsus