

armenian
pavilion

XLVIII VENICE BIENNALE

international exhibition of art

june 12 - november 7, 1999



LOGGIA DEL TEMANZA
Dorsoduro, Venice.

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for chairing the Armenian Pavilion Council-1999

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for consulting on matters related to space exploration,
and for provision of "Dgher" Observatory in Armenia, as a link between Venice, Yerevan, and the Universe

Professor Raymond S. Maxwell, III, of Cornish College of the Arts, Seattle, Washington, USA
for editorial assistance provided for the publications related to the Armenian Pavilion.

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**The Armenian Pavilion at the
XLVIII International Art Biennale of Venice**

Artist: Narek Avetissian

Curator: Stepan Veranian

Commissioner: Edward Balassanian

Under the Auspices of
The Ministry of Culture, Youth Affairs and Sports of The Republic of Armenia

Organized by
The Armenian Center for Contemporary Experimental Art

Hosted by
Centro Studi e Documentazione della Cultura Armena

Loggia del Temanza, Venice, Italy

June 12 - November 7, 1999



POST FACTUM

EARTH, SPACE AND DREAM

Two incredible events transformed the nineties: the collapse of the Soviet Empire and the upsurge in electronic communications. An enormous and powerful regime, seemingly unassailable, suddenly collapsed in the early nineteen-nineties. An empire that had extended its tentacles into the everyday life of more than a billion people simply ceased to exist. Parallel to this event was a telecommunications and electronics upsurge that transformed the nature and habits of daily routines. From exploring the depths of the universe to operating the most humble household appliances, electronics became an integral, and indispensable, part of our lives.

When the Soviet Empire crumbled an enormous reservoir of intellect was let loose. The rich ocean of intellectual discourse, whose contact with the outside world had been contained, and was often distorted and adulterated, finally flowed beyond the Empire's borders.

Throughout the Soviet period the arts and sciences had routinely been inhibited by ideological dogmas—or were stifled altogether. As a result some intellectuals instinctively turned to abstract and pure sciences that, at least at the outset, did not relate to “real” life. They now find themselves caught in a transition that does not bode well for them. Adjusting to the new conditions is a matter of survival.

Artists, on the other hand, have moved on to new frontiers. They were not, and are not, hampered by limiting conditions of scientific thought or rules of conduct. Such limitations are deftly passed over by the arts community.

Within the Newly Independent States a new generation of artists is emerging. Narek Avetissian, thirty, who alone represents Armenia at the Forty-eighth Venice Biennale, is in the forefront of this new generation. He, along with his contemporaries, does not carry the burden of the Soviet-era rules and mores. They look at their surroundings with an open mind and fresh vision. They are creating a New World in which the rules of aesthetics, social behavior and artistic expression have once again become malleable.

Out of this new vision has grown an appreciation of the mysterious, the non-factual and the non-tangible. It is stimulation for their imagination rather than a forbidden boundary, a wellspring from which they create their art—their unconditional projections of what they discover in this zone. Intellectual discourse that is logically derived, deduced, and documented, has for the most part, been left behind.

The new generation of artists are not dissidents. They are not revolting against organized tyranny of mind and paralyzing rules. These artists, unlike their predecessors, are free. They are the products of a new time. It is after the fact: *Post Factum*.

With these artists we are introduced to a new age, a milieu when nothing seems impossible. The unobservable is observed. The inexplicable explained. Images of all dimensions, from the minutiae to the massive, are there to be discovered and explored. This is an age in which questions of reality; methods of understanding and means of conveying the human experience are being rewritten. What is critical for these artists is more the question than the answer.

Narek Avetissian's installation is about the earth, space and his dream that “floats” in between. In a morsel of land called Armenia, he connects an eight millennia old stone observatory in the south—preceding the English Stonehenge by several millennia—with a state-of-the-art giant radio-observatory in the north, and from there to the unknown depths of the universe 50,000 light years away. And, for the duration of the Forty-eighth Venice Biennale, this network will pulsate from the City of Dreams. Here, boundaries delineating art and science are blurred. Disciplinary spheres of inquiry are intermingled so that one discipline can just as easily be the other.

Edward Balassanian
Commissioner



Each year the Venice Biennale becomes the axis from which artists from across the globe engage us in a cultural experience. It is here at the Biennale that artists and their art open for us an opportunity to see the diversities, as well as the similarities, within the global cultural community.

It is natural for the viewers to compare the artistic pieces—to attempt to ferret out a common thread that ties all the works together. Hence one can easily fall into making simple and direct comparisons based on external factors. This is what has been common place throughout the history of art. Here at the Venice Biennale one has the opportunity to view and compare works of art on the basis of their essence and the content of their message.

Signs and symbols, which are vital in serving as a vehicle for conveying subconscious ideas, are what we typically regard in artwork. When we compare artwork we need to be aware that we are making comparisons at only one level. Certainly this level is important and rich in diversity, it is a level at which we can come to an understanding of man's spirituality, discover new meanings and enjoy the breadth of art. A level vital for the arts. But it does not reveal everything. Dangers lurk at this level.

One of the greatest dangers of viewing art as merely a collection of signs and symbols is that it leads to comparisons. Comparisons in turn can lead to superficial understanding. There can be an unlimited number of comparisons made for each piece of artwork. Further, comparisons can easily lead us astray, lose meaningful interpretation and fall short of providing us with a deeper understanding of art. In fact, comparisons hold little ultimate value, cloud possible understanding and can lead to a chaos of interpretations. As the saying goes, "A pimple may be compared with Mount Everest, and a berry with one's uncle".

There is, however, another possible system to be used in comparisons. In such a system meaning is derived from function and the internal relation of elements in the object. In using such a system one passes through similarities and diversities and gains new understanding. New ideas, motifs and relations are illuminated by the common thread that runs through the pieces, though this system of comparisons is far more complex to grasp than simple comparisons. This system of comparison through function and internal relation holds a great potential for understanding.

Narek Avetissian's "Post-Factum" reflects the general tendencies in contemporary art. He uses a sign system to engage his audience. His sign system is significant, in part, because it reflects contemporary trends of understanding of the human mind. But too, his sign system retains elements of a spiritual element within humans.

Universal and encompassing, Narek Avetissian's project is at once personal and global. Too, he has created a work that is both an art piece and a non-art piece. A non-art piece because he wishes to leave behind the traditional methods of artistic expression. He seeks to emancipate imagination—most specifically his imagination. In Post-Factum he presents the viewer with a number of possible options, some limited combinations, all created out of many elements. By selecting from possible combinations of objects, Avetissian is recreating images, both real and potential, that exist in the universe.

Post-Factum shakes the foundations of traditional iconography. His imaging becomes more and more accidental because it is influenced by internal vision. Ideas and images are repeated. In his work we witness a broad chasm between motif and meaning. There is this inclination of violating and crossing borders in all of Narek Avetissian's works. Post-Factum is only one expression of this tendency. In using different techniques he creates a consistency in his overall artistic tendencies. The idea of "two infinities" is presented in Post-Factum. The first infinity is of unending disruptions; the other infinity is one of continuity. We witness the artist's quest for the inclusion of the entire human race between these two



poles. Every personality is embraced in this overall movement, where everyone, without relinquishing his or her identity, is part of the dynamic and developing whole—a collective passion.

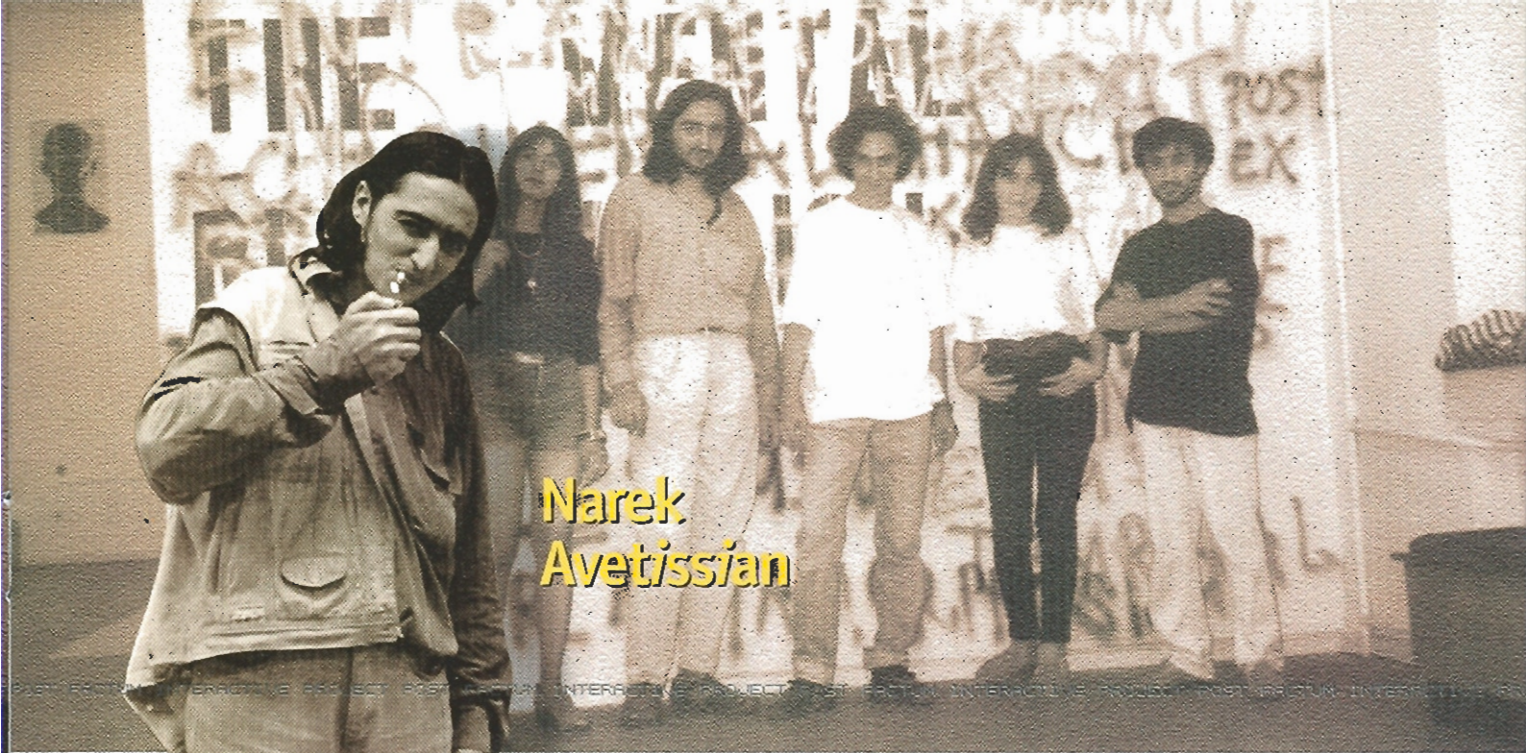
Post-Factum moves through enormous depths. From semi-dark spaces emerge and take form multi-faceted personalities. What we see are the formation of new personalities. Post-Factum deals with the universalization of man as a perpetual process. The indestructibility of eternity is considered. A vision of perpetuity emerges. Infinities become evidence that—in the future—they are equal, or—in the past—one is larger than the other.

Avetissian gives us a possible answer: Perpetuity is eternal and eternities are equal perpetuities. Eternity, leaving behind its dissolving past, constantly unfolds before us a world of possibilities, but leaves behind nothing.

No matter how private Post-Factum may be, what emerges is only a fragment of a bigger concept. This project, being experienced simultaneously in Venice, as well as in Armenia, is also extending, expanding and changing as it moves toward the edge of the universe.

It is one step towards the summit of the absolute.

Stepan Veranian
Curator



Narek Avetissian

Date of Birth: September 20, 1969

Place of Birth: Yerevan, Republic of Armenia

Education: 1988, graduated from P. Terlemezian School of Art
1988-92, studied at the Painting Department of the Institute of Arts and Theater of Yerevan, Republic of Armenia

In 1995, with a group of young artists organized "ACT", an action-group dedicated to search and discovery of alternative means of expression, by intervening in unconventional environments and systems.

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 1998 "Yerevan Biannual Exhibition of Avant-Garde Art - 98"
Armenian Center for Contemporary Experimental Art (ACCEA), Yerevan, Armenia.
- 1996 "Beautiful Progress", ACCEA, Yerevan, Armenia
"POST FACTUM", "ACT" Group, Museum of Literature, Yerevan, Armenia
"INTERVENTION IN A CLOSED SYSTEM", "ACT" Group
Factory of Robotics, Yerevan, Armenia
- 1995 "YEREVAN-MOSCOW", Central House of Artists, Moscow, Russia
"ART DEMONSTRATION", "ACT" Group, ACCEA
Yerevan Museum of Contemporary Art, Yerevan, Armenia
"ACT", Ex-Voto Gallery, Yerevan, Armenia
- 1994 "CLEAN CREATION", Gallery of "Arvest" Magazine, Yerevan, Armenia
"YEREVAN LANDSCAPE", Museum of Russian Art, Yerevan, Armenia
"YOUTH EXHIBITION", Painter's House, Yerevan, Armenia
"THIRD EXHIBITION", ACCEA, Toumanian Museum, Yerevan, Armenia
- 1992 "THIRD FLOOR", Painter's House, Yerevan, Armenia
- 1991 "MONOCHROME", Aesthetics Center, Yerevan, Armenia

ONE PERSON EXHIBITIONS

- 1993 V International Festival of Classical Music, Curator Vladimir Spivakov, Colmar, France.
- 1992 "ACHROMATIC PERFORMANCE", "N.N." Gallery, Lublin, Poland
"WILD", Gallery Nova, Lublin, Poland.

PERMANANT COLLECTIONS

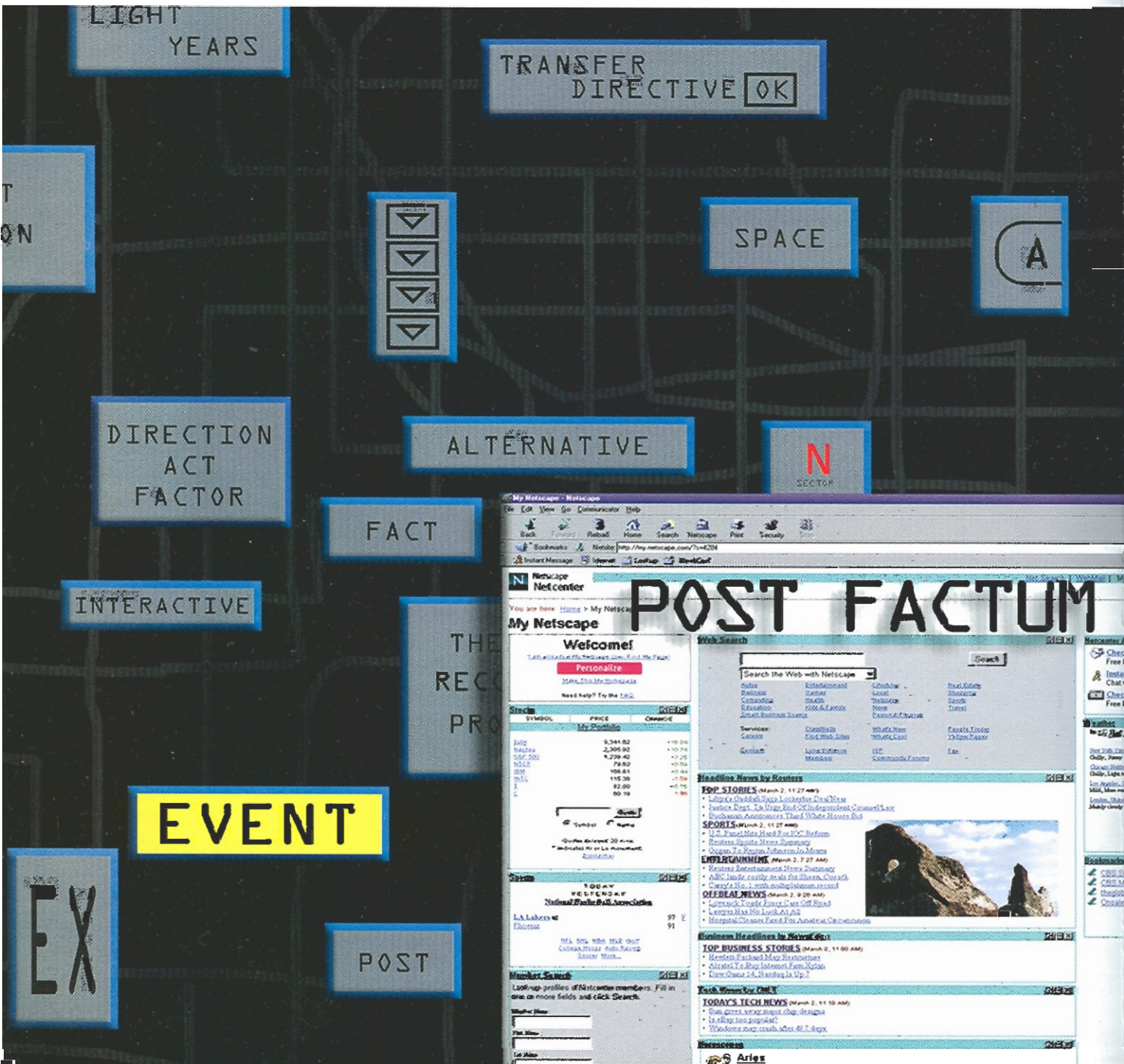
- Zimerli Museum, Washington D.C., U.S.A.
Modern Art Museum, Marbey, Spain.
National Gallery, Lublin, Poland.

CATALOGUES

- 1998 "Yerevan Biannual Exhibition of Avant Garde Art - 98", ACCEA, Yerevan, Armenia.
- 1995 "The Armenian Contemporary Art 1980-1995", Moscow, Russia.
- 1993 "V International Festival of Classical Music", Colmar, France.

POST FACTUM – EARTH, SPACE, DREAM: An Interactive Project by Narek Avetissian

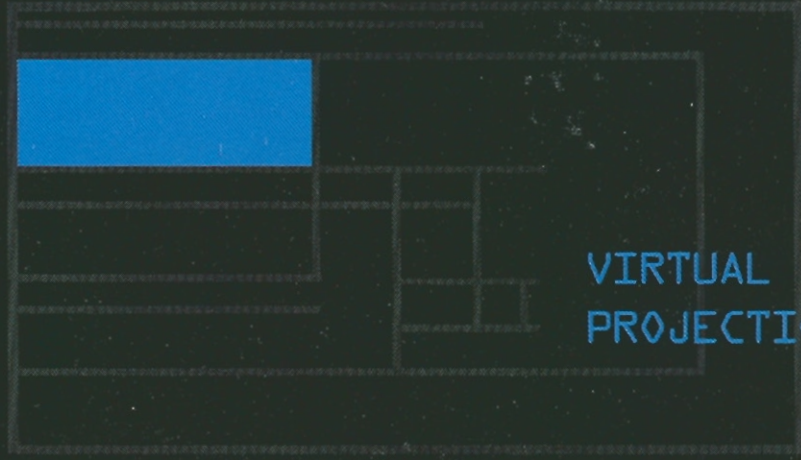
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POST FACTUM – EARTH, SPACE, DREAM: An Interactive Project by Narek Avetissian

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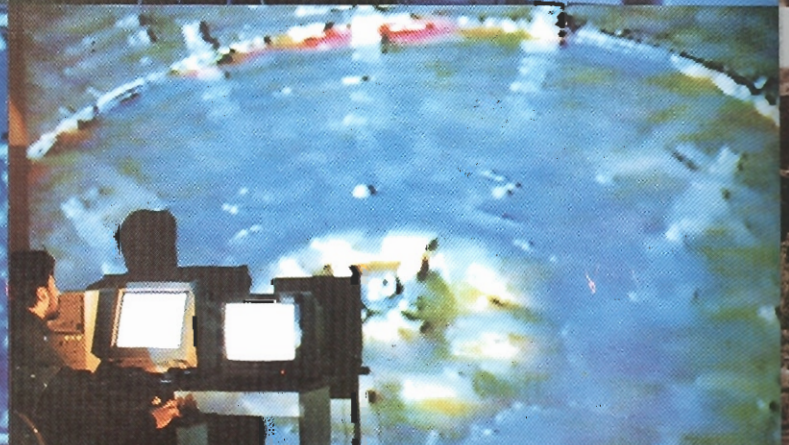
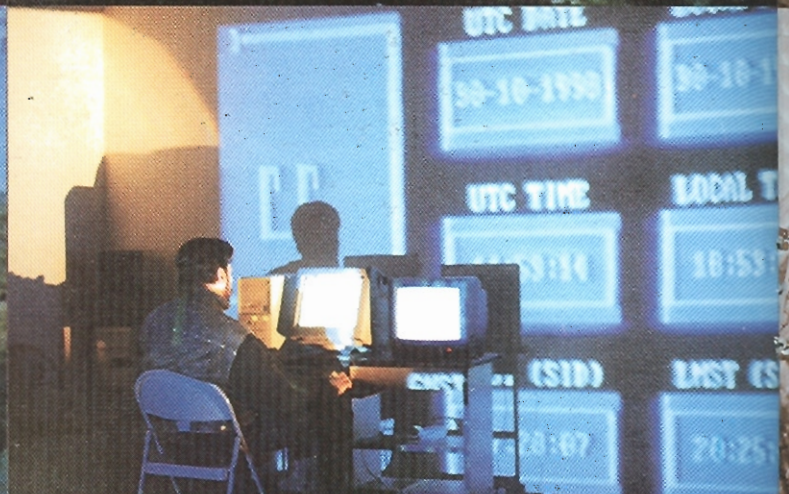
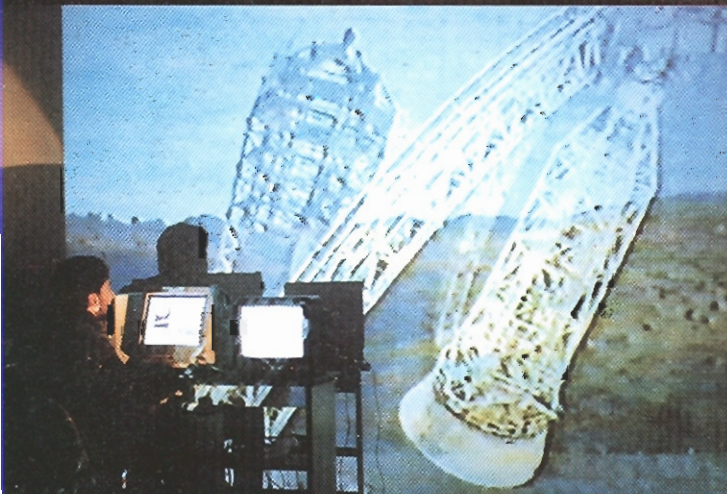
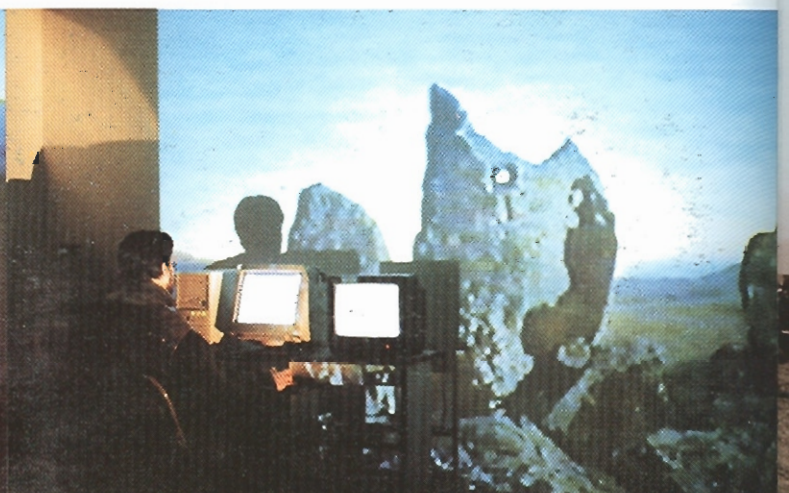
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VIRTUAL
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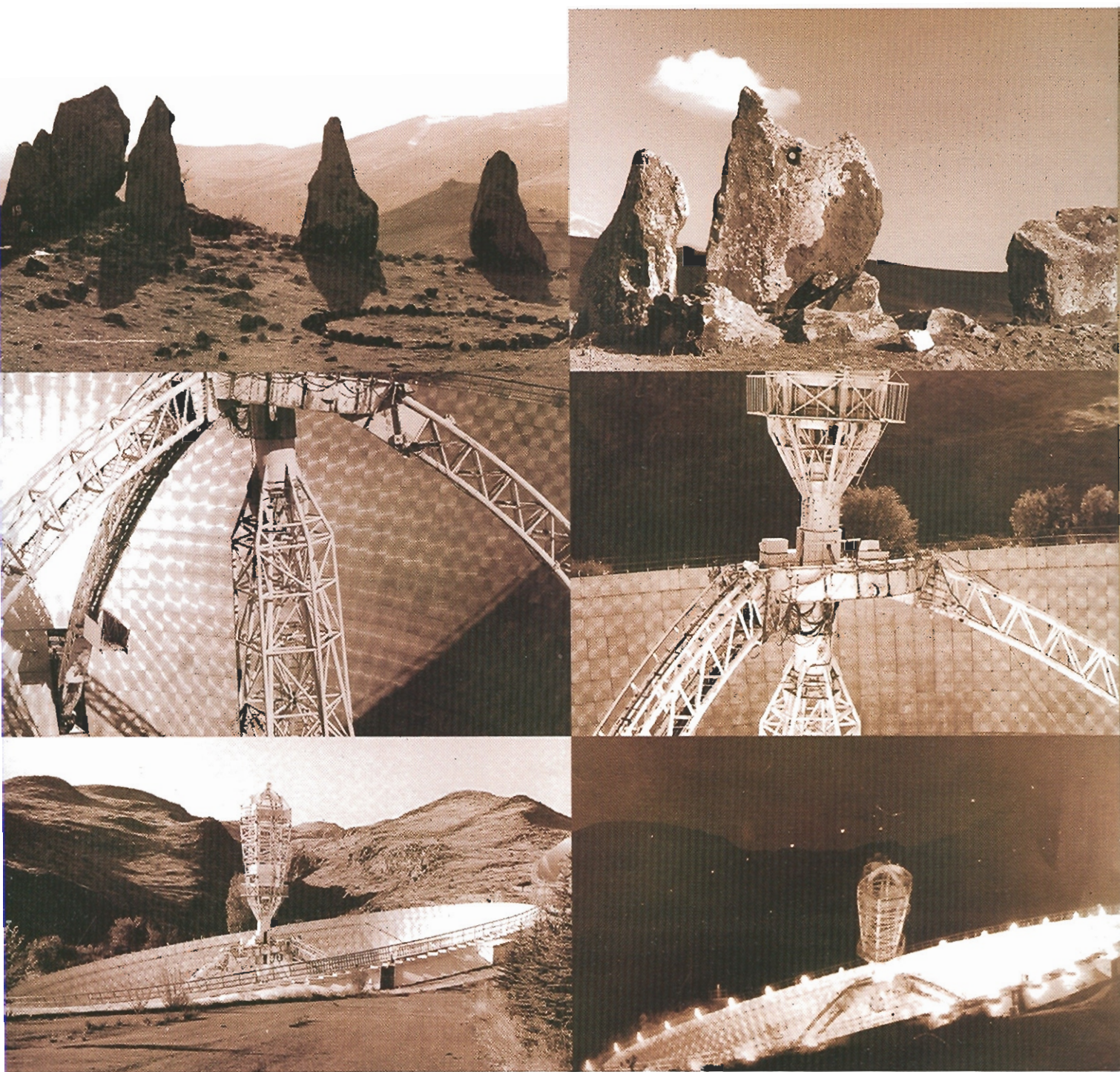
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"POST FACTUM"

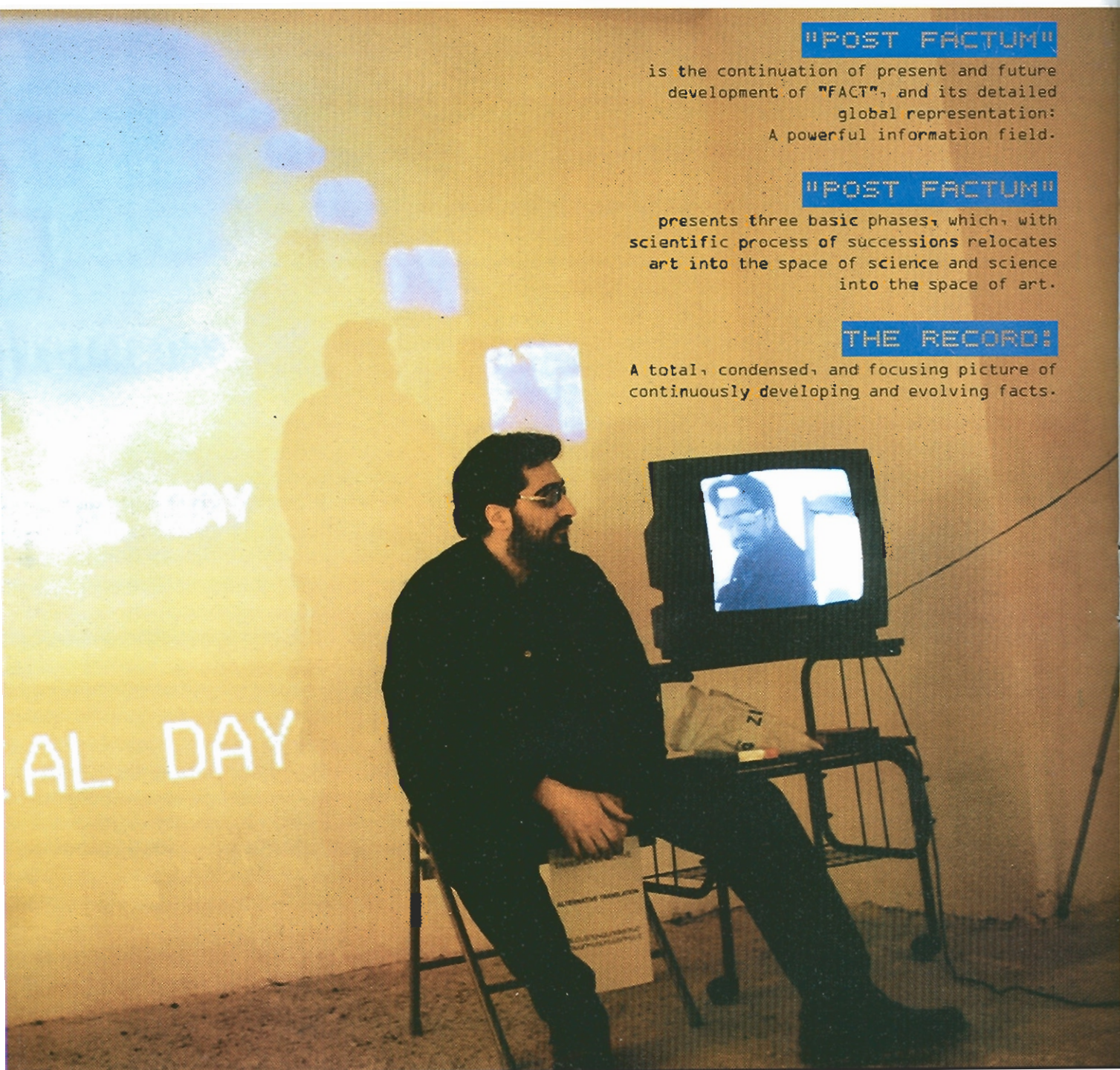
is the continuation of present and future development of "FACT", and its detailed global representation: A powerful information field.

"POST FACTUM"

presents three basic phases, which, with scientific process of successions relocates art into the space of science and science into the space of art.

THE RECORD:

A total, condensed, and focusing picture of continuously developing and evolving facts.



POST FACTUM – EARTH, SPACE, DREAM: An Interactive Project by Narek Avetissian

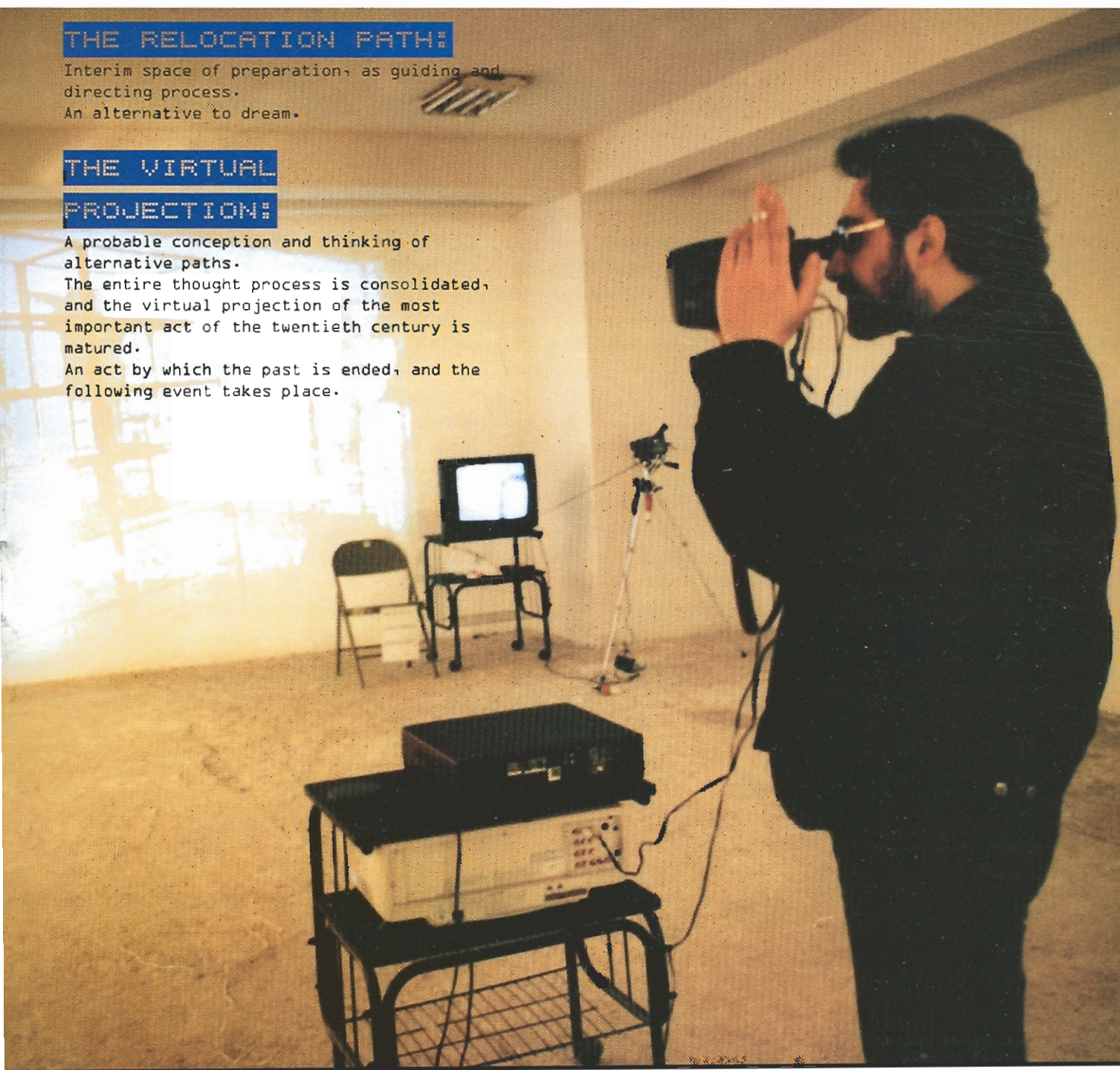
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THE RELOCATION PATH:

Interim space of preparation, as guiding and directing process.
An alternative to dream.

THE VIRTUAL PROJECTION:

A probable conception and thinking of alternative paths.
The entire thought process is consolidated, and the virtual projection of the most important act of the twentieth century is matured.
An act by which the past is ended, and the following event takes place.



THE ARMENIAN CENTER FOR CONTEMPORARY EXPERIMENTAL ART

Founded by Sania and Edward Balassanian in 1995

ACCEA is a non-profit Private Voluntary Organization, registered in Yerevan and New York, dedicated to promotion of Armenian avant-garde art.

The mission of ACCEA is:

- To encourage and facilitate uninhibited expression and creativity.
- To support the process of search, discovery, and conquest of "new frontiers".
- To create a non-commercial environment, for counteracting commercialization of the creative process.
- To present Armenian contemporary art at the international arena.
- To promote an interactive artistic community of Armenia proper and the Armenian Diaspora.
- To organize intellectual discourse: seminars, conferences, etc.
- To create multi-media art and reference library.

Since 1992, ACCEA has gone a long way. It has created a vibrant venue for young and aspiring artists' quest for discovery and excellence. Has established tradition of annual exhibitions of young artists, of photography, and, of design. It has founded an experimental theater group, and, the crown of them all, the Yerevan Biannual Exhibition of Avant-Garde Art (Yerevan Biennale). In addition, many individual and group exhibitions and concerts have been organized, since inauguration of the Center's new facility in Yerevan.

CENTRO STUDI E DOCUMENTAZIONE DELLA CULTURA ARMENA

Established during the 1960's by a group of intellectuals in Milan, The Center for Study and Documentation of Armenian Culture and the OEMME Edizioni propose to promote and to further recognition of non-dominating cultures, mostly of the Caucasus and the Middle-East. Cultures that strive with difficulty to find room for their legitimate claims.

There have been many scientific and cultural activities fostered in these years: of particular importance has been that of the collaboration with the Faculty of Architecture of Milan Polytechnic and the National Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Armenia, making possible detailed scientific inquiries with various themes. The fruit of this long work has been published in the series "Documents of Armenian Architecture". In addition, texts have also been published on politico-historic issues, music, and literary criticism and illustrated books.

Center's headquarters presently is located in Venice, at Loggia del Temanza, an 18th century Palladian style "casin"—a library. A vast collection of literary as well as photographic and cartographic material has been made available at the loggia for the scholars' and public use.

THE ARMENIAN PAVILION COUNCIL - 1999

AT THE XLVIII INTERNATIONAL ART BIENNALE OF VENICE

For three consecutive Biennales (1995, 1997 and 1999) international committees were formed under the name of "The Armenian Pavilion Council" to facilitate the project and its financing. These Councils were composed of ardent supporters of art, and steadfast friends of Armenia, and advocates of its proper exposure on the international arena in the arts.

The Ministry of Culture, Youth Affairs and Sports of the Republic of Armenia, the artist, and the leadership of ACCEA are immensely grateful to these individuals, who have done everything possible to see this project through, and to elevate the image of Armenia and its rich and unique culture.

HONORARY BOARD

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of the Armenian Pavilion Council

1997

Ani Boyajian

1995

George Garo M. Beylerian

Nina Hovnanian

Alice Kirikian



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