

BRUMMBAER - CYBERNETIC DESIGNER of the FUTURE

By Timothy Leary

In the late 1960's, a New Breed of Young People began emerging on this planet. They were the first members of the post-industrial, electronic society of the 21st century.

Marshall McLuhan, the Canadian philosopher, predicted the emergence of this Global Electronic Village.

He said "The Medium is the Message."

This is, in my opinion, one of the most important statements ever made.

This $M = M$ equation applies to human psychology the theories of quantum physics (Einstein-Heisenberg) which demonstrate that all and everything in the universe from galaxy to quark, from you to me, exists only in field-interaction.

If you exist, you communicate. How you communicate is what McLuhan is interested in.

THE MEDIUM IS THE REALITY

The realities we inhabit are defined by the kind of signals we send and receive. Specifically and practically this means that the technology we use to package-communicate thoughts determines who we are.

Barefoot hunter-gatherers may have rich inner neuro-realities and are hyper-sensitive to the "natural" sights and smells of the jungle. But their medium was voice-gesture, thus limiting them to a very narrow scope of signals sent or received. A very limited range of external reality.

Feudal societies which package-communicate thought via the "medium" of stone tablets and illuminated manuscripts are obviously static and resistant to change. I offer as evidence, the fundamentalist Judeo-Christian-Islamic cultures.

The packaging-and-communicating of thoughts by machine-made books and magazines defines the reality of the factory-cultures which produced the efficient-robot citizens of the late 20th century.

It was the genius of Marshall McLuhan to see that the use of electrons to package-communicate our thoughts would create a new world, a global village, made up of light-speed cybernetic realities. Electronic off-on clusters also happens to be the native dialect of the brain.

THE ROBOT MASS MEDIA OF THE PRINTING-PRESS CULTURE

The realities inhabited by people in the Industrial Stage of evolution were designed and constructed in machined-metal and concrete by Newtonian architects and engineers. They fabricated the assembly-line environment-realities of their age—the "factories" in which we (pre-1990) robot-people were born (hospitals), educated (schools), lived (urban apartments), worked (offices), died (hospitals). These factories efficiently produced the final packages, the coffins in which our replaceable robot-bodies are trucked off to the final consumer warehouses, the neatly landscaped cemeteries.

ELECTRONIC REALITIES

Just now, in 1990, we are beginning to understand that the Medium of Electronics defines the Light-Speed Realities our species is going to be inhabiting in the cybernetic future.

Historians will probably designate December 1989 as the glorious date when the Cybernetic Age of Human Evolution began.

What went down with the Berlin Wall was the all-powerful industrial state which controlled its citizens like robots. An information society is based on individuals communicating freely.

And you know and I know that the Wall was not brought down by tanks and guns, but by millions of young people who were activated, mutated by electronic images of individual, pro-choice freedom, flashed across borders in the form of pirate radio broadcasts, rock records, TV, films, video-tapes, fax sheets received by the open minds of this New Breed of Global Youth.

It was Marshall McLuhan, the Voice of America, Walt Disney, BBC, John Lennon, MTV, Jimi Hendrix who brought down the Iron Curtain. If you don't believe me, ask Vaclav Havel, the poet-president of Czechoslovakia, who said: "Without a global revolution in the sphere of consciousness, nothing will change for the better in our sphere of being."

This "revolution in the sphere of consciousness" is what McLuhan was talking about. The major occupation, the central vocation, the universal profession of the human being in the 21st century will be the designing and building of Electronic Environments.

Mechanical Materialism is as outmoded as slavery. Instead of proudly showing our concrete-homes and sleek metal cars to impress others, in the 21st, we will boot-up Electronic environments, invite our friends to jack-in and help us fabricate the everchanging patterns of our interactive environments.

The great fabricator-wizards of the future will be electronic artists, digital architects, cyber-designers. This new profession will map and create the new worlds of Cyberia.

Now, please allow me to introduce to you one of the first wizards to practice this new profession of electronic architecture.

His name is Brummbaer.

WHO IS BRUMMBAER?

Brummbaer is, like the Greek Phidias, the Italian Giotto, the Dutch Rembrandt, one of the first masters of this new art medium. He is one of the first Wizard Fabricators of the cybernetic realities of the 21st century.

Brummbaer is, as you would expect, a man of all centuries and cultures. When you see him strolling down the avenues of your mind in his white suit, white hat, white scarf, you will recognize him as a living work of art.

Brummbaer is a reincarnation of Ryokan, elegant, suave, sophisticated.

Brummbaer is a re-realization of all the legendary rampaging Bohemians, hurricane creative van Goghs, typhoon flamboyant Cezannes, tempestuous cultural innovative Picassos, earthquaking Pan-Dionysius poet-artists, riot-ruckus, reality-scrambling jazz-innovators who have swept through human history on the tides of erotic-chaos and precise, sensual commotion.

Brummbaer is a cyber-dancer, surfing those tsunami waves of aesthetic signals that explode off our screens into our naked eyeballs and sweep through our brains, flooding the receptor sites of our synapses with pornographic neural signals that expand our realities.

For starters, Brummbaer is the construction engineer who "realized" in digital patterns the cyberspace blueprints of William Gibson.

When *Neuromancer* was published it created in the minds of millions a longing lust to visit Cyberia, the computerized-world of electronic data which is the habitat of the 21st century human.

Gibson's brilliant words shuttled us through the pages of his book into the Matrix, the new universe of information. But what did it look like in its shimmering digital form?

BRUMMBAER'S TRAINING FOR HIS FUTURE ROLE

Brummbaer knew, perhaps as well as anyone on the planet, because since 1965 he has been a neuronaut, a tantric yogin, an video-hormonal explorer of the inner world of psychedelia. From Ernst Fuchs, the visionary Viennese, he learned how to use paint and canvas to chart and map the yantric-mandala geography that he recorded on his polaroid brain.

In 1969 he performed light shows with Frank Zappa and the legendary German rockbands Amon Duul II, Tangerine Dream.

In 1971 he founded his country's first and largest underground magazine. Under his editorship *Germania* became what Jann Wenner's *Rolling Stone* magazine was in America, what Richard Neville's *Oz* magazine was in England, what *Fools Mate* is today in Japan. The expression of young, avant garde, electrifying, shocking futuristic ideograms.

In the early 1980's Brummbaer splashed his incandescent erotic art in *Playboy*, *Penthouse* & *Transatlantik*; unveiled a major exhibition in *Galerie Klinzer*, Munich; produced and designed computer-animation effects for top German TV shows.

These, it seems to me, are good, basic training exercises for one who is going to convert the electronic screen into an intimate sensual extension of the brain.

In 1986 my company Futique obtained the software rights to Gibson's novel *Neuromancer*. Brummbaer was immediately seen as the logical choice to realize cyberspace on screen.

BRUMMBAER GIVES WILLIAM GIBSON A "NICE SHOCK"

When Gibson saw Brummbaer's visions of the Matrix he said: "After a couple of years of seeing *Neuromancer* illustrations ranging from hopeless to almost-but-not-quite, it is a nice shock to find something that looks like what I had in mind. Really hot."

WHY IS BRUMMBAER'S ELECTRONIC ART "REALLY HOT"?

Brummbaer, as you now realize, is not some Amiga cowboy, some computer nerd with a digital paint program He is not some girl-shy, inhibited hacker jacking-in to his lonely screen.

He has been for 30 years a master of sensual expression. When Brummbaer starts spraying pixels he converts your screen from this flat pane of plastic into these delicious sensual, landscapes.

He floats you down your cerebral canals, through the luscious lobes of your brain.

He floods you with text-book illustrations of the carnal, voluptuous, yin-yang potentials of your neurology. He is designing the avenues and boulevards of your brain.

The serious, no-nonsense hardware plumbers over there at Sony, those spread-sheet nerds at Microsoft, those MBA marketing cuties at Apple, those jumpy cartoon animators at Nintendo never dreamed that the computer could create these tropical islands of voluptuous, carnal electronic forests of enticement.

Once you have let your optical membranes caress Brummbaer's electrifying, throbbing screens you understand that your brain is a soft, juicy, pulsing cyber-sea with 100 billion computers (called neurons) waiting to be strobed with intelligent, funny digitals.

It is no accident that Brummbaer is the first electronic painter to humanize, eroticize the screen. He was, after all, the darling of Amsterdam's Wetdream Festival in 1971. He had spent twenty years learning how to use his skin-covered keyboard and mouse to activate and turn-on the mind-body.

Brummbaer's name will be honored in the cybernetic Hall of Fame because he was the one of the first hackers to convert the computer into a pulsating, vibrating instrument of pleasurable communication.

IT TAKES WORLDLY, SOPHISTICATED PEOPLE TO DESIGN THE CYBERNETIC FUTURE

Common sense tells us that we can only go as far into the future as we have conscious understanding of the past.

We know that our future is going to confront us with new challenges, new complexities. We also know that the values, habits, emotions, thought-communication practices of the past are going to effect our behavior in the future. For good and for evil. For growth or for stagnation.

It follows, does it not, that the design and construction of our new realities will be best performed by men and women who understand the past. As the sage warns us: "Those who do not understand the past are destined to repeat it."

We can observe this principle at work in the first forty years of the computer "industry". The first generation of hardware engineers worked for IBM (the International Bureaucracy Machine). These dedicated, button-down, serious engineers with almost no cultural training or rich life experiences were great for the first stage. Like idiot savants these IBM guys built the roads and manufactured the steam-rollers of the electronic age.

They had no clue about where we were going or why. Their job was to produce machines that made money for the stockholders.

The next generation produced the personal computer, the "auto-mobile" in which the individual could explore the digital universe. Most of the the first generation software developers and hackers (Gates, Jobs, Kahn, Wozniak, Hawkins, Kapor) were veterans of the psychedelic consciousness movements of the 1960's and 70's. If you had logged some time navigating your own brain you were obviously better prepared to navigate around personal cyberspace.

Consider this brigade of energetic, ambitious young executives zooming around Silicon Valley who are suddenly thrown into this position of designing, not just new office appliances, but a new reality stage, new action models of human intelligence. With all due respect, these guys are just not equipped for this staggering challenge. They simply do not possess the cultural breadth.

Many thoughtful, humanist observers have worried that computers will depersonalize, robotize, mechanize human behavior. Just read one of the biographies of John Sculley and you will sympathize with these concerns.

But our species has weathered many of these cultural conflicts between corporate bureaucracies and aesthetic innovators.

And in the present case the specific challenges and promises that await us in the electronic future have been skillfully discussed by a New Breed of Cyberpunk writers.

William Gibson and William Burroughs and Thomas Pynchon and Norman Spinrad have written novels which have personalized and humanized the cybernetic future. Other sophisticated, cultured people have added historical depth to the software. Brenda Laurel with her Ph.D. in Electronic Drama. John Perry Barlow, lyricist for the Grateful Dead. Ted Nelson, the heroic prophet of hypertext. Philosopher Howard Rheingold. Stewart Brand, publisher of the *Whole Earth Review*.

These sophisticated writers remind us that electrons have only one function. Communication.

Other computer artists of sophistication are contributing to this new vision. The *Ars Futura* celebration in Barcelona, January 1990 presented stunning visuals of Rebecca Allen, Yoshiro Kawagucci, Susan Amkraut and Michael Girard. Brummbaer regularly sings the praises of his American colleagues, Ed Emshwiller and David Em.

And now, here comes Brummbaer to show us how to use the screen for interpersonal communication; how to embrace, fondle, cuddle, snuggle, enliven our brain-exchanges to the level of the high spiritual art of India, China, Tibet, Rome, Egypt, Venice, Berlin. He has sculpted digital pixels into tender, caressing mind inter-play things.

It is always the artists who blueprint and design the spirit of a culture. The 21st century is beginning to express itself in the shimmering electronic realities of these digital wizards.

Timothy Leary 1990 Los Angeles