

"UTOPIA"
An Interactive Multi-Media Installation

"Utopia" is a multi-media installation which explores the state of the environment and specifically the crisis of the contemporary urban environment. The core of the piece is an unusual interactive video game hosted by performance artist, Rachel Rosenthal, in which the viewer is asked to make a series of choices:

HEAVEN/HELL, POWER/IMPOTENCE, FICTION/REALITY, UTOPIA/DYSTOPIA...

These are the dichotomies of the city, particularly in Los Angeles, where we all desire Heaven and we don't want to confront Hell. Where we are seduced by the Hollywood fiction that we can have Wealth, Beauty, Paradise and that anything less is a failure.

The interactive video is designed to have the visceral, exciting quality of a video game while at the same time presenting compelling video imagery, text, sound score and experimental performance. Within the setting of the installation, the viewer is drawn toward the game on a large interactive monitor. Coaxed by a surrounding chorus on two additional video monitors, the viewer picks up a lazer gun and enters into collusion with a strangely bizarre and challenging interactive activity.

"Utopia" includes text, video and interactive media by Max Almy and Teri Yarbrow, with paintings by Teri Yarbrow and performance by Rachel Rosenthal. The installation utilizes the new CD-I interactive format as the vehicle for the game. Almy and Yarbrow have worked with interactive media for three years and with this work are pushing into new territory with experimental use of full motion digital video and interactive performance.

"The ultimate world-historical significance - and oddity - of Los Angeles is that it has come to play the double role of utopia and dystopia for advanced capitalism. The same place, as Brecht noted symbolized both Heaven and Hell." Mike Davis, City of Quartz