

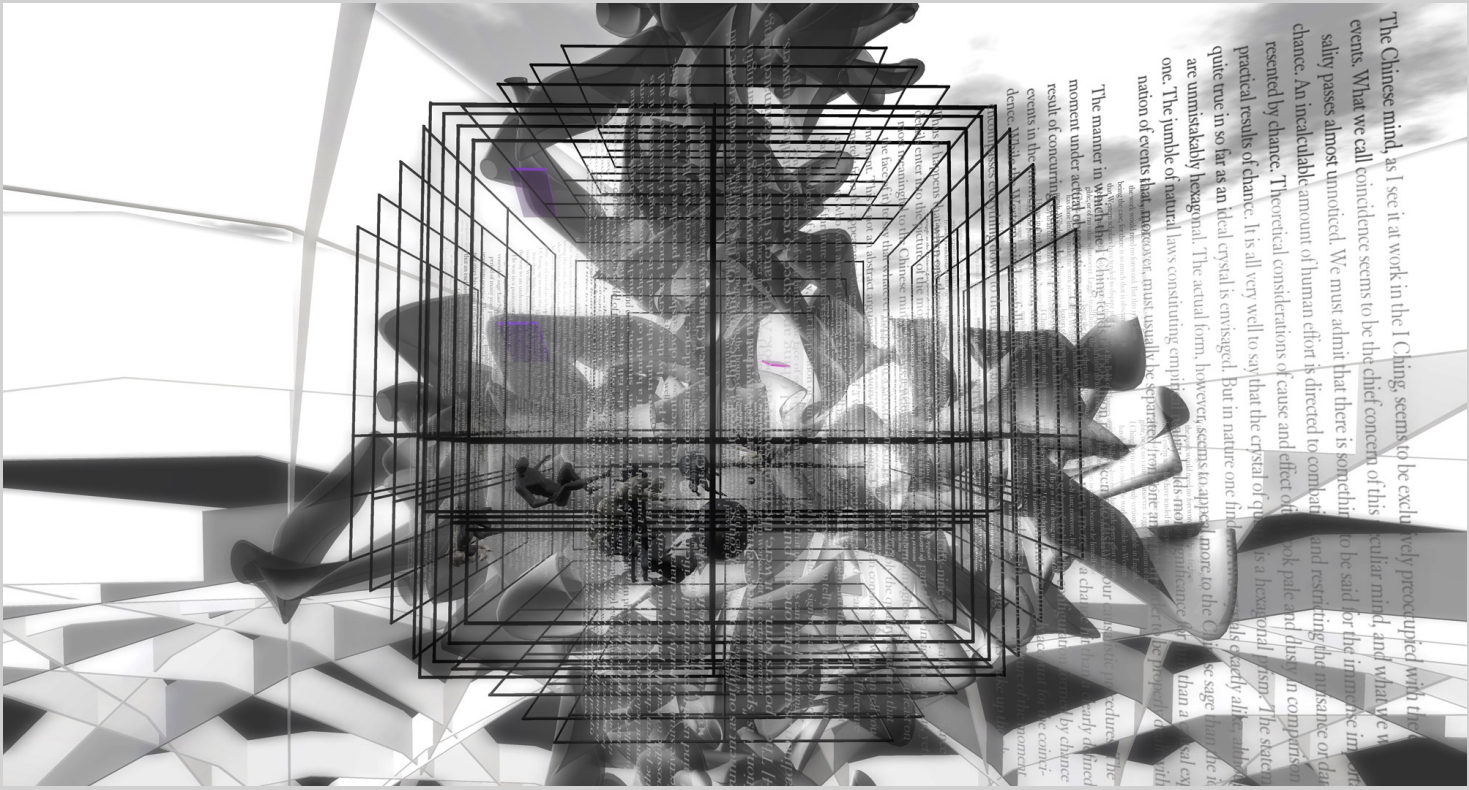
URANOMETRIA

A documentation of my “cage” project which juxtaposed Carl Jung’s introduction to Richard Wilhelm’s translation of the I Ching with Johann Bayer’s famed celestial atlas.

20.6.12

SynchroniCity

I made Uranometria upon an invitation by Marc Moana/Marc Blieux to participate in an art project called **SynchroniCity**, which he instigated and curated in Second Life in 2011, at Aire Ville Spatiale. The concept was that the work of different builders should come together and converge synchronistically in order to create new meanings and forms through their proximity.



Thus my cage was placed very near a beautiful organic construct which Marc had made; and then both his contribution and mine were surrounded by a huge revolving sphere, built out of many segments, which was created by Werner Kurosawa/Werner Van dermeersch.



18.6.12

The Age of the Enlightenment

Johan Bayer's celestial atlas, **Uranometria**, was published in 1603 and therefore pre-dates the Age of the Enlightenment by a good 50 years, if not more. And Newton was not yet even born. Nevertheless, I think that the atlas is one of the harbingers of what would be in the offering during the decades to come - the philosophy of a strictly organized, gridded, partitioned, immutable universe - one that we can understand and measure and chart, like we (supposedly) can anything else as well.



The irony for me is that this very condition which makes us the masters of the universe also constitutes the basis of Western astrology which decrees that we are the slaves of those very stars that we can measure and classify and thereby gain ascendancy over.



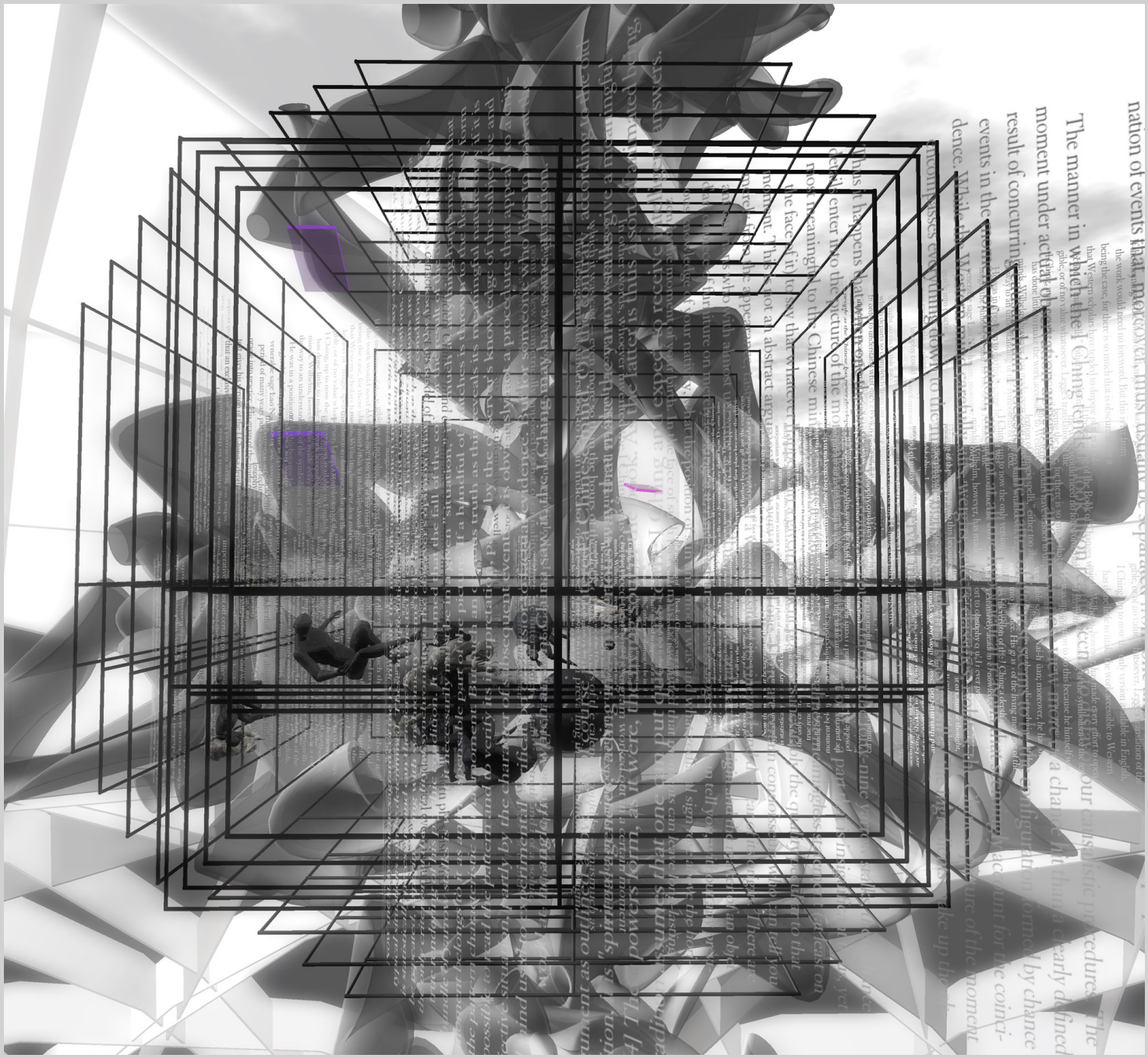
The flip side of the coin therefore says that we are nothing but the victims of our unchangeable fates/personalities which are cast by those self-same stars...



The cage

This had a prior existence at **New Genres Grid** where I still have it in place **underwater** at my island **ShapeShifter**.

I have known of **Johan Bayer's** amazing **celestial atlas** for a long time and have always wanted to do something with it - a type of remediation, if you will. However, regardless of my awe for the beauty of its spreads, the atlas has always oppressed me. Or I should say that the entire notion of a clockwork universe is something that I have a hard time with. These contradictory feelings of unease and awe are what led me to make the cage.



Although I sometimes also work with a specific end in mind, I should admit that more often than not I do not arrive at these conclusions consciously while I am actually making stuff, but only much later. I mostly just start playing around with things and somehow one thing leads to something else - my hand and my eyes are way ahead of the game in relation to my brain. I just do something. And that is how the cage also came about. I did not deliberately plan on making a cage in which a bunch of avatar sculptures were caught like flies in a spider's web to represent the idea of a mechanistic universe from which there is no out, in which the stars and constellations and the planets hold our fate.

What happened instead was that I had all of these gorgeous textures which I had gotten from the **Linda Hall site** (to the best of my knowledge the atlas is in the public domain) and I wanted to put them on something, to see how they would look mapped onto 3D objects. So, I made a whole bunch of avatar sculptures to this end. Once the sculptures

were made I saw that they needed some kind of structure to cling to. Initially I made many poles, and then it seemed that the poles needed cross bars to pull together. And, that was then the cage.

I was happy with how it looked - more or less, and I also liked the cage symbol that I had inadvertently come up with; but still I had a niggling feeling that something more was needed, that what I had made was not complete...



The I Ching

When Marc told me about **SynchroniCity**, I went to wikipedia to refresh my memory as to **what the term meant exactly**. This led me to Jung's famous text on synchronicity, which is actually his **foreword** to Richard Wilhelm's 1949 translation of the **I Ching**. From there I somehow made a connection with my Uranometria cage (in the end, a synchronistic one, I guess), and decided that what the cage needed was precisely some kind of a visualization of the contrast between the deterministic world view of the West and the fluid system of changes of the East.

Although when I made the cage I worked without deliberation, very much surprising myself with the outcome in fact; when it came to integrating the I Ching into the cage I became very deliberate and employed a design strategy to which I gave a lot of thought before I actually went and implemented it.

I did not want to do anything corny like adding Chinese visual elements to all of this. Those types of appropriations I usually tend to find quite disrespectful: I am not from that culture - I can not understand what that iconography really means, what emotional impact it is meant to deliver. I do not know the signposts - I cannot even read the text. All I know is that it is very beautiful. Which does not give me the right to ride roughshod over it and pretend that it is mine. Jung's text on the other hand, which I can understand, seems to carry similar concerns. He repeatedly emphasizes these in passages such as this one:

"I do not know Chinese and have never been in China. I can assure my reader that it is not altogether easy to find the right access to this monument of Chinese thought, which departs so completely from our ways of thinking."

My love of Jung's text and my reluctance to integrate Chinese artifacts led me to the idea of using the text itself as the element of contrast. The cage, and its avatar sculptures would be constant like Bayer's clockwork universe, whereas Jung's text would move unpredictably with the virtual winds, bringing life to the frozen structure.



I did not want the text to be easily read. If anything, I wanted it to attain continuously different meanings (as well as non-meanings); and have many entry and exit points that would perpetually come together and then blow apart - which is also my conception of how the I Ching should be approached.



Thus, another thing which I added to the wind generated motion effect was layering, which I brought about by placing all of the text on transparent backgrounds. I made many different panels on which I put different passages of Jung's foreword. All of the text had the same point size and font (Garamond). And so, as the panels blew around, the text kept deconstructing and changing since the uniformity of size and font kept merging semantic content that was on different panels. Sentences would appear one after the other, only to be immediately blown into novel configurations by the wind which kept the whole conglomeration in flux at all times.



Artist's statement (2011)

Uranometria brings together two things: Excerpts from Carl Jung's introduction to Richard Wilhelm's translation of the I Ching and the astronomical maps from Johan Bayer's Uranometria, which is the first Western celestial atlas, created in 1603.

Although the Age of the Enlightenment was still centuries away, I think that Uranometria is an early harbinger of it, presaging a mindset which is grounded in causality and reason. And then I am also thinking of the whole nature of western astrology with its mechanistic, clockwork universe in which the rigidly structured/ predetermined sojourn of the planets chart out seemingly immutable patterns of influence upon human life... Which is so very different from the fluid, ever changing universe of the I Ching which caused Jung to coin the term "synchronicity."

Thus my avatar selves are dressed up as Uranometric zodiac signs, held captive by their star bound fate which is represented by the similarly attired and caged humanoid objects that revolve around them.

In their vicinity however Jung's words float freely, tossed hither and thither by virtual winds...

The avatars

I enjoy making avatars as much as I enjoy making "things," and probably even more. What I really like to do however is to make avatars which become extensions of the structures that they inhabit, where the system/concept of one is carried through into the other. Where "things" become "people," and vice versa...



In the case of the inhabitants of the cage I wanted them to be bogged down by their celestial fate. So, I encumbered them with a small version of the cage itself, which they wore on their chests. And clinging to different parts of their bodies and their heads were the sculptures, which they also had to drag around with them. And finally, their skins were made of the celestial atlas itself.

This avatar was also given as a gift to the visitors of the cage and many people wore it and merged with the construct during their stay - thus becoming "Uranometria," while being surrounded by the "I Ching."



13.6.12

Pages for a flipbook

I know that for many people flipbooks are in dubious taste. As for me, I love making them and have quite a collection of them on issuu.

I could talk about things such as how I am conceptualizing the irony of using the workings of an analog artifact for digital output and so forth, justify myself in that way I suppose. But, I am not going to do that: I simply like how they look, their cleanness, the beauty of the issuu interface itself, that lovely reflection effect in the gutter and the edges that gives the books a very sophisticated faux volume. And also the flip effect.

Yet another reason may also be that I miss my old profession, graphic design, and try to compensate for the loss by making flipbooks which go by the same design rules as physical publications do.

The spreads below come from a book called **alpha.tribe tales**, in which I put together 4 different "stories," which my avatars participated in.





What we call coincidence seems to be the chief concern of this peculiar mind, and what we worship as causality passes almost unnoticed. We must admit that there is something to be said for the immense importance of chance.



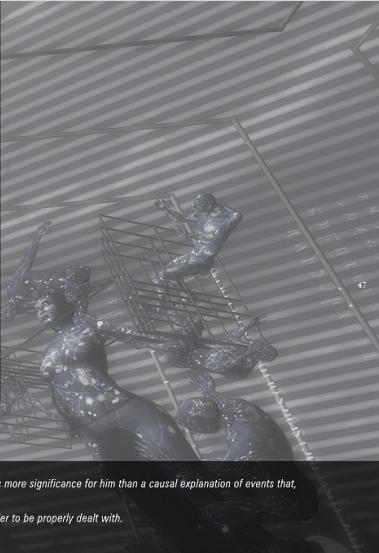
Bayer's main source of star positions and magnitudes for the Ptolemaic constellations was the catalogue of Tycho Brahe, augmented by observations of his own. In the first edition of the *Uranometria*, a catalogue of stars in each constellation was printed on the reverse of each plate. It was in these lists that the famous Greek and Roman letters identifying the brightest stars made their appearance. They are now known as Bayer letters. Bayer did not allocate letters to any non-Ptolemaic constellations; that was done by later astronomers.

Image processing with metaverse avatars. November 2011.



Image processing with metaverse avatars. November 2011.

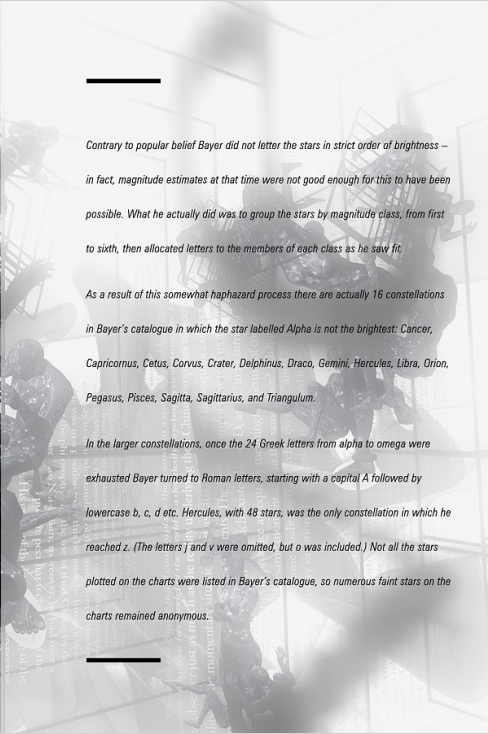
An incalculable amount of human effort is directed to combating and restricting the nuisance or danger represented by chance. Theoretical considerations of cause and effect often look pale and dusty in comparison to the practical results of chance. It is all very well to say that the crystal of quartz is a hexagonal prism. The statement is quite true in so far as an ideal crystal is envisaged. But in nature one finds no two crystals exactly alike, although all are unmistakably hexagonal. The actual form, however, seems to appeal more to the Chinese sage than the ideal one.



The jumble of natural laws constituting empirical reality holds more significance for him than a causal explanation of events that, moreover, must usually be separated from one another in order to be properly dealt with.



The moment under actual observation appears to the ancient Chinese view more of a chance hit than a clearly defined result of concurring causal chain processes. The matter of interest seems to be the configuration formed by chance events in the moment of observation, and not at all the hypothetical reasons that seemingly account for the coincidence.



Contrary to popular belief Bayer did not letter the stars in strict order of brightness – in fact, magnitude estimates at that time were not good enough for this to have been possible. What he actually did was to group the stars by magnitude class, from first to sixth, then allocated letters to the members of each class as he saw fit. As a result of this somewhat haphazard process there are actually 16 constellations in Bayer's catalogue in which the star labelled Alpha is not the brightest: Cancer, Capricornus, Cetus, Corvus, Crater, Delphinus, Draco, Gemini, Hercules, Libra, Orion, Pegasus, Pisces, Sagitta, Sagittarius, and Triangulum. In the larger constellations, once the 24 Greek letters from alpha to omega were exhausted Bayer turned to Roman letters, starting with a capital A followed by lowercase b, c, d etc. Hercules, with 48 stars, was the only constellation in which he reached z. (The letters j and v were omitted, but o was included.) Not all the stars plotted on the charts were listed in Bayer's catalogue, so numerous faint stars on the charts remained anonymous.

Image processing with metaverse avatars. November 2011.

In the spreads for the Uranometria "tale" I added an informational typographic layer on top of the images in which I combined passages from Jung's foreword to the I Ching with text by Ian Ridpath that discusses some of the important aspects of Johan Bayer's Uranometria, his contributions to the field of astronomy. The text on the dark background belongs to Jung, the text on the white background is the text about Uranometria.

Image processing with
metaverse avatars.
November 2011.

While the Western mind carefully sifts, weighs, selects,
classifies, isolates, the Chinese picture of the moment
encompasses everything down to the minutest
nonsensical detail, because all of the ingredients
make up the observed moment.

In other words, whoever invented the I Ching was
convinced that the hexagram worked out in a certain
moment coincided with the latter in quality no less than
in time. To him the hexagram was the exponent of the
moment in which it was cast -- even more so than the
hours of the clock or the divisions of the calendar could
be -- inasmuch as the hexagram was understood to be
an indicator of the essential situation prevailing in the
moment of its origin.

This assumption involves a certain curious principle that I have termed synchronicity, a concept that formulates a point of view
diametrically opposed to that of causality. C. G. Jung, 1949



12.8.12

alpha.tribe tales

I like to think of all of this as part of a larger whole, which I call alpha.tribe tales. I try to document these as small websites, using tumblr and blogspot and I interlink them so that visitors may wander from one to the other:

modernist.avatar: <http://modernistavatars.tumblr.com/>; foolz.gold: <http://foolzgold.tumblr.com/>; entre loup et chien: <http://twilightavatars.tumblr.com/>; The Tales of Ruysch: <http://ruyschavatars.tumblr.com/>; abject.avatar: <http://abjectavatar.tumblr.com/>; alpha.tribe: <http://alphatribe.tumblr.com/>; the island: <http://alphatribeisland.blogspot.com/>; ShapeShifter: <http://shapeshifterisland.blogspot.com/>; Asemia: <http://elifayiter.wix.com/asemia>

Admittedly, many of them are incomplete, and all of them are works in progress...



11.6.12

Acknowledgments

Marc Moana, for giving me the opportunity to take my play with the cage much further. The cage, complete with Jung's text, nowadays lives on Marc's OpenSim grid Aire Mille Flux, which you can join [here >>>](#).

Heidi Dahlsveen (Mimesis Monday in SL), for giving me a full collection of her animations and poses without which the documentation of these projects would have ended up being a rather stiff and soulless affair. Truth be told, I probably would not even bother to do it were it not for the amazing expressiveness that my avatars attain thanks to her brilliant work.



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