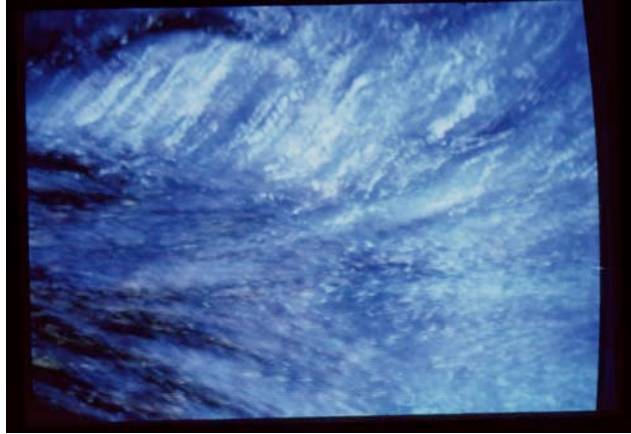


# PASSAGE

*From one state of consciousness to another.*







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*From one state of consciousness to another.*

*By Christine Whittaker*

*Additional neurological research  
and editing Virginia Engelhardt.*

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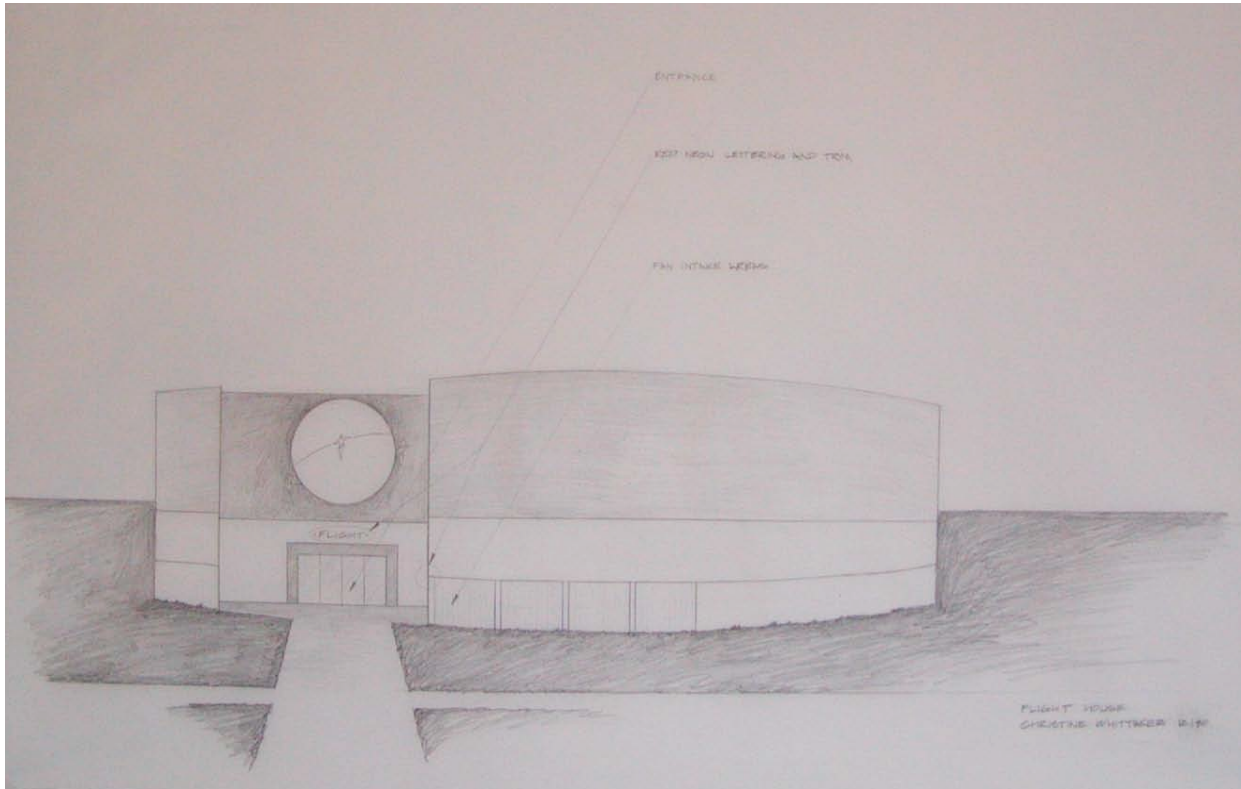
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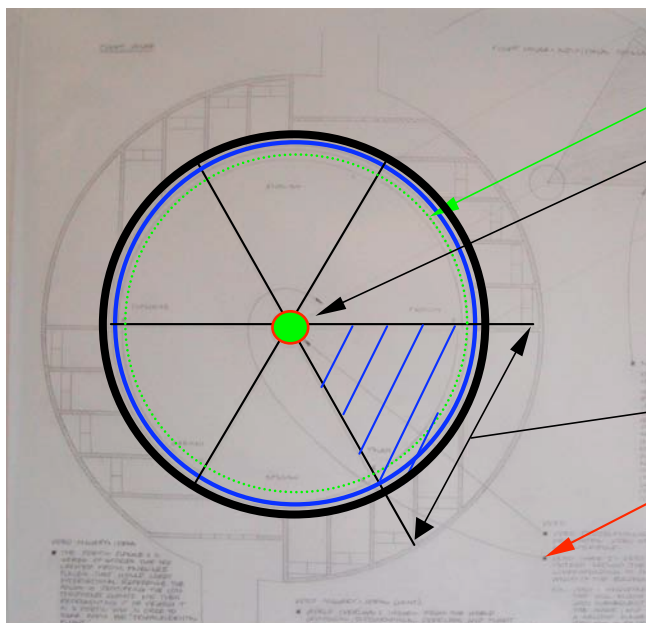
**Idea Generation: FLIGHT to PASSAGE.**



***Flight: Idea Generation for Laurie Anderson and Peter Gabriel's Real World Barcelona (experience theme park).***

In the winter of 1992, I submitted a series of eight proposals to Laurie Anderson for the project Real World Barcelona which is to be constructed in Barcelona Spain. One of the proposals was called FLIGHT (figure 1), a multimedia environment that guides the viewer participant on a metaphysical journey through space and time. The large circular, indoor space is divided up into six sectors with corresponding arcs of wall space. The video stills briefly occupy each arc of the wall at a different time as they rotate in a segmented, clockwise motion. The imagery consists of various geographical and topological views from rural and urban areas from all over the world. The six sections present a narration of the visual imagery in different languages through wireless, remote headsets worn by the multicultural audience.

***Flight 1. Top view of FLIGHT***



*Video projection screen.*

*Media core from which emanates image, projections and dialogue in six languages through wireless, remote headsets that are worn by viewer-participants. This way the participants can move throughout the entire structure between the media core and the projection screen.*

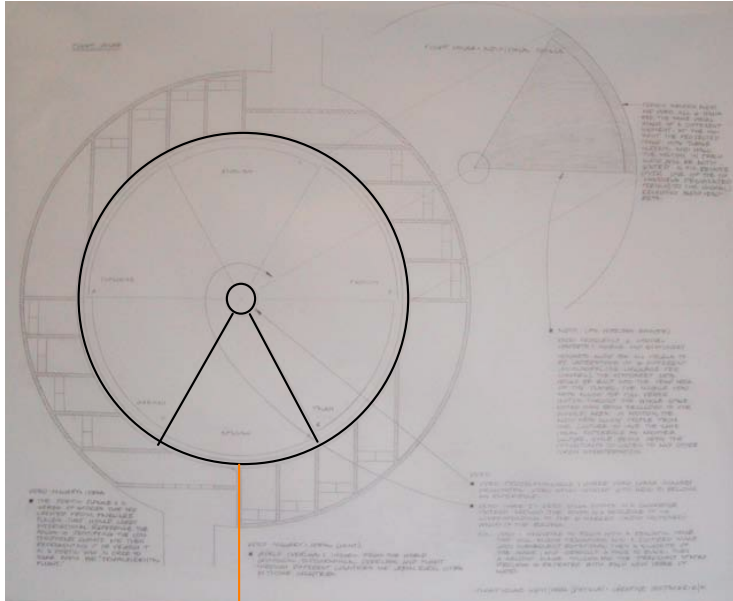
*An audiovisual quadrant.*

*The movement of the visuals will chase in clockwise pattern across the scrims and wall areas.*





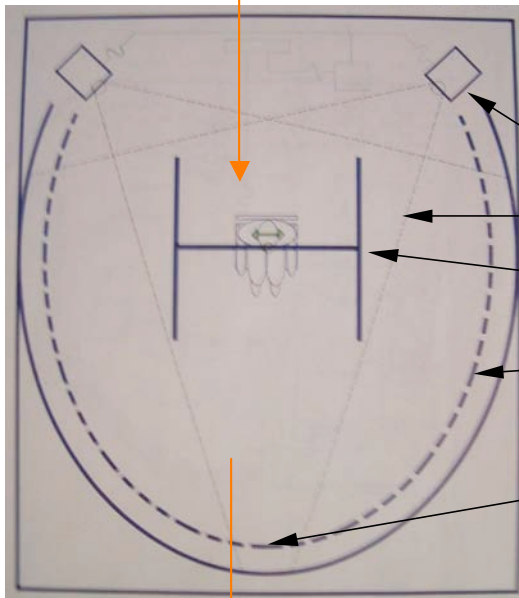
**Idea Generation: FLIGHT to PASSAGE.**



**Flight: Origination of imagery**

The story lines that are created involve familiar places and are meant to focus on representing contemporary climates in a poetic way in order to provoke the participant into thinking about the world as a whole and how they exist within it. I left the general concept of the stories open to the suggestions of individuals that visited the space, so they too would be able to contribute experiences to be transposed into video storyboards. FLIGHT also serves as a metaphor for the metaphysical suspension in time that occurs when one experiences being within the moment and enters into a higher state of awareness. I am interested in evoking the participants to pass out of the usual linear temporal experience, and enter into a more fluid state of consciousness as a platform for an entrance into personal creativity. Thus, I create multi sensory environments that induce the viewer-participants to dissociate from their normal state of existence and integrate into an alternate reality.

**Figure 3. Top view of the first conceptual transition from FLIGHT to PASSAGE.**



- Video projection units.
- Video projection area.
- Viewer-participant wearing headphones sitting in the audio suspension chair.
- Video image screen and wall (the combination screen and wall will create the illusion of a 3D image).
- Video image overlap area.

**Passage evolves as a prototype of Flight.**

In the spring of 1992, I started to facilitate PASSAGE as a smaller prototype of FLIGHT to further investigate slow motion video, sound and a moving viewer-participant. I pulled a section of the wall in out and created a singular visceral experience with the viewer-participant (figure 2). In FLIGHT, (refer to Real World Barcelona "Dream as big as you can") the participants are elevated in a horizontal position on hydraulic platforms, but for PASSAGE I chose to suspend the participant in a swing to enable perpetual motion.

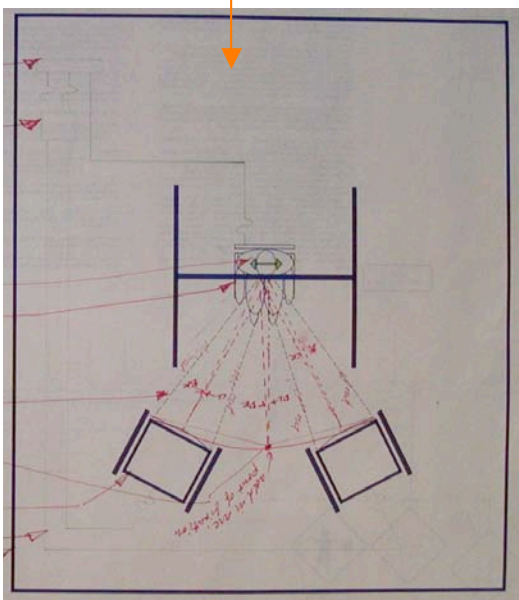


Figure 3, below, is a top view of my idea that evolved. However, working with a time limitation and the difficulties presented in trying to obtain two video projection units, I simplified the idea in replacing a single screen with two 25" monitors. I built an audio chair that allowed the viewer and the direct environment to become part of the storyline, thus enmeshing video with real-time sound.

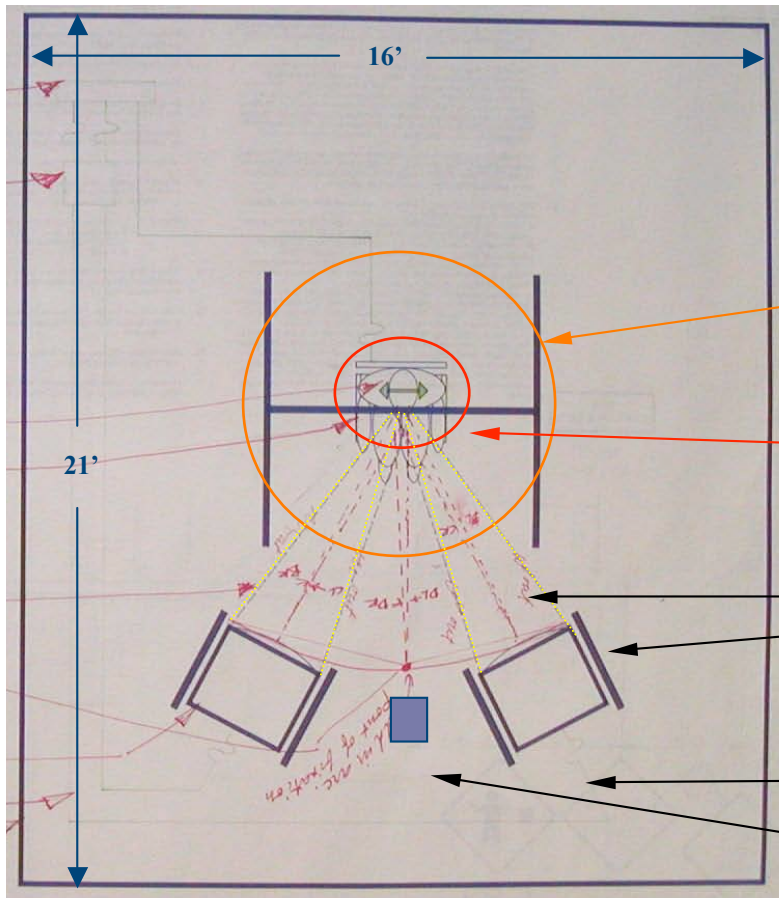


**Introduction: Overview of Passage and affects on viewer participants.**

PASSAGE illustrated (in figures 4 and 5), incorporates the viewer- participant as they swing in a suspended audio chair that is laced with piezo flat and condenser microphones. The mikes reveal low intensity, ambient sound and surface resonance that can be hears through headphones connected to the chair. Emphasis is given to the seat and back of the chair is painted white to symbolize purity, while the chair framework and its support structure are painted black.

Sitting in the chair, the participant faces two 25" video monitors which are positioned are set 4.5 ft. apart so that the imagery appears center to the viewer's peripheral sight. The monitor cabinets and monitor stands are painted black. In addition, the room is very dimly light in order to avoid any visual interruption of the video image. The video imagery leads the participant on a 45-minute walk through the woods alongside a six year old, while intermittently presenting slow motion nature sequences. A picture drawn by the child, of a site encountered during the walk is located on the floor in between the monitors.

PASSAGE was exhibited in the spring of 1992 at the Delaware Center of Contemporary Art and the fall at State University of New York, Fredonia. Approximately 200 participants experienced PASSAGE in both locations and had the same metaphysical, hypnotic experience regardless of age (ranged from 3 to 60yrs), intellectual background, or knowledge of psychological theory. The following pages are an attempt to explain this experience.



**Figure 4. Top view of PASSAGE.**

*The following layout is a diagram of the installation as it was installed in both locations.*

*Audio suspension chair and support structure. The audio chair is laced with condenser and piezo flat microphones.*

*Viewer-participant seated within chair wearing headphones. The audio amplification system is also located in the base of the chair.*

*Incoming peripheral imagery.*

*(2) 25" television monitors.*

*Electrical wiring.*

*Drawing produced by Jenny Moore (child filmed walking in video).*





*Figure 5. Photograph of PASSAGE at eye level.*

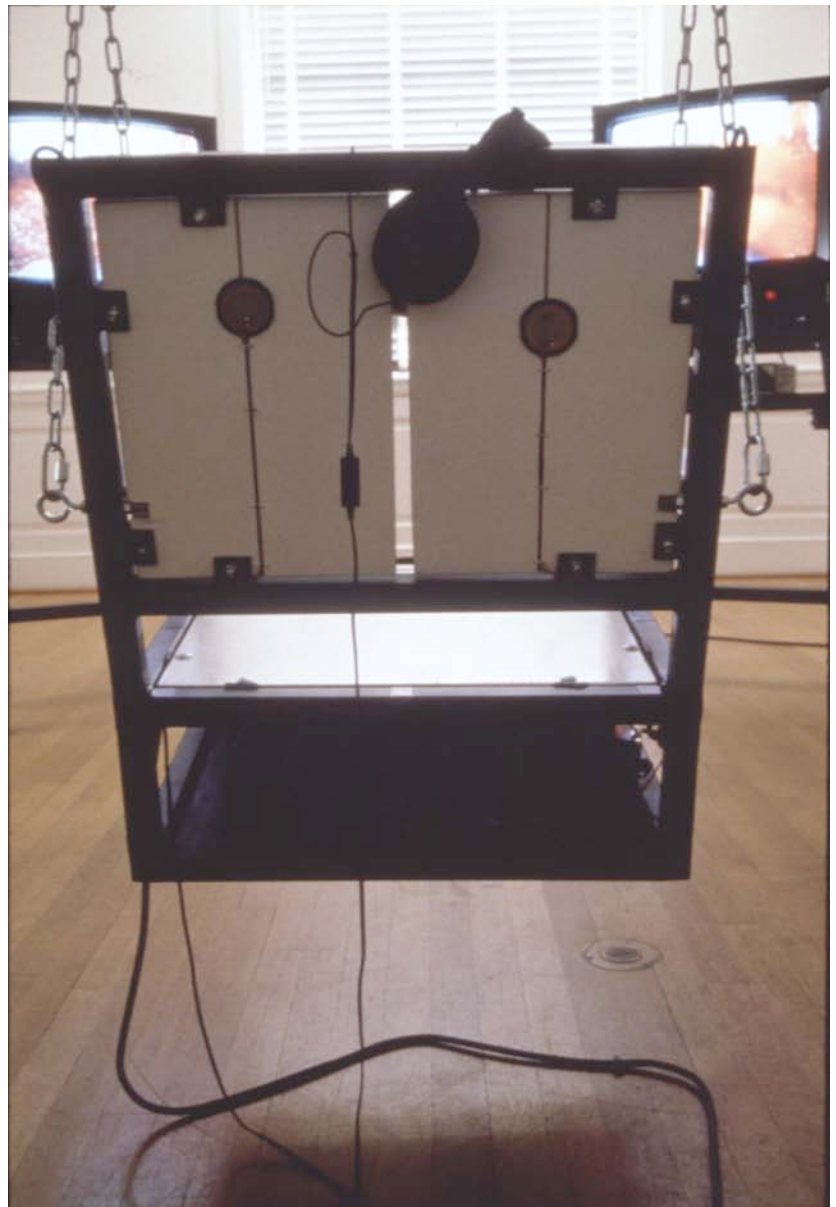
### ***The audio suspension chair and its sound system.***

The audio chair (figure 6) is suspended from its frame at a height, which barely allows the participant's feet to touch the floor. I initially fabricated the audio chair to dwarf the participant in order to instill a feeling of security yet smallness. Constructed of 1" square stock steel tubing, the chair weighs close to 100 lbs. including its sound equipment and the chains that suspended it. The weight of the chair and the participant ensure that the person can only swing back and forth at a relaxed pace.

Since every volumetric cavity has a characteristic, naturally occurring pitch, I believe that silence does not exist; we only lack the ability to hear all sounds. Thus, I fabricated mikes that would reveal the amazing, mysterious sounds that people usually miss in order to make them aware of the beauty in "silence". The condenser mikes that I designed, unlike the piezo mikes, are not only capable of detecting the wide range of pitches audible to humans (above 0 decibels), but also those far below the threshold of hearing (above -65 decibels). The output signals from the condenser mikes are then amplified so that the participant can hear them.

Through the chair's sound system, the participant became auditor ally incorporated into PASSAGE and the environment. The condenser mikes amplify a live matrix of ever changing sound; consisting of the interaction between the characteristic pitches of the chair's resonant structural tubing and the minute sounds in it's surrounding environment. In addition, the condenser mikes, the voices of others in adjoining rooms, the sounds of the steel chains that suspended the chair, the pitches of the different - length floor boards when tapped, and even the traffic passing outside of the building.

In a moment of external stillness, the listener perceives their suspension in the chairs tubular framework, encompassed by the tones arising from it's internal space. The rushing sound gave one listener the impression that they were "flying through a tunnel, a passageway". The piezo flat mikes, located on the chair's back, make audible the surface vibration of the chair as it swings and the participant moves across it.



***Figure 6. Photograph of the back of the audio chair showing the attached piezo flat mikes, headphones, a pre-amp and a 100-watt amplifier (located under the seat) and the 1"***



*The Video Storyboard.*



*Figure 7. Demonstrated is the storyboard and the rate of the video transitions of Jenny Moore (at 30 frames per second) and nature images (at 2 to 7 frames per second).*