

# Prueba - The World was Flat, now it's Round and it will be a hologram

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Curatorial Text

The title of this exhibition announces a voyage through time, a seemingly chronological history of major transformations of time and space. This history seems to be linear, but it is so only in appearance. The title names the evidence that time and space mutate as consciousness mutates.

The sailors who sailed with Christopher Columbus were afraid of the abyss at the edge of the earth and of the monstrous creatures they expected to find there. Taking our point of departure in this image, we may consider that for at least 1,500 years prior to this voyage, experiments, such as those conducted by Eratosthenes in 200 BC, had successfully proved the roundness of the earth. But nevertheless, to Columbus' men the world was still flat.

Our world today is made up of three dimensions, which places us firmly on a globe. This is the state of mind of our contemporary civilisation, even if higher dimensions are comprehended in mathematics and physics; and even if the collapse of space-time - as we understand it - has found a scientific expression in the field of quantum mechanics.

How does an idea take shape over time? How does the emergence of a technology - a means of transport, a means of navigation, a means of recording, for example - durably modify our consciousness and our relationship to space and time?

The exhibition presents a group of contemporary artists whose works open perspectives on these fundamental problems. The passage from a flat to a round world, and beyond, is marked by shifts in consciousness. This is the thread of the exhibition - which is laid out like a journey - where instruments of man play a major role.

The exhibition is produced by Bildmuseet and curated by Lina López and François Bucher.

## The World Was Flat...

Measuring the passage of the sun in the sky gave ancient societies a notion of "apparent solar time": they witnessed the pattern of the movement of the sun in the celestial dome from a human perspective. Apparent solar time is nowadays forgotten: automated measuring devices and a deep change in our capacity to observe events unfold in time have made this kind of *knowledge* unavailable to us.

In the development of the science of measurement various instruments were fabricated, such as sundials, hourglasses and finally stopwatches. The technique of *timing* was refined step-by-step up until the invention of the atomic clock that is calibrated to count 9,192,631,770 vibrations of the Cesium atom and then make its first "tick". All modern clocks, since the invention of the mechanical clock, have been built on the same principle of this "tick, tick, tick". <sup>3</sup>

In other words, ever since the first pulley-driven clock, for modern man the experience of time is linked to a contraption. The mutation to a mechanical time consciousness was installed in this civilisation like an operating system, replacing the vivid and constant relationship with the cosmos that was at the basis of man's relationship with the *dimension* of time. Along with the reduction of heavenly phenomena to functional calculations came a new body, one that was no longer involved in the experience of a *dimension* that is not reducible to *mechanics*: TIME.

These mechanical *encapsulations* may be a first glance of what later came to be called "artificial intelligence". It is as if man had captured the sun and the stars, reduced them to a mathematical equation and locked them inside small mechanisms that we call clocks or timers.

Now It's round

Early in the 15th century, a new invention opened the field for a mutation in our relationship with space: Brunelleschi's linear perspective. In the *Hospital of the Innocents* in Florence, space is conquered through the method of the *vanishing point*. This experiment involves placing the viewer in a determined position from where they can see the projection of an *artificial* space, a *trompe l'oeil* where depth is fabricated for the eye. The subject has become an *observer* and an artificial shape of the world has been simultaneously created which coincides with the parameters of this observation.

In this new field the subject decides to believe in what they see over every other sense. If they give credence to other senses, they still live in yesterday's world, a world in which lines extend to infinity. But if they believe in what they see above everything else, then the archaic flat world is no longer at hand; it has morphed into a modern grid; and the mysteries that had populated the world will not find their dwelling place in that all-determining framework. The round world is the *stage* where time and space have apparently been captured; the shape of the planet is grasped, SPACE is conquered, and so are all the monsters that used to linger at the ends of the world.

Ant it will be a hologram

The hologram references a *stage* where our space-time coordinates are no longer valid. The word *hologram* comes from the Greek word "holos", which means complete, where "everything is represented". It invokes the consciousness of fragments that contain the totality of everything. <sup>4</sup>

An example of this is the mycelium of fungus that may extend over a huge area underground, while above ground there appears to be individual mushrooms. The point is that all the mushrooms are linked to the same invisible constellation. Tim Ingold follows mycologist Alan Rayner in suggesting that the entire field of biology would be different had we taken the mycelium as the prototype for a living organism. Because from that point of view it would be unthinkable to assume that life is contained within the absolute boundaries of individual fixed forms.

Mycelium is therefore another expression of what is meant by the *holographic*. Furthermore, the underground mycelium meshwork appears identical to an abstract picture of the World Wide Web, which has created a new paradigm of space and time for us, a new expression of the networked metabolism that we were always already in.

