



# TALE OF TALES

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*Auriea Harvey & Michaël Samyn*  
GAND, BELGIQUE

Bonjour. Je suis Belge, mais Flamand.  
Donc je parle le français très mal.  
Veuillez m'excuser de continuer *in English*.



*Auriea Harvey & Michaël Samyn*  
CYBERESPACE + GAND, FLANDRES<sup>1999</sup>

I am Michael Samyn.  
I am an artist and  
I have worked together with my partner Auriea Harvey for 17 years now.  
She's American and lived in New York when we met on the internet in 1999.  
It was a very romantic experience to meet in cyberspace.  
That sense of spiritual connection with a stranger has continued to influence our creations.



## *Cathédrale Saint-Bavon*

942-1569

Now we live in the city of Ghent in Belgium, the former capital of the county of Flanders.  
Ghent is a beautiful medieval city that inspires our creativity.  
We especially enjoy visiting the Saint Bavo cathedral,

...



*L'Adoration de l'Agneau mystique*  
HUBERT & JAN VAN EYCK<sup>1432</sup>

...  
which is the home of the Ghent Altarpiece,  
probably the most beautiful object in the world,  
created by the Flemish Primitives Van Eyck in the 15th century.



*Tale of Tales*<sup>1634</sup>  
[WWW.TALE-OF-TALES.COM](http://WWW.TALE-OF-TALES.COM)<sup>2002</sup>

Our studio in Ghent is called Tale of Tales,  
after a 17th century collection of fairy tales by  
Giambattista Basile from Italy.

JEUX VIDÉO

And we make videogames.

“

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”

And we make videogames.



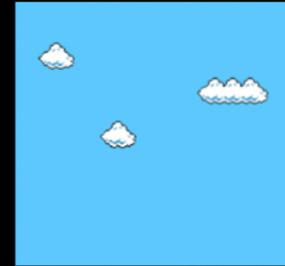
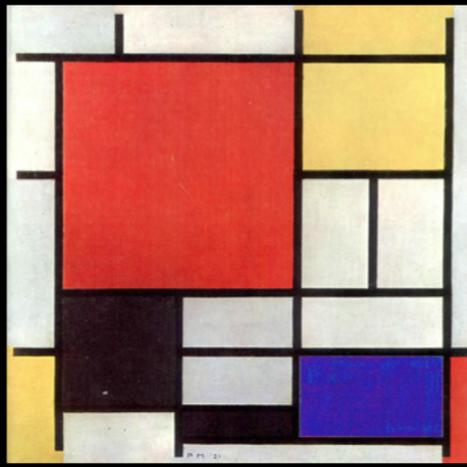
# ART & GAMES?

*Auriea Harvey & Michaël Samyn*

As artists we are drawn to digital media and computer technology for creation.



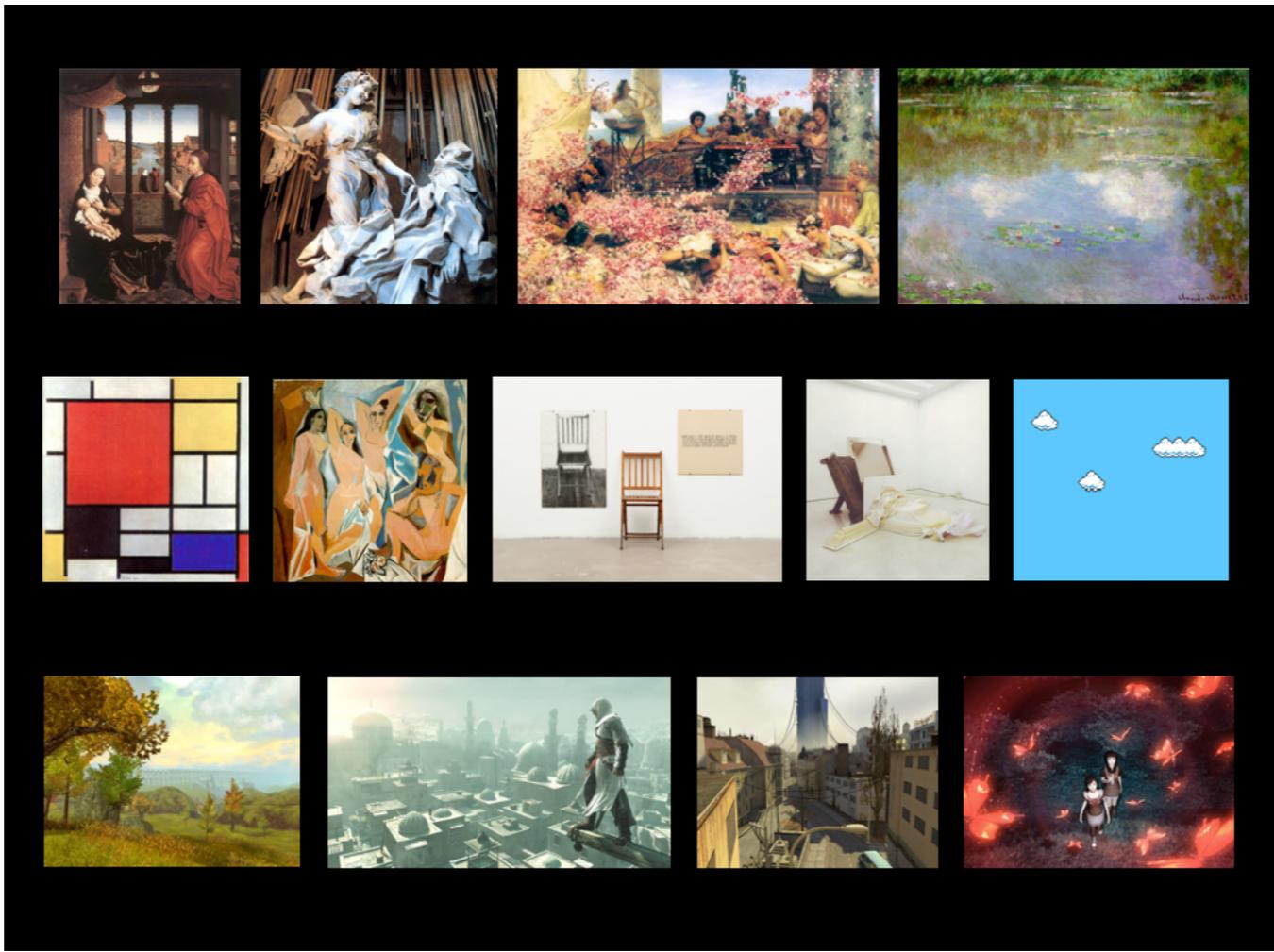
But the art that we enjoy tends to be older.  
We like  
beauty in art,  
stories,  
feelings,  
figuration.



Modern art often just doesn't do it for us.  
We cannot enjoy  
the abstraction,  
the emptiness,  
the irony.



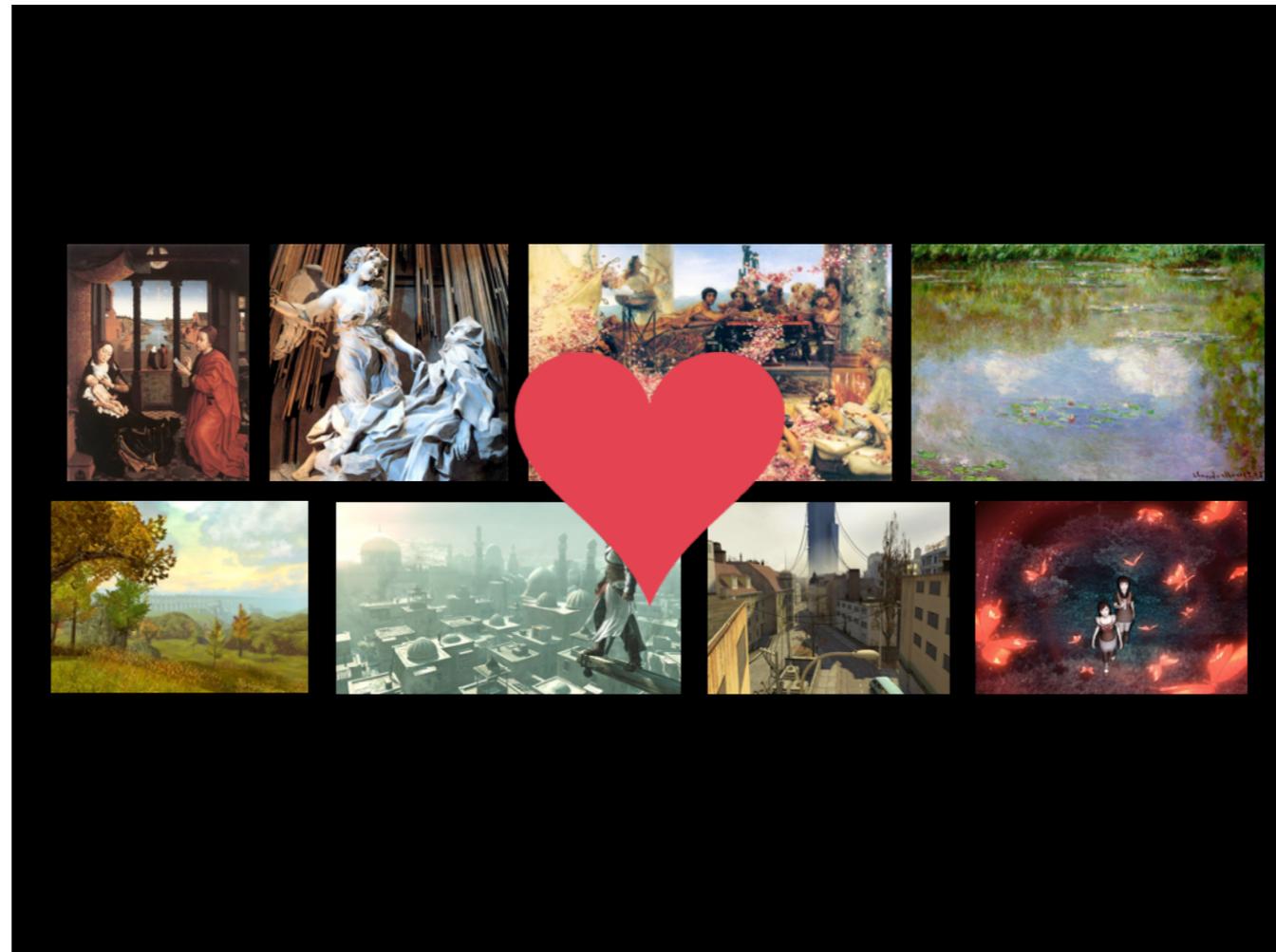
Videogames are a modern medium but they often tell stories and depict places and people. And are very concerned with beauty. Often almost as obsessed with realistic representation as the ancient Master Painters.



So from our perspective  
videogames have a lot in common with the art that we enjoy.  
And we chose the medium in order to  
continue the traditions of art  
before modernism interrupted them.



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*High-Tech*  
TECHNIQUES DE POINTE *XV<sup>E</sup> & XXI<sup>E</sup> SIÈCLE*

We work with the high technology of our time,  
just like the Flemish primitives.  
And we love how technology allows us to  
embrace traditional artistic concepts such as  
figuration,  
emotion and  
beauty.  
Thanks to videogame technology,  
we can explore  
history,  
mythology and  
religion.



## SOME OF OUR WORK

*Auriea Harvey & Michaël Samyn*





The Godlove Museum is a series of websites based on the first five books of the bible. Our love felt so overpowering that we could only express it in biblical terms. But the bible also allowed us to explore contemporary politics.



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# Eden.Garden

EDEN.GARDEN.I.PROJECTS.SFMOMA.ORG<sup>2001</sup>

Eden.Garden turns every web page into a beautiful **realtime 3D paradise**.  
 You **enter a web address** and it generates a garden based on the code that comes in.  
 Auriea and I **scanned** our bodies for the roles of Adam and Eve.  
 Our movements are derived from **videogame character** animations and are triggered by the text on the page.  
 Or you can type to make us dance.  
 Sadly this piece does not work anymore because of technological progress.



## *The Endless Forest*

THE.ENDLESSFOREST.ORG<sup>2005-...</sup>

The Endless Forest is a multiplayer online game where everyone plays a deer.

It's set in a romantic landscape that contains

**references** to myths and legends

but **no story** is told.

And there are also **no game** objectives or rules.

The players have to **invent** their own way of amusing themselves.

The Endless Forest was originally created with the support of **museums** in Belgium and Luxemburg

and continued to develop through **commissions** by cultural institutions.

Every time the work was exhibited, a new element was added to the forest.



## *Fatale*

TALE-OF-TALES.COM/FATALE<sup>2009</sup>

In Fatale you play the spirit of John the Baptist  
in the **aftermath** of your execution.

You can explore the still scene where  
Salome danced the **dance of the seven veils**  
one last night, before you go to heaven.

The game is very much inspired by **Oscar Wilde's** play about the story.

It's all about **looking at things** and the consequences of not looking:

John refused to look at Salome and he was killed for it.

It's very romantic.



*Bientôt l'été*  
BIEN.TLO.TL/ETE

Bientôt l'été is a tribute to Marguerite Duras.

It's a game within a game.

You play an astronaut who visits a **holodeck** that runs a simulation of a French **coastline**.

As you walk along the beach,

the waves bring **quotes** from a dozen novels by Marguerite Duras.

You collect these words to use in a conversation in a café on the boardwalk.

When you close your eyes, you see **cyberspace**.

Bientôt l'été is a game about feeling connected, even when far apart.



Cathedral-in-the-Clouds is the project we are now working on.  
It's a big project and we have only just started.  
So I can't show any finished work.  
But I can talk about  
where the idea came from and  
what we intend to create.



# ORIGIN

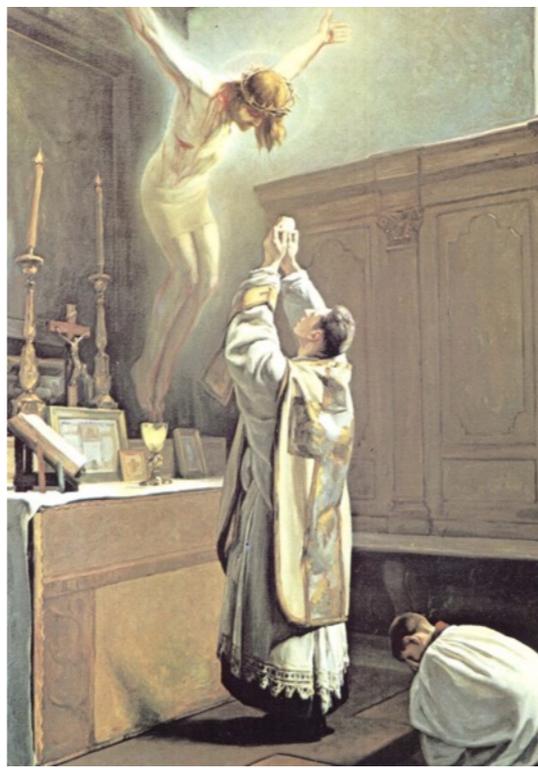
*Auriea Harvey & Michaël Samyn*



Jan van Eyck  
Madonna with Canon Joris van der Paele

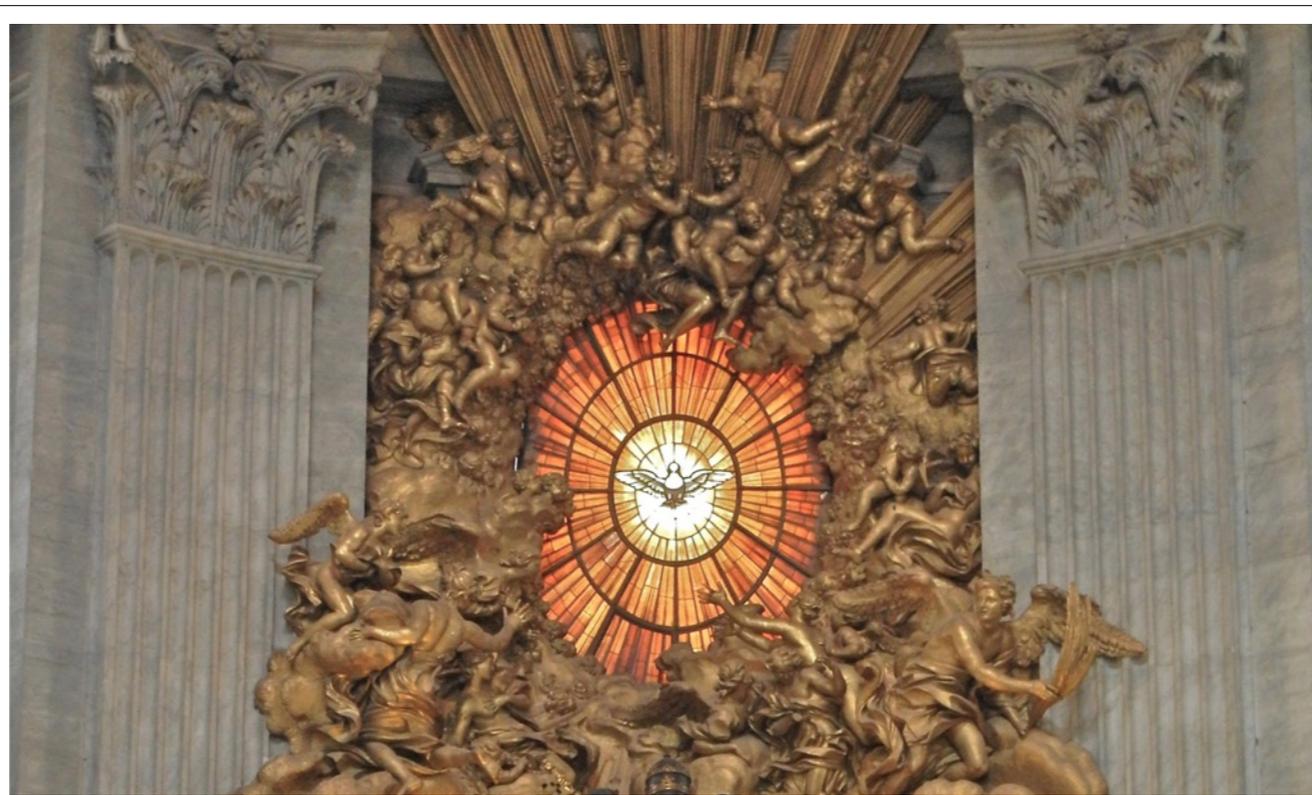
*Les Primitifs flamands*  
MICHAËL EN REGARDANT L'ART

As I mentioned before,  
we have always deeply enjoyed old art,  
much more than modern art.  
A lot of those old paintings and sculptures depict  
religious themes and characters.  
That is part of why they are so moving to us.  
The saints are a sort of super heroes.  
We look up to them, we admire them and  
they help us understand and deal with our lives.



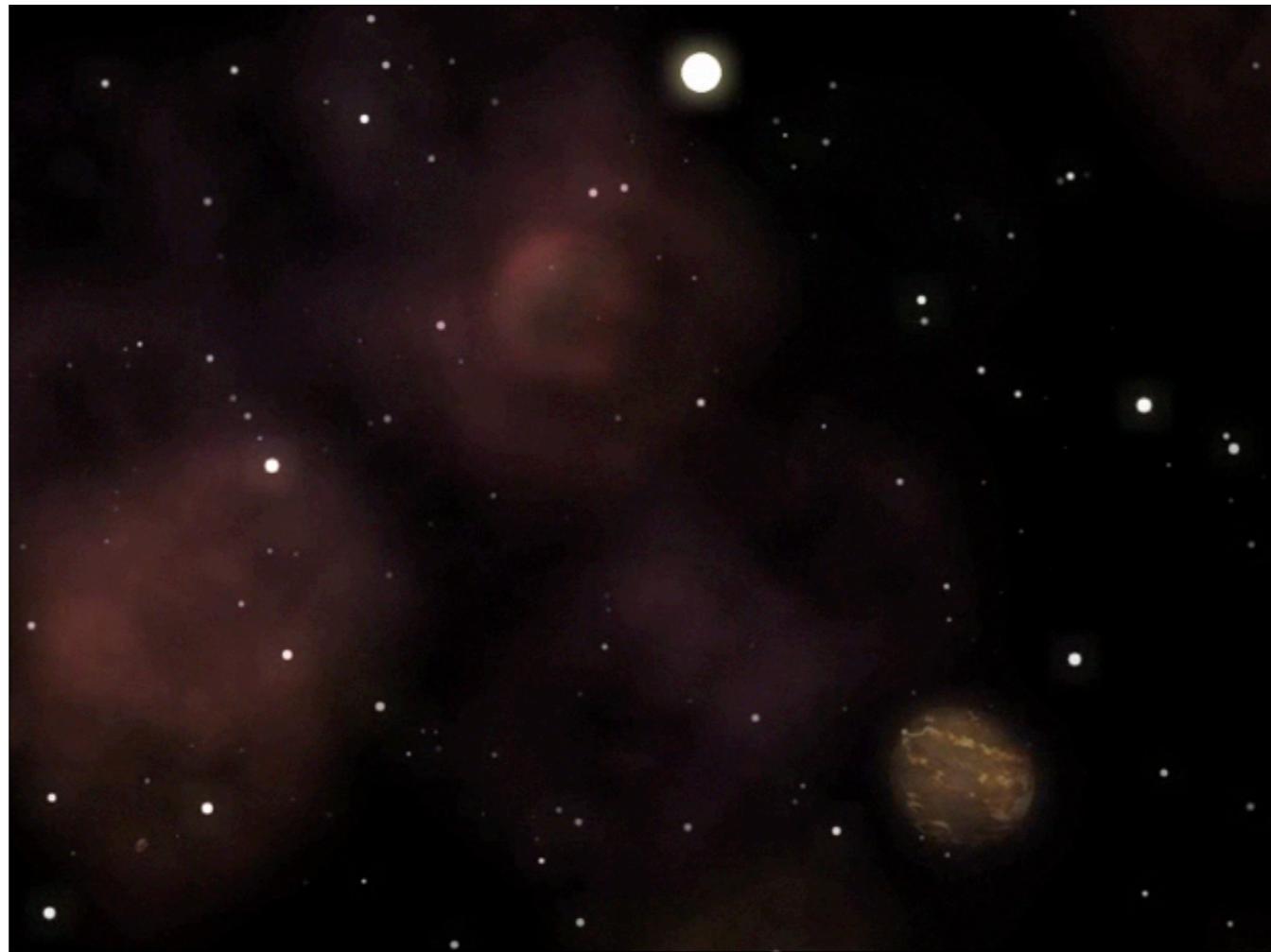
*Nous ne croyons pas*  
MALHEUREUSEMENT...

But in spite of our love for religious art,  
we are not religious ourselves.  
We have been brought up by  
modern parents to believe there is no god  
— or to invent for ourselves what we believe.  
So, like most of our contemporaries,  
we are spiritual idiots.  
But we are eager to learn!



*Beauté = Dieu*  
?

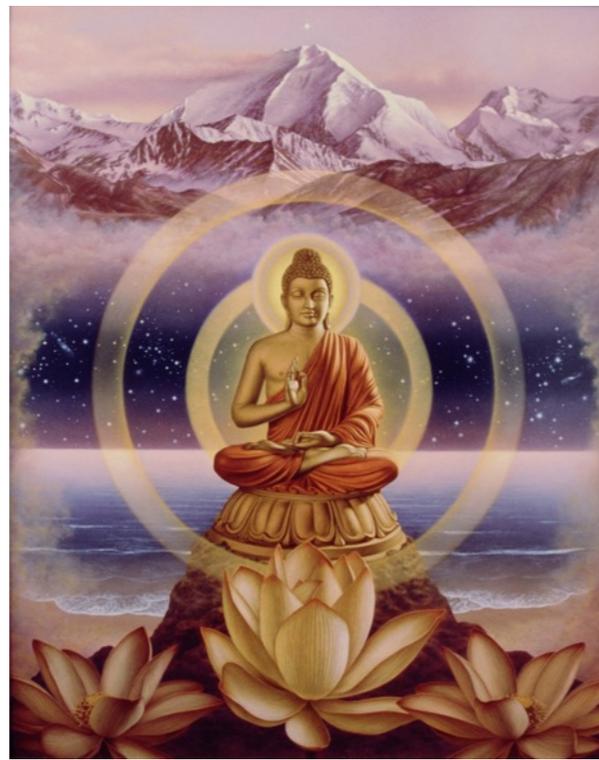
I think we confuse beauty and god.  
Or maybe beauty and god are one and the same thing.  
Maybe beauty is just another word for god.  
Or the experience of beauty is a spiritual experience.



With Cathedral-in-the-Clouds we want to create opportunities for contemplation. The old art that we love helps us contemplate our existence on a cosmic scale. It makes us feel connected to other people, even people who have died a long time ago.

But we have a feeling that a lot of people now don't experience that with old art. So we would like to create something that people today can connect to more easily.

Without betraying what it is all about. Cathedral-in-the-Clouds is still about encouraging **kindness and patience** and offering opportunity for **gratitude and worship**. It's about feeling **rooted** in place and time, giving people a more conscious **awareness** of their existence in the cosmos.



*Christianité*  
RÉCUPERER LA RELIGION POUR LA CULTURE?

People today who desire such experiences often turn to foreign religions probably because their own is tainted by history. But I feel Christianity offers all the spirituality we need. Christianity is part of our Western culture and it's foolish to ignore it. Even if we don't believe in gods, we could treat Christian mythology in the same way as Greco-Roman mythology: as inspiring stories with great symbolic value and interesting metaphors.



Onze-Lieve-Vrouwekerk  
Brugge

*Recherche & Exploration*

KIJKDOOS.TUMBLR.COM

A project like Cathedral-in-the-Clouds is a great opportunity for us to explore these topics more deeply. We are visiting cathedrals and museums, reading books, and so on.



## *Les Primitifs flamands* EN FLANDRES

And since our studio is in Belgium we have easy access to great works of art. Many of the great masterpieces of architecture, sculpture and painting can be found in Belgium and neighbouring countries. Like France.



# THE PROJECT

DIGITAL DIORAMAS + VIRTUAL CATHEDRAL

*Auriea Harvey & Michaël Samyn*

Cathedral-in-the-Clouds consists of two parts.



## *Dioramas & Cathédrale* CATHÉDRALE-DANS-LES-NUAGES

The core of the project is a **series of digital depictions of saints** that will be created for many different platforms: desktop, laptop, tablet, smartphone, web, even video and print.

To display all these different pictures together, we are building a **cathedral in virtual reality**.

Both aspects of the project are **endless**. There's an endless amount of scenes we can depict in dioramas. And the cathedral, since it is virtual, will continuously be expanded.



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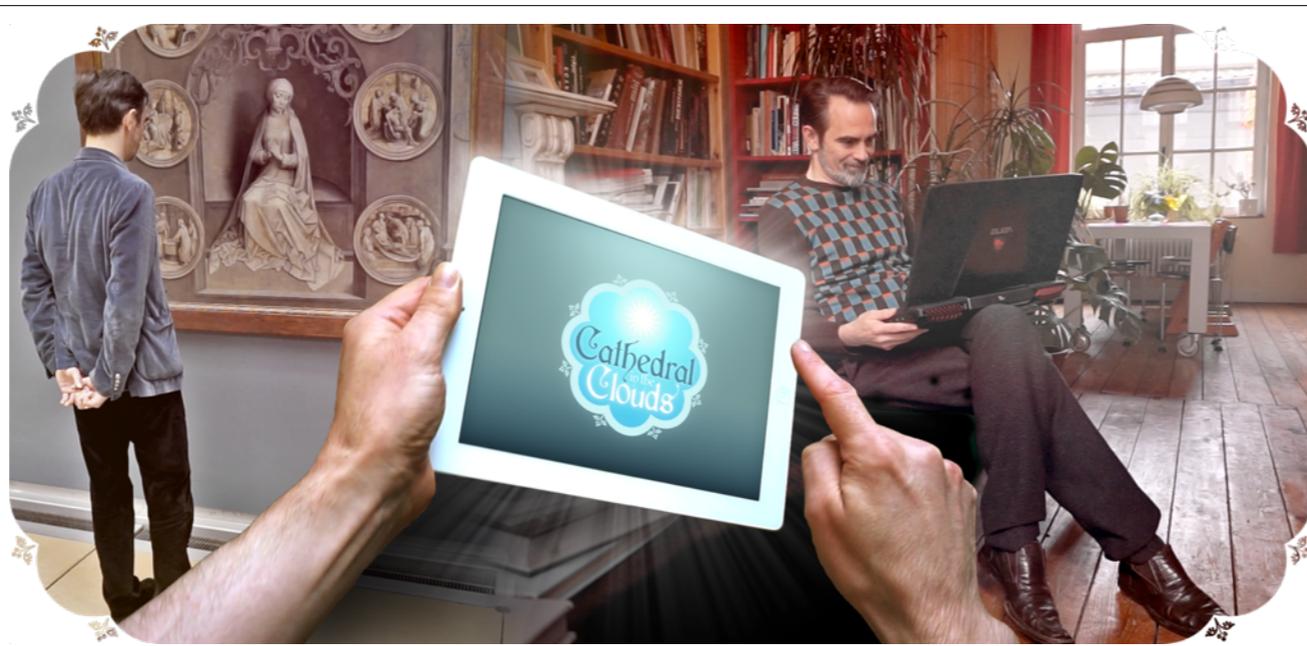
## DIGITAL DIORAMAS

*Auriea Harvey & Michaël Samyn*



*Équise*  
PROTOTYPE TRÈS TÔT

Our Digital Dioramas are  
computer programs that will be  
available for multiple platforms.



*Dioramas numériques*  
POUR PLUSIEURS PLATEFORMES

Our Digital Dioramas are computer programs that will be available for multiple platforms. The general idea is to bring the contemplative experience of the museum into the intimacy of the home.



What we want to make is a bit like a digital version of devotional cabinets or portable altars. A sacred object that can be closed and carried with you to open whenever you feel the need for contemplation.



## *Triptych*

CADRE, ORNAMENT, ARCHITECTURE, SCÈNE

These are like home editions of the much larger triptychs you often find in churches and museums.

Just like these, our dioramas will show a depiction of a scene around a **central character**, a saint or an angel, the virgin Mary or Jesus himself. The character is **life size** and since the screen of your laptop or tablet is smaller than a person, you will need to scroll around to see the whole thing. That's the only interaction that will take place.

In many dioramas, however, a **dramatic change** will happen, a change that helps explain the significance of this scene.



*Sculpture gothique*  
POLYCHROMIE

We don't consider the characters in our scenes to be really alive.  
Even though they may be moving,  
it's important that they remain synthetic.  
We think of them as **virtual statues**.

We're very inspired by the style of medieval sculpture for instance.  
But also by African sculpture and even some modernists like Brancusi.



*Sculpture africaine & moderne*  
STYLISATION & SYMBOLISME

We're very inspired by the style of medieval sculpture for instance.  
But also by African sculpture and even some modernists like Brancusi.

We want to move away from a photographic realism  
towards **symbolic representations** of a  
reality that cannot be perceived.





Another diorama that we are looking forward to work on is a **virgin and child** scene. As in some paintings, baby Jesus would not be drinking but rather **offering** his mother's **breast** to the spectator, perhaps squeezing it so the **milk flows out**.

It's through **subtle animations** like this that we will make the spectator aware of the **live** character of the presentation:  
 milk flowing,  
 wind blowing,  
 light shifting, etc  
 Some of these can happen in response to **user input**.  
 Maybe you can  
 move some things around or the  
 light changes with the input received through the device's camera eg.



## VIRTUAL CATHEDRAL

*Auriea Harvey & Michaël Samyn*

Next to all the different platforms,  
the dioramas will also be on display in a  
virtual cathedral.



## *Une cathédrale virtuelle* EN VR POUR OCULUS RIFT

Next to all the different platforms, the dioramas will also be on display in a virtual cathedral.

We chose VR technology for this project precisely because it is **inaccessible**.

The hardware to experience a 3D VR simulation is **expensive**.

And it's just a very **nerdy**, very uncool thing to do.

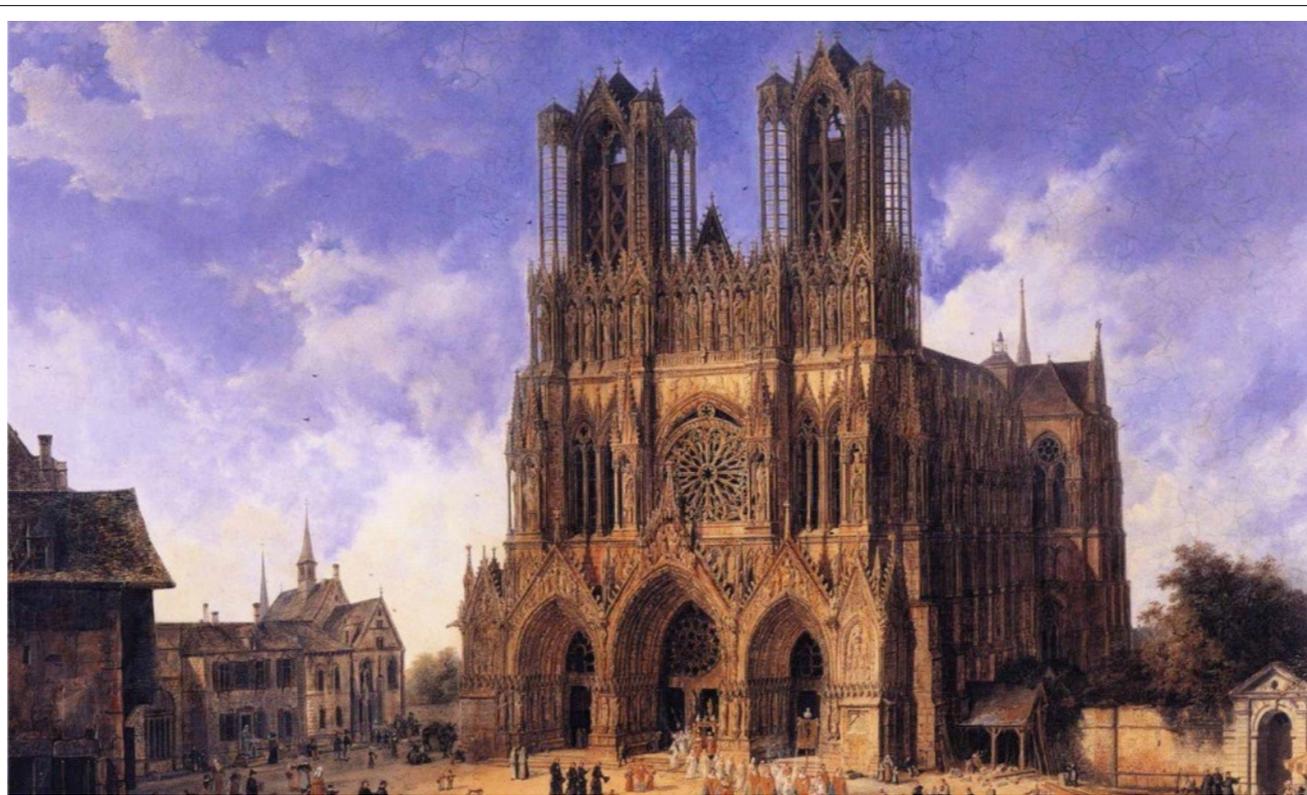
It **isolates** the user from their environment.

And it messes up your **hair**.

Thus a sort of **pilgrimage** will be needed to see our cathedral!

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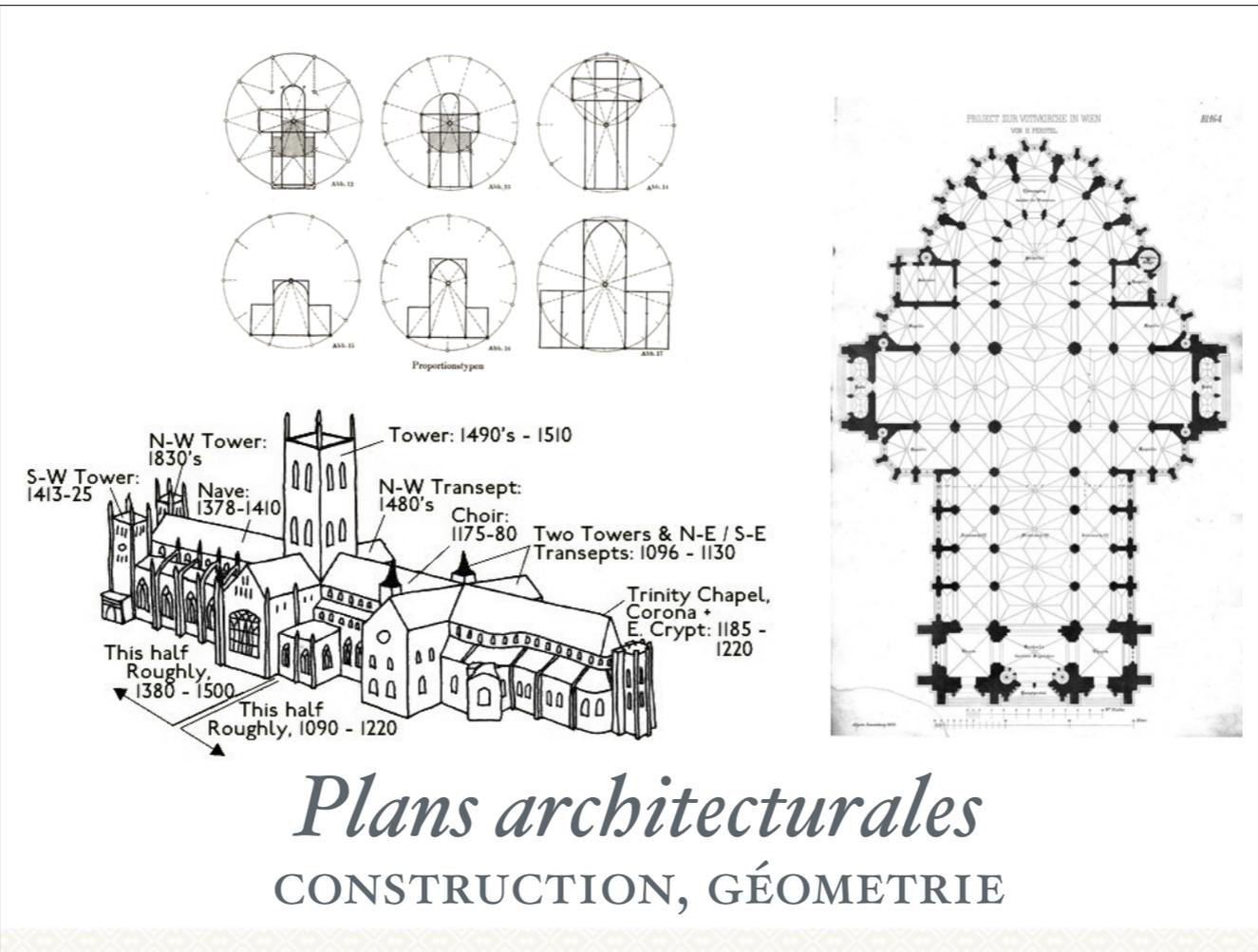
Just like the cathedrals in the gothic era were built as pilgrimage destinations or stops on the road to Compostela.



## *Architecture gothique* & NÉO-GOTHIQUE

Thus a sort of **pilgrimage** will be needed to see our cathedral!  
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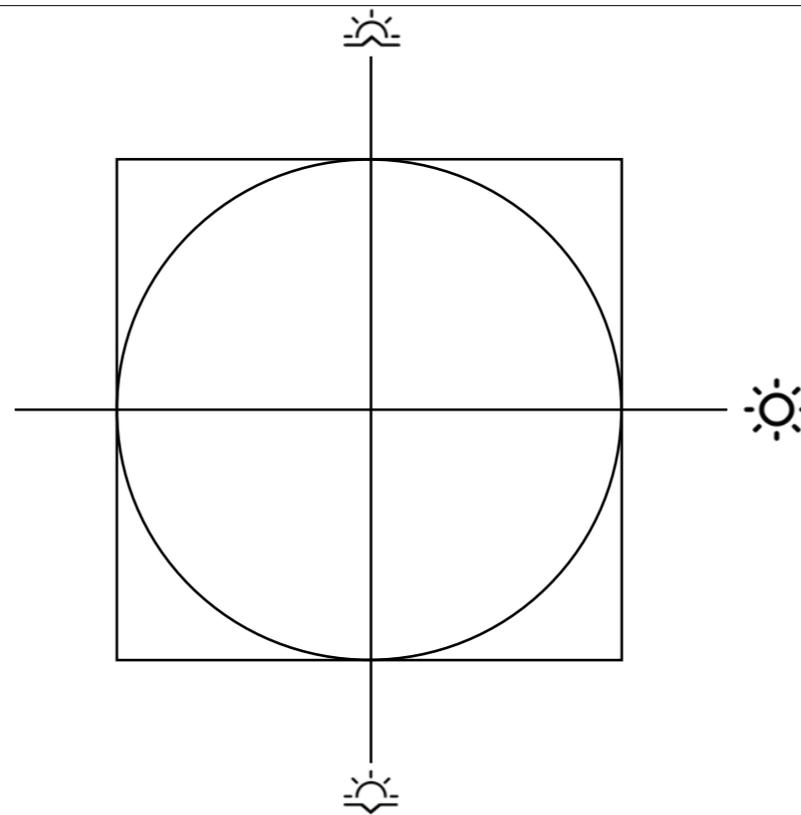
Even though we do not intend to simply build a  
replica of a gothic church in 3D,  
we're very interested in the  
**construction** and  
**design** of gothic buildings.



*Plans architecturales*  
 CONSTRUCTION, GÉOMETRIE

We're fascinated by the way in which these **complex intricate structures** are composed through rather **simple geometric principles**.

And how the design of churches forms a connection between **earth** and **heaven**.



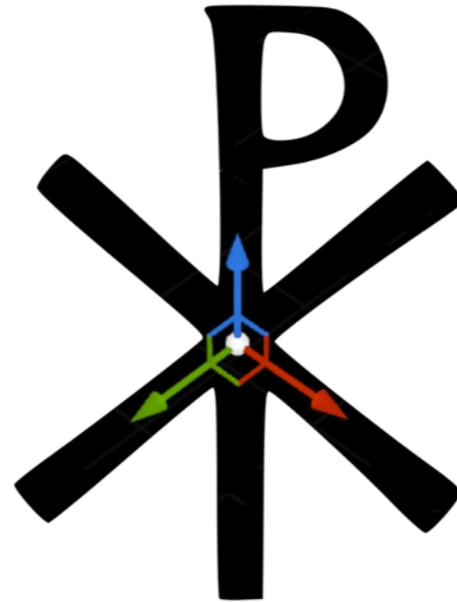
## *Géométrie sacrée*

JEAN HANI: LE SYMBOLISME DU TEMPLE CHRÉTIEN

The **square** or rectangular floorplan symbolizes the **earth**, while the rounded **vaults** and **domes** symbolize **heaven**.

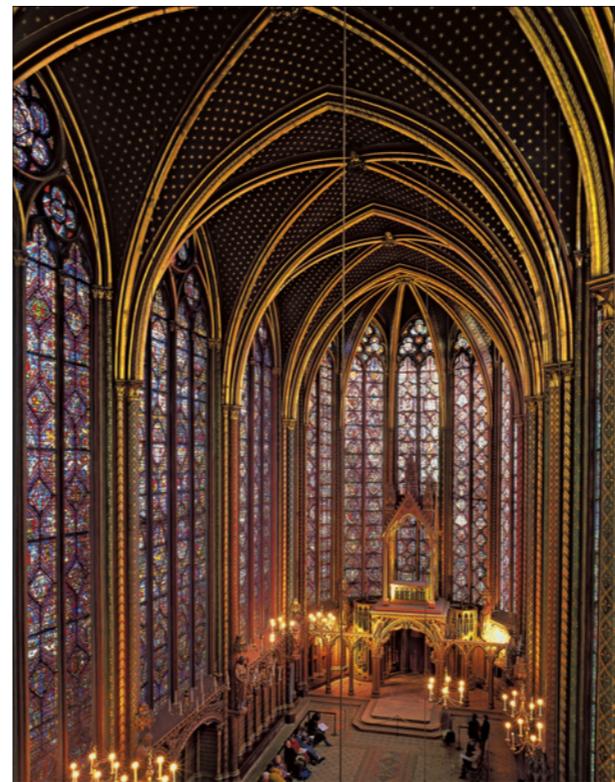
Most gothic cathedrals are also built with the choir in the **east**, where the sun rises, and the main entrance in the **west**, where it sets.

The **cardinal directions** defined by the movement of the sun form a **cross** that connects very nicely to the cross that **Jesus Christ** was crucified on.



*3D temps réel*  
LA CROIX COMME GUIDE...

3D space in the computer is also organized along a cross, a three-dimensional axis that represents width, height and depth.  
So realtime 3D takes place in a sacred space.



*L'esprit gothique*  
SOLENNITÉ, SPIRITUALITÉ, LUMIÈRE

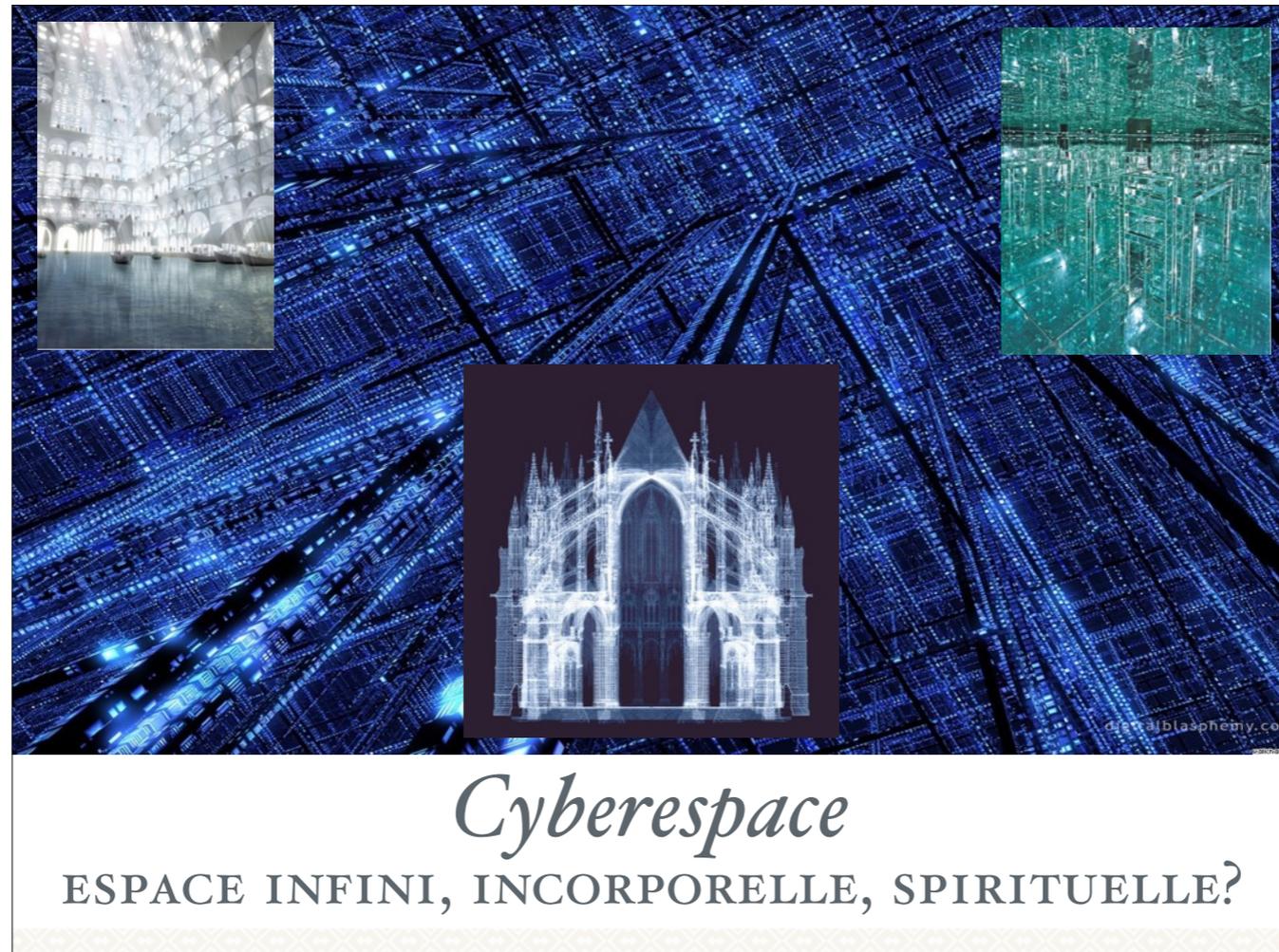
Even though our cathedral will probably not look like a real building, we definitely want to use **elements** from gothic architecture. We hope to recreate the **feeling of entering** a cathedral in 3D. From the **confusing noise** of outside to the **silent clarity** inside.



## *Spectacle baroque* THÉÂTRALITÉ

But since in virtual reality we are not bound by **physical forces** such as gravity, we can also add **theatrical elements** that would not be possible in real space. Although the baroque sculptors got very close to denying the forces of nature too.

In a way, our cathedral only **exists in the imagination**. That's one reason why it's "in the clouds". Virtual Reality is the clouds.



The Cloud is of course the new name for what we used to call **Cyberspace**.

And our cathedral is a **tribute** to at least how we used to **feel about cyberspace**.

Back in the nineties we thought of the internet as a **place**, a sort of other

**planet**, where different rules applied.

It was very romantic.

Sometimes it felt a bit like the **afterlife**, like **eternity**.

So from our early experiences on, we have connected

**the digital** with **the spiritual**

It makes sense because both are not physical, not corporeal, but ethereal.



# PRODUCTION

*Auriea Harvey & Michaël Samyn*

Cathedral-in-the-Clouds is a non-commercial project.

## Cathedral-in-the-Clouds: contemplation in the digital age



Virtual dioramas to contemplate ancient religious themes in real-time 3D, created by avant-garde indie studio Tale of Tales.

Support the project!

Created by  
Tale of Tales



838 backers pledged €37,019 to help bring this project to life.

# Crowdsourcing

## NOVEMBRE 2015

Cathedral-in-the-Clouds is a non-commercial project.

We are funding the production through **crowdsourcing**, like the campaign on Kickstarter in November.



✿ CROWDSOURCING KICKSTARTER

✿ SUBSIDIES GOVERNMENTS

✿ DONATIONS PAYPAL

✿ COMMISSIONS MUSEUMS & INDIVIDUALS

✿ COPRODUCTIONS EVENTS & THEATERS

✿ PATRONAGE PATREON

*Projet non-commercial*  
GRATUIT POUR TOUS

We are funding the production through

**crowdsourcing**, like the campaign on Kickstarter in November.

We are applying for **subsidies** but have not been lucky so far.

We are accepting **donations**. Simply via PayPal on our website.

We also have opportunity for **commissions** from museums or individuals.

Some of the rewards in the Kickstarter campaign were a tombstone, a statue or even an entire chapel dedicated to you in our virtual cathedral.

We like expanding a project through such unforeseen elements. It worked very well in The Endless Forest.

And of course this happened in medieval cathedrals as well.

We also hope to do **co-productions** with museums, theaters or other such organizations.

And then there's pure **patronage**, which we currently organize on Patreon: people directly support our creative practice through **monthly contributions**.



# TALE OF TALES

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kijkdoos.tumblr.com

*Auriea Harvey & Michaël Samyn*  
GAND, BELGIQUE

I hope I was able to **illustrate** our new project and share our **passion** for art in general and our **desire** to work on this very **challenging** project.

I'm sorry I wasn't able to show any **results** yet. We have just started. But maybe we can come by next time and **show** some of the things we've created.

Do keep an eye on our **website** and follow the project on **Twitter** and **Tumblr**. And feel free to **email** us.

Thank you.