

CYBERTHEATER

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I conceived the idea of creating a 'Cybertheater' in early 1966 but it was not until the summer and autumn of 1967 that I began to work out the details. Together with my kinetic artist colleagues, we constructed part of a large mockup in Leningrad. The whole complex of the mockup occupies about 20 m² and within it are 15-18 models of cybernetic devices or 'cyber-creatures' or 'cybers' most of them measuring about 130 × 80 cm, though some are smaller. For the moment, the models operate with the simplest automatic mechanisms and programs (owing to the temporary lack of technical means). The models of the 'cybers' are capable of producing (cf. Figs. 1, 2 and 3):

(a) fairly complex movement, with five to six degrees of freedom;

- (b) interior lighting of a fixed, pulsating and scintillating type plus illumination from light sources external to the models;
- (c) lighting whose color and intensity can be varied;
- (d) sounds in the form of semi-phonetic language, music, 'concrete' sounds, etc. correlated to the movement of the models; and
- (e) puffs of vari-colored non-toxic smoke or gas and smells of various kinds (some not pleasant).

It is estimated that the 'Cybertheater' will occupy an area of approximately 3.5 to 4 km². The largest of the 'cybers' will be 35 to 40 m high, the smallest about 10 m. Not only will each 'cyber' be programmed but so will the whole complex. The site of the theater would be provided also with a number of pools (at different levels), some with mirror-smooth surfaces, others with swirling water and

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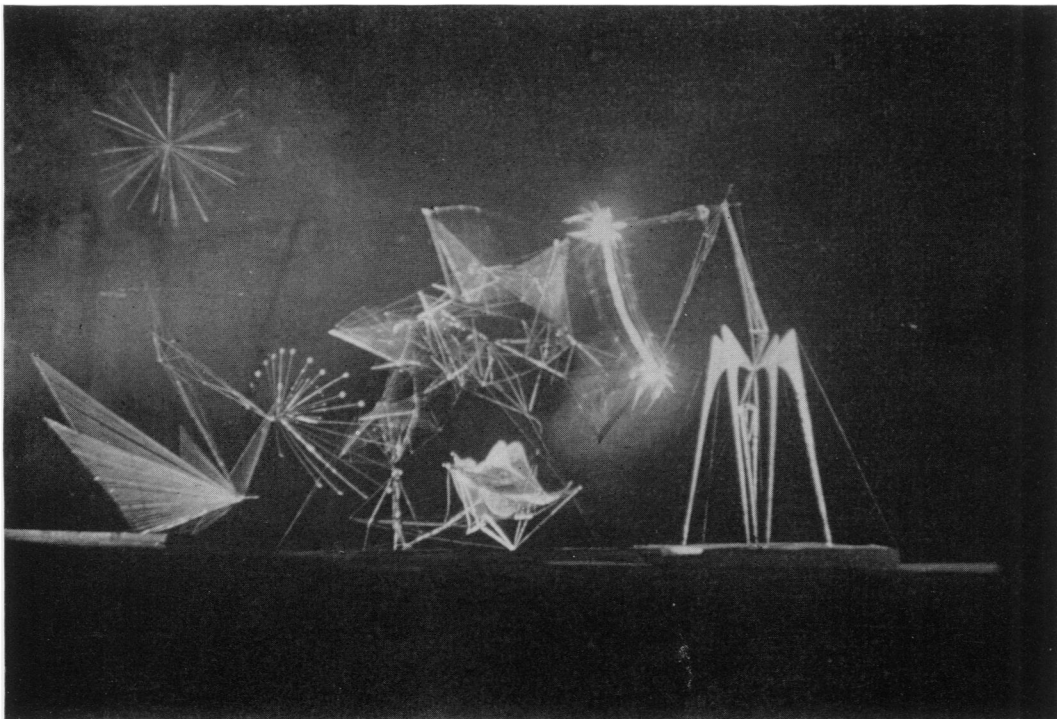


Fig. 1. View of models of 'cybers' for the 'Cybertheater' of the Russian Movement Group.

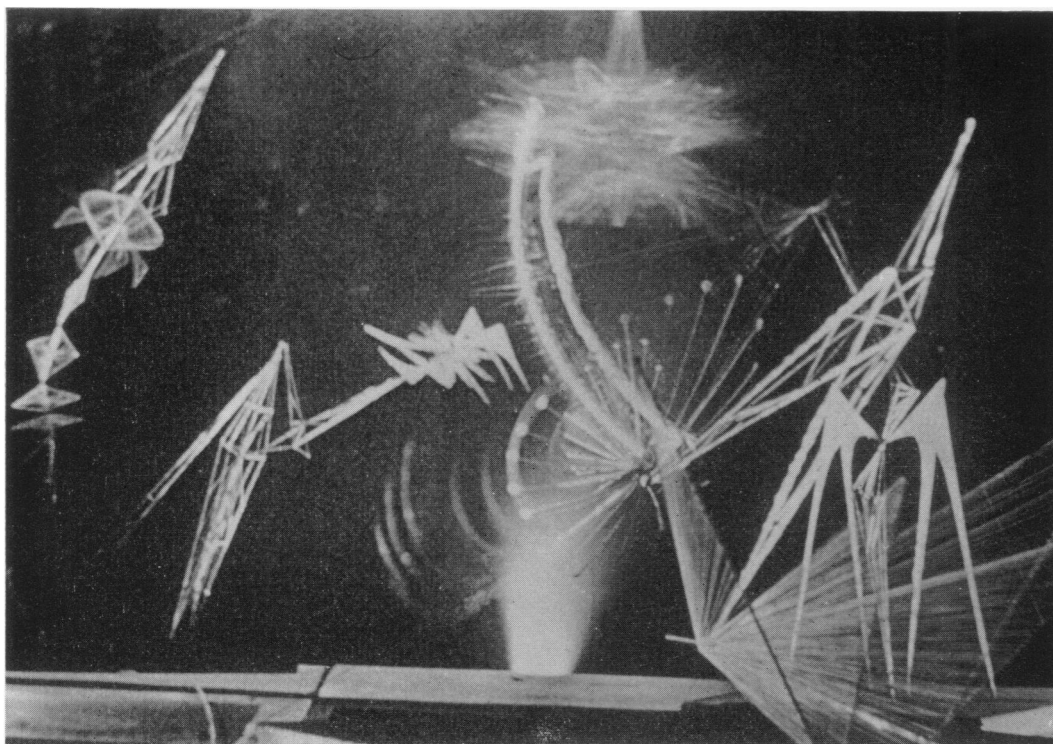


Fig. 2. Close-up view of models of 'cybers'.

with specially designed cascades tinted in different colors.

Paths will be marked out for spectators to follow. Some paths, it is true, will lead through water but the pools will be only 8–15 cm deep (visitors will be issued with special boots and protective clothing). There will be automatic signs and safety devices in places where flames or gases emerge from beneath the water or from the 'cybers'.

Paths leading through the inside of certain 'cybers' will enable spectators to take part in their programmed action and experience both fear and pain and also the joy and satisfaction of surviving the experience. But even when outwardly sharing the experience of the machine and being involved, psychically, in the struggle with machines—Man remains Man.

The 'Cybertheater' is intended to be yet another reminder to Man of the fantastic possibilities of technology and of the need for developing it further; but, at the same time, it is intended to serve as a warning of the dangers inherent in highly developed machines.

The 'Cybertheater' serves in a way as one model of our man-made world and of the relationship

between the Machine and Man. It is of course an aesthetic fantasy, perhaps with prophetic overtones. Is not Man himself creating more and more of his environment on the planet Earth (using matter in the same way as a sculptor uses clay for his sculptures)?

Herein lies the significance of the 'Cybertheater'. Here Man clashes with Machine in the most non-utilitarian and aesthetic sense, with the Machine expressed in elegant form. But even in this form, the Machine remains only a machine. I do not believe that the Machine will ever (no matter how developed it becomes) be capable of becoming a Creator, even if Man, the maker of machines, gradually evolves biologically or otherwise into a higher type of rational being.

Nearly all the members of our 'Movement' group took part in elaborating the project and constructing the models of the 'Cybertheater': Francisco Infante, Nikolai Kuznetsov, Tatiana Bystrova, Aleksandr Grigoriev, Galina Bitt, Vyacheslav Borodin, Natalya Prokuratova and others [1]. We are at present preparing to make a color film, 'Cybertheater', by our own efforts and with our own resources.

REFERENCE

1. Russian 'Movement' Group, *Leonardo* 1, 319 (1968).

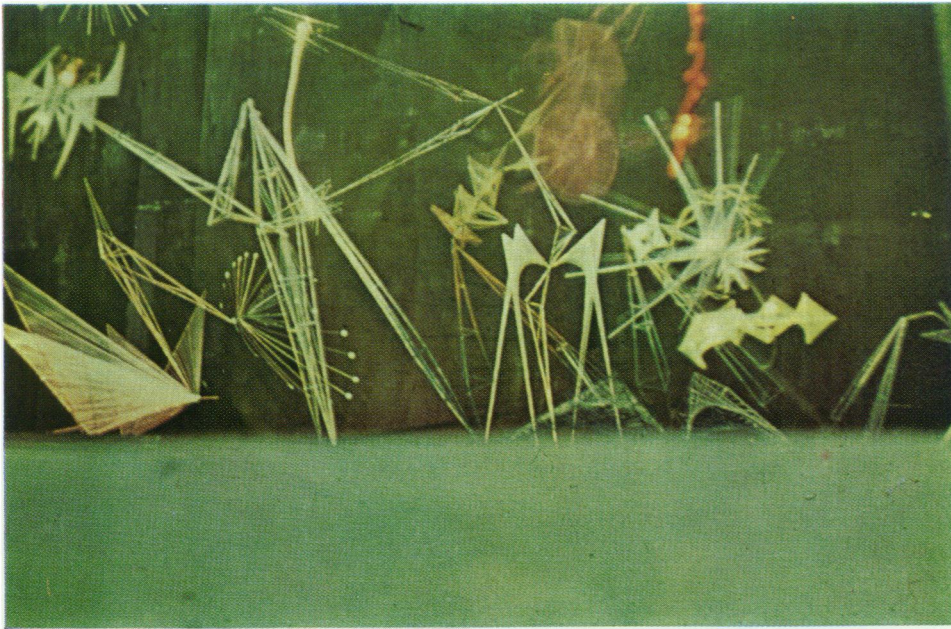


Fig. 3. View of models of 'cybers' for the 'Cybertheater' of the Russian Movement Group.