Audience & Avatar

Brody Condon: Modifications
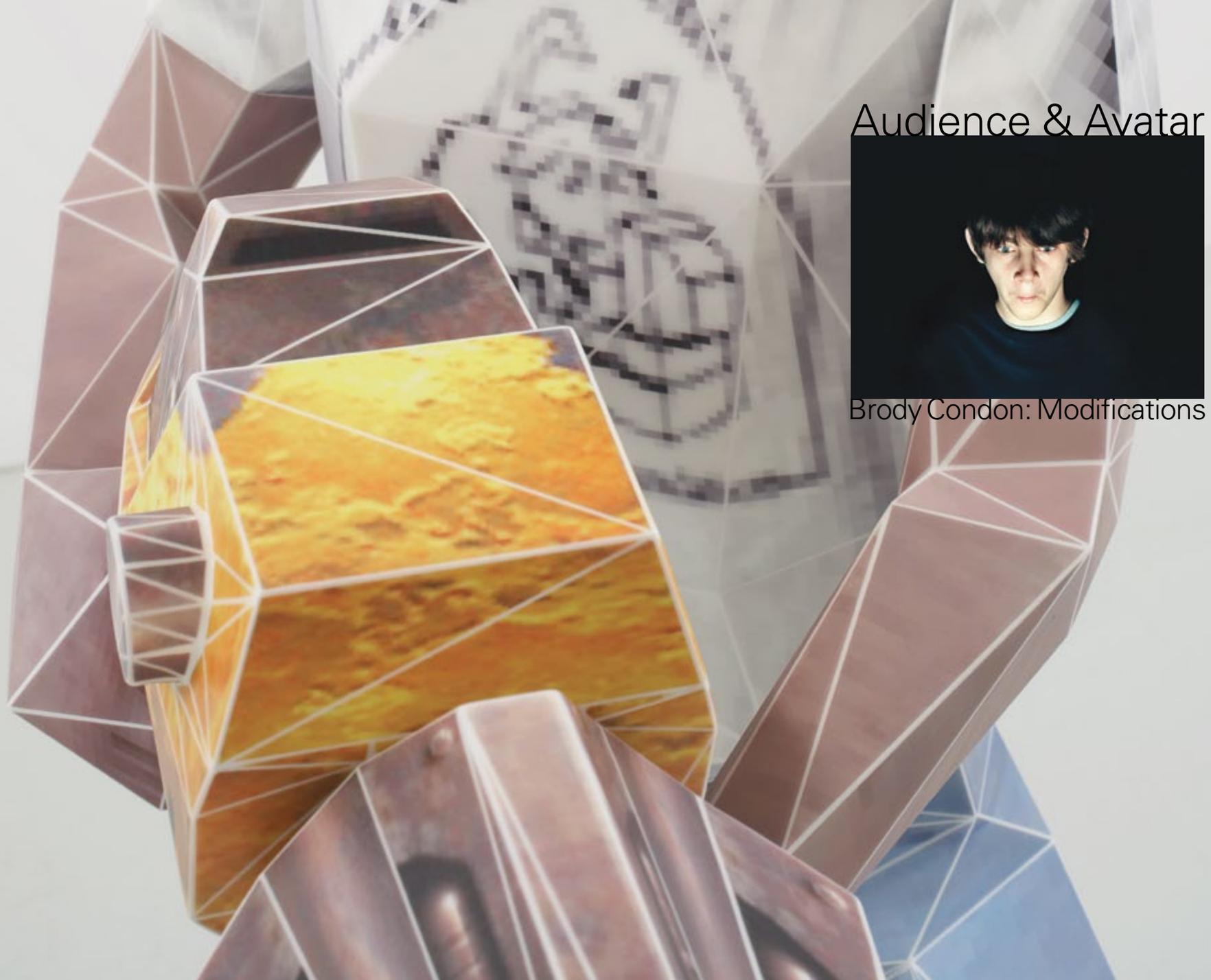
This catalogue is published on the occasion of the exhibition

Audience & Avatar

and
a project gallery by Brody Condon

Modifications

October 24 – December 13, 2008
USF Contemporary Art Museum

Curated by Don Fuller

Organized by
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University of South Florida, Tampa

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Foreword | Acknowledgements

Nearly three years ago Don Fuller first expressed his interest in curating an exhibition for the USF Contemporary Art Museum that addressed issues relating to the way in which artists were exploring the phenomenon of videogames and gaming cultures. Margaret Miller, Director of the Institute for Research in Art, provided encouragement and support toward the endeavor. *Audience & Avatar* is the result of his research and keen interest in art that captures the duality of the spectator and the performer.

Fuller, Curator of New Media for USFCAM, has chosen a provocative group of works by seven international artists. John Paul Bichard, Brody Condon, Jon Haddock, Damiano Colacito, Eva and Franco Mattes (aka 0100101110101101.ORG), Phillip Toledano, and Eddo Stern create intriguing works that reveal our sensory adaptation to both fictive gaming experiences and actual world events. CAM's West Gallery, which serves as a project room, features both recent and seminal works by Brody Condon in a show titled *Modifications*. Condon will both work at Graphicstudio and be guest artist-in-residence with the School of Art and Art History during spring 2009.

Audience & Avatar is the most recent project that USFCAM has undertaken to enhance its program offerings in order to engage a new and broader audience in an understanding of contemporary art practice. By originating and hosting exhibitions that introduce

Eva and Franco Mattes aka 0100101110101101.ORG, *Karee Kayvon*, 2006

Audience & Avatar:
some interlocking perspectives and meandering associations
by Sally O'Reilly

As a coupling of alliterative words 'audience and avatar' are deceptively perky sounding, like bat and ball or Tweedledum and Tweedledee. And yet this particular double act, if you give it a moment's thought, relates some of the most seismic shifts in paradigm of the twentieth century. A grand claim, perhaps, considering it was the century of the atomic bomb and space travel, but for cultural production, at least, acknowledgement of the audience's role in generating meaning left the traditional segregation of making and looking, articulating and understanding, as unsupportable. And the very notion of a secular avatar, or representation of the self as other, unsettles deeply ingrained philosophies of identity, with the mind/body question bifurcating along yet another axis. The perennial conundrum of whether it is the seat of consciousness or biological impulse that rules is made more complex as the avatar journeys into a reality that is extra-bodily.

The following extracts have been assembled through an attempt to unravel these ideas, starting from the apparently straightforward notion of fantasy football. But from the magic circle of a computerised soccer game tumbles forth a stream of difficult, radical and elusive ideas about representation, simulation, authenticity and agency. Each fragment contains the seed of the next to form a trail through the thicket of the previous century. This trail has been forged by following a scent, but it should, of course, be acknowledged that there are limitless possible trails, myriad methods of tracking and as many scents as we are sensitised to pick up.

The space in which the game takes place is a subset of the larger world, and a magic circle delineates the bounds of the game (figure 5.1). When a ball game has a rule prescribing that the game stops if the ball leaves the playing field, this relates to the border between game space and world space. But in video games, the magic circle is quite well defined since a video game only takes place in the screen and using input devices (mouse, keyboard, controllers), rather than the rest of the world; hence there is no "ball" that can be out of bounds.

In a computerized soccer game such as *FIFA 2002*, the game is delineated by the screen and input devices, but the game itself projects a fictional world quite similar to the real world of FIFA cups, inside which a game space is delineated by a magic circle and a soccer game is played (figure 5.2). This is typical of sports adapted to video games (and many other video games): A fictional world is projected and a game is played in a part of that fictional world. Since it adds meaning to a game to place it inside a larger fictional world, this is a common way of structuring a game.

Jesper Juul, *Half-Real: Video Games between Real Rules and Fictional Worlds*, Massachusetts/London: MIT Press, 2005

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When we visualise something, though we encounter or experience the image, what we imagine is not the image but the object itself. By having the image we imagine the object. But the image is not merely a sign. In visualising it is as if the object were present in the image, as an object perceived is present in the percept of visual impression. There is thus an aspect of illusion in visualising, which, although it cannot be eliminated, does not normally deceive us. In normal visualising we are conscious not only of the object as if present in the image, but also of the image as such. If this were not the case all visualising would be hallucinatory.

In visualising of the first or 'conjuration' type, it is as if the object itself were moved from its actual place and time into the presence of the imaginer. In visualising of the second type it is as if the imaginer were moved into some other place and time, and it is as if these movements were accomplished by the direct action of the mind, whether voluntary or spontaneous. The two types of visualising are both instances of the production of an appearance of the movement of some object by the action of the mind alone. But this is an analogue principle of magic, as Hegel describes it in the *Encyclopaedia*, where he says that the magical is an immediate causal relation of the mind upon extramental objects, or upon something else generally.

If processes and activities are called 'imagination' on account of their relation to magic, and if Hegel's definition of magic is adequate, then imagination in general is not a real but a merely apparent direct causal relation of the mind upon extramental objects, or upon something else generally, including the self or ego of the imaginer.

RK Elliot, *Aesthetics, Imagination and the Unity of Experience*, ed. Paul Crowther, International University of Bremen, Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2006
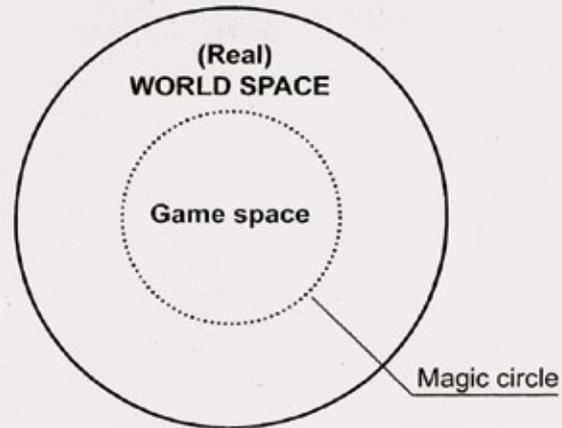
| Figure 5.1 |
A physical game (such as soccer): The game space is a subset of the space of the real world.
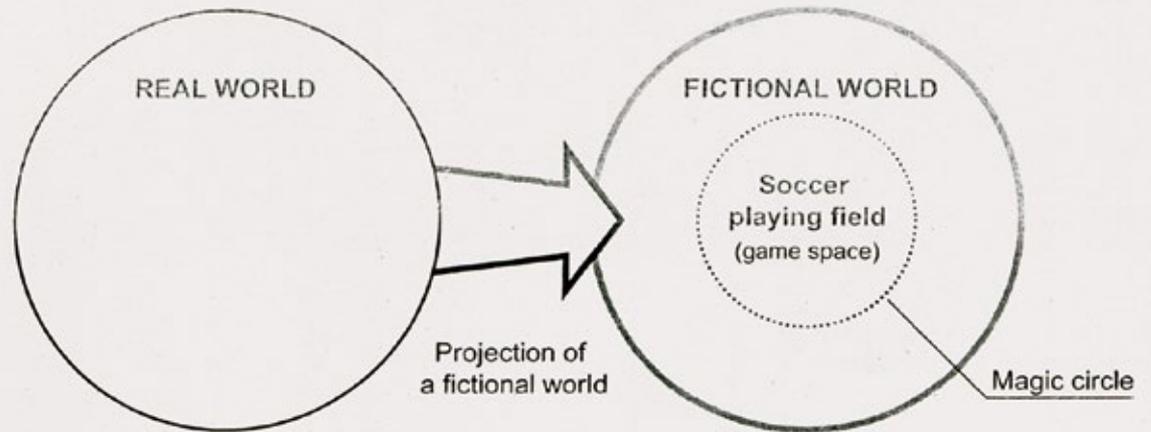
| Figure 5.2 |
FIFA 2002 projects a fictional world, with a playing field on which soccer is played.
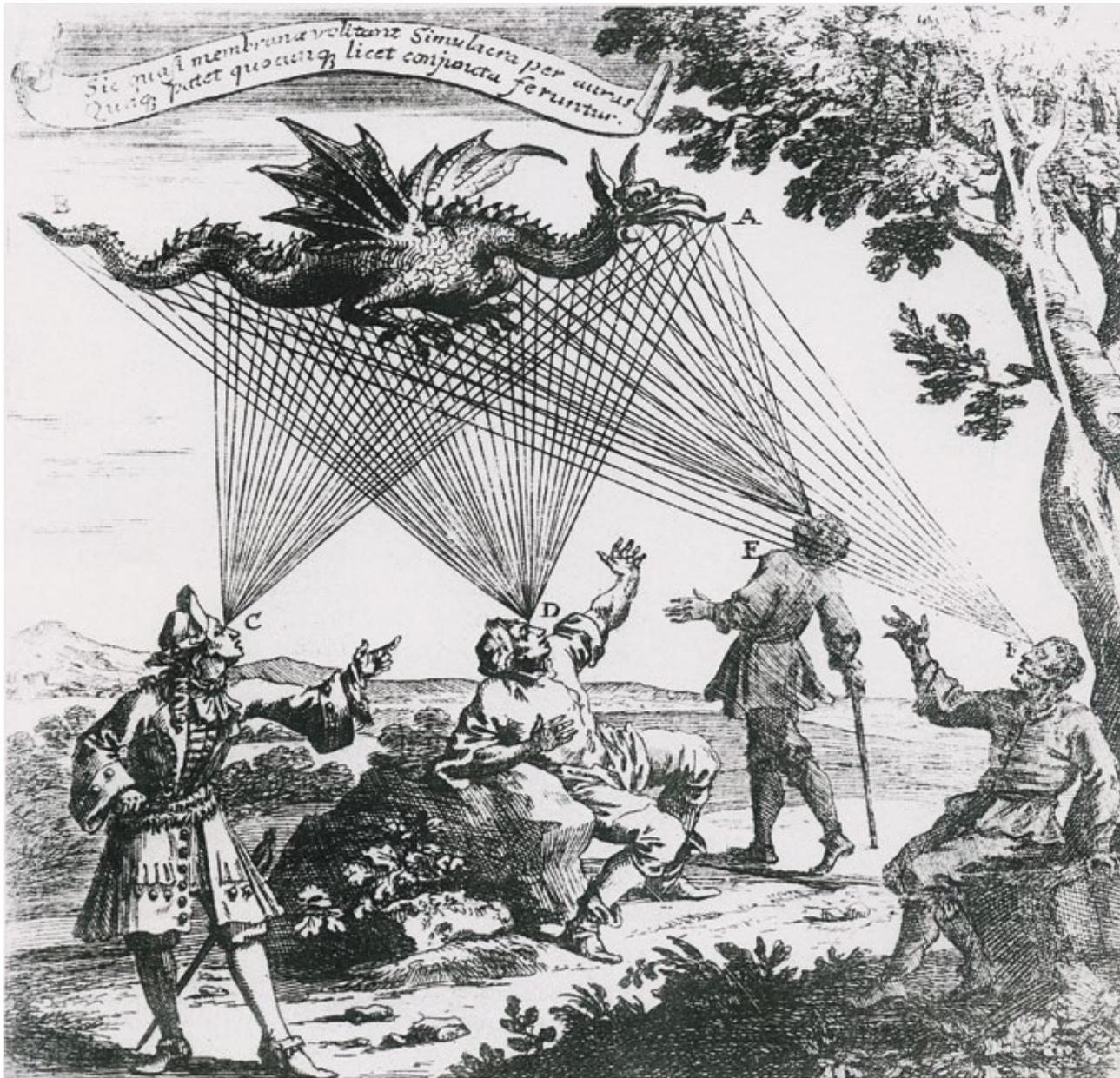
'The Radiating Eye', in Johannes Zahn, *Oculus Teledioptricus*, Nuremburg, 1702

In the medieval Christian tradition, the Devil is a mimic, an actor, a performance artist, and he imitates the wonders of nature and the divine work of creation. His medium is illusion. Unlike God, the Fathers of the Church argued, the Devil cannot perform real miracles or really alter phenomena. He is the mere ape of God, the master of lies, of imitating and simulating and pretending – but he is impotent when it comes to transforming substance and matter. He can only conjure visions as illusions, as he did when in the person of Mephistopheles, he summoned the pageant of the deadly sins for Doctor Faustus and then seduced him with the bewitching appearance of Helen of Troy. The Devil summons images in the mind's eye, playing on desires and weaknesses. He toys with us, especially when creating spectacles that are not there, for the work 'illusion' itself comes from '*ludere*', 'to play' in Latin.

Marina Warner, 'Camera Lucida', *Eyes, Lies and Illusions: The Art of Deception*, London: Hayward Gallery, 2004

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Summing up the formal characteristics of play we might call it a free activity standing quite consciously outside "ordinary" life as being "not serious," but at the same time absorbing the player intensely and utterly. It is an activity connected with no material interest, and no profit can be gained by it. It proceeds within it proper boundaries of time and space according to fixed rules and in an orderly manner. It promotes the formation of social groupings which tend to surround themselves with secrecy and to stress their difference from the common world by disguise or other means.

Johan Huizinga, Homo Ludens: *A study of the play element in culture*, 1938, (London: Temple Smith, 1970)

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Such a definition, in which all the words are important and meaningful, is at the same time too broad and too narrow. It is meritorious and fruitful to have grasped the affinity which exists between play and the secret or mysterious, but this relationship cannot be part of the definition of play, which is nearly always spectacular or ostentatious. Without doubt, secrecy, mystery, and even travesty can be transformed into play activity, but it must be immediately pointed out that this transformation is necessarily to the detriment of the secret and mysterious, which play exposes, publishes, and somehow expends. In a word, play tends to remove the very nature of the mysterious.

[…] I am proposing division into four main rubrics, depending on whether, in the games under consideration, the role of competition, chance, simulation, or vertigo is dominant. I call these *agôn*, *alea*, *mimicry*, and *ilinx*, respectively. All four indeed belong to the domain of play. One *plays* football, billiards, or chess (*agôn*); roulette or a lottery (*alea*); pirate, Nero, or Hamlet (*mimicry*); or one produces in oneself, by a rapid whirling or falling movement, a state of dizziness and disorder (*ilinx*).

[…] *agôn* and *alea* imply opposite and somewhat complementary attitudes, but they both obey the same law – the creation for the players of conditions of pure equality denied them in real life. For nothing in life is clear, since everything is confused from the

very beginning, luck and merit too. Play, whether *agôn* or *alea*, is thus an attempt to substitute perfect situations for the normal confusion of contemporary life. In games, the role of merit or chance is clear and indisputable. It is also implied that all must play with exactly the same possibility of proving their superiority or, on another scale, exactly the same chances of winning. In one way or another, one escapes the real world and creates another. One can also escape himself and become another. This is *mimicry*.

Roger Caillois, *Man, Play & Games*, 1958 (London: Thames & Hudson, trans. Meyer Barash, 1962)

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Special resemblance differs from *general* resemblance in that the combination of shape, attitude and colouring produce a more or less exact resemblance to some definite object in the surroundings. In this method, the animal is not camouflaged by becoming indistinguishable from its background, but by being mistaken for something else.

Lieut-Colonoel CHR Chesney PSD, with four chapters written by J Huddlestone, *The Art of Camouflage*, London: Robert Hale Ltd, 1941

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In vogue at the time of [Christian von] Ehrenfels' paper ['On Gestalt Qualities'] was a psychology of atomism, the proponents of which restricted themselves to interpreting things "from below" – analyzing the functions of parts, and from that discerning the whole. Within this approach, the nature of parts was absolute, and wholes were the sum of their features.

Contrarily, Gestalt psychology was contextual or holistic, interpreting things "from above." As Paul Weiss once explained, atomism is like looking through the customary end of a telescope, and by that enlarging the details, while the holist peers through the opposite end and sees the *relations* of things. To the Gestaltist, components are altered by where they are and by what surrounds them, such that wholes are best described as "more than the sum of their parts."

Roy R Behrens, *Art & Camouflage: concealment and deception in nature, art and war*, University of Iowa, 1981

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Even a don sympathetic to Derrida admitted that 'deconstruction, which began as a heresy, soon turned into a dogma, and hardened into a theology, sustained by a network of evangelists and high priests and inquisitors'. The Vatican of this new creed was Yale University, where the three 'boa-deconstructors' Jacques Derrida, Paul de Man and J Hillis Miller reigned jointly as pontificating pontiffs, but the papal jurisdiction extended far beyond their own department of comparative literature. 'Students taking courses in literature, film, "cultural studies", and even, in some cases, anthropology and political science, were taught that the world is just a socially constructed "text" about which you can say just about anything you want, provided you say it murkily enough,' the

'protective resemblance: safe-effacement. Three walking-stick insects.', Leut-Colonel CHR Chesney PSD, with four chapters written by J Huddlestone, *The Art of Camouflage*, London: Robert Hale Ltd, 1941
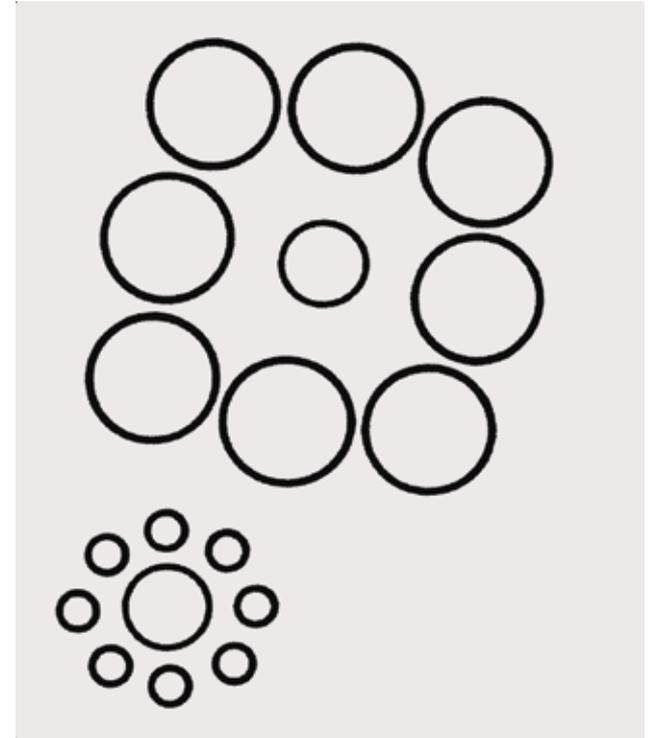
In this demonstration of the simultaneous contrast of shape, the central circles in the two diagrams appear to be different sizes, even though, by measurement, they are exactly the same size.

Roy R Behrens, *Art & Camouflage: concealment and deception in nature, art and war*, University of Iowa, 1981

left-wing American author Barbara Ehrenrich complained. 'One of my own children, whose college education cost about $25,000 a year, reported that in some classes, you could be marked down for using the word "reality" without the quotation marks.'

[…]

Terry Eagleton's bracing left-wing critique of post-modernism, published by the *Monthly Review* in July 1995, noted yet another irony almost parenthetically: 'It believes in style and pleasure, and commonly churns out texts that might have been composed by, as well as on, a computer.' The truth of this quip was proved a year later when a mischievous Australian academic, Andrew Bulhak, designed a computer program 'to generate random, meaningless and yet quite realistic text in genres defined using recursive transition networks'.

Francis Wheen, *How Mumbo-Jumbo Conquered the World: A Short History of Modern Delusions*, London: Fourth Estate, 2004

It has thus become increasingly apparent that physical "reality", no less than social "reality", is at bottom a social and linguistic construct; that scientific "knowledge", far from being objective, reflects and encodes the dominant ideologies and power relations of the culture that produced it; that the truth claims of science are inherently theory-laden and self-referential; and consequently, that the discourse of the scientific community, for all its undeniable value, cannot assert a privileged epistemological status with respect to counter-hegemonic narratives emanating from dissident or marginalized communities.

Alan D Sokal, 'Transgressing the Boundaries: Towards a Transformative Hermeneutics of Quantum Gravity', created via The Postmodernism Generator computer programme and published in the peer review journal *Social Text* #46/47, Spring/Summer 1996

In *Simulacra and Simulation* (1981), Jean Baudrillard plots what he calls the strategy of the real: 'The impossibility of staging illusion. Illusion is no longer possible, because the real is no longer possible. It is the whole political problem of parody, of hyper-simulation or offensive simulation, that is posed here.' His point hinges on the intention behind simulation, and how staging an action not only carries the usual consequences of that act, but also attacks the principle of reality itself.

But how do we consider the tied fly in this context? Is the angler attacking the fishes' reality principle with his pantomime renditions? Any likeness between Jon Beer's fly and the real thing is absurdly way off the mark; the fabricated version appears to be in drag, with a feather boa and too much makeup. This extravagance of form that characterises manmade flies, however, is to compensate for the effect of water on the fibres and the ocular mechanism of the fish. […]

Hawthorn fly and Hawthorn fly (Jon Beer)

Soldier beetle and Soldier beetle (Taff Price)

Pat O'Reilly, *Matching the Hatch: Stillwater, River & Stream*, Shrewsbury: Swan Hill Press, 1997

So perhaps, after all, the angler's mode of representation is one of pantomimesis, untouched by parody or hypersimulation but tinged with a material theatricality that is unavoidable.

Sally O'Reilly, 'Pantomimesis', *Contemporary*, issue 57, 2003

Each man had something about him, perceived perhaps at the tenth or twentieth glance, which was not normal, and which seemed hardly human. The only metaphor he could think of was this, that they all looked as men of fashion and presence would look, with the additional twist given in a false and curved mirror.

[…Each] man was subtly and differently wrong. Next to him sat Tuesday, the tousle-headed Gogol, a man more obviously mad. Next was Wednesday, a certain Marquis de St. Eustache, a sufficiently characteristic figure. The first few glances found nothing unusual about him, except that he was the only man at table who wore the fashionable clothes as if they were really his own.

[…] Then came Syme, and next a very old man, Professor de Worms, who still kept the chair of Friday, though every day it was expected that his death would leave it empty. Save for his intellect, he was in the last dissolution of senile decay. His face was as grey as his long grey beard, his forehead was lifted and fixed finally in a furrow of mild despair.

[…] Right at the end sat the man called Saturday, the simplest and the most baffling of all. He was a short, square man with a dark, square face clean-shaven, a medical practitioner going by the name of Bull. He had that combination of savoir-faire with a sort of well-groomed coarseness which is not uncommon in young doctors. He carried his fine clothes with confidence rather than ease, and he mostly wore a set smile. There was nothing whatever odd about him, except that he wore a pair of dark, almost opaque spectacles. It may have been merely a crescendo of nervous fancy that had gone before, but those black discs were dreadful to Syme; they reminded him of half-remembered ugly tales, of some story about pennies being put on the eyes of the dead.

GK Chetserton, *The Man Who Was Thursday*, 1908

[…] The question posed by a golem was never about its skin or breath or blood; it was about the extent to which looks may deceive. Babylonian Jews long ago imagined a golem, sent to trick Rabbi Zera, who spoke to him, but received no answer. "Thereupon he said unto him, 'Thou art a creature of the magicians. Return to thy dust.'" Not physiognomy but responsive-ness, sociability, sincerity have been at issue, whence upon the shock as von Kempelen's chess-playing automaton swept the

Heath Robinson, 'A warm-hearted old soul disguised as a merman seeking to lure a mermaid from her native element', *Absurdities*, London: Book Club Associates, 1975
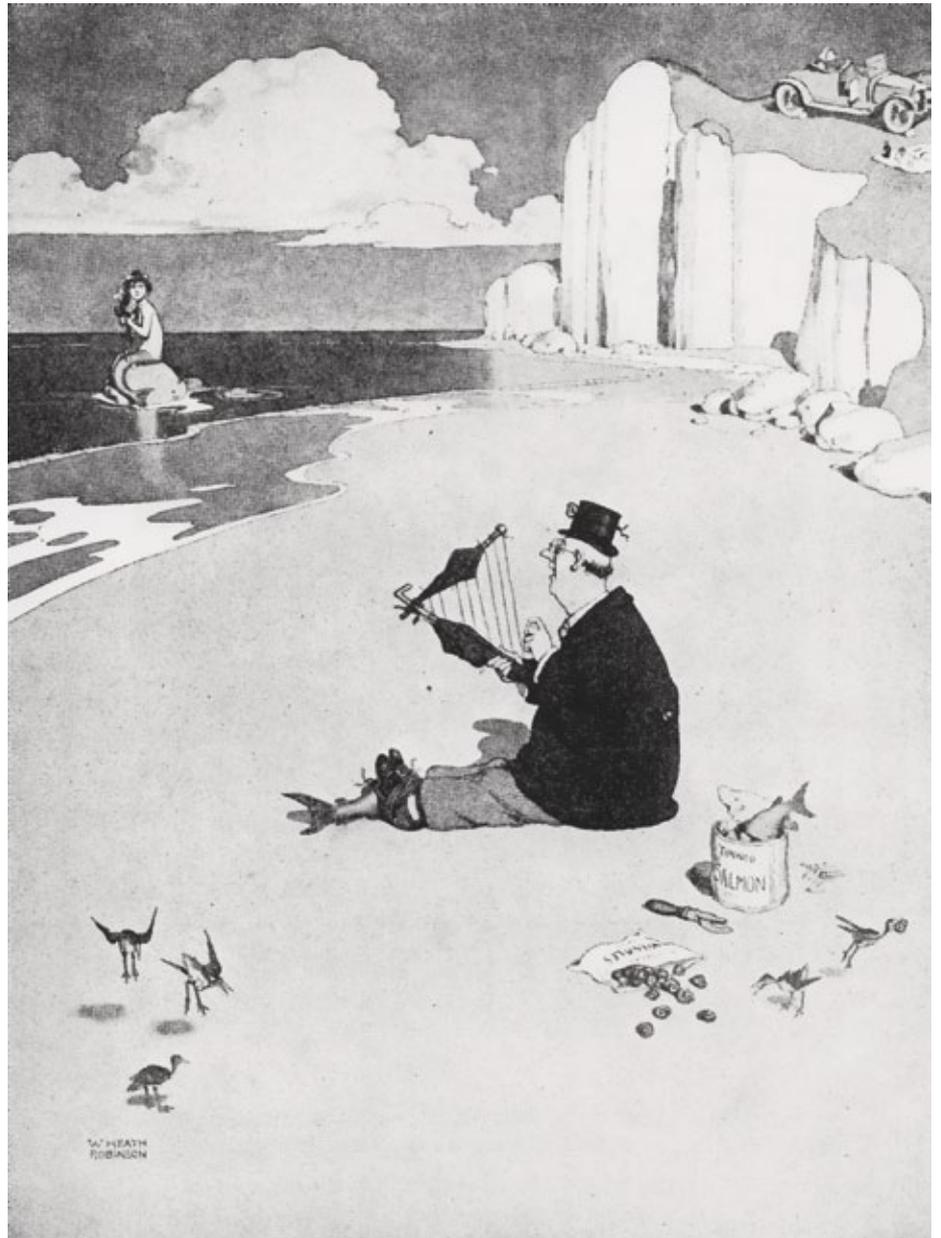
pieces off the board if components cheated; whence the drama of Rossum's Universal Robots as one falls in love; whence the smiles of audioanimatronic figures at Disney World. The more agile we become at replicating human beings, the more we look to qualities social or immaterial (loyalty, love, despair, boredom, competitiveness, confusion) to tell ourselves from our creations – or the more pride we must take in their equivalence to us.

Turing saw "little point in trying to make a 'thinking machine' more human by dressing it up in … artificial flesh." To be deceived by such cross-dressing would prove nothing about the mentality of a machine. Indeed, he wrote, it would be harder for a person to carry off the pretense of being a mechanical calculator than for a disguised electronic computer to carry off the imposture of being a thinking person. An intellectual uneasy with small talk and oblivious to many social conventions, Turing reframed the debate about the limits of mechanism in terms of the limits of our ability to see through social simulation.

Hillel Schwartz, *The Culture of the Copy: Striking Likenesses, Unreasonable Facsimiles*, New York: Zone Books, 1996

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The theatrical instinct for disguise and transformation, one of life's pleasures, could here be seen in all its purity, without the least taint or awareness of a performance; so strongly did it manifest itself here in this unconscious, perennial art of self-representation that by comparison the middle-class custom of building theatres and staging plays as an art that can be rented by the hour struck him as something quite unnatural, decadent, and schizoid.

Robert Musil, *The Man Without Qualities*, Trans. Sophie Wilkes and Burton Pike, London: Picador, 1995

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At the same time that the public life movies starring celebrities were playing in the mass media, personal movies, billions of them, starring ordinary people who hadn't passed to the other side of the glass, were playing in everyday existence: on the street, at the office or factory, at a restaurant or shopping mall or local bar, in school, at a party, in the living room, even in the bedroom. There weren't necessarily high-concept pictures like the public lifies; they were frequently no more than a conversation or a gesture or a glance. These didn't have audiences in the tens of millions as the public lifies did; sometimes they had only an audience of one. And these didn't provide metaphors and myths as the public lifies often did; usually they provided only the modest joy of performance. […]

But whether showmanship was a natural instinct or not, it was certainly useful in negotiating one's way through the world. As the urban sociologist Richard Sennet saw it in his book *The Fall of Public Man*, appearance and self-presentation were the very bases of social relations in Europe in the eighteenth century. In Sennet's analysis, people, particularly the upper

classes, dressed like actors and behaved like actors on the unstated assumption that public life was basically a performance in which you projected to others how you wanted to be perceived, even though everyone understood that the role has very little to do with anything other than role-playing.

Neal Gabler, *Life: The Movie*, New York: Vintage Books, 1998

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A zoologist might quote quite a list of birds which adorn their dancing floors with bright feathers, pebbles, shells and various other *decorations*. Thus, for instance, the tropical crow is so fond of these things that the natives of the regions where it lives always look for their lost ornaments near its "dancing establishments."

Indeed, bird theatres are far from being primitive and unpretentious. They set a very high example of histrionics to the animal kingdom. Nor do the dances performed in these theatres consist of mere jumping and walking. Some of the birds, like, for instance, the so-called prairie turkey, execute complicated pirouettes, just as our grandfathers did in the period of rococo, advance two or four at a time, bow their heads, spread their wings over the ground, step backward and then forward again, turn on their toes and screech with merry voices.

Let us, however, pass from birds to higher animals whose psychology can be more accessible to us and whose life lies within the range of our daily experience. Consider, for instance, a dog looking for hours out of the window or observing the world from an automobile. This "watching the parade" is truly suggestive. It has no other purpose than to take in mentally different street scenes and happenings, that is to say, to be a "spectator" in a "show." […]

But watch a dog playing with a bone, throwing it up, pushing it, keeping it in motion and growling, barking, assuming pugnacious poses at the same time, and you will agree with Herr Groos, one of the keenest students of the psychology of animals, that this is real, unquestionable acting accompanied by "conscious self-deception."

[…]

Psychologically speaking, there is but a step from the "masquerading" of the primitive man in his everyday life to the theatre in the narrow, technical sense of the word. Indeed, is it not natural for man who adorns his colourless existence by organizing shows under such pretexts as marriage, death, administration of justice, etc., to organize them also without pretexts, that is to say, to stage shows for their own sake?

Nicolas Evreinhoff, *The Theatre in Life*, Ed. & Trans. Alexander I Nazaroff, London: George G Harrap and Co Ltd, 1927

[Leaning] forward in one's seat one mirrors the thrust of the dramatic action. Imaginatively we follow a path that runs parallel, not to the events themselves, but to the shifts of tension either between characters or between ourselves and the performers. This process may be called *empathetic parallelism*.

Bernard Beckerman, *Dynamics of Drama: theory and method of analysis*, New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1970

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Recalling from that period the occasion of either Forrest or Booth, any good night at the old Bowery, pack'd from ceiling to pit with its audience mainly of alert, well dress'd, full-blooded young and middle-aged men, the best average of American-born mechanics—the emotional nature of the whole mass arous'd by the power and magnetism of as mighty mimes as ever trod the stage—the whole crowded auditorium, and what seeth'd in it, and flush'd from its faces and eyes, to me as much a part of the show as any—bursting forth in one of those long-kept-up tempests of hand-clapping peculiar to the Bowery—no dainty kid-glove business, but electric force and muscle from perhaps 2000 full-sinew'd men.

Walt Whitman (1819–1892). Prose Works. 1892. V. November Boughs 14. The Old Bowery

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Sally O'Reilly is UK-based art critic and writer, and co-editor of *Implicasphere* magazine. She contributes regularly to many publications, including *Art Monthly*, *Frieze*, *Art Review*, *Spike* and *Time Out*. She has written many catalogues essays for emerging and established artists for international venues and organizations, including BALTIC, Gateshead, Mori Art Museum, Tokyo, Gemeentemuseum, The Hague, and Locus+, Newcastle. She is also a visiting lecturer on many BA and Postgraduate courses around the UK, and conducts tutorials on studio practice and critical theory. She also devises and produces performative events, both individually and in collaboration. She was artist in residence at Camden Art Centre (February 2006), co-producer of the performance programme for Whitstable Biennale 2006, co-writer, producer and performer of the Brown Mountain Cabaret at the Bethnal Green Working Men's Club (October 2006) and curator of Beacon Art Project 2007.

John Paul Bichard, *Evidência #003, Inverse Forensics,* 2007. copyright © John Paul Bichard 2007
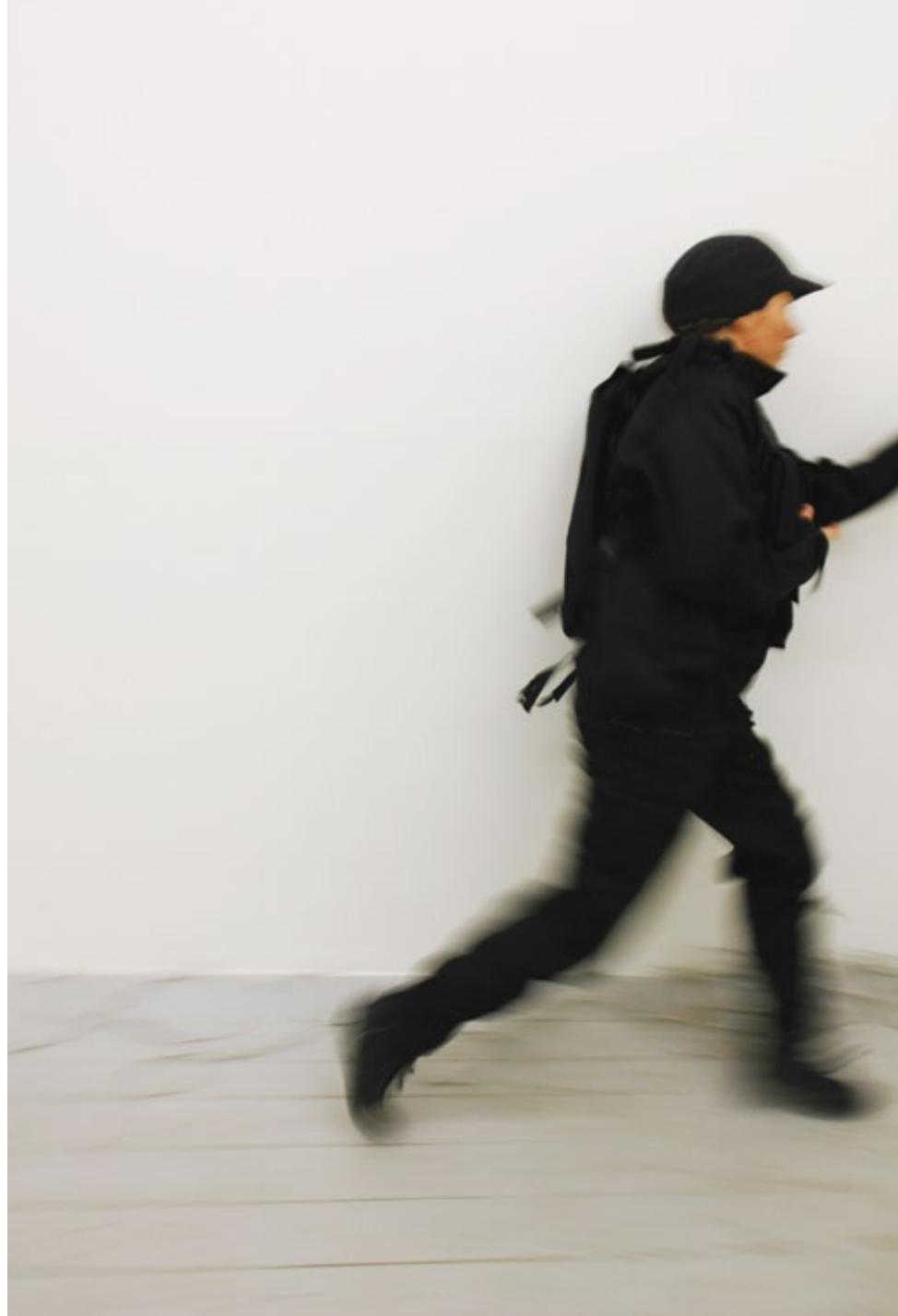
Brody Condon, *650 Polygon John Carmack v2.0*, 2004 (Photo: Tom Powel Imaging, Inc., NY)

The Silver Cord and God's Eye
by Don Fuller

I

Sometimes they were funny things. Sometimes exciting ones, and he had to be quick to stay alive. He had lots of deaths, but that was OK, games were like that, you died a lot until you got the hang of it.

Ender's Game by Orson Scott Card

The artists represented in *Audience & Avatar* and *Modifications* each explore ways in which videogames, game culture, technology, and psychology influence participation of the viewer in art. Some artists in the exhibition use games or their essential technology as a tool to delve into the psychology of their subjects, or their audience's perception. Other artists, who have grown up playing videogames and witnessed the growing influence of games on popular culture, are now using those games and the ways of seeing learned from them to explore the tense space between the virtual and the real, between game space and art space.

Though commercially produced videogames may be considered art, the focus of these exhibitions will be on Game Art, which Matteo Bittanti has defined as, "any art in which digital games played a significant role in the creation, production, and/or display of the art-work. The resulting artwork can exist as a game, painting, photograph, sound, animation, video, performance or gallery installation."[1]

Representation of the self in videogames has evolved simultaneously with advances in technology, becoming more complex, more real. Avatars have developed from Space Invaders' low resolution tank and Asteroids' imperiled space ship to the infinitely customizable avatar that you choose to be your representation inside Second Life or in a first-person shooter (FPS)—though in the latter you are likely only to end up seeing the barrel of the gun your avatar is holding and the trace of crosshairs on your target.

This triumph of the digital picture plane in the modern FPS allows a deep immersion of a player, a "projection of self" that can be equated with an out of body experience—consciousness tethered to the physical body by the metaphysical silver cord. The power of the game camera to create and influence the psychology within a scene is virtually unlimited. At the other extreme are life-simulator games such as The Sims franchise, real-time strategy games such as Command & Conquer, and turn-based strategy games such as Sid Meier's Civilization series. In these games the view and consciousness is pushed back out of the scene to the God's eye view, floating above the room, the city or the world, with the illusion of complete control. The player feels like a Greek god ready to come down from Mount Olympus and interfere with the lives of mortals. It is this player-controlled point of view, not limited by real world physics, and allowing for the omnipotence of the God's eye view and the subjective immersion of the first-person view, that makes videogames such a fertile field for artists' explorations.

The lack of overt interactivity is an over-arching theme of the work in *Audience & Avatar* and *Modifications*. This may be counter-intuitive to someone not familiar with Game Art, and in many cases is meant to subvert the idea of a game. These are not Art Games in which a viewer enters the museum and picks up a controller and plays. The act of denying the expected cycle of videogame interactivity—rethink, replay, die again—enhances, rather than reduces, the audience's engagement with the work

1 Matteo Bittanti, "Game Art, (This is not) A Manifesto, (This is) A Disclaimer," *GameScenes – Art in the Age of Videogames*, ed. Matteo Bittanti and Domenico Quaranta, (Johan & Levi Editore, October 2006) 9.

and highlights the viewers' perceptions of what interactivity really means. The artists exploit the perceptual shifts built into the media in ways that are as much about the viewers as about the work itself.

II

He froze up for moment before he remembered that the memory was not real, it was of a computer game he played back in battle school.

Speaker for the Dead by Orson Scott Card

John Paul Bichard's ongoing *Evidência* series explores the idea of fictionalized violence transposed from game space into the gallery. What would happen if the traces of carnage left behind by a player in a first-person shooter game were manifested into a real space and treated as if the avatars' violence were real? The intimate personal small-screen scale of the game is inverted into the large-scale audience space of the museum.

The *Evidência #002, White Room* (2004) series of photographic prints are reminiscent of crime scene photographs. They are the result of an in-game photo shoot of game environments in noir-themed Max Payne 2.[2] They are displayed unframed in a case like evidence of a crime without bodies—all the avatars, dead and otherwise, were removed from the scene. Bichard uses implied story, inviting the viewer to be the CSI, to reconstruct the events as they happened, to imagine the situation that created the traces of violence—blood stains, broken furniture, residue of an unknown and ultimately unknowable tragedy.

Evidência #003/#003a, Severed Hand installation (2007) is a performance installation utilizing a rule system based on first-person shooter game tactics, executed in the public space of the museum, leaving traces of the fictionalized violence behind. As in *White Room*, Bichard creates a crime scene, but instead of photographic evidence of virtual violence, this time it is for real. The viewer is left to decipher the crime based on detritus left in the gallery. Police tape surrounds a flak jacket, blood and bloody rags, photographs, and a severed hand—as if a game somehow jumped into real space.

Severed Hand was cast from the artist's own hand clenched in a death grip as if a computer mouse was pried from his cold dead hand. Was it punishment, self-inflicted amputation, violent blowback from the game world into the art world, or as the artist said, "the only way to stop playing the game?"[3] Another unintended level of violence was injected into the piece when the hand, itself an artificial trace of fictional violence, was subjected to real violence. A visitor to a museum in Sweden methodically dismembered the hand, spreading the fingers around the gallery. Did the avatar die here or the player or the artist?

But the illusion is not perfect, and is not meant to be. There is no suspension of disbelief, because the installation also contains, *inside* the police tape, a monitor playing documentation of the performance. It is a trace of the original, a disclaimer stating that none of this is real. The video documents the work as first performed at Mejan Labs in Stockholm on August 30, 2007—questioning even the idea of the remade performance as different or original.

In all the *Evidência* works the viewer projects his or her own cultural and personal ideas about violence, about what the crime may have been—domestic or sectarian violence, gang war or mob hit, terrorism or just a terrible random act. Does the viewer see himself or herself in the scene or someone else—as a victim or as the perpetrator? Are they alone in the gallery, with friends or in a crowd, and does that affect how they view the crime they cannot see? Does the fictionalized violence cause real psychological anxiety? In the end, the only thing that is real is how it makes you feel.

In Damiano Colacito's *Castle Wolfenstein* series, the artist builds real world copies of virtual objects from a famous 3D game. In the commercial game, the player is meant to have specific interactions with these objects, but in the museum the viewer is denied the original function. Return to Castle Wolfenstein—released in 2001 by idSoftware, led by visionary game developer John Carmack—is the sequel to Wolfenstein 3D. It was the first

2 The shoot took place within the game's developer mode using the GOD and GETALLWEAPONS cheats and BenDMan'S 'bloody mod 1.2', <http://www.idealmilk.com/project/evidencia/evidencia_02.htm>.
3 Phone conversation with John Paul Bichard. October 7, 2008.

John Paul Bichard, *Evidência #002 - White Room*, 2004. All images copyright © John Paul Bichard 2004.
Images originated within the developer version of Max Payne 2 running the standard game maps. Max Payne
is a trademark of Rockstar Games /Take Two Interactive. Max Payne 2 is Copyright © Rockstar Games 2003

John Paul Bichard, *Evidência #003/#003a, Severed Hand installation*, 2007. copyright © John Paul Bichard 2007

(above) Damiano Colacito, *Wolfenstein's HALFTRACK HANOMAG SDKFz 251*, 2005
(right top) Damiano Colacito, *Health-bag*, 2005. (right bottom) Damiano Colacito, *m_mission*, 2006

videogame to use a fully immersive 3D environment and subjective camera view, creating the game genre known as first-person shooter in which the only portion of the player's avatar visible to them is the barrel of their gun. Colacito first discovered the immersive power of FPS videogames at a party where a group was playing Doom. He recalls: "In a bedroom being used as a closet were four or five people sitting in a semi-circle in front of a computer. They were all staring at the monitor, engrossed in the screen, yelling and jumping, like the monkeys in front of the monolith in *2001: A Space Odyssey*."[4]

Colacito takes these digital relics made from information and recreates them in the real world, as if they had be pulled through a tear between the parallel dimensions of the World War II game and the museum gallery. He painstakingly created processes for "materializing the impalpable nature of electric energy."[5] Because the game was played by millions of people all over the world, the objects will be familiar to many museum visitors who shared in this mass common experience. The uninitiated viewer is required to contemplate what the original function of these alien representations of familiar objects could have been. For players of the game, the artist creates a perceptual short circuit between the virtual and the real by removing these memory traces from their original small screen context, and removing the original interactivity associated with them. Players confront familiar items encountered through the first-person view many times before, but in a completely different context, drawing attention to the subjective nature of the experience. As Colacito puts it, "The most attentive are those who—after observing what I have extracted from an FPS for a few minutes—realize that the real subject of this investigation is not the object at hand but, on the contrary, the viewers themselves, or better, their first person view..."[6]

Jon Haddock's *Screenshots* (2000) is a series of C-prints produced from digital illustrations created in Photoshop at a screen resolution of 800x600 pixels. Haddock's concern for his young son's consumption of violent images in the news media first led to these explorations.[7] By recreating images witnessed repeatedly through the small screen, he has taken control of them. In contrast to Vik Muniz' *Memory Drawings*, these are not about recreating iconic images from memory, but instead about reinvestigating heavily mediated images, to perhaps show how our memory has failed us. Haddock used multiple sources when available, creating a composite view to accurately represent the scene independent from the original camera sources, often resulting in an unfamiliar view of a well known event.

4 Matteo Bittanti, "Interview: Damiano Colacito," videoludica | game culture, December 6, 2006, <http://www.videoludica.com/news/gamescenes/interview-damiano-colacito>.
5 Ibid.
6 Ibid.
7 Henry Lowood, "Jon Haddock, Screenshots. Isometric Memories," *GameScenes – Art in the Age of Videogames*, ed. Matteo Bittanti and Domenico Quaranta, (Johan & Levi Editore, October 2006) 16.

The mixture of both real and fictional images range from the anonymous man facing down tanks at Tiananmen Square to a scene out of the *Godfather* to Princess Diana's destroyed Mercedes. These redrawings rendered in the isometric perspective, as if from The Sims or a strategy game, push the viewer back to what is referred to in games as the God's eye view. This allows for a neutral assessment of the scene, reminiscent of the use of parallel perspective in traditional Chinese scroll painting to eliminate the single viewing angle and suggest the equal importance of all parts of the picture. Whether seeing the death of Martin Luther King Jr. or the cafeteria in Columbine High School, the viewer floats above the action, perhaps feeling empowered for the first time with the sense they could take control and change the outcome, like a cheat code for the real world.

Eva and Franco Mattes (a.k.a. 0100101110101101.ORG) are an Italian art duo living and working in the online world Second Life. They are represented in the exhibition by a selection from their recent *Most Beautiful Avatars* series and high definition video documentation of three of their *Synthetic Performances*.

In their *Synthetic Performances*, the artists use avatars fashioned in their own images to reenact seminal performance art from the 60s and 70s inside Second Life. The duo conducts the performances live through their computers, though some elements involve scripting. The events are attended by people all over the world watching through the subjective view from the eyes of their avatars in Second Life. The performances executed during Performa07 were also attended by an audience in the physical world watching—through the eyes of an avatar—a projection of the crowd gathered around the digital performers. Like performance in the physical world, much of the drama in the Mattes' *Synthetic Performances* is in the interaction of the performers with the audience. How do the meanings of the reenactments differ from the originals after being removed from the context of the physical world, the meatspace, and thrust into the synthetic world of Second Life?

In *Reenactment of Marina Abramovic and Ulay's Imponderabilia* (2007) the artists' avatars stand naked facing each other in the entrance to a gallery just as in the original. However, since the primary mode for avatars' mobility in Second Life is to fly, no one is forced to pass between the male and female bodies to enter the art space as they were required

(clockwise top left) Jon Haddock, *Screenshots Series: Lee and Jack*, 2000; *Mercedes*, 2000; *Lorraine Motel*, 2000; *Fredo & Neri*, 2000; *Cabin-Early Spring*, 2000; *Children Fleeing Napalm Attack*, 2000; *R.King*, 2000; *Florence & Normandie*, 2000.

to do in 1977. The reenactment takes on a voyeuristic yet more playful tone, with many avatars passing through the pair facing one direction, then flying up and over the wall of the gallery to the other side, and passing through again facing the other direction. Unlike the surprise of the hidden camera in the original, everyone in the reenactment is well aware that their interactions are being recorded to countless devices. The uncomfortable nature of the public physical contact with the naked Abramovic and Ulay that led to avoided eye contact in the original is gone, replaced with at times absurd visions like a giant Hello Kitty passing between, and in fact through, the Mattes' avatars.

Franco Mattes' digital body took a digital bullet in *Reenactment of Chris Burden's Shoot* (2007). Eva shot him, but it was a scripted event with a predetermined result. There was no danger, no pain, no spontaneity, and there was no question whether he was going to survive. Unlike most videogames, even his avatar was not in danger. The country is currently mired in an unpopular war as it was in 1971, and the American obsession with guns and exposure to violence in the media has grown. The reenactment highlights our desensitization and how much our culture has changed. It is simply not shocking any more, and tame by the standards of current games played by many children. Where is the blood and gore?

The *Reenactment of Gilbert&George's The Singing Sculpture* (2007) is perhaps the most similar of the three to the experience of the original 1968 performance. It is absurd and entertaining, and while the spectacle of the artists' bodies as sculpture is present, it lacks the drama of the physical strain on the artists. Their digital surrogates could perform indefinitely.

The artists' physical discomfort and pain are gone from these *Synthetic Performances*, as well as the unpredictability and potential danger. In the online worlds where Eva and Franco Mattes reenact these works, the audience is performing through *their* avatars as much as the artists are. The notions of confrontation and sexuality are different, but they are no less real to the participants. The artists have friends who have both married and divorced because of activities in Second Life.[8]

8 Rachel Wolff, "All the Web's a Stage," *ARTnews*, February 2008: 98.

13 Most Beautiful Avatars are colorful yet cold portraits of avatars that the artists observed and photographed while roaming the digital landscape of Second Life as *flâneurs*. The Mattes embrace the apparent banality of the *Portraits*, citing Lichtenstein, Warhol and the Pop Art tradition of borrowing images and characters from popular culture.[9] The *Portraits* explore the way players choose to represent themselves in a world where they can create their avatar alter-egos to look like anything—idealized digital representations of themselves, animals, superheroes or inanimate objects. The artists see avatars as self-portraits reflecting the way people want to be as opposed to the way they are, and add, "Actually, our works are not portraits, but rather 'pictures of self-portraits'."[10]

The *Portraits* illustrate the undeniable influence of fashion and Western ideals of beauty in Second Life. However, a preference toward representing a more handsome or beautiful idealized self is natural because it can significantly impact how a person will be perceived through their avatar in the very real social spaces of virtual worlds. When you can be anything you want, why not be a little thinner or more muscular, more buxom with a smaller waist, fuller lips or maybe get rid of that bald spot? Perhaps you prefer a furry tail and flames coming out of the top of your head? What digital clothes you choose to wear is no less important to how your avatar is perceived—jeans and a T-shirt, a black suit, a gown of vines and flowers or perhaps a cardboard box?

When deprived of other sensory input like touch and smell, someone's appearance and their conversational skills through the typed word are the only available tools by which to judge them. Though notions of beauty differ among cultures, some traits such as symmetry and appearance of health are universally attractive. The implied evolutionary advantage of attractiveness may seem irrelevant in virtual worlds, but the cross-cultural preference for attractiveness may be as simple as the fact that gazing at attractive features puts people in a positive frame of mind from which they are more likely to evaluate anything about the person, or the situation in general, more positively.[11]

Eddo Stern's recent sculpture and video work is informed by his avid participation in videogame culture and obsession with

MMORPGs (Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Games). He most recently completed a year-long immersion of over two thousand hours playing World of Warcraft (WoW). He explores the social relationships forged in the crucible of adventure and combat in the mountains, forests, dungeons and city streets of these massive networked digital fantasy worlds, and how those relationships bleed out into the physical world.

With more than 10 million players worldwide,[12] and peaking at close to a million online at a time, WoW is truly a mass cultural experience. Stern believes people play for many different social reasons including seeking out competition against real people, looking for new friends and a sense of community online, and even using the game to bond with their children. He adds: "There are people who play to make themselves feel better. That would be maybe closest to the escapist thing. It's a form of fantasy, and people need to consume it. I think a lot of men play, especially in America, for weird reasons, anxiety about masculinity in this culture specifically."[13]

Stern's 3D computer animations feature mask-like talking heads created from icons, avatars and digital detritus out of the games, leaving empty holes for the eyes and mouth. The effect is a post-geek recreation of Giuseppe Arcimboldo's Renaissance produce portraits, animating actual conversations and conflict between players about issues related to the seriousness with which the game is treated.

In Level sounds like Devil (BabyInChrist vs. His Father) (2007) a young WoW player, with the screen name BabyinChrist, asks for advice in talking to his father who does not approve of the game, believing it is dangerous to his Christian morals. Another player, reassuring BabyInChrist that his fantasy gaming is not at odds with his faith, says: "The game doesn't even take

9 Domenico Quaranta, "The most radical action you can do is to subvert yourself - Interview with Eva and Franco Mattes aka 0100101110101101.ORG," <http://www.0100101110101101.org/home/portraits/inter-view.html>.
10 Ibid.
11 Katherine Isbister, *Better Game Characters by Design: A Psychological Approach* (Morgan Kaufmann, 2006) 8.
12 "World Of Warcraft Hits 10 Million Subscribers," *Gamasutra*, January 22, 2008, <http://www.gamasutra.com/php-bin/news_index.php?story=17062>.
13 Noralil Ryan Fores, "Eddo Stern Interview," *Short End Magazine*, February 11, 2008, <http://shortendmaga-zine.com/content/view/452/101/>.

Eva and Franco Mattes aka 0100101110101101.ORG, *Nyla Cheeky*, 2006

place in a real reality. The 'magic' in the game has absolutely NO connection to real-world magic."

The second animation, *Best...flame war ..Ever (Leegattenby King of Bards v. Squire Rex)* (2007) documents an escalating war of words between two players of EverQuest that threatens to spill out of the game. One player tries to convince the other to meet him at a Tough Man fight competition to settle the argument over arcane knowledge. Both works critique the way experiences in the game world intersect with life outside that world.

Stern contends—perhaps counter-intuitively, though with some authority—that players who immerse themselves for long periods in online games are not in fact trying to be someone else. "The emotional attachment that playing MMOs [MMORPGs] for extensive durations forces a melding of the player with their player character that essentially collapses the premise of roleplaying. That is to say, the hardcore players are no longer taking part in an act of "roleplaying" but are essentially playing as themselves in an alternate world as the relationships with real other human beings bring out…well…real emotions."[14]

Stern juxtaposes his 3D animations with kinetic shadow puppets portraying archetypes that have become so common in MMORPGs as to be just background noise. The colorful projected shadows of *Man, Woman, Dragon (After World of Warcraft)* (2007) and *Lotusman* (2007) tell stories of love, conflict and spiritual awakening in the simplest of terms. The hi/low tech hybrid contraptions create their own avatars of light upon the walls of the gallery—Joseph Campbell's *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* manifests in the form of plexiglas Chuck Norris and Steven Segal.

Eddo Stern collaborated with artist and writer Jessica Hutchins to create the machinima video *Landlord Vigilante* (2006). Machinima is a technique developed by videogame enthusiasts to capture choreographed game action as it is rendered in real time on screen, and then edit the sequences together to create a narrative. This low budget form of filmmaking emerged from the ability to save and playback in-game movies of a level or encounter, and as a reaction to the complex, expensive and time consuming process of traditional computer animation.

Stern and Hutchins used the controversial game Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas as the primary vehicle to tell the story of the life and death of cab-driver-turned landlord Leslie-Shirley. The neo-noir text written by Hutchins is rendered in the gritty digital Los Angeles landscape of the game. By denying its original interactivity and repurposing the game to tell their own story, the artists remove the game from its original context as entertainment, revealing the impact videogames have on how we see the everyday world.[15]

14 Ceci Moss, "Interview with Eddo Stern," rhizome.org, April 8, 2008, <http://rhizome.org/editorial/296>.
15 Juan Devis, "Landlord Vigilante," KCET Online, 2008, <http://www.kcet.org/explore-ca/web-stories/games/landlord-vigilante/essay.php>

(clockwise lower left)
Giuseppe Arcimboldo, *Rudolf II (Holy Roman Emperor) painted as Vertumnus, Roman God of the seasons*, 1590-1
Eddo Stern, *Level sounds like Devil (BabyInChrist vs. His Father)*, 2007
Eddo Stern, *Man, Woman, Dragon (After World of Warcraft)*, 2007
Eddo Stern and Jessica Hutchins, *Landlord Vigilante*, 2006

33

Phillip Toledano's photographic work focuses on the physical manifestations of the psychology of popular culture in the United States. His clean, crisp graphic imagery reveals hidden aspects of everyday American life. His *Portraits of Gamers* photographs are humorous yet haunting portraits of videogame players deeply engrossed in their endeavor. He uses videogames to open the doorway to unexpected aspects of his subjects' psychology that perhaps they themselves did not even know they possessed. As Toledano puts it, he was "teasing out hidden parts of people's personalities..."[16]

The players' masks of extreme emotion are reminiscent of Greek theatre masks locked in expressions of tragedy, rage, fear and ecstasy. These physical manifestations betray the depth of the players' immersion, and how far their consciousness is projected into the game and tied to their avatars' virtual behavior—their trials, tribulations, triumphs, defeats and ultimately deaths. Viewers of the portraits may then project themselves into the scene with their videogame experience or lack thereof, imagining the drama unfolding inside the intimate personal screen space. But ultimately, the physical traces of interactivity are all we see.

In Brody Condon's project gallery *Modifications*, the artist uses self-running games, sculpture, found video, machinima and performance documentation to blur the line between fantasy and reality. He blends game technology and performance to explore personal history, trauma and the "projection of self" through the lens of historical archetypes, fantasy art, role-playing, religion, and psychedelic counterculture. Most recently, Condon has created a series of self-running games based on re-imagined late 15th century Flemish religious paintings by Gerard David, Dieric Bouts and Hans Memling.

In *DefaultProperties (after Gerard David)* (2006), Condon freed the composition from the weight of its religious and historical contexts and re-assembled it with a completely new cast of characters. Christ being baptized was replaced with a balding pot-bellied graybeard with a skin condition standing shivering in the water, while John the Baptist was transformed into a man wearing furs wielding a flaming sword, giving baptism by fire a whole new meaning. An inter-dimensional being—a god or a player?—appears out of the passing clouds as if waiting for the action on the ground to resume.

The artist evokes a sense of expectation in *Resurrection (after Bouts)* (2007). The figures in the painting—and it does feel like a moving, living

16 Email conversation with Phillip Toledano, February 20, 2008.

Phillip Toledano, *Brian, Pigeon, Rizzle* from *Portraits of Gamers*, 2002

Brody Condon, *DefaultProperties (after Gerard David),* 2006

Gerhard David, *The Baptism of Christ,* 1502-8

Dieric Bouts, *Resurrection*, 1455

Brody Condon, *Resurrection (after Bouts),* 2007

Brody Condon, *Judgement (after Memling),* 2007

Hans Memling, *The Last Judgement,* 1467-71
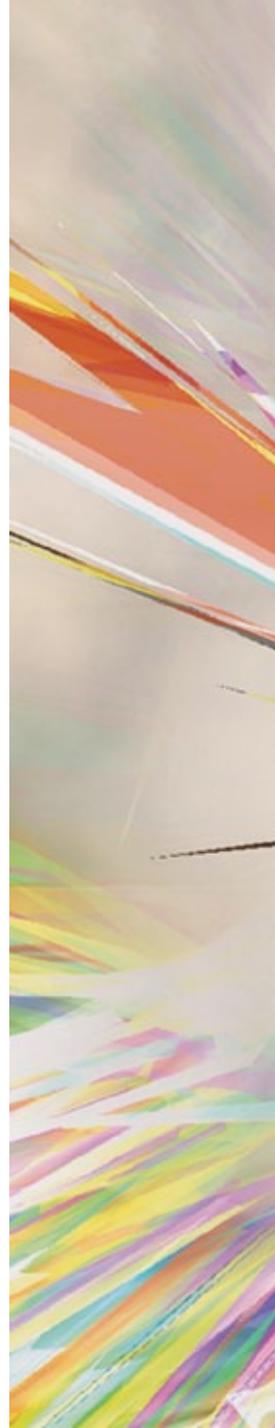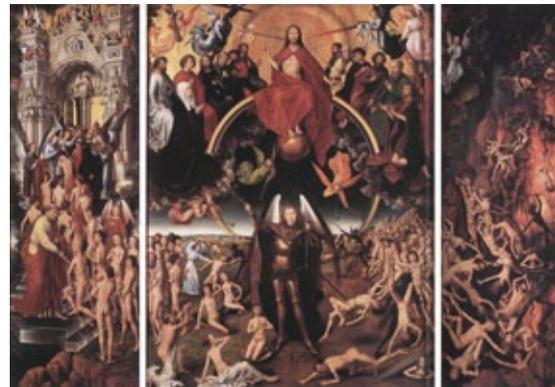
electric painting—are clearly waiting for something to happen. The resurrected Christ has become a tattooed avatar looking as if he has nowhere to go. The angel, now a zombie, practices yoga on a rock. While one soldier sits naked staring into the fire, another with an abstracted head seems to vomit off screen as if this peyote trip is just getting started. Condon saw something familiar in the imagery of the early Flemish paintings that reminded him of videogames, "but as characters now stuck in some kind of repetitive stasis somewhere between trauma and transcendence."[17]

Judgement (after Memling) (2007) illustrates Condon's melding of religious imagery of the late Middle Ages with New Age thought, fantasy and psychedelic influences. The artist transformed the pearly gates into a nudist colony guarded by a neo-pagan engaged in self-trepanation and a giant iguana. The dead are carried by a figure in magic armor with peacock tail feathers. This may not be the heaven you were expecting.

Condon implies interaction and then denies the viewer the ability to interact, as if the game controller has been put down mid-game and the player walked away. He designed and built these environments using the same development tools commercial games do in order to present a completely immersive alternative narrative. He constructs a custom computer for each piece, which is placed prominently in front of the screen. He wants the viewer to understand that these are not looped videos; they are synthetic performance environments full of potential, alive and waiting.

Without Sun (2008) is an edited series of found videos portraying a psychedelic "projection of the self" into other realities. As with much of Condon's work, the rules and structure are important. The video is fifteen minutes long following the rough timeline of the subjects' internal journeys, their out of body experiences to the end of their silver cords and back. The large projection enhances the found video's compression artifacts[18] and creates a monumental presence to the bodies. Condon views the videos, "like the face of a gamer playing, it's a series of found performances showing the outer visual surface of people projecting themselves into other fantasy worlds."[19]

17 Brandon Stosuy, "Sinking Into the Floor," *Known Planes of Existence*, Brody Condon (Santa Monica Museum of Art, 2008) 25.
18 Compression artifacts are visual degradation as a result of aggressive data compression applied to video to create smaller file sizes for distribution over networks and the web.
19 Email conversation with Brody Condon, August 15, 2008.

(left-right) Brody Condon, *Without Sun,* 2008, Brody Condon, *Suicide Solution,* 2004, Brody Condon, *Death Animations,* 2008

Suicide Solution (2004) is another edited collection of videos, this time documentation collected over a year of the artist's avatars committing suicide in over 50 first and third person shooter games. It is an exploration of the psychological relationship between player and avatar, demonstrating how projected consciousness survives the virtual death unscathed.

Death Animations (2008) documents a crossover work for Condon linking two main thrusts of his artistic endeavor, his videogame modifications and his performative events with medieval reenactment and fantasy live action role-playing subcultures. The work, performed in slow motion in medieval fantasy costume, combines movements from computer death animations with audio meant to induce out of body experiences, and was inspired by Bruce Nauman's *Tony Sinking into the Floor, Face Up and Face Down* (1973).

Condon's *650 Polygon John Carmack v2.0* (2004) blurs the boundary between game space and real space by creating a physical sculpture directly from a low polygon game avatar, textured with decals printed from the low-resolution game textures. Like Damiano Colacito's *Castle Wolfenstein* objects, this refugee from a FPS pays homage to idSoftware founder and pioneering game developer John Carmack. It is an object out of space, but unlike those works, Condon's sculpture brings us full circle. It is not about the viewer's way of seeing, but rather about a virtual performance that has come to life—this fantasy has become reality. At any moment this avatar could start fragging museum visitors, and they likely would not respawn in another part of the gallery.

III

He recognized that expression of adult agony on a child's face. He had seen it before […] *as he was pushed beyond the limits of his endurance, playing battle after battle in a game that was not a game. He had seen it when the war was over, when he found out his training sessions were not training at all, that all his simulations were the real thing* […] *that was the look of his own face in the mirror…*

Speaker for the Dead by Orson Scott Card

Are the specific videogame references important to understanding and appreciating the work in *Audience & Avatar* and *Modifications*? Gamers and non-gamers may have different experiences in the exhibition, but ultimately that is unimportant. Gamers, whose numbers are growing, may see more because of their shared experiences. Videogames have gone mainstream, and game culture already permeates society—no longer a sub-culture but instead an industry bigger than Hollywood movies. Many millions of people across generations share common experiences. While in the past those experiences may have been hidden from public view in front of small screens, that is changing as gaming invades the public space, the social space. The ways of seeing learned in videogames are bleeding into other media. For example,

the 'behind the quarterback' camera view millions grew up with playing the Madden NFL football videogame franchise is now a common feature on network football coverage.

While passive media like TV can generate real emotions, gaming experiences are an order of magnitude more intense, due to the interactivity, immersion and perceived empowerment. New input devices have taken the gaming experience off the couch, while others promise to let you guide your avatar by thought. Avatars themselves are breaking free of proprietary games and virtual worlds with technology that enables these digital alter-egos to follow you wherever you go in the networked world. For now, physical contact and feedback are still the domain of the meatspace, but the experiences, relationships and emotions people have in synthetic worlds are real.

The economies are real as well, with fluctuating exchange rates between the currencies of virtual and real worlds. You can pay US dollars for real estate in Second Life, or for arms, armor and experience in World of Warcraft. Like all economies, there is exploitation of labor. One recent study exposed the "gold-farming" industry in which poor people—mostly in China—are paid a small wage to play games, and then the assets are sold. Accurate figures were hard to come by due to the criminal nature of much of the endeavor, but Dr. Heeks work suggested the industry employed close to half a million people, rivaling India's software sector.[20] The irony is that after their paid shifts in the game end, many of those workers go down to an internet café, and log back on to play their own character.

But how real is real? Does fictional violence equate with real violence? Blaming violent tragedies like Columbine on videogames is simplistic and ignores all personal moral responsibility.

While it must be recognized that countless hours immersed in a FPS likely made Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold better shots and gave them a clear understanding of small unit tactics, the reality is that tens of millions of people play those same games and do not go on shooting sprees.

In a culture saturated with media violence, the military implications must not be ignored either. Some skills must translate from the virtual to the real since the US Army uses videogame trainers such as Virtual Combat Convoy Training to ready soldiers for duty in Iraq. In their online recruiting game, America's Army, millions of young players test their skill in sanitized combat. The unmanned machines of war—*armed* aerial drones, tracked vehicles and naval vessels—now being deployed are piloted through telepresence—the projection of self. The stated aim is to keep America's fighting men and women safe, but will the mediated violence they must perpetrate seem less real to the young soldiers running them?

What does all this mean for the future of Game Art? As our information society barrels toward a world where simulation becomes indistinguishable from the physical world, where our entertainment space and our work space converge, and where pervasive network access means we are never truly alone, we must be more aware than ever of the ways of seeing learned from the entertainment we consume. "Game Art" as a label will become as meaningless and quaint as the term "Digital Art" seems today, only useful for defining a period of time before a technology became so pervasive as to be invisible. When our long-promised holodeck[21] finally arrives we may not even notice. Artists who are fluent in the visual and technological languages of what we now call videogames will become even more important, prompting us to pause and rethink that which we take for granted, and to pull back the veil from the performance of our everyday lives.

Don Fuller
New Media Curator
USF Contemporary Art Musuem

20 Richard Heeks, "Real-World Production in Developing Countries for the Virtual Economies of Online Games," (Development Informatics Group, Institute for Development Policy and Management, University of Manchester 2008) < http://www.sed.manchester.ac.uk/idpm/research/publications/wp/di/documents/di_wp32.pdf >.
21 A holodeck is a simulated reality facility located on starships and starbases in the fictional Star Trek universe. The holodeck is depicted as an enclosed room in which objects and people are simulated by a combination of replicated matter, tractor beams, and shaped force fields onto which holographic images are projected. Sounds and smells are simulated by speakers and fragranced fluid atomizers, respectively. The feel of a large environment is simulated by suspending the participants on force fields which move with their feet, keeping them from reaching the walls of the room (a virtual treadmill). <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holodeck>.

Brody Condon, *650 Polygon John Carmack v2.0*, 2004 (Photo: Tom Powel Imaging, Inc., NY)

Jon Haddock, *Cafeteria* from *Screenshots Series,* 2000

Audience & Avatar Checklist

1. – 20.
JON HADDOCK
Screenshots Series:
    Fredo & Neri, 2000
    12 Angry Men, 2000
    The Humiliation of Mr. Banks, 2000
    Birmingham, 2000
    The Condo on Bundy, 2000
    Cabin-Early Spring, 2000
    Cafeteria, 2000
    Children Fleeing Napalm Attack, 2000
    Lee and Jack, 2000
    Florence & Normandie, 2000
    Hernando, 2000
    Lorraine Motel, 2000
    Mercedes, 2000
    Elian, 2000
    R.King, 2000
    General Loan Executes a Suspect, 2000
    Sherman Hills, 2000
    Sound of Music, 2000
    Wang Weilin, 2000
    Quang Duc, 2001
20 chromogenic prints from digital files created
in photoshop
22 ½ x 30 inches each
Courtesy of Howard House Contemporary

21.
JOHN PAUL BICHARD
Evidência #003/#003a, Severed Hand installation,
2007
Installation: wax hand (#003a), flak jacket, blood,
police tape, photographs
Dimensions variable
Courtesy of the artist

22.
JOHN PAUL BICHARD
Evidência #003, Inverse Forensics Video, 2007
DVD Video
7 minutes, 30 seconds
Courtesy of the Artist

23-29.
JOHN PAUL BICHARD
Evidência #002 - White Room, 2004
7 Digital Prints - In-game photoshoot of
manipulated gamespace interiors
8 x 6 inches each
Courtesy of the artist

30.
DAMIANO COLACITO
Health-bag, 2005
Iron, wood, resin, Scotchprint 3M
27 ½ x 12 ¼ x 6 ¼ inches
Courtesy of nt Art Gallery

31.
DAMIANO COLACITO
Cold Meal power-up, 2006
Wood, Scotchprint 3M
5 ¾ x 13 ¾ x 17 ¾ inches
Courtesy of nt Art Gallery

32.
DAMIANO COLACITO
m_mission, 2006
Wood, Scotchprint 3M
Installation, dimensions variable
Courtesy of nt Art Gallery

33.
DAMIANO COLACITO
Parloradio, 2005
Wood, Scotchprint3M, audio file
8 ¾ x 6 x 11 inches
Courtesy of nt Art Gallery

34.
DAMIANO COLACITO
The 4th Chair, 2007
Wood, Scotchprint3M
34 ¾ x 15 4/5 x 15 4/5 inches
Courtesy of nt Art Gallery

35.
DAMIANO COLACITO
Allarm-box, 2006
Wood, Scotchprint3M, audio file
6 ¾ x 10 ½ x 4 ½ inches
Courtesy of nt Art Gallery

36.
DAMIANO COLACITO
*Wolfenstein's HALFTRACK
HANOMAG SDKFz 251*, 2005
Wood, Scotchprint 3M
17 ½ x 7 ½ x 5 ½ feet
Courtesy of nt Art Gallery

37.
EVA and FRANCO MATTES
aka 0100101110101101.ORG
Karee Kayvon, 2006
Digital print on Somerset velvet
35 x 44 inches
Courtesy of Jean-Yves Noblet Contemporary Prints

38.
EVA and FRANCO MATTES
aka 0100101110101101.ORG
Jeanne Varun, 2006
Digital print on Somerset velvet
35 x 44 inches
Courtesy of Jean-Yves Noblet Contemporary Prints

39.
EVA and FRANCO MATTES
aka 0100101110101101.ORG
Nyla Cheeky, 2006
Digital print on Somerset velvet
35 x 44 inches
Courtesy of Jean-Yves Noblet Contemporary Prints

40.
EVA and FRANCO MATTES
aka 0100101110101101.ORG
Kate Colo, 2006
Digital print on Somerset velvet
35 x 44 inches
Courtesy of Jean-Yves Noblet Contemporary Prints

41.
EVA and FRANCO MATTES
aka 0100101110101101.ORG
Sarah Asturias, 2006
Digital print on Somerset velvet
35 x 44 inches
Courtesy of Jean-Yves Noblet Contemporary Prints

42.
EVA and FRANCO MATTES
aka 0100101110101101.ORG
*Reenactment of Marina Abramovic and Ulay's
'Imponderabilia'*
Synthetic Performance in Second Life, 2007
High definition video documentation
8:44 minutes
Courtesy of the artists

43.
EVA and FRANCO MATTES
aka 0100101110101101.ORG
Reenactment of Chris Burden's 'Shoot'
Synthetic Performance in Second Life, 2007
High definition video documentation
1 minute
Courtesy of the artists

44.
EVA and FRANCO MATTES
aka 0100101110101101.ORG
*Reenactment of Gilbert&George's
'The Singing Sculpture'*
Synthetic Performance in Second Life, 2007
High definition video documentation
9:26 minutes
Courtesy of the artists

45.
PHILLIP TOLEDANO
Arun, Portraits of Gamers, 2002
C-print
30 x 40 inches
Courtesy of the artist

46.
PHILLIP TOLEDANO
Brian, Portraits of Gamers, 2002
C-print
30 x 40 inches
Courtesy of the artist

47.
PHILLIP TOLEDANO
Dan's Friend's Sister, Portraits of Gamers, 2002
C-print
30 x 40 inches
Courtesy of the artist

48.
PHILLIP TOLEDANO
Dan's Friend, Portraits of Gamers, 2002
C-print
30 x 40 inches
Courtesy of the artist

49.
PHILLIP TOLEDANO
Dan, Portraits of Gamers, 2002
C-print
30 x 40 inches
Courtesy of the artist

50.
PHILLIP TOLEDANO
Eric, Portraits of Gamers, 2002
C-print
30 x 40 inches
Courtesy of the artist

51.
PHILLIP TOLEDANO
Pigeon, Portraits of Gamers, 2002
C-print
30 x 40 inches
Courtesy of the artist

52.
PHILLIP TOLEDANO
Rizzle, Portraits of Gamers, 2002
C-print
30 x 40 inches
Courtesy of the artist

53.
PHILLIP TOLEDANO
Stuart, Portraits of Gamers, 2002
C-print
30 x 40 inches
Courtesy of the artist

54.
EDDO STERN
Best...flame war ..Ever (Leegattenby King of Bards v. Squire Rex), 2007
3D computer animation with sound
TRT 15 minutes
Courtesy of the artist and Postmasters Gallery

55.
EDDO STERN
Level sounds like Devil (BabyInChrist vs. His Father), 2007
3D computer animation with sound
TRT 12 minutes
Courtesy of the artist and Postmasters Gallery

56.
EDDO STERN
Man, Woman, Dragon (After World of Warcraft), 2007
Kinetic sculpture; plastic, paper, electronics
4 x 5 x 2 feet
Courtesy of the artist and Postmasters Gallery

57.
EDDO STERN
Lotusman, 2007
Kinetic sculpture; plastic, paper, electronics
4 x 6 x 2 feet
Courtesy of the artist and Postmasters Gallery

58.
EDDO STERN and JESSICA HUTCHINS
Landlord Vigilante, 2006
Digital video
30 minutes
Courtesy of the artists

Modifications Checklist

1.
BRODY CONDON
650 Polygon John Carmack v2.0, 2004
CNC Milled Polyurethane, Archival Inkjet Prints
42 ½ x 22 x 25 ½ inches
Courtesy of Tom Powel

2.
BRODY CONDON
DefaultProperties (after Gerard David), 2006
Self-playing video game
Edition of 10 + 2AP
Courtesy of Virgil de Voldère Gallery

3.
BRODY CONDON
Resurrection (after Bouts), 2007
Self-playing video game
Edition of 10 + 2AP
Courtesy of Virgil de Voldère Gallery

4.
BRODY CONDON
Judgement (after Memling), 2007
Self-playing video game
Edition of 10 + 2AP
Courtesy of Virgil de Voldère Gallery

5.
BRODY CONDON
Without Sun, 2008
Digital video
30 minutes
Courtesy of Virgil de Voldère Gallery

6.
BRODY CONDON
Suicide Solution, 2004
DVD Documentation of in-game performance
Edition of 10 + AP
19 minutes
Courtesy of Virgil de Voldère Gallery

7.
BRODY CONDON
Death Animations, 2008
DVD Performance documentation
Edition of 10 + AP
10:30 minutes
Courtesy of Virgil de Voldère Gallery

Artists' Biographies

John Paul Bichard (born 1964, United Kingdom). He is an artist, games designer and curator, and lives and works in Sweden where he is currently Artist in Residence at the Interactive Institute in Stockholm. He was games editor for *Mute* magazine from 1995 to 2001. Bichard has participated in group exhibitions and projects at venues including Brooke Alexander Editions, New York (1993); Contemporary Art Centre of South Australia, Melbourne, (1996); Institute for Contemporary Arts, London (1998); Bildmuseet, Sweden (2007); and La Casa Encendida, Madrid (2008). Work from his *Evidência* series is currently touring Sweden.

Damiano Colacito (born 1973, Teramo, Italy). Currently, he lives and works between Pescara and Bologna, Italy and teaches at the Academy of Fine Arts in Frosinone, Italy. Colacito has exhibited widely in Italy and throughout Europe and won the Prize Carmen Silvestroni 2006, Forlì, Italy. Recent exhibitions include: *Allarmi3 Nuovo contingente*, Barracks De Cristoforis, Italy; GODART2007, Sant'Angelo, Italy; and *Some Other City*, XXIII International Festival Sarajevo, Sarajevo, Bosnia-Erzegovina. In 2009, Colacito will open solo exhibitions at the Museo d'Arte della Citta di Ravenna; Envoy Gallery, New York; and nt art gallery, Bologna , Italy.

Brody Condon (born 1974, Mexico). He is based in New York. He graduated with an MFA from University of California, San Diego, and attended residencies at the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture in Maine and the Rijksakademie van Beeldende Kunsten in the Netherlands. Condon's work has been shown nationally and internationally at venues including the Whitney Biennial 2004, New York; PaceWildenstein, New York (2005); Kunstmuseum, Austria (2006); Kunstwerke, Berlin (2007); and Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam (2006, 2008). He will present a solo exhibition at the New Museum of Contemporary Art and PERFORMA in New York in 2009.

Jon Haddock (born 1960, Sacramento, CA). Haddock lives and works in Tempe, Arizona. He earned his MFA from University of Iowa (1991), his MA from University of Iowa (1990), and a BFA from Arizona State University (1986). He has presented solo exhibitions at Arizona State University Art Museum, Tempe, AZ (2001); Roberts & Tilton Gallery, Los Angeles, CA (2001); Clough-Hanson Gallery, Rhodes College, Memphis, TN (2004); and Howard House, Seattle, WA (2001, 2008). Haddock has participated in group exhibitions both nationally and internationally at Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (2001); PaceWildenstein, New York (2005); Civic Gallery, Monza, Italy (2006); Palazzo delle Papesse - Centro Arte Contemporanea, Siena, Italy (2007); and Stonefox Artspace, New York (2008).

Eva and Franco Mattes (a.k.a. 0100101110101101.ORG) (born 1976, Italy). Live and work in the online world Second Life. In 2006 they received a fellowship from Colombia University, New York. They received the Jerome Commission from the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis and are among the youngest artists to ever participate in the *Venice Biennale* (2001). Their works have been shown internationally at such venues as Manifesta4, Frankfurt (2002); ICC, Tokyo (2004); Postmasters Gallery, New York (2004, 2007); Lentos Museum of Modern Art, Linz, Austria (2005); New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York (2005); Centre Pompidou, Paris (2006), Artists Space, New York (2007), Tacoma Art Museum, Washington (2007); and McDonough Museum of Art, Youngstown, Ohio (2008). The artists' works are part of several private and public collections including the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; MEIAC, Museo Extremeño e Iberoamericano de Arte Contemporáneo, Badajoz, Spain; and MAK, Vienna.

Phillip Toledano (born 1968, London). Lives and works in New York City. He earned his BA in English Literature from Tufts University, Boston, and worked as an Art Director for a decade before devoting himself to photography. His published books of photography include *Bankrupt* (2004) and PHONESEX (2008). Toledano's work has been shown in solo exhibitions at Annina Nosei Gallery, New York (2004) and Colette, Paris (2006). He has participated in group exhibitions at Eyestorm, London (2005); Jenkins Johnson Gallery, San Francisco (2006); Robert Miller Gallery, New York (2005) and Miami Art Space (2008).

Eddo Stern (born 1972, Tel Aviv, Israel). Lives and works in Los Angeles. He earned his MFA in Art/Integrated Media from California Institute of the Arts, Valencia, CA (2000), and his BA in Electronic Media and Art from University of California at Santa Cruz, (1997). He has exhibited internationally, including solo exhibitions at The Koa Gallery, *Dark Machinima*, Honolulu, Hawaii (2006) and Postmasters Gallery, New York City (2007); and group exhibitions at PaceWildenstein, New York (2005); Civic Gallery, Monza, Italy (2006); Edith-Ruß-Haus für Medienkunst, Oldenburg, Germany (2006); Neuberger Museum of Art, Purchase, New York (2006); Museum für angewandte Kunst (MAK), Vienna, Austria (2006); UAM - University Art Museum, Long Beach, CA (2007); Total Museum of Contemporary Art, Seoul (2007); and iMAL (interactive Media Art Laboratory), Brussels, Belgium (2008).

Institute Staff

About the Institute for Research in Art

The USF Institute for Research in Art is the umbrella organization for the *Contemporary Art Museum*, *Graphicstudio* and *Public Art* program. Part of the University of South Florida College of Visual & Performing Arts, the IRA is dedicated to an international artists' residency program that brings to the University and Tampa Bay community today's most accomplished and influential artists working in the international art arena. Exhibitions, collection development, publication of limited edition graphics and sculpture multiples, commissioned public art works, lectures, symposia, workshops and special events are designed to foster awareness about the role of contemporary artists in shaping our culture and society. Participating artists represent the full and diverse spectrum of contemporary art practice including, but not limited to, painting, sculpture, photography, electronic media, and performance.

The University of South Florida *Contemporary Art Museum* (USFCAM) organizes and presents significant and investigative exhibitions of contemporary art from Florida, the United States and around the world, including Africa, Europe, and Latin America. Changing exhibitions are designed to introduce students, faculty and the community to current cultural trends. USFCAM also publishes relevant catalogues, schedules critically important traveling exhibitions and underwrites new projects by artists emerging on the national and the international fronts. USFCAM maintains the university's art collection, comprised of more than 5,000 art works. There are exceptional holdings in graphics and sculpture multiples by internationally acclaimed artists.

Graphicstudio, founded in 1968 as a non-profit, university-based, collaborative art making facility, remains unique in its commitment to aesthetic and technical research in the visual arts. Leading contemporary artists are invited to work in Graphicstudio's state-of-the-art studios in collaboration with expert artisans to create works on paper—including prints, photographs, digital images, books—and editions of sculptures in a variety of materials. In addition to its publishing program, Graphicstudio carries out a program of research and education including technical workshops, conferences, tours, lectures and publications.

The *Public Art* program at USF focuses on site responsive works, typically resulting in the creation of places, as opposed to objects. Most projects have been developed for the interjacent spaces between buildings, with footprints that result in plazas, gardens and courtyards. These projects serve as informal gathering spaces for the various academic neighborhoods of our campus.

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(cover inset) Phillip Toledano, *Eric* from *Portraits of Gamers*, 2002; (back cover) Eva and Franco Mattes, *Sarah Asturias*, 2006

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