

# [-empyre-] Missive 2: Bastard/alien spaces and SI - based art

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  - *Subject:* [-empyre-] Missive 2: Bastard/alien spaces and SI - based art
  - *From:* "patrick lichty" <[voyd@voyd.com](mailto:voyd@voyd.com)>
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This is a fascinating thread, the role of architecture in SL reminds me of the ArchOS project which gathered data about any number of data sets, such as airflow, temperature, population density, sound pressure, light levels, and so on throughout the given building. In so doing, the infostucture of the physical space is laid bare and is made available for possible cybernetic interaction.

The curious thing about architecture in SL is its multivalence. For example, I can think of it as information-ordering, epistemological ergonomics, avatar ergonomic, and so on. Novak broke the doubling of the physical in the virtual long ago into liquid architectures and "alien" spaces, and truly opened up the notion of virtual architecture. Why do we need rectilinear, static architecture with `_stairs_` (in most places) when avatars have some fundamentally different user experiences than flesh-bodies? Teleportation, flight, and the fact that the POV requires more expansive interior spaces `_should_` alter the architecture of virtual worlds, although many have not.

For instance, I am still deeply influenced by Benedikt's "Cyberspace: First Steps", and Anders' "Envisioning Cyberspace". The cover of the first book, with it's looming, rectilinear data structure seems more at home in SL than Ars Virtua or the BitFactory, but in considering Anders' proposition of the Anthropic principle in 3D virtual spaces, it's not surprising that so many SL practitioners choose to reconstruct with varying levels of verisimilitude. Because of the perception of human embodiment, space, gender, time, etc, forms seem to take on familiar shapes.

But as I travel SL, I see it almost like the final scene of The Matrix, when Neo sees The Matrix for what it is, a swirling data construct. This is what is fascinating about Annabeth's work, as persistent data is collected and reconstructed from interactions to shape the given project - it reveals the hidden currents of the infotecture. This interaction with infotecture is what I find is interesting in regards to tapping the fundamental, formal, structural aspects of virtual worlds to explore alterior communications methods.

For a little background on my interest in narrative infostructures,  
(Event-Spaces 1: (re)cursor, 1994-5)

<http://www.voyd.com/voyd/es1.htm>

Metaphor and Terrain: Interface as art object

<http://www.voyd.com/voyd/terrain.htm>

Grasping @ Bits 1.1

<http://www.voyd.com/voyd/gab.htm>

Sprawl: The American Landscape in Transition (Smithsonian AAM)

<http://americanart.si.edu/helios/newmedia/lichty/>

(Although I have been doing performance in SL, the narrative/space component seems to be staring back at me...)

And I agree that this can be highly problematic when it comes to "Bastard Spaces", or when the human perceptual frame gets its supports knocked out from under it, leaving a sort of existential limbo. Perry Hoberman's "Systems Maintenance" did this really well.

<http://framework.v2.nl/archive/archive/leaf/other/.xslt/nodenr-142973>

When I played with the installation in 1998 at Cornershop in Manchester UK, I found the tripling of trying to align the virtual, physical, and miniature rooms highly disorienting and challenging. I actually love Perry's assertion that there is something (joyfully) "ridiculous" about virtual spaces that take the idea of verisimilitude seriously at all.

>From a personal perspective, perhaps this is why I may be more interested in Novakian/"Alien" architecture in SL (as part of my interest in infotecture/narrative structures), although I have not yet done more than continue my experiments in relatively conservative avatar-centric architectures at I Am Columbia Island.

As an aside, after working heavily in SL for most of Spring, I felt that I was LIVING in a sort of "Bastard Space", in a number of levels, from space, to time compression to the desire of the various spaces to have my concomitant involvement. I found it very distressing, and caused my pulling back a great deal over the summer, retreating into the all-too-physical (but is it non-bastard?) space of New Orleans French Quarter.

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"It is better to die on your feet  
than to live on your knees."

-----Original Message-----

From: empyre-bounces@lists.cofa.unsw.edu.au

[<mailto:empyre-bounces@lists.cofa.unsw.edu.au>] On Behalf Of Stephan Doesinger

Sent: Thursday, August 02, 2007 3:52 PM

To: soft\_skinned\_space

Subject: Re: [-empyre-] Welcome to the Bastard Space!

Hi James,

regarding your comments I would like to adress two issues that I feel are worth reflecting:

- 1) "presence"
- 2) "interaction"

Just to illustrate: One of my first experiences with constructing a virtual world is back in 1998. For an art event in Munich me and my partner reconstruted the architecture of one of Germanys biggest techno-club, with the 3d modelling programm of the ego-shooter game "Marathon". You all may know that game...

Then we installed the game within the physical club. The virtual reconstruction was very detailed, we even integrated the art works of all the other artists, who presented their work in the "real club". We installed more than 30 screens and projectors and everybody could play this LAN game. Needless to say it was a fairly agressive game...

The Marathon scenery somehow began to merge with the real space it only copied. A bit later it even occupied the real space...

Everybody who played the game in this "doubled environment" was flashed by the experience of a "double floor" that emerged. After having played the game, one couldn't go around the corner in the "real club" without some sort of caution or even anxiety. This feeling off-game was enhanced by a crowded space filled with techno-music, fog, etc....

But there were two other experiences which we found striking in terms of "presence" and "interaction":

- 1) The power of the simulation of space created a feeling that we lost the sense for the "genius loci" - the presence of the real space. We were overwhelmed by the games'audio-visual world, which took control over all other senses. All those other senses how we feel and experience space and our intuition, were flattened.
- 2) The interaction of the game demanded our full concentration. This media space was about instinct and reaction. One's own associative mind was completely blocked.

I am aware that SL is more than a LAN game is in many ways much different but there were clear paralells to dedect. Presence became something like an "alienated presence" - a similar feeling that occurs in SL. In that respect I would subscribe to G.H. Hovagimyans comment that emotionally this sort of presence is indeed very poor.

The Bastard space is defined by media that demands interaction - which forces an involuntary concentration. Once you are stripped of all media that

surrounds you (no cell phone, no nothing...) you will experience physical space and the people you meet there differently. You realize that you are not an Avatar.

At least I did, when I stayed in a very remote place in wild nature in Turkey recently. No media space would intrude there. So yes - there is a non-Bastard space - although it may have become an exceptional space...

Join me for a beer now?

Well, only that which is absent can be imagined!

Stephan

--- james <empyre@factorynoir.com> schrieb:

> Hello Stephan,  
>  
> I have been patiently waiting for this discussion  
> for a few months  
> now. Allow me to introduce myself first then I hope  
> to address some  
> issues and maybe pose some thoughts. I.R.L. I am  
> known as James  
> Morgan, mild mannered lecturer at the CADRE  
> Laboratory for New Media  
> at SJSU. I also have a not so Secret Life as  
> Rubaiyat Shatner,  
> director of Ars Virtua New Media Center and Gallery  
> located in Second  
> Life (on the border of Dowden and Butler).  
>  
> I have been in Second Life for nearly 2 years now,  
> and WoW for  
> probably about a year. I consider myself a gamer  
> and have played in  
> other immersive environments in the past.  
>  
> I welcome the discussion "beyond the hype."  
>  
> Aesthetically SL is a 3d cartoon, a low resolution  
> rendering of a  
> vast small place.  
> Psychologically it is a game or a first person  
> shooter.  
> Sociologically it is liberating, anonymizing, and  
> egalitarian.  
> Architecturally it is no different, the laws of  
> physics and materials  
> differ.  
>  
> The first show that we did in Ars Virtua was titled  
> "The Real." I  
> curated this show and was deep in the process of  
> patting myself on

> the back for coming up with something so clever as a  
> "real" show in a  
> "virtual" environment when in the process of  
> collecting the work and  
> laying out the gallery I realized that despite my  
> desire to see the  
> work as "virtual" it was in fact as real as any  
> other art that I had  
> experienced. That is to say that the experience was  
> real, the objects  
> had reality, and the engagement and writing about  
> the work were also  
> real. The simulation had become the simulated.  
>  
> It is hard for me to see any mediated interaction as  
> anything but a  
> "Bastard Space." Along those lines though I am not  
> certain that there  
> is a non-bastard space, or that there ever was.  
>  
> The quality of SL (and WoW) that I find most  
> compelling is the  
> immersive social quality. It is difficult for me to  
> explain the  
> difference that I feel between a phonecall/IM  
> conversation and one in  
> SL, but it centers around a difference in the  
> medium. I have found  
> that in SL there is a common experience, one that  
> contributes to a  
> sense of presence.  
>  
> So if the space is not fundamentally different from  
> another mediated  
> space and the primary function is social, what does  
> that mean to  
> "native" art in SL? It becomes a question of the  
> mediation and the  
> nature of the social content and context.  
>  
> Consider Brad Kligerman's  
> Architectural/Sculptural/Mapped/Visual  
> space that would have a hard time existing anywhere  
> else and I think  
> we start to see a partial answer, but what is it?  
> Truly there is no  
> simple answer, though I would not dare to claim it  
> is new it is an  
> amazing extension that begins to illuminate the  
> corners of a new medium.  
>  
> So what role then does architecture have in this  
> space? What is the  
> purpose of architecture IRL? The meaning of a  
> building is completely  
> without context in an environment where distance is  
> deprecated.  
> There is no need to move from point A to B when you  
> can teleport, and  
> there is no necessity of a floor when everyone can

> fly. Architecture  
> becomes a magnificent barrier, an inconvenience and  
> a governor of  
> experience.  
>  
> Imitation of functional forms from other media  
> creates an inherent  
> uselessness. Mind you I think this can be  
> compelling and  
> illuminating but I have classically railed against  
> this sort of  
> transliteration.  
>  
> James Morgan  
> Rubaiyat Shatner  
>  
> On Aug 1, 2007, at 2:27 AM, Stephan Doesinger wrote:  
>  
> > Hi all,  
> >  
> > first of all: thanks, Melinda, for your initiative  
> and invitation  
> > to this discussion.  
> > There are not many forums that discuss Second Life  
> "beyond the  
> > hype"...  
> >  
> > It is obvious that 3D technologies SL are  
> multilayered. So to keep  
> > life simple - or at least trying hard - my  
> contribution to this  
> > forum will focus on architecture....  
> >  
> > Aesthetically SL seems to be a mirage of reality.  
> > Psychologically it may appear as a stageset filled  
> with digital  
> > puppets.  
> > In sociological terms SL seems as if it is only  
> about "playing"  
> > communication.  
> > Architecturally SL appears as a fusion of  
> different spatial  
> > concepts - "The Bastard Space"(...).  
> > In terms of technology SL may appear as a "3D  
> telephone" or maybe  
> > even a new kind of internet-interface.  
> > If one imagines a combination of SL (or something  
> like SL) with a  
> > GPS navigation system, Google Earth or Microsoft  
> Maps, one could  
> > also imagine, that this could create a new  
> topography of our real  
> > cities.  
> >  
> > At the end of the day we realize, that all of this  
> "virtual matter"  
> > swaps back to the first world, and somehow fuses,  
> creating  
> > something new...!  
> >

> > So, as for a kick-off, I want to put forward a few  
> thoughts on  
> > Second Life, that I summarized in a text entitled  
> "The Bastard  
> > Spaces".  
> > It was written for the (not yet pblished)  
> catalogue of the Ars  
> > Electronica Festival 2007, where the "1st  
> Architecture & Design  
> > competition in SL" will be held. (www.aec.at)  
> >  
> > Apart from that, I also want to invite everone of  
> you to submit  
> > your projects to this competition...  
> > Please find all details at: www.sl-award.com  
> >  
> > Stephan  
> >  
> > -----  
> >  
> > Bastard Spaces  
> > 1st Annual Architecture and Design Competition in  
> Second Life.  
> >  
> >  
> > Why are so many people fascinated and at the same  
> time alienated by  
> > the virtual world in \*Second Life\* (SL)? Is a  
> deceptive alternative  
> > to physical reality, to so-called ?First Life,?  
> being suggested  
> > here? What if this metaverse (1) is an eerie  
> mirror of reality?  
> > Could it be that Walter Benjamin?s 1929 commentary  
> has become the  
> > central metaphor of our basic cultural situation?:  
> ?When two  
> > mirrors look at each other, Satan plays his  
> favorite game and opens  
> > the perspective to infinity.?(2)  
> > I initiated this architecture and design  
> competition because  
>  
=== message truncated ===

=====  
Stephan Doesinger  
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<http://www.subtle.net/empyre>

--

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2:22 PM

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• **Follow-Ups:**

- [\[-empyre-\] Missive 3: The Issue of Remediation](#)
  - *From:* "patrick lichty" <voyd@voyd.com>

• **References:**

- [Re: \[-empyre-\] Welcome to the Bastard Space!](#)
  - *From:* Stephan Doesinger <sdoesinger@yahoo.de>

- Previous by Date: [\[-empyre-\] Missive 1: Reply to Annabeth.](#)
- Next by Date: [\[-empyre-\] Missive 3: The Issue of Remediation](#)
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