

BECAUSE I AM NOT HERE, SELECTED SECOND LIFE-BASED ART: DUAL SUBJECTIVITY, LIMINALITY AND THE INDIVIDUALLY SOCIAL

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ABSTRACT

Second Life is a virtual world accessible through the Internet and in which users create objects and spaces and interact socially through 3D avatars. Certain artists use this platform as a medium for art creation, using the aesthetic, spatial, temporal and technological features of SL as raw material. These artists, their avatars, code and script applied to animate and manipulate objects and artwork in SL have been the center of my research for a number of years now: what does virtual existence mean and what is its purpose when stemming from aesthetic exchange in SL? Through a qualitative research method mixing distributed aesthetics, digital art and media theories, I examine aesthetic exchange in the virtual: the shifting patterns of subjectivity, identity and avatars as reflected in the artwork of Gazira Babeli, Bryn Oh, Eva & Franco Mattes and China Tracy (Cao Fei). I also reflect further on how artists create and embody avatars, produce liminal identities, dual subjectivity and *mythopoeia*, experiencing oneself as 'another,' turning liminal subjectivity-construction into artists' resources, synthesized in the paradoxical image of the *Individually Social*. This paper presents a synthesis of the methods, findings and conclusions of research on both these aspects.

BECAUSE I AM NOT HERE [...]

Second Life (SL) is not a conventional online computer game; rather, it is a MMORPG (massive multiplayer online role-play game) or a social experiment in the virtual, in which its members, known as residents, are provided the tools and basic knowledge to create objects, spaces and content.

The understanding of identity playing and appearance of avatars in SL, the way they create objects and spaces and how they develop the capability to relate to others and create content, is an essential goal of virtual aesthetics research. A complex dynamic, unfolding in SL, weaves structures of subjectivity, identity, social, economic and emotional exchange, both in real and virtual life. Unlike other virtual environments, SL virtual characterizations are, from the beginning, under the resident's control and creativity. It is precisely the capability of modifying and constantly reinventing an avatar's appearance and 'personality' that is the hallmark of SL's ability for experimenting with virtual identity and subjectivity and, by extension, the displaying of interactive, aesthetic and meaning-making experiences, whose design, exchange and trade grows in direct proportion to the experience of virtual embodiment, social performance and presence projected in the virtual self and the multiplied *personae* of the avatar. An important finding of my research is that an avatar's identity relies on a particular sense of liminal and multiple 'selfhood' developed through digital manipulation, representation and aesthetic exchange, all enacted by an amplified and mutable subjectivity. This is the notion of

distribute aesthetics applied in my study [1]. In this sense, identity becomes augmented (not fractured), negotiated and shaped through the exchange between avatars and people in both the actual and the virtual worlds to form a hybrid 'personality' to such an extent that may impact the actual reality. [2]

What is more, interacting with others catapults to the surface a number of aspects highly related to "impression management" [3] and, with them, a dense dynamic involved in the exchange of meaning-making, self-image representation and behavioral experiences. In my work, a central ontology of SL deals with presence, subjectivity and identity in virtual worlds, causing embodiment and agency processes to lie in a liminal state between self awareness and semi-subjective perceptual features. All of these stem from intra-to-inter-subjective transferences between the avatar and his/her actual owner in real life. Additionally, these factors become enhanced by the environment in which avatars 'live,' interpenetrated by powerful digital communication channels (Web browsing, chat, SMS, voice, video, etc.) that also contribute to reshaping presence, subjectivity and identity in SL. Therefore, interactivity, persistence and the capacity to share with others in a common virtual space – while actual life (AL) individuals may be located in opposite corners of the earth – contribute significantly to the liminal feeling of being (oneself) immersed as *another self* in a three-dimensional persistent virtual space.

This happens despite SL's relatively low resolution (or draft) representation of avatars, objects and spaces. The sensation of being immersed creates a surprisingly powerful, psychologically enticing and semiotically meaningful result. It is therefore clear that emotional and affective factors are involved in the feeling of presence, agency, self representation and action in virtual worlds. In the last ten to twelve years, specialized VWs research has reported the extent to which synchronous reactions, behavioral and psychological responses are elicited by user interaction. [4]

Since there is no specific plot, goal, score or rules to follow, portraying SL as a game would be misleading. It is a social environment extending and stimulating the conditions to perform and embrace a parallel virtual life, merged with our actual experience of the metaverse. Hence, my research emphasizes how the meaningful achievements in SL's social, economic, cultural and personal interaction are symptomatically goal-oriented activities that are dependent on the avatar's personality, narratives or, to borrow a more accurate term from Paul Ricoeur, their "emplotment." [5]

Goal-oriented activities are propelled by the persistent nature of SL's three-dimensional space, its navigability and the hyper-

communication tools at hand, stimulating the mutability and enhancement of presence, subjectivity and the illusion of being immersed in non-mediated experiences. This is the definition of the metaverse applied in my work. However, in Linden Lab's words (the company that launched, owns and has run SL since 2003), the mainstream objective of the platform is the creation and maintenance of social networks, the edification of a virtual society through the objects, spaces and narratives necessary to populate it: a collection of 'cultures' designed and shaped at residents' will.



Fig. 1. *Lacan Galicia's Living Room* (Lacan Galicia is my avatar), 2012, Personal Screenshot in SL © Gerardo Toledo.

Unlike this view, I entertained a different perspective in which responsiveness and self-representation – assumed as a flow of narrative-creation-to-self-experience dependent on extended dual subjectivity – are actually 'testing' the limits of private and social virtually-represented *personae*. My research applies a combined perspective as a valid mode of virtual, media and distribute aesthetics analysis, bound to explain and enlarge our notions of the virtual, contributing to reshaping our own epistemologies of digital media and virtual worlds theory.

THE AUGMENTED SELF AND AN ONTOLOGY OF THE METAVERSE

The notion of the augmented self is drawn from Italian new media, semiotics and film specialist Adriano D'Aloia's concept of "autoempathy." [6] I affirm in my work that auto-reflexive empathy comes earlier than social bonding in the form of an affective sequel targeted, primarily, to ourselves when experiencing our one-self as another: an 'avatarian' multiple identity. In other words, I am referring to distributed aesthetic experiences becoming vital and subjective in a meaningful second virtual existence. Accordingly, my research on certain forms of SL artwork witnesses an almost ideal scenario for analyzing these questions: virtual identity, behavior and liminality combined. In former research, I examined the features, behavior and ethos of four avatars creating art in SL: Gazira Babeli, Eva & Franco Mattes, Bryn Oh and China Tracy (Cao Fei). These are the names and virtual identities of SL avatars, except for China Tracy, who deliberately maintains her actual identity (Cao Fei) associated to that of her SL avatar.

The ontology of the metaverse that I apply in my work reveals both the hyper communication tools as well as the identity and subjectivity patterns created within the liminal as being key to deepening the relationship between avatars and actual selves. In my four case studies, the artists' virtual identities account for augmented, multiple and transformative processes of self-perception, subjectivity, narrative creation and aesthetic exchange running from SL to AL and vice versa. In all four cases the process of *dual subjectivity* (DS) is a common – liminal – threading-element.

DS is defined as the merging of computer or *machinic-subjectivity* with *human-augmented-subjectivity*. [7] In the context of aesthetic exchange in SL, this manifests as an augmented, metamorphic and reversible path-creation, oscillating from the intra-to-the-inter-subjective *personae* in the avatar and its actual owner. This ultimately means that a complex form of self-acknowledgment, between the virtual and the actual worlds, unfolds earlier than mere sociability. According to D'Aloia, autoempathy, takes place in SL even before the creation of social bonds: "We see a condensation or saturation, of the Self, to the detriment of the presence of the Other. Especially, online virtual worlds are environments where the player fundamentally experiences, almost auto-erotically, his/her own ego. The interactional axis hovers on the Selfness side and the intra-subjective logic is stronger than the inter-subjective one. [...] Visual and sensorial perception oscillates between two declensions of the same Self. And if the actual Self is more concerned with empathising with the virtual Self than with the Other, then empathy is required only as a reflexive ability. In such auto-reflexive environments, in which users need to engage a motional and emotional relation first and foremost with themselves, a form of autoempathy emerges." [8]

In other words, a complex process advances forcing the avatar to enter into a liminal, discursive negotiation with him/herself and with the actual person on 'this side of the screen.' Especially because self-representing our self as another self demands a perceptual and affective relocation of both private and public *personae*. Within this framework, I elaborated a key perspective that sheds an alternative view on the virtual as a techno-cultural process, attesting to the emergence of human and *machinic-subjectivity* in the avatar, preceding two dynamics lived in the virtual: dual immersion and dual subjectivity.

These constitute the affective-subjective foundation upon which virtual liminality acquires its constitution as both an epistemological and aesthetic process between perceived realities. An avatar's artist immersed in SL becomes a true "actant" thanks to autoempathy's fuzzy limits between the calculated (or intuited) self-narratives on the side of the avatar-performing-as-artist and the merging of private and public personalities, when the actual self – represented as a virtual one as another – interacts and performs socially. [9] Hence, the aesthetic exchange lived by a virtual self, auto projected as an artist (and another self) is

fundamentally a liminal experience. In other words, an avatar becomes simultaneously three things. First, it becomes an enunciator in semiotic terms, as dual subjectivity constitutes a non-fixed, enigmatic, pivotal point from which it is possible to emit distributed aesthetic forms of the self (represented as another self). Second, it becomes a character in an unfolding self-narrative (a plot) because those forms ultimately express the merging of subjective, social and sense-making structures, which are necessary for self-agency, the creation of the narratives that sustain it and the embodiment of the performing personae by the (artist's) avatar and vice versa. Third, it becomes a reflective/reflected spectator of both processes, because, under these conditions, embodiment implies a liminal continuous relocation of the self as another virtual self.

According to my findings, autoempathy and liminality are the true bearers of an avatars' ability to generate, circulate and simultaneously transfer subjective content, interacting online/offline with an audience and projecting themselves as an augmented-other. From there, threading augmented and hybrid 'instances' of avatars and actual personae allows for the formulation of the paradoxical term I have referred to as the *individually social*. This is the subject critically addressed in the chapter "Individually Social: From Distribute Aesthetics to New Media Literacy. Approaching the Merging of Virtual Worlds, Semantic Web and Social Networks" in *The Immersive Internet*. [10] In the book, a number of scholars and researchers envision a merged technological scenario for the future: a networked universal space inhabited and 'browsed' by standardized 3D avatars, dispossessed of their rich augmented subjectivity, who are, nevertheless, able to communicate between different virtual platforms.

DISTRIBUTE AESTHETICS AND SL – BASED ART

I have examined these subjects from a relatively innovative research method centered on qualitative inquiry, case studies and a mix of analytical perspectives from distributed aesthetics, VWs theory and media studies. Every time one (self) performs in 'avatar mode,' a double affective operation on its perception and interaction in both worlds takes place. The avatar-body is the means through which a SL resident becomes an actant, representing, in semiotic terms, a "'position' in both physical and enunciatinal meaning." [11] This happens because of the development of a particular sense of presence: that of being there as another oneself, which implies an extension of the actual self. On the other hand, the relationship is performed through a dual actant 'who' precipitates and amalgamates identity and uniqueness in a continuum, so "the recognition as oneself does not neglect the relationship between the self (as another oneself) in the virtual, with the self-other (otherness) in actual life." [12]

However, in the case of SL—an environment categorized by a semi-subjective visual frame – the dual actant also interferes in the relationship with the other. The reason being that these aspects accrue to one essential topic in digital aesthetics: the original

versus copy. Aesthetics analysis, virtual art and digital media research are best explored and built departing from the remarkable property of digital images to reproduce multiple versions of themselves that work as 'originals,' resulting from the inherent invisibility of the source code. This is an unavoidable fundament for examining the digital image and distribute aesthetics and indeed is of particular importance on VWs research. [13]

This view emphasizes critical functions of performativity and shared meaning-making and the affective exchange from the dual – individually social – actant who creates, enhances and weaves narratives, identity and subjectivity patterns, constituting what Anna Munster (and others) call a *space of reciprocity (SOR)*. Munster in particular affirms that SOR is absent from mass media. The relevance of this idea is, on the one hand, a call for a strategic contribution to the theory of digital aesthetics from a media studies perspective. On the other, it confirms the mutation of "digital non linear temporalities" that, according to Munster, constitute a radical shift in the digital image's regime, as time (real) is virtually superseding distance (real space). Following this path, Munster has developed a (Deleuzian) conception of embodiment as a different arrangement of lines of expression bound to interpret the effects of coding on the homogenization occasioned by the image body's components when translated to the digital order, thereby creating a complex specialization. [14]

Considering Boris Groys' term *topological aura*, in his chapter "Art in the Age of Biopolitics" (2008) he traces a parallel between Walter Benjamin's notion of aura and the issues of representation, documentation originality and copy (reproducibility) of the digital image. According to Groys, a different, presumably more specific sense, in which the concept of aura is used, arises from a closer reading of Benjamin's text. [this] "makes clear that the aura originates only by virtue of the modern technology of reproduction – that is to say, it emerges in the same moment as it is lost. And it emerges for the same reason for which it is lost." [15]

This is what Groys calls the "topological aura" of digital images; the idea that, through its inscriptions, aura transforms itself into the relationship of the artwork to the site in which it is found: "The important realization is that for Benjamin the distinction between original and copy is exclusively a topological one – and as such it is – entirely independent of the material nature of the work." [16] This is of particular importance for the theoretical framing of this paper, because SL operates as a liminal space proliferating a differential of topologies. Differently put, it operates not only as the site of creation, display and dissemination of art objects, but also as the liminal 'engine,' transforming its aesthetics (affecting between worlds) and the technical yet mythic place of their reproduction, thereby demonstrating how the "technical reproduction as such is by no means the reason of the loss of aura." [17] This formulation precedes the development of the important theory of digital image as "documentation," that is, as part of a vast movement anchored in art theory, aesthetics and bio

politics. In my case, this is precisely the point at which performances, installations, narrative and participative art in SL work as forms of documentation (a property of digitalized information firmly sustained by its tools), engendering “strategies for making something living and original from something artificial and reproduced.” [18]

Consequently, the digital image reproduces not only a copy from an original source that remains invisible and particularly in SL-Based Art, we may say that there is “no such thing as a copy. In the world of digitized images, we are dealing only with originals – only with original presentations of the absent, invisible digital original.” [19] Hence, one should consider that every time we are exposed to the digital image, we are truly looking at a digital copy that has no visible original and that the visualization of the image is an original event in and of itself. A digital image, to be seen, says Groys, should not merely be exhibited, but “staged or performed.” Accordingly, one can say that “digitalization turns the visual arts into performing art” in which subjectivity, narrative and avatar’s multiplied selfhood becomes liminally, yet systematically, embedded. [20]

In this sense, the idea of extending one’s subjectivity into an augmented self ‘as another’ in virtual worlds, takes on aesthetic and epistemological relevance because the incorporation of one’s body into our avatar is not just a psychological, perceptual operation but, in essence, a topological, narrative one. For the sake of brevity, I will comment here only about the artwork in two of my cases: *Gazira Babeli* and *Bryn Oh*. However it is worth mentioning that the other two (*China Tracy* and *Eva & Franco Mattes*) seemingly fall within the same coordinates. We and our avatars create the conditions and narratives for our digital incarnation to function as a real (virtual) self, making possible the inscription of reality and life, which is essentially artificial. Whether consciously or not, intentionally or not, our avatars act under a regime of subjective narratives around a former fiction: that of representing our self as one that is essentially another self ‘who,’ nevertheless, creates a hybrid narrative. This is because the liminal dimension threads a whole process of interaction, heavily loaded into digital objects, spaces and social networks created by the virtual beings that populate it.

FOUR CORNERS MAKE A PENTAGON

The artists examined here assume, negotiate and apply their art to subjectivity construction, liminal identity and multiple *self* embodiment. Due to their critical position on SL, they are on a quest for virtual/actual aesthetic exchange, catalyzing a new emerging SL *ethos* in which individual and subjective content is socially produced and disseminated, but still emanates primarily from liminal and auto emphatic patterns. The artists express a set of mutable and proliferating realities lived in the liminal, presenting themselves as artists in the virtual while in many cases concealing their AL identities or playing pranks at different levels with the liminal connections between identities. In this regard, their artwork, aesthetic statements, augmented subjectivity and identity experiences enact and perform dual subjectivity (and immersion)

while at the same time the “technological hyper subject” is aesthetically projected. [21] I have approached this by analyzing the artists’ idiosyncratic *modus operandi*, art statements and *mythopoeia*. This latter meaning the personal but powerful narratives emerging from their own liminal identities and the exceptional condition of behaving like one self who performs through two (or more) bodies – one in the actual, one in the virtual – that nevertheless ‘respond’ to an actual mind.

In this sense, from the mixed perspective in my case studies, the artists represent four ‘corners’ that conform, metaphorically, not to a square but a pentagon: a fifth corner arises directly from the intermedial, aesthetic and liminal ‘substance’ amalgamated by dual subjectivity and the paradoxical and omnipresent self-reflexive practices of the technological hyper subject. Such is the epistemological fundament of the term individually social, as ‘a’ necessary condition of autoempathy, coalescing into the multiple selfhood via machinic and doubled subjectivity.

GAZIRA BABELI

“I can walk bare feet, but my avatar needs Prada shoes.”

Gazira Babeli

Nobody knows who is behind the ‘female’ avatar wearing the tall black hat and sunglasses who likes to be called ‘Gaz.’ Her identity in AL remains deliberately unknown. Is there one individual? Several? What gender? Is it a group of genius hackers and pranksters? A cutting edge artificial intelligence bot disguised as an avatar? There are no answers to these questions, although one thing is evident: ‘Gaz’ reveals an abundance of dark humor, top-notch programming and computer skills and a sort of nihilistic-irony disguised as *joie de vivre* in avatarian terms. Her work points to a defined aesthetic claim in favor of illusion and ‘magic,’ that is, the power of code capable of prompting life in the artificial. Gazira emphasizes this in the construction of the idea of the real as virtual because only through “tekhne” and “episteme” [22] is one able to elevate an idea of the virtual embedded in the actual. Gazira’s SL performances and interventions demonstrate this, explaining why she can be at once a systematic, ferocious and caustic character and yet cool, generous and funny. So, it is thanks to illusion and representation that one senses the virtual as a manifestation of the ‘real,’ and vice versa. The realness of the virtual is apprehended mainly through its technical representation and cultured illusion, in the same sense that our cultured views allow for conferring a degree of reality to dreams, fantasies, epiphanies, literature and poetry. Gazira Babeli’s code performances, interventions and *machinima* constitute a vector of illusion and representation transformed into the true bearers of continuity between the real and the virtual worlds.

This understanding stems from her exemplary work *Acting as Aliens* (2009): visitors (to the Kapelica Gallery in Slovenia) are subtly projected to a context in which the only possibility to connect with the absent (although not disembodied) artist, is to start acting

as an avatar (an alien). Real (actual) people become seduced, following at a distance actions, movements and directions provided by Gazira, the SL avatar-artist. In a genius transference of subjectivities and alternate bodies at play, Gazira accomplishes something fascinating: real people in the gallery become transformed into 'actual avatars' controlled by a virtual avatar in SL who, at the same time (and hidden somewhere), displays the current action to other people (in SL) who are now transformed into other 'residents' in the actual world in the gallery's computer mirrored-screen. When interviewed by my avatar, Gaz affirmed that imaginary realities are always part of our deal with the cultured representation of the world and that one does not need to escape from the real just because tangible materiality becomes differently patterned through code. Gazira's art is an enticing opportunity to experience the extension and re-materialization of the body in the digital at a symbolic level through the virtual, but real as illusion.



Fig. 2. *Acting As Aliens*, 2009, photo Miha Fras © Gazira Babeli's Website.

BRYN OH

"When someone falls in love in SL, they fall in love with another mind, not with a cartoon character."

Bryn Oh

I consider the fact that Bryn Oh is a traditionally-trained oil painter to explain her obsession as a virtual artist. It also explains the prominence she confers to visual composition, among other sensorial and perceptual referents. In her interview with Lacan Galicia (my avatar) and within her copiously maintained media-presence (BlogSpot, YouTube, Vimeo and *machinima* sites) she emphasizes the 'superior' qualitative ranking introduced in art by compositional order. [23] Bryn is able to apply this notion as a direct outcome of mathematical harmony and classical composition techniques to attract attention and 'guide' the visitor's gaze. That does not imply that she neglects the power of intuition, lyrical spirit and emotional or even darker and turbulent imagery. Rather the contrary: Bryn is a lonesome character that aesthetically turns the conditions of liminality, privacy and self-containment – primary of her own personality and temperament – into a powerhouse.

Bryn supplies stories that become transformed into interactive virtual installations, scripted sculptures, intriguing and ambiguous 'toys' and *machinima* productions that flirt between private and

subjective realms on the one hand and shared and collective ones on the other. *Immersiva* Island, the artist's exemplary artwork, is a SIM (VW simulator), a fantasy telltale, a mutable 'city,' where proliferating stories become transformed into surrealistic plots, underlying the architectural, spatial and temporal poetics of those visitors interacting with Bryn's creations: sculptures, rusted robots and ill-toy-characters, fantastic machines, cybrid-characters and abandoned spaces. What Bryn seeks is to share her fantastical inner imagery and telltale skills, dreams and melancholic atmospheres through poetic discourses that adopt both visual (three-dimensional and interactive) and textual forms. These are profoundly woven into her delicate yet effective and detailed sense of composition. Just entering Bryn's *Immersiva* one becomes integrated in the dynamics of a poetic flow, unfolding from the series of objects, characters and situations that open their full poetic potential only in accordance with the visitor's degree of interaction, focus, curiosity and tenacity. [24] More than seeking to conduct or anchor our interpretation, she looks for the multiplication and rearrangement of possible articulations, to which the visitor can append her own affective receptivity, poetic and intellectual interpretation.



Fig. 3. Lacan Visiting Virginia in "Virginia Alone," *Immersiva*, 2011 © Gerardo Toledo (Personal Screenshot from SL).

For this reason, her bucolic and morbid atmospheres are populated by talking, interactive and narrative devices, ready to lead the viewer, at the request (and effort) of the patient and curious visitor, to new levels of interaction and narratives around phantasmagorical and personal subjects: 'infantile' items and narratives of memory, all melancholic spirits wandering in the dusk or at night on the borders of the real, the surreal, the virtual and the oneiric. This is Bryn's approach to desire, an arrangement of oneiric contexts created by her poetry and virtual installations, expressed through scripting techniques, using the 'centrality' of visitor's gaze, emphasizing and re-locating it, in relation to the narratives and architectural regime of *Immersiva*. For this purpose, programming and suggesting an 'ideal' trajectory to the visiting avatar is one of Bryn's remarkable techniques. Her artistic standpoint relies basically on the possibilities of allocating her gaze in that of us, the viewers; and by this procedure, taking partial control of a number of 'poetic trajectories' and findings that only the avatar's endurance, curiosity and commitment can discover (or not) on her sites. In the end, what really matters, she claims, is the poetic continuity, the fluid stream

of narrations threading, intersecting or recomposing each other, as one has always experienced in dreams, creative epiphanies and fantastic day-dreaming. Bryn intensively assumes the preservation of a poetic and literary continuity, that is why the visitor needs constantly to *re/locate* herself towards the intermedial entangling of sensorial and affective processes, in which the lyrical and mysterious spirit of Bryn Oh, the oil painter-artist from Toronto, will seek to 'bring your avatar inside the painting,' through harmonious and mathematical compositional patterns. All the while, Bryn Oh, the skillful computer animation artist, strives for your patience, curiosity and constant feedback, in order to put in motion the kind of plots that are best perceived in task-oriented action, like in the film structured immersion of her *machinima* works. Bryn's *mythopoeia*, due to the virtuosity of their formal and painterly treatment, makes avatars recognize themselves as accomplices and integral parts of the artwork.

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- Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 16. What Ricoeur means by this term is "the development of a kind of story line or assignation of roles between a character—a subject—and a narrative in which the order of submission between one and another can oscillate."
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- Adriano D'Aloia, "Adamant Bodies," 56.
- Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, 16-17. The term actant refers to characters or players capable of affirming themselves through action and narrative. [...] "narratives express (represent) worlds inhabited by agents capable of responding to questions such as 'Who is speaking? Who is acting? Who is recounting about himself or herself? Who is the moral subject of imputation?'"
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- Anna Munster, *Materializing New Media. Embodiment in Information Aesthetics* (Hanover, NH.: Dartmouth College Press, University Press of New England, 2006): 172. "I suggested that virtual reality and computer gaming offer experiences of nonlinear temporalities where time is compressed, layered and multimodal rather than disappearing or monotonously stretched into an eternal present[...] [What I] suggest is unfolding for global information aesthetics, a vector that perhaps signals its most radical shift yet. In all modes of digital media production we are witnessing the move from regimes of spatialization to those of temporalization: media are no longer sent from one location and received in another but diffusively distributed and qualitatively changed by the differentials that guide that distribution. [...] we are in the midst of a shift to aesthetic regimes that rely upon temporalities rather than spatialities while they are being supported by emergent, networked socialities."
- Boris Groys, *Art Power*, 61.
- Ibid, 62.
- Ibid, 62.
- Ibid, 65.
- Ibid, 91.
- Ibid, 85.
- My avatar, Lacan Galicia, was able to appreciate SL artwork that shows the degree to which individual subjectivity has been updated to an enhanced version of the "technological hyper-subject [...]" the belief that contemporary subjectivity is connected to and depends on digital networks: the contemporary hyper-subject is made up of human and machinical/technological components, including [...] protocols, processes and the hardware and software platforms regulating the functioning of digital networks. Networking, as a cultural practice based on making networks, is a multiplication of identities, roles and methods no longer built exclusively on human beings but also on non-living beings and relevant topologies and physiologies." Mario Costa, *Dimenticare l'arte. Nuovi orientamenti nella teoria e nella sperimentazione estetica [Forget About Art]* (Milano: Franco Angeli, 2005), quoted in Vito Campanelli, *Web Aesthetics*, 226.
- David Barison and Daniel Ross, *Directors, The Ister. Parts 1 (Chapters 1, 2) and 2 (Chapters 3, 4, 5)*, DVD (Australia: Black Box Sound and Image, 2004), 189 min. To Gazira Babeli's work, I applied the notions of *tekhne* and *episteme* as presented in the documentary film *The Ister* based on Heidegger's lectures of 1942, which were in turn centred on Hölderlin's poem of the same name. "The terms *tekhne* means knowledge, know-how or art (in the *metier* sense) and *mythos* is assumed not just in its conventional sense of *metier* and the beliefs about certain reality (i.e. literary fiction), but more in the sense of an intimate, magic and subjective aim, a technical arrangement of images, words, poetry and language bound to preserve and transmit certain explanations of things." (Gerardo Toledo, *Because I am Not Here*, 181).
- Gerardo Toledo, *Because I am Not Here*, Appendix C, 210-218. Bryn Oh interviewed by the author (London, Canada, January 29, 2011).
- Ibid: "My audiences are those who like to lift up a rock to see what lives under it. People with great curiosity and patience. I hide many elements to my work inside the surface. Both mentally and physically. For example, I may have a tiny word printed on the side of a work. If the viewer types that word in chat then the sculpture will 'hear' it and open up a hidden compartment. When the compartment opens the viewer will then be able to find new layers to contemplate. If that viewer doesn't type the word in the first place then they will never discover other elements."

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