

## Panel 28

### IVSA Conference 2009

#### Appreciating the views: How we're looking at the social and visual landscape

Panel Title	
Masters of the Universe: Landscapes of the Imagination	
Description	
<p>The technological revolution of the recent past has dramatically changed our perceptions of the accessible environment, and it could be argued that it marks a significant shift in terms of the role of the 'real' in the interactions that mark our realm of experience. The rise of virtual environments of all kinds and their escalating capacity to offer heightened levels of particular experiences is a phenomenon which interests many but few agree on, and the discourse around virtual worlds is very disparate indeed. This panel seeks to consider and examine the phenomenon of imagined landscapes, and their place in our contemporary understandings.</p>	
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## Final Selected Papers

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Paper Title	
<b>VI imagined and Travelled Landscapes in SecondLife</b>	
Description	
<p>This paper is about a research<sup>1</sup> conducted in Second Life as a new and interesting point of observation of the communicative dynamics of virtual imagined landscapes. Therefore Second Life, has seen as a particular place for the communication of the territory, a space built as social relationship, able to involve the new travellers of the "second life" in new ways in connection with the "real" places of the "first life".</p> <p>The study background of this research is based on three linked areas: the communication theory, the theory of collective imagery, the sociology of tourism.</p> <p>The research tries to understand how is possible to communicate a territory inside Second Life. For this reason it involved a group of tourists/travellers/SL-goers to understand the ways of this new kind of touristic gaze.</p> <p>The research – carried out in November 2007 – January 2008 and restarted on April 2009– involved a panel composed by a number of male avatars and female avatars, expert and newbies, aged until 34 years, 35-44, 45 and more (because these are the ages of the users in Second Life). They were asked to visit a SecondLife land, a land chosen on their own, that could represent a real territory. Moreover they had to take 10 snapshots of the land that could tell a story about the travel experience. The visual technique of this step was the native image making.</p> <p>Thanks to the pictures about Cuba, Assisi (Italy), Mantova (Italy), Dublino, Yamato, Atomium Belgio, and so on) avatars have been interviewed into a peculiar lab-room in Second Life with photo-elicitation.</p> <p>The first goal of the research is the chance for the avatars/researchers to focus new ways and possibility of the making research. For example the second order observation dynamics (observer who observes the relation between the observer and observed: Human observer -&gt;Avatar observer/avatar observed). But also some interesting ways for the visual methods in Second Life: to project images during the interviews, and so on.</p> <p>Thanks to the results of this first step of the research – qualitative and based on the visual approach – the researchers made a survey and the visitors avatar of a specific land called LucaniaLab could fill out a questionnaire about the SL experience of a territory.</p> <p>Some results.</p> <p>SecondLife fulfils the "need of elsewhere" and the avatars claim to experiment forms of travel as in real life;</p> <p>Postmodern tourist, inside SL, looks for an effective mix of simulated reality and new reality, based on the peculiarity of a virtual space;</p> <p>An effective touristic communication in SL has its "killer application" in the relationship and sociability (better between "natives" of a land and avatars/travellers);</p> <p>4. A virtual tour in a SL land based on a real place in RL, in a land that represents a real town, region, etc., reinforces the real-travel desire, to visit those real places and bring to take information about that real places in web sites, books or tourist guides.</p>	

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<sup>1</sup> The team of the research is composed by Giovanni Boccia Artieri, Laura Gemini and Valentina Orsucci, IULM, Milan, Italy.

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Paper Title	
<b>Territory of <i>Irelantis</i>: delirious, ecstatic or satirical landscapes?</b>	
Description	
<p>'Collecting Meteorites at Knowth', 'The Great Pyramids of Carlingford Lough' or 'Trouble with the Glacier in Henry St., Dublin', are the extravagant titles of some Sean Hillen's visionary photomontages. The surreal landscape of <i>Irelantis</i>, 1999, seems to escape and, at the same time, to encapsulate the chronotopic frame of now/here in its combination of stereotyped, romantic, imagery of Ireland hybridized with exotic elements from various ages and cultures. Hillen posits the theory of 'reality tunnel' in communication, conceived as endolinguistic translation, where understanding dangerously travels separate tunnels, each with its own nuances and variables; yet the transversal intersection is the identification with place. If the landscape is the symbolic mirror image of the world reflecting and signifying the symbiotic relationship with the culture of human agency, what do Hillen's chimerical landscapes translate? Do they attempt at (de)constructing the fiction of a country whose dichotomies between nature and technology, myth and commodification melt and solidify under an overlapping globalisation and current world crisis? Do the suspension and the displacement of the visual information provided by <i>Irelantis</i> artificial landscapes expand the hiatus between subject and identity making? Or, are they an omen of a (hetero)utopian future defined by hybridity, fragmentation, and discontinuity, where collective memory and identity will lose claims of intrinsic unity? If photomontage is a 'static film' and non-places are <i>the measure of our time</i> can Hillen collage technique be regarded as a heterotopia and can <i>Irelantis</i> subversive iconoclastic landscapes be considered 'non-places'? This paper wishes to consider the visual suggestions and contents inspired by <i>Irelantis</i> landscapes in connection to the practice of identity-making.</p>	

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Paper Title	
<b>Designing Virtual Experience in the Landscape of Immersive Simulated Environment: An Understanding of Users' Perspectives.</b>	
Description	
<p>Every experience stems from the interaction between an individual and an object or an environment. The degree of such interactions in the range of options and the number of sensory aspects differentiates three types of experience namely direct, indirect and virtual experience (Li, Daugherty and Biocca, 2001). On one hand, a hyper-realistic simulated virtual landscape offers heightened level of shopping experiences for consumers. On the other hand, it is inevitably that the virtual landscape also brought new dimensions and opportunities to designers, marketers, manufacturers and retailers. The virtual landscape also acts as a communication platform and it helps both sides in providing direct and interactive communication. This paper is going to report an on-going research project design, which is designed as a laboratory research, in setting up a simulated virtual environment for consumers to shop and to experience visual merchandizing display virtually. The use of advanced 3D graphics together with the support of using head-mounted display for creating an immersive virtual environment for consumers will be employed. Likewise in many fashion business, virtual shops has been set up in digital platform which enables their customers to browse and even try on clothes on the internet. However, only few researches have been done by researchers aiming to uncover the concerns and views on users' perspectives. Therefore, this project is designed with the objectives of understanding consumers' shopping experiences in an immersive virtual environment by a series of laboratory testing and interviews follow-up. Discussion on the research methodologies for obtaining customers' views about virtual shopping experience is put forward. This paper also concluded with some initial findings and concerns of the research regarding consumers' experience on immersive virtual landscape. Implications for future research opportunities are identified for researchers, designers and marketers.</p>	

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Paper Title	
<b>"The glorious ideal of human nature": searching for Pantisocracy in John Cassavetes' suburban America</b>	
Description	
<p>Pantisocracy was conceived by the poets Robert Southey and Samuel Taylor Coleridge as an escape to an exotic utopia, away from perceived European corruption in the late eighteenth century. The plan was for twelve couples to travel to the bucolic paradise of the Susquehanna River in Pennsylvania, establishing a community of intellectuals unspoilt and untouched by religious and political doctrines.</p> <p>Pantisocracy was never realised, but has curious echoes in the films written and directed by John Cassavetes. Cassavetes was of Greek heritage, and for him, escape from corruptive influences meant contributing to a cinema that eschewed Hollywood modes of production. Cassavetes' pan-socratia (all-governing society) was founded in the suburbs of Los Angeles, with a crew of individuals dedicated to making films outside the studio ethos.</p> <p>Through readings of Coleridge's sonnet, "Pantisocracy" (1794) and Cassavetes' Love Streams (1984) and associated materials, the paper will focus on how this escape from corruption is romanticised, attempting to create a human geography absolved of the iniquities of an outside, social order deemed to be in decline. Coleridge's notebooks and letters, and the production diary for Cassavetes' film offer additional insights into how the "glorious ideal" of paradise can be projected onto two very different locales.</p> <p>The paper addresses questions of 'the human' and 'nature' through the pursuit of suburban and pastoral idylls, particularly with regard to trans-continental visions of paradise as a 'land elsewhere'; and will explore how the philosophical and social outlooks of the late-eighteenth and -twentieth centuries inform a new way of looking at the human and physical landscape in the early years of a new millennium.</p> <p>Robert Furze is writing his Ph.D thesis at Dublin City University, where his research interests include depictions of man's animal nature in film and how its visceral effect is screened for the cinema viewer.</p>	