# UTOPIA COMPUTER

The »New« in Architecture?

Nathalie Bredella, Chris Dähne,
Frederike Lausch (Eds.)

NETZWERK
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The critical concern of the book "Utopia Computer" is the euphoria, expectation and hope inspired by the introduction of computers within architecture in the early digital age. With the advent of the personal computer and the launch of the Internet in the 1990s, utopian ideals found in architectural discourse from the 1960s were revisited and adjusted to the specific characteristics of digital media. Taking the 1990s discourse on computation as a starting point, the contributions of this book grapple with the utopian promises associated with topics such as participation, self-organization, and non-standard architecture. By placing these topics in a historical framework, the book offers perspectives for the future role computation might play within architecture and society.

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CEZARA NICOLA

# Virtual Artistic Spaces

## Roy Ascott's "LPDT2," Cybernetics and Beyond

*This paper examines a seminal cybernetic artwork that integrates aesthetic and architectural principles together with digital technology. Essentially considered an artistic endeavour, Roy Ascott's "La Plissure du Texte 2" ("LPDT2") is a unique artefact not necessarily because of the popular platform that supports it, but because of the interaction between its avatars and the spaces that surround them. Exploring notions of "distributed authorship" and "moist media" introduced by Ascott, as well as concepts such as "cyberception" and "cyberscapes," this paper reflects on the relevance of virtual space in contemporary art. It contributes to a critical discourse on the role of material culture in digital artefacts, and the impact of virtual architecture design on contemporary artistic production.*

In 2010, British artist Roy Ascott filmed a virtual artwork on the online platform *Second Life*, and exhibited it at the INDAF new media art festival in South Korea.[1] Until today, no consensus has been reached regarding which category the platform that hosted the experiment should be officially included in. Its creator, the San Francisco-based company Linden Lab, stresses that *Second Life* is not a traditional computer game, as it does not have a clearly set aim.[2] Moreover, the website cannot be regarded primarily as a social endeavour, as it displays no explicitly social objective.

1    Henrietta Knight, "Roy Ascott @ INDAF LPDT2/Syncretica," Quorum, last modified September 22, 2010. https://i-dat.org/roy-ascott-indaf-lpdt2syncretica/.

2    Kristin Kalning, "If Second Life Isn't a Game, What Is It?," NBC News, last modified March 12, 2007. https://www.nbcnews.com/id/wbna17538999#.VPslGuFMXuM.

The only certain discernible aim is the idea of a user-created, community-driven experience.[3] However, Ascott's work goes beyond regarding the multi-user virtual world as a sum of individual designs achieved through a creative tool set, underlining its impressive artistic, communicational and architectural potential. The present analysis attempts to map the early significance of virtual architectures in the artistic realm, employing the British artist's work "La Plissure du Texte 2" / "LPDT2" as a case study. From textual structure to digital environment, the paper will tackle the interplay of aesthetic and cybernetic principles and consider the potential of AI-driven mechanisms and organic reactions within the case study. As crucial elements in virtual architectural design, the first section will assess both the aesthetic construction and scientific principles that enable the video performance. In the case of "LPDT2," it is clear that its impact on society and culture does not concern the visual realm exclusively, but reaches into the world of cognition as well. It is not so much a graphic oeuvre as a demonstration of the potential of cybernetic architecture. Since the system that makes up *Second Life* is capable of adapting to stimuli from the digital, as well as organic, realm, it presents a unique possibility for users: they can experience an out-of-body event while connecting to others through remote cognitive processes. Thus, the latter sections of the paper will investigate the cybernetic and cognitive factors informing Ascott's work, as well as the possibility that virtual artistic spaces are bolstering what Ascott terms "behaviourist" features of art.

## "La Plissure du Texte 2": genealogy and construction

"La Plissure du Texte" or "LPDT2" represents the *Second Life* embodiment of Roy Ascott's media artwork "La Plissure du Texte / The Pleating of the Text: A Planetary Fairytale," originally

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3    Philip Rosedale, "The Origin of Second Life and its Relation to Real Life," Iinovate (2006), video, 6 min, last modified November 22, 2006. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0t1XR-LrgyM.

Fig. 1. Roy Ascott, Selavy Oh, MosMax Hax, Alpha Auer, Frigg Ragu and INDAF, "LPDT2" overlapping of text, digital photograph, n. d. Source: https://www.flickr.com/photos/alpha_auer/4948236550/. Elif Ayiter. CC BY-NC-ND 2.0 (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/2.0/). Accessed October 13, 2022

created in 1983. The complete title of the initial project referenced Roland Barthes' book *Le plaisir du texte* (1973), which examines authorship, semantics and the role of reader interaction. The 20th-century version of the work featured digital text only and aimed to emphasize the emergence of "distributed authorship."[4] In 1983, the text was generated by human storytellers located in different parts of the world, whereas in the new version of the work, autonomous avatars modified the "literary landscape" by "acting as communication nodes between the narrators of this new version of the tale."[5] A text generator was also used to create dialogues that extracted different quotes from classical literature. The structure of the generator allowed the overlapping of text from different sources, including text messages sent live by

4    Elif Ayiter, Stefan Glasauer and Max Moswitzer, "LPDT2 La Plissure du Texte 2," in Digital Media and Technologies for Virtual Artistic Spaces, ed. Dew Harrison (Hershey/PA: IGI Global, 2013), 75.

5    Ibid., 77.

the audience (fig. 1).[6] This type of sampling was both random and intended, mirroring spontaneous interaction and communication between individuals in the organic realm. As a synaesthetic image, it points to a process of artistic production that occurs beyond temporal and spatial boundaries, or even organic ones. It therefore illustrates Barthes' conviction about the disappearance of the authorial voice in modern works: "The absence of the Author… is not only a historical fact or an act of writing: it utterly transforms the modern text… Time, first of all, is no longer the same. …the Author is supposed to feed the book – that is, he pre-exists it, thinks, suffers, lives for it; …Quite the contrary, the modern writer (scriptor) is born simultaneously with his text; he is in no way supplied with a being which precedes or transcends his writing, he is in no way the subject of which his book is the predicate; there is no other time than that of the utterance, and every text is eternally written here and now."[7]

Ascott's work fits the description of Barthes' modern artefact and its "scriptor" as it was created in real time, through the participation of the aforementioned avatars and the texts typed by different users directly online. Interaction (in the case of both of Ascott's works), inspired by the notion of authorial dismissal, thus appears to be the most important aspect of his artistic practice.

Interestingly enough, Barthes advocated the blunt disappearance of the author in the interpretation of literary artefacts in the 1960s, a decade when new modes of artistic production were also challenging traditional convictions about art. This period of time marked the emergence of crucial art movements such as Conceptual Art, Minimalism, Pop Art, Psychedelic and Op Art on a global scale. A recurrent feature there was that the naturalization of process-based art practices based on thorough documentation led to a reduced emphasis placed on the figure of the author.[8]

6    Roy Ascott, Selavy Oh, MosMax Hax, Alpha Auer, Frigg Ragu and INDAF, "LPDT2 windlight 02," Flickr (2010), video still. Accessed July 27, 2020. https://farm5.static.flickr.com/4144/4948236550_2ed6b53b86_z.jpg.

7    Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author," in Image-Music-Text, trans. Stephen Heath (New York/NY: Hill and Wang, 1977), 145.

8    Christian Berger and Jessica Santone, "Documentation as Art Practice in the 1960s," Taylor & Francis Online 32, no. 3–4 (2016): 201.

Perhaps not coincidentally, the same time period is regarded as a bridge for a decisive transfer of cybernetic principles from the scientific realm to the art world.[9] Similar to the rejection of the author's identity when critiquing a literary text, cybernetic art highlighted the fact that not just machines but organic entities too might be subject to cybernetic rules.[10] The idea of "model building" continued to allude to a creator and a product, but the cybernetic matrix ensured that the artefact did not have to be "complete" anymore. The concept of *feedback* and *feedback loops* that can potentially change the meaning of an artistic product through the interaction between artist, spectator and artwork appears to echo critical theory on the dismissal of authorial intent, such as Barthes' 1967 essay "The Death of the Author." Ascott's early nod to Barthes' text in his 1983 work might thus highlight a certain point of emergence for cybernetic artefacts in the 20th century. At the same time, it underlines intersections with social and artistic theory that allowed it to further develop into what the artist termed the "distributed authorship" of artworks.[11]

A clear offspring of the concept of the "disappearance of the author" as proposed by Barthes, the notion of "distributed authorship" hints at the dismissal of authorial intention in the sense that it is open to intervention from a variety of content creators who are, at the same time, inhabiting spectator roles. Nevertheless, it moves beyond the temporal dimension suggested by the French writer by featuring digital space that allows remote authoring. Beyond a chronology of experiential accumulation which results in the creation of artefacts informed by the author's personal background, virtual, digital space enables not only multiple perspectives on artistic practice and production, but also adds to the geographical specificity of the communicational act. The integrative architecture of *Second Life* is visually represented through

9   Roy Ascott, "The Construction of Change," in The New Media Reader, ed. Noah Wardrip-Fruin and Nick Montfort (Cambridge/MA: The MIT Press, 2003), 130.

10   Michael J. Apter, "Cybernetics and Art," Leonardo 2, no. 3 (July 1969): 257.

11   Roy Ascott, "Is There Love in the Telematic Embrace?," Art Journal 49, no. 3 (August 2014): 242.

the reshaping of traditional communicational settings. The spontaneous emergence of avatars and the possibility of transferring language modelling tools designed outside the framework of the "game" into the virtual world is perhaps similar to "real world" interactions with persons outside our circle of familiarity.[12] We act accordingly in order to integrate new acquaintances and situations into our cycle of experience.

Similarly, *Second Life* functions by continually taking in informational, linguistic and visual input concerning avatars and their environment, then allowing users to build over what already exists in this universe. Creative Industries Professor Axel Bruns refers to this type of accumulation of resources as "distributed creativity," positing that "such community efforts at collaborative content creation form part of the wider phenomenon of audiences becoming more visibly and more thoroughly active in creating and sharing their own content than ever before."[13] Because contributors are both content developers and content testers, Bruns suggests that they be called "produsers," a hybrid position which would also account for an emerging type of societal organization in the 21st century, namely "produsage." In such communities, development is marked by collaborative efforts which expand technological knowledge through practices of remixing and re-writing.[14]

If "distributed authorship" and creativity as a means of artefact construction may comprise both temporal and spatial re-writing, could they also point to a particular model of sensory experience governed by behavioural rules and the transition of behavioural autonomy from "produsers" to the product under use? And if so, could this mean that "LPDT2" as an early artefact of this type possesses certain features characteristic of artificial intelligence, which are in fact mediated by digital technology and virtual reality? The following section will focus on the cybernetic characteristics in Ascott's work, testing the premise that it may represent

12   Rosedale, "The Origin of Second Life."

13   Axel Bruns, "Distributed Creativity: Filesharing and Produsage," in Mashup Cultures, ed.

Stefan Sonvilla-Weiss (Vienna: Springer, 2010), 25.

14   Ibid., 26.

an early conceptualization of autonomous reasoning processes through the incorporation of several scientific principles.

## Autonomous action and cybernetic features in "LPDT2"

One of the basic concepts of cybernetics is information or communication theory, provided there is an agent attempting to convey a certain message to a given receptor. Nonetheless, the message does not necessarily have to be textual. On the contrary, it can be conveyed through other media, sound and image being but a few examples here. In the case of *Second Life* and, more particularly, "LPDT2," the information conveyed is multi-layered, from the visual construction of the space inhabited by the avatars to their appearance and the dialogues that take place between them, often prompted by sampled dialogue. The notion of information as *message*, understood as text in its most traditional, semantic sense, is present in the experiment through sampling from canonical literary works. However, the virtual reality mediated by *Second Life* feeds the spectator visual cues, displacing the aforementioned textual references. Paradoxically, most of the actual lettering and text used in Ascott's filmed work appears as heavy, large-dimensioned blocks resembling the concrete used in architectural constructions[15] (fig. 2). The words form labyrinth-like bright spaces against dark backgrounds, a nod to the act of communication which at the same time removes authors' quotes from their temporal context. Here, the message involved in the communicational act becomes the frame which is literally holding the agents of communication together. In a sense, it *controls* interaction by setting out paths and trajectories for the subjects or avatars to take and encounter each other.

As more and more information is released onto the platform, the physical environment of the avatars enlarges, allowing them

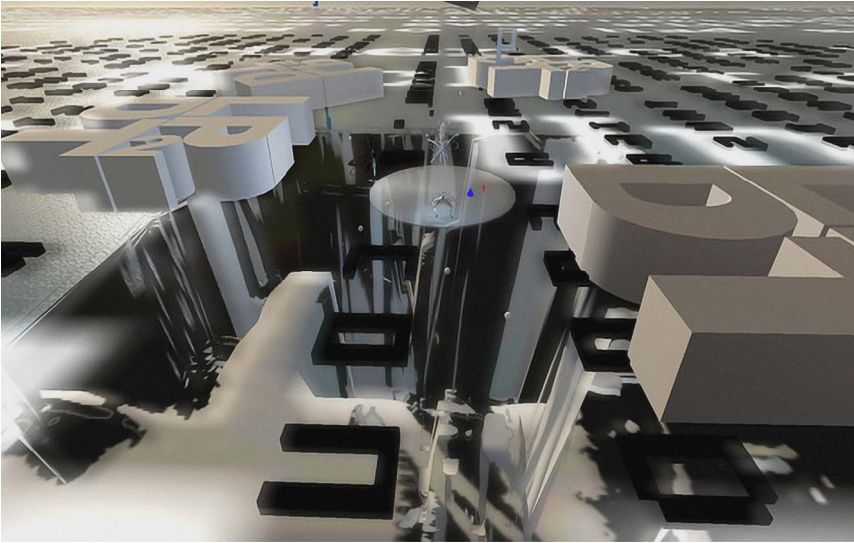15   Ascott, Oh, Hax, Auer, Ragu and INDAF,
"LPDT2 windlight 02."

Fig. 2. Ascott, Selavy Oh, MosMax Hax, Alpha Auer, Frigg Ragu and INDAF, "LPDT2" text blocks, digital photograph, n.d. Source: https://www.flickr.com/photos/alpha_auer/4948449256/. Elif Ayiter. CC BY-NC-ND 2.0 (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/2.0/). Accessed October 13, 2022

to perform more varied actions there.[16] They watch the setting changing around them, stroll through the dynamic architectural elements, have philosophical discussions prompted by surrounding text blocks and even engage in romantic behaviour. As virtual space opens up before them in the form of text blocks, they respond accordingly to this communicational act by accessing new paths.[17] At its core, such actions might be regarded as a conscious response to interaction stemming from communicational sources and, therefore, as *feedback* on the part of the responding entities. As text continues to be generated and unfolds in the virtual environment, it creates an expectation of response and movement on the part of the subjects inhabiting the world. Thus, the action may be regarded as exercising control over the communication performed there.

16   Renato P. Dos Santos, "Second Life: game, simulator, or serious game?," Acta Scientiae 16, no. 1 (January 2014): 74.

17   Roy Ascott et al., "LPDT2," vimeo (2011), video, 12 min. Accessed October 7, 2020. https://vimeo.com/14518397.

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The functioning of "LPDT2" as a cybernetic artistic artefact ensures that it is also relevant in the field of communication through the successful transmission of messages between the users of the virtual reality platform. Still, how can one advocate the purposeful transmission of information from a source to a receiver when faced with informational impulses which seem random and computer-generated? Research psychologist Michael J. Apter claims that such strategies favoured by contemporary artists who employ visual and textual randomization serve to strengthen the "inverse relationship between probability and the amount of information: the less probable an event, the more the information when it occurs. …In general, the more random and therefore unpredictable a sequence of symbols constituting a longer message is, the more the information in the message."[18] Researcher Stephen Jones refers to such experiments as "systems in conversation," remarking upon the wide spectrum of realms where cybernetic systems have long been functioning, despite their traditional association with 20th-century technological progress: "Cybernetics… was developed by [Norbert] Wiener out of the wartime need to dynamically point anti-aircraft guns so they would be capable of hitting an enemy aircraft while it was traversing the sky, given that the shell would take time to get up to the aircraft. …But cybernetics has a much deeper past than these dark arts. …and in a more palpable way it drives human evolution, particular in its social forms through one utterly important process: that of conversation, which, itself, will have come about through signalling processes."[19]

In other words, cybernetics describes adaptive systems from organic evolution and corporeal entities to the more contemporary fields of virtual reality and artificial intelligence. What is common to all of them is the notion of *communication*: the basis on which development occurs and the ability to adapt improves.

18   Michael J. Apter, "Cybernetics and Art," Leonardo 2, no. 3 (July 1969): 258.

19   Stephen Jones, "Cybernetics in Society and Art," in Proceedings of the 19th International Symposium of Electronic Art, ed. K. Cleland, L. Fisher and R. Harley (Sydney: ISEA International, 2013), 2.

As far as "LPDT2" is concerned, the graphic union of text and architecture should not be regarded as random, despite the casualness of the "in-world" avatar encounters. As architectural cues transcend the virtual realm, the art object is fundamentally deconstructed, revealing not the end product but the ongoing process of artistic production and reception. The impact of this newly found focus may inform the construction of organic societies as it allows for a substantial degree of experimentation with technologies employed on a large scale and in very diverse fields without the fear of failing at purposeful communication.

The dynamics of networks before virtual reality and artificial intelligence assumed that "while the system can discover new patterns of input behaviour that seem to indicate what actions should be taken, it is unable to discover new kinds of actions which can be taken – that is, it can only discover new instances of information, not new types of information. It's not autonomous, not alive."[20] While *Second Life* boasts an interface that is nowadays superseded by more advanced graphics, it nonetheless features a decent amount of autonomous activity within the virtual world. This applies especially with regard to avatars and avatar features which can be individually designed and introduced onto the platform by users. As a result of the arbitrary responses that can be triggered by the introduction of such figures and features, *Second Life* might be regarded as resembling the structure of modern AI systems. This would translate into the fact that it is capable of functioning by putting together pieces of information extracted from multiple sources, such as user-generated text, architectural elements and random text sequences, while adequately responding to new challenges.

Looking at the texture of the universe imagined on the *Second Life* platform, the next section of this paper will map out possible functions of the entities inhabiting this experiment, as well as the emergence of an adaptive type of art based on technological

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20  Ben Goertzel and Stephan Vladimir Bugaj, "The Internet Supermind and Beyond," Goertzel.org, July 2000. Accessed October 7, 2020. https://goertzel.org/benzine/AIManifesto.htm.

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progress. Moreover, the issue of artefact perception will be broached, with a focus on the development of renewed ways of grasping informational landscapes.

## The virtual artistic space:
## Behaviourist Art and a brief nod to utopia

In terms of the potential social significance of a work such as "LPDT2," one could wonder to what end virtual reality and progressive aspects feature in the work—are they displayed as reminders of technological development at the beginning of the 21st century? Do they feature an urge to escapism and are therefore imbued with utopian hues? Or rather, were they preferred for the purpose of signalling a possible dystopian future brought about by too-rapid changes in society and science? Beyond a discussion of the instrumental aspects of the medium used in Ascott's experiment, this paper contributes to the hypothesis that virtual reality enhances a cybernetic discourse in art by allowing for a metaphysical, utopian existence of spectators as users. Here, the notion of "utopia" is employed in both a social as well as a spatial sense. It should be viewed in light of the theory concerning the transformative, emancipative potential of "free" information circulating on the internet and regulating relations between individuals in a positive manner.[21]

In order to be able to benefit from the potential of free ranging information in the virtual realm, however, users need to possess a renewed sense of literacy which allows them to decipher information from organic as well as technological environments. Cyberception essentially requires the adaptation of organic cognition so as to be able to take in and adequately make sense of various information landscapes.[22] Theoretical and artistic accounts before the turn of the 21st century indicated the necessity of surpassing mediating notions of representation and

21  Joshua Cowles, "The Internet as Utopia: Reality, Virtuality, and Politics," Oshkosh Scholar IV (November 2009): 81.

22  Douglas Rushkoff, Cyberia: Life in the Trenches of Hyperspace (New York/NY: Harper Collins, 1994), 3–4.

visuality in the computerized quest to engage one's audience or receptors directly.[23] With the advent of the 21st century, however, a distinct return to organic experience could be observed, especially within the field of new media art, as collective experience arises from the realization that perception may be achieved even without employing one's sensorial system.[24] As such, cyberception represents the ability to adapt to multiple cybernetic settings, both physical and virtual. Planetary Collegium researcher Živa Ljubec assigns this adaptive capacity in particular to modern artists, stating that they represent, therefore, an essential factor in technological development. She further claims that "connectivity, immersion, interaction, transformation and emergence in the process of mutation of cyberceptive organs make the intermediary intellectual instruments and modes of representation obsolete."[25] She thus appears to emphasize a certain utopian quality in artworks created nowadays, namely that of entertaining a perpetual flux of meaning beyond issues of visuality and representation. This hypothesis follows a rhetoric of cyberspace that highlights the idea that "utopia is attached to technologies that have not yet exhausted their potential," underlining once again the adaptive potential of works created with computerized means:[26] "If the cybernetic spirit constitutes the predominant attitude of the modern era, the computer is the supreme tool that its technology has produced. Used in conjunction with synthetic materials it can be expected to open up paths of radical change and invention in art. …The interaction of man and computer in some creative endeavor, involving the heightening of imaginative thought, is to be expected."[27]

23  Živa Ljubec, "Growing Cyberceptive Organs within Electronic Environments," in EVA '15: Proceedings of the Conference on Electronic Visualisation and the Arts (Swindon: BCS Learning & Development, 2015), 132.

24  Peter Weibel, "The Intelligent Image: Neurocinema or Quantum Cinema?" in Future Cinema: The Cinematic Imaginary After Cinema, eds. Jeffrey Shaw and Peter Weibel (London: MIT Press, 2003), 599.

25  Ljubec, "Growing Cyberceptive Organs within Electronic Environments," 133.

26  Cowles, "The Internet as Utopia: Reality, Virtuality, and Politics," 82.

27  Roy Ascott, "Behaviourist Art and the Cybernetic Vision," in Multimedia: From Wagner to Virtual Reality, ed. Randall Packer and Ken Jordan (New York/NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 2001), 103.

In his 1966/67 essay on the emergence of what he termed "Behaviourist Art," Ascott discusses the economic and social effects of automatized systems in modern society and a possible transformation of the human self as a result. He lists factors such as instant communication, environmental technology and the renewed human/computer relationship as markers of a "cyber-nated society" and the "perfectibility of systems."[28] This striving for improvement points to utopian aspects through its optimism about the smooth rapport between organic and non-organic bodies. Faced with the need to define the role of the artist in this newly acquired ideological and societal environment, the British artist suggests the alignment of artistic products with the modern spirit of process-based advancement: "Behaviourist Art constitutes a retroactive process of human involvement, in which the artefact functions as both matrix and catalyst. As matrix, it is the substance between two sets of behaviours; it neither exists for itself nor by itself. As a catalyst, it triggers changes in the spectator's total behaviour."[29] The possibility that Behaviourist Art is regulated by cybernetic principles seems valid in Ascott's opinion, as it appears to possess qualities such as the transmission of information represented by the artist's creative action, and adapts to the different environments it is exhibited in and to various audience responses. In order, however, for the art realm to accommodate modern notions stemming from science and technology, its new coding has to be deciphered by a literate audience. Behaviourist Art as proposed by Ascott arrived with a set of associated concepts which mediated the public's reception of the accompanying artworks. Among them, the notions of "cyberception," "moistmedia" and "cyberscapes" have been central to the comprehension of the digital imaginary in contemporary art. In the remainder of this section, the latter concepts will be examined as crucial elements in the construction and reception of cybernetic artworks.

Perhaps a more common term nowadays relating to the affluence of new media art in specialized galleries, on the market and in

28  Ibid., 100–101.                    29  Ibid., 102.

individual homes is represented by "multimedia" and "multimediality." These words point to the interconnection of a variety of means of expression—from text to graphics and sound—in a given artefact. At the turn of the 21st century, however, Ascott had proposed a similar term in order to describe the confluence of numerous media types in the creation of art works, namely "moistmedia." His theorization purposefully distanced itself from the more established "digital media" and integrated aspects of organic and computational existence: "Between the dry world of virtuality and the wet world of biology lies a moist domain, a new interspace of potentiality and promise. …Moistmedia (comprising bits, atoms, neurons, and genes) will constitute the substrate of the art of our new century, a transformative art concerned with the construction of a fluid reality. This will mean the spread of intelligence to every part of the built environment coupled with recognition of the intelligence that lies within every part of the living planet."[30]

Moistmedia proved able to integrate elements pertaining to virtuality, digital architecture, corporeality and the organic environment in a way that surpassed mere simulations. In the particular case of Ascott's "LPDT2," the positioning of the performance within the digital environment of the platform *Second Life* does not necessarily signal a parting with what could be termed corporeal reality, due to its rootedness in textual sources pertaining to agents in the physical realm. The use of avatars and "textual architecture" at this point might serve simply to tackle potential future communication in the digital experiment without implying a mimicry of identities and spaces in the organic world[31] (fig. 3). In terms of physical presence, neither the avatars nor the text blocks acting as setting cancel the existence of organic bodies. Rather, they emphasize the act of communication unfolding beyond spatial and temporal boundaries.

30  Roy Ascott, "Edge-Life: technoetic structures and moist media," in Art, Technology, Consciousness: mind@large, ed. Roy Ascott (Bristol: Intellect, 2000), 1.

31  Roy Ascott, Selavy Oh, MosMax Hax, Alpha Auer, Frigg Ragu, INDAF, "LPDT2 avatars," Flickr (2010), video still. Accessed July 27, 2020. https://farm5.static.flickr.com/4088/4992957968_7d9e676da1_z.jpg.
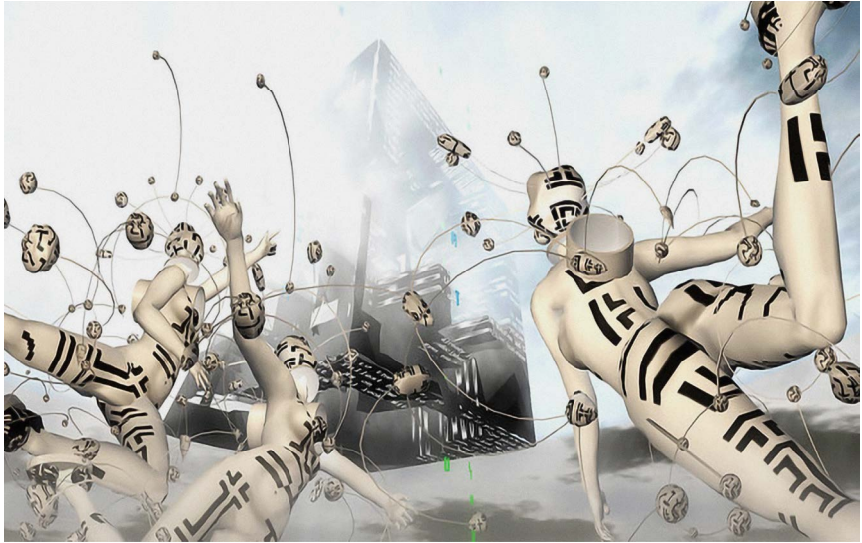
Fig. 3. Roy Ascott, Selavy Oh, MosMax Hax, Alpha Auer, Frigg Ragu and INDAF, "LPDT2 avatars," digital photograph, 2010. Source: https://www.flickr.com/photos/alpha_auer/4992957968/. Elif Ayiter. CC BY-NC-ND 2.0 (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/2.0/). Accessed October 13, 2022

This type of setting that flows beyond the organic into the digital has nevertheless been influencing perceptions of the physical world ever since its inception. What we now recognise as "cyberscapes" is the "representation of physical places on the Internet."[32] In "LPDT2," these spaces are spontaneously generated by users and render spatial information based on cues from the physical realm. The space portrayed in "LPDT2" is technologically mediated but nevertheless recognizably urban in that the arrangement of the text blocks resembles tall buildings and complex street structures. At the same time, these blocks seem to lay bare the intricacy of computer architecture, because the running text invokes programming models and input/output logic. To a certain extent, each element of "LPDT2" in *Second Life* signals distinctly on its own while creating a complex sensorial image that requires a particular set of skills to decipher.

32  Mark Graham and Matthew Zook, "Visualizing Global Cyberscapes: Mapping User- Generated Placemarks," Journal of Urban Technology 18, no. 1 (2011): 115.

## Conclusion

Over the course of seventeen years, the trajectory of *Second Life*—almost a cultural shorthand for virtual reality technology—and its ability to remain current in the face of rapid technological advances has been met with a certain degree of surprise. The answer to the question of how this platform maintains a stable number of almost one million users annually might lie in the fact that it exhibits mobility and authenticity in its allowing outside content creators to add to the spatial and temporal universe it proposes.[33] This strategy of enriching and expanding the world aligns itself with the process of "distributed authorship" suggested by Ascott at the beginning of the 21st century and which is ever-present in contemporary artworks that blend digital and more traditional media.

This paper favoured an inductive approach to the issue of virtual space in the art sphere. By looking at a fluid performance from an artist who is also one of the pioneers of cybernetic art and a theorist of process-based artistic production, my analysis identified scientific aspects employed in artworks that favour the use of new technologies and their potential to enable experimental and playful communication. Thus, this paper considered the concepts of message, control and feedback at the level of content creation and regulation as factors that create expectation on the part of the spectator. These factors can trigger spontaneous interaction between content contributors and artwork, creating cyberscapes and a hybrid state of art "produsers."

The individual functions of artefacts such as "LPDT2"—communicational, informational, consumerist, visual—come together in what may be regarded as a "metasystem transition," suggesting new ways of perceiving immediate reality through the development of cyberception as a new sensorial capacity. What is alluded to in works such as Ascott's is the engendering of alternative, living knowledge and the evolution of the art product into

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33  Dos Santos, "Second Life: game, simulator, or serious game?," 75.

a breathing organism capable of constructing spatial and tempo-
ral models through moistmedia, placing them in specific interac-
tive contexts and supporting a novel, hybrid existence.

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The critical concern of the book "Utopia
Computer" is the euphoria, expectation
and hope inspired by the introduction of
computers within architecture in the early
digital age. With the advent of the personal
computer and the launch of the Internet in the
1990s, utopian ideals found in architectural
discourse from the 1960s were revisited and
adjusted to the specific characteristics of
digital media. Taking the 1990s discourse
on computation as a starting point, the
contributions of this book grapple with the
utopian promises associated with topics such
as participation, self-organization, and non-
standard architecture. By placing these topics
in a historical framework, the book offers
perspectives for the future role computation
might play within architecture and society.