Worlds Within
Karel Dudesek/Van Gogh TV

Worlds Within is a multi-user domain. *Worlds Within* is a public electronic site distributed through a network. *Worlds Within* is a model for the future use of media in which interactive networks accommodate a collective form of expression. *Worlds Within* is a virtual space for real communication. In this three-dimensional world, human beings can talk with one another, get together, play music, read texts, create graphics and video sequences or organize events.

The Network

Worlds Within offers numerous worlds for urban living. Human beings meet one another — they speak or chat; they form or design; they play, draw or enjoy music; they trade and sell … It is the exchange, the dialogue, which imparts life, colors, sounds and resonance to these platforms — that is culture.

The network is on-line 24 hours a day. It offers individuals the possibility of specifying their own camera angle and position in the world; visitors can also interact at a selected site as well as with other visitors by means of available multimedia tools.

Worlds Within is an open system at which you can dock by means of computer modem. Access with a PC requires special Frontend Software for navigation and visualization. You can obtain Frontend Software through Van Gogh TV at .

Van Gogh TV — Worlds Within

Worlds Within is staged in digital networks, it appears on backroom video monitors and on the desktops of spacious office suites. Here, the anonymity of the information society is the point of departure and foundation for new social rituals, new forms of play and manifestations of life. Only as a result of long-term utilization will identical processes or even new ones unfold, like in the real world. *Worlds Within* is not a substitute for the real world, but rather a virtual parallel world.

Co-operation — Collaboration — Teleworking

Anyone can dock his/her digital structure to, or implement it in, *Worlds Within*. *Worlds Within* is a modular system that can be set up and modified step-by-step. Interested users can obtain information about conditions from VAN GOGH TV.

User forms, avatars, containers, textures, effect fields, individualized worlds and programs can be created. Functions in the world include informants, co-ordinators, service providers, adjutants, referees, district administrators, etc.

Design Specifications

You can create 3D forms with any 3D editor you choose [e.g. 3D Studio-Autodesk], but they must be created in 3D format. For user forms, the maximum number of polygons is 50. The standard size for textures is 128x128 pixels.

Worlds Within — The Game

by Julean A. Simon

Worlds Within is a reality game since it is linked to reality in which participants can throw anything, from bricks to hard disks, incredible distances, erect gigantic towers out of diskettes or waste paper, hop on one leg through the local supermarket or across a desert, teach amazing tricks to their pets, make kindling with a single karate chop or simply be the greatest, the slowest, the best, the hardest, the longest, the furthest or the fastest in their individual discipline — thus, they can go about their normal, everyday activities — with the virtual reality of a network game in which users showcase their personal achievements and can receive acknowledgment from or be challenged by others.

The virtual, three-dimensional space is a simply structured world which is organized like a "personal performance trade show" through which users navigate as small avatars. Performance-oriented players occupy so-called "claims", in which they document their capabilities as colorfully as they deem appropriate; other players who do not accept these claims or presume to be able to surpass them — perhaps because they seem totally implausible — can challenge them. Just like in real life, though, there is a third group of players which takes advantage of this situation, taking sides as adjutants, making bets, playing the referee or maybe just playing a prank, issuing rules, naming themselves as district administrators or simply observing the wheeling and dealing with quiet amusement.

Three categories of action can thus be distinguished:

Presence

The presence of a player comes about here through the representation of a particular capability which functions as a pars pro toto of himself/herself as a person. The participant presents something that he is or can do, thereby selecting or inventing a discipline which he regards as his individual strength or outstanding quality, which best reflects his nature and with which he would also like to be identified.

There are various forms of self-representation of a player in his "claim", which are supported by corresponding tools. The typical form of expression is certainly a multi-media documentation which conveys the representative capability of a player by means of descriptive text supported by sketches and scanned photos in the style of an illustrated story in a tabloid newspaper. For example, an interview with a neighbor can be used to attest to a player’s credibility. Another option would be for a player to set up an intricate system of rules and to elaborate his capabilities in a quasi-scientific form, accompanied by exact measurements, charts and diagrams which reflect this. Here, only the deposition of an expert, certified by a notary public and appended to his documentation, might possibly do justice to the player’s claim to credibility. But there can also be co-operative projects which raise a certain claim as a way to seek potential collaborators. Finally, there is the possibility of interactive claims whereby proof is provided in support of a capability within the claim. For example, someone could assert in his claim that he knows everything about a certain subject; anyone visiting this claim can challenge him to undergo a type of quiz to test this.

It should be clear that the assertion of a capability exists not only in the virtuality of the game environment, but also finds expression in real events which can be linked in extremely diverse ways with their representation in a claim.

Competition

The dynamic nature of the game emerges from the assertion raised in the self-representation of a participant — namely, to be something special in some particular respect — in that there is always someone who finds it interesting, sees it as calling for a comment or takes it as a challenge. The game environment must see to it that these diverse attitudes and reactions of the community are channeled appropriately and, in the same way as the claims to which they refer, are publicly presented in the environment and a context is established for their adjudication.

This principle of competition is meant to assure that the presence established by participants through their claims does not lead to an indifferent co-existence, as if all those present had merely exchanged business cards with one another, but rather constantly gives rise to new situations.

The typical case is that other participants either acknowledge or dispute the title asserted by a player in his claim. Along with the obvious next step — namely, putting forth a counterclaim of an even greater capability — other means are conceivable which can be applied to test the credibility of the holder of a claim, to cast doubt upon it or to force the claimant to justify, prove and assure his claim.

Interaction

Besides the interactions directly supported by the interface — such as navigating through the world, opening and viewing content pages as well as using available tools to create new content pages, carrying out a conference with other players and a few other possible activities — the game enables participants, in their interaction with the community, to negotiate and/or modify the fundamental principles and rules of the game. Although there are a few basic rules arising from capacity and performance restraints [such as the number of potential claims in a world], activities in the game world and participation in the game essentially proceed according to conventions which can be freely negotiated, set up and continually revised in interactions among users. Here, it should be kept in mind that these may possibly determine not only individual aspects and situations of the game but its general dynamics as well.

There are rules on different levels: a claimant more or less independently draws up the set of rules under which he puts forward his capability and under which a challenger would have to outdo him. Nevertheless, in the case of a dispute, a decision voted by the community can be implemented. The simplest form to establish rules is to display them on a content page [for example, in the player’s claim]. Other players can comment on them by linking an annotation to this content page. Rules can also be defined by several players in a conference and made public in a catalogue named "Rule-Book"; should these become controversial, they would be put to a vote. Thus, to the extent necessary, final authority to determine which rules apply to whom and where within the world rests with the community. On the other hand, the community might deem it sensible to structure itself such that roles are established and assigned to individual players. In addition, there are "Wizards" mediating between the community and the system operator, between the play level and the technical level. Their function, as well as that of the community, is to influence the general dynamics of the game in such a way that the technical architecture is not overtaxed while opportunities for display and development corresponding to the playing styles of a wide variety participants are made available.

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