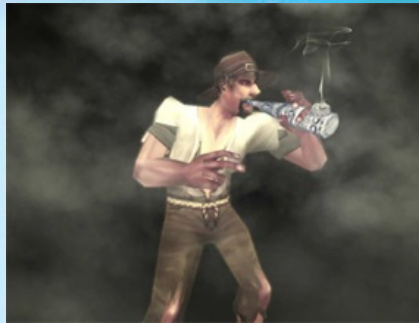


Networked_Performance

reBlog: Interview with Eddo Stern by Ceci Moss

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[Image: Still from "Amongst Fables and Men" Tonight artist [Eddo Stern](#) will host "QQ More", a screening he curated of offbeat fan-made machinima dealing with real-life issues such as drugs, pornography, and death at Brooklyn's [Light Industry](#). The show begins at 8pm and will be followed by a discussion between Stern and [Alexander Galloway](#). I conducted an email interview with Stern about his interest in the phenomenon and its relevance to his own art practice. - Ceci Moss



In gaming parlance, what does "QQ More" mean? How does this relate to the concept behind your program "QQ More"?

QQ is an emoticon that means crying or sobbing - think two big round eyes with lil' tears. The program contains a few real tearjerkers hence the title "QQ More."

When and how did you start working on "QQ More"?

I've spent quite a few too many hours watching fan made machinima from MMOs on fan sites, most of which I would call "vanity videos" -- short films of players' tributes to -- themselves, set to emotionally charged music. Then one day I stumbled on a video called *Rest in Peace Ignoramus* -- a Norwegian World of Warcraft video made by a few guild members to commemorate a fellow guildmate's death -- the video's intended audience appears to be Ignoramus's family and his online friends. The video is uncomfortably intimate, and the production is very amateurish - it runs way too long, has terrible camera control, sappy music and no editing whatsoever but it still will bring you to tears. (Oh pathos, I cannot resist thee!)

After unearthing *Rest in Peace Ignoramus* and watching the infamous video by Serenity Now about the memorial massacre, I started a more systematic search through fan-made WoW videos and found a few other oddballs -- the selection for *QQ More* represents some of my finds that could be appreciated by gamer and non-gamer audiences alike. Last year, I compiled a shorter version of the screening for the Australian Machinima Film Festival in Melbourne, and since have added a few finds.

What do you see behind the development of this "real-world" genre of machinima? Do you feel like this is a phenomenon specific to gaming? For example, to my knowledge, this narrative genre doesn't exist in home video culture. Why would users gravitate toward this sort of video in the world of gaming?

The emotional attachment that playing MMOs for extensive durations forces a melding of the player with their playe character that essentially collapses the premise of roleplaying. That is to say, the hardcore players are no longer taking part in an act of "roleplaying" but are essentially playing as themselves in an alternate world as the relationships with real other human beings bring out...well...real emotions. In a single player game, say when a player character is disrespected, or in turn revered by an automaton NPC - the emotional weight of the encounter is emotionally inconsequential (unless it affects game progress in which case we are getting into another issue altogether...). In an MMO when real humans do the disrespecting -- there are emotional consequences for the players. All of this is old news in multiplayer virtual worlds -- think of the emotional attachment of players in text-based MOCs as narrated by Julian Dibble's wonderful book *My Tiny Life*.

What I find interesting about the machinima that reflects these more intimate and intense emotions is that they are made public outside of

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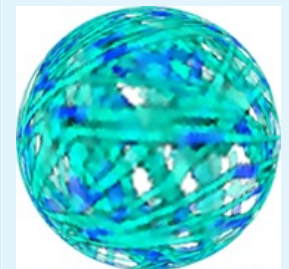
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minimize the creative elements to that they are these pastiche elements of the game's immediate diegesis – yet thanks to the internet and MMOs operating as a kind of feedback loop, do find their way back into the game world. Especially true in the context of World Of Warcraft which has gone mainstream or "post-geek" and represents a new type of fantasy based world in comparison with earlier MMOs such as *Ultima Online*, *Everquest*, or *Dark Age of Camelot* – which represented cordoned off sub cultural islands with very little dialogue with main stream culture.

Many of these videos represent elements of gamer culture that are still "officially" kept out of the game world – sex, drugs, real violence, death, etc. – but fan-based machinima, and forums postings become the spaces where these aspects of the gaming culture find an outlet, their expression in-game is repressed by the game companies censorship - they offer a glimpse into the subculture of the subculture.

RE: The idea of "vanity videos" or narcissistic self documentation that I mentioned earlier – I think there do exist analogous practices outside of gaming, in mainstream culture and in subcultures – look at surfing and skateboarding videos that show off physical feats, vanity videos made by soldiers, and the now ubiquitous form of the music video – the band recording and then editing itself performing.

Your work similarly channels the slippery divide between fantasy and reality proposed by games like World of Warcraft. (For example, [Tekken Torture Tournament, 2001](#)) Can you comment on the connection between the quandaries explored in your own art practice and the "real-world" genre of machinima?

I am interested in all aspects of fantasy really, but I am specifically drawn to the moments and contexts where fantasy collapses unto itself unto "realism" in the various senses of that word, whether this uses the body as a site for this collapse, the sudden shock when humor turns to tragedy, fear, anxiety, or historical specificity.

RE: "QQ More" - I like these particular machinima because they represent this same sort of collapse of a seemingly banal and artificial fantasy world like World of Warcraft into something that, at least for me, succeeds in evoking an emotional response where 99% of fan-made machinima and the "narrative backstory" and "lore" of MMOs fail.

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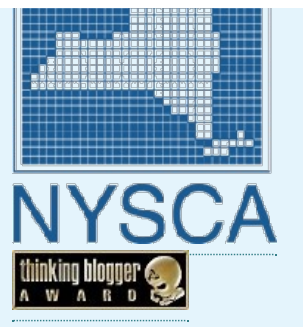
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