

# FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT WITHIN GAMESPACE

Anne-Marie Schleiner

**SYNOPSIS:** As action game players search, navigate, and explore, the parameters of the game world solidify from a host of possibilities. Solitary movement within gamespace passes from the illusionary, through the virtual, to the pre-designed constraints of the actual, (within the bounds of made worlds). Escapist collaborative play loosens those ties binding the player to what is considered the Real. The artist may then transpose such ludic comportments to a variety of situations, game architectures and live city fluxes. Space and flows become playable.

**START MISSION:** I trace a line following the player. The player moves in circles exploring the game world in all directions from a temporary start point.

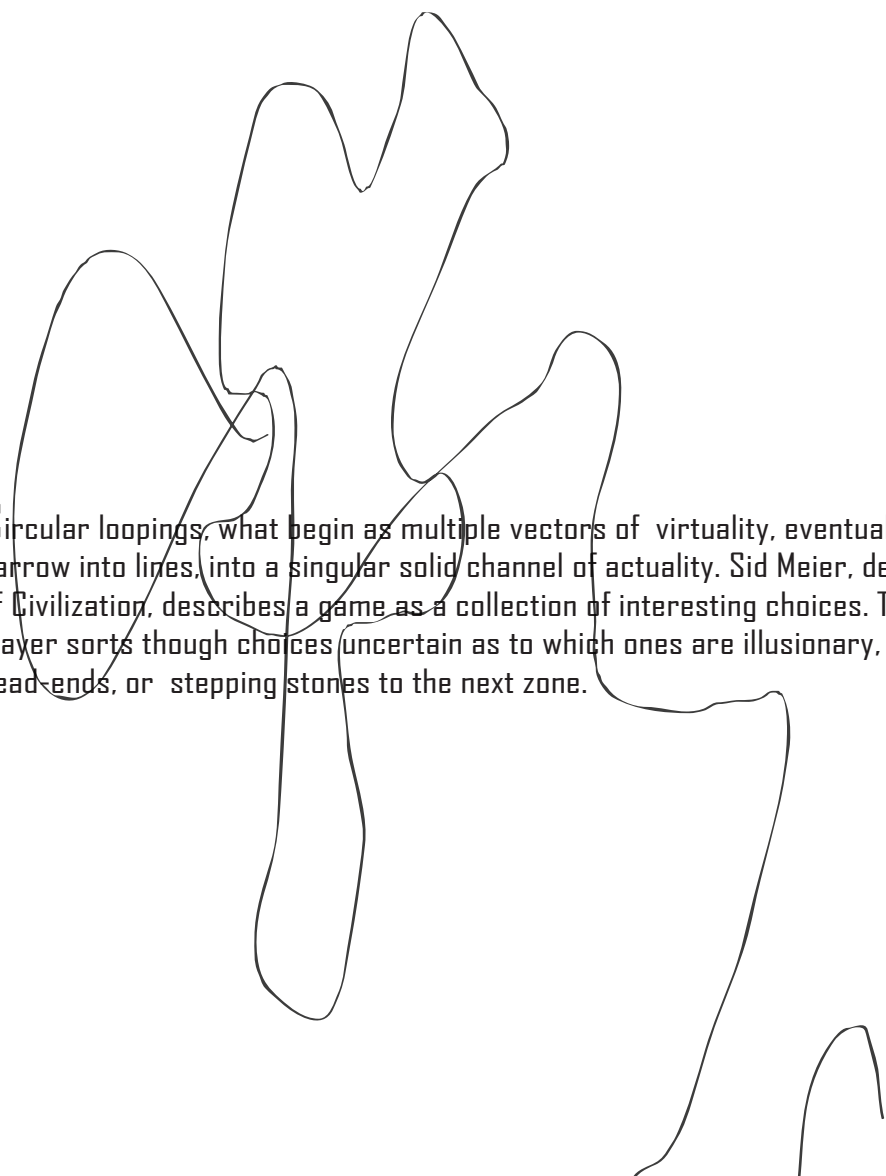


**ZONE B:** Finally an opening and breaking into into the next zone. The player maps a zone of possibility once again, compelled to follow the flow of abandoned canals, lured by glimpses of distant cityscapes



Movement branches out from another node. It's trajectory responds to the limits imposed by walls and edges, insurmountable rusty piles of 21st century junk. Movement for the single player is running, jumping, exploration, bumping into walls and obstacles, momentary seduction by a vista, the collection of a weapons and health, and intermittent adreneline boosts of conflict.

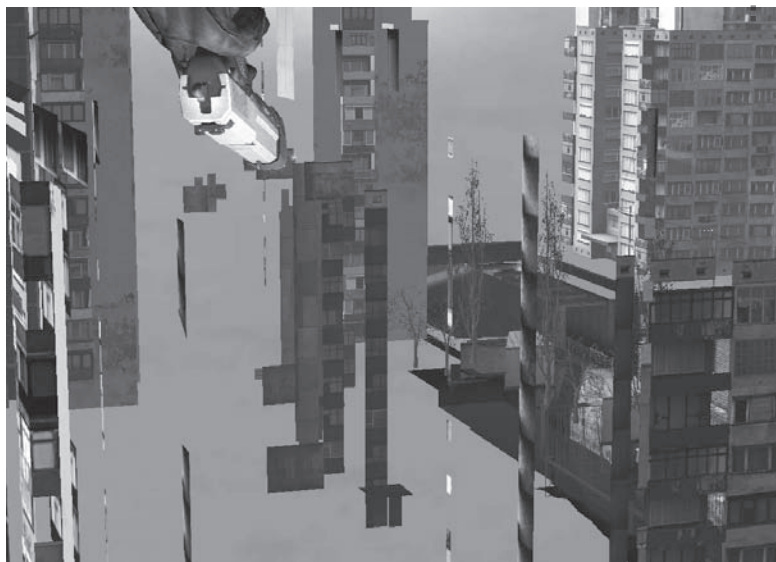
Action is searching, navigation, exploration, movement. The goal is discovery of this segment of the path itself. The player only vaguely remembers the overarching aim of the game narrative..



Circular loopings, what begin as multiple vectors of virtuality, eventually narrow into lines, into a singular solid channel of actuality. Sid Meier, designer of Civilization, describes a game as a collection of interesting choices. The player sorts through choices uncertain as to which ones are illusionary, dead-ends, or stepping stones to the next zone.

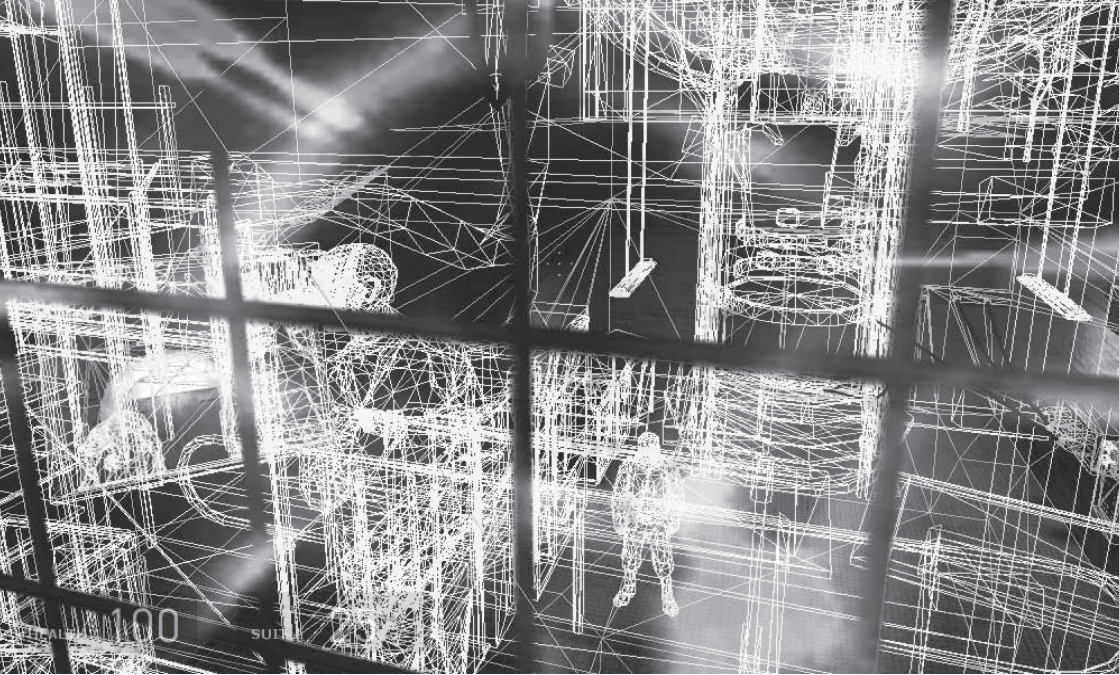
Meanwhile, the game architecture vibrates in a state of uncertainty. Giorgio Agamben's halo of possibility displaces the contours of the world along the edges. The halo zone is where possibility and reality, potentiality and actuality are indistinguishable.

GAME ARCHITECTURE: This vibrating limit, this threshold (Grenze) is the point of contact with Kant's Outside—the player cannot determine exactly where the world dissolves into the void



These worlds created by artifice are not limitless spaces of freedom.





Players and artists are “‘Being-free thrown’ into a set of finite possibilities.”

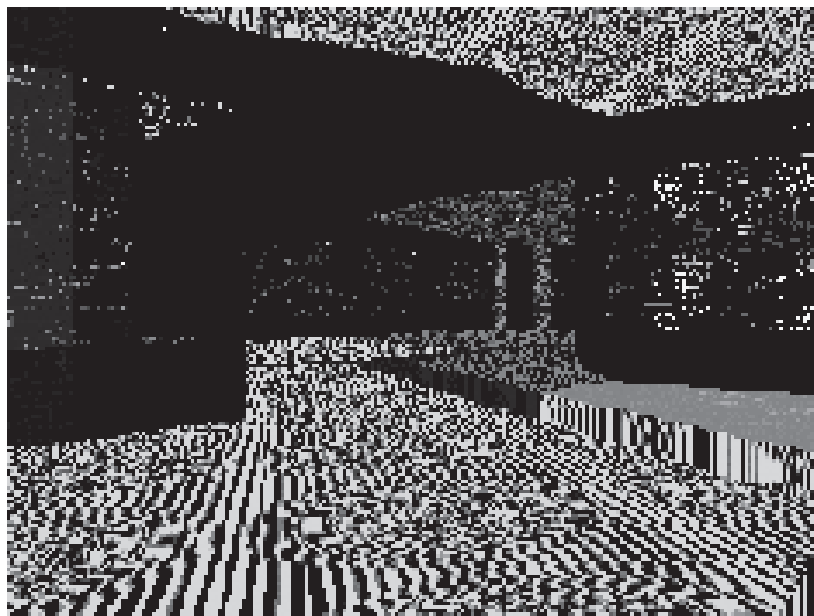
\_\_Dana Villa, *The Fate of the Political: Arendt and Heidigger*, Princeton University Press, 1996 Exploratory play is the freedom of disclosedness, an open comportment towards the game world. The will supercedes this freedom in everyday life. Mundane practicalities, errands, incrementation of MMO (Massively Multiplayer Online) game stats, and material demands have a tendency to circumvent and enclose.

LEVEL DESIGN: The givenness of the game world starts to solidify after the player bumps into enough walls. The hand of the overlord architect, of the level designer, becomes apparent. “Interaction is a dialectic between potential and actual, but the potential is not limitless freedom.” \_\_M.Maietti, *Player in Fabula*. in *Games Without Frontiers - War Without Tears* Edited by Andreas Jahn-Sudmann and Ralf Stockmann, Macmillan Publishers Limited, 2009

ESCAPE: Light and irresponsible escapist play loosens the societal bonds entwining the subject, a subject free to become other selves. The ludic is dampened when the social meshes offline work, school and virtual worlds too tightly together, Social is understood as Hannah Arendt's everyday routines under the watchful eyes of family, State and Capital, (in her terms economy). For instance, social software Facebook's policy prohibits non-identifiable profile photos of game avatars. \_\_Lightness of Digital Doll Play, Schleiner 2009

An open ludic compartment to the world, on the other hand, teleports the ludic artist into unforeseen situations. Customizing characters, modulating architecture, rearranging and diverting flows, the player remakes whatever she is given in a micro or macro way.

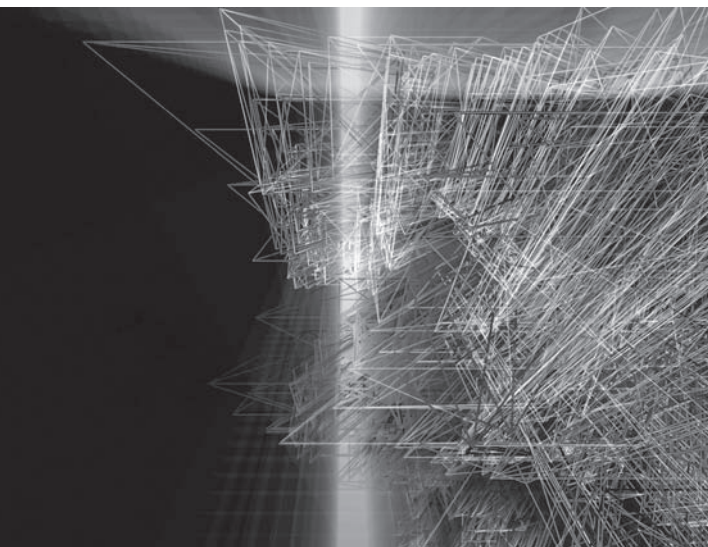
"In this regard, cheating is quite similar to the phenomenon of 'emergent gameplay', a term that refers to play strategies that have not been foreseen by the designers." [In *Deus Ex 2000*] \_\_Julian Kuecklich "Wallhacks and Aimbots: How Cheating changes the perception of Gamespace" in *Space Time Play, Computer Games, Architecture and Urbanism, The Next Level 2007*



CRACKING THE MAZE: GAME PLUGINS AND PATCHES AS HACKER ART, 1999

Playable architecture is transformable beyond the vision of ESP (Extra-sensory cheat perception through walls and hyper-awareness of opponents). Mods of games alter the virtual given. Invoking the Situationists, "The architecture of tomorrow will be a means of modifying present conceptions of time and space." \_\_Gilles Ivain [Ivan Chtcheglov], *Formulary for a New Urbanism*, October 1953 printed in *Internationale Situationniste #1*

Some games allow the player to modify the architecture real-time while playing. The walls of GLTron, inspired by the 1980's arcade game movie Tron, are redrawn every game from the exhaust trails of virtual motorbikes. The player wins by escaping their enclosing trajectories.



Oversaturation (2005) is a mod of GLTron by Mexico City based Luis Hernandez and collaborators. The game starts in a dark and empty gridded world. Over time a 3-D 'city' of lines is drawn, suffocating the player and literally crashing his CPU while he attempts to break free from rampant urban overgrowth.

Conversely, Katamari Damancy gobbles up the game world, emptying it of its defining spatial characteristics, rolling up all furniture, landmarks and buildings into one giant sticky ball.

VERTIGO: Roger Callois' forgotten fourth category of play, games of vertigo, (ilinx) can be spotted as far back as 2-d side scroller Mario, Prince of Persia, to the chasm of Quake 3, the planetary terrain of Halo, the rooftops of Mirror's Edge, resurfacing casually in the World of Goo. The player's being in the world reveals its own mortality as its defining potentiality of being. That is, until the player dies, hovers around as a ghost, regenerates, and is thrown (Geworfen) once again anew into a world of strangers and finite possibilities.

**CONTINGENCY:** If conditions are hospitable to ludic mutation, the player may cross worlds, into a live city of traffic and passersby, bicycles and skate boards, police and variable weather.



CONCEPT SKETCH FOR OUT, LIVE URBAN GAME INTERVENTION,  
REPUBLICAN NATIONAL CONVENTION, NYC, 2004.

The heterogeneous game world of the actual live city is pierced by overlapping vortexes of virtuality and augmentation. Observing the tendencies of night, day, weekday, weekend, the Situationist artist/game designer projects potential trajectories of movement and temporal flows. She identifies potential system hacks, points of intervention, modulation and encounter.



RIOT GEAR FOR ROLLARTISTA, ANNE-MARIE SCHLEINER  
AND TALICE LEE, CASTELLON, MANCHESTER, 2006-07.

An artist's ludic comportment toward gamespace can solidify a given, unravel questionable goals or divert a flow. The vibrating limits of worlds are waiting to be discovered and played.



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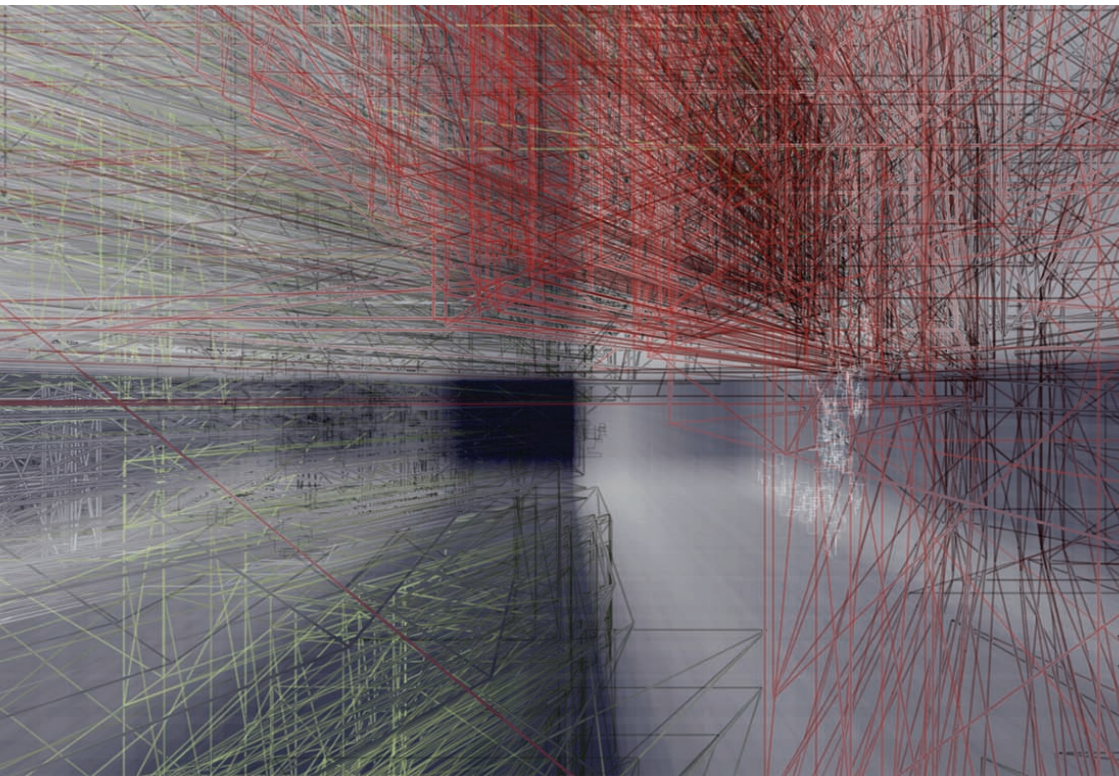


HALF-LIFE 2 SNAPSHOT BY LUIS HERNANDEZ GALVAN, DRAWN OVER BY ANNE-MARIE SCHLEINER, 2009.



SUICIDE SOLUTION, BRODY CONDON, 2004

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