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Issue Editors' Corner: Introduction

Arts in Virtual Worlds

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Under a heading as general as "Arts" for this issue of the *Journal of Virtual Worlds Research*, you could expect to find articles on everything from curatorial practices to concerts, from storytelling to sculpture. This, indeed, is the case. My fellow editors and I were lucky to have received papers from artists and scholars on a variety of topics, each investigating at least one art medium (though often more) and its relevance to and within virtual worlds.

But there is nothing hodge-podge about this collection. An important single thread runs through this issue: the exploration of artistic "process". The importance of process in various instantiations to all of these articles renders this issue more specifically about "*ars*" in the Latin sense -- *ars* being a skill or a craft that usually, but certainly not always, results in an artistic object. As Elbert Hubbard, the founder of the Arts and Crafts community of Roycroft, said, "Art is not a thing, it is a way" -- it is the "way" of art in virtual worlds that we invite you to read about in the following pages. And although many distinct and valuable art-related processes are foregrounded in this volume, I would like to isolate four that link the articles in various ways.

1. The Process of Collaboration

It could be argued that working together is a given when discussing contemporary virtual worlds since so many people participate in building and maintaining the technology and content of such spaces. In "Art Medium Too: Avatar, Art, and Assemblages," Christine Liao frames one collaborative process in particular, that of creating avatars. The art-making here consists of fashioning pre-made elements, usually provided by someone else, into representations of ourselves. She foregrounds the "potentialities of multiplicity" in this process as it allows us to make and re-make symbols of ourselves endlessly, thus constantly re-invigorating our creative energies. Similarly, "Kromosomer: An Experience in Shared Creative Work and Expression," joint-authored by Heidi Dahlsveen and Catarina Carneiro de Sousa, offers a perspective on the symbiotic and mutable roles of storyteller and listener. Carneiro de Sousa creates sublime avatars to vivify Dahlsveen's traditional Norwegian stories and the participant then appropriates these avatars to extend and individualize the tales. Margaret Corbit, Suzanne Kolodziej, Jennifer Wofford then explore the manner in which collaborative process, informed by isolated, individualized consideration of curatorial issues, can help middle- and high-school age girls present history virtually in "Museum Discovery Institute: Designing in Cyberspace".

2. The Process of Discovering

Also dealing with curatorial possibilities in virtual worlds, "Museums and Art in the Age of 3D3C Virtual Worlds", co-authored by Yesha Sivan, Ilana Salama-Ortar, Omer Kaspi & Gary Hardee uses a narrative of circumscription – the framing of art space in Second Life – to reveal the ways in which developing a personalized virtual exhibit can foster the discovery of various communal, creative, and commercial phenomena on both sides of the computer screen. Similarly, "Virtual World Television Products and Practices: Comparing Television Production in Second Life to Traditional Television Production" by CarrieLynn D. Reinhard and Pooky Amsterdam opens up art production to a wider audience by affording television viewers the opportunity to become producers in Second Life, thereby discovering the process of narrative and visual communication.

3. The Process of Building Community

Crafting a virtual art exhibit or television show is almost always spurred by a desire to foster community. These changes to the ways we interact with the arts are also seen in music. But how do musicians adapt to virtual worlds, particularly in terms of live performance? In "Content management for the live music industry in Virtual Worlds: challenges and opportunities", Marco Lüthy and Jean-Julien Aucouturier propose a solution to the two-fold goal of broadcasting music to the largest audience and cultivating a fan base. Their live music recommendation system moves the music scene in Second Life forward by, in certain ways, triggering a return to the past when you could pop down to the local bar to hear a band. Their system combines tantalizing selection with vivacious spontaneity, but on a tremendous scale.

4. Cultivating *Eudaimonia*

While each of the six articles in this issue deals with at least one of the three "process" categories mentioned above, all engage on some level in the concept of the fourth category: cultivating *eudaimonia*. As used by Aristotle, the term *eudaimonia* (roughly translated as "well-being") refers to excellence that is achieved through action and informed by reason. Artists, therefore, foster *eudaimonia* by developing abilities to produce art. Engaging in the process of collaborative storytelling, crafting a

virtual exhibition, producing a television show or creating a platform for musicians therefore moves a person further along the road to fulfilment. But no strict lines are drawn between art-maker and art-viewer. Rather, the process of making and experiencing are symbiotic. And virtual worlds not only support this symbiotic pursuit of a eudaimonic life, but also offer the possibility of this pursuit to people living far from museums and concert venues.

In closing, the editors would like to thank all of the authors we worked with for their compelling insights and hard-work. We would also like to thank Yesha Sivan for his idea to produce a special arts issue and his enthusiastic support. And lastly, but certainly not least, we are grateful to Tzafnat Shpak for her expertise and tireless patience in bringing this issue to press.