

SELF INTERVIEW ON SECOND LIFE

04/08

Hello! Finally!!

What took you so long?

Lots of things- business, laziness, resistance-ness

Resistance-ness?

Resistance to the format of self-interview....

Why?

Something about it felt a bit onanistic- like why should others care to read me talking to myself? Why should I pretend to ask myself questions from an outside perspective- it felt a little funny.

But you got over it?

Well now I have some time and I actually thought it could be good for me because I'm facing some kinds of essential questions about the work I've been preparing for really about a year now already and so- maybe it will be interesting for others-and if not, I hope it will at least be interesting for me!

I liked very much writing and reading others responses to Mette's questions for her research, *The Making of The Making Of* 2 years ago. I felt that publication filled little a gap in the period just as I was finishing school which was- what other or new forms of 'community' can we form around work which isn't being students together and ist being collaborators- but learning from each other nonetheless. I started to feel around then, and it continues to feel now like we are increasingly self-engaged- working in our micro-communities of the cast of a production and that while every theater and production house must use the term 'artistic dialogue' in one brochure or another, that in fact, very little of this goes on.

This sounds a bit fatalist.

Maybe. The dialogues I have are with the people whom I directly work and maybe with audience after a performance. The coffees I grab with other artists where we talk about our and each others' work seem too few and far between. I can't complain, because, unlike Mette, I've never really been a facilitator of this- but always a very, very willing participant. It only seemed as if a self-interview would not particularly fill that void as it would only re-install a self-referential characteristic to talking about working which to be honest I have quite enough of- I mean- time to think and write etc. to myself about myself lalala. But maybe this is an opportunity for me to move my own ass and set up an artists interviewing other artists publication....

So you haven't gotten over it?

What?

Your resistance.

Right, no, let's go: As Eleanor Bauer would say, 5,6,7,8!

Maybe we should start with where you are now and what you're doing.

At the moment I'm in Essen at PACT- alone to think by myself (!!!!!)

You said you were at a kind of 'essential moment' in the work.

Yes- well- I got through the proposal and fund raising part- that took about half a year- then getting the people together and carrying out a 6 week research working period which resulted in a public showing. Now that is over and 'production phase,' I guess we could say, begins in a few weeks- so yes, naturally I have some questions about which direction I would like the work to continue.

Could you give us some background about this work?

Surely- the piece is called *Second Life* and it's a piece which imagines a sort of utopia- a futuristic leisure space from the perspective of 'us' in the future but as old people. In that way it's a piece which is both 'futuristic' and 'old'. And I am making the piece in fact with a group of elderly people 70 years old and above. The question for me is what would a leisure space- the Club Med, Cruise Ship, Island retreat space- of the future look like. We have incorporated a lot of new age elements- from body and spiritual practices, often cultishly performed, as well as a very new age soundscape. But as it is a kind of sci-fi piece, we also are working on a kind of non-thetic quality- I mean an airy there-but not there quality- as if the body and these new age body practices are there only as an image to reassure us that we still have bodies. The cult comes together and celebrates their bodies ritualistically through leisure, pleasure, exercise, 'bodily communication'. The whole thing is very space-age. This Utopia-island is either floating in outer space, in the afterlife, or in a virtual space- in any case the idea is that these elderly bodies are there in effect, but not in essence.

And is the title a reference to the online virtual world then?

You see what I mean- this is a perfect example of where I plant a question so that I can give an answer of course I know the answer so isn't it a bit weird that I supply this phony question?

You could of course try to change the format, or redefine some rules.

Ok, no phony planted questions- I only ask questions if I don't already know the answer to them- so I don't ask, 'so when will it premiere?' as if I don't know when. Because this gives me the creeps.

You could....

But ok, so that's a good first rule. A little more like a schizo-monologue than a pretend conversation between me and my imaginary friend AZB...

As you like....

I'm also starting to dislike the voice of this second person. He has this kind of distant self-righteousness which is only making him sound more calm and reasonable and me the opposite...

Can you not just do the fucking interview?

Yes.

The title, as I was saying. The title is a reference to the online virtual world. Originally the proposal was of secondlife as an afterlife space. I did a lot of research into utopian cults- promothoists, cosmotheists, transhumanists. Anyone interested in some very bizarre but good sociological reading on new age groups might want to check out a wonderful website called transtopia.org. It is very bonkers but fantastic. I saw that all of these utopian groups have to deal with the question of the 'afterlife'- whether from a scientific, a pseudo-scientific, or a purely spiritual/ religious perspective this was always a question they had to deal with. I thought about how we could imagine Second Life as an afterlife space- that life after death wouldn't be about heaven and pearly gates but about your brain being frozen and your avatar continuing to live on- I thought in many cases of course this exists- I mean many 'residents' of Second Life are poetically a hybrid of a virtual and an analogue body. Their body exists at least as much if not more in a virtual space as it does in a 'real one'. Simultaneously those lines are beginning to blur of course. I wanted to develop an analogue body (as I am not especially computer-savy, and don't work on computer design) which was at the same time real and virtual. How do we do that- its very difficult because of course you could not find a space more conducive to the analogue than the theater. Even the gym is more virtual.

But I thought what would second life look like without the interface-i.e. without the fucking dopey computerish thing sitting in front of me which shows me a screen which even with 'point of view' perspective I have to then invest my own imagination into these pixels and dopey washed out colors. And what would it be without the big heavy helmet and glove that we've almost forgotten about since we first saw Keanu Reeves in Johnny Mnemonic, and said 'Dude!' So a fully immersive virtual space. And when we would consider this fully immersive virtual space, how different would it be in fact and in what ways different, from our 'real space,' real interactions etc. So I knew I wanted to make a piece with elderly people, because that was for me where the contradiction was which made the concept interesting and which sci-fi usually doesn't do- I mean usually we see ourselves in the future looking like Scarlett Johanssen in a tight track suit. But of course in the future- we will be old and fat and balding and our sexual organs will be sagging, and I somehow doubt we will all be walking around on our walkers and canes looking like Aeon Flux! As I started to work with these elderly people- I was firstly amazed by how immediately playful and even hyperactive they were- but I also realized that 'physical research' was very tricky. You could say- imagine (ps working with elderly has taught me again to say things like 'imagine'... and 'pretend that you are a....' wow, I really missed this. In contemporary dance we never say these things, its only, let's try with such and such quality, or I would like to take such and such material and lets apply this operation to it etc. etc. Now its like choreographing in the sandbox again- 'imagine that you are on a flying a mega-speedboat and there are dragons spewing fire at you and you have to

jump away from the fireballs before they scorch you in a bloody pulp of lava, no the fireballs are coming from THERE, not THERE!!! How big are the fireballs? Really really really really big'Its great.) But they go for it and of course with their bodies you would say- what the hell are they doing? And its fantastic. But to develop a new body with them, this was difficult.

Ok ok, Im thinking of something good- I cant know the answer I cant know the answer I cant know the answer I cant

- ah here's one- why did you want to develop a new body with them- it sounds like seeing an 84 year old man pretending that he was avoiding lava-spewing dragons could be enough- no?

It's a very good point. I also thought this- but like I said the virtual is a tricky concept to try to approach with bodies and without technology. And when you think of a compelling 50 minutes and not a compelling 50 seconds- I knew that I wanted to install another reality- not just a 'land of elderly make-believe'! And I'm also still at heart a dancer- so I do truly feel this gushy need with each project to develop a body practice- not to have an AZB style- but that each project develops a physical reality that pushes the material- however wonky that material may be- dragons, or mulabanda meditation or whatever- I'm less concerned with the material qua material and more how it can be done in a way that produces another reality- well in this work- I know I'm interested in creating an 'environment' more than a 'piece' i.e. one with dramaturgy, development, etc.- which seems closer to me to the dramaturgy of second life- things happen but there is no craft from outside to shape its development- the structure is floating but highly connected. More than likely this is how I would like this piece to develop.

But for this other reality-there needs to be an other body- and old bodies doing things that old bodies don't normally do isn't for me enough. So I wanted to develop a kind of design and technique that I could teach them.

I'll let you continue and wont ask 'what was that technique then, andros?....'

Perhaps I should get a hand puppet... like Mr. Hand in South Park- ok enough self-consciousness- we're already on page 4.

So I worked with a group of 3 other dancers and we worked on developing a 'virtual technique' or 'avatar physicality.' We worked on lots of disassociation techniques- how to move the head independent of the body, the arms independent of each other- i.e. in a single walk moving between walking homo- and hetereo- laterally and inbetween-i.e. out of rhythm from each other, or swinging together perfectly- to move between these smoothly in one walking path- you should try walking down the street, its lots of fun! And then the direction of the torso- how to move it with, counter to, just behind or just ahead of the movement of the head- how to do this on a lateral plane, a vertical plane, a diagonal plane- so for instance if you would look up at the 'sun' the torso and head and could direct upwards on a diagonal, or the torso could move first, followed by the head, the arms could then start to turn followed by the torso turning but turning just a bit too far, the head catching up and the arms synching in. Basically we treated the body the way animators do- as different fields of information which need to be operated simultaneously but independently- so there is no 'integration' or integrity to the body- but neither is it a kind of forsythey isolation

thing- but each body part was another set of information to compute and continually try to operate simultaneously- being in information (effect) not essence.

This might have been robotic but we then worked on how to never have any tension and in fact to use the pressure of the feet to the floor to wobble slightly so that you had this kind of 'wetness' to what would otherwise be a robotic body. More like a body in outer space or under-water. The idea was to make a kind of passive body- indeed a body which is controlled from outside- which does not move but is moved- and that for me has a lot of, I guess existential implications.

One friend said- we looked very Alexander-ed out- I mean the spine was always super 'elongated' the body very released and we were very much enjoying our comfort like some rich old men on the golf course whose bodies could at any moment reveal themselves as being made of only water and pixels.

So the idea was great, now I will work on this with the elderly. Well it took us 6 weeks to get somewhere- and I don't say we were masters at this- and we are used to trying to develop and absorb new physicalities. With the elderly- I couldn't work more than once a week- 3 hours per session (half of which you have to understand goes to eating cookies and drinking tea and talking- which I thoroughly deeply enjoy, but doesn't really help our 'productivity)- and of course their bodies are not quick to absorb new behaviors- so the possibilities of elderly avatars- as attractive as it is to me seemed to be not fully feasible.

At the same time we were pleasantly happy with what we made with this research group so now we come to the sticky part where I can perhaps offer myself some kunst-counseling:

Let's hear it.

Option 1- I continue only with the young ones on this concept (we wore grey wigs, and I think that wearing these wigs plus knowing what the final aim of the project infected our physicality making us indeed look like elderly forever-young avatars, but we never worked on imitating the movement of elderly people). In this case, we lose something which is precious to me in this piece which was one of the early questions for me- how is it to not work via imitation of foreign bodies (one of the primary concerns of my previous work) but to work on the bodies themselves. Which is to say that somehow or other my work is usually interested in society- real, historical political society, and/ or what if? Hypothetical Society- i.e. an abstraction or complexification, hybridization of social bodies and qualities, themes, physicalities, dynamics which for me, are poetically inherent to those bodies in a real or imagined society.

But now I want to know what it is to work on those bodies directly rather than to approach them from the beginning body of a contemporary dancer. I mean, does it not bother anyone else that before you go to see a show you know already that you will see 20- or 30- something year old, liberal-minded, agile bodies? No matter what they will do on a stage- the demographic is already clear before the show starts. And when we want to speak of other bodies- that no matter what, it will still be those bodies speaking for or about or as if they were these 'other bodies'? Well it began to bother me, or make me feel that this was a limitation which contemporary dance had versus for instance, video art- the alternative usually being the humanistic multi-racial-gender-national-generational performances which try to present difference as something to be well noticed and then overcome by the simplistic thesis that we are, in the end, all human. This piece is post-humanistic if anything. I do not want these

elderly people to be cute, and 'in the end just like us', I want them to be a bit terrifying in their boredom and desire to continually please their disembodied senses. Well, if I would work with only the young ones- I would lose this opportunity to work 'directly on the bodies themselves'. We would be again back in contemporary dancers doing as if they were. . . .

Option 2: (should I insert "what is option 2, AZB?" this is becoming a monologue...

What is option 2, AZB?

Sorry. Option 2 would be to work just with the elderly in which case I likely would have to give up the physicality we developed- and rely on a supremely analogue pleasure chest of reclining, exercising, meeting and greeting, pensioners keen on fun, adventure, and entertainment as a personalized experience- the less shared the better- and work on the display of virtual experience rather than becoming-avatar. For this we have been working with remote controls a lot and what we call 'Magic carpet' like where the subject stands on a carpet in Las Vegas and 'experiences' what they are told to do, receiving in the end- a dvd with a backdrop video- when they ducked down it was because they were passing under the arm of the Statue of Liberty- when they waved, it was to Elvis etc.- basically virtual reality- imagine the helmet glove example- without the helmet and the glove. This asks the question of how to not perform the imitation of an experience- for instance imitating fighting- but to perform the perception of the experience- for instance to perform perceiving that your body is fighting- this is very feasible for the elderly. Becoming avatar is therefore out the window. And that would be a pity, because sometimes I would miss this state which we developed- sometimes in the grocery store or in the post office I just want to slip into my avatar state anyways- I think it would often help me cope better with some of these spaces. . . .

Performing young and old together on a stage is absolutely out of the question. For the abovementioned reason of united colors of Bennettonness.

Option 3: a two part performance in which we see the virtual world and then the analogue world experiencing the virtual, or becoming virtual. I like this option the best but it requires then some clarification. Well first lets say, because it is never only about artistic means but also always about economic means that this third option nearly insures that the piece will not tour. 8 elderly plus 4 young, plus a technician, perhaps sound person as well, from a choreographer named AZB that not too many people have particularly heard of means we perform in Kortrijk and Essen and that's the two year process- yes ok there are a few more dates Brussels, gent, leuven- but it will not go far beyond Belgium. Do I care about this? Now, no, but in a year when I will have worked for so long, and there it is, the work is over and can no longer be shared and communicated I said it here first, I will be sad.

What are the questions here? And maybe now I can shift into the main role because mister answeryanswery has pretty much been on top of the whole discussion.

Ok.

I'm wondering: when you would make these two parts- that means the first part is a more developed version of what you already showed- basically an environment where avatars meet in a disconnected way and share new-age body material, exercise, relaxation, pleasure and bodily entertainment, and then lots of if I can say so myself-

very complexly composed walking around in a particularly strange but codified physicality. Nothing happens. There is no development. First of all are you happy with this?

Yes.

You could work more on it. What would you do?

Eleanor Bauer again, said- what's the characteristic of time in second life, what's the characteristic of space in second life (i.e. the virtual world). Whatever it is- do it much more (extremely). I still didn't answer that question for myself but it was a good one. In second life, time is fluid-meaning it does not move at a constant pace because there is a conduit for it- namely- streaming. And streaming speeds and slows irrationally. We should use this much more and on a more subtle level. Time is really infinite- meaning without beginning or end. You tune in and out of second life- but it doesn't turn off- but the result of this is pretty much what we already do- lights come up we are already going- lights go out we are still going. We could of course bring lights up and down a few times, but otherwise this infinite time is difficult to convey and maybe not so important. To represent a 'logging the body off' materially would just look like us occasionally going to sleep on stage- although I suppose there is something when a user for instance goes to the bathroom that means that even if there is a virtual war going on in front of his avatar- for that moment while he's peeing- his avatar is in a fluid 'out of it' state. And this simultaneity of intense bodies and inert bodies can be interesting-

About that time fluidity- does it happen individually or globally- to the system I mean.

Well, that is a damned good question. I could check into that but I can already say that both are interesting- I mean an individual computer stalls, or its connection goes slowly- or the mega computers at Linden Labs fluctuate in their speed and the whole environment speeds or slows together- it could be very interesting to work with this concept a bit more.

What else about time?

Its viral in second life- I mean that time is so static there until 'something happens', then there seems to be a lot of movement created out of nowhere- there's no logic to this- randomly lots of people teleport to a certain event. And then disappear more or less together as well. About this fluidity thing- I was also just thinking about this is it personal or is it global and thought- its also relational- I mean that the real time-ness can have a slight difference between two systems- meaning that what might appear as a unisono on screen is in real time not and vice versa- which implies to me the possibility of 'joining each other' in a decalage. I suppose it could also mean the opposite- ridiculously precise timing even in those things like greetings which normally have loose timings- as if the program runs on its own.

And space?

Someone else said- why do you run in this piece? (we do some speed walking, for our health, its true) he said I cant stand it when contemporary dancers run on stage and I'm reminded that there are these fucking curtains and that we are AGAIN in a theater black box where they have to turn around or run in a circle or whatever. Very good point. I hate it too. So I would need to think how to make the theater space seem limitless- of course within second life you have these invisible barriers- there is still property and invisible fields that you bump against out of nowhere and cannot cross- but mostly the space is endless. This is obviously impossible on a stage.

Wings?

I remember asking someone once why is it that we don't like 'going offstage' anymore. I mean, I remember as a kid being in these big ballet productions where it was all about waiting on the side for the cue- coming in, doing your part, and going offstage again until your next entrance. In contemporary performance we've mostly gotten rid of those entrances and exits. She said to me- its because we don't like as audience to be reminded that there is another reality which exists besides what we see on the stage. I agree- but in this case if we can imagine the stage as screen- then it should be as if the environment is floating, passing in front of our 'point of view' looking at a screen- in which case yes, wings are useful, but also having lots of performers would be useful. With the elders this could be possible- with the youngings for economic reasons- this is more difficult.

But there is something also relationally- I mean that in a virtual space tangential relation is not a problem. It s all about 'approximate' space- and the bodies do not relate to each other as much as they related to 'the space of the other'. They can also relate 'to each other' facing the same way as we would be physically related to each other while we play a videogame together- but this would be more for the elderly part- where we see the 'real space'.

But so, do you work on this with the elderly or not?

Schitze.

?

I mean, if I go for these two part there needs to be a difference, materially, relationally... the elderly space still needs to be about 'real' space but needs to suggest certain characteristics of the virtual- I mean the idea should be that they live enough in the virtual world that their analogue relations begin to take on a virtual quality, without them representing avatars etc.

And materially- what's the difference?

Well I guess that the major difference should be that we see in the first part the avatars, the surrogate bodies, and in the second part we see them playing 'us' without that virtual space being present or represented. Imagine a first part from the perspective of 'within' secondlife' and a second part from outside where you would see someone playing secondlife- only rather than sitting at a computer typing at a keyboard you see a kind of direct embodied link to their other. In the first part you see the solution and in the second part you see the problem.

I think I get what the solution is but what's the problem?

The problem could be a lot of things- physical atrophy gives a good reason for wanting to have a virtual self who is fit and able and never deteriorates. Another problem could be- but here we have to be careful about becoming theatrical/psychological- that either the boredom of or inability to interact in real space creates the desire to interact in virtual space.

So this second part would be about failure.

Yikes.

?

I mean this is tricky. Who wants to see another piece about us humans who just can't relate to each other. This was done by someone like Meg Stuart and reiterated very well by someone like Phillip Gemacher. No, there has to be a smarter way with this- I'm thinking of the kind of numbness that a consumer culture inspires- I mean like with this magic carpet ride you hear this annoying, I can say super American girl shouting things like 'oh my gawd, look over there! It's Michael Jackson! Say hey, Michael Jackson! Allright good job you guys!' and you imagine these wonky tourists there doing whatever she says, I mean she could say anything and they would do it and from a very passive investment, they receive a document of a 'spectacular experience'. I'm thinking now of the problem as being this kind of inserting passive bodies into the perception of a spectacular situation where the actual investment needed is the price of admission and that's pretty much it. And there's a lot to do with disembodiment there- you are provided a surrogate who experiences this for you. I need to invent my own version of the magic carpet ride. Of course I will also just steal hers... but I'm thinking also about Nintendo Wii. Do you know it- this video game that is motion sensitive- so rather than pressing the 'up button' on the controller, you have to move the controller 'up' so a small movement creates a big big jump on the screen. And now they have Nintendo Wii Yoga. I think it's very relevant.

How do you work with these elders on this?

I need to buy it.

But I also need to work on their focus- this blank amazement that looks through the audience to the supposed 'screen' which is in this case not a 2D screen but an immersive environment.

Which brings us back to the question- is the material any different then between these two parts?

I guess not really- only that we see it from different angles- and that with the elderly we see the 'total space' that means also elderly lying around, sun tanning, walking around, past and in front of those who are immersed in playing a virtual space.

You spoke before- or I don't remember exactly but suggested something about perversity- that these elderly people should be somehow frightening- this sounds pretty innocuous, innocent.

Yes. There needs to be a character to how they do- that they are consumerist pleasure bunnies. That its hot in there. That there are too many of them in this small space trying to squeeze out any second of pleasure and that the range of options for quick meaningless distraction are so many that there is no real satisfaction-this becomes so narrative that it borders on theater theater. Why is this a problem I have to ask- and does this mean that this is more representational/didactic/literal and therefore more superficial? Is there something less narrative- more systematic, qualitative, or dynamic which might include these things without 'doing'/ representing them?

Now *you're* asking the good questions.

Someone had to.

And so...

And so. I guess you want answers.

That'd be nice.

No you know where the fold is has to be clear between these two spaces and its not- which is bothering me. It sounds to me like more or less the same thing done by more or less very different people. In the first part they wear wigs, in the second part they don't need to.

Doesn't sound like answers.

No, no not yet. I mean something has to be in this 'total space' that complexifies the limited scope we've seen in the first part. I mean if we see the utopia of the virtual in the first part, in the second we need to somehow see what the problem, so to speak, is- about this experiencing the virtual co-existing within actual space. And that it- virtual space- somehow 'distracts us from true, human interaction' is somehow just not enough. I will go get a coffee.

Good luck.

But it seems to me like I could draw out some different approaches between these two parts- if indeed I go for them which the more I write (sorry, Met, I didn't think it would be this long either!- the more I'm sure of) and I had to answer that question could there really be a significant difference and not the same concept acted by two different types of bodies in order for me to want to go forward with it- but there's still this material question lingering for me. I mean the approaches to the same material can be so stretched apart that we really see the same space looked at from two dimensions-namely from the perspective of 'within' the virtual space and from the perspective of outside-i.e. in analogue space. And like I said, I don't care how stupid the material itself is- but the way its done needs to be layered- in the avatar part we have more work to do- but lets say Im less worried- I think the content could still

expand but even when we're walking around and around in the space I have to say I think it's great. But about this analogue space- I don't want to do representing playing virtual reality games- there still has to be in this analogue space something producing a state, a behavior which doesn't belong to what we know. Massumi talks about this and I think its very relevant here- that when you want to go for the virtual (and here he's talking about the virtual and not 'virtual reality' which are very different) that you cannot take one molar (a whole, for instance an elderly person) and another (for instance, playing virtual reality games) and arrive at something virtual- you will end back with another whole- i.e. elderly people playing virtual reality games. And the virtual- well I don't totally understand what this term means but I think my misunderstanding of it has been very helpful for my imagination! The virtual needs some kinds of displacements- things that should normally be there and aren't and things which are there and which you cannot place. And these are not things that you 'add on' or 'take away,' these are things which are forced to emerge as a surplus or a deficit to what we would otherwise understand as being 'the whole.'

Sounds good, but, what does this mean?

I was thinking about this last night- in the kind of Johnny Mneumonic DUUUDE!!! virtual reality of the 90s, there was this helmet and this glove. Very stupid, but interesting, no? because it meant that the hierarchization of the body was artificially shifted. Suddenly the concentration of a whole body's worth of movement was put into the hand. To jump left, right, duck etc. You would see the hand moving like crazy and the rest of the body as a kind of byproduct, reacting to the actions of the hand.

If you would take away this glove and helmet- would this 'rehierarchization'-however you call it- would this be a surplus or a deficit?

Yes. That's maybe somehow it- to see resistances or facilities without a instrument-to see these things as if they appear from nowhere as matter-of-fact dynamics, approaches the virtual.

How does that help you, or are we just having fun speaking knots?

Thank you, yes- this is the danger of the self interview! I mean an outside interviewer's job is to make sure that the interviewee doesn't become over indulgent in speaking about what he wants to talk about rather than what other people care to hear about! They're not the same!

I'm sure this'll get edited.

It depends. If Mette got lots of money she'll probably print the whole thing.

And add color photos.

That'd be great.

And a bonus CD.

It helps, yes because I'm trying to say how do you tear apart this material into two different directions. And it helps to have strong material- you know like a lot of frequencies, intensities or whatever to work with- manipulating white noise is more difficult than manipulating Britney Spears. But yes, so one thing is that this 'outside space' shows the perception of experience rather than the representation of it. It shows the body only as a kind of reaction to perception rather than its actor. I would say that it's also possible for the body to be controlled then by the perception of an experience rather than vice versa- perception controls body rather than body controls perception. The bodies become consumers of perception- but not passive consumers- this isn't about couch potatoes but *new couch potatoes*- a more interactive, indeed active version of the couch potato- the same direction video games have been going for awhile now.

So if the actions of the body which we see are in fact supposed reactions to stimuli- it's also possible to imagine this 'reaction' as lopsided- we can imagine that instead of the 'glove' the 'control' is directly visual or linked to the torso, etc. And this implies to me a disembodiment where the body is potentially re-hierarchized. I mean in Wii the whole body of the video game character are controlled by the motion of the hand- it's obviously possible to complexify this relationship between player and character. Movement should seem passive and active at the same time- in Virtual Reality you are active but your activity is based on your response to the virtual environment.

Could you give me an example of what this would look like technically?

One thing the elders have done good to respond to is working with movement from the feet up- I mean you can use your feet's pressure into the floor to move the whole body rather than moving from the release technique kind of 'center'. So the arms might wail- but I'm not wailing them.

What the hell are you talking about?

You can try this- your feet have a clock around them- you move your weight from 12 o'clock all the way around and go as far as you can with your weight without shifting your feet.. Now vary the speed at which you do this so that it is smoothly speeding and slowing. Now try shifting between points in the same way- 12 o'clock to 6 o'clock to 4 o'clock to 10 o'clock- around clockwise to 6 o'clock etc. etc. Now imagine a vertical clock that goes on the vertical axis around your feet- try going around the clock this way at 12 your weight is as high and light and at 6 as low and heavy as possible. Work in the same way- clockwise, counterclockwise, then between points. Now try to mix between the vertical and the horizontal clocks in the same way. If you allow this to effect into the body in a way that isn't active but reactive you get a kind of floaty quality the head and focus need not have integrity to the movement, and this 'streaming time' should also be considered. It also implies for me, something that we haven't done yet- working with the voice- I mean everything should be reaction to direct perception- so when Francois receives his sensual massage by the Hawaiian lady on the beach (ok, Francois, so, I want you to imagine that you're on a beach....) and his movement shows this 70 year old man in ecstasy- the voice should be present and not in a way that necessarily corresponds to the movement. We should be able to imagine that there's more going on there than what we can see, and that there's a strong logic to the programming of your own

sensations. I mean when he wants her to massage lower, he pushes his tongue more and more to the left. Believe me, I can only get away with this kind of thing because they're old people.

You took another break...like a month since the last time we wrote

Oups... but honestly I didn't know what to write because this question wasn't resolving.

Did it now?

Yes, pretty much. These two worlds needed to be differentiated as much as possible. That's what I was working on. If it was going to be necessary to have these two parts they needed to have their conceptual reasons not just practical causes- somehow-like usual- it was a long fucking detour just to arrive back at what I now think was anyways there from the beginning- it just takes me a long-ass time to get back there and realize that I could've realized this months ago- but of course that detour is what makes it now seem so much simpler, and a lot more rich in the sense that now its *necessary* before it would have just been another choice.

You start working again in one week, what are the next steps going to be?

We have three weeks now and the difficult part is whether what we made before should remain intact as a material or whether it should be thrown out- indeed as the detour we took to arrive back at something from the beginning having that behind us. There are some things that need to be explored that weren't before- mixed into the physicality of the avatars and the new age material there needs to be more perversity- the kind that you get in a film like *Crash*, *Eyes Wide Shut*, *Stepford Wives*. I went recently to this upscale spa in Belgium late at night and I remember this sense there of all of these quite wealthy people there- I was there in a couple- but I couldn't help but feel, and my partner felt the same- that there was this creepy undercurrent to this affluence. Everyone walking around naked and checking each other out in this kind of 'I feel comfortable, do *you* feel comfortable' way- wanting to kind of reassure each other, even by sense and attitude, that they were indeed living the good life- that they were getting their money's worth out of life and that this sense was indeed *still* lasting *now*. And you felt that at any moment that desire for reassurance could express itself in a creepy way. But it never did, at least not to us- it was all in the sense of things- the ways that the bodies did normal things in just slightly abnormal enough ways.

Does this fall back into representation? How do you maintain the 'sense' without representing?

But I don't want to represent sex or violence- but the perversity of what would happen to the drives of fantasy once they could be expressed in a non-physical (avatar) body. And it cant turn into representation because it will become *jan fabre* very quickly and this is not what I want- I want to know when this de-psychologized, de-physicalized body has the possibility to literally do anything what and how it does- when the ways to connect to the sensual possibilities of bodies is through having a non-physical surrogate what can happen.

But we know- it would do more or less what we already do- just more explicitly and at times more imaginatively- for sure more remotely and more anonymously- but is this aspect of second life really so interesting?

No, you're right its not- but here we have to imagine not a representation of second-life but avatar subjectivity- the avatar as a state of subjectivity meaning it shares something with the human- it isn't something to be imitated by the human. In which case- its true the avatar as it is, is often used to express explicitly that which we cant or don't want to in society etc. isn't really the point.

The point for me is how to position this imaginative space- and this space for me has more to do with the inherent creepiness of the affluent spa than the overt fetishes on second life. So I wonder more about how aerobics can have an undercurrent of creepy sense in enjoying one's own body while doing it- things can be given just a little too much-pleasure, indulgence, force to push it into perversity- a sense that body fitness is the language through which the now extinct, so-called 'drives' can continue to exist. Another is to go back to the Japanese Game shows which are such an awesome physicalization of perversity- bodies which are not quite human and not quite videogames acting out the socially unacceptable fantasies of and for a public. Working with these as sources I think that divorced from the sound, the other bodies, the objects they use we might be able to arrive at another type of behavior at least mostly divorced from representation. It all needs to be a bit more like a dirty rich old man.

And can you imagine putting that on stage?

That's the difficulty- we know sex and violence as materials on stage the question is how do you extract the sense of a thing without using that material. I'd go back to what Sandra Iche saw in the showing in April in a part where I do these push ups very rapidly against the floor, my head sort of bobbing around aimlessly despite the force and repetition of my body and she saw this as perverse-it reminded her of the Paul McCarthy installation with the mechanical man fucking the earth and the tree. But at that point we had never spoken of sex, violence, perversity blah blah- perversity wasn't in the material itself but the overcompensation of expression- the pleasure I seemed to get from this exercise was not the pleasure that it seemed I should have gotten. Perversity in the rehierarchization of things- giving an over-determination to certain parts over the whole. There are ways perhaps which Japanese gameshows, American Psycho, Crash, Le grand Bouffe, Eyes wide Shut et al might not lend new materials to be represented per se but a new access point to the materials we already have- how can exercise and new agey meditation exact the same kinds of dynamics as sadism or any other fetish- not in a dark oooo-oooh... Way, but in a new, glossy way, a combination between the just-under-the-surfaceness of my spa example and the way that overt fetishes are enacted in second life- as part of the norm, encoded on the exact same plane with all actions in general- the perverse and the norm aren't really anymore qualitative differences...