

Emma Fraser

Open Lecture #8
18:00 Wed 24.05.2017

Virtual-material feedback : ruined cities, video games and digital space



image: Hellgate: London (2007), concept art

This talk presents current research on the relation between digital environments in games, and embodied experience out in the world, through the figure of the modern architectural ruin – or, the ruins of the recent past. Ruined cities in games, and specifically the ruins of cities that players might reasonably recognise (London, Pittsburgh, Boston, Washington), provide an interesting focal point for debates around meaning and representation; digital space, and the nature of play in 3D and virtual spaces in games. In particular, design practice and play practice can be interrogated through in-person encounters – both the playful navigation of ruinous cityscapes in games, and the dream-like exploration of actual cities using data and experiences that are derived from gameplay. This talk describes an theoretical and methodological approach to both the study of virtual environments and contexts of digital design and communication, through the critical capacities afforded by ruins and ruination, which reveal a relationship between digital architectures, and lived and situated encounters in urban space.

Emma Fraser is a final year PhD candidate at the University of Manchester, researching video games, virtual architecture, and urban decay. Emma's work is focused on 3D and digital space in terms of meaning production, urban play, and design. In particular, Emma considers the depiction and navigation of ruined cities in games in relation to urban experience and the writings of Walter Benjamin, Caillois, Lefebvre, and others, and her research has been published in games studies, urban studies, geography, sociology, and art media. Emma's work broadly considers regeneration, urban exploration, and modern ruins, and has focused on fieldwork and embodied experience in Detroit, Chernobyl, Berlin, Paris, New York, Sydney, Christchurch (NZ), and elsewhere. Emma has been invited to work collaboratively with Practising Place and The Arca Project, and is a member of the Playful Mapping Collective. Emma is currently a research assistant on The Craft of Play at Manchester Metropolitan University, and a key investigator on the Urban Planning through Playful Participation (UPPP) PoC, in progress at the University of Warwick

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