In a sense the dungeon master has to be at once in and out of the fantasy—they have the architecture but also engage in the fantasy enough to direct the characters. The goal for me is to keep the performers inside the fantasy if I succeed at that, then I’ve done my job well: I can’t always do that, but that is my goal.

When you enter the gallery there are sixteen framed drawings presented formally in traditional picture frames, but the drawings themselves are strange simulations of simulations. They are of skinned faces, these pink Day-Glo computer screen, and have titles like “Onion Dancing” in Their Own Digital Ectoplasmic Cocoon, which is probably my favorite title of all time! The rendered surfaces are quite material, there’s significant evidence of the human hand and human investment, so they stay within normative visual parameters and exist within a more “lesser” world. However more than to move to the back room of the gallery to the video, we move into the untitled real of the virtual and these same simulations take on a more detached, more identifiable character. They seem, for whatever reason, less real.

Yeah.

Your title Heterotopias is borrowed from a lecture by the French philosopher Michel Foucault. His heterotopias are countervailing spaces created necessary by society to allow citizens a space to deviate significantly from established norms. In the exhibit, the traditionally made drawings and the technologically revolutionary videos are like a model created, like a bearskin rug wrapped around a bear skeleton. I am fascinated with the building process of the CGI and how it constantly references the physical. I’ve always been interested in masking and costume as vehicles to open up a narrative to explore the psyche and conditions of the prop. When I saw these diffuse maps they were just incredibly beautiful to me, because they were on this threshold between the physical and the virtual. They are all totally digital information, but they’re so confusing because they look really physical; they’re really flashy and they’re on this fuzzy line between being kind of beautiful and being grotesque. So they’re just virtual skin, basically—like someone was virtually skinned.

Can you explain a bit how atavism comes into play in this project?

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Can you explain a bit how atavism comes into play in this project?

Another theme in your work, the mask, has taken on a startlingly new quality and a new meaning. It’s like someone was virtually skinned. In that sense, it’s interesting to think about how avatars become a kind of prosthetic; if somebody has never been able to walk creates an avatar that allows them to experience a form of walking, they are using a nonphysical, simulated environment to experience physical relationships. And teenagers, they absolutely use their online identities to try out fifty or九十 different personalities to see what’s more successful with their peers. Virtual masks allow for this testing and experimentation. How has CGI changed your approach to masking and, more generally, to the way you design and build your projects?
back in the day in Turkle’s idea, which has come up in several of her books, about people playing either dh innovation and adaptation, within other, being able to change in accordance with other people’s ideas and hopes with the fact that we are simply replicating our existing conflicts and desires, db heterotopia of deviance within concept would still make most people uncomfortable—this countersite, this db and reverse that timeline, or scramble it up, so it’s not necessarily linear. Maybe what is before and after is no body.

It’s a beautiful thing to think about, and maybe it isn’t so futuristic. I think this concept would still make most people uncomfortable—this countersite, this hetero- topos of deviance within CGi programming. A list of us are confused by the idea of creating a more perfect self online, which both implies that we have failed in some ways and also implies that perfection is possible. In physical culture we have become comfortable with a certain degree of vulnerability in our interac- tions with other people, but our technology says something different. It says, ‘This is what we want perfection. We want data relay to be an easy process and relationships to be a simple, ‘I care for you,’ ‘you care for me’ type of thing.” There wouldn’t be any kind of disruption within that perfect framework if it were up to technology. I think a lot of critiques of Cgi and Larping (live-action role-playing) have to do with the fact that we are actively replicating our existing conflicts and desires, we’re not allowing ourselves room to be affected and changed in the face of the other being able to change in accordance with other people’s ideas and hopes for us, do you find that there’s room for this kind of relationship, this kind of innovation and adaptation, within Larping or virtual gaming?

One thing that I was thinking of when you were posing this question is Sherry Turkle’s idea, which has come up in several of her books, about people playing either back in the day in Mu (Multi-User Domains) or even now through Facebook, and mud gaming. Jane McGonigal’s work is a great example. In this project I have used dance to create an ethos of empowerment, but always choreographed movement in your work? In this project you use dance to create an ethos of empowerment, but always choreographed, some of it shows the performers moving together in unity while other times performers are solo. But I’m really excited to hear you link the battle to the dancing. I hadn’t thought of that at all but it really clicks for me because in this project and throughout all my projects, I have been really inter- ested in this personal and collective conflict between discord and harmony that is presently represented by the dancing in the videos. Consider our ability as human beings to go back and forth constantly—to want harmony but act in discord in our personal lives and beyond. One of the themes in this project is this slamming back and forth between these spaces. I feel that battle is something that is prescribed in our biology and it is something that I believe we can transcend.

Desirée Holman lives and works in Oakland, California. Her work has been exhibited internationally at the São Paulo Museum of Modern Art, Brazil; the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; The Headlands Center for the Arts, San Francisco; and the Hammer Museum in L.A. She received her BFA from the Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, Rhode Island, and her MFA from the University of California at Berkeley. She has been a resident at the Headlands Center for the Arts, the residency released her first self-published catalog. Her work is in the permanent collections of numerous museums, including Santa Fe’s The Santa Fe Museum of Modern Art, and The Hammer Museum.

Exhibition curated by Phyllis Wattis, Artists Curator, Phyllis Wattis, Los Angeles.