

ETC



The Original And The Copy

Vacancy Kit, Observatoire 4, Montréal. January 14 - February 4 1995

DX Raiden

Number 30, May–August 1995

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/35766ac>

[See table of contents](#)

Publisher(s)

Revue d'art contemporain ETC inc.

ISSN

0835-7641 (print)

1923-3205 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this review

Raiden, D. (1995). Review of [The Original And The Copy / *Vacancy Kit*, Observatoire 4, Montréal. January 14 - February 4 1995]. *ETC*, (30), 37–38.

MONTREAL THE ORIGINAL AND THE COPY

Vacancy Kit, Observatoire 4, Montréal. January 14 - February 4 1995



Collaboration, *Vacancy Kit*, 1994-1995. Rubble Pentagon. Rubble collected from vacant lots. 5 blocks on wheels. Wood, cement, belts, computer terminal.

"Gee, where's the blood, Hey congressman this one's for you".

So concludes an unfavorable review in *Electronic Gaming Monthly* of a shoot em up game which doesn't shoot enough. In the denouement of the twenty first century, the textually fused body of biology and technology leaps ahead of the technical possibilities to create cyborgs. A cyborg by definition through it's refutation of gender, disease and time casts negative utopias around the framework of what defined being a biological creature.

Just as culture mutates by technology's auspices that it will be rebuilt faster, have an interior which transgresses the exterior's physical confines and be at a price that everyone can afford so to does the body; but the critical search for what we are to become smoothes the supplements with which we already live into a deceptive flow of discourse.

There is no need to project our capabilities when fully amped for we already exist as electronic beings; inbred from data transactions, these character's speak and travel in the reticule behind the MUDS, mall's monitor's and medical cards, access to their vital statistics a screen away.

It is at this juncture of physical boundary, fluid technology and the undertow that a new social matrix is formed. A digital landscape where conflict and chaos reign supreme; as suitable mandates of how to regulate the orchestral flows of information are forged, only to find that they float unconnected in the space where gravity does not push or pull but instead becomes a signifier of the miscarried attempt to transplant ideological constructs of the physical world upon it's inhabitants.

It is at this point which *Vacancy Kit* deposits itself; contradictory, interactive and out of order, it is an installation which does not issue a statement of healthy balance.

Before you enter the gallery space, the initial impact of the work is the sound, audible the length of the hallway, a distorted cycle of arcade game soundtracks woven together produce ambiguously threatening sounds of combat and motor racing but also an enticing sound of "Amusements", with the bonus of the noise camouflaging the individuals presence when crunching over the rubble pentagon.

Speaking the language of the vacant lot the rubble and blocks form a paragraph of transition : Whilst long term vacancy is a verbose rupture of capitalism's schemata, short term vacancy suggests an inanimate suspension,



Collaboration, *Vacancy Kit*, 1994-1995. Detail of the screen within the block.

whilst visions, plans and economics are discussed, a holding of abeyance and speculation of improved future circumstances. Territorially the blocks refer to the production of spatial enclosures, which not only concentrate interaction but also enforces it's boundedness. The pentagon becomes a micro geography of human interaction hinging around portable bubbles of personal space zonation. Yet it is a space whose rigid concrete markation is underscored by the wheels on which the blocks sit which along with the prosthetic belts flowing from the top, suggest some type of medical vehicle or sacrificial table. This undermining of spatial authority is again enacted by the incision of a computer monitor into one of the blocks.

Connoting the appearance of the auto-bank with the slots at the side of the terminal, this is an experience not "exclusive only to our customers", as there are capsule shaped plastic cards strewn amongst the rubble. On the cards is printed "BORDERING A SMOOTH LACUNA YOUR 5 CHARACTERS SPEAK OF A BODY THEY HAVE FABRICATED". This is the message in the capsule, the cultural shift from Freud's theory's of the unconscious, for now rather than thinking in terms of œdipal hang up's or psycho-social dynamics we now attribute root causes of personality to chemical flows, blockages or imbalances. By placing the capsule card into the slot we extend or supplement ourselves as we engage beyond the screen. Have the 5 characters of the card escaped from the blocks into the hyper space, or are they the plethora of identities that construct the individual under the misnomer of the single. As the single player negotiates the program its ambiguity becomes apparent through its converse positioning of video-game structuring via narrative; this game has numerous possibilities of role playing and is not clear as to whether you're hunting bodies, searching to reveal figures or watching the yeti's footprints stalk your fictive characters, the scenario systematically dislocates the parameters

of arcade interaction : contrary prescriptive personality analyses flashing at you through the communication channel and contradictory information throughout the journey leave you uncertain of which character you're playing, whether you're interacting within the program or watching the action take place. It is by this disorientation of the player's position that the interface is transformed from the boundary that cognitive consciousness perceives it to be to become the permeable membrane that the supplemented characters of electronica require to operate in. In fragmented preterit terms, the interface which encourages us to conceive of a duality of existence in front and behind the screen, perpetuating the illusion that one must be real is collapsed as our characters are transformed amongst disparate localities, non more concrete than any other.

As these transient identities shift, it is not the initial play between Sartre's hodological spaces where the environment is viewed in terms of personal reconstruction but instead the play between connective spaces viewed in terms of our physical reconstruction.

It is within the capsule of electronic dissemination that the psychological and the physical, the screen in the block, the abstract and the concrete can be seen simultaneously in an interactive gesture.

Kit is a collaboration of artists pursuing ideas through the fabric of a collective. Within the kit lies the original and the copy, the deconstructed awaiting assemblage, the constructed directions dependent on the fragmented pieces. It is within this conflict that the act of collaboration functions.

Kit can be contacted through Observatoire 4 or located throughout arcades around Montreal.

DX RAIDEN