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*The Flâneuse in the Virtual City: Exploring "Lost Angeles"*

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In this essay I contemplate the relationship between virtual and physical bodies and the terrains through which they move in *Lost Angeles*,<sup>1</sup> a three-hour video work by Lee Tusman that follows gamer Derm McGuigan as he bypasses the narrative structure of *Grand Theft Auto V*. Tusman frames McGuigan as a “virtual flâneur”<sup>2</sup>—referencing the literary trope of the urban wanderer who possesses both the leisure time and curiosity to wander as an amateur investigator of urban landscapes.<sup>3</sup> With the help of dance scholar Lena Hammergren, I will consider how *flânerie* performed in the *Lost Angeles* might fall more accurately under the domain of the *flâneuse*:<sup>4</sup> one who visits spaces that she cannot access physically by means of her imagination. Hammergren’s *flâneuse* responds to gendered differences in mobility and access to public space<sup>5</sup> by using her own archive of bodily memory to imagine what it would be like to interact with previously inaccessible spaces. *Lost Angeles* also complicates the concept of the *flâneuse* through the presence of an avatar who delivers visual information about the landscape and how it might affect a body. These relationships become more intricately entangled with the entrance of an additional set of spectators that watch McGuigan and his avatar via a live video feed. The collision—of Tusman and McGuigan’s unorthodox mode of play, with mechanisms inbuilt to *Grand Theft Auto* that encourage kinesthetic connection with the gameworld—causes the singular figure of the flâneur to become unstable and multiply, producing numerous relationships between the players and spectators, the body of the avatar, and the city of Los Santos. In this essay, I hope to demonstrate how the proposal of *Lost Angeles* interacts with the structure of *Grand Theft Auto* and produces not one flâneur, but numerous flâneuses who traverse the virtual city via complex kinesthetic associations with the avatar’s movements and the landscapes of the gameworld.

### **Entering Los Santos**

*A red-haired woman walks, chest first, through a field of flowers and weeds. To her left, a curving cliff gives way to an expanse of ocean whose medium-sized waves collide with the coast, sending jets of water flying into the air. To her right, steep hills obscure the horizon. Except for a few empty houses, the woman is alone. Now and then, she breaks into a run, seemingly curious to see what might lie around the next curve. At the very least, she is intent on going somewhere.*

*I sit at my desk watching this woman make her way across the foothills while the camera shifts rapidly between third-person and first-person perspectives. I look down at her from*

*a high point, I gaze across at her, or I follow behind her. Other times I see through her eyes and hear her footfalls as if they were my own. The lush and pixelated landscape rotates around us as we move.*

*But there is someone else here too. A man with a bright red beard and glasses sits on a boldly patterned couch in the bottom-left quadrant of the screen. A red-tipped microphone juts toward him, punctuating his rectangular space. His hands are out of the frame. As she moves, he speaks in the first person: "...If I go over this ridge, I'll probably get a better view." As she strains on the steep incline of one of the hills, he groans: "Ugh! Nope, I don't think I can make it up this hill. It's too high for me. I need to remember to bring some walking cleats, then maybe I can make it a little better."<sup>6</sup>*

### **Playing the landscape**

The bearded man in the lower right corner of the screen is Derm McGuigan, known to his online community as PasticheOfSkin. The woman is an avatar dressed in form-fitting clothing, whom McGuigan has outfitted as his representative in the virtual landscape of *Grand Theft Auto*, which McGuigan plays for an audience that watches on a live video feed. I am sitting at my computer with a recorded copy of the video, which I solicited from Tusman after having seen the live video projected in a gallery at UCLA. The four of us are looking at a mountain range that lies just outside the city of *Grand Theft Auto's* Los Santos, which is built to mirror the urban sprawl of Los Angeles. In our separate times and places, but somehow also together, we are participating in what online gaming communities refer to as "Let's Play,"<sup>7</sup> in which players video-record their movements through a game and share them with an online audience.

In the description of the work, Tusman characterizes *Lost Angeles* as a collaboration between himself, then an MFA student at UCLA's Design Media Arts program, and McGuigan, a video gamer from Ireland who has an ongoing practice of playing for a live stream audience. In an interview, Tusman viewed his decision to broadcast McGuigan's play-through via the lens of "readymade" art, an aesthetic movement popularized by Marcel Duchamp that recontextualizes non-art objects through the choice to showcase the object as art, and in doing, questions the status of both the artist and the art object.<sup>8</sup> By asking McGuigan to bypass the narrative structures of *Grand Theft Auto*—in which players ascend criminal hierarchies through illicit missions—Tusman and McGuigan subvert normative gameplay and open up alternative possibilities for experiencing the gameworld. Tusman also described his collaboration with McGuigan

as a tactical move that allowed the work to reach a wider viewership and to be seen in multiple contexts simultaneously, both artistic and otherwise.

While the specifics of Tusman and McGuigan's collaboration are not explicitly discussed in *Lost Angeles* or its framing materials, Tusman explained to me in an interview how he and McGuigan prepared for the stream. Before broadcasting, Tusman and McGuigan corresponded via email and completed a test run. Tusman, from his post in Los Angeles, shared travel guides with McGuigan, who had never visited Los Angeles in person, and sent links to blog posts, academic papers, and newspaper articles that addressed the activity of walking from a variety of perspectives. The suite of readings helped to place *Lost Angeles* within an ongoing dialogue amongst scholars and game players about how video games might serve as a new landscape for avant-garde intellectual and aesthetic practice. In more than one article, authors connect avant-garde pedestrian methods such as the *dérive*, psychogeography, and *flânerie* with a subset of video games designed to be experienced via first-person virtual walking.<sup>9</sup> *Kill Screen* blog contributor Miguel Penabella discusses how gaming communities have failed to appreciate the value of these minimalist walking games derisively called "walking simulators." Penabella argues that more than just a genre of video games, first-person walking games are part of an ongoing artistic movement. Rather than treating walking as a "perfunctory, emotionless action," he urges gamers to consider how these games treat walking as a meaningful mode of expression, and how decelerating the level of action within gameplay encourages "a contemplative, participatory mindset over guided directness."<sup>10</sup> Tusman engages these dialogues by playing an action-oriented game as if it were a "walking simulator." By inviting a practiced gamer to navigate a virtual version of a real city he has never visited, and then to broadcast that navigation to viewers, some of whom watch the feed while standing in the real city, *Lost Angeles* generates an overlap between the real and virtual cities and asks questions about how we experience both real and virtual spaces.

Combining both the idea of the "readymade" and the tradition of walking as a mode of aesthetic expression, Tusman invites McGuigan to do what he normally does (play a video game for a live audience) within a pre-made virtual space (*Grand Theft Auto's* Los Santos), but with specific intent of wandering. In his description, Tusman

describes McGuigan's role in the three-hour journey as a "virtual flâneur;"<sup>11</sup> he wanders through Los Santos, moving toward that which attracts him and offering commentary and personal reflections as he goes. His citation of virtual flânerie refers to a longstanding literary fascination with the role of the stroller in the urban landscape. Two of the more recognized treatments of the flâneur appear in the writings of Charles Baudelaire<sup>12</sup> and Walter Benjamin<sup>13</sup> who characterize the flâneur as a "passionate spectator"<sup>14</sup> who sees the world from the very center of its activity while remaining anonymous—as Baudelaire says, "The spectator is a prince who everywhere rejoices in his incognito."<sup>15</sup> For Benjamin, the idling flâneur is able to reveal secret meanings within the cityscape; outside the purposeful rush of the other city dwellers the flâneur can see what the others do not.<sup>16</sup> Baudelaire's flâneur, active in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, is notably male, white, and of the leisure class, which affords him both mobility and neutrality. The flâneur differs from the other characters that inhabit his domain: the dandy, who dresses to stand out, and the urchin, who is invisible and always told to move along.

While the normative mode of play in *Grand Theft Auto (GTA)* encourages players to carry out a series of heists, car-jackings, murders, and other illegal actions in service of the game's pre-scripted narrative, the design of the *GTA* games also creates ideal locations for flânerie. Built as "open worlds"<sup>17</sup> in which players may roam freely in addition to following the linear narrative, the games situate players within condensed yet lifelike versions of American cities that have been painstakingly constructed based on input from tour guides, architectural historians, and extensive photographic and motion capture data.<sup>18</sup> The level of detail in each virtual city invites a secondary mode of play; in addition to advancing the game's narrative through criminal missions, players also enjoy the less-used option of suspending plot-advancing activities in order to explore and interact with the virtual site.

Throughout the lifetime of the *GTA* franchise, shifts in both the narrative structure and player experience of the game have progressively enriched its offerings for virtual flâneurs. Whereas in the first versions of the game (*GTA I-IV*), players are restricted to embodying a single character in the criminal underworld, more recent versions allow players to switch between three different characters, and later, to create multiple unique avatars and missions.<sup>19</sup> The fracturing of *GTA*'s playable narratives coincides with an

expansion in the depth and complexity of the gameworlds and a crucial change in the way that players view their virtual surroundings. In *GTA V*, players acquire the ability to switch from a third-person perspective of their avatar to first-person view, which reveals the gameworld in increased detail while raising the stakes of each action.<sup>20</sup> *GTA V*'s perspective shift thus allows for a deeper immersion into the gameworld while simultaneously inviting more investment in observation and experimentation as modes of game play. McGuigan and Tusman's project of virtual flânerie, then, responds to an invitation coded within the very structure of *Grand Theft Auto*: put aside your mission and navigate instead by desire and curiosity.

### **Inviting the flâneuse**

As a scholar interested in the relationship between place and embodiment, I was drawn to Tusman and McGuigan's collaboration and the questions it provokes about what it means to be "in" a place. While watching McGuigan move through Los Santos, I began to wonder how we might understand our experience of places in which we are never physically present. Watching McGuigan move his avatar through Los Santos, I was reminded of Lena Hammergren's article, "The re-turn of the flâneuse" in which Hammergren appropriates the male figure of the flâneur, who prioritizes vision above all other senses, to create a different and distinctly feminine pedestrian observer: the flâneuse.

With the figure of the flâneuse, Hammergren responds to what Janet Wolff has highlighted as invisibility of women in the literature of modernity.<sup>21</sup> In her widely-cited article, "The Invisible Flaneuse," Wolff argues that accounts of modernity, which have focused primarily on urban public spaces, have failed to consider the role of women who have generally been confined to the private sphere.<sup>22</sup> Modernity, as described and theorized in the literature of authors like Baudelaire, makes visible certain categories of female city dwellers: the prostitute, the widow, the old maid, the lesbian, the murder victim, and the woman who passes swiftly by on her way to somewhere else (but *never* tarries). There is no female counterpart for the flâneur, who enjoys both anonymity and the privilege of taking up public space, except for those who disguise their genders.<sup>23</sup>

In “The re-turn of the flâneuse,” Hammergren writes from the point of view of a historian trying to make literal “sense” of the 1930 Stockholm Exhibition, of which there are no female accounts. In order to enter into the space of the Exhibition, Hammergren uses an act of imagination in which she synthesizes her own lived experience with information from written historical sources. Hammergren-as-flâneuse walks hand in hand with the flâneur, with his penetrative “glances, gazes, peeps, stares, and observations,”<sup>24</sup> and instead focuses on kinesthesia; she allows the environment to touch her. The flâneuse literally fleshes out the flâneur by including her whole body as an instrument of research. While the flâneur is preoccupied with what he sees, the flâneuse asks, “What bodily sensations do I get? How does it feel to touch an object, to adjust to a normative bodily code [...] to sit in a chair, to look over a landscape [...] to compare this body to that body?”<sup>25</sup> By calling up an archive of personal bodily memories, the flâneuse creates a hypothetical experience of places she may never visit physically. By attending to her own physical sensations and bodily memories as they interact with archival materials and hypothetical scenarios, Hammergren suggests that the historian can, in fact, wander through the past using the vehicle of her present-day body.

This dual positioning of the flâneuse, which brings inaccessible spaces into reach through the vehicle of the historian’s own body, provides a useful lens for understanding some of the ways McGuigan occupies the city of Los Santos both discursively and physically. Just as Hammergren cannot travel back in time to 1930, McGuigan cannot realistically exist within Los Santos, but might still visit the virtual landscape through linkages between his own bodily memory and the virtual landscape. He muses on the cozy feeling of seeing city lights after being in more remote areas, remarks on the similarities between the oceanfront in the game and his home in Northern Ireland, and delights in finding the ruins of an old house that remind him of clandestine parties as a teenager. Thus, McGuigan’s sense of being in Los Santos is constructed through a network of other places he has visited and the way those places have acted on his body.

The flâneuse is also active in McGuigan’s kinesthetic connection with his avatar. As *she* hoists herself over walls, *he* grunts audibly. When *she* falls into the water, *he* expresses surprise and annoyance. When *she* ascends cliff faces or other high points, *he* talks about his fear of heights and seems visibly disturbed by vertigo. For much of the

game, “I” and “she” are indistinct. The player’s paradoxical position as both inside and outside the game, as both the mover and the moved, is central to the very structure of *Grand Theft Auto* and helps to engender a feeling of immersion within the world of Los Santos.

One of the ways in which *Grand Theft Auto* creates this elision is through the option to switch between first- and third-person perspectives. In first-person mode, the player looks through the eyes of the avatar and experiences each place through the vehicle of her body. As McGuigan engages in his flânerie, he plays primarily in first-person mode: as she/he stumbles, the camera shakes and disorients. As she/he strains to ascend a steep slope, her/his footfalls slow down and her/his limbs appear at the sides of the frame, struggling to balance the rest of her/his body.

McGuigan’s relationship to and reliance on his avatar seems at first to mirror Hammergren’s relationship with Ivar Lo-Johansson, a Swedish working-class writer whose texts afford Hammergren a glimpse of the past. The flâneuse, lacking the total mobility of the flâneur, collaborates with figures like Lo-Johansson in order to imagine aspects of the space that have not been documented. However, McGuigan’s case can also be seen as an inversion of the flâneuse relationship; McGuigan (male) moves his avatar (female) through a virtual world and becomes affected by her kinesthetic experience, which is rendered visually through the game graphics in first-person mode.

### **Stumbling and breaking**

It is important to note that, although this relationship between the bodily experience of the player and that of the avatar is carefully crafted through the features mentioned above, it is also ambiguous and changeable. Konstantina Kiltani, Raphaela Groten, and Mel Slater have offered a framework for understanding what they term “Sense of Embodiment” in virtual spaces that helps to explain the instability of the kinesthetic connection between McGuigan and the avatar. Kiltani et al. define “Sense of Embodiment” as consisting of three subcomponents: sense of self-location, sense of agency, and sense of body ownership.<sup>26</sup> The authors posit that a person may be aware of connections between self and body, self and environment, and body and environment independently, without having to experience all aspects simultaneously in the same



location. The three factors are correlated, meaning they most often occur together, but can also operate in non-normative configurations of embodiment. For example, in out-of-body experiences, the connection between one's self and one's body is interrupted; likewise, in virtual game-play, a player may perceive their sense of self to be located in the body of an avatar, or in a virtual environment without a body at all.<sup>27</sup>

Kilteni et al. propose that “Sense of Embodiment” occurs along a scale in which the criteria of embodiment—self-location, agency, and ownership—are met to varying degrees and are dependent on specific conditions. According to this framework, self-location arises through the interpretation and synthesis of visuospatial, vestibular, and tactile signals. Agency is determined by the degree to which the imagined consequences of an action match the actual consequences. Ownership is affected by the degree of morphological similarity between a real body (or part) and an external body (or part) to be incorporated.<sup>28</sup> Following this logic, if “Sense of Embodiment” occurs through the interweaving of these separate but correlated factors, it becomes possible to see how the structure of *Grand Theft Auto* can induce a non-normative “Sense of Embodiment.” Players may perceive themselves as inside the virtual space of the game, inside the virtual bodies of the avatars, or present in both simultaneously. Through the functionalities of first-person player mode, realistic renderings of avatars' morphology and movement, and gameworlds that offer realistic consequences to players' actions, the design of *Grand Theft Auto* draws players into an embodied relationship with the game.

At the same time as the game produces a sense of physical immersion, certain features of the game prevent the player from achieving a stable “Sense of Embodiment” within the gameworld. During the three-hour journey, McGuigan rapidly toggles between first- and third-person perspectives, looking at the world through the avatar's eyes, but also viewing her from other vantages. Staring down from on high, or over at her from a distance, McGuigan and his audience can also regard the figure as an object to be controlled, a host accommodating us as we pass through the game, and perhaps even an expendable resource (and life is fairly cheap in *Grand Theft Auto*). Thus, the inbuilt option to choose between first- and third-person perspectives stages the player as both central and peripheral to the events that unfold within gameplay. Scholar Kiri Miller has discussed parallels between the perspectives of ethnographer and game-player,

highlighting how each mode encourages both immersion and detachment. While Miller focuses primarily on the parodic nature of *Grand Theft Auto*'s content, the overlap between first-person and third-person play also supports her observation that the games "keep each player in [a] liminal state that partially defines the classic fieldwork experience: not a tourist, but not a local; [...] in the world but not of the world."<sup>29</sup> This state of ambivalent immersion within Los Santos draws players into the game but allows for regular breaks in the connection in order to facilitate fantasy actions—hijacking a helicopter, assassinating a rival, or base-jumping from the Hollywood sign—that would be largely impossible in Los Angeles.

*In the last hour of the video, McGuigan makes his avatar take a selfie at the top of a cliff, but she stumbles and falls. "Oh shit!" he exclaims, and flippantly adds, "Well ... that's the end of my vacation." But the avatar gets up and dusts herself off—"What just happened? We're alive again." As he spurs her to further jumps, scrambling up hills and falling again, I wince. As a viewer on the live stream, I am struck by the realization that I feel anxious. Suddenly, it becomes necessary to consider my own kinesthetic investment in this scenario. After spending the afternoon watching McGuigan's wandering through the eyes of the avatar, it dawns on me I have been building my own connections to her experience without realizing. I remember Hammergren's phrase, "the writer does, in a sense, plunge into the past" when the "source material [operates] kinesthetically on the writer."<sup>30</sup> Watching McGuigan's has caused me to slip into a place somewhere in between the gameworld and my own chair. I am there, in Los Santos, while being here in Los Angeles. More than just a voyeur, I, like McGuigan, actively process the two cities, layering them as I move/he moves/she moves through them. As McGuigan looks for a stop in highway traffic so he can move her across the street, I tense up, remembering my own bodily experience of being out of place as a pedestrian, newly landed in a city where car is king.*

As McGuigan moves us through Los Santos, I realize that have been participating all the while in the flâneuse's memory associations. In addition to getting to know McGuigan better, I seem to achieve a measure of sympathetic embodiment with the avatar, built through my gradual exposure to the gameworld through her perspective.

As I attempt to account for this, I can think of several ways to explain my shift from voyeur to accidental flâneuse. First, the elephant in the room: McGuigan chose a female avatar to move through the game. When I asked Tusman about this choice, he told me that they had tested the broadcast with a male avatar, but that McGuigan had selected a female version at the last minute, without explanation. We conjectured that perhaps

McGuigan had wished to distance himself from the male-centric and often misogynistic tenor of normal play in *Grand Theft Auto* by choosing an avatar that was visually outside of the cast of known characters. Tusman also offered that McGuigan may have wanted to play with a body different than his own, but then cryptically added that perhaps McGuigan did not perceive the avatar as having a body that was different than his own.<sup>31</sup> Either way, I register and am aware of the consequences of the morphological similarities between my own body and hers.

Second, as I watch McGuigan's video stream, my experience meets several of the criteria outlined in the "Sense of Embodiment" framework: on the screen, I view limbs that are morphologically similar to my own and find that the actions carried out by those limbs result in consequences that are more or less what I would expect if I were acting on my own. I begin to measure the virtual space through the avatar's strides and arm-lengths as she walks the city and reaches for objects. Through the high-definition motion graphics, I also receive information about the relationship between the avatar's body and gravity that stimulates my connection with her virtual body; when she falls, the horizon shakes and blurs just as it has when I have fallen. Because McGuigan manipulates the gaming console on his couch in Ireland, I experience a lesser degree of agency and ownership over my avatar body, but surprisingly, the information I take in passively as a viewer is potent enough to provoke a sense of being both in the avatar body and in the gameworld.

Finally, Tusman and McGuigan's project to enter the virtual world of Los Santos through the lens of *flânerie* generates a third invitation to find myself inside the game. As he plays, the little rectangle in the bottom left corner of the screen arranges his body to face mine. He cannot see me, but throughout our three hours together, I shift my focus between watching him and watching the avatar, amused that we may both be looking through the same pair of eyes at times. I think of the oddness of our configuration; we are facing each other, but also looking in the same direction through the eyes of the avatar. McGuigan generally broadcasts rather than converses, but in sharing his personal memories as they arise in relation to the virtual landscape, he triggers a similar process in my own memory. Furthermore, the specific geographic and temporal context of my own viewing—as a recent arrival in Los Angeles who has just made first impressions of many

of the featured locations from the vantage of my own body—heightens the number and clarity of associations I can make with the virtual world.

### **Sitting with the pieces**

*He begins to talk about plans to jump off a mountain, land on a train, and catch a ride back to the city, and I desperately want to leave Los Santos. His ongoing stream-of-consciousness narration coexists onscreen with jagged readjustments of perspective that jump according to the dips and bumps of the trail. Almost at once, our alignments with each other seem to reverse. I note that the avatar and I are both silent. We see a sign reading "Danger," and he lets out the laugh of someone who knows he is about to get in trouble. The wooden slats of a rickety bridge creak underneath us and the sound of the wind grows louder and more menacing. McGuigan bids the audience goodbye and makes the avatar parachute off a mountain peak. Her hands frame the mountain range ahead of us as he steers. He mimics the voice of a pilot telling us the altitude and flight speed. I look at her hands.*



Figure 1. Derm McGuigan a.k.a. PasticheOfSkin navigates Los Santos via the cooperative body of the avatar (Image: screen capture by author on December 2, 2016).

*We arrive at a place called Paleto Bay that looks strikingly like a deserted Malibu. I remember visiting this real-world location only days before and feeling small next to the dusty cliffs that abut the expansive Pacific Ocean. I walked the beach at sunset, sharing it with just a few other people due to the cold November air. I remember wondering if it was a mistake to remain on the beach after dark—I had become accustomed to the rhythms of foot traffic in New York and knew the well-lit pathways home by heart, but in*

*California, I was still figuring out how, when, and where it was safe to walk the city. Suddenly, McGuigan's image disappears from the screen. The moon gradually moves out of the frame and the sky turns increasingly purple as cars pass one-by-one on the highway below. I can see the light of the moon on the ocean and remember numerous other times I watched it rise over the Atlantic (I briefly access the bodily imprint of sitting in the sand near my grandmother's house in Massachusetts and watching the moon rise, impossibly large, over the water). I hear cars and birds. I am aware of my computer's waning battery. I am scrunched in my chair. I am looking back at the screen. I hear crickets outside. Are they in Los Angeles or Los Santos? It gets darker. I hear a car radio and then a ticking clock. The division between spaces is no longer clear to me. The screen flashes "Alert – kicked from the session for being idle too long. Return to GTA online" along with a small button that says: "Continue"... Since I can't press the button, I drift further away from Paleto Bay, Malibu, and Massachusetts, and back to my orange sofa in Los Angeles.*

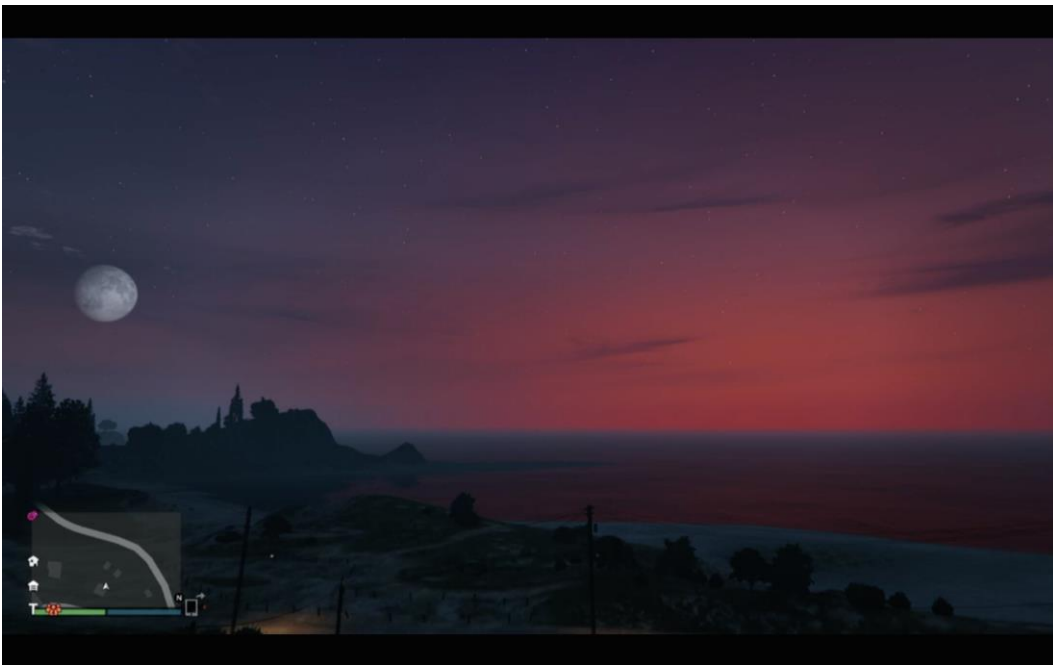


Figure 2: Derm McGuigan quits the scene. I am left to contemplate the sun setting over Paleto Bay (or is it Malibu?) as the counter runs out. (Image: screen capture by author on December 2, 2016).

I understand my state of disorientation as resulting from the intersection of inherent aspects of gameplay in *Grand Theft Auto* with Tusman and McGuigan's intentional use of Los Santos as a site for virtual flânerie. Over the course of McGuigan's three-hour video, the "I" of the wanderer(s) moves between singularity and multiplicity, while the "place" of the wanderer(s) fractures into an index of other places that the

wanderer(s) occupy simultaneously. We are in the game, but also in galleries and on couches and in numerous other unknown locations. We are in Los Santos, but also in other cities. We are in our bodies, but using the circumstances of another body to experience Los Santos, which constantly refers to its twin, Los Angeles. As she moves, we are reminded of other places: The Hollywood Bowl, Santa Monica Pier, and the Venice canals, but also the childhood hideouts, abandoned buildings, and corner stores of our memories. If *Grand Theft Auto* provokes a flâneuse-like relationship with both city and avatar, Tusman's broadcasting of McGuigan's game results in a proliferation of flâneuse figures who visit Los Santos with the help of the avatar. Even though McGuigan is in control of the avatar, the fact that the live stream viewers witness his/her journey from a first-person perspective reinforces a kinesthetic connection between the secondary viewer and the avatar.

For Hammergren, the body is an archival tool, but also an archive in its own right. The historian's body can join with the archive and draw out additional meaning about the past, but only because the historian's body remembers how it feels to interact with the world in its own lifetime. One of the reasons *Grand Theft Auto* is so compelling is because it activates this bodily archive—of places remembered, of falls taken, of the feeling of exertion and escape—to heighten the thrill of doing in Los Santos what would never be possible in Los Angeles. Walking as flâneuses in the city of Los Santos, we gain insight into place as a dynamic construction, built from a combination of new and remembered experience. When thinking about where we are when playing in a gameworld, perhaps the question to ask is not “Where are we?” but “How are we?” By detaching from the need to exist within a single location, we might better understand how places are always networked with other places. In a sense, all places are “virtual”—that is, created through the union of real-time perception and past experience. It is only through bringing attention to kinesthetic experience that we might hope to make them “real.”

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<sup>1</sup> This video was originally broadcast on Twitch.tv with the title, *#PasticheOfSkin LIVE 'Free As In' Tour of Los Angeles/Los Santos*. The Twitch.tv link no longer functions, but Tusman made a version available on YouTube for readers of this article at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3mFLdRIUVy8>

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- <sup>2</sup> Lee Tusman. e-mail message to author. October 15, 2016.
- <sup>3</sup> For discussions of the flâneur and flânerie, see Charles Baudelaire, *The Painter of Modern Life* (1893) and Walter Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism*, Harry Zohn, trans. (1983)
- <sup>4</sup> Lena Hambergren, “The re-turn of the flâneuse” in *Corporealities: Dancing, Knowledge, Culture, and Power*, ed. Susan Leigh Foster (London: Routledge, 1996), 54.
- <sup>5</sup> Hambergren dialogues with Janet Wolff’s feminist critique of the bias toward (primarily masculine) public space within modern literature. See: Janet Wolff, “The Invisible Flâneuse: Women and the Literature of Modernity,” *Theory, Culture and Society* 2, no. 3 (1985): 37-46
- <sup>6</sup> McGuigan and Tusman, 2016.
- <sup>7</sup> Patrick Lee. “The Best Let’s Play Videos Offer More than Vicarious Playthroughs,” *The A.V. Club*, April 25, 2015. Accessed December 2, 2016. <http://www.avclub.com/article/best-lets-play-videos-offer-more-vicarious-playthr-218477>
- <sup>8</sup> Tate. “Readymade – Art Term.” Tate. Accessed December 16, 2017. <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/r/readymade>
- <sup>9</sup> Rosa Carbo-Mascarell. “Walking Simulators: The Digitisation of an Aesthetic Practice.” *DiGRA/FDG ’16 - Proceedings of the First International Joint Conference of DiGRA and FDG* 13, no. 1 (August 2016). [http://www.digra.org/wp-content/uploads/digital-library/paper\\_66.pdf](http://www.digra.org/wp-content/uploads/digital-library/paper_66.pdf).
- <sup>10</sup> Miguel Penabell. “Why Are We So Afraid to Walk?” *Kill Screen*, October 27, 2015. <https://killscreen.com/articles/why-are-we-so-afraid-walk/>.
- <sup>11</sup> *Lost Angeles* was originally created as part of the exhibition, *Free As In...* at the Department of Design Media Arts at UCLA.
- <sup>12</sup> Charles Baudelaire and Jonathan Mayne. *The Painter of Modern Life: And Other Essays* (New York, N.Y.: Da Capo Press, 1964).
- <sup>13</sup> Walter Benjamin. “Paris: The Capital of the Nineteenth Century” in *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism*, Harry Zohn, trans. London, 1983.
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