The persistence of games is remarkable. Empires and institutions may disappear, but games survive with the same rules and sometimes even the same paraphernalia. The chief reason is that they are not important and possess the permanence of the insignificant. (Roger Caillois)

I am restoring to our silent and apparently immobile soil, its instability, its flaws; and it is the same ground that is once more stirring under our feet. (Michel Foucault)

An Approximation + Reassembly of Given:
1. The Waterfall, 2. The Illuminating Gas

Notes concerning a virtual reconstruction and analysis of Marcel Duchamp’s Étant Donnés. Duchamp is believed to have completed his last great work in 1966 and to have produced the famous manual of instructions the same year.

Introduction

When Marcel Duchamp announced to the world in 1923 that he was retiring from painting to pursue the game of chess, this statement was part of an elaborate critique of what he termed the ‘retinal’ in art and simultaneously constituted one of the opening moves of what would later be known as conceptual art. Indeed Duchamp’s withdrawal constituted a precise analytical game and paradoxically an extraordinarily playful and casual act. The seemingly contradictory nature of this move, that it was at once profoundly logical and rational and at the same time a celebration of irrational desire and the aleatory, lies at the heart of Duchamp’s critique. For Duchamp these two realms did not have to be mutually exclusive. They were part and parcel of what he believed needed to be restored to the art world and something that the game of chess as a cerebral and yet passionate game had not lost. Chess for Duchamp had by this time become a model of the aesthetic, an ideal activity that was at once governed by precise intellectual rules but also subject to the influence of play and desire.

As is well known, Duchamp went on to pursue one of his most important works after this extraordinary withdrawal. Beginning sometime in 1946...
Duchamp undertook an ambitious project. This project, enigmatically entitled, *Étant Donnés: 1. La chute d’eau 2. Le gaz d’éclairage* (Given: 1. The Waterfall, 2. The Illuminating Gas) consisted of a sort of complex three-dimensional assembly; a tableau that was neither simply a painting nor sculpture. It was also a work that would eventually rewrite the trajectory of both disciplines and send shock waves through the art establishment. Its genealogy could perhaps be said to be closest to 19th century diorama and *phantasmagoria*, but also to the shop window displays and arcades with which German social theorist Walter Benjamin was so absorbed. Duchamp is believed to have completed the project in 1966 two years before his death and some twenty years after its initiation. A lot had changed in the intervening years. It was now the height of the Cold War, a time that was to see the rise of decedents of the imaginary worlds of the arcades; ‘simulated’ phenomena that would continue the accelerated trajectory of technological illusion. This was the period of the ascendancy of the digital computer and with it the emergence of the realm of computer representation. Ironically, as Duchamp was preparing his final critique of retinal art a new media was emerging based upon the dominance of vision.

The completion of Duchamp’s last great work in 1966 and the emergence of computer simulation in the same period present an interesting alignment. Indeed it is just such an aleatory alignment that would have fascinated Duchamp. Could it be by chance that as he was putting the finishing touches on his work and writing the famous ‘manual of instructions’ outlining its assembly, that in a computer lab at Harvard University Ivan Sutherland, the ‘father’ of computer graphics, was creating the first ‘virtual reality’ environment? This was an environment in which the ‘viewer’ could enter a virtual wireframe room through use of a head-mounted display a procedure that strangely resonates with the work of Duchamp. Could it be that forty years later the most appropriate way to investigate these phenomena would be to utilize a game descended from this technology as the seed of the representational strategy to analyze Duchamp’s work? It is with this notion in mind that the Quake ‘n Space project set out on the present virtual reconstruction.

There is a pregnant opportunity in all of these alignments. It is an opportunity that opens the possibility of a renewed analysis and critique of these issues particularly as they relate to the rapid transformations in the use of computer representation in architecture, the arts and popular forms of entertainment such as film and electronic gaming. This opportunity necessitates the reevaluation of such diverse discursive fields as game theory, architecture, Cold War cultural studies, popular film, electronic entertainment, psychoanalysis and theories of representation. These fields need to be put into play as their cross-contamination will engender new domains of study that can reveal alternative directions in the interpretation of the issues surrounding this important work.

Forty years after the final move of Duchamp’s game the Quake ‘n Space project began as a reconstruction of *Étant Donnés* utilizing the popular video game *Quake III Arena*. *Quake* is a game that is readily available and is serviced by a vast community of devoted online players and ‘mappers.’ Mappers are players who have moved beyond the passive role of consuming the standard environments provided by the game’s makers and have become producers of new environments themselves. Utilizing Duchamp’s own manual of Instructions, a facsimile of which is published by the Philadelphia Museum of Art the home of *Étant Donnés*, the Quake ‘n Space project produced a digital model of the tableau. This digital model was then translated to the native format of the *Quake III* game technology utilizing freely available software from the online community.
Danger and Vision

The technologies associated with ‘video games’ and their contemporary manifestation, interactive gaming, engender a host of issues concerning representation, embodiment, the violence of the gaze, automats, the monstrous other, and the distancing of subject from object. However, it is in regard to the notion of the Voyeur, a term specifically used by Duchamp when he compiled his elaborate instruction manual for the assembly of Étant Donnés in 1966, that one might find parallels between video games such as Quake and Duchamp’s final work. These are parallels that might reveal something about the structure of Duchamp’s ‘Game’ and in the process open up potential connections between this seminal work of the 20th century and contemporary architectural discourse.

It is in the figure of the Voyeur that influential thinkers such as Sartre began to link the disembodied notion of vision that characterized Enlightenment thinking with mechanisms of desire. This repositioning of the organism back into the regime of vision is occasioned in Sartre’s discussion in ‘The Look’ by the interruption of the act of peeping through a keyhole by another’s gaze. The act of solitary viewing is exposed to ‘the look’ of the Other, thereby diminishing the mastery of the subject over the field of view. The subject is returned to its body and revealed as an object to others. As Rosalind Krauss has elaborated:

It is this pinioned object, this body bent over the keyhole, this carnal being trapped in the searchlight of the Other’s gaze, that Sartre thickens into an object, and thus an outsider to his own eyes. For in this position he is no longer pure, transparent intentionality beamed at what is on the door’s far side, but rather, simply as body caught on this side, he has become a self that exists on the level of all other objects of the world, a self that has suddenly become opaque to his own consciousness, a self that he therefore cannot know but only be .... (Krauss, 2004)

The networked nature of modern interactive gaming, with Quake III Arena being perhaps the most paradigmatic example, has much in common with this description. The disembodied ‘avatar’ that enters a game world acts as the focal point of the perception of the user. This voyeur separated from other players by the computer screen, is exposed to the mobile gaze
of a host of mutual players within the field of play. These multiple and constantly transforming viewpoints serve to re-objectify each of the players and force them ‘back into the world.’ Their virtual identities merging into the representation of the spatial playing field itself.

This loss of identity, this masking, or to use the appropriate gaming term skinning, begins to equate the hollow core surfaces of the player character (a kind of painted identity) with the surface rendering of the environment. In this sense the player can be seen as camouflaged with respect to the world, a condition of loss of self, of being engulfed by the ‘void’ of the environment that is reminiscent of Roger Caillois’ discussion of insect camouflage in ‘Mimicry and Legendary Psychasthenia’ as referred to in Anthony Vidler’s The Architectural Uncanny.

Caillois’s theory centers on the idea that the loss of self, generated out of ‘represented spaces... multiplied by contemporary science: Finsler’s space, Fermat’s spaces, Riemann-Christoffels hyper-space, abstract, generalized...and thinned out...’ are the result of the mutability and transience of the presumed focal point of perception. This phenomenon, as related to visual perception, can be summarized by reference to the idea of a ‘double dihedral changing at every moment in size and position.’ The figure and the horizontal plane of mobility form an intersection that remains fluid as the figure moves about and thus progressively the organism is ‘no longer the origin of the coordinates, but one point among many; it is dispossessed of its privilege and literally no longer knows where to place itself.’ The anxiety of the living creature is increased until a fundamental disturbance is created ‘between personality and space.’ Such an experience became essentially schizophrenic for Caillois:
To these dispossessed souls, space seems to be a devouring force. Space pursues them, encircles them, digests them in a gigantic phagocytosis. It ends by replacing them. Then the body separates itself from thought, the individual breaks the boundary of his skin and occupies the other side of his senses. He tries to look at himself from any point whatever in space. He feels himself becoming space, dark space where things cannot be put. He is similar, not similar to something, just similar. And he invents spaces of which he is ‘the convulsive possession.’

(Caillois, 1984)

It is important to note that the player’s virtual ‘body’ in these gaming environments becomes fragile as well as anxious and split, a phenomena that mirrors the player’s own body’s vulnerability in modern technological society. They become open to what Gaston Bachelard termed ‘the coefficient of adversity,’ a term that became so important to Sartre in *Being and Nothingness*. The electronic playing field becomes the space for the multiple and fluid exchange of a visual ‘intertwining,’ technologically initiated and separated by vast distances. A zone is constructed where each and every-one becomes the target of another’s gaze and eventually dissolves into the environment through the process of being ‘fragged’. The violence of this exchange is what fundamentally characterizes modern video games. It is not however without precedence in modern thought. Certainly the violence inherent in Duchamp’s *Étant Donnés* against the figure beyond the door has affinities with this notion especially as it registers the shame a viewer feels at being exposed observing such a scene.

The *Dark Space* mentioned by Caillois can be extended to become synonymous with the space of an arcade or the dark residential room from which a gamer is networking in - a ‘non-space’ that can be situated anywhere. The gamer is a hyper-accelerated version of Benjamin’s *flaneur*, where the context of the urban arcade has imploded into itself to produce another kind of fragmented and disinterested viewer. The dangerous environment here is not the densely filled urban environment with the ‘shocks and collisions’ of traffic intersections but the paranoid field of being subjected to the legacy of Mutual Assured Destruction. Players prefer to shroud themselves in darkened spaces while playing and thus fulfill a logical extension of the Cold War mantra ‘duck and cover.’ In many ways video games and the environments in which they occur are simply accelerated, disorienting versions of this same cycle of viewer and viewed recognition, a cycle that culminates in frenzied ‘fragmentation.’

Walter Benjamin perhaps foresaw some of these changes. He pointed out after all, in *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, how the work of the Dadaists (in this sense it is clear we can include Duchamp) became ‘an
instrument of ballistics’ and paralleled a series of transformations culminating in the effects of film. Their work ‘hit the spectator like a bullet...thus acquiring a tactile quality.’ Here, Benjamin is referring to the irony that in film the ‘distancing element...is also primarily tactile, being based on changes of place and focus which periodically assail the spectator.’ (Benjamin,1985) The trajectory of the visual arts, increasingly registered through mechanical modes of representation, moved away from notions of slow, thoughtful contemplation toward accelerated physical shock and bodily desire.

In a fascinating cultural alignment that is particularly Duchampian, the nosecone art of WWII bombers can make clear the connection between projectiles, fate, and visual pleasure. They can also serve as a parallel manifestation of the logical conclusion of Benjamin’s thesis in a society in which individual citizens are subject to the fear of destruction from an abstract aerial attacker. This type of long distance bomber in the hands of an enemy ‘other’ and the desire to defend against them is what led to the development of the U.S. continental defense network based on RADAR technology. This system known as the Semi Automatic Ground Environment (SAGE) defended the United States during the Cold War and is the technology through which computer graphics, the internet and electronic gaming are descended.

Anthony Vidler has outlined Sartre’s interest in ‘the coefficient of adversity’ in The Architectural Uncanny. For Sartre the body is re-inscribed into the equation of vision due to its own vulnerability; ‘the definition of the self and its body is
described as a function of the perception of resistance that objects in the world have to the self.’ (Vidler, 1992) Rather than the disembodied entity of visual mastery, the body is revealed to us after the confrontation with instrumental-things and the danger they present to our wholeness.

Sartre's body participates in a world within which it has to be immersed and to which it has to be subjected even before it can recognize itself as a body. It knows itself precisely because it is defined in relation to instrumental complexes that themselves are threatened by other instruments, understood as ‘destructive devices.’ (Vidler, 1992)

The instrumental complexes associated with video game technology grew out of the command and control systems of the Cold War, which like Sartre's formulation of the ‘making of the self’ through the confrontation with instrumental danger, were developments of the experiences of WWII. Given that the technological armatures emerging out of this same period - ballistic missiles, RADAR, computers, atomic warfare, aerial bombardment and cybernetic theory - in some way all participated in the development of real-time computational simulation, it is not surprising that echoes of Sartre's problematic should appear in contemporary game technology.

Thus, ironically, it is not by chance either that the same gaming systems have been chosen by the U.S. Government to be the basis of modern training and recruitment simulators for the Army (America's Army based on the Unreal game engine). There is a long tradition of this interchange between the military industrial complex and civilian modes of entertainment and communication systems. These connections have been most clearly mapped by Paul Virilio. The notions of the radical insecurity of our bodies in the world vis-à-vis the destructive instrumentation of contemporary warfare, ideas that grew out of Sartre's fear of aerial bombardment, have been extended by Virilio to their modern manifestations in computer graphics and telecommunication networks:

Numerous innovations in computer technology were spin-offs of the effective installation of this warning system [SAGE - America's cold war early warning system], which used a real-time radar network for the very first time. One example we might cite is the notion of time-sharing, the coupling of the computer and the telephone that would give rise to TELEMATICS, computer simulation and even the beginnings of digital imagery .... In its way, the SAGE system opened the door to the world of virtual reality, that otherworld made necessary by the delivery speed of nuclear weapons. Since the real environment - urban and rural space - could no longer escape the influence of electromagnetic networks, the possibility of reconditioning it by a virtual, fundamentally cybernetic environment became a reality .... (Virilio, 1995)

Dark Ekstasis

Perhaps it is most appropriate then that this ‘reconstruction’ and investigation into the complex web of associative meanings in Duchamp's work, Étant Donnés, be carried out through the medium of another genre of game. Video games, those mediated by the glass plate ‘picture plane’ of the cathode ray tube, the electronic pulses of electron guns and glowing phosphors, are fertile ground to explore those issues of ‘retinal art’ and the relationship of technologies of projection to representation that were so important in Duchamp's work. The pulsing and constantly ‘refreshing’ screen of the computer is so clearly a descendant of Durer's and Alberti's glass plates, a dimensional collapse of space and time, a projective window engendered by an electronic ‘action at a distance.’ And yet this pulsation also aligns this device with the tradition of disruption
2.2 Quake ‘n Space: Duchamp’s Game 40 years After Stephen Turk

that Krauss so clearly presents in her later work. Could it be that Duchamp himself would have approved of the irony inherent in investigating such a canonical piece of 20th century art vis-à-vis the popular medium of interactive gaming, a genre routinely denigrated by the academy and press alike? A genre that is all about desire, that is experienced vicariously and yet is strangely visceral, where representations of bodies are routinely ‘fragged’ (blown apart) only to be respawned; where the incessant hum of a computer hard drive combines with the haunting glow of the screen initiating Ekstasis.

This project takes the position that the issues of vicarious experience inherent in these games and the technological armatures that bring them into being strike a cord with Duchamp’s work. They can serve as a spring board for
both a review of the heritage of his ideas as they evolved over the course of the 20th century as well as how they appear in popular entertainment forms and resonate through contemporary culture and architectural discourse. Duchamp’s persistent fascination with technology, his continuous project of exposing the irrational in the seemingly most secure frontier of the rational, the language of science and engineering, and his poetic reconfiguration of theories about space and time through the release of the ambiguity of this language, can be seen to be ‘verified’ in popular cultural forms centered on the personal computer. Ironically what drives the personal computer revolution at this point in time is not ‘productivity’ software but people’s taste for the irrational mythic narrative, the delirious twitching action of the ‘joy stick’ and the remote control megalomania of the simulated world.

There is an important distinction to be made with regard to some characteristics of the games involved in this study. Certainly there is an important differential to be laid out between Duchamp’s interest in chess and the reflex driven, spatially disorienting action of lightning fast interactive gaming. The very titles of video games such as Quake emphasize the destabilizing aspects of these games, the disorientation, confusion and the violence of play. While all of this is highly abstracted in the board game chess, these qualities are made extremely evident on the screen, painted with ever increasing realism. To clarify this situation one might turn to Roger Caillois’ classic study Man, Play and Games (1958) in which he outlines four polar qualities that establish the field of operation of games in culture.

Caillois’ important contribution to mid-century theories of games and perhaps why associates such as Jacques Lacan were so interested in his thought, was to reintroduce the poles of the irrational back into a discourse dominated by mid-century mathematical and cybernetic ‘game’ theories that excluded all but rational foundations for game playing and decision making. Chess, to game theorists, was a game of ‘perfect information’ where at each stage of play nothing was hidden and all possible choices were laid out in perfectly reasonable ways. In this sense Caillois’ discussions of games in culture can be seen as closely connected to Duchamp’s project which reintroduced destabilizing principles into the static form of play that had come to dominate early 20th century chess. Vertigo (ilinx), the irrational flirtation with chance (alea), ecstatic ritual (simulation) and the rule-based frames of competition (agon), form the opposing poles of Caillois’ thought, and provide a much larger field for the understanding of game phenomena in culture. Indeed, culture as such is seen in light of man’s capacity to play and construct abstract realities that encompass both the rational and irrational. (Caillois, 1979)

Caillois points to the survival in modern times of the irrational branch of this spectrum in the continued fascination with gambling, traveling fairs, the circus, carnival masks, tightrope walking and parachute jumping. We could easily extend his list into the late 20th century by adding so called ‘extreme sports’, amusement parks, the irrational obsessions of on-line auctions, special effect laden movies and video games.

The relationship between the poles of simulation and vertigo for Caillois are most clearly understood as a survival in modern society of the mask and ecstasy so characteristic of shamanistic practices. The frenzy of possession, the narrative journey to the other-world (the land of the dead) and the confrontation with the monstrous are constant motifs of modern video
2.2 Quake ‘n Space: Duchamp’s Game 40 years After Stephen Turk

From top left clockwise Fig. 29 Views of the Quake ‘n Space Reconstruction of the Étant Donnés
Fig. 30 The eye holes of the reconstruction and their remarkable affinity to the Caillois’ theory of insect camouflage
Fig. 31 Overall perspective view of the reconstruction
Fig. 32 Quake character approaching the reconstruction
SwanQuake: the user manual

The journey into the labyrinth, so prevalent in the ‘first person shooter’ genre of video games as exemplified by the Quake and Unreal game series, recapitulates the confrontation with the Minotaur.

This journey, I would suggest, is related to the historical trajectory of the Sublime, a ‘dark space’ phenomena according to Vidler, which survives in contemporary culture for all the success of the modernist model of transparency. This phenomena emerged out of late 18th century thought, where interest in light and transparency spawned an equally powerful opposite obsession with the fear of ‘darkened spaces.’ Vidler refers to Foucault’s discussion that this interest for the ‘fantasy-world of stone walls, darkness, hideouts and dungeons’ was the result of an initial fear ‘of the pall of gloom which prevents the full visibility of things, men and truths.’ (Vidler, 1992)

This duality of light and dark continues in the world of video entertainment, where the electric light ‘window’ of the computer screen is used to engender imaginary lands of fear and darkness.

These imaginary lands are the extension of Sartre’s notion of Ekstasis, a being-beyond oneself or ‘standing out from,’ that is most closely related to shamanistic ritual. Far from being a detached other worldly zone of rationalism, a space of separation and emotional detachment, this is a zone that reinvokes the primal notions of ecstasy in its original sense. This is a space of fear and danger. It is a space inhabited by berserkir (variously translated from Old Norse as bear-shirts or bare-skinned), a martial cult of ‘wild beast warriors’ who evoked animal furor when entering battle. This according to Eliade predates even shamanism and has its origins in ‘the hunting rites of the paleo-Siberian peoples, [whose] techniques of ecstasy develop[ed] from a mystical imitation of animal behavior.’ Initiation into such ecstatic cults involved ritual dismemberment and symbolic journeys both to the sky and the underworld to confront the dead, followed by a remaking of the bodily self by the reassembly of the initiates bones. (Eliade, 1972)
Deleuze and Guattari, though critical of both Sartre and Lacan’s notions of subjectivity as ‘reflected in a phenomenological field,’ nevertheless saw in the ecstatic furor of the berserker warrior pack a form of multiplicity, a ‘becoming-animal’ that escaped the subjectivity of the modern Western self. Sartre’s positioning of the danger inherent in the ‘coefficient of adversity’ as the foundation of subjectivity and his positioning of ekstasis to explain our situations as constantly beyond ourselves has echoes in Deleuze and Guattari. There is an inversion however in the flow of ‘danger’ as in Sartre the self is subjected to the danger from the outside, and is resistant to it, indeed formed by it, were as in Deleuze and Guattari the furor is generated internally in the pack and released across the landscape. Thus in Sartre a notion of the Humanist self is retained at the cost of a continual angst of subjectivity and being-in-the-world, but in Deleuze and Guattari the self is lost and flows fluidly both across the landscape and into others. The berserker for them ‘has an entire becoming that implies multiplicity, celerity, ubiquity, metamorphosis and treason, the power of affect.’ (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987)

In an often cited discussion of the cultural implications of games, Deleuze and Guattari expand upon these ideas in relationship to power structures and the ‘apparatus of the State’ through a comparison of the games Chess and Go. Deleuze and Guattari in this section of The Treatise on Nomadology are pointing to deeply rooted cultural traits that they believe to be characteristics of the games themselves. Deleuze and Guattari understand Chess as an ‘institutionalized, regulated, coded war, with a front, a rear [and] battles.’ This is placed in opposition to the game of Go, ‘a nonsubjectified machine assemblage with no intrinsic properties, only situational ones.’ Chess exemplifies the state in their view, operates through it, and with it, and thus is totally coded by it. Go on the other hand has the anonymity of the hoard; it is stateless, contingent, anonymous and collective. Go operates synchronically, Chess diachronically and thus the spaces they present are radically different. Go in their view creates a ‘smooth’ space, a space without easily definable boundaries, a space ‘with neither confrontation nor retreat,’ that operates through an emphasis on exteriority. Chess, on the other hand, establishes a ‘striated’ space with fronts, separations and interior ‘territories.’

Here the game being played is ultimately about the loss of the self, and the return of identity to the realm of world. Beings are not separate from the world here; beings in this game are engulfed in a becoming-landscape. Surely even this characterization, one that is suspiciously close to the phenomenological thoughts of Heidegger, would not be supported by the authors, as they are more interested in what they term lines of flight, or escapes from systems of codification and not in replacing one system with another. It is also clear however that Deleuze and Guattari are interested in the liberating potential of systems like Go that resist codification and territorial inscription. Go is positioned in this argument as a contingent, temporary point of resistance. Indeed resistance is too strong of a word, as the idea of withdrawal, retirement, flight and escape is a closer analogy. This is the idea of game in its broadest most general sense; a sense of a contingent flight from another world that perhaps explains Deleuze and Guattari’s interests in Game Theory.

This interest in the ecstatic, illicit, hidden, dispersed, deterritorialized and dark is according to Caillois a general function of games, whereby tendencies ‘disapproved and condemned by law and public opinion’ are brought forth in fictional universes to serve expressly as contradictions to received social values. He suggests, for instance, in the case of children’s marionettes, that they traditionally are ‘inclined to be grotesque and
immoral, if not even sacrilegious.’ The traditional British marionette story of Punch and Judy in which Punch performs all sorts of transgressive acts including murder, serves to illustrate the notion that these activities perform a cathartic role in culture, one in which an element of vertigo is present. The excesses of festivals, in which the ‘eruption of phantoms and strange powers terrifies and captivates’ individuals is also an expression of this same tendency. Caillios’ claim is that ultimately it is difficult to separate the rigid moments of rule based, circumscribed competition or theatrical simulation from the opposing poles of excess, transgression, chance and vertigo. (Callois, 1979)

Games like Quake and its brethren are thus important cultural artifacts that are part of this tendency in societies to transgress established boundaries, to destabilize categorical separations and frames of reference. They represent potential lines of flight from codified systems and received notions about the use of modern computer technology. These games are complex analogical mappings of the culture in which they are embedded. Thus, this new generation of games should be approached with a critical eye as they are closely aligned with the technological means of communication and electronic projection emerging over the course of the last century. The Quake ‘n Space project initiates a constellation of associative interconnections between the last great work of Marcel Duchamp and modern electronic media in the hopes of generating dialogue about both the potential benefits and pit falls of the use of this technology in our discipline. The issues of what Duchamp identified as the ‘retinal’ in art are perhaps more relevant than ever to architects as the praxis of the discipline becomes dominated by computer graphic representation. Attention to Duchamp’s game forty years after his last dramatic move may provide a line of flight from the standard debates about both the perceived problems and potentials of electronic media.

References
Caillois, Roger (1984) / 'Mimicry and Legendary Psychasthenia' / in October No. 31 (Fall) / Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press / Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies

Biography
Stephen Turk received his Bachelor of Architecture degree from the Pennsylvania State University in 1989 and Master of Architecture degree from the Ohio State University in 1991. He is a licensed architect practicing in Ohio and has taught at the Ohio State University for 15 years where he is an Associate Professor. He is the winner of an Award of Distinction from I.D. Magazines 45th Annual Design Review, a past recipient of the Architectural League of New York’s Young Architects Award and has been the awarded grants from the Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts and the Ohio Arts Council. Turk’s work focuses on the critical ramifications of technology in contemporary architectural discourse and explores issues of representation and the instrumental nature of technology. His interests cross many disciplinary boundaries but include film theory, interactive networked environments, computer aided fabrication, and furniture design. He is currently working on a series of projects entitled Gaming Space | Spatial Play that focuses on the critical potentials of contemporary inter-networked gaming phenomena in architectural design.