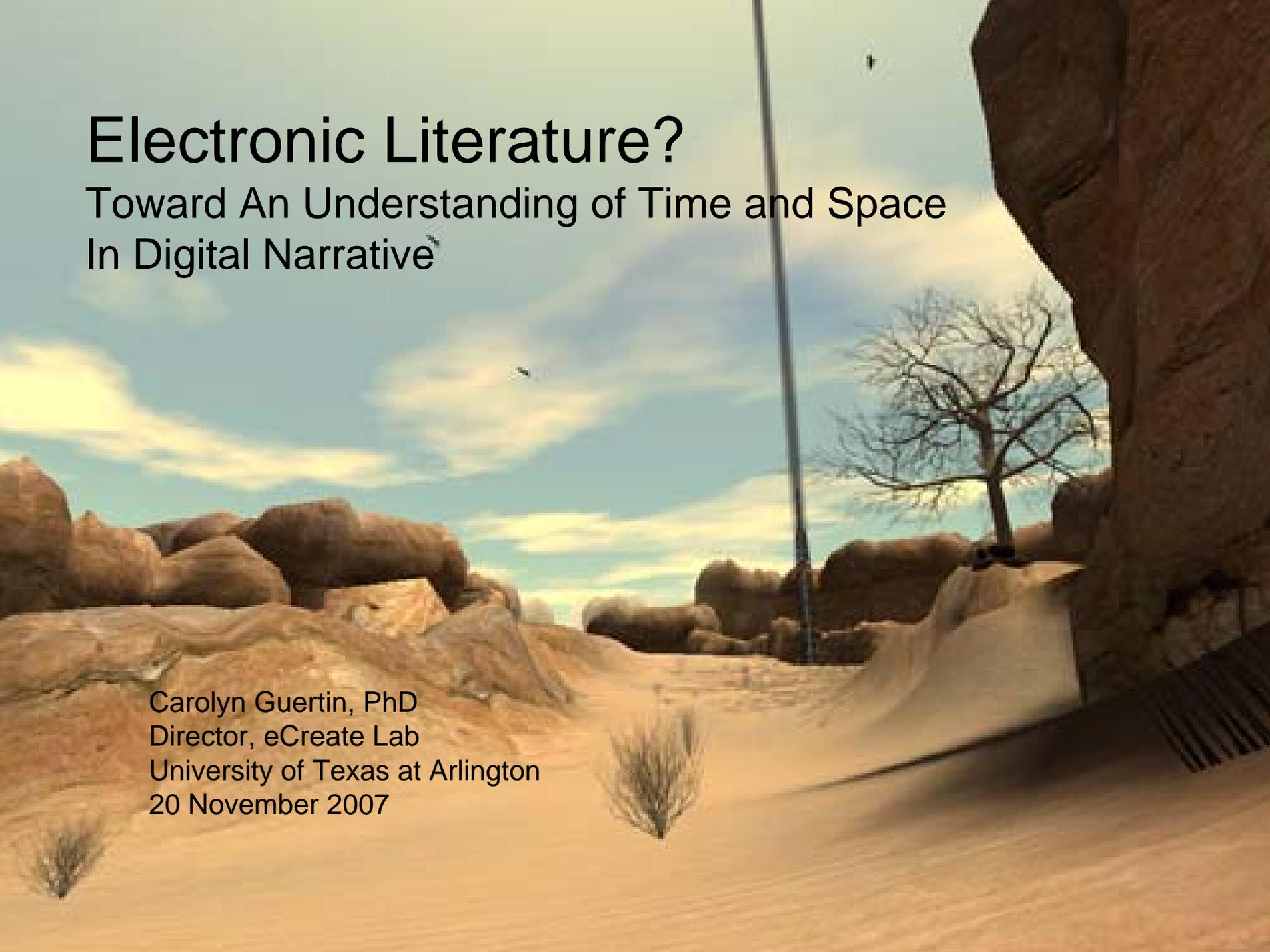


Electronic Literature?

Toward An Understanding of Time and Space
In Digital Narrative

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What is electronic literature?

Digital narrative versus electronic literature





Time is a key element
in storytelling



Photography made time visible,
revealing whole new worlds



Time Travel?



A time-based story is controlled.
It is an orchestrated experience.
Specific events in a specific order.

A photograph of a narrow alleyway between old stone buildings. The buildings have weathered, textured walls. On the right, there is a wooden door and a window with a grid pattern. The ground is uneven and appears to be made of dirt or stone. The lighting is warm, suggesting late afternoon or early morning. The text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

Space is connection. Engagement.
It is the place where we interact
with a narrative's many dimensions.

A spatial narrative operates under a different logic than time-based narrative.

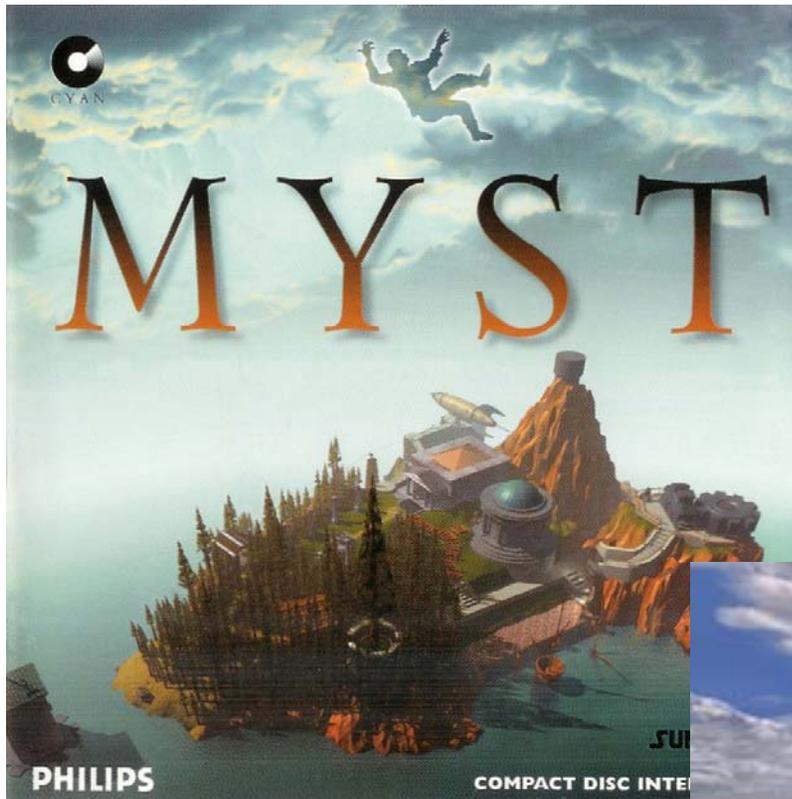


Spatial stories are episodic.
Have no predetermined order.
Privilege exploration over plot.
Enable collaborative storytelling.
Undertake world making.



What are some of the differences between spatial and temporal stories?





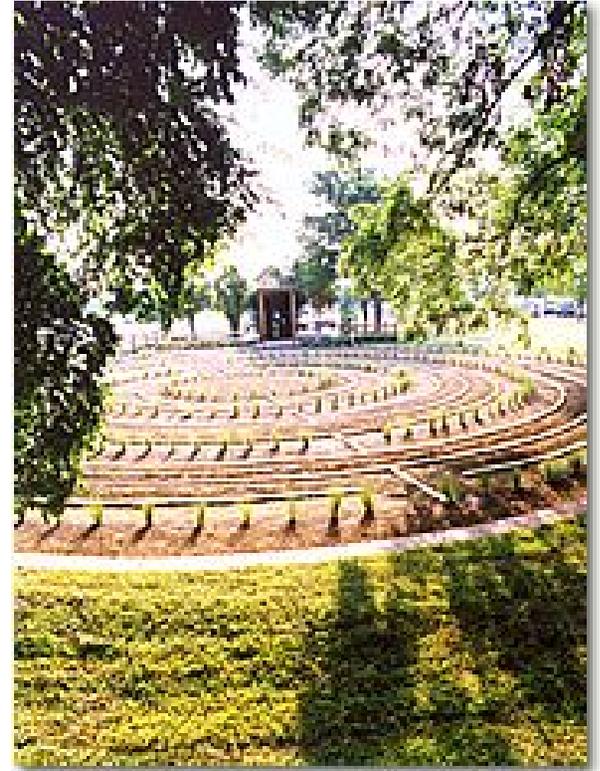
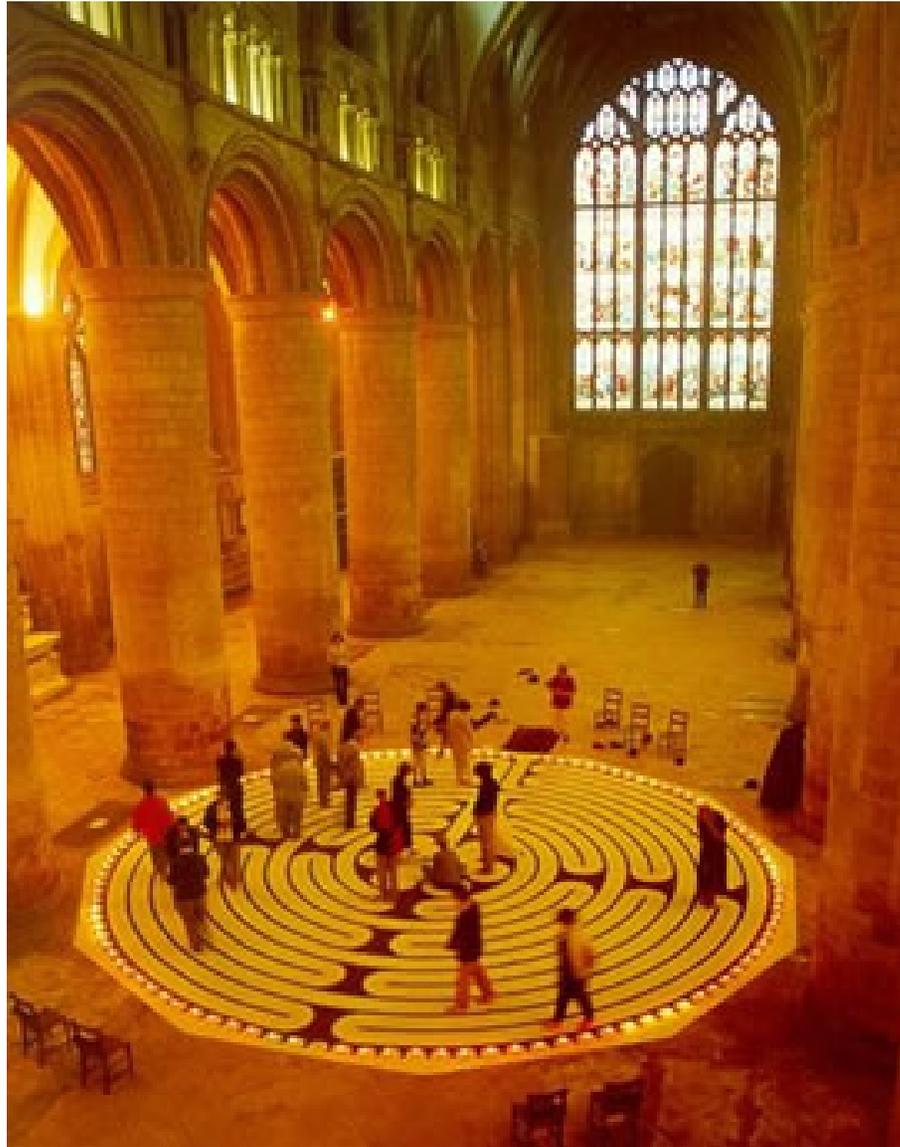
Myst and Exile





05:28:37





Spatial narratives often develop stories across different media



Muddy list

All Mission Crew Faction



Narrative is movement

Link





Search



Hierarchize

Compare



Map

*This is the way
I go every day.*



*One of my best
memories is...*



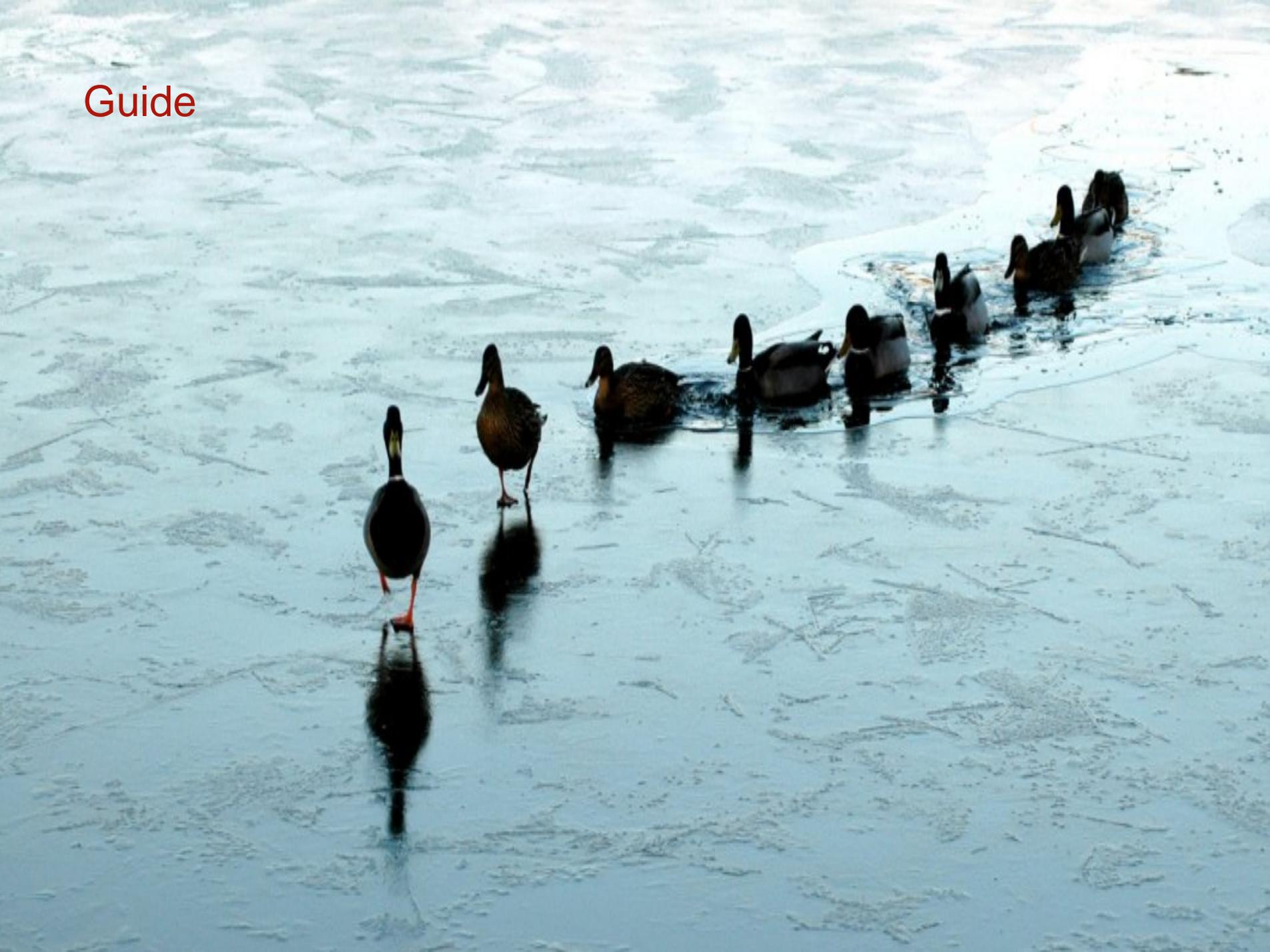
*My worst
memory is...*

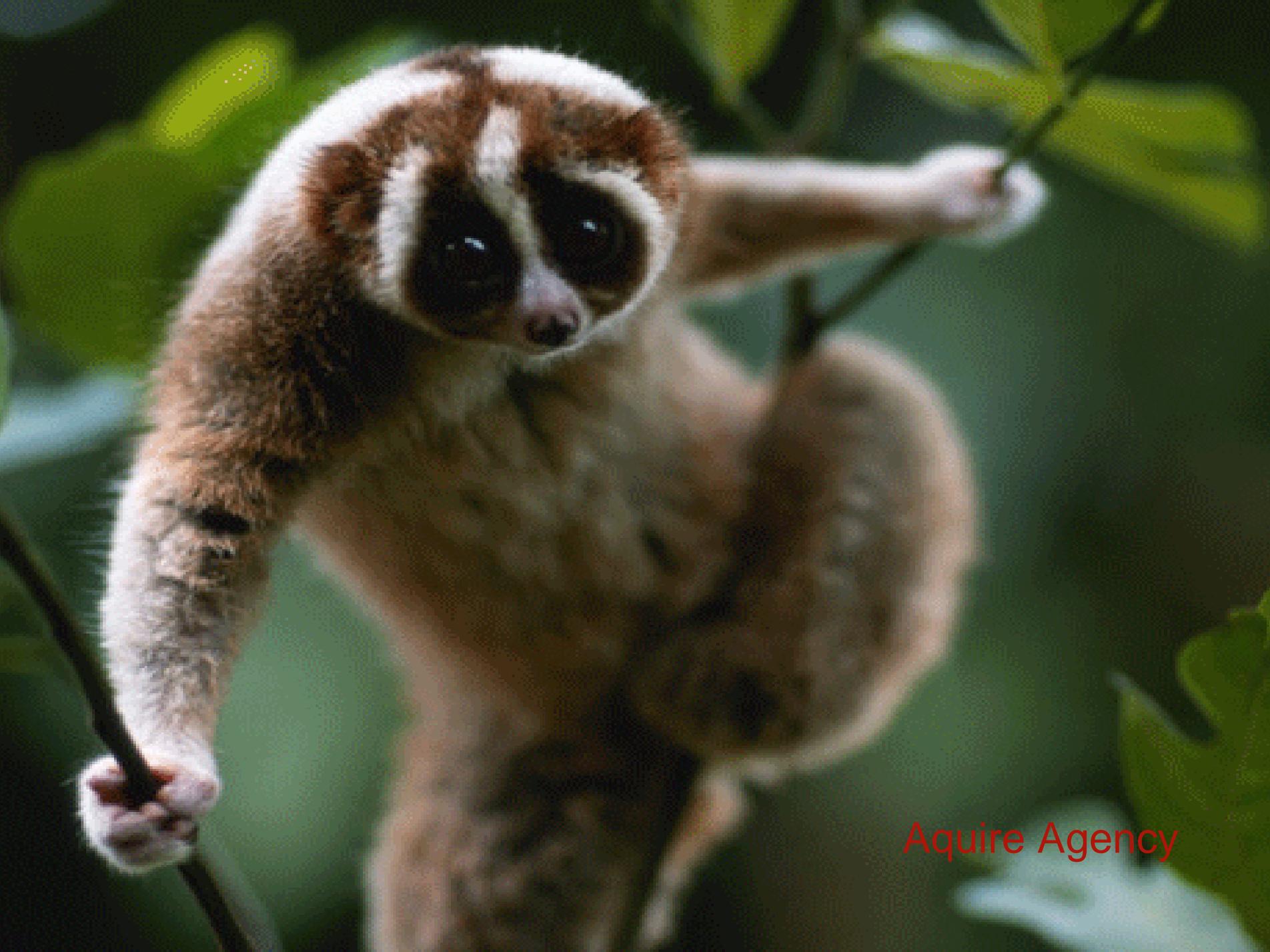


*This is how
I connect
to the past.*



Guide

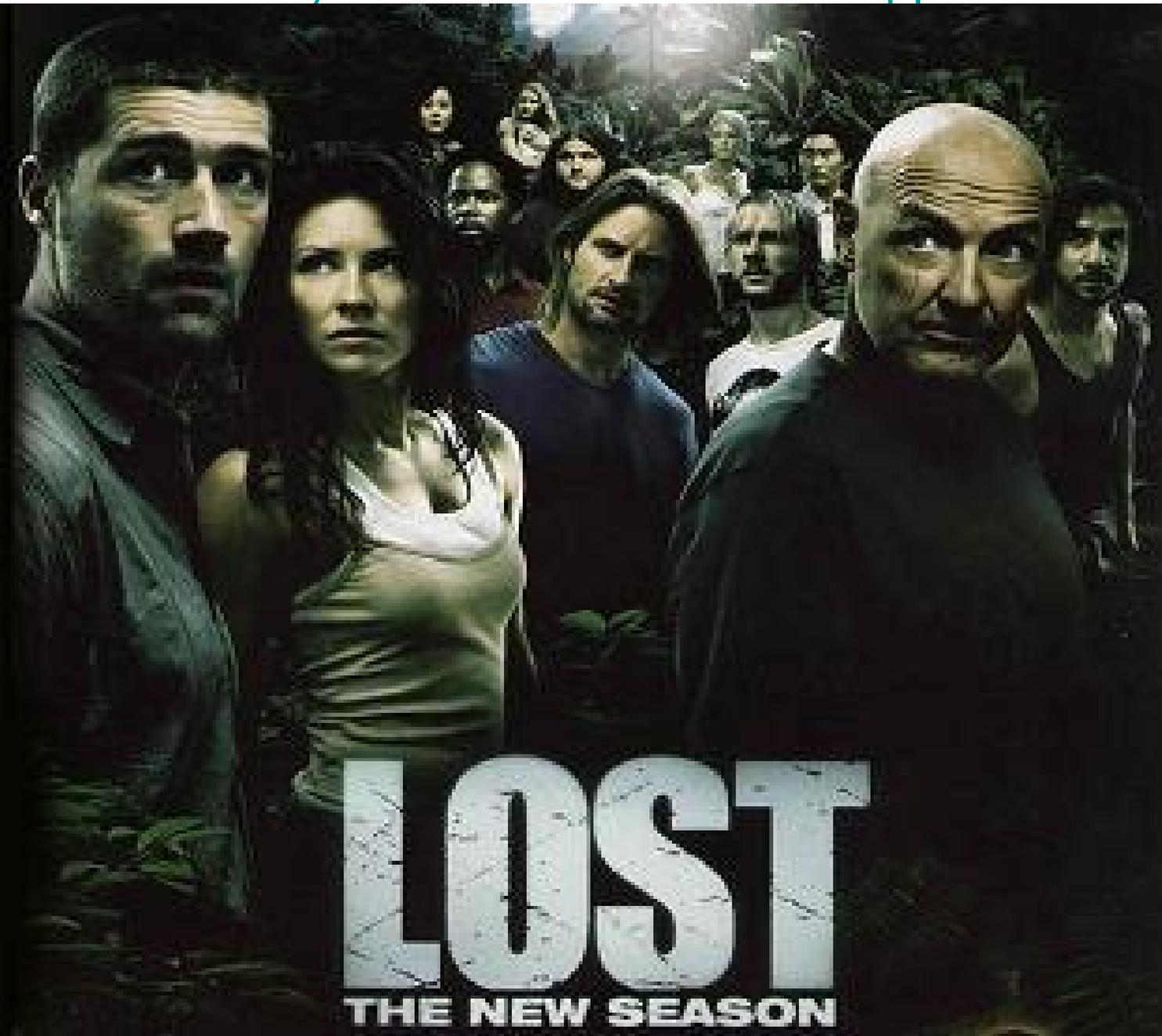




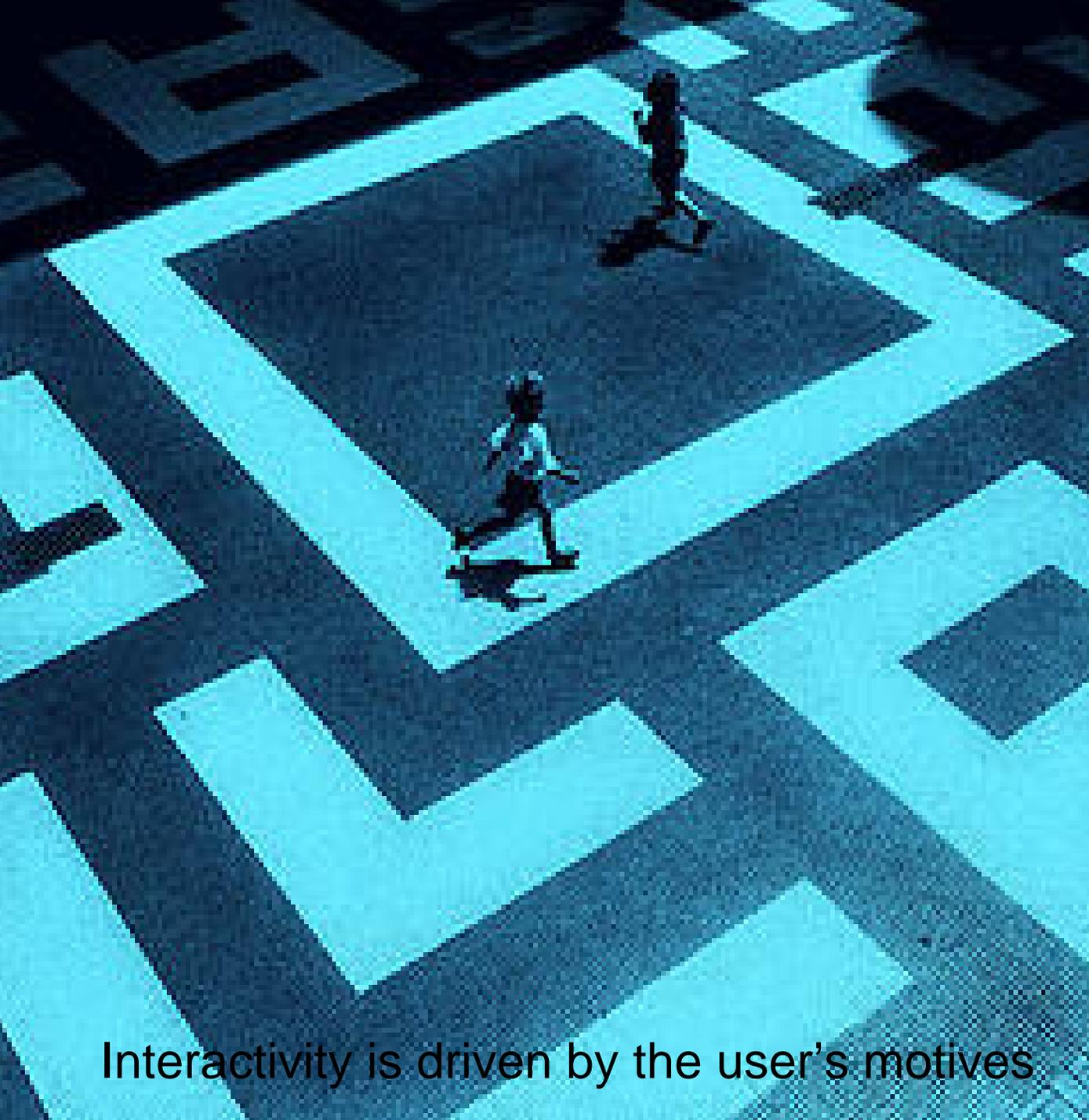
Aquire Agency

What is interactivity?

Interactivity versus narrative. Polar opposites?



Are all forms of narrative interactive?



Interactivity is driven by the user's motives

In what ways might a game
be a narrative?

Games are not stories, but we might think of them as spaces ripe with narrative possibility





Not all
games tell
stories

Many games have narrative aspirations





The experience of game play can never be reduced simply to the events of the plot

Games that do tell stories do it differently from other media

The image shows a terminal window titled 'rxvt'. The window has a title bar with standard window controls (minimize, maximize, close) on the right. Below the title bar is a status bar with the text 'West of House' on the left, 'Score: 0' in the middle, and 'Moves: 0' on the right. The main area of the terminal is black with white text. The text displayed is the introductory text of the game 'ZORK I: The Great Underground Empire'. At the bottom left of the terminal, there is a prompt character '>' followed by a small white square cursor.

```
rxvt
West of House                               Score: 0           Moves: 0

ZORK I: The Great Underground Empire
Copyright (c) 1981, 1982, 1983 Infocom, Inc. All rights reserved.
ZORK is a registered trademark of Infocom, Inc.
Revision 88 / Serial number 840726

West of House
You are standing in an open field west of a white house, with a boarded front
door.
There is a small mailbox here.

>■
```

Is play a form of narrative?

Complementary to other forms of storytelling,
play is distinctly different.



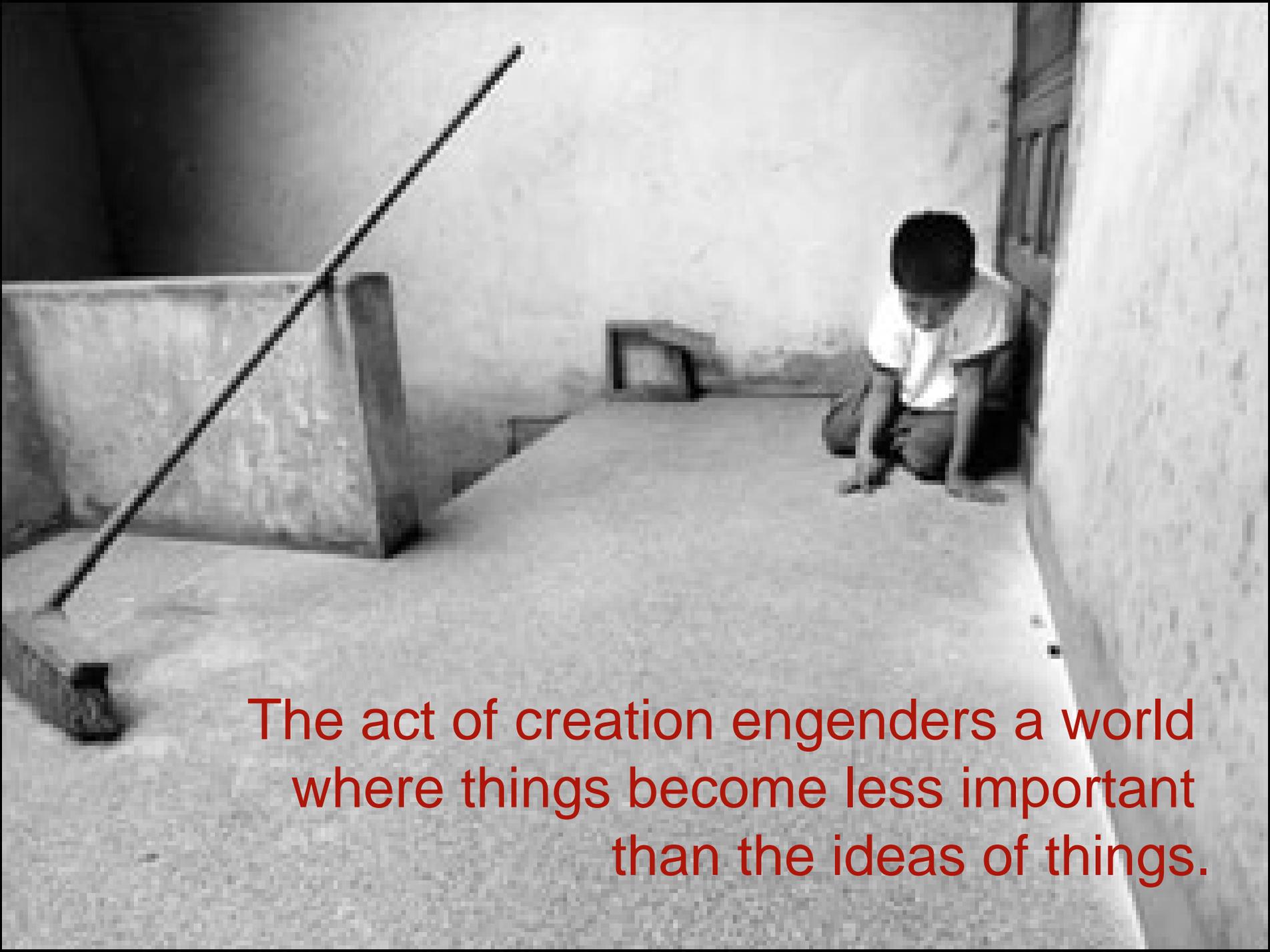


Play takes place
without spectators
and its performers
engage directly
with the
metaphorical realm
as a essential form
of storytelling.

The pleasures of play come from the constantly shifting and changing nature of the rules, and the ability to create one's own syntactical universe. It is an act of creating something from nothing.

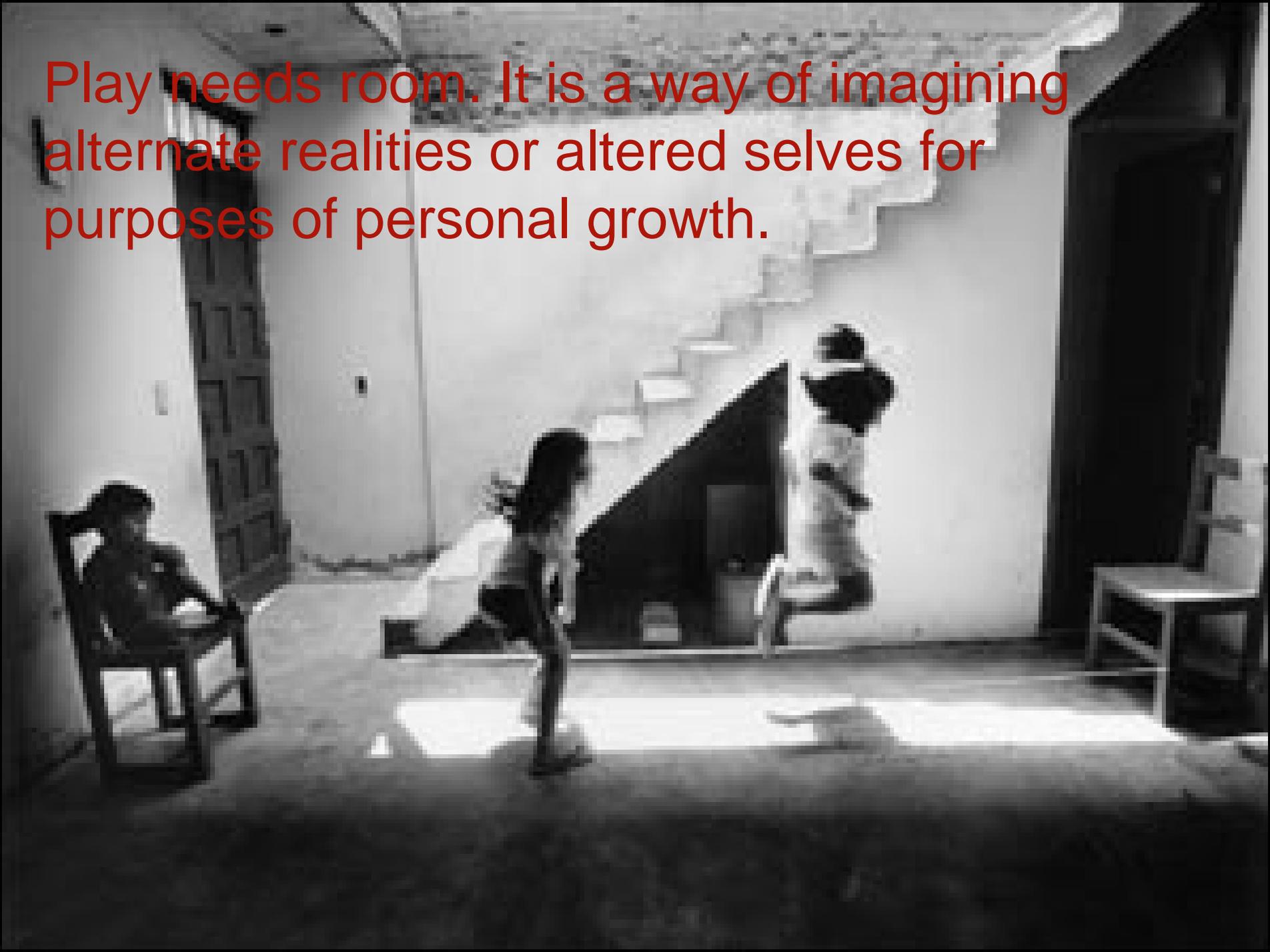


Second Front, a Second Life performance group



The act of creation engenders a world
where things become less important
than the ideas of things.

Play needs room. It is a way of imagining alternate realities or altered selves for purposes of personal growth.



Not only does play lack an audience,
but it is by definition unscripted.



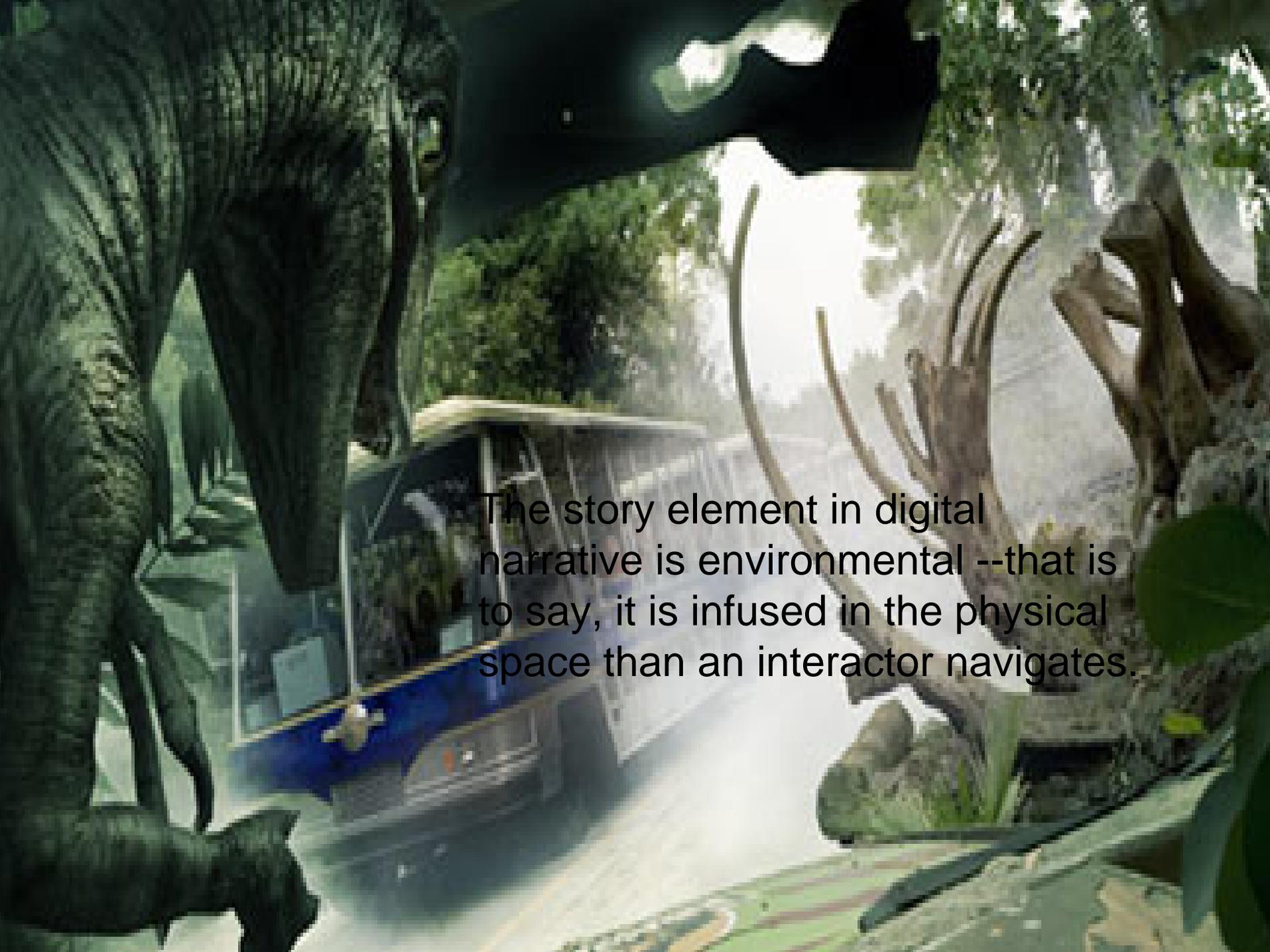


Environmental storytelling is architectural
and site-specific

Rafael Lozano-Hemmer's *Body Movies*



Watch video at: <http://www.lozano-hemmer.com/video/bodymovies.html>

A digital landscape featuring a blue boat on a path, surrounded by trees and foliage. The scene is rendered in a stylized, somewhat abstract manner. The text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

The story element in digital narrative is environmental --that is to say, it is infused in the physical space than an interactor navigates.

Environmental storytelling uses plot as an organizational structure for the design of imaginary geographies, of worlds



Spatiality is key in these worlds for these are spaces that we physically navigate and move through...



These works often have what Russian filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein called 'attractions', moments with profound emotional effect, often instantiated in objects or other discrete elements



Spatial stories tend to have “accordion-like structures”.

Moments can expand or contract without harming the meaning of the overall plot



- 
- An aerial photograph of a farm. In the upper right, there is a large, white, multi-sectioned barn with a gabled roof. Below the barn is a large, rectangular field enclosed by a wooden fence. The field is divided into several smaller sections by wooden posts and rails. The surrounding area is green grass, and there are some trees and a paved path visible on the left side of the image.
- Russian formalist critics distinguish between *plot* (or *syuzhet*) or causal events and *story* (or *fabula*), the viewer's mental perception of the story's chronology or events

Repetition and redundancy is privileged in exploratory narrative structures over spaces and artifacts.

Why?

We might consider this accordian-like construction a kind of architecture.

Why?



Digital narratives can also take the form of authoring environments like Will Wright's The Sims or Spore



A narrative on the nature of the medium

- It has been reported that Michelangelo was advised not to use stone as a medium. ‘Real artists’ used marble. Three centuries later the Impressionists were sneered at for using paint from tubes because ‘serious artists’ grind their own pigments. By the early years of our the 20th century, the Constructivists were criticized for using modern industrial materials like plastic and steel. Marcel Duchamp was viciously attacked for his use of found materials.
- The lessons of history seems plain: the mainstream institutions of art and literature hate innovation that troubles the boundaries of forms.
- For the past 30 years computers have been the forbidden medium. It was OK for established artists and authors (Warhol and William Gibson) to use them, but for the up and coming it is a treacherous path. And yet real innovation rarely comes from people who work unquestioningly within old boundaries...

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