

# reviews

## Works

NEWYORKEXITNEWYORK

Givord, Lenclos, et al

Review by Patrick Lichty

In the new media realm, there have been a number of works that have either used virtual reality as medium for the transmission of metaphor, or real-time game engines in order to play with that particular aspect of culture. Givord and Lenclos' *NEWYORKEXITNEWYORK* distinguishes itself as a game engine work that neither succumbs to the use of gaming as metaphor, nor the frequently clumsy interfacing problems that challenge most immersive or VR pieces.

Perhaps I'm doing a disservice to *NEWYORKEXIT-NEWYORK* by starting with a comment on its technical aspects, but its techne is impressive, encompassing the virtual interpretation of nearly two square miles of Manhattan, surrounding Times Square in New York. Even more impressive is that this 'model' of Manhattan was created over repeated trips from the artists' on-site photography, using thousands of photographs for representing various temporal and spatial components of the city.

Therefore, *NEWYORKEXITNEWYORK* is not a doppelganger of the NYC landscape, but an interpretation. If one chooses to fly through the city rather than walk, one can investigate inner details of some of the buildings that would not be evident through conventional means, such as unique interpretative texturing of the insides of structures, etc. Some structures are left in partially (de)constructed form when visual data is absent, making evident the complexities of Givord and Lenclos' interpretation. In addition, the discontinuities between the imagery used in the installation produce a wonderfully rich sense of time, as areas suggest day and nighttime views, and slight differences of season are evident.



Eschewing many of the trappings of conventional VR / immersion, *NEWYORKEXITNEWYORK* uses a large-scale projection and simple joystick navigation system to journey through the interpreted Times Square. The piece speaks simply yet effectively, as the visitor glides effortlessly through this reconstructed space. However, it is not merely an exercise in game engine wizardry: *NEWYORKEXITNEWYORK*'s use of dynamic imagery (animated crowds, signage, traffic, time of day), and directional sound aptly convey the feeling of Manhattan through an aesthetic of the digital flaneur.

As I sat on the floor with the joystick, I visited many of my favorite walks, studying the pastiche of images that made up the artists' interpretation of New York. As the accompanying website says, "I've been there, really..., and I'm going back!" Perhaps I can say that I've really been where they've been, and perhaps it isn't the same place (vis-à-vis my own trips to Manhattan), but it's fascinating to see the city from a new viewpoint.

<http://www.newyorkexitnewyork.com/>