

WHITE PAPER

## FIRST FORAY into SECOND LIFE

Valerian Miranda, Rodney Hill

### ABSTRACT

Globalization, inter-disciplinarity, collaboration, user participation, communication, problem solving,... are just a few of the terms that have found their way into the lexicon of current architectural education. Simultaneously, architectural education is evolving to encompass all aspects of the natural, built and virtual environments. Clearly, the *status quo* is not adequate to fulfill the tripartite academic mission of higher education or advance the College of Architecture's goal of excellence.

Human interaction is at the core of architectural education. The widely subscribed viewpoint that higher quality interaction results in a superior studio experience still holds true. However, as one excellent studio professor states "...I have always been afraid that a class would lose the studio culture with students buried in their computers...". Additionally, interdisciplinary exchange has always been difficult to arrange and proximity is usually a prerequisite. Collaboration with students and faculty in other countries invariably leads to a rich and rewarding cultural and technical exchange. It also fosters networks and inter-personal relationships that extend far beyond individual projects or singular contact.

A decade of exponential growth of visual internet use has shown that predicting the advantages, benefits and directions of new technologies is a futile exercise because opportunities are limited only by imagination. Imagination, coupled with technological innovation and vision has opened the opportunity of interactive, 3-D virtual worlds such as Second Life.

This white paper describes the concept of interactive 3-D virtual worlds. It reports on the progress of Rodney Hill's second year honors design class project (a series of connected galleries and individual studios) in Second Life. The paper proposes currently available opportunities, and in conclusion, sets out a vision for the College of Architecture's presence in the 3-D virtual world within the context of our tripartite mission of teaching, scholarship and engagement.