

# The Third Culture: The Question between Artistic Freedom and Cultural Appropriation in a Collaborative Virtual World

Hsiao-Cheng Han

The University of British Columbia, Canada

## **Abstract**

**3D animated virtual worlds such as Second Life and Open Simulator are new habitats for contemporary people. Virtual world content creators come from anywhere around the world and from diverse cultural backgrounds, and visual communication among residents in the virtual world is not limited by geographic location. Images with different meanings coexist in the virtual world, and the relationship between images and users is not direct or transparent. The mixed and matched visual imagery created in the virtual world is often more culturally complex than the visual imagery of the real world. Users in the virtual world unconsciously learn from the images they encounter and may not pay attention to the original meaning of the images. Understanding how people perceive and how content creators create visual culture in the virtual world is the starting point for building the connection between visual culture in the virtual world and in the real world. Immersed in the Third Culture, users learn and relearn multiple meanings and contradictions of imagery. In the Third Culture, the meanings of images, built by users, are negotiated by**

**residents as they create their culture. This section is to discuss the third cultural phenomena and to explore the question between artistic freedom and cultural appropriation in a virtual world. Hope to provide an answer for art educators on how should we teach our students how to be responsible content creators in virtual worlds.**

### **Keywords**

Visual culture, Third culture, Virtual worlds, Culture appropriation, Artistic freedom.