

FIASCO

Probing everyday computing, public interfaces, mobile services, and mediated communities

game interface for location-based play

introduction

- FIASCO reinterprets traditional street games as hybrid digital-physical play.
- It explores players' relationships to their city and to other inhabitants. The city becomes a gameboard; networked communications roll the dice.
- Traces of play create a prismatic portrait of urban places mediated through technology use and social relationships.
- The game acts as methodological experiment in producing a rich environment for community engagement and social research.

motivation

- Further the development of interactive systems addressing the intersection of two growing social and technological computing trends: massively multiplayer (MMP) games and mobile Internet access
- Probe the pressures new technologies place on long-standing social practices
- Experiment with design methodology by using a long-running game as an open-ended research platform
- Encourage creative expression and collaborative play.

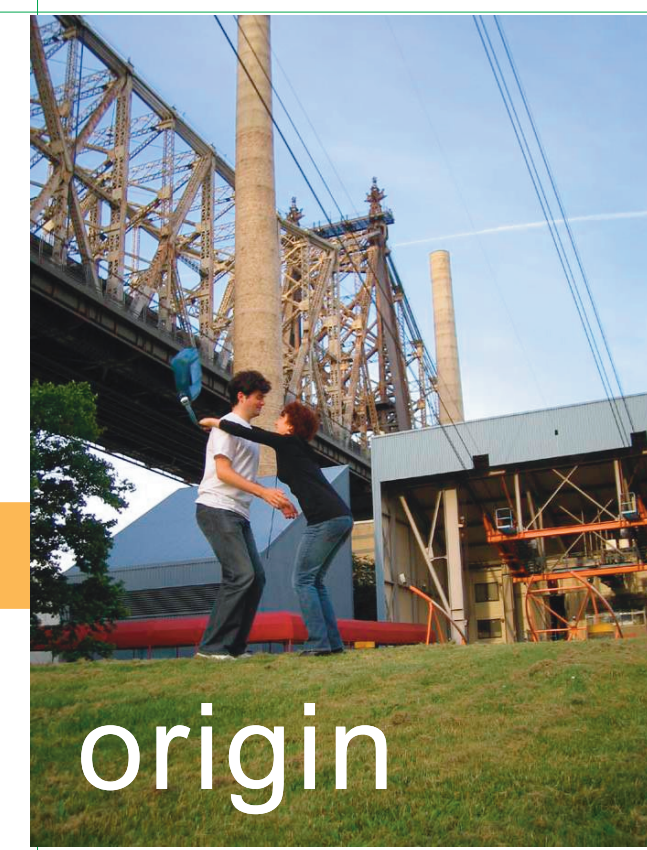


Sample player profile from the website

enriching our conceptual vocabulary

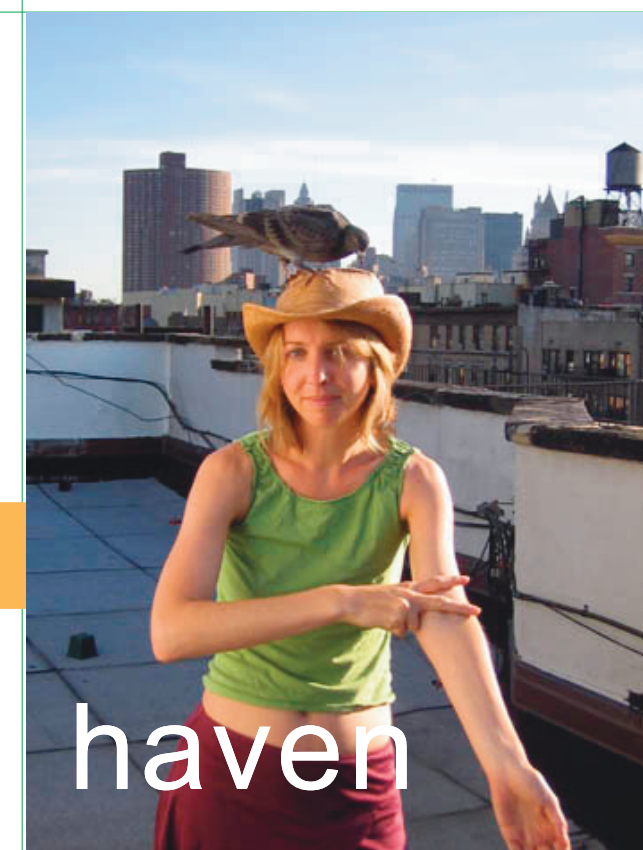
gameplay

- Players dominate an online map of New York City by planning, performing, and documenting small pieces of street theater, or stunts on real-world street corners.
- They upload photos to the website, where other players rate the stunts' artistic value (or their sheer silliness).



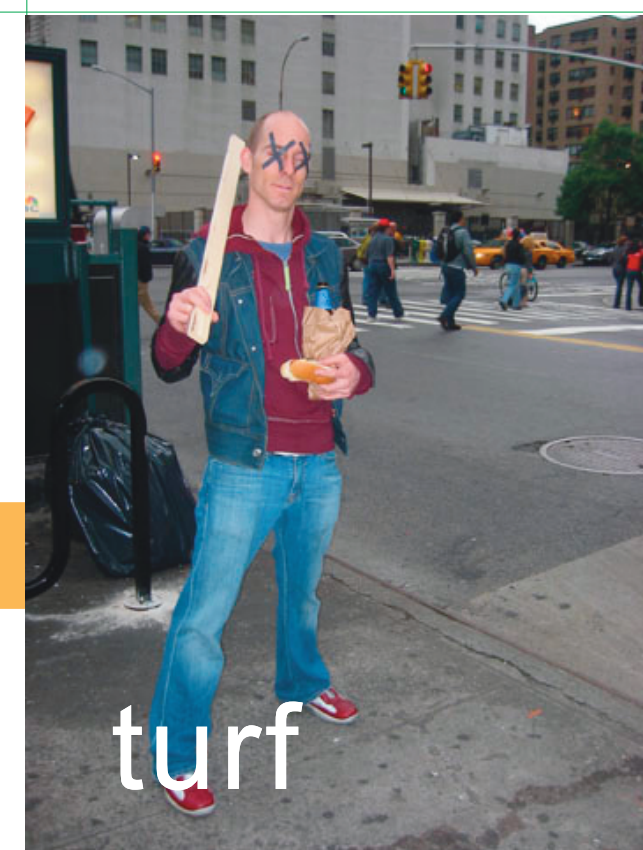
origin

Returning to a childhood neighborhood



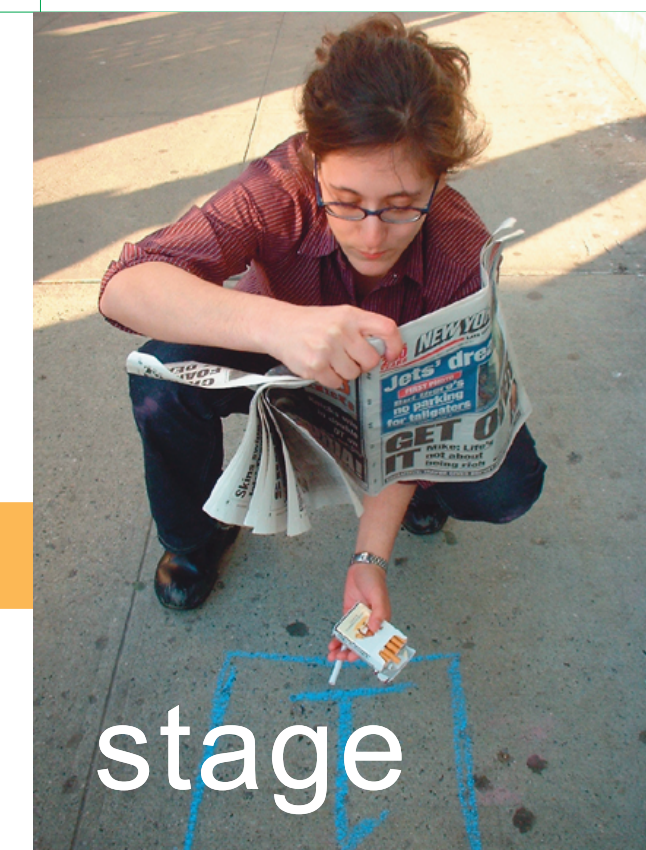
haven

Restricting activity to a place of safety



turf

Laying claim to the daily commute



stage

Playing out private jokes in public



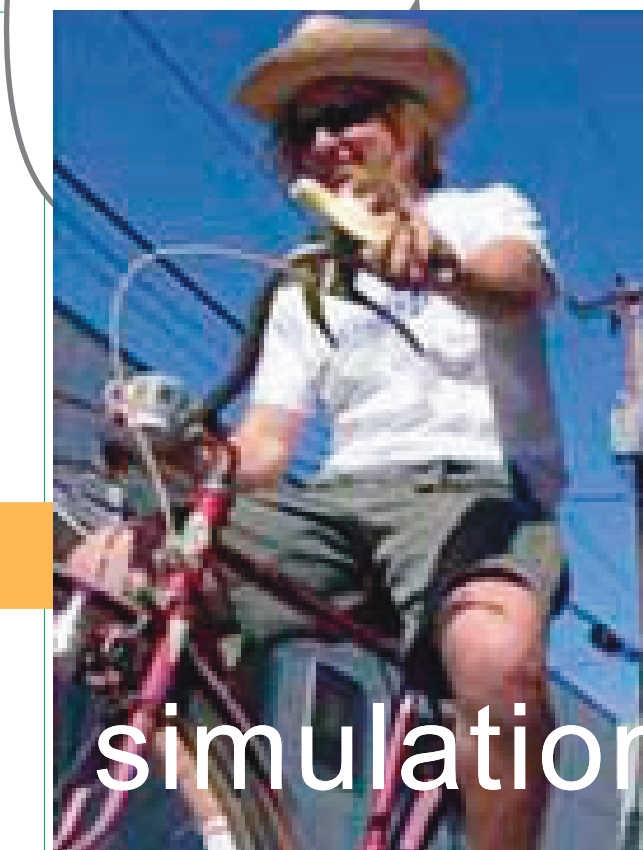
base

Staying close to one's current home



billboard

Using the built environment as a canvas



simulation

Using one place as a stand-in for another

methods

- Informal interviews with 10 players in person and over the phone
- Shadowing two players on the streets
- Analysis of online activity – both players who simply browse the site and those who initiate game actions

deployment

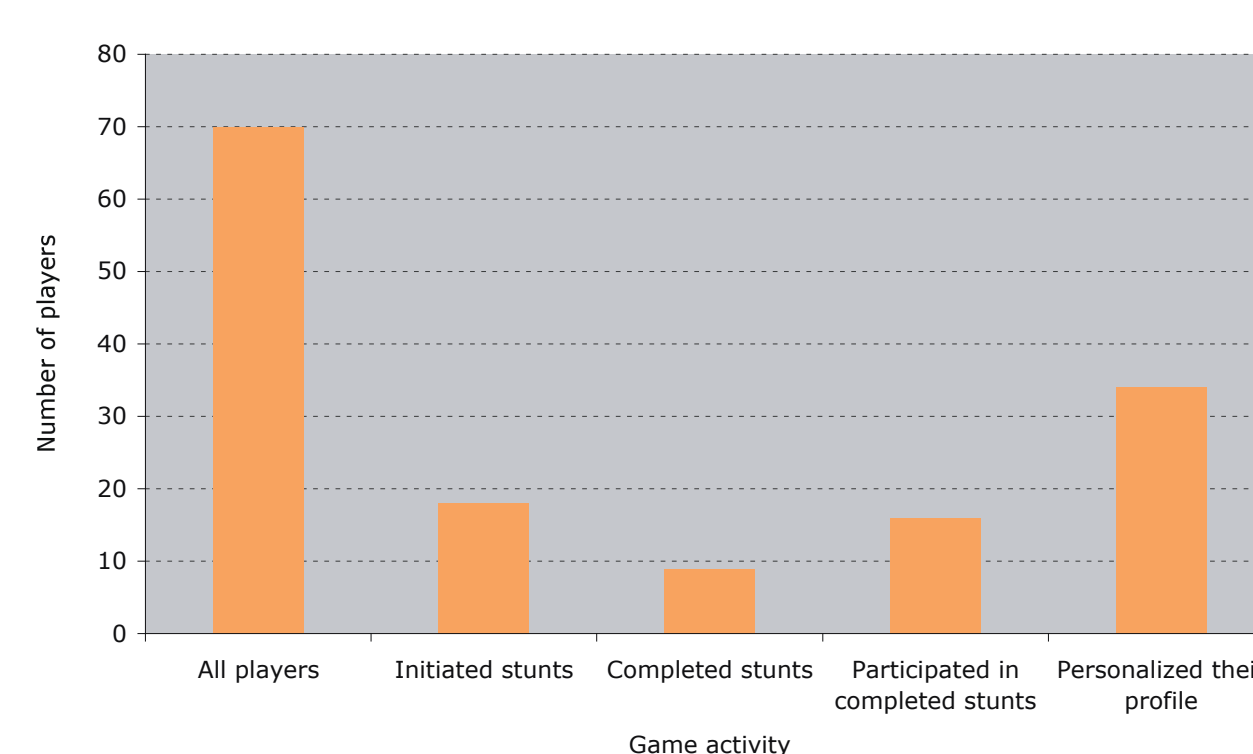
70 registered players as of July 30, 2004

- early June** friendly trials – six players added 'posse' section to track player alliances
- mid July** limited public release through posts to New York-centric email lists added player gallery to reduce navigational dependence on the map

my posse	about	Culver	dfine	lig	manfred	oneasy 002
name	Brooklyn City Mount					
PIQued	4.47	ALL-CITY				
strove	6.4					
brook	4.27	the city the streets the space				
dfine	4	La-Melania				
parade	3.88	Clinton Hill				
strove 002	3.87	Lower East Side				
pafranga	3.5					
strove	3					
lig	2.5					
strove	0					
strove	0					

play will continue until January 2005

Commitment to play



learning from player decisions

hurdles to play

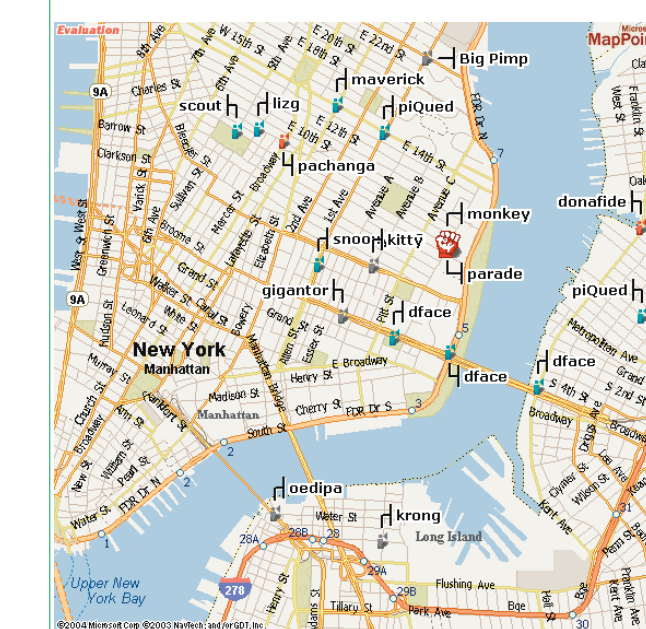
- lacking friends** who will join in
- perceived lack of time**
- competing urban amusements**
- performance anxiety**

recruitment

- leaders** initiate stunts then recruit friends
- natural affinity**: leaders invite those they know (or assume) enjoy public play
- resources**: leaders recruit friends with necessary resources (ie, a camera)
- social bounds**: players do not recruit outside their pre-existing social circle

map limitations

- restricted views**: Map interfaces cannot show every stunt, everywhere at once. Yet players want their stunts to be immediately visible on the map.
- people-centric vs. place-centric**: Many online communities represent activity through social ties. Some players have been taken aback by a spatial interface.



Gameboard as of July 23, 2004

incentives

- self-invented games** within the game
- demonstrating **ownership** of territory
- 'show and tell'** of special skills or possessions (like a pet pigeon)

team negotiation

- individual vs. contributors**: "I feel really uncomfortable putting my name on the map. I don't see it as myself, alone, but more of a collaborative effort." *nikita*
- reciprocity**: "If we were going to take over the L line, I'd have to share it with my posse." *PIQued*.

...lessons learned

- When groups of friends play together, games thrive or die from pre-existing social tensions.
- Match rhetoric to interface. The game promised team play, but the map overly emphasized individual players.
- The practicalities of gaming on the streets produce a range of user engagement. Casual participation is still valid.
- Mobile play doesn't happen without meaningful incentives. Only then do players invent their own reasons to play.

game as probe...and product?

Revising a probe in response to player requests highlights tensions between learning from a research project and improving a designed product



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