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## Atomic Age and Digital Age: Media's part

To view the artwork associated with this paper please visit:

OIPIANS as product: <http://www.mydigitalhandprint.com/oipians-as-a-product.html>

OIPIANS as Research: <http://www.mydigitalhandprint.com/oipians-as-research.html>

Introduction:

*The Creative process is messy. Artist Chuck Close made some very good observations about being an artist. "All the best ideas come out of the process; they come out of work itself"(Genn, n.d.). You can stand idle and think you will have divine inspiration; it probably is not going happen. Chuck Close was quoted as saying, " Amateurs look for inspiration; the rest of us just get up and go to work" (Genn,n.d ). I believe this is true. I go through a lot of paper, tears and failure before I arrive at the one great idea that stands out. The same is true for the world of industry.*

### **Understanding the company, the product, and market while targeting the audience:**

There are many aspects for a product to survive and much of that comes from the way an idea is packaged. Packaging starts with a viable product, but sometimes even a viable product can fail. The reasons can be vast but a stronger advertising campaign has the ability to persuade people to believe the product is a “need” gives the product a better chance of survival

#### **How is this done?**

A good marketing campaign targets its audience, stretches over multimedia platforms where new consumers could be lurking, and communicates in a context that causes a physiological reaction.

All types of marketing whether it is a product, politician, journalist, artist, and most recently educational institutions have learned it is important in this global market to be seen and seen in a big way.

#### **Company**

One of the newest forms of marketing is within virtual platforms such as Second Life (SL)([www.markettruths.com](http://www.markettruths.com)).

A resident can locate various real life businesses and schools of higher learning while in the virtual world. Businesses such as IBM (<http://virtualworlds.nmc.org/portfolio/ibm-center/>) and Cornell University (Ju, 2007) are well-established names within SL, but there are many more maintaining a presence in Second life with either Research-Based or Practice-Based missions. It can be difficult to find them due to lack of advertising or maintaining their real life branding in the virtual world. In addition, Second Life is not a household name, so advertising must include information about SL. Most of the information that is available to make correlations between real life businesses and Second Life business comes in the form of documentation through scholarly writings, or company blogs. These companies are missing the opportunity to bring in more consumers.

" investment bank Piper Jaffray reports that sales of U.S. virtual goods will total \$621 million in 2009—an astounding increase of 134 percent from 2008 figures—most people take note Even more astounding is the prediction that total sales will rise to nearly \$2.5 billion by 2013."(Capiro,2009).

The question is why the companies maintain a low profile. To understand the why, we have to understand the product that the developer Linden Research Inc. (LL, Linden Labs) created.

In 2003, Linden Labs launched Second Life and the people came. For the gamer it offered access to Havok Physics (OpensourceObsure,2010) which is the gaming physics used to create real time movement and dynamics. In addition to free access, Second Life had something no other virtual platform has content is completely user generated. ( Lastowka,G, n.d. ). A resident can create anything they imagine and do anything they fantasize.

Linden Labs' programmers could often be seen in the virtual world; meeting, greeting, and being active participants in the Utopia of SL along with the other residents. Many times Second Life is referred as an experiment in which open-ended social interaction collides head-on with surreal engineering (Terdimann,2003). Linden Labs was becoming known for its freedom of expression, but also for education. Linden Labs responded to this positive progress by opening the Teen grid in 2005 to serve the K-12 Educators.(Harrison,2010 ) Unfortunately, too much freedom can be bad for business. Linden Labs would discover this in 2006-2007 as embedded journalists began to report child role-play, failing marriages, and murder all linked to Second Life Platform (Stanage, 2007). Scholars and journalists dubbed Second Life the wild west of the virtual worlds. (Tuten, n.d.). Bad publicity, lack of content policing and protection of intellectual property coupled with their high tolerance for user behavior began to cause the disillusionment of Second Life. In 2010, Second Life was struggling to maintain the financial burden of maintaining an adult and teen grid. They opted to shut down the teen grid with some protest from the educators that had vested their time in developing curriculum within the virtual platform (Harrison,2009).

Linden did have a plan to tame the west. They actively started working on the rebranding of Second Life. Even the name "Second Life" was up for debate in this rebranding effort. Linden worked quickly to change policies and terms of service to protect intellectual rights, bring back the residents that identified themselves as builders and scripters, and entice new residents and companies to join Second Life. They implemented a rating, and content filter system to be able to slowly introduce teens into the main grid( Linden Research Inc. ,2009). These effort along with good timing, as game based learning methods (Bradley,2009,) are becoming the new focus is helping Second Life turn around, with a positive sign at the 2012 Virtual Worlds Best Practices in Education self reporting over 4000 unique Avatars logging on to attend a sessions in the weeklong conference, which was 1600 more than 2011( Virtual World Best Practices in Education, 2012).

Another favorable sign that Second Life is not completely lost its luster, during this conference I did hear that not enough has been done about the grieving in the welcome areas. This causes educators and their respective universities, schools, and business to worry that student will be exposed to this from of bullying. The solution has been to provide a private simulation area, but that does not prevent the exposure to grieving while residents are developing online identity.

### **Creating identity:**

To be a resident all you need is an email account and you will need a form of ID to be age verified to enjoy all the areas of Second Life(Second Life,2012 ) . First you will choose your resident name and initial avatar then complete the process by creating an account and downloading the viewer (Second Life,2012). A residents become more accustomed to SL they also begin to customize the avatar to reflect the online identity or just to experiment with other roles. There is a lot of focus within the virtual platform on the look of the avatar, but a new look is going to cost money. Lindens dollars is Second Life's form of currency. Second Life does have its own stock market, and linden dollars respond to the value of the US dollar. The new resident(Second Life does not use the word Avatar) will land into a welcome area. A welcome area provides all the skills and information to allow the avatar to interact in the virtual world. I will stop at this point talking about Second Life, and address my creative process.

### **Creative process: You asked for it...**

I was in the process of hiring my summer camp staff, when I began to focus on this project. This is actually a very difficult task, due to the fact most people that apply believe themselves very capable of caring for children, and arguably, I rarely interview someone whom would not meet the minimum standard for a licensed child caregiver; I want more than minimum in the programs I create. I am looking for someone that thinks outside the box, and be able to forecast possible outcomes of the activities they do, and adjust quickly and accordingly to achieve the desired outcome. Sometimes the applicants with the best resume don't get the job, because what sometimes looks good on paper does not always stand up when applied. I was trying to figure out how to visually represent those attributes in a day camp counselor. I found that many times the people that have those skills don't always realize its due to it being intrinsic to their identity. So my original idea was to create a campaign to promote awareness of the true talents and abilities of these young people I hire. But it was not fitting as well as I was hoping into the assignment criteria. I continued to think about this as I attended my annul training on child wellness and one of the topics was bully and even more specific cyber-bullying. The presenters pointed out that most cyber-bully is just another medium for the bully as he/she is likely to be exhibiting this behavior in other mediums such as text, paper, and in person. The bullied has a choice in responses. Now, I have always maintained that "we" give power to words by our reaction to them. The concept between "what is said" and "what is heard" and how we react to that communication is based on a life time of personal experiences ( Carston,2002). The bully is looking for a desired response, the bullied has a choice in how they respond. They can choose to 1) internalize the message and react 2) recognize the intent to get a reaction and not be manipulated. When I apply this approach to the visual culture, I can see how imagery can affect our perspective.

I was introduced to Mark Carter's "Vulture watches a starving child"( Krauss, n.d) the image was powerful enough to send me off to find out more on my own. I research Mark Carter life, work and death, concluding my research in an audio narrative brief and webpage dedicated just to connecting my understanding of "why he did not save the child" (Knoll,2012).

A strong image will send the someone looking for more information, but a weak or highly audience targeted campaign that assumes the viewer will know the brand and product runs the risk of alienating potential consumers.

My research in virtual technology is innovative; therefore I need to insure that people not familiar with virtual technology, specifically Second Life, understand the culture and technology within it in order for them to understand the dynamics of the subculture that is developing.

Although there are 28,937,245 unique accounts registered with Second Life as of April 23, 2012,( Second Life Grid Survey-Regional Database,2012) there are 7,009,527,156 people in the world on that same day (United States Census Bureau,2012 )which leaves 6980589911 people in the world that are not residents of Second Life. If I am going to present information on the subject of grieving and online persona I have to start with an explanation of what is Second Life. Second Life is a free 3D virtual world where users can socialize, connect and create using free voice and text chat. Resident additions to the virtual world are called **user-generated content**, and this content is just one of the factors that makes Second Life such a unique online environment( Roos, Strickland, n.d.).

The following is my narrative research of the residents, specifically the grieving behavior that happens within the welcome areas of Orientation Island Public(KillerKarrit,2012,James Au 2012). I focus on a selected global subculture of SL residents. Over the last three years, I have been observing a simulation (SIM) area in SL called Orientation Island Public (OIP). OIP is a welcome area created by Linden Labs as a logging on location for new residents (noobie, noobs). The purpose of a welcome area is to provide a learning space for the noob to practice the basic skills required to function in SL. Some Second Life Residents repeatedly return to OIP and congregate within a circular fenced area. They spend their time talking in a mix of text (chat) and Voice over IP (voice). I have coined this group the OIPIANS.

The "worst" OIPIANS are the trolls, griefers, ragers, and hackers. They are aggressive and have no boundaries on topics for conversations. They can wreak havoc on a sim, crashing the application software of one or all the residents present. Some enjoy picking arguments recording the verbal battle on video screen capturing software and upload it on YouTube as trophies. "Griefing is the act of players exerting power over other players inside the game space, usually (but not Always) in a manner that is independent of the rules and goals of the game" (Schubert, 2011, p.48).

There is also another way to view the OIPIANS. OIPIANS are improvisational actors that break the 4th wall and create Machinima, gestures, music, clothes, scripts. They engage observers. They beat the rules of the "game". Their grieving can be funny and creative as it challenges others to problem solve (James Au, 2012). They challenge people on their ideas, beliefs and identity.

OIPIANS break all the rules, as they discuss global topics with a level of honesty that politicians would never be able to achieve. Yet, if you are a virtual tourist to the OIP welcome area this seemingly erratic aggressive behavior, or the oddity of these residents sitting in complete silence in a circle can cause the new or returning resident to be disconcerting. Even with multiple complaints, rarely does Linden Labs intervene immediately. I believe the reason is actually as Schubert stated, the grievors (OIPIANS) provide an important element to the environment. They are as much of an important aspect of Second Life as an "experiment in which open-ended social interaction collides head-on with surreal engineering"(Terdimann,2003 ).

If we look at OIPIANS as actually serving a purpose in Second Life, as by default welcome area greeters assisting the new residents then they are not as disconcerting. In my observations, OIPIANS normally do not grief or troll new avatars unless they are approached aggressively.

Frequently, OIPIANS offer to help get new residents headed in the right direction even going so far as to provide landmarks which normally will be their personal SL businesses. OIPIANS report underage children logging into SL and alert Linden Labs of residents referencing child pornography. In a way they can be considered the neighborhood watch of OIP, albeit with self-serving intentions. They also are a good measuring stick for our future.

### **My project:**

I used the Atomic Age as a theme for this project. I feel it is a good comparison with the Digital Age.

The Atomic Age was a time of scientific advancement, new technology, discovery, and fear of the unknown. The fear of communism had Americans suspiciously watching strangers and neighbors. Americans were building bomb shelters, then having parties as a type of housewarming. Hollywood was able to take the fears of the American people and profit in the form of B-movies. Since my project is really more about perspective, and how that relates to understanding of the visual culture and specifically Second Life.

Here is how Time Magazine U.S. reporter Roger Rosenblatt describes, "four perspectives on a reality, after Enola Gay opened the hatch and the atom bomb fell on Hiroshima."

"A survivor of the bombing who is now the director of the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum, saw was the suffering of people and the destruction of a city." (Rosenblatt, 2005).

"physicist who witnessed the first successful nuclear chain-reaction experiment in Chicago in 1942...saw effort of American scientists to win the war and the developing partnership of science and the military." (Rosenblatt, 2005).

"U.S. President, one of eight Americans in history to have the power to wield nuclear weapons. What he saw after Hiroshima was a revolution in world politics and in the nature of the presidency." (Rosenblatt, 2005).

"fourth is a view of how the Bomb affected American thought and culture. What the people saw after Hiroshima was a fearful vision of the future." (Rosenblatt, 2005).

Not to minimize what had occurred in the world during the Atomic Age, I do feel it does have a relationship to understanding the Digital Age. Second Life are powerful tools in communication and gaining knowledge of other cultures. It has been said if you want to control people you don't do it in force, you do it within the mind, the best weapon is visual and verbal. We are only beginning to understand the future it will create for us, I think we should be more aware of our choice in the direction we go.

These virtual people OIPIANS interact in a new way. They remove the false niceness that real life society deems behavior should be, and replaces it with 100% speaking their minds although what they are stating may not be a real believe they hold. Their weapon is anything from using their OIPIAN body to attack another resident to creating video of an avatar arguing out a point. The residents of Second Life fear the OIPIANS because of their ability to violate the perceived anonymity of Second Life. While the for the vast major of the cases this information is not "hack into" but freely given in conversations. This information is really no different than the information you give the pizza guy that will deliver your pizza, to the stranger your standing in line with for 30 minutes at Wal-Mart. What is the difference? perspective. That is what this project comes down to. The OIPIANS (griefers, trolls, and ragers) have been able to work in a

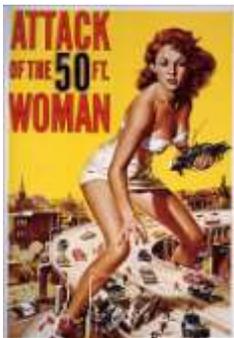
loose collaboration as they have found each other on Second Life and began to grow into their own sub-culture. They add into their experience by using YouTube, wikis, blogs, Skype, tiny cam, as this is their means for reaching the real world audience.

I took the iconic side of what Atomic Age was to people when looking at it from what might be called snapshots, applied the same ideas to Second Life OIPIANS. I want to point out there is another way to think about the problem of Griefing. I believe Linden Labs knows the value of the Grieferers. So with that said I put together a few visuals, based on the ideas of advertising a product.

The following are the items I addressed in this project

Content	Atomic Age	Digital Age
Color	Bold colors, slightly muted Primary and secondary Industrial steel, silver, greys	Tertiary colors due to the internet and no cost for more colors .
Font	Expressive, word art	Expressive, text as art
Semiotics	Atom: technology, science, discovery	Atom: still a strong symbol for science, research @ is probably one of the most known symbols in the world now.
Gossip	Water cooler, hair salon	Facebook, twitter
Entertainment	B-Movies	YouTube
News	Newspaper, magazines	Blogs, online news sites
Advertisement	Billboards	Website banners, side bar ads
Communication	Radio	Voice over Ip

Examples of the comparison.

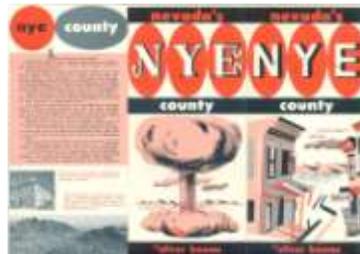


Attack of the 50Ft. Woman movie poster.



Billboard for the OIPIANS, compared to the B movie poster :The color scheme is similar strong flat color background, the woman breaking across the horizontal plain, as the logo and lightening blot also do.

Image retrieved date: 4/23/2012  
[http://www.ebay.com/itm/NYE-COUNTY-NEVADA-PHOTOVIEW-ATOM-BOMB-GRAPHICS-BROCHURE-/230413329576#ht\\_2549wt\\_1396](http://www.ebay.com/itm/NYE-COUNTY-NEVADA-PHOTOVIEW-ATOM-BOMB-GRAPHICS-BROCHURE-/230413329576#ht_2549wt_1396)



Font: Above Left: Word Art Above Right : Text as Art

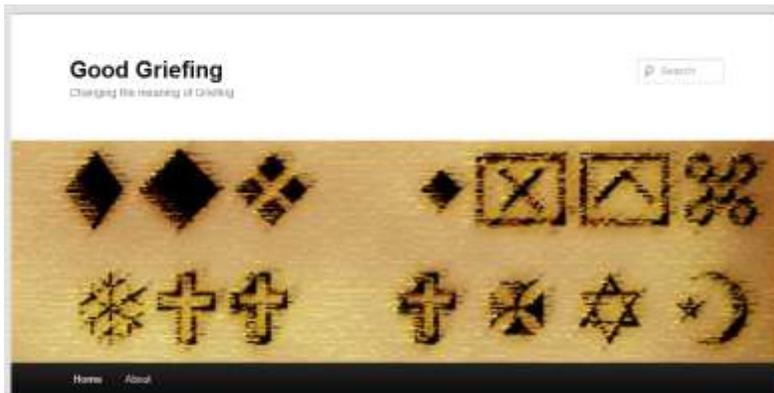


### Conclusion:

By studying the behavior on Second Life through narrative research, I believe we can see the changes taking place within our global community. I believe the people like OIPIANS are a global sub-culture. I believe I can sell this concept.

I bet you are wondering how we got here. My understanding of globalization, social media, and virtual platforms like Second Life, we do have a choice in how we choose to react to any one situation. My target audience for this project would be educators and the OIPIANS, as they are the ones that shape all others.

I do hope we continue to search out for a deeper understanding than a 30 second bits of sound, video, or image flash. I hope the visual culture can give posing views but with honesty, and not in judgment, based on their own personal believes and moral code. How we choose to see the world and what we highlight about it says something about who we are, as an individual, a society, and a world. We should always remember no two people can see the world the same.



[Good Griefing Blog](#)



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