

Identity tourism in digital places encourages a form of settler entitlement, but rather than entitlement to place, it invites an entitlement to the emplaced bodies and experiences of marginalized and colonized people.

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Digital Place-Futures Outside a Colonial Metaversal Imaginary: Danielle Brathwaite-Shirley's WE ARE HERE BECAUSE OF THOSE THAT ARE NOT as Critical Digital Place-Craft

Luke A. Meeken
Miami University

Abstract: In this piece, I analyze a recorded digital walk-through of Danielle Brathwaite-Shirley's *WE ARE HERE BECAUSE OF THOSE THAT ARE NOT*, a digital archival place designed to contain, protect, and share the experiences of Black trans people. I contextualize and analyze my encounter with Brathwaite-Shirley's work through critical and decolonial place lenses and digital materialist lenses. I pay particular attention to the ways physical and digital places crafted in colonial contexts bodily habituate settler-colonial sensibilities. I examine how the critical digital placemaking strategies practiced by Brathwaite-Shirley informed teacher and student place-craft within the context of a summer camp program focusing on youth crafting of 3D digital environments. I suggest that such strategies of critical digital place-craft are relevant for contemporary educators who craft their own digital places as part of their teaching, educators who specifically engage with digital place-craft as an arts practice in their teaching, and educators likely to be faced with commercially developed 'metaverses' as a part of their future teaching.

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Correspondence regarding this article may be sent to the author: meekenla@miamioh.edu

Introduction

In the fall of 2021, as I was reflecting on the data collected during the *Digital Places* camps I had remotely co-taught the summer prior, Mark Zuckerberg released a keynote (Meta, 2021) describing his vision for the development of a “Metaverse.” In the presentation, Zuckerberg showcased *Horizon Home*, a vision of home that elided the complex embodied politics of family, cohabitation, property, domestic labor, and refuge from labor, exclusively inviting an experience of home as a place for performing one’s individual identity as a neoliberal consumer shaping their sovereign territory through independent aesthetic and commercial choices. Zuckerberg also described his Metaverse as a force for equity, “giving people access to jobs in more places, no matter where they live, [which] will be a big deal for spreading opportunity to more people” (Meta, 2021, 00:29:49), evoking for me Facebook’s history of leveraging language of equity to mask exploitative practices. Facebook’s *Free Basics* program, for example, claimed to offer no-cost, phone-based internet access to users in the Global South, but was banned in India as a form of “digital colonialism” for funneling users into a handful of privately-owned, U.S.-based services where a great deal of their personal data was harvested without their consent (Nothias, 2020, para. 26; Solon, 2017, para. 6).

Zuckerberg’s announcement has given me a sense of urgency about my teaching and research with digital places. Considering the theme of this issue, I see considerable investment in the *next big thing* involving the circumscription of learning, working, and leisure within digital places whose material qualities are shaped by the Silicon-Valley ideologies that shaped *Facebook*. Consequently, it feels particularly urgent for art educators to cultivate the critical sensitivities necessary to recognize the

ideologically laden doings of those material qualities of place, and to conceive and craft digital places of learning that operate otherwise.

In this article, and in my other writing on digital place-craft in art education (Meeken, 2022), *material qualities of place* are the invitations and inhibitions toward action and sensation evinced by a place (Drucker, 2013; Ellsworth, 2005; Verbeek, 2006). Materiality is defined here as performative, rather than as physicality. It is a product of the ways materials act upon bodies. Within this performative articulation of materiality, digital places possess material qualities just as physical places do (Drucker, 2013; Hayles, 2004; Leonardi, 2010). When I discuss fostering critical sensitivities to the material qualities of digital places, I define *critical sensitivity* as an awareness of the material qualities enacted by material entities, the ways they act upon bodies, and the ideologies they enact (Meeken, 2022). Digital and physical places may materially enact ideologies imbued by their human designers, demanding deliberate, sensitizing inquiry and pedagogy that recognizes that what is sensed – and what is not – is a political issue (Ahmed, 2010; Calderon, 2014; Latour, 1992/2008; Latour, 2005; Verbeek, 2006).

The *Digital Places* camps mentioned above provided an opportunity for myself, my co-teacher and collaborator Oscar Keyes, and the students we worked with to explore and apply critical sensitivity through digital place-craft, both through teachers’ co-development of a curricular resource website and students’ co-development of 3D digital environments. In these camps, youth collaborated on 3D digital environments after critically examining settler-colonial sentiments habituated by popular digital places. Our camp curriculum articulated settler colonialism using the distinction education scholars Eve Tuck (Unangaŋ) and Marcia McKenzie (2015) made between what they called settler colonialism and exploitation colonialism.¹ Per Tuck

¹ This is just one taxonomy of colonialism(s). Other scholars have developed more complex taxonomies, such as historian Christoph Mick

(2014), who posited four major categories of colonialism: settler colonialism, exploitation colonialism, surrogate colonialism, and internal

and McKenzie (p. 59), exploitation colonialism entails colonizer domination of a local labor force to harvest resources to send back to the metropole, whereas settler colonialism involves colonizers coming to a land inhabited by Indigenous residents, and claiming that land as their new home. Settler colonialism is not a past invasion event, but an ongoing structure (Wolfe, 2006). It is not only propped up by written settler laws and histories (Tuck & McKenzie, 2015), but also supported by settler *sentiments*, including felt entitlement to land and mourning for a tragic past to which the settler-colonial project is relegated to foreclose present political action (Yoon-Ramirez & Ramirez, 2021).

Colonized physical places, through their material qualities, habituate settler-colonial sentiments of place, facilitating, for example, settler senses of belonging to and power over land through residential and transportation infrastructures (Khanna, 2020; Rifkin, 2014; Yoon-Ramirez & Ramirez, 2021). Likewise, digital places have the capacity to habituate settler place relations based on the material qualities they possess. Digital game places that invite individualistic agency over a place and its inhabitants inculcate settler entitlement to place and reinforce a liberal individualism that discourages sensitivity to historic and systemic qualities of places as colonized (Byrd, 2016). Digital game places that purport to recreate real-world colonial histories often reinscribe settler-colonial notions of *terra nullius*, rendering uncolonized lands as unmarked blank slates (Loban & Apperley, 2019). Digital archival places, such as public museum archives of scanned artifacts, often prioritize open access to their contents without considering the ethics of a majority-settler audience being empowered to download and remix Indigenous cultural knowledges and objects (Carroll et al., 2020). Digital re-presentations of physical places through Street-View and mapping uncritically assert settler names,

claims, and boundaries on Indigenous lands (Calderon, 2014; Hunt & Stevenson, 2017). My analysis of youth place-craft in the *Digital Places* camp, as well as my analysis of my own curricular place-craft through the crafting of online digital resources for the camp, centered on ways that critical sensitivity to the ideologically laden material doings of digital places may help learners and teachers to craft places that do not habituate settler sentiments of place (Meeken, 2022).

One sensitizing tool in my own scholarship on digital place-craft has been to make sensorially-attentive visits to digital places crafted by marginalized artists as acts of critical place-craft. In this article, I focus on one work of critical place-craft that deliberately subverts several of the settler place norms materialized in many commercial digital places, the digital archive *WE ARE HERE BECAUSE OF THOSE THAT ARE NOT* by Black British trans woman artist Danielle Brathwaite-Shirley. Through my recounting and analysis of my experience of this digital place, I aim to model how art educators may surface the ways digital places participate in and respond to settler-colonial place relations. I also hope to illustrate, through the selection of this exemplary artwork, how the creation of digital places may itself function as a critical gesture, materializing a critical sensitivity to, and interrogation of, settler place norms. I have chosen to center Brathwaite-Shirley's piece in this article because it provides an opportunity to explore critical place-craft outside of works that explicitly textually engage with real-world histories of settler colonialism, or which are crafted by Indigenous artists. Anticolonial digital places crafted by Indigenous artists played a significant role in the *Digital Places* camp curriculum. However, not only works that explicitly textually engage with colonialism are impacted by it or responsive to it (Rifkin, 2014). Examining Brathwaite-Shirley's work can highlight strategies for non-Indigenous teachers

colonialism. Historian Nancy Shoemaker (2015) has described a typology with 12 distinct varieties of colonialism.

and learners to engage in critical anticolonial digital place-craft.

In this article I include a narrative sensory account of a video-recorded walkthrough of Brathwaite-Shirley's digital place which I recorded as part of the research and development process for the *Digital Places* curriculum. I then shift into an analysis drawing upon critical digital materialisms and decolonial critique of settler placemaking. Recorded walks have an established history in human subject and ethnographic filmmaking (e.g., Crawford & Scott, 2003; Jhala, 2007; MacDougall & MacDougall, 1977; Pink, 2004; Powell, 2020), and walking-through as a methodology affords researchers the opportunity to attend to relational and sensory activities of place (Powell, 2020). As my teaching and research are interested in the sensory ways digital places habituate colonizing norms, critically and sensitively attending to my walking through this digital place affords access to the data I find most important. My own experiences in this digital place have made salient to me novel and necessary modes of digital place-craft that not only shaped my own co-creation of curricular websites and synchronous remote-learning settings, but also shaped the ways I frame digital place-craft in my teaching. After my walkthrough and analysis of Brathwaite-Shirley's work, I highlight ways that Brathwaite-Shirley's critical place-craft strategies inflected my own curricular place-craft and my encounters with places crafted by youth participating in the *Digital Places* camp.

Walking Through WE ARE HERE BECAUSE OF THOSE THAT ARE NOT

Danielle Brathwaite-Shirley's *WE ARE HERE BECAUSE OF THOSE THAT ARE NOT* opens by describing itself as "the pro Black pro trans archive" with bold, purple text appearing over dark footage that indicates that I am floating forward over a barely lit terrain. The text alerts me that "Your own identity will determine how you can interact with the archive"

and admonishes me to "Be honest with the archive." In words emulating the End User License Agreements (EULAs) that dictate the rights of users of software and websites, the site tells me that "By entering this space you are agreeing to centre the Black trans experience." However, unlike most EULAs, which disinvite reading through them, and invite users to hastily scroll past and click through (Chee et al., 2012), this agreement is succinct and unambiguous.

The site then textually reminds me that "This is not your space, this is our space," a statement asserting specific boundaries when encountered by my White cis male body. This is a place that centers Black trans people and experiences. It is emphatically not a place designed to cater to my presence or assumptions. In fact, it is designed to make me uncomfortable in sensitizing ways.

After the introductory text, I am greeted by a figure standing against a dark ground, composed of loosely joined, undulating forms and colors, who asks me "What do you identify as?" and prompts me to respond as being either Black and trans, trans, or cis (Figure 1). When I indicate that I am cis, this figure tells me that they cannot trust me, and admonishes me to prove them wrong. I am then brought to a "Terms and Conditions" screen (Figure 2) that informs me that "[y]ou must agree to centre Black trans people and use your privileges to help them. This is not a place where we make you feel better! Your actions will tell us if you stand in support of our existence." When I agree to the terms set out, a "loading screen" appears. Rather than indicate that it is loading assets, models, or sounds, this screen alerts me that it is loading "Security against trans tourism" and "Allyship" as well as performing expected technical processes such as "Deleting cookies."



Figure 1: A screenshot from my walkthrough, depicting a prompt for me to identify myself as Black and trans, trans, or cis.



Figure 2: A screenshot from my walkthrough, depicting the “terms and conditions” requiring me to center Black trans people.

Finally, entering the archive proper (or the segment of it accessible to cisgender visitors), I find that *WE ARE HERE BECAUSE OF THOSE THAT ARE NOT* continues to engage with me on its own terms. I do not have direct control over my movement through this digital place. Rather, I am moved through it, encountering situations and figures which are *visually* challenging through their idiosyncratic incoherence and mutability, and often *ethically* challenging, confronting me with the expectations the archive has of me as a cis visitor. Sometimes the site admonishes me for the low expectations it has of me. One such moment is when a figure appears with the words “STOP LOOKING FOR IT” printed on their crotch and pectoral areas. The figure speaks on experiencing cisgender gazes that probe trans and gender-indeterminate bodies in an attempt to “reach an answer” to the problem a trans body supposedly poses. Other times the site articulates high

expectations it hopes I will meet, such as the moment when I am reminded that, in leveraging my privilege as allyship, I am expected to use actions, not only rhetoric. The piece invites me to indicate whether I feel I have no privileges, whether I do not know how to use my privilege, or whether I will use my privilege to protect others (Figure 3). Tripartite prompts like this are the sole way I am invited to act within this place, and they determine which areas of the place I end up visiting. In response to this prompt, I choose the second option, indicating that I do not know how to use my privilege to be an ally.

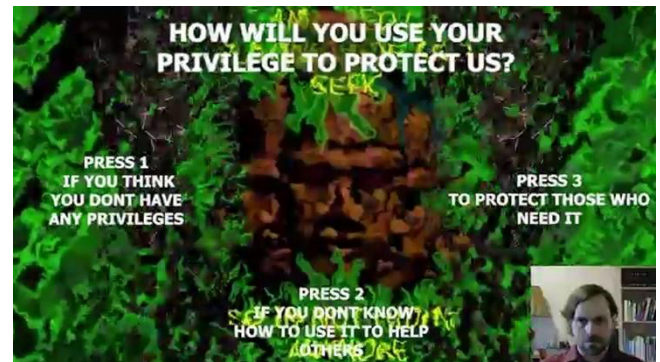


Figure 3: A screenshot from my walkthrough, showing a prompt asking whether I have privilege, whether I do not know how to use my privilege, or whether I will use my privilege to protect others.

This choice first takes me to the above-described encounter with the figure admonishing me for “LOOKING FOR IT.” I am then introduced to a figure who identifies themselves as a “Forgotten Black Trans Body,” who charges me with burying their deadname, the only thing that was not buried when they died. Glittering text then informs me that I have “joined the security team” as a voice intones the phrases,

I am tired of hiding...I am tired of wiping off my makeup...I am tired of travelling scared. I am tired of travelling scared. I am tired of travelling looking down. I am tired of travelling anxious. I am tired of over-preparing. I am tired of looking back over my shoulder...I am tired of wishing someone would help. I am tired. I am tired.

At this point, a fluctuating, abstracted green body with the glowing word "SECURITY" on its side appears, and is identified as me. I am then introduced to another abstracted figure, a Black trans femme who I will help to remain safe when traveling to meet her friends who are "feeling down."

My chosen paths on this escort task eventually lead me to a "Deadname burial site," where I remember the earlier request of the Forgotten Black Trans Body. However, visiting this site does not allow me to bury their deadname, eliciting in me a feeling of frustration with a task left incomplete. My visit to *WE ARE HERE BECAUSE OF THOSE THAT ARE NOT* abruptly ends at this moment of frustration, with the screen cutting to black, then displaying a credits sequence acknowledging the Black trans artists who contributed to the archive in workshops run by Brathwaite-Shirley.

Examining my Walkthrough of *WE ARE HERE BECAUSE OF THOSE THAT ARE NOT*

Because it situates itself as an archive, when considering *WE ARE HERE BECAUSE OF THOSE THAT ARE NOT* within decolonizing frames of digital place-craft, my attention turns to the Global Indigenous Data Alliance (GIDA, 2019) and the norms it has developed for digital archival places. Resisting the white technolibertarian bromide that "information wants to be free" (Levy, 2014, para. 14), articulated by the widely adopted FAIR (findable, accessible, interoperable, reusable) open data principles (Carroll et al., 2020), GIDA advocates for CARE principles: collective benefit, authority to control, responsibility, and ethics. While Brathwaite-Shirley does not claim an Indigenous identity, her work evokes the decolonizing ethos of the GIDA care principles by explicitly *not* making all the content of its archive freely findable, accessible, or usable. Rather, it asserts unambiguous boundaries, set by Brathwaite-Shirley, a Black trans woman, which make some of the parts of the archive off-limits to non-Black and non-trans visitors. *WE ARE HERE*

BECAUSE OF THOSE THAT ARE NOT materially asserts that marginalized peoples should have the authority in digital archival places to control access to their community's archived data, an ethical choice made for the collective benefit of Black trans people.

In addition to describing this work as a digital archive (Brathwaite-Shirley, 2020a; 2020b), Brathwaite-Shirley also at times describes it as a game (Brathwaite-Shirley, 2020c; Vallette, 2020), inviting comparison to digital-games-as-places. The material invitations and inhibitions of *WE ARE HERE BECAUSE OF THOSE THAT ARE NOT* serve to frustrate settler entitlement to place in ways many commercial digital-games-as-places do not. Settler-colonial projects, in addition to dispossessing Indigenous people of land, also induce an affective sensibility, or felt relationship, toward land that normalizes settler entitlement to Indigenous land (Khanna, 2020; Yoon-Ramirez & Ramirez, 2021). Quotidian experiences within colonized places induce habits of being, sensing, and doing that reify settler entitlement (Rifkin, 2014; Yoon-Ramirez & Ramirez, 2021). Among the sources of quotidian experiences that inculcate settler sensibilities of entitlement to land are engagements with digital places, including video games, the most widely played of which are commercial games that materially invite colonizing actions to the places they contain or depict (Alfaraj, 2019; Byrd, 2016; Loban & Apperley, 2019; Mukherjee, 2019). Several popular games I have discussed with students in *Digital Places* camps reflect these norms. For example, in *Super Mario 3D World* (rated for play by all ages), the player is incentivized to kill the inhabitants of places visited in the game, extract money and resources, and eventually raise their flag over the conquered place, with overall progress represented by a map with the players' monogrammed flags fluttering over conquered territories. In the trailer for *Red Dead Redemption 2* (rated for play by people ages 17 and up), settler expansion into the West of the North American continent is presented as an inevitable expansion of "civilization" into the "wild and lawless

frontier” (Rockstar Games, 2018, 00:29), and the player is invited into the role of a white settler facilitating disputes between other white settlers, engaging in combat with Indigenous residents of the land, and inescapably participating in a recreation of the white settlement of the American West.

Conversely, *WE ARE HERE BECAUSE OF THOSE THAT ARE NOT* deliberately frustrated any entitlement I may have felt toward it as a place. Most overtly, the regular textual reminders that “This is not your space, this is our space” made it clear that this was a place made by and for Black trans people, in which I was at most a temporary visitor. Beyond the textual statements, the material qualities of *WE ARE HERE BECAUSE OF THOSE THAT ARE NOT* regularly resisted my habitual felt entitlement toward digital places. Cordoning off two-thirds of the archive for Black and trans individuals frustrated any completionist aims I may have had to extract all of the “content” from this experience. By constructing the place materially as a series of videos with occasional interactive prompts, Brathwaite-Shirley prevented me from feeling like I was entitled to freely roam and explore the Black trans archive. My own prior experiences in schooling, work, and video games have habituated in myself a feeling that I must successfully complete tasks and solve problems in the places I find myself – a sentiment that *WE ARE HERE BECAUSE OF THOSE THAT ARE NOT* deliberately frustrated. I must also acknowledge the fact that most of my schooling, working, and playing have been on stolen land in a settler-colonial state, as a white settler. Living in a colonized context in my settler positionality has inculcated in me sentiments such as entitlement to place and experience of places as potential sites for extracting value (Rifkin, 2014). My completionist aims, which were frustrated by Brathwaite-Shirley’s digital place, stem from this habituated settler sensibility, which included a felt entitlement to go everywhere in the place and to extract all of the experiential data it would yield.

The frustration I expressed above about not being able to bury the deadname of the Forgotten Black Trans Body is not solely rooted in the productivity-oriented school and work experiences identified above, but also likely in a habituated colonial sensibility of white saviorhood (Bandyopadhyay & Patil, 2017). The sensibility of white saviorhood invokes a feeling that my unquestioned entitlement to, and power in, place carries a felt responsibility to solve the problems of oppressed peoples in that place, eliciting a self-congratulatory feeling for myself without necessarily addressing the systemic causes of the problems encountered (Bandyopadhyay & Patil, 2017). Repeatedly, and insistently, *WE ARE HERE BECAUSE OF THOSE THAT ARE NOT* calls attention to colonizing sentiments of place, habituated in my white settler self by past experiences in digital and physical places, by resisting and frustrating those sentiments.

WE ARE HERE BECAUSE OF THOSE THAT ARE NOT’s textual and material qualities also defy the norms in commercial video games that invite identity tourism in marginalized bodies for privileged audience-members (Leonard, 2003; Mills & Godley, 2018). Identity tourism in digital places encourages a form of settler entitlement, but rather than entitlement to place, it invites an entitlement to the emplaced bodies and experiences of marginalized and colonized people. *WE ARE HERE BECAUSE OF THOSE THAT ARE NOT* textually inhibits a sense of identity tourism by explicitly stating that is it loading “security against trans tourism” on the screen that precedes entry to the archive. Materially, the piece inhibits identity tourism through its careful design of specific places for non-Black and non-trans visitors which explicitly acknowledge, address, and reinforce the visitors’ positionality (Hart, 2020). During my time in *WE ARE HERE BECAUSE OF THOSE THAT ARE NOT*, I was never placed in the body of a trans person in an attempt to foster empathy. Rather, I was placed in the position of a cisgender ally helping a trans femme travel at night, in the position of a cisgender onlooker subjecting trans body to an

invasive, interrogatory gaze, and in the position of a well-meaning cisgender person who nonetheless needed to earn trust by moving beyond stated intentions toward embodied actions. The explicit experiential boundaries set up by Brathwaite-Shirley felt to me like a reaction to the experiences of Anna Anthropy, a white trans woman artist, who was angered by the number of cis male critics who claimed that playing Anthropy's game *Dys4ia* allowed them to walk the proverbial mile in her shoes (D'Anastasio, 2015). Anthropy's response was the participatory artwork *Empathy Game*, consisting of a pair of Anthropy's boots with a pedometer attached, allowing gallery visitors to score a single point for walking a literal mile in her shoes, with no possibility of equaling the 'score' Anthropy had accrued over her lifetime (D'Anastasio, 2015). Brathwaite-Shirley inhibits the impulse for cis men like me to assume *WE ARE HERE BECAUSE OF THOSE THAT ARE NOT* has given us an empathic window into trans experience by repeatedly and firmly situating us within our own embodied positions *in relation to* trans experiences.

WE ARE HERE BECAUSE OF THOSE THAT ARE NOT consistently, though its material qualities of place, resists sentiments of settler entitlement inculcated in me through decades of life as a settler living in physical and digital places crafted in and on colonized contexts. Brathwaite-Shirley's piece delimited my access to its archive, asserted my position as a cisgender outsider whose presence was contingent on judgements outside of my control, and refused me the voyeuristic catharsis of assumed empathy through the appropriation of a marginalized embodied identity. In doing so, *WE ARE HERE BECAUSE OF THOSE THAT ARE NOT* resisted settler-colonial norms of digital archival and game places, and prompted my reflection on the entitlement to colonized places and bodies such digital places often habituate (Byrd, 2016; Carroll et al., 2020; Leonard, 2003; Mills & Godley, 2018).

Student and Teacher Critical Digital Place-Craft

Brathwaite-Shirley's critical place-craft strategies, along with those of other artists outside the scope of this article, substantively informed my re-crafting of the *Digital Places* camp curriculum in 2021 and contributed to a shift in curricular focus toward critical sensitivity toward colonial qualities of digital places. When bringing in popular commercial works to the curriculum as objects of discussion, I no longer framed them solely as potential sources of sensory experiences that students might extract for their own sensitive digital place-craft. Rather, I contextualized these works with questions to prompt consideration of place-histories and the sovereignty of Indigenous human and non-human residents of a place (Figure 4). Brathwaite-Shirley's choice to delimit access to her archival place and restrict visitor movement, to maintain safety and control for the marginalized people whose experiences were archived, prompted for me a sensitivity to the way to the way invitations and inhibitions designed into digital places participate in historical and present power relations. Consequently, I crafted the framing prompts to aid students in considering the actions and experiences invited by digital places, and the ideological entailments of those actions. The prompts also positioned the student as a visitor to the place with its own prior life and history, rather than as an agentic or heroic player for whom the place was designed.

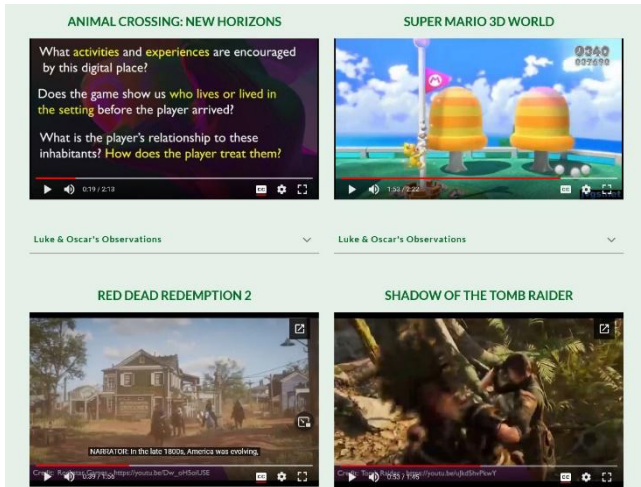


Figure 4: A screen capture of the *Crafting Digital Places* web resource, displaying edited clips of digital game places, framed with prompting questions.

These framing concerns also informed our discussions of critical place-craft by Indigenous artists included in the curriculum. One such work was Naphtali Faulkner's (Ngāi Te Rangi) *Umurangi Generation*, a series of digital places which contain diegetic histories evoking real-world histories of colonization, Indigenous resistance, and climate catastrophe. *Umurangi Generation* pointedly positions the visitor as a photographic documenter of the apocalypse, rather than as an agentic savior. Another work visited and discussed was Taylor Peyton McArthur's (Nakota of Pheasant Rump Nakota First Nation, Saskatchewan) *Line of Sight*, which presents a deceptively complex and uncompromising setting of invisible boundaries and portals, which operate on their own terms and frustrate attempts to traverse, claim, or understand its digital terrain. Our discussion of these works was also informed by my experience with the "security against trans tourism" in Brathwaite-Shirley's piece, as we identified the critical placemaking choices made by these Indigenous artists in these places, without claiming our visiting these places gave those of us who were settlers an empathic understanding of Indigenous lived experiences.

Student responses to the curriculum's framing of digital places varied in their critical approaches, as I

have explored in detail elsewhere (Meeken, 2022). Considering the students' work in the context of Brathwaite-Shirley's piece prompted my attention to the ways their work addressed and positioned the human visitor/player. Three digital places were collaboratively crafted by participating youth.

One group pursued an avoidant strategy, developing an emotional dreamscape, that the students described as disconnected from the violence entailed in real-world colonial histories, but inadvertently rooting their depictions of emotional states in extractive settler conceptions of place and land (Meeken, 2022). This group was reluctant to identify the implied dreamer conjuring their dreamscape, and when leading the class on a walking tour of their place, focused on how the present material state of their dreamscape reflected the present emotional state of the implied dreamer, without acknowledging the individual or systemic histories that may have informed that dreaming.

Another group crafted a digital place with a complex diegetic history involving a population displaced by natural disaster, and refused refuge by a more affluent adjoining nation which may have been responsible for the natural disaster. Their place evoked the real-world ways colonial histories map onto who is displaced by climate crisis and who is empowered to accept or refuse displaced peoples (Meeken, 2022). The human visitor/player to this place, however, was not acknowledged by the place, nor was their relationship to the diegetic history undergirding the place.

The third group developed a place with a similarly rich diegetic history, an Earth-bound enclave of extraterrestrial refugees stranded after escaping human colonization of their own planet (Meeken, 2022). Unlike the prior two projects, this third place explicitly acknowledged the position of the human visitor/player, who was framed as a human photographer seeking to document the enclave, and toward whom the extraterrestrial residents vocally

reacted with justified resentment and aggression (Meeken, 2022).

When reflecting on my sensitization to the ways students' places acknowledged or elided the political position of the visitor/player, I find that my experiences in Brathwaite-Shirley's work were essential in making salient the critical potential of this design decision. The other digital works I visited during my research and crafting of the curriculum prompted my pedagogical focus on critical history of digital places and critical approaches to visitor agency in digital places (Meeken, 2022), but only in *WE ARE HERE BECAUSE OF THOSE THAT ARE NOT* did I encounter a digital place that explicitly, and critically, addressed my positionality as a visitor to its archive.

Outside of my own teaching with digital place-craft, I see the critical sensitivities materially invited by works like *WE ARE HERE BECAUSE OF THOSE THAT ARE NOT* as necessary for any art teacher teaching in the present moment. Teaching in and through digital places is more common than ever, due to the ongoing pandemic (McClain et al., 2021). Since Zuckerberg's announcement mentioned in this piece's introduction, billions of dollars have been invested by largely white male settler technologists in the development of immersive metaversal digital places which will exert material agencies over future teaching (Meta, 2023). And, presently, students are spending a tremendous amount of their school and non-school lives navigating a variety of digital places largely developed by settlers in settler-colonized and colonizer contexts (Anderson & Jiang, 2018; Auxier et al., 2020). As educators, who participate in pedagogical place-craft every time we set preferences for our Zoom class meetings or arrange materials in an online discussion board to complement our face-to-face teaching, it is necessary that we think critically about the ways our own digital place-craft resists or affirms prevailing, harmful, and colonizing norms manifested in the curricula of so many digital places.

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