



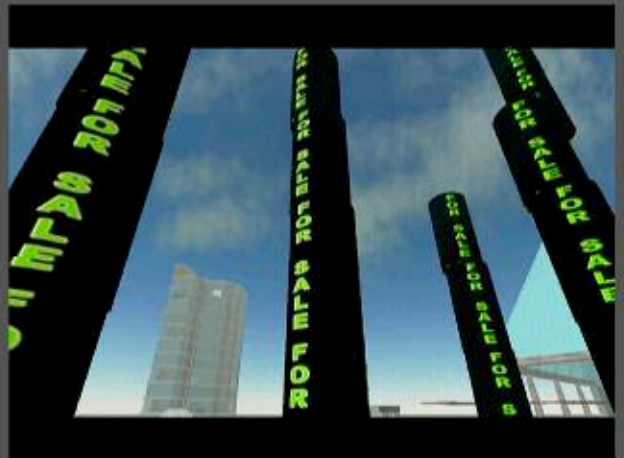
[12:17] Hug Yue: It's one that is dominated by youth, by beauty, and money.



[12:19] China Tracy: I don't know where I am.



spills over



To me, street culture is a very natural, wild, free, and spontaneous form of expression. I like its tempo, force, energy, its image, and impact.

DISCUSS

Before Viewing

- Where do cultural trends come from, and how do they spread? Define the terms *street culture* and **popular culture**. How do they differ? In what cases might they be the same?
- Discuss the concept of utopia. What makes something utopian? How does technology contribute new ways of defining and imagining utopia?

While Viewing

- To what forms of popular culture does Cao Fei refer during the segment, and how do they influence her work? Define the terms **cosplay**, *hip-hop*, and **avatar**, and discuss how students personally relate to them.
- List the examples of role-playing presented in Cao Fei's work and her segment. What kinds of characters and **avatars** does she create? How do they interact with their environments?



RMB CITY 4, 2007. Digital C-print, 47 1/8 x 63 inches. © Cao Fei, courtesy the artist and Lombard-Freid Projects, New York

After Viewing

- Discuss the term *cultural mobility*. How does it relate to Cao Fei's observation, "Neither **cosplay** nor hip-hop is native to China. But when we experience cosplay...we feel that it has become indigenous and original."
- Cao Fei says that she thinks it is very common in the nature of human beings to dream of establishing one's own rules of the game. How does Cao Fei's work in Second Life or in her videos illustrate this observation and provide a platform to experiment with utopian concepts or political ideals?



Golden Fighter (COSPLAYERS SERIES), 2004. Digital C-print, 29 1/4 x 39 1/4 inches. © Cao Fei, courtesy the artist and Lombard-Freid Projects, New York

CREATE

- Write a short story or choose a favorite work of literature. Fashion a character from this work as an **avatar**, using SecondLife.com or another application. Using images of the avatar, create a digital profile that includes photographs or drawings of the avatar in relation to the story.
- Collect music videos from a variety of genres, cultures, and countries that blend imagery, music, text, and performance in different ways. Using these videos as inspiration, create a multimedia installation or performance that explores a specific street culture.

OPPOSITE: *i.Mirror* by China Tracy (AKA: *Cao Fei Second Life Documentary Film*), 2007. Video stills. Second Life documentary film, single-channel color video with sound, 28 min



Born

1978, Guangzhou, China

Education

BFA, Guangzhou Academy of Fine Arts, Guangzhou, China

Lives and Works

Beijing, China

About the Artist

Cao Fei's work reflects the fluidity of a world in which cultures have mixed and diverged in rapid evolution. Her video installations and new media works explore perception and reality in places as diverse as a Chinese factory and the virtual world of Second Life. Applying strategies of sampling, role-play, and documentary filmmaking to capture individuals' longings and the ways in which they imagine themselves—as hip-hop musicians, costumed characters, or digitized alter egos—Cao Fei reveals the discrepancy between reality and dream, and the discontent and disillusionment of China's younger generation. Depictions of Chinese architecture and landscape abound in scenes of hyper-capitalistic Pearl River Delta development, in images that echo traditional Chinese painting, and in the design of her own virtual utopia, *RMB City*. Fascinated by the world of Second Life, Cao Fei has created several works in which she is both participant and observer through her Second Life **avatar**, China Tracy, who acts as a guide, philosopher, and tourist.

Teaching Connections

Media and Materials
 net art, new media, video

Key Words and Ideas

avatar, **cosplay**, cultural mobility, **popular culture**, Second Life, street culture, utopia

Related Artists

Matthew Barney, Mel Chin, Trenton Doyle Hancock, Barry McGee/Margaret Kilgallen, Raymond Pettibon, Paul Pfeiffer