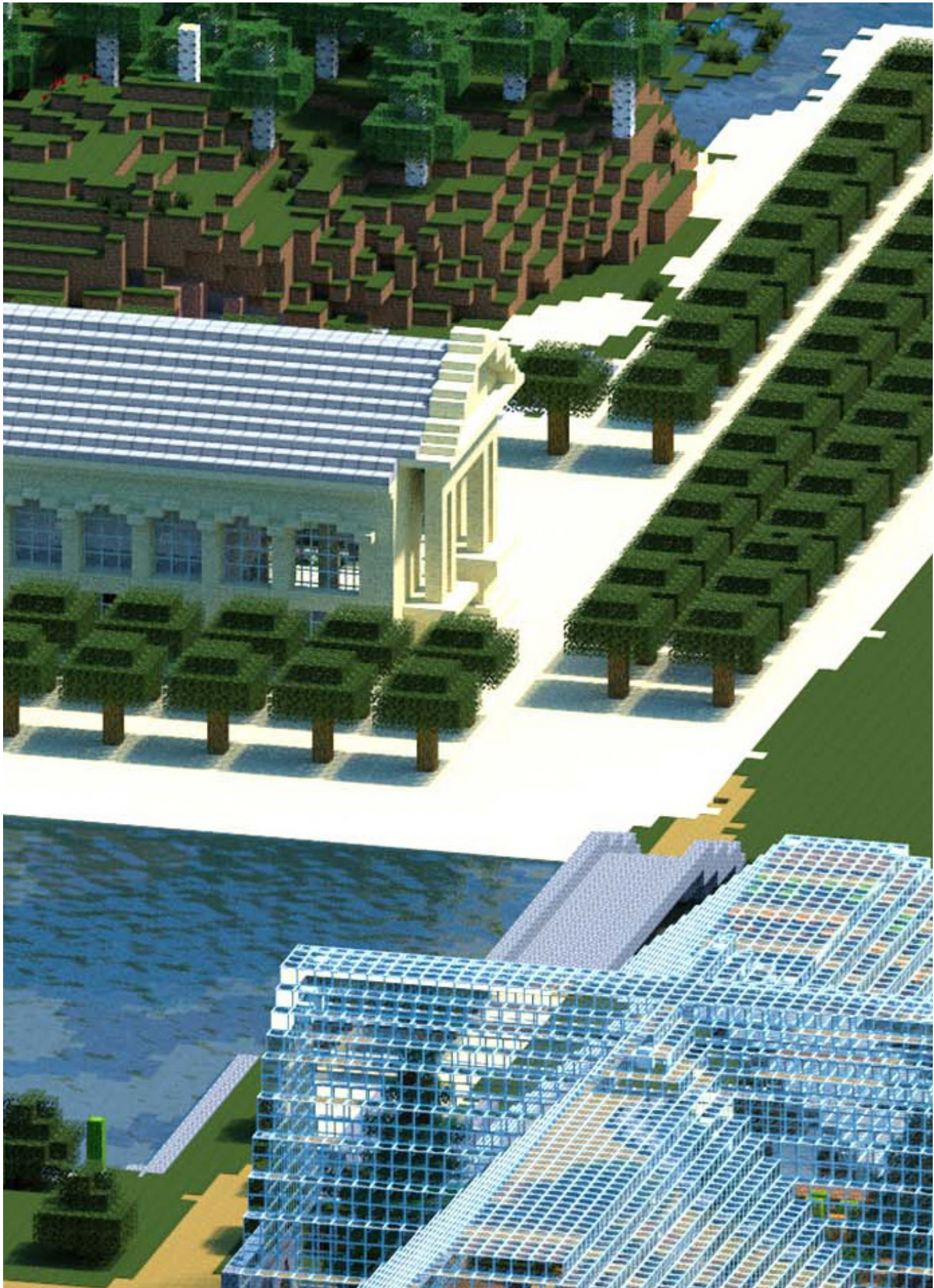


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Minecraft Explorer :

Impalpable laboratory

«Minecraft Explorer» is a virtual scientific exploration mission, made of researchers (CNRS, IGN, INRA), mediators, an illustrator, an author and a photographer. This performance began in January 2021 with interventions regularly broadcast live on social networks. Together, we probe and experiment the infinite potentialities of this immaterial universe in a constant evolution.



Dreaming of scientific exploration

«During the first lockdown, I discovered the game Minecraft. Unable to escape, I got into this game, and started digging tunnels.

Like the famous movie «The Great Escape», my goal was to escape from this confinement by digging and digging for hours.

This strange journey took up all my mental space. My world was big, infinite even. This territory was virgin and like Bill Murray in «Groundhog Day» I found myself alone with all the time I wanted to build, travel and reinvent myself.

I quickly felt like a 15th century explorer lost in the new world.

I wanted to understand this object... not to win the game, nor even to advance in experience. But to collect, draw, study. I wanted to bring back into the real world pieces of this discovery to show them, classify them and understand them.

An idea was born, to set up a scientific exploration mission in a video game: to try to discover this game, to understand it, in its logic as well as its aberrations.

What I know about scientific explorations comes from some memories of the middle school, and from the movies I saw. In my imagination, these missions take place where there are still things to explore. In its virtual transposition of the real world, Google has not yet recorded all that is possible to see: the voids, the mysteries, and the strange creatures are precisely the object of my attention.”

At a time when the virtual has never been so central to our daily lives, Thibault Brunet offers a new kind of performance: guiding a scientific mission through the virtual worlds of the video game Minecraft.

Since its inception, Thibault Brunet's research has relied on digital technology to question our relationship to virtuality: he has studied the landscapes created inside video games («Vice City», 2013), catalogued the architecture of French territory on Google Earth («Typologie du Virtuel», 2014) and more recently was inspired by photographic missions to propose images close to modeling («Territoires Circonscrits», 2017).

In the continuity of this work, the purpose of the project «Minecraft Explorer» is to test the modalities of interaction between real and virtual worlds, and to make dialogue between scientific and artistic approaches by applying the scientific method to an imaginary universe. The crossing of these views highlights the infinite scope of the functionalities of this «game» that are unsuspected by simple users.

«Minecraft Explorer» is a world in accelerated time: the days pass in 24 minutes, one can do almost everything: walk, swim, eat, read, build tools, houses, make fire, interact with animals and other characters. From the researcher's point of view, the slightest action raises a multitude of questions, for example when he comes across a chicken: the reasons and direction of its movement, its reproduction system, its needs...

The evolution of the game being autonomous and self-generated, within a framework barely defined by humankind, all the elements



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involved follow mysterious and fluctuating rules. Therefore, trying to understand the rules governing this caricatured world allows us to better understand our own.

The existence of natural resources (mineralogical, fossil, animal and vegetal) that can be exploited and transformed, the presence of physico-chemical and ecological elements obeying their own dynamics, allows us to consider a very vast field of study: oceanography, electronics, computer science, history, botany, archaeology... aiming for example at complex systems, the propagation of fire, the construction of infrastructures/roads, with as many potential derivatives such as the visit to the planet Mars.

Thus, this research is inspired by the great scientific explorations, replaying the myths and fantasies of the discovery of an unexplored world.

Virtual missions

Starting in January 2021, guest researchers are tasked with observing, collecting and analysing data related to their discipline. The missions are regularly broadcasted live on Twitch, a video-streaming platform very popular among the gaming community. From an artistic point of view, each broadcast constitutes a new kind of performance; through this innovative approach, the artist brings into the field of creation the codes of an increasingly popular contemporary practice: «e-sport».



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