Paul Sermon, Research Outputs Since January 2008:

Artists Web Site: http://paulsermon.org
Documentary Video Archive: http://vimeo.com/paulsermon

The information and practice-based research accounts contained in this document identify up to five research activities that could be considered for REF2014. In each case the practice-based project/output has multiple activities and outcomes that both underpin the theoretical and practical aspects of the research and disseminate it within an international context appropriate to the field. Research evidence in the form of online documentary videos, project web sites and exhibitor web pages have been provided for each proposed output.

The contents of this document are outlined below.

Research Outputs:

1. Neural String Network – 2012
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1. Neural String Network – 2012

An interactive collaborative drawing ‘machine’ designed on the concept of a neural network, allowing participants to experience a shared creative process, using the principles of open-source and social networked communication through an analogue string system. The underlying concept of the Neural String Network is to introduce participants to the idea of collaborative-shared drawing practice, a dispersed collective that draws on Roland Barthes ‘The Death of the Author’ (1967) whereby each participant plays an equal role as both viewer and artist. Played out like a surrealist ‘Exquisite Corpse’ game of consequences or as a piece of Haiku poetry, the drawing participants contribute marks, signs and signifiers to an open-content drawing, akin to the development of open-source software on neural networks. The string network consists of five drawing table ‘nodes’ within a room/studio space measuring eight by eight metres square. Each node is linked to the other four via pulleys and washing lines, making it possible to peg a sheet of A4 paper to a line and winch it across to any one of the other nodes. The network system uses 10 string connections between the five drawing tables, creating a pentagram within a pentagon neural network design.

Representing the interconnected synapses and neurons of the brain the role of each participant is that of cause and effect, a single instruction initiates a series of consequences that unfold in drawings, marks and patterns that are created whilst being hoisted simultaneously across the room in quick succession. The Neural String Network project was first set up in February 2012 to coincide with the centenary celebration of Alan Turing, a project undertaken by students from the BA Graphic Design programme at MediaCity Salford University. Each participating student was given a single word drawn from the Turing theme, such as machine, brain, code and apple that were interpreted as a drawing by a collective consciousness. This installation has been exhibited and presented through:

- MediaCityUK Salford, March to April 2012.
- The College of Fine Arts at Shanghai University, China, from 02 to 13 July 2012.
- The Drawing Research Network Conference Loughborough University, 10 to 11 September 2012.
- TRACEY Journal Loughborough University 2013
- The Journal of Technoetic Arts (Intellect) 2013
- Ars Electronica, September 2013

Documentary Video: [http://vimeo.com/paulsermon/neuralstringnetwork](http://vimeo.com/paulsermon/neuralstringnetwork)
Project Web Site: [http://www.paulsermon.org/string](http://www.paulsermon.org/string)
2. All the World’s a Screen – 2011

On the evening of Saturday 28th May 2011 participants at MadLab in Manchester's Northern Quarter and Hangar Artist Studios in Poblenou, Barcelona were joined together on screen for the first time to create their very own interactive generative cinema experience, complete with sets, costumes and props. Employing the scenography techniques of Alfred Hitchcock the artists created a miniature film set in which the remote audiences acted and directed their own movie, transporting participants into animated environments and sets where they created personalised unique narratives. This playful ludic intervention merged urban environments with networked audiences allowing the participants to explore alternative networked spaces. The key impact of this installation can be measured through its focus on public arts engagement, exploring the potential for interactive artworks to engage with the public, allowing audiences to make a creative contribution to the installation through the development of unique user-generated narrative events. All the World’s a Screen pushes the boundaries of telematic art and generative cinema, combining the possibilities of telepresent performance with miniature scale-models and animated scenes for the development of audience participation that explores the way narratives can be revealed through a subtle interplay between artist, audience and environment. With key features of the telematic stage, user generated performances and the dramaturgy of networked communication this project references Shakespeare's infamous line 'All the world's a stage' with seven rooms of a model film set relating to the seven ages of man as presented in Shakespeare's ‘As You Like It’, providing a metaphorical backdrop to steer the unfolding plot. This project was co-hosted by the Museu d’Art Contemporani de Barcelona MACBA Study Centre. In addition to the installation this project also included hosting a practice-based workshop for Manchester and Barcelona based artists, researchers and students to take part and contribute to the research and development of its broader impact. This installation has been exhibited and presented through:

- MadLab Manchester and HANGAR Gallery Barcelona, 28 May 2011.
-MACBA Study Centre Barcelona and Umbro Design Space Manchester.
-FutureEverything Manchester 13 April 2011.
-The International Journal of Performance Arts and Digital Media (Intellect), September 2013
-ISEA Sydney, June 2013

Hangar Documentary Video: http://vimeo.com/paulsermon/all-the-worlds-a-screen
Project Web Site: http://www.paulsermon.org/screen
Project Blog: http://alltheworldsascreen.tumblr.com

All the World's a Screen installed at Hangar Studios in Poblenou Barcelona on 28 May 2011.
3. Front Room – 2010

Front Room ran between Contact Theatre Manchester and Sao Paulo MASP Museum of Contemporary Art, Brazil for FutureEverything 2010 and involved both programmed and ad hoc interaction. Two identical sofas were located in dispersed remote locations; Manchester and Sao Paulo. In front of each sofa stood a video monitor and camera. The video camera in each location sent a live video image to the other location. The two images were mixed together, via a video effects generator, and displayed on the monitors in front of each sofa in both remote locations simultaneously. The viewers in both locations assumed the function of the installation and sat down on the sofas to watch television. At this point they entered the telematic space, watching a live image of them selves sat on a sofa next to another person. They started to explore the space and understood they were now in complete physical control of a telepresent body that can interact with the other person.

Front Room is a vacant space of potentiality; it is nothing without the presence of a viewer and the interactions of a user who create their own television program by becoming the voyeurs of their own spectacle. The concept and structure of Front Room is an open framework, where the artwork itself emerges only through the participation of users and through their lived experience at a given moment in space and time. Bluntly put, the experience is the artwork. Therefore, sources representing such phenomenological information, whether textual, oral or visual, become the pivotal points of interest in the research. Front Room was world premiere created specially for FutureEverything 2010, supported by the University of Salford, British Council, Northern Net and Arts Council England. This installation has been exhibited and presented through:

- Contact Theatre Manchester for the FutureEverything Festival 2010.
- The MASP Museum of Contemporary Art, Sao Paulo Brazil for the FutureEverything Festival 2010.

FutureEverything Documentary Video: [http://vimeo.com/paulsermon/front-room](http://vimeo.com/paulsermon/front-room)
MediaCityUK Documentary Video: [http://vimeo.com/paulsermon/believe](http://vimeo.com/paulsermon/believe)
Project Web Site: [http://www.paulsermon.org/frontroom](http://www.paulsermon.org/frontroom)

*The Front Room set installed in the entrance foyer space at Contact Theatre Manchester, May 2010.*
4. Picnic on the Screen – 2009

An interactive public video installation for the BBC Village Screen at the Glastonbury Festival 2009. The installation consists of two blue picnic blankets in front of the Village Screen. The audience groups sitting on these blankets are captured on camera and brought together through a system of live chroma-keying, and placed on a computer illustrated background, and behind computer animated elements that are triggered and controlled by the audience through a unique motion tracking interface that is integrated in the installation. When a member of the audience discovers their image on screen they immediately enter the teleport space, watching a live image of them selves sitting at a picnic scene next to another person. They soon start to explore the space and understand they are now in complete physical control of a teleport body that can interact with another person in an illustrated enchanted ludic scene, complete with animated characters that respond to their movement and actions. Following the success of 'Picnic on the Screen' presented at the Glastonbury Festival 2009 Charlotte Gould and Paul Sermon were invited to develop a new version of this interactive public video installation for Picnic in Arcadia used to link public audiences between the Bluecoat Gallery Liverpool and the University of Shanghai, for the first time via a telematic videoconference connection, as part of Liverpool Biennial 2010. This site-specific work allowed the public to engage and interact while simply passing through or relaxing having lunch. This playful environment merges two public spaces together, creating a third otherworldly space on screen where people can interact with others across the globe on a virtual picnic blanket, allowing the audience to explore alternative networked spaces. This installation has been exhibited and presented through:

- BBC Village Screen at the Glastonbury Festival 2009.
- The Bluecoat Liverpool UK, for the MOVES10 Festival, 21 to 25 April 2010.
- The Bluecoat Liverpool and Shanghai University for the Liverpool Biennale, October 2010.
- The Lowry Salford and the University of Nottingham Ningbo China for the Digital Resources in the Humanities and Arts Conference 2011, September 2011.

MediaCityUK Documentary Video: [http://vimeo.com/paulsermon/believe](http://vimeo.com/paulsermon/believe)
Glastonbury Project Web Site: [http://www.paulsermon.org/picnic](http://www.paulsermon.org/picnic)
Bluecoat Liverpool Project Web Site: [http://www.paulsermon.org/urbanpicnic](http://www.paulsermon.org/urbanpicnic)
Shanghai Project Web Site: [http://www.paulsermon.org/shangpool](http://www.paulsermon.org/shangpool)

Students from Shanghai University participating in Picnic on the Screen, October 2010
5. Peace Games (Liberate your Avatar) – 2008

An interactive public video installation incorporating Second Life environments and user interaction, developed for ‘GAMES: Kunst und Politik der Spiele’ Kunsthalle Vienna (Kunsthalle project space Karlsplatz) 28 May - 6 July 2008. Supported by Arts Council England “Welcome to Peace Games, where Second Life and First Life converge in a bizarre peace talks charade that reflects the absurd face of global politics”. This project looks specifically at the concepts of presence and performance in Second Life and first life and attempts to bridge these two spaces through mixed reality interfaces. The project further examines the notion of telepresence in Second Life and first life spaces, the blurring between 'online' and 'offline' identities, and the signifiers and conditions that make us feel present in this world. This work questions how subjectivity is articulated in relation to embodiment and disembodiment, and explores the avatar in relation to its activating first life agent, focusing on the avatar's multiple identifications, such as gender roles, human/animal hybrids, and other archetypes, identifiable through visible codes and body forms in Second Life.

The aim of this practice-based research is to critically investigate how online participants in three-dimensional worlds, Second Life in particular, socially interact within innovative creative environments and appropriate these cultural experiences as part of their everyday lives - questioning what is 'real' in this relationship. The work brings together ethnographic and creative practice-based research that identifies and develops innovative interactive applications, interface design and new cultural and sociological experience. This creative practice aims to help shape and define the emerging online 'metaverse' society by significantly contributing to the quality of both First and Second Life equally. This installation has been exhibited and presented through:

- **GAMES Kunst und Politik der Spiele, Kunsthalle Vienna, 28 May - 6 July 2008.**
- **Second Life Installation and panel, ISEA Belfast, August 2009.**
- **DUAL Exhibition, Nottingham Playhouse, September 2012.**

**Project Web Site:** [http://www.paulsermon.org/peacegames](http://www.paulsermon.org/peacegames)
**Exhibition Web Site:** [http://www.kunsthallewien.at/cgi-bin/event/event.pl?id=2572;lang=de;back=2821](http://www.kunsthallewien.at/cgi-bin/event/event.pl?id=2572;lang=de;back=2821)

*Screen shot of merged Second Life and first life images at the Kunsthalle Vienna in May 2008.*
6. Additional Research Outputs:

**Mirror on the Screen** - *DUAL Exhibition, Nottingham Playhouse Digital Arts Programme, 2012*
Exhibition Web Site: [http://www.the-cutting-room.org/dual/dual.html](http://www.the-cutting-room.org/dual/dual.html)
Project Web Site: [http://www.paulsermon.org/mirror](http://www.paulsermon.org/mirror)

**Telematic Dreaming** - *Extimacy, Es Baluard Museu d’Art Modern i Contemporani de Palma Mallorca, 2011*

**Telematic Dreaming** - *Borderless Reality, Nabi Art Centre, Seoul, Korea, 2010*
Exhibition Web Site: [http://www.nabi.or.kr/english/project/coming_read.nab?id=336](http://www.nabi.or.kr/english/project/coming_read.nab?id=336)

**Telematic Vision** - *Imagining Media at ZKM 20 Jahre ZKM, Karlsruhe, Germany, 2009*
Exhibition Web Site: [http://on1.zkm.de/zkm/stories/storyReader$6831](http://on1.zkm.de/zkm/stories/storyReader$6831)

**Urban Intersections** - *Waterfront Plaza Belfast for ISEA 2009*
Project Web Site: [http://www.paulsermon.org/urban](http://www.paulsermon.org/urban)

**AVATARIUM** - *AMBER08 Media Art Festival Istanbul, Turkey, 2008*

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7. Research Impact:

**Telematic Vision** - *The Experimenta Science Museum Heilbronn, Germany, since 2009*
Museum Web Site: [http://www.experimenta-heilbronn.de](http://www.experimenta-heilbronn.de)

**The Telepresent Embrace** - *The PUBLIC, West Bromwich, since 2008*

**The Teleporter Zone** - *The Evelina Children’s Hospital London, since 2005*
Project Web Site: [http://www.paulsermon.org/teleporter](http://www.paulsermon.org/teleporter)