URBAN INTERSECTIONS

An interactive urban installations in contested virtual spaces for ISEA 2009 Belfast

Paul Sermon, Charlotte Gould & Peter Appleton (Submission 414)

Supported by ma-net Media Arts Network and Arts Council England

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Exhibition Installation Proposal

This urban exhibition project brings together three multi-user virtual environment projects, developed by members of the ma-net Media Arts Network [http://www.ma-net.org/] from the University of Salford and Liverpool John Moores University, within a site-specific Second Life environment designed and constructed for presentation in Belfast at ISEA2009. The installation exhibition touches on a number of the conference themes, specifically 'interactive storytelling and memory building in post-conflict society' and 'citizenship and contested spaces'. The facade of the of the Belfast Waterfront building has been identified as the proposed urban projection screen, which forms the central focus of the installation and immediately references the city of Belfast and its painted murals that depict the recent social history. The project could equally be projected onto the end of many of these rows of terraced houses.

Installation and Public Interaction

Each of the three projects presented will be housed in a Second Life space that represents the virtual exhibition of contested space. The projects will deal with ironies and stereotypes in multi-user virtual environments such as boarder control, cultural identity, gender roles, digital consumption and virtual desire. Each project will also utilise alternative interactive functionality and techniques that will allow the participants to interact and direct projects by their presence and movements in the space immediately in front of the projection screen. Interfaces will include live video streaming and motion capture techniques.

A live narrative unfolds on the facade of the Waterfront Building as two opposing sides of identity come together from first and Second Life. Through motion tracking the participant in first life directs the camera view through the Second Life environment and their movements are tracked in a designated area just below the screen. These physical coordinates are mapped from the first life installation into Second Life.

The installation space, already staged in a grand setting, at the Waterfront Building, represents a neutral territory, built after the peace agreement. It is similar to those environments frequently found in Second Life, with it’s formal symmetry, a design which references times gone by complete with raised square lawns, columns and plinths. This will be used as a stage area, dressed to represent a garden with deck chairs, umbrellas and other garden paraphernalia. Through this garden we will explore the concept of boundaries and territories, as a metaphor of boarder control and enforced perimeters.

Just as in Adam and Eve’s garden, the Second Life space will represent the idealised space, promoting tolerance and community, complete with the glorious kitsch of the contemporary garden, with a shed, gnomes, water features and statues. As the participant leads us through this virtual landscape, first and Second Life inhabitants meet on screen. We come face to face with our other inhabitants, both online and offline, in this augmented reality setting. The participants complete this artwork as the narrative develops and a live digital mural reveals it’s self on the wall of the Waterfront building.

Previous projects from this artistic collaboration include:

Video link: [http://creativetechnology.salford.ac.uk/paulsermon/liberate/documentary.mov](http://creativetechnology.salford.ac.uk/paulsermon/liberate/documentary.mov)

Video link: [http://creativetechnology.salford.ac.uk/consensual/video2.mov](http://creativetechnology.salford.ac.uk/consensual/video2.mov)

Video link: [http://creativetechnology.salford.ac.uk/isea2009/ludic.mov](http://creativetechnology.salford.ac.uk/isea2009/ludic.mov)
URBAN INTERSECTIONS - Group exhibition of interactive urban installations in contested virtual spaces

Video and Data Flow Diagram

Camera
tracking movement
of person wearing LED light

Waterfront Building

X, Y location coordinates of avatar’s camera
view are controlled by X,Y coordinates of user

Composite video out via VGA converter

Mac (networked)

Motion Capture running
Translation (Motion capture
to Second Life)
Second Life Client running

Second Life avatars mapped
with participants on screen

Screen

Edirol V4
Video feeds to chroma key Mix

Mac (networked)
Running Quicktime
Broadcaster

Salford Quicktime
Server

Internet
Detail of Chroma-Key Flow Diagram

Image from Second Life (SL) shown on big screen in installation

- Video feed to big screen in installation
- Video streaming server to the web
- Video feed to web streaming server
- Chroma-key video mixer
- Video feeds to chroma-key mixer

1. SL Client showing blue box studio in SL
2. Video camera taking live image of person in installation
3. SL Client showing SL model of installation with incorporated live video stream

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Installation Plan and Location

Video camera located inside Waterfront captures image of ground below for motion capture

White projection screen mounted in front of glass

Video projector positioned on tree plinth (for best image on screen and out of view of public)

Video camera sending live video stream of green square into Second Life

Motion capture space

VGA and power cable

Participating public on green square with free WiFi access
Hardware and Installation Equipment

Video and computer hardware supplied by The University of Ulster:

1 x Sanyo PLC-XF70 data projector and zoom lens

Video and computer hardware supplied by Sermon, Gould and Appleton:

2 x 3CCD video camera, tripod/camera mount
1 x Edirol V4 video mixer
2 x 14” preview monitor
4 x MacBook Pro laptop computer
1 x Canopus ADVC110
2 x Video Distribution Amplifier
Power cables/supplies/outlets, video cables and adaptors

Installation Equipment supplied by Sermon, Gould and Appleton:

1 x White video projection screen attached to Waterfront Building
1 x Waterproof housing and mounting for video projector
Deckchairs/garden furniture/umbrellas/inflatable gazebo

Resources and supplies from Waterfront Building:

4 x Internet connection 100 Mbit
9 x Internal power outlet
4 x External power outlet
Free WiFi Zone in front of Waterfront building
3 x Table 120 x 75
6 x Folding chair
Internal and External Location of Equipment at the Waterfront Building
**Installation Site-Specific Inspiration and Context**

Much of the Installation environment constructed in Second Life will reflect on the surroundings of Belfast and will draw inspiration from the local history and community. Reliant on both user interaction and input the audience will form an integral part of this installation that aims to transcend borders and boundaries of culture and gender as interactive storytelling and memory building in post-conflict society.

This exhibition proposal is made in conjunction with a panel discussion consisting of the same group of researchers/artists from this exhibition proposal. Whilst this proposal will require a public urban venue/s in Belfast the resources, equipment and its transportation will be supported and undertaken by the University of Salford, Creative Technology Research group. This project offers a unique chance to bring together current practice-based research led by Paul Sermon, Charlotte Gould and Peter Appleton, working in the areas of location based arts, online multi-user virtual environments and the telematic urban intersection. This exhibition will focus on the issues of identity, mobility and user driven emotions by contesting the colonisation of online augmented and locative environments, gender roles and how we embody virtual spaces.
Previous Interactive Urban & Second Life Installations

Clockwise from top right:

**Second Life Ludic Narrative, Moves 09, Liverpool April 2009**
[http://creativetechnology.salford.ac.uk/gould/](http://creativetechnology.salford.ac.uk/gould/)

**LIBERATE YOUR AVATAR, Urban Screens, Manchester October 2007**
[http://www.paulsermon.org/liberate/](http://www.paulsermon.org/liberate/)

**Peace Games for Kunst und Politik der Spiele, Kunsthalie Wien, May 2008**
[http://creativetechnology.salford.ac.uk/paulsermon/peacegames/](http://creativetechnology.salford.ac.uk/paulsermon/peacegames/)

**Linking Phenomena and Actions within Virtual Spaces, 2008**
[http://creativetechnology.salford.ac.uk/consensual/icdc.html](http://creativetechnology.salford.ac.uk/consensual/icdc.html)

For current work in Second Life by this group please visit the following SLurl:
Peter Appleton - Reader in Creative Technology

School of Art & Design, Liverpool John Moores University, UK
Email: p.appleton@ljmu.ac.uk URL: http://www.ljmu.ac.uk/LSA/97447.htm

Biography

After a period working on the Oil Rigs in the North Sea he began to create objects which responded to and were powered by the elements, producing sound from wind rain and sun. Simultaneously this enquiry into electroacoustics produced a series of experimental performance instruments used in performance and collaborations with other musicians. Noteable performances were at: Queen Elizabeth Hall and National Theatre as part of the Sounds Unusual festival on the South Bank, Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival and at the Windsor Jazz Festival. Collaborations include recordings with The Loved One and the New Fast Automatic Daffodils and on Extreme Records. Also noteable was a performance with Brian Eno in Japan at the Inaugeration of a Shinto Temple in Tenkawa
Charlotte Gould - Lecture in Digital Media

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Biography

Charlotte Gould has developed a number of web-based interactive environments that explore user identity and the notion of a floating narrative. She is currently developing location specific work in which the user becomes an active participant in the narrative and explores methods of user driven content. The work seeks to identify a counter culture, and provide an alternative aesthetic that questions the predominance of digital realism and explores the conventions and politics of embodiment in multi-user virtual environments. Through her work she encourages creative play and looks at the way the audience can experience the urban space through telepresent technology. She has undertaken illustration and animation commissions from a range of companies including the BBC and Manchester Art Gallery. She graduated with a BA Honours Degree in Graphic Design from Chelsea School of Art in 1990 and was awarded an MA in Creative Technology from the University of Salford (2003). Charlotte Gould is Programme leader of BA Honours Graphic Design at the University of Salford.
Paul Sermon - Professor of Creative Technology

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Biography

Born in Oxford, England, 1966. Studied BA Hon's Fine Art degree under Professor Roy Ascott at The University of Wales, from September 1985 to June 1988. Studied a Post-graduate MFA degree at The University of Reading, England, from October 1989 to June 1991. Awarded the Prix Ars Electronica “Golden Nica”, in the category of interactive art, for the hyper media installation “Think about the People now”, in Linz, Austria, September 1991. Produced the ISDN videoconference installation “Telematic Vision” as an Artist in Residence at the Center for Art and Media Technology (ZKM) in Karlsruhe, Germany, from February to November 1993. Received the “Sparkey Award” from the Interactive Media Festival in Los Angeles, for the telepresent video installation “Telematic Dreaming”, June 1994. From 1993 to 1999 employed as Dozent for Media Art at the HGB Academy of Visual Arts in Leipzig, Germany. During this time continued to produced further interactive telematic installations including “Telamatic Encounter” in 1996 and “The Tables Turned” in 1997 for the Ars Electronica Centre in Linz, and the ZKM Media Museum in Karlsruhe. From 1997 to 2001 employed as Guest Professor for Performance and Environment at the University of Art and Industrial Design in Linz, Austria. Since June 2000 based at The University of Salford working primarily within the research field of immersive and expanded telematic environments.