

Mirror on the Screen

An interactive telematics Second Life installation

For DUAL at Nottingham Playhouse 5th September to 30th October 2012

Produced by Paul Sermon & Charlotte Gould (21/06/12)

Charlotte Gould - Senior Lecturer in Digital Media
Paul Sermon - Professor of Creative Technology

School of Art & Design, Centenary Building
The University of Salford
Peru Street, Salford
Greater Manchester
M3 6EQ

Paul Sermon p.sermon@salford.ac.uk
Mobile Tel.: 07753 167726
<http://www.paulsermon.org>

Paul Sermon & Charlotte Gould
13 Longford Avenue
Stretford
Greater Manchester
M32 8QB

Charlotte Gould <c.e.gould@salford.ac.uk>
Mobile Tel.: 07525 011167
<http://creativetechnology.salford.ac.uk/gould/>

CONCEPT AND DESCRIPTION

Mirror on the Screen

“Confront your own avatar in Second Life as you explore the enchanted the forest.”

This installation allows ‘first life’ visitors and ‘second life’ avatars to confront each other and coexist in the same enchanted forest environment in a live interactive public video installation. An interactive telematic Second Life project by Charlotte Gould and Paul Sermon, from the University of Salford. Developed site-specifically for the DUAL Exhibition at Nottingham Playhouse as part of the Digital Stage programme.

This project looks specifically at the concepts of presence and performance in SecondLife and first life and will attempt to bridge these two spaces through mixed reality techniques and interfaces. The project further examines the notion of telepresence in SecondLife 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. It 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 project aims to evaluate the diversity of personas and social life styles of the avatar.

So as to explore this emerging relationship between the virtual and physical, Paul Sermon and Charlotte Gould have developed a number of interactive installations using “Second Life” that focus on the interaction and exchange between online and offline identities through social practices, such as performance, narrative, embodiment, activism, place and identity construction. Their collaborative experiments seek to question whether Second Life is a platform for potential social and cultural change - appropriated as a mirror image of first life. By consciously deciding to refer to this image that is mirrored as ‘first’ life rather than ‘real’ life, the authors' central question poses a paradox in Second Life when we consider Jacques Lacan's proposition that the ‘self’ (or ego) is a formulation of our own body image reflected in the ‘mirror stage’. However, there is no ‘mirror stage’ in Second Life. This would suggest that the computer screen itself is the very mirror we are looking for, one that allows the user to formulate her/his ‘second self’. Although an ‘alter ego’, this is nonetheless a self that can have an engaged social identity.

In Second Life the user can create an avatar that lives out an online existence. There are no set objectives, one can buy property, clothing, accessories, furnish one's home, modify one's identity, and interact with other users. This online community has grown to seventeen million residents since launching in 2003, generating a thriving economy. However, based our own observations through developing works in Second Life, while the virtual shopping malls, nightclubs, bars and beaches often reach their user capacity, there are noticeably fewer creative and sociological modes of attraction. Consequently, there is an increasing need to identify new forms of interaction, creativity, cultural production and sociability.

DUAL EXHIBITION - PRODUCTION PROGRAMME

Project production and milestones:

- Work stage 1 commencing 04/06/12: Produce initial project concept/proposal.
- Work stage 2 commencing 18/06/12: Site visit Nottingham Playhouse 20/06/12.
- Work stage 3 commencing 25/06/12: Produce final project concept/proposal.
- Work stage 4 commencing 02/07/12: Produce Second Life environment and test.
- Work stage 5 commencing 16/07/12: Get PC delivered in Manchester and test.
- Work stage 6 commencing 30/07/12: Construction of plinth at Nottingham Playhouse.
- Work stage 7 commencing 06/08/12: Arrange transportation of all equipment to Nottingham.
- Work stage 8 commencing 27/08/12: installing at Nottingham Playhouse on 01-02/09/12.
- Work stage 9 commencing 03/09/12: opening at Nottingham Playhouse 05/09/12.

EQUIPMENT AND MATERIALS

Provided by the Venue: Nottingham Playhouse

- 1 x LCD HD Screen 50"
- 1 x PC with Full HD 1080p Graphics Card
- 1 x PC Audio speakers
- 1 x Plinth/cabinet for positioning screen/camera and housing equipment
- 1 x Wired Internet connection

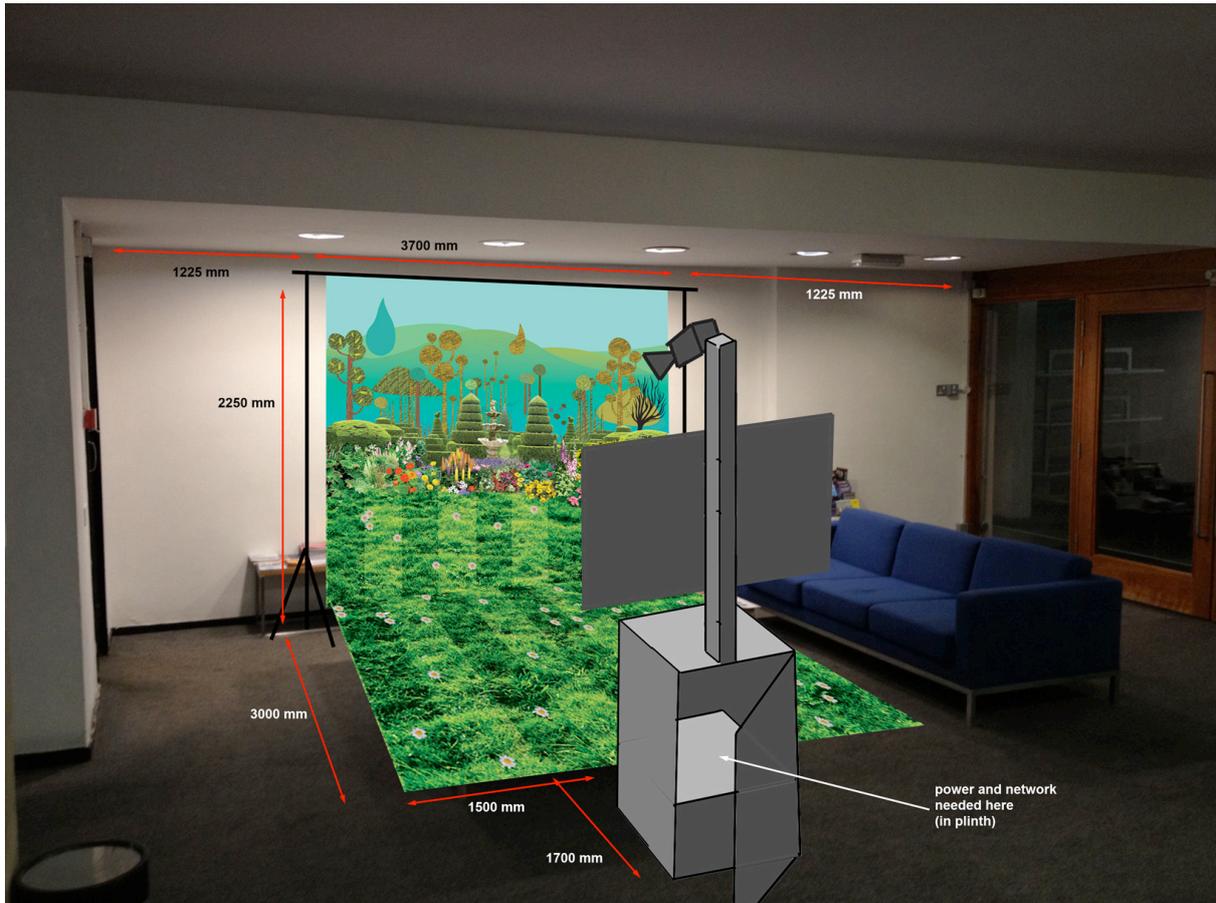
Provided by Paul Sermon and Charlotte Gould

- 1 x Panasonic AW-HS50 Video Mixer chroma-keyer
- 1 x Sony HD video Camera
- 1 x HDMI to SDI Blackmagic converter
- 1 x Stand for Backdrop or Blue screen
- 1 x Backdrop or Blue screen
- 1 x Wireless keyboard and mouse
- Various HDMI, SDI and DVI cables

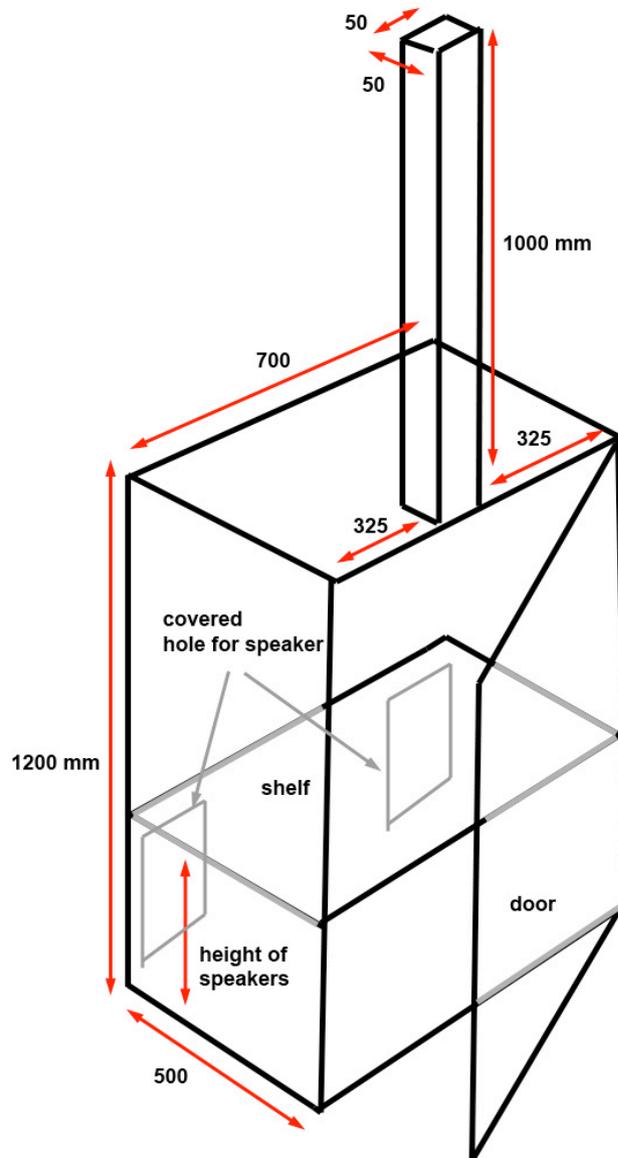
INSTALLATION FLOW DIAGRAM



INSTALLATION MODEL



MONITOR PLINTH/ EQUIPMENT BOX & CAMERA SUPPORT



PREVIOUS COLLABORATIVE INSTALLATIONS



Picnic on the Screen, Glastonbury Festival 2009 <http://www.paulsermon.org/picnic/>



Urban Intersections, ISEA Belfast 2009 <http://www.paulsermon.org/urban/>



Shang-pool Picnic, Shanghai, Liverpool Biennale 2010 <http://www.paulsermon.org/shangpool/>



GloNet Front Room, FutureEverything May 2010 <http://www.paulsermon.org/frontroom/>



BIOGRAPHIES

Charlotte Gould - Senior Lecturer in Digital Media

Head of the Creative Technology & Communications Research Centre
School of Art & Design, The University of Salford, Greater Manchester, UK

Email: c.e.gould@salford.ac.uk

Artists Web Site: <http://creativetechnology.salford.ac.uk/gould/>

Biography and Curriculum Vitae: <http://www.seek.salford.ac.uk/profiles/CGOULD.jsp>

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 Hons Graphic Design at the University of Salford.



Paul Sermon - Professor of Creative Technology

Creative Technology & Communications Research Centre
School of Art & Design, The University of Salford, Greater Manchester, UK

Email: p.sermon@salford.ac.uk

Artists Web Site: <http://www.paulsermon.org>

Artists Videos: <http://vimeo.com/paulsermon>

Biography and Curriculum Vitae: <http://www.paulsermon.org/sermon/>

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 Centre 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.

