Proposal for RE:SOURCE MAH online Curated Showcase

Coombe Hill or High Water (2022/23)
http://www.paulsermon.org/coombehill

By Paul Sermon

Coombe Hill or High Water (2022/23) is an interactive tragicomedy for two online performers set in a dystopian redundant world; an online post-Brexit/COVID-19/democracy end of days story/game/drama/meeting. It presents two online telepresent participants (actors) trying to carry on as normal, waking up in flood water, distilling their own fuel and driving into the hills to escape with no real plan, only to find themselves back where they started, but worse. The work is a dark absurd satire on ecological ignorance told through a symbiosis of storytelling and telepresence. Informed by the recently completed AHRC-funded COVID-19 Response project *Collaborative Solutions for the Performing Arts: A Telepresence Stage* (December 2020 to May 2022) https://www.telepresencestage.org, supporting theatre and dance companies with new online telepresence performance solutions through the COVID-19 lockdown. This new work builds on online telepresence techniques such as green-screen compositing, networked video production and virtual set design to provide coexistent telepresent interactions between remote performers. By using background segmentation instead of green-screen technology *Coombe Hill or High Water* has been developed as a networked telepresence artwork for online public participation, requiring only a computer, webcam, Internet connection and web browser to participate.

Online participants in *Coombe Hill or High Water*, March 2023. Trying to survive the flood by whatever means possible, floating in a wheelie bin as raw sewage continues to flow into the water.

Documentary video of the development of *Coombe Hill or High Water* can be found here:
https://vimeo.com/manage/videos/767347076

Paul Sermon Biography

Born Oxford, England, 1966. Studied BA(Hons) Fine Art under Professor Roy Ascott at Newport School of Fine Art, from 1985 to 1988. Studied Master in Fine Art (MFA) at The University of Reading from 1989 to 1991. Completed PhD *A phenomenology of empathy and presence through telematic art practice* in 2019 at the University of Brighton. Awarded the Prix Ars Electronica Golden Nica Interactive Art, for *Think about the People now* in 1991. Artist in Residence at the ZKM Centre for Art and Media Karlsruhe, Germany in 1993. Received the Sparky Award from the Interactive Media Festival Los Angeles for *Telematic Dreaming* in 1994. Dozent for Media Art at the HGB Academy of Fine Arts Leipzig, Germany from 1993 to 1999, Professor of Creative Technology at the University of Salford from 2000 to 2013. Guest Professor for Performance and Environment at The University of Art and Design Linz, Austria from 1997 to 2001. Since September 2013 Professor of Visual Communication and Leader of Doctoral Studies in the School of Art and Media at the University of Brighton. Principal Investigator for the UKRI-AHRC Covid Response project *Collaborative Solution for the Performing Arts: A Telepresence Stage* from November 2020 to May 2022.