Occupy the Screen

An interactive telepresent public video installation designed for site-specific impromptu performance and user interaction.

Paul Sermon & Charlotte Gould

20th October 2013

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PROJECT MOTIVATION

This proposed project builds on the practice-based research and development of a former installation *Picnic on the Screen* originally developed for the BBC Public Video Screen at the Glastonbury Festival of Performing Arts, UK, in 2009. In this new project Paul Sermon and Charlotte Gould have carefully considered the technical and conceptual aspect of the former work, to develop and propose an original site-specific work for Connecting Cities. This new installation pushes the playful, social and public engagement aspects of the work into new cultural and political realms in an attempt to ‘reclaim the streets and screens’ through new technical developments in ludic interaction, camera recognition and HD videoconferencing. Inspired in part by 3D street art, the motivation behind this proposal also comes from the historical films of Lumière contemporaries, Mitchell & Kenyon, whose films of public crowds in the 1900’s present a striking similarity to the way audiences react and respond in Sermon & Gould’s telematic urban screen installations. These pioneering fairground screenings of audiences filmed earlier the same day possess all the traits, albeit the latency in processing, of live telepresent interaction, whereby the audience play directly to the camera and occupy this new public space by performing to themselves and others when screened later.

PROJECT PROPOSAL

The installation functions equally as a single site installation between two separate audience groups in front of a single public screen or between two geographically distant audiences at separate screens. Using a familiar telematics technique, the installation takes live oblique camera shots from above the screen of each of these two audience groups, located on a large 100m2 blue ground sheet and combines them on screen in a single composited image. As the merged audiences start to explore this collaborative, shared telepresent space they will discover the ground beneath them, as it appears on screen, will start to react and respond to their movements and interactions in a variety of surprising and intriguing ways. These backgrounds will directly reference their social setting and range from simple retro dance floors that light up like coloured paving slabs as they step on them to complex animations, trails, destruction, decay, games, and 3d graffiti etc. as a result of the participant’s movements and the interaction of the remote audiences.

TRANSITORY HAPPENING

Following Mitchell and Kenyon’s example our intention is to provide the audience participants with the opportunity to direct and change the outcomes of this installation through an open system of interaction. These unique transitory outcomes will rely entirely on the roles and performances the public participants bring to these urban screen and the experiences they choose to live out. Contextualized by their urban and commercial environments and recontextualized by a diverse array of interactive backdrops, our aim is to allow these public audiences the opportunity and agency to reclaim these urban screens. This fluxus happening will include the widest range of urban participation possible, ranging from buskers playing, singing, shouting and dancing to people shopping, walking, talking, reading, waiting, watching, meeting, and people campaigning, canvassing and sadly even begging. In order to engage these communities and reclaim this public landscape we aim to work with local dance companies, youth groups, skaters, beatboxers and cosplayers to employ their transitory improvisations.

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION

The installation consists of two blue groundsheets in front of public video screens. The audience groups on these backdrops are captured on camera and brought together through a system of live chroma-keying and composited on a computer-generated background sequence. This background scene is triggered and controlled by the audience through a unique motion-tracking interface developed in openFrameworks on Mac OS X and integrated into the installation. The custom built software tracks the composited image of the participants from the separate locations and responds in a variety of ways to both their individual and combined movements with a range of animated responses and sequences. In the single location installation the two chroma-key blue ground sheets will be placed as far apart as possible not to disclose the location of the two groups and encourage the audience to explore the telepresent communication, whilst in the dual location the sites are geographically concealed. These sites can then be linked between locations around the world via an HD videoconference system over a broadband Internet connection.
Previous Project: PICNIC ON THE SCREEN Glastonbury Festival 2009

*Picnic on the Screen* was commissioned through the Arts Council England Cultural Olympiad programme, with the intention to establish a creative and sustainable use of urban video screens as a legacy of its investment and infrastructure beyond 2012. By reflecting on the playful public intervention of Kit Galloway and Sherrie Rabinowitz’s satellite artwork *Hole-in-Space* from 1980, *Picnic on the Screen* directly responds to the particular public encounter at festival events. This unique project combined established telematic arts practice with an interactive augmented-reality interface developed specifically for the installation, providing the telepresent participants with the ability to discover and control animation sequences on screen in front of them.

This collaborative partnership resulted in an interactive ludic interface that was first developed for the BBC Village Screen (public urban video screen) at the Glastonbury Festival in 2009. This work explored the creative potential of the Glastonbury audience as performers that have the capacity to create improvised narrative sequence through urban screens as a communications portal. Through the augmentation of the virtual and the real, users could explore alternative telepresent spaces and develop unique playful narrative events. Picnic on the Screen explored social play and the way fun and enjoyment interact with and enhance new media content and technologies, as a means of reclaiming the urban landscape through public screens.

Picnic on the Screen was a practice-based telematics research project situated in the interactive media arts discourse. This specifically concerned issues around the artistic use of large format public video screens through the urban screens discourse led by Scott McQuire and Mirjam Struppek et al, with its practical origins in public satellite artworks and performances by Nam June Paik, which is further discussed by media archaeologist Professor Erkki Huhtamo.

Following its success at the Glastonbury Festival 2009, Picnic on the Screen was invited 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. Between the Lowry Salford and the University of Nottingham Ningbo China for the Digital Resources in the Humanities and Arts Conference in September 2011, and for the official opening of MediaCityUK Salford in November 2011.

*Picnic on the Screen, premiered at the BBC Village Screen at the Glastonbury Festival 2009*

- 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)
## EQUIPMENT AND MATERIALS

### SINGLE LOCATION INSTALLATION:

- **1 x** large format public urban video screen  
  *Hire/loan, Venue to source*

- **1 x** 18" HD LCD Screen with HDMI or DVI input  
  *Hire/loan, Venue to source*

- **2 x** Panasonic AW-HS50 Video Mixer chroma-keyer  
  *Provided by Paul Sermon*

- **2 x** 3CCD HD video Camera  
  *Provided by Paul Sermon*

- **2 x** Blackmagic HDMI to SDI  
  *Provided by Paul Sermon*

- **1 x** HDMI splitter  
  *Provided by Paul Sermon*

- **2 x** Wall mount/bracket for camera  
  *Provided by Paul Sermon*

- **1 x** MacBook Pro  
  *Provided by Paul Sermon*

- **Cables: HDMI, SDI DVI etc.**  
  *Provided by Paul Sermon*

- **2 x** Installation blue screen environment  
  *€ 800.00*

- **Open frameworks software development**  
  *€ 1200.00*

- **Programme development**  
  *€ 500.00*

- **Contingency**  
  *€ 500.00*

### DUAL LOCATION INSTALLATION:

#### Location One:

- **1 x** large format public urban video screen  
  *Hire/loan, Venue to source*

- **1 x** 18" HD LCD Screen with HDMI or DVI input  
  *Hire/loan, Venue to source*

- **2 x** Panasonic AW-HS50 Video Mixer chroma-keyer  
  *Provided by Paul Sermon*

- **1 x** 3CCD HD video Camera  
  *Provided by Paul Sermon*

- **1 x** LifeSize Express 220 HD Video Conference System  
  *Provided by Paul Sermon*

- **1 x** Blackmagic HDMI to SDI  
  *Provided by Paul Sermon*

- **1 x** Atlona AT-HD560  
  *Provided by Paul Sermon*

- **1 x** HDMI splitter  
  *Provided by Paul Sermon*

- **1 x** Wall mount/bracket for camera  
  *Provided by Paul Sermon*

- **1 x** MacBook Pro  
  *Provided by Paul Sermon*

- **Cables: HDMI, SDI DVI etc.**  
  *Provided by Paul Sermon*

- **1 x** Installation blue screen environment  
  *€ 400.00*

- **Open frameworks software development**  
  *€ 1200.00*

- **Programme development**  
  *€ 500.00*

- **Contingency**  
  *€ 500.00*

#### Broadband Internet Connection  
 *(Bit Rate: 100 Mbps (synchronous) Up and Down)*  
 *Venue to source*

#### Location Two:

- **1 x** large format public urban video screen  
  *Hire/loan, Venue to source*

- **1 x** 18" HD LCD Screen with HDMI or DVI input  
  *Hire/loan, Venue to source*

- **1 x** Panasonic AW-HS50 Video Mixer chroma-keyer  
  *Provided by Paul Sermon*

- **1 x** 3CCD HD video Camera  
  *Provided by Paul Sermon*

- **1 x** LifeSize Express 220 HD Video Conference System  
  *Provided by Paul Sermon*

- **1 x** Blackmagic HDMI to SDI  
  *Provided by Paul Sermon*

- **1 x** Atlona AT-HD560  
  *Provided by Paul Sermon*

- **1 x** HDMI splitter  
  *Provided by Paul Sermon*

- **1 x** Wall mount/bracket for camera  
  *Provided by Paul Sermon*

- **Cables: HDMI, SDI DVI etc.**  
  *Provided by Paul Sermon*

- **1 x** Installation blue screen environment  
  *€ 400.00*

#### Broadband Internet Connection  
 *(Bit Rate: 100 Mbps (synchronous) Up and Down)*  
 *Venue to source*
VIDEO FLOW DIAGRAM: SINGLE LOCATION INSTALLATION

HD Chroma Key 1
HD Chroma Key 2
MacBook Background
HD Camera 1 Midground
HD Camera 2 Foreground
Large format public video screen
Blue ground sheet 10 x 10 metres
Blue ground sheet 10 x 10 metres
VIDEO FLOW DIAGRAM: DUAL LOCATION INSTALLATION

HD Video Conference

HD Chroma Key 1

HD CK 2

HD CK 3

MacBook Background

HD Camera 1 Midground

HD Camera 2 Foreground

Large public video screen

Blue ground sheet 10 x 10 metres

Large public video screen

Blue ground sheet 10 x 10 metres
VIDEO CHROMA-KEYING SEQUENCE

BACKGROUND SKETCHES & STREET ART IMPRESSIONS
OTHER INSTALLATIONS

Front Room, FutureEverything Sao Paulo 2010
http://www.paulsermon.org/frontroom/

Liberate your Avatar, Urban Screens Manchester 2007
http://www.paulsermon.org/liberate/

All the World’s a Screen, MACBA Barcelona 2011
http://www.paulsermon.org/screen/

Shang-pool Picnic, Liverpool Biennial, Shanghai 2010
http://www.paulsermon.org/shangpool/
BIOGRAPHIES

Paul Sermon - Professor of Visual Communication
Faculty of Arts, University of Brighton

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

Paul Sermon joined the Faculty of Arts as Professor of Visual Communication in the School of Art, Design and Media on September 1st 2013. Paul was previously Professor of Creative Technology at the University of Salford and has worked for over twenty years as an active academic researcher and creative practitioner, primarily in the field of interactive media arts. Having worked under the visionary cybernetic artist Professor Roy Ascott as an undergraduate Fine Art student at the Newport School of Fine Art in the mid 1980s, Paul Sermon went on to establish himself as a leading pioneer of interactive media art, winning the prestigious Prix Ars Electronica Golden Nica in Linz, Austria, shortly after completing his MFA at the University of Reading in 1991. An accolade that then took Paul to Finland in the early 1990’s to develop one of the most ground breaking telepresent video installations of his career Telematic Dreaming in 1992. This early success then led to an invitation by Professor Jeffrey Shaw to undertake a residency at the internationally renowned ZKM Centre for Art & Media in Karlsruhe in Germany, where he produced his second ISDN videoconference installation Telematic Vision in 1993. Whilst living in Berlin from 1993 to 1999 Paul Sermon then took up the post of Dozent at the HGB Academy of Visual Arts in the former East German city of Leipzig and from here he went on to develop a portfolio of interactive telepresent video installations and telematic encounters that he continues to exhibit internationally. Further accolades during this period included the 1994 IMF Sparkey Award from the Interactive Media Festival in Los Angeles as well as interactive art commissions for the Millennium Dome Play Zone. Paul moved back to England in 2000 to take up a post at the University of Salford as well as becoming an honorary Professor for the MA Media Art Histories at the Danube University Krems, Austria and continues to visit and contribute to this programme once a semester.

Charlotte Gould - Senior Lecturer in Digital Media
MediaCityUK, University of Salford

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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.