

Arts and tech, new narrative strategies.

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My background:

Theatre

studied drama undergrad

write plays.

Also a blogger/geek

writing has been reproduced in national newspapers

I work with arts companies on their artistic and logistical use of technology.

I'm a world-walker.

And I want to talk to you about the incredibly exciting things happening in the transaction between the worlds of technology and performance.

2 ways that tech and the arts are crossing over –

Art itself

way we proliferate and promote processes and products.

This morning focussing on the use of digital ethics in art  
practical uses of tech this afternoon

To check any of my sources and find more links <http://bit.ly/HNspeech>

This event is all about interactivity – begin with question – show of hands

Facebook account?

untagged a picture?

Respond to amount

pruning online identities,

building an online version of yourself

interests, appearance, inclinations.

Adverts on journey?

a profile, a character, an avatar, whatever you want to call it,

we do an awful lot of constructing of ourselves.

And what's more

every day a thousand different people are telling you how they think you should do that,

buy to be better, prettier, more successful.

This is the way we live now

final question – either bought RATM for Christmas no.1, or voted in X factor?

You're one of millions.  
why group them together?

both of them were built on models of audience interaction, both born out of people wanting to affect change in their world – to *interact*

There's a desire there – a desire to change the world around us.  
Something I think many artists are also missing out on.

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So I'm here to talk about interaction and the audience.  
Our audience is changing.

#### **Click**

59 % of the UK aged 6-65 are gamers,

#### **Click**

45% of which are female

#### **Click**

Last year, consumers spent 30% more on video games in Britain than on films

#### **Click**

On Amazon Modern Warfare 2 was the No. 1 seller for 2009 [Source](#)

#### **Click**

BBC survey found that 100% of the 6-10 year olds played video games

here's a quote from one of them [Source](#)

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These are the people who will be consuming the narratives we build.  
People who split their personalities  
rebuild themselves  
enter new worlds everyday.

This boy isn't an audience, he's a participant

Facebook, myspace, bebo, twitter, flickr, posterous, youtube,

Cultivating digital versions of ourselves.

Personal data, buying habits, images, memories, thoughts and feelings  
entrusted to huge multinational companies  
more than the goods we make, our money, our time  
trading in pieces of our selves.

why should we in the arts care about the digital world?

If people are going to be trading in us, don't you think we should have a way of  
regulating our investments? Exploring how we're invented. Take control?

fear I encounter when working with artists  
particularly performance  
somehow the virtual world opposes the bodied world.  
This isn't true.  
arts and tech need each other.

arts need tech in order to carry on telling stories that are relevant,  
tech needs the arts as a way of looking at it.

we're building new worlds, new ways of doing, being and seeing every day - the  
question isn't why should the arts wading into these worlds - the question is why  
on earth aren't we there already?

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the arts are unique  
re-represent the world  
theatre builds worlds,  
fine art windows into them,  
music, film, perspectives on them.

chance to step back, examine how ideas, experiences, and people are  
constructed.

perfect way to reflect on the new lives we're living.

Here's another (slightly more mercenary) reason  
<set up>

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**NEXT SLIDE**

4,921,991 views.

This video has has 4,921,991 views.  
Cats on youtube more views than my little blog will ever dream of.  
But my blog gets more views than an academic journal

This cat. Is you competitor.  
Seriously  
4 walls, exhibitions and carefully crafted pictures and sounds when they can  
watch this?  
What are you saying about their lives that will make them move from their comfy  
seats?

Shift happening RIGHT NOW in how we use tech  
a long time: mouse and a key board  
then iPhone  
this year Google, Microsoft, and Apple launching tablet computers – overgrown  
iPhones.  
At the same time blogs are becoming main new content providers, Wikipedia is  
breaking down the gap between data and information.

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21<sup>st</sup> century marks a change in the way we interface.  
Why should you have to look at a piece of art. Why can't you change it, twist it,  
make it yourself?

If people are embedding themselves in new worlds, we should be embedding  
them in our art too.

As our lives become more intertwined with tech – the rate of change is  
increasing – each day is a new world that needs investigating.

Next big thing in interactive technology - augmented *reality*  
you've heard of virtual reality <explain>  
simple augmented reality applications on the iPhone <explain>

I believe augmented reality is an incredibly exciting place for performance right  
now.

Couple examples now of theatre work as a kind of augmented reality.

Pervasive Gaming,

exciting revolution crossing tech and performance ethic.

Definition I use 'Pervasive Gaming'

all performance strategies that involve augmenting personal or environmental reality from a player-as-protagonist perspective.

examples

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Hide and Seek - major UK pervasive gaming company

describe themselves as making "social games and playful experiences"

somewhere between computer games, and the games you used to play as a child

digital ethics in working practice:

wiki-ethic to create/run their games/events. >> explain wiki

Use the web as a place to assemble ideas,

anyone can edit and invent new games

all of the work is available under a free-to-use Creative Commons licence.

Run 'sandpit' events – take a similar approach to software development.

Games played by Hide&Seek never for prizes

large groups across urban spaces.

They're simple games played across whole cities – explain Scoop!

Every player is an associate artist

Hide & Seek collaborated with pioneering co. Punchdrunk

'Multiplatform Immersive Theatre Experiences' or MITE

using virtual and real worlds,

exploring narrative using the spaces between them.

**NEXT SLIDE – watch video – don't skip slide to finish**

heavily interactive and personal experiences  
players in these MITEs control their experience,  
but the whole narrative is curated by the artists.

This is theatre, and this is art,  
using the real world and the virtual to explore a world create.  
There's no better way than exploring how we create ourselves in our everyday  
lives than by conspiring in this third reality in theatre.

*As if it Were the Last Time* = another example of Pervasive story-telling.  
free sound walk-come-performance  
devised by Duncan Speakman and in association with *Subtle mob*.

Subtle mobs are flashmobs that no one is supposed to notice,  
30 minute MP3  
a map,  
and a time and date,  
meet there with a partner and start your recordings at exactly the same time.  
The voice on the headphones, the music sounds and voices melded with the real  
life you were experiencing – artistic augmented reality.

For each person the experience was theirs. Entirely.

not, in staged theatre, as each audience member *receiving* from a diff perspective.  
each participant *doing*.  
The movements, the characters, the gestures, and the touch of someone's hand  
on a shoulder, were all completely *yours*. Of your making.

Conventional suspension of disbelief – the belief that you pay into conventional,  
staged performance – pales into comparison to the weight of belief that you pour  
into this kind of experience.

A piece of staged theatre = a rip in the space-time continuum  
a hundred different hours, poured into one,  
*As if it Were the Last Time* was one *whole* moment,  
the heat of one breath.  
stories, yours, of others,  
and *your* reflection in the window.

You weren't just interacting -  
embedded in a new world entirely.

one solid piece of information you were given was that the piece was in memory of another.

instead of talking about the person lost, it asked you to find yourself there as if it were *your* last half hour.

It was the story of a person seeing the world as they'd never see it again, you travelled that journey with them

And this wasn't the linear narrative of the lives we used to lead

the busy, building, barrage from all side experience of our lives now.

The narrative built like a collage, like a barrage of images and sounds and ideas that didn't fit, and then you realised they were building a whole person. And it hurt. And it was wonderful. You felt like you were falling off a building. Or maybe 'you' didn't, maybe only I did.

There were moments when it faltered, when things didn't fit with what you were hearing, but you were seeking, willing them to get back on track, because this was you - *your* belief at risk. This wasn't an actor fluffing their lines, it was you, as an avatar of the narrative.

That word 'avatar' is an interesting one

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The last thing I wrote on my blog after returning from the experience:

"Those thirty minutes were the most vivid, most high contrast of my week. It was true augmented reality, and I want to take my friends and loved ones back to share it. It hurts that I can't. But that's kind of what *being* is, isn't it?"

In our continually recorded and replayed worlds, it's easy to forget that.

I think that is what art should be reminding us.

Thank you.