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DIGITAL THEATRE: CONSIDERATIONS AND AN ANALYSIS OF LIVE PERFORMANCE
PRACTICE IN SECOND LIFE

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A thesis submitted to the University of Huddersfield in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
degree of MA by Research

The University of Huddersfield

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Introduction

SECOND LIFE

This thesis comes as a result of the increased pervasiveness of online social environments. As more and more people gain access to the World Wide Web, areas where people can socialise and connect over large distances instantly have sprung up to facilitate this unprecedented level of communication. One part of this new influx of social networking sites includes 3D visual environments where users can interact using virtual representations of themselves. As these interactive areas become more and more popular the artistic applications of them are being explored. Established artists have begun to use these online spaces as an extension of their artistic practices while new artists are being born from this new emergent online culture. This thesis will explore how artists new and old are interacting with the newly established online world and the unique considerations they are having to engage with that come from the virtuality of these social spaces. There are many online 3D environments available on the internet, such as There, EverQuest and World of Warcraft. There are too many to be included within this thesis, however, so I will be concentrating my discussion on Second Life, a 3D environment that has recently started to support its growing culture of artists and performers.

Second Life is an online virtual world built to house 3D representations of users. Within this world the 'residents', as users are called, can socialise with each other, build and trade virtual property with each other and organise and attend events within the virtual world. Launched in 2003, it gained fame for the seemingly endless possibilities it offered in terms of creation and expression. Since then it has achieved recognition in the business sector for its global connectivity and its potential as a new market (Hof, R. D. 2006).

Second Life is a place where almost anything is possible. The world is based upon the interaction between its residents who use a type of virtual ambassador to represent their presence within the virtual space. These ambassadors, called avatars, serve as a locus for the residents' identity with the space and can walk, talk and interact with each other in a similar way to physical world encounters. Within Second Life, however, avatars can also use more fantastical means of transportation such as teleportation or self-propelled flying to travel around the many islands and handful of main-lands within the virtual world. Sandboxes, specially allocated spaces to create and build objects, are often scenes of fantastical creation and contain structures that could not exist in the physical world. Frequently half-finished UFOs hover in a Sandbox sky and levitating cubes

hang in the air as residents sculpt them into the desired shape. This creation is not limited to inanimate objects; avatars themselves have the capacity to be endlessly editable. It is not an uncommon sight to see residents who have chosen to appear as animals or winged humans or even, as one of my survey respondents sometimes chooses, a flying book (see Appendix A, Respondant UY, page 102).

Within Second Life it is possible to completely change your avatar's appearance from one instance to the next. The tools within the online interface allow residents to show an outward image of themselves that is of their own choosing. Whether this is a direct virtual equivalent of how they appear in real life or a complete abstraction is dependent upon the individual resident.

It is commonly believed that Second Life is primarily a place where users role-play (Boellstroff, T. 2008). To a certain extent this is true; there are a vast number of places within Second Life dedicated to this purpose and their topics include a range of cultures and sub-cultures from real life and the virtual. The Caledon Gaiety Theatre, for example, serves as a base for those avatars wishing to play a character embedded in the genre of Steam-punk (Childs, M. 2010). My surveys during this period of research, however, have come to suggest that rather than role-playing a fictional character or living the (Second) life the user has always wanted to live, residents tend to use Second Life as an affirmation of themselves.

There are many implications associated with the use of the virtual world, especially when that particular program becomes the cornerstone of an entire culture. Second Life has instigated the blossoming of a cultural phenomena specific to itself. Residents use slang developed within the virtual world and there are many different social rules and idiosyncrasies that define the way a Second Life resident behaves when they are within the world. Outside of the program, Second Life has also formed the basis of many social discussions, particularly in terms of personal relationships and as a result has received a somewhat, in my opinion, unfair reputation for being a place where distasteful and immoral activities abound. During the early years of Second Life's popularity articles concerning themselves with the rare occurrence of "age-play" (Terdiman, D. 2006), an act where adult users role-play as children, and Second Life's 'seedy underbelly' (Rawstorne, T. 2008) garnered a lot of attention for highlighting the more sensational and morally ambiguous aspects of virtual life. Within recent years, however, more and more articles have appeared citing Second Life as a great place to introduce business ventures (Hof, R., 2006) and supplement educational practices (University of Nottingham, 2011).

The freedom available within Second Life has meant that certain adult themes, such as sexuality and fetishism, have a chance to be explored without the inherent taboo associated with

them in the physical world. To a certain extent this can be explained by Second Life's interface and the opportunity for users to remain anonymous as well as the fact that laws regarding the activities of virtual beings are still being discussed. Added to this is the ethics and morality attached to simulated activities and the extent to which the barrier between the virtual and the physical removes actions from standard morals and behaviour.

Second Life has helped to form a unique living style in a modern age. As such, it seems prudent to study the artwork of this emerging culture so we may further understand the themes and ideas that are important to the users and artists within this culture. Because of Second Life's dependancy on user-based creation, it is difficult to distinguish between which creations are considered 'art' and those which are not. Thankfully, the administrators behind Second Life have begun to recognise the artistic community in-world and have established a specialised area for the display of commissioned art works within the virtual world. This does not, however, limit the artistic creation to that one area; there are a multitude of users who create artworks to populate their own private piece of land within Second Life. As this thesis will serve as an introduction to the themes and considerations of online art, I will be focusing primarily on those companies and individuals who create art events and consider themselves artists. While it is interesting to look at artists born out of Second Life, it would be foolish to ignore the impact the virtual world has had on established artists. Theatre and performance companies from the physical world have started to embrace the digital technologies into their processes and final productions. This thesis will look at the way in which artworks and the companies that make them use Second Life and how Second Life has bred its unique form of performance art. This exploration of Second Life's artistic impact will be achieved by discussing the artworks and artistic practices from the perspective of performance and audience engagement. I will be looking closely at how these performance pieces are manifest within the virtual world and what techniques are used to connect to the audience.

THEATRE AND DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY

Over time, theatre has had to survive the advent of many new types of media. As the medium has grown and survived it has become characterised by its ability and willingness to adapt to and incorporate new technologies to tell its stories. With the invention of the internet and the creation of virtual worlds within that, we have started to see an interest from theatre companies in expanding their practice to include online components. These components can and have taken many forms.

They may take shape as profile pages on social networking sites describing the company or even pages written in-character adding further depth to the characters and their back story. Pilot Theatre did this for their 2007 show “Looking for JJ” (Pilot Theatre, 2007). Companies have also used online services to capture an audience within the fictional world of the piece before the live event. Slung Low's 2009 vampire show “They Only Come At Night” used online blogs, videos and direct character-to-audience emailing to tell the story of one of their characters. She went on to play a small but important role within the performed piece (Slung Low, 2009). These uses of interactive online media form an impression of the theatrical world outside of the performance space which expands the mythology of the live piece giving the audience a bigger and more rounded view of the world the artists have created.

There are also companies who have actively used online and networking technologies in the technical creation and distribution of their art works. IOU Theatre have recently included Second Life into their working practice to form an online interactive archive of their past works and also use the virtual space to demonstrate new works to a wider audience. Their 2010 piece “Airborne” became a virtual exhibition within Second Life and in the Autumn of 2011 they created a light and sound installation within the physical and virtual worlds simultaneously (IOU Theatre, 2011). If we look even further we can find companies like Invisible Flock who are using mobile augmented reality technologies to bring art work to the streets of Leeds (Invisible Flock, 2011). These augmented reality technologies allow the audience to see a virtual world over the physical world they experience today. By using the camera embedded in their mobile phones, audience members are able to view a virtual artwork that transforms the physical space they are in. The company's piece, created as part of Situation Leeds, is triggered by an audience member, with access to the right technology, holding up his or her mobile phone to a specific junction box in Leeds city centre. When they do this they are treated to a video piece superimposed over the images of Leeds their mobile phone is capturing (Invisible Flock, 2011).

The above examples illustrate the fact that there is an increased interest and willingness to experiment with interactive and online digital technologies. As they are becoming more and more prevalent in modern theatre making practice, a further understanding of its uses and implications would provide a beneficial look at how networked online spaces like Second Life can impact and potentially improve upon modern theatre practice. By looking at the techniques used by arts companies to capture online audiences we may be able to pinpoint new techniques that will become more and more prevalent in the future as online technologies become ever more ubiquitous.

Theatre companies and arts collectives have started to take advantage of Second Life's

global connectivity and are creating new audiences that can interact with the company on a virtual as well as physical level. The potential for a brand new audience market is something that has attracted established artists into the virtual world. While these companies were born within the physical world and are using Second Life to expand their practice, there is also a growing number of companies that have originated from within the virtual world. As a result these companies, created by long-term residents in-world, concern themselves with making art works and performances for viewing specifically within the virtual world. As such there are certain themes and cultural concerns that appear within the pieces that can be identified as uniquely virtual in their origin and create an aesthetic that is recognisably virtual.

METHOD

During my literary survey I have discovered that there have been many texts that discuss virtual worlds as entities unto themselves and many more that form introductions for users wanting to enter into the expansive area of online virtual worlds. Further still there have been many books that focus on specific areas within these worlds and social and anthropomorphic studies of user behaviour within these worlds. Despite this current interest and enthusiasm for the virtual world as an object of study, there is yet to be one that discusses art and performance within these worlds. Art is a cornerstone of any culture and as such there is substantial discussion to be had within any paper that concerns itself with the study of culture in virtual worlds. The art world is where we look when we want to discover what ideas and stories are important to a culture. Art reflects tradition and cultural assumptions and provides a context for the ideals and morality held within that society; we can see this in the morality plays of the ancient Greeks to the political rhetoric of Brecht in the modern era. While the subject of virtual art and performance may form a part of existing texts, it has not yet received substantial critical discussion or academic recognition. If this trend of adaptable digital theatre practice continues then, I feel, it would be prudent to begin a debate on the merit and potential future of the growing field of virtual artwork.

Because of the lack of virtual artistic discourse in printed works, and also because of the medium within which I am working, the vast majority of my source material comes from the Internet. Many of the arts practitioners I will discuss in my thesis work primarily in the online domain, regularly contributing to personal and professional blogs as well as submitting articles for online publication. As Second Life is exclusively an online experience the vast majority of the

information concerned with the programme can only be found on the World Wide Web. To reflect this, the questionnaires I created to gather information from Second Life users were distributed through the use of online forums. I used questionnaires so I could gather my own first-hand accounts of users' experience and motivations for using Second Life. I was interested in the way the users chose to interact with their own avatar and also tried to discern why Second Life users were attracted (or not) to virtual performance. As such my questionnaire featured two distinct parts; one part introspective and the other concerning engagement through a computer screen. Many of the questions were framed as closed questions with the invitation to elaborate and explain the answer. This was done so that I could quote directly from the respondents, as if I had conducted an interview, and also collate the answers to form definite statistics to evidence my findings. It also meant that I could definitely track the number of respondents who disagreed with my working theories and what their personal opinions of Second Life were, in turn giving me a more rounded view of the programme and its users.

This thesis will interrogate the nature of art works in online spaces. As a result of my research, including personal experience within Second Life, I have come to determine four aspects of virtual life within which we can consider the main cultural and technical differences between the online and physical worlds. These four aspects are centred around the perception of the self, the formation of online communities, the concern of live human interaction in a simulated world and, lastly, the creation of spectacle in a world centred on image. It is these four aspects that I believe online artists can, and do, discuss within their works to create and establish pieces that could not exist in the physical world. It is by finding works that are specific to the virtual world that this thesis will start a debate into the validity of online artworks and, hopefully, prompt the need for further research into an art-form that is starting to find its own voice and vocabulary.

The next chapter will form an overview of the four aspects and the major theories I will use while discussing them. It will also form a more in-depth introduction to Second Life and its interfaces. I have entitled the four aspects 'Personal Identity', 'Community', 'Liveness and Interaction' and 'Spectacle' and they will form the main body of my thesis. Taking each in turn I will discuss:

Personal Identity

This chapter will outline and discuss the problem of personal identity within a society that employs 3D editable representations of the users. The way Second Life operates means that users do not

necessarily have to reveal their real life identity to other users and as such questions arise about the principles of an appearance and associated behaviour pattern that can be completely manufactured by a hidden resident. Many of the residents within Second Life take the opportunity to explore new personas by role-playing in various settings and time-periods. This role-playing forms the foundation of Second Life's resident interaction and this chapter will explore how this interaction is affected by the inherent anonymity built into the software's interface. The anonymity affords a freedom to residents allowing them to explore these role-playing options available to them without fear of repercussion or embarrassment. As a result the majority of residents that use Second Life tend to explore aspects of themselves they would not usually attempt to in the physical world.

Community

This chapter will be closely associated with the previous, concerning itself with identities converging upon a mutual point of interest. Community in the virtual realm has a certain number of issues that arise through the use of virtual technology. This chapter will discuss the issue of inter-personal connection in a world where no-one is truly themselves. As a result of the millions of users and the ability to connect with anyone regardless of physical proximity, communities in the virtual world tend to converge around a common interest rather than through a combination of factors present in the physical world, such as geographical situation. As such there are many role-playing groups and societies who use the expansive scriptable building tools to create realisations of the world they want to inhabit. The global connectivity of Second Life has also attracted existent theatre companies to the virtual world in an attempt to open up their practice to new audiences and display their work in a more readily accessible way. This chapter will look at how these theatre companies achieve this connectivity in such an environment.

Liveness and Interaction

This next chapter will concern itself with the problem of interaction and 'liveness' in a world based on virtuality and simulation. One of the factors that differentiates theatre from other performance types, such as cinema or television, is the proximity of the audience to the performer and the sense of connectivity between the two groups of people within the dedicated performance space. With

Second Life and other online worlds, however, the very technology that these programs use negates the possibility of audience and performer sharing the same space and, therefore, throws into question the sense of 'liveness' in online performance when movements can be pre-programmed and automated. One way that companies in Second Life have sought to overcome the mechanised nature of virtual performance is through actively involving their audience in the performance through vocal contributions or even producing promenade style virtual artworks. This section will, in part, try to determine whether these aspects come together to create a new form of theatre practice and whether this is part of what makes online theatre unique as it manages to maintain a sense of real-time interaction while being mediated at the same time.

Spectacle

When you first enter Second Life one of the first things that impresses many new residents is the amount of creative and impossible objects that exists within the world. While the aim of Second Life may be to offer an alternative life to lead, it keeps the computerised world's ability to disregard rules and laws that are found in the physical world. As such there has arisen a line of art work and performance that use this disregard for physical law to create impossible things. This could be as simple as giving avatar working wings to illustrate their ability to fly or as complex as constructing a, seemingly, living and interactive dragon for avatars to ride around their world. Within the theatre world this can manifest in a number of ways. It can turn complex and expensive stylistic choices into simple, programmable builds; an existing example would be providing the audience members with clothing to include them in the piece's aesthetic (Act UP!, 2008).

Using several surveys targeting Second Life users as well as arts practitioners alongside an extensive literary review and hours of personal experience in Second Life both for work and pleasure, I hope to illustrate the arguments put forth in this thesis. I hope to have formed a text that will provide a basis for further discussion and debate about the validity and aesthetic of online art works. As with any paper discussing an emerging art form I cannot hope to have captured every nuance and intricate detail concerning this area, but I believe I will have formed a comprehensive understanding of virtual art work that will inspire further engagement and deliberation about an area of art that was born out of the modern age.

Overview

Second Life is a 3D virtual environment that relies on the user to create the content of the online space. The main method of user interaction occurs through digital ambassadors; avatars which represent the 'Real Life' users that interact with the online program. These avatars can be heavily customised giving the user a wide range of possibilities. Along with the tools available that allow users to build objects and subsequently wear them, avatars can look like almost anything imaginable. This scope is one of the attractions of using this virtual world to socialise and explore; by permitting people to have a degree of control unlike that in the physical world over how others perceive them, Second Life has made itself popular to the extent that as of January 2011 it had over 21.8 million registered accounts of which approximately 50,000 of them are logged in at any one time on average (Linden Labs, 2011a).

The expense of using Second Life is non-existent if the user chooses it to be. Initial set up and basic experience is free, users are allowed access to all the aspects of the Second Life interface; building, communicating, teleportation etc. There is the option, however, to pay for premium membership which will allow users to own a plot of land where they can place objects they have built and even create second homes for their virtual doppelgänger. The currency used in Second Life is the Linden Dollar, named after Linden Labs the creator of this program. Users may buy Linden Dollars at an exchange rate of L\$300 to £1 (DX Exchange, 2011). It can be relatively inexpensive to have a full Second Life experience but most importantly it can be less financially draining to have these experiences in the virtual world than the physical one.

Much discussion has arisen about Second Life focusing on a definition of what this program is. It is generally labeled an MMO which stands for 'Massively Multiplayer Online', a type of internet experience that attracts many users who can then interact with one another on a number of levels whether that be fully realised 3D avatars, vocal communication or real-time 'text-chat' (Wen, H. 2008). The debate arises from its genre classification. The lack of an over arching objective or strict 'how-to-play' rules could negate the label of 'game'; but at the opposite end of the spectrum it is not restricted to just being a space for socialising. The expansive world can potentially be explored without interacting with any other avatars if the user so wishes. Second Life, therefore, is a flexible creative environment where the users themselves decide what their major objective is. It is this freedom of expression and exploration that has attracted so many to this program (see Appendix A, pp.67-106).

The Massively Multiplayer Online experience finds its origins in online programs called Multi-User Domains (MUDs) (Castronova, E. 2006, p.10). These MUDs could take many forms from fully realised 3D world to purely text-based interfaces with the emphasis on multiple players communicating to achieve the overarching goal of the program. As MUDs gained popularity and as technology advanced, companies began to experiment with this genre of computer connectivity. In 1986 the Japanese company Fujitsu released *Habitat* for the Commodore 64 computer, a program Castronova describes as a “2D graphical MUD [...] the first of many massively multiuser graphical chat spaces [...] *Habitat* was not really a game space,” (p.291). Here he is describing what could be a forerunner to Second Life in that it took advantage of the development and connectivity of MUDs while not instigating a game-style interface. While it is not appropriate to label Second Life a MUD, or perhaps even an MMO, outright, the program can be seen to draw lineage from both genres and as such it is wholly appropriate to draw from relevant critical discussion on these subjects. In the following chapter entitled ‘Community’ I use Richard Bartle’s and Nick Yee’s work to explore personality types with virtual worlds. While this work comes from an analysis of MUD activity I believe it is applicable to the discussion within the chapter as it draws on fundamental aspects of the online interactive experience; something that MUDs, MMOs and Second Life all share.

With the increased popularity of online media and the ubiquity which the internet has achieved in the modern age, it is appropriate to assess the audience of online entertainments alongside those that gather for live theatrical and televised events (McQuail, D., 1997). There are many systems in place for the analysis of audience groups. I will be basing my discussion on an audience model originating in the analysis of the televisual experience that draws its evolution from the theatre. Philip Auslander in his book *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture* claims that the concept of the ‘live’ performance only came into being when the mediated audience experience evolved; the ‘live’ cannot exist with the “possibility of technical reproduction” (p.54). Here we see how the theatre and the televisual are explicitly linked in their development and as such Second Life seems to be a culmination of the two; real-time interaction through a mediated interface. Ambercrombie and Longhurst have created a model that not only includes the theatrical and televisual, but is also inclusive of the online media that has made itself such an integral part of modern life. This model, which I shall be using as a basis for my audience analysis throughout my thesis, consists of three distinct groups in which to categorise audience groups.

With the advent of television and other long-distance communication came the need for the Mass Audience group. With television, audiences no longer were confined to the single

performance space, they could be far flung individuals brought together at the same point in time to witness a specific televised event. As a result a new definition of 'audience' is needed (McQuail, D. 1997, p.1). The Mass Audience is a group that shares many similarities with the Simple Audience but with a few important distinctions. The Mass Audience is not a localised gathering of people rather a disparate group who come together only in the sense that they witness the same event at the same time. Because of the spatial distance between the individuals, however, the viewing experience is a lot more private, in terms of both other audience members and performers, and as such the level of concentration paid to the entertainment event is a personal choice rather than an expectation as it is with the Simple Audience. There is also the absence of direct communication between performer and audience member. With this group the audience members receive the performance but any response is confined to the space which the individual audience member occupies. Any communication between the audience and performers comes from long term contact through more impersonal channels such as letters, journalistic reviews and, now, internet forums (Ambercrombie, N. & Longhurst, B., 1998, p.63).

The last group in this model comes from the advent of the internet and the proliferation of online entertainments and instantaneous group communication. With the arrival of the internet into the wider public usage the audience becomes the one that can gain control of the information flow (McQuail, D., 1997). The prevailing ideology behind the third model, the Diffused Audience, is that with the audience spread over a wide area and communicating instantaneously everybody become an audience member all of the time. Televisual entertainment is available at any time and anywhere, negating space-time constraints of the Simple and Mass Audience and bringing performance into every aspect of daily life. Communication between performer and viewer is the fastest it has ever been. Even the definition of 'performer' has started to fluctuate. With the invention of 'YouTube' and other media sharing sites it is possible for the audience to become the performer, switching between the two constantly (Ambercrombie, N. & Longhurst, B. 1998, p.75). It is this idea of the public perpetually being an audience that lies at the heart of the Diffused Audience model and forms the basis of why programs like Second Life are becoming more and more popular. As every member of the public is an audience member at all times, this also means that the public is perpetually performing, something which contributes to the success of anonymous programs like Second Life, and something I will discuss in more depth in the next chapter of this thesis.

The above audience models will form the basis for my analysis on Second Life and its users. Due to the anonymity of online personas, this medium allows and appears to give users the freedom or the opportunity to explore the parts of themselves that “may not find expression

elsewhere” (Zachny,R. 2008), especially in a world where performance is ubiquitous. The reasons for this are many and span aspects of Second Life itself, its interface, the expressive customisation and the “freedom that anonymity and changeability provide” (Zachny,R. 2008). We can see this freedom of expression in the variety of avatars that populate the servers the many different ‘second homes’ the users create for their avatars and the roles they adopt and appoint for themselves within the Second Life community. The variety in this virtual world is staggering and almost every taste or desire has a place where it can be accommodated from the 'sword-and-sandal' slave-master society of the Gors to the Victorian era Steam-punk Caledonian Theatre to anarchic animal-faced collective the Furies (Meadow,M.S. 2008). Whether it be ideological, sexual or purely aesthetic most things are catered for in this 3D online program created without established rules or ultimate objectives.

With this blank, open space ready for people to create and explore it was only a matter of time before the virtual world was filled with user experimentation. The tools to create tradable commodities and items of personal expression are surprisingly easy to learn and this has meant that creation in Second Life is not restricted to those with specialist knowledge or access to the proper materials. Nearly every user, with a short amount of time experimenting with the build interface, can create objects that would not be possible in the real world and are inherently the possession of that user alone and no-one else's. The accessible nature of the program's creation tools and the massive amount of online tutorials means that those unable to in real life can more readily create objects and creative projects in their Second Life.

This is one of the reasons art pieces have begun to appear within the online realm. Second Life lends itself to the creation of arts pieces by being cheap and easy to use giving the residents the opportunity to create large and potentially gravity-defying objects. The global reach of Second Life also lends itself to theatrical practice, reaching far to bring together people from all over the globe to form new audiences for theatre groups and other arts practitioners. As a result of this new potential a number of established arts organisations and theatre companies, as well as those originating within the 3D environment, have started to take interest in what Second Life can offer them.

There are many theatre groups and dedicated theatrical spaces in Second Life (Linden Labs Inc. 2011c). To a certain extent this is to be expected. Theatre is one of the oldest forms of entertainment and as such has had to frequently adapt more often as new technologies and entertainment mediums are created. With the occurrence of the televisual it has become increasingly problematic for theatre to lay claim to its popularly attributed distinctive features of ‘liveness’ and immediacy. As the televisual becomes the more prevalent form of entertainment communication in

the modern world we are faced with the fact that audience members “have a cinematic vocabulary that one must deal with,” (theatre designer Wendall K. Harrington quoted in von Hoffman, 1995, p132). As a result of this we can see that while live performances are becoming more and more mediatized, whether through the use of microphones or the replication of recorded material (Auslander, P. 1999, p.31). Indeed, Auslander claims that both the televisual and the theatrical are inherently linked in their perpetual referencing of each other (p.39). In this way we could see Second Life as a natural progression of the mediatized and live performance validating each other at the same time. Second Life, after all, is primarily about real-time interaction through a mediatized interface. In this way we could potentially see Second Life as a point of reconciliation between the two mediums.

There are a number of ways Second Life is used in theatre-making practice. Not only is this program used to make fully fledged theatrical events it is also used to create 3D realisations of lighting and set designs and is used as a neutral space within which practitioners can communicate and experiment from around the world at an almost face-to-face level (University of Nottingham, 2011). This all occurs with significantly less financial cost to all parties concerned compared to pursuing the same activities in real life meaning that the ability to virtually create theatre and other live performances are available to more people. This leveling of the playing field has meant that more people are finding their way into theatre, people that would not necessarily have the time, money or knowledge to otherwise engage in theatrical creation (Renee,T. 2009). With new people comes new ideas, and when these new ideas form in a new virtual reality the results are something that will not have been seen before.

The majority of theatrical companies that originated in Second Life are performing stage plays transplanted into a medium that they were not written for. It is here that we see the distinction in performance between the physical and digital mediums. A digital avatar, on the one hand, is not capable yet to communicate facial expressions or subtle character traits but it can perform feats a human being is unable to. There are examples of artistic groups and collectives that are in the process of identifying the key differences between the physical and virtual theatre practices and are experimenting with these defining aspects to create art works that can only be possible in programs such as Second Life (Arthole Radio, 2008). It is in this process of experimentation and creation that we can see how theatre will flourish in virtual environments and what a new theatre-based art form could potentially look like in a brand new medium.

To state an example of this process in a previous era: when film was born at the end of the 19th century, the first attempts at portraying a fiction in celluloid were heavily inspired by the

theatrical techniques of the time. This meant that the type of acting employed by the performers in this new medium was more suited to playing to a crowd of hundreds ensuring that even the audience members furthest away could see and understand the performance (Auslander, P. 1999, p. 12). Initially film-makers and performers transplanted the major form of visual entertainment they had, theatre, into a celluloid art form that was distinctive for its ability to be personal and emphasize the small and subtle. Eventually this was realised and new ways of acting and filming were achieved that fully incorporated the technical and artistic aspects that made cinema unique. The whole industry flourished as a result and evolved into something that very much has its connections to theatre but exists as an art form unto itself (Auslander, P. 1999, p.11).

In terms of theatre, my comparisons between the practices in the virtual and physical worlds are primarily concerned with theatre companies who have already begun to explore the use of the digital in their own performance practice. With theatre companies such as IOU and Pilot Theatre we already see aspects of performance practice that breaks the conventional assumptions of theatre and its infrastructure. They often include techniques such as breaking the fourth wall, creating site-specific performance and re-evaluating the performer/spectator role. With IOUs latest body of work, which include 2010's *Airborne* (IOU Theatre, 2010, Junction Theatre, Goole) and 2011's *Volatile Light* (IOU Theatre, 2011, Junction Theatre, Goole), we can see that they are even turning potential times of research and development into publicly accessible productions thereby transforming technician into performer also. Some of these aspects have become the cornerstones of contemporary performance practice (we need only look to companies such as Slung Low and Punchdrunk to see exemplary instances of large-scale site-specific work) and so looking at companies who are conceptually receptive to experimentation with new ideas will prove illuminating to see their engagement with digital and online technologies.

Pilot have a history of using new interactive media in their theatre making process. Their 2007 adaptation of Anne Cassidy's 'Looking for JJ' featured the invention of an internet profile for their main character. The protagonist, Alice Tully, was given a Myspace page which feature pictures and blog posts that not only revealed parts of her character before the production began touring but also suggested the atmosphere and themes of the piece (Pilot Theatre, 2007). Apart from using the internet for multi-textual storytelling, Pilot use it, and Second Life in particular, to connect with their collaborators and designers. Not only can these meetings happen across great distances, they can occur in fully realised 3D models of the designers concepts. Being able to explore designs in this manner and discuss the result has sped up the decision process and allowed more time for experimentation and development (Pilot Theatre, n/a).

IOU on the other hand, have used the tools Second Life has to offer to reach across the globe and share their work with people as far afield as China. The use of Second Life in the creation of their online archive for their 2010 sound-based piece 'Airborne' has resulted in the recreation of a real life arts space, the Junction theatre in Goole, in the virtual world. By placing their work in a virtual, arts specific space IOU have evoked an atmosphere particular to theatres and galleries and have therefore affected how their audience engages with 'Airborne'. They have brought audience members together into one space where each individual is visible in a way not possible with a purely browser based experience. These individuals have been connected while simultaneously being scattered across the country and potentially the globe. IOU have used the tools of Second Life to create a community of disparate, dispersed and yet unified peoples that would not be possible in any other medium.

There is also a flux of artists and theatre practitioners that work exclusively for and in Second Life. These artists born out of their experience within the virtual realm create works with a unique viewpoint on life within online environments. As such they deal and engage with a number of idiosyncrasies that make virtual life an entity unto itself with artworks specific to that medium. The differences that make virtual art-forms unique manifest themselves out of the technical interfaces and mechanics that are inherent within the Second Life program.

Such things as superficial as the ability to fly have presented new and interesting ways to experience movement and has been used to significant effect for ZeroG SkyDancers who attract large crowds to see their flying performances in a roofless auditorium, purpose built for their shows (Spensely, DC. 2011). Other, more fundamental aspects of Second Life offer something that can be discussed and used to create theatre that is specific to the virtual realm. These aspects are concepts that have come from the basis of the interaction in 3D virtual worlds such as Second Life.

One of the companies I will be discussing in this respect is a company that creates the more traditional idea of theatre and yet has used the distinctive qualities of Second Life to ensure that not only that their work is well received but it also holds a place of significance in the artistic culture of this virtual world. ActUP is a company that stages live performances from scripts and attempts to incorporate aspects of a more traditional theatrical experience. Their 2008 production of Shakespeare's 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' was a faithful rendition of the text (Dansereau, D. F. & Evans, S. H., 2008). What makes this work noteworthy is the company's use of Second Life's creative tools to produce a piece with a distinct aesthetic that it would not be possible to construct it in the physical world.

Based in the Ivy Falls theatre complex, the company designers, Rekka Berchot and Kere Delcon, created a landscape filled with ancient sprawling trees with impenetrable canopies, babbling streams, fireflies and bluebell carpets. Nestled in amongst this was built a stone terrace covered in hanging greenery that could be faded in and out depending on the scene. Along with Kavar Cleanslate and Blaze Petrov, the designers developed costumes that reflected the surrounding scene. The fairies were clad in climbing ivy and some even had moving animals as part of their clothing. Oberon and Titania themselves were blue-skinned humanoids whose added height separated them from the world of men and placed them distinctly in the land of the ethereal along with their unusual form of transport; a translucent horse and a giant dragonfly respectively (Dansereau,D.F. and Evans,S.H. 2008). Costumes were even created for the audience members to wear, it was permitted for the audience to sit amongst the set, in the tree branches, along the river side etc., but in doing so they were obligated to wear clothing that matched the aesthetic used (Tizzy,B. 2008). The resulting effect was one of a fantastical forest inhabited by all kinds of strange and impossible creatures, an effect and level of engagement with the audience that could not have been executed as readily in a non-virtual environment.

With this production it becomes evident that while the superficial value of being able to witness impossible things seems to be very much for the spectacle, the virtual is able to bring many of these spectacles together to form atmospheres specific to this version of reality. The potential for these atmospheres to exist and the experiences to be had within them are something that makes theatre in worlds like Second Life unique and medium specific. Along side this comes the increased likelihood of an experience which can take audiences further out of a potentially passive viewership and further into the theatrical world than previously possible. Whether this will prove to alienate or enhance the engagement of the audience members will depend from production to production. The Second Life comedian Lauren Weyland, for example, has received a mixed reception for her shows which feature the female avatar talking with a gruff male voice. This blurring between the gender expectations has resulted mostly in success for her act but there have been a notable number of people who have been confused or even upset by this (Shuftan,B. 2011).

One of the more fundamental aspects of Second Life that has inspired artwork is the problem of identity in a world where you can potentially be anyone/anything you want to be. The arts company Arthole used this concept to form the basis of their performance piece 'Orientation' which was widely acclaimed for its use of Second Life idiosyncrasies in conveying its message (Arthole Radio, 2008).

Arthole is a partnership between two artists, one based in England and the other based in the United States, who come from a visual art background. In 2008 the duo created a piece of interactive performance art they named 'Orientation' that played upon the idea and concerns of identity in the virtual world of Second Life (Eglington,A. 2009). The piece began in the lavish reception hall of Ludovico Industries, a fictional company involved in unspecified medicinal manufacturing. The reception was brightly coloured and well lit with comfortable looking waiting room chairs, overall it seemed very welcoming. The employees of this company, however, were a different matter. Each avatar, the receptionists, the security guards, even the pictures of the CEO wore a rabbit head in place of their regular human-looking one. These rabbit heads could not be customised, the individuals only distinguishable by their clothing signifying rank and responsibility. When the participants entered the space they were given a yellow boiler suit and their own rabbit head they were compelled to wear. As the participants did so one-by-one each carefully crafted and unique avatar identity was effectively deleted until the individual audience members became a mass of yellow 'bunnyken'. From the reception area the group was led into a even larger orientation room seemingly made from great dank stone walls, a complete tonal shift from the sparkling reception room. Here the 'bunnyken' were sat in uniform rows, each with their own TV screen, and were subjected to Orwellian-style propaganda images, the rabbit face a dominant image, along with an address from the apparent CEO who spoke gibberish. Once that had finished the group was allowed to leave via a second door which led over a bridge and into an apparently idyllic dome, something seemingly promised by the propaganda images. Once the 'bunnyken' stepped onto the green grasses, however, the floor seemed to become insubstantial and all the participants fell down a stone shaft and into the funnel of a meat grinder. This, it was implied, was the end place for all those that had given up their identity and followed the company blindly (Claveau,A. 2008).

It is this piece, along with those I described above, that I will be discussing within the rest of my thesis. With 'Orientation', Arthole had created a piece that subverted one of the main appeals of Second Life and by doing so emphasised its importance. The concept of identity is one that a lot has been written about and has become more and more problematic with the creation of 3D virtual worlds and the means of individual representation they employ (Meadows,M.S., 2008). By taking the crafted identities of the Second Life users and rendering them unusable, Arthole have manipulated the power of a visually immediate identity and the behavior these visuals inspire in their users. Here is an example of an arts company producing live performances that deal with what it is to be a participant in a virtual world. By doing this not only have they created a piece that was overwhelmingly well received, it is a piece that can demonstrate and tell the story of the specific

medium and culture it inhabits. These types of performances could potentially ensure the survival of live theatrical performances in programs like Second Life; pieces that are culturally and artistically important and can only be told through the virtual worlds they discuss.

Personal Identity

Now we come to a fundamental aspect of Second Life: the idea and problem of identity in a 3D virtual environment. This aspect is a by-product of the ability to represent oneself by a fully rendered 3D humanoid and having full control over the appearance of this avatar. By being able to choose their outward facing aesthetic, users choose how they want to be perceived and how they want others to interact with them. This mirrors a common phenomena in real life as Ambercrombie and Longhurst show us; “people are presenting themselves to others and, in doing so, are imagining how the others will see them. They are, in other words, performing for an imagined audience,” (1998, pp.95-96). This idea of performing an identity is not only restricted to the virtual worlds it seems.

The advent of the internet and online interaction has had a dispersing effect on mass media audiences. Previously the two models used to analyse audiences were those of the Simplified Audience and the Mass Audience. The Simplified Audience is probably most easily identified with those of conventional theatre audiences. They are the captured group of people located within the same physical space watching the same performance at the same time. The creation of these audiences has a number of implications for the manifestation of community and mutually reinforced experience. When a spectator enters the performance space he “surrenders individual status” as well as receiving “his own well-marked private space, individual seat, and relative immunity from physical contact with his fellows” (Elam,K., 1980, p64). This means that the spectator’s interaction with the performance is at once private and public (Goffman,E. 1969, p.125).

The Mass Audience came about with the invention of widely broadcast radio programs and televisual media. This audience model consists of a wide-spread group of people that have witnessed the same event and yet a single audience member may have experienced this event at an entirely different point in time and in a completely different place to any other audience member. The performances most experienced by the Mass Audience are mediated, constructed events. They are not live and as such the opportunity for editing and ‘quality control’ has led to a different aesthetic and expectation between live performances and broadcast media (Ambercrombie, N. & Longhurst,B., 1998, p.60). The creation of a localised audience is more problematic for this model, but it still retains the distinct barrier between performer and spectator that is starting to dissolve.

When the internet became a channel for communication and entertainment distribution it became apparent that a new model was required. The potential for extended performer/audience feedback and the ease with which the public could create an online presence meant that a third

audience model emerged in which “in contemporary society, everyone becomes an audience all the time,” (Ambercrombie, N. & Longhurst,B., 1998, p.68). This simultaneity of the performer/audience role and the blurring of the performance/spectator boundary has manifested in such a way that:

we cannot help responding to others as if their actions - and our own - were being recorded and simultaneously transmitted to an unseen audience or stored up for close scrutiny at some later time. [...] The intrusion into everyday life of this all-seeing eye no longer takes us by surprise or catches us with our defenses down. We need no reminder to smile. A smile is permanently graven on our features, and we already know from which of several angles it photographs to best advantage. (Lasch,C., 1979, p.47)

Lasch’s quote from the 1970s came decades before the internet was released to the public but it is, however, apt for this analysis. Lasch’s ideas of Narcissism were surfacing out of the massive popularity of global television and cable, but are also applicable to the advent of the internet as this not only continued the trend of Narcissism but even increased its effects by allowing the public to communicate in such an instantaneous way.

This idea can be found in the many smaller performances found in everyday life from waiters adding flair to their service to a sales assistant's name tag inferring an identity that has more to do with the service than the individual (Ambercrombie, N. & Longhurst,B., 1998, pp. 70-72). The Diffused Audience model, as it is called, eliminates the distance between performer and audience member and as such performance starts the leak into everyday life. When we look at the implications of this model and how it has affected the perception of the self we can see why virtual environments, such as Second Life, have become a popular place for personal expression.

The philosophy connected to the invention of the Diffused Audience model has been labelled ‘Narcissism’. The fundamental notion behind this is “the idea that people act as if they are being looked at, as if they are at the centre of the attention of a real or imaginary audience” (Ambercrombie, N. & Longhurst,B., 1998, p.88). It was first labelled ‘Narcissism’ by Christopher Lasch in 1979 taking the term from the ancient Greek myth about the figure Narcissus. While the common usage of the word has existed for much longer than Lasch’s ideas, this theory is named for the self-awareness, and therefore self-absorption, prevalent in a society where performance is integrated and ubiquitous. The distinction between the private and public responses we see in the Simple and Mass Audience models shrivels when we get to the Diffused model and its inherent Narcissism; the private becomes a public commodity that operates under the same scrutiny (Lasch,C., 1979). When this happens the locus of identity becomes something located in others, it

“becomes a social construct, and human beings build their identities on the basis of the ways they are seen by others” (Landy,R.J., 1993, p.20). With the introduction of the internet the concept of the self does not even have to restrict itself to one persona. As Sherry Turkle states “immersion in a networked computer can provide the user with a number of identities, so that the self becomes endlessly multiplied” (Turkle,S., 1995, p.81). The multitude of websites available that offer us the opportunity to extend our online presence have resulted in a ‘split subjectivity’ without the chance for reconciliation or reaffirmation (Causey,M. 2006, p.17). Matthew Causey theorises in his 2006 text *Theatre and Performance in Digital Culture* that technology has the potential to both split and reconfigure our identity. He claims that our subjectivity has the potential to be “extended, challenged and reconfigured” by technology (p.16). It is in this latter action that arenas such as Second Life play their part.

Virtual environments like Second Life that use customisable avatars instead of photographic representations of the user have a tremendous capacity for self ratification or even self-discovery. Second Life and its avatar interface do not require personal information to operate. With this great potential for anonymity that is not available or appropriate for sites such as Facebook or Youtube, the users of 3D virtual worlds have been offered a place where there is no higher objective other than to express yourself however you wish. It is this “perfect anonymity” that provides MMOs with arguably their “most significant social factor” (Curtis, P. 1992, p.129). Using these virtual ambassadors gives users a feeling of a degree of regulation in their online social experience without recrimination. It is as Mark Meadows says: the use of avatars means the user’s

intimacy and interaction with others can be more easily controlled, and they feel more protected. We feel safer because the person we are talking to is not right next to us, because they cannot see our real faces, because we cannot see theirs, and because, perhaps, they have no idea even who we are. [...] We are not entirely connected, we tell ourselves. (2008, p.36)

It is in this state of anonymous semi-connectivity that the creation of the self is found. In these semi-private virtual spaces there is the possibility to fulfill desires and needs that were once private and could not be allowed into the public eye. For some this is something fantastical and creative, while for others it is something more fundamental to who they are. Through surveys and interviews with Second Life and other MMO users I have been able to find a trend in avatar creation.

In the majority of the responses to my questionnaires and the findings of other anthropologists and academics in this area there is the overwhelming suggestion that online domains such as Second Life do not unleash the dark, secret fantasies of users that some believe

would happen; rather we find that these spaces permit “access to an interior self that in the actual world has masked by an unchosen embodiment and social obligations,” (Boellstorff, T., 2008, p. 148). The lack of recrimination and the feeling of agency that comes from controlling a 3D digital representation of oneself can lead users to feel like they have found a space where they can find their true selves rather than having the burden of playing their given roles in real life. During his fieldwork in Second Life one of Boellstorff’s contacts stated that she felt the virtual world “allows you to define your role instead of being the one you are in RL [real life] (in my case, mother, wife),” (Boellstorff, T., 2008, p.120). Here we see what it is that Second Life offers; the chance to perform your choice of role in a space where almost anything is accepted. It is interesting to note that the use of an avatar still seems to be a performance of a sort. It is *what* is being performed, however, that makes Second Life noteworthy in the mass media of today.

In my own survey, the majority of the respondents, when asked about the motivation behind their avatar creation, said they either actively wanted to re-create themselves in Second Life, with certain physical improvements, or their avatar’s look ‘evolved’ until they found a persona that resonated with who they are (see Appendix A, pp. 67-106). This suggests that users have identified the freedom Second Life offers to perform identities; indeed, respondents ‘AH’ and ‘PO’ cited “freedom” (p.81) and the “thought of being able to create and program parts of reality” (p.69) as reasons for them joining Second Life initially. The importance of this cannot be understated. According to my survey results over 60% of users questioned felt their avatar was themselves in digital form despite the discrepancies between physical appearance and behaviour. Over 80% of the users described themselves as introverted and yet they describe their actions in Second Life as being ‘outgoing’ and ‘socially confident’. It seems that the majority of users who answered my survey have found a place in Second Life where they, in the words of respondent ‘PO’, “I can express parts of me in SL [Second Life] that due to RL [real life] considerations I cannot do in RL with the openness I may prefer” (see Appendix A, p.82).

The ‘openness’ that Second Life seems to offer has led to a trend of experimentation, especially in terms of appearance. In their guide to Second Life, Michael Rymaszewski et al stated in their section about avatar creation “whatever you do, remember that your presence in the virtual world is defined by your appearance,” (Rymaszewski, M. et al., 2007, p.72) and despite the fact that the users questioned in my survey had a strong sense of their online self, a number of them had multiple avatars they could switch between. The lack of ramifications in a creative virtual platform has resulted in a space where users are unafraid to play with appearance and as such many users have come to display themselves in unique and outlandish ways; one of my respondents, UY, has

several avatars including a flying book and an eggplant (see Appendix A, p.102). One of Tom Boellstorff's contacts concluded that "the outward appearance really does communicate a lot about who you are, because it's made up of conscious choices about how you want to present yourself," (Boellstorff, T., 2008, p.130). It seems, therefore, that the appearance of an avatar, whether it changes or not reflects the user in a way that is more consciously connected than 'Real Life' and its pre-determined genetically-coded appearances. This shows just how important avatars, their appearance and the performance of identity in the virtual world are and how integral this is in the existence of Second Life.

There are a number of companies in Second Life that use this unique rendition of identity in their theatre-making practice. First I shall discuss Arthole's arts piece 'Orientation'.

Before the events of the show began, the audience gathered in a reception area. It is arguable that the performance had begun by this point despite the audience members milling around and exchanging pleasantries with their friends. The officials present in this specially built reception space, the security guards, the receptionists, even the images of the CEO, had, in place of their default humanoid head, a caricature of a rabbit's face. The audience members were given their own rabbit heads to wear as well as an accompanying yellow boiler suit to complete their transformation into 'bunnyken'. Eventually each unique and outlandish avatar in the arena became indistinguishable from their neighbour, the job of their clothing and customisation rendered moot. The original officials, the ones wearing suits and uniforms, were the only avatars that remained with any discernible identity and even then it purely served to denote their position within the company, it was not intrinsic to their personalities. With the transformation completed, the then identical audience members were led into a much less glamorous room in which they were given their 'orientation'. The video played contained images intended to be hypnotic while the gibberish spouted by the rabbit-headed CEO formed an unintrusive soundtrack to the video while forming a vocal connection to the audience. Once the audience were suitably 'hypnotised' they were led without argument to the idyllic pasture which unceremoniously dropped each of the 'bunnyken' into the food processor that was their ultimate destination. The main points this piece wished to demonstrate was the ease with which, once stripped of the trappings of individualism, people are manipulated into conforming.

By disturbing their audience's concept of identity and the tools they use to affirm this, Arthole have ensured that their discussion of conformity, industrialisation and assertive individualism have become more immediate and personal to each audience member. This type of manipulation on a large scale could not have been possible or as deeply effective had this project

been attempted in the physical world. The computerised world communicates primarily through symbols and the exchange of symbols (Meadows,M.S., 2008). The avatar is the most personal and constantly used symbol in 3D virtual interaction, it is an “interactive self-portrait that we use to express ourselves,” (Meadows,M.S., 2008, p.106). By transforming each audience members’ avatars until they were unrecognisable and, even worse, indistinguishable from the next, Arthole have played upon one of the most fundamental interfaces and cultural traits in Second Life. The destruction of any semblance of individuality created a subduing effect in the audience and altered how they interacted with the piece. With their personal ambassadors in the virtual environment reduced to that of a faceless tool with which to interact with the performance the audience have no choice but to deal with the sudden loss of their once reliable locus of identity which at once disrupts their personal response to the piece and also expands it to encompass the performance as a whole.

At the same time the destruction of the avatar persona highlighted the importance of the role the avatar plays in Second Life. Having a mask to put on, or indeed a whole virtual person to wear, ensures that users have a sense of agency and engagement with their environments while allowing a certain sense of disconnection and distinction between the digital and physical worlds (Murray,J.H., 1997, p.113). This disconnection serves as a safety barrier between action and consequence and has helped to shape the thriving Second Life communities (Meadows,M.S., 2008, p.36) while the sense of agency keeps the user interacting with the environment in a process of personal evolution and discovery that mirrors the physical world (Meadows,M.S., 2008, p.78). With an avatar that has suddenly become unfamiliar, users have nothing but the disconnection from the experience. Without the amount of control over their avatar they are used to, users lose the sense of agency once available to them and their behaviour becomes easier to manipulate. My survey revealed that the majority of Second Life theatre audiences are generally more active and vocal in their reception of performances than they would be in the physical world. Here, Arthole have managed to discover a way to keep their audience contained and manipulatable by taking away one of the strongest visual connections to their own virtual presence; a sense of themselves is lost. If we compare the reaction with Punchdrunk theatre company’s practice of masking their audience members we can see how this result is very much medium specific. Punchdrunk’s aim in using masks is to make their audience feel unconnected to their fellow audience members allowing deeper and more personal response to the piece (Channel 4, 2010). In Second Life, on the other hand, this mechanic results in a reaction unique to the medium. On her radio podcast, Amy Wilson describes it as “a very different kind of feeling that you get wearing this weird outfit waiting for something to happen when you’re in real life versus when you’re in Second Life. When you’re in Second Life

there really is something about giving up your identity, whereas in real life you never quite lose it” (Arthole Radio, 2008). Not only does this hold the implication of an audience willingly surrendering its own identity and accepting the atrocities of the fictional corporation, it also highlights why this piece could never be performed in the physical world and have the same impact. ‘Orientation’ uses concepts and mechanisms that exist within Second Life and use them to create an acclaimed and popular piece that could only work in the virtual world (Arthole Radio, 2008).

Second Life comedian, Lauren Weyland, has gathered much controversy and acclaim for her stand up routines that use this basic interface of unrestricted avatar creation to play with socially relevant assumptions of identity. Lauren Weyland appears to be an attractive blonde female but when she speaks her voice is that of a deadpan male’s. One routine involves a section comparing the act of giving birth (a possibility in Second Life) to a ‘prim’ baby to that of having a ‘sculptie’ baby (Treet TV, n/a). The terms ‘prim’ and ‘sculptie’ refer to two different techniques used for object creation and building with Second Life. Coupling material concerning an exclusively female function, childbirth, placing it the context of Second Life and also having the comedienne talk in a voice that is obviously male not only makes apparent the source of the controversy surrounding her, but also shows why Lauren Weyland is a performer that would not enjoy the same success were she performing in the physical world. In my opinion, however, there is more to her act than controversy and medium specific material that makes her a Second Life success. There are implications of a male playing a female comic that a can only be found in the virtual world.

Gender in Second Life is a choice. Upon signing into the virtual world for the first time new users are asked which gender they would like their avatar to portray. Unlike screen names gender in Second Life is changeable, there is the possibility available to all users to be able to change their avatar’s gender whenever they see fit. Initially, Second Life, along with other MMOs offered only very obvious male or female avatar templates and the various default animations that came with them only served to reinforce the perceived gender norms (Boellstorff,T., 2008, p.141). There are some in the virtual world who see this choice as an opportunity to “experience rather than merely observe what it feels like to be the opposite gender,” (Turkle,S., 1997, p152). Out of my survey responses approximately 25% of the respondents actively changed their avatar regularly between genders, and sometimes even between species. The prevalence of this avatar gender switching implies that the defining characteristic of a gender in the virtual world come from visual representations. When asked how people react to her voice Lauren Weyland herself says that “as long as I remain in character, it would be, like... No one thinks of Mickey Mouse as a male falsetto voice, so everyone just hears me as a strong woman,” (Shuftan,B. 2011).

This, in part, is why Lauren Weyland and her comedy routines are very much identifiable as originating in a virtual world. Her Second Life audiences accept her voice as female because there are less and less obvious gender divisions as more and more users are given a choice to enter the world as female or male, or perhaps neither. Coupling this with the non disclosure policy of Linden Labs whereby users are not obligated to reveal their actual gender (Linden Research Inc. 2011), we find gender and its definition has become very much a grey area. By using this blurring of gender definition, Lauren has created an act that could only exist through the use of online virtual worlds. Were this to occur in the physical world Lauren's act would be read entirely differently. In the physical world the male origins of Lauren's act would be more obvious and therefore reflect in the way the audience reacted to her. In the virtual world Lauren's physicality is decidedly feminine and as such reads as an entirely different performance, a performance that is distinctly virtual in nature.

Through the manipulation of the unique kind of identity that exists in Second Life, Arthole and Lauren Weyland have produced acts that could only be possible in virtual MMOs. The use of 3D representations of users has introduced a new dialogue centered around what it means to be yourself when you can choose how others see you while remaining essentially anonymous. The two artists I have discussed above show that the virtual realms have the potential to produce art works that consider and engage with the elements of Second Life that make it a unique forum. This holds the potential for new and original art works to be made that could lead to a new genre of performance in the online domain.

Community

With the previous chapter we saw how the arrival of ubiquitous networked technologies affected the individual's sense of self. This chapter explores the implications of the Diffused Audience model on groups and looks at how virtual worlds have changed the creation and need for community in a realm where presence is simulated.

The creation of communities centered around a particular medium, or even a specific genre within that medium, is not new. We need only look as far as science fiction conventions and book groups to see this. Audience members look to form groups of like-minded individuals. Though the way these groups appear have differed, there seems to be a commonly discernible underlying reason they come together.

While looking into the creation of groups centered around romantic fiction, Janice Radway studied a woman only group who read this genre of literature as an "individual escape" from parts of their lives they were unhappy with (Radway,J., 1990, p.96). During her research she discovered, however, that the women who met to discuss these books were not reading them purely for a personal response but by meeting with others to discuss these books they were "providing themselves with another kind of female community capable of rendering the so desperately needed affective support" (Radway,J., 1990, p.96). Radway's romantic fiction group used their mutual fondness for the genre to explore an area of their lives that they were not happy with, and by identifying with each other through the writing they created a group where they could help each other with this area of their lives (Radway,J., 1990).

Conversely, 'fans' of various celebrities, books, television programs or even entire genres have often been forcibly grouped together by those that do not share the same enthusiasm for that specific interest. Being placed together it becomes easier for fans to be characterised as 'other' and this often drives the community of like-minded enthusiasts together (Jenson,J., 1992 cited in Ambercrombie, N. & Longhurst, B. 1998, p.123). This form of discrimination, however, can result in the formation of strong and lasting fandom communities. The term 'Trekkie' has been adopted as a moniker by those who enjoy the science fiction television program 'Star Trek' despite it being used in a derogatory manner on occasion by those not within the fan community. The formation of these fan groups serves to reinforce the validity of their likes and dislikes for certain media content, and as such the community reaffirms who they are. Although they came together as a result of outside influence the groups of like-minded fans, like Radway's romance women, have formed

groups where they can meet around a common interest and help each other reaffirm their personal like and dislikes without fear of recrimination (Brower,S., 1992, pp. 163-164).

As with individual identity the advent of a networked media that relies on feedback as well as displaying its own content has resulted in a new way of defining and instigating new groups and collectives. With the emergence of what has become known as the Diffused Audience model we have seen an expansion of the use of anonymous media, such as Second Life, by users who wish to discuss things of interest to them and others without fear of ridicule or personal recrimination.

The presence of users in the virtual realms are paramount to their existence and continuing survival. Users serve to give “a sense of place; no amount of dazzling graphics could compensate for the role of sociality in filling an otherwise “empty” virtual world” (Boellstorff,T., 2008, p.182); as one of Boellstorff’s contacts said, “the people that inhabit this space are what make it feel real” (Boellstorff,T., 2008, p.182).

The presence of others serves to reaffirm the identity users have built for themselves by having their peers acknowledge and accept them for who their avatar shows them to be. Although Second Life is a place built for personal realisation it still seems that this “does not mean that all else is obliterated. On the contrary, an active audience of other, and individual, selves is required, although it is an audience whose purpose is to reflect the central self” (Ambercrombie,N. & Longhurst,B. 1998, p.92). To this extent it seems that users find others of a similar personality for a better chance of identity acceptance and confirmation. Like Radway’s romantic fiction group, users find each other through a mutual interest and develop a group that feeds the foundation of who they are in the virtual world.

The creation of social groups on internet forums and other virtual spaces has become common practice and is even the reason users join certain online sites initially. Richard Bartle’s user model for MUDs splits the user demographic into four distinct groups based on how the user interacts with his or her environment. He has termed these groups Achievers, Explorers, Socialisers and Killers. Each of these labels denotes a method for engaging with the games interface and progressing through the game. Achievers concern themselves with completing objectives set by either themselves or by the game. They play to gain wealth or knowledge that will ultimately help them complete the next section of the game (Bartle,R., 1996). Explorers are involved within the game to seek out new and interesting things about the world. This can range from the look and virtual geography to searching for glitches and testing the inbuilt physics to the extreme (Bartle,R., 1996). Killers are the group of players that play to cause havoc and harm to other players’ avatars. They assert their own superiority on others, whether that be though beating them within the rules of

the game or manipulating loop-holes within the game's programming to best their opponents (Bartle,R., 1996). Socialisers are the group that use MUDs as a background for player interaction. For them the game is usually a secondary concern next to developing relationships and discovering more about the in-game cultures that develop. The inclusion of the 'Socialisers' as a group unto itself indicates that interacting with other players forms a major part of why people decide to engage with online multi-user sites (Bartle,R., 1996). Furthermore, Nick Yee's research into the motivations of MMORPG (Massively Multi-player Online Role-Playing Game) players found that when users had a memorably positive experience in-game it largely "revolved around interactions with other users" (Yee,N., 2004). In the wider world of massively multi-player online games, socialising and being around other users has proved to be a major force for attracting new users and has even become a way to engage with and play the game. *World of Warcraft* and *Guild Wars*, two of the leading online MMORPGs, even limit the number of quests a player can achieve on their own almost forcing the player to interact with other participants to achieve their goals (Blizzard Inc. 2011). Socialising within the virtual world has become a vital part of online entertainments.

With players having such a positive response to the social aspects of virtual spaces it is not surprising that vast communities have sprung up in Second Life. When users first visit the Second Life website to sign up one of the recurring statements on the animation that greets new visitors is 'Who will you meet?' (Linden Labs Inc. 2010). Linden Labs have placed a huge amount of importance upon the fact that their online spaces are open to connectivity on a global scale and by bringing people into an anonymous space they are inviting interaction in a way that is free of recrimination and open to free expression. Looking at Second Life in particular, my own survey of users shows that a third of respondents stated that the ability to meet new people and socialise was the reason they joined (see Appendix A, pp.67-106). In addition to this, when asked what the most satisfying part of their online experience is, two thirds of users answered that meeting people and spending time with friends was the factor they held above all others (see Appendix A, pp.67-106).. With such a vast group of people entering Second Life with the intention of meeting new people and responding to socialistic opportunities available within the virtual world we can see how groups and eventually larger societies of avatars have come together.

As an example, Second Life is home to many types of user made societal groups. Two such major and contrasting cases are those of the Goreans and the Furs. The Goreans are based on John Norman's science fantasy novels and operate as a very structured state that often employs slaves. The corner stones of Gorean society are the high moral code and strict hierarchy that inform how the inhabitants behave and how the society forms (Ghiardie, T., 2010). The slaves volunteer of their

own free will and the society is at its heart a place for role-playing certain types of character (Meadows,M., 2008, p.35). Gor was already a flourishing role-playing society before the advent of Second Life with forums, instant messaging chat rooms (Gorean 101, 2007) and even in real life gatherings (BBC, 2006). With the creation of Second Life and its invitation to users to express themselves with relative freedom, the Gorean society quickly found itself represented in many spaces within the 3D virtual world (Ghiardie, T., 2010). As of 2009 there were an estimated 20,000 Gorean role-players populating Second Life (Persius, 2009). Here we can see how a rigorous society has found a place in the virtual world and, through the ability to represent themselves and interact with each other in way not possible previously the society, is stronger and growing everyday.

Furries, on the other hand, are a loose but vast collective of people who choose to appear as animals with humanoid characteristics. This community was originally inspired by a series of cartoons drawn by Steve Gallacci featuring an animal character in a realistically human military setting. This led to “a gathering of fans to look at Gallacci's notes” for further explorations of animals in a human world. These gatherings became an informal series of “Gallacci groups” who eventually became organised into “more formal furry parties” (Patten,F., 1996). Compared to the Goreans, the Furries’ society is one of anarchy and freedom of expression, though conversely they also practice slavery in some areas (Meadows,M., 2008, p.40). While the Goreans are primarily a heterosexual society, the sexual orientation of the Furries is more evenly spread with the majority stating they are bisexual (University of California, 2007). The Furries are generally seen as the polar opposite to the Goreans and, perhaps unsurprisingly, there have been accounts of unrest between the two societies (Meadows,M., 2008, p.40). During his experience in-world Mark Meadows, author of *I, Avatar*, witnessed examples of this unrest. The main objective of these incidents were to disrupt the other groups way of living their 'Second Life' by either upsetting their ideals in-words or disrupting their computer service. As an example, Meadows witnessed avatars dropping specially scripted objects onto other residents' land which would then proceed to duplicate itself until the residents' computers could no longer support the amount of information it needed to process the duplicated images. This led to the assaulted computer crashing thereby disrupting the users in-world experience (Meadows, M. 2008, p.42).

These two groups are the larger examples of the type of groups users have formed in Second Life. Ranging from fully fledged societies to student lecture groups, from bible reading groups to artistic user collectives there is a massive occurrence of users finding others to share their interests and virtual space with (Childs,M. 2010). During his fieldwork in Second Life, anthropologist Tom

Boellstorff met one resident who noted, “people gain strength by being in groups. SL (like rl [real life]) is large and disorientating” (Boellstorff, T., 2008, p.185). With its potential to connect people who are “free to be themselves” (Fleck, D., quoted in Peralta, E. 2006) on a global scale we can see how and why people come together in Second Life and other online realms and why companies, business and theatrical, have moved to take advantage of this connectivity.

We can apply some of the same reasoning to theatre audiences and how they come together. As Ambercrombie and Longhurst say, “people attend performances at least partly for the sense of a relationship with other people in the audience,” (1998, p.66). The desire to be a part of a group of like-minded individuals enjoying the same event goes some way to negating the feeling of disorientation that Tom Boellstorff’s subject talked about. By moving into and engaging with the virtual realms, arts companies are bringing audiences into the virtual world. It is for this reason we can see theatre companies expanding their practice to include online strategies and why there are groups arising within Second Life that are centered on theatre and the arts. Two such companies I will be discussing are Pilot Theatre company and IOU Theatre company. Both organisations are well established in the physical world and are currently growing their presence within Second Life. Though both use the platform to different effect they are both concerned with bringing together users in a global network in an attempt to create new communities centered on their work.

Pilot are a company based at the York Theatre Royal and have gathered attention and acclaim for their use of digital technologies and online networks in the creation of their productions. Their recent award winning production of 'Looking for JJ' utilised the social network of 'Myspace' to open up a preemptive discussion about the subject matter and the performance script (Tully, A. 2007). Similarly with their 2011 production of 'Romeo and Juliet', Pilot Theatre created a dedicated website to not only track the progress of the show but to assist with the educational aspects of a curriculum text (Pilot Theatre, 2011a). By exploiting the network capabilities of the Internet, Pilot have given themselves a reputation for digitally supplemented work that has led to them creating and hosting a major annual digital theatre conference, Shift Happens (Pilot Theatre, 2011b).

Pilot branched out into Second Life in 2007, five years after the program launched, and own a space within the virtual world that forms a centre for their online creative practices (Reve, K., 2008). The Pilot Theatre Hub (located <http://slurl.com/secondlife/Earth/159/66/27>) is a space where the theatre company can meet within the virtual world while being physically apart. They have a dedicated stage space within the complex where they meet with other creative professionals to discuss designs and see those designs mocked-up in 3D without the inherent cost. There are also links built into the constructions so visitors can contact and communicate with the company

members via email or instant messaging and a space dedicated to exhibiting previous productions which avatars can explore through links to outside websites. Pilot's use of Second Life is mostly centered around the proliferation of their own practice and advertisements of their work through reaching out to new audiences via networked virtual spaces.

IOU, on the other hand, have engaged with Second Life and its wide reaching network on a different level. IOU is also not a stranger to technological gadgetry. The vast majority of their shows have featured at their centre large, mechanical constructions, such as *Leech* (IOU, 1998) which featured a 20m long articulated leech, or digital technology, such as *Long Division* (IOU, 2008), a site-specific sound installation using hidden speakers. During the autumn of 2010, IOU was commissioned to build a replica of Goole's Junction Theatre in Second Life (located <http://slurl.com/secondlife/Nedben/248/213/112>). At its launch there was within the performance space an interactive representation of the sound and video installation experiment IOU were performing that same weekend. This exhibition of 'Airborne' and its content could have simply been placed in a dedicated web page on IOU's professional website, as such things have been done in the past. By using Second Life and its ability to connect people on a global scale, IOU have created a space where users can gather at a focal-point and see each other in a way not available on a standard web page or even a forum site. Not only does this offer an unprecedented way for audience members to communicate but also the fact that the central material, the exhibition itself, is viewable simultaneously means that groups and communities form around mutually captivating art works and these art works stay at the centre of the gathered group. This much has been expressed by the company itself.

In my questionnaire to the company IOU stated that one of the reasons they first considered using Second Life in their arts practice was “to explore new modes of distribution of IOU's work” (see Appendix B, p.108). The presence of a large international community within the virtual world has proven to be a great pull for many companies, not just arts based, and IOU have identified this potential audience as a great opportunity to enhance “audience relationships across real world geographic boundaries” (see Appendix B, p. 108). The company has discovered the ability of this 3D virtual world to connect disparate residents in a demographic that is not possible outside of the online sphere and are building a central point around which this demographic can form. Not only does this international community offer the chance for companies to increase their audience, reaching new people with far reaching digital technology, it also offers the chance for companies to build new experiences for their preexisting audience in the physical world. With 'Airborne', IOU created a live 3 day event full of experiments for the purpose of creating

extraordinary soundscapes from natural phenomenon. Within Second Life the company attempted to document the experience with interactive virtual terminals displaying videos, audio interviews and text based information on the experience. This served to be a virtual archive of the live event, an example of the virtual supporting the physical. As a virtual supplement 'Airborne' showed what was easily achievable for companies wishing to establish a virtual presence and by portraying an archived show in a new and interactive way, the company also opened their practice up to a new dynamic audience.

In September 2011, IOU went on to produce 'Volatile Light', another 3 day open experiment focusing in this instance on light and its connection to sound (IOU, 2011). They also created Second Life content for this piece although this time the content took on a different form. This time IOU built an accurate replica of the moving machinery used in the physical world's 'Volatile Light' complete with LEDs and video projection located in the workshop at the other end of the Junction theatre. By using Second Life to “augment real world experiences of live projects” (see Appendix B, p. 108), IOU have sought to replicate the 'real world' piece for an audience only capable of witnessing IOU's work within the virtual realm. IOU have experimented with building new “contexts for distribution” (see Appendix B, p. 108) and also with the content of what is being distributed. In an attempt to build “an audience experience that is designed for SL” (see Appendix B, p. 108) IOU have created a reconstruction of the physical 'Volatile Light' experiment. By not only harnessing the connectivity of Second Life but also using the inherent aspects of the program offering freely available construction functions and programmable physics, IOU have created a piece that faithfully recreates the experience of the physical world counterpart and offers the Second Life residents an introduction to IOU's work, thereby widening the companies audience base. Using the native assets of the virtual world the company built a piece that would attract the residents of Second Life to an art work that could stand as an arts piece in its own right.

Second Life has impacted IOU's artistic ventures since their arrival in-world in 2010. Their participation in the UK-China initiative UK Now has presented IOU with the direct opportunity of attracting a Chinese audience base by promoting their Second Life work as an example of and virtual locus of their arts practice. To enhance this potential link to the Chinese public, IOU created a Chinese-themed public square in Second Life where the virtual 'Volatile Light' could be viewed (located <http://slurl.com/secondlife/Ungseokbong/15/107/146>). This consideration of their audience demographic and the ability of Second Life to provide a quick and cheap building tool has led to IOU expanding their practice in this attempt to attract a particular, and yet far flung, global audience.

We have seen how two previously established companies have used Second Life to improve their working practice. Both have capitlised on the connectivity available in the online world but both have used it for different effects. Pilot have used the space to demonstrate real world builds and designs in a space that allows consideration and easy change. By using the 3D visual aspect of the program and the ability to connect users, Pilot have used the interfaces of Second Life to improve their physical world pieces. IOU, on the other hand, have used Second Life in a different manner. They have embraced the ability of the program to connect people on a global scale by documenting and recreating their own works digitally. This has proven to open up the company to a wider community of residents by offering them representations and Second Life specific experiences. Here we can see how the ease with which forming communities in Second Life has had a beneficial effect of established arts companies.

Liveness and Interaction

When we come to define theatre in the physical world one of the most fundamental features is the presence of the audience component. Indeed, many authors have defined theatre by its relationship with its audience group. Victor Turner, author of *From Ritual to Theatre* points out that “performance involves a relationship between performer and audience in which a liminal space, however slight, is opened up” (Turner, V. quoted in Ambercrombie, N. & Longhurst, B., 1998, p.40). With this definition we can see the importance Turner places on the connection and definition between performer and audience. By connecting these two entities an area of transcendence is established where the movements and vocalisations of the performer take on a meaning that serves to take the audience from the performance space and into the world of the character. It is within this new world that Turner claims an “examination of socially and culturally sensitive issues is possible” (Ambercrombie, N. & Longhurst, B., 1998, p.40). According to Turner's definition the performer-audience connection is crucial not only when it comes to defining theatre but also if theatre is to fulfil its function. When we concern ourselves with the connection between the audience and the performer we must also consider a number of implications inherent in our understanding of theatre. Traditionally we understand theatre to be enclosed, holding a captive audience in a dedicated performance space. As new genres of performance have been established the definition of theatre has expanded to include promenade theatre, street theatre and invisible theatre to name but a few that confound our traditional understanding of the audience-performer relationship. Audiences need no longer be found in dedicated performance spaces or indeed be expecting to witness a performance at all.

As the definition of the audience changes with the invention and exploration of new theatrical genres, we can see how theatre and the televisual are not as disparate as is assumed. Punchdrunk theatre company give their audience members masks to wear while they witness the show. The intention behind this is to separate the individuals of the audience group and enable them to have their own response to the piece without feeling the pressure of the collective group on their own reaction while. In this respect we can see how theatre audiences mimic that of the televisual, who are also separated entities of a wider group of viewers. It is for this reason that Philip Auslander, in his book *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture*, claims that “mediatized performance makes just an effective focal point for the gathering of a social group as live performance” (p.55). As such the mere presence of an audience will not be the only aspect of theatrical performance that defines the idea of ‘liveness’, there are other aspects of its make up that

must be considered.

When audience members in the physical world come together to witness a performance a number of behavioural expectations are placed upon and expressed by the group. It is largely assumed that the audience will remain a passive observer in terms of contribution to the development of the piece and its narrative. It is not, for example, expected that the audience will play a part in the performance of the piece unless expressly asked by the performers. The audience's involvement is restricted to “limited and predefined ways, clapping and cheering, for example” (Ambercrombie, N. & Longhurst, B. 1998, p.51). It is expected that the audience will respond to the happenings onstage and indicate their opinions of the piece in these culturally accepted ways and at the approved times. Certain genres of theatre have attempted to improve the apparent engagement of their audience by disregarding these expectations and letting their audience become directly involved within the performance. Modern Christmas pantomime, for example, often includes a vocal back-and-forth between characters and the audience as a whole whereas it is not uncommon to see street performances involve individuals in sections of the narrative often to comic affect. Although these instances seem to deny the expectations set out above they are sanctioned by the performers, the audience being invited to join in with the performance, and as such do not exert any influence over the nature or development of the narrative.

Using the Audience Model I have previously discussed, conventional theatre is most often placed in the Simple Audience model; the audience being gathered in a single time and space receiving a one-way information stream from the performer. Theatre as a medium constantly defines and redefines the stage space “inventing and evoking the play world,” (Meisel, M. 2007). This being the case, many authors of performance analysis have highlighted the distinction and ensuing distance between the performer's world and audience's as one of the issues that must be addressed if the audience is to engage successfully with the piece (McQuail, D. 1997). To accomplish a heightened sense of audience engagement with the production's world there are a number of conventions that the production can use to reduce the barrier between performer and audience. Kier Elam, author of *The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama*, points towards the particular sign system employed by productions as a whole. The reliance on communication falls not solely on the actor's expression and dialogue but is also encapsulated by other aspects of the piece such as the set design, lighting, use of sound, costume and props (p.37). The audience will then “interpret this complex of messages [...] as an integrated text, according to the theatrical, dramatic and cultural codes at [their] disposal,” (p.38). This idea suggests that one way the piece engages with the audience is by communicating with the audience in an indirect manner, through means other

than dialogue so as to not distract the audience from the substance of the piece. This type of implicit communication is an effective way of using the established sign system of the theatre medium to connect the audience to the performer and the action taking place 'onstage' making them feel acquainted with this world.

The very make up of the audience itself has an effect on the connection and engagement of an audience member. As Susan Bennett says "theatre is an obviously social phenomenon. It is an event which relies on the physical presence of an audience" (p.86). The very experience of being part of a group witnessing the same event is fundamentally different to experiencing a live production as a solitary audience member. Bennett talks expansively on these situations:

"The experience of the spectator in a packed auditorium is different from that of one in a half-empty theatre. When a theatre has a very few spectators, the sense of audience as a group can be destroyed. This fragmentation of the collective can have the side-effect of psychological discomfort for the individual which inhibits or revises response. When a theatre is at full capacity, not only can this enhance an audience's confidence to respond to the performance, but it can also reaffirm the spectators' sense of themselves both individually and as a group." (p.131)

It becomes apparent looking at Bennett's argument that the basic make up of the audience can have a profound effect on the engagement an audience feels when witnessing a production. The feeling of isolation in an empty auditorium when facing a live and physically present performer hinders the process of understanding and interpretation that occurs when an audience member reads the signs of the piece. Isolation within the physical world is one that inspires feelings of vulnerability which in turn overcomes the immersion intended for a theatre piece. Conversely isolation of the physical self when taking part in an online activity inspires feelings of immersion. When participating in online events, having physical company distracts the participant from the online environment meaning their attention is split between their partner in the physical world and their activity and persona in the virtual world. Therefore, being alone while participating in the virtual realm increases immersion for the audience member involved.

When we come to look at the performances that occur within the virtual world we can see that many of the techniques used to engage audiences in the physical world will no longer be effective. As our audience analysis model shifts from the Simple Audience to the Diffused Audience the distinct differences between the two models effect how an audience member reacts and interacts with the performance they are watching. Whereas the Simple Audience model of theatre audiences

in the physical world places each member in proximity with each other and the performance itself, the very nature of the virtual online world means each user and performer is separated from each other. It is this separation that differentiates the audience types enough to place them in separate categories. What places virtual audiences into the Diffused Audience model, as opposed to the Mass Audience of televised medial entertainment, is the back and forth of the flow of information. The Mass Audience is defined as an audience spread across a large geographical area receiving a one-way flow of information without a channel through which they can send a response to the performers in an immediate way (Ambercrombie, N. & Longhurst, B., 1998, p.63). Any response from a Mass Audience member would come later through a different medium such as internet forums or published review. While there are some programs that allows for live interaction the majority of communication occurs afterwards and even the live communication is mediated and becomes part of the Mass Audience's viewing experience. The Diffused Audience, especially one using Second Life, has the opportunity to offer an immediate and direct response to the performers using the same channel through which they experienced the performance. For these reasons we can classify audiences within virtual spaces, specifically Second Life, to be a part of the Diffused Audience model and therefore subject to the unique issues and opportunities inherent within performances that play to this model.

One of the principle distinctions between theatre in the physical world and virtual theatre is the use of digital representations of its performers and audience members. The fundamental interface of the program enforces the barrier between each performer and audience member as there no biologically present humans present either directly in front of us, as we would expect at most theatrical shows, or on the screen for us to watch as is common with most televisual entertainment. As I have discussed previously it is this interface that allows for the anonymity that Second Life employs to allow its residents to express themselves. As such we cannot view this virtual necessity as a obstacle preventing the connection between performer and audience that is usually afforded by theatrical and televisual media. This unique separation of audience and performer becomes a feature of virtual theatre manifesting in the ways that the creative companies overcome the distance between the users.

Something that must be considered when looking at performance in virtual theatre is the fact that each user, whether involved in a designated performance or not, is in some respect taking on a role. If we define performing a role as “a kind of activity in which the person performing accentuates his or her behaviour under the scrutiny of others. That accentuation is deliberate even if unconscious” (Ambercrombie, N. & Longhurst, B. 1998, p.40) then we can confidently define the

use of the virtual avatar by most of the residents as a performance of a role. This aspect of virtual life forms part of the “fundamental level [of] the diffused audience experience” characterised as it is “by the virtual invisibility of performance” (p.72). This causes a distinctly virtual issue in terms of defining the performance space and separating it from the everyday goings on of the virtual world.

Conversely it could be said that the virtual world and the theatre medium are well matched. Theatre, as with Second Life, is a “prominent source of role, because it is predicated on the fact that actors take on a mass, persona, part or character - all terms synonymous with role - in order to enter into the imaginative reality of others” (Landy, R. J. 1993, p.14). This could also be said of the residents of Second Life who, consciously or not, take on a persona while piloting their avatars around the virtual world. The very interface of this virtual world necessitates the assumption of a role. The use of editable avatars affords an anonymity that manifests in the creation and assumption of a user-defined role.

At this point in the development of virtual reality technology, avatars do not yet have the capacity to accurately mimic human facial expression. As a result this means that one of the fundamental areas of performance communication, especially that centred on emotional response, is unavailable to the virtual performer. There is, however, a secondary element to physical expression that is still available to performance avatars. Erving Goffman in his book *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, determines that “the expressiveness of the individual (and therefore his capacity to give impressions) appears to involve two radically different kinds of sign activity: the expression that he GIVES, and the expression that he GIVES OFF” (1969, p.14). Avatars, therefore, still have the capacity to communicate effectively to others although the way in which they do this uses only one of the above sign systems. Unable to *give* an expression, avatars may still *give off* an impression which they can communicate through proximity to others, gesture, movement across the space and other aspects of theatre communication that can implicitly demonstrate meaning to an audience member. As such it seems that virtual performance must take into account this specific type of demonstrative performance that relies less on humanising facial expression and more on the sign systems of body communication.

Despite the limitations of the technology in being able to honour the traditionally fundamental theatrical assumption of face-to-face communication, there arises another interpretation of this type of interaction that defines live performance for the virtual world. There are those within the digital sphere that believe the virtual world has a creative advantage over the physical, especially in terms of performance. The virtual image “being alterable, contains the ability to oscillate realities within the technology and, thereby, retains an advantage over the temporal/

spatially bound live subject,” (Causey, M. 2006, p. 45) Although the initial definitions of theatre originate in the physical world, the virtual world can in some respects accommodate certain physical aspects such as creating set and costume for use on purpose built stages. The tools available in Second Life means the ease with which these objects can be built and the extent to which an imaginative set design can be realised without compromise is seen by some to be an improvement on the intentions and realisations of theatre bound to the rules of the physical world. Users of Second Life have the ability to create an almost infinite range of visual representations of locations and settings. These settings can vary massively taking inspiration from fiction and physically impossible imaginings as well as users replicating the physical world with the virtual. These creations happen with relative ease and, compared to constructions in the physical world, cost less in terms of money, time and physical exertion. As a result the performance spaces the audience members enter have been custom made for that show and as such the aesthetic of the piece can be more fully completed than if it were performed in the physical world. This means that performances within the virtual world can almost take place in the environment they were conceived to represent. This in turn helps to compensate for the lack of “power of the local encounter”, the lack of connection obtained by physical proximity, by allowing the audience to accept the world that encompasses the performance through the completeness of the setting increasing the feeling of immersion in the theatrical world (Causey, M. 2006 p.57).

As we can see, there are a number of considerations to be examined when a comparison of theatre in the physical world and virtual world takes place. There is the potential to look at the inability of the virtual world to provide that ready connection that occurs between a physical performer and their audience as a deficiency of the interface. There are a number of strategies and alternative options practitioners in the virtual world can employ to overcome this gap. These strategies and alternatives serve to define the genre of virtual performance and help to distinguish it from performance in the physical world. The way in which performances in Second Life engage with their differences with real world performance serve to differentiate them from the traditional definition of theatre and as such helps to define itself as a genre of performance in its own right and, in turn, worthy of in-depth exploration. Below I will outline some contemporary examples of live performances within Second Life and the techniques they employ that increase the level of interaction within the performance and, in turn, increases the sense of 'liveness' that so engages audiences.

Traditionally, the idea of 'liveness' comes from the physical proximity between performer and audience member, something that is exclusively an attribute of theatre and other live

performance events. In recent years, Philip Auslander has suggested that the idea of liveness is a relatively new one, having surfaced as a result of mediatized entertainment (p.54). Without the 'other' of the pre-recorded material there would be no call or need for a term to define 'liveness'. It is therefore problematic to try and combine the idea of 'liveness' that is brought about by physical proximity and that of a mediatized environment. Auslander argues that television's claim as theatre's successor came from the fact that it too had the quality of immediacy and intimacy that theatre was lauded for (p.32). There are, however, a number of different ways in which theatre practitioners in Second Life have accounted for this idiosyncrasy of online entertainment in an attempt to achieve the same feeling of immersion created by the feeling of 'liveness'. In this case it is necessary to redefine what is meant by 'liveness', or at least how 'liveness' is achieved. Despite the separation inherent in the use of virtual media it is possible to acquire a sense of 'liveness' through the real-time communication between residents.

It has become apparent that it is the online interface that stands in the way of live performances in Second Life from achieving the level of immersion and engagement as their real counterparts in the physical world. There is, however, reason to believe that the same interface, the interface that makes Second Life distinctly recognisable, accounts for many of the unique characteristics that ensure Second Life performances achieve greater creative fidelity to the original conceit than physical world performances in certain respects. From my surveys of Second Life performance participants there seems to be the general sense that performances in Second Life are more interactive than those in 'Real Life'. Approximately 60% of respondents to my survey commented that performances in Second Life allow and even encourage more audience involvement in some respect than 'real life' performance. Mostly this takes the form of responding to the events on stage and as a result of the text chat function inherent in Second Life the audiences' responses do not interrupt the performance and can even be ignored if so desired (see Appendix A, respondent BW, pp.71-73). This ability to silently communicate combines with the already established sense of freedom from the avatar-based interface resulting in the residents feeling more like they are able and should offer their opinions and responses to the piece. It is the freedom to respond truthfully that was cited by the respondents who agreed that Second Life encouraged live audience-to-performance response (see Appendix A, pp. 67-106). Here we can see how Second Life is using its assets to account for the lack of engagement that comes from performances in a medium that helped to establish the Diffused Audience model. A disparate audience formed by the blossoming of online entertainment, the inherent idiosyncrasies in the user interface have been used to encourage audience immersion despite the differences the virtual holds to the physical. By

encouraging real-time communication Second Life has discovered an alternative path around the issue of the inherent disconnection between the virtual audience and performer.

As the above example discusses how Second Life has encouraged direct interaction from audience member to others there are also examples of how the virtual realm has engaged with the task of engaging the audience members with the piece itself. As a result of the distinct technologies Second Life employs, there is less reliance placed on the subconscious communicative power of the performer themselves, especially their expression and use of incidental human characteristics. To cope with this stunted avenue of communication, practitioners in Second Life have had to employ other means of being able to communicate to the audience. The respondent labelled AH in my research described the performances in Second Life as being “more semantically rich” than its real life counterparts (see Appendix A, pp. 67-106). This highlights the use and perhaps even reliance on sign systems and symbols in the creation of meaning in virtual theatre. Throughout my survey there is the common consensus that Second Life is a realm where the most memorable and impressive of artistic expression is centred on the impossibility of what is seen in world (see Appendix A, pp. 67-106). It is the visual element, set and costume for example, that hold the meaning used to communicate subconsciously to the audience. These semiotically charged sets, costumes, animations etc. are the objects within virtual theatre that evoke the atmosphere that stays with the audience members once the piece is over. Just over 50% of my respondents expressly stated that it was the overall atmosphere and impression of the piece that made their experience memorable and engaging (see Appendix A, pp. 67-106). It is here we can see that Second Life has used its distinctive ability to easily create intricate and potentially physics defying objects to its advantage in ensuring the audience are engaged with the work being shown. While this is also possible in real life the extent to which the work load is eased by using a virtual space means these types of spectacular builds are more readily come by in Second Life.

As performance practitioners in Second Life expand their working practice there have arisen examples of how companies in the virtual realm have dealt with the issue of audience engagement in their chosen medium. In 2008 Second Life theatre company Act UP! staged the first full length virtual adaptation of a William Shakespeare text; *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Act UP! 2008). This particular version was a representation of the piece set in the time period in which it was written. There was no contextual or scenographic update in an attempt to make it relevant nor was there any experimentation in the way the performers portrayed the story; the text was performed much as an audience member might expect were they to see it in a conventional physical world setting (Dansereau,D.F. & Evans,S.H., 2008). The formality of the traditional performer-audience

denotation the company had decided to employ meant the issue of audience engagement arose in its conception. To deal with this, Act UP! utilised two aspects of Second Life to its advantage and ensured that the audience members were engaged with the piece if not through the presence of the performers then by other means. The company employed Second Life resident and performer Rekka Berchot to head its creation of costume and set. She was charged with creating the fantastical forest that could possibly house fairy royalty and other mythical creatures. Because of the relative ease of building that Second Life offers over the physical world, Berchot were able to create a full scale and intricately detailed forest populated with large sprawling purple leafed trees and floating fireflies that fully encompassed the playing space (Dansereau, D. F. & Evans, S. H., 2008). The creation of a performance space that surrounds the audience and performers in this manner means that the division between the two groups is blurred. With a set that shows no boundary between the theatrically invented world and the other the division between the performers' world and the audience's space is negated. The audience are invited to inhabit this world of fairies and magic as if it were their own adding to the breakdown of the barrier that stands between the audience and the relevant belief in the theatrical world.

Similar to Arthole's 'Bunnyken' outfits, once Act UP!'s audience arrived at the performance space they were handed an original costume to wear for the show. The costumes consisted of flora-based clothing items complete with wings similar to the ones worn by the cast (Tizzy, B. 2008). The audience were then invited to sit wherever they preferred, within reason. It must be noted that the set design included a river which served as a subtle denotation of the edge of the stage, although I believe this was more to show the playing direction than to serve as an audience barrier as the audience were given relative freedom in their choice of seat (Tizzy, B. 2008). Indeed, in one of the show recordings available online audience members are visible sitting amongst the branches of the trees above the performers wearing the fairy costume provided (Dansereau, D. F. & Evans, S. H., 2008). These costumes were given freely to audience members and were optional to wear at the choice of the individual viewer. The impact of this choice to include the audience in this manner meant that not only were the audience members allowed to feel a part of the aesthetic and therefore a part of the theatrical world, they were also free to find their own space within the world where they felt most comfortable encouraging an individualistic experience and heightened engagement with the piece. One of the respondents to my survey even stated that when they watch a piece of Second Life theatre they "prefer to be on my own and watch it from any camera perspective" (see Appendix A, respondent QS, pp. 83-85). Another of my respondents said that they "tend to get more drawn in because I am sitting alone watching it" (see Appendix A, respondent PO, pp. 80-82). Act

UP!'s choice to give the audience relative freedom around the performance space reflects the two opinions of PO and QS by allowing the avatars of audience members to reflect their positional isolation in the physical world and, if they so desire, to have a purely personal experience without being forced to join with the virtual audience group. Here we can see how the company has identified the barrier between performer and audience that the technology presents and how it has used that same technology to forge a connection between the disparate members of the performance to form an engaging and inclusive experience that uniquely and distinctively of the virtual world.

There are many differences between performance in the virtual world to that of performance in the physical world. Most of these differences can be traced to the medium the pieces take place in. This has meant that when companies in the online world decide to instigate a production the established ways in which performers and audience members communicate and interact with each other change. In some instances these methods can become problematic or disappear altogether. The concept of 'liveness' is here inspired by real-time interaction rather than the suggestion of physical proximity. As we can see from companies like Act UP!, there are emerging techniques that can be employed to compensate for these differences. In some instances these online only techniques increase the audience-performer relationship, especially in terms of involvement and evoking the theatrical world. The custom physics of Second Life mean set and costume constructions are easier to build and have the potential to be more outlandish than their physical world counterpart potentially encompassing the audience in the created theatrical world. With the Second Life performance community discovering new ways in which their medium can provide uniquely digital experiences for their audience members we start to see the beginnings of a set of medium specific aspects of performance that distinguish online theatre from that of theatre in the physical world and in doing so highlight the fact that it is a genre of theatre unto itself.

Spectacle

When we consider the Diffused Audience model of the modern day, we can see how one the fundamental aspects of this analytical construct deals with the formation and viewership of spectacle. The Diffused Audience model is defined by the ubiquity of performance to such an extent that the audience member becomes both viewer and performer simultaneously. If for some the aim of contemporary life is to see and be seen (Lasch,C. 1979), then this had led to an identifiable increase of what Christopher Lasch calls 'Narcissism' in the modern lifestyle (1979). If we are to consider the transformation of the audience into a diffused model we must also consider the transformation happening to the object or event being witnessed. At the other end of the audience/event spectrum is the idea of Spectacle. As the development of Narcissism came with the increase in media that contains instantaneous feedback loops, so the concept of Spectacle became ever pervasive in a world where visuals, aesthetics and experiences have become important commodities.

With the general spread of interconnected communication networks, modern culture is witnessing the connection of people like never before seen. A resulting aspect of these connections is the relative ease with which people can share images and form relationships through these images (Debord,G. 1967, p.12). We need only look at the rise of Facebook and its visually-based communication system to see examples of this taking place in our society today. Internet users communicate through images and as a result these images take on new meanings beyond their content. These meanings can be subjective and come from personal preference or they can come from societal and cultural memes to become more than their visual content. Even text-based communication is included in this definition of 'image', we need only look at the popular use of 'smilies' and 'emoticons' to understand this. The use of grammatical symbols to form facial expressions (for example, :-) is a smiling face while :-(is a crying face) shows how a cultural meaning can be extrapolated from symbols created for another purpose. Sociologist John Urry notes how this has become immensely prominent in the tourist experience. One example he states is the transformation of the Yorkshire Dales into 'Brontë Country' almost as if a photograph of the rolling hills contains more than its physical shape, it somehow contains the spirit of the three sisters and their literary creations (Urry,J. 1990, pp.180-181). It is this concept that has heralded the transformation from image to spectacle in the everyday lives of the public.

As the idea of being able to capture a sense of place with images became commonplace there also arose the sense of 'attending' to the world (Urry. J, 1990, p.182). Again this sense was

more prominent in tourism, at least to begin with. As people travelled they expected to “treat the world as a series of spectacles” (Ambercrombie, N. & Longhurst, B. 1998, p.80) and as such sunsets, mountains, native dwellings and other features of the civilised and natural world became aspects and events to pay attention to (Chaney,D. 1993). Because of the increase in communicative digital technologies, the ubiquity of images and ability to share them has led to the world becoming itself a type of performance in which “the objects, events and people which constitute the world are made to perform for those watching or gazing” (Ambercrombie, N. & Longhurst, B. 1998, p.78). As a result of this the ‘spectacular gaze’ is no longer restricted to the predefined events and instances of performance but are a “more pervasive feature of everyday life” (Ambercrombie, N. & Longhurst, B. 1998, p.81) It is the wide spread nature of the spectacular gaze that completes the audience/event spectrum within the Diffused Audience model and offers a counterpoint to the narcissistic thread that runs through both the model and modern culture.

Guy Debord in his book *The Society of Spectacle*, discusses how the concept of spectacle has permeated its way into every aspect of modern life. His main ideas centre around the propagation of capitalism as the main economic structure of modern cultures. It is interesting to note that within this discussion he cites technology as one of the key factors in the longevity of the current economic construct; “the reigning economic structure is founded on isolation, at the same time it is a circular process designed to produce isolation. Isolation underpins technology, and technology isolates in its turn” (p.22). We can see the isolating factor Debord talks about within the Diffused Audience model in its use of digital technology to reach audience members in disparate and varied geographical locations; the audience no longer needs to be within the same physical space and as such the audience member’s experience differs (McQuail,D. 1997, p.4). Debord claims that the “origin of the spectacle lies in the world’s loss of unity” (p.22) but the lasting existence of spectacle comes from its ability to re-unify. In a society where the digital technologies of the time have served to separate audiences, the transformation of images into ‘spectacles’ has not only come as a result of this separation but serves to unify; “it is that sector where all attention, all consciousness, converges” (p.12). This results in the formation of communities, however temporary, around these singular instances of spectacle and it is for this reason of transcendent convergence that spectacle has become an important part of modern society.

One of the more overt examples of spectacle we can see in the modern world is the rise of celebrity culture and its ensuing fanatic following. Celebrity relies on media representation to convey a particular image or persona which in turn attracts audience members which use a particular celebrity as the central locus of their distinct grouping. Celebrity is a “spectacular

representation of living human beings” (Debord, G, 1967, p.38) and as such the people who reach ‘stardom’ transcend the everyday reality of fans and other viewers to become more than who they are, similarly to the ‘Brontë Country’ example I cited earlier. This whole process signals a transformation of the image into an idea that is bigger than what is immediately visible. By seeking out and buying these images the capability to possess these ideas is available to anyone and everyone and as such the images, or spectacles as they are now, become commodities (Debord, G, 1967, p. 43), traded and displayed between the networks of people that make up the Diffused Audience model.

Above we can see the various ideas and contributing factors to the reason why ‘Spectacle’ has become such a pervasive part of modern everyday life. Spectacle has, of course, had a place in parts of human existence for a lot longer than Debord implies but the fact that this idea of spectacular imagery has found its way into almost every aspect of modern life is one that is distinctly contemporary and mirrors the appearance of the Diffused Audience model.

As a virtual digital world Second Life need not obey the physical laws of the ‘real’ world. Gravity along with other forces that govern our world are no longer relevant in the virtual reality of Second Life. Other considerations are also no longer a worry for residents wanting to create original content. Building tools are available to all residents from the moment they sign up and materials appear within world at the click of a button. The building interface operates through decimalised numbers and as such artworks, architecture and even avatar accessories can be created through mathematical planning alongside artistic experimentation and each method can be accurately implemented to 0.001 of a centimeter. The ease with which residents can use the building tools available to them means that a large amount of original content populates the various regions of Second Life and a large proportion of that content could not be created in the ‘real’ world, not only due to cost and expertise but also because it would not be physical possible for these items to exist. Coupling this with the 20 million individual imaginations currently signed up to Second Life (Linden Research Inc. 2011a), it is not uncommon for residents within the digital world to witness or surround themselves with impossible things. This feature of Second Life is one that attracts users to the digital world, nearly half of my survey respondents cited ‘creativity’ and being able to ‘program reality’ as one of the reasons they first signed up to the program (see Appendix A, pp. 67-106).

The idea of ‘spectacle’ is one that is easily applied to the online world of Second Life. The virtuality of the digital space means that the rules of the physical world can be disregarded and the landscape can be shaped at-will to whatever shape the resident so desires. This ability of users to

edit their surroundings and thereby imbue their landscape with a meaning centered on their own visual tastes demonstrates how integral the idea of 'spectacle' is to the virtual realm, in particular Second Life. Indeed, one of the founding principles behind the creation of Second Life was the idea of it being a completely "user created environment" (Linden Research Inc., 2011a). The freely malleable world, same as digitally alterable images, "contains the ability to oscillate realities with the technological" (Causey, M. 2006, p.45). This world, however, can use its adaptability to reflect the changing ideals of the prevailing culture and its owner's desires. As such the topographical world of Second Life is constantly shifting to not only be visually impressive but to also alter the ideas associated with the resulting image created. This is, of course, not restricted to only the landscape; the aesthetic of the avatars themselves are also affected in the same way as are the various buildings and objects that have created by residents. As such great areas of Second Life have become specially dedicated to one aesthetic and, therefore, one set of aesthetic ideals.

There are a number of various examples of this throughout the Second Life world. The ability of Second Life to cater to the role-playing aspects of residential life is essentially built into the interface of the program with users encouraged to live another life with no overt direction from the program itself. Without any objectives or 'end-game' scenarios the residents are encouraged to create and explore not only the world but also themselves. As such role-playing has become a large aspect of Second Life and a number of islands and regions have established themselves for this very purpose. An example of these areas that are currently running in Second Life is 'Neo Tokyo'. Neo Tokyo is an island sized simulator (often shortened to 'sim') that is dedicated to a particular aesthetic and encourages residents to populate the sim for the purpose of playing along with the aesthetic and fulfilling the image by populating the landscape. The description of Neo Tokyo on the official Second Life map says "Neo Tokyo is a post-apocalyptic fantasy role-playing sim set in a dystopian city that has become a haven for the remaining survivors in a fallen world filled with supernatural elements" (Linden Research Inc. 2011b). The general aesthetic of the island is that of neon lights, ancient oriental tradition combined with near future metal structures and scientific laboratories containing unknown horrors and abominations. As this sim is a dedicated role-playing environment residents are required to follow particular rules in creating characters and conducting themselves around the dystopic region, in fact there is an entire website dedicated to the upkeep and enforcement of the prevalent aesthetic (n/a 2011a). This demonstrates the importance placed upon the combination of images to create the idea of place, time and ideal. It also demonstrates how the concept of spectacle has found its place in the virtual realm.

The transformation of image into 'spectacle' takes place when the image becomes or denotes more than is contained within its visual content (Debord, G. 1967). Virtual life, such as that demonstrated in Second Life, deals primarily with images and the way people and their virtual ambassadors interact with those images. By encouraging residents to create their own images Second Life opens up the world to become a hive of spectacle. With users creating their world with their own images the program becomes a realm that encourages users to own visual constructs and even trade in them. The Second Life Market Place deals exclusively with the in-world digital creations of residents thereby giving the purely visual creation a monetary value along with the connotations that it represents. The creation of a digital table, for example, may be built from 5 digital oblongs, but having been purposefully arranged it projects the idea of a table, and once this table enters the Market Place it gains an in-world monetary value thereby allowing the users to own the idea of the table. Indeed, the same could be said for the physical world, but the builds and objects that are created by the residents in-world do not hold any physical weight and as such they are purely reliant on their visuals to highlight their presence in the virtual world reinforcing the idea of image as spectacle. In a realm of visuals, certain ideas have to connect with the images for the online experience to become what Second Life has become; a digital space where users really invest in their time into creation and connection. Each digital creation is imbued with the cultural ideas of the creator and with this the images that make up the world of Second Life become 'spectacle'.

Spectacle has always had a place in theatrical practice. Within the pieces themselves, images abound that have become more than the sum of their parts. Often audiences are asked to suspend their disbelief and employ their imagination in completing the images presented to them and in doing so audiences bring with them cultural ideals and opinions that inform how these images are realised and the significance they entail. On a larger scale, theatre in the physical world can present its audience with a collection of spectacular images to create an atmosphere, a sense of place that is the result of more than its components. Theatre in Second Life also uses this aspect of its physical world counterpart. Because of the nature of the digital realm the act of building and acquiring of set pieces and objects to create these images forgoes many of the considerations theatre practitioners in the physical world have to keep in mind. With the ease of building and creating that is an integral part of the Second Life interface the appearance and use of spectacle becomes more prevalent as the virtual world seems more readily accommodating of this concept.

Spectacle is a fundamental aspect of Second Life and as such forms a great portion of artistic endeavour within the digital realm. There are examples of many types of spectacle within the arts community within the virtual world ranging from the spectacular lifestyle to the spectacular

event and the spectacular image. Within this next section I will be discussing three examples of these instances of 'spectacle'. Lauren Weyland, a male resident whose avatar is a female comedian, demonstrates the idea of living as a 'spectacle' that I discussed earlier in this chapter. I will also discuss the Second Life flying dance group DanCoyote ZeroG SkyDancers who utilise the innate Second Life ability of avatars to fly. This produces beautiful dance routines using specialised light manipulation to create an experience that cannot be found anywhere else, especially outside the virtual world. Lastly I will look at the recent exhibition by Rebeca Bashly which took place on Linden Endowment for the Arts [LEA] sim number 6 (<http://maps.secondlife.com/secondlife/LEA6/96/162/625>) and depicted all the levels of Hell as described by Dante Alighieri in his *Inferno*. As an art piece, Bashly created an all encompassing three dimensional representation of the nine levels of hell complete with regularly appearing statues of Virgil who guides the audience member from level to level using the built in Second Life function of teleportation. These examples portray the use of spectacle in the virtual world and how its prevalence in Second Life has meant this concept has formed into a fundamental part of the art produced in the digital realm.

The first of my Second Life examples concerns itself with the spectacular lifestyle I discussed earlier in this chapter. Second Life's interface holds within it the fundamental idea of role-playing. By using the concept of a virtual ambassador the users are allowed to explore their identity, whether this is to the extent of taking on another character or merely exaggerating certain innate personal traits is entirely dependent on the individual user, but there is, however, with all accounts a sense of displaying a particular controlled image of either the self or a chosen persona. One resident who has taken this idea of spectacle and built an act upon the subversion of audience expectation is the comedienne Lauren Weyland. Weyland, the male resident as a female avatar, has dedicated her entire Second Life experience to playing this persona and has generated a widely acclaimed comedy act because of it (Shuftan, B. 2011). By dedicating her entire Second Life experience to the creation and upkeep of her image places her within the boundaries of the definition of a spectacular lifestyle. Despite being a middle aged brown-haired man in 'real life', all promotional material and interviews are conducted using the pronoun 'she' (Shuftan, B. 2011). Even interviews conducted via video link which reveal the real man behind the "28 year old blond comedienne" use the pronoun 'she' thereby maintaining the image of Lauren Weyland despite visual evidence of the image being false (Etopia News Now, 2010).

It could be said that Lauren Weyland's comedy act relies on the fact that her persona is maintained while the use of the overtly masculine voice repeatedly flouts this image. A lot of her comedic material comes from the fact that she is talking about female issues and female experiences

in an obviously male voice (Etopia News Now, 2010). Within Second Life, however, the voice has become a part of who Lauren Weyland is and, therefore, has become a part of her image and indeed is a major factor in her audience appeal (Shuftan, B. 2011). In this respect we can see a very specifically Second Life creation of the spectacular. While she has given her digital life to this role she has created for herself, only in a digital realm like Second Life could a persona such as this be invented and implemented so successfully. Trans-gender performance has been a staple of entertainment for a lot longer than Second Life has been around. Comedians and performers throughout history have taken part in cross-dressing routines, including contemporary personalities such as Dame Edna Everage and Lily Savage. What makes trans-gender performance in Second Life so convincing is the anonymity afforded to the human behind the avatar. If it weren't for the fact that the resident behind Lauren Weyland had participated in web-chat interviews it could be assumed that Lauren was voiced by a woman with voice altering software. Everything feminine about Lauren is purely digital and as such can be accurately altered to look female without having to take into account the residents own physicality.

The idea of the spectacular image is the most common and well-known aspect of the concept of 'spectacle'. When an image becomes more than it visually represents, when it becomes something to be admired and traded along with all its connotations, it is at that point an image transcends its normal definition and becomes spectacular. With the ease of image creation that Second Life offers it is not surprising that spectacular images are abound within this digital realm. Along with the unique physics of the virtual world there has arisen a company whose creation was an attempt in utilising these elements to create a "completely new art form in Second Life" (n/a 2011b). Created in 2006 by DanCoyote Antonelli, the ZeroG SkyDancers combine music, avatar movement and animated visuals to create uniquely Second Life art pieces. Choreographed dance routines combine with avatar attachments that generate visuals that add to and enhance the spectacular nature of the SkyDancers' routines to the extent that they have "been universally acclaimed by audiences throughout Second Life" (n/a 2011b).

The experience of witnessing one of ZeroG SkyDancers' performances in Second Life constitutes the dynamic visuals and the choreographed dances occurring all around the audience members. Avatars regularly take flight to perform intricate movements through all levels of the performance space and completely immerse its audience in the movement and visuals being created before their (virtual) eyes. While these images themselves are made up of composed colours and shapes the connotations of its creation, the flying avatars, the musical accompaniment and the customised attachments that the visuals often originate from, and the response elicited from the

audience members means that these images are valued and carry with them associations that constitute more than the appearance of the image itself. The work of ZeroG SkyDancers and its capacity to induce a sense of wonder in its audience form the basis of its transformation into spectacle. Indeed DanCoyote, the founder of the group, has written on his own website about the importance of the artist to “remind us of our capacity for wonder” (DanCoyote, 2011). By creating wondrous images with his gravity defying dance group, DanCoyote has created a company that deals with the idea of spectacle in a way that is very much of the digital realm.

Rebeca Bashly’s October 2011 exhibition featured a large scale representation of Dante’s *Inferno* which contained oversized statues of Virgil alongside depictions of the tormented souls populating the encompassing landscapes that stretched across the sim. All nine levels were fully realised as avatar sized settings which were completely explorable and attempted to evoke the atmosphere of Dante’s conception of hell. To fit the massive build in the limited space on the arts dedicated LEA6 sim, Bashly built the nine level world using Second Life’s ability to ignore gravity. She was able to replicate the journey of Dante by arranging the various levels vertically ensuring the avatars were continuously traveling downwards as if descending into the belly of the inferno. Upon arriving at the sim, residents are greeted by a statue of Virgil who serves as an information point letting the visitors know how to continue their exploration. The resident then enters the grey foreboding cave, complete with the famous “abandon all hope” quote above the entrance, to find Charon and his boat ready on the bank of the river Styx and another statue of Virgil, hand outstretched. Upon ‘touching’ Virgil’s hand (the resident must click the statue), the avatar is instantly transported to the next level of hell. Within each subsequent level, statues of Virgil stand ready to take the resident further down the levels of hell, although the location of these statues are hidden and as such the resident are forced to explore the levels of the world to find the next statue and therefore the next stage of the exhibition.

The statues that populate the various levels of the exhibition are much larger than regular avatar size lending a sense of intimidation to the already imposing world. The choice of textures and colour palettes, a mix of blood red and stone grey, give the levels a sense of disconnected life; an afterlife wherein the blood of the deceased is drained from the inhabiting spirits and is now rushing through hell carrying pain and punishment. The red elements of the exhibition are the only animated part of the exhibition giving rise to the feeling of a primal destructive force. These images form not only the components but also the surrounding landscape ensuring the avatars are completely enveloped in this representation of hell. All of the elements culminate in an exhibition that not only demonstrates an interpretation of a classical piece of literature but also signifies an

experience that is unlike anything that could be built outside of Second Life. The images created not only represent their visual image but within them contain the literary heritage of the stimulus text. Combining this with the truly “amazing” build that “soars high above most standards of art inworld” we can see that Bashly’s exhibition has become something of a spectacle (Amat, N. 2011). Not only does it represent itself it also denotes something that could not have been achieved in the physical world. As such it becomes more than just an arts piece, it becomes a symbol of what can be achieved in Second Life, and therefore become a spectacle of virtual artistic achievement within the platform (Amat, N. 2011).

Second Life is very much a place of spectacle and spectacular images. Not least in a comparison to the real world, that which can be found in the digital realm comes straight from the imagination of its creators without the necessary consideration for the laws that govern the physical world. Although Second Life is restricted by the confines of its own computer coding and scripted rules it has a much broader scope than real life physics. As such the capacity for wondrous and captivating images are increased and indeed have become almost commonplace in the virtual world. The examples above illustrate the various levels of the spectacular image and how then have been employed in the online arts community. The images created within the digital world transcend their basic meaning when their audience experience something that assigns more to the images than their apparent appearance. In the case of the digital world we can see that this happens on a regular basis with residents trading in images and concepts and regularly exhibiting their virtual inventions. Second Life is a pool of unique image creation and as such the idea of ‘spectacle’ is one that permeates this world at a fundamental level.

Conclusion

Throughout this thesis I have attempted to make the case for online digital theatre practice as something worth its own definition within the performance platform that should be explored further on its own merits. In discussing a choice selection of what I believe to be the most fundamental aspects of online culture and, therefore, its artwork, I have identified four primary reasons as to why theatre practice with digital platforms such as Second Life deserve to be analysed alongside their 'real life' contemporaries. By actively engaging with these core facets, digital artists are producing work that would not, or perhaps could not, exist nor carry the same significance or emotional weight had it been produced outside the virtual realm. Given the relative youth of the digital age, online theatre practice has the great potential to grow and develop as any young art form might, and with the growing support Linden Labs is giving its artistic community we can see the dedication users have to create unique forms of art that will shape our understanding of the digital culture that has permeated much of the developed world.

These aspects of identity, community, liveness and spectacle have formed the basis of my discussion and have in turn highlighted the particular characteristics within the digital community that has led me to place such emphasis on its culture and its burgeoning arts scene as an object of analysis and discussion. These aspects deal with the basic issues of any community; self-image, interaction with others and how the population see their world. By discussing these ideas I have attempted to explore and explain the culture of digital environments and their distinctiveness.

The idea of identity within the digital world has sparked a wide variety of debate in many forums of discussion. The ability of users to hide their 'true' identity while engaging in online activities has become a treacherous topic with many analysts discussing the negative impact of perceived 'escapism' and criminal dishonesty (Holahan,C. 2006) while users themselves claim to find it a liberating and fulfilling experience (Epstien,F. 2008). Identity in the virtual world is one that can be manufactured by its users and with the innate anonymity afforded its residents there is no real sense of accountability in the real world. Despite this ongoing debate about the nature of the self in a online environment that primarily uses avatars to facilitate user interaction, my own research has concluded that users tend to use virtual environments to explore themselves, or aspects of themselves, rather than indulge in a full-blown fantasy persona. The fantastical and somewhat exaggerated appearance of many resident avatars somewhat denies that conclusion yet the lack of real world constraints has opened the potential for users to express themselves in a way that was not possible until relatively recently. The apparent importance placed upon the appearance of avatars in-

world has formed the basis of many interesting discourses within the digital art world. As the primary unit the resident has sole control over, the avatar becomes a symbol of what and who that resident is and what they think of themselves. Clothing and the appearance of an avatar has become a part of digital expression. Arthole showed us an example of what happens when that stream of expression is taken away from users. With the piece 'Orientation' the arts collective used this unique type of identity to create something that spoke of self-representation and expression in the digital realm. This piece would not have had the same impact within the physical world and as such demonstrates the need for serious and protracted analysis of digital art works that can offer, within the context of their own culture, a point of view that is relevant to an audience that reaches past those that are firmly a part of environments such as Second Life.

The formation of community inside virtual worlds such as Second Life have offered users unprecedented interactivity with people from all around the globe. With the advent of the internet came the opportunity for long range instant communication between peoples which spurred on the formation of communities based on single ideas. Within an online 3D world like Second Life this manifested itself in the formation of communities that concentrated on certain aspects of identity, as exemplified by the myriad of role-playing sims established within the world, along with personal likes and interests. It is this area of Second Life that theatre companies have capitalised on in obtaining a fan-base that could potentially reach further than previously possible. It is this reason that has attracted companies practicing in the physical world. By creating a Second Life presence these companies are opening up their practice to a wider, more global audience and one that has the potential to instantly feedback their opinions and comments on such practice. As such the transfer of information and conceptual ideas has the potential to increase the speed at which companies can work with audience feedback originating from much further afield than could be previously accessed and taking seconds rather than potentially days if they were to rely on written audience testimony. The companies I focused on exploited the virtual nature of Second Life by also using it to open up not only their public artworks to a much wider audience internationally but also their creative process. Pilot Theatre uses Second Life to experiment with their set pieces, seeing them in a virtual situation before spending the funds necessary to create in the physical world. IOU Theatre, in conjunction with Goole's Junction theatre have created a space that not only opens up the theatrical world to a more computer literate demographic but has also formed a theatre hub for IOU's online practice which has the potential to house exhibitions and artworks long after the physical world's realisation of that piece has been dismantled and stored in its archive. The ability of Second Life to create unique and global communities has drawn established companies to the

virtual world and will continue to offer an online area where the potential to tap into an international community has never before been realised.

For those companies performing live theatre pieces with the virtual environment the concept of liveness that is so prominent in physical world performances had to be reconsidered. While at first it has been easy to term this an obstacle and a possible disadvantage of the online format, my chapter on the subject attempted to illustrate the reasons why this was not the case. A re-examining of what it means to be in front of a live performer or a live audience was necessary for a performance format whose major source of visual interaction relied on the computer graphic representation of humanoids. The redefining of such an established fact of 'real' world theatre performance lent credence to the fact that digital performance in the virtual realm deserves to be scrutinised for its own theatrical merit. The differences between the effectuation of the concept of liveness in the physical and virtual worlds stems from the interface the virtual world employs to bring its residents into the digital world. The use of virtual ambassadors, the customisable avatar, to represent the presence of actors and audience members alike served to diminish the differences between the performer and viewer and threw into ambiguity the unwritten rules of liveness established by the theatre practice in the physical world. As such new methods of engaging the audience needed to be created to account for the unique qualities of the virtual world. ActUP! demonstrated their attempt at this exploration of capturing their audience by actively including them in the performances aesthetic. Similarly to Arthole's use of costume ActUP! brought the audience closer to the piece. However, in contrast to Arthole's use of clothing, Act UP! did not overtly reference this aesthetic choice in the piece itself and thereby demonstrated one of the less invasive methods Second Life theatre companies can integrate their audiences in their performances. It is aspects of the digital world like this that demand a reexamination of theatre practice and, therefore, demand an examination of the aspects that make theatre practice in the virtual realms so unique. These examinations could pave the way for a new genre to be created specifically for the description of online theatre and what that entails. It is the digital worlds unique considerations and relationship to established theatrical form that will ultimately decide the establishment of digital theatre practice as a practice in its own right.

As a world that deals with images as its primary source for communication and interaction, Second Life is a space where the idea of 'Spectacle' that has flourished in modern western culture has found real ground to embed itself. The culture of Second Life is one that centres on the creation of content by its residents and the innate ability of the digital world to create impossible images is one that has initiated a wide spread of extravagant and outlandish clothing, objects and landscapes

within the virtual world. As a result of the combination of physics-defying objects and resident dependent creation, the concept of the spectacular image is one that finds a home amongst the interfaces and viewing platforms of Second Life. This idea is one that has been grasped by Second Life performance groups and features in some of the more outstanding artworks and theatrical experiences within the virtual world. In the chapter, I cited the ZeroG SkyDancers as a proponent of spectacle. This was not to say their pieces were without merit as one might assume when the label ‘spectacle’ is attributed to a performance, but rather their intricate flying choreography coupled with the trailing coloured light that followed each dancer let the audience present in the digital world experience something visually stunning that could not be possible in the physical world. The pure visual nature of the company’s performances lent itself to the exploration of the idea of ‘spectacle’ and the transformation of the image as it is viewed for the purpose of emotional resonance. Second Life has within its technology the ability to let practitioners experiment with images and visuals that have never been possible before the advent of digital technologies. This opens up art audiences to experience these images and visuals with the potential to encounter new emotional responses. With companies like the ZeroG SkyDancers continuing to explore the visually stunning it is possible to see why Second Life and its arts community is in need of serious consideration and analysis as it brings this new avenue of visual response to the arts community.

We can see that the artistic culture of Second Life is thriving and continuing to explore aspects of itself and the wider society that is relevant to its residents. The four aspects that form the focus of my thesis have become four defining factors in virtual art within Second Life and can be identifiable in each work that could be described as uniquely digital. It is my hope that further investigations and analysis are completed in regards to this subject matter. The digital world is becoming ever more prevalent and as it does so the artistic community that has been growing continuously, especially with the support of Linden Endowment for the Arts, will be given wider coverage to audiences that have an inherent knowledge of digital interfaces and online activities (Linden Research Inc., 2011d). As this happens themes will emerge and identifying the four aspects in the theatre pieces produced will help highlight the impact the medium has had on producing art pieces. From this a new genre of performance will emerge with virtual worlds at its centre. This thesis is an attempt to outline some of these themes and unique aspects and discuss the reasons for the occurrence of these themes. By considering the fundamental elements of the user interface I have outlined four basic elements of theatre practice within virtual worlds; personal identity, community, liveness and spectacle. It is my hope that this thesis will form a starting point for further discussion about the growing area of digital life that is virtual art works.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Questionnaire responses of Second Life Audiences

Respondant AH

Second Life and Theatre Response

Project Options

Second Life Audiences

[Create New Project](#)[Project Properties](#)

As part of my research for my Masters degree I am looking into who make up Second Life theatre audiences. Please be as honest as you can. All responses will be anonymous. By taking part in the survey you are agreeing to have your answers used and published in my thesis.

1. Gender

☒ Male ☐ Female

2. What is your favourite entertainment medium?

- ☐ Radio
☐ Television
☐ Theatre
☐ Films
☐ Books
☒ Internet
☐ Video Games
☐ Concerts

3. How long have you been using Second Life?

4. How often do you use Second Life?

5. What first attracted you to Second Life?

6. What is the most satisfying part of your user experience?

7. What is the least satisfying part of your user experience?

8. When referring to your avatar which term do you use?

- ☒ I
☐ We
☐ He/She
☐ It

9. Please describe your avatar as fully as you can including, where appropriate, character traits.

10. Did you have a specific ideal in mind when creating your avatar? Please expand upon your answer.

11. Please select the statement that you agree with most strongly.

- ☒ My avatar is me
☐ My avatar is a part I play
☐ My avatar is a tool that lets me play the game
☐ My avatar is a companion in my user experience

12. Would you describe yourself as an introvert or an extrovert?

- ☒ Introvert
☐ Extrovert

13. Does your Second Life experience differ from your real life in terms of behaviour and lifestyle? Please explain your answer

I am more outgoing and articulate and socially confident in SL. Also I can carry many more things at once. :)

14. How often do you watch theatre/performance pieces in real life?

Perhaps once a month?

15. How often do you watch theatre/performance pieces in Second Life?

Several times a week, depending what you count.

16. What drew you to watching performances in Second Life?

The convenience, the diversity of the experiences available, the interesting performers and quality of the audiences.

17. Do you prefer watching performances in second Life or real life? Please explain your answer.

Well, they both have their pluses and minuses. SL is much more convenient, RL is more full-sensory.

18. What has been the most memorable performance you have seen in Second Life and why?

Um, that's a tough question. Perhaps the Beautiful Freaks Burlesque Circus, for the creativity and fun of the acts.

19. How do Second Life performances compare to performances in real life, in your opinion?

More convenient, safer, more semantically rich, more opportunity for wild creativity; less full-sensory, less immediate and immersive.

20. In your opinion, should theatre in second Life be called theatre or given a new title? Please explain your answer.

"Theatre" is fine; I don't see any need for a new word, just as we don't have separate words for indoor and outdoor theatre, or live vs recorded theatre.

21. How responsive do you make your avatar? For example, if you laugh in real life would you make your avatar laugh also? 1 = never, 5 = always

- ☐ 1
☐ 2
☐ 3
☒ 4
☐ 5

22. How would you compare your Second Life audience experience to your real life audience experience? For example, are you more vocal?

More vocal, outgoing, more likely to start up conversations with fellow audience members. :)

Respondant BW

Second Life and Theatre Response

Project Options

Second Life Audiences

[Create New Project](#)
[Project Properties](#)

As part of my research for my Masters degree I am looking into who make up Second Life theatre audiences. Please be as honest as you can. All responses will be anonymous. By taking part in the survey you are agreeing to have your answers used and published in my thesis.

1. Gender

☐ Female

2. What is your favourite entertainment medium?

- ☐ Radio
☐ Television
☐ Theatre
☐ Films
☐ Books
☒ Internet
☐ Video Games
☐ Concerts

3. How long have you been using Second Life?

4. How often do you use Second Life?

5. What first attracted you to Second Life?

6. What is the most satisfying part of your user experience?

7. What is the least satisfying part of your user experience?

8. When referring to your avatar which term do you use?

- ☐ I
☐ We
☐ He/She
☒ It

9. Please describe your avatar as fully as you can including, where appropriate, character traits.

10. Did you have a specific ideal in mind when creating your avatar? Please expand upon your answer.

11. Please select the statement that you agree with most strongly.

- ☐ My avatar is me
☐ My avatar is a part I play
☒ My avatar is a tool that lets me play the game
☐ My avatar is a companion in my user experience

12. Would you describe yourself as an introvert or an extrovert?

- ☒ Introvert
☐ Extrovert

13. Does your Second Life experience differ from your real life in terms of behaviour and lifestyle? Please explain your answer

I am more extroverted and bold online than in real life. And my avatar has more stuff than me! I am poor in real life!

14. How often do you watch theatre/performance pieces in real life?

Not as often as I would like to. A few times a year, at most.

15. How often do you watch theatre/performance pieces in Second Life?

A few times a year, it is one of the reasons I log in.

16. What drew you to watching performances in Second Life?

Social gatherings of people I know online, and showing support for the performers whom are usually people I know.

17. Do you prefer watching performances in second Life or real life? Please explain your answer.

Real life. Second life is canned movements, and doesn't at all feel real. There is zero comparison to real life, where the unexpected can happen and I will always see something new. The same blingdolls in SL and everyone doing the same animations and dances gets really old really quickly.

18. What has been the most memorable performance you have seen in Second Life and why?

None of them stand out, nothing blew me away. There was a war between Calidon (sp?) and Darkmere a few years ago, and everyone put on a really cool big performance of that. I came to the after party and saw the aftermath of it. That was pretty cool, a ton of work and planning went into that event! Custom costumes, props, and scripts for everyone.

19. How do Second Life performances compare to performances in real life, in your opinion?

It didn't compare. But, knowing this one was put on by friends, who are not professionals and didn't make money off it, still makes it special.

20. In your opinion, should theatre in second Life be called theatre or given a new title? Please explain your answer.

Hmmm... well, theatre has never needed a big grand stage. If we can call our 5 year olds fumbling around and crying on a stage 'theatre', there is no reason we can't call what happens in SL theatre. Theatre can happen on street corners with curbside magicians and performers, or in grandma's house after thanksgiving dinner, or in a coliseum thousands of years old while being broadcast around the world. There really are no limiting factors to the definition of 'theatre', just like you can't define 'art'. Theatre is a performance with an

21. How responsive do you make your avatar? For example, if you laugh in real life would you make your avatar laugh also? 1 = never, 5 = always

- ☐ 1
☐ 2
☒ 3
☐ 4
☐ 5

22. How would you compare your Second Life audience experience to your real life audience experience? For example, are you more vocal?

Honestly, I usually play up my audience experience in SL to encourage the performer. I also carefully choose when to disclose how something made me feel based on who I am talking to. Because, frankly, sometimes I am laughing AT someone, and not with them. I don't use sounded animations at performances, that seems rude to me (it interrupts the performer). I just type in chat. In the same sense, I type in chat during performances a TON more than I would talk during a real life performance. People can choose to read chat or

Respondant FT

Second Life and Theatre Response

Project Options

Second Life Audiences

[Create New Project](#)[Project Properties](#)

As part of my research for my Masters degree I am looking into who make up Second Life theatre audiences. Please be as honest as you can. All responses will be anonymous. By taking part in the survey you are agreeing to have your answers used and published in my thesis.

1. Gender

Male

2. What is your favourite entertainment medium?

- ☐ Radio
☐ Television
☐ Theatre
☐ Films
☐ Books
☒ Internet
☐ Video Games
☐ Concerts

3. How long have you been using Second Life?

6 years.

4. How often do you use Second Life?

Once or twice a week.

5. What first attracted you to Second Life?

The ability to be creative within a game context.

6. What is the most satisfying part of your user experience?

The ability to meet and interact with people from all over the world.

7. What is the least satisfying part of your user experience?

The lack of spontaneity.

8. When referring to your avatar which term do you use?

- ☒ I
☐ We
☐ He/She
☐ It

9. Please describe your avatar as fully as you can including, where appropriate, character traits.

He's a tall brunette male. He wears his hair stylishly long, and wears a goatee. He dresses casually, for the most part -- jeans and boots, with shirts and jackets that give him a rockstar look.

10. Did you have a specific ideal in mind when creating your avatar? Please expand upon your answer.

He's me, but skinnier and more attractive.

11. Please select the statement that you agree with most strongly.

- ☒ My avatar is me
☐ My avatar is a part I play
☐ My avatar is a tool that lets me play the game
☐ My avatar is a companion in my user experience

12. Would you describe yourself as an introvert or an extrovert?

- ☐ Introvert
☒ Extrovert

13. Does your Second Life experience differ from your real life in terms of behaviour and lifestyle? Please explain your answer

My avatar is much more outgoing.

14. How often do you watch theatre/performance pieces in real life?

Once upon a time it was a regular occurrence. These days, rarely.

15. How often do you watch theatre/performance pieces in Second Life?

Rarely, because it seems that they rarely occur.

16. What drew you to watching performances in Second Life?

I am interested in everything that goes on in SL.

17. Do you prefer watching performances in second Life or real life? Please explain your answer.

Given the choice, I would prefer performances in RL, because those in SL are limited in scope.

18. What has been the most memorable performance you have seen in Second Life and why?

A production of Pink Floyd's "The Wall" which was staged about 4 years ago. It was SL theatre on a grand scale.

19. How do Second Life performances compare to performances in real life, in your opinion?

RL performances don't depend on someone scripting the actions.

20. In your opinion, should theatre in second Life be called theatre or given a new title? Please explain your answer.

It's theatre.

21. How responsive do you make your avatar? For example, if you laugh in real life would you make your avatar laugh also? 1 = never, 5 = always

- ☐ 1
☐ 2
☐ 3
☐ 4
☒ 5

22. How would you compare your Second Life audience experience to your real life audience experience? For example, are you more vocal?

Yes, I tend to comment more than I would in RL.

Respondant GN

Second Life and Theatre Response

Project Options

Second Life Audiences

[Create New Project](#)[Project Properties](#)

As part of my research for my Masters degree I am looking into who make up Second Life theatre audiences. Please be as honest as you can. All responses will be anonymous. By taking part in the survey you are agreeing to have your answers used and published in my thesis.

1. Gender

☒ Female

2. What is your favourite entertainment medium?

- ☐ Radio
☐ Television
☐ Theatre
☐ Films
☒ Books
☐ Internet
☐ Video Games
☐ Concerts

3. How long have you been using Second Life?

4. How often do you use Second Life?

5. What first attracted you to Second Life?

6. What is the most satisfying part of your user experience?

7. What is the least satisfying part of your user experience?

8. When referring to your avatar which term do you use?

- ☒ I
☐ We
☒ He/She
☐ It

9. Please describe your avatar as fully as you can including, where appropriate, character traits.

10. Did you have a specific ideal in mind when creating your avatar? Please expand upon your answer.

11. Please select the statement that you agree with most strongly.

- ☐ My avatar is me
☐ My avatar is a part I play
☐ My avatar is a tool that lets me play the game
☒ My avatar is a companion in my user experience

12. Would you describe yourself as an introvert or an extrovert?

- ☒ Introvert
☐ Extrovert

13. Does your Second Life experience differ from your real life in terms of behaviour and lifestyle? Please explain your answer

Not really, I think my avatar can afford to dress better than I can, and she can be more bold in her clothing choices because size and fit and shopping availability aren't as big an issue in SL as they are in real life. She is married, so in terms of lifestyle she isn't promiscuous, though she has lots of friends. She's been employed in SL as a reporter (which is what I have done for a living).

14. How often do you watch theatre/performance pieces in real life?

not often--once a year

15. How often do you watch theatre/performance pieces in Second Life?

I've spent years attending live music events in SL, especially in 2006-2008. Lately not much, but in the past at least

16. What drew you to watching performances in Second Life?

I was in SL before it was possible for live performance (live music), and when live music finally became possible I went every week to hear several musicians perform. I was invited to several Shakespeare performances and poetry readings and participated in a few poetry readings. I've also attended performances by real life celebrities, author visits (where the author attended in an avatar designed to look like a character from his book), and movie openings (where the director and actors were available).

17. Do you prefer watching performances in second Life or real life? Please explain your answer.

I don't have a preference. They're both different and enjoyable.

18. What has been the most memorable performance you have seen in Second Life and why?

I went to see Suzanne Vega in Second Life, and a friend of mine designed her avatar. It was memorable because it was nice to share the seating with friends and visit and type out questions and hear her perform because nobody had heard from her in years and suddenly here she was, virtually and actively engaging with us.

19. How do Second Life performances compare to performances in real life, in your opinion?

In Second Life you can do things you can't do in real life. The ghost really is a "ghost" in a play. However, because the software is slow and lag is an issue, it's not always a seamless performance. The music or voices can be off from what's going on on stage, or the whole sim can crash. In real life, you can feel the music if it's a concert, though maybe you can't see the performer (in SL you can just adjust your camera so you can see everything).

20. In your opinion, should theatre in second Life be called theatre or given a new title? Please explain your answer.

I think everyone in SL is theatrical--people dress outrageously and its encouraged, they act outrageously because inhibitions are low. A planned theatre performance in SL is one place where everything is scripted, so the only surprises are what happens when the sim crashes or a griefer shows up and showers everyone with a replicating script (which is a performance in itself). "Virtual theatre" would be a misnomer because it's all theatre. Can you call it "theatre"? Sure. Can you call a virtual performance "theatre", sure. I think they are

21. How responsive do you make your avatar? For example, if you laugh in real life would you make your avatar laugh also? 1 = never, 5 = always

- ☐ 1
☐ 2
☐ 3
☐ 4
☐ 5

22. How would you compare your Second Life audience experience to your real life audience experience? For example, are you more vocal?

It depends on the venue. Sometimes talking is encouraged, sometimes its not. I just respond based on the expectations and whether or not its considered rude to talk. Also, sometimes I have more fun looking at the audience. You can be sitting next to a robot and a rabbit or fuming because someone wore 5,000,000 prims and scripts and is running the sim into the ground. I take more photos in a SL performance, and I can often interact with the performer (before, after, or even during the performance), which is something you can't do

Respondant PO

Second Life and Theatre Response

Project Options

Second Life Audiences

[Create New Project](#)[Project Properties](#)

As part of my research for my Masters degree I am looking into who make up Second Life theatre audiences. Please be as honest as you can. All responses will be anonymous. By taking part in the survey you are agreeing to have your answers used and published in my thesis.

1. Gender

☒ Female

2. What is your favourite entertainment medium?

- ☐ Radio
☐ Television
☐ Theatre
☐ Films
☐ Books
☒ Internet
☐ Video Games
☐ Concerts

3. How long have you been using Second Life?

4. How often do you use Second Life?

5. What first attracted you to Second Life?

6. What is the most satisfying part of your user experience?

7. What is the least satisfying part of your user experience?

8. When referring to your avatar which term do you use?

- ☒ I
☐ We
☐ He/She
☐ It

9. Please describe your avatar as fully as you can including, where appropriate, character traits.

10. Did you have a specific ideal in mind when creating your avatar? Please expand upon your answer.

11. Please select the statement that you agree with most strongly.

- ☒ My avatar is me
☐ My avatar is a part I play
☐ My avatar is a tool that lets me play the game
☐ My avatar is a companion in my user experience

12. Would you describe yourself as an introvert or an extrovert?

- ☒ Introvert
☐ Extrovert

13. Does your Second Life experience differ from your real life in terms of behaviour and lifestyle? Please explain your answer

I can express parts of me in SL that due to RL considerations I cannot do RL with the openness I may prefer

14. How often do you watch theatre/performance pieces in real life?

1 a year or so

15. How often do you watch theatre/performance pieces in Second Life?

every couple of months

16. What drew you to watching performances in Second Life?

friends going or something caught my eye

17. Do you prefer watching performances in second Life or real life? Please explain your answer.

RL it is a bit more interactive

18. What has been the most memorable performance you have seen in Second Life and why?

there was something called something like Sky Dancers (I know so specific)
it was a group of dancers doing a choreographed dance in the sky very hard to explain but it was incredible
and at the time very cutting edge

19. How do Second Life performances compare to performances in real life, in your opinion?

by the nature of the medium I do not think they can compare to RL, however they allow me to see things that I would not be able to

20. In your opinion, should theatre in second Life be called theatre or given a new title? Please explain your answer.

no

21. How responsive do you make your avatar? For example, if you laugh in real life would you make your avatar laugh also? 1 = never, 5 = always

- ☐ 1
☐ 2
☐ 3
☐ 4
☐ 5

22. How would you compare your Second Life audience experience to your real life audience experience? For example, are you more vocal?

I tend to get more drawn in because I am sitting alone watching it

Respondant QS

Second Life and Theatre Response

Project Options

Second Life Audiences

[Create New Project](#)[Project Properties](#)

As part of my research for my Masters degree I am looking into who make up Second Life theatre audiences. Please be as honest as you can. All responses will be anonymous. By taking part in the survey you are agreeing to have your answers used and published in my thesis.

1. Gender

☒ Female

2. What is your favourite entertainment medium?

- ☐ Radio
☐ Television
☐ Theatre
☐ Films
☐ Books
☒ Internet
☐ Video Games
☐ Concerts

3. How long have you been using Second Life?

4. How often do you use Second Life?

5. What first attracted you to Second Life?

6. What is the most satisfying part of your user experience?

7. What is the least satisfying part of your user experience?

8. When referring to your avatar which term do you use?

- ☒ I
☐ We
☐ He/She
☐ It

9. Please describe your avatar as fully as you can including, where appropriate, character traits.

10. Did you have a specific ideal in mind when creating your avatar? Please expand upon your answer.

11. Please select the statement that you agree with most strongly.

- ☒ My avatar is me
☐ My avatar is a part I play
☐ My avatar is a tool that lets me play the game
☐ My avatar is a companion in my user experience

12. Would you describe yourself as an introvert or an extrovert?

- ☐ Introvert
☐ Extrovert

13. Does your Second Life experience differ from your real life in terms of behaviour and lifestyle? Please explain your answer

In Real Life I have to condone with other people's will - In SL I just do whatever I want to, at any given moment.
In Real Life I have to be polite all the time - In SL I can just teleport some other place or say "bro" if the conversation is getting annoying.
In Real Life I have to work (at a place with a poor human environment), in Second Life I can distance myself from responsibilities.

14. How often do you watch theatre/performance pieces in real life?

Each two months, average

15. How often do you watch theatre/performance pieces in Second Life?

I used to, in my early days, now it is rare

16. What drew you to watching performances in Second Life?

Wanted to see how was it possible to have people playing together in SL and at the same time being geographically apart in Real Life. The opportunity of watching performances without the need of dressing myself, combing my hair, spending some gas, driving etc to a theater not always that close to me :)

17. Do you prefer watching performances in second Life or real life? Please explain your answer.

It really depends on the mood of the day. Sometimes I enjoy feeling the real atmosphere surrounding me, others I prefer to be on my own and able to watch it from any camera perspective, with the sound volume of my choice, etc

18. What has been the most memorable performance you have seen in Second Life and why?

Some ballet/dance performance of ethnic basis which put together dance and visual effects of light. The animations were really good, the scenario was fairy like and the whole atmosphere of it transported the audience to another level

19. How do Second Life performances compare to performances in real life, in your opinion?

You have to be an artist to perform both in real life as in SL. If you think that you can be a "dancer" in SL just because you only have to jump on an animation script, you will soon find out that is not the way to do it.

20. In your opinion, should theatre in second Life be called theatre or given a new title? Please explain your answer.

I think theatre is the right designation. You have to "act" not only through your voice, give different expressive enunciation without being too exaggerate, plus you need to immerse in the right scenario and atmosphere, in order to "drive" your avatar correctly in the virtual space.

21. How responsive do you make your avatar? For example, if you laugh in real life would you make your avatar laugh also? 1 = never, 5 = always

- ☐ 1
☐ 2
☐ 3
☐ 4
☐ 5

22. How would you compare your Second Life audience experience to your real life audience experience? For example, are you more vocal?

Mmm - after some thought I would say that I tend to avoid audiences in SL for quite some time now. But if I have to... I guess I am more true to my real state of mind in SL. Meaning that I can be truly nice if I am in that mood - and that I can be a bitch, if that's what I feel like. In first Life, of course, I tend to always be polite - which is often just fake.

Respondant RE

Second Life and Theatre Response

Project Options

Second Life Audiences

[Create New Project](#)[Project Properties](#)

As part of my research for my Masters degree I am looking into who make up Second Life theatre audiences. Please be as honest as you can. All responses will be anonymous. By taking part in the survey you are agreeing to have your answers used and published in my thesis.

1. Gender

☒ Female ☐ Male

2. What is your favourite entertainment medium?

- ☐ Radio
☐ Television
☐ Theatre
☐ Films
☐ Books
☐ Internet
☒ Video Games
☐ Concerts

3. How long have you been using Second Life?

since october

4. How often do you use Second Life?

every day

5. What first attracted you to Second Life?

money

6. What is the most satisfying part of your user experience?

money

7. What is the least satisfying part of your user experience?

drama

8. When referring to your avatar which term do you use?

- ☒ I
☐ We
☐ He/She
☐ It

9. Please describe your avatar as fully as you can including, where appropriate, character traits.

I'm a medieval fae.

10. Did you have a specific ideal in mind when creating your avatar? Please expand upon your answer.

have fun make friends learn stuff make money

11. Please select the statement that you agree with most strongly.

- ☒ My avatar is me
☐ My avatar is a part I play
☐ My avatar is a tool that lets me play the game
☐ My avatar is a companion in my user experience

12. Would you describe yourself as an introvert or an extrovert?

- ☐ Introvert
☐ Extrovert

13. Does your Second Life experience differ from your real life in terms of behaviour and lifestyle? Please explain your answer

yes I am an escort in second life not in real life

14. How often do you watch theatre/performance pieces in real life?

I've seen a few

15. How often do you watch theatre/performance pieces in Second Life?

not that often but I can if you want

16. What drew you to watching performances in Second Life?

had nothing better to do I suppose

17. Do you prefer watching performances in second Life or real life? Please explain your answer.

not sure it's fun to go out with someone and watch some rising stars in the community perform a well written play live but second life I don't have to leave the house to watch.

18. What has been the most memorable performance you have seen in Second Life and why?

I guess that time in greeting class

19. How do Second Life performances compare to performances in real life, in your opinion?

20. In your opinion, should theatre in second Life be called theatre or given a new title? Please explain your answer.

theaters fine

21. How responsive do you make your avatar? For example, if you laugh in real life would you make your avatar laugh also? 1 = never, 5 = always

- ☐ 1
☐ 2
☐ 3
☐ 4
☐ 5

22. How would you compare your Second Life audience experience to your real life audience experience? For example, are you more vocal?

your not suppose to talk during a performance

Respondant CD

Second Life and Theatre Response

Project Options

Second Life Audiences

[Create New Project](#)[Project Properties](#)

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1. Gender

☒ Female

2. What is your favourite entertainment medium?

- ☐ Radio
☐ Television
☒ Theatre
☐ Films
☐ Books
☐ Internet
☐ Video Games
☐ Concerts

3. How long have you been using Second Life?

4. How often do you use Second Life?

5. What first attracted you to Second Life?

6. What is the most satisfying part of your user experience?

7. What is the least satisfying part of your user experience?

8. When referring to your avatar which term do you use?

- ☒ I
☐ We
☐ He/She
☐ It

9. Please describe your avatar as fully as you can including, where appropriate, character traits.

10. Did you have a specific ideal in mind when creating your avatar? Please expand upon your answer.

11. Please select the statement that you agree with most strongly.

- ☐ My avatar is me
☐ My avatar is a part I play
☐ My avatar is a tool that lets me play the game
☒ My avatar is a companion in my user experience

12. Would you describe yourself as an introvert or an extrovert?

- ☒ Introvert
☐ Extrovert

13. Does your Second Life experience differ from your real life in terms of behaviour and lifestyle? Please explain your answer

Absolutely.
My avatar has a great job that she loves. A gorgeous house on the water.
Lots of fun and close friends. And a wardrobe to die for.
I have none of these in real life.

14. How often do you watch theatre/performance pieces in real life?

Maybe once a year if I am lucky. I would go more often if I could afford them.

15. How often do you watch theatre/performance pieces in Second Life?

Every once in awhile.

16. What drew you to watching performances in Second Life?

I find it interesting how the craft is transposed to fit in SL.

17. Do you prefer watching performances in second Life or real life? Please explain your answer.

Real life. There is no comparison at all.
Real life theater is a huge rush for me. I can feel the energy reaching out to the audience and being returned back. It's a wonderful game of catch. Real life theater is an immersion of creativity and vibrance that cannot be matched at all in SL.

18. What has been the most memorable performance you have seen in Second Life and why?

There was a Pink Floyd "The Wall" experience that was amazing.
They used every building/scripting etc tool available and sky rocketed with it.

19. How do Second Life performances compare to performances in real life, in your opinion?

Well they do the best they can, it is interesting in it's own way.
But....they don't have the immersion that RL does.

20. In your opinion, should theatre in second Life be called theatre or given a new title? Please explain your answer.

Sure, it can be called theater.
It has many of the elements of RL theater. It's just not on a live stage.

21. How responsive do you make your avatar? For example, if you laugh in real life would you make your avatar laugh also? 1 = never, 5 = always

- ☐ 1
☐ 2
☐ 3
☐ 4
☒ 5

22. How would you compare your Second Life audience experience to your real life audience experience? For example, are you more vocal?

I'm more free.
My joyful side comes out more.

Respondant XM

Second Life and Theatre Response

Project Options

Second Life Audiences

[Create New Project](#)
[Project Properties](#)

As part of my research for my Masters degree I am looking into who make up Second Life theatre audiences. Please be as honest as you can. All responses will be anonymous. By taking part in the survey you are agreeing to have your answers used and published in my thesis.

1. Gender

☒ Male

2. What is your favourite entertainment medium?

- ☐ Radio
☐ Television
☐ Theatre
☐ Films
☒ Books
☐ Internet
☐ Video Games
☐ Concerts

3. How long have you been using Second Life?

4. How often do you use Second Life?

5. What first attracted you to Second Life?

6. What is the most satisfying part of your user experience?

7. What is the least satisfying part of your user experience?

8. When referring to your avatar which term do you use?

- ☒ I
☐ We
☒ He/She
☐ It

9. Please describe your avatar as fully as you can including, where appropriate, character traits.

10. Did you have a specific ideal in mind when creating your avatar? Please expand upon your answer.

11. Please select the statement that you agree with most strongly.

- ☐ My avatar is me
☐ My avatar is a part I play
☐ My avatar is a tool that lets me play the game
☒ My avatar is a companion in my user experience

12. Would you describe yourself as an introvert or an extrovert?

- ☒ Introvert
☐ Extrovert

13. Does your Second Life experience differ from your real life in terms of behaviour and lifestyle? Please explain your answer

absolutely...Wee is much more outgoing and playful. he's also younger and gets to do the things in rl he couldn't at our age...lol.

14. How often do you watch theatre/performance pieces in real life?

I have a degree in theatre arts but now live performance is less frequent experience.

15. How often do you watch theatre/performance pieces in Second Life?

theater-haven't really seen any cause it seemed a waste to only see segments of the work. performances-musi

16. What drew you to watching performances in Second Life?

one of the sims I went to featured live musical performers.

17. Do you prefer watching performances in second Life or real life? Please explain your answer.

real life. No wait audiences are more fun and polite in SL lol

18. What has been the most memorable performance you have seen in Second Life and why?

there were some poetry readings on a day of the dead event that were rather moving.

19. How do Second Life performances compare to performances in real life, in your opinion?

more like watching performances on tv than live.

20. In your opinion, should theatre in second Life be called theatre or given a new title? Please explain your answer.

it falls into theater but actually for many their entire experience of SL might be called theater.

21. How responsive do you make your avatar? For example, if you laugh in real life would you make your avatar laugh also? 1 = never, 5 = always

- ☐ 1
☐ 2
☐ 3
☐ 4
☐ 5

22. How would you compare your Second Life audience experience to your real life audience experience? For example, are you more vocal?

sl audiences are more part of the show and there seems to me to be a focus on interacting with audiences by performers.

Respodant ZI

Second Life and Theatre Response

Project Options

Second Life Audiences

[Create New Project](#)[Project Properties](#)

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1. Gender

Male

2. What is your favourite entertainment medium?

- ☐ Radio
☐ Television
☐ Theatre
☐ Films
☐ Books
☒ Internet
☐ Video Games
☐ Concerts

3. How long have you been using Second Life?

4 years

4. How often do you use Second Life?

Daily

5. What first attracted you to Second Life?

Business opportunities

6. What is the most satisfying part of your user experience?

Exploration

7. What is the least satisfying part of your user experience?

Constant misunderstanding therefore criticism of Second Life

8. When referring to your avatar which term do you use?

- ☒ I
☐ We
☐ He/She
☐ It

9. Please describe your avatar as fully as you can including, where appropriate, character traits.

White humanoid, average height/build

10. Did you have a specific ideal in mind when creating your avatar? Please expand upon your answer.

I tend to always create humanoid avatars when possible

11. Please select the statement that you agree with most strongly.

- ☒ My avatar is me
☐ My avatar is a part I play
☐ My avatar is a tool that lets me play the game
☐ My avatar is a companion in my user experience

12. Would you describe yourself as an introvert or an extrovert?

- ☒ Introvert
☐ Extrovert

13. Does your Second Life experience differ from your real life in terms of behaviour and lifestyle? Please explain your answer

Yes, I am more social and outgoing in a virtual environment

14. How often do you watch theatre/performance pieces in real life?

Never

15. How often do you watch theatre/performance pieces in Second Life?

Seldom

16. What drew you to watching performances in Second Life?

Friends invitations

17. Do you prefer watching performances in second Life or real life? Please explain your answer.

Second Life

18. What has been the most memorable performance you have seen in Second Life and why?

Cannot recall last one attended

19. How do Second Life performances compare to performances in real life, in your opinion?

Not tied to physical boundaries - able to do things not possible in RL

20. In your opinion, should theatre in second Life be called theatre or given a new title? Please explain your answer.

New title

21. How responsive do you make your avatar? For example, if you laugh in real life would you make your avatar laugh also? 1 = never, 5 = always

- ☐ 1
☒ 2
☐ 3
☐ 4
☐ 5

22. How would you compare your Second Life audience experience to your real life audience experience? For example, are you more vocal?

More lively in SL - less constrained

Respondant JK

Second Life and Theatre Response

Project Options

Second Life Audiences

[Create New Project](#)[Project Properties](#)

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1. Gender

☒ Male ☐ Female

2. What is your favourite entertainment medium?

- ☐ Radio
☐ Television
☐ Theatre
☐ Films
☐ Books
☒ Internet
☐ Video Games
☐ Concerts

3. How long have you been using Second Life?

4. How often do you use Second Life?

5. What first attracted you to Second Life?

6. What is the most satisfying part of your user experience?

7. What is the least satisfying part of your user experience?

8. When referring to your avatar which term do you use?

- ☒ I
☐ We
☐ He/She
☐ It

9. Please describe your avatar as fully as you can including, where appropriate, character traits.

10. Did you have a specific ideal in mind when creating your avatar? Please expand upon your answer.

11. Please select the statement that you agree with most strongly.

- ☒ My avatar is me
☐ My avatar is a part I play
☐ My avatar is a tool that lets me play the game
☐ My avatar is a companion in my user experience

12. Would you describe yourself as an introvert or an extrovert?

- ☐ Introvert
☒ Extrovert

13. Does your Second Life experience differ from your real life in terms of behaviour and lifestyle? Please explain your answer

Yes and No. I built and manage an island for the disabled in SL. I defend against grievors and bullies. Pettiness is not permitted. I am a futurist and have built the island to reflect peace, prosperity and an uplifted spirit. Meanness is punishable by death. No exceptions. I am the judge, jury, and executioner.

14. How often do you watch theatre/performance pieces in real life?

often

15. How often do you watch theatre/performance pieces in Second Life?

almost never

16. What drew you to watching performances in Second Life?

N/A

17. Do you prefer watching performances in second Life or real life? Please explain your answer.

Real Life. Second Life is also a form of performance.

18. What has been the most memorable performance you have seen in Second Life and why?

My own Second Life.

19. How do Second Life performances compare to performances in real life, in your opinion?

They are the same.

20. In your opinion, should theatre in second Life be called theatre or given a new title? Please explain your answer.

Yes it is theatre.

21. How responsive do you make your avatar? For example, if you laugh in real life would you make your avatar laugh also? 1 = never, 5 = always

- ☐ 1
☐ 2
☐ 3
☐ 4
☒ 5

22. How would you compare your Second Life audience experience to your real life audience experience? For example, are you more vocal?

The same.

Respondant UY

Second Life and Theatre Response

Project Options

Second Life Audiences

[Create New Project](#)[Project Properties](#)

As part of my research for my Masters degree I am looking into who make up Second Life theatre audiences. Please be as honest as you can. All responses will be anonymous. By taking part in the survey you are agreeing to have your answers used and published in my thesis.

1. Gender

☐ Female ☐ Male

2. What is your favourite entertainment medium?

- ☐ Radio
☐ Television
☐ Theatre
☐ Films
☒ Books
☐ Internet
☐ Video Games
☐ Concerts

3. How long have you been using Second Life?

4. How often do you use Second Life?

almost 4 years

5. What first attracted you to Second Life?

creativity

6. What is the most satisfying part of your user experience?

creativity

7. What is the least satisfying part of your user experience?

lack of Linden Lab's caring what the residents really want

8. When referring to your avatar which term do you use?

- ☐ I
☐ We
☒ He/She
☐ It

9. Please describe your avatar as fully as you can including, where appropriate, character traits.

it depends on the day

10. Did you have a specific ideal in mind when creating your avatar? Please expand upon your answer.

Not really. I have several avatars, including a flying book and an eggplant (really!)

11. Please select the statement that you agree with most strongly.

- ☐ My avatar is me
☐ My avatar is a part I play
☐ My avatar is a tool that lets me play the game
☒ My avatar is a companion in my user experience

12. Would you describe yourself as an introvert or an extrovert?

- ☒ Introvert
☐ Extrovert

13. Does your Second Life experience differ from your real life in terms of behaviour and lifestyle? Please explain your answer

I can be anything I want

14. How often do you watch theatre/performance pieces in real life?

often

15. How often do you watch theatre/performance pieces in Second Life?

some

16. What drew you to watching performances in Second Life?

I am interested in the arts

17. Do you prefer watching performances in second Life or real life? Please explain your answer.

RL--can have all senses engaged

18. What has been the most memorable performance you have seen in Second Life and why?

can't remember

19. How do Second Life performances compare to performances in real life, in your opinion?

Less ability to have all senses engaged in SL

20. In your opinion, should theatre in second Life be called theatre or given a new title? Please explain your answer.

Theater. All of Second Life is theater, in a sense

21. How responsive do you make your avatar? For example, if you laugh in real life would you make your avatar laugh also? 1 = never, 5 = always

- ☐ 1
☐ 2
☐ 3
☐ 4
☐ 5

22. How would you compare your Second Life audience experience to your real life audience experience? For example, are you more vocal?

same

Respondant VL

Second Life and Theatre Response

Project Options

Second Life Audiences

[Create New Project](#)[Project Properties](#)

As part of my research for my Masters degree I am looking into who make up Second Life theatre audiences. Please be as honest as you can. All responses will be anonymous. By taking part in the survey you are agreeing to have your answers used and published in my thesis.

1. Gender

☒ Female ☐ Male

2. What is your favourite entertainment medium?

- ☐ Radio
☐ Television
☐ Theatre
☐ Films
☐ Books
☒ Internet
☐ Video Games
☐ Concerts

3. How long have you been using Second Life?

6 years

4. How often do you use Second Life?

every day

5. What first attracted you to Second Life?

The Economy and ability to provide content and be creative.

6. What is the most satisfying part of your user experience?

Interacting with residents and exploring. Tough question for a multi-tasker:-)

7. What is the least satisfying part of your user experience?

When the platform is not working properly.

8. When referring to your avatar which term do you use?

- ☒ I
☐ We
☐ He/She
☐ It

9. Please describe your avatar as fully as you can including, where appropriate, character traits.

Argus Collingwood has been Married to Farnokh Vavoom my Precious love in RL and now SL. Let these be your desires: To melt and be like a running brook that sings its melody to the night. To know the pain of too much tenderness. HL, please check out my picks and classified for more information:-)

10. Did you have a specific ideal in mind when creating your avatar? Please expand upon your answer.

I wanted to create a look that was in my minds eye. To make me a sort of Uma meets Olivia Newton John.

11. Please select the statement that you agree with most strongly.

- ☒ My avatar is me
☐ My avatar is a part I play
☐ My avatar is a tool that lets me play the game
☐ My avatar is a companion in my user experience

12. Would you describe yourself as an introvert or an extrovert?

- ☐ Introvert
☐ Extrovert

13. Does your Second Life experience differ from your real life in terms of behaviour and lifestyle? Please explain your answer

LOL! Of course it does. In SL I can fly, there are no dirty dishes, I can travel the world virtually and take pictures, create new clothes, have a great shopping experience, own a mansion, go to music concerts hourly, ski jump, use a katana, shoot zombies.... etc etc

14. How often do you watch theatre/performance pieces in real life?

maybe once a year

15. How often do you watch theatre/performance pieces in Second Life?

maybe once every six months unless you count going to concerts as theatre

16. What drew you to watching performances in Second Life?

It's a unique experience that translates well within the platform.

17. Do you prefer watching performances in second Life or real life? Please explain your answer.

Yes, it is much much cheaper and easy.

18. What has been the most memorable performance you have seen in Second Life and why?

A presentation of Pink Floyd's The Wall. I have seen the piece live and the SL version was a lot more riveting with more effects.

19. How do Second Life performances compare to performances in real life, in your opinion?

I need to see more of them to judge.

20. In your opinion, should theatre in second Life be called theatre or given a new title? Please explain your answer.

Interesting concept. Virtual Theatre might be better.

21. How responsive do you make your avatar? For example, if you laugh in real life would you make your avatar laugh also? 1 = never, 5 = always

- ☐ 1
☐ 2
☐ 3
☐ 4
☐ 5

22. How would you compare your Second Life audience experience to your real life audience experience? For example, are you more vocal?

Yes certainly SL Concerts are more lively. There is more participation by the audience.

Appendix B

Questionnaire responses from established theatre companies

Respondant IOU Theatre

Second Life and established Theatre Companies Response

Project Options

Second Life and Theatre Companies

[Create New Project](#)[Project Properties](#)

A short questionnaire on current theatre companies' use of Second Life. All answers may be confidential if you so wish.

1. How have you used Second Life in your theatre practice?

IOU has used Second Life to augment real world experiences of live projects. We have explored SL as a context for documentation of a project and are currently building for an audience experience that is designed for SL and pushes at its technical capabilities.

2. Why did your company decide to expand its practice into Second Life?

1. to explore new modes of distribution of IOU's work
2. to explore new contexts in which to create work
3. to provide a context for building skills and experience in 3D world builds, project management and audience experience

3. What were the main draws to using Second Life?

existing infrastructure and user base; ease of access

4. How important has the global connectivity of Second Life been for your company's practice?

very important - allows us to explore audience relationships across real world geographic boundaries

5. What aspects of Second Life benefit your theatre practice?

ability to widen the reach of real world projects; ability to explore new ways of working and new contexts for distribution

6. Do you foresee Second Life playing a part in your company's future? Please explain your answer

YES - it is providing a context for experimentation and the development of practice. This will continue. IOU expects to migrate to new contexts that may be developed and to use the skills/experience it has acquired to shift into other technologies utilising 3D

Appendix C

Questionnaire responses from Second Life theatre companies

Respondant Myst Dancers

Second Life Theatre Makers Response

Project Options

Second Life Theatre Makers

[Create New Project](#)
[Project Properties](#)

A short survey discussing the virtual theatre making process and the part Second Life plays in it.

1. How do you use Second Life in your theatre making process?

Choreography of dances, making of costumes, building of stage sets and effects.

2. Why do/don't you use Second Life to stage live theatrical events?

The fun of performing to a 'live' audience, having others appreciate what has been created, even if it's anonymously.

3. What does Second Life offer to your theatre making process that real life can't achieve?

Tapped in to a previously 'unknown' talent of choreographing dances. Never been involved with the 'Arts' in RL, other than as part of an audience. Love working with a multi-international cooperative team as I am limited in my social interaction in RL.

4. In your opinion, what artistic merit does Second Life offer to theatre that can't be achieved in real life?

people can use their imaginations to create roles and activities not always possible in RL.

5. Could you give a rough outline of your audience demographic?

Anyone interested in Music, and dance creation

6. What do you look for in a performer during the audition process?

Enthusiasm, understanding of commitment and cooperation.

7. Please describe your rehearsal process.

1/ The group agrees on a theme. 2/ Each had master (choreographer) chooses their music to match the theme either by title or interpretation. 3/ Once the music is agreed (no duplication) costumes and dances are sought. 4/ Had master choreographs the dances to suit the music. 5/ Dances are presented to the group for suggestions, as are the costumes to be worn for the dance, to meet everyone's consent to wear. 6/ Once each had master has a completed dance routine, line-up of music is discussed and agreed upon. 7/ Lists are

8. What limitations does Second Life have on your theatre making practice? What improvements would you like to see?

The only limitations we have are of time zones and real life commitments, which unfortunately SL can do nothing about.

9. In your opinion, do you think theatre in Second Life communicates effectively? Please explain your answer.

Nothing can replace the 'real' thing but for those who have no RL bent or ability for theatre SL is a good substitute.

10. What type of audience reactions do you get?

appreciative comments, donations, requests to join the troupe, fans creating fan clubs and web pages dedicated to the troupe.

11. How would you categorise the type of performances you make?

Live Musical Entertainment

12. In your opinion, should theatre in second Life be called theatre or given a new title? Please explain your answer.

13. Do you think theatre in Second Life and virtual theatre as a medium has a future? Please explain your answer.

Yes, it will eventually reach a greater audience. Many people either cannot/do not want to travel the distances to live venues. Electronic media/virtual theatre is a way to be entertained in the comfort of your own surroundings.

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