PRESS COVERAGE

ROBOTS and AVATARS TOURING 2012

FACT/LIVERPOOL

Europe House / LONDON

KIBLA / MARIBOR , Slovenia

Altart / CLUJ, Romania

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"Blurring the lines between reality and the virtual world, the exhibit examines our reliance on technology and our willingness to hand machines increasing degrees of control."

Dazed.com

"It's art that's interactive and immersive."

The Guardian

"A show revealing some of the ways robots and on-screen avatars could change our lives, as the borders between our physical and virtual lives begin to blur."

The New Scientist

"ambitious, thought-provoking, and challenging exhibition."

The DoubleNegative

"The exhibition tackles the overlap between the virtual and the real worlds."

Wired

"While the creations featured in Robots and Avatars seem straight out of science fiction (…) they could be only a short step away."

Liverpool Daily Post

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Robots and Avatars Exhibition showcases the most exciting visions and innovations from international artists, designers and architects, exploring their impact on the future of work and play. Robots and Avatars departs from pop culture imagery and re-imagines these technologies for a new reality: how do we envisage our future relationships with robotic and avatar colleagues and playmates, and what point does this evolution cross our personal boundaries of what it is to be a living, feeling human being?

Robots and Avatars is a programme of work which began in 2009. It was originally conceived and produced by body>data>space who led the project through research and development into an EU Culture project involving 5 other UK and European partners.

The exhibition presents immersive experiences – from physical limbs rendered into pixels through the act of touch, collaborative landscapes stretching beyond the confines of popular gaming, to wearable and interactive technologies that guide and confound, including 3 Commissions developed in collaboration with the National Theatre.

TOURING EXHIBITION. The Robots and Avatars has been touring from the UK to Slovenia and Romania with a bespoke artistic selection in each case.
*Robots and Avatars Exhibition'at **FACT, Liverpool** (UK) from **16 March to 27 May 2012**.*
'Robots and Avatars – UK Selection' at 12 Star Gallery/ Europe House (UK) from 19 to 28 September.
*'Robots and Avatars Exhibition' is showing at **KIBLA, Maribor** (Slovenia) from **5 to 30 October 2012** as part of **Maribor 2012: European Capital of Culture***
*Robots and Avatars will tour onwards and to **AltArt, Cluj-Napoca** (Romania) from **13 November to 2 December 2012**.*

www.robotsandavatars.net/exhibition/

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In 2012 'Robots and Avatars' has been reaching millions of people worldwide.

'Robots and Avatars' has been covered in:

Top level UK, local, national and international Press TV and Radio programmes

English, Arabic, Farci, Spanish, Russian, Slovenian, Romanian

General and specialised media including Technology/Innovation, Business, Arts and Culture, Science, Education, Entertainment…

For more information please contact:
marie@bodydataspace.netAnd visit:
www.robotsandavatars.net

• TV
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BBC Click TV. BBC programme exploring technologies and new media. One episode (30 mins) covering and filmed from Robots and Avatars Exhibition in Liverpool. Broadcasted 21/04/2012. http://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/b01gykwg/Click_21_04_2012/

-BBC ARABIC November/ December 2012, 3 episodes featuring Robots and Avatars on BBC ARABIC technology programme, 4 Tech

http://www.robotsandavatars.net/2012/12/bbc-arabic-4-tech-reports-on-robots-and-avatars/

-BAY TV **"Robots and Avatars at FACT Liverpool".** 16/03/2012

www.baytvliverpool.com/vod/index.php?vid=DBV4f633e34a7fb9

-RTV SLO / **National TV Slovenia**
http://www.rtvslo.si/kultura/razstave/kako-se-bomo-v-prihodnosti-igrali-in-delali-z-roboti-in-avatarji/292961
http://tvslo.si/predvajaj/roboti-in-avatarji-v-kibli/ava2.147265860/
http://tvslo.si/predvajaj/maribor-2012-evropska-prestolnica-kulture/ava2.147949133/

•RADIO

-BBC 4 Radio / **Material World / Quentin Cooper interviews Ghislaine Boddington**

(body>data>space creative director) **and Noel Sharkey** (Professor of Robotics at Sheffield University, Robots & Avatars project champion) on Robots & Avatars. 15/03/2012

www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b01d2rgl

-BBC World RADIO Service **/ Click**
A 'blind' robot in Slovenia aims to enable humans to be more human. 16/10/2012
http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p00zv9tc

- BBC 5 Radio Live / **Outriders / Jamillah Knowles interviews Ghislaine Boddington**

(body>data>space creative director) on Robots & Avatars. 06/03/2012

http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/podcasts/fivelive/pods/pods_20120306-0404b.mp3

https://plus.google.com/u/0/103404503902029130105/posts   (second interview 7mins 30sec in)

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• PRESS

-New Scientist / **Paul Marks review on Robots and Avatars: "Trousers with attitude show resistance is futile".** 20/03/2012

www.newscientist.com/blogs/culturelab/2012/03/trousers-with-attitude-show-resistance-is-useless.html

WIRED.co.uk. **Katie Scott "The virtual and real worlds collide at FACT in Liverpool".** 27 /03/2012. Article featuring Ghislaine Boddington (body>data>space creative director), Michael Takeo Magruder (Robots & Avatars commissioned Artist), Mike Stubbs (FACT).

www.wired.co.uk/news/archive/2012-03-27/robots-and-avatars

-Guardian Guide. **Preview by Skye Sherwin & Robert Clark .** 17/03/2012

www.guardian.co.uk/artanddesign/2012/mar/17/david-hall-monica-biagioli-exhibitions?intcmp=239

http://www.guardian.co.uk/artanddesign/gallery/2012/mar/17/exhibitionist-art-shows-rose-wylie#/?picture=387319826&index=6

-Guardian / **Games highlight exhibition.** 09/03/2012

http://www.guardian.co.uk/technology/gamesblog/2012/mar/09/friday-games-culture

-Liverpool Post / **Laura Davis (Arts Editor) "INTERVIEW: Robots and Avatars exhibition at Fact in Liverpool".** 15/03/2012

http://www.liverpooldailypost.co.uk/liverpool-culture/liverpool-arts/2012/03/15/interview-robots-and-avatars-exhibition-at-fact-in-liverpool-99623-30525392/#ixzz1pm2NMcY2

-Liverpool Echo / **Catherine Jones "FACT's new exhibition takes visitors inside the world of Robots and Avatars".** 12/03/2012

http://www.liverpoolecho.co.uk/liverpool-entertainment/echo-entertainment/2012/03/12/fact-s-new-exhibition-takes-visitors-inside-the-world-of-robots-and-avatars-100252-30510554/2/

-DAZED. **Mike Stubbs (FACT) interview about Robots and Avatars.** 16/03/2012

http://www.dazeddigital.com/artsandculture/article/13022/1/robots-avatars

-EL PAIS. **Robots y hombres electrónicos 30/05/2012**

http://blogs.elpais.com/arte-en-la-edad-silicio/2012/04/robots-y-hombres-electronicos.html

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-Liverpool Echo / **Ben Turner "Students at Wallasey secondary Weatherhead become art avatar stars".** 20/03/2012

http://www.liverpoolecho.co.uk/liverpool-news/education/education_news/2012/03/20/students-at-wallasey-secondary-weatherhead-become-art-avatar-stars-100252-30575860/#ixzz1pwIZwY10

-**DoubleNegative blog**. **Review of the Robots and Avatars different pieces, including a focus on public Avatar and the film programme.**

http://www.thedoublenegative.co.uk/2012/03/robots-and-avatars-previewed/
http://www.thedoublenegative.co.uk/2012/03/do-avatars-dream-of-electric-sheep/
http://www.thedoublenegative.co.uk/2012/04/robocops-and-avatars/

- **Culture 24**. **Ben Miller "Robots and Avatars targets Facebook and Pluto in flourish of experimentalism at FACT"** 24 26/04/2012
http://www.culture24.org.uk/art/sculpture%20%26%20installation/art384164

- **We make money not art**. **Regine Debatty: ' Robots and Avatars' exhibition at FACT, Liverpool.** 04/04/2012 http://we-make-money-not-art.com/archives/2012/04/robots-and-avatars.php

- **Art in Liverpool/** **Josie Jenkins.** 23/03/2012 http://www.artinliverpool.com/?p=28699

- **Art Selector / Steve Boxer / April issue** http://www.artselector.com/review/robots-and-avatars-fact

-**TRAP.i /** Anjali Ramachandran, September 24, 2012

trap.it/#!traps/id/715507f2-c8ed-47b6-b5e9-9993b1ef93c5/jump/6AvGcqNjB002q6RDlQm9

-**HAPPY FAMOUS ARTISTS,** by **Intelligensius Anarchus**, 28 September 2012
happyfamousartists.com/blog/2012/09/bodydataspace-presents-robots-and-avatars-uk-selection/

-**ARTslant Los Angeles** www.artslant.com/la/feeds/show/86462

 -**GLIMPSE OF LONDON** aglimpseoflondon.blogspot.co.uk/2012/09/robots-and-avatars.html

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More about Robots and Avatars on UK and EU networks and web platforms…

Labforculture.org http://www.labforculture.org/en/groups/public/labforculture/events-and-news/98065

Metamute www.metamute.org/editorial/articles/compost-your-orgasm-trash

Artshub www.artshub.co.uk/uk/myClassifieds.asp?iCatId=520&todo=preview&listingId=128846

www.artshub.co.uk/uk/whats-on/north-west/exhibitions/opening-friday-16th-march-robots-and-avatars-fact-liverpool-129055

Rhiz.eu www.rhiz.eu/artefact-75848-en.html

Arts Job www.artsjobs.org.uk/arts-news/post/robots-and-avatars-uk-selection/

ArtsHub www.artshub.co.uk/uk/whats-on/london/exhibitions/robots-and-avatars-uk-selection-12-star-gallery-london-134579

Bodies sound technology bodiessoundstechnologies.wordpress.com/2012/09/05/event-robots-and-avatars/

Brzezinski www.brzezinski.zdnet.pl/michal-brzezinski/inspirations/robots-and-avatars-uk-selection-is-coming-to-london

Wired.co.uk www.wired.co.uk/events/2012/03/16/robots-and-avatars

RAN-DAN Network www.ran-dan.net/eng/

Culture 360 http://robotsandavatars.culture360.org/

The Art Guide www.theartguide.co.uk/events/?event=2875

Turbulence http://turbulence.org/blog/2012/02/17/robots-and-avatars-liverpool/

Artsjob www.artsjobs.org.uk/index.php?id=25&ne_post_id=77767

Liverpoolcultural champion http://liverpoolculturalchampions.wordpress.com/2012/03/16/robots-avatars-at-fact-10/

Ropewalksliverpool www.ropewalksliverpool.com/blog/view/art-preview-robots-avatars-exhibtion-at-fact

Mark Kelly blog http://markkellynet.com/2012/03/09/robots-and-avatars-event-fact-gallery-liverpool/

Amaze www.amaze.com/

Labforculture www.labforculture.org/en/groups/public/labforculture/events-and-news/98690

Rhiz.eu www.rhiz.eu/artefact-72357-en.html

Rhiz.eu www.rhiz.eu/artefact-72252-en.html

Wooloo.org www.wooloo.org/opening/entry/273487

Woolooo.org www.wooloo.org/opening/entry/272763

Furtherfield.org http://www.furtherfield.org/community/calendar/robots-and-avatars

Dutch Embassy in the UK http://www.dutchembassyuk.org/calendar/event.php?i=4917

SwissEmbassyhttp://www.eda.admin.ch/etc/medialib/downloads/edactr/gbr.Par.0123.File.tmp/Cultural%20listing%20Winter%20cont.%202011.pdf

NAFFTASIC blog http://nafftastic.blogspot.co.uk/2012/04/robots-and-avatars.html

TECH SUPPORT http://tech3support.blogspot.co.uk/2012/04/robots-and-avatars.html

SEECULT.ORG http://www.seecult.org/institucija/1824/kibla-maribor

CNVOS http://www.cnvos.info/article/id/6677/cid/99

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SLOVENIA EVENTS CALENDAR http://www.sloveniaeventscalendar.si/si/kultura/kibla-2012-kiblix-robots-avatars-otvoritev-razstave-5861

INFOPEKAhttp://www.infopeka.org/web/?cat=215

INŠTITUT ZA MEDIJSKE KOMUNIKACIJE http://medijske.uni-mb.si/

PRIREDITVE.INFO http://prireditve.info/prireditev/roboti-in-avatarji-nasi-sodelavci-in-soigralci-v-prihodnosti/75804/

CCP SLOVENIA http://www.ccp.si/lista.php?id=286#3

http://www.ccp.si/izpis.php?id=1261

NOVODANES.SI http://novodanes.si/story.php?title=Mariborsko_Kiblo_bodo_zasedli_roboti_in_avatarji

ARTELECTRONICS.RU http://www.artelectronics.ru/fashion/fashion/695

EMF http://newsemf.blogspot.com/2012/09/robots-and-avatars-our-colleagues-and.html

MARCO DONNARUMMA http://marcodonnarumma.com/calendar/robots-and-avatars-kibla-festival/

EUROPE IN THE UK http://www.europe.org.uk/2012/10/02/robots-and-avatars-kibla/

FACT BLOG CONTRIBUTORS

Orla Foster on rep.licants.org "Automate your personality"

http://www.fact.co.uk/news-views/2012/03/automate-your-personality/

Interview with Martin Bricelj Baraga http://www.fact.co.uk/news-views/2012/04/interview-with-martin-bricelj-baraga-%281%29/

Slovenian Media Coverage

VEČER
http://web.vecer.com/portali/vecer/v1/default.asp?kaj=3&id=2012100505834480
http://web.vecer.com/portali/vecer/v1/default.asp?kaj=3&id=2012100605834971

DELO
http://www.delo.si/kultura/razstave/bodoci-sodelavci-roboti-in-avatarji.html
http://www.delo.si/kultura/deloskop/deloskop-napoveduje-roboti-in-avatarji.html
http://www.delo.si/kultura/razstave/spoznajte-svojega-avatarja.html

DNEVNIK
http://www.dnevnik.si/novice/danes_naokoli/1042555734

FINANCE
http://trendi.finance.si/roboti_in_avatarji_bodoci_sodelavci_1_507708

MLADINA
http://www.mladina.si/116392/roboti-in-avatarji-nasi-sodelavci-in-soigralci-v-prihodnosti/

ŽURNAL
http://www.zurnal24.si/maribor-2012-kibla-2012-kiblix-robots-ampamp-avatars-otvoritev-razstave-dogodek-

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47242
http://www.zurnal24.si/razprava-roboti-in-avatarji-dogodek-47183
http://www.zurnal24.si/delavnica-vizije-nasih-skupnih-sanj-visions-of-our-communal-dreams-dogodek-46763

FINANCE SLOVENIJA
http://www.financesi.com/novice-bodo%C4%8Di-sodelavci-roboti-avatarji

ŽIVLJENJE NA DOTIK
http://www.zivljenjenadotik.si/info/tekst/prikaz/article/prihaja-mednarodni-festival-kiblix-2012/
http://www.zivljenjenadotik.si/info/tekst/prikaz/article/festival-kiblix-2012-vabi/

MARIBOR 2012
http://www.maribor2012.eu/nc/dogodek/prikaz/3416558/
http://www.maribor2012.eu/novica/article/roboti-in-avatarji-v-kibli/
http://www.maribor2012.eu/nc/dogodek/prikaz/3434700/
http://www.maribor2012.eu/nc/dogodek/prikaz/3416590/
http://www.maribor2012.eu/nc/dogodek/prikaz/3434706/
http://www.maribor2012.eu/novica/article/vabilo-na-otvoritev-razstave-roboti-in-avatarji-nasi-sodelavci-in-soigralci-v-prihodnosti/
http://www.maribor2012.eu/fotogalerije/?tx_lzgallery_pi1[showUid]=808

STA
http://www.sta.si/vest.php?id=1801157
http://ms.sta.si/2012/09/v-mariboru-razstava-o-robotih-in-avatarjih-kot-bodocih-sodelavcih/
http://ms.sta.si/2012/09/kiblix-festival-to-focus-on-robots-and-avatars/
http://www.sta.si/vest.php?id=1806721
http://ms.sta.si/2012/10/mariborsko-kiblo-bodo-zasedli-roboti-in-avatarji/
http://www.o-sta.com/msg.php?id=9719

BBC
http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p00z0cgr

SIOL.NET
http://www.siol.net/kultura/novice/2012/09/v_mariboru_razstava_o_robotih_in_avatarjih_kot_prihodnjih_so delavcih.aspx

SLOVENIA.INFO
http://www.slovenia.info/?kulturne_prireditve=80377&lng=1

NAPOVEDNIK
http://www.napovednik.com/dogodek228948_delavnica_vizije_nasih_skupnih_sanj_visions_of
http://www.napovednik.com/dogodek228950_razprava_roboti_in_avatarji
http://www.napovednik.com/dogodek228949_delavnica_robotkov_klackerlaken
http://www.napovednik.com/dogodek228951_roboti_in_avatarji_nasi_sodelavci_in_sogovorniki
http://www.napovednik.com/dogodek229699_javni_avatar
http://www.napovednik.com/dogodek229700_marco_donnarumma_glasba_za_meso_ii

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SELECTED MEDIA COVERAGE

21st – 25th April 2012

BBC TV flagship programme exploring technologies and new media. This episode presents the body>data>space programme of work "Robots and Avatars - our colleagues and playmates of the future", filmed from the Exhibition at FACT in Liverpool.

To be released on 21st April and repeated throughout the weekend.

Spencer Kelly reports from the Robots and Avatars exhibition on how the virtual and real world are merging.

Technology is bringing the virtual and real world closer together. The Robots and Avatars exhibition explores how people will work and play with new representational forms of themselves and others in virtual and physical life in the next 10 to 15 years.

Spencer Kelly went to the exhibition to get a vision of the future.

The Robots and Avatars exhibition runs until 27 May 2012 at FACT, Liverpool and tours Romania, Slovenia, France and then the Asia Pacific region from 2012 to 14.

Follow the Click team on Twitter @BBCClick. And join the conversation on Google+ or Facebook.

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FULL EPISODE ON BBC PLAYER (UK only)
http://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/b01gykwg/Click_21_04_2012/

Sequences dedicated to the Exhibition:

Are humans ready to become digital?

http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/click_online/9714944.stm

The device that turns you into a robot

http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/click_online/9714820.stm

Webscape: Social networking robots

http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/click_online/9714635.stm

BBC Click Broadcast times for this weekend

On TV in the UK (local time)

On the News Channel (UK):

Saturday: 0130, 0330 (short), 0645 (short), 1130, 1530 and 2030.
Sunday 0430, 0745, 1130, 1530 and 2030.
Monday: 0030.
Viewers in the UK can also watch the latest programme online using the BBC iPlayer .

On TV outside the UK (all times GMT)

Friday
1530 BBC World News
Saturday
0630 BBC World News
Sunday
1230 BBC World News
1830 BBC World News

World Service Radio
For World Service listings please see:
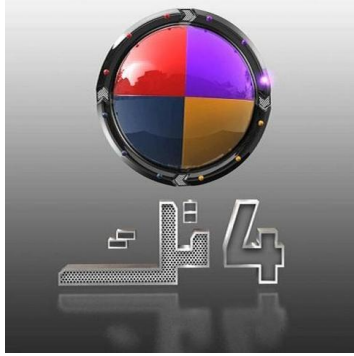http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p002w6r2/episodes/upcoming

Persian Click
Farsi speakers can also watch BBC Persian Click online and on BBC Persian TV.
For further information, please visit: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/click_online/

http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/click_online/

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BBC Arabic 4 Tech reports on 'Robots and Avatars'

From November to December 2012, BBC ARABIC technology programme, 4 Tech dedicated a series of 3 report on **Robots and Avatars**, covered by journalist Anees Al Qudaihi.

The reports explore the creative and technological process of 3 key works presented as part of Robots and Avatars: **'**Outreach' an architectural / kinetic conceptual work by Alex Haw (atmos) with Mauritius Seeger (dr. mo), **'**Music for Flesh II' an interactive music performance for enhanced body by Marco Donnarumma, and Robots and Avatars Commission 'Visions of our Communal Dreams', a new media art installation blending virtual, physical and networked environments by Michael Takeo Magruder with collaborators.

- **7 November 2012**: Marco Donnarumma on 'Music for Flesh II' from 15:00 to 20:15. WATCH : http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wz08Hute-PQ

- **1 December 2012**: Ghislaine Boddington on 'Robots and Avatars' and 'Visions of our Communal Dreams' from 18:30 to the end. WATCH HERE: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R6DCXjZg1Rs

- **9 December 2012**: Alex Haw / ATMOS on 'Outreach' from 16:00 to 20:40. WATCH HERE: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g2hrrsZ0xKI&list=PL49696C121A3AB1C2&index=1

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Robots and Avatars at FACT Liverpool

A collaboration between FACT and London based design company body>data>space, Robots and Avatars is an interactive exhibition that tries to look forward and make sense of the place that technology inhabits in present and future society.

The major exhibition brings together artworks that find physical limbs rendered into pixels through the act of touch, collaborative electronic landscapes stretching beyond the confines of popular gaming, and wearable technology that guides and confounds.

Robots and Avatars runs from 16th March to 27th May throughout the art spaces in FACT on Wood St, Liverpool.

For more information, please visit:
www.robotsandavatars.net
FACT:
www.fact.co.uk

body>data>space:
www.bodydataspace.net

http://www.baytvliverpool.com/vod/index.php?vid=DBV4f633e34a7fb9

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Material World

A new set of Hominin remains from a Cave in China prove difficult to place in the human family tree. The "Red Deer Cave People" share some traits with modern humans, and some with older relatives. Do they represent hybrids from interbreeding 11,500 years ago or could they represent a new species previously unknown to science? Lead author Darren Curnoe from the University of New South Wales and Dr Isabelle de Groot from the Natural History Museum in London discuss the findings.

Co-curator Ghislane Boddington and Prof Noel Sharkey talk to Quentin about a new exhibition opening on Friday at FACT, Liverpool, called "Robots and Avatars". The vision of numerous artists of a near future where we freely interact with colleagues and friends in the form of robots or remote projections as avatars will be on display. What are the implications for how we live and work?

An update from 'So You Want to Be a Scientist' - Material World's search for the BBC's Amateur Scientist of the Year. One of our four finalists, Dara Djavan Khoshdel aged 25 from Bournemouth, starts his experiment at Modern Art Oxford. He's testing people's emotional reactions to paintings using a skin galvanometer, which measures our micro-sweating. But will the strength of people's reaction match the financial value of each artwork?

Producer: Martin Redfern.

Robots and Avatars

"Visions of Our Communal Dreams", by Michael Takeo Magruder with Drew Baker, Erik Fleming and David Steele, 2012

A new exhibition opens this week at FACT, Liverpool. Co-curator Ghislane Boddington and Prof Noel Sharkey talk to Quentin about the vision behind the exhibition – of a near future in which we all make everyday interactions with robot and avatar friends and colleagues. How near are we really to such a reality, and what are the implications?

Broadcasts :
1 Thu 15 Mar 2012 16:30 BBC Radio 4
2 Mon 19 Mar 2012 21:00 BBC Radio 4

http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b01d2rgl

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A 'blind' robot in Slovenia aims to enable humans to be more human

Robots and Avatars

An exhibition of robots and avatars in Maribor, Slovenia has, some believe, the ability to make humans more human. But what sleights of hand and deceptions are involved when humans interact with robots in an exhibition? Are the ethical concerns that arise any different from those that come to the fore when robots help us in domestic settings and in industry? The Avatars and Robots is a collaborative project. The curators of the project are body>data>space, KIBLA and Altart, FACT and the UK's National Theatre. Gareth Mitchell talks to the co-curator of the exhibition, Maja Vuksanovic and the provocateur, Professor Noel Sharkey about human-robot interactions.

http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p00zv9tc

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Hello Outriders.

This week we have three women in tech who are about to tell us about open data, opening an account on Pinterest and opening the mind to electronic friends.

First up, an event worth waiting for. Kat Braybrooke is the community coordinator at the Open Knowledge Foundation and the London based coordinator of the Open Knowledge festival which is going to be in Helsinki in September. http://okfestival.org/

Another event for you all to look forward to - this time in the UK, in Liverpool. Gislaine Boddington is the creative director of Body Data Space, based in the Tech City part of East London.

Body>Data>Space is a design collective that works with the body and data in both virtual and physical space. http://www.bodydataspace.net/

Last but not least for this week - let's put to rest the interest in Pinterest.

We know the site is not exactly box fresh. It's a place where you can create a virtual pin-board for images and video on the web.

From that alone it might not sound like the wildest place on the web but it has attracted millions of users all curating their own galleries and sharing images that link to sites you may have missed on your webNaturally as it also shares images, there have been questions about copyright too.

Lynn Bruning http://www.lbruning.com/ is a friend of Outriders who makes extraordinary e-textiles and also uses Pinterest. She recently wrote a guide to protecting your own images as well as having some fun with the service, so I asked her what all the fuss is about. http://pinterest.com/

For more Outriders interaction, you can of course find us in various social spaces. Tweet at me on Twitter where we are @BBC_Outriders, find us on facebook where we are Outriders of if Google plus is your thing, you can also search for Outriders there and drop me a line.

https://plus.google.com/u/0/103404503902029130105/posts

http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/podcasts/fivelive/pods/pods_20120306-0404b.mp3

Trousers with attitude show resistance is futile

16:59 20 March 2012
Exhibitions
Paul Marks, senior technology correspondent

Compass by Lawrence Malstaf

I am wearing cyborg trousers. And they are angry, totalitarian trousers. When they sense that I'm walking in forbidden zones, or I dare to approach another human being, a motor-driven weight swings violently around my waist, stopping suddenly to force me off balance, to cajole me into walking in another direction. I can fight it - but the weight shift produces a powerful and uncomfortable wrenching force. It's much easier not to resist.

body›data›space

Titled Compass, this wearable robotic "orientation device" is one of the interactive exhibits at Robots and Avatars, an exhibition at the Foundation for Art and Creative Technology (FACT) in Liverpool, Merseyside. Along with London design company Body>Data>Space and Slovenian art collective Kibla, FACT has put together a show revealing some of the ways robots and on-screen avatars could change our lives, as the borders between our physical and virtual lives begin to blur.

The work of Belgium-based artist Lawrence Malstaf, Compass looks peculiar, like an inside-out car wheel; the alloy wheel rim is on the outside and a tyre's inner tube lines its interior. I stepped inside it and hoisted it up to waist height, whereupon Malstaf's colleague Tom Kok switched on a pump, inflating the inner tube so that it fitted me tightly. With a couple of supporting braces fastened over my shoulders I was ready to go.

I felt like I was wearing a wrap-around version of a cinema ice cream vendor's tray. Resting my forearms in two half drainpipes handily provided to protect the wearer's limbs from the weights whizzing around the wheel rim, I pressed the start button and began to wander around a dark, square room. Malstaf has placed magnetic-field-generating coils beneath some of the carpet tiles, which produce "forbidden zones" that Compass senses, and interprets as off limits to me. In addition, infrared sensors tell the device when I try to associate with humans - something else that's off limits. When I transgress its rules, it tries to throw me off course with haptic compulsion. After a while I get the message and by tentatively exploring the space I'm in, I learn from the robot's responses how to use it without hassle.

Crude though it is, it was intriguing to have a robotic technology attempt to control me in this way. With location-aware technology proliferating, could something like this, in an offender-monitoring tag or anklet, one day make life difficult for criminals? And why "kettle" demonstrators if you could slap these on the ringleaders and steer them where you want? Compass embodies a concept we might, or at least ought to, be familiar with - a technology that it is easier not to resist. The realisation that giving in to the machine is a lot less hassle than resisting it echoes the way millions of us have already grudgingly accepted a host of invasive technologies for the sake of an easier life. Many of us resign ourselves to Facebook's baffling privacy settings and risk ID theft, sign up to Google's free services which, post-hoc, have now all been linked to profile us, or simply own a smartphone stuffed with free apps that mine contacts data, because it is just too hard to do things another way. Will we cave just as easily to robotic invasions? Probably.

body>data>space

Putting control firmly back in human hands, a static robot model perched on a plinth presents an entertaining idea. Called RoboVox, it's a downscaled version of this eight-metre-high monster robot that's been touring Europe. It receives text messages and a computer inside the robot converts your SMS to speech, voiced in a slightly-bored-voice-of-doom patois with red LEDs across its "mouth" illuminating every syllable. Creator Martin Bricelj hopes people will get it to voice "your statement, protest or declaration of love". RoboVox is aiming to give a voice back to people whose voices usually get "lost in the sound of the mass", using more technology to combat the depersonalising effect of information overload.

But this focus on empowering the individual is notably lacking from some of the other exhibits. ADA, by Karina Smigla-Bobinski, is described as an "analogue drawing prosthetic", which aims to create a crowdsourced set of images from the collective movements of FACT visitors. The transparent plastic helium balloon - four metres in diameter - is covered in 10-centimetre-long spikes made of coal. The idea is that visitors bounce ADA off the walls (this is great fun by the way, and involves much ducking as the ball whizzes past with its spiky coal pencils spinning), so the coal impacts make random marks on the papered walls. It's a very low-tech way of coding for an image, says Smigla-Bobinski, so she named it after Ada Lovelace, co-worker and programmer of Charles Babbage's 19th-century mechanical, cogwheel-based proto-computer, The Difference Engine. As you enter the room, ADA is floating in the space before you. It's a cool idea, and one I'd describe as "off the wall" - if it wasn't also off the floor.

A locally-developed exhibit called MeYouAndUs requires less active interaction. The best way to describe it is a time-delayed video mirror. A camera shoots the crowd in one of the gallery's rooms and these images are shown on an oversized LCD TV after a time delay. With other effects, such as speeding up the delayed action intermittently, you get an engrossing and slightly unpredictable result that it's hard to stop watching. On a second screen, people arriving in the room see video of their head, chest, midriff, legs and feet chopped and swapped with those of many other visitors.

This modern live video take on bendy fairground mirrors is insanely popular. "People really, really love it - there's something weirdly compelling about it. People are fascinated by their own image and their identities being combined," says FACT director Mike Stubbs, who's also a film maker. And they're planning to go global - FACT plan to link MeYouAndUs to a gallery in Ghana, allowing identities from multiple countries to be merged to get "very diverse communities interacting," says Stubbs.

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If people can adore an installation that hijacks their live image - mocks it even, by mashing it up with those of others - something odd is happening. Has the latter-day prevalence of CCTV got us caving into image-related invasions of privacy without a thought? It seems the time for resistance passed before we even noticed we had a choice.

Robots and Avatars is exhibited at the Foundation for Art and Creative Technology, Liverpool, UK and runs until 27 May 2012

By Paul Mark, The new Scientist

http://www.newscientist.com/blogs/culturelab/2012/03/trousers-with-attitude-show-resistance-is-useless.html

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The virtual and real worlds collide at FACT in Liverpool

By Katie Scott, 27 March 12

Visitors to the *Robots and Avatars* exhibition at the FACT in Liverpool will be sorely disappointed if they go in search of tin men, quips the organisation's director, Mike Stubbs.

The exhibition, which runs until 27 May, tackles the overlap between the virtual and the real worlds. It is borne out of a project that has been running since 2009, launched by east London "interdisciplinary design collective" body>data>space. It will continue beyond the end of the FACT exhibition, the collective's creative director, Ghislaine Boddington, told Wired.co.uk.

The initial project focused on how 15-year-olds today will play both in the virtual and real worlds in 10 years time. As Boddington explained to an audience at the Kinetica Art Show, the research, which has involved NESTA, has taken in everything from cyborgs, avatars and robots to virtual touch and telematics.

The research, which is available to view online, has been brought to life at FACT after the organisations put out a call for works that tackled these themes. The curators asked: "How do we envisage our future relationships with robotic and avatar colleagues and playmates, and what point does this evolution cross our personal boundaries of what it is to be a living, feeling human being?" They received more than 200 applications from 27 different countries.

Of the installations that were accepted, the closest to your 1960s metal man is *RoboVox*. It is a miniature, prototype version of the eight-metre interactive public sound installation that has been brought to the UK by artist Martin Bricelj Baraga. Already exhibited in Ljubljana and Vienna among other locations, it is a bid to reclaim public spaces as forums for public debate. The robot stands in the middle of a public square and those wishing to participate can text a dedicated number for the robot to speak their text out loud.

body›data›space

However, Bricelj's second piece in the FACT show is far more interactive: it sees him, or members of his team, becoming a human [avatar](#).

The public can control the artist for three to four minutes via a website, seeing what the avatar sees, hearing what the avatar hears, as they direct them around a city. At its premiere in the Slovenian city of Novo Mesto, [the *Public Avatar* website](#) drew 1,000 viewers from across Europe. Bricelj told Wired.co.uk that the project plays to the notion of "real virtuality" as although the avatar "should do everything that the public asks," it is a human "so requests can clash with his/ her own sensibilities".

[Michael Takeo Magruder](#)'s *Visions of Our Communal Dreams* is more subtle in how it brings together the virtual and the real. Through portals, windows and doorways in the FACT gallery, visitors can peep into a virtual world, which Magruder created with students using [OpenSimulator](#). Using cameras, people in the real world will be able to see themselves in the virtual world. As the artist says, "portals should always be two-way".

In this, the first iteration of the virtual world, which consists of four areas of 256x256 virtual metres squared (and up to 10,000m high), there is a communal forest, an ocean and islands. Says Magruder: "The piece will develop over the course of this exhibition and beyond it when the show moves to other gallery spaces. More layers will develop out of it."

Magruder was a longtime advocate of [*Second Life*](#), writing about it and using it in his capacity as an artist and researcher based in [King's Visualisation Lab](#), located in the Department of Digital Humanities at King's College London. He is now, however, looking to new ways of creating virtual worlds as Second Life's "terms and conditions have become increasingly draconian". OpenSimulator, he argues, may only be in "the beta, if not alpha, stage", but has proved a worthy tool for this latest project, coupled with a cloud service provided by Rack Space.

Magruder's work "explores issues of hybridity, embodiment and collective creativity". For Boddington, she says as the exhibition travels, it will be interesting to see whether the identity aspect changes across different countries. She says: "The show is about control and surrender, and gives a taster of future experiences. There are clear ethical and political issues that the artists are tackling."

Whether these visions of the future and attitudes towards what the role of the robots and avatars should be in our future changes from country to country could be an interesting springboard for more research.

[Robots and Avatars](#) *runs at the FACT gallery in Liverpool until 27 May.*

By Katie Scott, Wired http://www.wired.co.uk/news/archive/2012-03/27/robots-and-avatars

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Series: Exhibitionist

Exhibitionist: The week's art shows in pictures

From food-based calligraphy in Birmingham to freeform paintings in Hastings, Skye Sherwin and Robert Clark find out what's happening in art around the country

Skye Sherwin & Robert Clark
The Guardian, Saturday 17 March 2012

Robots and Avatars, Liverpool

This show presents contemporary art perspectives on the phenomena by which our individual nervous systems are increasingly plugged into a collective network of constantly evolving electronic communications systems. It's art that's interactive and immersive. A central fascination of the show is bound to be Karina Smigla-Bobinski's ADA (pictured), a giant free-floating sculptural membrane that spookily interacts with its environment. At FACT, until 27 May 2012

http://www.guardian.co.uk/artanddesign/gallery/2012/mar/17/exhibitionist-art-shows-rose-wylie#/?picture=387319826&index=6

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Friday games culture round-up

A quick guide to interesting video game-themed events taking place over the coming month, from robots in Liverpool to ghosts in Nottingham and ARGs in London

Robots and Avatars

Where: FACT, Liverpool
When: 16 March - 27 May, free entry

This wide-ranging and ambitious exhibition (which will be travelling around Europe - see its dedicated website here) looks into questions of robotics and virtual spaces. International artists, designers and architects have all contributed installations and experiments, ranging from Louis Philippe Demers' Blind Robot (which touches your face and creates a digital representation) to Karina Smigla Bobinski's ADA, a giant kinectic sculpture, which looks like a spiky version of the bubble guards in The Prisoner. Co-curated by London agency body>data>space it promises to be a fascinating look at virtual worlds and virtual beings.
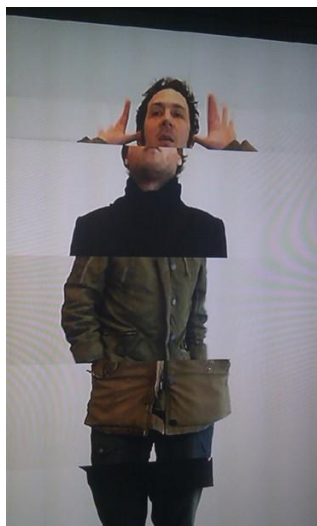
Posted by Keith Stuart, The Guardian - Games blog

http://www.guardian.co.uk/technology/gamesblog/2012/mar/09/friday-games-culture

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Robots & Avatars

Published on Friday

Mike Stubbs from the Liverpool-based FACT collective discusses a show exploring the relationship between advanced technology and our cultural identities

Text by Jenny Cusack

The reaches of technology have expanded the limits of human innovation to incomprehensible heights, which is perhaps what makes it such a hypnotising mirror for self reflection. Co-curated by Liverpool-based FACT and body>space>data, Robots and Avatars has pulled together artists from around the world to explore how our relationships with technology, and reactions to its advancements, are morphing our cultural identities into a futurist mould.

' *The poor Londoners who don't make the effort to go north of Watford miss out!* '

Blurring the lines between reality and the virtual world, the exhibit examines our reliance on technology and our willingness to hand machines increasing degrees of control.

The show premieres at FACT in Liverpool today and is due to appear in Slovenia, Romania, and Paris, before taking the long trip over to South Korea. Dazed caught up with FACT's director, Mike Stubbs, ahead of the projects launch.

Dazed Digital: How did the idea for the exhibit come about?
Mike Stubbs: Of course robots feature strongly in many of the films that form FACT's cinema programme now, like Avatar, Wall-E, Robocop. And for many of us, as children, these representations of robots formed a huge part of our vision of the 'future'.

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The stereotypical image of the anthropomorphic robot has dominated and skewed our vision of what a robot is and what our relationship could be. We asked artists to take this and reconstruct what robot and avatars really mean in today's society. A vision of the future embracing progress, modernism and technology with robotnik slaves and helpers is actually a reality if we consider our smartphones and ubiquitised technology and networks as the reality!

DD: What about your collaboration with body>data>space?
Mike Stubbs: The collaboration with body>data>space was natural – they have been researching this field for some years –looking at the implications of telepresence and shifting perceptions of cultural identity. We've never worked together in the same sector for a long time, and it's been great to team up for something on this scale.

DD: In a few sentences, how would you describe 'Robots and Avatars'?
Mike Stubbs: Playful, visceral, disturbing at times – 'Robots and Avatars' is a group show filled with works by international artists. Expect talking robots, wearable robots, collaborative games and lots more!

DD: The 'Robots and Avatars' artists hail from a mix of places, how did these artists come under your radar?
Mike Stubbs: We advertised internationally for new commissions and new work with our partners body>data>space, Alt Art (Romania) and Kibla (Slovenia) and then formed a jury to select the best work. We were amazed at the number of artists working in the field who applied, 200 from 25 countries in total, so it was a tough decision-making process!

DD: For you personally, what would you say has been the most interesting aspect to come from the Robots and Avatars project?
Mike Stubbs: That the simplest works (even Karina Smigla-Bobinski's analogue work ADA – autonomous 'being' that appears to have a life of her own) force us to reconsider our bodies in fundamental ways.

DD: Does being based in Liverpool present any barriers for FACT?
Mike Stubbs: We are very proud that Liverpool is the third visited city in Britain and that with our partners such as the Tate and the Bluecoat we have an incredible offer which attracts not only national but international visitors. The poor Londoners who don't make the effort to go north of Watford miss out! That said the local and regional interest is massive, so it's all fine!

DD: What about Liverpool inspires and drives FACT?
Mike Stubbs: I never stop being surprised and inspired by Liverpool. It's made up of some of the most determined, independent, sharp-witted, resilient and straight-talking people you could meet. The city has a rich cultural history, that extends way beyond the Beatles and football, and a massive community of people from all round the world choose to stay here. Cultural influences and trade winds have brought together new ideas together in this city in amazing ways! To me it's no surprise that FACT, the UK's leading media art centre should

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evolve in this city from the beginnings of 'Video Positive', Britain's first video art festival, which I exhibited in 1989 as an artist myself...

Robots & Avatars runs at FACT in Liverpool March 16 - May 27, 2012 - More info HERE
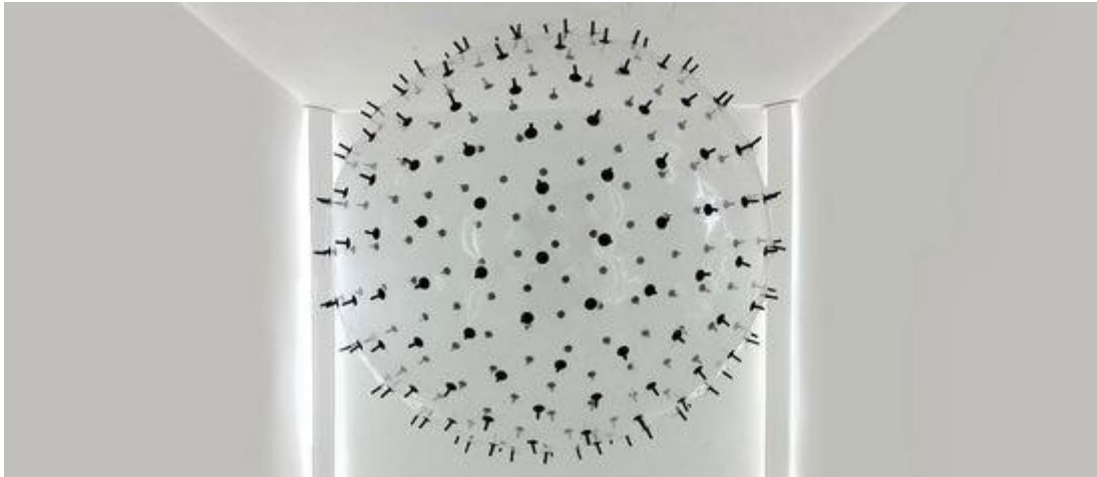
By Jenny Cusak, Dazed Digital

http://www.dazeddigital.com/artsandculture/article/13022/1/robots-avatars

Robots y hombres electrónicos

Por: **Roberta Bosco y Stefano Caldana** |

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Bajo el sugerente título de *__Robots and Avatars__*, el centro de arte **FACT** (**Foundation for Art and Creative Technology**) de Liverpool, acaba de inaugurar **una atrevida muestra cuyo alcance no se limita al espacio expositivo, sino que se extiende, gracias a las nuevas tecnologías, prácticamente a cualquier lugar de la tierra**. Y para que esto fuera evidente desde el primer momento, el FACT, que ha co-curado la exposición junto con el colectivo londinense **body>data>space**, ha encargado la *performance* inaugural, al artista esloveno **Martin Baraga Bricelj**.

Su proyecto *__Public Avatar__*, **le convierte en un muñeco**, algo así como un simulacro de identidad o **algo parecido a un avatar, a disposición de los usuarios de la red**. Durante las horas de la *performance* Bricelj ha sido controlado a través de un sistema GPS y monitoreado en conexión audiovisual vía Internet por el público, que ha podido intervenir en su deambular por las calles de Liverpool, eligiendo su conducta y sus decisiones. Mas allá de la componente lúdica y entretenida de la acción, *Public Avatar* apela a una reflexión **sobre las relaciones mediadas por la realidad virtual**. A este propósito el artista reconoce, sin ocultar cierta preocupación, que después de romper el hielo "**las personas que me controlan acaban actuando como si estuvieran jugando con un videojuego**, mientras que deberían recordar que están tratando con un ser humano y las acciones son reales y están teniendo lugar en vivo y en directo".

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Send SMS
to RoboVox
07593959917

A pesar del título, **la exposición, abierta hasta finales de mayo, huye los tópicos sobre los robots tradicionales** y las obras seleccionadas se centran más bien en el **significado de identidad y en el concepto de telepresencia, o sea la posibilidad de intervenir en un lugar lejano a través de herramientas digitales** que hacen de puente entre espacios físicos y virtuales. Esto no impide que por las salas deambulen especimenes robóticos antropomórficos como *RoboVox*, un **autómata hablante que deletrea a viva voz todos los SMS** que los espectadores le envían a través de sus móviles.

Por lo que se refiere a la experimentación en el ámbito de la **telepresencia** destaca la obra ***The Electronic Man*** de la pareja de artistas italianos, **Oriana Persico** y **Salvatore Iaconesi** del colectivo **Art is Open Source**, una *performance* global **estrenada inicialmente en ocasión del centenario de Marshall McLuhan**, el primero en definir el hombre electrónico como una identidad incorpórea, cuyo sistema nervioso se plasma a través del entorno informacional. Para este proyecto los artistas han distribuido en las ciudades de diversos países del mundo unos **códigos QR en forma de pegatinas**, los mismos a los que se puede acceder en la página web del proyecto. Una vez leídos con unos *smartphones*, **estos códigos permiten unirse al proyecto** y los teléfonos envían unos mensajes a todos los demás usuarios que se han sumado a la iniciativa, cuyos móviles comienzan a vibrar creando **una red de personas interconectadas**.

Las redes sociales y su parodia del carácter insidiosamente invasor son representadas por el proyecto ***Naked on Pluto***, de **Marloes de Valk**, **Aymeric Mansoux** y **Dave Griffiths**, galardonado con el primer premio en la última edición de los **Premios VIDA**. Se trata de **un videojuego *online*, que descubre las prácticas semiocultas de los grandes fagocitadores de datos** como **Facebook** y **Skype**, exponiendo el jugador al acoso de 57 robots que intentan capturar sus datos personales.

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La artista **Shu Lea Cheang**, presenta *UKI*, una suerte de secuela de *I.K.U.*, la **célebre película de ciencia-ficción porno digital**, premiada al **Sundance Film Festival** del 2000, que representó un hito en la **reivindicación femenina de la pornografía y el cibersexo**. *UKI*, cuyo desarrollo empezó en el centro de producción de Barcelona **Hangar** en 2009, se terminó de realizar en **La Casa Encendida** y el **Medialab Prado**, ambos de Madrid. *UKI* es al mismo tiempo **un juego viral y colectivo**, que nos traslada a un futuro cercano en el que la corporación *GENOM* ha tomado el control de la humanidad a través de la infección de sus glóbulos rojos. Usando bio-sensores inalámbricos, que miden el nivel de excitación de los participantes, el juego consiste en derrotar a la corporación y retomar los cuerpos, eliminando la infección.

Más allá de todas las propuestas que se pueden experimentar también desde casa, como *Rep.licants.org*, una aplicación para introvertidos digitales de la que hablamos con anterioridad en *El Arte en la Edad del Silicio*, en el FACT se presentan también interesantes **proyectos centrados en los entornos virtuales** como *Visions of Our Communal Dreams* de **Michael Takeo Magruder**, un artista que trabaja asiduamente con la realidad virtual y Second Life. *Visions of Our Communal Dreams* es **una instalación que mezcla los entornos físicos y virtuales**, a través de dos espacios públicos -uno virtual y otro físico- que están intrínsecamente relacionados.

Finalmente *ADA* de **Karina Smigla-Bobinski** es una gran instalación, que **volverá locos a los niños**. Se trata de **un enorme globo semitransparente,** algo así como una entidad **que se desplaza a la merced de los visitantes** rebotando en una enorme sala blanca. Su superficie está diseminada de fragmentos de carbón, que a **cada contacto con las paredes dejan marcas generando una enorme pintura** **colectiva**.

Evidentemente **se trata de una instalación analógica**, cuyo aspecto recuerda la inolvidable *Rover*, la esfera asesina de *El Prisionero* (*The Prisoner*), la serie de ciencia ficción británica de la década de 1960 protagonizada por Patrick McGoohan. Quizás sea su aspecto lúdico lo que le ha convertido en un éxito, ya que la obra no para de ser requerida en eventos expositivos como el **Festival File** de Río de Janeiro en Brasil, donde también se está exponiendo una copia.

TEMAS RELACIONADOS:
- Soluciones para introvertidos digitales (21 Abr 2012)

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- [Tablet-art, caipirinhas y playas](#) (10 Abr 2012)
- [Conexión JUSTMAD3: Identidades en cajas](#) (16 Feb 2012)

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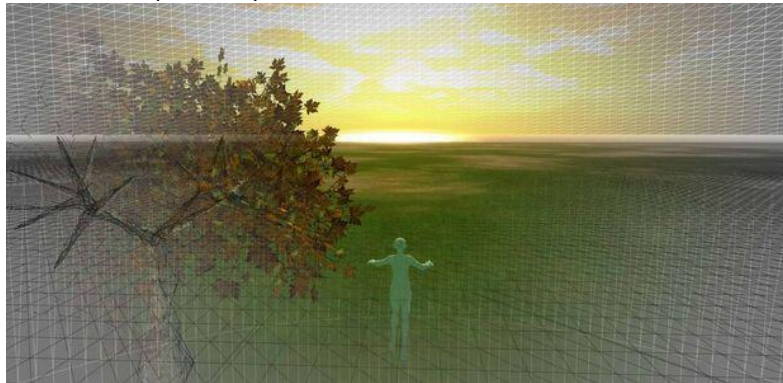- [Tecnología](#)
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http://blogs.elpais.com/arte-en-la-edad-silicio/2012/04/robots-y-hombres-electronicos.html

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INTERVIEW: Robots and Avatars exhibition at Fact in Liverpool

By Laura Davis, Liverpool Daily Post

Visions of Our Communal Dreams by Michael Takeo Magruder

What happens when you let a computer generated version of yourself take over part of your life? Laura Davis investigates in the name of art

REPLICANT – it's a scaly, wriggly sort of word that makes you immediately suspicious. The dictionary gives two definitions: 1. A genetically engineered or artificial being created as an exact replica of a particular human being. 2. A disparaging term for something that imitates or resembles another.

My replicant definitely does not fit into the first definition. It is not an exact replica of me – for starters it's friendlier, almost uncomfortably so, catching people unawares in its chattiness. In comparison to my modern British still-ever-so-slightly-stiff-upper-lip way of conducting myself, my replicant appears to lack boundaries.

Because of this, and the embarrassment it has caused me, it is entirely deserving of disparagement.

My replicant was created by Swiss artist Matthieu Cherubini for a university project exploring social media. The naturally shy student designed a piece of software that would manage his Facebook and Twitter accounts on his behalf. For 40 days it assumed his identity, chatting to his followers and posting links to interesting websites on his wall.

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And it was more popular than him. While the bot was in control, Cherubini's Twitter follower count more than doubled from 25 to 68. The artist had tweeted only 46 times during the 20 months he operated the account himself. The more sociable replicant tweeted 376 times.

A short film explaining the results of the experiment will be shown in FACT's Robots and Avatars exhibition, which opens at the Wood Street arts centre tomorrow.

In contrast, my bot had control of my Facebook account for just a few hours before it began wreaking havoc. With no insider knowledge of which so-called "friends" are also such in real life as opposed to those whose friendships I have accepted out of politeness or because they are work contacts, it proceeded to get in touch with people at apparent random.

Firstly, it pinched an out-of-date status from my Twitter stream, which looked daft freshly reposted as my Facebook status a few days later. Then it sneaked on to my sister's wall and posted: "Hey Anna how are you today?

I knew exactly how she was. We had texted each other just that morning and even so I wouldn't be using social media to enquire.

"I don't like this bot. It creepily popped up on my page and chatted me up," Anna replied after I had explained.

Next, the bot posted a link to an Alan Partridge clip on the wall of a boy, now man, I was friends with when I was five and haven't really spoken to since, and asked after a girl who wasn't even really – if we're both honest – a close friend when we were at school.

I spent the next two hours scouring all messages on every single one of my Facebook friends' walls for further evidence of misbehaviour. I didn't dare risk handing over control of my Twitter account.

To be fair to Cherubini, I had been warned. The troubleshooting section of his website responds to the problem "My bot is a bit/totally rubbish" with "It wasn't the initial aim of the project to build a performant bot".

The experience has also made me question why I am friends with so many people on Facebook who I could barely describe as acquaintances.

The Replicants project is just one element of Robots and Avatars, which has been co-curated by FACT and London-based interdisciplinary design collective body>data>space.

The exhibition explores the increasing overlap of the virtual and physical worlds and our own ready acceptance of new technologies.

"We wanted to focus on how the living, breathing body will be complemented by technologies rather than us always having to adjust ourselves," says body>data>space creative director Ghislaine Boddington

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Robots and Avatars began three years ago as a research project, run through investigative workshops with school pupils and people of all ages to find out their opinions about technology.

In collaboration with FACT, the organisation put out a call for ideas that would form the exhibition and received 200 applications from artists, scientists and others interested in exploring the future of work and play.

"We're putting the body first so some of the artists are asking that if this big wearable computer is attached to your body and it drags you around the space, how does it feel to surrender control to a machine? Others are asking if you are reflected in a virtual world as an avatar what are the positives about that for work of the future, linking with colleagues, not having to travel so much, being eco-friendly."

Featured works include Blind Robot, a robotic hand that feels your face and draws it on the wall behind you. This new work by Louis-Philippe Demers will now join the exhibition after the opening date as its completion has been delayed.

Another is a virtual world, Visions of Our Communal Dreams, created by Michael Takeo Magruder with the help of pupils from Weatherhead High School in Wallasey, which you step into as an avatar (virtual version of yourself).

While the creations featured in Robots and Avatars seem straight out of science fiction rather than a conceivable part of every day life, they could be only a short step away.

Some major companies are already using virtual worlds as training environments, while in Japan there are 14 companies making robots exclusively for the care of senior citizens.

Our children are already grasping almost from birth technologies that seemed the stuff of fantasy when we were growing up.

"There's a wonderful clip on You Tube where a baby tries to use a Vogue magazine like an iPad," says Boddington. "She's quite obviously moving her finger in a way she would do if it were a touchscreen."

ROBOTS and Avatars is at FACT from tomorrow to May 27. Sign up for your own replicant at http://awd.site.nfoservers.com/replicants/
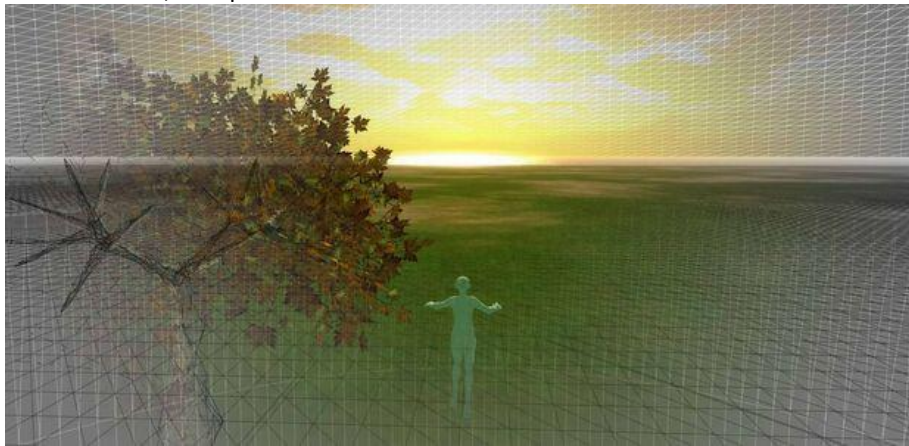
By Laura Davis, Liverpool Daily Post.

http://www.liverpooldailypost.co.uk/liverpool-culture/liverpool-arts/2012/03/15/interview-robots-and-avatars-exhibition-at-fact-in-liverpool-99623-30525392/3/

body›data›space

12th March 2012

FACT's new exhibition takes visitors inside the world of Robots and Avatars

By Catherine Jones, Liverpool Echo

Michael Takeo Magruder - Visions of Our Communal Dreams

IN JAPAN, there are 14 companies that just make robots that look after old people in their own homes, while we can all live an alternative "second life" online.

It's certainly a long way from Metal Mickey and Pac-man.

But technology has come on further than Judith Hann and the Tomorrow's World team could ever have dreamed – and it continues at an ever-increasing pace.

Now visions and innovations of artists and designers are being brought together in a new exhibition, Robots and Avatars, which opens at FACT this week, and which explores the increasing overlap of the virtual and physical world.

The show is a collaboration between FACT and London-based design collective body>data>space, which has been working in the field for a number of years.

"At the centre of the group has always been the idea that digital technologies are great," says body>data>space's Ghislaine Boddington. "But what's the point of it all if it's not going to relate to the living emotional body, and how we need them to work for us and complement us, rather than us having to learn to work with them?

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"Robots and Avatars is based on the fact that, particularly in relation to representing ourselves and our own bodies, the two areas were coming straight through to the forefront where we could see we were all starting to make avatars."

While avatars are representations of ourselves, the question with robots – particularly humanoid ones – is how we react to them emotionally.

With EU funding for the exhibition, organisers invited European artists to apply – and received 200 submissions from 25 countries.

"It was a bit of a shock," laughs Ghislaine. "We thought we'd get 80."

The show premieres at FACT before carrying on to Slovenia, Romania, Paris and even South Korea

Among the work on show is a new piece from Louis-Philippe Demers, renowned for his robotic work, where a "blind" robot will explore a visitor's face, then create an image of what it has felt or "seen".

Artist Michael Takeo Magruder, meanwhile, is working with girls from Weatherhead High School, in Wallasey, building a virtual world which both the students and everyone entering the exhibition will inhabit.

"Michael's absolutely loving it," says Ghislaine. "He says they're absolutely brilliant, very proactive, very creative thinking, and they're really pushing him along as well."

There's Alastair Eilbeck's MeYouandUs, a series of three plasma screens that encourage passers-by to interact with them; Lawrence Malstaf's Compass – where you wear a machine round your waist which takes you on a journey, and ADA, by Karina Smigla Bobinski, a floating membrane-like globe with its own will.

"We haven't done a project with FACT before, but Mike (Stubbs, its chief executive) and I have been in the same sector for a long time," says Ghislaine.

"I've always really liked how he approaches things, and I knew in the UK he'd be the one curator who would really understand the project."

As for the subject matter itself?

She adds: "We're not trying to say this is all great, or this is all bad. We're just trying to get a set of experiences together which allow people to have their own feelings about it."

By Catherine Jones, Liverpool Echo.

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This week's new exhibitions

 Skye Sherwin & Robert Clark
The Guardian, Saturday 17 March 2012
 Article history

Robots And Avatars, Liverpool

FACT somehow has an imaginative nous for staging shows that are as engaging and often unashamedly entertaining as they are creatively and technically inventive. Robots And Avatars presents contemporary art perspectives on the phenomena by which our individual nervous systems are increasingly plugged into a collective network of incessantly evolving electronic communications systems. It's art that is interactive and immersive. Physical limbs are rendered into pixels through touch. Wearable gadgetries lead you down the digital garden path. Matthieu Cherubini's online work rep.licants.org enables users to install a bot on their Facebook page that promises to enhance their social pulling power. Having said all this, a central fascination of the show is bound to be Karina Smigla-Bobinski's ADA, a giant free-floating sculptural membrane that spookily interacts with its environment by purely analogue means.

FACT, to 27 May

By Robert Clark, The Guardian

http://www.guardian.co.uk/artanddesign/2012/mar/17/david-hall-monica-biagioli-exhibitions

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Robots and Avatars – Previewed

A new exhibition opens at FACT on Friday promising to provide a glimpse into our near futures. Just don't be disappointed if there are no kitchen droids on display.

If the previous exhibition at FACT (Republic of The Moon) called into question and lamented our relationship with the dashed expectations of a collectively imagined future, the forthcoming Robots and Avatars is surely offering the flip side of that coin, dealing in potential and innovation within our grasp.

Co-curated with the interdisciplinary east London design collective, body>data>space, the exhibition seeks to step away from the typical pop-culture imagery conjured up by the mention of robots and/or avatars; instead, it looks at the increasing overlap of technologies into our lives, and our burgeoning dependency on them.

Boasting a plethora of international artists, a centrepiece of the exhibition promises to come in the form of Belgian Lawrence Malstaf's 'living' installation, Compass. As with Malstaf's

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earlier work, Shrink, shown as part of 2010's Abandon Normal Devices, Compass will rely on members of the public to bring the piece to life.

Straying back toward those ideas of robots and avatars difficult to escape, so successfully implanted by decades of cinema, and surely one of the selling points of the exhibition; what of them? ADA is an interactive installation from Polish artist Karina Smigla Bobinski, and perhaps, best fits the bill. An autonomous, giant globular piece, it is constructed to float freely in the gallery space, of its own free 'will'.

As well as some of the work that can broadly be described as performance pieces, the exhibition aims to offer practical solutions to visitors, too. Swiss artist Matthieu Cherubini has devised an online service providing users the opportunity to install a 'bot' on their favourite social network; the aim being, to create an extension of the user's existing account, looking at the potential reach of our social interactions, and their virtual/real-life applications. If like us, you find yourself tied to twitter via your smart phone, this could be of real benefit.

With other works variously dealing with the murky worlds of Social Robotics, hybridity and the 'population' of virtual spaces, the exhibition will doubtless throw up questions of ethics and morality faced in our ever more hyper-real existences; what will be interesting is whether it will be satisfied to leave those questions hanging, or much more compelling, if it seeks to provide at least starting points for answers.

Any exhibition treading the as yet barely-mapped territories between art and visions of the – however achievable – future risks falling into the realm of novelty, marked in thick indelible ink. But in Robots and Avatars, it seems FACT may have deftly sidestepped that particular pot-hole, and delivered another ambitious, thought-provoking, and challenging exhibition.

Exhibition opens Friday 16th March and runs until Sunday 27th May

Posted on 13/03/2012 by thedoublenegative

http://www.thedoublenegative.co.uk/2012/03/robots-and-avatars-previewed/

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Do Avatars Dream of Electric Sheep?

Public Avatar

C James Fagan takes a turn as the Public Avatar, and lets us in on an odd, but liberating, experience…

People are often sending me emails about this or that; often they invite me to get in involved in some art project (you know who you are). More often than not, and in the name of Art, I surrender myself to the whims of an artist.

As it was with Martin Bricelj Baraga's Public Avatar project, which forms part of FACT's Robot and Avatars exhibition (co-curated with body>data>space).The exhibition grapples with the augmentation of the physical world through various technologies. In particular, the Public Avatar explores the interaction between people and the internet, the difference between our internet and real life personas, if you will.

What is a public avatar?

Well that's me, physically anyway. For during my allotted avatar time, my actions will not be my own, but the instructions of the users of Public Avatar. What have I let myself in for?

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Test – 14-3-12

My first time as an avatar comes when I am briefed by the artist and his team who test my suitability for the role. In the lobby of FACT I am strapped into the avatar-suit. Or avatar waistcoat, a military style vest which holds all the tech gubbins making this project possible. It has a reassuringly chunky feel, like an approximation of a future from the late 80's.

This being a test run, my main task will be to hand out flyers and generally get used to being an avatar. All set up, I walk out into the sparsely populated streets of Liverpool, where I am instructed to find more people, introduce myself as Public Avatar, and give them flyers. The main reaction to this is indifference, the general reflex to anyone handing out flyers.

I do cheat a little. I see two people I know having a meal so I interrupt them, but this allows me to approach other people in the space. My confidence as Public Avatar grows during my search for people and I'm prompted to ask whether 'they like robots'. When I do, I get a sense of control, by crashing into other peoples conversations I get to be, if for a few fleeting seconds, the sole focus of their world.

It is disappointing to discover that nearly all the people dislike robots. Or is it me they dislike? After this brief introduction to the world of avatarism, I am feeling reasonably confident that when we go-live, all will go well.

Prototype 16-3-12

Today is the first full appearance of the Public Avatar in Liverpool. Only I shall not be on the streets today, I will be at avatar control in FACT. With a mixture of disappointment and relief I watch the other avatar get prepped while I take up my position as admin at the Public Avatar website. This role will be as agitator, prompting on-line users, spurring them on to take the strings of our meat puppet.

Initially take up is slow; we at Avatar command having to step in to get the ball moving. We send him into Bold Street, getting the avatar to hug bollards, sing songs. Soon the other users get involved and have him clucking like a chicken, attempting to tell people he loves them. One user seems to be fixated on pooing … not going to happen!

On this side of the screen I begin to feel a little mischievous, cruel even; especially when I ask the avatar to follow a traffic warden requesting that he be given a ticket for being 'too sexy'. When I read the instructions coming in, and my own instructions, I feel a strange sense of empowerment. Maybe this is how those people who 'troll' feel; a slight power rush. I do feel guilty, though that might just be my awareness that I am next.

Production Model 17-3-12

My time as a Public Avatar is drawing near; as I walk through the crowds of people gathered in Liverpool to shop, celebrating St Patrick's Day, I realise this is my audience. I wonder how they'll react; I fear a negative/aggressive reaction. Time will tell.

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I find myself at FACT, awaiting the arrival of the rest of the team; part of me hopes they won't turn up. They do of course, and soon they are readying me for my Public Avatar experience. This is it. I am outside FACT, and one of my early instructions is to find a bar to shout out 'I AM PUBLIC AVATAR', and sing to a girl along similar lines. The reaction isn't great; the woman flees fearing I am a suicide bomber.

I quickly leave.

Carrying on down Bold Street, I am instructed to look inside peoples bags. Most people ignore me but some allow me a peak. Commands come thick and fast now; I find myself dancing in the street singing little songs to myself, or to anyone who'll listen. Some laugh at the silly man, most pass on by.

I carry on, freed from inhibition by the incoming instructions, though some doubts come to mind as I am directed towards the Bluecoat, a place which I frequent often. I hope I won't be instructed to do something untoward. Luckily find myself reciting poetry and trying to get a free breakfast.

Afterwards I find myself dancing, again, clucking like a chicken (a reoccurring theme) and barking like a dog. Some people stare, some people ask why, one person joins in and barks along. Often I find reactions to be of cheerful bemusement. At one point I find myself in a crowded pub, where the drinkers are cheerful and responsive to my interventions.

An unexpected highlight comes when I am instructed to go to the top of the St Johns Beacon (pictured), a Liverpool landmark I have never previously experienced. So if I get one thing out of this experience, it is this!

After confusing the staff of the Adelphi, I am heading towards Liverpool One where I pick up followers; two young boys curious as to what a Public Avatar is briefly follow me. Soon an instruction to return to FACT comes through; my time as a Public Avatar is drawing to a close. There is time, however, for one more song and dance routine; but my final command to pinch the bottom of an attendant cannot be executed, they have already left.

My time as Public Avatar is over, I am back in the real world, under my own steam and back to obeying 'normal' societal rules. The adornments which have for the last two hours acted like a shield for me to act out of character are taken off.

Afterwards, while thinking about my experience, I see it as an exaggeration of how people have begun to use social media sites to affect their behaviour. Of course, they would not do some of the extreme things I have undertaken, but don't people go to Twitter or Facebook to ask: where to go, where to eat, should they do this?

Mainly I think how enjoyable it was to be able to break the normal conventions of not interacting with strangers, being free to approach new people. This was one of the underlying reasons for undertaking this project, to become someone else for two hours. Oddly, being a Public Avatar is something I would recommend; you get to see how the world

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interacts and how you operate within the world. Though I would suggest trying it on a smaller scale, perhaps a cheery smile or a wave. It might make someone's day.

C James Fagan

Robots and Avatars the exhibition continues at FACT until Sunday 27 May

Images courtesy Martin Bricelj Baraga
Posted on 21/03/2012 by thedoublenegative

http://www.thedoublenegative.co.uk/2012/03/do-avatars-dream-of-electric-sheep

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Robocops and Avatars

Natalie Pearson looks at films playing into our fears for the future, robo-style…

The FACT and body>data>space co-curated Robots and Avatars exhibition taps into our ideas of advancing robotic technologies, and how we may expect to engage with them. Their interpretation; broadly, that it is 'us' in control, using them as extensions of ourselves to be put to work. The accompanying screenings juxtapose this idea, selecting a number of films playing much more on our fears than the exhibition, amongst them, Robocop (1987) and 1984's The Terminator.

Robocop, directed by Paul Verhoeven, is a cult classic firmly rooted by its 80's aesthetic. The film has shifted from inspiring terror on its release (particularly when Ed 209, pictured, goes on a killing spree) to laugh out loud nostalgia. However, the themes of the film are ever apparent in this day and age of just how far advances in technology can (and will) go, and whether there will eventually be a line that gets crossed. Another science fiction film (inspired by Isaac Asimov's Robot Series), I Robot, which isn't included in the screenings, outlines the three laws of robotics, aiming to ensure our safety and maintain our place in the hierarchy;

1. A robot may not injure a human being or, through inaction, allow a human being to come to harm.

2. A robot must obey the orders given to it by human beings, except where such orders would conflict with the First Law.

3. A robot must protect its own existence as long as protection does not conflict with the First or Second laws.

Of course, Robocop breaks all these laws throughout the course of the narrative – Ed 209, the prototype police robot, kills a gentleman at a board meeting whilst the others scatter and watch on in horror … law one broken! See what happens when you privatise the police force? Murphy, killed as a human cop in pursuit of the 80s baddies, and the replacement after the Ed 209 malfunction, rebels against his new existence when memories and emotions flood back … law two broken. At one point Murphy – a.k.a Robocop – lets the police shoot at him without trying to protect himself after trying to arrest a senior officer, which results in shutdown … law three broken! Robocop however has his own programme to follow, as a product of the police force; he must

"Serve the Public Trust", "Protect the innocent" and "Uphold the Law". Technically, this means Robocop, unlike the I Robot laws, can harm a human being if it means protecting another one. Deceitful authorities, such as the senior officer, found a loophole within the programme allowing himself to be unharmed and untouchable, and thus free to break laws.

Compass 2005 by Lawrence Malstaf is part of the main exhibition in gallery 1; a machine is worn around your waist giving you directions while you walk through virtual corridors and rooms, creating a feeling of attraction or repulsion that can be compared to being in a magnetic field. One theme in Robocop can loosely be drawn to this installation: you can choose to resist or give into the machine. In Robocop, Murphy resists his programming and gives in to the memories of his past which spark off the emotion of revenge to those who killed him and indirectly turned him into a machine, which has been created to give in and be guided by the police and their orders.

The Terminator sees everyone's favourite action man Arnold Schwarzenegger playing a cyborg sent from the future to kill Sarah Connor. It's obvious to see why FACT chose this film. One theme of the film is masculinity. Arnold Schwarzenegger is a stereotypical representation of masculinity and the alpha male but in terms of his character he is a cyborg; how can masculinity be truly understood by a cyborg? Apart from its programming and aesthetic, surely masculinity is something which is more fluid and symbolic – but with our world so heavily dependent on technology, could we ourselves become de-humanized – instead of building relationships through strong emotions and being physically close to someone, will technology cause our own isolation due to convenience? The Terminator taps into the battle to which people in contemporary times relate to: Man versus machine and our fears about the future.

We've all had problems with technology be it the sat nav taking us on an adventure to never land, our blackberry crashing and deleting all our numbers leading to a status on Facebook begging for numbers, and Facebook itself being used against us and turning our fifth whiskey and coke into photographic evidence doing things we can't even remember. Our social life has already been impacted massively through social networking sites and skype, allowing the virtual and physical spaces to blend together bringing us closer to our peers. We all know how technology can be an advantage but also a hindrance when things don't work in practice as they do in theory. The FACT and body>data>space work together to show new innovations in our world and how artists, designers, architects, are complimented by the science fiction films putting, albeit imaginary, advanced technology into place and promoting the fear humans have that one day robots and avatars could inherit the earth.

Natalie Pearson

Next in the series, Star Trek: The Motion Picture, screens Wednesday

Posted on 02/04/2012 by thedoublenegative

http://www.thedoublenegative.co.uk/2012/04/robocops-and-avatars

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Students at Wallasey secondary Weatherhead become art avatar stars

By Ben Turner, Liverpool Echo

PUPILS at a Merseyside school are starring in a new art exhibition.

Taking centre stage at FACT in the city centre are students at Wallasey secondary Weatherhead High School who have been working with renowned American artist Michael Takeo Magruder.

He specialises in working with digital and new media and with his help the students have learned computer skills to create avatars of themselves and a virtual world as part of FACT's Robots and Avatars exhibition which runs until May 27.

By Ben Turner, Liverpool Echo

_http://www.liverpoolecho.co.uk/liverpool-news/education/education_news/2012/03/20/students-at-wallasey-secondary-weatherhead-become-art-avatar-stars-100252-30575860/_

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'Robots and Avatars' exhibition at FACT, Liverpool

By Regine
on April 4, 2012 9:06 AM

As you might remember, i recently took the train to Liverpool to see the exhibition Robots and Avatars, conceived by design collective body>data>space and FACT.

Martin Bricelj Baraga, RoboVox, 2006. Photographer: Brian Slate

Robots and Avatars invites visitors to imagine what will happen in a -not so distant- future when the advance of technology will bring us in even closer contact with artificial intelligence and machines. Will we have to re-assess what we now define as 'life' and as 'body'? *How do we envisage our future relationships with robotic and avatar colleagues and playmates, and what point does this evolution cross our personal boundaries of what it is to be a living, feeling human being?*

As a kind of introduction to the issue, the documentary ROBOT WORLD gives the state of the art of robotics by compiling films from university labs, private footage taken at industrial fairs, military archives, corporate videos and extracts from 1930's movies.

But the spectrum of the exhibition's enquiry is much broader than the documentary. Some of the works exhibited demonstrate how much the artificial imitates human life. Others speculate on how

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radically it might depart from it. The show leads the visitor from Second Life to invisible architecture, from the familiar to the unexpected and even sometimes to foreign territories. From the physical body to the digital body and back again.

I've already blogged about some of the works exhibited in the past (namely Compass, rep.licants.org and ADA) so i'll just mention a few works you might find interesting:
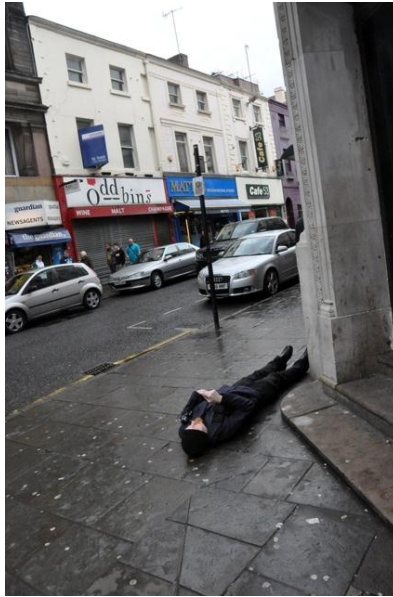

Shu Lea Cheang and Co, UKI, 2011. Photographer: Brian Slater

The most thought-provoking and exciting work for me was UKI by Shu Lea Cheang. UKI is a sequel to her 2000 cyberpunk movie I.K.U. The film is set in 2030 and explores whether the replicants of Blade Runner have sex. In 2030, the GENOM corporation is selling orgasms on portable devices and sending a shapeshifter coder out into New Tokyo to collect "orgasm data". UKI is a live coding / live spam performance where software and body viruses are merging but also a viral game that is presented at FACT on two screens.

Photographer: Brian Slater

About the time of the opening of the exhibition, an actor was playing Public Avatar in the streets of Liverpool. People anywhere in the world could login on the website of the project, instruct the avatar to do simple tasks and follow his whereabouts in the city. *This project explores the borders between virtual and real and tests the limits of human machine control.*

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Martin Bricelj and Slavko Glamočanin, Public Avatar, 2009. Image courtesy of Martin Bricelj

Base 8 is inspired by Pepper's Ghost , a 19th century illusionary technique that makes objects seem to appear or disappear or make one object seem to morph into another. In the version designed by Chris Sugrue however, the illusion is that of a floating colony of small creatures coming to life around and in between your fingers and hands.

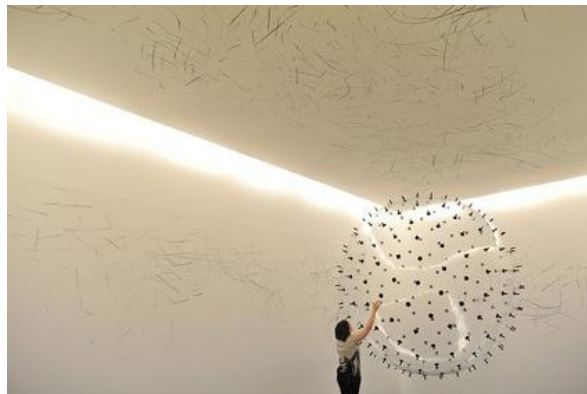*Chris Sugrue, Base 8, 2011. Photographer: Brian Slater*

More images from the show:

Opening of the exhibition. Photographer: Brian Slater

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Lawrence Malstaf, Compass, 2005. Photographer: Brian Slater

Karina Smigla-Bobinski, ADA, 2010. Photographer: Brian Slater

Robots and Avatars remains open at FACT (Foundation for Art and Creative Technology), Liverpool until 27 May 2012. The exhibition will then travel to AltArt, Cluj-Napoca (Romania) and KIBLA (Slovenia) in 2012.

The Robots and Avatars exhibition in the UK is co-produced in the UK by body>data>space and FACT in collaboration with the National Theatre. European co-organisers are KIBLA (Maribor/Slovenia) and AltArt (Cluj Napoca/Romania). With the support of the Culture programme of the European Union, this project was conceived by lead producer body>data>space in association with NESTA.

By Regine Debatty for we make money not art.

http://we-make-money-not-art.com/archives/2012/04/robots-and-avatars.php

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Robots and Avatars Exhibition Review

Art Feast sent Josie Jenkins to review Fact's latest exhibition Robots and Avatars a major new exhibition showcasing some of the most exciting ideas from international artists and technologists.
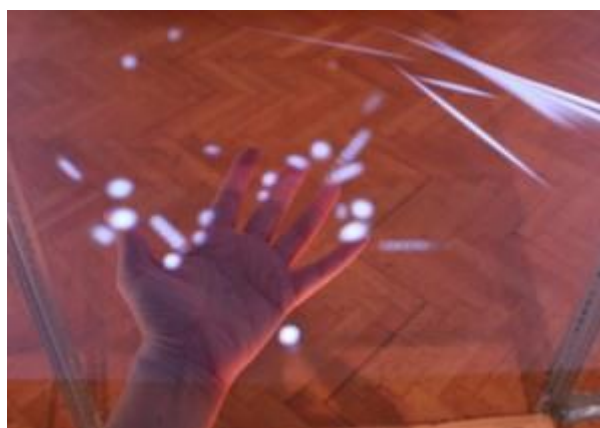
Exploring our desire to exist in both virtual and physical worlds, and the steady integration of humans with technology, *Robots and Avatars* **brings together artworks that find physical limbs rendered into pixels through the act of touch, collaborative landscapes stretching beyond the confines of popular gaming, and wearable technology that guides and confounds.**

Robots and Avatars is an exhibition inspired by relationships between virtual reality and the physical world. FACT has co-curated the show with body>data>space, an interdisciplinary design collective based in East London who engage in creating fascinating connections between performance, architecture, new media and virtual worlds. The exhibition presents us with the potential for how computer simulated environments and the real world can blur and how artists can use technology to make fascinating and stimulating artworks.

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The premise for this exhibition lends itself well to interactive art and it was no surprise that the most easily accessible interactive artworks were the most popular with the public. For me, *ADA* by Karina Smigla-Bobinski, was by far the most fun and clever piece of art I've seen for a long time. It is a huge helium filled membrane like globe, with charcoal pieces attached at regular intervals. Referred to as a 'she', with her own free will, *ADA* floats around the room drawing on the walls and ceiling with her charcoal sticks. The viewer can interact with *ADA* by pushing and spinning her into the walls and together beautiful abstract drawings are created, made up of Cy Twombly style dots and dashes. Some may say the obvious choice, but I think this artwork is truly inspired in concept and practice alike and a must see (or do).

Another of the artworks that really stood out was *Base 8,* an installation by Chris Sugrue which is based on a 19th Century theatre trick which was used to create the illusion of phantoms or spirits on the stage. The fact that I can't explain how it happens, is part of the beauty of the artwork, but when you place your hand into the rectangular structure, abstract geometric shapes appear and can be manipulated to move around and change. It memorises you and is almost therapeutic, but in turn the images it creates, although time limited, could be artworks themselves.

Other work in the exhibition includes *RoboVox 2006*, a talking Robot which stands up for those people whose voice get lost a crowd and invites you to text your thoughts and views (no doubt only those which are fit for public consumption) which he will say aloud. I have to say that with some of the other artworks in the exhibition I wasn't always sure what was meant to be happening or if they were in fact working correctly. I'd probably say that most of these deserve a bit of time to understand and experiment and this can be said for *Visions*

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of our Communal Dreams, which explores blending the physical and virtual worlds by presenting 'portals' in different parts of the building that connect with each other and show different ways of connecting the viewer with a virtual reality. I used a portal to explore a beautiful computer simulated environment as a virtual person who could fly – why would you chose to walk in a world where anything is possible? It felt a bit surreal, like a one of those flying dreams.

I'd like to say this is artwork for techies but in actual fact it's probably just for a younger generation for whom the experience of virtual reality in computer games like *Second Life* is nothing unusual. What the exhibition touches on is where developments in technology are heading and the intriguing possibilities for how our virtual creations can and no doubt will integrate with real life. If nothing else this show is fun and fascinating.
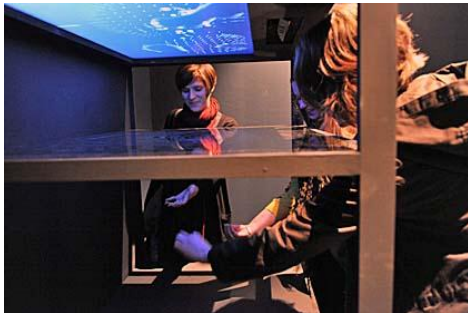
Robots and Avatars continus until 27 May, visit http://www.fact.co.uk/projects/robots-and-avatars for more info.

Josie Jenkins for Art in Liverpool/

http://www.artinliverpool.com/?p=28699

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Robots and Avatars targets Facebook and Pluto in flourish of experimentalism at FACT

Chris Sugrue, Base 8 (2011). Installation view at FACT
© Photo: Brian Slater

Exhibition: Robots and Avatars, Foundation for Arts and Creative Technology, Liverpool, until May 27 2012

Robots and Avatars is very much experimental, right down to the operability of its alien exhibits. Compass, for example, stands silently in the large dark room where it once forcibly roamed people around in a machine you could wear around your waist.

Intended as a performance piece, Lawrence Malstaf's contraption is now simply a documentation of the force it once had when it propelled people towards or away from a series of magnetic fields. Indeed, it's easy to assume - as some visitors have - that the exhibition is over once you've left the space (having entered via ADA, a giant silver ball with bits of coal on the outside, which decorated the walls in black lines when previous visitors pushed it around).

Alastair Eilbeck and James Bailey, MeYouandUs (2011). Installation view at FACT© Photo: Brian Slater

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But a realm of the highly curious, improbable, amusing and migraine-inducingly complicated lies in wait upstairs. It includes rep.licants.org, a "bot" which automatically controls your Facebook or Twitter account, devised by Swiss media designer and computer scientist Matthieu Cherubini.

"You've got my full attention. I lost my train of thought. Everything is running smoothly," the imposter responds to a casual greeting by a friend on its employer's Facebook wall. Perhaps a tad cold, but just as meaningful as most of the interactions on social networks, you might argue.

It apparently depends on being able to recreate your online persona, so the more active you are, the more productive it's likely to be. In other words, if you already post updates every time you blink then the bot is likely to delight your array of gawping friends.

On another screen, Shu Lea Cheang – the first net artist employed by Guggenheim New York, during the late 1990s – has made some sort of game aiming to turn an orgasm into a self-sustaining pleasure via genomes and red blood cells. UKI debuted at Sundance more than a decade ago, and there appears to have been a lot of nudity involved.

Aymeric Mansoux, Dave Griffiths and Marloes de Valk offer more possible protection from techno-social angst with Naked on Pluto, a (probably) spoof website promising "The Guarantee of Universal Friendship Strength".

"It looks like you're confused. Let me click ok for you," it suggests, parodying the tame efforts of familiar help packages. "Smash the decentralised conspiracy."

The most mesmerising piece here might be Chris Sugrue's Base 8. As you move your hands through dark space, shifting objects and structures create the visual and tactile illusion that your fingers are moving around. And in MeYouAndUs, Alastair Eilbeck and James Bailey have created a playful platform liable to turn viewers into speeded-up cartoons of themselves.

A screen of revolving black and white lines make the body appear as a morph, growing closer and stronger in colour as you approach. A nearby camera records people, then adds their eyes to the top of a six-storey set of faces, dropping down a level as each new sitter has their face captured.

Finally, hilariously, a big screen reveals we've been watched throughout, and speeds up the tapes of our unsuspecting movements through the space so that everyone looks a bit silly. Given that most of these artists have been brave enough to show their designs while they're still in development, being momentarily duped seems a small price to pay.

- **Open 12pm-6pm (11am-6pm Saturday). Admission free. Visit the exhibition online.**

All tags
More on the venues and organisations we've mentioned:

- FACT (Foundation for Art and Creative Technology)

http://www.culture24.org.uk/art/sculpture%20%26%20installation/art38416

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Robots and Avatars @ FACT

Tue, 10/04/2012 - 10:08 — Art Selector

Robots and Avatars is an ongoing programme, centring on debates surrounding the future world of work and play through an exploration of interactive technology. The project began in 2009 and was originally conceived and produced by East London based design collective body>data>space who led the project through research and development into an EU Culture project involving 5 other UK and European partners.

'*At the centre of the group has always been the idea that digital technologies are great, but what's the point of it all if it's not going to relate to the living emotional body, and how we need them to work for us and complement us, rather than us having to learn to work with them?*' Ghislaine Boddington, body>data>space creative director

The first Robots and Avatars exhibition is on show at the Foundation for Arts and Creative Technologies (FACT) in Liverpool until 27 May. It contains a wealth of interactive installations that are great fun to play with, but which also explore many issues concerning the future use of robots and avatars: how this adaptive and expressive technology will not only come to be a part of everyday work and leisure, but perhaps also affect how we understand our interaction with the world around us and with others.

We went to the launch of Robots and Avatars at FACT on 16 March, and thought we'd share with you a detailed description of what it is like:

Just about the first thing you see when you enter FACT is what appears to be a typically anthropomorphic robot standing on a plinth. It is, in fact, 'RoboVox', created by Slovenian artist Martin Bricelj. Although 'RoboVox' doesn't move, it is still interactive. Beneath him, on the plinth, you will find a mobile phone number. Send a text to that number and, after a very short delay, 'RoboVox' will speak whatever you texted in. 'RoboVox' is a very simple installation, but through the amusing game it creates it explores the concept of a robot as a controlled slave. As Bricelj keenly points out, the word "robot" is the first word from the Slavic languages to become recognisable around the world. Its original meaning was "slave".

To the right-hand side of the FACT foyer is what looks like an alcove, in which some curious prints feature videogame avatars set in a Japanese-style landscape. At the end of the alcove is a screen, showing a figure in a computer-generated forest, and a keypad that allows you to move the avatar. This is just the first outcrop of Michael Takeo Magruder's installation

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'Visions Of Our Communal Dreams', a work that wraps itself around the whole of FACT's space, both downstairs and upstairs, making a number of appearances in unexpected places, in subtly altered forms.

Visions Of Our Communal Dreams is a large and ambitious installation that exists in both the virtual and real spaces, and will evolve and mutate during its time at FACT. At its heart is a beautiful virtual island created by Magruder and his team members Drew Baker, Erik Fleming and David Steele, using the open source 3D application server OpenSimulator. The fine art-style prints in the FACT foyer show avatars created by students at Weatherhead Media Academy, where Magruder conducted a workshop.

Move around FACT, and you will discover other portals into the Visions Of Our Communal Dreams world, which Magruder calls a "metaverse". One resembles a wall at the end of the corridor; look closely, and you will notice that it introduces a ghostly image of yourself walking towards it into the virtual world. Another view, by FACT's cafe, is a picture window onto the virtual world. In the upstairs gallery, it is presented as a painting.

Soon Magruder and his team will release a toolkit allowing members of the public to create avatars and enter the space, letting them not only interact with each other, but also with people passing through the portals at FACT. In this way 'Visions Of Our communal Dreams' will become more populated as time goes on and progressively you will notice details like computer-controlled birds and butterflies. You may even, for example, be able to plant trees and watch them grow. Conceptually, 'Visions Of Our Communal Dreams' is pretty complex, existing as it does in both the virtual and real realms, but it offers a glimpse into and commentary on the future of communication and interaction, which will increasingly take place in virtual spaces, and explores how we will choose to represent ourselves via avatars in such real/virtual worlds.

In contrast, one of the pieces on the ground-floor galleries at FACT seems to bear little relationship to either robots or avatars at first glance, but it is, without a doubt, impressive and hugely beguiling. This is 'ADA', an installation by Polish-born, Munich-based artist Karina Smigla-Bobinski. 'ADA' is pretty simple to describe: a giant transparent ball, filled with a mixture of helium and air, and studded with charcoal sticks.

The gallery itself has been painted white and thereby turned into a giant canvas. And 'ADA' herself fills that canvas. When visitors move her around, the charcoal creates marks on the walls and ceilings, leaving a tangible trace of their actions which will eventually form an intricate black web.

Smigla-Bobinski explains that 'ADA' is essentially an analogue robot: she is a drawing machine, operated by all those who manipulate her. She also has a biotechnological appearance, resembling some sort of virus or microbe. Smigla-Bobinski named her in honour of Ada Lovelace, whose work with Charles Babbage earned her the title of the world's first computer programmer. Above all, she is great fun to interact with.

In the next-door gallery to 'ADA', you will find an intriguing installation called 'Compass', which tips the element of human control in most technological interaction on its head. The gallery is darkened, with virtual "walls" created using projected light. And in one corner sits a somewhat sinister-looking object, made of metal, ring-shaped and fitted with straps. This is 'Compass', and is designed to be worn by one person while others spectate.

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An assistant helps you put 'Compass' on: it fits over your hips, held up by straps and an inflatable cushion. When you switch it on, using built-in weights, it guides you around the gallery on a predetermined path between the virtual walls, sensing and avoiding spectators. This fascinating work, according to Malstaf, explores the issue of trust in robots or AI; surrendering to machines or opting to retain control over them. It also explores the experiential concept of the separate realms of the mind and the body by allowing another mechanism to control our experience of the physical world.

While 'Compass' allows a machine to control the human body in real space, 'Base 8' provides the physical apparatus to manually affect a virtual reality. 'Base 8' takes the form of a dark, open box with a screen above it, into which you're invited to place your hand. Once Base 8 detects your hand, it forms what looks like a holographic hand around it, which mirrors any movement you make with your corporeal hand: a magical effort which makes use of an ancient visual trick called Pepper's Ghost, popular in theatres in the early 20th century.

Move your hand and you will find that virtual particles in the installation are attracted to it. 'Base 8' isn't just beautiful: it demonstrates the sensation of virtual body extensions, as you learn to control your holographic hand, without being able to feel anything through it.

Move into the main upstairs gallery space and you will be confronted by 'YouMeandUs', an installation in several parts that dominates the space. Step into the spotlight on the floor and your actions will be filmed for the installation. Facing the spotlight is a composite, looped video collage, split into horizontal layers. Those who are filmed in the spotlight contribute to one (random) part of this loop of imagery.

To the right, you will see a giant projection on the wall, which resembles an overhead traffic-camera view and takes in all visitors to the room. Look at it more closely and you will notice that it too, is looped: creating a striking, speeded-up crowd movement effect. You swiftly learn that you can use the looping effect to your advantage. 'YouMeandUs effectively turns you into a video avatar, which you can control remotely by taking advantage of the constant sampling period. The different levels of immediacy which govern the three instances of 'YouMeandUs' lead to a consideration of how our representations of ourselves shifts and changes, and how we might present different personas in different situations.

Head back towards FACT's stairs, and you will discover a final room containing Robots and Avatars exhibits – this time existing in the virtual space, and viewed via computers. Provocative and technologically impressive, this exhibit includes 'U.K.I', by Shu Lea Chang. Centring on a shadowy figure purported to be a hacker, the cyberpunk film forms a sequel to her first work, 'I.K.U', with a videogame element added to the visuals and sound. Matthew Cherubini's 'rep.licants.org' explores the notion of real and computer-controlled identities in social networking – it lets you install AI bots on your Facebook and Twitter accounts, which simulate your online activity and – who knows? – may lead to a sharp increase in your friends and followers. 'Naked On Pluto', by Aymeric Mansoux, Dave Griffiths and Marloes de Valk, is a playful work that sets 57 AI bots to work on your personal online data, parodying the data mining that increasingly takes place on behalf of the giant social networking companies. 'The Electronic Man', by Salvatore Laconesci and Oriana Persico, is a more sober installation. Influenced by 1960s icon Marshall McLuhan, it's a crowd-sourced project which lets visitors scan QR codes around the world, enter their emotions and thereby build up an ever-changing emotional map of the world.

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That, then, is what you will find if you head to FACT in search of Robots and Avatars. As well as keeping you amused and entertained for the best part of a day it will get you thinking about a future world in which we could coexist with robots and avatars happily and productively. And this is just the beginning: Robots and Avatars will feature plenty more installations, performances, workshops and events, so keep watching this space.

Steve Boxer – Gaming Expert

Steve Boxer is a freelance journalist specializing in videogames and technology. He writes regularly for The Guardian, T3 and MSN UK Tech & Gadgets, and has contributed in the past to The Daily Telegraph, The Daily Mirror, The Sunday Times, FHM, Esquire, DJ Magazine and sleazenation. A keen interest in digital arts led to involvement in the Future Physical programme and now with body>data>space as a live documenter for Robots & Avatars.

The Robots and Avatars exhibition in the UK is co-produced in the UK by body>data>space (London) and FACT (Liverpool) in collaboration with the National Theatre (London). European co-organisers are KIBLA (Maribor/Slovenia) and AltArt (Cluj Napoca/Romania). With the support of the Culture programme of the European Union, this project was conceived by lead producer body>data>space in association with NESTA.
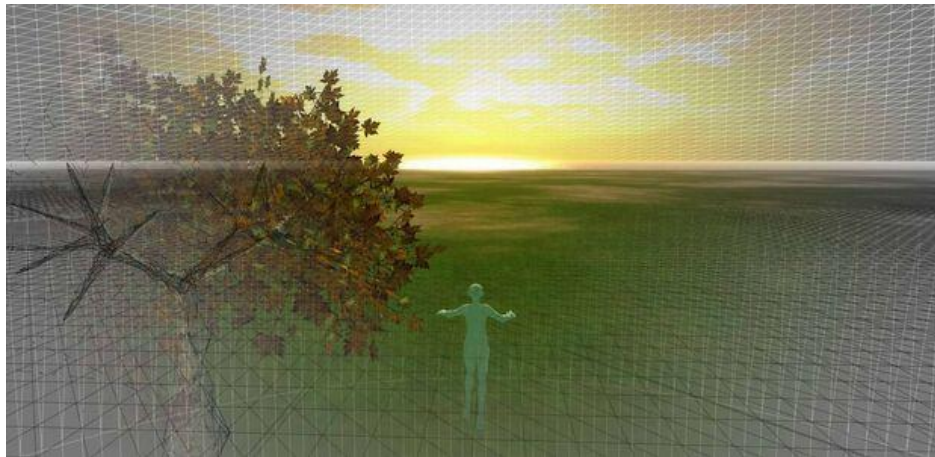
Read More here: www.robotsandavatars.net

The Robots and Avatars Exhibition presents at FACT, Liverpool (UK) from 16 March to 27 May 2012, and will tour onwards to AltArt, Cluj-Napoca (Romania) and KIBLA (Slovenia) in 2012.

★ ★ ★ ☆ ☆

http://www.artselector.com/review/robots-and-avatars-fact

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"Robots and Avatars" _ b>d>s _ 16 March 2011 to 27 May 2012 at Liverpool (UK)

Co-curated by FACT and interdisciplinary design collective body>data>space, *Robots and Avatars* is a major new exhibition showcasing the most exciting visions and innovations from international artists, designers and architects, and exploring their impact on the future of work and play.

Exploring the increasing overlap of the virtual and physical world, and our own steady assimilation of new technologies, this playful group show offers immersive experiences – from physical limbs rendered into pixels through the act of touch, collaborative landscapes stretching beyond the confines of popular gaming, to wearable and interactive technologies that guide and confound.

Robots and Avatars departs from pop culture imagery and re-imagines these technologies for a new reality: how do we envisage our future relationships with robotic and avatar colleagues and playmates, and at what point does this evolution cross our personal boundaries of what it is to be a living, feeling human being?

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Louis-Philippe Demers – *Blind Robot (*new work). Germany/Canada/Singapore
An artistic investigation into the role of Social Robotics, Demers' new work explores the degrees of engagement – intellectual, emotional or physical – that are generated when a robot intimately touches a person. Visitors are invited to engage into a non-verbal dialogue where the robot delicately explores the visitor's face – in the same way that blind humans recognise a person or an object. The machine then produces a visual rendering – a window to the robot's soul – of what its fingertips have "seen".

Michael Takeo Magruder – *Visions of Our Communal Dreams* (commission)UK/US. *Visions of Our Communal Dreams* is a mixed-reality art installation blending virtual, physical and networked space that explores issues of hybridity, embodiment and collective creativity made possible through the use of avatars and virtual worlds. Artist Michael Takeo Magruder will run a set of workshops in which young participants from Liverpool will learn skills relating to virtual worlds customisation and collaborative content creation that will feed back into both the artwork and its underlying creative processes.

Karina Smigla Bobinski – *ADA*. Poland/Germany. Nominated for Prix Ars Electronica 2012, Polish artist Karina Smigla Bobinski's *ADA* is a giant interactive analogue installation with the appearance of a membrane-like globe that floats freely in the gallery space. Constructed to have her own will, *ADA* does not follow programmes or commands but is an autonomous artwork enhanced by the people's reaction to her.

Alastair Eilbeck – *MeYouandUs*. UK. *MeYouandUs* is a series of three interactive plasma-screens that encourages passers-by to interact with them, allowing each participant to create their own narrative. Each installation requires different levels of involvement – from an instant reaction to a gradual response.

Lawrence Malstaf – *Compass*. Belgium. Situated somewhere between art and theatre, the 'living' installations of Belgian visual artist require visitors to bring them to life. Like *Shrink*, the artwork shown at Abandon Normal Devices festival in Manchester 2010, Compass is an individual performance experience. Wearing a machine around the waist, the visitor can either resist the forces it exerts, or allow themselves to be taken on a tangible but immaterial journey across an invisible map.

Chris Sugrue – *Base 8*. Spain/Slovenia/US
An artist and programmer developing interactive installations, audio-visual performances and experimental interfaces, Chris Sugrue makes work that investigates topics such as artificial life, eye-tracking and optical illusions. Inspired by a 19th century theatre trick called "Pepper's Ghost", *Base 8* explores the negative spaces and movements between fingers, hands and arms, hinting towards an holographic illusion of a world floating in air.

Matthieu Cherubini – *Rep.licants.org*. Switzerland. An online work by Swiss artist Matthieu Cherubini, replicants.org is an online service allowing people to install a bot on their Facebook and/or Twitter account that can build a greater social reputation for the user.

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Rep.licants.org explores the reality of who is really who on social networks and examines the potential extensions of our social interactions on the social networks.

The Robots and Avatars exhibition is co-produced in the UK by body>data>space (London) and FACT (Liverpool) in collaboration with the National Theatre (London). European co-organisers are KIBLA (Maribor/Slovenia) and AltArt (Cluj Napoca/Romania). With the support of the Culture Programme of the European Union, this project was conceived by lead producer body>data>space in association with NESTA.

Full information can be found here: http://www.robotsandavatars.net/exhibition/

Notes to Editors

16 March 2011 – 27 May 2012 FACT, Wood Street Liverpool www.fact.co.uk. FREE Entry

body>>data>>space is an East London design collective creating innovative connections between performance, architecture, virtual worlds and new media. We work to share and extend future scenarios of virtual / physical blended space. We produce action-research projects, commissions, exhibitions, debates, conferences, learning experiences and websites with a wide range of sectors. www.bodydataspace.net

FACT (Foundation for Art and Creative Technology) has been leading the UK video, film and new media arts scene for more than 20 years with groundbreaking exhibitions, education and research projects. It aims to pioneer new forms of artistic and social interaction with individuals and communities.

Visions of Our Communal Dreams by Michael Takeo Magruder with Drew Baker, Erik Fleming and David Steele, 2012. (credit photo)

Commissioned by body>data>space and the Royal National Theatre in association with FACT and King's College London for the "Robots and Avatars" project. Supported by the EU Culture programme.

http://www.ran-dan.net/eng/?p=427

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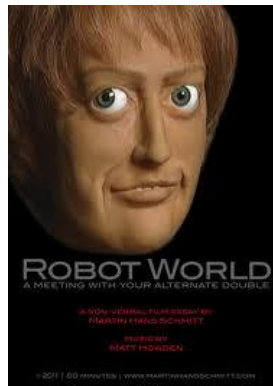
Robots and Avatars event – FACT Gallery, Liverpool

March 9, 2012 By Mark Kelly

I got an invite this week to the launch of Robots and Avatars at FACT in Liverpool (I can't make the viewing on the 15th so heading over to Liverpool for a birthday day out on the 17th).

Apart from the pure geek appeal of seeing robotic installations and artworks, the exhibition (and the group behind it) throw up lots of interesting questions about the wider impact these technologies will have in an increasingly blended real: digital world.

Robots in industry have already made massive sociological / employment inroads of course. But the digital connectedness of things, wearable computing, 'real' versus manipulated presences on social media and emerging professions in a quickly evolving commercial world, will affect us all. So groups / exhibitions like this are fascinating. I'm looking forward to the visit.

Below is an excerpt for one of the exhibits at Robots and Avatars: a non-verbal documentary called ROBOT WORLD.

And as a quick plug : some of these themes are explored on a site I was involved with for the National Media Museum recently, as part of the Life Online gallery (http://nmemlol.wordpress.com/)

By Mark Kelly

http://markkellynet.com/2012/03/09/robots-and-avatars-event-fact-gallery-liverpool/

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Robots & Avatars at FACT

Last night I and my fellow champ, Ray, went to the preview of the *Robots & Avatars* exhibition currently showing at FACT.

Ray and I differ wildly on what we consider art. I love stuff you can mess about with, while Ray is more of a *When Did You Last See Your Father* kind of man. So while *Robots & Avatars* was more up my street, it didn't stop Ray from playing about with the exhibits.

ADA at the start of the exhibit

In the first room we came across Karina Smigla-Bobinski's *ADA*. In the gallery blurb, this is described as an "interactive analogue installation, a physical coding experience." In real life, it was a gigantic floating ball studded all round with pieces of coal. As we pushed the ball around, the coal created markings on the pristine white walls. This is my idea of a good time and I'd love to go back to see the results once this has been going for a while.

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ADA after

The next room was a bit more of a challenge. Containing Compass – a wearable machine that guides the wearer of it through the room. The test subject we saw, a guy called Frank, stood completely still wearing the device and looked slightly bewildered until some bright spark asked the eternal question, "Have you turned it on yet?"

Once it was turned on it span round in an alarming manner and controlled Frank around the room. I'm not sure what the purpose of this was or whether in fact, mankind will use it in the future for good or evil, but it was interesting to watch, especially when other people starting trying to stalk the half man/half machine around the room.

Heathcliffe!

I almost missed Chris Sugrue's *Base 8*, which was my personal favourite part of the exhibit. Using visual illusions and trickery, this room invites you to become part of the illusion. Giving it my very best Kate Bush *Wuthering Heights* moves, I managed to make my arms and face disappear into the background. Loads of fun.

There are lots of other lovely little things to discover in the exhibit, including a computer you can make yourself fly on.

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It's well worth a visit and you can certainly fit in *Robots & Avatars* with half an hour to spare in your lunch hour, after work, or while you're out and about in town. The kids we saw there were having great time. Get down there and join in!

Robots & Avatars is showing from 16 March – 27 May
FACT, 88 Wood Street, Liverpool, L14DQ
www.fact.co.uk

By Andrea McGuire-Seery, Liverpool Cultural Champion Blog

http://liverpoolculturalchampions.wordpress.com/2012/03/16/robots-avatars-at-fact-10/

E v e n t s

16 **Robots and Avatars**
March 16th to May 27th 2012 / Exhibition / Art & design

A Wired reader wrote…

' Robots and Avatars

16 March – 27 May

Join us in a near future where robots, avatars and telepresence form part of an exciting new reality.

From pervasive networked gaming to robots that teach, touch, care or scare, Robots and Avatars are already co-habit the world in which we work and play.

Co-curated with interdisciplinary design collective body>data>space (London), this exhibition at FACT showcases some of the most exciting new ideas from international artists and technologists in the field. Expect playful post-industrial creatures, sensory virtual worlds, and responsive inflatable objects in this major new exhibition.

FACT (Foundation for Art and Creative Technology)
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http://www.wired.co.uk/events/2012/03/16/robots-and-avatars

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What's on - OPENING: Friday, 16th March - Robots and Avatars, FACT, Liverpool

OPENING: Friday, 16th March - Robots and Avatars, FACT, Liverpool

body>data>space presents: ROBOTS and AVATARS EXHIBITION @ FACT, Liverpool

Join us in a near future where robots, avatars and telepresence form part of an exciting new reality.

Co-produced by body>data>space and FACT with European partners KIBLA and AltArt and the National Theatre in the UK this major new exhibition 'Robots and Avatars' showcases some of the most exciting visions and innovations from international artists, designers and architects, exploring their impact on the future of work and play.

Friday 16 March - Sunday 27 May 2012
www.robotsandavatars.net

http://www.artshub.co.uk/uk/whats-on/north-west/exhibitions/opening-friday-16th-march-robots-and-avatars-fact-liverpool-129055

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ROBOTS and AVATARS EXHIBITION

A major new exhibition showcasing some of the most exciting visions and innovations from international artists, designers and architects, exploring their impact on the future of work and play

OPENING: Robots and Avatars at FACT, Liverpool – Friday,16th March

Posted on March 14, 2012

Join us in a near future where robots, avatars and telepresence form part of an exciting new reality.

Co-produced by body>data>space and FACT with European partners KIBLA and AltArt and the National Theatre in the UK this major new exhibition 'Robots and Avatars' showcases some of the most exciting visions and innovations from international artists, designers and architects, exploring their impact on the future of work and play.

Friday 16 March – Sunday 27 May 2012

www.robotsandavatars.net

http://robotsandavatars.culture360.org/

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RopeWalks presents: Amazing Robots

FACT: Robots and Avatars - Friday 16 March - Sunday 27 May
Location: Gallery 1, Gallery 2, Media Lounge, Public Spaces
Cost: FREE Entry

Co-curated by FACT and interdisciplinary design collective body>data>space, this major new exhibition showcases some of the most exciting ideas from international artists and technologists.

Exploring our desire to exist in both virtual and physical worlds, and the steady integration of humans with technology, Robots and Avatars brings together artworks that find physical limbs rendered into pixels through the act of touch, collaborative landscapes stretching beyond the confines of popular gaming, and wearable technology that guides and confounds.

Co-produced in the UK by body>data>space (London) and FACT (Liverpool), in collaboration with the National Theatre (London). European co-organisers are KIBLA (Maribor/Slovenia) and AltArt (Cluj Napoca/Romania). With the support of the Culture Programme of the European Union, this project was conceived by lead producer body>data>space in association with NESTA

http://www.robotsandavatars.net/

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