

# Peoples Screen

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## Abstract

For the first time the citizens in Guangzhou, China and in Perth, Australia were brought into exchange through an artistic real time performance on public screens from 15 to 29 November 2015. Peoples Screen was presented during the Guangzhou Light Festival on the screen at the Flower Garden Square and on the Northbridge Screen in Perth, offering public audiences the opportunity to co-create coincidental encounters and spontaneous interactions between these two cities.

## Artists Concept

“Peoples Screen” by Paul Sermon and Charlotte Gould was a site-specific work commissioned by Public Art Lab Berlin for the Guangzhou Light Festival from 15 to 29 November 2015, linking audiences in Guangzhou’s new Flower Garden Square, China and Northbridge Piazza in Perth, Australia. This installation builds on practice-based research and development of previous interactive works for large format urban screens such as “Occupy the Screen” for “Connecting Cities - Urban Reflections” in September 2014 between Supermarket Gallery Berlin, Germany and Riga European Capital of Culture, Latvia.



Fig 1. *Peoples Screen*, 2015, Paul Sermon and Charlotte Gould, telematics urban screen installation, photograph by Lin Zewu.

This new installation pushed the playful, social and public engagement aspects of the work into new cultural and political realms in an attempt to ‘reclaim the urban screens’ through developments in ludic interaction and internet based high-definition videoconferencing. Through the use of illustrated references to site-specific

landmarks of Guangzhou and Perth, audiences were invited to occupy the screen. The concept development of “Peoples Screen” was inspired in part by 3D street art as a DIY tradition, referencing the subversive language of graffiti. The interface borrows from the “topoi” of the computer game, as a means to navigate the environment; once within the frame the audience becomes a character immersed within the environment.

“Peoples Screen” linked two geographically distant audiences using a telematics technique; the installation takes live oblique camera shots from above the screen of each of these two audience groups, located on a large 64 square metre blue ground sheet and combines them on screen in a single composited image. As the merged audiences start to explore this collaborative, shared ludic interface, they discover the ground beneath them, as it appears on screen as a digital backdrop, locates them in a variety of surprising and intriguing anamorphic environments where from a particular position the characters can look as if in a precarious situation.

“Peoples Screen” aimed to include the widest range of urban participation possible and aligns to a Fluxus “Happening” in a move away from the object as art towards the street environment and the “every day” experience. It also borrows from a tradition of early cinema where audiences were transfixed by the magic of being transported to alternative realities through screenings at traveling fairs. Lumière contemporaries, Mitchell and Kenyon, whose films of public crowds in the 1900’s present a striking similarity to the way audiences react and respond to “Peoples Screen”.



Fig 2. *Peoples Screen*, 2015, Paul Sermon and Charlotte Gould, telematics urban screen installation, photograph by Lin Zewu.

Through this research we found that the environment and timing have a large impact on the way that an audience responds. The inspiration was drawn both from the cities of Guangzhou and Perth, with input from the communities. The area of play was clearly demarked as a space via a blue box groundsheet in both cities identifying a theatre of play, once in the space the participant engages as they wish. In many ways “Peoples Screen” broke down cultural and social barriers, both in the local communities, but also between two cities, Guangzhou and Perth, where new collocated spaces and creative encounters could be founded and occupied.

### **Project Partners Websites and Links**

Connecting Cities: <http://www.connectingcities.net>  
Public Art Lab Berlin: <http://www.publicartlab-berlin.de>

### **Project Links**

Connecting Cities:  
<http://connectingcities.net/project/peoples-screen>  
City of Perth:  
<http://www.perth.wa.gov.au/newsroom/featured-news/perth-and-guangzhou-interact-virtual-real-time>  
Visit Perth City:  
<http://visitperthcity.com/northbridge-piazza/events/peoples-screen-guangzhou-light-festival>  
Guangzhou Light Festival  
<http://www.gz-lights.com>

### **Previous Project Videos and Websites**

Artists Documentary Video:  
<https://vimeo.com/paulsermon/occupy-the-screen>  
Pub Art Lab Documentary Video:  
<https://vimeo.com/118602716>  
Artists Project Website:  
<http://www.paulsermon.org/occupy/>

### **Artists Biographies**

Paul Sermon (<http://www.paulsermon.org>) is Professor of Visual Communication at the University of Brighton. He has worked for over twenty years as an active academic researcher and creative practitioner, primarily in the field of telematic arts. Having worked under the visionary cybernetic artist Professor Roy Ascott as an undergraduate Fine Art student, Paul Sermon went on to establish himself as a leading pioneer of interactive media art, winning the prestigious Prix Ars Electronica Golden Nica in Linz, Austria, shortly after completing his MFA at the University of Reading in 1991, an accolade that took Paul to Finland in the early 1990s to develop one of the most groundbreaking works of his career Telematic Dreaming in 1992.

Dr Charlotte Gould (<http://www.charlottegould.org>) has developed a number of interactive environments for urban screens. She is currently developing location specific work in which the user becomes an active participant in the narrative and explores methods of user

driven content. Charlotte graduated with a BA Honours Degree in Graphic Design from Chelsea School of Art in 1990 and received an MA in Creative Technology from the University of Salford in 2003. She was awarded her PhD in 2015 from the School of Arts & Media, University of Salford, entitled: Interactive Works for Urban Screens: A practice based study into building new ways of engaging communities in urban space through interactive artworks for urban screens. Charlotte Gould is a Principle Lecturer and Academic Programme Leader for Visual Communication at the University of Brighton.