

BLAST THEORY

PRESS RELEASE

Meet Karen, your life coach. Interactive app based on the mining of big data launched by Blast Theory, the digital storytelling pioneers

Blast Theory, the award winning arts collective that invites us to question our place in society, has created a new smartphone app called Karen - an onscreen life coach who adapts to you using psychological profiling techniques.

A cross between gaming and storytelling, Karen offers a disconcerting experience that reflects on the data mining techniques employed by corporations and governments.

Karen gets to know you by asking questions about your outlook on the world and your life experiences.

As your week-long relationship with her unfolds, Karen becomes more and more curious. She is slightly chaotic with few boundaries between her personal and professional lives and she seems to know things about you that she shouldn't. Karen is in fact profiling you, giving you advice based on your conversations as well as data scraped from your mobile.

At the end of your experience, the personalised psychological profile Karen has created about you can be purchased, with the most dedicated users given the opportunity to take part in a secret rendezvous with Karen herself.

This new work by Blast Theory has been produced in partnership with National Theatre Wales. Co-commissioned by The Space and 539 Kickstarter backers, Karen has been developed with support from the Mixed Reality Lab at the University of Nottingham and in collaboration with Dr Kelly Page, an expert in gathering and interpreting data, who researched the systems that eventually became Google's DoubleClick™ ad-serving network.

Having worked with the Blast Theory artists to explore the history and practice of psychological and behavioural profiling for Karen, Dr Kelly Page says: 'This project fascinates me because it exposes how governments and organisations are collecting data on individuals. Where are the critical discussions about what this means for us as a society?'



Matt Adams, Co-Founder of Blast Theory continues: 'We're all familiar now with big data as used by companies like Google and Facebook and this knowledge represents massive social change. Karen is about both the limitations and the potential of gathering data about an individual and reflecting it back to them in a new way. Using profiling and personalisation, Karen is an experience that explores how art and culture might be affected by those changes.'

Ruth Mackenzie, Interim CEO and Creative Director, The Space, says: 'Karen by Blast Theory should delight and disturb. We are proud to be working with Blast Theory who have an outstanding track record for creating playful, explorative and participatory work using technology. The Space look forward to welcoming Karen to our virtual world.'

Karen will be available on the Apple App store in mid April 2015 and on Google Playstore shortly afterwards.

For further information, preview and review copies, interviews and images, please contact Chloe Barker, PR Consultant, on 07921 866109 or at chloegudrun@live.co.uk

About Blast Theory

Blast Theory makes interactive artworks that invite you to question your place in society. Renowned internationally as one of the most adventurous artists' groups creating groundbreaking new forms of performance and interactive art that mixes audiences across the internet, live performance and digital broadcasting. Led by **Matt Adams**, **Ju Row Farr** and **Nick Tandavanti**, the group's work explores the social and political aspects of technology. Drawing on popular culture and games, the work often blurs the boundaries between the real and the fictional.

About The Space

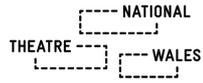
The Space commissions new, innovative digital art, seeking out and profiling artists and their work on www.thespace.org and through partnerships with the cultural and technology sectors. The Space is a not-for-profit public service for artists and audiences with a global remit, set up by the BBC and the Arts Council England.

Credits

Karen is a new work by Blast Theory, developed in partnership with National Theatre Wales. Co-commissioned by The Space and 539 Kickstarter backers. Karen has been developed with support from the Mixed Reality Lab at the University of Nottingham and in collaboration with Dr Kelly Page. PR Image by RULER: www.thisisruler.net

BLAST THEORY

t: +44[0]1273 413455 | www.blasttheory.co.uk
Facebook: www.facebook.com/blasttheory
Twitter: @blasttheory



Supported using public funding by
ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND