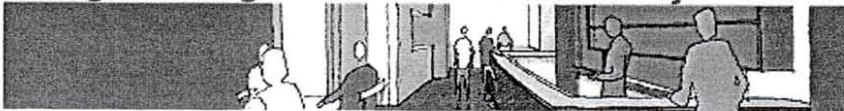


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BLAST THEORY

01 October 2004

Can You See Me Now brings Blast Theory to the Gardner Arts Centre for the first time. They invite us into a chase game played online at <http://www.canyouseemenow.co.uk> and around the university campus.



Run for your life...

Founder member **Ju Row Farr** explains that **Blast Theory's** exploration of technology is focussed on its potential to enable connection. There's no facile equation of technology and emotional distance here.

Thus, the game site allows each runner to tell their own story of someone they've lost. We're asked to name "a person who is still in our thoughts".

Then I play, desultorily at first. I'm caught after a couple of minutes.

This fires a determination to outwit the runners. During my second, more successful turn, I'm hooked and totally immersed.

I find myself making physical responses to the my virtual situation, I hunch when I'm hiding, swerve in my chair when I'm running and impatiently urge on my avatar.

I experience moments of dislocation, realising that 'they' can't actually 'see' me. I'm so exhilarated when I manage to avoid a runner I thought had caught me, I shout. I'm alive in the game.

Leaving the 'Control Room' (**Gardner Arts Centre**) is a shock. The austere gamespace is replaced by the noisy, visceral campus. It's fascinating that the staging is in Freshers' Week; the crowds are nervous, disconnected. I exchange a brief wave with **Ju** before she starts to run. From 'outside', she appears to be sprinting randomly across campus. Unsurprisingly, she receives several puzzled looks!

The piece was first performed in 2001 and **Ju** is keen to stress the accumulation of knowledge, the similarities between the stagings. Can You. is building up a storehouse of stories of lost friends, real contacts and reunions made in virtual space, It's a touching thought.

Like many of **Blast First's** works, **Can You See Me Now** expertly blends cutting-edge technology with human interaction. This is work that isn't in thrall to technology, instead using it as inspiration and collaborator. **Can You See Me Now** wants to enable humanity to go out into the world, to enjoy what **Ju** describes as "moments of possibility". It's a thrilling experience.

For full details of this and other great shows at **Gardner Arts Centre** go to www.gardnerarts.co.uk

Camelia Gupta
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