

The Argus

35p Monday, April 9, 2007

www.theargus.co.uk

The Argus, Monday, April 9, 2007

NEWS

PICTURES: ALAN JONES

AJ050407D-4



SOCIAL SPACE: Artist Ju Row-Farr with characters from the Day Of The Figurines, which she describes as a mass participation artwork

by RACHEL PEGG

A GROUP of artists who once kidnapped two members of the public then broadcast their captivity on the internet have launched a new multimedia work.

Blast Theory made international headlines when, in 1998, it invited people to pay £10 for the chance to become a hostage.

It then staged the kidnap of a 27-year-old Australian temp and a 19-year-old shop assistant and kept them for 48 hours, streaming their captivity online.

Now the group, based in Brighton's New England Quarter, has begun a "mass participation artwork" it describes as "a mix of EastEnders and Second Life directed by Quentin Tarantino".

The installation, in North Laine, invites members of the public to choose a plastic figure, give it a personality and enter it into a virtual world.

The characters are placed on a map and players can spend the next three weeks telling them what to do via text messages.

Up to 1,000 people can play, visiting different spots in the fictional town, talking to each other, watching bands, hanging out and picking up and using objects such as guitars and step ladders.

The project, called Day Of The Figurines, is intended to allow ordinary people to create an interactive artwork.

Ju Row-Farr, one of the three artists behind Blast Theory, said: "There are all sorts of things going on.

"There is a summer fete, things happen in a cemetery, there is a gig that happens at night, troops appear, there is an eclipse.

"People can meet each other and set off a chain of things. It could be me and you deciding we are going to go and have a drink or get everyone in this room to go down to the beach and dip our feet."



LIFE OF ITS OWN: Players can choose a figure and enter it into a virtual world

'This game takes on a life of its own. I'm really excited'

In the real world the game takes 24 days but in the virtual town just 24 hours pass.

Players can generally only see those events that happen close by, which means they each have a different experience.

It is possible to die and players have to keep their characters alive with food, drink and medicine.

Ms Row-Farr said: "The aim is for people to help other people. If you do that or how you do that is up to you. Everything you have done in the game has a cost."

She said she sees the work as a "social space".

She said: "In a way it feels crude, like a board game but the stuff going on is incredibly rich.

"This game takes on a life of its own. I am really excited because we don't know what people will make of it."

Players are not charged for texts they receive and the texts they send are charged as normal. Personal details are not shared with anyone. You can join by visiting 28 Kensington Street between noon and 4pm any day.

Ms Row-Farr and her co-artists Nick Tandavanitj and Matt Adams have been working on Day Of The Figurines for two years in collaboration with Mixed Reality from the University of Nottingham.

The group has previously won four Bafta nominations and the Prix Ars Electronica. They have exhibited at Tate Online and The Science Museum and in Sydney, Rotterdam, Palestine, Taiwan, Japan and Chicago.

Day Of The Figurines, partly funded by the EU, has taken place in Berlin and Singapore with a trial run at the Sonar Festival in Barcelona.

This is the first time it has come to the UK. It began on Wednesday and will last until April 27.

rachel.pegg
@theargus.co.uk