

Eirini Nedelkopoulou  
University of Reading  
Bulmershe Hall, Woodlands Avenue, Reading, RG6 1FB  
UK  
00447738380935  
lcr05en@rdg.ac.uk

### **The Augmented Theatre in Virtualised Society: See You in Walhalla**

The paper examines the blend of real and virtual space in the virtual theatre of See You in Walhalla. The performance was staged in Athens in 2006, was simultaneously transmitted via a complex webcam system to Amsterdam and Sofia and was also streamed live over the internet. See You in Walhalla ‘fuses’ the cities of Athens, Sofia and Amsterdam, sending the Avatar/player on a journey across an urban industrial landscape composed of digital fragments of Europe. This multi-dimensional urban-landscape in which this performance takes place makes reference to the complex virtual game environment of Second Life.

Elaborating further the generic title of virtual theatre as defined by Gabriella Giannachi, I discuss the reality-virtuality continuum focusing on mixed-reality experience which ruptures the demarcation of the real and the virtual, creating an augmented performance space. Rather than position such work as virtual theatre, I tend to specify the project as ‘augmented theatre’ emphasizing its mixed-reality identity. Within augmented performance space of See You in Walhalla, embodiment becomes ‘posthuman’ and this paper argues for an analytical framework through which to address the nature of embodiment in mixed-reality theatre, based on Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s idea of embodied nature of perception. Under the characterisation of the condition of contemporary mankind as “virtual” by Katherine Hayles, I explore the possibility of ‘posthuman’ presence of user/player/spectator in everyday spaces. The paper redefines the phenomenological idea of consciousness as a sense of being-in-the-world and inaugurates the idea of being-in-the-new-physical-world in mixed-reality theatre.