

THE PHOTOGRAPHERS' GALLERY

Between Worlds 23 June – 24 September 2023

PRESS RELEASE

What happened to your first online game, website, social platform or virtual world?

Our everyday lives have been digitised and scattered through different spaces since the internet was created. Opening on 23 June 2023 – the 20th anniversary of virtual world Second Life – *Between Worlds* examines the digital folklore created by online communities and worlds. The social exchanges, digital artefacts and politics that inform our current experiences of online life are all explored in the exhibition.

Many virtual worlds – like Second Life and PlayStation Home – have been created and inhabited online, bringing close-knit user communities together. Second Life is a rarity to still be active – many virtual worlds appear and disappear within a few years. The end of many of these worlds, often linked to profits, have been marked by ‘end of the world’ parties – one last community get-together before the servers are switched off.

Despite many virtual worlds ending, improved usability has led to a resurgence of interest in online communal spaces. All helped by significant increases in domestic computer capacity, changing social attitudes; as well as the rise of VR headsets, metaverses and Web3 technologies.

Between Worlds traces the development from Maze, considered the first 3D first-person game ever made, and the influence these early games had on the development of virtual communities. In Preserving Worlds, a documentary series through aging and beloved virtual worlds, Derek Murphy and Mitchell Zemil invite users, developers and preservation communities to discuss historically important spaces such as WorldsChat, Myst Online and ActiveWorlds.

Reflecting more recent developments, *Between Worlds* includes screenshots from viral ‘meeting my internet best friend’ videos where relationships formed in virtual communities spill out of virtual spaces; and the EU-funded metaverse Global Gateway, an initiative designed to engage young people in topics such as climate, connectivity, health, which highlights the increasing interests of governments in virtual worlds.

Between Worlds also includes a newly commissioned video game with Glasgow-based creative developers Benjamin Hall and Frances Lingard. In the *World Imagining Game*, you are invited to create new and alternative virtual worlds while exploring the power dynamics, aesthetic possibilities, and legacies at play. Imagine your own visuals, characters, modes of gameplay in your world, and think about who your world is for, how it is moderated, and how it operates economically.

Between Worlds marks a new strand of programming and research through The Photographers’ Gallery digital programme into the structural and socio-political issues around online worlds, and precedes a new PhD collaboration with the Centre for the Study of the Networked Image at London South Bank University.

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Notes for Editors**The Photographers' Gallery**

The Photographers' Gallery (TPG) champions photography for everyone. Located in the heart of central London and home to an international community of photographers, the Gallery explores photography in all its forms, with a diverse and critically acclaimed programme of exhibitions, events and courses. Over the past five decades TPG has helped to establish photography as a recognised art form, introducing new audiences to photography and celebrating its place at the heart of visual culture.

Find out more at: thephotojournalistsgallery.org.uk

Visitor information – The Photographers' Gallery

Mon – Weds 10am – 6pm

Thurs & Fri 10am – 8pm (Friday free from 5pm)

Sat 10am – 6pm

Sun 11am- 6pm

Tickets - your ticket covers entry to all exhibitions on the day of your visit

£8 / £5 concessions (members go free)

Advance online booking: £6.50 / £4 concessions

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