

Last Will - a prototype MITE *

A Hide & Seek / Punchdrunk Production
In association with HP Labs and seeper

About

Last Will is the working prototype of an ambitious, genre-defying experience. An old man who led an extraordinary life dies, a recluse, and leaves a mysterious will. The will finishes with the lines 'somewhere in my house is a safe. Inside the safe is all the treasure of my life that is left. If you can find the safe and open it, the contents are yours'.

This is the call to action. Players must then seek out the house, which is both an installation preserving the story of the recluse's life, a mysterious and enchanting environment, and a vanitas - an encoded system of clues and conundrums, composed by someone on the brink of death, about the truth of his memories and the pricking of his conscience.

The game will blur the boundaries between real and virtual experience. The house will be mirrored as an online 3D environment, enabling those not geographically able to reach the physical house to participate fully.

The experience is designed so that it is accessible at a number of levels. Casual players can visit the house (in real life or online) and enjoy the experience much as they might a visit an exhibition or museum. The engaged players will pick up on the puzzles and try to solve them, extending their experience beyond their visit through a network of online media. Immersed players will visit repeatedly and collaborate with others, immersing themselves in the old man's story and enacting the key moments of his life in an attempt to reach the safe.

Real-world actions will have virtual outcomes and vice versa. Some challenges will only be overcome by collaboration between online and real-world players.

Each member of the playing audience is the hero of their own adventure, going as far as they dare. Depth of participation is rewarded by personalization of experience. The outcome of the game - what is in the safe - is the ultimate experience. Two tickets to Shanghai to discover the final truth...

* Multiplatform Immersive Theatrical Experience



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The Research + Development Process

Punchdrunk and Hide and Seek Productions are collaborating to experiment with digital technologies and games design. The relationship cements a personal collaboration between Felix Barrett, artistic director of Punchdrunk, and Alex Fleetwood, director of Hide and Seek, dating back several years. "Felix and I have been talking about games, the online world, and how that could relate to Punchdrunk's work since I saw The Firebird Ball in 2005", says Alex Fleetwood. "We started plotting Last Will shortly after we met and have been developing the idea ever since".

The technological underpinning (for) the experience proved elusive until Felix and Alex attended HP Labs' Mediascapes conference in 2007. Mediascape is a software platform that enables games and interaction design to be processed with input data from real world sources including GPS, RFID and other types of sensor. Richard Hull says "HP Labs mediascape research has long benefited from collaborative projects with early users of this emerging technology. Last Will has provided a wonderful opportunity to extend our research into instrumented spaces in partnership with a highly innovative and creative team".

A first result of this experimentation was a simple sensor-driven room experience: the 'Sensory Symptom' at the Pervasive Media Studio in Bristol, undertaken by Punchdrunk and H-P Labs and funded by Arts & Business Reach programme. After securing R&D funding in April 2007, HP Labs, Seeper, Punchdrunk and Hide & Seek formed a research partnership to investigate Felix & Alex's ideas and apply them to a working prototype.

Creating a hybrid virtual / real world environment required the production team to be rigorous in defining the exact nature of the piece at an early stage. Alex Fleetwood says; 'We had to move away from the processes of installation theatre, where it's possible to continue to define the space after you've built it, and move closer to film; a detailed script was produced and the technical implications of that script were worked out before any of the teams built anything'.

This process was carried through into a number of layered maps of the space, which pinpointed every light, sound effect, object, and interaction. Evan Grant says; 'We're pushing the limits of technology and the production process with Last Will. The whole team are organically adapting to a new way of working. The convergence of four different industries, with each one bringing its own language, process and ideas. Venturing into this collective alchemy is very exciting, and this is only the beginning!'

The ultimate goal of the prototype is to scale it up into a massively multiplayer experience, allowing multiple simultaneous interactions between people in the real and virtual environment. 'We realise the scale of that ambition now', says Alex Fleetwood, 'and thanks to the brilliance and hard work of this team we believe it's possible.'



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Credits

Main team:

Directed by Felix Barrett
Written and Produced by Alex Fleetwood
based on an idea devised by Felix Barrett and Alex Fleetwood

Project Manager - Colin Nightingale
Technical Director - Evan Grant
Physical Space Designer - Gary Campbell
Theatrical Lighting and PA Installation - Euan Maybank

HP Labs team:

Interaction Design - Richard Hull, Ben Clayton, Gary Porter
Sensing & Actuation - Gary Porter
Mediascape Programming - Ben Clayton, Mihkel Aamer
Context Framework Representation - Richard Hull
Project Co-ordination - Vanessa Bellaar Spruijt

seeper team:

Direction + Production - Evan Grant
Graphic + Motion Design - Ronin Cho
Interaction Design + Programming - Marek Bereza
Sound Design - Christian Curtis

Thanks to the National Gallery for supplying Madigan's paintings.

Last Will is presented with support from:
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Biographies

Alex Fleetwood is a producer and director of Hide and Seek Productions. Alex founded Hide and Seek, the UK's first festival of social games and playful experiences, in 2007. This year the festival played to over 3000 people at the Southbank Centre and featured an international line-up of artists. As well as Hide and Seek, Alex has produced projects including The Eternity Man, a film opera for Channel 4, and The Soho Project, an ARG for the London Games Festival. www.hideandseekfest.co.uk

Felix Barrett is founder and artistic director of Punchdrunk, the UK's leading immersive theatre company, whose most recent productions Faust (2006-7) and The Masque of the Red Death (2007-08) have brought a major new audience to the next frontier of theatrical experience.

www.punchdrunk.org.uk

Creative and technologist **Evan Grant** is founder of collective seeper. He has been working for the past 10 years as a director, developer and producer with a self-applied remit for innovation led wonderment. Exploring natural user interaction and ubiquitous computing to create multi-sensorial experiences and memories. 2008 has seen seeper working with the likes of Sony PlayStation, Glastonbury Festival, Unilever and Aldeburgh Music.

www.seeper.com

www.evagrant.com

Richard Hull, DPhil is a senior researcher at Hewlett-Packard Laboratories in Bristol whose primary research interest is in the delivery of rich experience through pervasive computing. He was the technical lead on the large-scale Mobile Bristol collaborative project and the architect of the mediascape platform www.mscaapers.com.

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