# Performing Mixed Reality (MIT Press)

*By Steve Benford, Gabriella Giannachi*



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Working at the cutting edge of live performance, an emerging generation of artists is employing digital technologies to create distinctive forms of interactive, distributed, and often deeply subjective theatrical performance. The work of these artists is not only fundamentally transforming the experience of theater, it is also reshaping the nature of human interaction with computers. In this book, Steve Benford and Gabriella Giannachi offer a new theoretical framework for understanding these experiences -- which they term mixed reality performances -- and document a series of landmark performances and installations that mix the real and the virtual, live performance and interactivity.

Benford and Giannachi draw on a number of works that have been developed at the University of Nottingham's Mixed Reality Laboratory, describing collaborations with artists (most notably the group Blast Theory) that have gradually evolved a distinctive interdisciplinary approach to combining practice with research. They offer detailed and extended accounts of these works from different perspectives, including interviews with the artists and Mixed Reality Laboratory researchers. The authors develop an overarching theory to guide the study and design of mixed reality performances based on the approach of interleaved trajectories through hybrid structures of space, time, interfaces, and roles. Combinations of canonical, participant, and historic trajectories show how such performances establish complex configurations of real and virtual, local and global, factual and fictional, and personal and social.

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## Editorial Review

Review

Mixed Reality emerged as a novel technological platform for cultural production, but as this timely volume demonstrates, in an era of ubiquitous computing all technological experiences are to some extent mixed reality systems. *Performing Mixed Reality* is a landmark text by two of the leading figures in the area. Deftly interweaving theoretical and technological considerations, and drawing on their unparalleled experience across a range of innovative projects, Benford and Giannachi provide an invaluable resource for future research and practice in this rapidly developing field.

(Paul Dourish, Professor of Informatics, Donald Bren School of Information and Computer Sciences, University of California, Irvine)

Benford and Giannachi's masterful crafting and interweaving of a decade of their cutting-edge research into mixed reality performances provides a real eye-opener into the art and science of designing captivating and innovative technology-augmented experiences. Mixed reality is a hybrid space that opens up new ways of traversing and encountering the world; this book, likewise, compellingly crisscrosses between different genres and narratives, revealing many insightful ideas, concepts, and experiences.

(Yvonne Rogers, Professor of Human-Computer Interaction and Director of the UCL Interaction Centre, University College London)

About the Author

Steve Benford is Professor of Collaborative Computing in the School of Computer Science at the University of Nottingham. Gabriella Giannachi is Professor in Performance and New Media and Director of the Centre for Intermedia in the English Department at Exeter University

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