



## **Landscape/Portrait**

An online public art project by Kevin Carter

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## An online public art project by Kevin Carter

Produced by Forma

Landscape/Portrait is an art project that invites participation from geographically defined communities and encourages participants to create individual video self portraits in response to stereotypical views of their localities. It is an online social sampling project that allows communities to challenge the authenticity of demographic stereotypes depicting person and place. The work exists as a web site ([www.landscape-portrait.com](http://www.landscape-portrait.com)), which may be made available to communities in a range of public settings, in order to generate local participation.

The starting point of Landscape/Portrait is the demographic statistics that are used to create models of places and the communities who live in them. These statistical models are frequently referenced by town-planners and developers in the planning and design of public services and regeneration projects.

The statistical models they refer to are created by categorising people by their postcode area into social and economic stereotypes, which are based upon assumptions about their lifestyles and their relationship with their

community. In Britain, fifty-six such stereotypes are used, built using demographic data from private market research companies and the national Census survey. They can be applied to categorise almost every person with a postcode.

However, the authenticity of the 'picture' portrayed by demographics is open to question, particularly where economic factors such as migration, housing, retail and employment changes have served to reconfigure the makeup of an area. The reductive nature of 'statistical imagining' leads to a sense of misrepresentation of the individual and the community.

Landscape/Portrait sets out to question and explore whether communities can really be reduced to such simple sets of data and to challenge the authenticity of these 'views' of person and place. By providing people with access to their own demographic stereotype, and effectively asking them "Is this you?", the work offers an opportunity to re-focus on the individual and their community, rather than on the mass abstraction of the demographics.



**YOU ENJOY CAMPING,  
ANGLING, BINGO,  
HORSERACING AND  
RUGBY. YOU LIKE  
WATCHING CABLE TV  
AND GOING TO THE PUB.  
DOES YOUR POSTCODE  
DEFINE WHO YOU ARE?**

Visit [www.landscape-portrait.com](http://www.landscape-portrait.com) to find out.

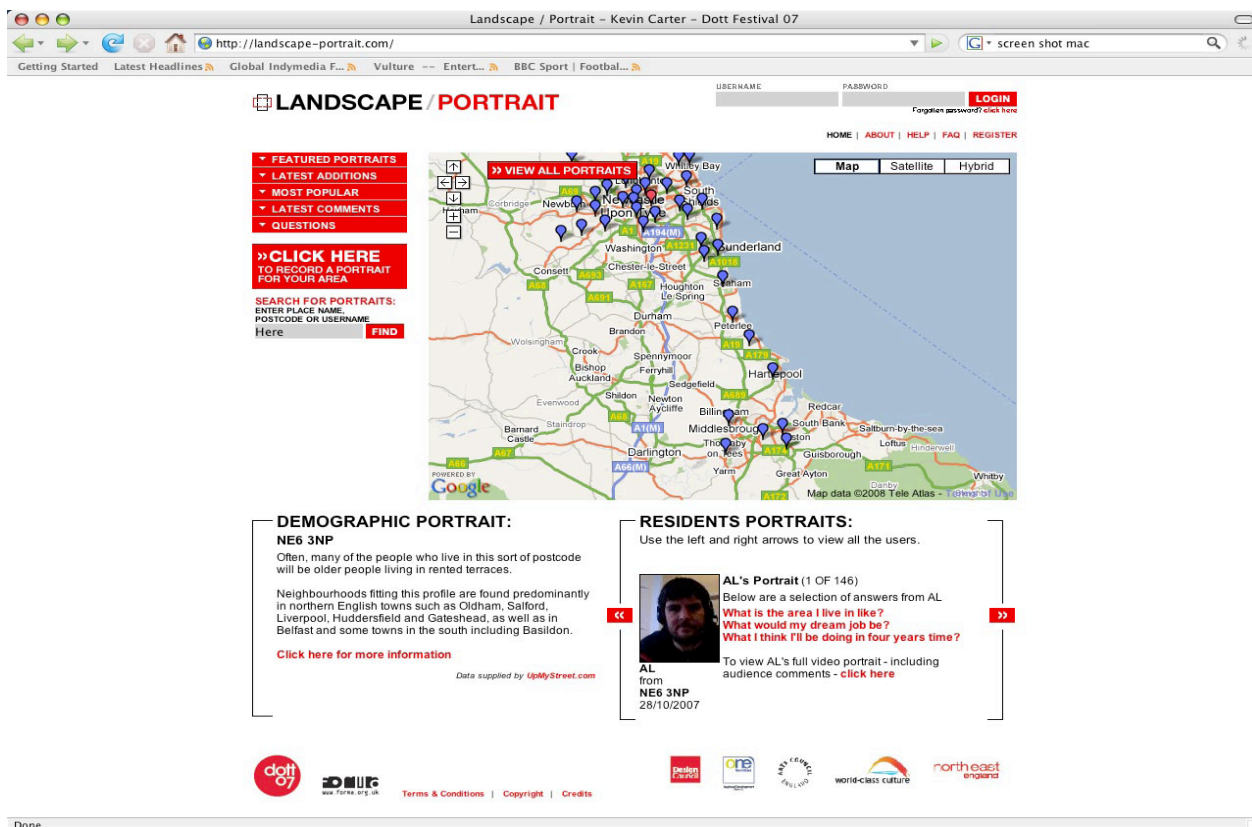
Image produced by Forma as part of the project's billboard campaign

The project web site allows users to enter a postcode and retrieve the demographic portrait of the corresponding location. They can then choose to enter their own portrait, recording it as a video response to a number of questions about the place in which they live, their lifestyle and aspirations.

The web site archives each self-portrait geographically and makes them accessible through a map-based interface. In this way visitors can use the map to locate and view other video portraits in their street or town, or simply search for portraits by postcode, username or by the questions that have been answered. Visitors can also leave comments on other people's videos, creating dialogue and debate. As more portraits are added, Landscape/Portrait will grow to become a valuable social resource, offering a challenge to the reductive vision inherent in demographic portraits.

Landscape/Portrait has enormous potential to reach more people through further promotion and facilitation within the context of festival/venue/community initiatives, and at points of public access to the internet (such as libraries and schools). An essential part of the success of the project's first presentation was the presence of trained invigilators/facilitators who acted as both a technical and social guide to the work.

As Landscape/Portrait grows it will become a significant social reference. Potentially the project could be made available to socially engaged websites and commercial services (such as upmystreet.com), offering a chance to challenge the validity of the demographic image.





Landscape/Portrait can be used/installed in any location within the UK, or in other countries where a suitable supplier of demographic data can be found. It is particularly revealing to locate the project focus in areas undergoing social or economic change and therefore can provide a tool for critique of regeneration schemes.

For its first presentation as part of Dott07 (Designs of the Time) in North East England, the web site was initially populated with video portraits of people from three different communities across the region. These were created by the artist in collaboration with regional media producers, Media19. Interviews with the participants were displayed on a large screen in the exhibition space, alongside three computers at which visitors could access the site and upload their own content.

The artist also worked with a photographer, Karin Coetzee, whose images of the three areas in which the initial participants live, formed the basis of an outdoor element of the project – displays on billboards and other advertising sites – and a series of postcards.

In future presentations of the project, the artist is keen to continue to collaborate with other artists across a range of media; these collaborations both animate and locate the project, and generate additional materials for its exhibition.

Similarly, Landscape/Portrait may form the basis of an education project around themes of citizenship, identity and portraiture.

Credits:  
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[www.landscape-portrait.com](http://www.landscape-portrait.com) was supported by Teesside University and Digital City, and data was supplied by [upmystreet.com](http://upmystreet.com). Additional support was provided by Digital Knowledge Exchange, d|lab, Fluid Pixels Studio and Babel Digital



Photos by Karin Coetzee

## Kevin Carter

Forma worked with London-based artist Kevin Carter to produce Landscape/Portrait, first presented as an online and public realm project as part of the Design Showcases programme for Dott 07 (Designs of the Time 2007) – a year of community projects and events that explored how design can make a positive difference to our daily lives.

Carter uses digital technology, new media and data to create interactive gallery installations and online pieces that explore the relationships between society and technology, artwork and audience.

As founder of London-based new media design and production agency, co-lab projects, Carter has collaborated with programmers, artists and technicians to create a variety of digital and public arts projects.

Carter's recent projects include De do do do, de da da da (They're meaningless and all that's true), a web based piece for the group show Daytodaydata, at Angel Row Gallery, Nottingham, Aspex Galley, Portsmouth and ICA, London; and the interactive installation Oral Tradition at Nunnery Gallery, London (all 2006). His work Karaoke me, Babylon Gallery, Cambridge (2004) won a webarts award and was nominated for a BAFTA.

He is currently developing a family of software voices for use in the computer system of the gallery at The Public, West Bromwich. He is also working with architects civic on new public art proposals for Burnley Borough Council.



Photo by Karin Coetzee

# Contact

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