



Australia - Japan
MEDIA ART
MEETING

豪日メディアアートミーティング

Official Report, November 2010

Australia–Japan Media Art Meeting

Coordinators: Hisako Hara, Alessio Cavallaro, Miki Fukuda

Artists: Mari Velonaki, Greg More, Troy Innocent

Supported by the Australian Embassy Tokyo, Australia-Japan Foundation

Cooperation: Australian Centre for the Moving Image (ACMI), Chukyo University, Institute of Advanced Media Arts and Sciences (IAMAS), Golightly Inc., Nagoya City Art Museum, Osaka Electro-Communication University, The National Museum of Art, Osaka

Workshop 1:

Period: May 30 - June 4, 2010

Venue: Osaka Electro-Communication University, etc.

Workshop 2:

Period: May 31 - June 4, 2010

Venue: Institute of Advanced Media Arts and Sciences (IAMAS)

Presentation 1

Title: Education of New Media Art in Australia and Japan

Date and Time: June 5th, 2010, 14:00 - 16:00

Venue: Nagoya City Art Museum, Aichi

Presentation 2

Title: New Media Art in Australia

Date and Time: June 6th, 2010, 14:00 - 16:00

Venue: The National Museum of Art, Osaka



Contents

Project outline p.3

Artists' profiles p. 4

Workshops p.7

Presentations p.13

Questionnaire results p.17

Comments from the artists p.21

Conclusion p.25

Acknowledgments p.32

Project outline

Australia has produced numerous pioneering media artists, such as Stelarc and Jeffrey Shaw. This project involved concise presentations of Australian media artists' works to a Japanese audience. We were very pleased to have Mr. Alessio Cavallaro (senior curator of the Australian Centre for the Moving Image), and three media artists – Mari Velonaki, Greg More and Troy Innocent – coming over from Australia for this occasion.

There are a considerable number of currently active media artists also here in Japan. We think that this program was helpful in deepening mutual understanding between both countries in the field of new media art.

The project comprised two workshops and two presentations. Thanks to the cooperation of educational institutions and art museums, we were able to establish a platform for communication and the exchange of knowledge and information on different levels, ranging from academic dialogue among specialists to the development of human resources, and general publicity of new aspects of Australian contemporary culture.

Workshop 1

Period: May 30 - June 4
Venue: Osaka Electro-Communication University, Osaka
Artists: Mari Velonaki, Troy Innocent
Japanese artists and researchers: Juichen Tan (Malaysian national), Hideyuki Ando, Yasuaki Matsumoto, Tomoyuki Takami, Megumi Matsubara, Katsuhiko Ohnishi, Kunihiro Chihara, Naokazu Yokoya, Hirokazu Kato, Tomoko Hayashi, Firman Widyasmara (Indonesian national)

Workshop 2

Period: May 31 - June 4
Venue: Institute of Advanced Media Arts and Sciences (IAMAS), Gifu
Artist: Greg More
Participants: Students of IAMAS and Chukyo University

Presentation 1

Title: Education of New Media Art in Australia and Japan
Date: June 5
Venue: Nagoya City Art Museum, Aichi
Panelists: Hisako Hara, Alessio Cavallaro, Mari Velonaki, Greg More, Troy Innocent, Atsuhito Sekiguchi, Kiyofumi Motoyama, Joe Takeba

Presentation 2

Title: New Media Art in Australia
Date: June 6
Venue: The National Museum of Art, Osaka
Panelists: Hisako Hara, Alessio Cavallaro, Mari Velonaki, Greg More, Troy Innocent, Akihiro Kubota

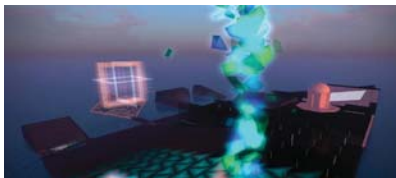
Greg More

(Lecturer of Architecture + Design at RMIT University, RMIT's Spatial Information Architecture Laboratory)



Greg More is an artist, designer, senior lecturer and director of Melbourne-based design consultancy OOM Creative. He is a global expert in the area of digital environment design and Web 3D.

In 2008, More's futuristic project Eureka, a software prototype that enables information and content to be seen and moved within a dynamic 3D interface, was exhibited at the prestigious Museum of Modern Art (MoMa) in New York. Hailing from New Zealand, More originally trained as an architect in Wellington before making the move to Melbourne in 1998 to complete his Masters in Architecture at Deakin University.



Portrait Island - Doppelgänger: Second Life Exhibition

In 2001 More was headhunted by RMIT University, Melbourne, to join the start-up team of the innovative SIAL (Spatial Information Architecture Laboratory). It was during his time, and more recently, as a senior lecturer in the School of Architecture + Design, that More has advanced new ways of thinking about and designing digital environments, and his research work with students in Second Life has been received with international acclaim.

Since 2008 More has been dividing his time between lecturing and directing his company OOM Creative, which specializes in the design of 3D digital environments; combining architecture, web and game technologies to develop shared information spaces for business and creative enterprise.

In July 2009, More was personally namechecked by Beth Noveck (Deputy Chief Technology Officer, White House Office of Science and Technology Policy) who complimented his design work during a keynote speech outlining the digital media initiatives of the Obama administration.

Projects:

- Eureka Presentation Environments
- Portrait Island - Doppelgänger
- Thumpa

Mari Velonaki

(Co-Director, Centre for Social Robotics within the Australian Centre for Field Robotics, University of Sydney)

Mari Velonaki has worked as a researcher and artist in the field of interactive media since 1995. She proposed a new theoretical foundation for interface design that promotes intimate and immersive relationships between humans and machines, based on her concept of “amphidromos”, a meeting point beyond action and reaction, and prior to discourse – a brief moment of recognition between two parties. Her position has been experimentally demonstrated through a series of interactive artworks – 24 catalogued exhibitions during 2002-07 – that engage the spectator/participant with digital and robotic characters. Many of these have been selected as case studies in academic monographs.

In 2003 Velonaki initiated and led a major ARC art/science research project titled Fish Bird: Autonomous Interactions in a Contemporary Arts Setting, in collaboration with Drs. Rye, Scheduling and Williams. The project created a new theoretical foundation for communication between humans and machines that incorporates notions of trust and shared intimacy.

In 2006, with Dr. David Rye, she co-founded the Centre for Social Robotics within the Australian Centre for Field Robotics, University of Sydney.

Projects:

- Fish Bird
- Embracement
- Modelling Human Movement



Circle D: *Fragile Balances*

Troy Innocent

(Deputy Head [Research], Multimedia and Digital Arts Senior Lecturer, Monash University)

Troy Innocent has been exploring new aesthetics enabled by computers since 1989. Deconstructing and understanding the endemic properties, language and nature of the digital realm has been the underlying theme of his work. Trained as a designer and practising as an artist, he has moved across media in works involving computer animation, installation art, interactive media, synthetic images and sound. His work has been exhibited widely at national and international galleries, conferences, and symposia, including Ars Electronica 2004.

Typically, these works involve the construction of artificial worlds that explore the “language of computers”. In his work, Innocent explores the dynamic between the iconic ideal and the personal specific, the real and the simulated, and the way in which our identity is shaped by our language and communication.

Projects:

- LifeSigns
- Transitional Forms
- Colony
- Ludea



World Machine

1: Osaka Electro-Communication University, etc

Program encompassing presentations of works and studies, and exchange of views between Australian and Japanese artists and researchers

The purpose of this event was to give artists and researchers from Australia and Japan an opportunity to showcase their pioneering activities in the field of new media art, with the ultimate aim to explore possible directions of future exchange between both countries. For most participants it was the first occasion to meet and learn about each other's activities, and in retrospect the workshop was a highly stimulating experience for all of them.

Day 1 (May 30, Sun)

Next to presentations of works by Dr. Mari Velonaki and Dr. Troy Innocent, Juichen Tan (artist and part-time lecturer at Osaka Electro-Communication University) introduced his recent interactive video installation Gel City on this day. Following a short research outline, Osaka University associate professor Dr. Hideyuki Ando demonstrated interface parts of works previously exhibited at Ars Electronica and the Japan Media Arts Festival among others. Next was a presentation by Kyoto Saga University of Arts professor Yasuaki Matsumoto, who illustrated possible industrial-academic cooperation projects incorporating wearable displays in artworks. Dr. Tomoyuki Takami, an associate professor at Osaka Electro-Communication University, gave an outline of his studies, and introduced examples of how results have been applied in the conception of game type works. The time between 2:00 and 7:00 PM was a period of concentrated input.

Day 2 (May 31, Mon)

The day began with artist/architect Megumi Matsubara's presentation of her own practical and research work since her student days. Trained in architectonics and information engineering, Matsubara introduced numerous intriguing, philosophically tinged projects. Both Dr. Velonaki and Dr. Innocent were deeply impressed by these concepts and art works, and seized the opportunity to discuss and ask questions related to Matsubara's work.

Next was a presentation of Professor Takami's computer programs for sensor-based works that function as interactive games for multiple players, and a hearing/demonstration of Osaka Electro-Communication University associate professor Dr. Katsuhiko Onishi's computer animation studies.



Presentations at Osaka Electro-Communication University



Troy Innocent watches a demonstration

Day 3 (June 1, Tue)

On the schedule for this day was a visit to the Nara Institute of Science and Technology under the guidance of Osaka Electro-Communication University associate professor Kazuhiro Ueda.

Attendants inspected research work at the laboratories of professors Kunihiro Chihara, Naokazu Yokoya and Hirokazu Kato respectively.

At Chihara Lab, the students witnessed demonstrations of “real-time animation of water” – defining water as an aggregation of particles, the interaction of which is calculated in real-time – and other studies related to image processing.

At the Vision and Media Computing Laboratory they inspected studies in the fields of computer vision, human interfaces and computer graphics, and were finally given a presentation on research into Augmented Reality and next-generation interfaces at Kato Lab.

<http://chihara.naist.jp/index.html>
<http://yokoya.naist.jp/index-e.html>
http://imd.naist.jp/index_e.html

Day 4 (June 2, Wed)

The morning was dedicated to an extensive tour around the motion capture, film, recording and CG studios of Osaka Electro-Communication University’s Joint Institute for Advanced Multimedia Studies (JIAMS), including demonstrations and a screening of 3D computer animations produced by JIAMS researchers.

On the afternoon program was a presentation by Tomoko Hayashi (artist and technical assistant at the Graduate School of Information Science and Technology, The University of Tokyo), followed by a Q&A session about her research and production of works exploring by means of communication technology the evocation of contacts between individuals in remote places, and other occurrences of skin sensation.

Day 5 (June 3, Thu)

Presentation of works by Firman Widiasmara, an animation artist from Indonesia who is presently staying in Japan as part of The Japan Foundation’s JENESYS programme.

Day 6 (June 4, Fri)

The day began with a review of the presentations of each of the researchers and artists who had been taking part since May 30, followed by a brainstorming and investigation into possible directions of future exchange projects based on certain keywords, and finally, a closing summary.

The six-day program was wrapped up with Dr. Innocent's "Micronation of Ludea" workshop for graduate students.

2: IAMAS

As part of the institution's curriculum, the Institute of Advanced Media Arts and Sciences (IAMAS) in Ogaki, Gifu, hosted a workshop with Australian artist Greg More as guest lecturer. At this occasion, More taught about information design in a virtual space, and exchanged views and information with IAMAS president Sekiguchi regarding their respective schools' educational systems, the situation of new media art in Australia and Japan, and various pedagogic issues. The workshop was an opportunity to underpin both parties' constructive plans to further deepen their mutual exchange.



IAMAS (Institute of Advanced Media Arts and Sciences)



Kei'ichi Irie shows Greg More and Alessio Cavallaro around the IAMAS facilities

Theme

"Ephemeral Proximity"

- 1) Visualization of information in the virtual world
- 2) Creation of virtual spaces for sharing information

The main idea was to work out facilities (structures) and systems for selecting and sharing certain information utilizing Second Life, an Internet-based virtual world system. The creative work took place in the form of collective research in five groups of four members each. A central issue here was the question how to design (visualize) numerical data in a visually appealing and user-friendly way.

Lecturers

Guest lecturer: Greg More

IAMAS instructor in charge: Prof. Kei'ichi Irie

In his function as IAMAS teacher in charge of this class, Studio 3 professor Kei'ichi Irie assisted More as a mediator between the instructor and the students.

Professor Irie is an architect who normally teaches interactive and spatial design. Working as a bridge from English to Japanese, he made simultaneous interpretation unnecessary, and occasionally supplemented More's instructions with explanatory notes for the IAMAS students. The workshop greatly benefited from professor Irie's generous support throughout the event.

Workshop Schedule

May 31 (Mon) – Jun 4 (Fri)
9:00 – 12:00

Lecture

14:00 – 17:00, lecture by Greg More about his own work

Students

The workshop was attended by 19 first-year postgraduate students plus one visiting student from Chukyo University in Aichi. (The participation of a student from another university was realized as part of a domestic student exchange program.)

Different from students at other art universities' graduate schools, the IAMAS students come from various backgrounds, including not only arts but also science, technology, sociology, literature, etc. This so-called "motif work" course is designed as an opportunity for students from different backgrounds who have just enrolled at IAMAS to get together for one week only and collaborate on one specifically themed work. Their concentrated activities during this period that is usually scheduled early in the first year at IAMAS include research, examination, production and presentation. Conducted by yearly changing instructors on different themes, this year it was Australian artist Greg More, who led the workshop as guest lecturer with support from IAMAS tutors.

The workshop was scheduled to take three hours of the daily morning classes, and once the regular afternoon lessons finished around 6:00 PM, the students split up into five groups of four persons each, and engaged in lively discussions until the early morning. After a period of repeated trial and error, they managed to complete their collective work in time for the Friday presentation. Considering that only three days were available for constructive work as the first day was basically introduction and the last dedicated to review, it was an extremely hard program for the students.

Day 1 (May 31, Mon)

After introducing himself to the students, More explained this workshop's aim and the schedule of the week ahead, before introducing the basics and possibilities of Second Life, and the exhibitions and other projects in this virtual environment in which he is involved. More finally taught the students how to install the software and create avatars.



Greg More and Kei'ichi Irie answer questions from students



Discussion about concept, purpose, function and design at a students' laboratory



Students experience the arrangement of objects in the virtual world

Workshops



The avatars of students in Second Life

Day 2 (June 1, Tue)

More started with an introduction of seven techniques of creating, animating and storing objects in the Second Life environment. The students then formed five groups to discuss what kind of structure would be suitable for what kind of data.

Day 3 (June 2, Wed)

Each group did an intermediate presentation. They explained their ideas regarding themes, structures and types of data, following which More and professor Irie offered their individual advice on each of the projects. Their comments locating the problem points helped those students that were still tapping in the dark as to what kind of work they should create, so that all participants got a better understanding of the basic idea.



Presentation/review session

Day 4 (June 3, Thu)

Each group focused on their productive work. More and professor Irie went around to meet the members of each group, discuss with the students, point out conceptual inconsistencies, and offered advice to those who struggled during the creative process.

Day 5 (June 4, Fri)

The day began with presentation/review sessions by each of the five groups, joined by professor Masahiro Miwa as a sharply critical reviewer. The five groups conceived in the virtual space structures on such different themes as "birthrate", "Youtube" or "animals", whereas More was particularly delighted about the students' interesting ideas, and the high degree of perfection in relation to the short period of three days.



Presentation/review session (Kei'ichi Irie and Greg More, center)

A lecture by More introducing his own work and creative processes followed in the afternoon. The students showed great interest in the stance of this skilled architect who occasionally works as a designer and media artist. There was a lively exchange of views, and on the final day of the workshop, participants had obviously begun to understand each other's thoughts. As not much information on media art from Australia is available in Japan, this event was an invaluable opportunity for Japanese students.



Presentation/review session of the five groups' works

After the workshop, all students gathered for a farewell party at a space run by students themselves in the city. In addition to the workshop participants, students and teachers who were not involved joined the party as well, to chat about classes, arts, campus life and other things.

Education of New Media Art in Australia and Japan

Date and Time: June 5, 2010, 14:00 – 16:00

Venue: Nagoya City Art Museum, Aichi



Nagoya City Art Museum

Moderator: Hisako Hara (Professor, Faculty of Information Science and Arts, Osaka Electro-Communication University)

Panelists:

Alessio Cavallaro (Senior Curator, Australian Centre for the Moving Image [ACMI])
Troy Innocent
Greg More
Mari Velonaki

Guest Commentators:

Atsuhito Sekiguchi (President, IAMAS)
Kiyofumi Motoyama (Associate Professor, Graduate School of Information Science, Nagoya University)
Joe Takeba (Curator, Nagoya City Art Museum)



Presentation "Education of New Media Art in Australia and Japan"

This event on the theme of "Education of New Media Art in Australia and Japan" was held at the Nagoya City Art Museum on June 5, 2010.

Program coordinator Hisako Hara (Professor at Osaka Electro-Communication University) began with an introduction of the Australian art scene and representative artists, followed by a brief explanation of this program's aim to create a platform for sharing information and exchanging views by way of workshops and presentations.

Next was Alessio Cavallaro (Australian Centre for the Moving Image ACMI), who gave a general outline of this program's Australian participants, and provided an overview of practical and theoretical media art courses in Australian universities and colleges, and how these have shaped both artistic and curatorial practices. This was followed by artist Dr. Troy Innocent's (Lecturer at Monash University) and Dr. Mari Velonaki's (Co-director of the Centre for Social Robotics, University of Sydney) accounts of artwork presentations and the extensive exchange with artists, laboratory visits and workshops at Osaka Electro-Communication University, which had preceded the presentations.



Presentation about Osaka Workshop by Mari Velonaki and Troy Innocent

Presentation 1



From left: Troy Innocent, Mari Velonaki, Kiyofumi Motoyama and Joe Takeba

Greg More (lecturer at RMIT University) gave an account of the progression and results of a workshop based on Second Life as a platform, conducted at the Institute of Advanced Media Arts and Sciences (IAMAS). IAMAS professor Kei'ichi Irie, who had been in charge of the respective courses, pointed out that the workshop's positive results were due to the inspiration his students drew from More's thoughts.

IAMAS president Atsuhito Sekiguchi then spoke about his involvement with new media art and the educational programs of IAMAS as an educational institution for new media art, as well as about his attempts to sound out contact points of new media art with the regional industry. Kiyofumi Motoyama (associate professor at Nagoya University) discussed the meaning of teaching art at Japanese universities, while referring to the power of new media art to inspire new ideas especially in students from fields not related to art. Joe Takeba (curator at Nagoya City Art Museum) introduced the "Nagoya Biennale ARTEC", a new media art exhibition that was held four times since 1989 at Nagoya City Art Museum, and shared his impression of recent efforts in new media art having returned to rather physical qualities, compared to works from the 1980s.

In the closing Q&A session, Alessio Cavallaro answered a question from the venue's side concerning the position and definition of media art, and methods of teaching it at schools. According to Cavallaro, "aesthetic and conceptual developments in and critical understanding of media art and other fields of art often inform and influence each other. Also, from a curatorial and audience perspective, the emphasis of media art should be on the content of the work and how it engages the audience, rather than the technology used to create the work." Chukyo University professor Masao Kohmura remarked from his place in the audience that "the understanding of media and artistic materials is essential for the definition of media art," and that, "for that matter, all previously created works of art could in fact be categorized as media art."

The New Media Art in Australia

Date and Time: June 6, 2010, 14:00 – 16:00

Venue: The National Museum of Art, Osaka



The National Museum of Art, Osaka

Moderator:

Hisako Hara (Professor, Faculty of Information Science and Arts, Osaka Electro-Communication University)

Panelists:

Alessio Cavallaro (Senior Curator, Australian Centre for the Moving Image [ACMI])

Troy Innocent

Greg More

Mari Velonaki

Guest panelist:

Akihiro Kubota (Professor, Department of Information Design, Faculty of Art and Design, Tama Art University)

This “New Media Art in Australia” themed event took place at the National Museum of Art, Osaka, on June 6, 2010.

Following an introductory speech by the museum’s chief curator, Atsuhiko Shima, program coordinator Hisako Hara explained the program’s general outline and purpose.

Alessio Cavallaro then introduced the various programs and other activities of the Australian Centre for the Moving Image (ACMI), and showed images and video footage of several works by Australian new media artists. Artists included Patricia Piccinini, known for her exquisitely modeled “clones” of living beings; Craig Walsh, whose video installations make clever use of their respective settings; and Jon McCormack, who has been creating artworks based on algorithms of artificial life since the early 1990s.

Next to introduce their own previous works were artists Dr. Troy Innocent, Mr. Greg More and Dr. Mari Velonaki.

The second half was dedicated to Tama Art University professor Dr. Akihiro Kubota’s account of his most recent research into Australian bio art, a genre that is presently attracting international attention. “Bio media” incorporating structures of living organisms are being considered as novel media of the 21st century. Kubota gave an overview of the history of bio art, including the achievements of various groups and individual artists, with a special focus on his observations at the SymbioticA Centre of Excellence in Biological Arts in Perth. He explained about the work and facilities of SymbioticA, and introduced concrete examples of Bio Art, before closing by pointing



Greg More



Alessio Cavallaro

Presentation 2



Presentation by Troy Innocent

out that the relationship between DNA and protein in bio media is an extension of the data-media relationship in the realm of digital media.

Those who participated in the presentations finally had the opportunity to give feedback. In reference to Kubota's Bio Art report, Cavallaro commented that there is a growing interest in Bio Art. However, non-specialist audiences are intrigued by it but often find it difficult to understand. He also commented on the increasing number of projects that involve creative relationships between artists, scientists, technicians, and technology developers. Other comments concerned the sheer scope and diversity of Australian media art that was conveyed very well throughout the presentations.'



Akihiro Kubota

Moderator Hara wrapped up the event by looking back at this year's meeting as a first step of a project designed to promote the sharing of information and the exchange of opinions between Australia and Japan, which is going to continue in various forms in the future.



Hisako Hara

Questionnaire results

Presentation 1

June 5 (Sat) at Nagoya City Art Museum, Nagoya
Answers from 16 out of 44 attendants

(Numbers in parentheses indicate numbers of corresponding answers/persons)

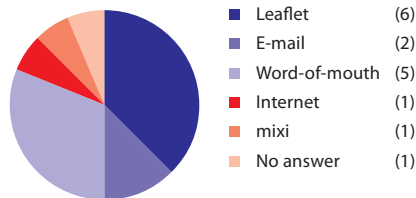
Q1 What prompted you to attend, and what was your personal aim?

- I'm interested in media art and education in this field. (6)
- I wanted to experience an art-related presentation in English (6)
- Curiosity (4)
- No answer (1)

Q2 What was your impression, and what do you expect from future installments?

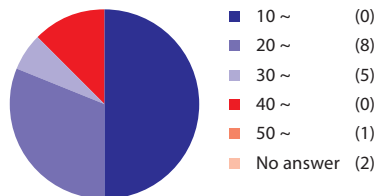
- The multinational discussion on media art based on different views of technology was exciting. (1)
- It was interesting to learn how media art emerges from interdisciplinary dialogue. (1)
- Learning about Greg More's work was interesting. (1)
- It would be nice to have more slides and other materials related to specific works. (1)
- Mari Velonaki's works were intriguing. (1)
- It was an occasion to learn about the meaning of a platform for conscious exchange in the field of media art between Australia and Japan. (1)
- I hope this event will be held again. (2)
- I'm interested in the process of designing works, and I want to learn much more about it. (1)

Q3 How did you learn about this event?

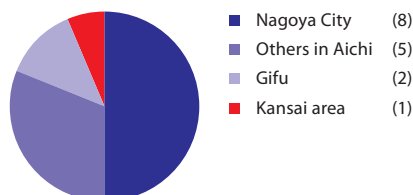


Breakdown of attendants

Age

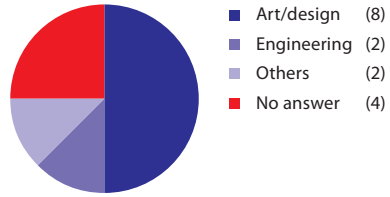


Area of residence

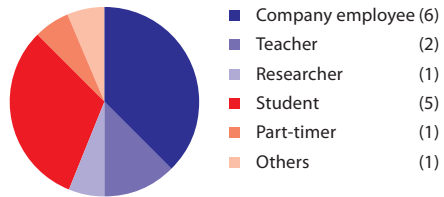


Questionnaire Results

Field of specialization



Profession



Presentation 2

June 6 (Sun), The National Museum of Art, Osaka
Answers from 17 out of 78 attendants

(Numbers in parentheses indicate numbers of corresponding answers/persons)

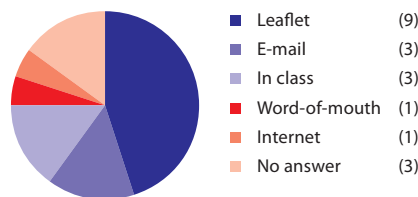
Q1 What prompted you to attend, and what was your personal aim?

- I wanted to learn about the Australian art scene. (1)
- I wanted to learn about media art in Australia. (4)
- I wanted to learn about media art in general. (4)
- I wanted to learn about Bio Art. (1)
- I saw an announcement on the museum's leaflet. (1)
- Our teacher told us about the event in class. (2)
- An announcement from the Australian Embassy. (1)
- No answer (3)

Q2 What was your impression, and what do you expect from future installments?

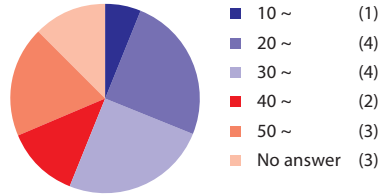
- Learning about a major movement in Australia gave me an idea of a type of originality that is yet different from European, American or Japanese characteristics. I'm looking forward to the reports. If there was a Bio Art workshop I'd like to attend. (1)
- I want to attend a general workshop. (1)
- I'd like to get in direct touch with artworks (visit exhibitions). (3)
- Akihiro Kubota's speech about how Stelarc's works and Bio Art will probably show further developments in the future. (1)
- I'm curious to learn about how Bio Art is being received in different countries. (1)
- I was startled to see how art has evolved before I knew it. The event was an occasion that encouraged me to ponder the question, "What is Art?", which was also asked in the meeting, once again. I also discovered the innovativeness of Australian art. Personally I liked Greg More's works in particular. (1)
- **(Message to the participating Australian artists:)** Have you ever thought about whether your works may need sound? The presentations were interesting, but you have to have a clearer focus because otherwise it's quite pointless. Media do not control your work, but your work may choose media as needed.

Q3 How did you learn about this event?

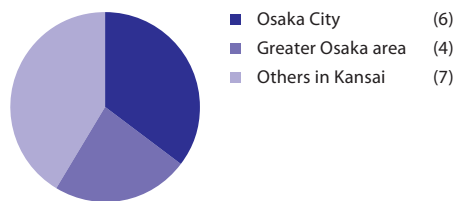


Breakdown of attendants

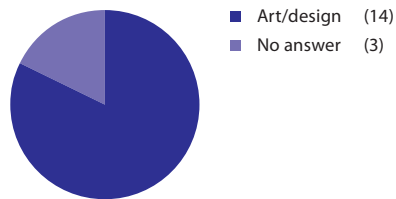
Age



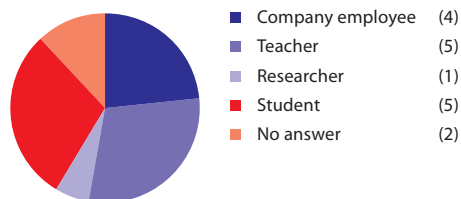
Area of residence



Field of specialization



Profession



Greg More

It was an honor to be part of the Australia-Japan Media Art Meeting, and to run a workshop with Professor Irie at IAMAS early in June 2010. The five-day workshop I directed exposed IAMAS students to new ways of thinking about information within shared digital spaces. As an artist and designer, I am interested in how data and virtual space are synthesized to form new spatial experiences. The student outcomes were great considering the time constraints, and I hope they further explore the ideas raised at the workshop later in their careers. Professor Irie was a perfect host, and obviously managed to overcome the inherent language barriers.

After the workshops, the public presentations happened in Nagoya and Osaka. These allowed Mari, Troy and myself to present our project work and discuss ideas pertinent to our practice. Alessio gave a clear overview of the Australian media art scene, and it was also interesting to hear the other guests enhance the relationship between Japanese and Australia media art.

Since returning to Australia, I have presented to my colleagues at RMIT's Spatial Information Architecture Laboratory the workshop and symposium outcomes, and also shown them all the wonderful publications collected from IAMAS. There is a lot of interest in further collaborations. I feel that the experience has enriched my understanding of media arts practice in Japan, and highlighted the similarities and differences between being a media artist in both countries. It has given me great contacts and networks for future projects.

July 1, 2010

Mari Velonaki

I was one of the three artists, alongside Troy Innocent, Greg More and curator Alessio Cavallaro, invited by Hisako Hara and Miki Fukuda to participate in the Australia-Japan Media Art Meeting 2010. I am a media installation artist and a researcher in human-machine interface design at the Centre for Social Robotics/Australian Centre for Field Robotics at the University of Sydney.

During my stay in Japan I was mainly based at the Osaka Electro-Communication University where I participated in a one-week workshop aimed to create a dialogue between Australian and Japanese media artists and technologists in relation to our practice and research.

For me this was a unique opportunity to present and discuss my work with my Japanese peers, but most importantly to be exposed to their own work and practice. During the first day of the workshop I experienced a very stimulating sequence of presentations by Japanese media artists and technologists about their research and practice. Troy Innocent and I also presented and discussed our work, showing videos documenting our projects. The workshop participants discussed a wide variety of projects, showing a diversity of approaches to media practice and human-machine interface. I was particularly excited to be able to experience many live demonstrations. In the following days we visited several labs at Osaka Electro-Communication University and the Nara Institute of Science and Technology, where we were exposed to many research projects that were interesting both conceptually and technologically. I was particularly impressed by the state-of-the-art laboratories at both universities, and the high degree of specialization of their staff. At the end of the week, Troy Innocent, Greg More, Alessio Cavallaro and myself, alongside eminent Japanese media art researchers, gave public presentations at the Nagoya City Art Museum and the National Museum of Art in Osaka.

For me the workshop was extremely beneficial in the sense that it was very different from a conference; it was a much smaller group that could spend several hours together in a more informal environment where thoughts and ideas could flourish. A common realization was that, although we all use technological tools for our work, our conversations were not about technology but about people and communities. Perception and communication were the two main themes that emerged throughout the workshop, and in a sense, these were the two elements that bounded us together as a group.

Conclusion

The workshop provided a wonderful opportunity for individual participants to create links with artists who are producing work conceptually and thematically connected to our own. I am very much interested in continuing this dialogue with Professor Matsumoto and Tomoko Hayashi.

I hope that this is only the beginning of a long-term collaboration between Australian and Japanese artists and our associated institutions. I would very much like to see a group exhibition in Japan and Australia, as well as opportunities for residencies in both countries that would lead to the creation of new projects. Finally, I would like to thank our hosts Hisako Hara and Miki Fukuda, Osaka Electro-Communication University and the Australia-Japan Foundation, and the Australian Government for giving me the opportunity to participate in this very unique, very organic workshop.

August 27, 2010

Troy Innocent

Experience

The visit to Osaka, hosted by Hisako Hara at the Osaka Electro-Communication University, was an intensive week of discussion and exchange on contemporary media arts practice. This was of great benefit to myself both professionally and personally. A good foundation for further exchange between Australia and Japan in media arts was established, and many interesting ideas were shared. In relation to my practice, the opportunity to reflect upon my work in this new context highlighted themes of augmented perception, and I felt a synergy with the artists and researchers and the works they presented.

In summary, there were six days of workshops and visits, followed by two days of presentations in Nagoya and Osaka.

Day 1: Presentations from artists and researchers

Following presentations from Mari Velonaki and myself, many new ideas and approaches were introduced by artists and researchers. These included experiments in interaction, alternate ways of working with sensory information (Yasuaki Matsumoto), installation and site-specific works, and research into new technologies.

Day 2: Presentations and discussion at OECU

A presentation from Megumi Matsubara, introducing a playful architectural point of view, and a materiality in expression of media. In another presentation, Firman Widiasmara introduced stop-motion animation and narrative. We also paid a visit to the AR lab of Professor Onishi, who connected gestural interaction with L-system growth models in trees. This day also allowed time for reflection on the many ideas and works introduced previously.

Day 3: Visit to NAIST

Three research groups presented their projects to the group at this advanced science and technology institute in Nara. The highlight was the Augmented Reality and communication lab. These projects that connect real world objects to models of communication based on architecture, colour theory and gestural painting, provided further ideas on augmented perception.

Day 4: Presentation and tour of the OECU facilities

Tomoko Hayashi's presentation on her practice based on intimate communications augmented/mediated by technology led to a discussion between the workshop participants on possible project ideas, such as a collaborative nonverbal/audiovisual long-distance communication project.


Day 5: Presentations and discussion at OECU

On this day Alessio Cavallaro joined the group and discussion around the media arts exchange developed. Myself, Mari and Firman began this discussion by briefly presenting our works and ideas in this new context. A conversation on common threads in Japanese media arts practice emerged, whereas both by the playfulness in some work, and the ways in which new modes of perception are explored equally from an artistic and technological approach, inspired me personally.


Day 6: A theme, a workshop, and an agenda

On the last day, I had the opportunity to conduct a "Perspective Glitch" workshop with postgraduate students at OECU. Over an hour we constructed small tags using a formal language system from the Micronation of Ludea. Participants were invited to take their tags and find a home for them, responding with a photograph and short story of their tag located in an urban context.

Meanwhile, "connections between perception and communication" emerged in discussions as a general theme of the exchange. More specifically, by augmenting (or sometimes limiting) perception (typically using new technology), an alternate mode of (often non-verbal) communication is realised. In summary, the result is ---

 Augmented Perception ::: Non-verbal communication

As a starting point, there are some aspects of this theme that may be considered:

- 
1. Limiting communication: eg. Tomoko's removal of sound
 2. Augmenting perception: eg. technologies... (brain interfaces)
 3. Creating systems / processes / spaces: for new ways of communication
 4. Connecting humans: human <--> human
 5. Cross-cultural communication: exchange, dialogue, discourse

This theme presents an opportunity for a conference and/or exhibition theme involving artists from Japan and Australia.

Day 7: Presentations in Nagoya: The Education of New Media Art in Australia.

Following brief presentations from Mari, Greg and myself, we discussed the workshop conducted at OECU on the first day. Atsuhito Sekiguchi presented an overview of the teaching and research programs at IAMAS.

Day 8: Presentations in Osaka: The New Media Art in Australia.

Alessio Cavallaro delivered a keynote presentation on new media arts in Australia, followed by presentations from myself, Greg and Mari. The report from Dr. Akihiro Kubota on bio-art was well presented and informative.

These final two days of presentation allowed for a consolidation of many ideas and themes that emerged during the workshops. Both were well attended, indicating a high level of interest in media art practice. There is potential for this project to continue and build further connections between Japan and Australia based on the synergies present in media arts from both countries.

Additional activities

Monday, June 7th: On my way back to Tokyo I took a detour to visit IAMAS in Ogaki and met with Atsuhito Sekiguchi and Yosuke Kawamura. This led to an invitation to undertake a residency at IAMAS in 2010, and exhibit an Augmented Reality work from the Micronation of Ludea at the Ogaki Biennale.

Tuesday, June 8th: In Tokyo, met with Minoru Hatanaka at the ICC to discuss my work. We will stay in touch as he is interested in new work connecting ecosystems and language. Viewed the Open Space 2010 exhibition.

Outcomes

- Invitation to exhibit at Ogaki Biennale
- Collaborative nonverbal/audiovisual long-distance communication project
- Building media arts networks and connections in Japan
- Plans for Monash University to participate in a publication and/or symposium initiated by the Australia-Japan Media Arts workshop
- Plan to apply for Australia Council artist-in-residence program to undertake location-based media arts projects in Japan (also linked to work during the residency at Tokyo Wonder Site in April)

July 1, 2010

Hisako Hara

While there has been various interchange between Australia and Japan in the broad field of art, there wasn't any project in the past that was designed to develop continuous exchange with a focus on new media art in particular.

Both countries keep throwing up internationally respected artists in this field, sweeping Golden Nicas and other prizes at the Ars Electronica Festival, for example, for more than a decade now.

In Japan, exhibitions and related symposia at such specialized facilities as the NTT InterCommunication Center [ICC] and the Yamaguchi Center for Arts and Media [YCAM], as well as conferences of the Society for Art and Science and the Society of Image Arts & Sciences do provide opportunities for exchange of views related to new media art, but there are still only few occasions for communication between Japan and other countries in this field.

Creating opportunities for large numbers of people to encounter works of art through the medium of the exhibition is essential. As a first step for this program, however, Miki Fukuda and myself shifted the emphasis on workshops that bring together artists, engineers and students, and help intensify communication among these groups through such shared processes as research and creative work.

At IAMAS, small groups students each completed work on one specific project, presented and discussed the results – all within the framework of an intensive weeklong program that proved to be a highly instructive and enriching experience. The emphasis at Osaka Electro-Communication University was on opportunities for artists and researchers to learn about each other's studies and practical work over time.

In new media art, advancements in technical research significantly affect the production methods, styles and formats of artworks. The further program included various scientists' presentations and demonstrations on subjects like image processing, interfaces, programming, etc., while the participating artists introduced their previous works and recent activities. Such interdisciplinary workshops were occasions that even university professors Dr. Innocent and Dr. Velonaki reportedly don't often get a chance to take part in.

In many cases, the work of technicians and artists is about approaching the same subject from different angles, whereas the understanding of this difference of perspective often inspires new discoveries. Many of the participants in this project expressed their gratitude for being given the chance to make this precious experience here.

Conclusion

I for one will make every effort to realize further installments of this Australia-Japan Media Art Meeting, in one form or another.

I would like to thank Alessio Cavallaro, senior curator of archives and exhibitions encompassing games, animations and contemporary media art based on the century-long history of film at the Australian Centre for Moving Images [ACMI], whose cooperation was elemental for the realization of this program. I also thank Melinda Rackham, former director of the Australian Network for Art and Technology [ANAT], Performance Space curator Bec Dean, and all other people who provided us with information during our preparatory research.

I also wish to express my gratitude to the Australia-Japan Foundation, as well as to Nancy Gordon and Hitomi Toku from the Australian Embassy in Tokyo, for their financial and various other invaluable support.

July 20, 2010

Alessio Cavallaro

SUMMARY REPORT

The primary aim of the Australia-Japan Media Art Meeting was to build new linkages among Australian and Japanese artists, curators and researchers for future collaborations in the rapidly growing field of media art.

The range of lectures, workshops and public presentations conducted at Tokyo University of the Arts, Osaka-Electro-Communications University, the Institute of Advanced Media Arts and Sciences (IAMAS), the National Museum of Art Osaka, and the Nagoya City Art Museum certainly have developed and enhanced the potential to achieve this aim.

The events at each of the venues above generated considerable interest and were very well received. Researchers and students at the participating universities were keenly engaged by the creative workshops conducted by the three Australian media artists – Troy Innocent, Greg More and Mari Velonaki – and the Australian curator’s guest lecture (at Tokyo University of the Arts). The public presentations were very well attended, with audiences genuinely eager to hear the artists talk about their respective work, and also to learn about the current trends in Australian media art.

The project was also extremely rewarding for the Australian artists and curator, as it provided a unique opportunity to meet and enter into creative dialogues with Japanese colleagues. All involved were mutually inspired by the stimulating discussions, and by the diversity and innovative nature of their respective projects and developmental research.

PROJECT MODEL

The scope of the Australia-Japan Media Art Meeting in Japan proved to be effective, productive and manageable within the given resources. A similar model would work equally well if the project were to be staged in Australia, subject to a similar level of financial assistance from funding agencies, and in-kind support from cultural and educational institutions.

A notable aspect of the project is that it was structured for both specialist and general audiences: intensive workshops and presentations between the artists, researchers and students at the universities, complemented by public forums at the two museums. The “bi-lateral” approach enabled greater awareness of Australian media art to be promoted to a wider and more diverse audience, while also allowing for comparative perspectives by leading Japanese academics on the current status of media art in Japan.

AJMAM 2

The success of this project has established a strong foundation upon which to build creative dialogue, exchange, and partnerships in the future. All parties involved in the Australia-Japan Media Art Meeting are excited about the possibility of developing an expanded version of the project in Australia. Ideally, in addition to workshops and presentations, the next iteration could include, for example, a two-day symposium featuring prominent Australian and Japanese artists, curators, academics and researchers working at the intersections of media art, science and technology. Other project components could include artists' residencies, exhibitions, screenings, educational and other public programs, online initiatives, and publication outcomes.

Depending on timing, funding and levels of interest and capacity by prospective partners, AJMAM 2 could be staged in either or both Sydney and Melbourne, at venues such as the University of Sydney, the University of Technology Sydney (UTS), the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT), and Monash University, and at various galleries and cultural institutions, potentially including the Australian Centre for the Moving Image.

The Australia-Japan Media Art Meeting has been an invaluable and groundbreaking project – one that has generated a high degree of good will and dedication between all involved, and an enriching legacy upon which to create future iterations. I am deeply committed to further developing cultural and educational partnerships between Australia and Japan, and will actively pursue all possible options in order to achieve the exciting potentials afforded by this inaugural project.

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I wish to gratefully acknowledge Professor Hisako Hara for initiating and producing this important project, and Miki Fukuda for co-producing and managing the project.

Also, I thank: the Board of the Australia-Japan Foundation, and Deborah Peterson, Manager, Australia-Japan Foundation, for enabling the project; the Australian Embassy, Tokyo – in particular, Nancy Gordon and Hitomi Toku – for their significant and generous assistance; the directors and staff at the participating cultural and educational institutions (including researchers and students) for their keen interest; and the three Australian media artists, Troy Innocent, Greg More and Mari Velonaki, for their enthusiastic commitment to the project. My special thanks to Professor Keiichi Irie, IAMAS, and Assistant Professor Kazuhiro Jo, Tokyo University of the Arts.

June 30, 2010

Miki Fukuda

As part of the Australia-Japan Media Art Meeting, Australian artist Greg More was invited to coordinate a workshop at IAMAS.

IAMAS implemented an artist residency program and continued to invite a large number of artists from overseas since the time of its foundation. The works co-produced with the visiting artists have always been integrated in the institute's educational program. After a temporary discontinuation due to the recent economic situation, the IAMAS staff must have been tremendously happy to invite More and offer students once again the opportunity to get inspiration and stimulation from an artist visiting from abroad. For the students, More's open-minded approach and working style beyond the limits of artistic genres was without a doubt a highly stimulating experience that will surely exert a positive effect on their future studies, practical work, and ultimately, their careers at large. Needless to mention, Australia as a country and culture has definitely become something much more familiar to the students.

Greg More, on the other hand, was visibly stunned by the results of his work with the highly motivated, imaginative and responsive IAMAS students. The chance to meet Japanese young people apparently sparked his interest Japanese culture in general.

More is teaching at RMIT's Spatial Information Architecture Laboratory (SIAL), an educational facility specializing in crossover disciplines just like IAMAS. I sincerely hope that this human exchange will inspire the collaboration of both organizations, and ultimately help promote communication, joint studies and human exchange in the field of media art education between Australia and Japan.

I also believe that the accounts of workshops conducted at Nagoya and Osaka, focusing on creative endeavors in the new field of "media art", were opportunities to introduce aspects of a forward-thinking new art scene in Australia. Inviting not one but multiple artists was absolutely helpful for conveying the diversity of media art in Australia today, whereas the encounters with Dr. Velonaki and Dr. Innocent had a particularly advantageous effect.

Finally, I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to the Australian Embassy and the Australia-Japan Foundation for their generous support of this truly fruitful workshop and exchange program. It was a great honor for me to work with Alessio Cavallaro, who coordinated the project from the Australian side. I would like to express my gratitude also to everyone else for their cooperation and participation.

July 14, 2010

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