

Minutes of the Aotearoa Digital Arts Trust Annual General Meeting

Sunday October 11, 2009

Auckland (Starkwhite, Karangahape Road), Wellington (The Southern Cross Hotel), Christchurch (The Physics Room) and Dunedin (Otago Polytechnic School of Art).

Present: Marcus Williams, Danny Butt, Luke Duncalfe, Phil Dadson, Janine Randerson, Zita Joyce, Su Ballard, Caroline McCaw, Douglas Bagnall, Morgan Barnard, Stella Brennan

Via IRC: Rachel Gillies, Trudy Lane, Ian Clothier, Liz Bryce and Vicki Smith

Apologies: Alex Monteith



Multiple screens and chocolate chip cookies at the Christchurch AGM (in the exhibition *Dance, Sons and Daughters, Dance! The Future is ours to Shape and Mould*, curated by Martin Basher)

After the mysterious technical failure of the four-way video link, the meeting was held via teleconference, with an IRC channel updated by Caroline McCaw.

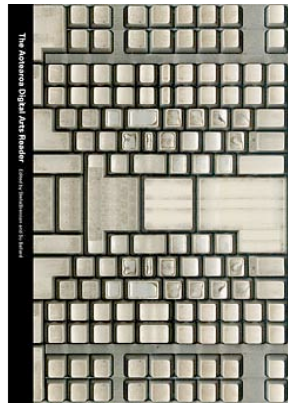
Zita welcomed all members, and thanked them for attending. She noted that this is the first AGM since ADA's establishment as a charitable trust, and that the trustees wanted to find a way to hold the meeting that reflects the distributed nature of our organisation.

1. Activity Report to 30 Sept 2008

1.1 The ADA Reader (Stella Brennan)

The initial project, for which Stella received a grant from CNZ in 2005, was in two parts – web development and an online publication. The web aspect of the project, to develop an ADA site, was completed by Luke Duncalfe in 2005 (www.aotearoadigitalarts.org.nz), however Stella decided to enlarge the proposed publication and to invest in a physical print run, rather than purely digital distribution as first proposed. Su Ballard agreed to co-edit the book. This expansion allowed us to fill a significant gap in audience knowledge of digital media, not accessible by

online means. The project grew into a substantial full-colour, 240 page, peer-reviewed book and we secured the support of Clouds as co-publisher.



Drawing on four years of online discussion (archived at www.aotearoadigitalarts.org.nz) and four face-to-face conferences, *The Aotearoa Digital Arts (ADA) Reader* presents key texts on new media art to a broader audience. Edited by Stella Brennan and Susan Ballard and designed by Jonty Valentine, the book is composed of 20 histories and topical essays, along with 11 pageworks by selected artists. *The ADA Reader* is designed to bridge the space between academic text and artistic monograph. The publication records the practices occurring in New Zealand within a context of critical and historical discussion.

The Aotearoa Digital Arts Reader had its international launch on July 28, 2008 at the National Museum of Singapore. The launch was hosted by Martin Harvey, New Zealand High Commissioner to Singapore as part of the 2008 International Symposium on Electronic Art (ISEA). In Singapore ADA also presented *Cloudland: Digital Art from Aotearoa New Zealand*.

The book launch featured a panel discussion by Stella Brennan, Zita Joyce, Trudy Lane and Caroline McCaw. Launching the book in this context allowed it to reach the international audience most interested in this area of research and production.



Launch at the National Museum of Singapore

The August 15 New Zealand launch was hosted simultaneously by St Pauls Street gallery in Auckland and the Dunedin Public Art Gallery, with a video Skype link between the venues.

A significant portion of copies have been distributed to contributors. Copies have also been distributed to artists, writers and academics at ISEA and at conferences and art events including in Latvia, the UK and Australia. Sales of the reader provide a small but significant income stream for the Trust.

1.2 Cloudland: Digital Art from Aotearoa New Zealand (Stella Brennan)

A partner programme of ISEA 2008 at the Substation Singapore

July 24th – August 3rd 2008

Curated by Su Ballard, Zita Joyce and Stella Brennan, the works included in the exhibition were:

Stella Brennan *South Pacific*, 2007

Len Lye *Free Radicals*, 1958/79

et al. *the social meaning of things*, 2008

Kentaro Yamada *Listening Heads*, 2006

Alex Monteith *Composition for farmer, three dogs
and 120 sheep*, 2006

Etherradio: PSN Electronic, Bruce Russell
and Adam Willetts, 2008

Zita and all the artists except for Bruce Russell (and Len Lye) traveled to Singapore for the exhibition and associated performances. Su, although initiator and curator of the project, was unable to travel due to pregnancy.

One of the valuable aspects of this project was the combination of the international audience provided by participants in ISEA with the Substation's local audiences. Presentation of *Cloudland* at ISEA offered significant opportunities for the artists and the curators to meet many international artists, curators, festival organisers and venue directors. It was also a useful opportunity to promote ADA. The Substation was an ideal venue for the show, as a space to work in and as a space within the cultural scene of Singapore, with opportunity to build on links made through previous projects and conferences and to meet and to work with locals, gaining a sense of Singapore an active cultural site. The *Cloudland* exhibition and the performances of Adam Willetts and PSN Electronic on opening night felt like another step in a valuable exchange between New Zealand and Singapore.

The initial catalyst for the exhibition was a discussion between Su and Gunalan Nadarajan, the Artistic Director of ISEA2008, which led to an invitation to launch the reader at ISEA. The invitation to exhibit grew from the book launch and the two events provided a package that allowed us to showcase New Zealand work, as most of the exhibitors were also featured in the reader. In addition distributing around 80 copies of the Reader at ISEA, we also distributed an A2 fold-down catalogue. We shipped 1700 to Singapore, of which nearly all were distributed free, either in the conference packs to ISEA delegates (700) or at the venue. The catalogue functioned as an invitation, poster, and explanatory text. The book and exhibition together operated as an excellent way of introducing an international audience to New Zealand digital art. The exhibition was proposed to New Zealand galleries, but unfortunately we have not been able to find a local venue for the show.

Trudy Lane asked if the exhibition was not picked up due to technical concerns, but Stella said the constraints were budgetary, with venues looking to utilise their staff curators and in-house collections in the current climate, and that paying participants adequately was an important, but potentially expensive part of our proposal.



Cloudland installed at the Substation



Performances by PSN Electronic and Adam Willetts

1.3 Tending Networks, Christchurch Symposium 2008 (Zita Joyce)

This was the first symposium organised by the current trust board as an ADA Trust activity. It took place in Christchurch by invitation of the Physics Room, in recognition of our ongoing partnership with the gallery. The symposium was hosted and supported by the Design and Arts College of New Zealand, who provided us with a seminar space, network, and student volunteers. We managed and catered the conference itself with a very small budget, using recycled crockery from the Super Shed (tip shop), and simple but hearty home catering – continuing the ADA open source sandwich free lunch tradition.

To emphasise the growth of ADA since *_emerge_*, the Dunedin symposium, we named the 2008 symposium *Tending Networks*, and the session themes explored the process of developing and supporting networks.

The Christchurch Symposium marked the development of three basic principles of ADA symposia, which we could define as:

- Discussion
- Inclusivity
- International connection

To enhance discussion at that symposium we structured the sessions around panel discussions with three presenters invited to speak about particular projects, and a moderator who channeled discussion between the presenters and the audience.

Because the panel presenters were specifically invited, we opened up space for others with short artist presentation sessions (10 minutes per presentation). We called for proposals for these and also invited a number of speakers. These short presentation sessions are intended to create a safe space for students and other unpracticed speakers to present their work and ideas. This should in turn expand the range of possible presenters for other contexts, so that possible participants aren't limited purely to those the organisers are already aware of. Several of the short-duration presenters (and some panel presenters) were from the Christchurch tech and craft communities, rather than the ADA community specifically. This was a way of connecting with the broader fields of digital and creative practice in the city, and broaden the community base of ADA itself.

Following on from the participation of Steve Dietz and Melinda Rackham in the Dunedin conference, we invited Young Hae Chang Heavy Industries from Korea to the Christchurch symposium. Young Hae Chang and Marc Vogue's work intersects with film, writing, and net art and flash animation, which we felt would resonate with ADA practitioners. Their visit was enabled by funding from the Asia: New Zealand foundation, and they were enthusiastic and fun symposium participants. Our first keynote presentation at *Tending Networks* was provided by Adam Hyde, who spoke about his work, and the process of connecting between New Zealand and the world as a media artist.

Full details of speakers and themes are on the symposium website and blog:

<http://symposium08.aotearoadigitalarts.org.nz/>

2. Activity Report from 30 Sept 2008 to 11 October 2009

2.1 Critical-Digital-Matter, Wellington Symposium 2009 (Douglas Bagnall)

The 2009 symposium was held in Wellington at the Victoria University of Wellington School of Design. Thanks to Morgan Barnard and the Department of Digital Design, we had no trouble at all with the venue or technology.

We chose to go with themes of criticality and materiality. Previous symposia have been about our very existence as a network, and the board thought it was time to try to get onto something a bit less solipsistic.

We chose Phil Dadson and Matthew Fuller as keynote speakers, which wasn't hard. Matthew Fuller didn't want to travel to NZ for family and environmental reasons, so we worked out a way of having a remote conversation using De Balie in Amsterdam as a kind of third leg. That was negotiated by Zita Joyce and Su Ballard. As usual there was a free lunch provided each day, which Caro McCaw helped with a lot. For the first time we had a workshop day, which was generally successful.

Alongside the symposium proper, there was a screening and performance evening co-ordinated by Alex MacKinnon, and an exhibition at Enjoy Gallery curated by Siv B. Fjaerestad. Both of these were pretty good.

We had around 80 people attending, though the numbers ebbed and flowed, with perhaps 40 or 50 people there for much of the time.

ADA got \$5400 + GST from CNZ. The main costs were:

- fees for artists, keynote presenters, and workshop leaders;
- food (and wine for opening);
- travel and accommodation for keynotes, alex, and organisers (unless they could get their employers to cover costs).
- hire for the screening (symposium was covered by VUW).

We also spent a little bit of money looking after our first ever uninvited Australian visitor. For future Symposia it is unlikely that we will change the format too much, though we would like to shift some load off the board if possible. The time and location of the next symposium has not been finalised, but it will probably be somewhere new, and on the same kind of 18 month cycle that we've been maintaining

Phil Dadson commented that that the chance to present projects in progress was an important part of the symposium and it was agreed that critical workshops would be a useful idea to develop further for the next symposium.

2.2 ADA/ Physics Room Agreement

Su presented the outline of this agreement, which we devised as a way to share equipment that was acquired for the Cloudland project.



**THE
PHYSICS
ROOM** A CONTEMPORARY ART PROJECT SPACE

The Equipment Pool

Information sheet

7 October 2009

PURPOSE OF THE EQUIPMENT

ADA and The Physics Room intend to make this equipment available to use for artists and galleries at cost. This is a service that has never been provided to the art community before. We hope that accessibility to this gear enables artists to realise projects hitherto unrealisable.

WHAT EQUIPMENT WILL BE AVAILABLE

4 x Panasonic PT-AX200E projectors
4 x Storm case flight cases

7 x Sennheiser HD200 headphones
2 x Audio-Technica ATH-ANC7 QuietPoint headphones

2 x Apple iPod nano 4GB
3 x Camellion AP-218 USB switching mode power supply

4 x wall mounted television/projector shelves, 360 x 370 x 120 [includes fixing straps for shelves]

Cables

VGA/DVI adaptors x 4
3-way RCA cables x 2
2-way RCA cables x 2
RCA to mini-jack cables x 2
Apple dock connector to USB cable x 1

WHO CAN USE THE EQUIPMENT?

The equipment pool is hosted by ADA and The Physics Room to provide galleries and artists with audio/visual equipment at cost. Please be aware that it can take a month to process your application for hire and that we operate the following prioritised system for hire:

- **PRIORITY 1:** Public sector funded artists presenting video/electronic media artwork in Aotearoa. Hirers in this category are eligible to book equipment up to 6 months in advance.
- **PRIORITY 2:** Public sector funded galleries presenting video/electronic media artwork in Aotearoa. Hirers in this category are eligible to book equipment up to 3 months in advance.
- **PRIORITY 3:** Artists showing within dealer spaces and artists using video within dance/theatre/music presentations. Hirers in this category are eligible to book equipment up to 1 month in advance.

Any other bookings will be taken at the discretion of ADA and The Physics Room.

FURTHER INFORMATION

For further information about this development please contact Su Ballard (ADA) or Vanessa Coxhead (The Physics Room). A full terms and document of hire procedures will be available shortly.

3. Financial Statements

Please see accompanying Treasurer's report.

4. General Business

Phil emphasised the importance of turning the recent list discussion into some kind of a formal submission to the Creative New Zealand Strategic Plan.

Su agreed, but with the understanding that it is important for us to remain true to our way of doing things, rather than following the agendas of funders.

Vicki Smith [via IRC] “ada is about collaboration and skills exchange and exploration of possibilities - people with ideas and knowledge - fund the roving workshops i say, ada is about collaboration and skills exchange and exploration of possibilities - people with ideas and knowledge”.

Morgan [via IRC] “I wonder if the ada site could grow to allow for members to share work documentation, etc”

Su-ballard [via IRC] “ yes there originally was a space for file sharing... on the web site.”

Thanks was also offered to Su for all her work as treasurer, and to Janine Randerson, who has been a hardworking founding board member, and has resigned due to work, study and parenting commitments.

5. Future planning

This was connected back to the list discussion on strategic planning. Douglas suggested that two separate issues, what the future direction of CNZ, and what the future direction and possibilities for ADA might be had gotten mixed up, and that it would be useful to untangle them. The board will be making a submission to CNZ, but ADA will encourage those who have contributed to the lively online discussion to put in their own comments as well.

5.1 Committees?

As the meeting was running well over time, it was decided to defer this discussion.

5.2 Electrosmog Festival (Zita Joyce)

This distributed festival will be run by De Baile in Amsterdam from 18-20th March next year, ElectroSmog is a new festival that explores the concept ‘Sustainable Immobility’ in theory and practice. (<http://electrosmogblog.wordpress.com/>)The festival was developed by Eric Kluitenberg and Adam Hyde, and is being organised by De Balie, the Centre for Culture and politics in Amsterdam, where Eric is the head of the media department.

From the website (<http://electrosmogblog.wordpress.com/about/>):

ElectroSmog is a truly international festival, with everything you might expect of such a festival: international debates and discussions, performances, art projects, exhibits, site specific projects, screenings, design competitions, and much more. However, no presenter will travel beyond their local or regional boundaries to participate in this event.

To achieve this we will work together in a network of accomplished cultural and new media centres, labs, theatres and other public venues to create the local ‘hubs’ that will inter-connect for this unique festival.

A crucial dimension of the festival will be its on-line presence, where audiences from basically anywhere with an internet connection can follow events on-line, join in discussions and debates, and contribute to the program.

ElectroSmog acknowledges from the start that bandwidth is not equally distributed across and within societies. Therefore remote connection to lower bandwidth spaces, do-it-yourself telematics, and information technologies for the majority world will be one the central concerns the festival wishes to address, again both in theory and in practice.

ADA is one of the international partners for the festival, and we need to start working on how we will participate in it.

We have already provided the first major successful test of the electrosmog principles through the networked keynote discussion between our own Su Ballard, Eric Kluitenberg, and Matthew Fuller at the Critical-Digital-Matter symposium. For that we used ichat to connect three different spaces (Matthew's office at Goldsmith's college, a breakfast table in the atrium of De Balie, and our symposium space in Wellington). De Balie streamed the ichat conversation into second life and a number of people watched and discussed it there, including ADA members from around NZ.

The ADA Agm was also a test run of sorts for local connections to build on for the festival, by connecting four different spaces around the country supported by an irc forum. For Electrosmog we need to find a way to run our own nationally distributed festival that we can connect to the globally distributed one.



Screenshot of the Critical-Digital-Matter linkup from Second Life

We need:

- Spaces around the country
- A means to connect them (maybe with more reliability and connections than ichtat)
- Activities in each of those locations
- Opportunities in those locations to watch and participate in web feeds from other Electrosmog locations around the world
- Content

Morgan Barnard noted the today's connection issues highlight problems with local infrastructure that we need to negotiate in participating in this project. Morgan also suggested using the KAREN network as a way to connect.

Zita responded that was a useful option to explore, but that those facilities tend to be buried in the bowels of universities, and that the festival has an emphasis on consumer-level technologies, so perhaps we could use a combination of different methods.

The meeting closed at 6.45pm