IDAprojects the *Vernacular Terrain* - *the story so far.*

This project began in New York 1999 where I was researching graphical interface protocol for online networks. During this time, I met Laurence Gartel who had worked at the Experimental Television Centre (E.T.C.) in New York with Nam June Paik researching early video paintbox systems in the mid 1970's. Gartel and I discussed the idea of digital art and how we could create and merge virtual and physical exhibition environments whilst building an online portal and resource for digital art. So I set about designing a framework for new connections in the fields of academia, emerging technologies and professional art practice via the World Wide Web officially launching the original project name of International Digital Art Awards (IDAA).

We were not the first to exhibit online, however we were the first to set up infrastructure for both virtual and physical exhibitions that were supported by traditional programming frameworks. This saw the foundation of the first IDAA exhibition committee to facilitate in the selecting of work via an online review process.

In hindsight the early years were in part about how we engaged new thinking models around technology, digital aesthetics, memetics and cyber-culture over and above any deliberate act of presenting an exhibition of digital art. It was about how anv infrastructure could be set up to coexist and maintain professional standards in display, and documentation whilst providing an avenue for cross cultural exchange in a virtual and physical space.

As we were part of a "new" emerging digital time line, it was important that our programming was inclusive of the early digital forms (generative, fractal, paintbox and video). We included early pioneers such as Jean Pierre Herbet, Manfred Mohr, David Em and Laurence Gartel to mention just a few to sit alongside emerging artists. This provided an important platform to open a dialogue about metadata, how it related to mass media and culture as a comparative document to new technologies and the digital aesthetic. It wasn't until 2005 that we included a full program of new media and time based art.

This was partly predicated by the institutions we were working with and what technologies were available. This meant there were significant design concessions to tailor our exhibitions to suit small, medium and large spaces.

Artists have always been among the first to comment on culture and technology. IDAprojects provides an extensive survey of around 800 artists who have participated in our programs since 1999. This survey continues to look at the distinctions between art that uses digital technologies as a tool for more traditional outcomes such as photography, printmaking, mixed media and sound, and art that uses technology as it's own medium and how it employs interactivity and performance.

The history of digital art is well documented and there is no need to recite passages in this introduction. It is important although to briefly mention those digital moments relevant to the project.

Since the 1960's digital art has had several name changes, Computer Art (1963), Video-Paintbox (1975) and New Media (1995). The late 1960's also saw the inception of an ancestral network dedicated to scientific and, after 1975, military communincation that evolved concurrently to digital art. The internet did not publicly emerge until 1982 with graphical interfaces for the internet becomimg available in the early 1990's.

Whether you use a search engine like Google, personal blogging such as Myspace and YouTube or a portal such as Second Life or an online gallery, the distribution of information via the web is immediate. The internet has been one of the most important techno-cultural developments in history.

Animation art, ascii art, computer art, digital art, digital poetry, electronic art, generative art, hacktivism, information art, interactive art, internet art, net art, performance art, robotic art, software art, sound art, time based art, video art, virtual art, video game art are all recent inventions but where do they sit in context to the

economies of contemporary art?

It is well documented that new programming models for digital and new media art include important museum and institutional exhibitions, the writing of critical art theory and the acquisition of important works for major public and private collections. Most importantly there are purpose built facilities such as FACT UK, ICC Tokyo and ACMI Australia, as well some major online portals like Rhizome and Leonardo.

There has never been a more fluid time in art history to engage new art forms and perhaps this has been influenced in some way by the internet and how quickly we can share information – ideas and invention are no longer generational. If one dog year is equivalent to seven human years, then technology must be seen as an X10 memeplex factor.

I am cautious to define digital art in absolute terms. It might be considered an interdisciplinary practice, a hybrid process in which artists engage with practices and outcomes that go beyond any single art form. The collaborative partnering with other disciplines such as science, ecology, philosophy and engineering continues to build a new contextual language within the digital aesthetic.

In 2005, I developed a new programming directive to reflect a deeper philosophical view about technology, and the social implications surrounding ways artists use technology in contemporary art practice. I also established important institutional partnerships with Queensland University of Technology Creative Industries Australia, Beijing Film Academy China, Yokohama Art Project Japan, Monash University Australia and Platform Art Institute China to further support research and programming infrastructure for new media.

The past three years we have toured continuously in China, Japan and Australia with new opportunities presenting in the UK and Europe. What has become of interest from the cross cultural experience is how we engage and adapt to new environments and the exchange of diplomacy.

We have been privileged to include significant contemporary artists such as Peter Greenaway and Istvan Horkay, Song Dong, Mark Amerika, Cui Xuiwen, Chen Wei, Kim Joon, Lara Favaretto, Katrina Neiburga, Ben Hibon, David Rosetzky, Monika Tichacek and James Lynch as well as many other important international artists.

The current IDAprojects exhibition is called **The Vernacular Terrain.** This exhibition looks at how artists engage with culture, language and environment through technology as a visual language.

Our early programming reflected the "vernacular" more as an undefined premise compared to the formal programming structures we currently work with. Our current programming functions as a living document open to new ideas and debate about contemporary art.

So is it possible to speak of local dialects of the terrain? Are the artists in **The Vernacular Terrain** presenting specific viewpoints of the landscape within a contextual framework? What are the
nfluences of hyper-techno landscapes around the vernacular in virtual worlds, interactive design, gaming, locative/mobile technologies and web culture?

What we see in **The Vernacular Terrain** exhibition is an eclectic view of our world. Bridging perspectives from installation, interactive design, video, documentary, animation, photomedia, performance and sound art, IDAprojects is a synthesis of artistic minds from across the globe from which participants experience a profound sense of cross-cultural association.

Our programming provides a continuous experience extended by means of customized events, exhibitions, performances, special projects, on-going workshops, educational programmes and public screenings. It guides people into a reading of global culture, a living document in the form of a touring art exhibition.

IDAprojects includes a dedicated public and education program. We have formed important industry partnerships that will pilot an internship and opportunities for emerging artists and graduating students in Australia, China and Japan for 2008 and beyond.

This catalogue will highlight works from the 2007 exhibition, selected images from the past six years and some interesting contributions from our curators and artists who have toured with us.

Unfortunately we cannot display all the images from the past eight years however a complete list of participating artists will be included in the acknowledgments.

I must thank all the people over the past eight years who have contributed to IDAprojects *(also listed in acknowledgments).*

Finally a special thank you to Lubi Thomas who not only assists me but has made such an important contribution to the success of this project.

Stephen Danzig
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