

The Art of Advocacy: Spreading the Word on Digital Media

BENJAMIN MILTON HAMPE

Brisbane based artist Stephen Danzig developed International Digital Art projects (IDAprjects) in 1999, with friend and colleague Laurance Gartel, at the Experimental Television Centre (ETC) in New York while conducting research on video guru Nam June Paik. Gartel is an early pioneer from the School of Visual Arts (New York) who worked with pre-eminent artists such as Andy Warhol and Keith Haring. Danzig was interested in understanding how data could be rearticulated via the World Wide Web using virtual exhibitions as a way to develop new discourses for artists using technology. Born from this research, in 1999 Danzig sent an international call for interest via email: twelve hundred artists responded, hoping to participate in one of the world's first online exhibitions. Since this exhibition more than twenty-one thousand artists have applied to IDAprjects with some six hundred being selected for exhibitions since 2000. More than twenty-four million people currently visit the website annually, and IDAprjects holds one of the largest and most extensive international arts databases.

IDAprjects is an important nexus, providing a platform for academia, research technologies, and professional art practices to build new discourses. A paper written in 2007 by Dr David Sudmalis of the Australia Council, 'Building Capacity: Literacy and creative workforce development through International Digital Arts Projects' (IDAprjects) exhibition programs and partnerships' is further strengthening existing support with major institutions

and museums. IDAprjects is clearly seen as a cultural asset and important voice in new media and contemporary arts.

In 2000 Danzig was invited to curate the first IDAprjects print exhibition at the Queensland University of Technology (QUT) Art Museum. The project (then known as the International Digital Art Award or IDAA) included an international committee of peers (Gartel included) who selected work for the touring exhibition. In 2004 Danzig was asked by the Print Council of Australia (PCA) to write, 'Redefining Tradition in the Digital Atelier' which looks at issues of conservation and printing standards associated with digital printing from the early 1980s to current technology. It should be noted that Danzig's colleague, Melbourne based artist Vicki McConville presented research in 1993 to the PCA on laser (Xerox) print technology which was accepted and lasers were some of the first digital prints to be added to the PCA's collection.

In 2005 Danzig rewrote the IDAprjects directive to be more inclusive of dynamic media (video) and was subsequently invited by the Today Art Museum (Beijing, China) to curate a new media exhibition. More than five thousand people visited during the first week of the exhibition. The esteemed art critic and historian Li Xiang Ting attended the opening and invited Danzig to develop new projects in China. Mr Li has since been appointed director of the Songzhuang Art Museum which hosted an



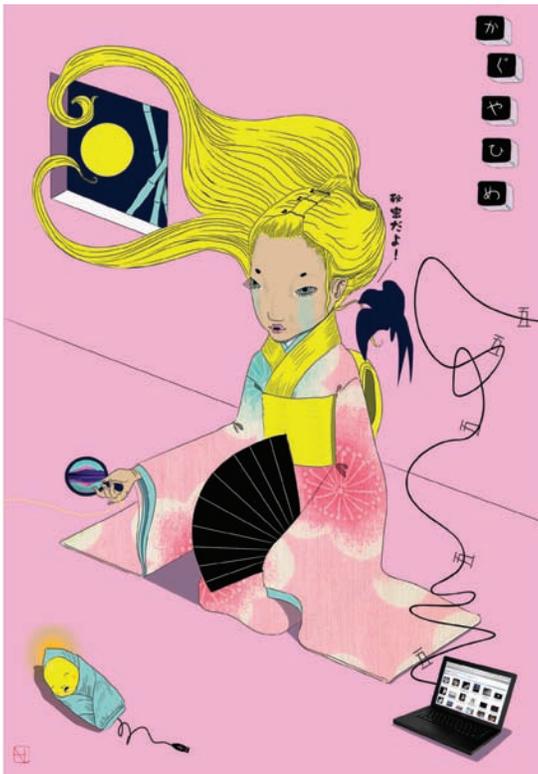
David Rosetzky, *Worlds Apart #2*, 2006. Courtesy of the artist and Sutton Gallery.

IDAprojects exhibition in December 2007. During Danzig's time in China an important relationship was established with the Beijing Film Academy (BFA), Asia's largest institution specialising in tertiary education for film and television.

Due to continual changes in technology IDAprojects exhibitions have expanded to include video installation, animation, computational media, artist designed computer games, and interactive works, forming a dynamic living document of new media art.

After the 2005 China tour, Danzig presented an opportunity for QUT Creative Industries Precinct to develop a relationship with BFA. This new collective which includes IDAprojects, QUT, and BFA is presenting annual exhibitions in China and Australia until 2010, including a major program for the 2008 Olympic Movement and one for World Expo 2010 in Shanghai.

The relationship between IDAprojects, BFA, and QUT epitomises QUT's core international policy of developing new networks with Asian partners.



Andrea Innocent, *Kaguyahime*, 2007. Courtesy of the artist and KAZARI Collector.



Andrea Innocent, *Horror Otaku*, 2007. Courtesy of the artist and KAZARI Collector.

QUT's Creative Industries Precinct has developed as a destination for local, national, and international productions, exhibitions, and events that showcase digital and new media work to international acclaim. The Block (located at the Precinct) supports this concept as a fully wired, dense multimedia display space capable of showing such an extensive, dynamic exhibition. The Block has been the perfect incubator for IDAprojects. IDAprojects and QUT are at the forefront in identifying, supporting, and promoting the next generation of digital artists as

well as pushing the boundaries of exhibition display and experience.

As a result of these major institutional partnerships, curators from Monash University in Melbourne, the new Anne & Gordon Samstag Museum of Art in Adelaide, 798 District in Beijing, Platform China Contemporary Art Institute, and Yokohama Art Projects in Japan have invited IDAprojects to collaborate on a number of future projects. As these working relationships are developed across

the globe, the process of co-curatorship allows for multi-cultural interpretations of the directive thus encouraging a truly international response to the curatorial rationale and the overall aesthetic of the exhibition.

IDAprojects presented an exhibition at ZAIM Artspace (Yokohama, Japan) in July 2007, a large collaboration between IDAprojects, QUT Precincts, BFA, Yokohama Art Projects, Yokohama City, and Tokyo Polytechnic University. The implementation of this exhibition with such an internationally networked hub of creative institutions places IDAprojects in an integral role in promoting Queensland as a technologically and culturally sophisticated society.

IDAprojects is developing a national regional tour incorporating broader programming initiatives for the business sector, local governments, local community groups, primary and secondary schools, universities, and TAFE colleges. In 2007 alone IDAprojects curated exhibitions in partnership with New England Regional Art Gallery, Pinnacles Gallery (Townsville), and Kickarts (Cairns). The curatorial team at IDAprojects works closely with regional gallery directors and curators to tailor shows that best suit spatial, budgetary, and equipment requirements. Using the annual body of artists as a pool of possibilities, curators from IDAprojects and regional galleries tailor a unique and relevant show for each space. The portability of digital media broadens the scope for touring exhibitions and makes this major international exhibition accessible to regional audiences. The regional tour is just one strategy that IDAprojects employs to connect international cultural activities with the local creative industries framework.

By extending linkages beyond the arts to the technological, education, and business arenas IDAprojects provides opportunities for cross-cultural dialogue by building on those diplomatic links that Australia, China, and Japan already share. From this platform IDAprojects aims to engage local and overseas audiences through the delivery of high-quality and innovative exhibitions and to increase our understanding of contemporary, political, environmental, and cultural place. This drives the 2007 curatorial rationale for 'The Vernacular Terrain' exhibition and will mould the exhibition program through to 2011 and beyond.

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For more information visit www.idaprojects.org.