

Considering digital arts in New Zealand Su Ballard.

Transmediale 06. Berlin. Monday 6 February 2006.

BACKGROUND

Aotearoa is the Maori word for 'Land of the Long White Cloud', a name given to New Zealand by the Polynesian explorer Kupe, when he discovered the islands around 800 yrs ago. *Aotearoa Digital Arts* is New Zealand's only digital artist network. Instigated in 2003 by Stella Brennan and Sean Cubitt as part of New Zealand's first digital artist in residence programme hosted by Waikato University, ADA has grown to claim a particular place on the New Zealand landscape. ADA is a network according to the simplest of means: it is open, unmoderated and self-defining. In material terms ADA is an email-discussion list, a website, and three face-to-face symposia. Membership of ADA hovers around 150 people, mostly artists, curators, writers, and teachers with some kind of self-defined affiliation to New Zealand. Although ADA has no formalized infrastructure, New Zealand's major creative arts funding body has recognized and supported it. Individual artists use the name ADA where appropriate, and it has some recognition within broader art circles. In November last year 70 people attended a three day symposia in Dunedin.

It would be wrong to say that ADA "represents" "New Zealand" new media practice – this would be a totally impossible thing to do, and also not an appropriate claim for our cultural context. Nevertheless, ADA does include a significant number of people who are engaged with the formation of digital practices in NZ. In many ways it is dependant upon these artists, writers, teachers and curators who subscribe and contribute to the online discussion. However, in a week when nothing has been posted to the list, it is clear that ADA still exists. In talking about online communities Margaret Morse said that: "Unlike information, conversation as social sculpture is autotelic: it achieves its pleasures and purpose simply by virtue of coming into being."¹ In a random online dictionary of "difficult words" autotelic is defined as "having itself as its only purpose, or, a work of art which is an

¹ Margaret Morse "alien intercourse : the poetics of a listserve conversation" in *interaction: artistic practice in the network ed Amy Scholder and Jordan Crandall eyebeam dap ny2001. p. 124.*

Aotearoa satellite image and
ADA image

Stella Brennan
Tuesday 3 July 2001, 10.38am.
2001-2
Needlepoint embroidery, cotton
on canvas, 860 x 1150mm

-----Original Message-----

From: I.Clothier@witt.ac.nz
Subject: [Ada_list]
**transm. abstract - Email
found in subject**
Date: 17 January 2006
3:59:48 AM CEST

To:
ada_list@list.waikato.ac.nz
... that history and heritage are
constructed and we can be
active agents, not mere
reporters of events. Giving
votes to women here was
easier than doing it in the UK -
why? Because the forces of
culture here were less strongly
antagonistic, and because we
felt we could it - we could make
a new place of our own
determination.

Janine Randerson
with Oakley Buchmann and
Claudia Nelles (HIT Lab)
Sound: Jason Johnston
Islands 2005
Interactive installation

"In the *Islands* project audio and
video sequences are triggered
when a viewer moves
underneath a screen. Four
lasers and sensors play
different combinations of macro
images from satellites or
microcosmic cell images and
electronic sound when the
beam is crossed. More than one
viewer can communicate in
'semaphore' by signaling to the
other screen." Ian Clothier
artmagazine.

end in itself, or its own justification.” Within art’s histories this has always been a difficult and problematic idea. This evening, by looking at a selection of works and artists I want to extend Morse’s idea and suggest that the online conversations facilitated by ADA have purposes other than those immediately recognizable. The network is more than an end in itself, it is more than conversation, but that as yet we do not and cannot know what that “more” might be.

So, rather than attempt to summarize the entire output of ADA - as if a dubiously material network can itself have outputs - or suggest that such an activity would be useful, or interesting, this presentation looks at the formation of ADA as a digital arts network. And, the manner in which I think the network recognized as ADA is constructing digital histories in New Zealand. I will do this by suggesting a series of encounters with ADA and its artists.

SOUND

The first encounter is with sound: literally the process of being heard. ADA was started because of a recognition that it was very difficult to talk about digital practice from one end of our long thin country to the other without some kind of network. The first voices that were heard were those of artists wanting to generate these connections. Being heard is also about being seen. The artists I discuss here are concerned with representation, identification, and also the strength of an indigenous new media voice.

What does it mean to be heard? Most, if not all, subscribers to ADA have connections to NZ Aotearoa. Whether because they currently live there, or have lived there in the past, or in someway consider Nz important. ADA

Alex Monteith
Invisible Cities 2004
Computer, internet search engines, CCTV, director code by Sean Kerr.
<http://www.window.auckland.ac.nz/showing/viewinvisible.html>

In the installation *Invisible Cities* (2004) Monteith draws on the languages and objects found in Calvino’s novel to activate a trawling of internet image spaces. *Invisible Cities* is a record of the interrelationship between entropy and information in the visualization of a search engine. Monteith isolated two thousand noun groups from Calvino’s book. Using a code written by Sean Kerr to limit and to some extent automate the AltaVista search engine, *Invisible Cities* (the installation) brings up linked images based on these terms every twenty seconds.

-----Original Message-----

From: Helen Varley Jamieson <helen@creative-catalyst.com>
Sent: Jan 27, 2005 9:08 PM
To: soft_skinned_space <empyre@gamera.cofa.unsw.edu.au>
Subject: [-empyre-] summ(er)ing up

...
when thinking about place & home & distance, i keep coming back to the simple fact of how geographically isolated new zealand is. the internet allows us to bridge that distance - but close the connection & the distance is back again.

Rachael Rakena
Close (2005)
Collaborative video performance

A collaborative performance, part of an indigenous artist’s residency at “Performance Space” in Sydney. Pacific peoples wash up on Bondi Beach just as the sun comes up.

makes NZ be heard. ADA has enabled us to recognize a history of digital art making within New Zealand, and to partially reclaim artists who have been successful “off-shore” as well as provided pathways for discussion and organization.

Being heard is also central to the booming broadcast networks that trace an ethereal map over Nz. Zita Joyce’s spectral mapping project shows the denseness of these operations and the relationships they have to ownership. Joyce’s image suggest a different kind of mapping of the local one that does not include islands bordered by foreshore and coastline, but that also encompasses the other spectrums within which we operate. Joyce’s project is a collaboration with geographers, and as yet these lines do not ‘truly’ reflect the aural distribution, as waves get interrupted by hills and transmitted differently through different air surfaces. Instead they represent a kind of path or pattern of the “invisible landscape”. Joyce’s project serves as an archive of our daily engagement with the unseen and unheard.

One of the concerns shared by ADA artists is that of history and the archive. I think this is on our minds because we are a relatively recent settler country whose people have arrived and still arrive in waves of colonization. In the south where I am from we were taught the stories of european settlement as simply, first four boats, then more. New Zealanders are very aware of the need to address the noise of our histories. These noises find themselves into the works we make.

Online debate circles about what it might mean to be ‘local’, or whether such a definition is necessary. The progress of the discussion can be seen as one of “correctly posing problems” rather than their solutions. Manuel Delenda says that a problem is “well posed if it captures an objective distribution of the important and the unimportant.”² These kinds of problems help in actively shaping our environment. And it is the posing of these open problems that has in many ways lead us here today. As I said as part of the ADA discussion I do not believe you can construct histories without first examining why you want to make these histories. The problem of history comes first.

Zita Joyce
ethermap, 2004-
“Ethermapping is an ongoing project exploring the electromagnetic dimensions of the landscape. Electromagnetic waves pass over and through the environment, creating a kind of ‘radio atmosphere’ within which we live. These ethermaps illustrate the density of the radio atmosphere, representing the frequencies of registered radio transmissions and the physical points from which the originate. In NZ licenses to use most radio frequencies are sold at auction, so that access to radio communications is largely an economic, rather than a social or cultural matter.”

Nathan Pohio
Untitled, three works 2003
Data projector, DVD player & screen, VHS deck & monitor, Pastel on card.

In "Untitled (Wookiee shuffle)" a small VHS monitor documents Pohio dressed in a full wookiee suit rotating through space in an empty room (doing the wookiee shuffle). A larger format DVD projection leaning casually against the side wall of the alcove shows two oversized furry wookiee hands slowly fumbling their way through a jigsaw puzzle of Han Solo and Chewbacca (a kind of self-portrait). In a torturous act of stop motion animation, we watch the pieces of the jigsaw appearing and slowly filling empty white spaces, (the whole sequence takes 25 minutes), its empty jigsaw spaces mimicking pixelated gaps in reception. On the wall behind the video monitor is a portrait of Chewbacca rendered in white pastel on an oversized sheet of cardboard boxing.

first release of George Lucas's *Starwars*, (1977).

² del. 7

Nathan Pohio's Wookiee attempts to live up to expectations of modern living, of fitting in to a standardized frame and addresses the issues of histories both received and created.

NOISE

After sound comes noise, and the potential development of a particular aesthetics. Early ADA discussions centered on the histories of digital practice in nz and words were spent discussing the particularity of NZ aesthetic.

The tour of Stella Brennan's *Dirty Pixels* in 2003-4 introduced a wide audience to current practices and issues in digital art. Stella's work in the exhibition looked at the aesthetics of noise as it shifts both medium and material. In a digital remake of Nam June Paik's *Zen* works, Brennan's *Zen DV* traces both the noise and continuity of a genealogy for digital work.

Some answers to this are found in the fact that the NZ digital community is dominated by sound artists. This has transposed into a particular aesthetic or approach to the digital, which should not be confused with being DIY or 'half-baked'. This approach to media is considered and makes use of the tools at hand. Elsewhere I have termed this a "noise aesthetic": that is something which engages with the varieties of signals, their non-periodic variations, fluctuations and their impurities, rather than a streamlined notion of communication, or pure operating spaces. Discussion on ADA has often returned to this 'noisiness' as a potential "New Zealand-ness" Rather than continue those debates here, it is interesting to look at the particularity of the noise aesthetic as it appears. Adam Willetts is both a musician and artist. His solar powered robotic balls graze like the sheep that seem to fill every uninhabited space of the country (well in our imagination anyway). Willett's work derives from a position where sound and image are not necessarily separate activities and where these strands are woven together in

Ana Terry
Terminal Eden 2005
Recycled keyboards, video.

The noise of a small island can produce a lot of waste. In "Terminal Eden" Terry works with obsolescent technology that she has intercepted on its way to the local rubbish dump. Terry is concerned with the reactivated object. That this many keys can come from a town of only 100,000 people opens up and reminds us of New Zealand's connection and individual response to broader global process of western capitalism.

Stella Brennan
ZenDV 2002.

In Stella Brennan's *ZenDV* 2002 two monitors sit on plinths side by side at the end of a wall. Joined by the umbilicals of leads and headphone cabling, they each play test signals: one is of the default blue screen, a reference colour telling us that 'no signal' is coming into the system. The other monitor shows the colour bars and tone used to calibrate screens. Every screen projects its colour differently so colour bars allow a precise mapping of the intended colour of a work with the actual colour of a work. The tone, allows us to listen for any variation in the speed of projections, an oscillation in the tone means the speed of playback is not exact. Brennan has applied scratch and filters from audio and visual programmes to these signals; dust commands have been set into operation.

particular constructions. The robotic balls hit and play small toy bells, like those of a goatherd.

Networks can only occur through the interweaving of different strands whether people, ideas, practices. It has been argued that the strength of the NZ digital community is in audio practice, although this could misrepresent other strands, such as those artists coming from a film or television background. The dominance of audio practices may be because on a very basic level there is a long history of access to resources and community. Nathan Thompson is a musician who now works across audio and film fields moving these into digital media. His audio work has always been atmospheric, and now contributes directly to the visual image. *Miasma* plays with idea of moving paintings, a work that is uncertain as to its genesis, and also, sharing something with Brennan's *ZenDV*, foreground the tools by which it was constructed.

INTIMACY

The third encounter is with intimacy, both presumed and enacted. The growth of a list is not necessarily measured in size, or the number of subscribers, but in the depth of discussion. Without moderation, ADA has maintained a particular level of intimacy. This notion of community and intimacy has perhaps been drawn from works that address community both online and offline. The development of a network involves the specific durations of intimacy and exists before the concrete network. Myron Kwon has written that:

"It may be more comforting to perceive and/or imagine oneself in relation to a cohesive whole, be it a city or a more abstract social structure. But it seems to me that individual self-recognition, which is the fundamental basis for the possibilities of a collective formation, is not a continuous state of consciousness, but rather a scattered, messy desire based on infrequent and unpredictable moments of epiphanous realisations of one's subjectivity. ... it is through the very

Nathan Thompson
Miasma 2006
Single channel video installation

Creates an image that is a moving painting. Using simple found effects to evoke connection between sound and image. Thompson sees it as "making a feature of the effect, and giving it a presence, rather than using the effect to simply effect something else." *Miasma* exposes the workings and 'set-pieces' of programmes like final cut pro.

Rachael Rakena
Iwi.nz 2002-4
Stills from video
In the related installation *Rerehiko* (Christchurch Public Art Gallery, 2003) Rakena uses dual projection and sound to present a narrative about identity and politics. Stepping with the room, the viewer finds herself bathed by the underwater glow of a public swimming pool overlaid with the blue screen of a computer monitor. One two facing walls members of Kai Tahu Whanau perform underwater haka, as korero echo around the space. Scrolling over the figures are extracts from emails posted to the Kai Tahu Whanau discussion group.

shock of ruptures, incongruities, and discontinuities that one is reminded (in negation) of the sense of wholeness and place."³ On the ADA list Danny Butt, has described these relationships as a “complex shuttling”. The key to developing intimacy may be a shared history, and the ADA website alongside others is beginning to operate as an archive. The beginnings of the list explicitly recounted some of the dispersed history of new media arts in New Zealand. And recently as part of the discussion towards the writing of this paper has returned to works that make up some of our early digital and other important electronic explorations. But ADA is not a fixed group of people, nor represents one particular set of viewpoints, and as people come and go, there are still first time meetings whether face to face or online, such as the symposium in Dunedin, and here tonight.

Upstage is a collaborative development which has suggested some key positions for New Zealand artists within the broader networks of digital culture. But what is particularly interesting about *Upstage* is the manner in which it generates particular and intimate experiences both for the performers and the audience. *Upstage* performs both the complex shuttling of place within the network, but also generates a very particular sense of place within the network. Through their adoption of different theatrical avatars and the combination of textual and audiovisual communication *Upstage*, like any theatre can transport the audience to other not quite here spaces from the safety of their desktop.

-----Original Message-----

From: db@dannybutt.net
Subject: Re: [Ada_list]
transm. abstract and the local
Date: 18 January 2006
1:25:16 AM CEST
To: ada_list@list.waikato.ac.nz
Reply-To:
ada_list@list.waikato.ac.nz

1) The nation-state is not "local" in a useful way, except as a) the trace of the colonial and b) a field for policy/resource intervention (e.g. a pragmatic concept rather than a philosophical/conceptual one). I think language is a more useful thread than the nation for tracking localness, if that's what is really the object we're talking about. I've met people who've never left NZ who are more "English" and "Samoan" than people who've never left England or Samoa.

Upstage, 2004-

Helen Varley Jameison, project coordinator; Douglas Bagnall, software design; Vicki Smith, Karla Ptacek, Leena Saarinen, and Media Lab South Pacific.

“A new medium for online performance, theatre and storytelling is now in its first release. UpStage is an open source web-based venue and tool for artists to compile different digital media for textual and audiovisual communication into a live performance, in real time, for online audiences. The first release of the software was launched on 9 January 2004.”

<http://www.upstage.org.nz/index.html>

³ quoted in Léger, Marc James. "Koreatown, Part One: What Kwon Remembers About Home." *Parachute* 120 (2005): 114-120.

One artist who's practice has focused on community building through collaborative print media is Caroline McCaw. Her most recent work *Animalia* was made as part of a HITlab residency, in collaboration with Angela Main as well as utilizing the technical expertise of the human interface Lab in Christchurch. (Another work made as part of the same residency programme was Janine Randerson's *Islands* shown earlier). In a kind of zoomorphic search for nirvana *Animalia* allows a small group of animals to work together in order to evolve. Transporting users between their own body spaces and the interactive spaces of the installation *Animalia* suggests that the best communities are always in formation, through networks, but with their exact purposes other than play left undefined. Last years HITlab partnerships are a positive first step towards further interaction between the arts community and those developing technical tools. These interactions also add another node to the network.

NETWORK

So, lastly I want to address the network as both institution and infrastructure. I have hited throughout this paper that the ADA network has grown to a point where it is recognised as needing some kind of infrastructure and this affords it potential further opportunities. However, ADA does not operate alone and it is important to address other related projects and specific works that specifically deal with the network as a material. In doing this I will suggest that the strength of ADA is in its openness and non-specificity, which is based on a shared but indeterminate sense of location, and a shared but equally indeterminate sense that the network itself is important.

Douglas Bagnall's *Film-making Robot* makes use of existing networks in order to make works that reflect the particularities of the city in which the robot lives and travels, but that also reflects something of a particular trained aesthetics of the film. Travelling in Stagecoach buses the robot films what it sees. When passing by a wireless node the computer downloads its footage. At night the computer dreams, and in the process of dreaming edits together the days footage to make that days film. Using its classical training in aesthetics, the robot assesses each frame and compiles the "work". As

Caroline McCaw and Angela Main,
Animalia, 2005.
with Julian Looser, Joerg Hauber hitlabnz, Eric Woods, Media Dragon and Marc chesterman, Sound.
multi-user interactive.

"the project sources readymade body parts, sounds and images through the internet, placing them in local, oversized video contexts for us to try on literally as well as figuratively."

-----Original Message-----

From: Andrew Clifford
artwerks@slingshot.co.nz
Subject: Re:
[Ada_list] transm. Abstract
Date: 17 January 2006
8:35:22 PM CEST
To:
ada_list@list.waikato.ac.nz
... Can temporal location provide advantages? Due to timezones, I'm certainly aware at times that I'm getting a headstart on much of the world's working week by starting a day 'early'. So is GMT the temporal centre, with NZ at the front rather than the periphery?

Douglas Bagnall
Film-Making Robot. 2004.
"This robot makes short films based on its visual experience. Its eyes travel about the city on buses while the body sits in a gallery. The eyes collect snippets of video, and transmit them to the body when their buses come within range of a [Cafenet wireless internet node](#). The robot body splits the video into individual frames and analyses each one, obtaining twenty numbers reflecting the arrangement of colour, shape and detail within the frame.

Bagnall himself says “I used to be a film maker, now I help robots to make films”. The network here is particular and local, dependant on bandwidth, the circulation of public transport, and the generation of shared viewing experiences.

Douglas Bagnall
Film-Making Robot. 2004.

...

These numbers are treated as coordinates in a twenty dimensional space, in which distance is somewhat related to visual difference. For twelve hours a day the robot traces a zigzagging path through this space. This path passes through a series of images, which become a video sequence. Visitors to the gallery can see this video, called variously the robot's "dream" or "stream of consciousness". At the end of the day the robot looks over its days work and joins the best parts together as a finished film. The robot uses neural networks and heuristic rules to choose waypoints for its daily dream, but the finished film is mainly selected for the smoothness of its movement through the space. The robot will remember everything it sees until it has five million images in its mind, after which it will replace its least favourite images with new ones. In addition to getting images from the eyes, the robot creates false memories by combining and manipulating well-liked and overused images. These notes are incomplete.

Making use of the network for performative works Marcus Williams seeks to combine the intimate with the distributed. In the *Smoke In* performance Williams smoked a cigarette simultaneously with others around the world, matching breaths and sending the exhaled smoke down a webcam and microphone. The *Smoke In* is a simple exercise in networked intimacy. However, for the audience, because of the sound and sensation of breath, and the affective experience of a room actually filling with second-hand cigarette smoke, it had a profound effect of embodiment across the network. Williams says of the performance: “Smoking; with its dualistic physiological and cultural dimensions could be viewed as symbolic of the limbic human dimension (that part of the brain which facilitates the uniquely mammalian capacity for emotion). The ‘Smoke-In’ performance explores the idea of ‘limbic function’ under highly mediated conditions. To what degree can

Marcus Williams
Smoke In, 2005
Networked performance
in collaboration with Martin
Krusche (Austria) with
participants Dagmar Eberhardt
(Graz, Austria), Monochrom
(Vienna), and mathieu &
molicnik, St. Gallen,
Switzerland.
(<http://www.van.at/howl/cyb/iso/smoke/index.htm>)

Limbic Resonance occur in a social environment highly augmented by the hyper real?"

The material of the network is home for *Window*, a gallery which shows work both on and offscreen, and is NZ's only dedicated webart gallery. Luke Duncalfe curates the online component, which has quickly managed to attract works by both established artists and those working through internet technologies for the first time. Duncalfe's recent work *Interlayers for Window*, hosted on the Window site, enacts both the single space of the browser and the multiple spaces of code and programming, by placing interlayers over the window website which are only viewable through the IE browser. The work though is only complete for Duncalfe when others download the script and apply the interlace layers to their own websites, in a scripted collaboration.

END

In New Zealand a lot of media art is still very much video installation and variants of that. Slowly there is an emerging culture of digital/ new media which is questioning this. Digital work has not entered into public collections in a major way, yet. The important thing as Sean Cubitt has stressed on the ADA list, is that it happens, before it is too late. But when is too late? Before the technologies are obsolete, does this mean that technology determines our collecting strategies? Before the people who made the work are no longer around, does this mean that we collect to some kind of biographical canon? A list of firsts? Yes to both of these. But I think there needs to be a larger imperative. We need to collect, document and discuss this work, because without doing this we cannot create the digital media histories, which will enable us to do more collecting, documenting and discussing. Without the record our turntables are themselves obsolete. Because the major public galleries in NZ are only beginning to admit much significant digital or new media work into their spaces, for our context I think it is necessary to talk about this in terms of disciplinarity. Until very recently digital/new media practice in New Zealand has not been consistently recognized as a 'thing' in its own right. Without being a discipline it is not possible to argue for its absence. (as occurred with photography in the 1960s, when most Nz galleries established

Luke Duncalfe
Interlayers for Window, 2005.

"Interlayers for the Internet work to intervene in the process of command and response by lining the interface in a plane of indifference. Placed in a web page they occupy the border of action and response, neither expecting nor relying on a click of the mouse." Duncalfe.

<http://www.pipedreams.net.nz/interlayers/index.php>

Sean Kerr
Fred ii. 2003

Computer, found cardboard box, electronics, software
"Sean Kerr's friendly monster *Fred II* greeted visitors to this show, appearing to watch and talk to us with his googly eyes peering out from an oversized cardboard box. Fred had a limited capacity for conversation, simply repeating comments programmed in by his creator, taken from a gallery visitor book. Artificial sight was provided via a surveillance camera sensitive to movement. So although Fred was incapable of watching us, the illusion was not so, we were in fact watched, and tracked - caught on camera in the gallery as we are multiple times a day going about our business in shops, garages, banks and city streets." Rosemary Forde Physcis Room Annual report 2003.

collections of contemporary photo media.)

For various reasons, key NZ media artists tend to work and live off shore (Honor Harger, Adam Hyde, Toshi Endo, Josh On, Julian Oliver etc.) so for those of us trying to get new media/ digital works onto the agendas within New Zealand, the boundaries and potentialities of disciplinarity are very real and very urgent. Disciplines exclude, but this is not necessarily a bad thing. For example in an ADA discussion about archiving sound art practices it was suggested that the significant repository of the National Film Archive might be a good home. Lissa Mitchell wrote that if the film archive were to expand and include sound that would be a total shift in focus, one that must be passed by the initial members who established the film archive. The film archive is for moving image, that is its discipline, and although in many ways I can see the affinity between sound archives and moving image archives, I can also see good reasons for a separation. Disciplines are operations of power that operate through, alongside and beneath our languages and practices of digital media. Disciplines have not only written themselves into academic institutions, art galleries, and our public spaces, but into the very systems through which we approach the world. Therefore, without a disciplinary label at all digital and new media work in Nz has been hard to promote. In order for new media to be recognized by the major infrastructures in Nz it is necessary to define it as a set of distinctive disciplines, that once identified can be also identified as missing.

Of course all of this is up for dispute, and it is rather presumptuous of me to come to an audience such as this one, and make such grand claims.

Especially when I know these ideas are not necessarily those agreed to in Nz itself. there are a number of government initiatives which seem to want to address digital strategies in New Zealand. Important sites like the big Idea now act as an employment and news hub for not only the digital arts.

Window offers an online exhibitions pace, and galleries such as the Physics Room and Artspace regularly exhibition digital and new media work, sound and installation. For our size we certainly have a large number of institutions, but as is becoming clearer to those of us who work in the digital arts, very little infrastructure. ADA of course cannot address all of this.

From: adam@xs4all.nl
Subject: Re:
[Ada_list] transm. abstract
Date: 17 January 2006
4:17:05 PM CEST
To:
ada_list@list.waikato.ac.nz
there is no real-space
media lab in NZ that
represents NZ new media
practice. In just about every
country that I can think of
that has a 'presence' in
international new media
discourse there is an
organisation that 'puts the
country on the map' so to
speak...some countries
have many of course, but
curiously NZ has none...i
dont think this is a bad
thing, and it may reflect the
enormous role geography
plays in the development of
NZ arts...perhaps
appropriately the 'new
media space' is indeed a
network, a translocal
space, inherent in ADA....

Jon Marshall an Australian writer on networked communities has written that “The Internet, and information technology generally, is not separate from the social world in which it is embedded, neither does it fully determine that world. It may, however, allow modifications, intensifications or even subversions to occur.”⁴ Marshall continues “The Internet, though providing pathways for contact between subgroups, may not provide ideal pathways for discussion or organisation.” I would argue that in the case of ADA the internet has provided a major pathway for both discussion and organization, and that this is its strength. It is interesting to see how this might play out in the future. When writing about classifying geometrical objects Manuel Delanda suggests we classify them by “their response to events that occur to them”⁵ rather than looking at their properties. What if this was applied to community formation? Instead of this community or network having a particular property so it fits this category, we look at the way that that community or network responds to the events and situations around it.

From: helen@creative-catalyst.com
Subject: [Ada_list] emerging from _emerge_
Date: 4 December 2005 1:08:04 AM CEST
To: ada_list@list.waikato.ac.nz
in trudy's presentation about SCANZ & also in an earlier post to the list, she floated the idea of building a "collegial and open atmosphere via some form of shared online space" as part of the build-up to SCANZ. during the symposium vicki & i proposed UpStage as an environment where some of this could take place - possibly a series of artists' presentations - "online soireés" - where participating artists can show images from their work & discuss it with an online audience

This paper has considered the possibility that the construction of networks like ADA is a process made of four simultaneous steps. Firstly, sound – wanting to be heard or a recognition of a need to be heard. Secondly, noise, the creation of noise, and the development of a sense or aesthetics of that noise / speech/ and a presence whether on or off screen. Thirdly, intimacy, a point at which the list in formation generates intimate spaces for other formations. And lastly, the network itself, perhaps the institutionalization of that group through recognition by self, by other, the opening up of that network again to sound / noise and intimacy. This process is tied up in an idea of history as well as in an analysis of the sorts of works that are being produced in nz at the moment. If a history such as this can produce a momentary disorientation, a sense of not quite having stood in this place before, then maybe this is a good thing. If new histories can refute previous constructions whilst also presenting alternatives, then we can't argue either. And if these histories are not necessarily constructed in opposition to other histories, but embrace opposition within them, for

⁴ Marshall, Jon. *Internet Politics in an Information Economy*. Fibreculture issue 1. 2003. http://journal.fibreculture.org/issue1/issue1_marshall.html.

⁵ mathematics of the virtual 17

example, a double claim to the premier position, means there can be a doubling of first times, a kind of expansion and folding of the histories we want to write. It is this kind of questioning that is central to ADA and that I think is central to the formation of networks of this kind. Not only operating retrospectively, “this is what has happened”, nor as an announcements list, “this is what is about to happen”, ADA deals with the “this might happen”. By coming into being, the potential spaces for a community which finds itself in a process of construction, the artist’s works that are made alongside the discussions, and the various interjections of location, politics, pleasure and information seem to suggest that ADA, although it does not yet know what it “is”, does know something about where it might go.

- links:
- <http://www.physicsroom.org.nz>
 - <http://www.window.auckland.ac.nz>
 - <http://www.artspace.org.nz>
 - <http://www.thebigidea.co.nz>
 - <http://www.remote.org.nz/index.html>
 - <http://www.audiofoundation.org.nz>
 - <http://www.mic.org.nz>

+++++