

The Aotearoa Digital Arts Reader
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Designed by Jonty Valentine
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leveraging of favours and expertise in completing projects for Spatial State of A and B. As Michael Betancourt describes it:

*The digital presents the illusion of a self-productive domain, infinite, capable of creating value without expenditure, unlike the reality of limited resources, time, expense... that otherwise govern all forms of value and production.*¹³

The Online space has “never cost a cent” while the bureaucratic processes of construction and maintenance have placed a definite dollar value on the physical space.¹⁴ This split between a gallery’s demands of rent and overheads and the often more insubstantial requirements of websites that are squirreled away on company or institutional servers and maintained in late-night coding binges underlines a more general Internet tendency of extracting corporate value from the voluntary labour of bloggers, posters and file sharers. But this volunteerism is also part of a grand tradition of artist-run spaces fuelled by the dedication, enthusiasm and self-interest of artists.

In New Zealand, with no dedicated funding support for art self-consciously identified as electronic, digital practices have remained disparate, linked to personal expertise and collaborative relationships. Digital art practice remains more contiguous with other aspects of contemporary art, often operating within the context of extant forms such as theatre or experimental film. This is less the case in comparable nations such as Australia in part because of the historical policy preferences of funders and the technical resources of exhibition spaces. In an early example of this local bias, Spatial State tended to present projects by artists such as Michael Stevenson and Tessa Laird who were well versed in contemporary practice, but not necessarily technically savvy. This is an approach with benefits as well as limitations. As Hutchinson noted, working with such artists was:

*...more work for me, and perhaps they aren’t as inclined to really push the medium as far as it can go, but the ideas are just as strong, and they’re being presented to an audience that may be used to ‘virtual bodies’ and ‘viral complexity’ but probably hasn’t dealt with a carefully placed fried egg on the floor.*¹⁵

13. Michael Betancourt, “The Aura of the Digital,” CTheory: 1000 Days of Theory, ed. Arthur and Marilouise Kroker, 9 June 2006. <http://www.ctheory.net/articles.aspx?id=519>

14. Luke Duncalfe in conversation with Stella Brennan, December 14 2007.

15. Butt, “Spatial State of A and B: Robert Hutchinson.”

Luke Duncalfe, *Untitled*, 2008. Duncalfe plays with a CAPTCHA, an acronym for ‘Completely Automated Public Turing Test to tell Computers and Humans Apart’. The tests are an online security measure attempting to sort the people from the bots, often through reading distorted text.

