

## **Reflections on the ICAS Launch**

Dear Joanne

Thanks for going over the various aspects of the Launch today. All changes/ suggestions will be taken on board and I'll get the receipts to Sue Edwards asap.

In the meantime, see below for a sample of the remarks. They're all quite positive, reflective and informative. I have also received very positive feedback from members of Academic Court (I've been looking to see where I filed them, and will send them along when I locate them!). But in any event, here's a sample.

See what you think – and thanks for all your support in this important Research endeavor. It will yield results both financially and intellectually.

Johnny

### **From Sir Tim Berners Lee**

Dear Prof. Golding,

New initiatives like yours, which cross the famous divide between arts and sciences, are indeed very important these days, as the boundaries of our traditional disciplines are repeatedly brought into question. I hope and expect the event will mark the start of a great new developments. I am sorry I can't fit it into my schedule.

With very best wishes,

Tim Berners-Lee

### **From Caroline Ascot: Head of Research, The Courtauld:**

Of Clouds and Clocks: When Art met the web Sciences

The fine performances and musical interludes mesmerized and opened up a space for reflection. Time-based at the point of performance the physicality of performance and of reception/perception drew the symposium participants away from the simultaneity of information or code into the ticking clock of the social and the pulsing, degenerating framework of the corporeal. Saturday's discussion (17<sup>th</sup> October 2009) seemed to offer ways of placing the somatic peculiar against and within the worldwide aggregate or structural pre-given. Indeed the somatic peculiar emerged as the governor of the aesthetic but the aesthetic was being considered as irrevocably recalibrated by an acknowledgement of the processing of the aggregate global. The heroic singular with its assumption of voice and difference, its distribution of active and passive can be revisited and reenergized by positioning the somatic peculiar within the shifting, fractal animal mould. The web sciences require us to attend to and operate with different registers of the aesthetic and the psychic: the allegorical rather than the symbolic, the polymorphous rather than the genital. These shifts do not bring radicalism per se in art or academia but any critical project has to take advantage of these modalities.

Caroline Arscott, Courtauld Institute of Art

### **From Simon Biggs, Research Professor, Edinburgh College of Art:**

Thanks for the invitation. I am happy for you to use anything I was associated with during the ICAS event in any documentation and the website. If you want to link from your site to mine that is great. I will set up a link to yours as well. Just let me know the details when you have them.

Here is a reflective text derived from my experiences at the ICAS event.

### **Becoming Borg**

Greenwich Maritime, where we came together as ICAS for two days of critical and creative exchange, was once the centre of an Empire founded on naval power and the trade in

anything imaginable - including people. Within the often violent and grim context of the 17th Century Christopher Wren conceived of the Royal Naval College as the hub of British power. An architectural marvel, it is an expression of rationalist idealism and human (nee British) dominion over the world; political, economic, social and natural.

Some argue that we live in a new colonial age, an age marked by the globalised incorporation of property and power, where anything imaginable is traded - including people. This culture functions through the progressive instrumentalisation of human activity, especially creativity. Every human on Earth, whether they like it or not, are aware of it or not, is becoming part of this cultural economy. As soon as we learn to communicate, to exchange value between ourselves, we are subsumed into the dynamics of social discourse. Historically the content and form of this discourse remained the property of the individual citizen (although slaves, women and children were rarely thus sanctioned). Now we live in a world where we are all subsumed into what some have called the 'attention economy', whether we do so as active participants and producers within the 'cultural industries' or as consumers. Most of the time we are both and as such we are instrumentalised within a globalised economic model; Adorno's mass deception is complete.

Katherine N Hayles wrote of the posthuman as the transformational mediation of ourselves by technology. Hayles' posthumans are part human and part cyborg, mediated by the machines and communication systems that are the technological architectures of globalisation. There is another aspect to this. As we have created an integrated global network our existence as social beings has been extended and diffused into that network. As humans we have become network-mediated and thus articulated as rhizomes of diffused being throughout that network. When once we existed in and of our particular communities today we are, like the apparatus that envelopes us, always everywhere and nowhere, promiscuously connected to everything and yet isolated, rendered virtually senseless by the ensuing cacophony. As socially instantiated beings perhaps we have always been cyborgs. Now we are fully networked cyborgs and in this form we are assimilated into and are a functioning part of the global apparatus. We are no longer cyborgs and are becoming Borg.

ICAS can exist as a means for people to gain insight into what is happening to us as we become something different. Seeking to understand what we are becoming from within our disciplinary silo's will not suffice. We will need to be profoundly inter and trans-disciplinary if we are likely to assemble the critical and perceptual tools we require to apprehend, understand and value our evolving selves in a changing world.

Best

Simon

**From Michaela Hampf:** Prof. Dr. M. Michaela Hampf John-F.-Kennedy-Institut für Nordamerikastudien

Thank you for what has been the most intriguing, most brilliantly orchestrated conference in a long time. It was also the one with by far the most constructive atmosphere and the nicest crowd that i can remember.

I'm attaching my paper (which I'd be happy to rewrite/amend for publication and focus more on the media-corporeality-ethics nexus) and a picture.

Michaela

From Lauren Goode, London artist  
Hi

Johnny,

It's been wonderful to hear all the presentations; the ICAS Symposium was great. It was also good to be so warmly welcomed, with tasty refreshments. It was an intensive two days, very thought-provoking and stimulating.

As you will see, reading on, I'm not a web 3.0 expert yet, but I much appreciate being included in the learning journey of the symposium. My currently ongoing unemployment predicament is quite isolating and so it has also felt doubly great to be able to attend.

Thanks very much for all.

Best wishes  
Lauren

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I said I'd write my response, here goes...

I think the ramifications of the implications, and applications, of the arrays of modes of practices 'of clouds' and 'of clocks', i.e. the logics at play, have huge results and affects; and this symposium felt to me a very important one as it was enabling, and leading on, realising an 'intra'-movement where these ramifications and implications were being reconnected with their logics: these were met with and up for problematising rather than passing under the radar. We had historiography, irreversibility and Event, spoken of by Finzsch, but as well as "an ethos of responsibility". I noted your remark that "sometimes art works because it does: there's no other reason". One can say the same of science too. So, from the symposium, I'm thinking: how to deserve this 'Event' and this "working" requires the operation of a logic, whether by technics of art/science, that moves in tandem to its a-logic, in residency with this Affirmation; and hence that, the making and navigating of this journey, meeting this Event, is both a political and ethical act.

I thought that it was also great that the symposium gathered those working at impressive cutting-edges in a supportive inclusive way, ie, both those with important early-career practice, and those with outstanding mature practice.

It seemed to me that the journeys being opened up, embarked upon or shared were highly relevant to launch and set in play the Institute for the Converging Arts & Sciences, and because of how the work/practices were addressing and alert to the nuances of 'Event' and "working" mentioned above: hence, rather than arriving at questions of whether, or not, art leads science or vice versa, an emphasis on 'converging' Arts & Sciences because of shared ethics in relation to making technics of grasping that are alert to this notion of Event and which, perhaps, requires, more attention to working with generative indeterminacy in a way that seeks to retain it, rather than generative systems that confine outcomes to possible probabilities rather than 'impossibles' and, hence, are capable of inadvertently closing generative indeterminacy through technics capacities for entrainment. (In the symposium we had this aspect of 'possibles' and 'impossibles', in distinction to a systems set of probabilities raised).

[I should add in here that with regard to ethics, Event and 'deserving', I'm also drawing upon Jalal Toufic's work 'Undeserving Lebanon'.]

At the end the provocateurs framed some deliberately controversial questions to kick-start the discussion. I wish that I'd managed to respond at the time. The provocateur's questions were: whether science leads art or art leads science; whether the knowledge of art or science is superior; upon art/science funding; upon the political and ethical engagements of the work/practice shared.

In response, I'd say that these questions, whilst effective in arousing some controversy into the discussion, tended to lead us away from the important density of subtleties relating to issues around logics (and, including, crucially, the socio-politico-culturo-ethico-

scientifico powers of ontics -- this list could have been in another order) that were shared carefully in the presentations we had received throughout the symposium. For example, for me, important hinge-terms used/introduced/focused upon included 'Code Drift' and 'Event' [Kroker and Finzsch's presentations]. Whilst code references a logic that employs a 'representation', one that relies on a leap that invents representational value-variables in a series, instead, with 'Code Drift' we have a logic that brings back the often excluded ontic of the 'differentiation' of Event. (With my scruffy mash-making, even in writing here, you'll appreciate why I wasn't brave enough to chip into the discussion with these comments). Sadly, I'm probably wildly corrupting Kroker's term 'Code Drift' here. But I'm interested in linking back to Deleuze's chapter 4 in 'Difference & Repetition' where the logics and operations of representational series (metaphysical calculus) -- and as opposed to a differential calculus--- are mapped out, not just mathematically, but across other domains. (It's against/within these linkages that I would have liked to have responded by introducing some questions).

Anyway, what I've just written is in order to introduce a question that I thought might be raised. My question refers back to the title of the symposium, and relates to Wendy Hall's presentation but also comes out of others. Hall's presentation illustrated how the take up of web technologies impacted upon its development, eg, in the earlier development phases, predominantly by enthusiasts web-publishing, rather than the later stages when we have governments and corporate monopolies etc online. Therefore, one could suggest (and as probably has been suggested many times) that the dominance of a distributed user-base in the extended early-stage development phases played a key part in the web developing as a democratizing tool, ie, its underlying logic-technics' constructs were effected accordingly.

In contrast, when Hall introduced to us the current/forthcoming web 3.0 development stage (dbpedia?, eg database-pedia?), it was clear that this time the acting power bases (whether politics or business based) would not be late entry players, but could be key monopoly players in the early-stage dialogues that direct the web 3.0 development. It struck me that, if there is not now resistance and knowledge-sharing about what needs to be resisted against, in the development of the next stage, then the undemocratizing power-bases stand well-placed to massively claw back the democratizing powerforce that the web has been so far, e.g so far, it has contributed to a hugely significant shift of power from states to peoples.

My specific question area, though, is that, depending upon the logic that is written into the web 3.0 development, we could see this shift of power massively reduced. How concerned should we be about the logic installed beneath the radar of web 3.0 enhancements? One of the slides Wendy showed was of a kind of chart-table (the one that had copyright in it). Unfortunately, I can't remember the technical terms that it included. But the gist that I get is that to enable the web 3.0, as depicted in the table-chart, the lead back-end users will have to 'agree' (possibly 'fix') upon what appears to me as a representational logic. (And, perhaps, this is like installing an operating a system of probabilistic possibles rather than installing programming that operates a generative indeterminacy...). (It's bound to be obvious here that I'm out of my depth in this question too, but still, in the spirit of sharing my response...)

It appears to me that the logic of web 3.0 could be wiser than a representational logic and somehow function back-end through the installation of logic that enables the best of both worlds, 'code-drift' logic and a representational logic? I'm wanting to raise a distinction between developing a centralized approach regarding the metadata aspect, where the definitions allow no, or limit undemocratically, term-drift, or code-drift.

It's relevant to slip in here a question area with reference to Fox Harrell and Maureen Thomas's presentation. Harrell demonstrated work of his that enabled, on a computer, production of a response to a word typed in, and one generating a poetic event. A kind of linking sub-question to the question I'm introducing and I'd want to insert in here would compare and question the logic operating in this work with that in Thomas's 'Rune'. It appears to me that, possibly, these works achieve operating code-drift logic to some extent. Its

possibly interesting to unpack further the differences though between algorithmic proliferation of possibles, which are different from the possibles of probabilities, but perhaps, still not necessarily of the status of the 'Events' more radical 'impossibles'. Problematising here may link one back to the distinctions that were being made about augmented reality and artificial reality. For instance, the wearable eye (that one of the presenters showed us, Aya Walraven?) reminded me of Rodney Brooks' analogue programmed robots ['Intelligence without representation' 1987], and the way in which their behaviour resembled a consciousness (but, and importantly, did not operate upon a representational logic); and the complex augmented reality of Arice that Walraven introduced.

It seems to me that by ICAS being concerned with: the ramifications of the implications, and applications, of the arrays of modes of practices 'of clouds' and 'of clocks', i.e. the logics at play, that have huge results and affects; and realising an intra-movement where these ramifications and implications (including their players) are reconnected with their logics, met with, and up for problematising... ICAS also reflects a fully socio-politico-scientifico-culturo engaged ethics that is important.

Colin Smith, MA student

Victor Hugo wrote that there is nothing as powerful as an idea when its time has come

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and the time has come for ICAS and the event demonstrated that the coming together of ideas in a community of arts and sciences is the way forward and is an essential possibility for political amelioration ...

thank you for making it happen ...

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