

**ISEA2010 RUHR**  
**Keynotes**

The Keynote Lecture Programme of ISEA2010 RUHR presents outstanding contemporary positions on art, science and society. The lectures deal with media and new identities, current scientific and artistic paradigms, utopian models and responses to the global crisis. They are addressed to a wider audience and seek, within the framework of the ISEA2010 RUHR conference programme, to generalise on those topics that have proven to be particularly important in the lead up to ISEA2010 RUHR, and that in the morning and afternoon panels will be treated in detail by participants. The main topics of the conference will be condensed into the keynote presentations and so offer a comprehensive overview of the state of things in debates about art and culture.

The Keynote Lecture Programme ISEA2010 RUHR is organised in cooperation with the Federal Agency for Civic Education.

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## What Makes an Event? Considerations for the Occurrent Arts

Keynote

**Brian Massumi** (qc/ca)

University of Montreal  
Department of Communication Sciences  
Professor

The 'occurrent arts' is a name suggested by philosopher Suzanne Langer for arts of the event. Digital media have complicated the question of what constitutes an art event – or for that matter an event in general – by making spatially and temporally distributed events the new norm. What makes an event an event when its occurrence is dispersive: when no unified perspective on it or integral experience of it is possible? The notion of distributed cognition is often appealed to in answer to this question. Does distributed cognition solve the problem, or complicate it further? The questions of distributed events and distributed cognition are not only relevant to art, but also have been a central topic for military theory in the age of 'netwar'. This paper considers some of the questions raised by the notions of distributed events and distributed cognition, in art and war, drawing on the philosophies of experience of William James and A.N. Whitehead.

The following text is an excerpt from: Brian Massumi, "The Thinking-Feeling of What Happens" *Inflexions* 1.1 "How is Research-Creation?" (May 2008)

... I think the concept of "media" is in crisis. It's in tatters. That's because the digital isn't a medium, but it is what is now dominating the media field. Digital technology is an expanding network of connective and fusional potentials. You can take an input in any sense modality, and translate or transduce it into any other, say sound into image. You can take any existing genre of artistic practice and fuse it with any other, say animation with cinema. Digital technology has no specificity as a medium in its own right. That is why commentators like Lev Manovich call it a "meta-medium." But that doesn't get you very far. From there the best you can do is catalogue the kinds of connections that are possible, chart their permutations. It leads to an encyclopaedic approach. At best it gives you a combinatory flow-chart. It entirely shelves the question of art and artfulness. It doesn't give you any vocabulary to think the properly aesthetic dimension, what makes digital art "art." Part of the problem is that the concept of media was never well-formed. Is a medium defined by the material support, say celluloid for cinema? If so, is digital cinema then not cinema? Is a medium defined by the sense modality the product presents itself in – sound for music, vision for cinema? That alternative

misses the absolutely fundamental fact of experience that the senses can take each other up. Michel Chion made that point about cinema. He showed that it is not visual. It operates through what he calls audiovision, a singular-generic fusion-effect of sound and image that emerges when they operate in resonance with one another. Neither sound nor image, audiovision is a kind of effective cross wiring of their potentials. The cinematic image, according to him, is a singular kind of relational effect that takes off from both vision and audio but is irreducible to either. It's a thirdness, a supplement or boosting, that needs them both to happen, but isn't one or the other. It has an experiential quality all its own. It's not a simple mix. A fusion is more than a mix. Mixing as a concept doesn't go much further than meta-medium. It has the same limitations. It's just a general name for the operations that the idea of meta-medium attributes to digital technology. Beyond that, there's the whole problem of the unexamined assumptions about perception that go into the very notion of "mediation." Perception as I have been trying to talk about it, as Whitehead's philosophy says and as embodied cognition also says, is always direct and immediate. It's always its own self-embracing event. It always has presentational immediacy.

All arts are occurrent arts. That's another phrase of Suzanne Langer. All arts are occurrent arts, because any and every perception, artificial or "natural," is just that, an experiential event. It's an event both in the sense that it is a happening, and in the sense that when it happens something new transpires. There is eventfulness in art, just as there is artfulness in nature. And there is creativity across the board. Because every event is utterly singular, a one-off, even though with and through its one-offness a "likeness" is necessarily thought-felt to a whole population of other events with which it forms an endless series of repeated variations. Langer has probably gone farther than any other aesthetic philosopher toward analyzing art-forms not as "media" but according to the type of experiential event they effect.

You have to rethink what the typology is based on, but also what a typology can be logically. It doesn't have to be a classification system, in the sense of subsuming particulars under an abstract, general idea. It can be based on a differentiating singular-generic thought-feeling. That is to say, it can try to take into account the kind of abstraction that effectively makes a perception what it actually will have been – the really lived abstraction of the virtual. This is a generative typology, a typology of dynamic forms of perception's speculative appearing to itself and in itself. It is an immanent typology or typology of immanence. It amounts to the same thing. The kind of logic called for is what Simondon called allagmatic, an operative logic of the analog expressing "the internal resonance of a system of individuation." Of individuation, because this kind of typology will always have to keep generating variations on itself, as the experience is always being restaged as an event and in the event, recomposed from within. New dynamic forms are always immanently emerging. Art is part and parcel of that process. Its practice speculatively advances its own generative typology. It practically contributes to its own thinking.

**Keynote****The Tongue That Sees.  
Neuroaesthetics,  
Molecular Aesthetics  
and Media Aesthetics****Peter Weibel** (de/at)Centre for Arts and Media Karlsruhe (ZKM)  
Chairman and CEO  
Artist/ Teacher/ Art and Media Theorist

Classic media theory, from Bergson to Stiegler, from Freud to McLuhan, is in the main an organological theory of media. Media are interpreted as extensions of the sense organs, with each new medium redefining the relationship of the senses to one another. The synaesthesia of the turn of the century (from Skrjabin to Kandinsky) has opened up the new chapter of „Seeing Sound“ in the avant-garde film of the 20s and 30s, which eventually led to the MTV mainstream. Now we are on the threshold of a material revolution radicalising the synaesthetic programme in which one sense organ (the eye) partially takes over the function of a different sense organ (the ear): Any given sensory organ can take over the functions of any other sense organ. The brain appears to be sufficiently adaptable to allow the networking of all sense organs with each other. What was once seen as a paranormal phenomenon has today entered a phase of technical realisation, due to the promises of biotechnology and information sciences. The discredited Nobel prize laureate Professor Brian Josephson, Director of the Mind-Matter Unification Project of the Theory of Condensed Matter Group at the Cavendish Laboratory, Cambridge, has been proven right by the experiments of neuroscientist Paul Bach-y-Rita. In molecular chemistry and in nanotechnology, the utilisation of natural resources, including the human being, is continuously advancing on the micro level of matter. How neuroaesthetics and molecular aesthetics can open up new horizons. And fields of action for media art is the subject of this lecture.

## Keynote

**MIND-LAUNCH:  
Reflections/Projections  
on Education as Art****Roy Ascott** (gb)Planetary Collegium  
University of Plymouth  
Founding President

This paper looks primarily at the development, and the possible present and future relevance, of two specific projects, the Groundcourse of the early 1960s and the Planetary Collegium of the new millennium. There is a third project of the early 1970s, lurking in the wings, which, although more radical, and potentially efficacious than the first, lasted a mere 12 months, and so has been consigned by some to the dustbin of history. The link between all three initiatives has been the search for structures that elicit and support creativity, enable research, and develop innovation – of systems, cyberception, identity, language, and behaviour. The field is art, technology and consciousness (technoetics). The thread that links these initiatives is what I call ‘cybernetics of the third kind’, the art of connective, interdependent, associative, transformative syncretic systems. Education as art resists orthodoxy, denies academic predictability, opens up the territory of the unknown in all its fields of inquiry and practice.

The Groundcourse began in 1961 at Ealing, London and ended in 1967 at Ipswich, an education based on process and system, concerning behaviour, identity and change (eventually closed down by educational experts). It was the first of a number of ideological interventions, the most spectacular perhaps, being at the Ontario College of Art and Design in Toronto, where I was the president for just one academic year. My sin was to have totally restructured the curriculum, establishing primary zones of Information, Concept and Structure, articulated from the point of view of theory, analysis, speculation and social application, thereby desacralising the century-old divisions

of fine art, weaving, potting, graphic design, fashion, product and industrial styling, and removing the petty privileges of old territorial serfdoms. The architecture of this initiative, the work of a small team working closely with me over an intensive summer, was made totally transparent, and available to students as a tool to build the curriculum of their dreams. But the pioneering spirit of Upper Canada faltered here. I was duly beheaded! [1]

It was at ISEA 1994 in Helsinki, that I first presented proposals for the Planetary Collegium [2], defining a worldwide organism of advanced research in art. 30 years earlier, *The Construction of Change* [3] described the Ealing Groundcourse (later developed as a *Cybernetic Art Matrix* [4]). The years between these events, took me on a tortuous but enriching journey across several continents, involving many remarkable people, the publication of hundreds of papers, manifestos, conference presentations, seminars, and some quite radical institutional restructuring. In 1994 I launched CAiiA, The Centre for Advanced Inquiry in the Interactive Arts, and the first Ph.D. programme in the practice and theory of interactive art. In 2003, *the Planetary Collegium* was finally established with its Hub at the University of Plymouth, and Nodes in Zurich and Milan. Around this time also, I was installed in a new chair for Communications Theory at the University of Applied Arts in Vienna where for the next seven years the opportunity was provided to develop processes for education as art in the telematic context.

If the seeding and growth of meaningful educational innovation under the various political and educational regimes have been fraught with resistance in the past, the future is no less problematic. There is for example considerable confusion between inter-disciplinary and trans-disciplinary methodology; the one synthetic, the other syncretic. Synthesis is often only skin deep; a cautious accommodation of disciplinary interpenetration, preserving old words in new contexts, and generally more ideological than creative. Syncretism, on the other hand, calls for new language, new structures, and new behaviours. The future I see is of a wholly syncretic, planetary art.

Back of the earlier projects I have cited, and at the root of all my education as art initiatives since then, is an understanding of the central role of cybernetics, the science of dynamic, interrelated systems and processes of communication and control in living and artificial organisms. It has served to inform my practice as an artist, in perfect sync with my work as a teacher and administrator. It was as true for me in the 1960s, as it is for me now. as I continue to develop the Planetary Collegium. While many issues for education remain the same, and von Foerster's second-order 'cybernetics of cybernetics' remains the foundation stone of progressive thought about emergent networks, newer, and in a sense, more pressing issues are upon us: the necessity of a syncretic resolution of cultural and political differences, the emergence of the multiple self both in cyberspace and in the material world, our experience of the variable reality of worlds currently discovered and constructed, the navigation of consciousness, the utility of field theory, the prevalence of process over product, the social value of social networks, the spiritual significance of the nanofield.

The old cognitive fix of digital systems will increasingly give way to new approaches to the chemistry of mind. Media has not just become *moistmedia* but is beginning to embrace the notion of bio/neuro/geo/chemico/cogno/nano/astro/pharmo/psycho media. Media, in other words, that transits the spectrum of wet and dry, natural and artificial, embodied and distributed, tangible and ephemeral, visible and occult.

Equally longstanding in the practice of education as art is the question of evaluation, which has grown progressively problematic and destructively bureaucratic. Quality, ownership, authorship, intentionality, meaning, skill, purpose, responsibility, as traditionally defined in art discourse, are all up for re-evaluation and interpretation. Students increasingly challenge the canon of values that try to assign them a place in the firmament of art. Their rejection and refusal of old codes of assessment and aesthetic differentiation come from the recognition of the quicksand of taste on which they are so often based.

Given all these changes and challenges, a crucial contemporary question is, where are to be found the guides to new possibilities and necessities of an education as art? By what experience and skills will these guides supervise unforeseeable behaviours, and fluctuating aesthetic decisions? Who will guide the guides when the event horizon is always receding? Who guides the guides, when they are themselves exploring the unknown and challenging the unknowable? It is in these unknown territories of pixels and particles, mind-to-mind communication, and out of body telepresence that research in media arts practice is located, where no meta-language presides, and where new forms of description, navigation and mapping must be invented. In the new educational territory, who will extricate travellers from the quicksand of relativism, and support radical methodology? Education as art becomes the collective responsibility of groups of explorers, collaborating across networks to climb the summit of new knowledge, sharing insights and websites along the way.

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**Keynote****Margaret Morse** (us)University of California  
Professor for Film and Digital Media**Out of Synch****What Artists Do Despite the Worn  
Out Conceptual Frameworks We  
Use to Think About Art**

The umbrella terms of electronic or new or digital “media art” or technological art no longer cover the range of art – gardening, textiles, bio art, social media – that is being made today in their name. We are using an exhausted framework provisionally until we find a way of understanding what we do that encourages rather than constrains us.

This presentation has two parts and a concluding question:

First, the presentations in the New Art Theory panels will be briefly reviewed and contextualized as various proposals to reframe or to expand our understanding of “what we do.”

Second, examples of specific pieces of art are presented that challenge our notions of what belongs to “media art”: the faucet (as a social medium contextualized by Grant Kester); the smell of dandelion (Clara Ursitti and ARTLINK) and the distribution of art and the senses; and, the chemical computer (Bill Seaman and a very different approach by Herwig Weiser), challenging the conceptual binaries such as analog/digital, hardware/software. Rather than an epigonal time (based on the past), we live in a period of epic struggle to maintain openness in areas of cultural innovation. The utopian impulses that originally informed and motivated media art have been taken seriously and evolved into a greater perceptual and symbolic range in recent art.

The presentation concludes by asking whether it makes sense to reframe the notion of “medium” and “art” so as to capture the complexity of current situation and find the common thread in our shared utopian heritage.

**Keynote****Harald Welzer** (de)Center for Interdisciplinary Memory  
Research, Essen  
Director**Geo-Crises: From  
Knowledge to Action**

Territoriality is today increasingly less tied to geographic locations, but instead manifests as a multifaceted phenomenon in which national and power-political demands play a similar role as international financial flows, technical infrastructure and mass media attention. And so communications technologies and the mobility of information technically create a new, globally effective territorial order which requires new critical methods and strategies for its used analysis and design.

Currently there is lots of talk about 'crises'. We are however, economically just as ecologically, by no means in a crisis, but we have found ourselves at the limit of a 250 year long, extremely successful system. It is particularly surprising that the knowledge necessary for this diagnosis has been available, in some cases for decades, but that no appropriate action has followed from this knowledge [...]. Radical changes in life styles and options for action do not work with top-down implementation, but must be tested in everyday life and, if found successful, spread until they become part of the cultural mainstream. The future depends on this potential being more attentively taken, promoted and made political.

**Keynote****Marko Peljhan** (SI)University of California, Santa Barbara  
Associate Professor**Logistics and Strategies –  
What I Have to Tell You  
about Radio and 1995**

The talk by Marko Peljhan explores the tensions between the emancipatory and destructive potentials of technological systems for data aggregation and distribution, radio and related media fields. From the history of the satellite, life in the Arctic, to the realities of a modern battlefield.

The wars on the territory of former Yugoslavia from 1991 to 1999 have transformed multiple landscapes on multiple scales. These range from deeply emotional, personal and psychic, to the technological, techno-political and even strategic fields.

As the wars started in 1991, one of the first visible and tangible consequences was that the skies went silent. Air traffic in one of the more congested air corridors in Europe stopped. No contrails were visible for months, and when they reappeared, they were a consequence of military, UN or other war related traffic. Air traffic control communications all but ceased. But one particular landscape that accelerated in the other direction almost to full saturation was the rest of the electromagnetic spectrum. Telecommunications suddenly became a vital, congested and deadly tool in the hands of the opposing military factions. Electronic media played a vital role in preparing the genocides that followed and in chronicling them as well as saving and destroying lives, separating and uniting families and loved ones, mapping and executing destruction and analyzing it. As a radio-amateur operator, I followed these events with my radio systems on high and very high frequencies from Slovenia, utterly incapacitated to do almost anything and drawing conclusions that haunt me to this very day. Wherever I am. In Srebrenica, Tuzla, Sarajevo, Belgrade, Ljubljana, Santa Barbara or Den Haag.

When the skies over Bosnia were slowly opened again in late 1995 and early 1996, after the NATO-led bombing of Serbian forces' military and communications positions around Sarajevo and central Bosnia that started

in late August 1995 and ceased in September 1995, I created a work that followed them in all of their 'spectral' qualities, entitled Terminal, that was first shown as part of the 'Sense of Order' exhibition in the Ljubljana Moderna Galerija in 1996. But 1995, as we learned in July and August, was also the year when the genocide over Bosnian citizens, started in 1992 by the army of s.c. Republika Srpska with the help of international mercenaries and Serb paramilitary forces with the tacit and many times not so tacit support of the federal forces of the Serb dominated Yugoslavia, took its final turns with the overrunning of the UN designated 'safe areas' of Srebrenica and Žepa. All that followed is a sad and cynical history of the betrayal of a people by an incapable, cynical and cowardly United Nations 'Protection' Force, a history of ruthless and well executed mass murder on an unprecedented scale for our part of the world in the late 20th century, enabled by an organized, rather well equipped, armed and completely honour-less military and paramilitary force and a stand-by European and world community, waiting for four years that the weak would be overrun and destroyed by the more powerful, and that a semblance of peace, built upon destruction might prevail. These attitudes are still sensed to this very day, despite the establishment of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) and the convictions of many and the silence of many more. Denial of genocide is still not a crime in Bosnia, or for that matter in all of former Yugoslavia and Europe.

Besides the survivors' memories, forensic evidence on the ground and the satellite and aerial reconnaissance photos that provided a silent witness to the brutality on the ground with their SIGINT, COMINT and IMINT systems, one other damning piece of evidence remained. The spectral trails of military communications that prepared, executed and later tried to hide the evidence of genocide. Trails, that were intercepted, recorded, deciphered, decoded and catalogued by a small force of tactical intercept operators using very basic equipment in strategic positions in Eastern Bosnia, including the mountains Konjuh, Okresanica, and positions in Dekici and Gradno. Some of which, to this day remain important SIGINT and COMINT positions for this part of the world, manned by the super secretive National Security Agency personnel and off limits to the rest of the world.

When I learned about the existence of this evidence, I started digging up the archives of the ICTY, the most obvious place, first slowly and with a lack of response from the court archivists and clerks, later, especially since the Krstić and Blagojević case archives and court exhibits went online, the results were here.

Later I met and talked to some of the people who set up this intercept operation and to a lot of people that re-lived the events from 1992 to 1995 and onwards with me, especially Hasan Nuhanović and Nedžad Hasanović and I am deeply indebted to them for the time and energy they are devoting in talking to me and opening up their archives, contacts and memories. The work Territory 1995 was part of a long process that attempts to map, understand and reveal the role of tactical and strategic communications and their record in the execution of modern world genocide.

**Keynote****Tokyo Galapagos****David d'Heilly** (jp/us)

Filmmaker, Curator, Journalist, Translator

In a 2007 UN report, greater Tokyo, at 35,676,000, is regarded to be the world's most populous metropolitan area. Its nominal GDP is also the largest, estimated at just under 1.5 trillion. The current discourse on megacities, however, tends to focus on Mumbai, Mexico City, São Paulo, Shanghai and many other upcoming major conurbations. Tokyo tends to be seen as a special case, or an irrelevance. I found this interesting. The last time that Tokyo was featured in a major survey of urbanization was Saskia Sassen's "The Global City", in 1992. Now, in researching Tokyo, what we're finding is that much of what is successful about Tokyo, what keeps it the largest and most competitive city, are indeed the same things that bring it this claim to irrelevance.

The study of Tokyo is fascinating because its modernization is so succinct. Tokyo went, in the space of 100 years, from being a medieval castle town, in a nation which had expressly excluded modernization, to being the world's largest megacity. Tokyo exploded; but only horizontally. Today, central Tokyo has a population density of some 35,600/mi<sup>2</sup>. This is similar to Brooklyn, at 34,920/mi<sup>2</sup>. Brooklyn, however, is 86% multi-unit dwellings, whereas a similar percentage of Tokyo's homes are two-story single family dwellings. And this is not just for residential areas. As late as 1997, there were only 70 buildings over 30 stories high in all of Tokyo.

If all of America lived at central Tokyo's population density, they would fit in the state of New Hampshire. The advantages would include things like independence from foreign oil, everyone would bike, or take public transport. Municipal health care would be a complete non-issue. It would be a real boon for the planet. Of course, it would never work. America-ville would still need to defend its borders, and who knows what political implications would come of that kind of concentration. But if it happened they would have a truly awe-inspiring greenbelt.

Japan has less land, and much of it is mountainous. Tokyo, in any event, does already have these concentrations in its center. It is a tight horizontal

concentration of single family dwellings, now 20 years into a “lost decade”, generated by a property asset-value bubble. To be clear, this took place almost exclusively in domestic finance, so there was no global crisis attendant to it. Tokyo’s housing areas still require minimal public investment. Real estate is very efficiently used, with sidewalks often moonlighting as semi-public gardens, and renovation taking the place of what used to be rebuilding. There are still no bad neighborhoods, or gated communities in Tokyo. If anything, with the subsequent fall in land prices, central Tokyo has seen its population increase.

One of the big reasons that Tokyo’s lesson is seen as something irrelevant is that the labor markets are notoriously inflexible. The foreign community is a scant 1% of Tokyo’s population, English (or other) language facility is uniformly dreadful. Even for its own citizens, the norm for salaried workers is one company per career. For decades Japan has watched its population aging, and so far, national downsizing seems to be the agreed consensus. Where it should have politicians that influence world affairs, it is run by bureaucrats. Japan’s national debt is nearly twice its GDP, second only to Zimbabwe, but this debt is held by those same home-owners. What struck me was the absolute reliability of its currency throughout the past decade despite the fact that it has been so poorly managed.

The thing that is most impressive about Tokyo is the industry of the city. Small manufacturing, retail, and food service are pervasive throughout the city, so much of it created in the service of Tokyo’s urbanization – refining its own urban environment. Japan has more blogs than any other country, and they are impressively obsessive. Millions of human hours detailing all manner of human experience, and no doubt almost none of it will ever provide any reference to anything but the Japanese speaking world. There are mobile phone sites that aggregate tens of thousands of GPS data encoded, photo posts daily about microclimates throughout the city, to help forecasters address the effects of urban microclimate guerilla rains that develop too quickly for the national meteorological agency. People famously sleep anywhere. There are internet cafes where one can shower, eat and sleep, for \$20 a night. They’ll even let you register your address there, while you’re getting set up in the city. Tokyo’s fashions, its cuisine, its love hotels or karaoke, its thousands of volkswagen-van sized pubs, its high-tech toilets... These are not business models which are in any way exportable.

I’m not saying that what works for Tokyo will work anywhere else. I’m not saying that it should. But I hope to be able to say that Tokyo, the world’s largest conurbation, in many ways an extremely efficient megalopolis, functions partially because of its incompatibility with global norms, and that this is something worth considering for any conurbation. Rather than a world of same-same cities based on high-return interchangeable modules of competitiveness, how great it would be if each city, especially if human culture is to be re-written in a common model on the planet, was its own galapagos of irreconcilable difference and mutual incomprehension.