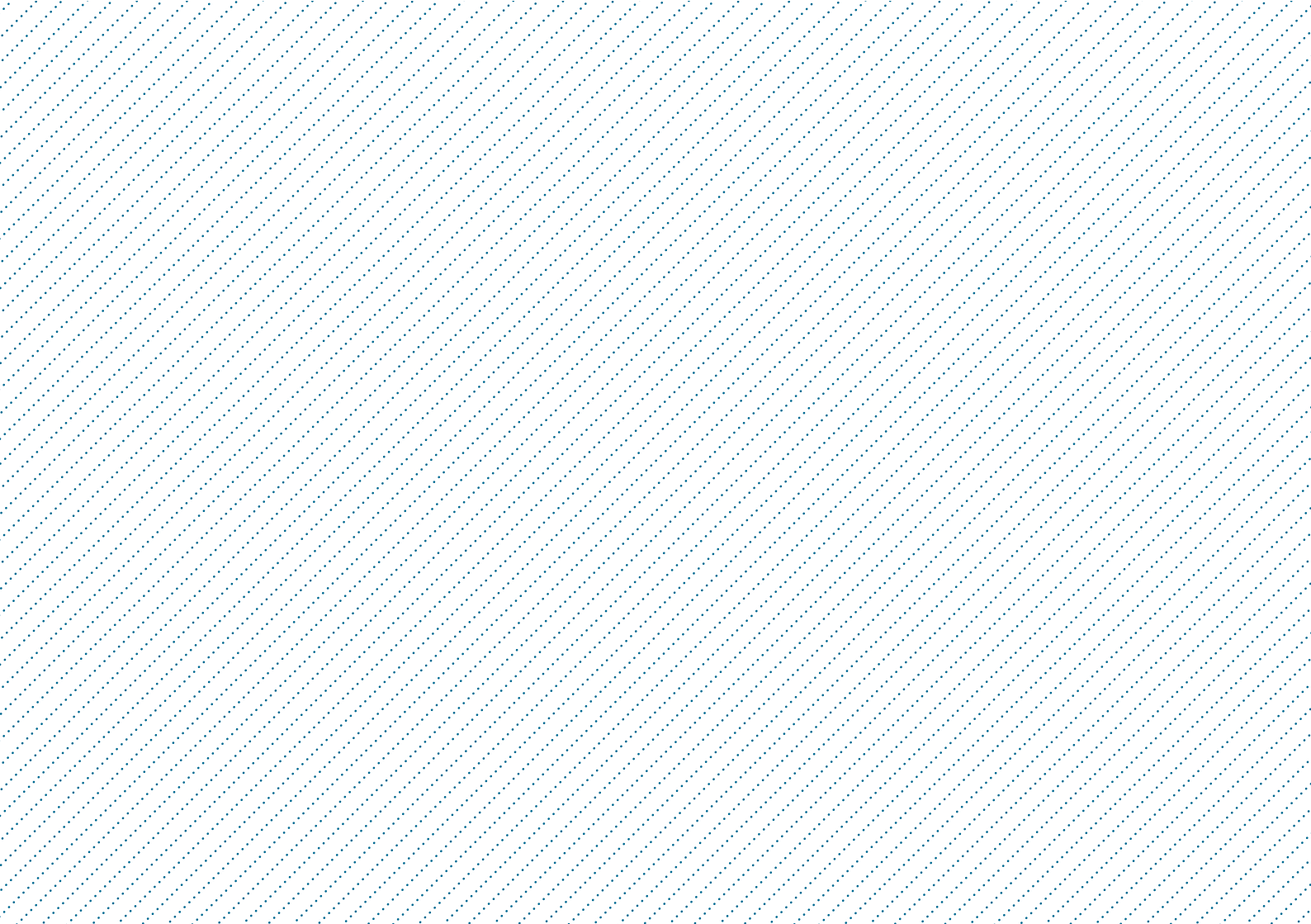


WE HA VE
A S IT UA T
IO N !

a series of live, trans-border, online-offline participatory performances addressing current cross-cultural European issues.



We have a situation! is a series of live, trans-border, online-offline participatory performances addressing current cross-cultural European issues.

Four “situations” were created, in France, the Netherlands, UK and Austria, between March-May 2013. Each involved a 4-day workshop and a performance and discussion event, using the online platform UpStage (www.upstage.org.nz).

In each location, a current topical issue was chosen as the theme and researched; from this a networked performance (cyberperformance) was created, that shared stories and posed questions to creatively frame the specific situation. After each performance, the audience - both online and at physical venues - participated in a discussion that imagined creative solutions to the situation. This process engaged all of the participants in a creative and discursive exploration of topical issues.

The project has been documented and a model created that can be adopted and adapted by other artists and organisations for their own “situations”.

We have a Situation! is the result of a European partnership between APO33 (FR), Furtherfield (UK), MAD : emergent art center (NL), Schaumbad – Freies Atelierhaus Graz (AUT), independent artist Helen Varley Jamieson (NZ/DE) and software developer Martin Eisenbarth (DE). It was made possible with the generous support of the European Cultural Foundation (NL).

The Project

We have a situation! brought people from around Europe together in the online environment, to participate in online arts activities and to engage in discussion about topical issues. We hope that the this project will inspire other similar projects and activities.

We have a situation! created:

- > live, trans-border, online-offline participatory performances addressing current cross-cultural European issues;
- > meaningful and productive collaboration between the project partners and participants;
- > an artistic framework that can be applied in a variety of situations;
- > a new version of the UpStage platform incorporating audio-visual streaming, which is available for others to download and use;
- > a green paper demonstrating that the arts have an important social role in facilitating inter-cultural dialogue, and that individual citizens can make a vital contribution to problem-solving.

We have a situation! encourages:

- > the use of cyberformance (online/networked performance) as a grass-roots tool for cross-cultural discussion and activism;
- > the participation of ordinary people in local problem-solving and decision-making;
- > the generation of positive alternatives and possible solutions to real problems faced by local European communities.

One of the project outcomes is a model for decentralised creative partnerships operating at the trans-European level. We offer insights into networked or remote working practices and the use of online tools for creative as well as administrative/communication practices. Remote communication is fundamental to this project and in our daily lives - from telecommuting to distributed family structures. Understanding remote and trans-cultural communication is increasingly important in the globalised world.





"an open place to exchange with a large variety of people on site and online"

London situation : e-waste!

The first situation took place in London, at Furtherfield Gallery in the middle of Finsbury Park. It was March and snow was falling, but this did not dampen the enthusiasm of the 16 workshop participants.

Earlier in the year, artist Tom Keene (Furtherfield) had made a connection with Bright Sparks, a local organisation who successfully tackle the issue of e-waste at the community level by providing affordable repair and recycling services for old electrical appliances. They were able to give us a lot of information about electronics recycling and we had a fascinating visit to their workshop and storage space. However, our research soon showed that Bright Spark's proactive attitude is unfortunately not widespread: although the UK has facilities capable of recycling 100% of its e-waste, an incredible 77% (estimated) is being shipped off-shore to illegal dumping sites, primarily in West Africa.

During the workshop there was much discussion and research about the topic of e-waste, from how our own personal actions contribute to the problem, to the humanitarian and environmental disaster occurring in places like Ghana where children are living, working and dying on toxic rubbish heaps - made from our waste. We decided to use the popular children's party game "pass the parcel" to structure our performance and follow the typical journey of an electronic gadget. What begins as a gift ends up all too quickly as e-waste.

The particular architecture of the gallery inspired the creation of an e-waste installation - from materials kindly loaned by Bright Sparks; the audience in the gallery could move through the installation, and parts of the cyberperformance were streamed out from within it.

As well as the online audience and those at Furtherfield, a gathered audience at kunstGarten Graz (Austria, in cooperation with Schaumbad) participated via the text chat and a live audio-visual stream. From the gallery in London, Tom led a very lively post-performance discussion - everyone had a lot to say about their personal experiences with e-waste as well as the larger global problem. Putting the responsibility and cost of reducing and recycling e-waste back onto the companies who are making the products - and the profits - was generally agreed as fundamental to solving the problem of e-waste.

Nantes situation : Recycle a Boeing

The initial proposal for the Nantes situation was the long-running controversy of a second airport planned for Notre Dame des Landes, epitomising the incompatibility of current economic policy with the concept of green cities. With the e-waste research we had done in London fresh in our minds, and conscious of Nantes' status as "European Green Capital 2013", we began to wonder: what happens to aircraft at the end of their lives? *Recycle a Boeing* became the title for this situation, within which we could rethink air travel and investigate its consumption and recycling implications.

Recycle a Boeing provoked interesting, humorous and creative responses: facts such as 10,501 Boeing 737 aircraft have been constructed to date and there are 1,250 737s in the air at any given time; the story of French entertainer Michel Lotito who ate an airplane; a chorus of people imitating the sounds of aircraft taking off and landing; and a delicious cake in the shape of a plane.

We used the structure of a typical flight, with the audience in Nantes as passengers: entering the performance space, they appeared online in UpStage as if they were passing through a body scanner. They were seated in closely placed chairs, a safety announcement was delivered, and we took off. The inflight entertainment included *Pilote un Boeing*, a montage of sound, poetry and video by local artists Cyril Pointurier and Julien Ottavi; factual information about flights and recycling; and animations. Refreshments were served (the plane cake) and we landed as paper planes were thrown via live streams from Graz and Eindhoven into the space in Nantes.

The discussion pointed to the rapidly changing nature of post-industrial European cities and how the 1950s concept of the airport as an essential transport hub conflicts with 21st century desires for "green" cities; what is the true local benefit of better trans-European connectivity, and how long will low-cost air travel last? Participants in Graz and Eindhoven responded with a series of beautiful and powerful images via the streams. Multiple video projections gave the audience in Nantes a surround-image experience throughout the event.

Afterwards, those in the gallery in Nantes were treated to a sonic performance, *Plane Composition #1* by Julien Ottavi, performed by NO-Ensemble and international guest Eva Ursprung; online audiences could listen to the stream.

"There was a great dynamic where everyone felt they could get involved."



ance card

Sing the
National Anthem

ugee status

is Shell Nigeria a Dutch
company?

are there 11
provinces in
the
Netherlands
?

he is going

space here

<student> my boyfriend has
break up with me

1 2 3 4 5 6

<reveal1> do people in the
Netherlands wear wooden shoes?

<reveal1> did Vincent van Gogh
paint "De Nachtwacht"?

<reveal2> we are soooooo
many people

<refugee> 6

<reveal1> do you speak Dutch
at home?

so be active, don't just stay there

<refugee> e for me

<reveal1> what do you eat as a
side dish with boerenkool?

maybe

<reveal1> who is the most
famous football player in the
Netherlands?

ha?!

<student> he is going

<reveal1> is Shell Nigeria a
Dutch company?

<loaded dice> are there 11
provinces in the Netherlands?

<reveal2> b o e r e n k o o l

Eindhoven situation : Peopoly

The city of light, a “smart city” in a country regarded as progressive and open-minded, Eindhoven markets itself as an incubator of technological innovation - an exciting destination for students and tourists, and a welcoming new home for migrants. Yet appearances can be deceiving: animal cruelty, human trafficking, and the stain of distant oil spills lurk beneath the city’s pretty, shiny surface.

We set about researching these issues from our base in the public library, and came up with the idea of a board game as a way to incorporate several different situations within one performance: *Peopoly*, a pastiche of Monopoly. The graphics skills of our student participants were put to good use creating a board that visually represented the different issues, and avatars for playing pieces: a tourist, a migrant and a student. The different experiences of these three characters when they came to Eindhoven formed the content of the performance and laid bare the ignored or unknown situations.

We encountered another, unexpected, situation: network issues. We were in the “city of technology” where the cassette tape and CD were invented, but the internet connection at the public library was weak and blocked ports prevented the streams from working. Martin Eisenbarth and Rob Bugel executed some impressive technical acrobatics to get the streams working, but we still had to limit the number of computers online at the library to ensure that the connection wouldn’t drop during the performance. This in turn required some cyberformance acrobatics from the few performers who could be online; luckily everyone was fit and no-one slipped!

Local artist and curator Martin Voorbij was an excellent MC for the game/performance, mediating between the online and Eindhoven audiences and commentating the progression of the avatars around the board. He also facilitated the discussion between those physically present in Eindhoven, the online audience in the chat, and gathered audiences in Graz and Nantes who joined via the streams. Different personal experiences of migration were shared, and the hidden issues of industrial pig farming, human trafficking and Dutch Shell Oil’s responsibility for the environmental disaster in the Niger Delta were discussed. This was followed by an improvised audio-visual jam session between the three streaming locations (Eindhoven, Graz and Nantes) as a creative response to the situation.





not bite it; tail biting or cannibalism are an un-
behaviour that results
from the stress of the
farm and the disorder
intense confinement. }
<dream> { but the dr
many of the animals t
crippled under their ow
<dream> { Piglets, wh
taken away from their
mothers after just a few
have their tails chopper
teeth are clipped off wi
and the males are cast



Graz situation : Unidentified Flying Food

As the saying goes, “we are what we eat” - but the increasing use of pesticides, chemical fertilisers and genetic modification, as well as the extensive movement of food around the world, means that we often don’t know what we are eating or where it has come from. If we don’t know what we eat, how can we know what we are?

Our venue in Graz was appropriately located near to the slaughterhouse and a former factory for animal food. During the workshop we researched industrial and organic farming in Austria, and made excursions to a local community garden and the kunstGarten Graz. Participant Veronika Koren from the VGT (Association against Animal Factories) gave a presentation about Austrian meat production and industrialised farming in Europe, and we drew on our recent learnings about intensive pig farming in Eindhoven to make connections between people’s eating habits and meat production. The large group of workshop participants from diverse artistic and cultural backgrounds brought a wide range of personal perspectives to the situation.

With the experience of three situations already behind us, we were able to plan well for this last event and allocated more time for the whole programme. This meant we could experiment more with the technology, had more time for rehearsals, and fitted in cultural visits - to Kunsthau Graz and the Kirche St. Andrä, which displays contemporary art in and on the church.

Our cybperformance *U.F.F. – Unidentified Flying Food* told the simple story of a pig who breaks free from her cage and journeys across the lush Austrian countryside, only to discover that outside life is fraught with questions and uncertainties that leave her wondering if she wasn’t better off in her cage. Pig’s story was interspersed with news flashes about sightings of “U.F.F.s” in the Austrian skies. Facts about global food production and farming practices were presented in the news flashes and through animations and audio.

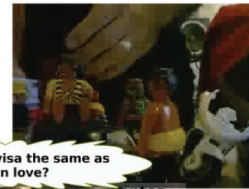
Local artist Eva Ursprung facilitated the discussion, which began with a streamed presentation from London responding to the situation and continued with the local audience in Graz, online participants, and a stream from Eindhoven. Changing our personal eating habits was a solution offered in the discussions, and from later feedback we learned that some people have indeed made permanent changes to their eating habits as a result of participating in the event.

One passenger emits 140 grammes of CO2 / km a little bit less than 100 grammes for a car passenger

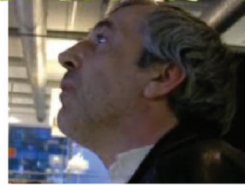


Graz

is marrying for visa the same as falling in love?



Nantes



back again
 <loaded dice> Nantes is singing?
 if you have enough money, it is not
 (i guess)
 <eindhoven> there is a debate
 <reveal3> we talk about serbia
 <eindhoven> about whether or not serbians need a visa
 <eindhoven> sanja says they need
 yes, we need visa for holland
 <eindhoven> martin says not and for graz also
 <eindhoven> serbians do need visa for holland, the audience says
 <eindhoven> so it's a fact
 I was asked in marriage by someone to get a visa
 <reveal3> you would like to go to holland?
 <eindhoven> { would you marry for a visa? }
 yes, but it is limited to 3 months
 <eindhoven> { is marrying for visa the same as falling in love? }
 }



Feeding grain to livestock to produce meat - instead of feeding it directly to humans - involves a large energy loss, making animal agriculture more resource intensive than other forms of food production.

Players: 06 | Audience: 30
 environmental degradation (including air and water pollution, soil depletion, diminishing biodiversity, and fish die-offs).
 <Pig> { things are pretty bad out here }
 so does dairy
 we have bees in our prairie garden to try to do our part
 <UFF> A big amount of the feedstuff used is genetical modified soya from Argentina and Brasil, grown on cleared rainforest areas.
 no pesticides in our garden, none
 <UFF> Water is consumed at unsustainable rates in many agricultural areas.
 another pig!!!
 none here either, but that doesn't change anything
 <UFF> Feeding grain to livestock to produce meat - instead of feeding it directly to humans - involves a large energy loss, making animal agriculture more resource intensive than other forms of food production.

<z1> { marginalised }
 ...which linke do you thin
 insidious?
 I read the UK gov was so
 climate debate in the na
 curriculum?
 <if you> Electronic scrap
 accounts for 70 percent
 overall toxic waste curre
 found in landfills
 WHICH LINK DID
 INSIDIOUS
 ? PLEASE
 <z1> { commer
 marketisation of
 insidious }
 <gift> { capita
 yes it does
 <gift> { capita
 somebody ment
 is insidious, and
 which one: than
 <interpol> { a
 sucks }
 Ipad sucks!
 <broken pc> w
 consumers

tons of CO2. }
 coffee and blood for me
 <cake> { One passenger emits 140 grammes of CO2 / km a little bit less than 100 grammes for a car passenger }



The first ever aircraft recycling centre was opened at the Châteauroux-Déols airport in central France in June 2005.

Players: 06 | Audience: 13
 <plane> { the plane is making me sick }
 <plane> { turbulence }
 <plane> { pollution }
 ambulance!
 <plane> { motion sickness }
 <plane> { landing! }
 welcome back on ground
 phew
 <cake stream> { time for refreshments }
 whats this?
 something to eat?
 no!
 don't do it!
 a cake?
 nooo
 <cake> The first ever aircraft recycling centre was opened at the Châteauroux-Déols airport

The Process

Bringing a diverse group of people together to create a cyberformance in four days is ambitious, but it's fun, intense and inspiring. The time pressure forces us to find creative solutions and at the end of the workshop, the show must go on!

Over 4-5 days, participants compile and select from their research material about the situation; learn about networked performance technologies and techniques; and devise and rehearse the cyberformance that will be the provocation for a discussion about the situation.

Many variable factors, such as the number and backgrounds of the participants, the venue, time and context, mean that every workshop is unique, with its own challenges and insights.

Some of the key factors in creating a good workshop are:

- > advance preparation, including research on the local situation and developing relationships with participants;
- > a clearly-defined situation, chosen before the workshop begins;
- > finding a structure for the performance that makes sense for the situation and helps audiences unfamiliar with the format of networked performance to engage in the work;
- > making time for at least two proper rehearsals before the performance.

The workshop process has been extensively documented in *Make Your Own "Situation"*, a 15-page PDF that includes preparation, gathering participants, research, the workshop, tips for ensuring a good discussion and technical requirements. Samples of a workshop outline, performance script and other documentation is included for reference.

Make Your Own "Situation" can be downloaded from www.wehaveasituation.net.

A Green Paper? What is that?

Good question; in Europe, a “green paper” is a consultation document of policy proposals for discussion. It’s the first step in changing the law. Since one of this project’s goals is to empower people to be more engaged in political decision-making and problem-solving, we thought we’d practice what we preach and write a green paper as one outcome of this project.

A green paper is supposed to pose questions for discussion, so here are the questions that we came up with as we reflected on *We have a situation!* and the role of the arts in Europe.

- > How are digital arts practices contributing to raising critical awareness of the politics of social media?
- > Should the arts be included within the European Commission’s (EC) Digital Agenda?
- > In what ways do digital/networked arts support EC goals and actions?
- > Are small-scale cultural events better able to promote real social agency, engagement and cross-cultural understanding than large-scale events?
- > What new possibilities can networked arts offer in terms of engaging and empowering audiences/participants?
- > Can the success of networked performance projects be measured in terms of the level of participant engagement, rather than by audience numbers?
- > How can truly grassroots projects (in the arts and other areas) be recognised within large-scale initiatives such as the Digital Agenda?
- > How can the European Union (EU) best support small-scale networked performance projects that advance European cultural policy and EU goals?
- > What qualitative methods are appropriate for measuring the success of small-scale arts projects?
- > Should networked arts practices, such as cyberperformance, be specifically included in cultural policy, other arts/cultural-related policy, and documents such as the Digital Agenda?
- > Should the EU recognise and support non-EC-funded projects that successfully promote and advance EU goals, and if so how?

The full green paper is available to download from www.wehaveasituation.net.

Streaming with UpStage

We have a situation! used the web-based cyberperformance platform UpStage (www.upstage.org.nz) to connect participants and audiences from Europe (and around the world) via the internet. For this project, the features of UpStage were enhanced with full audio-visual streaming by developer Martin Eisenbarth.

UpStage is a real-time collaborative platform that allows artists and audiences to interact through a web interface. Logged-in “players” have access to tools that let them manipulate digital media - graphical avatars, backdrops, animations, audio, video, text, text2speech and live drawing - to create a performance that is simultaneously experienced by the players and audience. Audience do not need to log in or install any special software, everything takes place in a web browser, and they can interact with the performance and each other through a text chat, influencing the performance and adding their own voice to the conversation.

Naturally, a good internet connection is required for the workshop and performance venues; UpStage functions well over domestic broadband for those receiving the performance, but sending multiple streams from the workshop and performance locations required a robust network. One of the challenges for this project was to test and sometimes improve the existing internet network in every location.

Participants came with their own laptops and other equipment including webcams and video cameras. Good quality data projectors were required and also sound systems and microphones. Since we were streaming audio and video, managing the audio was always a concern: we needed to hear the audio in the performance space, but not generate a feedback loop by rebroadcasting our audio.

Documentation was another consideration in the technical requirements. In some locations we were able to video record the workshop and event, and we made screen recordings of every event. This required a dedicated computer, in “audience mode”, and was best done by someone not present at the event location.

EU Partnership

AP033 (Nantes, France)

www.apo33.org

AP033 is a not-for-profit association/artists' collective founded by Julien Ottavi in 1996. AP033 is a transdisciplinary project, whose practices include philosophy, poetry, visual and sonic art, as well as anything else that may develop through collaborative working. AP033 operates across virtual and physical networked spaces and develops tools (hardware/software) for creative projects and the wider FLOSS (Free/Libre Open Source Software) community of artists and programmers.

Furtherfield (London, UK)

www.furtherfield.org

Furtherfield was founded by artists Ruth Catlow and Marc Garrett in 1997 and sustained by the work of its community as the internet took shape as a new public space for internationally connected cultural production. Furtherfield is now a dynamic, creative and social nerve centre where upwards of 26,000 contributors worldwide have built a visionary culture around co-creation – swapping and sharing code, music, images, video and ideas. Furtherfield believes that through creative and critical engagement with practices in art and technology people are inspired and enabled to become active co-creators of their cultures and societies. Our mission is to co-create extraordinary art that connects with contemporary audiences providing innovative, engaging and inclusive digital and physical spaces for appreciating and participating in practices in art, technology and social change.

MAD emergent art centre (Eindhoven, Netherlands)

www.madlab.nl

Foundation MAD (Multi-Art-Disc, 1995) was established as an artists initiative and is now a very active organisation with enthusiastic volunteers, each with their own specialisation, who develop connections between art, science and technology. MAD acts as a laboratory, platform and provider of Emergent Art: art that arises from the tensions between culture and cutting-edge technology. MAD maintains its interfaces as large as possible and focuses on artists, designers, scientists, technologists, public interest groups, educational institutions, governments and businesses - regionally, nationally and internationally. The internet, ICT and new media offer the possibility to undertake interactive research, development, presentation, production, distributions, and discussions that are accessible for public.

Schaumbad - Freies Atelierhaus Graz (Graz, Austria)

<http://schaumbad.mur.at>

Schaumbad – Freies Atelierhaus Graz is a self-organised platform of artists in Graz (AT) working in all artistic fields, from visual arts, media art, photography and video to performance, literature and music. This creates a mutually inspiring neighbourhood fostering synergies such as mutual support or collective projects. Founded in 2008 in a former bathroom warehouse, Schaumbad established a diverse exhibition programme (annual group show, steirischer:altweibersommer...), as well as lively networked activities with local and international artists and art spaces such as symposia, workshops, online networked projects and exhibition exchange. The group had to move out of their building in 2011 and are now working on the restoration of a new space in a former factory.

Lead artist

Helen Varley Jamieson (NZ/DE)

www.creative-catalyst.com

Lead artist Helen Varley Jamieson is an artist and writer with over a decade of practical experience in cyberformance, a term she coined in 2000 to describe the new form of live, online performance that she was experimenting with. She completed a Master of Arts researching cyberformance in 2008, and is recognised internationally as a pioneer in the field of networked performance. She regularly performs and presents at festivals and conferences around the world.

Developer

Martin Eisenbarth (DE)

www.foobarlab.net/projects

Programmer and artist Martin Eisenbarth developed audio-visual streaming within the cyberformance platform UpStage for this project, and is now developing DownStage, a new concept and architecture for UpStage. Martin has been involved in the UpStage community since 2009, and developed the concept of DownStage in his Diploma thesis (completed 2011) to radically update and enhance the existing UpStage platform. His background is in multimedia design.

Participants

Artists, technicians, researchers, organisers:

Leo Bakx, Henno van Berlo, Anthony Berry, Rob Bugel, Valentin Chevalier, Abbie Clarke, Stefan Dacier, Martin Eisenbarth, Hedva Eltanani, Alexandra Gschiel, Ricardo Gschiel, Katy Griffiths, Elma Geurts, Jolita Grueters, Amelia Hallsworth, Ioanna Haritou, Katerina Hayek, Daniela Hinterreiter, Helen Varley Jamieson, Maya Kalogera, Tom Keene, Rachelle Viader Knowles, Veronika Koren, Christina Lederhaas, Olga P. Massanet, Danny McNally, Lucy Mills, Bernadette Moser, Lisa van Oort, Julien Ottavi, Christina Papagiannouli, Romain Papion, René Paré, Sofia Perrin, Jenny Pickett, Ollie Plop, Cyril Pointurier, Marie Agnes Pottier, Alexandra Reynolds, Alessandra Scapin, Gabriella Silvagnoli, Maria Slovakova, Eric Sprik, Fergus v.d. Stappen, Olga van Straten, Edda Strobl, Jochem Tax, Petra Temel, Eva Ursprung, Robert de Vaan, Martin Voorbij, Rich White, Sanja Zdrnja, Paul Zuurveen.

Collaborating organisations:

Arts Council England (UK)
bm:ukk - Austrian Federal Ministry for Education, the Arts and Culture (AUT)
Bibliotheek Eindhoven (Susan Brinkman, NL)
Bright Sparks (Diye Wariebi, O'Neil Howell and the team, UK)
Haringey Council (London, UK)
KiG! Kultur in Graz (AUT)
kunstGarten Graz (Reinfrid and Irmi Horn, AUT)
La Fabrique, Iles de Nantes (institutional partner, FR)
Land Steiermark
Ökoservice (AUT)
Stadt Graz (AUT)



Photographers: *Éva Ursprung* (pages 12, 13, 15), *Káterina Hayek* (pages 6, 22), *Helen Varley Jamieson* (page 5) and *Apo33* (page 9) // Graphic design: *Jonathan Gowthorpe*



FURTHERFIELD



schaumbad
FREIES ATELIERHAUS GRAZ

bm:uk»



www.wehaveasituation.net