

ALCHEMY INTERNATIONAL MASTERCLASS FOR NEW MEDIA ARTISTS AND CURATORS

ANAT's International Masterclass for New Media Artists and Curators took place in Brisbane in May and early June. Sixteen tutors and forty two participating artists and curators explored new media practices, critical concepts for cross cultural collaboration and generally had an extraordinary time exploring with and playing in the newly opened Brisbane Powerhouse - Centre for the Live Arts, who partnered with ANAT on the realisation of this project. Whilst a core of the program was undertaken in a lab which ANAT installed in the Courier Mail Rooftop Terrace and function room, participants took advantage of having run of the entire building, including the Visy 200 seat theatre, rehearsal studios and a plethora of flexible exhibition, installation and performance spaces in and around the building.

Participants had 24 hour access to the equipment and the building and the Powerhouse staff provided incredible support in realising what was an amazingly diverse and surprisingly complex project, both logistically and conceptually.

The masterclass engaged with a diverse range of topics: from science discourses to Indigenous issues, to issues facing artists working in diverse cultural settings, to curatorial practice for interdisciplinary and new media practices. Of particular note was the component of the masterclass which occurred in early June which was dedicated to performance and hybrid practices. ANAT had not focused on this area in previous Summer Schools and was keen to open up a space for the development of this area of practice in the context of a cross-disciplinary project. The project was intended as a dynamic one and there have been extraordinary opportunities for the exchange of ideas. We hope that the spaces opened up by this project will continue to generate dialogue and exchange between the participants well into the future.



Alchemy (photo courtesy of Charity Bramwell)



Alchemy participants from l-r, Kamal Krishna, Jenny Fraser, Raul Ferrera (photo courtesy of Charity Bramwell)

Participants for *Alchemy* were selected from a call for proposals distributed in late 1999 through the media, advertised in *Realtime*, mailed to ANAT members as well as distribution via national and international email lists. The participants were chosen through their proposals, with geographical and cultural considerations also taken into account when the final selection was made.

Brook Andrews (NSW)	Bruce Gladwin (Vic)
Caroline Farmer (SA)	Chris Dempsey (Qld)
Christian Thompson (Vic)	Christiawan (Indonesia)
Clare McGrogan (Qld)	Deborah Lawler-Dormer (NZ)
Dena Curtis (NT)	Edwina Bartleme (Qld)
Gongxin Wang (China)	Grisha Coleman (NY)
Hartanto (Indonesia)	Jane Schneider (Qld)
Jenny Fraser (Qld)	Jernej Kozar (Slovenia)
Jo Law (WA)	Kamal Krishna (Qld)
Keith Armstrong (Qld)	Kelli McCluskey (WA)
Kim Machan (Qld)	Lisa Anderson (Qld)
Mae Adams (Vic)	Mari Velonaki (NSW)
Megan Rainey (SA)	Mike Stubbs (UK)
Monica Narula (India)	Partha Pratim Sarker (Bangladesh)
Patricia Adams (Qld)	Peter Toy (WA)
Raewyn Turner (NZ)	Raul Ferrera (Mexico)
Rebecca Youdell (Qld)	Rolando Ramos (NSW)
Sam James (NSW)	Sarah Ryan (Tas)
Sarah Neville (SA)	Sheridan Kennedy (NSW)
Shilpa Gupta (India)	Sophea Lerner (NSW)
Steve Bull (WA)	Vanessa Mafe-Kean (Qld)

Tutors were invited to the ALCHEMY MASTERCLASS based on their level of skills and experience with new media arts. The tutors all had varied backgrounds and interests, in order to provide a healthy cross-section for the participants. The tutors were selected to provide not only technical training, but also a wider conceptual and philosophical background to new media practice:

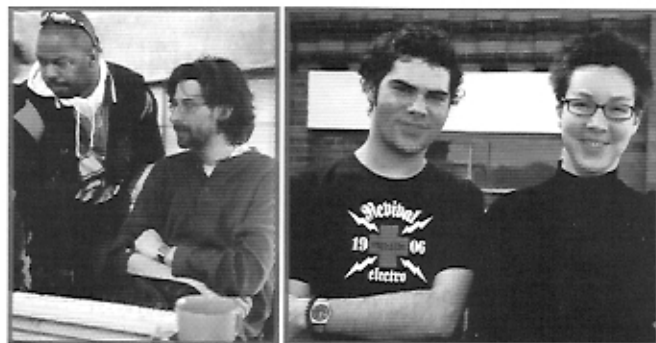
Alexei Shulgin (Russia)
(Net artist, performer and curator <http://www.easylife.org>)

Nina Czegledy (Canada)
(Independent media artist, curator and writer)

Mongrel (UK)
(Mongrel make socially engaged cultural product employing any and all technological advantage that they can lay their hands on <http://www.mongrel.org.uk>)



*From the top, Alchemy participants
(l r) Tim Plaisted, Sheridan
Kennedy, Grisha Coleman &
Caroline Farmer
Alexei Shulgan (tutor), (l r) Shilpa
Gupta, Sophea Lerner & Raewyn
Turner (photos courtesy of Charity
Bramwell)*



*(left) Mongrel Mervin Jarman
& Alexei Shulgin. Christian Thompson & Megan Rainey
(photos courtesy Charity Bramwell)*

Geert Lovink (Aust and Netherlands)
(Lecturer and activist who has participated in many conferences on independent media, the arts and new technologies)

John Tonkin (Aust)
(Animator and web artist who develops his own software <http://207.225.33.116/>)

Rea (Gamileri/ Wailwan)
(Internationally recognised artist who specialises in developing digital media)

Mike Stubbs (UK)
(Artist and curator who works with sculptural installation, performance, film, video and installations)

Sara Diamond (Canada)
(Director for the New Media and Visual Arts programs of the Banff Centre for the Arts)

Tess de Quincy (Aust) and Laura Jordan (Aust)
(Performance and new media artists. Tess and Laura have collaborated on performance and research events)

Marko Peljhan (Slovenia)
(Performance and communication artist and writer)

Blast Theory (UK)
(Four artists who make live events, installation and new media work)

Shuddhabrata Sengupta (India)
(Founding member of the Sarai new media initiative <http://www.sarai.org>)

The project provided for an intensive and productive period for exploration, conversation and the generation of dialogue and new ideas. What some of the participants have said about ALCHEMY:

"At the end, it all seemed like a dream converting bytes of realities into ephemeral spaces. ... my expectations about learning were fulfilled thanks to the great sharing mood that navigated through Alchemy". (Raul Ferrera Balanquet, Mexico)

"For me Alchemy has transformed my way of viewing the world and technology. I hope that the network [developed during the project] will stay functioning and that we can figure out ways in which we can share a physical space in the future." (Shuddhabrata Sengupta, India)

"The whole experience was invaluable. It was a great thing for me to have an opportunity to participate in an event so totally outside of the craft world and into a whole new realm. It was more than just increasing my degree of technologic; the most exciting and stimulating part was making connections with the people in the workshop, who worked in different media, who came from different geographies and cultures. A feast as Raul describes it, tastes from different places. It was also great to be there in the crossover third week [combining internet and hybrid/ performance practices] so I could get to meet people like Grisha, Sarah and Kamal who injected a necessary reminder of working in the 3 dimensional realm, remembering our bodies." (Sheridan Kennedy, Sydney-based jeweller)

"...the opportunity to attend the Alchemy international Masterclass was a highlight of my year so far. Especially I appreciated the open and non-competitive creative atmosphere that was prevalent at the Masterclass. I believe this was due to the generous attitudes of the tutors, the combined alchemy of the participants who came from many different countries and experiences, and the experimental and creative space encouraged by ANAT's management of the program. It was inspiring to be able to learn about new technologies from creative people instead of the dry business oriented experience. The combination of ideas, theory, experimentation and technical learning was for me a rewarding mix that generated a huge learning curve..." (Mae Adams, Victoria)

"Too many interesting people - far too many interesting conversations.... How are we supposed to get any work done or learn anything with all this stimulating interaction going on?" (Sophea Lerner, a sound artist from Sydney)

"...an info surge!" (Megan Rainey, Adelaide)



The Powerhouse, Brisbane (images courtesy of Charity Bramwell)

The ALCHEMY MASTERCLASS was made possible by support of a wide variety of organisations providing in-kind support, including:

Blueprint Consulting (Qld)
Apple Computers (Australia)
Choice Connections (Qld)
Macromedia (Australia)
Adobe Systems Pty Ltd (Australia)
Multimedia Art Asia Pacific (Qld)
Institute of Modern Art (Qld)
Brisbane Powerhouse (Qld)

In recognition of its international and national significance, the Masterclass was generously supported by a range of government agencies. For the first time, ANAT received major support by the Canadian-based Langlois Foundation, an organisation which supports international projects dealing with Art, Science and Technology. ANAT is also grateful to Australian federal and state bodies for their continued support of its programs. Funding for ALCHEMY was received from:

Daniel Langlois Foundation (Montreal, Canada)
Australian Film Commission (Industry & Cultural Development)
Australia Council (Emerging Artists Fund of the New Media Arts Fund)
Arts SA
NSW Ministry for the Arts
Arts Tasmania
Arts Queensland through the Queensland Artworkers Alliance