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dLux Media Arts - D>Art05: distributed art and mobile journeys

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Exhibitions are often about product rather than process. Like a trade show demo, the curated exhibition is the opportunity for artists to showcase their research, innovation, and general creative endeavour alongside that of their peers.

There is time for the work to be examined, experimented with, and opened up to a visiting public. This kind of exhibition model has for a long time been problematic for works that do not exist within a defined 3D space, or a comfortably measured duration. *D>Art05* and *Mobile Journeys* address the temporal and spatial restrictions of the exhibition model by making the work available for download both during and post-exhibition. Visitors to the exhibition could bring their mobiles and download any of the fourteen works in Mobile Journeys, in effect,

Exploring the creative potential of mobile devices

mobilising the work. This process allowed the phone user to generate an afterlife for the work that is acutely in line with the initial purpose of mobile technologies. Within the gallery the six sound works (averaging eight minutes each) were all playlisted onto IPods forced into immobility by the strictures of mass exhibition. However, post exhibition dates the sound works will be podcast under creative commons licensing encouraging different spaces for sustained listening. The six web works have a similar double life. Presented as projected screens and keyboard/mouse interfaces within the gallery, the web works were palpable aesthetic objects. Visit the **dLux** and each work is linked to provide the user with another opportunity to approach the works, to sit within the more personalised environment of the desktop and spend longer exploring their quiet complexity.

These purposefully distributed operations of the multifaceted D>art exhibition are a successful negotiation of the specificities of new media, which demand an ongoing (mobilised) interaction which is impossible in a gallery context. Whether through headphones whilst travelling to work, or as a contemplative engagement with the web interface, or as essential mobile relay within an increasingly politicised social environment, these artworks are given the opportunity to move into other interesting environs. This is not however duplication of the exhibition, but an exhibition with an afterlife, an extension of the spaces of the exhibition back out into the arena from which the media has come in the first place. It is an open release of the original work, an evolution.

What did not fit this framework, and so has perhaps become sidelined, was the fourth screen component of the *D>Art show* (essentially the source from which the current diversity has grown). Digital moving image was shown in a film theatre facing imminent closure. These screen works did not demand a life off screen, or inside another sort of screen. Does this difference mark the line between time-based media – dependent on specific viewing times and a commitment to that moment – and a mobilised media available in multiple formats? The mobilised works suggest a different role for the viewer, who is able to determine how the work operates and its length. In short, the mobilised works allowed the viewer/listener/user to actively determine the experience of the work. These issues were raised in the fifth component of the D>Art exhibition: the Excavation, Ecology and Evolution forum that specifically addressed the distributed environment of mobile media. It seems that distribution outside the strictures of the gallery space is essential both for, and as a result of, the media at play.

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Su Ballard is an artist, writer and musician from Dunedin, New Zealand. She is currently completing her PhD on materiality in digital art installation at UNSW, Sydney.

D>Art05 was presented by dLux, ANAT and AIMIA at the Sydney Opera House Exibition Hall August 10 – September 4 2005

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http://dlux.org.au/mobilejourneys/