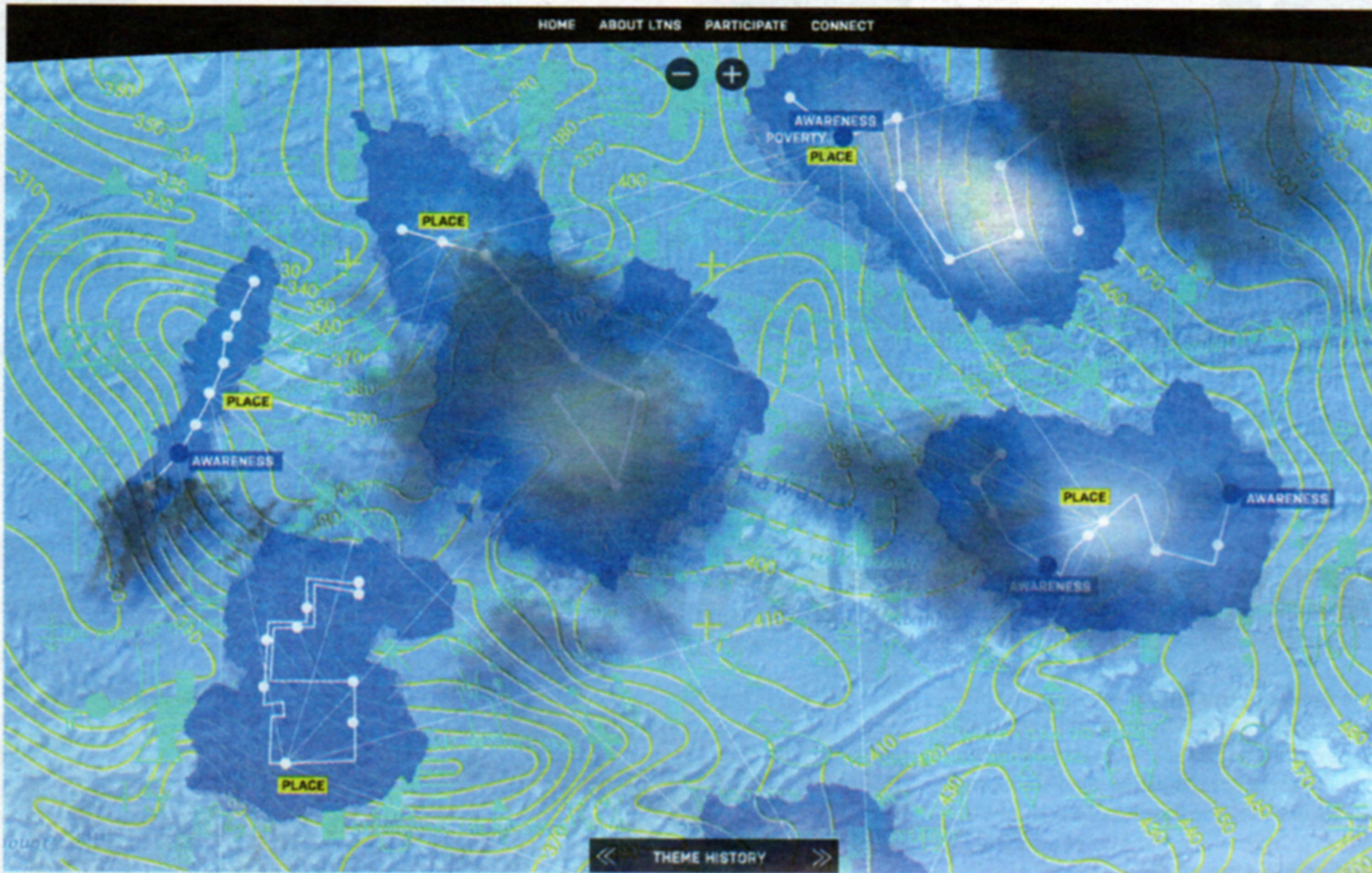


ISEA: Immersion + Assange



In its press release of 3 May, ISEA2013 added weight to its "Resistance is Futile" theme by announcing that a Special Keynote speech would be delivered to conference delegates by Wikileaks founder Julian Assange via live video link from the Ecuadorian Embassy in London, 5.30pm 13 June.

Assange's presence emphatically underlines the ambiguity of ISEA's theme: "the 2013 program explores the ways art and new technologies are used in the service of power, protest and resistance." The internet that increasingly monopolises our lives is nonetheless an invaluable tool, if not of the utopian order dreamt of in the 1990s.

As the ISEA2013 press release puts it, "Julian Assange has a unique insight into the futility, or otherwise, of resisting the incursion of the digital into every aspect of our lives. In systems under constant and multiple pressures there will always be leaks. Wikileaks exists because of this, embracing the digital, exploiting the ubiquity of digitised information: Resistance is Fertile."

ANAT, Synapse: A Selection

On 3 May, ISEA revealed a third batch of events in an enormous program which displays the works of 150 artists and delivers talks, forums and partnered events with VIVID Sydney. Synapse: A Selection looks back over five years of collaborations between artists and scientists with works by artists, some of whom are represented elsewhere in ISEA2013: Keith Armstrong, Helen Pynor

& Peta Clancy, George Poonkin Khut, Mari Velonaki, Erica Secombe, Ken+Julia Yonetani, Nola Farman, Chris Henschke and Kirsty Boyle.

Along with the launching of the RealTime Media Art Online Archive 1994-present and Campbelltown Arts Centre's Catching Light exhibition (bringing together digital artists from the 1990s and current practitioners; see RT114, p2), Synapse: A Selection provides a short-term historical perspective in a field that can sometimes develop too quickly for reflection and, curiously, is archivally weak.

SymbioticA, semipermeable (+)

In semipermeable (+) at the Powerhouse Museum, SymbioticA—the University of Western Australia's Centre of Excellence in Biological Arts, will present extant and newly commissioned works from 15 artists including Nigel Helyer and the centre's director Oron Catts. The works range from investigations into "protocells, infection and DNA through to skins and garments, to borders and state control." Surprisingly, after many years of internationally respected experimentation and creation, this is SymbioticA's first major exhibition.

Electric Nights, Parramatta

ISEA2013's programming is notable for its incursion into the streets (including Electronic Art Pop-Ups by six international artists in The Rocks) and greater Sydney. At dusk, 15-16 June, on the banks of the Parramatta River, "audiences can interact with a mass of LED-lit balloons, participate in a kinetic sculpture on bikes to generate energy and watch stilt performers with roaming data projection." There'll also be Indonesian food associated with an interesting food-internet crossover in the form of Grobak Padi 2013.

The grobak is a traditional Indonesian food cart, although serving food is not its function here. In Grobak Padi 2013 "wired up carts will link Sydney and Yogyakarta live via multi-channel links, along with in-cart video art and a multimedia dance spectacle by artists Michael Hornblow (Australia), Agung Gunawan (Indonesia) and Tony Yap (Australia/Malaysia)."

Keith Armstrong, Long Time No See?

Keith Armstrong's collaborative work, facilitated by Western Sydney's Information and Cultural Exchange (ICE), Long Time, No See? (www.long-time-no-see.org) will also be found in Parramatta. A specialist in interactive installation and art-science collaborations, Brisbane-based Armstrong and co-creators will provide the public with "an opportunity to create possible futures through data mapping and a smartphone App on local walks through Parramatta."

The Portals

At Chatswood's new cultural centre, The Concourse, five telematic artworks will connect communities in Sydney and Darwin through networked and interactive artworks, via high speed broadband and large screens in public spaces—a welcome change from big screen advertising and an opportunity for artists to show the public how to make the creative most of online infrastructure. "The Portals includes live art, visual art, e-literature, interactive performance, sound art and community engagement" with some works running continuously and others as "one-off performance events in Darwin and Sydney."

In Metaverse Makeovers (LIVE), artists will work "with nail technicians to makeover members of the public with stick-on nail 'appcessories' created by Thea Baumann and collaborators—wearable augmented-reality nail accessories that interact with a companion game app" that connects the two cities.

The Portals also includes Shadow Net, using Microsoft's Kinect technology "to incorporate the shadows of passers-by...into a shared, virtual game space; Distributed Empire, a real-time portrait generator that recombines the faces and voices of volunteers in various locations; and Is Starlight A Wifi Signal? which encourages audiences in Sydney and Darwin to interact via their mobile devices with a networked performance that includes moving bodies, projections and text" (The Portals, press release; www.facebook.com/ThePortalsProject).

Memebrain Art Hackfest

Also at the Concourse, is the intriguing "cross-locational" Memebrain Art Hackfest, a long-term project starting out at ISEA, created by Sydney-based dLux MediaArts with Dorkbot, The Portals Project, Darwin Community Arts and Byron Bay's Kulchajam. Its aim is "to generate rich creative exchange in an informal online atmosphere to challenge the way media are used culturally." The artists, working in the Concourse's underground, invite the public to join them online.

Troy Innocent, Zydnie

Overground, leading Melbourne media artist Troy Innocent will also be at the Concourse, as well as in Darlinghurst and Newtown with Zydnie, his street game "that explores colonisation as an ongoing process via urban codes and language. Choose one of the three warring factions in a battle to revert, renew or remake the city."

RealTime@ISEA

If you're attending ISEA2013 or keeping track of it at distance, follow RealTime bloggers Urszula Dawkins and Gail Priest daily and catch reviews and video interviews and exhibition coverage at www.realttimearts.net

Immerse!

Events like The Portals, PVI's Deviator, Electric Nights and others offer opportunities for the public to engage with artists and their works online or on the streets. Some of these you can simply visit, some you need to book for. ISEA offers new relationships with art, technologies and the internet that will take you beyond the everyday of email overload and tweeted gossip. RT

See RealTime 114 for an interview with ISEA2013 Director Jonathan Parsons talking extensively about his program.

ISEA2013, 19th International Symposium on Electronic Art, Sydney, 7-16 June; www.isea2013.org

Image: Keith Armstrong, Long Time, No See?