

# Uncovering the Once Discovered: Infozone Residency + Exhibition Project, State Library of Queensland.

**The Artists: KEITH ARMSTRONG & CHRIS BARKER (dirs.) & Stuart Lawson (Visual Artist), Darren Pack (Quest 3D Author) and Luke Lickfold (Interactive Sound Composer)**



KEITH ARMSTRONG has worked for 17 years in collaborative, hybrid, new media practice. He has created numerous large-scale, site-specific electronic artworks and networked interactive installations with alternative interfaces and hybrid performance forms.

These artworks, which all investigate the idea of 'ecology', have been shown extensively both in Australia and overseas. He has been the recipient of numerous

grants from the public and private sectors - including an Australia Council New Media Arts Fellowship and a Doctoral and postdoctoral New Media Fellowship. He has co-directed this work with internationally awarded animator Chris Barker and a key team of collaborators.

Full details at [www.embodiedmedia.com](http://www.embodiedmedia.com)

## Spin-doctor (some notes on KNOWMORE [House of Commons])

By Pat HOFFIE

A small, semi-enclosed, darkened space, set in the Infozone at the State Library of Queensland and inside, a round table, that seems, on the surface, much like many others in the room. What can this tent-like construction possibly mean, erected in the midst of all this public one-on-one concentration, and what is this brightly lit table that it harbours? What kind of strange fare will be served on its surface? What kind of culinary rituals and interactions will be required to partake in such a session? Or is it another kind of table altogether designated for other kinds of engagements - a ouija board or crystal ball maybe?

For the past seventeen years Keith Armstrong's work has focussed on engagement and interactivity. He speaks of "embodied practice" - of work that invites the viewer to behave as a participant - transforming them into an essential element of the work itself. Like so much of his previous work, **KNOWMORE (House of Commons)** has involved deep collaboration in the process of its making and also invites collaboration as an integral aspect of experiencing it. This in itself makes this work stand apart in a place where the search for knowledge often appears isolated and non-engaged. In an information age, the gap between information availability and learning may still be great.

Armstrong sees libraries as a kind of portal - as places where the possibilities of individuals engaging in embodied learning through interactive experiences may offer the most viable pathways towards learning, as opposed to the mere collection and collation of information. This artist uses the term "ecosophical" (literally translated as 'wisdom of the dwelling') to describe the necessary interconnectedness between all of the ecologies for which we must learn to develop custodial practices - ecologies of the economic, the societal, the political, the social, the designed world and of the image - all of which interact to impact upon our current shared crisis of climate change.

Once we enter the artist's space, it becomes evident that we are in an immersive environment that is super-sensitive to our presence, alive with responsive light and sound. The way we negotiate this space - and each other - has a direct bearing on the images and

sounds that can be willed into appearing. Even during the briefest encounter it becomes apparent that this is no ordinary table. If you approach it, the images on its surface jump, twitch and dance. And if you spin it entire worlds come into orbit. There is a dense cosmology implied here - one in which five environments eclipse, overlay and overlap. It is a deep mix of ecologies where sense and memory come into play - where associations are as poetic as they are rational.

Here unicellular organisms seem to mutate and transform; at a different level sub-aquatic forms flip and flow and elide transformation. At another level again, a central 'nest' spins out to become an entire vortexical universe. And deeper still, there is a possibility of entering a quite different grey, ghostly world - a shrouded, clouded place where 'knowledge' and 'information' have been codified within a mysterious, grided taxonomy. Floating high above this world, it is difficult to tell whether you might have entered a kind of Google-Earth GPS environment, and are hovering above an ordered graveyard. But as the spin of the table recedes you descend closer, to where the encryptions become legible and the work's keystone emerges - an arcane database of outdated microfiched registrations, texts, images and diagrams. But this allusion of entering a ground-zero of order is short-lived, for these images and data begin to reveal a world that is as fluid and poetic and open to interpretation as the more biomorphic worlds "above" it.

In this work 'information' is presented as 'spin' - a series of bytes and images and takes that are understandable according to how you participate - thereby making all the difference in the outcome of the reading. There is also a sense that the locus of control shifts and bends and morphs and mutates according to the choices that you make. And the question about the extent to which any possibilities to 'know more', as a precursor for 'learning', might be compromised by any over-emphasis on amassing data and 'information' hangs in the balance like a threatened life form.

Pat HOFFIE

Pat HOFFIE is a visual artist and a Professor at Queensland College of Art, Griffith University where she is a research-intensive member of SECAP (Sustainable Environment and Culture, Asia-Pacific).

## KNOWMORE (House of Commons)

Keith Armstrong

21 Feb - 24 May 2009

This exhibition is one of a series of art programs held in the State Library of Queensland's Infozone.

Artists are invited to explore the State Library and investigate new ways of interpreting and responding to the collection.

This unconventional collaboration between the State Library and contemporary artists reflects an interesting direction for the State Library.

Libraries are a social experience, as well as an artistic nucleus for communal issues. **Infozone Residency + Exhibition Project** is presented by the State Library of Queensland in collaboration with Artworkers Alliance.

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■ **Artist Talk: 6 March 5:30 - 6:30pm**  
at the State Library of Queensland,  
Cultural Centre, South Bank, Brisbane

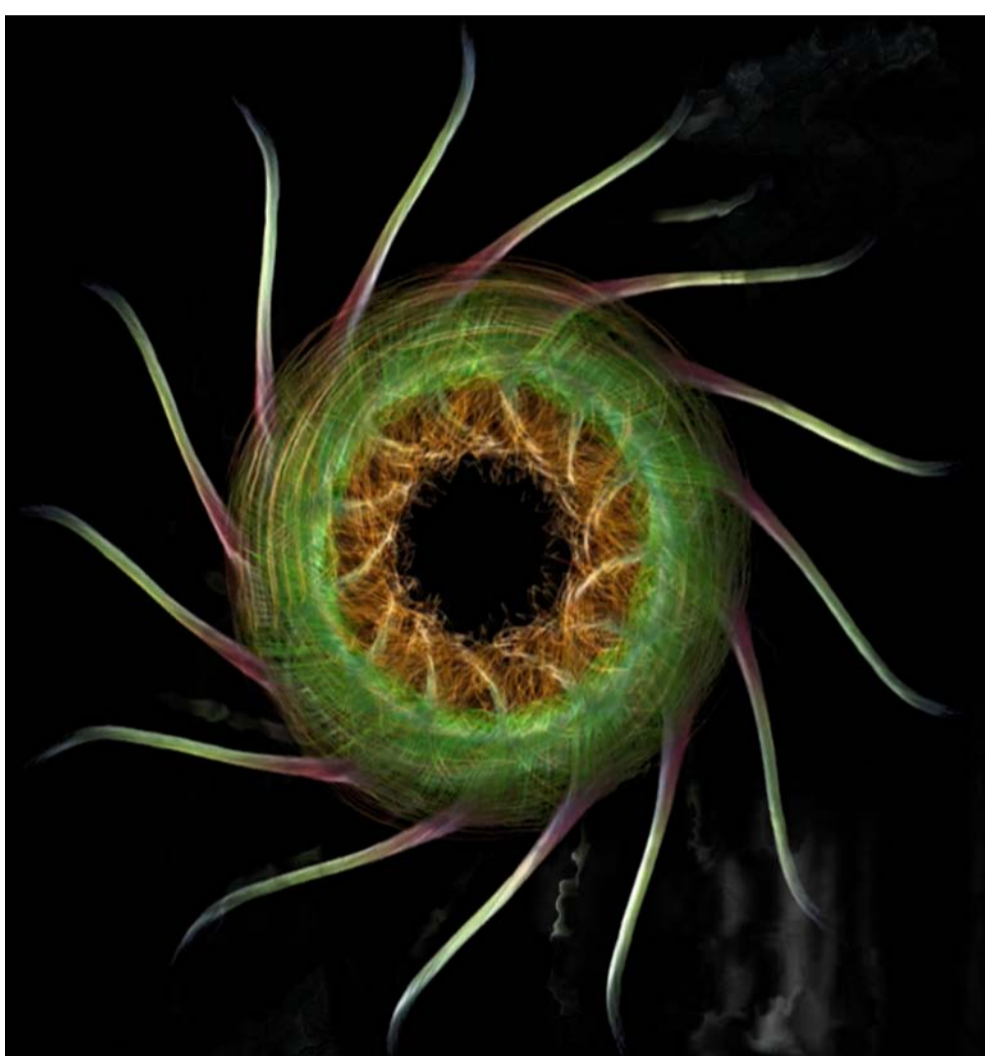
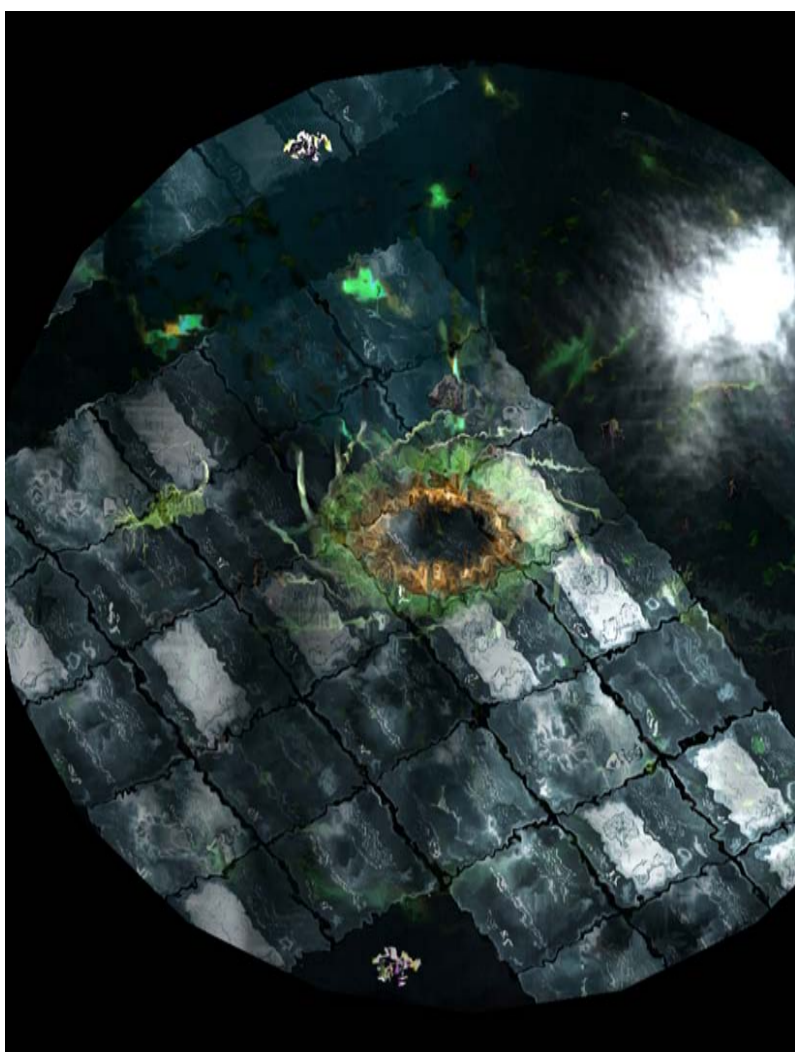
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Artworkers is supported by the State Government through Arts Queensland.

[www.slq.qld.gov.au](http://www.slq.qld.gov.au)



## IMAGE CREDITS

**01**  
Detail of the transitions between states Eroding, Keeping Still, Break Through and Composing from KNOWMORE [House of Commons]. (2009) Courtesy the artist. Image: Chris Barker / Stuart Lawson.

**02**  
Detail of State 3: Keeping Still from KNOWMORE [House of Commons]. (2009) Courtesy the artist. Image: Chris Barker.

**03**  
Participant interacting with KNOWMORE [House of Commons] (2009). Wooden table, metal, electronics, painting, wiring, computer hardware, rubber, carpet. 1500 x 1500 x 830mm. Photo: Keith Armstrong.

**04**  
Single element from the Periodic Table / Microfiche Sequence from KNOWMORE [House of Commons]. (2009) Courtesy the artist. Image: Stuart Lawson / EMBL <http://tinyurl.com/y9u86q>



Special thanks to Tony Fry (who is extensively quoted in the work) and his seminal body of writing around 'Design Futuring'.

Table Interface – Design and Construction by Fred Howie/Howie Engineering

Software – Quest 3D (courtesy of E2E Visuals) and MaxMSP

Lisa O'Neill (Shroud Construction) & Julie Dean (Support)

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