

PRESS RELEASE
For immediate release

New *d/Lux/MediaArts* Touring Show
Garden of Forking Paths

The game show where everyone gets out alive!!

Exhibition dates: 3 - 24 October 2009
Opening night: 2 October 2009 6 - 8 pm
Venue: Loop Space - part of the Renew Newcastle initiative

ARTISTS:

Laurie Anderson (USA) with Hsin-Chien Huang (Taiwan), Tale of Tales (Belgium)
Jaron Lanier (USA), Michael Nyman (UK), Nina Pope and Karen Guthrie (UK)
Anita Fontaine (Australia) and Mike Pelletier (Canada) , Andy Deck (USA)

For Electrofringe 2009 *d/Lux/MediaArts* presents the premiere of a new touring exhibition, **Garden of Forking Paths**, a unique show which draws together notable historic and contemporary examples of games that push the bounds of the genre and break the orthodox set of rules.

This exhibition will challenge younger audiences' conventional understanding of what a computer game is, providing a hands on exploration of "just how different everything was back in the 80's and 90's - text based games, low res graphics and bleepy sound effects".

The unusual title of the exhibition is from the Jorge Luis Borges' 1941 short story "*The Garden of Forking Paths*". This famous literary work predates the Internet but its complex storyline surrounding an infinite, labyrinthine book that realises multiple paths and futures echoes the information age with hypertext, the World Wide Web and the form and structure of computer games.

Artists have been exploring the potential of this burgeoning medium to create alternative gaming strategies that communicate across platforms and fuel imaginations with new possibilities.

Hands up who remembers the Commodore 64?

Garden of Forking Paths revisits examples of very earliest computer games running on the original hardware as well as some of the latest creations by leading artists.

Virtual reality pioneer, **Jaron Lanier's** work *Moondust* is a 1983 generative music video game created for the Commodore 64. *Moondust* was programmed in 6502 assembly code, and is widely considered the first art video game. *Moondust* is also considered to be the first interactive music publication

Laurie Anderson's 1995 interactive CD ROM *Puppet Motel* is an imaginary universe made up of the interplay between light and darkness, mystery and poetry. This universe is populated by puppets and, of course, its creator, the artist herself. The three dimensional virtual spaces are crammed with ghosts and secrets: the visitor is constantly taken by surprise.

CuteXDoomII by Australian artist Anita Fontaine and the recently released cult game *The Path* by Belgium based Tale of Tales are also featured in the exhibition and follow in the tradition of utilising immersive and surreal psychological landscapes to draw players into the rich imaginative worlds of the artists.

The Path is a darkly seductive horror game inspired by the original macabre Little Red Riding Hood fairy tale. While *CuteXDoomII* is a psychedelic video-game mod that takes a violent shoot 'em up and converts it into an experience of popular cultures obsession with cuteness. In this unique customised game your character, a member of a supermodern religious cult that worships cute material objects, becomes an unwitting victim and must attempt to escape the surrealist morphing castle she has become her prison.

Curator of the exhibition **Neil Jenkins** works extensively with *Furtherfield*, an artist-led group that utilises networked media to create and promote the art that bridges the boundaries between established art-world institutions, grass-roots artistic and activist projects and communities of socially-engaged software developers. A collection of maverick media-art-makers, small collectives of cross-specialist practitioners, acting to critique and change dominant hierarchical structures as part of their art process.

<http://www.furtherfield.org>

For further information please check the website www.dlux.org.au or contact David Cranswick, director@dlux.org.au or call 0411 474 554



Details of the works and artists

Puppet Motel

Laurie Anderson (USA) with Hsin-Chien Huang (Taiwan) 1995

An arts CD ROM by writer, musician, composer, performer, and photographer Laurie Anderson, is an imaginary universe made up of the interplay between light and darkness, mystery and poetry. This universe is populated by puppets and, of course, its creator, the artist herself. Wandering around the visitor is often tempted to put a story together from the successive images displayed on a virtual TV screen in a 'black jack manner' or from the objects found in a dim lit room but in the end he must realize that he has been chasing after shadows since the CD ROM does not belong to the tradi-

tion of the great narration. These three dimensional virtual spaces are crammed with ghosts and secrets: the visitor is constantly taken by surprise. He is trapped, over and over again, by the virtual setting so he must switch off the computer and start again in order to escape. This platonic vale of tears radiates an enigmatical atmosphere which, all too often, appears manneristic and over-refined.

Video intro from Voyager (publishers)

<http://blip.tv/file/462115/>

review

<http://www.wordyard.com/dmz/digicult/anderson-motel-5-10-95.html>

Known primarily for her multimedia presentations, **Laurie Anderson** has cast herself in roles as varied as visual artist, composer, poet, photographer, filmmaker, electronics whiz, vocalist and instrumentalist.

Hsin-Chien Huang is a surrealist and coder in the field of new media art. His work has been presented at galleries, new media arts festivals and museums worldwide.



Moondust

Jaron Lanier (USA) 1983

<http://www.well.com/~jaron/>

video

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DTk4SqKL-PA>

Jaron Lanier is a computer scientist, composer, visual artist, and author, highly regarded for his pioneering work in virtual reality technology.

wikipedia

Moondust is a 1983 generative music video game created for the Commodore 64 by virtual reality pioneer, Jaron Lanier. Moondust was programmed in 6502 assembly in 1982, and is widely considered the first art video game. Moondust is also considered to be the first interactive music publication, and it sold quite successfully. With the profits from Moondust and additional funding from Marvin Minsky,[8] Lanier formed VPL which would later go on to create the DataGlove and the DataSuit and to become one of the primary innovators of virtual-reality research and development throughout the 1980s.

Moondust's gameplay is characterized by graphical complexity, and the game features an abstract ambient score. The goal of the game is to guide a spaceman around the screen creating strange patterns and getting bullet-shaped spaceships to pass through the trails that the spaceman creates. In in-game scoring system assigns point-values according to an algorithm. The game has been compared to the works of Jeff Minter.

Additionally, Moondust has frequently been used as an art installation piece in museums, and by Lanier and others in papers and lectures as an example to demonstrate the unexpected ephemerality of digital data.



An Artist's Impression of a text based environment

Nina Pope and Karen Guthrie (UK) 1999

01/10/99 and touring

<http://www.somewhere.org.uk/artistsimpression>

project

An on-line game (MUSH) & gallery installation including live performance

Karen Guthrie and Nina Pope produce ambitious, innovative and challenging projects spanning film, the web, installation, live events and broadcast media.

An Artists' Impression was a long-term project originating in our fascination with the 'soft underbelly' of the WWW! We researched a number of live online 'games' concentrating on those where simple role-playing and social activities happened (see Links for more) and found the characters, landscapes and activities constantly occurring (in text only) in realtime in these - the most visually impoverished corners of the web - compelling. Both banal / workaday and fantastical in content, we are also impressed by the volume of regular players in these MUSHes and MOOs, and the absence of anything more than a 'code of honour' in most that delineated the players' conduct.

We developed our own social online game or MUSH, Island - which you can still visit using the link opposite. An open-ended experiment, it's a live, interactive space which during AAI's most lively time - when the project was first exhibited and toured - has hosted many players and seen many events and buildings...Shortly after this went online we decided to undertake the making of a physical 'impression' of this space which would still somehow articulate the impossibility of mirroring an online space. The online MUSH culture seemed intuitively to link to the aesthetic of the model railway, and so the island was developed using these modelling techniques and aesthetics.

When the project was finally exhibited (first at the Institute of Contemporary Arts in London) the visitor was met with a vast model island (8m x 4m) and us (the artists) at work in corner workshops, constantly trying to update the model with the online 'game' changes. A parallel audience experienced the project solely online.



Frame Game

Michael Nyman (UK)

2003 duration: 31 mins 23 sec

Michael Nyman is an internationally acclaimed composer, musician and musicologist. A leading figure of minimalist rhetoric in Music, he remains perhaps best known for his many award-winning movie scores, which he has composed during his lengthy collaboration with Hollywood's finest movie makers.

Nyman's work has been exhibited in various public institutions, such as the Tate Modern in London, the Reina Sophia Museum in Madrid, and the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

Frame Game is a video taken from the series *Distractions*, shot by artist Michael Nyman in various parts of the world during the past fifteen years. To Nyman, there seemed no point in filming static monuments, so in **Frame Game** when he found himself at the ancient site of Persepolis, the length of each shot of the static ruins is dictated by the time it takes the frame to clear itself of tourists. In post-production Nyman enters into a competition with those tourists who choose not to move out of frame.

Experimentation with the medium of video, its limits and its ability to allow an infinite range of possibilities and random coincidences, remains a focal point in Nyman's work. In **Frame Game**, Nyman appropriates the recording of an ordinary scene depicting a historical site visited by a group of tourists. Shot with a hand-held camera and altered with digital intervention, the footage is then distorted and turned into a fictitious set of video games, seemingly inviting the viewer to engage with the work, much in the same manner a player would engage with a video game. Nyman's manipulation of his own imagery is an attempt to communicate an alternative scenario of the mundane and the monotonous, instantly transformed into a plot of unfolding events and unexpected results. Consequently, the medium becomes part of the message it conveys, contributing to the very aesthetics it purports to describe.



The Path

Tale of Tales (Belgium)

Released: 18 March 2009

Designed and directed by Auriea Harvey & Michaël Samyn

Music by Jarboe & Kris Force

<http://tale-of-tales.com/ThePath/>

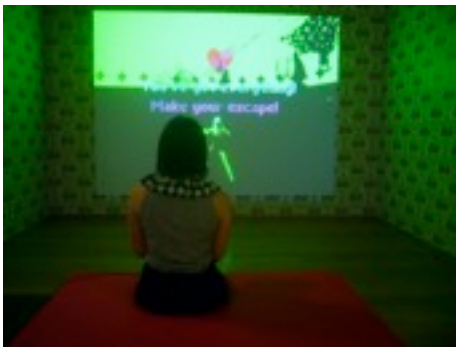
*Tale of Tales BVBA is a games development studio, founded by artists **Auriea Harvey** and **Michaël Samyn** in Belgium in 2002, to create elegant and emotionally rich interactive entertainment.*

The Path is a short horror game inspired by older versions of Little Red Ridinghood, set in modern day. The Path offers an atmospheric experience of exploration, discovery and introspection through a unique form of gameplay, designed to immerse you deeply into its dark themes. Every interaction in the game expresses an aspect of the narrative. The six protagonists each have their own age and personality and allow the player to live through the tale in different ways. Most of the story, however, relies on your active imagination.

The Path is designed with accessibility in mind. There are no ticking clocks or monsters to defeat. No hard puzzles will ever halt your progress. Most activities in the game are entirely optional and voluntary. The player has all the freedom in the world to explore and experience. The Path is a Slow Game.

Six sisters live in an apartment in the city. One by one their mother sends them on an errand to their grandmother, who is sick and bedridden. The teenagers are instructed to go to grandmother's house deep in the forest and, by all means, to stay on the path! Wolves are hiding in the woods, just waiting for little girls to stray.

But young women are not exactly known for their obedience, are they? Will they be able to resist the temptations of the forest? Will they stay clear of danger? Can they prevent the ancient tale from being retold?



Cute x Doom

Anita Fontaine (Australia) and Mike Pelletier (Canada) 2008

<http://anitafontaine.com/index/>

From Australia, currently living and working in Amsterdam, **Anita Fontaine's** fantastical technology interventions and new media explorations radically repurpose contemporary technology to surprising new ends.

Mike Pelletier is a freelance designer/programmer based in Amsterdam. His artistic practice involves everything from drawing to videogame modifications and exhibits and consults internationally.

Cutexdoom is an video-game mod that takes a violent shoot em up and converts it into a hyper- cute experience that explores popular culture and the obsession with kawaii culture. Your character wants to join a supermodern religious cult who believes the worship of cute material objects will lead to happiness and enlightenment. In order to prove worthiness you must collect enough cute toys to constitute an offering for the leader of the cult, before they welcome you to join it. Once you are inside the temple you will receive a special message of enlightenment.

Cutexdoom is internationally acclaimed and has been exhibited widely in Australia, North and South America and Europe as an installation and a videogame modification. (Programming by Mike Pelletier, Sound by Luke Ilett)



Space Invaders Act 1732

Andy Deck (USA) 1994

<http://artcontext.org/act/97/space/invaders.php>

A response to the Space Advertising Prohibitions Act of 1994 that plays with the symbolism of the arcade classic.

Andy Deck works on the development of collaborative process in the context of art and connectivity. Pre-empting regular programming, leveraging accidental freedoms, he attempts to demonstrate alternatives for Internet interactivity and interface design. Deck has made art software since 1990, initially using it to produce short films. Since 1994, he has worked with the Web using the sites artcontext.com and andyland.net.

He makes public art for the Internet that resists generic categorisation: collaborative drawing spaces, game-like search engines, problematic interfaces, informative art. Similarly his printed calendar, which he began making as a child, resembles an artist's book or comic book. Increasingly, this annual publication integrates essays and projects available via the Internet.

An avid critic of corporate culture and militarism, Deck's hybrid news-art projects have addressed a variety of issues that are regularly misrepresented in the mass media. In the interest of preserving this available alternative media, and sensing the drift of the Internet toward a marketing and entertainment medium, he has allied himself with open source software developers, optimising his work for use with the Linux operating system, and publishing source code for much of his software.

He has taught at the Universidad Internacional Menendez Pelayo, Sarah Lawrence College, and New York University. Currently he teaches at the School of Visual Arts. Andy Deck is a media artist specializing in Internet art. His work addresses the politics and aesthetics of collaboration, interactivity, software and independent media.