CONSTELLATIONS

Notes from *Constellations*

:.. o.. o.:· ⁰ Holistic Computing Conversation Circle ⁰·*:.. o.. o.:*·

16 July 2023
Contemporary Art Tasmania

:. ₀.. ₀.:. ⁰ **Holistic Computing Conversation Circle** ⁰ ·*:. ₀.. ₀.:*.
was a two hour workshop led by Nancy Mauro-Flude, with iRD[1] guest Rosa Menkman and conversation participants. In this artist-centred chautauqua focused on computer arts, the group discussed the navigation of personal computing infrastructure and the incumbent knowledge and conventions that lead their online and digital expectations, ranging across: customs around sending and receiving emails, the provenance of hardware, file formats, directories/folders, the minerals and vessels we keep data in, and the space and lands these may occupy.

Notes from *Constellations: *:. o.. o.:*. ⁰Holistic Computing Conversation Circle ⁰.*:. o.. o.:*.* 2–4PM 16 July 2023

PRESENTERS: Nancy Mauro-Flude, Rosa Menkman

WELCOME: Kylie Johnson opened the event by acknowledging the first peoples of nipaluna/ Hobart, the Muwinina.

The discussion examined the computer as material media (physical, substantial and instrumental) and capable of permeating and influencing all segments and layers of contemporary life: via our communications, polity, activism, economics, psychological, etc. The workshop then focused on how artists can contribute their expertise to the field rather than being co-opted by the dominant technological and economic discourses which generally inform and drive the conversation. The discussion group then reflected on a computer as being a material in the manner of conventional art materials; able to influence, modulate, transform and to be our artistic productions.

The conversation was structured around a series of stimulus questions: What was your first memory with a computer? What was your first experience of a computer as an artistic medium?

Responses included a range of personal dimensions and involvement, for instance: * imagining the future with a friend in kindergarten - spurred by inherent possibilities engendered by the blank white space of the dot matrix on continuous concertina computer paper sheets; * using computers against their grain, with friends exploring the edges of video game environments, experientially finding chance characteristics and unintended consequences (reminiscing the movement of the protagonist of Carmen Sandiego[2], who was, in reality, the Prince of Persia sensually humping a wall).

The collective conversation deviated across nostalgia to considerations of the contemporary life along with possible future conditions. Included in the commentary were: * intimate experiences with computing-inscribed social experiences (family photo archives); * an exchange of the cultural/ agential properties inherent in materials/materiality of the computing mediums through which we work and archive our ephemera; * working with networks and systems from within carries awareness that we operate in an interconnected cultural and ecological sphere in which the computational plays a formative and extractive role; and *appreciating computing as an art medium brings an awareness of ecological constructions and the social, cultural, and political issues that hover, enabling a tendency to analyse the systems and dynamics that belie people's artistic outputs.

The group concluded the circle conversation by reflecting on the necessity to understand the distinction between experience with computing arts as a medium (rather than as an editor for text, audio or visual materials or third-party social media tools) where the computer performas as cultural apparatus where the content and action of the artwork are generated. There was acknowledgment of the problem of the mesmeric qualities of vast computations and their immeasurable possibilities alongside the troubling ethics of participating in the extractive violence of computing (where over 50 different minerals needed for computer chips are extracted from the earth, often from unceded lands). Consequently, a call for a reconsidered position on computational practices was shared. Artists working culturally, socially, and critically with increased skills in computational media are empowered by this new knowledge and the increased potential for creativity.

[PROGRAM END]

Notes compiled by Nancy Mauro-Flude

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[2] *Carmen Sandiego* is a long-running video game series. The original 1985 video game was titled, *Where in the World is Carmen Sandiego?*

Further information:
Kylie Johnson
kylie@contemporaryart.org.au

contemporaryarttasmania.com