

Ubiquity: The Journal of Pervasive Media

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## EDITORIAL

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# *Ubiquity*: A paranoid manifesto

### Introduction

*Ubiquity* is a peer reviewed journal for creative and transdisciplinary practitioners interested in technologies, practices and behaviours that have the potential to radically transform human perspectives on the world. The title refers explicitly to the advent of ubiquitous computing that has been hastened through the consumption of networked digital devices. The journal anticipates the consequences for design and research in a culture where everyone and everything is connected, and will offer a context for visual artists, designers, scientists and writers to consider how ubiquity is transforming our relationship with the world.

In embracing these aspirations *Ubiquity* recognizes the transgressions and trauma that are implicit in the inevitable cultural shifts that will follow. As well as providing opportunities for enriching human experience these technologies and entangled practices bring with them neurosis and paranoia. The journal aims to create new dialogues between disciplines that utilize these technologies and to consider these activities within a social/cultural context. *Ubiquity* will not only focus on creative disciplines but will provoke a critical engagement with science, computing

and socio/economic studies, emphasizing the impact that design and technology has on everyone's lives.

Seeking new methodologies for interfacing with the world, a series of practical and theoretical design processes are beginning to emerge from a wide variety of industrial, academic, scientific and creative contexts. These new methodologies are collapsing previous distinctions between science and art, and are constructing new transdisciplinary vocabularies for understanding a social, environmental and technical sense of 'place' that was previously understood through the limited and discrete parameters of time and space.

## Community

*Ubiquity* focuses on contemporary practices that engage with these technologies and behaviours within the creative arts (design, architecture and art) but more importantly explores the impact these technologies are having on synergies between disciplines and the broader cultural context. We envisage the journal as an instrument that seeks to establish critical and creative frameworks and methodologies that effectively articulate and nurture innovation in this field.

This instrument aims to become a context in which these new methodologies can be demonstrated and theoretical implications explored. Implications that involve a sensitive inquiry into the subjects that bind social conversations such as memory, place, ownership, material, identity and image. In doing so *Ubiquity* will explore the artificial division between quantitative and qualitative research methods, provoking a critical approach to existing paradigms and orthodoxies within physical, social and design sciences and arts. For instance, the heated debates in the earth sciences concerning the validity of data collected by humans ('dirty') and data collected by instruments ('clean') dissolve within 'techno-ethnographic' Web 2.0 Citizen Science platforms.

## Content

*Ubiquity* adopts a networked publishing strategy that is underpinned by creative practice and the reflexive application of these technologies through workshops, collaborations, commissions, seminars, field work, documents, conversations, interviews, media archaeology and data streams. Built around heavily illustrated articles, *Ubiquity* adopts a pragmatic and open approach to the dissemination of practice within this emergent field. The journal offers a context for experimentation through interdisciplinary collaboration and access to 'instruments' that encourage a reflexive reinterpretation of disciplinary practices.

The need for this journal has come about following the fragmentation of established design and creative industry models for the production dissemination and consumption of information media. Integral to this fragmentation has been the emergence of digital platforms that challenge traditional

publishing and broadcasting with mobile and locative media and Internet platforms. This fragmentation has resulted in a variety of technologies and media forms that are having a significant impact on a range of disciplines, practices and human experience.

In response to this the journal is structured using a reflexive interplay between people and technologies, histories and futures and thinking through making. Each journal begins with three core complementary articles: in this first issue Jonnet Middleton introduces us to her personal 'Internet of Things', Jan Andruszkiewicz and Paul Thomas explore the realm of the nanotechnological laboratory for creative practice and Stenton et al reflect upon the 'Extended Theatre Experience' through wearable on-stage cameras. The Archaeology section explores historical precedents for the artefacts and processes that we now know as pervasive media: we are privileged in this issue to present previously unpublished images by Buckminster Fuller from the Buckminster Fuller Institute. In contrast, in an attempt to capture exploratory and emergent research, the journal probes the zeitgeist through interviews with contemporary practitioners, such as Anne Galloway who describes how she designs stories for humans and nonhumans.

Acknowledging the situated nature of ubiquitous experiences the journal hosts a practical symposium between each edition. Entitled 'Labs' the intention is to explore a variety of non-standard media technologies/practices (such as scanning electron microscopy, RFID tagging and plant biology) that challenge conventional notions of cultural production. These Labs often use technical and cultural instruments as a focus that allows a syllabus to be evolved reflexively according to the different participants and stakeholders. The Lab model provides an intensive burst of activity that ignites a production process and a conversation between participants from different backgrounds. They allow collaboration with people in areas outside of their comfort zone and provoke a proactive engagement with broader issues to their own disciplines. This enables an engagement with non-familiar, non-standard practices and also unlocks interdisciplinary relationships.

These technologies and associated practices open up new understandings of the world. More dimensions are unveiled, more realities are modelled and more truths envisioned, but framed within isolated disciplines these new visions of reality are lost to the broader culture. There are more things in heaven and earth than currently understood in our media philosophy. The scientific study of phylogeny and the context of the Royal Botanic Garden in Edinburgh is the focus of Lab #1 documented through images of the event as well as accompanying texts by the artist Hamer Dodds and scientist Alexandra Wortley.

In addition the reviews section identifies and interrogates peculiar symptoms of the ubiquitous condition. From the proliferation of the urban chicken to networked toys this regular feature of reviews hopes to reveal the playful transgressions and aberrations of living in a network society.

## Call for papers

We the editors invite you to contribute to the tuning of this cultural instrument by contributing to *Ubiquity* on subjects such as:

- The evolution of media forms as they seep off the page and screen and into the environment
- The emergence of the 'Internet of Things' and the advent of spimes, blogjects and ambient intelligence
- The consumption of networked digital devices and the transgressions and trauma implicit in the cultural shift that follows
- The behaviours and technologies that cultivate a networked culture
- New interdisciplinary vocabularies for understanding a social, environmental and technical sense of 'place'