

A Short History of the International Symposium on Electronic Art

Wim van der Plas

ISEA Symposium Archives

Rotterdam, NL

wvdplas@xs4all.nl

Abstract

This paper takes a critical look at the motivations to start the series of ISEA symposia and how the original intentions evolved over time.

Keywords

ISEA, International Symposium on Electronic Art, Inter-Society for the Electronic Arts, ISEA-International, Electronic vs Digital, Definition of Art

Introduction

The author takes a journey through the history of ISEA, both the ISEA symposium and the ISEA organisation(s). The history is based on the ISEA Symposium Archives as well as the author's personal archive. The focus is on the aims of ISEA as they were formulated at the start and in the course of its development. In the conclusion the current situation is evaluated in the light of the original aims.

The Start of ISEA

The idea for the First International Conference on Electronic Art was conceived by a Dutch computer scientist with strong cultural and political interests, Theodor Hesper, currently a citizen of Indonesia. Theo and the author of this paper, a sociologist, had worked together in a small co-founded 'Foundation for Creative Computer Applications' (SCCA in Dutch), based in Rotterdam in the early eighties (see Figure 1). The SCCA was instrumental in introducing the computer as a creative tool to Art Schools in the Netherlands. The SCCA was primarily art-oriented, but it looked at the word 'creative' in a broader sense. Among other things, it initiated competitions such as the 'design a ping pong playing robot' and 'server hack'. The latter had the aim to show the importance of computer security, but the Dutch Society of Informatics protested: "Computers should not be hacked." The concept of ethical hacking was not yet familiar.¹



Figure 1. SCCA Poster

As a next step, the SCCA decided to focus on the integration of art disciplines made possible by the developments in electronic technology, and to go international. Without too much hesitation, the SCCA announced the First International *Conference* on Electronic Art, to be held in Rotterdam in 1986, approximately a year after the announcement was distributed internationally via ordinary ('snail') mail (see Figure 2). It was published in several magazines and journals and asked for expressions of interest to be shown by returning a small reply slip. Very soon the SCCA started to receive scores of envelopes with reply slips from all over the world, with a majority coming from the USA. In the meantime, Hesper had decided that 'Symposium' sounded nicer than 'Conference'. So, the event would not be named FICEA, but FISEA and it would not take place in 1986, but in 1988.

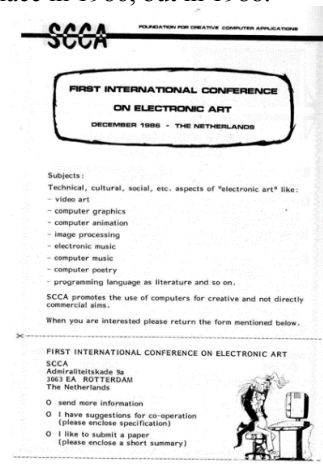


Figure 2. First International *Conference* on Electronic Art (FICEA)

¹ Note: the SCCA invited the Dutch Society of Informatics (NGI) to participate in the preparations for the competition, and they did, after all. [1]

The motivation behind the activities of the SCCA, as described in their brochure, was worded as follows: *“Developments in technology have far-reaching social and cultural consequences, such as increasing structural unemployment. It is striking that this liberation from labour is negatively valued. Our culture, and more specifically our image of society, is determined by the industrial era behind us. [...] Technological development is in danger of becoming disconnected from the rest of culture. What is needed is: **The cultural integration of technological innovation.** [...] The SCCA promotes and demonstrates critical and creative computing. The SCCA believes that **current developments in information and computer technology should serve the user's expressive possibilities.**”*[2] (Original reference translated from Dutch to English by Google Translate)

It is clear that the motivation behind the foundation's activities were primarily sociological. The challenging nature of their ideas was demonstrated by the fact that the SCCA presentations at art schools were sometimes met by demonstrating students who held up signs saying ‘No computers in art schools!’ and ‘Chips Are Square!’. [3]

Nevertheless, it was the art school teachers and managers, plus professional designers, architects, animators, etc, that showed the most interest in the SCCA's activities. A large ‘Project Computer Art’ (see Figure 3), organised by the SCCA in Rotterdam in 1984, partially consisting of a series of seminars for art & design professionals, was sold out.



Figure 3. Project Computer Art

It is understandable that the SCCA's next step would be art-oriented. Recall the reaction of the Dutch Informatics Society to the computer hack competition plan, mentioned above. Nevertheless, in the announcement of ‘FICEA’, the expected content (the subjects) is described in rather sociological terms: *“Technical, cultural, social, etc. aspects of “electronic art”*. Examples of ‘electronic art’ were given: *“video art, computer graphics, computer animation, image processing, electronic music, computer music, computer poetry, programming language as literature and so on”*. [4]

The Inter-Society for the Electronic Arts

During the first symposium, (FISEA) a panel was organised including Theo Hesper and a number of other electronic art pioneers that were present, like Raymond Lauzzana, Roger Malina, Jurgen Claus and others. Hesper explained that the aim of the symposium was to start co-operation between institutes and organisations that were active in the field of electronic art. Of those, quite a few were represented at FISEA: Leonardo/ISAST, the Computer Music Association (CMA), SIGGRAPH, Computer Arts Society, etc.

It was decided that an umbrella organisation needed to be founded that would connect these institutes and organisations. As a name that would symbolise this ‘meta’ character, ‘Inter-Society’ was proposed. [5]

At the meeting in Utrecht, SCCA's co-organiser, the Utrecht School of Art (HKU), announced the continuation of the activities: the organising of the second symposium and the founding of the Inter-Society. However, in the course of the next year (1989), the HKU withdrew their offer. It was too much of a challenge for them. So, there was a change of plans and the second symposium (SISEA) was organised by another large art school, based in the city of Groningen, in the north of the Netherlands. The art school (‘Minerva’) and the Groningen Music Conservatory both belonged to the Groningen University of Applied Sciences (Hogeschool Groningen), that became the organiser of SISEA. The former director of the SCCA (the author) had moved to that art school as the manager of a post-academic school for computer animation and became the executive director of SISEA. Hesper, as well as the conference organising bureau that administered FISEA, played an advising role.

Shortly before SISEA actually took place, Hesper and the author took the initiative to found the Inter-Society for the Electronic Arts officially, on July 18, 1990, as an Association under Dutch law. Even before the SISEA symposium took place in November of 1990, a meeting of the Inter-Society was organised at SIGGRAPH in Dallas, Texas, USA (see Figure 4)

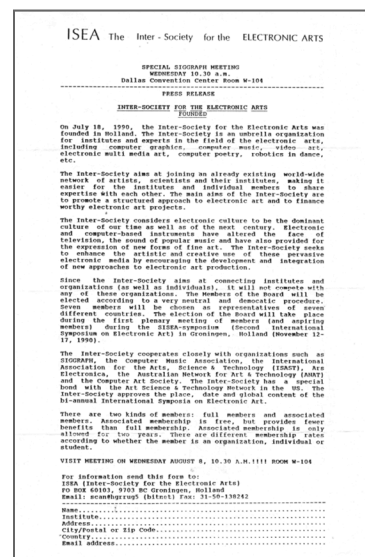


Figure 4. Inter-Society Press Release at SIGGRAPH 1990

Apart from the aim to connect “*artists, scientists and their institutes*” into a network, the press release for the SIGGRAPH meeting on the founding of the Inter-Society worded its aims as follows: “*The main aims of the Inter-Society are to promote a structured approach to electronic art and to finance worthy electronic art projects*”. [7]

What was meant with the structural approach can be explained by giving an example. It was understood that the musical (or sound) possibilities that were provided by electronic technology were virtually limitless. Nevertheless, the first fully electronic music instrument that was integrated into musical practice was the synthesizer, first the analogue version, and later digital ones. The synthesiser is based on the sound spectrum of the classical symphony orchestra. Instead, the founders of ISEA imagined artists and researchers should, with their studios and labs, make appointments with each other about researching the new possibilities, each in a different direction. So that, at a later point, results could be brought together and exchanged, in order to find new ways into musical development. That is why co-operation between electronic art institutes was necessary.

The Inter-Society for the Electronic Arts was abbreviated as ‘ISEA’, since the symposia were named with their chronological number included: FISEA for First symposium, SISEA for Second and, later, TISEA for Third. Only after the founders realised that the Fourth and the Fifth would have to be called FISEA again, it was decided to include the year (the Fourth one was called FISEA’93) and after that, to just leave out the number, so that the Fifth was called ISEA94. This caused a tremendous amount of confusion. To this day, some people translate the symposium name (ISEA) as Inter-Society for the Electronic Arts.

And since, much later, the Inter-Society association was replaced by a foundation called ISEA-International (in 2008), some people will now call the symposium “ISEA International”. [6]

The newly founded association had no other potential income than membership fees, and so the meeting in Dallas was meant to be the start of membership recruitment. The idea was that organisations and institutes would become members (so called institutional members), but it was mainly individuals who applied for membership. The founders decided on a low fee for individuals and an even lower one for students. The benefits for members consisted of a discount on symposium fees and a subscription to a monthly ISEA Newsletter. Since the symposia were organised by a different party every following year, the discount needed to be negotiated by the Inter-Society with the symposium organisers. The Newsletter was compiled by the author, together with a Dutch volunteer, Dirk Boon. The Newsletter was sent via ‘snail mail’. All the work was done on a volunteer basis, the income from membership fees was used for xeroxing and stamps.

Back to the symposium. At SISEA there was quite a large Australian delegation. Australian new media artists had connected and arranged for funding as a collective to come to The Netherlands. This was actually the start of ANAT, the Australian Network of Art & Technology. They let it be known that they wanted to organise the next

occurrence of the ISEA symposium, and presented their plans at SISEA (see Figure 5). [8]



Figure 5. Australian delegation brochure at SISEA (1990)

When they did organise the Third ISEA (TISEA) in 1992 in Sydney, directed by Ross Harley and Gary Warner and supported by, among others, the University of New South Wales and the Sydney University of Technology, interest was expressed to organise the next symposia. Roman Verostko (Minneapolis College of Art and Design) wanted to organise it in Minneapolis, and did so in 1993, Antti Kari (University of Art and Design) brought ISEA94 to Helsinki and Alain Mongeau (University of Quebec) organised ISEA95 in Montreal. All this happened in an informal way; these people just approached the author at TISEA or SIGGRAPH and he supported them with advice.

The ISEA95 symposium in Montreal was the largest so far, with an opening at Buckminster Fuller’s Biosphere, including speeches on behalf of the Prime Minister of Canada and by the Prime Minister of Québec, as well as by the Minister of Culture and Communications of Quebec and the Mayor of Montreal (see Figure 6). While SISEA had less than 40 works in the exhibition, at ISEA95 there were about 150. Also, there were 10 Concerts & Performances at SISEA, and there were more than 50 at ISEA95.



Figure 6. Still from Gary Warner’s video of the ISEA95 Opening [9]

The 1995 symposium also marked the start of the activities of a newly founded organisation in Montreal,

called SAT, Société des Arts Electronique (Electronic Art Society), similar to how TISEA marked the start of ANAT (and there are many other examples of the ISEA symposium serving as the launch of a new organisation or institute, like FACT in 1998 and Zero One, in 2006). SAT, seeing how successful their symposium was, offered to host the Inter-Society as of 1996. That meant that the activities of the volunteers in The Netherlands, who called themselves half-jokingly “ISEA HQ” would be taken over by the Canadians. Unlike the Dutch HQ, the Canadian HQ would have financial support, by the Daniel Langlois Foundation. Daniel Langlois was the founder and owner of the then very successful computer animation company Softimage, and he put his money in a cultural foundation that bore his name (and still exists today).

The Inter-Society had, so-far, not been able to live up to its goals. Hardly any institute would become a member, except for a few libraries that were interested in the Newsletters and Symposium Proceedings. The individual members never exceeded the number of about 50. The administrative work, consisting of sending the annual invoices, and then often a reminder, or two, did hardly balance with the income it generated; the operation relied on the volunteers, working for nothing. No wonder the offer from Montreal was very welcome. Since, for legal reasons, it appeared practically impossible to move the Association from the Netherlands to Canada, a second Inter-Society for the Electronic Arts was founded, now with the French translation. “Inter-Société des arts électroniques” as integral part of its name (see Figure 7).

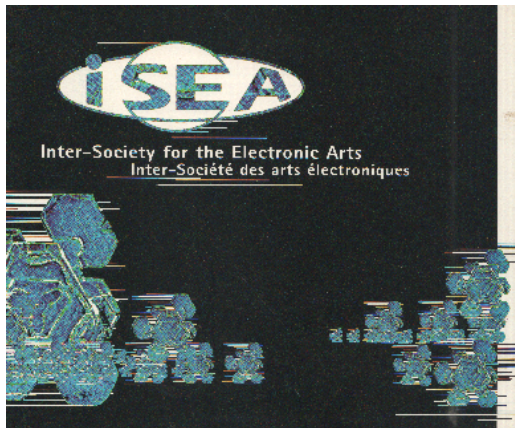


Figure 7. Brochure Montreal HQ

ISEA’s mission was described as follows in their brochure: “The aim of ISEA is to establish and facilitate interdisciplinary communication in the field of art, technology, science, education and industry. ISEA advocates a culturally diverse community, which stimulates a global promotion and development of electronic art practices. The Inter-Society fosters such communication by means of an International Advisory Committee, an on-line network; a monthly newsletter and endorses the International Symposium on Electronic Art, ISEA’s most vibrant and visible activity.” [10]

It is noticed that the ‘network of institutes’ has disappeared from the description of ISEA’s aims, as did the promotion of a “structured approach to electronic art”. It has made place for just ‘communication’ and non-artistic categories such as cultural diversity. On a minor note, it is

also noticed that the Montreal HQ got the name of the symposium wrong in their brochure: “International Symposium on Electronic Arts” instead of ‘Art’.

The new HQ organised some fundamental discussions, as described in my ISEA2013 paper “The Inter-Society for the Electronic Arts Revived?” [11]

Apart from a physical multi-day Inter-Society board meeting, for the first time made possible outside the occasion of the Symposia, a broader “Assembly” was organised in 1999, called Cartographies. “Its aim was to make progress ‘toward a definition of new media art’, because “works of today are polysemic, multi-sensorial, interactive, virtual. In search of an identity of their own, they demand new criteria of evaluation and understanding, as well as new sensibilities”. [12] The discussion, interesting as it may have been, did not result in a revival of the institutional co-operation plans that were the basis for founding the Inter-Society. As described in the 2013 paper, the Langlois Foundation terminated its support shortly after the meetings, when they realised that a nomadic symposium is not held in Montreal each year. Plans, proposed during the multi-day board meeting, to at least organise an annual ISEA related event in Montreal, apart from the symposium, did not get support from a majority of board members and was dismissed.

HQ moved back to the Netherlands in the year 2000, where the original Inter-Society was still in existence, be it in sleeping mode. This HQ was run by students and volunteers, without means. In 2004 the Inter-Society board distributed a brochure (see Figure 8) at the ISEA symposium in Helsinki/Tallinn. Its mission was then described as “The Inter-Society for the Electronic Arts (ISEA) is an international nonprofit organization fostering interdisciplinary academic discourse and exchange among culturally diverse organizations and individuals working with art, science and emerging technologies”. [13] It is noted that the co-operation between organisations/institutes has made place for ‘discourse and exchange’, and the ‘structural approach to electronic art’, that finally had a modest start with the Cartographies discussions (‘discours’) in Montreal, had not regained its place in ISEA’s mission statement. On a side note, it may be noticed that the flyer gave more food to the confusion caused by the different meanings of the term ‘ISEA’, both identifying the Inter-Society and the symposium.

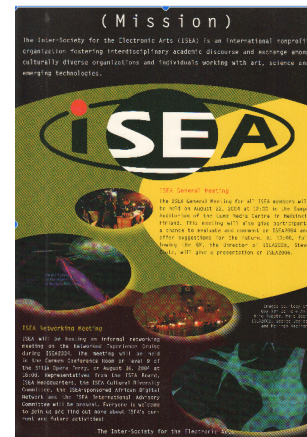


Figure 8. Inter-Society Flyer at ISEA2004

ISEA-International

At a board meeting during ISEA2006 in San Jose, California, it was decided that the membership model was not the most adequate way to run the organisation. Apart from the low membership (income) it was theorised that an association, of which the board is elected by the members, is a less reliable partner for potential subsidisers or sponsors. Under Dutch law “*a foundation has no members, but for an association members are mandatory*”. [14] (Original reference translated from Dutch to English by Google Translate)

So, the Inter-Society went to sleep (it still exists, but in an inactive capacity) and a foundation was started, after the members of the association were consulted (via email) and gave their consent (that is: a number of members replied positively and nobody objected). The foundation now co-ordinates the continued occurrence of the symposium and is called ISEA-International, again based in the Netherlands. By the way, now some people think the full name of the symposium is ISEA-International!

The aim of ISEA-International, is described in its bylaws as: “*The objectives of the foundation are: the international promotion of the level of and cooperation in the field of the electronic arts; the continuation and coordination of the ISEA symposiums, management of the ISEA website and management of the (online) ISEA archive; and everything related to or belonging to the above, and/or which could be of benefit to the above, in the broadest sense of the word.*”

Since this is rather general and concise it is worth also quoting how “[t]he foundation will work to achieve its objectives:

- *establishing and maintaining contacts with (potential) ISEA symposium hosts;*
- *supporting the organisers of the ISEA symposiums with advice and similar help;*
- *maintaining relationships with institutions which manage electronic art archives;*
- *maintaining the relationship with the Inter-Society for the Electronic Arts for as long as this society exists;*
- *having and maintaining one or more administrative organisation(s), known as the "ISEA headquarter(s)", as applicable;*
- *monitoring the quality of the activities listed above.*” [15]

What is worth noticing here is the prominent place of “*the international promotion of ... cooperation in the field of the electronic arts*” and the mentioning of the Inter-Society for the Electronic Arts, leaving the possibility open of a revival of the association. It must be noted here that the bylaws were, on advice of the notary, kept very general, while the details were worked out in a document called Domestic Regulations. The reason for this being that Domestic Regulations can be modified, changed and expanded by the board of the foundation, while changes of bylaws require (costly and time consuming) interference by the notary office.

Consequences

As a consequence of this change in legal status, the ISEA organisation got rid of membership administration and did not need to provide member benefits anymore, which had been much work (among others providing the monthly

ISEA Newsletter), even a bit of a struggle. Furthermore, the organisation was now more liable to receive subsidies or sponsorship, although there apparently has not been much progress in that respect yet. On the other hand, it also meant a loss of community involvement, of *democracy*, if you want. Where the Inter-Society had always been open about its financial situation, by publishing an annual balance report and presenting that at the Annual General Meetings that are part of the symposium; since ISEA became a foundation, nobody outside the board has seen any financial figures. Although the Domestic Regulations provided a role for an International Advisory Committee; the members thereof did not get insight into these figures either, nor did they ever get to read the board meeting minutes.

All this is completely legal, but it must be said that since the ISEA organisation has become a foundation, its transparency has gone. It may even have caused the conflict that rose among the board members in 2017, which even involved hiring a lawyer. Since the situation became unworkable, some of the board members called in the Advisory Committee to help solve the problems. After several meetings the complete board resigned and together with the members of the Advisory Committee chose new board members, some of which were former Advisory Committee members. This new board was intermediary and, after some 5 years, most of them handed over their positions to new, often younger people. The intermediate board succeeded in getting a new, more functional, HQ in place, at the University for the Creative Arts (UK), headed by Jeremiah Ambrose. The new HQ set up a new website [16], that is updated on a regular basis and now provides ISEA International with a proper secretariat. All in all, ISEA-International recently made a fresh restart. [17]

Original Aims Revisited

Since the beginning, the original aim of the symposium, to start a network of organisations, has been overshadowed by the success of the symposium. That is to say that the symposium got a life of its own, the continuation of which became the main goal of the ISEA organisation.

Competition for finances may have played a role there; since the 80's scores of electronic art (or new media) events and institutes have seen the light, and they are all competing for scarce resources. However, a recent initiative raises hope for cooperation between the relevant organisations.

The initiative was taken by the ISEA Symposium Archiving team and is called the ‘Summit on New Media Art Archiving’ (SNMAA). In Brisbane, it is held for the 4th time at the ISEA symposium. In it, the following parties have been cooperating with the ISEA Archives: ZKM Center for Art and Media (DE), Ars Electronica (AT), SIGGRAPH (USA), Archive of Digital Art (ADA, AT), Electronic Language International Festival (FILE, BR), and Memoduct Post Human Archive (RS).

So far the ISEA symposium organisers (respectively in Montreal, Barcelona and Paris) have been very cooperative and so are the Brisbane organisers. The SNMAA is discussing its relationship to the ISEA symposia with the board of ISEA-International, without losing the

cooperation between the other institutes. The ideal of the Inter-Society, over 35 years after it was formulated, finally becomes a reality. Maybe it means we have to wake up the association Inter-Society for the Electronic Arts again!

The other, related, ideal of the founders of the Inter-Society has not received a lot of explicit attention. That is the “structural approach to the problems and potentials of electronic Art”. [2] About the only time this was more or less explicitly addressed was the Cartographies meeting in Canada in 1999. Not only were representatives of quite a few relevant institutes invited which made it a ‘network of institutes’ meeting, but also the ‘definition of media art’ was on the table.

Which brings me to the subject of the term ‘electronic art’, or rather, the terms ‘electronic’ and ‘art’. Electronic refers to the technological revolution that took place during the second half of the last century and that has shaped today’s culture at large. There has been some discussion on the question whether the term ‘electronic art’ still covers the content of the ISEA symposia. In my opinion it does. Terms like ‘New’ (media) or ‘Emergent’ are too vague and relative. Both terms exclude history. And even though developments in chemistry, biology, physics, medicine etc. are spectacular and have infiltrated in the world of the ‘ISEA artists’ (or the artists have infiltrated in these scientific fields), at the heart of all those is electronics, whether one likes it or not. Without the computer all these developments are unthinkable. So the word ‘Electronic’ remains the right word.

To the author’s astonishment, the ISEA2023 symposium was advertised on many French websites as ‘Symposium on Digital Art’ or ‘Numerical Art’. [18] Neither are translations of ‘electronic’. They exclude half of the history of electronic music, starting with the Theremin over 100 years ago and continuing until today, where analogue synthesizers are in pretty high demand among musicians. It also overlooks the important role analogue video art played in the development of interactive art.

Then consider the word ‘Art’. If there ever is a taboo in the ISEA world (but also in the much wider art world) it is the definition of the word Art. When I bring up the subject and remark that I have been trying to find my own approach to the subject, I am immediately referred to philosophers like Friedrich Schiller and, more contemporary, Jacques Rancière. However, these thinkers do not really define art, but described its (theoretical) function. Hegel, who built on Schillers theories, defined art in the following terms: “*Art proper ... is the sensuous expression or manifestation of free spirit in a medium (such as metal, stone or color) that has been deliberately shaped or worked by human beings into the expression of freedom.*” [19]

In other words: rather abstract. And if one leaves out part of the sentence he said, “*Art ... is the ... expression ... of free spirit ... into the expression of freedom.*” And that sounds rather tautological to me.

For Rancière, art “is the framing of a space of presentation by which things of art are identified as such.” [20] In other words: ‘art is what people define as art’. That is a sociological description.

My own approach would be a socio-psychological one: I would like to invite all people, for whom the word art has a

meaning (artists, art critics, art curators, art lovers), no matter what discipline or genre, to try and describe, through introspection, what it is that triggers them to say ‘this is great (art)’, when they read a novel, watch a movie, listen to music, etc. (or maybe even outside of these contexts). Let us then see what we have in common. Of course we will never arrive at a scientifically sound definition, that will distinguish art from non-art (that would even be rather fascistic), but if we don’t have the discussion on what is art, we have a ‘Symposium on Electronic Don’t-know-what-we-are-talking-about’.

To be clear: I believe that a sound definition of art is impossible because it would render art superfluous. What I want is the discussion. Let us formulate why we call something art. For example, for me, after the aforementioned introspection, a part of the ‘definition’ would be that it is ‘emotional communication’ (or ‘communication of emotions’). Others may disagree. We may have different schools of thought. That is fine. Much better than avoiding the subject.

Earlier, I experimented with distinguishing ‘artistic/aesthetical’ from ‘social’ themes in papers that were presented at ISEA symposia. [21] Without going into the details here and without claiming academic solidity, I present a graph that resulted from this experiment (see Figure 9):

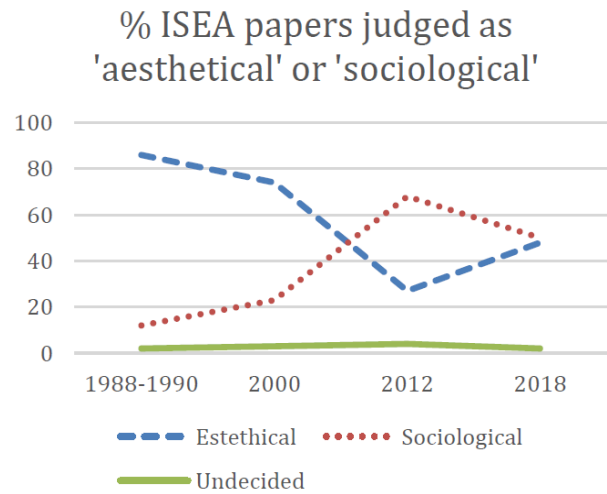


Figure 9. From an unpublished paper by the author

To find a trend like this, it is essential to be as clear as possible on the meaning of the word art. The structural approach to electronic art is still relevant.

Roundtable & Survey ISEA2022

At the ISEA2022 symposium, the ISEA International Advisory Committee (IIAC) organised a Roundtable called ‘Learning from the Past; Looking at the Future’. Connected to this a survey was held; participants were invited to fill these out on physical paper and put that in physical dropboxes (dressed up shoeboxes). People could also give their view via email. The discussion (which was video recorded [22]) and the survey (documented by the IIAC)

generated a large amount of remarks, constructive, as well as critical. 90% was about the symposia and the way they are organised, mostly focussing on the current (2022) symposium. However, there were comments on the supervising organization, ISEA-International, also (and of course, the remarks on the way the symposium is or was organised are relevant for ISEA-International too, if they take their supervising role seriously (the symposium hosts are obliged to organise the symposium in accordance with ISEA International's Guidelines [23]). From the wealth of reactions I give a few examples of comments related to ISEA-International:

- *Please have a membership so that the media Departments of schools can pay more but their students pay less*
- *What happens with the 15k that the host symposium organizers have to pay Head Quarters?*
- *All the work needs to be archived.*
- *Longer time frame for calls. Can we start submissions already before we know where the next ISEA will be - could this be centralized to avoid the need for onboarding each host wash year?*
- *The main issues for improvement were as identified by the roundtable: rejuvenation (demographics of attendees), diversity of participation, quality of durable (archive-grade) publication, lack of funding to pay even token artist fees in most cases, and, not so much a problem, but a reality – to adapt intelligently and resourcefully to the realities hybrid (online + in-person) creative and intellectual conditions today.*
- *ISEA should learn from the past 2 [COVID] years and become compatible with a long-term hybrid approach where delegates don't have to fly 20,000 km to be acceptable speakers.*
- *Connect with other related events more like Ars Electronica, Transmediale, EVA etc, and organisations like Leonardo -in a more collaborative not competitive way- share knowledge and the community*

As said, most comments were on the symposium, not on the organisation. Many are very good. In this respect ISEA has problems being a learning organisation because of its nomadic character. ISEA-International needs to maybe play a stronger directional role. And one wonders what has happened with the results of the roundtable and the survey. Asked for specific comments on "ISEA organisation as a whole", somebody replied: "Need for greater transparency. Openness to more democratic participation of [...] participants".

Conclusions

This paper takes a critical look at the motivations to start the series of ISEA symposia and how the original intentions evolved over time.

My recommendations on the basis of the above: ISEA needs to revisit its history and find ways to re-establish democracy and transparency in its organisation. On the basis of this, the original aims of the organisation need to be reconsidered and actualised. ISEA needs to find ways,

in spite of its nomadic character, to become a learning organisation.

Acknowledgments

Special thanks for the feedback on the draft version of this paper to Aarti Baldewsing, Janice Searleman, Chun (Terry) Wong & Bonnie Mitchell.

References

- [1] Minutes meeting SCCA and the Security Section of the NGI, The Hague. July 05, 1985, Author's Personal Archive,
- [2] Brochure Stichting Creatieve Computer Applicaties, Rotterdam, 1984.
- [3] "Chips Are Square", Author's Personal Archive website, accessed November 14, 2023, https://wvdplas.home.xs4all.nl/Chips_Are_Square.pdf.
- [4] Announcement in Computer Graphics Forum, Vol 4, no. 4, December, 1985, Elsevier Science Publishers, Amsterdam
- [5] FISEA 1988 Panel: Theo Hesper, Roy Ascott, Jürgen Claus, Roger Malina, Ray Lauzzana and others: "Founding Meeting Inter-Society for the Electronic Arts", ISEA Archives website, accessed November 14, 2023, https://www.isea-archives.org/symposia/fisea-1988/presenters-2013-2/fisea-1988-panel_hesper_et-al.
- [6] 28eme Parallele website accessed November 14, 2023, www.28emeparallele.com.
- [7] Inter-Society flyer, distributed at SIGGRAPH, Dallas, 1990, Author's Personal Archive.
- [8] SISEA 1990 Proposal: Virginia Barratt: "TISEA Presentation", ISEA Archives website, accessed November 14, 2023, https://www.isea-archives.org/symposia/sisea-1990-presentation_barratt.
- [9] Gary Warner, Vimeo video, 0:04, accessed November 14, 2023, <https://vimeo.com/70917869>.
- [10] *The Inter-Society Montreal* (Brochure), 1997, Author's Personal Archive
- [11] Wim van der Plas, "The Inter-Society for The Electronic Arts Revived?". *Proceedings of the 19th International Symposium on Electronic Art, ISEA2013, Sydney, Australia*, https://www.isea-archives.org/docs/2013/proceedings/ISEA2013_proceedings.pdf.
- [12] "Cartographies, The General Assembly on New Media Art". Review, CIAC (Centre international d'art contemporain de Montréal) website, accessed November 14, http://www.ciac.ca/documents/magazine/no_9/en/cadre.html.
- [13] *Inter-Society ISEA2004* (Flyer), 2004, Author's Personal Archive
- [14] "Wat is het verschil tussen een vereniging en een stichting?" (What is the difference between an association and a foundation), Stichting Oprichten website, accessed November 14, 2023, <https://www.stichtingoprichten.nl/verschil-vereniging-stichting/>.
- [15] Memorandum of association Stichting ISEA-International, Notary office Bussink, Rotterdam, July 18, 2008. Certified translation from Dutch, Author's Personal Archive
- [16] "Home", ISEA International website, accessed November 14, 2023, <https://www.isea-international.org>
- [17] "Meet the Board", ISEA International website, accessed November 14, 2023, <https://www.isea-international.org/about/meet-the-board>.
- [18] "Exposition Outland", Plateforme website, accessed November 14, 2023, http://plateforme-paris.com/plateforme_2023/exposition_outland.html.

- [19] Stephen Houlgate, "Hegel's Aesthetics", Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy website, accessed November 14, 2023, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/hegel-aesthetics>.
- [20] Joe Blakey, "Rancière on Art – Glossary of Terms", Joe Blakey website, accessed November 14, 2023, <http://joeblakey.com/ranciere-on-art-glossary-of-terms>.
- [21] Wim van der Plas, "ISEA online Symposium Archives for Education purposes,". *Proceedings Balance-Unbalance conference 2018*, <https://www.balance-unbalance2018.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/BunB2018-programme-proceedings.pdf>.
- [22] "[ISEA2022] Roundtable: ISEA International Advisory Committee — ISEA: Learning from the Past; Looking at the Future", ISEA International website, accessed November 14, 2023, https://www.isea-archives.org/isea2022-presentations_roundtable_statement_iiac.
- [23] "The International Symposium on Electronic Art Guidelines for Host Candidates ", ISEA International website, accessed November 14, 2023, https://www.isea-international.org/ISEA_Guidelines.pdf

Bibliography

- [A] Proceedings, 19th International Symposium on Electronic Art, ISEA2013, Sydney, 2013
- [B] Proceedings, 20th International Symposium on Electronic Art, ISEA2014, Dubai, 2014
- [C] G.W.F. Hegel, Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik I, Frankfurt am Main, 1970 (original texts 1832-45)

Author Biography

Wim van der Plas (NL) studied Social & Cultural Sciences at the Erasmus University, Rotterdam. He was director of the Foundation for Creative Computer Applications (SCCA, Rotterdam) when he started working, in 1986, on the first ISEA, that took place in 1988 and was an original idea of Theo Hesper. Together with Hesper he founded the Inter-Society for the Electronic Arts in 1990, the year he also organised the second ISEA. Since then he has run the ISEA HQ until 1996, then was a board member of the Inter-Society, and, in 2008, founded ISEA-International, together with Anne Nigten. In 2017 he left the board, but continued work as an ISEA Symposium archivist. In 2018 he received a Leonardo Pioneer Award. He is also the Honorary Chair of the ISEA International Advisory Committee. From 1987 to 2011 he worked for several Art Schools and Universities of Applied Sciences in The Netherlands, among others in the fields of Computer Animation, Media Technology, Media History and the Creative Industries. Also, he published in many journals, magazines and books and gave lectures in The Netherlands, Belgium, the UK, Spain, Italy, Greece and the USA.