

Current

An experiment in collecting digital art

375,635,000 kilometers

Current: an experiment in collecting digital art

26 March – 4 June 2011

Current Experiment

boredomresearch
Michael Szpakowski
James Coupe
Thomson & Craighead
Harwood Wright and Yokokoji



An exhibition, acquisition and debate, presented in partnership by the Harris Museum & Art Gallery and folly.

A unique partnership project between the Harris Museum & Art Gallery and folly, *Current: an Experiment in Collecting Digital Art* not only celebrated innovative and creative use of new media technology, but formed a pioneering practical case study for the collection and integration of digital artworks into existing permanent collections; furthering the Harris' mission to establish a nationally significant collection of new media art.

The partnership invited applications from UK-based artists working with technology to propose new or existing work for exhibition and acquisition. Proposals of work such as digital art, interactive art, net art, electronic art, multi- and time-based

media were welcomed.

The project included the following elements

- A public exhibition of new media artwork held at the Harris Museum & Art Gallery between 26 March and 4 June 2011.
- An acquisition of one artwork for the museum's permanent collections.
- A public debate held on 24th May 2011 to analyse the experiment and share findings and best practice on collecting digital art, and
- Evaluation of the project to inform future collecting of new media at the museum.

The aims and vision of the project

- We will support artists working with technologies in innovative and inspiring ways.
- We will increase public engagement with new media artwork, as well as increasing the understanding and accessibility of it.
- We will further develop existing professional knowledge and expertise of new media and museum collecting through a meaningful collaboration.
- We will share findings with colleagues in both visual arts and museums sectors.

This ground-breaking project will push the boundaries in the representation of new media work and set a standard of best practice for other collecting institutions to learn from.

Public Exhibition

Selected by an expert advisory panel, the following artists made the final cut, and presented new and recent work for the Current exhibition which embraced technology in very different ways - from live networked installations through to moving image and sound.

Click on the names to find out more about the artists and their work:

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James Coupe
Thomson & Craighead
Harwood, Wright, Yokokoji

From this shortlist, one work from the exhibition was selected to be acquired for the Harris' permanent collection by an expert panel, including Paul Hobson, Director, Contemporary Arts Society; Sarah Fisher, Chair of Axis and Chair of FACT; Gavin Delahunty, Head of Exhibitions and Displays, Tate Liverpool; Taylor Nuttall, Chief Executive, folly; and Alex Walker, Head of Arts & Heritage Preston City Council.

In selecting the work to be acquired, the following criteria were applied by the panel -considering the context of the Harris Museum & Art Gallery, the four aims of the project, public engagement, representing current artistic practice and promoting critical dialogue.

The selected work was Thomson & Craighead's piece; *The distance travelled through our solar system this year and all the barrels of oil remaining*, 2011.

The work consists of two wall based gallery projections that dynamically display the number of remaining oil barrels left in the world alongside the distance the earth has travelled this year. By juxtaposing something global (the statistic streams) against something local (a visit to a gallery and contemplation of an artwork), the piece allows a poetic connection to be made between the individual and the world at large.

"We are delighted to acquire this piece by Thomson & Craighead. The work is a completely new departure for the Harris Museum & Art Gallery. It's very much of the 21st century and could only be produced now. It makes use of live stream from the internet, and also deals with the big issues of the environment which are of concern to everyone. It may not initially have obvious connections with the Harris' collections, however, artists have always been concerned with helping us to understand and relate to the world we live in. Through the Current selection process we have acquired a piece which is both experimental and innovative."

Alex Walker, Head of Arts & Heritage, Preston City Council

What our visitors thought about the exhibition

"Very ambitious, awe inspiring and interesting. An eye opener"

"Very compelling and challenging"

"It was great, and I never thought it would be this interesting. Overall I would say 10 out of 10, it was fantastic"

Harris Museum & Art Gallery visitors, Mar - April 2010

Debate

Having undergone the acquisitions process, an event was held on 24 May 2011 to discuss the issues and challenges that arose from the project. The debate aimed to challenge the current climate of collecting new media, and the fact that very few museums are collecting and exhibiting artists that work with this art form.

The debate was developed with experts from CRUMB (Curatorial Resource for Upstart Media Bliss – University of Sunderland); and chaired by Sarah Cook - Co-editor of Crumb and Research Fellow at the University.

In the morning, the background, short-listing and acquisitions processes, and the realisation and installation of the exhibition - along with our findings from the experiment were discussed.

An afternoon session aimed mainly at sector professionals, then debated the role of digital art with in the wider visual arts sector, and the roles both the museum and education sector can play in this.

Follow the project on twitter at [@current2011](#) or join us on [Facebook](#)

What's On This Month

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
27	28	29	30	31	1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

Dates for your Diary

Families

Twitter

Thomas Miller and Friends: The Rise and Fall of a Preston Art Collection

Wed 20 June, 6.30pm for 7pm start.

This talk explores Miller's background and his art collection.

Tickets £5, booking essential, please



Harris Museum

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[#DiscoverPreston](#) Practising with broom handles before we install some Jacobean staves!