



Australian Network for Art and Technology

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Report on proposed electronic art projects
within Zone 4B of the
Sydney Olympic Park
& the conceptual and design imperatives behind
The Media ARTcade.

Location

The proposed site is the pedestrianway that will be formed between the developments located on sites 4a and 4b at Sydney Olympic Park. This particular site is a unique opportunity to establish an electronic art presence, as it will be the most overshadowed, narrow pedestrian traffic area and passive recreation space in the entire precinct.

This particular site has a primary function as the building entrance way for a major corporate tenant. Any artworks proposed for the site must allow for this as the primary usage of the site. The location is both a thoroughway and a site for passive recreation for visitors and on-site workers. Established visitor flow across the Park shows that lots of visitors will move through the laneway on their way to and from the railway station; the site is also a destination for the many workers and visitors at the CBA, who will pass through it on the way to and from work. They will also take the opportunity to lunch here, to use it as a breakout space and/or meet with acquaintances and colleagues. For visitors to the Sofitel, it is a green space with interesting architectural and artistic elements – a local oasis with its own cultural and heritage significance.

The retention of four of the site's existing brush box trees, interpretation, public artwork and the through site link will be utilised to connect Site 4B to the heritage precinct. During landscape design, the trees will be enhanced and softened by an understory of bushy shrubs, providing an interesting context for the proposed electronic art.

The electronic artworks will create and define character for the laneway, capitalising on the intimate space by adding a fine-grain, unique and cutting edge 'gallery' to the mix of heritage vegetation, modern landscape design and fine architecture.





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Aims and Objectives

The electronic artworks commissioned or resited for this Media ARTcade precinct will contribute greatly to the broader SOPA aims of commissioning and installing artworks that:

- Add to the attractiveness and high-end design values of the place through an artistic representation of its multi-faceted new identity;
- Provide visual re-inforcement of the creative community dimension of Sydney Olympic Park;
- Celebrate the cultural history of the Sydney Olympic Park site;
- Activate the public spaces and create a unique Outdoor Art Gallery environment, offering a cultural tourism destination in the public domain at the Park; and
- Promote a creative environment and provide a cultural dimension to the public domain, enhancing it for visitors, residents, workers, program participants and staff, and attracting creative industry to the Park.

Specifically, the objectives for this 4b laneway site MediaARTcade are:

- To install smaller, fine-grained public artworks in this more intimate precinct of the Park
- To compliment the existing large scale artworks within the Park, visible from great distances, with smaller fine-grained public art.
- To install electronic and time-based artworks that are space efficient yet fully utilise the nature of electronic media - dynamic, sustainable and adaptable to the rhythms of the site.
- To create the 'feel' of an outdoor art gallery.
- To design an exterior art experience that accounts for the experiences of both active passers-through who have mobile appreciation of the artworks, and those wanting to linger, sit and make return visits.
- To integrate the art experience with site 4b architectural design and laneway landscape design features as far as possible.
- To reflect the character and nature of the site, particularly its new multiple roles as a throughway, a space viewed from within the new buildings on either side and a passive recreation/breakout space for workers within the buildings.

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Design Parameters

In considering and developing an overall electronic art strategy and design for the precinct, we must take a 'place orientated' approach. Essentially this means:

- Working from a deep understanding and interpretation of the character of the site as pathway, passive recreation area, and destination.
- Accounting for the historical specificity of the site.
- Keeping within the overall the SOPA vision for artworks in the site and the role they play in espousing the themes in the Park.
- Accounting for the SOPA landscape design of tall canopy trees underscored by low green planted beds.
- Working towards a clear, legible through-site link.
- Utilising opportunities provided by seating placed in shaded areas.
- Designing a solution that has material continuity across the public domain.
- Strengthening the Commonwealth Bank 'campus' character.

Electronic art is a good solution to the parameters of the site because:

- The narrowness of the site lends itself to flat, screen based works.
- These forms of art, united across media, can offer a good variety of viewer modality, from meditative, to immersive, to participatory, to performative, to temporal.
- Display points (eg screens, kiosks) can be designed in a modular or Systemic way that will allow future, new works to be commissioned for that specific site using the original specifications; this is the nature of electronic digital works, allowing more 'bang for your buck.'

The design must also account for the following constraints:

- Narrow precinct with various straight and meandering pathways and dense vegetation.
- That the majority of the audience will be regular (and hopefully habitual) users of the space.
- That artworks need to be sustainable and have acceptable lifespans.
- Shadow and daylight effects, housing/cabling requirements,
- To not clutter or choke the pedestrian throughway.





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Design Solutions

The consultant will produce a set of recommendations that outline the overall design and conceptual approach, the specific artworks to be resited or commissioned, and the full technical and budgetary specifications to deliver those works.

At this stage, we can outline the preliminary design solutions.

Form of the works:

- The use of multiple display points (screens, effectively) – one at each entrance to the site, one in the middle and/or several on the wooden landscape screen at the rear of the Sofitel. These display points can be used to show discrete but complimentary artworks.
- These display points will be used to show the current proposed projects, and have the advantage of adaptability to enable the curators to site or commission future works on these display points.
- The display points can also be networked, so that an artwork can 'flow' through the site from one display point to another.
- A strong use of LED (Light Emitting Diode) aesthetic in the artworks. LED is a robust, economical and flexible medium for electronic art. It will perform well in daylight, providing strong, dynamic colour and movement.
- One of the screens -a LCD screen is to be located within the CBA foyer, to be viewed from outside by passersby, that can display a variety of regularly curated and changing programs of digital videos, generative art work , animations etc.
- A wireless – based artwork that would capitalise on extant wireless networks and enable site visitors to use their phones or PDAs to log into an electronic artwork that is viewed, and can be interacted with, via the phone/PDA. This is akin to a virtual work that is always operating in the site but needs to be proactively accessed by the visitors.





Art Works

The Art works chosen for the ARTcade echo the thematic of place, emphasising the movement through the space, along with the human scale and intimacy of the village atmosphere created within the precinct and our engagement with Digital Nature.

Recognising the cyclic nature of the environment, the LED and LCD light emitting screen works will attain more prominence in the evenings as the usage of the site changes, -they can run 24/7, and have 'night' states. Works under consideration include:

Jim Campbell's "Walking Man"

- Reflects on the site as a place of movement and the human scale of the precinct.
- Physical activity, healthy lifestyle and well being.
- The heritage of cattle trail to the abattoir.
- Viewed on distributed screens, it visually unites both entrances with the middle of the precinct.

A commissioned Wireless art work focusing on Human interaction, perhaps Matt Gardiner's Bluetooth interactive folding sculptural acrylic and metal robotic origami flowers.

- Demonstrates innovation of the precinct and its users.
- Promotes participation and engagement.
- Provides an awareness of the precinct's growing community.

Digital Nature Curated Screen including artists Joyce Hinterding and David Haines, Jon McCormack, and Jennifer Steinkamp.

- Raises awareness of the environment, particularly key issues of sustainability, conservation, rehabilitation, or alternative energies.
- Addresses our human engagement with nature - as we are increasingly alienated from natural surroundings we recreate and reinterpret them, providing new perspective and a greater appreciation of the nature which surrounds us.





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The Consultant

ANAT is the peak body for Australian artists working with technology.

Over the past 20 years ANAT has extensive experience in commissioning, curating and producing both small and large scale public art projects such as the Luminosity Urban Projections featuring artists Cicada and Craig Walsh; exploring the creative possibilities of mobile phone and wireless with the Mobile Journeys mobile phone art series; and, in partnership with the Adelaide Festival of the Arts, producing the Peoples Portrait - a participatory electronic networked public portraiture project which was simultaneously displayed across five global cities in 2006.

ANAT's Executive Director **Dr Melinda Rackham** is an internationally regarded artist, producer, and curator who specialises in networked and distributed Media Arts. She was Consultant Curator of Networked Media at The Australian Centre for Moving Image (ACMI) Melbourne producing the Network exhibition in 2004 -Australian Culture Now and currently has several national and internal curatorial projects in production. Melinda provides Curatorial Direction for ARTcade.

Kate Richards of Sparke Media - a multimedia design, production and consultancy business, with extensive experience in developing multimedia for public places has been retained by ANAT as Producer for this project. Previous clients include The Historic Houses Trust of NSW (Richards was the in-house multimedia producer for the Museum of Sydney from 1999-2003); Landini Associates; The Sydney Olympic Park Authority (Richards designed the multimedia in the Visitors Gateway); Otto Cserhalmi + Partners; Root Projects Australia; Stalker Theatre Projects; The National Parks and Wildlife Service NSW.

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