Cybernetic Serendipity

The D.C. Art Science Evening Rendezvous (DASER) is a discussion forum organized by Cultural Programs of the National Academy of Sciences (CPNAS), held 4-6 times annually. DASER fosters community and conversation around the intersections, and interweaving, of art, science, and culture. On March 15, 2018, DASER broke from its traditional format to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the groundbreaking exhibition *Cybernetic Serendipity*. The opportunity to have the exhibition curator, Jasia Reichardt, speak was made possible by her presence in town as part of Art + Technology Week at the NAS and her participation in the Arthur M. Sackler Colloquium Creativity and Collaboration: Revisiting Cybernetic Serendipity (March 13-14, 2018). Reichardt was joined in conversation by Klaus Ottmann, Deputy Director for Curatorial and Academic Affairs at The Phillips Collection, Washington, D.C. (see page 4 for biographies). We welcomed 100 guests to this event at the Keck Center, 500 Fifth St., N.W., Washington, D.C., which featured a historically significant conversation looking back at the impact of the exhibition 50 years later. The program was live-streamed and videos are available on CPNAS’ YouTube channel at: http://www.YouTube.com/CPNAS.
Klaus Ottmann kicked off the evening by framing it with a quote from Leo Tolstoy’s book *What is Art?* Tolstoy wrote, “Science and art are as closely bound together as the lungs and the heart…” Ottmann went on to provide a historical context of the 1960s that included political turmoil as well as the spirit and excitement of innovation and collaboration that permeated science, technology, and art.

Jasia Reichardt began her talk by suggesting that technology presents two extremes in society - the march of progress that anticipates the worst and happy compliance that can lead to dullness and stagnation. Reichardt introduced the philosophical and perceptual history of computers beginning in the 1940 that laid the ground work for the concepts of computer related art in the exhibit. She stated that computer is a tool and that two kinds of art made by computer: virtual which only exists on the screen and work that uses the computer to program the creation of a three-dimensional object or a series of physical events. Reichardt then presented delightfully rich installation photographs of the exhibit in London and the ideas that framed her creation as she took the tour on a visual tour of the exhibit. After Reichardt’s virtual tour, Klaus Ottmann joined her onstage for a discussion with a lively and at times intense question and answer session with an informed audience.

During the reception, guests were invited to have cake and champagne in celebration of another 50th anniversary - that of our partnering group Leonardo which now offers infrastructure and networking opportunities to nearly 30 similar art science salons around the world.

https://www.leonardo.info/laser-hosts

**PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS**

Art + Technology Week at the National Academy of Sciences
March 12 - March 18, 2018

The March DASER was a part of Art + Technology Week organized by CPNAS in collaboration with partners that include the Arthur M. Sackler Foundation, Studio International, and The Phillips Collection. At the beginning of DASER, Ben Shneiderman gave a report on the week’s happenings. A video of Shneiderman’s report can be seen at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jjRn83-krVs&t=1s. The week also included: March 12: Sackler Student Fellows Symposium. Role/Play: Collaborative Creativity and Creative Collaborations brought together 54 graduate students from North America representing a wide range of disciplines to present their work to each other. Organized by Liese Zahabi and Molly Morin. March 13-14: Creativity and Collaboration: Revisiting Cybernetic Serendipity was a two-day Arthur M. Sackler Colloquium exploring ways that art + design and science, engineering, and medicine research can yield productive partnerships that address the grand challenges of our time. March 13: Branches from the Same Tree: A Lecture by David J. Skorton, Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. March 18: Love in the Time of Data: Exhibiting Artist R. Luke DuBois engaged in conversation with Guest Curator Anne Collins Goodyear, Co-Director, Bowdoin College Museum of Art, Brunswick, Maine.

The evening offered an opportunity to celebrate the historically important exhibition Cybernetic Serendipity and to create a conversation around its impact on how we view computers in art today as well as the nature of collaborations and conversations that occur across disciplines *Cybernetic Serendipity* dealt broadly with the demonstration of how people can use computers and new technology to extend creativity and inventiveness. It was exhibited at the Institute of Contemporary Arts, Nash House, London, Aug. 2-Oct. 20, 1968. It then traveled to the Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. and the Exploratorium, San Francisco.
The reason I attended:

Interest in the topic and speaker.
To hear deep thoughts on science and technology.
To hear Jasia Reichardt again.

I would come back because:

DASER is cool.
The evening was well designed and unusually friendly.

Reichardt was inspiring.
Topics discussed with interdisciplinary views by experts in their fields is mind opening.

I didn’t anticipate:

A female robot.
The excellence of the dialogue.
To be connected to the culture of the avant garde of the 1960s.

The speaker nailed it when:

Too many to list.
The question of “computer created art.” Art is made by humans NOT computers.
Reichardt described the attitude and approach of robots as a constructed comment on society.

What would make this more valuable for me:

More time for cross talk between the panel of experts.

#DASER Social Media Highlights

There was lively Twitter and Instagram activity during the DASER program.

@drdarsci: Curator #KlausOttmann reads from Tolstoy’s “What is Art?” on the essential co-existence and sharings of science and art, published over 100 years ago - #SciArt is of and for the ages. #DASER

@elpeanoh: 1968-Vietnam, MLK and RFK assassinations, but also a new generation that expanded the notion of art. Hence #CyberneticSerendipity #DASER

@drdarsci: Wow what a year 1968. Amidst that year’s violent chaos and raucously wonderful music (and my favorite film, 2001: A Space Odyssey), the Cybernetic Serendipity exhibit opened, to waiting lines. #DASER

@drdarsci: “Computer art started with “mistakes” as well. Science certainly does.

@aquinsta: Cybernetic Serendipity featured several fully functional IBM computers that people could try out. Many visitors’ very first exposure to computers, no doubt. #DASER #LASERTalks

@look2listen: It was good there were no committees. - Jasia Reichardt #DASER

@look2listen: All you need is an idea. That’s how my work continues. - Jasia Reichardt #DASER

@elpeanoh: Jasia Reichardt is a great choice for #WomensHistoryMonth! Proof that you don’t need a #STEM degree to be an advocate for #sciart #DASER

Read the complete social media Wakelet archive: https://wakelet.com/wake/2ce2c58e-1547-493b-bcbe-28a5716d0b74
Jasia Reichardt is a writer on art, and a curator, most notably of the Cybernetic Serendipity exhibition in 1968. She has taught at the Architectural Association, as well as at other colleges, and has written several books. She is interested in art that encroaches on other fields – science, music, and literature- and has spent many years following the connections between art and technology.

1963-1971 Assistant Director of ICA, London
1965 Curator Between Poetry and Painting
1968 Curator Cybernetic Serendipity
1974-1976 Director of Whitechapel Art Gallery
1982-1992 Member of Committee of the British Association for the Advancement of Science
1988-today Caretaking of the Themerson Archive, London, together with Nicholas Wadley
1989-1998 Director of ARTEC biennale in Japan
1998 Curator Electronically Yours, Tokyo Metropolitan Museum

Jasia Reichardt’s travel was supported by Studio International and her attendance was made possible by her participation in the National Academy of Sciences Arthur M. Sackler Colloquium Creativity and Collaboration: Revisiting Cybernetic Serendipity, March 12-14, 2018.

At the Phillips, he has curated the exhibitions George Condo: The Way I Think; Arlene Shechet: From Here On Now; Karel Appel: A Gesture of Color; Hiroshi Sugimoto: Conceptual Forms and Mathematical Models; Angels, Demons, and Savages: Pollock, Ossorio, Dubuffet; and Per Kirkeby: Paintings and Sculpture; and oversaw the installation of the Phillips’s new permanent installation, a Wax Room created by Wolfgang Laib. Dr. Ottmann has curated more than 50 international exhibitions, including Jennifer Bartlett: History of the Universe. Works 1970–2011; Still Points of the Turning World: SITE Santa Fe’s Sixth International Biennial; Life, Love, and Death: The Work of James Lee Byars; Wolfgang Laib: A Retrospective; and Strange Attractors: The Spectacle of Chaos. His publications include Yves Klein by Himself: His Life and Thought; The Genius Decision: The Extraordinary and the Post-modern Condition; and The Essential Mark Rothko. In 2006, he translated and edited Yves Klein’s complete writings, Overcoming the Problematics of Art: The Writings of Yves Klein, and in 2010 he translated F.W.J. Schelling’s Philosophy and Religion (1804).

In 2016 Dr. Ottmann was conferred the insignia of Chevalier of France’s Order of Arts and Letters by the French ministry of culture and communication.

Klaus Ottmann is Deputy Director for Curatorial and Academic Affairs at The Phillips Collection in Washington, D.C. and the publisher and editor of Spring Publications.

SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES
EXHIBITIONS ON VIEW DURING ART + TECHNOLOGY WEEK

February 20 - July 15, 2018. #ArtMakesItself

Aguahojia: Work by The Mediated Matter Group, MIT Media Lab
March 1 - July 31, 2018. #Aguahojia

March 7 - August 15, 2018. #DuBoisData
TWEETREACH SNAPSHOT FOR
#DASER

ESTIMATED REACH

314,185
ACCOUNTS REACHED

EXPOSURE

1,008,886
IMPRESSIONS

ACTIVITY

167
TWEETS

48
CONTRIBUTORS

7
DAYS

TOP CONTRIBUTORS

190.7k
IMPRESSIONS

@CPNAS

55
RETWEETS

@CPNAS

60
MENTIONS

@CPNAS

MOST RETweeted TWEETS

8
CPNAS @CPNAS
Want to learn more the 1968 Cybernetic Serendipity exhibition organized by Jasia Reichardt? Join us Thursday evenin…
twitter.com/i/web/status/9…

Darcy J Gentleman @drdarsci
Mathematician created sculpture of metal rods and strobe lights that transformed noise into shapes. Picture of the… twitter.com/i/web/status/9…

5
CPNAS @CPNAS
Join us tonight at #DASER with Jasia Reichardt and Klaus Ottmann of @PhillipsMuseum for a look at the 1968 cybernet… twitter.com/i/web/status/9…

PHOTO CREDITS