

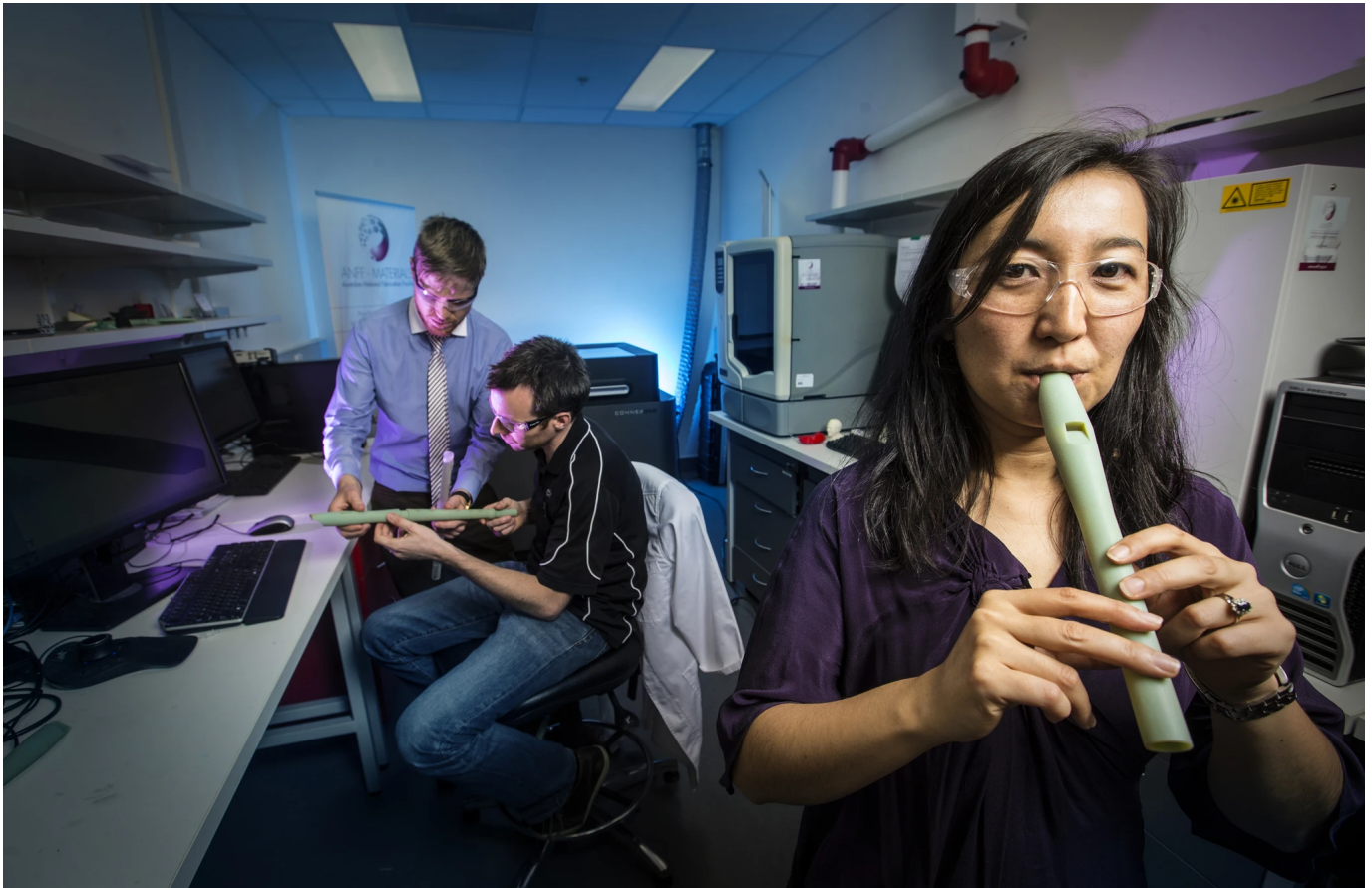


EMBRACING INNOVATION VOLUME 5

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24 July – 29 August 2015

Stephen Barrass and Nadège Desgenétez (University of Canberra and Australian National University); Maureen Faye-Chareon (independent practice); Tim Frommel (University of Canberra- Craft ACT: Craft and Design Centre 2014 Emerging Contemporary Exhibition Award recipient, UC, Faculty of Arts and Design); Mehrnoush Latifi and Dr Judith Glover (RMIT); Dr Scott Mayson (RMIT); Terumi Narushima together with Dr Stephen Beirne, Matthew Dabin, Kraig Grady, and Associate Professor Christian Ritz (University of Wollongong); Dr Fanke Peng (University of Canberra), Mouhannad Al-Sayegh and Miguel Angel (University of the Arts London, UK); University of Canberra Design team: Dr Eddi Pianca together with Dr Stephen Trathen, Dr Carlos Montana-Hoyos and Bill Shelley with Olympic Winter Institute and Australian Institute of Sport; Norwood Viviano (Grand Valley State University, Michigan, USA); Stuart Walker (Lancaster University, UK)



Terumi Narushima with Dr Stephen Beirne, Matthew Dabin, Kraig Grady, and Assoc. Prof Christian Ritz 3D printed microtonal flute

Embracing Innovation Vol 5 by Dr Susan Ostling

It seems this annual exhibition Embracing Innovation—that highlights cross-disciplinary research using digital technologies to innovative ends, and pioneered in Australia by Craft ACT: Craft and Design Centre— has a precedent. The precedent I am suggesting could be *Laboratorium*, an exhibition-project realised by curators Hans-Ulrich Obrist and Barbara Vanderlinden in Antwerp in 1999. Described as an interdisciplinary project interfacing the scientific laboratory and the artist's studio, it had high aims—none less than to "search the limits and possibilities where knowledge and culture are made".¹ The beginning of the new millennium, the curators thought was surely the time to finally "transcend the anxiety of interdisciplinary practice"². *Laboratorium*, then set to do this through initiating dialogue between disciplines starting "where the artists and the scientists experiment and work freely"—the "workplace"³. The following questions were posed: "How can we bridge the gap between the specialized vocabulary of science, art and the general interest of the audience...?" "What is the meaning of laboratories? What is the meaning of experiments? When do the experiments become public and when does the result of an experiment reach public consensus? Is rendering public what happens inside the laboratory of the scientist and studio of the artist a contradiction in terms?"⁴

The project consisted of inviting practitioners from a range of fields to set up a place to work, making workplaces, workshops or laboratories within abandoned office spaces in Antwerp over the summer of 1999. Some of these were a laboratory 'of doubt', 'a cognitive science' laboratory, 'a highway' for choreographic investigations, and the first laboratory of Galileo. Some artists and scientists decided to work in the Museum of Photography making among other things a temporary and moveable structure

for archives and experiments. Weekly colloquiums were held with performances and presentations given by the participating artists and scientists. Then there were guided tours to 'hidden' laboratories on Open Laboratory Days—where those laboratories as part of universities, harbour management, the zoo, and police stations, opened to show visitors what was made, measured or tested daily in these places. Pathways led through the city to take visitors between laboratories and studios. As well, there was the two-day "Theatre of Proof: A Series of Demonstrations"—a lecture program created by the sociologist of science Bruno Latour who brought together luminaries from science and art to take audiences on curious journeys of investigation. David Weston for instance with "Nature: the Ultimate Laboratory", demonstrated how what isn't known, or wasn't intended is most likely to be a future threat; or, Xavier Le Roy's performance "Product of Circumstances" traced his life as a scientist working on breast cancer research, and also learning to dance; or, Pierre Laszo's "A White Costume and a Blue Surprise" unravelled the social history of the lab coat; or Martha Rosler's "Romances of the Meal", delved into the industrial kitchen as a social site and cultural metaphor. And, as part of the mix Bruno Latour re-presented an abridged text of Louis Pasteur's April 7, 1864 Sorbonne Lecture "On Spontaneous Generation" including in it a demonstration of some of the basic experiments Pasteur developed to convey his position that spontaneous generation was merely the fault of poor laboratory practice.

Could be said then that Laboratorium was able to "search the limits and possibilities where knowledge and culture are made"? Probably not. However Laboratorium and its substantial catalogue, suggests a vigorous stirring of knowledges and no doubt contributed in part to the interest in pursuing, a decade to follow, the art/science collaborative research turn. Interestingly Peter Galison and Caroline Jones in their paper "Trajectories of Production Laboratories/Factories/Studios" in Latour's "Theatre of Proof" analysed the way the science laboratory and the artist's studio in the 1950 and 60s in the US, had both come to function somewhat like a factory. The physics laboratory grew to "factories of physics" employing hundreds of staff. And for the artist's studio, Andy Warhol's Factory became a case in point. The authors say that at this time artists and scientists jettisoned the "genius" model to become an "executive" where authorship expanded into "multiple-author functions"⁵. Fifty years later it is again easy to draw parallels with the places where artists and scientists work—this time, it could be said to be in part a dust free computer zone.

This is part of a deeper trend. Henk Slager in *The Pleasure of Research* notes the changes that have taken place in both art and science through a shift in "ontological anchorage"⁶. Slager attributes this to the trigger set off by Marcel Duchamp's nominalist approach to art, and the "methodological pluralism" introduced by the philosopher of science Paul Feyerabend in his influential 1970s publication, *Against Method*. While Duchamp's call was to remove "habit encrusted assumptions" about art—cooking it up "fresh each time"⁷, Feyerabend asserts the value in an open-ended approach to research, where "all methods and ways of perception are in their basic premise possible and nothing is excluded when

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+61 2 6262 9333
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