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LEA just got a facelift: Refreshed, crinkle-free with same great content. Come visit!

by Nisar Keshvani

P O Box 850, Robinson Road

Singapore 901650

Email: nisarh@keshvani.com

URL: <http://www.keshvani.com>**Abstract**

In "LEA just got a facelift! Refreshed, crinkle-free with same great content. Come visit!", LEA editor in chief, Nisar Keshvani announces the launch of LEA's new interface developed in collaboration with Drake Nox and Eva Sim. He describes the development process and the Locative Media Special guest edited by Drew Hemment and gallery curated by Suhjung Hur, Andrew Paterson and Annie On Ni Wan to curate the gallery. The website also launches new resources - the curriculum and bibliography sections developed by the community for the community.

Keywords:

LEA "Locative Media" Special, ISEA, FutureSonic, LEA Bibliography section, LEA Curriculum section

"LEA just got a facelift!*Refreshed, crinkle-free with same great content.**Come visit!"*

Boldly reads our tagline for 2006. From this issue, you will notice a new website interface for Leonardo Electronic Almanac. Though the idea was germinating for a long while, the actual process began exactly a year ago to the day, where this website will be officially launched at the 13th International Symposium of Electronic Art (ISEA 2006) this August.

The spark began in a classroom at the San Francisco Art Institute. For 10 solid hours, Roger Malina, Stephen Wilson, Pamela Grant-Ryan, Patricia Bentson, Kathleen Quillian and I sat like knights at a square-table (albeit in uncomfortable chairs with a chalkboard) trying to strategize what would be next for Leonardo Electronic Almanac.

Often in the daily humdrum of work-life, we rarely able to take the time off just to sit, reflect and think. My colleagues from the Asia Pacific will attest to this fact - somehow the pace of life in this region is quite different, and you cannot visualize it, unless you are physically here.

We put LEA in the line of fire, and asked essential questions like "Who exactly is our community?", "Why do we publish LEA?", "Is there a need for LEA to exist?" and of course, "How do we fund an enterprise like this one?".

Perhaps we still don't have the right answers, but we get closer with every day that passes. From that point, we established an online focus group of 30 individuals consisting of artists, scientists, academics, researchers and students from across the globe. Their feedback was instrumental.

After this intensive process, Eva Sim, Drake Nox and I did the trendy corporate retreat thing (minus the budget). In April, we locked ourselves in a shabby hut away from the world, minus communications, to develop the facelift. For the last two months, I've been working round the clock migrating content. That was not it; we tested various iterations and will continue adding functionalities, so come visit often!

A process like this can never be developed in isolation. Though impossible to mention all involved, here goes:

**LEA just got
a facelift!**Refreshed, crinkle-free
with same great content.
Come visit!**"... the highbrow
hot spot of
cyberspace...
a digital bible
for the lowdown
on the {hi-tech}
art scene."**- Wired Magazine
on LEA

Special thanks to our board members and Natra Haniff, Stephen Wilson, Erika Block, Juraimi Jumahat, Grace Tan, Effandi Mohamed, Drew Hemment, Tim Peterson, Fatima Lasay, Choy Kok Kee, Paul Brown, Beth Rainbow, Suhjung Hur, Mark Amerika, Joanne Tay, Lydia Teh, Michelle Goh, Ruth Song, Kim Machan, Young Hae-Chang, Steve Dietz, Han Youfu, Andre Ho, Gunalan Nadarajan, Roopesh Sitharan, Sue Thomas, Seah Hock Soon, Stephen Wilson, Annick Bureaud, Larry Larson, Joel Slayton, Beverly Reiser, Julie Jansen and everyone who has helped.

And also hats off to Leonardo Executive Editor, Roger Malina for his limitless energy and support, and the San Francisco team; Patricia Bentson, Kathleen Quillian, Pamela Grant-Ryan and Nicholas Cronbach for their valuable input.

Kudos to the web team, Eva Sim, Drake Nox and Natra Haniff, who worked too impossible deadlines (and demands) for their patience, tenacity, and excellent work. As we tread new territories, our congratulations to Natra Haniff who takes on the Managing Editor role.

In this inaugural issue in our new interface, you will find an exclusive collection of Locative Media essays guest edited by Drew Hemment - an established entrepreneur in this field and an important voice. This special edition came about from a tiny informal exchange that just grew exponentially.

This special is a first in many ways. We were bursting at the seams. We made tough decisions to select from the best of over 100 high-quality submissions. From essays, Hemment-Keshvani began discussing the idea of an associated gallery. The first call for papers produced good results but because we wanted young and emerging voices, Drew invited Suhjung Hur, Andrew Paterson and Annie On Ni Wan to curate the gallery.

The trio broke ground, firstly by identifying new voices we would not ordinarily hear, and expanding our reach to the community. It is also the first gallery curated across three time zones and on Wikipedia. I dare say, keep a close watch on these curators and artists as they might make history in time to come.

While discussing essay topics with various academics, the idea of developing a curriculum guide and a bibliography surfaced. A resource that would be developed for the community by the community. Check out the associated curriculum section edited by Drew Hemment and the bibliography index which Steve Bull, Elizabeth Goodman, Pete Gomes, Derek Hales, Hana Iverson, Paula Levine, Ann Morrison, Teri Rueb, Alison Sant, Leslie Sharpe, Jen Southern and Nick West generously share.

For those of you visiting FutureSonic 2006: Urban Festival of Electronic Music and Arts in Manchester, UK on 20 - 23 July. Pop by for an informal gathering in honor of the LEA "Locative Media" Special and look up guest editor Drew Hemment.

If you have any ideas, thoughts or comments to the new website and would like to propose thematic issues, we welcome you to drop a note to: lea@mitpress.mit.edu

Our tagline (developed by Grace Tan, our branding & identity board member), reads "Refreshed, crinkle-free with same great content."

Our editorial team of LEA staff, guest editors and peer reviewers will take that further step to boldly say, our content will be even greater. So do come visit us often and watch this space for more exciting developments.

Enjoy!

Author Biography

Singaporean *NISAR KESHVANI* is a consultant, Internet journalist, web developer, educator and new media specialist. In the last decade, he has worked across five continents (Asia, Africa, Europe, North America and Australia/Oceania). He is editor-in-chief of the Leonardo Electronic Almanac (<http://LEA.mit.edu>) and International Co-Editor of fineArt forum (<http://www.fineartforum.org>) - one of the Internet's longest running arts publication. He has worked for various international magazines and newspapers since 1993.

Keshvani sits on the board of the Art, Science, Technology Network (ASTN), Leonardo/International Society for the Arts, Sciences & Technology; fineArt forum and on SIGGRAPH's Singapore Chapter Management Committee. He is Program Advisor

(Asia Pacific) of the Brisbane Multimedia Art Asia Pacific (MAAP) Festival. Keshvani has extensive experience developing and maintaining websites and was an online journalism educator at Queensland University of Technology, Australia, examining internationalization issues and changing work practices in the online newsroom. He was also Digital Media Lecturer and module leader for Web Design Applications with Ngee Ann Polytechnic's School of Film & Media Studies in Singapore. In 2003 - 2004, Keshvani was on consultancy with the Aga Khan Development Network (a group of international development agencies working in health, education, culture and rural and economic development, primarily in Asia and Africa).

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