



Leonardo Electronic Almanac

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INTRODUCTION

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< This Issue >

Craig Harris, Executive Editor

Leonardo Electronic Almanac
Volume 8, Number 7 and 8
Introduction

This double issue of Leonardo Electronic Almanac covers a great deal of territory on the media arts scene.

Jocelyne Rotily and Roger Malina announce the realization of a multicultural and interdisciplinary three-year project focused on the cultural and scientific contexts of water: "The Spirit and Power of Water." The primary objective of the project is to develop and encourage exchanges between intellectuals and artists from Africa and from the other continents.

In "Computers and Art: Myths and Reality" Bulat Galejev explores a variety of myths and preconceptions when computers, progress and art converge.

Eduardo Kac introduces Alba, the living result of his pursuit of Transgenic Art, an art form based on the use of genetic engineering to transfer natural or synthetic genes to an organism, to create unique living beings. GFP Bunny, or Green Fluorescent Protein Bunny, probes deeply into the creative and sociological issues that intersect with this complicated terrain.

We also are bringing an extensive Monograph into the LEA Archive, The Souillac Conferences, 1997-1998. These conferences brought the worlds of art and industry together to explore collaborate and innovation, and this monograph reflects the combined archive for two substantial conferences.

And Michael Punt brings Leonardo Digital Reviews back in full force, after a brief "sabbatical" reorganizing the LDR web site and fine tuning the LDR process.

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FEATURE ARTICLES

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< The Spirit and Power of Water:
A Study at the Confluence of Arts and Sciences >
by Jocelyne Rotily and Roger Malina

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OLATS/VIRTUAL AFRICA , in collaboration with the RIVER FESTIVAL
announce the realization of a multicultural and interdisciplinary
three-year project focused on the cultural and scientific contexts of
water: "The Spirit and Power of Water."

1) Virtual Africa in a few words <<http://www.olats.org>>.

Virtual Africa is a multimedia project organized under the aegis of
LEONARD/OLATS. Its primary objective is to develop and encourage
exchanges between intellectuals and artists from Africa and from the
other continents. Designed as a large patchwork of images and texts,
with several scenarios put together and presented by experts from the
scientific and artistic fields, Virtual Africa proposes to reflect on
the following themes:

- _ The relations between arts and sciences.
- _ The relations between ancient and contemporary arts.
- _ The relations between Africa and the other continents.

2/ The River Festival <<http://www.olats.org/festival-eau>>

The River Festival is a project organized by Camel Zekri and Dominique
Chevaucher. Their scope is to engage a cultural and artistic dialogue
while traveling down the biggest rivers of Africa. The Niger and
Mouhoun River were parts of their last journeys. The "River Festival"
will be on tour in France in the autumn and spring of 2001.

OLATS/VIRTUAL AFRICA in collaboration with the RIVER FESTIVAL announce
the realization of a multicultural and interdisciplinary three-year
project focused on the cultural and scientific contexts of water :
"The Spirit and Power of Water." This project will have its source in
the African continent, a land known as the cradle of the universe but
also as one of the first victims to suffer from highly critical
problems of shortage and purification of water. Starting with artistic
and scientific studies proper to the African context, we will then
extend some ramifications in the direction of the other continents in
order to examine - in the largest possible perspective - the role and
signification of water in the artistic and cultural activities of
human societies. Water, a linking substance per se, will be used in a
symbolic mode to create links between different cultures, and to open
up spaces of encounter and reflections between artists and scientists.

"The Spirit and Power of Water" will give rise to a seminar in
Vandoeuvre-les-Nancy (France), in May 2001. This encounter will gather
artists, scientists, engineers, and will allow them to present the
outcomes of their research on how water and water networks do
structure cultural, economic and political lives of African peoples
and human beings in general. In prolongation of the seminar, a series
of publications and workshops will be made accessible on the Virtual
Africa's web site. Later on, a selection of artworks and articles will
be equally published in the American arts and sciences journal
LEONARDO (published by MIT Press).

... [Content omitted: Ed.] ...

[Ed. note: the complete content of this article is available at the LEA website: <<http://mitpress.mit.edu/e-journals/LEA/>>.]

< GFP Bunny >

by Eduardo Kac

Eduardo Kac
Email: <ekac@artic.edu>

My transgenic artwork "GFP Bunny" comprises the creation of a green fluorescent rabbit, the public debate generated by the project, and the social integration of the rabbit. GFP stands for green fluorescent protein. "GFP Bunny" was realized in 2000 and first presented publicly in Avignon, France. Transgenic art, I proposed elsewhere, is a new art form based on the use of genetic engineering to transfer natural or synthetic genes to an organism, to create unique living beings. This must be done with great care, with acknowledgment of the complex issues thus raised and, above all, with a commitment to respect, nurture, and love the life thus created.

WELCOME, ALBA

I will never forget the moment when I first held her in my arms, in Jouy-en-Josas, France, on April 29, 2000. My apprehensive anticipation was replaced by joy and excitement. Alba -- the name given her by my wife, my daughter, and I -- was lovable and affectionate and an absolute delight to play with. As I cradled her, she playfully tucked her head between my body and my left arm, finding at last a comfortable position to rest and enjoy my gentle strokes. She immediately awoke in me a strong and urgent sense of responsibility for her well-being.

Alba is undoubtedly a very special animal, but I want to be clear that her formal and genetic uniqueness are but one component of the "GFP Bunny" artwork. The "GFP Bunny" project is a complex social event that starts with the creation of a chimerical animal that does not exist in nature (i.e., "chimerical" in the sense of a cultural tradition of imaginary animals, not in the scientific connotation of an organism in which there is a mixture of cells in the body) and that also includes at its core: 1) ongoing dialogue between professionals of several disciplines (art, science, philosophy, law, communications, literature, social sciences) and the public on cultural and ethical implications of genetic engineering; 2) contestation of the alleged supremacy of DNA in life creation in favor of a more complex understanding of the intertwined relationship between genetics, organism, and environment; 3) extension of the concepts of biodiversity and evolution to incorporate precise work at the genomic level; 4) interspecies communication between humans and a transgenic mammal; 5) integration and presentation of "GFP Bunny" in a social and interactive context; 6) examination of the notions of normalcy, heterogeneity, purity, hybridity, and otherness; 7) consideration of a non-semiotic notion of communication as the sharing of genetic material across traditional species barriers; 8) public respect and appreciation for the emotional and cognitive life of transgenic animals; 9) expansion of the present practical and conceptual boundaries of artmaking to incorporate life invention.

... [Content omitted: Ed.] ...

[Ed. note: the complete content of this article is available at the LEA website: <<http://mitpress.mit.edu/e-journals/LEA/>>.]

< Computers and Art: Myths and Reality >
by B. M. Galejev

B. M. Galejev
Russia, Kazan
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The words "computer" and "progress" have become regarded as synonyms long ago, though the development of cybernetics in our country, as it is known, met dramatic conflicts at the beginning. But "dramas of ideas" accompany computerization of our life permanently, even after it's exclusive usefulness and inevitability have become obvious and indisputable - especially when applied to technology, natural sciences, economics, statistics, intellectual games and so on. The situation with computer application to art/creative work appeared to be more problematical. Here we meet some inherent prejudices and myths that began to form since the very beginning and are present not only in common consciousness, but also in a social one. Let's consider these myths in their logical and historical order.

1st myth: sooner or later, computers should be able to make adequate models of any form of human mental activity, including art forms. The pathos of such slogans was displayed especially brightly in our country, when after the initial persecution of cybernetics as bourgeois false science the pendulum had swung into the opposite position. Even humanitarians suddenly began to sing enthusiastic hymns to expected potentialities of computer art. This forced one prominent poet to shudder: "Any progress is reactionary, if man falls to the ground!"

Such expectation of "Art ex machina" was, using the expression of a French theorist in the field of cinema, A. Bazin, "most of all bourgeois." Saying so, he had in mind cinema and photo-technique. By his opinion, the advocates of this conception see the destination of new technique in allowing ones "to fabricate art works, not being the artists themselves." Let's add that the following attitudes are "bourgeois" as well: a desire for man's liberation from "pains of creation" by shifting them off onto the computer; i.e., an expectation of marvelous birth of new artistic value spontaneously and practically "from nothing." The father of cybernetics N. Wiener warned about the dangers of such attitudes. He anticipated that there might appear new tribes of "machine worshippers" who will gladly expect that "some functions of their slaves can be passed to the machine." The logic of its operation might be unknown, but still it is regarded as "reliable" and wittingly "objective." Of course both Bazin and Wiener point out here the position utterly humiliates both the artist and the art itself. But "drama of ideas" is called as "drama" just because one cannot achieve harmony immediately - harmony between question mark and exclamation mark, between desire and possibility.

So, when researchers began to investigate the problem of "Art and Computer", arising in aesthetics since 1950s, they met paradoxical facts: even those machine's "creative works" (more concretely, computer graphic compositions) which were obtained without any

artist's interference (in the process of solving pure mathematical/engineering tasks), often were demonstrated at special "cybernetic art" exhibitions and their beauty were widely recognized. Especially it relates to the amazing fractal geometry patterns, that were discovered not long ago (and would lead one to conclusion that God was probably the first programmer with somewhat aesthetic inclination, when He created the whole beauty of nature around us).

... [Content omitted: Ed.] ...

[Ed. note: the complete content of this article is available at the LEA website: <<http://mitpress.mit.edu/e-journals/LEA/>>.]

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MONOGRAPH

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< The Souillac Conferences, 1997-1998 >

Introduction by Don Foresta
and Fernando Lagrana

Introduction by Don Foresta

It is generally agreed that, throughout the 20th century, we have been through and continue to experience a period of profound change manifest everywhere in western civilization, socially, politically, culturally, intellectually, philosophically and psychologically. This transformation has been most apparent in the arts and the sciences of our century and it is there we must look to discover the meaning of that change and its consequences for society. These tandem sources of knowledge have, consciously and unconsciously, been offering clues for the past 100 years as to where we might be headed.

Every society has at its core an image of itself, a schema of how it operates, how it defines relationships, an image of how that society functions - an organizational space. During the course of the 20th century that schema, for western and probably world civilization, has changed in profound and fundamental ways from the clockwork mechanistic universe to something not yet defined. By exploring art and science, separately and as an ensemble, we can perhaps begin to understand that emerging space and how it works and thereby better understand, and possibly direct, the future evolution of our society.

The organizational space is at the same time a communication space, a visual space, an intuitional space, the space we call imagination and the way we see things operating. It will probably be at least another generation or two before we have consensus on the shape of that space, but if we are to believe what art and science have been saying, it is probable that that space will exist in time, be an interactive process and organised horizontally with a geometry quite different from the euclidian geometry of renaissance perspective.

With the explosion in telecommunications potential and its eventual merger with media, we are witnessing the creation the infrastructure of a new interactive communication space which will inevitably grow in importance and contain more and more of the personal space of each of us. It is our contention that this new space is, in many ways, the

technical manifestation of the space described above. That it is the product of the artistic and scientific revolutions of our century, whereby art and science redefine our imaginary space and propose new sets of relationships, adding to our philosophical and psychological givens, time, interactivity and virtuality in a new emerging geometry. Seeing relationships is the stuff of art and of science. The new communication space will change our way of communicating with each other, the perception of the world around us and how we relate to it and to others.

The charter for art and industry that we are presenting here is a response to that change and a recognition that we can in fact begin to see what that new space may be through the artistic use of the evolving tools of communication. As stated in the document, the point of departure is the mutual recognition on the part of the art world and industry that a profound transformation is taking place in our society due to a radical shift in communication potential and that all actors concerned can address the issue and examine ways of collaboration and cooperation to assure the most beneficial use of this new potential for all of society.

People from industry, those of the world of art, culture and education, others responsible for government policy are all asking the same questions about the future of this new space and what it will mean to them and their constituencies. What decisions are to be taken in developing this important new means of communication and for what ends. The charter focuses on a small area of human activity, but with partners directly concerned by the issues, and proposes the beginning of a search for some answers to those questions.

Introduction by Fernando Lagrana

In an era of globalisation, I like such a name: "The Souillac Charter." This manifesto was drafted over an extended period of time, involving a fairly large group of people disseminated around the planet (I should say around the network). However, this name reflects the fact that the Charter was drafted during a short retreat (a few days) in a very precise - and tiny - location on the globe.

Who knows Souillac? The local and regional population of course does, as well as this group of irreducible fighters who have anchored their reflection in an almost abandoned abbey in a really forgotten village of Perigord. In a way, the Souillac Group shows the need for a right balance between a global network, a global vision, and a local identity. We need such a strong anchor, which can serve as a point of reference in the new communication space. Souillac will remain in my mind the point of origin to which I will often refer to navigate safely in a network with almost no limits and a changing and unpredictable topology.

I am probably the last infocommunication industry representative advocating for the right to hesitate. I do promote with the same conviction improved interactivity in networked services and applications, and non real-time usage of this enhanced feature. Souillac was based on this type of interactivity: we could meet and mark a pause in a shared communication space, as Don Foresta likes them, and think, discuss, exchange our views quietly, at the kind of pace that I perceive as being "natural" and that I favour.

Why a dialogue between the infocommunication industry and the art world? Because scientists have created a new reality that they can't

grasp anymore. And they know that artists excel at using new tools in unexpected ways and at exploring new directions. The infocommunication industry has developed communication patterns that have altered our organisational space, as well as our relation to time. Gabriel Garcia Marquez said once that he hated travelling by plane, because the soul and the body couldn't travel at the same speed. Our industry has indirectly created the netlag. It has modified the original space-time curve and generated a new type of chaos, that even the most advanced researchers (like Ralph H. Abraham) haven't analysed yet.

Ends of century have always provided good opportunities to stop, look back and prepare for the future. We were very lucky because we stopped in Souillac. We sat down. We discussed. The result is the Art-Industry Charter, the Souillac Charter. If you are familiar with the ISOC, consider this text as an RFC. Your comments, as one says, are most welcome.

... [Content omitted: Ed.] ...

[Ed. note: the complete content of this monograph is available at the LEA website: <<http://mitpress.mit.edu/e-journals/LEA/>>.]

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LEONARDO DIGITAL REVIEWS 2000.08

Editor-in Chief: Michael Punt
Executive Editor: Roger Malina
Managing Editor: Bryony Dalefield
Web Editor: Sudhira Hay

As you may know Leonardo Digital Reviews has been on a short sabbatical while it has restructured its organisation to respond to the growing complexity of managing reviews and initiating new projects in a web environment. The LDR page is now up and running again in a SKELETON form. Sudhira Hay has been working on the basics and we will now get an information designer to look at it as a project. In the meantime we are slowly posting the backlog of reviews and have produced a substantial section of reviews for the next Leonardo. At the time of writing this editorial the contributions listed below are posted, and we hope that by the time this copy of LEA is distributed the number of reviews up on the site will have increased substantially since we have a large backlog of work to process. In the meantime we are, as ever, grateful to the panel for their sustained output of high quality reviews during this period of reorganisation, and look forward to some exciting opportunities for new projects to develop on the website and in the journal.

These reviews can be read at the usual URL:
<<http://mitpress.mit.edu/e-journal/Leonardo/ldr.html>>.

Electronic Adventures in Flamenco Lagos/Venosta/Mariani.
Reviewed by Mike Mosher

New Music for Player Piano Godfried-Wilelm Raes, Joachim Brackx, Hans Roels, Kris De Baerdemacker.
Reviewed by Mike Mosher

Address letters of application to:
Chair, Digital Media/Film Studies Search Committee,
Department of Art Practice
345 Kroeber Hall
University of California Berkeley, Berkeley, CA 94720.

University of California at Berkeley
Junior/Tenured Faculty Position
Media Theorist/Studio Practitioner

The Department of Art Practice and the Program in Film Studies at the University of California Berkeley seek a media theorist/studio practitioner for a junior level - tenure track - appointment effective July 1, 2001. Candidates should possess a notable record of accomplishments including: digital media research, professional exhibitions, and scholarly publication record on issues of media theory and the digital arts. Arts based computing expertise is required in two or more areas: digital video and audio, design for virtual worlds, physical computing, modeling and animation, sensing, database, and programming for Web-based interactive environments.

Qualifications:

Distinction as a professional artist and scholar in the area of New Media, Ph.D. or terminal degrees. University level teaching experience and new program development.

Application Requirements:

Statement of artistic and scholarly background, educational philosophy/approach to teaching, resume, three references including phone numbers, mail and e-mail addresses. Support materials must include examples of both professional studio work and scholarly publications. Applications should contain no more than 30 pages of written material (hard copy only), and no more than 15 minutes total viewing time of media-based work including video, interactive media and web-based work. Media files must be formatted for the Macintosh, URL's listed must include on ZIP disk the necessary plug-ins needed to view. Include SASE for return of materials.

Application Deadline:

December 15, 2000.

The University of California Berkeley is an Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Employer.

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

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< Media_city Seoul 2000 - Contemporary Art and Technology Biennial >

Contact information:

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URL: <www.mediaseoul.org>

Contemporary Art and Technology Biennial
September 2-October 31, 2000
Seoul, Korea

Media_city seoul is an international biennial event on view in museums and public venues throughout Seoul that presents and explores the convergence of technology and the contemporary arts. The theme for the inaugural biennial, city: between 0 and 1, interprets the ways in which the digital revolution is transcending physical boundaries of space and time.

Artists:

Including Vito Acconci, PilYun Ahn, Chantal Akerman, Laurie Anderson, Matthew Barney, Pierre Bismuth, Christian Boltanski, Stan Douglas, Douglas Gordon, Dan Graham, Zaha Hadid, Bernd Halbherr, Gary Hill, Myungseop Hong, Michel Jaffrennou, Haemin Kim, Kichul Kim, Sora Kim, Alexander Kluge, Rem Koolhaas, Bul Lee, Sookyung Lee, Steve McQueen, Tony Oursler, Nam June Paik, Pipilotti Rist, Danny Rozin, Ilgon Song, SUPARTIST, Rosemarie Trockel, Bill Viola, Tamas Waliczky, Jane & Louise Wilson, HyunJung Yu and Pei Li Zhang.

General/Artistic Director: Misook Song, Art Historian and Critic

Curators:

Barbara London, The Museum of Modern Art, New York; Jeremy Millar, Artist and Curator, London; Hans Ulrich Obrist, Le Musee d' Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris; Byoung Hak Ryu, Independent Curator; Shin Eui Park, Art Historian and Critic; and, Chang Ik Jang, Magic I Entertainment Co. Ltd.

Organizers: media_city seoul 2000 Organizing Committee

Sponsors:

Seoul Metropolitan Government
Seoul Industry Promotion Foundation

Media contact information:

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< Call for papers - WSCG - Int. Conference on Computer Graphics,
Visualization, Computer Vision and related fields >

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e-mail: <skala@kiv.zcu.cz>
URL: <http://iason.zcu.cz/~skala>
URL WSCG: <http://wscg.zcu.cz>

The 9-th International Conference in Central Europe on Computer Graphics, Visualization and Computer Vision 2001, in cooperation with

EUROGRAPHICS, IFIP WG 5.10 & Computer Graphics Society

to be held in February 5 - 9, 2001 in Plzen very close to PRAGUE, the capital of the Czech Republic.

W S C G '2001 Conference

Conference dates: February 5 - 9, 2001
Deadline for authors: October 10, 2000
Information: <<http://wscg.zcu.cz>>

Accepted papers will be published in the Conference proceedings with ISBN and processed by INSPEC, ISI, Cambridge Scientific Abstracts and others for citations index.

Topics included

Fundamental algorithms, rendering and visualization, computer vision, pattern recognition and image processing, virtual reality, medical imaging, geometric modelling and fractals, parallel and distributed graphics, computational geometry, graphical interaction and standards, object-oriented graphics, WWW technologies, animation and multimedia, computer aided geometric design, CAD/CAM, DTP and GIS systems, educational aspects of related fields, usage of graphics within mathematical software (Maple, Mathematica, MathCAD etc.) in education.

Papers on all aspects of computer graphics are encouraged.

The program includes international books exhibition and video show, too.

W S C G '2001 International Exhibition

The WSCG Exhibition will be held in parallel. Top leading European and Czech companies active in computer graphics, visualization and computer vision, CAD/CAM and GIS systems, virtual reality, multimedia systems and others will be presenting their latest products.

Special programme will be available, too.

< Call for Participation: "Spirit of Water" >

For more information on the project, please, contact :

Jocelyne Rotily
174 Bis rue Jean Mermoz
13008 Marseilles. France.
Email: <jocelyne.Rotily@wanadoo.fr>

CALL FOR PARTICIPATION : "THE SPIRIT AND POWER OF WATER"
A study at the confluence of arts and sciences

OLATS/Virtual Africa <<http://www.olats.org/africa/avva.shtml>>, in collaboration with the River Festival <<http://www.olats.org/festival-eau>> announces the realization of a multicultural and interdisciplinary three-year project focusing on the cultural and scientific contexts of water: "The Spirit and Power of Water." This project will originate in the African continent, a land known as the cradle of the universe but also recognized as one of the

first victims of highly critical problems of shortage and purification of water. Starting with artistic and scientific studies in the African context, we will extend some ramifications so that other continents can examine the role and signification of water in the artistic and cultural activities of human societies. Water, a linking substance per se, will be used symbolically to link different cultures and to initiate dialogue and reflection between artists and scientists.

Water has always held a privileged place in men's imagination and artistic creation. In Africa like anywhere else in the world, water is very often seen like a living substance inhabited by spirits, by supernatural beings that men have imagined to explain natural phenomena and some aspects of the human condition. Around the ambivalent and extraordinary world inherent in water, some myths, legends fairy tales, ritual religious practices have crystallized.

On the basis of these quasi-universal cultural representations, associating water with spirituality, with wonder and imagination, a body of studies and workshops (on-line and off-line) are proposed. These events will examine the cultural and artistic representations linked to water, in their complexities and diversities, both in Africa and on the other continents.

Hence, the terms of an esthetic study on water is posed. Water, as will be verified, has its own esthetic characteristics, its own imagination, and, as such, is an endless source of inspiration for all the artists in the world.

Artists whose work is/has been inspired by the water theme are strongly encouraged to participate in this special event. All medias and artistic trends will be represented.

A selection of artworks and articles will be equally published in the American arts and sciences journal LEONARDO (published by MIT Press).

< ISEA2000 - 10th International Symposium on Electronic Arts >

ISEA2000 - REVELATION
10th International Symposium on Electronic Arts
Paris, France - December 7-10, 2000

(to receive a more detailed program and/or to register)
ART3000
156 Avenue de Verdun
92130 Issy-les-Moulineaux France
Tel.: 33 (0)1 46 48 66 36
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Email: <isea2000@art3000.com>
URL: <<http://www.art3000.com>>

After Utrecht, Groningen, Sydney, Minneapolis, Helsinki, Montreal, Rotterdam, Chicago, and Liverpool/Manchester, the tenth edition of the International Symposium on Electronic Art (ISEA) will be held in France in December of 2000, uniting participants from over 30 countries. Under the theme of Revelation, ISEA 2000 will explore the effects of the technological revolution on art and its impact on society through new forms of representation, such as digital imaging, multimedia, the virtual, interactive installations and networks. ISEA 2000 will focus on the transformations and the challenges that exist in the visual arts, the performing arts, music, imaging, architecture and design, while highlighting how these new tools generate artistic expression intrinsic to digital culture.

ISEA 2000 includes:

An International Symposium at the Forum des Images from December 7th to the 10th which will bring together over 2000 artists, educators, researchers and industry experts.

A series of artistic events organized by various groups in and around Paris, including: Batofar, Bibliotheque nationale de France, the Canadian Cultural Centre, Centre d'art d'Ivry (CREDAC), Centre Georges Pompidou, Centre National de la Danse, CICV Pierre Schaeffer, Divan du Monde, Espace Landowski (Boulogne), Institut Goethe, Institut Finlandais, IRCAM, Project Cafe MK2, Universite Paris 8-CIREN, Web Bar, les Nuits Savoureuses (Belfort), Monaco Danse Forum, De Visu (Brest), Mix Move (Paris), ACROE (Grenoble), Intersenses (Marseille).

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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WORLD WIDE WEB
ACCESS

The LEA Word Wide Web site contains the LEA archives, including all back issues, the LEA Gallery, the Profiles, Feature Articles, Publications, Opportunities and Announcements. It is accessible using the following URL: <<http://mitpress.mit.edu/e-journals/LEA/>>

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