AHRC ICT Methods Network Student Bursary Awards

CHArt (Computers and the History of Art) Conference
Fast Forward - Art History, Curation and Practice after Media
Birkbeck College, University of London, 9 – 10 November 2006

CONFERENCE REPORT

Richard Hooper, *Chester University.*
PhD Title: What Ever Happened to Matter? The significance of digital methodologies in sculptural form in the 'post-medium' age.

I was most grateful for the opportunity to attend the CHArt Conference, and this provided a good opportunity to engage in the wider curatorial debates around the significance of archiving, storage, retrieval and display of digital work as well as an opportunity to learn more of current practice in the digital arts field.

Whilst my research interest in computer-aided sculpture runs somewhat counter to the main thrust of the title of the conference (with its implied eschatological stance in respect to matter/media), it has given me a valuable reference point to my inquiry and access to a scholarly, friendly and supportive academic community. I hope to attend future CHArt conferences and would welcome advice and contributions from anyone with an interest in the history and current (and, rattle of cage, ongoing!) practice of solid digital sculpture.

Specifically, I was able to:

- Meet Bruce Wands (Keynote Speaker) from the New York Digital Salon, author of *Art in the Digital Age*, and to explain my work. His book will prove a valuable reference for my literature research in regards to existing practitioners in my field.

- Talk with Paul Brown from the University of Sussex about his and others early (Slade etc.) and current manifestations of computer art.

- Talk with digital artist Elaine Shemilt (University of Dundee, Scotland, *A Blueprint of Bacterial Life - Can a Science-Art Fusion Move the Boundaries of Visual and Audio Interpretation?*) about her work with bacterial life gene dataset utilization. She expressed interest in my work and we agreed to keep in contact.

- Talk with Daniella Sirbu from the University of Lethbridge, Canada, about her work on the virtual Teatro Olimpico as a site for interactive arts (*The Digital Space of the Teatro Olimpico: A New Environment for Interactive Arts*). We discussed the use of Blender Open Source software.

- Get advice from Professor Suzette Worden from Curtin University regarding my research and its framing in my research proposal.

- Talk to Dr Nick Lambert from Birkbeck College, University of London (*Preserving and Recovering Computer Art: Reconstructing Data or the Artwork*) about the increasing use of digital processes in the field of sculpture as prices for hardware and software decrease and learning curves are reduced.

- Talk with Dr Krystof Cieszkowski from Tate, who offered the Tate library as a resource for my research and drew my attention to the Tate online archive.

Furthermore, I had my attention draw to the existence of the journal *Digital Creativity* which is relevant to my area of research and a potential receptacle for the dissemination of my work.

All in all the conference was an excellent opportunity to engage with academics, curators, librarians and practitioners in a friendly and supportive context. I aim to attend next year if I can.