

E.C.A.S. – Networking Tomorrow's Art For An Unknown Future

A. VISION / AIM

Our aim is to build a strong and integrated European framework for new cultural forms related to sound and new technologies. A unity that is inherently inclusive and empowering for the vibrant cultural forms which are redefining European cultural identity. It is a quest for a cohesive view of what currently exists and a questioning of the state of things as they are; an examination of how to cope with an unknown future using the tools that have been developed so far. In times with no illusions of utopia, the urge to find methods of self-empowerment – a backing-up for the unknown – is more urgently needed than ever before. Advanced sound and its strongly linked new cultural forms and technologies are the very perceptible examples for our society of how the human condition is changing and they deliver a low-threshold access for all generations to get acquainted with questions and needs and the possible societal changes beyond the impact of the harsh economic changes.

The vision encapsulated in this proposal is for an integrated framework and a series of activities, which will enable a significant stride toward unity for the co-applicants and the art forms they represent.

B. Objectives

- * To commission world class inter-cultural artworks and present them in different trans-national settings
- * To support 'bottom up' or 'citizen' creativity and innovation, and provide pathways from 'prosumer' to professional
 - * To test different engagement methods and engage large numbers of people (hundreds of thousands or millions) by staging a series of events that are themselves experimental and involved in nurturing new cultural forms and technologies.
 - * To increase the mobility of artists, audiences and professionals
 - * To explore new methods of artistic collaboration, with a focus on advanced sound and related arts
 - * To build stronger trans-EU connections by consolidating the ECAS network
 - * To explore new methods of collaboration for people working in the cultural sector.
 - * Cross-cultural – to support musics that have grown within migrant communities; to open marginal sounds up to a bigger audience

C. BACKGROUND

The co-applicants exist to support emerging digital and electronic art forms and advance innovative methodologies for public engagement. Their work in these art forms broadens inclusion and empowerment in the arts and positively contributes to redefining European cultural identity. Over the past two years they have engaged with over 2000 artists and reached a 'direct' audience of more than 300.000 across 18 European nations.

Over the past 15 years new art forms and new forms of cultural event have emerged which are crucibles for an emerging and ever changing European cultural identity. These are characterised by their innovative and early adoption of digital technologies, placing them at the forefront of the digital revolution. These art forms and events developed in a 'bottom up' manner, rather than through the patronage of established educational and cultural institutions, and have, as a result, focussed on inclusion and empowerment. They are both hyper local and inherently international, involving specific sub-cultural groups that are globally dispersed.

Europe today is in the midst of a major cultural shift driven by the proliferation of digital technology. Only in the last few years has this grown from a specialist interest to something that is having a truly transformational impact across Europe. Aspects of this include a shift away from established cultural hierarchies towards a more pluralistic and horizontal cultural field, a movement towards a 'glocal and lobal' world where traditional distinctions between 'local' and 'global' break down. This is characterised by the rise of user-generated content and the ability to share information instantly and globally, a dizzying number of connections between trans-national collaborators, and by going beyond national identity, making the geo-political provenance of music and art less and less relevant.

The co-applicants in this project have been at the forefront of this shift through over 15 years of pioneering work in areas of electronic and digital experimentation. They have long traditions of experimenting in advanced sound and related arts, and exert an influence on how we produce, present, experience and understand art and music today.

Advanced Sound – an exemplary case of such an emerging art form – is a specific focus for these organisations. Music has historically been a highly accessible medium and a driving force for wider change in media and technology. Advanced sound in this context is a broad term used to define post war experimental music that has developed into a common culture of electronic experimentation. It's a strong under current in Europe and is a common element in the development of interdisciplinary arts, something that is reflected in many of our organisation partners' programs.

The easy access to personal computers starting in the late 1980s made it possible for the first time not only to create sounds electronically but also to rework them without huge studios, to develop programmes that did not need any knowledge of composition or harmonic rules and made it possible to link sound and image in an easy way. The structure of closed compositions was opened up, the song became track, the orchestra was replaced by the 'universal machine' computer. New forms appeared like the loop, field recording, sampling and inter-conversions of sound and image.

This mainly first European current incorporated also traditional regional approaches and is nowadays trying to re-link to elements of other currents, e.g. the ghetto tech movements in around the world, trying to merge these new techniques and characteristics with the traditional, local music productions, whether in European metropolises as in London, Paris or Berlin or others like Sao Paolo, Mexico-City, Johannesburg or New Delhi.

The problem is still to define this new realm that is mainly based on the invention of the new instrument Computer and that has a bigger impact on artistic creations than the invention of the piano. It did not only change the ways of production but also the ways of collaboration and communication between artists, organisers and the general public.

This proposal is the product of an international network of cultural organisations, **ECAS (European Cities Of Advanced Sound)**, which strives to create collaborative partnership between the co-applicants. Beginning in 2006, the ECAS network has brought together a large number of cultural events from different EU countries with a commitment to supporting and nurturing cultural connections through advanced sound. The focus is upon cultural festivals and events that support emerging cultural forms and new forms of audience participation. ECAS is the first organisation to focus on promoting advanced sound as having a common European cultural heritage.

D. OUTLINE OF ACTIVITY AND DELIVERABLES

A programme organised into four overlapping 18 month work packages/periods. The first two are focused on deepening the impact of their current cultural value, the third on extending and bridging into adjacent domains, and the last on sustainability and legacy.

Each work packages consists of four aspects:

1. Artistic co-commissions and curatorial projects;
2. Audience development and engagement initiatives;
3. Contextualising dialogue and engagement with wider society
4. Impact assessment.

I. Working Period I: * "Cultural Festivals and Events as Living Laboratories: *Experimenting in new forms and models of presenting artworks, of new working methods and engaging audiences.*"

II. Working Period II * Networks of Advanced Sound and Related Arts: *Bridging cultural sectors and different media, and enabling citizen innovation*

III. Working Period III: * Ubiquitous Art and Music: *Art and the everyday*

IV. Working Period IV: * Tools For An Unknown Future: *What did we achieve, what will we keep, how will we proceed?*

I. Cultural Festivals and Events as Living Laboratories

Experimenting in new forms and models of presenting artworks and engaging audiences

The cultural sector is increasingly fluid, changing at a bewildering pace. Over the past 15 years it's been possible to see the rise of a new generation of cultural festivals, which increasingly reflect and represent the fast-paced cultural sector of today. We propose these festivals can be viewed as a new kind of cultural institution, which, unlike other traditional cultural institutions such as the museum, have the versatility to respond and adapt very rapidly to emerging artistic forms and trends. They engage with wholly new themes, formats and art forms each year, or within a single year's programme.

For the co-applicants, festivals are viewed as 'living laboratories'. They are conceived and designed

as playgrounds or experimental spaces where new cultural forms, new technologies, and new modes of audience engagement can be presented and evaluated.

Festivals are characterised by 'eventness', that is to say, temporality, and structured cultural programmes. This event-based approach is increasingly being adopted by other institutions, such as museums, as an effective approach to organising their programmes.

Festivals are a place where different forms and communities cross-fertilise, acting as a meeting place between audiences, cultural workers, artists and other stakeholders. Crucially, they are a space where new cultural forms, methods and technology prototypes may be tested and evaluated with a live audience. They also offer the ability to give attention (including media attention) to the topic that the festival explores in a particular year.

The Working Period I programme will be coordinated by co-applicants DISK, Futureeverything, and CynetArt. FutureEverything collaborates with Lancaster University and has formalised the 'living laboratory' methodology, and has been judged to be an example of 'world class research' in the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) 2008. DISK/ CTM is a melting pot for Europe's trans-national creatives, helping to foment new cultural forms. CynetART is experiments with social media and interactive art in new formats for cultural engagement.

II. Networks of Advanced Sound and Related Arts

Bridging cultural sectors and different media, and enabling citizen innovation

The focus here is twofold:

- a) on opening up and providing a window onto different artistic interest groups that are already trans-national but not otherwise connected
- b) on bridging different cultural sectors and different media.

In Europe today the cultural sector is increasingly made up of a very large number of specialist communities organised around a specific genre or art form. Single cultural institutions can no longer encompass or represent this diversity. The field of advanced sound is particularly attuned to minorities due to the development of so many genres and forms as a part of the cultural life of specific minority or migrant communities. It is necessary to be responsive to this diversity, but also to rise to the challenge of connecting and establishing creative dialogue between these specialist interest and minority groups, and exposing marginal sounds to bigger audiences. On the other side we are witnessing a huge cultural shift often referred to as 'the rise of the amateur' that is characterised by a proliferation of sites of creative practice. The cultural and educational institutions, which have historically overseen and mediated the cultural life of Europe no longer have a monopoly on the means of cultural production. It is necessary in this context both to ensure that we are able to promote only the highest standards of creative excellence while also maximising the potential for increasing inclusion and empowerment.

Working Period II of the programme will focus on these themes, by exploring innovative ways of connecting heterogeneous artistic and audience communities, and finding ways of scaling up without losing this diversity. It is also about bridging the different spheres of experimental music production and to look on the impact advanced sound has on other fields of artistic production.

There are exciting possibilities for new artistic collaborations that are based on a sustained dialogue that benefit from the time and space needed to developed shared language. This project will look at the impact on European culture.

The Period II programme will be led by co-applicants with specific expertise and competence in connecting different artistic communities and also overcoming the challenges of geographical distance. Leading co-applicants: Musikprotokoll, Tone, Skanu Mezs, CynetArt

III. Ubiquitous Art and Music

Art, Sound and the everyday

Sound and digital image are everywhere. A consequence of the ever-spreading reach of advertising, and also the rise of new technologies such as ubiquitous and pervasive computing. This phenomenon is matched by new artistic approaches to creating art and music for the public realm. Ecoustic ecology is the composition of public sound environments which transforms 'noise pollution' into engaging soundscapes. Locative media involves creating digital artworks which are experienced in public spaces using location-aware mobile devices. Generally, there is increasing interest in presenting cultural activities in 'lived spaces' where people go about their everyday lives, instead of

culture being the preserve of traditional arts venues and museums. The 'city' is increasingly a focus, as urban spaces draw together different communities and forms of media and technology, and digital technology is changing the function of the city, and dissolving the boundaries between work and play.

The Working Period III programme will be led by co-applicants who are at the forefront of devising cultural events that respond to the urban context, within some of Europe's most densely populated regions or alternatively among the most remote regions on Europe's periphery. Today'sArt and FutureEverything will commission and present highly imaginative ways of responding to urban environments in the Netherlands and the UK, and in Tromsø, Norway, with Insomnia.

IV. Tools For An Unknown Future

What did we achieve, what will we keep, what has to be left, and how will we proceed

The final year of the programme is focused on sustainability and legacy. We will look to the future by developing a set of tools for the co-applicants and other cultural organisations in Europe. We will establish a sustainable ECAS network, and anticipate having created a legacy for the wider cultural field in Europe..

The final year will map out practical routes towards sustainability.

This applied and theoretical knowledge will be drawn together in a toolkit, which will take the form of a set of resources for cultural production and event organisation, focusing upon the specific insights and expertise of the co-applicants and their partners. The tools will be in the form of online and printed resources.

E) Working Methods, Meetings and Publications

a) METHODS

- i.i. * Co-commissions
- i.ii. * Residencies
- i.iii. * Touring packages – European work
- i.iv. * workshops, lectures

i.i.Co-commissions

Each year two substantial and unique ECAS commissioned works or performances will be drawn from a public trans-European call for submissions. Calls for submissions will be publicised across the networks websites, publications and mailing lists, giving ECAS unprecedented reach. The call for submissions will also act as a positive marketing exercise. The Programming Group is responsible for establishing the criteria for these commissions during the first planning meeting in June 2010. The four calls for proposals will be linked to the theme of the actual working period. An independent panel of leading arts and industry figures drawn from the ECAS network will be enlisted to judge a final short-list of proposals.

i.ii. Residencies

In cooperation with our associated partners within each Working Period a residency will be made possible for artistic production at Trans-Media-Academy Hellerau, Dresden, at MOTA in Ljubljana, Slovenia, at Dis-patch, Belgrade and at Mediaruimte Labau, Brussels.

i.iii. Touring packages - European work

In each working period a number of relevant artistic works and performances will be gathered in a touring package of artists and shown at each of the co-applicants cities that are not mainly involved in coordination of a periods Working Period. The package will be shaped by the Programming Team.

i.iv. Symposium including workshops and special lectures

During each Working Period one symposium on the theme is organised at the main coordinators site, to deepen the theoretical work and to prepare the upcoming theme.

ii. Trainees and Internships - Cultural Worker in Residence (Knowledge Transfer of organisations)

In each Working Period all core applicants will send out a trainee from his/her organisation to one of the co-applicants organisations to support working on the ECAS-project for two months. Nine internships will be offered for the ECAS-project in each Working Period by co-applicants, providing opportunities for international exchange.

b) Partner Meetings

Partner meetings in the format of workshops and special public lectures are scheduled to take place. These meetings help the exchange, dissemination and evaluation of the project:

December 2011: SOCOFestival, Montevideo, Uruguay. May 2012: Mutek Festival, Montréal, Canada. April 2013: Nexsound Festival, Kiev, Ukraine April 2014: CMKY Festival, Boulder, Colorado, USA

A last word: The ECAS network: Conclusion

The ECAS network currently consists of nine co-organisers and 18 EU and 11 non-EU affiliated partners from 14 European and eight non-European countries. Each of these network members currently produces and maintains an annual not-for-profit music and related arts organisation and festival. As a collective network, this group has access to an immense amount of experience, knowledge and contacts in East and Western Europe, Asia, the Middle East and the Americas.

A wealth of artists, creative business initiatives, ideas, projects, funding know-how and administrative experience exists in this network, that when combined will create a formidable cultural resource for ECAS members, partners, institutions and cultural workers alike.

The formation of the network will provide access to solutions and ideas for many of the problems faced by these often idealistic not-for-profit organizations during their continued development. Projects and productions being developed both by the ECAS project and independently by partners would be 'pooled' and shared by the group. Trans European sponsor networks and related creative business initiatives will be established, opening up a much larger arena for potential partnerships, both financial and creative, and without threatening the profile of individual events or compromising quality.

By formalizing this network and through a commitment to sharing our experiences and knowledge, we will create a sustainable organisation that can offer support to all members and partners in an atmosphere of unity that also celebrates innovation and European diversity.

This network became ICAS - International Cities of Advanced Sound and Arts Network.
www.icasnetwork.org