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Temporal

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Temporal

Keith Armstrong (Queensland University of Technology)

Exhibited at Bundaberg Art Gallery, Bundaberg, Queensland, Australia

11 February to 22 March 2015

Archive of project at <http://embodiedmedia.com/homeartworks/temporal>

Project Team:

Keith Armstrong (Artistic Co-Director), *Lawrence English* (Artistic Co-Director), *Luke Lickfold* (MaxMSP Design), *Dr. Peggy Eby*, Consulting Behavioural Ecologist
(UNSW/freelance)

Statement

The interactive artwork *Temporal* arose from a series of art-science investigations with some of Australia's leading flying fox ecologists. It was designed as a gently evolving meditation upon the complex, periodic processes that mark Australia's often irregular seasonal changes. These changes directly govern the migratory movements of Australia's keystone pollinating mammals—the mega bats (or, Flying Foxes). *Temporal* further calls attention to our increasing capacity to profoundly disturb these partners within Australia's complex, life-supporting systems.

The work's design and aesthetic constructions reference complex readings of Australian seasonal patterns provided by Grey Headed Flying Fox expert and behavioural ecologist Dr. Peggy Eby. We drew upon Peggy's extensive data set that tracked the seasonal migrations of this important Australian mammalian species—as a way of correspondingly understanding seasonal fluctuations. She described to us how “nectar pulses” sweep across the Australian landscape, marked by the irregular flowering of the great Australian gum trees, and thus how these nectar-loving mammals follow in that wake. We therefore used both this powerful image, and her scientific data, as mapping and orientation devices within the installation.



Figure 1. *Temporal* (Bundaberg Regional Gallery. Image by Lawrence English)

To achieve this synthesis, we designed custom interactive systems to computationally control the flow, pace and content of the work. We also drew upon a range of visual illusionary techniques, including the use of softly curved dish screens, experimental lighting techniques and simple robotic control systems. Multi-channel, real-time spatial audio processes drew upon a rich array of sounds, including seasonal, nocturnal field recordings sourced in the Australian regions. Synthesised visual imagery drew upon detailed observations of changes within seasonal foliage and flowering phases. These approaches also sought to draw attention to the subtle transitions between the multiple seasons recognised by Australian indigenous cultures, suggesting much finer-grained, relational changes beyond the rigid structures of the old European seasonal models. Sensor-based systems in the installation registered audiences' "bodily disturbances" and were also used to subtly alter the sound and image in real time, as a technique for furthering the immersive, embodied experiences of the work.

Through all of these approaches, *Temporal* sought to amplify and shine light upon a myriad of mysterious lives lived in blackness, speaking to the availability of sensuous,

deep engagement with the rich, irregular spectras of seasonal forms, yet also hinting at a far less comforting background, increasingly framed by anthropogenic climate change.



Figure 2. *Temporal* (Bundaberg Regional Gallery. Image by Lawrence English)



Figure 3. *Temporal* (detail) (Bundaberg Regional Gallery. Image by Lawrence English)

This work completed a two year long project of dynamic mediated installations presented in Sydney,¹ Beijing,² Cairns³ and Bundanon,⁴ each choreographed by environmental cycles and alluding to a new framework for making media artwork that we named “Seasonal”—seeking to draw attention to that which will disappear when biodiverse worlds have descended into an era of permanent darkness, marking an “extinction of human experience.”⁵

¹ <http://embodiedmedia.com/homeartworks/night-rage>

² <http://embodiedmedia.com/homeartworks/light-of-extinction>

³ <http://embodiedmedia.com/homeartworks/dark-cartographies>

⁴ <http://embodiedmedia.com/homeartworks/black-nectar>

⁵ See *Temporal* video at <https://vimeo.com/117792188>



Figure 4. *Temporal* (detail) (Bundaberg Regional Gallery. Image by Lawrence English)



Figure 5. *Temporal* (detail) (Bundaberg Regional Gallery. Image by Lawrence English)



Figure 6. *Temporal* (detail) (Bundaberg Regional Gallery. Image by Lawrence English)

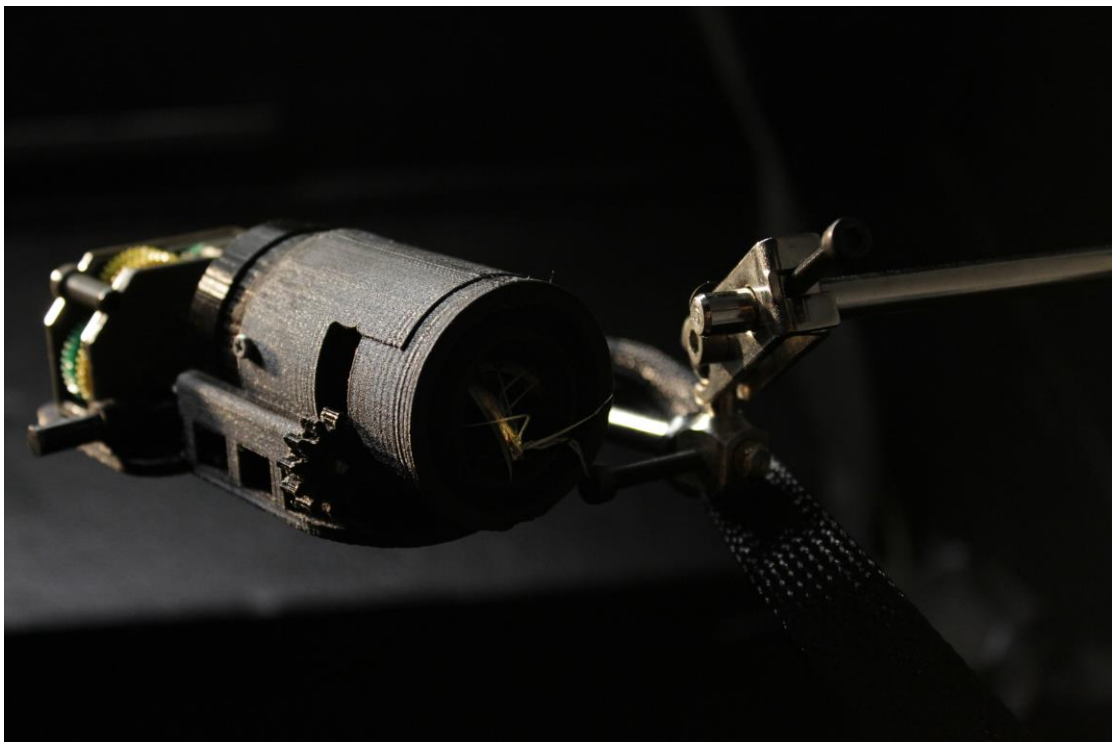


Figure 7. *Temporal* (robotic light projector, detail) (Bundaberg Regional Gallery. Image by Lawrence English)



Figure 8. *Temporal* (entrance detail) (Bundaberg Regional Gallery.

Image by Lawrence English)

Keith Armstrong is an experimental artist profoundly motivated by issues of social and ecological justice. He has specialised for over twenty years in collaborative, experimental practices with emphasis on innovative performance forms, site-specific electronic arts, networked interactive installations, alternative interfaces, art-science collaborations and socially and ecologically engaged practices. He is currently a part-time Senior Research Fellow at Queensland University of Technology, author of numerous chapters and papers, and an actively practicing freelance new media artist.

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