

Critical Conversations: Art, Access & the Digital Now

**An International Conference on Inclusive
Digital Innovation in Arts and Culture**

Presented by the Fremantle Biennale and DADAA, Critical Conversations: Art, Access and the Digital Now is the first access and digital technologies symposium of its kind in Western Australia. This two-day international conference convenes leading researchers, technologists, artists, cultural practitioners, and advocates to explore cutting-edge developments in digital technologies and artificial intelligence (AI) to expand accessibility within the arts and cultural landscape.

Held at the WA Maritime Museum, the symposium will feature a dynamic lineup of international, local and national speakers, visitors and organisations. It will create space for critical conversation, practical demonstrations and peer-to-peer exchange, foregrounding innovations that advance accessibility, equity, and meaningful inclusion—particularly for individuals with disability and those from marginalised or underrepresented communities.

Through a dynamic program of keynote presentations, panel discussions, interactive workshops, and pioneering projects, the conference seeks to critically examine the intersection of technology, culture, and social justice. It aims to foster cross-disciplinary dialogue and catalyse the co-creation of inclusive digital futures that democratise cultural participation and expression.

Critical Conversations: Art, Access & the Digital Now will highlight both emerging innovations and persistent barriers, aspiring to inform practice and reimagine the cultural landscape as a space of equal opportunity, creativity, and belonging for all.

Program

Day 1: Friday 21 November

Time: 9:00 AM – 4:00 PM

Convener & Host: Sarah Collins

9:00 – 9:30

Welcome & Opening Remarks

- Welcome to Country
- Introductions (David Doyle, Executive Director, DADAA & Tom Müller, CEO, Fremantle Biennale)
- Conference goals & theme overview

9:30 – 10:15

Keynote One: Karen Anderson MBE, Artistic Director, Indepen-dance Dance (UK)

Title: From Principles to Practice: Evolving Accessibility in Our Company

Summary: The intersection of dance and digital technology within Indepen-dance's practice and evolving futures.

10:15 – 10:30

Morning Tea Break

10:30 – 11:15

Presentation: Katie Ellis, Kai-Ti Kao, Kathryn Locke, Curtin University

Title: Smart Stages, Inclusive Spaces: AI Transforms Cultural Access

Summary: The Inclusion Compass report by the Centre for Inclusive Design reveals critical insights into Australia's inclusion landscape that have profound implications for AI-enhanced arts and cultural experiences.

11:15 – 12:00

Short Presentations:

Focus: Artistic practice, digital technologies and creative access.

Presented by:

Fuji Yosaku, Artworker, Tanpopo-No-Ye Foundation (Japan) *online presentation
Riana Head-Toussaint, Artist (Fremantle Biennale – Guided Wrestling)

12:00 – 1:00

Lunch

1:00 – 2:00

Breakout Sessions Digital Technologies

Choose from:

- A. affordable low tech, high impact in under-resourced regional communities
- B. co-creation with communities: tech-enabled participatory practice
- C. designing for neurodiversity

2:00 – 2:45

Keynote Two: Andreas Reichinger (Austria)

*online presentation

Improving Inclusivity through Tactile Interpretations of Art

Summary: Making art accessible: inclusive design, tactile interpretations, enabling technologies and the ARCHES project for Museums.

2:45 – 3:30

Keynote Three: Prof Yan Zhang, Artist & Professor, Western Sydney University **Generative Dreams: Rethinking Art in the Age of AI**

Summary: how generative AI is reshaping our conventional understanding of art, creativity and the role of the artist.

3:30 – 4:00

Wrap-up & Reflection

4:00 – 8:00

Explore the Fremantle Biennale

Visit the Manjaree Precinct for the [Community Kitchen](#), [Manjaree Music Exhalation](#) + more

[Guided Wrestling](#) by Riana Head-Toussaint

Book tickets to [A Predatory Chord](#) by Ben Frost

Dance at [Sanctuary Within](#).

[View the full program here.](#)

5:00 – 7:00

Sundowner & Networking Event, location TBC.

Program

Day 2: Saturday 22 November
Imaginative Futures — AI, Inclusion, Innovation & Artistic Practice

Time: 9:00 AM – 4:00 PM
Convener & Host: Sarah Collins

9:00 – 9:15

Morning Welcome & Recap

9:15 – 10:00

Keynote Four

Sarah Mace Dennis, Artist

Title: Collecting Time: Artificial Intelligence, Art and the Future Creative Economy

Summary: Artists from across the globe set ideas in motion that inspire new aesthetic and cultural transformations. This paper focusses on global artists working at the intersection between human and machine.

10:00 – 10:45

Keynote Five

Nat Lim, Director, A11YVerse (Singapore)

Title: Enabling Access: Realising Potential in the Metaverse Creator Economy

Summary: Traverse through 'The P11ayground', a virtual world seeking to elevate the standards of accessible work & learning for diverse communities. Discover how our living lab approach makes putting accessibility at the forefront, child's play.

10:45 – 11:00

Morning Tea Break

11:00 – 12:00

Short Presentations

Speakers to be announced

- 3 x 20 min short presentations from artists, researchers, and students.
 - Focus: Latest in AI in access to the arts
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12:00 – 12:45

Breakout Sessions (Roundtable Format)

- A. AI as a collaborative creative partner
 - B. AI for Artistic Accessibility
 - C. Ethics, ownership and Attribution in AI Art
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12:45 – 1:30

Lunch

1:30 – 2:00

Presentation: Dr Scott Hollier, CEO, Centre for Accessibility, Australia

Title: Digital accessibility, AI, and the Arts

Summary: The rapid evolution of machine learning and generative artificial intelligence is having a significant impact on the Arts community and its support for people with disability. While generative AI has seen significant accessibility benefits, it's also important to recognise the risks and its reliability. Join DrScottHollier, lead author of the W3C international guidance on accessible machine learning and generative AI, to explore this topic in a thought-provoking session with practical tips.

2:00 to 2:30

Final Panel: Cross-Sector Reflections

- Bridging policy, practice, research, and lived experience
 - Multi-voice panel moderated with audience Q&A
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2:30 – 2:45

Closing Remarks & Collective Commitments(Sarah Collins)

3:00 – 4:00

Curator's Tour: Fremantle Biennale

(*Limited places)

4:00 – 4:30

Performance by Indepen-dance at the DADAA Theatre, Fremantle.

4:00 – 8:00

Explore the Fremantle Biennale

Visit the Manjaree Precinct for the [Community Kitchen](#), [Manjaree Music Veil](#) + more

Sunset at the river with [Vespers](#), John Tonkin Reserve, East Fremantle.

[Guided Wrestling](#) by Riana Head-Toussaint

Visit [Nepenthe \(Summer Palace Ruins\)](#), [Content Pool](#) and [Fifty Thousand Years](#).

View the full program here.

Biographies

Karen Anderson, MBE, Indepen-dance (Scotland, UK)

Karen, the founder of [Indepen-dance](#) in 1996, is driven by the core principles of access, participation, and integration. As the Artistic Director, she provides a robust and imaginative framework, playing a pivotal role in the ongoing success and evolution of the company. With a background in social work spanning over 13 years within Strathclyde Regional Council, Karen developed her skills through various training programs focused on working with disabled individuals. Utilising dance, creative movement, music, Touch Trust, and Watsu, she firmly believes in the transformative power of these art forms, offering profound benefits to people of all abilities and ages, fostering social inclusion, and empowering individuals to realise their artistic potential to the fullest.

Karen's collaborative spirit shines through her close work with esteemed choreographers such as Royston Maldoom, Wolfgang Stange, and Lucy Bennett, among others, ensuring that all participants in Indepen-dance's core activities are exposed to high-quality dance and creative movement experiences. Her extensive artistic connections locally, nationally, and internationally have significantly expanded the reach of Indepen-dance's work, spanning across the UK, Ireland, Europe, Canada, Paraguay, Australia, Colombia, and South Korea.

Sarah-Mace Dennis

[Sarah-Mace Dennis](#) is an interdisciplinary creative leader with two decades of experience working internationally across the arts, education, screen and community engagement sectors. She has taught creative research & practice at Universities in Australia and the UK and collaborated with disabled talent in the creation of films, exhibitions and advertising campaigns for international festivals and brands.

Sarah's leadership approach is informed by her lived experience of traumatic brain injury, after which she learnt to walk & eventually dance again by listening to the sound of her feet. Interested in who speaks, and for whom, she works with communities to create digital experiences that transform libraries, stadiums, and urban spaces into platforms for meaningful storytelling. In 2022 she worked with disability-founded production agency 'With Not For' on HSBC's digital accessibility campaign. From 2022-25 she was part of a majority disability-led board as trustee of world-renowned professional dance company Candoco.

Biographies Continued

Riana Head-Toussaint

[Riana Head-Toussaint](#) is an interdisciplinary crip/disabled artist, DJ and curator/community organiser of Afro-Caribbean heritage. Her practice sits at the intersection of creative expression, activism, cultural exchange and disability justice. Riana creates across choreography, performance, sound, film, writing, and installation. Her work is aimed at challenging deep-rooted systems and ways of thinking, driving social change, and creating spaces that invite deeper embodiment and expansive ways of experiencing the world. Her work is site-specific, and has taken place in carparks, post-industrial ruins, raves, clubs, galleries, theatres, and online/digital spaces. Riana's projects have been commissioned and presented by a range of institutions and organisations including Human Rights Watch, the Art Gallery of NSW, the Opera House, Buxton Contemporary, Carriageworks, The Keir Foundation, Arts House, the British Council, Perth Festival, the Institute of Modern Art, Utp, Fremantle Biennale, Frame Biennial, Casula Powerhouse, Pari Ari and more.

Riana is the founder and curator of CRIP RAVE THEORY, a sound and club culture project that draws on intersectional disabled/crip knowledge to create more accessible music, rave and party spaces. She also has a broader curatorial practice, and has curated for the Art Gallery of NSW, Runway Journal and Firstdraft. In recognition of her contributions to the national arts and cultural landscape, in 2024 Riana was awarded Creative Australia's prestigious national '*Arts & Disability Award*' for early career artists. In 2022 she was also shortlisted for '*Best Artist*' at the fbi SMAC AWARDS. She currently resides on sacred, unceded Kulin lands.

Dr Scott Hollier

[Dr Scott Hollier](#) is the CEO of the Centre for Accessibility Australia. He specialises in the field of digital accessibility and has a PhD in Internet Studies, a Master of Management, and senior management experience across the not-for-profit, corporate and Government sectors. Scott also holds academic positions at Edith Cowan University and the University of South Australia and is an Invited Expert for the W3C Accessible Platform Architectures Research Questions Task Force. Scott has a lived experience of disability as a person who is legally blind, and as such has both a professional and personal understanding of the importance of accessibility.

Nat Lim, Director, A11YVerse (Singapore)

[Nat Lim](#) is a creative technologist and disability arts practitioner dedicated to "Enabling Access, Nurturing Creators." As Founder and Executive Director of A11Yverse in Singapore, she pioneers barrier-free ecosystems where disability arts meets Web3 technology. With an MFA from CalArts and extensive experience producing major festivals in Singapore, Nat has championed accessibility through groundbreaking works including the internationally commissioned, *And Suddenly I Disappear... The UK/ Singapore 'd' Monologues*, she currently leads the world's first A11Y IMPACT ACADEMY, empowering D/deaf, disabled, neurodivergent and atypical communities to thrive in the creator economy through innovative metaverse training programs that bridge disability arts practices with emerging technology.

Andreas Reichinger, ARCHES Project (Austria)

Dipl.-Ing.(FH) Andreas Reichinger studied media technology and design and is currently working on his dissertation on Visual Computing for Tactile and Auditive Senses at Vienna University of Technology. He is Senior Research Engineer at VRVis GmbH and was involved in over 15 national and EU-funded projects in the field of visual computing, ranging from object tracking, 3D data acquisition, modeling, rendering and virtual reality. Since 2010 he is working on inclusive design and he has created over 40 tactile interpretations of paintings, photographs and other works of art, shown at 20 museums and cultural institutions, helping especially blind and visually impaired people. His research interests include accessibility in art, 3D modeling, touch tool creation, 3D computer vision, computational photography and virtual reality.

[ARCHES](#) helps European museums to become barrier-free with 3D art replicas, mobile phone apps, games and sign language video avatars. ARCHES stands for “Accessible Resources for Cultural Heritage EcoSystems”. With the support of the European Union, ARCHES has brought together disabled people, technology companies, universities and museums. Together, they have developed technological solutions, such as tactile reliefs made with the latest 3D modelling techniques, barrier-free apps and games for smartphones and tablets, together with sign-language avatars are the cutting-edge technologies. The technologies have been co-designed and tested by more than 200 disabled people in Spain, Austria and the UK.

Fuji Yosaku – Tanpopo-No-Ye Foundation (Japan)

[Tanpopo-No-Ye Foundation](#) (Japan) is a nonprofit organization working with people with disability implementing a wide range of art projects from the standpoint of “art” and “care”. Striving for social inclusion, it carries out projects that ask the public to think about the social significance of art and civil culture. It links with organizations domestically and internationally into networks for promoting a cultural movement, carrying out work of highly public nature.

Prof. Yan Zhang

[Professor Yan Zhang](#) is an international leading researcher in Artificial Intelligence (AI), an [award-winning landscape photographer](#), and a mountaineering enthusiast. At Western Sydney University, Australia, he leads the cutting-edge research in the areas of Knowledge Representation and Reasoning, Applied Machine Learning and Generative AI. Alongside his 30 years academic career, Yan has established a strong reputation as a landscape photographer, celebrated for his striking and often remote high-mountain imagery. His work has received numerous accolades, including being the winner of 2022 Australian Geographic Nature Photographer of the Year (Landscape).