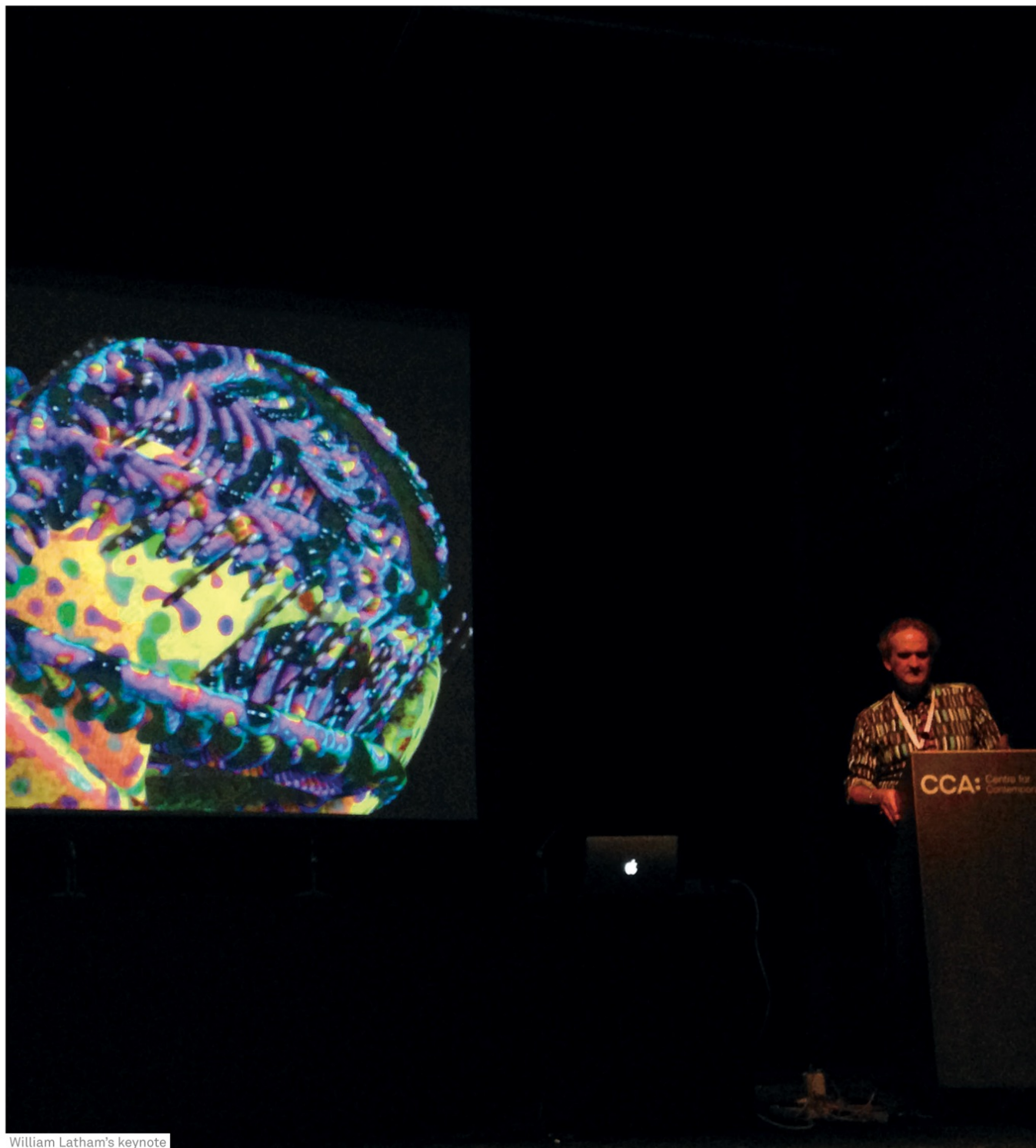
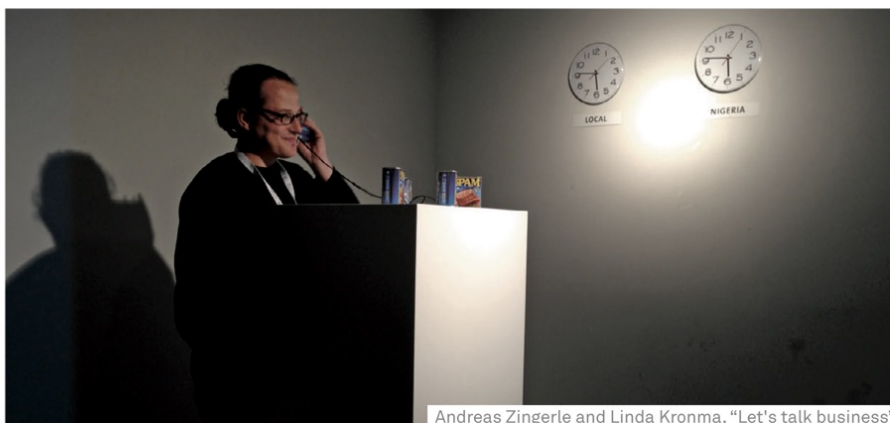


# xCoAx 2015, Glasgow

> report



William Latham's keynote



Andreas Zingerle and Linda Kronma, "Let's talk business"

xCoAx is a conference whose acronym means "Computation, Communication, Aesthetics and X." The "X" leaves plenty of room for properly decoding its full spectrum of possible significances, but it's placed there on purpose as a recursive unknown factor in a formula. After the first two editions in Bergamo in 2013 and Porto in 2014, the 2015 edition has been organised in Glasgow by the local University of the West of Scotland in collaboration with an extended international network of institutions and academics. The conference has been initially created with a specific attitude to investigate computational aesthetics in very different embodiments, and during these first three editions it has shared a number of works developed on a remarkable either technical or theoretical complexity. In Glasgow the symposium has been hosted in the auditorium of the Centre for Contemporary Arts, in a fascinating 19th century building with plenty of interesting papers' presentations. Among them: Alessio Chierico analysed three of his artworks incorporating what he defines as the "technological manifestations of visual devices", deeply questioning consolidated display conventions; Gabriella Arrigoni (together with Tom Schofield), discussed "artistic prototypes" as a distinct methodology compared to design ones, and a critical medium for properly expressing categories of both "openness" and "fictionality". André Rangel, discussed the results of an investigation about the term "intermedia" he

engaged with personally, showing that is a term that has been largely known, being used and sometimes even abused as its meaning is quite uncertain among many people. Tracking back Coleridge's original definition of "intermedium," and mentioning Futurist's "shameless use of any media" and the Dadaists' attitude to "assembly" he was able to reinstate "intermedia" as an important term beyond its programmatic "capacity to create new media through the fusion of existing media" through, quoting Coleridge, a unique "indisciplinary activity." In a different paper, Luke Sturgeon and Shamik Ray presented their research in visualising electromagnetic fields through a toolkit and the evaluation of different artworks. Mathias Müller then illustrated their quite innovative technical prototype of "elastic display" (developed with Thomas Gründer and Rainer Groh) meant to possibly deal, for example, with elastic projections. Nicole Koltick, instead, led the audience to a certainly more theoretical territory. Her definition of "accidental aesthetics" was introduced and investigated through various philosophical perspectives including phenomenology and speculative aesthetics. They were related to computation and autonomous systems, reinforced by the intriguing experiments she's developing at Drexel University's Design Futures Lab. A more atypical presentation was Christoph Theiler and Renate Pittroff's one explained their "Fluid Control," an impressive project to develop "water based electronic elements to control

different parameters of electronic sound and video tools" with a high technical level accomplished through DIY practices. Finally the keynote speaker for this year was famous William Latham with a talk entitled: "Evolution Art and Computers Now." He reconstructed his career as a pioneering computer artist who went through different work environments. During his studies he started his art practice drawing as a "human generative system," (a practice that he has refined over the years), but after a while he was attracted by Benoit Mandelbrot theories and visualisations, and also by computer and software enormous potential in visual creation. He then started to work on his organic-fictional creatures, programmed and rendered through extensive and days-long computer calculations in the end of eighties, when he started to work for IBM. These artworks after a while became acknowledged by both art and science communities and got their peak of fame in the early nineties, in a historical moment when digital technologies started to have an important role for societies. In the same period he then left everything else to be involved in producing artefacts for the rave music scene (renowned, for example, his covers for the "The Shamen" band albums) and developed mesmerising computer animations and graphics which has literally shaped an important part of that movement's aesthetics. He developed his own software called "Mutator" and was involved in commercial visual works. But after many years he got rid of





"Growing Objects: Testing with biological generative systems" by R.Pinto, P.Atkinson, J.Vieira and M.Carvalhais

all of that and returned to academia becoming professor at Goldsmiths, University of London in the Computing department. Judging current art field he affirmed that it is filled with "sensationalism", and what would instead really help would be reinforcing collaboration, and open source getting wider is a very good sign in this respect.

Exhibitions were hosted in different places. Among the works hosted, there were: "Let's talk business" by Andreas Zingerle and Linda Kronma, an installation exploring online scam narratives through a 5-channel interactive audio uncovering the most common "business proposals" and scam schemes in their full plausible political effect. In the presentation he gave during the conference, Zingerle explained their background research, underlying the role of the communication through telephone in the narrative, providing a study of a 374 emails sample, commonly used in business proposal scams. "AR/VR\_Putney 1.0" by Alena Mésarošová and Ricardo Climent, instead, was an immersive virtual environment aimed to involve the user in a playful and active sound-oriented experience: collecting the pieces of a 1969 VCS3 synthesizer and make it work plugging them in the exact place. It was playing interestingly with sense of orientation and it could have been defined as "augmented" as well, as in the immersive space the physical one was rendered.

And there was also "Growing Objects: Testing with biological generative systems" by Raul Pinto, Paul Atkinson, Joaquim Vieira and Miguel

Carvalhais, a visually engaging artwork and experiment in the form of mysterious organic "vases." It was an investigation where the generative "potential" has been properly applied, as a concept, to biological systems. With a pure DIY approach here the vases were built with mycelia fungus, so ready to grow and sprout (as they evidently were), and then programmatically distributed to users who should take responsibilities to grow and maintain them, strengthening the generative concept through a simple social environment. xCoAx ended with a performance program centred on the relationship between gesture, sound, visual and music. The next edition will take place in Bergamo in 2016, hopefully further expanding and consolidating its lively and engaged community.

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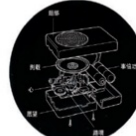
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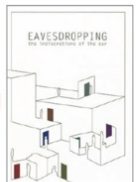
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