



**15 JULY 2009 – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **The Australian Centre of Virtual Art wins major Australia Council grant to create a virtual art lab.**

The Australian Centre of Virtual Art (ACVA) has received funding from the Australia Council to design and run a series of experimental spaces for Australian artists interested in extending their practice into the virtual domain.

This twelve-month project will canvas the Australian art scene for people working in virtual environments, conduct a call-out for those interested in participating in a series of creative labs, and develop a series of prototype virtual spaces for selected artists to work in. Ongoing experimentation, creation and review will be conducted over the course of the project, with outcomes exhibited across a range of mediums.

The Lab is a cross-artform, multi-practice initiative – including dance, community arts, Indigenous arts, interdisciplinary arts, literature, music, sound art, theatre and visual arts and will involve a range of experienced and emerging practitioners in this field.

Christopher Dodds, Adam Nash and Greg More are coordinating the Lab. Dodds and Nash established ACVA in 2007 after their *Babelswarm* project won the inaugural Australia Council Second Life Artists in Residence grant (with Justin Clemens).

Local and international curators, theorists and artists will be invited to participate as provocateurs alongside the final selection of Australian lab participants. The lab's outcomes will be used as a road map for the future of virtual arts in Australia, with documentation and case studies made available via the ACVA web site.

ACVA LAB is supported by the Australia Council as a commitment to their Arts Content for the Digital Era Strategy. It will provide research and development and workshops for artists who are creating content for digital platforms such as virtual worlds and video games. The initiative aims to raise the profile of these emerging artforms and support artists to evolve their arts practice in these new domains.

“A key priority for us is to help artists working with digital technologies and to develop quality, cutting-edge work for the digital era,” said Kathy Keele, Chief Executive of the Australia Council for the Arts. “This Virtual Art Lab brings both these goals together in an exciting hothouse environment where artists can inspire each other and workshop all that is possible.”

Virtual environments utilised during the Lab will include real-time 3D spaces such as MMO games, Second Life, VastPark and Unity platforms, plus a mix of social media and digitally networked environments.

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The project's roll-out can be followed via <http://blog.acva.net.au>, with a full web site launching in August 2009.

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*This project has been assisted by the Australian Government through the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory body.*