

Presenting Video Exhibitions: Face to Face - a case study

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In 2009, artists and curators alike are faced with a plethora of new technologies in the production and exhibition of new media arts. Many artists and galleries may find the complexity and diversity of available digital technologies—as well as the pace of development swamping the digital landscape—daunting and may need assistance navigating the best technologies from production to the final output at exhibition.



The d/Lux/MediaArts *Face 2 Face* exhibition not only presents a range of interpretations of portraiture in the digital age, but also a survey of the myriad of technologies that have been available to and utilised by artists in recent times. Some of the greatest advances have been made in the area of video art. With High Definition technologies now more accessible than ever, the delivery of video art is no longer limited to disc play back (DVD), thus allowing the artist's work to be seen as intended.

Face to Face at Hazelhurst Gallery, NSW.

For many artists, converting files to DVD causes a significant loss in the sound and image quality of their work (not to mention ongoing headaches with faulty discs and idiosyncratic DVD players). Often exhibition installations need to be in Standard Definition and, although it is possible to play back work shot on High Definition video cameras through Blu-ray DVD technologies or by “down converting” to Standard Definition, many artists do not have the funds or choose not to invest in these recent technologies. So artists are often left with little choice but to convert their High Definition work for play back on Standard Definition screen based technologies.

With the *Face 2 Face* exhibition project, however, d/Lux/MediaArts has dispensed with DVD discs and players in favour of innovative use of video files, ensuring that we can accommodate the needs of artists now and in the future.

This technology has the following benefits:

- ✓ The play back of video files direct from a computer hard drive allows for seamless integration with the latest High Definition LCD screens as the video signal is sent via HDMI cabling and wireless audio.
- ✓ The best possible play back quality of High Definition files is obtained by eliminating conversion to DVD and, thus, the necessity for conversion to Blu-ray DVD or down conversion to Standard Definition.
- ✓ The file size of the project is limited only by the size of the computer's hard drive and not by the capacity of a DVD.
- ✓ Files can be easily delivered to galleries and curators via high speed broadband internet, allowing for easier transfer and compiling whether in High or Standard Definition.

The solution for d/Lux/MediaArts was to use High Definition codecs that have recently developed for play back in the new 1920 x 1080i High Definition format. The play back of High Definition Pro Res¹ from a small computer hard drive (such as a Mac Mini) allows for the artist's work to be seen at its best.

Constant by Denis Beaubois in situ - courtesy of the artist and d/Lux/MediaArts



For *Face 2 Face*, d/Lux/MediaArts has chosen the Airfoil² video player software as it has the capability to transmit audio wirelessly to multiple speakers via airport express or any wireless device. This eliminates the cost and time involved in the installation of speaker cabling, and allows for more aesthetically pleasing installations.



There are also a number of other software video file players available for free or for very little cost. Some of these have the capacity to play multiple files so that large projects do not suffer from dropped frames or choppy play back. Many software players also support play back for a range of file types, allowing for backward compatibility as well as real time streaming from websites³.

HotNot by Rachel Scott with sound cone, courtesy of the artist and d/Lux/MediaArts

¹ The Apple coded Pro Res is fast becoming the industry standard of High Definition video format files and equals the resolution needed for the latest generation resolution of 1920 x 1080i LCD and projectors using HDMI – DVI from computer to screen cabling and eliminating RCA or component cables. See: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ProRes_422

² see <http://www.rogueamoeba.com/>

³ see <http://www.videolan.org/vlc/>