

ARCLines *New Forms Festival*

Allison Collins



New Forms is an artist-run festival that was started in 1999 by Malcolm Levy, Jarrett Martineau and Rachel Flood, three artists and arts professionals who had an interest in contemporary art based in music, media, technology and performance. The festival was founded with the intent to disseminate media art and different forms of contemporary art using media and technology in various community spaces throughout Vancouver. The organizers were actively interested in emerging artists using technologically forward practices that were developing elsewhere across Canada and internationally, but had not yet found a niche locally. Levy and Martineau had been involved in the overlapping media arts and electronic music scenes of Montreal, and the notion to begin New Forms was sprung of their previous collaborations on events in that city.

New Forms Festival took root quickly in Vancouver, gaining many new supporters by their second year,

including Camille Baker, Aleksandra Dulic, Kenneth Newby, Carol Sill, and James K-M. These contributors worked together to co-curate thematic 3-day events each year to bring practices in video, experimental music, experimental technology, photography, and performance to both commercial and non-commercial spaces in the Main Street area.

In the first year, venues included coffee and retail shops, artist-run centres, restaurants and industrial spaces:

SOMA (a coffee shop)

Monsoon (a bistro)

Video In (now VIVO Media Arts Centre)

LUGS

The Whip (restaurant)

Naked

Sugar Refinery (a factory)

The Alibi Room (a restaurant)



In the second year, New Forms began receiving funds from government organizations to support their programs and manage the event. Venues expanded to include Roundhouse Community Centre, the Dance Centre, the Western Front, Sonar, the Elektra Building, and the St Andrew Wesley United Church, located at Burrard and Nelson. The spaces would house performance with visuals including video installations, vaudeville, live bands, and electronic music.

In the third year of operating, some members of New Forms decided to collaborate with artists and musicians looking for production spaces, and the result was the opening of the Open Forum Media Arts Society, a two story building off Main Street that contains a film studio black box and seven studios. The space was formed

to accommodate a combination of electronic media, music and visual art. Operating independently from New Forms, the Open Forms Media Arts Society established a base of operations for the festival, giving New Forms access to a venue that could accommodate programming and events in their off-season, as well as house their administrative needs throughout the year.

Particularly in its early years, the festival gained valuable support from collaborating organizations like Video In (now VIVO Media Arts Centre), and Western Front. Over the years New Forms has evolved, partnering with grunt, Western Front, VIVO, and W2. As it continues, New Forms focuses on contemporary art forms based in experimental media practices, and builds connections to similar events happening around the world such as a recent showcase in Montreal at MUTEK.

New Forms Founding Artists and Curators, 1999

Malcolm Levy
Jarrett Martineau
Rachael Flood

and in 2000

Camille Baker
Aleksandra Dulic
Kenneth Newby
Carol Sill
James K-M

Velocity Media Arts Services Society, Original Mandate

New Forms Media Society is a media arts organization that nurtures and connects local and international arts, sciences, academic and grassroots communities through the annual New Forms Festival. By promoting Canadian artists in collaboration with the international arts and technology world, the NFF facilitates multimodal art works and engages in discussion on their role in our cultural environment. Since its inception, an integral element of the NFF is the recognition of independent and groundbreaking artists; the NFF aims to showcase and increase awareness of these artists and their work within our community and beyond by promoting them within a larger milieu. The NFF is part of a larger, international, multi-media, festival movement, which explores the ever changing and evolving world of art and creates a platform for artistic growth. The Society wishes to make new media art, music, film, technology-based installation and performance accessible to a wider audience. The aim of the NFMS is to create a festival and space that are accessible, engaging, educative and exciting to its visitors. We also hope to entice and enable our community to use or expand their use and understanding of media art practices and technologies through education, discussion and research.

New Forms Media Society is a non-profit society that exists to provide the following through the New Forms Festival:

- Promote new art forms and talent in an interactive forum
- Explore and research new directions in new media, arts and technology from an alternative aesthetic
- Create ways in which new forms of art, media and culture are accessible, engaging, and exciting to a larger audience

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About the Author:
Allison Collins is a Contributing Editor for ArcPost. She is an independent curator and writer based inVancouver.