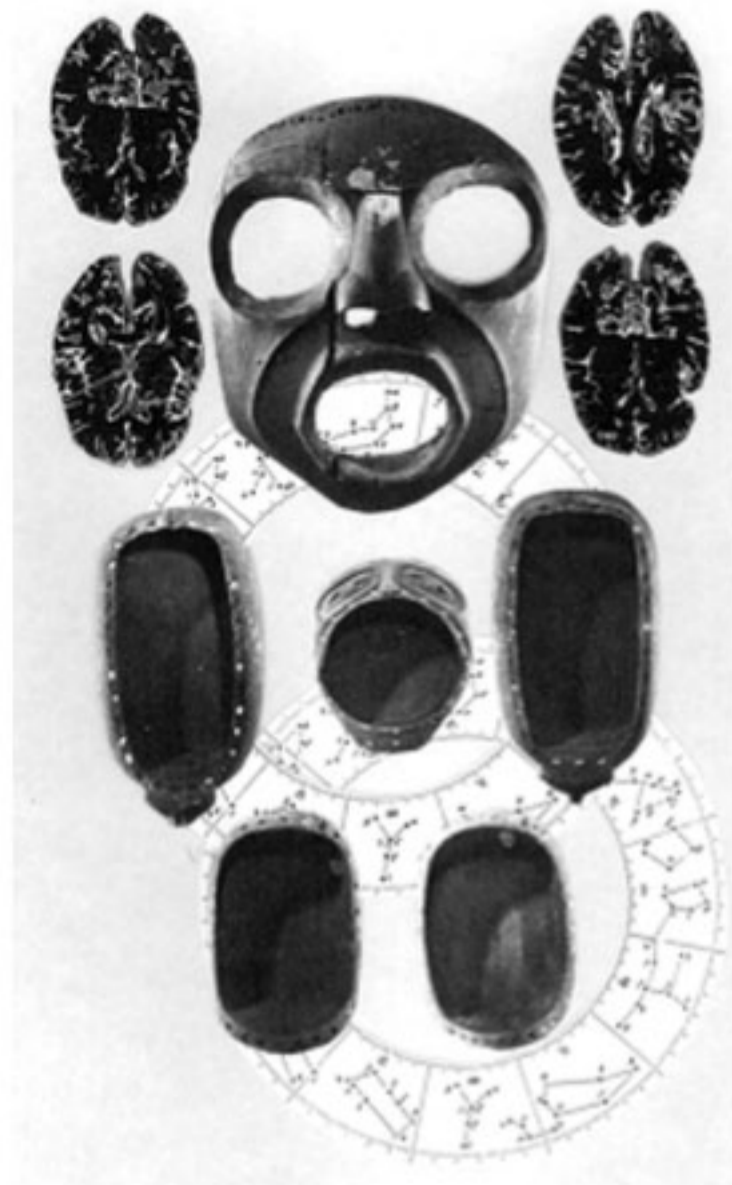


Ghosts in the brain of the machine

CAiiA is a port hub on the international network of artsmedia labs. The last few augusts, CAiiA has been host to its unique 'Consciousness Reframed' conferences, at its University of Wales base, in Caerleon, above the river Usk, a forum for redefining the reach of art, technology and consciousness. This report is on CAiiA's Consciousness Reframed 2



The Centre for Advanced Inquiry into the Interactive Arts (CAiiA) is an ambitious, if small new media department set in Caerleon, a few miles outside Newport in South Wales, Britain. For the last five years the Centre has been running a Doctoral and Research programme, primarily on-line, though with annual ten-day intensive face-to-face sessions between students and faculty, the former being mainly mid-career artists. It's an example of a leading edge experiment of the planetary collegiate in the making.

In 1997, the Centre convened the first conference on art and consciousness in the post-biological era, called 'Consciousness Reframed'. In their interpretation of post-biological the organisers began from an inclusive definition of 'all aspects of life which are mediated, extended or transformed by technology, including the mind and consciousness.' The aim was to bring together the different and interested communities whose primary concerns were new media in all its various emergent manifestations, ranging across internet telematics to virtual reality.

To a certain extent the conference appears to reflect the wide-ranging interests of the Centre's Director and Conference's primary organiser, Roy Ascott. Among the original generation of artists who became immersed in the enabling potential of new media for artists to engage issues beyond their traditional provenance, Ascott has been at the forefront of promoting concepts such as telematics, cyberception and recently, shamanics. Of the conference's original intention, he has written of how a 'central interest was the impact on art of