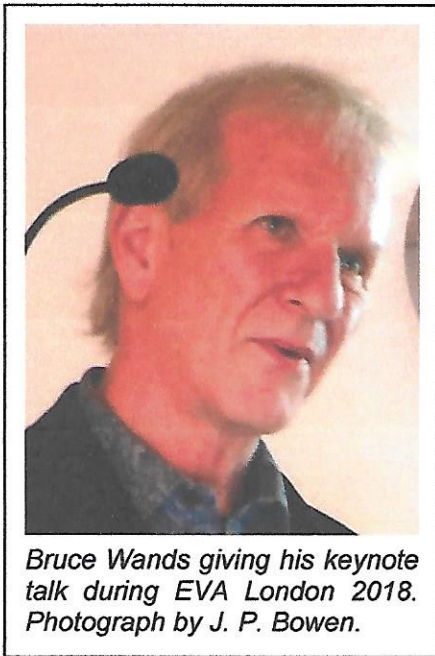


Tribute to Bruce Wands

Nick Lambert
Chair, Computer Arts Society



Bruce Wands giving his keynote talk during EVA London 2018. Photograph by J. P. Bowen.

In the past year, the world of digital art has lost several key figures. Of particular relevance to EVA is Bruce Wands, who passed away on 6 July 2022 (while EVA London 2022 was running) at the age of 72. Bruce was a great supporter of EVA London for over a decade and attended many conferences along with students and colleagues from the School of Visual Arts (SVA) in New York.

Bruce discovered computer graphics through his Masters degree in Television/Radio/Film at Syracuse University in 1976 and immediately found a computer animation post in New York. His credits included the animated opening sequence for *Saturday Night Live* and the graphics on the Spectacolor billboard in Times Square that counted down the New Year.

In 1984, he began as a faculty member at the SVA, teaching a Business Graphics workshop in Continuing Education. Over the next few years, Bruce developed over seventy digital art courses and was appointed Director of Computer Education in 1992. He founded the BFA Computer Art Department in 1994 and educated many cohorts of students along with his faculty members at the Computer Art Center. In 1998, he was named Chair of the MFA Computer Art Department. Along with further expanding the department in the 2000s, he also became active in developing computer education in China.

Bruce saw the potential for emerging digital art to link together creative media and with this in mind he became the curator to the first *New York Digital Salon* in 1993, chaired by Timothy Binkley. Bruce became Chair in 1998 and the Salon ran for over 20 years, hosting internationally recognised digital artists selected by a panel of judges. The exhibitions were written up in the *Leonardo* journal and emphasised the connectivity of the digital arts scene, touring internationally and within the USA. Based on his leading role in the digital arts, Bruce was awarded grants by the National Endowment for the Arts, Rockefeller Foundation, New York State Council on the Arts, and NESTA UK. Bruce's key books included *Digital Creativity* (Wiley, 2002) and *Art of the Digital Age* (Thames & Hudson, 2006). These did much to popularise the area of computer-based art.

My own connection with Bruce developed through my colleague Professor Jeremy Gardiner, who had worked closely with him during his time in the USA. Bruce provided generous and continuing support to our project *Computer Art and Technocultures*, including a memorable evening at the SVA in 2009 that included many luminaries of American computer art past and present. It was also in 2009 that Bruce began his longstanding connection with EVA London. Later, Bruce became a judge on the Lumen Prize for Art and Technology and when Lumen presented at New York Creative Tech Week in 2016, he opened the doors at SVA and gave freely of his time to support us. He was an affable guide to New York's digital art scene, and we enjoyed his anecdotes.

I miss Bruce greatly, as do my EVA London colleagues, knowing how much he did to establish computer art both in American education, through the *Digital Salon* and his own publications, supported by his personal warmth alongside his sterling contributions to the field.



EVA London 2017 Symposium panel session. Photograph by J. P. Bowen. Left to right: Jon Weinell, Jeremy Gardiner, Bruce Wands, Jonathan Kearney, Tula Giannini, Carla Gannis.