

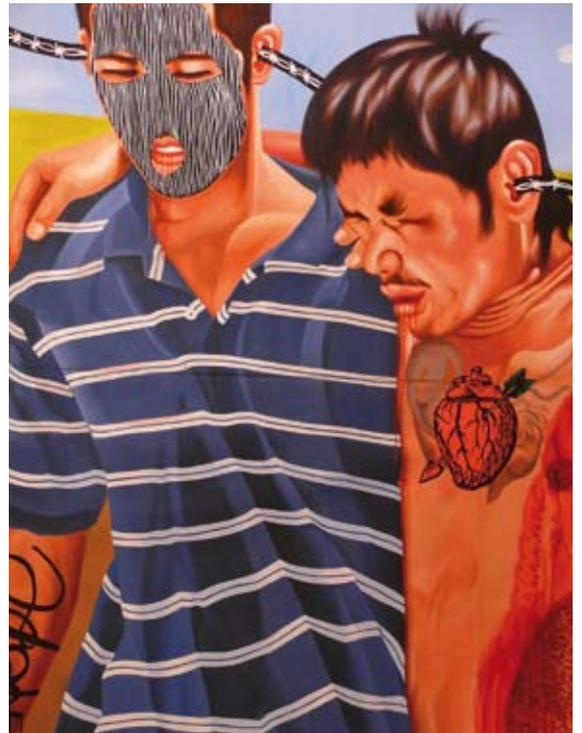
un.



Dylan Martorell
Panter Cluster Rimbone, 2007
Bamboo, plastic, guitar amps, keyboards, organs
Dimensions variable
Image courtesy the artist



Susan Jacobs
For Every Solution There is a Problem (detail), 2007
Dead tree, stud wall, hinged door
300 x 500 x 780cm
Image courtesy the artist
Photo Credit: Julie Davies



David Griggs
Blood on the Streets (detail), 2007
Acrylic paint on canvas
300 x 400cm
Image courtesy Uplands Gallery

FREE



department of fine arts / caulfield

2008 staff/BFA undergraduate program

painting program: leslie eastman, lily hibberd, rosslynd piggott, michael bullock, cate consadine, maryanne coutts, john nixon, julie rrap, steven rendall, andrea tu, michael vale, rosie weiss

sculpture and spatial practice program: kit wise, terri bird, fiona macdonald, kathy temin, cate consandine, stephen garrett, dan wollmering, jon eiseman, jim boyle, suzanne palmieri, bethany wheeler, ben sewell, marian hosking, vito bila, george aslanis, simon cottrell, mascha moje, spiros panigirakis

photomedia program: prof claudia terstappen, matthew perkins, peta clancy, julie rrap, claudia terstappen, catherine bell

drawing program: nick mourtzakis, tom nicholson, anne holt, peter wegner, nina sellars, christian capurro, maryanne coutts, ken smith, phil cooper, damiano bertoli, jill orr (performance), michael graeve (sound), david hamilton, ginny grayson, dagmar cyrulla

printmedia program and the artist's book studio: marian crawford, toni covino-beehre, carolyn frazer

honours program: terri bird, janet burchill, christian capurro, marian hosking, fiona macdonald, daniel palmer, kit wise

2008 staff/BVA undergraduate program: catherine bell, stephen garrett, hilary green, steven rendell

2008 staff/postgraduate program

dr caroline durre, prof claudia terstappen, dr domenico de clario, dr robert nelson, kit wise, dr julie roberts, dr john gregory, dr anne marsh, prof bernard hoffert, dr daniel palmer, leslie eastman, dr maryanne coutts, dr michael vale, dr dan wollmering, dr terri bird, dr tom nicholson, kathy temin, catherine bell, dr melissa miles, dr luke morgan, dr bronwyn stocks

2007-8 visiting artist residencies

veronica brovall and emil holmer (germany); daniela gullotta (italy); eugene carchesio (brisbane); peter hill (sydney); jordan baseman (uk); sabine finkenauser (germany); adad hannah (canada); clifford charles (south africa); stefan lehman (germany); stephen farthing (uk); roberto giannotti (italy); trish morrissey (uk); mervyn kurlanski; david bate; doris betz; nina fischer/maroan el sani (germany); janine antoni (usa); paul ramirez jonas (usa); annette lawrence (usa); mark amerika; sheena mcrae (uk); kai schiezmenz (germany); jane dixon (uk)

2007-8 women in research residencies

anne wilson / rosslynd piggott / selina ou / nina sellars / lyndal walker / sanné mestrom / yuka oyama / danielle freakley / yhonnie scarce/ susan stamp / sue dodd / mikala dwyer / bronia iwanczak / nien schwarz / vicki shukoroglu / mikala dwyer / sarah jane pell / sandra selig / diena georgetti / lizzy newman

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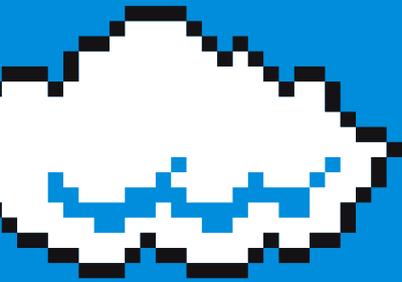
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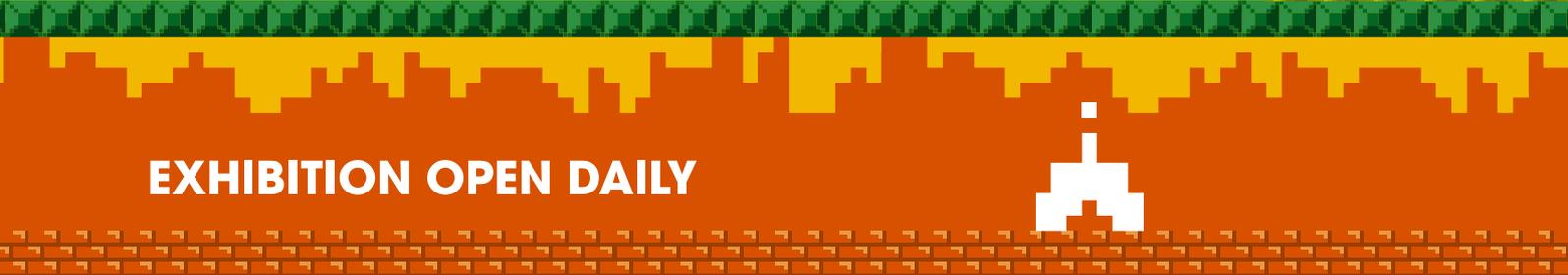


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Volume Two, Issue One

Two years on from its previous life as a quarterly review journal, every issue of *un Magazine* could be considered something of a special edition.

Independent magazines have traditionally published in spurts and starts throughout Australia's art history, struggling with sporadic funding, volunteer staff and limited distribution. *un Magazine* has had its share of these difficulties, but what's great about *un* is that it hasn't disappeared. It started as an experiment and here, four years later, we offer you a new experiment of sorts—a collection of some familiar and some fresh voices, making variously critical, personal, academic, political, and lyrical responses to contemporary art.

When *un* began in 2004 it was in reaction to an unhealthy gap between the quantity and quality of art being made and exhibited in Melbourne's contemporary art community versus its critical reception—or lack thereof. This is still part of the motivation for *un* and we hope more initiatives will continue to pick up on the review and documentation of work made and exhibited here.

Reflecting on his experience of publishing, art critic and *Tension* editor Ashley Crawford has observed that, 'it takes a certain amount of lunacy to start an independent art magazine in Australia'. If by 'lunacy' Crawford was trying to describe the inspired motivation and evangelical dedication to the cause of strengthening critical discourse in our art community, then I'm very grateful for the lunacy of founding editor Lily Hibberd and the committee members of *un Magazine*.

Rosemary Forde

Editor

un.

un Magazine

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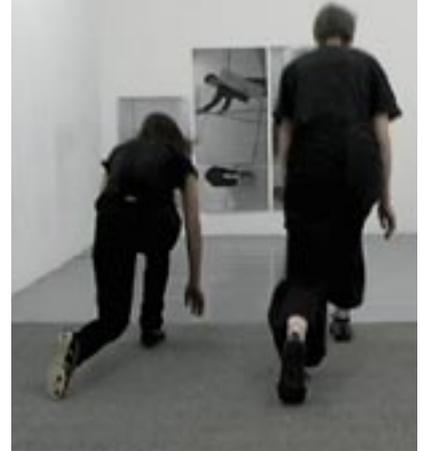
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un Magazine would like to thank all at Next Wave for generously sharing their office space with our staff; the fabulous artists and performers who supported the issue launch at the Tote Hotel in Melbourne and the Adelaide Festival Artists' Week for hosting the issue launch in Adelaide; designers Warren, Sam and Anna for their talent and support of the project; Catherine Doggett and K.W.Doggett Fine Paper for supplying handsome stock; Mel Irwin and Dylan Rainforth for their proofreading assistance; Angela Brophy for her assistance with the launch; the advertisers and distributors who have supported this issue; and especially, thanks and congratulations to the contributing artists and writers who have made the magazine such a great issue!



Chatreuse-better ed some book is

6 **Psychotropicalism: A Manifesto in Search of a Manifestation**
Amelia Douglas

12 **Incomplete Enquiry, Incomplete Adventure: Attila Kotányi and Me**
Reuben Keehan

14 **I Could Take This of Photographs. Reading in the Ruins of Representation.**
Patrick Pound

16 **Rear Window or Front Projection?**
Dylan Rainforth

22 **Conflict, Hierarchy and Hard Work**
A short conversation with Damp, The M.O.S.T. and Pat Foster and Jen Berean

26 **Nothing If Not Critical: Jean-Simeon Chardin Hans Holbein**
Chris Jones

28 **Writing About *The Ranger***
Artists Julie Gough and Nici Cumpston interviewed by Zara Stanhope

32 **Rationale**
Robert Cook

34 **HE and SHE**
Lou Hubbard

36 **Venice Licks**
Jess Johnson

42 **How to Write an Opening Speech to an Art Exhibition**
Daniel Palmer

44 **Hypothetical Interview for Rob Hood by Harold Grieves**

46 **Let's All Go to Iraq**
Fayen d'Evie

50 **Nothing If Not Critical: Nicolas Poussin Antoine Watteau**
Chris Jones

52 **The Writer Versus the Artist Who Speaks in Quotes**
An interview between Penelope Trotter and The Quote Generator

54 **The Banality of Everyday Life**
Michael Ascroft

57 **un.Covered**
Reviews and comment

80 **Nothing If Not Critical: Caravaggio**
Chris Jones

Dylan Martorell

Aguas da Marco (detail), 2007
Archival giclee print on sealed canvas, edition of 10
Dimensions variable
Image courtesy the artist

Chris Jones

Nothing If Not Critical (detail), 2007
A selection of pages by Chris Jones appears throughout this issue, from a series to be published at www.lighthinking.com

Bianca Hester

Provisional Devices for the Production of a Propositional Living Space (detail), 2007
Image courtesy the artist



Psychotropicalism: A Manifesto in Search of a Manifestation

Amelia Douglas

THERE IS NO room for irony. Cynicism and cool facades—they're out too. We stand in the shade of the Big Pineapple; we look to psychedelic folds; we create fluid histories that are infinitely revisable. Psychotropicalism emerges in the wake of a radical dissatisfaction with *that which is*: it sails across the oceans of rhetoric in search of the sincere. The detritus of dogma washes up on the shores of the psychotropicalist, who makes and remakes histories over the limits of what is known and what is possible.

Someone once asked me what I thought was the defining characteristic of art after the 1990s. I had to go with sincerity. After the ennui and endless navel-gazing of art in the age of post-postmodernism, in recent years there has been scattered evidence of a changed impetus for production; a revised way of making meaning, the kind of meaning that has no truck with labels; the kind of art that says what it means and means what it says (art by the likes of Ben Nicholson, Brodie Ellis, Raafat Ishak, Lucas Ihlein). The kind of artist who might know that the boat's on course for rough waters but embarks anyway, armed with nothing but a towel and the hope of coercing the captain into charting a new course (artists like Matthew Griffin, Lou Hubbard, Andrew McQualter—a surprising congregation for sure, but one motivated by their shared imperative to act against all odds).

This article sketches out the story of one possible framework by which such

strands of contemporary art might now be addressed. The tale begins with the mutation and appropriation of a neologism. 'Psychotropicalism' was coined during numerous conversations with Melbourne artist Karla Pringle in 2007, in reference to a nascent, imaginary religion that featured readings from the *Book of Pineapple* and whose converts worshipped only on Sundaes. Extrapolating from this pagan cosmogony, I now believe that (i) psychotropicalism can find an alternate application as a means of reading a selection of recent, contemporary Australian art and (ii) that although psychotropicalism is not determined by the visual, it does have a strong aesthetic presence that directly informs its political efficacy.

Take, for example, the works of Melbourne based practitioners Nathan Gray and Dylan Martorell. Martorell and Gray have been collaborating musically for about a decade under the name of Snawklor. Over the past few years, both artists have established solo practices that integrate sonic improvisations and field recordings with drawing, installation and performance. These works are linked by an interest in fictional rituals, myths and discarded relics, and sharpened with an aesthetic sensibility that approximates what I mean by psychotropicalism.

Nathan Gray's exhibition *The Fold* (2007), at Joint Hassles, resembled nothing less than a portal into a world sparkling with the residue of hallucinogens. Almost all



above
Dylan Martorell
Multi-Kulti, 2007
Plastic beads, cardboard, material, cotton thread.
Dimensions variable
Image courtesy the artist

opposite
Dylan Martorell
Infinights, 2006
Archival giclee print on sealed canvas, edition of 10
Dimensions variable
Album covers, keyboards, bamboo, string, plastic,
guitar effects pedals
Image courtesy the artist



top
Nathan Gray
Love Purity Accuracy, 2007
Installation detail, Utopian Slumps
Image courtesy the artist

above
Nathan Gray
Love Purity Accuracy, 2007
Installation detail, Utopian Slumps
Image courtesy the artist



above
Nathan Gray
Double Dogg, 2007
Collage
Image courtesy the artist

of the pieces featured handmade fragments of paper, saturated with organic swirls of marbled colour or stained with the imprints of salt crystals. On the walls, collages with titles like *Pyschraficial Hood* (2007) and *The Hawknotist* (2007) were pinned behind glass like specimens in a museum. A series of freestanding sculptural growths sprawled across the floor, their wooden frames serving as supports for improvised compositions of paper, prints, collage and string. While the evolution of the forms seemed almost slapdash, they also had a lyrebird quality about them, as if Gray nested out in the gallery and built little bivouacs around shiny, precious lures ('new-old-things', Gray calls them: mythic relics from some non-existent culture).¹

Dylan Martorell's exhibition *Panther Cluster Rimbone*, at Utopian Slumps in 2007, was guided by comparable concerns. The centrepiece for this show was a customised, analogue music machine surrounded by a temporary bamboo frame. Its body included a *sitar* equipped with a mechanised arm that autonomously generated rhythmic, haphazard chords. The gallery floor was layered with a still-growing slab of lawn and hazed by the sporadic fog of a smoke machine. Guitar leads, percussive tools, mixers and sonic paraphernalia littered the grass (leftovers from a Snawklor

performance), lending a valence of construction to the tableaux as a whole. On the walls, fantastical landscapes were juxtaposed with prints of figures cloaked in neo-ritualistic garb, their bodies covered in musical instruments or hidden entirely beneath woven, misshapen costumes.

Whereas Martorell sometimes refers to his compositions as 'clusters', Gray often speaks of the process of 'aggregation'.² Both terms evince a preference for the part over the whole and point toward fluid pathways for alternate progressions. Psychotropicalism is angled toward the future, but it also admits that the future might not be visible in the patterns we're given to work with. So it makes new patterns that are endlessly recyclable: a tactic also at work in Mathieu Gallois's soluble negotiations or Masato Takasaka's inverted topologies.³ The art of the psychotropical is situated on the side of permutations and hallucinations, both collective hallucinations and the kind that can come on during solitary wanderings through the deserts of the real. Curiosity is essential for survival in psychotropicalia, as is a refusal to accept established partitions. A Constructed World, I think, are also well aware of this imperative, in so far as their 'partitions' are always foldable, movable and adaptable. In their work ideas are shaded and shared under the

filtered blue light of tarpaulins, and temporary encampments can be set up to accommodate additional travellers.

Hope is the key word here, a light possibility edged on all sides by doubt. Without hope and doubt, stasis rules: the anti-entropic flatliner fatal to all organisms. As Nathan Gray has remarked of his own work, 'it's about optimism, and flowing from one thing into the next, and trying to be as playful and possible and trying to make art that's not cynical. Not because I'm a particularly optimistic person, but because I'm thinking that's kind of really what we need right now'. Martorell and Gray thwart the flatline at every turn: in the feedback loops that mark their sonic improvisations, in the psychedelic particles of their organic installations, and in their sincere insistence on the contingency of junctions and the interminable possibility of future re-formation.

The message of the psychotropicalist then takes on the form of a rumour—a tantalisingly unconfirmed transmission that impels its receiver toward recirculation—and mirrors the progressions of the game *Exquisite Corpse*. Gray's 2007 exhibition *Love Purity Accuracy* at Utopian Slumps actively engaged this association. Gallery goers were invited to redraw



the artist's compositions; replacing his drawings with their own which in turn were redrawn ... and so on and so on ... until, at the end, the 'exquisite whispers' were exhibited like a renegade archive, not one iota of which was false, but all of which were contradictory.

Traces of this kind of activity—the rumour, the conglomerate, the aggregation—can be found across a plethora of contemporary Australian art, which prompts the question: why? It makes me wonder, too, what is it about the political and social conditions in Australia right now that might specifically spur the psychotropicalist onward? I can narrow this down: what is it about Australia's relation to history that might facilitate psychotropical manoeuvres? Is it the knowledge that 'that which is' is not synonymous with 'that which could be'? Is it the contingent relation between 'past' and 'future' that leads to the impossibility of singular perspectives, the balancing of numerous vanishing points in a process of ongoing negotiation? Is it the radical discrepancy between the 'history' of the nation and the opposing, and at times irreconcilable, histories of its inhabitants? Is it the aggregated layering of socio-political forces that are always in excess of the two-party system? Or perhaps it emerges in reaction to the lies perpetrated by Australia's last

government, who refused point-blank to take responsibility for the past? To what extent does psychotropicalism feed off or respond to factors such as these?

If these questions can be answered—and perhaps they can't—the findings must be coupled with an ellipse that keeps the enquiry open, that enables the possibility for future activity without losing respect for the integrity of forms. As Gray has said, 'sometimes forms need to go back and then forwards again, or across a gap, or through the air, in order to survive. Survival is very much on the agenda right now'. For the psychotropicalist, this agenda is addressed through the production of structures that take the future into account; the fragile forces that determine the direction of forms, or the factors that influence the way in which a line may proceed, are of equal importance to the contexts in which those forms were originally produced.

Psychotropicalism is not a style: it is a mechanism, a way of behaving that reacts to and produces hallucinatory phenomena, initialising structures hostile to closure. Like a compass rose on the map of contemporary art, the psychotropical can be used to navigate the works of numerous artists that seek to maintain a state of potential or acknowledge the multifarious pathways of perception and production. The term

resonates most closely with those artists who produce psychedelic addendums to the absurdity of contemporary life or cycle through forms to transcend perceived boundaries. It is a paradoxicalism whose motion is not teleological but rather remains open to flaws, reruns and overlapping frequencies. It is a reaction—a response to psychotropic ingestion—and its horizon line is yet to be reached. It serves as a reminder, and this is the best part, of what I liked about contemporary art in the first place.

Amelia Douglas is a Melbourne based contemporary arts writer who is currently residing in psychotropicalia.

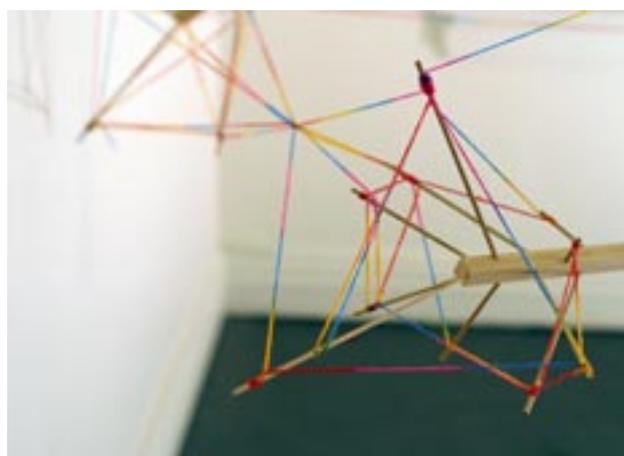
1/ All citations from Nathan Gray are taken from conversations with the author in 2007.

2/ Thanks also to Melissa Loughnan for her comments on Martorell's work.

3/ See Anthony Gardner, *Virtually Yours, The Art of Mathieu Gallois*, catalogue essay, 2002. Available from http://mathieugallois.com/text/virtually-our_2.html; accessed 2 October 2007.

opposite
Nathan Gray
Love Purity Accuracy, 2007
 Exhibition view and installation detail, Utopian Slumps.
 Image courtesy the artist

below
Nathan Gray
Mobile, 2007
 Exhibition view and installation detail, Carlton Hotel.
 Image courtesy the artist



INCOMPLETE ENQUIRY, INCOMPLETE ADVENTURE: ATTILA KOTÁNYI AND ME

I never met Attila Kotányi; he died before I had the chance. The Hungarian artist Janos Sugar had told me he'd been sick—that he'd had a stroke actually—and even sent me a photo. Kotányi was sitting in his study, wearing a terrible pair of shorts. He looked happy but tired, and I remember thinking how much he reminded me of Norman Mailer. I'd been in touch with Kotányi's daughter, who'd made a beautiful film about him, but the conversation was difficult given that my specific point of interest was a period of his life that had brought her and her family so much pain. And then my computer crashed, and I lost her contact details, our correspondence, Janos's photo, the lot. Attila passed away shortly after, aged 80.

Though writing on Kotányi has finally begun to appear in the wake of his death, it has largely taken the form of short, anecdotal musings composed by members of his immediate circle in the last years of his life. Perhaps this is appropriate for a man who wrote so little, favouring, as he did, conversation as a primary mode of theoretical elaboration. This was partly for practical reasons—an outbreak of polio immediately following the Second World War had claimed the use of one of his arms and partially

paralysed the other—but it was also central to the philosophy of a man who harboured deep suspicions about mediated communication. Most of Kotányi's thinking was relayed verbally, in his lectures at the Düsseldorf Kunstakademie in the 1970s and 80s, and, later, in the great Hungarian philosophical tradition, through a weekly 'Saturday circle' hosted in his Budapest apartment.

The few samples of thought that Kotányi could bring himself to commit to writing were largely published in the eponymous journal of the Situationist International (SI), in which Kotányi played a central role between 1960 and 1963. These were either rhetorical summaries of theoretical advances being made within the organisation, or more sustained analyses written with either Guy Debord, Raoul Vaneigem or both, usually bearing the stylistic hallmarks of one or the other co-author. Predictably, though, his most significant contributions to the SI took place outside these texts, in spoken form. It was through speech that he made his famous proposal that any work of art produced by a situationist ought to be described as antisituationist, thus precipitating the most significant split in the organisation's history. And it was again in this capacity that he contributed to the mysterious internal document known as the *Hamburg Theses*. This latter contribution was what interested me most—the former had been discussed to death—and became my principal reason for seeking him out.

The *Hamburg Theses* were composed by Debord, Vaneigem and Kotányi on an extended

dérive through Hamburg toward the end of 1961, and were later amended by Debord's partner Michèle Bernstein and the Scottish Beat poet Alexander Trocchi. They constituted—for Debord at least, reflecting during an unusually active period of his later life—one of the most significant documents to be produced by the SI, its 'rich and complex' conclusions signaling the group's shift away from an earlier utopian avant-gardism toward the development of a total revolutionary critique. More extraordinary from a historical perspective, though, was the decision not to publish the text, but to instead destroy the handwritten manuscript completely after committing the entire thing to memory. This was wholly in keeping with the SI's wariness of recuperation—the dominant economy's tendency to co-opt forms of cultural resistance—a wariness of which had informed Kotányi's antisituationist art proposal. The manuscript's destruction seems also to have been intrinsically linked to the content of the *Theses*, the dialectical character of which is suggested in Debord's revelation, 28 years later, that the document contained, or could at least be summarised with, the phrase 'Now, the SI must realise philosophy'.

The specificity of this phrase, its implicit reference to the *Introduction to a Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right* (arguably Marx's most 'situationist' text), interested me greatly, and, as both a student of the Situationist International and an aspiring dialectician, I was immediately curious to determine the *Theses'*

contents. By this stage, Debord was already dead by his own hand, Trocchi long gone to heroin. Vaneigem would be a wholly unreliable source—he'd become far too entangled in the internecine struggles within the post-situationist milieu of the 70s and 80s to provide a dependable picture. And Michèle Bernstein, for her part, was notoriously evasive when it came to issues whose rationale had been deliberately kept secret, closely guarding situationist clandestinity with wonderfully coy remarks like 'Even if I could remember, I wouldn't tell you.' There was no real option: it had to be Attila.

Kotányi had joined the SI in 1960 in place of the Dutch painter and utopian architect Constat, whose resignation had just been tendered. He'd trained in architecture after anti-Jewish laws had cut short a promising military career, falling into the circle of the brilliant philosopher Lajos Szabó. After the failure of the 1956 Budapest uprising, Kotányi had followed Szabó into exile in Belgium, meeting the situationist painter Maurice Wyckaert, who would in turn introduce him to Debord. His tenure in the SI lasted until the end of 1963, when his authorship of an unpopular orientation document resulted in his exclusion from the group.

In brief, Kotányi's membership was terminated for his suggested re-engagement with more established intellectual currents, namely tenured academia and those strands of Heideggerian thought that Kotányi called 'philosophy'.¹ The detectable influence of Zen Buddhism in his reasoning also

played a part, given that fashionable mysticism was anathema to more 'orthodox' situationists like Debord, Vaneigem, Bernstein and their *éminence grise* Asger Jorn.² Curiously, as Debord would attest years later, the three week debate that preceded the exclusion featured numerous references by Kotányi and Bernstein to the articles of the *Hamburg Theses*, whose contents effectively became a benchmark for the critique of one of their authors.

Four decades on, I could only reflect on my ultimate inability to determine the truth of those contents. I'd been slow to act. The misconception that I'd need to tackle Magyar Hungarian or at least muddle through correspondence with a tired old man with my rudimentary high school German, was an initial deterrant; a certain timorousness in the proximity of an object of my study was another, all-too-human, determining factor. As it turned out, I'd learn from one of his students that Kotányi didn't discuss the old days all that often, and would likely have politely spurned my enquiries anyway. That period of his life caused him lingering pain, not for the ignominy of exclusion, but for the devastation that the three preceding years had brought his family. Revolution, like idiocy, requires utter dedication, and even a mystic knows the melancholy of devotion. The non-consummation of my curiosity was appropriate. I could guess at the contents of the theses: a will to disappearance that they shared with their form, their destiny, their strategic role, all grounded in the self-immolating agonism of the *enfants perdus*.³ And yet

there were no aesthetics to this disappearance. It left no sign, no performative gesture, no previous presence to make the act of absencing meaningful or even noticeable; this was not a symbolic disappearance—not in the way the destruction of a piano might signify the destruction of the institution of music—but a strategic one. And so my non-consummation is perhaps better thought of as a dis-consummation, a necessary incompleteness; a failure bound to the logic of its problematic, programmed from the start and essential to the understanding of a document that once bore the most incredible instructions—instructions I was never meant to see.

Reuben Keehan is Curator at Artspace Visual Arts Centre, Sydney.

1/ Indeed Heideggerian terms like 'being-in-the-world' and 'equipment' make their appearance throughout Kotányi's rare situationist texts.

2/ Jorn had resigned from the SI in 1961 in order to shield it from his growing celebrity as an artist, but maintained a significant degree of influence within the organisation. He was particularly scathing about Kotányi.

3/ Literally 'lost children', a French military slang term of which Debord was particularly fond, denoting scouts sent on suicide missions behind enemy lines and never expected to return. Elsewhere I have suggested the term as a means of rethinking the avant-garde in the age of spectacle. See, by way of inadequate but easily accessible example, 'Ruark Lewis and the expanded field of language', *Eyeline*, no. 60, 2006, pp. 24–27. An insightful reading of the importance of incompleteness to Debord's usage of *enfants perdus* can be found throughout Vincent Kaufman's *Guy Debord: Revolution in the Service of Poetry*, trans. Robert Bononno, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 2006, *passim*.

I could take this of photographs

reading in the ruins of representation.

what if

art writing were short

er

and ideas were light

er

readymade to

re

arrange

one. Walter Benjamin

wrote

down

a. dictum

Allegories are,

in the realm of thoughts,

what ruins are in the realm of

things.

i. had an idea

that i could take this

down

for my own

things.

I could take this of photographs

then that

Photographs are,

in the realm of representations,

what ruins r

in the realm of things.

there (3)

for (4)

to (2)

(l)ook at photographs is

to read in the ruins of representation.

Patrick Pound is a Melbourne based artist. He is also working on
an art history doctorate at Melbourne University.



left
Patrick Pound
Passport photo of Walter Benjamin (detail)

above and below
Patrick Pound
Soft Real Estate Model (details), 2007
27 x 35cm
Image courtesy of GRANTPIRRIE





ANDY WARHOL'S EIGHT-HOUR fixed-camera shot of the Empire State Building marked a literal entrance—to the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art's *Cinema Paradiso* exhibition—and an historical and metaphorical one that invited us to engage with (according to ACCA's own publicity material) the 'magic of celluloid in an exhibition that explores the intersection between cinema and art'. But if we were here to celebrate the magic of *celluloid* then why was *Empire* being projected from a DVD in a light-saturated doorway?

REAR WINDOW OR FRONT PROJECTION? DYLAN RAINFORTH

My complaint is not the essentialist one that film—to qualify for the term—must be shot and presented on celluloid. Today's high definition (HD) digital video mocks those who'd argue that celluloid will always be superior to, or even distinguishable from, pixels. Yet, in the ACCA context, there was something highly problematic about the projection of a bleached-out video version of Warhol's film, preceding as it did its later catalogue presentation as a 16mm film, complete with film stills that fetishistically gloried in the damage and scratches done to this iconic object in the thirty years since its creation.

It's this trading in auratic talismans while presenting only an anaemic marker for the work's reduction to a creation myth for a particular avant-garde that galls. It assumes that a viewer would only want to mark *Empire* present and correct, while expressing no

interest in its actual content. Warhol's dispassionate interrogation of cinema and its constituent elements of light, (non) action, time and space is whittled down to a totem marking precisely everything that, too often, goes missing in art exhibitions that profess to the cinematic.

In Melbourne in 2007 at least three exhibitions explicitly probed the intersections between cinema, video and art. Along with *Cinema Paradiso* there was the 'Post-Cinema' section (the only part I'll look at here) of *Centre Pompidou Video Art 1965-2000* at the Australian Centre for the Moving Image (ACMI) and a smaller exhibition, *Post-Cinema* at RMIT Project Space.¹

Monash University based academic and film critic Adrian Martin has recently noted in an article in *Artlink* that '(h)istorically, the relation between

art institutions and film has been fraught with every imaginable problem and inequality'.² He looks back on moving-image exhibitions of the 1980s and 90s as ruled by hybridised technologies proliferating on screens in too-close conjunction to each other, with competing soundtracks blaring across over-lit exhibition spaces. It's easy to agree with him, and if he dates these tendencies to that era it's only to argue—following film theorist Raymond Bellour—that it's now time to return the cinematic apparatus to its privileged historical position of a singular screening with a beginning and an end, projected to a captive audience. No one in their right mind is suggesting this is the ideal way to view *Empire*, but his point is clear.

While it might sound like special pleading, Martin's focus is cinema not video art and perhaps his linear approach

should be understood as a 'horses for courses' one. After ridiculing museological approaches to 'film as art' that ignore cinema's more mainstream achievements he goes on to excoriate (video) artists that make 'artist's films' that pretend to the 'cinema effect' but which exist in a retarded state that shuns any real knowledge of cinematic history and form. Matthew Barney is singled out, but Isaac Julien's *Baltimore*, a glossy but ultimately meaningless multi-channel homage to blaxploitation films (screened in the Post-Cinema section of the *Pompidou* show) would serve just as well. HD is used here in an unselfconscious imitation of film's language and technical qualities but with little of its gift for old-fashioned storytelling—the superficial complications added by the work's simultaneous multi-channel elaboration notwithstanding.

Obviously, for every 'bad' example such as Barney or Julien we could find a 'good' one. In the same *ACMI* show, for example, there was Pierre Huyghe's complex layering of narrative and 'truth' in his double-channel examination of the events portrayed in Sidney Lumet's film *Dog Day Afternoon*. This Brechtian re-enactment—in which the original robber directed actors on an anti-naturalistic, black-and-white set—of the bank robbery at the heart of that film was something much more interesting than any denuded cinema-jealous 'art film'—and its proper place could only be the gallery. However, this sorting of good from bad, of lambs from goats, would be interminable and gets no one very far.

We need to ask, rather, if anything has been learnt from this painful courtship between cinema and art. What is the current tone? An elegiac mood for love past? This would characterise much of *Cinema Paradiso* (reflecting its appropriation of the title of Giuseppe Tornatore's sentimental and nostalgic film), especially in the beautiful, funereal light-filled theatre screens featured in the series of Hiroshi Sugimoto photographs, or Callum Morton's models of broken down drive-in screens.

Or perhaps the funereal tone is that of a forensic autopsy: a Hitchcockian look back through a rear window, post cinema. These exhibitions consisted largely of video art (*Cinema Paradiso* included other media, and benefited for it) that entered into the crisis discourse of the 'death of cinema'. A vast range of voices have in recent years posited emergent sociological, technological, aesthetic and commercial imperatives as factors contributing to the death of communal movie-going and the cinema itself, at least as we have understood it for an approximate one-hundred year period. So we find artists 'doing it to death'—evidenced in reworked footage of a st-st-stuttering scream as a man repeatedly bangs his head against a car in an endless loop in a work by Nicolas Jasmin at *ACCA*.

It follows that the need is still there to compulsively examine the anxieties that film has helped us to





previous page
Andy Warhol
Empire, 1964
 16mm film stills
 Courtesy the Andy Warhol
 Museum, Pittsburgh

above
Pierre Huyghe
The Third Memory, 1999
 two-channel video still
 Courtesy Musée national d'art moderne,
 Centre Pompidou, France

both articulate and repress. The post 9/11 desire for martial reassurance, for example—made real through the paradoxical filmic fantasy of terrorist spectacle—is successfully deconstructed in the action-disaster-catastrophe film montage *Doomed* by Tracey Moffat in collaboration with Gary Hillberg, also at ACCA.

Originally I had been struck by how the use of the term post-cinema seemed to differ, and was seemingly being contested, between its retrospective use in ACMI's *Pompidou* show (and, by extension, in ACCA's *Cinema Paradiso*) and the exhibition *Post-Cinema* at RMIT. *Post-Cinema* curator Shaun Wilson took the term for a technologically-driven ontological enquiry into what the death of cinema might pave the

way for. Post cinema, post-YouTube hybridised video technologies are meant to proliferate, redefining means and terms of production and distribution in ways entirely 'other' to the hierarchies between film and video art I complained of in Isaac Julien's work. Typifying Wilson's approach was his inclusion of prominent media theorist Lev Manovich's database-driven 'pick-a-path' *Soft Cinema*, in which genre narratives are reconfigured with every viewing from a closed set of predetermined elements.

It's enough to give pause to back-to-fundamentals proponents like Martin and Bellour, and at first glance Wilson's show seemed to have little to do with any cinematic legacy. The evangelical claims made for the work sometimes yielded the kind of bad video art that gives the

genre a bad name: an eight-minute video of cars passing left me demanding a refund on my time.

I can however now see Wilson's use of the term post-cinema as not entirely at odds with the rest. The inclusion of Brendan Lee's *Out of the Blue I*, a reconstruction of locations from Australian film *Dogs In Space* fused with political content informed by the Cronulla riots, conforms to other uses of the term post-cinema to categorise works that seek to democratise cinematic form and narrative, especially as used to examine history and memory. This is effectively what Huyghe's work discussed above achieves and Lee's work could, for example, have plausibly appeared in the ACCA show. Wilson's use of the term post-cinema though is a knowing one



above
Isaac Julien
Baltimore, 2003
 three-channel video still
 Courtesy Musée national d'art moderne,
 Centre Pompidou, France

that aims to take one step further, to position post-cinema (as a 'genre') as just one of many post- or 'other' cinematic possibilities brought about by the death of the original. In this goal I didn't find the exhibition entirely convincing, but it is reassuring that someone is giving it serious thought.

I set out, in writing this piece, to try and puzzle out for myself how museums and artists have responded to cinema. Can art, and its sub-category of the moving image, find its own, native ways to meaningfully interact with film? Martin's concern in his article was to find ways that film can 'enter the milieu of the art gallery proudly, on its own terms, bearing its own history, demanding its own specific mode of attention'.³ Far from taking issue with this, and certainly

not in an effort to freshly reinscribe the inequalities that he has identified in that relationship, I wonder how art can find ways to respectfully reciprocate the engagement, without losing what in turn makes it distinct from cinema. And if this sounds essentialist perhaps it is—because if art is just going to come on like the movies without a budget then I'm probably better off at a Michael Bay (*Pearl Harbor*, *Transformers*) blockbuster. Or, just because I like Rodney Graham doesn't mean I don't wanna see those Randolph Scott westerns again.⁴

Dylan Rainforth is a freelance writer and the president of the Melbourne Cinémathèque.

- 1/ *Cinema Paradiso*, Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, 16 October – 2 December 2007. *Centre Pompidou Video Art 1965–2000*, Australian Centre for the Moving Image, 22 March – 27 May 2007. *Post-Cinema*, RMIT Project Space, 24 September – 19 October 2007.
- 2/ Adrian Martin, 'Black Box / White Cube: Cinema in the Gallery', *Artlink*, vol. 27 no. 3, 2007, pp. 36–38. (See also Adrian Martin, 'Cinema (and Post-Cinema) Effects in APT5', *Art Monthly Australia*, no. 197, 2007, pp. 11–15).
- 3/ *Ibid.*
- 4/ With Graham I'm thinking specifically of his 'western' loop *How I Became A Rambling Man* (1999), which screened at ACCA in 2003. In the late 1950s Scott made six brilliant 'existentialist westerns' with director Budd Boetticher, collectively known as the Ranown Cycle.

CONFLICT, HIERARCHY AND HARD WORK

23



A short conversation with

DAMP, THE M.O.S.T. AND PAT FOSTER & JEN BEREAN

Collaborating art group Damp have been working together in Melbourne in various forms since 1995. Their research into collaborative practice has formed the basis of a group show featuring other art groups from around Australia and the world (exhibiting at the Victorian College of the Arts Margaret Lawrence Gallery in March–April). Reflecting on both the concept and the realities of collaboration Damp asked itself and two of the participating groups—The M.O.S.T. and Pat Foster and Jen Berean—to discuss topics such as conflict, process and hierarchies. Ranging greatly in numbers, experience and style, each group responded to whichever topics or questions had most resonance for them.

above

Damp

Fete worse than death, 2004

Performance/installation

Image courtesy of the artists and Uplands Gallery

opposite

The M.O.S.T.

Map of Mostlandia, 2007

Ink on paper 42 x 29.7cm

Image courtesy the artists

DAMP

Formed in Melbourne, 1995.

Current members: Robert Creedon, Narelle Desmond, Sharon Goodwin, Meg Hale, Mark Hislop, Ry Haskings, Debra Kunda, James Lynch, Lisa Radford and Nat Thomas.

What do you get out of collaboration that you do not get from an individual practice?

We get money (hardly ever), sex (please ask the others), context, meaning (on the odd occasion), fun, pleasure, friendship, companionship, the odd headache, opportunities and continuity.

On Conflict:

For the first few years conflict was something we tried to practice and not shy away from. We did lots of exercises to bring differences to light and recognise where everybody stood. Conflict became a subject and also flowed into the work. It hasn't been so much of a focus for the last few years. The longer we work together words seem less important than actions. There are some people who have a strong need to push things in certain ways and others who are just as happy to make something and work stuff out in the process. Most of us are in our thirties now. There are more pressing conflicts between everyone's lives, work and families, with less time to do all this silly group stuff.

On Hierarchy:

Please ignore, but don't forget to be polite in the process! I don't think there is much hierarchy in Damp. There are a lot of old friendships though. I guess a few of these have probably well and truly solidified. I guess that's how groups become institutions—when relations become cemented.

On Ways of Working:

Damp's work is hard work—homework, group work, working nation, casual work, old work and new work. In Japan everyone just works a lot. They have one day off a week, there isn't much space outside of work. I've seen people sleeping standing up in the train station or just collapsed face down on the tiles of the train platform asleep! It's difficult to understand the unrelenting drive. Damp works well, we all work for money but Damp doesn't work for the man, or maybe it does. Through our work we create a surplus though. In our *Book of Shadows* all Damp's work is archived in leather bound manuscripts. It's not really archived, it's more like illuminated.

On Outside Perceptions:

They warp things and make you paranoid.

THE

Formed in Portland, Oregon, 2003.

Current members: Katy Asher, Kris Soden, Jennifer Rhoads and Rudy Speerschneider

What do you get out of collaboration that you do not get from an individual practice?

M: Working creatively within a group allows ideas to get out of your hands and mutate in ways that they would not if it was only you working with them. Your own idea might be so modified that it comes back and surprises you. I refer to this phenomenon as a sort of magic that happens through the process of working in a group. Also: safety in numbers.

O: I'd second that. What I get out of collaboration is that a single idea or intention can grow into something you never ever expected. On the same note, a dream you have can turn into what you hoped would happen but then have all of these extra benefits you never would have thought of in the first place. I also think working with other people gives ideas the opportunity to be more rounded, more thought out, more clear.

S: I most definitely laugh a lot more during the process of making something collaboratively than individually. And I have more passionate and messy and heartfelt conversations. And I think bringing more joy and creative conversations into this backwards, splintered, waning culture is a political act, so, I guess collaboration allows for me to be a better citizen.

T: Something undoubtedly more significant and purposeful is immediately created, even while it remains unfinished, because with each person over one person involved in any piece or project is a huge step towards the true sense of community and understanding the palpability of the collective conscious, which is the ultimate beautiful thing.

On Conflict:

M: Conflict is unavoidable, but we try to mitigate it as best as we can. Katy has a lot of practice as a facilitator, and brings that element to the group. Sometimes differences in ideas arise, and the only way we end up getting around them is by doing them anyway, or capitulating, which seems to have sometimes been helpful and sometimes hurtful. We talk a lot about the idea of 'emotional safety' in considering the things that we are doing, but we have definitely all hurt each other's feelings at one time or another. We're all learning.

O: I think conflict is unavoidable in any aspect of life—not just in group work. Working with people you trust and share work with to make something happen will inevitably have conflict and also lead to learning about how to resolve conflict. When you all believe in something and want it to happen, there's more incentive to figure out creative (if not sometimes desperate) ways to resolve conflict. The learning that happens from figuring out conflict (both when it's successful and not successful) in the group trickles into the other parts of your life in really positive ways.

S: Some of our most vehement conflicts have been about explaining to each other the politics, customs, legalities and geographies of *Mostlandia*. This is a place we all consider home in some way and if there are discrepancies in memories or in research great passions arise about who has the true picture. These passions vacillate between excited discussions to flat out argument. I usually try to remember that conflict arises because we care deeply about the work we're doing and about *Mostlandia* the place as well as *Mostlandics* as individuals.

T: We know there is a great treasure to be discovered about each other when points of disagreement arise, there is actually an excitement involved because it's like, 'alright, now we are getting somewhere!' But at the same time we certainly do not encourage or thrive on this way of working because we take great care in handling and empathising with what each of our feelings and emotions may be at any given time. I guess that is why it feels so honest and fulfilling working together.

PAT FOSTER & JEN BEREAN

Formed in Melbourne, 2001.

On Conflict:

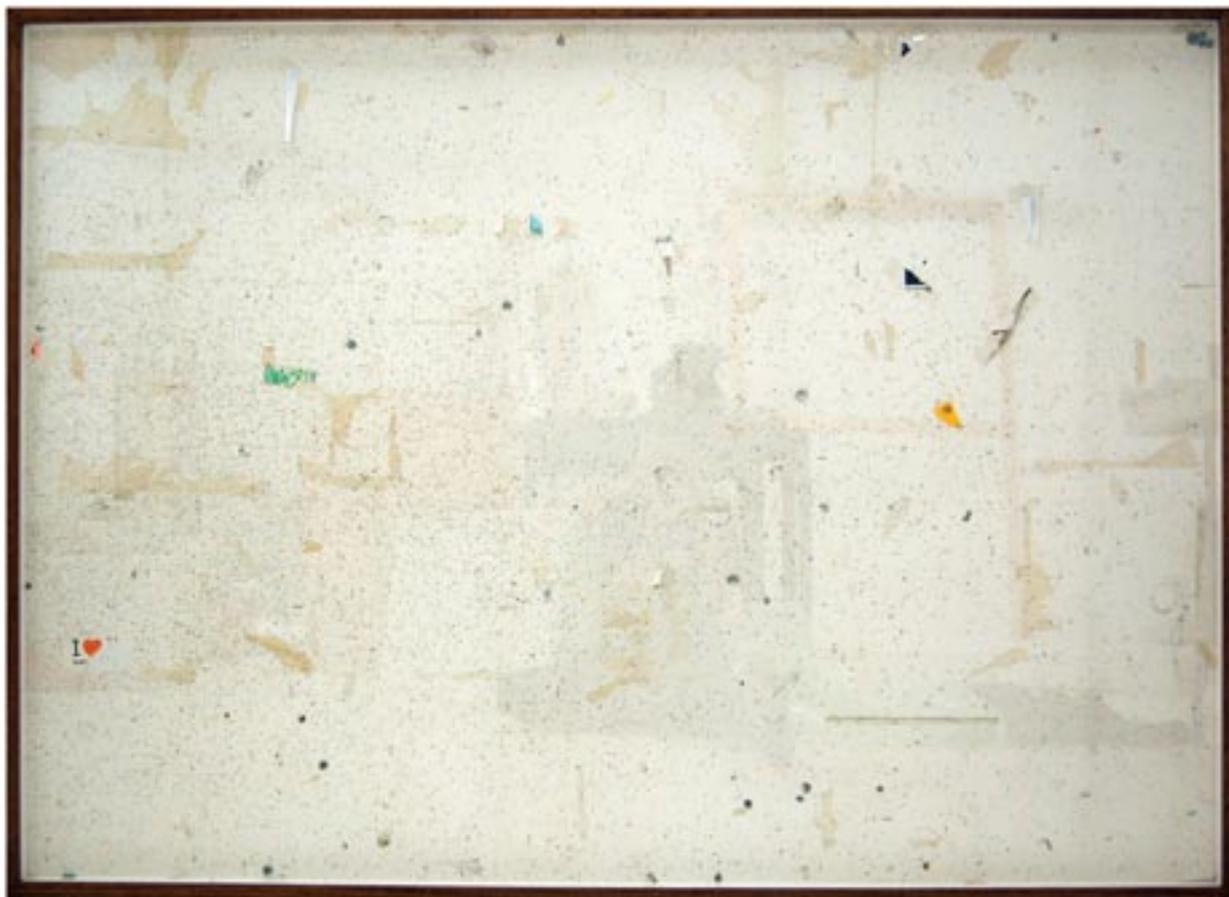
We collaborate because of the capacity for conflict to take place. This conflict facilitates and inspires our work. This is not conflict in the sense that things are thrown, or malicious things are said to each other. This is conflict in terms of two minds approaching one aim, to produce artwork. Collaborative practice is a popular way to work, particularly right now. Why others do it we can only presume, for us it offers a particular model that the work we make requires. That is to say, the artwork that we produce is a direct result of our choice to work together. To make work that discusses interaction, function, intervention and action it seems rather reasonable, if not pertinent, that these concerns grow from the two of us interacting, functioning and battling each other. There is a constant level of conflict existing beneath the surface of our relationship, this conflict is perhaps due to neither of us ever really understanding what exactly it is that we are doing, we may have entirely conflicting ideas of what we think we are doing at any given time. All the dialogue imaginable can never resolve the problem that it is two minds considering the one thing. And without that we wouldn't be making what it is that we are making, we think.

below

Pat Foster & Jen Berean

One Thing After Another, 2007

Stolen foamcore, noticeboard, Blue Tac, pins, tape, texta, pen, ripped paper 90 x 120cm
Image courtesy the artists



is



^{is} Few critics can be both honest and eloquent; nobody does it in such fine style as Hughes John McDonald

Excerpt-green in the pithere books; correct, wrong-correct, in and *bourbonically stuffed*



is



A mistake in Chatreuse-better, is
book in an inspiredsome book^{is}

^{is} Hughes has an exceptionally intense, almost lecherous, awareness of the physical characteristics of a work of art; a learned but graceful manner; a finely poetic imagination; and a dandyish, deeply mediated wit that can be devastating and, occasionally, generous. Nicholas Jenkins^{is}



Julie Gough

The Ranger, 2007

Furniture, carpet, seaweed, clothes, charcoal, brush
2 x 6 x 12m

Image courtesy the artist

Photo credit: Michal Klivanek

Writing about *The Ranger*

Artists Julie Gough and Nici Cumpston reflect on *The Ranger*, a residency and collaborative exhibition project for Gough, at the South Australian School of Art Gallery, Adelaide, in dialogue with Zara Stanhope.

ZS: Writing has been an integral part of your work process Julie, undertaken alongside or in retrospect to the creation of art. Hence, it seems appropriate for us to have an email conversation regarding a recent project where you were invited to research and create an exhibition.

JG: Yes. It started with an extended discussion with Mary Knights, SASA Gallery Director, regarding whether I could make a site-specific installation during a residency. I knew that I could best decide how an historical 'story' or event or encounter could be addressed once in the space in Adelaide, as I enjoy working in rapid response to a situation with the immediate ideas and the information at hand. It feels like I am alive and very much in the moment making work in this way. It is a bit exhausting too.

ZS: The subject of your inspiration accorded with your interest in the contemporary relevance of the history of Aboriginal people, and here, in particular, in relation to the story or character of a reclusive Aboriginal woman who lived on King Island during the 1830s and 1840s. With only scant details documented in the journal of sealer John Scot, how did the recorded history of 'The Ranger', as she was known, evolve into an exhibition project?

JG: I have found little about this woman, recorded only as 'The Ranger', from knowledge shared with me by King Islanders during three visits to the island during 2006 and 2007, when I worked on a community art project. The generosity of these Islanders and their understanding of history being important in the present was, for me, really sustaining and mirrored my own sense of how I view times past. I see history as literally being alive, sometimes shadowy but always fascinating in offering relevant lessons for today.

I continued to research the interconnected lives of the few inhabitants, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, of King Island from the late-1700s to the mid-1800s. Material emerged from unexpected sources and information seeped out and consumed me until I created something from these clues:

as usual in my work the recreation of aspects of a past story form elements of text.

John Scot's journal revealed clues about his life and that of his Aboriginal family. The sealer unsuccessfully sought The Ranger over years on King Island. For me, her resolve for privacy and her tendency to take flight when Scot neared made her seem a kind of spectre of all Aboriginal women who tried to avoid men and outsiders in the earliest days of colonisation.

The installation comprised old clothes, seaweed and furniture. Into the latter were burnt excerpts from John Scot's journal mentioning The Ranger. The space was sparsely lit and spatially the exhibition resembled a theatre set, giving the impression that action had just or might soon take place but meanwhile the key players were absent. The sense of absence and silence, and of a viewer's uninvited occupancy, became part of the work's operation.

Due to my reliance on Scot's perspective and text, the exhibition focused on aspects of what I understand as the miscommunication between the worlds of The Ranger and Scot. This difference was partly manifest in suggestions of the furniture morphing, by the insertion of brush twigs, into something otherworldly and perhaps visually threatening. The mix of culture and nature, in simulating a crisis of forced interaction, was intended to evoke the tension between different cultures, genders and dimensions, as a type of visual metaphor for how I see the post invasion period.

ZS: Have you worked in this way previously?

JG: Yes, I have worked from small amounts of information when a compelling and significant aspect of a story reached out and seemed to force me into action. In May 2007 I was invited by Caroline Turner and David Williams at Australian National University School of Art to participate in *Thresholds of Tolerance*. The resulting site-specific installation, *Force Field*, made with a lot of local help, was based on the shooting of an ancestor in Tasmania, who was forced to tell a magistrate that her 'master' shot her by mistake, thinking she was a possum.

I try not to arrive with a hugely predetermined map when undertaking a site-specific installation because it is unhelpful to be locked into ideas before seeing the space. The tone, the resonance of a work, requires seeking materials, editing items out and moving things around until everything is working together to the best outcome. It involves an almost

musical composing of a space, a feeling for and marking out the route of the visitors' eyes and path.

When a story offers something universal about the human condition I try to visually transmit that 'thing'. The accounts that leap out towards me are generally early-mid nineteenth century historical stories. They are usually disregarded because they are complex and difficult narratives, not valued by either the politically extreme right or left. They mirror, or are sometimes drawn from, my own family history. I see great potential for art about human presence, endeavour or exchange in situations that reveal courage, fear, hopes, failings, transactions or their traces.

ZS: *You write a lot about your work but not necessarily for a public readership. Is writing important to each project?*

JG: I try to write something about most artworks just after their making. Otherwise, I am too involved with the next project to remember details, and also I think that I need to write about work in the same spirit as when I made it.

My writing for the catalogue of *The Ranger* was different; it had to be completed about a week before my arrival in Adelaide. Hence, it addressed *The Ranger* the woman and why I am inspired by her, and the possibilities of working from absence rather than knowing what would occur once I arrived.

There is a kind of honesty in writing about work at the point of its emergence and not once you have spent time or received critical feedback and perhaps realised the other connotations you have inadvertently embedded in the work. So, in that spirit I should identify that it is now December 2007 and I made *The Ranger* in September 2007!

ZS: *Writing over the span of a work's creation is then an immediate reflection on its existence rather than a plan for the future?*

JG: The work becomes a kind of map of me that can, subsequently, make sense within the bigger context. Art, especially if documented in catalogues, reviews or elsewhere, exists beyond its own moment. Much as the archives and newspapers of the 1820s and 1830s provide material for my work, my art might be able to be revisited in the future as a register of my intentions and concerns, and of others around me who commissioned or collected works. Art with its records communicates our ideas, fears and obsessions.

ZS: *Nici Cumpston, you are an artist and the project and residency assistant in Adelaide. Can you tell me how *The Ranger* was initiated and your involvement?*

NC: Late in 2006, Mary Knights, Director of the SASA Gallery, and I were brainstorming ideas about an Indigenous artist working with our students as an artist in residence and creating work for an exhibition. I was very interested in learning more about Julie's work, and Mary knew Julie's work from Tasmania, so that is where it all started. My role was to liaise with the various people contributing to this exhibition, as well as to assist Julie whenever I could with locating, sourcing and transporting materials, and meeting the locals, especially the local divers and seeing the dolphins in the Port Adelaide River.

We arranged a three day journey to Kangaroo Island to visit places where Aboriginal women lived after they had

been taken by sealers from Tasmania. One very important aspect of that trip was Lola Greeno's (Tasmanian Indigenous elder) discovery of mariner shells. This confirmed that the kidnapped women from Tasmania would have been able to make their necklaces or at least feel a sense of home, knowledge that was comforting for Lola.

ZS: *How open was the project for Julie? Was she requested to include students and other artists in the development and completion of a project within such a short duration?*

NC: It was open apart from requiring the participation of three to four students (we ended up with five). As it turned out, the students were all excellent in their own way and it was great to have input from them. The gallery was used as a studio space until the day of the opening. People were allowed in to be part of the process. Students and staff were asked to donate clothing and to help gather seaweed, the whole Kaurna building smelt like the sea for a couple of weeks. Artists from around Adelaide, as well as curators from the Art Gallery of South Australia, came to see the work in process. Julie spent many nights in the Gallery by herself stacking coal under the table, burning text into the furniture, drilling holes and attaching brush, or just contemplating what to do next. It was a very intense period as there really wasn't a lot of time to make the work.

The intention was to provide a unique opportunity for our students to work alongside a highly skilled artist. Students were party to the huge amount of work undertaken as research and in creating the artworks. They shared Julie's ideas for the exhibition and were also subsequently able to see the formation of those ideas into a dramatic and intriguing exhibition.

ZS: *Nici, from Julie's accounts and those of participating students, *The Ranger* stands out as a rewarding collaboration between many people. As Julie stated:*

This form of work relies on the goodwill and availability of people I encounter, the interactions and relationships with people, often strangers I come to work with, as much as on fate in terms of the timely location of appropriate materials.

*What do you think people took away from *The Ranger*, either by working with Julie or seeing the end result in the exhibition and publication?*

NC: The response of a group of Year 10 students from Darwin was indicative of the intrigue and fascination attending to *The Ranger*. They were interested to discern from the objects that the sealer had drowned, and that *The Ranger* then joined the other Aboriginal women who had been under his control. People really related to the exhibition and wanted to know more about Julie's other work.

For me this was a very stimulating time. I was enriched by Julie's focus on her practice and by the time spent with Lola Greeno, Director Mary Knights, independent curator Fulvia Mantelli and Yhonnice Scarce, another Aboriginal artist on Kangaroo Island. I know the students were similarly inspired. Matt Huppertz wrote how the experience of working in this intense collaboration was an invaluable gift, a 'fantastic example of what can be achieved when a group of focused individuals work together towards a common goal.'

Julie Gough
The Ranger (detail), 2007
Furniture, carpet, seaweed, clothes, charcoal, brush
2 x 6 x 12m

Image courtesy the artist
Photo credit: Michal Klivanek

The Ranger was at the South Australian School of Art Gallery 12-28 September 2007.

Nici Cumpston is a lecturer in Indigenous Art Cultures and Design at the University of South Australia. Her work has been selected for numerous awards and exhibitions including the 24th Telstra National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Award, the 2007 Hobart City Art Prize, and the People's Choice Award in the 2007 River Murray Art Prize.

Dr Julie Gough is a lecturer at the School of Creative Arts, Faculty of Law, Business and Creative Arts at James Cook University, Townsville, Queensland. Her traditional country is far north-eastern Tasmania and she is a descendent of the Trawlwoolway people.

Zara Stanhope is a member of the un Magazine editorial committee.



Good things are happening. I am increasingly enjoying dance music. **There is fire.** Check out the Staufenberger typepad. **This is not some wild romantic enterprise.** Chuck Pahulickorhoweveryou spell his name digs Amy Hempel. **Bug's got wind in her hair.** Can't find Hempel books in any bookshop in my home town. **Turn 47 in a wheatfield.** Hope it hasn't been dying out there. **Little comets shooting into nowhere and stuff.** Actual time. **A guy teaches literary minimalism and there are activities.** Maybe I do have weapons hiding somewhere inside me. **Last night.** Hung my jacket on the back of a wooden chair. **Drove crosstown and stopped at a small bar where Ivan Gough was djing.** Danced like French people in the film *Romance*. **Had the softest pair of loafers**

Rationale

on. Rode home from work on Saturday afternoon. **Did a cool trackstand in front of a fellow curator who didn't notice my marvel of physics.** I am failing to define my boundaries as a person. **Navigation by the stars.** A beautiful idea. **I am**

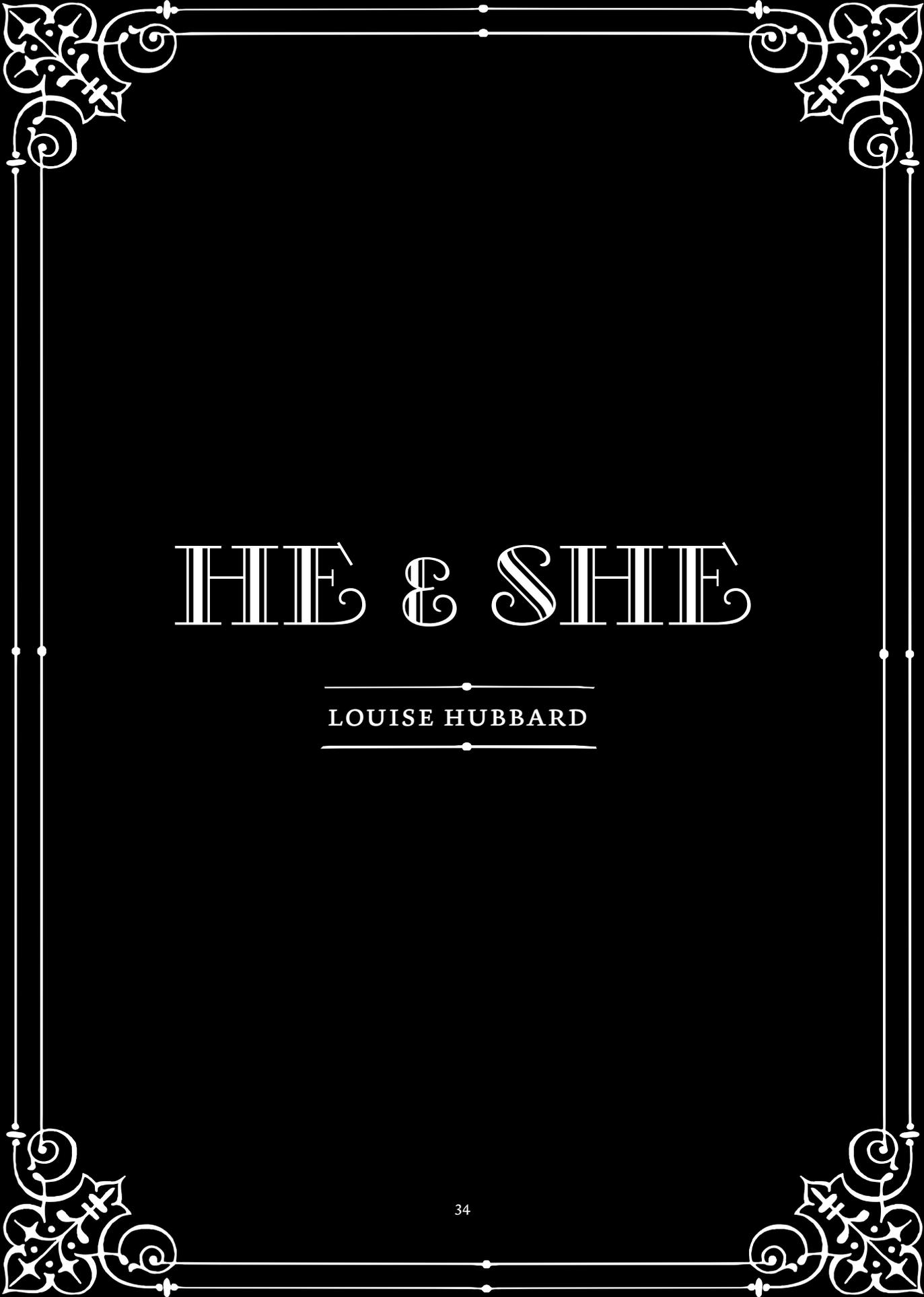
devouring everything. Power is power, even when it is soft and full of ironic asides and unfelt confessions of idiocy. **Hang dog.** In the foyer of the place I work I show L. a book called *Mr. Classic*. **Don't have the weather.** Just one person sitting in front of the computer. **Wrote two pieces for Paul Knight.** Melbourne, where I do not live. **A story about someone into boot-jacking.** A young male who had hung himself in an auto-erotic mishap. **The young male was not dead in actual life.** I felt responsible for the non-death-death. **The simple fact of us having mouths means we are guilty.** 46 was the best year of my life. **Fiction, made after the fact, forms prior reality.** Checked shirt = best shirt. **In my suburb there is a lot covered in trees.** There is a house tucked away at the back. **No one remarks.** I am so much smarter than I say I am. **They were trying out allocated seats at the movies.** People sat wherever anyway. **I realise I look best in pale colours.** I just speak all of this and the ruffles in the air become words or something like that. **It is probably unconscious.** In my lunchbreak I found a book called *The Geography of Nowhere* and wished I had have read it before now. **It is too boring to read books written in 1992 or something.** I am addressing no one but myself. **Read books when they come out or don't bother reading them at all.** Still trying to sell my *Principia* frame. **Dark stuff can be too dark.** I say to friends that stuff can be emotionally true if not factually so. **Into the wild was moving.** The journey to self-loss, the dispersal of the self combined with the sense of being fearful but testing yourself all the time no matter. **Lovely.** The intro titles were done in a pretty dodgy font. **I have prioritised stasis.** In both manner and visage, I am quite similar to James May from TV's *Top Gear*. **When I was eight I played cricket for a season.** I sleep on my stomach. **Never learned the fielding positions.** At the end of the game, you had a can of cool drink. **Kids would push in and grab theirs.** I'd hang back. **There followed a lecture of sorts, or maybe just a remark, which acknowledged the pathetic backwardness and remove that became the structure of my personality.** Always ready to slip away, into oblivion, loneliness, nothingness, living-death. **Dreams of being in the back-seat of my parents' car and then noticing that they were missing, and me being driven off, out of anyone's sight, never to return.** There is no explanation. **Mum and Dad went crazy.** I. **Who is knocking on the door?** Bug is in pain. **Why don't you get it?** Can't look. **I am soooo busy!** Why was I so spooked? **It's the same for everyone.** The working life and the hobby life and the bigger life too. **This whole thing is just this thing about going as far you can without killing yourself and then backing off a little because you are tired and finding a place you can work from and do the work you want to do, more or less, and then being happy enough that things aren't going exactly how you had thought they would in life because you can still make as good a shot of things and as good a contribution as you can in the process.** The Japanese restaurant is, in fact, very good. **I have seen professionals dance with their arms in the air.** There have been lectures in French. **It bothers me how you bring stuff up like how the coffee is bad here.** A review in the newspaper. **I am surprised.** High cheek bones. **Someone banked on the big thing that happened.** I fell into the classic Freudian trap. **Sublimation.** If I could be a star at something that would make up for the deficiencies. **Beards!** What's up with that? **I went to art school because I was more special than everyone else around me.** At art school I was surrounded by others who thought they were special. **I was most special.** I had a fantasy where God would enter the bus I was on to the Joondalup campus of Edith Cowan University. **He would stop everyone from talking, illuminate me with his God-light and explain that I was greater than anyone else on the bus.** Objective fact. **There is a thing called 'the decoy worry'.** Oh Jonathan Ames—you are the most, most, most special! **In the glasses I have recently bought, I look like an actor.** Typing has been fulfilling in many ways. **It has been a conduit for half-friendships.** A defence against shyness. **I.** No one is a bogan. **I am lonely when I ride by openings and see the people on the pavement drinking beer.** I lived most of my childhood under a rollercoaster. **My face is red from prawns that we shouldn't have eaten.** I will not buy the new Mark Z Danielewski novel *Only Revolutions* because it has gotten a heap of bad reviews, most of them on Amazon. **I take the TV show *The Beauty and the Geek* extremely personally.** My appearance is not 'positive'. **Once I thought I was Dutch.** Oscar sleeps on the tiles. **I am waiting to be emailed back.** If you require a reason you don't really need it.



The fixed gear craze has gone worldwide with hipsters busting moves and making the scene. Here, in downtown Perth, we find aging trend-follower Robert Cook in one-handed trackstand mode. Hush now kids, don't brake his concentration, he's on a dope zen-ride to nirvana baby-o.

Glasses by LA eyeworks, jeans by Minus Ung, shirt by Country Road, shoes by Tretorn. Hair by Newways. Watch by Casio. Styling by Robert Cook. Photography by Lucy Harper.

Robert Cook is a curator and an art writer who lives in Perth, Western Australia.



THE & SHE

LOUISE HUBBARD

HE is my simulacrum.
SHE is my experienced and trusted advisor.

SHE gave me the photos and said she'd kept a few. They didn't work out—a couple of HIM.
SHE said HE looks terrible. Really off.

An unrelated while later I told her about an idea: I wanted to take HIM to my studio—lay him out on a table and play with his dial—pinch his nostrils flat and gape open his mouth a few times—roll up his flesh. He'll let me do anything to him. When I set up the video in the late night kitchen and called him in and said hug me just like this, I was wearing the human hair wig of a bald man. He hugged me like I was incurable. When I told him he was on the invite hugging the baldy, he put it on the fridge.

SHE got the idea. SHE knows body-parts, flesh and blur, dodge and burn, terror. SHE said gestures of HIS tormented face sounded like Francis Bacon and SHE might give me those photos after all.

I want the photos.
Nauman says that when you are making art you rein in the God-given gift for making things so it will not get in the way of an elegant and aggressive solution.

I commit acts of visual aggression. HE is my elegant solution.
HE asked me how I thought of him aging. I told him flatly: I want you as Duchamp. He protests he is not Duchamp. I restate the problem. Frankly, I want you as Beckett. I suggest HE take The Last Modernist to the salon. Cut the Duchamp. Boof the Beckett. HE drives me to work. Hair drives me.

SHE gave me the photos.
A couple of snapshots privately felt.
Two moments of HIM. A split moment for me. *Beckett Remembering. Remembering Beckett.*
Physically measurable, metaphysically unknowable. In one instant, HE is too weak to cry. In the other, my baby did a bad, bad thing.
I Can't Go On. I'll Go On.
SHE has unbuttoned his Beckett. The bit I bite down on.

SHE snaps: the shots are duds—dud shots.
Dud dud dud dud dud dud dud. Utterlessly blank. Dudded—I am struck.
SHE pictures HIM; I picture HIM; SHE pictures ME.
Shots I nearly missed.

I see the Acconci video CONTACTS. A man is cropped hard from waist to chin, naked. A woman, kneeling in front of him, head not in view, moves her hands over his body. I hear their rapt whispering 'yes' 'now' 'pelvis' 'yes' 'now' 'rib' 'yes' 'now'. This blow-by-blow goes on for some time.
I'll go on. I can't go on. I take my lunchtime pleasure and exit. At the entrance I notice a sign:

**Please Note: The work CONTACTS does not represent sexual activity.
What it does represent is a performance focussed on sensing perception.**

Louise Hubbard is an artist and lecturer at the vca, University of Melbourne.

VENICE LICKS

JESS JOHNSON

PHOTOS JORDAN MARANI



above
The USA Pavilion at the Biennale.
Free posters for All!

opposite page
... and where all the posters end up.

One of the Venice Biennale staff members eagerly shows me a video he filmed from his rooftop. A giant seagull struts amid the bodies of dead pigeons that it has delivered to its nest. The gull is burying its head in their bellies, flicking intestinal strings into the air and gulping them into its gullet. My new friend has been collecting evidence of bird-on-bird violence for some time, posting his videos on YouTube. I appreciate his mild obsession. I've freshly landed in Venice to spend one month employed by the Australia Council, assisting in the deinstall of the Australian exhibitions. My personal spur is to observe the Biennale's dystopic death. I picture myself standing on the deck as the Venice Biennale sinks beneath its own weight. I sing a mournful dirge to the art world, a ravaged pigeon on my shoulder ...





clockwise from top

- Handwritten signs compete at the national pavilions.
- Sophie Calle secrets away.
- Venice sinks under Biennale waste.
- Outside my front door during frequent flooding.
- Malfunctioning technology at the Arsenale.
- Venice the Menace, vandals strike!



Venice is an opulent corpse of a city. Its thin streets are littered with steaming mounds of dog shit, deposited by snapping dogs in quilted jackets. The stench of sewage mingles with perfumed boutiques. The damp is pervasive and the toilet rolls in our apartment puff up like exotic blooms. Adrift in this surreal stage set I dodge the tourist packs clutching oversized maps and expensive cameras. Bored children run at the abundant pigeons. Sometimes their pitiless feet connect with the overfed birds, much too fat to fly away. In the night-time the dead and maimed pigeons are shovelled into piles. The tourists take photos of the still-fluttering heaps as they do of the flocks during the day.

My free days are spent inspecting the Biennale in its last thralls. The soggy, crumbling reality contrasts with the slick catalogue documentation. The wear inflicted by 300,000 visitors over six months is obvious. Exhibitions are looking tired. Damp plaster is crumbling in chunks. Information texts peel from walls. Spotlights have slipped. Technology is faltering. Jarring blue screens broadcasting 'No Signal' break up the video orgy. The attendants loiter in the corners of rooms playing with their mobile phones. No one seems to care very much. A video installation by Oscar Munoz, displaying five blue screens with the floating SANYO screensaver, still manages to attract a veritable crowd when I pass.

I find China out the back of the Arsenale. Cao Fei's work was once a futuristic inflatable tent that you could sit inside to watch videos. That was before it succumbed to the elements. Her inflatable has become a deflatable,

a pool of slimy green rainwater weighing down its centre. A cardboard sign with NO ENTRY marks the entrance. Some brainless plutocracy absurdly keeps the pump forcing air into a few rolling sections.

Another day I start a faltering conversation with the man minding the Armenian exhibition. He tells me he is the building's gardener. The Armenians went home early and left him in charge. At least that is what I think I am told. Rather unexpectedly he shows me where there is a ping-pong table in a backroom and invites me to a game. We play a vigorous set for forty minutes until I eventually concede and depart in a disorientated fug. How did that come about?

The Giardini houses the largest concentration of art. A park that accommodates 30 permanent national pavilions, it is akin to traversing a world expo. The weather is bitterly cold. In the Polish Pavilion the attendants are huddled around a small red heater that might be a re-wired toaster. Next door the Romanian attendants resemble angular alley cats, their hair sticking up in thick tufts. They shiver impassively and shake their heads when I ask for a handout. On the other side of the tracks is the USA Pavilion. Their exhibition has giant, glossy posters to give away. A sign states 'Please Take: Unlimited Supply!' and the mobs of daily visitors comply. The posters are unwieldy and cumbersome. People soon tire of carrying them and discard them in droves. All across Venice they can be seen overloading rubbish bins and clogging canals. Some schoolkids use their poster rolls to start wars with other classes, swooping on each other, shrieking war cries.

One morning wailing sirens wake me at 6am. Later I learn they are to announce the arrival of *acqua alta* (high water). The frequent floods that roll in and out of Venice are a winter phenomenon produced by synchronicities of the full moon, tides and wet weather. I don a pair of gumboots to leave but as I step outside the water surges to my knees. A submerged latex glove waves at my feet. I have to make it to the raised walkways that are erected on the main drags but there is a network of flooded streets to navigate first. A bloated rat and several dead pigeons bob amidst burst rubbish bags and food scraps. I imagine the USA's flotilla of posters journeying out to sea. I am so startled at my predicament that I wade straight through. I dare not consider the dog shit. Venice just vomited on me.

On our final day we board up the windows and doors of the Australian Pavilion. During the inbetween time the Giardini is bequeathed to a lone security guard and marauding packs of vandalising kids. There is an air of abandoned theme park to the place. Already the Giardini is blanketed deep in its winter leaves. A few figures move in the bleak as we finish up our work, picking the Biennale's carcass clean. We give the bones one last clean then leave the hungry kids to it.

Jess Johnson and Jordan Marani install other people's art for money and are co-directors of a gallery called Hell.



Deflatable Inflatables: China represents at the Venice Biennale

How to Write an Opening Speech to an Art Exhibition

Daniel Palmer



Cate Blanchett opens Ricky Swallow's Venice Biennale exhibition in June 2005.

Image courtesy of The Australia Council for the Arts.

Of all the genres of commentary about art, the opening speech is perhaps the most difficult to pull off. These notes consider some of the pitfalls of the opening speech, motivated by the author's recent experiences (both as an opening speaker and audience member). It is inspired by Umberto Eco's essay 'How to Write an Introduction to an Art Exhibition' (1980), collected in *How to Travel with a Salmon and Other Essays* (1994). Like Eco's satirical essay, mine is essentially instructional, offering counsel for both artists and potential opening speakers (POS).

Let's start with the obvious. As everyone knows, good public speakers don't unfold pieces of paper out of their pocket. So the following advice about *writing* a speech is really about *giving* a speech. Not that I am an expert. Far from it. I am, however, resigned to my fate, as an art school lecturer, of being called on by students to open their shows (at least when my celebrity colleagues are unavailable).

My objective here is to help myself, as much as you, to avoid dull speeches. In this sense I have to disagree with a website advising on giving a speech, which states: 'Don't try to be unique or interesting. Be as fully and completely yourself, unrestrained by your fears and desire to please others ...' Nothing could be more dangerous. You need to overcome who you are. I'm not suggesting there isn't good advice available online to help you overcome *glossophobia*.¹ For instance, many sites wisely advise against the idea of picturing the audience naked, since these images might inspire more terror than comfort.

But general advice such as 'know your audience' may not be sufficient for art openings, which as we know are composed of a diverse mix of poseurs and wannabe artists and their hangers-on, not to mention the artist's family and friends, and all those attracted to free wine. Surely nobody has come specifically to hear your speech, which is why the following lessons, learned the hard way, might help:

1. Keep it short.
2. Never sound like, or quote from, the catalogue essay, especially the puff-piece you may actually have written for the show. If you must talk about how the work is made, make it brief.
3. Try to see the work first. As with writing catalogue essays, not knowing the work can prove embarrassing.
4. Personal connections are *de rigueur*, but remember: other people don't care about the details of your wonderful friendship with the artist.
5. Maintain an authoritative air, and never admit to your ignorance. A prominent art critic recently admitted to me that he doesn't understand contemporary art. If you have nothing to say about the work, talk about something else. I was once lucky enough to open an exhibition on the day Jacques Derrida died.
6. Never open your own exhibition (if you are the artist or, increasingly likely, the curator). There are plenty of POS around.
7. If you agree to open a show for the wrong reasons (such as for a favour, professional obligation, to see your name on the invitation, etc.), use special tact. The opening speech, like the catalogue, is not the place to express doubts about an exhibition, contemporary art, or yourself.
8. Curated shows pose a special risk: you may discover that despite the title, there is no actual theme that unites the works on display. This calls for some spontaneous para-curating. SEE POINTS 2 AND 3.
9. Humour is obviously desirable in a POS, but if you must resort to singing in public make sure the acoustics are kind. Galleries are usually OK, old church halls even better.²
10. Always dress better than your audience (thanks Steve Martin).
11. Theatrics are good; if you're not much of a performer, at least wave your hands around a lot.
12. Despite all the above, opening speeches are all about authenticity—yours, and that of the art. It's a sobering business, so if you're worried that your words might feel hollow, strained, or false, try to avoid this by drinking at least two glasses of wine before you open your mouth.

¹ *www.speech-writers.com* even devote a special topic to the tricky problem of opening art exhibitions, which they claim is 'Suitable for use by someone who has had the honor of being asked to open the art exhibition.'

They advertise: 'How to Solve YOUR Opening of an Art Exhibition ... Problem in 60 Seconds.' The speeches are described as addressing 'the part art plays in our lives', and importantly, 'Each Speech is Complete in Itself, Easy To Deliver, Risk Free, & Guaranteed To Work!' Importantly, they underline, their pre-prepared speeches 'say what etiquette says OUGHT to be said on a particular occasion.' All for just US\$23.15.

Daniel Palmer is a lecturer in the Theory Department of the Faculty of Art & Design at Monash University

² My apologies to everyone in Devonport during my visit in 2005.

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MMO \$2.25 Billion market!

I LOVE numbers this big...a brand new \$2.25 Billion market for Enviro Resolutions' (OTC: ENVI) Diesel Exhaust Scrubbers created virtually overnight! I forecast a quick 345% price growth for ENVI in a rush to upgrade America's diesel engine fleet! Get in now...this could be enormous! Enviro Resolutions' patented diesel exhaust scrubber can retrofit 690,000 diesel-powered buses with no viable competition!

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MUM OF TWO TERI CAMPBELL from Tasmania used to earn \$32k p.a. now \$50k plus in 4 months. "I implemented the new BBIO System into my contracting company in March 2007, the latest figures for July 2007 are 52% up on the previous year for the same period."

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Revealed: My Next +300% Alternative Energy Blockbuster... The renewable and alternative energy industry is the hottest sector in the market making a handful of investors quite a bit of extra income. And we've just uncovered a company whose energy-saving technology will soon be installed on every residential home in America. The stock is an easy triple within 6months!

Already in 2007 - My Internal Audience received the following recommendations:

- Buy FXPE at \$1.08 before it went to \$3.56
- Buy YCKM at \$1.90 before it went to \$3.65
- Buy SOBM at \$1.90 before it went to \$3.50
- Buy SCEY at \$1.80 before it went \$4.31
- Buy AULO at \$1.10 before it went to \$1.75
- Buy SGCR at \$0.48 before it went to \$1.15

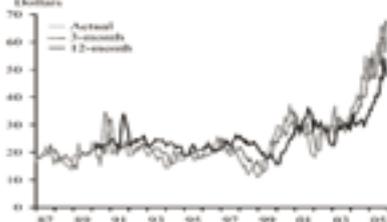
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Figure 2. Benchmark forecasts



This is me with the kids on the beach in Corsica. You can do it

Technical Information in this report is based on information compiled by Dr Rodney Boucher who is employed by Linex Pty Ltd and who is a Member of The Australasian Institute of Mining and Metallurgy. Dr Boucher has sufficient exploration experience which is relevant to the style of mineralisation and type of deposit under consideration and to the activity which he is undertaking to qualify as a Competent Person as defined in the 2004 Edition of the 'Australasian Code for Reporting of Exploration Results, Mineral Resources and Ore Reserves' ("JORC 2004"). Dr Boucher consents to the inclusion in this release of the matters based on his information in the form and context in which it appears.

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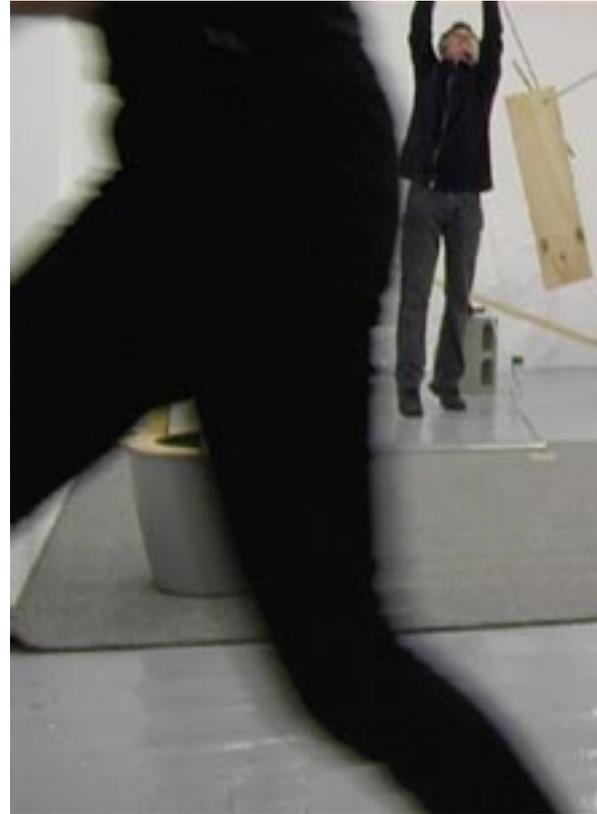
Let's All Go to Iraq

As the battles in Iraq for commercial gain and survival persist, contemporary artists have been criticised for failing to make powerful work about the war because of their distance from the action. As remote spectators, their responses have been disparaged as simplistic commentary reflecting a lack of engagement or apathy. Enter Charles Green and Lyndell Brown. Accepting a commission from the Australian War Memorial, they agree to be embedded for five weeks in 2007 with the Australian Defence Forces (ADF) on active duty in Iraq and Afghanistan. Journalists report enthusiastically on the PR claims of complete artistic freedom and likely confronting material and on Green and Brown's brief to develop a 'total aesthetic experience' of the conflict.¹

However, slip behind the PR frontlines, and the claims of artistic freedom and conceptually challenging material begin to lose their foothold. Watch as systems of institutional control rear their ugly heads. First strike: the commissioning institution has a

proclivity for realist paintings of war environments and specifies that the role of the war artist is not to provide political commentary.² The pool of contemporary artists that might be considered is swiftly decimated on both formal and conceptual grounds. So long Adam Geczy, with the provocations of your 'I Hate Australia' rhetoric, and Scott Redford, lest you homoeroticise our diggers. Farewell all those working with ephemeral materials: your polystyrene has no place in history.

Once non-threatening painters have been selected, then brace for the second strike as the war artists are shepherded towards empathetic identification with the logic of battle and the professionalism of battle troops. Isolated in ADF enclaves, Green and Brown's contact with outsiders is limited to glimpses of locals from their armoured vehicle plus a squadron of Iraqi soldiers who put on a haphazard show of manoeuvres. The strategy seems to have worked. Green and Brown return from their tour with effusive praise for the warm and





secure welcome of the ADF: ‘They don’t want anything happening to their pet artists!’³ When questioned, Green defends the parameters of their embedding, their seclusion inside the wire: ‘You don’t understand, there is only inside, there is no outside.’ Other than one painting of unruly Iraqi soldiers (*Iraqi Soldiers, Camp Ur*, 2007), the war artists’ realist output communicates stillness and control. Quiet tanks stand parked at Tallil airbase. Soft blue waters lap at the edge of dusty buildings in Camp Victory in Baghdad. The works from Afghanistan suggest similar themes: a tired-but-focused corporal sits at rest with the red, white and blue of her alliance badge prominent.

Traditionally, war artists participate in constructing the official collective memory of a particular conflict. As Green and Brown’s images garner support for nationalism, the ‘total aesthetic’ of others engaged in the conflict is sidelined—especially Iraqis. And even if one argues that the focus of the commission is the experience of Australians in war, then conspicuously

absent are the Australian private contractors making a buck in Iraq. Close to \$2 billion worth of bucks. As Green and Brown talk about ‘participating in history’ and creating a ‘mental archive’ for future generations of Australian children, little attention has been paid to the politics of remembering and to acknowledging what is being forgotten.

One wonders how the official memory and understanding of the Iraq war might be subverted if the access, logistics and financial support provided to Green and Brown were offered to contemporary artists whose practice would normally lead them to be excluded from such a commission.

To disrupt the formal conventions of a war artist, let’s start by recruiting the experimental sculptural practice of Bianca Hester. In a recent work, Hester and Jude Walton arrange and rearrange wood, string and other props to develop movement responses resembling choreographed dances. The functional props and the provisional structures formed recall

above

Bianca Hester

Provisional Devices for the Production of a Propositional Living Space, 2007

Image courtesy the artist



the fragility of Iraqi reconstruction projects. Poor construction, looting, a lack of spare parts and outbreaks of violence cause structures to fall into disuse—until an inspection and new contract lead to rebuilding. Bodies move against and around props at each moment in the construction-dismantling-reconstruction spiral: encircling, interfering. With alliances and fissures between individuals and collectives in the war zone perpetually in flux, perhaps Hester could reprise her 2004–05 work, in which plasticine is stretched and manipulated and sullied by the artist and by people passing through the space. Smudged and stained with temporal traces, the plasticine acts as a diligent archive of the forces and relations to which it has surrendered. Hester’s commission thus offers a focus on the volatile tensions of contingent relationships as people and processes cajole, extort, impel and resist.

Next, we enlist David Griggs to disturb the War Memorial’s painterly protocol with his symbolic battery. Like the confused narratives of the Iraq war,

Griggs’s recent works collide rainbow-strewn fantasy with bravura posing and seared flesh. Billboard-sized, with blood dripping from eyes and mouths and throats, his paintings aggressively colonise their viewing space. Through a collage aesthetic, foreign iconography invades and defaces magnified snapshots of Filipino street life. A bald eagle releases hooded masks from its talons as it shits mid-flight on the land below. A boy in a grotesque Halloween mask sports a badge ‘I Have Family in Iraq’. Here lies the opportunity for Griggs’s commission to extend a body of work that has emerged through his repeat encounters with communities in Asia. We thus embed Griggs with the thousands of ‘Third Party Nationals’ who are recruited or trafficked to service the coalition bases as laundry workers, canteen staff, labourers, maids and beauticians. While Bush equates Iraq to the American annexation of the Philippines, thousands of Filipinos and South Asians flood into Baghdad to effect a structural assault on the spectacle

of the war. The scope is rich for Griggs’s perversions and supra-national subtexts.

First World War correspondent Charles Bean wrote of the shelling: ‘each shrieking tearing crash bringing a promise ... I will tear you into ghastly wounds ... fling you half a gaping quivering man ... to lie there rotting and blackening like all the things you saw by the awful roadside’.⁴ As the instigator for the Australian War Memorial, Bean was adamant that artists be engaged to convey war without exaggerating heroism or sanitising the conflict. Yet commemoration at the Australian War Memorial courts idealism with those who die in war joining a regimented role of honour as abstract heroes.

To expand our vocabulary for commemorating death, let’s call up Tony Garifalakis, whose installations are littered with characters celebrating sacrifice through personal ritual. Occasional political allusions (murals in the style of Northern Ireland, the Aussie parliament as a house of



far left
David Griggs
Blood on the Streets, 2007
 Acrylic paint on canvas
 300 x 400cm
 Image courtesy Uplands Gallery

left
Tony Garifalakis
Paradise Slaves, 2006
 Acrylic, PVC, glass, sconces and candles on wall
 720 x 310cm

horror) are subsumed within expansive individual and group creeds on death. Fragments of suicide notes offer bold catch phrases as public epitaphs. Serial killer Herb Mullin's 'die song' declares a sense of civic responsibility to kill or be killed. Like uniforms and hoods in Iraq, face-paint and wrestling masks provide protective costumes that lend permissibility to violence. Slogans anticipating the end of the earth announce the apocalypse: the ultimate biblical corruption of death in the service of national security. Indeed, given the significance of American evangelical support during the emotionally charged days that led to the invasion of Iraq, why not embed Garifalakis in a Texan mega-church or fundamentalist sect?

This hypothesising leads us to a troubling issue concerning the Australian War Memorial artists' programme: its privileging of battlezone experiences in constructing enduring impressions of a war. The political jostling, social dissent and coercion that surround the decision to enter and sustain engagement in a war

are assumed peripheral to the national archive of reflections on the experience of war. Thus, for our twilight mission, we resuscitate our early casualty, Adam Geczy, to infiltrate the War Memorial itself. With past work probing the malleability of recounted histories, repression, mediated violence and state control, Geczy seems eminently suitable to agitate the mythology of the War Memorial and its 'pet artists'. Perhaps he could draw parallels with Iraqi museums, which have long been a field of combat for manipulating culture and filtering heritage in the service of national interest.

¹ For example: 'Politically powerful artists chosen to portray complex war' by Silvia Dropulich, *University of Melbourne Research Review* 0307, pp. 8-9; 'New additions to a rich tradition of art and war' by Gabriella Coslovich, *The Age*, 3 November 2007.

² Dropulich, *op.cit.* p. 8.

³ This and all other direct quotes attributed to Green and Brown were professed during a public lecture at the Centre for Contemporary Photography, Melbourne, 7 November 2007.

⁴ *Origins of the Australian War Memorial*, <http://www.awm.gov.au/aboutus/origins.htm>, accessed 28 November 2007.

In 2006 Faye d'Evie resigned from directing a United Nations-mandated education and training centre for peacebuilding and the prevention of violence in order to focus on contemporary art practice.

The book was right, most azure, but always
a
contra **counter**



For the last decade or more, Mr. Hughes ^{is} has been writing the best art
criticism for popular consumption in the English language

Bryan Robertson

is

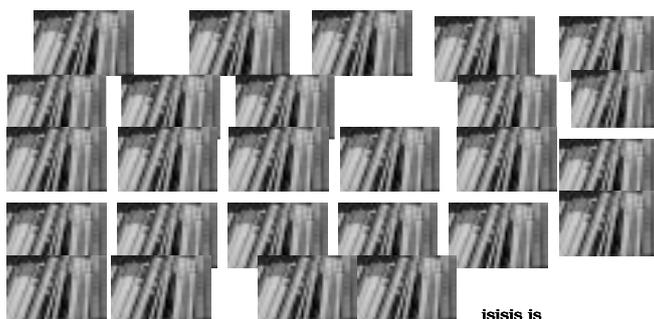


For the last decade or more, Mr. Hughes^{is}

Bryan Robertson

*Clear, literate, insightful and direct ... No one has explained as cogently the sorry state of art today or outlined as **tellingly the shortcomings of its alleged superstars Alan G.Artnr**,*

Corrected right, right-made book, this *bucolliccal inliftia*



THE WRITER VERSUS THE ARTIST WHO SPEAKS IN QUOTES

An interview between Penelope Trotter and The Quote Generator

DANIELLE FREAKLEY'S current performance titled *The Quote Generator* appears to have crossed a cultural boundary for some. This may be because this artwork seems to reveal as much about the way that we write about, cite and document ideas within art as it is about how we communicate with each other. On watching *The Quote Generator* participate in a university seminar in 2007, it became evident that through her art piece she is ultimately working in the same way as an academic or writer. Many of the articles, talks and discussions of academics and art writers are constructed upon thinking about other people's quotes and references.

After visiting the United Nations with *The Quote Generator* in New York in November 2007, and being endeared by her choice of attire (koala jumper under a smart jacket and squid shaped knitted gloves), and impressed by her good behaviour, as our playful host ran us through the middle of an African congress, I started to wonder whether there does really exist an ulterior motive to subvert authority in this performance. At this point it became obvious to me that *The Quote Generator* is simply being genuine. The interview below has been inspired by the seminar that got me thinking about all of this.¹



Fig. 1 Image of Penelope Trotter and Danielle Freakley courtesy of Carmel Mulvany, Chief UN Works Programme, Department of Public Information, United Nations.

PT: What is the main premise behind this work?

QG: *Give it away.* Red Hot Chilli Peppers, 1991.

You must think I'm the cheapest whore in town. Art School Confidential, 2006.

It is neither possible nor desirable to reduce everything to a common set of rules. The Necessity of Artspeak, 2003.

PT: Do you think there is a personality behind the performance of *The Quote Generator*?

QG: *That other one who is me, blind and deaf and mute because of whom I'm here, in this black silence, helpless to move or accept this voice as mine... I must disguise myself... It's not me it can't be me. Whether it's me or not. Here there is no frankness all I say will be... to begin with not said by me.* Samuel Beckett, 1958.

I know not everyone will like me, but this is who I am so if you don't like it, tough! Britney Spears, b. 1981.

Recognise me. Gandhi (the film), 1982. *I cannot avoid being myself all the time.* Louise Bourgeois, 2001.

I am what I am. Reebok, 1960.

PT: Do you think you are 'acting' when you undertake the role of *The Quote Generator*?

QG: *Theatre takes place all the time wherever one is.* John Cage, 1961.

But Beavis and Butthead, 1993; *I'm no actor.* Liz Hurley, 2000.

PT: Is the performance of The Quote Generator meant to be confronting to its audience?

QG: *I'm just bloody normal.* Chopper, 2000; *I'm one of you.* Scanners, 1981.

PT: When this piece is enacted in a real social space do people generally react nicely?

QG: *I think I was a problem for them.* Karen Finley, 1998.

I came to myself within a dark wood where the straight way was lost, at first it made me weep; strange tongues, horrible language... And as he, who with labouring breath has escaped from the deep to the shore, turns to the perilous waters and gazes. The Divine Comedy, The Inferno, c. 1308–1321.

Lengthening faces into lengthening faces. Scott Walker, 2006;

When you're strange faces come out of the rain... People are strange when you're a stranger. The Doors, 1967.

Carry out my sentence—well I get what I deserve. Nine Inch Nails, 1989.

It's like. Run DMC, 1983; *People are broad-minded. They'll accept the fact that a person can be an alcoholic, a dope fiend, a wife beater, and even a newspaperman.* Art Buchwald, 1983.

PT: Do you think this performance mimics the linguistic representation of contemporary culture or the dialogues around contemporary art?

QG: *Man's natural character is to imitate.* Marquis de Sade, 1740–1814.

Kant implies, the products of the artist's imagination are essentially mimetic. Michelle Marder Kamhi, Art and Cognition: Mimesis versus the Avant Garde, 2003.

But Beavis and Buttthead, 1993; These artists are sly and pretentious when they claim to be the true simulators of pure appropriation of pure copying. Baudrillard 1929–2007.

Though collecting quotations could be considered as merely ironic mimeticism, victimless collecting, as it were... the collector becomes someone engaged in a pious work of salvage. Susan Sontag, 1977.

Plagiarism is necessary. Progress implies it. Guy Debord, 1931–1994.

It's what happens in the space between us that matters. In the medium of language within which we communicate, in the culture within which we've been conditioned at this point in time in our history. Stelarc's *Prosthetic Head*, 2003.

In the beginning. Genesis 1:1 The Bible, year unknown; *I actually think my first performances were some sort of bizarre attack on language... Some of them came out of my poetry.* Mike Parr, 2004.

PT: Do you lose your own sense of personal identity when doing this performance, as The Quote Generator is being taken over by other people's language?

QG: *Would seem the obvious suggestion.* Black Adder, 1989;

Only the shallow know themselves. Oscar Wilde, 1854–1900.

Anyhow. Winfield, 1972; *Such was the traditional role of the fool, the town clown or village idiot, who through the hilarity of his gestures provided an inverted and ironic mirror for contemporary culture.* Nancy Spector, 1999.

PT: What is your definition of truth?

QG: *Truth.* Calvin Klein, 2000 for women, 2002 for men.

The prime truth Albrecht Dürer, 1528; *Is it universal wisdom? or romantic psychology?* Roland Barthes, Death of the Author, 1967.

It is the beginning of wisdom to say, 'I don't know'. Monkey Magic, 1978–1980.

We're not here to answer cuntish questions. Guy Debord, 1961.

Penelope Trotter and Danielle Freakley, December 2007.

Danielle Freakley is carrying out a three-year public performance art project named The Quote Generator where she speaks only in quotes. A full description of the project can be found on the website www.thequotegenerator.com.

Penelope Trotter is a lecturer in Art Theory at Monash University Gippsland Campus and is currently undertaking a PhD in performance-based photo media titled 'Fantasy Fulfilment and Pressing Politics: Ethical Communication as Performance'.

¹ Mimesis panel discussion with Danielle Freakley as *The Quote Generator*, 'Women in Research Project', Monash University, 2007. Speakers included Penelope Trotter, Dr. Anne Marsh, Dr. Daniel Palmer and Lily Hibberd.

The Banality of Everyday Life

Michael Ascroft



The television genre of ‘cringe comedy’ or mockumentary has cemented its place in the Australian popular-imagination in recent years. High points have been Chris Lilley’s series *Summer Heights High* and a 2007 episode of *Kath & Kim* guest-starring Australian cricket’s Romeo, Shane Warne. The growing popularity of this particular genre of satire (which also encompasses offshore programs such as Ricky Gervais’s *The Office* and *Extras*, *Nighty Night* and *The Catherine Tate Show*) is evidenced as much by the indefatigable repetition of the formula, as it is by the ratings. These shows tend to be received in one of two ways: either they are championed as works of a kind of anthropology, where all the petty egotisms of human behaviour are thrown into relief, to which audiences and critics respond with mock horror and resignation; or, there is a less widespread response which criticises the shows for peddling in gratuitous exaggeration or prejudice, by simply rehearsing the stereotypically dull, stupid, mundane aspects of modern life. (The latter view was even expressed by a couple of disgruntled high schoolers protesting in letters to the editor of *The Age* about indecent stereotypes in *Summer Heights High*.) In my view, the two opposing interpretations seem to avoid the crucial point that what makes these shows unique is that they are not reducible to either the acute or the fatuous. Rather it’s as if every ‘real life’ stereotype and situation played out in them is already made up of some level of fiction—watching this cringe-making entertainment, we often feel there is something *too* faithful in the portrayals, and it is this that makes them so uncomfortably, shamefully familiar.

Some recent examples of contemporary art—and, in particular, video and photography—share what can be called a family resemblance to these programs. A whole series of connections could be made between television programs and contemporary art practice that takes the everyday as its subject, but, in light of the current success of the satire of mockumentary TV comedies, this article will attempt to tie that genre to the work of contemporary

Australian artists Darren Sylvester and David Rosetzky. The connection here is the common use across art forms of a particular kind of reflexive logic, one in which the artist or television producer, the artwork or show and their corresponding audience are all implied in an ironic series of connections with one another, sustained by a shared premise—‘the banality of everyday life’. So it’s with these ‘mockumentary’ art forms that not only are the artist and audience engaged in this play, but this whole series of connections are built into the work itself. However, to say this logic is ironic is already saying too much, since the works themselves never lend themselves to straightforward satire or parody—which is what the standard receptions miss or avoid. It is simply that they are thoroughly reflexive, constantly reflecting back upon themselves.

There are three notable trends in contemporary art and photography that coalesce around some concern with or elaboration of the everyday. Firstly, there is the loose, documentary style of representation depicting the day-to-day lives of artists and their immediate environments and friendships. Often adopting the Gonzo photo-journalism ethic, major contemporary photographers like Nan Goldin and Larry Clark self-consciously present themselves as part of the action (either firsthand or at one remove), though the action itself is often slowed to a banal crawl. Secondly, there is a range of staged portraiture, whereby photographers from very diverse backgrounds, such as Yvonne Todd, Martin Parr and Anna Zahalka, ironically celebrate people of suburban or run-of-the-mill normality, whereas an artist like Tony Garifalakis perversely integrates sub-cultural references into domestic settings. The third strand of contemporary art concerned with the everyday revolves around the appeal of the confessional. Intimacy is deployed as endearing, sometimes funny, but always dependent on the audience’s identification with the confessor as saying and giving it all away. Video artists Rachel Scott and Anastasia Klose, among others, work in this manner.

Although these loose definitions over-simplify the many engagements with banality and the everyday in contemporary art practice, they do serve to draw out a shared concern with the authenticity of the document, of the artist’s sentiment, of their lives and their capacity to represent everyday life. There is also a consistent reliance on some degree of a reciprocal and spontaneous empathy between the characters depicted in the artwork and the audience. Sylvester and Rosetzky, I would argue, follow a different approach to the everyday by abandoning this inheritance. They instead draw on, or play with, these themes of authenticity and fiction simultaneously, while never reducing one to the other. The tag ‘mockumentary’ is itself cringe-worthy, but nevertheless covers this essential difference between works that separate fiction from documentary, ultimately belief from truth, and those that don’t. Like the better moments of the TV shows, the potentially anthropological insights of Sylvester’s and Rosetzky’s works are intended to lead out of the impasses of artistic authenticity and into the narratives, implicit or explicit, of their characters.

Darren Sylvester’s photographs *If All We Have Is Each Other, That’s OK* (2003) and *The Explanation Is Boring. It’s Simple. I Don’t Care* (2006), are examples of this approach. They seem to emerge out of some weird space between a documentary and a soap opera. It’s as if every conversation you’ve ever had or overheard concerning some imbroglio in a share house or workplace is illustrated with absolute detachment. Any comedic value they evoke is certainly of the ‘cringe’ variety; the teenage KFC feast of *If All We Have is Each Other, That’s OK* perhaps being the best example. The sentimental narratives Sylvester draws on complicate things further, dragging the lowest reference—American fast food, braces—into the highest realm of authentic feeling. The brilliance lies in the complexity of the staging and the attention to detail.

David Rosetzky’s video installation, *Untouchable* (2005), similarly plays with a complex staging of sentiment

P.54

Darren Sylvester

Your First Love is Your Last Love, 2005

Lamda digital print, edition of 6

90 x 120cm

Images courtesy the artist and Sullivan + Strumpf

Fine Art

right

David Rosetzky

Untouchable, 2003

Digital still from 3 channel DVD

18 minutes, colour, sound

Image courtesy the artist and Sutton Gallery



and artifice. In a quasi-parody of the confessional, various characters speak to the camera discussing the everyday dramas of relationships, miscommunications, unrequited love and desire. Yet any authenticity or sentimentality is unsettled between scenes as a ridiculous elevator music soundtrack plays and characters shuffle out a short awkward dance. It is testament to the precision of the staging that so much sentiment returns to the piece almost immediately after these intermissions.

Sylvester and Rosetzky share the sophisticated reflexive style of the popular satirical TV cringe-comedies. Their works keep in play both the staged artifice and the allusion to authenticity, setting in motion the audience's own reflection on the characters in their works. The sentimentality or melancholy of their artworks operate the same way as Chris Lilley or Ricky Gervais TV programs do: the moment any sentiment is felt by the viewer, the work reflects back

on its own artifice and the immediate, spontaneous authenticity of the feeling dissolves. But to keep looking means this same loop plays out again and again.

Yet the artists also have in common, at least in the works mentioned here, something that seems to jut up against this sophisticated reflexivity. It's a kind of fatalism, a cliché, the often-quoted 'banality of everyday life'. That is, the characters themselves constantly play out the first reflective move: we see them deep in thought, staring at themselves in mirrors or vacantly into the middle distance, alone or alone amongst friends, talking to us about this or that dilemma. Or else they're being interviewed by a documentary crew about life, their aspirations, and so on. But mostly, the characters seem to permanently return to what they already are, endlessly replaying this cycle, seemingly forgetting each time what they had thought or said just before. While there is a highly sophisticated reflexivity used on a

formal level, it seems to always fail for the characters who, reduced to a catch-phrase essence, remain utterly stuck with who they already are—now we have 'destiny' turned into banality. And it is the exact opposite of what theorists of reflexivity say people in modern, reflexive society should be: 'the more societies are modernized, the more agents ... acquire the ability to reflect on the social conditions of their existence, and to change them in that way.'¹ It's a strange moment when artists like Rosetzky and Sylvester, along with all the TV shows, remind us that, although we can reflect on who we are through culture to an unprecedented level of nuance and sophistication, everyday life may be none the better for it. Or, that this reflexivity becomes the very substance of modern banality.

Michael Ascroft is a writer and student.

¹ Beck, U., Giddens, A. & Lash, S., *Reflexive Modernization*, Cambridge, Polity, 1994.

Reviews
Comment

un.Covered

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Vox

Philip Brophy
Gertrude Contemporary Art Spaces,
Melbourne
11 September 2007 – 6 October 2007

Discussing voice in film, Australian artist, filmmaker, curator and cultural theorist Philip Brophy wrote in 1998: 'Our larynx is the morphic machine of that muscular and neurological struggle to attain speech ... Each and every nuance of our genetic inference, communal interaction and acoustic environment is impressed on our *vox mechanica*. Vowels are tied to our mother's breath; pitch to our conversation with friends; phrasing to our surrounding architecture; volume to our landscape ... It is no surprise that we fear the taking-over of our voice by another.'¹ Nearly a decade on, Brophy continues to investigate the significations of voice and film with *Vox* at Gertrude Contemporary Art Spaces, an audio-visual installation consisting of an animated filmic exchange between a male character and a female character. Their voices, however, are inhuman oscillations with no evidence of a familiar language to be found in the digital noises that erupt from their mouths. Furthermore, as each character speaks, their face expands and mutates in a manner that evokes the horrific bodily expansions made popular in sci-fi and horror films such as *Alien* and *The Fly*.² Considering past uses of this cinematic device of bodily mutation, the characters of Philip Brophy's *Vox* are instantaneously associated by viewers with that which is alien or other.

In *Vox*, the morphing and digitization of voice explores the popular filmic icon of male and female dialogue. The artist investigates the reductive manner by which we extract meaning from a vast array of film and entertainment. As stated in the catalogue essay: 'In *West Side Story* ... the girls flap their Rican skirts in waves of high heat. The spiv studs respond with a series of erectile poses ... In *Vox*, a man opens his mouth. Stuff comes out. A woman opens her mouth. Stuff comes out.'³ It has been noted that the meaning we extract from sound, for example the melancholy of Beethoven's *Moonlight Sonata*, is not due to innate content ingrained within the physical structure of the music's sound

waves, nor is it a biological matter, it is simply the product of a psychological association that is produced upon hearing any given sound. In *Vox*, with such psychoacoustic implications in mind, Brophy post-dubs the characters of his uncanny romance with digitally synthesized noise. This creates confusion for the audience by denying them the naturalised human voice they expect, through which literal interpretation is confounded. Without a clear understanding of what is being communicated and because of our inability to associate these noises with literal expressions, the audience is confronted with an ambiguity and disorder, one that the images and sounds of popular culture counter through well-known pop songs, television and film.

A similar exploration of voice is offered in Brophy's *Evaporated Music 2* in which a scene from the camp 1990s television series *California Dreams* is post-dubbed in perfect lip-synch with a death metal soundtrack composed by Brophy. As amiable girls croon with smiling faces, the audience hears demonic growls amidst a barrage of instrumental intensity, a confusion of signifiers that Brophy likens to 'Disney riddled with cancer. The Wiggles sweating with Hep B.'⁴ More than just postmodern trickery, *Evaporated Music 2*, much like *Vox*, creates a level of confusion through its juxtapositions of pop-cultural iconography. Allusions to dating and romance cross with sci-fi and digital noise in *Vox*, and in *Evaporated Music 2* popular high school students cross with a dark musical subculture from which they appear far from fitting.

The human body, too, is of intrinsic importance to an investigation of Philip Brophy's *Vox*. Vaginal constructs become phallic and labial likenesses are bound within male genitalia, all morphing into unfamiliar bio-structures. This process brings to mind the genital development of an unborn child, where testes ascend or descend to form ovaries or testicles respectively, prior to the assignment of culturally constructed gender distinctions.

Hollywood romantic comedy cinema expands upon Western gender constructs to extreme levels and this is bizarrely reinterpreted in *Vox*. Brophy's 'romantic comedy' deconstructs filmic iconography, regurgitating select traits in a manner that welcomes the viewer and listener at first into an experience of filmic familiarity,

and then proceeds to destroy certainty with a barrage of completely alien sonic information. Unabashed in its investigation of pop-cultural taboos, the work of Philip Brophy identifies aspects of Western culture that pass unnoticed or are fundamentally ignored by others within his field, perpetuating weird yet significant contemplations of contemporary life.

Jared Davis is a freelance writer based in Melbourne, contributing independently to a number of publications and currently managing CULT, an online blog for Melbourne arts news and critique.

1 Philip Brophy, '1 Scream in Silence: Cinema, Sex & the Sound of Women Dying', in *Cinesonic: The World of Sound in Film*, Australian Film Television & Radio School, North Ryde, New South Wales, 1999, pp. 51-78.

2 Philip Brophy, *The Body Horrible*, 1988. <http://philipbrophy.com/projects/bodyhorbl/BodyHorrible.html>. Accessed 29 October 2007.

3 Philip Brophy, artist statement *Vox* catalogue, 2007.

4 Philip Brophy, *Evaporated Music* overview, 2006. <http://philipbrophy.com/projects/evap/overview.html>. Accessed 20 October 2007.

Territorial

Curated by Andy Ewing & David Broker
Artists: Bernie Slater, Silvia Velez, Raquel Ormella (ACT) and Franck Gohier, Gary Lee, Catriona Stanton (NT)
Canberra Contemporary Art Space,
1–30 June 2007
24HR Northern Territory Centre for Contemporary Art,
14 September – 20 October 2007

Two territories, two curators and six artists set the tone for a curious and compact exhibition mounted by Canberra Contemporary Art Space (CCAS) and Darwin's 24HR Art last year. Titled *territorial*, this exhibition formed a notable bridge between Australia's two extant and somewhat anomalous territories which both 'suffer a sense of isolation and alienation that is both physical and psychological,' according to Andy Ewing (catalogue statement), curator of the exhibition's NT component. How far this exhibition went towards alleviating this perceived condition is difficult to say but the sense of alienation was far more apparent

in the works of the show's three ACT artists. Bernie Slater, Silvia Velez and Raquel Ormella. True to the political hub of their locale, each of their works dealt in some way with alienation from democracy and life under the thumb of a Howard Government and its particular brand of national identity. The three NT artists on the other hand presented a more discursive front; the work of Franck Gohier, Gary Lee and Catriona Stanton variously brought into play questions of cultural and historical import with the landscape given more than a cameo appearance.

In the analogy of place supported by *territorial* one could surmise that Canberra artists are all preoccupied with politics while in the NT it's more about colonial and cultural frontiers. Of course with such a tight selection—like the parallel trios of the *Brady Bunch* coming together—it is the combined voice of the two curators which speaks loudest. They are the veritable Mike and Carol of this territorial bunch; it is their analogy of place on show. Just which of the curators is Mike or Carol is probably a moot point but the CCAS's David Broker went for a more streamlined approach than his NT counterpart (perhaps making him more akin to Carol's smart bob than Mike's unruly curls). Speaking at the exhibition's Darwin stint, the CCAS's Toni Bailey admitted that Canberra artists generally resist being identified with the city's central political and bureaucratic status. It is, she said, almost a clichéd point of reference. And yet, ironically, the cliché retained its perch through the work that Broker chose to exemplify his territory.

Canberra is, according to Broker's catalogue statement, 'rarely defended by its citizens let alone people outside the ACT's borders,' and 'frequently derided as dull, a city with low esteem and without soul.' A soulless quality certainly pervades *Disruptive*

recruits, a work by Velez, with its wall-bound installation of lanyards portraying the city's federal parliamentarians. Each lanyard holds a camouflage-print insert bearing an MP figurehead in outline, a comment on soul-destroying conformity and the elusive (anti-) persona of 'pollies' and the public service. Velez's installation had more visual impact in the exhibition's CCAS hang but struck me as little more than a wry concept which, in execution, failed to rise above the banality it lampoons.

'Critical art has a currency in the ACT that just isn't quite the same elsewhere,' concludes Broker. To this end, Velez's disillusionment with the face(s) of democracy was supported by the stylised 'protest' art of Slater and Ormella. Both these artists apply the materials and iconography of certain forms of protest art in ironic, almost histrionic ways. For Slater it is the cartoon aesthetic of the political poster/mural, *We Know Who We Are* which is given a distinctively Chinese twist: John Howard emblazoned in red like a grim Mao Zedong rises above a gathering which recalls the infamously nationalist Cronulla riots. A *Work Choices* pamphlet, *TV Week* and TV screen image of America's popular talk show psychologist Dr Phil, form part of the rabble along with a *Daily Telegraph* banner screaming 'Terrorists want to root your sister.' Slater's swipe at Coalitionist propaganda and mass media-fuelled mob hysteria is made more ironic in light of the Coalition's recent federal election defeat with Howard replaced as PM by the ALP's Mandarin-speaking Kevin Rudd and, in his former seat of Bennelong, by former ABC journalist Maxine McKew. Political journalist Karen Middleton captured the Liberal Party's election eve mood at Sydney's Wentworth Hotel where a one-time senior Howard Government official brazenly blamed the loss of Bennelong to 'Those f—ing Chinese.'¹

Philip Brophy

Vox (detail), 2007
Still from 2-screen digital animation
7 minute, 5.1 Dolby Digital sound
Image courtesy the artist and Anna Schwartz Gallery

below

Raquel Ormella

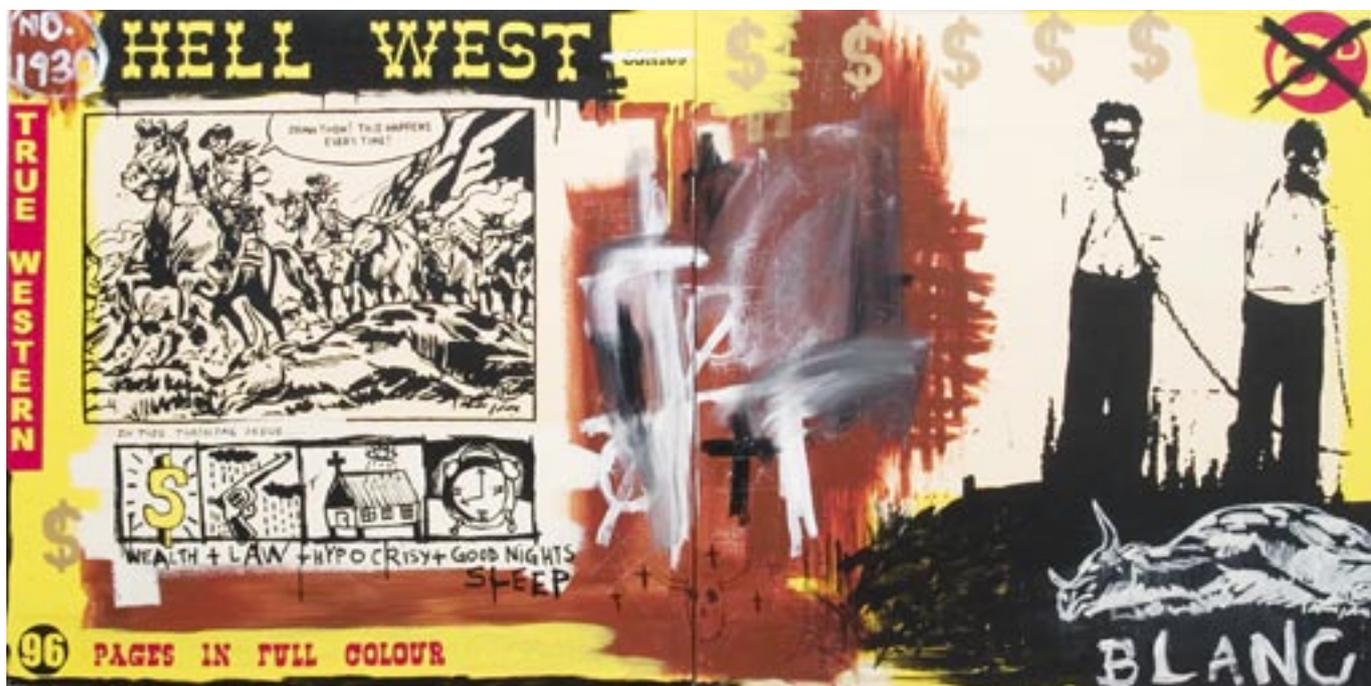
Australia Rising # 1
Cotton, felt, metallic thread, ribbon, 380 x 180cm
Image courtesy the artist and Mori Gallery, Sydney
Photo credit: Brenton McGeachie

p. 57

Nomeda and Gediminas Urbonas

Karaoke, 2001
Still from 15 minute colour digital video
Image courtesy of the artists and Artspace





above
Franck Gohier
Hell West, 2005
 Acrylic on board
 120 x 240cm
 Image courtesy the artist and Ray Hughes Gallery
 Photo credit: Brenton McGeachie

opposite
James Deutsher & Hao Guo
Haircut No. 6, 2007
 Performance
 Image courtesy the artists
 Photo credit: Spiros Panigirakis

Political art can seem coldly irrelevant once the political landscape has changed. Ormella's mock tribute to the Howard Government's Mutual Obligation welfare reforms with *Australia Rising # 1* risks this fate even while continuing to tug at the strings of nationalist and patriotic overkill. Still, part of the point of the exhibition was the inter-territorial dialogue between works. Here Ormella's mythologising resonated with the Wild West heroics of Franck Gohier's paintings which, in their comic book vignettes, also echoed Slater's imagery. In its dissolution of persona, Velez's work was in total contrast to Lee's very personalised photographs which juxtapose portraits of his niece and nephew alongside those of Larrakia individuals taken by police inspector/photographer Paul Foelsche (1831–1914) soon after Darwin's establishment in the 1870s.² In Lee's *Mei Kim and Minnie* the lineage is direct—Minnie is Mei Kim's maternal great-great-great-grandmother—whereas in *Shannon as Billiamook* the connection is more along cultural aesthetic lines—two young Larrakia men in their prime.

As the only Aboriginal artist in *territorial*, Lee's inclusion amplifies the absence of a Ngunnawal artist to represent the traditional owners of the ACT region. In his choice of politicised work is Broker merely eschewing political correctness or does this suggest a deeper cultural oversight given the exhibition's emphasis on place? Perhaps this partly explains why Lee's portrait of his nephew, *Shaba*, graced the catalogue cover (for the exhibition's premiere in Canberra) even though this work—an affirmation of tropical, almost *David*-esque male beauty—wasn't included in the exhibition.

For Ewing, immersed in 'Darwin's chaotic optimism on the edge of Australia's wildest frontier,' the Indigenous perspective is much more compelling and extends to the art of non-Indigenous artists Gohier and Stanton who have worked closely with top end Indigenous communities. Gohier makes no bones about the less-than-cattle equation of Indigenous lives in the Kimberley's so-called 'cattle wars'. His

derision of anthropologists in *The Trap* painting could seem a little blinkered against the work of Lee who, also an anthropologist by training, is more ambivalent about the profession including the legacy of amateur anthropologists such as Foelsche. Inasmuch as Broker and Ewing gesture rather than pontificate in their final curatorial count, Ewing is the more gestural, particularly for embracing the whimsy of Stanton's obsessive toothpick landscapes on his side of the territorial coin.

Maurice O'Riordan is a freelance writer with a foot in both Darwin and Canberra.

1 Karen Middleton, 'Playing the blame game', *The Canberra Times*, Saturday 1 December 2007, Opinion B7.

2 The Larrakia are the Aboriginal traditional owners of Darwin and the Cox Peninsula regions. For more on Foelsche's photographic legacy see *The Policeman's Eye: Paul Foelsche's Frontier Photography*, a South Australian Museum exhibition, 2005

Haircuts

An ongoing project by James Deutsher and Hao Guo

The first time James Deutsher and Hao Guo shaved each others' heads, *Haircut No. 1*, was in Guo's overgrown garden in 2005. They were wearing transfer print T-shirts with Che Guevara and Chairman Mao on them. A self-timed photograph shows them with their freshly shaved heads, chins tilted up, and Deutsher with a plaster cast on his arm. There is a backdrop of fake jungle: fecund growth and urban brickwork.

The T-shirts the artists are wearing act as inverted symbols of this first encounter—commodified signs of revolution (portraits of Guevara and Mao) that have been absorbed into the system they sought to negate. Deutsher bought the T-shirts somewhere between the free enterprise system of Thailand and, Singapore, the beacon of advanced



capitalism in the region. Avoiding the generic awkwardness of the service industry, Deutsher and Guo trust each other to draw the vibrating blades over the contours of their heads. They are momentarily escaping a predominant system, sustaining each other cooperatively.

As a contemporary project, it is very much grounded in the delineated realm of collective human history. Hair is cultural. Like clothing, it's a language articulated on the body that takes forms that are personal, arbitrary, unclaimed, dense, vacuous, yet it balances the space between being worn, like clothes, and just being, like skin. No other animal has head hair that grows continuously and with so much distinction between members of the same species, so it is perhaps inferred that within the protein filaments that make up hair, some of our identity as human beings is trapped.

Deutsher cites an initial urge to maintain a shaved head as a pre-emptive resistance to controlling forces, 'in that any powers that be can gain some sense of control over you by cutting your hair.'¹ The United States and Libya still shave prisoners' heads as punishment.

Like the connection Chris Kraus² makes between S/M and Noh theatre, Deutsher and Guo's *Haircuts* have their own parameters, conventions and codes that contain the action that takes place. The logic is that within a fixed and controlled space, practitioners have a greater capacity to be explorative and free. What action should take place is prescribed,

so the focus is diverted to how it should be played out. This hyper-orchestrated, yet open condition is a component of S/M that Kraus explores in her writing.

Each *Haircut* exists as both a continuation and a breaking point. The stable, ongoing structure that conditions the *Haircuts* opens up a space for the artists to negotiate new meanings, shifting contexts and variable possibilities through a consistent dialogue.

The artists began with no outside involvement, a private performance with Deutsher and Guo as the only participants, documenters and audience, but this gradually expanded to include others as a means to reposition the *Haircuts* with each manifestation. So far, they have taken place in a communal circle, in a studio with a crystal in front of the lens, in a friend's backyard with a guest taking footage, and at the Victorian College of the Arts. In September an open call was sent out inviting people to sit in a circle and have their heads shaved while shaving the head of the person in front of them. This group event, *Haircut No. 6*, played out a defining principle of the project. There was no artist/audience dichotomy, only participants. 'In some way, our position as artists is lower compared with creator-artists ... and the audience, in the other way, have more responsibility. We are equal in it,' Guo reflects.³

The point of creating, or at least constructing, comes when Deutsher edits the video footage into short films. There is no consistent logic

between the action and how it's edited, like the haircuts themselves the edits come from a feeling that emerges at that moment, or an impulse to interject something immediate into the smooth flowing of time. Guo considers his role in allowing Deutsher to 'do whatever he wants' as 50 per cent of the work in the post-production process, demonstrating the value of letting go in a collaborative practice. The capacity of both artists to 'let go' when working together has helped to create something new altogether: not a composite of each of them, not two halves that make a whole, but a way of working that is not necessarily reflective of their work as individuals. Collaboration in this case is not just about togetherness or blending, but about attempting to work away from individual tendencies to multiply the possibilities of ideas and their outcomes.

Deutsher and Guo are creating their own space to exist within, setting up the peripheries that they fill with personal ritual, performance/dialogue, fluctuating cultural meanings and the pragmatic outcome of keeping their hair short.

Olivia Barrett works from World Food studio in Melbourne. Writing, publishing, making clothes, being on the board of TCB art inc., and watching soccer take up most of her time.

¹ James Deutsher, from an interview with the artists, 16 November 2007.

² Writer, Semiotext(e) publisher and filmmaker.

³ Hao Guo, from an interview with the artists, 16 November 2007.

For every solution there is a problem
Susan Jacobs
Ocular Lab, Melbourne
27 October – 4 November 2007

With shifting spatial orientation, planar axis and gravitational relations, Susan Jacobs's works suggest movement whilst conveying contemporary environmental concerns. Her latest piece, *For every solution there is a problem*, presented an incongruous obstacle inhabiting the space of Ocular Lab. On first impression the work appeared as a mere tree placed on the gallery floor, however, closer inspection revealed a complex and subtle accomplishment.

The crisp white gallery walls and polished concrete floors sharply contrasted with the twisting, knotted branches encompassing the space. Appearing as though it had grown *in situ*, the tree was in fact installed through the removal and re-adherence of impeding limbs. Assembled horizontally, the tree's branches occupied the gallery whilst its trunk, sculpted into the shape of a wedge, partially propped open the door leading to the adjacent space. Acting simultaneously as both an obstruction and support, the work symbolised the binary nature of the ideas it embodied: thoroughfare/interference, obstacle/passage, hindrance/progression, interior/exterior.

The installation grew from a series of drawings exhibited in 2006 that were propositions for large-scale sculptural works. Highly detailed graphite sketches outlined Jacobs's spatial and environmental motivations. Exploring

temporal trajectories through the translation of the pictorial space, the planar surface was transformed to the three-dimensional. The process of constructing a wall to house a doorway to accommodate a prop suggests a backwards-in-coming-forwards time-fold. The prop itself, a dead tree that had undergone change over a long period of time, further emphasised this temporality.

Concerned with the cultural significance of the site-specific and the impact that any chosen site has upon the production, presentation and reception of the visual art it houses, Jacobs's installations extend and elaborate upon the ideas addressed in her drawings. These ideas relate to and reconsider the conceptual art practices of the 1970s with particular reference to the land art of Robert Smithson and the architectural interventions of Gordon Matta-Clark. By recontextualising the discarded or redundant and reclaiming the environmental, Jacobs's interest in *Arte Povera* and 1970s conceptual practice is also unveiled.

For every solution there is a problem referenced the paradoxes that an artist commonly explores in their creative process. The idea and its implementation, or the problem and its solution, undergoes a process of trial and error before reaching its conclusion. Whilst working through a problem, it often becomes more convoluted before attaining a point of clear progression. Citing that a problem and a solution could be made from the same material encourages the consideration of idea as material.

Fluctuating between melancholic, humorous and ironic, the nature/culture divide is explored

as an engaging quandary. In essence a matter of *every solution there is a problem* signified the despondence we can feel around contemporary ecology yet used wit and irony to explore the artistic process.

Melissa Loughnan is a Melbourne based curator and the Founding Director of Utopian Slumps.

below

Susan Jacobs

For Every Solution There is a Problem
(installation view), 2007

Dead tree, stud wall, hinged door

300 x 500 x 780cm

Image courtesy the artist

Photo credit: Julie Davies

right

Rachel Scott

What goes up must come down (installation view), 2007

Acrylic on masking tape

Dimensions variable

Image courtesy the artist

Photo credit: Sam Smith

Between you and me

Curated by Anneke Jaspers
Artists: Ben Denham, Paul Greedy,
Sarah Jamieson, Rachel Scott, Sam Smith
Firstdraft Gallery, Sydney
31 October – 17 November 2007

For some people contemporary art is 'cold mechanical, conceptual bullshit.'¹ Surprisingly it's an opinion not far off Sol LeWitt's notion that 'the idea becomes a machine that makes art.'² It seems the divide between conceptual art advocates and antagonists is not about





definition, but mirrors the art-historical binary of ideas-based art and emotive, expressionistic practice. Yet conceptual artist and Turner Prize winner Martin Creed claims, 'I want to make things because I want to communicate with people, because I want to be loved.'¹³ That conceptual practice can be primarily emotionally driven demands that the assumed mutual-exclusivity of these two aspects of art making needs to be reconsidered.

Between you and me, curated by Anneke Jaspers, identified an underlying trend within current modes of art making which confounds this historical distinction. The five emerging artists Ben Denham, Paul Greedy, Sarah Jamieson, Rachel Scott and Sam Smith all incorporate the reflexivity of 1960s conceptual practice by self-referencing form and rendering the audience self-conscious within the gallery space. Yet, by further exploring the notion of the artwork as mediator these artists re-establish the significance of the artist in the process of making and pose interesting questions regarding the relationship between them, their work and their audience.

The work of Sarah Jamieson and Rachel Scott addresses the relationship between the private and public experience of art making by combining reflexive form with intimate and intuitive content. In *Climb every mountain* (2007) a video recorded in the exhibition space, Scott performs as herself-the-artist, ambiguously referring to the personal struggles faced in the process of making art. Combining sexual innuendo with language reminiscent of

sports psychology, Scott replicates the awkward intimacy of a confession or over-revealing heart to heart, highlighting how the emotional aspect of art production, largely considered self-indulgent within critical forums, is practically taboo within the contemporary art world.

As Scott's video exposes the preparative stages of art making, the painting she went on to produce, *What goes up must come down* (2007), is installed on the opposite wall. Strips of masking tape are elevated from the status of artist's aid to the rainbow appeal of a painter's palette and become a messy sculptural painting, resembling a bright yet botched Daniel Buren inspired, DIY paint job. Scott's vibrant and highly humorous work makes a transition from a form of personal revelation, to Minimalism's reductive removal of self-expression, back to the loaded mark making of gestural abstraction.

Where Scott uses ambiguity for satirical affect, it serves in Sarah Jamieson's *Practice (7)*, *practice (2)*, *practice (8)* (2007), to highlight the different stages of removal that distance a performance from its reception when mediated via video. As the audience voyeuristically witnesses both a self-recorded private performance and the self-reviewing of that act the artist's presence is more explicit in the fast-forwards and rewinds of the camcorder playback, than in the enigmatic primary footage. Operating across three monitors, the work foregrounds the multiple layers through which it functions, as both the performance for video and the resulting performance with video are depicted side by side.

Rather than having a predetermined outcome, as is the convention with ideas-based practices, Jamieson describes her approach as 'a practice in the true sense of the word'.¹⁴ Similarly Ben Denham engages with the process of practice in his performance-based work *No strings: pre-cursive* (2007), a dual-screen projection that records Denham in a clunky cyborg-esque motion capture suit and the indeterminable writing that is digitally generated by his corresponding movements. In an attempt to form recognisable letters by controlling sensors attached to his arms and legs the artist performs a tai-chi style dance. Jarring video edits and a short loop make this frustrating to watch, conveying a desperate and dysfunctional attempt to communicate. Yet this awkward quality exposes a performative element in the act of writing that is a curious reversal of Sol LeWitt's process of making work, in which a set of written instructions are to be followed.

Accompanied by a simple suggestion for engagement, rather than prescriptive instruction, Paul Greedy's *Brahma's echo* (2007) on the other hand is interactive in the true sense of the word, existing only at the point of participation. Unlike Denham's work it is the audience who must engage in inquisitive play and like them the artist only features in his work when in its vicinity. Despite a high-tech set up, the work revisits a traditional form of representation, as the audience members view themselves in a live projected *in situ* portrait, their image retouched with the soft focus of ripples produced by their own vocal vibrations.



left

Sam Smith

Tunnel (installation views), 2007
Plywood, matt board, balsa, acrylic;
high definition video transferred to DVD
Dimensions variable; video duration 0:02 loop
Image courtesy the artist and GRANTPIRRIE
Photo credit: Sam Smith

opposite

Simon Horsburgh

Untitled Heart, 2007
Steel supermarket trolley, latex balloon, silicone
Image courtesy the artist

Tunnel (2007), a video installation by Sam Smith, playfully explores the material and fantastic nature of digital art using *trompe l'oeil*. Within a basic plywood structure the audience views a hyper-real projection of the tunnel's interior, however this otherwise seamless illusion is disrupted by the image of the artist continually falling from one tin of glowing green paint into another. The artist's presence is a symbolic one, illustrating the idea of literally tumbling into another reality. The wormhole motif has other cultural incarnations such as the rabbit hole in Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* (1865) and the office portal in the film *Being John Malkovich* (1999). Yet the timeless quality of Smith's work belies narrative convention, being more aligned to sculptural practice. Playing with the idea that green screen technology meshes the here and now of our world with a parallel digital world of unlimited possibilities, Smith reminds us of its fragility. As his plywood structure disintegrates into a delicate cubist form, the seductive and mesmeric charm of video is at risk of dissolving into meaningless pixels at any time.

As interrogators of their own practices these artists reference the historical art forms that inform them whilst questioning prior methodologies, such as counteracting the over-intellectualisation of Conceptual Art by engaging humour and elements of play. Centralising not just the audience, but the often historically absent artist, they acknowledge the specificity and intimacy of this particular human interaction.

Since graduating with BA Hons in Critical Fine Art Practice in the United Kingdom, Josephine Skinner moved to Sydney in 2007 where she currently works at Stills Gallery.

1 Kim Howells, 2002 Minister at the British Department for Culture, Media and Sport. Extract from a note Howells pinned to the Turner Prize visitor comments board. As this stance was seen to reflect popular opinion the British Government supported it.

2 Sol LeWitt, 'Paragraphs on Conceptual Art', *Artforum*, June 1967.

3 Martin Creed in *Art Now: Interviews with Modern Artists*, Continuum, London, 2003.

4 Sarah Jamieson, artist talk at Firstdraft Gallery, 17 November 2007.

Forthcoming and Untitled

Simon Horsburgh
Conical Inc., Melbourne
11 August – 1 September 2007

In an artist's statement Simon Horsburgh speaks of an interest in natural phenomena, but it's not natural objects so much as *naturalised* objects that he is drawn to. A shopping trolley, a rubber thong, a plastic supermarket bag are items of such prosaicness that their reality is diminished by their ubiquitous familiarity. Yet through Horsburgh's sleight of hand they are de-naturalised and, perversely, they acquire a heightened realism. The found objects he displays are ordinary but no longer banal.

Through the application of a range of forces, the objects are inscribed and bear the trace of the actions performed on them. A windscreen is scratched, a trolley compressed and a disposable shopping bag delicately threaded with monofilament and staged as an object of attention. The residue of these actions is their index, and through these manoeuvres the objects are transformed.

Unlikely juxtapositions structure the work: a blood red latex balloon is trapped within the mangled metal frame of the shopping trolley, and wedged between the windscreen and the gallery wall is a yellow rubber thong. It's a surrealist device but the result is less a shock to the unconscious than the *frisson* of the everyday animated in unexpected ways.

I'm reminded of Petra Blaisse's photographs of billowing curtains that push through their window casing and balloon out beyond the building's façade, confounding the relations of inside and outside, and contrasting their softly inflated form against an obdurate frame.

Here too, there's a sense of things pushing through and things fleetingly ensnared. In *Squash*, a creamy mass of expanding foam seeps through the crevices and folds of crushed galvanised steel. The two materials—

metallic and synthetic—interlock, their meshed contortions forming a sculptural *grisaille*.

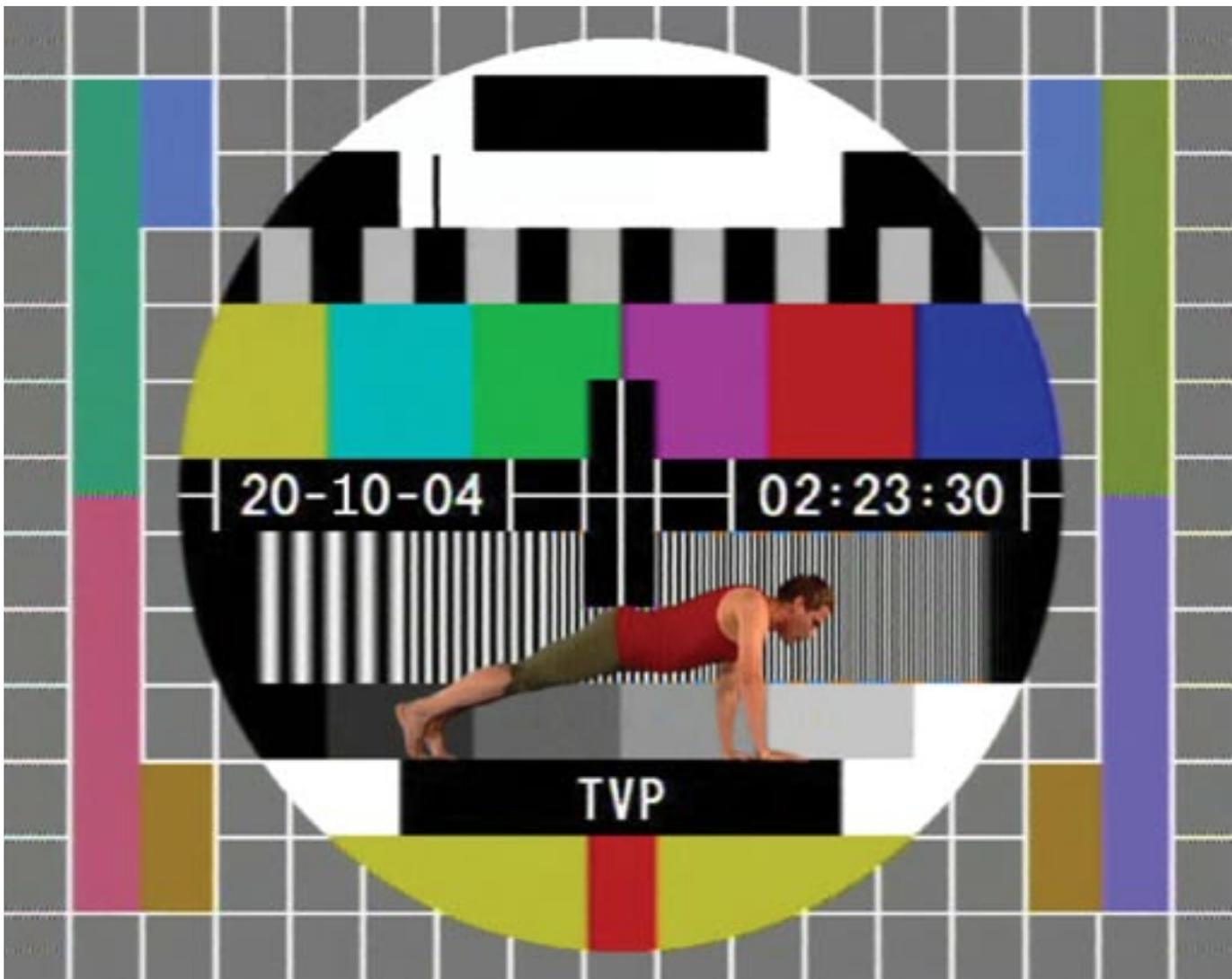
The windscreen work, *Dive*, laced with cracks and scratches, inevitably brings to mind Duchamp's *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even* or more colloquially *The Large Glass*. Although the cracked glass of Duchamp's work was the product of accident (it was broken in transit in 1926), both works ostensibly display their shattered glass surface as an index of their subjection to external forces. Duchamp subtitled his iconic work *Delay in Glass*, implying that his inanimate object had the capacity to toy with time: to slow it or, like a photograph, arrest it.¹ Horsburgh's sculptures share in this impetus to take on the photographic qualities of freezing time. This desire to make the object a vehicle for a snapshot effect is the untitled heart of Horsburgh's project.

The subtlest piece in the exhibition, *Thaw*, is a small area of the existing gallery window ground with oil like a clearing in a frosted windowpane. It's the most easily missed work yet it's the emblem for the suite—its icy surface suggestive of the surrounding 'frozen' moments. If the frosted opacity of the glass connotes the idea of seeing 'through a glass darkly', Horsburgh's works redress our imperfections of vision. Through the interlacing of object and event, he returns to our sight the quotidian created anew.

Sophie Knezic is a Melbourne based visual artist and writer, and committee member of Kings ARI.

1 For a discussion of the link between the photograph, the index and the readymade see Rosalind Krauss's essay 'Notes on the Index: Part 1' in *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths*, The MIT Press, 1986.





STILL HERE: Humour in Post-communist Performative Video

Curated by Simon Rees

Artists: Azorro, Kuba Bakowski, Olga Chernysheva, Oskar Dawicki, Esto-TV, Gints Gabrans, Arunas Gudaitis, Evaldas Jansas, Gabriel Lester, Marko Lulic, Dainius Liskevicius, Marko Maetamm, Mindaugas Navakas, Katrina Neiburga, Reinis Petersons, Arturas Raila, Kriss Salmanis, Nomedas & Gediminas Urbonas
 Artspace, Sydney
 26 October – 17 November 2007

Curated by the director of Contemporary Arts Centre in Vilnius, Lithuania, and former Australian resident Simon Rees, *STILL HERE* exhibited post-communist video art from the countries of the former Eastern Bloc. Around thirty videos were shown looped on one projection and five television sets scattered around Sydney's Artspace. As the content moved from absurd to silly, from repetitious to almost still, from depicting the past to depicting the potential, from the glitz of Western capitalism and architecture to desolate 1960s–70s structures of communal urban living, I couldn't help but wonder how funny the local art audience would find some of the dichotomies evoked here.

Most of the works operated on a perpetual trajectory between tragedy and farce, such as *Karaoke* by Nomedas and Gediminas Urbonas (Lithuania), in which two rows of formally dressed women (and one effeminate man) sing ABBA's 'Money Money Money' in a Lithuanian Savings Bank. The revolutionary song of the communist era is not as prominent a reference as is the commodity fetishism Father Marx warned about: to consume ABBA's ditty is to consume its lyrics, its image, its meaning, and, repeated five times, it is difficult not to take it seriously. Their plan to collectively 'find a wealthy man' here mockingly refers to the rush of Eastern European countries to join the European Union—and therefore renew their economic potential—which is, in effect, replacing one form of state collectivism with another. As we are serenaded over and over we are told that, sadly, the contestants might not do, even after sacrificing ideologue Marx for capitalism. ABBA never used to be this political.

Like the post-socialist condition in former communist countries, the works in *STILL HERE* can be categorised under two realities of which they themselves are a symptom: the reality of emerging out of communism—socially, economically, politically, psychologically; and the reality of proceeding 'towards new destinations', that is, capitalism, supposed democracy and the European Union. The

diversity of social and political constraints, limitations and possibilities in the individual countries of Eastern Europe is as varied as the number of works in this show, which themselves display as many contradictions and absurdities.

How plausible is it that just as the former communist countries of the Eastern Bloc enter the market economy, the end of art is proclaimed? More than just plausible, it is reality according to the collective Azorro in their video *End of Art* (2002). Illuminating the absurdities that continue to dominate art production in post-communist countries, the art 'supergroup' receives an invitation to do a show for which no travel expenses nor payment are secured for the artists, with no budget for a catalogue, but which will nevertheless, Azorro are assured, be a prestigious exhibition; what can one do but laugh, as does the collective?

Where exactly do we locate the newly acquired value systems of the former communist countries? How new are these values anyway? The television test-card resonates across Eastern Europe as much as the *Internationale* does as a symbol of state control and censorship. Kuba Bakowski uses it in *TV Zero Zones* (2004) as a form of meditation, suggesting perhaps that we never realised its true value as a soul-searching and soul-rejuvenating device. The tragi-comic dialectic—evident, for instance, in the *Chaser-style* video

opposite
Kuba Bakowski
TV Zero Zones, 2004
Production still, single-channel DVD
Overnight broadcast on Polish channel TVP2 in 2004
Image courtesy the artist

right
Yandell Walton
Windows, 2007
Video projection
Dimensions variable
Image courtesy the artist
Photo credit: Clare Hassett



Choose Order (2003) by Esto-TV, where neo-liberal and order-focused policies of Estonia are taken to their logical and ridiculous conclusion, as well as in the nostalgic recollection of Soviet idealism and utopianism—holds the show together.

Despite providing a feast for a communist-aesthetic nostalgia, *STILL HERE*, especially in its Sydney location—removed from a European context highly saturated with Eastern European art and the values placed on it—asserts a necessary question: is there such a phenomenon as post-communist or post-socialist art, and more importantly can we talk about it in the same way we talk about postmodern art, institutional critique or relational aesthetics? If so, perhaps our only chance of understanding its phenomenological basis unequivocally is through humour.

Dunja Rmandić has recently completed a Masters of Curatorship at the University of Melbourne, with a particular interest in cultural and historical revisionism in both Europe and Australia.

Geek Chic: A digital ontology

Curated by Alex Gibson & Christina Tester
Artists: Nicola Page, Azlan McLennan, Janine Randerson, Mia Salsjo, Su Stamp, Laura Woodward, Michael Meneghetti, Yandell Walton, Salote Talowe, Tape Projects Artists (Lorraine Heller-Nicholas, Ryan Heyward, Simon O’Carrigan, Jackie Felstead, Eddie Wong, Dyfan Thomas, Benjamin Ducroz, Madeleine Griffith & Jessie Scott)
Loop Bar, Melbourne
30 September 2007

UR A g33k! You secretly love being online... model trains...astronomy...high energy physics...don't lie...it's ok...once it wasn't cool...but now it is (Alex Gibson, *Geek Chic*)

According to Alex Gibson, curator of *Geek Chic*, the public now have an ease with and, an interest in, technology. In fact, it seems technology is now in vogue. So, all you *Doctor Who* and *Star Trek* fans, bookworms and mathematicians, be proud because there has never been a

better time to be a geek¹. This embrace of stereotypically unpopular ‘geek’ characteristics has become increasingly widespread in the last decade, no doubt an effect of the computer and technological revolution.

What exactly were the curators Alex Gibson and Christina Tester exploring through *Geek Chic*? When I attended the first event, it occurred to me that digital technology was once associated with an esoteric quality, hidden behind scientific laboratory doors, the domain of inventors and scientists. Today it has become increasingly accessible and embedded in our everyday lives. With our reliance on technological innovations in the form of mobile phones, iPods, video games, laptops and wireless connectivity, we often forget the great shift that has taken place.

‘Geek Chic’, as in *très chic*, implies an element of *savoir-faire* with technology. This series of interdisciplinary contemporary art and new media events was designed to acknowledge the role of digital technology in art and life while also bridging the institutional divide between the history of art and the history of technology. The first evening of the series consisted of an impressive 19 local artists presenting works on various platforms, from painting, sculpture and video installation through to music, animation and performance. The objective was to negotiate current cultural trends in art, technology and aesthetics by exploring the role of art in the 21st century. It did so convincingly.

In the main room, visible on entry, was Nicola Page’s work *A Safe Space* (2007), comprising paintings and an animated projection that morphed into one another at a snail’s pace. The silent work had a transfixing and sensorial quality. *A Safe Space* explored constructs of beauty, and also challenged ‘pure’ disciplines of art by fusing paintings on canvas with new technologies of image projection. This encouraged contemplation on how one can view art in light of recent technological advancements and yesterday’s commonly held presuppositions. The concept was distinctive, however the execution was lacking due to the unrefined transitions between media.

Tape Projects, a collective of emerging artists that create innovative, temporal audio-visual works and site-specific performances through experimentation with new technology, presented

work in the theatre. There were six screenings showcasing a rich cross-section of animations and short films. Using Flash animation software, Jessie Scott’s *Silhouette* (2004) explored the female silhouette in fashion. Each frame presented the viewer with a polarised outline in black or white of a woman’s body distorted by, and adorned with, various garments that traced a history of women’s fashion. Drawing on the fluid nature of femininity and fashion, this seductive and mesmerising piece glided assiduously through images and conceptual notions of the female form, highlighting its flux and mutation throughout history.

Femininity was also explored in Lorraine Heller-Nicholas’s work *Advice to those in love* (2005) in which she enveloped her audience in the realm of love and relationships. This visually beautiful work of pencil on paper was created using ‘rotoscoping’ (an animation technique that involves tracing over live-action film, frame by frame), stop-motion and hand drawn techniques. A sensation of touch and a feeling of closeness were attained through the gestural lines and endearingly makeshift transitions between drawings. Exploring associations with nostalgia and melancholy, one could almost feel the couple’s embrace and heartbreak. The narrative presented a story of ‘young love’: from first glance, to first kiss, and on to last goodbye.

Yandell Walton’s site-specific video projection *Windows* (2007) was exhibited in the laneway and utilised the window as a looking space. Her piece explored a pervious boundary between the public and the private, highlighted by virtual curtains that flurried open and shut, projected over the existing façade. The viewer became enticed by the blue-hued projection. Was this a portal to an unknown space? Was this real? Exploring technology, symbolism, and interactivity, Walton blurred distinctions between the physical, virtual and imagined. This negotiation of boundaries articulated the idiom of the *Geek Chic* program.

Rachael Watts lives, works, studies, writes and curates in Melbourne.

¹ For an interpretation on the rise of geeks, see: ‘The Geek Shall Inherit the Earth’, by Lev Grossman, *Time*, 25 September 2005, available at <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,917,1109317,00.html> accessed 31 January 2008.



Louise Bourgeois

Tate Modern, London

10 October 2007 – 20 January 2008

Announcing her presence in London, along the Thames Louise Bourgeois's massive spider, *Maman* (1999), was placed in contradistinction to the erect smoke stack of the re-purposed electric substation that houses Tate Modern. At the beginning of Tate Modern's history, a bevy of her spiders resided in the cavernous Turbine Hall, as the first commission for that space. Bourgeois and the Tate have had a long involvement. The curator of the current show, Frances Morris, has been vital to maintaining that relationship, and is superbly informed to produce a substantive and rewarding show. This she has done, yet the weakness of the Tate is a lack of space to show more work to effectively realise Bourgeois's prolific output. Perhaps, as the exhibition travels to its subsequent venues at the Centre Pompidou, the New York Guggenheim and the Hirschhorn Museum, Washington, it will fulfil a broader vision.

The intention of this show appeared to be the inscription of Bourgeois into the canon of art history, by monumentalising what she has produced. I approached the show with an interest in locating Bourgeois's legacy on ensuing generations of artists, especially more recent female practitioners. This expectation left me slightly disappointed as a result of the monumental spirit that permeated the show.

Over the past several decades Bourgeois's life has been writ large within her work. The 96 year-old artist has extensively explored childhood traumas. Much of her work stems from an early event that Bourgeois refers to as the 'betrayal', when her father brought his mistress into the family home to live as the children's governess. This is arguably a psychoanalytic process, in which Bourgeois seeks to understand and remake that history, albeit in fantastic forms. While Bourgeois plumbed the depths of her psyche, many well known American artists, such as Donald Judd and Cindy Sherman, Mel Bochner and Richard Prince, in addition to recent work by Christopher Williams and the UK artist Jonathan Monk, have expelled details of biography from their work in favour of formal and theoretical criteria or cultural deconstruction and contextualisation.

Privileging the autobiographical is something that has resurfaced recently with British artists such as Tracey Emin and Grayson Perry. After decades of conceptual cool and sleek fabricated distance, there has been a kind of Freudian turn, with psychological turmoil or even psychological calm having returned as valid and enticing subject matter in art, perhaps in part due to Bourgeois's prominence since she represented the US at the Venice Biennale in 1993.

Although many artists would avoid being read in terms of psychoanalysis, Bourgeois's influence is visible in a number of younger female artists emerging in the last five years. This can be seen in diverse instances, in work by artists such as Italians Luisa Lambri and Monica Bonvicini. Bonvicini's constructions reiterate spaces of gendered hegemony, and Lambri's interior photography plays on notions of subjectivity.

Bonvicini's spatial and conceptual vocabulary engages with power dynamics, taking architecture as a physical and symbolic

manifestation of male-female dichotomies. This is apparent in such works as *Wall Fuckin'* (1995), in which a woman is shown masturbating against a wall. Similarly, Bourgeois's primary theme of personal anguish and trauma is often articulated in the form of domestic architecture. Her *Femme Maison*, or housewife series, made in the mid-1940s, marks the start of this theme and her series of 'cells' started in the 1990s, adapting the vernacular of installation art to produce intimate domestic sites of confusion, conflict and mystery. *Cell (Choisy)* (1990-93), dominated the first room of the Tate exhibition. As with all her 'cells', a cage is constructed of chain-link fence that has some sections filled in with panels of plate-glass windows, a few of which are broken. Obscured by dust accumulated on the glass, a carved pink marble house is set within the enclosure, on a 10cm-thick marble chopping block, positioned on industrial sewing machine legs. The sculpture is modelled after the house where Bourgeois grew up. A gate to the cage is framed by a guillotine, with its blade raised, ready to drop, in an implied destruction of her childhood home that signals a positive and swift annihilation of the dead weight of memory. By distressing and attacking her materials and through strategies such as displacement and the exposure of damage, Bonvicini, like Bourgeois before her, incorporates seemingly irreconcilable polarities within familiar or intimate settings.

A defining feature that differentiates some of these recent practitioners to Bourgeois's work is an awareness of contemporary theories of feminism, power and gendered constructions of the gaze, evident in the practice of artists like US-based Anne Collier, Sue de Beer, and Hannah Greeley. Each of these explores emotional states, although some more personally than others, in an approach that can be identified with Sophie Calle's complex autobiographical projects. For instance, Collier has photographed herself in tears at the spot where her deceased parents' ashes were cast out to sea, to produce stark, minimal images fraught with emotion. This cannot be isolated to female artists either, a notable example being Darren Almond, the British artist who has explored family trauma in such works as *Traction* (1999), a three-channel video installation where he interrogated his father about physical injuries the elder Almond has had scar his body. Almond's mother is also present yet silent, on a separate screen we see her response turn from tears to laughter as she



opposite

Monica Bonvicini

Wallfuckin, 1995

Stills from video installation

Drywalls, wood panels, aluminium stubs, monitor,

video player, b&w video with sound

Dimensions variable

Courtesy the artist and Galleria Emi Fontana, Milano

bottom left

Louise Bourgeois

Cell (Choisy), 1990-1993

Pink marble, metal and glass

306 x 170 x 241cm

Image courtesy the artist and Ydessa Hendeles

Art Foundation, Toronto

Photo credit: Peter Bellamy

right

Buffdiss

Di on a Stick, 2007

Masking tape

5.67 x 3m

Image courtesy the artist

Photo credit: Lachlan MacDowall



attempts to recompose herself. The dynamics of family are clear, as is the trauma of the father behaving in ways disturbing to other members of his family.

Greely's sculptural objects construct psychological and perceptual space through the manipulation of everyday materials. In works such as *Silencer* (2002), she imbues a sense of humanism into a super-real rubberised toddler that seems to be coyly concealing herself under a green hooded jacket. The psychological tension in *Silencer* emphasises Greely's embrace of narrative-driven work. As with Bourgeois, the narrative is suggestive rather than determined, so the viewer can construe what is happening by themselves. In *Uncertain States of America*, a group show organised in 2006 by Hans Ulrich Obrist, Daniel Birnbaum, and Gunnar Kvaran, Greely included a coat rack made from bleached cow bones, on which was hung a light blue sun hat, clearly labelled with the brand Sears, a style that is usually worn by older men. While this particular sunhat could be read as a sign of life in retirement, the bones are reminiscent of medieval vanitas. With an economy of means and an uncanny resonance akin to Bourgeois, Greely plots an emotional landscape of modern existence, from infancy to old age.

For Bourgeois the *Femme Maisons* represent an architectural collision with anatomy. Many of the solitary female figures are bare and exposed except for an obstructing apartment house. As in recent photographs by Lambri, modern architecture registers an intimacy and a trace of complicated personal histories. These impenetrable, mysterious spaces are organic yet alien. Both repulsive and compelling, suggestive of primitive drives with poetic inflection, Bourgeois always seems to be passing through complex structures, negotiating the domestic space of trauma. Her most recent body of work, sewn together in homespun imperfection are a series of solitary figures, many of which are fragmented. They are not individual portraits but are symbolically representative of humanity and the fragility of life. While psychoanalysis and autobiography cannot be reduced to Bourgeois's work alone, once again Greely's cow bone structure seems to owe something to her tangible manifestations of psychic space. Yet the crafty nature of Tracey Emin's quilted and stitched banners, or Grayson Perry's fragile vessels decorated with clumsy drawings, as if

done by the hand of a small child, also seem more pertinent to the legacy of Bourgeois, in light of her most recent retrospective.

Kathleen Madden is a contemporary book editor in London who has recently completed books with Marine Hugonnier, Chloe Piene and Darren Almond.

Buff Vs The Queen

Buffdiss

Bus Gallery, Melbourne

16 October – 3 November 2007

In an age of Total Graffiti Management in which corporate automatons in overalls spray grey paint daily on freeway pylons, it is worth remembering the radical nature of 'the Buff'. Immortalised by numerous 'Fuck the Buff' New York train murals, 'the Buff' was the supposed end of the Golden Age of graffiti and a precondition for its expansion. In Melbourne, the Buff began in earnest in 1990—both a process of city-wide cleaning and a machine housed in an anonymous shed on the fringe of the Jolimont train yards, by which train murals were first reduced to fabulous smears with the application of cleaning acid, then removed entirely. It is in the context of this history and mythology and the various formal qualities of graffiti that the innovative tape-work of Melbourne artist Buffdiss is best understood.

The show at Bus Gallery included five walls of masking-tape drawings and three works on paper, as well as the obligatory work on the outside wall of the gallery. *Buff Vs The Queen* is Buffdiss's most substantial gallery installation to date, following work that has mostly appeared on footpaths and building facades. As his moniker suggests, the work engages with the process of erasure and decay, while simultaneously acting as a strategy for evading cleaning, the masking tape being allied to the relatively minor misdemeanour of littering, rather than the more serious offence of criminal damage.

The show's subject matter was the relatively straightforward iconography of British military adventurism, reminiscent of Michael Moorcock's quartet of *Cornelius* novels in which the eponymous hero exists in a dark Boy's Own adventure of sexual obsessions with royalty and army hardware. In *To Fox A Hunt*, Falklands-era

fighter planes and profiles of warships mixed with skeletons in uniform wielding sabres and canes that may or may not be merely ceremonial. Elsewhere, rats appeared as the Royal alter egos when framed portraits were defaced to reveal rodent eyes and whiskers, a theme further elaborated in a series of drawings in which rats frolicked in piles of treasure. The strongest images were the neat schematic rendering of warships and tanks, and the mass of paparazzi in *Di on a Stick* who only slowly emerged from the criss-cross of tape.

In conversation, the artist admits to a fascination with graffiti but a frustration, even revulsion, for paint. Buffdiss's work captures graffiti's obsession with monumental outlines, a fixation connected to the rise of computer-aided graphic design, in which graffiti writers have become increasingly obsessed with the perfect line, eschewing drips, smudges and overspray for crisp lines made easier by new spray can technology. Buffdiss's method initially satisfies this kind of perfectionism, then displays the degradation of graffiti falling apart. On close inspection the tape lines are far from perfect, often pushed in curved lines with uneven rips visible or tape already wilting off the walls.

There is no ideal graffiti object, only a series of spaces—the gallery, the courtroom, the street, the photograph—in which it is materialised. As John Scanlon writes in his trashy history of rubbish, 'the act of conceptualising garbage actually turns it into something else'.¹ A scan of Buffdiss's previous work shows that it is most successful when responding to the immediate environment, something that only happens in a limited fashion in the Bus space, for instance with a tape drawing of a rat in a corner, where the tape leaves the wall to form a 3-D ribcage.² Nevertheless, the singular nature of Buffdiss's method—taking what was once a preparatory gesture prior to spray painting as a final image system—and the increasing virtuosity of his drawing technique, make this one of the most interesting strategies for translating the aesthetics of graffiti and street art to the gallery.

Dr Lachlan MacDowall is a researcher in the Community Cultural Development program, Faculty of the Victorian College of the Arts, University of Melbourne.

1 John Scanlon, *On Garbage*, Reaktion Books, London, 2005, p. 14

2 See: <http://flickr.com/photos/buffdiss/>

Westside

Conor O'Brien
Utopian Slumps, Melbourne
25 May – 24 June 2007

Conor O'Brien's *Westside* series of photographs was as gritty and urban as its inner-city exhibition space, the lovely Utopian Slumps gallery. A new addition to the Melbourne art scene, Utopian Slumps is accessed through an alleyway, from a street lined with industrial-looking buildings. It seemed an appropriate setting for O'Brien's raw, unstudied photographs of everyday moments. A collection of still lifes, portraits and landscapes, *Westside* documented O'Brien's year of living in a beachside suburb of Perth. O'Brien's photographic practice involves a personal, diary-style approach: 'I try to look to my life to make genuine pictures that express emotion and feeling.'¹

The images in *Westside* evoke a peripatetic, youthful existence of drunken parties, share houses and late nights, but rather than capturing the action, O'Brien gently celebrates those moments that sit just outside the action. One of the highlights of the exhibition, the photograph *Backyard*, documents the detritus of a party: four mismatched chairs, an upturned milk crate, beer bottles and crushed cans strewn across a suburban backyard. It's the morning, or perhaps even the afternoon, after a big night and you can almost feel the hangover. Yet there is a gentle quality to the image—the backyard grass is bathed in soft natural light and the position of the chairs evokes an intimate conversation. There is a similarly soft feel to the portrait *Amanda Hospital*. This light-filled image is a tender close-up of a young woman asleep. She is peacefully slumbering in clean white sheets, the title of the photo and plastic hospital bracelet the only clues as to its hospital setting.

The collection of random, spontaneous moments documented in *Westside* included the whimsical *Ice Cream*. This photograph depicts an oversized, colourful model of an ice-cream (perhaps souvenired from a Mr Whippy van) in a mundane setting. The upturned tables suggest a storage area. Wherever it is, nothing is happening. The appearance of the multicoloured ice-cream cone is playful and cheeky, yet strange and inexplicable. It's an unexpected splash of colour in an unlikely environment, as is *Hospital Flowers*. While this photograph captures some of the details of a hospital environment—we see glimpses of medical equipment and tubes—O'Brien focuses on the pink gerberas in the red, white and blue milkshake cup, a quirky, personal little detail in an otherwise forbidding and institutional environment.

O'Brien's diaristic, snapshot style clearly channels Nan Goldin, and the works have a freshness and immediacy to them. However *Westside* didn't quite have the visual richness or emotional intensity that a more accomplished practitioner like Goldin achieves with her use of the snapshot aesthetic. Internationally, the snapshot style has been well practiced within contemporary art photography, with photographers like Goldin and Wolfgang Tillmans paving the way for younger artists like Ryan McGinley and Hiromix. The snapshot



aesthetic has also been popularised in magazines like *iD*, *Vice*, *Purple*, *Dazed and Confused* and *The Face*, as well as in fashion advertising, all of which appeal to a hipster, youthful demographic.

In the context of contemporary Australian art photography, some of O'Brien's peers employ a similar snapshot aesthetic (as could be seen in the December 2007 group exhibition *Do You Remember What It Was?*, curated by O'Brien). However, diverse approaches can be seen in the work of young and emerging Australian art photographers. Some seek to illustrate narratives or broader themes, rather than capturing the moment. For instance, Selina Ou's series of workplaces depict the superficiality and isolation of modern commercial spaces. Other artists use photography to highlight the artifice and emotional manipulation of advertising, like Darren Sylvester, or to suggest psychological depths, like Paul Knight.

Despite its commercialisation, the popularity

of the snapshot style—and why young artists like O'Brien continue to practice it and why audiences continue to go to their exhibitions—might be due to more than just its edgy magazine credentials. Perhaps the attraction of the snapshot aesthetic persists because it offers an accessible means of exploring and documenting identity, relationships, youthful freedom and rebellion.

Laureen Villegas is an art addict who in 2007 embarked on a quest to visit 100 exhibitions (*Westside* was number 38).

¹ Conor O'Brien, interview by Jason Lingard, *Nothingmag* issue 14, www.nothingmag.com/issue14/index.html#6, accessed 8 October 2007.

above
Conor O'Brien
Backyard, 2004
C-Print
71 x 101.6cm
Image courtesy the artist

Amanda Hospital, 2004
C-Print
50.8 x 72.4cm
Image courtesy the artist



left
Hannah Bertram
An Ordinary Kind of Ornament
 (final performance), 2007
 Dust from house renovation
 and dry pigments on gallery floor
 Dimensions variable
 Image courtesy the artist and
 Diane Tanzer Gallery
 Photo credit: Penny Grove

right
Roma Publications
Ghent / Lisbon / Porto / Drawings
 Bart Lodewijks, 2006
 16.5 x 22.5 96p
 Culturgest, Lisbon / S.M.A.K. Ghent
 Photo credit: Roger Willems



An Ordinary Kind of Ornament

Hannah Bertram
 West Space, Melbourne
 12 October – 3 November 2007

In Hannah Bertram's installation *An Ordinary Kind of Ornament* the artist transformed dust into an ornamental carpet. Installed for three weeks on the floor of West Space, the work was ritually destroyed during a final performance.

Hannah Bertram's temporal work engaged with a number of cultural and contemporary art references, including a healthy nod to Marcel Duchamp's work *Dust Breeding*, famously photographed by Man Ray in 1920. This 'readymade' was actually the reverse side of Duchamp's *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even* (1915-23), which involved a series of cracked glass panels. Duchamp applied lead wires across the glass and then allowed it to gather dust over most of 1920. Man Ray captured the photograph in Duchamp's New York studio on Broadway describing it in his notes as 'a landscape of dust bunnies'.¹ Bertram's work references this iconic art moment through her use of house dust, strategic photographic documentation and the inherently ephemeral nature of the physical art object.

Bertram's installation also alluded to various Eastern religious and cultural practices, including the Tibetan Buddhist tradition of sand mandalas that are painstakingly constructed by monks only to be swept away after the ritual is completed. The Islamic tradition of chalk carpets, which derives from a particular interpretation of the *Qur'an* requiring prayer mats to be placed on a flat surface, as close to the earth as possible, is another strong reference for the work. The work's site-specificity is firmly anchored in the more recent traditions of Western contemporary art, but beyond these art world signposts exists a deep and complex reflection upon the human condition in contemporary society.

On the final day of the exhibition, as the performers began to travel across the dust carpet with the pace and precision of Butoh dancers, many of the audience slowly sank to the concrete as considerations of form and function, art and the everyday object, fell away as inconsequential. The gentle scraping of feet against floor, the calm destruction of

this beautifully fragile work of the imagination, overwhelmed any preconceptions and, for a brief ten minutes, the hustle and bustle of the outside world simply vanished.

Before the erasure of the final performance, the materiality of the work proved infinitely interesting as the viewer traced the cracks in the concrete floor of the gallery, the pigment bled and smudged itself into the very fabric of the space. Now that it is over and the dust has been cleaned away, a microscopic memory of the event remains undetected by the human eye. This beautifully contradicts the seemingly transient nature of the work that the performative act of its destruction was intended to reinforce. At its core *An Ordinary Kind of Ornament* is aligned with the precepts of conceptual art in that the idea of the work is more important than the physical art object. Once the dust has been swept away it is the memory of the work and the performance moment that lingers. The memory, like the dust itself, attracts its own. The memories of other performances, other works of art and of other significant moments in a lifetime of moments.

Ben Laden is currently the Artistic Director of the Courthouse Youth Arts Centre in Geelong, Victoria.

¹ Sheets, Hilarie M, 'They Laughed A Lot', *Art News* 94 (April 1995), p. 38.

Roma Publications 1998–2007

The Narrows, Melbourne
 November 7–24, 2007

To discuss this exhibition, a short description of where Roma Publications are conceived is in order: Imagine a ninety-mile beach book-ended by two busy seaports. The sand is fine, relatively clean but wet. This not because of the vagaries of the tides, but from rain, which regularly reminds one of uncertainties to come.

This beach with adjoining sea dunes is the only part above sea level for miles around. The country behind the dunes is continuously pumped dry. So much for the great outdoors—there is none. 'Netherlands' is a very apt description of the place. Smaller than Tasmania but home to millions and millions of—if not necessarily happy—certainly very busy people. Every tree is planned and planted and still looks good.

Adventure has to be created here and that is what Roma Publications do.

Roma Publications is an independent publishing project, founded by artist Mark Manders and graphic designer Roger Willems. It is used as a platform to produce autonomous publications in close collaboration with a growing number of artists, institutions, writers and designers. Related to the content, every issue has its own rule of appearance and distribution, varying from house-to-house papers (free newspapers which are distributed in so called 'controlled circulation') to exclusive books. So far the publications have been produced in editions between 2 and 150,000.

Think of Mark Manders's *Coloured Room with Black and White Scene*, page thirteen: 'a place where my thoughts are frozen together'. The typography complements the paper stock, a minimal page in equilibrium: poetry! At the exact centre of the publication twelve photographs bleed off the pages illustrating this coloured room. An eruption of domestic vulgarity with the beauty of found objects: a Japanese garden?

Ghent / Lisbon / Porto / Drawings is a publication on the work of Bart Lodewijks. The artist is a cyclist. He is on the road for months at a time. By interfering with the built environment he creates new ways of seeing the familiar. Installations by Christo come to mind, albeit of a less material-intensive nature. Travelling in Portugal Bart arrives at Porto. A chronicle, written by his shadow 'Frank Maes', describes the creation of a rather monumental drawing. Portuguese Wanderings page 5: 'For the first time he has not chosen a crumbling wall bearing the scars of its history, but a structure that is only a few years old ... It will be a chalk drawing extending over the wall's full length, about fifty metres. Lodewijks feels the wall looks as though it lacks something ...'

The Roma Publications list of adventures numbers over one hundred and counting. The selection of books exhibited at The Narrows in a concise and thoughtful installation lent the gallery a study centre atmosphere and aesthetic, appealing to an ever-increasing public of print aficionados.

Niko Spelbrink is a sessional lecturer, mentoring students of typography at RMIT and Monash Universities. In his practice he strictly creates typography where form follows function. Good stories deserve good typography!

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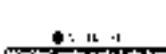
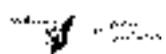


Ace Wagstaff, *grand unified theory (mark one)* 2007. bubblegum, balsa wood, mirror, HO scale miniatures, card, pencils, pine, ply, 500cm x 200cm x 200cm

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André Stitt: Dingo – A treatment towards a new communionism

Editor: Blair French. Contributors: Thomas J. Berghuis, Edward Scheer. Extensive documentation and critical reflection upon André Stitt's major performance installation work undertaken at Artspace in August 2007.

Mutant Media: Essays on Cinema, Video Art and New Media

John Conomos. Published in association with Power Publications. Gathers together a selection of Conomos' essays across the years, tracking the trajectory of his cinephilia since the 1960s, his ongoing interests in film criticism and theory, as well as his deep involvement in video art and new media since the 1980s.

ARTSPACE ONLINE

Column #1

Editor: Reuben Keehan. The first issue of a bi-annual Artspace periodical featuring documentation of Artspace Gallery Projects with accompanying texts, selected symposium papers and in issue one an artists' pageworks project marking a decade of the Helen Lempriere Travelling Art Scholarship.

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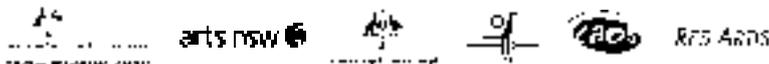
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image Terry Ricardo Lost Dog: Photo-montage, 2007 student calendar

¹Robert Hughes stands out from the brother-and-sister-hood [of art critics]. If you doubt this, just read a few pages – better still, all of them – of *Nothing If Not Critical*.... His insights are as lucid as his prose style, his arguments as keen as his perceptions of the difference between good and bad, high and low, and, particularly in the case of contemporary art, genuine and pretentious.¹⁸

**The book, dark-aqua, was the alreadyin, a
*counter-leave***



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18



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Reuben Keehan Incomplete Enquiry, Incomplete Adventure: Attila Kotányi and Me
Patrick Pound I Could Take this of Photographs: Reading in the Ruins of Representation
Dylan Rainforth Rear Window or Front Projection?
Damp, The M.O.S.T. and Pat Foster and Jen Berean Conflict, Hierarchy and Hard Work
Chris Jones Nothing If Not Critical
Julie Gough, Nici Cumpston and Zara Stanhope Writing about *The Ranger*
Robert Cook Rationale
Lou Hubbard HE and SHE
Jess Johnson and Jordan Marani Venice Licks
Daniel Palmer How to Write an Opening Speech to an Art Exhibition
Harold Grieves Hypothetical Interview for Rob Hood
Fayen d'Evie Let's All Go to Iraq
Penelope Trotter The Writer Versus the Artist who Speaks in Quotes
Michael Ascroft The Banality of Everyday Life
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