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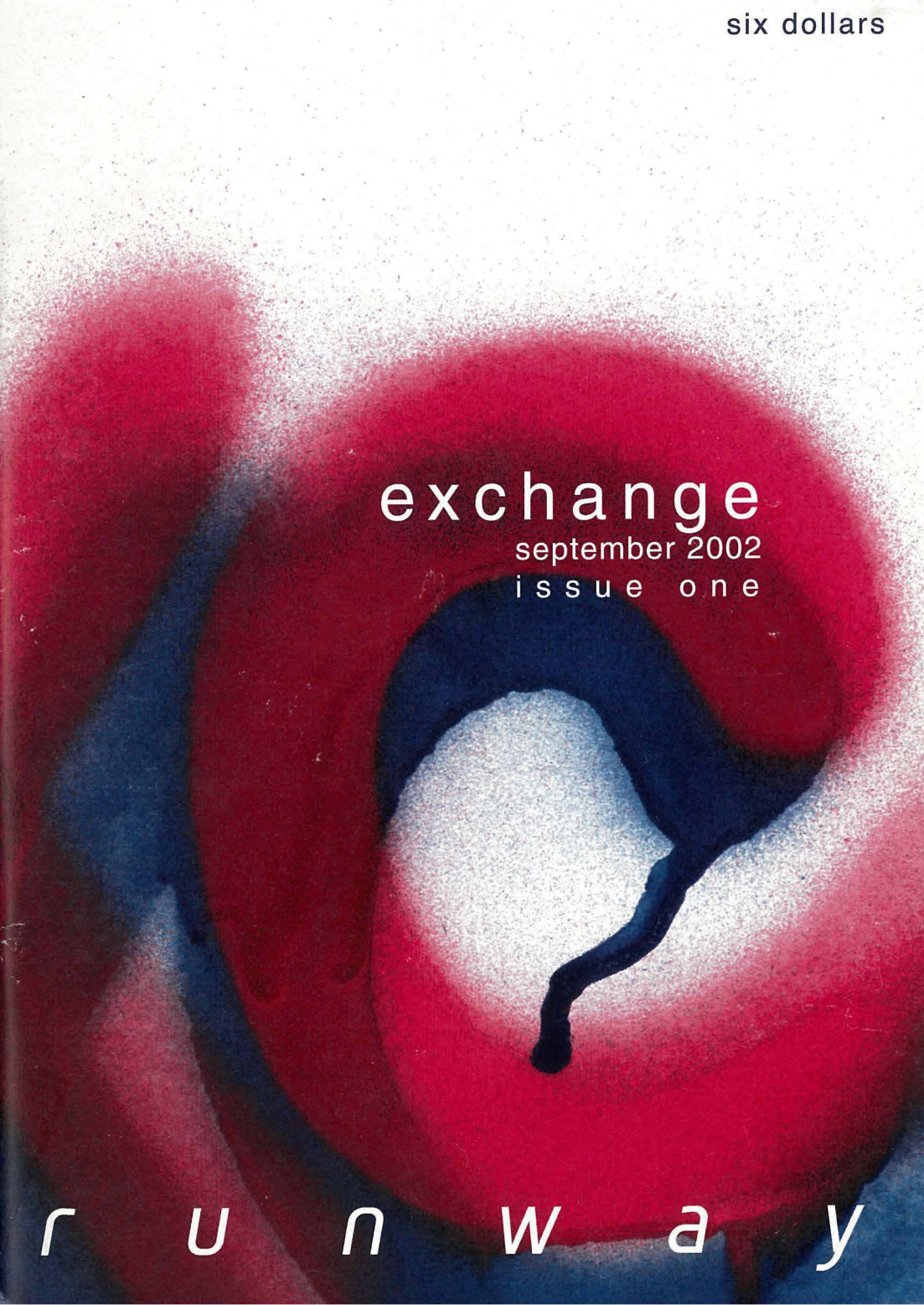

exchange

september 2002

issue one

r u n w a y

r u n w a y

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We are interested in hearing from people who wish to contribute to runway. Both written and visual material will be considered, although due to the self funded nature of the publication we are unable to pay contributors. Call us on (02) 9698 3665, email runway@post.com or write to us at Firstdraft Inc 116-118 Chalmers St Surry Hills 2010 Australia.

Edition 250

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Next Issue...
February 2003, No.2

collection

Issue two invites contributors to explore accumulation, congregation and convergence, responding to the significance and connotations of the collection.

r u n w a y

issue one

contents

Editorial

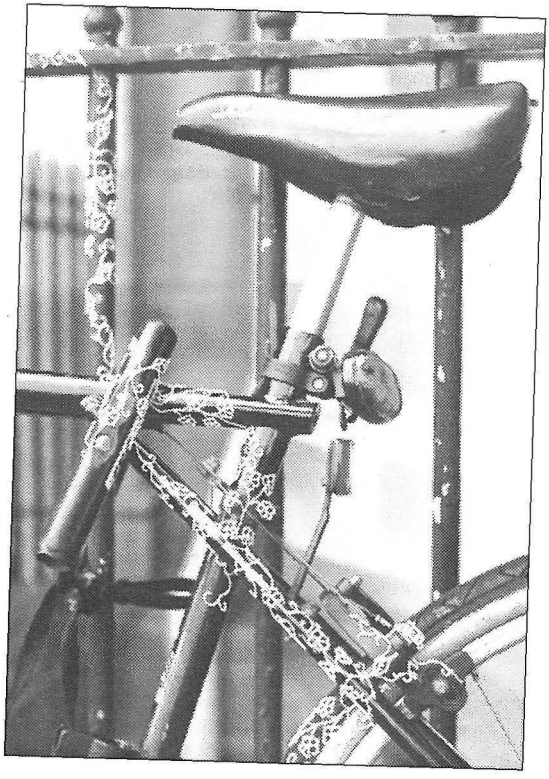
Jaki Middleton

An early insight into the exchange I now understand as inherent in visual art occurred when I was a teenager visiting the Art Gallery of New South Wales on a school excursion. Covering the floor of one gallery, was a precise rectangle of thousands of gold wrapped lollies, collected to mass a huge carpet. Instructed that 'permission' was granted, I crouched down and accepted a sweet. Felix Gonzales-Torres had intended that the audience throw the wrapper back, thus circulating the exchange of giving and receiving, however, some point after the opening of the exhibition, for reasons unknown, the gallery deemed it more appropriate that wrappers be disposed of elsewhere.

Exchange is the bridge between object and art. The production of work invariably involves a series of exchanges, an engagement with material and ideas that cause and effect the eventual resolve. The presentation in exhibition, extends this exchange to an audience, which via response informs the work on a number of additional levels.

This, the first issue of runway, is a gesture similar to that pile of lollies, endeavouring to form a series of open-ended exchanges; between artist and audience, and concepts and concerns relating to contemporary visual practice, individually and as a whole. With the ambition to create a forum for discourse, documentation and discussion relevant to visual art practitioners, runway is essentially a new 'artist-run space' devoted to supporting emerging artists and theoreticians.

Without the commitment and assistance of the contributors and those at Firstdraft Inc thus far, this project could not have been realised. The continuation of runway is dependent on several factors; the ongoing involvement of contributors, securing of outside funding and the response and support of the community. With continued interest and involvement, runway has considerable, uncertain and exciting possibilities.



Beware of Greeks bearing gifts

Matina Bourmas

Upon finding the shopping centre closed: Biennale of Sydney 2002

Nathan Dunne

image: Jaki Middleton, 2001

Two days after the golden floodgates opened I attended a lecture at the MCA entitled, 'Do Biennales matter?' Writer, curator and cultural theorist Ralph Rugoff spoke on the general nature of Biennales as finite commodities, which as a result of their sequined acrobatics are becoming increasingly reductive in their aims. Rather than distinguishing cultural highlights in modes of practice and attempting to modulate works around a thematic concern or predetermined aesthetic agenda, their intention, as Rugoff suggested, is to become service-based economic tools for a global network society, often resulting in the void, or at least lack of, emergent ideas and informative debate about art - in place of art goods. He suggested that Biennales were comparable to supermarkets or shopping centres, where each item is shelved according to the need and convenience of the consumer, i.e. shiny happy signs for a full trolley. Yet shopping centres despite their bright lights and elevator music (set in time to the precise beat of a resting human heart) don't have everything, although in presenting groups of need-specific (i.e. food) shops they'd like us to believe they do.

One understands, however reluctantly, on the basis of arts generative roots that 'There is an economy of cultural goods, but it has a specific logic,'[1] although as a result of contemporary art being a peripheral mode of cultural commodity in the broader 'field of power,'[2] as Bourdieu puts it, can we not utilise the periphery as power in itself, rather than attempting to assimilate into the general manufacturing of capitalist commodity? Can we not use the existing knowledge of marketing techniques within the culture industry to empower contemporary arts luxurious seclusion from centrality, rather than attempting to jump from the moving train into a sea of spreadsheets and knives? Perhaps I am too optimistic, or just unable to completely repudiate arts traditionalist capacity as a cave dweller with its own rhyming dictionary.

This, the 13th Biennale of Sydney, curated by artist Richard Grayson, attempted to deliver a variety of narrational generalities as to allow for 'the power of the everyday imagination.'[3] Consequently, audiences received postcards of contemporary art disguised as contemporary fictions. And fictions are subjective, meaning that each work of art invited the viewer (consumer) into a world with its own truths, realities and maps of the hills. This segregated individuation of each artwork's 'earth' allowed for a perpetuation of stop/start logic as one moved from world to world in a cyclic state of dismissive confusion. One viewer among the crowd remarked that it was like reading ten books at the one time.

In a multiplicity of skies in which to dream, one may not necessarily move further towards a fictional magic or wonder but instead become lost in all the open space. It appeared under the resultant pressure of perennial inventiveness that the Biennale as a packaged 'one world' with its variety of other-worldly constituents, was hesitant to be definitive about its moods of exotica, thus restraining the 'one world' as somewhat adrift at sea.

Amongst the glare of neon in shopping centres it is often difficult to remain transfixed on a singular product, if at all, and therefore each product is marketed in subtle difference to others in its range (difference in colour, packaging, font, name of product etc.) Essentially each product, via marketing variance, is crying out for the consumer to come aboard at all costs. Yet the sacrifice the product makes in doing so, is to be treated without niche speciality and thus becomes throwaway, or at least cheapened to a degree where it is placed lower in the given products hierarchical order (the relation of the product to its range.) I am not suggesting that any artwork in the Biennale was in itself, throwaway, but that their presentation and marketing as 'fun'[4] indicates a lack of currency overall.

Works that truly 'worked' in this Biennale were those that could raise a drowning hand among the waves of pre-determined rhetoric, however paperweight. New Zealand artist Michael Parekowhai exhibited works from the series *The Beverly Hills Gun Club* and *Consolation of Philosophy*, where in the latter series large

photographs of floral arrangements in white vases symbolised funereal memorials to the Maori Pioneer Battalion of 1916/1917. Titles such as *Boulogne*, *Turk Lane* and *Passchendaele* refer to locations where Maori dug trenches for European soldiers and died as a result. Although the arrangements are photographed in honour of the Battalion, there is a farcical temper which underpins the images' commerative essence, in that none of the flowers are native species and all are fake (plastic, silk.) This is also the case with *The Beverly Hills Gun Club* where rabbits and sparrows (imported species - pests) act as discomfort for the autonomy of bright-orange minimal bolster pieces, emphasising the confusion in looking at a wider cultural debate about shifts in identity and history. Parekowhai's work is structured in a way which reveals a didatic sense of 'out of place', indicating a definitive reality while simultaneously intersecting with the blue sky sophistry of its conferral and design.

Patricia Piccinini presented *Still life with stem cells*, a futuristic/nightmarish depiction of a domestic nursery, where a life-size little girl sits toying with techno-ooze as if it were a ken doll. The simple reaction of horror at 'what might one day be' is as much to do with the artist herself as with the work. If one presents fiction in such a fashion (thus thinking on a given fictions' associative ideas) what is to prevent its actuality via the spread of attitudes and thus experiments with technology? It begs the question.

Comparable to the first person accounts of UFO sightings in Susan Hiller's *Witness*, those bearing the accounts become fictions rather than the stories themselves. One is led to wonder on the validity of much of the material as the stories are heard in multiple languages and therefore become like whisperings of the aliens narrated. Who to doubt? The artist, perhaps having fabricated an expensive joke, or the stories themselves which can hardly be taken at face value. Could they possibly be real?

Aleksandra Mir suggests 'You cannot tell one story without others'[5], and although the trampoline from A to B to C etc. is perhaps what Grayson was aiming for, where 'misrecognition is the order of the day'[6], the temporal soundness of much of the 'worlds' was nothing more than a passing immediacy. If the first principle of storytelling is to trust the teller (at least on

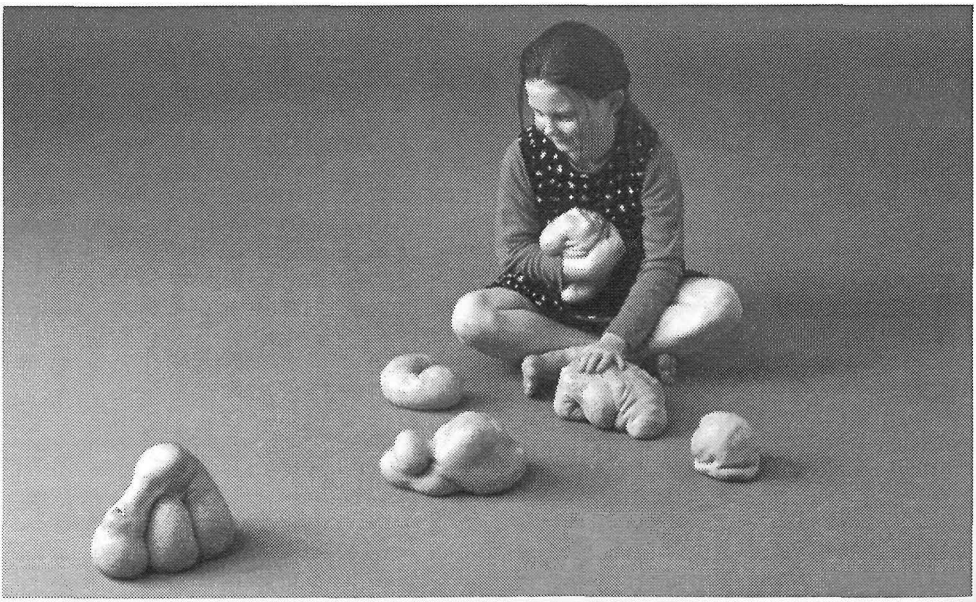


image: Patricia Piccinini *Still Life With Stem Cells* 2002 Mixed media. Photo: G Baring

image:Aleksandra Mir *HELLO*, 2000-ongoing (excerpt: Dorothy and Augustin, Hong Kong, 1978) inkjet prints, dimensions variable Courtesy the artist; Gavin Brown's enterprise, NYC

the grounds that if one goes to the story for something to begin with then the mere recognition of the story itself is enough to validate the teller) and that that is what is being made dissident, in attempting to erode conventional understandings one must at the same time replace the vacuum. Dissidence and erosion itself is not enough, and works in this Biennale which had the 'something more' were easily distinguishable.

The Netherlands group Atelier Van Lieshout describe themselves as a straight forward, no-nonsense entity with emphasis on aspects of collaboration. Criticising 'the myth of the inspired creator'[7] the group is driven towards the notion of an ideal city where art exists as everyday objects. *Masterplan*, a rudimentary drawing of houses, tanks, cut down trees and a small factory, reveals a working commune of industry, domesticity, and army, all combined on a confused socialist farm. One is left to speculate on the off-centre Bauhaus ideal as absurdist, while at the same time observing the optimism of a global political banner which reads something to the effect of 'Think again.'

The Biennale as a fanciful metropolis of contemporary fictions is also optimistic. Among the various works one couldn't help feeling like it was the soundtrack to a movie and not the movie itself. Perhaps there was and is no movie, and one accepts the view of Lynne Cooke, previous Biennale director, that 'no exhibition is definitive'[8], yet none the less, revealing the lack of definition is hardly enough without further signaling on behalf of the curator. Grayson's view of Biennales as circuses is easy to disfavour, yet when considering Rugoff's view of Biennales as cultural commodities (and aren't circuses cultural commodities?) how can one not? Ironically, Rugoff was instrumental in the Biennale coming together as he worked on the 'thinktank/sounding board'[9] of advisors that aided Grayson.

The Biennale of Sydney was founded with the objective of situating Australian art in an international exhibition arena, but with the push of the global network society, referred to earlier, this intent appears much outside of that agenda, not to say it wasn't naive and counterfeit to begin with. One could say this Biennale was a parade of an internationalist yet antipodean ambiguity about the 'truth' of the Zeitgeist, and while one accepts that globalism itself is a contrivance full of lost ingenuity and prevarication, how long can we (the antipodes) walk the tightrope before our bogus assimilation (disguised as playfullness) is exposed as a mere blind spot?

I went to the Biennale. It was fun.

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2. Bourdieu, in O'Loughlin, p18.
3. Fink, Hannah, Fabulous (The world may be) Fantastic: 2002 Biennale of Sydney, Art Monthly Australia, July-August Issue, 2002, p6.
4. Fink, Hannah, p8.
5. Fink, Hannah, p6.
6. Ann-Low, Lenny, Fantastic Worlds, Sydney Morning Herald, 6 May 2002, p23.
7. Latos-Valier, Paula & Grayson, Richard, Atelier Van Lieshout, in, Biennale of Sydney 2002 Exhibition Guide, p30.
8. Fink, Hannah, p8.
9. Gardiner, Sue, Shake the Dice and Discover that (the world may be) Fantastic:6

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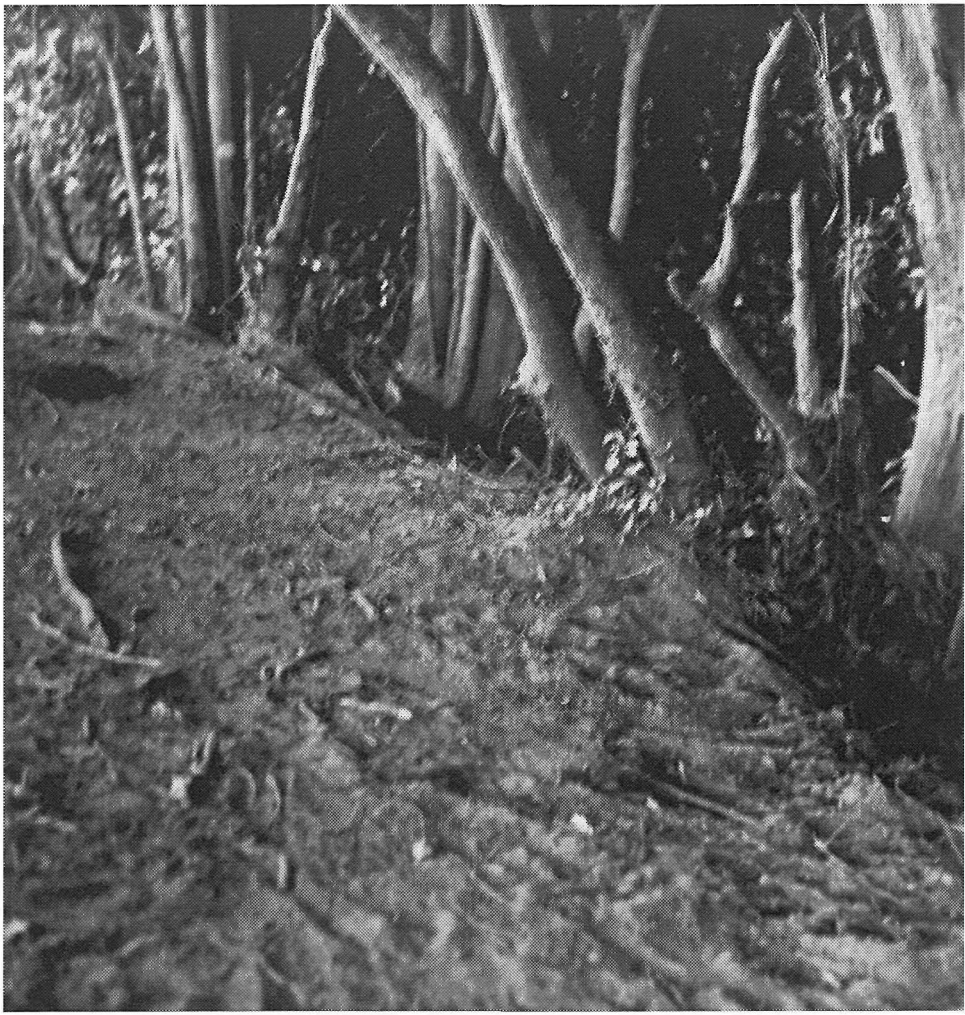
Kate Ford



Privileging vision and other preoccupations: a conversational exploration

Rachel Scott and Rebecca Fry

The aim of this article is to acknowledge the importance of the two-way conversation as a means of sharing ideas and opinions and as an opportunity of voicing thoughts about our artistic practice in an informal and relaxed situation.

Loosely inspired by Deleuze and Guattari's model of the rhizome, and rhizomic space, we start as individuals, with two separate positions, and hope that during the course of the conversation, the connections and 'lines of flight' will create a third space – an in-between space of exchange and collaboration.

We had not known each other long when we embarked on this conversational journey, and a major concern for us was to harness the ease and spontaneity that our initial meeting and dialogue possessed. We quickly realised how difficult this would be – the pressure of being recorded and the perceived need to sound clever whilst pontificating about 'art'n'stuff' proved to be a little more evident than we had anticipated.

We deliberately chose to keep the conversation open ended, without a formal or contrived beginning or conclusion, as this allows for all the conversations that have occurred previously and those that are still to come.

The work is a pastiche of several conversations had over a period of time.

Rachel Scott: I believe you said you're planning on doing something with family photographs, Rebecca?

Rebecca Fry: Yes Rachel, but I'm not sure how to do that without it looking fake. I don't like the aesthetic of the obviously manipulated photograph.

RS: So, by using the family photographs what are you exploring?

RF: I want to take these images of family members, watery, reduced images...old photos fifteen to twenty years old and put them in a different environment. Say, a present day landscape...

RS: By using photoshop or...

RF: Neg sandwiching or something like that.

RS: I see, that way you get a composite image of family and landscape.

RF: I'm playing with, manipulating, memory. I'm taking the original memory snapshot, taking them out of their environment, in the past, and placing them in a contemporary context/ environment.

RS: You create these ephemeral images, which allude to an 'other-worldliness', which could be rather problematic in terms of painting or object based work, whereas photography seems to lend itself to a certain association with memory and the intangible.

RF: Well, I think that in order to set up a discourse with a specific visual language, you access the layers beneath and beyond the brain which can be recalled through such things as memory, intuition and the conscious and sub-conscious workings of the mind.

RS: I too am interested in the unconscious – the repressed darkened spaces of the psyche. Empty streets, houses and apartments, hotel rooms - violence and suppressed emotions dwell in these everyday settings and anything could be imagined to be happening behind facades of normality.

RF: For me landscape plays a big part in metaphorically mapping the psychological terrain. I grew up on the edge of a bush reserve and our garden was an extension of that, so I suppose I formed a language from this environment at an early age. I found solace and comfort in running to the bush, but there was often a feeling of apprehension.

Image:Rebecca Fry, 2002

RS: So in a way you're entering the realm of the Romantic painters such as Casper David Friedrich and Turner and poets like Coleridge, Keats and Wordsworth who found salvation through the appreciation of the awesome beauty of nature, believing that once you can appreciate nature you'll be alright. Nature and spirit have been closely aligned in the canon of art history and literature.

RF: It's ethereal and spiritual, but also grounded and constant. I am comforted by this constancy in nature.

RS: You also mentioned that you like to 'shoot from the hip'. You have all the technical knowledge, but at some point you allow the camera to take over.

RF: Yes, I do the preparatory work to ensure the photo will be technically proficient but at the moment of taking the shot I let go, I'm elsewhere, I'm away from the camera.

RS: I'm interested in giving the credit to the camera. For me, it's the camera's vision that is manifested in the photograph. I find that by letting the camera 'do its thing' you can achieve some interesting results.

RF: Yes, letting go of the technology. I suppose I'm a bit of a contradiction. I think of myself as an artist, not a photographer.

RS: I certainly don't think of myself as a photographer either. I come from a painting background and I have little technical knowledge about photography, which has suited me fine

thus far. Its important for us to place our work in the context of contemporary art – to know which 'gang' our work belongs to. Which contemporary photo artists do you draw connections with?

RF: People like Doug Aitken. I saw his video installation at the last Sydney Biennale (2000) and it really affected me. I was just transported into his work, it was amazing and all encompassing. There were seven projections around the room so you were surrounded by the images. Wherever you looked, you didn't see a wall, you saw a volcanic landscape (which is what it was about – the aftermath of a volcanic eruption in the Bahamas or somewhere like that.) And it was the most electrifying, transfixing, spiritual experience I've ever had with art...

RS: Wow, that's saying something...

RF: I had a sublime experience. It was just incredible. He uses quite hi-tech equipment.

RS: How is the hi-tech visible in his work?

RF: He uses cutting edge technology but he uses it seamlessly. The work is not about the technology at all.

RS: No, it isn't. They're quite simple, straightforward images. Now that you talk about your interest in his work I can see a connection. There is definitely something there in your mutual interest with the natural environment and a sense of the awesome or possibly sublime, vast, absorbing landscape.

RF: Yes, a sense of the all encompassing, that's what I'm interested in. What I want to do is create an 'immersable' space. A total environment suspended between the world of the seen and the unseen.

RS: You're interested in a sense of mystery, in the 'unknown' present in these awesome landscapes, you're asking the viewer to perceive a sense of the 'unknown' rather than representing it. If you talk about mystery, unknown, sublime experiences, you can't look for that in the photograph so much as use the photograph as a tool to then...

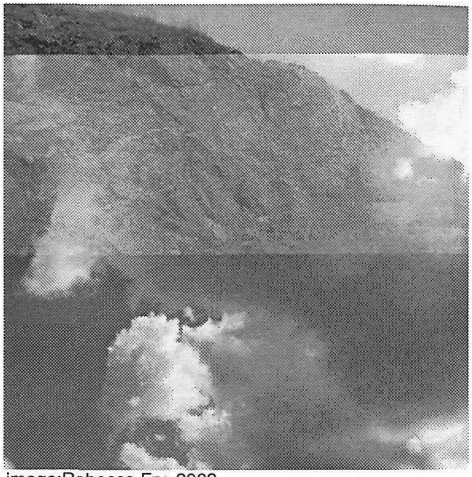


image:Rebecca Fry, 2002

RF: Experience it in an all encompassing way, one that engages all aspects of the psyche.

RS: I think I'm old fashioned in my approach to technology and method of production. I saw an interview last year on BBC World 'Hardtalk' with a cinematographer called Jack Cardiff who worked with Michael Powell on films like 'Peeping Tom', 'The Red Shoes' and 'The Black Narcissus'. He came from a painting background and therefore his cinematic images are very painterly. Anyway, he wasn't interested in using post-production technology to do what he considered should be done through the camera at the time of shooting. And I agree with him. I'm not really interested in manipulating the image after the fact. I have a loathing of technology which means I'll do anything to avoid it.

RF: Your images are exploring experiences of the Everyday, the banal and giving them a sense of the fantastic and mysterious through the camera lens.

RS: Yes, they're very much about fantasy and making theatrical and dramatic the Everyday. The camera and photography can do that.

RF: And be surprised by the results.

RS: That's what you were talking about when you said you 'shoot from the hip', that you let go at the moment of taking the photograph.

RF: We work very similarly really.

RS: Yes, we work in an intuitive way, but there is a very specific focus to the work as well. It is focused on the practice of looking. For me it is concerned with the privileging of vision and the power of the gaze. I'm exploring the roles of the voyeur and the exhibitionist and using myself as the common factor – the artist as voyeur and exhibitionist. I use the camera to explore dark and dodgy, urban spaces that provide me with the opportunity to imagine the underbelly of banal everyday life.

RF: You're also very much playing with spatiality and perspectives, drawing the viewer in and distorting their spatial sense of self.

RS: Yes, there is a tension between the outside and the inside and a certain fluidity between them, the boundaries between can be collapsed through using photography, the night, windows, mirrors and myself...

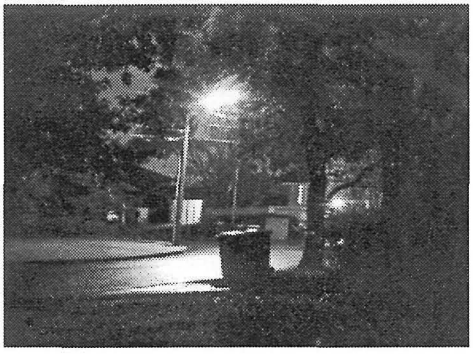


Image:Rachel Scott *Untitled(Baulkham Hills),* 2002

RF: You have a bank of images. Do you shuffle them around – put them into sequences?

RS: Well, I have done. Planning the work for our upcoming exhibition has started me thinking about how I will display the images.

RF: You could have a sentence running the length of the wall at eye level.

RS: Mmm. Sentence?

RF: That's what I call them. A long sentence. With this reservoir of postcard size images you have, there's an endless amount of 'sentences' you can make from them and your sentence will be totally different to mine.

RS: In the past I've tried to avoid, to an extent, a linear narrative by placing images on top of each other or as part of a grid.

RF: In your last installation you displayed them for the audience to imagine they were looking at someone's personal pinboard, in their house, snippets of their life.

RS: I saw it more like windows – on the computer – layered on top of one another. We were talking about scale the other day and that is also a very important aspect of the work. Playing with the grand and the intimate and the relationship between them and the viewer.

RF: With postcard size images like some of yours, you have to go up to them and peer into them to see what's happening. You really have to investigate them because they arouse your curiosity. I find this interesting because in a way I want them to be larger, I want to experience more of the image, whereas with the larger ones...

RS: Well, that comes back to our discussion about the viewer being engulfed by the image. This can happen in very large photographs, say 5mx3m, where the photograph acts like a theatrical stage backdrop and the viewer is a participant in the scene rather than merely an onlooker.

RF: You mean the distance, even the relationship, between the viewer and the image shifts.

RS: That's right. And with the 'environments' that we are creating for the viewer, we want them to be in there – I want them to enter the nightspace and be surrounded by the darkness. However, with the mirror self portraits, I want them to be really small and intimate and the viewer has to look for them in the darkness. If I had a really big 3mx2m 'me' I'd be uncomfortable but maybe that idea is worth exploring.

RF: Maybe you could have one really big one – and the rest you could possibly have in little light boxes.

RS: Are they expensive?

RF: Definitely.

RS: That makes me think of Jeff Wall, he's an *artist who uses lightboxes.*

RF: Yes, he uses them beautifully.

RS: But how much money would that cost?

RF: Oh, thousands.

RS: Mounting on foam core is expensive enough for me. (Laughter)

RF: Getting film processed by a mini lab is expensive too. It's all expensive.

RS: The thing is, at this stage of the game you can be ambitious to a certain degree, but doing a huge Jeff Wall type lightbox, that's just not possible.

RF: However, by being creative you can make just as much of an impact.

RS: Like your slide projections – they're going to be stunning.

RF: Yes, you don't have to spend that much money...

RS: I think that there is a certain level of 'schmickness' that is important in the presentation of work – especially photography. For instance, just sticking photos on a wall...

RF: You can't do that. You let yourself down so much when you do. No way. I'm all for cutting up negatives and being experimental and free with my process, but when it comes to presentation I guess I go back to my Graphic Design days – where I'm a real pain in the ass. I'm finicky, anal – it has to be just right.

RS: I agree. I think the finish is important unless it's a conscious decision not to be. In painting, if the edges of your canvas aren't folded perfectly... you have to demonstrate a certain level of professionalism.

RF: People pick up on it and as soon as they do – forget it. I know because I do, I'm terrible. If a work is really dirty – like those filthy, scratched frames we saw the other day – I dismiss it. That person obviously doesn't care *too much about their work. I'm like a school* teacher. (Laughter)

RS: Absolutely. Framing – and the right frame too.

RF: Well, I don't like frames. I don't use frames. I get them backed.

RS: You don't like frames?

RF: Frames contain the work too much. The image is too boxed in. And that's not how I want my images to be seen. If you had a black frame around this (referring to a photograph) I think it would contain the imagination, whereas if there are no edges and it's just mounted on a clean crisp board, your imagination is uninhibited. The way I think is not confined within boundaries. My mind likes to be able to run free and not to be told what to do. I'm a bit of a naughty girl, I like to break the rules.

RS: I think it really depends on the work. Your vast, eerie landscapes need to be able to spill out from the edges, whereas my proposed 'glamour photographs' need to be framed in kitsch gold frames because that alludes to a certain domestic aesthetic which is intrinsic to the work.

RF: And what's more glamorous than gold! I can't wait to see them. What are you going to wear?
(Laughter)

RS: Maybe we should just forget about trying to be intelligent.

RF: Yeah, maybe people just want to have a light read – like Mills and Boon.
(Laughter)

RS: Maybe we should be even more light and fluffy.

RF: These shots here, they're sexy (referring to photographs)

RS: Oh really?

RF: The 'International Woman of Mystery' character you have created has a very sexy element to her.

RS: She certainly does. She's a fantasy character and therefore aspirational – as fantasy characters often are.

RF: They're better than real life

Image: Rachel Scott *Untitled (New York)*, 2000.

RS: This is a way of exploring some kind of perceived notion of glamour or female sexuality and male driven images of women.

RF: But she's very much in control of her own sexiness.

RS: Well, that's why I see her in the same vein as the Film Noir 'femme fatale'. I think there is a strength in that character which was, at that time, a very interesting cinematic representation of a certain type of woman. I identify with contemporary artists such as Ria Paquee, Madeleine Berkheimer and Lyn Hershmann who have created specific characters through which to explore their various issues and ideas.

RF: Yes, it's very contemporary, and at the same time it has the film-goddess-glamorous aspect that you wanted to achieve. The body is where the work happens, and you are taking control of your own image.

RS: I was reading an article a few weeks ago in the Spectrum Section of the Saturday Morning Herald about the phenomenon of girls setting up webcams in their rooms and broadcasting over the internet. There are a growing number of them and they become quite 'famous' – they have merchandise and everything. What is valued in our Western society seems to be fame and the image. These girls are taking control of their own images. Rather than waiting for the star makers and media to come to you, do it yourself first. All you need is a camera.

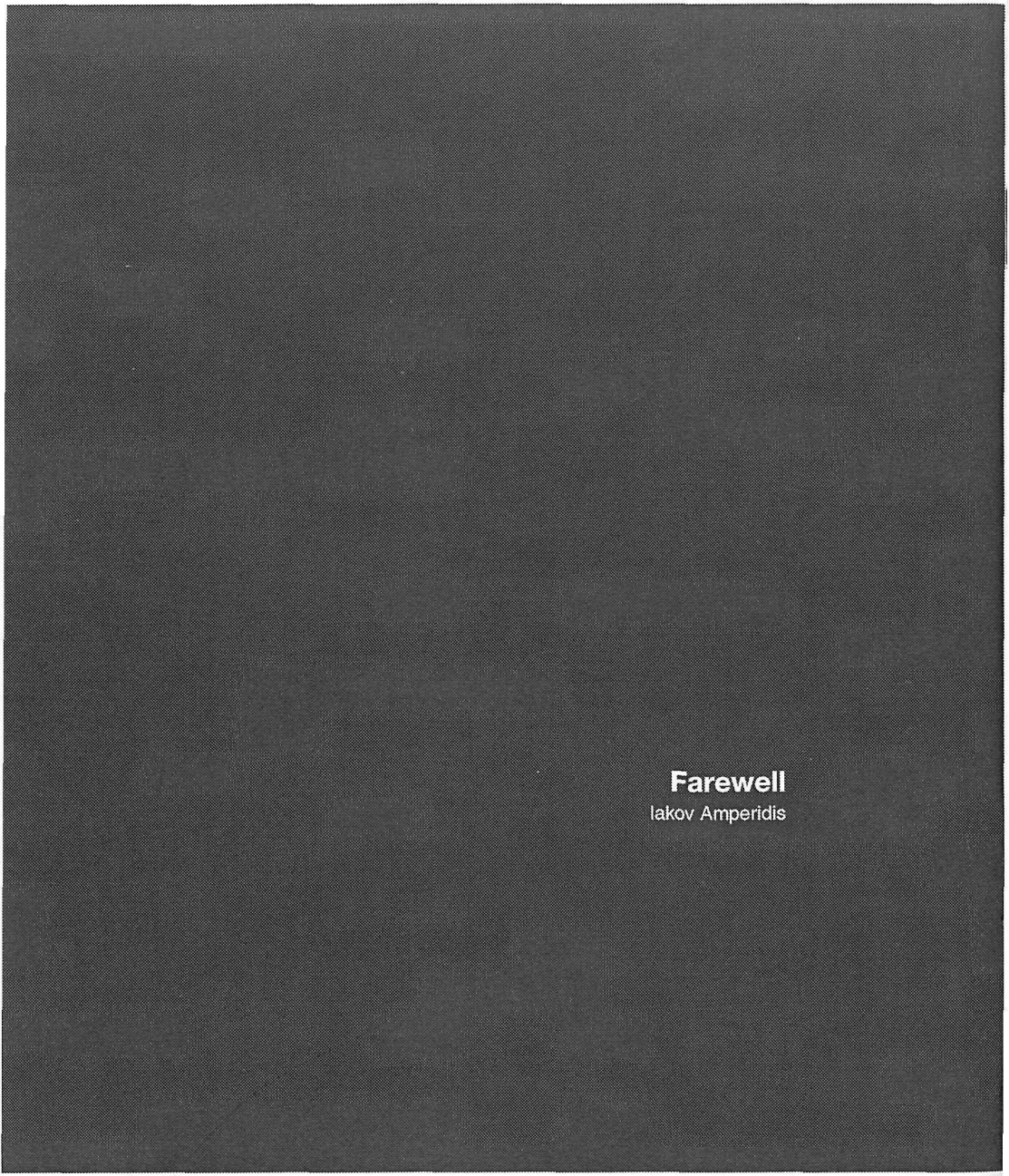
RF: It just occurred to me that maybe this kind of thing will bring about the demise of the superstar, because it is so accessible to the masses now. Anyone can do it.

RS: Well, at the moment it seems to me that the cult of the celebrity is becoming more substantial. There's a crazy kind of focus in the mainstream media on certain professions, such as models and entertainers. It's as though they're the only people who are visible in the world.

RF: Yes, and there is a power that comes with that which is unwarranted.

RS: Yeah, it's terrible. By the way have you read this week's New Weekly?
(Laughter)

Rachel Scott and Rebecca Fry's exhibition **Snow White and Rose Red** *opens on the 24th October and runs for three weeks at the new artist-run initiative Phatspace in Darlinghurst (Projekt room 35, 94 Oxford St, Darlinghurst).*



Farewell
Iakov Amperidis

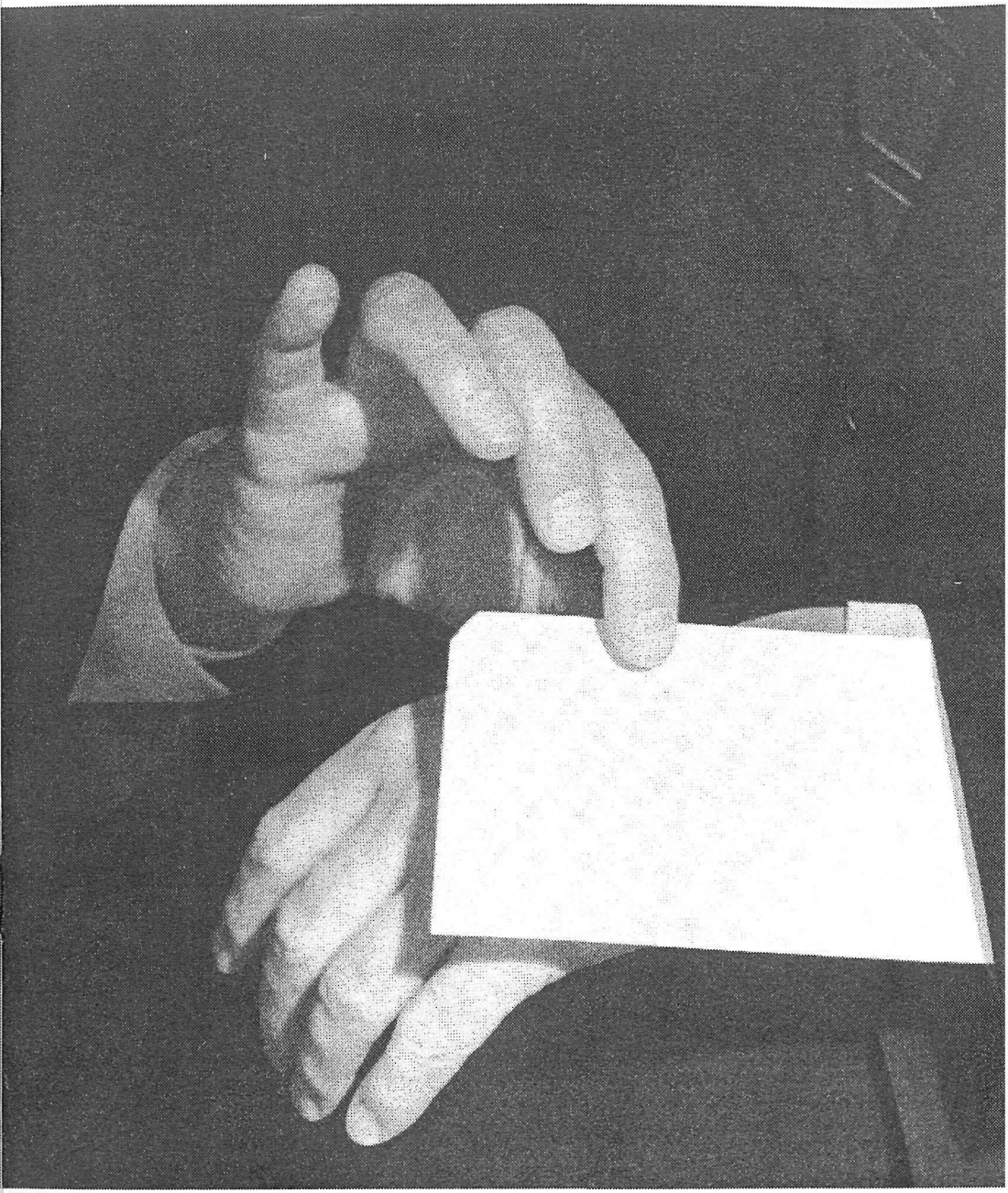


Image: Simone Leary, 2002

The location of exchange

Simone Leary

Here is a ribbon that represents the circular process of exchange. The movement of the curve is a spiral because in the exchange one acquires what the other loses. The inequality of the curve should explain the gain and loss involved in every exchange.

Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Psychology of the Imagination.* Methuen 1972, p112

I am in my lounge room watching a film about watching films, "The Purple Rose of Cairo". It portrays life as random, meaningless and disappointing. The film within it is also entitled "The Purple Rose of Cairo" and is as idealistic as the other is disheartening. The two films are parallel portrayals of life, which, through comparison and contrast, raise questions about the nature of existence from an existential point of view. This philosophical angle is exemplified in one scene involving an exchange that looks at the uncertain outcomes of life decisions and the difficulty of personal choice when there is no second chance. The exchange scene exemplifies the way we discard things we no longer desire to acquire something new that we anticipate shall serve us better. I am taken by the humanity of the scene, the heroine's belief that her decision to exchange one way of life for another will be beneficial when in fact it turns out to be self defeating. This exchange is made all the more poignant by its location, the interior of a deco cinema, which lends an ambience and significance to the drama. Here, I examine the visual language of the cinema and the interplay between the action and location in "The Purple Rose of Cairo".

The Background of the Exchange

The exchange begins with Cecilia, a woman in her thirties, living in America during the depression years. She lives a life typical of the era: impoverished, arduous, with few pleasures. She is trapped in a loveless marriage and dreams of better things. Her escape is the cinema where she immerses herself in the latest Hollywood films. One movie comes along which particularly strikes at her desire for escapism: "The Purple Rose of Cairo". She watches every screening becoming more engrossed in the reality of the film each time. During one session, fiction and reality collide when one character from the film, Tom, by some magic, steps out of the screen and into Cecilia's life. The couple run away together, into the outside world, leaving the parallel universe of the film in a state of suspension. Complications arise when Gil Shepherd, the actor who plays Tom, arrives and attempts to rectify the situation. He convinces Cecilia that he loves her and she is then forced to decide between a man of flesh and blood or one born from celluloid. This is the basis of the exchange. Cecilia ultimately opts for the real actor over the fictional character, thus exchanging her recent immersion in fantasy for a future in the real world. The basis of her exchange is her desire to lead an authentic life with a real person but she pays for her decision when the actor deserts her as soon as his character re-enters the film. Cecilia's exchange turns out to be disappointing, and costs her an opportunity at happiness.

The existential ambience of the film, emphasised by the cinematic context of the exchange, calls to attention a popular desire to escape reality through fantasy. By locating the exchange within the cinema a juxtaposition of fantasy and reality is established in which each one helps define the other. Cecilia's exchange is based on choice. In film, choice does not exist as the future is pre determined. Cecilia's exchange is based on self-awareness and an awareness of her situation. In film, characters are not self-aware. They exist on a less conscious level and are equivalent to Sartre's concept of (non-human) "things". The exchange is based on a desire to lead a more authentic life by following personal values. The fantasy world lacks authenticity because it is merely a mirror of the real world. Fantasy is based and

dependent upon the authentic whereas the authentic is not dependent upon fantasy. In addition the fantastic filmic world is based on conformist, pre fabricated values, which are viewed by existentialists as "inauthentic". Tom's dissatisfaction with his own lack of self-determination, and his struggle for independence against social conventions, mirrors a common desire to lead a more fulfilling life.

The interaction between location and "exchange" is a concept fraught with significance, in that it creates a flow between place and action, hence becoming an exchange in itself. Location provides the exchange with an appropriate tone, and is an important element in its own right, worthy of interpretation. The location is the cinema in which Tom and Cecilia have their first encounter. It is now empty since Tom has abandoned the film save the characters on the screen who languish in their luxury apartment, pondering their uncertain future, and the three protagonists, centre isle. The screen bathes the cinema in a soft glow, casting light on rows of empty, shiny seats. It is the moment of truth, as Cecilia is forced to choose between the two men, who are one and the same, thus exchanging one life for another. The division between the actors and the composition of the cinema setting symbolise the distinct domains of fiction and reality. Tom, the fictional character, stands to one side. Behind him is the film screen, the portal to his fantasy world of fictional friends and luxury living. On the opposite side stand Gil and Cecilia. Behind the scene is the exit to the real world, thus illustrating the tension between fiction and reality. The desire to live "happily ever after" seems so attainable within the cinema setting, an environment which invites a suspension of disbelief, that Cecilia is blind to reality as she makes her decision. Beyond the cinematic context of fantasy, the exchange falls apart and the remoteness of fantasy is suddenly apparent. "The Purple Rose of Cairo" is a film without a "happy ending", an analogy for the inescapable harshness of reality.

The cinematic atmosphere of deep shadows and radiant light prepares us for the emotional impact of the exchange, particularly the resultant feeling of sadness and missed opportunity. This constructed environment of shadows and lights is fused with fantasy and the kind of idealism prevalent in films of old, which may seem naïve by today's standards yet is demonstrative of cinema's optimistic portrayal of life as orderly and inherently significant, and in which human strength prevails.

Considering the cinema itself as a monument to idealism and escapism, I am reminded of the photographs of Hiroshi Sugimoto, which capture the essence of a bygone era through the imagery of empty motion picture theatres. The photographs have a recurring motif of a blank, radiating screen, which reveals the ornaer escapism by delivering defeat and disappointment. It illustrates nothing is eternal in the real world: Love, life, existence, is ephemeral. The quest for authenticity, for personal meaning and truth may be self defeating but that is the nature of the search. Unlike fantasy life is unpredictable. The Exchange, as Sartre says, involves loss. In "The Purple Rose of Cairo" a great loss gives us pause to consider what a life without meaning and fulfilment is like.

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exchange series one *untitled*

Peter Giaprakas

How does a cube become a room or a new philosophy of space?

David Lawrey

You're walking down a busy street and you see an old friend in the distance, someone you've been meaning to catch up with but never seem to have the time. You smile to yourself and at that time they see you with a sense of recognition. You keep walking at the same pace, but keenly aware of your locality to theirs, eye contact is made and broken a number of times, and in the time it takes you to reach them you are also conscious of the enclosing distance. There is a recoiling space created with your relational progress. A space that exists through your awareness of distance and movement, for in the time you where walking along that street you passed countless people oblivious to the crossing vectors of motion. So while we could map all the potential or physical interactive spaces, for you space is the product of interactions, where there is an awareness of these associations.

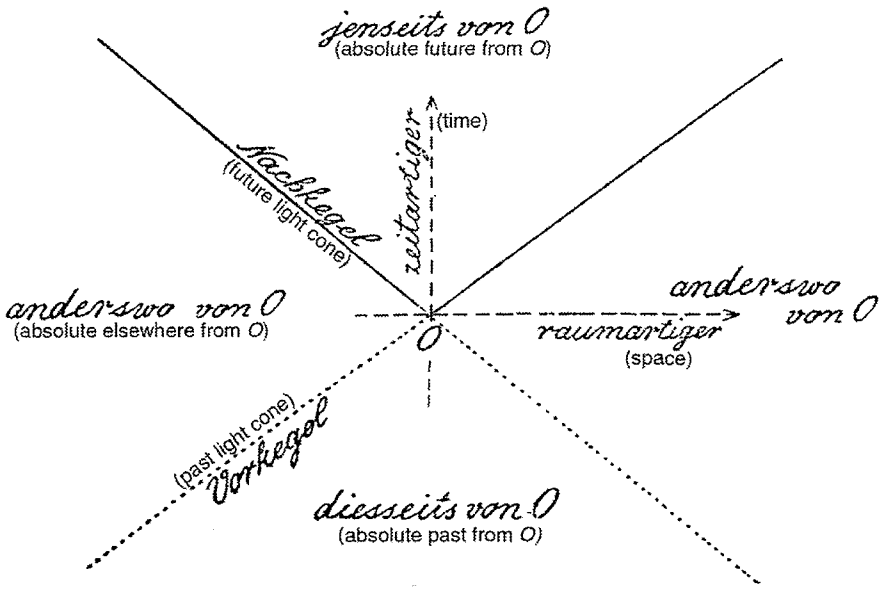
Physical or chartable space is infinitely large in all its dimensions and infinitely divisible. What fills this space is not space itself. Space exists as a description of the relational 'vectors of direction, velocities, and time variables'[1] between objects. Everything you can think of exists within space. The question of what is the nature of this ultimate vessel is not an easy one to answer.

Newton believed that space was capable of no action, form, or quality, and its parts were impossible to separate from each other by any force, no matter how great. Newton saw an overriding absolute order to space, which existed like an infinite grid of location in three dimensions. 'All things are placed in time as to order and succession; and in space as to order of situation.'[2] The point of origin within this theory of Absolute Space and Time was the point of Creation: 'He constitutes duration and space'[3]

Within the over arching system of space, various inertial frames exist. The frames are created through differential movements such as a vehicle moving at speed, the interaction between that body and the ground creates an inertial frame with respect to the earth. The earth is also an inertial frame within the solar system, and the solar system with relation to the universe. The various spaces here are the result of the interaction between the bodies in question, it only takes one party to change in order to change the inertial space. All these frames could in theory be measured against the Absolute Space and while Newton was not able to prove the existence of the primary frame of reference, it followed for him that as there was an absolute frame of reference in God there was also one in space.

With Nietzsche's heralding the death of God and with Einstein's Theory of Relativity, Absolute Space gave way to the idea that space was mere relative relational interactions. Einstein discovered that within any inertial frame, time and space operated independently from any other, and as such no primary frame of reference was possible. It was shown that as a particle reached the speed of light, time slowed down such that if there were two twins and one stayed on earth for ten years while the other travelled in a rocket at close to the speed of light for the same amount of earth time, when he arrived back he would have aged only about a day. The amount time slows, depends on the velocity difference between the two spaces in question such that even as you walk along the street, time slows just a little as compared to a still object. Minkowski, working with this idea, put forward the concept of the space-time continuum, for any body within a space there is not a discrete relationship between time and movement. Time flows uniquely with the inertial space in which it is measured, and as such this intimate relationship means we need to introduce the concept of space-time where the measure of time is recorded with that of inertial space.

Minkowski created a graphical representation of a space from the point of view of a single



Minkowski's diagram of space-time

body, that allows the viewer to understand the interdependence time and space. The construction of the diagram is based on the historical representation of time and one dimension of space of a particle. The vertical dashed line indicates time while the horizontal line represent the spatial dimension, the units are such that the speed of light intersects the graph at 45 degrees, forming what is known as a light cone. The graph shows three regions of space: jenseits (absolute future), diesseits (absolute past) and anderswo (absolute elsewhere)[4]. Within a linear understanding of space, the space-time of everywhere the particle can go (jenseits), everywhere the part could have come from (diesseits) and everywhere the particle can never be (anderswo) are represented.

When looking at the movements and transmissions which create spaces for humans, the purely physical model of space used to map particles and objects suffers limitations. Space for the human subject as with the particle is *still a relative entity created through these* interactions, but for the human subject the complexity is greater, due to the way these spaces are tied in with added factors of meaning and understanding. This space is dependent on the relative situation of the interacting parties, change either, and the resulting space also changes. It would be correct to say that the physical environment cannot react the presence of a person except via Newton's third rule of motion but it is also not static, and the human subject reacts to changes such as natural changes in day light. Using the space-time model, with respect to human interactions with their environment, means that space and time are not discrete considerations.

Seeing space as the result of interaction necessitates the inclusion of the element of time, and so while you wake up in the same room everyday, the space of that room is not the same, for one you're different; one day older at the least, and the room itself is also different as the weather, light and seasons change. This is not to say that the physical mappable space of the room does not exist if *nobody is in it but it is merely a material con*struction in a location, it only becomes space

through interaction, which gives it meaning. Space then, is not physically bound but conceptually enclosed, while in many cases the conceptual boundary of a space is marked by a physical boundary such as a wall, it is not the wall that encloses but way the concept is connected to the idea of a division.

In an attempt to understand spaces of the human subject, the concepts of absolute past, absolute future, and absolute elsewhere are a key way to analyse the elements in the interaction. These ideas as used here, are more complex than with a linear subject, being influenced by factors such as memory, emotion, attitude and feeling, in addition to all the physical constraints and liberties an individual may experience.

Absolute past is the region of memory and knowledge. All the space that you remember being in and seeing is contained here. The diagram shows how these tools of understanding funnel to the point of the present, where you stand now. You walk into a space and you see walls, floor, windows and ceiling, you understand that that is what they are from the knowledge gained in the absolute past, and these things are put together in the present to make a room. The influence of past is particularly strong when attached to a specific emotional memory, (I scored the touchdown that won the game on that football oval) or nostalgic memory (I used to play here when I was seven), every space leads you to access the past, even if you haven't been there before, you assess new spaces on the basis of what you understand and its similarity to what you already know.

The absolute future is the region of possibility, the space of senses, all the space you can now see and move into, the aroma of cooking food in the kitchen, your hand on a banister when the lights are out, the sound of music in another room, or the taste of a dust blown up from a dirt road. With the primacy of sense, is the idea of movement, the subject senses the

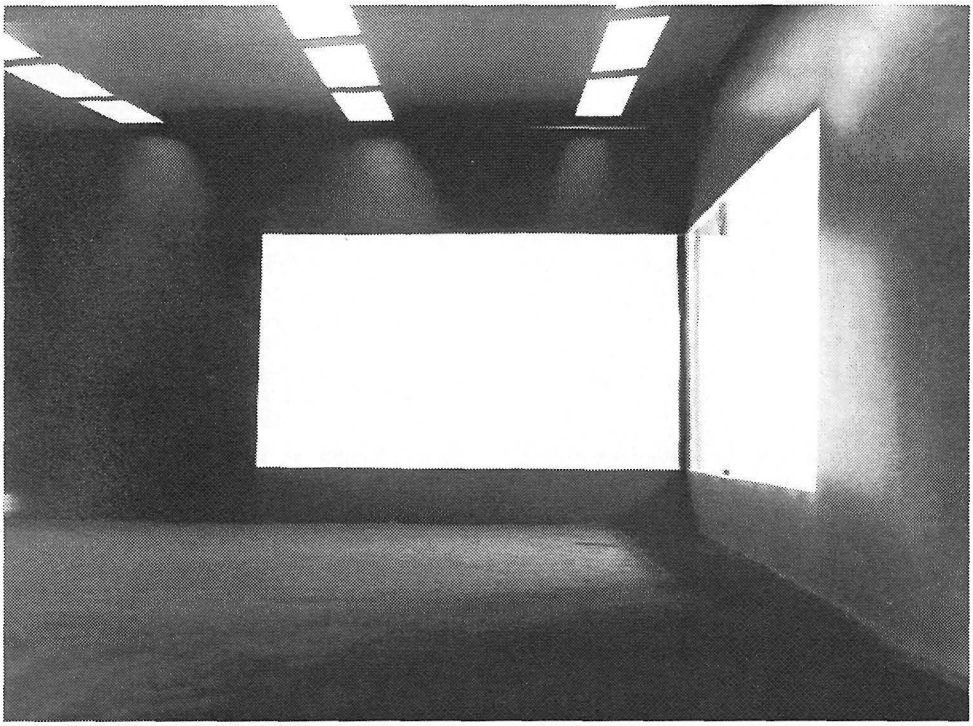


Image: David Lawrey *my office,* 2001

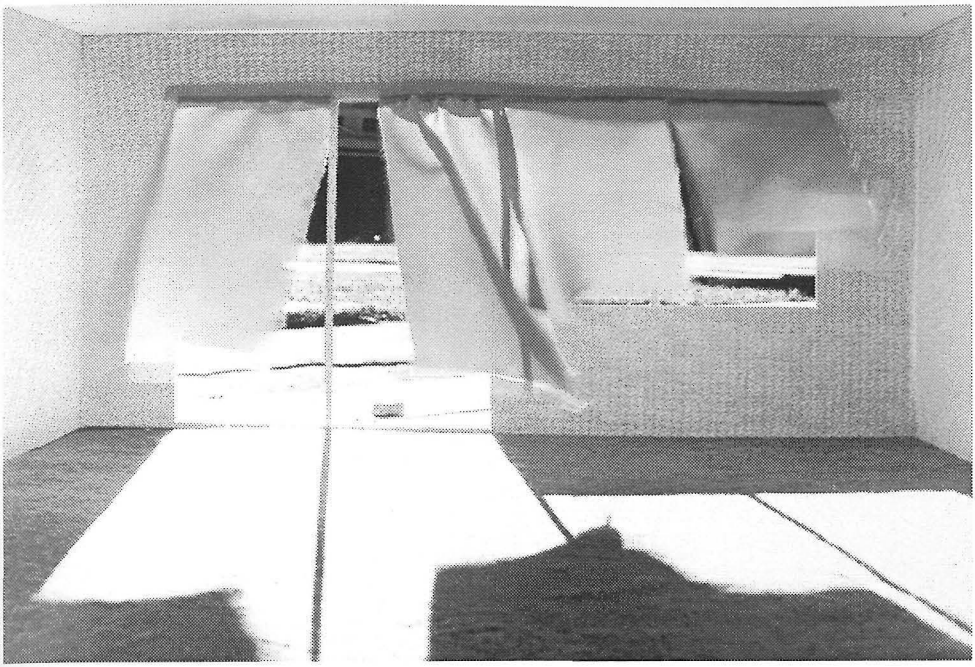


Image: David Lawrey *my house,* 2001

space around them with the view to moving through that space, even if they have no intention of getting up off the couch.

The absolute elsewhere is the space of impossibility, it is everywhere you cannot interact with except via imagination and speculation. An example of the elsewhere is space of the room next door, the space behind the skirting board or the crack in the wall. There is an overlap between the absolute elsewhere and future, for it can be seen on the diagram that all possible future is mapped, but of course when future becomes present the possibilities outside that become elsewhere.

So how does a cube become a room?
The question is a semantic one, for the only difference is that one object references cube and the other room. In a cardboard cube with some carefully placed holes, *my house* (2001) and *my office* (2001) demonstrates the transition from cube to room. These works highlight the importance of the referencing features known to be contained within the idea of room. It is through the analysis of spatial interactions that this occurs.

Looking into the absolute future of these spaces a three dimensional picture becomes apparent, and the movement and stillness in the environment demonstrates all the possible ways to progress through and interact with this space. This leads one to assess these visual clues through the absolute past of our experience, accessing the endless examples of rooms and what component elements make them up. The elsewhere of presence, here, is what leads to a questioning and exploration of this space, further: what's outside, what's in the next room?

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1. Certeau, Michel de, The Practice of Everyday Life, The University of California Press, Berkeley 1984 at pg. 117.
2. Cajori, F., Sir Issac Newton's Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy and His system of the world, University of California Press, Berkeley 1960, at pg.8.
3.Sir Issac Newton's Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy and His system of the world.
4. The translation of these words is based on the English terms that are attributed to these spaces within the theory of special relativity.