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an australian contemporary art magazine

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Special issue: includes curated video art DVD



runway

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Cover (front): Michelle Hanlin, *He used to give me roses*, painting on canvas, 2007. Photo: David Lawrey.

Cover (back): Michelle Hanlin, *Untitled*, painting on canvas, 2007. Photo: David Lawrey.

Facing page: Drew Bickford, *Love is Surrender (Carol vs Freddy)*, graphite on paper, 2007.

LOVE IS
SURRENDER



DREW 07

Editorial

JAKI MIDDLETON

*I will wait a long time if that's what it takes.
But someday I want to help your momma
when she brings out the pancakes.
I want to be back in your life,
I want to be back in your life,
Baby baby, I want to be back in your life.*

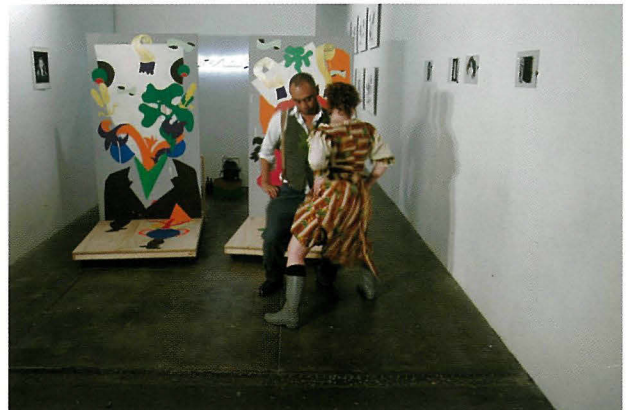
If this magazine was a romantic relationship, it might easily be placed in the difficult 'on-again, off-again' category. Certainly, there is a strong attachment and devotion that has fuelled the magazine's continuation, but it would be dishonest to suggest that the thought of breaking up hasn't also been considered on a couple of occasions. It's not that the love has gone—it hasn't—it's more a matter of poor timing, geographical constraints, juggling commitments ... the usual.

So this year, in order to keep the romance alive we've decided to experiment with polygamy and share the love. Starting with this issue, for which Ella Barclay has been commissioned to curate a special Romance video art DVD (which you can find inside the back cover), *runway* will be regularly engaging guest editors and curators, both in order to share the load, and the excitement and satisfaction that putting together a publication involving so many excellent artists and writers brings.

In this, the tenth issue of *runway*, the theme of Romance is considered from a number of angles. Alex Gawronski goes furiously searching for romance within the annals of art history, while Daniel Mudie Cunningham analyses the illusory romantic narrative inherent in the Romance movie genre. In Anna Peters *Romance Cartoons* one figure looks at a gift card, exclaiming "This anonymous admirer says they're in 'tove' with me! Ha ha!" as the facing figure responds with the despairing thought "Oh no I crossed the 'l'!" This observation of the pain of romantic failure is echoed in Ella Barclay's essay introducing the *I ♥ Heaps* DVD, in which she heartbreakingly reveals one of her own romantic tragedies in order to underpin the motivation for her selection of videos.

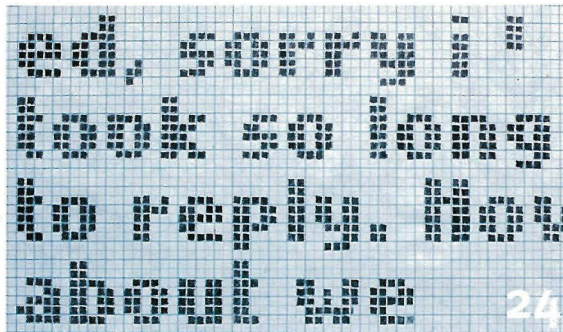
Many of the submissions herein respond to the theme of Romance with suspicion, cynicism and sadness, asking: 'How can we live up to the dreams that the notion of romance sets up?' or even, 'What is the value of aspiring to something so self-indulgent and extravagant?' What is additionally revealed, however, is that the pursuit of Romance can also be honourable, heart-felt and sincere.

*And time's a-wastin', cause what once was a puppy is now a dog.
And what once was a piglet is now a hog.
And I want to be back in your life,
I want to be back in your life.¹*



1 Jonathan Richman, "Back in your life" performed by Jonathan Richman and the Modern Lovers (Beserkley Records 1979).

Above: Agatha Gothe-Snape, Brian Fuata and Pete Volich, performance still from *runway* issue 9: Change launch at Firsdraft, Sydney, 2007. Photo: David Lawrey.



FEATURES

5 MICHELLE HANLIN'S DEDICATIONS
AMANDA ROWELL

**10 A BRIEF LOOK AT ART AND ROMANCE:
LOOKING FOR LOVE IN ALL THE WRONG
PLACES**
ALEX GAWRONSKI

**14 MOVING THROUGH THE MATERIAL
WORLD**
EMMA WHITE interviews JESSICA OLIVIERI

20 THE PORNOGRAPHY OF ROMANCE
DANIEL MUDIE CUNNINGHAM

**24 SWEET AS: JAKE WALKER AND THE
SPIRITUALITY OF IMPERFECTION**
CARRIE MILLER

ROMANCE

31 THROWN OUT 2006
EMIDIO PUGLIELLI

33 MYSTERY TOUR
NANA OHNESORGE

38 BATHROOM
JENNIFER LEAHY & VINCENT WATSON

40 MINDSCAPES
HUSEYIN SAMI

44 t⁶ v⁶ U⁹ Sh¹
SARAH MOSCA

46 MOTION SICKNESS: CORPUS MUSIC
CRAIG BENDER & VERA HONG

50 THERE'S A WINNER IN YOU
TOM POLO

56 ROMANCE CARTOONS
ANNA PETERS

58 GO NOW (PARTS I, II and III)
PETE VOLICH, BRIAN FUATA &
AGATHA GOTHE-SNAPE

**64 Q: IS BEING DRUNK A VALID EXCUSE
FOR INFIDELITY?**
MS & MR

72 SCHMOMANCE
EMMA WHITE

REVIEWS

75 BENT WESTERN
JACQUELINE MILLNER

78 RANGE OF MOTION
JESSIE ANGWIN

80 BETWEEN YOU AND ME
TANYA PETERSON

83 TRANSLATIONS
NAOMI EVANS

86 NOTHING RHYMES WITH FAILURE
TAMSIN GREEN

88 KEEP GOING
ANNEKE JASPERS

PREVIEWS

91 FORTHCOMING EXHIBITIONS
A LIST OF EXHIBITIONS FOR THE DIARY

ROMANCE DVD

96 I ♥ HEAPS
curated by ELLA BARCLAY

FEATURES



Michelle Hanlin's dedications

AMANDA ROWELL

The things in which we invest the greatest significance are the things of which we have the least tangible experience. The metaphysical aspects of religion, along with other fears and mysticisms (e.g. the promotion of national or personal identities), have a hallucinatory insistence in the imaginative domain. In this light, Michelle Hanlin seems to illuminate canonical mysteries via the venerable traditions of icon and emblem making. She takes icons from their niches and brings them into a bright and vivid realm, initially, one might believe, as part of a mission of demystification. The ethereal immateriality that permeates her paintings and sculptures is elevated by monochrome backgrounds and flat matte surfaces. Their delicate, high-key pastel palette together with their peculiar faith in a preordained compositional structure bestows upon the viewing experience a rare lucidity, something in the order of an epiphany or vision of the divine. At their best, Hanlin's images hover over ontological blindspots—things that we're not quite sure exist—like the dove of the annunciation hovering over the divine conception, her hallowed subjects at once a picture of, and catalyst to, the abstract event or thing.

Hanlin gathers the classics of heraldry and regalia (crowns, ermine, stars, fleur-de-lys), ornamental paraphernalia (acanthus, scrolls, flowering vines), paradigms of Catholic decor (robes, candles) and sometimes the trappings of a more shamanistic type of ritual (burning embers, blood). She takes this heady arsenal of accessories and employs it as a playful rhetorical force in the service of a cast of local deities (The Southern Cross, Mt Kosciusko, The Blue Mountains, koalas, cockatoos, galahs, budgerigars, football teams etc.). Things on more of a personal level, including childhood obsessions and fantasies, are also enshrined (the faces of imaginary friends, the soft texture of a guinea pig's mane, locks of braided hair tied with bows). Cairns of stones make regular appearances as landmarks to the dead or the living. Armed with this wherewithal, Hanlin constructs allegorical images, surreal and idiosyncratic badges of, and altars to, the 'saints' and saintly attributes that arise from our multi-denominational enthusiasms, often appealing to the darker side of things. Her subtle pantheon is also graced with less definitely symbolic but nonetheless ecstatic 'events': sparklings, glistenings, lustres, shimmerings, twinklings, ignitions.

Above: Michelle Hanlin with *Spirit World*, 2006, wood, wire, wax, plastic, eggs, flocking, plaster, fabric, expanding foam, acrylic paint. Photo: Mark Hanlin.



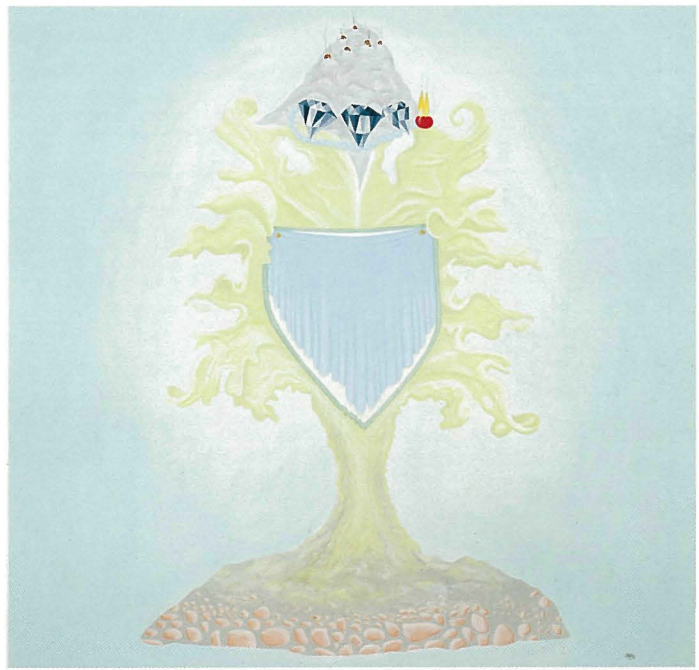
An intuitive understanding of the power of symmetry is fundamental to her work. She takes her subjects and straddles them around a central axis or gives them a formal frontal orientation to the viewer, emphasising their existing bilateral anatomy. For symmetry is a direct avenue of communication that takes you straight to the heart of the thing at hand. It provides evidence of apparent order; confers majesty upon and consecrates in our minds things about which we might not otherwise have been convinced or thought we understood. In Hanlin's work, symmetry is also a literalised marriage (or contest) of opposites—light and dark, up and down, alive and dead, girl and boy. There is an awareness of the transformation that occurs in coupling. Two birds in flight decapitate Love's temple. Hanlin's work unveils mysterious points of intersection where oblique truths (fear, happiness, love) meet the more direct truths of geometry, finding common denominators within seemingly unrelated spheres.

Above: Michelle Hanlin, *Heirarchy and Hagiography*, 2007, acrylic on canvas. Photo: Robert Lake.

Facing page (above left): Michelle Hanlin, *Coat of Arms (Firewatcher)*, 2005, acrylic on canvas. Photo: Silversalt photography.

Facing page (above right): Michelle Hanlin, *Coat of Arms (Swansong)*, 2005, acrylic on canvas. Photo: Silversalt photography.

Facing page (below): Michelle Hanlin, *Good Girl, All Saints, Blue Bag* (installation shot), 2007, wire, mod rock, glitter, acrylic paint. Photo: Mark Hanlin.





Above: Michelle Hanlin, *House*, 2007, acrylic on canvas. Photo: Mark Hanlin.



Above: Michelle Hanlin, *Constance*, 2007, acrylic on canvas. Photo: Mark Hanlin.



Above: Michelle Hanlin, *Cup*, 2007, acrylic on canvas. Photo: Mark Hanlin.



Above: Michelle Hanlin, *Betty*, 2007, acrylic on canvas. Photo: Mark Hanlin.

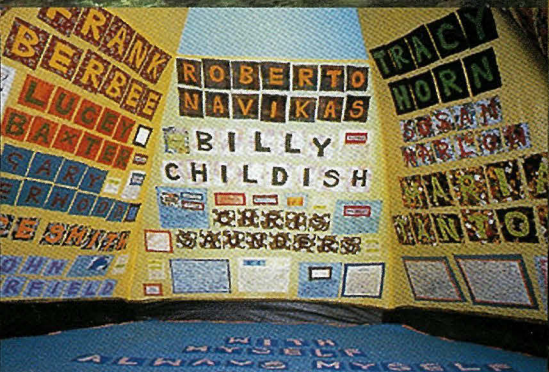
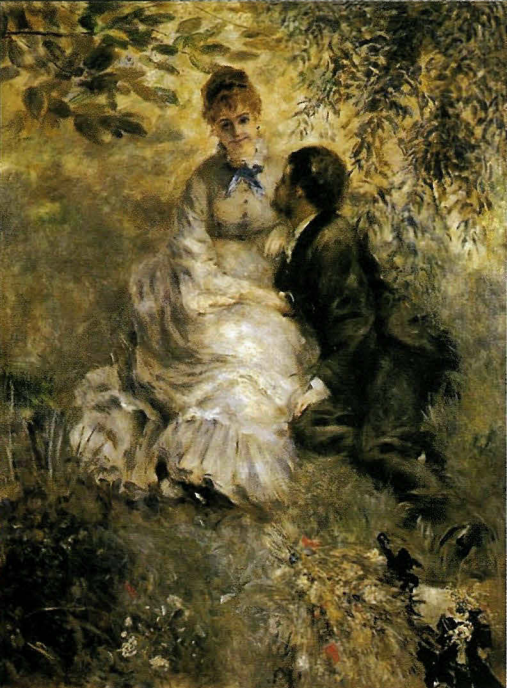
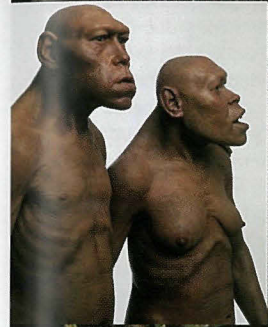
A Brief History of Art and Romance: Looking for Love in All the Wrong Places

ALEX GAWRONSKI

First there was 'Change' then there was ... 'Romance'! (but not always in that order). Ah ... Romance! It seems our world is teeming with references to it, in books, in film, in the media especially. Writing about Art and Romance therefore was bound to be a cinch! Or was it? In fact, the more I thought about the term Romance's connection to art, new and old, the harder it became to sustain the link. Of course, beyond its most readily conjured meaning—pertaining to the rituals of love and loving—the term 'Romance' could be used as a prefix to a multitude of unrelated topics. For example, one could speak of the 'Romance of the Metropolis' (of Paris, Berlin, Shanghai etc.), the 'Romance of Revolution', the 'Romance of the Garden' and so on. Of course, there were always bound to be topics to which such a rule would never apply. For instance, even though they are pervasive obsessions of our age, one could never imagine being turned-on by the 'Romance of Economics/Marketing/Management/Accounting/GST' etc. That is, unless you were *seriously* kinky. Then again, there is the Romance *of* Art. But that's an entirely different caper and one more bound up in clichéd notions of the artist's precious quasi-autistic oneness with their chosen medium. So, in the end, I decided to settle with the most immediate and suggestive use of the term Romance and attempt to locate irrepressible evidence of art's romantic inclinations through time to the present.

Starting way back, I racked my brains for suitable examples of the fevered entwining of Art and Romance. Why not start with the French, I thought. Certainly if anyone knew about both Art and Romance it was the French. And, surely enough, in the 18th Century there were the 'decadent' Rococo fantasies of artists like Fragonard and Boucher. The latter's work in particular was riven with excessive, but intimate, erotic detail while the work of the former was all dressed in frills and acreages of silk, at the same time being equally informed by traces of chivalric codes that dated to the middle-ages. Were these really traces of Romance though? Boucher's work seemed too orgiastic, and therefore too inexclusive to be truly Romantic, while Fragonard's appeared too fetishistically obsessed with the cake's wrapping than with the cake itself. How about their contemporary, Watteau, most famous for his romantically incandescent painting *Embarkation for the Isle of Cythera* (1717), (re: the island of luuuuuurrv!) Romance must be lurking there? But ... disappointment again! Watteau's picture is definitely sensuous but is dominated, like most of this artist's oeuvre, by the dim light of melancholy (a feeling that isn't necessarily antithetical to Romance). In fact, many have suggested that Watteau's daintily poised couples, exquisitely dressed in crushed velvet, are embarking on a journey from which they will never return, i.e. Watteau's picture represents the Enlightenment era's Romance with the Absolute through which lustful yearning—absolutely endorsed and practiced by the aristocracy—will finally be purified. Corny? Yes. Horny? No. And so again, no carrot.

Facing page (left to right, top to bottom): Georgette and René Magritte, 1923; Jean-Honore Fragonard *The Swing*, 1767; René Magritte *Les amants* 1928; Tim Noble and Sue Webster *The New Barbarians* 1999; Edouard Manet *Le Déjeuner sur l'herbe* 1867; Carla Cescon *Portrait: An Autobiographical Narrative* (screen still) 2006; Henri Matisse and model 1939; Alexandr Rodchenko and Varvara Stepanova 1920; Tracey Emin *Everyone I Have Ever Slept With* 1963-1995 1995; Pierre Auguste Renoir *The Lovers* 1875.



OK, OK, where to now? What about the following century, the 19th, actually known as 'The Romantic Age'? In such an auspiciously remembered age, there must be found a welter of true representations of Romance in art? Then again, unpromisingly, the Romantic Age was dominated in England by artists like taciturn Turner, with his crusty evaporating paeons to the dissolution of the subject in swirling fogs of atmospheric immateriality. Either that, or there was the rustic 'Romance of the Farm'—which naturally may not have excluded dalliances with a strapping farm boy or busty milkmaid—best represented by Constable and his paintings of, err ... trees, trees, a river, a hay cart, more trees, a pond, some fields, little people, the sky, a church steeple ... How about Germany? It sounds odd I know, looking for love among the Teutons, but at that time there were plenty of Romantics there too, Romantics like Caspar David Freidrich. Romantics, sure, but not much interested in Romance, unless your thing is love for stones, clouds, the moon, gothic ruins, open graves, an owl on a spade, impenetrable forests or, well ... nothing, that is, if you discount the powers of attraction of a monk by the sea.

Perhaps France could be given another chance, besides France by this stage was really warming up. Romantics with dramatic coiffures dressed in tight frockcoats were furiously painting away as though possessed; artists like Gericault, followed by his follower Delacroix. Still not much Romance I'm afraid. Gericault was more interested in painting decaying bodies and the guillotined heads of criminals than with the intricacies of seduction. Delacroix, on the other hand—by all accounts a ladies man—obviously knew something of Romance in life but in his art it most often appeared in the guise of turgid colonialist fantasies—the exotic Romance of the middle-eastern harem being a specialty—a subject the moustachioed one obviously had little first-hand knowledge of. Foiled once more! Travelling further down towards the steamy South might offer more chance for love. Down there was 'hot-blooded' Spain, which the French had already invaded bringing the Spaniards' blood to a boil. Against such odds I guess it's unrealistic to expect artists to be producing heart-felt homages to their sweethearts. Earlier Goya gave it a go with his naked and clothed *Maja's*, which together supposedly comprise a secret (and thus oh-so-very-much-more Romantic) double-portrait of the powerfully connected Duchess of Alba with whom he was utterly obsessed. Alas, it seems there was much unrequitedness in this fleeting coupling and Goya may have painted these works for, um ... more 'practical' purposes. In any case, the age of the Romantics was also the age of European Nationalism, meaning most of the artists just mentioned were more likely to profess undying love for their homelands in their work than for that 'special someone.'

Later, at the birth of the Modern Age, came the rapid exponential growth of the bourgeoisie—pleasure seekers par excellence. The very tip of that century saw artists like Manet, whose cool but lascivious odalisque *Olympia* (1863) enticed (and repelled) audiences in Paris as did his *Luncheon on the Grass* (1863) with its depiction of a couple of laconically lounging dandies dressed to the nines in the company of their naked (or nearly naked) lady 'friends'. But hang on a minute, is there any Romance in these pictures or is love here more a question of property—hey, do you think this nude goes well with this jacket? At the same time, there was Toulouse Lautrec (except his deformity precluded him somewhat from access to too much genuine Romance) which was no matter, as he simply substituted love's delicacies for a lot of 'good-humoured' whoring which, as an errant member of the aristocracy, he could well afford—he an upper-class devotee of the under-class in his element. Elsewhere there was Gauguin who dumped his wife and family for the Romance of the tropics, then eventually for the more passionate embrace of syphilis, gonorrhoea and more. Still Gauguin was always more seriously motivated by the Romance of possessing Otherness—women as earthy 'exotic fruits' ripe for the picking, quickly abandoned after they started to go mushy. Even earnest, heavily bearded Monet tried his hand at imbuing his paint with the syrupy smoothness of Romantic feeling—aiming to tug at the heart-strings, he painted a portrait of his dying wife as though she were a slowly discolouring bowl of fruit! What about van Gogh, otherwise a Romantic failure extraordinaire? He did immortalise his union with the hard-faced, business-minded prostitute Sien, whom he attempted to redeem from her lowly ways, but then again, 'all he ever got from her was Sorrow' (or vice versa). It was only sometime later he figured he'd be 'getting more' if he gave more of himself, literally, in the form of a gift-wrapped portion of his own ear which he generously bestowed on another prostitute. Of course, there was always plenty of Romance in Renoir, with his endless parades of young pretty Parisians lounging around riverbanks etc., but that was ultimately ingenuous Romance with a capital K (for Kitsch), predestined to live on forever (discounting insolvency) in the heart of Red Tulip's 'Fancy Assorted.'

Not much luck in the 19th Century. The 20th has to promise more, I mean, what with that century's further scandalous loosening of 'moral standards'. Of course, there was Surrealism. Now there's a movement always ready for romance! First, Surrealism's boss Andre Breton, was proclaiming at every opportunity *amour fou* for all. He even wrote a book about it after he met, totally by chance, the woman to whom it would be dedicated, Nadja. Romance? Yeah, sure, the book should have been subtitled *I Dated a Crazy-Chick* or more appropriately in the true spirit of self-love *Andy loves Andy*. Ernst had the *Hundred Headless Woman* (1929)—not much use for chocolates and flowers there. Dali? Dali ... he had (dare-you-to-kill-me-right-now) Gala, boiled beans and sea urchins. Magritte had *The Rape* (1934), hardly Romance (although he also had that really cute picture of him and his beloved Georgette taken in a photo-booth before they were married). Speaking of photos, who said the Russians don't know how to love? Seen that picture of the Constructivists Rodchenko and his own beloved Varvara Stepanova in their cosy, matching woollen polos? Way too cute! Except in their art it's all angles, lines and hard edges—Whites being beaten by phallic Red wedges. Too cold in Russia perhaps? In Vienna, Expressionist Oskar Kokoschka, as a tribute to a failed Romance, was busy wining and dining his handmade life-size rag doll of the haughty, wayward, much-older Alma Mahler—and getting half-price at restaurants and cafes no doubt. Finally, once more in the warm climes of the Mediterranean, it's time to meet 20th Century art's ultimate Love Machine—Pablo Picasso—he cannot possibly fail us in the 'R' department. Those big white undies aren't too appealing though, and, come to think of it, he spends most of his time worrying about his manliness, scribbling nudie-pictures in his studio, endlessly giving birth to more and more surrogate Pablitos specially signed for the masses—incontrovertible proof of his potency. What about Picasso's 'only serious rival' then—a man of comparable 'genius' and sensuality—Henri Matisse? In his art of 'Luxury, Calm and Voluptuous', he seemed fully appreciative of the attractions of the Romantic interlude, or at least a cosy picnic for two. Still, by all accounts he couldn't stand his wife and in every photo looked every bit the cranky banker, dispassionately eyeing his models as though they were investments. Yes, unfortunately in the Modern Age, money was capital and love, like everything else including art, was for sale in unprecedented quantities.

Alas, the more I looked at art history, the less love could I see. The chances of finding it now, in our own age, the Celebrity Age of the spectacle in which anything is possible and/or admissible, was obviously going to be much easier! Earlier, Hermann Nitsch had groupies seeking Romance in animal entrails. The Abramovics had it all, not only each other but the diversionary delights of snakes, guns, knives and in the end, the Great Wall of China—a fitting backdrop to their final farewell. Carolee Schneeman found joy in meat and the intoxicating early morning tongue-pashes of her cat. Sometime later, Tracey Emin was lovin' practically everyone in the yBa scene one after the other, then lamenting about it ad nauseum, when it all inevitably turned sour. Her mate, Sarah Lucas, followed that lead but was left only with two fried eggs and a kebab. At the same time, young British art's self-certified new barbarians, Tim Noble and Sue Webster, were celebrating their undying Romance simian style, wistfully dreaming of its eventual immortalisation in the hallowed chambers of the British Museum. Further North, Scotland's own dynamic duo, Smith and Stewart, were filming themselves in all sorts of Romantic scenarios—their heads, gently resting side by side on pillows, deeply thrust in airtight plastic bags or, simply just laying on hickies deep and hard until a delicious, and most aesthetically 'pleasing', shade of purple had been achieved. Elsewhere, the self-proclaimed 'authentic' Amerindians, Coco Fusco and Guillermo Gómez-Peña were caging themselves in and outside various museums, Romancing each other 'native' style for any unsuspecting gallery goer to see. Nearby, the American performance artist Andrea Fraser was so desperate for Romance she was auctioning it off to the curator willing to pay most for the pleasures of her company.

But what of our own backyard art romances I hear you say? Well, WE had ... Scott Redford longing for the unattainable love of Hollywood's own Keanu Reeves or the even farther off embraces of his pal, the deceased River P—but forced ultimately to seek solace in equally far off places, in the tough love of Berlin back bars. We had Sydney's Wild Boys doin' it in drag, just as local guest-artist celebrity Shappylle Scragg was holding a mirror to true 'Australian Values', and doin' it with ... anyone who would. Also in Sydney, Josie Cavallaro and Anne Kay (somewhat in the spirit of Andrea F) were arranging artist/curator speed-dating down at Artspace which was bound to be a big success as artists, generally being masochists, were never happier than with the delayed (even for eternity) institutionally-facilitated orgasm. Finally, we had Carla Cescon pursuing both, the paranormal love of The Ramones lost to the Other Side and Vampire Love, the latter most compellingly captured in her 2006 must-see video *Portrait: An Autobiographical Narrative*.

Ah ... Art and Romance! What could be sweeter as our journey grinds slowly to a halt? But even now I'm not so sure, because I just couldn't help feeling somewhat downhearted and dissatisfied walking away from art's long association with Romance. Passing from dirty love to the shiny-white Absolute beloved of the Enlightened 18th Century, to the rugged Nature/Nation love of the 19th, from the Money Love of Modernity to the pervy, show-it-all spectacles of our Celebrity obsessed present, I just couldn't rid myself of a creeping discomfort. The feeling was that, yes, artists did love Romance, indeed, couldn't get enough of it. In fact, it is this very last point that reveals that the Romance artists love most—which most frequently appears in their art and never more so than today (when it would come as no surprise if a professional narcissist like Paris Hilton, retrospectively claimed her life's 'work' as legitimate performance art)—is the Romance of ourselves.





Moving Through the Material World

EMMA WHITE interviews JESSICA OLIVIERI

Sydney artist Jessica Olivieri's current practice involves a hybrid of performance, installation and video. Having trained at the University of Western Sydney's (sadly) now-defunct School of Contemporary Art, Olivieri first worked with sculpture and installation before beginning to experiment with performance. Her live dance works have incorporated elaborate costuming, music and the use of non-professional performers, and convey the immediacy and confident use of space and colour that were present in her earlier sculptural pieces made with light and inflatable material. Olivieri's works have been shown internationally and in Australia at Firstdraft, Pelt, CarriageWorks, the Next Wave Festival, and most recently at Blacktown Arts Centre as part of the exhibition *Bent Western*. Her solo show at MOP opens in October 2008.

Above and facing page: Jessica Olivieri, *Make hay while the sun shines*, 2008, installation. Photo: Jessica Olivieri.

Lets talk about musicals. Are there specific things about the idea of the musical that you connect to?

Yes, there are specific formal things. The dancing—Busby Berkeley is a big influence in the way that I choreograph the works, or collaborate with other people to choreograph the works. He creates these works that are more than a group of dancers dancing together, they become shapes of other things, which on a really formal level is the same as what's happening to the fabric.

There's something transformative going on there. Like a reverse anthropomorphism—people into forms.

Totally.



But also narratively? There's that wistful, dreamy ...

... yeah—and very nostalgic. The narratives in musicals are inevitably quite weak, they are really a MacGuffin for a lot of singing and dancing. My work is kind of the opposite, the singing and dancing is a MacGuffin for the underlying narrative. I'm also interested in the damsel in distress archetype in musicals, in how vulnerability is portrayed.

Are you interested in feminism?

Hmm ... it kind of makes me cringe.

I remember I went to see an Ernesto Neto exhibition in Paris with you, and I know you like his work, and you gave a deep sigh and went, like “oh, if a woman had made this work it would be read completely differently”. It struck me as very true. So you're obviously aware of those issues.

Yeah, my work is quite 'feminine' or 'girly' and it can be frustrating if the work is given a narrow reading just because of my gender. Having said that, I'm quite interested in gender. I think it's interesting that Ernesto Neto can make work like that and ...

... get away with it?

Yeah.

Above: Jessica Olivieri & Hayley Forward, *My heart belongs to Daddy*, 2006, performance still. Photo: David Lawrey.

***My heart belongs to Daddy* is hyper-feminine. It's almost sickening. The colours and the flowers are really intense, and the lyrics of the music as well ...**

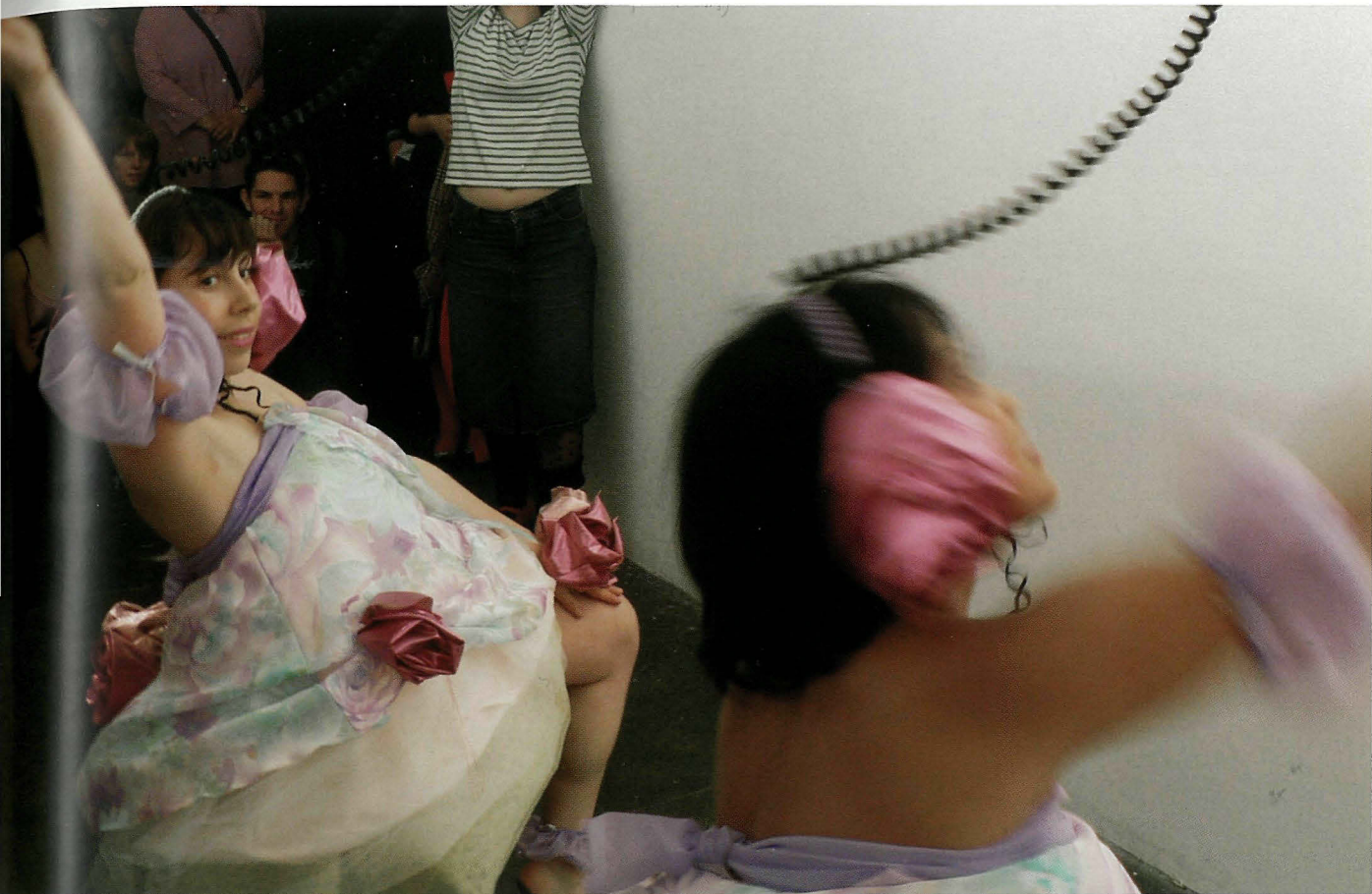
That's where the musical influence comes in, it's so over the top. It's really kitsch, really feminine.

Are you interested in critiquing representations of femininity or embracing them?

It's a problematic term. I'd like to *gently* critique it, but I'm also interested in embracing it. And in how you can use that to say something else rather than critiquing it.

There's an autobiographical aspect to your work—I know that when you're making the work you're often referring to events or things that have happened in your own life. There's this tricky balance between what you want to reveal or conceal about those personal triggers. How do you manage that?

By making work I really am testing the boundaries of how much I tell people and how much I leave unsaid, and how much do you need to tell people for them to engage and how much is too much. I think about that in films as well; there's the plot and then there's what the director is *really* trying to get at. I always find it more interesting when it's not entirely obvious. When it comes down to it I am



interested in how we define the boundaries of our personal space and how we territorialise these spaces, but mostly who we let in and how we stop those we don't want there from coming in. I like the way Deleuze and Guattari talk about the territorialisation of space as an abstract idea rather than necessarily something physical or tactile.

I'm always thinking about a certain anecdote or incident that's informing the work as I'm making it, but there's always a point that I get to where I'm like, OK, I don't want to reveal any more now. I don't go past that and I create space around it and then the titles refer back to the original trigger point.

If the making of your work is triggered by a personal event, then what choices influence the form the work takes? How do you decide things like a particular element of a costume and things like that?

For me, material things relate really easily to anecdotes. Because I feel that material—especially fabric—has really descriptive qualities about it. Costume material in particular is descriptive in the way it moves and in the connotation it has with amateur performance. It reminds me a lot of growing up, because I was in dancing groups, and we would put on performances, so the fabrics that those costumes are made out of are loaded with associations. The fabrics can also sometimes relate to an era as well; the colours that were used in *Amour for warhorses*, where the costumes were kind of big tuttle balls, related to the eighties era that I grew up in.

Above: Jessica Olivieri & Hayley Forward, *My heart belongs to Daddy*, 2006, performance still. Photo: David Lawrey.

There's certainly a kind of nostalgia about what you do.

That yearning for something that doesn't exist any more is quite prevalent in my work.

There's something of that in your earlier inflatable works as well—it's air, essentially; it goes up and down, and doesn't last.

Moving around a lot as a kid, you become very aware of your material world, because it changes so much. Suddenly you don't have that same garden with those same bricks. I remember really missing the smooth red brick pavement of my first house when we moved. I think that's why I find it easy to invest meaning and emotions into objects and materials. Also, moving around, you become really nostalgic from a young age ... you really miss things, you know. You don't have a lot of familiar things around you anymore so you miss everything that was familiar. You realise how temporary everything is.

You're quite interested in the aesthetics of amateur performance. What's the difference between that kind of performance and your work? How is it changed by its use in an art context?

I think about the idea of the amateur a lot when I'm making my work. I just found out that until recently, Olympic events required athletes to be amateurs, because lack of financial recompense was seen as a sign of commitment. I always think about Hal Hartley's film *Amateur*;

the main character's journey from amateur filmmaker, where he just documented things he saw, to his obsession with seeing everything through a frame. He is still not a professional, but somehow goes beyond the innocence of amateurism.

In my choice of costume, dance moves and ultimately who performs my work, I do set out to create something reminiscent of amateur performance, but in copying the form and constructing the outcome, it becomes an artifice. It loses its innocence in the process of trying to recapture it. The dancers in my performances take their roles seriously; they are performing to the best of their abilities. But they're not twelve or fifteen, they're in their mid-twenties or thirties.

They're prematurely nostalgic.

They've been once, maybe twice removed from their original context. They're wearing costumes that are maybe acceptable on twelve year olds, as part of their end of year celebration or something. They're doing something that looks a bit weird because they're no longer acting their age, but it isn't that they're pretending to be young; they're just dancing.

And they're not professional dancers.

No, definitely not. That's a very conscious choice because I don't want it to be about how technically amazing they are at dancing, or about how beautifully they move, or how great the dance steps are. I want it to be about the vulnerability of putting yourself up there and *dancing*, as well as *wearing something a little bit uncomfortable*. All of my dancers are 'lounge-room dancers'. The less technically adept they are, the better; that feeds back into the work. They don't have that idea of the fourth wall, they're *there*, and very present. You can see that they're nervous. They don't have that professional ability to disconnect, I suppose. They're still very connected to people looking at them from the audience.

Do you conceive your performances with particular performers in mind?

Well, maybe more a type of person, or a person who they will represent, then I try to find someone like that. Like Julie [de Paoli, one of Olivieri's semi-regular performers], I think about her when I make my work. I like to have the performers come to the work already part of the work, so who they are and what they look like is important, it is invested into the work. As I make more performances more people tell me they would like to be in the next one, so the little family of dancing girls grows.

Is there a thing there about how much it's controlled and how much it's not—is that important?

Yeah, I try to find a balance between making the dancers feel comfortable and allowing the audience to see their vulnerability. So it's important that they are given some control over how this takes place. *By the time I get the dancers in, the work is already made*. Literally, I've already made the costumes and props and the narrative around them so I am happy to let go a little. I don't always choreograph the works either, sometimes I get my little sister to choreograph them. She's a teenager and she knows the dance moves they do in those amateur dance performances because she

is in them. And it's more about the fact that they're doing these awkward dance movements than what those actual movements are.

So the mistakes are planned into the work already?

They're definitely expected. But they are real mistakes!

You've been collaborating a lot with Hayley Forward, who is a sound designer.

That happened naturally because I would always get her help with making soundtracks, and I'd always bounce ideas off her. Then we decided that with *My hart belongs to Daddy* we would actually collaborate properly, that she would be part of the whole process. I really enjoy collaboration; it's a really nice way to work. You can kind of tag team a bit.

Do you remember your dreams? Do they ever influence your work?

I sometimes write the good ones down. It would be a really easy way to make work if I could just recreate some of my crazy dreams. Often when I make work, I have a dream that will be the solution to a work. I'll wake up and go 'oh, fantastic!'

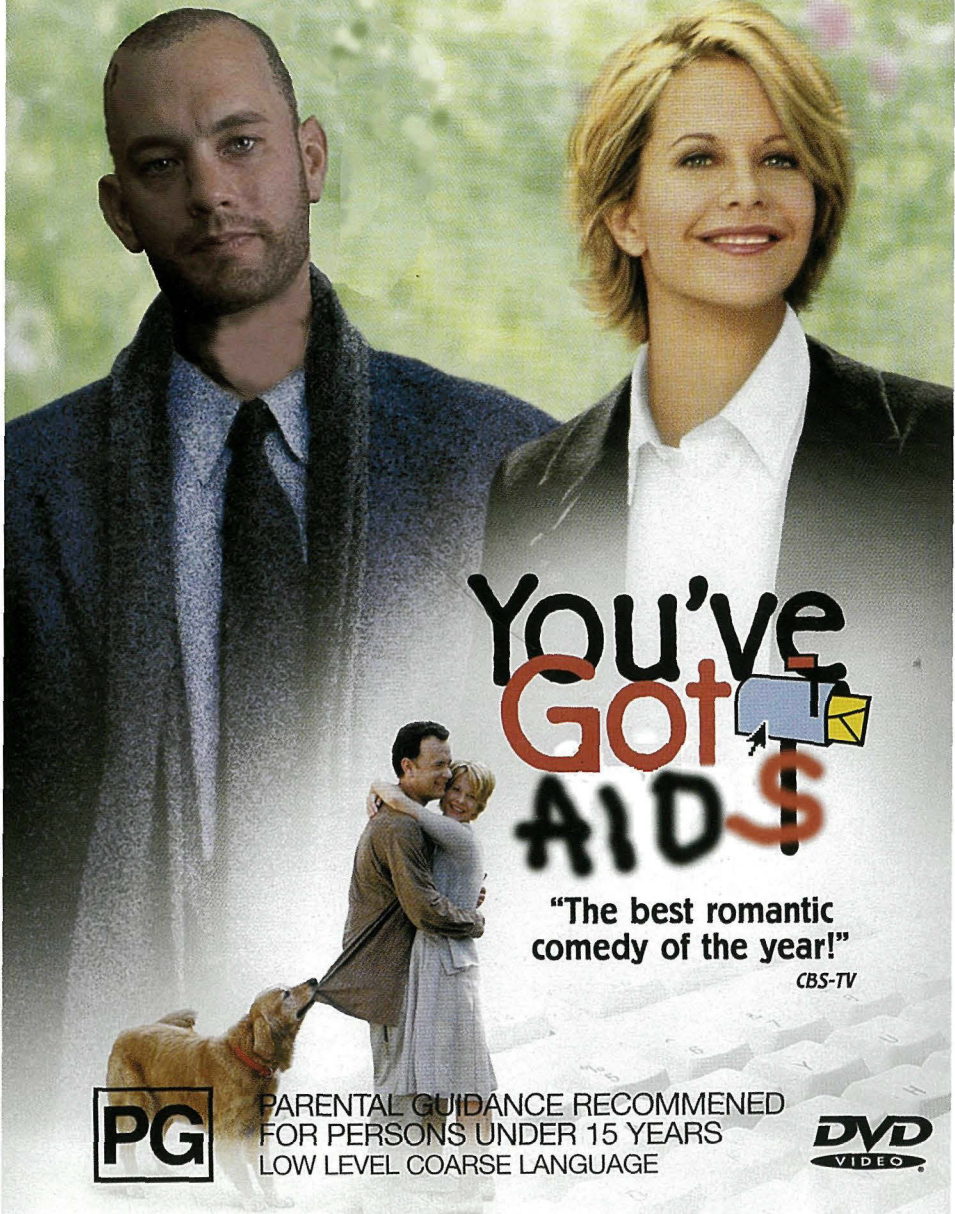
The answers are in your dreams?

Sometimes ... yeah.



Tom Hanks

Meg Ryan



You've Got 2 See Us

"The best romantic
comedy of the year!"

CBS-TV

PG

PARENTAL GUIDANCE RECOMMENDED
FOR PERSONS UNDER 15 YEARS
LOW LEVEL COARSE LANGUAGE

DVD
VIDEO

The Pornography of Romance

DANIEL MUDIE CUNNINGHAM

romance *n.* 1. a tale depicting heroic or marvelous achievements, colourful events or scenes, chivalrous devotion, unusual, even supernatural experiences or other matters of a kind to appeal to the imagination.¹

The Macquarie Dictionary provides ten definitions of romance and what most commonly unites them is the stress placed on romance as narrative. Characterised as invention, exaggeration, imagination and extravagance, definitions of romance focus on make-believe. Romantic love seems a secondary after-thought for the dictionary, as if real life experiences of romantic love come nowhere near their representational counterparts. This got me thinking that perhaps outside the conventions of narrative and genre, romance does not exist. This maybe explains why romance is so unattainable, at least in lasting measures. Its temporal and transient character is like a swift punch in the guts: plummeted into absolute incoherence, logic breaks down and all that remains is a disorienting and confusing episode that is here today, gone tomorrow. Opening credit sequence for now ... end titles later. Romance never lasts because romance is representation. Romance is genre. Romance is narrative. Like narrative structure, romance has limited use value in real life.

Browsing through my local Blockbuster store, Romance is a category that sits on the other side of the store to Action. I suppose if I had to make a choice, I'd go with the 'chick flick.' Trawling through titles in the Romance section, I'm confronted with an idea that romance is conceived of by what it excludes. Romance is the implementation of gender codes, compulsory heterosexuality and a precursor to Family – that mother of all invention. Romance, then, is very Blockbuster in that it competes for the same normative ideological space as Blockbuster, the conservative American franchise, which famously discriminates against stocking titles that supposedly undermine good old-fashioned Christian 'family values.'

Romantic fiction is perhaps even more nebulous than a cinema of romance. Romantic literary representations depend on melancholy, pathos and tragedy to extract appropriate emotional responses from a reader. Low culture at best, romance novels are the 'lowest' form of fiction and their writers are seen as the 'lowest' of all writers. A case in point is the depiction of the romance novelist in the film *Romancing the Stone* (Robert Zemeckis, 1984). World famous for her passion pot-boilers, Joan Wilder (Kathleen Turner) writes because she has no romance in her real life. Joan Wilder's life ain't that Wild, until—of course—fiction and reality coalesce during the steamy romantic wilds of a jungle-set jewel hunt.

When I was a kid, *Romancing the Stone* was one of my favourite films, and I'm not lying! But now that I'm all grown up I know that such concepts of romance impress upon childhood in specific ways. Having no experience of romance, popular culture representations of romance ignite for children and teens the mystery of a romantic adulthood to be experienced one day in the not-so-distant future. Romance is pitched at kids because if you've had no experience of it, you have no frame of reference to judge false promises.

Romance may appeal to the liminal imaginations of childhood, but it's no secret that the genre is for women, even when it's written by men. Pedro Almodóvar's *The Flower of my Secret* (1995) inverts the gendered significance of the romance novelist stereotype. The titular 'secret' is the true identity of romance novelist Amanda Gris, who is really just a pseudonym for male writer Leo Macias. Even the Australian film *Paperback Hero* (Antony J. Bowman, 1999) depicts the gendered significance of the romance writer. Hugh Jackman is the romance novelist this time and he's the idealised macho vision of the Aussie male. That is, if you like the rugged outdoorsy truck driver type. The tagline for *Paperback Hero* sums up this type of Aussie bloke: 'He's hard, tough ... and doesn't give a XXXX for anything ... except romantic novels.' If romance fiction relies on stock gender stereotypes, it certainly requires that the authors of such novels are the living embodiment of the stereotype. It's a Jackie Collins kind of thing ... or Barbara Cartland if you're Blue Rinsie.

That Hugh Jackman is a novelist hiding behind a female persona shows how romance fiction constructs the author as much as it constructs readers. The romance writer does not just write romance novels, she writes herself (or himself as her). Female consumers of romance fiction buy into the doubling of romance represented: the longings of the romance writer thinly disguised in formulaic plotlines that arouse precisely because of narrative blueprints predicated on repeated happily ever afters. In terms of how it functions through repetition and arousal, romance is a kind of pornography and the happily ever after is the ultimate 'money shot'.

Romance, therefore, is narrative and like narrative, romance is incompatible with reality. Illusory and erroneous, romance as a representational system lacks a real-world referent. The structure of any narrative cinema, be it Hollywood or not, depend on the consummation of heterosexual imperatives in the quest for narrative closure. In his essay on *My Own Private Idaho* (Gus Van Sant, 1991) Thomas Waugh explains that narrative closure is impossible

because the film is an unrequited queer romance. Waugh argues that narrative cinema is based on ‘the structures of sexual difference inherent in Western (hetero) patriarchal culture.’² In *Private Idaho*, melancholy and longing cast a narcoleptic shadow on romance, the consummation of sexual attraction kept at bay. Unlike hetero romantic-comedies, *Private Idaho* revels in imagination rather than reality, because the reality brings anguish and pain. The oneiric and intangible nature of romance reveals how narrative closure does not coincide with the money shot of sexual consummation as it does in hetero romantic-comedies. Rather, narrative closure is a myth and only exists in death. As gay-themed films of this period often bore the spectre of the AIDS crisis—take *Philadelphia* (Jonathan Demme, 1993) for instance—narrative closure indeed coincides with a nexus of sex/death.

When I think of romance in its ugliest manifestation, I think of Tom Hanks and Meg Ryan. The pornography of romance is never more evident than it is in Nora Ephron’s rom-coms starring both Hanks and Ryan: *Sleepless in Seattle* (1993) and *You’ve Got Mail* (1998). A big year, 1993 saw Hanks sleepless in Seattle and dead in Philadelphia. Narrative closure for the conventional romantic comedy coincides with the ultimate coming together of the male and female protagonists. If death features at all, it’s *la petite mort*, a French term which refers to the idea that a good orgasm is like ‘a little death.’ Unlike Meg Ryan’s simulated café orgasm in *When Harry Met Sally* (Rob Reiner, 1989) the money shot in Ephron’s films is only ever implied. Ephron’s films typify romance as false consciousness, perpetuating myths about how romance functions as life, when in fact, if these films were taken verbatim, romance ends the minute the end credits roll, which corresponds with the very moment the couple are united sexually—even if the PG rating paints the sex as implication over porn.

Everything else is *A Prelude to a ... Fuck*.

1 *Macquarie Essential Dictionary* (NSW: Macquarie University, 1999).

2 Robert Lang, “My Own *Private Idaho* and the New Queer Road Movies” in *The Road Movie Book*. Eds. Steven Cohan and Ina Rae Hark. (London and New York: Routledge, 1997) 330–348.

CLAUDIA KARVAN

HUGH JACKMAN

Bareback Hero

He's hard, tough...
and doesn't give
a XXXX for
anything
...except
romantic novels





'Sweet As': Jake Walker and The Spirituality of Imperfection

CARRIE MILLER

Jake Walker's latest paintings are a weird, mix of abstracts, 'landscapes' and text pieces: multi-layered, blurred dots; a sub-aquatic, pod-like domestic structure docked in an island cove; colloquialisms, slogans, and affirmations.

In accounting for the work's ostensibly oblique nature, Walker has suggested the landscapes 'could be viewed as historic accounts of events profound to a particular group', the text work read as 'tenets to live or fail by', and the abstracts, 'symbols of reverence and tools for transcendence'.

The disparate elements in his work do seem to make a bit more narrative sense if we think of them as part of some metaphysical system we may not be privy to: an exclusive society perhaps or a special cult. Certainly, the paintings have an irreducibly secretive quality, one that gestures to a plane beyond the physical.

The strange mood of Walker's highly aesthetic, small-scale works is difficult to calibrate, but a starting point might be found in the

equally strange position the artist occupies as an ex-pat New Zealander living and working in Sydney. In 1999, the Australian artist Imants Tillers articulated this strangeness between the two cultures in an essay on the New Zealand artist Shane Cotton:

Because of Australia's vast size and New Zealand's relative proximity to Australia's east coast, cities like Auckland or Wellington are closer to Sydney and Melbourne than are Perth and Darwin, which lie on Australia's western and northern extremities. Despite significant diasporic populations of both Maori and Pakeha (white) New Zealanders in Australia, there seems to have been very little cultural traffic across the Tasman Sea until recently. It is as though Australia and New Zealand were located precisely in each other's blind spot.¹

Tillers wrote this around the time Walker moved to Sydney. While Tillers suggests the cultural eclipse he describes had begun to shift, Walker's practice continues to embody the complexities of negotiating the psychological and aesthetic space between where



he came from and where he ended up. He has ‘a strong interest in the subtle cultural differences between here and across the ditch’, he says, as well as an investment in ‘not losing the sensibilities that growing up on an isolated little rainy island gave me’.

This has had enduring implications for Walker’s practice:

It’s taken a long time to find a balanced practice over here. At first I just continued with what I was doing back home but it soon became apparent that there was much more of an international style going on here. That changed the direction of my practice, before I shuffled back towards an older, more comfortable practice.

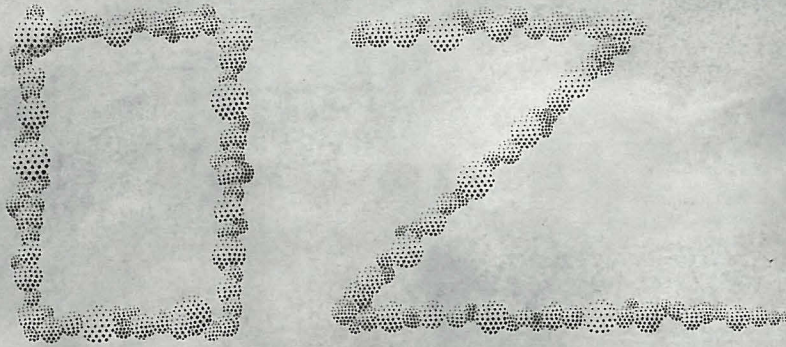
Arriving at this point has been a long experimental process for Walker—one that began with an early obsession with graffiti and continues to play out in his current text work.

As a teenager living in Wellington, Walker saw the documentary *Style Wars* (Henry Chalfant and Tony Silver, 1983), a film about New

York graffiti art. An hour later Walker felt he had ‘a completely new visual language’; a week later ‘the exact details of that imagery began to fade and my brothers and I were left with our own doodles’. Although he subsequently tried to internationalise his style through a more direct copying of images from overseas, in retrospect Walker saw that his early, naïve attempts were innately more interesting. Instead of being just another white guy from a cultural backwater trying to emulate hip-hop artists at the epicentre of the avant-garde, Walker stumbled onto his own unique sensibility.

It’s a way of seeing the world that he now recognises as deeply implicated in the specificity of place he believes is intrinsic to New Zealand art: ‘All New Zealand art is essentially landscape. It infects everything; it even affects the abstract.’ Unsurprisingly, Walker cites Colin McCahon as his country’s pre-eminent and most influential artist in the development of this aesthetic:

I love the way he adapted modernism, he used it in a way that fitted uniquely into the New Zealand landscape and psyche. He

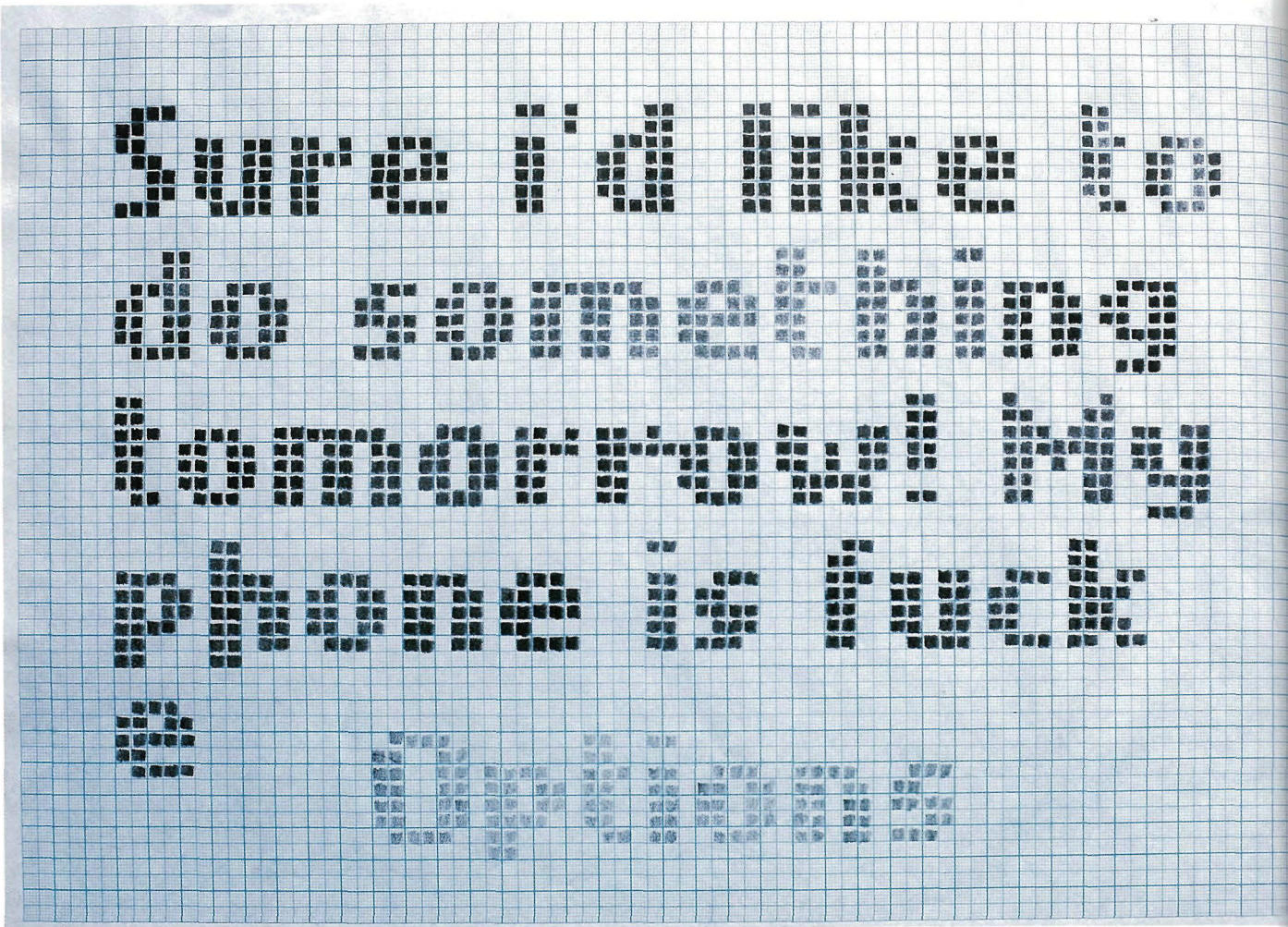


really understood the predicament, physically and emotionally. I think his ability to achieve this was in part due to the isolation of New Zealand in the forties. Images and travelling shows of what was going on in Europe and the US must have been few and far between. I can relate to this situation in terms of my introduction to graffiti.

Walker's early experiments with street art—of finding the threads of artistic success through a kind of failure—also revealed to him something important about the practice of art-making itself: that originality and authenticity can be achieved through inadvertent means. Against the romantic notion that these qualities spring from some primary inspirational source, Walker had discovered something inherently valuable in the cultural, conceptual, and aesthetic limits of representation. The artistic capital he derived from his misinterpretation of New York graffiti is what he continues to mine as an ex-pat in a culture that, while not radically foreign, is neither entirely his own.

In his current text pieces, Walker works the slippage of meaning inherent in translation to his cultural advantage. Abstracting everyday slang like 'Fuck Me Dead', 'Soft Cock', or 'Sweet As' from its entrenchment in a network of taken-for-granted cultural relations, illuminates the strangeness an outsider might feel hearing us talking in the pub.

Walker's conceptual interest in words is also inseparable from his ongoing formal concerns. He's had a long-standing interest in perceptual illusion and the nature of visual experience—seen most obviously in his coolly cerebral, black and white drawings from 2005 that *The Art Life* described as 'deftly executed, marvelously obsessive gems'.² While these works directly speak the rule-bound vocabulary associated with Op Art, more recently Walker has employed this formal lexis in the service of exploring the illusive nature of signification itself. The ambiguity of meaning inherent in the lingo he depicts, as well as its potential for *unreadability*, is beautifully revealed through the deftness of his illusory technique—it literally oscillates.



In a city obsessed with hi-tech, showroom-ready pieces determined to engage in an ‘international dialogue’, Walker takes local ephemera—a text message, a slang phrase, a sign—and isolates and preserves it, lending it a significance through methodical artistic labour. The effect is paradoxical: while the former often looks infinitely reproducible and therefore disposable, Walker’s modest paintings take on the auratic quality of a singular artefact.

For Walker, the ‘end-game of perfectionism’ played by many of his contemporaries is ‘dry and soulless’—both as an artistic process and in terms of the cultural objects it produces. He instead finds inspiration in the imperfection of the aesthetics of the everyday. Like McCahon—whose own text pieces were partly inspired by his childhood memories of watching sign-writers at work—Walker is fascinated by hand painted signs:

I just love the way painted words look. I love the degrees of technical competence. With amateur sign-writing there is an attempt to achieve professionalism but the end result is far from

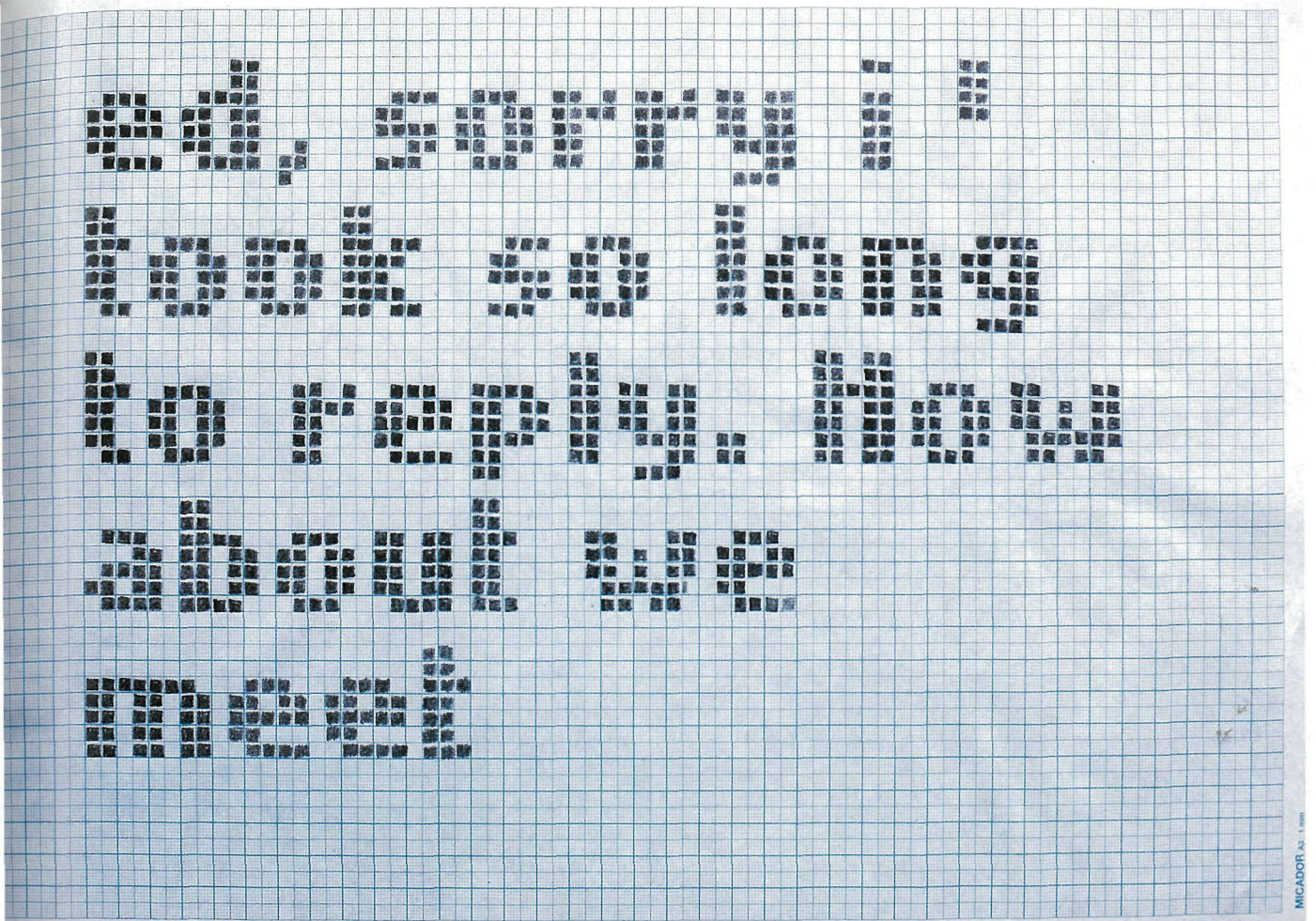
it. The variants of letter thickness and size are just so frail, so human. This quality gives artists a great tool to explore the idea of failure.

In the end, it is the *redemptive* possibility of failure that both informs Walker’s approach to art-making and forms the basic subject matter of his work. His daily practice consists quite simply of:

sitting cross-legged on the floor with a small painting in my left hand and a brush in my right. From a practical perspective, I just get on with it these days, inspired or not there’s always something that needs priming. Physiologically, I am trying to shut my head up to be as quiet as possible so I can listen to what the works want. That is *much easier said than done*.

The day-to-day limitations and possibilities of the individual creative project revealed in Walker’s description of his own practice are given literal expression in his paintings. Faulty abstract symbols and potentially uninhabitable architectural structures are coupled with quasi self-help slogans such as ‘Keep Coming Back’ and ‘It’s

Above: Jake Walker, *break-up date* (part 1 of tryptich), 2002, pencil on paper.



MICADOR AS 1 mm

Not A Race' that remind us of our failings and yet, not without irony or romance, offer a consolation for them. While the abstract and symbolic aspects of Walker's work may suggest the transcendental possibilities of being, his obsessively personal style simultaneously inflects it with a handmade quality that reminds us of the immanence—the clunky *humanness*—of this futile but necessary project of self-overcoming.

- 1 Imants Tillers, "Locating Shane Cotton", *ART AsiaPacific*, Issue 23, 1999.
- 2 The Art Life, "They said we'd never make it", *The Art Life* April 2005.
http://artlife.blogspot.com/2005_04_01_archive.html

Above: Jake Walker, *break-up date* (part 2 of triptych), 2002, pencil on paper.

ROMANCE



Thrown Out 2006

EMIDIO PUGLIELLI

To Debbie.

To the sweetest &
cutest girl I have
ever met. To the
girl I like very
much and will
always like you
anywhere you go.
Hope to be with
you soon.

Lorely

Always
Lorely S.

TAKEN
in '75
G. Ker
to me
in
'76

Mystery Tour

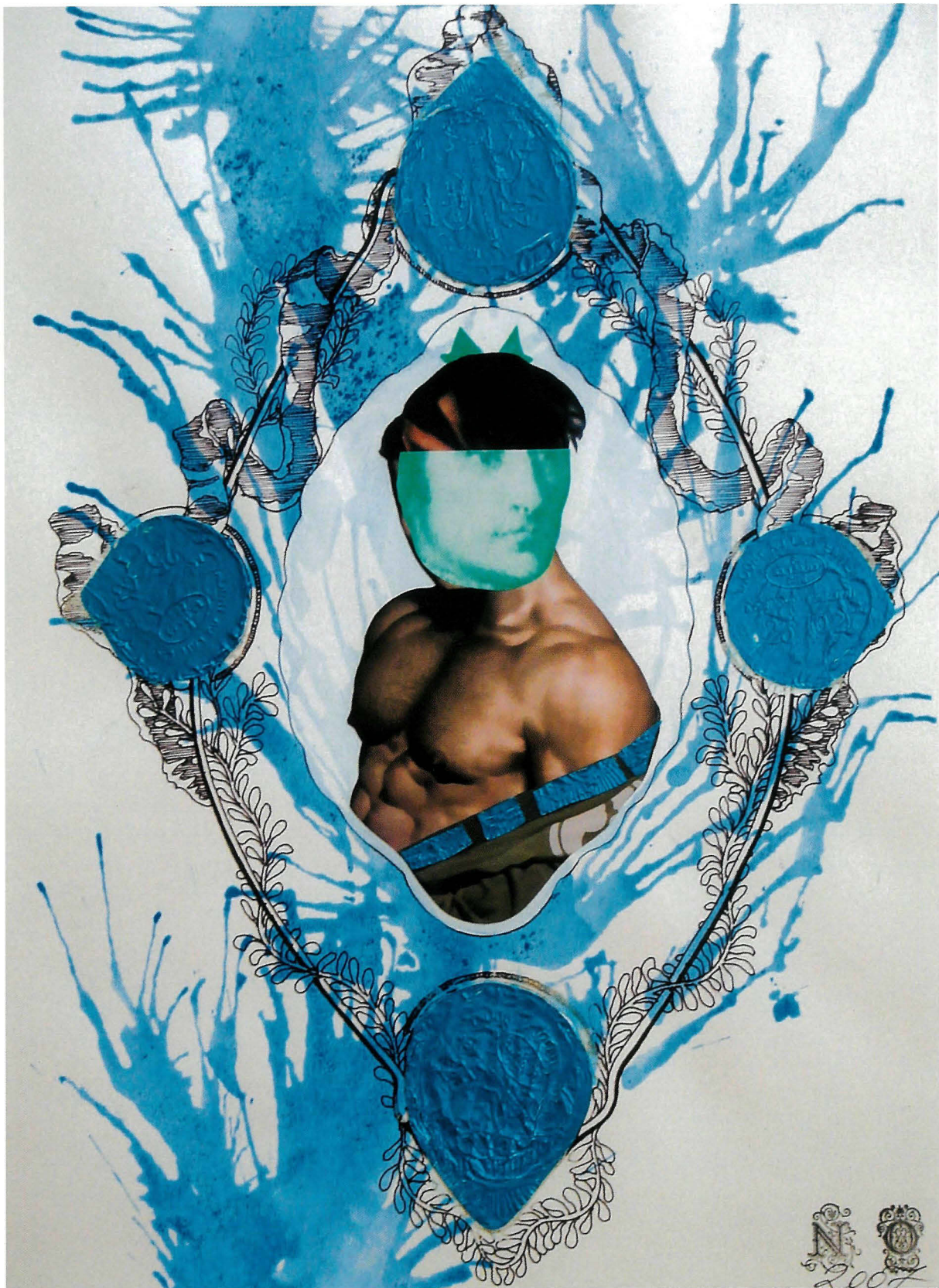
NANA OHNESORGE





n.o.
2007









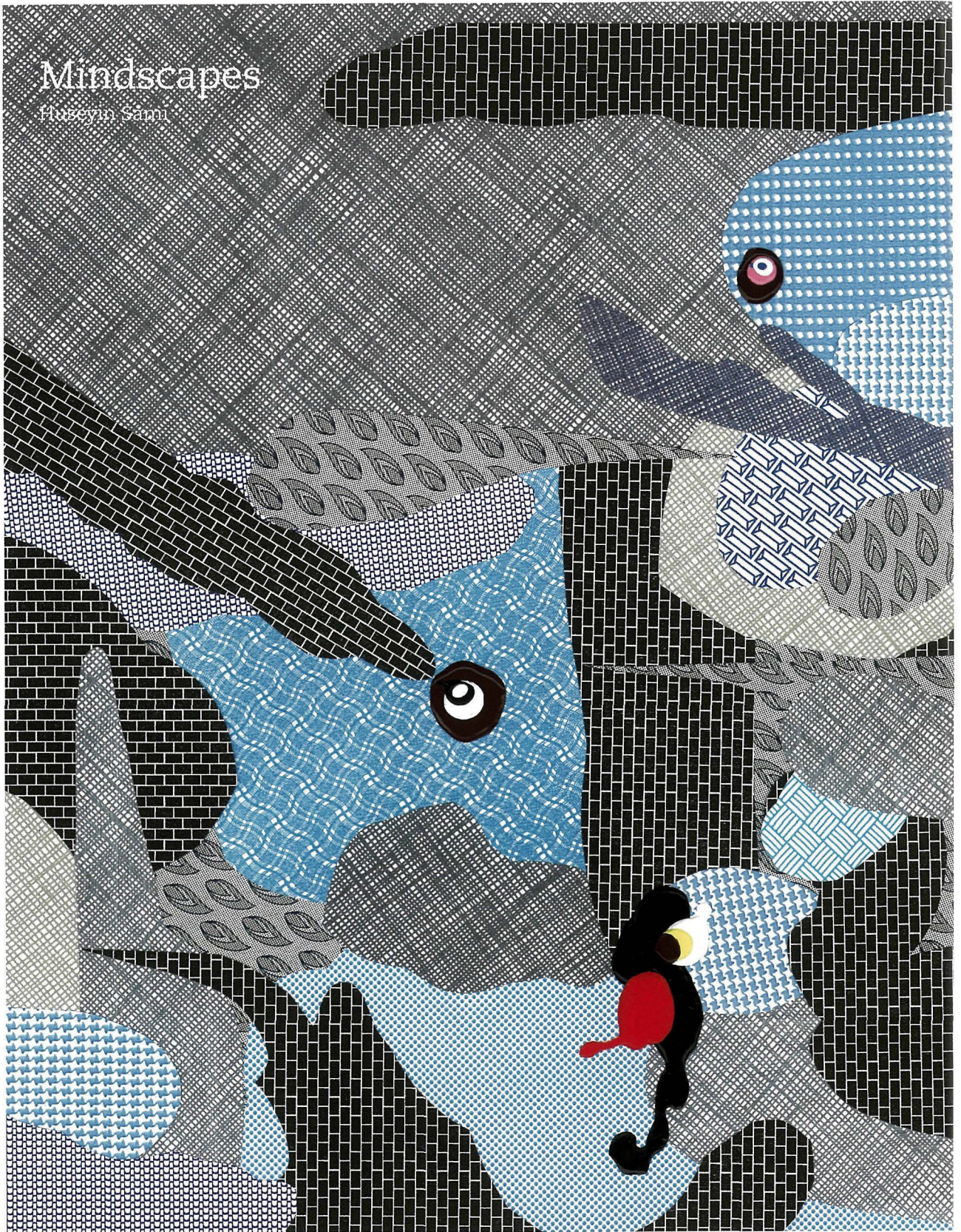
Bathroom

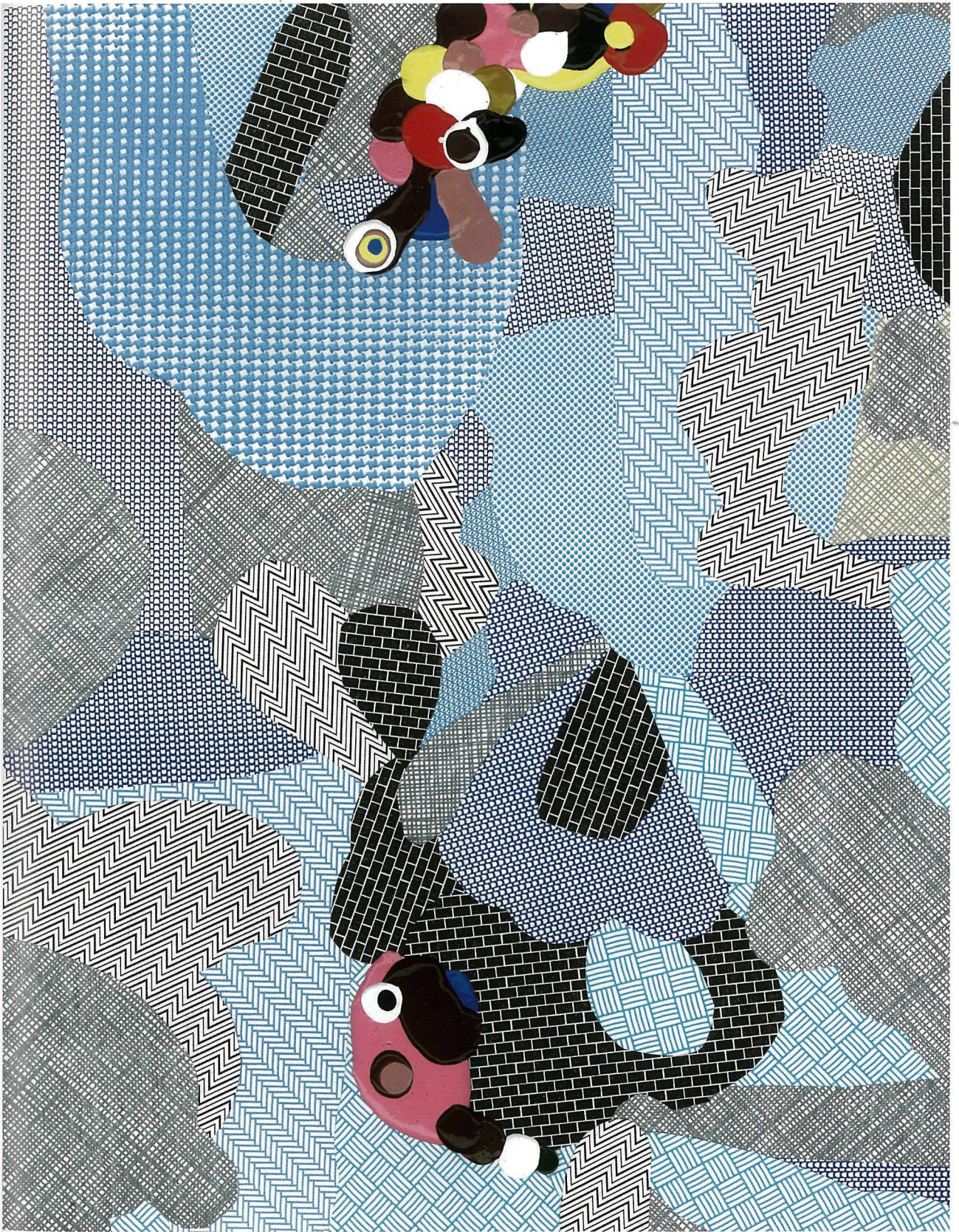
JENNIFER LEAHY & VINCENT WATSON



Mindscales

Huseyin Sami









pH
phlegm

om comatose	yC ⁴ you can do it							
nW ³¹ snow	N ¹⁹ neurotic							
pp ⁸⁸ nipple	B ⁷ bed	vM love muffin	No no means go away	ch ²⁷ smooch	Ut ¹⁰⁸ shut up	Pr ³ pash rash	IU it's not me it's you	cM call me
B ²³ boys	tAg contagious	F ⁴ fixate	Q quiet	X ⁵⁷ sex	yD yes dear	TL skin-tight leather	oo boobs	Hr ¹¹ hysteria
yL if you leave can I come	NS ⁵ noise	Od ⁷¹ food	pb phobic	he heart-shaped anything	iL smile	Sg ⁶⁰ sing a long	rD ⁴ harder	yF you're lo
Mo ²⁹ make out	fU ¹⁰ I meant it when I said it	wE swelling						

Cr car	Pe ³⁷ pie	dG ⁴⁵ dog	U ⁹ you	sK ⁵³ sock
H house	v ⁶ love	AR pear	LL ¹⁹ ball	hT shirt

t¹⁶ v⁶ U⁹ Sh¹

SARAH MOSCA

t¹⁶ v⁶ U⁹ Sh¹

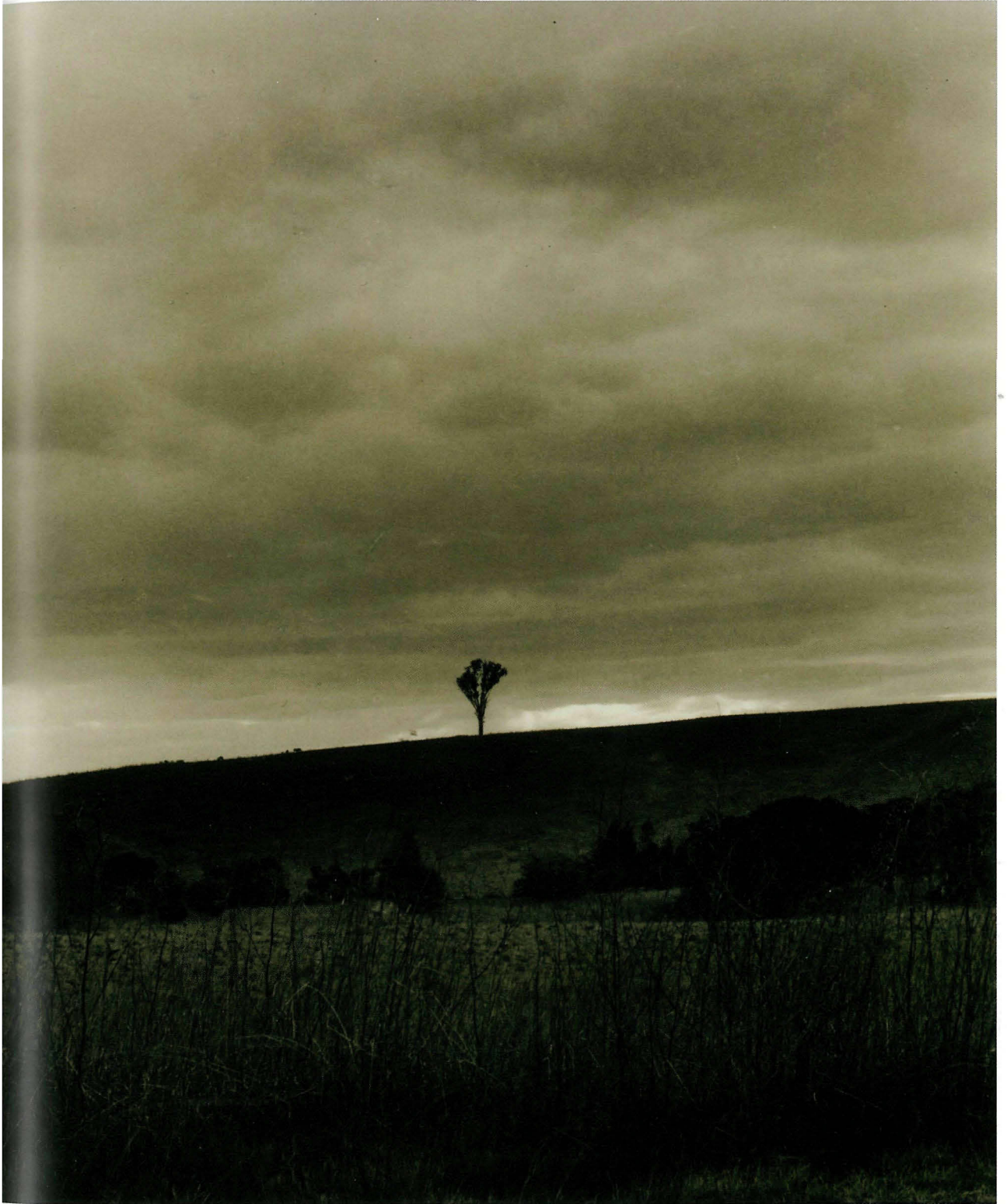
									Gu ⁷ give it up
			Mb ring my bell	oD oo darling	Oi ¹³ over it	Ng ⁴ boring	sC the small things count	hn honey	
			sH ¹⁵ short shorts	P grope	H ³⁸ hump	cT cup of tea	P ³⁴ grumpy pants	dy ¹⁵ syndrome	
A ²² allergic	C ² calm down	TH ⁵ mouth	R ¹⁶ tired	tc ⁶⁶ crotch	dn drive in	SS kiss me	tK ⁹ sweet talker	mU ⁸⁶ smut	
Ca ¹⁹⁹ casual what	F fondle	nD rebound	ST stop calling me	UG sugar	D ⁶ disturbing	T ² poo bum wee	IP ²¹ road trip	OI fools	
Ap ¹¹ cheap	dB double bed	ea ⁹ headache	gP get a grip	W ⁵⁹ whip	rK park	Lk ²⁹ stalker	ee ⁴ sleep	HL hot lips	

n sink	Wo ⁵ wool	Lg leg	F ⁴⁶ cup	Z ² hat	oS rose	uH ²⁰ brush	K book	rf ⁹⁰ scarf
Hr ¹² horse	N ⁹⁴ toy	aT match	eN ⁸ chair	Vs ⁴ vase	aM ¹⁸ lamb	s pen	t ¹⁶ I	Sh ¹ sweetheart



Motion Sickness: Corpus Music

CRAIG BENDER & VERA HONG









There's a Winner in You

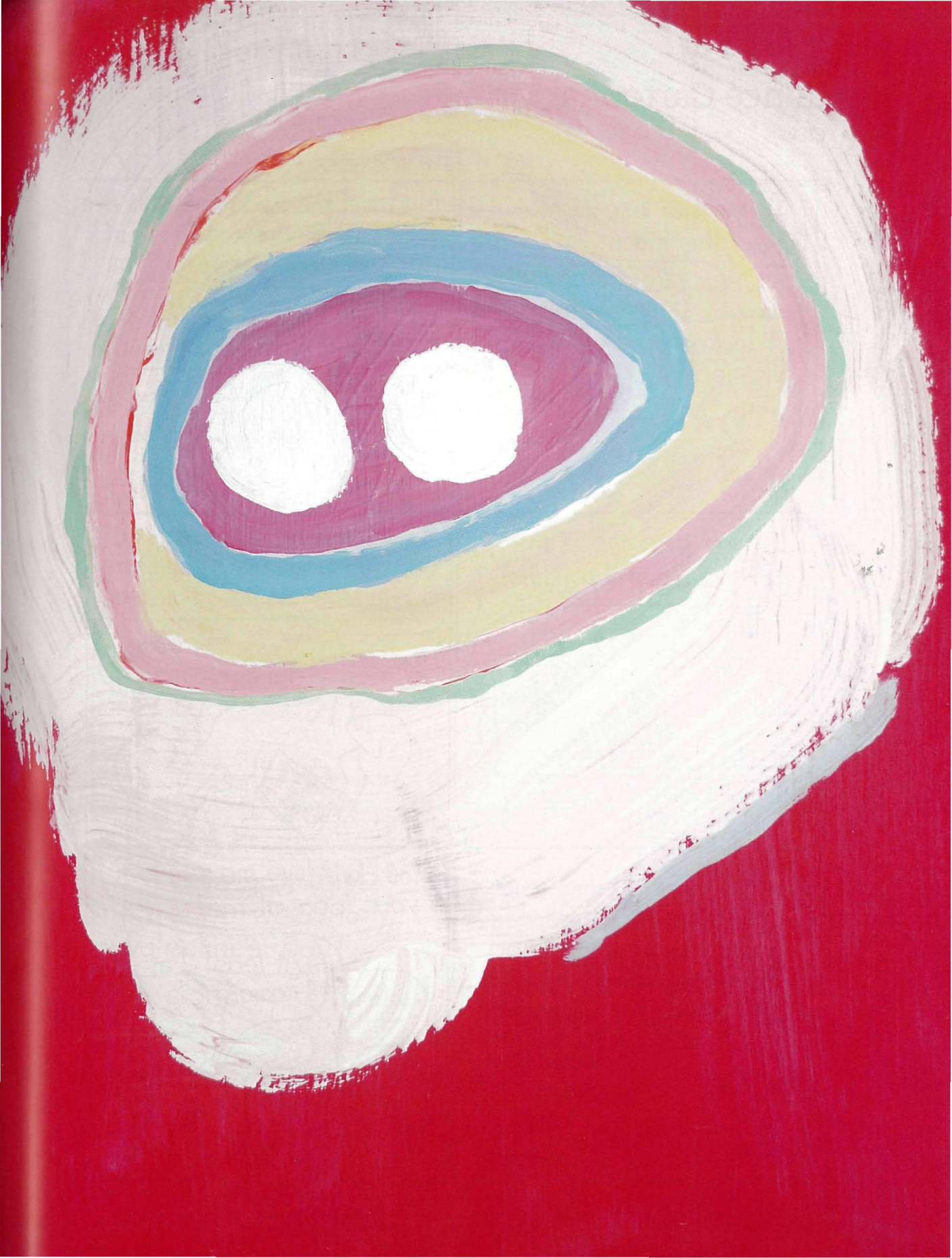
TOM POLO





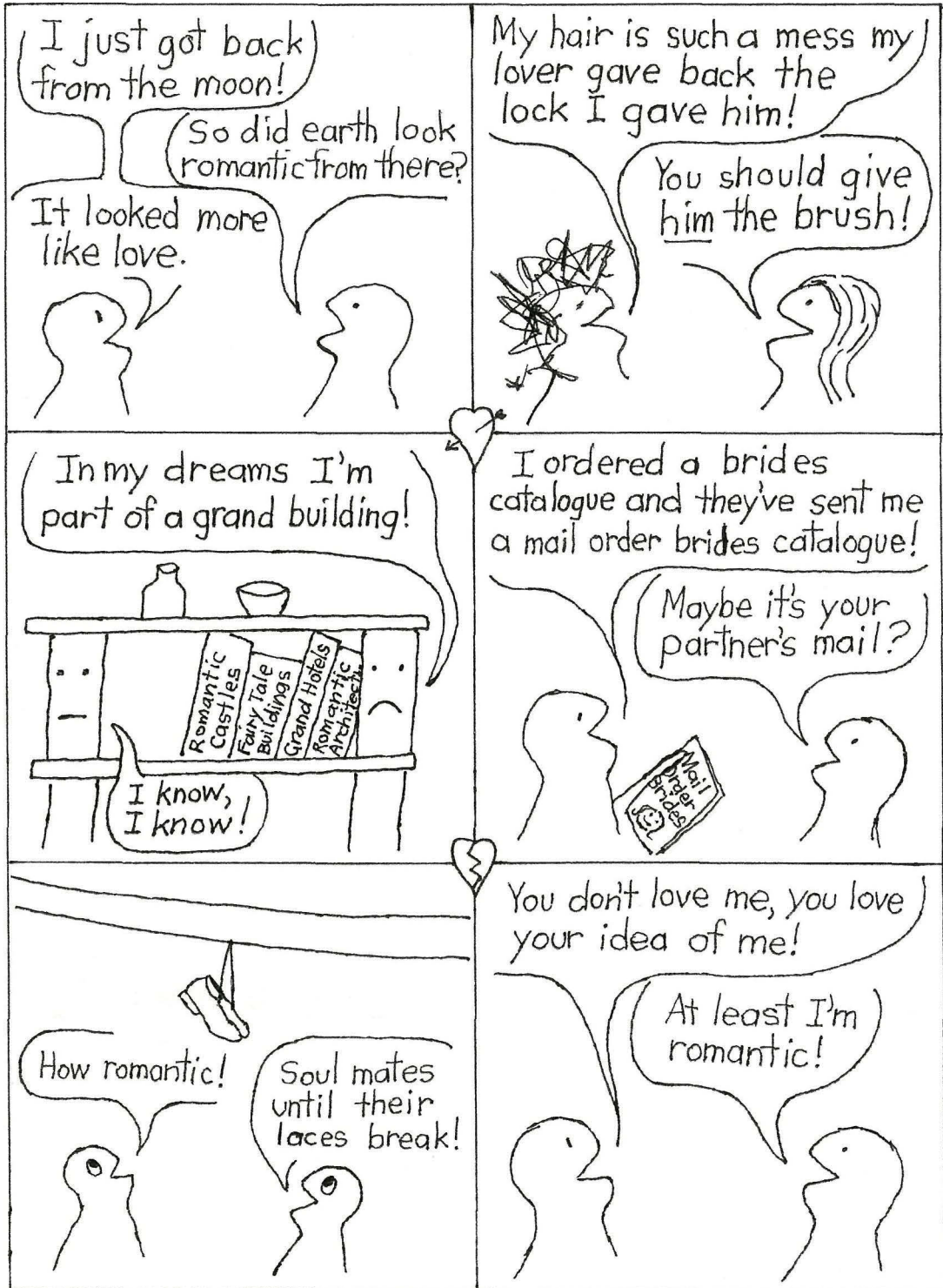


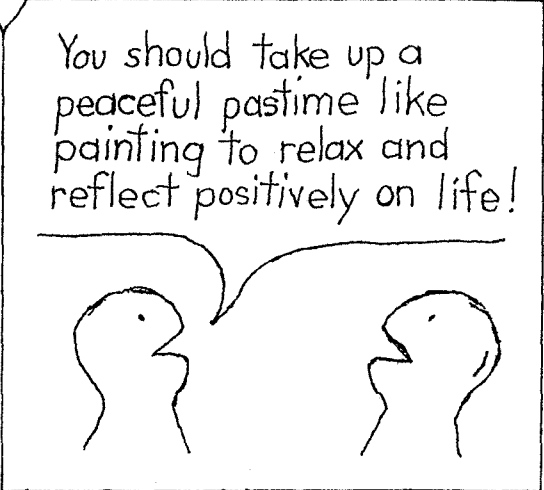
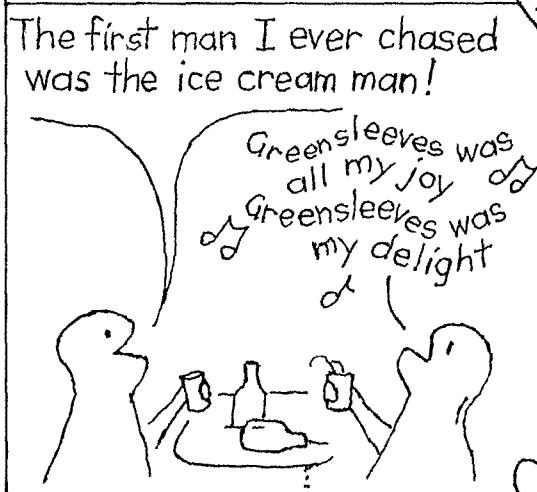
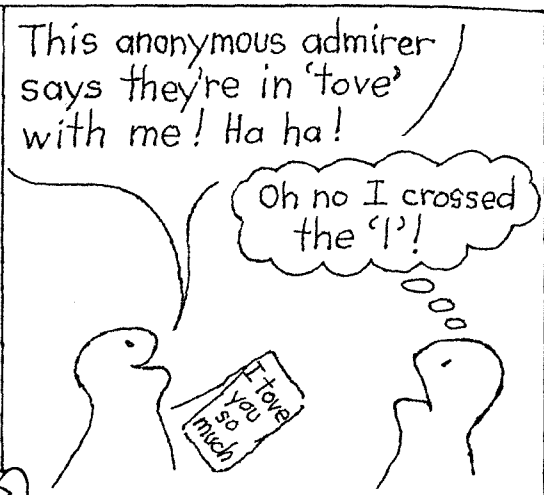




Romance Cartoons

ANNA PETERS







Go Now (Parts I, II and III)

BRIAN FUATA, AGATHA GOTHE-SNAPE & PETE VOLICH











Q: Is being DRUNK a valid excuse for infidelity?

MS & MR

Just a moment ago, Andrew Frost sent us a very thorough questionnaire to complete for this issue of *runway*. He said we could fill it out however we like. It would have been easier to complete the rather straight-forward task had we been completing it under supervision, but instead we found ourselves misappropriating it online. We guess we're easily distracted.

Search ▾

Applications edit

- Photos
- Free Gifts
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- Events
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▾ more

Inbox Sent Messages Notifications

Compose Message



Mr
is sleeping in 1987.
Updated just a moment ago edit

Profile ▾

1987/2007
Between Ms and Mr



Ms
Today at 10:41pm

Ok, so far we've managed to fill out our name on the supplied questionnaire.

Part 1: Personal Details
Complete the following details and be sure of the form using a blue or black pen only.

Name of person completing this form
Ms M

Age (write in words or numbers) 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60 61 62 63 64 65 66 67 68 69 70 71 72 73 74 75 76 77 78 79 80 81 82 83 84 85 86 87 88 89 90 91 92 93 94 95 96 97 98 99 100

Male Female (If Professional)

Marital Status Single Engaged Married Divorced

Current Address _____

How long have you lived in this area? _____

How long are you? _____

How wide are your shoulders? _____

How tall are you? _____

How wide are your feet? _____

How long are your arms? _____

How long are your legs? _____

How long are your fingers? _____

How long are your toes? _____

How long are your ears? _____

How long are your nose? _____

How long are your lips? _____

How long are your eyelashes? _____

How long are your eyebrows? _____

How long are your hair? _____

How long are your nails? _____

How long are your fingers? _____

How long are your toes? _____

How long are your ears? _____

How long are your nose? _____

How long are your lips? _____

How long are your eyelashes? _____

How long are your eyebrows? _____

How long are your hair? _____

How long are your nails? _____

10. In the future, the world will be heavy sentimental.

Part 3: Visual Acuity
Look at the following image carefully, noting all its details, setting, the use of colour, composition and lighting. Now imagine that this image is telling a story. What is happening in this picture? In the working space provided, respond to this picture in any way you wish. [Allow 30 mins].



Mr
Today at 10:42pm

mm, but how did we digress into facebook?

10. I consider myself more of a doer than a thinker.
11. I like to set goals before beginning a project.
12. I like to follow schedules.
13. I am easily distracted.
14. I have had sex outdoors/in a public place/at a beauty spot.

True ~~False~~
True ~~False~~
TRUE
~~True~~ False



Ms
Today at 10:43pm

I think it happened when we got to drawing our face 'In the Space Below'. I got to thinking about the time we tried to find an online test to see if we could be diagnosed as being co-dependent. But all we could find was the 'relationship blender'.

What Do You Think .com.au

Q:
Is being DRUNK a valid excuse for infidelity?



Mr
Today at 10:45pm

Yeah, according to the blender, we're "a fluffy angel food's cake (with a nut in it)".

I think we we like blending time.



Ms
Today at 10:48pm

Well, our 'Videodromes for the Alone' (VFTA) dissect a number of years, but more importantly have liberated me from my space-time continuum.



Mr
Today at 10:49pm

...and you have kidnapped me from mine.

but i'm not the only one to exist in 1987, you also exist, I have the photos to prove it!



Ms
Today at 10:52pm

That's quite true, a parallel '87...although in different hemispheres so at any given moment one of us is standing upright and the other upside down. In fact, as I'm awake, you're probably sleeping.



Mr
Today at 10:55pm

yes, in VFTA: Teleplasmic Mass (1987/2007), I really want to see myself open my eyes just to confirm that I can see you here/there.



Ms
Today at 11:03pm

In Cronenberg's 'Videodrome', Spectacular Optical's trade slogan is "Love comes in at the eye". In our works we are relating to each other as an image. I think we're hoplessly attempting to merge representation and reality. Like in Videodrome, the screen is treated as a part of the brain and subsequently whatever is seen on video emerges as a raw experience for the viewer. I mean, we know from all our pop-science 101 that the mind's memory is quite plastic and is easily tricked by the eye.



Mr
Today at 11:05pm

I love when you get all Oliver Sacks on me. Love comes in at the eye and is transformed by the screen. That's why I don't have to see myself open my eyes.



Ms
Today at 11:07pm

as I know it, you're always sleeping in 1987.



Ms
Today at 11:10pm

I have to say how impressed I am by your image definition then, my tapes in 1991 don't even compare... and my 2007 resolution is only slightly better. ..hey I just realised that video tape is magnetic, so with our brand of string theory perhaps certain points in time are mutually attracted to each other when they get all scrunched up.



Mr
Today at 11:14pm

...and where time collapses, so does age. But, I also don't want to forget that in a way, when you first saw me in 1987 I was rather embarrassed about watching my unconscious nose-pick with you. I mean it goes on and on, and that finger delves really deep.



Ms
Today at 11:18pm

Isn't the nose-pick the 'original' protagonist? If it weren't for the nose-pick you wouldn't exist as an 11yr old Mr. sleeping in 1987! That's what the camera wanted most. Now when I look at that footage in VFTA:Teleplasmic Mass, it's actually quite strange to think of your brother being there, cause it's like we've transformed the eye of the camera.



Mr
Today at 11:23pm

Definitely. The eye of the camera is liberated from time and authorship!!





Mr
Today at 11:23pm

My brother discovered early on that the camera had the potential to torment me. I was documented quite thoroughly, even in my sleeping hours. It was the perfect sibling blackmail to show a neighbour or a friend if I disgraced myself at an opportune moment, so I guess I've always associated home movies with suburban trauma.

Of course, you're watching me closer than my brother ever watched me. Your attention is different, more present. With you, there's a reciprocal yearning.

or, perhaps it just transplants one form of creepiness for another.



Ms
Today at 11:29pm

... 'living in over stimulated times'.

I first saw you in '87, during an abundance of time-space relay in november 2006. Your Dad's basement filled with that excessive home movie archive is a relatively unique transportive device, if just for the mere breadth and variety of time grabs. I was/am particularly struck by the steady beauty of this particular footage. This footage of you sleeping reminds me of Warhol's Sleeping films.

Aren't all your tapes and early home movies part of your future inheritance from your Dad?



Mr
Today at 11:31pm

The best way to digest those tapes is to eat them. It's like our shared obsession with that 'dreamfasting' scene from Dark Crystal.



Ms
Today at 11:32pm

Let's just clarify that as not involving 'dreamcatching'.



Mr
Today at 11:38pm

Jim Henson puppets aren't exactly high brow references either! The Gelfin's in Dark Crystal have that superpower that allows them to communicate telepathically. They can condense a lifetime of experience into a few moments of hand-to-hand touch. Like an instant sped-up replay between two that creates an instant empathy. I always loved that scene as a kid, it's actually really emotional.

But back to my future inheritance...it's true, I'm apparently going to inherit this massive collection of home videos/films and ephemera.



Ms
Today at 11:41pm

...yeah so you'll inherit the past we've already begun to create. I love the redundancy of all those plastic bricks that we're already in the process of transferring to other formats. Maybe we can use them to build a house.



Mr
Today at 11:45pm

I like that the work exists like this at this point in time, but the work may exist again in a parallel way at different junctures in time.



Ms
Today at 11:47pm

ok, so how many times do you think we've sat and watched Videodromes for the Alone:Teleplasmic Mass?

39. I masturbate regularly, sometimes more than once a day.

40. I can usually sense what someone is feeling without having to ask him/her

True - ~~False~~

41. When I've offended someone in the past, I could never really understand why they took it so badly.

True - ~~False~~



THE LOVECATS
The Cure
playing

00:41



Mr
Today at 11:50pm

Well that work sort of started with the first interference with the footage. it's like once we co-opted the footage it was never the same. My response to it changed from trauma to longing... and then fantasy. For me the only films I can watch over and over again are fantasy films (and woody allen).



Ms
Today at 11:52pm

It was like that with The Wedding Video (1999/2006). Again I think we wanted to transform the eye of the camera. The funny thing is these documents seem just as or even more authentic than their 'original' parts.



Mr
Today at 12:01am

I've always associated home movies with trauma, and find them difficult to watch, however confounding the video memories and transforming them into fantasies makes them somewhat addictive. We all wonder if that chair or that wallpaper we remember from our parents lounge room when we were two, is something we recall from experience, or something we recall from the cameos it made in childhood photographs. The thing is that we'll never really know.

That's partly the genius of 'Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind'. A science fiction constructed around a human memory erasure clinic. It's almost like splicing each other's mature selves into our respective documents of the past is the opposite procedure carried out by Lacuna Inc. in the film.



Ms
Today at 12:10am

So theoretically, if either of us were to go to Lacuna Inc. to get the other erased from our memory, our series of altered and versioned documents could potentially make the procedure that much more difficult. Maybe we're ensuring self-preservation.

Not long after we got together, I remember spending a weekend with you when you destroyed a whole crate of childhood photographs and stuff (thankfully no video). I always thought that it was more that you were curating your life to that point, which at the time had barely reached adulthood....I mean I was only seventeen.

I was so struck by that power to decide that. It wasn't negative. It was quite moving. These documents are usually held with significant reverence. It made me realise the power that destroying an image could have.



Mr
Today at 12:15am

I wanted a new beginning with you, still do, and hopefully always will. Maybe its like Groundhog Day (1993)...I love how after Bill Murray's character gets over his narcissism, he falls in love for Andie McDowell's character over and over again, and I believe he even acknowledges he could live in this state of repeated love forever.



Ms
Today at 12:15am

Do you think it's slightly pathological?



Mr
Today at 12:16am

Yes, that's why it's also our art practice.



Mr
Today at 12:19am

btw, it's your turn in scrabble.



Ms
Today at 12:29am

Done. Where were we? '87, '88, ...'91?



- Search
- Applications edit
- Photos
- Free Gifts
- Chess
- Events
- Scrabulous

facebook

Profile edit Friends Networks Inboxes Home account privacy logout

is watching in 2007. Updated just a moment ago edit



Ms

Compose Message

1987/2007 Between Ms and Mr

Mr Today at 12:42am
The future is heavy sentimental.

Ms Today at 12:41am
Mr, turn now with me back to our future. x

Mr Today at 12:39am
Well, I just want to thank you for letting me bend time and lock eyes with you. x

Ms Today at 12:37am
ha, yep, there's an extra turn or two. I distinctly remember my performance seeming odd. In fact, as I recall I was going to do it with some other girl who I was teaching my routine to, but ironically I found the collaboration intolerable and decided to shed the baggage and do it alone. So it seems an especially adept restoration of the plurality of the song's title. It's like your accompaniment was and is implicit to the performance.

Mr Today at 12:35am
A young girl, alone, performing to an audience of school girls, teachers and parents lip-syncing to The Cure of all things. Robert Smith is a curious idol for an 11yr old girl. There's a moment in the footage where you hear this baby crying from the audience, and it's the perfect interruption to highlight just how strange the combination of things is. It cries at the moment where we start to appear a little out of sync with each other. I think I make a couple extra turns, just cause I got into the hang of turning on the spot.

Ms Today at 12:31am
I'm directing you in 1991, but also in 2007 from behind the camera counting out the steps for you. That was a gruelling night of recording. I don't think either of us realised how hard it would be to follow my awkward and rather erratic routine to The Lovecats.

Mr Today at 12:29am
Back to 1991. In Videodromes for the Alone: The Lovecats 1991/2007, I find it really hard to keep up with you when your 11 years old.

I've completed this questionnaire at ^a time we'd rather be elsewhere.

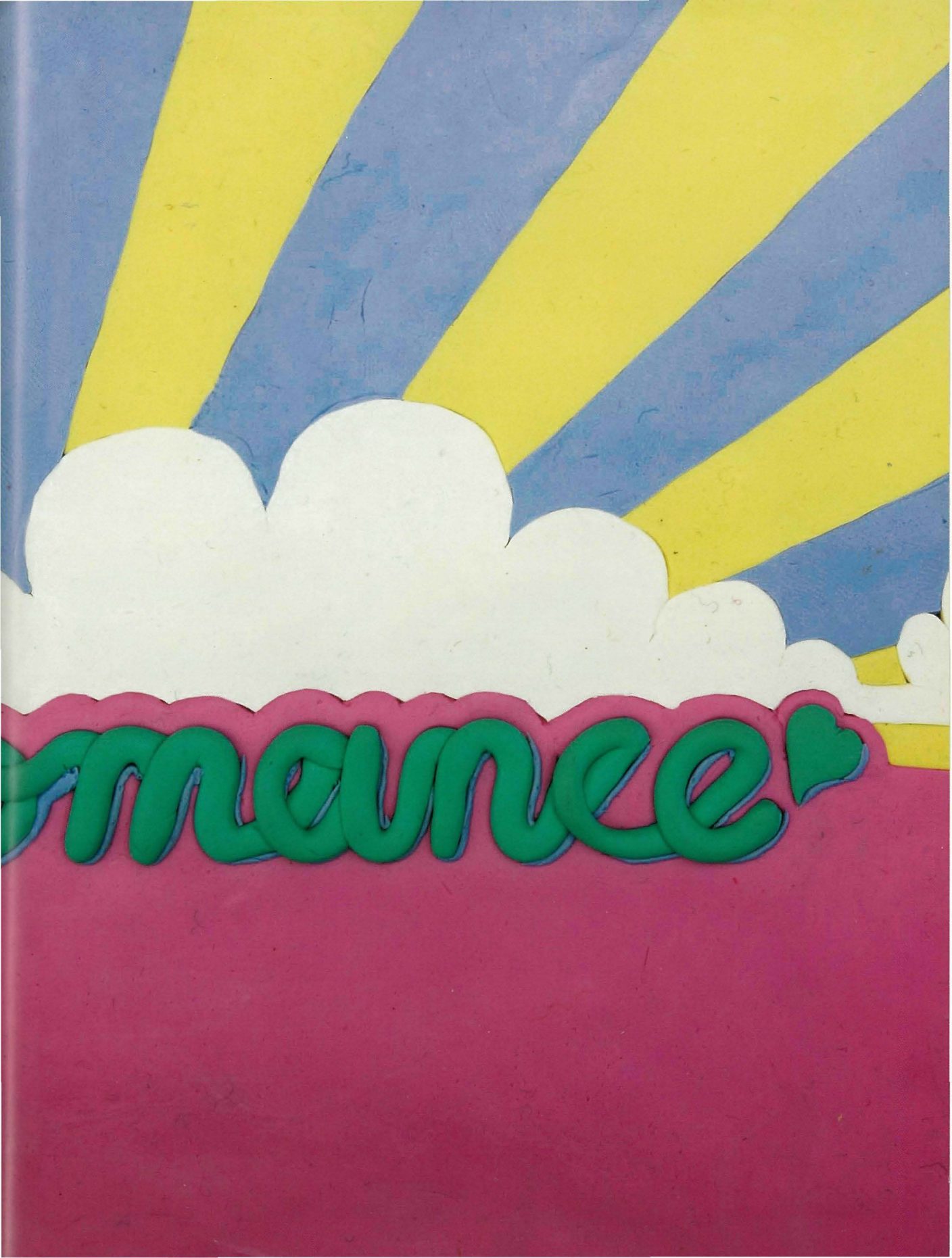
Date: 20/07/07

In the presence of the past.



Schmomance

EMMA WHITE



announce

REVIEWS



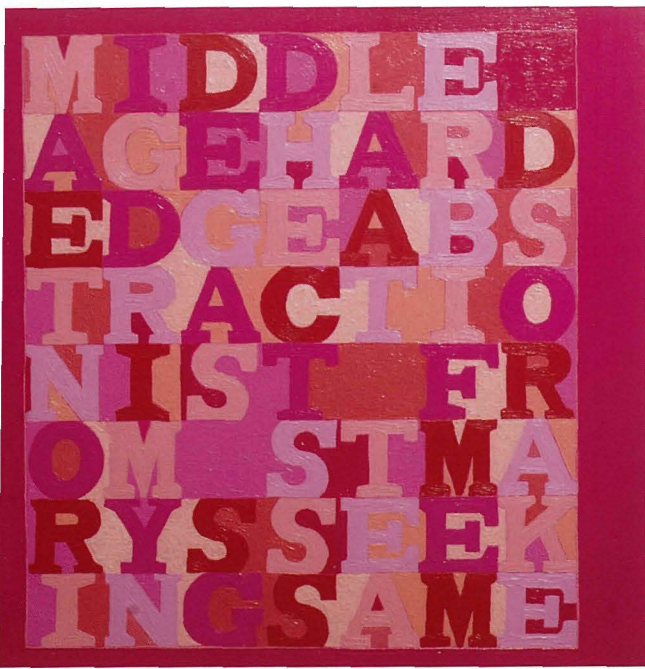
Bent Western

JACQUELINE MILLNER

Lovingly carved wooden dildos; gay lonely hearts ads in large pink print; self-reflexive lesbian S&M; decorative urinal wall motifs; cross-dressing narcissists: the group exhibition *Bent Western* at Blacktown Arts Centre surveys 'queer' art from Western Sydney, with most of the work hailing from the last ten years. Through its curatorial premise, then, the show wears its identity politics on its sleeve. This is a point of interest, a strategic move *and* a problematic proposition, as the curator Daniel Mudie Cunningham and the other catalogue essayist, David McInnes, acknowledge. It begs the question: what is the effect of framing these artists' work in terms of their (doubly) non-normative credentials?

Undoubtedly, such framing does serve to amplify the audience's understanding of the 'queer experience' beyond the cliché of inner city lifestyle. It also offers an alternative context for the artists to consider their work, one based in common experiences of developing as queer artists in places renowned for exacting a high price for non-conformism. And given its brief to tie in with the thirty-year anniversary of the Sydney Gay & Lesbian Mardi Gras, the exhibition affirms the longer history of practice by Australian gay artists (although only one artist represents this broader timeframe). However, the curatorial rationale necessarily suggests that there are conceptual or aesthetic correspondences between these works by virtue of the artists' queerness and suburban location, a risky gambit, especially in light of the show's apparent emphasis on the traumatic aspects of gay sexuality.

Above: *Bent Western* (installation view, works from left to right): George Tillianakis, *DISTILLED DISTORTION: Search & Destroy the Artist*, 2003, video; George Tillianakis, *Always a Blank Fucking Canvas & The Ghetto Jesus of Blacktown*, 2007, digital video; Ron Adams, *Alife*, 2007, acrylic and gesso on linen. Photo: Adam Hollingworth



Consider such works as Liam Benson's *Bleeding Glitter* (2005), in which the artist has photographed himself locking eyes with the viewer as fine rivulets of red glitter run from his nose; or Michael Butler's *Untitled* (1999), a mixed media work comprising images of male eroticism structured around the decorative motif of a baseball bat; or Karen Coull's *What Fresh Hell is This?* (1994), which by the addition of rose thorns transforms a benign everyday broom into an instrument of sado-masochism. Love hurts. Ask Anastasia Zaravinos, who documents her session with the curiously uncharismatic dominatrix Rooty Rita in *Glamour TV* (2008), lumbering from one banal act of humiliation to another while making soft-spoken, hapless asides to the audience. The symbolism of pain and violence resonates throughout the exhibition, at times even underscored by allusions to criminality. Drew Bickford's *The Speckled Hen* (2005), ink drawings of monstrous hybrids on animal skin stretched with sinew, is made all the more chilling by being accompanied by a letter the artist sent together with his drawings to the prisoner Katherine Knight, a woman convicted of skinning her husband and serving up his head and buttocks for his children's dinner.

The true crime theme also subtends *Investigation* (1999), one of the collages by the late Arthur McIntyre, the only artist represented here from the 1980s, whose work acts as the ballast of the exhibition. McIntyre, who for many years worked as a critic, educator and author as well as an artist—he published significant books on Australian drawing and collage—is a figure who deserves much greater recognition, as is clear from the works seen here. These include *Art and Man* (1986) and pieces from *The Survival Series* (c 1975), collages combining excerpts from medical texts about venereal disease, erotic drawings and blood-like stains. The aesthetics of these collages betray tenderness and fragility, the poignancy of the confluence of love and disease (at a time well before the outbreak of AIDS). While some of these have been exhibited in high profile exhibitions (they made an impression on me in *Don't Leave Me This Way: Art in the Age of AIDS* at the National Gallery in 1997), there is clearly merit in mounting a retrospective of McIntyre's work.

Above left: Christopher Dean, *Middle Age Hard Edge Abstractionist from St Marys seeking same*, 2007, oil on canvas.
 Below left: Kurt Schranzer, *Self-Portrait on Christmas Eve, Whilst Masturbating*, 1986, acrylic on canvas board.
 Above Right: Arthur McIntyre, *Art and Man*, 1986, acrylic and collage on paper. Courtesy Macquarie University Art Collection.



McIntyre's predilection for Surrealist-inspired collage and drawing is shared by a number of artists in the exhibition, most notably Kurt Schranzer, whose spare and exquisitely crafted works on paper balance mechanical elements with sinuous line. The results are witty and suggestive homo-erotic scenarios, somewhere in between abstraction and figuration. The humour integral to these drawings plays counterpoint to the traumatic tenor of many other works here, although it is echoed in Lionel Bawden's *C.V. (cock vitrine – objects of desire)* (1998/2008), perky penises sculpted from the material he has made his own, coloured pencils. Humour of a wryer variety is pickled in Christopher Dean's large abstractions, such as *Lace monochrome (mauve)* (1997), made by suffusing doilies and other domestic cloths in house paint. Dean's body of work, developed since the early 90s, is a compelling testament to his sustained interest in the place of the gay artist in the grand narrative of modernism.

While *Bent Western* could have benefited from the inclusion of more historical work, its attempt to survey art by queer practitioners who identify with Western Sydney does help to complicate existing notions of what constitutes both Sydney's contemporary art scene and gay subculture. Moreover, the exhibition's foregrounding of how different perspectives emerge when arts education is not beholden to the large sandstone institutions strikes a most refreshing note.

Curated by Daniel Mudie Cunningham, *Bent Western* was exhibited at Blacktown Arts Centre from 8 February – 12 April 2008. The show featured: Ron Adams, Lionel Bawden, Liam Benson, Drew Bickford, Michael Butler, Karen Coull, Jose Da Silva, Christopher Dean, Tim Hilton, Marius Jastkowiak, Erna Lilje, Arthur McIntyre, Jessica Olivieri, Kurt Schranzer, George Tillianakis and Anastasia Zaravinos



yes,
yes,

Range of Motion

JESSIE ANGWIN

Eight hours to work, eight to relax and eight to sleep ... Ordered time and ordered activities for the rational sons and daughters of the Empire.¹

The twenty-first century's appetite for chaos amid convention mirrors the irony in this nineteenth century ideal. *Range of Motion* seems to similarly signal—within urbanism at least—an inability to escape from such systematic order, as well as the ensuing hysteria forced to thrive just below its highly regimented surface. In a rather awkward adherence to this, I view *Range of Motion* during a program committee meeting at the gallery scheduled on a weeknight to neither encroach on the Nine to Five workday nor on any member's weekend.

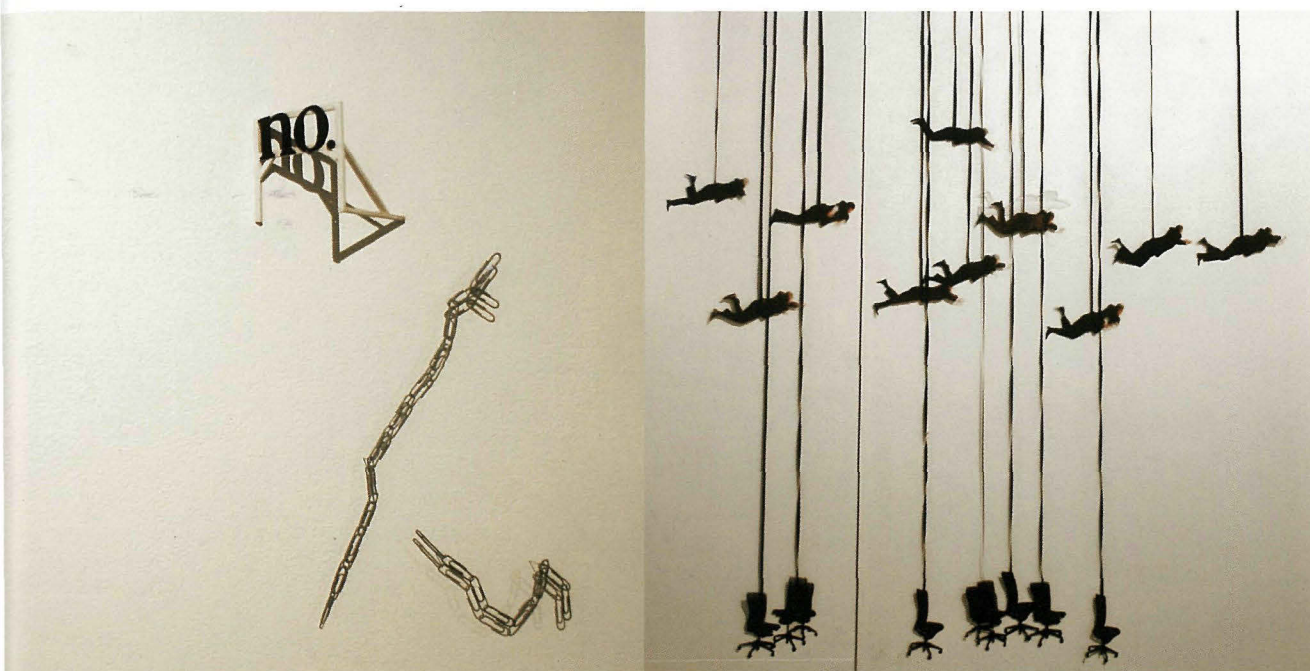
Though not technically a collaborative effort, Cain, Donovan and White nonetheless deliver a discomfiting space in which conceptual tension is built around the tussle between autonomy and inter-dependence not so much within the artworks themselves as between them. Collectively, the works are almost territorially installed and imaginary lines between the displays of each artist might be drawn. It is here easy to intuit that the allocation of space or territory has been significant to this group's process of configuring, but what this process really betrays is the complex means by which they collaborate. By actually resisting the configuration of a common spatial territory the artists work together to incongruously demonstrate the failure of such an attempt. If afforded to another conceptual premise this methodology might have exposed a problematic weakness but it works to advantage in *Range of Motion*.

In *Way of a Pilgrim* (2007), White deliciously but devastatingly recalls the creative compromise of the artist in the corporate office. The work is a meandering installation of familiar office ephemera and written/verbal statements worked in Fimo (coloured baking clay). These baked objects are installed with pins, some of which cast shadows that aid in their impression of delicate objects until the medium becomes apparent and their fragility gives way to a somewhat deflating yet highly appropriate rigidity that finalises itself as stoicism. A string of linked paperclips form a haphazard chain that leads to the word 'Yes' only to be contradicted a little further along by an imposing 'NO'. We bear witness to the traces of an individual's daily 'grind'; the moments they spend at work escaping from that very occupation, waiting for time itself to relinquish them from a time-based and time-weary routine. In these objects there is an attention to detail that is both endemic of the lovingly handcrafted homage to the office routine, and a by-product of the near-catatonic state induced by it.

Above left: Madeleine Donovan, *Castellers de Cooleman Court* (detail), 2007, installation. Photo: Madeleine Donovan

Above right: Emma White *Way of a Pilgrim* (detail), 2007, polymer clay, pins, balsa. Photo: Madeleine Donovan

Facing page: Penny Cain, *Deep Water* (detail), 2007, installation. Photo: Madeleine Donovan



Sympathetic to the installation arrived at by White is Donovan's *Castellers de Cooleman Court* (2007) a carefully arranged series of monochromatic stills and single-channel video that collectively portray a scene outside a suburban shopping centre in which a group of young adults form human pyramids in another contemporary homage—this time to the ancient Catalan tradition of Castelling. The imagery's humble scale belies the grandeur of Donovan's vision of a team that must work together to make an achievement that is—in this case—a series of mutual balances that can only be accomplished by the group. A contractual agreement is entered into between each of these contemporary Castellers who must support one another to succeed, or risk the personal peril and guaranteed group demolition sure to await them on failing. In a post-industrial age, corporate workers are sweepingly constructed as either successes or failures; can- or can't-do's. In a meritocracy, these identities are heavily imagined as linked solely to individual effort and self-belief (or lack thereof). Donovan's enquiry throws challenge to this paradigm, questioning its achievability and voicing the hope for an alternative.

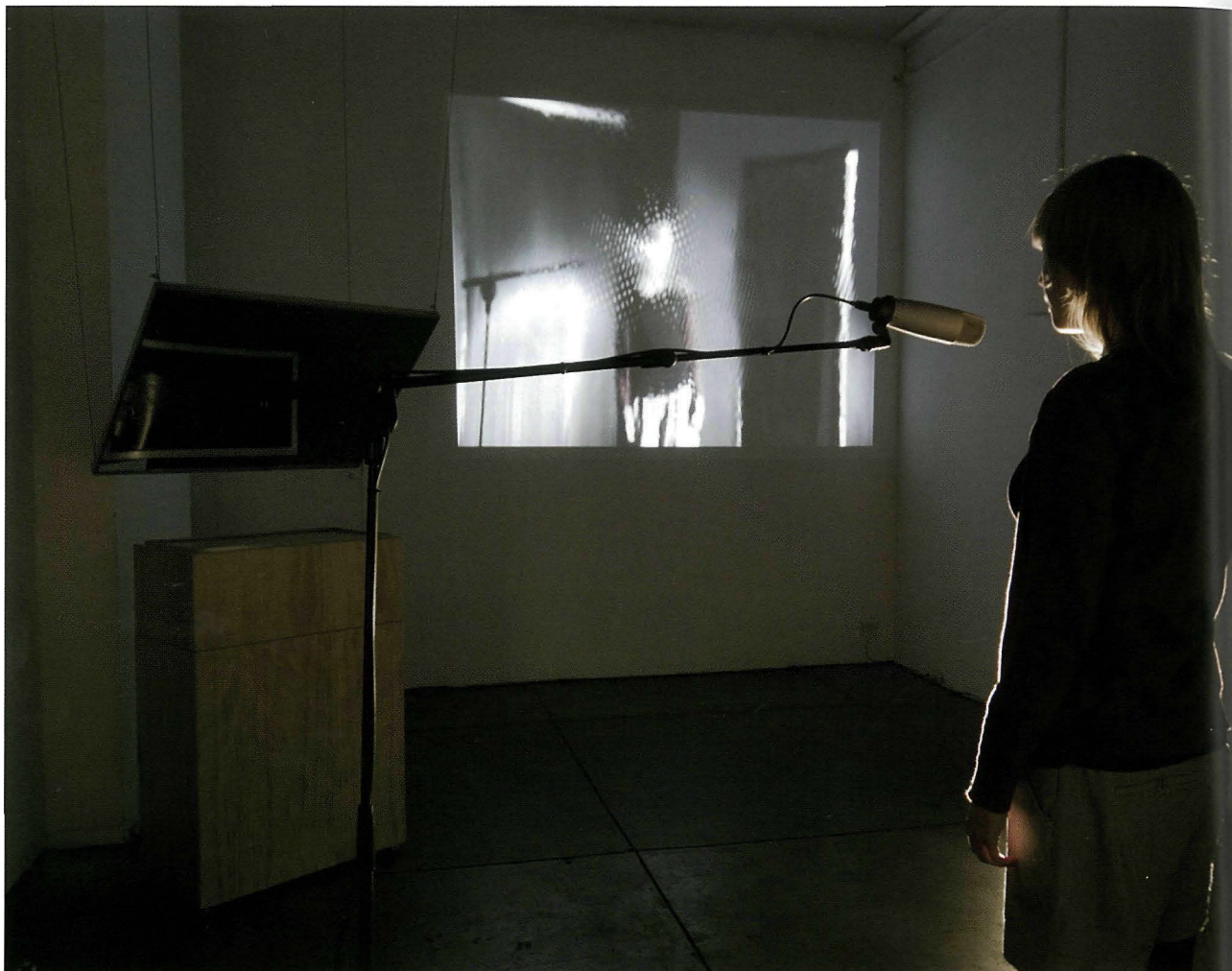
Cain's video-still and drawing composites layered on Perspex somewhat overshadow the physical delicacy achieved by Donovan and White, but her inclusion is necessary to provide the strongest reference to the corporate machine that each of the three artists seem compelled to resist. The authority in Cain's work imbued by its scale—and visual dominance accomplished by a considered penchant for a lack of detail enabled by the large areas of uninterrupted black on her suited, corporate figure in *Hummingbird* (2007) for instance—undermines the individualisation found in, say, White's obsessively handcrafted objects. This is an appropriate and highly successful tension, however. Visually heavy, dominant, and oddly static, Cain's imagery seems to yearn desperately to move within the white cube, the formal arrangement, and the confinement of itself to a contained interior workspace that is the familiar legacy of the gallery as institution.

In the same week as the opening of *Range of Motion*, a gunman fatally shot a corporate worker in Melbourne's CBD. This occurred amidst the peak of the city's early morning commuter rush, and what emerged was the story of a hero who, running to the aid of a victim, was murdered for his selfless action. Though slain directly outside his workplace, the man was not dressed at the time of his death in office clothes but in his jogging gear—evidently moving between strictly ordered routines of physical exercise and corporate work. In her catalogue essay Kate Just writes of the 'animal characteristics'² assigned by Cain to her figures. Certainly, Cain's instinct is to liberate the individual worker from the corporate conglomerate, but her method is contemporarily complex. Rather than do this by ascribing them with 'inhuman' characteristics such as flight so as to literally afford them the means to 'escape', these super-human qualities serve to exaggerate each figure's humanity. It is emotion that chases, matches and eclipses the pressures of merciless corporate motion. Cain's workers seek not to flee these but to evolve, and so embrace them.

The exhibition *Range of Motion*, with work by Penny Cain, Madeline Donovan and Emma White was held at West Space, Melbourne from 22 June – 14 July 2007.

1 Penny Cain, Madeline Donovan and Emma White, *Artists' statement* (Range of Motion: catalogue, West Space, 2007)

2 Kate Just, *Free Range* (Range of Motion: catalogue, West Space, 2007)



between you and me

TANYA PETERSON

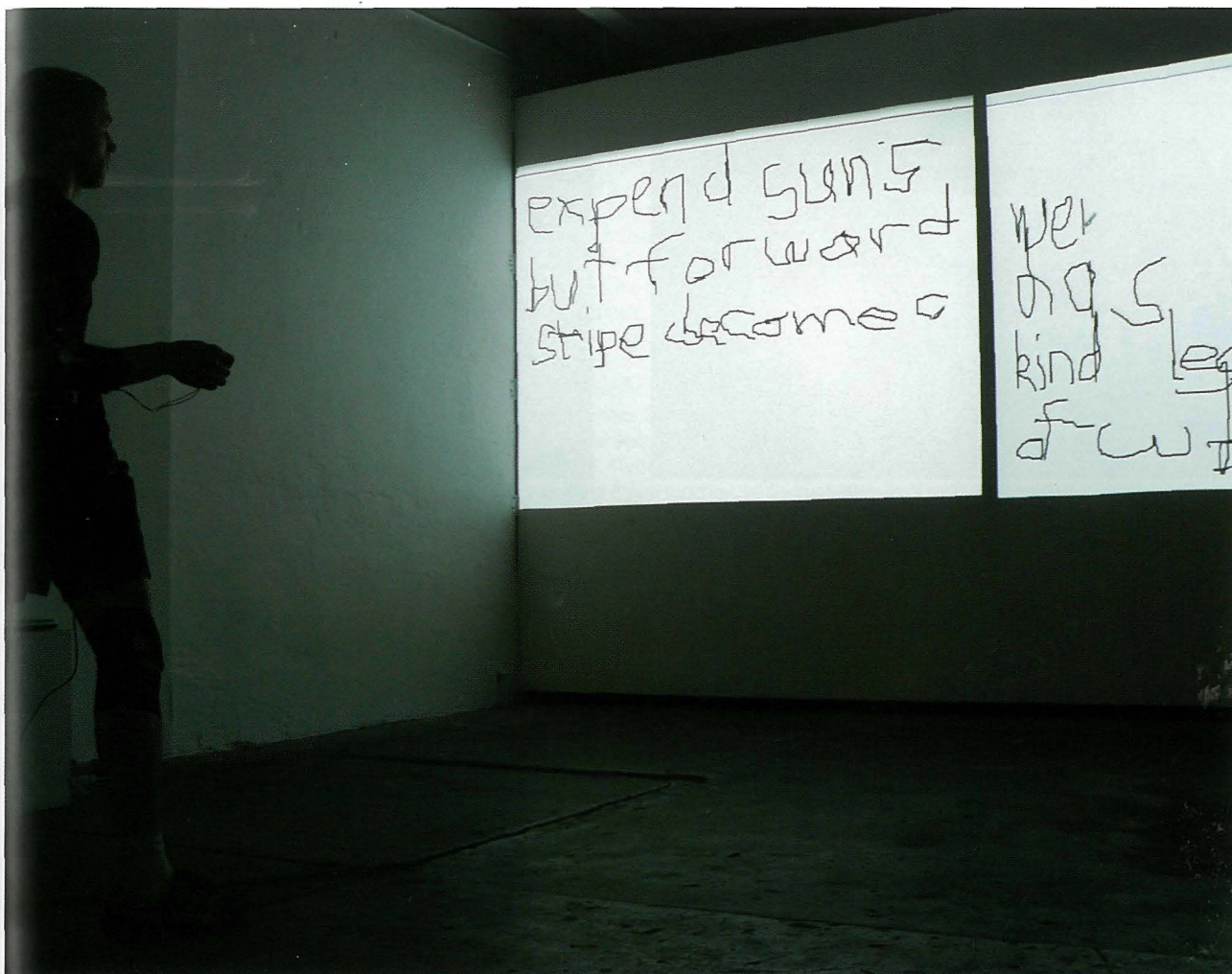
In the late sixties, Bruce Nauman filmed himself, as the title of the work suggests, *Walking Around the Perimeter of a Square in an Exaggerated Manner* (1967–68). The performance took place in his studio. One foot in front of the other, and sometimes one foot behind the other. Forwards, backwards, it didn't really matter because it was a narrative to nowhere, which was precisely the point. With its allusions to Malevich's transcendentalism and Pollock's style of intuitive 'flat-bed' painting, Nauman choreographed his moves around an empty square to strip the art making process back to the irony of its mannered authenticity. Playing on notions of artistic genius and gesture, the laboured repetition of his actions literalised the vacant centre of these mythologies.

between you and me, the group show curated by Anneke Jaspers, shared common ground with Nauman's conceptual antics. The

Above: Paul Greedy, *Brahma's Echo*, 2007, wood, glass, aluminium, water, sound, computer, closed circuit video. Photo: Sam Smith.

lowercase titling of the exhibition, with its inference of intimacy, recalled a similar behind-the-scenes look at the performative role of the artist. With video as its predominant medium, Jaspers presented the work of five artists to explore the production of art (often read as painting), with standout works by Rachel Scott, Ben Denham, and Paul Greedy.

Two works by Scott set up a provocative dialogue between conceptual and material concerns inherent in artistic practice. The first work, *What goes up must come down* (2007), was an installation of masking tape strips, adhered to a wall of the gallery in a spectrum of colours. In the corner of the wall, a more organic formation of coloured tape was strung up in a tangled arrangement. It looked like an Abstract Expressionist painting slowly trying to disengage itself from the wall's geometric regime. Opposite this

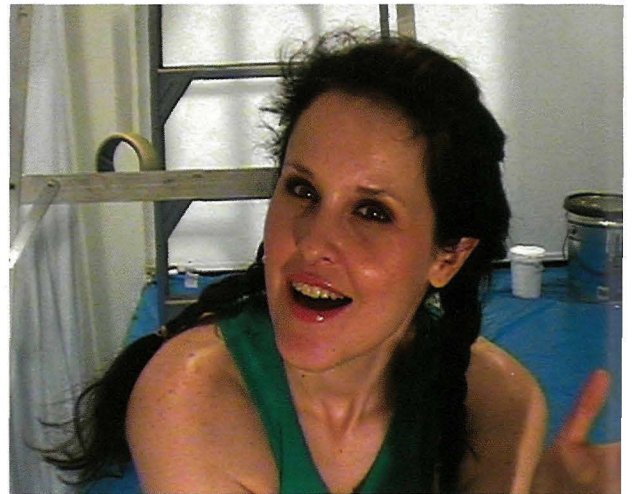
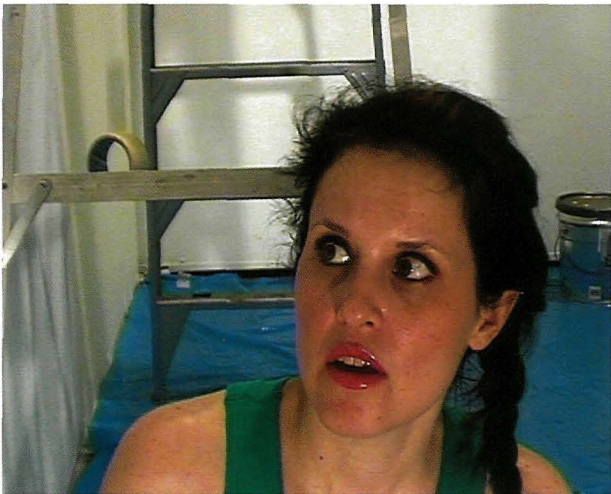
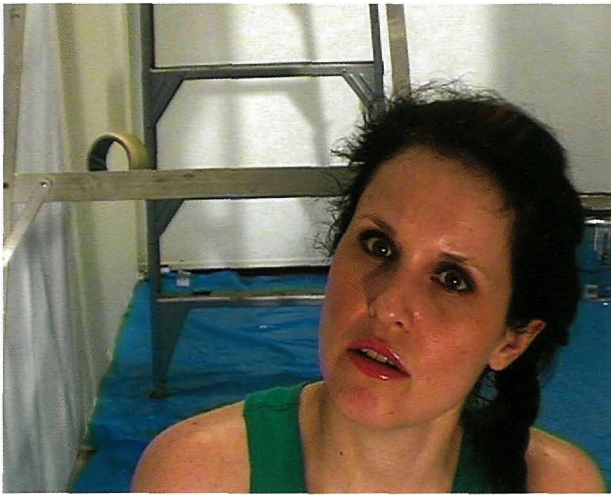


work, Scott's accompanying video piece, *Climb every mountain* (2007), offered a teasing confession from the artist about what it takes to get the job done, although the actual job was not directly mentioned on camera. Talking in suggestive tones against the pre-install backdrop of *What goes up ...*, Scott gave us a series of answers to questions we never heard. There was a sleaziness to both her works, emphasised by the video's coy suggestiveness and the installation's lo-tech, grungy feel. Moreover, before and after dialogue between her video and installation, created a narrative that played like an old Hollywood sex scene—from insinuation to cigarette smoking—the creative act was implied but never shown. This teasing oversight served as a playful reminder of the marketable distance between art's labour and capital.

The immediacy of Denham's performance and video work,

no strings: pre-cursive (2007), also explored the process of construction as deconstruction. On opening night, dressed in a black singlet and shorts with his arms and legs connected to electronic sensors, Denham looked like an updated version of a nineteenth century photographic time-lapse subject. The sensors mapping his joints fed his movements into a computer and large screen projection, allowing him to digitally graph his gestures in real-time. Focusing intensely on his body's actions, he attempted to form legible words but ended up writing the grammar of his own body. Ultimately, his contortions worked in opposition to the 'evolution' of Stelarc's third-arm performances of the early nineties. In Denham's work the language of technology was used as a conduit for symbolic regression. As such, the registration of the artist's disembodied touch and its 'pre-cursive' form suggested the virtual potential of gestural painting, with the indexing of action, from body to machine,

Above: Ben Denham, *no strings: pre-cursive* (video still), 2007, performance still.
Photo: Daniel Green.



translated as textual scribbles that appeared to mark the threshold of cognition.

Greedy's audio-visual installation, *Brahma's Echo* (2007), approached sensory interfaces on another level by using the viewer's interaction with the space to generate the work's imagery. In a small room, a closed circuit video captured and projected the viewer's body onto a wall. A microphone was also set up in the space, positioned to feed sounds into the projected image via a discretely located computer. The result was a visualised ripple of audio responses. Sounds appeared to skim the surface of the projection, reflecting the audio intensity transmitted into the microphone by the viewer. The viewer's mirrored body, projected on screen, appeared to register the effects of the sounds. In a similar way to Denham's work, Greedy's installation poetically reconstituted the body's sensory movements in virtual space and reflected them back to the audience as a series of mystical effects.

The majority of works in *between you and me* highlighted the performative slippage between artist, audience and artwork, using the dynamics of video as an aberrant proxy for subjectivity. Pushing our perceptions beyond the subject/object divide, Jaspers' curatorial efforts made for an engaging show. Overall, *between you and me* thoughtfully examined the language of contemporary artistic production and cultural consumption, while keeping the mythologies of the past firmly within its line of sight.

between you and me curated by Anneke Jaspers was held at Firstdraft Gallery, Sydney from 31 October to 17 November 2007. The exhibition included the artists Ben Denham, Paul Greedy, Sarah Jamieson, Rachel Scott and Sam Smith.

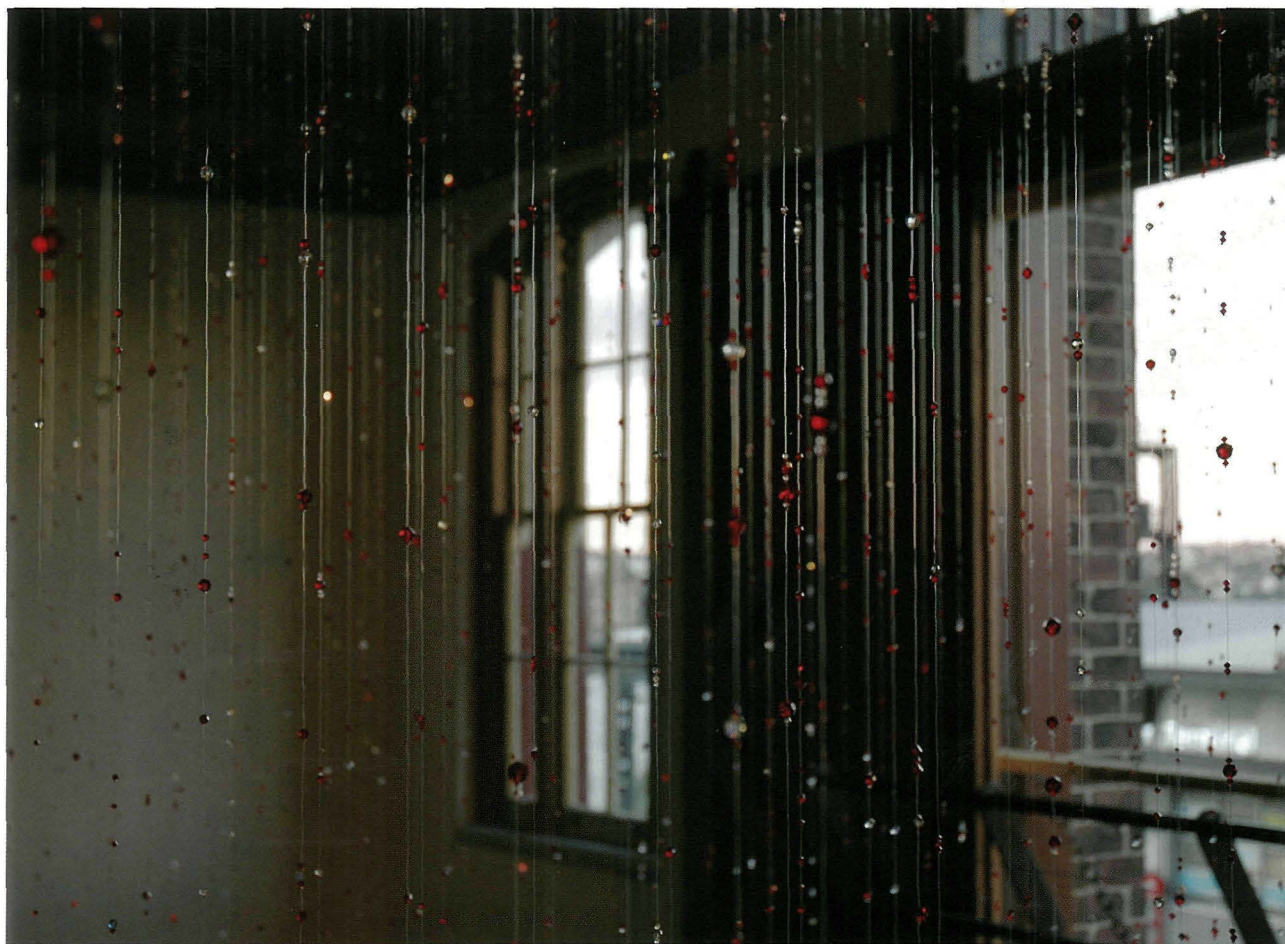
Above: Rachel Scott, *Climb every mountain* (video stills), 2007, digital video transferred to DVD.

Translations

NAOMI EVANS

Terminus Projects, spearheaded by co-directors Clare Lewis and Sarah Rawlings, addresses the dearth of site-specific art programs in Sydney city. Apart from the Biennale of Sydney, Sydney Festival and the City of Sydney Council's *Art & About*, there exists a real need for an ongoing platform for artists to engage city audiences and utilise public spaces. The strength of Terminus Projects lies in an astute acknowledgment of the business and governmental desire to actually assist artists. Of course, altruistic alignments have advantages for corporations and institutional bodies, as much as sponsored advertising spaces, untapped commercial sites and open-air venues in the CBD provide great subject matter and opportunities for artists. Art that responds specifically to place can open up complex relationships, as well as privilege the small and interpersonal. Quizzical and contemplative as much as critical and didactic, the delight in encountering this work might be found in the fact that public art has to go up against masses of visual material that is all trying to sell you something.

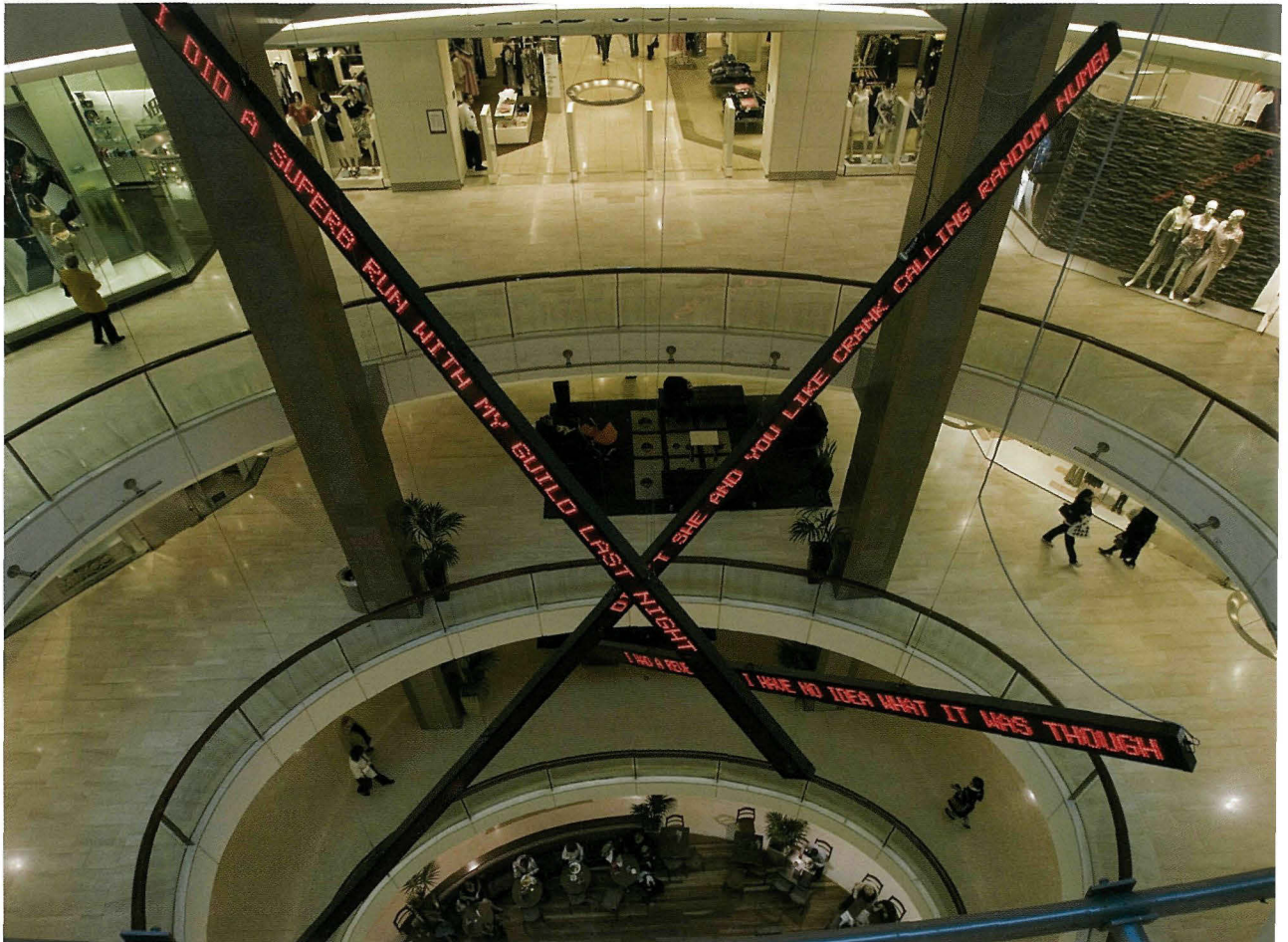
In July 2007, Terminus Projects opened the third in its series of site-specific public art projects. Responding to the theme *Translations*, it presented four artists' works across Sydney's metropolitan area. Drawings by Andrew McQualter were reproduced on large posters and exhibited in JC Decaux-managed bus shelter advertising displays. Nigel Milsom's *Hawks and doves* (2007), a video piece crafted from YouTube footage, was projected onto the ABC Building on Harris Street, Ultimo. Multi-media artist Zina Kaye offered a digital messaging presentation across three massive LED (light-emitting diode) structures at Westfield Bondi Junction, while Yuca Ishizuka's delicate installation of strung beads occupied the historic ASN Co (Australasian Steam Navigation Company) Building in The Rocks. The venues, which dotted an area from Sydney's CBD to Leichhardt and south to Maroubra, were all easy to access, situated along busy pedestrian thoroughfares and public transport routes.



Above: Yuca Ishizuka, *Missing Links: Autobiography*, 2007, mixed media installation, ASN Warehouse. Photo: : Jenni Carter.

On the fourth floor of the heritage ASN Co Building, overlooking Sydney Harbour, hulking wood columns and cross-beams provided an armature for Ishizuka's spare and diaphanous installation of clear crystal and red glass beads, suspended on strands of fishing line. Titled *Missing Links: Autobiography* (2007), Ishizuka notes, 'The venue was chosen to resonate with women's diaspora in Australia whose significance has also been kept unvoiced.' Hung from the ceiling in a cube form of weft lines, this piece was drawn from the linguistic source of *Nushu*, a recently disappeared language understood only by the Chinese women of the Hunan Province. Ishizuka's work pays homage to this particular spoken dialect and written code that allowed women to communicate and record their own stories in secret, without fear of reprisal or censure, because the 'text' was circulated via exchanges of embroidery or knotting in fabric. In Ishizuka's three-dimensional field, the artist has created her own form of this intimate communication. The accretion of delicate beads lends weight and tautness to the lines, keeping the installation still as if frozen. Like the coursing of a binary code, the placement of the two bead colours intimated a language that could be read by an initiate, while the immediate experience of the work's form undercut the need for the text to be comprehended linguistically. It seemed to privilege being and feeling as its meaning, spatially crafting a poignant and mesmerising effect.

Zina Kaye's, *Hyperplex* (2007), employed three massive LED displays splicing the three-storey atrium of Westfield Bondi Junction. These long black bars of scrolled messages in red lights, first appeared as disjointed psyche-speak, but then a narrative or debate took shape, as if a casual texting forum was going on between several sets of characters, in varying degrees of seriousness and play. Generally used as a system for communicating messages of commerce, this artwork could not have had a more relevant backdrop, with the LED's reflecting off front windows of Westfield stores like Target and David Jones. The texts scrolled sequences such as 'everyone has the right to piracy' 'yeah?' 'groan ...' as well as comments that ranged in subject from the war in Iraq to existentialism and anti-materialism. Rather than resulting in a didactic piece, *Hyperplex* contained much humour and absurdity in the poetic transfers between the adolescent and adult voices in the travelling text lines. The difficulty with the space, however, was that Westfield is so visually powerful, and those LEDs so pervasive, that the artistic interruptions appear to play to the house (in the way that advertising has co-opted the strategies of culture-jamming). However, it was this complicity with such a context that made the work so effective.



Above: Zina Kaye, *Hyperplex*, 2007, LED installation, Westfield Bondi Junction. Photo: Jenni Carter.

Facing page: Andrew McQualter, *The word for the thing*, 2007, JC Decaux bus-stop poster, Sydney. Photo: Jenni Carter.

It was a surprise not to see any text branded over Andrew McQualter's works, which were displayed over twenty sites from The Rocks, to Anzac Parade and Coogee beach. A restraint on Terminus' part, McQualter's three watercolour drawings, one per bus shelter, were magnetic partly due to the fact that there was no way to tell what these pictures were *for* (against the expectation of advertising that the context sets-up). McQualter's works might be called metaphysical, for the way in which they privilege thought. His images operate as signifiers that suggest concepts, relations between pictures and ideas, or words and the limits of communication. In one work, a woman considers a wooden chair while the chair considers an image of a 'tree' (drawn in a thought bubble). In another, a man gives the hand sign for 'scissors'—as in the game of rock/paper/scissors—while a picture of scissors is drawn as a concept existing, or equivalent, in the man's mind. There is a subtlety to his work that allows the audience to observe the incongruity of communication and its means, with a sort of slow humour, while the particular forms add up and keep turning into something else.

The theme of 'translations' importantly allows for individual notions of language to be addressed through disparate practices, and offers a consideration of spoken, written and visual languages, which intercede on an idea's behalf. This project allowed the audience to experience a critically engaged and public meeting of art, architecture and commerce, and to recognise how vital projects such as this are for a city's cultural life.

Curated by Sarah Rawlings and Clare Lewis, *Translations*: a series of site-specific installations across various locations within the Sydney CBD, was held over July–August 2007. The artists involved were Yuca Ishizuka, Zina Kaye, Andrew McQualter, Nigel Milsom and Melissa Ramos.



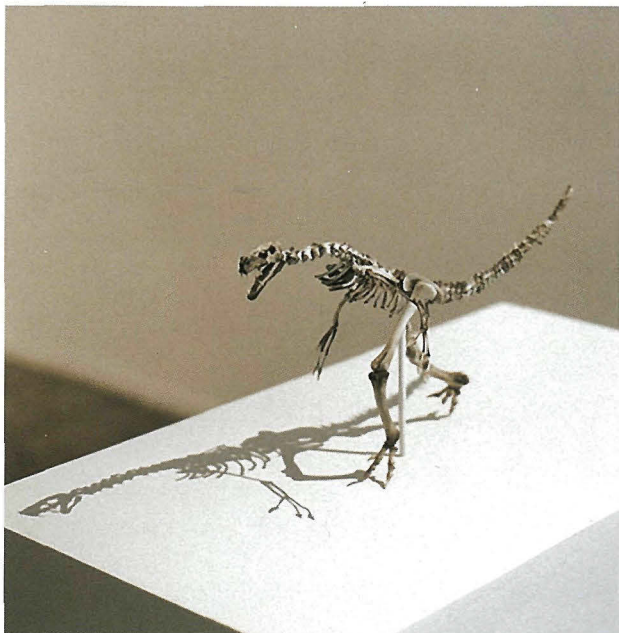
1 Yuca Ishizuka *Art Project Site* <http://homepage.mac.com/xyucax> (accessed March 3, 2008)

Nothing Rhymes With Failure

TAMSIN GREEN



Success is a rose made
entirely out of feathers.



If success is a rose made entirely out of feathers, then romance is a model dinosaur made entirely out of chicken bones. In this romance the character of the lover is played by the artist who attempts to woo meaning out of material. The exhibition, *Nothing rhymes with failure*, however, is an embrace of this effort's inevitable doom. You have to try to fail, but if you try to fail and fail you have not failed, but you have. Even the title of the show acknowledges its failings, with azalea scrawled on the back of the invitation.

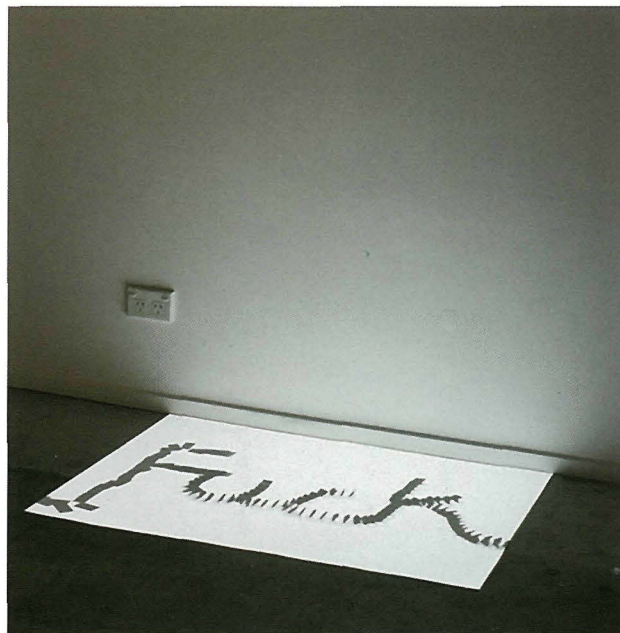
Some of these navigations in the field of failing circle towards the dark. In Kel Glaister's video *Snowden* (2007), the internal mechanisms of a music box writhe slowly around. The tinkering of a distorted sentimental tune only adds to the lonely futility of this object. The cogs and wheels are *Snowden's* guts, trying to fall out.

In another of Glaister's video works an unrelenting loop of dominoes falls again and again, spelling out 'every fucking time.' It seems we should read this as 'every attempt fails,' but you can't really complain about inevitability if you are the one knocking over the dominoes. The material of this work, the domino, stands in for a larger statement about art making and communication.

Sometimes failure can be fun. Like the not quite convincing Sahara Desert created in a Clayton bedroom, Stephen Palmer's *37° 54' 23.47" S, 145° 08' 43.5" E* (2007) that says: I'm a loser, but I've got imagination. Or Amy Marjoram's photo book, that both protests against and celebrates personal crapness. In these works 'Failure is having the earrings you accidentally left posted back to you by a lover who doesn't live far away and opening the envelope to not

Facing page: Amy Marjoram, *Detail from artist book*, 2007, digital photograph.
Photo: Amy Marjoram.

Above left: Stephen Palmer, *Domestisaurus*, 2007, chicken bones, superglue, nails.
Photo: Tamsin Green.



even find a note, not a word that is ...' Success in these works, is the capacity to capture these dirty underwear moments.

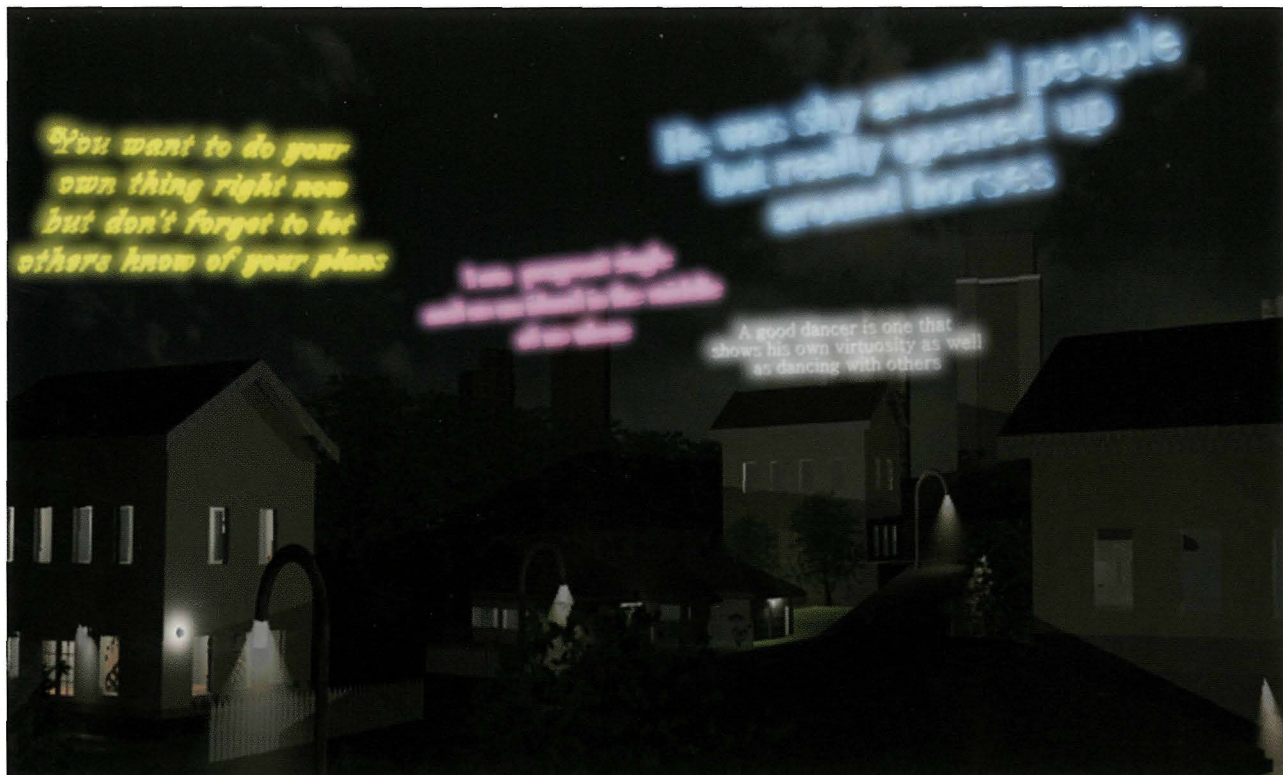
There is a thread of considered formalism that runs throughout this show, making all the different instances of failing hang together seamlessly. In Kiron Robinson's photographic work *Two smiles* (2007), the artist tries to squeeze more out of the snapshot. Like a nineteenth century post-mortem portrait, this photo tries to breathe new life into the image, leaving the subject all the more dead, cut-up and still grinning.

As it turns out the T-Rex is the chicken's ancestor, so the next time you are at your folks for a roast think 'oh how the mighty have fallen.'

In the end, romance is an attempt, and failure is a possibility. Art making is an attempt to communicate something, and the failure of meaning is a possibility, but the doomed attempt is tempting. To try to achieve failure can only lead to a paradox, but to try to achieve something knowing that failure is a possibility is a reality. Love hurts.

Nothing rhymes with failure featured the work of Kel Glaister, Stephen Palmer, Amy Marjoram and Kiron Robinson. The exhibition was held at Victoria Park Gallery, Melbourne from 22 March – 7 April 2007.

Above right: Kel Glaister, *Untitled (every fucking time)*, 2007, digital video, looped.
Photo: Tamsin Green.



Keep Going

ANNEKE JASPERS

The revival of the concept of utopia in art making and art discourse over the past decade has coincided with a number of other phenomena. Renewed interest in the dynamic between aesthetics and politics has been accompanied by extensive analysis of the notion of community within site-oriented practices. Likewise, the emergence of a framework of production centred on human relations has assumed major significance.

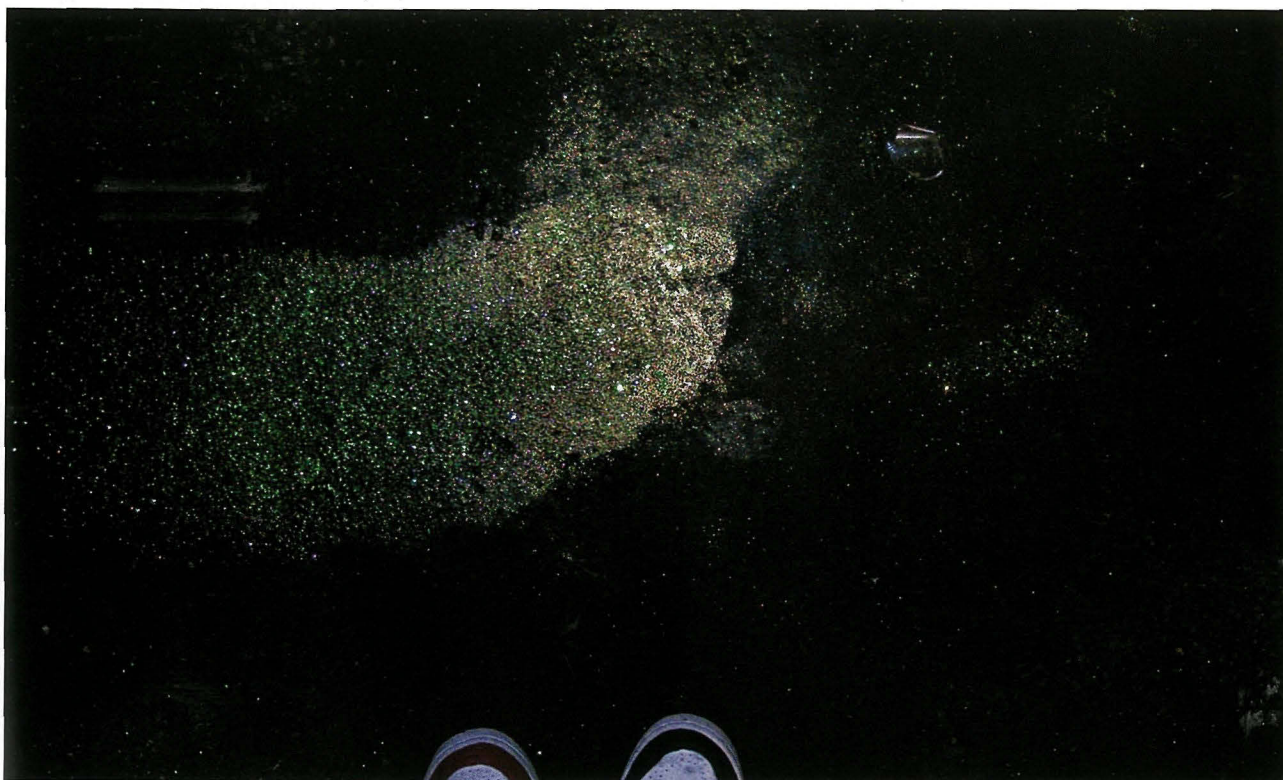
In most cases, one could argue, the most compelling interactions with the idea of utopia have taken place at the intersection of such concerns. This nexus is a space that allows for critical reflection on how utopian idealism might be relevant to contemporary times, within the context of a set of discursive domains that acknowledge its historical shortcomings. And these shortcomings are, as we know, vast. Utopia has been revealed as 'one of the most corrupted of modern ideologemes,'¹ one that has come to be synonymous with dystopian schemas.

Within this set of circumstances it would seem difficult for a gallery-based exhibition to perform adequately as a platform for critically interrogating such a theme, and *Keep Going* laboured under this predicament. Curated by Sally Brand as part of Hazelhurst Regional Gallery's three-part initiative *Heaven on Earth*, the show brought together a range of existing works and created some unexpected juxtapositions. However, it steered clear of the more complex issues at stake. The theme was approached via the perspective that 'paradise' is a highly personal construct, reinforcing the notion that the social imperative of modernist utopia has been all but dismantled, and locating its operation instead in the contingent domain of the imagination. With this in mind, Brand's selection of works mapped, by and large, two approaches to the subject—one premised upon aesthetic interventions or effects that revealed images to be seductive fictions, and the other a construction of virtual realms that fractured a sense of social and physical cohesion.

The works representing the latter approach were more interesting, rupturing the smooth functionalism of environmental planning to elaborate on how an ideal always inevitably generates a space for deviance. In Peter Alwast's *The Night Sky* (2006) a sequence of non-descript, computer-generated houses appear as a fantasy of sorts for an aspirational middle-class. The houses loom over dimly lit white picket fences and manicured lawns, with empty interiors glimpsed through open windows revealing the structures as an elaborate facade for a non-existing community. Floating in the sky, snippets of arbitrary personal narratives are severed from any particular human subject, suggesting the inherent friction between the rhetoric of belonging and place, and the increasingly homogenising, alienating effects of suburban environments.

Above: Peter Alwast, *The Night Sky*, 2006, video still, courtesy the artist and Gallery Barry Keldoulis.

Facing Page: Peter McKay, 2006-06-04c_3625 [*HAPPY SLUG*], 2006, type C photograph.



In contrast to Alwast's video, Sam Smith's *Street Shift* (2007) work used footage of an existing inner city block in Surry Hills where domestic spaces coalesce with those of industry, development, leisure, transit, and refuse. The set of relations in this contested space of gentrification was disrupted not by social action but by uncanny digital interventions. Street signs multiply, garage doors become glowing portals, and objects inexplicably defy the rules of gravity. The streetscape is remade as a volatile zone where matter misbehaves, disrupting the organisational logics that govern physical space and our interactions within it, such that it becomes disorienting, disquieting and erratic. To this end, Brand mobilised Smith and Alwast's works to highlight the complex relationship between perfect/defective and unified/disorderly within utopian constructs.

An exception to the two aforementioned approaches was the contribution by the artist collective Squatspace, who presented various aspects of their project *Redfern-Waterloo Tour of Beauty* (2005-ongoing). An on-the-ground tour of the area affected by the Redfern-Waterloo Authority, privileged contributions by local speakers in response to the Government's controversial urban renewal initiatives. This was supplemented in the gallery space by a documentary video, showing footage of earlier iterations of the tour and outlining the parameters of its concerns. Additionally, a map of the area 'customised' by people who had inscribed upon it their specific personal experiences, memories and trajectories was spread across the floor. By restructuring aesthetic production according to an inclusive, discursive framework, the Squatspace project managed to achieve what none of the other works did—the creation of a realm of activity that could articulate through the participation of a range of stakeholders, Chantal Mouffe's notion of an 'agonistic' public sphere premised upon the constructive expression of difference. Here, the actual contestation of space via the exchange of conflicting points of view or divergent accounts of its operation and meaning countered the representations of imaginary and aestheticised environments that dominated the rest of the show. I would like to think of the model proposed by the Squatspace project as a kind of 'enacted utopia', to borrow a phrase from Michel Foucault—a reconstitution of the concept of utopia as analogous to the discursive, agonistic 'site' produced by the type of contemporary artworks operating at the intersection outlined in the opening paragraphs.

Incidentally, another proposition for the spatio-temporal enactment of what might constitute a utopia in the present was also suggested by Brand in her account of curatorial agency. In her essay, Brand describes the exhibition as a selection of 'works by some of her favourite contemporary artists', and in turn, 'her version of paradise'. In this sense, the exhibition platform was articulated as a utopia in itself, albeit according to the conventional modernist strictures of an overarching power hierarchy and idealism premised upon exclusion. In pointing to the ways in which most gallery exhibitions and curatorial strategies still conform to a modernist model, the notion of exhibition-as-utopia added a dimension of self-reflection to the project.

Keep Going, curated by Sally Brand, was the third exhibition in Hazelhurst Regional Gallery's *Heaven on Earth* series. The artists included in the exhibition were Sam Smith, Squatspace, Peter Alwast, Spat+Loogie, Peter McKay and Jess MacNeil.

1 Hal Foster, *Recodings: Art, Spectacle, Cultural Politics* (Bay Press: Port Townsend, Washington, 1985) 95.

PREVIEWS



Forthcoming Exhibitions



NSW

BOTANICALS | SANDRA BLACK, JULIE BLYFIELD, NICOLA CERINI, QUYEN DO, INDIA FLINT, ALASDAIR GORDON, MARIAN HOSKING, MARIE LITTLEWOOD, AMANDA LOUDEN, VICKI MASON, JULIE PATERSON, DAVID NEALE, JENNIFER ROBERTSON, TANIA ROLLAND and ALICE WHISH

curated by KYLIE JOHNSTON

5 April - 15 June

Object: Australian Centre for Craft and Design

415 Bourke Street, Surry Hills

www.object.com.au

IN ADVANCE | STEPHEN BIRCH, GEOFF KLEEM, VANILA NETTO and PAUL SAINT

curated by TANYA PETERSON

22 April - 23 May

UTS Gallery

Level 4, 702 Harris Street, Ultimo

www.utsgallery.uts.edu.au

SELLING OUT | MENG-SHU YOU

26 April - 7 June

Gallery 4A Asia-Australia Arts Centre

181-187 Hay Street, Sydney

www.4a.com.au

MAN: DEPICTING CONTEMPORARY MASCULINITY |

LIAM BENSON, FERGUS BINNS, STEPHEN BIRCH, DANIEL BOYD, SIMON CAVANOUGH, MATTHYS GERBER, CHRISTOPHER HANRAHAN, NIGEL MILSOM, TV MOORE, NEIL ROBERS, TONY SCHWENSEN, CHRISTIAN BUMBARRA THOMPSON, JUSTIN TRENDALL and SIMON YATES

26 April - 29 June

Penrith Regional Gallery and the Lewers Bequest

86 River Road, Emu Plains

www.penrithregionalgallery.org

OBLIVION PAVILION | MARLEY DAWSON, AGATHA GOTHE-SNAPE, MATTHEW HOPKINS, EMILY HUNT, TIM SCHULTZ and RAQUEL WELCH
curated by AMANDA ROWELL

Roslyn Oxley 9 Gallery

1 - 17 May

8 Soudan Lane, Paddington

www.roslynolexy9.com.au

Above left: Kiron Robinson, *Sometimes I walk a dangerous line between laidback and lazy*, 2006, video still.

Above right: Stephen Birch *Civic Minded* (detail), 1999. Copyright Estate of Stephen Birch, courtesy Kaliman Gallery, Sydney.

SCREEN TEST | JOHN A DOUGLAS

1 - 17 May
Chalk Horse
56 Cooper Street, Surry Hills
www.chalkhorse.com.au

EXPERIMENTA PLAYGROUND

8 May - 17 June
Performance Space
245 Wilson Street, Eveleigh
www.performancespace.com.au

WHY DO WE DO THE THINGS WE DO | ROSE NOLAN

curated by BLAIR FRENCH and ROBERT LEONARD
9 May - 7 June
43 - 51 Cowper Wharf Road, Woolloomooloo
www.artspace.org.au

BATTLE NULLIUS | MONIKA BEHRENS

15 - 31 May
Firstdraft
116-118 Chalmers Street, Surry Hills
www.firstdraftgallery.com

A | ANN BRENNAN, ANDY HUTSON and ALEX MARTINIS ROE

curated by DANNY LACY
15 May - 7 June
Peloton
19 & 25 Meagher Street, Chippendale
www.peloton.net.au

THE WAYBACK MACHINE | JAKI MIDDLETON & DAVID LAWREY

22 May - 8 June
MOP
2/27-39 Abercrombie Street, Chippendale
www.mop.org.au

HELIOTROPE | JONATHAN JAMES

25 June - 5 July
Sheffer Gallery
38 Lander Street, Sydney
www.sheffergallery.com

FIONA LOWRY

16 July - 16 August
Gallery Barry Keldoulis
285 Young Street, Waterloo
www.gbk.com.au



Above: John A Douglas *Screen Test #4 (Australiana)*, 2008, c-type print on Aluminium.

Facing page (left): *Oblivion Pavilion* (installation view), 2008.

Facing page (right): Jonathan James *Sunset* (detail), four colour screenprint, 2008.



BIG | SHAUN GLADWELL, MELLETIOS KYRIAKIDIS, ROWAN WILSON
and RULLY ZAKARIA
17 - 29 July
Gaffa Gallery
1/7 Randle Street, Surry Hills
www.gaffa.com.a

ACT

CONQUER IN COMFORT | BERNIE SLATER
4 April - 17 May
Canberra Contemporary Art Space
Gorman House Arts Centre, Ainslie Avenue, Braddon
www.ccas.com.au

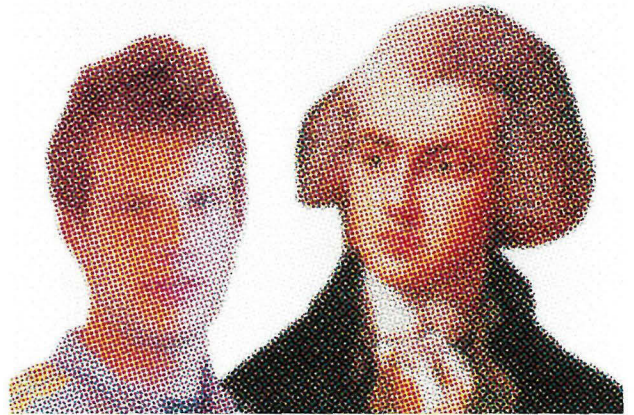
VICTORIA

SCENE 1 | DAMP
15 March - 22 June
Heide Museum of Modern Art
7 Templestowe Road, Bulleen
www.heide.com.au

MY DOUBTFUL MIND | DAVID ROZETSKY, DAN SPIELMAN, DOMINIC
REDFERN, NATASHA JOHNS-MESSENGER, LESLIE EASTMAN & SOO-
JOO YOO.
curated by JAN DUFFY and ALEX TAYLOR
18 April - 25 May
Linden
26 Acland Street, St Kilda
www.lindenarts.org

KAY ABUDE
as part of the Next Wave Festival
9 - 31 May
Kings ARI
Level 1 1/171 King Street, Melbourne
www.kingsartistrun.com.au

SUPERPIT | BRODIE ELLIS
17 May - 7 June
Conical Inc.
Upstairs, 3 Rochester St, Fitzroy
www.conical.org.au



INSIDE OUTSIDE INSIDE ON | KENZIE MCKENZIE & JAMES BROWN
20 - 31 May
Seventh
155 Gertrude Street, Fitzroy
www.seventhgallery.org

CHANGING FIELDS | ADAM COSTENOBLE, BEN BYRNE, MATT
CHAUMONT, MONICA BROOKS and THEMBI SODELL
22 May - 7 June
Blindside
Nicholas Building, Room 14, 37 Swanston Street, Melbourne
www.blindside.org.au

HOCKEY PLOT | REHGAN DE MATHER, MARIA LUISA MARINO, KAREN
HEATH, SIMON PERICICH, BRODIE ELLIS and KYLIE LIGERTWOOD
as part of the Next Wave Festival
23 May - 14 June
West Space
1st Floor, 15-19 Anthony Street, Melbourne
www.westspace.org.au

**OCTOPUS 8: THE SOFTNESS IN THE ROCK: HOPE IN
DISAPPOINTING TIMES** | ELEANOR AVERY, FIONA CONNOR,
NICHOLAS FOLLAND, KIRON ROBINSON, GARY SIMMONS and
HANNAH TAI
curated by EMILY CORMACK
4 July - 2 August
Gertrude Contemporary Art Spaces
200 Gertrude Street, Fitzroy
www.gertrude.org.au

TASMANIA

COMPANION PLANTING | DEAN CHATWIN, AMANDA SHONE,
MICHELLE CANGIANO, LUCY BLEACH and RAEF SAWFORD
curated by JACK ROBINS
24 May - 15 June
CAST
27 Tasma Street, North Hobart
www.castgallery.org

OUT OF HOME | SHEA BRESNEHAN & NICOLE ROBSON
6 - 28 June
Inflight Art
237 Elizabeth Street, Hobart
www.inflightart.com.au



SA

UNEASY: RECENT SOUTH AUSTRALIAN ART

Curated by TIMOTHY MORRELL

20 June - 17 August

Anne & Gordon Samstag Museum of Art

Hawke Building, City West campus

University of South Australia

55 North Terrace, Adelaide

www.unisa.edu.au/samstagmuseum

42A | ALISON CURRIE

26 June - 5 July

White Cube, Experimental Art Foundation

The Lion Arts Centre, North Terrace (West End) Adelaide

www.eaf.asn.au

WA

BON SCOTT PROJECT | STUART BAILEY, GUY BENFIELD, ADAM CULLEN, REBECCA DAGNALL, CECILIA FOGELBERG, ALEX GAWRONSKI, IAN HAIG, BEVAN HONEY, MATTHEW HUNT, LUCAS IHLEIN, RICHARD LEWER, MICHAEL MORAN, RYAN NAZZARI, VANILA NETTO, NAT PATON, SCOTT REDFORD, ELI SMITH, MARTIN SMITH and TANJA VILOSEVIC

curated by JASMIN STEPHENS

17 May - 29 June

Fremantle Arts Centre

1 Finnerty Street

Fremantle Western Australia

AUSTRALIAN GOTHIC: VIDEO ART NOW | BRENDAN LEE, TAMMY HONEY, MARSHA BERRY, LARISSA HJORTH, ALEX AVTZOGLU, ROBERT HECIMOVIC and SHAUN WILSON

curated by DR SHAUN WILSON

12 June - 3 August

Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts

Perth Cultural Centre, James Street, Northbridge

www.pica.org.au

NT

SILENT RUPTURES | KRISTIAN HAGGBLOM, MATHIEU BERNARD-RAYMOND and YOSHIRO MASUDA

9 May - 14 June

24HR Art: Northern Territory Centre for Contemporary Art

Vimy Lane, Parap Shopping Village, Darwin

www.24hrart.org.au

HOLD BACK NOTHING | CATRIONA STANTON

14 - 31 May

Woods Street Gallery

Darwin Visual Arts Association

56 Woods Street, Darwin

www.dvaa.net.au

KID | LUCY KENNETH and YOUTH

22 June - 11 July

Watch this Space

4/9 George Crescent

Alice Springs

www.wts.org.au

QUEENSLAND

GRANT STEVENS

3 May - 21 June

Institute of Modern Art

420 Brunswick Street, Fortitude Valley

www.ima.org.au

THINK ABOUT HONKING IF YOU LOVE CONCEPTUAL ART: THE ART OF HUMOUR | BIANCA BARLING, JAMES DODD, SHAUN O'CONNOR and MATTHEW BRADLEY

curated by JAMES DODD

Ryan Renshaw

137 Warry Street, Fortitude Valley

www.ryanrenshaw.com.au

INSIDE OUT | KATE JUST, ALICE LANG and JOSH BURRY

23 May - 20 June

RAW Space Galleries

99 Melbourne St South Brisbane

www.rawspace.org

Metro Arts

Level 1, 109 Edward Street, Brisbane

www.metroarts.com.au

Above left: Brodie Ellis, *Super Pit*, 2008, photograph.

Above right: Alison Currie, *42a*, performance still, 2007. Photo: Edwin Comey.



Sharon Chin, *How To Talk To Strangers*, 2007, performance still

ISSUE 11 CONVERSATION

with guest editor Anneke Jaspers

... coming winter 2008

Melbourne Art Fair 2008 The Premier Fair and Exposition of Contemporary Visual Art in the Asia Pacific

30 July to 3 August
Royal Exhibition Building
Melbourne Australia

Melbourne Art Fair 2008 is presented by the Melbourne Art Fair Foundation, a not-for-profit organisation, promoting contemporary art and the ethical representation of living artists.

Alongside over 80 national and international gallery exhibitions from all states and territories of Australia as well as from Auckland, Wellington, Beijing, Hong Kong, Osaka, Kuala Lumpur, New Delhi, Lucerne, Cologne and Dublin, Melbourne Art Fair 2008 presents programs which directly benefit the work of living artists. These include: Artist Commissions; Project Rooms featuring independent and emerging artists; and free public Forums and Lectures featuring artists, curators and international guests.

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entry to Vernissage, VIP Lounge.
Collectors Packages AU\$250 inc gst.

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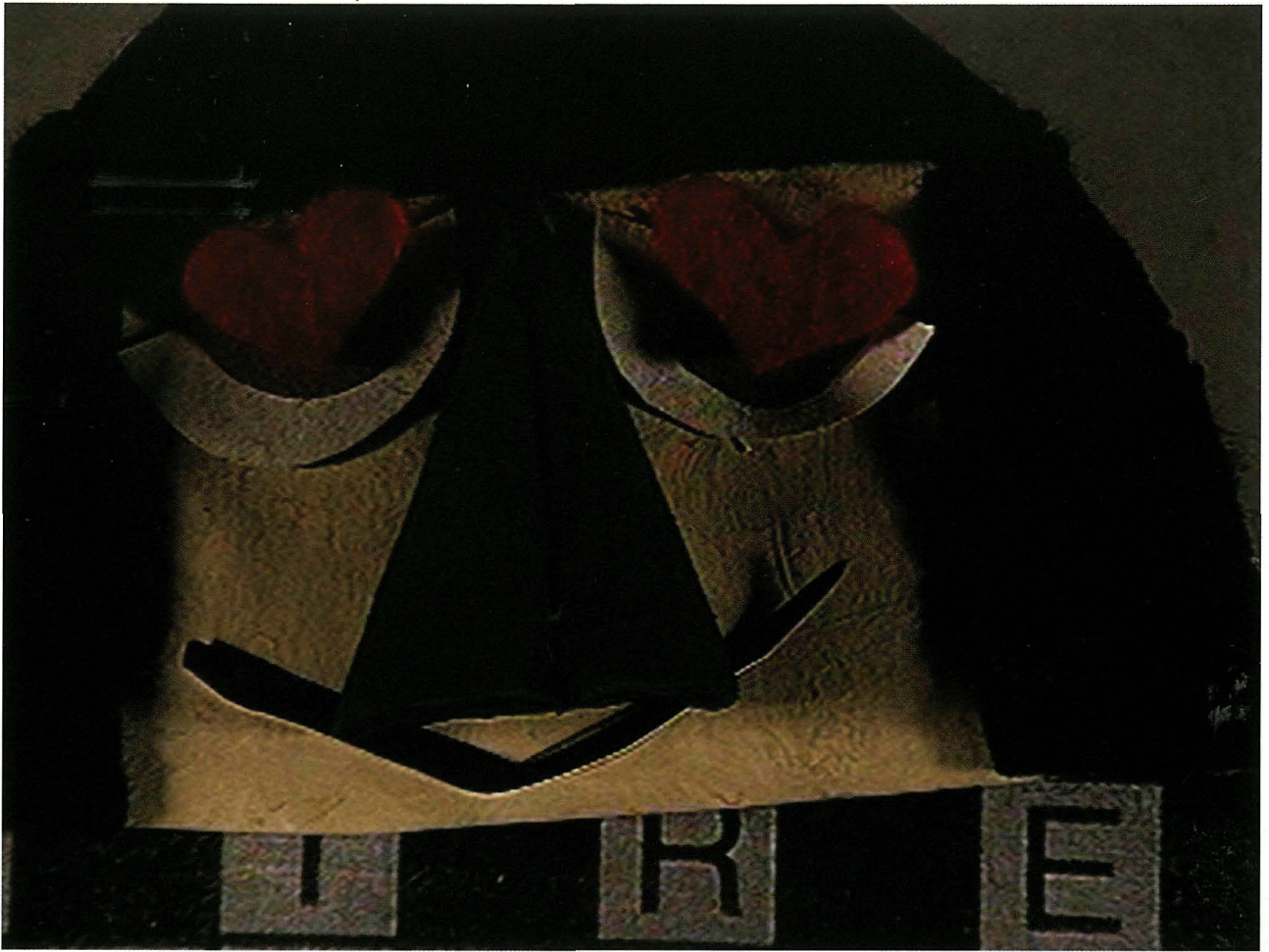
AUGUST

SEPTEMBER

NOVEMBER

DECEMBER

ROMANCE DVD



I ♥ HEAPS

ELLA BARCLAY

Last year in Scotland, the boy I'd allowed myself to be unrequitedly obsessed with was going away forever; let's call him Gus. I had to work the night of his going away drinks but as soon as it hit zam, I closed the pub and headed over to the bar where everyone had ended up.

Even though I gave the two Polish bouncers my most sober and endearing smile, they braced the door and exclaimed "No one new after two." I tried explaining that I had just finished work; that one of my most privately cherished friends was leaving, but to no avail. When I tried losing my jacket, donning a hat and casually 'dancing' through the entrance, I was forcibly banished. So I stood there, now in just a t-shirt, waiting for my Gus to emerge like a hero and make things okay. Of course he didn't.

The minutes drifted on, as did the chatter, the rain and the reverb. The self-pity kicked in and I started to cry, knowing it was now all too late. All the daydreams, all the nervous and delightful, foolishly anticipated quick intimate moments I'd let myself imagine with him, were finally washed away, there with the cigarette butts in the gutter outside that terrible, terrible bar. I headed home, crying without holding back, recklessly, stupidly. Feeling the stinging mix of hot tears and icy rain on my face. Telling myself this was always to be my life: hard, cold and lonely.

And *then*, suddenly, I was FURIOUS.

Furious because this Polish chef called Andzrej, who I was half-heartedly seeing at the time, actually had the NERVE to chase after



me with my coat and the news that he'd sweet-talked the bouncers into letting me in. The NERVE. I couldn't believe it. Geez. He was ruining my drama! He'd rained on my raining parade! I snatched my jacket and told him to go home.

"Ella, you don't have to make it like this" he yelled after me.

"Of course I do!" I barked, in an 'uh duh' kind of way, and I carried on in the cold.

Soon we'll be united for good. I'll lie down and take you in my arms. I'll roll with you in the midst of great secrets. We'll lose ourselves, and find ourselves again. Nothing will come between us anymore. How unfortunate that you won't be present for this happiness.¹

Georges Bataille doesn't really discuss why he chose to open his second volume of *The Accursed Share* with the above quote by

Maurice Blanchot, but I think he's getting at all the time that gets wasted on daydreams of romance. The book essentially argues how the surplus of free time and capital acquired in any one economy is necessarily wasted, indulgently—through making art, through non-procreational sex and romance, through extravagant war.

This very small collection of video works you have here, compiled in this special *runway* Romance DVD, are very diverse in their production techniques and intended outcomes, but are all, in my opinion, lamentations on romantic visions.

Sonja Todd's *The Most Disgusting Thing* (2007), is a brutally honest excursion through the mundane and the gross at an extremely emotional and difficult time in her life. Steve Mykiety's *Pacing* (2006) is a portrait of near insanity—three monologues compete for the viewer's ear: conflicting narratives of the boring, the saucy and the angry trawl on as he strives to make artistic meditations in his studio more important than they perhaps are.

Above: Jonathon Bailey *Romance* (video still), 2008, digital video.
Facing Page: Masahiro Wada *A Street (KEBAN HOTEL)* (video still), 2006, digital video.



Rachel Scott's *Whistler Rendezvous* (2003), hints at irony but perhaps also hope, as she cunningly explores flirtation-as-performance in her guerilla-style ski-slope mingling manoeuvre. In Hanae Seida's *Murderous* (2006), the artist laboriously stop-animates a scene of heartbreak followed by a really bad gag. Jonathan Bailey's *Romance* (2008), comically conveys the potential for ideas to be forcefully inflated and then spectacularly destroyed.

Masahiro Wada's *A Street (KEBAN HOTEL)* (2006) is a study of, and homage to, Istanbul's kebab-men, 'outstanding sculptors' of very temporary works, the artist believes. This video led him to building a pine kebab van that he toured around Japan, hacking at a kebab meat stick made out of timber with a saw and serving up woodchip junk food sculptures. Then there is the Kingpins with *Sydney Infinity* (2005), in all its anthemic, nauseating, unstoping, fit, dazzling glory. Finally, Tony Schwensen's *Waiting for Enlightenment* (2002): waiting, waiting, waiting for that one pinnacle of all life's struggles, the blaze of glory, the moment when nothing's shit.

I think about that poor Polish boy and how selfish I was for orchestrating such drama. I think about how much time I spend wasting time, imagining terrifyingly brilliant romance or impossible art that's universally overwhelming, whilst pottering through the succession of busy nothings.

Art is the time out, the daydream, the romantic encounter, the gushing outpour, the indulgent, the wasteful, the agony on ecstasy, and the stupid.

1 Georges Bataille, *The Accursed Share*, V.II, (Zone Books, London 1967)

1	Sonja Todd <i>The Most Disgusting Thing</i> , 2007	3 min 24 sec
2	Jonathon Bailey <i>Romance</i> , 2008	2 min 46 sec
3	Tony Schwensen <i>Waiting for Enlightenment</i> , 2002	58sec
4	Steve Mykietyn <i>Pacing</i> , 2006	6 min 22 sec
5	Rachel Scott <i>Whistler Rendezvous</i> , 2003	2 min 2 sec
6	Hanae Seida <i>Murderous</i> , 2006	1 min 10 sec
7	Masahiro Wada <i>A Street (KEBAN HOTEL)</i> , 2006	1 min 37 sec
8	The Kingpins <i>Sydney Infinity</i> , 2005	4 min 3 sec



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a Video art DVD curated by ELLA BARCLAY

heaps

