

# runway

an australian contemporary art magazine

ISSUE 11 CONVERSATION

Guest Editor: Anneke Jaspers



AU \$10 NZ \$12 EU €7 UK £6 CAN \$12 US \$10 JPN ¥1000



# runway

Winter 2008

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**Photography** pages 58 – 61: Craig Bender.

**Special thanks** to Melissa Cook, Adam Costenoble, Michaela Gleave, Rachel Scott, Holly Williams, and I.C.A.N. Directors: Carla Cescon, Scott Donovan & Alex Gawronski.

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ISSN 1448-8000

Edition 1000

*runway* is an independent, artist-run initiative published by The Invisible Inc.

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#### runway

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The Invisible Inc. is supported by



Australian Government

THE VISUAL ARTS AND CRAFT STRATEGY



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NSW Government through Arts NSW

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Cover: Mitch Cairns, *Real life with maracas (get rhythm)*, 2008, performance still (artwork in background by Hitesh Natalwala). Photo: Craig Bender.  
Facing page: Emma White, *Negative Reinforcement #3 (time's a-wasting)*, 2007, polymer clay and wire. Photo: the artist.







# Editorial

ANNEKE JASPERS

Late last year, at around the time I began thinking about this issue, *The Australian* published an article by Sebastian Smee relating an interview with Charles Merewether, curator of the 2006 Biennale of Sydney. The piece conveyed the curator's misgivings at the 'lack of engagement' with the Biennale, the absence 'of ongoing discussion' about the exhibition, and more broadly with a kind of critical and discursive apathy he found typical of the Australian context.<sup>1</sup>

I missed the piece when it was first published in the newspaper. However, it was loudly registered when I picked up the next issue of *Broadsheet* magazine where it was referenced by no less than a handful of articles, at least one of which had been explicitly commissioned as a response.<sup>2</sup> The irony did make me wonder—not only about the truth or otherwise of Merewether's disappointments—but about the spaces, mechanisms and rhythms through which critical discussions take form in the local art scene.

In turn, this issue of *runway* takes a step back from the usual focus on the material output of artists to address a broader series of issues that interface with production. It looks at the interstices between and around works. It considers the circulation and exchange of ideas at an interpersonal and community level—and as a function of an expanded set of 'practices' initiated by curators, writers, audiences and organisations, as much as artists. Lisa Kelly reflects on a recent string of events in Sydney and different approaches to facilitating discussion around art works. Camille Serisier picks up this thread in her interview with Spiros Panigirakis, which maps a specific 'feedback' model and the context in which it has developed. The question of how meaning is translated and articulated in particular contexts is addressed throughout, and taken to the extreme by Ben Denham in his description of the physiological processes that underpin speech.

The increasing prevalence of a discursive mode in the making of works comes into focus in the contributions by Amy Spiers & Victoria Stead, and Keg de Souza & Zanny Begg, both of which are framed by a series of personal encounters in local neighbourhoods. As a counterpoint, many of the artist pageworks articulate a more oblique perspective on the theme—Mitch Cairns suggests an introspective retreat from sociability; Kathryn Gray investigates the conventions of narrative; Christian Bumbarra Thompson and Sam Smith construe conversation as an abstracted exchange. In several cases, a breakdown of communication is the conceptual focus, which, coincidentally, cycles back to my initial starting point for considering the theme of the issue.



Above: *K* inaugural exhibition opening at Institute for Contemporary Art Newtown (I.C.A.N.) on 18 November 2007. Photo: I.C.A.N.

1. Sebastian Smee, 'Nation "Too Parochial" to Engage', *The Australian*, 5 November 2007.

2. Alan Cruickshank (ed.), *Broadsheet*, Volume 37 No. 1, March 2008.

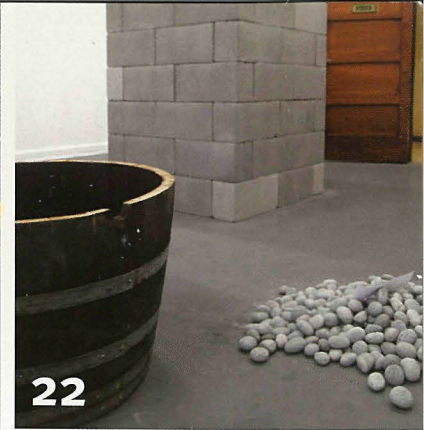




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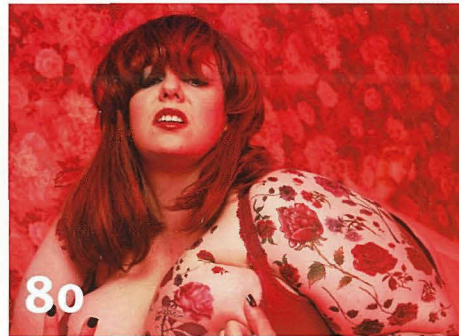
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FEATURES





## Notes on a state of conversation

LISA KELLY

### HOW DO WE COMMUNICATE?

On the short term, phones and email can be used to arrange meetings. But they often fail to provide the impetus that actually brings people in dialogue with one another. They act as alibis for the commitment that may or may not be sufficiently developed between people. Given the event-led cultural economy we live in today, communication after the fact proves to be the weakest link in our development. One might envisage setting up an AGENCY FOR AFTERMATH COMMUNICATIONS in art practice ... Face to face contact is precious.

— Clementine Deliss<sup>1</sup>

Over a recent three-week period I was immersed in an incidental but noticeable sequence of visual arts dialogue events and encounters. These seem useful material for a part round-up, part temperature check on how occasions to talk to each other—as artists, audiences, people, peers, and communities—are being generated out of local practices, projects and spaces. And on the varying qualities of these occasions, differing approaches to facilitation, and the meaningful potential and effects of thoughtful discursive practice.

Above: Kirsten Bradley, *About, above*, 2008, cardboard, pinholes, sunlight, rear-projection screen, blacked-out room; artist talks, Firstdraft, 19 April 2008. Photo: Nick Ritaj.





**1. Saturday 19 April 2008, 4:30pm**

Artist talks: Firstdraft, Surry Hills

Kirsten Bradley, Josie Cavallaro, Leah McPherson.

Under its current board of Directors Firstdraft coordinates artist talks for each program of exhibitions, and this year I've liked to go along; whether to support friends, or simply support the opportunity to listen, learn and spend a bit more time than usual with artwork. That I expect to be in the role of a listener, more than part of a to-and-fro exchange, describes this standard talk model—where an artist serves up the what-where-why-and-how of their project—and opens onto my own mixed feelings for such talks. Of course, they are great to hear and important to do, especially for emerging artists finding a voice around their practice. And it's ultra-important not to take for granted the spaces we can create and utilise for speech. That said, many artists are shy of these talks and their medicinal flavour (i.e. it's 'good for you' and the kind of thing you should be able to do), and some opt out of them altogether. Sometimes this seems fair, given

that the point in time that artists are often called upon to give a talk is when they are in the thick of exhaustion after realising an exhibition,<sup>2</sup> and possibly riding an anticlimax that has them wondering why they went to all the trouble in the first place. Shake this up with some public speaking nerves and you might well ask if this is the most supportive construct for expanding and facilitating the understanding of artwork.

At this point, it might be just as useful for artists to do some listening themselves—to the feedback, questions and thoughts of viewers—rather than be obliged to give, perform and put out *more* than they have already. It's the performance quality of such talks that can seem like a problem. Where the artist stands up and delivers all their well-meant intentionality, but simultaneously grounds the wilder flight paths of interpretation that might have been at play for gathered viewers. This same performativity can give those that come along permission to settle back into a comfort zone of consumption. In showing respect for a speaker, a group can easily slip into a torpor and it's a challenge to maintain

Above: *THISISCURATING*1-40 exhibition opening at Firstdraft on 23 April 2008. Photo: Firstdraft.



active listening. How, then, to supplant this reflex of consumption with one of engagement and make artist talks a really productive meeting of an artist's intentions and the viewer's experience?

On this Saturday at Firstdraft, we progressed through the galleries on stools for three talks, each a counterpoint of similarity and difference, micro-climates of speech and response—friendly, curious and supportive. The first work called for the artist to talk in the dark, a novelty that sharpened listening and the awareness of bodies and floating voices, while eyes strained to see what we were hearing we *should* see. In the second, an awkward but astute observation was made of the register of the artist's voice, with a slight slip from speaker for her own work to another role as an art educator. This opened a glimpse onto another terrain entirely—who is an artist speaking for here, themselves or the audience? from what perspective: inside or outside a practice?—that wasn't further explored. It's interesting to imagine a dialogue structure that could support a consideration of sensitive but resonant questions like these.

In the third talk, the artist deftly flipped the responsibility for dialogue onto the audience. Distributing her hand-held works to get us looking and thinking, she voiced her nerves and a desire that the talk unfold more responsively, and then settled into a middle ground from which to mediate our questions and feedback. This gentle but significant shift in the dynamic prompted a much more active sequence of generous and interlocking responses from us audience members on stools. Achieving the energising organicism and traffic of a good conversation, arrived at by collaboration between two parties—speakers and listeners—the roles of each usefully mutable and elastic. The suite of three talks closed with a pleasing sense of having opened up some room to move a little smarter, a little differently, within the shape of the artist talk.

## 2. Wednesday 23 April 2008, 6pm

Exhibition opening: Firstdraft (emerging curator program) *THISISCURATING1-40*, curated by Joel Mu.

Openings are the most reliable and recurring spaces the art world creates to meet up, speak and socialise, each with varying degrees of sincerity and (self) interest, in that weird amalgam of personal meets professional. I remember reading about Fiona MacDonald's film *Museum Emotions* (2002-2003), a soap-opera styled document of the Australian art scene, and how it clearly showed that at openings, people are really just talking to themselves. The film points to the sport of self-aggrandising that forms the baseline of much conversation, perhaps more so than the work an audience assembled to see. But then, openings are usually the least helpful conditions to view most kinds of work ('I'm going to come back for a proper look'). This is for fun, fizz, clamour and gossip—the happy and healthy celebration of another exhibition fronting up to the world, where the level of dialogue with an artist/curator will tend to be one of support, praise and congratulation.

The opening of *THISISCURATING1-40* was big and buzzy, with a shift of the usual compression and spill of bodies thanks to a change of entrance from the front to side-street garage door. Going along without plans to meet anyone or really knowing any of the artists, I was free to float and settle, less distracted by the social structure bracketing the exhibition. Though this was no obstacle to some quality chat, like one conversation where two

of us pondered exactly this social dimension of the exhibition opening as a kind of *force*. A positive force, my conversation-friend insisted, while I was more interested in how and when the artwork *might hold up as the stronger power in the situation*. Another opening at Firstdraft from earlier in the year came to mind, of a work that included death metal playing at full volume,<sup>3</sup> an element which the artists felt had genuinely unsettled people's typical responses and behaviour at the opening (which in turn unsettled them). While my friend remembered hearing of an opening in Perth where the artist hired two hundred security guards to just be there, with neither party—the guards or audience—really knowing what to do about the other. In both instances a device of 'overwhelming' seemed able to interrupt usual behaviour and allow something less certain to happen. The opening of *THISISCURATING1-40* finished as many do, by leaving the pretext of the exhibition behind and transplanting its social platform to a more fitting location. I was enfolded into a drift up to the pub, where conversations branched naturally and strangers became acquaintances.

## 3. Saturday 26 April 2008, 4pm

40 minute mics: artist talks at Firstdraft  
*THISISCURATING 1-40*—H&M, Victoria Lawson, Nadia Wagner

## Saturday 3 May 2008, 4pm

40 minute mics: curator talks at Firstdraft  
*THISISCURATING 1-40*—Aaron Seeto, Anneke Jaspers

## Saturday 10 May 2008, 4pm

40 minute mics: artist talks at Firstdraft  
*THISISCURATING 1-40*—Biljana Jancic.

The exhibition *THISISCURATING1-40* was also the platform for a tailored program of artist and curator talks. Thursday evenings and Saturday afternoons during the show fostered micro-gatherings of participating artists, peer practitioners and anyone else who wandered along, as I did on each of the Saturdays. In accord with the project title, the talks tended to foreground curatorial process and practice, particularly highlighting the point of dialogue and relationship between the artist/artwork and curator. The talks were actively hosted and facilitated by the curator and as a result, they all had a more managed, discursive tone than straight-up artist talks. Though still with some sticking points, particularly in teasing discussion out into a group endeavour. The conversation thread was often determined by the two or three confident speakers, who enabled the quieter or less-assured to sit back and watch the show.

The first Saturday talk had an interesting example of a reluctant speaker—a participant whose work occupied a liminal space in the show as a 'perfume' or smell, for whom it seemed that to speak freely about its fabrication or make-up might diminish this marginality and in turn its effect. This was probably quite true, but it set up a funny conflict given that the work only really came to light via the construct of the talk, which the artist met with a concerted effort to say as little as possible, obstinately dodging and resisting the group's natural curiosity. While the last of the set of talks started with the artist speaking to a PowerPoint of images and then blossomed into a more freeform feedback environment, care of the intimate assortment of folk who did and didn't know the practice, jointly tracing the lines of reference and connection running through the body of work. The program's strength was in the space it made to engage with an exhibition over its lifetime,





expanding relations among participants while folding in peer practices alongside viewers using the tool of dialogue. Along with the pleasure to be had from simply showing up. By the second week, three of us in the audience recognised each other from the first talks and joked we imagined we'd see each other next week too—which we did, not quite strangers anymore. Like exercising a muscle, the practice of talking generously to each other about what we do might get healthier with continuity and accumulation.

#### 4. Thursday 1 May 2008, 6:30pm

Artist lecture: Artspace, Woolloomooloo  
*Paradoxical Forms of Exchange*—Cesare Pietrouisti.

It's a welcome change to be able to go to talks by artists working in studios down at Artspace, whether locals, or interstate and international visitors on residencies. This talk by established Italian artist Cesare Pietrouisti was pegged as an 'artist lecture'—a

marked shift in phrasing from 'talk' or 'discussion'. It can be interesting to read the arrangement of furniture at public programs and watch how it then determines the dynamic between the people sitting on it. The level 2 seminar room at The Gunnery was set up with tight rows of chairs facing a projection screen and desk with a large computer, which Pietrouisti sat beside with an easy, open grace, rather than disappearing behind. A survey of his solo practice, the lecture moved through a range of works from the late eighties to the present, illustrating the shift from his production of photographic works within galleries to a focus on creating situations and performances that reveal the relations and spaces *around* galleries. As in *Quelli che non c'entrano* (2006), where a group of elderly friends and relations of the gallery were stationed at street-front tables and chairs outside the gallery entrance, engaged in lively socialising. The title, translating as both *Those who don't go in* and *Those that have nothing to do with*, subtly exposes some limits to demographics and participation in contemporary art contexts.

Above: *THISISCURATING* 1-40 40 minute mics: curator talks at Firstdraft on 3 May 2008. Photo: Garry Trinh.



As people mingled and milled to speak with Pietroiusti personally afterwards—heartened maybe by the gift he made all of us of a drawing with Woolloomooloo tap water on paper—we browsed some of his publications laid out on the front desk. One was a collection of propositions for actions as artworks, including ‘Bring the three most disquieting people you know to an opening’, suggesting gentle subterfuge as a method to aerate the scripted social spaces and interactions the art world can hinge on.

#### 5. Friday 2 May 2008, 3pm

Gallery visit: Institute for Contemporary Art, Newtown  
*Swarm Transfer*—Peter Newman.

It was a sunshiny afternoon and stopping in to a gallery which I knew a friend was minding, a happy accident to find three other friends and peers doing the same. Gallery visits can be the best opportunities for more spacious one-to-one encounters, particularly in artist-driven projects where the exhibitor plays their part in housekeeping and is often present. The Saturday gallery crawl is a well-instituted phenomenon, where you can bank on running into someone you know as small search parties of art fans drift and collide across the city, ‘doing the rounds’. This weekday afternoon felt more rare and random, collapsing for a moment the frequent sense that artists in Sydney live such far-flung and busy working lives. *Amplifying the nature of these spaces as less about static presentations than a continuum and community of the people, plans and relationships that flow through them.*

We paid shamefully little mind to the work on show, with two there to case the space for their own upcoming project, and the rest of us choosing the sun and the front step and the world wheeling by. A curatorial statement for a group show at a commercial gallery that had opened the night before was fished from a backpack. Studying it we agreed we could make neither head nor tail of such writing—a buttress of language that forgets to actually communicate. We aired our gripes with the local contemporary art space, wondered if anyone was passing on the gripes, and *workshopped some useful phrasing for talking with male peers* (like ‘Now is the point in the conversation where it would be polite for you to ask me about my work’), giving us room to laugh and linger before pressing on with our days.

#### 6. Tuesday 6 May 2008, 6:30pm

Feedback meeting: convened at Firstdraft.

One night after work, a small group of artists and curators convened over an informal drink to float ideas for activating more rigorous discussion of local practices and exhibitions. Among a healthy generational mix of emerging and established practitioners, there was agreement on the lack of time and space made for sustained critical dialogue and the limitations of prevalent artist talk models. Sharing our experiences of other approaches to facilitating discussion, we set on starting a local dialogue practice, using an open source feedback model developed by CLUBSproject in Melbourne as a starting point that we might gradually customise to local needs. The CLUBS feedback sessions work with an intimate, invited group of an artist’s peers and related professionals to stage a structured conversation. *Significantly, the artist is present but doesn’t speak. The emphasis is instead re-oriented to an active and generous interpretive*

*process by viewers, which the artist gets a unique opportunity to listen to. Excited by the prospect of mustering a missing something on the local scene, we each headed home holding the germ and intention for a positive new project.*

...

Soon after this spate of talks, meetings and encounters, I chanced upon the spectacle of freshly blacked out traffic lights at Cleveland and Regent streets. Stopping to watch, it was surprising how well the heavy traffic on two arterial roads could self-organise according to natural gaps and flows, degenerating only now and then when single-mindedness overpowered cooperation and drivers chose to edge and ram across the intersection. Five police cars blazed through in the space of ten minutes, clearly tending to more pressing matters than directing traffic. Which seemed to draft a nice analogy to the agency we all have as peers, to foster more spacious and attentive relations and conversations around contemporary art practice.

1. Clementine Deliss, *Metronome* No.10, (Oregon: Future Academy, 2006), unpaginated.
2. Thinking here of some Primavera and Biennale talks at the MCA and not Firstdraft, who sensibly schedule their talks towards the end of exhibitions.
3. *We’ll keep our cow shit in the country if you keep your bull shit in the city*, Vicky Browne, Shane Haseman & Koji Ryui. Firstdraft, Jan 30 - Feb 16 2008.





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# Art conversations—failure to communicate

JOSIE CAVALLARO & ANNE KAY

Participating in *It's a new day*, a residency and exhibition project curated by Sally Breen at Artspace in 2006, presented considerable challenges in terms of how to capture or represent meetings and interactions with people encountered during the project—conversations which formed the core of our contribution, as is often the case with ephemeral, discursive, and/or socially engaged artworks. Our project *Who needs artists?* was a speculative, collaborative endeavour that attempted to engage directly with the local community around Artspace. As such it is a useful talking point to grapple with awkward questions that arise in participatory works, particularly when presented in the space of the gallery, as was the case with *It's a new day*.

In the planning for *It's a new day* Breen articulated the aims and intentions for the project as: 'seeking out the porosity of what has been ostensibly a closed building—tightly shut to the local community, many artists and audiences,' and that the exhibition invited artists to 'engage with the metaphor of community via the conceptual and physical grammar of what it means to work in convergent spaces.' In the regular planning meetings leading up to the project, we decided that rather than attempt to interpret the complex social space of the Woolloomooloo neighbourhood, we would ask people in the local community to determine the form of our residency. In doing so, they would define what the role of a visiting artist might be within their own neighbourhood, perhaps even the value of artists to society in a general sense.

We began by creating a flyer with the headline: Who needs artists? This simultaneously asked if the services or presence of artists were required, but also playfully alluded to the possibility that the response might be: Artists? Who needs them! The flyer sought responses to the question: 'If you had two artists coming into your neighbourhood for six weeks, what would you want them to do?' We listed a series of suggested activities or tasks we could offer that were general in nature such as domestic tasks—for instance, washing dishes, walking dogs, or making social visits—as well as services that required our specialised skills as artists and art educators: offering art workshops, gallery tours, photography, video editing and production.

To facilitate responses and communication, we installed a *Who needs artists hotline* in our studio and set-up a dedicated email account. We produced 500 flyers and distributed them to dwellings and community notice boards in the area immediately surrounding the Gunnery. To our surprise, the project generated an exhaustive (and at times exhausting) number of engagements with people in the area. We received about 5 phone calls in the first few days and the number of contacts and conversations we had with people grew exponentially through word of mouth. Some callers had existing events they needed assistance with, for instance, a community umbrella event on November 11 commemorating Remembrance Day, the naming of Tom Uren Place, and the saving of Woolloomooloo from development in the 1970s by the Green Bans. Other callers had an idea for an event, or something they

wanted to do, or learn. Sometimes people called just to make contact and invite us to visit. The events we assisted with included an outdoor screening in a local park of the Australian silent film *Kid Stakes* from 1927,<sup>3</sup> which was partly shot in Woolloomooloo; a tour of the John Passmore Museum of Art; brief art workshops for the Baptist Community organisation, Hope Street; and individual tutoring in video editing and professional development. During the exhibition we also initiated two events that aimed to broaden the relationships between Artspace, the local community and Sydney-based art practitioners. The first was an Artist-Curator speed-dating evening, which saw independent curators, as well as curators from major institutions like the MCA and the AGNSW, 'date' local artists by following the conventional format of Speed-dating. The other event was created in consultation with the Juanita Nielsen Community Centre's After-School Care program and involved a Cake as Art Workshop developed and facilitated by artist Natalie Woodlock.

One of the major decisions we faced in planning and realising the project was how to bring any activities or interactions with the locals, into the gallery. Collaboration often raises differences in terms of ideas and formal approach, for the most part our negotiations were characterised by considerable like-mindedness. However, the issue of documenting our project proved to be one of the points of difference. To better represent our own points of view, we'll break into our individual voices here:

## Documentation and *Who needs artists?*

**JOSIE:** For me, a major and still unresolved issue with *Who needs artists?*, for me is the role of documentation for the eventual function of transcribing the project within the gallery. This was particularly problematic due to the intentions of our project. During our residency, we did not direct members of the community to engage with our project by following particular instructions, such as participating in a performance or interview. Rather, our project was responsive and activated via the processes of listening, conversing and exchanging ideas. Including a device for documentation in amongst these exchanges (which often took place in peoples homes) would have shifted these interactions from conversations to an artist research tool. Whilst attempting to maintain an equilibrium within these exchanges, the documentation that remains of the project represents only those with a public outcome.

While undertaking *Who needs artists?* I had concerns about aestheticising our community contact, conversations and residency outcomes in order to present the project in a gallery context. In recent years, I have come across gallery manifestations of projects that centre on the outcomes of social engagement. Whilst representing a specific social experience, many of these projects shared an underlining template that attempts to 'flesh out' the physical dimensions of the gallery space with photos, transcripts



and video footage from the project's encounters. For me, viewing such exhibitions is a bit like trying to interpret a stranger's family photo album. A worthwhile exercise in generating and satisfying curiosity? Yes. A connection to the project and its situation? No, not really.

The exhibition component of *It's a New Day* was scheduled immediately after the residency period. Since our project was centred on social engagement, we really didn't have the time to resolve or challenge the obligation of presenting *Who needs artists?* as part of a physical exhibition. We did, however, utilise the exhibition space to activate and host events that created new intersections between local communities and Artspace, such as Artist-Curator Speed-dating and the Cake as Art Workshop. For visitors to the exhibition, the gallery manifestation of *Who needs artists?*, failed to communicate the intentions, processes and diverse actions that defined this project. What remained on view for the exhibition was a scrapbook of our process and engagements, an enlarged calendar of activities, and furniture that was used during the aforementioned events within the period of the exhibition. Once again, a work that centred on social engagement failed to communicate with the gallery visitor encountering the project for the first time.

**ANNE:** Initially, I assumed we would record aspects of the project with video or photography, which would then form part of the exhibition. Josie raised concerns with this approach, and we attempted to find other ways to present our project in the gallery. At one point we toyed with the idea of inviting participants to document activities with supplied disposable cameras and involving them in the installation of the images. In the end, we decided on an evolving wall calendar and a mobile stack of furniture and equipment for the scheduled gallery activities. The calendar, intended as a timetable of gallery events, was to include photographs from any of the artists or events in *It's a new day*, with an accumulating bank of images developing throughout the exhibition.

Having installed these elements, however, we realised we were not offering the same clarity to gallery visitors about the project as we did in conversations with participants, so we compiled the reference materials we had collected in the studio into a 'scrapbook' presented in the gallery. I also contributed to Lisa Kelly's blog ([www.its-a-newday.net](http://www.its-a-newday.net)), which audience members could access through the Artspace Reading Room, in an attempt to elaborate a sense of the project's breadth.

In retrospect, perhaps we should have opted out of the exhibition and simply worked outside the gallery, because the manifestation of the work in the gallery was—to put it bluntly—pretty boring. Or we could have invited local residents into a participatory environment that would have included other gallery visitors, but in the 7 weeks we had in the area this wasn't possible. It took us all the allotted time just to make connections in the neighbourhood, and when we did it became clear how disenfranchised the nearby residents were from what went on within the gallery.<sup>2</sup>

Photographic documentation of participatory projects when presented in a gallery can only ever present a partial view of situations with spatial, temporal and experiential dimensions. The differing and possibly conflicting experiences and points of view

of project participants are difficult to capture, even video or film must necessarily be edited and constructed by the artist.

The meaning of photographs can be mobilised, and opened out so that it is possible—particularly when they are contextualised by a written text—they become an illustration of an idea, or an authoritative, one-dimensional project account.<sup>3</sup> Alexander Alberro, discussing the recording of conceptual art in the 1970s, says, '... records not only validate and affirm but also fix or freeze meaning.' For Alberro, records refer to 'legal documents, catalogues, artist statements, preliminary models, schemata, photographs, sketches, maps and the like.' In ephemeral artworks such as performance and conceptual or participatory artworks, the 'records,' particularly the photographic records, can take on a life of their own. Subsequent exhibitions of the photographs and reproductions in art magazines, artists' monographs and art history texts, not only fix the meaning of these works, but have in the case of photographic documentation of some 1970s practices, come to stand in for the work: not only as the exchangeable commodity, but to be mistaken over time for the artwork itself.

...

## Conclusion.

For *Who needs artists?* we were wary of using forms of documentation for these reasons and hoped to be able to bring something more immediate or direct to the exhibition component of *It's a new day*, but in the exhibition we weren't able to achieve this.<sup>4</sup> Our discussion here aims to encourage a rethink of the presentation and representation of projects where conversations *are* the artwork. The current conventions used by artists and curators have cut and pasted the documentation strategies developed in response to conceptual and performance art practices, onto socially engaged projects. Photographs, videos or other records or traces of conceptual and performance works become iconic replacements for the works themselves. When photographs and other records are used to represent socially engaged projects, they are even less appropriate considering the multi-dimensional nature of such conversations. They are only traces and need to be recognised and acknowledged as such. Even blogs, a more recent possibility for project documentation, are discursive and do afford a fitting opportunity for discussion and alternate positions about the project to be presented. However, at this point in time, blogs don't always capture a wide cross-section of participants or the audience. So, while we have not managed to resolve these questions we hope that raising them here might contribute to considerations of these kinds of practices and how they are discussed and represented.

1. Written and directed by Tal Ordel.

2. Interestingly, many of the residents spoke very fondly of the Gunnerly when it was a squat for artists from the 1980s to 1992.

3. I was prompted to think about how relational projects are presented by artists from Lucas Ihlein's comments at a feedback session for *It's a new day*, when he raised the issue of how artists 'narrate' these kinds of projects.

4. Projects of this kind may need considerably more support and resources for the artists over a sustained period of time if they are to be more than glancing, superficial encounters. Although, we were much better off than many artists on this occasion, with the Artspace artist's fee and materials budget, possibly the most generous in Sydney.





Above left: *It's a new day* (installation view, works from left to right): Lisa Kelly, *From Scratch*, 2006; Josie Cavallaro & Anne Kay, *Who needs artists?* 2006; The Wild Boys: Trevor Fry, Richard Gurney, Tim Hilton, installation, 2006. Photo Silversalt Photography.

Above right: Josie Cavallaro & Anne Kay, *Who needs artists? Artist-Curator Speed-dating event*, 2006. Photo: Jane Polkinghorne.

Below: Josie Cavallaro & Anne Kay in collaboration with Natalie Woodlock, *Who needs artists? Cake as Art Workshop*, 2006. Photo: Josie Cavallaro.



# Static Feedback

CAMILLE SERISIER interviews SPIROS PANIGIRAKIS

While some artists don't necessarily make work with the express intention of engaging the audience, the role of the audience is undeniable. If the audience had no purpose or meaning there would be no reason to show work at all. Instead, artists would be hermetic beings, holed up in their studios amongst piles of unseen work.

At the same time, it often seems like the role of the audience is largely a silent one. Exhibition reviews are limited in number and usually not long enough to contain significant discussion of the work at hand. They are seen, perhaps, more as advertisements and milestones than critical engagements. On a personal level, response is mostly limited to feedback from close friends and colleagues, or when exhibiting, strangers who are comfortable voicing their opinions.

Even artist talks and stand-alone forums sometimes deny the audience a significant voice. Artist talks focus on the artist and their opinions—audience feedback is often controlled by the artist, and the ensuing discussion influenced by the artist's presence and level of comfort. Similarly, while forums and panels are regularly interesting, they tend to focus on general issues facing the arts and avoid direct or detailed discussion of contemporary practitioners and their work.

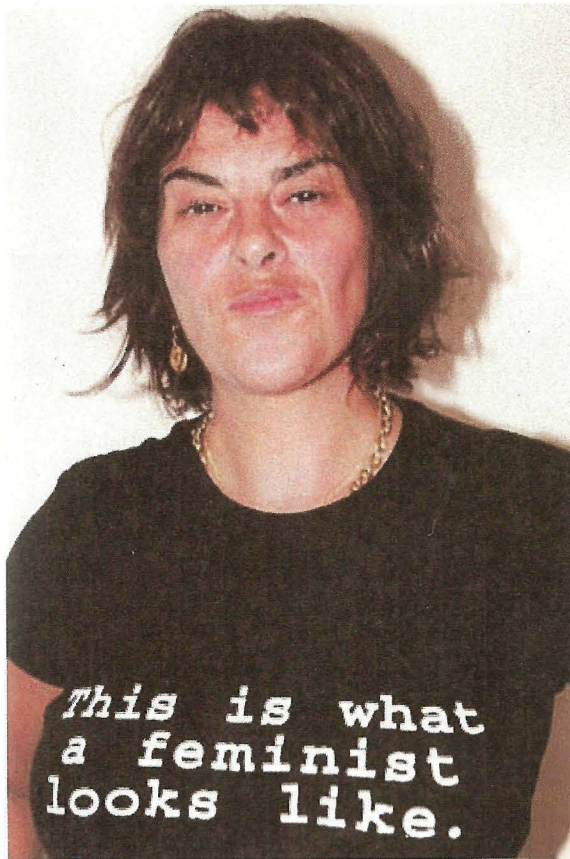
There is one group in Melbourne, however, that has been trying to tackle the problem of the silent audience by providing a platform for critical discussion of individual shows and works. In the following interview Spiros Panigirakis, a long-standing member of CLUBSproject, speaks about the CLUBSfeedback sessions run by the group and how they first began.

**Camille Serisier: What initially made the CLUBSproject board decide to start hosting the feedback sessions and initiate projects that led away from the gallery-based focus of the traditional Artist Run Initiative (ARI)?**

Spiros Panigirakis: CLUBSproject's founding committee formed out of a cross-generational group that had some experience with RMIT's Sculpture department at the time Robert Owen was Head. He initiated a feedback structure that was derived from Dutch art educational contexts.

We wanted to continue the rigorous and exploratory feedback we gained, but also gave during this period (ranging from 1995–2001). The idea that you graduate as a fully-formed artist is an alien concept to a lot of artists. The idea that we, as artists, continually develop our practices, within the context of dialogue based in a





number of different communities, is an important idea for me at least. But also, CLUBSfeedback (as we sometimes call/called it) opened up as a type of 'service' to provide alongside the 'material' work we facilitated/hosted/presented when we were based in Fitzroy, and later on in our offsite projects. We hoped this would create another type of ARI space: a productive space that I guess was an antidote to the 'convivial'—but let's just say hollow—conversations experienced after your show/project opens ... when you mind your show at an ARI or other space, for ten sometimes deflating days after your opening, and there is a type of discursive silence. We wanted to expose and/or encourage a dialogue: a dialogue that the work produces.

I used the term 'convivial' specifically in regards to art openings, because I wanted to throw back a term at the tired critique that is used for relational/social forms: i.e. anything that is relational and in some way has a convivial quality isn't critical enough (thanks Claire Bishop/Hal Foster). And so we've had all these cloned arguments in Australia that use the Bishop model of critique—where all things described as 'convivial' are actually euphemisms for 'not quite good' (enough). Yet at the same time, we have no problem engaging in conversations at openings that don't even

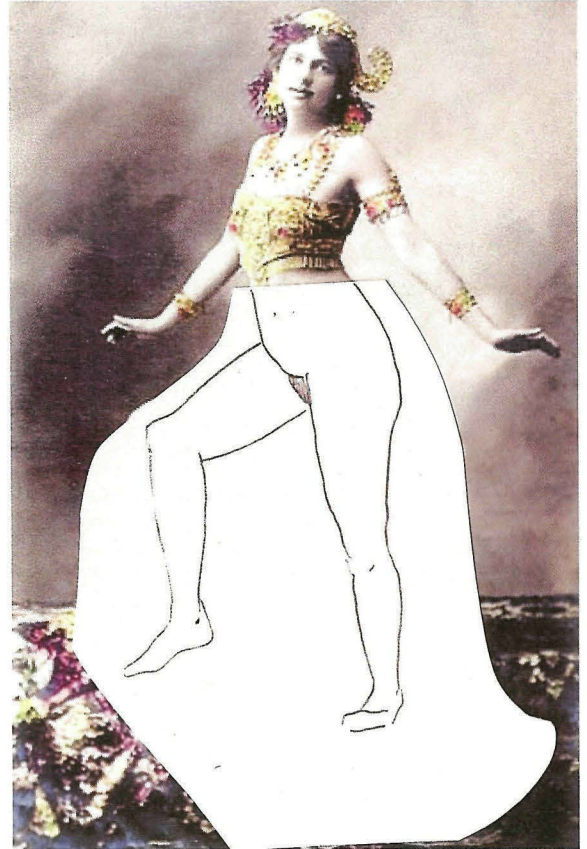
begin to scratch at the work. I was just at an opening the other day (tipsy I guess), congratulating the artist with empty platitudes. So basically, in a long-winded way, I'm saying feedback sessions create a space outside of the usual and frequent type of feedback artists receive in an exhibition context.

**CS: When the CLUBS members offered themselves up to the general Melbourne community as a 'service' of sorts, how did people react?**

SP: Well, I guess we somewhat alerted the public to the service via our website. But mostly what happens is people from outside CLUBS are invited to join in on a feedback session for a project and following on from that experience, they request a feedback for their own project. So over the years, the network of people participating has grown on account of their direct engagement in a feedback of another artist's project. The facilitator of the feedback session encourages the new *feedbackers* to invite CLUBS to organise something for themselves as a reciprocal arrangement. While it's good to have experienced feedbackers on board, it's also important to have new people coming through.

Above: Camille Serisier, *boobs*, 2008, paper and felt-tip marker.





Above: Camille Serisier, *naked*, 2008, paper and fel-tip marker.



**CS: Were artists keen to have the group discuss their work?**

SP: Yes and no. Mostly we have had encouraging noises from participants and that is why they invite us to organise a feedback of their work with another group. But sometimes other participants are not really into this kind of forum of discussion and we don't hear from them again, either as feedbackers or as artists receiving the feedback. We only invite people to the feedback—we don't force them to speak or co-operate in any particular way outside of the already mentioned format.

**CS: You mentioned that not everyone liked the feedback sessions that they participated in. Could you speak a little more about that?**

SP: I am thinking about only one or two particular situations where the feedback session quite obviously wasn't compatible with the artist's thinking. We were invited by the curator of this one particular project to facilitate a feedback. The structure of the feedback means that the author of the work remains quiet for the duration of the descriptive and responsive sections, and then only engages in the third part of the feedback in response to three or four questions posed by the feedbackers. While the curator was quite aware of the structure, it was the last thing the artists wanted to engage in. We didn't know this at the time, and we went about describing the work to great length; some might call this precise, others might be more inclined to call this detail of the work 'minutiae' maybe. Often with a big project we also like to create systems of cataloguing the descriptions. For example: The show consists of solid horizontal planes, irregular arrangements of organic matter and so on ... Someone will invariably disagree with this cataloguing of materials and a discussion ensues regarding this. It's important within the format to ground the conversation not only in the context of the presentation but also in relation to what is actually there. The responsive part of the feedback is a conversation that sometimes is full of questions that might need to be answered. There is often discussion regarding the framing, relevance and language structure used—I'm thinking of nomenclature. There are no absolutes in this part of the discussion and so tangents and musings are often part of the course. One of the participants sensed the artist was bored with this level of engagement and started being quite irate about the feedbackers not actually addressing the artist. We didn't realise at that stage that we hadn't been aware of the pop-cultural reference imbedded in the work. I think this anger was a little misdirected. After all, the artist is very rarely next to the work or part of the work, providing the audience with an explanation, rationalisation or direction. I think that it's probably the closest thing an artist gets to eavesdropping or peer review.

I had an exhibition of my own work open last night and apart from a few polite words here and there, there was simply not an amount of discussion that could be called peer review. I'm not making art to extend my CV, or so that I can gain approval from different institutional forces (that includes ARIs) in order that they give me

the go-ahead to make another project for their space. Don't get me wrong, I love creating new contexts for publishing my work but I also want the work to produce discourse and I want to be able to measure that in some way. Obviously there are discussions I'm not privy to. That's always going to be the case. But is the only measure of success, failure or effect, whether you are asked by another curator or committee to present again (or not)?

**CS: You mentioned the reasons why you got involved, but I would like to know if you think the feedback sessions satisfy your intentions of animating critical discussion? I am involved with a group in Sydney that is trying to get its own version of the CLUBSfeedback model off the ground and we are discovering quite a polarised response. People are either quite enthusiastic and open to the experience, or quite affronted about the process and suspicious of its value.**

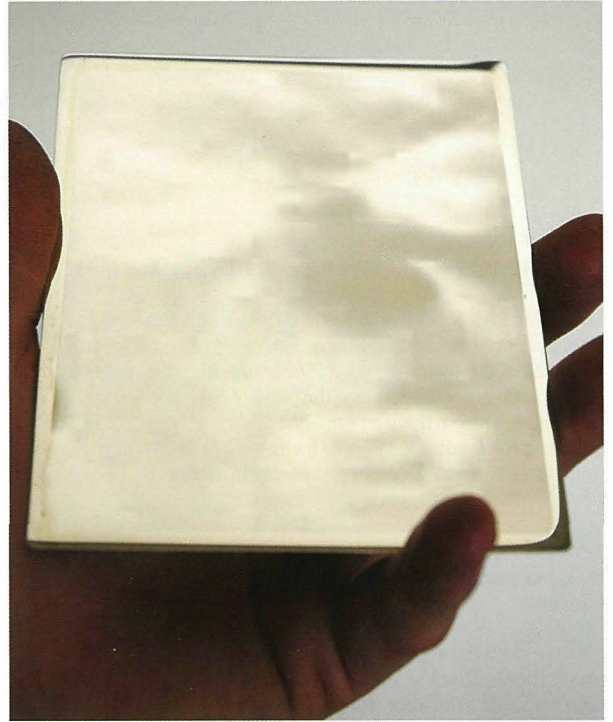
SP: I am not implying this of anyone, but I'm not interested in conducting feedback sessions with those that need conversion. As members of a community that run ARIs our time is very limited. I'm open to different positions, as long as there's a willingness to engage. We're part of an unpaid volunteer workforce comprised of people who also have individual art practices, families/ partners and paying jobs, and while most people involved enjoy participating regardless of which side of the feedback they sit on, it's important that the recipient at least cares. They mightn't *agree*, but caring about feedback is a different matter.

Regarding the 'effect' of critical discourse in a city the size of Melbourne or Sydney, I was talking to [theorist and critic] Anthony Gardner a few weeks ago and he talked about the notion of the 'pivot' (I think after Aby Warburg). The pivot isn't a radical change but a shift in direction. Maybe a really slight one, but from that shift, potentially another one will emerge.

On another note, I think it's important to practise the feedback and make it somewhat regular so that participants feel comfortable talking about art within a group. Feeling comfortable uttering ideas that fall flat, 'half ideas', incomprehensible ideas and convoluted ideas is part of the mix. So having some 'newbies' but mostly people that feel comfortable with each other might be a good idea to start off with. This ensures you're growing the pool of feedbackers but also allowing the group to feel comfortable with one another. We're not orators or debaters, so having a good facilitator to thread the ideas along is quite a good idea too. The facilitator challenges the ideas of the participants giving the feedback. In some ways they are the ones defending their positions. The artist has done their job—it's a time to listen and reflect.

Spiros would like to acknowledge Terri Bird, Bianca Hester and Andrew McQualter for their work in writing the CLUBSproject feedback manual. For more information about CLUBSproject visit [www.clubsproject.org.au](http://www.clubsproject.org.au).





## I want to leave a nice well-done coffee here

JOEL MU interviews AARON SEETO

The following interview stems from an initial conversation on 24 May 2008, between Aaron Seeto and Joel Mu in a cafe not far from Gallery 4A, where Seeto is Director. The questions were formulated after-the-fact from memories of the original discussion.

**Joel Mu:** When we last met I remember you saying ‘the conversation continues’. Beginning a conversation, coincidentally sometimes, somehow, leads to collaboration or to a new way of communicating and talking about art. You spoke as if a conversation can become a thread of ‘ideas and concepts that are pushed into materials, places, exhibitions and texts’. It might seem obvious that a conversation becomes a creative premise for art making and curating, but exactly how does the ‘conversational’ provide an entry point into your artistic and curatorial practices?

**Aaron Seeto:** I suppose the way that I work means the form of the exhibition, or the final format of an artwork is dependent on a range of cumulative processes. In my photographic work, there is so much that is left up to the physical chemical properties of photography, such as silver halide chemistry. The chemistry is something that I have only an elementary understanding of. How the chemicals will interact with the object that I want to make

photographic is only partly controlled by the initial idea or set of parameters that I set myself. In this way, I suppose I am interested in photography as alchemy, ideas and language as contingent. Maybe it has been a way for me to rethink the truthfulness of photography—that ultimately photography and archives can lie as well as they can record. In your question, the term ‘conversational’ is too loose, so general as to become almost meaningless. Yes, I like conversations, they are a good way for me to think through ideas, but there comes a point when exhibitions or artworks are also about the process of research. And I think this occurs concurrently in my practice. A lot of my artworks are formed from sets of archives that I collect and maintain, but they emerge from an ordered approach to the collection and collating. For example, the process of collecting every edition of the *Leader* newspaper in the Sutherland Shire since the Cronulla riots; or the process of collecting 1000 portraits from extended family photo albums; or developing and refining a series of Google searches, to locate images of protest and race violence on the internet to form an archive. These things have very concrete beginnings.

**JM:** You mentioned the problematic of the ‘conversational’ as meaningless by its overuse ... In principle I agree, but I’m also reminded of why this tendency to ‘talk and talk’ has come to define the last 30 odd years. As the art historian Alexander Alberro suggests, our current cultural epoch arguably began with

Above (both details): Aaron Seeto *Oblivion*, 2006, Daguerreotype. Photo: Mike Robinson.





**the Tiananmen Square protests and massacre, the end of South African Apartheid, and the fall of the Berlin Wall. Contrasted against the proposition of grand ideas and bold gestures that perhaps characterise the 20<sup>th</sup> century, this need to converse (about ideas previously put forward) is placed into context. Perhaps the conversation is an attempt to make grand ideas tangible, to somehow ‘highlight the everyday’?**

AS: No, it’s not the everyday, though I think I understand what you mean. I don’t think I would use the phrase ‘the everyday’—it seems so abstract. I suppose the politics that motivate my work—both the artwork and the curatorial work—involves the erasure of certain histories and points of views from an understanding of Australian modernity. The identity politics that I have been interested in is definitely not the everyday—within the general understanding it is basically unknown—so how could it become the everyday! Here, is probably not the place to speak in depth about what I mean by this, but, in the context of your question of the ‘everyday’, perhaps your ‘everyday’ is not the same as mine or someone else’s. It is this assumption of belonging or sameness that I am interested in, and which I think my work addresses in different ways.

One of my curated projects that presents this idea is *News from Islands* (Campbelltown Arts Centre, 2006). It was a project that was very much about being generous. Involving artists throughout the entire conception and rethinking the relationship of the institution to its surroundings, thinking about how an art centre is part of a community and how a community is connected locally and globally. The exhibition had an Asia-Pacific focus, which started off by looking at the demographics of where the arts centre was located. Campbelltown has one of the biggest populations of Pacific Islanders in Sydney. Initially, the project developed from observations of the news, or reportage but subsequently sought artist perspectives on the range of particular issues that face individuals and communities through their networks. I wanted to see what strategies are used to address the resonances, oscillations and collisions that occur within global and local networks. And in order to do this, I had to work very closely with artists. I wanted a more nuanced discussion, particular to each of the artists, which then might make other connections to more general issues. It was a way of circumventing the general as the first position.

In my collaboration with Lieven de Boeck in 2007, I suppose we were thinking about the everyday through public space—of the control lurking within the promise of public space. The artwork

Above: Simryn Gill, *Wonderlust 1996 – 1998*, (detail from *News from Islands*, Campbelltown Arts Centre, 2006) coconuts, shoes, banana skins engraved with the opening pages of Len Deighton’s book ‘Spy Line’ (an espionage story set in post-wall Berlin), dimensions variable, Collection: Art Gallery of New South Wales – Gift of the artist 2003. Photo: Silversalt Photography.





and exhibition that we made in Breda, The Netherlands developed from an interview text that we wrote over a year and a half. The exhibition *The World Unmade* developed as a way of thinking about the spaces we inhabit, about ideology and freedom, and the systems that moderate our behaviour and thought. We began collecting slogans from political marches taken from a series of internet Google searches; we ended up with slogans about animal rights, human rights, sexual freedom, war and anti-war, women's rights, race violence. These are very important markers that have shaped our contemporary lives, but the slogans, when taken out of the context of the protest, were so meaningless as to become almost funny and absurd. So, we inscribed about two hundred glasses with these texts and lined the gallery windows with the glasses, and then we turned it into the bar for the opening. If people wanted a drink they had to choose a slogan, have the glass filled and then proceed to one of four stations from where they had to make a toast. We introduced the toast, as a formal activity—as an icebreaker. We couldn't decide whether it was a private or public activity, but certainly it was a social (if also archaic and formal) activity that could express a sentiment from one person to another or a message to the entire world. A message made in hope that we are not isolated, not remote, but global—that we might belong, that we share our sameness. Perhaps we think this, or hope this, at the expense of thinking that

perhaps we do not belong, or that we could never be the same. This is the type of nuance I want in a discussion of the everyday.

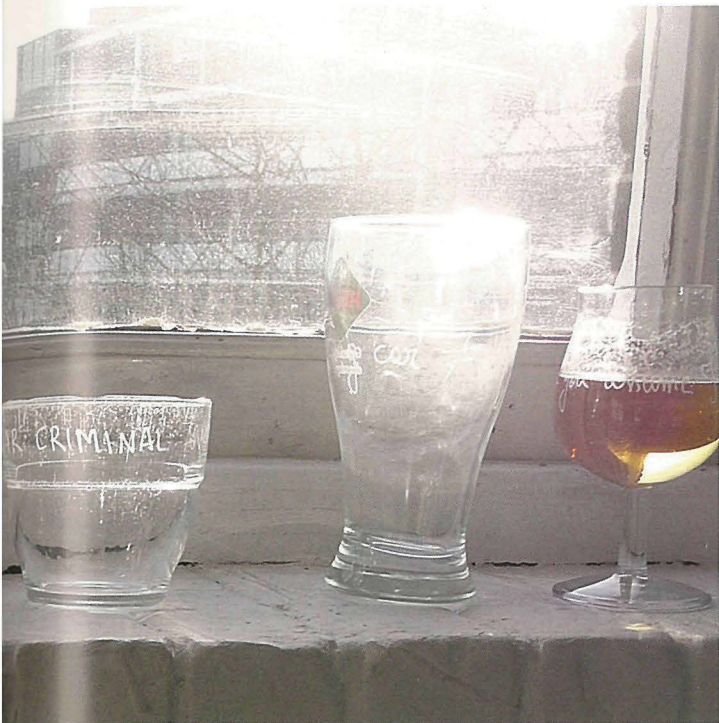
**JM:** From my perspective the 'final format' for both artworks and exhibiting art seem like questions that you might constantly ask of yourself. Is this, as I have heard you put it, 'the death of the exhibition'? And if it is, what inspires you in its place?

AS: One of my basic fears when I curate an exhibition, or write, is that the text simply re-administers hegemony by representing the status quo. A profound experience I had in the last two years, as I began research on the *News from Islands* exhibition, was during a studio visit by a curator whom I respect very much. After presenting my work and the motivation of the work vis a vis Chinese-Australian political history, erasure and exclusion of experiences outside of the status quo, the curator turned to me and asked me whether or not I might be recreating these sites of violence through presenting the artwork in an exhibition. He seemed to be asking me 'how might I avoid becoming part of the problem?' Since then it has been something that is constantly in the back of my mind. Exhibitions can confine as much as they enlighten. Without wanting to sound pretentious, there is a responsibility at play. My initial response back to the curator was that I am not only an artist, that I also curate, I write, I am

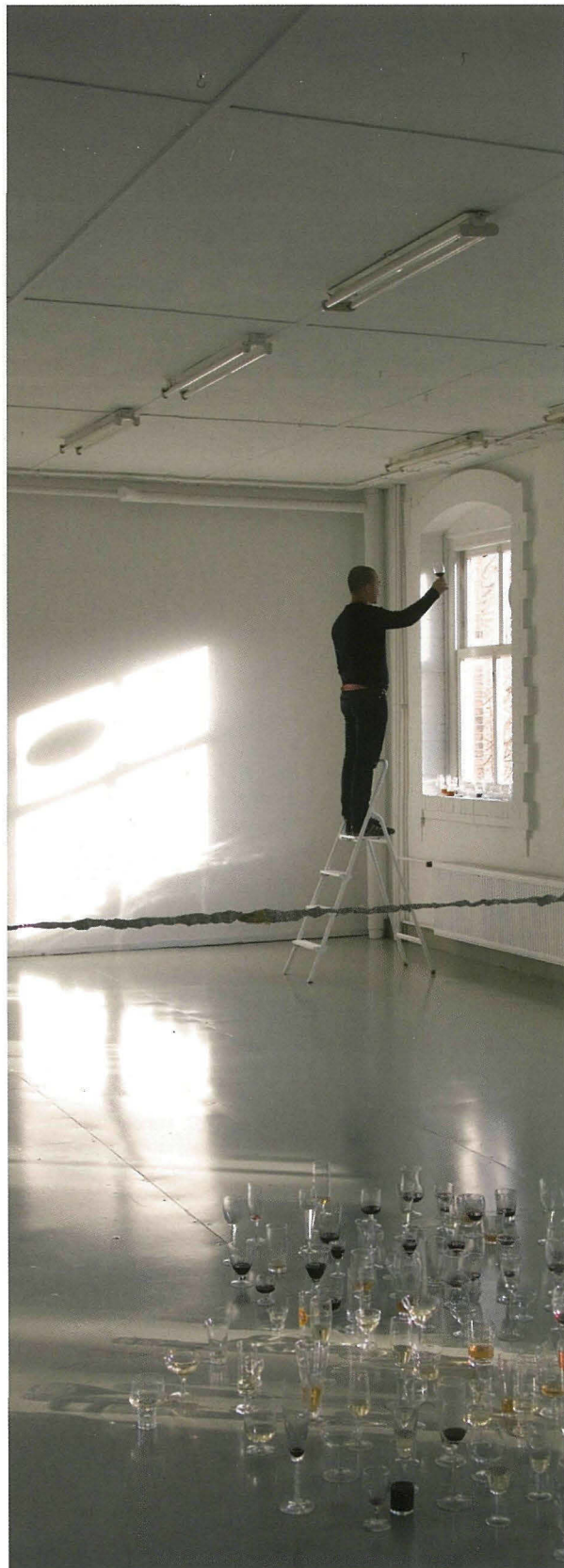
Above: Aaron Seeto & Lieven de Boeck, *The World Unmade* (detail), 2008, texts on found glasses, mirrors with text, ladders. Photo: the artists.

Facing page: Aaron Seeto & Lieven de Boeck, *The World Unmade* (installation view), 2008, texts on found glasses, mirrors with text, ladders. Photo: the artists.





involved in education of sorts; but it wasn't until I began writing the catalogue essay for *News from Islands*, that I began to understand that one of the solutions to this dilemma might be found in language. To be able to write, or curate in a way that opens up language, and doesn't close down meaning. At the time I was reading Maurice Blanchot's *Writings of the Disaster* in which he writes in such a way that you really have to allow language to wash over you before you might get a glimpse of meaning. It's not like reading a press release. It was also like the 'public space' which Lieven de Boeck and I continued to think about during our conversations for *The World Unmade*: the idea that literature, like public space oscillates between meaning and control and freedom and interpretation. It is something that ultimately needs to be navigated by the individual relating to the space or to the book. So in this sense an exhibition isn't necessarily a non-endpoint, because exhibitions still do present a position. Maybe through these projects, I have tried to be much more aware of the importance of the language used to arrive at the form, whether it is a text, an exhibition or an artwork—that the work and the practice be an active discussant in the discourse. What motivates me? I wish that generalisation not be the first position that governs our engagement with a work of art.





# Sound in Contemporary Art: Aspiring to the Condition of Music

BEN BYRNE

Sound has a complicated relationship to contemporary art. In recent years it has become familiar to hear discussions about 'sound art' and its place in the gallery. It is common for so called 'sound art' to be shown in galleries around the world, supported by funding bodies and even included in festivals previously reserved for 'visual art'.

Given this acceptance, why then do so many in the arts community profess a lack of understanding of 'sound art' when they confidently claim to understand other art forms? Under what circumstances does music become 'sound art'? What separates 'sound art' from 'visual art'? Why does 'sound art' remain a marginalised form with limited audiences? And why is 'sound art' seen as insular and exclusionary in its practice?

It appears that the use of the term 'sound art' itself has led to a degree of confusion among artists, reviewers and curators alike. Referring ostensibly to all artworks presented in a gallery context that focus on the use of sound, the term is itself relatively new compared with age-old art forms such as painting, music and even writing. There is no discrete practice of 'sound art'. 'Sound art' as a terminology is representative of a shift in perceptual approach to the auditory arts, attempting to place such work in the milieu of art rather than that of music. Just as 'visual art' refers to a vast array of artistic practices so too must 'sound art', and even then both terms fail to encapsulate the plurality of practices to which they refer. Any sensory distinctions between the arts are inherently arbitrary and increasingly meaningless in a contemporary context.

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It has been suggested to me many times that 'sound art' remains impenetrable to many because of the inability of sound to 'refer outside itself', a reiteration of the familiar argument that music is the only closed semiotic system—certainly not a new argument, save for the significant substitution of sound for music.

Writing in the nineteenth century, Walter Pater famously suggested that 'art aspires toward the condition of music'. He argued that music presents form and matter as one, appealing to the senses not just the intellect, and therefore stands as ideal:

All art constantly aspires towards the condition of music. For while in all other kinds of art it is possible to distinguish the matter from the form, and the understanding can always make this distinction, yet it is the constant effort of art to obliterate it. That the mere matter of a poem, for instance, its subject, namely, its given incidents or situation — that the mere matter of a picture, the actual circumstances of an event, the actual topography of a landscape — should be nothing without the form, the spirit, of the handling, that this form, this mode of handling, should become an end in itself, should penetrate every part of the matter: this is what all art constantly strives after, and achieves in different degrees.<sup>1</sup>

It is widely believed that these ideas stem from the work of philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer and his seminal text *The World as Will and Idea*, in which he constructed a detailed aesthetic theory that placed music in a privileged position in relation to other art forms. Schopenhauer considered music to be the only non-representational art: an immediate and abstract art form that possessed an immanent quality that remained unattainable to the other, more material art forms of the time. He also considered music a source of inspiration for other arts such as poetry.

It stands alone, quite cut off from all the other arts. In it we do not recognize the copy or repetition of any Idea of existence in the world. Yet it is such a great and exceedingly noble art, its effect on the inmost nature of man is so powerful, and it is so entirely and deeply understood by him in his inmost consciousness as a perfectly universal language, the distinctness of which surpasses even that of the perceptible world itself.<sup>2</sup>

It is interesting that there has apparently been such a paradoxical reversal from the discourse around music's relation to art in the nineteenth century, to more recent discourse that has positioned 'sound art' as impenetrable to the general public due to the perceived non-referential character of the form. I suggest that this reversal is the result of a shift from a focus on music as a form to sound as a medium.

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Attempts to understand the nature of sound are, historically, relatively recent. In fact, as Jonathan Sterne noted in his book *The Audible Past*, 'prior to the nineteenth century, philosophies of sound usually considered their object through a particular, idealised instance such as speech or music'.<sup>3</sup> For example, Pythagoras developed a series of equations as translations of musical notes after realising that the sounds emanating from blacksmiths hitting their anvils were beautiful and harmonious. He eventually discovered this was due to the relative sizes of the anvils being simple ratios of one another. However, he undertook this work attempting to better understand the art of music rather than the nature of sound. Leonardo da Vinci was perhaps the first thinker to attempt to understand the nature of sound, writing that:

Just as a stone flung into the water becomes the centre and cause of many circles, and as sound diffuses itself in circles in the air; so any object, placed in the luminous atmosphere, diffuses itself in circles, and fills the surrounding air with infinite images of itself.<sup>4</sup>

According to Martin Kemp, in his book 'Leonardo da Vinci: The Marvellous Works of Nature and Man', da Vinci understood sound as 'a series of successive "tremors" rather than as linear movements of actual material'.<sup>5</sup> In the centuries prior to that many had already undertaken related study, but always with





BLINDSIDE





constructions such as the voice or music in mind as the object of study—as was the case with Pythagoras—rather than sound itself. Only since the work of Leonardo da Vinci and others in the last five hundred years or so have we begun to focus on sound itself and approach it as an immanent perceptual modality. Subsequently, it wasn't until the development of technologies of sound reproduction in the late nineteenth century that all sounds were rendered as potential cultural capital, manipulable in the name of the arts. The work of artists such as the Italian Futurists, the French school of *musique concrete*, and John Cage established the possible use of all sounds in music and by extension in the arts more broadly, and it was in this context that the notion of 'sound art' emerged.

It is widely held that the arrival of photographic technology assumed mimetic responsibility in the visual arts from the art of painting, allowing the development of modernist abstract painting. Similarly, although it advanced the possibilities for auditory arts beyond music, the development of phonography resulted in a corresponding expectation that such technologies behave mimetically. Sound technologies were, and are largely still, expected to reproduce 'true' or 'original' sounds corresponding to discrete and recognisable sources. This is exemplified in the rhetoric of 'high-fidelity' that accompanied the development of these technologies, a trend we see even today with advertising describing 'hi-fi' stereos and other equipment. It is within this milieu that auditory artworks are interpreted and required to offer 'fidelity', 'meaning' and 'understanding' to audiences in a way that is not required of other art forms.

Straddling the worlds of art and music, the auditory arts have remained marginalised throughout their existence. Artists who explore the use of sound in art and/or music beyond conventional western understandings of music are typecast as 'experimental'. Luminaries such as Luigi Russolo, Pierre Schaeffer and John Cage supposedly opened the door to the possibility of hearing absolutely any sound as music or art over fifty years ago and yet continually we still hear talk of the 'avant-garde' in music and 'sound art'. Performances, exhibitions and releases from artists working directly with sound in the arts usually attract relatively small audiences precisely because of the self-perceived failure of so many to 'understand' the work, even though they are usually not asked to do anything of the sort. Cultures around the auditory arts are often unwelcoming to outsiders precisely because of this friction, which explains a tendency for self-sufficient communities to develop an isolationist approach that avoids the need to answer *the same questions again and again from outsiders asking for explanations.*

It is only artists working with sound who somehow open up a visually or conceptually digestible approach to their work that are able to generate interest in the broader art world. For example, Christian Marclay works with sound in almost all his works and frequently performs as a musician. However, he is best known for his experimentations with vinyl records that are most commonly presented (either themselves or through documentation) as 'visual art'. As a result Marclay has not only been widely accepted but has come to be seen not as a 'sound artist' but simply as an artist.

Above: Sumugan Sivanesan & Sam Smith, *Potent*, 2006, Plywood Box Photo: Sam Smith.





It has only been around two hundred years since we even began to regard the senses as separate and distinct and yet we apparently now see modes of sensory perception as some sort of insurmountable distinction in form, despite the increasing prevalence of mixed media installation work, which not only invites audiences to watch and listen, but to touch, smell and sometimes taste as well. Matt Chaumont is one young artist working with sound who illustrates the point perfectly. After losing his hearing in one ear as a young man he became interested in the idea of music for the deaf, developing a performance practice in which he generates music from the acoustic phenomena resulting from the interference of various sub-bass frequencies in space. Alongside his work as a performing musician Chaumont exhibits artworks in which he takes found objects (most commonly barrel drums or other industrial containers) and, using actuators bolted onto the objects themselves, turns them into speakers of sorts, vibrating with sub-bass frequencies tailored specifically to the space. In this way his objects can be both seen and heard in the gallery, demonstrating his interest in modes of perception and sensory phenomena such as synaesthesia. Importantly, Chaumont's work does not promote sensory hierarchies but rather functions as an investigation of the immanence of perception itself.

The term 'sound art' is primarily the result of a push for legitimacy from artists and musicians working in the arts who do not feel completely comfortable wearing either moniker. There is actually little that separates the auditory arts from their visual cousins, and if artworks produced entirely from sound are presented in

a gallery context without any sort of material dimensions then I would argue that—save for some examples of more conceptual works—they are presented as music, and regardless can be received simply as art.

'Sound art', and indeed any distinction made between the auditory and visual arts in a contemporary context, is nothing more than an arbitrary delineation based on modes of sensory perception. If we avoid such sensory distinctions as a basis for denoting art forms then we will be in a better position to conceive the arts as a whole. We should dispense with our preoccupation with 'understanding' and approach art with an acknowledged and renewed naivety, engaging with a broader concept of total aesthetic experience and attempting to come to terms with the immanent. In reality all the arts are inherently based in our own sensory perception. Anyone and everyone is equipped to approach, explore and enjoy so called 'sound art', just as we are any of the arts, if only we can get past that little phrase 'I don't understand'.

1. Walter Pater, *The Renaissance: Studies In Art & Poetry* (London: Macmillan, 1922), 105.
2. Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World As Will and Idea* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co, 1966), 330-331.
3. Jonathan Sterne, *The Audible Past* (USA: Duke University Press, 2003), 23.
4. Leonardo da Vinci, 'Sound and Space', in I.A. Richter (ed.), *Selections from The Notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 203.
5. Martin Kemp, *Leonardo da Vinci: The Marvellous Works of Nature and Man* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 114.

Above: *Tracts* (installation view, works from left to right): Matt Chaumont, *An Example*, 2006, Installation; Adam Costenoble, *The Obstruction*, 2008, Installation; Ben Byrne, *Tremors*, 2008, Installation. Photo: Adam Costenoble.



# Conversing through mirrors

BEN DENHAM

What do we know about the functioning of the body during reading, writing, listening and speech? How do we relate the process of understanding to the physical embodiment of ideas? We can start to answer these questions by thinking about the babbling baby who needs no listener, who exercises the vocal cords just to find out what they can do. This is followed by the realisation that some of those random sounds refer to things in the world. 'Ma', 'Da', 'Ba'. Parents listen and make sense of the phonetic play, guessing at and then attributing meanings. The parent speaks, telling the baby the significance of their proto-words. Baby listens. Baby tries to imitate and interact, but the muscles needed to produce fully articulate sounds are still developing. These are our first conversations.

Skip to the deaf baby learning sign, only four months old and already indicating its hunger to its mother by using the sign for 'milk'. The muscles controlling the gross movement of arms and hands are much easier to manipulate than the complex of mouth, tongue and throat muscles needed to produce clear speech sounds.<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile the hearing baby babbles on in their attempts to imitate the speech of adults. Slowly the muscles develop allowing the child to produce the set of sounds that make up their particular language. Interestingly those muscles will be as important to the child's ability to understand the speech of others as they will be in that child's own ability to speak.

In order to elaborate on this connection between speaking and understanding it's useful to consider the work of a group of Italian neuroscientists and their discovery of the mirror neuron system. In the mid-1990s a number of neuroscientists discovered that a large proportion of the neurons that fire when we perform a particular action, also fire when we watch someone else do that same action.<sup>2</sup> This mirroring is so profound that there is an inhibitory response in the spinal cord that stops us from performing the action that we are watching. With these discoveries the 'mirror-neuron system' came into discursive existence. Since then, it has been used to account for (among other things) our ability to imitate the actions of others (including speech sounds), our capacity for empathy, and our ability to understand language.<sup>3</sup>

One of the studies to have considered the functioning of the mirror-neuron system in a specific part of the body examined the activation of tongue muscles in both speaking and listening.<sup>4</sup> This study found that when we listen to and—perhaps more importantly—when we understand speech sounds, there is an activation of the neurons that control the muscles that allow us to produce those sounds. So, when we hear a word like 'front', in which the combination of the 'f' and 'r' sounds strongly engages the tongue muscles, we mirror that engagement of muscles at the level of our neurons. Crucially that activation is significantly diminished in the case of pseudo-words and non-words, suggesting that the neural mirroring of the muscular movements of speech during listening is part of the process of understanding what is said—a kind of embodied understanding.

We can then expand this perspective to think of how the mirror-neuron system might be involved in understanding gesture. From here we can start to think of the listening aspect of conversation as an *understanding through embodiment* of the gestures and speech-sounds of the speaker.

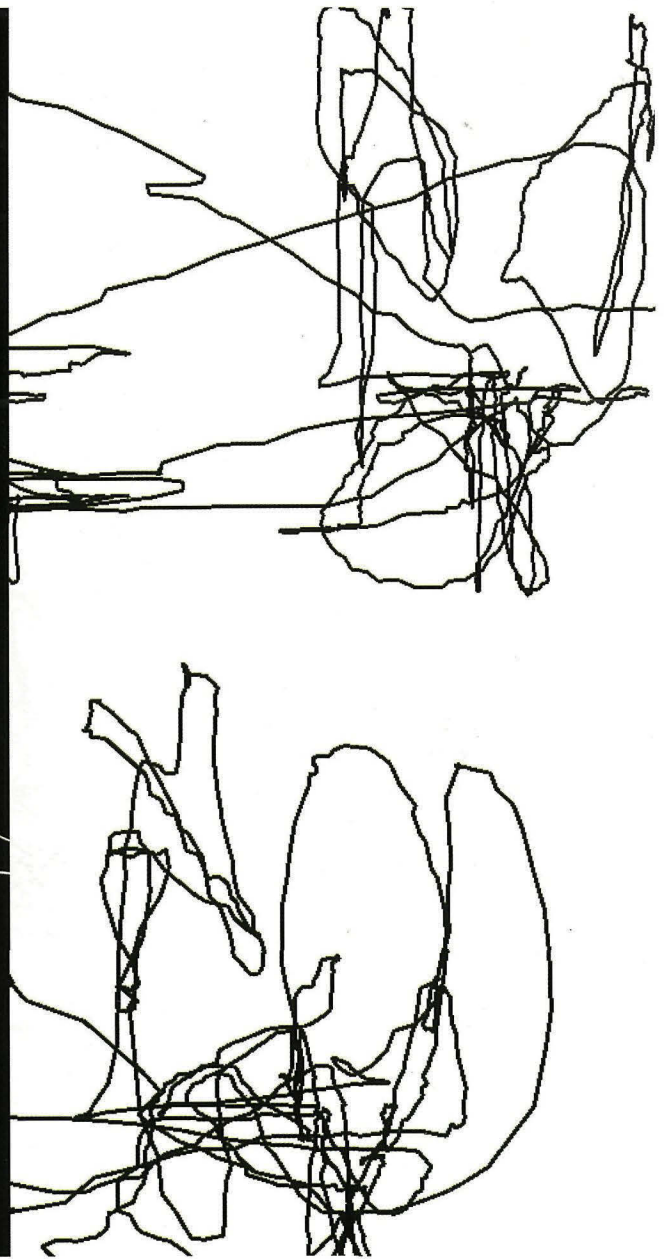
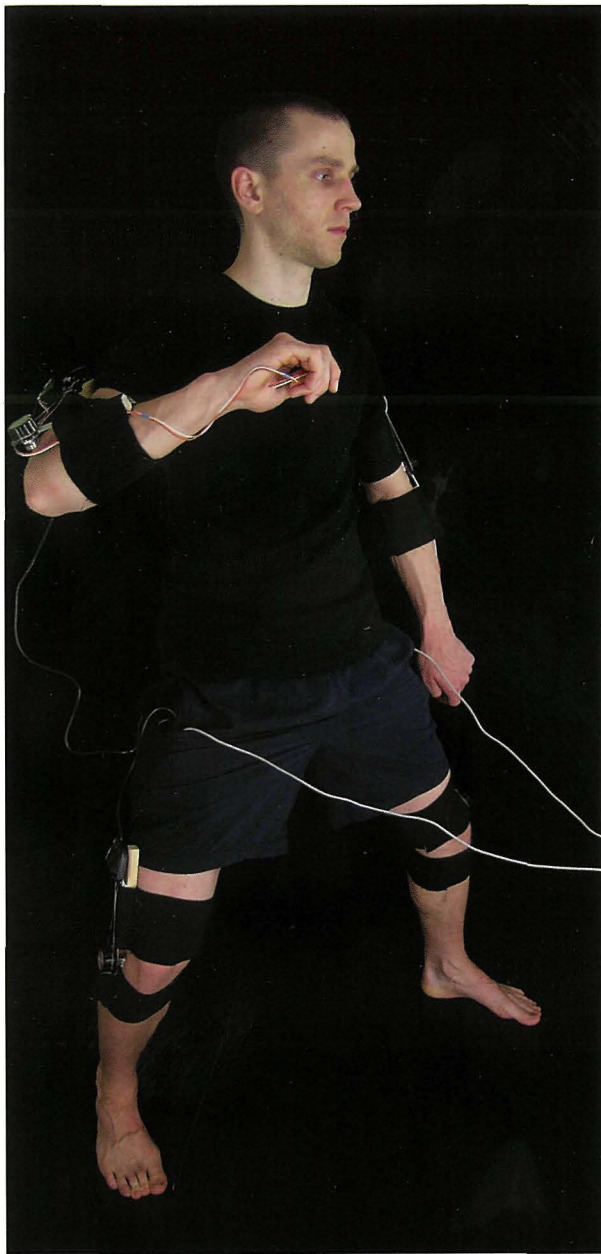
But how does all this relate to reading and writing? In another study, researchers have found that both reading and listening to descriptions of bodily actions also activates the neurons that we would use to perform those same actions.<sup>5</sup> This suggests another dimension of embodied understanding that can be applied to the reading process.

While we might well imagine that the mirror-neuron system plays an important role in learning through its links to imitation and empathy, it's worth noting that mirror-neuron activation is more specific in response to physical activities that we are able to do ourselves. For example, an expert pianist will have a much more detailed and specific mirror-neuron response to the performance of a difficult piece of music for piano, than I would, as someone who has a very basic knowledge of piano playing. So when we learn a particular physical activity, we also learn to perceive it with greater specificity.

This is equally applicable to the baby learning to speak and listen. But while with the concert pianist we don't see the hours of practice that have enabled them to produce a flawless performance (i.e. we don't see the process of the pianist learning the action/mode-of-perception), with the baby we observe this learning process and become aware of a less structured play and exercising of the muscles in order to find out what they can do. Only later can the muscles be controlled more effectively and be used to produce articulate sounds.

The fact that a four-month-old baby can use sign language to indicate its hunger suggests that it is muscle control, rather than a lack of understanding, which limits the language capacities of young babies. An unfamiliar mark-making mechanism places similar limits on the adult body. The first step in using these mechanisms is relatively unstructured play and exercise, to work out how the mechanism makes a mark in relation to the movements of the body. Later it becomes possible to make more articulate marks and form letters. This process of learning through performance is more aligned with the child learning language than with the concert pianist's recital, highlighting the mind/body process by which gross physical movements can be refined to facilitate the subtleties of articulate language production.





Here a parallel can be drawn between writing and speech as processes that require the training and development of the muscular body. We can then think of the performance of the act of writing as existing in a space somewhere between writing and speech. Through the presence of the body, the viewer can combine an understanding of gestures and facial expressions with the marks that are made, in order to make sense of the process as a whole. An important part of what can be understood from these works is the difficulty of making marks with these mechanisms. Through the mirror neuron system, an attentive viewer will actively engage and empathize with that difficulty. This kind of engagement allows the viewer to think of the struggle to make meaning as one of the meanings of the work.

<sup>1</sup> Oliver Sacks, *Seeing Voices: A Journey into the World of the Deaf* (London: Pan Books, 1990). 30.

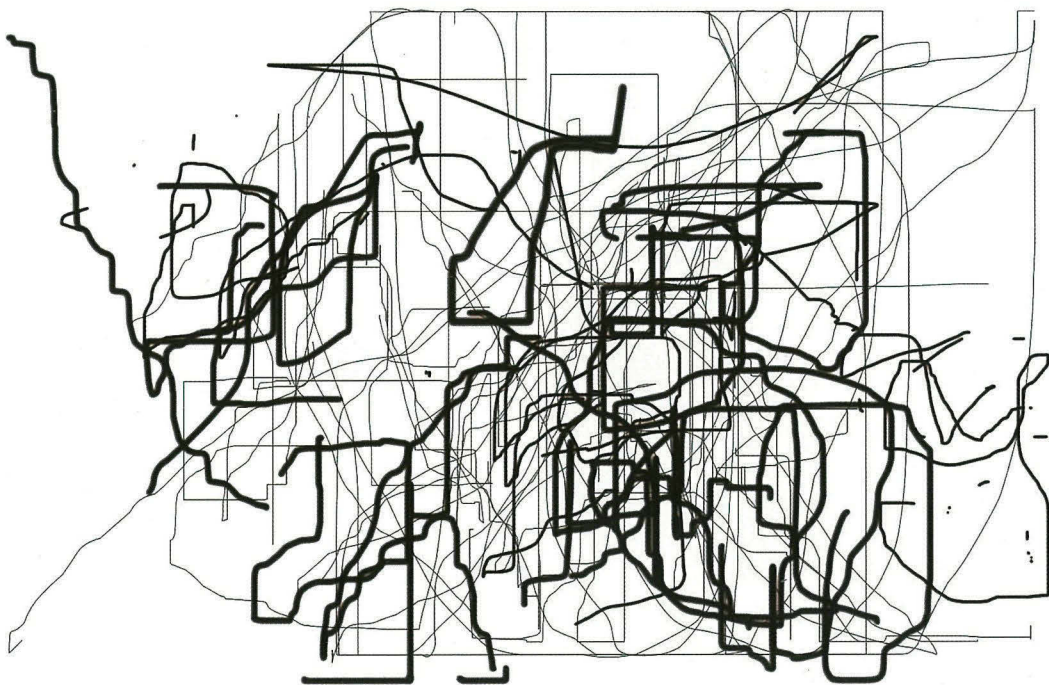
<sup>2</sup> Giacomo Rizzolatti and Laila Craighero, 'The Mirror-Neuron System,' *Annual Review of Neuroscience* 27, 2004. 169-92.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> Luciano Fadiga, Laila Craighero, Giovanni Buccino and Giacomo Rizzolatti, 'Speech Listening Specifically Modulates the Excitability of Tongue Muscles: A Tms Study,' *European Journal of Neuroscience* 15, 2002. 399-402.

<sup>5</sup> Marco Tentamanti, et al. 'Listening to Action-Related Sentences Activates Fronto-Parietal Motor Circuits' *Journal of Cognitive Neuroscience* 17.2, 2005. 273-81.







as part  
to build  
some sense  
for extra



CONVERSATION



# The Gates of Tambo

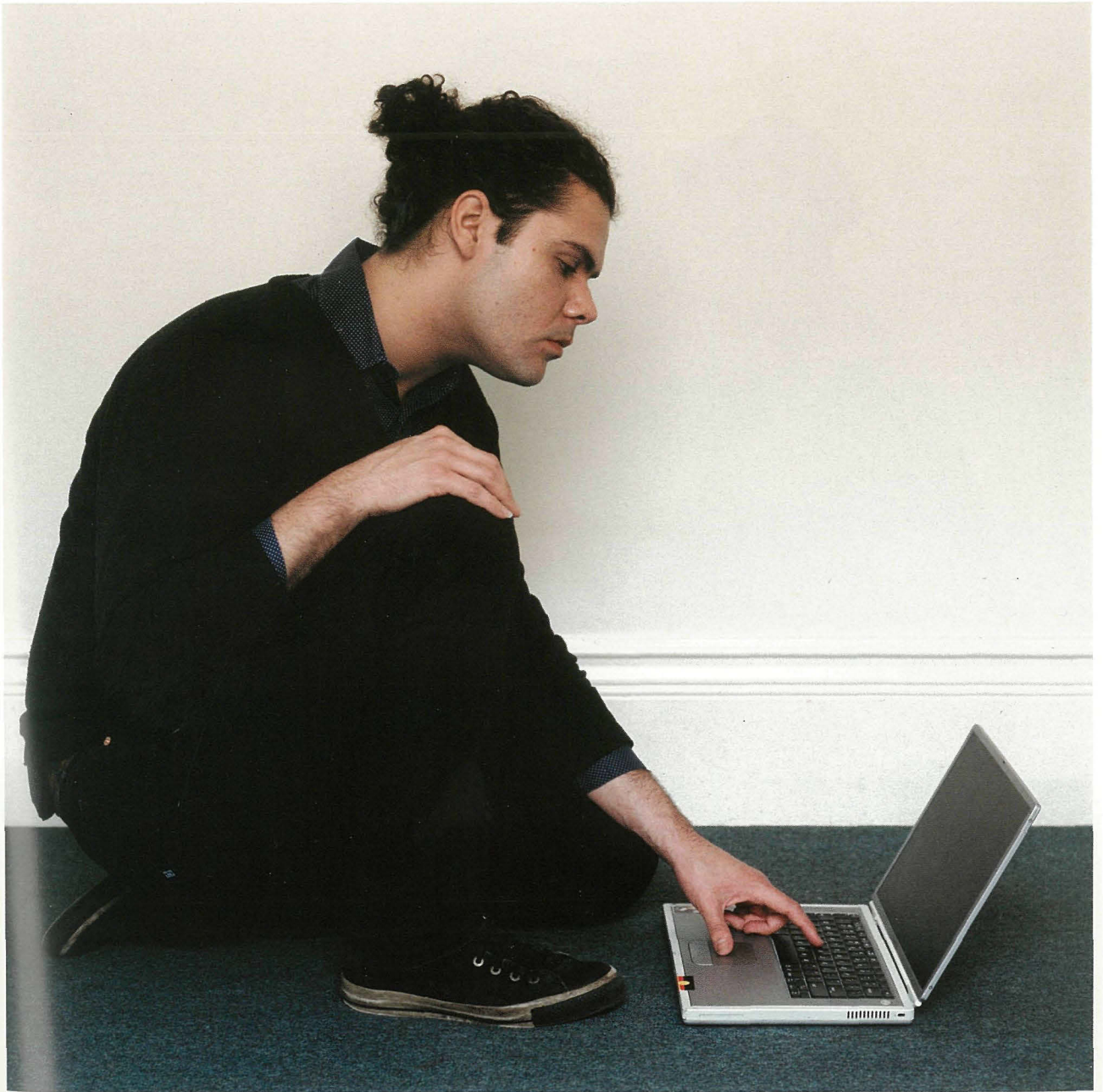
CHRISTIAN BUMBARRA THOMPSON





















# How To Talk To Strangers—A Strategy

SHARON CHIN

Sit facing each other on two chairs. Listen to each other's heartbeats through stethoscopes as you imagine the conversation you are having. Do not say a word, although you may find yourself smiling or frowning involuntarily. *Make sure to maintain eye contact.*

Sit back to back from each other on two chairs. Listen to each other's heartbeats through stethoscopes as you imagine the conversation you are having. Do not say a word, although you may find yourself smiling or frowning involuntarily. Be sure to concentrate on the conversation.

*This is a strategy proposed for any social, political or cultural situation. In a public setting, conversations between two strangers may be broadcast though speakers. But the important thing is that everyone listens.*

Sydney, Nov 2007.













# Picking Up

DANIELLE FREAKLEY (THE QUOTE GENERATOR)

Say, what's a nice joint like you doing in a girl like this? – *Deep Throat*, 1972.

You're not funny. – *Madonna*, 1994. I'm bored with that line. I never use it anymore. – *Andy Warhol*, 1979. I mean, is that a response? Are you responsible for it? – *Noam Chomski*, 2003. U – *Sesame Street*, 1969. flirt with anyone from garbagemen to grandmothers. – *Madonna b.* 1958. You're a mouse studying to be a rat. – *Wilson Mizner*, 1876 – 1933.

You don't really know me yet. – *Peaches*, 2000.

You know, I bet you're a real yo-yo. – *Rebel Without a Cause*, 1955. You're a job or you're a wanker. – *Tism*, 1998.

I am what I am. – *Reebok*, 1960. I am whatever you say I am. – *Eminem*, 2000.

When was the last time you went out on a date? – *The X Files*, 1993 – 2002. ... you longed for the lewdness of your youth ... your bosom was caressed and your young breasts fondled? – *The Book of Ezekiel*, 21, 735 – 715 BC.

I'm not fucking anymore because sex is like a prison, it becomes a support of this post-capitalist system like art. Businessmen who want to make money have to turn up a product that people will buy and want to keep buying. Since American consumers now own every object there is plus, they don't have any money anyway cause they're always being squeezed between inflation and depression. Just like fucking. These businessmen have to discover products that obvious necessity sells. Your parent spoonified you in-between materialism – which the sexual revolution did thanks to free love – and hippies. Sex is a terrific hook. Sexual desire is a naturally expanding market. Now capitalists are doing everything they can to bring world sexual desire to an unbearable edge. – *Hannibal Lecter, My Father*, 1991.

I'm not here to listen to a sermon. – *The Omen*, 1976.

I can smell your cunt. – *The Silence of the Lambs*, 1991. I turn you on like the electric company. – *Lovage*, 2001.

**That's your opinion.** — *Labyrinth*, 1986.

**You know my view; if what you propose stems from humility ... why would you want to ruin everything? Why be so unbending? ... The desire for martyrdom and self sacrifice is taking control of you.** — *Dostoevsky*, 1872

**I think you should know.** — *Deicide*, 1995. **The Hopeless Soul Keeps Mating.** — *Burzum*, 1991.

**You picked the unrequited variety. It's very bad for the skin.** — *Being John Malkovich*, 1999.

**There is no true love.** — *Isadora Duncan*, 1877 — 1927. **Young people everywhere have been allowed to choose between love and a garbage disposal unit. Everywhere they have chosen the garbage disposal unit.** — *Guy Debord*, 1931 — 1994. **If you say, I love you, then you have already fallen in love with language, which is already a form of break up and infidelity.** — *Jean Baudrillard*, 1929 — 2007

**You talk too much with your mouth.** — *The Glass Key*, 1935. **You're happy, you with your oily words. You believe your own drivel.** — *The Seventh Seal*, 1957. **I may not be smart enough to debate you point-for-point on this, but I have the feeling about 60% of what you say is crap.** — *David Letterman*, 2006. **I didn't say I didn't love you.** — *On the Waterfront*, 1954.

**Quand les chiens ont peur, ils mordent** [when dogs are afraid they die]. **You make me impotent I reach for my dagger.** — *Louise Bourgeois*, 2001. **Why don't you just light your tampon, blow your box apart? Because it's the only bang you're ever gonna get, sweetheart!** — *Priscilla, Queen of the Desert*, 1994.

**You're like a life support system for a cock.** — *The Doom Generation*, 1995.



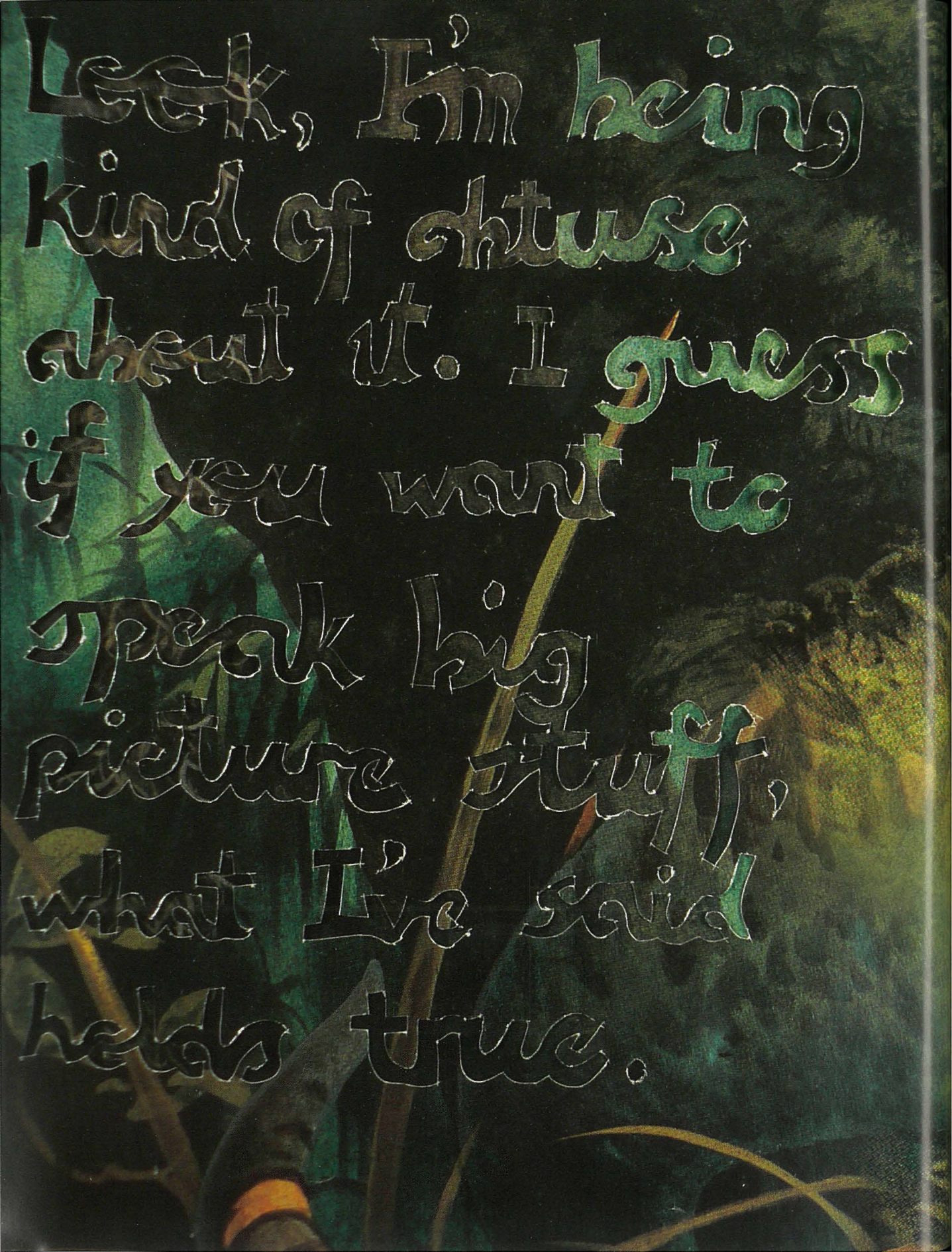
# Interim measures

KATHRYN GRAY



I'm just imagining  
thinking  
backwards.





Look, I'm being  
kind of obtuse  
about it. I guess  
if you want to  
speak big  
picture stuff,  
what I've said  
holds true.



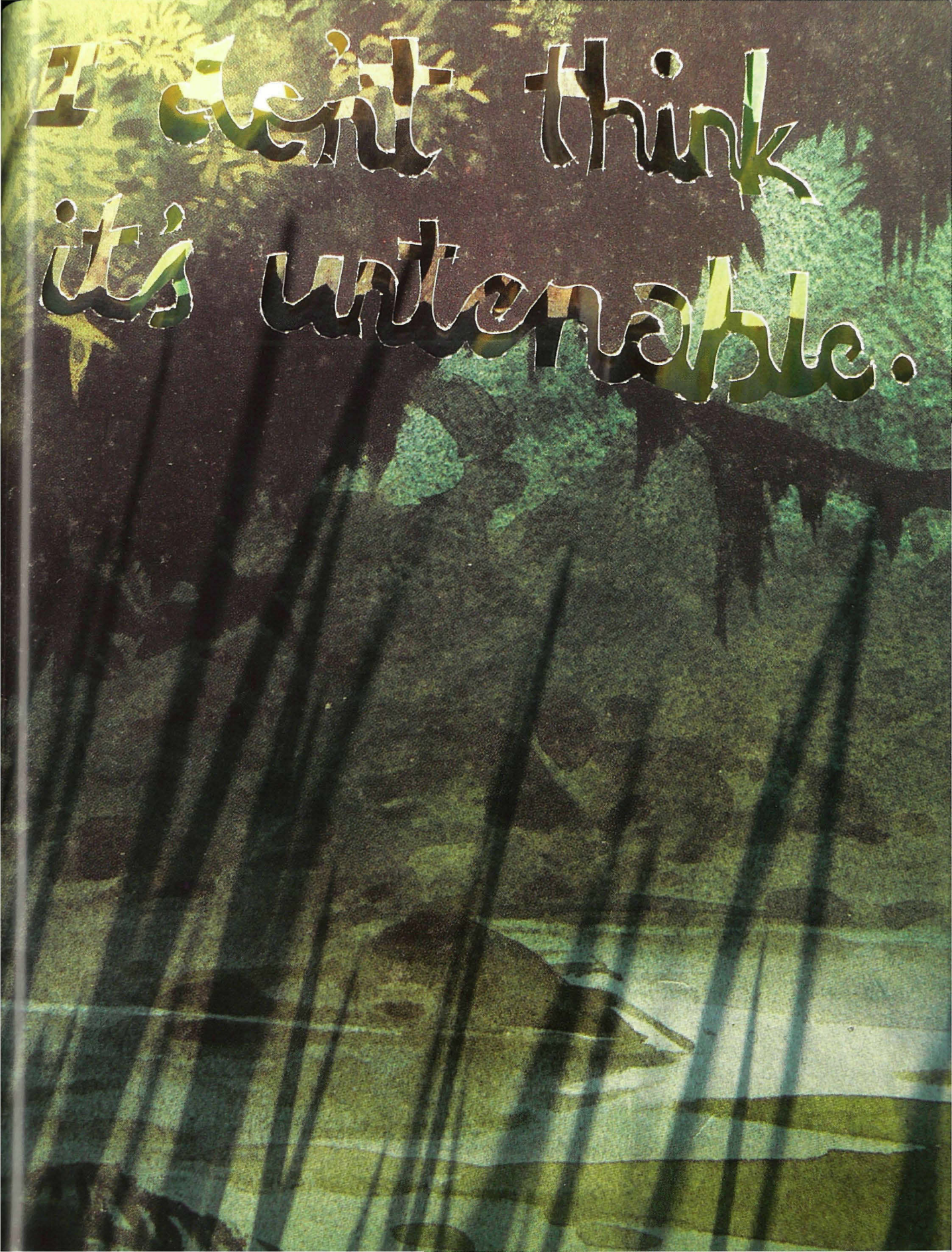








I don't think  
it's untenable.





*Go on a tour of your local neighbourhood in the time it takes to do a load of washing.*

In the Melbourne suburb of Brunswick, a coin laundry masquerades as an artist-run travel service.



## Agents of Proximity

AMY SPIERS & VICTORIA STEAD





WELCOME TO BRUNSWICK

AGENTS OF



PROXIMITY

Hey Everyone!

I just went on a laneway rambling - fruit pilfering mission in west Brunswick!

A very talkative, inquisitive fellow named John (who also works at the state library) took us around and we found a beautiful abandoned house with a giant lemon tree... I'll send you some pickle soon... xxoo  
Ariva.

www.agentsofproximity.org



Jon, Stella, Zineb + Julian

[Redacted address line]

Carlton 3053









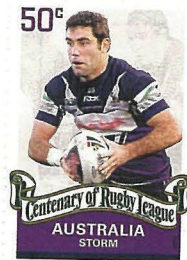




WELCOME TO BRUNSWICK



Reinhabiting the abandoned and rejected, embracing the refused ("Refuse"), Mitch, our guide, took us to sites of waste and demolition and revealed to us how he and his friends had found warm life, sustenance and beauty there. In a magic moment he took out a mysterious key and opened a giant dumpster standing in an alley behind a supermarket. Diving into it, he produced for me a bunch of still-fresh golden flowers! Epiphany! Love, Freya



Sarah

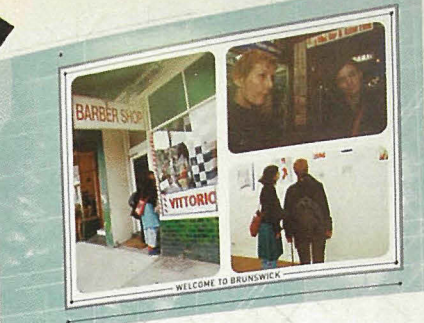
[Redacted]

East Brunswick

Nic 3057

www.agentsofproximity.org



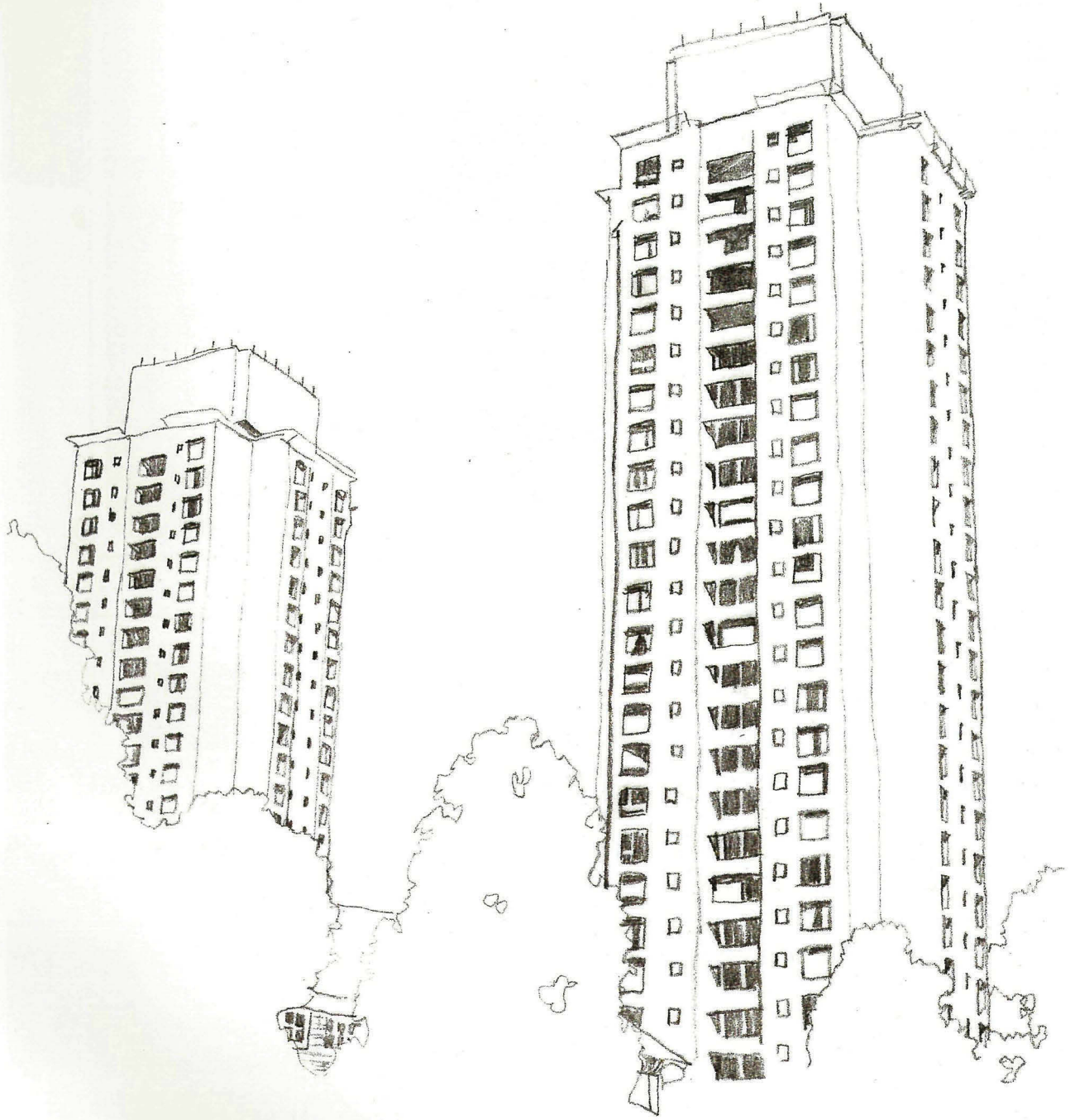


Handwritten text on a poster, including the name "SA SOFT" and a signature.

Handwritten text on a poster, including the name "Jan Woodcock" and the address "BRUNSWICK VIC 3056".

Vertical text on the left side of the wall, including "The Co-Op Shop" and "STEVENS FAMILY".





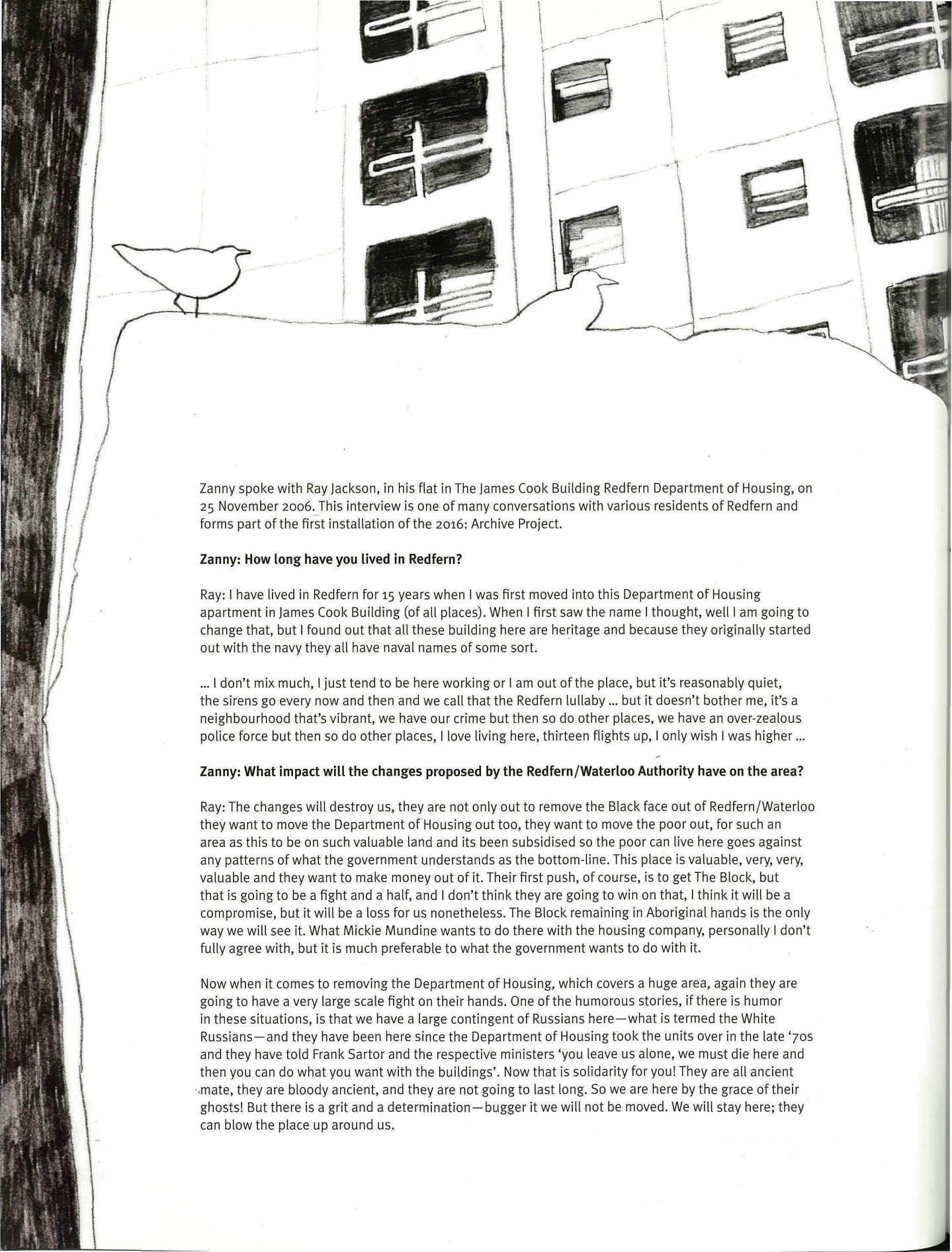




2016: Archive Project

KEG DE SOUZA & ZANNY BEGG





Zanny spoke with Ray Jackson, in his flat in The James Cook Building Redfern Department of Housing, on 25 November 2006. This interview is one of many conversations with various residents of Redfern and forms part of the first installation of the 2016: Archive Project.

**Zanny: How long have you lived in Redfern?**

Ray: I have lived in Redfern for 15 years when I was first moved into this Department of Housing apartment in James Cook Building (of all places). When I first saw the name I thought, well I am going to change that, but I found out that all these building here are heritage and because they originally started out with the navy they all have naval names of some sort.

... I don't mix much, I just tend to be here working or I am out of the place, but it's reasonably quiet, the sirens go every now and then and we call that the Redfern lullaby ... but it doesn't bother me, it's a neighbourhood that's vibrant, we have our crime but then so do other places, we have an over-zealous police force but then so do other places, I love living here, thirteen flights up, I only wish I was higher ...

**Zanny: What impact will the changes proposed by the Redfern/Waterloo Authority have on the area?**

Ray: The changes will destroy us, they are not only out to remove the Black face out of Redfern/Waterloo they want to move the Department of Housing out too, they want to move the poor out, for such an area as this to be on such valuable land and its been subsidised so the poor can live here goes against any patterns of what the government understands as the bottom-line. This place is valuable, very, very, valuable and they want to make money out of it. Their first push, of course, is to get The Block, but that is going to be a fight and a half, and I don't think they are going to win on that, I think it will be a compromise, but it will be a loss for us nonetheless. The Block remaining in Aboriginal hands is the only way we will see it. What Mickie Mundine wants to do there with the housing company, personally I don't fully agree with, but it is much preferable to what the government wants to do with it.

Now when it comes to removing the Department of Housing, which covers a huge area, again they are going to have a very large scale fight on their hands. One of the humorous stories, if there is humor in these situations, is that we have a large contingent of Russians here—what is termed the White Russians—and they have been here since the Department of Housing took the units over in the late '70s and they have told Frank Sartor and the respective ministers 'you leave us alone, we must die here and then you can do what you want with the buildings'. Now that is solidarity for you! They are all ancient mate, they are bloody ancient, and they are not going to last long. So we are here by the grace of their ghosts! But there is a grit and a determination—bugger it we will not be moved. We will stay here; they can blow the place up around us.





**Zanny: What changes would you like to make in the area?**

Ray: I would like to put more resources into the neighborhood. They start good, they put in a tennis court but when the nets start to rot that's it, they never maintain it. They say that the community should maintain it—but this is Department of Housing, its poor, the community can't maintain it. Welfare these days is really a welfare-welfare, its people with mental health issues, addictions, all that sort of stuff. There needs to be a lot more done. I would also like to change how cliquey this place can be—these days there is more emphasis on privacy than community. We had one person in the unit opposite there who was dead for five weeks and nobody found him! Later when people were talking about it they said they hadn't seen him for a while ...

There also needs to be something here for the teenagers to do. I was saying before that they put in the tennis court and the teenagers all went there and played touch football etcetera but the people above the tennis court complained to the Department of Housing that the kids were swearing so they stopped them from using it. So it sat there for months unused and now the net is rotten.

**Zanny: Keg and I are making this archive for the next ten years, how do you see Redfern changing over this time?**

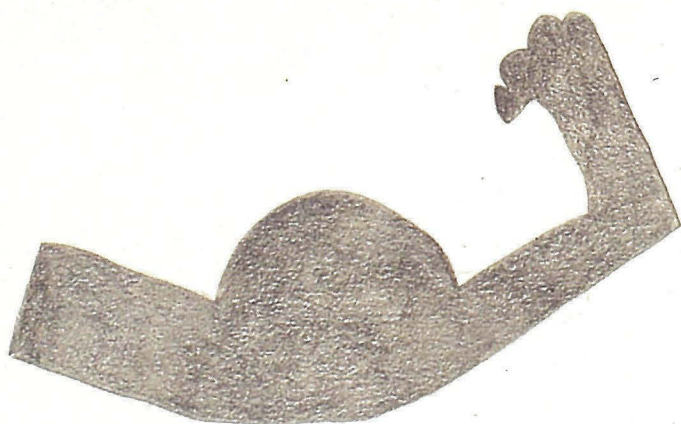
Ray: I like to think we will still be here in ten years, better managed and better self-managed. I certainly hope that we have a better class of copper, 'cause the police are brutal here.



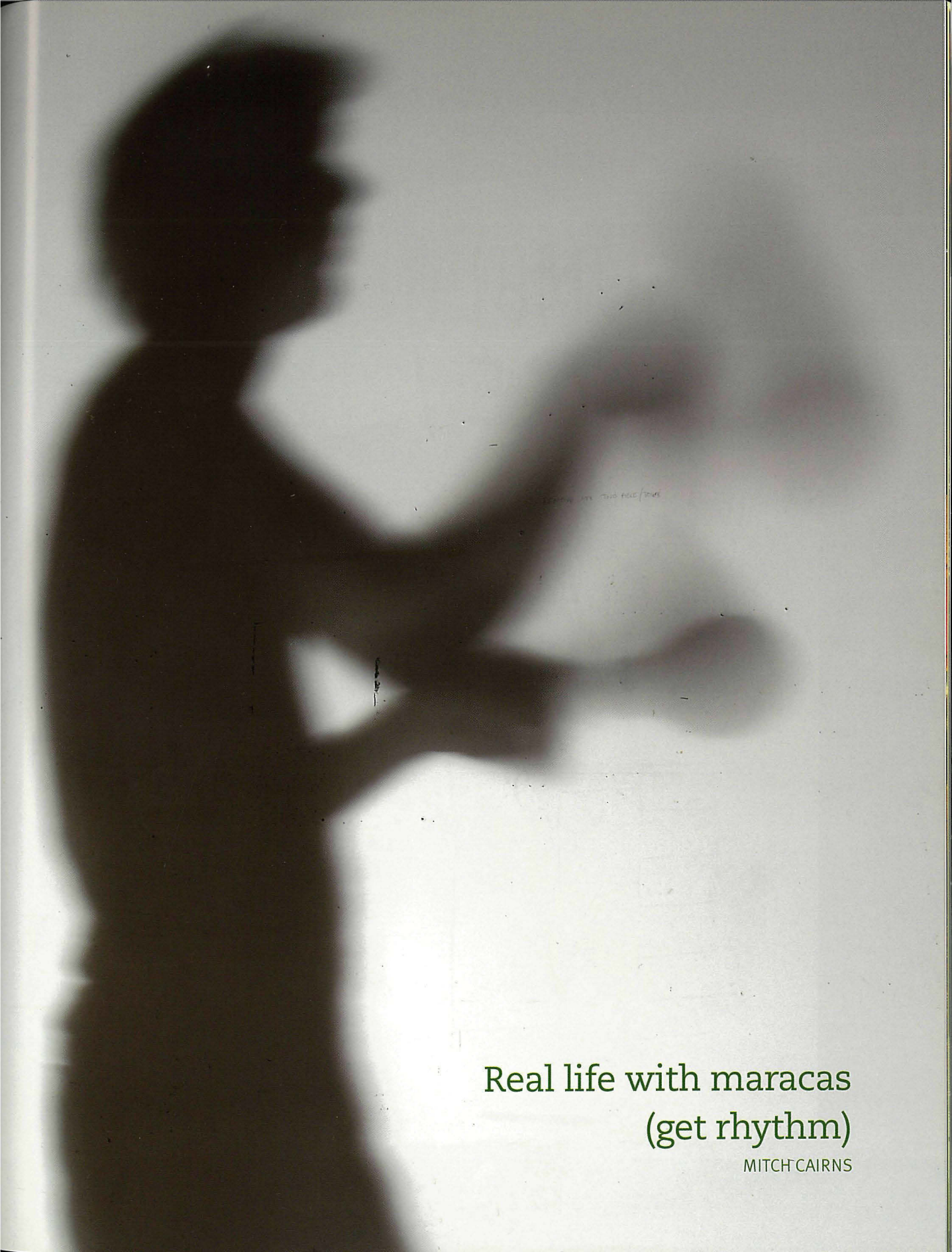
FOOL TO  
CRY /

LADY

PUSH UPS





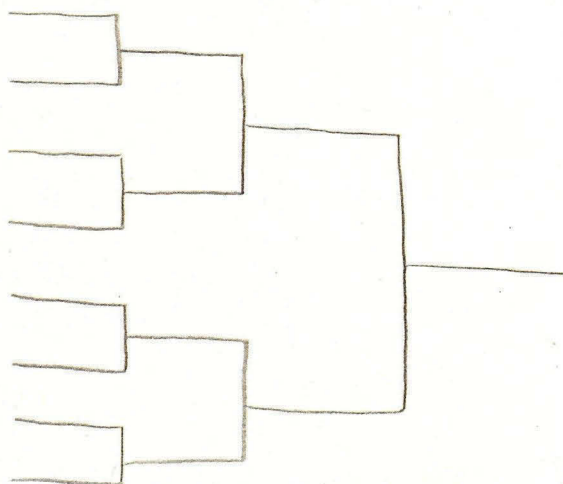


Real life with maracas  
(get rhythm)

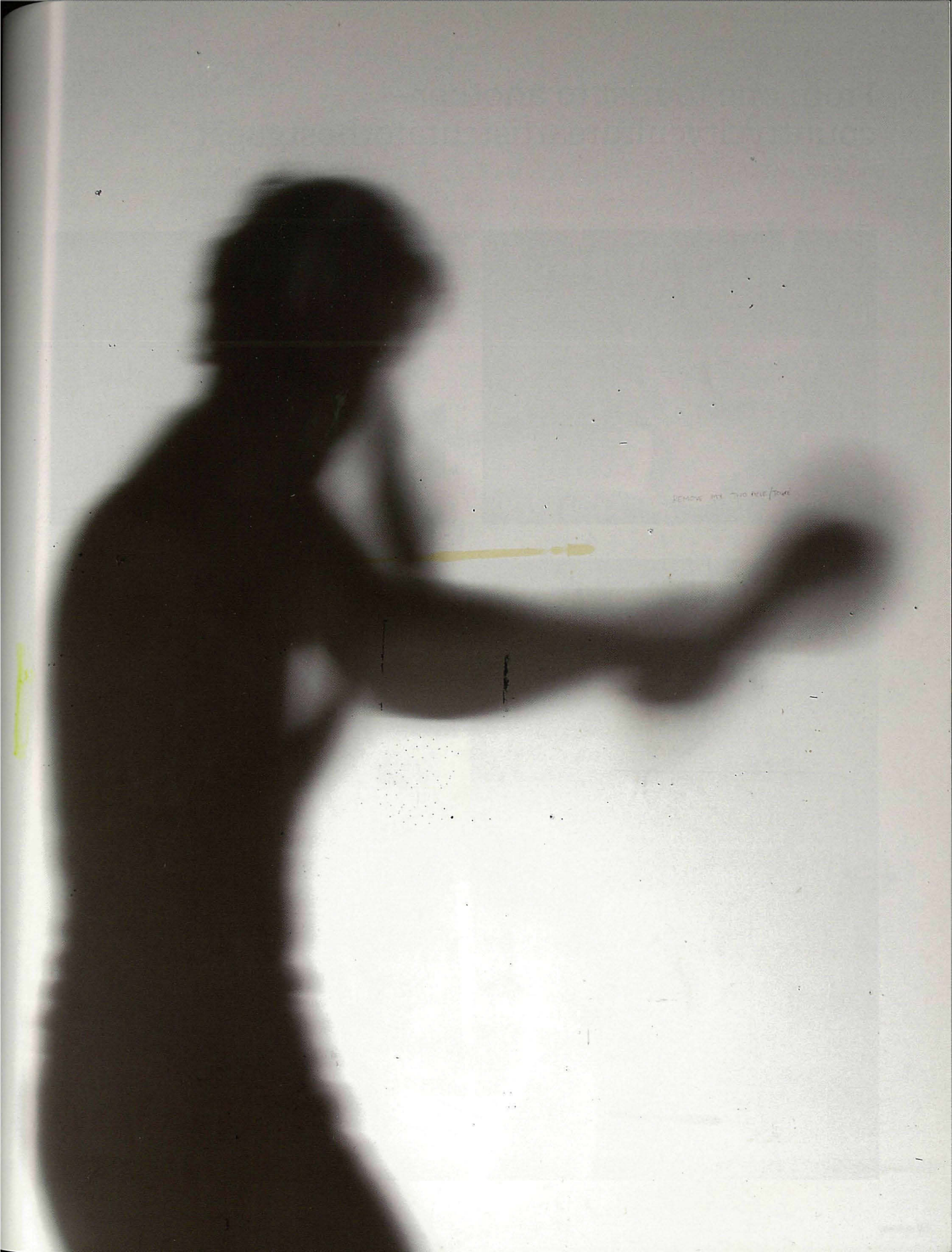
MITCH CAIRNS



TUMBLING  
DICE /  
LONG  
LOAD



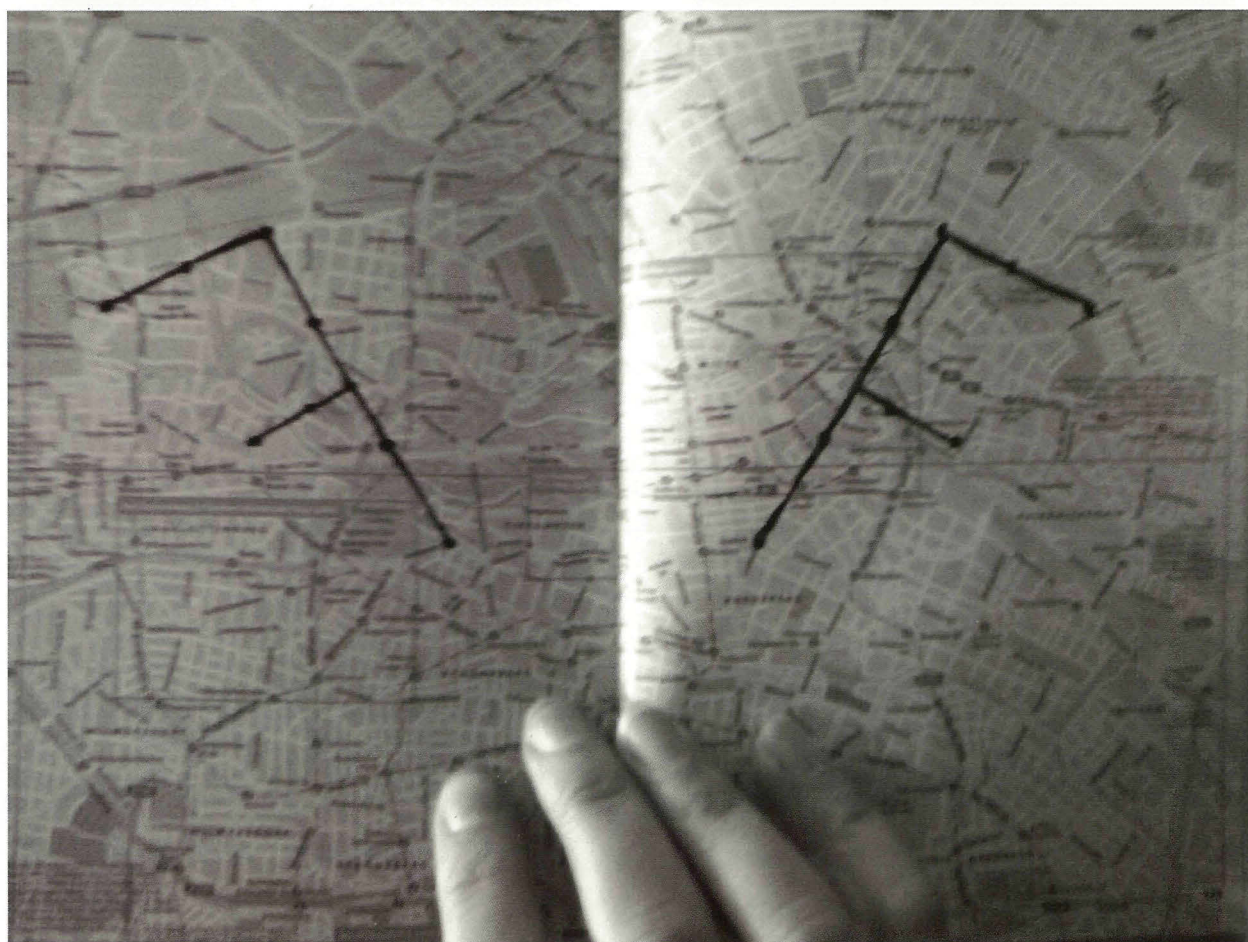
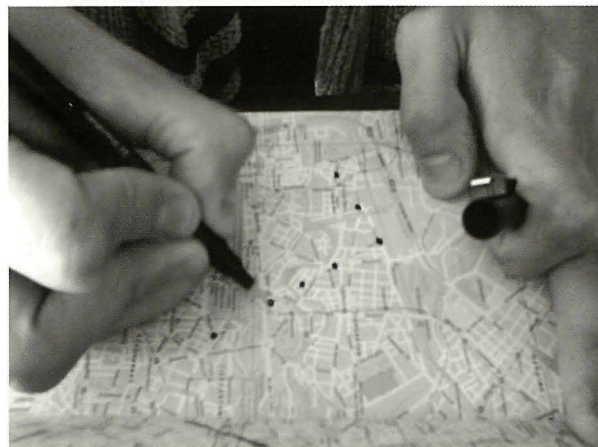






# From one tourist to another— countrycitycultureartistcuratorhostguest

VICTORIA LAWSON





7:57 PM VL: in the project?

JM: in the project  
i see two  
possibly  
three threads developing  
First, the critical space

7:58 PM Second, action—which i see more than the performance actually  
and the Third  
this imagined space

7:59 PM (and this is where, i think the last phase will actually begin)  
to then return to the critical

what is interesting  
is how these threads  
intersect....

8:00 PM JM: you were the one offering the invitation  
and i was the invitee  
the host  
and the guest

8:01 PM country  
city  
culture  
artists  
curator

VL: and the next idea—i invite you to reverse the détournement

8:02 PM JM: perhaps not a reversal  
but a continuation  
a change in location  
in cities  
in berlin  
you become the guest

8:04 PM VL: and i become the tourist  
seduced  
by sites and sights

JM: and possibly by yourself—as i was, rather unexpectedly  
in berlin

8:05 PM i will give you the guide book  
8:09 PM and other books

VL: when you start to talk about the possibility of self alteration you are working with  
performance—tourist as performer—tourism creating a subject  
a tourist

8:10 PM so i will be touring  
to become a 'tourist'  
the conceit becomes more implicit

8:11 PM and perhaps the project becomes more social



# The Telepathy Project

VERONICA KENT & SEAN PEOPLES









8:30  
SENT  
24 MAY 2008

Received 8:30



A newspaper.

24 MAY 2008

Sent 5:15pm



roller skating in a  
psychedelic orange tunnel

24 MAY 2008



RECEIVED  
24 MAY 2008  
5:15

Sent 6:15



a bird bath

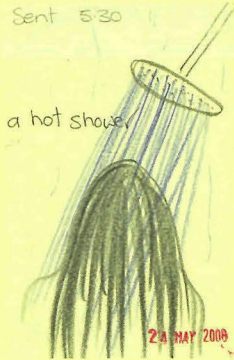
24 MAY 2008



A cat on a glass  
table.

RECEIVED  
24 MAY 2008  
6:15

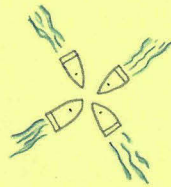
Sent 5:30



a hot shower

24 MAY 2008

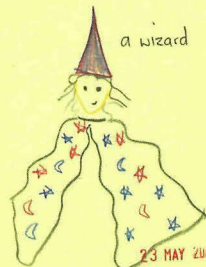
RECEIVED  
24 MAY 2008  
5:30



7:00  
23 MAY 2008  
SENT



Received 7pm



a wizard

23 MAY 2008

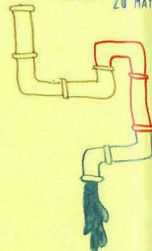
Sent 8pm

that terrible story of the girl who  
hung herself from a tree in the  
forest near your house - and  
the wedding later that same day  
where no one noticed her but  
she showed up in the wedding  
photos - swinging, hogging in the  
distance



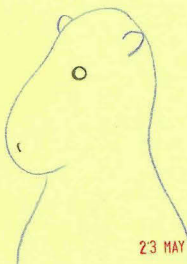
20 MAY 2008

RECEIVED  
23 MAY 2008  
20 MAY 2008



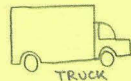
Sent 6pm

a moomintroll



23 MAY 2008

Received  
23 MAY 2008  
6:00



TRUCK



ATHENS



H2O  
WATER

Sent 8:30

An Emo



22 MAY 2008

Received  
22 MAY 2008  
8:30

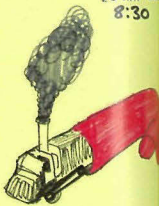


Sent 8:30



23 MAY 2008

RECEIVED  
23 MAY 2008  
8:30



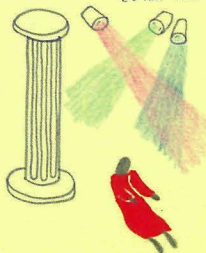
Sent 5:15



a full moon

23 MAY 2008

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5:15  
23 MAY 2008



7:15

20 MAY 2008



sent

Received 7:15



a cowboy on a horse with  
a lasso



MAY 20 2008

SENT 8:00  
20 MAY 2008



Received 8pm

a sandwich  
possibly a BLT

20 MAY 2008

Received 6:15pm

SENT  
20 MAY 2008  
6:15



A smoking monkey

Banana



grapes

string beans

20 MAY 2008

6:00  
22 MAY 2008  
SENT



Received 6pm



22 MAY 2008

Sent 6:15pm

My daughter 'Somy' doing  
'finger knitting', making a  
very long multicoloured chain



MAY 20 2008

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6:15  
20 MAY 2008



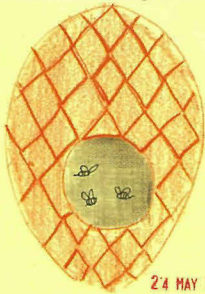


Received 7:45

7:45  
24 MAY 2008  
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a beehive



24 MAY 2008

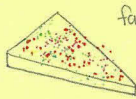
SENT  
23 MAY 2008  
6:15



KEVIN RUDD

Received 6:15pm

Sent 5:15



fairy bread



23 MAY 2008

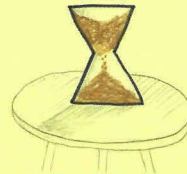
The back of my neck



22 MAY 2008

MOTION

Received  
22 MAY 2008  
5:15



Received 7:45

RECEIVED  
7:45  
23 MAY 2008



Sent 6:30



a dinosaur painted on  
a topless girl.

22 MAY 2008

6:30  
22 MAY 2008  
RECEIVED



7:45  
21 MAY 2008  
SENT



MADONNA

Christmas tree with  
flashing lights

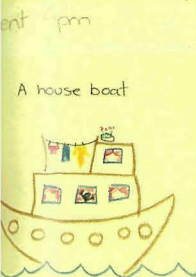


Pink dots. Spots.

21 MAY 2008



23 MAY 2008



A house boat

23 MAY

6:00  
24 MAY 2008  
RECEIVED



I Sent Sean  
Lots of  
Teen aged  
girls



21 MAY 2008

RECEIVED  
21 MAY 2008  
6:45  
I felt  
oddbly lacking...  
...only shoes.



Received 6:15

Sent  
22 MAY 2008  
5:15



"A BODY OF WATER"

Woosh  
Wind  
Clouds

22 MAY 2008

Received. 5:45.

5:45  
22 MAY 2008  
SENT



one of my  
'Kitty wigs'



22 MAY 2008

6:15  
22 MAY 2008  
SENT



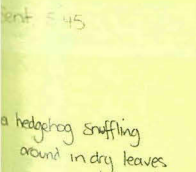
a hamburger

22 MAY 2008

9:00  
21 MAY 2008  
SENT



21 MAY 2008



24 MAY 2008

RECEIVED  
24 MAY 2008  
5:45



Sent 8:45



a bento box

23 MAY 2008

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RECEIVED  
23 MAY 2008



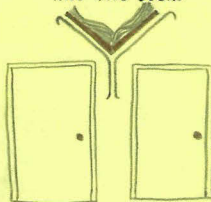
Sent 6:45

sitting under a table



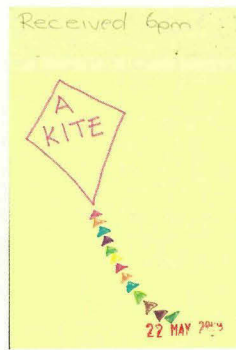
24 MAY 2008

BOOK IN A FUNNEL  
AND TWO DOORS



RECEIVED  
6:45  
24 MAY 2008





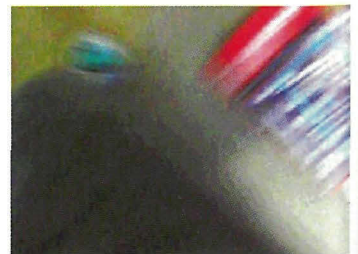
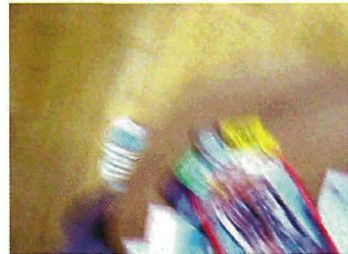
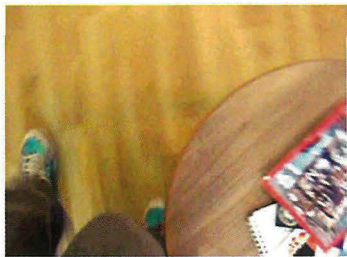
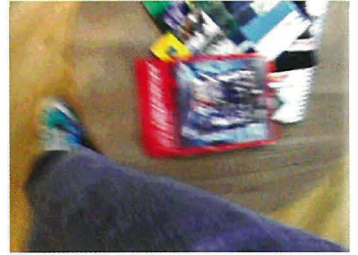






# Working, between

SARAH HETHERINGTON & SARAH JAMIESON





I ran around a table until I  
collapsed. I was trying to  
connect with it.\*

Working, between  
each other  
touch  
connect and extend

It happened  
It was not constructed

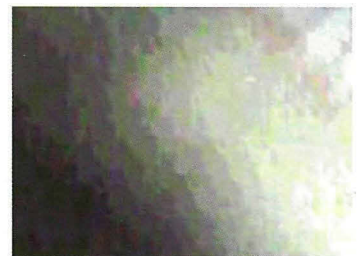
Intimate boundaries  
Interior  
Exterior

Time is extended  
Art is closer to life

Meaning is lost  
Mediated  
Disconnected

Respond

Make a salad\*\*  
Experience



\* Sarah Jamieson, June 2008. \*\* At the MCA in Roskilde, Denmark an exhibition titled Fluxus Scores and Instructions, The Transformative Years: 'Make a salad' will take place in 2008. 'Make a salad' is the title of a score for Alison Knowles' Proposition, first performed during the Festival of Misfits, ICA London, October 24, 1962.

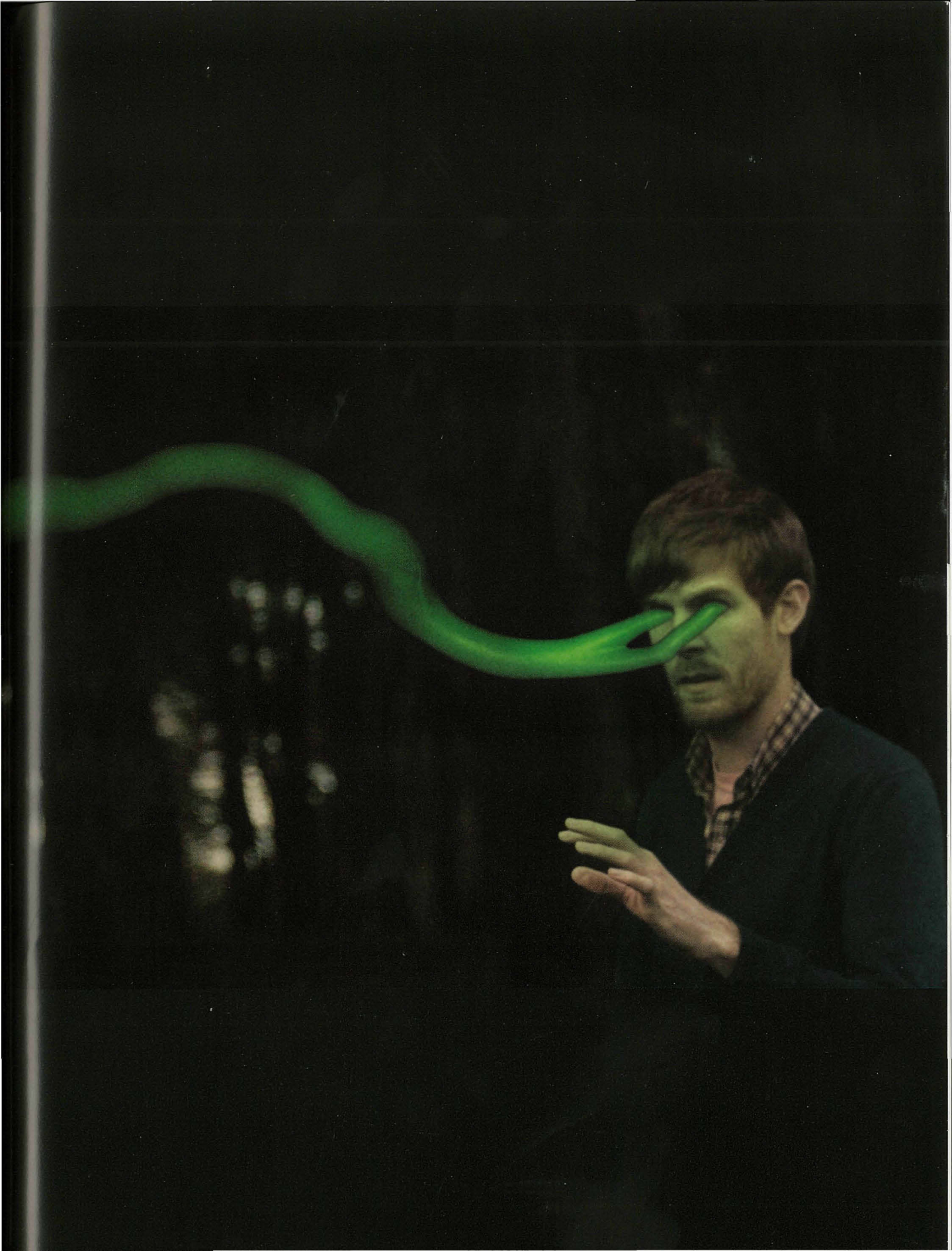




# Untitled

SAM SMITH

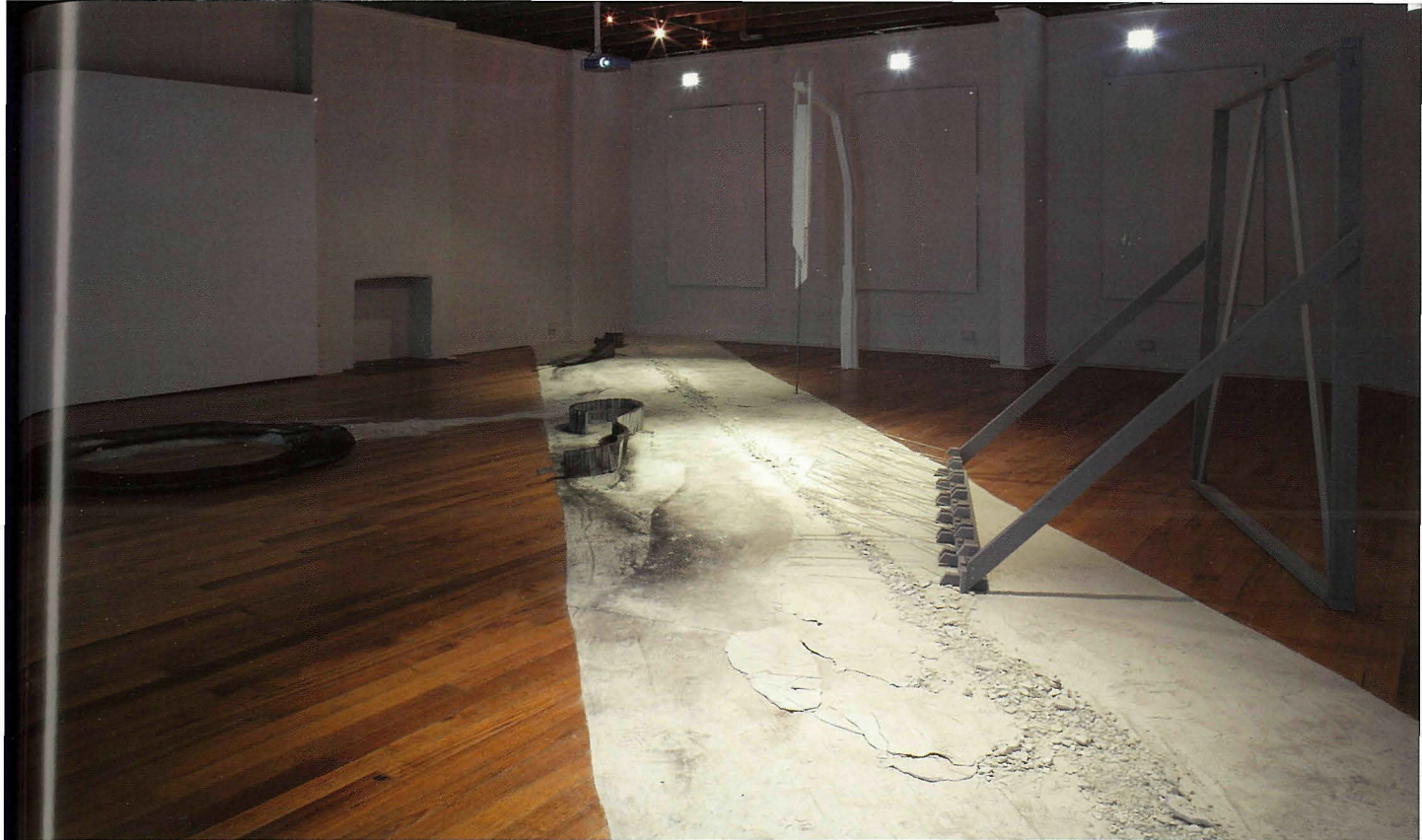






REVIEWS





## Descent into the Pit

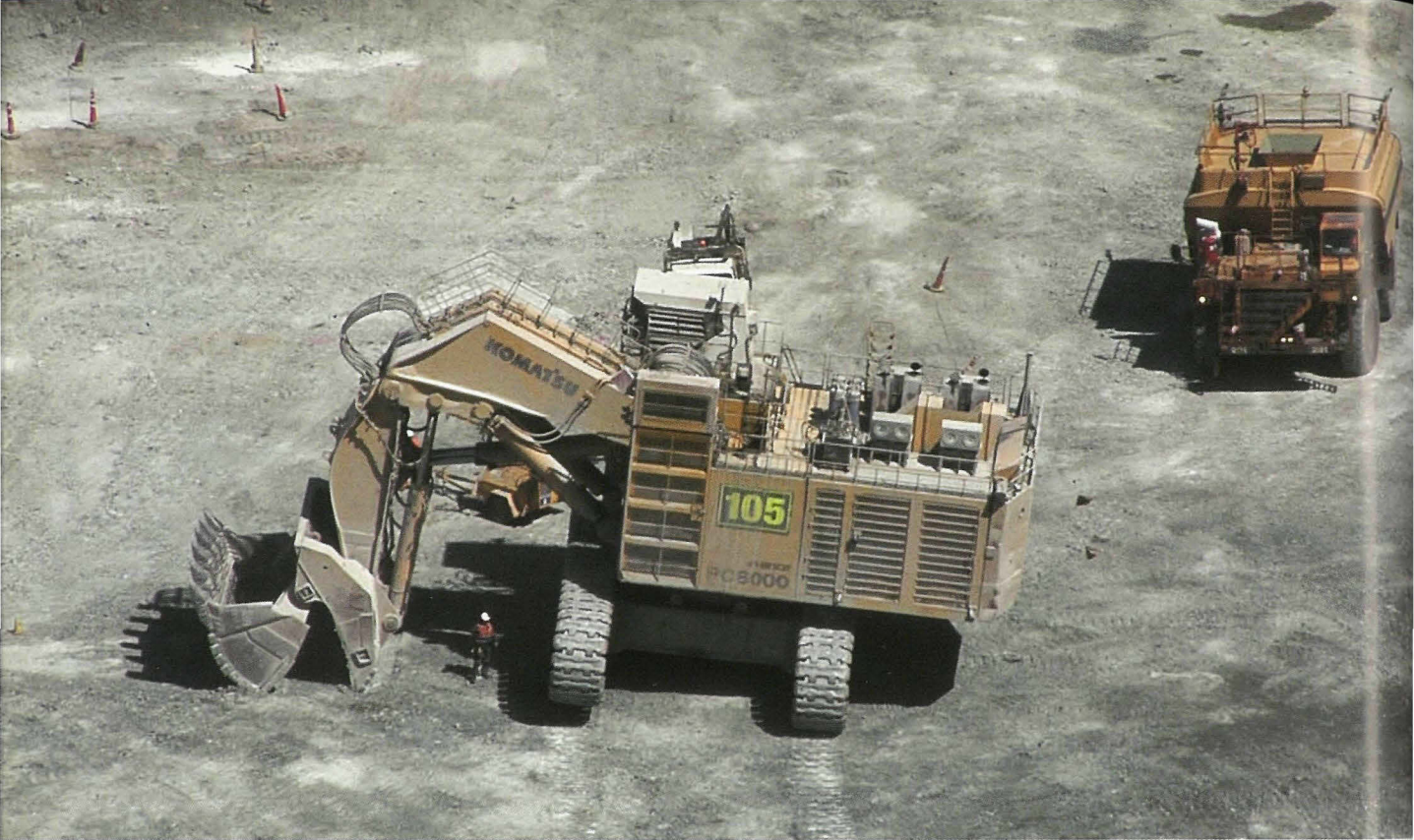
ALEX MARTINIS ROE

Brodie Ellis' exhibition *The Super Pit* at Concial Inc., part of the 2008 Next Wave Festival, was a poignant look at our future as already past. Using the largest open-cut mine in the southern hemisphere—the Kalgoorlie Super Pit—as a lens, Ellis describes the death of an era with cinematic grandeur. The Next Wave Festival's theme *Closer Together* broadly posed a discussion around communication technologies and globalisation. *The Super Pit* puts a complex twist on this theme, drawing analogies between mining machinery and fossilised dinosaurs, and using the West Australian landscape as a Western film set. The exhibition retrospectively explored our descent into environmental disaster as a slow march. But Ellis staged the end as closer than we think, the horizon (or the bottom of the Pit) just behind us.

Apocalyptic themes are horrific but also sublime. The end of the world is just as impossible to imagine as eternity. Ellis' film and sculptures create a sensation of quiet awe, similar to the very strange feeling I have experienced in the outback, of being immersed in a void. In the vastness of the Australian landscape it is easy to lose all sense of human perspective, until confronted with something like the depths of the Super Pit. The human labour invested in this mine is almost as incomprehensible and seemingly endless as the open country that surrounds it. The mine gets deeper in various locations every few days; around the clock, newly-blasted rubble is loaded onto trucks and dumped in massive piles around the mouth of the mine. New blasts uncover old mining shafts that have been dug out by hand over a hundred years ago. This mine goes kilometres into the earth! Ellis has found a ready-made model for our current horror at depleting natural resources and permanent environmental damage. She shows us the awesome impact of industrial enterprise as akin to the ferocity of a natural disaster. This strategy of using one side of the fence to explain the other is an intelligent one: it highlights the co-dependent relationship between civilisation and what is determined as Nature. Ellis' imagery and objects bring the mine and the landscape that surrounds it closer together in our physical memory. This reminds us of our own paradoxical embroilment. No matter how far we think we are from the bottom of the mine, our lifestyles implicate us as part of a consumer market that drives this industry.

Above: Brodie Ellis, *The Super Pit*, 2008, clay, pine, glass, calico, plywood, steel piping and HD DVD. Photo: Christian Capurro, Concial Inc.





Ellis organised her show as a kind of drive-in museum. At the entrance to the main gallery, I found myself at a crossroad: my trajectory interrupted by a cracking road made of clay leading from one wall to another. Traditionally, the walls of a gallery are white in order that they act as a void that can accommodate any image. Here, the white walls were both a poetic dead-end for Ellis' road, and canvasses with the potential for its pictorial continuation. So, in a way the road led both nowhere and to a potentially infinite vanishing point at the same time. At various points along the road lay life-size sculptural representations of broken mining machinery. One of the sculptures derived its form from the claw of an excavation (digger) truck. Made of timber studs, the piece was the equivalent of the digger claw's skeleton. Wedged into the frame were glass spines that represented the digging teeth on the claw. The glass spines were so fragile that some of them had broken in two from the pressure of their insertion into the frame of the digger.

Ellis continued her material oxymorons with a literalised 'flat-tyre'. Eschewing three-dimensional representation, Ellis' tyre was a flat, two-dimensional surface. It looked like she had rolled out a truck tyre to record it as a flat ring of degrading matter. To achieve this effect, Ellis pressed clay into the ring shape of a tyre and allowed it to dry out. This resulted in natural cracks throughout the material, which worked conceptually to represent the furrowed rubber tread of a tyre. This material impossibility was key to Ellis' contention: these things were always already dead. The sculptures were placed theatrically as though they had been left to rot where they had broken on the road, yet there was a distinct sense that they had been placed in the gallery like fossils in a diorama. These are the dinosaurs of the future, *The Super Pit* a museum show for our descendants.

Set back from the sculptures on a recessed wall, a large-scale projection showed the movement of trucks and other machinery in the Kalgoorlie mine. The film used camera angles, pans and editing to author a trembling sense of the earth's depth. The style of the video editing immediately described the recessed wall as a kind of open cinema: a drive-in. I watched as tiny people fixed a broken machine and a rush of empathy washed over me; I felt I was watching them torture some injured beast into working—not the expected feeling towards a machine designed to destroy. Ellis' film, with a powerful cinematic score by Misha Dumnov, anthropomorphises the machinery until we mourn their broken bodies. As I watched these machines, dwarfed by the size of the mine, I realised that they could be seen as contemporary incarnations of the human miners of previous generations.





The second part of the film is shot from the inside of a car driving along an outback highway at night towards a fork lightning storm. The story: a never-ending drive on a highway towards the earth's wrath. Apocalyptic films are thrilling. This thrill-seeking drive towards a phallic storm seems to be reflective of a certain type of cinema experience. A thrill can be a variety of abject responses to breaking taboos or the confusion of boundaries. These disruptions to order incite disgust and fear, which break down identification with offending characters and events. Creating psychological distance between the viewer and the undesirable ultimately reaffirms the viewer's identity: they are not in danger or breaking taboos, but they have to scream in order to feel safe about who they are. The Australian landscape has been described anecdotally as the ultimate feminine abject space. To be crude, this describes it as the biggest and scariest vagina i.e. a space without language or spatial markers (you can't get much *Closer Together* in the outback than that!). This is completely sexist, yet this metaphor persists in cultural language as the thrill of the sublime. *The Super Pit's* soundtrack features a spare and lamenting guitar in a looped country music rhythm, which marks the film as a Western. Westerns challenge us to accept abject scenarios because they are stories of distant lawlessness, reinforcing the comfort of our own comparative safety. There is a kind of pleasure in imagining the desolate life 'out west' and an appreciation of the genre as pure entertainment. In giving the film a Western flavour, Ellis critically interrogates 'exploring the outback' by being really camp: the desert, the darkness and the mine are all giant holes. Ellis' film entertains, but the horror that she describes is a reality. The thrill and wonder of the mine and the road become an uncomfortable pleasure, mingled with sorrow.

It seems that Ellis' show is part of a larger body of cultural material that is currently being produced, which mirrors the desolate state in which industrialism and climate change have left our hopes for the future. Yet Ellis goes further, and presents the current state of the Super Pit as a picture of an apocalypse already upon us. Her vision is in no way protracted. Cormac McCarthy's 2007 Pulitzer Prize winning novel *The Road* is a post-apocalyptic narrative of a father and son relationship as they travel south across America along a highway, seeking an escape from the bitter cold. Their world is cold and dark and the air is filled with ash. They live in constant fear of cannibals and starvation. The only salvation they can hope for is dependent on the continuing strength of the son's instinctual empathy and altruism. I think *The Road* can in many ways be read as a companion text to *The Super Pit*. The difference is that Ellis' story is a reality now. So lets begin the conversation: what will be its salvation?

Brodie Ellis' *The Super Pit*, part of the Next Wave Festival, was held at Conical Inc., Melbourne from May 17 to June 7.



# Oblivion Pavilion

JOSEPHINE SKINNER

Like tipsy adults exploring a deserted and deranged fairground, spectators of *Oblivion Pavilion* navigated the lo-fi constructions of large, colourful letters and a rickety rollercoaster shaped work cluttering the space, against a backdrop of one-eyed fairytale beauties and a self-harming clown. With contributions from Marley Dawson, Agatha Gothe-Snape, Matthew Hopkins, Emily Hunt, Tim Shultz and Raquel Welch informing this tightly-knit show, recurring motifs and shared references created a satisfying dialogue.

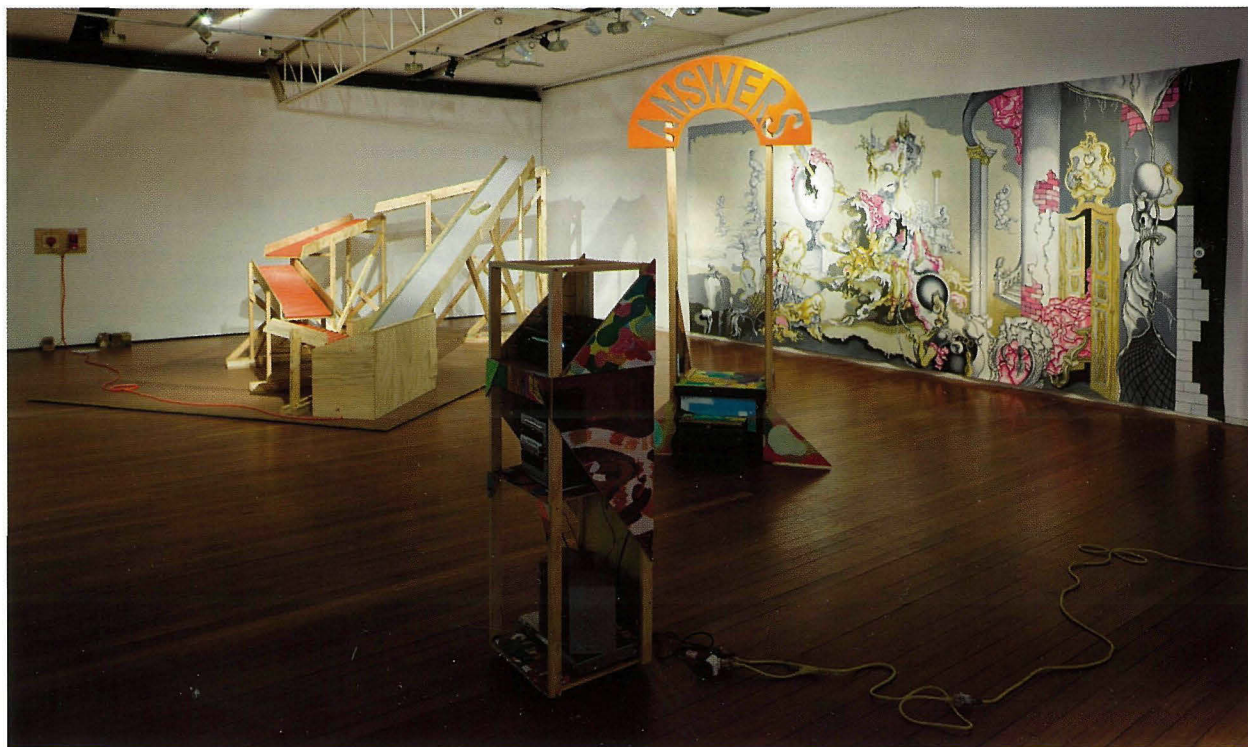
If language is thoughts translated through symbolic manipulation, and humour occurs due to the gap between our expectations of those symbols and the undermining of those expectations, then *Oblivion Pavilion* was situated in this gap. Seeking to make visible the invisible structures of language, comedy and art, this show demonstrated a contemporary trend for embracing the literal, including a recurring device of incorporating (dodgy) construction as a symbolic representation for Deconstruction.

Tim Shultz's impressive large-scale painting *The Broken Egg* (2008), for example, echoes the lo-fi construction and bad painting aesthetic of the rest of the show, albeit through a beautifully rendered depiction of the collapse of form: exposed pink bricks, crumbling walls, disintegrating stairwells and the fragmentation of his feminine subjects. The painting incorporates the classic tropes of surrealism—including the manipulation of the canvas plane and

perspectival confusion—punctuated by the symbolic quotation of malleable watch faces and eggs from Dali's visual language. Yet Shultz's simplistic and fantastical representation is more stylistically akin to the popular forms of Manga or graffiti.

The recurring staircase motif in Shultz's painting recalls M. C. Escher's trademark impossible reality stairs, mirroring in form Marley Dawson's infinite production-line construction. But in the case of Dawson's *Big one liner* (2008), it is the improbable reality of a cyclical conveyor belt contraption that determines the journey of a brick back to its starting point, and the continuous production of nothing but noise. Dawson's work cleverly renders the term 'one-liner' literal, whilst retaining the punch: it operates as a visual metaphor for the futility of art production and in turn cheekily mocks its avid spectators. Like watching a dog chase its tail, the spectacle is nevertheless entertaining.

While Dawson literally constructs a play on language, Agatha Gothe-Snape's *Enough and other organisations* (2007) takes the deconstruction of language to the level of child's play. Unlike the colourful magnetic letters we shuffle around on fridge doors, we are the ones who must shuffle around these freestanding letters, dwarfed to childlike proportions. The simplistic construction of the letters compliments their unsophisticated translation from language symbol to sculptural object, yet the accompanying video *Ego (Picture Plane Slow Dance)* (2008), adds another



Above: *Oblivion Pavilion* (installation view at Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, works from left to right): Marley Dawson, *Big one liner*, 2008, timber, conveyor belt, plastic rollers, electrics, brick; Agatha Gothe-Snape, *Ego (Picture Plane Slow Dance)* (shelving unit) 2008, digital video; Agatha Gothe-Snape, *Special Pedestal ? No Answers*, 2008, timber, sawn paintings, found boxes; Tim Schultz *The Broken Egg*, 2008, acrylic on canvas. Photo: Moshe Rosenzweig.



dimension to the work. As the artist re-organises the letters in her studio, the screen is de-compartmentalised into shifting zones of 2D solid colour and 3D time-based representation. Revealing a sophisticated account on the specificity of the video medium, Gothe-Snape visually interlaces Modern and Postmodern references from the minimalist roots of text-based art to the artist-as-subject in performative practice.

Walking a fine line between the absurd, the disturbed and the funny, Matthew Hopkins intersects comedy and art, incorporating comedic cliché with self-deprecating representation. Reminding us that the role of artist and comedian correspond in their transgression of taboos, inversion of language and action, mockery of authorities and symbols, and pervasive obscenity, Hopkins presents the anti-hero image of tortured artist come sad clown.

Poorly disguised behind huge fake ears, a cartoon mouth mask and black bow tie, the artist repeatedly hits his head with a hammer in the video projection *Hammerhead 2 (Beating the Brainchild to Sleep)* (2007). Resembling a cross between the cartoon Chihuahua Ren (from the *Ren & Stimpy Show*) and childlike Laurel (from the comedy duo Laurel & Hardy) Hopkins' blows to his own head are punctuated by the sound effects of 'canned' laughter and the *boiing* noise featured in any good episode of *Tom & Jerry*. The work portrays an embodied manifestation of slapstick's classic signifiers. However, unlike the conventional comedy duo dynamic, Hopkins plays both the protagonist and victim. The disturbing spectacle of ridiculous

get-up and psychotic self-harm reveals both the inherent darkness of the genre and the uncomfortable truth that nothing puts a smile on our faces like other people's pain and humiliation (what else could explain the continuing success of *Australia's Funniest Home Videos*?).

Elsewhere in the gallery Matthew Hopkins appears again, this time caught with his trousers down (but socks still on) in a personified sound and sculpture installation *Self Portrait as a Guilty Catholic Brain 2*, (2008). The humiliation of an over-cautious mound of plasticine keeping a doweling penis erect is underscored by an ambiguous noise that is strangely reminiscent of both old-school computer game zapping and embarrassingly loud farts. Periodically emanating from loudspeaker eyes, this absurd sound causes the small plastic pupils, like those found stuck on cheap felt toys, to roll with self-directed exasperation at every vibration.

These days, cables and wiring that used to be banished from sight now hang from gallery ceilings and are strewn on the floor in an aesthetic almost as common as white walls. After all, Health & Safety is 'out', and exposing the rusty nuts and bolts of the art world, 'bad' painting, press releases that are impossible to decipher, and plywood, tend to be the criteria for 'in'. *Oblivion Pavilion* was 'in', but it worked anyway.

*Oblivion Pavilion* curated by Amanda Rowell was held at Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery from 1 May to 17 May, 2008, and at Gertrude Contemporary Art Spaces from 14 March to 12 April. The exhibition featured Marley Dawson, Agatha Gothe-Snape, Matthew Hopkins, Emily Hunt, Tim Schultz, Raquel Welch.



Above: Matthew Hopkins, *Hammerhead 2 (Beating the Brainchild to Sleep)*, 2008, digital video. Photo: Mark Ashkanasy.







# Bon Scott Project

LIA McKNIGHT

Love him or loathe him, if you were born of a certain generation, chances are you can reminisce about Bon Scott, AC/DC's charismatic front man from 1974 to 1980. Personally, I'll never forget watching the clip for *It's a Long Way to the Top* for the first time as a young child (admittedly a few years after its original release in 1976). Rocking down Melbourne's Swanston Street on the back of a ute, Bon was all hairy midriff and cheeky grin. Finding myself both drawn to, and repulsed by Bon's animal magnetism, I was utterly compelled to keep watching, despite the feeling that I probably shouldn't. Bon's aura of masculinity and sexuality, his worship as a rebel among his loyal legion of fans, and the tragic circumstances of his death were—as one would expect—all points of interest in Fremantle Arts Centre's *Bon Scott Project*. This wide-ranging initiative included a group show of 17 artists, an exhibition of Bon's personal letters, an online blog, public art, a forum and even a tribute band. More surprisingly, as I walked through Fremantle Arts Centre's galleries I found that this conversation about Bon drew out personal stories and intimate moments, revealing something of Bon but far more of the artists involved.

On a tiny screen mounted just inside the main entrance, in her video phone performance *Oh Bon!* (2008) Tanja Visosevic pouts and postures, seeming to shift between the identities of Bon and his sexed-up groupie. Advertising her services as 'Madam TV', Visosevic received calls on opening night as she 'channelled' Bon. Post-performance, viewers can only speculate about what transpired but by all accounts, the conversations ran the full gamut of emotions: humorous, sexy, poignant, sad. Visosevic was not alone in her imaginative merger of identities; Adam Cullen also appeared to lose himself in the persona of Bon. Dissolving in and out of endless black space, the figure of Cullen's sombre portrait/self-portrait captures the void of loneliness that for many seems to accompany fame, particularly life on the road. Close to Cullen's work, a collection of Bon's letters gave an insight into this experience. Between the lines of jovial banter, it is not difficult to see the emerging trajectory of his life that would end alone in a car while on tour, as the result of alcohol poisoning. Many would argue, however, that Bon was anything but a tragic figure. Part of his charisma and appeal emerges from his being comfortable with himself, along with his irrepressible spirit, and it was with this in mind that I viewed Adam Cullen's work. Reflecting on these aspects of Bon, and indeed, Cullen's impressive back catalogue of strikingly dark and frenetic paintings, I was left looking for the slightly dangerous energy of both his subject and his previous works.

Close by, the cleverly constructed dialogue between the works of Nat Paton, Cecilia Fogelberg and Scott Redford really hit the mark. Inside her luscious boudoir, Paton as 'Rosie' (made infamous by AC/DC's 1977 release, *Whole Lotta Rosie*), both beckons and repels as she only has eyes for Bon. In contrast to Paton's *Forty-two, thirty-nine, fifty-six Rosie* (2008), a highly staged, saturated photographic image, Fogelberg's dreamy and childlike drawings read like a private journal, making the sexually graphic elements slightly unnerving. Two views of Bon's crotch which contrast in scale and media, made me feel simultaneously empowered and consumed: Fogelberg's tiny fabric doll *Bon Scott* (2008) looks up from its low stage as it sings into a microphone/phallus; while Redford's black and white, pixelated wallpaper of Bon's bulging groin, *A Piece of the World* (2008), looms over and around the space like a hungry screen of *Countdown*.

Facing page: Cecilia Fogelberg, *Bon Scott*, 2008, recycled fabric, wire, cotton thread, beads, texta. Photo: Andrew Curtis.





Downstairs in the main gallery, the works of seven artists covered a broad spectrum of approaches. I enjoyed the makeshift installation and hand-made aesthetic of Stuart Bailey's bootleg merchandise stall, however I had to wonder what distinguishes these 'goods' from those already commonly made by AC/DC fans. On the whole, I was less intrigued to sit and contemplate works here, though the longer I spent with Martin Smith's photographic works, the more was revealed. Smith's dreamy landscapes have a quiet tension—laboriously hand-cut text discloses anecdotes from his early life that are full of awkward moments and personal loss in *I then when up and told my ridiculous stories* (2008) and *Fixing my endless array of crappy cars* (2007). Smith also represents the lyrics to *Hells Bells* from AC/DC's *Back in Black* album, their unofficial tribute to Bon, released soon after his death. As Smith's restrained self-deprecating voice jumps to AC/DC's crude, menacing lyrics, I wondered if behind the humour, there remained a teenager's raw emotion.

Filling up the end of a spacious hallway, Richard Lewer's expansive charcoal drawing *30 Maerora Road* (2008) spreads around corners, across walls and up 4.5 metre ceilings to form a mesmerising and compelling image of that often hermetic space of conflicting pressures and desires: the teenager's bedroom. Black dots raid the surface of the walls like silent bullets, while the Lewer family in demure portrait-pose hang suspended in space beside various religious items, along with the members of AC/DC looking down from their *Highway to Hell* poster. Nearby, Matthew Hunt's photograph presents a Swiss underpass, stark and empty apart from a huge bale of hay and a roughly graffitied 'AC/DC' with the lightning bolt ending in an arrow. Full of presence and absence, humour and rebellion, this image encapsulates in breathtaking simplicity everything that this show is about. It left me wanting more.

Clearly, curator Jasmin Stephens took an ambitious approach to the project, covering vast ground in imaginative and lateral ways. Testament to this are the public works of Bevan Honey and Lucas Ihlein, which act as a kind of reply to the bronze statue of Bon recently commissioned

Above left: Nat Paton, *Forty-two, thirty-nine, fifty-six Rosie*, 2008, digital print. Photographic assistant: Gia Mitchell.

Below left: Matthew Hunt, *Untitled landscape (Underpass)*, 2004, digital print.

Above right: Richard Lewer, *30 Maerora Road*, 2008, charcoal on wall; Matthew Hunt, *Untitled landscape (Underpass)* (visible through archway). Photo: Lia McKnight.





by his fans. Ihlein's blog ([www.bonscottblog.com](http://www.bonscottblog.com)) and Honey's four metre high image of Bon's grinning face beneath Fremantle's Stirling Bridge are entertaining, accessible and appropriate to their subject.

So, does all this really bring us closer to the man, Bon Scott? Not really, but I get the feeling that was never the intention. It does succeed in allowing us to reflect on a certain kind of masculinity in all its strength and frailty, as well as common experiences of desire, loss and the avaricious urges of the sub-conscious. Most impressively perhaps, in this age of cynicism and self-enforced isolation, it has succeeded in bringing together a sense of community, and where better than in Bon's home town? The collection of artworks, letters and online chatter leaves the impression of many, varied voices humming along to their own tune, somehow coming together for the chorus. Happily, it's given me an excuse to embrace my inner bogan and remember what it's like to live with childlike enthusiasm and abandon. I'm off to buy some Acca Dacca.

*Bon Scott Project* curated by Jasmin Stevens was held at Fremantle Arts Centre from 17 May to 19 June 2008. The artists involved were 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, Tanja Visosevic. Other major components of the Bon Scott Project were the Bon Scott Letters exhibition curated by Katie Dyer, and Bon Scott Blog ([bonscottblog.com](http://bonscottblog.com)) created by Lucas Ihlein.





## Bordertown

MEGAN ROBSON

Lily Hibberd's *Bordertown* (2008) investigates the manifestation of borders within society as physical and ideological forms of exclusion. The work focuses on the domestic materialisation of segregation through its narration of the awakening of two women—Anna Pham, a recent refugee, and Stacey Bain, a disenfranchised young white woman—as they struggle to ‘voice’ their presence in society. An indictment of contemporary Australia, *Bordertown* identifies the historical precedents that have allowed bipartisanism to remain an extremely effective tool for enforcing traditional hierarchies of power within the country. In particular, the work explores how mainstream society denies those individuals and groups who do not conform to rigid social and economic standards the means to represent themselves in public discussion, in effect condemning those who are most vulnerable to remain invisible. Through their representation within *Bordertown*, Anna and Stacey are given a space in which to publicise their experiences. However, as an audience we are made very much aware that *Bordertown* is a vehicle of the artist's own making through the central role of the artist in the work and the use of fiction in the narrative. By acknowledging the artificiality of the construct through which Anna's and Stacey's stories are presented, *Bordertown* does not simply create a space in which unheard voices can be given an audience, but highlights the inability for such voices to be given an audience in any other public arena.

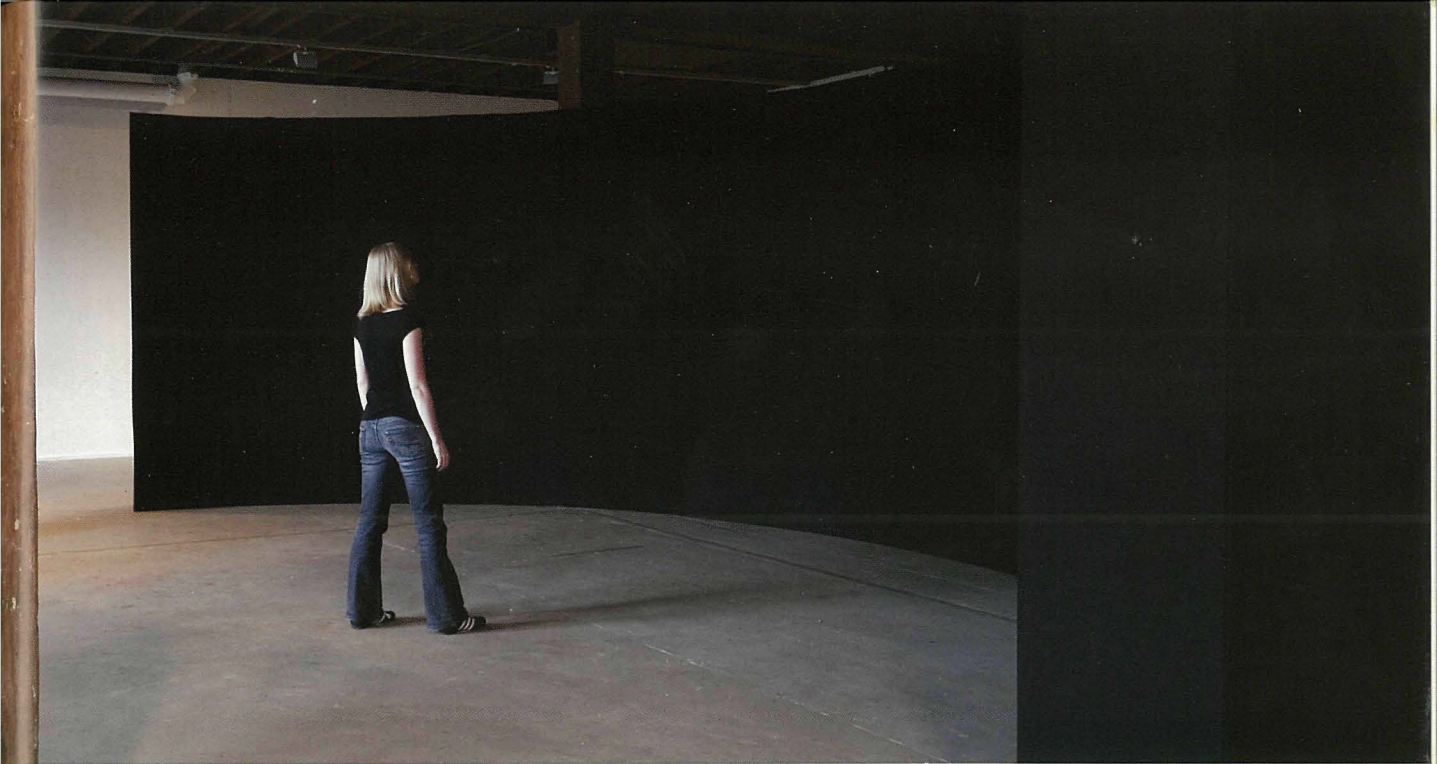
*Bordertown* uses a combination of oral, written and visual mediums to communicate the experiences of Anna and Stacey in Bordertown, a large regional town located across the NSW and Victorian border. Both women are marginalised within the social hierarchy of the town, and their status proscribes them from conversing with mainstream society through existing avenues of communication (in particular those of authority). Anna and Stacey both identify the wall recently erected by the authorities to mark the state boundary as a physical representation of the exclusionary forces that exist within the town. These are, as Hibberd illustrates, a microcosm of broader social, economic, and racial prejudices. The wall that runs through Bordertown also separates Anna, who lives in an internment camp in the south, from Stacey, who resides in the poor suburbs in the north, until both women gain employment in a dog food factory on the outskirts of town. This chance meeting challenges each of the women's assumptions about the other, and becomes the catalyst for a wider examination into the subjugated positions they occupy within the social and economic structures of the town.

For *Bordertown*'s exhibition at Artspace, a black semi-circular wall was installed in the gallery. The wall towered over the viewer in an intimidating fashion, whilst a sound piece comprising of extracts from interviews the artist conducted with Anna and Stacey was broadcast from within the structure. Accompanying the sound installation was a publication that consisted of a diary kept by the artist during her seven-week residency in Bordertown, a series of photographs taken as part of the artist's research, and a transcript of the interviews with Anna and Stacey.

What becomes apparent to the audience as the narrative progresses is that the artist is not just an integral character in *Bordertown* but is the dominant voice in the work. In both the

Above and facing page: Lily Hibberd, *Bordertown* (installation view), 2008, Artspace, Sydney. Photo: Silversalt Photography





sound piece and the publication, the representation of Anna and Stacey is mediated through the artist. For example, the interviews are interspersed with monologues by the artist ruminating on the situation of the women, and in the diary, the artist presents the two women's experiences within a broader social context with reference to local and international current affairs, historical events or philosophical writings. Hibberd's positioning of the artist as an integral character within the work is particularly important in illustrating the position of the women as one that is defined by their inability to communicate. The artist has complete freedom in her communication with the audience, as observed in her anecdotal diary entries, whilst Anna and Stacey in comparison have no control over their representation and are only given a public presence through the artist.

The use of fiction in *Bordertown* not only serves as a steady reminder to the audience that the work is a manufactured space, but it also makes reference to the powerlessness of Anna and Stacey. In particular, the inability of the women to have ownership over their public representation is made palpable through the prefabrication of their testimony. Hibberd has scripted the two women's accounts from dialogue drawn from interviews and documents already present in the public arena. The contrast between the use of secondary sources of information and what we perceive to be the artist's 'first hand' account of her experiences in *Bordertown* replicates the omission in official accounts of individuals and groups who are not recognised as members of mainstream society. Fiction is also used with great effect in Hibberd's representation of the town itself as a means through which the audience can witness how past events and attitudes have legitimised the practices of exclusion which Anna and Stacey experience in contemporary *Bordertown*.

*Bordertown* illustrates the selective nature of social membership; both Anna and Stacey are rendered invisible in mainstream society

by not being able to participate in any kind of public discussion or exchange. Those individuals and groups who do not have access to the forms of communication (whether these be oral, written or visual mediums) that enable their participation in social discourse are ultimately deemed invisible for the very reason that they cannot make their presence known through such discourse. In *Bordertown*, the voice is the means by which individuals can communicate their own representations in the public arena. It is through having a voice that individuals are recognised as members of society and have the power to question structures of exclusion or dominance. As the artist notes in her diary, for many migrant communities the importance of having a 'voice' is paramount to the recognition of both the group's culture and status as active participants in society. Anna's and Stacey's frustration and anger at being denied the ability to represent themselves is testament to the importance of having a 'voice'.

*Bordertown* provides a space in which Anna and Stacey can seemingly articulate their own experiences, exploring the ability of art to create representations of people who do not have access to the language and mediums of communication to voice their own presence within the social sphere. However, far from simply purporting to be an apolitical vehicle in which the underprivileged can petition their views to the mainstream in an unmediated fashion, the work acknowledges that it is a manufactured construct through the use of fiction and the central role of the artist in the narrative. In deliberately revealing these aspects of the work, *Bordertown* opens up a critical investigation into the complexities involved in using art to publicise such representations.

Lily Hibberd's *Bordertown* was exhibited at Artspace, Sydney from 7 February to 3 March 2008, and at Conical Contemporary Art Space, Fitzroy from 7 to 29 March 2008.



PREVIEWS





## Forthcoming Exhibitions

### NSW

#### **SAM DOCTOR**

7 July – 30 August  
Chalk Horse  
56 Cooper Street, Surry Hills  
[www.chalkhorse.com.au](http://www.chalkhorse.com.au)

#### **OUR FUTURE WAS OURS** | DARREN SYLVESTER

25 July – 30 August  
Australian Centre for Photography  
257 Oxford Street, Paddington  
[www.acp.org.au](http://www.acp.org.au)

#### **ROMA PUBLICATIONS**

An editorial project by ROGER WILLEMS & MARK MANDERS  
29 July – 29 August  
UTS Gallery  
Level 4, 702 Harris Street, Ultimo  
[www.utsgallery.uts.edu.au](http://www.utsgallery.uts.edu.au)

#### **ECR.** | MARLEY DAWSON & CHRISTOPHER HANRAHAN

8 August – 6 September  
Performance Space  
245 Wilson Street, Eveleigh  
[www.performancespace.com.au](http://www.performancespace.com.au)

Above: Christopher Hanrahan and Marley Dawson, *Sweet bikes*, 2008, 70cc mini bikes. Photo: Marley Dawson.





**HOOCHIE COOCHIE | EMILY HUNT & RAQUEL WELCH**

Black & Blue Gallery  
8 – 24 August  
302/267-271 Cleveland Street, Redfern  
[www.blackandbluegallery.com.au](http://www.blackandbluegallery.com.au)

**FISH OR CUT BAIT? | NEWELL HARRY**

Roslyn Oxley 9 Gallery  
21 August – 13 September  
8 Soudan Lane, Paddington  
[www.roslynoxley9.com.au](http://www.roslynoxley9.com.au)

**HAYDEN FOWLER**

21 August – 20 September  
Gallery Barry Keldoulis  
285 Young Street, Waterloo  
[www.gbk.com.au](http://www.gbk.com.au)

**UNDER STARS | ELAINE CAMPANER, PATRICK POUND, DARREN**

SYLVESTER and EMMA WHITE  
curated by DANIEL MUDIE CUNNINGHAM  
23 August – 30 November 2008  
Billboard project in the gardens at Hazelhurst Regional Gallery & Arts Centre  
782 Kingsway, Gyemea  
[www.hazelhurst.com.au](http://www.hazelhurst.com.au)

**VANILA NETTO**

25 September – 25 October  
Breenspace  
289 Young Street, Waterloo  
[www.breenspace.com](http://www.breenspace.com)

**POST CHRYSALIS | ANNIE AITKEN, HELLE JORGENSEN, ANTHONY O'CARROLL, EDWARD WARING, JUDY GARB WEISS, HEIDI YARDLEY**

7 – 26 October  
sullivan+strumpf Fine Art  
44 Gurner Street, Paddington  
[www.ssfa.com.au](http://www.ssfa.com.au)



**PATIENCE. THIS IS A MEANS AND NOT THE END**

KATE SCARDIFIELD  
10 – 27 September  
Firstdraft  
116 – 118 Chalmers Street, Surry Hills  
[www.firstdraftgallery.com](http://www.firstdraftgallery.com)

**POINT OF ORIGIN | DORA ECONOMOU, CEAL FLOYER, JACK JEFFREY, TARAS POLATAIKO, HUSEYIN SAMI, ROLANDE SOULIERE, KELLY WOOD**

curated by GARY PEARSON  
12 September – 12 October  
43 – 51 Cowper Wharf Road, Woolloomooloo  
[www.artspace.org.au](http://www.artspace.org.au)

**PRIMAVERA | MARCUS CANNING, DANIELLE FREAKLEY, ARIEL HASSAN, MARK HILTON, PAUL KNIGHT, PILAR MATA DUPONT & TARRYN GILL, MOYA MCKENNA, MS & MR, GEMMA SMITH and SODA\_JERK**

curated by HANNAH MATHEWS  
19 September – 2 November  
Museum of Contemporary Art  
140 George Street, The Rocks

**BECOS I'M WORF IT! | THE MOTEL SISTERS, ALICE AMSEL, DREW BICKFORD, DANIEL MUDIE CUNNINGHAM, DANIEL GREEN, RICHARD GURNEY, TIM HILTON, GINO HO, MARIUS JASTKOWIAK, SARI TM KIVINEN, VICTORIA LAWSON, LUIS MARTINEZ, TONEE MESSIAH, LOUIS PRATT, RACHEL SCOTT, GEORGE TILLIANAKIS, TEO TRELOAR and ANASTASIA ZARAVINOS**

curated by THE MOTEL SISTERS  
25 September – 12 October  
MOP  
2/27 – 39 Abercrombie Street, Chippendale  
[www.mop.org.au](http://www.mop.org.au)

**2. FIELD WORK | DENNIS TAN & LISA KELLY**

29 September – 19 October  
Chrissie Cotter Hall  
Camperdown Bowling Club, Pidcock St Camperdown  
[www.marrickville.nsw.gov.au/community/artsandculture/chrissiecottergallery.htm](http://www.marrickville.nsw.gov.au/community/artsandculture/chrissiecottergallery.htm)

Above left: Adam Norton, *Thw Library of Fact and Fiction* (detail), 2008, mixed media. Photo: the artist.

Above right: Hayden Fowler, *new work*, 2008. Photo: Joy Lai.



**WONDER TWIN POWERS, ACTIVATE!** | KARENA KEYS and OWEN LEWIS  
curated by ANTOINETTE KAREN BAILEY  
13 November – 29 November 29  
Locksmith  
6 Botany Road, Alexandria  
[www.locksmithprojectspace.com](http://www.locksmithprojectspace.com)

## ACT

**LOW AND LONE** | STARLIE GEIKIE  
12 July – 23 August  
Canberra Contemporary Art Space CUBE  
Gorman House Arts Centre, Ainslie Avenue, Braddon  
[www.ccas.com.au](http://www.ccas.com.au)

**HELIOS SELENE** | LLOYD GODMAN  
1 – 20 September  
ANU School of Art Photospace Gallery  
Building 105, 1st Floor, Childers Street,  
The Australian National University, Acton  
[www.anu.edu.au](http://www.anu.edu.au)

## NT

**MUGSY** | LISA ROET  
2 September – 18 October  
24HR Art: Northern Territory Centre for Contemporary Art  
Vimy Lane, Parap Shopping Village, Darwin  
[www.24hart.org.au](http://www.24hart.org.au)

## QUEENSLAND

**WIND CIRCLES** | LUCY GRIGGS  
15 October – 1 November  
Metro Arts  
Level 1, 109 Edward Street, Brisbane  
[www.metroarts.com.au](http://www.metroarts.com.au)

**PREMIER OF QUEENSLAND'S NATIONAL ART AWARD IN NEW MEDIA** | PETER ALWAST, JULIE DOWLING, ANITA FONTAINE, JOYCE HINTERDING & DAVID HAINES, NATALIE JEREMIJENKO, ADAM NASH, SAM SMITH, JOHN TONKIN, MARI VELONAKI  
1 November 2008 – 8 February 2009  
Gallery of Modern Art  
Stanley Place, South Bank  
[www.qag.qld.gov.au](http://www.qag.qld.gov.au)

## SA

**ENDLESS SUMMER: SUNGLASSES AND THE SPECTACLE OF VISION** | LILY HIBBERD  
29 August – 27 September  
Experimental Art Foundation  
The Lion Arts Centre, North Terrace (West End) Adelaide  
[www.eaf.asn.au](http://www.eaf.asn.au)

**MATTHEW BRADLEY**  
20 August – 14 September  
Greenaway Art Gallery  
39 Rundle Street, Kent Town  
[www.greenaway.com.au](http://www.greenaway.com.au)

## TASMANIA

**RE: DRAWING** | FIONA MACDONALD, BRONWYN CLARK-COOLEE, BEN HARPER, THERESE MASTROIACOVO and SPIROS PANIGIRAKIS.  
curated by FIONA MACDONALD  
20 September – 12 October  
CAST  
27 Tasma Street, North Hobart  
[www.castgallery.org](http://www.castgallery.org)

**STUPID LITTLE DREAMER** | ADAM NORTON, ANNA PETERS, RON ADAMS, MS&MR, EMMA THOMSON, HOLLY WILLIAMS, NANA OHNESORGE, MITCH CAIRNS, DANIEL MUDIE CUNNINGHAM and DREW BICKFORD  
Curated by RON & GEORGE ADAMS  
3 – 26 October  
Inflight  
237 Elizabeth Street, Hobart  
[www.inflight.com.au](http://www.inflight.com.au)

## VICTORIA

**... WHEN THEY COME WE WILL BE READY** | SIMON PERICICH  
1 August – 30 August  
Platform  
Degraives st. Subway, Melbourne  
[www.platform.org.au](http://www.platform.org.au)

**YOUNG OLD HOT: TAKING CARE OF BUSINESS FOR 10 YEARS** | AMANDA MARBURG, SHARON GOODWIN, JAMES LYNCH, JON CAMPBELL, MATTHEW GRIFFIN, LISA RADFORD, MEG HALE, PAT FOSTER & JEN BEREAN, ROB MCLEISH, ROB MCHAFFIE, OLIVIA BARRETT, A CONSTRUCTED WORLD, KAIN PICKEN & ROB MCKENZIE, FERGUS BINNS, RY HASKINGS, THOMAS DEVERALL, CHRISTOPHER LG HILL and BLAIR TRETOWAN  
6 – 23 August  
TCB art inc.  
Level 1/12 Waratah Place, Melbourne  
[www.tcbartinc.org.au](http://www.tcbartinc.org.au)

**SIGNAGE** | BRAD HAYLOCK, FIONA MACDONALD, AMY MAJORAM, TAMSIN GREEN and KIERAN STEWART.  
curated by KEL GLAISTER & TAMSIN GREEN.  
8 – 30 August  
Kings ARI  
Level 1 1/171 King Street, Melbourne  
[www.kingsartistrun.com.au](http://www.kingsartistrun.com.au)

**PRESENT ELSEWHERE** | MICHELLE USSHER  
8 August – 6 September  
Gertrude Contemporary Art Spaces  
200 Gertrude Street, Fitzroy  
[www.gertrude.org.au](http://www.gertrude.org.au)

**SOME KIND OF COYOTE** | JACQUI STOCKDALE  
13 August – 6 September  
Helen Gory Gallerie  
25 St Edmonds Road, Prahran  
[www.helengory.com](http://www.helengory.com)

**GREEN MAN** | KO SONNOY  
26 August – 6 September  
Seventh Gallery  
155 Gertrude Street, Fitzroy  
[www.seventhgallery.org](http://www.seventhgallery.org)



**FLASH** | JULIA GORMAN, KATHERINE HUANG, ANNE-MARIE MAY,  
PETER MCKAY, LOUISE PARAMOR, GILES RYDER  
curated by JAN DUFFY & GEOFF NEWTON  
19 September – 2 November  
Linden  
26 Acland Street, St Kilda  
[www.lindenarts.org](http://www.lindenarts.org)

**ECHOLOCATION** | ALEX STAHL  
9 – 25 October  
presented by Melbourne International Arts Festival  
Federation Square, corner Swanston & Flinders Streets, Melbourne  
[www.melbournefestival.com.au](http://www.melbournefestival.com.au)

**BRYAN SPIER**  
11 October – 1 November  
West Space  
1st Floor, 15–19 Anthony Street, Melbourne  
[www.westspace.org.au](http://www.westspace.org.au)

**BLACK SWANS, RED HERRINGS AND WHITE ELEPHANTS** | RUTH  
JOHNSTON, MARION PIPER, JULIAN WHITE, ROSS WALLER,  
JULIE-ANNE MILINSKI, ANDREW TETZLAFF  
curated by JULIAN WHITE  
16 October – 1 November  
Blindside  
Level 7, Room 14, Nicholas Building  
37 Swanston Street, Melbourne (enter via Cathedral Arcade lifts)  
[www.blindside.org.au](http://www.blindside.org.au)

## WA

**TOUCH ME SO I KNOW I EXIST** | STEVEN MORGANA  
22 August – 7 September  
Breadbox  
233 James Street, Northbridge  
[www.artrage.com.au/breadbox](http://www.artrage.com.au/breadbox)

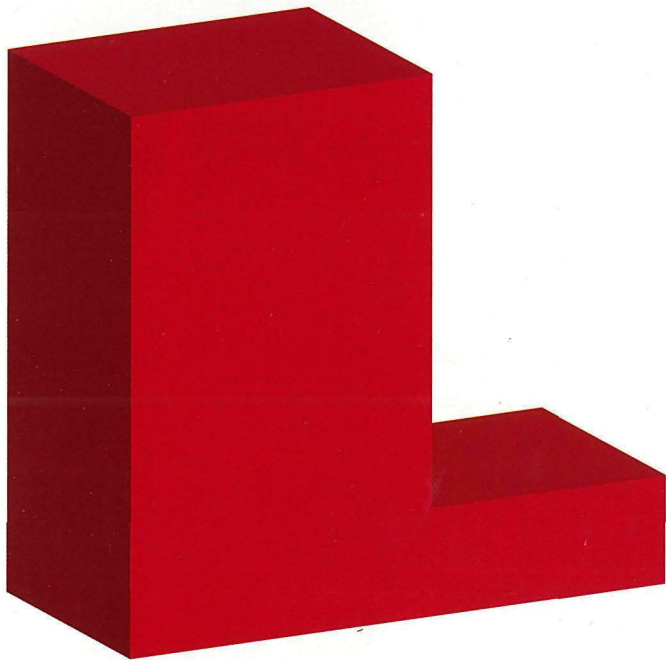
**FREMANTLE PRINT AWARD** supported by Little Creatures Brewing  
23 August – 5 October  
Fremantle Arts Centre  
1 Finnerty Street, Fremantle  
[www.fac.org.au](http://www.fac.org.au)

**SILVER—ARTRAGE 25**  
curated by MARCUS CANNING & ANDREW GAYNOR  
16 October – 23 November  
Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts  
Perth Cultural Centre, James Street, Northbridge  
[www.pica.org.au](http://www.pica.org.au)



Above: Darren Sylvester, *Forgotten and Alone But Trying*, 2007, photograph. As part of the billboard project in the gardens at Hazelhurst Regional Gallery & Arts Centre.






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**Newell Harry**  
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THE VISUAL ARTS AND CRAFT STRATEGY

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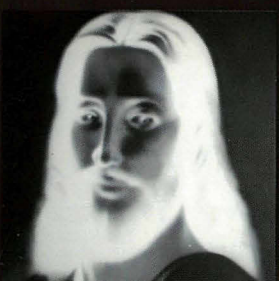
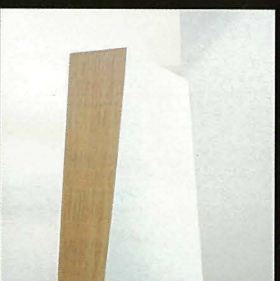
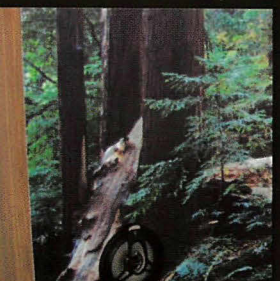
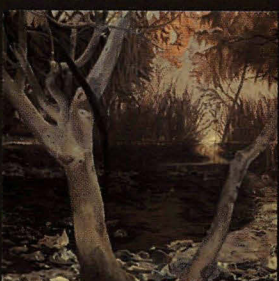
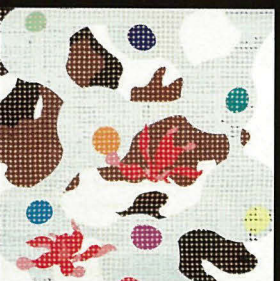
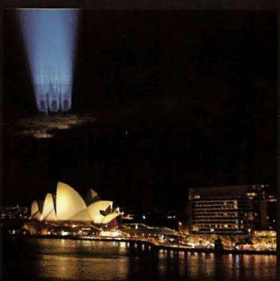
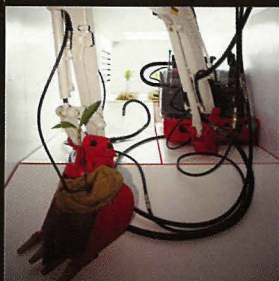
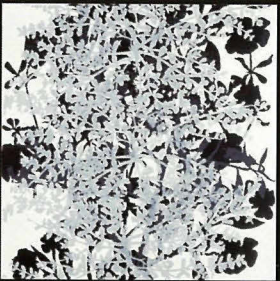
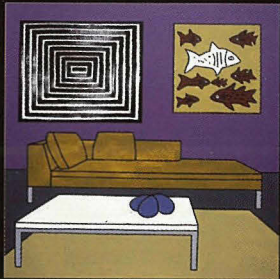
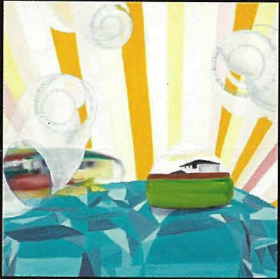
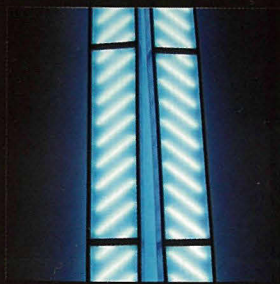


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| → INSANITY                         | - COURT CASES.                             |
| → DIARRHOEA                        | - CASINO SPECIALIST.                       |
| → MADNESS                          | - BAD LUCK                                 |
| → TO MAKE MENS PENNIS<br>strong    | - CUSTOMER ATTRACTION.                     |
| → WOMAN WITH PREGNACY<br>PROBLEMS. | "ETC....."                                 |
| → VOMITING ALL THE TIME            |                                            |

The Institute of Contemporary Art Newtown, (I.C.A.N.)/191 Wilson St, Newtown,  
NSW 2042, Australia/Directors: Carla Cescon, Scott Donovan, Alex Gawronski  
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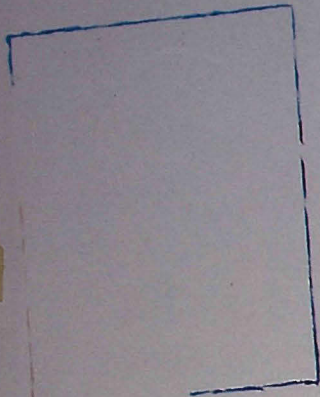
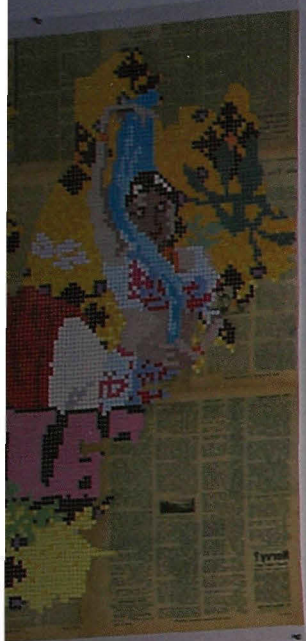
ISSUE 12 MAKE-BELIEVE

... coming spring 2008

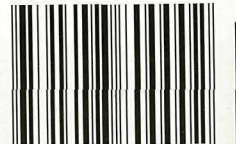


Adam Costenoble, *Bad Faith (synthetic)*, 2008, HD Video (still).





ISSN 14488000



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