

# runway

an australian contemporary art magazine

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# runway

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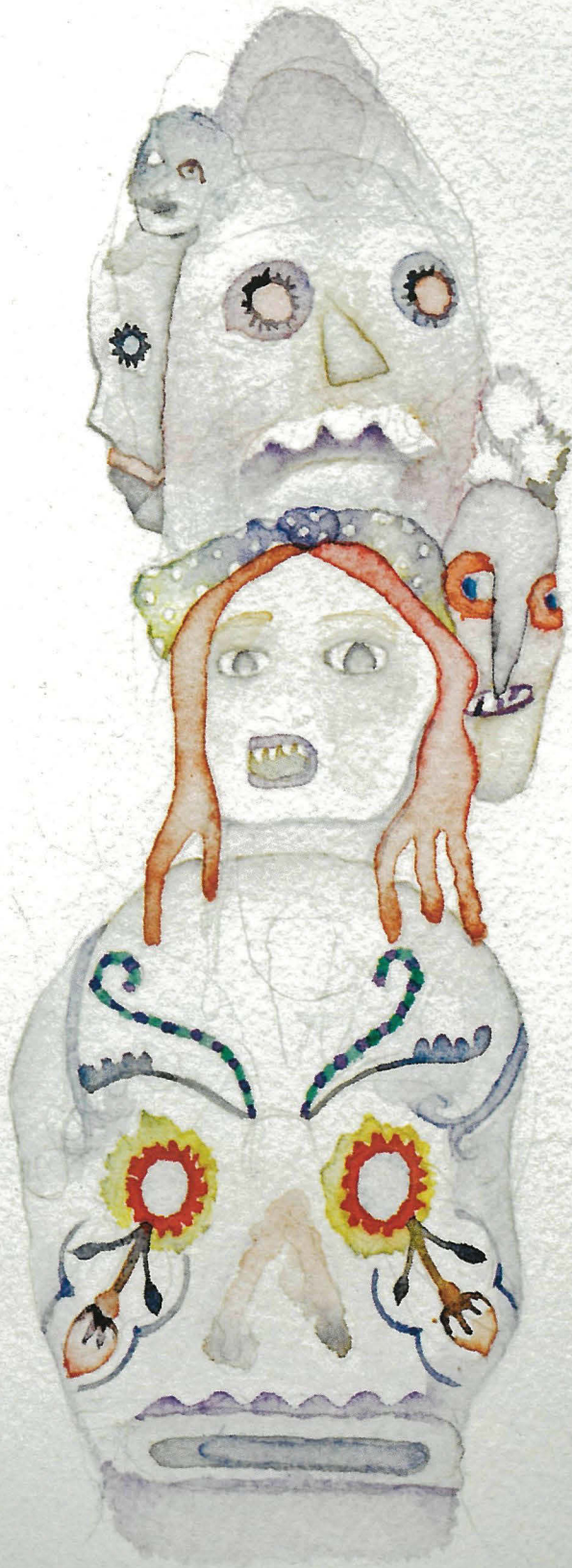
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Cover and facing page: Tara Marynowsky, *Helter Skelter*, 2010, watercolour on paper.



# Editorial

JAKI MIDDLETON

In her large-scale installation, *Regulated Fool's Milk Meadow* (2007), American artist Phoebe Washburn created a closed system factory centred on the cycle of growth and decay. With a 60-metre conveyor-belt loop at its heart, the work employed a carefully designed system of lights, watering stations and fans to promote the growth of a series of small plots of grass. Once a plot had cycled through the system to maturity, it was placed atop the structure, adding to an accumulating (dying) sod roof.

For Washburn, the ridiculousness of this process is central to the work. While it would be clearly much easier, cheaper and more efficient to simply place the grass outside to grow in nature, the system is intentionally inefficient: 'The factory's only purpose is to produce its own material for its own use. There is no greater goal—which is totally anti-industry. It ultimately consumes its own product, which is again nonsense.'<sup>1</sup>

In the process of this seemingly pointless exercise, something is in fact produced that exists beyond the system, however, that product is entirely conceptual. The work opens up a series of questions about life economies, consumption, sustainability, artistic production and waste.

It seems, especially now, that the idea of return has a strong cultural resonance—whether it is a return to the dream of post-war family values, or a return to a more natural, self-sufficient existence.

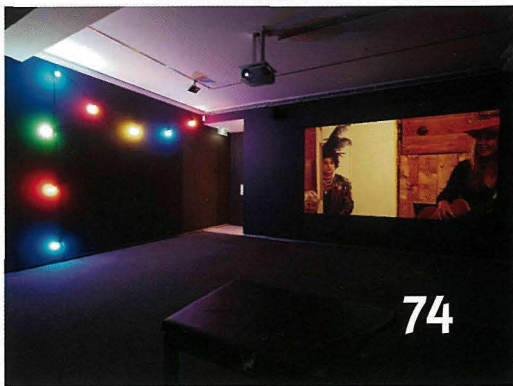
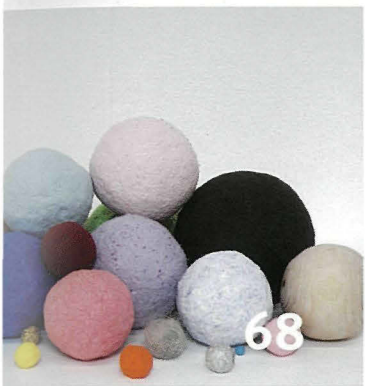
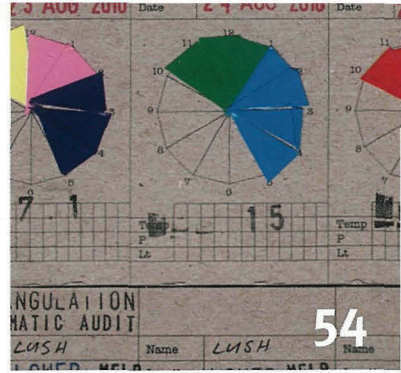
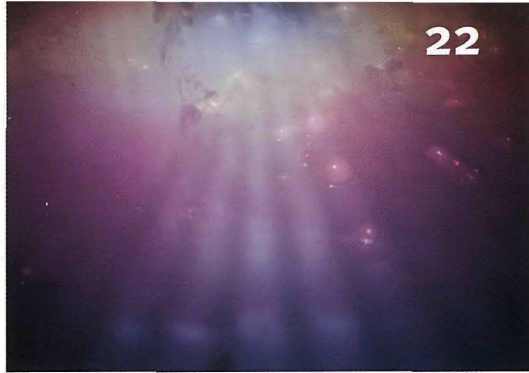
As always, referentiality and reciprocation are essential tools for artists. This issue of *runway* explores artistic practices that return to historical events, representations and methodologies, as strategies in the production of work. 'Return' as a physical exchange of services, experience and knowledge is central to the work of artists Bababa International, Kelly Doley and the Prismatic Auditors. In her review of *On Life After Death* (an exhibition in the Death Be Kind project curated by Claire Lambe and Elvis Richardson), Rosemary Forde looks at art that considers the ultimate return of 'dust to dust'.

Return is ever present, both within us and surrounding us. The process of return incorporates layers of understanding, enabling reflection that allows us to better understand the present, our futures and ourselves.



Above: Phoebe Washburn, *Regulated Fool's Milk Meadow*, 2007, installation view, Deutsche Guggenheim. Photos: David Lawrey.

1. Phoebe Washburn (interview with Joan Young), *Phoebe Washburn: Regulated Fool's Milk Meadow*, (Distributed Art Publishers, New York, 2007) 55.



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Six artists respond to Hazelhurst's haunted house

Robyn Backen \ Matt Glenn \ Daniel Kojta \ Wade Marynowsky \ Kate Murphy \ Eugenia Raskopoulos

Curated by Daniel Mudie Cunningham

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Image: Hazelhurst Cottage c.1953.  
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FEATURES



## Bababa International: Without Right Angles

IVAN MUÑIZ REED

History tells of Bababa International, a (possibly fictitious) resistance group, that came together in 1928 in a quest to protest against the Modernist ethos in the most foolhardy, courageous and elaborate ways. Rivals to the International Style in Architecture, ‘... wherever and whenever a Gropius, Oud, van der Rohe or Corbusier was raised’ they would appear ‘traveling in a large, elaborately patterned Zeppelin with a zig-zag throttle and peanut shaped under-carriage’ to contest the grandiose and communicate their shared vision of a world without right angles.<sup>1</sup>

Recently, Bababa International mysteriously returned from the shadows of Modernism, finding their way back through all the rubble and detritus of its heroic failures. Since 2008, the Sydney based collective formed by Tom Melick, Ivan Ruhle, Stephen Russell, Giles Thackway and (the newest member from the United States) Uncle Eric Harrod, have been creating a series of projects

that are actively engaging audiences through participatory artworks and ingenious suggestions that still hold true to that old and splendid dream of their namesake.

Bababa International's recent appearances have been characterised by their considerate and generous nature, where the viewer is an active individual who participates in a playful rhetoric that reveals as much as it withholds, precariously balancing naivety and intent, beneficence and critique. In their world, the habitual is brought into question by creating out-of-the-ordinary experiences where conventions are disturbed. Through the expansive and fantastical use of familiar spaces and objects, they invite us to engage in a range of activities—from the most essential ones like eating and bathing to more complex acts of exchange and consumption—to offer a momentary release from the normalised amnesia that is an inevitable consequence

Above: Bababa International, *Possible Curries*, 2009, installation view, Kudos Gallery, Sydney. Photo: the artists.

of the neoliberal global capitalism we live in. Their work often humorously defies social norms by presenting alternative systems for our consideration; ‘... their activity is fantastic and irrational, following no discernible pattern, moving towards no visible goal.’<sup>2</sup>

An example of the collective’s ingenious acts of generosity is *Possible Curries* (2008), an early work in which passers-by were invited to come into the gallery to stumble on what appeared to be haphazard installation/sculptural elements spread throughout the exhibition space. A plywood bike ramp was installed in the middle of the gallery, separating the space in two halves. To the left, a few shelves with cooking ingredients and a clumsy, hand-made, wooden shopping trolley were on display; to the right, a large map of Sydney with pinpointed locations hung next to a paper scroll with handwritten names and addresses. One couldn’t help but join a queue, which had formed inside the gallery, hoping that somehow the system would become apparent.

Participants followed the line, which led to a kitchen hidden underneath the gallery’s floorboards. Here, members from the collective were making curry and taking down the visitors’ contact details to deliver their meal to any chosen location within Sydney at any preferred delivery time. The rest of the crew were transcribing visitors’ details into a scroll of paper and marking order destinations onto the large map of Sydney in preparation for the bike delivery. All they were asking in exchange was the visitors’ curiosity. There is a rehabilitation of art implicit in the aestheticisation of a ‘free’ service that inflects this work with an ethos of social good, just as it underscores the usefulness of art. In addition, the invitation for the exhibition conveyed an antagonistic stance towards artistic conventions, it read: ‘*Possible Curries*, delivering you from Art’s continual disappointment’. And indeed, there was no prescriptive or elusive statement here left to be misunderstood in disappointment; instead Bababa International provided a tangible, edible benefit. In this sense, the work is a suggestion that we can no longer be disappointed by art if it fulfills our most essential need: hunger. It’s crucial, however, to remember that the altruism implicit in their work has its limits. The piece suggests a playful but provocative use of generosity. While most people were generally measured in their requests, others purposely chose difficult locations and absurd delivery times because they could. Nonetheless, Bababa International delivered.

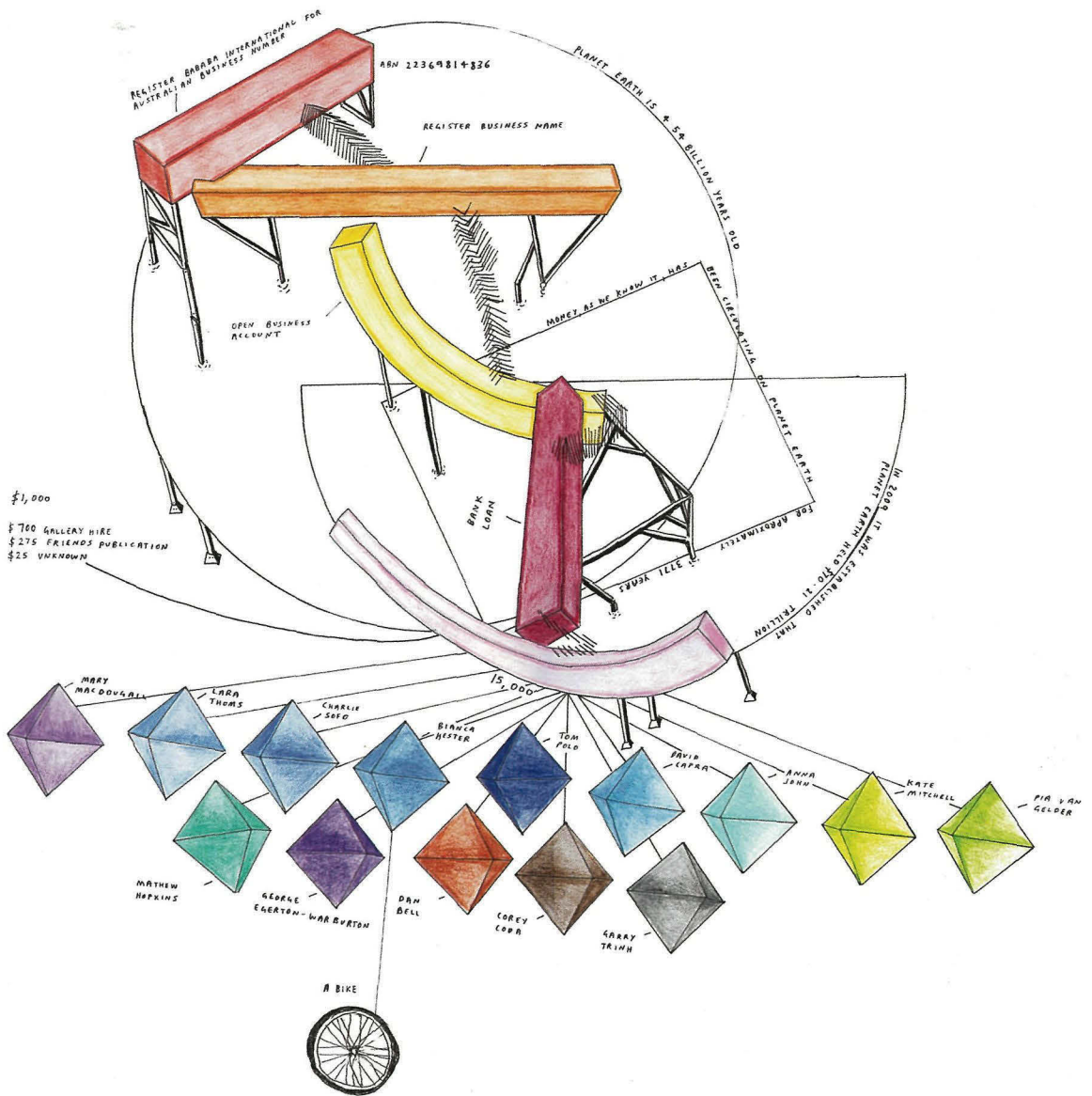
*Possible Curries* is not Bababa International’s only food-related project. Taking into consideration the collective’s view that ‘food is the ultimate necessity and therefore the ultimate human invention,’<sup>3</sup> the act of cooking is presented both as a creative and cultural act. Recently, the collective has been in communication with the cereal company Kellogg’s in a vivacious attempt to attract sponsorship for a new workshop that will focus on ‘investigating and documenting a prolonged engagement with Rice Bubbles.’<sup>4</sup> The letter sent to the international corporation specifies that the methods and exercises implemented in the workshop will be in accordance with a teaching syllabus designed by artist and pedagogue Aleksandr Rodchenko, and will enable participants to think critically about food. The generic tone of the template response letter from Kellogg’s contrasts starkly with the collective’s earnest and personal proposal, and exposes the reality of an individual lost in a system. Other food-related works spring to mind—Gordon Matta-Clark’s restaurant Food in 1970s SoHo or Rirkrit Tiravanija’s many cooking pieces—but in those works, the author is dissolved into the group and the enunciation is collective. In Bababa International’s practice, the author remains very much at the centre of the work’s transaction with its individual benefactor and collaborator.

Other works by Bababa International intersect with more complex systems of exchange. In September of 2010, the collective was part of *Friends*, an exhibition in Melbourne organised by Tom Polo, Mary McDougall and Charlie Sofo in which the premise was the camaraderie held among its participants. The exhibition provided Bababa International with another perfect opportunity to put munificence to the test while considering artistic practice in relation to exchange. They devised a two-part work, *Investing* and *Debt* (2010). For the first part of the work, *Investing*, they requested a loan from a bank to provide a considerable artist fee to every participant in the exhibition. The gift provoked a range of responses among the artists; while some politely thanked them in embarrassment, others were overwhelmed, responding in a frantic attempt to reciprocate. One of the artists, Kate Mitchell, promised to climb a mountain in gratitude. Artist Mathew Hopkins promised to draw a one-cent coin every day until he matched the value of the gift received, which will take him approximately 27 years. Garry Trinh’s response was to never cash the cheque. This work brings into question the repercussions and political implications that arise through a generous act, the motivations inherent in the act of giving and the burden of reciprocation.<sup>5</sup>

For the second part of the work, *Debt*, Bababa International will become part of a service economy, charging money for different services to gradually pay the loan back. One of the services offered by the collective is ‘rigorously researched conceptual catering,’ available for those who are interested in ‘eating the new.’<sup>6</sup> Another money-making service involves members Stephen and Ivan developing websites and iPhone designs upon request. *Investing* and *Debt* unites their working philosophy, methods, and social legitimacy with those of other workers outside of the parameters of art—strapping them into the wider engines of the economy and the technologies that drive it. While the setting may still be ironic, the execution of such work frames a sincere transaction, with the priority of rendering an actual service in an attempt to rescue the act of exchange from anonymity, standardisation and indifference. The establishment of an ethical transactional gesture remains at the core of this work, which also recognises that reciprocity between individuals should be at the heart of honest exchange.<sup>7</sup>

Seen in this light, Bababa International deploys its mimetic relationship to the sites and actions it replicates not to demolish with irony but to rediscover and recuperate the potential of an irrational yet unique experience. A good example of this is *The Soothsayer* (2010), a project currently in development for Locksmith Project Space in which they will transform the gallery into a large vending machine. While this machine will attempt to mimic the vehement focus and skill for presentation of the vending industry, the artists’ imperative will not be commercial. Instead, their vending machine will be stocked with useful premonitions; objects, articles, devices and items that are of the present, but that might be able to tell us something about what the future will be like.<sup>8</sup>

Some of their works seem to directly use the service model to focus emphatically on ideological critique. Bababa International’s *Imbroglia City (unit one) 2010*, a unit housing a hexagonal tub for six bathers, a wash-station, change-rooms and a deck for congregating is an example of this approach. The unit is equipped with a fictitious computational data collection and assessment mechanism. ‘Driven by inputs drawn from the unit’s geographical location, this facility sensitively evaluates the reality that surrounds it, using the data in order to select the type of material suitable for the actual bath.’<sup>9</sup>



Bababa International, *Drawing for Investing*, 2010, pen and coloured pencil on paper.





Above and facing page: Bababa International, *Imbroglio City (Unit 1)*, 2010, movable bathing system featuring a hexagonal tub, wash-station, two change rooms, elevated deck and congregation area. Installation view, Melbourne Central Shopping Mall rooftop, Next Wave Festival. Photos: Jorge de Araujo (above), Paul Davis (facing page).



Visitors are then invited to plunge into a tub full of mud described by the artists as a thickened, silky curd, which is a symbolic culmination of the clean tiled floors, escalators, air-conditioning, attractively pre-processed food and windows dressed in good taste of the shopping mall where, in its Next Wave Festival incarnation, it was installed. The site responsive piece, created on the third level rooftop of Melbourne Central Shopping Mall for the 2010 Next Wave Festival, provided a humorous alternative to commodity culture and enabled 'persons to survive this confusing mess by actively bathing in it.'<sup>10</sup> The unit invites us to consider the uniformity of standardised experience in our culture—its bureaucracy, its commercially charged insincerity, and its frequent indifference.

*Smooth Interpersonal Relationships* (2009) is an earlier work by the collective that was also responsive to a particular social situation of a site. The work was part of the exhibition *Horn Of Plenty: Excess and Reversibility* at Para/Site Artspace in Hong Kong. During their residency, Bababa International learnt how to manicure and pedicure in order to create a 'temple dedicated to the maintenance and serious beautification of humanity's most vital appendages (the hands and feet).'11 In this case, the service was aimed especially at migrant communities employed as domestic workers living in Hong Kong, who were invited to

the space by the collective. Although the attendance of this community was unfortunately not in the numbers they expected, their performative interplay sought to challenge an established commercial relationship of inequality by inverting it; in their work, the seller of goods (the supplicant of a transaction) became the buyer (the master of a transaction). *Smooth Interpersonal Relationships* (2009) brings our attention towards generosity, social conventions and consumerism, key concerns that reoccur in the collective's practice.

A similar considerate and altruistic intent can be seen in much service/relational aesthetics work, which as a form of art can be traced back to the social activism of the sixties. Not far from Joseph Beuys' *Social Sculpture* where 'every human being is an artist,'<sup>12</sup> the artifacts built by Bababa International consciously engage in DIY processes to emphasise that anyone who puts their mind to it could do as they do. For a 2009 residency at Firstdraft gallery, the collective set up a laboratory in their studio in which they taught themselves how to produce soap. A map was then transcribed into the soap bars that were given away to visitors to indicate the location of a nearby clandestine rooftop showering unit and water tower built out of wood, pipes, and a converted wine barrel. Once again, the option provided was an unlikely alternative to art, to the act of bathing and to the same languid





stupor of experience in a capitalist order that revolutionaries like Guy Debord from the Situationist International so avidly opposed.

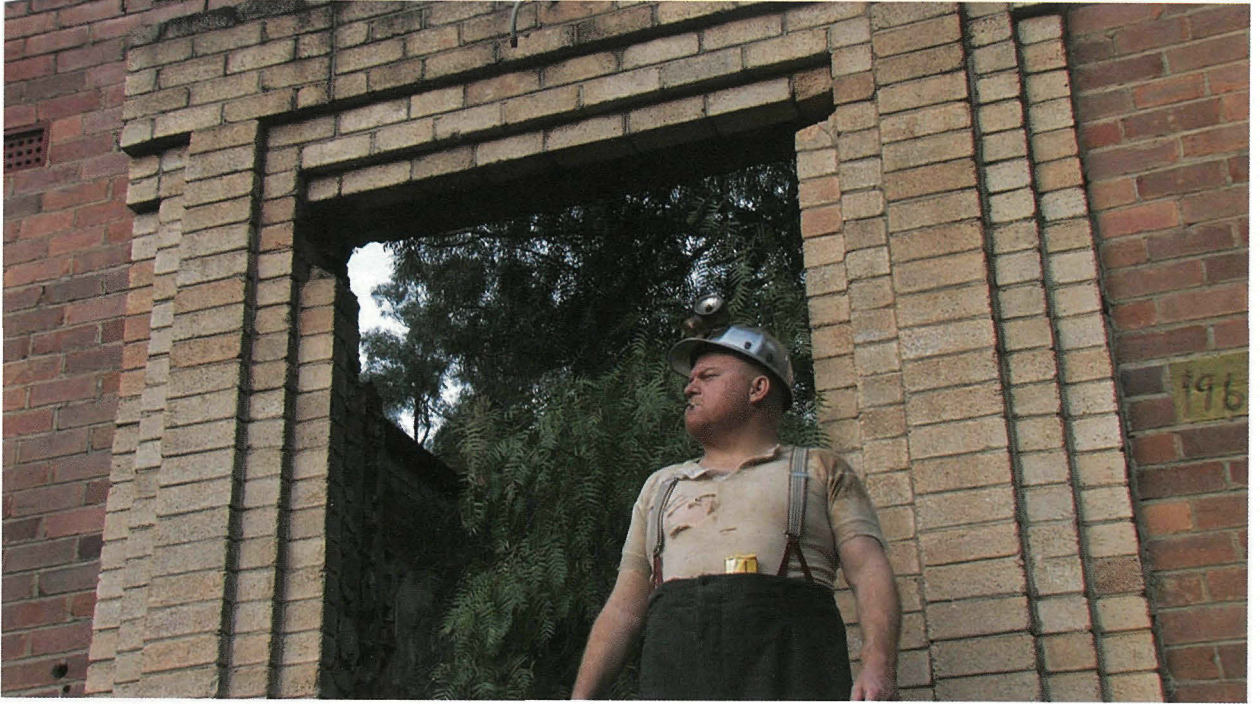
Many of the attitudes Bababa International articulate through their work are evocative of the ideals of visionaries who critiqued the power of the State and of capital by emphasising the power of the collective. Yet the work of Bababa International seems to fluctuate between these imperatives, offering a different way to define artistic work in relation to social praxis without intending to educate and enlighten with critical discourse. The collective urges us not to live in another man's utopia,<sup>13</sup> creating work that moves across cultural borders, class borders, work borders and aesthetic borders. Bababa International does not present us with an enlightened option to move forward but rather with the humble possibility that if we return to ask ourselves the most basic questions, the towering structures, the systems of cities, and the right angles will come undone.

'Ah, the old questions, the old answers, there's nothing like them!'<sup>14</sup>

1. See [www.bababainternational.com](http://www.bababainternational.com)
2. Ibid
3. Bababa International in a letter to Kellogg's, 19 September 2010
4. Ibid
5. Tom Melick, conversation with author 26 September 2010
6. Bababa International poster for *Conceptual Catering 2010*
7. Steven Henry Madoff, 'Service Aesthetics: personal transactions in art' *Artforum*, September (2008)
8. Stephen Russell, email message to author 3 October 2010
9. [www.bababainternational.com](http://www.bababainternational.com)
10. Ibid
11. Ibid
12. Sol Lewitt, 'Paragraphs on Conceptual Art', *Artforum*, June 1967
13. Tom Melick, conversation with author 26 September 2010
14. Samuel Beckett quoted by Tom Melick, conversation with author 26 September 2010

Above: Bababa International, *Soap City*, 2009, showering unit, water tower made with a converted wine barrel, installation view, clandestine rooftop, Sydney. Photo: the artists.

Facing page: Bababa International, *Smooth Interpersonal Relationships*, 2009, functional nail salon and pedicure facilities, installation and performance, Para/Site Artspace, Hong Kong. Photo: the artists.



Ghosts Undermine:  
*Strange Land Vol. 1* by John A. Douglas

DANIEL MUDIE CUNNINGHAM



'There was once civilisation here?'  
'Yeah, it used to be a mining town, just something went wrong'.

*The Chain Reaction* (1980)

Glen Davis is a small forgotten ghost town located in the Capertee Valley, near Lithgow in the Blue Mountains. Nestled alongside an ominous escarpment, the valley's history of industry and capital are embodied in the ruins of what was once a successful shale oil mining enterprise that opened in 1938, with some 2,500 miners and their families populating the area. For a time the site was a flourishing contribution to the heroic battler ethos of Australian working class determination. But its legacy was ultimately short-lived as then PM Robert Menzies decreed the local production of shale oil an unviable option in a post-war economy. Thus, the mine was closed in 1952 and auctioned off to private interests.

The miners and their womenfolk left as quickly as they had arrived, the local shops ceased trading and decay settled on the town. Today the ruins are still there—heritage listed, in fact—evoking an Australian modernity born from colonial triumph but grappling with a vast range of competing ideological forces and imperatives. The soldiers may (or may not) have come home when World War II ended, but the insidious Cold War era of the Menzies regime dictated that communism posed as much a threat as nuclear terror. Catholic priests joined politicians in sermonising anti-commie propaganda, effectively splitting the union movement and the Australian Labor Party in two. A strong union culture motivated the Glen Davis miners, their blood, sweat and tears shaping Australian myths of the miner who battles against the odds of such perilous, transient labour.

Fast-forward to 1980 and Glen Davis re-entered history through the popular imagination of Australian cinema. Ian Barry's feature film *The Chain Reaction* used Glen Davis as the setting for a thriller about nuclear contamination, car chases and gratuitous nudity.<sup>1</sup> Considering its decline during Cold War era rhetoric around nuclear threat, Glen Davis seemed the perfect locale through which to make sense of geopolitical tensions embedded in the Australian psyche. *The Chain Reaction* appeared at the end of the 1970s renaissance of Australian

Above and facing page: John A. Douglas, *Strange Land Vol 1 - The Miner*, 2010, HD Video still.



cinema, among them: *Wake in Fright* (1971), *Picnic at Hanging Rock* (1975), *The Devil's Playground* (1976), *The Last Wave* (1977), *Long Weekend* (1979) and *Mad Max* (1979).<sup>2</sup> Each film spoke to Australia's preoccupation with defining itself through various postcolonial anxieties and was often set against Australia's harsh and foreboding landscape.

John A. Douglas revisits and reimagines various social histories of Glen Davis in *Strange Land Vol. 1* (2010) through the prism of Australian cinema. To date Douglas has amassed a striking body of video and photomedia work that examines how Australiana has been constructed through visual culture, particularly from the 1960s and seventies until now. *Screen Test (Australiana)* (2007) reinvented the suicide scenes from *Walkabout* (1971) and *Wake in Fright*—two iconic Australian films made by imported directors with imported but no less compelling visions of what constituted the Australian outback. His more recent work, *Ask Noeline... (not the ogre)* (2009) channelled Noeline Donaher, the matriarch of early 'reality TV' series *Sylvania Waters* (1992), also produced by imported talent. As an Aussie kid from the suburbs, Douglas was reared on a solid diet of movies and TV produced on these shores. It comes as no surprise that his practice today is hell-bent on reclaiming the screen media of our past through counter-narratives that are as critically smart as they are fondly nostalgic.

For *Strange Land*, Douglas collaborates with performance artists Sari T.M. Kivinen and Liam Benson to create a series of symbolic characters that, in referencing the town's history, conjure the ghosts of a lost time and place. Realised as an ambitious three-channel video installation, Douglas has fashioned a compelling universe that uses the road as a literal and metaphoric device. Tracing the road going in and out of the abandoned mine site, Douglas plays with fictional meanings mapped onto the land in the guise of a national identity that is constructed, ideological and narrative based.

The ghosts evoked by Douglas, Kivinen and Benson materialise as a miner, priest, housewife, waitress and pioneer. Less obvious archetypes are a Hazmat suited worker testing radiation levels with a Geiger counter. In a surreal twist, this character resurfaces in sci-fi terms as a gold alien figure surveying the site, perhaps seeking cryptic interplanetary knowledge amidst an ancient city's ruins. Episodic



in structure, these characters draw out stories about the area told by Leonie Knapman, a miner's daughter who grew up to be the town historian. Douglas takes advantage of the unreliable, romanticised nostalgia of such oral histories by responding through interpretive rather than literal means. In doing so, *Strange Land* refers primarily to the way post-settlement Australian culture cannot seem to shake its view of the land as something we can't quite conquer or tame no matter how hard we try.

Implied by this anxiety is an unknowable spirituality associated with the land's original Indigenous owners, the Wiradjuri people. Even though Douglas shirks overt reference to its Aboriginal past or present, the land's strangeness seems as much connected to contemporary cinematic or literary archetypes as it is to the sense that the land harbours deep, unimaginable wounds (some unverified accounts claim that whites colonised the land through the massacre of its occupying Aboriginals). Tracey Moffatt's revisionist outback in *Night Cries: A Rural Tragedy* (1989) inevitably emerges as a reference point—not just in relation to the Indigenous poetics/politics it brilliantly and wordlessly conveyed, but also in the way *Strange Land's* soundtrack composer, Debra Petrovitch, samples the chilling sonic template of her *Night Cries* score.

When the terrain is this troubled with contested, uncertain signs, the obvious trail of navigation is the road. It may lead you in but do not assume it will lead you out. Roads help us make sense of the landscape, they offer pathways to shelter and navigable means of traversing what can be difficult psychogeographic terrain. Like a trail of breadcrumbs scattered by a child to safely guide the passage home, Douglas underscores the circuitous unreliability of roads that lead to a terrifying nowhere-land for no-place-people.

Starella is one such person. Named after one of Kivinen's established performance personas, Starella the waitress loiters around an abandoned milk bar drinking red wine straight from the bottle (this character is also a reference to *The Chain Reaction's* blousy waitress

Above: John A. Douglas, *Strange Land # 5—The Priest* (featuring Liam Benson), 2010, c-type photograph.

Facing page: John A. Douglas, *Strange Land # 2—Starella* (featuring Sari TM Kivinen), 2010, c-type photograph.



Gloria). As the sun beats down on Starella, her alcoholic delirium and paranoia accelerates and she runs onto the road. An unseen paranormal force could be chasing her, causing intense fear and terror. But the road offers no solace or escape. We've seen this before in *Long Weekend* or *Wolf Creek* (2005), where the doomed find the road just when they need saving from impending death. But instead, the road conspires with their captor, closing in for the kill. During production the working title for *The Chain Reaction* was *The Man at the Edge of the Freeway*, which evokes an image of human vulnerability when sidelined against the edge of the ominous road.

Ultimately the characters of *Strange Land* are haunted by the ghosts they become. Riddled with historic traces of failure and trauma, the ghost town is a holding cell for restless spectres whose presence ascribes to the place a 'badland' status. According to author Ross Gibson, a 'badland' is 'originally a tract of land that would not succumb to colonial ambition.'<sup>3</sup> What remains are the ruins and ghosts of history, which through the accumulative force of time make some lands incapable of mastery. 'By calling a place ominous and bad,' says Gibson, 'citizens can admit that a pre-colonial kind of "savagery" lingers inside the colony even though even though most of the country has been tamed for husbandry and profit.'<sup>4</sup>

These 'badlands' are so figured within a dominant conception of Australian national identity that cinema produced during the seventies obsessively returned to these tropes around a haunted, terrifying terrain. *The Chain Reaction* was released a year after *Mad Max*, which according to the film's producers 'made people feel we didn't have to embrace our history and outback' but rather adopt films about road culture and nuclear contamination.<sup>5</sup> The disavowal of the role played by the landscape in either of these films is strange considering how the whole point of road culture is that it fulfils the macho desire to conquer and penetrate a difficult land, in the same way narratives of nuclear contamination speak to an overarching extinction anxiety or fantasy.

In a sense, Douglas recognises how these cultural and social panics are encoded in the fragile economies/ecologies of a modern civilisation. If citizens aren't busy stressing about their annual subscription renewal to nationhood, other fraught factors to stock-take include gender, class and religion. Kivinen's good Christian housewife persona busily orders civilisation amidst the bush, while preparing tea and cakes for a guest that never comes. Ants attack the cakes, recalling the hypnotic 'luncheon on the grass' of *Picnic at Hanging Rock*. In contrast, Benson's priest sits alone outside the chapel, drinking beer in the oppressive heat, while reading the scriptures and waiting for a God that never comes. A deep sadness permeates his facial expressions, distilling through gesture and nuance an irresolvable crisis of identity. A beer is his last supper as he proceeds to the mine to hang himself. In creating this character, the conflicted beer-drinking priests of *The Devil's Playground* are called to mind. So too is the historical context of Glen Davis's pub being converted into a chapel in the mid-1950s after the mine closed down. Apparently a priest suicided not long before the priesthood abandoned the Glen Davis seminary, leaving their possessions behind without explanation. Suicide is a recurring theme in Douglas's work, having figured prominently in his earlier work *Screen Test (Australiana)*. The manner in which suicide is played out in the landscape is a metaphor for the 'sadness that lies at the centre of the male psyche' and the fragility of a human condition that turns us all into ghosts in the end.<sup>6</sup>



Adding another spooky layer to the visual culture of Glen Davis is a music video that obscure rock band Wildland shot there in the 1990s. When interviewed for a trashy US cable program about ghosts, the band claim that a ghost appeared on the tape; to this day it is believed to be either the priest or a miner who died in a fatal accident.<sup>7</sup> Douglas plays this miner emerging from the earth all bloodied and bruised. As he dies, the miner transforms into a ghost that patrols the site as a one-man marching band, beating a drum as his blood turns to oil. The strong union culture class struggles of mining in Australia have a long history of which Glen Davis is part. Once it was announced the mine was to close, the strike that ensued saw 52 men stay underground for 26 days, while the community rallied support with a neighbouring soup kitchen and marching band demonstrations.<sup>8</sup> Douglas's performative invocation of the ghost miner foretells the fate of a town destined for ruins.

A common thread in Indigenous culture is the belief that ghosts are best found in the mountains at dawn. John A. Douglas shot some of the ghost sequences at dawn, paying homage to this belief while also forging an atmosphere founded on the trickery of light. Ultimately, *Strange Land Vol. 1* amplifies the role light plays in granting visibility: the light of cinema and photography; the light of religion ('the light of the world'); the light illuminating the spectral whiteness of the lonely woman in the bush; the light manifest as a coalmine furnace blasting; the light that summons ghosts. It is a light that is not only directed toward the living or dead amongst us, but to the perilous fictions cultivated over time, over place, under mine.

1. A year after *The Chain Reaction*, filmmaker Peter Butt made a short documentary, *No Such a Place* (1981), about the troubled history of Glen Davis. 'It was one of those places where everything seemed to go wrong', remarks a former inhabitant resident when recalling the town's heyday in *No Such a Place*. *No Such a Place* screened in national release alongside Peter Weir's *Gallipoli*.

2. See David Stratton, *The Last New Wave: The Australian Film Revival*, (London; Sydney: Angus & Robertson Publishers, 1980).

3. Ross Gibson, *Seven Versions of an Australian Badland*, (University of Queensland Press, St. Lucia, 2002) 14.

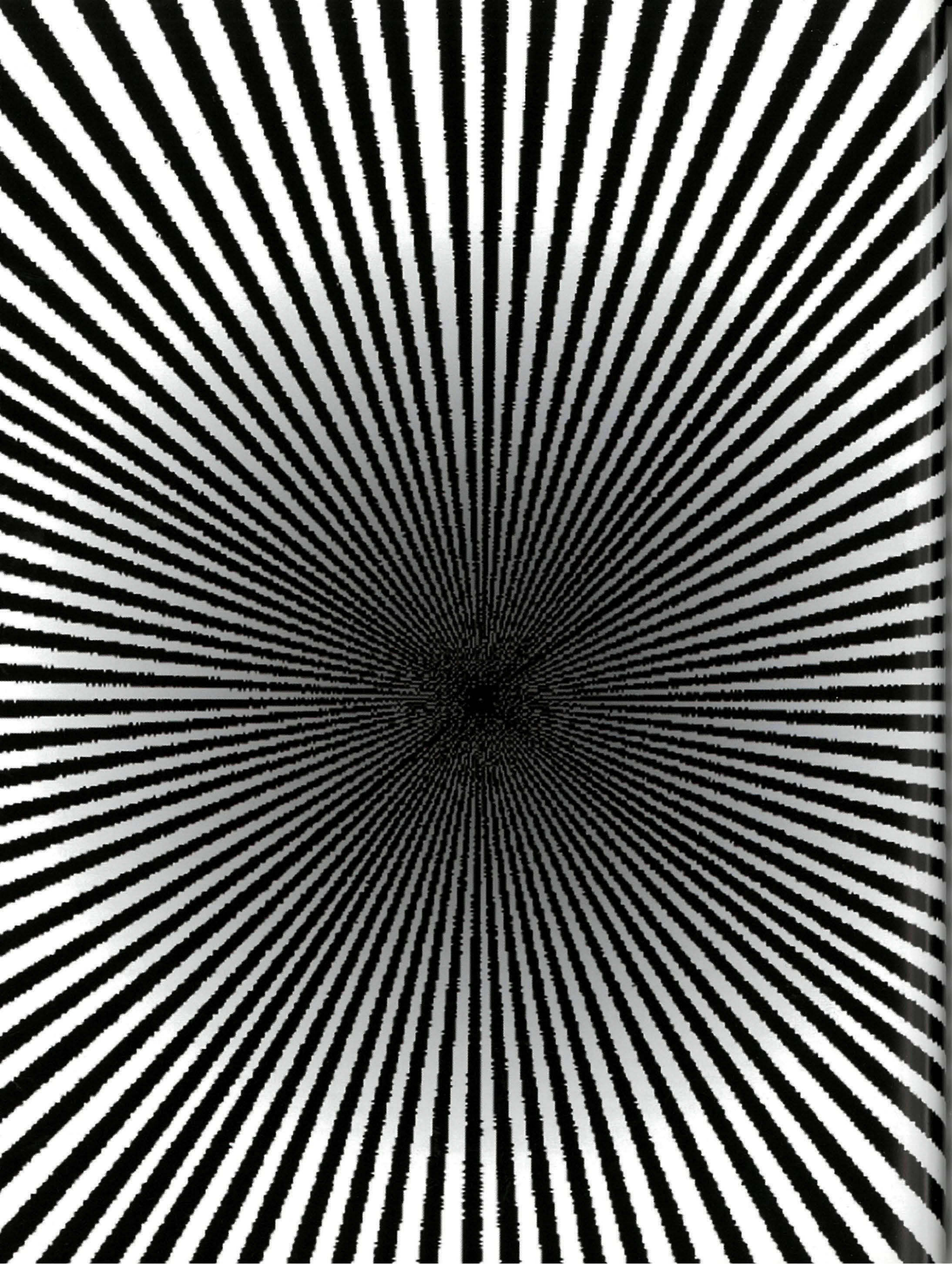
4. *Ibid.* 15.

5. Cited in interviews with director Ian Barry, producer David Elfick and actor Steve Bisely from *Thrills and Nuclear Spills* making-of featurette for *The Chain Reaction* (Umbrella Entertainment, 2005).

6. Email correspondence with John A Douglas, 25 September 2010.

7. The clip from *Scariest Ghost Videos* (Bravo Entertainment) featuring the Wildland interview and music video excerpt can be viewed at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZwftQhsnVzw>.

8. 'Stay-down Strike at Glen Davis Ends After 26 Days', *The Sunday Herald*, 29 June 1952, 3.





# Round and Round in the Night

OLIVIA SOPHIA in conversation with ELLA BARCLAY

Ella Barclay indulges in domestic spectacle. She uses home-baked google-science to create installations that conjure up and comment on one of the most influential of contemporary spaces: the internet. Like a moth to a flame, or a procrastinator to an extra browser tab, it's difficult not to be attracted to her world of mesmerising gifs, video projections and tangled cables. Barclay employs a self-referential process in which the medium is both message and method. Knowledge gained online is used to make work that describes, celebrates and critiques the impact of new technologies on our personal lives. I decided to continue the *mis en abyme* and interview her online. Hit return, this is our Gmail chat.

ellabarclay: hellooooo

**oliviasophia: that YouTube was funny!**

ellabarclay: which one?

**oliviasophia: the one on your signature ... 'man blowing a raspberry'.**

ellabarclay: oh yeah. Squeamishly good.

**oliviasophia: so did you happen to get to get to Sarah's opening on the way home? Matthys Gerber?**

ellabarclay: nope me bad, you?

**oliviasophia: nope, me bad too.**

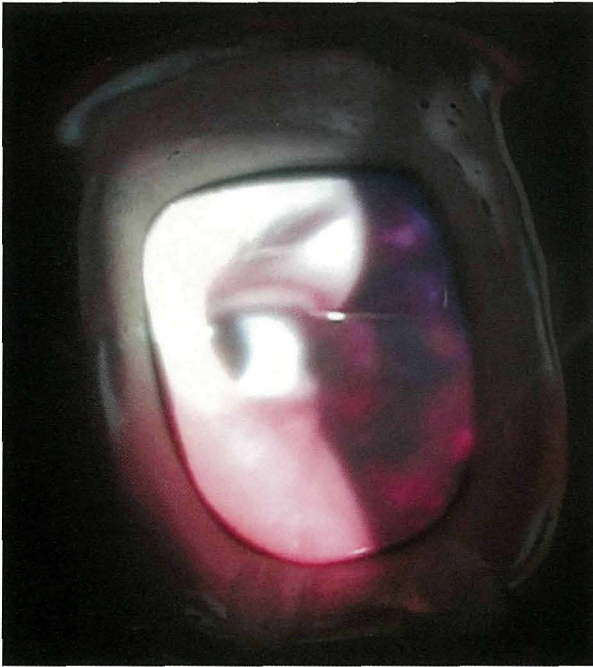
ellabarclay: bad x 2 = good

**oliviasophia: like! So ... Ella, your work seems to be almost 'placeless'—in a very sophisticated kind of way. It jolted me when I read that you were born in Bendigo. But perhaps that sense of 'placelessness' is to do with the nature of your subject, new technologies. Your work deals with the impact of advancing technology, yet it is often very lo-fi. Tell me about *the gif*.**

ellabarclay: well I like to think I employ both high and low production qualities. From coating kettle leads in KY jelly laced with holographic glitter to working with really creative programmers in MAX/MSP to make more complex works such as a giant, interactive walk-on whoopee cushion. The lo-res vortex gif is something that had stayed with me. It sprung out at me once when I was trawling and I was entrenched by its poorly compressed sleaziness, possibly because I also possess these qualities. I like to think of it as the visual equivalent of the THX sound through blown Taiwanese computer speakers.

**oliviasophia: the black and white flashing lines have such a mesmerising quality. I always feel entranced, and unable to look away.**

ellabarclay: that's the vibe. People do tend to get transfixed when viewing the works I make that feature this vortex, yet it's not different to the screens we stare at all the time, we're warmly sedated by the vibrations of light and colour, imbuing it with our ilts towards fun times in a future that may never quite exist. But this isn't such a *bad* thing.



**oliviasophia:** what about the dry ice? When I see it billowing from tangles of cables I can't help but think of 'the cloud'. But I guess you started using dry ice before this term had currency?

ellabarclay: well, 'cloud' technology is all about storing your data on larger servers that you connect with online. This is a process I now heartily employ after about four years of ruining my hard-drives in the process of making art. My idea for dry ice, like all the gadgets and processes that I employ, came from the internet. I love that there's a bottomless nerd-pool of step-by-step instructions for making all these magical-looking things that previously required privileged access via suppliers and assembly knowledge.

**oliviasophia:** well I guess there's an Australian element to your work—DIY!

ellabarclay: ha! Further to the placelessness thing though, I was born in Bendigo but before I was one year old I moved to London—Dad was an engineer working in Defence. Then when I was five I moved to Lithgow, then Canberra, then Melbourne then when I was 14, I moved to Sydney.

**oliviasophia:** it's all coming together now.

ellabarclay: I remember being young, maybe about six, and thinking that through some weird process, if you just willed it, your toys will come alive. In a way I'm still trying to get to that magic, domestic spectacle, which will probably always look DIY and lo-fi ... BUT MAGIC.

Above (left): Ella Barclay, *Too Much, Not Enough*, 2006, video still (detail).

Above (right): Ella Barclay, *SHIT RIP*, 2009 installation view, Firstdraft Gallery, Sydney. Photo: the artist.

Facing page: Ella Barclay, *SHIT RIP*, 2009, video still.

**oliviasophia:** the magician/shaman element in your work has always appealed to me. I recently described your installation at db as 'sciencerific' because of the wonderful conjunction of the scientific and the terrific. Do you think of yourself as a modern day shaman/witch?

ellabarclay: well, first let me qualify this by stating that I was raised in a non-religious environment and I'm definitely not one to believe in the spiritual, but I do think we all engage with online media in an intuitive fashion. When we relate to each other through sending quirky images or songs, we're charging them with emotional meanings that extend far beyond what can be articulated. In the same way your term 'sciencerific' rings true, we want the spectacle of science, no longer diligent pursuits. We're seduced by the prospect of a luminous, lovely time—it's like an internet spa bath.

**oliviasophia:** yes ... 'we go round and round in the night and are consumed by fire'.<sup>1</sup> In fact, your work isn't so much about the new technologies themselves, as the behaviours brought about by new technologies.

ellabarclay: totally. I read a really interesting interview with Jake Chapman in *Papers in Surrealism*<sup>2</sup> where he pretty much said that most of Guy Debord's work was plagiarising Georges Bataille without really understanding it. *The vibe...* Having said this, I am really interested in the title of Debord's final film, *in girum imus nocte et consumir igni* (1978) a palindrome that translates to, well, what you said above (*we go round and round in the night and are consumed by fire*). I easily get stuck trawling in the half-light, aggregating quirky yet mostly insignificant information and



redistributing it to individual recipients based on variant behaviour or *agenda du jour* (daily diary). I don't know what came first, me making work about getting lost on the internets ... or getting lost on the internets whilst trying to make work. Every time we browse, we forget about the time before and repeat our behaviours. I'm stumbling round the same circuit spinning the same half-mast gag to the same cast of people, but those with long attention spans weird me out.

**oliviasophia: I know right? So, back to the captivating luminous screens ... your projections onto water give the sense of bathing/ being immersed in the internet. Where do you get the footage from?**

ellabarclay: the footage mostly comes from me. I use underwater cameras or have videographers film me from above while I'm in the water. *Shit Rip* (2009) was ironically titled because the day I picked to be filmed swimming in the ocean with my laptop, was a day when all of Sydney's storm water was floating along the coast, yet it also comes back to the vortex gif—something that's been copied badly.

**oliviasophia: shit.**

ellabarclay: the footage features me dodging 30cm high walls of floating polutafoam, I remember the videographer telling me 'when you get cancer, I want you to know it was because you swam in this water today.'

**oliviasophia: but it sounds like it was a fortuitous follow up to your work *Garbage Tit* (2008)?**

ellabarclay: *Garbage Tit* (2008) was me sitting on the bottom of a pool staring into my laptop and being so mesmerised by the screen that I seem oblivious to the fact that I'm sitting under two metres of water. I was actually nursing a heavy stone to keep

me on the bottom—chlorine was both my friend and enemy. The resulting footage was projected onto a bin full of water.

**oliviasophia: and how did you hold your breath?**

ellabarclay: I just did.

**oliviasophia: dedication.**

ellabarclay: I should patent that shit ...

**oliviasophia: it's great that through a simple projection you are able to turn water into a screen. But of course the water is never still and always has this creepy feeling of being alive, a bit like the internet—you're staring into something which is actually a great big blob of movement: a giant mass of ever changing information.**

ellabarclay: mooohahaha! Yeah, I like how water is simultaneously skittish and ungraspable yet fun to lie around in.

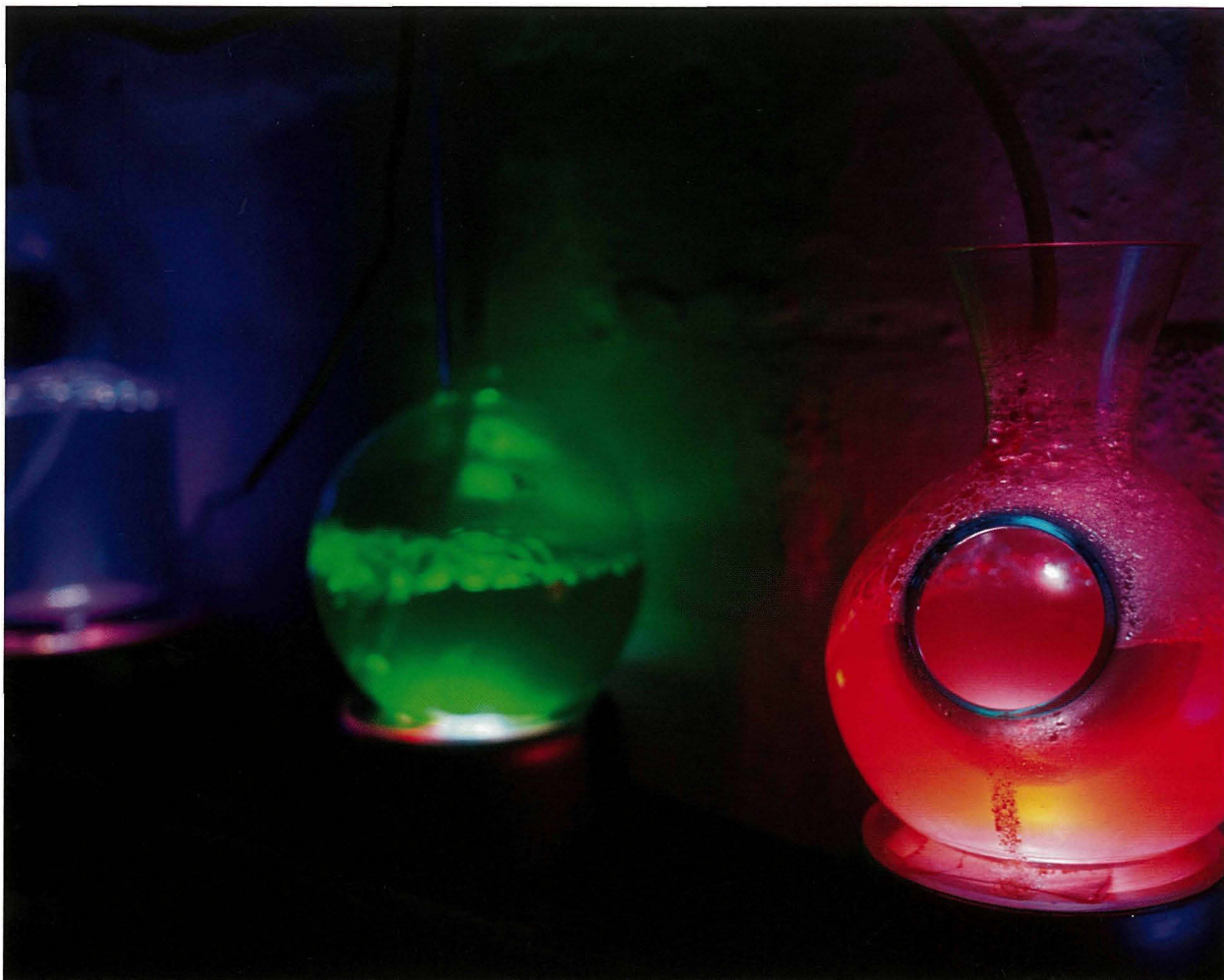
**oliviasophia: I'm interested in the sublime nature of the internet ... in the Kantian sense. It's glorious and engrossing, but also causes fear because it's unfathomable and unrepresentable. Our minds can't grasp it in its entirety.**

ellabarclay: I know, Charlie Brooker was just this week accusing the new *Google Instant* of trying to kill him.

**oliviasophia: hang on, what's *Google Instant*?**

ellabarclay: the predictive text that fills in your search query with possible endings to your sentences.

**oliviasophia: omg, I hate that.**



ellabarclay: I think the technology has come about because often we get anxious when we are online and run out of things to look at. We exhaust our trusty routes of blogs and feeds and need something else. We want to look, but don't know what to look at. We want the fix, but have lost the dealer's number. It's like with all things, not knowing where to go is terrifying, but once you start with something, you can whistle while you plod along. Deleuze and Guattari speak of 'The Refrain', using the metaphor of a child singing to herself in the dark to ward off whatever might be out there and give herself something to stick to.<sup>3</sup> I think we all come back to our own songs and choruses for the same reason. And that's why my work is quite hum-heavy.

**oliviasophia: you mentioned Bataille earlier. Has he been an influence on you? What theorists have you drawn on in your practice?**

ellabarclay: I read a fair bit of Bataille when I was in Edinburgh, particularly *The Accursed Share*, *Visions of Excess* and *The Solar Anus*.<sup>4</sup> Around the time I made *Too Much, Not Enough*

(2006), I was interested in early net.art, Alexei Shulgun, [jodi.org](http://jodi.org), [0100101110101101.org](http://0100101110101101.org) (Eva and Franco Mattes) and Heath Bunting. I was looking at how value was assigned, particularly to creative works that were digital. There was a fear back then, a justified one, concerning how we would assign value to cultural works if everyone online was making them. Bataille engages this idea, but, even in his most complex works, with a degree of romance and misery.

**oliviasophia: ahhh yes, assigning value to cultural production. That's what we do for a living isn't it, my dear?**

ellabarclay: yes, the system. *Too Much, Not Enough* is a single-shot video work where, in a first-person point of perspective, we see a figure walk home alone, up her stairs, into her bathroom, and gaze into her toilet. There she sees a short dream-like narrative appear on the surface of the water: images of jewel-encrusted turds being delivered in red velvet envelopes through the mail. I was interested in the tension between abundance and preciousness in an e-commerce context.

Above: Ella Barclay, *Searching for a legitimate domain*, 2010, installation detail, tp project, Sydney. Photo: David Lawrey.  
Facing page: Ella Barclay, *VELLEITY STUDY*, 2009, installation view, GrantPirrie Window, Sydney. Photo: Jessica Maurer.



Yet it was as much about those issues as it was about me being sad that I didn't have a boyfriend, and feeling that I gave too much to my friends maybe and didn't hold back something for someone special. I was mystically willing romance on myself through videos of me vomiting Plasticine sparkly faeces.

**oliviasophia: is it true that you could actually order *Too Much Not Enough* to be delivered in a velvet envelope?**

ellabarclay: You still can! I made 25 velvet envelopes that you could buy individually from my website for values that varied from £1 to £100. When it arrived you had to stick your hand in and find a wad of glittery KY jelly and a DVD, which had to be washed to watch. It all stemmed from a dream I had that a red velvet envelope arrived for me, and in it was a mixed CD from a man I'd crushed out on years before. I woke up with a glorious sense of hope and that things were gonna be okay.

**oliviasophia: So there's definitely a personal element to your work. Do you think of it as self-portraiture? Or more cultural commentary? Or is there even a division between the two in this Facebook age?**

ellabarclay: I think everything offers cultural commentary, but artists who set out with that objective in mind are the worst.

**oliviasophia: TOTALLY**

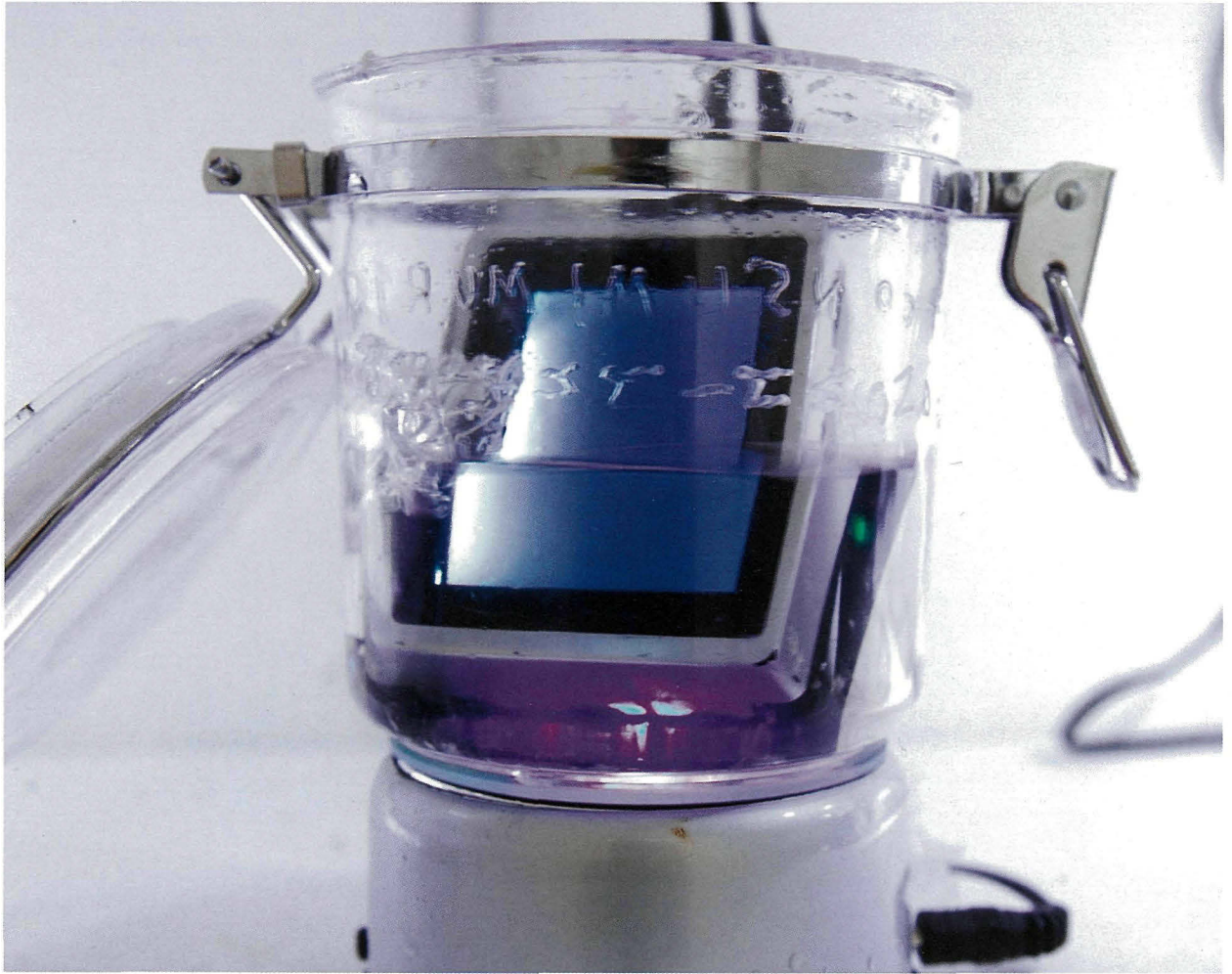
ellabarclay: but my practice has always been, and will exponentially be, an exercise in expressing the journey, and those little moments of reflection that we rest in then forget. I like it when works provide entry points into larger narratives.

**oliviasophia: yes, better than being hit over the head with a conceptual baseball bat.**

ellabarclay: well, there's just no flirt to it, right? The best art is that which teases you until you can't let it go.

**oliviasophia: agree. Sometimes I tell clients that if you get it straight away, you'll probably hate it next week.**

ellabarclay: true! The same goes for boys and music.



**oliviasophia:** wow. Of course. I think you just single-handedly solved my perennial dating problem! But back to art, the one work that sticks out to me as being a little different (at least in terms of media) is the piece you displayed in the Grant Pirrie Window in 2009. Where did the text 'Strike Now' come from?

**ellabarclay:** the work was called *Velleity Study* (2009) and I thank the ever-inspiring and clever artist Lee Bul for introducing me to the term velleity: 'a wish or inclination not strong enough to lead to action.'<sup>5</sup> 'Strike Now' therefore becomes both an instruction to stop and a will to start something. I'd like to think that even as you read it, you were mesmerised by the bubbles happening through the lettering. I guess it all comes back to the internets.

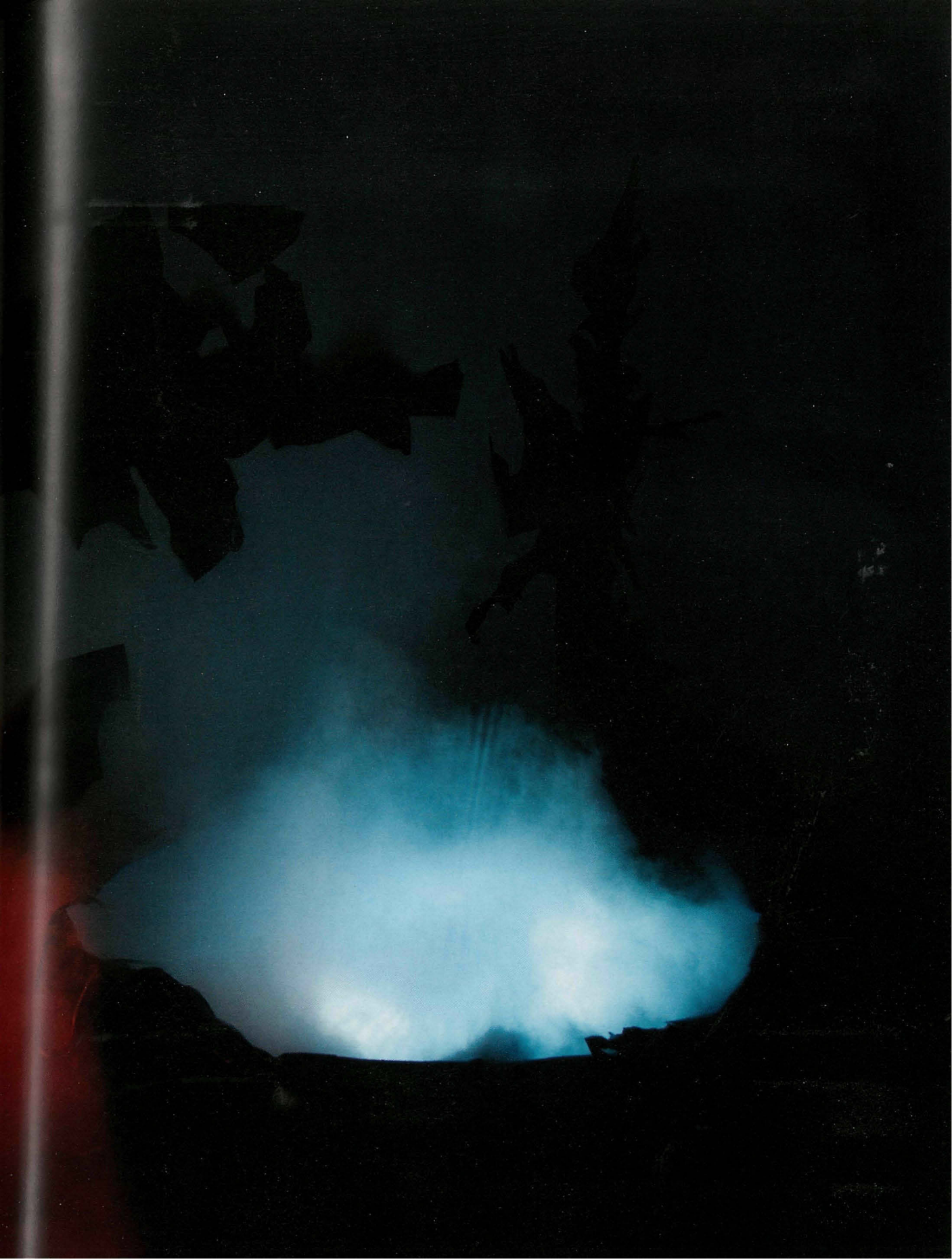
**oliviasophia:** well I feel like that might be the perfect last sentence.

**ellabarclay:** BUT OLIVIA IT NEVER ENDS

1. English translation of the medieval Latin palindrome: *In girum imus nocte et consumimur igni*, Wikipedia article, accessed 10 October 2010, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Palindrome>.
2. Jake Chapman and Simon Baker, 'Jake Chapman on Georges Bataille: an Interview with Simon Baker', *Papers of Surrealism*, Issue 1, Winter 2003, accessed 10 October 2010, <http://www.surrealismcentre.ac.uk/papersofsurrealism/journal1/index.htm>.
3. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari; Brian Massumi trans., *A thousand plateaus : capitalism and schizophrenia*, London: Athlone Press, 1988.
4. See Georges Bataille; Robert Hurley trans. *The accursed share : an essay on general economy*, New York: Zone Books, 1988-1991. Georges Bataille, *Visions of excess: selected writings, 1927-1939*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985. Georges Bataille, *L'Anus solaire (The Solar Anus)*, 1931.
5. [www.oxforddictionaries.com](http://www.oxforddictionaries.com).

Above: Ella Barclay, *RAVE JARS I*, 2009, installation detail, Gaffa Gallery. Photo: Joy Lai.

Facing page: Ella Barclay, *Hurry! While There's Still More Time!*, 2010, installation view, db project. Photo: David Lawrey.



# Time After Time

MELANIE OLIVER

... the specific difference between the momentum of appropriation in the 1980s and today lies in a decisive shift in the relation to the object of appropriation—from the re-use of a dead commodity fetish to the invocation of something that lives through time—and, underlying this shift, a radical transformation of the experience of the historical situation, from a feeling of a general loss of historicity to a current sense of an excessive presence of history, a shift from not enough to too much history or rather too many histories.<sup>1</sup>

'HISTORY LOSES ITS APPEAL' a banner boldly announced from the window of the University of Auckland's General Library foyer, recalling proclamations from the late-20th century of an apparent crisis or even the end of history. The banner, part of Auckland-based artist Louise Menzies' project *Gut Feeling* (2009), was accompanied by a postcard available in the library's newspaper section that revealed this statement had been gleaned from a recent sports headline in the *New Zealand Herald*. Menzies often utilises materials, processes and ideals from the past to resurrect alternative histories, so was this a public declaration that history no longer held any interest for her, or did this refer to history as an exclusive Hegelian paradigm? Located on the edge of an institution that is dedicated to the storage and dissemination of knowledge, the site for *Gut Feeling* was critical. Given that Menzies is primarily interested in histories that have been overlooked by hegemonic accounts, this work emphasised the centrality of issues relating to historiography for her practice and called into question the power relations associated with the construction of knowledge. It also seemed to speculate on the ubiquity of history and historiography within contemporary art practice.

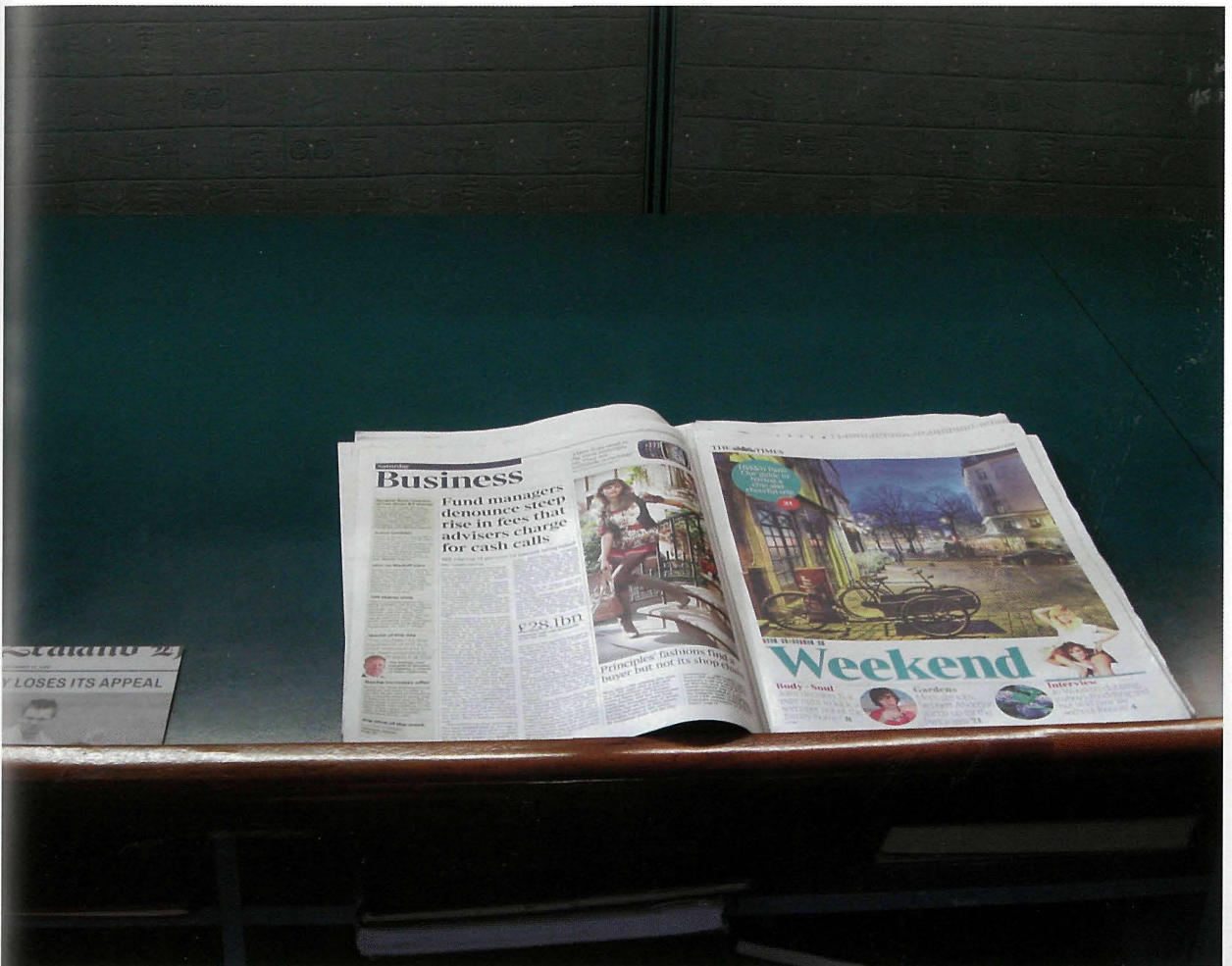


Above: Louise Menzies, *Gut Feeling*, 2009, installation view, General Library Foyer, The University of Auckland. Photo: the artist.



For the past twenty years or so we have been fixated with recollection, appropriating archival materials and fetishising obsolete technologies, reusing objects, characters, events and processes from the past. Is this supposed historiographic turn simply nostalgic, an attempt to resuscitate previous utopian visions as possible models for the future, to fail better? Or is it to avoid considering the present moment and what may come next? Dieter Roelstraete locates this apparent shift within the cultural milieu of global capitalism, proposing that the trend of looking back was a reaction against the previous condition of forgetfulness inherent in a consumerist culture of the ever new, or even the inwardly focused art from the 20th century, and is a strategy to avoid addressing the issues of today or envisioning the future.<sup>2</sup> Yet artists are not simply returning to the past. Rather, they are utilising history as a way to politicise the present, sourcing materials from specific times and places to invoke unresolved histories that can perform in the here and now. Coupled with this is a return to narrative, not as storytelling or definitive accounts, but through the use of objects and images contextually, in a way that articulates the complex and contingent relationships between the past, present and possible futures, emphasising the materiality of these histories.

Since the end of the Cold War and the supposed end of history, time has sprung into action again, multiple diverse histories have assumed prominence and the field of material available for appropriation expanded dramatically. The increased digitisation of photographic and film processes has not only heightened awareness of the role these media play in recording the past, but also made historical documents more accessible, placing them in circulation with the amorphous flow of information available online. Historical documents now surface among the array of forms that constitute our knowledge economy, current affairs, blogs and social media networks, blurring temporal distinctions and institutional controls. More than simply a technological shift, these archival fragments are considered within a vastly altered spatio-temporal site, no longer experienced sequentially but as part of a nebulous database, reflecting a different conception of time as well as of history. As the museum without walls, photography enabled modern art history to be told, so perhaps digital technologies and our shift in historical perspective have similarly enabled alternative narratives to be built from ostensibly disjunctive fragments. Artists' utilisation of historical archives highlights our experience and understanding of how images have come to circulate, physically and as constantly shifting signifiers,

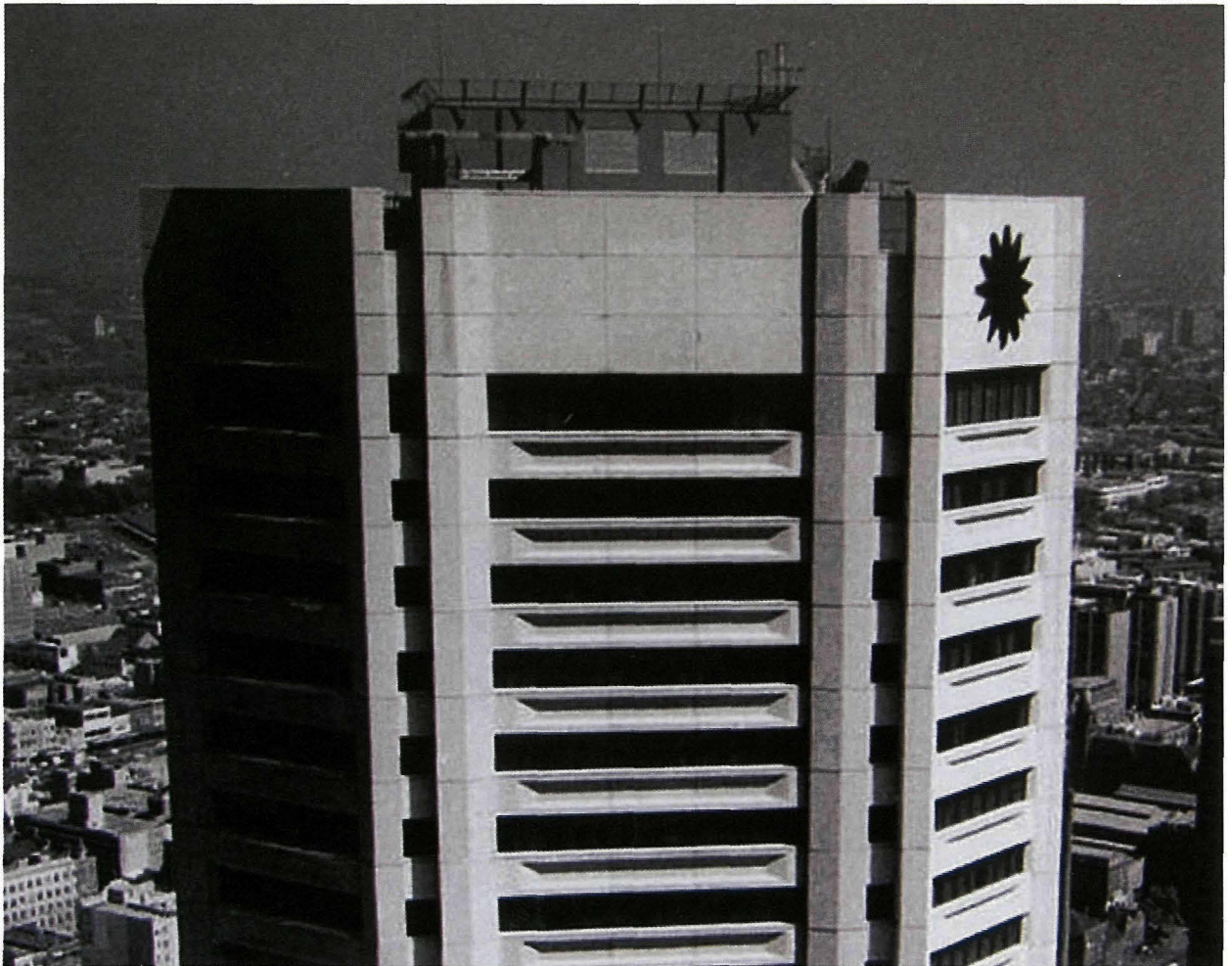


Above: Louise Menzies, *Gut Feeling*, 2009, installation view, General Library Foyer, The University of Auckland. Photo: the artist.

and how they act politically. If the message on a banner can be produced and disseminated through photography, is there still the need to actually go on a protest march? Is not the image the site of action, rather than the street? In our current media age where communication strategies surround everything and politics operates primarily through sound bites, YouTube clips and truncated images, perhaps invoking ghosts from the past is a way to expose the processes through which the market endlessly appropriates and absorbs dissent. Going back and resurrecting historical forms makes it possible to map the pasts of alternative presents and imaginary futures, casting doubt on fact and fiction.

Appropriating the archives of counterculture groups or movements, such as those of the School of Radiant Living from the 1930s or Mushroom magazine of the 1970s, Louise Menzies' work utilises the past not only as a source of documentary materials, but also processes, models of community and failed utopian ideals, exploring romantic visions of the future that appear to contrast remarkably with our contemporary ethos. This approach can be seen in the work Menzies made during and directly after the 2008 global financial crisis. *Self Defense Against Falls* (2008) was a series of photographs based on collages that juxtaposed inflammatory newspaper headlines with material from the Citizen's Advice Bureau (C.A.B), an organisation established much earlier in the 20th century to help people with whatever problems they may face. Articles titled, 'Politicians told to address crisis' and 'Wall Street sweat washes up on Asian shores', were placed alongside a brochure for 'Emotions Anonymous', a group for those who feel 'Worried, Stressed, Resentful, Frightened, Anxious, Angry, Depressed, Full of panic.' The contrast of perspective was abundantly clear, and while Menzies did not necessarily propose a return to C.A.B. values, through interpolating the global and local as well as the personal and public, this work showed that there are always possible alternatives to dominant ideologies.

Jacques Ranciere has claimed that when everything is a commodity, outdated commodities hold the promise of the future, suggesting that it is through operating in the site of tension between autonomy and heteronomy that art can engage politically.<sup>3</sup> What Menzies seems to reveal is that politics is radically different in our current time compared to previous eras. No longer based on overt systems of power, our



Above: Nicholas Mangan, *Nauru: Notes from a Cretaceous World*, 2009, video still.

present political climate is more insidious and contrived, dynamic rather than centralised, collaborative instead of hierarchical, adaptable and unfixed, based in a culture of knowledge not industrial production.<sup>4</sup> Menzies work operates in response to and as part of the particular socio-political conditions of late-capitalist society. Using various media, from public talks to installations, situations or photography, and constantly shifting personae, she undermines and unsettles assumed historical trajectories—just as her banner proclaims.

While Menzies often contrasts the recent past with the present, Melbourne-based artist Nicholas Mangan invokes living histories that extend back on a geological timeframe, utilising objects from curiously layered situations. The project *Nauru, Notes from a Cretaceous World* (2009-2010) was focused on the small Pacific island of Nauru, a once lush atoll that was strip-mined for its phosphate over the mid-20th century, rapidly depleting a mineral resource that takes millions of years to form. Left environmentally and economically devastated, the island nation resorted to desperate and dubious methods of generating income, first in the 1990s as a tax haven for money laundering, then between 2001 and 2008 as the site for an Australian detention centre. Mangan took as his starting point an unusual proposal from the late Nauruan president, Bernhard Dowiyogo, to rescue the island's economy by turning the mined rock pinnacles into coral coffee tables. From this almost humorous anecdote, Mangan brought together an installation that followed the disturbing chain of events in Nauru's recent history without literalising or prescribing judgement. Using sculpture, found objects, video and drawing, he loosely charted the specific socio-political history that thrust Nauru into destitution, but did so as a case study with which to reveal the potential results of neo-liberalism. He indirectly referenced the local politics of the Howard government's 'Pacific Solution', but more broadly highlighted the environmental damage and social inequalities endemic in our current global economy. By presenting a model of the apocalyptic future that we are bound to enact unless alternative visions are pursued, Mangan posed a critical question for collective consideration.



Above: Removal of coral pinnacle from Nauru House entry court, 80 Collins Street, Melbourne, Australia. Photo: P. Glenane. Courtesy of the Herald and Weekly Times.

In the installation a video projection panned across desolate surreal landscapes in Nauru and artefacts of its redundant mining industry as well as images of Melbourne's Nauru House taken during the nation's affluent heydays of the 1970s. Introduced by a brief voice-over, the slow camera movement and predominant silence reflected Mangan's interest in natural history and 'deep' time. The film felt muted, restrained and avoided any overt condemnation, perhaps similar to the state of public discussions on the issues it raised. In the adjacent room sat three coral coffee tables. Their shape and solidity echoed the now empty platforms outside Nauru House, where three imported rocks had once stood as a symbol of prosperity, removed in 2003. The tables resembled stylishly designed domestic commodities, but implied the loss of the island's resources, or, more hopefully, the bases for future prospects that are as yet undefined. More than referencing history to provide political commentary, Mangan reveals our limited experience or understanding of time and the shortsighted nature of our actions, showing that in comparison to geological frameworks, all events in modern history are recent fabrications and that time on this scale is beyond our comprehension.

In *808.838: Grandfather Paradox* (2010) Ms&Mr (Stephanie and Richard Nova-Milne) conflate theories of time travel with that of film, a medium that depicts and documents the past. Known for their domestic science fiction and retroactive collaboration, here they quite literally attempt to resuscitate ancestral ghosts, melding archival super-8 footage of Richard's grandfather with recently recorded video in order to convey the philosophical conundrum known as the grandfather paradox. According to this loop of logic, if time travel occurs—within a linear conception of history—time shatters, each era becomes filled with interlopers, and history falls apart. Through collating grainy film footage shot between 1976 and 1977 with high definition renderings from 2010, Ms&Mr overlay this sci-fi parable with the characteristics of film. Film is commonly described as portraying an absent subject, merely a presence from the past, and supposedly depicting a moment of death— Ms&Mr's *808.838: Grandfather Paradox* embodies the afterimage and invokes a medium in both senses of the word. When recently exhibited at Artspace, Sydney, the main video projection featured in the work was installed within a dark, cavernous gallery with various smaller screens and cables scattered about, a space that appeared boundless and opened out to time in



Above: Nicholas Mangan, *Dowiyogo's ancient coral coffee table*, 2009, coral lime stone. Photo: the artist.

all directions. This overlaying of the concepts of fractured and parallel histories with the implications of photography theory reinforces the integrity of materials for historiographic projects. Ms&Mr's work displays the shift since the 1980s in relation to our perceptions of appropriation, the historical situation and notions of time.<sup>5</sup>

Perhaps Menzies' *Gut Feeling* was right after all. History has lost its appeal, been subsumed into new perspectives, experiences and relationships of time. As Jan Verwoert proposed, 'Appropriation then is about performing the unresolved by staging object, images or allegories that invoke the ghosts of unclosed histories in a way that allows them to appear as ghosts and reveal the nature of the ambiguous presence.'<sup>6</sup> The apparent return to histories and to narrative is through materials that are no longer considered dead and complete, but rather exist in between autonomy and heteronomy, a place in which politics can register. Ghosts mingle with the living, and time is of the essence: a moment of urgency.

1. Jan Verwoert, 'Living with ghosts: From appropriation to invocation in contemporary art', *Art & Research: A Journal of Ideas, Contexts and Methods*, Vol. 1, No. 2, Summer (2007) 4.
2. Dieter Roelstraete, 'After the historiographic turn: Current findings', *e-flux journal*, no. 6, May, 2009.
3. Jacques Ranciere, 'The aesthetic revolution and its outcomes: Emplotments of autonomy and heteronomy', in Pamela Johnson and Kathleen McLean, eds., *Heart of Darkness* (Minneapolis: Walker Art Center, 2006) 40.
4. Slavoj Zizek, 'Violence', *Profile* (2008) 14.
5. Verwoert, op.cit.
6. Jan Verwoert, 'Apropos Appropriation: Why stealing images today feels different.' *Art & Research* Vol. 1, No. 2, Summer, 2007.



Above: Ms&Mr, *8o8.838: Grandfather paradox, 1966- 1977 /2010*, installation view, Artspace Sydney. Photo: the artists.



## Returning the Gift: Art in Exchange for Knowledge

DIANA SMITH in conversation with KELLY DOLEY

Kelly Doley is a Sydney based artist who likes to confuse the boundaries between painting and performance and, increasingly, between art and life. The two of us met in 2004, while studying at The College of Fine Arts (Sydney) and have been collaborating in one way or another ever since. We make video and performance works with the other members of Brown Council; we worked together as directors of Sydney artist-run initiatives Firstdraft and Quarterbred; and we lived together for many years—which I often think of as the ultimate collaboration. This interview marked a new type of collaboration that began with a conversation about art, in this instance about Doley's current project, *The Learning Centre*, a participatory performance centred on direct communication, conversation and interactivity.

Through *The Learning Centre* Doley has constructed an imaginary system of exchange, in which knowledge is traded for art—or more specifically, lessons on life are given to the artist in return for

a painting. The first public outcome of this project, *The Learning Centre: Manifestos for Living*, took place as part of *Draught*, an exhibition at Tin Sheds Gallery, in January this year. For this exhibition, Doley invited participants from different cultural, political and religious backgrounds into the gallery to give her a one-hour lesson on what they do, why they do it, and how it gives them meaning. This act of performative pedagogy took place in an installation that looked much like a classroom—complete with blackboards, a table and chairs, and just the right amount of stationary to undertake serious learning.

Over the duration of the exhibition, Doley received lessons from 16 participants on subjects as diverse as hypnotherapy, anarchism, Buddhism and biochemistry. In exchange for their lesson, the participants were able to request a painting of their choice to be completed by the artist in the studio at a later date. The second public outcome of this project, *The Learning Centre: Paintings for People*, which opened at Firstdraft in October this year, involved

Above: Kelly Doley, *The Learning Centre: Manifestos for Living* (Lesson on Life Coaching, Johnny Trujillo and Kelly Doley), 2010, installation view, Tin Sheds Gallery. Photo: the artist.  
Facing page: Kelly Doley, *The Learning Centre: Manifestos for Living* (Lesson on Biochemistry, Mohammad Kamal and Kelly Doley), 2010, installation view, Tin Sheds Gallery. Photo: the artist.



Doley returning the paintings to the participants at designated times throughout the course of the exhibition.

**Diana Smith: Let's start simple. Let's start from the beginning. Can you tell me about what prompted your interest in creating *The Learning Centre*?**

Kelly Doley: Last year I became quite disenchanted with the art world; I found myself questioning the validity of artistic practice, and rethinking my role as an artist. I became interested in making work that prioritised an engagement with people outside of the art world, who might not necessarily be equipped with the tools to decode the complex language of contemporary art. So I decided to invite a range of people into the gallery to teach me a 'lesson' about how they live their life. I thought that through this process, I would discover some kind of 'truth' about art and why I had chosen to devote my life to such a cause; or alternatively it would enable me to find a more suitable life path.

**DS: How did you invite the participants to take part in the project?**

KD: I sent a formal letter of invitation to people that I specifically wanted to engage with, including a monk, a life coach and a board member from Greenpeace. In addition, I posted WANTED signs up around the city and placed advertisements on online classified sites. It was important to me that the majority of the participants were strangers, as I wanted to connect with people that I might not otherwise come into contact with.

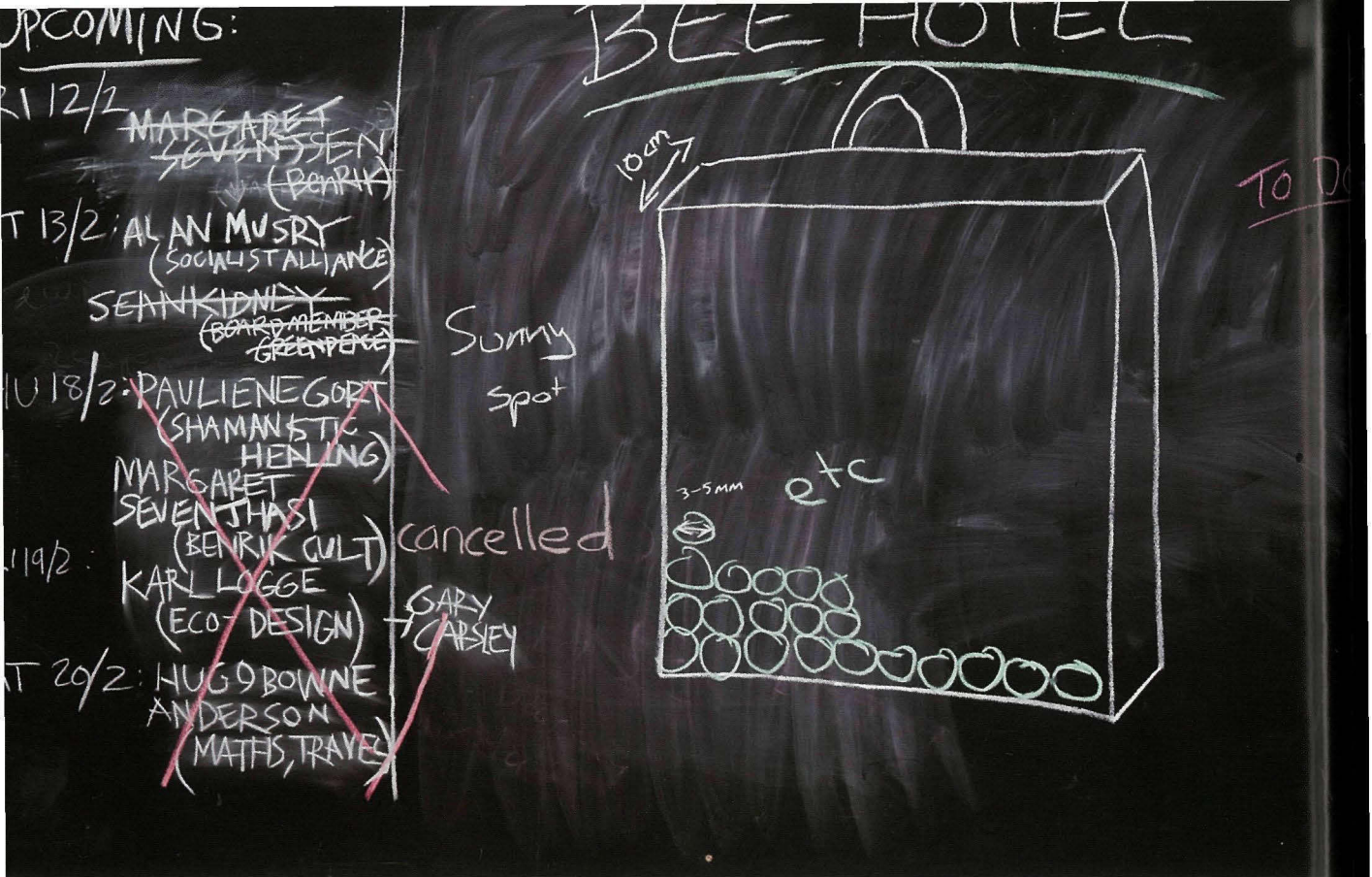
**DS: How important is the audience to you? In the case of *The Learning Centre* did you see the participants as the audience?**

KD: For me the audience is everything; as an artist my aim is to connect with people via the framework of art. I am interested in creating an active space in which audiences can directly engage with the work and are essential to the success, and indeed the very existence of the performative act. In terms of *The Learning Centre*, which was a participatory performance, I see the 'participants' as the 'audience'.

The artist/audience or artist/participant relationship is complicated by the fact that there are two levels of audience co-existing in the work. On the one level there is the audience/participant who is either conducting the lesson or collecting their painting. They are integral to the performance, as the work simply doesn't exist if they don't turn up—in the same way that it can't exist without the presence of the artist. On the next level there is the audience/participant who enters the gallery and experiences the 'performance' from the periphery. I like to think that their role is also participatory as they were able to make a choice to either listen to the lesson, or just simply walk past.

**DS: What led you to the decision to stage *The Learning Centre* in the gallery?**

KD: I have had many suggestions from people that this work should be presented in a more public space, like a classroom or a



community centre for instance. There is a long-standing tradition of this type of practice in which artists take an interventionist approach and present similar projects in site-specific locations. However, I wanted to use the gallery as a site-specific space in which performative exchanges, interactions and conversations could unfold. Placing social events and rituals in the gallery is a way to play with the conventions of the hermetic 'white cube' and challenge the historical traditions of art with its focus on presentation and display. I am also interested in bringing people into the gallery who wouldn't normally engage with contemporary art, let alone be a part of an artwork.

**DS: Can you tell me a little bit about your decision to set up a system of exchange based on art and knowledge? Do you think this is an equal act of reciprocity?**

KD: When I first started this project I hadn't really considered the notion of reciprocation. I (perhaps naively) assumed that the experience of teaching a lesson to an artist in the context of an artwork would be an interesting enough experience for the participants.

However, it soon became apparent that people wanted something in return for the effort and time required to prepare and deliver a lesson. I couldn't offer them money, so it had to be in the form of trade, and the most obvious thing for me to do was to paint them a picture—as painting is a skill that I possess. I was unsure if the

painting itself would be considered an equal trade, but I hoped that the gesture of making a painting—a task that requires time and effort—would be considered an equal act of reciprocity.

**DS: Can you tell me about the types of requests you received from the participants about what they wanted you to paint? I imagine that there would have been a broad range of responses, so how did you approach this in practice?**

KD: The requests were very diverse and ranged from simple images like a bee, or a house, to quite specific things like 'a picture of something bright and cheerful, so that when I wake up I can say "Hooray it's a new day!"' To overcome the difficulties of painting a predetermined subject matter, and to create a relationship between the works I developed a set of aesthetic rules, which included a uniform canvas size, painting application and colour palette. Once the aesthetic concerns were resolved I really enjoyed being able to switch off and treat the act of painting as a task, almost like a form of manual labour.

**DS: I really like the way that you have constructed an imaginary 'gift economy' in which a one-hour lesson is valued equally to the time and materials required for you to make a painting. Is this a critique of the art market and the value that is placed on works of art, which often seems so illogical to someone outside of that system?**

Above: Kelly Doley, *Lesson on Socialism*, 2010, blackboard paint, chalk on chalkboard. Photo: Craig Bender.  
Facing page: Kelly Doley, *Lesson on How To Make A Bee Hotel*, 2010, chalk on chalkboard. Photo: Craig Bender.



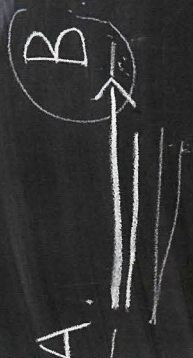
Is art and science a dialectical relationship of interpenetration?

One begins where the other ends.

Each needs and relies on the other.

ART — SCIENCE  
ART — SCIENCE

→ THERE ARE SOME THINGS ONE CAN'T EXPLAIN.



KD: I think that this invented art economy that trades art for knowledge does challenge the conventional system of buying and selling, and wheeling and dealing, that takes place in the art market. Because you can't buy or sell these works, the potential market value and role of the 'dealer' has been removed from the equation. I am by no means against the commercial art market; I am just imagining other systems in which art can potentially be traded.

**DS: In *The Learning Centre: Paintings for People* at Firstdraft the paintings were exhibited as conventional 'art objects', and yet their primary function is to act as an object of exchange. Why did you decide to have an exhibition of the paintings rather than simply returning them to the participants outside of a gallery context?**

KD: I chose to display the paintings in the gallery context as I wanted to make the act of exchange visible to the public. While initially the paintings were hung on the wall as 'art objects', they continued to disappear over the course of the exhibition as the participants come to collect them—leaving only bare hooks and pencil lines in their place. What primarily interests me is the disappearance of the paintings over time—the gesture of going from something to nothing.

**DS: How have the participants responded to their paintings?**

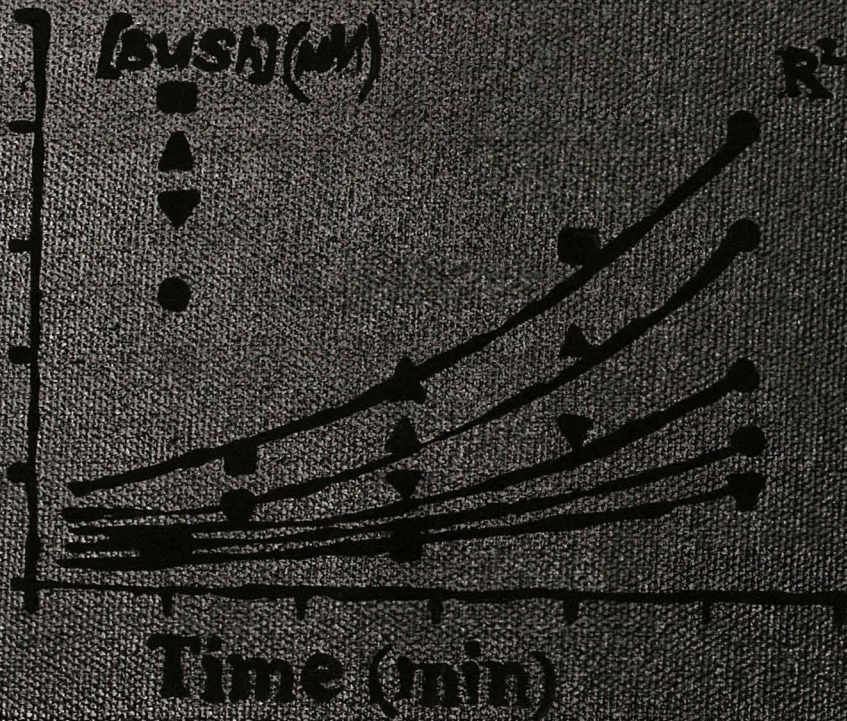
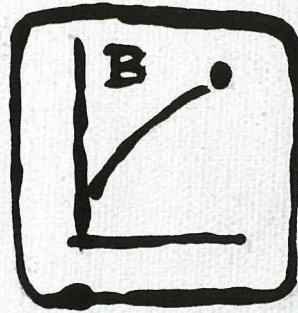
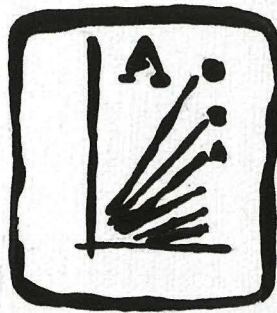
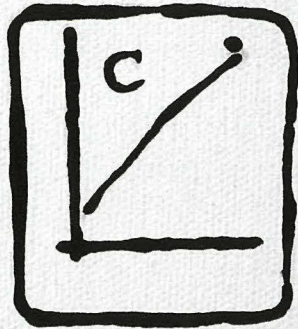
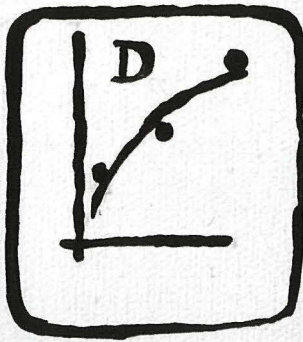
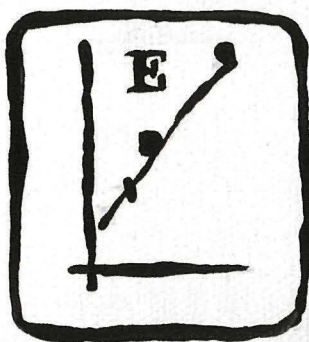
KD: There have been mixed responses from the participants, mainly about the aesthetic choice to use black paint. It would

seem that people generally prefer colourful paintings! Mohammad Kamal, who gave me a lesson on biochemistry, had an interesting response. When he saw his painting, of a scientific diagram, he immediately proposed a plan for a potential collaboration combining art and science. He also suggested I make a few additions to his painting including religious iconography to represent each of us. At that point I had to inform him that this might not be appropriate, given that I am a staunch atheist!

**DS: Over the years you have moved away from the traditions of painting and object-based practice in favour of a performance based approach, and yet there is always an element of painting in your work. How do you see the paintings functioning in *The Learning Centre*?**

KD: My practice began as an inquiry into the relevance of painting, and more recently, of art itself. This has led me to other forms of artistic practice, like performance and socially collaborative works. However, painting is still a central part of my work and the basis of my training; I like to consider how painting can function within performance-based practice. In the case of *The Learning Centre* my ability to 'paint a picture' is the skill or service I am able to supply in exchange for knowledge. The act of painting aids the process of engagement with the participants and when exhibited, acts as a document of the 'event'. The paintings are proof that the contract of exchange between art and knowledge has taken place.

Product (M)



NAME	LESSON	PAINTING REQUEST
Mistry	Socialism	Diagram of Dialectical Materialism (from lecture)
Jan Jones	Anarchism	Bees
Dyer	Manifesto For Living	Food
Prudence Xu	Christianity	King St., Newtown
Prudence Xu	Beast Cult	Vishnu Indian God
Prudence Xu	Chinese Characters	Something cheerful so I can say 'it's another nice day!'
Prudence Xu	Buddhism	'Nam-Myo-Ho-Renge-Kyo' Buddhist chant
Prudence Xu	Biochemistry	A slide from his Biochemistry lecture
Prudence Xu	How To Surprise Someone	A celebratory horse with fireworks, camp
Prudence Xu	Art in Slovenia	A picture of IRWIN Art Group
Prudence Xu	How To Make A Bee Hotel	1-3 characters, some plants, ambiguous, funny
Prudence Xu	How To Break Up With Someone	Dying Doctors' Great Depression dance marathon couple
Prudence Xu	Eco-Shamanic Healing	Portrait of Paulien Gort
Prudence Xu	Clairvision	'Buddha's Hand' citrus plant
Prudence Xu	Life Coaching	A painting of Kelly Doley
Prudence Xu	Life Coaching	Something that represents/reflects Werner



**DS: I know that you have been thinking about the best way to document *The Learning Centre* and also what to do with the knowledge that has been imparted on you. Where are you up to with this process?**

KD: It is always difficult to document a performance and particularly participatory performance after the event because it is premised on exchange and dialogue. The subsequent recordings of the event are completely removed from the moment of interaction, conversation and encounter, which is, in my view, the actual work. Even so, I still have a desire to archive the information, and communicate the process to viewers. People are curious about what was said during the lessons, so I suppose it is important to share that information. At this stage I am planning to present the 'remnants' of the work like an archive—possibly in the form of a book, which will include excerpts from the transcripts and photographic documentation.

**DS: What's next for *The Learning Centre*?**

KD: Next year I am planning to take *The Learning Centre* to several locations around Australia—the first stop is Fremantle Arts Centre, where I will be undertaking a month long residency, and working with the local community. The long-term plan is to tour the work overseas and continue the process of 'learning'. I still

have a lot of unanswered questions about whether it is possible to commodify knowledge, life experience and education and if these unquantifiable elements can be traded for art. So I'm hoping that by presenting *The Learning Centre* in different cities, continents and cultures I might get a little bit closer to finding out.

For more information on *The Learning Centre* visit [www.kellydoley.com](http://www.kellydoley.com).

1. Prudence Xu, transcript from a Lesson on Chinese Characters, *The Learning Centre*, Tin Sheds Gallery, Sydney, 11 February 2010.

Above: Kelly Doley, *The Learning Centre: Paintings For People*, 2010, installation view, Firstdraft gallery. Photo: Diana Smith.  
Facing page: Kelly Doley, *Painting for a Lesson on Biochemistry*, 2010, ink and acrylic on canvas. Photo: Craig Bender.

RETURN

# Helter Skelter

TARA MARYNOWSKY

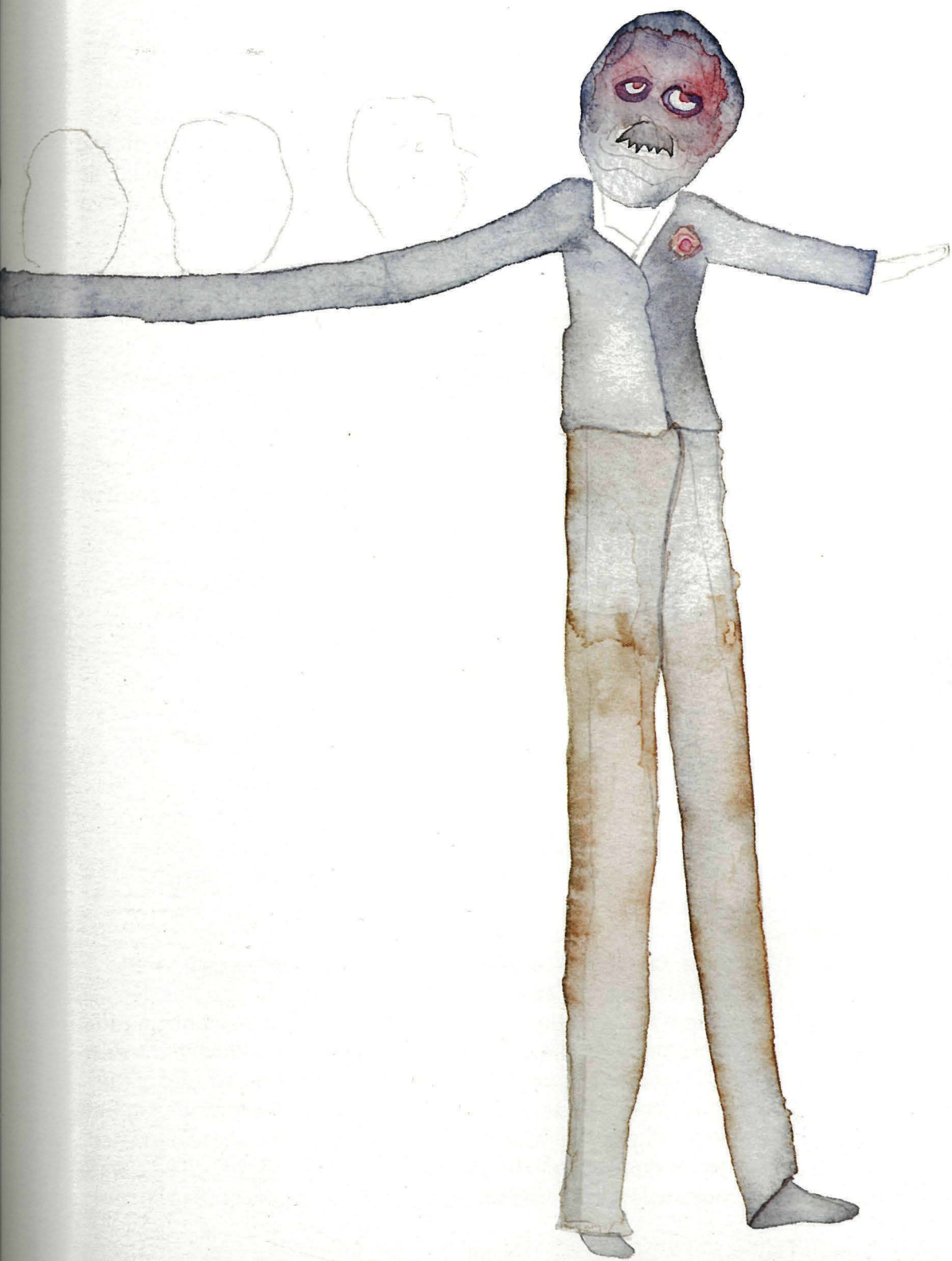












# On Photography and Consecutive Matters

JAI MCKENZIE and AMANDA WILLIAMS

On 30 August 2010, at 21:25, Amanda Williams wrote:

A thought came to me tonight ... while I was preparing for our dialogue and attempting to find the right words to set us off and pay homage to Carl Andre and Hollis Frampton; that I should, at least in form, return to the source and begin as Andre did with a proposition:

‘what derives from the case photography well-known and used by the Greeks of Periclean Athens?’<sup>1</sup>

Did the Ancient Athenians invent photography? Well perhaps they did! Elaborating thankfully, Andre cites the case of Phidias—the Athenian sculptor charged with impiety for producing a life-like self-portrait—as one possible example of photographic process. Then passing the typewriter to Frampton asks ‘what is photography in a culture or civilisation?’

Despite advances in photographic technology, I suspect the proposition is still completely relevant today, if not more relevant?

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On 31 August 2010, at 8:24, Jai McKenzie wrote:

Andre’s comments raise two interesting questions; What is photography? And, what place does photography have in society?

Also, I am intrigued by the thought that between 438-436BC the Athenians used photography. This urges me to consider where the invention of photography begins? Does it begin with the most basic understanding of visual perception and the role of light within those mechanisms? With the observation of the ‘bleaching’ effects of the sun? The camera obscura? Johann Heinrich Schulze and his understanding that silver nitrate darkened when exposed to light? Or, even Daguerre and Niépce who were acknowledged as the inventors of photography in 1839?

1. Carl Andre and Hollis Frampton, *12 Dialogues 1962-1963*, edited and annotated by Benjamin H. D. Buchloh. (The Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design and New York University Press, 1980).

It seems that an understanding of what photography is depends on one's definition of the invention. So, perhaps we should turn to Daguerre for a vital clue in all of this, he claimed, at the invention of the Daguerreotype<sup>2</sup> that 'I have seized the light.'<sup>3</sup>

I see what he means, as light is the fundamental aspect of the invention, it endures regardless of technological advance. So, Andre is correct, in a sense, as much as we may turn to the Athenians for the origins of Western culture and democracy we may also turn to them for the origin of photography. By 438BC the Athenians understood light in terms of the first atomic theory. The 'Atomist' Democritus hypothesised that all things including light are composed of minute, invisible, indestructible particles of pure matter or 'atoms', which move forever in empty space. Democritus considered the universe a consequence of these whirling atoms. This initial philosophical understanding of light was an important beginning for photography.

If we think of photography in these terms, that it has and always will be composed of light, then perhaps photography is not as susceptible to technological change as it is to cultural change? What is photography in a culture or civilisation? I will be blunt and reductive; photography is what it is used for.

What is it being used for today and why do you use it?

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On 2 September 2010, at 12:45, Amanda Williams wrote:

Photography is what it is used for ... What a philosophical declaration, manifesto-like in its scope. This really seems to assign photography a verb-like status. Photography becomes an action or rather an interaction; a performance, determined and driven by the user.

Thinking about the implications of this, the idea that one might create through photography rather than with photography, brings to mind a central motif used by Marshall McLuhan in *Understanding Media*,<sup>4</sup> that of the light bulb. McLuhan highlights the inherent emptiness of the light bulb in terms of content, and its latent capacity for transformation. When

2. Edgar Allan Poe points out in his essay *The Daguerreotype* (1840), that the correct spelling is *Daguërreotype*, and 'pronounced as if written *Dagairraioiteep*.' in *Classic Essays on Photography*, ed. Alan Trachtenberg, trans. Alan Trachtenberg (New Haven, Conn: Leete's Island Books, 1980).

3. Daguerre cited in Melissa Miles, 'Focus on the Sun: The Demand for New Myths of Light in Contemporary Australian Photography,' *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Art* 2008/2009. 222.

4. Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding media: the extensions of man*. Edited by W. Terrence Gordon. (Corte Madera, CA: Gingko Press, 2003).

activated, the light bulb emits a powerful force illuminating the darkness and therefore, widening the scope of human perception and interaction.

So, what is photography being used for today? The obvious answer in this context is—illumination. Photography facilitates the illumination of everything and nothing.

I use photography to reveal certain truths and investigate the relationship between technology and the human psyche. Borrowing from Jean-Louis Baudry,<sup>5</sup> I am interested in uncovering and exposing photography's technological means as a way of facilitating its demystification. Recently, I have been using lens-less, automated actions whereby the resulting images are not 'processed' through my eyes rather they exist as examples of sightless vision, mechanised perception. I use photography to demystify this process of illumination.

How do you use photography? I have in mind the work for your upcoming show. Although it is not strictly photographic how might it relate to photography? Could it still be considered photographic in some way? Does it even matter?



Amanda Williams, 3:2 *The Golden Ratio* (research scan), 2010, digital file.

5. Jean-Louis Baudry, 'The Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematographic Apparatus', in Gerald Mast/Marshall Cohen/Leo Baudry (eds.), *Film Theory and Criticism. Introductory Readings* (New York/Oxford, 1992).

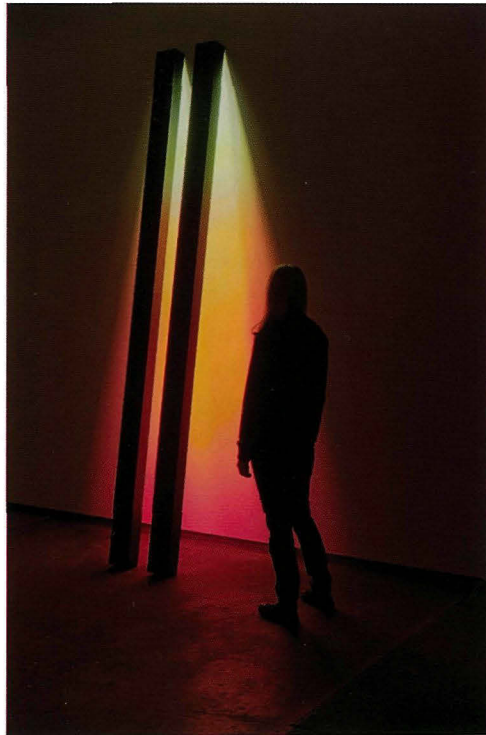
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On 2 September 2010, at 21:30, Jai McKenzie wrote:

As I read your email, I am just a week away from my show at Firstdraft gallery. I always find it difficult to discuss new work, especially before the opening, but for now I can say that I made *Superstructure* with an understanding of a particular architectural legacy. Initially this may seem disparate to photography but on closer examination it shares some interesting connections. My research for this work began with a growing interest in the photographic collages of Superstudio<sup>6</sup> and Buckminster Fuller. They proposed large circumscribing forms intended to encase or disrupt urban spaces to enable holistic systems for living, connection and growth. These structures were never realised but Superstudio's photographic collages started a specific trajectory in my thinking. Their visualisations, while remaining as propositions, created a tension between what exists and what does not, but might. This maintains an interesting connection for photography today. In some sense, it is not only about what is activated but also what is latent and possible.

6. Recently, while online I discovered a fragment of a film that formed part of Superstudio's project *Architettura interplanetaria* (Interplanetary architecture), 1972, a body of work which also consists of photomontages and a storyboard. In the film Superstudio claims that architecture occupies a relationship between space and time, us and others. I think this is also an important aspect of the connection between photography and architecture. To extend this and the connection with the void further *Architettura interplanetaria* is useful; the work functions as a proposition for us to imagine a world made of real and assembled images, it activates the possibility for the construction of an 'immediate future'. This is something I was thinking about when developing my recent work.

The project *Architettura interplanetaria* was first presented in 'Superstudio presenta l'Architettura interplanetaria', *Cassabella* no. 364. April, (1972). 46—48.



Jai McKenzie, *Superstructure*, 2010, steel, fluorescent lights, lighting gels.  
Photo: Michael Myers

I think you have come to the heart of the matter with your discussion of McLuhan, and your claim that ‘photography facilitates the illumination of everything and nothing’ is interesting to me. This signals that you see photography operating as a paradox where the photograph simultaneously represents all and nothing, and as such, it is a void space. Not as ominous at it first seems, as the void is always full of possibility.

And, so, you ask ‘is it photography?’, ‘Does it even matter?’

No. I don’t think it matters, not to me anyway. Some people seem to linger on these notions of medium specificity; I believe that grouping work by medium provides ill fitting categories for contemporary practice. But, I also acknowledge that there are relevant discussions to be had about the medium of photography.

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On 13 September 2010, at 14:35, Amanda Williams wrote:

I concede ‘does it even matter’ was a leading question as this is an area of enquiry I am particularly interested in. Although medium specificity is somewhat tired as a framework for the reception of contemporary practice, it would seem that there has been a reconsideration of that debate by artists, a return to the role of medium in this so-called post-medium age.<sup>7</sup> Emma White’s practice for example, appears to focus on what the medium of photography signals today. She does this by re-situating the photographic process. It could be said that she is working through photography via sculpture – reinterpreting the medium. Perhaps this is a return to medium via material as process? And perhaps this is why photography and architecture seem to share so many fundamental constituents. Architecture functions like any other ocular technology in its organisation of perception, centering and de-centering vision; it produces images material and mental, which as you indicated, lead us towards an understanding of the void as the site of pure potentiality.

7. For a greater examination of the ‘specificity’ of the post-medium condition see: Rosalind E. Krauss, *Perpetual Inventory*. (MIT Press, Cambridge MA. 2010).



Emma White, *Found and made* (detail) 2010, polymer clay. Photo: the artist.

It is useful here to turn to the Sanskrit term *Sunyata* (often simplistically translated into English as void). In Eastern philosophy and Buddhism, *Sunyata* is not simply a descriptive term for emptiness, nothingness or a void state; it is a conceptual premise and a coveted state of mind. It represents a framework for understanding the true nature of reality.

I discovered recently that Roland Barthes had developed an interest in Buddhism after his mother died.<sup>8</sup> So impassioned was his interest, he left the final words of *Camera Lucida* (*La chambre claire*) to the Tibetan Buddhist Rinpoche Chögyam Trungpa, by placing a quote on the back cover:

Marpa was very moved when his son was killed, and one of his disciples said: ‘You have always told us that all is illusion. Is it not so with the death of your son, is not that an illusion?’ And Marpa replied: ‘Indeed, but the death of my son is a super-illusion.’

Chogyam Trungpa, *Practice of the Tibetan Way*.

8. See, Jay Prosser, ‘Buddha Barthes: What Barthes Saw in Photography (That He Didn’t in Literature),’ *Literature and Theology* 18, no. 2 (2004). 211–22. Here Prosser outlines the way Barthes engages with Buddhism and argues that the punctum is equivalent to the concept of *Sunyata* in Zen Buddhism.

Ironically, when Barthes’ text was translated posthumously into English in 1981, the quote was lost. It disappeared somehow in that procedural void of semiotic exchange. A super-illusion indeed.

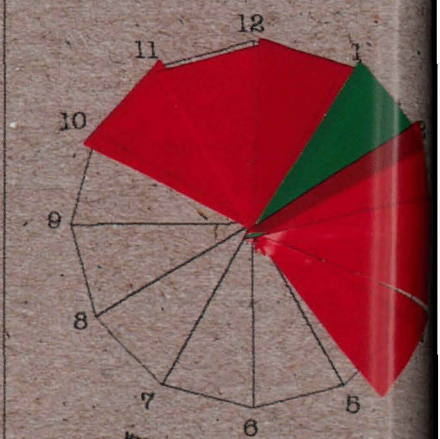
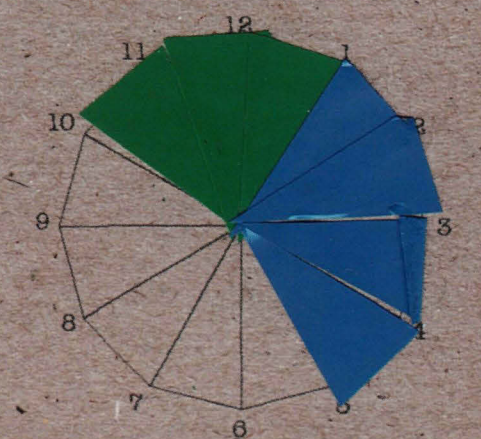
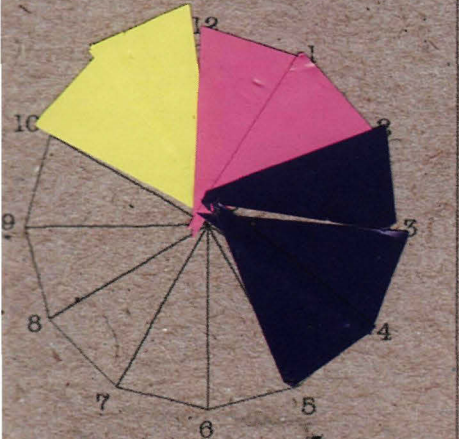
TRIANGULATION  
PRISMATIC AUDIT

Melbourne Central Audit

Name: **WHATEVER GIFTS**  
 Location: **LOWER MELB GD FR CRL**  
 Date: **23 AUG 2010**

Name: **WHATEVER GIFTS**  
 Location: **LOWER MELB GD FR CRL**  
 Date: **24 AUG 2010**

Name: **WHATEVER GIFTS**  
 Location: **LOWER MELB GD FR CRL**  
 Date: **25 AUG 2010**



Temp: **17.1**

Temp: **15**

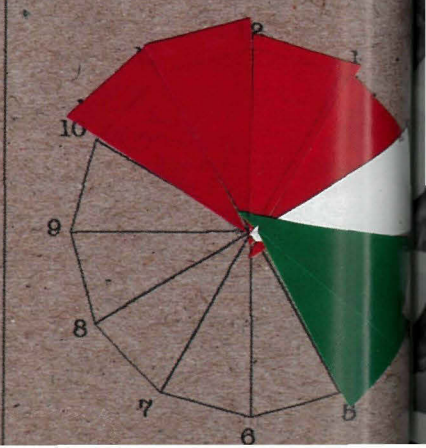
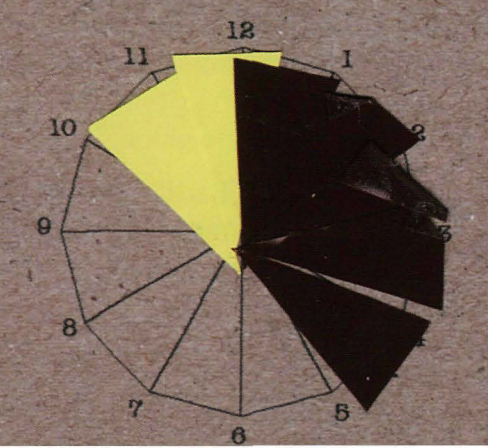
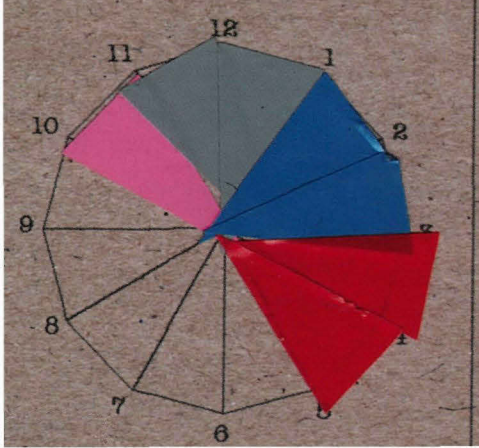
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TRIANGULATION  
PRISMATIC AUDIT

Name: **LUSH**  
 Location: **LOWER MELB GD FR CRL**  
 Date: **23 AUG 2010**

Name: **LUSH**  
 Location: **LOWER MELB GD FR CRL**  
 Date: **24 AUG 2010**

Name: **LUSH**  
 Location: **LOWER MELB GD FR CRL**  
 Date: **25 AUG 2010**





# PRISMATIC AUDIT INSTRUCTION SHEET

Thank you for taking part in this audit. Your participation is appreciated.

To maximise the effectiveness of this process it is important that you follow correct procedure.

Please pay careful attention to the information contained in this document. Deviation from the norm can cause deviant abnormalities.

The audit runs for 12 consecutive days:

Monday Aug 23rd - Friday 3rd Sept.

Data collection will occur every hour of the 12 days between 9am - 5pm. This means that an auditor will come by and site your flag then radio in the colour - it doesn't mean you have to post a different flag every hour.

Public briefings will occur in the 1st floor forecourt beneath the Shot Tower at 1pm and 5pm each day.

The briefings will provide the community with updates on prismatic conditions as the audit progresses. We realise that being retailers you may not be able to attend - don't panic - we will keep you up to date on the audit's progress with little memos and Youtube links to clips of the briefings.

You can always contact us at [whyamipurpletoday@gmail.com](mailto:whyamipurpletoday@gmail.com) or go to our website for more information [www.prismaticaudit.com](http://www.prismaticaudit.com)

## Prismatic Auditing Procedure

What is requested of you

Assemble and display your Prismatic Signalling Device either on your counter or the glass front of your shop as shown in figures 1.1 - 3.2

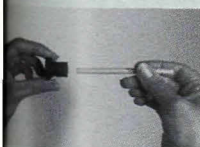


Figure 1.1

Select a high visibility position to enable clear data transfer and maximum social impact.

**Make your flag count.**

If you place it somewhere discreet - make sure you tell the auditors.



Figure 1.2

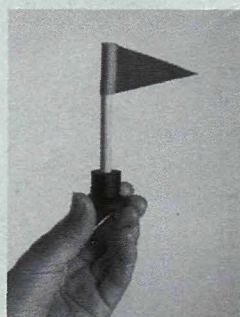


Figure 1.4

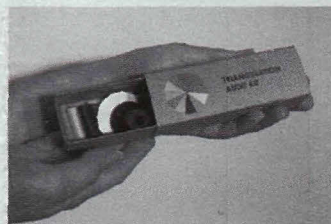
Change your signal colour whenever and as often as you feel it is necessary during the audit time frame specified above.



Figure 1.3

## Audit Kit Contents

- 1 wooden stick.
- 1 black rubber suction cup.
- 1 white adhesive disc.
- 11 coloured flags (red, green, blue, purple, orange, yellow, pink, black, brown, white, grey)
- 1 white rectangular adhesive nametag.
- 1 Instruction sheet.
- 1 Safety Pin



## Maintain your equipment. Respect your neighbour's equipment.



Figure 2.1



Figure 2.2



Figure 2.3

A piece of white adhesive contact has been provided to aid suction. Peel and attach as shown in figures 2.1 - 2.3



Figure 2.4

You may experience suction failure, especially under high temperature conditions. In this instance do not panic. Gently apply the tongue to the rubber cup making sure of complete rim coverage. Correct wall configuration is shown in figure 2.5

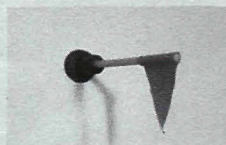


Figure 2.5

Promptly notify an auditor if you experience any technical or emotional difficulties with your Prismatic Signalling Device.

## Frequently Asked Questions

Q - What if my shop has more than one person in it and they also wish to participate in the audit?

A - In some cases more than one individual may be present. In these circumstances multiple devices can be displayed on the door or counter. Alternatively collective responsibility can be taken for one device. If multiple devices are going to be posted, clearly print the name of each individual on the rectangular white sticker provided to specify to whom the device corresponds. Attach the sticker as shown in figure 3.2 (It is not necessary to attach a name tag if you are the sole occupant in a shop).

Q - What do I do if my rubber suction cup does not attach?

A - Try licking it.

Q - What if it still doesn't stick?

A - Eat something?

Q - That doesn't work either?

A - Put it on your counter (be careful not to knock it over whilst working).

Q - What happens if I am not in my shop for several hours or days while the audit is going on and I leave the last flag I posted up for ages and it gets logged many times, and starts to effect the way the whole building feels, and anyway it was black because I was in a really bad mood when I put it up and now because I haven't been back for ages everybody thinks that I'm really emo and maybe there's something seriously wrong with me?

A - Tough titty.

Q - What happens at the end of the audit?

A - All the Prismatic Signalling Devices are returned to the auditors.

Q - What about the data?

A - We publish a report.

Q - What if I feel my individual data strip reflects something unique and personally significant that should be treasured for life?

A - Make us an offer?



Figure 3.1

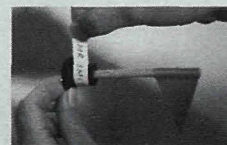
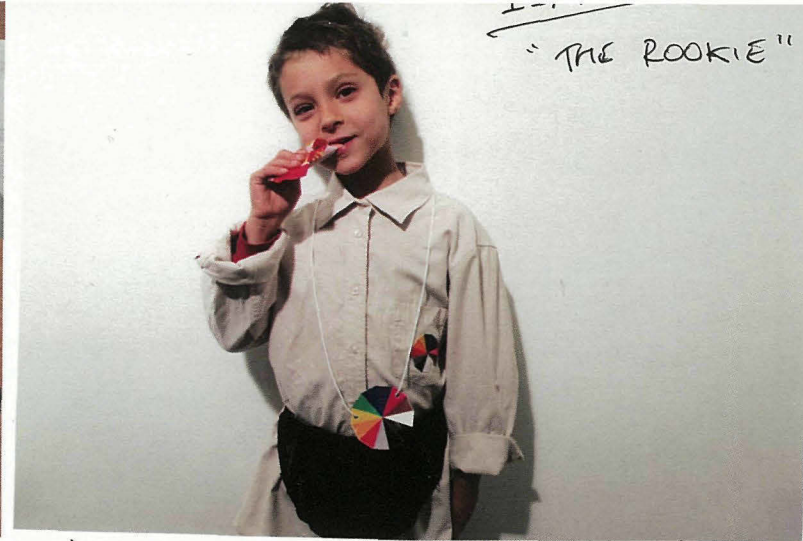


Figure 3.2





Mobile

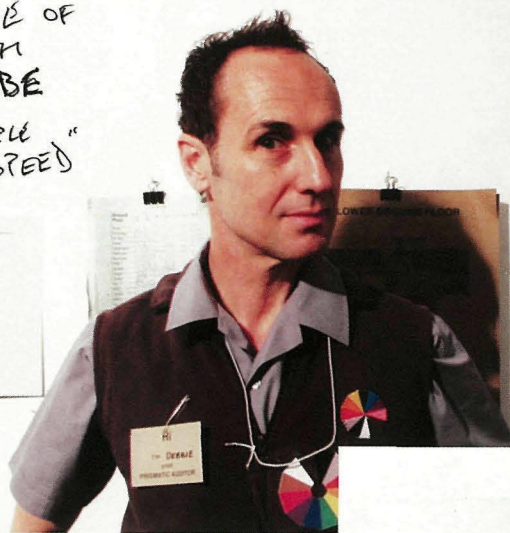


"THE ROOKIE"

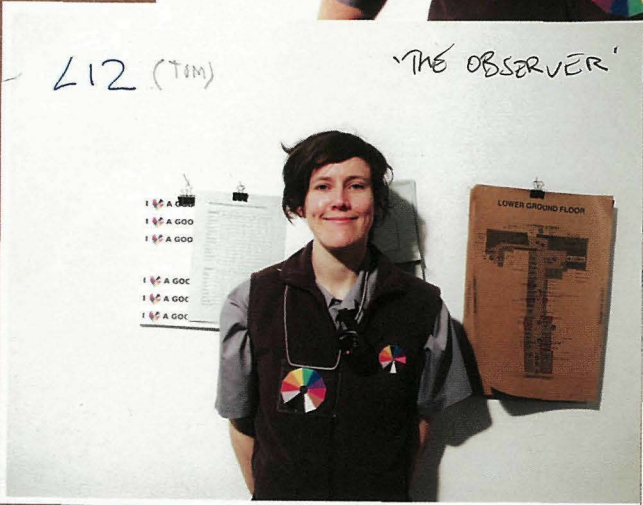


PETER (DEBBIE)  
EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH WINNABE  
"ITS PEOPLE NOT SPEED"

"THE COUNSELOR"



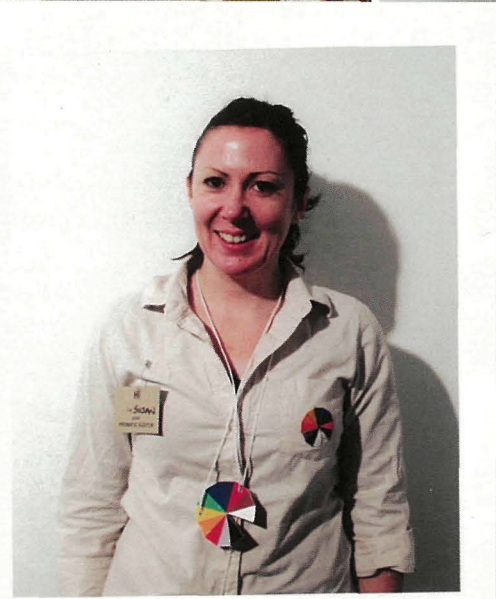
A GOC  
A GOC  
A GOC  
A GOC  
A GOC



L12 (TIM)

"THE OBSERVER"

A GOC  
A GOC  
A GOC  
A GOC  
A GOC



PHIP (SUSAN)  
"THE TALKER"

JASON



Tom - EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR 2018  
THE ORIGINAL

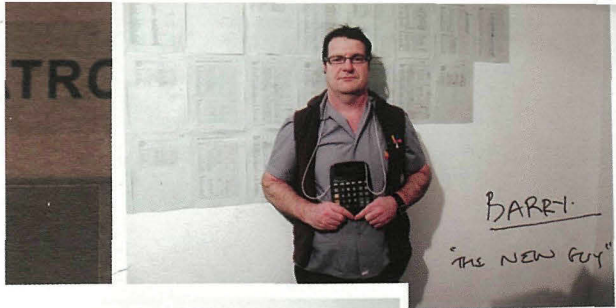


Susan & Amy  
AKA SUSAN & DEBBIE  
ASHLEY & BEN  
- 216 OPS

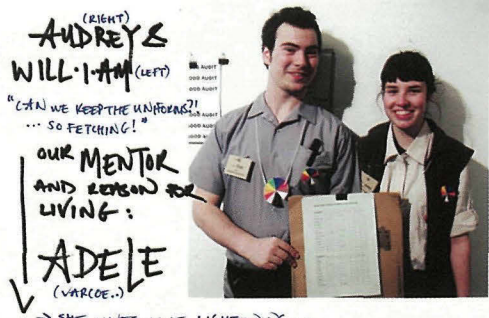




**TORIE** PRINCIPAL AUDITORS



**BARRY**  
"THE NEW GUY"



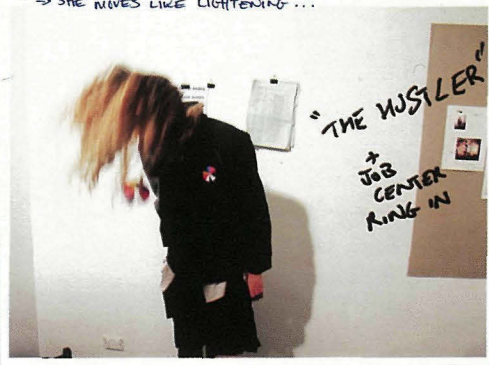
(RIGHT) **AUDREYS**  
(LEFT) **WILL-I-AM**  
"CAN WE KEEP THE UNIFORMS?  
... SO FETCHING!"  
OUR MENTOR AND REASON FOR LIVING:  
**ADELE**  
(VARCOE.)  
→ SHE NIVES LIKE LIGHTENING ...



**SUSAN**  
EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR  
- 24/10



**EMMA**  
HIGH REED AND IMA  
AND AWESOME  
FILMMAKER  
"THE PRICE MAKER"



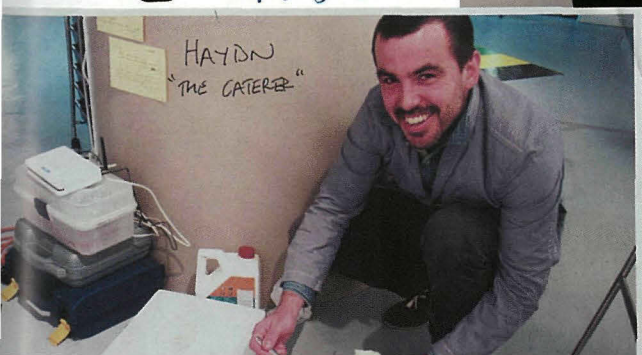
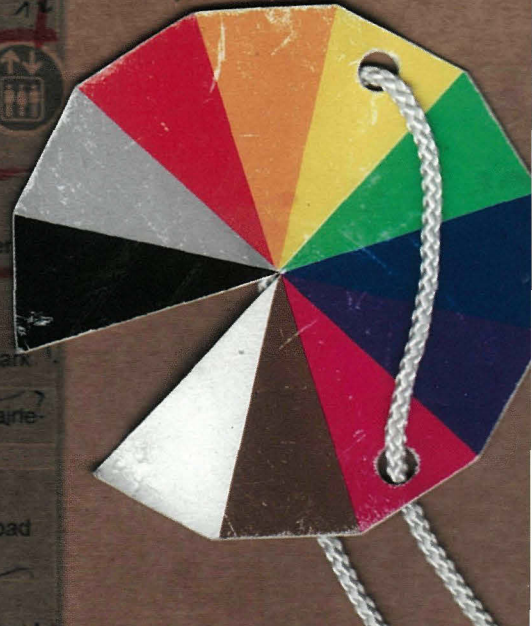
"THE MUSTLER"  
+  
JOB  
CENTER  
RING IN



**BING (Tom)**  
"THE FLIRT"



TALICUS  
Balan  
men  
ce  
Napoleon Perdus



**HAYDN**  
"THE CATERER"

Orlik Denmark  
Veronika Marie  
Country Road  
Antons

What does... deep and lasting... (principal Auditors) will be... directly to you over the next couple of... about fractional chromatic representation and... tonality are their speciality. You are doing a fabulous job people and sighting your flags each hour is like standing in sunbeams streaming through a stained glass window in the cathedral of truth. 5 days to go - don't forget about the briefing clips on youtube (search for Prismatic Audit) more will be up later today, and yes, the rumours are true - the LINE GRAPH is here - look out Melbourne Central. - The Auditors.

keep it real Melbourne Central. Day 4, 8 to go. The Auditors

# Participan Communications

Thanks so much for taking part - This audit is all about you, no really it is.

Your colour changes are being tracked on an h basis on a personalised strip of card. Without y there would be no data.

If you would like to see your individual pismat and find out how your selections compare with those of your neighbour, your floor or the whole of Melbourne Central - come to the daily community briefings that happen at 1pm and 5pm in the 1st floor forecourt outside the Shot Tower. (You might see or hear an auditor running around with a stereo playing either Ice T's "Colours" or Cindy Lauper's "True Colours" - if you do you will know a briefing is about to happen).

The 5pm briefing is a special little ceremony where the predominant colour of the day is revealed. If you can't make the briefings don't panic - we'll keep you posted one way or another.


If you'd rather not display your flagpole in or on your shop you can always pin your flags to your clothing with the safety pin provided in the kit (just let the auditors know that they need to find you, not the flagpole).

Don't forget people:

COLOUR IS WHAT GIVES US COLO

Yesterday was a PINK day people - followed closely by blue. You can check out yesterday's end of day briefing and flag ceremony on youtube. The link is <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RjyKnhhrdbl> or just do a search for prismatic audit. We'll keep putting them up there for you. Love your work. Yours always - The Auditors

Hi  
I'm SUSAN  
your  
PRISMATIC AUDITOR



We are at a crossroads, to our left is YELLOW to our right is PINK, straight ahead is everything else. There are three more days left - what you choose will determine the chromatic fate of the audit, look deep people, look deep.

It was mildly painful for us to play Itsy Bitsy Teeny Weeny Yellow Polkadot Bikin by Bombalurina yesterday but if necessary we will go there again. No pressure - we totally understand if yellow or pink is your thing - in fact as a gesture of just how genuinely ok we are with it we have a lemon sherbert lolly for you to suck in your own time. Look out for the trolley of truth trundling your way soon. The Auditors of P



Just because you're special we are treating you... a peak of yesterdays flag ceremony highlight - THE LINE GRAPH. Don't panic if you are having difficulty gauging the ups and downs, it's amazing what a difference a little colour can make.

Thanks so much for a sensational blue day yesterday Melbourne Central - we had been hanging out for a little while Neil Diamond and you delivered him with extra chest thumping. We are definitely becoming much more comfortable with each other and it might be time to get a bit closer. You are invited to join us in our Audit office for the launch of The Westwing (the place we are based) on thursday evening 6-8pm. Do come - we'll show you our BAR GRAPH, 2nd floor beside the hanging garden. - Love, The Auditors.

YELLOW  
SONG

colour blindness

28 AUG 2009

MELBOURNE CENTRAL PRISMATIC AUDIT RAW DATA



Level 2	10 - 11	11 - 12	12 - 1	1 - 2	2 - 3	3 - 4	4 - 5
Anton's	Green	purple	green		Green	Green	Black
Laurent Shoes	purple + grey	purple + grey	purple + grey + pink			Purple + Grey	Purple + Blue
Nique	Orange	white	orange			blue	pink + orange
Industries	White	pink		white	white		
Rodd & Gunn	Brown	brown			bl		
Mimco	Yellow	yellow	green				
Marcus Mens	Red	grey					
Peter Alexander	white	white	pink				
Seduce	Yellow	yellow					
Metalicus	Green					ed	Blue
Chelsea	Green					green	
Fame Agenda					orange + red	orange + red	
Toni & Guy					purple	purple	

Monday  
ring  
larger

**I LOVE A GOOD AUDIT**  
www.prismaticaudit.com

		12 - 1	1 - 2	2 - 3	3 - 4	4 - 5
		orange	orange			
		red + yellow	yellow + pink			
	white		orange		grey	
	Purple	Orange		orange	yellow	
	Green	green		red	blue	red
Coste	Blue	Blue			yellow	
Portmans	Purple	Black	Purple	grey	grey	
Kookai	Yellow	Yellow	green		Red	red
Weiss Metal	Grey	Blue			ORANGE	pink
Sweet Dr (lolly)	Pink	Pink + red		red / pink		yellow

# You Win, Uncollected Works

WILL FRENCH

On 16 April 2010, I performed a work in New York City that was a response to the city, its atmosphere and circumstance. With wooden dowel and white linen fabric I made seven white flags: the kind universally recognised as flags of surrender. Next, I proceeded to the major galleries of the city: Dia Beacon, Guggenheim, Metropolitan Museum, Museum Of Modern Art, New Museum, PS1 and Whitney Museum.

In front of each gallery I waved a flag above my head, in an act of surrender, and proceeded to deposit the flag in the gallery cloakroom where it was exchanged for a token. Ordinarily these tokens are intended to be returned for the item on departure, instead they were kept. The seven tokens, each unique to the gallery they originated from, act as a memento of that place and time. Those tokens and a small, black and white photograph of me waving one of the flags remain as a record of the performance. Because my flags have never been collected they now occupy part of the galleries I visited; they are, in a sense, part of their collections, reserved for an indeterminate period of time.

Each white flag, loaded with symbolic meaning, provoked interesting responses from those who witnessed the performance. Unknown bystanders encouraged me not to give up. Opposed to my act of surrender, their cries of support were surprising and heart-warming.

For me, this performance was fulfilling. Seemingly at odds with everything that city is about, my surrender felt like swimming against the tide, it was a push in the opposite direction and that is why I did it.



REVIEWS





## On Life After Death

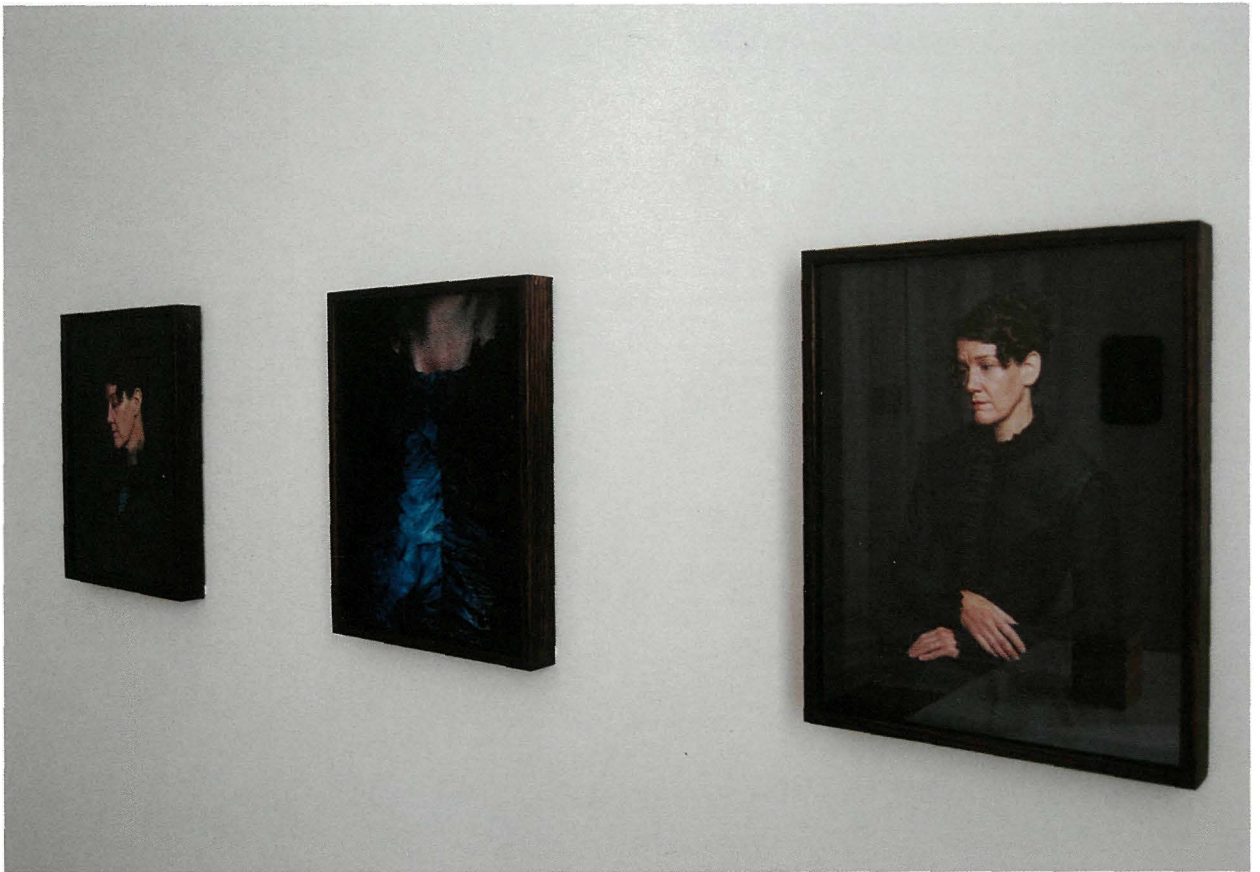
ROSEMARY FORDE

Two Melbourne artists, Claire Lambe and Elvis Richardson, have refreshed the local artist-run gallery model with their twelve-month curatorial project *Death Be Kind*. Like a concept album in gallery form, each of the exhibitions presented holds a relation to the constant theme—in this case life's only constant—death. Selecting artists and works dealing with the weighty topic in many tangential ways, Lambe and Richardson's project is a slow build that over the duration of the gallery's life allows for overlap and discourse to develop between the individual shows. As a space with a clear focus and agenda, the approach is welcome relief within what can be an impatient and flitting sector.

*Death Be Kind* resides in a homely space above a bar in Brunswick. Two adjoining rooms form the galleries and a third hosts a small office and additional exhibition space. The inaugural exhibition (*The Memorial*, June 29—July 25) was a collaboration between Lambe and Richardson that displayed a collection—borrowed from over 100 people—of treasured objects and keepsakes that once belonged to a deceased relative, friend, lover or acquaintance. As the first instalment of *Death Be Kind*'s program, *The Memorial* established the artists' premise by drawing on the communality of the experience of loss and grief, as well as the tendency for personal and idiosyncratic associations to be drawn between objects and lost loved ones.

The objects gathered (and beautifully displayed in an elaboration of the traditional museum case) each spoke of intensely personal narratives and memories, yet together created something shared. Following this collaborative opening project, *Death Be Kind* has presented exhibitions comprised of artists loosely grouped in threes, each individual artist occupying one of the three gallery spaces. In the recent exhibition *On Life After Death*, Martha McDonald, Patrick Pound and Elizabeth Pulie showed discrete bodies of work, each a part of the artists' ongoing research and interests and pertaining in some way to an intangible afterlife.

Above: Patrick Pound, *People who look like they're dead but (probably) aren't*, 2010, collection of found photographs on black wall. Photo: Joseph Lambe.

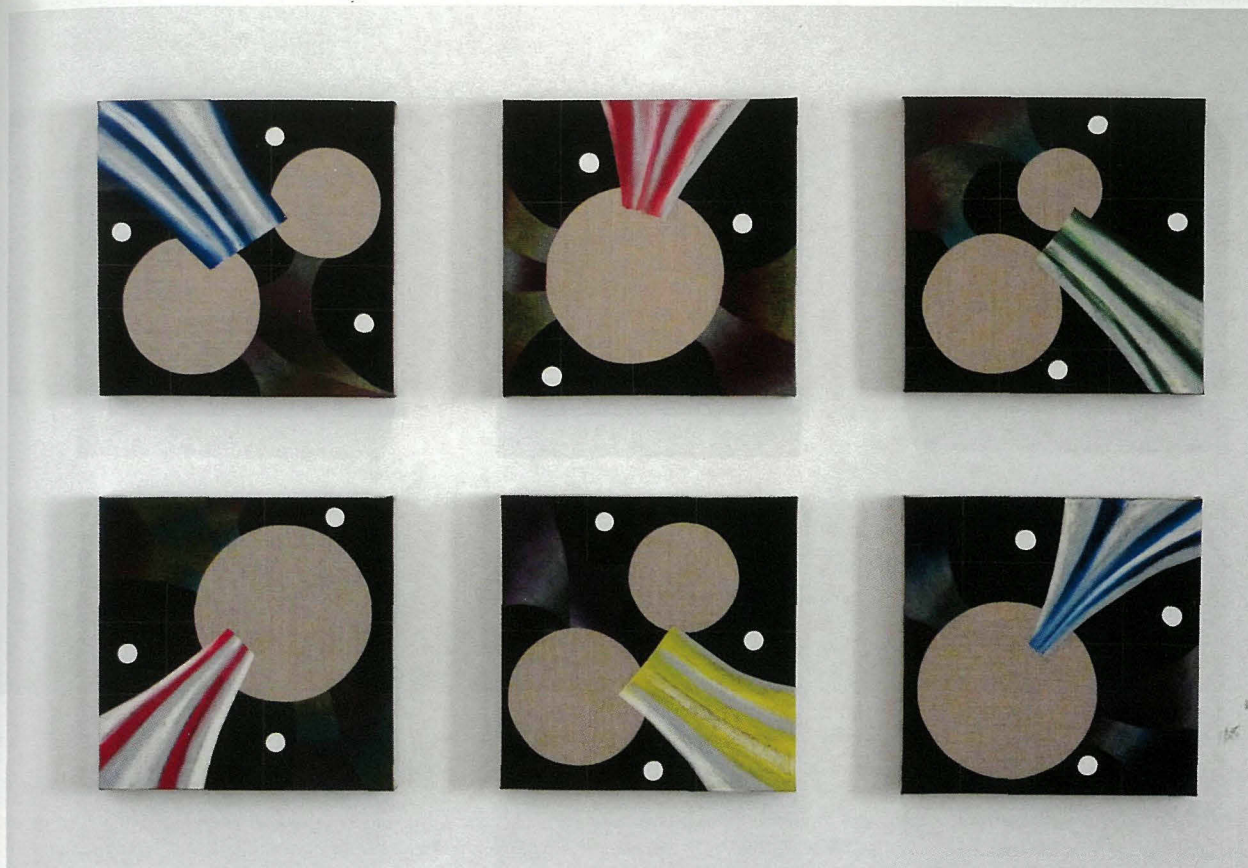


*On Life After Death* is titled after the book of the same name by psychiatrist Elisabeth Kübler-Ross (1991), in which the author examines the phenomenon of near-death experiences and describes death as a transition to a higher state of consciousness. A grief counsellor turned spiritualist, Kübler-Ross likened the moment of death to a butterfly emerging from its cocoon. The by-now culturally stereotyped imagery of light, tunnels, and warm glowing orbs was reprised in a suite of oil stick and pencil drawings on linen by Sydney-based artist Elizabeth Pulie. In these works, titled *Death of Art Series One* (2010), the interest in abstraction and patterning that has long characterised Pulie's work was placed in the radically different context of the sensations and visual phenomena experienced by the human brain as, deprived of oxygen, it enters terminal shut down.

Pulie's appealing drawings, a dance of modernist colour and form, also pointed to the end game of art theory and history with their title referencing 20th century theories on the death of art. In art, at least it seems, there is life after death and in Pulie's interpretation it is a playful, seductive afterlife.

Patrick Pound is a photographer who also collects and archives found photographs. Carefully categorised and ordered, Pound's exhibited albums and groupings included *People that look dead but (probably) aren't* (2010) and *Blind album* (2010)—the latter a found album complete with captions in Braille. Putting together a family photo album for someone without sight is quite a concept. It raises the problem of trying to describe or depict that which is unseen, an idea that is repeated in Pound's albums *Portrait of the wind* (2010) and *The photographers* (2010). In *The photographers* Pound has gathered images in which the photographer's shadow is captured in the shot, the shadows interrupting the connection between the subject and the viewer.

The collection of photographs Pound titled *People that look dead but (probably) aren't* (snapshots of people snoozing in hammocks, or with their heads lolling off the side of beds, or one particularly unusual one of a woman in white sportswear lying prone on a tennis court) touched most obviously on the overarching theme of the gallery. But presented with these collections of vintage photos and albums, we remember that all photography is locked in an intimate dance with death. We take photos to attest to lived moments but also to freeze those moments well beyond the life span of what they document. Photographs are an attempt to ward off death, their stillness is exactly that of lying in state. Yet there is also something soothingly comical about Pound's appropriated images—comical but with a chill in the air, they are like ghost stories told around a camp fire; they titillate but also obliquely educate—as much as guesswork, speculation and nervous laughter can prepare us for the great cosmic joke that awaits every one of us.



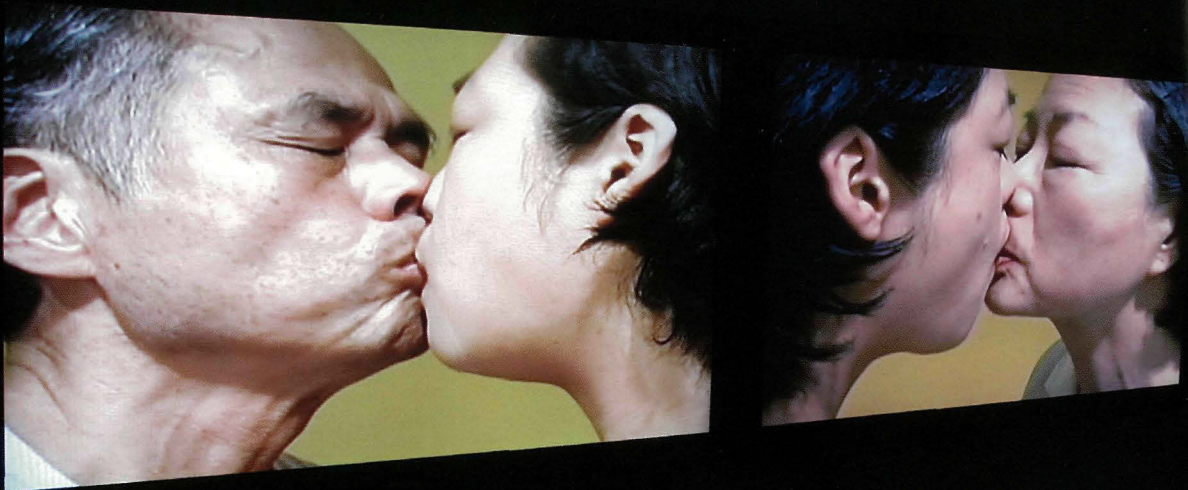
Ghost stories of a more literal kind were showcased in Martha McDonald's recital (on the last day of the exhibition) of British and American folk songs—tales of doom, false loves, early graves and demon lovers handed down from a world where times were harder, mortality rates higher and death was a constant companion. McDonald performed these in a crystal high voice accompanied by Craig Woodward on banjo, fiddle and mandolin. In the gallery, McDonald exhibited a series of photographic portraits and embroidered works exploring Victorian conventions governing feminine displays of grief. As McDonald points out in an artist's statement, 'as the public face of the family's respectability, 19th-century women were bound by a labyrinth of mourning etiquette that include long periods of seclusion and strict rules governing every detail of fashion.' A group of photographs shows McDonald wearing a crepe mourning gown; crepe was considered an appropriate material because it did not reflect light. It didn't hold pigment well either and the photos show black dye running down the artist's neck caused by McDonald's tears.

For the Victorians, grief was private and unseen yet required a public demonstration. What is interesting in these images—and it is there in Pound's images too in the signification of wind, photographers' shadows and Braille, and in Pulie's beatific death knells—is a making visible of the invisible. Ultimately, *Life After Death* and the overall project of *Death Be Kind*, attempts to imagine the unseeable, name the unnameable, the incomprehensible and the unfathomable.

*On life after death* featuring the work of Martha McDonald, Patrick Pound and Elizabeth Pulie was held at *Death Be Kind*, Melbourne from 4 to 26 September 2010.

Above: Elizabeth Pulie, *Death of Art Series One*, 2010, acrylic, oil stick and pencil on linen. Photo: Joseph Lambe.

Facing page: Martha McDonald, (from left to right) *Untitled (tear stains)*, *Untitled (detail)*, *Untitled (portrait)*, 2010, type-c photographs. Photo: Joseph Lambe.



## Last Words Phase 2

ELLA MUDIE

The last time I waited in line to renew my passport at a government office, I could not have felt further removed from the world of art. So, I was recently surprised and delighted to find these two worlds colliding at 4A gallery in Sydney's Chinatown where a whimsical trail of replica passports by Tintin Wulia darted and weaved across the walls and ceilings of its front room like a flock of birds taking flight. Installed as part of part two of the gallery's *Last Words* program, curated by Aaron Seeto, this group show brought together eleven artists working in Australia, Asia and further afield to provoke dialogue around the diverse factors that now influence and complicate our sense of identity, such as 'the dissolution of traditional boundaries of geography and culture through technology and globalisation.'<sup>1</sup> Glancing up at Wulia's passports, which concretised these ideas only to set them soaring, I wondered if perhaps the title of the exhibition might be reversed to read *Words Last*.

Transcending language is, of course, an impossible task for a reviewer and with this in mind I turned my attention to Alfredo and Isabel Aquilizan's spectacular work *In God We Trust* (2010). The work consisted of a disused US army jeep decorated with dazzling stainless steel motifs, a brazenly optimistic Filipino and Western hybrid best described as bricolage meets bling. Meanwhile, Meiro Koizumi's adjacent two-channel video, *Portrait of a Young Samurai* (2009), toyed with the viewer a little more cynically. Here, a young martyr dramatically declares to his parents that his time to make the ultimate sacrifice has arrived, that is until the voice of a director intrudes and it is made apparent that he is an actor. Over a series of takes, the 'true' spirit of the samurai is displaced in a slippage between the actor's imperfect rehearsals and the director's ideal rendition based on a historical example.

I moved to four photographs documenting an earlier live performance at 4A, *Oil Can* (2010) by Tatsumi Orimoto, a work that invited absurd audience participation to draw attention to alienation in modern life. Then it was up the stairs to the level one gallery where the atmosphere of the semi-darkened space was a little more subdued. Kiran Subbaiah's video projection *Suicide Note* (2006), was positively sombre as the artist recounted in a deadpan manner his multiple reasons for wanting to top himself. Despite presenting his frustrations about the futility of art in a parodic manner, the film never quite proved humorous enough to transcend its heavy premise. Nearby, a documentary style video by Shen Shaomin, *One Monk's Temple* (2010), offered a more compelling portrait of a businessman turned Buddhist monk who doubts his own spiritual integrity, likewise plunging the viewer into the complex reality of a man at odds with himself and his surroundings.

Above: Patty Chang, *In Love*, 2001, still from two-channel video.

Facing page: Sumugan Sivanesan and Damian Martin, *Elroy*, 2010, Mixed media.



Perhaps one of the biggest tensions in video art today concerns narrative and whether artists, as experimental filmmakers working outside the mainstream, should embrace or reject story. Meiro Koizumi's second offering, *Human Opera XXX* (2007) worked with this tension rather than against it, while one of the most powerful videos was also the shortest and without dialogue, the three-and-a-half minute *In Love* (2001) by Patty Chang. Displayed on a pair of side by side screens, the artist faces her father at close proximity and mirrors this pose with her mother in the other screen. Disturbingly, the artist appears to be passionately kissing her parents until an onion pops from their mouths and we realise the video is played backwards and they are actually feeding one another, sharing the onion by passing it from mouth to mouth. Direct, visually seductive and symbolically potent, the video resembled moving paintings and was uncomfortable yet affecting in its unflinching portrayal of the deeply entrenched bonds that tie children to their parents.

Intimacy between strangers was the subject of Young Sun Han's *Sliding Mirror: 24 Hour Embrace* (2010), while two witty and intriguing mixed media works offered some relief from the six video works that were densely packed into the room. The uncannily assumed a human face in Sumugan Sivanesan and Damian Martin's *Elroy* (2010), which presented a life-like cast of Sivanesan's head in a clear plastic cylinder filled with water. At first he appeared embalmed like Hirst's formaldehyde shark, until air bubbles surfaced from his nostrils and the lifeless artifact made a spooky return from the dead. All was not what it seemed in Will French's collection of nautical signal flags, *Colourful Language* (2010) either. Their DIY charm belied a more provocative intent with visitors invited to submit a profanity so the artist could pin the correlating signal flags onto the wall, a wry comment on the use and abuse of collective visual symbols across cultures.

The second and final installment in a program exploring big questions around the construction of cultural identity in a rapidly changing world and with an emphasis on performative works, *Last Words Phase 2* was ambitious in scope and if anything suffered a little from information overload, especially in the video domain. Yet a repeat visit was well rewarded, with each work revealing further layers of complexity when given a more concentrated focus. When it comes to articulating a sense of self in today's world, the plethora of forces exerted on the individual refute easy answers. The diverse responses offered in *Last Words Phase 2* reveal how the cracks in between the fixed points are well worth hovering over.

*Last Words Phase 2* at 4A Centre for Contemporary Asian Art, Sydney was held from 3 September to 16 October 2010. The exhibition included the work of Alfredo + Isabel Aquilizan, Patty Chang, Will French, Young Sun Han, Meiro Koizumi, Tatsumi Orimoto, Shen Shaomin, Sumugan Sivanesan, Kiran Subbaiah and Tintin Wulia.

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1. *Last Words Phase 2* exhibition brochure, Aaron Seeto, 4A Centre for Contemporary Asian Art, September 2010. ▶





## I Wish I Were Smaller

JANE SOMERVILLE

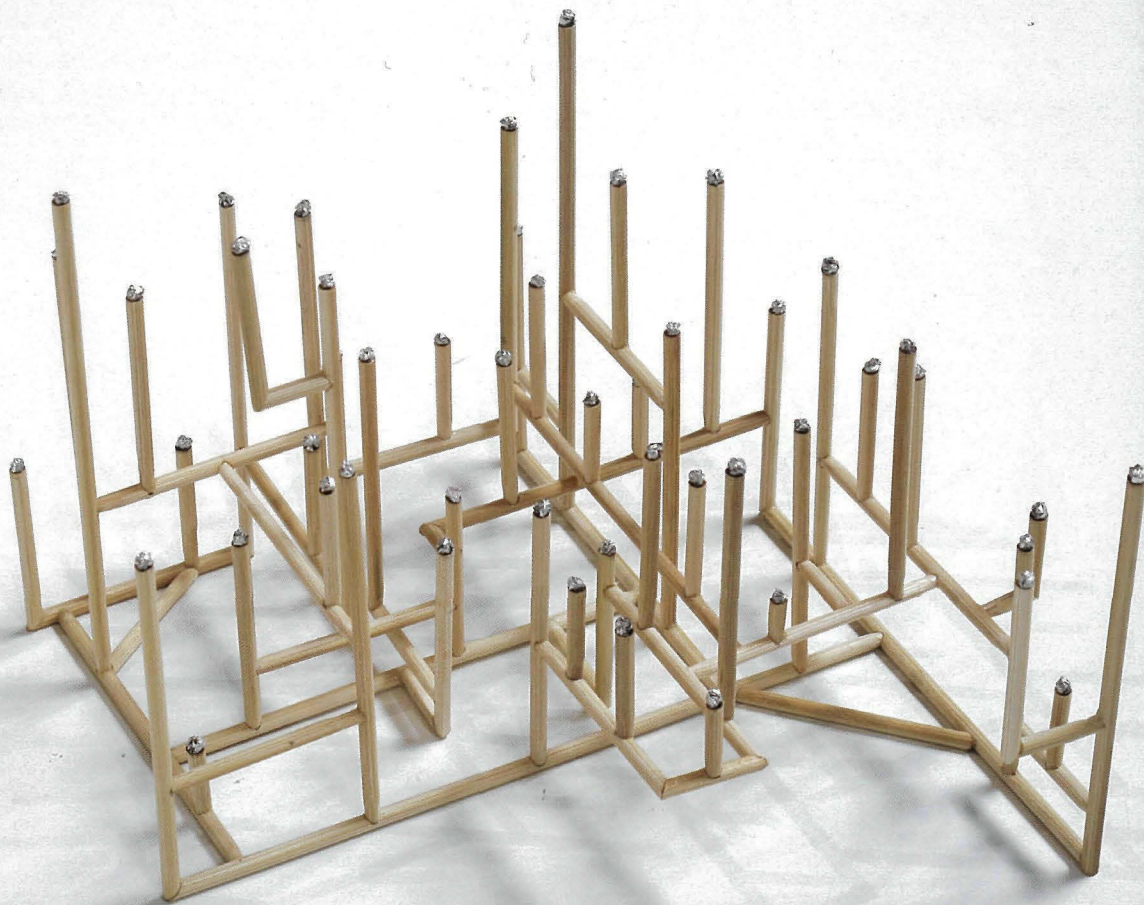
Repetitions of the mundanities of daily life are fundamental to Charlie Sofo's practice. His recent solo exhibition *I wish I were smaller*, at Darren Knight Gallery, pointed the viewer to a personalised, introspective space. This was evidenced in the eloquent sculpture *One Full Course of Antibiotics* (2009); a delicate, architectural-style bamboo construction on which Sofo has placed tiny balls of foil made from the bits that hold antibiotic pills in their packet. Sofo's recontextualisation of this overlooked item that forms part of everyone's existence is beautiful in its simplicity.

*Rubber Rack* (2009), a larger sculptural installation in an adjoining gallery space featured rubber bands found on footpaths. These were hung on a wooden structure recalling Duchamp's readymade *Bottle Rack* (1914). Next to the rack a ball made of rubber bands was placed on the floor.

Sofo has been making ball works for a couple of years using discarded materials and there were two examples in this exhibition. *Balls* (2010), features a small pile of brightly coloured balls, of various sizes and materials, assembled on a small shelf. Sofo's initial impetus for making these pieces started with 'a material concern with books and paper products'<sup>1</sup> and then grew to include materials from a vast range of sources such as foil, wood, Hebel<sup>2</sup> and dog hair. Sofo doesn't have a dog, the hair came from his friend Trish's dog and it is this exchange of materials that is at the core of these pieces. Made from items found on the street or given to Sofo from friends, the work signifies connections between people, a concept that runs in opposition to the individualism prevalent in contemporary society. For Sofo, *Balls*

Facing page: Charlie Sofo, *Rubber Rack*, 2009, rubber bands found on foot paths, wood, PVA. Photo: Garry Trinh.

Above: Charlie Sofo, *Rubber* (detail) 2009, rubber bands found on foot paths, wood, PVA. Photo: Garry Trinh.



(2010) symbolises dialogue via exchange; the balls ‘are really constellations of materials and social exchanges.’<sup>3</sup> An important act in a world where relationships are fundamentally altered through the oversaturation of social media.

*Unfinished Sentences* (2010) is an unlimited edition artist’s book. On each page Sofo begins a sentence that comprises just a few words or a line of text, the rest of the page is blank. It is like a ‘Choose Your Own Adventure’ story where the audience’s response becomes a key aspect of the piece.

In *Concrete Junk* (2010), Sofo presents concrete rubble as if it is a valuable archaeological specimen. Each lump of rock is catalogued with a label tied around it with a piece of string. Placed on metal shelves they are like precious gems in a museum. While the elevation of ordinary materials to art objects is not a new phenomenon (think of the spectre of Duchamp in this exhibition), Sofo’s method is refreshing, as it is not a comment on our consumer driven society, but suggests something less faddish than contemporary concerns with sustainability or the environment. His work points to something almost timeless and human.

Things happen and stuff is left in public space. And, perhaps this is one reason why the library is a recurring destination that appears in his work. Sofo acknowledges that libraries are one of the few public spaces that people can go to for free, where human knowledge is not only collected and classified, but, mistakenly and innocently, so are the lives of the individuals who peruse its collection. While a previous work by Sofo used hair found in library books, in this exhibition *Bookmarks* (2009) inlays into a tabletop torn pieces of scrap paper, card and post-it notes found in library books. It is intriguing to wonder how many people have used these scraps of paper to mark out a significant piece of information or just to keep their place in a book. The library is a communal space, a place of knowledge and learning and the bookmarks suggest a measure of time.

Above: Charlie Sofo, *One Full Course of Antibiotics*, 2009, foil, bamboo, PVA. Photo: Garry Trinh.  
Facing page: Charlie Sofo, *Balls*, 2010, paper, foil, wood, Hebel, dog hair. Photo: Garry Trinh.





20th July 2010 8:11pm

At Coles supermarket a young guy pauses while stacking a shelf, then brushes his straight blond hair out of his face.<sup>4</sup>

Sofó's work is about being present in the world. He observes people's behaviour within real time and in real space: on the street, in a café, or in a queue. His own actions of observation similarly mark time and space, like torn pieces of paper in a book, a quick reminder of time and place; here is a friend, this is a stranger, this thing happened and so on.

The subject of Sofó's art is the in-between space, he finds his material as he moves from one place to another. A common link between the works in *I wish I were smaller* is a simplicity of material choice, and altogether this approach made for a surprising and rewarding experience. 'I'm not suggesting that it's profound or anything, it just seems important to look at the world, or that huge part of the world that exists between people's houses, work, nightclubs, Centrelink etc ... The more you look, the more interesting it all becomes.'<sup>5</sup>

Charlie Sofó's exhibition, *I wish I were smaller*, was held from 28 August to 28 September at Darren Knight Gallery, Sydney.

1. Charlie Sofó, correspondence with the author, October 12, 2010.

2. Hebel is a lightweight masonry block used in domestic and commercial buildings.

3. Charlie Sofó, correspondence with the author, October 12, 2010.

4. Hair (2010) consists of a typed sheet of paper with a brief description of where, when and the way somebody (friends, strangers, even the artist himself) touched their hair.

5. Charlie Sofó, correspondence with the author, October 12, 2010.

# Love Sick

ANGELA BENNETTS

Once, floating in my family's ice-blue pool at Christmas time, I suddenly felt that I understood what love was. I was on that awkward cusp of adolescence and adulthood, and it hit me as I stared up into the hot yellow sky, that love was merely the desire not to disappear. To have one's image reflected and recorded; just as the sky was now reflected on the surface enveloping me. For what else is familial love, but the ultimate archive? At lunch it had become obvious that my mother—the ultimate archivist—was increasingly unaware of things that were coming to define me; what type of butter I preferred, my nascent political leanings, the person I spent the most time with on Sundays. Did that mean that those things, and myself by extension, were in danger of disappearing? Who now could see the real me?

Why this anecdote? While my then-budding grasp of love—and indeed, the world at all—stemmed from a rupture between me and my family, it hinged on the concept of being known, recorded, and reflected. This is what I have encountered again in *Love Sick*, an exhibition of video art and photomedia from a predominantly female line-up of artists. *Love Sick* also deals with love as a kind of reflection. And, crucially, the authors of the reflection are primarily women who become their own gaze-makers. Photographs are our modern-day archives—true and yet ambiguous. Maurita Harney writes of Emma Thomson and Tatjana Plitt's works, 'It [photography] can be a vehicle of documentation, claiming to construct an accurate record, or to capture situations as they "really" exist or happen. It is also an instrument of fantasy, of "faking it", of deception.'<sup>1</sup> All the images (moving or otherwise) in *Love Sick* use the 'neutral' medium of photography to construct (or reconstruct) unreal realities of love.

There are many kinds of love: sexual, ecstatic, abstract, platonic, familial, romantic. *Love Sick* deals firmly with the romantic, i.e. the idyllic castle in the sky built upon empty platitudes, meaningless gestures, hokey Hallmark cards and crappy chocolates. In short, a deception or a fantasy. In his book *Love*, John Cowburn defines romantic passion as unrealistic and by necessity unrealised. Romantic love is indifferent to the object; citing the classic tale of Tristan and Iseult, Cowburn says, 'What they love is love and being in love.'<sup>2</sup>

Tatjana Plitt's video piece *Forever* (2010) and her print series *Blaze* (2007–8) hook into this theatricality. Sans context, *Forever* features two lovers rehearsing all the staid gestures of love—patting, kissing, soulfully staring—in a seemingly endless loop. *Blaze*, meanwhile, is all context and carefully contrived tableaux, in which the lovers embrace and yet face away from each other. In both, the actors buy into the falsity. They act love in order to feel love. Similarly, Emma Thomson's *The Homemakers* (2006) finds couples defined more by their decor and belongings—TVs, stripper poles, Playstations, cigarettes and exercise bikes—than any shared history or connection. The love affair here seems to be one with consumerism.

Rachel Scott's high-definition video piece in which she severs her relationship with, well, her video, even more explicitly conflates how love and recording go hand in hand. In a highly stylised homage to Surrealist filmmaking, Scott's shadow is cast against an elaborate gilt mirror (another technology of narcissism) and the object of her affection: the camera. She says, 'I have been concerned for some time with the relationships and belief systems it creates, the power it wields, and its seeming omnipresence in first world societies.'<sup>3</sup> Just as with romantic love, this is an affair destined to be unrequited. And as with romantic love, it seeks oblivion: death or *la petite mort*, the break-up.

Anonymity plays a part in Narinda Reeders' four works, in which suggested trysts are placed within clinical, corporate settings. Two (male) hands grasp between computer cubicles, while two discarded beer bottles (labels suggestively peeled off) sit in a conference room, a pink alco-pop in the distance. This is a male-dominated environment, with women excluded even from an office romance, let alone a promotion. In *I Throw Myself at Men* (2006), Lilly McElroy attempts to puncture the male-dominated environments of dingy sports bars using her body. Converting a misogynist phrase into a literal truth, McElroy exposes the humour at work in the trite rom-com genre.

Did my teenage grasp of love, felt while floating on that summertime pool, mean anything? No, but like romantic love, I had suddenly become aware of my mortality. I sought to have myself recorded in the face of my mother, my lover, my friend. Romantic love, meanwhile, hungers for immortality through the permanent artifices that adorn love. These actively twisted and flip-sided retellings of romantic fictions are suitably, love sick.

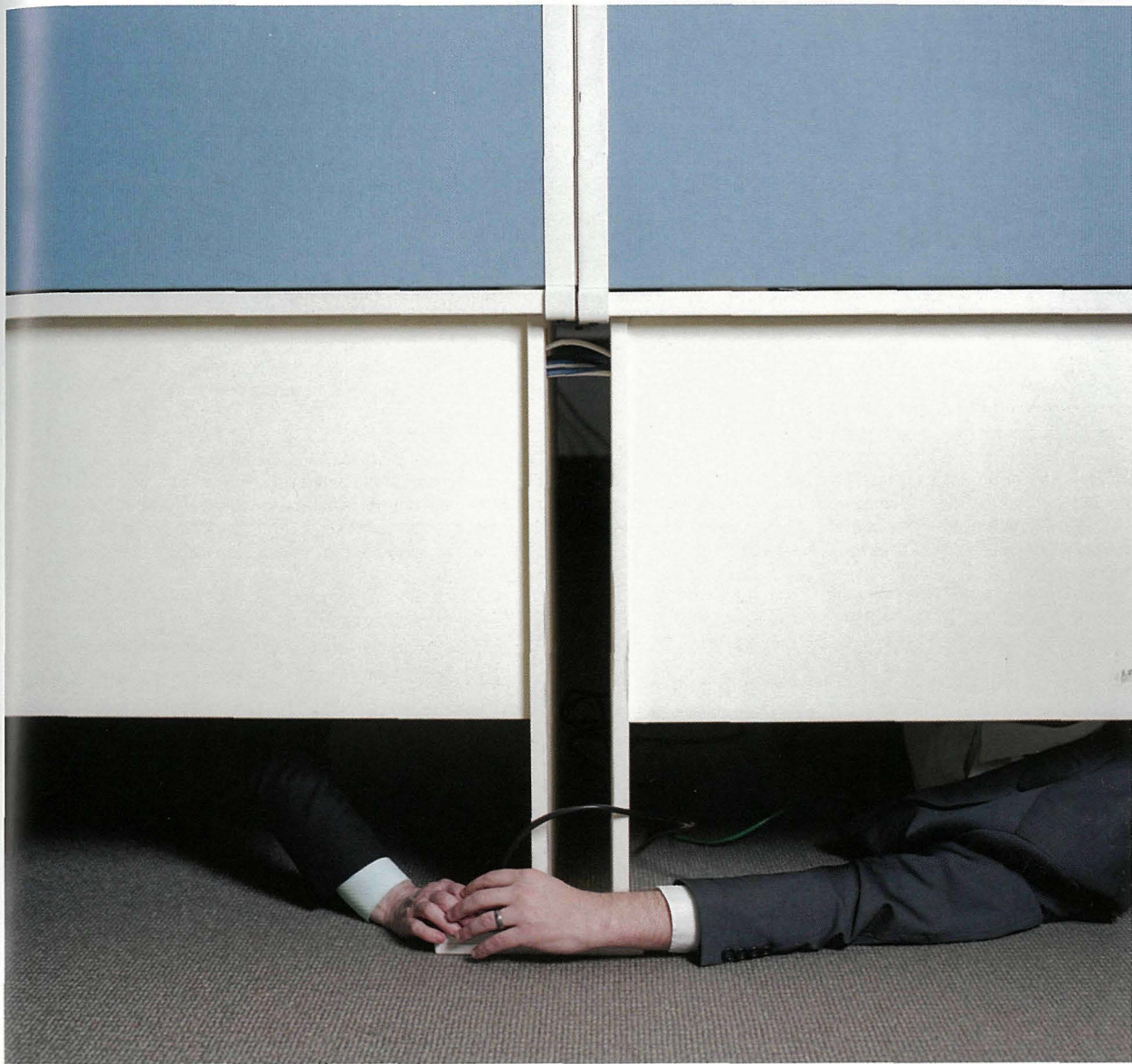
Featuring the work of Brown Council, Lilly McElroy, Laurel Nakadate, Tatjana Plitt, Narinda Reeders, Rachel Scott, Emma Thomson and Mai Yamashita & Naoto Kobayashi, *Love Sick* at Stills Gallery, Sydney ran from 29 September to 6 November.

1. Maurita Harney, *Stranger than Fiction*, exhibition brochure, Perth Centre for Photography, 2008.
2. John Cowburn, *Love*, (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2003).
3. Rachel Scott, artist statement, September 2010.

Facing page (above): Narinda Reeders, *Untitled* from 2010, 2010, lamda print.

Facing page (below left): Mai Yamashita & Naoto Kobayashi, *Candy*, 2005, video still.

Facing page (below right): Lilly McElroy, *I Throw Myself At Men #12*, 2006, digital print.





## Primavera 2010

JAI McKENZIE

Like most people my experience of the world is increasingly mediated by the electronic and, as a result, it is less tactile. Built into this exponential growth of electronic technology is a pervasive neophilia that deems anything 'old' or used as less desirable, less valuable or, in extreme cases, obsolete. In response to this technological pull, some people are pushing in the opposite direction, slowly returning to earlier ways of living and communicating with the world.

Katie Dyer, curator of *Primavera 2010* captured this emergent attitude through the art of seven Australian artists under the age of 35. Akira Akira, Julie Fragar, Agatha Gothe-Snape, Alasdair McLuckie, James Newitt, Jackson Slattery, and Emma White all return to older ways of seeing and making to craft an understanding of the world around them.

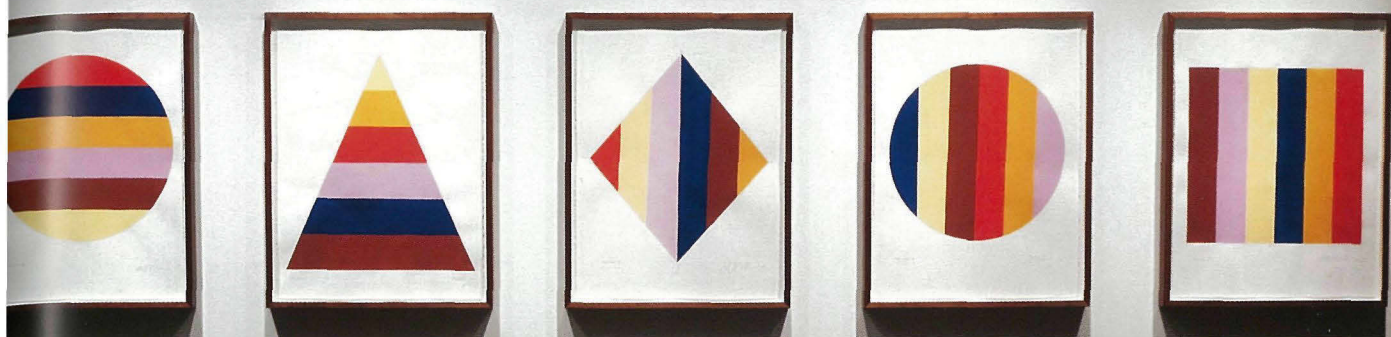
In her catalogue essay, Dyer dismissed any thematic connection between the works, instead claiming that the show was about bringing together artists who '... demonstrate a certain sensibility through an exploration of the past.'<sup>1</sup> Undoubtedly, a strong unifying premise was not discernible, nor should it have been as *Primavera* is traditionally a celebration of early-career talent. However, this 'sensibility' that prefaces the exhibition was clearly apparent.

I was immediately drawn to the distinctive primitivist and modernist forms used by Alasdair McLuckie in his inky black prints such as *The highest mountain peaks right before dawn* (2008–9). McLuckie's prints appear to be Voodoo influenced folktales expressed through large psychedelic patterns and recurring motifs such as skeletons, unicorns and whales. His imagery is constructed and structurally reinforced through the fastidious repetition of patterns and forms. Lines become energy waves

Above: Jackson Slattery, *Untitled* (detail), 2010, watercolour on paper.

Facing page: Agatha Gothe-Snape, *Feelings*, 2010, gouache and pencil on Archers hot pressed paper, installation view, MCA, Sydney. Photo: the artist.

5



that butt up against fragments of expressive text and shamanistic iconography drawn from primitive art and cultures. McLuckie's work contains a narrative of symbiotic creation and destruction, forming a compellingly vivid morality tale for contemporary society.

Placed opposite McLuckie's prints were Julie Fragar's paintings. Fragar explores the painted surface and in turn, the conceptual surface of reality through her work. Highly skilled, Fragar effortlessly employs sophisticated pictorial techniques that shatter surface planes and, particularly with the application of text in some of the works, momentarily arrest the viewer's eye is at the foreground of the painting. Many of Fragar's paintings resemble images commonly found in a family photo album, and indeed her work begins with photographic sources. Appealing for their potential narrative and suggested voyeurism, Fragar's paintings activate moments in time, and as such they extend the function of the photographs she works from.

Also working from photographs, Jackson Slattery creates detailed watercolour reproductions of images that he finds in magazines such as National Geographic or via Google and Flickr searches. Images such as *Untitled* from *Small Ambition Series 1-13* (2010) demonstrate the artist's sensibility for juxtaposing tough subject matter with the tender pigmentation of watercolours. The image depicts a young woman drinking red wine directly from the bottle.

Her lips barely touch the bottle lip and dark red wine courses down her neck like blood. The paintings were displayed like a tessellated Google image search (each of the watercolours have a similar arrangement and thumbnail like dimensions), enlarged to fit the proportions of the gallery space. Slattery's intense investigations into those images that fleetingly come into our zones of awareness during our regular consumption of online images and mass media were mapped out, transcribed and given the specific gestures of the artist's hands.

For me, the most interesting work in *Primavera* was Emma White's *Found and made* (2010). This work consists of a carefully crafted polymer clay sculpture of the coveted Hasselblad medium-format camera, prized by professional photographers for its mechanical sophistication and image clarity. The camera was famously used to document the Apollo moon landing. More pertinent to this work, it was also used by the documentary photographer Ansel Adams in his pursuit of faithful reproductions of reality. White's Hasselblad has been arranged within the gallery on a table; other objects of ostensibly lesser interest, such as a white foam ball and a box of paper, surround it. This still life was copied again as a photograph that hung on an adjacent wall. The only addition to the scene, a Kodak greyscale card, evokes Adams' zone system used by photographers to ensure the accurate reproduction of tone.



This approach by White engages the viewer in an examination of a copy of a copy of a copy: a direct play with ideas of the simulacra that were prevalent in late 20th century photographic and media theory. White's practice provides a fresh claim to the malleability of reality that photography has long been known for, despite historical claims of its capacity to reproduce the real.

Akira Akira's practice is marked by his unique ability to explore the tension between mass produced items and meticulously hand-constructed objects. This is most apparent with *Spillberg (black) No. 1* (2008), a sculptural work that consists of a viscous, black, paint-like substance flowing across the surface of a mass-produced Ikea table. The object presents a surreal mimicry of a liquid created through the careful layering of automotive paint, a process that must be time-consuming and laborious—while the table has been efficiently and speedily mass-produced for worldwide distribution. By contrasting these antithetical approaches to production, Akira Akira highlights the energetic tension that occurs between them and communicates ideas relating to labour, materiality, value and speed.

Agatha Gothe-Snape's gauche paintings titled *Feelings* (2010) seem on first observation to be relics of hard-edge abstraction, but on closer inspection soft pencil annotations on their surfaces indicate that they are deeply personal maps of the artist's moods and drivers. A range of emotional states—love, fear, anxiety, ambition, energy, relaxation—are mapped out. The viewer is able to move through this emotional terrain, which is at the same time open and closed by the highly personal nature of the mapping system that Gothe-Snape has employed. Gothe-Snape seeks to locate the viewer within the world via their senses and their emotions; her work combines the personal and universal in this way.

James Newitt showed a series of video works that reveal what is possible when we do exactly what Gothe-Snape proposes. Newitt manages to come as close as one can to another human being through his working methods. *Saturday nights* (2007) involved Newitt filming a Saturday night dance at Koonya Hall on the Tasman Peninsula. A corroding sadness hangs heavy over the dance hall participants. Newitt's cinematic approach connects the viewer with the sensation of despair that, it seems, every person at the dance has experienced. Like other towns in close proximity to Port Arthur, Kunya was affected by the massacre and the

Above: James Newitt, *Saturday nights*, 2007, HDV, installation view, MCA, Sydney. Photo: Jenni Carter.

Facing page: Akira Akira, *Spillberg (black) No.1* (detail), 2008, automotive paint, polyurethane resin, IKEA INGO table, installation view, Utopian Slumps. Photo: Louis Porter.



death of two residents on that April day in 1996. It must be said, there seems to be something quintessentially Australian about the qualities of this work. Like the other video pieces by Newitt, *Saturday nights* is a deeply sensitive, cinematic vignette of the people that he films. Beautifully shot, Newitt impresses with his cinematographic skill, and each of the four works clearly show his hand, his individual mark.

In *Primavera 2010*, what was deemed 'old' becomes relevant again. These seven artists communicate their personal engagement with the world, employing craft as a strategy for taking us in a 'new' direction away from the technological progression of inbuilt obsolescence and toward the already existing value of that which surrounds us.

*Primavera 2010*, curated by Katie Dyer, was held at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney from 19 August to 21 November, 2010. The exhibition featured the work of Akira Akira, Julie Fragar, Agatha Gothe-Snape, Alasdair McLuckie, James Newitt, Jackson Slattery, and Emma White.

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1. Katie Dyer, 'Delicious Industry', in *Primavera 2010: Exhibition by Young Australian Artists* (Sydney: Museum of Contemporary Art, 2010). 3.



Above: Kushana Bush, *Top Warble*, 2010, gouache and pencil.



# Liquid Dreams

ABBY CUNNANE

Watercolours have long played the underdog to other media, perhaps with some reason. Who, as a child, hasn't produced those regrettable, pallid little still lives, courtesy of a cheap paint box and a well-meaning relative at Christmas? Far more appealing were the flamboyant crayon scribbles, the coloured paper collages, the glitter-littered masks; even glue-sodden box models have their appreciative maternal audiences, but I don't remember a watercolour ever making it to fridge-magnet mounting.

Admittedly I'm taking the cliché too far: there is of course a well-established and highly respected historical tradition of watercolour painting. The medium dates back to the European Middle Ages, when it was used in manuscript illumination and during the Renaissance by major exponents such as Albrecht Dürer, Van Dyck, Claude Lorrain, Giovanni Benedetto Castiglione, and many Dutch and Flemish artists. India, Ethiopia and other countries have long traditions of watercolour painting, while in China, Korea, and Japan painting has traditionally been the dominant medium.

Yet the fact remains that whatever its historical pedigree, watercolour has suffered as *uncool*. Curator Karl Chitham assembled six emerging watermedia painters with the stated intention of refuting this, liberating the form from its contemporary associations with hobbyism, diluted landscapes and cloying sentimentality. Practitioners Kushana Bush, Linden Simmons, Michael Harrison, Kristy Gorman, Brendon Wilkinson and Julian Hooper were brought together by the cause. Regrettably, as is often the case with revisionist themes, its interest palls quickly. As a concept it felt somewhat arbitrary, or one-dimensional, and didn't necessarily translate to a coherent message across the works.

This is not to say the work was not individually strong or interesting. Kristy Gorman's *Drift*, a sprawling sequence of crystalline forms, acknowledged the paper as a distinct material presence. Treating it not as mere background, or site for the image, but as the formal equal and material opposite of the subtle pigments that soak its porous surface. The most restrained treatment of the medium in this group, Gorman's work nonetheless maintained a key presence in the exhibition. The scattered hang was a challenging formal proposition, yet not unsuccessful, and made the most of its clear distinction from the other figurative work in the space.

Michael Harrison's series of acrylics occupied a wall adjacent to Gorman's work, and the shift was a significant one. Harrison's work evoked the intimacy of a journal and the simplicity of symbol or hieroglyph. Possibly New Zealand's most prominent artist working in the medium, he makes it his own by adopting a unique language of form that is at once reserved and acutely expressive. Harrison's work suggests a link with the unconscious. His alphabet was exquisitely pared back to its critical elements while a horse's raised foreleg, flesh pink on a chocolate-black ground, maintained the geometry of semaphore. The saturation of colour established the flatness of field, these were light-soaked images; despite the gloom of the exhibition space their luminosity was sustained.

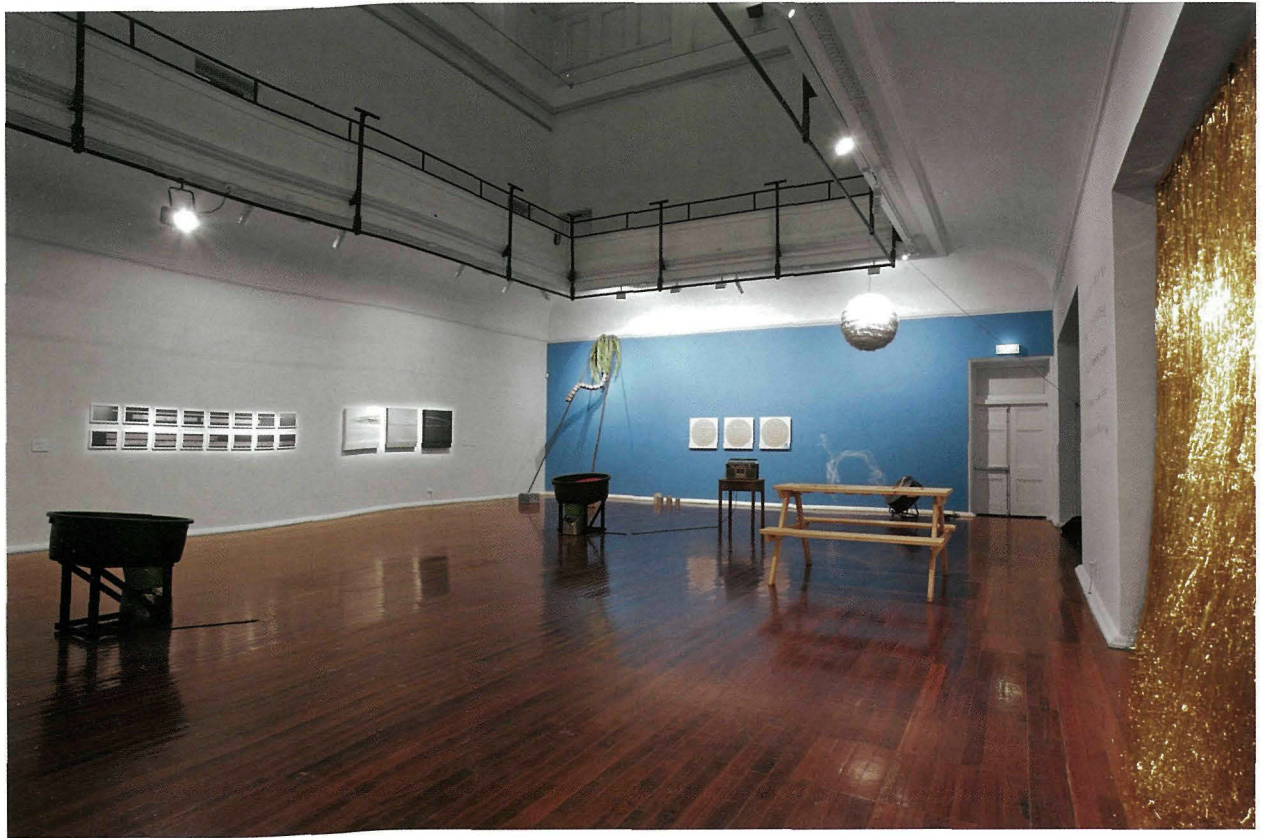
Julian Hooper employs a cool, assured surrealist vernacular. Perhaps more than any other work in the exhibition this series of acrylics counters the notion of watercolour as the preserve of the amateur. Working on linen, Hooper assembled a range of figurative forms—fish, fruit, flowers and shells—to compose his fantastical and uncanny portraits, tipping his hat to Italian late Renaissance painter Giuseppe Arcimboldo (rediscovered in the early 20th century by Surrealist artists like Salvador Dalí, who have clearly influenced Hooper). They exist in a territory that feels new yet familiar; the engagement with art history refreshes rather than burdens.

Hooper offered a note of levity in a predominantly sombre exhibition. The portrait subjects were not unlike marionettes, their backgrounds were like irregular architectural sets. Their translucence made them appear dreamlike or imagined, yet their likenesses were adroit. Who, in their dreams, has not been greeted by a highly coloured apple-headed man with a slippery-eyed transparent fish-woman clinging wetly to his arm? Or a shark-bodied gentleman with gaudy flower-child and posturing white shell to either side? The social satire was a welcome note of humour, the metaphor nimbly dealt with. Less grave than the others, this work went further to interrogate the plane, and the potential of the medium. Hooper works with prismatic, lucent colour and opacity, and at the edge of figuration and narrative.

Kushana Bush's works are memorable; they are the ones you will take home to worry and dream over. Meticulously finished, this series of watercolours featured athletic entanglements of male figures. Influenced by the highly ornamental tradition of Indian miniatures, Bush's intricate groupings were largely naked except for their striped socks, curious one-pieces and bandages, from which protrude minutely detailed genitals, braided hair and bloodied noses. Deeply strange, profoundly complicated and totally beautiful, these works were executed with a degree of finesse equal to sleight of hand. They tell stories of an unfamiliar kind: painfully erotic and yet perhaps closer to pattern or game than illustration. Bush's work is particularly successful on the grey paper she has used.

The physical space occupied by *Liquid Dreams* was somewhat bleak, bunker-like with a low ceiling and institutional grey carpet. However, skilful lighting went some way to ameliorate this. There were some beautiful works in the show, and while the 'revitalise watercolour' premise was not fundamentally a strong one, it did create a platform for their enjoyment. A good accompanying text might have helped to expand the theme, to tease it out in more telling detail. Less significant as a statement about the medium, *Liquid Dreams* opened up a ground of possibility, bringing together works with a clear-eyed approach to form and narrative, and to the host of dimensions beyond those that paint conventionally engages.

*Liquid Dreams: a contemporary take on watercolour* was held at the New Dowse, Lower Hutt, New Zealand, from the 19 June to 26 September, 2010. The exhibition featured the work of Kushana Bush, Kristy Gorman, Michael Harrison, Julian Hooper, Linden Simmons and Brendon Wilkinson.



## Circles to Regress

DARREN JORGENSEN

At the Perth Institute of Contemporary Art, Tim Carter's video *Pane* (2010), which stands no higher than my knee, resembles a miniature drive-in theatre. While I look from above at footage of rich green foliage blowing in a strong breeze, the camera's angle moves upward, creating a sense of weightlessness in the gallery space. The view of greenery is not clear; the video is shot through a window, the camera's focus and ours is made fuzzy by this pane of glass that interrupts the view. In the typically cavernous space of a public gallery, the work is humble and understated, its scale and cinematic textures offer an intimate simulation of looking through a window. The view provided by Carter offers a relief from the other works on show in *Rounds*, work whose scale clamours for our attention. *Rounds* is a clutter of friendly and clunky work, created to grab our interest with its interactive and spectacular novelties. While *Pane* is subtle and intimate, much of *Rounds* looks like a kid's television show after a big night out.

*Rounds* was conceived out of the association between some of Perth's newest art stars. Participant artist and curator Sarah

Rowbottam briefed the artists to make a series of works in response to each other, one work leading to the next and so on, in a merry-go-round of quick creative production. The model here is the relational or participatory aesthetics that has become so fashionable in recent years; such as Neil Aldum's interactive work, which includes a picnic table with a pair of xylophones neatly carved into them, and Rowbottam's foosball table cum sound installation. In an artworld driven by curatorial ideas, it is difficult to see the coherent lines of flight at work here, and instead, these are documented in an extensive catalogue and on a website.<sup>1</sup> These catalogue texts take pains to translate what the artists were doing at the time, but also threaten to eclipse the art as we leaf through an embellished series of interviews and essays about artistic process.

If there is a second model for the curatorial pretence of *Rounds* it lies in this idea of process, an idea that betrays the shared background of these artists in the fulcrum of Perth's art scene that is Curtin University's art school. It is here that Perth's artists are

Above: *Rounds*, installation view, 2010. Photo: Traianos Pakioufakis.

Facing page: Neil Aldum, *People Person Park Bench*, 2010, pine. installation view, PICA. Photo: Traianos Pakioufakis.

IN A SUMBRERO DIGGING FOR POWER

OPENING A DOLPHIN RUG CATHEDRAL

WE CAN ALL BE RAINBOW SERPENTS IN THE SHOWER

A MEASURE OF EMPATHY AT AN ANGLE TO THE EAGLE

THE AMBULANCE SLEEPS FOREVER IN THE WOODS





born, working their way into the city's gallery system or leaving for more lucrative opportunities elsewhere. Curtin is legend for its radical teaching practices, from banning pencils in drawing classes to turning sculpture workshops into backgammon games. In art schools the idea of process is vital to getting artists to reflect on what they are doing, but it is only a recent invention. Process is a way of remystifying the artist in an era of demystification, a way of justifying public money when the public has little interest in the high arts.

Australia inherited the problem of elitism in art from its earliest days, as public support for the arts was thought to be of benefit to a population of unworthy ex-convicts, roughneck settlers and other runaways from Europe. The earliest Australian artists were forgers, shipwrecked sailors and second-rate naturalists, but they were supported by free settlers who wanted to turn their ownership of land into a culture of dominance. It has been left to institutions such as PICA to carry on the tradition, to translate high culture for the low, and the relevance of art to a public that knows it remains the province of a few. Thus, in grant applications and acquittals, curatorial proposals and the micro-management of shows, the charade of making work for a fictional public sustains a small industry of bureaucrats. Those that matter in the art world are not artists but gatekeepers; the curators, institutions and funding bodies who carry on the paradoxical and colonial mission of mystifying art as a way of bridging the cultural divide.

Thus, in her catalogue essay PICA curator Leigh Robb thinks of *Rounds* after Harold Bloom, whose lineage of influence, from one artist to the next, constructed a model for high modernism at a time when it faced extinction.<sup>2</sup> Bloom's theory of competition among the great male figures of literature was much maligned by those trying to open up the establishment to other methods, other practices. The paradox of Bloom's model of art making exists in the stubborn individuality of artists dependant upon others for recognition and inspiration. His model may prove apt for thinking about contemporary art production, as artists climb over each other for funding and shows, while paying lip service to ideas of relationality, participation and process. If some of the works in *Rounds* create interactive opportunities for the gallery visitor, they also encode the banality of these interactions into a logic of making institutional art, designed to impress gatekeepers of the public's eye, who turn the merry-go-round of grants, solo shows, residencies, collections, group shows, awards and commissions. The art world has constructed a catch-22 for young artists, who want to make art but are bound to its bureaucratic strictures. By being valued as emerging, their practice, their art, becomes a kind of trap, a black hole into which its content disappears. They are organised enough, local enough, and young enough, and that's simply enough.

I'm not blaming the artists themselves here, but the distinction between emerging and established, process and product, professional and unprofessional, that establishes the mode of careers in the art world. Their problem is not unlike that of Queensland activists during the 1980s. After the then Premier Joh Bjelke-Petersen banned street protests, there was a wave of protests for the right to protest. On television this looked ridiculous, and played right into the conservative Premier's hands, as the radical left, who had very good reason to be protesting amidst increasing police violence, racism and corruption, were

reduced to protesting about protesting. So too art made for its own context becomes less about art than about its situation.

It's worth pausing on one of the participants in *Rounds*, George Egerton-Warburton, whose work might be the least developed, but for that reason is the among the most successful in the show. In *Welcome to Mirth* (2010) he salvages a tape deck from his youth, positions it in the gallery and in the catalogue he talks about the significance of the tape deck in his teenage youth. Egerton-Warburton understands that, literally, anything can be art in this context, as such he filled the space with anything at all, and talked about it. By doing this he constructs only himself as an artist, only the myth of art. Gemma Watson's catalogue essay builds an idiosyncratic figure out of Egerton-Warburton's eclectic practice, from his mock chicken run through Melbourne to a bicycle trek into the depths of the West Australian wheatbelt. The piece adds some flavour to the series of interviews and essays that function more like resumes.

*Rounds* closely follows the PICA format for shows, its website is careful to advertise the career credibility of the exhibiting artists, a mark of quality assurance for the public.<sup>3</sup> If *Rounds* can be taken as a sign of things to come from Perth's up and coming art world, then we should expect more of the same. The history of success amongst Perth artists, from Howard Taylor to James Angus, has been a history of banality, a history that has most recently expressed itself in what Jess Hutchens calls an 'absence of art'.<sup>4</sup> Paradoxically, this is also the situation that enables Perth artists to master the contemporary art world, as they have a special insight into the absences that inform the most successful of contemporary artists. The city enables contemporary art because it has nothing to offer artists but success.

*Rounds* was at the Perth Institute of Contemporary Art from June 26 to August 25 2010. It included work by Neil Aldum, Rebecca Baumann, Tim Carter, Elise/Jurgen, Shannon Lyons, Bennett Miller, Sarah Rowbottam (curator) and George Egerton-Warburton.

1. Matthew Giles, ed. *The Rounds Project*, Exhibition catalogue (Perth, Australia: Perth Institute of Contemporary Art, 2010) and [www.theroundsproject.com](http://www.theroundsproject.com), accessed October 10, 2010.
2. Leigh Robb, 'Introduction: the Whole Picture' in *The Rounds Project*, Exhibition catalogue edited by Matthew Giles, (Perth, Australia: Perth Institute of Contemporary Art, 2010) 8–14.
3. [www.pica.org.au/index.php?1=Exhibitions++Archive&2=2010](http://www.pica.org.au/index.php?1=Exhibitions++Archive&2=2010), accessed 10 October, 2010.
4. Jess Hutchens, 'Sarah Rowbottam: Project Work' in *The Rounds Project*, Exhibition catalogue edited by Matthew Giles, (Perth, Australia: Perth Institute of Contemporary Art, 2010) 148–150.

# Performance in Translation

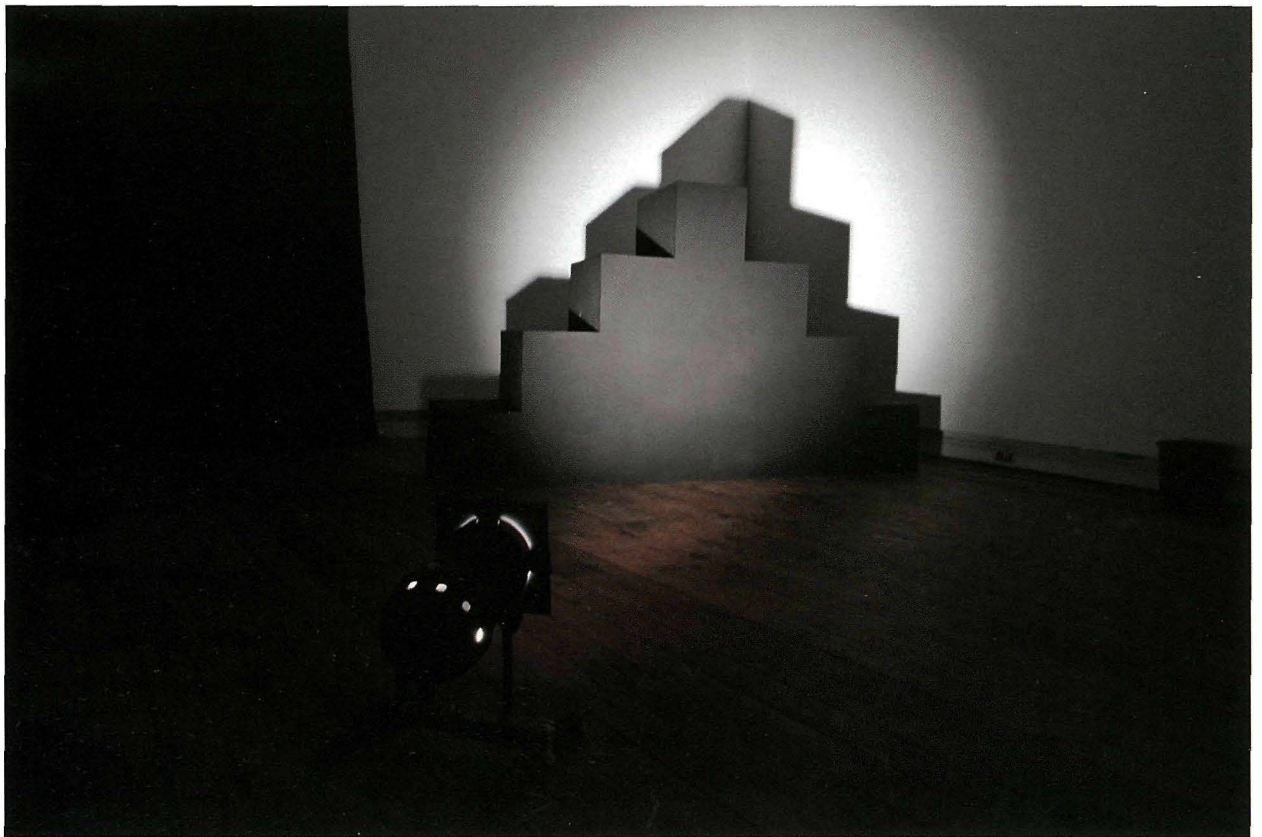
SUSAN GIBB

*The Man With The Hypnotic Eyes* at Locksmith Project Space marked the first solo exhibition by Frances Barrett following her 2009 collaboration with comedian Nick Sun—*Ship of Fools* at Pact Theatre and Firstdraft gallery—and her ongoing work as a member of Brown Council. Building upon concerns evident in this collaborative work, *The Man With The Hypnotic Eyes* furthered Barrett's investigation into the language of performance as it occurs across visual art and theatre through the installation of a 'theatre set' and the enactment of a 'performance' within a gallery context.

By boarding up Locksmith's front window, Barrett concealed the exhibition's contents and created a heightened sense of anticipation for an encounter with a live body in performance. However, upon entering the exhibition space the viewer was confronted by a simple set up of objects: a flashing theatre light, a pair of tap shoes, a bucket of piss, a stack of posters featuring a photo on one side and a text by Diana Smith on the other, and an imposing shape—a stepped pyramid—that was lit in rhythmic succession. These objects were left static and encountered as such, unless by the off chance another viewer was caught in the process of using them to live out the seven acts of performance detailed in Smith's text.

Most notable, however, was the absence of the artist's body, something particularly felt at the opening where it had been advertised that Barrett would perform. A past performance by the artist was vaguely alluded to by a photo that captured a shadowy figure crossing the pyramidal shape, the instruction in Smith's text to imagine what had already happened and the traces of human activity—scuffed footprints and accumulated piss. While these objects referenced historical models of documentation and residual traces of performance art, the invitation for the viewer to participate, as indicated in Smith's text, confounded their authorship and value, challenging how we were to engage with them.

Barrett's 'no show' at the opening was, as she later reiterated, her performance. It was a deliberate gesture designed to foreground the objects and their reception. Though on opening night this action was met by a mix of confusion as to where Barrett was, an enthusiastic





interaction with the objects and a more distant observation, together these responses opened up definitions that surround performance in visual arts and theatre. Careful tensions between artist/director/actor, ephemeral action/script, sculpture/prop and installation/set were established. This exposed the process involved in the translation of actions and objects of performance across disciplines.

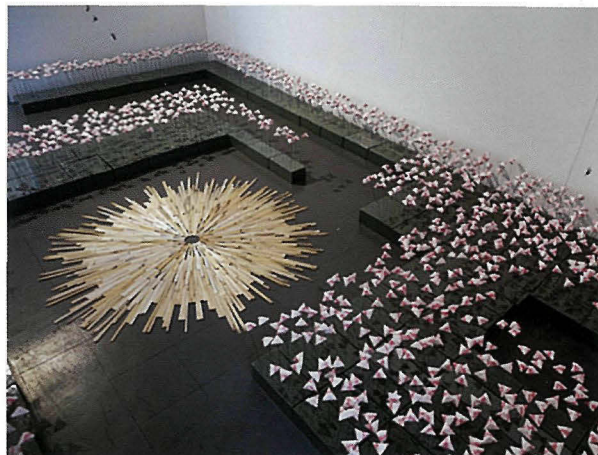
The presentation of performance within visual arts contexts, particularly in the format of an exhibition, poses many questions. How is a performance work best represented in such contexts? Can its intentions be adequately served in an exhibition that has a duration beyond its own? Does the residue of the performance speak for itself or is supporting documentation required? What of the current trend of restaging performance works? How does this alter the value placed on the ephemeral action? And, how do we read performances that transgress the gallery or the theatre? These questions are increasingly pertinent due to the significant use of performance by contemporary art practitioners across disciplines and a resurgence of institutional interest in historical works of this medium.

While not providing definitive answers to these questions, *The Man With The Hypnotic Eyes* successfully created a space that opened up to questioning the conventions of performance as they occur in visual arts and theatre. By playing out their intersections, similarities and resulting tensions, Barrett's project spoke to how these two forms can distort and renew each other. At a time when theatre is often deemed to be dead while visual arts occupies an 'expanded sphere', hybridisation remains relevant to negotiating our understanding of contemporary performance practices.

Frances Barrett's *The Man With The Hypnotic Eyes* was held at Locksmith Project Space, Sydney from 16 to 25 September, 2010.

PREVIEWS





## Forthcoming Exhibitions

### NSW

**NOMAD** | JAE HOON LEE  
29 October—11 December  
4A Centre for Contemporary Asian Art  
181—187 Hay Street, Sydney  
[www.4a.com.au](http://www.4a.com.au)

**DAVID HAINES**  
12 November—24 December  
BREENSPACE  
289 Young Street, Waterloo  
[www.breenspace.com](http://www.breenspace.com)

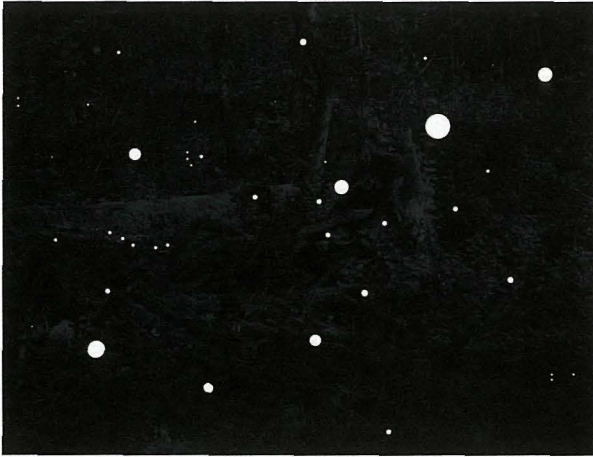
**FREE ART** | ALEX GAWRONSKI  
18 November—11 December  
Peloton  
19 & 25 Meagher Street, Chippendale  
[www.peloton.net.au](http://www.peloton.net.au)

**PAN PAN / MAYDAY MAYDAY** | SAMUEL VILLALOBOS  
18 November—18 December  
GrantPirrie Window  
86 George Street, Redfern  
[www.grantpirrie.com](http://www.grantpirrie.com)

**SLAB** | PAUL SAINT  
19 November—19 December  
Artspace  
43-51 Cowper Wharf Road, Woolloomooloo  
[www.artspace.org.au](http://www.artspace.org.au)

**JAMES McMAHON DALE**  
26 November—16 December  
Gallery 8  
12 Argyle Place, Millers Point  
[www.galleryeight.com.au](http://www.galleryeight.com.au)

Above left: Arlo Mountford, *The Triumph*, 2010, HD digital animation still.  
Above right: Siying Zhou, *Phoenix Tails and Flies*, 2008.



**HELENA LESLIE**

1—19 December  
*Firstdraft*  
 116—118 Chalmers Street, Surry Hills  
[www.firstdraftgallery.com](http://www.firstdraftgallery.com)

**THE GHOST SHOW** | ROBYN BACKEN, MATT GLENN, DANIEL KOJTA, WADE MARYNOWSKY, KATE MURPHY and EUGENIA RASKOPOULOS

curated by DANIEL MUDIE CUNNINGHAM  
 4 December—29 January  
 Hazelhurst Regional Gallery & Arts Centre  
 782 Kingsway, Gymea  
[www.hazelhurst.com.au](http://www.hazelhurst.com.au)

**ANNA JOHN**

9—18 December  
 Locksmith Project Space  
 6 Botany Rd, Alexandria  
[www.locksmithprojectspace.com](http://www.locksmithprojectspace.com)

**UNE FETE DANS LE PAPER** | PENELOPE BENTON and ALEX CLAPHAM

11—16 January  
 The Paper Mill  
 1 Angel Place, Sydney  
[www.thepapermill.org.au](http://www.thepapermill.org.au)

**TERRITORY TIME** | AMINA McCONVELL, CATHERINE McAVOY, REBECCA ABON, SIMON COOPER and SIYING ZHOU

20 January—6 February  
 MOP  
 2/39 Abercrombie Street, Chippendale  
[www.mop.org.au](http://www.mop.org.au)

**PAINTINGS** | DANE LOVETT

2—26 March  
 Chalk Horse  
 56 Cooper Street, Surry Hills  
[www.chalkhorse.com.au](http://www.chalkhorse.com.au)

**NATURAL DIGRESSIONS** | PENELOPE CAIN, KIRSTEN FARRELL, ELLIS HUTCH, WARATAH LAHY, ROSE MONTEBELLO, AL MUNRO and ERICA SECCOMBE

Curated by YOLANDE NORRIS  
 8 March - 8 April  
 UTS Gallery  
 Level 4, 702 Harris Street, Ultimo  
[www.utsgallery.uts.edu.au](http://www.utsgallery.uts.edu.au)

**ACT**

**BLAZE 5** | VARIOUS EMERGING ARTISTS WORKING IN CANBERRA

25 February—26 March  
 Canberra Contemporary Art Space  
 Gorman House Arts Centre, Ainslie Avenue, Braddon  
[www.ccas.com.au](http://www.ccas.com.au)

**QUEENSLAND**

**CRAWL 2: THREE MOVES** | FRANCIS ALŶS, ARLO MOUNTFORD and GEMMA SMITH

curated by ELLIE BUTTROSE and BREE RICHARDS  
 13 November—4 December  
 Boxcopy  
 Level 1, Watson Brothers Building  
 129 Margaret Street, Brisbane  
[www.boxcopy.org](http://www.boxcopy.org)

**MAS** | JAMES & ELEANOR AVERY

24 November—11 December  
 Ryan Renshaw Gallery  
 137 Warry Street, Fortitude Valley  
[www.ryanrenshaw.com.au](http://www.ryanrenshaw.com.au)

**CHRONICLE OF THE NEW HUMAN ORGANISM** | IAN HAIG

27 November—26 February  
 Institute of Modern Art  
 420 Brunswick Street, Fortitude Valley  
[www.ima.org.au](http://www.ima.org.au)

Above left: Maschi Fontana, *Secret Societies 1*, 2010, Giclee print.

Above right: Lisa Reihana, *Te Po O Matariki*, 2010, video still.

Facing page: Eleanor and James Avery, *Harfang Noir*, 2010, laminate and plywood. Photo: the artists.

**SANDRA SELIG**

18 November—4 December  
Milani Gallery  
54 Logan Road, Woolloongabba  
[www.milanigallery.com.au](http://www.milanigallery.com.au)

**SA****SOFT CORN** | MATT HUPPATZ, LYNNE SANDERSON and guests.

2—18 December  
FELTspace  
12 Compton Street, Adelaide  
[www.feltspace.org](http://www.feltspace.org)

**STOP(THE)GAP/ MIND(THE)GAP: INTERNATIONAL INDIGENOUS**

**ART IN MOTION** | REBECCA BELMORE, DANA CLAXTON,  
ALAN MICHELSON, NOVA PAUL, LISA REIHANA and WARWICK  
THORNTON

curated by BRENDA L. CROFT  
24 February—21 April  
Samstag Museum of Art  
55 North Terrace, Adelaide  
[www.unisa.edu.au/samstagmuseum](http://www.unisa.edu.au/samstagmuseum)

**WORK FOR NOW** | JOHN BARBOUR

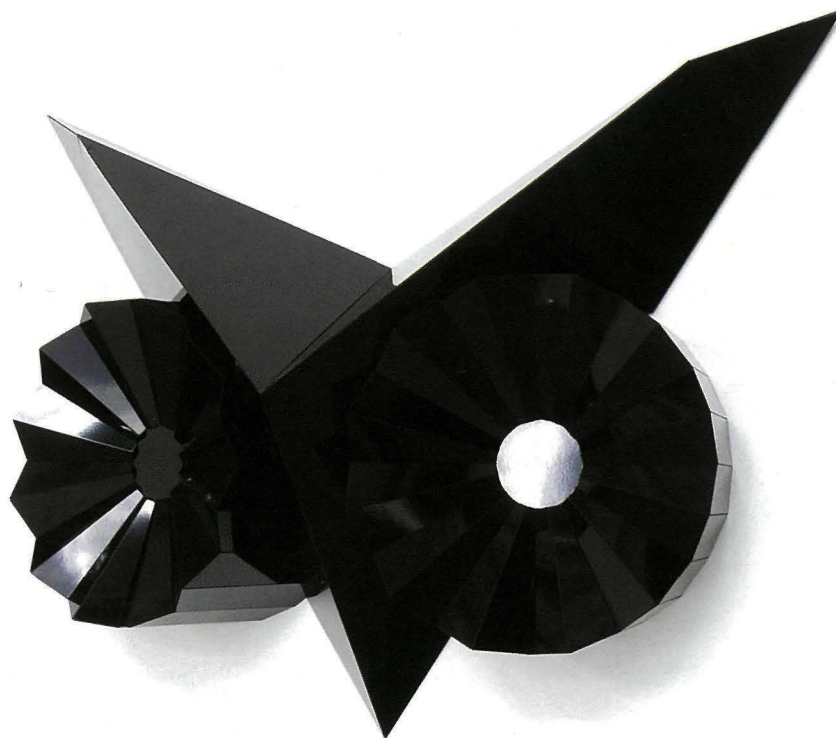
11 November—11 December  
Experimental Art Foundation  
The Lion Arts Centre, North Terrace (West End), Adelaide  
[www.eaf.asn.au](http://www.eaf.asn.au)

**WA****RISING LOTUS** | MASCHI FONTANA (TOM MÜLLER & JEAN-THOMAS VANNOTTI)

29 January—20 March  
Fremantle Arts Centre  
1 Finnerty Street, Fremantle  
[www.fac.org.au](http://www.fac.org.au)

**GEORGE EGERTON-WARBURTON**

12 November—3 December  
Goddard de Fiddes  
31 Malcolm Street, West Perth  
[www.goddarddefiddes.com.au](http://www.goddarddefiddes.com.au)





## VICTORIA

**INNOVATORS 3** | MATTHEW GARDINER, WANDA GILLESPIE, LAURA WOODWARD, WILLIAM MACKRELL and CLARE PEAKE & TANYA SHULTZ

13 November—12 December  
Linden

26 Acland Street, St Kilda  
[www.lindenarts.org](http://www.lindenarts.org)

**ENDLESS DAYS** | VIN RYAN

18 November—23 December  
Anna Pappas Gallery  
2—4 Carlton Street, Prahran  
[www.annapappasgallery.com](http://www.annapappasgallery.com)

**IN PURSUIT OF A STATE OF UNCERTAINTY** | BARBARA KNEZEVIC

26 November—18 December  
Kings ARI  
Level 1 1/171 King Street, Melbourne  
[www.kingsartistrun.com.au](http://www.kingsartistrun.com.au)

**EXPERIMENTS ON PLANT HYBRIDISATION** | MARIAN DREW, JUAN FORD, MATTHEW HUNT, MAKESHIFT, ANDRE PIGUET, HANNA TAI, CLAIRE WATSON and KENT WILSON

27th November—18th December  
Dianne Tanzer Gallery  
108—110 Gertrude Street, Fitzroy  
[www.diannetanzergallery.net.au](http://www.diannetanzergallery.net.au)

**MONUMENTAL EFFECT** | curated by CLAIRE LAMBE and ELVIS RICHARDSON

30 November—19 December  
Death Be Kind  
Upstairs @ The Alderman  
134 Lygon Street, Brunswick  
[www.deathbekind.com](http://www.deathbekind.com)

## TAKURO KOTAKA

28 December—8 January  
Seventh Gallery  
155 Gertrude Street, Fitzroy  
[www.seventhgallery.org](http://www.seventhgallery.org)

## TASMANIA

**THROUGH THE GUISE OF THINKING** | BILL HART

11 February—13 March  
CAST  
27 Tasma Street, North Hobart  
[www.castgallery.org](http://www.castgallery.org)

**CURTAIN PLACE** | LLAWELLA LEWIS

26 November—18 December  
Inflight ARI  
100 Goulburn Street, Hobart  
[www.inflightart.com.au](http://www.inflightart.com.au)

## NEW ZEALAND

**HOOP** | KATE WALKER

7 March—3 April  
Square<sup>2</sup> City Gallery Wellington  
Civic Square, Wellington  
[www.citygallery.org.nz](http://www.citygallery.org.nz)

**AN AMERICAN INDEX OF THE HIDDEN AND UNFAMILIAR**

TARYN SIMON  
18 December—6 March  
Govett Brewster Art Gallery  
Corner of Queen and King Streets, New Plymouth  
[www.govettbrewster.com](http://www.govettbrewster.com)

Above left: Taryn Simon, *Cryopreservation*, *Cryonics Institute*, *Clinton Township*, *Michigan*, 2007, c-type photograph.

Above right: Penelope Benton, *Rasberries and Rosewater*, 2010, c-type photograph.

Next Wave

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Image: *Dachshund U.N.* by Next Wave Kickstart 2009 artist Bennett Miller, part of the 2010 Next Wave Festival. Photo by Jorge de Araujo.

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Communities  
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Image: Heath Franco, *PARKLAND (still)* 2010

The logo for ARIPEDIA features the word "ARIPEDIA" in a bold, black, serif font. The letters "R" and "I" are positioned on a red, irregularly shaped background that resembles a map of Australia. The letters "A", "P", "E", "D", and "I" are placed above, below, and to the right of this red shape, respectively.

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**ARIPedia** is an Artist Run Initiative history project. We are trying to build a comprehensive history of ARI activity in Australia.

If you are, or have been involved in ARIs and would like to submit content to this project, please email [savearihierarchy@crawl.net.au](mailto:savearihierarchy@crawl.net.au).

The Crawl Team

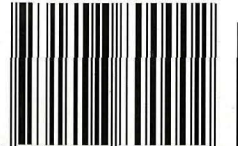
ARIPedia  
[wiki.crawl.net.au](http://wiki.crawl.net.au)

ISSUE 18 EXPECTATION  
... coming Autumn 2011





ISSN 14488000



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