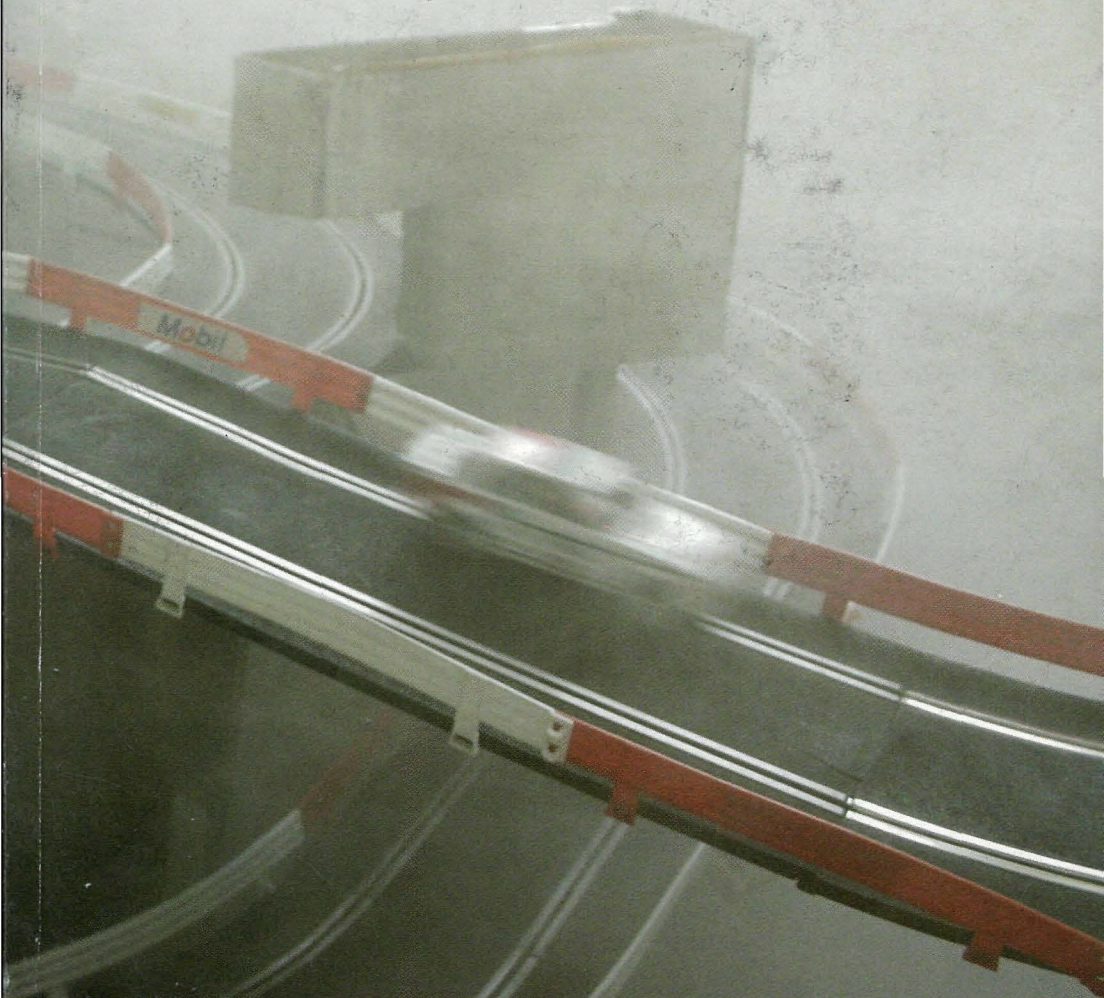


r u n w a y

issue five: escape



six dollars

r u n w a y

runway is an independent, artist-run initiative published twice a year.

Editorial Board: Matina Bourmas, Jaki Middleton, David Lawrey, Rachel Scott and Emma White.

Cover image: David Lawrey, installation detail from *I can control something out of control*, 2004.

Contributors: David Lawrey, Jonathan Hochman, Justin Miles, Iakovos Amperidis, Penny Cain, Ella Barclay, Tim Gregory, Sarah Cashman, Nathan Dunne, Peter Volich, Rachel Scott, Huong Ngo, Soda_Jerk, Matina Bourmas and Damien Arkins.

Special thanks to Veronica Scott, Soda_Jerk, Firstdraft, West Space, Rocketart and the colouring in people.

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runway is supported by the Australian Government, through the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory body; The National Association for the Visual Arts, with financial assistance from the New South Wales Government Ministry for the Arts; and Firstdraft Inc.

Penny Cain's artwork *Camouflage* was produced with the assistance of Experimenta through the New Visions Commissions.

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Next Issue:

WATCHING October 2005

Perception, mass media, surveillance, voyeurism and the gaze ... Issue six invites artists, curators and writers to consider the theme of 'watching'. Submissions are due July 1 2005.



firstdraft

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ISSN 1448-8000

Edition 500

r u n w a y

i s s u e f i v e

april 2005

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Editorial

Matina Bourmas

In *Cinemanía*, a documentary following the lives of five ‘cinephiliacs’ in New York (watching on average four to five films a day), one of the people is quoted as saying “it’s better than sex, it’s better than love, it’s beyond obsession, I don’t know what it is, there’s no word for it”.

Of all the various art forms, cinema is most commonly used as a medium for escapism. Just like the person in *Cinemanía*, I watch films with the intention of losing myself within them.

Before seeing the film *Lost in Translation*, I had developed a particular image of it, which was based on other people’s perceptions. This film, however, did not live up to my expectations, as I felt that they had romantacised the nature of Charlotte and Bob’s relationship and I was unable to identify with these characters and their choice of escape. While the film traverses many seductive avenues of escape, I found the central relationship between these two characters problematic, and at no time was I able to lose myself in the luxury of escapism. On the other hand, films such as: *Pretty in Pink*, *Gadjo Dilo*, *American Movie* and, more recently, *The Man Without a Past*, offer me a reliable opportunity to escape because—at least to some extent—I can identify with the main characters.

Unlike cinema, I do not expect contemporary art to provide me with an escape. Despite relating strongly to the *idea* of it, both through the interactivity and the apocalyptic atmosphere created, David Lawrey’s installation *I can control something out of control* does not encourage escape *per se*. Rather, the work uses these elements to evoke and sustain contemplation and consideration on a number of levels.

Contributors in issue five have revealed the naivety inherent in believing in the possibility of escape, via such means as: emancipating oneself from the art market, creating alternative possibilities through fictional fantasies and contemplating unrequited desires for a future self. Seen in this light, I am forced to admit that my expectations of *Lost in Translation* (or any other film) providing me with an escape, are also naïve and unrealistic. For escape is essentially a romantic ideal, accessible through the suspension of disbelief and the activation of imagination.



still from the opening sequence of *Lost in Translation* written and directed by Sofia Coppola



Don't get too close (to my fantasy)

Jonathan Hochman and Justin Miles











AFTERLIFE

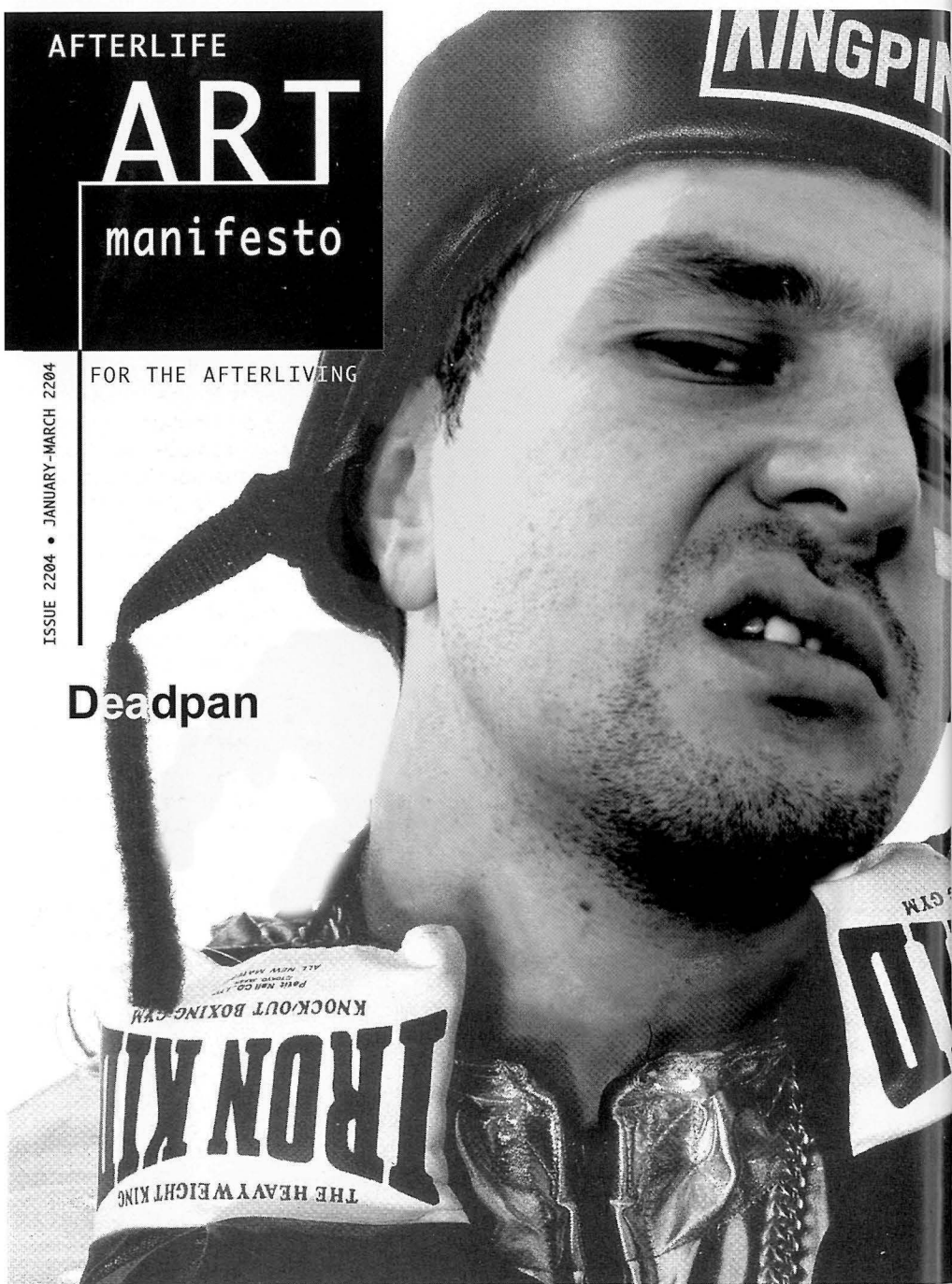
ART

manifesto

ISSUE 2204 • JANUARY-MARCH 2204

FOR THE AFTERLIVING

Deadpan



Welcome to the Terrorknown

Iakovos Amperidis

Produced and constrained by its own description, the object has nowhere to go but to reflect upon its own description conceptually.

Ian Burn¹

To survive as an artist, one must align one's practice with a specific set of thematic ideas. Whilst these concepts may vary over time, there is a necessity to surrender one's art production to the trials and tribulations of the most prominent discourses circulating in and around the art-world. Taking the form of variable terminologies, contemporary art thrives by an artist's ability to maintain a sustained individualised ideal in a form that most seductively becomes an object of desire. In short, an artist is just a pusher of their product, and the ability to art-speak can only aid in the fine art of persuasion. Nothing new or wrong in this fact; all artists are, and always have been, bound to the obligatory parameters and circumstantial responsibilities relative to their professional social context. Even voices of discontent in the form of socio-political critique are accountable as agents of their own distilled delusions, which is evidently desirable to capital industry. Consequently, there is no escape from the art-world as an *industry*. At best, challenges to this inescapable predicament merely result in artists becoming the *bullshit artists* they hate. So, rather than seek to find an escape route by way of shadowboxing my own propensity for bullshit, this essay welcomes you to my jingle.

Concrete Jingle

I have no other purpose than to further penetrate myself into a specific lineage and context, namely Australian art history and its related institutions. Within this context my aspiration and desperation to emerge is paramount to my survival as an artist: I must become ever more professional, and must align myself on par with the icons and ideals this industry and nation support. I will aggressively promote all those promoting their best interests in so far as I get some in the process. For instance, every contribution in this publication by an artist will inadvertently be co-opted by the editorial board and the microcosm through which both they and I are afforded representation: the emerging art scene in Australia. In exchange for representation, I will adopt a bureaucratic stance, pretending to be a particular kind of artist from a particular context. Despite appearances, I am completely dependent on this pretence for my survival as an *artist* Australian emerging artist.

I am a malleable subject that shifts and changes with the dominant values inherent in current governmental arts policies and the various global corporations that perpetuate this nation's economy and subsequently the art market. By way of induction into the larger cultural infrastructure of Australia, I must harness the various codes of conduct explicit in the eligibility requirements for financial gain and support. As an unwritten law, I gain entrance into the industry upon

completion of my undergraduate studies and/or during postgraduate studies, where I am initiated into the art-world as an apprentice. A 5-6 year window of opportunity is the time I'm given to harness the skills required in becoming a professional. With rising prospects on the horizon, I become pedagogically aligned with governmental and/or private institutions that assist and, more importantly, assess me in terms of my commercial and institutional use-value.

Fashioned as the art world's proletariat, I'm often seen to be representing a communal collective—a subterranean mass free of ideology, censorship and influence—associated with words such as independent, self-funded, non-profit and artist-run. These words produce an image of autonomy, marginality, and subversiveness, though nothing could be further from the truth. I have only ever had one objective, and this has nothing to do with providing Australian culture with an alternative, neither is it to champion or revolt against the dominant institutions with a collective counterculture, but rather to steady myself into professional consent. Thus, what may appear as a collective plight to create excellence and to raise the benchmark in Australian art is rather an antagonistic plight amongst a disparate cluster of individuals trying to gain access to, or hold a monopoly on, the limited bandwidth of opportunities available in the Australian arts sector. Acting as a cloaked rite of passage, the judicial rituals I engage in therefore act to sober me up for a long hard slog in an industry that is fiercely competitive.

Battle Cry

A great example of the sobriety needed to be a sincere opportunist became all the more apparent during my examination for a Master of Visual Arts at Sydney College of the Arts in 2003. The examination consisted of two prominent figures in the industry who both repeatedly stated that the art world is a very, very competitive place; it would seem I had no idea of this and should change my attitude accordingly. Furthermore, I was likened to a cowboy, and was threatened by this analogy in so far as cowboys are known to come and go and thus never gain a permanent foot in the industry. This essay is therefore testimony to the fact that there is much to learn from an art education: I learned how to take shit.

What ignited this career counselling session was my resistance to answering certain questions that seemed to reinstate my final project through the discursive preferences of a particular dumb-struck professional. Basically, I was to give an effective sales pitch on demand and to paraphrase already answered questions. My “less than candid approach” to these demands was a reluctance to tell this person what they were getting paid to hear and promote. At that point in time there was a personal need to reclaim my six-year long academic studies from being reduced to a marketing spiel with jargonised catchphrases. I believed there was more to what I was doing than meeting aggressive marketing standards by way of self-promotion, though obviously I was mistaken, and I have learned an invaluable lesson from this experience. The hard-earned right to give somebody sound advice in the guise of a reality check—such as those exercised

by my authorities—in this instance was nothing but a rhetorical gesture of hierarchy in its most hallucinogenic state. Inadvertently, this examination was also another brilliant revelation about how arts professionals position themselves on the phantasmagorical ladder of professionalism. I learned that this is precisely the trapdoor I must pass through in order to make art that will make it. Despite criticisms and threats, I successfully passed (through) and have now begun climbing the same ladder they are on. I am now, more than ever, an emerging artist come neo-professional.

Becoming Gladmoore

In *Australian Art Collector* issue 30, I appear on the glossy front cover standing submerged in clear blue shallow water, and according to the title preceding my name I'm apparently "at the wavefront"². Given these few key visual metaphors one can imply a number of things: 1. I have risen from the depths of emerging art obscurity and anonymity into mainstream professional success. 2. The perfect wave has come round to catch me, guaranteeing me direct and up front commercial appeal. 3. The reference to waves and ocean water act as an extended promotional tool for my "dangerously sublime situations"³. 4. This is just another nationalistic campaign of an Australian cultural identity in its most accessible form 5. I am the current fad, the token young new-media artist hotly pursued by key commercial galleries.

A combination of all the above readings is possible, though the desired interpretation is that I'm at the forefront of a collective movement in Australian art and that this

natural force hitting the shores of the market is the sublime new-media force of I, who is readily available for consumption. This transparent sales promotion comes as no surprise considering Australian Art Collector is tailored to the art market. What happens when I'm represented in a high-end commercial art magazine and the Australia Council Support for the Arts Handbook? My presence produces a captivating façade capable of luring artists into a false sense of hope in so far as they see fit to mimic and position themselves within the narrative of an emerging artist going from rags to riches, from OZCO to Australian Art Collector, from a state of dependency to a state of autonomy and, more importantly, overnight. Clearly this is bullshit, but it is the language of hierarchy, the language of my industry, a language I am now all too familiar with. So be it, if I weren't getting co-opted to promote this fairytale, it would've been someone else.

In issue 55 of the Australian art journal *Eyeline*, Kate Rhodes' article about me, titled *I am somewhere in the city*⁴, points to one of the most common representations I'm given. Supposedly, I am an authenticated conveyor of urban culture and the 'eyes on our streets'⁵. The streets and urban environment are symbols of an implied authentic experience and engagement with sub-cultural activity. Sub-cultural associations suggest a street-smart urbanity, down with the scene, finger on the pulse types. Continuing on, Rhodes suggests I am 'forming a critical mass of sub-culture-exploring'⁶ and that my friends, Gladwell, the Kingpins and '...others like them have a lot to tell us about the state of art-making in Australia...'⁷ [italics mine]. Indeed I do, I am telling you all that the imagination

of the art industry is exhausted with redundancy and depends heavily on me in order to add value and freshness to boring dumb-ass professional art. Therefore, I become a representative of a 'zeitgeist'⁸ who will produce the goods on cultural, sexual, and political difference. In this instance the 'sub-cultural-exploring' activity I am engaged in, is more accurately a means to an end for the art industry, as sub-cultural-*exploiting*. In response, I become a self-delegated rep for marginalised groups, either by direct identification with a marginalised group or by way of ethnography, seeking out the marginal in order to capitalise on it. Understandably, I endorse terminologies, ideologies, media and aesthetics that bequeath my practice with accelerated advancement, difference, ambiguity and, more specifically, contemporaneousness, a certification that my professional intent is sincere in satisfying consumer standards for excellence, diversity and fresh produce.

Darkside Of The Maul

No matter how hard I try, I am the very thing I feared becoming; I am the medium of this message, the art industry in motion, run of the mill, 'cause for the mill I keep running. I had to kill several naïve ideals in my emerging state—beheaded the fuckers one by one— to arrive at this cornerstone, but now I have nothing left to say. I animate myself through others in order to keep the attention away from the fact that there is nothing but this deadpan dialect reverberating in my head. I hold onto this psychodrama from fear of failure, I keep hearing voices, they're rambling on and on with a bible-bashing puritan academic art style, saying that a

far more critical strategy to the subject in this essay:

'... would have necessitated a considered response to world events, and the conflict of cultures that has climaxed in the shameful fiasco of the US invasion of Iraq and Australia's involvement with it'⁹, and "would have reiterated as well the contemporary networked identity of global contemporary culture and its inherent complexities"¹⁰ which could be "achieved by art that resists the demands of the market."¹¹ "Instead we often see a situation dominated by exclusion, obsessed with hierarchies, infected by power and hindered by unimaginative and unhelpful art criticism."¹² "We must not ignore that which is divisive"¹³, instead "we need to develop new models"¹⁴ which are "more easily accessible and perhaps comparable—that is not to suggest that the excellent examples chosen were either inadequate or inappropriate,"¹⁵ after all "someone has to keep the wheels turning."¹⁶ But "it tells us more about the public relations industry than it does about aesthetics"¹⁷ and so "this is not a criticism, but is merely to suggest that,"¹⁸ "it's the cowards way out"¹⁹ and "that's how he deals with life."²⁰

And I thank God for this internal delirium I am having, 'cos I know they're all absolutely right, in order to survive in this industry sometimes you have to seduce your audience into believing that your own bullshit is for the greater good, and not just to push your own product.

Now that's progress.

- 1 Ian Burn, *Uttered Objects/Reflected Words*, Art & Text, issue 41, 1992, p.73.
- 2 *Shaun Gladwell: at the wavefront*, Australian Art Collector, Issue 30, Gadfly Media, 2004, front cover
- 3 Peter Hill, *State of original cine*, Sydney Morning Herald, Spectrum, January 8-9, 2005 p. 16
- 4 Kate Rhodes, *TV Moore: I Am Somewhere In The City*, Eyeline 55, Eyeline Publishing Ltd, 2004, p. 36-38
- 5 *ibid*, p. 36
- 6 *ibid*
- 7 *ibid*
- 8 *ibid*
- 9 Adam Geczy, *Untitled*, Broadsheet, Volume 33, no 3, 2004, p. 53
- 10 Alex Garowski, *No Big Picture*, Broadsheet, Volume 33, no 3, 2004, p. 49
- 11 David Lawrey, *Editorial*, Runway, Issue Four: Work, Firstdraft Inc, p. 5
- 12 Lisa Kelly, *Dead Freight (or what we told the inquiry)*, Eyeline 48, Eyeline Publishing Ltd, 2002, p. 48
- 13 Patrick Swann, *Patrick Swann on How Things Work*, Runway, Issue Four: Work, Firstdraft Inc, p.6
- 14 Nikos Papastergiadis, *Brad Buckley: The Politics of Art*, Catalogue for exhibition *Sub Rosa*, Cast Gallery, 2001, p. 3
- 15 Nicholas Tsoutas, *Masters report for Iakovos Amperidis*, June 2004
- 16 Peter Timms, *What's ~~Wrong~~ Wrong with Contemporary Art?*, University of New South Wales Press Ltd, 2004, p. 51
- 17 John McDonald, *New Era? Old Dilemma*, Sydney Morning Herald, Spectrum, January 29-30, 2005 p.19
- 18 Rex Butler, *A Secret History of Australian Art*, A Craftman House Book Pty Ltd, 2002, p. 62
- 19 Peter Timms, *Worshipping Things*, Broadsheet, Volume 33, no 3, 2004, p. 43
- 20 *ibid*

Image: *Kingpins in the Afterlife*, Courtesy of Iakovos Amperidis.



Camouflage #1, production stills, 2005

Penny Cain



Teen Flee

Ella Barclay

When I was fourteen, inspired by Maggie O'Connell on a recent episode of *Northern Exposure*, I wrote a letter to myself to be opened on my twenty-fourth birthday.

At 174cm and 90kg, the recently post-pubescent Ella Barclay was no Lolita, and I knew it. The letter was a kind of spell, an attempt to will glamour onto my future self.

In the last few years it has been a cause of anxiety – I couldn't remember what I had written only that it had been intended as some kind of get-your-shit-together slap-up. I was scared the letter would indicate that I had indeed become the twenty-four year old, big mouthed, unaccomplished bum I had tried to avoid.

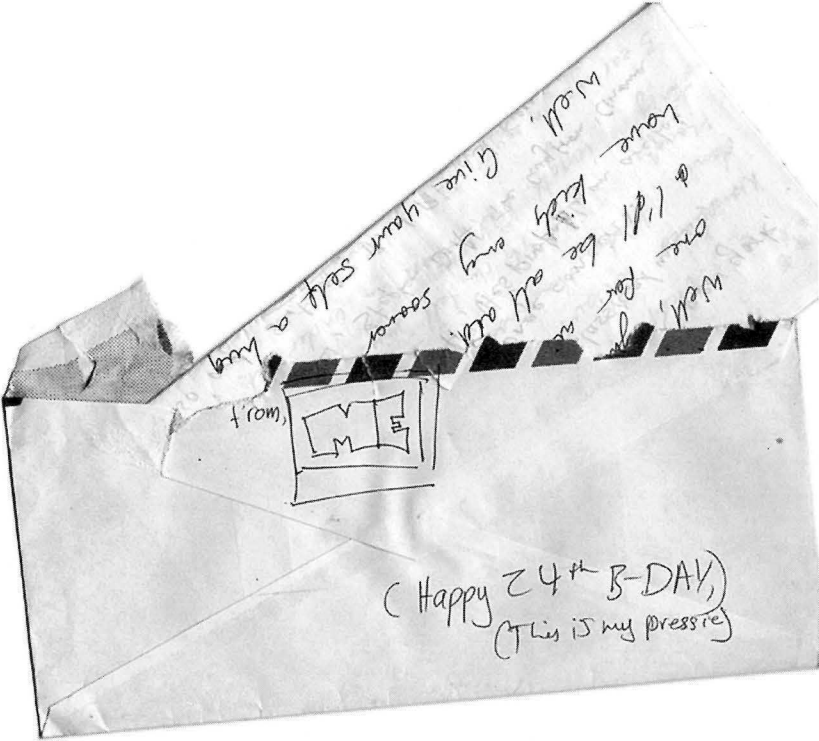
Patience has never been my thing, so, a few months before my twenty-fourth birthday, equipped with a scanner and a bottle of red, I broke it out.

 Toll-free
Air Mail
Par Avion

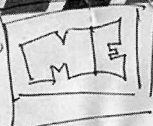
- get
it, lol

Ella Rose Barclay,

DO NOT OPEN UNTIL
7 APRIL 2005



Well, I love
kiddo & I'll be
all over you for
me
Give your self a hug
sawyer

from, 

(Happy 24th B-DAY)
(This is my pressie)

Tuesday, the 5th
of September,
1995.

Dear Ella,

Hi! Well, it's me, well, you, this is
so weird, oh well, that's me I guess. Well, I'm
14, (incase you can't be stuffed adding it up,
do you still hate maths?)

Well, to give you a bit of a reminder,
I'm living in Melbourne, I'm going to M.I.G.'S
I'm good friends with Katrina Grant, Karen Newton
Kowan Mangan, Catherine Chisblm, Chrissie Demas
and that's about it, oh, and Sarah Davidson)
They're my Melbourne friends. I have to
move to Sydney. I really don't want to.

I wish you could tell me what will happen in
Sydney, that you could jump back in time, or
I could jump forward. Is your writing
still this bad? They're ~~a~~ about to start
Nuclear testing in the south Pacific & the
cause of my first protest, wow! Melrose Place,
The X Files, Liquid TV, Denton, Absolutely Fabulous,
Frontline and Roseanne are my favourite shows
at in 1995, they would have all been axed by 2005 though ~~DD~~

* * * is that how you write it? I've always
wandered about that. I'm fat, I can't
denie fat, I'm not that worried about it
though. I'm 174 cm tall, my hair is shoulder
~~length~~ length and I have an under cut. I have
3 earrings in my right ear and 2 in my left.

I have 3 pairs of favoured shoes, Fruit DM's, ~~Face~~
(peach & plum)
face boots \$ Bottle Green
(Rocencrate Converse
Guit d'instien) (Socrates & Aristotle)

well, I ♥ movies, the best ~~storie~~ movie
this year, so far is Immortal Beloved.

✱ My favourite actors are Gary Oldman and
abunch of others. I like, Enya, Suzanne Vega,
Offspring & Green Day.

So, where are you? I hope by now you are
a thin, well accomplished actress. Please
don't let me down on this one, PLEASE.
I've wanted this since I was 8. I may seem very
naive and foolish when I say this but I have
wanted ~~to~~ nothing more than ~~to be an actress~~
since I was eight. It is my life, and it will be, I'm not
going to ~~see~~ screw this one up. (have I?) please say
no.

I hope you're living the good life in New York, indulging in Art, theatre, classical music, movies, food and punk/grunge concerts. Have you met Stephen Dorff? (He's probably an asshole, I know)

~~to~~ Johnny Galecki, Stephen Dorff, The Guy from 'Cinema Paradiso' and part of Brad Pitt and Keenan Reeves are who I think are ~~the~~ hot now, but but the time you read this, half of them will be 40! (eww)

Now we should talk about Richard Irvine, I was totally infatrated with him for $1\frac{1}{4}$ years, (don't tell me you've forgotten) Well, he seemed nice when I saw him, (3.1.94) - It was a while ago. Yeah, well, *If you're a no-hoper, it's not too late, get out there and get a career in acting. For me and you, for us.

* If your a Mathematician, Scientist, doctor, etc. **YOUR A VERY STUPID!!!** - I mean it.

~~* If you're~~
* My worst night mare would be if you were married and living in the suburbs, **BIG MISTAKE, NO EXCUSES!!!**

Don't say I don't know what I'm talking about
* If your living ^{not married} _{so} with Stephen Dorff or etc. and have been in at least 1 decent movie, then **I DU!!!** P.T.O

Well, you better start writing
one row when your 34, god,
& I'll be all old. I don't want to
have kids any sooner than then.

Well, Give your self a hug
from me, no matter what.

and, Good bye for ever,
(oh!) ^{book}

allo
Rose

Barelay.

XOXOXO

XOXOXO.

my signature.

@Barelay

P.S. Never Give up.

P.SS. I believe in you more than anyone. remember that.
~~love you.~~

P.SSS. Now you'll probably have a dreamer where I came
back and get really angry at you for burning
out (or really proud for being a legend)
Malox.

I'm not an actress. I'm not attending classical music/punk/grunge concerts in New York with Stephen Dorff, and I'm still a bit fat. I thought that reading this letter would spin me into frenzy, towards sorting myself out, towards getting out.

I also hoped this letter would invigorate me with youthful idealism, fill me with courage and remind me of my calling, but as it turns out, I was just as fickle then as I am now.

Yes, I'm off-track, and it's a jolly good jaunt.

Ella Barclay's *Teen Flee* was exhibited as part of *Family Business* at The Wedding Circle in March.

Escape. 1.1 Breaking Up Epiphany: escape=transit

Tim Gregory

It is hard to ignore the 'scape' in 'escape.' Personally, it makes me want to draw connections between escape and landscape, to write a metaphoric piece on the nihilistic quality of escape and say, Caspar David Friedrich's landscape paintings. Too often when I explore poetic possibilities of words I ignore the visceral, the experiential. My experience of escape is hardly interesting, but in an attempt to ground escape, it will have to do.

Faced with the inevitable position of a partner breaking up, with me I find that I am invigorated with an uncharacteristic energy. I get restless and cut in, stating something mildly ironic, like 'It's ok, really, I'm ok with it,' and making for the door and walking home, for hours, one time even days. It is impossible to stop; it is an utter embrace of a primitive escape that knows nothing of buses or trains. Through this recurring event, I have come to the conclusion that escape is nothing more than physical movement. This has been long understood by gym junkies, gyrating nymphomaniacs and obsessive dog walkers alike, who escape their fucked-up lives through physical movement. It explains the reason why, when people want you to be emotionally moved they will ask you to sit down, and, no doubt, why my psychiatrist insists that I lie on a straight jacketing couch to analyse my failings.

Of course this is all bullshit, physical movement can be as much a release of emotion as it can be a suppression of it.

Transit might be a better definition of escape. The space of transit, being unconnected from place, offers us the best method of losing the ego, of unplugging the self. It offers a method to stop feeling, to stop hurting. This is why travel is often connected with escape; it is not the destination that matters (as any backpacker will tell you) but the journey—the state of transit. Likewise, the irony of travelling to 'find oneself' is universally accepted. My desire to walk as a method of escape is a desire to extend the state of transit.

A global world, of global communication, media, transport, economics, relationships, is a world embracing physical or virtual (hence vicarious) spaces of transit. Despite the global world, escape is still emphatically individual; collective escape, the unplugging of the human race, is still only a (my) dream.

Escape. 1.2: Bar Chicks and Office Workers

At the end of the first series of the British comedy *The Office*, Tim, a sales rep, decides to give up his dream of going to university to study psychology. Tim's dream is shelved because his manager offers him a minor promotion. The end of the second series sees Tim decline the position of Acting Manager, with this decision preserving his state (eternally) mid way up the corporate ladder.

Tim illustrates the impossibility of the romantic ideal of escape. He reflects what we should all be acutely aware of; escape happens to others, not us. Yet for some reason, we are completely obsessed with it, as if it holds the keys to a golden nirvana. Oddly enough, the simple question 'what are we escaping from?' is completely ignored or scoffed at, as if to treat escape as a verb is to somehow miss the point. We believe in artists who live fantasy lives of escapism as much as we do in Frodo and Middle Earth. Because we ache to believe that they have achieved complete escape, we are blinded to the fact that it is a fiction, and a superficial one at that.

There are those who acknowledge that modernity illustrates that pure escape is impossible. If you want to know about escape then look at Manet's *A Bar at the Folies-Bergère*. Manet captures the look of absence, disaffection and nihilism that I had assumed was purely a post-grunge phenomenon. The stare is of timeless absence, as if it's 125 year old model was literally there, standing behind the frame. Of course she would be paid (minimum wage) for her effort, or lack

of. She doesn't care (or know) if she is serving at a bar or modelling for an up and coming artist. She gazes out, not to her customer or to us, but to a Middle Earth. The lack of interaction is palpable and instantly recognisable despite, or perhaps because of, the crowded scene echoed in the mirror. She has been thinking about her complete escape for 125 years without ever coming close to it. She will never achieve it, and neither will we.

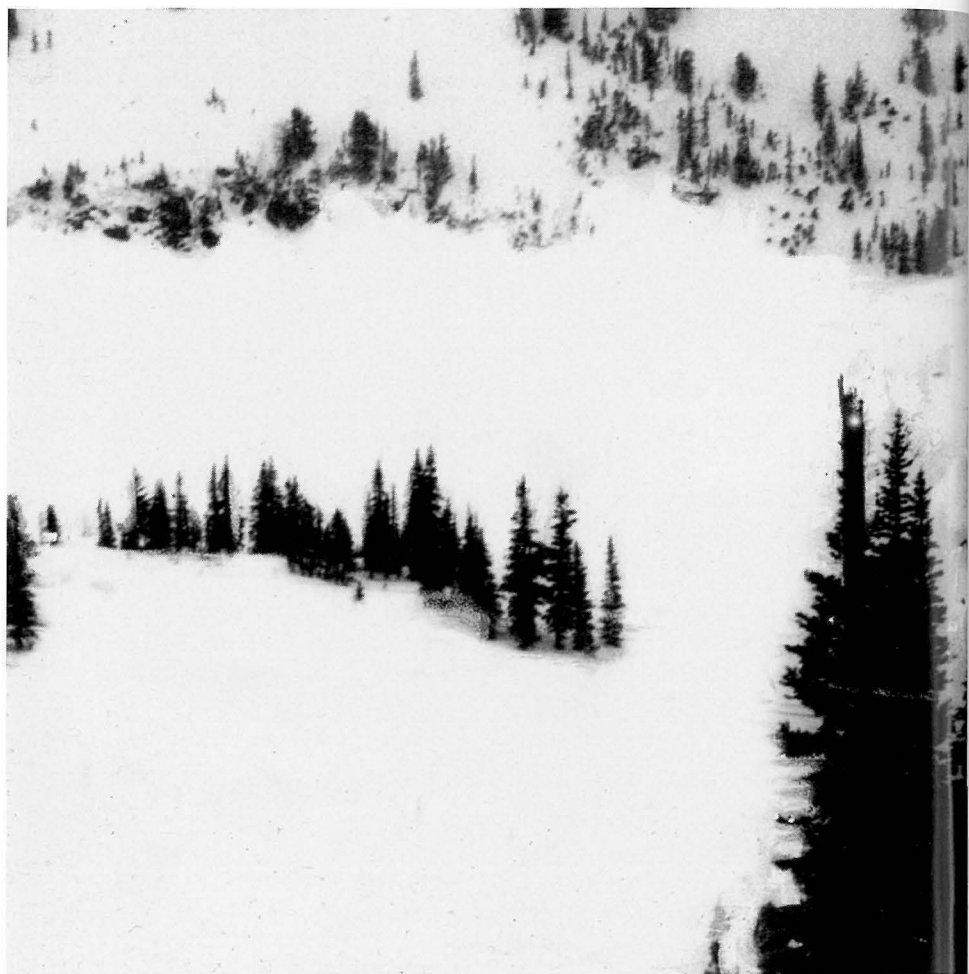
I understand exactly why Tim made the decisions he did, and part of me knows I would have made the same choices. And if I am honest, I don't feel sorry for Manet's bar chick, I don't feel anything. But that is the point. As she looks into her own private fantastic escape and ignores me, so do I.

And so as I feel guilty for not attempting pure, romantic, idealised escape (surely that is how one gets the most out of life), I write this in the pause between episodes of a Buffy marathon.

Green Line

Sarah Cashman







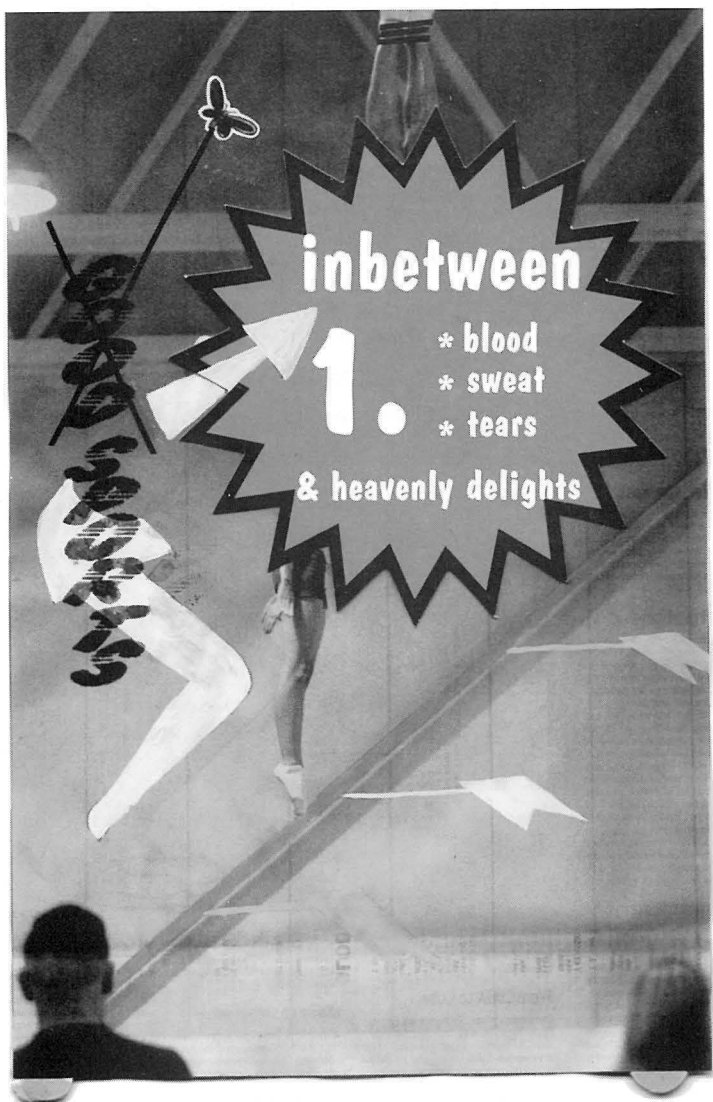
My Lord what a morning

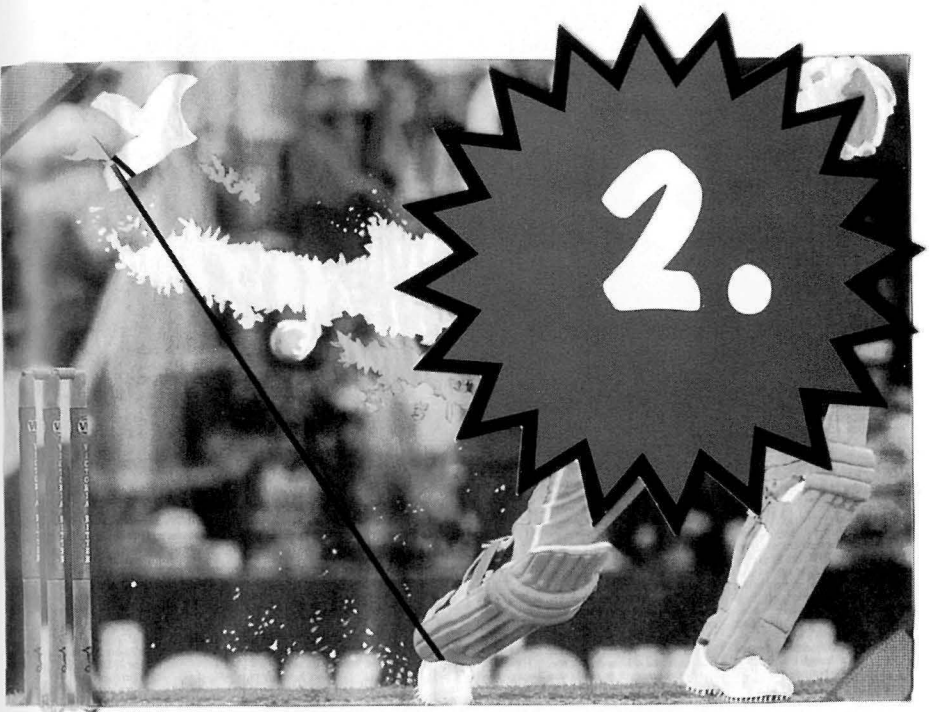
Nathan Dunne

You look back as you begin to lose your footing. You think to yourself: My Lord what a morning. The guards are running fast now, sirens blaring behind them. You know what they're thinking to themselves: My Lord what a morning. You scramble higher, trying to get a grip on the uppermost part of the fence. You've never been this high before and the sun looks so close. You wonder what you'd do if you could be that high up in the sky. You wonder what you'd say to all that space. Maybe you'd say: My Lord what a morning. Or maybe you wouldn't feel the need to speak at all because you'd be up so high. You could just laugh and look down at the grass and the trees and the white plumes of smoke. The smoke could say: My Lord what a morning. You can feel one of the guard's hands on your feet trying to drag you down. He is shouting: My Lord what a morning. You turn around and spit in his eye. You can feel yourself slipping. In a moment they'll have you and it will all have been for nothing. You'll be down on the ground and they'll march you back inside. You start to sing: My Lord what a morning. As your words climb higher into the sky the guards pull you down and begin to sing: My Lord what a morning.

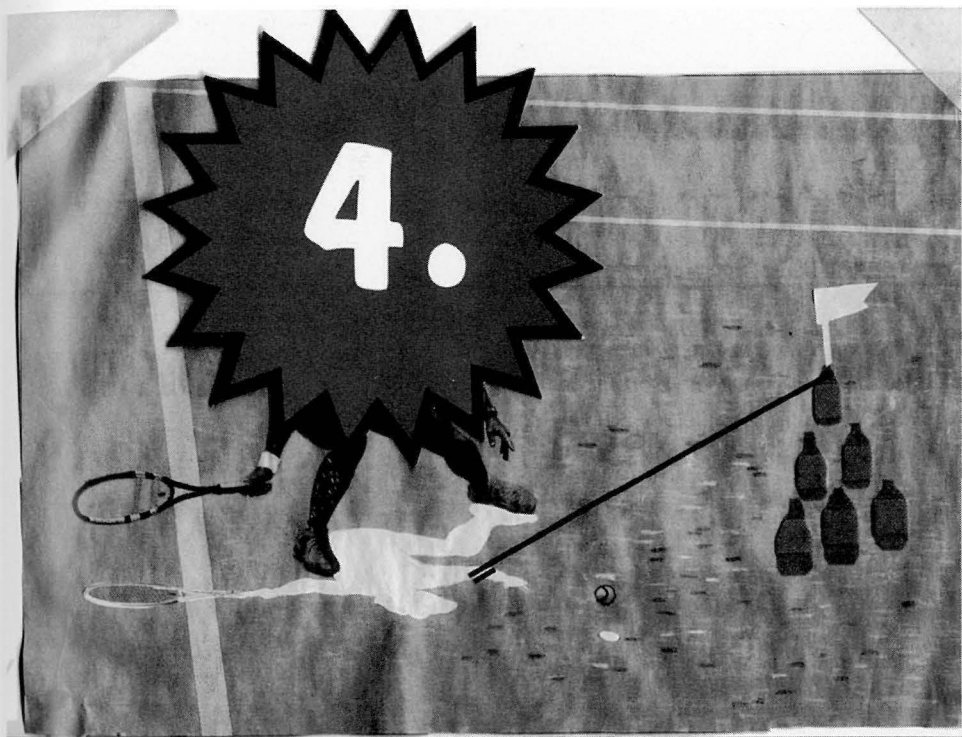
Inbetween Sports - blood/sweat/tears ... part 2

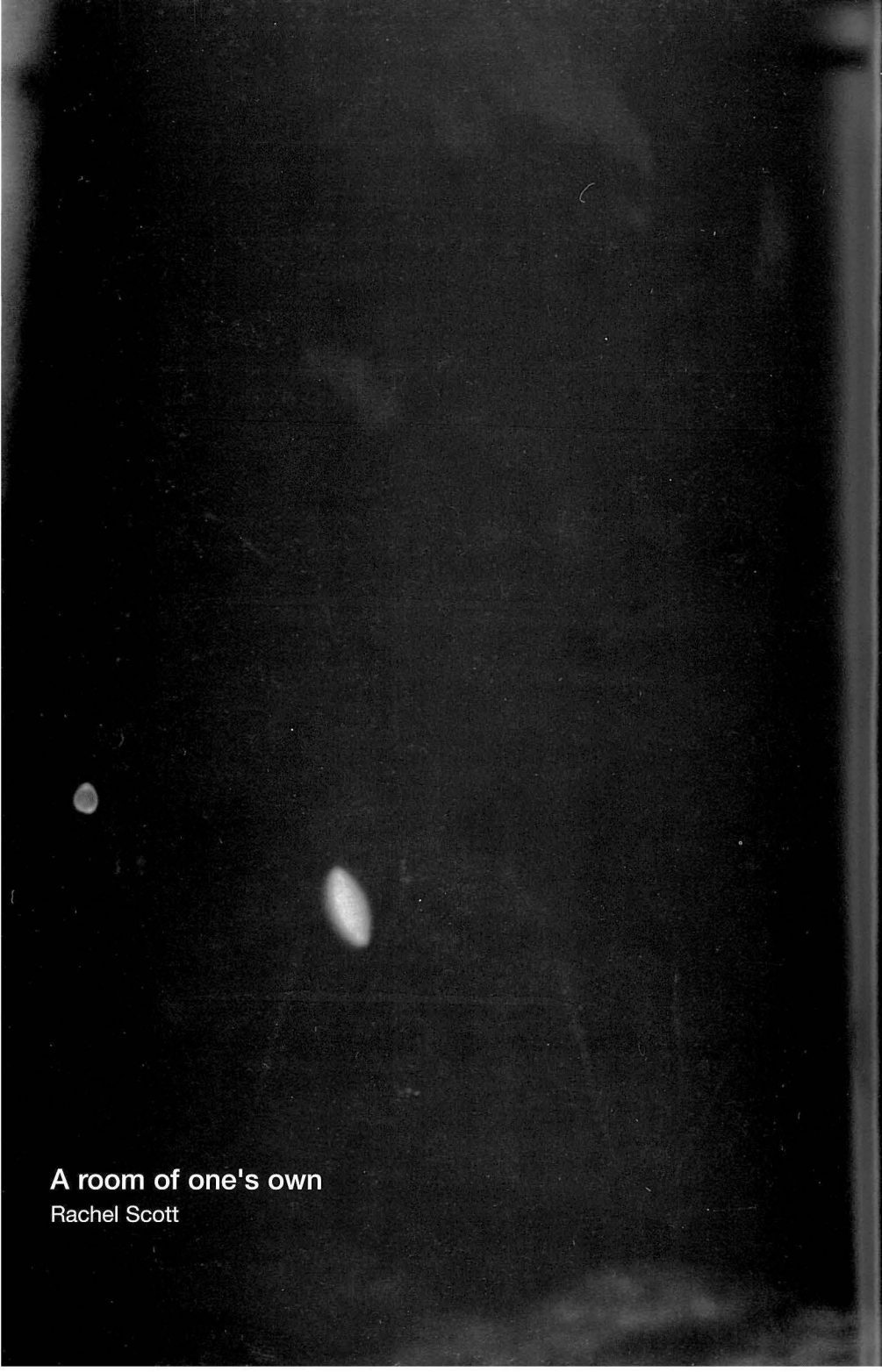
Peter Volich











A room of one's own

Rachel Scott



The expanse of suburbia enthral and disgusts me as it creeps further into the beyond. Invading pastoral landscapes with bitumen and brick, the failed utopian dream becoming ever more fanciful. The culture of narcissism grows stronger in its wake. When once the dream was of a modest red brick bungalow, now, nothing short of a McMansion will do, tottering precariously atop a handkerchief-sized piece of dirt, replete with Reality Show garden and interior design. Don't walk on the grass. Don't speak to the neighbours. Stay private. It's easy. Shopping centres. Real estate. Houses are important. Armed with my camera and tripod I photograph these dwellings and their occupants as they go about their 'private business'. Although the curtains are normally closed, I'm there, watching and imagining what is going on behind the thinly veiled glass panes. Televisions drone imperceptibly ... then, I trundle up to the shopping centre and mingle amongst my neighbours. We all look as average and non-descript as each other, clothed in the same disposable chain store fashions, with the dull, weary eyes of the commuter. Baulkham Hills, Basingstoke, whatever. Suburbs are like hotel chains, whose inoffensive homogeneity commands neither attention nor interest beyond a mild sense of comfort in the face of recognition, deteriorating rapidly into numbness. Home sweet home. This is a society consumed with popular culture, a culture dependent on the vacuous, transparent simulacra of virtual infantile retrogression. Cosmo, Cleo, New Weekly. Bridget Jones and Adrian Mole. Self-obsessed neuroses and thirty-something singles. Plastic surgery, weight loss and immortality at all costs. Let's forget about our troubles and indulge in some fat-free, wheat-free, sugar-free, carb-free high protein snacks. I can diet my way to a face-lift in two weeks! I'm thirty-two but I'm still dressing in the same clothes as when I was fifteen.

Ah, night falls once again. The decline of the day brings hope and comfort. Comfort and respite from the interruptions and distractions of the never-maligned, bright, sun-shiny day. Never maligned and much lauded. How ungrateful and malicious and downright nasty to turn away, dismiss and deny the bounteous offerings of the daylight hours. How strange to prefer the darkness. The silence, punctuated all the more dramatically by sounds relegated to mere noise during daytime, proffers possibilities and adventures nullified and razed by the burning light of day. The romance of solitude creeps carefully and seductively down hallways and around doorways. Darkened corners and illuminated patches invite the imagination to journey at whim into places hitherto unknown or unseen. "Make sure you close your curtains, anyone can see you going about your private business." Private inside business. Alone in one's room. At night. People, *other* people: peeping toms, the neighbour's wayward son, rapists, escaped murderers, serial killers, psychos ... beware! Fear incubates with gleeful resolve the multifarious monsters that lurk in lascivious anticipation of an unwitting participant joining them in their nocturnal flights of fancy. Frightened into ecstatic compulsion, the reader devours the pages of the Gothic novel. Cloistered from the world in the cotton wool security blanket of the suburban family home, she wrestles ghosts and demons, delighting in the perverse pleasure of imagined transgressions.

With fear and trepidation temporarily abated, but still waiting anxiously in the turrets and recesses of my mind, I venture out into the darkness to implicate myself as a spectre of *ambiguous purpose or origin*. I step outside and smell the sweet allure of absence. Windows glowing with illuminated warmth invite and repel concurrently. Where am I? When am I? The banal reminders of the twenty-first century are gently shrouded by the chiaroscuro of the night. A car drives past. Lights, shadows and sound blur and pass on. Space and time collapse into the awareness of a suspended moment. A mechanical eye procures the two dimensional remnant of a breath of night air. Beneath the lamplight, an apparition of feminine wiles stands provocatively. Captured with the technical prowess of an amateur auteur, I pose with the artifice of a low rent, B-grade Hollywood starlet. The mysterious and unspeakable loiter in the bushes behind me. This formulaic character, assembled from long-forgotten party frocks and supermarket make-up, blonde-wigged and buxom, serves as a doppelganger of dubious repute.

International Woman of Mystery Rule#1: Take the highs with the lows. For every glamorous, head-turning prance through transit lounges to departure gates, there follows an exasperatingly lonely arrival in a foreign town—a cold, empty hotel room and the prospect of a stomach-churning solo entry into the lobby bar for a much-needed drink. A seat by the open fire, a glass of red wine and a packet of trusty gold-rimmed menthol cigarettes cannot make up for the excruciating self-consciousness experienced and fed by the paranoid awareness of the sly gazes of those in the room who question the intentions of the dark-haired, red lipped, (invariably) black clad woman sitting alone.

So, here I am once again. Alone in a hotel room in some corner of a foreign country. Wind whistles outside as snow desperately tries to fall, but only succeeds in manifesting itself as slushy sleet which is unwelcome and disliked by all. Inside, it's warm and toasty, the gas fire burns seductively and poses believably as its more romantic cousin, the log fire. My legs are contentedly exhausted from a long and rigorous day on the mountain. A cold beer and the last mouthful in a tiny bottle of Jagermeister have quenched my thirst and warmed my insides. I'm at a loose end. Was supposed to be heading out for a date with a tall, dark, attractive stranger, but the bastard has stood me up. Not that I really care. I mean, I'm cool, it's water off a duck's back to me. I don't need a man. How dare he, the rat! My heart has hardened a little more this night. Resolve to go out later—in the meantime, what to do? Hmm. Television-come-radio, some long-forgotten hits from the '80's that were never hip, nor fashionable. Cory Hart, Bryan Adams, Midge Ure, Robert Palmer and Tom Petty. What would have happened if I hadn't quit the Johnny Young Talent School? I think to myself as I bring out moves not seen since my time as a cheerleader on *It's A Knockout* in 1986. I could have been a popstar, if only I could sing, hell, that's not even a prerequisite. Anyway, the hairbrush suits me fine as I croon and pout in front of the full-length mirror. Aerosmith? No, they're boring. Turn off the camera for that one. I must say, I'm pretty impressed with my performance. I am good. I don't need to go out on dates, I can just hang out here on my own and play dress ups and popstars and dream. It's fun. As long as the camera, the vicarious eye of the audience, is there to record me, I'm fine. I'm valid. I'm recorded. I'm an image. What more could I want?

I want to be famous. I don't care how I'm gonna get famous, but that's what I want to be. It's all I've ever wanted for as long as I can remember. I don't care about marriage or stuff like that. Just me, famous. But as I realised, you gotta be pretty and skinny to be famous. Hmm. I'm pretty but not skinny enough. I can work on that. Hmm, fifteen years later and still working on it. Not as easy as I thought it would be. Getting skinny takes a lot of work and sometimes I just say 'stuff it'. It's my own fault I'm not famous. I realise that maybe I'm gonna have to make myself famous. Like, take photos of myself'n'stuff. If no one else is gonna do it then I'm gonna. I can pout and pose and look just as good as any of those chicks in the movies and magazines. I don't trust anyone else to take photos of me, I can do a better job myself. I can be anything I want to be in my world, and under the guise of art, I can pass it off as, well, art. But what if that doesn't work?

She walked out onto the heat-seared tarmac. Eyes squinting like folded paper fans against the blazing midday sun, her arms laden with hand luggage and a long winter coat. Soon she would be free of this sweltering hell-hole and back to the more inclement weather she preferred. As she made her way up the narrow steps leading into the tiny plane and turned back for one, final farewell look, a hoard of memories flooded back to her of her life in that god-forsaken place. She missed it already. How typical. The grass was always greener for her nomadic heart.

Safety Poster Series

Huong Ngo



VANQUISH FEAR AND PANIC



**ISOLATION CAN LEAD TO FEELINGS
OF HELPLESSNESS AND DESPAIR**



YOU MUST UNDERSTAND THE EMOTIONAL STATES ASSOCIATED WITH SURVIVAL JUST AS YOU MUST UNDERSTAND SURVIVAL CONDITIONS AND EQUIPMENT. IN A SURVIVAL SITUATION, YOU (AND YOUR COMPANIONS) ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT ELEMENT IN DETERMINING YOUR SUCCESS OR FAILURE.



Gogo

POZZO

Didi

ESCAPE ORIGINALITY:

A script remix constructed entirely from words and phrases sampled from Samuel Beckett's *Waiting For Godot*.

Soda_Jerk

(Trousers down and fly open, Didi looks at his carrot appreciatively, as he dangles it between finger and thumb.)

Didi: You can't help looking, it's too much for one man. It hangs as large as a horse—how many people could boast as much?

Gogo: Billions?

Didi: You think so?

Gogo: I don't know.

Didi: You may be right.

(Didi raises the carrot in his hand, it is swelling visibly)

Gogo: You're a hard man.

Didi: Yes, it's a good sign, but it'll fall all of a sudden. Suppose we give him a good beating, the two of us?

(Gogo pulls at Didi's carrot)

Didi: On, on! Faster! Yes, yes! Woah! Yes Yes ... No!!

Gogo: No?

Didi: No, yes, but not so rapidly...

(Gogo jerks at it, panting. He gives us exhausted rests and tries again)

Didi: Ah! Ah! ...Yes! Make Haste! Yes! Yes! Yes! ... Yip!

Gogo: Yip?? *(Gogo bursts into an enormous laugh)*

Didi: *(Agitated)* Ah, stop blathering and help me off with this bloody thing! Be a bit attentive for pity's sake, otherwise we'll never get anywhere.

Gogo: Attentive? What do you expect?

Didi: Pull hard! He usually responds to that—

(Gogo jerks it violently with both hands)

Didi: Ow!! Careful, don't strangle him!

(Irritably, Gogo gives up. He drops Didi's carrot, strikes a match and begins to light his pipe)

Didi: *(Scandalised)* You could have finished it!

Gogo: *(Puffs at his pipe)* I am perhaps not particularly human, but who cares?

Didi: You're merciless. I'll never walk again ... Come on, try once more? It's the start that's difficult.

Gogo: No, I find it tedious. Let's pass onto something else, do you mind?

Didi: Yes I do! After all the time I spent sucking all the good out of your carrot, you chuck my elongation away like a banana skin. How am I to sit down again without affectation now that I have risen?

Gogo: It's a simple question of will power.

Didi: Pooh! I'd do just as well myself

(Didi jerks his own carrot)

Gogo: No harm in trying ...

Didi: *(Jerks faster)* I drunk a little more than usual, I don't seem to be able to come ... It must be dead! Help! It must be dead!!

Gogo: You always say that and you always come. *(Lyrically he reflects)* The come of the world is a constant quality. For each one who begins to come somewhere else another stops. Everything that's hard oozes. For the moment he is inert but he could run amuck any minute ...

Didi: *(Hastens his jerks)* No! No! He is dead. Help!! Help!!

(Enter Pozzo with large bible and cross)

Pozzo: Could I be of any help?

Gogo: *(Pointing to Didi's fly)* Yes, please sir, can you blow him?

Pozzo: *(Recoils in horror, flabbergasted)* Oh no. Not for an instant! Is he queer?

Gogo: He wants to know if you take the carrot! Isn't that obvious? He's a trifle effeminate. *(Looks Pozzo over)* You must be queer too, deep down, if only you knew it.

Pozzo: Oh no, no not for an instant. With me it's just the opposite

Didi: What? You want a bush? A woman's knook, hole, the forward compartment ...

Pozzo: No, no. Just the opposite.

Didi: The back compartment?

Pozzo: No.

Didi: Well fancy that, I could have sworn it was just the opposite-

Pozzo: No! I'm made in God's image

Pogo: What, with white beard?

Pozzo: No. (*Anxiously looks at his bible*) I don't do any, you know, I don't "do it". No pubis wriggling at all.

Didi: Christ! Whatever you want, but not that! Even woman is better than nothing.

Gogo: Let's try and get this clear. Has he got the right to use his carrot? Certainly he has. It follows that he doesn't want to. There is reasoning for you. And why doesn't he want to?

Didi: It's too short?

Gogo: Yes, it's too short, why it's absolutely certain. If it's large you have to use it.

Pozzo: But Christ didn't!

Didi: (*Flabbergasted*) Christ had a teeny weeny?

Gogo: What's Christ got to do with it? You're not going to compare yourself to Christ. He lived a million years ago. Our generation are having such a dull, dull time they need erections!

Pozzo: I really must be getting along ...

Gogo: (*Wry*) Where to? Heaven? Lucky you. Well, we must be getting along to damnation.

Didi: But suppose we repented our being queer? (*With exaggerated enthusiasm*) I'm curious to hear what the bible has to offer. Then we'll take it or leave it.

Pozzo: You have to decide to turn resolutely towards nature-

Didi: Towards woman? (*His face contorted*) But down there everything is red! Do you really think we could get off with a woman?

Pozzo: By all means, with a little practice there is nothing simpler; it's the natural order after all. But you must practice with a woman. While doing it think of-

Gogo: England?

Pozzo: No! Think of Christ!

Gogo: But, it'd give us an erection ...

< The End >

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Samuel Beckett, *Waiting for Godot* (Faber and Faber Limited, London 1965)

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He liked to sit just quietly and
smell the flowers.



... ..

