

r u n w a y

ISSUE EIGHT: TRASH

TWELVE DOLLARS



r u n w a y

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Soda_Jerk, *Tabloid Trash Attack (50ft Brit vs Kevzilla)*, 2006

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Next Issue

CHANGE
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MOP Projects

r u n w a y

issue eight: trash

october 2006

Editorial	Holly Williams	4
Trashure	Jen Cabraja	6
Garbage Epiphany	Andrew Frost	9
Bad/Old/Rubbish (A + B)	Alex Gawronski	14
Are You Sleeping Brother John?	A. Bloom	16
Come Undone	Rachel Scott	18
Between Drinks	Michael Moran & Todd McMillan	24
Roland Barthes, the Bear	Kuba Dorabialski	26
Do the right thing	Keg	30
Souped Up at Supré	Daniel Mudie Cunningham interviews the Motel Sisters	35
Love is Trash	Teo Treloar	40
Swap Meet: Free Stuff Party!	Emily Hunt & Raquel Welch	44
The Chocolate Revolution Manifesto	Benedict Ernst	46
Notes From The Bin (Notes To Self)	Rob McLeish	52
Trash Cartoons	Anna Peters	56
The big issues of Christopher Hanrahan	Pete Volich interviews Christopher Hanrahan	58
Cut and collect your own trash	Adam Norton	63
Cool Balls, Sick Nuts: The Art of Vicki Papageorgopoulos	Ella Barclay	69
Thoughts from the nap and an afternoon couch with Pete & Brian	Brian Fuata and Pete Volich	72
Haute Plastique	Sarah Cashman	80

Editorial

Holly Williams

Trashing is an insidious problem in the art world, as pervasive as the cheap wine served at openings. It is not the rock-musician-smashing-up-a-guitar-on-stage kind of trashing, rather, it's the bitchy little comments on who got the funding grant, or won the prize, or had the show, or why Melbourne is better than Sydney, or why Sydney artists do it tougher. It's the *yeah but no but yeah* of Little Australia; it's the *...but anyway, don't listen to her because everyone knows she's done it with an Alsatian* of the Vicky Pollard in all of us. But where does this tendency come from, and what value, if any, can be extracted from it?

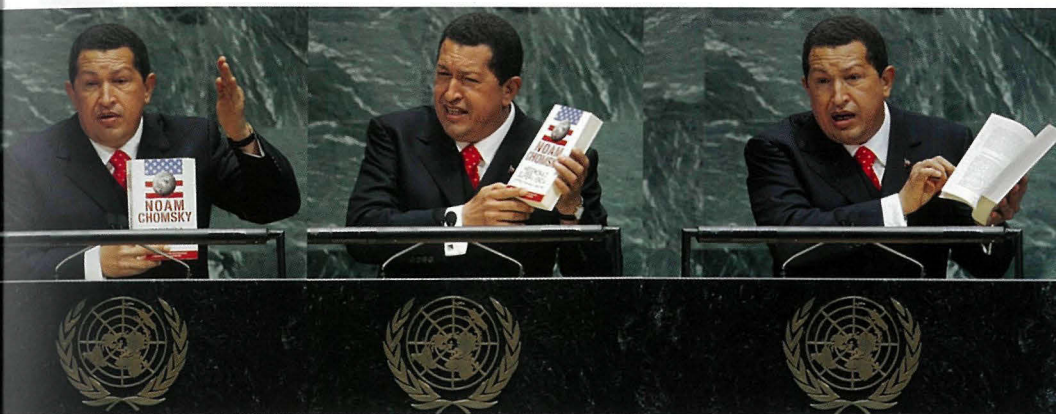
Zen Buddhism is built on the *10 Grave Precepts* and there are a couple of precepts dedicated solely to not trashing people: *I take up the way of not discussing the faults of others* and *I take up the way of not praising myself while abusing others*. The crux of art world trashing is insecurity tinged with jealousy. Artists are a little unsure of themselves as a general rule, so it's hardly surprising that when a little solid ground is sighted it is landed upon with a kind of keen, if covert desperation. Being critically engaged and informed is a different animal all together.

But at a time when celebrity magazines have transcended doctor's waiting rooms and are recreational pursuits in themselves, what hope is there? Reading about the faults (real or constructed) of people we don't know is now a form of relaxation! Is

the trashing tendency due to boredom, or escapism? If so, what is being escaped from or missed out on? A report came out the other day called *Corporate Paedophilia*, with its catchy title encapsulating the over-sexualization of pre-tweens with 'bralettes' and 'hot' clothes. The report raised questions of why little girls are worshipping older (celebrity) men and I couldn't help but think of Katie Holmes as an underage girl gazing adoringly at the posters of Tom Cruise on her bedroom wall. How do I know that she did this? Because I too indulge, from time to time, in the brain-rot of celebrity journalism.

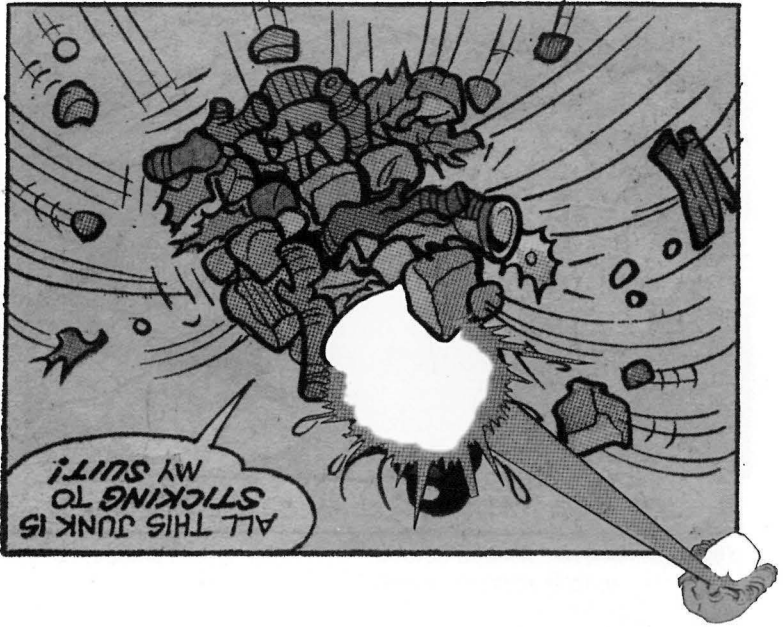
If I was to feature myself in a trash mag I could dish some dirt: my hair is thinning and going grey, I sleep around, I am considered bossy, assertive and controlling by my friends (god knows what non-friends think of me), I don't look great in a bikini, I think I make good art (but I hardly make it anymore so I don't have to run the gauntlet of other people's opinions and I can remain safe and unchallenged). Sometimes I even smell like sulphur, just like the stink Hugo Chavez said George Bush left behind at the United Nations, because there's a little George Bush in me, just like there's a little George Bush in all of us.

(For another kind of celebrity trashing read Chavez's recent speech at the United Nations on www.venezuelanalysis.com/news?newsno=2083)

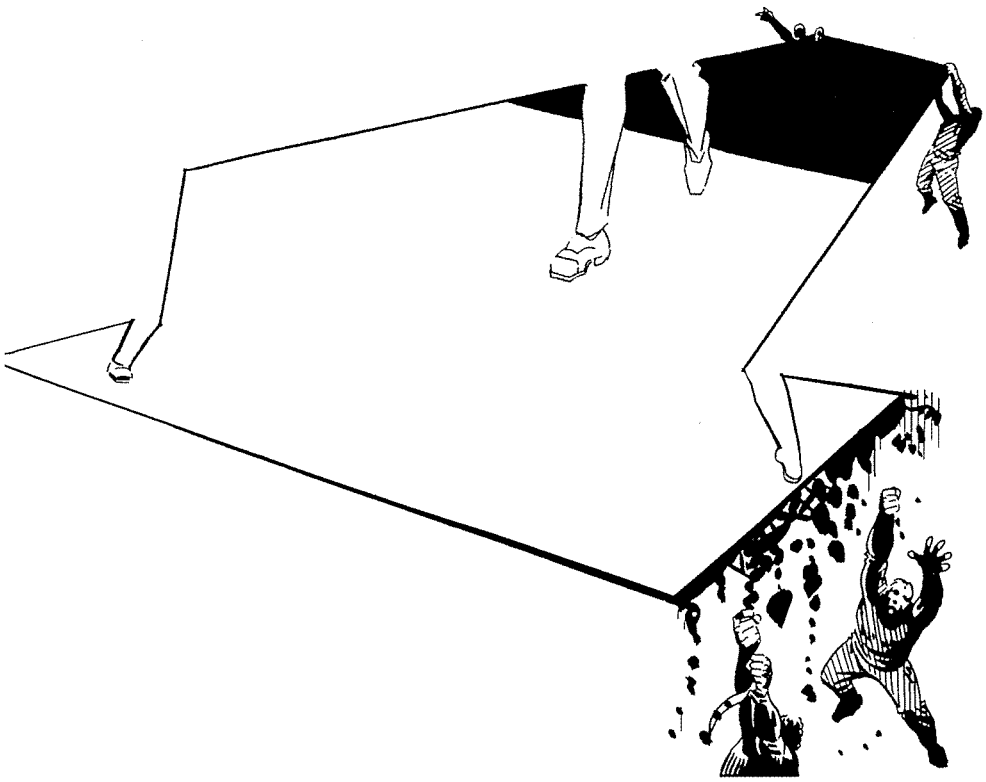


Ray Stubblebine, *Venezuela's President Chavez displays author Chomsky's book at the UN headquarters in New York, 2006, Reuters Pictures*

Trashure
Jen Cabraja







Garbage Epiphany

Andrew Frost

Me and Dad had a problem. I didn't like to do any work around the house. He didn't want to pay me when I did. We'd reached a stalemate. I'd lie around in my bedroom reading Asimov paperbacks and he'd be in the kitchen getting mad at me for not doing anything. Since he couldn't seem to remember to get the money out of the bank, it was the perfect excuse to do nothing. And besides, in the 1970s the Unions went on strike if things were fucked. So I was on strike.

I had plans for spending money if and when it came along. I wanted to buy a Super 8 camera so I could make sci-fi movies, but cameras were like \$750 or more and there was all the other stuff you'd need. Even assuming I wasn't on strike, this plan seemed an impossibly long way off. It'd take years. Then one day I noticed a McDonald's was being built in the new extension to Carlingford Court. Dad told me — sniffing over his newspaper — that if I *wanted* a job I should write a letter to McDonald's HQ in North Sydney. I wrote the letter on a blank page I tore out of my school book, found an envelope, stuffed it in and posted it off. I got an answer back a couple of weeks later in an official envelope. They were having an afternoon signup session where anyone who wanted a job could fill in an application.

It was late summer and hot when I went to the new McDonald's store. The restaurant was only half finished. There were ladders all over the place, sheets hanging down, all the kitchen gear under wraps. It looked pretty modern. A lot of kids from school were there. Some guy in line reckoned that probably everyone could get a job if they wanted to but I'd seen enough World War 2 movies to know that only some of us would make it. It was a numbers game.

There was a guy dressed in a white shirt with a buzz cut and moustache handing out applications and little pencils. We all sat down and filled in the forms. One of the questions asked how many shifts you'd be willing to work in a week. I wrote down three shifts at about four hours each. I based this on the amount of money I thought I'd need to buy a Super 8 movie camera. At \$1.25 an hour I would need all the hours I could get.

I looked around at the other kids filling out forms. There were a lot of older kids. They'd be hard to beat. They had ties and white shirts and looked confident. There were girls there who'd put some effort into getting dressed up, makeup and shit. Then there were a bunch of guys — Gary and Tubs and those guys — who were dickheads. They lived in the Dundas Valley and always got into trouble. Not that I was particularly good, it was just that their level of trouble was much grander than mine. They called the teachers cunts to their faces and rode unregistered mini bikes on the road. I looked at them and knew that I could beat them. My chances were 50/50.

A month later I found out that I'd got a job. All the successful applicants were asked to go to the store one Thursday at 3.30pm. School finished at 3.15pm so I had to really hike it up Mobbs Hill to get there in time. I made it hot and sweating. I looked around and saw that almost everyone was my age. None of the Dundas guys were there.

The two managers introduced themselves. The guy I had seen with the square head and the Freddy Mercury tash was Leo. The other bloke was Chinese and was named Charles. He had a friendly smile but he just sat there smiling and smiling. It was Leo who did all the talking. He was business-



like and a bit frightening. He kept his hands on the waist of his tight grey slacks.

Leo said we got jobs because we had *the right stuff*. Everyone nodded. We were all to be given two shifts a week, four hours each, tried out in different sections of McDonald's. Depending on how we did, we might be given better jobs. There was Chicken & Fish, Fries, Burgers. There was a Set Up Crew who'd do early morning shifts and Close Up Crew who'd work late. There was Register Crew and Clean Up.

I wasn't that confident I'd escape Clean Up. I wasn't good at team sports because I preferred talking or standing around. I'd been in a soccer team but that was when I was 8, which was also the first time I'd ever heard the phrase 'weak link in the chain'.

I felt destined to work with garbage. Leo concluded by saying — 'you've all got the right stuff and remember — we're gonna close them down!' He was pointing out the window at the Kentucky Fried Chicken store. Everyone cheered and I cheered too even though I quite liked KFC when my Dad brought it home after late night shopping on Thursdays, but it was good to be part of a team that didn't involve kicking a ball around and they gave me a uniform.

When I showed up for my first Tuesday 6pm to 10pm shift, I was rostered to Chicken & Fish. The chicken pieces came from places unknown and were packed dry in the storeroom. The Fish part — the Fillet O' Fish — came frozen in rectangular blocks in boxes marked Produce of Canada. They were pre-crumbed and

stacked 20 boxes high in a freezer at the back of the work area.

My job, dressed in a blue smock and cardboard McDonald's hat, was to crumb the chicken after removing bits of gizzard, then roll the chicken in bread crumbs and throw *no more* than 15 pieces into the pressure cooker. You'd just flick a switch and wait until the light went off. Then you'd put the chicken in a heater box until an order came through. You'd toss the pieces — no more than two or three — into a box. The Fish was even easier. You'd stick the rectangular fish pieces into rectangular slots in a steel basket, then lower the basket into hot oil. When the fish block went golden brown it was done. Some buns would be heating away in the steamer and then you'd just slide the fish pieces onto the bread. All that was left to do was to wrap the burgers and slide them down the chute.

I didn't have to worry about Fries, which was located right next to Chicken & Fish. That was a tough, high-pressure job and they had one kid whose entire responsibility was to keep making fries until someone said stop. All the girls on the registers were trained to ask every customer 'Do you want fries with that?' and since everyone said 'Yes', Fries was a job I knew I didn't want. Leo rostered a hyperactive guy named Mario to work Tuesdays and he was really on top of the whole deep fried potato experience.

It wasn't a hard job and I got paid in cash. I didn't spend any of it. I would look at my Colonial Building Society account and marvel at the power of 22 percent interest. If I kept at it I would have enough for a Super 8 camera and a projector.

One day Management decided that night shifts early in the week didn't need three people in Chicken & Fish and Fries anymore. I'd been working with a guy

named David and we'd split the fish and chicken duties. Under the new rules I was pulling shifts where I was working on my own and had to do Fries as well. It got to be a high pressure job. Fries there, chicken here, everything going at once.

*

McDonald's was a new thing. There were only three stores in Sydney. We'd had KFC since I was a kid and fried chicken in paper buckets was part of the modern world, but buying hamburgers like that was weird. You bought them in milkbars and they came with beetroot and pineapple. KFC had the Colonel who was human, but McDonald's had a clown who was just gay. A lot of people couldn't cope with the McDonald's universe. Customers seemed pretty comfortable with saying *burgers* because that was a lot like *hamburgers* but the big problem was the word *fries*. Employees were trained to say it and you could get fired for saying 'I'll have a hamburger with egg and chips, please' even as a joke. It took at least six months of constant TV advertising to get the customers to say the right thing.

As management had promised the staff were trained in other areas. Burgers was a real glamour job. Those guys were the chosen few and they had *the right stuff*. They could toss half a dozen all-beef patties off a small spatula and juggle toasting buns while they talked and laughed and had all the Coke they could drink. I was too slow and afraid of getting burnt.

They tried me out on the Registers for a night. It went well until a customer came back and complained that I had overcharged him. I think I must have forgotten to carry the one or something. I asked to be made part of the Start Up or Close Up crews because they had no contact with customers and the whole job

was just cleaning. I didn't like people, didn't like the public and being away from them was good. I was knocked back because I wasn't 'ready' for it.

Since it wasn't really working out for me anywhere else I stuck to C&F. I'd watch the guys in Burgers really 'going for it' and something clicked. I wondered why they were knocking themselves out for \$1.25 an hour. I practically slept on the job and still got the same pay. My *real* problem was that I couldn't handle the pressure of doing Fries and C&F at the same time. Whenever the management needed a volunteer to do the garbage compactus I'd volunteer and then spend twice as much time doing it as anyone else. It was great to get away.

The garbage compactus was a massive metal box with a moving steel arm. It could crush anything — big oil cans, bits of wooden pallet — and reduced anything to about 10% of its original size. There'd be huge piles of plastic garbage bags, towers of boxes and a dozen steel drums left over after busy shifts. The stink was awful. It was a sour smell that fizzed inside your nose with the faint tang of diseased milk. I got used to it and spent as much time there as possible.

Then I had a garbage moment, a sort of epiphany. One afternoon as I was staring at the metal arm crushing boxes and bags, sort of in a trance... I'd never imagined there was *so much garbage in the world*. The world was producing fantastic amounts of shit but I had no idea where it went. I'd seen a few films at school that showed *the terrible devastation of pollution*. There would be grainy shots of garbage tips in New Jersey with lots of seagulls flying around. As far as the birds were concerned, garbage was a boon, but where was it all going? Trucks would come and take it away. To where? I had no idea, and it was building up. If the world wasn't destroyed with atom bombs, it was going

to sink under an avalanche of burger trays. We were living on a garbage planet.

*

When I turned 16 I started earning \$2.25 an hour but my enthusiasm for the job was over. I was extending my meal breaks as long as I could. I ignored the meal allowance and just took whatever I wanted. I let my hair grow back to its usual shoulder length and I refused to wear a hair net. Ross, the Tuesday manager, kept reminding me to get it cut but there was no way I was doing that. Fuck you man, I'm punk rock.

I was pretty bored with my job but then so was everyone else. We were told there were going to be *changes*. Carlingford McDonald's had been rated top store in the state when it had opened but now it was rock bottom — even below McDonald's on George Street in the City which we all knew was shithouse. I was relieved I wasn't the only one who was slacking off because then there was a good chance I'd survive the changes.

Ross was the first to go. It turned out that he'd been in charge when the McDonald's secret agent came around, the man who went from store to store rating them. We'd heard about these secret agents and I had imagined they'd be like the CIA or the KGB, but they were more like the SS. They wore official McDonald's uniforms. The guy came in and we all knew who he was. He bought a burger, examined it, then binned it. Then he left. No chicken, no fish. Not even fries. All McDonald's stores were rated on the quality of their Big Mac. Our Macs must have been just one grade above dog food. Ross was gone.

Everyone who worked at Maccas knew time was limited. The older you got, the lower your chances of staying on. I was 16 and there were only a handful of 17 year



olds on the roster. They were just there for the sake of appearances to placate hostile unions. A group of the older kids had got together and complained to management that they weren't getting enough shifts. Leo listened to their complaints and then a week later they were all sacked. I decided I was safe, I probably had a year left.

I went into work for my regular Sunday afternoon shift. When I got there a guy said, 'Wow, Leo is really mad with you'. I asked why and he told me I'd missed my shift the day before. A *Saturday shift*? I hadn't worked a Saturday shift in six months. When I saw Leo he sent me home and then later I got a phone call. I was sacked.

I told my Dad what had happened and he rang up to complain. It was a con job, a set-up, but Leo told him I was a bad worker, that I'd been warned about my hair and my meal allowance and he talked about the *incredible* amount of time I'd been wasting in the garbage room. There was no come back. Dad hung up the

phone with the resignation of a man who had come to expect disappointment. He sat down at the kitchen table, picked up his newspaper and sighed. We were back to the stalemate.

As I watched *Logan's Run* that night on TV I knew that the future was certain. I would go back to washing the car and mowing the lawn. It was good, honest work and Dad and I could work out our problems. I had enough money for the camera and all the other stuff as well. McDonalds didn't need me, and I didn't need them either.

There was a bigger problem. The end was coming. The world would end either in a fireball or slowly disappear under ever-growing mountains of garbage. I'd seen the evidence. You could get ready for the end, prepare yourself for the brave post-apocalyptic world that was to come, or you could just sink lazily into the mire. On TV, Logan escaped from the city with his hot girlfriend and made for the abandoned ruins of Washington DC. It was wilderness out there, but there was hope.

Bad/Old/Rubbish (A + B)

Alex Gawronski



A.The idea of Utopia



B. False Friends

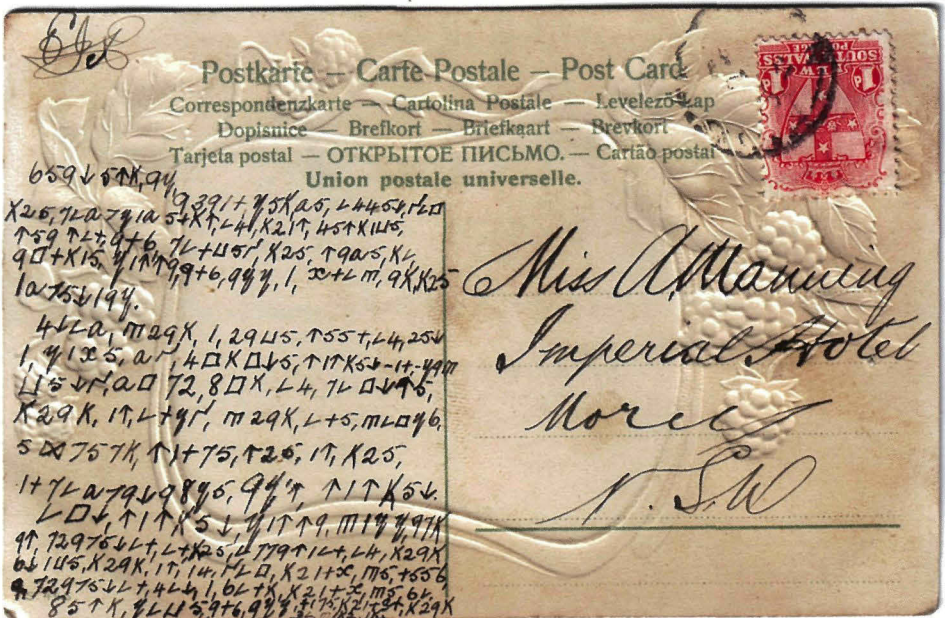
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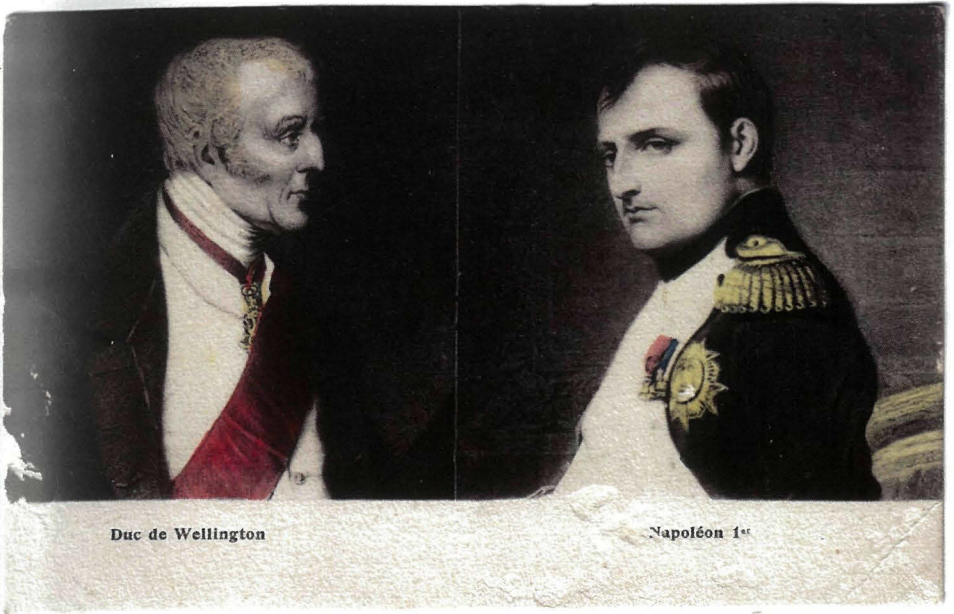
A. Bloom

I recently witnessed the auctioning of a deceased estate. Actually the estate was fine, but its owner was presumed dead. He had disappeared—that is to say, his ‘remains’ hadn’t been found. So too his worldly remains, or the remainder of them (his personal affects and *leavings*), which sat throughout the house in a parallel state of abeyance, until now undiscovered. For the most part junk, his things sold for ‘next to nothing’ to trash-store owners and charitable organisations, while collectors collected the few real ‘pieces’. The scene reminded me of a short Roland Barthes text in which he likens the auctioning of objects from *The Normandy* and *The Ile de France* ocean liners (both of which have now disappeared) to ‘dismembering the dead’. Barthes had eaten from the dishes of the *The Ile de France* and viewed the skyscrapers of Manhattan from its decks, so his was no metaphor. No inert thing, the liner and its innards formed a ‘certain

body’, one animated by the complex systems of memory, use, and experience. Separated from experience, the body had flatlined and was now, much to Barthes sentimental disapproval, at the mercy of ghouls.

And so too this estate: this *trace* of a body forming a body in itself, whose limbs were now being severed by those of us eager to take home, at under market value, our pound of flesh. Actually two bodies were being dismembered: this ‘certain body’ and the life of the imaginary ‘him’ to which it gave rise. In effect ‘he’, despite his absence, was not completely absent, but rather a trace metamorphosing from his traces. ‘He’ awaited narration, which is to say ‘he’ awaited *dissection*. Which brings us to the vaguely necrophilic turn of Barthes phrase—the peculiar pleasure one takes in playing with, and to some extent re-animating, the inert. That is to say, the





Duc de Wellington

Napoléon I^{er}

voyeuristic pleasure one takes in looking but not being seen and the subsequent ventriloquism of talking for that that cannot talk back. My observation, then, is that 'he' was at the apex of middle age; slept badly and with blackheads; ate alone and over the sink; had a thing for runners; liked Classical Lite and sentimental songs; watched television occasionally, and the ABC exclusively; had come into a modest amount of money that he subsequently came out of; read the 'serious end' of contemporary fiction; laughed at his own jokes; and attempted to fill the void created by the absence of family and friends by dragging home a lot of material 'stuff'.

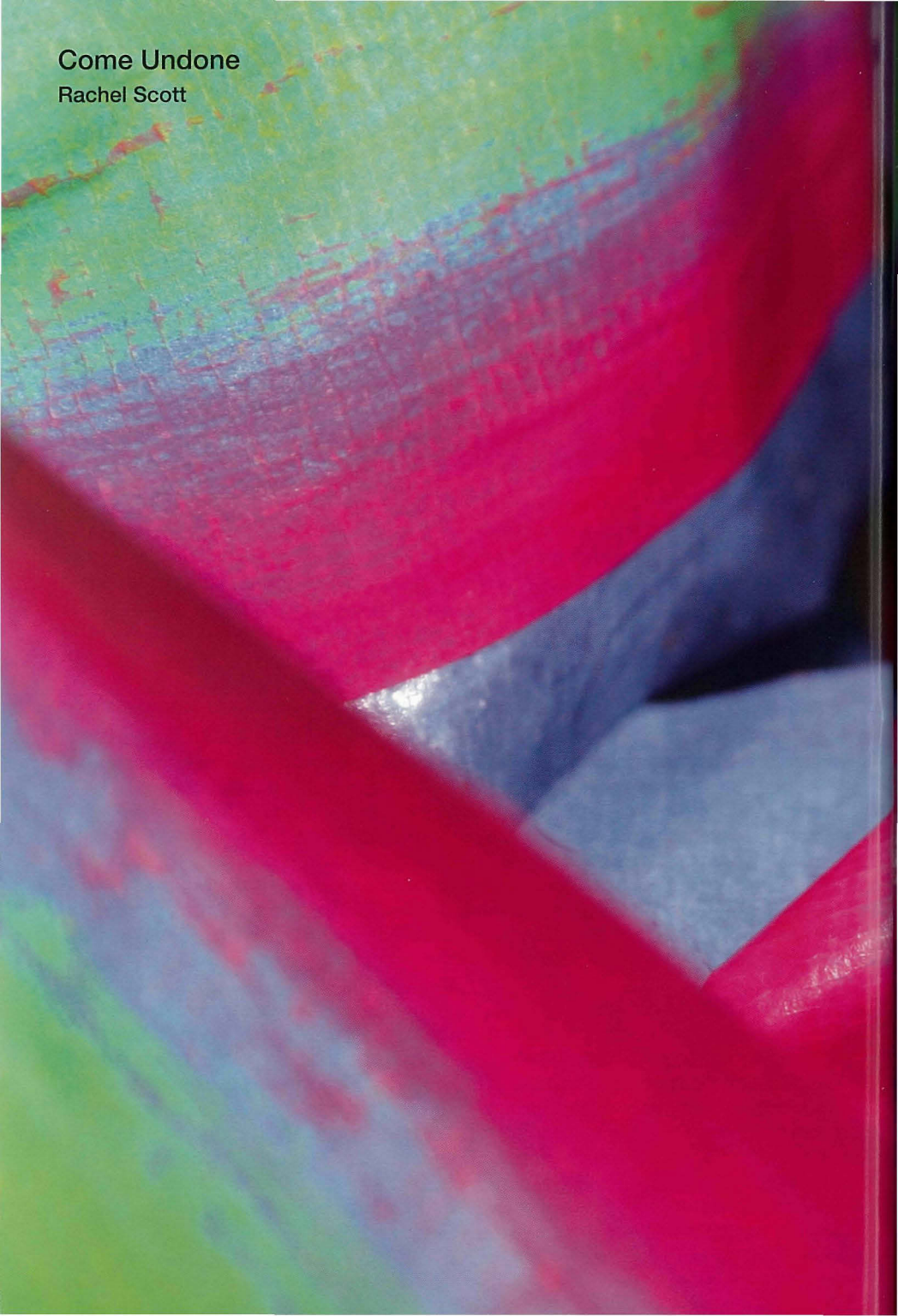
But there is no need to get reductive about it. As Gertrude Stein asks, grappling with a similarly mysterious double murder, 'Why should blood on the floor make anyone mad against automobiles and telephones and desks? Why?' Unlike the traditional crime fiction genre she never gets around to answering this question. For Stein, the true mystery is neither in the event of these deaths nor tracing them back to an origin or source, but rather in their re-remembering.

Or more to the point, it is in that that facilitates this re-remembering: the text, with all of its slippages and ellipsis', its inherent *delirium* from which sense derives. Four bodies then: one presumed dead, its 'certain body', that body's transmutation into a chimerical body and crossing over into this text. And to this last body the ultimate lacuna. To this last body, out of respect for the dead, should remain the greatest mystery.

So what's my point? If there is one, it is *trash*: some guy was dead (trashed) and we were looking through his trash. In sorting the wheat from the chaff I felt trashy about reducing his life to a series of meaningless commodities (the ultimate trash). On the other hand I took a voyeuristic pleasure (read: trashy, this time in the affirmative) in viewing his trash and subsequently reanimating 'him' through the excesses of language (the other ultimate trash). And finally, that this very recollection is nothing but bullshit, trash-talking: I have never been to such an estate. And so the dead rise.

Come Undone

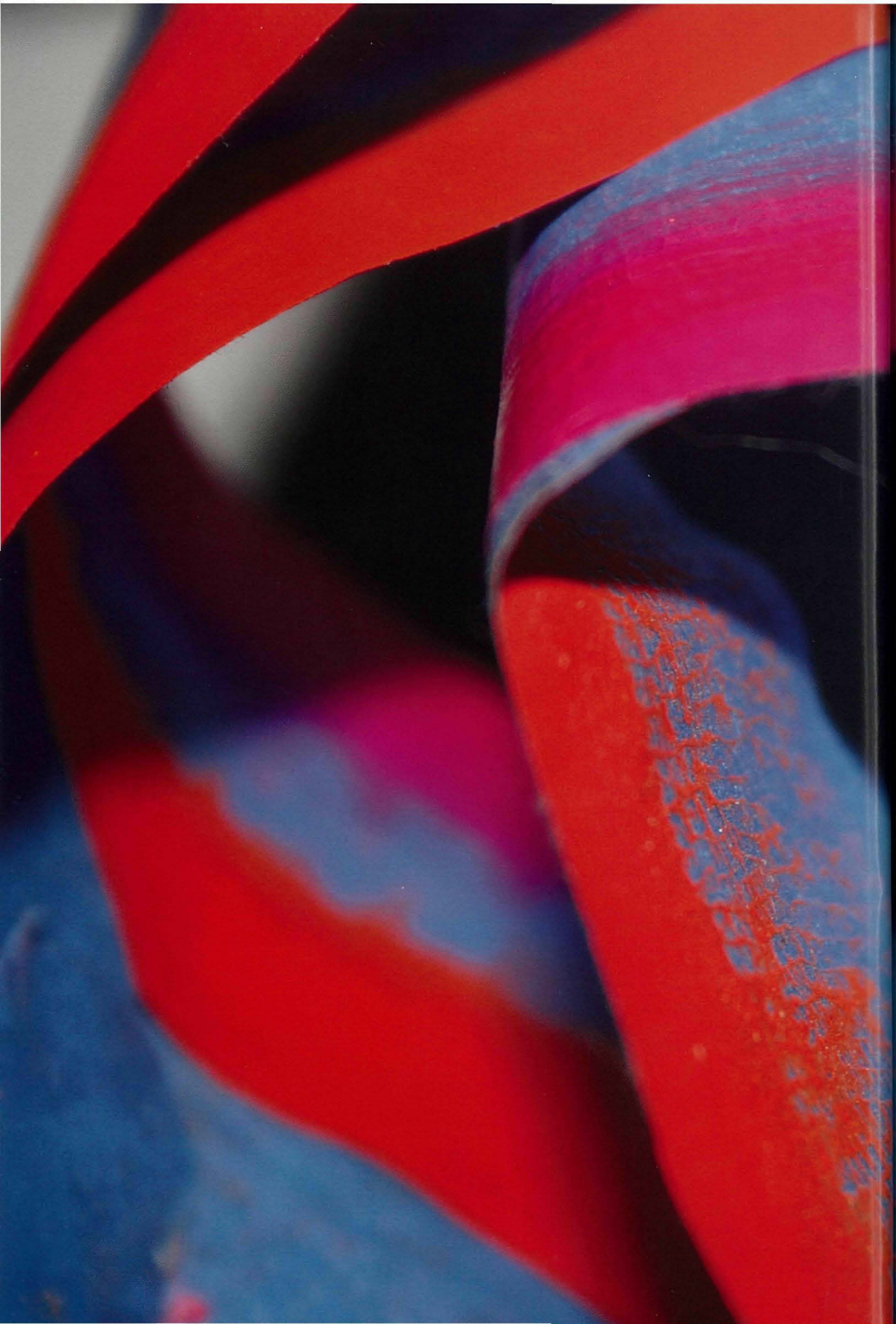
Rachel Scott

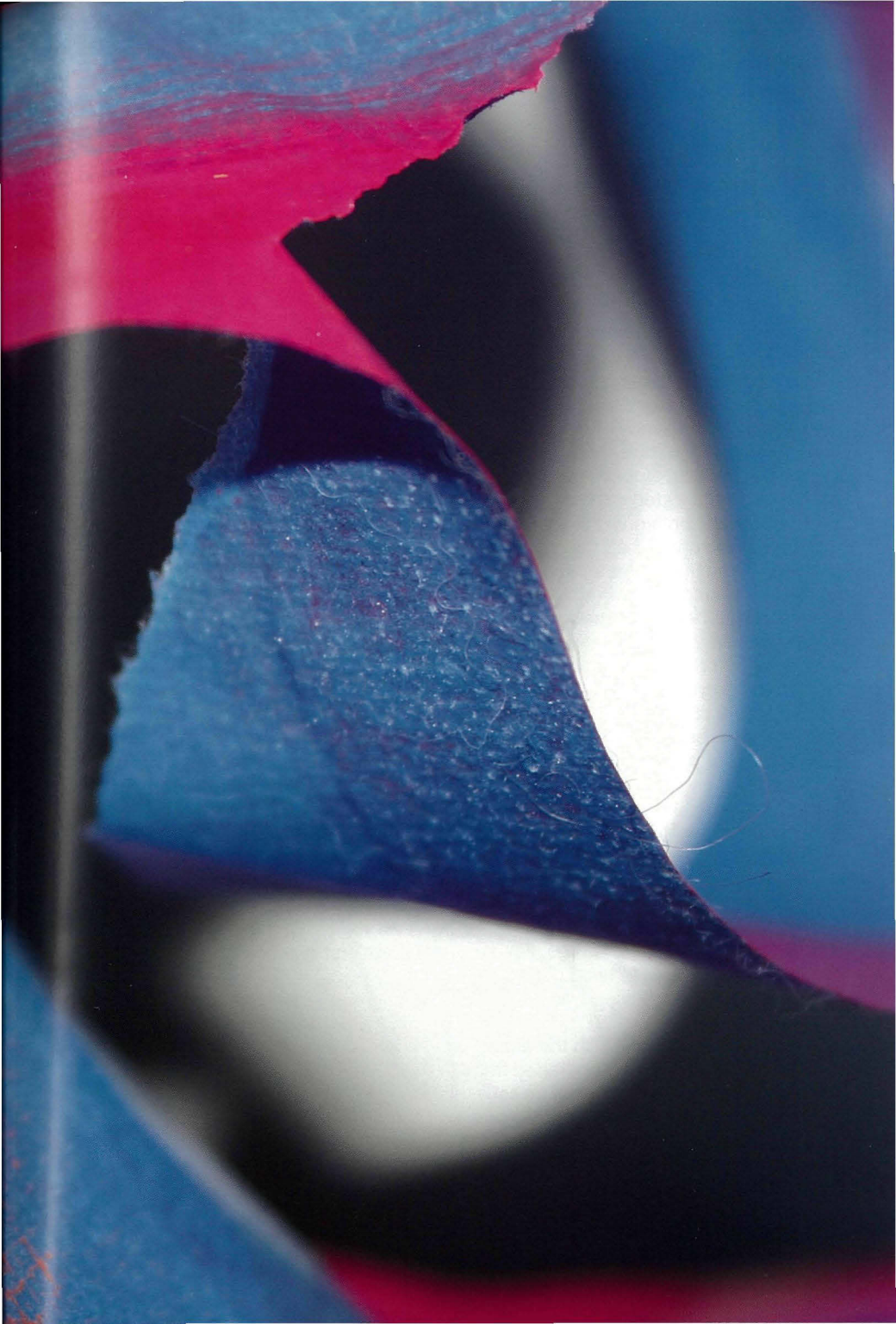












Between Drinks

Michael Moran & Todd McMillan

On the weekend we watched the Melbourne Storm break clear from the pack to reach thirty-six points on the rugby league premiership ladder, making them odds-on favourites to take out the trophy for 2006. Their victory of forty-six points to four came at the expense of last year's premiership winners the Wests Tigers.

Part One:

A fair few years ago, I ventured down the coast to Mollymook for a winter weekend with some boys I'd known since I was about so high. We played cricket, smoked a lot of dope, ate a bunch of mushrooms, and inhaled plenty of bulbs when things became too serious. Quite happily, the weekend also coincided with my birthday. I spent the occasion arguing incessantly with a mate about who had the more attractive queen in their hand, and observing formations of swimming frogs in the clouds. When things became too serious, I would walk off quietly to frolic in the shories before realising it was actually tarmac, knowing all the while that a stoic, if stupid, game of cricket awaited on the beach if things, once again, became too serious. It was a pretty good weekend.

By the next winter, I hadn't seen much of the fella I argued with about cards, another had moved to Canberra and become very insular, yet another was practically married and I, along with most of the others, had reached the end of my tether when it came to the abuse of recreational drugs. For old times sake we decided to head down to Mollymook.

Two of the fellas persisted with the dope, although this time they had upgraded from bongos to buckets, and the rest of us sat around getting drunk, telling jokes that we had all heard before. Cricket was notably absent. When we did have a more substantial conversation it was to reminisce about our last weekend away with a kind of inherent pathos that only occurs when you know you should have known better.

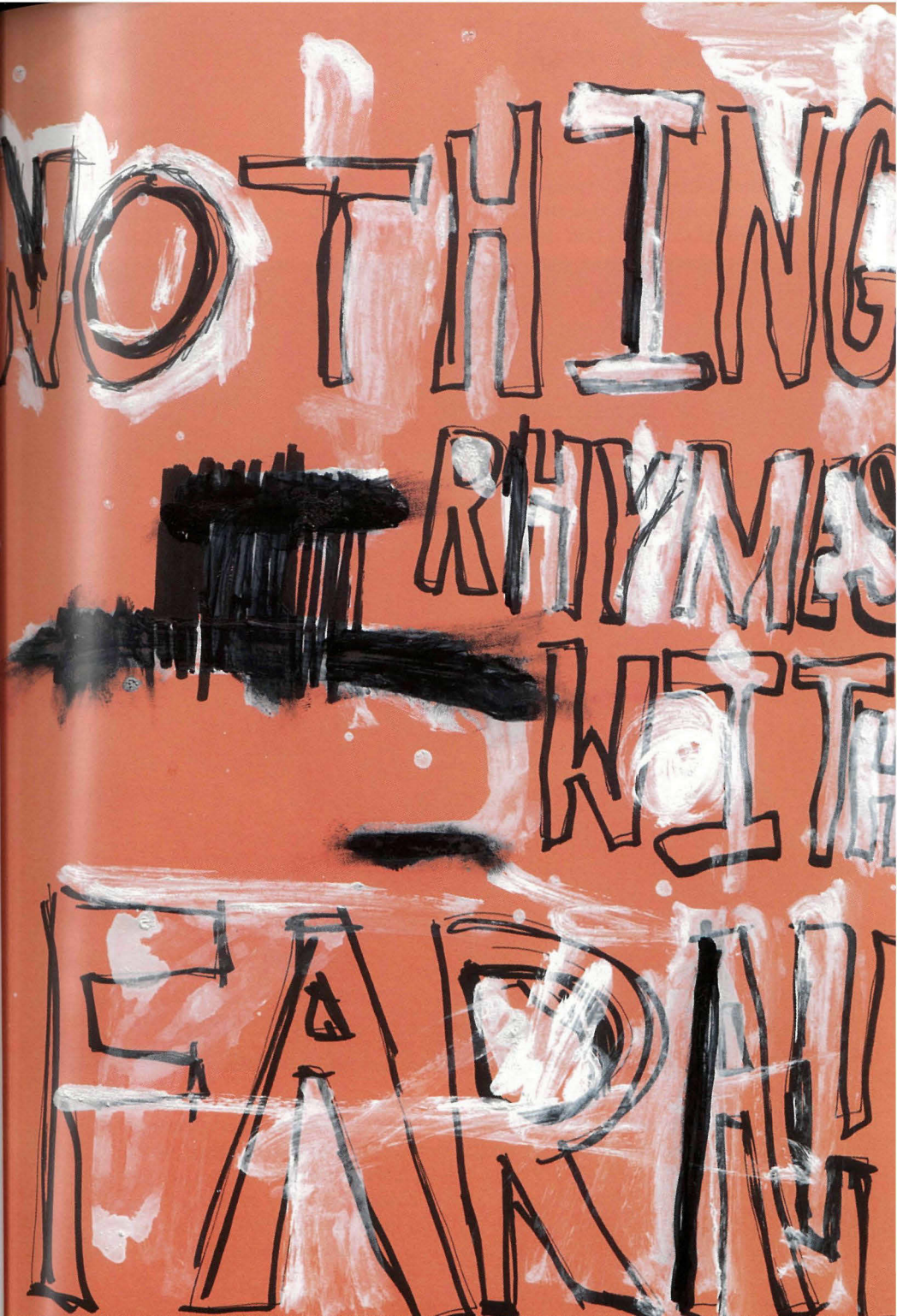
Part Two:

The Whitsundays, not a terribly inspired holiday destination, but we were not a terribly inspired group. Seven out of the eight of us had nicknames that phonetically ended in a vowel. We all lived at home with our parents. Two weeks on a boat. Eventually all of our faces took on the appearance of burn victims. We ate sausages and eggs. We drank beer that smelt and tasted of prawns.

On the final night we had run out of alcohol. 'No mind' said the dope smokers (not a direct quote), to which I responded with threats of death. We went to a nearby holiday island. We attracted no notice from the ladies there.

That morning one of us had turned from red to white. Two days later he was airlifted back to Sydney as we drove beneath. It eventuated that Daimo had been drinking with another person's liver.

As we write this, the Wests Tigers are out of premiership contention.



NOTHING

RHYMES

WITH

FAIRY

Roland Barthes, the Bear

Kuba Dorabialski



I'm not much of a book collector, but about a year ago I came across an offer online for a signed first edition of Roland Barthes' autobiography, *Roland Barthes par Roland Barthes*, and decided to finally put my new credit card to use. A first edition of a major work, in pretty good nick, with inscription and autograph; it was expensive but not as expensive as it should have been. It did, however, lack certification. But I wasn't about to resell it. It was a treat for myself. On the flyleaf at the front of the book, in a pre-war hand was the author's inscription:

*à Luc Dimanche, homage de l'auteur
- R. Barthes*

I don't know who Luc Dimanche is or was and I wouldn't even bother trying to find out. No one of note, most likely. A student perhaps, who had a book signed after a lecture. He could have been anyone; Barthes was quite a celebrity and there are quite a few signed copies of his books and essays around the place, often with a similar inscription but, obviously, with a different name.

*

On a recent trip to Paris, during a period of particularly intense Barthes enthusiasm, I began digging around specialist bookstores in the 6th arrondissement, asking about my first edition; about the signature and its authenticity. To my surprise, I was met with a general indifference and something of a bemused sympathy for the foreigner who still bothers to read Barthes, much less collect his books. It seems that in 21st century France, Barthes and his intellectual contemporaries, figures such as Foucault, Derrida and de Man, are forgotten and neglected. The only fools who ask

about these writers are naïve American tourists; those of the same heap as Monet enthusiasts and Da Vinci Code pilgrims. 'Who does France look to now?' I asked one book dealer.

He leaned forward and said, 'Sartre and Chomsky.'

One guy dead for 25 years and the other an American pamphleteer! I was surprised. 'This bullshit of language and metaphysics is not important in today's world. We are interested in justice and religious fundamentalism and American imperialism.' Pause.

'When there is peace, then we can bullshit,' he added, turning serious.

I drew a deep breath and took a few mental steps back to get a good run up, ready to tear him a new one and deliver my well rehearsed speech against materialism and historical myopia and absolutism and quasi-humanist fascism and all the rest of it, but stopped at the last moment. What's my issue? After all, he's happy. Who am I to interfere? You don't tell a Siberian Nanai animist he's misguided, you stand back and thank the world for its diversity. You hug him and admire him and envy him his conviction, his absolute resolve. You dance with the Nanai woodsman! Hear his drums. 'Get all worked up, kiss his womenfolk and drink his beer! So, with this in mind, I held back. I said nothing and restrained myself and smiled. I held back and to my surprise it was like dancing with this book dealer; dancing all night to the waltz of his immovable stubborn shit.

'Of course,' I said, in the end, flicking through a 1938 Polish copy of Arsenyev's *Dersu Uzala*, 'Peace comes first.'

*

While I was in Paris, through friends of friends of work colleagues of relatives-by-marriage (all manner of half baked connections that are made by us to both contract and authenticate our worlds) I came across an unknown (that is, up until now, unpublished and unexhibited) black and white photograph of Barthes. In it, he sits on a wooden chair in a dark room illuminated only by the morning light coming through the window. He is dressed in a white undershirt and, although it's not entirely clear, it seems he is naked from the waist down. The 64 year old is captured in profile, cigarette dangling from his mouth as he reaches out to his bureau.

The photograph is something of an accident. As Barthes sits there in his room, the photographer is either struck by some aspect of Barthes' appearance or the romanticism of the moment or the qualities of the light and scene. He picks up the camera, focuses, composes, sets the exposure (it takes for ever, or at least it used to; the face you photograph is seldom the face you wanted to catch), and as he trips the shutter, impatient Barthes has proceeded with life (in this case, picking things up from the table) and is caught in reality rather than pose.¹

According to the photographer, this is the last photograph of Barthes before his accident.

*

In front of the lens, I am at the same time: the one I think I am, the one I want others to think I am, the one the photographer thinks I am, and the one he makes use of to exhibit his art. In other words, a strange action: I do not stop imitating myself, and because of this, each time I am (or let myself be) photographed, I invariably suffer from a sensation of inauthenticity, sometimes of imposture (comparable to certain nightmares). In terms of

image-repertoire, the Photograph (the one I *intend*) represents the very subtle moment when, to tell the truth, I am neither subject nor object but a subject who feels he is becoming an object: I then experience a micro-version of death... The photographer knows this very well, and fears (if only for commercial reasons) this death in which his gesture will embalm me. Nothing would be funnier... than the photographers' contortions to produce effects that are 'lifelike': wretched notions: they make me pose in front of my paintbrushes, they take me outdoors (more 'alive' than indoors)... they notice a bench and immediately (what a windfall!) make me sit down on it. As if the (terrified) Photographer must exert himself to the utmost to keep the Photograph from becoming Death.

Much can be made of this excerpt from Barthes' *Camera Lucida* in relation to the photograph that I came upon. In fact, early in this piece's history I'd decided I wouldn't dare go in this direction (too predictable), but unfortunately something within me broke and I solemnly faced the truth: I am a hack theorist and (consequently) I am a weaking.

So: we wonder whether Barthes is in the act of posing; we wonder whether he is in fact urged by the photographer to appear 'lifelike'; is he thinking that he is at that instant becoming an object? Is he recalling this very passage from *Camera Lucida* (it was written more or less several months before the photograph was taken)? Here we have Barthes in the process of being 'embalmed' in a photograph just before he joins this represented dead self in reality. To quote Barthes again, 'He is dead and he is going to die.'

Can you grok that shit?

*

On the 25th of February, 1980, Roland Barthes was hit head-on by the drunk driver of a laundry truck while crossing the street at 44 Rue des Écoles across the street from the Collège de France (where he was chair of Literary Semiology). He was on his way home from a luncheon held by Mitterrand where he had talked with, among others, Michel Foucault.

An interesting (if suspect) account of the crash was given to me by an old man I met in a café in Lyon, of all places. He smiled at my son and asked me what it was I was doing in this shit-hole of a town (his words). When I found myself wondering the same thing, his question became more general ('Why France?'). I mentioned my wife's work and some research of my own and when he hears the name Roland Barthes, his sausage of a finger flies up and his lips thin.

'I saw him die!' he announces.

For a second, I suspect he is referring to French goalkeeper Fabien Barthez and his 'death' in the 2006 World Cup final. Everyone was talking football at the time. 'But it's no joke! I was a garbage collector in Paris. I saw him walk out onto the street and *phstzz*,' (he claps his hands) 'the truck hit him.'

'You're kidding,' I say, amazed.

He sits back in his chair feigning insult. After a while, he tells me.

'It was amazing, I mean, terrible, but amazing. When the truck hit, he instantly turned into a soft piece of dough. He suddenly had no skeleton. He doubled over and went high into the air,' the garbage collector slowly glides his open hand up in front of my face. 'More up than forward, you see.'

'My God,' I say.

'Yes. And the sound he made when he died... I still hear it in my head. You could hear him die at that instant. Like a dirty rag hitting asphalt.'

I stood up.

'But he didn't die for another month!'

'No, he died instantly. I saw it and I heard it.'

*

One summer, at the age of ten or so, I went camping with my family in the T____ Mountains. For two weeks we hiked and ate and set fire to things. One night, off alone to watch the night sky (I was romantic like that), I saw a medium-sized brown bear climb down from a tree and wander over to a parked car and peer in. He pressed his paws against the glass and sniffed through the rubber seal. I took a few quiet steps back and waited for him to pull the door clean off, but he didn't. He walked around back and forth for a while, looked over at me, and didn't care.

Soon, a large militia van came speeding around the road, tried to brake, and hit the poor animal head-on. I was so horrified that I immediately took flight, but managed somehow (eyes in back of head) to see the bear fold neatly in half and pop up nearly two metres in the air. Like Barthes, he went more up than across and turned soft as soon as the car hit. The impact of the bear's body on the road sounded like a wet towel and I cried and cried.

*

Look carefully at an image of Barthes, late in life. Tell me he doesn't look like a bear.

*

I contacted the fellow who took the photo of Barthes on that sad last morning and asked him if he could photograph me getting hit by a truck at the same intersection Barthes got hit and he said yes and I asked my wife to make me a bear suit and she said yes.

1. Don't pick on me for using words such as reality or pose without inverted commas; I'd like to think that we do that automatically, anyway. I'm not here to jerk you off.

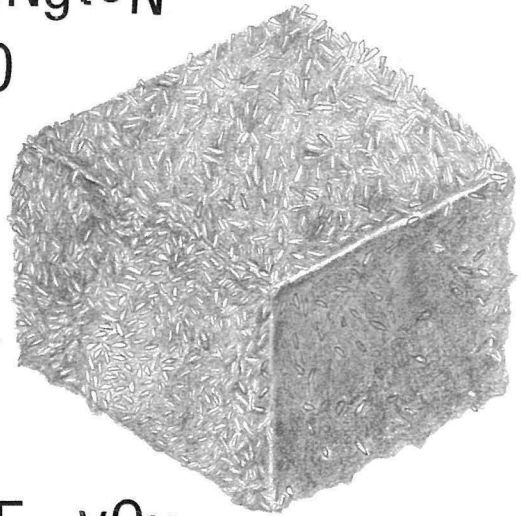
Do the right thing
Keg

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REGional RuBBiSH:
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On THE seat



(juST in caSE yOu
fORGOT wHAT couNTRY
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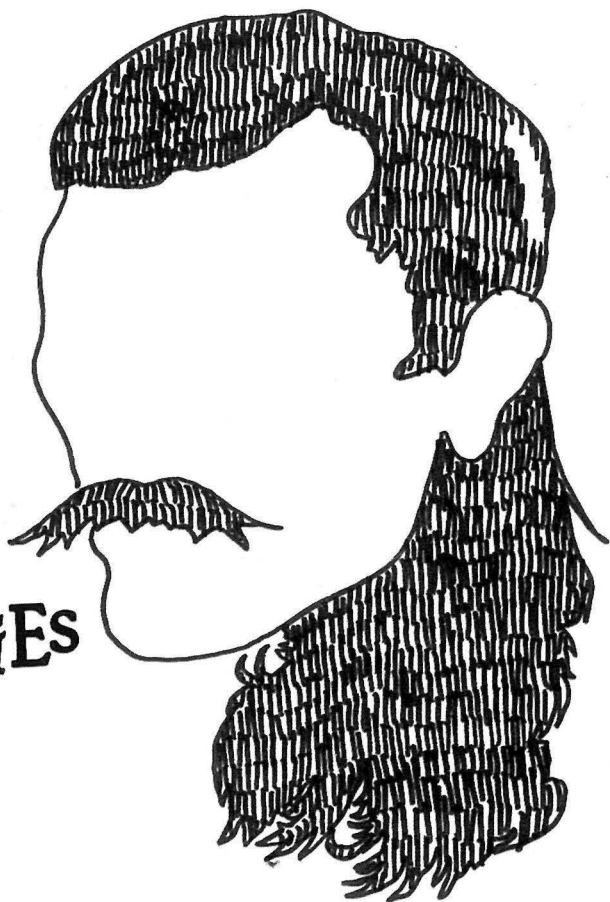
**WORDS FROM
A TRASHBAG:**

**'SEX ONLY COMES
BEFORE ALCOHOL**

**WHEN I'M
SOBER'**



BOGAn:
aUStrALia's
teRM fOr
whItE
TRASH
spAnning
aLL
nAtiONalitiEs



ironically, the pile of fliers
scattered everywhere at the
subway station saying,
'JObs, jObS, jObS!!'
were NOT
advertising
for a
janitor



Souped Up at Supré

Daniel Mudie Cunningham in conversation with the Motel Sisters

[Paris Hilton is] the sleaziest STD that we collectively picked up in reality television's debasing democratization of fame. Bouncing back from the whole "N-word" scandal and turning amateur porno into a marketing coup, Hilton is a bottomless skank hole of reinvention. Marginally attractive and fantastically stupid, she laid the groundwork for her upcoming act as a pop singer with hair feathered to the point where it looks like a platinum hang-glider. Her popularity reflects that of the President, as she's another rich cracker moron with a propensity for falling upwards.¹

Why do the most spectacularly alluring specimens of human trash always get everything? Great clothes, hair, accessories, TV shows, product lines, sex scandals, party invites, little dogs, and bit parts in horror films. Paris Hilton's fame reigns like a headlining celebrity rash erupting over the airbrushed face of US trash culture – a trash rash so to speak. With heiress as a major fame claim, Paris and sister Nicky became über-whore-magnets, making bad seed hot beds out of other young dumb starlets like Nicole Ritchie, Lindsay Lohan, Bijou Phillips and Taryn Manning. Reinforcing the old conundrum that it takes a hell of a lot of cash to certify top grade trash, Paris Hilton is, as Terry Sawyer aptly puts it, 'another rich cracker moron' – white trash with money, you might say.

What hasn't Paris tried her hand at? Unless one considers her foray into home video a downloadable kind of video art, we can safely assume Paris hasn't been to art school. Such an art educational oversight is exactly the kind of gap the

Motel Sisters bridge. As if they one day realised that pink had met unfettered discrimination in an art world so beige, Australian performance artists Liam Benson and Naomi Oliver invented the Motel Sisters: a super duo that crash art openings guerrilla style, dressed up to the sixty-nines. The Motel Sisters loved the starfucking, sycophantic flatter-blubber of art openings so much that they decided to become artists themselves. And when their celebrity got too big, they invented more than just a back story; they cultivated alter egos in Tiffany and Shane, and let Sari Kivinen's character Jessee-Liina trail along for the joyride. Never one to let a good story get in the way of truth, I spoke to Liam, Naomi and Sari while waiting in the drive-through queue at Penrith McDonalds.

Daniel Mudie Cunningham: When did you start the Motel Sisters?

Naomi Oliver: The first performance coincided with the 2004 Biennale. We had tickets for the artist party and we just thought it would be hilarious to dress in pink. And we both had this thing for Paris Hilton because she seemed famous for no real reason.

Liam Benson: The reactions were quite explosive so we thought we'd develop it.

DMC: What was it about Paris Hilton that inspired you in the first place?

NO: Self-promotion and over-confidence.

LB: Because there doesn't seem to be enough of it in the art community. Everyone's so sensitive and hard on themselves. We always felt Paris' confidence was a really honest form of self-love.



The Motel Sisters, *I hear she had a shot-gunwedding and all her family wore black*, 2005, digital photograph, 60x80cm

NO: Paris became famous by just turning up for things, so we thought let's just turn up for things and see how far we can surpass people's expectations; getting people used to an idea and manipulating their perceptions of us and what we are lovingly parodying. We're a bit like what a 'Westie' teenager would find exciting to dress up as.

DMC: Why is Westie culture important for the performance? The suburban aesthetic seems at odds with the celebrity cultures referenced.

NO: For me, working in Penrith for years, you see the Supré culture, which is a cheap kind of glamour, which I identify as being very Paris Hilton. If she wasn't an heiress, she'd be a Supré queen.

LB: Not because that would be the only job she could get but because she'd love it.

DMC: So Supré is the inspiration for all the costumes?

NO: Yeah, we buy all the costumes from Supré and we make any one-off pieces

with materials from Spotlight. Paris Hilton looks like she shops at Supré but she makes it look really glamorous.

DMC: The suburban white trash feel of the Motel Sisters really seems at odds with the wealth, privilege and power of their real life counterparts. Are you saying money corrupts taste?

NO: I don't think we are. Paris Hilton wouldn't dress all classy because then she wouldn't be noticed. She's creating a hook, and the overtly sexual, trashy style is her hook.

LB: We're not saying this is good taste or bad taste, we are just celebrating a particular type of taste: the 'souped up', outlandish and garish.

DMC: Do the Motel Sisters sometimes crash and burn – that recurring trademark of real life celebrities enthusiastically documented by the

tabloids?

NO: We sometimes pretend to come down off drugs because it's cooler to pretend.

LB: The Motel Sisters are very provocative but don't have sex. The irony is we get dressed up and our look screams sex, but there would just be no way logistically that we could have sex! We're watching our wigs all night to make sure they don't get caught alight or tangled in something. Basically my breasts are a launching pad for messages.

DMC: Tell me a bit about your video work *Pink Thang* (2005) and its connection to Tracey Moffatt's *Pet Thang* (1991)?

LB: We love Tracey Moffatt! But *Pet Thang* was our least favourite work so we wanted to parody it.

NO: *Pet Thang* had a sexual element that we were confused by. Maybe it looked a



The Motel Sisters, Jessee Liina, Paris and Tacky Motel at the *Being-Narly*, 2006, digital photograph, 5x7 inches

bit stiff, awkward and self-conscious like what I've seen of Paris Hilton's sex video. As emerging artists it is really naughty to take-off someone who is completely established and an art world darling.

DMC: How do you understand the role of drag in relation to the Motel Sisters?

LB: We consider it 'advanced dress ups'. As a drag queen, I'm like the child's toy that you can muck around with and get a bit broken, whereas traditional stage drag queens are like mantelpiece ornaments that you can't touch.

NO: And you do get touched quite a bit.

LB: Early on it was annoying; I felt if I was a real woman would you treat me like that? We get all sorts of weird things. At the Biennale party this year, one guy said to me: 'Stop looking at me like you wanna suck my dick.' I looked at him and said, 'Stop looking at me like you wanna suck my dick!'

DMC: Sari, how do the characters you have developed relate to the Motel Sisters?

Sari Kivinen: I developed my first character about a month after the debut of the Motel Sisters in 2004. I was going

to be some kind of Jessica Simpson if they were Paris Hilton. But I went nuts and created three characters – three different versions of the same person. The first one is Jessee-Liina – she's the one who goes out and socialises with the Motel Sisters. Jessee-Liina's two younger sisters – Caroliina and Starella – haven't interacted with the Motel Sisters. I'm exploring their sibling dynamic, their hereditary weakness to alcohol and the downward spiral between them. Jessee-Liina aims for the top, so she's a socialite always smiling like a pop star.

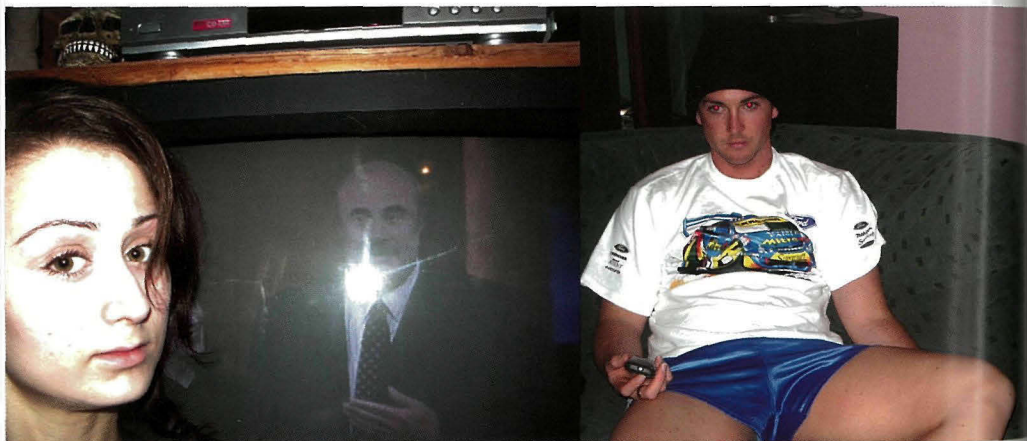
DMC: Tell me about Shane and Tiffany, who are alter-egos created for the Motel Sisters.

NO: Shane and Tiffany are average Westies. Liam is Shane and I am Tiffany.

LB: Shane's a repressed working class male who doesn't really know where he's going in life, but he works as hard as he can.

NO: The relationship between both character couples is based on escapism or is like a dream – much like Shane and Tiffany dream up Paris and Tacky.

LB: When Shane becomes Tacky, he's like a girl from magazines like *FHM*, *Ralph* and *Picture* – all airbrushed and worked over.



The Motel Sisters, *Shane watching tv and Tif+Dr Phil*, 2005, digital photograph, 5x7 inches



The Motel Sisters, *Westie Gofik* (detail), 2004, C-type print, 82x100cm

DMC: So you invented the “dream” first and then the people who dreamt them?

NO: Yeah we work backwards.

LB: Actually, we’re kind of like sketch comedy where you have many different skits that sometimes overlap.

DMC: Do Paris and Tacky know Naomi and Liam?

LB: No, they’re too self-obsessed and caught in the moment. They don’t really know where they are half the time.

DMC: Will you move beyond showing at galleries and crashing art openings?

NO: We have so many ambitions. We want to slowly infiltrate B-grade TV show audiences. We absolutely love Toni Pearen and tried to get into the audience of *Funniest Home Videos* but that didn’t go down well.

LB: One day we’ll have a TV show of our own. And we want to release a book called *Contemporary Art for Hotties*.

NO: Next year we want to do a show called *Because I’m Worth It* and invite artists to make work manipulating our image. It’ll be like the Archibald but better because it’s about us. We’ll present M.E. Awards – named after the Emmy Awards, which we’ll give out to the best artists on the night.

DMC: Do the Motel Sisters have a shelf life?

NO: We’ll last as long as Paris Hilton is alive and well. If the interest in her peters out then maybe we’ll retire.

LB: We just know we’re going to meet Paris Hilton before then.

1. Terry Sawyer on Paris Hilton, PopMatters, 2004: <http://www.popmatters.com/film/best2004/tv-sawyer.shtml>

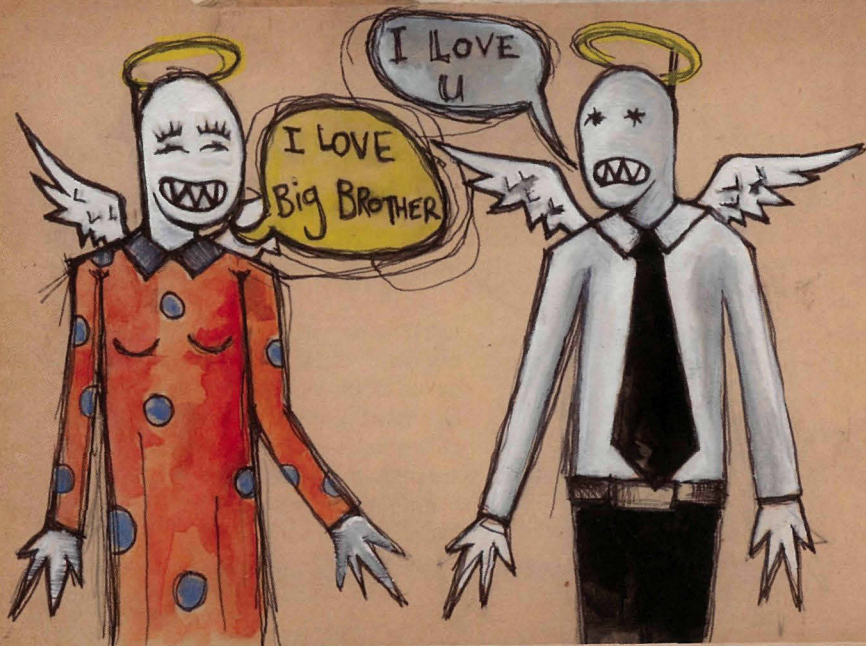
Love is Trash

Teo Treloar

love is trash

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love

LAND FILL



Swap Meet: Free Stuff Party!

Emily Hunt & Raquel Welch



What do you do when you have excess baggage? Well, you get rid of it! And who better to dump it on, but your friends?

Swap Meet parties are a way of getting rid of all that useless junk and swapping it for a few finer pieces. If you thrift and hoard, you can understand the need to cull every few months, to allow for new acquisitions and eliminate those unworthy of your possession. We have held two successful Swap Meets so far, and all participants have gone home happy hoarders.



Good stuff we've seen at Swap Meet parties:

R2-D2 soap dispenser, old slides of strangers, Punky Brewster doll, gold bullion, kebabs, Marky Mark's original demo tape, perfume bottles, XTC Lust in the Dust video, Batman t-shirt, Footballers Wives series one, deer head candle holder, cufflinks, Marie Antoinette picture frame, woollen scarf and even a fridge!

The bag being sent to Salvation Army hell is full of crap such as packets of cake mix, religious ornaments, raggedy clothes, multiple copies of Bjork's Homogenic album, soiled underpants, Tin Machine poster, Cancer Council daffodil pins, a single sock, The Celestine Prophecy, \$2 shop shampoo.



Look at this happy boy. What has he scored? He scored a lifetime supply of happiness. It's true, you can be happy too, if you're involved in a Swap Meet!

In his mouth he is munching on Emily Lanigan's old student I.D card. Maybe he is planning some sort of counterfeit action? Identification cards are hot property in Asia and this forward thinking man is building himself a little nest egg from free stuff! You really need to be on the ball. As people unpack their stash, watch closely and keep in mind your plan of action, ie. getting to the good stuff before any of your 'friends' get their dirty claws into it.



Another happy punter! This smart young fox was a regular viewer of *The Antique Roadshow* on TV. She knew the ins and outs of bartering and brought along some top shelf items that surprised us all. Remember that song by Sade 'Smooth Operator?' well this is who she was singing about. She won that trophy fair and square and she is now a regular long-time fan and promoter of our Swap Meet parties.

Crap shit ends up in hell with you if you don't get rid of it, and the best way to do so is to literally throw it out the window. We live above a shop on a busy road, which is just perfect for said purpose. However, with children throwing rocks at passing cars, we have to be careful not to get sued.

In the end, what goes around comes around. Sometimes junk haunts you and you can't get rid of it. The headless freak is still getting rained on outside on the balcony. We have to look at it every time we go out for a smoke and we're using it as an ashtray. See that hole in it's ear? Perfect.



The Chocolate Revolution Manifesto

Benedict Ernst



THE CHOCOLATE REVOLUTION MANIFESTO

2006

"The really revolutionary revolution is to be achieved, not in the external world, but in the souls and flesh of human beings"

Aldous Huxley

Dear friends,

Together we stand at the dawn of a new millennium, yet a millennium already ensnared by the cartography of the past. We inherit a world shrink wrapped, pre-packed and neat stacked for our consumption. We experience a world dominated by planners and statisticians,

drawers of diagrams, programmers of systems,

mappers of genomes and samplers of ozone,

Historians, Commentators, Curators and Home Makers.

modelers of models, makers of maps, charters of graphs.

We live in a world of signs

We inherit a world dominated.

So the time has come for a new Manifesto for much has changed since our last endeavours. The project itself made ridiculous for we no longer share even the most basic presumptions of our modern era ancestors.

We have no Ideals to pursue (Oh the joy!)

No Future to enrich (those born today have already dismissed us)

No State to Smash (Oh sweet Oedipus!)

No Past to escape – for we are born of the world, fat and nourished on unprecedented freedoms. As a generation of calves turned feral in an abandoned and heretical temple we know little but pleasure, ease and opportunity.

But yet we languish.....

Why?

Our lives today are forged by the hammers of diversity, equality, plurality and democracy. We hold **Truth** to be an outmoded historical concept replaced by anti-discrimination legislation and 'free' trade mythologies. **Reason** likewise is an embarrassing old uncle, bed ridden and incontinent. We are corralled by the materialistic pragmatism of the social scientists; the simplistic literalism of the lowest common denominator.

Our lives are so obvious.

Our boundaries pre-proscribed.

The imaginative of us are milked dry in youth then sold to celebrity freak shows till early drug addled death. We live on a trash diet that sustains but does not enrich.... and kills the spirit!

We must find the strength to admit ourselves a people malnourished

Our perception of the world has itself been polluted, our language and nomenclature turned toxic. Our experiences, indeed our identities, are filtered through language; we talk back to ourselves and can thus say 'I know', 'I see'. But our language has become cancerous, aggressive, malignant, growing away from us at an unprecedented rate. We are intoxicated with images that cannot be assimilated.

We fetishize the new and novel and are no longer understood beyond our most immediate circles.

We make models of our experience, images of our lives, patterns and representations that will fit some structure and lay the foundations of Knowledge. We have always done this. Maybe it is what we do...

... *but*, our image making capabilities have accelerated to such a malignant state that we sit in besotted stupefaction before these colourful blossoming cultures that are demeaning us.

They have over-run the healthy tissue.

These models are no longer *aids memoir* or handy abstractions; they have spawned the possibility of fictional, fraudulent, entirely *virtual experience*. Dumb struck and stupid, slack jawed like Narcissus at the pool we sit infantile and retarded, tinkering and intoxicated with these simple pretty pictures, chattering and discussing their trivialities.

It may simply be that to this we are doomed

Pictures tell a story, a story based on a formula, structured by a system, a set of contextual premises. This system illuminates a model of experience. A model we can relate to, copy, and model our own experiences upon or against. Thus through repetition these systems grow and compete, interconnect, monopolize and form a web.

A web of understanding,

a web of communication.

Initially this formed community, distinct cultures, *but today* we witness the sown seeds of a global *lingua franca* of idiocy and forgery - **of language without experience**.

We are surrounded by spin doctors and that surely signifies a systemic sickness!

Then as this World Wide Web of Chatter fattens and grows it forms a cocoon. A tightly spun, closely wrapped web of polluted perception and rancid representation that blocks out the sun.....stifles the air.....and muffles all sound.

The animals knew it first and have either joined us or died away. We will no longer be petitioned by their concerns - we have fabricated their input.

So, my friends, if you should awaken to breathe an air that seems sweetly infused with an almost indiscernible unpalatability and find yourself witness to a world of overflowing Beauty; If you should find yourself suddenly open to the bounty of Diversity, able to appreciate all things equally without discrimination and fighting a gag reflex and an acrid aftertaste; If you should awaken mumbling "*Ceci n'est pas un pipe*" from a broken dream of a dream and fevered sleep; in short if you should awaken one day to the strange awareness of the universal predominance of an unnameable *Inauthenticity*, then, my friends, you awaken to the

Chocolate Revolution!

The Inauthentic is the signal fire, the alarm bell, the rallying call, the cold sweat and night cry of the coming Revolution.

The Chocolate Revolution accepts that the Death of Truth has led to the crippling of Integrity! That Integrity is the pumping of the blood to a Human Being.

The Chocolate Revolution frees us from lives as cultural production assistants, content providers or cultural facilitators, rebirthing all again.....*as Artists!*

The Chocolate Revolution does not accept Art as a branch of the welfare state nor as a small business enterprise or entrepreneurial trade gambit, but as the *essential* digestive function of a healthy organism.

Beware! The Chocolate Revolution accepts the genuine fake, the truly inauthentic, and the honest phony. **The Chocolate Revolution** is non-binary and non-material. It comes in Milk, Dark, White, Hazelnut and other combinations yet to be made manifest.

The Revolution makes but one demand,

Seize the means of production!

All the maps, all the images, all the systems that order the world, the syntax, the bureaucrats, the fat cats, the fathomless complexity, or simple serenity we inhabit is spun from our **Desires!**..... like a chocolate thread from a candy spider.

Perceptual acknowledgement is your greatest weapon!

All the up, down and round and round. The left, right, day, night, the choices you choose between, all the things you see *are spun by your desire*. They are structured by your perception, and your perception is structured by them, *but.....It is all Chocolate!*

The whole sugar spun archipelago of images and reproductions, this candy citadel of our common desires and mutual hopes, this glorious beauty, this miraculous package, is spun from within you. Inside and out is an outmoded binaryism. The Revolution sees that all is Chocolate, for the Revolution demeans all cheap spatial metaphors. The Package *is* the Product and your skin is but a systemic glitch, a simplification and illusionary contextual byproduct..... awaiting Revolution.

Perceptual acknowledgement is your greatest gift!

The Chocolate Revolution therefore *is* a **war** of words, a **battle** over images, a **rebellion** of perception.

The Chocolate Revolution does not concern itself with **content** or **ideas**, these like Heaven are systemic mythologies (and there was a revolution there too!).

The Chocolate Revolution is a revolution of **Form**.

The Chocolate Revolution is **superficial**. All is Surface. All is Action. Concepts and Ideas are pretentious presumptions perpetuated by the insecure, stupid and complacent who live in fear of the truth of Chocolate.

The Revolution is about **behavior** not motivation for the Revolution knows that *all motivation is Chocolate!*

Perceptual acknowledgement will be your greatest test!

The Chocolate Revolution insists you take the red pill, Neo, not but once but *again and again*. Make a daily habit of Chocolate ingestion, a regular diet of anti-illusionaries, of package openers, of onion peelers. It is true that when all is done this labour may resemble a grand futility, revealing nothing more than a broken ladder, a series of Chinese boxes - of boxes in boxes....in boxes..... in boxes.....in boxes, a vicious regress of empty packages and broken promises *but the Revolution will deliver*.

The Process will yield the Chocolate vision,

The Chocolate Revolution will yield the awareness of those packages.....

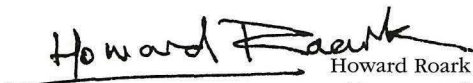
...as packages!

As sweet, shiny, seductive, beautiful wrapping that even if after a lifetime of unwrapping, unpacking, decamping, deconstructing and stripping it all away we find no Zion, no Heaven, no Soul, Self or Substance, but only forgotten, mumbling old age and the inevitability of complacency.....

Was it still not the best way to live?

Anyway...'nuff a that, here are the bullet points

- ▶ Ignore the 'Important'. It is simple code for the snap frozen and pre-packaged, the regurgitated, twice digested banalities of an imaginationless cunning. *Go into the world with Chocolate!*
- ▶ (Although we concede the point Mr. Scott-Heron), the *effects* of the *revolution will be televised*. **The Chocolate Revolution** itself will take place on your taste buds!
- ▶ Beware of Irony it is the ultimate form of consent! Sarcasm is better.
- ▶ (art) History's a fool! But the Fool is cool. And Cool is hot. And Hots what we got for your tots in stock this season!
- ▶ The future is now, Buck Rodgers: **the future is Chocolate!**


Howard Roark
24th June 2006



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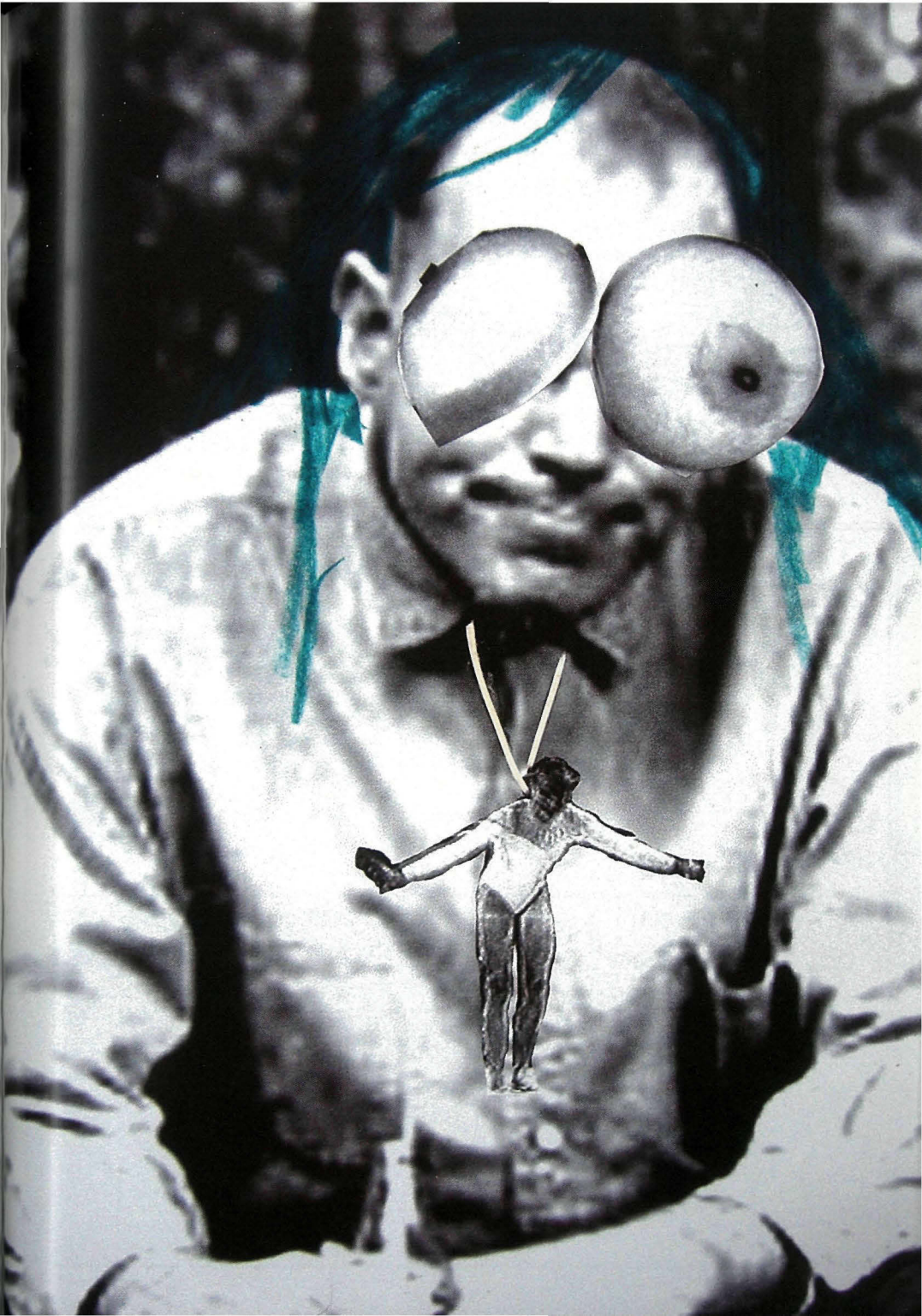
Notes From The Bin (Notes To Self)

Rob McLeish










Trash Cartoons

Anna Peters


You shouldn't see the glass as half empty but as half full!

Full of what?



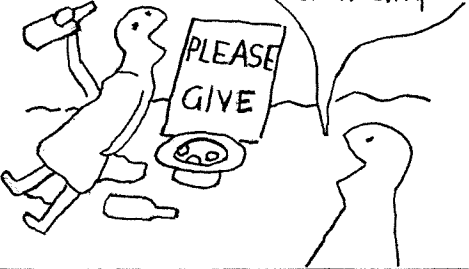
Those people are expendable!

Do you mean they've got nothing left to spend?



I'm a lady!


No you're not - you're a tramp!



What do you think of the dried prawn paste?


It's trashy!

No, it's trasi!




I live in a garbage dump!

Why don't you tidy it up?




How's your vacuuming robot going?

It keeps consuming my artwork!



Where's my gumnut
emblazoned cardy?

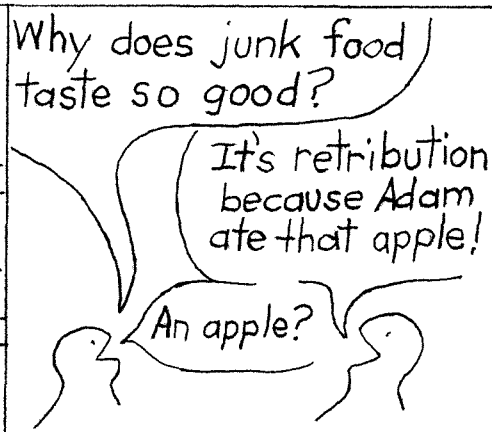
It's in the
kitschy!



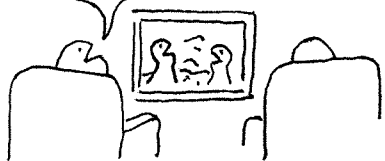
Why does junk food
taste so good?

It's retribution
because Adam
ate that apple!

An apple?

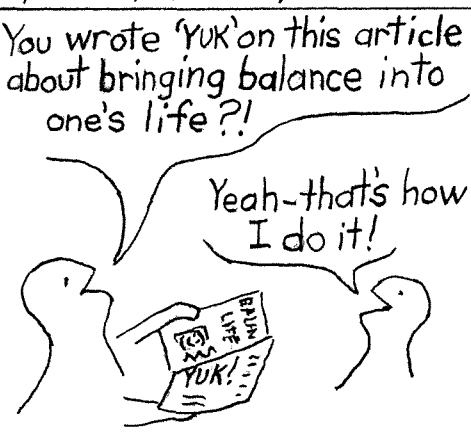


You've only got to see
one show on the
Aborigines and you know
all there is to know
about them!




You wrote 'YUK' on this article
about bringing balance into
one's life?!

Yeah-that's how
I do it!



Do you sing the
national anthem
at school?

Well I wouldn't
sing it
anywhere else!



The big issues of Christopher Hanrahan

Pete Volich interviews Chris Hanrahan



Pete Volich, *I'm ugly you're beautiful* #3, 2006, photographic print on metallic paper

Pete Volich: You and I both know it's a really big life, how do you think you fit into it?

Christopher Hanrahan: Umm, that's a big question. Listen Pete, I like to problem solve but it's hard. I'd like to defer to the Hebrew proverb – although I do believe that Catholicism is the bread and butter of religion – 'Some can find money for mischief when they can find none to buy corn'.

PV: Are you Jewish?

CH: I carry around a little book of Jewish wisdom.

PV: Interesting... In the first line from your song *Ain't got noth'in* featured in *Welcome to Struggletown*, you suggest that an unnamed 'other' has taken all your money.

CH: Peter, do you even like Country Music?

PV: I'm asking the questions.

CH: Well there is an art critic that I really like called Jerry Saltz, now before he was a critic he was a truck driver and his CB handle was 'The Jewish Cowboy'.

PV: Moving right along, are you just plain sad?

CH: Well it's funny, no not really, but a good friend of mine Todd McMillan is always sad. The great thing is he contacted Gallery Nicolai to see if he could work with Peter Land, but the gallery wrote back saying no, Peter isn't working much because he's depressed.

PV: Is that why your process involves mining the archive of the human experience?

CH: Hmm. 'As is the garden such is the gardener', Peter, there's another piece of

Jewish wisdom for you.

PV: I'm finding this interview quite difficult. Are you?

CH: I hope you feel that I'm not being... difficult?

PV: I'm just having a bad day.

CH: When I'm having a bad day I like to refer to the Jewish proverb...

PV: Can I just stop you there. Perhaps we should talk about your last show. Having heard some people say that they may need to get a run-up with understanding your work, how do you feel about this and how do you think your latest show may have reflected this?

CH: It would be pretty presumptuous of me to expect people to have seen my work and make work that can only be read in that context. It's simply absurd. Though, to an extent, it is true to say that my work is accumulative and often I'll recycle various objects from previous shows. However, like any artist, I'd hope that a viewer could approach my work and engage with it regardless. As the Yiddish saying goes, 'Better to ask ten times than to go astray once'.

PV: Hmm I see. I have always had ten or more questions that I could occupy myself with in relation to your work, but do you think that the Sydney art scene has time for ten questions? Tell me about a specific work from your last show that could possibly only sustain maybe lets say three questions?

CH: Well if pressed for time, I'd probably group three relatively disparate elements from the show. The installation was intended to encourage this type of reading anyway, but as we know time is money... I'd single out the video *old grey masyh*,



Christopher Hanrahan, *Our Still Lives (keep on coming)*, 2006, installation view, MOP Projects

the group of DAS crockery, *Cupboard Suite*, and the perforated crate piece *Keep Falling*.

PV: What a great selection, I found that the materials had a sorrowful yet hilarious sensibility in combination with one another. What are your thoughts on this marriage? Is there an undertow of 'hilarious melancholy' in your work that seeks to undermine and or enhance the reading of it?

CH: Well, yes, to a degree, I select my materials for a variety of reasons, and perhaps to anyone else they may seem a little sad. Generally the selections are based upon a personal engagement, either the materials are around me in everyday life or I will select them based upon their art world cache or some odd, obscure or punny reference I have arrived at for them. This is the same with the text in my work I may generate it but it is just as likely to come from the things I spend time with. This could be anything from music or literature or a drunken conversation with friends. I suppose that this reasoning leads

to some odd combinations. In a way your previous suggestion that the audience may need a run up to engage with my work is quite pertinent here. Sadly though, it's a bit of a stretch to expect anyone to attend a dissertation on my year nine woodwork class and the joys of Howard McFetridge's tutelage.

PV: I know that you are a big fan of MySpace. You have never been one to shy or turn your nose up at staring down the barrel of the lens with how you live your life and then wanting to document it, it seems 'hyper real' to me or a construction, similar to how poetry can enunciate or extrapolate a condensed and saturated essence of something. You also appear in many of your video works. Why do you like to show off so much?

CH: As you touched on in the last question, there is a sense of tragi-comedy that I enjoy documenting. I'm certainly no NIDA graduate and this I find is where (if any) resonance can be derived from my works. Often when shooting a video, I'll shoot

many times attempting to get the take right. More often than not, the entire shoot, or the first imperfect take ends up as the finished work. What I think is interesting is not trying too hard to force the thing. I've had a few disastrous meetings with curators and other artists where they seemed to want me to extrapolate what I would produce for an exhibition in 12 months time. Every time I come up with something I think they want to hear, only to come out of the meeting realising that the idea was horrible. So, as with the videos, I need to maintain that there is some unpredictability in the process. The challenge is to ensure that the reasoning behind the work is sound. So in answering your question, when you're so disorganised, no one really wants their time wasted, which leaves me as the only fool left at the bar.

PV: How would you describe your sense of performativity?

Bumbling and clumsy. Performativity is something that is incredibly persuasive if presented in the right framework. At it's worst I would put the SDC production of *Underland*. That show was so incredibly

hyped and boasted some of the world's best, dancing to Nick Cave's songs. Sadly, its hammy, literal interpretation of the lyrics was completely at odds with the earnest costuming, lighting and stage design. Performativity at its best is surprising, either because of technical acuity or complete audaciousness. It's the unguarded moments when the performer is completely unselfconscious; it seems only from this that something interesting or worthwhile can be revealed.

PV: I was impressed by your work, *Mug Tree (old grey mashy)*, in the recent ABN AMRO prize and was disappointed when you were not selected in the final hang. Would you mind telling me what you thought of the final hang? What is your interpretation of the site specificity that your work took on within the foyer? How would you feel about this work being a permanent sculpture in the ABN AMRO foyer?

CH: The final hang appeared to suit a bank, which is fine considering they are signing the winner's cheques. I think the idea of entering a work that had some

Christopher Hanrahan, *Our Still Lives (keep on coming)*, 2006, installation view, MOP Projects



site specificity was actually pretty stupid, after all, it's a prize for 'artistic merit' not my belief in everyone's need for jokes. In saying that, I've always liked the idea of public and corporate commissions. It seems to be this untapped world that could really engender some great work if the commissioners and selectors were willing to step outside of the usual suspects and mediums. If that work in particular was to go to a corporate foyer, I think it would have to be significantly larger.

PV: I know you have a sporting background. How do you think this has influenced your current practice?

CH: I enjoyed goading other students in theory classes about their disdain for sports. It would always take a pretty predictable, albeit I believe, quite valid argument about the parallels between sports and visual art: learning a skill, practicing that skill and then executing it. It was great, people that prided themselves on their tolerant and educated demeanour completely berating something of which they had little or no knowledge or experience of, their views defined by the demographic associated with the sport, or the media's coverage of it.

Actually, there is an article in the last *Broadsheet* that sort of touches on this in relation to the curation of exhibitions examining contemporary political events. The basic premise being that there are serious pitfalls in putting together a grab-bag of political art from around the world – the time required to properly research such a show far exceeds the usual allotted time and budget for the exhibition. In this case, the exhibition becomes hamstrung by the media's reportage of the particular political events, and the inevitable influence this holds over the curator.

So, in returning to a shared trait with sport, the art and or curator is acting in a retrograde fashion which has little or

nothing to add to an issue – it is simply navel gazing moralizing that seems to make the artist/curator feel that they have made an ethical and just gesture. Alike, with the late, lazy effort in the sporting arena, the gesture is flaccid: too little, too late. The effort must be made prior and consistently in order to achieve the win. So, erm, in summary, I'm influenced in that I love the diligence and commitment, it may not be easily recognisable but as a scholar of the subject the nuances become evident.

PV: Wow, you really are a heart-felt man Christopher Hanrahan. Let's talk about your future projects. That video piece in your last show depicts an articulate understanding of movement. Where exactly are you moving?

CH: Gee, thanks Pete, I do like to indulge myself sometimes. In making that video, *Our Still Lives (old grey mashy)*, I engaged in a bit of cheesy dance. It's fun and perhaps even funny, I'm not really built like a dancer, so to put myself in that context is kind of awkward. Outside of my own practice, I like that kind of stilted, yet strangely alluring type of action. My friends and I have created a dance environment called C.H.O.D.E. We perform really sporadically and mainly tributes to significant events. We last performed a dance interpretation of the Beaconsfield mining ordeal and I think some of the upcoming performances will look to Cyclone Tracy, Lindy Chamberlain, Burke and Wills and on a more contemporary note, Peter Brock and Pro Hart.

PV: I think we may be done...

CH: Thanks Peter, 'Tread upon thorns while the shoe is on your foot'.

PV: Yes!

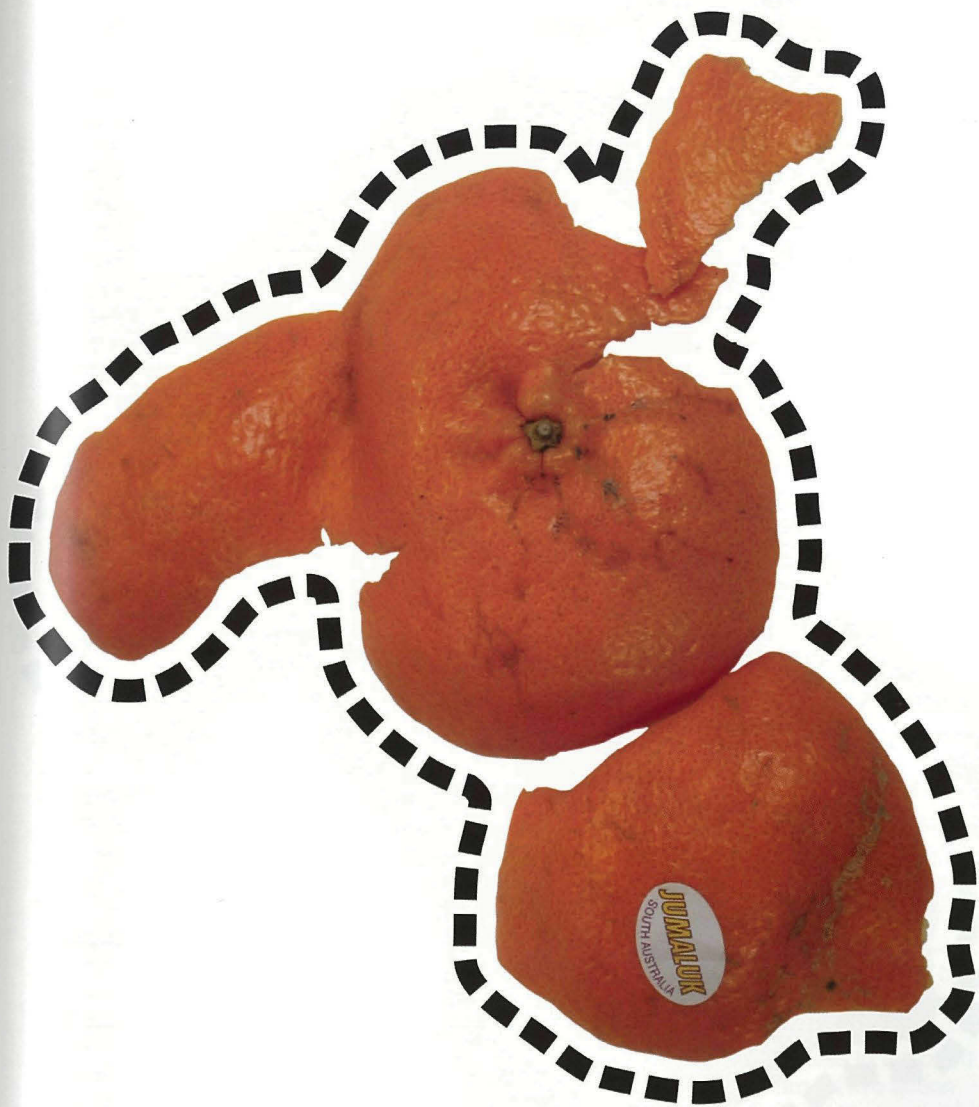
CUT OUT AND COLLECT YOUR OWN TRASH

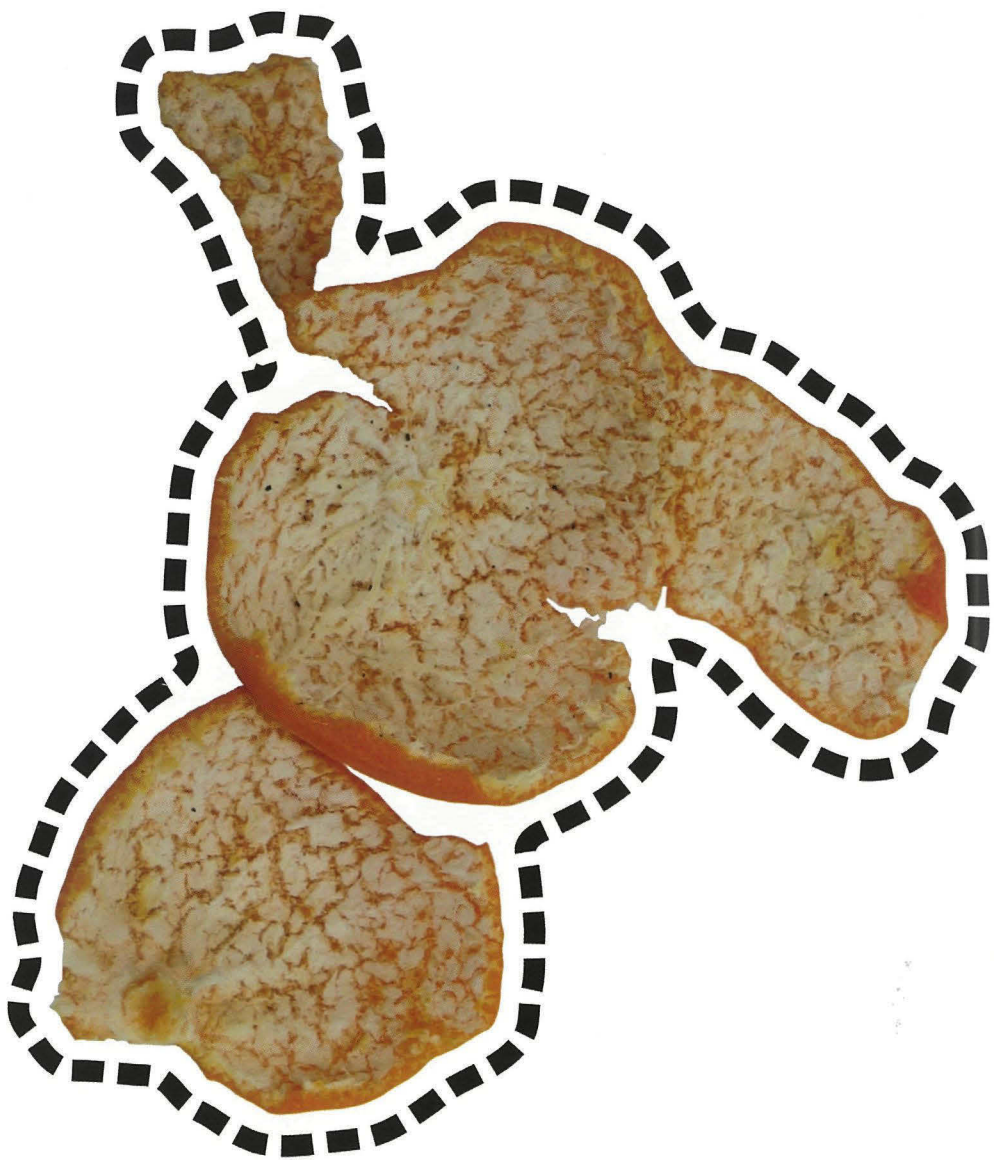












Cool Balls, Sick Nuts: The Art of Vicki Papageorgopoulos

Ella Barclay

*Hey Elz, don't you think it's funny
how, when it comes to sobriety, I
keep it tight but with artwork I'm
a loose-caboose and with most
artists, it's the other way round?*

Melbourne, March 2006

I've never seen Vicki drunk. She tends to end up playing a very motherly role after exhibition openings, closely monitoring any destructive behaviour patterns and ensuring everyone gets into their taxis. This instinct may have arisen from her four years as co-director of Gallery Wren. A task she juggled with her paid job as a children's daycare attendant, which arguably draws from a similar skill base.

The first conversation I had with Vicki was at Glebe Point Road's *Le Petit Tarte*, a café where I spent much of my early twenties underpaid and under worked. As I cleared her glass and half chewed smiley-face shortbread biscuit, she held up a biography on Picasso and explained to me that she and Melody Ellis were about to start a radio show on FBi about Art and thus needed to 'do some research'.

Later, I stood in front of *Shipwrecked* at Gallery Wren. Amidst masses of watery cling-film, clumps of tin foil and a piece of bent cardboard mounted on plastic, I wondered whether she had gone to special needs school. 'It's a speedboat' she said suddenly, sincerely—gesturing encouragingly to speed fins out the back of the cardboard. Not knowing whether to laugh or not, I looked down and realised I had almost trampled a tiny scene of chewing gum pellet people, all frantically helping each other get out of the water onto a small tin foil island. Something clicked.



Vicki Papageorgopoulos, *Shipwrecked* 2005, installation view, Gallery Wren, Sydney

At Francis Baker-Smith's *Barnyard Show*, Vicki installed an old-school blue tarpaulin wading pool, wherein floated a flock of swans. The swans' bodies were made from blown-up plastic bags, their necks were tin foil, and their heads and beaks were exercise book paper with felt-tip marker. If one stood at the opening for long enough, they might work out which artists appeared here in swan form, simply represented by way of a hat, a tie, some earrings or fuzzy hair. One might also observe the swans making and breaking alliances in the pond and compare it to the flurry of live action non-swans engaging in exhibition opening banter in the gallery space.

Cool Balls, the following year, involved a collection of googley-eyed characters drawn onto the surface of tennis balls

and mounted to the gallery wall by way of souvlaki sticks. Both fictional and real characters appeared in the spread: Ninja balls, monster balls, graphic designer balls and hung-over balls. I could imagine them bouncing around the rooms; smashing into one another and brave gallery goers.

In Michael Moran's doughty curatorial project *To Think We Almost Made It: The anti-heroic gestures of true romantics* at Firstdraft Gallery in 2005, Vicki exhibited *Surf's Up*, a chaotic aquatic microcosm riding the current of a curling blue tarpaulin. Portraits of art contemporaries Todd McMillan and Christopher Hanrahan bare their greased body builder six-packs as they surf cardboard waves. Crabs have sex, a whale gives birth to a seal with a flat-top haircut. In the centre rotates a mermaid sticking out her tongue; precious and shabby, ridiculous and cheeky. All these creatures, whilst struggling to stay afloat, are having a laugh.

Elvis' Last Fart was exhibited at Next Wave



Vicki Papageorgopoulos, *Swans*, 2005, detail, Francis Baker-Smith, Sydney

Festival in Melbourne this year at the back of a dark, dusty shipping container. The fart was imprisoned in an emptied jar of BI-LO pasta sauce, illuminated by a fluorescent tube and a green plastic clipboard. It stood behind a cardboard picket sign that simply stated 'Elvis Aron Presley'. Here, even history's most monumental annals boil down to shits and giggles in the end.

It's hard when making work, for an artist not to flirt with secret visions of its possible future. Thoughts that one day, with luck, maybe, this art will be poured over in spacious museums by generations to come, wondering what the wall text might point to, what this work will signify, mark, react against, confirm or invent. But Vicki's work is not for the archive—it's junk.

Her paper will yellow, the cardboard will warp, the marker will fade, the aerosol will flake, the blown-up plastic bags will deflate, the tin foil will... okay the tin foil will last. But future generations will miss out. And that's not such a bad thing, 'cos it's not for them. Aware of this, Vicki makes a cheeky poke instead of a monumental gesture, a quick aside over the lasting message. In its crudest form, this is Network Art. Made of and for her immediate audience—her art mates—to remind us that we're all in it to win it, but in it together.

Junk, art, you, me, junk.

I must confess, a small chunk of this article has been retrieved from my own trash. This is perhaps just a shameless nudge at the issue's theme, but also the truth. It was canned as a feature for an Australian fashion magazine: 'it was a bloody great read but... the powers that be, aka the company director, thought the images were a little too raw (I know this is a stylistic choice of Vicki's) and has decided not to run the feature.'

Junk, art, you [giggle], me, junk.



Vicki Papageorgopoulos, *Cool Balls*, 2005, detail, Gallery Wren, Sydney

If that which is expelled inevitably returns, we must trace its circuitous path: Shit comes back and takes the place of that which is engendered by its return but in a transfigured, incorruptible form. Once eliminated, waste is re-inscribed in the cycle of production as gold.

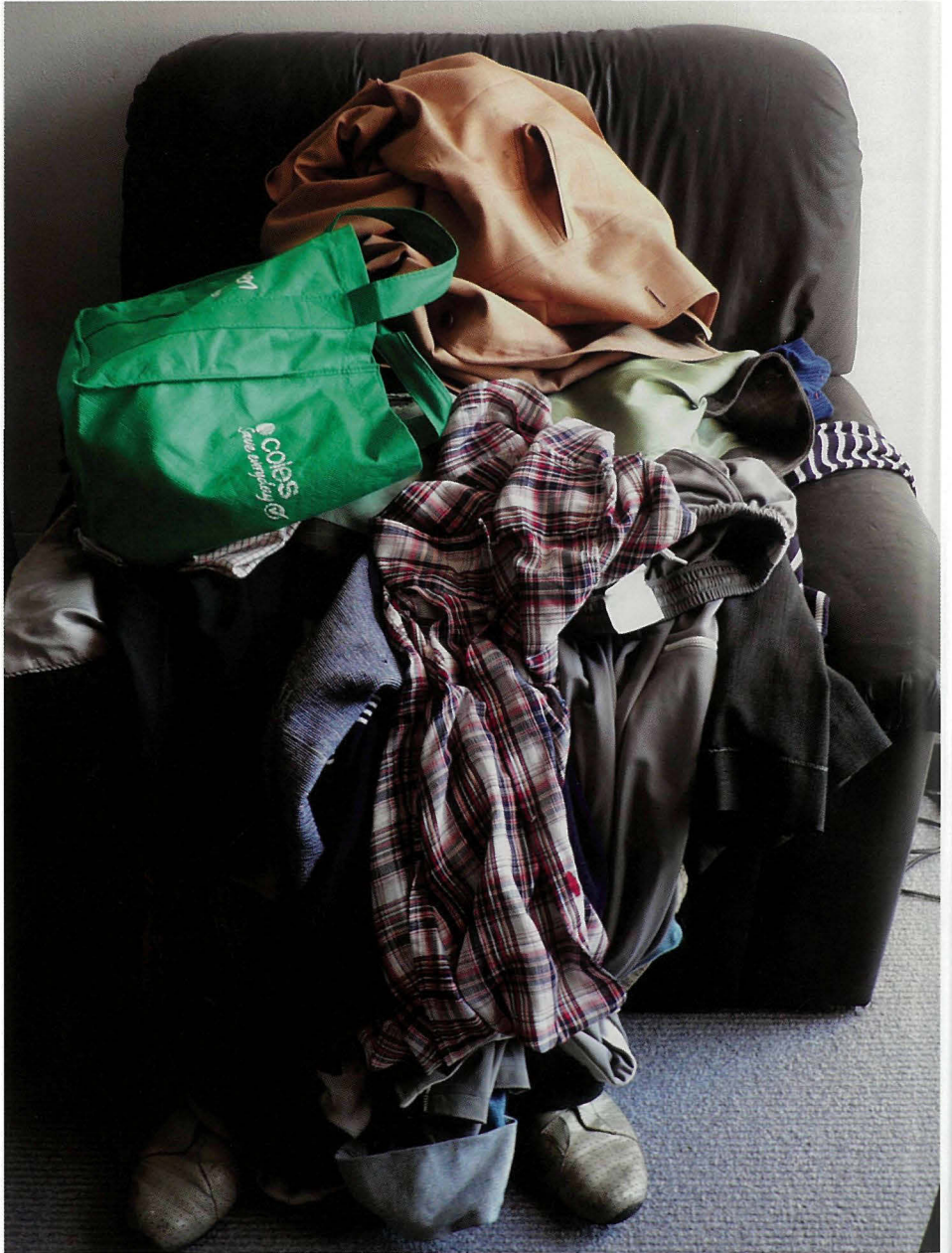
Dominique Laporte, *A History of Shit*.

And there it stood, *Gold Rush*. A giant, gold-covered turd rising from the toilet with an operatic, histrionic presence akin to Hugh Jackman as Peter Allen (but with ghetto earrings). Absurd and delightful, a shit made from 'shit' but solid gold in shade and sentiment. The work no longer

exists after a rampant garage clean-up by her father, and her brother's hunt for BBQ kindling. However, remnants will be displayed in Vicki's 2007 show *Retrospective Gives Me Perspective*.

The works of Vicki Papageorgopoulos are the fart jokes of contemporary Australian art. They're about stopping to have a giggle, as artists flirt and float and poke and bounce into and around one another. More sparkle, less showmanship. Less dialectics, more dead-arm. With almost dangerous implications to the protected enclave of contemporary commercial art, she reminds us that we can all take hold of these materials, graft ideas, and make people laugh.

Thoughts from the nap and an afternoon couch with Pete & Brian
Brian Fuata and Pete Volich



Shane: Do you want to go for a drink?

B: I would love to. When?

Shane: Well, what are you doing now?

B: I was going to a doctor's appointment, but I can do that anytime!

Shane: I drink when I'm sick.

B: Yes, it's only chemo. Besides, I'd find more therapy having a beer with you than lying down like some fuckwit in some machine.

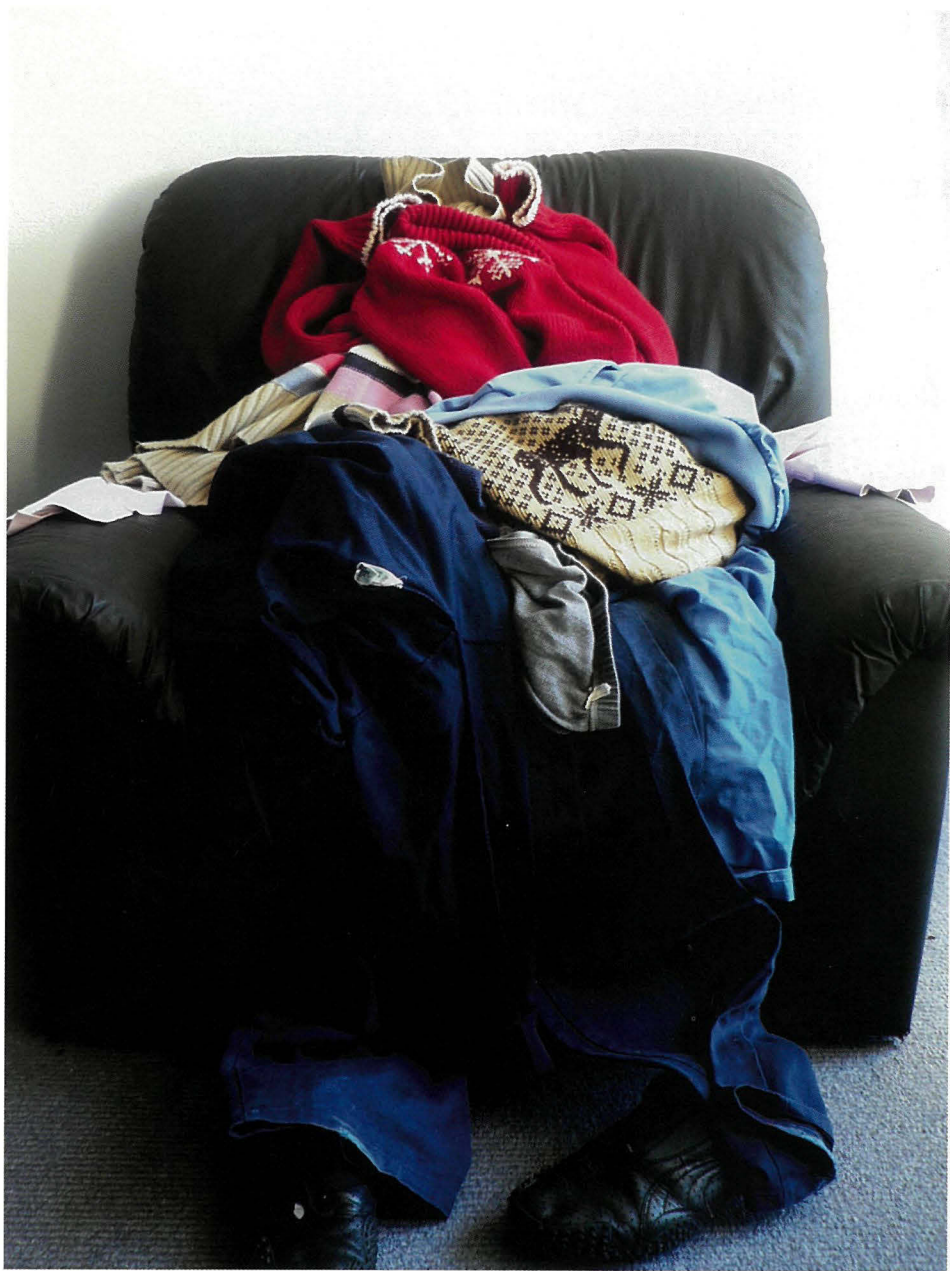
Shane: You're excellent.

B: Yeah, thanks. I guess, so are you.

Shane: Y'know what?

B: What?

Shane: Let's skip the pub, I've got alcohol at my pad.



B: Pad?

Shane: My house.

B: Yeah, right. Well, how far a walk is it?

Shane: Less than 5 minutes.

B: You're looking at me weird.

Shane: Sure, sorry... I don't mean... it's just that, it's been a while since...

B: Listen, I might go.

Shane: Go where?

B: I should do my chemotherapy, I don't want to die.

Shane: Yes. You should. I don't want you to die either.

B: Thanks for understanding, and for your kindness, and for that ten dollars.

Shane: I work full-time. It's fine. Oh, you're... Ok. Yep. Yeah. Bye. Nice to meet... Bye.



Clive: It's cold. Your hands are so warm.

B: That's because your hands are holding them.

Clive: Ha, you're funny. You make me laugh.

B: I guess that's why I'm funny.

Clive: Are you coming to church next week?

B: Does the Pope shit in the woods?

Clive: Is a bear Catholic?

B: Ha. You're quick, aren't you?

Clive: Stop looking at me like that. Have we locked everything up?

B: Yes.

Clive: Well, we better be off before it starts raining. Let's get burgers for dinner.



B: I'm getting fat, quickly. I need to stop.

Clive: Stop looking at me like that. We need to lay low, the rain's gonna get us.

B: Do you drive?

Clive: Nope. It's you and me against this whole world.

B: Speak for yourself. I'm calling my mum to pick me up and she doesn't like you.

Clive: Well, it's stopped raining anyways and your mum's a slut.

B: C'mon, let's go. I actually don't have a mum, I was only lying. I like you a lot. Let's go have burgers.

Clive: Yes. It's you and me against this whole world.

B: Pass me the mayo. I love mayo in burgers.

Clive: Delicious.

Gutter



Trash

haute plastique

If you're into trash aesthetics and find beauty in the banal, then you'll love the new collection by Haute Plastique. Hot off the streets and for a limited time only we're offering every reader the chance to accessorise with their very own piece of someone's else's litter. To take advantage of this amazing offer simply cut along the dotted line, fill in your details below and answer a few simple questions to help us customise a piece of jewellery to suit your individual fashion taste.

Name:

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I would like a:

(please only circle one) bracelet brooch earrings necklace ring

My favourite colour is:

My favourite chocolate bar is:

When I buy a bag of chips I will most often buy:

My hobbies include:

* Because we hand make all items in the Haute Plastique range we ask that you please be patient and allow at least two weeks for delivery.

