LOCAL ART

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FRESH CUT: Paul Adair / Cameron Anderson / Nick Batchelor / Timothy Kendall Edser / Kirstan Flannery / Danny Ford / Tracy Grant / Jane Hudson Matt Malone / Deborah Mansfield / Luisa Rossitto Grant Stevens / Wilkins Hill / guest curator Alison Kubler
Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane
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Chris Handran

Fresh Cut is the Institute of Modern Art's annual look at the work of selected graduates from Queensland College of Art (Brisbane and Gold Coast campuses), QUT Creative Industries and the University of Southern Queensland. *Fresh Cut* exhibitions, with their implied promise of 'fresh meat' on offer, are prone to the rhetoric of the now and this year's exhibition is no exception. Using such phrases as "post September 11 syndrome" and "the new 'terror' Zeitgeist", the works are categorised as a collective response to the threat of global warfare. Under the rubric of *'boys and girls come out to play'*, curator Alison Kubler classifies the works using the broad division of "chicks and blokes".

As a result, the exhibition includes work by a number of male artists whose works reference military imagery. The assemblages of Cameron Anderson feature found materials and painted/drawn imagery of soldiers and helicopters, and are thus linked to a "new popular culture" of terrorism. Had this work been made two years ago, however, its imagery would have seemed almost nostalgic. The thing that makes such imagery frightening is not its newness, but precisely its predictable repetition throughout history.

Nick Batchelor's *Toy soldier* could be described as DIY military/hardware. Made from expanding gap filler and cardboard, this awkward, almost abject figure features a heavily hand-made aesthetic. In a related video piece, similar soldier figures are dropped from buildings, attacked with branches and sticks, decapitated and blown up. These spectacles of masculinity come across as deadpan versions of *Jackass*, or *Australia's Funniest Home Video Show*. In contrast to this aesthetic of 'dumb fun' are Batchelor's photographs, which combine the slickness of product advertising with the simple subversions of low budget horror.

The text-based videos of Grant Stevens present some of the hallmarks of Hollywood action films, emptied of emotion and spectacle. One-liners enact the most routine of action scenes (in *PoliceChasePolice*) and the opening credits become the main feature (*Can you do that Dad?).* While Kubler argues that these works "avoid [video's] tendency to steal time", for me it is precisely the mesmerising monotony of these works that are so affecting. *Your move*, with its dispassionate voiceover and droning soundtrack, perfectly captures the sense of futility felt by Travis Bickle in the film *Taxi Driver*. These works function less as appropriations than as re-enactments.

In Timothy Kendall Edser's ongoing series *Ride 'em*, the construction of masculine identity is critiqued through the use of cowboy imagery. *Surrender* is a wooden cut-out of a cowboy, hands raised in surrender. This figure seems to have either fallen onto the floor face first, or slipped into the gallery between floor and wall. Nearby, *Stroke 'em* features a scratch video style appropriation of a classic Hollywood Western. The video features a male protagonist stroking his face with a gun, in what appears to be a state of both remorse and ecstasy. Slowed down and looped, this simple action becomes compelling. Also included is a work from Edser's ongoing performance series *Tension*. In progress since 2000, this series has included a number of confronting and very successful performances. The inclusion here of video documentation, removed from context, seemed to me something of a compromise.

The proximity of Edser's *Surrender* to floor pieces by Danny Ford also created something of an obstacle course for viewers. Ford's *Tracer* comprised a mass of second hand tennis rackets, each with a single letter printed on its face, scattered around the floor. A group of these leaned up against the wall, spelling out the phrase *a practiced swagger*. In the exhibition catalogue, Ford's work is said to play with a "post-painting practice" that is also "post-punk in origin". Perhaps this is a post-match practiced swagger, a volley of post pun wordplay. Speaking of post-punk puns, in *What the hay?* Wilkins Hill reworked a public art piece for the gallery. This work is reminiscent of the Ad Rheinhardt cartoon in which an abstract painting retorts to a bemused viewer: "what do YOU represent?" Anticipating confusion or bemusement at the sight of dog kennels and bales of hay in the gallery, the work responds with bemusement at the presence of viewers, calling out "what the hell is that?" as they pass. From the doghouse to the house of God, Kirstan Flannery's *The Holy People of God* physically resembles the readymade sculptures of Wilkins Hill, but is altogether different in tone. The solid weight of this Church-like object sits leaden, stolid and silent on the gallery floor. Its bare timber and blocky construction make it seem like the product of a home handyman or a model maker's obsession.

This sense of earnestness continued in Tracy Grant's *Soliloquy*. Created during bedside vigils in hospital, this work features a number of baby's bonnets woven using copper wire. It is the harshness of this material that is

Danny Ford, *Tracer* 2002, Photo: Don Hildred
Image courtesy of the artist and the Institute of Modern Art

unsettling. This is accentuated when the copper wire is juxtaposed with soft material, as in *Neuron Nidification 1,* which features medical illustrations of the brain embroidered into fabric. The red of the copper wire seems at times to stain the fabric, arcing out in tendrils, taking root like a cancer.

In a familiar refrain, Jane Hudson's *I never promised you a rose garden* attempts to find something poetic and evocative within the detritus of everyday life. Fragments of plastic shopping bags are linked together to form what looks like a daisy chain, or a curtain of feathers. This brought to mind the work of Lauren Berkowitz, but Hudson's gentle streams of plastic did not attempt to fill the space in the same manner. Instead, the ephemeral feel and delicate nature of this piece would have been better served in a less open space.

In attempting to mimic wallpaper, the photographs of Deborah Mansfield did attempt to fill space, or at least to become part of the space. In *the Port* it is a small, abstract image that is repeated. Depicting what appears to be reeds or grass reflected in water, the photographic prints are block mounted and lacquered so as to take on the appearance of tiles. Some of these prints jut out while others seem to recede, creating a curious effect more related to the corner reliefs of Tatlin than to domestic decoration. Imitating (and exaggerating) the classic 1950s decorative ducks in flight, 400 photograms of ducks scale the walls in Mansfield's *Untitled*. These prints, hand-cut into ovals, have a certain softness about them, as if they could have been hand-drawn.

While Mansfield's works mimic decoration, Paul Adair's photographs suggest that the photograph is the perfect crime. While seeking to unsettle our assumed faith in the truth of photography, this work resembles quirky fashion photography – a discipline founded on fabrication and 'the look'. Perhaps this is *The Perfect Crime* not because the male protagonist is not caught in the act, but because he manages to strike a pose for the camera. These actions poses and gestures fill the image with an intentionally empty and ambiguous narrative.

Luisa Rossitto's *52 Flourishes* offers a more complex confusion of narrative. The drawn image is repeated and used as a matrix for the painted one; elements and images from one image 'fill in' space within another, as images are recomposed, repeated and rearranged. With their saturated watercolour hues and ornamental patterning, Rossitto's work becomes a play of forms, colours and design. These contrast with the referential plays in the work of Matt Malone. Owing much to the work of John Nixon, these paintings take the form of a simple play with symbols. Paint is sprayed onto small perspex panels and adhesive vinyl is placed upon this surface in the form of a cross; a discarded U.S. Mail bag is stretched to form a readymade canvas; a never-ending game of computer ping-pong is superimposed over footage of Marcel Duchamp playing chess. Taking references seemingly at random, these works evidence the sort of endgames that they would otherwise seem to critique.

While an attempt was made to link the works in *Fresh Cut 2003,* the broadness of this thematic seemed to return many to the grad show atmosphere from which they emerged. As Alison Kubler reminds us, such shows are "by their very nature, […] disparate in theme, medium, and attitude". Perhaps it is too much to expect that Fresh Cut exhibitions can ever be more than this, despite the promises and expectation that only the choicest and freshest cuts will be on display.

WHERE DO WE BEGIN TO TALK ABOUT "AUSTRALIAN" ART?

Sally Brand

We could begin here. Within our locality, as local writers, as local artists, as locals down at the local. But geographically, locality is a slippery concept, a difficult notion to place and an impossibility to set boundaries about.

It really depends on your relative position. Here, for example, you could choose the local to be that area specified by the Brisbane City Council. You could also however include other regional centres such as the Gold and Sunshine Coasts. Easily you could list the entire state of Queensland or our whole continent and country as forming what we think of as local.

Local boundaries constantly slip and flow over into ever expanding spaces, into the global and even universal. They can also shrink and squeeze into spaces as small as one's bedroom. This fluctuating ability, however, does little to dampen the notion of commonality amongst the local. To be local is to be connected, to be mutuality bound by something beyond just a common geography. Regionally or globally, for example, we may think of ourselves as commonly human. Universally we may think of ourselves, and everything else, as being constituted by the same particle stuff of atoms, electrons, protons and neutrons.

For local art this notion of commonality suggests some ultimate framework which we could use to discuss all local art. Over the course of Australian art history, the provincialism problem has been a major framework, applied relentless and exhaustively, so that 'local' and 'provincial' have become interchangeable terms.

According to the provincialism model (clearly explained by Terry Smith in his 1974 essay "The Provincialism Problem"[1]) Australian artists can at best achieve eccentrically eclectic blends of external styles. This may, on occasion, prove to create *good* art however it would most likely never form part of a *good* art history. This is due to provincial art's powerlessness and inability to turn back upon its influence and affect the external conceptions and standards from which it was derived. Here, the power flows one way from that distant powerful metropolis to our powerless, dependant and isolated province.

The major problem with this provincial framework is that there appears to be no way out. Firstly, our provincialism can never be simply rejected as this would ultimately only enhance our 'out of touch' provincialist nature. It would also not nearly be good enough to attempt to resolve the problem by quietly tolerating our provincialism, hoping that one day, by chance of good luck, we might find the metropolis here upon our own shores.

In the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s local provincialists chose to follow quite a different path. Through the tug and pull of late twentieth century postmodernism, the provincialism model was radically morphed, altered internally, not that the problem escaped, but was paradoxically refigured. The problem became the solution. The disease part of the cure.

Provincialism was pushed to its limits. Artists became shameless imitators, proud of their second-handness and wholly complicit in their dependence upon external styles. The artist Imants Tillers was an exemplar of this artistic production. Tillers copied directly from his contemporary peers, constructing large scale paintings composed of small canvas boards, making openly obvious the derivative nature of his work. This copying hoped to empower Australian art, as Tillers argued that his blatant copies could turn back upon the metropolis and affect its power. Tillers wished to show that the power of the image was not only manifest within its original authorship but also within its subsequent readings/copies. The power between metropolis and province shifted and split. Power began to flow both ways and, finally, Australians had made an original art theory from an unoriginal art.

Just as seductive and potent as the first provincialism problem, this wonderfully paradoxical model became the ultimate framework for discussing local art. The provincial joke could be seen everywhere. The problem with this model was that it pushed itself to the limit. There appeared to be nothing beyond the horizon, beyond the paradox that consumed all angles and possibilities (but also, again paradoxically, consumed nothing). This was not only a condition of provincialism but of the greater problem with post modernism, and just like this heady framework, as well as the previous provincialism problem, there appeared to be no way out.

Somehow, over the course of the 1990s, the provincialism framework seemed to lose its potency. It reached a climax and here we believed we found our Australianess. Now, in 2003, local artists who I talk to do not seem particularly interested in their work as 'Australian'. They seem more interested in making art as art, and not so much concerned in its possibilities as 'local' or 'provincial'. Perhaps we might think of our condition as beyond making "Australian" art? Perhaps the framework now for our local art is that of globalism, our locality stretched. But just as we began, localities shift and shrink and expand. It really depends on your relative position. I have returned now to where I began. This is a difficult problem, and perhaps an ultimately fruitless issue to pursue, but if we are to talk about local art we ought to begin somewhere. I guess we can only begin here.

1. Smith, T. (1996) "The Provincialism Problem" in Butler, R. (ed.) *What is Appropriation?* Institute of Modern Art and Power Publishing: Brisbane and Sydney

SPAN: Sandra Selig
BRISBANE CITY GALLERY
23 January - 23 March 2003

Rachael Haynes

I enter the first space without looking left or right. Blinkered as I am by past vision – by only glimpses? I like this space, I like the parquetry floors, the gloss, the sheen - the feeling that at any moment I might start skating across them. I like the subdued atmosphere, the quietness. Sound here becomes muffled, indistinct. I wait a moment before entering, to look at the doorway into the space. A darkened entrance with strong shadows that intermingle and subdue each other, tinge each other with darknesses and lights. One perpendicular shadow overrides the others, dominates with its verticality and draws me back again to the architecture of the doorframe.

hmmmkhmmmkhmmmkhmmmkhmmmkhmmmkhmmm
A sound, one that itches the ear, inside the ear cavity, scratches the air. A swarm of sound, it seems to belong to an artificial nature, contented, no – a little more insistent, but regular. There seems to be shades of sound, oscillations that shift and shape the air inside my ear. The sound is already present, seemingly without source it comes up to meet me as I descend downwards.

How delicate is this sound/air ratio? How can I describe even to myself how it sounds to myself? I encounter a warning: Please be careful as you enter. These works are extremely fragile. I walk as carefully as possible so as not to disturb the sound.

A glow illuminates sandra selig SPAN,one strangely formed, so that the light itself becomes a substance, rectangular with soft, padded edges. A shimmer of red: a shimmer of red. I turn from one to another.

It begins as a mist; a mist that glints as it is caught in a yellow light. Two spotlights catch me in their glare, a pair of eyes that stare into mine and blind me for a moment. Blind, I become an animal caught in headlights, stock-still; I wait a moment before entering the space itself. My being is caught, trapped in that moment of disorientation, of blind seeing. I advance slowly.

An elderly woman and man enter the space before me. I listen – there is an extended silence, (a whisper), then a proclamation:

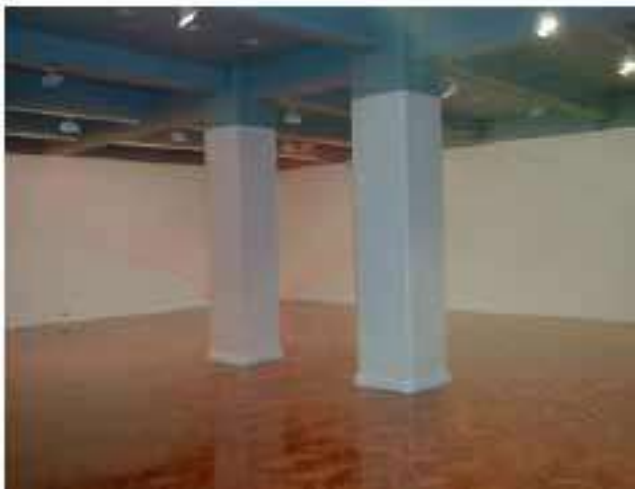
"IT'S JUST STRING".

Said with relief, with triumph, with confusion. How can we orientate ourselves here? They begin to trace the curves with fingertips. Spanning the forms with hand and eye. With gentle curving gestures that fall softly at their end.

Where do I find fragility? As a place *between*, as a promise of form, of being, where one may easily slip and fall? A rubbing together of delicate fibres that are fraught with one another, become ensnared, bound to one another with invisible bonds?
I find this point of delicacy in the corner, a meeting place where thread lines meet their shadows. A touching, tip to tip, toe to toe. Rays draw towards me but dissolve with proximity – too close for clear vision. The intimacy of their embrace causes them to blur and fade. My vision reversed, when due to short sightedness the future is a blur, all distance remains unknown – here the familiar becomes strange, the present becomes a shadow to itself.

I move closer, edge. I sense my way blindly now, hands stretched before me. Do I close my eyes? Strangely, as I approach the mist of coloured light the red comes to transform itself, as colour, as form. Caught in glow it softens to rose and becomes at points colourless. I lose the moments of transition but now, suddenly, this great form arcs above me moving towards impossible points. I fit exactly beneath – it stands over me – a caress, an embrace.
Do I dare to touch? I reach upwards, stretch - stretch. I pull back. The thread shivers even from my intention.

But I have entered a strange void space – one I cannot inhabit – I stand fixed. The shadows entwine, the form folds into them – my eye draws in space along lines that become (im)material. Up close these threads are fibrous and tough, uneven as tufts of hair protrude. Each in pairs already doubles itself, each is already two – pulling towards and against itself, holds itself intact while it holds the promise of its demise. Each doubles and then doubles itself again as it draws itself with light and darkness - shades of grey meet those of red. This red is not a fire but aglow. It splits itself to become another double and a twin dressed in green. Stretching against the pillars that hold the sky above our heads, in a private conversation one with the other. I am startled to hear a second sound reverberate in dialogue with the first.
hmmkhmmkhmmkswswswuswswswu
This language becomes a secret touching between the sounds. There are secret, unobtainable views I cannot reach. Although transparent these forms keep me on the outside.



I move towards the tangible drawing together of their forms, here, on the wall where their lines meet in shadows. Their quality is that of delicate graphite lines. These are obliterated by another form, a larger shadow with indiscreet edges; a form of body, limbs – a shadow of being, I see myself dissolve. I lose where I am. I fall over - over the edge of an installation. It spans above me – a hand span, a bridge span, an architecture of hand and form – a place to inhabit that nonetheless dissolves my body and leaves me nowhere.

The thread breaks upon itself and falls. Can it be rolled back into itself – a ball of shadows?

WHAT WOULD YOU DO IF YOUR FROZEN HEART BEGAN TO MELT? & CONSTRUCTED REALITIES
Dyson Industries
Brisbane Powerhouse

Linda Carroli

Late last year, I saw two dance works choreographed by Clare Dyson, a Canberrra-based artist. The works were developmental pieces presented at the Brisbane Powerhouse as part of a research residency. I admit I am new to dance and am struggling a little in writing about it. I have always wanted to write about dance but never quite made the leap. What makes Dyson's works more available or readable to me, as a predominantly new media and visual art writer, is her engagement with installation and gallery spaces. The performers' bodies, then, are immersed in audio-visual spaces; there is less of a staged quality and both the performers and audience members are somehow transported along the lines of the trajective and the performative.

The first performance, *what would you do if your frozen heat began to melt?*, was presented in the Powerhouse's Gallery as a work-in-progress. For most, this gallery has proven to be a difficult space. As the name suggests, the Powerhouse is a renovated powerhouse and the integrity of the industrial space has been retained in its conversion to a cultural centre. The gallery is not a whitebox: it's brick and various elements of its industrial past punctuate walls and floors. It is also sectioned into three by partly decayed walls. I can't actually recall what part of the old powerhouse this space used to be, but it is located on the ground level on the riverside of the building and a wall of glass overlooks the usually still, brownish river. The gallery does seem to have an observatory quality where visitors can look in, out and through – not quite panoramic but nevertheless one of the many enjoyable vistas in this city.

I have to tell you about the gallery in order to tell you about the installation in which the performance is presented. Viewers are instructed to come and go during the one hour performance. Outside, along the river's edge, white serving platters are placed on white tables. Each platter contains hearts cast in ice, coloured red with rose petals set in them. It had been raining that evening – a summer rain, heavily scented by the ripening of tropical flowers, fruit and the earth itself. It's the sort of rain which releases the heat from the ground and freshens the air. Along the outer glass wall, a row of 'tea light' candles are glowing in brown paper bags, weighted by a handful of small stones. Inside the gallery, in the three cells, large blocks of ice are melting into surrounding, erratic puddles, a palm-sized red heart is frozen into each block. The performance-installation takes place across the three spaces of the gallery and as each space is animated in turn, the audience moves to get a better view.

Watching ice melt has never been my idea of riveting viewing. However, as with anything as subtle and slow as this, there is clearly an appreciation of time passing, of the transformation of something solid into water and the possibility of it evaporating into air. And it's this engagement with the time it takes that I find enticing, even poignant. Obviously, as the ice melts, the puddle in which it sits grows. The performers, dressed in long black skirts made from interfacing, a sewing material for stiffening collars, cuffs, waistbands and the like. It's one of those sewing terms that has also found meaning in the lexicon of new media practice. Interfacing, while stiff because it is a bonded textile like felt, is actually quite light. The skirts skim across the puddle, not only drawing the water into them but also drawing with the water. The performance is comprised of sequences and repetitions of slight gestures: rocking which causes ripples; swaying which splashes the water; and lifting their skirts so that the water drips back to the ground. There is an atmospheric dreaminess in this work. It's like a daydream where the mind wanders and the body does what it can to parallel the randomness of thoughts.

It's reminiscent of the Calvino story *t zero* which in turn reminds me of Zeno's *Paradoxes*. And herein lies a moment of my own heart melting. I was perusing my bookshelves for the anthology in which *t zero* is bound. First pulling out *Cosmicomics*, I open it to read the inscription on the title page: it's from someone I once loved, long gone. The heart does indeed melt - with mercurial speed - at this memory, so surprisingly embodied that it invokes an overwhelmingly strange response. Almost decomposition. Recomposed and returning the book, I find *Time and The Hunter,* the rightful location of *t zero.* Here Calvino describes the possibilities dormant during the second in which an arrow is shot, in transit between the archer and the target. This second is an eternity, a universe of which Calvino writes: "supposing time knows no repetitions and consists of an irreversible series of seconds each different from the other, and each second happens once and for all, and living in it for its exact length of one second means living in it forever." [1] In Dyson's choreography, time is stretched, slowed down, where the rhythm of a heart (or ice) melting makes for muted musicality composed of small gestures. A second is an hour, a lifetime an impossibility. So too, possibilities are endless in Dyson's choreographed fragments. I feel like I am being drawn into the subtleties and repetitions of a Cy Twombly drawing.

In *Constructed Realities*, the second work in development through Dyson's residency which will be performed in its entirety at the Canberra Theatre Centre, the audience is again drawn to the Powerhouse's gallery. We congregate outside, looking into the three spaces through the windows. Reading the gallery from left to right, as a series of installations, a garden grows in the first cell; in the second, there's a stack of suitcases; and a patch of grass sits in the centre of the third. Dirt has been spread across the floor and about 20 flowers with absurdly long stems are planted in it. They evoke Bataille's writing about the irrationality of flowers, straining to reach the sun only to collapse back the ground – dead, dying, rotting back into the earth. Gathered outside the gallery, peering into it through the glass, a woman sweeps the floor, tidying the scattered dirt with a broom to form a straight edge for her garden. She is inappropriately dressed for such a task - wearing a formal, long, satin, gold gown with high heels and white gloves. As the doors are thrown open, the audience is ushered inside.

This work engages ideas about and practices of the landscape, from the suburban to the arid. In addressing the Australian landscape, Dyson also considers experiences of belonging and home: what it means to be Australian; what home or place feels like; and what it means to exist within and across multiple cultures in this place. And she does this through an itinerary of performed vignettes dotted throughout the Powerhouse comprised of installation, projection and video. The audience is led through various spaces of the Powerhouse to view particular sites and scenes as if on a guided tour. Some of the scenes are familiar: a patch of manicured grass, packing and unpacking suitcases and a 'lady of the house' taking tea. Others - like the two performers velcroed together struggling against and with each other to free themselves of their clothing or the gown-clad gardener lovingly snipping the heads of her cherished flowers and crushing them into the dirt – are incongruous.

Dyson also takes us across more distant horizons and projected images of desert scenes form the backdrop to several of the performances. The desert occupies an indescribable place in the Australian psyche: terrifying because of its harshness yet also a romanticised drawcard for countless holidaymakers and tourists. It is, of course, home for many; sacred and dreaming for others. This beautiful environment has also become the site of ecological and human catastrophe: from nuclear testing to military base to prison for refugees. *Constructed Realities* is an exercise in geography, writing the landscape in a way that draws on the visual and literary poesis of this country's imaginary about the land. It seems to pose many questions about what shapes our sense of belonging and place. It asks, at whose expense do we feel at home?

1. Calvino I, (1987) 't zero', in *Time of the Hunter*. trans. Einaudi G., Sphere Books: London, p.110

Teuila Postcards performed by Polytoxic in
"Transmission: Season of New Contemporary Dance Works"
Visy Theatre, Brisbane Powerhouse
Images courtesy of Polytoxic, Photos: Dallas Blackmore

Archie Moore
Poortraits 1/3 (detail) 2002
From the exhibition “6 Coats of Black”
Ink on paper
Image courtesy of the artist and Fire-Works Gallery

SEE-SAW: Jemima Wyman
The Farm
31 January 2003

Mark Webb

WHAT THE ? SEE-SAW !

….THE MOST DISTURBING ACTS ARE THOSE THAT INSISTENTLY PERFORM BODIES/SELVES IN SUCH A WAY AS TO ACTIVATE SPECTATORIAL ANXIETIES AND/OR DESIRES, WHILE AT THE SAME TIME CALLING INTO QUESTION WHAT IT MIGHT MEAN TO CALL SOMETHING "NATURAL" (OR FOR THAT MATTER,"UNNATURAL"). [1]

In her essay *Acting Unnatural, Interpreting Body Art*, Amelia Jones argues that the spectator/viewer of (performance) art becomes politicised through the operation of *performativity* in body art, through the act of being implicated in the contest of "natural" and "unnatural" engagements, and the various modalities of power that are activated in this operation [2]. She points out that this occurs most overtly in erotic and/or sadomasochistic acts, but asserts, that performance is not simply "transgression *tout court* ", it also acts as an active component in the formation of identity and social positionality for performer and spectator alike, ultimately revealing the partial and supplementary nature of these experiences. [3]

Jones also argues that the intersubjective engagements made possible through the performance of the body in art, enact a reversibility of self and other, "natural" and "unnatural". Consequently, the viewer becomes aware of the chiasmic intertwining of the performer/spectator, "…the contingency of each on the other---of the 'unnatural" on the "natural"[4]. Both performer and spectator become aware of their own *enacting* of self, and their own acts of interpretation and coming to meaning.

It is this movement Jones identifies, between self and other, that often refuses "the *easy* reification of particular (naturalized) meanings and values" [5], and she further suggests that all manner of cultural products can be "rendered performative (can be made into an act)", through the various associations and investments they have with their contexts and effects. [6]

This rendering of the *performative* then, activates a field across which artist/artwork and viewer are engaged in a reciprocal gaze, an uneasy transaction of acting out the "natural" / "unnatural" inscriptions of identity, of see-sawing between the real and the virtual, between truth and fiction.

PARALLEL WORLDS
This strange double movement, *See-Saw*, which Jemima Wyman performs at **the farm** speaks loudly about the way in which these constructs of identity, for viewer and performer, are intertwined and complicated by the encounter with her work. The sheer density of colour alone threatens to disrupt orientation through its scale, saturation, and intensity. The various sites of inhabitation and engagement of media

(video/installation/performance) short-circuit any authority over object and/or subject, and the forms themselves are weirdly familiar, yet absurdly aligned and misplaced.

This, along with the fact that the *performance* is both absent and present, actual and virtual, static and ecstatic, equal parts frantic and sad, mesmerising and distracting, leaves the viewer seesawing uneasily between these frenzied, corresponding spaces.

And it is precisely because of this, that *See-Saw* acts out our anxieties about just what Wyman is constructing here, it demands we attend to our own complicity, and otherness in the performance of it. It is also where the confluence of temporal elements, outer and inner space, and viewer/performer, seem to fold us into her own universe, -- *or not*, because of course some spectators will find it too "unnatural", much too alien to contemplate, and so choose to remain firmly rooted on their own planet. But like a band of intrepid cosmic theorists we will not be daunted by the boundaries of mere physics, and will speculate on what it might be like to exist in parallel worlds, Wyman's worlds.

MUTANT SPACE TIME ZONES
The idea that the universe is an infinitely folded surface/ connective tissue of spacetime with (at this point at least) the probability of as many as 11 dimensions, and may just be one of equally infinite universes, is fantastic to say the least, perhaps "unnatural" even! [7]

Yet *See-Saw* might just open a portal onto these strange dimensions, and might in itself, contain its own multiple and mutant time zones. On entering the space of the work, the viewer becomes immersed in an array of screaming colour and lumpen form; actual and virtual spaces are encountered through the wall/screen of patchwork material, itself equipped with video screens and portals --for seeing the "other" side.

One can sit back on the equally lurid, and slightly comic, patchwork ottomans scattered around this space and take in the work at one's leisure -- or risk.

But, inevitably, you are compelled towards the material, drawn into the detail of the patchwork, curious to peek through the apertures which puncture the screen of material, attracted, moth like, to the luminous glow of the chroma key video screens, all with the faint hope of shedding some light on what on earth is going on in there!

It is in this intense push and pull of optical and haptic visuality, in the bewildering lattice of visual and tactile experiences that a dislocation of "natural" viewing occurs. The viewer experiences vast distances (virtual infinities) as well as claustrophobic proximities of intense colour, at one moment there is a loss of centre, at another, the caressing of the eye through texture and detail. Across this vertiginous terrain, figure and ground begin to dissolve, the correlation between performer and spectator becomes charged, and the tension between "natural" and "unnatural" heightened.

But wait, there's more! Because there is an "other" side, a parallel dimension, a **saw** to the **see**.

Wyman has always thought of the body as a mobius strip, reversible, inner and outer the same surface. Developing Merleau-Ponty's idea that perception is a fold in the flesh of the world, *See-Saw* emphasises, and extends this, by overtly making the surfaces, colours, forms, and images the connective tissue that fold subject/object and performer/viewer into a more complicated matrix, so the entire installation is also rendered *performative*.

In this case the patchwork screen acts as a membrane, a boundary condition that simultaneously closes off and opens out onto the other side. It is also porous, in that it can be viewed through both sides (reinforcing the reciprocal gaze, as viewer becomes performer) and contains its own virtual worlds, the video screens, one endlessly repeating a Wyman clone caught in some slapstick glitch in time, ineptly and endlessly repeating a leap across the void, flaying around in an empty technicolour universe. The other a loopy series of bizarre miniature models, "Polly Pockets" apparently perfect visions of domestic nirvana, cute and clean, inane and lifeless, the cold dark matter in between every parallel world perhaps? However you read them, their insistent awkwardness renders you acutely aware of the process of interpretation, and the reversibility of "natural"/"unnatural" in your engagement with it. So this patchwork membrane can represent both an intersection of performer and spectator, *as well as* a fold in spacetime. The adjacent parallel world, encountered by looking across, or moving past it, presents us with yet another possible alien encounter, separated only by the thinnest of connective tissue.

QUARKS AND STRANGELETS

If our last portal of call skewed the domestic with a sensory overload of baroque surface, acid colour, and soft furnishings, this dimension contains an architecture that twists Playschool around the dodgy sci-fi props from Dr Who. As such, it sets up a perverse assembly of apparently simple and colourful, albeit oversized, infant's toys. A human scale hexagonal cubicle attached to a dog kennel/house shape by bright pink "arms" becomes a post-pop version of Dr Who's nemesis, the Cybermen. This is further complicated by the virtual head encased within the "cyborg" which, may or may not be controlling the erratic, and sporadic, movements of the kennel/house connected to it. This disembodied head, the apparent victim of a demented intergalactic face painter, is mute, and stares languorously out into the world, it is it seems, trapped in a state of perpetual ennui.

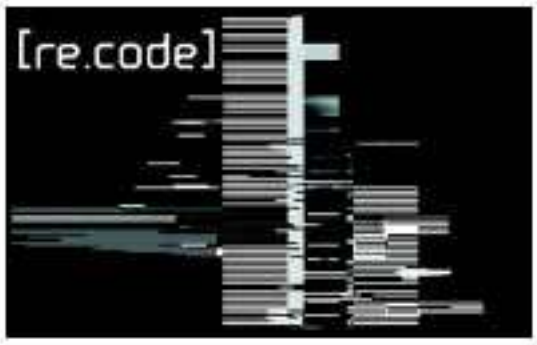
Whatever is going here though, just doesn't seem right. And when the realisation occurs that it is Wyman as both disembodied head, and blind/absent performer isolated in the claustrophobic kennel/house form, the anxiety of identification takes hold. The uncertainty generated by the condition of domination/servitude in these physical forms connected as they are by their "pink bits" (with all the resonances of her previous performances), seems suddenly libidinally charged, if not somehow "unnatural". Also, the illusion generated, by the hierarchy of forms and codes, that there is an archetypal master/slave relationship, becomes further complicated by the performance of Wyman herself, apparently subjugated and confined in the kennel, but all the time interacting with, and manipulating, the subject/object, performer/spectator interface; the tail wagging the dog! It is terrifyingly hilarious, but most disturbingly, it is a world that mimics all sorts of problems regarding power, complicity, and the formation of personal identities in *our own, strange, world*.

ANTI-GRAVITY

Meanwhile back at **the farm**, the portal onto Wyman's world has temporarily closed (most likely under border protection laws), but not before we recognise that her projection towards us, as alien other, as *monster* artist, transforms our identifications in the world, and when we perceive, and attribute meanings to her, that transformation is reciprocated 8. Yet it is not just that See-Saw develops this awareness that is compelling about the work. In many ways it is the Hee-Haw (sick?!), the exuberant humour it performs, that is equally valuable, because it demonstrates the potency and transformative potential of play in negotiating meaningful connections to the world, or *whatever* world we choose to inhabit.

References;
1. Jones, A. "Acting Unnatural; Interpreting Body Art" p.13, in Case, S.E, et al (2000) Decomposition, Post-Disciplinary Performance. Indiana University Press Indianapolis
2.ibid. p.12.
3.ibid. p.11.
4.ibid. p.12.
5.ibid.p.11.
6.ibid.p.13.
7. There is as much speculation on the nature of the universe as there is on art, oblique, abstract, poetic, mind boggling. Here some accessible starting points for m theory;
www.mkaku.org/mtheory.html
www.superstring-theory.com
www.damtp.cam.ac.uk/user/gr/public/qg_ss.html
www.sukidog.com/jpierre/strings
8. op cit.p.16

Photos: Dirk Yates
Images courtesy of the artist and The Farm



Mathew Fletcher - [re.code]

Opening Friday 7th March 2003 at The Farm
6:00 - 8:00pm (one night only)

Lucy Griggs

Exhibition Opening 14th March 2003 at The Farm
6:00 - 8:00pm
14th March - 5th April
Artist talk 2pm Saturday 15th March
Gallery opening hours: Wed - Fri 11:00am - 6:00pm, Sat 11:00am - 4:00pm

Julie Pitts Miles Blow
Stills from stop motion animated film *Waiting*

YOUR FRIENDS DON'T EVEN KNOW ME!

Grant Stevens

*Eminem, as we all know, meets some girl. He has sex with her. This is the worst scene in the movie. Not that I can't enjoy a good sex scene or something, but I personally just didn't like this one at all- it may have been because I was with my girlfriend, but then again, I could sense the rest of the theater's uncomfortability too; it is just an uncomfortable scene. We actually have to watch it, and it adds more to the discomfort when we remember that they're just f*cking and not making love- don't you hate sex scenes that glorify things like that?* [1]

Generally, I think, men have trouble confronting and expressing their emotions. In many popular American films, men articulate themselves through violence and sex. The perpetuation of these two filmic instruments allows us (viewers) to defer our own desires and inadequacies, and replace them with the totalities of the heroic characters presented to us. As far as I can tell, this is one of the reasons American blockbusters are successful (at least financially).

When I first saw *Top Gun* I was probably about eight or nine years old. Either because I was young, or because it was true, I remember there being a large fuss about the film's sex scene. Even with a PG rating, and after a few years, I also remember thinking that sex scenes could not really get any better. *8 Mile* is the first movie I have seen since then that has forced me to reconsider that evaluation. Would Maverick (Tom Cruise) and Charlie (Kelly McGillis) make love like this if *Top Gun* were made in 2002/2003 rather than 1986? Would they make love at all? Or would they just have sex?

The sex scene in *Top Gun* is famous for its saturated blue lighting, breezing curtains, silhouetted lovers and the song "Take My Breathe Away" by Berlin (if you remember eggs frying on stomachs you are thinking of *Hot Shots*, if you remember clay and a ghost you are thinking of *Ghost*). I remember it taking an eternity. Conversely, the sex scene in *8 Mile* seems to be over in a flash yet camera angles are held for awkwardly ("uncomfortably") long periods of time. It is also one of a few rare moments in the film that there is no music playing. In fact, there is barely any sound at all, only the distant sounds of machinery and the immediate sounds of kissing and moaning. The *Top Gun* scene takes a little over a minute and only has four camera shots (an average of one edit for every sixteen seconds), while in *8 Mile* we watch for a little less than two minutes and witness twenty-six edits (approximately one every four and a half seconds).

My initial theory was that because *Top Gun* was made in 1986 the sex scene was longer and excessively sensual, highlighting the passion between the two lovers, and that because *8 Mile* was made in 2002/2003 it was short, snappy and without pretense. The discovery that the *Top Gun* scene is actually shorter and has far less edits means that there is something else going on. My new theory is that in *Top Gun*, the length between cuts, the variation in camera angles and sexual positions, and the subsequent scene depicting Charlie waking up in bed the next morning, gives the impression that this act of love between Maverick and Charlie was in fact too huge, too immense to capture and portray. There is no climax. We love this, it's easy: we can project ourselves into that world without having to confront or deal with our emotive, perhaps even primal, connections with this act of procreation.

In opposition, in the Eminem/Bunny-Rabbit corner, we are forced to face these issues. The twenty-six edits (and only one sexual position) means we see every angle and detail from start to finish essentially in real-time. Where Maverick and Charlie are left alone to finish their business in blissful privacy, Bunny-Rabbit (Eminem) and Alex (Brittany Murphy) play out their spontaneous urges for all to see. They have no soft lighting or love song to cover their facial and oral expressions.

Despite the film's obvious lack of integrity, it does offer, I think, at least this one moment of criticality. We can witness this clearly in the words of my fellow "reviewer" quoted above. The truth is, although he might be "in love" with his girlfriend, sometimes when they "make love", he is just having sex.

1. Taken from: http://www.epinions.com/content_80499543684, author unknown

photo: Catherine Brown

LOCAL LISTINGS

Bellas Gallery
27 Feb – 15 Mar
A Personal Survey: Madonna Stuanton
Anothering: Vernon Ah Kee

Black Peppers Gallery
21 Feb - 29 Mar
Being Black: featuring Maureen Watson & Laurie Nilsen, Jenny Fraser & Sharenne Bell, Davina Kelly & Gloria Beckett, Archie Moore & Ricky Pascoe, Steve Mam & Mayrah Dreise

Brisbane City Gallery
23 Jan – 23 Mar
Span: Sandra Selig
A Survey 1995-2002: Rosemary Laing

Craft Queensland
14 Feb – 29 Mar
Unleashed: the passion of graduate and emerging artists

Doggett Street Studios
21 Feb – 15 Mar
9 Group Exhibition: featuring Alasdair McIntyre, Kris Carlon, VR Morrison, David Clayton, Miriam Columbo, Jimmy E, Joanne S Turner, Fred W, Tim Ritson.

Institute of Modern Art
13 Mar – 27 Apr
Madonna Staunton

The Farm
7 Mar (one night only)
[Re: Code] Mathew Fletcher
14 Mar – 5 Apr
Lucy Griggs

Fire-Works Gallery
7 –29 Mar
Changes: Gloria Petyarre

Gallery A Go Go
1 - 28 March
Open in Awe: Elsje Downes, Justin Nicholas, Dhana Merritt and Brett Fyfield

Queensland Art Gallery
6 Dec – 8 Apr
Pentimento: The Master of Frankfurt's Virgin and Child
13 Feb – 5 May
Minister's Awards for Excellence in Art 2003
4 Apr – 6 Jul
Otherworlds: Images of Fantasy and Fiction

QCA Gallery
14 Feb – 6 Apr
Transit Narratives

QUT Art Museum
- 13 Apr
MCA Unpacked: Drusilla Mojeska and Jane Campion Selections
- 20 Apr
Best of QUT Visual Arts Graduates
21 Mar – 13 Jul
Water: Prints from Lockhart River and the Tiwi Islands Images from Arnhem Land

Palace Gallery
19 – 24 Mar
Graph: Drawing Systems
2 Apr
datum FUND show

Soapbox Gallery
8 Mar – 2 Apr
Chris Rathbone, Genevive Fothergill, Tanja Stark

Studio 11
19 Mar
Invitational 1+1: curated by Rachael Haynes
16 April
Op Shop: curated by Chris Handran

Local Art is a series of six free, print and on-line publications with the intention of generating decisive responses to the 'emerging art' scene in Brisbane. *Local Art*'s content will focus on the work of local emerging artists, writers and art-workers. With this said, the publication will not take these premises as limitations, rather it will endeavour to explore contiguous fields as a means of contextualising local contemporary practices and discourses.

Local Art is currently calling for expressions of interest and content submissions. Through much appreciated Arts Queensland's funding, *Local Art* is able to pay two contributors $100 each (one major artist page, one major article), and four contributors $50 each (can range from exhibition reviews to artist's writings, artist pages, interviews and critical essays).

Content deadlines are: April 4th, May 9th, June 13th, July 28th and August 22nd.

If you would like more information about *Local Art* or are interested in contributing, please contact The Farm or any of the *Local Art* editors: Sally Brand, Natalya Hughes, Grant Stevens and Dirk Yates (thefarm@thefarmspace.com, sallybrand@hotmail.com, natalyaks@hotmail.com, grant@thefarmspace.com, dirk@thefarmspace.com)

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LOCAL ART

LOCAL ART - ISSUE 2 APRIL 2003

LUCY GRIGGS
The Farm
14 March – 5 April

Donna McColm

The latest body of work by Brisbane-based artist Lucy Griggs closely follows, as well as deviates from, the style she has explored for the past several years. Griggs describes the development of these works as an exploration of 'painting as installation [1], apparent in the placement of several canvases to illustrate one large narrative. We are encouraged to read each individual painting for its flatness, decoration, and meticulous linear form, and then as part of a story – like 'pieces of a puzzle'. Underlying the extreme detail of the seven recent paintings are the social ramifications of stylising the 'Orient', which led to the signature 'willow' blue china design that showed the taste and wealth of eighteenth century English collectors.

On the surface, we find a connection with these images because of their prevalence in popular culture. The narrative she has appropriated in this new series also reflects a timely historical junction between painting and printmaking. Thomas Winton engraved a 'willow pattern' print based on Chinese porcelain in 1780, which was used initially to hand paint bone china in the manufacturing warehouses of Stropshire, then spreading to Worcester, Spode, Wedgwood, and so on. Today, the abundance of cheap willow china recalls the manufacture transfer processes used to popularise the pattern and make 'taste' available to a wider audience. The popularisation of printmaking through posters, comics, magazines and books, leads us back through Griggs' new 'willow' series of works to the kitsch childrens' book sources of her previous paintings.

The sources reflected and immortalised in many of Griggs' paintings are best explained through the type of widespread concerns that many artists and critics are exploring today, particularly in connecting historical narratives with contemporary painting styles. This trend is the topic of Barry Schwabsky's essay, "Painting in the interrogative mode", where he suggests that painting since the 1990s has shown a 'difference' in consciousness from its modernist and even post-modernist counterparts, requiring yet another reconsideration of recent art history in order to explain where contemporary painting exists at the moment, as well as where it might be heading. This is "the only form of progress", in his words [2].

An overriding aspiration throughout Lucy Griggs' career has been the execution of what she calls 'personal projects', based on found imagery that recalls memories, people and things that surround her. The major characteristics of Griggs' earlier works exhibited in 2000-01 from her *Do bee* series are the gathering, recycling and appropriation of the scribbly techniques drawn throughout the pages of childrens' activity books that she has picked up in a variety of places [3]. The resultant paintings reference popular culture's obsessions with second-hand goods. They also document the locus of childrens' creative learning through drawing and colouring-in. While perusing the surfaces of these paintings, memories of childhood innocence flood one's vision, and we vividly remember the scenes held within. Perhaps Griggs has expressed aspects of her own personal history through these common symbols. Hinting at potential narratives, the coloured-in illustrations frame scenes of playing 'Cowboys and Indians' and other child-like pastimes. Such scenes were replaced by paintings of insects, landscapes and talking animals in the artist's *I am a mouse cool* series of 2001 [4]. In addition to the activity book imagery, Griggs also reproduced the 'accidental' or unconscious textual dimension of these childrens' drawings and learning experiments. Made by children who are probably now in their 30s or 40s, unknowingly the quirky annotations made by these subjects has contributed to the evolution of her idea. The layered nature of these two series has since led to the 'willow' paintings, themselves interacting in a kind of private narrative.

Lucy Griggs, From the *Do Bee* series 2000
Photo: Richard Stringer
Image courtesy of the artist
and the Institute of Modern Art

Lucy Griggs, from the *I am ~~a mouse~~ cool* series 2001
Photo: Chris Handran
Image courtesy of the artist

Amongst the very diverse appeals for painting in our time, the playful subjects of Lucy Griggs' appropriations in her paintings from 2000-02 followed the path of acquiring concepts by children. This made her artistic 'personal projects' rely on other individuals' personal inscriptions and histories on paper. In the *I am a mouse cool* series, the objectification of personal language (albeit that of strangers) was an interesting component of both the naïveté of these child-like paintings, as well as the complexity of the subject matter. Today Griggs' act to paint from language – in making different types of language concrete, and yet subject to her own consumption – might allow her to successfully pursue figurative painting imbedded with a conceptual edge. Many artists, I would say, have built careers on 'personal projects' and the nostalgic effects of gestural (or conceptual) mark making. Where Griggs and many other contemporary painters create these effects through a meticulously figurative rather than abstract mode, what would have seemed a bold move for previous generations of painters may now be just a part of the 'recycling' or reviewing of history in the 21st century.

Japanese artists Takashi Murakami and Yoshitomo Nara, two contemporary painters leading the Asian art scene, explore the popular culture images at the height of their own era. Their work is infused with engagement with kitsch culture, and appeals to Griggs' own sensibility regarding her personal projects. Murakami's outlined figures filled by intricate patterning and fine brushwork, and Yoshitomo Nara's fixated images of children against vacant backgrounds, reminds me of Griggs' earlier childrens' book appropriations. The flatness of current Japanese styles of painting, and also the prominence of animation, harks back to a long history of Japanese art, best described in the fifteen volumes of *ukiyo-e* artist Katsushika Hokusai's *Manga* [5]. Filled with spontaneous 'sketchbook' prints of people, animals and insects, the *Manga* built a narrative from isolated images, almost 'snippets' of larger narratives. This type of approach resonates within Griggs' concept of 'painting as installation' in her latest body of work based on the Chinese willow pattern and its mythology.

Murakami, in his manifesto *Super Flat*, suggested that the continuing relationship between historical and contemporary Japanese art (identified in print and animation) has been a shared concern and interest in the creation of 'surface images' [6]. If we are to follow Murakami in his quest for flatness, we may be led to a revision or repetition of recent history. It seems that Griggs is interested in the surface images of her era, and the narratives that may come as a result. What makes the discussion of local artists so difficult is often their relationship to the wider (international) field of contemporary art. In certain circumstances, however, the progress of artists' work is reliant upon narratives and histories, perhaps those of bygone eras.

Lucy Griggs, from the *Willow* series 2003
Photo: Jonathon Griggs
Image courtesy of the artist and The Farm

1. In conversation with the artist, March 2003. All other artist quotes are from this source.
2. Schwabsky, B. (2002) "Painting in the Interrogative Mode", in *Vitamin P*, ed. Breuvart, V., Phaidon Press: London, unpaginated.
3. Exhibited in the QUT Honours Graduates exhibition (2000), and Fresh Cut, Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane (2001).
4. Soapbox Gallery, Brisbane (2001). The *I am a mouse cool* series began Griggs' interest in 'installation' painting.
5. Hokusai (1760-1849) initiated the *Manga* in 1814. Twelve volumes were published between 1814 and 1834, with three volumes published posthumously.
6. Murakami, T. (2000) "A Theory of Super Flat Japanese Art", in *Super Flat*, MADRA Publishing: Japan, p.9.

TALKING ABOUT "AUSTRALIAN" ART

Sally Brand

Throughout its history, Australian art has been predominantly viewed as distant, dependant and imitative. Isolated on our provincial island, we have been cultural sponges, absorbers of influence, and have at best, produced powerless art categorized by its eccentric and eclectic blend of external styles [1]. Until the late 1970s and early 1980s, the provincialist bind seemed all but inescapable. It was fortunate then, that through the wondrous twist and turns of post modernist theory we were able to 'solve' our 'provincialism problem'. At this time, Australian artists ceased mourning our culture's second-hand nature, and instead exaggerated its tendencies. The problem became the solution, the disease part of the cure. Imants Tillers, an exemplar artist of this era, produced large scale paintings composed entirely of derivative images. By blatantly copying, Tillers hoped to empower Australian art. He hoped to show that the power of an image was not singularly manifest in its original, but also in its subsequent readings/copies. This was a critical moment in Australian art. Finally we had made an original art of our absolute unoriginality.

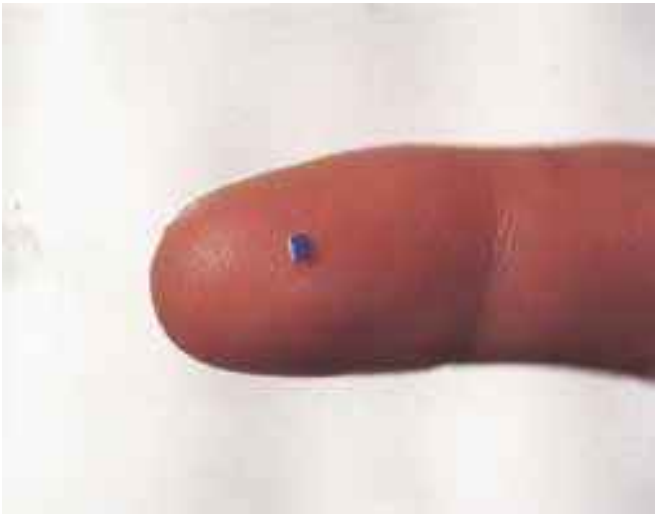
These were heady times. We had pushed our Australianess to its limit, there seemed to be no space for provincialism left. It seemed that we no longer had to make provincial imitative art. We seemed beyond our provincialism and perhaps also beyond our Australianess.

This situation was heightened over the following decade with the expansion of everyday information technology and the introduction of the internet. Now we could easily traverse continents and countries in microseconds. In our digital world we do not need to be tied completely to our geographic localities. We can exist beyond our shores, no longer as distant 'antipodeans'. We can imagine to live in a locality stretched, in a global culture.

It is therefore not surprising that the provincialism problem, which has marked so much Australian art, has now lost much of its potency. Local artists who I talk to do not seem particularly interested in their work as 'Australian'. They seem more interested in their art as art and not so much concerned in its possibilities as local or provincial. Does this mean that we now no longer produce provincial imitative art? Tillers made this a possibility, but in 2003, is it a reality? The work of local artist Gareth Donnelly addresses these issues.

Donnelly is an imitative artist. He is a painter but the objects that he creates are not quite paintings. They are carefully crafted constructions of wood, canvas and paint yet they seem to be more imitations or models of painting rather than actual paintings themselves. They are usually tiny geometric abstractions, the smallest being a blue monochrome which measures only 1.0 by 1.2mm. They are more like toys ready for a doll house than the human sized space of a gallery. Usually they are attached to the massive white expanse of a gallery wall, where they are almost lost, becoming dots on the wall, little vanishing points. They play with notions of distance and along with their imitative nature, display key elements of our provincial past. It is, however, in Donnelly's most recent work that the legacy of our locality lingers most.

Currently, Donnelly is manufacturing miniature copies of artworks by major 20th century artists [2]. In a collection of nearly eighty pieces (which is still growing), Donnelly has produced replicas of works by artists such as Andy Warhol, Donald Judd, Blinky Palermo, Barnett Newman, Robert Delaunay, Gerhard Richter, and even a miniature copy of Marcel Duchamp's *Bicycle Wheel*. It is a collection to entertain and test the art historian in their ability to identify each work's original. So far Donnelly has not included any Australian artists in this large scale miniature project. This is not so much a comment on how Australian art has been left out of major art histories, or in other words commenting on the powerlessness of Australian art, but rather a reference to our distant locale.



Gareth Donnelly, *Tiny Painting* 2002
Synthetic polymer paint on match-stick stretcher
1.0 x 1.2 mm
Image courtesy of the artist and Bellas Gallery

Despite the suggestion that we live in a global culture, Donnelly acknowledges that we still remain relentlessly here. Despite recent developments, it still takes numerous hours to travel to the significant cultural 'centers' of our western world. As a result Australian artists *still* usually only experience major 20th century artworks in reproduction.

This work illustrates Donnelly as a distant Australian artist. None of the works produced have been copied from a privileged personal encounter with its original. They have all been produced from reproductions, and often this is visually evident. This is particularly true of Donnelly's copy of a Richter squeegee abstraction, noticeably made from a reproduction. The surface of the copy is far too textured and the colours far too mixed, aspects which their reproduction may suggest. However, these works by Richter, when viewed in the flesh, are most astonishing for their incredibly flat surface and sharpness of colour. Nevertheless, despite the difference with his copy, for Donnelly this is not a problem. His copy remains recognizably as a Gerhard Richter painting, there is still enough information here for the theorist to realise its source.

What is perhaps most interesting about Donnelly's work is its relation to the appropriation strategies which were earlier employed by Imants Tillers. In this country, appropriation art has had an incredible cultural resonance, it was through appropriation strategies that we could finally claim our 'originality', and our 'essence' as Australian. Tillers used appropriation to empower Australian art. He appropriated, undermined and subverted the conception of political power within international art world that seemed to otherwise exclude Australian art. Tillers' work was loud, large and powerful.

Donnelly's work could not seem any more different. Though this work is awe inspiring in its vastness and in the time and attention to detail that has gone into producing such work, it does not advocate anything like Tillers' cowboy approach. This is a quiet miniature response to our country's provincialist past. In its production it draws upon aspects of imitation and distance and can be used, quite easily, to discuss provincialist tendencies, but perhaps too easily.

Donnelly's work, both his most recent copies and his previous toy abstractions, attract theoretical attention. They ask for your historical response. Undoubtedly this is why I was so attracted to them at first. Donnelly's practice produces quirky gimmicks that recall, at first with his toy geometric paintings, modernist theories, and secondly with his 20th century copies, Australian provincial theories.

Donnelly's relation to Tillers then, seems much like the relationship of Neo-Geo (a type of painting that emerged in the 1980s in New York) to its high modernist precursors, a relationship which Hal Foster elucidates in 'The Return of the Real' [3]. Neo-Geo, which included artists such as Sherrie Levine, Peter Halley and Ashley Bickerton, seemed to epitomize, rather than critically engage and extend, the history out of which it was born. Donnelly's work is similar in its illustrative nature. It seems represent our condition and our Australian art history rather than being really critical or actively engaged with its development. In this manner, it even doubles the provincialist tendencies that it illustrates, and so becomes truly powerless art.

Donnelly is an Australian artist, yet the objects that he makes seem to be more models or imitations of Australian art rather than Australian art themselves. This is, of course, quite ridiculous. How possibly could an Australian artist not make Australian art? Perhaps we might think of Gareth Donnelly as not an Australian artist. Yet, as Donnelly's work suggests, we remain relentlessly here. We are locals with a specific local history. A global locality, and the production of global art may still be possible, it just needs to be located.

1. Smith, T. (1996) 'The Provincialism Problem' in Butler, R. *What is Appropriation?* Institute of Modern Art and Power Publishing: Brisbane and Sydney, p. 133
2. A small collection of these works are currently hanging in the office space of Bellas Gallery.
3. Foster, H. (1996) "The Art of Cynical Reason" in *The Return of the Real* MIT Press: Massachusetts.

Sally,

Read your "Where Do We Begin" piece in Issue one of Local Art. It is, of course, a question that gnaws at me- trying to understand the dynamics of locality and the regional. By coincidence I recently commented on Terry Smith's "The Provincialism Problem" (1974) article, with a Sydney colleague. It is an important article- it throws down a gauntlet, rather than- say- throwing arms up in despair. But I believe that Terry got something wrong- and I am going to address the 'wrongness' with him.

The real problem (?) is the assumption, latent or active- that provincial means parochial. It often works that way- what (British curator) Michael Greenwood wrote in 1979 of the Canadian 'problem'- the "semi-sacred defiance of a beleaguered provincial toward the encroachment of mass culture upon local folkways" [1]. Meaning- it can become a strategy in the work itself. But if it's not a strategy, who will pay attention? It's not in the discourse-as-game.

The problem with "The Provincialism Problem" is Smith's qualifying equation- that is, the 'historical truth'. He writes that Sidney Nolan is (considered) a great Australian artist, while Jackson Pollock is a great artist- "his Americanness accepted as a secondary aspect of his achievement" [2]. This is not true. Pollock represents the post- 1950 incursion of American Empire authority "upon local folkways". America is great and powerful, therefore Pollock is great… and powerful. Simple- and not so simple- as that.

Pollock- among other things- represents the Edison- American work ethic… 98% perspiration, 2 % inspiration. Which is also to say that Oliver Debre (1920-1999)- for example- is not the 'Paris School' derivation of Pollock, but a regional artist of his own making and vision… as much as any artist can make, remake and unmake themselves. But Debre's vision is accompanied by coquille st-jaques, not launched by a B-52. The regional artist will always be at a disadvantage. There is a problem- for example- with the 'canonisation' of Tony Tuckson. The mark is missed by equating him with 'Abstract Expressionism' from a regional perspective. That is… to be only 'the best of the Australian strain'. If we want to understand more about Tuckson, we have to look at concurrent work in other regions. But that is a double jeopardy… inter-regionality does not constitute cultural authority. To paraphrase an Ian Burn work, 'no regional artist implies the existence of another'.

What all of this may mean is that the cultural model is askew. In the scientific model, aberration must be addressed and the model changed. So, the Smith proposition- that the Australian artist "can at best achieve eccentrically eclectic blends of external styles" [3] – is an inversion that is only true of one model- the centralist creation mythology or model of New York hegemony- primacy- is accepted without question. Yet, Smith states that New York is also 'provincial'. How does that operate with respect to American- only (?) art history and the so-called, mid 20th century, MidWest Regionalists?

The question that should be asked- in the Australian context- is why the Australian canonisation of Ian Fairweather (who- to my reading and understanding- never thought of himself as Australian). Then one MUST ask, why is Tarsila do Amaral (1886- 1973) a radical Modernist in Brazil, but nowhere else?

If we start to ask those questions, examine art practice- one artist at a time (and I have merely cited two, of many)- then provincialism becomes locality… and locality may turn out to be the great generator. Globalism is just the means by which locality travels and circulates.

Regards,
Ihor Holubizky

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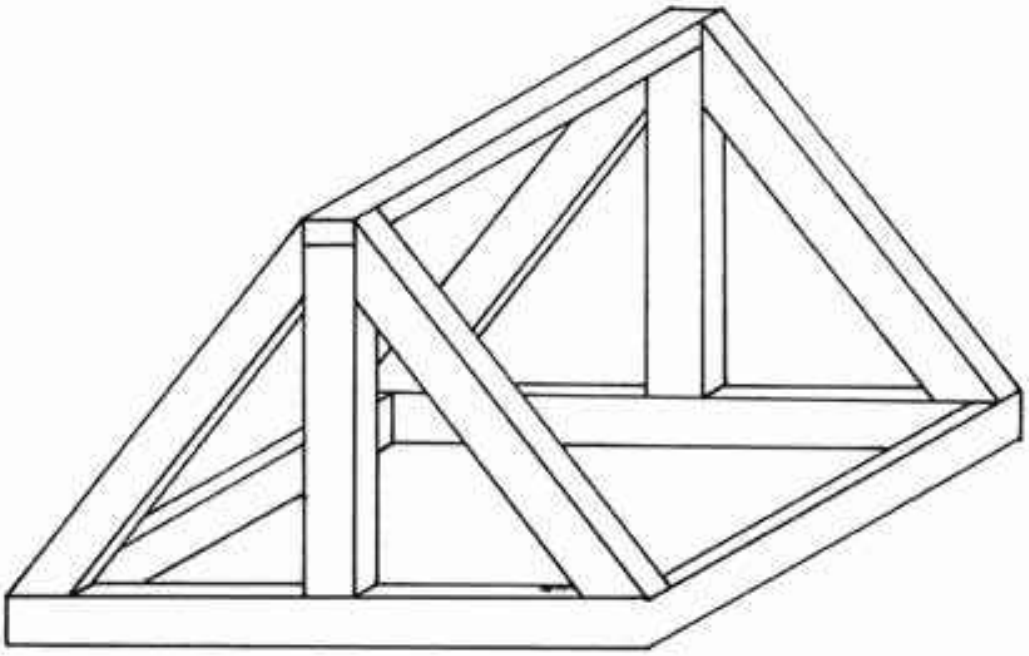

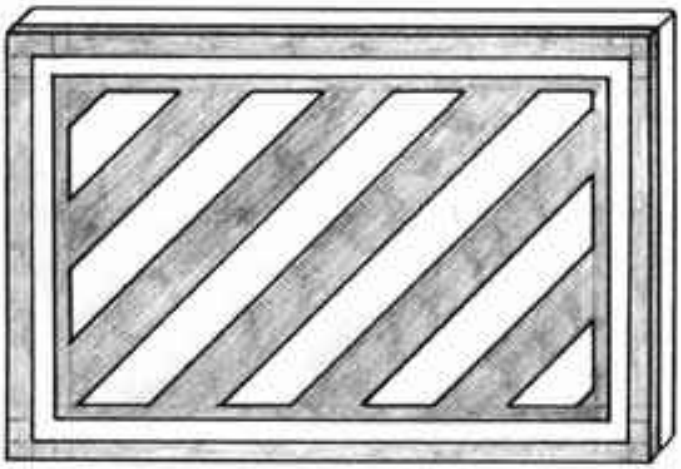

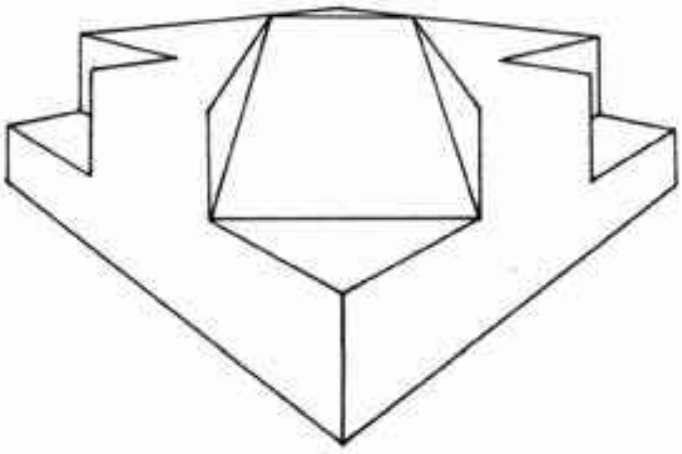

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Ken Leslie, 2003

HANGS OF NEW YORK

Holly Arden

February in New York is an ungenerous season, with temperatures of –8C and a wind that curses through the streets. Nevertheless, with a cup of hot soup in one hand, my travelling companions and I took to the streets for a fortnight of indulging in the city's art attractions and galleries.

New York is abundant with everything, and opportunities for art are everywhere. For example, near Washington Square stands a 36 foot adaptation of Picasso's *Bust of Sylvette*, while across the East River in Queens, a building which houses scores of artists' studios attracts local and international artists to cover the entire block (stairs and roof included) with graffiti art. This latter venue was discovered late one evening, when we chanced upon several local artists working on a stairwell. We were immediately seduced by the depth and vibrancy of colour used on imagery that ranged from animation to fantasy. The varied and gritty street culture of New York, where streets and subways are venues for opinions, seemed to highlight the relative sterility of Brisbane's public spaces. Graffiti murals and stickers made plain the vehement anti-war sentiments felt by many New Yorkers at this time.

Building in Queens
Photo: Holly Arden

I became increasingly conscious of the way not only public spaces were utilised in the city, but of how the galleries worked with spaces and environments, often with great innovation. One example was the Museum of Modern Art's affiliate gallery, P.S.1 Contemporary Art Centre in Queens. P.S.1 is a converted public school building of the British Victorian kind with long, dark corridors and huge wooden doors, and, maybe because it reminded me spookily of my own primary school, the whole experience was rather uneasy. This atmosphere particularly suited the work on display, which was a large collection of sometimes confronting video works, which were screened in a darkened maze of interconnecting spaces. The exhibition, *Video Acts*, included more than 100 (often iconic) works designed for single monitors, which dated from the mid 1960s to 2000. Included were works by John Baldessari, Gilbert and George, Nam June Paik and Bill Viola. The presentation allowed one to become quite lost or disoriented, which heightened the tension, for example, of Paul McCarthy and Mike Kelley's subversive and ghoulish *Heidi*. Some of the monitors had been placed in unorthodox but intelligent locations: the unit playing Pipilotti Rist's work, *Blutclip*, was outside the female toilets. Its haunting, repetitive music echoed into the private spaces of the toilets, and coupled with the subject matter, which concerned menstruation, heightened the work's impact.

One of the most personally exhilarating works was an installation, *Meeting*, by James Turrell, upstairs in P.S.1. Opening a large door to what I thought was another room, I stepped out into a space where a large square segment had been cut in the flat roof, revealing a framed section of sky outside. Around the walls were church pew-like benches and a soft light that was filtered upwards, lending a theatrical feel to the space. Visitors lay on the benches or on the ground watching clouds drift past the square. We were hit by the piercing cold air but also by the quietude of this outdoor room. Lying there, as our eyes adjusted, it became difficult to tell which was the sky and which was the ceiling, as the image became alternately flat and then three dimensional. While the work echoed Modernist concerns of the monochrome and the push/pull effect of light, dark and colour on the eye, it was permeated with an uplifting sense of spirituality.

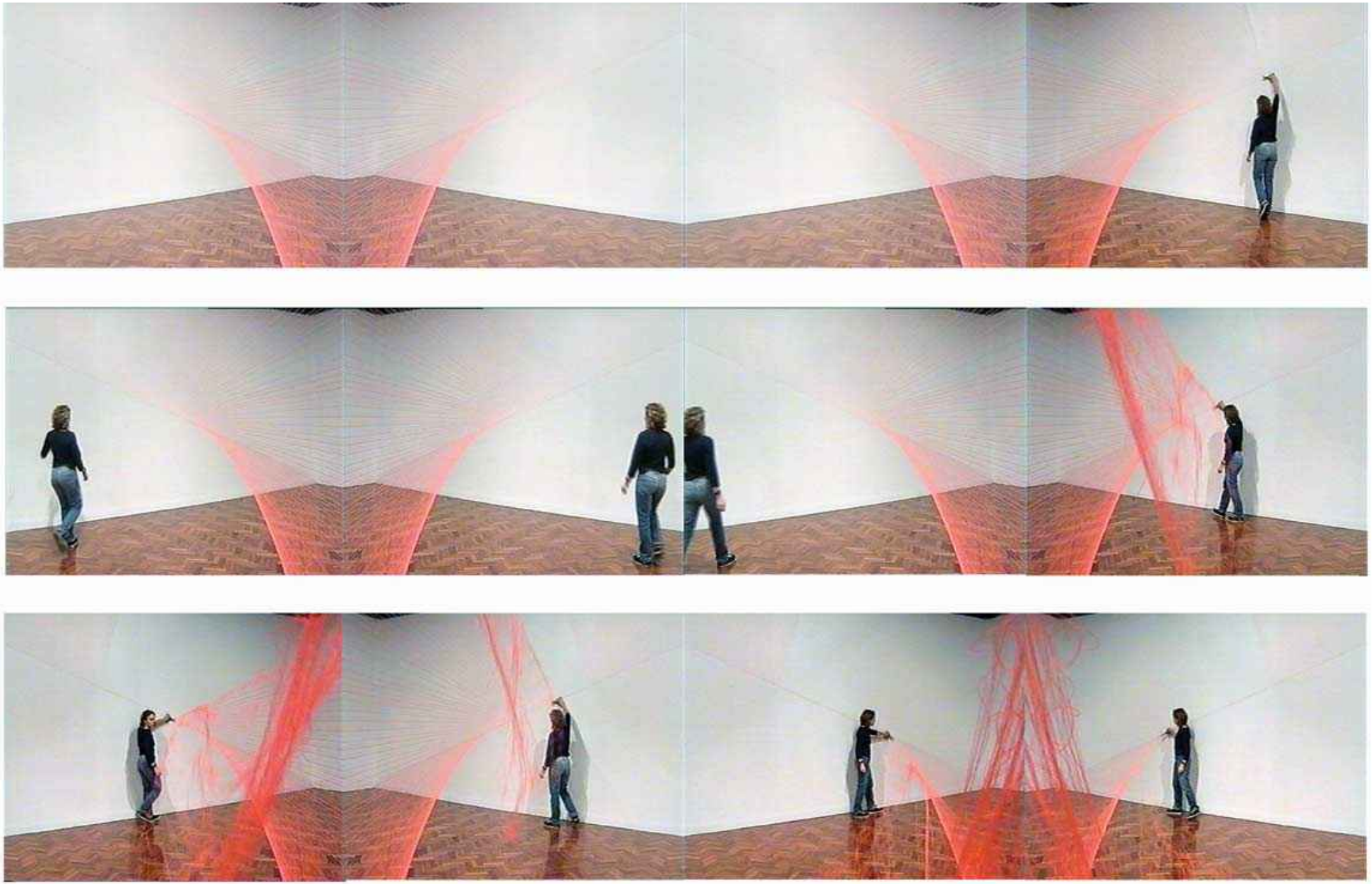
The below freezing temperature in the city penetrated everything and, for me, heightened the experience of public and installation art. On the roof of the Dia Centre for the Arts was Dan Graham's minimal installation *Rooftop Urban Park Project*. The work simulates the characteristics of the surrounding rooftop environment: the square frameworks built around air vents and skylights and the cylindrical water towers. It comprises a large wall of glass which is set back from, yet surrounds, a smaller glass cylinder. Both sections of the work are transparent, yet reflective, and the viewer's image is part captured in the glass. This aspect of the installation, that focused my attention to my own body in space and interaction with the work, was sharpened by its positioning on the rooftop. Here, the temperature and wind made me more aware of my own movement and location. For example, certain positions inside the outer wall acted as a buffer from the wind, while I could also meander in and out of these more protected areas and feel the fluctuations in temperature.

Venue entry pass (New York)

The responsiveness by galleries to spaces and environments was echoed by a similar receptiveness to cutting-edge trends and ideas (undoubtedly driven by the dynamism of the New York art scene). For example, at the New Museum of Contemporary Art in Manhattan, there was an exhibition that explored the latest innovations in architectural surface by architects using digital technology. One of the most educational aspects of this exhibition was the extent to which a relatively small and specialised area had been expanded and explored.

In certain areas of New York, the galleries are situated back to back and while there is not the space to elaborate here, a further observation and comparison with Australia may be made. This is in relation to the fairly traditional approach taken by some of the major New York galleries to installing work. At the Guggenheim, I wound my way up three levels of the permanent collection displays, which, while showcasing an impressive quality and quantity of work, indicated a rather prescriptive approach to hanging. Many of the spaces presented the 'Masters' of particular periods or genres, but left little opportunity for the viewer to discover: to find their own links between periods, subject matter or individual works. Similar display methods were evident at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, which featured traditional, often 'Salon' hangs, with works often grouped by artist, period or 'movement'. Undoubtedly, these methods of display showcase work in important ways that help to contextualise them, while the quality and quantity of works will not cease to attract audiences. It would have been interesting to explore some of these hangs in different ways and in so doing, perhaps challenge audience preconceptions of art and further expand their experiences. On arriving back in Australia, the innovative installation approaches taken by many galleries here were highlighted, where viewers are being invited to find new inroads into art and investigate alternative ideas.

Building in Queens
Photo: Holly Arden



Sandra Selig: video stills from de-installation of *Span*, Brisbane City Gallery, March 2003

SOME EXAMPLES OF THE DIGITAL IN LOCAL ART

Claire Gobé

An article in *The Weekend Australian* recently explored the effects of digital media on movie and television production [1]. Lynden Barber reported that, 'call it revolution or call it evolution' [2], digital media is changing the manufacture of movies and television programs by making them accessible to a broader range of producers and directors. High quality digital cameras are relatively inexpensive in comparison with their predecessors, and professional editing programs are now available that run from home computers. This technology has burst onto the market, and has enabled a plethora of underground and independent films to be produced.

Can the same be said of painting? Can we presume that a similar increase in accessibility will be made possible in the visual arts by the use of digital technology? The answer to this question is varied — ostensibly the answer is no. The adoption of digital media in the production of footage has made film and television production easier, cheaper and more flexible than ever before. For painting however, where artists previously used pencil and paper or brush, paint and canvas, the use of digital media involves costly and cumbersome hardware that is by no means available to all.

However, one would think that the use of such digital media would free the artist, to some degree, from the technical proficiency needed to complete some works. One might foresee a style of painting that incorporated realism without the manual skill currently needed to render this. Surely digital media would allow for a move away from such physical restraints in this medium.

However this does not seem to be the case when looking at trends in the use of digital media by young local painters. Grant Dale, Natalya Hughes and Rachel Toohey, for example, use digital media to varying degrees and effects. Dale and Hughes use digital media as a tool, with their final works maintaining the appearance of a traditional painting. Toohey, in comparison, reflects the digital processes she uses in the final aesthetic of her work. Yet through each artist's practice there is a continued emphasis on manual skill and technical proficiency.

Grant Dale, *Untitled* from "Operation" 2002
Photo: Grant Dale
Image courtesy of the artist and The Farm

The use of digital technology is relatively new to the practice of Grant Dale, who adopted it for his most recent exhibition, *Operation*, held in November 2002 [3]. The works in this exhibition were based on landscape and portrait photographs that were scanned into a computer and distorted by Photoshop (an image manipulation program), each image pixilated into simplified masses of colour. Dale then abstracted these coloured shapes further in the final stages of applying paint to canvas.

Grant Dale, *Untitled* from "Operation" 2002
Photo: Grant Dale
Image courtesy of the artist and The Farm

In one version of art history abstraction is the end point of a long line of development that responded to the changing needs of representation after the invention of the camera. Dale has taken this abstraction and reproduced its characteristics through an instantaneous process. Despite the abstracted nature of the works, traces of the original landscape and portrait images remain, taunting the viewer with their faint recognisability. The works bear an ambiguous relationship with the original image by simultaneously revealing and disguising their source.

Natalya Hughes, *Untitled* (from the Toyokumi series) 2002
Digital print: courtesy of the artist and Bellas Gallery

Natalya Hughes, who has long been using digital technology in her art practice, scans an appropriate image, then uses Photoshop to subtract and reconfigure various elements. The shapes and patterns that remain hang together loosely on the canvas, abstracted from the figurative associations that had previously held them together. In recent works, elements of the original source

such as window frames and doorways ground the image and re-establish connections with the location and perspective of the original work, disturbing purely abstract associations. Hughes' modified version of the original is printed and used as the template for the work on canvas, the image changing little between this "sketch" and the final work.

Although the digital processes used by Dale and Hughes are an integral part of their respective practices, each artist emphasises their manual skills in the final stages of work. Dale highlights brushwork in the rendering and installation of his abstract images. The colours and media chosen have an inherent texture that is brought to light by Dale's placement of the works below the eye of the spectator. The raking view created by this vantage stresses the gestural application of paint. In one example, Dale has left a portion of gesso uncovered. Here the materiality of the work and the method of its creation are exposed by this absence, plainly visible from the viewer's position.

Natalya Hughes, *Untitled* (from the Shuncho series) 2003
Digital Print: courtesy of the artist and Bellas Gallery

Natalya Hughes likewise emphasises the manual skill of her painting. For Hughes, painting is a sensual experience. The feel of applying oil onto canvas is an important part of the creative process, the sensual nature of the application of paint echoing the sumptuous look of each image. The skill required for the finely wrought details in her work has been progressively developed, and original sources are now chosen according to the degree to which the artist believes she will enjoy painting their patterns.

Rachel Toohey is another young artist employing digital technology within her practice. Unlike Dale and Hughes,

Rachel Toohey, *Dissolved Becoming Emptiness* 2002
Digital print on polyurethane: courtesy of the artist

however, the digital processes used by Toohey are reflected in the final aesthetic of the image. Toohey's 'paintings' are digitally crafted and then printed onto polyurethane sheets. Each image has a plastic feel, yet is presented stretched like canvas over a wooden frame, with the colours chosen adopting a chalky appearance and texture.

These ambiguous links between digital media and the traditional practice of painting are continued in Toohey's preparatory processes. Toohey photographs an image, scans it into the computer, then sets about redrawing the entire image using Photoshop. Despite the digital aesthetic of the work, the precision of line, form and colour remains factors governed by the artist. An emphasis on the artist's manual skill continues.

Following the examples of these three emerging local artists, digital technology does not seem to be revolutionising painting by freeing the practice from an emphasis on technical skill. Dale, Hughes and Toohey each integrate digital technology with measures that affirm that the manual skill of the artist remains significant. But digital technology is revolutionising painting by providing an instant source of imagery, and an accurate template from which the artist can work. Camera obscura, camera and film all changed the ways that artists produced images. It will be interesting to see the developments that continue to be made to the practice of painting in the wake of digital media.

1. Barber, L. "Edge of reality" in *The Weekend Australian*, Jan. 11-12, 2003, pp.R16-R17.
2. Ibid, p.R16.
3. at The Farm, Brisbane.

stumble then rise on some awkward morning:
Ben Frost
The Farm, Brisbane
7 February – 1 March

JUSTIFIED GRAPHICS

Grant Dale

Edgar Degas, *After the Bath* 1895, Oil on Canvas (left)
Edgar Degas, *Woman Drying Herself,* 1895, Photograph (right)

Dear Les,

I have a problem.

I recently attended the opening night of Ben Frost's show, “stumble then rise on some awkward morning” (lowercase aesthetics his not mine). I'm embarrassed to say that I found it quite compelling - so much so that I bought the red one. I'm not normally one to be too suspicious of my not uneducated chequebook but in this particular case I find myself worried that I'm losing my edge; Am I descending into an appreciation of kitsch?

To be completely honest the critic in me feels as if Frost pulls these poor, ephemeral digital images kicking and screaming into an incongruous materiality. Surely painting is an image telos where such content goes to die. Frost's project, for what I discern it to be, seems unnecessarily realised via painting - I keep asking myself, 'Why aren't these digital prints?'

Please Les, tell me I'm not endorsing an embarrassing anachronism just because of my perhaps unfashionable penchant for a good old lick of paint?

Earnest Collector.

Ben Frost,
she dreamt she was a bulldozer she dreamt she was alonein an empty field 2003
Photo: Grant Stevens
Image courtesy of the artist and The Farm

Dear Earnest,

Let me just make sure I've really got a handle on your predicament-

Your fear is that the imagery is insecure within the medium of painting, that the painting of them is just some sort of quick-fix, a way of elevating these generic digital studies to a state of art object-hood that they don't really warrant. If you contemplate them simply as digital imagery they're quite unremarkable, you've seen it before, but as you confront them here as paintings you find yourself compelled. You cringe at yourself. You're scared that you're allowing the physicality of the medium to enrich the imagery illegitimately, the fact that the work is painting seems inconsequential to the machinic objectivity of the digital imagery rendered on each canvas. In essence you're concerned that you've endorsed an art form disinterested in the demands of *medium specificity* - that is the Greenbergian observation that an avant-garde art necessarily addresses the conventions and limitations of its medium. You suspect Frost's work to be realising itself more along this line:

“overpower the medium to the point where all sense of its resistance disappears and the adventitious uses of art become more important”[1]

Add to this Greenberg's definitions of Kitsch -

“kitsch is mechanical and operates by formulas”, “vividly recognisable”, “identifications are self evident immediately”[2]

and it's not looking good for the Frostian.

However I don't think you're necessarily unjustified in your compulsion towards these paintings. I don't think that everything needs to be approached in such an obvious fashion. To assuage your fears as to Frost's work being an irresponsible kitsch we need to assert that it's not solely the illusionism of the imagery that is the vital ingredient in its effectiveness as art; we need to validate the works painted nature in relation to what is clearly a digitally formulated image. That's easy enough...

Paint can realise something that is always only an illusion in digital imagery - continuous form. The perfectly weighted curves intrinsic to the equational pleasure of the vector based graphics depicted in Frosts paintings, on screen or printed out, do not really curve at all. Like all computer graphics digital representations of vectors only pretend to curve in that horizontal/vertical stepping of aliasing; they are a zigzag of pixels or dots, not a real continuity. Expanses of solid colour or tone are also only an illusion of autonomy within digital media, only ever really being discrete instances of RGB or CMYK distributed so as to be blended at a distance by the eye. With this in mind we realise that simply by tracing his vectorised maps onto canvas with the natural plasticity of paint Frost necessarily creates actual curves and forms where only approximations existed. Frost essentially makes the virtual illusion of his digital image a real one.

This difference between digital presentations and painted ones is clearly radical but a difference that only profoundly affects the articulation of the imagery at a somewhat close degree of scrutiny. Are they in this sense then like Photorealism's somewhat perversely precise re-enactment of it's photographic model - an acute representation of the complete detail of a photographic image via carefully modelled paint for its own sake? They are like this in their fidelity to their model but there is an important distinction to make: the materiality of Frost's acrylic paint doesn't necessarily efface itself as such through complicated modelling and manipulation to achieve this accuracy. The paint is spread naturally in its space-filling opacity unblended, it is simply corralled within the boundaries that its vectorised model has suggested. Frost's paint does what acrylic paint naturally does it simply fills in.

The paint is free in this way because the model it is following - that particular visualization created by applying a vectorizing filter already mimics 2d materiality. Vectorised images suggest areas of flat colour as tightly fitting formal juxtapositions like snap-locking jigsaws. As we have established, such efforts at curving contour and presenting flat colour are merely illusionistic of two-dimensionality within digital presentations. So, as irresolute endpoints for the imagery they suggest, vector images can be conceived of as precisely mapped out plans of territorial boundaries waiting for a continuous substance like paint to inhabit and articulate.

From here the painted form that Frost's images take is completely appropriate even logical. And what's more we need not to content ourselves with an appreciation of their painted nature as solely an imitative function of modelling and blending - it's a style of image that deploys its paint in a pure fashion. These unblended territories of unashamed flat acrylic naturally emphasise two-dimensional materiality, the sheer painted surface of high Modernist painting.

So Earnest, it's clear from herein that these images need not be digital prints to enter into a valid relationship with their medium. As paintings they are compelling as an interplay of abstract painted materialities in their machinations as descriptions of a photoreality. Illusion and surface oscillate like blinking polarities, flickering between a 'holed through' window and a self-conscious painted canvas. To go that one step further. I'm going to place this work squarely within a paradigm that is quintessentially Painting: the form of art that we are confronted with in Frost's painted vector models, especially when we examine Edgar Degas implication of photography into his abstracted painting process, can be framed as the hyperrealised progeny of the fundamental pictorial project of Impressionist realism.

I'll leave you with that flight of image-science fiction fantasy.

I hope Earnest, that via this analysis you can breathe a sigh of relief, relax into a comfortable chair and enjoy the painting you purchased on its own terms.

Sincerely, Les S. Moore

Edgar Degas, *Four Ballerinas behind the scenes* (detail) 1898, Pastel on Paper (left)
Edgar Degas, *Untitled Ballerina study*, 1898, Photograph (right)

1. Greenberg, C. *Towards a Newer Laocoon*
2. Greenberg, C. *Avant Garde and Kitsch*

LOCAL LISTINGS

Bellas Gallery
8 – 26 Apr
Storm 2 - Rosslynd Piggott

Brisbane City Gallery
28 Mar - 25 May
Second Sight – Curated by Chris Handran

EA (Emerging Artists)
15 Apr (5:30pm)
Forum (slide night) – "Under the influence: Open mic." Lv.2 381 Brunswick St.

Fire-Works Gallery
11 Apr – 10 May
Ronnie Tjampitjinpa

Gallery A-Go-Go
12 Apr – 8 May
Culture is dead ... serious – various artists

Institute of Modern Art
1 – 31 May
Fields – Micky Durrg, Ken Thaiday, Roy Wiggan and Fiona Foley (guest curator – Diane Moon)

The Farm
11 – 12 Apr
Dumb Bombs – David M. Thomas
18 Apr – 10 May
Weapons on the Wall – Chris Howlett

MetroArts
Main Gallery
2 – 18 Apr
Per:form – Selina Braine, Amanda Cuyler, Mathew Fletcher, Katherine Taube and Liz Williams (Curated by Selina Braine and Chris Comer)
Development Space
14 May
Impossible Sites – Rachael Haynes

Queensland Art Gallery
13 Feb – 5 May
Minister's Awards for Excellence in Art 2003
4 Apr – 6 Jul
Otherworlds: Images of Fantasy and Fiction

QCA Gallery
11 Apr – 1 Jun
World Famous Brand Name – The Luo Brothers

QUT Art Museum
- 13 Apr
MCA Unpacked: Drusilla Mojeska and Jane Campion Selections
- 20 Apr
Best of QUT Visual Arts Graduates
21 Mar – 13 Jul
Water: Prints from Lockhart River and the Tiwi Islands Images from Arnhem Land

Soapbox Gallery
11 Apr - onwards
featuring Rebecca Ross and Chris Handran

Studio 11
16 Apr
Op Shop – Dirk Yates (Curated by Chris Handran)

Local Art is a series of six free, print and on-line publications with the intention of generating decisive responses to the 'emerging art' scene in Brisbane. *Local Art*'s content will focus on the work of local emerging artists, writers and art-workers. With this said, the publication will not take these premises as limitations, rather it will endeavour to explore contiguous fields as a means of contextualising local contemporary practices and discourses.

Local Art is currently calling for expressions of interest and content submissions. Through much appreciated Arts Queensland's funding, *Local Art* is able to pay two contributors $100 each (one major artist page, one major article), and four contributors $50 each (can range from exhibition reviews to artist's writings, artist pages, interviews and critical essays).

Content deadlines are: May 9th, June 13th, July 18th and August 22nd.

If you would like more information about *Local Art* or are interested in contributing, please contact The Farm or any of the *Local Art* editors: Sally Brand, Natalya Hughes, Grant Stevens and Dirk Yates (thefarm@thefarmspace.com, sallybrand@hotmail.com, natalyaks@hotmail.com, grant@thefarmspace.com, dirk@thefarmspace.com)

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For the on-line version of *Local Art* visit www.thefarmspace.com and follow the links from the main menu.

The views expresed in *Local Art* are not necessarily shared by its editors.

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(The Farm is supported by Rinzen, Kirlou Signs, Brett's Hardware and Dendy Cinemas)

LUO BROTHERS: World Famous Brand Name
Queensland College of Art Gallery, Brisbane
April 11 - June 1 2003

Sarah Stratton

The Luo Brothers' work can best be described as a collage - in the literal sense and also in terms of the pastiche of ideologies, imagery and techniques they employ. Even the process of working collaboratively could be considered collage in terms of the cutting and pasting of individual concepts and skills to form an accomplished art object.

Since 1986, the three Luo brothers, Weidong, Weiguo and Weibing, have been producing work as a collective, exploring the visual language of popular culture within China through traditional and contemporary art forms. Much of their work addresses issues of consumerism and globalisation, drawing inspiration from a number of sources including popular Chinese New Year prints, political propaganda images and Western advertising campaigns.

New Year prints (nianhua) are part of yearly festivities in Chinese culture and for centuries have been used as decorations to celebrate the end of the harvest and to ensure good luck for the New Year. These popular prints of chubby children and animals symbolising good luck are characterised by simple lines and bright colours. The imagery of these New Year pictures were appropriated by the Chinese Communist Party during the 1940s and used for party propaganda. To remain relevant to contemporary audiences, symbols of progress, such as freeways and high-rise buildings, were added to the traditional scenes of babies, animals and flora. 1

During the 1980s, images of Western popular culture infiltrated the work of many contemporary Chinese artists, functioning as both an affirmation of consumerist desire as well as social commentary. More recently, the allure of the West as an exotic alternative to historic tradition has given way to an investigation of what is meant by the term 'Chinese' art in the contemporary international art sphere. 2

'Political pop' developed as a major theme in contemporary Chinese art in the 1990s. This loosely defined movement is characterised by the combination of communist and capitalist imagery, while at the same time refusing to openly critique or promote either ideology.3 During this period the term 'gaudy' art was also coined to describe a group of artist whose subject matter borrowed symbols of western consumerism and Chinese folk art, and combined them in a garish or colourful way.4 The work of the Luo Brothers can be considered in relation to both branches of contemporary Chinese art.

The Luo Brothers
100 Family Name Primer 1993 - 1994
Madly Changing Name Series
Lacquer on wood
Courtesy of the artists, QCA Gallery
and Ray Hughes Gallery
Photo: Dirk Yates

In works such as Welcome the World Famous Brand series, chubby babies and symbolic animals mingle with western products such as soft drinks, chewing gum and video recorders, which represent consumer culture. Luo Weidong explains that the ease with which capitalist symbols have infiltrated China s everyday public life can be attributed to an acceptance of Western culture.5 With these new configurations the Luo Brothers work seems to celebrate the arrival of the New World brands with the same joyful exuberance of the New Year prints.

Communities throughout the world are witnesses to the acceleration of globalisation. Artists who become actively engaged in critiquing this process attempt to negotiate the boundaries between 'the local and 'the global'. As the distinctions between us and them / East and West diminishes, questions of artistic homogenisation are raised. What makes contemporary Chinese art different from other forms of contemporary art are the unique traditions, styles and techniques available to draw upon - ones that are quite removed from Eurocentric

perspectives. While the constant review and revision of traditional culture is the foundation of any creative pursuit, from any region, external forces also continually influence these past traditions, in order to create new perspectives. [6]

The Luo Brothers employ the technique of Chinese lacquer painting to distinguish their work from the propaganda posters they source and the other artists of the gaudy art movement. Highly skilled in the craft of Chinese lacquer, Luo Weidong explains how the Luo Brothersí work is also distinct from that of the masters he trained under:

> "The two teachers and I belong to two different times, 'works should serve for times', this is our creation thought to follow. The traditional lacquer painting contains its limitations, and it is very difficult to express the contemporary art by it, so we made some improvements, and created the works belong to this our times, such as Dialogue of the Day Before 21st Century, Welcome the World Famous Brands etc." [7]

The quality of the lacquer technique gives the work an extravagant lustre and enhances the brightly coloured images, giving them an almost plastic quality. Ironically, the objects themselves mimic the plastic sheen of many consumerist products and elicit the same kind of desirability from the viewer.

The Luo Brothers have a strong international exhibition history and are represented in a number of major international collections. The exhibition at the QCA Gallery brings together over thirty works including paintings, drawings and mixed media pieces and is the first time such an overview of the Luo Brothers work has been presented in a public gallery in Australia.

Contemporary art from China has become very popular with Western audiences in recent years. While these audiences are beginning to become familiar with a number of key Chinese artists, it is important to consider the situation of exhibiting contemporary art in China. The difficulties inherent in any discussion about contemporary Chinese art in relation to the global art scene are even more incongruous when you realise many of the artists are more well know to international audiences than they are to their own country.

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2. Leng Lin, (2000) "The China Dream", in Chinese Art at the End of the Millennium: Chinese-art.com 1998 - 1999, New Art Media Limited: Hong Kong, p.30.
3. Reena Jana, (1999) "Between Worlds Old and New", in New Modernism for a New Millennium: Works by Contemporary Asian Artist from the Logan Collection, exhibition catalogue, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art: San Francisco.
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5. Luo Weidong, (2002) "A talk with Luo Brothers", interviewed by Zou Yuejin/interviewee Luo Weidong on behalf of the Luo Brothers, in Luo Brothers, exhibition catalogue, Ray Hughes Gallery: Sydney, unpaginated.
6. Wu Hung, (2002) "Mapping Contemporaneity", in APT2002: Asia-Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art, exhibition catalogue, Queensland Art Gallery: Brisbane, p.25
7. Luo Weidong, (2002) "A talk with Luo Brothers", interviewed by Zou Yuejin/interviewee Luo Weidong on behalf of the Luo Brothers, in Luo Brothers, exhibition catalogue, Ray Hughes Gallery: Sydney, unpaginated.
8. Li Xianting, (2002) "The Damage of Pompousness - Artworks by Luo Brothers", in Luo Brothers, exhibition catalogue, Ray Hughes Gallery: Sydney, unpaginated.

The Luo Brothers
Welcome the World Famous Brand 2000
Lacqer on wood
Cortesy of the artists, QCA Gallery
and Ray Hughes Gallery
Photo: Dirk Yates

LOCAL RESPONSE

Sally Brand

In a continued exploration of 'locality' with respect to local art, I recently asked a number of Brisbane artists to reply to the question "How does your locality affect your practice?" Here are their responses:

Peter Alwast
I remember a day in 1984 when I was really young and my father took me for a walk in St. Kilda. We went out to get some perogi from the local deli for lunch and as it was Grand Final day between Hawthorne and Essendon there was a lot of yellow, brown, red and black decorating shops and flats in our neighbourhood. It was a typically temperamental Melbourne day and walking back to our flat on Westbury St it began to rain. The footy hadn't started yet, so we ate our perogi watching the '84 World Olympics that were hosted under the big blue Los Angeles sky. It seemed to me that almost everyone in the world was in sunny Los Angeles, in America.

Anne Wallace
To tell the truth, I try not to think about my 'locality' - if by that you mean where I live in relation to the rest of the world, more specifically, the artworld and its supposed centres - because, frankly, therein lies the path to madness.
I know that a lot of people think that Australia is necessarily behind the eight ball when it comes to art, and that Brisbane, by extension, is utterly off the map. The problem is not this fact - and it is undeniably true that nothing I could be doing here would be of interest "over there", where there are already a thousand other artists doing more or less the same thing as me. The problem, rather, is the thinking of these thoughts. Instead of being bothered by my complete inconsequentiality, I think it is more interesting to think about art in ways that do not pertain to the "artworld" and how it is configured in international art journals, and so on. Would living "over there" actually allow me to paint anything I couldn't here? Conversely, does living "here" prevent me from painting the things I want to paint? One of the problems of locality - and its ultimate uselessness as a concept - is that, insofar as you are in it, you cannot answer these kinds of questions.

Grant Dale
In terms of city, (Sydney, Hobart, Brisbane - in that order) my work has been essentially unaffected by the subtle difference in art dialects of east coast Australia; the image-essences I respond to have been the same wherever Iíve been. I know that if I'd grown up in another country, then that would have had a considerable effect in terms of the 'personality' of my work, but seeing as my projects are inspired by an art media that transcends cultural boundaries the locality that affects me the most radically is my historical one. Like practically all of my art colleagues, I think that my eighties childhood in middle-class suburban utopia - the sunny playground that so tragically blossomed into the disillusionment of generation X, has hard-wired my fundamental artistic consciousness.

Archie Moore
In my practice I use words; plays on words. Whilst in Prague, inside the Czech locale, I used cross-linguistic puns. "City", for example, is a bilingual homonym where the arrangement of letters exist in both the Czech and English language but do not share pronunciation or meaning. The work I do in Brisbane still involves words but they usually have a discriminatory, marginalized bent: racist, sexist, homophobic etc. These have been words drawn from my personal experience of various surroundings; from the schoolyard, the home, relatives white and Aboriginal and rural vernacular. You can take the boy out of the white/ christian/male town but you can't take the white/christian/male town out of the boy.

Natalya Hughes
To be honest, I find it a little difficult to assess the impact of my locality on my art practice, as I have had no experience of making other than that of making art in Brisbane. Having said this, it is clear to me that working in a city which promotes itself as a centre for Asia-Pacific Art (hosting events such as the Asia-Pacific Triennial) has had a significant effect on my practice - specifically my appreciation of the (Japanese) art historical traditions I work from and relate to.

Peter Alwast
Feet, Bird, Window 2003
Enamel on two sheets of mylar
Photo: Rod Bucholtz

SECOND SIGHT: Narelle Autio / Jessica Ball / Cherine Fahd / Estelle Ihasz / Deborah Paauwe / Troy Ruffles / Darren Siwes / Carl Warner / Curated by Chris Handran
Brisbane City Gallery
28 March - 25 May 2003

Rachael Haynes

Second Sight
Second Sight is an exhibition that features the work of eight contemporary Australian photographers who present us with a means of seeing the world anew . This piece of writing forms a response to the exhibition and draws on dialogues with Chris Handran, the curator of the exhibition, over the last twelve months. It explores the premise of the exhibition to see the world through photography and by extension, through various lenses, filters and veils.

love at first sight: to see through love
It was not love at first sight; perhaps love was the second or third sighting. To see, suddenly, with a certain clarity, something hitherto overlooked. What marked the significance of this moment? Through not knowing, still, we recognise one another. There was, at that moment, a touch of second sight - a glimpse of distance as present.

How can one see through love - a love that perhaps blinds, that veils? To see love through another and to experience through love, when love is a filter. To see through the eyes of another, an other whom we love - can we glimpse a shared vision, a double vision perceived as one? Through this filter I look at you. To come to a transparency of seeing I can only hold onto my blindness, my veils.

eye to eye: the interiority of vision
A doubling of my vision that is always carried with me. My double eye sees both worlds, twin worlds, each unknowable to the other. First one eye and then the other? My twin eyes, born together. Sight is always two - always there is a second sight - yet my vision falls into one Sight.

To save my blindness from itself, I attach a vision of correction. To see always through an other - a corrective lens that brings the world into focus. Or to become immersed in a hazy atmosphere of short-sightedness - to see the world through oneís failed vision.

through your eyes: the curatorís lens
Always seen through this lens of not seeing - the intangible beauty of the world that I see through you. How can I find the overlooked, the unseen? Where is the beauty within the banal, the mysterious within the mundane, the otherworldly within the ordinary?

To translate this lived experience into material terms I modify my eye. I turn to a mechanical world I can manipulate - to find a certain truth of vision, I rupture my eye, I twist and turn it, tape it together - look, O so closely until I can no longer see. To choose, a particular visionary device for each sight - to see at once, those things that cannot be seen until later. To see transparency, filters - the lens of the artificial eye. To hold in my hand this prosthetic memory of a moment, the intangible fringes of memory - the secret snapshots. To discover in the detail of moments and memories some tangible thing - some pain of beauty that pierces and remains.

At twilight the world is quiet. The day turns in on itself. The night begins like a slow nocturne. I sleep. To find in this world a tangible atmosphere - to find an image of dreams and slow lights.
The eerie emptiness of deserted streets, lights emanate from closed windows. Window frames that dissolve in sunlight like a soft dream, a facade of the world. A glow moves eerily across the frame and into my eye, my first, my second sight.

Darren Siwes
I am Expecting 2001
Cibachrome photograph
100 x 120 cm
Courtesy of the artist, Brisbane City Gallery and Greenaway Gallery
Photo: Dirk Yates

a lens to see through
To see the world anew, a new world seen through a mechanical lens, an extension of the eye. And in this world to see what our eyes may overlook, to take a second glance and find the intimacy of observation. I cannot see through the eyes of another, through this inanimate eye - there is always an embodied eye, a subject for vision, a moment transferred through a desiring subject.

blind vision: to see an exhibition
Where are my blind eyes so that I can see? My eyes disconnect themselves and bounce through the exhibition - what do they see without me? Disembodied, they are so disinterested they quickly lose themselves. My ultimate viewing apparatus - a pair of eyes connected to my heart.

Frozen Moments
To carry a disembodied eye with me where I may go to capture moments, I stand stock still while my eye roves and tumbles. To hold each moment in my hand, my own, this sight, this sight I cannot see except through

my prosthetic eye, one I carry with me wherever I go, my ìway of lifeî eye. To be preserved - this chrysalid of a moment. Imprecise, each becomes distilled into a fragment of itself. Kept inside of itself each moment becomes another - an ecstasy of moments.

Double Vision

My eye follows the wind; wind swept, moisture forms at its tips. It falls into precise forms, carefully blown by chance. It cannot find its way through naming - it trips into misplacing where it is going. It travels the time of the image, into a distant present. The present moment becomes stretched, stretches into another moment already gone - all at once already here, in the here and now of my wind swept eye. Forms look back at me, reflect my look, the look of the black and white eye, of pink eye... Each resembles itself looking back into itself.

Seen From Above

My eye hovers over the landscape - this becomes a field of shimmering green. It itches my eye. Strangely, forms are pinned, anaesthetised and fastened down. Sharply forms merge and emerge - they come to meet me as I am pulled down into the green world. I fall out of vision, out of coherence into a strange world - a pixel world of hovering form as colour.

Seen From Below

To see the underbelly, to look above and see - the underneath. My eye stumbles into flatness - to glaze the surface, to float over structure and become stilted. My eye turns to memory, to the trace of pasts written in silence. To see the significance of the moment. Left in the present the past writes itself as present. To keep, to return, to see the past spin back towards itself in the eternal presence of the structure.

Private Viewing

My eye finds the intimacy of observation, the intimacy of thought, an intimacy that veils narrative. A delicacy of the eye as it folds and moves within a fragment - soft and crisp, this fragment wounds and leaves a scar in my vision. To be another here so as to see myself as another, there. To place this other inside the veil of my memory the space of the fragment is closed, kept close, interior. My eye is given back to itself - exterior. To touch, to touch the veil - is this to touch everything? To leave this veil intact, to be safe and sound. Sometimes the eye tears the skin, it wounds - so to soften the blow with a veil.

Seeing Double

My eye splits between yourself as self and an other. As an other you speak silently to yourself. You move both towards and away from where you are standing. Where are you? You are misplaced, left standing, stock still - staring, as if you had lost sight of yourself. You see me. My eyes cannot be kept whole. It springs from you, towards you, between the two versions of yourself that you cannot place.

On Reflection

To see as if already seen, a reflection of one surface on another. I see light reflect itself, it returns to where it has already been. The light writes itself as shadow. The image hovers beneath its own double. To reflect, I fall into the reflection of another. To be - I see myself reflected in a surface. To see the world as it is, upside down, in details of shadows and glimmers. The mark glances off the surface, rests, between one side of itself and the other. My eye falls between one resemblance and its reflection.

Seeing Spots

How can one see vision? To inscribe vision as light, to write with a lens, with a pin hole. To bring to light what lay in darkness, to bring a light to light itself. To write itself blindly, in the darkness - to bring to light what was hidden. What remains unwritable of this light? How can light see itself? As if magical, the light writes itself in doubles and puns - spots of light, spot-lights. The mechanical manifestation of light brings its own image to light. To illuminate light - its path, its past, its present, to see what was at first darkness, what is at second sight - illuminated darkness.

The End in Sight

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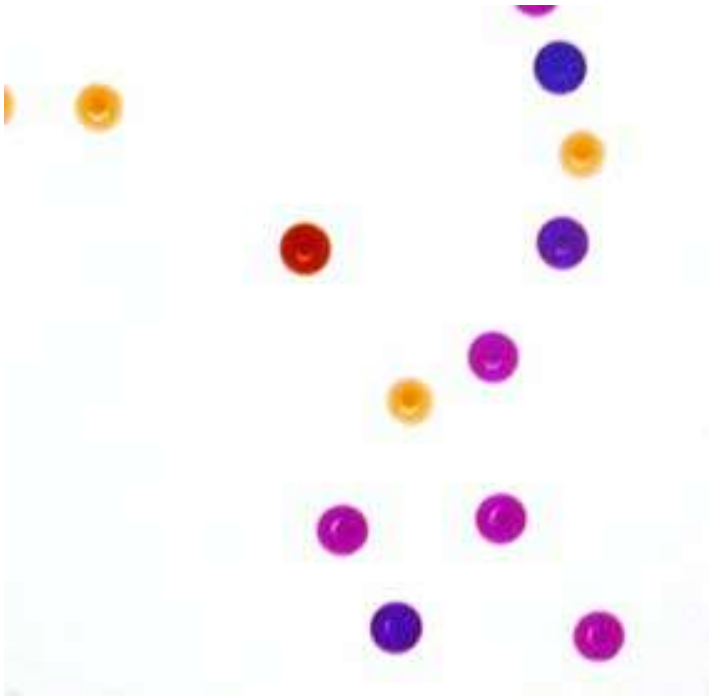


Jessica Ball
Parisian Blobs #20 (detail) 2003
Chromogenic pinhole photograph
75 x 75 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Brisbane City Gallery
Photo: Dirk Yates

CURATING SOFTWARE ART:
Interview with Mathew Fletcher, curator of [re:code], exhibited at The Farm, Brisbane, 7 March 2003

Angela Goddard (April-May 2003)

AG: Could you explain the curatorial premise of [re.code]?

MF: [re.code] was primarily conceived as a curatorial project to survey a number of approaches, artworks & artists working with either the idea of software-as-art and/or its ancillary byproducts, like the use of program source code or software development environments in their various permutations.

I wanted to include a wide range of approaches to software art, which incorporated these processes into their production such as artists interrogating the aesthetic conventions of common desktop operating software (Jonah Brucker-Cohan) and other more established practitioners in this emergent field like Olga Goriunova and also local artists, Tim Plaisted and Thea Bauman who oscillate between other fields of visual inquiry such as temporal media design and games development. One of the aims of [re.code] was to problematise what could possibly constitute this emerging form of digital arts practice.

[re.code] was also a way for me to rethink the types of discussions and issues raised in other forums such as the 'software-art panel' staged as part of the international media art festival 'transmediale.03' held in Berlin earlier this year.

Photo: Dirk Yates

Mathew Fletcher (curator)
Installation view of [re.code]
Courtesy of Mathew Fletcher and The Farm

AG: So the show was about exploring current approaches to the particular artform rather than a thematic or content-driven approach?

MF: Initially, I had framed the show as an investigation into the broad field of software art rather than perhaps necessarily focussing on the content of the works included in the show. However, in framing the show in such a technology-specific manner, I discovered sub-categories of investigation and activity under this broader category. For example, several of the artists works intervene in the neutral or productive space signified by the aesthetics of software interfaces.

At this point, for me, [re.code] departs with other common canons of the Zen or art of programming or other historical recuperations of the link between software and art. I am more interested in the critical, political and aesthetic dimensions of software art than simply examining the figure of programmer-as-artist or algorithmic-art. For me, [re.code] questions the alignments of this form to certain approaches, technologies, or even the types of practitioners working within the vicinity of software art.

AG: Considering your role as an art educator at QUT and QCA Gold Coast, did you feel any pressure to make the work accessible to your audience, who may not have been familiar with digital art?

MF: I guess I was concerned with both of these things, how to present the work in such a way as to allow it to be easily accessed by viewers and, yes, the show was also really about exhibiting and framing a type of work that an audience not familiar with specific knowledge of software art or even new media art could still engage with despite much of the work in the show existing as experimental works.

I think in the case of [re.code] it was important to present this emergent field but in a form that did not require specific prior knowledge.

AG: How long did the project take from conception to completion?

MF: Close to three months. I posted calls for work on a number of lists during December 2002. Originally, I had conceived the work as existing solely as a DVD project. I then communicated individually and collectively with the artists involved, developing the curatorial premise and negotiating how each work would function in the show until early February, and from then on I organized and negotiated the logistics, the DVD production and so on.

AG: Did the origins of the artists play any part in the formulation of the exhibition?

MF: Most of the artists are from Europe or the US with the exception of local artists Thea Bauman, Tim Plaisted and MEZ (Mary-Ann Breeze).

At this stage, at least, most of the artwork constructed as an artist-coded-software and software intervention is happening overseas. I think this is for a variety of reasons

- a history of open source software, software hacking & piracy and other occurrences around this such as the 'demo scene' in Europe, the history of software experiments under the broader category of net.art and so on.

For much more detailed descriptions of the work see, The Farm website: www.thefarmspace.com.

AG: Which contemporary theorists inform your work? Do you adhere to a particular critical position or methodology?

MF: One of the most exciting aspects of working in this manner, is the theoretical developments that are occurring and where they are occurring. For example, I think smaller listservs such as Empyre (amongst other larger lists such a Fibreculture) host some really interesting dialogues with respect to how critical theory relates directly to new media arts practice. As to my own work, there are the usual suspects (Virilio, Manovich, etc.) but I respond more strongly to other critical theorists such as Brian Massumi, and his reading of virtual spaces.

AG: How did the audience respond to the work?

MF: I have received a whole range of responses to the show. I appreciate those that have been supportive but the critical feedback is of most value. As [re.code] is my first foray into independent curating, I have learnt a considerable amount about the limits and possibilities one can achieve through integrating new media work into the physical space of the gallery.

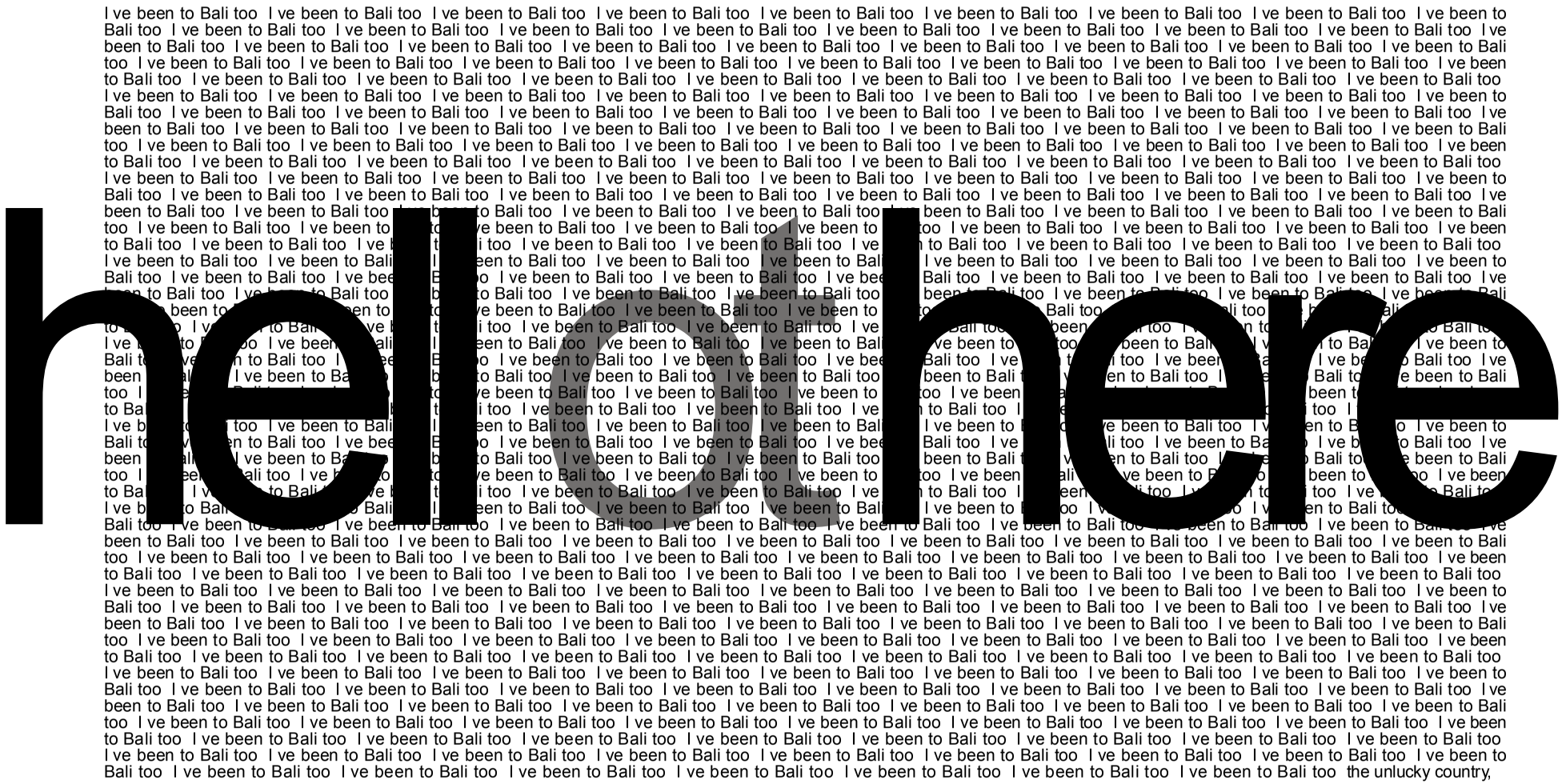
AG: And the one-night-only format?

MF: I think the benefit of this type of format is that it obviously facilitates a greater turn-around in terms of the program for any given space. For this type of show it allowed easier negotiation of the space and works from a curatorial point of view but obviously makes it impossible for viewers to revisit the show to experience the works after the event of the opening.

I note that one of your own works was included in 'per:form' at Metro Arts recently. How did the [re.code] curatorial project relate to or inform your own work?

Apart from an interest in generative code as a way of constructing artwork (be that sound and/or video art etc.) I think the points where these two activities have perhaps crossed are around the idea of taking a seemingly intangible form, highly dependent upon certain infrastructure for execution / playback / broadcast, and attempting to integrate or situate viewers so that perhaps the contemplation and experience of this type of work relies upon the immediate, physical space in which these infrastructures and consequently the work, is staged.

Mathew Fletcher (curator)
Installation view of [re.code]
Courtesy of Mathew Fletcher and The Farm
Photo: Dirk Yates



Vernon Ah Kee
Hello There 2003
120 x 180 cm
Inkset in polyprophene, satin laminated
Courtesy of the artist and Bellas Gallery

READYMADE GESTURES: MATT MALONE

Claire Gobé

Appropriation has been a common term in art history since the late 1970s. The practice has allowed artists to question both the role of the artist and the nature of art itself through the exploration of the boundary between originality and reproduction. Can an artist today persist with this practice of appropriation and maintain contemporary relevance, or have the possibilities of this type of appropriation already been exhausted?

The idea behind appropriation, with its questions about the role of originality and reproduction in art, first appeared when R. Mutt (Marcel Duchamp) presented his Fountain, a commercially made urinal turned upside down and placed on a plinth, to the Society of Independent Artists in April 1917. It was decreed that this Fountain was not art, and the work was banned from exhibition by a society who had previously stated that any artist could exhibit in their joining year.

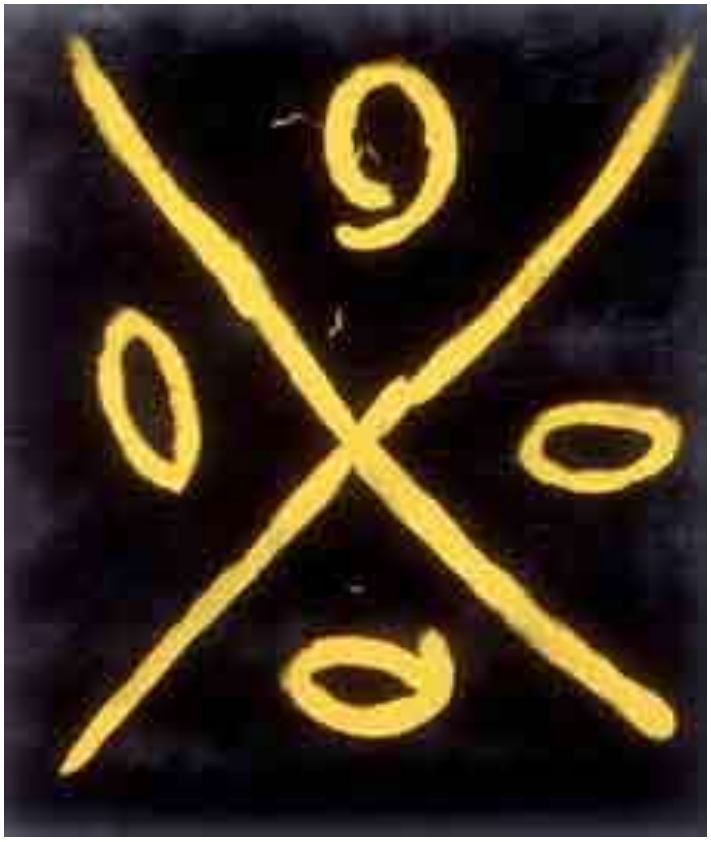
Sally Brand's recent series of articles in 'Local Art' have repeatedly focused on appropriation in Australian art. Brand's articles have praised Imants Tillers as the paramount contemporary Australian artist for his response to issues of originality and provincialism through the direct appropriation of symbols from the history of modern art. Following on from Terry Smith's article 'The Provincialism Problem' [1], Brand has argued that Tillers' appropriation allowed for the development of a truly novel Australian art, despite its imitative foundation, through the copy's indelible reinterpretation of its original. [2]

This use of appropriation is echoed in the practices of artists such as John Nixon and ADS Donaldson. These artists reinterpret examples of high modernism by relating this style of art, generally associated with terms such as ëgeniusí, back to everyday experiences and objects. Nixon, for example, reinterpreted the monochrome by representing it on commercially produced canvas board and raising it on a frame of unpainted pine off-cuts. As Rex Butler argues in The Anamorphic Monochrome, Nixonís Block Painting (Orange Monochrome) (1993) gave the monochrome a depth it had not previously had. Butler states:

> "A clue here is perhaps to be found in what the artist himself says about the piece: that ' it arises in direct response to the large-scale paintings of Barnett Newman and Ad Reinhardt and the work of the Australian Field generation artists . Doubtless he means this in a predominantly negative sense: that his work is a refusal of their grand scale and overweening ambition." [3]

Likewise, Donaldson's The Purples (from 'Courts and Jesters' portfolio) (1992) presents a series of purple screen-prints with varying intensities of layering in a manner that relates Clement Greenberg's sometimes lofty theories on taste and aesthetics to the choices of a Dulux colour chart. According to Butler, the objectification of modernism that can be seen in the work of Nixon and Donaldson raises questions about whether or not these works are indeed paintings or sculptures or neither. He relates this type of abstraction to a point of intersection between Duchamp's readymade and the reductive theories of Greenberg's modernism. [4]

Matt Malone is an emerging local artist who completed his Bachelor of Visual Arts from the Queensland College of Art last year. His work was recently shown in the IMA's Freshcut exhibition.[5] Malone continues the style of appropriation used by Nixon and Donaldson, begging the question of whether or not this action can still be seen as relevant within a contemporary context. Untitled (Cross 1-4), is a series of four "paintings" that repeat the appropriation of a canonical symbol from the history of modern art, black and white reflective vinyl strips are laid over Perspex rectangles that have been covered with varying hues of enamel paint. Malone emphasises the material and formal properties of the work in a similar way to Nixon and Donaldson. However, unlike Nixon and Donaldson, the cross itself becomes a tool, a mass produced medium to be used in the same way as the vinyl strips, enamel paint and Perspex with which it is depicted. Of course, after Malevich and Nixon, not to mention historical associations, contemporary artists cannot avoid the plethora of meanings that are linked to this symbol, even when these meanings and the possible reinterpretations the work may produce are intended to be incidental to the formal qualities of the image. But this is part of the workís intrigue, for the depiction of the cross can no longer be "original". The symbol is similar to Duchamp's Fountain in that it is readymade and innately reproduced, a quality emphasised by Malone's continued practice of working in series.



Matt Malone
Untitled (Window)
Roadpaint and enamel on plywood
35 x 30 cm
Courtesy of the artist

Matt Malone
Untitled Cross (1 - 4)
Vinyl and enamel on Perspex
19 x 14 cm each
Courtesy of the artist

In addition, artists cannot avoid the subjective associations that their works unavoidably have. Untitled (cross 1-4) plays with objectivity and subjectivity through its undeniably autobiographical aspect. Malone's background includes careers in both the mining and construction industries. In the past, he has been impressed by the materials such as reflective vinyl that he saw from day to day, recalling: 'It'd be pitch black and you could see these lines walking towards you or walking around in the dark as they picked up any sort of light that was around.'[6] Likewise, the enamel car paints and perspex used are taken from the artist's daily life. An ambiguous relationship develops between an emphasis on media and readymade imagery and the presence of the artist and his history. As in the work of Nixon and Donaldson, a canonical symbol from the history of modernism reflects the artist's everyday existence.

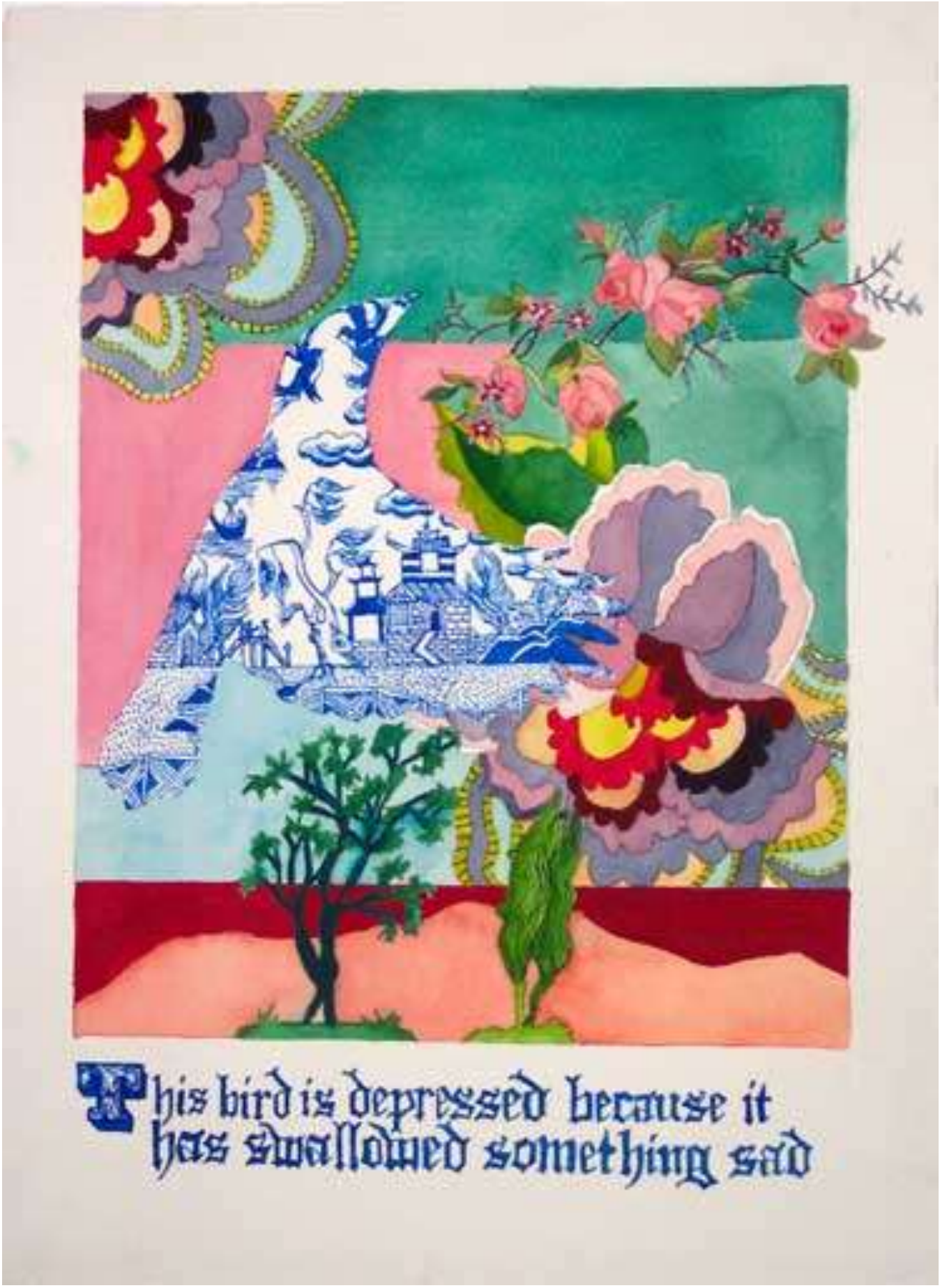
In contrast, The Cross Series 2002, a series of ten works, seems to remove the presence of the artist as much as possible. The series uses as its basis the cross markings that construction workers make to identify windowpanes on site. Malone photographed these then reproduced them exactly with black reflective vinyl strips stuck onto perspex covered with black enamel paint. The gestures that are recorded are those of an anonymous artist, reproduced as exactly as possible in media that seems to deny the presence of the appropriation artistís hand.

These gestures are firmly indebted to industry and mass production. Like Duchamp's Fountain, they have no identifiable artist and are not considered art. Yet unlike Duchamp's Fountain these gestures are transient, removed on completion of each particular site. By recording them, Malone elevates them to a status of permanence that they were never intended to have. Yet this is done in a manner that is itself shifting and changing. The reflective vinyl strips with which the image is recorded flash and disappear according to the fall of light on the worksí surfaces. By preserving an industrial mark and elevating its status to that of permanence, The Cross Series challenges the boundaries between art and industry. This is heightened by the associations between the art historical cross and the formal qualities and title of the chosen image.

Concurrently, by attempting to reproduce the industrial cross exactly, Malone establishes a shifting relationship between the absence and presence of the artist. The original artist is both there and not there, his or her work unintentionally art but made so only by its appropriation. The appropriator is also both absent and present; absent through his reproduction of a found mark but present through the subtle and unavoidable differences his reflective vinyl gesture will have with its original. This relationship of absence and presence is further complicated by the site installation that accompanies the work. Malone uses PVC tape to reproduce similar crosses to those found on construction sites within the setting of an art institution. Despite the industrial origin of these crosses and industrial medium with which they are created, they possess the gestural quality of the "artist's" mark. Yet the nature of appropriation and the interrelationship that it establishes between original and copy means that they remain inextricably linked with the non-art cross and the anonymous artist.

And so, returning to our initial question, Malone's work shows that the possibilities of appropriation have by no means been exhausted. By comparing Malone's work to its precedents, a fine line between originality and reproduction is exposed. This ambiguity deflates further notions of originality and raises additional questions about what constitutes art in contemporary society.

1. Smith, Terry (1996) 'The Provincialism Problem', in Butler, Rex (ed.) What Is Appropriation?, Institute if Modern Art and Power Publishing: Brisbane and Sydney, pp.131-8
2. See Brand, Sally (2003) 'Where do we begin to talk about 'Australian' art?' in Local Art [Brisbane], Issue 1, March 2003, p.3.
3. Butler, Rex (1997) 'The Anamorphic Monochrome', in Geometric Painting, Pestorius, David (ed.), University of Queensland Press: Brisbane, p.43.
4. Ibid., pp.45-7.
5. Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane, Feb.-Mar. 2003.
6. Interview with the artist, Brisbane, 22 Mar. 2003.



Luisa Rossitto
Depressed Bird 2002
45 x 25 cm
Watercolour on paper
Courtesy of the artist

Interview with David M. Thomas regarding his exhibition Dumb Bombs held at The Farm, Brisbane, 11 - 12 April 2003

Grant Stevens

GS: In your statement accompanying the show you talked about moving to Brisbane and some of the things you've done since being here. How conscious are you of your surroundings when you are making work? Is it important for you to respond directly to your environment, or does it affect the work more incidentally: for example, as one of the frameworks in which you are working?

DMT: The way I work for an exhibition is to try and keep my options open as much as possible and to prepare my work as best I can, and also to prepare myself to make last minute decisions.

I do place an importance on dealing with information that is directly around me. I am very conscious of my surroundings when I work. I also think that this environment is what I share in common with everybody else. I guess itís what we call suburbia, but it is also a departure point where I will then use this information to talk about my attitudes to it or my ambivalence to particular input.

I always try to integrate my ontology into what I do, which is what makes the work self referential and reflective of that environment. This also relates directly to the works that I do in the area of self-portraiture. There is, of course, a danger here that this activity can be easily read as purely a vanity or subjective project. But I see it more like if I choose my perspective or my image to work with or through, it is more ethical or simpler.

GS: This issue of responding to your environment also relates to the series of drawings included in the show, that you made in New York a few years ago. Do you still think of them as those drawings I made in New York or are they now those drawings I showed in Dumb Bombs , or both, neither, something else?

David M. Thomas
Detail of Dumb Bombs 2003
Courtesy of the artist and The Farm
Photo: David M. Thomas

DMT: Graphic and painterly works constitute one part of my art practice. In some ways all the different types of works I do document at least referentially, and often extremely tangentially, my experience.

I think of those drawings as the work I did in New York because they are, and they look like aspects of New Yorkís Lower East Side.

Why did I choose to include them in this show that implied some kind of didactic opinion about geo politics? And why did I refuse to deliver one?

I am very open to the idea that I can pursue and use several different forms of intervention at once; drawing, sound, graffiti, installation and performance have all been utilized or sampled in this exhibition. I am also very interested in resistance on the level of interpretation, especially in relation to political issues that may be very large and very small.

GS: One of the links I see between the drawings, the sound and the video components of the show is that they all seem to respond to an issue of proximity : the materials you use are relatively cheap and easy to come by, the imagery in the video work comes from around where you live, and many of the sounds are appropriated from popular culture (sound effects, theme songs, pop songs etc). In effect they are all things close and accessible to you. Does this idea of proximity inform the way you think about making art, or is it less conscious than that?

DMT: Maybe it s more about availability and speed. I have a tendency to want to work quickly, to cover as much ground as I can. I am by nature an impatient person, but I am also and have been referred to as a TV junkie. I love watching TV. I love listening to music and collecting records. These things including art making are what navigate me through life, and again, I guess I see it as a kind of documentation of ontology on a kind of abstract poetic level. The idea of a quick or immediate response to things sometimes allows for a directness or a connectedness not found in other works.

I probably got into using found objects and material for many of the same reasons I think a lot of people did in Sydney in the early nineties. We all lived on the dole and had very little money and rent was expensive. What money people had either went on drinks, drugs food or clothes. Many of the artists that I was directly exposed to through my involvement with CBD gallery, did very impressive sculptural and installation works made from crap basically, and this had a big effect on me. It was as if through an act of will by these artists these refuse materials, in combination with their ideas, could be transformed into art. In recent times there has been a retreat from this way of working, mainly because collectors see just the crap and not the ideas.

GS: I remember coming over to your house to look at some of your work a little while before the show and admiring your studio set-up. Then when it came time to install the exhibition you basically just moved your studio into the gallery. Do you think that using the same tools or technologies in both making and showing the work displays some sense of honesty on your behalf? Is there any anxiety involved in this

form of presentation, as opposed to somehow hiding behind a more slick form of presentation?

DMT: For the Farm Show I did dress it up a bit. The equipment that I have collected are fetish objects to me, and setting them up as the performer in the slightly rased stage area of the space was intentional. I have referred to myself as a nerd before and this I think is the nerd that is in me that wants to display my stuff. Also a ìmore slickî as you put it sound system or video projector may have given a false impression of what my desire is, as it never is about creating more spectacle for purely spectacleís sake.

I thought about the audio and video installation as a system, a sound and visual system. Much like the reggae sound men from the 1950s in Jamaica used to build, or have built, systems out of what was available to them. There are stories of them using speakers used for sonar from American navy ships to build the ultimate sound system. I am a little less driven than that, my system is meant to represent me, my domestic life, my art work and my desire to explode or amplify that.

GS: A few years ago there was this debate about going to see 'live' electronic music: people were complaining that the musician or band weren't really 'performing' because they would just sit behind a computer screen and press buttons. At the opening of Dumb Bombs one of the things that struck me most was the way that we all stood back in the room and watched the equipment (a reel-to-reel player, sound desk, tape player, mini-disc and speakers) as if it was performing. Do you think that we've just gotten over this issue with technology, or was it perhaps about the way the equipment was installed facing the audience - thus being able to see it working?

DMT: I have designed a proxy me, the equipment I used was all old technology, it's all kind of dum stuff that has been replaced by computers and better versions of themselves. There is a bad mojo of redundancy here. And also Australians and Brisbanites have a lot invested in guitar music historically. The live band, with big amplifiers, shiny guitars and drums, the energy that this can generate, and the skills that it displays. Naturally there is a movement away from these old ideas, that may be reduced often to the theatrics of live music. I think people are more aware now that you can have live music with all kinds of instruments not just guitars and that computers are an instrument, just a very good one.

I was happy that in my exhibition at first people were the audience, watching the mechanical proxy me, but later they relaxed sat around in the room had a drink and watched the video and had a chat. And also I was interested that there were people that wanted to wear the headphones and twiddle the nobs of the mixing desk and look at the drawings.

In setting the exhibition up so that I didn't have to perform the Audio visual system could also act as an abstract sculptural self-portrait.

b - sides

rediscovering lost treasures

gia mitchell
lucy griggs
sebastian moody
chris handran
martin smith

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LOCAL LISTINGS

Bellas Gallery
22 May - 7 Jun Gordon Bennett
10 - 29 Jun Natalya Hughes

Brisbane City Gallery
- 25 May Second Sight - Curated by Chris Handran
31 May - 27 Jul Wrapping Beauty - Acer Chor

EA (Emerging Artists) Forum
10 Jun 5:30pm "Do as I say, not as I do?" Teaching and Making Art

Fire-Works Gallery
16 May - 14 Jun People: Vincent Serico, Rod Moss, Trevor Nickolls, Owen Yalandja, Pantjiti Mary McLean, Archie Moore, Paddy Fordham Wainburranga

Gallery A-Go-Go
- 5 Jun Good Things Happen: Stuart Carrier and Dhana Merritt

Institute of Modern Art
- 31 May Fields: Micky Durrg, Ken Thaiday, Roy Wiggan and Fiona Foley
12 Jun - 19 Jul 4 x 4: Vernon Ah Kee / Michael Snelling, Kim Demuth / Julie Walsh, Annie Hogan / Ruth McDougall, Jewel MacKenzie / David Broker

The Farm
16 - 17 May Type: Simone Hine
23 May - 14 Jun Fluff Monger: Shaun Weston

MetroArts
14 - 29 May Impossible Sites: Rachael Haynes (Development Space)
21 May Stethoscape (Datum Soundshow): Rebecca Crowley, Julia Dowe, Patrick King, Gillian Lowrey, Wayne Nelson, Damien Pascoe, Alex Scott, Vanessa Weekes, Wendy Parker and Lubi Thomas

Queensland Art Gallery
- 6 Jul Otherworlds: Images of Fantasy and Fiction
- 9 Jun Colour: Contemporary Art for Kids
- 31 May Arryn Snowball (Merlo Starter Space)

QCA Gallery
- 1 Jun World Famous Brand Name: The Luo Brothers

QUT Art Museum
- 13 Jul Water: Prints from Lockhart River and the Tiwi Islands Images from Arnhem Land

Studio 11
14 Jun B-Sides: Gia Mitchell, Lucy Griggs, Sebastian Moody, Chris Handran, Martin Smith

Local Art is a series of free , print and online publications with the intention of generating decisive responses to the ëemerging artí scene in Brisbane. Local Artís content focuses on the work of local emerging artists, writers and art-workers. With this said, the publication will not take these premises as limitations, rather it will endeavour to explore contiguous fields as a means of contextualising local contemporary art practices and discourses.

Local Art is currently calling for expressions of interest and content submissions. Through much appreciated Arts Queensland funding, Local Art is able to pay two contributors $100 each (one major artist page, one major article), and four contributors $50 each (can range from exhibition reviews to artistís writings, artist pages, interviews and critical essays).

Upcoming content deadlines are: June 13th, July 18th and August 22nd.

If you would like more information about Local Art or are interested in contributing, please contact The Farm or any of the Local Art editors: Sally Brand, Natalya Hughes, Grant Stevens and Dirk Yates (thefarm@thefarmspace.com, sallybrand@hotmail.com, natalyaks@hotmail.com, grant@thefarmspace.com, dirk@thefarmspace.com).

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LOCAL ART

LOCAL ART - ISSUE 4 JUNE 2003

BEYOND THE REVOLUTION: AN INTERVIEW WITH REX BUTLER ABOUT "ART IN THE POST-ABORIGINAL AGE"

Sally Brand

SB: What interests you or, rather, why do you write about Aboriginal art?

RB: I write about Aboriginal art for the same reasons as I write about any art – a mixture of intellectual curiosity, the belief I have something to say and the desire to learn something about myself. That said, writing about Aboriginal art in Australia today seems to me uniquely exciting because there is so much at stake in it, both personally and for the culture as a whole.

SB: What particularly do you learn about yourself when you write about Aboriginal art?

RB: You learn about your own perspective and the limitations of your own conceptual map of the world. Aboriginal art in particular tests whether what you think about the art is adequate to the art itself. All art does this, but you are especially aware of it when you write about Aboriginal art, for obvious reasons.

SB: So what do you believe good art criticism should achieve?

RB: Good art criticism has to walk a very fine line between being faithful to the work and taking the work somewhere else. There is no point in merely repeating what is already there in the work, but at the same time you cannot just wilfully disregard it. A good piece of art criticism recreates the work in its own language and using its own particular powers.

SB: Is your approach to Aboriginal art any different from your approach to non-Indigenous art?

RB: Hopefully, my approach is not different, but with Aboriginal art for a white critic you are obviously struck by the problem of how you might best be "faithful" to it. I think it's patronising to believe that another culture is fundamentally different from you own, does not suffer the same problems and limitations. It would ultimately be an impossible project for me to write about Aboriginal culture in its "own" terms: I would inevitably end up producing a "Eurocentric" account. As with any art criticism, you are trying to bring out the potential of the work in your own language – while undoubtedly, in ways you cannot see, your own language is being transformed by the encounter with the work of art.

SB: 'Beyond the Revolution' is the review you wrote for the *Courier-Mail* newsaper on Gloria Petyarre's recent show *Changes* at Fireworks Gallery [April 5, 2003]. What did you mean by suggesting in this essay that these "new works are less about tradition and more about art in a post-Aboriginal age"?

RB: First of all, I must say that the headline – "art in the post-Aboriginal age" – was given to the article by the newspaper. I cannot entirely deny that this was something like the argument I was making, but it has an edge I was not entirely happy with. Nevertheless, my thoughts on the subject were raised when I first saw the show and felt that most of Gloria's works were disappointing because they seemed over-determined by the commercial necessity to make so much art. The drip-style in the new works, rather than the usual dapplings and lines, seems like a manner that arises simply because it allows the artist to cover vast expanses of the canvas much more quickly. The works are a lot less labour-intensive and seemingly a lot less tied to any traditional iconography. They – along with similar looking works by Michael Nelson Jagamarra, George Jungarrayi, Ronnie Jampitjinpa and Rosella Namok – constitute, I would want to claim, a kind of second period in Aboriginal art.

SB: So really what you were talking about is a stylistic shift occurring within Aboriginal art? In the *Courier-Mail* it seemed perhaps that you were also applying this notion of "post-Aboriginal" to the entirety of Australian indigenous culture.

RB: Yes, my comments do initially relate to style but ultimately could be seen to relate to Aboriginal culture as a whole. In fifty years I don't think there will be "traditional" Aboriginal painting as we have so far known it, for a variety of social and artistic reasons. Dare I say it, Aboriginal culture has always been post-Aboriginal, like Western culture has always been post-Western. This is merely to say that Aboriginal culture is historical, like all cultures. By the way, I am not saying that this "post-Aboriginal" style necessarily represents a decline in the aesthetic quality of the work. Though I am not a fan at all of the recent Michael Nelson Jagamarras or Rosella Namoks, I happen to think that George Jungarrayi is one of the greatest Australian artists currently working. I even began to like Gloria's paintings a little more upon a second visit to the gallery. But there is a kind of new "style" that I see emerging in the work of a new generation of indigenous artists: that was all I was really trying to put my finger on

Gloria Petyarre
Mountain Devil Lizard 2003
Acrylic on linen
180 x 270cm
Courtesy of Fire-Works Gallery

in the article.

SB: You have written about Eric Michaels' essays on Aboriginal art, particularly on the Yuendumu Doors. How do you think Michaels' writing compares to your own?

RB: Michaels' essays are not only extraordinary, inventive pieces of writing in their own right, but they are primary documents about a certain moment of Aboriginal art and culture. This is something that my writing cannot possibly achieve. Michaels' essays are a source of unquestionable authority: like a kind of "sacred" text, they cannot be criticised and we can only try to understand them better. They have been achieved through actual contact with Aboriginal people at moments of great historical change. After Michaels, and after the deaths of many of the earlier generation of Aboriginal artists, I have a sense that writings like Michaels' are no longer possible. This marks a shift from the first – dare I say, "heroic" - period of Aboriginal art and the European encounter with Aboriginal art. I am a "post-Aboriginal" art writer, whereas Michaels and Geoff Bardon are not because they were there, part of the beginning. What I write can be wrong, misguided, disregarded in a way what they write cannot be. Even if we disagree with them, it is only because of what they have taught us. It is the difference between first-order work and its commentary – and perhaps we are even seeing the same thing with Aboriginal art itself.

BEYOND AUSTRALIAN ART

Sally Brand

For the past four months Local Art has been a forum for my ideas on locality, Australia's provincialism and possible frameworks for considering local art. In my essay 'Where do we begin to talk about "Australian" art?' I noted that perhaps local artists were not so much interested in the possibility of their work as 'local' or 'provincial', and so perhaps neither interested in their work as 'Australian'[1]. I then suggested that we might instead think of our current condition as beyond 'Australian' art. Indeed there have been whispers in the air of a 'post-Australian' art, if that is what we wish to name it, and perhaps it is to be found in the absence of such provincialist frameworks.

In my second essay I noted a tendency in the work by local artist Gareth Donnelly that seemed to operate both for and against such ideas. Particularly Donnelly's most recent work, which involves the miniature reproduction of artworks by major 20th century international artists, seemed to suggest a continued response to our relentlessly local and provincial position. Yet even though Donnelly appeared to use appropriation strategies similar to Imants Tillers, his obvious Australian precursor, there remained something critically absent. It seemed that Donnelly's work was more an illustration or model of previous provincial art rather than a critical continuation of such ideas (a relationship similar to that described by Hal Foster in *The Return of the Real* between Neo Geo, a type of simulation painting which emerged in the 1980s in New York, and its high modernist precursors [2]). Although Donnelly's work might at have first suggested, in its particular imitative qualities, an inherent 'Australianess', his miniature copies seem rather more imitations of Australian art rather than 'Australian' art themselves. The problem being circuitous, as even though this would perhaps suggest a post-Australian tendency, something beyond Australian art framed by a provincialist problem, Donnelly's work remains to be understood within a particularly local context and history. The fact that we might read his work in this manner is dependant upon a history of appropriation art, a history which has had an incredible cultural resonance in this country. Perhaps then, this 'post-Australian' condition would be more precisely noted in the absence of such local histories, where the provincialist problem is no longer needed to be qualified, no longer discussed.

In the recent show 'In Conversation' held and the University Art Museum (University of Queensland) the absence of provincialist concerns could perhaps be noted. Curated by David Pestorius the show brought together works from the van Vliet Collection of International Contemporary Art and works, mostly by Australian artists, from the University Art Museum's collection. Artists represented in the exhibition included Jenny Watson, Sylvie Fleury, Ian Burn, Gail Hastings, Rose Nolan, Mariko Mori, Yasumasa Morimura, Dale Frank, Ralph Balson, Emily Kngwarreye and John Armleder. Understandably the motivation for such a show was undoubtedly linked to Australia's particular remoteness from the art world circuit and the corresponding rarity of public access to high-level international contemporary art. Other than this momentary nourishing of a certain local lack, the notion of Australia as a provincial out-of-touch space for contemporary art did not even seem to whisper amongst the works.

The 'conversations' generated here were both meaningful and interesting. The exhibition opened with a conversation between works by the Swiss born artist Sylvie Fleury and Australian born artist Jenny Watson. Watson's late 1970s painting 'A painted page: pages 52 & 53 of *In the Gutter*' and Fleury's mid 1990s large-scale fashion magazine covers, faced each other across the space of the first gallery. Both objects protruded into the real space of the viewer, Watson's canvas being exaggeratedly deep and Fleury's magazine pages leaning against the wall, and both objects took as their reference printed pages. For Fleury it was the front covers of high fashion magazines, while for Watson it was pages from the 1970s book, *In the Gutter* which compared tribal decorations with English punk piercings. These similar elements could be understood as conversation starters, beginnings to possible further discussions which would perhaps concern fetish practices, obsessions, the position of women in art, and the authenticity of female artistic practices: topics which both works could entertain in a thoroughly informed discussion.

It would be worthy to imagine how these conversations might play out and what kind of personas these works might present upon their interaction. Both works would present a feminine persona, and this is not simply because both Watson and Fleury are female artists, but rather because their works appear to actively engage with the possibilities of typically feminine activities in art. In Fluery's work this is most evident in her use of objects from women's culture, paraphernalia from the cosmetic counter, elite boutique, department store and fitness centre [3], and quite marked in Watson's work in her use of 'girly' colours, such as the pink off set boarder in which the 'painted-page' is positioned.

The female persona of Fleury's work would be most likely slick and self-assured, yet also prone to casual moments of spontaneity. A character exposed in the work by the arrangement of the magazine covers almost as if they had been just carelessly thrown onto the coffee table, just waiting to be read again. Similarly Watson's work could be thought of as self-assured, as it is aggressive in its application of paint, yet perhaps it is more interested in a grass-roots approach to art making, and something decidedly more punk than the slick commercialized nature of Fleury's magazines.

Given such personas we would probably expect a head strong and intense conversation, a battle of wills and strengths, and they're both in with a winning chance. There seems no hint here that Fleury, as a Swiss born artist, might be projected as 'better' or more 'powerful' than Watson (perhaps it might even be the other way around). In this conversation there is no subservient Australian position, no need to 'elevate' Watson's work to a comparable status with its international peer, it's already there. A provincial frame would suggest such a need, and indeed Tillers speaks of this 'elevation' and desire, to raise the status of 'Australian' in his practice and therefore provincialist 'solution' [4]. This condition however does not seem apparent here, and is a tendency repeated across the exhibition. Conversations between Ian Burn, Gail Hastings, Rose Nolan and Noritoshi Hirakawa were all equally partial, built up by the elemental composition of their works. Conversations between the

paintings by John Armleder, Ralph Balson and Dale Frank are similarly frank and unassuming of provincialist concerns, seeming rather more interested in greater concerns regarding the continuation of abstraction. The conversations here are bigger, and ultimately perhaps more interesting and currently meaningful than those concerning a provincial problem.

I began 'Where do we begin to talk about "Australian" art' by suggesting that locality promoted an idea of commonality amongst the members of its locale. I also noted that such notions of locality are slippery and may never be precisely defined. It is perhaps here, in this characteristic of locality that we might finish, at least for a moment. The exhibition 'In Conversation' wished to generate conversations, and though its curator would have had an idea of possible conversations he could not hope to have imagined them all. There would always be that other story, that new perspective to be built upon. Similarly, though locality might suggest commonality, and some have suggested that Australian art can be thought of in a particular way, this commonality cannot be always or exactly accounted for. Locality is slippery, always more complex (or perhaps even more simple) than one can singularly imagine, and this could be the lesson learnt. This is not to suggest that there are no possible answers, for there will always be answers, but rather that we must know that there is never only one.

1. This argument took its roots in Terry Smith's 1974 essay 'The Provincialist Problem' and Imants Tillers proposed 'solution' 1980s in appropriation art.
2. Foster, H. (1996) 'The Art of Cynical Reason' in *The Return of the Real* MIT Press: Massachusetts.
3. Hayt-Alkins, E. (1992) 'Sylvie Fleury: The Women of Fashion' in *Art & Text,* n. 49, September, pp. 30-31 (cited p.30).
4. Rimmer, M. (1998) 'Four Stories about Copyright Law and Appropriation Art' in *Media and Arts Law Review*, v. 3, n. 4, (cited p. 183).

Dale Frank
Blastosphere 1994
Oil and enamel paint on linen
200 x 200cm
Collection of The Unversity of Queensland
Courtesy of he University Art Museum,
University of Queensland

Shaun O'Connor
Me 02 YOU 2002
Acrylic, enamel and spraypaint on cardboard

TYPE: Simone Hine
The Farm, Brisbane, 16 - 17 May 2003

David Crouch

> *nos vetera instauramus, nova non prodimus*
> - Erasmus [1]

> *... most suggestive," said Holmes. "It has long been an axiom of mine that the little things are infinitely the most important"*
> - Arthur Conan Doyle [2]

Type, the latest work from Brisbane artist Simone Hine, is an installation piece composed of six exquisitely handcrafted boxes and their mysterious contents. In one box sits a small screen repeating a close-up image of a typewriter typing; another tiny television shows a shadowy female figure, alone and reverentially carrying one of these boxes across a grassy landscape; she peers down as if fascinated by the contents. One box contains fragments of heavy paper, rough-cut and imprinted with typed text, offering variations on a simple self-reflexive sentence. Another holds tiny hand-painted boards in an impressionistic style that depict a scene echoing the video image of the wandering woman. One is empty. These fragments, held gently in the dark wood of the boxes, are rarefied by their careful enclosure and seem to speak of an infinite importance in 'little things'. Each is steeped with a sense of something sacred. Like a grandfather's watch or a dead mother's engagement ring, the contents are heavy with someone else's significance, their depths ultimately unknown to all but their keeper. They are like personal treasures whose meanings and narratives are elusive to an outsider. For the outsider however, there is almost a voyeuristic pleasure in peering into someone's private effects, and imagining all the possible stories that might lie behind and link them.

Over the continual 'clack' of an old typewriter, a sound that accompanies the work, the artist herself comments on the boxes, "I still feel like I'm carrying them" [3]. So what one could call the 'central scene' - the female figure carefully carrying a box – appears to be the artist herself. *Type* seems then part-performance, or at least, the fragmentary documentation of a performance, installed into the space of the gallery. As an installation it is a deviation from Hine's earlier predominantly performance-based work, however it does contain elements and echoes that are clearly reminiscent of her previous performances. In this way Hine's work reminds one of German artist Joseph Beuys whose artworks and installations were born directly from his performance art, from his 'Actions' as he called them. For both artists, the installations themselves seem to become relics, leftovers and mementos of their performances. What we are left with are specimens, residual representations, and the remaining ephemera of some half-glimpsed drama.

In particular, it is the video element of *Type* which allows this compression of performance and installation. However, the more curious thing about the video technology deployed in *Type* is its intersection with something decidedly organic. Unlike the slick synthetic arrangements of video found in work by artists such as Gary Hill, Hine has her electronic medium nestle amongst surfaces that speak of the human hand and the natural world. The most obvious example of this juxtaposition is the floor of real grass above which the boxes are set. In the usual white cube of a gallery space, it is a strange sensation to have to cross a small field of grass, feeling its living fibres press down under the feet, in order to view the work. The boxes above seem to grow out of the grass. Kyle Weise's essay accompanying the exhibition, points to the boxes "hovering" on plinths - "that most invisible of gallery objects" [4]. But do they hover? On first sight, a preoccupying, perhaps banal, question became: "where are the wires? How do these televisions keep working? Powered by the forces of the boxes themselves? Or perhaps by batteries?" I imagined cables than ran down into the interior of the plinths like roots or veins. Far from invisible, the plinth itself became a mysterious part of the work, feeding the contents of the boxes from the organic matter of the grass below. This organic gesture subtly repeats itself in the hand-painted boards and handcrafted boxes, they diffuse the utterly flat and glowing medium of the television screens. Perhaps 'Type' suggests possibilities of a contemporary co-existence between nature and the digital, an almost cyborgian sense of someplace between the human performance and its mechanical (re)representation.

Simone Hine
Installation view of *Type* 2003
Courtesy of the artist and The Farm
Photo: Simone Hine

There are also hints here of a personal myth-making. The source or story behind these boxes is not offered but they seem to contain teasing possibilities of a narrative. The contents become the elusive specimens from a larger tapestry of story that we cannot read, but are invited to imagine for ourselves and thus participate in. Their enigmatic enclosures recall American artist Joseph Cornell, who produced beautifully contrived boxes which tell the story of his obsessions. For example his *Untitled (Ostend)* is a wooden box containing a broken wineglass, a glass ball, a metal ring, nails and a broken piece of white piping. Like the boxes in *Type*, *Untitled (Ostend)* has an insistent sense of mystery and nostalgia, "a kind of poetic theatre of memory".

As its name suggests, *Type* is also bound up in ideas about words and their reproduction. Weise suggests that *Type* enacts and manipulates the strange "double vision" always required of a reader – that is, that the text itself is visualised, read with the eyes, in tandem with the scene which is invoked by the text and visualised in the mind. In a third reflex, the type describes its own

construction: "A mechanical typewriter imprints words onto a page" [5].

"Standardised print is an important aspect of the conditions for such reading", writes Weise. Yet I have some disagreement here. Does the typewriter really produce what we now think of as 'standardised'? Does it not instead suggest an almost nostalgic air of something past, something before the smooth and easy, totally impersonal, hyper-fast and homogenised printing we now pump out into the world (without a thought or obstruction) through the personal computer and home printer? There seems instead something here which harks back to a time when type was something laborious – and when the machine needed to be carefully and painstakingly negotiated – there was no delete function on these old machines, no 999 levels of undo. A thin metal arm, topped by a single metal character, was struck down through a ribbon of ink to press against a page of paper; mistakes might be disasters, requiring a complete rewrite, or a messy and fiddly application of the white-out bottle. Perhaps the typewriter, rather than being a cipher for our modern condition of utterly 'standardised print', represents an in-between point, a recent past, somewhere between the individual idiosyncrasies (Weise points to "unique pictorial qualities") of one's own handwriting and the completely identity-less printing process of the digital age. The 'type' of the typewriter still contains a sense of the contingent, a sense of a time when writing was not so separated from the body or even from the organic processes of chance in nature. Even in the typed fragments of text found in one box, the printing is imprecise and varies, some words and letters darker or sharper than others.

Simone Hine
Installation view of *Type* 2003
Courtesy of the artist and The Farm
Photo: Simone Hine

One of the first times a typewriter was mentioned in a fictional work was in the Sherlock Holmes detective story "A Case of Identity". The way Holmes solved the mystery, by identifying an impostor's typewriter, seems to support this argument for the less than 'standardised' nature of the typewriter's printing:

> "It is a curious thing," remarked Holmes, "that a typewriter has really quite as much individuality as a man's handwriting. Unless they are quite new, no two of them write exactly alike. Some letters get more worn than others, and some wear only on one side . . . in this note . . . in every case there is some little slurring over of the 'e,' and a slight defect in the tail of the 'r.' There are fourteen other characteristics, but those are the more obvious ... I think of writing another little monograph some of these days on the typewriter and its relation to crime". [6]

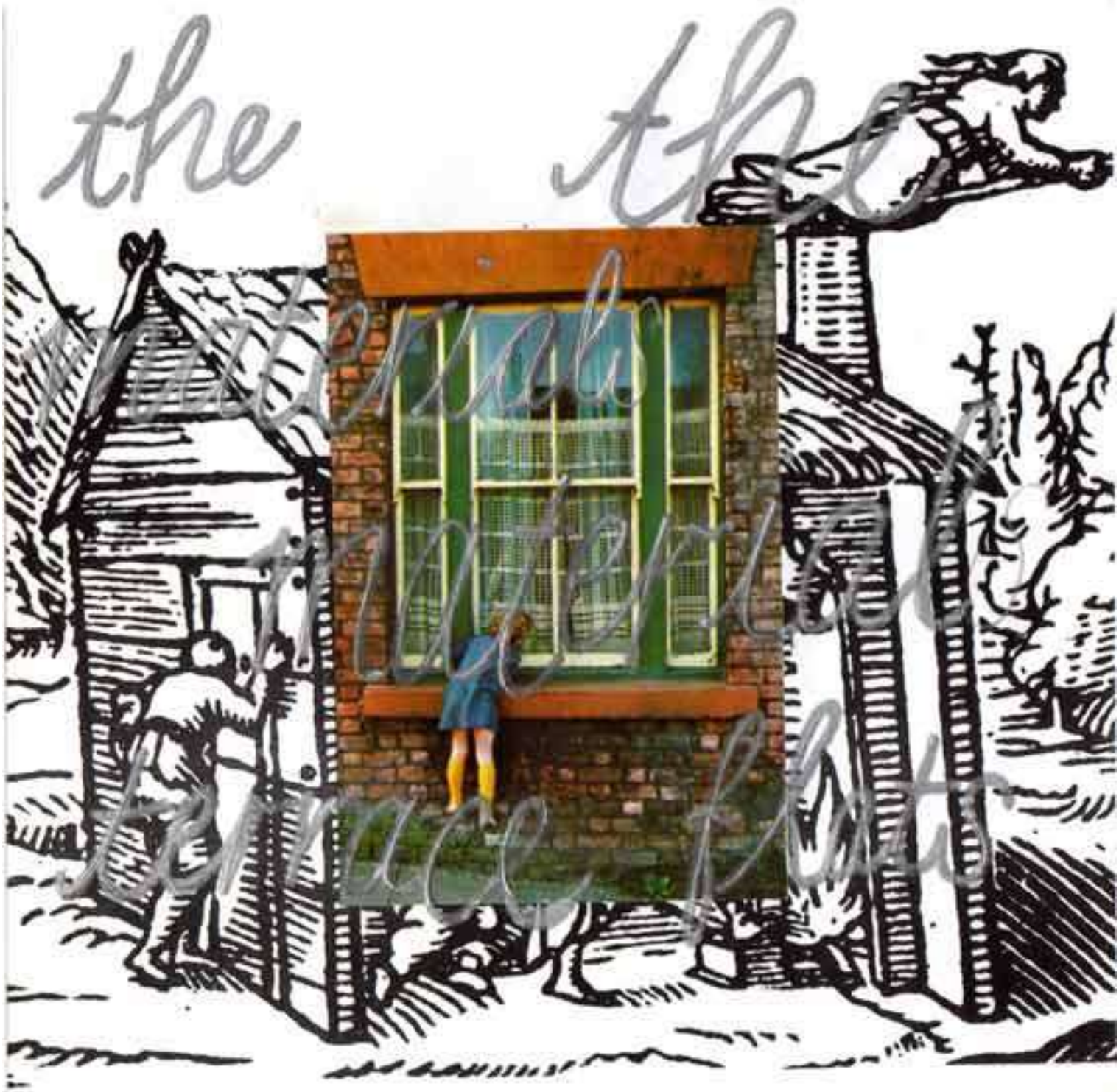
Weise's essay, citing Freidrich Kittler's ideas about type, suggests that writing, after the typewriter, "can no longer be seen as the expression of an individual soul". Weise claims that language conveyed through the typewriter causes a "separation of language from the controlling 'expression' of the author". Yet what is it about the typewriter itself that causes this? Languages and words are always slippery things, always shying away from authorial control, even if they have the merely momentary and un-mechanical existence of conversation and spoken words. One could deny the possibility of any communicable meaning, claiming that the intention behind a work cannot be known and that each reading of a text is a re-creation of it. In fact, with Holmes' monograph handy, we may instead be able to capture the 'individual souls' of the typewriters themselves.

1. "we restore old things, we do not produce new ones"
2. Conan Doyle, Arthur (1891) 'A Case of Identity'. Originally published in *'The Strand'* magazine for September, 1891.
3. In conversation with the artist, May 2003.
4. Catalogue Essay: Weise, Kyle (May 2003) *Type*, ex. cat. The Farm: Brisbane.
5. Printed words included in the installation.
6. Conan Doyle, Arthur (1891) "A Case of Identity". Originally published in *'The Strand'* magazine for September, 1891.


Terrace Units
THE MATERIAL

THE MATERIAL

TERRACE FLATS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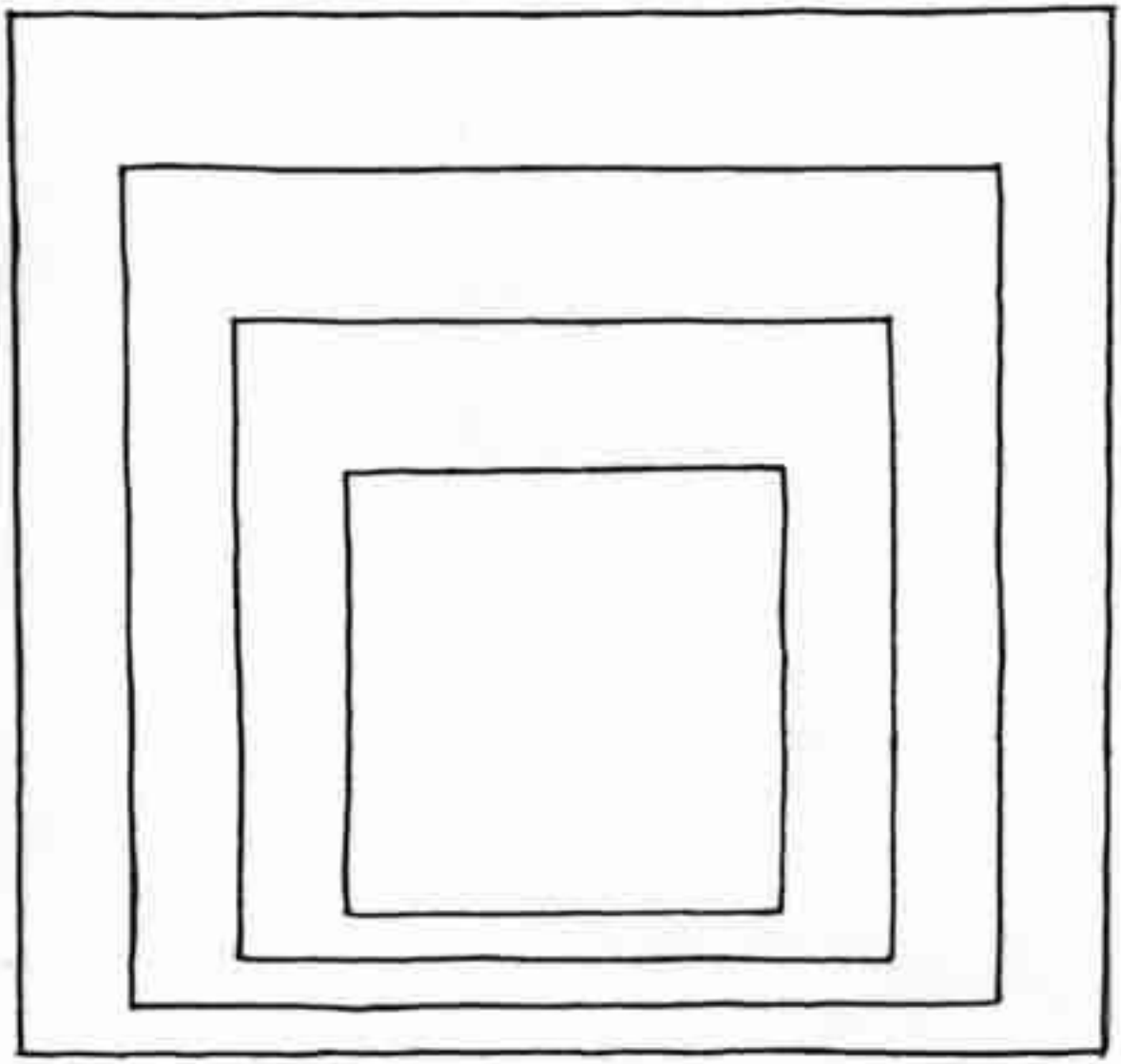


Terrace Flats

HAWAIIAN SHIRTS AND SAFARI PANTS: Chris Howlett Comes Out of the (Political) ~~Closet~~ Wardrobe

Weapons on the Wall: Chris Howlett
The Farm, Brisbane, 18 April – 10 May 2003
Grant Stevens

As we know, trends in fashion are constantly changing. Thanks to postmodern theorists like Fredric Jameson [1], we also understand that fashion, like "culture" generally, is a collage of different eras and styles. The most prominent example of this, at least in terms of fashion, might be the continued popularity of "retro" fashions. The development of and shifts in this popularity denote a hegemonic function in contemporary culture. To explain: as a reaction to the excessive and ambivalent cultural trends of the 1980s and early 1990s, grungers and post-grungers of the mid 1990s began to appropriate particular visual styles from the politicized 1960s and 70s. However (in a typically Jamesonian manner), the political associations generated by these adopted fashions (because they at the very least resemble those worn by anti-Vietnam War protestors), were not employed as a strategy to restate, reinforce or rearticulate the "hippie" advocacy of liberal democracy. Rather, the adoption of "retro" fashion was simply a means to symbolically distance and differentiate grungers and post-grungers from both the dominant and generally conservative populous and other alternative sub-cultures. Perhaps because of this essentially superficial appropriation, by the late 1990s this reclaimed "retro" fashion was already being consumed back into mass culture. The release and enormous success of the first *Austin Powers* film in 1997 marks the climax of this reintegration. Effectively a *James Bond* "spoof", *Austin Powers* amplified the sexist and racist undertones of Bond films to humourous kitsch, and combined it with a glorified version (minus the apparent "immorality") of "free-love". The result was the official passing of retro-culture as once again "popular", thus negating the self-differentiating and self-identifying "original" retro appropriation, not to mention the distant memories of a more radical alternative to mainstream ideology.

Here in Queensland we have a reputation for being rather laidback. Our recent anti-war protests were more like "Picnic in the Park" (organized by local and state governments, and Channel Seven) than an appeal for radical political change. Was it a coincidence that at these protests it was not unusual to see people wearing Hawaiian shirts and safari pants? Has the capacity for radical political change been consumed along with sub-cultural identifications with "retro" fashion?

Chris Howlett's recent exhibition, *Weapons on the Wall*, sought to question the state of and space for critical debate in contemporary culture. By covering the gallery walls, floor and ceiling in cardboard, Howlett created a new space in which he could present a variety of resources. Collected essentially from popular culture, these ranged from watercolour posters employing the text and image relationship of *Time Magazine* covers to Cookie Monster videos and old *Superman* audio-story records. Protest slogans hand written on cardboard covered the ceiling, while sections of wall were plastered with newspaper clippings and magazine advertisements. In the center of the installation was a Sony Playstation running an interactive game based on the plastic green and grey toy soldiers available from toy stores. Other components included in the exhibition were videotapes of the famous terrorist attacks of September 11th 2001, water-pistols, a large cardboard tank with "Big Wood" written on its cannon, videotapes of American "sit-coms", "home-made" images downloaded from a pro-American website , peace signs as well as art and critical theory books.

Through sheer sensory "overload", Howlett's installation demonstrated the proximity of information available through media sources. With no distinct agenda or biases other than the re-presentation of cultural material broadly relating to central themes such as war, fashion, violence, comedy, politics and masculinity, *Weapons on the Wall* amplified the sometimes forgotten assumption that underlies democratic forms of government. That is, the assumption, stemming initially from Rene Descartes and later the Enlightenment Project, that an individual, when presented with the relevant and accurate information, is able to make an informed and rational value judgment. This form of reasoning sustains the integrity of democracy, as opposed to other political systems like Fascism and Communism, by presenting individuals with old adages like "it's nobody's fault but my own" and "I should've known better". Howlett's installation, then, by reserving its own value judgment serves as some kind of catalogue through which opinions and subsequently, debate may emerge.

Read metaphorically, Howlett's cardboard installation could be described as the "cave" that is contemporary art. That is, at once immersed in and hidden from popular culture. In this way Howlett poses two questions: Is art able to provide a space for critical debate? and, How does this humanistic assumption of democracy still pertain to our highly mediated post-industrial information age?

Art could be the activity that neo-conservatives now maintain in order keep those radically inclined (leftists) busy, while they continue to colonize culture in the name of late-capitalism. Alternatively, art could be the last bastion of critical debate, acting with "critical distance" from popular culture. Generally, at this point we would get to the question of audience: If Howlett, like other artists, has (at the very least) the privilege of time (more like will) for observation, why does he show his findings in a gallery? Why doesn't he use the mass media or public space so that a larger audience can benefit from his insights? However, Howlett essentially counteracts this argument by demonstrating that all this information is readily available to the general public: not through artistic insight or torment, but rather through simple attention to observation. Howlett also poses this as one of the problems facing contemporary critical debate, and hence radical political change. That is, because the media (and to some degree, public space) is controlled by companies and individuals directed by economic rationalism, their biases reinforce those (right-wing) ideals. Obviously, there are no clear solutions (yet). As Howlett demonstrates, information technologies like the Internet and cable television have promised much and delivered little – actually, they've just delivered more of the same. Howlett's own solution might be most visible in the appropriated text used for the exhibition invites that, although flippant, sincerely pleas: "MURDER THE PM".

1. For example see: Jameson, Fredric (1983) "Postmodernism and Consumer Society" in *Postmodern Culture*, Foster, Hal (ed.), Pluto Press: London, pp.111-125.

Chris Howlett
Installation view of *Weapons on the Wall* 2003
Courtesy of the artist and The Farm
Photo: Dirk Yates

ELECTRONIC ORGASMS, OR WHAT WOMEN WANT

Kelly Vella

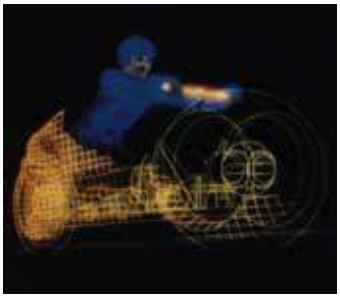
I assume you've seen *The Matrix: Reloaded* and recall the scene in a restaurant [1] where a character called the Merovingian sends an unsuspecting woman a truly orgasmic chocolate cake. To be specific, the moment where we, the viewers, follow a computer pan up between a woman's legs to see her insides radiate in a 'big bang'-like explosion. Her legs shift, the curve of code describing a singularly organic experience. And yet, the cut from her smooth empty pudenda, so clean, to the light film of sweat on her upper lip is still so restrained. This is no When Harry Met Sally, because this character is more genuinely out of control. The event, which is to say, her body, has escaped her mastery. She is bespelled by science to make an example of the illusion of free will, yet her exercise of control is still superficially in evidence. Here in this one event is the provocation of my questioning: how does desire and control play out in the eternal instant? And what is more real, which is to say, more powerful: her unasked pleasure, or his intellectual orchestration? How am I manipulated as a viewer, what choices am I given? And if given a choice, and given that that choice is not an illusion, what do women want? Information is power according to the late nineties, but I'll dodge that absolute equation with my own addition, and attempt just a little *more* information before I make my reply.

This moment I wish to examine entertains, as far as I can tell, three levels of play. The first one is engagement, the second thematic, and the third occupies the space between the two. Let's look at the first. *The Matrix* series is the latest in a long line of films using technology to interrogate what it means to be human (see: *Blade Runner*, *The Truman Show*, *Frankenstein*). What is real (a real home, real memories, real people, real choices) is interrogated through juxtaposition with its nearly perfect replica. With the virtual technology of the Matrix, the difference between real and virtual can only be detected by careful scrutiny, and only confirmed by *seeing* it, which is to say by actually moving from one frame to another, from the Matrix, to the Real world. Given our privileged positions as audience members we move frequently and at ease (though with no control) between these frames. Our sight, and knowledge, is greater than that of the players, we straddle our reality, and the fictions of their multiple worlds. Hence our power, in the aforementioned equation, is greater. When we don X-ray specs and crawl up between the legs of a beautiful woman eating chocolate cake, we are in possession of a finely balanced thing: knowledge of the cinematic fantasy of a computer-generated laying bare of that most elusive of things: the female orgasm. Veil upon transparent veil fall to reveal the final veil that we call our reality. It's not coincidental that this image reworks that old painting of Courbet's *l'origine du monde (the origin of the world).* What would be more appropriate than that repeatedly lost original, first commissioned for an Arab playboy, who reputedly hid it behind a green veil [2]. The restaurant scene is even lit in a subdued green, and the big bang, l'origine orgasm, is filled with glowing green code against black space. The movement from naturalistic-view, to computer-view, and back again destabilise our expectations, but leave us wanting more. This imperfect mimesis holds us in a thrall of wanting, anticipating closure, a climax of some kind, but instead there is only endless deferral: nothing satisfies.

We want more than one view, more than one take, one world. We want to be able to move between them, see more, *be* more. But would we, as potential characters, evolve in a ladder-like procession, one rung at a time, or is it something more convoluted? Take the orgasmic nameless woman. She appears pretty low in the ladder. For this woman as she is (least real, and therefore) to be enlightened, to attain the Real, she must come to a knowledge of herself as data (which is more real) before she can come to her true fleshy (and hence, realest) self, which looking at Zion, doesn't explain why she would bother. Is it for the elusive Truth? Is it because the orgasms are better there? There must be a difference, a gap between these two worlds, or movement between them would not be possible. Are their senses unrepresented in the Matrix, existent in that other, unnamed place? And if so, why didn't we hear about them? No, there is no fundamental difference, except on the return, and unlike many Hollywood films this does not indicate closure. This return signals increased power, and power, in this game, is information. It is as if the Merovingian informs the unnamed woman of her orgasm, and in the headless (which is to say, mindless) pleasure, we get sucked in, well and truly rupturing the borders of her body.

She is bodiless in this instance, yet still profoundly physical, and this is perhaps the most pervasive of the thematic reversals (or second level of play) this film deals with. The many partnerings of organic/inorganic, emptiness/presence, invasion/encapsulation, spirituality/science, magic/technology, illusion/the real, enact themselves with a Bizzaro-world logic, swapping clothes faster than you can say seventies swingers. Where generally speaking illusion might be associated with a lack of substance, here matter is revealed to be immaterial, while an imaging system of glowing squiggles is somehow more real for the fact of its artificiality. Similarly the cake is as bewitched as any apple, with a spell of mathematical precision but leaky results. How her hand trembles after the Tron-like rendering of inexplicable passion. Here "the body's carnal impulses are fused with 'virtual' fantasy" [3], but it is what doesn't fit that reminds us of the human, the remainder, what falls between the gap of impulse and awareness; in this case, the separation of her exterior from her interior. The event of the electronic orgasm displays the qualities of baroque architecture: the independence of the facade (public face) from an interior of darkness illuminated [4]. Despite the fact that infection and slippage is rife, spilling over into the entire film, her effort of will reacts against mysterious 'nature' to allow her the semblance of control. Her will is born in this conflict; it creates tension, and we all know how sexy tension is.

So much data, with so much of the carnal about it. It sweats, it fears demise, it desires more. Perhaps it is the film's failing that it can't readily imagine a machine Other that really doesn't *feel anything*. But without these narrative stresses it would fall apart into its components, revealing the human as the invader, the hot-minded swarm intent on collision, the sudden, the thing that can't be named. If "the price for our access to 'reality' is that *something must remain unthought*" [5] then this unnamed woman has greater access to reality for her lack of knowledge



Tron 1982

Gustave Courbet
L'Origine du monde
(The Origin of the World) 1866

The Matrix: Reloaded 2003

of her lack of power. In this case a double negative does equal a positive in her favour. Let me posit another paradox: I choose not to choose (to know). Who can say this wasn't her choice to begin with? If she is a victim of causality, perhaps ignorance is bliss. In the eternal moment that I will call the middle (or the third level) there is only space left for enjoyment. Choices are what define that space, bookend it if you will. They are the "positive content" [6] from which self flees. This is a void which we as viewers are visually overwhelmed by, as the light spills beyond the body, or we enter it. Our viewing engages with a neo-baroque system (no pun intended) as "dynamic forces that expand, and often rupture borders...[draw] the gaze of the spectator 'deep into the enigmatic depths and the infinite'" [7].

Then again, perhaps this is just a masturbatory fantasy cashing into the clichés of our time. What do women want? By god, it's chocolate cake. No, it's an orgasm. How easy it all is to understand, and to deliver. Finally female sexuality is decoded for our viewing pleasure, all the while retaining its mystery, its sense of genesis, and a certain virgin (but she can be slutty!) purity. What becomes of her? The insinuation is that she then performs fellatio on the next man to follow her into the toilet cubicle, the Merovingian himself. One imagines that afterwards she lapses back into her old self, inwardly confused at her lapse of good manners, but we all know- she was a good girl, made bad. Where have I seen this script before? Could it be that we are witnessing the fall of woman, tempted from her senses by her senses? Her sense of taste, smell, touch, and whatever sense covers orgasms- these senses are unpresentable in the cinematic format, and in fact to present them would be obscene (or performance art), but this is what the entire war between machine and human is being fought over. These senses close the distance between self and other. In the end it is still the mind that suffers, but taste, touch, and smell are personal in a way in which hearing and sight are not. In the effort to illustrate this, this animal closeness is concurrently lost. Light, an explosion. A woman's clitoris is drawn as a small star in a holographic galaxy, collapsing from its own intensity. No wonder it makes her insatiable. She hungers for more than chocolate cake! Watch her walk (not run) to the ladies and a quick headjob, while Persephone, the Merovingian's wife, calmly looks on desiring only a return to a lost intimacy (and revenge). Kudos to the women of this flick - their control is remarkable.

And so for a flash of seconds (even long hours) my mind passed inside this illusion and came out changed. I take some comfort from my new mastery over the details, my enlarged store of information. I'm sure it'll serve me well next time I'm face to face with an electronic orgasm, which by the way is in the production line [8]. As for which is better, a real or virtual orgasm, we are thankfully spared the answer.

1. Called *Le Vrai*, closest translation is 'The True'
2. Jones, Amelia (ed), *Sexual Politics: Judy Chicago's Dinner Party in Feminist Art History,* University of California Press: Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 1996, pp. 191-194.
3. Erik Davis, *Synthetic Meditations: Cogito in the Matrix*, http://www.techgnosis.com/index.html, accessed 10.06.03
4. Deleuze, Gilles *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*, The Athlone Press: London, 1993
5. Zizek, Slavoj "I, He or It (the Thing) Which Thinks", in *Tarrying With the Negative: Kant, Hegel, and the Critique of Ideology*, Duke University Press: Durham, pp. 9-44.
6. Zizek, ibid. p. 40
7. Ndalianis, Angela *Architectures of Vision: Neo Baroque Optical Regimes and Contemporary Entertainment Media,* http://web.mit.edu/comm-forum/papers/ndalianis.html, accessed 08.06.03
8. Sample, Ian (ed.), *Push-button pleasure*, published 19:00 07.02.01, http://www.newscientist.com/news/news.jsp?id=ns9999397, accessed 05.06.03

LOCAL LISTINGS

60 Merivale St
2 – 5 Jul Alasdair Macintyre

Bellas Gallery
- 29 Jun *Other Paintings* – Natalya Hughes

Brisbane City Gallery
- 27 Jul *Wrapping Beauty*: Acer Chor
- 27 Jul Gr*eat Expectations: New British Design*
- 27 Jul *Art, Love & War*: Stella Bowen

EA (Emerging Artists)
15 Jul *Gallery Without Walls? Public Art Projects*

The Farm
20 - 21 Jun *Soft . Pilot . Watch* – Katherine Taube
27 Jun – 19 Jul *Generation: Point Click Drag* – Craig Walsh & Sebastian Moody

Fire-Works Gallery
27 Jun – 26 Jul Kathleen Petyarre, Abie Loy, Bob Dixon & Lilly Campbell

Gallery-A-Go-Go
- 3 Jul Escapism – James Grantham

Gallery Barry Keldoulis (Sydney)
19 Jun – 13 Jul *The Farm Comes to Town*: Peter Alwast, Chris Handran, Racheal Haynes, Martin Smith & Shaun Weston

Institute of Modern Art
- 12 Jul *4 x 4* – Vernon Ah Kee/Michael Snelling, Kim Demuth/Julie Walsh, Annie Hogan/Ruth McDougall, Jewel MacKenzie/David Broker.

Palace Gallery
- 30 Jun *Nightvision*, curated by Aaron Seto on behalf of Gallery 4a.
23 Jul *Datum Research Show*
30 Jul Ali Verban

Queensland Art Gallery
- 6 Jul *Otherworlds: Images of Fantasy and Fiction*
19 Jul – 2 Nov Jo Laboo (Starter Space)

QUT Art Museum
27 Jun - 7 Sep *Architects of Glamour + Masters of Style: Excerpts from a Century of Fashion Photography*
27 Jun - 27 Jul *Costume and Memory*: Natalya Hughes & Elizabeth Lamont

Local Art is a series of six free print and online publications with the intention of generating decisive responses to the "emerging art" scene in Brisbane. *Local Art*'s content will focus on the work of local emerging artists, writers and art-workers. With this said, the publication will not take these premises as limitations, rather it will endeavour to explore contiguous fields as a means of contextualising local contemporary practices and discourses.

Local Art is currently calling for expressions of interest and content submissions. Through much appreciated Arts Queensland funding, *Local Art* is able to pay two contributors $100 each (one major artist page, one major article), and four contributors $50 each (can range from exhibition reviews to artist's writings, artist pages, interviews and critical essays).

Upcoming content deadlines are July 18th and August 22nd.

If you would like more information about *Local Art* or are interested in contributing, please contact The Farm or any of the *Local Art* editors: Sally Brand, Natalya Hughes, Grant Stevens and Dirk Yates (thefarm@thefarmspace.com, sallybrand@hotmail.com natalyaks@hotmail.com, grant@thefarmspace.com, dirk@thefarmspace.com).

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Pages 8 - 11: The Material, *Terrace Flats*, designs for 7" record cover. Contributors: Reuben Keehan (p.8), Gemma Smith (p.9), Shane Haseman (p.10) and Oscar Yanez (p.11). Compiled by Nicholas Chambers and Reuben Keehan.

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LOCAL ART

LOCAL ART - ISSUE 5 JULY 2003

WHAT. CHEW. GUN. ADO?
(Some thoughts and observations)
Extract from a recent essay

Richard Bell

INTRO

As a long-term observer of human behaviour, I must say that Anglo Australians (Ozzie Angloze) make very, very interesting subject material. For example, what other people on Earth characterise themselves as homeless vagabonds (Waltzing Matilda) and whose most enduring and endearing National hero is a vicious murderer and thief (Ned Kelly)?

Freudian slips perhaps?

One of the most intriguing aspects of Australian society is how the fact of prior occupation of the entire continent is deliberately (and ingeniously) dismantled and replaced by popular myth. The subjugation of the original inhabitants and their descendants is insidious and complete. Dehumanised, demonised and permanently carrying the full weight of expectancy to fail, the Aboriginal people inevitably remain victims - unable to disentangle ourselves from the carefully woven web of lies and deceit. This process is enacted and re-enacted over and over again. The status quo is thus maintained and perpetuated.

How is this done? How seemingly intelligent and compassionate people can be so consistently and totally duped is not the question. How they can consciously or unwittingly pass this dubious inheritance on to their children isn't either. The question is: What are you going to do to prevent further generations of Australians being afflicted?

Perhaps you don't see any problem. Fine. I'm not talking to you. But you will feel free to continue reading.

None of your ancestors were convicts, or, if they were, they were wrongly deported to Australia. They only stole a loaf of bread to feed their family. Yeah right! You don't feel guilty that some of your ancestors were liars, cheats or murderers? (And that was *before* they came here to graduate as lying cheating murderers). You don't agree that thousands of Aboriginal people died defending this country. You don't agree that Aboriginal people actually owned the land. You believe…OK. You can't stop yourself from believing that the Aboriginal people couldn't possibly own any land because…

… It's all right. Whisper it to me…

"…Well, you know Rich, they weren't even fully evolved human beings. Not you, of course, but LOOK at 'em. They didn't even have the wheel. So how can they be smart enough to know they owned the land? No, not you, you're more like one of US. AND it all happened soooo looonnngg ago. It wasn't me… I didn't do it. And none of MY relatives had anything to do with it… So why should I pay for something I didn't do?..."

…Keep going brother/sister (insert relevant)…Get it off your chest…

" Ohh. Alright…The ones in the desert are all right. And the ones up the Top End. But the ones in the cities…they're not really Aboriginal. They're…"

Just forget that I'm here. Really. I REALLY want to help you. You'll feel a whole lot better when you get it out. Gee, you won't even have to think about this again for half a lifetime, at least. I'm worried now at this stage brother/sister (insert relevant) is getting confused and beginning to worry that I'm gunna belt the shit out of 'em so I have to be careful. It works. Brother/sister (insert relevant) begins to relax.

"Yeah. We worked hard to get where we are today. Look at THEM. They're lazy, good for nothing drunk layabouts."

At this stage, I'M getting edgy. I really WANT to belt brother/sister (insert relevant) but I soldier on.

"WE made this country great. And *they* want *us* to GIVE them land and compensation. We have got one of the highest standards of living on the planet no and we're not going to let THEM ruin it all for us."

KAPOWW! KRAK! WHOOMP!!!

Don't mind the interruption. At this stage an ambulance is called by the Police. (If you ever need the cops in a hurry, tell them you're being attacked by Aborigines). I am not arrested, but I'm taken down to the local cells anyway. I'm held there and treated like a criminal, or convict if you will, before finally being let go after they have checked to see if there are any warrants out for my arrest.

Interruption concluded.

Where were we? Don't bother to look back up the page - I've already done it for you. Oh yes, brother/sister (insert relevant) delivered that bilious (solicited diatribe). This is what you believe in your heart of hearts. You believe that your ancestors did no wrong – that they were merely mistakenly convicted then horribly mistreated by the British military machine. That you and your ancestors are absolutely blameless. That we should forgive and you should forget. You believe that because Aboriginal people were not as technologically advanced as were the British that our humanity was impeded and that therefore you could take our lands, take our women, take our children and emasculate our men because you see/saw us as little more than animals. That you believe that even if it was wrong (which you doubt otherwise I wouldn't be writing this) it all happened too long ago. Gee. That's a novel idea. Perhaps Nazism and the Holocaust won't seem like such a bad thing in a hundred years. Oh and who do you think did the work that was 'beneath' the white man? Who did the ringbarking? Who did the stick picking? Who did the fencing? The black man of course. We put you where you are today. When you had to pay Aboriginal people equal wages jobs dried up overnight. You kept us poor, uneducated and reliant on menial jobs which have also dried up. That leaves us competing with 'poor white trash' for the few jobs remaining. Now that's a sure fire way to improve race relations at the coal face. No good drunken layabouts? Humph! Land owners, ALL… Not quite sipping Chardonnay. But, nevertheless, socialising and discussing the finer points of life and death.

You NEED us as victims to satisfy your macabre sensibilities. Yet you yourselves are perennial victims.

NOW!!! Don't you feel a little bit uneasy? Getting a sense of deja vu? Now you've cracked the code for what Ruddock was saying. What Blainey was saying. What Hanson was saying. What Howard IS saying.

You're hearing it. You're believing it. You're living it.

Did you know that there is a test to see if you are a Dinki Di Aussie? Have a gander at an example of your personalised Dinkum Aussie Chart which gives you ratings in several key areas, such as:

Your beliefs: This is the key area and tracks your beliefs and determines the profile of you that will emerge. See if you are:

Quintessentially Australian;
Up there Cazaly;
Well done Cobber;
Tasmanian; or
Who the fuck ARE you Abo lover?

Find out if your ancestors were good, bad, or just ugly.
And, your Dinkum Aussie Chart comes to you on acid free cotton rag paper.
Sweet dreams.

Richard Bell
Courtesy of the artist and Fire-Works Gallery

CONSENT: Vernon Ah Kee
Institute of Modern Art
12 June - 12 July 2003

Sally Brand

anotherthingandanotherthingandanotherthingand anotherthingandanotherthingandanotherthing?

reads one of Vernon Ah Kee?s large text panels in his recent show *Consent* at the Institute of Modern Art. Black words run onto black words, repeated and justified, filling the white panel?s surface. Anotherthingandanotherthingandanotherthing… Ah Kee calls my bluff. How long can I defer the moment? What else can I write about until I must address this work? Until I must lie bare my racism for all to read?

I am a white Australian and I can buy bandaids the colour of my skin. I can walk down the street and no one will pay particular attention to me. I can also usually avoid having to deal with racism and its many manifestations in this country. Ah Kee's recent exhibition however denied me of such usual white Australian privileges.

Ah Kee is a Brisbane based Indigenous artist working with text. His recent work, examples of which are hung in *Consent*, uses vinyl Helvetica type on white painted panels. It is a simple and direct format, and aesthetically the works sit slick and neat within the clean white cube of the gallery. Yet, despite their slick appearance, the message that Ah Kee's work delivers is far from comfortable. Rather, I do not want to hear it.

In a series of works using the word segment "aust" Ah Kee introduces the art world to the term "austracism" giving its definition; "to banish (someone) from their native country[,] to exclude by general consent from society, privileges etc". Neither the term nor its definition are particularly surprising. We know that Australia is a racist country. We know that we live in a 'redneck wonderland'. In contemporary times we need not look any further than our Prime Minister John Howard for an example. Look back a couple of years through our short European history and you'll find this land was claimed 'terra nullius' (land belonging to no one) because the 18th century European explorers could not believe the Indigenous inhabitants to be human. Again, it was our racist fear of the 'yellow peril' and the need to introduce the 'White Australia Policy' that federated Australia in 1901.

Standing in front of Ah Kee?s work we can talk about these realities. We can talk in the politically correct speech of this era. We can talk about our racist history, our racist prime minister and our fellow racist Australians. We can also attempt to extract ourselves from such obvious racist entities. This is all wonderfully time consuming until we realise that (obviously) 'austracism' not only refers to our ancestors nor the openly racist in this country. Here, Ah Kee is talking directly to the art world. He's talking to you and me.

Ah Kee knows his audience. He knows who comes through the doors of galleries like the IMA. He is also not fooled by the gloss of the art world's politically correct speech. He knows, like deep down we also know, that the "aust" in "austracism" refers to us too.

Ah Kee's message is direct: "What you inherit is what you have to reckon with". All Australians inherit a racist past, present and possible future. This is what we must all reckon with. Some might be able to repress it so that it does not pass their lips, but it is still there, just pretending not to exist, just waiting to surface. It's still there, and this silent racism is the scariest of the lot. It's the most difficult to reckon with because I can hardly put it into words. It's that deep bellied feeling when I don't want to write this, when I don't want to face the issues right in front of me, when I wish it would all just go away.

Anotherthingandanotherthingandanotherthing… I open my eyes again and realise that it's not going to go away. The words are solid and real. Anotherthingandanotherthingandanotherthing… I'm not going away either. So, what am I going to do about it? Perhaps we could talk, and I mean really talk about our austracism.

Vernon Ah Kee
Austracism 2003
120 x 180cm
Inkset in polyprophene, satin laminated
Courtesy of the artist and Bellas Gallery

seeing you seeing me seeing you: Kim Demuth
Institute of Modern Art
12 June – 12 July

Rachael Haynes

In his recent exhibition at the Institute of Modern Art, *seeing you seeing me seeing you*, Kim Demuth presents objects from various bodies of work in a mini-retrospective. One enters a darkened room in which these objects are sparsely placed, most lit from within, creating eerie glows of illumination and shadows. Seeing seems to pivot around three points of colour-vision: a particular whiteness, a golden green glow and a black hole. In *seeing you seeing me seeing you*, Demuth distorts and perverts the viewer's perception of space. In a darkened room the eye has no spatial framework to anchor itself; stationary points of lights may appear to wander irregularly creating an auto-kinetic movement. The still objects in Demuth's installation certainly begin to take on a life of their own after several minutes of standing with them, their inner glow winking and moving about the room in an uncertain dialogue.

These objects are scaled to human size, placed at head height and form a secondary resemblance to the body - they are negotiated in relation to bodily experience. Much of Demuth's previous work has featured the dissected or dismembered body; artificial limbs housed in boxes that become coffins for an inferred self. The construction of these objects form a kind of sentence of materiality, of references, of perceptual plays that often end in a question mark, or a punch-line.

At first glance these objects seem familiar, one recognises the computer shell of *Crashed* (2001), the medicine cabinet of *Nullify* (2000) and the recreation in *Manhole* (2003); these pertain to the everyday, the everywhere. This familiarity however undergoes a process of alteration whereby the familiar is made strange. The viewer is forced into a kind of double-take motion, a disconcerting moment like that which operates in the realm of the uncanny. As Mladen Dolar describes, the uncanny operates in "that tiny crack before different meanings get hold of [the object] and saturate it with sense" [1]. The viewer is left in this gap between what the object may suggest literally and its physical form. When viewing *Manhole*, one oscillates between recognition of the object's function and the literalisation of this function into a dizzying perceptual play. This hole goes on forever, or at least, to the limits of vision.

The title of Kim Demuth's exhibition highlights an endless loop of seeing. The subject oscillates between many indeterminate points of perception. To see from various perspectives at once suggests that the viewer must stand in many places at once. Alternately the act of seeing itself splits open and reflects crazily from the fractional spaces invented by Demuth. Demuth himself speaks of the viewer finding themselves in a disconcerting space, in a gap between that which can be known, felt, understood and that which cannot. One also finds oneself in the gap between what can be seen and that which remains unseen. In the act of see*ing* one stands before the work in the present moment, the work resisting that movement to knowledge whereby it becomes 'seen'. This deferral of the seen and therefore knowable object operates as a kind of resistance to consumption, by the viewer, of the art object. The possibility, the search, the reaching for knowledge is staged by Demuth with a clinical theatricality, however this possibility is deferred by a game of visual obstacles.

In the Western philosophical tradition, the correlation between knowledge and being is identified as the site of intelligibility and the occurrence of meaning. Knowledge is an activity that appropriates and grasps otherness, assimilating this otherness into the known. Demuth's work references this legacy of ontology, a thinking that explores self-consciousness and the primacy of being. However the realisation of this being is deflected in a hall of mirrors. In Demuth's work, the site of self-knowledge is endlessly deferred - the image of oneself disappears into a void of vision.

Kim Demuth
Crashed (2001)
Courtesy of the artist

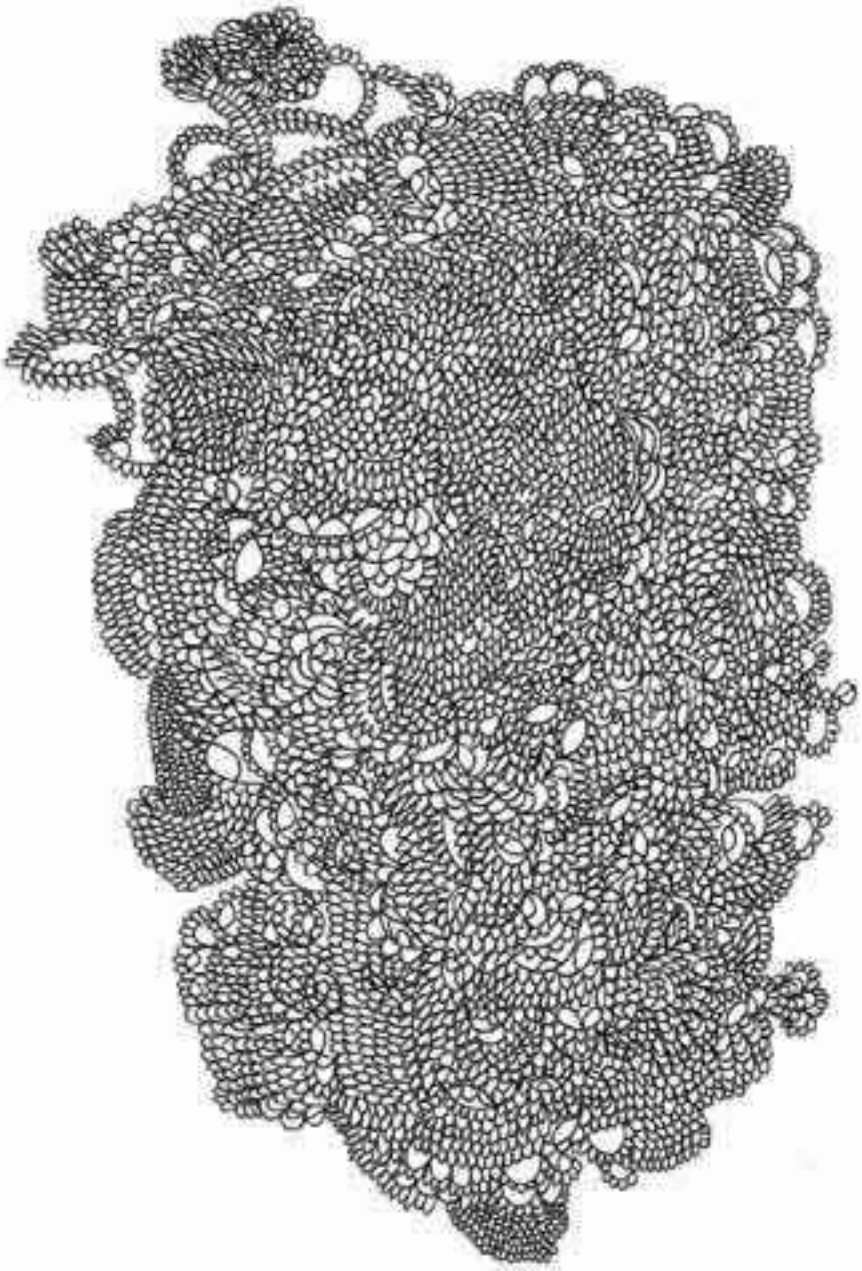
Kim Demuth
The Punter (2003)
Courtesy of the artist

Inside Out (2003) is a box constructed with double-sided mirrors; a box of reflections, of mirrors that reflect absence or a presence almost discernible. As one moves closer, the reflection of one's body progressively disappears, first the legs, then the torso and the head until only the reflection of one's eyes remains. It seems as if the harder one tries to see oneself, the less there is to see. The interiority of vision closes in upon itself, reflected eyes seeing one-self, seeing one-self. Access to the inside of this image is confounded; the handles that may open the box are located on the inside where one cannot go. There is the residue of fingerprints on the glass, as if some tried to enter by force. But inside, the mirrors double and retreat into the distance. Looking upwards, there is an airy, roofless void; a light filled void of reflected emptiness, the inside expanding into the distance seems bigger than the outside container. Demuth speaks of his fascination with the 'beyond' in both its physical and metaphysical senses [2]. This beyond folds into its own interiority and becomes referenced as a void, as empty space, as reflection. One looks into this void in search of something, only to see a full emptiness reflecting back. One sees one's own empty look.

The viewer's act of 'seeing' becomes staged in the work *The Punter* (2003). In a process of literalisation the viewer sees themselves in the body of the viewing double. Tongue in cheek, Demuth sets up a theatricalisation of viewing that despite its obviousness (once you get it) remains uncanny. As I was 'seeing' the rest of the exhibition this dark double continually interrupted my vision by twinging the corner of my eye. The eye recognising the comparable size and shape of the figure, registered this other as a presence. Of course, to take it personally, the viewer is headless, negotiating an impossible physical headspace in trying to see…something. The earnestness of the viewer as he leans forward in an interrogative position - reaching, seeking - heightens the absurdity, as it seems to indicate that he is unaware of his headless position. The blank images he so oddly peruses reflect blackness, but also a self-portrait of the artist, himself looking… And in the periphery, dim reflections of the internal lighting of the other works, a particular whiteness, a golden green glow and the black hole of vision.

1. Dolar, Mladen (1991) "I Shall Be With You on Your Wedding Night: Lacan and the Uncanny"

2. Courtney Pedersen, "Grim Humour, The Work of Kim Demuth" (ex.cat) Soapbox Gallery, Brisbane, 2001.



Bianca Kindt
Courtesy of the artist

BRIDGE SONG: Bone Map
The Judith Wright Centre of Contemporary Arts
12 – 14 June

Bridging Worlds

Anna Rice

Bridge Song, the latest work from Bone Map (a creative collaboration between Rebecca Youdell and Russell Milledge) is aptly named. It is a poetic piece that is split into eleven 'events' (some lasting only moments) rather like the stanzas of a poem or a song. And like poetry, or the lyrics of a song, much of it is to be understood intuitively rather than literally or intellectually. The bridge of the title refers to Brisbane's Story Bridge, yet it could just as well refer to the links this piece creates between different art forms. Dancer Youdell and visual artist Milledge have teamed up with Erik Griswold and Vanessa Tomlinson of the musical pair *Clocked Out Duo* to create a piece that can truly be described as multi-media.

What is most interesting about the intertwining of forms in *Bridge Song* is that no one form dominates. The video projections do not merely provide a backdrop to the piece and nor does the music serve only as a sound scape to Youdell's movement or Milledge's images. The musicians are fully integrated in the piece as performers, alongside Youdell. One of the most memorable points of the piece was a drumming performance from Griswold and Tomlinson. They are positioned opposite each other across the stage, each behind a drum. The drum sticks are attached to each other by pieces of rope that move in waves when a rhythm is beat out. A light is projected through the ropes to create an amazing visual and aural experience as the drums are played. We can see the energy as it is sent from one drum, one arm, to the other. When the energy meets, it causes the ropes to move in a vibrating pattern that seems to buzz with a sort of electricity. It is as if we are watching the physical sound waves move through the air.

Although the inspiration for *Bridge Song* is drawn specifically from the Story Bridge, its themes are universal. Between Milledge's projections and the live performances of Youdell, Griswold and Tomlinson, we are taken through a series of striking images that are capable of communicating volumes of meaning instantaneously. At one point in the piece, Youdell is illuminated, sitting on a chair naked, a globe covering her head. Blood runs from a point in the globe, dripping into her hands and onto the floor. This image touches on many ideas but the principal meaning we gain from it is that we *are* our earth and that in destroying our environment we are destroying ourselves. As much as we set ourselves apart from the natural world, we are inextricably linked, in fact dependent, on it. In this sense, the destruction of our natural world equates to self-destruction. These are not original ideas but the evocative power of this image makes its meaning ingeniously and horribly succinct. The ideas contained within 'Globe Head' resurface throughout *Bridge Song*, and form its dominant theme. Youdell's amazing control of her body means that she can adopt the physical qualities of the landscapes that appear in the projections to the extent that she seems to become a manifestation of them. This adds further meaning to the notion of our relationship to our environment.

Bone Map
Production image for *Bridge Song* (2003)
Courtesy of Bone Map

Bridge Song attempts a daring marriage of art forms and mostly succeeds. At times, I felt that the piece neglected its audience in favour of exploring an unconventional style of performance. It seemed as though the work was undertaken for the artists rather than for the audience, which perhaps it was. The disjointed nature of the piece, which is so contrary to the linear narrative style that we are used to, is at once its greatest strength and ultimate weakness. I felt a certain level of distracting frustration while watching *Bridge Song* because it seemed to be a series of beginnings; countless ingenious ideas were touched on but never fully explored. In retrospect, however, there was a continuity of themes throughout the piece that was not so apparent to me at the time. Had it not been so open-ended and sometimes maddeningly incoherent, it would not have provoked the level of thought in me that it did. I would like to see the piece performed in an outside environment because I feel that the closed space of the theatre perhaps didn't do the style and themes of the piece justice. The artists of *Bridge Song* have certainly forged new ground with this work and the talent contained within it is overwhelming.

Alasdair Macintyre
Rebuilding the Babelonian Edifice (2003)
Fibreglass, resin, acrylic/enamel paint, inkjet print, wood, vinyl
43 x 58 x 50cm
Courtesty of the artist

Alasdair Macintyre
60 Merivale Street, Brisbane
1 – 5 July

Kris Carlon

In Alasdair Macintyre's self-titled show, the viewer is presented with a series of small-scale sculptural tableaux that fuse elements of art history, philosophy, pop culture and religion. They take the form of hand sculpted dioramic assemblages that explore the experiences, influences and imagination of this very intriguing artist. An almost obsessive interest in the fields mentioned above has invested this artist with a unique and spiritual vision of the world around him, allowing him to see in the everyday objects of mass culture an artistic viability that borders on metaphysics. This transformative vision allows the artist to refer not so much to popular culture but to neoclassicism in conversation about the basis of much of his work. Rather than discussing the particular episode of *Dr. Who* that influenced him or the significance of Stormtroopers (of the *Star Wars* series) pondering Picasso's *Guernica* (1937), he comments on the work of Delacroix and David, semiotics and philosophy, and firmly posits his own work at a distance from simple representations of mass cultural icons, although he clearly has a soft spot for them.

Alasdair Macintyre
Installation view of exhibition at 60 Merivale St (2003)
Courtesy of the artist

Not only is the artist influenced by the iconography of pop culture, the assemblages of Joseph Cornell and the practices of Jake and Dinos Chapman, but he also draws much inspiration from the lives of these artists, treating their individual existences as equally valid source material as the works of art they create. This focus on the artist as guide is evidenced in the anecdote he tells of Max Ernst, who once said that you should have one eye open, focused on the external reality and the other closed, focused inside yourself and that what you create is a synthesis of these two worlds. The synthesis between thoughts, ideas and modern reality is clearly displayed in the mysterious juxtapositions within his boxed worlds, with one depicting the artist defending his easel against an encroaching army of art historical imagery, deftly given three-dimensional form by the artist against whom they advance. Perhaps they view him as an iconoclast of art historical imagery, or perhaps as a threat to their supremacy as objects of focus above and beyond the artists who created them. In this nightmarish dreamscape, the artist himself exists in the realm of the artists' imagination and is confronted by the very icons he destroys, indeed becoming one of those icons himself.

Alasdair Macintyre
Abide with me (2003)
Polymer clay, resin, sponge, plaster, rocks, acrylic paint, inkjet print, wood, hobby grass
30 x 38 x 26cm
Courtesy of the artist

A media release on Macintyre's website announces the opening of this exhibition and reveals more about the work than the artist-in-interview does, cleverly avoiding questions and twisting responses into art historical anecdotes that disclose nothing of the personal aspect of his work. "I am never comfortable discussing the 'meaning' behind my work, or any work for that matter. The meaning lies within the realm of the viewer, with their own references and experience. There is no one 'right' interpretation." In discussion with the artist, one becomes aware of the respect he has for Classical art, as he emphasises the Classical tableau quality of his 3-dimensional miniatures, and thus his use of the terms Renaissance and Neoclassicism take on a new light. Just as Giotto and Piero della Francesca created frescoes for the illiterate to appreciate biblical messages, so too does Macintyre create messages for modern audiences in a language they can understand. This modernisation of the vocabulary of art has its roots in the very origins of art history itself, but like art continually evolves, revises and revolutionises itself, assuming the form of the day.

By combining the vocabulary of mass consumption and aesthetics, Macintyre presents an enigmatic communiqué from his experience to ours, in a medium that we can all readily relate to. The fact that anybody can posit an interpretation on the significance of *Dr. Who*'s Daleks and Stormtroopers in light of their own experience simply reinforces Macintyres' avoidance of directly discussing the meaning of his work, as this would contaminate the pleasure to be found in personally exploring the meaning for oneself. This idea does however introduce an element of elitism into the work: not only must one have a grasp of art history to fully appreciate the pieces, one must also be familiar with the cultural icons Macintyre employs. Although many of the works in this show can be read as having a distinctly self-reflexive element to them, when asked if the works are intentionally self-referential, the artist suddenly heard something which he disappeared to investigate, the question forgotten upon his return. In relation to the work mentioned above (*Transfiguration on the Post-Modern Wasteland*, 2003), the artists' inclusion within some of the works adds a dimension of self-destructive iconoclasm. The question, in retrospect, is rightfully avoided, as this comment reveals: "I would prefer the viewer of my work to draw their own conclusions as to what is going on in those boxes. Have I the right to tell them what the art is about? Each will draw from their own experiences, as I have done".

Alasdair Macintyre
The Sacrifice (Inside the White Cube) (2003)
Polymer clay, resin, acrylic paint,wood, electric light
60 x 43 x 46cm
Courtesy of the artist

Alasdair Macintyre
Transfiguration on the Post-Modern wasteland (2003)
Polymer clay, resin, plastic, sand, canvas, acrylic/enamel paint, wood
40 x 52 x 46cm
Courtesy of the artist

This is not to say that all the works take place within the limited confines of modern consumer culture. More esoteric references can be found to the Andrei Tarkovsky film *Stalker* (1979) in *Abide With Me* (2003) that depicts the artist isolated on an "island"—taking its composition from the film—surrounded by a submerged reproduction of an Ian Fairweather painting; and to Ridley Scott's *Alien* (1979) in *The Sacrifice (Inside the White Cube)* (2003), where the astronaut/artist descends a rope into the chamber of glowing alien pods containing the images of Western art history. Schopenhauer's philosophy that life is essentially evil and cannot be made good appears in *Schopenhauer's Sepulchre* where a gathering of enigmatically robed figures surround a plinth upon which an internally lit sphere radiates a surreal luminosity. This work could almost be read (personally that is) as a ritualistic rebirth for a new era of contemporary art with the glowing sphere interchangeable with Tony Smith's 6" black cube entitled *Die* (1962). The views afforded the spectator take on the quality of cinema, with the artist placing emphasis on the fact that "you don't want to give the viewer too much information; only show them what they need to see". This revealing comment plus the intriguing nature of Alasdair Macintyre's work that virtually demands subjective interpretation is more than enough for this reviewer to want to see more, but only as much as the artist is willing to allow.

All quotes taken from either www.alasdairmacintyre.com or from an interview conducted on the 03/07/03 between Kris Carlon and Alasdair Macintyre.

soft . pilot . watch: Katherine Taube
The Farm
20 – 21 June

Selina Braine

When first entering The Farm on the night of Katherine Taube's installation, *soft. pilot. watch,* I was instantly teleported to a hi-tech/otherworldly red-light district. Clean, sleek platforms rose from the floor, pink and red lights permeated through blurred fixtures, screens unlocked forbidden images, highly codified text spilled out of monitors, alien porn-like noise emanated from a large box containing the dressing and undressing body of the artist: a constructed layering of a disjointed gaze.

Where to look? Should we look? Are we being looked at? In this installation the viewer is constantly in a state of sensualised questioning. Taube's work creates a hybrid space where references to soft porn, striptease, surveillance, science fiction, consumption and desire fuse together. In *soft. pilot. watch* Taube blends these referents to create a self-questioning, voyeuristic and desirable space where the artist is performing the viewer and the viewer is performing the artist. The role of each participant bounces around the space, off the walls and onto the body of the artist and into the gaze of the spectator. I find myself looking at the artist, and then looking at myself. I want to see what she is doing and I want to see myself: an uncanny desire to watch oneself watching. As I continue to stand in the space, the duration of the work, the images, the body, words and sounds fill me. The artist is in total control. Taube has created a highly alluring space, where peeping tom meets casual voyeur. I feel somehow tricked by the content of the room. Taube becomes the pilot of an obscured voyage to an abstracted red light landscape: I am her passenger.

Katherine Taube
Video still from *Soft.Pilot.Watch* (2003)
Courtesy of the artist and The Farm

Katherine Taube
Installation view of *Soft.Pilot.Watch* (2003)
Courtesy of the artist and The Farm

As a passenger the viewer is confronted with self-referential desire; negatives and positives in dichotomy. Desire is inherently part of deconstructing or rather reconfiguring the gaze in Taube's work. "To strike a pose is to present oneself to the gaze of the other, reflecting its power back on itself. Confronted with a pose, the gaze itself is immobilised."[1] Taube forms a location in *soft. pilot. watch* where the desire to watch, the desire to peep, the desire to look away, the desire to scrutinise and the desire to be consumed amalgamate. Three monitors carefully placed around the room project images of the artists body, live footage of the performance layered with video footage of fragmented bodies, fuzzy reception blended with highly intensified words, HAVE YOU GOT WHAT YOU PAID FOR? I am part of a hi-tech peep show. I am part of an all- consuming fragmented striptease. I am stripped of clear vision, attempting to de-code commodity and the body whilst questioning the commodity of desire. Taube relays these statements and questions, placing them onto repeated images and text. The viewer is confronted with a constructed deconstruction.

A large box in the centre of the room invites me to look in through blurred slits in its sides. I look in. I walk around it. Cameras protrude from the sides of the box and watch me. A type of otherworldly experience of machines watching, scrutinising and sending messages to something other begins to occur. The artist contained within the box is monitoring and surveying her audience. The artist as pilot. The artist as other. The messages relaying back to her.

Inside the box I see a body, dressing and undressing, sewing and unpicking. Taube performs within the box. The performance reflects upon codes of

Katherine Taube
Installation view of *Soft.Pilot.Watch* (2003)
Courtesy of the artist and The Farm

femininity: pantyhose, wigs and underwear. Taube's work uniquely manages to mesh a fetishised feminine or an idealised feminine with technology, where hi-tech equipment meets low-tech performance. The artist plays dress ups, gets frocked up and stripped naked in a sleek, technologically calculated environment. The performing female body is used in this installation as an extension of past feminist performances, simulating the body in video footage, live broadcast and a fragmentation of the 'natural'. The female body here is object, performer, controller and observer. In such a setting Taube sits somewhere between the stripper, the doll, the dominatrix and the cyborg, none of which are graspable identities, instead they seem to flounder, ascend and descend throughout the space.

Heightening these visual and sensual perceptions are the sounds of alien orgasms combined with hazy television reception noises. Sound and vision equally challenge any form of linear perspective or clear conceptual connotation. The pure measure of hybridity in this work aligns contemporary practice with multi-faceted research into art historical and theoretical contexts as well as issues pertinent to contemporary society and politics. The feminine and the gaze probe at issues of commodity, consumption and capitalism. The experience of art is fashioned through Taube's installation via a synthesis of trickery and questioning. Taube's work challenges an individual's visual cognition and corporeal consciousness. Her body/ My body… *Soft***.** Her controlling/ My controlling… *Pilot***.** Her surveillance/ My surveillance… *Watch*.

1. Jones, A. (1998) *Body Art: Performing the Subject* ,University of Minnesota Press.

Katherine Taube
Video still from *Soft.Pilot.Watch* (2003)
Courtesy of the artist and The Farm

RUSSIAN ARK
Sergey Dreiden, Maria Kuznetsova, Leonid Mozgovoy, Mikhail Piotrovsky
Director Alaxander Sokurov

Mike Cameron

While St. Petersberg's Hermitage Museum is the star of this groundbreaking odyssey our tour guide for this time-travelling voyage is an arrogant unimpressed 200-year-old French Diplomat, the Marquis de Custine (Dreiden). Our point of view is that of the director's, an unseen, unheard ghost floating on the coat tails of the disgruntled Marquis. Travelling through the past 200 years of Russian history. It's through the halls, galleries, and alcoves of St. Peterberg's Hermitage Museum where you are treated to a stunning ballet that took twenty-two assistant directors, 2,000 actors, three live orchestras all perfectly choreographed to be captured on one unedited piece of film.

While virtually unknown here in Australia, Alexander Sokurov is an accomplished Russian director with some sixteen documentaries and thriteen feature films to his credit. In 1995 he was honoured as one of the Best International Directors by the European Academy of Cinema. While living and working in St. Petersberg since the early 1980's Sokurov clearly shows with Russian Ark a deep respect and passion for one of the worlds greatest museums.

The Hermitage began as a modest palace built by Peter the great, then expanded by his heirs. It wasn't until 1764 when Catherine the Great, an avid art lover who patronised 225 paintings, founded the Hermitage as a museum and opened it to the public. In the film Catherine the Great first appears applauding a new drama, and is then seen running off to answer the call of nature. Later she is seen choosing a new painting to add to her collection and again running off through the snow, late for a banquet. Another historical turning point that belies this Ark is that of the family of the first Tsar, sitting down to enjoy a meal while unaware of the impending revolution. The stunning climax of this ninety-nine-minute odyssey is the last Royal Ball of 1913 where hundreds of guests dressed in their finest crowd wall to wall over two huge ballrooms with four dance circles. Then as a grand exodus the guests literally pour out down through a grand staircase.

The Marquis whom we follow around is clearly ill at ease with his Russian surrounds; openly detesting the applied art forms used in the Hermitage's frescos. Expressing an elitist snobbery he is offended at the sight of poorly crafted 'knock offs' that imitate trends and styles perfected by the great artists of his Eastern European home land. A deft knowledge of Russian history is not a prerequisite to enjoy Russian Ark, however I did wish I knew more about the historical figures as some scenes run like a who's who of 1700's high society.

Film still *Russian Ark*
Courtesy of the Dendy Cinemas

Essentially while Russian Ark is a film without a script, ironically it is an incredibly lucid film. Aesthetically in terms of colour and movement it is a soothingly hypnotic film to watch. Filming was done on digital video with a modified battery pack needed to sustain 100 minutes of continuous shooting. While the use of DV grows in popularity among filmmakers as a cheaper alternative to film, a Megaplex culture or art-house-phobic public are wary of a 'Blair Witch Project' style. This stigma still applies to films shot on DV: who wants to pay $13 for raw, grainy footage coupled with shaky hand held direction? The filming of Russian Ark however is film quality. Due in part to post production conditioning, some elaborate scenes look like a painting by Reubens or Raphael, as the colours of the costuming are rich and vibrant, lighting design ethereal and complex, and the direction slick and smooth. Sokurov at no time loses track of his subject and the flow of the camera sustains its dream like narrative constantly.

Thoughts on what 'Russian Ark' is all about have ranged from it simply being a dream about the Hermitage Museum and its history, to the suggestion that it possibly represents Alexander Sokurov's idea of heaven. For Sokurov however his Russian Ark "is all a single temporal space". Living and breathing within the walls of the Hermitage, Peter the Great and Catherine the Great are central historical characters that reinforce Sokurov's idea that "Historical time cannot depart, cannot collapse. For me not one of those times has ever stopped or ended". However, or even whenever, you find Russian Ark, it is difficult to ignore the fact that Alexander Sokurov has created an exhilarating and beautiful film that honours the Hermitage museum and its history and in a way never before captured on film.

Tara Pattenden, Ross Manning & Patrick King
Take Me To Your Ruler
6-8pm Fri 25th July
Also Open 11am-4pm Sat 26th July
Artist talk 2pm Sat 26th July

Peter Alwast
Working Like a Tiger
6-8pm Fri 1st August
Continues to 23rd August
Artist talk 2pm Sat 2nd August

Wilkins Hill
MATS: good practice for going around the horseshoe
6-8pm Fri 29th August
Also Open 11am-4pm Sat 30th August

LOCAL LISTINGS

Brisbane City Gallery
- 27 Jul *Wrapping Beauty*: Acer Chor
- 27 Jul Gr*eat Expectations: New British Design*
- 27 Jul *Art, Love & War*: Stella Bowen

EA (Emerging Artists)
12 Aug *Can Artists Run Spaces? Artist Run Spaces*

The Farm
25 - 26 Jul *Take Me To Your Ruler* – Tara Pattenden, Ross Manning & Patrick King
1 - 23 Aug *Working Like A Tiger* – Peter Alwast

Fire-Works Gallery
- 26 Jul Kathleen Petyarre, Abie Loy, Bob Dixon & Lilly Campbell

Gallery-A-Go-Go
2 Aug *Tourists* - Hannah Gatland and Jo Laboo

Institute of Modern Art
25 - 26 Jul *Particle Moves* - Ed Osborn and Elision members
31 Jul - 30 Aug *Sound Art* - Andrew Kettle, Lowkey + Nude, Ed Osborn
31 Jul - 30 Aug *Treatment: Video/Sound Works* - various artists

Palace Gallery
30 Jul Ali Verban

Queensland Art Gallery
- 2 Nov Jo Laboo (Starter Space)

QUT Art Museum
- 7 Sep *Architects of Glamour + Masters of Style: Excerpts from a Century of Fashion Photography*
- 27 Jul *Costume and Memory*: Natalya Hughes & Elizabeth Lamont

Studio 11
30 Jul *exercise* - curated by Grant Dale
20 Aug *Tree-House* - curated by Helen Nicholson featuring: Sally Cox, Lucy Griggs & Simon Mee

Local Art is a series of six free print and online publications with the intention of generating decisive responses to the "emerging art" scene in Brisbane. *Local Art*'s content will focus on the work of local emerging artists, writers and art-workers. With this said, the publication will not take these premises as limitations, rather it will endeavour to explore contiguous fields as a means of contextualising local contemporary practices and discourses.

Local Art is currently calling for expressions of interest and content submissions. Through much appreciated Arts Queensland funding, *Local Art* is able to pay two contributors $100 each (one major artist page, one major article), and four contributors $50 each (can range from exhibition reviews to artist's writings, artist pages, interviews and critical essays).

The next content deadline is August 22.

If you would like more information about *Local Art* or are interested in contributing, please contact The Farm or any of the *Local Art* editors: Sally Brand, Natalya Hughes, Grant Stevens and Dirk Yates (thefarm@thefarmspace.com, sallybrand@hotmail.com natalyaks@hotmail.com, grant@thefarmspace.com, dirk@thefarmspace.com).

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For the online version of *Local Art* visit www.thefarmspace.com and follow the links from the main menu.

The views expressed in *Local Art* are not necessarily shared by its editors.

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LOCAL ART

LOCAL ART - ISSUE 6 AUGUST 2003

GURLESQUE
Options Nightclub, Brisbane
7 June, 2003

Natalya Hughes

In her article *'From Here to Queer: Radical Feminism, Postmodernism, and the Lesbian Menace (or why can't a woman be more like a fag)'*[1], Suzanna Walters sets out to examine the relationship between what she identifies as a 'new queer sensibility' and lesbian feminist theory, the latter of which is seen to be under serious threat. For Walters, what characterises this new sensibility, both in the realm of theory and social practice, are the markers of a confrontational politics founded on an "aggressive impulse to generalisation"[2]. Consistent with this impulse is a repositioning of identity in terms of (a mobile and fluid) 'sexuality', privileged over, and separated from the concept of 'gender'. Reiterated through theories that stress the radical potential of gender play (or gender's potential transgression), queer theory and practice is seen to move away from a consideration of the specificity of gendered experience in favour of the celebration of "genderless nonnormativity"[3].

It is the claim of gender neutrality in queer theory that Walters takes issue with here as it has produced what she identifies as some troubling theoretical and political outcomes. One such outcome is that, despite claims to move beyond gender, within queer theory's key texts "the images/signifiers for this transcendence... are suspiciously male" (from drag queens to 'chicks with dicks') even in the discussions of radical lesbian sexual practice[4]. Similarly, Walters maintains that there has been a marked hostility within queer theory towards the tenets of feminism, because of the ways in which it has sought to address the specificity of gendered experience as a site for both interrogation and mobilisation, and because of its, at times, sexually prescriptive history. In what Walters understands as a strategic rewriting, feminism is posited as too limiting, and even 'retrograde' in its objectives, while lesbian feminism is understood to be better subsumed under the more generalised banner of 'queer'.

In Walters' opinion, queer theory has participated in a rewriting which evacuates feminism's importance and makes lesbianism "the unfortunate absence, not really the stuff of identities and identifications, merely the detritus of the grand narratives of male homosociality and homosexuality"[5]. Usually citing feminism's, at times, awkward history in relation to nonnormative sexual practices (best demonstrated by the 'sex debates' surrounding pornography, S & M etc), queer theory, she says has opted to represent feminism as prudish and policing when it comes to sexuality, with all that feminism once rejected being made radical on this very basis.

In the context of this debate, a show such as *Gurlesque* (an offspring of the *Gurlesque* Lesbian Strip show/'Lezzo Strip Joint' of Sydney) would seem to sit in a somewhat precarious position. Boasting a performance range of "hilarious comedy and drag to seriously sexy, in your face pussy struttin'"[6], *Gurlesque* consists of a series of acts built around the concept of strip tease, by women, and exclusively for women, many of which participate in the kind of radical sex revisionism that Walters associates with the 'new queer sensibility'. In this instance, the performance of strip, previously posited as problematic in its objectification of the female body, is reclaimed

Gurlesque Troupe (2003)
Courtesy of Tigerlil and *Gurlesque*

and celebrated as an empowering mode of sexual expression and identification. Many of the performances, insofar as they involve gender play, the revisitation of pornography and rhetoric such as the proclamation "long live gash flashing"[7], seem to perfectly illustrate the confrontational sexual/body politics that Walters articulates in her critique.

To dismiss the show as merely oppositional or antagonistic to feminist politics however would be too simplistic, ignoring some of the most fundamental aspects of the *Gurlesque* phenomenom, which, as I understand it, seemed to convey quite explicit engagements with feminist concerns. As the group's promotional material suggests, *Gurlesque's* objectives align it with the issues that dominated second wave feminism, in its attempts to provide a forum in which to "confront fears and insecurities, to challenge taboos, both sexual, social... (and) to explode myths about... what a patriarchal society dictates is sexy or attractive"[8].The format of the show echoes this 'consciousness raising' objective, as between acts, spectators are encouraged not just to watch, but also to play an active role in the night's proceedings. On the night of the Brisbane performance, under the direction of MC Sex Intents, the crowd was prompted to share their sexual/social experiences, and exhibit their own bodies, as well as respond to questions regarding their experiences as (queer) women.

The acts themselves were diverse in content ranging from pantomime style political satire (where Hussein, Blair, Bush and Howard strap it on and swap blood for oil), to parodies of glamour rock and 'weird science', as well as the traditional/conventional table dancing whereby visitors were encouraged to deposit *Gurlesque* currency ('Pussy Pounds') into the outfits of the dancers. While the emphasis of most acts was the fleshy erotics of strip, not all of the acts seemed

Glitta Supernova (2003)
Courtesy of Jo and *Gurlesque*

to have this as their central objective, and in some cases there was a marked absence of this within certain performances.

One such act, which at very least problematised the erotics of strip, was the performance by Glitta Supernova, a founding member of the *Gurlesque* troupe. Taking place on an entirely dark stage except for one strategically placed 'black light', the act involved a kind of reverse strip tease whereby each neon coloured item of clothing that was removed resulted in the disappearance of parts of the performer's body, rather than their revealing. The references in terms of costuming and movement here seemed to be a kind of 50's cheesecake or movie starlet glamour – from the gown, gloves and stockings worn at the beginning, to the stars that marked the presence (or absence) of the performers breasts towards the acts end. Concluding with the disappearance (from view) of the stripper's body, the act seemed to participate in a kind of inversion of the strip tease, which relied upon, and drew attention to the codified nature of the strip routine, and the (imagined) body it constructs.

Pussy Pound (2003)
Courtesy of *Gurlesque*

For me, the most interesting part of the evening (also proving most popular with the rest of the audience) was the concluding act by the Brisbane performer Azaria Universe. Based on the overly dramatic Bonnie Tyler track *'Total Eclipse of the Heart'*, the act seemed to parody the much celebrated, classically tragic, drag queen routine. Clad in nothing but large white platforms and an excess of stringed pearls, Universe performed/mimed the track with what began as an overenthusiastic sincerity, and developed into a frenzied and quite violent fervour (literally throwing her body about the stage). Satirising, not just the model of femininity presented in the song, but also its appropriation and satirisation by male drag performers, the performance seemed to critique both moments of performed womanhood.

Had the act solely engaged the model of femininity presented in the song, it might be easily theorised in terms of masquerade. The reference however was more specific, as it seemed to draw attention to the varying physical and social conditions in which gender might be seen to be 'performed'. In this sense what seems remarkable about the act (particularly in the context of Walters' discussion) was the extent to which it seemed to both address the notion of gender as performative (in its reference to drag, and its repetition of the transgressive act) and, at the same time, foreground any reception of this 'play' with the fact of the performer's body: as woman-doing-man-doing-woman. In this sense it might be seen to illustrate Walters' assertion that "for even the lionised drag queen, gender exerts a powerful force, one perhaps to be challenged or deconstructed"[9].

It is at this point then that *Gurlesque* might be best seen as straddling the fields of feminist theory and queer theory insofar as it acknowledges and celebrates the fluid sexuality of queer, but not at the expense of a consideration of the specificity of gender. At its best, *Gurlesque* might be seen to perform the implications of these debates at the level of practice, working towards the visibility of lesbian feminism via particularly entertaining means.

Azaria Universe (2003)
Courtesy of *Gurlesque*

1 Walters, Suzanna, *Signs* Vol 21, Issue 4, 1996.
2 Warner in ibid. p2
3 ibid. p5
4 ibid. p11
5 ibid
6 www.gurlesque.org/gurlesque.html, accessed14th August, 2003.
7 ibid
8 ibid
9 Walters, Suzanna, *Signs* Vol 21, Issue 4, 1996, p21

THE EUREKA FLAG
Ballarat Regional Gallery, Ballarat
Permanent Display

Sally Brand

The remnants of the Eureka Stockade Flag are housed in a small darkened room at the Ballarat Regional Gallery. Walking into the darkness and looking towards the monumentally sized, low lit flag it took a moment for my eyes to adjust. Its dark blue fields were inky like the night sky and its remaining stars seemed to glisten, promoting an aura about the 150 year old object which was strangely stirring. The darkened room was cold and quiet and the flag dominated my thoughts. Was this just a trick of the light? Or was this moment inspired by some significance this object holds as part of our history in this country?

I knew very little about the Eureka Stockade and its flag before I arrived in Ballarat. I remember someone once mentioning that the date of the stockade battle should replace our current celebrated national day. I had also once watched Betty Churcher's *Take 5* episode on the making of the flag. I knew that the stockade had something to do with a rebellious battle on the Victorian goldfields, an uprising of the underdogs and I was also vaguely aware that the event was somehow considered significant in the adoption of our current democratic model of government. Yet, my knowledge, in its particular lack of specific detail was like most of my understandings of Australian history, rather more imaginative than accurate.

I find it particularly interesting that Australian history seems rarely learnt and scarcely spoken about. We seem very reluctant to know, perhaps because we know that we won't want to know, how we have managed to arrive in today's society since the British invasion of 1788. When I begin to think however of the events of the 1854 Eureka Stockade, I realise that perhaps I know comparatively more about this event than other such significant moments in our history.

The Eureka Stockade forms part of a partial history of Australia which I learnt as a child. It is joined by the illustrious stories of pioneers and federation, of prime ministers and two world wars. It is a history packaged for my inherit Western sensibilities and spiced with a dose of patriotism.

It is a very different history from the one that I have discovered as an adult. It is almost a whole other history, often described as 'black arm band' for the events are much more gruesome and lacking the usually required heroism. It is a history which tells stories that a young triumphant country doesn't want to know. Compared to the history I collected as a child, this adult history holds no illusions of grandeur.

Charles A. Doudiet
Swearing Allegiance to the Southern Cross (1854)
Watercolour

It informs me of massacres and stolen generations, of attempted cultural genocide and extreme racist motivations. In relation to this history, and what I have recently read about the Eureka Stockade, it begins to seem that perhaps the stockade event is suspiciously over played.

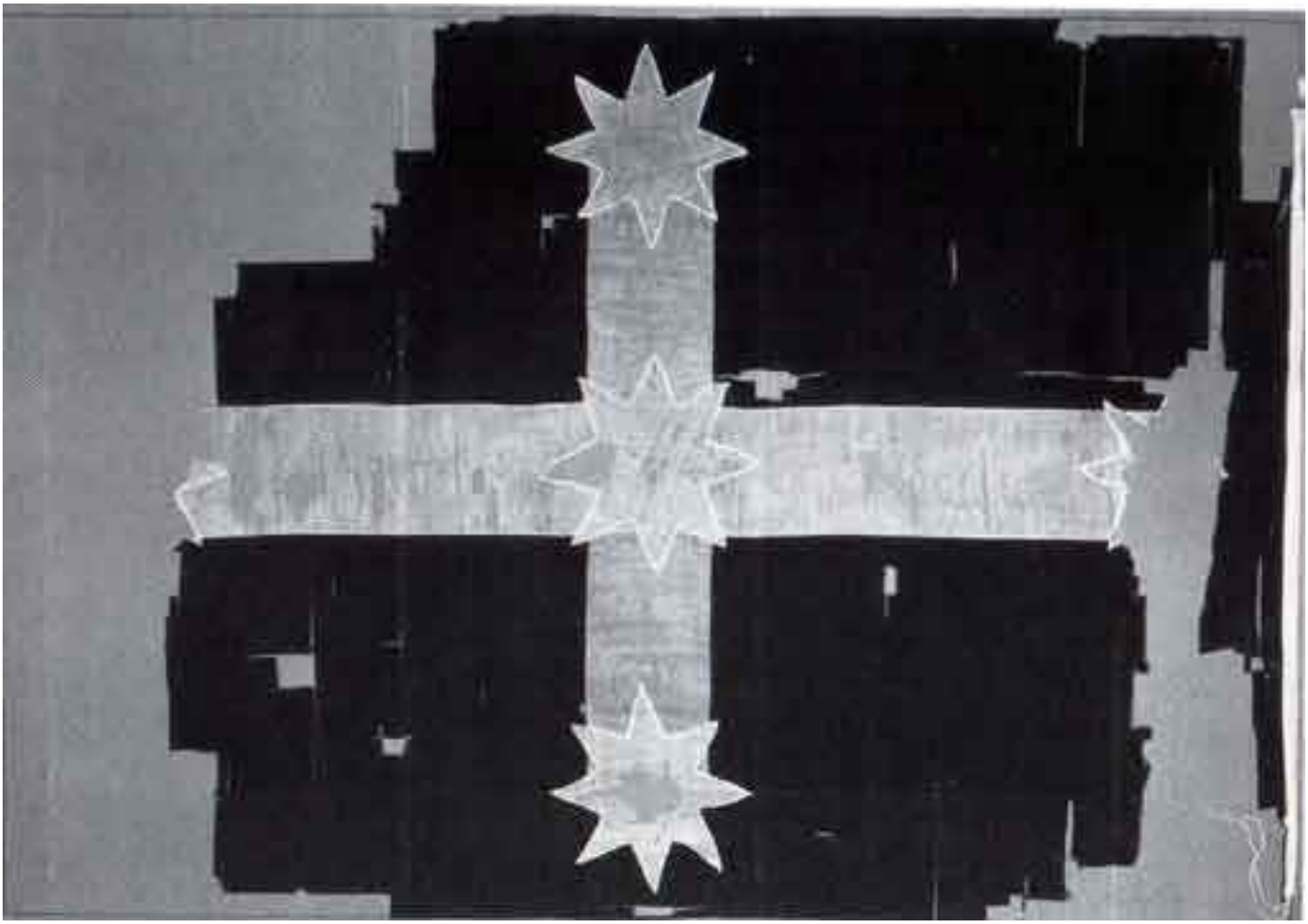
For the Ballarat Regional Gallery, the oldest and largest regional gallery in Australia, the Eureka flag is something of a destination piece. It is the original flag which flew over the battle of Eureka stockade on the Sunday morning of the 3rd of December 1854. United under the design of the southern cross, the flag is generally considered as a rallying point for the diggers who were rebelling against the perceived injustices of the local 1850s colonial government[1]. The actual battle which ensued however is said to have only lasted fifteen minutes and left twenty-four diggers and five soldiers dead while also leading 114 rebels off to prison[2]. The diggers at the stockade were quite disastrously defeated, especially considering that there were reported to be only about 150 men at the stockade at the time of the battle. "No one", the historian Manning Clark notes of the aftermath of the fall of the stockade, "…detected any majesty in the moment or prophesized that the diggers would one day be heroes of the people and hailed as the founders of democracy in Australia"[3]. So, why are they today? Or rather, why is their tattered flag framed and displayed to such glorified purposes?

The design of the Eureka flag is simple. A large white cross divides the blue rectangular field and five eight-pointed stars are each positioned at the ends and centre of the cross. In its current state beneath the shroud of a darkened room with theatrical lighting, the flag is far from its original flying splendor. At the end of the 1854 battle it was torn down from the stockade, dragged in the dust, and passed into the possession of John King, who had been a police trooper at the storming of the stockade and opposed to the digger's plight[4]. It was

then forwarded to the Ballarat Regional Gallery in 1895[5]. The material of the flag has now greatly deteriorated and there are also holes cut out of the fabric by early souvenir hunters. Consequently, to look at the flag without its museum frame, its heroic guise begins to flail and the other side of the story rather begins to unfurl.

History is always subjectively framed and presented to support a particular purpose. Thus, it can never simply be a notation of records or actual events. The Eureka flag is framed at the Ballarat Regional Gallery with grand monumentality to support a heroic notion of our history. The flag is glorified in remembrance of an uprising of the people and the fight for their beliefs. It is a symbol that crystallizes our country's current democratic ideals, and as such it cannot be denied its significance. Yet this is only half the story, as after their uprising, the people were defeated, sent to prison and put on trail for high treason. It is as if we did not stay around after intermission so that we only remember the instigating emotions and ideals rather than the disastrous ending. When I think about other stories that hold steadfast heroic positions in my idea of Australian history it becomes apparent that perhaps this disregard for the defeated conclusion might not just be isolated to this event. The tragic deaths of Burke and Wills and the final defeat of Ned Kelly are two tales that readily come to mind and indeed if this is to be the case, we must then consciously consider the direction that we are heading in this country and contemplate the constructions of heroism that may inform our national identity.

1. Fox, L. (1973) *Eureka and its Flag*, Mullaya Publications, Victoria, p. 16.
2. Clark, C. M. H. (1980) *A History of Australia Volume IV*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, pp. 78-79.
3. Ibid., p. 79.
4. Fox, L. (1973) *Eureka and its Flag*, Mullaya Publications, Victoria, p. 21.
5. Ibid.



The Eureka Flag (1854)
Wool and cotton
260cm x 324cm (approx.)

WORKING LIKE A TIGER: Peter Alwast
The Farm, Brisbane
1 - 23 August, 2003

Dirk Yates

Inside Out

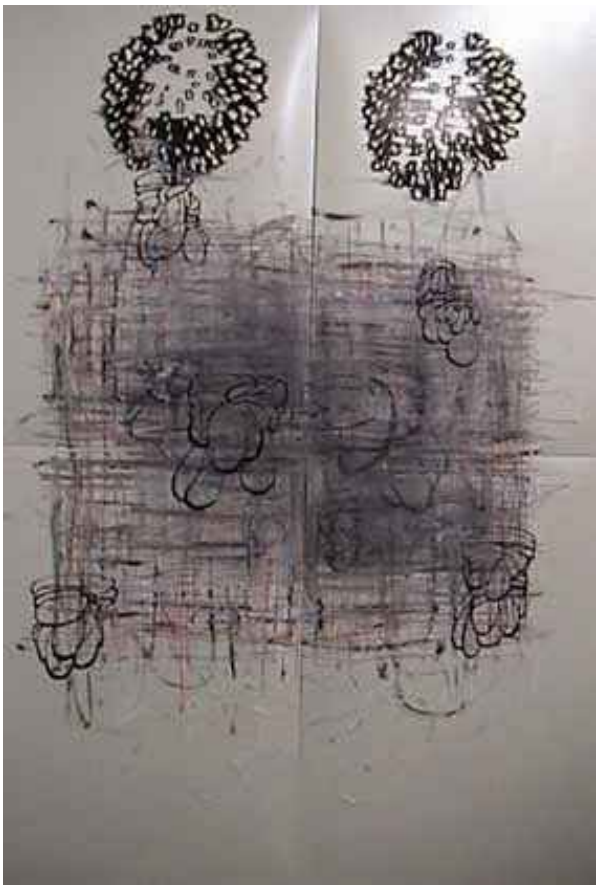
Peter Alwast's installation *Working Like a Tiger* attempts to diffuse the formal experience of viewing works in a gallery. The construction of three free-standing walls of clear plastic, stretched over stud timber - much like canvas stretched over a support - makes it possible to view more than one work at a time. Mounted on the plastic, the fronts and backs of works are made visible along with the movements of spectators in the gallery. An ochre coloured horizon line encircles the white gallery walls, while the works mounted on the plastic combine images of birds in flight, fireworks, MRI scans and other temporal motifs that denote limitations of human perception.

The constructed plastic walls create spaces that are acutely more intimate for viewers to consider the work. Clear silicon drawings of bodies denoting conventions in developing perspective, are over-laid on many of the works and are best viewed in these immediate spaces. Viewed in reproduction (for example, in the exhibition catalogue) or through the slightly opaque walls, this detail becomes invisible. The viewer's perception of individual works material information alters depending on their physical relationship with the work. This places an emphasis on the viewer's position as determining the margins in which the work is perceived.

The plastic walls also act like a hinge, where public and private spaces, fold in and out of one another. While allowing the observation of other spectators in the gallery, the constructed walls also act as two-way mirrors, reflecting the viewer's own position. The installation heightens the viewer's awareness of their own subjectivity in reading the works and presents the possibility of further readings from others present in the gallery. Every aspect of a work's formal presence is exposed by the multiple viewpoints that the installation affords the viewer. The viewer is able to judge their own appearance as well as that of others, in relation to the works.

The ochre horizon line that encircles the gallery walls is visible to viewers at all times. The unadorned, single-tone landscape acknowledges the abstract nature of the gallery and its separateness to the 'outside' world. The context of the gallery provides the viewer with an apparently autonomous space in which they may examine the gap that exists between the limits of human perception and physical reality.

Peter Alwast
Installation view of *Working Like A Tiger* (2003)
Courtesy of the artist and The Farm



Peter Alwast
Cross-Section (detail) (2003)
Courtesy of the artist and The Farm

Rather than acting as self-contained works with meaning concreted in their material forms, the works implore the viewer to find meaning between the signs that they contain and their environment. The installation acts as a metaphysical account of human perception. Laboriously worked upon, repeated and layered, the symbols and images present in the works hold a stronger tie to their existence as signs than their final reproduction at the hand of the artist. This, coupled with the significance of the works' relationships with the abstract nature of the gallery, dematerializes the work and places it at the service of the viewer's mind.

This dematerialization serves to place the works as a set of fluid concepts, rather than static signs filled with predetermined meaning. These fluid concepts allow the viewer to place their own context onto the work, and as if they had made the markings of the artist, the viewer can form their own decisions for why these signs are placed together in the context of the gallery. The meanings of the signs now exist beyond the control of the artist and are dependent upon the conceptual relationships that the viewer forms.

The difficulty in writing about this work lies in the fluid state in which the installation suspends the work. Moving between notions of perception and materialization, public and private spaces, the work is constantly folding in and out of itself making it difficult to give an objective account of how a viewer may navigate the space. This is of course the strength of the work - the inability to give a definitive account of the work that is beyond an individual viewer's own perception.

The installation acts as a system of pure relationship where a viewer may consider their role to be essential in fulfilling the expectations that the artist places on the work. Alwast positions his audience as the motivation for presenting the work in such a manner. The viewer is imbued with the role of developing possible readings into the work, rather than deconstructing the artifact that the artist has left behind in the gallery.

SUBJECT TO HUGE ACTIVITY: Dan Brock
Palace Gallery, Brisbane
7 – 9 August, 2003

Donna McColm

Painting might not be dead

The title of the recent solo exhibition by Dan Brock is founded in the work of the French artist Pierre Huyghe, who states that "everything you look at, any object whatsoever, or image, has been thought about, selected and been subject to huge activity."[1] Huyghe seeks to inspire narratives through his billboard photographs and films, drawing attention to the spaces between the original source and its representation. Huyghe has previously installed his large-scale photographs (of buildings for example) outside of the actual construction, in an effort to remove the shroud of belief often created through representational work. Brock's exhibition *Subject to huge activity* also focuses on 'representation', although through the methods of painting and drawing – both of which have moved in and out of fashion since the 1960s.

Earlier this year Thierry de Duve, a French theorist who has been at the centre of the debate for some time, wrote: "It is both amusing and pathetic that about once every five years the death of painting is announced, invariably followed by the news of its resurrection".[2] The implications of de Duve's candid statement are far from negative, and may signal the many reasons that we come to expect (and anticipate) declarations of death and rebirth when considering contemporary painting. In the 1980s, some art criticism argued whether contemporary painting succeeded or not, and more particularly whether it could actually exist at all in light of the so-called death of Modernism (which, ironically, was responsible for some of the most well-respected painters still being discussed today). Of the several important essays that emerged during this period, Yve Alain-Bois' 'Painting: The task of mourning' stands out as an exceptional glance at painting's mortality. Amongst much mourning for the death of Modernism (as well as triumphant declarations as to the glory of post-modernism), Bois suggested that painting might not be dead, and perhaps this proved more difficult for artists and theorists than the end of painting itself.[3] The same is true of drawing, which has seemed to be 'out-of-date' since the 1960s and '70s where it was used mainly in the realisation of installation and performance-based practices.

Dan Brock
Via City (2003)
Courtesy of the artist

As with numerous contemporary discussions that filter into our local scene in the work of emerging artists, we can ponder the many facets of 'painting' and its ongoing speculation through Dan Brock's approach. Brock's drawings and paintings are also connected to recent revivals in 'traditional' sources and working with narrative. His painted subjects and scenes – all drawn from the direct sources of his friends and surroundings – emit a closeness that remains strong in the finished work. This is often aided by the artist's use of photography and projection in the process of painting. Brock is interested in the possibility for dialogues between these media, which is also drawn out in the ephemerality of mural painting as another device to retain the closeness and immediacy of photography, as well as to address the inherent 'staging' of photographic devices. Within the exhibition, for example, the painting 'Michelle & Clay' (2003) appears also in the guises of a small-scaled drawing and a pencil wall mural, multiplying our possible responses to Brock's treatment of his subjects. With such actions, comparable to witnessing the process of snapshot photography or portrait painting, we become conscious of the transformation from subject to image.

Dan Brock
Damien (2003)
Courtesy of the artist

Others such as American artist Elizabeth Peyton use a combination of photography and drawing to capture the immediate beauty of friends in ordinary situations. The results hover in an interesting space between image and representation. Perhaps this is a result of the inherent closeness that photography and drawing retain, or the capacity of an artist to illustrate the fine line between randomness and accuracy in their images. It is possibly also in large due to the complex crossovers in contemporary art that has become apparent over the last decade.

Intimate poster-style portraits, slashed with broad and dripping strokes signify the figures and backgrounds of many of Brock's works, while delicate pencil-drawn elements slyly contrast the boldness and 'random' nature of the broader strokes. Both elements demonstrate the intrigue of the subjective. In a different group of works, contour figure portraits outlined in chalk on painted Masonite are titled with the names of the subjects – people that viewers may or may not know. On one level the figures themselves supersede the need to be recognised, as we also experience with Peyton's work – the medium and process re-creates not only a subject, but also a familiarity on paper. We are held in a relationship with the subjects of these images, probably little realising that the artist has controlled the amount of information presented to us. The same is true of the fractured painting 'Face with cherry blossoms and wallpaper' (2003) – part wall painting, work on canvas, and sculpture – that is segmented into four components. It crosses between painting and drawing with delicate outlines giving way to drips of black pigment that are lured along the canvas length.

Contemporary art that has its foundations in 'traditional' media was part of the focus of the exhibition 'Drawing now: Eight propositions', presented at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, in 2002-03. Here curator Laura Hoptman attempted to trace a new lineage for contemporary drawing to surpass drawing's own recent history as an adjunct to conceptual practices from the 1960s and '70s. Hoptman signalled Peyton's work as an illustration of contemporary art that also refutes many debates in painting criticism of the 1980s, and figures sentimentality or narrative in a positive light. 'Subject matter' made a come-back with Peyton's work, and in a local context this approach may be fitting with Brock's position and his depiction of the pop culture that befriends and provides a haven for many people.

1. Pierre Huyghe (2001), quoted in Art Now, ed. Burkhard Riemschneider and Uta Grosenick [Germany: Taschen] p.80.
2. Thierry de Duve (2003), in 'The Mourning After', *Artforum*, (40th Anniversary Special Issue, 'The 1980s': Part One, vol. XLI, no. 7, March 2003) p.211.
3.Yve-Alain Bois (1986), 'Painting: The Task of Mourning' in Painting as Model [Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990] p.243.

Dan Brock
Michelle & Clay (2003)
Courtesy of the artist

Christina Waterson
Rest (2002)
Monofilament and panduit
stainless steel cable ties
Dimensions variable
Courtesy of the artist

RED OCHRE ME: Fiona Foley
QCA Gallery, Brisbane
1 August – 14 September, 2003

Shaun Weston

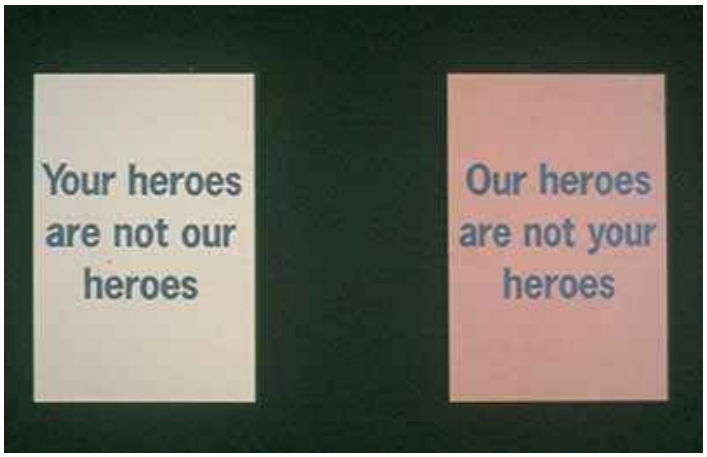
“Poor Bugger me" is a rather apt, somewhat poetic description of Fiona Foley's latest exhibition, *Red Ochre Me* at the QCA Gallery, that is, according to the minister for the Arts, the honourable Matt Foley, who officially opened the exhibition.

The title *Red Ochre Me* seems to place Fiona Foley as subject, perhaps indicating that it is an exhibition about the artist's personal experiences rather than what is a counter-narrative to past and recent histories concerning aboriginal Australians. It is the result of her ongoing investigation into her family history, race relations and the sexual politics of colonial and contemporary Australian frontiers.

The power behind the work is its ability to make the viewer question and to seek further information of what is indicated by the work. It is therefore appropriate that the exhibition makes use of accessible didactic panels and is accompanied by an excellent essay by Associate Professor Anna Haebich, which not only contextualises the works but facilitates an important educational role.

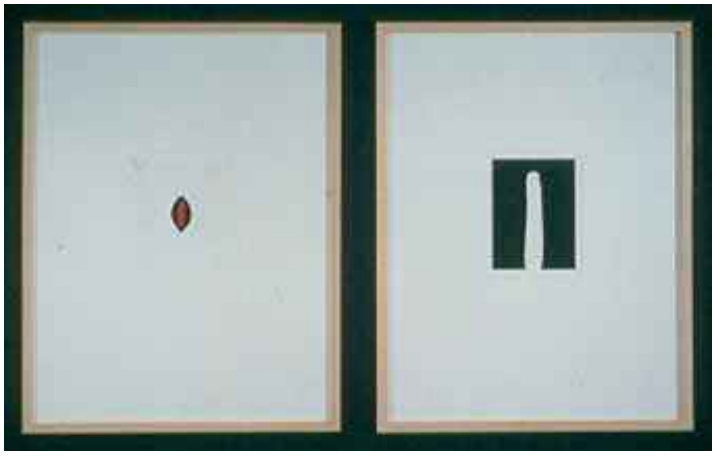
Two paintings, to the immediate left as you enter the gallery and also the last works you see as you leave, provide an excellent point of entry to the exhibition. These text works reading "Your heroes are not our heroes" and "Our heroes are not your heroes" are clearly addressed to a non-indigenous audience.

Foley asserts a history of Indigenous heroes remembered for their role in resistance toward colonising forces and in the protection and maintenance of cultural heritage. Official Australian history, supposedly based on objective truth, paints a different picture. *Untitled (Heroes)* takes on further meaning, given that Indigenous heroes remain ‘untitled’, or un-named in our history. The work asks us to be subjective (a position not dissimilar to our non-indigenous documenters of history), to question who our heroes are, yet we realise that our hero-types have been constructed for us, largely through our exclusive media and education.



Fiona Foley
Untitled (Heroes) 2003
Each acrylic on canvas
Courtesy of the artist and QCA Gallery

The erotification, objectification and sexual violence suffered by Aboriginal women are recurring concepts in Foley’s work. We see the use of the familiar red and black elliptical vagina motif incorporated with other sexually potent imagery, but what is most astounding about *Red Ochre Me* is how succinctly works which reference violations that occurred in late 19th and early 20th century read into works which explore the bizarre desire of New Age white men who mask their own personal inadequacies by exploiting and appropriating different cultural traditions and beliefs to suit themselves.



Fiona Foley
Fuck me Harder (2003)
Installation view
Courtesy of the artist and QCA Gallery

Fuck me Harder and *Anal Tantric Sex* are very similar through their professionally framed presentation and their uses of repetition to contrast a single image, but they represent two very different issues. Of the 25 drawings which make up *Fuck me Harder,* 24 identical drawings of the vagina motif are interrupted by a contrasting drawing: the silhouette of a white penis on a black background. Similarly, a photograph of a single erect penis breaks the repetition of 24 sexually suggestive photographs of a white male’s naked buttocks. Whilst the sexual violation of indigenous women by white men is obviously the focus of *Fuck me Harder*, *Anal Tantric Sex*, which gives rise to the alternative title "Poor Bugger Me", is a much more curious work in that its context is not immediately apparent. Upon further investigation it is revealed that this work is a witty take on New Age white men whom shamelessly appropriate Aboriginal spirituality. What’s more, it seems to expose their sexual motivations.

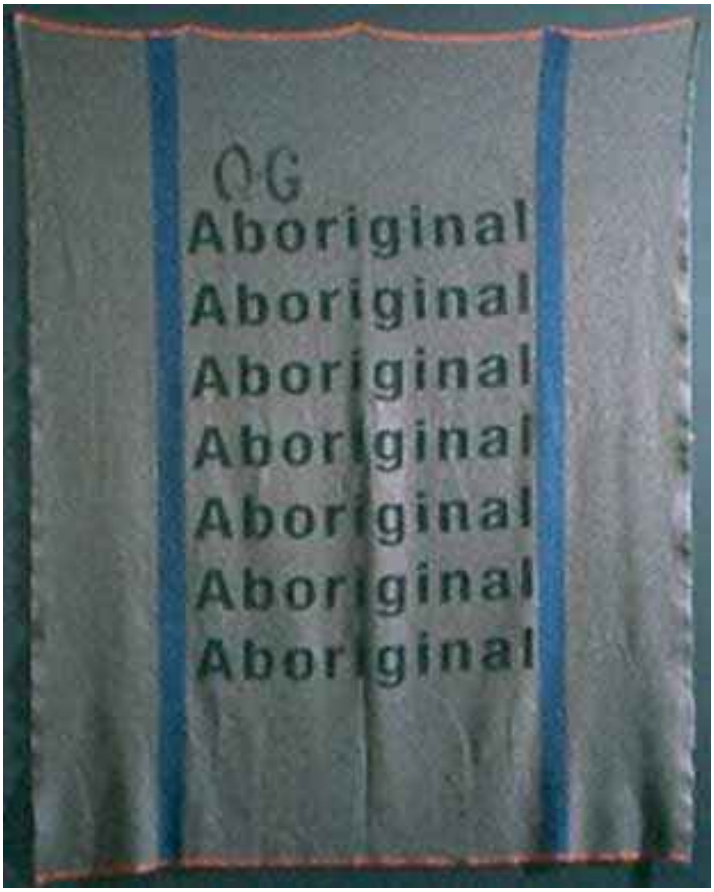
Anal Tantric Sex and another work entitled *Sacred Cunt Juice* were inspired by an article published in last year’s Sydney Morning Herald entitled *Once Were Emus*[1]. The article, a copy of which is available from the gallery, tells of journalist Jon Van Tiggen’s experience on a 10-day course in Advanced Shamanic training in the Pitjnantajatara lands. The article has to be read to be believed. Not only does it provide accounts of white men being initiated into the Wanampi Dreaming of Uluru but we also learn that the head ‘Shaman’, who ‘rooted’ his way into the new age, also led courses on ‘the joys of tantric anal sex’.

The article tells us how these Shamanic tourists apparently disturbed a sacred women’s site and in *Sacred Cunt Juice* the title and vinyl text on the wall directly quote this. Foley appropriates ‘sacred cunt juice’ (water stolen from the sacred site) with thirty small bottles of red ochre. We learn

Fiona Foley
Anal Tantric Sex (2003) (details)
Photographic prints
Courtesy of the artist and QCA Gallery

from Haebich's essay that "the presence of red ochre suggests the celebration of spiritual life through ancient ceremonies and rituals invoking the dreaming ancestors and asserting the power of Aboriginal women's sexuality"[2]. Cleverly, Foley provides her indigenous perspective to counter the commodification and exploitation of indigenous culture.

'Black Velvet' and 'Stud Gins' were names colonists used to refer to Aboriginal women as their "coveted sexual spoils of conquest"[3]. In the work aptly titled *Stud Gins*, seven government-issue blankets refer to not only to the treatment of women on the physical frontier, but also within church missions – which were supposed refuges.



Fiona Foley
Stud Gins (2003) (detail)
Courtesy of the artist and QCA Gallery

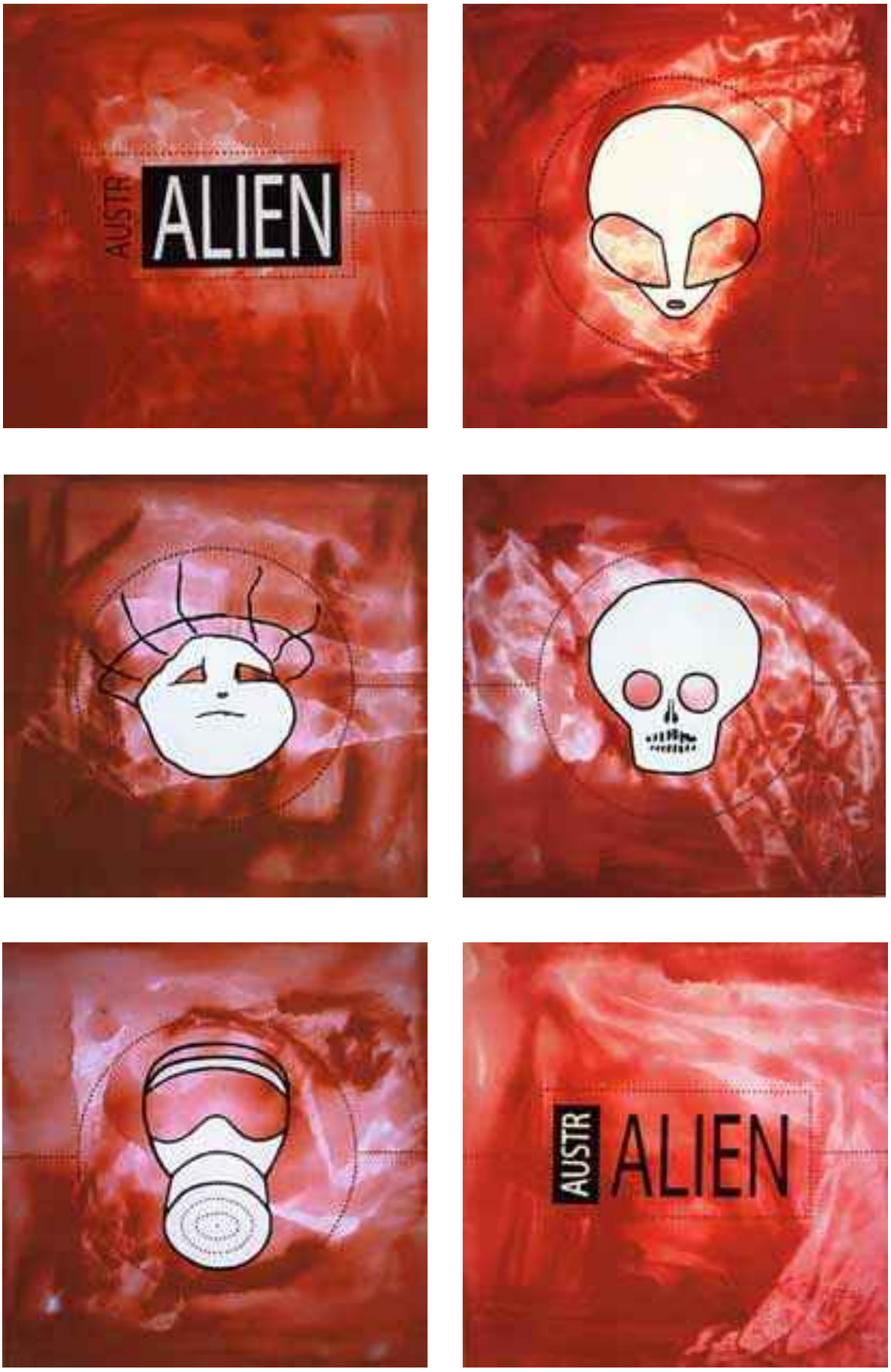
It would seem that Foley was uncompromising in sourcing these materials, the authenticity of the letters Q.G emblemised on one of the blankets, assigns ownership to the Queensland Government. Furthermore, the text printed onto each blanket adopts further authenticity due to its origin. The text has been taken from *A Terribly Wild Man*, Christine Halse's biography of Ernest Gribble, a significant missionary in Australia's history. In this book we are told how his father JB Gribble documented the treatment of Aboriginal women. "**Aboriginal women** were treated like property - **defiled, ravished, shared and discarded**" [4]

A complex and controversial figure, Reverend Ernest Gribble, the legacy of his family's missions partly reflected in these blankets, is remembered for his campaign for an investigation into a police massacre of Aboriginals in the 1920s, which lead to a Royal Commission of Inquiry. This provides yet a further point of reference as we shift our gaze to the works on the floor, which lay bare the most chilling occurrences in Australia's chequered history: the massacres. *Massacre* and *Bone Boxes* signify the burnt remains of countless aboriginals who suffered under unrelenting colonialism. The truths of which, despite the evidence, continue to be denied in a history we are yet to officially own.

Fiona Foley
Installation view of *Red Ochre Me* (2003)
Courtesy of the artist and QCA Gallery

Foley successfully marries multiple points of reference about Australia's colonial past with our contemporary present in this series of works that read off each other to effectively create one large installation within the black walls of the gallery. The works shock us but not in a loud antagonistic kind of way as one might think given the presence of nudity and coarse language. They shock us because they expose the truth, truths that are largely untold or denied. Truths that most of us weren't taught about at school, weren't told by our parents and for many of us, truths we may only come to realise after encountering Foley's work.

1. Van Tiggelen, J. 2002, 'Once Were Emus' Good Weekend Magazine, Sydney Morning Herlald, 9/2/2002, pp. 14 –18
2. See: Haebich, A. 2003, *Spiritual Copyright and Sex* in essay accompanying the exhibition, p. 6
3. Halse, C. 2002, *A Terribly Wild Man*, Crows Nest NSW: Allen & Unwin, p..26
4. Ibid, p. 12



Tony Albert
Alien 1 - 6 (2003)
Acrylic on canvas
61cm x 61cm each
Courtesy of the artist

TELSTRA NATIONAL ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER ART AWARD 2003
1st Prize: Richard Bell
Transcript of Acceptance Speech
Courtesy of Bellas Gallery
Transcribed by Jenny Fraser

Richard Bell

This is where I pretend I can read…
And I'll put the glasses on – it helps with the image thing

Anyway I'd like to acknowledge the traditional owners of where we're standing, sitting tonight.

I'm very proud, very honoured to win this prize.

You know, I didn't think I could actually win with a painting that sort of was criticizing an institution, a part of an industry that I was challenging with my work.

It's very good to be back here in Darwin again… I did 6 years at Rhoda Dixon Home, just down the road here. I came here in 1959, landed in Darwin here; we got into one of those big hangars. It was a horrible experience actually; there were all these young children… Not Stolen, none of them were Stolen, I've been told.

I'd like to thank the Museum and Art Gallery for putting this on.

I'd like to thank Margie West, Angela and I'd like to thank Ziggy. Telstra, thanks for the money.

I'd like to thank Peter Bellas for his support.

I'd like to thank Sissy and Brenda and the rest of my family.

If I forgot to thank anybody, don't worry I still love you and catch you up later.

If anybody was out there [booing ?] me, I've got friends, I'll find out where you live… we'll just talk.

Well this is really… it was a surprise to me. I got cold feet a couple of times and I was encouraged by my daughter, to keep going, to put it in… She thought it was a great picture. I got cold feet, I do believe it was the last painting to arrive here, I was that unsure of it.

I really need to mention something, about this prize. I want to speak on behalf of the Urban Artists from down south. We thought for many years that this was just a thing for the Northern Territory Artists and well, it's been dominated by Northern Territory Artists. You have many, many great artists, as we do down south.

We share lots of dreamings that run all the way down to the bottom of the country, even down to Tasmania I do believe… Is that part of Australia? Or is it the third island of New Zealand?

I've got to talk about when I was here in the 60's. There was a race problem and there was coloured people and then there was black people. The Full-Bloods were the Blacks and us Mixed-Bloods, we were the Coloured People, sometimes called Yella Fellas, that sort of thing… and us Yella Fellas were favoured over the Tribal People back in those days. But since the late 60's, early 70's there was a change in the momentum.

The Political Activism took on a more militant role.

That attitude – the sentiment about us Yella Fellas, the Mixed-Bloods: we were looked upon more favourably because we were like them, but that changed with the advent of Militism in the late 60's, early 70's, which culminated in the Tent Embassy in Canberra. Which was a pretty dramatic and emphatic statement by Aboriginal People with regard to Sovereignty: to create an embassy, an Aboriginal Embassy and a tent at that, spoke volumes, it was a great thing for our people and it was a rally and call for Aboriginal people all over the country.

I was affected by that and so were many Australians. The Australian people changed their view about who they favoured. Now its we, us who are.

I'd just like to characterize this by saying, how many times have you heard this saying? "I don't mind the full bloods, they're alright, but I can't stand those ones from down south, some of them are not even black you know, they're just trouble-makers and shit-stirrers".

My painting here addresses this problem, among other paintings, and I am my paintings, they are my soul, you know.

You see me, you see my paintings, there is no difference.

They're big, they're loud, they're bold, they're brash, but I passionately believe in what I talk about.

I'm here and I'm really proud to acknowledge it… and I've got to end this soon cause I'm bustin' for a piss!

And all I've got to say is – lets get rid of this issue, this issue of this separation, that's been put in between us people from the South and people from the North – we need to get together, we have to get together, to fight together for our Rights.

Thankyou.

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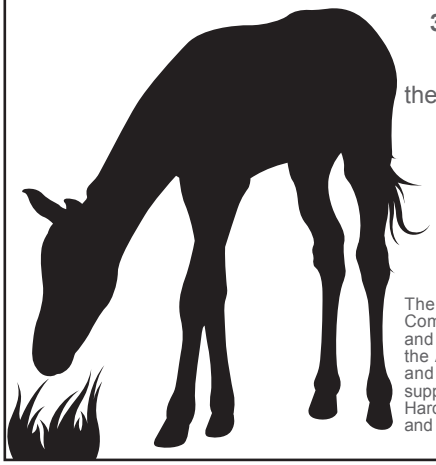
Also Open 11am-4pm Sat 30th August

Daniel Templeman
Invitation
6-8pm Fri 5th September
Continues to 27th September

David Spooner
Formiciverous
6-8pm Fri 3rd October
Also Open 11am-4pm Sat 4th October



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Christine Morrow
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LOCAL LISTINGS

Blackpeppers Gallery (40B Charlotte St, Brisbane)
5 Sept (6-9pm) Mayrah Dreise & Archie Moore

Bellas Gallery (49 James St, Fortitude Valley)
3-20 Sept *Grafts and Cluster* Sandra Selig (Opening 6pm 3 Sept)

EA (Emerging Artists) (Lv 2 381 Brunswick St)
16 Sept (5:30pm) *Why did you put that there? Artists and curators*

The Farm (358 George St)
29 - 30 Aug *MATS: good practice for going around the horseshoe* Wilkins Hill (Opening 6pm 29 Aug)
5-27 Sept *Invitation* Daniel Templeman (Opening 6pm 5 Sept)
3-4 Oct *Formiciverous* David Spooner (Opening 6pm 3 Oct)

Institute of Modern Art (Judith Wright Center, Brunswick St, Fortitude Valley)
4 Sept - 11 Oct *Readymade* Lisa Reihana, Beata Batorowicz and Greg Leong, curated by Ruth McDougall (opening 4 Sept 5:30pm)

Museum of Brisbane (City Hall, King George Square)
25 Oct Opening

Palace Gallery (Merivale St)
3 Sept (6-8pm) Curated by David Spooner

Queensland Art Gallery (South Brisbane)
-2 Nov Jo Laboo (Starter Space)

QUT Art Museum (Gardens Point Campus)
-7 Sep *Architects of Glamour + Masters of Style: Excerpts from a Century of Fashion Photography*

Studio 11 (Lv 3 Metro Arts, 109 Edward St)
17 Sept (6-8pm) selected works by Chris Bond, Christopher Dean and Christine Morrow, curated by Jane O'Neill
15 Oct (6-8pm) *Man Made* Curated by Sally Brand

Local Art is a series of free print and online publications with the intention of generating decisive responses to the "emerging art" scene in Brisbane. *Local Art*'s content focuses on the work of local emerging artists, writers and art-workers. With this said, the publication does not take these premises as limitations, rather it endeavours to explore contiguous fields as a means of contextualising local contemporary practices and discourses.

Local Art is currently calling for expressions of interest and content submissions. As this is the last issue of *Local Art* covered by the generous funding through Arts Queensland, it is unlikely that *Local Art* will be able to pay contributors in the future. Content can range from exhibition reviews to artist's writings, artist pages, interviews and critical essays.

The next content deadline is September 26th.

If you would like more information about *Local Art* or are interested in contributing, please contact The Farm or any of the *Local Art* editors: Sally Brand, Natalya Hughes, Grant Stevens and Dirk Yates (thefarm@thefarmspace.com, sallybrand@hotmail.com natalyaks@hotmail.com, grant@thefarmspace.com, dirk@thefarmspace.com).

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For the online version of *Local Art* visit www.thefarmspace.com and follow the links from the main menu.

The views expressed in *Local Art* are not necessarily shared by its editors.

Local Art would like to sincerely thank Angela Goddard who has graciously and efficiently fulfilled an editorial role in the absence of Sally Brand for part of this issue.

Local Art is produced by

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LOCAL ART

LOCAL ART - ISSUE 7 OCTOBER 2003

1962: SELECTED WORKS 1983 – 1992

Scott Redford

University Art Museum, University of Queensland, St Lucia

3 October – 22 November 2003

No art-historical heaven?

(Excerpt from Exhibition Catalogue)

Andrew McNamara talks to Scott Redford

Andrew: When did you first make the black works?

Scott: The first black painting proper is *Fear of Text*, 1983.[1] Its title comes from Imants Tillers's essay, "Fear of Texture," which I suspect is derived from the title of the Talking Heads album *Fear of Music*—maybe not. I had been making ironic little takes on Neo-Ex painting: like toy bulldozers moving around big piles of thick oil paint on child's writing slates. Things like that as a way out of what had become very quickly a too easy and not very interesting art style (everyone's paintings were brushy, messy and had a barking dog in them back then).

So I made this textured oil painting with objects embedded in it, like a Jim Dine, and one day I spray-painted it black (with a white drip) and I liked it, so did other people, which encouraged me to do more. I had used gloss black paint in some high school artworks and basically continued on from there.

Andrew: Why "black"?

Scott: It felt right and it was easy and pleasurable for me. It also allowed me to hide things in the works. I could also hide behind the art-historical surety the works possessed. Remember I was still a boy from the Gold Coast at this stage, which was not a desirable thing to be back then.[2]

Andrew: What were the original objects used in these works? And can you say something about what they suggest? Take the axes, for example; they contain the reference to music and guitar playing, but they also give the works a tinge of menace and violence.

Scott: I would use things I found around, things I bought. I used to think I couldn't use certain objects; that I needed to be an author and choose the objects. But then in 1988, I was asked to do a cover for *Eyeline* magazine with a black painting containing a Barbie doll. I felt this was too camp, so I asked the designer, Malcolm Enright, to copy my work and make a piece as a "design" for the cover. He did the cover, but never mentioned our arrangement. People assumed I had made the cover, which was a shame, as I liked the idea of my work being able to become design so quickly. Very Warhol I thought. Still, after that I realized I could use any objects. It didn't matter to the end result.

Axes I like because they have a nice shape—more anthropomorphic than other tools. I actually like their menace. Also I liked Punk Rock a lot growing up. *Vandalism: Beautiful As A Rock In A Cop's Face,* etc. Remember this was Joh Bjelke-Petersen era Queensland. Brisbane was not a nice place. Corruption in high places was rife and the whole environment was very coercive. You'd get pulled over just for driving after midnight. You could shoot a gun in central Brisbane

Photograph by Scott Redford
Courtesy of the artist and Bellas Gallery

after midday on Saturday and not hit anyone it was so dead. The black paintings were meant to signal some of this feeling, although the black books were meant to signal the Nazi book burning. Our anger at Joh was that he was making us the brunt of Southern jokes. We were also angry at the obliteration of Queensland's cultural heritage and the demolishing of historic buildings in the dead of night or Sunday morning. Homosexuals, aborigines, hippies, punks, etc., were all being picked on for being "different." Cops were eyeballing you (and worse) for going to a concert. These things should not be forgotten.

Hugh MacKay said at the time, "Queensland has a vested interest in the obliteration of history." [3] The black paintings reflected this mood, though indirectly.

Andrew: The black works are intriguing in that they seem to amount to an evacuation of content, yet simultaneously contain so many references.

Scott: Yes. All and nothing. Very "Surfers Paradise," as a few people commented at the time. I suppose they are a kind of language that still needs a level of decoding, similar again to local knowledge of a place versus "tourist" knowledge. I think this is why audiences like them.

People have always wanted to ascribe meaning to the objects in the black paintings. Meaning gives people a key to "solving" a work of art. Making the work less threatening. I always refused an ultimate meaning to the works: preferring instead to defer meaning. This I think was much of the ultimate success of the black works. They became "all or nothing," strange "blank slates," more blank than minimal paintings really because they render all "content" blank. Quite scary in a way.

Andrew: You seem to suggest that the black works are definitive 1980s' works. How then would you explain the white works, which contain both direct citations of styles and works as well as other, often non-formal evocations?

Scott: Yes, the black works are definitive 1980s' works that I continued to make into the early 1990s. Their basic form and content was fairly fully developed around 1987. The later black works were refinements.

The other, often white, works are similar to the black ones (up to a point) in that they both combine opposing "forces," I

suppose. The black works won out by sheer weight of "fullness," of gloss and content. As with my equation works, the white works were too close to their original referents to garner any broader audience; perhaps they were too willing to retain their high art status. Also, by then, I was moving very fast through late 1960s' art styles and only made one or two works on the way. I didn't let people digest what I was doing, probably because I wasn't exactly sure what I was doing.

The works that stand against the trend are the *After Adam McCaull* tracings. But here the overt sentiment is, as Michele Helmrich pointed out, so opposite to the black works that both benefit.[4]

Andrew: You have said you gained a lot from Imants Tillers and John Nixon? Can you explain what you gained from each? What from Tillers was important? What from Nixon?

Scott: I liked Tillers the best as he was able to articulate in a lucid manner the feeling of helplessness a lot of Australian artists were feeling when it was still believed that to make good work was to make work that could mesh or aspire to mesh with mainstream international art. From Nixon I got the very "objectness" of my black works. Then he went on to become a full-on patriarchal art star and with Mike Parr spawned the academy of the 1980s, but that's the boring end of Australian art.

I actually once asked Imants to give me a painted canvas board to paint black and he gave me one. It was painted at a Redford-Webb performance at ACCA in Melbourne in 1988. But I'd like to put in a word here for other artists as well who had an impact on me: Tony Clark, Janet Burchill, Juan Davila, Linda Marrinon, Dick Watkins and others. Influences change as the work develops; for me, for instance, Nixon became someone not to be like.

Andrew: What about Nixon's time at the IMA? Did it have any particular significance for you as a then young, emerging artist?

Scott Redford
Fear of Text (1983)
Enamel over oil and objects on board, 60.5 x 46 cm
Photograph: Richard Stringer
Courtesy of the artist and Bellas Gallery

Scott: No, not really for me. I was too young (18) and didn't understand what was going on: although his final, solo show there was great. This one painting was hung as you go up the stairs, so you had to enter the room and turn to leave to view the only work in the show. A small painting in browns of dollar signs with a cross, made out of cut up bits of those amateur canvas boards, that their gang were using at the time, glued on top.

The really influential Director of the IMA for me, of course, was Peter Cripps. Nixon had run a great program, but had felt that four people at an opening was just fine and avant-garde, etc. Peter knowingly took it to the then (and now) complacent small town Brisbane art scene and really stirred the pot. They all miss it now of course.

Andrew: Your public pronouncements have struck this ambivalence about the idea of being an "artist" (since the beginning, as far as I can tell!). Can you explain this? You oscillate between art being the thing you love to art being futile and nonsensical.

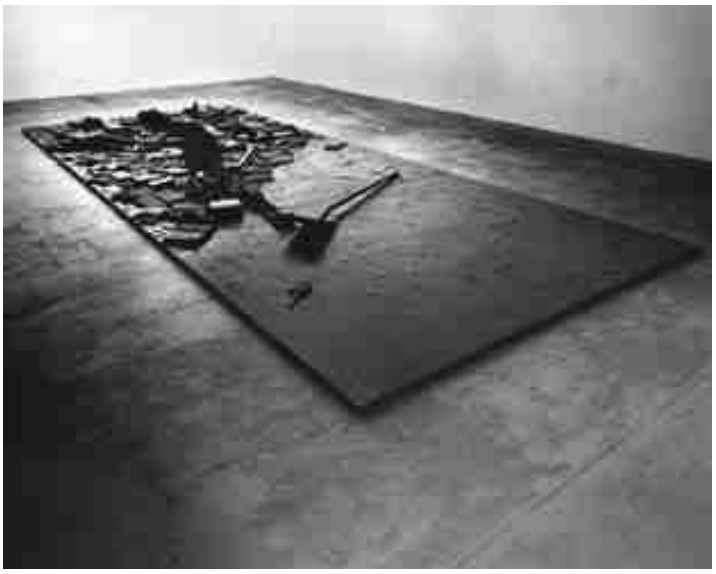
Scott: Well, yeah...I suppose so...yeah, OK…sure, if you think so…as Andy Warhol would say. But if you think about how I became involved in contemporary art and the prejudice I had to put up with you'd understand my ambivalence. As a Gold Coast artist I was even marginal in Brisbane. I had people take me aside and tell me about proper left wing politics as if I were a dumb redneck, right-winger because of where I came from. After I had my first one-person show at the IMA, I was derided as the "latest young male genius" by someone else trying to score feminist brownie points in a public forum. It got worse when I got to Melbourne.

This kind of reception continues up till recently. A New Zealand curator came to look at my work. He mentioned that he had seen the large black painting, *Anti–Matter,* 1991, in a show in Auckland and immediately thought of John Miller. Miller was an American artist making assemblage works of common objects, but covered partially in brown (as if covered in shit). The inference was that I must have copied him from art magazines. That I actually had been making these works for some time (before Miller I think) never entered his head. Why stop there? I could have extended the list for him: John Latham, Arman, Nikki de Saint-Phalle, Daniel Spoerri, et. al. Knowledge is one thing, but the antipodean critical reflex determines my place will always be at the end of the food chain—no matter what the actual chronology says.

As I say, if I had listened to all these people, I would never have been an artist. If you don't come with the right pedigree, forget it. It's worse in Europe or the U.S.

Andrew: You're being a little disingenuous here. You remember all these personal slights, but you are also an established, well-regarded artist now, not some unknown fellow from the provinces. And yet, you still maintain this ambivalence, which you can't shrug off with a Warholian aside. I'm not making it up. For instance, you tell Peter Cripps in 1986 that the two things you love are "popular culture and art culture," but you next say that "high culture" has lost its validity. Recently (in 2002) you told Astrid Mania in Berlin that art is in deep trouble and that you'd wished you had spent more time in film, advertising or fashion.[5]
So it's not a long, distant issue, not an issue of personal slights, but a consistent thread running throughout your career, perhaps even central to it.

Scott: Well, it is those many slights (which are far from slight to me) that created my attitude toward the art world. You can't now say that now I have overcome some of these obstacles by becoming relatively successful that they are now of little importance.



Scott Redford
LOVE + PRIDE (1986)
Enamel over acrylic and objects on 9 x household doors
246 x 612 cm
Installation at the IMA
Photograph: Richard Stringer
Courtesy of the artist and Bellas Gallery

Of course, I am not backward in coming forward in discussing these things. I suppose this is my (naive?) way of overcoming them. I could go further on these "slights," which can actually be very serious. I don't accept that all this is just scuttlebutt or gossip and that is secondary to the "real art." This is what makes and breaks art and I'm damned if these people are going to get away with it. I'm not going peacefully to art history heaven!

Andrew: Coming back to what you just said about the errant nature of the black works, I recall seeing the black works at Mori Gallery when it was located at Leichhardt, Sydney. That must have been 1991 and there were about one hundred of them. They were small, but compact. You mention the black works as a way of dealing with how quickly Neo-Expressionism became hackneyed and redundant, so you played with the idea of moving thick wads of paint around with toy tractors, which renders its heavy existential gesture into a playful gimmick. But I responded to them because I felt they undercut what had become very tired in endless postmodern pastiche, rather than dealing with the dead end of Neo-Expressionism (which by that time had well and truly played itself out). With the black paintings project you seemed to have found a way *not* simply to forget all this, but to emphasize your engagement with the modernist legacy while simultaneously retaining your connection to key features of this 1980s practice: the quotations from both art and popular culture sources. The black works contain what seems like an overwhelming proliferation of sources, while accentuating a minimalist look, the monochromatic black, yet with tangible evocations of texture as well as volume.
Rather than saying, here's postmodernism, goodbye modernism, these works stress what has become most viable in contemporary practice: the effort to engage with the culture around us while seeking out what remains most productive in the modernist legacy.
Maybe I respond in a completely different way to you?

Scott: When making work, one always trusts intuition over design. Funny how this all goes; I'll give an example. One of those Sydney writer guys who hung round with John MacDonald did a review of Nicholas Baume's exhibition, *Strange Harmony of Contrasts*, the 1990 group show I mentioned before. Of course, only Rosalie Gascoigne was a proper artist to him. But I had one piece with fourteen plywood boxes with the handprints of the people and artists involved with the show. This dude went on, "Why fourteen!," as if I had no idea or reason why I made it. In a way I didn't; fourteen just felt right. I wanted a lot of boxes and I wanted an even number to mirror the two handprints and I didn't want a dozen (too pat). So 14! Much later I read about the 5th century B.C. Greek sculptor, Polycleitus, who determined that the perfect body should be seven times the height of the head. No wonder fourteen felt right to me!

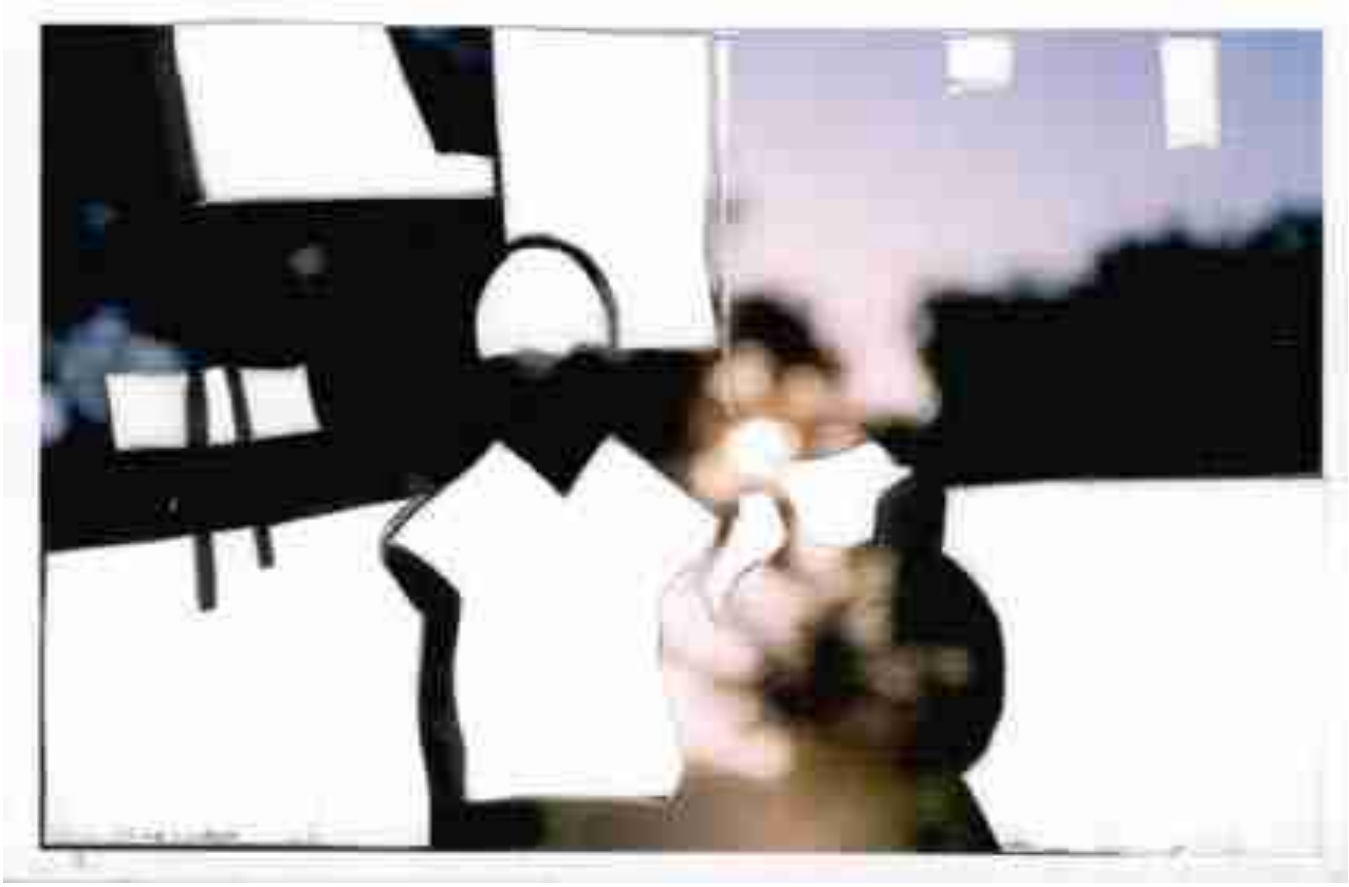
I feel I should explain this. I've long been fascinated by an inherent "classical" approach to scale and, spending a lot of time in hardware stores, I see how this still impacts upon standard lengths and sizes. These standards have been in place for centuries. It isn't due to the conservative nature of tradesmen, but to the fact that standard widths make everything easier for ordering, planning and building. It just WORKED BETTER that way. I really enjoyed these older tradesmen teaching me how things were done. I often incorporated their advice into my work. (I still do—why reinvent the wheel?) Later I was amazed to discover that everything made by humans accorded with human scale; everything was a reflection of this measure: doors, windows, the length of wood (measured in feet back then). Horses were measured in "hands," a yard (now the meter) is a basic wide stride by an average man, etc. Everything! It wasn't a matter of wanting to be classical; it was all just there and had been used for a very long time. And it was always better in the hardware stores than the art shops. The paint is always better straight from the can, the proportion of the plywood sheet better uncut. So then I started making a number of works based on the scale of my own body. A number of paintings based on my height and the length of my arms outstretched, or on the width of my shoulders. I took up this approach from Bruce Nauman and Barnett Newman, amongst others.

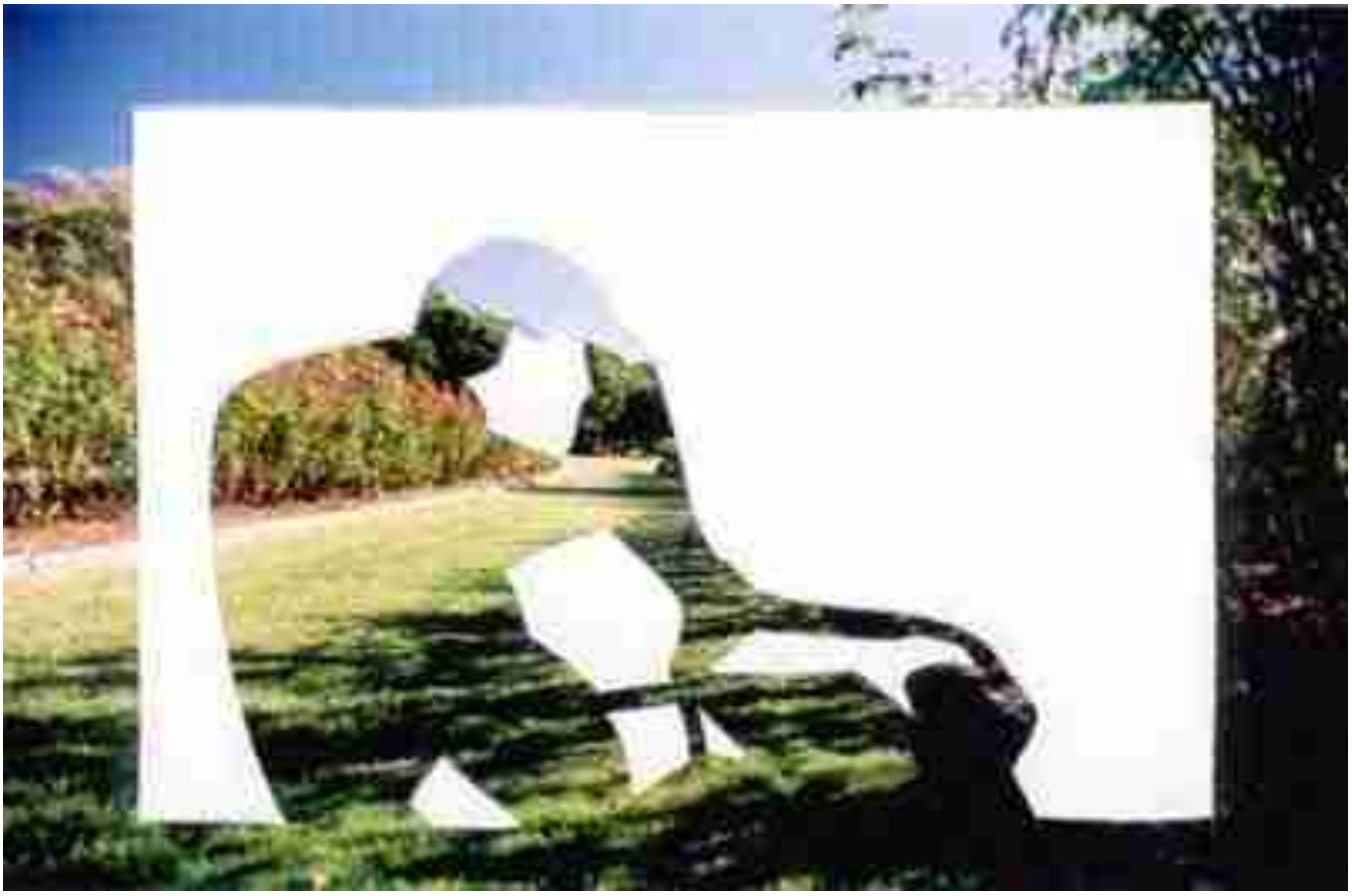
As to your post modernism/modernism take on the black paintings. I think what really happened was that I was (and still am) a tradition leaning artist. I didn't purposely make modernist influenced work to blur the, then quite strict, demarcation between the two "eras." I knew what I liked, what I felt and went from there. Only later did a lot of this come up. I knew I didn't want to make paintings with perspective lines and 50's graphic do-dads (clichéd po-mo). But you can also see that, at times, I am far too concerned with "composition" in the black paintings. Some of them are too fussy in the beginning. I was still a bit too young to take too many risks like dumping objects into thick paint and painting it black. I was actually trying my hardest to make proper good art.

Andrew: Well Scott, given your traditionalist aspirations, maybe there'll be an art-historical heaven for you after all!

The full-length interview will appear in the catalogue from Scott Redford's exhibition *1962: Selected Works 1983 – 1992* at the University of Queensland Museum of Art. Exhibition dates: October 3 - November 22.

1. *Fear of Text* and the next two black paintings, *Lyre* and *Dubuffet* (both 1984), were first exhibited in *Guttersnipers,* an exhibition of young Brisbane artists at Watters Gallery, Sydney in February 1985. The show was curated by Barbara Campbell and included work by Eugene Carchesio, Brian Doherty, Shane Kneipp, Scott Redford and Ted Riggs.
2. Interestingly, Redford has chosen an image of the late afternoon shadows falling on the beach at Surfers Paradise for the front and back covers of this publication. The shadows caused by the Gold Coast high-rises are still referred to as the ultimate example of the excesses of the famous tourist strip. Their darkness and long rectangular shape alludes to the colour and shape of Redford's black floorpieces.
3. Hugh Mackay is an Australian psychologist, social researcher and writer. For the past 22 years he has been publishing his social research findings in the quarterly series, "The Mackay Report."
4. Michele Helmrich, "Scott Redford: After drawings by my brother Adam McCaull," *Art & Text*, 39, May 1991.
5. The interview was printed in the brochure-poster accompanying the showing of Scott's porn video, *I Need More* (2002), at Künstlerhaus Bethanien, Berlin. An edited version of this interview was reproduced in *Broadsheet*, 32:1, (March-April, May 2003), 22-23.





Top left: Martin Smith *Donna and Richard outside Uncle Colin's place* (2003), Type C photomontage, 10x15cm
Bottom left: Martin Smith *Donna and I at Sacred Heart Convent* (2003), Type C photomontage, 10x15cm
Top right: Martin Smith *Donna's 15th birthday party with Dad* (2003), Type C photomontage, 10x15cm
Bottom right: Martin Smith *Donna waiting to go to St. Patrick's College semi-formal* (2003), Type C photomontage, 10x15cm
Taken from "you can give them a better life than I ever could", Canberra Contemporary Art Space, September 2003, all works donated to gallery patrons and printed with their consent.

Home & Away: Place and Identity in Recent Australian Art
Monash University Museum of Art Touring Exhibition
Customs House Art Gallery, University of Queensland
22 August – 12 October 2003

Sally Brand

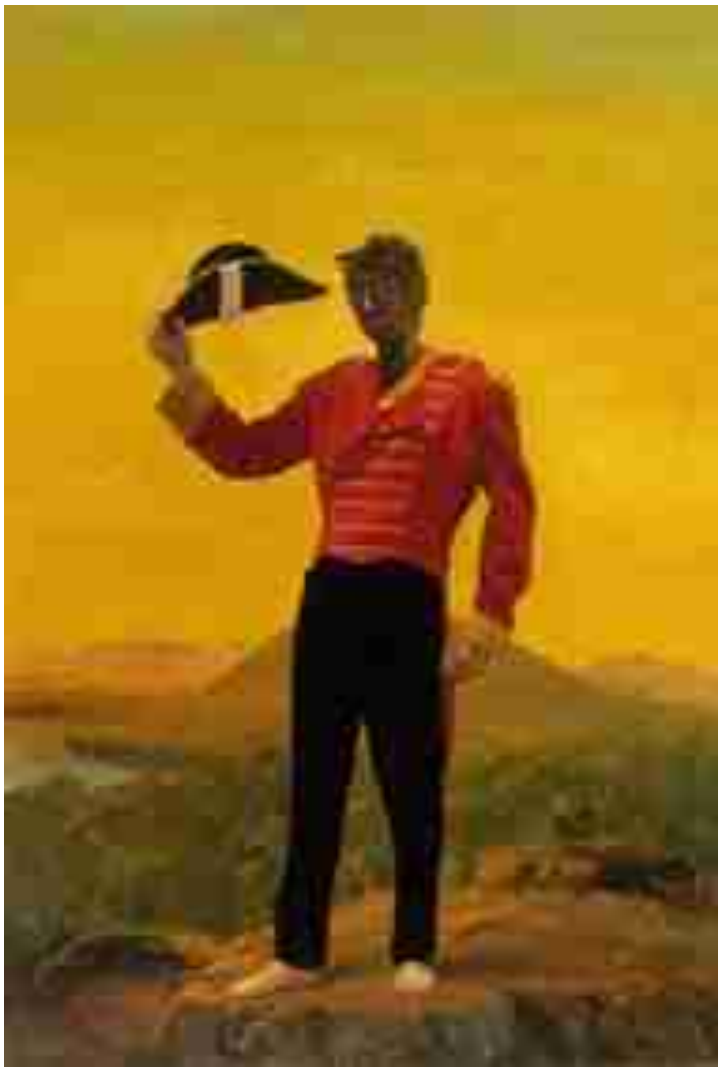
Generally, a curated exhibition frames a series of works in a particular way. As a consequence, there can be a tendency for curated exhibitions to burden works with predetermined understandings. In my opinion, the most interesting curated exhibitions, then, are those that strive to overcome such limiting qualities of a curatorial rationale and attempt to generate new and compounding ideas and understandings, both within individual works in relation to a curatorial premise as well as between the works grouped together within that context.

Similarly, the idea of national identity in Australia is consistently problematic. Throughout our history as a nation, arguments have been made in an attempt to identify and locate possible definitions of "Australianess". In the 1980s, the most prominent example in Australian art seemed to be the work of and discourses surrounding Imants Tillers' appropriation practice. Here, Australia's original contribution (which could then be seen as a nationally defining feature) was paradoxically argued as its complete unoriginality and its absolute borrowing of other cultures. Although this conception would appear inclusive and relatively open to continual expansion, in its particular application of postmodern paradigms, it rather began to close off a variety of alternative arguments relating to national identity. In this sense, like curatorial rationales, definitions of national identity can often be more limiting than liberating.

Home & Away: Place and Identity in Recent Australian Art[1] is the title of the Monash University Art Museum's traveling exhibition currently on show at Customs House. The exhibition brings together eighteen contemporary Australian artists from a variety of backgrounds. Its curatorial premise, as suggested by its title, is concerned with notions of Australian identity within recent art, and therefore immersed in both afore mentioned problems.

In *Home & Away*'s accompanying catalogue essay, it is suggested that the works included in the exhibition explore a broad range of histories, experiences and understandings relating to present day Australia[2]. Indeed a diverse range of artists are represented here. Entering the gallery, the first and most famous image from Tracey Moffatt's *Something more* (1989) series confronts the viewer. To the left, a large drawing and collage by Juan Davila titled *The Australian Republic* (1999) looms above, while Constanze Zikos' colourfully decorative gouache paintings of flags, regalia and insignias play across the wall. In another room, Christopher Langton's frighteningly large, blown up, PVC kangaroos share a space with Simryn Gill's photographic portraits of individuals wearing obscuring head masks manufactured from tropical fruits.

In connection to thinking about national identity, the artists included in *Home & Away* seem to represent many different cultures, backgrounds, and experiences, so as to present a multicultural image of Australia. Although this may seem to support wide-ranging ideas concerning national identity, rather the framing of the works through this curatorial premise encourages one to look predominantly, and perhaps superficially, at these defining notions of difference as endpoints rather than just one component of the works' possible readings.



Stephen Bush
No title (1989)
Oil on canvas
121.5 x 83.5cm
Courtesy of the University Art Museum

For example, the works by Christopher Langton and Louise Weaver included in *Home & Away* employ iconic imagery of a kangaroo and a rock wallaby respectively. As positioned by the exhibition's curatorial premise, these works have a tendency to fall into the conventionalized idea of Australian identity being inherently linked to the landscape and the native flora and fauna that inhabit it. This prioritized reading of the works overshadows the artists' individual explorations of the relationships between nature, more generally, and our often artificial experiences within everyday life. The use of native fauna then, perhaps functions in Langton and Weaver's works more as recognizable signs of nature (particularly for an Australian audience), rather than overtly nationalistic icons that stand in for national identity.

In a different way, the works of Diena Georgetti can also be seen as subsumed by this closed nationalizing impulse of *Home & Away*. Georgetti's intimately small-scale white on black paintings combine fragments of other cultures' iconography, such as the patterns of Vienese lace and traditional Japanese motifs, in order to reconstruct them into her own personal narratives. The logic of these narratives is not readily available to the viewer although they maybe familiar with the imagery. In this way, Georgetti's appropriation does not attempt to construct or present lucid cues that additively enable the formulation of any clear understanding of the artist's personal identity, including her relation to broader cultural contexts. This mode of working opposes itself to the "Australian art" model of appropriation posed by Tillers, that heavily informs the multicultural conception of national identity within this exhibition. In the context of *Home & Away* Georgetti's works are imposed with a sense that they do deliver a defined response to notions of place and identity in Australia. Thus, although in opposition to such a model, the works inevitably fall into such a reading informed by Tillers' model of appropriation.

Hopefully it is already clear that I do not intend to suggest that the works included in *Home & Away* are not interesting. On the contrary, it seems that the works here are somewhat misplaced. No doubt this is primarily because, though they might indeed reveal responses to current day Australia, notions of national identity (and this is even noted in the exhibition's catalogue essay[3]) are not necessarily governing factors in the production of some of the works included. Such that, what eventuates, is that from the very beginning the works in *Home & Away* are burdened with not only a limiting nationalistic framework, but also one that is also relatively unqualified or unintended.

As an exhibition about Australian art I find *Home & Away* quite disappointing. Even if local artists are not necessarily consciously informing their practices with concerns of national identity, it is possible that in this absence other interesting nationalistic descriptions might emerge. Therefore, the inherent problems of locating a national identity and conception of Australian art should not be misplaced or disregarded, nor pinned down to already exhausted and possibly irrelevant models. Rather, more work needs to be done to insure that in exploring such notions, future projects are able to maintain the nuances of individual artists and artworks, as well as expand this field of inquiry.

Louise Weaver
Rock Wallaby (2000)
Hand crocheted kid mohair, cotton thread,
lambswool & plastic over high-density foam taxidermist model
38 x 76 x 23 cm (irreg.)
Courtesy of the University Art Museum

1. Interestingly, there seems not the slightest hint of irony in the appropriation of the title from one of Australia's longest running television soaps.
2. Michael, Linda *Home & Away: Place and Identity in recent Australian Art*, ex. cat., Monash University Museum of Art: Melbourne, unpaginated.
3. Ibid.

Sasha Grbich
Tumbleweed (2003)
Materials - Text from Local Art (site specific)

PORTAL: Mellissa Bone, Patrick King, Cerae Mitchell, Rachael Parsons, Jacqui Vial, Vanessa Weekes and David Spooner
Curated by David Spooner
Palace Gallery, South Brisbane
September 3 – 8 2003

Amanda Cuyler

Portal [or the pollination of nasturtiums by hummingbirds]

> buried deep in the abyss of the cerebral unconscious exists a whole plain of existence which is continuously denied, a universe of unparalleled weirdness which shapes the entirety of the world outside.[1]

Under the guise of the annual Datum Curatorial Show, artist-curator David Spooner brought together seven emerging Brisbane artists to compose a 'portal' within the space of the Palace Gallery. *Portal* acted as an entry point for an exploration into both this world and others through an inspiring collaborative venture undertaken by Cerae Mitchell, Patrick King, Mellissa Bone, Rachael Parsons, Vanessa Weekes, Jacqui Vial and David Spooner.

Existing in the fluid territory between different disciplines and approaches, *Portal* took place in the in-between spaces created by the interplay of objects, video, image and sound. Three predominant points of exploration and key conceptual concerns arose from the exhibition:

- the active engagement between audience and artworks (*hummingbirds*)
- the notion of a wholly collaborative venture between artists and curator (*pollination*)
- the employment of sensorial pleasure and sensual perception as a key mechanism in the making of the works (*nasturtiums*)

Contrary to popular belief, hummingbirds do not hitch rides on geese or other larger birds. Hummingbird wing-beats are about 80 per second in forward flight and up to 200 per second in courtship. The heart rate for a hummingbird is about 1260 beats per minute. Hummingbirds are the smallest bird species found in the world. They can hover, fly backwards and at times upside-down.[2]

On entering the gallery's portal (a gate or doorway etc., especially an elaborate one), the audience was presented with curious continents made up of conglomerations of objects, images, sound and video. Through the entire space, these self-contained cosmoses spilled out across the floor, walls and ceiling. The exhibition became "a portal of shifting peepholes, wormholes, ant holes or the orifices of our world."[3]

Kate Bush yodeled from beneath a record needle, her rubber band voice bouncing around the gallery walls, as a paintbrush smeared with pink and green dandruff pigment stood at attention amongst formaldehyde filled flasks of chilies, snakes, and rubber gloves. A giraffe's head emerged from an incision in the lid of a cardboard box whilst a tugboat lay stranded in a bathtub of green jelly and saccharine icing.

Within *Portal* the audience was invited to travel through and explore an excessively proliferating zone of works. The artists hid and concealed elements like the grumbling 'glitch'-filled tummies that growled from the calico flamingos strung in a Siamese triplet sarabande from the ceiling. They also employed boxes, cases and cabinets to be opened and investigated, as in the camels that grazed over meadows of marbles littered with glowworm cocoons in a shoebox. By combining these

Detail from *Portal* (2003)
Various artists, various materials
Courtesy of the artists and Palace Gallery

tactics alongside the sheer number of elements employed, the artists actively encouraged the interplay between their pieces and viewers.

Indeed, the imperative to move and actively discover aspects of the works attributed *Portal* its air of marvel and mystery: "Wonder is bound to travel from one's own part of the world to another". [4]

Hummingbirds insert their long bills into nasturtium flower spurs to sip the nutritious nectar. When they do this, they get some pollen on their faces and then they do the nasturtium's bidding by delivering the pollen to another flower.[5]

The 'rhizomatic' theories of contemporary French philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari resonate strongly as a theoretical framework in which to situate the collaborative process between artists and curator as evidenced in *Portal*. Composed of a multitude of motifs whose origin or relation to each other was sometimes ambiguous, the themes in *Portal* could be defined as 'nomadic thoughts' which:

> [do] not respect the artificial division between the three domains of representation, subject, concept and being; [they replace] restrictive analogy with a conductivity that knows no bounds[6]

By replacing a closed equation of representation (x = x, not y) with an open equation of representation (+x + y + z + a + b), Deleuze and Guattari allow for the limitless juxtaposition of materials or ideas by "synthesiz[ing] a muliplicity of elements

without effacing their heterogeneity or hindering their potential for future rearranging" [7] By employing this pollination process for making, the seven artists in *Portal* created new phantasmagoric ways to engage with, and experience, a multitude of worlds.

The wholly collaborative process undertaken in the conceptualizing and installation of *Portal* allowed for the creation of potential new meanings for the amassed ingredients or elements utilised within the tableaux-like installations: "With this [rhizomatic] model of infinitely connectable textuality, narrative potential blossoms." [8]

Liquid translation was implicit within *Portal*. Although aspects, or elements, of each individual practitioner's works were evident, the assemblage and juxtaposition of components for the exhibition (accompanied by the distinct lack of signage or didactic paneling) denied any sense of singular, autonomous pieces. In this sense, the 'named' became the 'nameless' so that meaning could be undone and new readings could be made.

The assemblage or linking of components in *Portal* echoed the beliefs of alchemy, 'the art of transmutation'. It also referenced the Renaissance *Wunderkammen* phenomenon, popular in sixteenth and seventeenth century collections and museums, in which the viewer encountered an extraordinarily heterogeneous array of treasures packed in from floor to ceiling[9]. Sally wanted to check that Wunderkammen is related to the Renaissance?

Nasturtiums are a gardener's dream. They are virtually carefree once established. Snails don't seem to be interested in them. They will even self seed and come back the next year in mild climate. I look forward to their return each year; it signals that summer is here at last. Once nasturtiums begin to appear they quickly cover an area that is given to them, and within a very short time begin to produce an abundance of striking blossoms that appear to be made of tissue paper. [10]

An overarching preoccupation with sensorial pleasure and sensual perception was evident amongst all the works in *Portal*. Exploiting the seductive allure of a surface, the exhibition employed many non-traditional materials such as plants and other collected naturalia (nasturtiums growing on astro-turf and fish in tanks). This also included glossy plastic toys and figurines, and foodstuffs (staircases smeared with icing and hundreds and thousands, and bathtubs filled with jelly). An overwhelming amount of colour engulfed the viewer and glittered within the gallery glow. Loops of video and sound projected onto and within objects created hallucinatory or hypnotic effects on the static shrine-like compositions of objects.

Ceramic dolls guarded microscope monitors heralding hordes of ants and a diver bobbed and bounced amongst a friendly fish in a tank interrupted by the flickering video window. A bejeweled and bedraggled mannequin beat out her butts, as she grasped for support from a paint-dipped scraggly piece of sheepskin. A plastic ladybeetle nested in a hand of rotting lady-finger bananas whilst a pink lovebug parked on a circle of astro-turf under the table.

The cross-coding of image, sound, and object in *Portal* created a strange sense of 'otherness'. Under the guise of seductive beauty, this 'other' emerged, an 'other' unable to be positioned neatly within contemporary codes of culture. This notion can take cues from the extravagant worlds of Matthew Barney where beauty can elicit a sense of the perverted.

The sense of wonder, exploration and fun that was elicited by the works in *Portal* has acknowledged a dynamic new set of relationships that can exist between artists and an artist-curator. The particular skills, experience and traits that an artist-curator, such as David Spooner, can bring to the conceptualization and installation of an exhibition injected the gallery space with a new intensity. One hopes the collaborative model employed within *Portal* will provide a curatorial framework to be utilised again in the future.

The success of the *Portal* exhibition is also testimony to the importance of the Palace Gallery within the context of the Brisbane arts environment. To be demolished at the end of the year, the Palace Gallery, coordinated through the Queensland University of Technology, has provided the overarching support of the tertiary institution whilst actively encouraging such exploratory and speculative practice over recent years. The opportunity to exhibit in such a space is fundamental to the development and experience of emerging artists prior to their graduation and the Palace's capacity to fulfill this role will be sorely missed.

1. King, Patrick. 2003 Artist Statement from the *Portal* exhibition catalogue
2. http://portalproductions.com/h/
3. Vial, Jacqui. 2003 Artist Statement from the *Portal* exhibition catalogue
4. Steiner, Rochelle. 2000 *Wonderland*. London: The Saint Louis Art Museum. p8
5. http://www.floridata.com/ref/T/trop_maj.cfm
6. Deleuze, G. and Guattari, F. (1987) *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Translation by Brian Massumi. Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press. p.xii
7. Ibid. p.xiii
8. Moos, David. 'Lydia Dona: Architecture of Anxiety' in *Journal of Philosophy and the Visual Arts.* No. 5
9. Steiner, Rochelle. 2000 'Spaces for Wonder' in *Wonderland*. London: The Saint Louis Art Museum. p18
10. http://www.sallys-place.com/food/columns/gilbert/nasturtiums.htm

Detail from *Portal* (2003)
Various artists, various materials
Courtesy of the artists and Palace Gallery

MATS: good practice for going around the horseshoe: Wilkins Hill
The Farm, Brisbane
29 – 30 August 2003

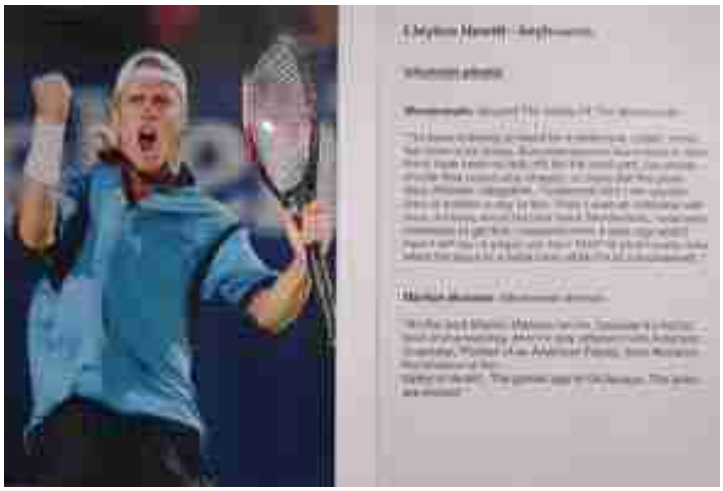
Grant Stevens talks to Wilkins Hill

Grant: Your exhibition at The Farm titled *MATS: good practice for going around the horseshoe*, developed a fiction based around a rock band called "Mats" that was founded in 1999 by former high-profile tennis players Mats Wilander and Pat Cash (who also opposed each other in the well-known final of the 1988 Australian Open). The installation included some didactic panels and photographs that presented the members of the band (Wilander, Cash, John McEnroe, Jim Courier and Lleyton Hewitt) along with their instruments and influences. In some respect, it is quite possible that this fiction could be true (let us remember cricketers Brett and Shane Lee's "Six and Out", and Russell Crowe's "Thirty-Odd Foot of Grunt"). However, the fact that this is in an art gallery and seems to serve no logical function there (surely you would pick a more prominent social location to promote or expose the band), it becomes clear that you are not trying to convince the audience that the fiction is in fact reality. In this way, then, you become immediately aware of the falsity of the claims and are stranded with nothing to be convinced by or wary of. As a regular art viewer this is an unusual position to be in. Is this process of estrangement a common strategy in your work?

Wilkins Hill: Just on that point of Brett and Shane Lee (don't forget Richard CheeQuee); John McEnroe, Pat Cash and Jim Courier have also played in real life bands, so yes our installation had some relation to believability. It is a deliberate decision to develop our fictions from factual information. On those other points, I'm not so sure I would describe the overall position of the viewer within our installation as 'stranded' just because of the fact that they might be aware of the fictional narrative as a constructed one. And I'm not so sure 'estrangement' defines how I understand the viewer's position within the work, but I understand that this is your reading of the work and I find it an interesting one.

To me, your question states that within the 'MATS…' installation we have staged a fiction that some viewers may feel distanced by, once the fictional content of the installation is realised (although some people really believed Mats was a band). A major aspect of our art practice is concerned with how a viewer engages with artwork – hence the 'staging' reference. The staging of the fiction becomes important, taking the idea of a 'show' literally, and referencing this with the use of glam rock music videos (as we see the glam rock genre as being all about staging). Minimalism is also an interest in our work…another staging reference. But some viewers will engage with the work differently, on an aesthetic level.

One of our intentions with this work was to offer the viewer a chance to engage with the 'event' of an exhibition as a 'whole'. In doing this we thought it might prompt some viewers to consider, "What am I looking at and how do I engage with this work?" which I think could generate the 'estranged' feeling to which your question refers. You are right in guessing our intent was not merely about tricking the viewer into believing the narrative (it can be one possible reading of it though).



Wilkins Hill
Detail from *MATS: good practice for going around the horseshoe* (2003)
Digital prints
Courtesy of the artists and The Farm

Grant: Because your work employs a number of mediums in seemingly unprivileged proportions and variations, it is relatively straightforward to categorise it as some form of "installation art". However, it occurs to me that the tool you employ most in your work is narrative. Do you use narrative as just another medium to engage with an audience, or is it employed in order to engage with as a subject matter?

Wilkins Hill: Both I think. The narrative can be described as subject matter within our installations simply because we incorporate it as just another element of the installation (ie. like a video, object). We have become interested in narrative in the last year or so and we use it in a similar way to last year's work where we were interested in directly referencing the Minimalist priorities of object, viewer and space relationships. I think the staging of a fictional narrative has a lot to do with the viewer's relationship to the narrative ie. 'believability' or "How do I engage in something which purports to be true but isn't (maybe)?" We are also interested in narrative because it does allow us to work within various mediums (ie painting, object, video and catalogue) with a view to then use the narrative to frame these individual elements.

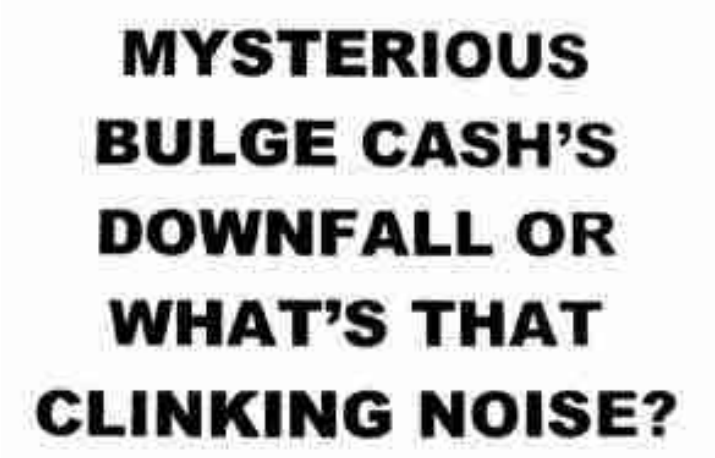
The tennis court motifs (in gaffer tape) on the floor of the gallery were intended to highlight the viewer's awareness of their navigation through the space in that respect. In using the motifs on the floor I think we had in mind some quasi reference to De Stijl (particularly Theo Van Doesburg's work), and a pushing out of the literal frame of the gallery space. I think that this refers back to your question regarding narrative in that we don't see our use of narrative as wanting to be contained by a single definable understanding. Hopefully it allows for multiple readings and references to art and outside of art; to ourselves, to rock music culture and to people who cross genres (like sportspeople who play in bands) or in our case, mediums.

Grant: The catalogue that accompanied this exhibition talked mainly about strategies and rules involved in playing doubles tennis. The major focus seemed to be on where each player should look while the ball is in play. Looking in the right place at the right time will both, according to the catalogue, make you a better doubles player and provide you with safety on the court. Is this awareness of looking a metaphor for your own strategy for making art and/or for the way viewers must engage with the work?

Wilkins Hill: It is that, because without eyes to see I don't think you would get much out of our practice. It is also something not so didactic. As we mentioned earlier, we address the viewer's relationship to the art object within our work. This 'looking' reference in the catalogue essay by Ray Chechus could be taken in a similar vein to Peter Tyndal's work that reflects on the viewer's process, reducing the viewer's role to that of a person who looks at objects ('A person looks at a work of art/someone looks at something'). But we didn't intend the 'looking' reference in the catalogue essay as something that reflects our overall motive for the 'MATS…' installation or our art practice.

We generate references/metaphors in a back-to-front fashion. For instance we fit the meaning into the signifier (object, video) through our use of contextualisation within the installation, after the signifier/object is created. We don't sit down and say, "Our practice is about the viewing process, let's do something that references the viewer's relationship to this process". We appropriate things that interest us as an individual element firstly; we then exploit their ability to generate other references and works for the installation. I think that some of these references come out subconsciously or accidentally. But on the other hand, referencing the viewer within our work does interest us, so it's not completely accidental or subconscious because we leave the reference in. But we don't set out to use metaphors like this to illustrate a concept that sums up the installation or our art practice; it is just one component of the installation.

Wilkins Hill
Installation view of
MATS: good practice for going around the horseshoe (2003)
Courtesy of the artists and The Farm

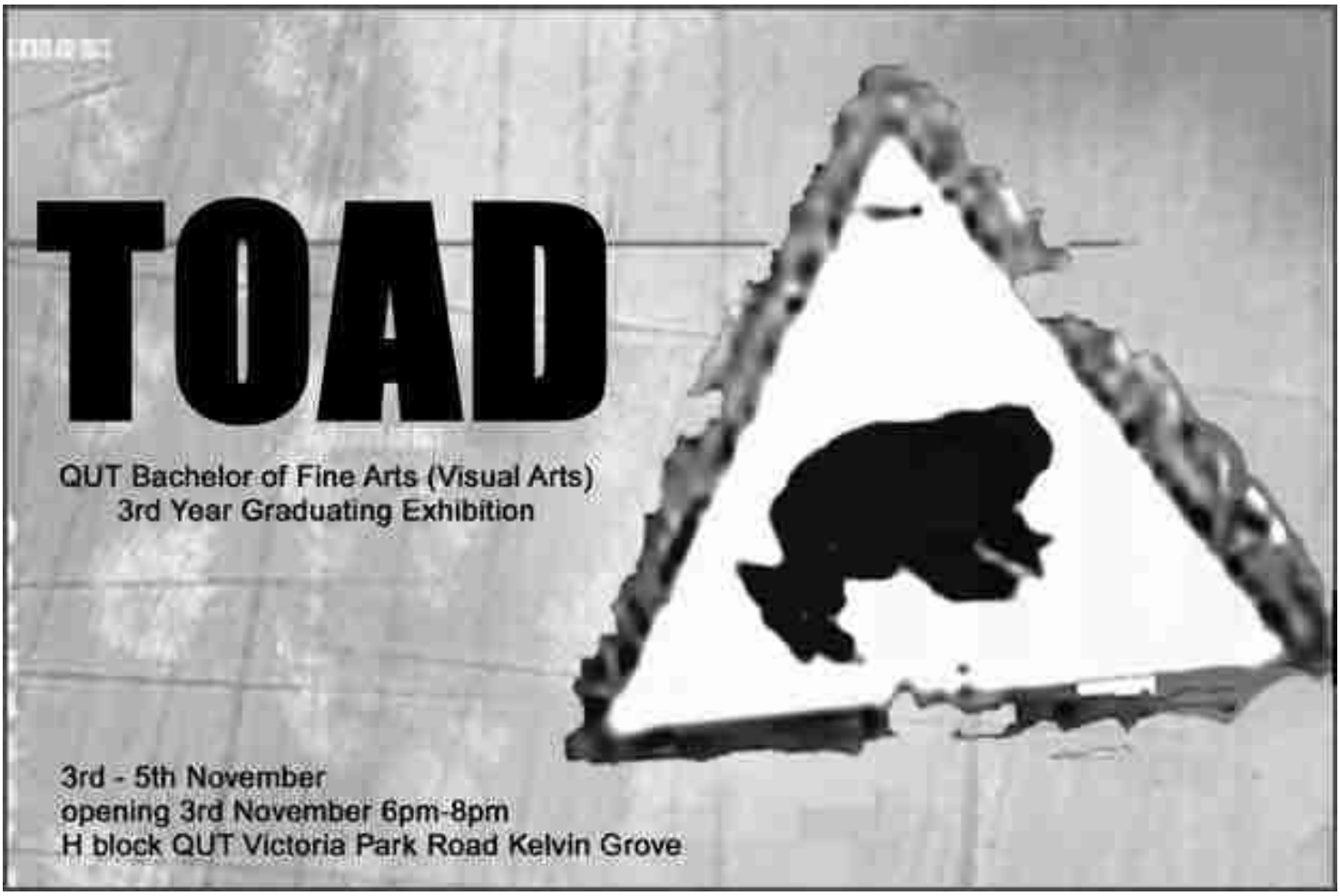


Wilkins Hill
Detail from *MATS: good practice for going around the horseshoe* (2003)
Digital print
Courtesy of the artists and The Farm

Grant: The video in the foyer of the gallery alternated between two shots of a male and a female tennis player hitting the ball over the net. How much does this video reflect the way that you work as collaborating artists? Does it also mimic or describe your expectations of how people might engage with the work: i.e. that they will play the "game" and enter into an endless loop or "rally" of analysis interpretation?

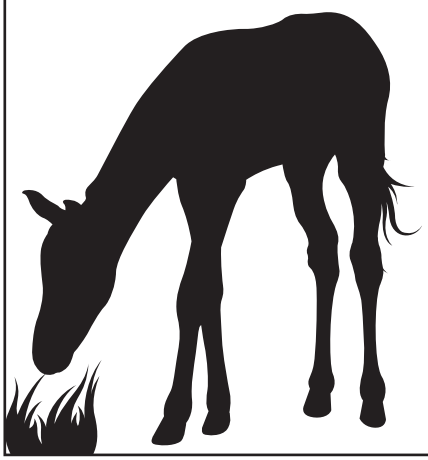
Wilkins Hill: Again, I think we read this work as being able to reference all of these things as well as serving to generate other aspects of the installation. The endless game reference does reflect how we relate to being an artist in some way. I feel that our practice revolves around play, particularly the playing of Wendy and Wes, and the processes and generating of ideas that drives the collaborative practice (through back and forth discussion).

I think that this work was a pivotal video for our practice, in its references to play, our collaboration, and how we envisage the viewer's experience in relating to our work. Our art practice has to be fun for us. In some respects we regard our practice as a bit like being an entertainer without so many jokes. We enjoy Andy Kaufman's work, but also people like Martin Kippenberger, Jeffrey Vallance, Mike Stevenson and Komar and Melamid. I think we are driven by the same things that we see in these people's work; an enjoyment of entertainment that borders on seriousness (or vice versa). These references aren't strictly within this video that you mentioned but it was made at a point where we realised that we had the confidence to do what pleased us and to go from there. This is not to say that the viewer's experience isn't a concern of our practice, to us it's about doing what interests us as both makers and viewers of work. I guess this again reflects back to ourselves as a collaborative team where we have the duel role of a generator of ideas and a receiver of the other's ideas.



David Spooner
Formiciverous
6-8pm Fri 3rd October
Also Open 11am-4pm Sat 4th October
Artist talk 2pm Sat 4th October

Chris Handran
The White Album
6-8pm Fri 10th October
Continues to 1st November
Artist talk 2pm Sat 11th October



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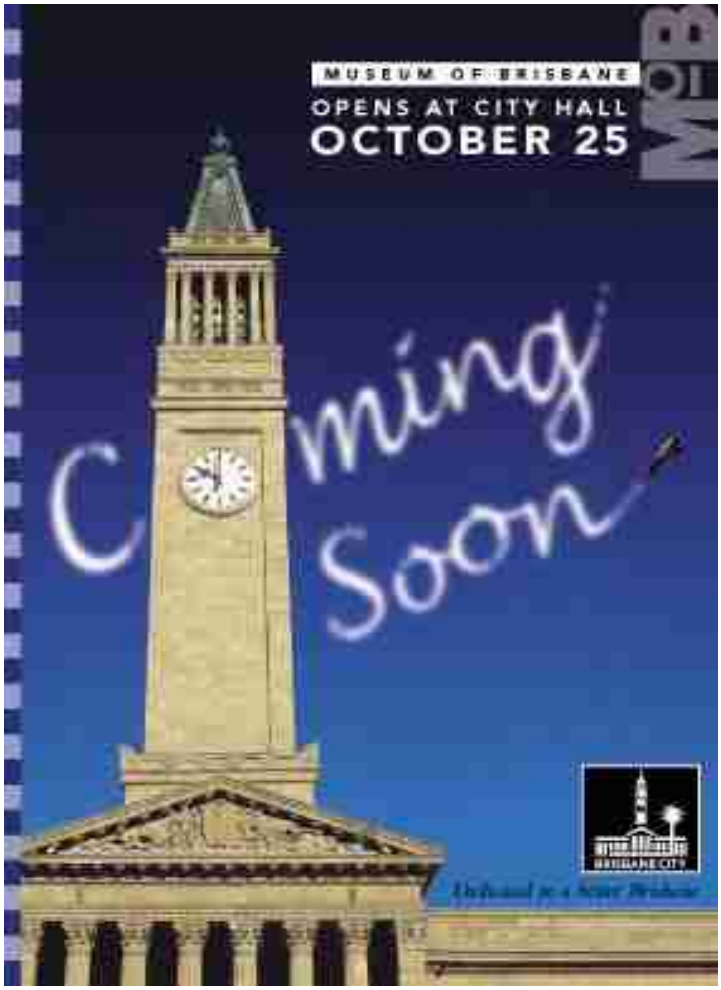
Open Wed-Fri 11am-6pm
Sat 11am-4pm

The Farm has been assisted by the Commonwealth Government's Young and Emerging Artist's Iniative through the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory body. The Farm is also supported by Rinzen, Brett's Hardware, Kirlou Signs and the Dendy Cinemas

Australia Council for the Arts



Man Made

Peter Alwast
Richard Bell
Grant Dale
Chris Howlett
David Spooner
Grant Stevens
Dirk Yates

Curated by Sally Brand

studio11

6 - 8 pm Wednesday 15.10.03
Level 3, Metro Arts
109 Edward Street, Brisbane

for more information or to join our email list, contact:
studio11@ourbrisbane.com

artworkers

ea initiative
www.artworkers.org

LOCAL LISTINGS

EA (Emerging Artists) (Lv 2 381 Brunswick St)
14 Oct (5:30pm) *What's that supposed to mean?* Critical Writing

The Farm (358 George St)
3-4 Oct *Formiciverous* David Spooner (Opening 6pm 3 Oct)
10 Oct – 1 Nov *The White Album* Chris Handran (Opening 6pm 10 Oct)

Institute of Modern Art (Judith Wright Center, Brunswick St, Fortitude Valley)
16 Oct - 29 Nov *Gulliver's Travels*: Tim Silver, Callum Morton, Louise Weaver, Matt Calvert, Charles Robb, Beata Batorowicz, Louise Paramour, Katie Moore, Ricky Swallow, Craige Andrae, Timothy Horn and Richard Giblett, James Angus, Curated by Stuart Koop (Opening 6pm 16 Oct)

Museum of Brisbane (City Hall, King George Square)
25 Oct *One Square Mile*, *Face of Brisbane* & Fatu Feu'u *Ifoga* (Opening 25 Oct)

Palace Gallery (Merivale St)
Until 14 Oct *MAP* Rebecca Ross
23 Oct *Signing Out* Chris Howlett (Opening 6pm)
29 Oct – 10 Nov Dirk Yates (Opening 6pm 29 Oct)

Queensland Art Gallery (South Brisbane)
Until 2 Nov Jo Laboo (Starter Space)

QUT (H-Block, Kelvin Grove Campus)
3-5 Nov *Toad* 3rd Year Graduate Exhibition (Opening 6pm 3 Nov)
12 Nov *Swarm* Honours Graduate Exhibition (Opening 6pm 12 Nov)

Studio 11 (Lv 3 Metro Arts, 109 Edward St)
15 Oct (6-8pm) *Man-Made* Curated by Sally Brand, featuring Peter Alwast, Richard Bell, Grant Dale, Chris Howlett, David Spooner, Grant Stevens & Dirk Yates

University Art Museum (Customs House)
Until 12 Oct *Home & Away: Identity and Place in Recent Australian Art*

University Art Museum (UQ, St Lucia)
3 Oct – 22 Nov *1962: Selected works 1983 – 1992* Scott Redford (Opening 6pm 3 Oct)

Local Art is a series of free print and online publications with the intention of generating decisive responses to the "emerging art" scene in Brisbane. *Local Art*'s content focuses on the work of local emerging artists, writers and art-workers. With this said, the publication does not take these premises as limitations, rather it endeavours to explore contiguous fields as a means of contextualising local contemporary practices and discourses.

Local Art is currently calling for expressions of interest and content submissions. As *Local Art's* generous funding through Arts Queensland has expired, it is unlikely that *Local Art* will be able to pay contributors in the future. Content can range from exhibition reviews to artist's writings, artist pages, interviews and critical essays.

The next content deadline is October 31st.

If you would like more information about *Local Art* or are interested in contributing, please contact The Farm or any of the *Local Art* editors: Sally Brand, Natalya Hughes, Grant Stevens and Dirk Yates (thefarm@thefarmspace.com, sallybrand@hotmail.com natalyaks@hotmail.com, grant@thefarmspace.com, dirk@thefarmspace.com).

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For the online version of *Local Art* visit www.thefarmspace.com and follow the links from the main menu.

The views expressed in *Local Art* are not necessarily shared by its editors.

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GRAFTS AND CLUSTERS: Sandra Selig
Bellas Gallery, Brisbane
September 3 – 20 2003

Morgan Thomas

The Only Way is Up

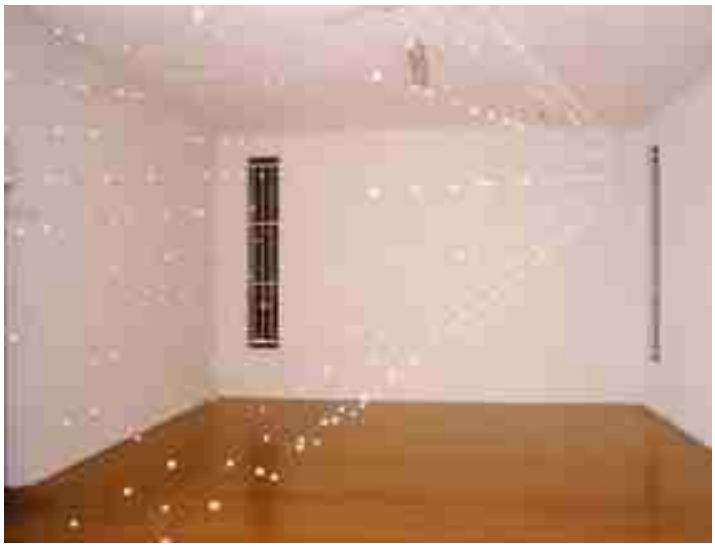
'Grafts and Clusters', Sandra Selig's September show at Bellas Gallery, is dominated by large-scale artworks which engage closely, even infectiously, with the space around them. Why is it, then, that the term 'installation art' doesn't seem to fit Selig's work? This is the term that generally describes art premised on the sort of close-knit, structural relationship to its surroundings that we see in most of Selig's recent work; yet it is also a term that is somehow jarring in the context of an exhibition like this one.

Maybe one way to understand the special character of Selig's work is to see how it teases and eludes the category of installation art while also remaining bound to it. There is a feeling of buoyancy and lightness running through this exhibition – a feeling which seems to cast these artworks adrift from the category of installation, or which at least places that category in a certain state of suspension. In Selig's case, this effect of lightness, no doubt carefully cultivated, appears tied to an approach to art-making in which the feeling of pleasure or exhilaration is paramount. In other words, this is supposed to be art you can enjoy.

For some, the continuing prevalence of installation reflects its ascendancy as a comfortable orthodoxy in contemporary art practice, often resulting in uninspired and uninspiring artworks – a lumping together of objects according to a logic of 'anything goes'. And it is true that the very word 'installation' tends to suggest something staid, something fixed in place. A situation, not an event.

The two key works in this show, *Mid-Air* and *Shadow Becoming* make it clear that it's precisely this tendency towards leadenness and immobility in much installation art that Selig means to combat. These titles themselves indicate where her interests lie: in making art that is fugitive, evanescent and playful in character.

These interests place Selig in proximity to some of the most significant artists working with sculpture and installation to emerge in the United States in recent years – artists like Tom Friedmann and Sarah Sze, for example. Selig shares in these artists'



Sandra Selig
Mid-Air 2003
Nylon thread and styrofoam balls
Courtesy of the artist and Bellas Gallery

fascination with grids, networks and molecular structures. And, like them, she generally favours mundane household materials in her work – modest materials which the work itself invests with something like a feeling of the sublime. In particular, there is a characteristic play with seriality and scale which seems to send the work off, or up, into a kind of infinity.

Thus, in a sequence of small, intricate works using acrylic paints on canvas board (entitled *Net Works*), pieces of fly screen act as a low-tech matrix capable of generating beautiful and endlessly varied optical patterns and shapes. Similarly, Selig's *Graft* series is a micro-investigation of the innumerable ways in which pieces of graph paper can be cut, pasted and folded. In *Mid-Air* and *Shadow Becoming*, small elements, styrofoam balls and plastic straws respectively, are strung together to make wall-to-wall chains and networks which run through the gallery space.

So, far from being a case of 'anything goes', Selig's artworks involve a painstaking discipline, or, more accurately, a discipline that consistently overextends itself in an almost obsessional way (again recalling Friedmann, one of whose recent works is made up of 30,000 toothpicks). Yet it is also this almost fanatical excess of discipline that makes these works the animated and beguiling things that they are.

The black and white plastic straws hooped and bunched together in *Shadows Becoming* create an effect of wonderfully anarchic profusion, an effect made all the more dramatic by the carefully

orchestrated play of light and shadow that these hanging forms trace across the walls of the gallery.

In *Mid-Air*, a dazzling work that takes up an entire room of the show, circular formations of white fishing-line beaded with small white styrofoam beads travel from wall to wall. In effect, these fine lines make three-dimensional tubular drawings through the air itself.

The ingenuity of this work has much to do with the games it plays with conditions of visibility and invisibility. When you walk into the room where *Mid-Air* has been installed, you quickly see that it is impossible to take in the whole work from any one standpoint. In some lights it would be easy to miss it altogether. In general, just a few details are apparent at any one time – just those fragments which are caught by the light coming through the windows of the gallery. Partly on account of the changing light, and partly because the whiteness of Selig's materials is a perfect match for the white gallery walls, this work keeps appearing and disappearing before your eyes.

This elusiveness, this endlessly permutable quality, is also what lures you into the work. Thus, if you walk right up to it and look along the lengths of fishing-line, it's as if you're looking down the tube of a wave. The experience of *Mid-Air* turns into an ethereal hide-and-seek.

All the artworks in this show have a particular lightness that I like – not a lightness which means an absence of thought, not the lightness of entertainment. It's the kind of lightness which, without seeking to be meaningful, deep, or, for that matter, 'uplifting', refuses to settle for any other realism other than one of invention – a lightness bound only to a rule of infinite possibility and play.

Sandra Selig
Shadow Becoming 2003
Drinking straws and thread
Courtesy of the artist and Bellas Gallery

VULVA GIRL: INTERVIEW WITH JEMIMA WYMAN

Sally Brand

SB: You are currently in 'Sub-Topic', a show at Hervey Bay Regional Gallery, curated by Louise Rollman and also featuring Laura Hill and Beata Batorowicz. What was the work that you made for this show?

JW: I guess it was in line with a number works I've done in the past, in that it was an installation which centered on a performative based video work. When I say that, it's a video that's based on a performance I've done which is then reworked digitally in the computer and then installed with other objects.

SB: What were the objects in this installation?

JW: I became really interested in IKEA, because I'd never been there before, and so this work had IKEA furniture, pulsating pink, central-core imagery, a TV monitor, a thousand pink folded paper 'chatter boxes', and lamps because I wanted the work to be self lit. I had also stenciled patterns on the walls and there were some of my own pink shoes and a whole range of other little pink bits.

SB: How would you describe the video that you screened on the TV monitor?

JW: In the video work I perform as 'Vulva Girl' in a white full body suit that has hot pink extensions from the breasts, vagina and mouth. These extensions can be pulled out or pushed back into the suit. During the performance 'Vulva girl' dresses up, dances and performs a striptease while also playing with her pink bits. These actions unfold within a small scale 'screen set' that is similar to a girl's bedroom (a private space where anything is possible).

SB: Do you think this suit is different from your other often monochrome suits?

JW: With the suit being different, I think it was the same with the performance, I didn't really think of the work as being any different but just another artwork that I was going to make. But then when I got responses from Matt Fletcher who helped video the performance and my Mum who made the suit I realised that it was a bit more sexually overt than my previous works.

To particularly describe this video, you could say that it had three different sections. The first section is slowed down, and is where I put on a nightie over the suit. I was particularly interested in the fabric of this garment because the cloth was like 'willful cloth,' in that it had its own movement when it was slowed down and reversed. So, here I put the nightie on, also putting it into the orifices of the suit, and move towards the camera. The second section is essentially layering on a number of different articles of the pink clothing that I own. The final section, is in line with the second section, in that it is a kind of striptease but the way that I treat the footage kind of like VJ-ing, in that it was done in real time where I scrolled over the footage and could reverse sections or replay sections over and over again. For instance, when I take the undies out of the cabinet and put them on and then put them back in the cabinet and then replay that motion over again, it becomes like an exaggerated action and quite characterized and so removed from an everyday scenario. With a lot of the video work I usually slow down, speed up or reverse it so that it becomes a different kind of temporality other than a real time experience of something unfolding.
This video, which runs for about 15 minutes, also has an architectural vulvic shape which you would relate to central-core imagery. I was particularly interested in a doubling of the vagina with the eye so that it becomes something that can be penetrated but is also engaged with a reciprocal gaze so that it also penetrates you. I used this vulvic shape as an architectural frame, something like a photoframe, as well as it being quite a clichéd thing relating to feminism. The fabric within this vulvic shape moves as well, so I was also referencing the haptic, texture in seeing and the eye getting caught up in the folds and the fabric.

SB: Was this work made specifically for 'Sub-Topic'?

JW: It's difficult to say because with all of my practice when I'm developing a work I will hold bits of information in my head and let it gather until it comes to some form of coherency. At the same time, and for quite a long time, I have been engaged with a continual dialogue with Louise Rollman about our interests in the idea of creating environments through installation and how you might work through this collaboratively. I've also been interested in making sense of artwork in terms of living architectures.

SB: Do you think these interests are particular to the objects you've used here?

JW: Yeah, and I like the idea that with the chair and the lights, being architectural and objects from an interior, they function both as signifiers but also as functional devices.

Jemima Wyman
Production stills 2003
Polyaroid photographs
Courtesy of the artist and Bellas Gallery

Jemima Wyman
Production stills 2003
Polyaroid photographs
Courtesy of the artist and Bellas Gallery

SB: But you couldn't sit in the chair and watch the video from that vantage point?

JW: Yeah you could. I set it up so that you could walk into the space around the chatter boxes on the floor. This was something that I had talked through with Louise, in that I wanted to create a single viewing space, in a way like a computer game or when you sit down at a computer, so the interaction between you and screen becomes a private encounter, like a one room viewing. This is different from it being a projection where you can gather as a group and see it. This was also a reason why I wanted to perform in the space and document myself in the outfit, so that then the viewer plays out the character within the space and they become an internal mechanism in the work.

SB: So when you were putting together the show for the Hervey Bay Regional Gallery did you take into account anything different considering it was in a regional gallery?

JW: Well I knew it wasn't Art Space in Sydney! I realised that the Hervey Bay program would probably vary a lot in terms of the types of shows they have and also that the audience wouldn't be as specialized as probably the audience that would go to Art Space. Also, because I wasn't going to be there with the work and give an artist's talk I was fairly wary about the video work and I did edit it with that in mind. I still wanted it to function in a certain way but I probably didn't make it as raunchy as it could have been.

SB: It is still quite raunchy though.

JW: Well in the raw footage I'm inserting objects and not only the nightie into the orifices of the suit.

SB: I understand that the video component of this work may have been turned off.

JW: I received a phone call on the Wednesday before the opening and the gallerist explained to me that the work had been turned off because they weren't sure about the meaning of the work and that the volunteers wanted to have an idea of this so that they could inform the patrons. So, the gallery asked me to write up a text and get it to them so that it would be ok to turn the work back on. I sent them a text a couple of days later.

SB: What was your first impression to the turning off of the video?

JW: Initially I thought it was extremely funny because the gallery's response amplified critical dialogue which usually surrounds my work. Because of the highly motivated visual language that I use and also the physicality of the work, a lot of the time it's written or spoken about in terms of being difficult to name or being about the physical encounter. Rachael Haynes talks about this in the *See-Saw*[1] catalogue in how sense making remains in the realm of the viewer and that it is the viewer who is thrown into question and must decide whether they go or stay, or look or not look. So the gallery's response is actually the desired outcome of the work and they obviously got it even though they thought they weren't getting it!

SB: One person described the work as like watching a horror movie as they were both compelled and repelled.

JW: I think it's like a see saw between things. I'm kind of asking the viewer to oscillate between an intellectual engagement in the work, in terms of the history of feminism and viewing, but also to engage with the work on a physical or physiological response. This is something that I always want to build into the work, that there are a number of levels of engagement. So, sometimes the response can be really literal and clichéd like considering the pink, the pink bits, the vulvic shape and the central core imagery and say 'Oh yeah, it's definitely female'. But then, even though the indicators point to this, this character's pink bits pull out and become like phalluses and then she pulls them and hits herself with them like some male strippers do (or that I've seen them do in Tony Oursler's work *Off*[2]) so then it becomes about playing or wanking and then also about clichéd male sexual actions. I see potential for this work in the future in terms of pornography or simulated sex scenes particularly in the physiological response in relation to the viewer and that you might have some sort of arousal in terms of the work. I think that's another way of involuntarily folding the viewer into the work and that further complicates their position in that they have to take responsibility for that and have to decide whether they go or stay. Do they get caught looking at it? Do they want to be seen seeing?

Jemima Wyman's 'Vulva Girl' will be shown as part of the Straight Out of Brisbane Festival on Saturday 6th December between 12pm-6pm in the Toys88 empty shop in the TC Bierne Building, Fortitude Valley

1. Haynes, Rachael (2003) *Hyper Doubles: the Possible Performances of Jemima Wyman*, ex. cat. For *See-Saw*, The Farm: Brisbane.
2. Tony Oursler *Off*, 60min 1999

Damiano Bertoli
Continuous Moment/ Gaetano Pesce 2003
Courtesy of the artist

TRAFFIC: CROSSING CURRENTS IN PACIFIC INDIGENOUS PHOTOMEDIA
Australian Center for Photography
5 September –12 October 2003

Jonathan Jones
(Co-curator of *Traffic* with Robyn Johnston)

The Pacific is a site of constant exchange, physically and conceptually. The diversity and expanse of Indigenous Pacific cultures are a testament to this. Pre-colonial exchanges between the Pacific Island Nations[1] are as numerous and as complex as the islands themselves, and exchanges between the Aboriginal people of Australia and the Maori of Aotearoa[2] can be traced through related language and objects. Such international exchanges have parallels in the internal exchanges that operate within each of these Indigenous Nations and are the foundation of Indigenous lifestyle. *Traffic* examines the work and practices of contemporary Indigenous artists from this region, who, through a range of approaches and concepts, are collectively continuing this creative exchange.

Racheal Rakena acknowledges this longstanding information highway in her video installation, *Rorohiko* 2002. Collaborating with her local Iwi[3] and Kapa-Haka[4] in Dunedin, Rakena references ancestral water mythologies in representing a submerged Indigenous culture, dislocated from physical constructs. *Rorohiko* is a two-channel, moving-image installation that immerses the viewer and projects culturally emotive imagery of dancers and lovers floating between fragmented texts of bilingual e-mails. The adaptation and exchange of new technology is recognised within this work *'rorohiko'* is the Maori word for computer. Cyberspace adds another, virtual dimension to the Pacific environment, freeing Indigenous culture of colonial confines and facilitating exchange. Putting the Iwi online protects Indigenous rights from being misrepresented on the worldwide web, where nothing is sacred, only HTML- ready.

Shigeyuki Kihara
Sina and Her Eel
From the series *Fale Aitu, House of Spirits* 2002
Courtesy of the artist and the Australian Center for Photography

This ability to successfully adopt new technology while simultaneously maintaining cultural integrity directs the visual dynamics of Peter Robinson's computer-generated lambda prints, *Into the Void* 2001 and *I Exist I Am Not Another I Am I* 2001. Robinson, an Auckland-based Maori artist, composed each image of ones and zeros as a reference to opposing and complementing forces (on/off, positive/negative etc). This one–zero code constructs and deconstructs the word 'IO', a supreme Maori creation entity, while their collation in eight-digit groups recalls computer text. As in Rakena's work, Robinson's images encapsulate Indigenous oral and visual cultural information in a contemporary digital framework. The tense pattern within this work is reminiscent of a *toi whakaaro*[5], and emphasises the relationship between contemporary and traditional practices.

Christian Thompson
Emotional Striptease 2003
Courtesy of the artist and the Australian Center for Photography

Colonisation occurred across the Pacific region in a number of unique manifestations, from the 1788 fabrication of *terra nullius* justifying the invasion of Aboriginal lands, to the 1893 militant American takeover of Hawai'i. With colonisation, Indigenous exchange was stifled and reconstructed in non-reciprocal contexts, such as the photographs of the 'dusky maiden' or the 'noble savage' posed against the painted sets of a nineteenth-century colonial studio. Contemporary Pacific socio-political environments are still contained within this paradigm, and are key references in the artwork of Auckland-based Shigeuki Kihara and Melbourne-based Christian Thompson.

Kihara's work, *Fale Aitu, House of Spirits* 2002, exists between roles, practices and concepts, like the artist herself. Kihara's multidisciplinary practices embrace performance, photomedia and fashion within her cultural state (which includes Samoan, Japanese and Fa'afafine[6]). *Fale Aitu* takes its name from the male, Samoan, festive, comedic skits that Kihara mirrors in performing a range of personas. She also engages with cultural costumes, as in her Pasifika Diva performance at the 2002 Asia-Pacific Triennial in Brisbane. Like Rakena's submerged Iwi, Kihara's work escapes definition. Both artists reflect the reality of the fluidity of identity and culture. Kihara transcends colonial homogenisation in her performance personas.

Bidjara[7] artist Christian Thompson lives a similarly defiant life. In his series, *Emotional Striptease* 2003, Thompson confronts historical constructs and the placement of Aboriginality by

deconstructing and reconstructing the legacy of Aboriginal representation in colonial imagery. Mimicking colonial studio portraiture, Thompson places young Kooris, armed with Indigenous weapons, in front of enhanced colour backdrops depicting Melbourne's iconic cultural buildings, challenging them as institiutions of a didactic Australian culture. Like negatives of the colonial 'noble savage', the works invert history. The models now pose proud, successfully negotiating the social constructs hanging behind them. As in Kihara's work, Thompson's portraits both defy and define contemporary categorisation.

Colonial studio portraiture mixed ethnography with the romanticising of the 'exotic' Pacific, fueling the prodigy of colonisation, tourism. Now a primary Pacific governing industry, tourism is critiqued in *The Souvenir Scarves* from the 2002 *Tiki Tour* series by Natalie Robertson, who is of Ngati Porou[8] and Clan Donnachaidh descent. Robertson's work is concerned with the representation and marketing of cultural heritage, and she has photographed kitsch scarves from the 1950s and 1960s, highlighting their imagery of Maori maidens, warriors and related objects. Captured as prints, these icons, which fictitiously represented a culture for tourism, are now analysed by those they intended to represent. On black backgrounds, the images have the visual aesthetic of a colour photogram, along with all of that medium's characteristics of processed investigation. Stylistically, they also reference the museum treatment and documentation of Indigenous objects, while concurrently examining the manufactured relationships of Aotearoa's Maori and Pakeha[9].

The social study of the misrepresentations inherent in tourism and popular culture and related product is played out in the surreal urban creation story, *Waiting for Goddess* 1993–2003, by Melbourne-based artist Destiny Deacon, of the K'ua K'ua and Erub/Mer people. Reflecting her cinematic work, these images construct and document the supreme visitation to the earth by a black plastic doll. Appearing deceptively simple at first, and underpinned by a seductive imagery, the works ambush the viewer with their political message. Deacon, the mistress of kitsch, plays with satire, manipulating the viewer's senses to fuse the polarised reactions of laughter and horror. Deacon's work embraces negative, stereotyped concepts of Aboriginality, and leverages these concepts to create powerful images of race relations.

Icons of colonial relations are also represented in the minimalist work of Auckland-based Maori artist, Michael Parekowhai. In the diptych *You're My Best Friend* 2001, Parekowhai uses the retro toy action figures, the Lone Ranger and Tonto, as symbols of an antiquated American western frontier partnership, where white supremacy reigned over the First Nations, in a 'cowboys and indians' set-up. Enlarging the action figures to two-metre-high portraits, Parekowhai lets them speak for themselves. Their blank plastic expressions mimic the Eurocentric context in which they were produced, a bias still prevalent throughout the Pacific.

The problematic relationship between colonisers and colonised is further commented on in the text-based artwork of Aboriginal artist Vernon Ah Kee. In *hellothere* 2003 and *austracism* 2003, Ah Kee amplifies the subtext of the suburbs and creates social textscapes of ritualised racism, such as the whispering of the One Nation belt in Queensland, where Ah Kee resides. Reading like a newspaper headline, Ah Kee's work states the unintended negative interpretation that pursues non-Indigenous conversations regarding 'the other'. Like the works of Robinson and Rakena, Ah Kee's plastic digital prints of minimally-patterned black text exploits the English language to create an urban Aboriginal creole, mobilising a new dialogue.

Transgressing colonial paradigms through engagement and reinterpretation can entrap Indigenous culture within the preceding colonial argument of cultural dilution. This concept of 'losing culture' disguises the ironic, ethnocentric concepts

Nathan Pohio
Moonwalker (still) 2002
Courtesy of the artist and the Australian Center for Photography

that governed Pacific colonial relations. In the work of Kihara and Thompson, culture is constantly changing and growing into new colonial identities. For example, pastoralism has now become integral to contemporary Indigenous culture, as seen in the work *From a Town called Lawrence*, *Bullrider*, *Moonwalker* and *Flag* 2002, by Christchurch-based artist Nathan Pohio. Having a super-8 filmic texture, these works deconstruct and mend the opposing cultural forces of Indigenous and non-Indigenous, through the slowing of time. Three videos present the following: Maori imagery of a rodeo rider, a children's fancy dress party spliced with a lonesome cowboy moonwalking on the shores of Te Rauone Bay, and a patriotic rodeo flag. They are screened on small, domestic, colour monitors, which sit side-by-side on the floor. Indigenous autonomy – where colonial issues are not resolved but absorbed – is highlighted in the graceful footage of Maori rodeo star, Merv Church. These images of non-Indigenous activity invert and highlight the mass of contradictions alive in the Pacific, where antiquated legacies of colonialism are upheld.

Fantastic Egg 2003, by Auckland-based collective LOVEWILLMAKELOVE FOUNDATION/33.3 (Andrei Jewell, James Pinker and Lisa Reihana) is another example of this reality. Emerging from concerns with social and genetic engineering, and the possible effects of these cultural inhibitors on romance and sexuality, *Fantastic Egg* offers a moment to consider the present and future. As in Rakena's work, notions of race, heritage and cultural safety are alluded to, here within a neon lit-montage. Set in a near-future, urban landscape, an enigmatic female figure connects with an egg. Floating between the screen and our imagination, the egg refers to the future for Indigenous culture – fragile, though inherently containing life.

The artists in this exhibition all suggest new possibilities for creative exchanges – a dynamic traffic of ideas – crossing Indigenous Nations and cultures that are bound and informed by shared geographical location, colonial histories and Indigenous heritage. Working within photographic media, the artists are reworking a medium that historically was used in colonial culture to manufacture an ethnocentric mono-discussion of representation and control. The collective expression of this Indigenous Pacific group, like that seen at the Sydney Pacific Wave Festival and the Brisbane Asia-Pacific Triennial, regenerates the Indigenous exchange relationships integral to this region and its Indigenous people.

1. Islands of Polynesia, including Tonga, Fiji, Samoa, Vanuatu, etc.
2. Maori for New Zealand.
3. Maori for tribe.
4. Maori dance group.
5. Maori for woodcarving.
6. Samoan 'third gender'.
7. Aboriginal people of south-west Queensland.
8. Maori Iwi or tribe.
9. Maori for non-Maori.

Clint Woodger
Some kind of love song 2003
Inkjet on archival paper stock
60cm x 21cm
Courtesy of the artist

THIS WOMAN IS… THIS MAN IS…
Vernon Ah Kee
As part of **Story Place: Indigenous Art of Cape York and the Rainforest**
Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane
25 July – 9 November 2003

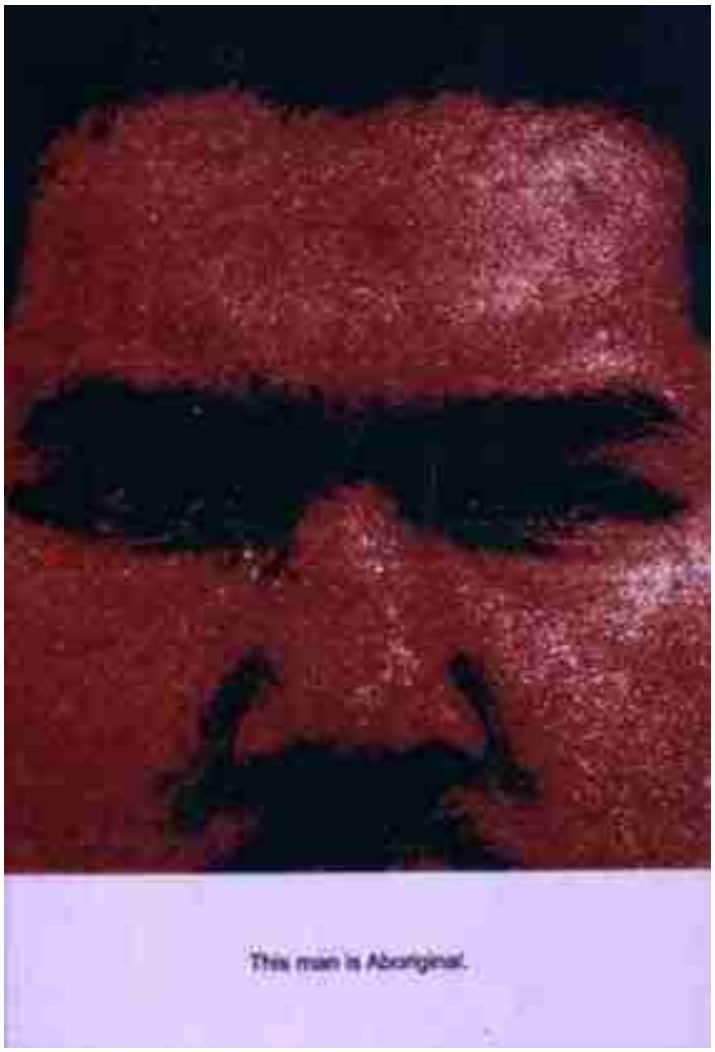
Holly Bennett

Aboriginal History and Identity

Three decades after the turning point for aboriginal rights (the Referendum of 1967), the clock was turned back with Pauline Hanson's One Nation Party in the 1998 Federal Election. In 2000 Prime Minister John Howard announced that the 2001 deadline for a national declaration of reconciliation would not be met. At this time Ex-Federal Affairs Minister John Herron also denied the existence of the stolen generation. Liberal minded academics talk of Australian Aboriginal history in terms of genocide, drawing parallels to the Nazi Holocaust; while the Prime Minister speaks of 'blemishes', and conservatives refer to the 'stolen' generation as the 'rescued' generation.

This is only a brief account of the recent injustices suffered by the Aboriginal communities in the last few years, and yet it is already more than enough to explain why contemporary indigenous artist Vernon Ah Kee feels so passionate about Aboriginal history and identity. He feels it, he lives it, and he expresses it clearly in his work for others to interpret. *This Woman Is… This Man Is…* is currently on display in the Queensland Art Gallery as part of, *Story Place: Indigenous Art of Cape York and the Rainforest*. This piece is a series of sixty photographs of the same man and woman, each with text underneath describing something about themselves and their culture, distinctly bringing up issues of racism. The faces are bold and distinct, staring at the viewer. To understand the work though you have to move in closer to read the text and get the full impact of the piece. The photographs have been screen printed, then scanned, digitised, and cropped. A strong red tone washes out the white of the images, leaving it with an earthy feel, but also giving a subtle reminder of blood spilt.

It is the text that makes you feel. Shame. Pity. Guilt. Guilt for being White, and guilt for feeling pity. Richard Bell calls it a "chronic case of blamelessness sweeping contemporary society" [1], referring to the injustices done to the Aboriginal people - overlooked by a country that will take no responsibility for past events. The issue of racism is embedded in the text of *This Woman Is… This Man Is….* A prejudice that was formed from the time of European settlement, yet still exists today. A prejudice that thrived on believing Aborigines are inferior because of physical and social differences. These prejudiced beliefs have been built on ignorance and myths, which in turn have sadly come to shape human

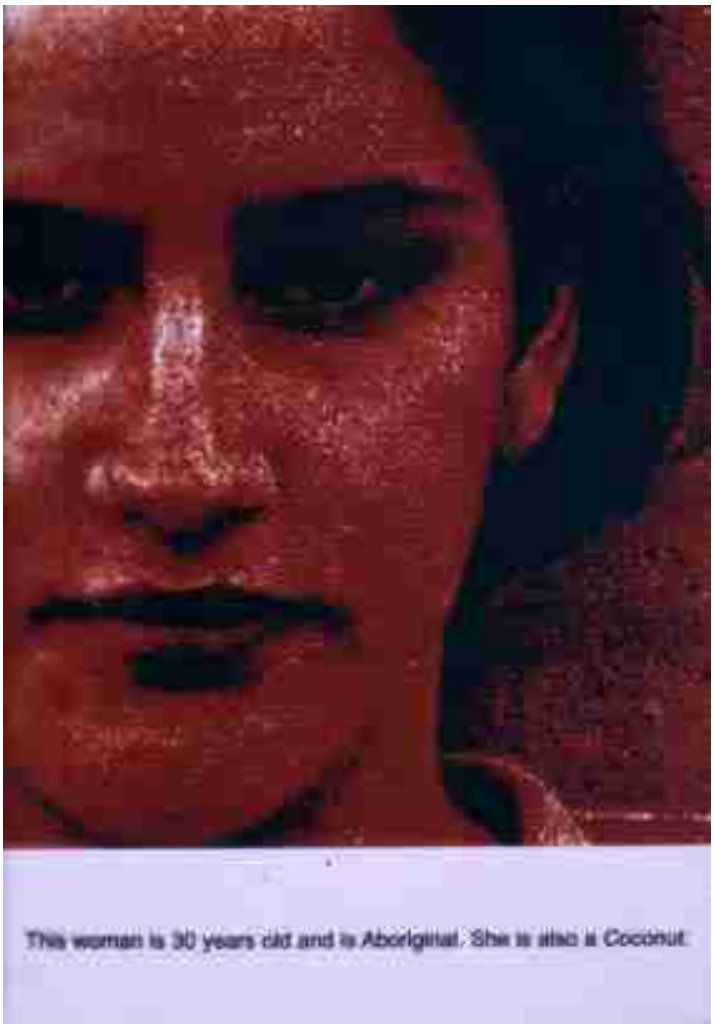


Vernon Ah Kee
Detail from *This Woman is ... This Man is ...* 2003
Ink set into polypropylene
Courtesy of the artist and Queensland Art Gallery

affairs and our perceptions of others.

The stories expressed in Ah Kee's work are unspeakable. They are the stories you don't or won't remember, or could not have even imagined. They make you feel. They stab at you, and you can't ignore them, and you have to read the truth. These stories depict death, rape, murder, mass execution, family breakdown, missions, alcoholism, police, and the corrupt legal system. All of these issues in some way or another play a prominent part in the lives of Aborigines. If these stories don't play a prominent part in modern life for Aboriginal peoples, they are forever embedded in the past, and are relived now with horror.

The emotions portrayed by Ah Kee are obvious. Pain. Anger. Distrust. Sadness. Isolation. Through art, Aboriginal artists can attempt to display these emotions and break through prejudiced thought with their ideas on Aboriginal treatment and identity. This is exactly what Ah Kee has done in *This Woman Is… This Man Is....* Where histories, politics and protest movements may fall short, through art a clear message and an awareness of the struggle of Aboriginal peoples can be portrayed.



Vernon Ah Kee
Detail from *This Woman is ... This Man is ...* 2003
Ink set into polypropylene
Courtesy of the artist and Queensland Art Gallery

Through the emotions expressed in his work, Ah Kee is consciously pointing to the ever present theme of Aboriginal identity. Where does the 'Blackfella' fit into White society? This issue of identity is one that Ah Kee, and many Aboriginal artists, address in their work. But perhaps it is the identity of the 'Whitefella' that for once should be questioned. John Howard's stubbornness to say "sorry" demonstrates the 'Whitefella's' inability to come to terms with our own Australian history[2]. All the regret, and shame, and guilt that separates us – that makes Aborigines the 'other' – could perhaps be overcome if we were to admit that this country was inhabited by Indigenous Australians before it was by western colonisers[3].

Ironically the photographs used by Ah Kee are of the same person, but the stories are different: as if it doesn't matter who suffered the injustices, it just matters whether those suffering were Black or White. The title of the work, *This Woman Is… This Man Is…* reinforces the idea behind the repetition of the photographs. The idea is that these stories could have happened to any Black man or woman, or all Black men and women. It is not just dealing with individual circumstances or stories, but with the histories of a diverse group of people as a whole. Yet the word 'Aborigine' is an English invention. While Jack Davis can say today that "our blackness unites us as one people, one together in our Aboriginality", no one could have written that at the time of European settlement because neither blackness nor language nor anything else united the many different tribes of people that lived independently to each other.

All these stories seem so far removed from my life – a White Australian life. I try to feel or imagine what it would be like if these stories happened to me. But I can't, or I don't want to try. And yet I feel as though I must understand these stories, know them, feel them. The past is there and it doesn't go away by ignoring it. The "sorry" factor is still there, the blamelessness, and the 'otherness'. I think it is only in acknowledging this 'otherness' - as opposed to ignoring it - that we all will ever truly move forward.

1. Bell, R. in Aldred, D. (2003) 'Outside the Square', *The Courier Mail*, 20 Sep, pp. 1/4. (p.1)
2. Greer, G. (2003) 'Whitefella Jump Up', *Quarterly Essay*, no.11, pp.1-78. (p.7)
3. Ibid., p.13

Ah Kee, V. (2003, Sep 19) 'This Man Is… This Woman Is…', Brisbane: Queensland Art Gallery, [Public Talk].
Gunn, B. (1985) 'Emu earns recognition for Cairns art student', *The Cairns Post*, 16 Oct, p.5.

FILM NOIR Politique Blanche: This, my son, is your father
Adam Geczy and Mike Parr
QCA Gallery, Brisbane
19 September - 9 November 2003

Simon Wright

Presentation given to Foundation Year Students, October 2003

This project began last year when I looked at our strategy for bringing important contemporary Australian art that had a direct bearing on what was being taught at QCA across a range of areas to the student interface. I was drawn particularly to the ideas that contemporary practice is so full of embedded information that we experience almost nothing, and that a condition of 'numbing-down' was in play across social, political and cultural spectra. FILM NOIR : POLITIQUE BLANCHE was also an exercise in putting together some leading Australian artists along with local, emerging artists and staged when collaboration was a central tenet of foundation year studies via the recent Stradbroke Island initiative and its simultaneous exhibition on campus.

Each shared a concern with processes. Processes such as doing performance, documenting performance and utilising post-object art opportunities – stuff like land/eco art, work utilising the body or bodies - and what the exhibition process does to transform such a record of events. Projects like these argue a case for art as a system of information processing where traditional notions of authorship and aesthetics get challenged, and the importance of analysis, concept and process are elevated.

Perhaps the most striking political reality out of this theory of 'the art system' is that it equates roughly the same importance to each facet within 'the system' – be it each artist in the collaboration, gallerist, writer, critic, curator, museum, etc. The challenge is to modernism's romantic claim for the artist as individual genius, or of the alienated, tortured practitioner.

Thought of in these terms, art may not be the closed system so many people have referred to where the system must end, the author must die – or where painting is dead – or whatever – but an open system where it keeps growing at the margins, forging new alliances and allegiances. These exhibitions, for instance, also traversed notions of what 'interdisciplinary' can mean, what intermedia art forms can look like, how performance and installation art can work together, seeking an interplay between notionally singular areas of study such as photography, cinema and film, documentation, drawing, painting, deconstruction, appropriation and art theory.

In considering FILM NOIR : POLITIQUE BLANCHE I think there are some surprisingly curious and useful parallels in thinking between important philosophers of the 20th century and members from Australia's senior indigenous leadership

ranks. I was drawn recently, for instance, to the words of a past ATSIC commissioner when she reasoned that Australia's indigenous and non-indigenous populations actually do share a real common thread – pain. The pain of conviction and military colonisation, of frontier fighting through to relatively recent times, the pain of family break-up and removal, of disease, of poverty, of racism, of jail, of dismissal, of world wars, of terrorism, of being a refugee or migrant.

Theoretical and philosophical positions have developed a similar framework of understanding societies – that each society is based on either violence, or the suppression and control of violence via law and order. Persuasive claims have also been made regarding certain socialisation and political processes which inflict a 'conceptual violence' through distortion

Mike Parr & Adam Geczy
Installation view of *Film Noir : Politique Blanche* 2003
Courtesy of the artists and QCA Gallery

and selectivity. Maybe we can apply this thinking to the way contemporary mass media imagery reinforce particular stereotypes in advertising and the effect it has on body image and self-esteem, or its predilection for macho bravado – like how programming segmentation is marketed at a certain gender. I'm thinking of prime-time TV ads for beer or bras, cars or creams, flavoured milk or fast food, sporting events etc… only the names change.

These representations are also part of the art system mentioned earlier, as they intersect with popular culture, literature, philosophy, politics, museums and any number of other source materials for art. Ways to critique notions of 'representation' can be found in further investigations of language and power structures. In her seminal work: "Powers of Horror; An Essay on Abjection" Julia Kristeva described the concept of the *abject* in relation to methods of representation. For this presentation the best way to describe the abject may be to think of someone who literally cannot stand the sight of a man nailing his arm to a wall… they have discovered for themselves the abject when that feeling of sickness arises following such a graphic scene.

Kristeva tells us the abject is an ambiguous condition, or zone, just beyond that which can be consciously coped with, by either the individual or society, and the anxiety that arises when that zone is encountered… The abject is emerging as a rich ground for artists here and abroad to explore… particularly in light of September 11 or if you subscribe to the notion that anxiety is an ongoing condition under which we live and work, travel and play.

Some of you might have seen Sebastian Moody's clever text piece painted in blood red on the walls of the old IMA building in Fortitude Valley: "Let's leave the abject out of it…" I think he's sort of saying, "don't mention the war". Adam Geczy and Mike Parr are other artists who deal in such limits to find and expose personal and public 'abject' zones, or in another way of thinking, 'comfort zones'.

Parr's endurance performances are well known, beginning in the 1970's with enactments of limb severing, leg burning, and more recently lip sewing, branding himself with the words 'alien' or 'artist' and a subject of this exhibition, his arm-nailing performance. It's really important to note here that this work by the artist is conceived in much the same environment as you would yours – these pieces are done in studios, rooms or galleries with only an assistant, medical practitioner and documenter – what you might say were studio assistants. This crucial distance, between the creation of the work and its audience means he does not rely on, nor want, the sensationalist dimension of a live audience. What we see is completely mediated and constructed for the artists concerned. So, whilst this work is clearly about process in art, it is very much also about the process of responding to art.

Geczy deliberately problematises Parr's action further. In this specific exhibition, they open themselves to the criticism of 'taking away' from the 'real' experiences of detained asylum seekers. This is despite the fact that for many making the claim, it has been the first time they or audience members have really spent considering the issue of art's role in dealing with it. With contemporary Australia made up of a variety of cultural groups, Geczy and Parr do not necessarily try to influence society as a whole, but hope to affect the way individuals think, feel and act as a result of an encounter with art. Using political motives to create and interpret art may provoke an audience to make critical responses to social issues…. even art as a social issue. Yet, it's clear art of this nature attracts criticism, such as the recent Courier-Mail review of FILM NOIR : POLITIQUE BLANCHE. We need to realise the wider, positive, ramifications of this.

So, how does this work by Geczy and Parr deal with such issues, or make broader claims for art's capacity to refer to anything outside of itself? To me, the fact we might be brought this far with such an apparently 'minimal' artwork indicates its rigour and depth. First and foremost is my proposition that Geczy and Parr's installation adheres to a systems-based aesthetic, overriding any concern for traditional notions of aesthetics, performance, documentation, authorship. They deliberately operate at levels that do not conform to stereotypes about art, or pre-conceptions of the audience. In fact – the most politically potent message from the installation is not so much the individualising of John Howard or conservative politics; it's the fact that they highlight how social life today is increasingly characterised by subjects 'closed off' from actual discussion, awareness, action and debate.

In times when contemporary art's complicity with consumerism and marketing of surface and style is at all time highs, how dare a work of art be so political, how dare a work of art be so conceptual, so impenetrable, so non-art? Geczy and Parr's installation, for me at least, really brings out the strength in the argument that anything that does not conform to pre-conceptions and stereotypes is to be dismissed, treated with derision, and tagged 'unAustralian'. This is a curious term, particularly in light of enduring national myths such as free speech, a 'fair go', or backing the underdog.

Think about the rhetoric of government and public commentators when they said, in response to Bob Brown's demonstration on the floor of parliament during George Bush's visit, 'there's a time and a place for that sort of thing', or that his actions in speaking out were 'unAustralian'. Brown knows as well as the rest of us that Bush's visit was stage-managed to within a nanosecond of its 21 hour itinerary and that, in fact, the only time and place was there and then. The point is to keep a lid on things, to suppress emotion and debate, thinking and protest. To be relaxed and comfortable, and in other words, conditioned not rock the boat … avoid the abject … Let's leave the abject out of it.

In this perverse investigation of social and political mores, Geczy and Parr ponder how such a spectacle is packaged and dealt with. Here, in the comfort zone, watching violence, despair, disorder, marriages to strangers, relationship breakdowns, the fabrication of celebrity, further conditioning denies the abject – that point at which we feel compelled to do something – vomit, protest, act, whatever. They argue this conditioning and other systems that transmit it also reinforce it, and that television or uncritical art for example, are complicit. It's about ratings, advertiser revenue, product visibility, sales and investment, personality as brand.

Their installation, in myriad ways, refers to these relentless routines: an endless repetitive soundtrack of film going through old style projection machines, as a reminder of whose interests are being projected into our living rooms. Or stacks of TV and video monitors backing each other up with the same message as a reminder of conformity across providers. Or a film on constant loop, reminiscent of the repeated programming we see from political and media outlets or a screen of permanent white-noise as a metaphor for the ubiquity of distortion or the simplistic notion of turning complex issues into black or white.

Again there seem to be references to European art-historical tendencies here – via artists like Hermann Nitsch or Arnulf Rainer – to look inside the 'self' as a site for social investigation… in particular we might think of the Hungarian script around the walls of the gallery describing events in WWII, recalling previous attempts at garnering mass psychology and state control.

Those at the artist's talk for FILM NOIR : POLITIQUE BLANCHE will recall Geczy and Parr's description of their next project "The Zippity Do-Da of Mass Fascism", which is a fantastic piss-take on an hypothetical populace in the face of manipulated cultural development – an almost blasé "who cares" as Rome burns. While this might seem cynical to some, for others it is an attempt to highlight the increasingly elusive boundary between virtual reality and what is real.

Is it any real surprise that at times when politics and politicians are at the bottom rung of perceptions about honesty, relevance, and effectiveness they seem to be the last people able to counteract the situation? It might, for instance, open a can of worms. Better perhaps, to adopt a variant of democracy where it's optional to vote – so that barely 28% of the population actually does, like the solution adopted by The United States Government. Locally, other highly orchestrated responses are offered which actually do reinforce cynicism rather than trust. Take Tony Abbott's recent 'Australians for Honest Politicians' anti-Hanson front, or Beattie's Charter for Budget Honesty, or Reith's handling of the Children overboard affair, each an exercise in 'representation', or spin doctoring.

What I've tried to do here is ground the work in the world, today, rather than solely in the rarefied domain of 1960's conceptual art. I've attempted this by referring to the artist's enunciation of a 'systems aesthetic', beginning with the idea of all art being brought about via the act of processing information. Sure, the show 'looks good', but I hope I'm steadily building a bigger picture where we might begin to appreciate the beauty of the concepts and ideas woven through the space.

Here 1960's art is important to think about briefly, as it was motivated by similar desires we've mapped out now. There was a desire to relate art to discourses external to art; a move away from traditional aesthetics; a systems approach to art information; and the deconstruction of the individual artist as author, in favour of collaborative strategies and commodity-resistant art forms. In the same way we might look at how this contributed in the 1970's to working against the traditional notion of the unique and precious art object, and the rise of appropriation from mass media sources to question underlying messages inherent in such communication systems, so much a major part of art during the1980's and beyond.

We might see how Geczy and Parr have utilised these histories and moved previous thinking about the body and identity from

Mike Parr & Adam Geczy
Installation view of *Film Noir : Politique Blanche* 2003
Courtesy of the artists and QCA Gallery

Mike Parr & Adam Geczy
Installation view of *Film Noir : Politique Blanche* 2003
Courtesy of the artists and QCA Gallery

a 'precious temple' or fixed state, to a fluid proposition about changing identities and malleable entities. We might also recognise their major contribution in understanding how documentation can be aestheticised as part of an installation, and how such systems are as much a part of artistic practice as the artists themselves.

Clearly it's not a passive aesthetic, it's both a matter of "sensation having" and of "information getting", reinforcing my earlier reasoning as to why this piece does not conform to contemporary expectations for art, or as to why it is not simply about pain.

By foregrounding the importance of these systems, and in a sense appropriating the logic of many of them, we realise their project is also addressing the Duchampian idea of the readymade – another deconstructive effort at backgrounding the 'input' of the artist. Such readymade systems have already been referred to – socialisation systems [family, school, art college etc], mass media systems, policy and government systems, contemporary art systems, art historical systems and so on. The fact that the work itself is only obtainable through photographic and filmic re-staging also emphasises the subjugation of the author and of the performer, performance and trauma.

Here photo-documentation of a performance is transformed into an installation, evolving into something more self-reflexive and self-critical. Combined with other elements such as text and sound it becomes a discursive tool, a trigger, and a good argument as to why the work should not be understood as 'minimal'. Because the text and images are able to generate socially relevant meaning, it clearly transcends minimalist formalism and denies a connection to Clement Greenberg's claim that minimal art is stripped back to emit nothing more than itself – his truth of materials proposition, where the medium and its limit seemed the big issue for art. Like that of another Australian artist, Imants Tillers, Geczy and Parr's work, by contrast, argues for an analysis of visual meaning which defines signs as both structurally constituted within language and other systems, as well as grounded in the referents of social and political experience. Their analysis develops a socio-critical line that eventually leads to a clearer understanding of the visual rhetoric used to reinforce existing paradigms and ideological frameworks.

For some, the theatrics and drama are distracting from the project, and further focus for criticism. For others, it is the very fact of this theatricality, usually situated in performance, film and photography [the three major components of this exhibition] that best represent the break with modernist tradition. Such a preoccupation with the theatrical allowed some to suggest it was the launch of intermedia art forms, of interdisciplinary approaches situated between, or outside the individual arts, with the result that the integrity of the various mediums – those categories the exploration of whose essences and limits constituted the very project of modernism – were now rendered meaningless.

My brief understanding of this work should now be a bit clearer, as should its relation to art systems theory, the real world, and why it is severed from modernism and minimalism, rooted in the deconstructive tendencies of postmodernism. We might better consider it a multi-layered contemporary artwork operating at the level of concept and installation, rather than expecting it to conform to traditional notions of aesthetics or authorial primacy. We might also see how it constructs a myth of its own – another sign of important art for me – or more precisely, how myth is best deconstructed by counter-myth. Buchloh, following after Roland Barthes, calls this 'secondary mythification'.

What is the secondary mythification of FILM NOIR : POLITIQUE BLANCHE? I think it is the argument that what is staged in this installation is not the 'physicality' of pain but the way 'representation' is staged within the texts of government rhetoric, media coverage of issues such as refugees, terrorism, and individual artist projects like Parr's performances and Geczy's uncanny mirroring of the mannerisms of film noir. Pain, through the vehicle of self-mutilation is, rather, another reminder of exploitation, of the abject, of the voyeuristic nature of the audience, of systems of perception.

Their ways seem subversive, just as the primary myths they address, but Geczy and Parr are deliberate, self-interested and, finally, transparent for those who are students of communication, aesthetic and political systems. This transparency has revealed several triggers – several rhetorics – used by these artists to communicate concepts behind the work and to allow the viewer an insight into what is being attempted and how it could be that it might be read as a vastly intricate and political work. The triggers are numerous, beginning with the title, which translates to 'white politics' or 'white policies'. Other rhetorics we see immediately include strategies of performance, painterly devices such as the bleeding text and 'action' of the drips, referring to abstract expressionism. In FILM NOIR : POLITIQUE BLANCHE this referent to expression is masked by veils layers of thin black paint… the shadow of suppression?

More importantly, for me at least, are a whole raft of references to systems – televisual, mass communicative, political and governmental, linguistic and visual. By focussing on systems you'll see a clearer science behind the work, and perhaps a better idea of the systems that operate around and on you every day – like that of the art education system this very minute.

To conclude; take some simple propositions raised by this work, such as: "I make art to be exhibited in front of an audience". Take another proposition; "Making art, art exhibitions, and audiences are part of an art system". In this sense, as argued by Coulter-Smith, the artist produces raw data to make new codes, and critics, magazines, galleries, museums, collectors and historians all exist to create information out of the unprocessed art data… hence, the institutions which produce data are as important components of the system as the producer of data.

In presenting this, my challenge to foundation year students of QCA was to be increasingly aware of the abject and important contemporary Australian artists, to read and look more and more at art, and to realise that if we don't, and the next generation of artists follow our lead, and so on, then it will be our actions – or inaction – that has an effect on the total art information produced, and that increasingly, it'll be writers, critics, historians, dealers and so on who will generate actual art information.

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LOCAL LISTINGS

Bellas Gallery (Cnr James & Roberston St, Fortitude Valley)
8 – 29 Nov *Somebody's Son* Scott Redford (Opening 4pm 8 Nov)
2-20 Dec Tim Johnson

EA (Emerging Artists) (Lv 2 381 Brunswick St)
11 Nov (5:30pm) *Where are you from?* Crossing over disciplines

The Farm (358 George St)
7 Nov *post-performance* Timothy Kendall Edser, Simone Hine, Jess Hynd, Katherine Taube & Jemima Wyman, curated by Chris Handran & Rachael Haynes (Opening 6pm one-night only)
14 Nov – 6 Dec *Confetti* Rachael Haynes (Opening 6pm 14 Nov)

Fire-Works Gallery (11 Stratton St, Fortitude Valley)
14 Nov – 20 Dec *What have you done lately (to change the situation?)* (Opening 6pm 14 Nov)
14 – 15 Nov *New Flames*: Andrea Fisher & Tony Albert (Opening 6pm 14 Nov)

Institute of Modern Art (Judith Wright Center, Brunswick St, Fortitude Valley)
Until 29 Nov *Gulliver's Travels*: Tim Silver, Callum Morton, Louise Weaver, Matt Calvert, Charles Robb, Beata Batorowicz, Louise Paramour, Katie Moore, Ricky Swallow, Craige Andrae, Timothy Horn and Richard Giblett, James Angus, Curated by Stuart Koop
13 Dec – 29 Jan Michael Zavros, Gina Tornatore, Sarah Ryan, Judith Kentish & Rodrick Bunter (Opening 4pm 13 Dec)
13 Dec IMA cocktail party from 4pm

Metro Arts Development Space (Lv 1, 109 Edward St)
Until 21 Nov *A ladybeetle whispers the story of the Rabbit in the Moon to a dead bee* Lucy Griggs
25 – 29 Nov *Playful in the Ambiguity of Form* Laura Hill (Opening 6pm 25 Nov)

Museum of Brisbane (City Hall, King George Square)
Until *One Square Mile*, *Face of Brisbane, Bite the Blue Sky* & Fatu Feu'u *Ifoga*

Palace Gallery (Merivale St)
Until 10 Nov *Nose* Dirk Yates

Pestorius Sweeney House (39 Eblin Drive Hamilton)
15 Nov – 13 Dec Stephen Bram (Opening 1pm 15 Nov)

QCA Gallery (South Bank)
Until 9 Nov *FILM NOIR Politique Blanche: This, my son, is your father* Adam Geczy / Mike Parr
15 Nov – 4 Jan *The THIESS Art Prize 2003*

Queensland Art Gallery (South Brisbane)
Until 9 Nov *Story Place: Indigenous Art of Cape York and the Rainforest*
8 Nov *Lost and Found (kids exhibition)*
15 Nov *Conceptualism in Brisbane*

QUT (H-Block, Kelvin Grove Campus)
12 Nov *Swarm* Honours Graduate Exhibition (Opening 6pm 12 Nov)

Studio 11 (Lv 3 Metro Arts, 109 Edward St)
19 Nov Eugene & Leighton Craig, curated by Sandra Selig (Opening 6pm, one-night only)

University Art Museum (UQ, St Lucia)
Until 22 Nov *1962: Selected works 1983 – 1992* Scott Redford

Local Art is a series of free print and online publications with the intention of generating decisive responses to the "emerging art" scene in Brisbane. *Local Art*'s content focuses on the work of local emerging artists, writers and art-workers. With this said, the publication does not take these premises as limitations, rather it endeavours to explore contiguous fields as a means of contextualising local contemporary practices and discourses.

Local Art is currently calling for expressions of interest and content submissions. As *Local Art's* generous funding through Arts Queensland has expired, it is unlikely that *Local Art* will be able to pay contributors in the immediate future. Content can range from exhibition reviews to artist's writings, artist pages, interviews and critical essays.

The next content deadline is for a special Straight Out of Brisbane issue on November 21st.

If you would like more information about *Local Art* or are interested in contributing, please contact The Farm or any of the *Local Art* editors: Sally Brand, Natalya Hughes, Grant Stevens and Dirk Yates (thefarm@thefarmspace.com, sallybrand@hotmail.com natalyaks@hotmail.com, grant@thefarmspace.com, dirk@thefarmspace.com).

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For the online version of *Local Art* visit www.thefarmspace.com and follow the links from the main menu.

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LOCAL ART

LOCAL ART - ISSUE 9 DECEMBER 2003 - STRAIGHT OUT OF BRISBANE ISSUE

IN HETEROTOPIA: Visual Arts Program
Straight Out of Brisbane Festival
3-7 December 2003

Sally Brand and Amanda Cuyler

In recent years, and most severely in the last twelve months, Brisbane has seen a stark decline in the number of artist run gallery spaces. Immense commercial and residential redevelopment in the inner city and corresponding rising rent prices have made it increasingly difficult to locate accessible and affordable spaces for artist-run initiatives. As a result, walking the streets of Fortitude Valley today, one is hard pressed to see the bubbling hub of Brisbane's so called "cultural precinct". Instead it is an increasingly gentrified area with newly constructed drab cement buildings and more bars catering for a more conservative audience. This however does not necessarily mean that local artists and artworkers have merely ceased cultural production. Rather, in the face of such developments, artistic practices that work outside the preordained gallery space and those produced in bedrooms, on kitchen tables and in backyards across Brisbane have strengthened. What we find in Brisbane's arts scene today is a small proportion of artist-run gallery spaces such as The Farm in Brisbane's CBD and more frequently projects such as Peer Projects and Space Project which instigate temporary viewings, studio openings, one night/day shows and migrating art spaces. There is also a growing number of artists working into the night and taking to the streets, a task easily achieved in our balmy climate, to intervene with public spaces by adhering posters, stickers, stencils and text messages.

When given the task of producing a visual art program for the 2003 Straight Out of Brisbane Festival, we too had to recognize that with our incredibly limited budget, the acquisition of affordable exhibition space would be near impossible. Simultaneous with this swift realisation was a recognition of the plethora of practices already in existence working outside institutionalised spaces. Consequently, in July this year we sent out our call for submissions seeking proposals that would work within the difficult climate of a Brisbane summer, a terrain equipped with tropical downpours, sticky heat and angry sweaty pedestrians. On the footpaths, on road corners, in cars, in empty buildings, in the air, on walls, in the day, in the night, anywhere and any time, we called for projects that would punctuate the heat and break through the usual summer lax. We were overcome by the quantity, quality and diversity of proposals we received and by early October had secured a program involving over twenty exhibition projects with over sixty of Brisbane's emerging and independent artists.

Reading through the Straight Out of Brisbane general program one is not only struck by the festival's amazingly busy schedule, with 150 different events jammed into five days, but also by the incredible diversity of projects,

Miranda Williams
Self-Portrait 2003
Oil on glass
Courtesy of the artist

panels and gigs all under its banner. Similarly, the festival's visual arts program itself incorporates a great depth and diversity of projects, even though the curatorial rationale, which calls for projects in exterior spaces, could be seen as relatively limiting. In fact, even amongst projects that particularly resonate with our curatorial rationale a broad range of content and approaches emerge. Projects such as the "Alley Project", "Fame Jealousy Project", "Space Project", "Random Acts of Horticulture", "Peer Space", "Exquisite Corpse" as well as "Dusk" and "In Heterotopia" are those which have not necessarily sought permission to use the public spaces with which they wish to intervene. On the other hand, projects such as "Sit With Me" a table cloth installation by Ciel Fuller at Fat Boys and Ric's Café; "Drive-Thru" an exhibition in the alley at Metro Arts; "Activity" a mural by Dan Brock on the exterior wall of Dooley's Hotel; "Loose Threads" a shop front exhibition and the "Empty Sound Show" that will use the public announcement system in the TC Beirne Centre are projects organized around the owner approved use of alternative sites. Included as an edition in the SOOB issue of Local Art, is "Tacky" a sticker exhibition which invites you to alter public sites with its tactility. Perhaps Natalya Hughes' sticker design that bluntly states "NASTY PUT SOME CLOTHES ON" will be plastered across the Holly Valance/Pepsi ads currently gracing many of our inner city bus shelters?

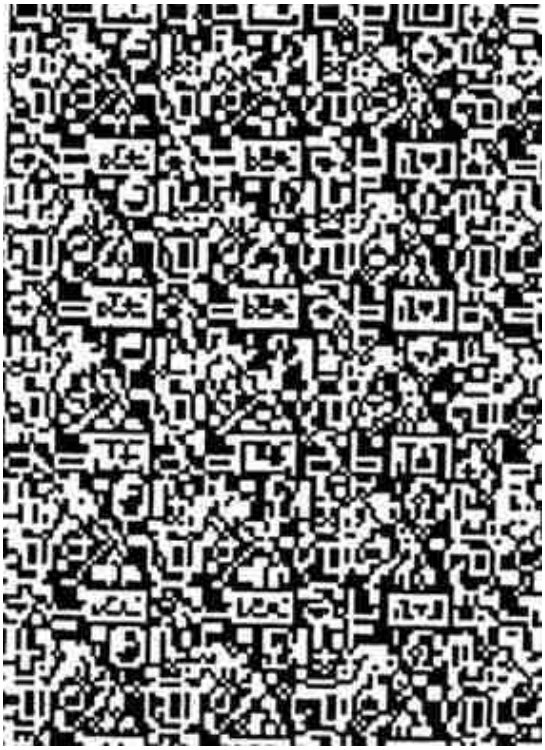
In compiling our program we not only focused on artists employing alternative exhibition spaces but also felt that artists should receive high exposure via their inclusion in the festival. The SOOB festival is constructed as a platform for the professional development and promotion for artists across a wide range of practices. Hence, we were keen to include a number of critical exhibitions

occurring concurrently with the festival period such as Rachael Haynes' "Confetti" at The Farm, Miranda Williams' "Live With It" at Metro Arts Development Space and the "Christmas Sellout" at Studio11. In this sense, we have often spoken about the visual arts program, quite cheekily, as being partially 'pilfered' or 'purloined'.

This drive for exposing great emerging talent to the broader public was also an impetus for the "Toys88" daily video show; the "Loose Threads" shop front exhibition curated by Jose Da Silva and project managed by Liz Watson; and B.A.D a day of installations, experimental sounds, performances, web-casts and animations at Ric's Bar. "Neo-Contre", an exhibition responding to neo conservative politics, and "See You No More", an exhibition centred on an exploration of gay male subjectivity and its formation in visual discourses, are two projects which also foreground the exposure of critical opinions and topics often taboo in mainstream media.

With the hard yards put in by the SOOB management team, the festival has been able to secure spaces for exhibition projects, a task initially thought impossible. These spaces include the empty shops in the TC Beirne Centre which have been used for the hanging of the "Here, Now" photographic exhibition, "Inscribed" a performance by Simone Hine as well as presenting the "Neo-Contre" exhibition and the "Toys88" video screenings. We also have been able to access to the SOOB Festival Club which will host our visual arts party "Homebrew".

After introducing the program for you here, we would like to mention that we do realise its enormity and the need for phenomenal time-management in order to physically attend every visual arts project within the five-day period. For this reason we have incorporated ideas of heterotopias, as discussed by Michel Foucault to



Artist unknown
In Heterotopia poster 2003
Courtesy of SOOB

Grant Stevens
Video stills from *Danger Zone* 2003
Courtesy of the artist

anchor our curatorial rationale within a conceptual framework. Following this agenda we then specifically curated a number of artists for a site-specific poster show "In Heterotopia" and daily migrating sound show "Dusk".

It is in his text "Of Other Spaces" that Foucault sets out the principles of heterotopias. He begins by speaking of our present time as above all an epoch of space and that "our experience of the world is less that of a long life developing through time than a network that connects points and intersects with its own skein"[1]. For Foucault, the spaces in which people live and interact is never void nor even in contemporary times entirely desanctified. Rather, the spaces in which we participate are infinitely textured and thoroughly imbued with quantities[2]. Foucault then goes on to consider the idea of 'heterotopias' as spaces that assume many varied forms, purposes and uses and exist in every culture. A most important feature of heterotopias is that while they relate to all other sites, they exist in such a way as to suspect, neutralize, or invert the set of relations that preexist[3]. For "In Heterotopia" and "Dusk" we invited local artists to take part in the creation of a heterotopia, geographically existing in Brisbane's Fortitude Valley, that would "create a space of illusion which exposes every real space, all sites inside which human life is partitioned, as still more illusory", a particular role of heterotopias which Foucault identifies[4]. "In Heterotopia" we envisage will interfere with pre-existing sites to create new and different spaces and passages within that world. The "Dusk" project too, will create alternate micro worlds, transforming spaces with pulsating air particles. Jesse Sullivan, one "Dusk" artist, hopes to bombard public sites of leisure and comfort with war movie noises. This is a gesture that will most definitely temporarily alter the dynamics of the space and simulate an inversion of expected rituals that usually fill a hot lazy evening during Brisbane's festive season.

So strap on your sandals and slip, slop and slap. Walk into Fortitude Valley during the 2003 Straight Out of Brisbane Festival and sidetrack those sports bars. Amongst the drab cement and corporate culture the visual arts program will be vibrantly visible. You won't even need to look. It will find you.

1. Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces", *Diacritics* no. 16, 1986, p. 22.
2. Ibid., p. 23.
3. Ibid., p. 24.
4. Ibid., p. 27.

L to R from top: 1. Tony Albert, 2. Archie Moore, 3. Shawn Weston, 4. Louise Terry, 5. Lucy Griggs, 6. Grant Dale, 7. Kitty Taube, 8. Ken Leslie, 9. Natalya Hughes, 10. Dirk Yates, 11. David Spooner, 12. Amanda Cuyler, 13. Thea Baumann, 14. Peter Alwast, 15. Chris Howlett, 16. Emma Boyes

SOOB PREVIEW
Terrain and transfiguration: the subtle art of Luke Jaaniste

Victoria Bladen

One of the focus themes of the Straight Out Of Brisbane festival is to take art away from the controlled environment of the gallery space and instead site it in the 'real world' of the urban landscape with the heat, sweat and unpredictability of external elements. The work of Brisbane artist Luke Jaaniste will do just that with his natural installation of planted seeds in various public grassed areas around Fortitude Valley and New Farm. The seeds will be planted in geometric patterns prior to the commencement of the festival and will spring up to transform existing landscapes physically and metaphorically.

The multi-talented Jaaniste has a background in composition, sound art, poetry, performance and visual art. He is currently engaged in a PhD at Queensland University of Technology Creative industries with dual supervision from music and visual arts. He is interested in the concept of "making space". This describes his approach to making work which defines, inflects and critiques our experience of context, site and space. In approaching his work, Jaaniste begins with the physical site and what it gives him in terms of dimensions, states and relation to human traffic.

Jaaniste is interested in creating work that is ephemeral and temporal, which may relate to his musical background, as there are certain parallels between temporal site installations and the nature of the intangible beauty of music. He also describes the traits of his work to include the automatic, in that once initiated, the work has a life of its own. The seed patterns generated in his current project will have their own processes and may evolve in unpredictable ways. Jaaniste will be recording this evolving process.

The unpredictability of such processes can create new inspirations. Jaaniste conceived the idea for his current installation from an earlier project. Last year he was involved in the temporary public art project Art Built-In at South Bank Parklands where he spray-painted the shadows cast by trees directly onto the grass for *Photo Synthesis*. Prior to this he was playing with the idea of creating works with birdseed arranged on the grass, which was intended to attract the birds and be slowly eaten up. The inner-city birds, used to a diet of junk food, in fact were not interested, but in the process of testing birdseed at his home, Jaaniste noticed that the seed soon sprouted, creating lush green organic art in his garden.

Luke Jaaniste
View of *Photo-Synthesis* 2002
Courtesy of the artist

Luke Jaaniste
View of *Photo-Synthesis* 2002
Courtesy of the artist

Jaaniste's work for SOOB will invert the usual gallery process whereby viewers come to the space, expecting to view and contemplate specific works. Instead, viewers will come across the green installation most likely by accident; driving by or walking past or even on the installations. Creatures other than humans will no doubt also be interacting with them. Thus public landscaped terrain will be transformed into an external, natural gallery, challenging assumptions of what constitutes gallery space, and the circumstances under which we interact with art.

Luke Jaaniste
View of *Photo-Synthesis* 2002
Courtesy of the artist

Gardens, public and private, have long been sites for cultural exploration of the fluid boundaries between what we conceive of as 'art' and 'nature'. Man, as maker of the 'artificial', is nevertheless part of the matrix of nature. At the same time there is little, if any, 'natural landscape' that has not been shaped, marked or altered by man. The concept of the garden is one whereby man seeks to control and define natural elements, perhaps in some way to subvert the primeval fear of wilderness and the natural processes of growth and decay. Such processes are treated as aberrations by contemporary culture, rather than accepted as part of the natural cycles which man is part of. So, we try to contain and order what sprouts and spreads. We mow, prune and pull; removing what we construct as 'waste'. Our public green spaces are perhaps in some way a sterilized utopian notion of nature which doesn't impede or challenge us.

Jaaniste's work will explore in subtle ways our impetus to shape nature and the potential of artistic engagement with natural processes that speak quietly to those who notice. Viewers may be bemused or confused but many will delight in the beauty of the unexpected and the gentle transfiguration of landscaped terrain.

Ric Aqui

What was the best artwork you saw in 2003?
Callum Morton Habitat, Ian Potter Center, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
What was the best group exhibition you saw in 2003?
Gulliver's Travels and Lucy Orta and Gary Carsley, Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane
Which Brisbane artist will be big in 2004?
Sandra Selig
What nationality is Vanessa Beecroft?
Italian
Who would play you in a movie about the Brisbane art world?
Winona Ryder

Amanda Cuyler

What was the best artwork you saw in 2003?
The *Portal* exhibition at the Palace Gallery
What was the best group exhibition you saw in 2003?
An exhibition of international artist books, instigated by the Clubs Project Inc. in the backroom of a pub lit by a chandelier in Melbourne.
Which Brisbane artist will be big in 2004?
All the artists in the Straight Out Of Brisbane visual arts program
What nationality is Vanessa Beecroft?
British
Who would play you in a movie about the Brisbane art world?
Fabio. I have memories of our perfect time together.

David M. Thomas

What was the best artwork you saw in 2003?
Tracey Emmin at the Art Gallery of NSW. The hype around certain artists like Emmin and the fact that my friend Sophie kept me waiting for an hour or so, put me in a situation which made it easy to have a bad art experience. But good work levels and neutralises all your baggage and changes you.
What was the best group exhibition you saw in 2003?
I don't like group shows generally and have no way of comparing them. Having said that I'm organising two next year, one called UN-SKINNY POP at the Farm in April, and POST CONCEPTUAL PAINTING at the IMA in June.
Which Brisbane artist will be big in 2004?
Vanessa Beecroft
What nationality is Vanessa Beecroft?
I've answered that already. Suzanne said I should change my name to Vanessa Beer-Croft. You have to have a name that sounds like a character from an adventure video game to get anywhere.
Who would play you in a movie about the Brisbane art world?
Yoshi, a small green lizard-like character with a big nose, from the video game Super Mario cart.

Simon Wright

What was the best artwork you saw in 2003?
A video/painting installation by Ugo Rondinone at MCA
What was the best group exhibition you saw in 2003?
Fieldwork at NGV / Storyplace at QAG
Which Brisbane artist will be big in 2004?
Quan Yeomans
What nationality is Vanessa Beecroft?
She's Italian
Who would play you in a movie about the Brisbane artworld?
Chevvy Chase

Genevieve Canavan

What was the best artwork you saw in 2003?
Daniel Templeman *Invitation* at The Farm, Brisbane
What was the best group exhibition you saw in 2003?
Op-Shop at Studio 11, Brisbane
Which Brisbane artist will be big in 2004?
Lucy Griggs
What nationality is Vanessa Beecroft?
South African
Who would play you in a movie about the Brisbane art world?
Lucille Ball

CRITICAL DISCOURSE IN BRISBANE: Where is it now?
Presented at the Straight Out Of Brisbane festival, 2002

Linda Carroli

In my invitation to this forum, I was asked to address “Critical Discourse in Brisbane - where is it now” in the following way: "where and how criticism is written and published, addressing the idea that there is a perceived lack of critical writing in Brisbane." Before I tackle these questions, I want to first step back in time because 'now' implies a 'then', and a process of change. So last Sunday morning, I was scanning my shelves and flipping through pages to find an image of 'then' that I might be able to use to give some shape to 'now'. I found the papers for the 1992 IMA Symposium, Shift: Critical Strategies which sought to elucidate a then crisis of criticism. It seemed a very comfortable step back in time given that Shift occurred a rather metric decade ago. In the introduction to the Shift papers, Nick Tsoutas, then the Director of the IMA, wrote:

> *… the conference sought to provoke debate by suggesting that in fact a 'shift' in criticism was taking place in the 90s, or was at least imminent. It suggested that criticism in the 80s had reached an impasse … It appeared moreover that in the nineties there has been something akin to a witchhunt against the former primacy of [capital T] Theory … A strategic gulf appears to divide those who adopt a sophisticated (if almost evangelical) theoretical position … and those who seek to restore to criticism a more 'rational', even life-affirming logic, and with it the primacy of the artist, the artwork and the world as we know it.*[1]

That suffices to establish one picture of 'then' as represented by a primary cultural locus in Brisbane. I am not that confident that I can speculate with such certainty about what the situation is now. Instead of articulating a position about the 'now' of critical writing, I will present some scenarios.

I
First, I want to notionally address the pejorative conflation of criticism, writing and publishing. It assumes that the only worthy criticism is written and then published in print form. And this is a conservative view that perpetuates an economy of waste or 'excess' and marginalisation. Neither of these things is inherently bad or even undesirable. However, when I recently picked up a copy of the recently released anthology of Queensland fiction and non-fiction, *Hot Iron Corrugated Sky*, I noted that it did not include any arts writing. It's a glaring omission. That anthology also didn't include any work by writers working in electronic media but that's another story. This is a hegemony and hierarchy of print-based criticism and publishing that severs other possibilities. Part of what I would like to do in this presentation is wrest the practice of criticism away from that kind of academically grounded, print based model.

My example of *Hot Iron Corrugated Sky* is an example of where and how criticism is not published: not as pleasurable, writerly or readerly work in a literary anthology.

II
Without embarking on a trajectory of definition, my preferred way of addressing 'critical writing' is as 'arts writing' and sometimes as 'cultural writing' because I think it is a more inclusive way of looking at it. It's also important for me to acknowledge the plurality of art writing and to consider that it doesn't necessarily involve 'writing' as such. For me, this practice involves making art, reading art and writing art within, across or for diverse literacies and textualities. A sense of ambiguity, of fold, of in-betweenness and exchange emerges from art writing, variously as pretext, context, intertext, hypertext, postext.

III
The economy of writing art seems to warrant no debate beyond, as occurred several years ago, a one-off government project in which it was pointedly stated that the primary purpose of art writing is to promote art and develop audiences. During the federal government's recent Contemporary Visual Art and Craft Inquiry chaired by Rupert Myer, submissions on art publishing were canvassed. The Inquiry acknowledged that art publishing and writing is an integral part of the contemporary visual arts and craft sector, "providing an essential forum for documentation and criticism and for the promotion of contemporary work nationally and internationally. It contributes to education and audience development, marketing and advocacy."[2] In a similar vein, in the study, Experimental Art in Queensland, 1975 - 1995, various writers and writing which have flourished with experimental contemporary art practices are mentioned. An almost mercenary relationship is alluded to: "In order to enter the permanent canon of Australian art, an artist has to be provided with a critical text by a writer who is actively networked in the southern critical circles."[3]

Do these texts really exist purely for the purposes of extrapolating and contextualising artworks or for merely supporting commercial interests or the careers of individual artists? On one level, writing is assumed to add weight to work, especially for those from less fashionable geographies. The 'weightier' the writer, the more likely interstate and international recognition. A hierarchy is charted between literacy and postliteracy, between word and image, between centre and periphery, between artist and writer. Voice is all important. The critic has typically been a male authority whose words act as sanction, who issues an objective judgment and truth about what 'real' art is and who speaks from a rarefied intellectual space. Without naming names, in the mainstream press in particular, just look at how some 'critics' wear or have worn that badge.

IV
Now, I want to turn my attention to this question of a perceived lack of critical writing in our city and ask 'what would an appropriate amount of critical writing look or feel like?' If there is a lack of critical writing, it does not necessarily mean we do not have a critical culture or critical discourse or critical languages or critical practices here. We need to be wary of the pre-eminence of not only the written word but the manner in which authority is constructed.

'Lack' is a word that bothers me. If something is lacking, it can be taken to mean that: we do not have enough; or there is not enough to go around; or something is

missing, wanting or needed; or what we have is not good enough. So there are both qualitative and quantitative implications of this word 'lack'. Moreover, there are also theoretical associations of the word as in Freud's notion that women are lacking and therefore incomplete. I think it is fair to say that 'lack', in any of these understandings, infers that there is some optimal situation that we feel compelled to strive towards or fulfill. It's not only about desire but also otherness and some residual Cartesian logic.

I concur that there is a limited amount of column inches in our arts journals, newspapers and catalogues and that Brisbane is often underrepresented or unrepresented in national and international arts publications. There is a current trend that journals, despite increasing readerships, are reducing the number of issues per year or pages per issue due to financial constraints. Subsequently, I can't help but feel that when we talk about a lack of critical writing, we are saying we are sick of the economies that prevail in contemporary arts, because those economies do not afford us either a fair or necessary level of resourcing. If this is the case, what really is lacking - cultural investment from institutions, commercial interests and public agencies or critical writing?

V
Like artists, critical or arts writers, especially those that seek to work outside the gamut of academia, work in difficult circumstances. Some of the material circumstances of our practice are documented in the Myer Report which is more focused on arts publishing, artists and art than it is on arts writers. And that's a problem in itself. The issues it identifies include:

- arts publications exist on non-professional editing and writing practices based on volunteer editors, academic and emerging writers
- arts writers are undervalued
- writers fees have decreased in real terms by 10% in the last five years
- regional arts writers are rare: there are few formal training and professional development opportunities for established and aspiring arts writers
- most arts writers in Australia are professional artists, curators and academics, not professional journalists or writers: writers do not make a living from arts writing.

VI
Our current, digital mediascape is purportedly one of possibility and unprecedented access. It is lauded as a do-it-yourself epoch, making available media and modes of communication to increasing numbers of people. Ours is an era in which participation mutates endlessly and ephemeral articulations of space, place and culture erupt. This year, I have seen several exciting do-it-yourself style arts projects in our city. This symposium is one of those. This space, The Farm is another as is TypeSlowly and Ideation. Brisbane, I would like to think, is renowned for these kinds of experimental, differentiated and critical undertakings: cast your minds back a generation to Artwalk Magazine, That Artspace, Space Plenitude, Little Roma Street, John Mills Himself, Triple Zed spaces like Amyls and Sensoria, and numerous other artist-run spaces and zines. There are other generational histories to which I am not privy but we can assume that Brisbane did have its own version of The Salon at some time as well.

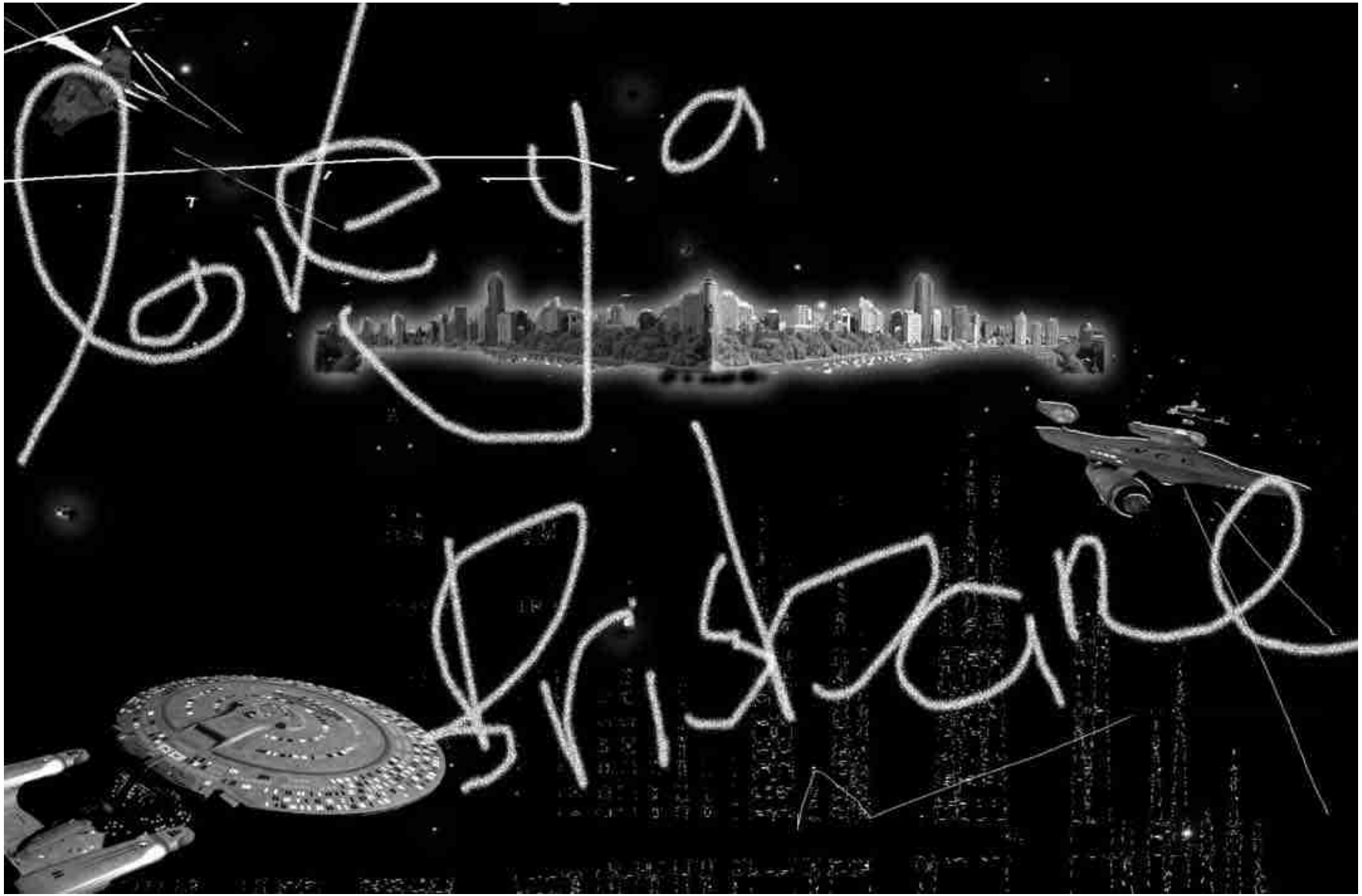
There's a prickling here about not only what constitutes the critical but what constitutes discourse, research and development.

VII
As with most things, context matters. Obviously, I support the notion of artist as critic and draw on activist and indymedia tropes to define art writers and art writing. I lean towards a politicized or ethical framework for our practices. I am disparaging about the currency of 'critical distance' as well as any attempt to hierarchise criticism and theory as more important or more critical than artistic practice in the realm of discourse. We are all networked - intimately involved in or connected to what's going on. The inflections of our identities are ever hyphenated as artist-writer or artist-activist or academic-artist or activist-media-worker or whatever.

What our writings, discussions, spaces and projects have done, do or can do in Brisbane is akin to what Johanna Drucker describes in her discussion of the journal M/E/A/N/I/N/G: "[T]hrough dialogue and articulation [the journal] succeeded in producing a community [- though I prefer the idea of network -] for whom it served a vital purpose: [meaningful] exchange around personal and professional issues directly related to the experience of the artists who wrote and read its pages."[4] As artist, activist, media and writer initiatives, our endeavours join with others where the scratching of overwriting from granting bodies, commerce and institutions has been acutely felt, where the pressure of bureaucratization has pushed process and product into eternal conflict. As resistance and productions, as performances or actions, our works are gestures, articulations of intent, mergings, fractures, webs, excesses, slippages and conversations.

And this is nothing, if not critical.

1. Nick Tsoutas *Shift, Critical Strategies forum papers*, Institute of Modern Art: Brisbane 1992.
2. *Report of the Contemporary Visual Arts and Craft Inquiry*, Commonwealth of Australia: Canberra, 2002. 284
3. Urszula Szulakowska, *Experimental Art in Queensland 1975 - 1995*, Griffith University: Brisbane, 1998. 165
4. Johanna Drucker, 'M/E/A/N/I/N/G: Feminism, Theory, and Art Practice' in Susan Bee & Mira Schor (eds), *M/E/A/N/I/N/G: An Anthology of Artists' Writings, Theory, Criticism*, Duke University Press: Durham. 2000. x



Kellie Vella
Love Ya Brisbane 2003
Courtesy of the artist

THE WHITE ALBUM: Chris Handran
The Farm, Brisbane
10 October – 1 November 2003

Martin Smith

> *"It is not the world out there that is real, nor is the concept within the camera's program – only the photograph is real".*[1]

The walls of the professional photographic lab where Chris Handran's photographs were printed are adorned with images typical of commercial photography: a wedding party smiling insanely against a city sunset, a black and white image of the Taj Mahal and a textural study of bark. It is no wonder then when confronted with Handran's white, form resistant images that the lab manager was ready to call out the technician as if there was a bug in the system, a fly in the ointment. He was looking at photographs deliberately exposed to remove all evidence of conventional commercial photographic mastery and he was unsure how to read them and what the reason was for their creation.

As an audience we have become accustomed to viewing photographs as the trained dog of the photographic commander. Every action is a deliberate manipulation of the photographic program to amaze, amuse and beautify experience whilst marveling at the master's sleight of hand - safe in knowledge of producing pretty pictures for a pretty audience - pandering to society's lust for a better life, a different life than the one we are now living - reducing the wealth of human experience to the authority of a photographic equation.

In contrast to the commercial photographers' deliberate and precise grasp of the their photographic apparatus, Handran's control represents organized chaos. Crafted from a makeshift plastic camera with the shutter detached allowing exposure only through the removal of the lens cap, the hand held camera is then exposed, flooding the film with light and causing the negative to turn black. When printed the image reverses to become luminously white with a faint hint of the represented scene.

Chris Handran
Installation view of *The White Album* 2003
Courtesy of artist and The Farm

Chris Handran
Detail from *The White Album* 2003
Courtesy of artist and The Farm

Vilem Flusser in *Towards a Philosophy of Photography,* describes photographic white as the "total presence of all the elements of oscillation found in light"[2]. Handran's photographs then present us with a smorgasbord of information, too much for the photographic process to record faithfully. It is only after being in the presence of these images for some time that the viewer starts to recognise some forms emanating out of his luxuriously abandoned photographs. The images are developing in our presence, we witness the faint outlines appear as if through the murky red lamp of the chemical darkroom. But the forms that emerge, because of the time spent holding the camera, are blurred fragments of an unrecognizable urban landscape, presenting us with the physicality of the photographic process, similar to a painter's stroke, or a printmakers scrapings.

Handran uses the photographic process as a point of departure; recording the gesture of photographing as opposed to the subject or scene playing out in front of the lens. Experience, memory, time and space are erased to reveal the photographic object, viewed not through "what was there" but "what is there"[3]. A "new state of things"[4], where the intuitive moment to photograph is captured and replayed as we watch the images reveal their secrets in front of our eyes. The photographic process is laid out for us to view – an organic mixture of light, paper and potions presenting an alternate photographic reality. The reality of the photograph is a physical reminder of a physical act one that positions us squarely in the now.

and suddenly a calm washes over me.

1. Flusser Vilem, *Towards a Philosophy of Photography*,1983, Reaktion Books, London. (37)
2. ibid (42)
3. ibid (48)
4. ibid (48)

Ric Aqui
dollars&sense meets christmasloft 2003
Courtesy of the artist

PEERING IN: An Interview With Chris Handran and Rachael Haynes

Grant Stevens

GS: Both of you have been active over a number of years in a variety of ways in the Brisbane art scene. This year you began Peer Projects together, and initiated your first project under that name; a small gallery space in the Metro Arts building called Studio 11. What was the original ambition of Peer Projects and how was Studio 11 conceived in relation to those objectives?

CH & RH: Peer Projects is an artist run initiative through which we want to pursue projects in alternative sites and spaces without being tied into the traditional gallery space. We wanted a structure that was really flexible – projects can shift, change and develop and respond to a particular need or idea at a particular time. We want to provide forums for visual artists that are not currently being provided or not accessible, including exhibitions and publications. The focus of Peer Projects is suggested in the title – projects by artists, for artists.

The particular focus of Studio 11 has been on providing a dedicated space for curated group shows. Studio 11 is literally located in Rachael's studio. The shows are one-night events and the project has a fixed duration (March – December 2003). There have been 10 exhibitions this year involving over 50 artists and 8 curators. Our aim has been to stimulate critical dialogue in the areas of exhibition concepts and practices, including curatorial practice, critical response, collaboration, site-specific practice and aspects of process.

From L to R: Catherine Brown, Anne Wallace and Peter Alwast
Installation view of *Invitational 1 + 1* 2003 at Studio 11
Curated by Rachael Haynes
Courtesy of Peer Projects

GS: Although Studio 11 has had quite a diverse range of exhibitions they all seem to have maintained some kind of 'edginess' or marginality that would perhaps alienate them from the programs of other galleries showing contemporary art in Brisbane. Was this part of Studio 11's initial agenda, or has it emerged through the range of curatorial premises over time?

CH & RH: With Studio 11 it hasn't so much been a matter of us driving the program as it has of setting up the situation to enable interesting things to happen – and they have. The nature of the studio is such that it encourages curators and artists to experiment. The space is intimate in scale and the one night shows allow for quite temporal projects. We had hoped that the curators would pick up on these issues, and we think that they have. The shows have ranged from group shows curated to a theme, to site-specific collaborations and explorations of process. As with all of our projects, we also hope that they help to generate critical dialogue and to ask questions and explore possibilities in practice, in terms of both curating and making.

GS: Running Peer Projects and Studio 11 must require you to fulfill with a number of roles that are quite different to being individual artists. As artists, how have you dealt with the variety of other jobs such as administration, publicity, designing, curating and writing? And how do you find sharing these responsibilities between the two of you?

Sally Cox from *Tree-house* 2003 at Studio 11
Curated Helen Nicholson
Courtesy of Peer Projects

CH & RH: We both do a lot of these things in the course of our practices as well as in what you might call our employed lives, so from that point of view it hasn't been that much of an issue. It has been more a case of finding time, finding a balance between all these diverse activities. In terms of sharing responsibilities, there are various things that each of us does better or more easily than the other, but everything happens within a constant environment of dialogue and conversation.

GS: Following your individual exhibitions at The Farm[1], a few people suggested to me that your practices seem to be moving closer to each other. Personally, I can see changes in each of your works, but I'm not totally convinced that they are merging. How much has collaborating together on other projects affected your own individual practices?

CH & RH: If there has been any effect, perhaps it has happened for different reasons – it's more like we collaborate because we have this enormous respect and trust of each other's practice and because we are in constant dialogue about each other's work, and that's the same reason that we may influence each other. There are some sensibilities underlying our practices and ideas that resonate – that's partly why we understand each other so well, but also our distinct approaches each play off one another. The view from inside a practice is always vastly different to what one may see from any single exhibition, so while superficially there may be similarities appearing, these shifts are never as great as they may seem.

From L to R:Helen Nicholson, Dirk Yates, Rachael Haynes, Jemima Wyman
Installation view of *Op Shop* 2003 at Studio 11
Curated by Chris Handran
Courtesy of Peer Projects

GS: For the Straight Out of Brisbane Festival there are two Peer Projects: *Peer Space* and *Drive Thru* as well *The Christmas Sell-Out* at Studio 11. How do these projects fit into Peer Projects' agenda?

CH & RH: *Peer Space* is a miniature mobile gallery that will be making appearances at a variety of locations during the festival – basically, it makes a link between the public space of viewing and the private space of the artist's studio. *Drive-Thru* is an exhibition that presents paintings in the Alleyway of the Metro Arts Building – so both projects are very much linked to ideas of space and place, site-specificity and exhibition practice, as well as exploring alternative exhibition sites and concepts. *The Christmas Sell-Out* is the final show for Studio 11, so we are going out with a bit of a bang. It is an art sale rather than a curated show, and a lot of the artists who have been part of the program this year will be featured. The aim is to provide an opportunity for unrepresented artists to sell work - we don't take commission or charge artists to be in the show, so the money goes directly to the artists.

GS: What can we expect from Peer Projects in 2004?

CH & RH: Our first priorities are to publish a catalogue for Studio 11 and develop a Peer Projects website – a space for all of our projects to come together. We think that it's important to have that sort of lasting record for the project – something that can also travel and record the critical dialogue that the project has generated.

Our first project of the year will be a small space at The Farm – The Hole in the Wall Space – featuring the site-specific installation practices of local and interstate artists. Peer Space will be appearing throughout the year and we are developing another project focused on collaborative practice.

From L to R: Sebastian Moody, Martin Smith, Lucy Griggs
Installation view of *B-Sides* 2003 at Studio 11
Curated by Martin Smith
Courtesy of Peer Projects

One of our key aims is to generate dialogue between artists in Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne through exchanges – hosting shows up here and taking shows down there – as we did this year by taking 3 shows to the interstate artist run space Rocketart and showing work by artists from Sydney and Melbourne as part of the Studio 11 project.

1. Chris Handran *The White Album* October 10th – November 1st and Rachael Haynes *Confetti* November 14th – December 6th

Entrance to Studio 11 with Catherine Browne from *Invitational 1 + 1* 2003
Curated by Rachael Haynes
Courtesy of Peer Projects

Confetti: Rachael Haynes
The Farm, Brisbane
14 November – 6 December 2003

Holly Arden

Early on a summer evening at The Farm the air is sunny and warm. A gentle draught stirs the strings of rainbow coloured paper confetti installed in the centre and corners of the gallery. The first impression of these multi-coloured threads recalls the delicious joy of walking into a candy store. Graceful tissue paper circles hang playfully from the ceiling or span corners of the gallery, some so subtle that we don't notice them at first.

Confetti continues Rachael Haynes' investigations into the unique qualities and applications of paper, particularly within the practices of object making and installation. Paper can be strong, malleable and supremely delicate. Haynes harnesses these qualities to develop fine, small-scale objects that participate in the play of light, shadow, space and colour on and around them. One of the beauties of her practice is the light-handed yet precise manner in which she manipulates media, creating objects that seem to belong in the realm of air and light. These are often incised prior to shaping, lending them an even greater airiness and enhancing the volume of the space that surrounds them. While the act of cutting can be seen as aggressive – one that manipulates objects and environments – for Haynes it is more about tracing a physical understanding of space.

The exhibition alters how we experience the gallery space and those aspects of it we take for granted such as light, colour and physical boundaries. This is achieved via the confetti objects, a series of paper/photo collages and two videos (Haynes' first foray into this medium). Haynes emphasises the potential of colour as a tool for mapping space. Her collages are coloured in sections and these, along with the coloured confetti objects, divide the gallery into 'regions' of reds, yellows, purples etc.

The collages are made from photographic prints of sites within The Farm such as windows, corners and floors. This series emerged from *Impossible sites: Shopfront*, held in August 2003 in Newcastle, NSW, where Haynes 'installed' paper objects within collage settings of architectural sites. The paper objects, in effect, were given what could be called their own site-specific environments; that is, they operated within the parameters of the spaces that Haynes assigned them.

Rachael Haynes
Detail from *Confetti* 2003
Courtesy of the artist and The Farm

This seems to be the exhibition's aim: to examine the nature of site-specificity; how a work in itself can shape or determine a site as much as a site can determine a work; how, in effect, works themselves can be 'sites' or 'happenings'; and how our experience of sites can be challenged and interrupted.

The collages in *Confetti* fragment and convolute our understanding of space. Each is made from two photographs layered one on top of the other, with the uppermost print incised in areas to create mini 'openings', or 'doorways' to the bottom layer. Some of these are partially open, tempting the viewer to peer inside, in the manner of children's pop-up books. These are then placed in sites around the gallery that in most cases do not correspond with those they depict. Viewers move between the snap shot and the actual space wondering where in each site we could be standing and how the photographed and actual sites could relate.

Inside these small collages tiny strings of confetti are 'installed', which mirror those in the gallery, some trailing out of the picture space. These suggest a third dimension, but more particularly, offer alternative sites for the confetti. We are presented with an almost limitless number of potential sites in which the confetti could be housed – these go beyond the boundaries of the gallery. Moreover, while the collages are depictions of the space they inhabit, as we view them we realise that our perception of the gallery space itself is altered. The gallery space and the collages are thus involved in a perceptual exchange – each in a sense is contingent on the other.

There is a playful and somewhat mystical aspect to Haynes' practice. It is reflected in the sheets of coloured plastic which lie in corners of the room and over the window panes, like stylised shafts of light and shadows. A video on continuous loop in the corner plays an image of confetti softly falling. This image not only plays on the screen, but on a screen pictured inside this, and on the one inside this, and so on. The screen itself, like the collages, becomes a site of 'happening', a space where the work is both housed and where it becomes. Such movements between the seen, the suggested and the emerging hover around the space like the play of light over surfaces.

Rachael Haynes
Detail from *Confetti* 2003
Courtesy of the artist and The Farm

Homebrew

Exhibition opening

6:00PM - 8:30PM :: Wednesday 3rd December
The Festival Club :: 21 McLachlan St Fortitude Valley

As part of the Straight Out Of Brisbane Festival, this party will be exhibiting and celebrating Brisbane's artists and artwork, as well as embracing another hot and long summer.
Zine's and badges will also be on sale.
With: Carmela Ruffino, Rachel Burton, Clare Chippendale, Grant Stevens, Dirk Yates, Lucy Griggs, Bo Stahlamn, Anko, Rinzen, Emily Berndt, Janis Murillo, Dane Walsh, Luke Lynam. Curated by Jo Laboo and Hannah Gatland.

Peer Projects proudly presents the Christmas Sell - Out

featuring affordable works by talented emerging and unrepresented artists. Hurry! Stocks won't last!
These bargains are never to be repeated!

Studio 11 Level 3 Metro Arts 109 Edward St **5 - 7 pm**

& Drive - Thru

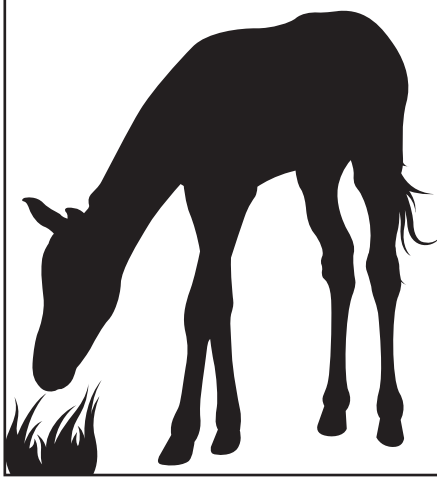
featuring the work of five Brisbane painters whose work explores various forms of mark-making.
Hannah Gatland, Rachael Haynes, Laura Hill, Bianca Kindt, Rebecca Ross

The Alleyway Metro Arts 109 Edward St **7 - 9 pm**

Friday 5th December 2003
as part of the Straight Out Of Brisbane festival 2003

The Farm Christmas Party

From 6pm Fri 19th December



the farm
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Open Wed-Fri 11am-6pm
Sat 11am-4pm

The Farm has been assisted by the Commonwealth Government's Young and Emerging Artist's Iniative through the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory body. The Farm is also supported by Rinzen, Brett's Hardware, Kirlou Signs and the Dendy Cinemas

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LOCAL LISTINGS

Bellas Milani Gallery
6 Dec Tim Johnson

The Farm (358 George St)
Until 6 Dec *Confetti* Rachael Haynes
19 Dec Christmas Party (From 6pm)

Fire-Works Gallery (11 Stratton St, Fortitude Valley)
Until 20 Dec *What have you done lately (to change the situation?)*

Institute of Modern Art (Judith Wright Center, Brunswick St, Fortitude Valley)
13 Dec – 29 Jan Michael Zavros, Gina Tornatore, Sarah Ryan, Judith Kentish & Rodrick Bunter (Opening and IMA cocktail party 4pm 13 Dec)

Metro Arts Development Space (Lv 1, 109 Edward St)
5 Dec 6-8pm *Live With It*, Miranda Williams.

Museum of Brisbane (City Hall, King George Square)
One Square Mile, *Face of Brisbane, Bite the Blue Sky* & Fatu Feu'u *Ifoga*

Pestorius Sweeney House (39 Eblin Drive Hamilton)
Until 13 Dec Stephen Bram

QCA Gallery (South Bank)
Until 4 Jan *The THIESS Art Prize 2003*

Queensland Art Gallery (South Brisbane)
Lost and Found (kids exhibition)
Conceptualism in Brisbane

Studio 11 (Lv 3 Metro Arts, 109 Edward St)
5 Dec 5-7pm *The Christmas Sellout*

STRAIGHT OUT OF BRISBANE FESTIVAL

Panels (IMA Screening Room, Judith Wright Centre)
3 Dec 1-3pm *Making Art and Making it Happen*, featuring Chris Handran, Rachael Haynes, Amy Thompson.
3 Dec 4-6pm *State Your Agenda*, featuring James Dodd, Grant Stevens, and Debra Porch.
4 Dec 1-3pm *Perform*, Featuring Simone Hine, Timothy Kendall Edser, Matt Dabrowski and Jeremy
Hynes.
4 Dec 4-6pm *Free Fizzy Drinks For Your Computer*, Featuring Patrick King

Exhibitions
3 Dec 6-8pm ***Homebrew***, Curated Jo Laboo and Hannah Gatland and featuring Clare Chippendale, Carmela Ruffino, Bo Stahlman, Lucy Griggs, Luke Lynam, Rachel Burton, Janis Murillo, Emily Berndt, Dirk Yates, Texta Queen, Grant Stevens, Anko, Dane Walsh and Rinzen. (SOOB Festival Club, 21 McLachlan St, Fortitude Valley)

4 Dec 6-8pm (viewable throughout the festival) ***Loose Threads – Shop Front Exhibition*** Curated by Jose Da Silva and Project Managed by Liz Watson and featuring Sebastian Moody & Craig Walsh (Lucid Laundry), Jemima Wyman (Lifeline), Rachael Haynes (Urban groove), Jo Laboo (Supafun5), Tim Edser (Blonde Venus), Freya Pinney (Mod Cons), Katherine Taube (Ultra Suite), and Selina Braine (Marz).

5 Dec 12-2pm ***Inscribed***, Performance by Simone Hine (SOOB CENTRAL - TCB Building, Fortitude Valley)

5 Dec 6-8pm ***Neo-Contre*** (SOOB CENTRAL - TCB Building, Fortitude Valley) Curated by Tim Plaisted and featuring Belle Budden, James Dodd, Simon Hunt, Escape from Woomera, Jenny Fraser, Deborah Kelly, Angel Kosch, Tim Plaisted, THINK AGAIN.

5 Dec (all day) ***Space Project***, various artists, various locations around Brisbane's CBD.

5 Dec 7-9pm ***Drive-Thru*** (The Alley Way, Metro Arts, Edward St, Brisbane), Curated by Rachael Haynes and featuring Hannah Gatland, Laura Hill, Rebecca Ross, Rachael Haynes,

6 Dec 6-8pm PAX (the Pope Alice Xorporation) presents ***See You No More***, featuring Jose Da Silva, Timothy Kendall Edser and Michael Markovic (Vitanza City Projects, old Rivoli Picture Theatre, Cnr Brunswick & Kent St New Farm)

Dusk - Sound Works Each night of the festival at dusk (roughly 6:30-7:00pm) Curated by Amanda Cuyler and Sally Brand and featuring: Wed 3 Dec Jacqui Vial on China Town and Brunswick Street Malls; Thu 4 Dec Wayne Nelson cnr Ann and Brunswick Sts, Joel Stern on Brunswick Street Mall; Fri 5 Dec Cerae Mitchell at the China Town Mall rock fountain; Sat 6 Dec Jesse Sullivan on Brunswick Street Mall; Sun 7 Dec Patrick King on Brunswick Street Mall.

TOYS 88 – Video Screenings (SOOB CENTRAL - TCB Building, Fortitude Valley *3-7* Dec, 12noon-6pm), Curated by Amanda Cuyler and Sally Brand and featuring: Wed 3 Dec 'Cover' by Clare Chippendale; Thu 4 Dec 'Danger Zone' by Grant Stevens; Fri 5 Dec 'Golf in Sheep's Clothing' by Madeline King; Sat 6 Dec 'Vulva Girl' by Jemima Wyman; Sun 7 Dec 'Play' by Laura Krikke.

Activity – Dan Brock (Dooley's, Brunswick St, Fortitude Valley), duration of the festival.

Peer Space - Curated by Chris Handran (various locations and times throughout the festival)

Sit With Me – Ciel Fuller (Fat Boys and Rics Café, Fortitude Valley), duration of the festival.

Local Art is a series of free print and online publications with the intention of generating decisive responses to the "emerging art" scene in Brisbane. *Local Art*'s content focuses on the work of local emerging artists, writers and art-workers. With this said, the publication does not take these premises as limitations, rather it endeavours to explore contiguous fields as a means of contextualising local contemporary practices and discourses.
If you would like more information about *Local Art* or are interested in contributing, please contact The Farm or any of the *Local Art* editors: Sally Brand, Natalya Hughes, Grant Stevens and Dirk Yates (thefarm@thefarmspace.com, sallybrand@hotmail.com natalyahughes@yahoo.com.au, grant@thefarmspace.com, dirk@thefarmspace.com).
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The views expressed in *Local Art* are not necessarily shared by its editors.

Local Art is produced by

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localART

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4077: an interview with Indigenous Intrudaz

Tony Albert and Natalya Hughes

Within the lyrical content of the Hip Hop group Indigenous Intrudaz, 4077 is a powerful numerical reference. Denoting the postcode of their home suburb of Inala, '4077' is proudly stated within their tracks repeatedly, indicating the profound importance of the place for the performers. As a group whose agenda is most certainly political, the reference to Inala is specific. Initially inhabited by the Jaggera people, Inala now houses the highest number of Indigenous people in the Brisbane area, situating what is for the Indigenous Intrudaz, a community with high levels of local pride and enthusiasm, despite its geographical isolation, its apparent dismissal or neglect by those who live outside it, and the internal challenges it faces.

It is this internal pride and concern, as well as external expectation that the group seek to mobilise, and while their music is essentially grass roots in its production and content, it carries a message that is in no way limited in relevance or appeal to the residents of Inala alone. As the group's performances seem to testify, their message is one enthusiastically received, both within Brisbane and interstate. Situated within a context of activism which aligns their creative output with other political arts practices now familiar to the cultural fabric of Australia, the distinctiveness of the group is that it utilises the medium of Hip Hop as a means of both self determination and education – of both their community and any within ears-reach of their music.

The following is the abridged transcript of an interview conducted 14th Feb, 2004 at the Queensland Art Gallery. Questions compiled by Natalya Hughes and Tony Albert.

Indigenous Intrudaz:
Damien Bani: (Amon)
Douglas Patrick: DCP
Zenith Bonner: Zenay

Natalya Hughes (NH): Tell me about the history of Indigenous Intrudaz?
Zenay: We were going to school together and have been friends since grade 8. Walking home, we were just beat boxin' and rappin' and always loved hip hop and music in general. One day these two (DCP and Amon) were rappin' and made up a song and were like 'why don't you join us and we can make a group?' and stuff and that's how it kind of started. It rolled on and here we are now... doing an interview.

NH: How would you describe what you do?
DCP: It's like taking issues from around our area and problems and putting them into songs as a way of letting outsiders who aren't from the area (Inala)...know what goes on. Like it's not just all bad stuff that comes out of Inala. There is some talent there but people have to find a way to unlock their talent. Everyone's got potential.

Amon: We've got a lot to offer and people say there's nothing out there... you know that we're all no hopers... but we're trying to turn that around.
Zenay: We don't make our music just to be relevant to Indigenous youth (either)... If it relates to anyone – like Australia or world wide... Firstly we just want to relate to Indigenous youth but secondly, if it does relate to anyone else around the world, even non Indigenous youth, we're happy.
DCP: Yeah, that's just like a bonus.

NH: So how important is where you're from to what you do?
Zenay: Inala is supposed to be the baddest area. But everything we do in Inala is with pride and passion. Like if we're playing football or if we're doing a picture, we're going to do it with expression. It's something about Inala. Cause we get so much negative feedback from people. It's like 'are you from Inala?' End of conversation – know what I mean?
DCP: That also gives us fuel and inspiration to do what we're doing.
Zenay: We want to be better than everyone else expects. So people will be like 'they're from Inala... that's mad' It's kind of like our words are like weapons... and you are going to love Inala by the time we make this album (laughs)

NH: So who are your influences (music wise)? Specifically I am wondering about the influence of West Coast Hip Hop and how that becomes the medium for your message.
DCP: I would say the biggest influence – and I think most of the Black communities would back me up here- is 2Pac, 'cause he was doing the same thing as what we're doing... He just did it on a whole different level. It wasn't just for one set group of people. Everybody and anything he talked about, the whole world could relate to it. So 2Pac would be at the top of the list... (But) we don't really just get our inspiration from Hip Hop itself. We

listen to Red Hot Chilli Peppers and Outkast and all this different stuff... and we all grew up on 60's, 70's and 80's music... so it's not just like Hip Hop is our only inspiration. We just grab it from everywhere. If it sounds good and we can relate to it then that's where we draw our inspiration from.

NH: We're interested in the way you use Hip Hop to speak specifically about issues concerning Indigenous youth in Inala. What do you suppose it is about Hip Hop that lends itself so well to talking about these things?
Zenay: Hip Hop's completely different to any other music. You know... it's a culture in itself...It's a tool you can use in life. You can be an activist and talk and some people won't listen to you. But with music... music's world wide. Almost as big as religion. If you are saying something good that's relevant and is going with a tune, people are going to listen they are going to understand the problems and issues.
DCP: Another thing we've found... the kids round our way, they look up to us cause we rap... They do a lot of stupid things ... but they won't listen to you if you try to come across and talk to them. That's why we incorporate most of this stuff in our rap cause they love their Hip Hop as much as we do...
Amon: We send a message.
DCP: Yeah, send a message like don't sniff, look after yourself, and stay in school. We're trying to incorporate all these messages because we know that if we put it in a song they'll listen to what we're saying.
Zenay: Then again, like I said, with Hip Hop as a tool... it's going to take you somewhere...If you've got the ability to do it- pick up the techniques and stuff - it's a piece of cake.

NH: So, what do you see as the most important issues for you to raise in your music? What are the most pressing things for you to talk about?
Zenay: Probably just the problems going around in Inala. All the Indigenous people around Australia... what we've been left to cope with. People... sniff petrol, sniff paint, who knows... sniff glue, smoke heroin or snort coke or something. It's kind of like a low self esteem thing too, you know?
Amon: Yeah, kids are so young and smokin' and stuff.
DCP: Like we all started doing bad stuff... you know like halfway in our teens but these kids these days they're like 11, 12 doing what we were doing when we were like 16 and stuff.
Zenay: It's also about guidance too. You know us three we have good parents. We could afford to muck around but we knew that if we got caught we'd be in trouble... get something hefty off our parents...These kids though that get in trouble... they've got no guidance, they've got no parents. That's the environment they live in. That's part of why we make music. If we can't help then god help 'em.
Amon: We're not preaching, but teaching.

NH: I notice that when you perform you're really able to draw a large crowd despite the fact that you're delivering powerful political messages- saying difficult things that are difficult to hear yet people are willing to listen. How do you approach performing and what do you hope to achieve in your shows?
Zenay: It's really raw... politics and stuff but maybe because it's in tune and on key the way its supposed to be done... 2 Pac did the same thing. He was an activist as well - actor and a singer and performer but he did it so good... that good that you can't ignore it, you know what I mean? You've gotta listen to it... it's got that tune going on. You might not get it at first but then it's like 'wow that's pretty good' You've gotta do it pretty good....
Amon: What we try and do with the performance is get the audience involved and with our lyrics... with some of our lyrics people would be afraid to say it in front of a big crowd but we wanna like get that message and those words out there... and the people in the crowd are like 'did they really say that? They've got guts but it's true'.
Zenay: That's with the crowd participation too. People looking round and thinking 'I'm not going to knock the stuff... people are enjoying it'. So they take the information in.
Amon: Like that saying 'the truth hurts'.
Zenay: But you gotta let it hurt sometimes.

NH: How do you go about making your music - individually and in a group? How does it start and what's the process?
Zenay: The three of us will get together and write a chorus... and we base all our verses on the chorus we wrote together and then we put it all together
DCP: Usually one of us will just write the first part ourselves and then they'll show the verse to the other two and one of us might click into it... you know... that's an alright verse that will go with a chorus I wrote a few weeks ago. And you know it's just piecing all these lyrics together. You know usually we don't see each other for about a month but we've all written two to three verses by then and we come together and we find all the verses just match...
Amon: It's like we're all talking about the same thing...
DCP: Sometimes it's like the songs just make themselves...we start bouncing ideas off each other...and then the song has a completely new direction.

NH: And in terms of lyrical content?
Amon: It's not just political stuff all the time… Sometimes it's like parties and relationships
DCP: It's not like we have so little lyrical content that we need to base everything on Inala. Inala has so many problems that it's like even if we didn't write songs... anything we do would have something to do with Inala.

NH: But you reflect on personal experience and respond to current events mostly?
Zenay: We also like to get away from that stuff and do a club track or something like that. We don't just do political stuff all the time...
DCP: It's not just all deep and dark.
Zenay: Some of them, you know, are like girl tracks and love songs.
Amon: It depends on our mood...

NH: So what does the future hold for Indigenous Intrudaz?
Amon: What does the future hold for the whole world?
Zenay: It could be world fame or we could end up working in a steel factory...
DCP: The future for Indigenous Intrudaz is the future of Indigenous Intrudaz.
Zenay: That's right.

Indigenous Intrudaz next performance is at Prime 04, Sunday 28th March, Queensland Art Gallery.

Indigenous Intrudaz will also perform at Stylin' Up, Saturday 22 May, Inala event

Photos of Indigenous Intrudaz
by Natasha Harth: Queensland
Art Gallery

the Cremaster Cycle

Matthew Barney at Australian Centre for the Moving Image

Federation Square, Melbourne
8th February, 2004

Kellie Vella

New to Matthew Barney mania, I sat down to watch seven hours of the *Cremaster Cycle* at ACMI: five films, a meandering graphic overload that depicts the Barney-scape. This work replicates a Baroque dissipation, but one which relies on our current media saturation: all times and all places are known to us and the author. Mythology and autobiography jostle in unchronologically produced narratives. Stories of order and transformation, act on characters taken from American popular culture, Gaelic mythology, and imagined hybrids. But they are with few exceptions, lonely stories. Characters float in bubbles of contained information that are emptied of emotion or free will. Everything is for show, and all characters perform preordained steps. In this way order reigns and transformation only occurs within the choreographed spaces, much as a pupa may become a bee, but only within the bounds of the hive. Where a hive may have a queen, this queen is Barney, despite his temporary relinquishing of that role to one of his many characters. In the *Cremaster Cycle* all characters are Barney, much as in a dream where all characters are the self. Barney's dream of extravagant beauty and self-perpetuating desire revolves entirely around the gesture of the artist, and more specifically a masculine creative principle.

Nowhere is this more glaringly obvious than at the prevalence of gonadal and penile imagery, the first instance of symmetry that Barney does little to unlock. From the Vaseline gonads on the two floating blimps, to the maypoled Empire State Building, Barney plays with classic coding to humorous effect. What doesn't occur is any real challenge to the sexual, and artistic, centeredness of his work. While he has interiorised, mocked and mutilated masculinity across his work, he has still managed to parade the soft cock, the withdrawn balls, and with this meekness write a hero's journey from premature start to withheld ending. And as with the classic hero, he is a man of action and few words, or in this case a man who performs tasks (and this series is laden with them), with no question as to why he is performing them. The result is a strangely uncritical attack on gendered forms. He works the visual field to have the crispness, the texture of plastic, and as easily smoothes over the demands of narrative, and audience criticality. In this way his work has the power of advertising: overpowering, soothing, appealing.

Like advertising it operates without the need for context: it is its own. While the *Cremaster Cycle* was not filmed in chronological order[1], there is an internal coherence over the series. Referring to the Cremaster muscle that controls testicular contractions in response to external stimuli, the series develops from a pure, almost nostalgic state to an overworked, flamboyant display. Embedded within *Cremaster Three* is the turning point, a mini-film, *The Order*, which outlines the development of the entire series as a number of levels which Barney the protagonist must surmount. His movement both up and down the levels implies the movement of the series, as the ascending and descending of complexity. Indeed *Cremaster One* and *Five* mirror each other strangely, both in complement and allegory. Perhaps this is also best understood as Barney's need to describe a self-enclosed 'unfixed, general point of sexuality' that could create a story 'about a sexual system that could move at will'.[2] To a great degree he has succeeded, *Cremaster Three* perhaps being the best example of this. As a pivotal point, and because of the brutal necessity of the character's actions, as well as the application of much needed humour, this film is what the entire series is about: desire, closeted and then released, transformation through destruction.

Cremaster One

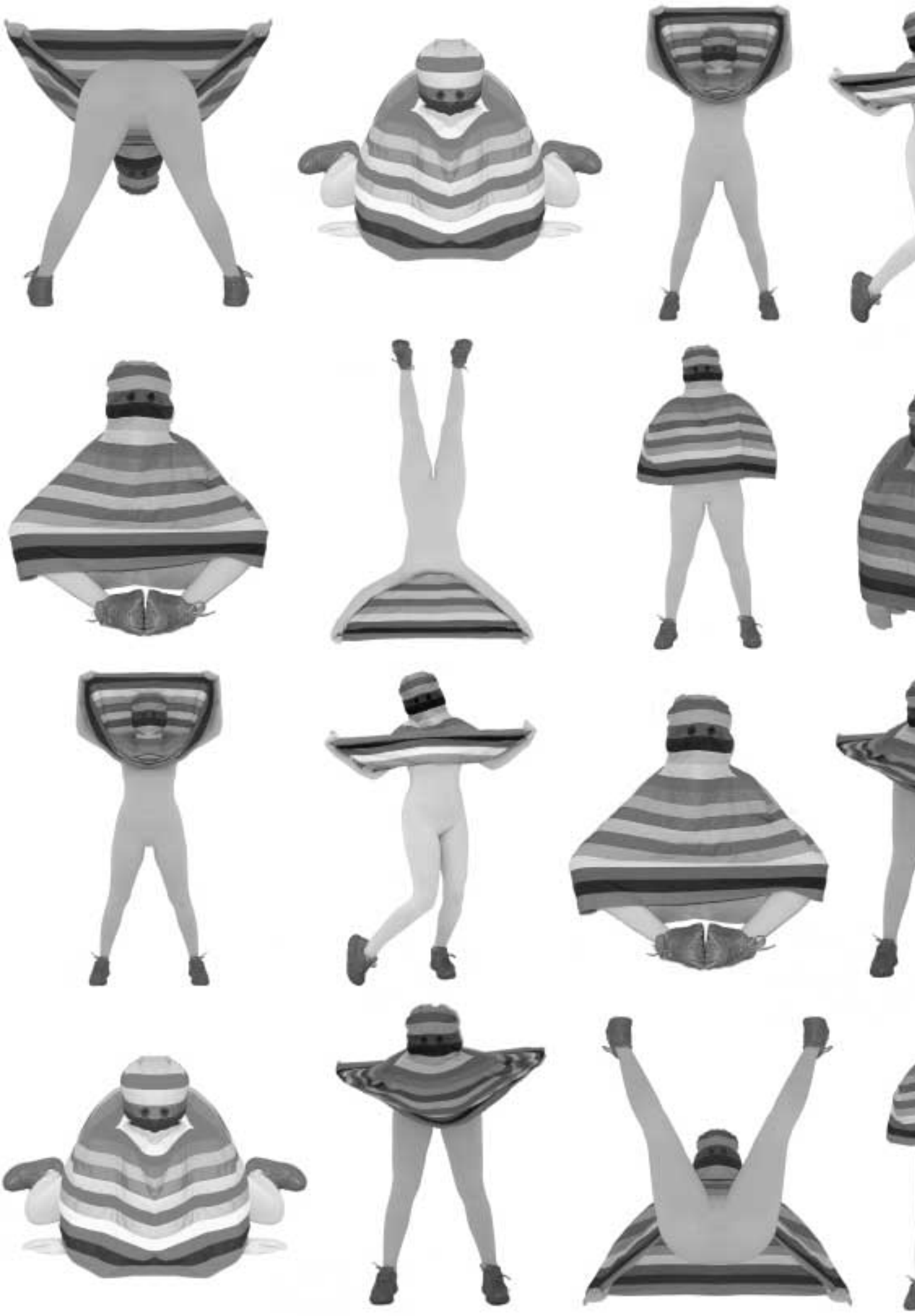
Put simply: grapes, fixtures, synchronised parading by dancing girls, sculpted headwear, Vaseline gonads, Goodyear blimps, and air hostesses in beige pumps. Beautiful. Nostalgic. Boring. This is time before time. Ordered but pointless. All the characters are women. The central figure, *Goodyear*, played by Marti Domination, places grapes in patterns soon mirrored onto the playing field below. Who knows what happens or why. The dancing girls high step and pirouette, the hostesses pout and smoke and adjust their faces. They are players in the first of Barney's machinations, which is to say that they are wallpaper, intelligent wallpaper, mapping the first of his patterns, ground to the action to come. Barney does not physically appear in this film.

Cremaster Two

Overtones of Cindy Sherman and *Wax: or The Discovery of Television Amongst the Bees*. Sacraments. Ritual displays, state and familial control. Male fertility. Metamorphosis as escape. An unnerving atmosphere, yet also some truly kooky shots at American traditions and mythology: cars, murderers, and rodeos. We see for the first time Matthew Barney ride a wild bull (but not *that* wild) down to the ground. Sex and death, those two old bedfellows, rattle their bones in an interiorised display of hive objects, strange genitalia, tears in fabric, and oozing flesh. Witness the most unmoving murder of all time, a foregone conclusion to the previous 20 minutes of deadly boredom with Barney as tweezer dick killer in two very fine mustangs playing with Vaseline, and bits of car. This film oscillates between grand landscapes: salt plains, and glaciers; and terrible interiors: the Mormon Tabernacle choir, beehived backrooms, cars locked together with shunts of metal and plastic. This work is a dramatic step away from the last, entangling the forces of control, and escaping from them. Barney takes a biological essentialist approach to human nature, bleak and certain. In one article, Matthew Barney chooses a text to illustrate his work and chooses *The Life of the Bee*, by Maurice Maeterlinci, Chapter VI The Nuptial Flight

'... we have an instance of the almost universal disproportion that exists between the gifts she (nature) rains upon love and her niggardly doles to labour; between the favours she accords to what shall, in an ecstasy, create new life, and the indifference wherewith she regards what will patiently have to maintain itself by toil. Whoever would seek faithfully to depict the character of nature, in accordance with the traits we discover here, would design an extraordinary figure, very foreign to our ideal, which nevertheless can only emanate from her. But too many things are unknown to man for him to essay such a portrait, wherein all would be deep shadow save one or two points of flickering light.'[3]

(continued page 10)



Cremaster Three
Perhaps the longest and most intricate production. Gaelic fairytale gives way to more disturbing rites: a corpse climbs her way out of the ground only to be whisked away in a black vintage car, complete with eagle, and then pulverised by five hotrods in the foyer of the Chrysler Building. Later the remains will be inserted into the bloody mouth of the Entered Apprentice, forcing his rectum to prolapse and ooze forth his broken teeth in a pink jellied substance. Transformations and allegory are rife, yet strangely evacuated of meaning. Freemason ritual meets J.G.Ballard's *Crash*, pagan mythology unearths itself in architectural folly, but

Cremaster Four
Barney as tap-dancing demon wears his way through the floor as transgendered nymphs watch and admire. Meanwhile two motorcycle teams trace their way across the Isle of Man in opposite directions. One team sports a pair of wandering jellied balls that ascend the rider, the other has a pair that descend. They traverse uneven ground, while Barney sinks to the depths, both wearing himself through the ground, to the water below, and from water to an intestinal labyrinth flooded with Vaseline. One senses nothing will end well, but all endings are deferred and rerouted.

still none of this gels until Barney makes his appearance in The Order, a five leveled attack on various challenges. Framed in the style of live sporting events, *The Order* has Barney scale the walls of the Guggenheim Museum Rotunda in mandarin kilt and fluffy hat, encountering The Order of the Rainbow for Girls: a chorus line of dancing lamb girls, *Murphy's Law and Agnostic Front* in a battle of the bands, Aimee Mullins as a cheetah woman (legless model who appeared some years back in designer prosthetics), Barney's own sculptural work, and Richard Serra guesting as the Architect. One reviewer quite accurately captured the feeling of this assault as that of Donkey Kong[4], which again makes reference back to King Kong's retreat to the Empire State building when modern life got to be just too much. Barney's misunderstood monster comes out more ahead of the game, disappearing and reappearing in multiple transformations, reentering the previous narrative to be killed in a modern Morris dance, and then again to retreat to the narrative before that and suddenly reverse the expected outcome.

Cremaster Five
All restraint from Baroque excess is forfeited. Ursula Andress performs as the Queen of Chain, an operatic figure of tragedy, reminiscent of the witch women in David Lynch's *Dune*, Barney appears as magician (of course), satyr, and lover to the Queen. Vast interiors provide more surfaces for Barney to scale. Pearls float atop a pool under which more transgendered water nymphs play and flirt. Barney ties long ribbons attached to flying pigeons to his oversized balls and descends into the pool. This work is the most visually opulent, lush in sound, and eroticism. Yet as the drama plays out it removes itself from the human, and becomes more closely related to code. At this point everything refers to everything else, nothing is innocent, and this has the feeling of a play enacted night after night, an endless performance that speaks of *'the emptiness inside excess – the redundancy of the Baroque, the ennui of information overload.'*[5]

Thus Barney completes his cycle with characteristic flair, producing gestures both hollow and resplendent. Barney's playfully enacted masculinities leak and soften, just as his heroism, deliberately or not, seems as pointless as any gameboy machination. Similarly while the Cremaster Cycle abounds in stories about stories, the continually shifting focus only serves to highlight the emptiness behind each one – a dreary situation at best, but one that is made more palatable by Barney's attention to detail. Indeed his skill at embedding his insignia within the visual frame, as well as for manufacturing voluptuous, plastic surfaces, makes Barney's work powerfully seductive. And finally, it must be noted that it will not be to his disadvantage that this work is written with an emptiness at its core, when it is this void that drives his desiring machine, as much as it does all others.

1 He first produced *Cremaster 4* (1994), the *Cremaster 1* (1995), *Cremaster 5* (1997), *Cremaster 2* (1999), and *Cremaster 3* (2002)
2 Matthew Barney in interview with Hans-Ulrich Obrist for *Tate Magazine*, Issue 2, http://www.tate.org.uk/magazine/issue2/barney.htm
3 eyestorm, http://www.eyestorm.com/feature/ED2n_article.asp?article_id='30&artist_id=96
4 Wayne Bremser, 2003, *Matthew Barney versus Donkey Kong*, http://www.gamegirladvance.com/archives/2003/05/23/matthew_barney_versus_donkey_kong.html
5 eyestorm, http://www.eyestorm.com/feature/ED2n_article.asp?article_id=30&artist_id=96

page 6: *Cremaster 1*, 1995, Matthew Barney, Photo Michael James O'Brien, Courtesy of Barbara Gladstone

page 7: *Cremaster 2*, 1999, Matthew Barney, Photo Michael James O'Brien, Courtesy of Barbara Gladstone

from left: *Cremaster 4*, 1997, Matthew Barney, Photo Michael James O'Brien, Courtesy of Barbara Gladstone

Cremaster 5, 1994, Matthew Barney, Photo Michael James O'Brien, Courtesy of Barbara Gladstone

live with it: Miranda Williams

Metro Arts Development Space
December 2003

Josh Milani

At every point a gaze confronts you, focused and intense. The strokes of paint are boldly applied with a line that recalls drawing. Behind each brushstroke is glass, translucent and reflective, amplifying the qualities of the oil paint. Some of the images seem literal, others metaphoric. Some stare with an intensity that melds rococo confrontation with complete absorption; an effect through which each image holds an absorbing tension, the phenomenological tension of looking intensely.

These self-portraits by Miranda Williams are as much studies of self as studies of figure *per se*, equally concerned with the ability of paint to record and describe psychological and emotional states. It is an approach, one could argue, that accords with ideas of 'self-portraiture' that go back many centuries. It has been noted that the term 'self portrait' was not used until the nineteenth century; in preceding times we find titles such as 'Rembrandt's likeness done by himself' or 'The portrait of Rembrandt painted by himself'.[1] It was an approach that clearly distinguished subject from artist as if the two were separate entities. It implied the artist painted self with an objective gaze. But what of the choice of subject? For lack of a sitter are we to presume? Or an intentional resource of psychological intensity? These quandaries extend to William's attempt to record her self with an impossible confluence of phenomenological detachment and psychological authenticity.

Some of these portraits, importantly, are erasures of reflection. Others are painted from mirrors, some from memory. Where the reflection forms the basis of the image, the glass, less than a mirror, offers a vapid and translucent reflection which is then over-painted. Where it is recorded from a mirror we find indexes of line and form that create images both tonally symbolic and figuratively mimetic. Where memory is induced, metaphor inscribes the artist's psychological condition externally drawing the pictures into a state of darkness that recalls the genre of horror. One is reminded of the separation of the symbolic, the real and imaginary through each of these approaches. The marks are laid down with a fleshy immediacy to make material that which is fleeting.

As viewers, we stand before these images at times catching glimpses of our own diaphanous reflections within the glass support. To find ourselves momentarily in the support for a painting as the painter once found herself is to be reminded of the indeterminate nature not only of source imagery (the real), but of the condition of viewing a work of art, which can also be understood – at least in part – as a cognitive study of the self through various texts and contexts. For a moment, artist subject and viewer cohere.

1. The point is made by Ernst VanWetering in 'The Multiple Functions in Rembrandts Self-Portraits,' in *Rembrandt by Himself*, ed. Christopher White and Quentin Buvelot (London & The Hague: National Gallery Publications Ltd. And Royal Cabinet of Paintings, Mauritshuis) 1999.

from top: Installation view of *Live With It*

The Introvert, oil on glass, 25cm x 20cm

people playing with themselves

Surface Tension: the artist in the image
Curated by Alasdair Foster and Reuben Keehan
Featuring Peter Fitzpatrick, Mike Gray, Mandana Mapar, Peter McKay, Deborah Paauwe, Nat Paton, Helena Psotova, Scott Redford, Peter Robertson, Tony Schwensen, Hiram To, JJ Voss

Australian Centre for Photography, Sydney
22 January - 29 February 2004

Di Ball

Mandana Mapar
from *I Am Not You (A Revolutionary)* 2003
Australian Centre for Photography, Sydney

'It is only shallow people who do not judge by appearances.'
Oscar Wilde

I love a good curation. I love a group show based around a common theme. I love that you can wander around a gallery, through different rooms, and explore a diverse range of artworks tied together on a curatorial whim. I love it when you wonder 'what the…?'. I love it when I discover new artists and revisit old friends. I love a GOOD curation.

Surface Tension at the Australian Centre for Photography was one such show. Curator Alasdair Foster had approached the much-used theme of identity from a different perspective.

> *It is this tension between the known interior and the read exterior that lies at the heart of this exhibition. With one exception, each artist is making images of himself or herself. But few create self-portraits in the true sense of attempting to reveal the humanity of the individual. Rather the artists become performers, mannequins or simply material objects within the image. Drawing upon their internal awareness and their physical appearance, they play across the divide between self knowledge and the perceived external world to explore such diverse concerns as dieting, masculinity, childhood, war, identity, wilderness and Australian foreign policy.* [1]

At first viewing, Gold Coast artist Mandana Mapar's work appears to depict a woman in a mask playing with fire. But there is something ordered in the shape of the fiery trail, something slightly familiar. And on closer inspection, the mask reveals itself to be a sort of embroidered veil covering the face with only the eyes showing, reminiscent of the face coverings of Muslim women. But there is something not quite right about the image: the hair is not covered.

The artist is indeed playing with fire. Born in Tehran, Iran, and immigrating to Australia in 1993, she has photographed herself wearing a neqhab, not in the Persian style, but that of Saudi Arabia. She has left her hair uncovered as a statement. The fiery shapes are in fact the traces left from spelling the title of the series '*I am not you (a revolutionary)*' in Farsi, an Iranian script. It is only readable to those who understand that language, and yet the image is in itself potentially offensive because of the uncovered hair.

Mapar has chosen a very potent symbol in her use of the veil. In her article 'From the Colonial Harem', Malek Alloula describes a postcard of a group of Algerian women:

> *Draped in the veil that cloaks her to the ankles, the Algerian woman discourages the scopic desire (the voyeurism) of the photographer. She is the concrete negation of the desire and thus brings to the photographer confirmation of a triple rejection: the rejection of his desire, of the practice of his 'art', and of his place in a milieu that is not his own.*
> *(…)*
> *These veiled women are not only an embarrassing enigma to the photographer but an outright attack upon him. It must be believed that the feminine gaze that filters through the veil is a gaze of a particular kind:*

concentrated by the tiny orifice for the eye, this womanly gaze is a little like the eye of a camera, like the photographic lens that takes aim at everything. [2]

Mapar's series of photographs also invoke notions of the gaze. The eyes behind the veil stare out at the viewer, but Mapar has turned the camera on herself. She is the photographer. She controls our gaze.

Following September 11, Mapar has found that she has had to explain many things about her birth culture. She is constantly being questioned about the Muslim faith, and she herself describes herself as a spiritual person, but not Muslim. In her artist's statement, Mapar writes: 'The initial idea arose from seeing an image that was plastered all over the Iranian and international press of a young guy who is still in jail for protesting in the marches of 1998. He has since come to occupy the minds of thousands of young Iranian women as a sex symbol and ultimately, a symbol of freedom.'

I was both intrigued and mystified by *these* haunting images, and her title is a timely reminder to us that we cannot all be judged by the action of others.

In high contrast, both literally and figuratively, Brisbane based Nat Paton exposes herself in an edited version of her highly popular show entitled *Punt* which featured at the Institute of Modern Art in 2003. This installation consists of a series of Lambda prints and the *Fat Chance* poker machine.

The media repeatedly portray success in terms of a rich lifestyle and a slender body. Thinness is the jackpot. The dieting and gambling industries trade on superficialities and the only really slim things are the odds of long term success.

I like to dress up and play different roles. Despite being a large gal, I know how to look glamorous, powerful and attractive. I use photography as the seductive medium that it is, so that people might be attracted to the underlying issues not repelled or shocked by the realities of, say, a documentary photo-essay about gambling addiction or chronic dieting. [3]

When the artist was traveling in America, she visited the city of Las Vegas. Surrounded by the glitz and the glamour, she saw a connection between the two addictions of gambling and dieting. In this city of excess, the promise of happiness 'relies on the false belief that thin people or monetarily rich people have fewer problems – that their lives are perfect.' [4]

Nat Paton *Lucky* 2001
Australian Centre for
Photography, Sydney

Paton's images are ripe with playful puns. *High Roller* (2002) depicts a woman in a top heavy red wig stuffed with hair rollers standing in front of a weighing machine. It is cropped just below the eyes, and our only clue to the woman's size is the reading on the scales. *The Thin Line* 2002 is a rear shot of a woman in a black g-string with money (pounds) tucked in. Her hands are behind her clutching more money, knuckles adorned with love and hate tattoos. The woman is revealed in all her cellulite glory, posing the viewer with the dilemma of being confronted by someone secure in her own flesh, but contradicting all that we are used to seeing in the media. *Lucky* 2002 depicts a large breasted woman smoking a cigar, resplendent in gold tassel pasties. She is clutching her breasts with red taloned hands. Around her neck is a gold and diamond encrusted chain with the word 'LUCKY'. Her face is cropped so we cannot see her eyes.

But it is Paton's pokie machine that is the piece de resistance, and the hardest to achieve. Her tales involving its realisation are hilarious and include acres of red tape, interference from the Arts Minister (with the Gaming Minister), and promises that it would not be used for actual gambling. You can push buttons, tumble images at random, hear the bells and the whistles, but you can never win. Sort of like real life.

Mike Gray
Macho Grande 2002
Australian Centre for Photography, Sydney

This is an artist secure in her own body, and willing to tackle the current cultural obsessions head on. But it is her wonderful humour as much as her glorious workmanship that makes this her work so enjoyable. People are drawn to the larger than life depictions, pore over the pores, and are captivated by the cellulite. And yet, amongst all of this glorious flesh, it was an image of a stiletto heel pinning down a hand that perturbed the censors in New Zealand so much that they ordered that particular page of Photofile 40 to be ripped out for NZ distribution.

The photographic series by Perth photographer Mike Gray hangs in a wonderful contrapunction to Nat Paton's Punt. While her work glories in the female, Gray's is all macho male. Consisting of a series of male 'hero' shots, closer inspection reveals so many clichés of masculinity that I found myself giggling to myself. They are all obviously of the same guy, the artist, but he poses himself as a war hero, a big game hunter, a gambler, a truckie carrying a huge truck engine in order to repair the 'little lady', a Vietnam vet on a two day pass. Is this guy real? A clue to the digital manipulation involved is in *Macho Confession* 2002-03 where we see the white war hero who appears to have escaped from a crashed helicopter. He is calmly smoking a cigarette with his sewn on black hand. It is now I realise that we have a piss-take at work.

Images of the male as 'god' have been circulated so widely that their power has become thin and therefore can be appropriated for satire. My photographs employ too many of these discourses to be taken seriously in respect to creating a new masculine ideal. The initial novelty for me is replaced by the fact that many of these discourses were operating when I looked in the mirror and became an 'other'. Far from being the object of my own desire, my photographs (digital images) are more an exercise in placing these over used 'objects of desire' on myself instead of them being used on other people. If any progress is to be made in defining a 'New Australian Male', it's going to have to start with owning up. [5]

Another artist familiar to us in Brisbane is Peter Robertson, whose wonderful Sharpies show touched down at the Institute of Modern Art last year. My first response to the work was 'this guy is a bit up himself', and I was a little bit correct. Robertson continues the nostalgic presentation of his life by moving us into the eighties. After his years as part of the gang, Peter the Sharpie left the suburbs to pursue a modeling career in the city. This was a time of high fashion, of large shoulder pads. Some of the photos are actual reproductions of his 'go see' card, whereas in others he has digitally inserted himself into advertisements typical of the period. Of course, we the viewer can't tell the real from the faux. We assume he was really famous, even rich. We think he is a real spunk, of course, maybe even familiar. Has he been on a soapie?

Beyond Zanadu takes photographs created for a specific purpose at a specific time and presents them in a forum for which they were never intended. This displacement forces us to look at the images in a new light. They become a caricature of themselves, allowing us to examine the way in which intention frames the photographic subject and demonstrating how complex this interplay can be. [6]

So the artist was not too upset when I asked him if he was indeed up himself; he felt that his intention had been realized. Robertson is currently preparing an even larger version for exhibition at the Centre for Contemporary Photography, Melbourne in March 2004. One is left to wonder where this compilation of a fictitious life will lead. Will he start to believe his own propaganda? What did he get up to in the Nineties? When will he catch up with himself? I eagerly await the next installment from Peter the Sharpie.

Surface Tension also included Scott Redford, Peter Fitzpatrick, Deborah Paauwe, Helena Psotova, Tony Schwensen, Hiram To and JJ Voss. Contrasting these images of the self, Peter McKay's satirical tableaux in the entrance gallery employs mass-produced dolls to celebrate and critique the star qualities by which a variety of famous 20th century artists are principally known. All together an extremely enjoyable curation, and the artist parties were pretty fun too!!

1. Foster, Alasdair (2004) Room Notes
2. Alloula, Malek (1986) 'From the Colonial Harem' in Mirzoeff, Nicholas (ed) (1998) *Visual Culture Reader*; Routledge: London and New York, pp319-322
3. Artist's statement, January 2004
4. Foster, Alasdair (2004) *Women and Food* in *Photofile 70*: Money and Power, pp28-29
5. Artist Statement 2004 from cd-rom
6. Artist's statement, January 2004

localLISTINGS

Art+Arch Infinite: A collaborative exhibition project in Brisbane that will involve at least 20 site-specific installations at different locations all over the city, stretching from Fortitude Valley, to the CBD, to South Bank and to West End. Project proposals due 07 May 2004. For further information contact Steffen Lehmann at s.lehmann@qut.edu.au.

Bellas Milani Gallery
54 Logan Rd, Wooloongabba
Richard Bell – Colour
28 Feb – 13 Mar

Craft Queensland
381 Brunswick St, Fortitude Valley
Unleashed – Emerging Craft and Design
6 Feb – 20 Mar

The Farm
358 George St, Brisbane City
James Dodd – Public Property
12 Mar – 3 Apr

Fireworks Gallery
11 Stratton St, Newstead
What Colour is Your Heart?
27 Feb – 27 Mar

Gallery Barry Keldoulis
19 Meagher St Chippendale, Sydney
Shuan Western and Suzanne Boccalatte – The Practical Guide to Mental Hygine
28 Feb – 21 Mar

Gold Coast City Gallery
135 Bundall Rd, Surfers Paradise
All that glitters…
7 Feb – 21 Mar

Institute of Modern Art
Judith Wright Centre, Brunswick St, Fortitude Valley
Fresh Cut 2004
6 Feb – 13 Mar

Museum of Brisbane
City Hall, King George Square, Brisbane
Temperature: Contemporary Queensland Sculpture
Until 23 May
Brisbane's Rock 'n' Rollers
Until 21 Apr

Perth Institute of Contemporary Art
51 James St, Perth
Martin Smith - You can give them a better life than I ever could
12 Feb – 21 Mar

Queensland Art Gallery
South Brisbane
Video Hits: Art and Music Video
21 Feb – 14 Jun
Prime 04: Art – Music – Video
2-10pm 28 Mar
www.prime04.com

Queensland College of Art – Griffith Artworks
South Bank Campus
This is Not America
6 Feb – 28 Mar

Queensland University of Technology Art Museum
Gardens Point Campus
Nascent – QUT Visual Arts Graduates 2003
20 Feb – 4 Apr

Redland Art Gallery
Noeleen St, Capalaba
Deb Mansfield – Neither Here Nor There
3 Mar – 7 Apr

Umbrella Studio
Flinders Mall, Townsville
Jim Deans – We come, we go
8 Mar – 31 Mar

Brisbane City Hall
Jake Chapman Lecture Tour
For tickets visit www.modularpeople.com
Thursday 25th March, 2004

localART ISSUE #11
deadline 26 march

localART

is a free monthly print and online publication dedicated to emerging artists and art writers. localART content focuses on the work of local artists and writers with the specific intention of generating decisive responses to the 'emerging art' scene in Brisbane. With this said, the publication does not take these premises as limitations, rather it endeavours to explore contiguous fields as a means of contextualising local contemporary practices and discourses.

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Gallery Barry Keldoulis (Sydney)
Centre for Contemporary Photography (Melbourne)
24 Hour Art (Darwin)
PICA (Perth)
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front cover: Chris Howlett
Terrorism is a weapon of the strong 2003

page 8-9: Jemima Wyman
Abbey Chroma 2004
Jemima would like to thank Matthew Fletcher.