



un. magazine

ISSUE 4

We'll never turn to the dark side

Richard Giblett & Andrew Hazewinkel
Goshka Macuga
Elizabeth Presa
Kate Ellis
Dominic Redfern
Nicola Loder
Arlo Mountford

Sally Breen
Carl Williams
Rosemary Forde
Bruce Mowson
Paul Andrew
Vikki McInnes
Contributors

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art review magazine

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Image: Ian Haig
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Performance still 2005

Downtown
August 13 - September 11, 2005
Simon Cuthbert

Image: Simon Cuthbert
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Type C print 84cm x 104cm

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Tourist: Blind Child 2, 2005
Lambda print, 6mm Perspex
120 x 160 cm
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un Back cover image: Richard Giblett
Subcity (While You Were Sleeping) detail, 2005
Plywood, pine, fluorescent lights
291 x 160 x 130cm
Image courtesy of the artist

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Editorial

Anyone watching the *Get Up Stand Up* series on the ABC in May would have seen an account of popular music's power to enact social change. This series presented more than a call to rise up from the couch, it constituted a challenge to the visual arts. It's clear however that commercial pop music does not offer any answers these days and perchance this is a caution to all artistic endeavours. We ought to be wary of the marriage of art with commodification, as it has brought about the loss of autonomy and the ability to question society in so many creative fields. So what role does art have to play in consciousness-raising and critique? Something is stirring in the bowels of the art world (and it's not just hot air). There's discontent with many of the social or political concerns at hand and artists have something to say on these matters, you just have to be listening carefully. Here's what the artists featured in un Mag Issue#4 have to offer. The uncanny as a Neo avant-garde politico movement, with Arlo Mountford, IRWIN and Charlotte Hallows. Humanist concerns and identity issues evinced by the works of Nicola Loder, Matthew Greentree, Susan Wirth and Kate Ellis, and in the recent curated shows *Prepossession*, *Dress Code*, *A Self Made Man* and *The Time-Image*. Lastly – beholding the vacuities of the 2005 Melbourne International Fashion Festival – there's pop-commentary offered by *Pop Versus Death* and in shows by Jessie Angwin and Lyndal Walker. With all of these bristling concerns sometimes it's a relief to put dilemmas aside and take simple pleasure in art-about-art, as we can with the work of Elizabeth Presa, Emidio Puglieli and Goshka Macuga. These shows leave us with a prevailing sense of containment; that within the gallery walls the parameters of meaning are infallible.

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un Magazine has two job positions available. Deadline for applications 30 June 2005. Contact Lily Hibberd for any enquiries. lilyhibberd@eudoramail.com

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The entire issue of un Magazine and the separate supplements are available in full colour online at: www.projekt.com.au

Download the PDF (it's a small file) to view the images in colour

Articles as online supplements to Issue 4:

*Yeb Weirsm*a Interview with Simone Ewenson

Emma van Leest Review by Simon Gregg

Beata Geyer Interview with Ruark Lewis

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un Issue #3 launch



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GERTRUDE

contemporary art spaces

A SHORT RIDE IN A FAST MACHINE

Gertrude Celebrates 20 Years

2005 marks Gertrude Contemporary Art Spaces' 20th anniversary, and the organisation is set to celebrate with a major exhibition, publication and forum series to be launched in July.

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PUBLICATION
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For further information, please see our website at www.gertrude.org.au

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Image: Alexander Kloss, *Hydrosphere Mkt* 1991



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SPACEMENT

Arlo Mountford's recent work

by Vikki McInnes

Right: Arlo Mountford
Requiem to the Negativist Spectacle, 2005
Mixed Media
Image courtesy the artist
Photo credit: Christian Capurro

There's a strong sense of ambivalence in Arlo Mountford's animation *Requiem to the Negativist Spectacle* (2005), but not the fluffy uncertain kind. Rather, a vehement opposition arises from the spectacle of a bunch of avant-gardists (Hugo Ball, Guy Debord, Marcel Duchamp), radical extremists (Patty Hearst, Valerie Solanas) and self-styled subversives (Johnny Rotten, Sid Vicious, Jake and Dinos Chapman), hands joined, dancing in a circle to the same tune. The tune in question is the Sex Pistols classic 'Anarchy in the UK', but the recent sublimation of punk into mainstream culture adds a further dichotomous dimension to the work. Mountford's suggestion that punk has become little more than a banal stereotype reaches its inevitable conclusion when, one by one, each figure's head violently shoots off its body leaving a crumpled heap of headless anarchists. It's quite a relief. It's also indicative of the work's complexity, a key factor of which is the installation's actual design.

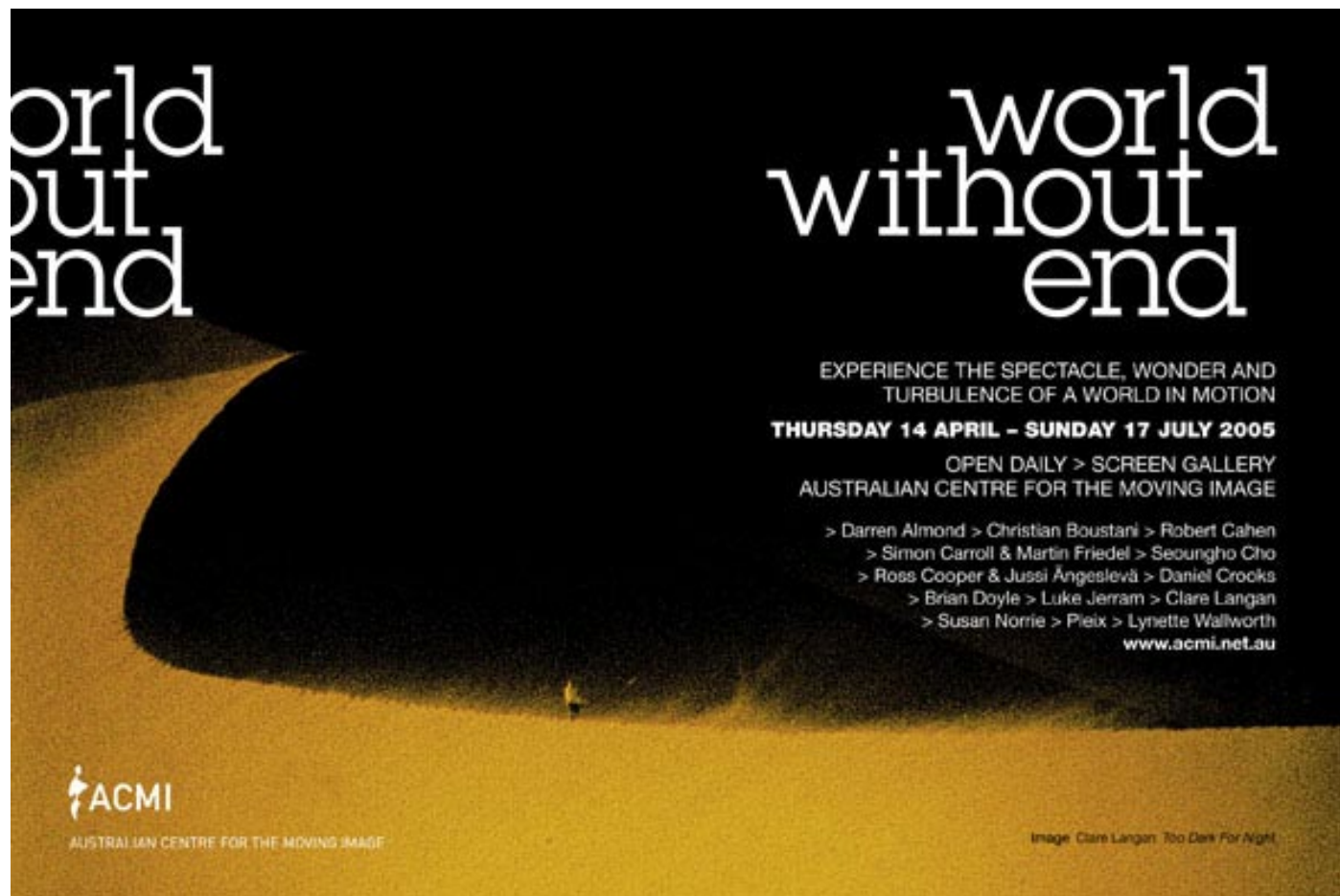
The animation is presented on two monitors that are sensor-activated and contained within a large cage-like construction. This wooden super-structure is the conduit for a seemingly endless number of steel ball bearings that are automatically fired around its circuit). Most of them never quite make it to the end, however, as a large knot in the last section of track causes the balls to fall through to the ground where they eventually come to rest. *Requiem*, particularly with the animation's inclusion of Situationist International (SI) leader Guy Debord, reflects on and updates the SI belief that practitioners ought not aim for a separate world of art that supposes daily life. Instead, the transformation of daily life should be encouraged by the formation of situations of creative potential, extrapolated through the combination of art, technology and behavioural experimentation.

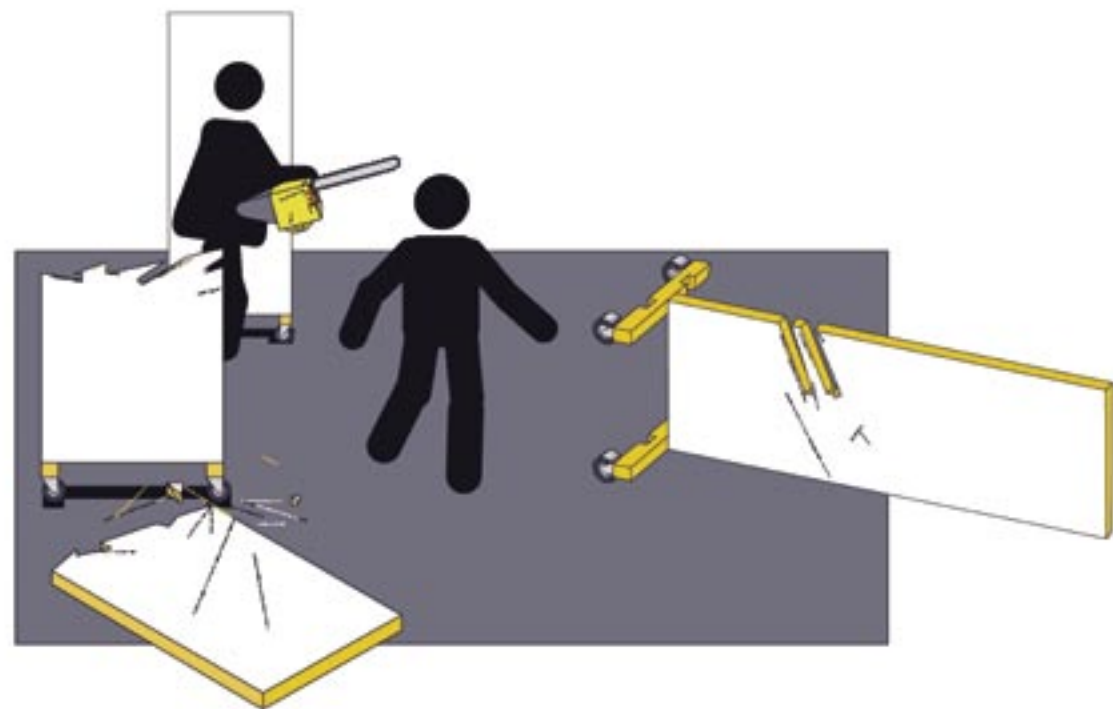
To this end Dutch SI artist Constant developed his visionary architectural project *New Babylon*, which called for a continuous space wherein *homo ludens* (the creative man) is freed from utilitarian function in order to fulfil his creative imagination.¹ In *New Babylon*, it was envisaged that the inhabitants' simultaneous activity would create a new collective culture; the actions of each individual



would form chain reactions that would themselves become critical, explode and thus be transformed into new situations. Of course, such a vision of a future society – where all labour is cultivated by a vast automated network, freeing man to live a life in which imagination is actualised – seems impossibly utopian today. Yet Mountford's *Requiem to the Negativist Spectacle* functions as both homage to, and parody of, the idea that art is in any way transformative.

The work operates as a visceral, yet humourous, questioning of the correlation between radical aesthetics and social activism. It also illustrates the artist's fraught negotiation of his own relationship to the art historical canon. Mountford offers an alternative path between the anti-intellectual stance of so much contemporary practice (think yBa art) and art that is resolutely socially or politically engaged.²





Above: Arlo Mountford
Museum Divides and Confused Encounters, 2004
 Animation Still
 Image courtesy the artist

Mountford's *Museum Divides and Confused Encounters* (2004) exemplifies this practice of not so much blurring the line between irony and sincerity, as quite literally taking a chainsaw to it. Like *Requiem*, *Museum Divides* comprises animation approached from within an intricate large-scale installation. Two figures, resembling the generic types on roadside signage, step into a void whereupon they act out a series of well-known art actions. They spray one another with gold paint and belt out a rousing rendition of 'Underneath the Arches', just as Gilbert and George did in *The Singing Sculpture* (1968). The figures then drag one another through a large spillage of International Klein Blue. The exercise becomes more sinister, however, when the figures construct a large three-dimensional swastika out of moveable walls. It finally takes a wholly anarchistic turn when one of the figures proceeds to chase the other, *Texas Chainsaw Massacre*-style, through the space. *Museum Divides* problematises the intersection between cultural elitism and extreme ideology and concedes that such activity can only be performed with a full awareness of both its machinations and its implications. With this work, Mountford has created a fecund space, one that offers the potential for violence as well as its actualisation and aftermath.

Mountford was awarded a residential studio at Gertrude Contemporary Art Spaces upon his graduation from the VCA in 2002, and much of his subsequent work has investigated the vexed position of the artist in the world. *Serenading* (2003) comprises a video of the artist strumming on an acoustic guitar and, as the first work he presented at Gertrude CAS, is most specific in this endeavour. A self-portrait by Andy Warhol is projected onto the wall behind him and on the table in front sits a glass of red wine and a cask bladder (a clear reference to Warhol's *Silver Clouds* of 1966). It is evident that Mountford is not a talented musician – in fact he is simply stumbling through the scales – and the mood of the work swings from humour through pathos to frustration and, finally, failure. It is a poignant avowal of the discrepancy between an artist's fumbblings in the studio and the legacy of Warhol's notorious fifteen minutes. For Mountford, the artist must navigate a path through the burden of art history, the weight of peer expectation and the insecurity of the artist.

Proposition (meets the unfathomable – bergwerk 5) 2004 also reveals the incongruity between artistic practice and critical reception but from an even more self-conscious



Above: Arlo Mountford
Requiem to the Negativist Spectacle, 2005
 Animation Still
 Image courtesy the artist



Above: Arlo Mountford
Proposition (meets the unfathomable – bergwerk 5) 2004
 Photo credit: Christian Capurro

and self-deprecating position. Mountford takes his cue from Martin Kippenberger's *Bergwerk* (the mine), which reflected (albeit obliquely) on increasing social and economic division. It featured a large boot placed on a carpet, beneath which sat an iron plate and a shaft leading down through a yellow, two-part foam plinth into a space filled with pasta. Mountford meticulously recreates the sculpture but adds a sound component; simultaneously paying respect to his predecessor while perverting his

own predilections. The soundtrack features Mountford's melancholic singing 'Oh Martin Kippenberger/How I'm missing ya-huh' before a female voice cuts him off, scolding: 'The artist is a total wanker. Is he just going to recycle all his favourite artists one after the other? And it's just a Eurocentric boys' club that he's referencing.'

On the one hand, Mountford's work epitomises a paradigm shift wherein young artists seem less interested in legitimisation from older artists or institutions and more concerned with what their contemporaries think. On the other, it follows a proud modernist tradition of generational reaction. In Mountford's case this involves a rejection of the category of postmodernism and of art practice that reeks of dumbed-down rebellion, and looks instead to art before everything started sucking.

Vikki McInnes manages the VCA Gallery.

<notes>

¹ An English translation of Constant's framework for *New Babylon* can be found at <http://www.notbored.org/new-babylon.html>.

² Christine Morrow's article 'Contemporary Art and Cultural Critique' gives a good local account of the latter tendency: see Christine Morrow, 'Contemporary Art and Cultural Critique', *un Magazine*, issue 3, Autumn 2005, pp.12-16.

Stuart Ringholt, Destiny Deacon, Mutlu Çerkez, James Lynch,
Kathy Temin & Mira Gojak

NEW 05 and the CAOS phenomenon

NEW05

Curated by Max Delany

Australian Centre for Contemporary Art

14 March – 15 May 2005

by Paul Andrew

Nothing beats a memorable event. The Australian art world calendar has too few. Primavera at the Museum of Contemporary Art, the Samstag scholarship and even the good old-fashioned Archibald Prize media circus spring to mind. *NEW* – the annual Australian Centre for Contemporary Art (ACCA) exhibition – is the latest to join the gaggle. According to ACCA the series serves to illuminate the latest, the best, the most outstanding new artists (and new works) and afford them an all too rare opportunity of furthering their professional creative development. Sounds promising. Sadly this year's selection of works for *NEW05* begs the question – new for whom?

Three years on and the *NEW* exhibitions continue to arouse curiosity. Since the series began at ACCA in 2003 they have attained a certain vibrancy, as commissioning new work suggests the enabling of untapped trajectories and possibilities. Disappointingly, this year the 'commissioned' works are reprises of work already seen in recent commercial or major public art institutions and four of the six artists have established commercial gallery affiliations. Choosing established artists is far from 'new' and despite the offer of a compelling exposé of individual works, an under-whelming sense of *déjà vu* prevails.

Stuart Ringholt's artist books welcome visitors to *NEW05* like strange guest registers. Beneath the covers are dark personal narratives, insights into imposed pathologies, personal relationships and profoundly resonant intimacies. Ringholt plays with social paradigms, alters them and imbibes them with murmurs of introspection. It's slightly regrettable however that his *NEW05* contribution reconfigures a smaller work seen at ACCA's previous exhibition *The Molecular History of Everything**. And there is no breakaway work here, with similar pieces seen in various exhibitions in recent years at Gertrude Contemporary Art Spaces. The paintings in *NEW05* by Mutlu Çerkez are sublime. His humble and meta-realistic portraits are meticulous studies, appearing as painterly stop-motion excerpts of faces, evincing timelessness. Once again these works are familiar to audiences, seen in *It's a beautiful day: New Painting in Australia: 2* (2002) at the



Ian Potter Museum of Art. Mutlu Çerkez, like Temin and Deacon, is something of a big gun now, a recent Level 2 Projects exhibition alongside artist Marco Fusinato at Art Gallery of New South Wales attesting to his established status.

Kathy Temin's *My House* (2004-05) conflates architectural model making with the dollhouse genre, representing her own home. *My House* segues into this ironic realm of micro, replete with teeny LCD screens simulating domestic video and DVD technologies, where miniature video art unfolds and soft anthropomorphic koalas get hard and nitty gritty. The videos on those tiny screens are repeat performances of works exhibited in any

Below: Mutlu Çerkez

Untitled, 2004

Oil on canvas

49.5 x 38 cm

Private Collection, Melbourne

Photo credit: John Brash



Above: Kathy Temin

My House 2004-5

Installation view

Courtesy of the artist and Anna Schwartz Gallery, Melbourne

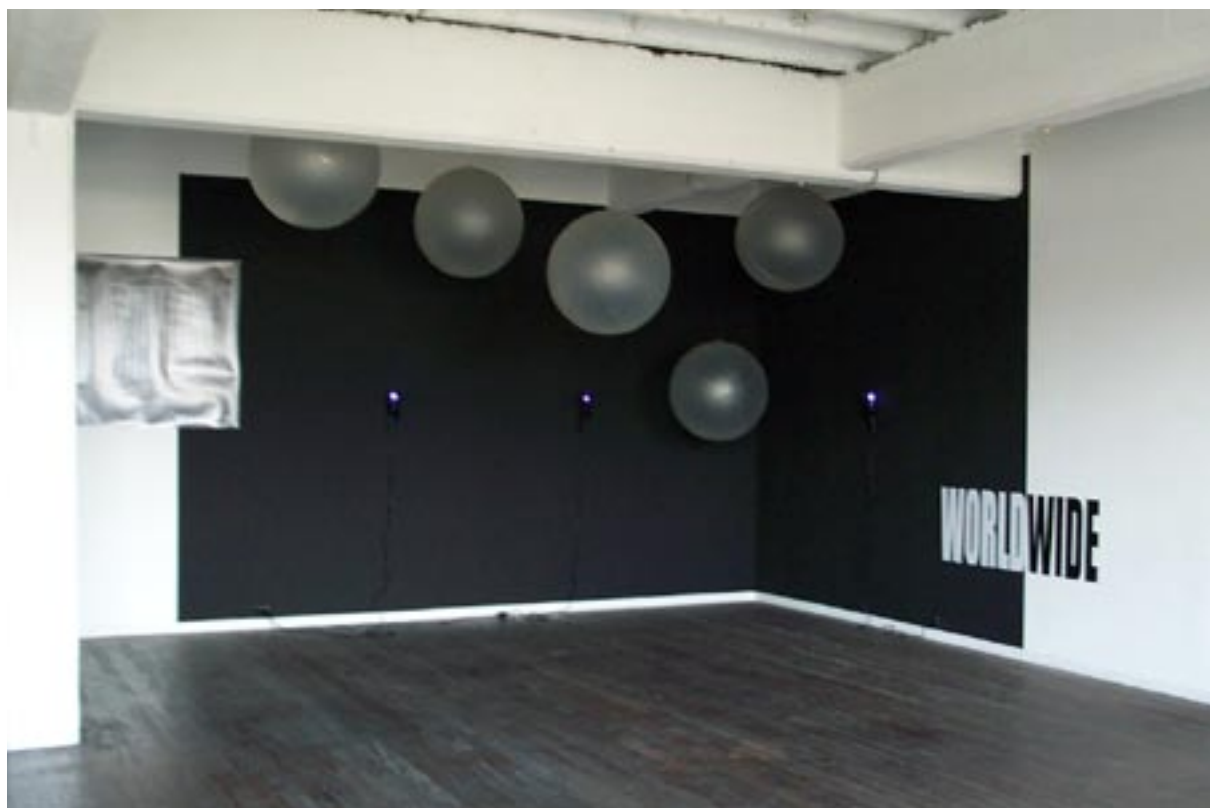
number of group shows in at both public and commercial galleries – a mini retrospective. Destiny Deacon parodies and plays with the world of dolls too. Her insight into the way kitsch and mass merchandising haunts indigenous social histories is delightfully paradoxical. Images intersect the masculine and feminine in a blunt photo video assemblage, revealing racial incongruities. In resemblance to Temin's *My House*, the artwork presented covers trajectories and means seen before. Deacon's work was the subject of a major survey show at The Museum of Contemporary Art in 2004 and quizzically some of these 'commissioned' pieces were in fact recently exhibited at Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery.

Mira Gojak is a domestic alchemist. Chairs, cupboards, mirrors and light bulbs are subject to transmutations that evince new possibilities for the mundane, and invoke a sense of awe, wonder and comedy. But it is hard to not feel jaded when it's the third time that *Stranded*, the stack of Ikea chairs, has been shown in Melbourne. James Lynch's outdoor cinema is the standout in *NEW05*. Lynch turns other people's dreams into strange videos. His surreal stories about everyday things like Italian espresso coffee pots are transposed into dreamy digital panoramas and stop motion treatment. Single frames are reified and

sketched-in like a child's colouring book, his animations projected into a mock-romantic outdoor cinema environment contained within ACCA's privileged white walls. The installation of the work is innovative, yet the form and content is a reworking of Lynch's recognisable oeuvre.

Max Delany's appointment as the guest curator provided solace and some hope for 'new' artists – emerging and emerged – following in the footsteps of ACCA Director Juliana Engberg (*NEW03*) and Geraldine Barlow (*NEW04*). His move to the Monash Museum of Art is a welcome transition from his role as Director of Gertrude Contemporary Art Spaces. Gertrude CAS is one of Australia's longest running Contemporary Art Organisations, founded in 1983 on the ethos of fostering new and emerging artists – the very values that have brought about the recent proliferation of ARIs in Melbourne. The irony of his curation of this show is that exhibitions like *NEW05* serve to widen the perceptual gap between Artist Run Initiatives (ARIs) and the Contemporary Art Organisation system (CAOS).

Undeniably, ARIs are today's event horizon for new art. Artists are taking business, networking and marketing into



*Above: First Floor gallery, Fitzroy
Wolfgang Thaler & Christoph Hinterhuber
Mep'yuk, 2001
Installation detail
Photo credit: Brendan Lee*

their own hands. This has dual purpose: to create greater balance and to circumvent exclusivity and privilege. The brokers of power and knowledge in the arts industry have long relegated artists to second fiddle.

Today, exhibition opportunities and commissions are still hard to come by, as is the opportunity to shift one's creative paradigm, which past *NEW* exhibitions have demonstrated. Paradoxically, this is why ACCA – and the CAOS phenomenon – first emerged. Organisations like ACCA, Brisbane's Institute of Modern Art, Sydney's Artspace and Adelaide's Experimental Art Foundation were established in the 1970s and 1980s for the ongoing showcase of new 'local cultural practice'. Conceptual art had gathered momentum and with it came an enervating cultural climate and a growing interest in the prismatic possibilities of conceptualism. In the unsettled scene of contemporary art practices in the 80s, these spaces set about to evince and distribute the conceptual art of the time; the new language of a generation that served to question the traditions, orthodoxy and status anxiety surrounding object-driven art.

ACCA (like Gertrude CAS) was opened in 1983 largely to address the lack of exhibition possibilities for Victorian contemporary artists and has since become increasingly

more institutionalised. Now ACCA is deeply entrenched in the private sector, more dependent on bureaucratised government support, more expensive to run, more self-serving and more deterministic – within the frame of economic rationalism and a myopic political climate. *NEW05* serves to remind us that today ACCA is outward and internationally focused. The proliferation of new local art isn't a regular programming event as it once was. Accordingly ARIs have become today's conduits for contemporary conceptualism and have largely eclipsed the original role of CAOS. With time a disproportionate discrepancy has emerged. Funding, attendance and the positive aspects of institutional clout are guaranteed for the CAOS spaces. Whereas this is certainly not so for the ever mercurial and organic ARIs who shoulder new local practice and struggle with sustainability and the will to patronage, while ACCA shoulders less.

Admittedly, recent ARI émigrés and *NEW* recruits like David Rosetzky and Guy Benfield have been afforded great momentum by their inclusion. Along with artists like Tom Nicholson, Daniel Von Sturmer, Nadine Christensen, Stephen Honegger and Anthony Hunt (*NEW04*), all of whom cut their teeth on Melbourne's ARI circuit, at spaces like First Floor, West Space, Penthouse&Pavement and TCBinc. Kathy Temin by way



*Left: The Australian Centre for Contemporary Art
Photo credit: Brendan Lee*

of example, exhibited at Store 5 – a major stomping ground for many of today's established artists. Store 5 was a Melbourne artist run space set up in the early 1990s and a Store 5 survey show, concurrent with *NEW05*, on at the Anna Schwartz Gallery is a piece of timely programming [see p.44-45 for the *Store 5 is...* review]. This synchronous alignment serves to remind us how integral the ARI system is to the public and private gallery network; *Store 5 is...* is a historic show no less and a clarion call to the commercial gallery sector for a greater exchange with ARIs at the outset rather than in hindsight.

Events like *NEW* and the annual Primavera exhibitions at the MCA are invariably struck as transitioning events. Artists are primed, geared and packaged for the departure lounges bound for high consumerism, media spectacle and global celebrity. Curatorial authority is primary, entirely celebrated and dependent on finding the next big thing and launching it to join the art star alumni and media distribution networks. Set against this commotion, are artist run galleries where new art pulses everyday, alongside the bittersweet reality that the art starlet phenomenon is indeed a very rare creature. Contemporary art spaces and commercial galleries would do well to 'mentor' and forge greater interrelationships

with artist run initiatives. Surely outward internationally focused exhibitions are the domain of the lucrative State Art Galleries (perhaps CAOS spaces have lost their way as they endeavour to tap into mainstream resources and outshine the state gallery system).

While the *NEW* series appear to be a step in the right direction, the question 'new for whom?' remains unanswered. Then again, maybe *NEW* is for the uninitiated. ACCA does indeed attract new audiences: school students, tourists and the spill over from neighbouring blockbuster shows at the National Gallery of Victoria, Federation Square, and the university and commercial gallery precincts. Perhaps, ACCA's audiences with curiosity spiked will stretch their legs and their imaginations, and find themselves down some quiet cul de sac in a refurbished warehouse or renovated shop front where they will behold the greater part of the new art event horizon – artist run initiatives. There again, ACCA may return to programming new local art without the hoopla, retrieve its origins and authenticity and present local conceptual art as a mainstay rather than an exception.

Paul Andrew is a Melbourne based arts writer and Documentary producer.

Nicola Loder – Keeping the Artworld’s Eyes Open

by Anthony Gardner

*I met people who were born blind.
Who had never seen.
I asked them what their image of beauty was.*

With these words, the French artist Sophie Calle reminded us that art can be wounding work. And with the conceptual parameters of *The Blind* (1986) established, Calle proceeded to combine the written text of her subjects’ responses with Calle’s own photographs of the beauty confided to her, along with mugshots of her speakers. ‘The most beautiful thing I ever saw is the sea’, claimed one man, ‘the sea going out so far you lose sight of it’. And beneath his portrait, with his gaze staring through the viewer, shone a vast and vacant sea. Above a photographed swathe of grass was written a young girl’s belief that ‘Green is beautiful. Because every time I like something, I’m told it’s green. Grass is green, trees, leaves, nature too... I like to dress in green’. Finally, a man’s image surrounded by nothing but the white cube of the gallery space: ‘Beauty – I’ve buried beauty. I don’t need beauty. I don’t need images in my brain. Since I cannot appreciate beauty, I have always run away from it’.¹

It was easy to forget that this was a dual wounding. While this man’s dolorous refusal was deceptively (perhaps exquisitely) painful, Calle had also ruptured art’s convenient reliance upon the trope of blindness: the narrowed visuality of canonised conceptualism, like Joseph Kosuth’s *One and Three Mirrors* (1965); the blankness of the monochrome; the averted, deadened gazes within postmodernist women’s photography. Against the fashionably ‘anti-aesthetic’ and its metaphor of narrowed vision, Calle presented congenitally blind subjects and their image of a ‘beauty’ defined by someone else. The return of the repressed emotion of the viewer was matched by the reclamation of a subjectivity defined as metaphor by her artist peers.

Art’s blindness to actual blindness was still a self-reflexive, and thus metaphoric, concern for Calle, especially given her own status during the 1980s as an overlooked artist. Yet Calle’s subject was a potent force, refusing the stylistic trend of blindness so as to explore what image cultures ignore in the canonisation of that trend. It is a potency that resonates with the equally poetic and critical, and unfortunately equally under-considered work of the Melbourne based artist, Nicola Loder.



Below: *Wild Thing, Piazza San Marco (detail) 2003*
Lambda print, aluminium sheet
120 x 120 cm
Photo credit: John Brash
Image courtesy the artist and Crossley & Scott

And, like Calle, Loder’s ongoing focus has been the subjectivities, representations and image-creations of the disenfranchised amid the constraints of our franchise economy.

Central to Loder’s practice are children; children from the after-school centre where she worked, children from the Royal Victorian Institute for the Blind, migrant and refugee children recently arrived from overseas and studying at Melbourne’s Western English Language School. In each case, the imaging of children defies the usual tropes associated with them. Like children’s attention-seeking antics, familiar from the performances of Mike Kelley or Paul McCarthy; children as becoming-adult, as Bill Henson’s work asserts; children unseen and silent beneath the patriarchal blanket, the Bataille formlessness of having ‘no rights in any sense and get[ting themselves] squashed everywhere’.² Instead, Loder’s children are active agents within the image stream. In Loder’s first major installation, *Child 1-175* from 1996, Loder photographed 175 children at low-angle, each figure heroised, romanticised, ennobled. Seen *en masse* however, these heroic kids became a menacing, strangely discomforting throng bearing down upon the viewer.



Above: *Child 1-175: A Nostalgia for the Present*
Stop 22, 1996
Silver gelatin prints
175 photographs, each 65 x 55 cm
Photo credit: Earl Carter
Image courtesy the artist and Crossley & Scott

While the work initially resembled Christian Boltanski installations of Holocaust-era photographs of children, Loder refused the victimology that reduces Boltanski’s subjects to pitied ghosts. Loder’s children, as Kevin Murray rightly claimed, loomed out of the *Village of the Damned*,³ an active posse of John Carpenter-style nasties threatening the viewer’s secure self-hood.

Loder has more recently provided children with cameras and rudimentary photographic skills, with the aim of seeing what those children would photograph that was special to them. Exhibited as part of *Smile* at Art Play, a children’s art facility in Melbourne, this Calle-esque series included images snapped by blind kids in an attempt to reconsider, as Loder asserts, ‘how the blind experience themselves outside of visual means and without visual memory’.⁴ This sincerely humanist and even anthropological concern sought to rupture the imagistic advertising for toys, fast food, or mobile phones, ads that tell (not just) kids what they want and thus who they are. In short, Loder’s critique was of the contemporary mirror-phase: our entry into the language of panoptical consumption.

Straight photography and the potential of children’s self-determination are not the only strings to Loder’s bow. Video and what Loder calls the ‘digital darkroom’ are increasingly core aspects to her practice.⁵ For *Untitled* (2000), Loder filmed meetings between five pairs of

strangers, each video presenting the tensions and intimacies materialised between people locked together for the first time. Bricolaged relations also underpinned *Wild Thing* (2003), especially her digital collages of Italian city squares bristling with tourists photographing local sites. These images were at once self-reflexive – photography of photography – and dystopian; each unit of tourists was locked within a separate photograph, with these atomised cells quilted together digitally like cogs in the omnipotent, spectacular public sphere. Nonetheless, *Wild Thing* was not simply resigned to the interests of an increasingly digitised metropolis. These caprices still suggested inter-personal possibilities that had not actually occurred, through the pleasures of sharing public space. The work’s dystopian potential, however, was a caution against treating such a metaphor as reality itself. This fantasy would, after all, blind us to the conditions denounced by Guy Debord and that still affect us today: ‘capital accumulated to the point where it becomes image’ and its equally frightening corollary whereby images mediate the social relations between people.⁶ Such a pressing and cautious sociability was particularly poignant given the broader paradoxes within contemporary Australian culture; the global dreams of reconciliation advertised by Sydney’s Olympic Games, staged as they were amid the first waves of recent political disinterest in more local reconciliations.⁷



Loder's various themes – ruptures of visibility and images of sociality; blindness and commodities – have begun to intertwine in her most recent exhibition held at Crossley & Scott. Entitled *Blind Child 1-6*, this is the first instalment of an intended six-part series called *Tourist*. Six photographs of blind children were digitised so severely that the figures began to dissolve into the ground. The works flirted with miming the conditions of visual impairment and yet problematised such an easy sympathy for, or identification with the children. As they morphed into the psychedelic, multi-coloured ground, so they refused a stable identification even as we tried to identify with them. Ultimately, the tropes of digital media became tools in their deconstruction: the omnipresence and hyper-visibility of digitised imaging slid into optical displacement; the digi-rhetoric of hyper-connectivity between all people everywhere devolved into the inability to recognise or address a person's presence right in front of us. The figures steadfastly denied easy subsumption within the digital imagining of how they should be seen.

Nonetheless, Loder's risks were great, chief among them being the potential fetishisation of visual impairment in the name of repairing an ethic of the visual. This was, after all, Sophie Calle's undoing, putting 'blindness' to the purpose of re-aestheticising art, while recolonising 'blindness' for artistic currency. Loder herself had also relocated 'blindness' within a commercial gallery, a

major shift in her practice from the public to the private sector.

Yet Loder's was an act of refusal instead of reparation. First, as the refusal to support our identification or identification with the children. And second, as the consequent refusal of digital imaging's ability to colonise all subjectivities and to reduce all people to tourists in each other's fields of vision; of subjectivity subservient to the capital-made-image. Each blind child refused representation within this digital visual field. They dissolved instead into the ground's hypertrophy of garish colour, its knowingly excessive Ken Done-commercialism and purple haze nostalgia. They were, as Stuart Koop stated in his excellent catalogue essay, incommensurable to the digital imaging that increasingly dominates our visual field, whether as advertising in the city or how we see the city with our photographic eye, a colonisation of the self both externally imposed and internally absorbed.⁸

Loder's work thus succeeds where Sophie Calle's did not. It unravels Calle's duplicity in putting 'blindness' to use so as to re-aestheticise the visual and to recolonise the subject. If Calle's failure was to be self-reflexive about blindness, Loder's success is her self-reflexivity toward photography. Implicit within this approach is Loder's refusal to align herself with the hegemonic trend in



*Above & across: Tourist
Blind Child 1-5 and Blind Child 5 & 4 (2005)
Lambda print, 6mm Perspex
120 x 160 cm
Photo credit: John Brash
Image courtesy the artist and Crossley & Scott*

contemporary Australian photography, the canonised reduction of Andreas Gursky-esque interiors or Thomas Struth-style portraits often to little more than second-hand style.⁹ The art historical force of Loder's recent practice is instead its turn to the still under-written history of women's photography in Australia in the 70s, of Mickey Allen or Robyn Stacey or other important but marginalised photographers.¹⁰ These women often 'touched up' their photographs of children, towns and daily life with painting and 'craft', an implicit critique of both marginalised 'women's work' and the high-key photography of the city by the macho male modernists. Loder renews this approach for the digital era, immersing herself in Photoshop technology with a communitarian imperative and a critical resolve. Her self-reflexive stance toward photography and its complicity with the imaging of capital and the construction of the self is amongst the most important practices in the country, as well as a pertinent engagement with the photographers of the 70s. And just as it is to the historian's discredit that these influences have been so little analysed, so it is to the critic's shame that so little has been written about Nicola Loder's practice.

Anthony Gardner is a contributing editor of un Magazine.

<notes>

¹ All text from *The Blind* is taken from Christine Macel (ed.), *Sophie Calle: M'as-Tu Vue?*, exh. cat., Paris: Centre Georges Pompidou, 2003, pp.377-384.
² Georges Bataille, *Visions of Excess: Selected Writings, 1927-1939*, trans. Allan Stoekl, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985, p.31.
³ Kevin Murray, 'Three Child Proofs', in *The First Age: An Exhibition of Photographs of Children and Childhood Experiences*, exh. cat., Melbourne: West Space, 1995.
⁴ Email to the author, from the artist, 15 April 2005.
⁵ Ibid.
⁶ Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith, New York City: Zone Books, 1994 (1967), pp.12-24.
⁷ Keeley Macarow argues this potential reading of *Untitled* in the catalogue for the exhibition in which *Untitled* was first shown: Keeley Macarow, *Orbital*, exh. cat., Melbourne: Experimenta and Centre for Contemporary Photography, 2000.
⁸ Stuart Koop, *Tourist: Nicola Loder*, exh. cat., Melbourne: Crossley & Scott, 2005.
⁹ Consequently, I would disagree with Stuart Koop, whose catalogue essay tries to re-align Loder's *Blind Child* with a Gursky aesthetic, albeit relayed through a personal anecdote: see *ibid*.
¹⁰ Sydney academic, Catriona Moore, has been instrumental in the revision of such practices, small though that revision is to date. See Catriona Moore, *Indecent Exposures: Twenty Years of Australian Feminist Photography*, Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1994.

Interview with Andrej Savski from the Slovenian art collective, Irwin.

IRWIN: Like to like

with Billy Gruner

Billy Gruner: Irwin stems out of a wider Central European tradition, and is specifically linked to groups like OHO (eye+ear), dating from the 1960s, and NSK (Neue Slowenische Kunst). Can I start by asking what has it been like to be an artist based in Ljubljana, Slovenia and how did Irwin, comprising Dusan Mandic, Miran Mohar, Andrej Savski, Roman Uranjek and Borut Vogelnik, form in the 1980s as a neo avant-garde art group?

Andrej Savski: The fact that we started working together in Slovenia at that particular time – in the early 80s – defined us strongly, because we were living in a socialist country. Coming directly from the art academy in 1983, this is the system we entered into; rigid, conservative, closed in and following an established order, where talking and thinking about art on all levels was almost the same as it had been in the 19th century. Romanticised ideas dominated, only the forms were somewhat different. It may seem like a paradox that abstraction was the official art form at the time, but we're speaking of the early 80s and late 70s and of a particular formalistic approach to abstraction where inventiveness had long gone.

OHO weren't active anymore at the time, but they had a cult status. As did earlier conceptualist activities from Zagreb and Belgrade. This line of thinking about art was very important for us and this was the circle in which we positioned ourselves. We established the art movement NSK together with Laibach, the music group, and the theatre group Sisters of Scipion Nasica in 1984. This was extremely important since it enabled us, because of the number of people and activities involved, to establish a level of autonomy for our production.

BG: As international contemporary artists you speak frankly of an avant-garde aesthetic and having shared 'radical' interests. Can you discuss how these ideas fit into Irwin's interdisciplinary practice? Also importantly, how did you come to focus on the idea defined as the 'retro-principle' or, as Igor Zabel later called it, 'programmatically eclecticism'?



*Above: Irwin
Like to Like/Wheat and Rope, 2003
(photo reconstruction of the group OHO (Milenko Matanovi) action Wheat and Rope from 1969)
199.5 x 168 x 7 cm
Photo credit: Tomaz Gregoric
Courtesy Cornerhouse*

AS: We stated our position in a form of a manifesto. That is where we first described the 'retro principle' as an artistic credo. 'Programmatic' or 'accentuated eclecticism' was the field within which we began to act. This implied that we wanted to show an awareness of the circumstances in which we produced art. That first phase of our art making was object oriented and transgressions came out of the conflict between different elements of which 'painting' consisted. We made references to non-artistic contexts such as ideology or ideas and things provoking a sense of taboo. This insistence later led us out of painting as a form towards what you call 'interdisciplinary' art. Here, the crucial projects aimed at the construction of the context of Irwin. We realised that the art world, both international and local, viewed us not as an art form, but as some kind of phenomenon.

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Me Working
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ANNA SCHWARTZ GALLERY



*Above: Irwin
Corpse of Art, 2003
Installation 300 x 300 cm, Courtesy Cornerhouse & artists*

BG: Irwin has enjoyed encountering identity through the act of artistic re-visitation. Importantly, the group makes art about its' own history, such as the earlier temporal OHO actions restaged and photographed. Yet you emphasise an ongoing examination of the art of specific historical figures like Kasimir Malevich and John Heartfield; the title of your show *Like to Like* speaks of this. Perhaps you could discuss the significance of such meta-documentation in Irwin's art?

AS: An artist has many possibilities or positions available to them. Irwin assumed very early on the position of the chronicler. Firstly, through the broader collective NSK (Neue Slowenische Kunst) and later in the specific conditions governing our own artistic practice – that of an artistic collective from Eastern Europe working at the end of the 20th century and beginning of the 21st century. We view the 'retro principle' as a method of thinking; we borrow images (together with their meanings or particular aspects and levels of their meaning) and incorporate these in new statements. This is the basis. In our painterly practice, that consists of the series *Was ist Kunst* and its later development in the *Icons* series, we have used many different approaches in constructing fresh semantic structures – by repeating certain images over and over again. In the *Icons* series for instance, we narrowed our choice of motifs to a few and the most recurring, like the *cross*, the *sower*, the *stag*, the *cup of coffee* and the *Malevich*

between two wars. We also borrow from each other. This inner circulation becomes a way to objectify subjective choices. The most important aspect has always been to try to find the proper element to establish a new entity on a formal level, as well as on semantic ones.

Irwin however has a tendency to work in bigger cycles, whereby a body of work is developed from the previous or is linked in some way to another part of our system. It was not something that was planned in advance, but at some point we noticed the group worked in that way and we're happy with it. Today, only bigger systems seem to have enough critical mass – they are interesting because they don't pass unrecognised so easily – a chain of repetition has become an interesting form itself. We're interested in seeing what kind of results will come out of it; that is why we're doing it.

BG: The principle of Gesamtkunstwerk (total work of art) is an ideal many formalists have historically striven towards. It seems reasonable to claim this is reflected in your activities, is it not? And in the literature produced on Irwin it is specifically suggested that an aim of the 20 year-old collective is to open up dialogues on revision. If so, and as members of a collective organization, are you personally stimulated by the outcomes of your practice? Moreover, what may others glean from your critical social activities?



*Above: Irwin
East Art Map lightbox, 2002
Courtesy Cornerhouse and artists*

AS: When you work in a group there is always a certain tension between the individual and the group. This is both good and bad. The good is you get fast and relatively honest feedback, the bad is the possibility of inertia. There are rules that are established through time; some inner understanding that leads activity. The key question in the functioning of the group is how to establish its dynamics and how to instigate a common interest and direct efforts to a common focus. Irwin is always interested in achieving equilibrium and stability. We realised that we have to trick ourselves in different ways to be able to instigate a development within the group, and this is now a method consciously used. It can only be done by an individual as an act of betrayal or a heresy in the established order. These methods may be of some interest to an outsider but are probably of more interest from a sociological standpoint.

BG: Igor Zabel talks about your 'non-neutral context'. He also feels Irwin is interested in a social realist enterprise of re-construction, whereby dominant ideas are altered'.² Can you talk about these ideas and how the *Corpse of art* installation of Malevich lying in state came about?

AS: *Corpse of art* is essentially a homage to Malevich. It restages a photo, depicting him lying in a coffin in the House of Artists, St. Petersburg, from 1935. There was always something disturbing about this photo. You can view it as an installation – a body was exhibited lying in the coffin done

in Suprematist style in the gallery surrounded by artworks – so a new context allowed us to view the situation as art. All three elements that make up the *Like to Like* exhibition and are in fact constructs; they are each at the same time found objects. What further interested us with priors OHO works was that they could be re-invented as well – today they are virtually unknown to the art world. The same goes for the *East Art Map*, which may be viewed as an invented history, since it is not well known. The common denominator of all three parts of the project, as well as for Irwin the group, is obviously an Eastern European context; and it is not a neutral one, just as Art is not impartial. There are always specific conditions to consider while working in a particular context, the other possibility is to be unaware of it or try to ignore it.

Like to Like was shown at ARTSPACE and the EAF in 2004, concluding its tour in Melbourne at RMIT Gallery on 30 April 2005.

Dr Billy Gruner is a practicing artist. He was one the founders of MOP Projects, is now running SNO and works at Viscopy.

<notes>

¹ Igor Zabel. *Like to Like*. Catalogue essay, Cornerhouse, Manchester. Reference sourced from *Like to Like*, Artspace exh. catalogue, 2004.

² Ibid.



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 Richard Dunn
 Jonathan Jones
 Sarah Smuts-Kenedy
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Join us at the
 opening night celebration
 Tue 16 August
 5 – 7pm

Don't forget your camera

Eamonn Verberne

Kings Artist Run Initiative
11 February – 5 March 2005
by Rosemary Forde



*Above & left: Eamonn Verberne
Don't forget your camera, 2004
Type C photographs
120 x 150 cm
Courtesy the artist*

Punctuating the Kings ARI with a suite of framed photographs, recent VCA graduate Eamonn Verberne gave us a break from wishing we were still on holiday. With the exhibition title clearly pointing to the universal desire to document personal experience, Verberne's work reflects on the unstoppable rise of the camera and its impact on our lives.

As this piece of technology grows smaller, smarter and more accessible, the results for amateur photographers become increasingly encouraging. At the same time, generations of people brought up with television and home movies need things on film just to remember them. From a distance, memory inevitably intermingles with fictions or later events; the photo is one way to keep things clear.

With modernity an ancient history and the future unknown, the present is in trouble and always over before

we know it. This worldview has given birth to the cult of memory, where nostalgia for what happened five minutes ago is kept alive to a large extent by pictures, our own personal documentaries. Photography becomes a means to capture and contain 'truth', whereas both tourism and art are more often driven by a desire to escape reality.

Verberne's photographs appear to be glorified holiday snapshots mimicking everyone else's snapshots. In 2004 the artist took his camera to some of Australia's most popular holiday destinations. Looking for adventure and escape, à la *Fantasy Island*, a continual stream of tourists to the Gold Coast follow a well-trodden path to make a temporary break from their ordinary lives. These are times to remember, so you'll want to take your camera. The thing is, once you get to your holiday destination with that suitcase full of expectations, you realise that thousands of others had the same idea. Your 'escape' has become an industry.



*Above: Eamonn Verberne
Don't forget your camera, 2004
Type C photograph
120 x 150 cm
Courtesy the artist*

Verberne selects and composes his subjects to highlight the ordinariness of such holiday experiences. He is also fascinated by the elements of manufacture and control imposed by the tourist industry. Although his camera is presumably always at the ready, Verberne doesn't give us any magical moments of spontaneity or individuality; instead we find the mundane and clichéd, reflecting the oddity and disappointment of artificial and constructed touristic experiences.

Photo opportunities are often staged and directed by the tourist industry, even signposted with 'Kodak Photo Spot' stamped all over the world's most picturesque destinations. The result is that everyone returns home with the same souvenirs and the same photos, creating a global cache of cliché memories like a clip art image bank. The extreme of this artificiality is witnessed by *Windows on the World*, a theme park in China's Shenzhen Bay featuring 118 of the world's tourist spots reproduced in miniature. Local would-be tourists don't even have to leave town to get a photo of themselves in front of the Swiss Alps or against the Manhattan skyline.

Verberne points out that as tourists we can't really get away from our ordinary lives or the realities and constructs of society. Nor can we do so as an audience of much contemporary art. In the first instance, escapist desires are met with the business of contrived tourism. In the second, while we might hope for some relief from reality with a little artistic fiction or indulgence, we are more often faced with reflections of what is already known. We just can't seem to escape the mundane.

This is not to say that Verberne's work disappoints. *Don't forget your camera* plays on and exposes the cultural elevation of average experiences and generically constructed realities. Photography has played a big part in this evolution and has changed the way we look and experience time, witnessed by the almost obsessive growing need to document and preserve memory as it happens.

Rosemary Forde is a tourist in Melbourne.

OW Dominic Redfern

Conical Contemporary Art Space

4 – 21 March 2004

by Bruce Mowson

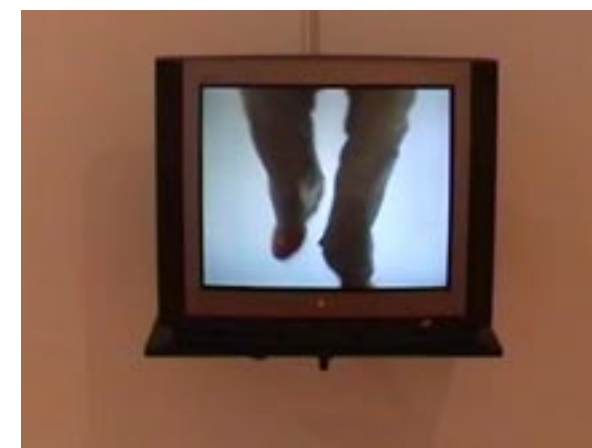


*Left: Dominic Redfern
OW (Installation view) 2004
Video installation
Image courtesy the artist*

Dominic Redfern is an artist working with video who displays care and engagement with the medium. This makes all of his works a pleasure to see and hear, and *OW* at Conical was no exception. In fact, I'd like to thank Dominic for not documenting himself rubbing a body part, or a surface with or without a household implement, videoing mirrors on the nature strip, taking shots of animals, or making closed-circuit video loops. To twist that locally infamous dictum – please stop with the crappily produced video art.¹

It was a real pleasure to see Dominic's video of a power socket, placed on the floor, in front of the power socket that powered the monitor. Photogenic, it was larger than life and seamlessly looped. It was tight a bundle, referring to the backstage of technology, pop imagery, self-awareness and self-reflexivity. This backstage of technology is about maintaining the 'illusion', as it is termed in theatre.

We might live in an age of technology but it is only the recent generations of home entertainment equipment that provide sockets on the front. Putting them at the back is visually neat but a complete pain in the arse with which to work. While we might like to think that this hiding of technology is merely convenient, a nice convention, or even the obvious thing to do, we could say the same about slaughterhouses or Union Carbide – keep the dirty work out of sight thanks, we're British. And what of self-reflexivity? We are not to be surprised by this, given that *OW* was by the artist who brought us the doppelganger (*Electro*, West Space 2004): himself, shockingly confronted by himself. Dominic's power plug reminded me of Warhol screen-printing dollar signs – a frank admission of where the power is coming from. Dominic serves up this video with a straight face – the TV – telling us that it's on because it's plugged in... Or at least that was all he was giving away.



*Above & left: Dominic Redfern
OW (Installation view) 2004
Video installation
Images courtesy the artist*

Writer's caption for the image above: The red shoes. Are they the missing blood in the bisection? Or a signifier of latent power, passion, energy, lacking in their limp movement?

The power socket video was seen on entering the space, however it shared the room with a second, more substantial piece. Two monitors were placed in a vertical configuration, in a rough manifestation of the upper and lower half of the human body. The lower half depicted a pair of legs – the artist's in fact – wearing jeans and red sneakers. They dangled in space, with a light switch in the background (hmmm). The legs were moving slowly, as if the person was lazily attempting to find traction. In the monitor above were the artist's torso and forearms – the shoulders and head hidden by, and trapped in, an air-conditioning duct. This half of the body was struggling – *OW*, get me out (!). And herein lay an obvious aspect of the work, the disjunction between the two halves of the body. On a wider stage, this is a familiar piece of pop psychology, a salient notion or myth in our society – the top half, the head, the face, the brains struggling violently, trying to do all the work, with the bottom half, the groin, the feet, the legs, suffering from neglect. A sedentary society... an intellectual elite... technocracy... couch potatoes.... Artists work with ideas and Redfern's portrayal of going nowhere, stuck in the dark, struggling against the limits is a dominant subtext of our time. It could be easily read as a literal statement (knowing that he works in an Australian university...).

Redfern's catalogue of works displays an engagement with issues of the artist's relationship to themselves and the viewer. There's a sense of latter-day Bruce Nauman – though less po-faced and more a sly wink – in Redfern's evocation of the circularity of life (and thankfully without the smarmy taste of a Bill Viola work reminding us that we should be grateful for how wonderful it all is). The West Space works, *Electro* and *Dice Man*, are now local landmarks in the exploration of self-reflexivity. They displayed deft judgement in the division between the artist staring into the mirror and the artist using the medium as a dynamic engine for philosophy, an interrogation of the medium and its socio-cultural workings. Against these works, *OW* felt like a strong minor work – well delivered but on a modest scale. I hope that this signals a period of reflection for the artist, with more of his strongest material to come.

Bruce Mowson is a Melbourne artist hiding behind your mirror with a video camera.

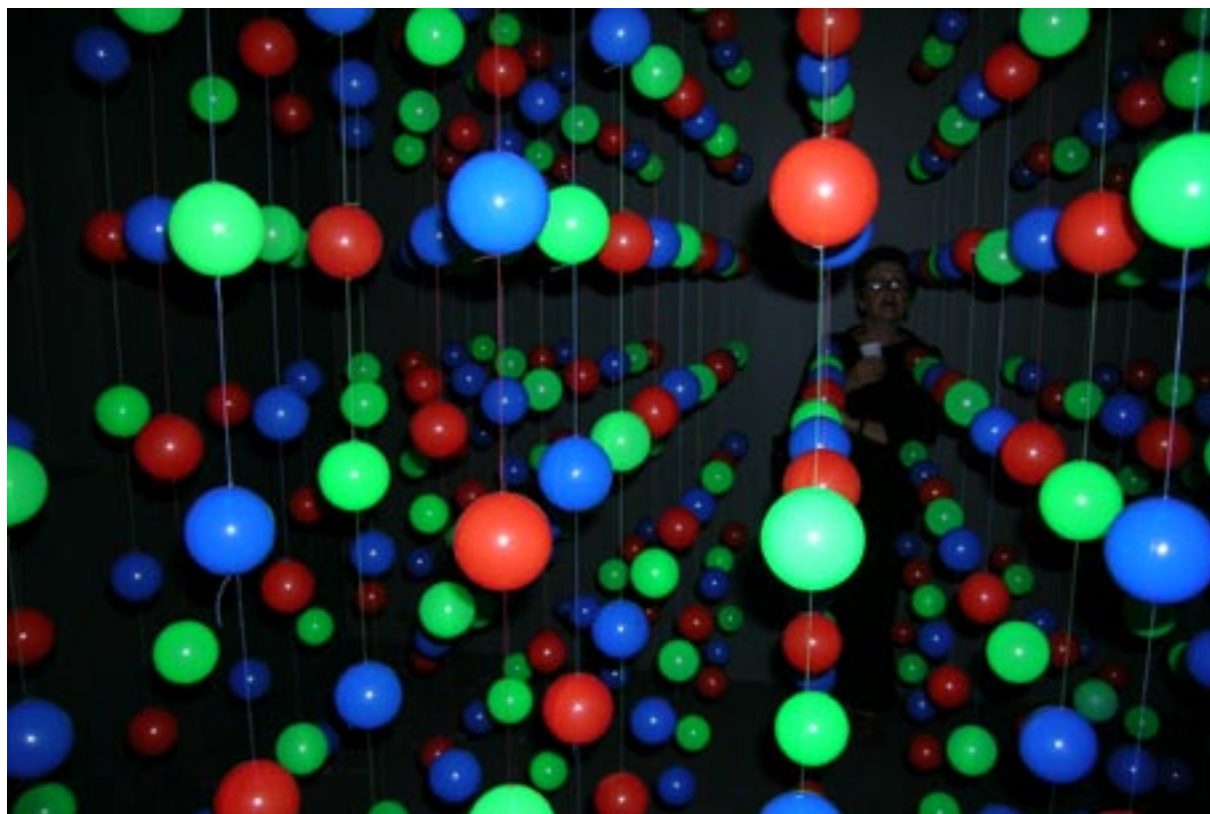
<note>

¹ Philip Brophy, 'Please stop it with the boring video art', *Like* #9, 2000.

*Nine*³

Narinda Cook & Paul Irving

Bus
22 February – 12 March 2005
by Zara Stanhope



The unexpected. It is inevitably a pleasant surprise to come across an exhibition offering unforeseen qualities. It sets the work apart from the pervasive sense of familiarity or re-working that is taking up a disproportionate amount of gallery space, created both by artists employing the benefit of maturity and retrospectivity or young things still coming to terms with creative practice and its history. Or perhaps this sense of déjà vu is a sign of my age?

The small but exquisite work that caught me unawares was at the rear of Bus. As in previous projects that I have seen, Narinda Cook and Paul Irving – whether working singly or in collaboration as here – generously invite the viewer to kick back from the everyday mindset. In my

mind's eye I see them creating their own worlds within worlds, or quarantining a chosen part of the physical realm within a human-scale snow dome – a reality shaken, the surroundings stirred and new forms settled upon.

Bus is a space that prides itself on its nondescript street presence and Cook and Irving's provisional situation felt almost illicit, secreted behind black curtaining at the gallery's rear. While emitting a low sound, indicative of Irving's contribution and talents, there was little else to indicate the existence or affect of the work. A darkened space lay behind the curtain, one permeated with the possibilities of the cube. A volume of darkness was filled at the centre with mysterious globular forms and suffused

*Below & across: Narinda Cook & Paul Irving
Nine³, 2005 (installation detail)
Plastic balls, thread, pins, stereo sound, strobe & L.E.D. lights
180 x 180 x 180 cm
Image courtesy of the artists
Photo credit: John Brash*



with industrial sounds in stereo. The *Nine³* grid of circles of red and green light suspended at the centre of the space gave the impression of hovering, a dematerialisation of form and its tactility that has been a constant hallmark of Cook's previous two and three-dimensional work.

True to the experience of any sound, light or moving-image work, being there was the best way to experience the work. Sensual and physical immediacy were its predominant appeal. Yet in retrospect, one of *Nine³*'s most interesting features was not its resemblance to a private chill-out room meets dance floor or its invitation to empty the mind, but the accumulative physiological effect of strobing light that overrode the meditative pleasures of the environment. This effect was as far from the regularly paced, 're-energising' tempo of muzak as Bus is from a public art space.

Nine³ was also distinctive for the artists' courage in creating an installation that took on the kind of work seen in better funded museums and galleries and would be equally at home in non-art venues, where its visitors would greatly outnumber the 'art audience'. In its incarnation

at Bus, there was plenty to occupy the gallery-goer, who could locate metaphors for the rationality yet fallibility of science, or might be turned on by the historicity and annotation of minimalist grids, and who were not yet sated by notions of immersion and their philosophical relation to the mind, body and spirit.

Visiting an art space, it is impossible not to be aware of your own performative actions (especially when you are a curator and therefore eternally a guest, in a sense, in the home of art). Cook and Irving's work offered a surprisingly deceptive theatre, generating a cocktail of pleasure and pain; inviting you to forget yourself, unwind and enjoy the tempo of the darkness, only to be reminded of the body by the mind's warning signals. It is invigorating to know that we can still empty our minds or be disorientated, or that science has no explanation for why the speed of light is slowing down and what that means...

Zara Stanhope, Deputy Director and Senior Curator at Heide Museum of Modern Art.

Run Girl Run

Jessie Angwin

Blindside
10 – 26 February 2005
 by **Amelia Douglas**

Run Girl Run – and run she most certainly does, scantily clad in nought but leg warmers and a tennis skirt, pink gas mask clamped firmly over mouth, the crest of a wave nipping at booted heels. To her left, a girl in red panties and a filmy negligee kneels on all fours on the floor of a tiny, hospital-green room. Her name, we have been told, is Chi. Chi reaches upwards, lightly fingering a small dark hole in the wall. Elsewhere, embroidered fragments of her skin are encased within luxurious, charm-like boxes that hang delicately from the walls of the room.

I must apologise. Jessie Angwin's works seem to have this effect on me. They bring out the worst of my kitschy, soft-porn fantasies. They do dreadful things to my punctuation. They encourage irresponsible use of metaphor, unnecessary indulgence in narrative and very, very purple prose.

Angwin's latest pieces incorporate images from Japanese Hentai and Manga within elaborate acrylic and textile designs. After first laying down her graphics in flat blocks of paint, Angwin hand-stitches elements of the images directly through the canvas itself. Tight, raised sections of thread gently puncture each surface. Like a palimpsest, each canvas is graphically over-inscribed. It's a process that has become the trademark of Angwin's work over the past four years. More recently her images have been embellished with further additions of Japanese paper, beads, silk tassels, geisha hairpieces and textile appliqué. *Tentacle Rape* is undoubtedly the most decadent specimen in this exhibition: lengthy trails of tubular kimono cloth coil from the base of each image to rest in a tangle of beaded stars on the gallery's floor. The canvases depict heavily cropped details of girls' torsos, their narrative context signalled only by the work's disturbingly indexical title.

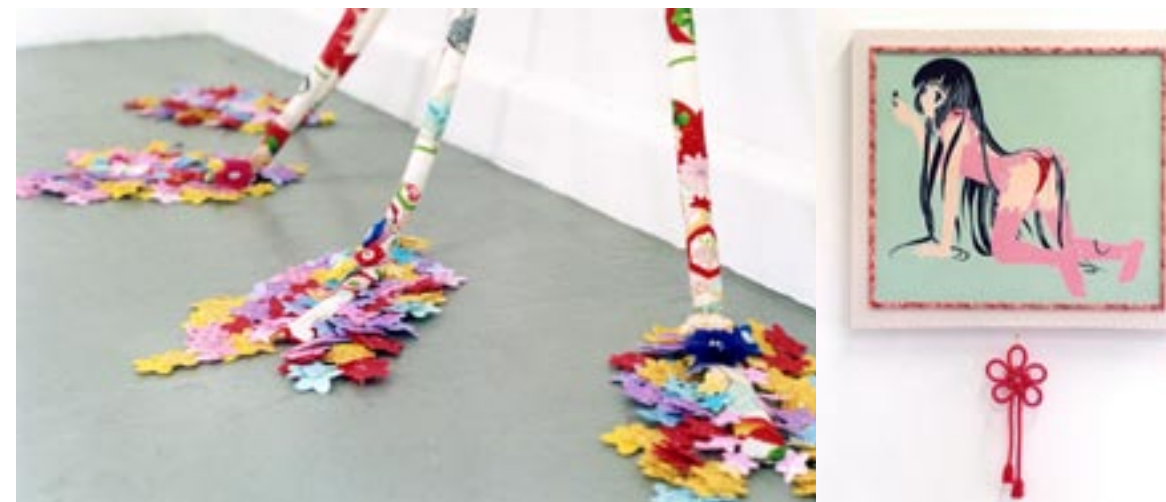
As with the majority of pieces in this exhibition, *Tentacle Rape* appropriates graphics from the popular Japanese Manga serial *Chobits*, whose heroine Chi is also the main protagonist in *Run Girl Run*; indeed, her face and body appear repeatedly in almost every frame. However, Angwin's obsessive treatment of her subject differs



considerably from the obsessions evidenced by Manga's original consumer base, the Otaku (Anime, Manga, Hentai fanatics). For Otaku, the pleasure of consumption is inseparable from the medium's ephemeral qualities and addictive demand for serial replacement. These are texts most commonly purchased from vending machines on Tokyo railway platforms; a form of cheap, throwaway stimulus devoured en route to work or downloaded for immediate gratification. Angwin's remakes are evidently oppositional to this form of consumption. She isolates her figures from the kinesis of narrative and ensures their

Below: Jessie Angwin
Tentacle Rape, 2005

Acrylic, silk thread, beads, mixed textiles, washi paper, balsa wood on canvas & waste canvas
 Dimensions variable
 Image courtesy the artist



Both images: Jessie Angwin
 Dimensions variable

Image courtesy the artist

Below: Poke Chi, 2004

Acrylic, silk, hook, washi paper, balsa wood on canvas & waste canvas

Left: *Tentacle Rape*, 2005 (detail)

Acrylic, silk thread, beads, mixed textiles, washi paper, balsa wood on canvas & waste canvas

captive stasis in permanent structures. This is a careful, repetitive and painstakingly detailed project, reminiscent of the construction of memorials or shrines. Preservation and retrieval seem close to its heart.

Angwin characterises her practice as a crafty subversion of Manga's erotic appeal: an introduction of traditionally 'feminine' language into an allegedly masculine domain. Despite this Angwin is a self-confessed fan, not a critic, of the images she so fastidiously preserves. As such, the seductive tenor of her graphics is anything but lost in translation. It is, however, redirected. Like all true aesthetes, Angwin figures seduction as not merely an explicitly sexual ritual but as a material concern, a task to be performed at the level of form rather than content. Moving around these works, the compositions threaten to dissolve into negative space: fragments of flesh abstract into decoration as figure goes to ground. The construction of the art object is often more explicit than

the objectification of the figures contained therein. For all the corsets, garters and knickers splashed across the walls of Blindside, it's the proposition of the work's formal display that remains more satisfying than any graphic proposal that Angwin's girls may enact. Desire is finally inscribed as locational, contingent upon its (cultural, political, aesthetic) presentation. Coyly unpicking the locations where transactions of desire may take place, *Run Girl Run* simultaneously rethreads their narrative trappings. For Angwin desire is on the move. *Run Girl Run*, indeed.

Amelia Douglas is a Melbourne-based curator and writer.

<note>

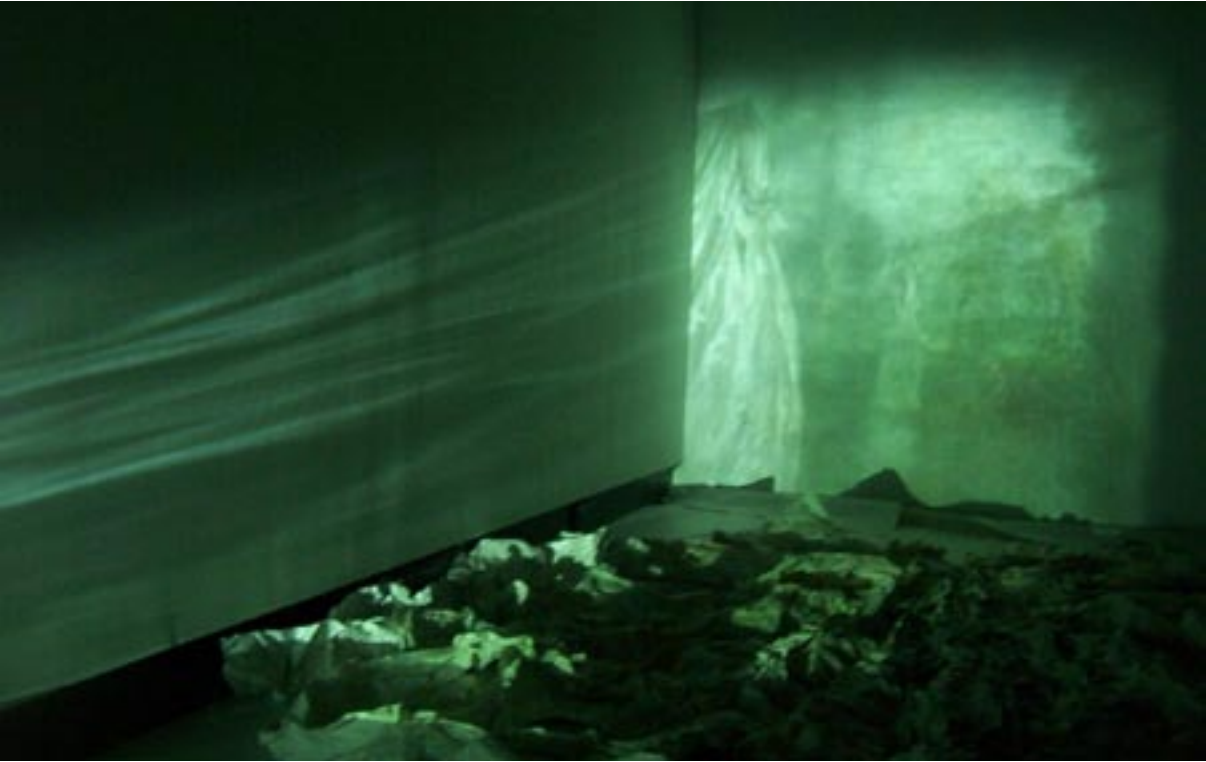
¹ Jessie Angwin, artist statement *Run Girl Run* catalogue, 2005.

Papier Machine

Elizabeth Presa

Spacement
15 March – 9 April 2005
by Melissa Keys

Below: Elizabeth Presa
Papier Machine, 2004-5
Silk, printed text, French rag paper, DVD & mirror
Dimensions variable
Image courtesy of the artist



Walking across the paper-covered floor in the darkened environment of Elizabeth Presa’s installation, *Papier Machine*, one was absorbed by a sense of intimacy and feminine sensuality; by the work’s myriad interwoven, tactile and philosophical folds and fragments.

Fascinated with the poetics of language and the choreographies and gestures of the spoken and written word, Presa’s practice echoes with the writings of a series of French poets, philosophers and theorists. These include Edmond Jabès, Maurice Blanchot, Rainer Maria Rilke and Jacques Derrida. Through a series of dialogues, each of these writers have explored the intricacies of textuality and Presa’s sculpture and performance practice is a concentrated meditation on the poetics of the text

and the book itself, that includes interpretations of the text as a ‘living, breathing organism; as a textile; and as a habitation’.¹

Presa’s installation at Spacement intricately interlaced video of water from the Seine with a small Jean-Antoine Watteau painting and a silk sculpture of a dress. Woven throughout the dress were pages from Jacques Derrida’s *Papier Machine*, a collection of essays and interviews addressing politics and textuality, which prompted the installation’s name. Set in a small, grotto-like side gallery, *Papier Machine* unfolded as one’s eyes adjusted to the darkness. On one wall a slightly blurry video projection played a detail of Watteau’s painting *Les Deux Cousines* (1716, Louvre) an exquisite and highly coded

Left: Elizabeth Presa
Papier Machine (detail) 2004-5
Silk, printed text, French rag paper, DVD & mirror
Dimensions variable
Image courtesy of the artist



painting showing a woman holding a letter, standing with her back to the viewer. Watteau’s Rococo jewel celebrated the aesthetic, linguistic and social systems of 18th century France and was admired by Presa for its sensitivity to the ‘complex dialogic relationship between the spoken word and its representation as image’.²

Before forming an image of the Watteau painting on the gallery wall, the projector’s stream of light glanced across a mirror set at an oblique angle, splintering the image into flickering patterns. The mirror was marked and flawed; it reflected an imperfect impression of the Watteau. The woman’s shadowy figure became almost animated, trembling with the gentle sway of Presa’s body, the pulse and rhythms of her breath as she filmed the painting in the Louvre. Once adjusted to the darkness, a sculptural gown became apparent lying on the gallery floor beneath the projection. Replicating that worn by Watteau’s mysterious woman, Presa’s gown was an elaborate construction of swathes, scrolls and swirls of silk. Splayed out like permeable skin, the gown embodied conversational language and written philosophy with pages from Derrida’s *Papier Machine* loosely stitched and

grafted into its cloth. Unlit and gently kissed by the light of the projector, the garment was difficult to discern, its buttoned bodice partly hidden by the darkness. The text became almost impossible to read, the printed words lost and revealed in the gown’s many creases and folds.

Under the soft flickering illumination of the projected image, the viewer was lured and seduced into contemplative dialogue with memories, desires and fears. Inside Presa’s *Papier Machine* the poetics of conversation and reading, the residue and traces of spoken and written word, were gathered and rarefied. Foundational philosophical questions, particularly of the French tradition, were evocatively materialised.

Melissa Keys is Program Administrator at Monash University Museum of Art.

<notes>

¹ Elizabeth Presa, *The Poetics of the Book in Sculpture*, unpublished PhD thesis, Monash University, 2003.

² Elizabeth Presa, artist statement, *Papier Machine* exhibition flyer, 2005.

Matthew Griffin, Anne Spudvilas, Kristin McFarlane, Jan Saric & Sanné Mestrom

The Time-Image

Curated by Phe Rawnsley
Counihan Gallery, Brunswick
24 March – 17 April 2005
by Edwina Bartlem

‘The past does not follow the present that it is no longer, it coexists with the present it was.’¹

In *Cinema 2: The Time-Image* (1989), Gilles Deleuze analyses cinematic temporality, asserting that that time should not be conceptualised as a linear flow divided up into measured increments. For Deleuze, time is not extensive or spatial, it is intensive, and dependent on subjective and interconnected experiences of space and time.² The proposition of *The Time-Image* is that post-war cinema provides viewers with an opportunity to perceive the world from alternate perspectives and durations.

Notions of non-linear time and multiple durations were central to Phe Rawnsley’s curatorial rationale for her exhibition at the Counihan Gallery in Brunswick. *The Time-Image* brought together five contemporary artists – Matthew Griffin, Anne Spudvilas, Kristin McFarlane, Jan Saric and Sanné Mestrom – who were each invited to respond to an historical artefact, sourced through the Brunswick Community History Group. These artefacts were exhibited alongside the responses, allowing viewers to make connections between these objects and to tease out the themes explored in the new works.

The Time-image was an important response to another exhibition at the Counihan Gallery, *History & Heritage: A Tribute to Brunswick*. This show tended towards a linear tracing of Brunswick’s history from White colonisation, through to successive periods of migration and transformation. Disturbingly, Wurundjeri histories were absent from this exhibition. Fortunately, the show dealt with 20th century working class struggles and European migration more successfully. A highlight was the history of working class labour, unionism and civil liberty protests as told through photographs and a short documentary film entitled, *Past, Present and Future*.

The works created for *The Time-Image* implied a seepage between the past and present. They invited viewers to consider the multiple historical and personal narratives related to specific historical artefacts, cultures and locations. Matthew Griffin’s series of eight pen and



Above: Sanné Mestrom
The Final House, 2005
Watercolour and pencil on paper
Image courtesy the artist
Photo credit: Chris Bond

ink crosshatched drawings visually connected the indistinct history of gangs and unions in pre-World War I Brunswick with the symbols and aesthetics of modern street sub-cultures. The visual coupling of contemporary and historical narratives of oppression, socio-economic hardship, rebellion and gangs made a strong connection between past and present subcultures in inner suburban Melbourne. A more personal narration was told through Jan Saric’s *Table Runner* (2005), a history of his parents’ journey from Yugoslavia to Australia in the 1950s. The story was told through woven images of a young woman in a red dress, schnapps, wafers and hand written text about border crossing. The structure of the work left the tale open to multiple interpretations, while the reference to a table runner in the title implied both the power of women in the home and the importance of this mythology in a family’s sense of identity and unity.

Kristin McFarlane’s *Curtain Call* (2005) was a magical installation piece that combined spinning glass disks embedded with photographs of unknown residents of Brunswick from the late 19th century with a glass-



encased montage of images and signs referencing old Vaudeville, dance hall and cinema theatres in Brunswick. The sparkling glass portraits of past inhabitants appeared to move in and out of focus as they spun in mid-air like spectres of forgotten revelries. Another beautiful, yet strangely disturbing work was *Bridal Suite* (2005) by Anne Spudvilas. This drawing and paper assemblage portrayed a wedding dress and hairpiece that belonged to Ethal Phillips, who was the Mayoress of Brunswick around the 1900s. The actual dress (c.1880) is held in the National Gallery of Victoria’s textile collection and the artwork was generated from the artist’s experience of visiting the NGV to observe and draw the dress. Spudvilas was struck by the ‘coffin-like boxes’ of the archival cases and attempted to replicate this sensation of looking at a preserved cultural object in her artwork.² *Bridal Suite* addressed the paradox of archival methods that seek to store and preserve cultural artefacts, while effectively eradicating all signs of life from these objects.

Sanné Mestrom made a direct response to an architectural drawing from *History & Heritage*; the *Exterior Elevations of the New Presbyterian Church in Brunswick* (1884). Mestrom’s watercolour and pencil drawing, *The Final House* (2005), shifted the focus from outside to inside the church, representing this interior from combined multiple

Right: Anne Spudvilas
Bridal Suite (detail), 2005
Graphite on paper & paper assemblage
Image courtesy the artist
Photo credit: Chris Bond

Below: Matthew Griffin
Untitled, 2005
Pen drawing
Image courtesy the artist



perspectives. These layered objects seemed to move and orbit as if they had become unmoored and were ascending to Heaven. The multiple perspectives of the work symbolised the fluid meanings and experiences of places of worship across time and between individuals.

The strength of *The Time-Image* exhibition was that it reinforced the sense of layered temporality inherent in the narratives and histories of Brunswick and the surrounding district. It asserted that there is no escaping from the past; instead there’s a continual flow between a multitude of histories and subcultures.

Edwina Bartlem is a Melbourne-based freelance arts writer and curator.

<notes>

¹ Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989, p.79.

² Ibid.

³ Anne Spudvilas, artist statement *The Time-Image* exhibition wall plaques, 2005.

Stadium United

Matthew Greentree

Watson Place Gallery, Melbourne

2 March – 2 April 2005

by Toby Miller

Sculpture, sculptural reliefs and even photography underpinned Melbourne artist Matthew Greentree's exhibition *Stadium United* at Watson Place Gallery, his first solo exhibition in a major commercial gallery. It might have seemed a case of ambitious over-extension were it not for the artist's careful knotting of each distinct practice to a sustained examination of sporting codes, contests and games.

The most compelling of these knots was found in Greentree's sculptural reliefs, which filled the main gallery's walls with elaborate tableaux enclosed behind glass in thick wooden frames. Composed almost entirely from sporting and office paraphernalia – tickets, files, chessboards, dice – the works cleverly mimed the general layouts and organisational structures we associate with the rules, conventions and television coverage of sporting competitions and board games. Yet it was also clear that while Greentree's works resembled sporting structures and rules, such rules – were there to be any – could only fail to make sense. Much of the pleasure in Greentree's reliefs rested in the fact that, no matter how tempting it was to imagine these works facilitating actual play, they never would.

This temptation was not limited to a purely intellectual pursuit but found itself further embroiled in an almost-physical challenge. Playing these games, or at least envisaging such, would have required their removal from the wall so as to place them along a flat horizontal surface. Such an act, like the thought of playing them at all, was impossible, but it remained a constant thread of my experience of the works that such an effect of horizontal-vertical displacement ran through any close experience of them.

Perhaps the simplest way to put this is to note that Greentree's assemblages only partially disguised their construction from items that are normally encountered along a horizontal plane. While a sliced dartboard and a topographic map produced a strict verticality – these items are usually seen hanging on walls at home – such effects were consistently offset, in work after work, by

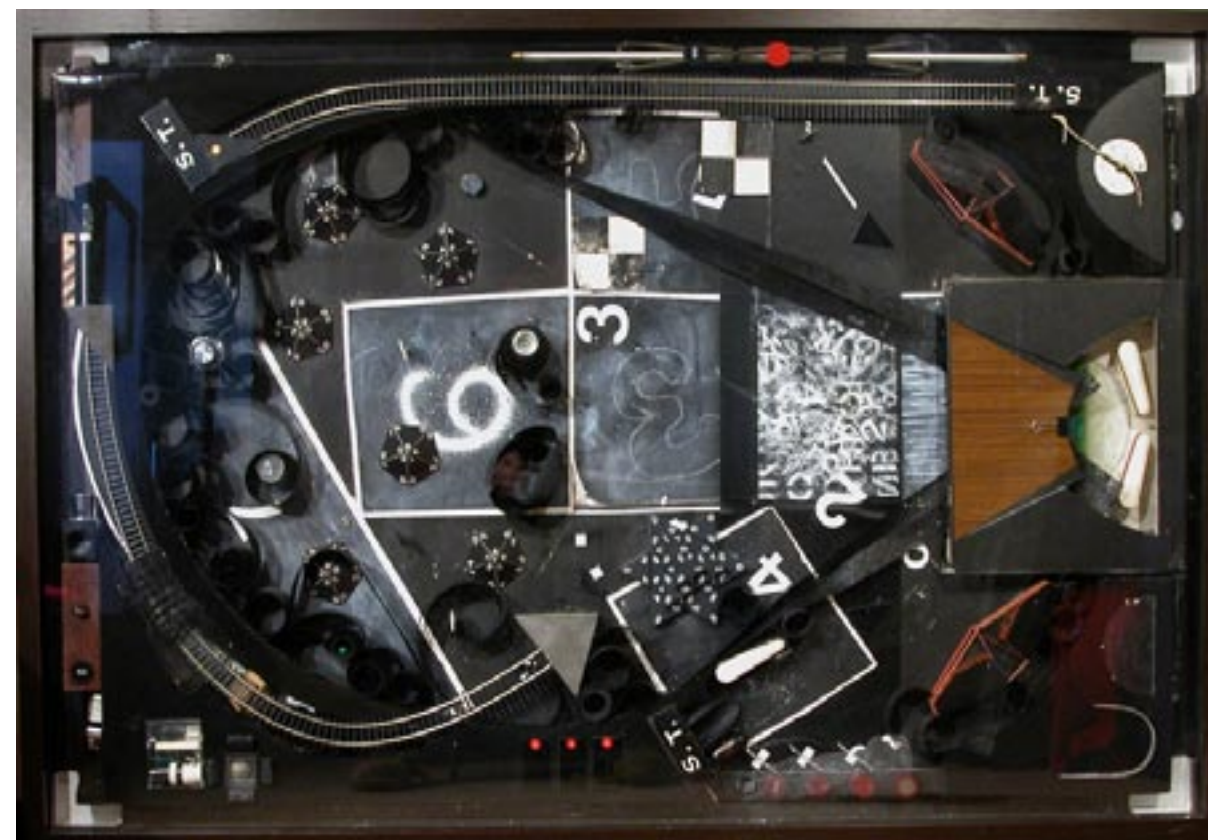


Above: Mathew Greentree
Fling Shot, 2004
Mixed media
83 x 123 cm

Image courtesy the artist & Watson Place Gallery

the chalk-drawn lines of a foosball table, the green felt of a billiard table and the chequered squares of a chess board. By being exhibited vertically behind framed glass, these works challenged the objects' horizontal use-value. Yet horizontality still lurked within this vertical display, challenging the usual reduction of painting and sculpture to simple horizontal and vertical planes.¹

Such juxtapositions and displacements were not, I feel, reducible to Greentree's intentional manipulation of codes and conventions. Rather, they existed at right angles to any such concern, as could be seen most clearly in the suite of four photographs that accompanied the exhibition. In each work, Greentree photographed a recognisable figure of Australian identity. Every figure, however, was displaced, shot within environments not befitting his or her actual employment or role. In one photograph, a cricketer stood to attention in dense



Above: Mathew Greentree
Boundary Yard, 2004
Mixed media
83 x 123 cm

Image courtesy the artist & Watson Place Gallery

jungle, while in another a soldier surveyed the grasslands of a quiet suburban golf course. The proposition here is that people can find themselves uneasily implicated in a world difficult to organise or control.

Sport in this sense might be a refusal of this fact, a simple way of ordering the world for the purposes of mastery and control that we would wish to have. But art offers no such respite. Artworks fight against the ways we try to hold them and literally to frame them. This may not be the meaning Greentree set out to convey, but convey it he did. And I cannot help but imagine that he did see the works this way – that what he intended to say about sport and society could only have been said in this way; that is under the terms of a judgment about the works as works to which a viewer might claim to have a relationship, albeit one marked by displacement.

For all that it might normally encourage inspection and beholding, Greentree's exhibition invited us to see that the work of art could not, or should not, be reduced to an occasion for idle spectatorship.

Toby Miller is a Melbourne based arts writer.

<note>

¹ See Yve-Alain Bois & Rosalind Krauss, *Formless: a user's guide*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1997 for further analysis of horizontality/verticality in art.

On Mysticism and the Death of Art

Charlotte Hallows

West Space, Gallery 2
11 – 26 February 2005
by Beatrice McDonald



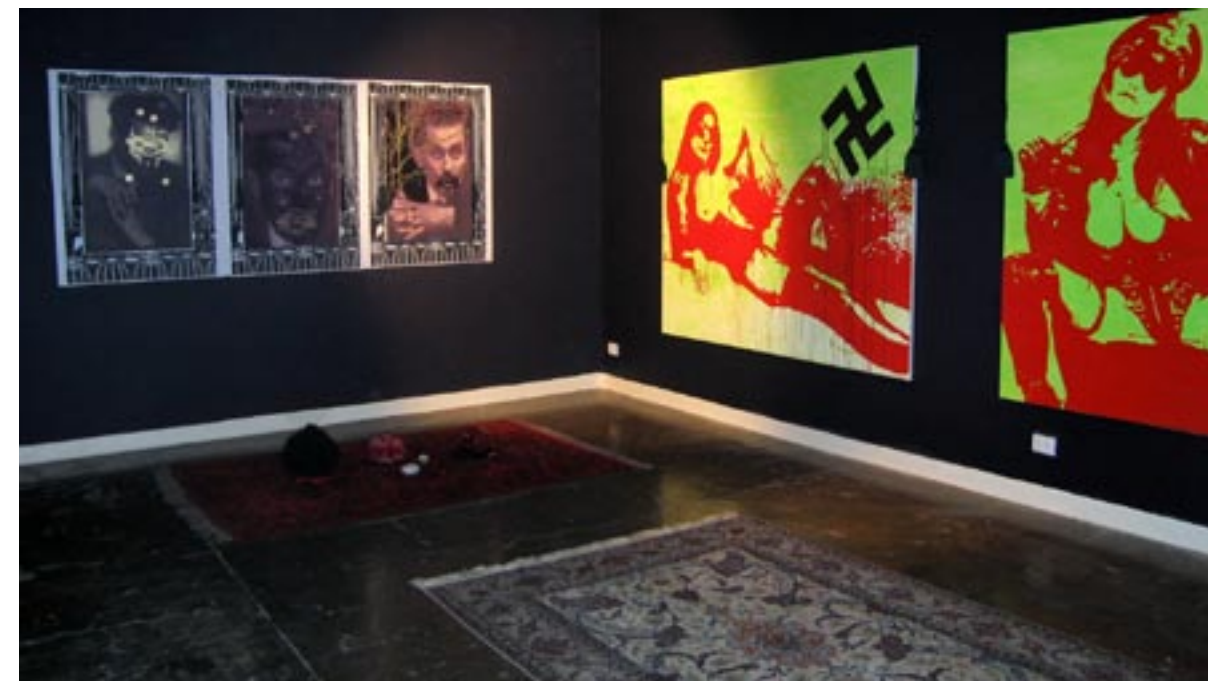
Left: Charlotte Hallows
On Mysticism and the Death of Art (detail) 2005
Mixed Media
Dimensions Variable
Photo: Brendan Lee

On Mysticism and the Death of Art explores the identity of space; the connections between interiors and personal identity and the construction of exclusion. Gathering discarded and dislocated objects and images of conflicting spaces – the sacred, the domestic, the childish and the sexual. In being composed of aspects of many spaces, Charlotte Hallows constructs a mutated zone, which brings to our attention the parameters of our usual associations between set behaviour and set spaces or images.

Hallows writes, in her introductory text, ‘our desire to inhabit space is often performative and part of the production of self-identity’. We can see here how the images, both present and absent in a space, are significant in creating personal and public memories, histories and identities. Hallows, by gathering elements of non-correlatable spaces and pursuing forbidden images, assembles new spaces of fascinating heterogeneity. Visual

images are de-familiarised through the foreignness of their juxtaposition within the installation’s environment. There is an uneasy joy in dwelling in this scene of difference. As Gilles Deleuze writes, ‘in its relation with the other, the force which makes itself obeyed does not deny the other or that which it is not, it affirms its own difference and enjoys this difference.’¹

Hallows’s installation, by occupying and aestheticising floor space, crucially lures her audience into an experience of exhibition inhabitation. This is an experience of marked dislocation: the gallery has five walls, and we are walking on one of them. Consequently Hallows disrupts our proximity to all of the components of the installation – the painting, photography and sculpture – whereby our negotiation with the work becomes performative. The Persian rugs that occupy the gallery floor suggest a domestication or bourgeois appropriation (as decoration) of the ‘oriental



Below: Charlotte Hallows
On Mysticism and the Death of Art, 2005
Mixed Media
Dimensions Variable
Photo: Irene Hanenbergh

sacred’, but become instead platforms for strange sculpture, the ceramic-capped stone and textile forms set amongst mounds of glittering gold sequins. The tactility of these forms – particularly the round balls of warm, matted wool – encourage our touch, a transgression of drawing-room (and gallery) etiquette. We become childish in our involvement with these objects.

The confusion of desire and repulsion is at work in the exhibition’s two central paintings. A swastika drips black at the corner of each canvas. If any sign can produce nausea, this is it. We lower our eyes, our gaze recovering in the crotch of a red woman, legs spread wide, lying across metres of a near-fluorescent green canvas. The disturbing grouping of these images, their violent and erotic excess, produces a difficult negotiation of these works. They take us to the limit of what we allow ourselves to remember, a precarious position at which terror and psychosis threaten.

Further pointing to art’s limits is Hallows’s inclusion of Anton Josef Trcka’s photographic portraits of Egon Schiele (Schiele was prosecuted for his explicit representation of women). Hallows disrupts the historicity of these iconic images in two ways; firstly through the contemporary process of digitalisation, and secondly by painting over Schiele’s images with gold and ritualistic designs. The modern becomes at once ancient and contemporary. This layering, within the exhibition as a whole, produces and complicates the narrative boundaries of cultural thought and production.

Beatrice McDonald is a Melbourne based writer.

<note>

¹ G. Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, Tr. H. Tomlinson, The Athlone Press, London, 1983, p. 7.

Chris Bond, Garrett Hughes, Melanie Kastalidis, Sarah Lynch,
& Christian Thompson

A Self Made Man

Curated by Kerrie-Dee Johns
Spacement
1 – 26 February 2005
by Carl Williams

A Self Made Man was curated around the theme of identity, and more specifically on its constructed, referential and participatory nature. The problem I see for a show operating on this pretext is the almost infinite horizon the idea of 'identity' has under these conditions. How does projection, reception and pre-conception operate in the establishment of identity, and indeed is it something that can be understood as an object with definable properties? Do you gain an identity by 'identifying' with an ethnic group, a commodity or indeed a profession? If this is true, then any work an artist makes is in some way a work about identity, and furthermore the forms this identity could take are as infinite as there are things in the world to refer it to. With the theoretically infinite range of options available in this construction, the most successful works in *A Self Made Man* were those that approached it through the social contract inherent in portraiture, while the weakest ones diffused identity through metaphor and cultural ephemera.¹

The photographs of Christian Thompson's *Gates of Tambo* negotiate the terrain of how an artist is understood through the image by documenting 'the artist at work'. But Thompson's chicanery has a diabolical twist – his flaunted categorical identity as an indigenous artist, a Bidjara man of the Kunja Nation. In an artistic context, this category operates as the maintenance of a separate status based on cultural difference, but how does this separate status operate when the means of constructing artistic identity conflates a woman from Peppiminarti with Andy Warhol? It dissolves this structure of cultural difference and exposes identity as a principle central to the reception of artistic 'meaning' and is therefore inherently prone to the vicissitudes of that arena. The collapse of cultural identity into artistic identity confuses judgements we can make on the basis of either.

Gates of Tambo operates on two levels, with cultural identity operating as a subtext to, and critique of, artistic identity that illustrates its arbitrary construction while showing it to be an inherent element in the creation and reception of contemporary Western art.

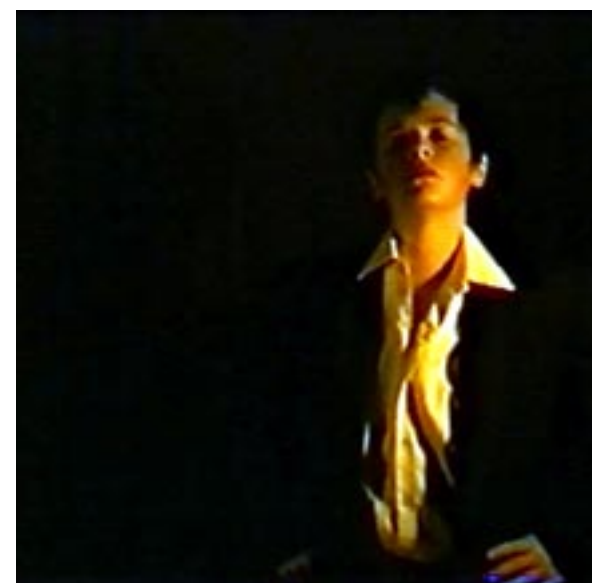


Below: Christian Thompson
Gates of Tambo (A Woman From
Peppiminarti), 2004
Digital photographic print

My Vestige (2004), the sumptuous large-scale photograph by Garrett Hughes presents a macabre double portrait, and it approaches identity construction literally, piecing together fragments of medium-format transparencies with glue to form the final print. The apparent conceptual simplicity of this approach is commensurate with its aims – the narration of identity as a process of collage and inscription that finds as its site the surface of the body itself. Moreover, the fracturing and reconfiguring of the body (not to mention the absence of genitalia) and its adornment with ornate clothing, attributes to identity a similar process of construction as a fetish – the simultaneous disavowal of the absence of identity on what is merely flesh and its wilful inscription back onto the body through its reconfiguration. This creates a tenuous reality of its own, beyond which lies non-meaning, as the fruitless tearing back of the skin reveals not a higher truth but the abject and incomprehensible viscera of bloody red guts.

Sarah Lynch's video work *Cold Clear Water* (2001) approaches identity as something that can be

Below Sarah Lynch
Cold Clear Water 2001
Video Projection (Still)
Image courtesy the artist



appropriated and performed. With its canned music, *Goodfellas* outfit and macho posturing, the piece reflects the aesthetic of the 'entertainment generation' – a process of dressing up and acting out in order to be made real by being seen on television. It is similar then to the work of The Kingpins and it is prone to the same criticism, as discussed by Mark Pennings in the previous edition of *un Magazine*.² Ultimately a person acting out a mass mediated identity is the only thing *Cold Clear Water* is about – a Post-feminist angle well and truly exhausted by now – and through its self-conscious sloppiness and naivety it fails to be either good entertainment or critical art.

The delicately carved *10100/10010/00101/00101* (2003) by Melanie Katsalidis and Chris Bond's consummate faux documents of *The Hitchcock/Feldmar Affair* (2002) constituted an obtuse inclusion in *A Self Made Man*. While these works could be construed as dealing with identity, they could equally be related to a number of other themes. Katsalidis's sculpture shows a tripartite 'tree' of sorts, one branch natural, one aesthetic and the one a quasi-Linnaean 'family tree'. While this work could be seen to illustrate the multifaceted nature of identity, changing according to circumstance, it could equally be seen as a critique of a taxonomic culture in its blurring of the line between nature, art and science. Similarly, Bond's imaginary 'affair' could be seen to illustrate how personal ephemera can be used to inform or manipulate a 'stable' identity. However it could also be

Below Melanie Katsalidis
'10100/10010/00101/00101' 2003
Mixed Media
Image courtesy the artist



about the use of material culture as a type of ambiguous evidence – a reading that ultimately opens itself towards a critique of contexts and modes of display rather than identity *per se*.

A Self Made Man was populated predominantly by strong individual works, not the least of these being Chris Bond and Melanie Katsalidis's contributions, and on the strength of its individual parts it presented an adept and by no means uninteresting exploration of its theme. However a thematic show should be considered more than a sum of its parts, and the inclusion of such obtuse works tended to blur the focus of an exhibition that claimed to offer an insight into the nature and means of a constructed identity.

Carl Williams is currently completing Honours in Art History at The University of Melbourne.

<notes>

¹ This aspect of the portrait is discussed by the art historian Richard Brilliant who contends that they embody 'a representation of the structuring of human relationships'. See: Brilliant, Richard, *Portraiture*, London, Reaktion Books, 1991. p. 9.

² Pennings, Mark (2005), 'The Kingpins', in: *un Magazine*, issue 3, pp. 50-51.

Ghostwork

Susan Wirth

West Space, Gallery 1

4 – 19 March 2005

She's crafty... and she's just my style

by Kate Just



When I was in high school, I had a vibrant Spanish teacher. One day, while jogging, her young husband died of a heart attack. When she finally came back to work, her hair was grey and she wore black every day for a year. When I first entered Susan Wirth's *Ghostwork* and came face to face with her three large white panels, bearing pictures made through a process of reassembling small pieces of black haberdashery, I thought of my Spanish teacher and her act of mourning.

Wirth's source material for this show was old family photographs from the 1920s and 1930s. Wirth was familiar with some of the people in the photographs; her grandmother was in all images and her father appeared in one. Everything else, who they are and their stories, was conjecture for Wirth. She imagined, 'they are probably seeing someone off in this one, they look like

they might be wearing old tennis clothes in that one, they are probably bridesmaids in the third one.'

The images were a careful employment of positive and negative space, constructed by nailing old black scraps of lacework, tablecloths, trim, embroidery, doilies and ribbon material into place onto white panels. Wirth's layering of material was carried out with a prodigious skill so that from a distance, the images formed highly detailed pictures. She achieved this partly through thoughtful application; floral fabrics comprised dense foliage, while more geometric fabrics or lacework created floor patterns. Large sections of ribbon nailed horizontally provided a realistic rendering of the siding on a house. The pictures revealed smiling faces, while the rich black materiality of the fabrics evoked musty parlours and teary widows. Death was in the air.



Left & across: Susan Wirth
Ghostwork, 2005 (installation detail)
Textiles, tacks & wood
180 x 120 cm
Photo credit: Wendy Joy Morrissey

Wirth's use of 'crafty' materials seemed the perfect choice for her process of connecting to a culture or past with which she wasn't familiar. *Ghostwork* wasn't inherently feminist, as it did not argue for the upholding the value of craft or women's work. And it wasn't identity-based, in the presentation of her 'culture' in an educative or identified way. Rather, she follows an increasing number of artists whose subject is the disconnection from (or lack of) a defined personal culture. Many of these artists have embraced time-intensive processes like knitting, stitching, or carving, because these endeavours allow the artist time to question, retrieve and rebuild a real or imagined history. Jessie Angwin's recent show *Run Girl Run* at Blindside featured a prolific use of cross stitch, sewing and long stitch on canvasses carefully painted with images from Japanese illustration books. Despite never having been to Japan, Angwin displayed a strong cultural

connection to the images. Her process of personalising the images through stitching deepened her connection.

Wirth's work is often on the dark side; a few years ago she made photos of herself lying face down, as if dead, in different city locations. I don't imagine it was torturous for her to cut beautiful black lace to bits. And I don't see the work as particularly nostalgic but rather an earnest attempt to fill the gaps in an unsettlingly blank past. Doily-by-doily and nail-by-nail, Wirth brings her ghosts to life and lays them to rest.

Kate Just is a Melbourne based artist, writer and lecturer.

Gary Wilson, Melinda Harper, Kerrie Poliness, John Nixon, Stephen Bram, Anne-Marie May, Rose Nolan, Gail Hastings, Kathy Temin, Constanze Zikos, Carolyn Barnes, Marco Fusinato, Tony Clark, Sandra Bridie, Callum Morton, Eugene Carchesio, Diena Georgetti, Vicente Butron, John Barbour, Sue Cramer, Shelley Lasica, Bronwyn Clark-Cooler, Andrew Hurl, Elizabeth Newman, Aleks Danko, David O'Halloran, Fiona Macdonald, Ben Curnow, Stephen Bambury, A.D.S. Donaldson & Kate Daw. NOTE: not all the Store 5 artists were in the show but each contributed to the catalogue.

Store 5 is...

Anna Schwartz Gallery
19 March – 30 April 2005
by Din Heagney

How things (don't) change

It's 1989 (let's just pretend cos it might as well be). Fashion lasts longer than a week. Computer art is so uncool that only video artists on acid will touch it. Queen Elizabeth II knights Ronald Reagan as George Bush Senior takes over the US presidency and promises Freedom For All™. *The Simpsons* starts showing on tele using Bush and radiation as staple rancho fodder. Salvador Dali dies and psychoanalysts go nuts paying exorbitant art insurance premiums. The Exxon Valdez spills 11 million gallons of crude oil onto the Alaskan coast but no one cares cos *Batman*, *Star Trek V* and *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade* are all hitting the cinemas. Germans start knocking down the Berlin Wall and the Dalai Lama is awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. Bruce Nauman makes sculptures of cats with sticks stuck up their arses while Boris Yeltzin wins the first free election in the USSR. Chinese tanks crush and kill democracy protestors in Tiananmen Square while the kids here are busy couching to the new release of Tone Loc's *Funky Cold Medina*. Wow, the end of the 80s was fucking awesome! Let's do it again. But actually this is where the history lesson ends. The rest is kind of history through contemporary eyes – which are nearly always unfocussed – and things get retold in a superficial 1984 kind of way. So here goes.

So it's still 1989 right? A bunch of minimalphile artists, led by Gary Wilson and Melinda Harper, decide to open an artist run space down an alleyway off High Street in Prahran. A number of them already hold studios in the storerooms of the old rag trade building. After kicking in the no. 5 storeroom door, cleaning up the heap of pigeon shit and giving the place a lick of paint, it was ready. On 15 April 1989, the first group show opened with Stephen Bram, Melinda Harper, John Nixon, Rose Nolan, Kerrie Poliness and Gary Wilson. Exhibitions would usually open on a Saturday afternoon and run for a few brief hours while the light was good. Store 5 cranked out no less than 150 shows over the next four and a half years, before closing the door for the last time in December 1993.

During that time there were few other artist-run spaces in Melbourne, certainly none that were properly or even

improperly funded. As Kerrie Poliness, one of the key players in Store 5, explains in the recent *Store 5 is...* catalogue: 'We initially contacted the Australia Council about the possibility of a small materials grant to get a computer for basic gallery administration. After a lot of re-direction and confusion a project officer finally told us that from past experience artists did not make good administrators – so they did not fund projects administered by artists.'¹ Onya OzCo. Other artist-run spaces would later pick up the ball after the close of Store 5 (i.e. First Floor) but there was a dedication both to a style of practice and an aesthetic that separates Store 5 from many other ARIs since then. And so, despite Gail Hastings's misgivings (as documented in the catalogue²), the Store 5 crew of around 30 artists would eventually become the apple of Anna Schwartz's eye...

So now it's like 15 years later. *Funky Cold Medina* still hasn't been covered by A-list white trash musos but has appeared in a few R&B remixes. Anna Schwartz, a regular visitor to Store 5 back in the day, decides to hold a retrospective exhibition. Now this in itself isn't extraordinary, as many of the hardcore Store 5 crew have since joined the comfortable stable afforded by Schwartz. But this x is an unusual call for a number of reasons: 1. Schwartz doesn't often hold group shows. 2. Store 5 was an artist run space while Anna Schwartz Gallery is about as cosily commercial as you get in Melbourne. 3. The work made for Store 5 was as much about practice as it was about finished work. 4. Few other spaces, be they artist-run or not, were interested in the minimal modernist aesthetic of Store 5 diehards at the time. Schwartz calls Store 5 a laboratory: 'I realized this little gallery operated according to the same principal I had always lived by: that the space was the domain of the artist.'³

With more than 50 works in this show, it is impossible to discuss each artist with due respect but there was one the question I kept posing to my invisible friend (you know, the one who begrudgingly accompanies us to shows). So I asked: A decade on and is the work any better, have the artists moved on – for want of a better term?



Above: Store 5 is...
Anna Schwartz Gallery
Installation views
Photo credit: Din Heagney



Right: Anne-Marie May
On wall: *Untitled*, 1993
Felt, 123 x 107cm
Centre of space: *Untitled*, 2005
Cotton stretch fabric
Dimensions variable
Courtesy the artist & Anna Schwartz Gallery

Before answering that, we need to look at Deborah Hennessy's curation of the show. From each artist there is one piece that was originally exhibited at Store 5 and another piece from the last year or so. The pairs are presented together with the missing link falling somewhere in the white space. Volume 1 of the *Store 5 is...* catalogue is impressive and insightful. For once, there's a collection of transcripts direct from each artist, not the oversighted delusions of curator and co. Lightly edited by the look of things, the catalogue offers memories and tales from the start of Store 5 up to present and reading it clearly shows why a critique of this show is walking a veritable minefield through late 80s minimalism. There are so many voices, and despite convenient bangalong genres pilfered from snotty art history texts, a lot of these artists are starkly different in their techniques and aesthetics. Yes, there is a pervasive abstracted minimalism to many of the works, but humour creeps into many of them and debunks any efforts toward pure form.

But to answer the question that my invisible buddy forgot (he was busy laughing at Kathy Temin's koalas in the show): a decade later, has the work of the artists improved or simply been repeated with variation? Unfortunately I

have to say no and then yes. I am not about to attack some of the most established names on the Melbourne art scene (I don't have the available word count) but I have to say that apart from a handful of fresh pieces many of these are loose and sometimes tired repeats, digital covers without acoustic backup. As one of the artists in the show later commented (off the record) it would have been better for *Store 5 is...* to be a collection of only new work from the original crew shown at Schwartz. The original Store 5 exhibited work would have best reappeared in some skanky hole in the alleyways of Prahran. Better still, kick the old door down and start again (just for a three hour show mind). But being a new visitor to an absent space, this all seems to be a memory of a past that repeating itself.

Din Heagney is a cat of many trades who should know better but can't be bothered in the current climate.

<notes>

¹ *STORE 5 IS...* Volume 1—Texts, exhibition catalogue, Anna Schwartz Gallery, 2005, pp.13.

² Ibid. p.20.

³ Ibid. p.7.

Animal Love

Kate Ellis

Gertrude Contemporary Art Spaces, Fitzroy
29 October – 20 November 2004
by Sophie Knezic

Emerging in 16th century Europe, a new type of inquisitiveness about the world expressed itself in the form of cabinets of curiosity, or *wunderkammer*. These cabinets – first assembled by doctors and apothecaries – presented rare and curious artefacts for private display. Automata and scientific instruments were included, although the cabinets mostly contained odd natural history specimens, such as skeletal fragments of rare beasts, deformed eggs or mistakes of nature like a two-headed calf. Over the course of the 19th century these collections of rarities were dispersed and re-assembled in the newly established institution of the public museum.¹ I think of the public's first encounter with these collections and the marvel in the face of such objects may be parallel to the wonder we experience in front of Kate Ellis's enchanting and uncanny *cabinets des animaux*.

Carefully laid out in white museum display cases rest an assortment of cast wax limbs: a woman's arm, whippet-thin, the diminutive form of a poodle's paw. Only two species are included in these cases – canine and human – and the dismembered limbs are strangely peaceful, as if reconciled to their life as curios. Their smooth skin is embellished with spiralling rings of thread and eccentric fluffs of hair, pressed into the surface. On the gallery floor, another specimen; the waxy body of a reclining dog. But this is no ordinary dog, rather a mutant – woman and beast conjoined. The hybrid forms repeat on the gallery wall, in drawings of poodle-girls fashioned from poodle fur.

There is an edge of pathology here. What deviant coupling produced these Skyllas?² Freud speaks of fetishism as the warping of normative sexual desire into a fantasy of inappropriate substitutes. The foot, for example, has long been understood as a sexual symbol which when over-invested transforms into a fetish. Here, arms and fingers join the fetishistic panoply. But the sex is displaced: the tops of the pre-pubescent legs sketched on the wall end in tutu tufts. In spite of the suggestion of aberrant desire, there is also something innocent in these girlish doodles, these blonde limbs. It's as if Freud's preoccupation with penis envy was all wrong, that female desire is altogether



more primal; to be of beast, not man, to dissolve the fixity of discrete animal-human bodies into the commingling of a single flesh. The gestural language of Ellis's hybrid creatures certainly implies that the fusion is a tranquil one: the delicately poised fingers (like a paw), the hind legs in repose.

Is this woman desiring to become animal, or the other way round? As the first domesticated beast, the dog has long been thought of as 'man's best friend'. For over 10,000 years they have served the human need to hunt and travel. Dogs as pets, like museums, only became prevalent in the 19th century, when a growing bourgeoisie needed emblems of a newfound wealth. In contemporary biology, radical theories claim that dogs, in fact, chose domestication. If so, the partnership has been mutually sought. Ellis takes this union into another realm; of macabre longing and taboo love, hinting that something deep in the neurochemistry of dog and human is intimately linked.

Sophie Knezic is a visual artist and sometime writer based in Melbourne.

<notes>

¹ Tony Bennet, *The Birth of the Museum*, Routledge, London, 1995.

² A mythical Greek creature, part woman, part dog, part fish.

Across: Kate Ellis
Untitled (installation view)
Wax, silk thread & poodle hair
Image courtesy of Kate Ellis
Photo credit: Ian Hill

Below: Kate Ellis
Untitled
Wax & silk thread
Image courtesy of Kate Ellis
Photo credit: Ian Hill



Pop Versus Death & So Hot Right Now

Pop Versus Death

Sue Dodd, Phil Dodd, Emile Zile, Christian Bishop
The Croft Institute
16 – 19 March 2005

So Hot Right Now

Lyndal Walker
Studio 12, Gertrude Contemporary Art Spaces
4 – 24 March 2005

Both presented by the 2005 L’Oreal Melbourne Fashion Festival
by Grace McQuilten



Sh-pop-ping

*You know that we are living in a material world
And I am a material girl...*¹

How can art compete with the marketing power, money and the glamorous veneer of our ever-increasingly material world? The answer – the L’Oreal Melbourne Fashion Festival tells us – is to shop. Critical art doesn’t stand a chance in this sleek consumer world, so why not be seduced? Sue Dodd and Lyndal Walker have taken up the challenge, creating works as part of this year’s Fashion Festival.

In the guise of Gossip Pop, Sue Dodd writes parodic pop songs with her brother Phil Dodd, which she then

performs. The songs employ the synthesised beats of Pop Music and reiterate the babble of popular culture. Looking every bit the pin-up for contemporary pop-rock, Dodd’s performances mimic the pouting and posing of the genre. For *Pop Versus Death*, the Dodds combined their performance with Emile Zile and Christian Bishop (aka ‘Morloch’), who provided a Death Metal counterpoint to the pop simulations. The event was presented as a battle of parodies – Gossip Pop on the one side and Morloch on the other. Sue Dodd’s performance shimmied with Kylie-inspired finesse as she ironically sang lines like ‘Stars without make-up.’ It was definitely fun. It was funny too. Yet it was indistinguishable from its target. It *was* pop culture and it was harnessed by L’Oreal to sell the fashion festival to a hard-to-reach subculture: the art crowd.

*Across: Sue Dodd, Phil Dodd
I Don’t Wanna Have a Baby Brad/Gossip Pop
Dimensions variable
Live performance still: sound & video
April 2005
Photo credit: Michael Ascroft*



Right: Lyndal Walker
Volatile Vanitas, 2005
Pegasus digital print
150 x 100 cm

Image courtesy Lyndal Walker and
Gertrude Contemporary Art Spaces

At one point in the performance Dodd proclaimed ‘Let me be your mirror’, referencing both popular culture’s mirroring of everyday life and her artistic mirroring of popular culture. Yet it was decidedly unclear where simulation ended and critique began. Gossip Pop might be cynical, but tongue-in-cheek is the very stuff of advertising. As Theodor Adorno wrote in the 1960s, ‘The information communicated by mass culture constantly winks at us.’³ The consumer world however, presents more of a dilemma than a bit of inane gossip about pop stars or the proliferation of diet and beauty tips. Hmmm, but as Dodd sings to us, ‘Kelly Osbourne got dumped on Valentine’s Day. How fucking crap is that?’ Gossip Pop reiterates the repetitive mantra of popular culture, hoping that repetition will make a point. Then again, didn’t Madonna make millions of dollars singing, ‘A

material, a material, a material, a material world. Living in a material world...’⁴

As with all good marketing campaigns, Lyndal Walker’s installation *So Hot Right Now* began with branding. A sign bearing the logo ‘Volatile’ guided viewers into Studio 12 at Gertrude Contemporary Art Spaces. Through the doorway, a silhouette of a rock-star, bent over electric guitar with flowing hair, was stencilled on the wall. Inside, the room contained a mock dressing room, mirror, shopping bags and a couch. These props surrounded a large photograph of a young couple on the wall. In the image, the male figure was naked except for a small barcode on his thigh, while the female figure lifted up her skirt to reveal underwear with the brand ‘Volatile’ in lipstick red. They both gazed over their shoulders at

*Below: Sue Dodd, Phil Dodd, Emile Zile & Christian Bishop
Pop Versus Death, 2005
Publicity still, The Croft Institute, Melbourne
Image courtesy Sue Dodd
Photo credit: Paul Knight*



the camera through masks bearing human skulls. The installation looked every bit like a critique of the fashion industry, however like *Pop Versus Death* it was hard to tell where mimicry ended and commentary began. The masked models did not refuse the projections of the viewer's gaze and in fact, the placement of a mirror in the room served to emphasise the viewer's narcissistic identification with the image. Positioned opposite the photograph, it enabled viewers to glimpse themselves as they cynically gazed at consumer culture. *So Hot Right Now* might not have been selling Nike but the 1980s punk-rock look, the 'hot' red branding and the retro couch are aestheticised fashions of alternative culture – fashion slipping seamlessly into a promotion of the consumption of a cool, ironic art world.

Pop Versus Death and *So Hot Right Now* presented beautiful, shimmering mirages. They gave the impression of criticality without actually asking us to sacrifice or even acknowledge our consumer desires. This superficial play began to rupture, if only briefly, when simulation gave way at one point in Gossip Pop's performance. Singing about Paris Hilton, Dodd bent to the ground, her face

briefly obscured. Repeatedly grunting 'star fucker' her mimetic façade cracked for a second, pointing to a simultaneous fracture in the plastic surface of consumer culture. Instead of replaying the seductive songs of a volatile present, perhaps we could stop for a second to reflect on what has been. Otherwise art starts to sound like a broken record, stuck on the surface of a culture that is busy devouring it. For if contemporary critique comes dressed as fashion, celebrating its own emptiness, what is left for us to do but shop... shop... shop...?

Grace McQuilten is an artist and writer, currently researching the intersection of contemporary art, design and consumerism.

<notes>

¹ Lyric from Matthew Marston and Paul Brown's 'Material Girl,' performed by Madonna on *Like a Virgin*, 1984.

² See press releases, *L'Oreal Melbourne Fashion Festival* http://www.lmff.com.au/2005/Arts_Program/

³ Theodor Adorno, *The culture industry: selected essays on mass culture*, Routledge, London, 1991, p.71.

⁴ 'Material Girl,' op. cit.

Available Light

Quentin Sprague

Bus

1 – 19 February 2005

by Viv Miller

Quentin Sprague's solo show centred on a series of flat, yellow panels, roughly arm-length high, each blended from pale to saturated colour. Whilst these objects' blank simplicity allied them to a minimalist creed, their slick appearance and acrid hue suggested that another inspiration was commercially manufactured objects. I'm thinking of street signage, or even the lamps and cups you find in expensive gift shops that try to look bright and funky. Aptly enough, Sprague's objects weren't hung on the walls, but placed on specially designed shelves and produced with the consistency that comes with mass production.

However, it didn't seem like this repetition's point was to bland the work out. The creep of the colour's blend alluded to some kind of quiet bliss, as if tension and resolve had been met in each panel. You could imagine them being made in a Zen-like pursuit of numb mechanical perfection. The occasional placement of spray cans along the shelves acknowledged this point too, while doubling as another polished, smooth component in the sculptural arrangement.

There were other objects in this show but never too many to disrupt its slightly deadpan understatement. White panels shared shelf space and some sat on the floor, their crisp surface patterned with lightly drilled holes. Elsewhere, a small skewed square offered an unexpectedly garish slice of black and pink. The most dramatic departure of the show was a small airbrushed painting of a lightning bolt. Strangely, the juxtaposition of this piece against the overall installation produced an unlikely match. On one level the bolt graphically illustrated the panel's movement of bold yellow and it had a glossed, smooth surface that matched the texture of the rest of the work. In another nod to processes of commercial manufacture, Sprague had 'outsourced' the production of this piece to a commercial airbrush artist.¹ Its inclusion inflected the show with a wry, ironic temper, a touch of schlock added to otherwise cool and restrained work.

There's an old formalist argument in art that roughly argues that art should concentrate on its own inherent,



*Above: untitled arrangement 2004-05 (detail)
Enamel on aluminium and MDF, Perspex & aerosol cans
570 x 84 x 10cm
Photo credit: Siri Hayes*

unique features (colour, line, shape... you know the drill) rather than aiming to inject any external content and meaning within it. The interesting thing is that while Sprague's work revealed an awareness of the discourse of formalist aesthetics, the particular brand of formalism on show here was very much awake to the production and appearance of the material world around us. This seemed to be Sprague's purpose: to focus on the detritus and stuff of contemporary culture where it suits and then to zone back out again, retrieving and distilling images and forms, making for unusual juxtapositions and uncommon beauties.

Viv Miller is a Melbourne based artist.

<note>

¹ Discussion with Quentin Sprague, 30 February 2005.

Richard Giblett & Andrew Hazewinkel

Cluster

Conical
1 – 17 April 2005
by Kerrie-Dee Johns

Intergalactic Tourism and Subterranean Cities

Inside the industrial catacomb of Conical, Andrew Hazewinkel and Richard Giblett create an apocalyptic drama from architecturally inspired forms. Futuristic works use theatrical effect to evoke sinister shadows and subterranean fantasies in the imagination of the viewer.

Subcity (While You Were Sleeping) 2005, contains a tension between what is visible and what lies under the surface. A phosphorescent green glow emanates from underneath, suggesting a termite’s nest teeming with activity. Like the humming of an electrical appliance, artificial energy is made explicit; it fuels the nocturnal productive drive of the dreamer, the insomniac and the dancer – whom underneath a false moon moves. An Orwellian authority asserts itself in grid lines that divide city squares. In subterranean gallows exists a system of operation that issues orders in secret. It does not discern highways or internet cables but likens them as one and the same: they’re agents of connection and control. Neither triumphal bridges nor arches have been erected in this city. There is no need for entry. Its grid-like pattern already impresses itself on our reality and possibly our fantasies too.

When looked upon from above, the modern city at night resembles a macroscopic computer chip. *Subcity* offers this same vantage point. Models give us a feeling of control and mastery. In the age of the imperial crusade, the military used models for their aid in strategic planning. Before the invention of three-dimensional software programs, models were the most dynamic way to render space; today they seem a rather static way to render space. In its representation of the city’s underground aspects and its emerging patterns of life, Giblett’s model seems to come alive. Giblett’s new work picks up a thread illustrated in his last exhibition, *Plant/Room*, 2004, with his earlier drawings of fungal life forms. Though the underground is what is conveyed when we speak of the life of laneways, the subterranean in *Subcity* refers to irrational divergences in thought and creative mutations in architectural form.

In the tabletop diorama of Giblett’s cityscape, a large circular sphere sinks into the city under the weight of

*Below: Richard Giblett
Subcity (While You Were Sleeping), 2005 (detail)
Plywood, pine, fluorescent lights
291 x 160 x 130 cm
Image courtesy of the artist & Conical Gallery*



its cosmic significance. In keeping with its planetary appearance, the object has its own field of gravity – it makes it the focal point in the midst of the model. At the same time the dome is an ode to the sublime architectural artifice of Etienne Louis Boullée, an architect who created a cenograph dedicated to the scientist Sir Isaac Newton, (the discoverer of gravity). Like Giblett’s mirror-ball sphere, the dome is a false moon designed to mirror nature. It reminds us that our position in the world is relative to the fluctuating rhythms of the universe.

Unlike our antecedents involved in imperial conquest, our new frontier isn’t sky or outer space but inner space and cyberspace. Following in the footsteps of Francesco Borromini, an architect of the Baroque period, Andrew Hazewinkel creates sculptural virtuosity from light and shadow, in addition to negative and positive space. In *Gathering*, 2005, the artist presents the collective agency

*Below: Andrew Hazewinkel
Gathering, 2005
MDF, 2 pac emperite & projected images
9 panels, 204 x 82 x 60 cm
Image courtesy of the artist & Conical Gallery*



of static power dissolved by multiplicity and movement, where the solid components of the work are defied by its fluid components. The installation unsettles the body in space and unhinges our sense of control and mastery. As a system of optics akin to the virtual, it presents its author as master, placing the spectator in a maze of power relations. Once again, our position must be negotiated.

From the right side of the gallery strides an army of shadows, marching towards the viewer with as much force as they recede; silhouettes of empty space created from inverse human proportions. Whilst the spaces in between present the viewer with a multitude of corridors, physical entry is impossible. As with horror house trickery (all smoke and mirrors), it presents an optical playground. What is closed may appear infinite and where there’s an entrance it may seem solid.

This is similar to Borromini’s architectural illusion in the Palazzo Spada (Rome). Where the imagination travels freely, the physical body trespasses. Like an early version of virtual reality, the architect arrests the rules of classic architecture, creating from a dead space of 8 metres the illusion of 32. Here the architect brings the spectator into close contact with the spectacular; like a heart restricted by the bounds of the human frame the artist craves infinity. With works by Hazewinkel and Giblett, the desire for the conquest of a new frontier is fulfilled.

Kerrie-Dee Johns is a Melbourne based writer and independent curator.

Chris Henschke & Donna Kendrigan

TOPOLOGIES

Interactive Exhibition

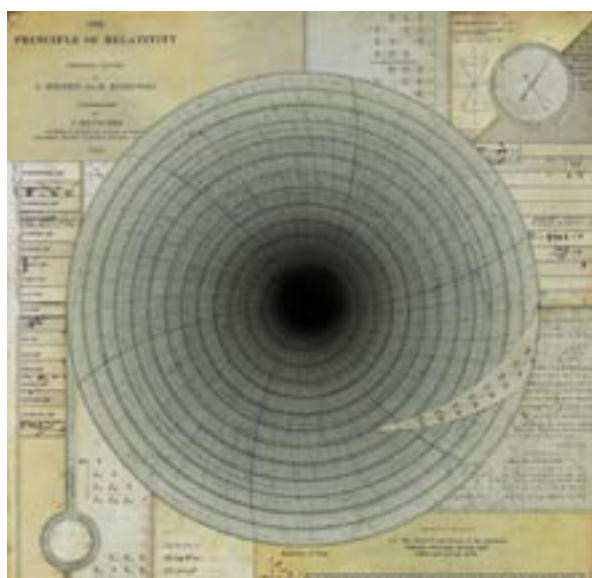
Toured Victorian Regional centres 2004-2005

Daylesford Convent Gallery, Daylesford, 5 November – 9 December 2004

La Trobe Regional Gallery, Morwell, 18 December 2004 – 13 February 2005

Exhibitions Gallery, Wangaratta, 22 April – 8 May 2005

by Julie Turner



Left: Chris Henschke
Image from HyperCollider interactive (top view)
Lambda Duratrans print in lightbox
22 (W) x 22(H) x 12(D) cm
Image courtesy the artist

Topologies featured two interactive works, *HyperCollider* by Chris Henschke and *Transplants* by Donna Kendrigan.¹ Both played with science fiction and scientific theory, sharing a fascination with the aesthetics and technologies of 19th and early-20th century science. *Topologies* toured Victoria's Daylesford Convent Gallery, La Trobe Regional Gallery and the Exhibitions Gallery, Wangaratta, from November 2004 through to May 2005.

The works located the exploration of scientific theories in a playful post-modern era. *Transplants* took the form of a botanical catalogue found in a fantastical, genetically modified garden of the far future (portions of the catalogue were revealed when specific plants within the virtual garden are investigated). Similarly, *HyperCollider* explored Einstein's theories of special and general relativity within the confines of an impossible machine; one that posed as contemporary yet was an absurd hybrid – part 1930s pinball-machine, part 1950s particle-accelerator.

Transplants – experienced on a touch-screen built into an old-fashioned, eccentric botanical cabinet – initially revealed via screen and voice-over the flowery, loquacious text of Adam Browne's short story (its inspiration). The user then explored a beautifully designed, map-like aerial view of a garden. On closer inspection, the map represented human bodily activity – breathing, twitching, pulsing. Upon selecting certain images, one discovered meticulously textured and animated flesh-botanical creations: grapey bunches of eyes, oozing kidney plants, hearty hearts pumping and murmuring sweet nothings. Unnerving organic sounds and witty, mock-scientific plant studies accompanied them, parodically nostalgic for dusty botanical catalogues and fading diagrammatic medical studies.

HyperCollider was encased in a wooden, exact-replica, German pinball-machine of the 1930s, complete with spring-loaded trigger, playfully investigating Einstein's theory of general relativity and its extreme cosmological

conclusions. A hybrid of pinball game, gramophone player and particle accelerator, *HyperCollider* was created from a collage of Einstein's relativity papers and handwritten notes, pressure graphs and star charts. *HyperCollider* allowed 'players' to launch various particles into its theoretical universe, to collide into each other and get pulled into a black hole, where spatial and temporal dilation effects were observed. By bouncing particles into the black hole, players could move through time into an increasingly uncertain future. This was set to a 'pop-science-pop-music' soundtrack that oscillated between sounds recorded in the early 20th century and those seemingly made a million years in the future.

Audiences responded enthusiastically to the works. At Daylesford, the works stood at either end of a long, narrow and darkened space under the convent eaves, linked by glowing light-boxes featuring details from the works. La Trobe Regional Gallery was huge in contrast and yet the works and light-boxes, together with illuminated microscope slides and related ephemera, drew users invitingly through the space. In both instances, people clustered together, experiencing the works in groups of twos and threes, laughing, commenting and taking turns. Curators of both galleries commented on how 'active' the works were, firmly drawing observers into hands-on interaction via the works' compelling soundtracks, elegantly wrought images and clever wit.

It is worth noting the keenness of many less computer-literate viewers of the exhibition. While younger viewers spent a short time with each interactive before moving on, some of the most engaged and enthusiastic feedback came from older or less 'contemporary art savvy' people who took pains to explore every facet of the works and the ideas on which they were based.

Further information can be found on the website www.topologies.com

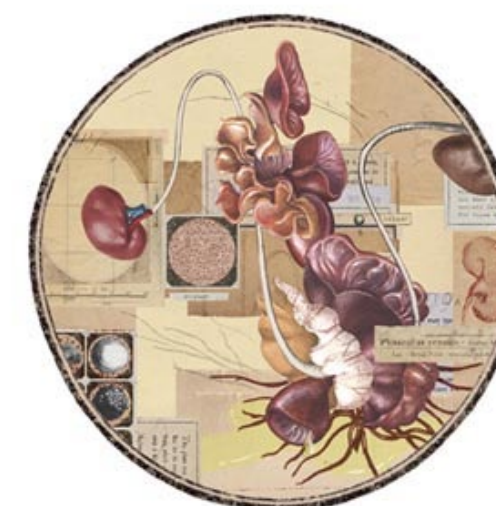
Julie Turner is a Melbourne based writer and editor with interests in film, comedy and interactive art.

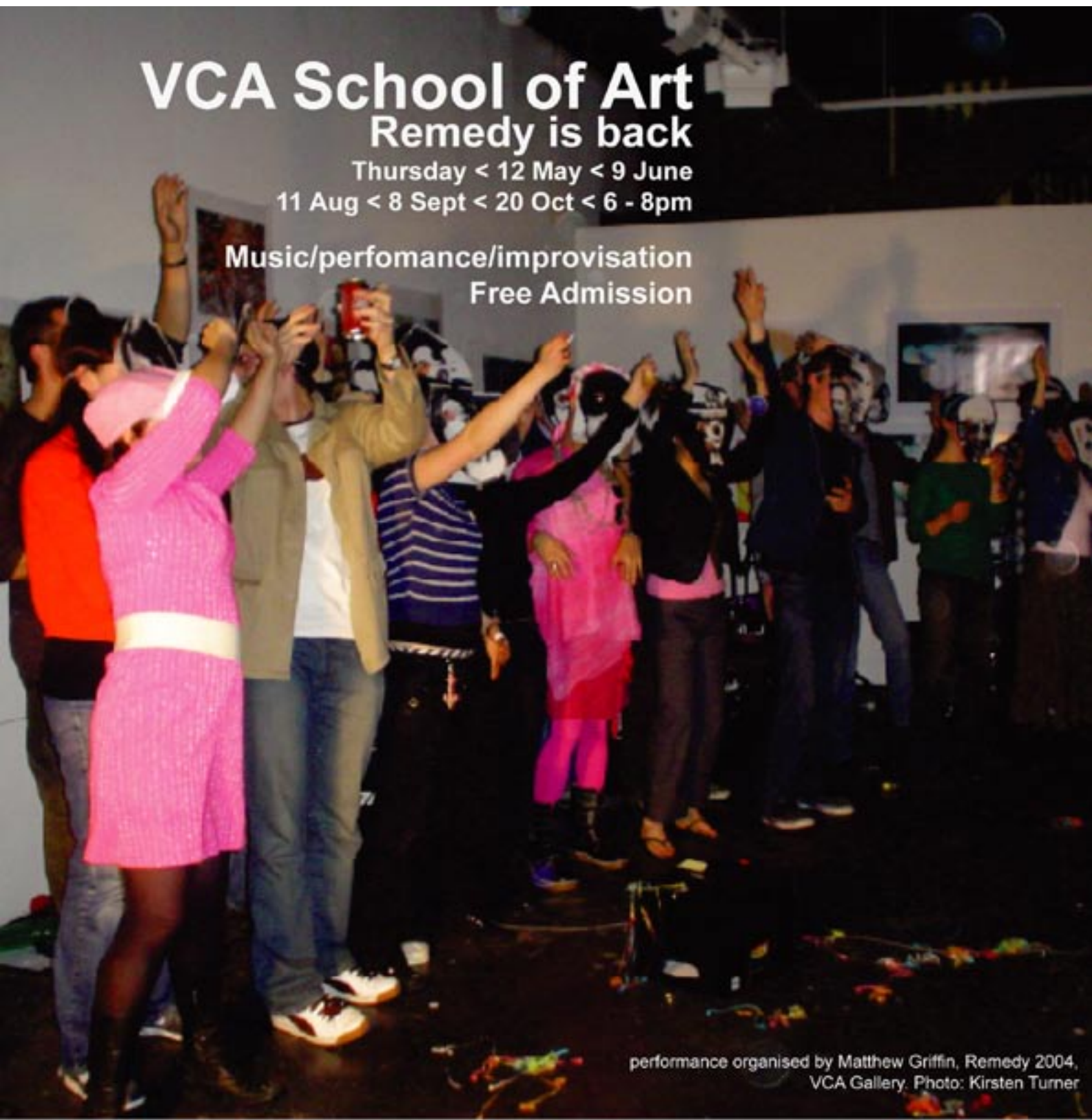
<note>

¹ Chris Henschke was commissioned by the National Gallery of Australia and Donna Kendrigan's work was funded by the Australian Film Commission.

Below: Chris Henschke
HyperCollider pinball machine, 2004
Interactive housed within a custom-made 1930's German-style
pinball machine cabinet
66(W) x 163(H) x 63(D) cm
Image courtesy the artist

Bottom: Donna Kendrigan
Image from *Transplants* interactive
Lambda Duratrans print in lightbox
27.5(W) x 27.5(H) x 9(D) cm
Image courtesy the artist





Orbit

Simon Terrill

West Space, Gallery 2
4 – 19 March 2005
by Andrea Bell

Below: Simon Terrill
Orbit, 2004
Plasterboard, construction pine, mechanism & motor
420 x 280 x 90 cm
Image courtesy the artist

I didn't know quite what to expect when I arrived at West Space, only I was soon to learn that I was to write about a white revolving wall! Dizzy and bewildered at the prospect, I hesitantly entered the realm of *Orbit*.

More than just a stirrer, Simon Terrill has foundations in theatre installation design and they are key to *Orbit's* focus: the relationship between viewer, space and object. Without the viewer's presence, the work would continue revolving, much like the world keeps turning. Yet our participation gives the work meaning. We can make a difference!

Orbit challenges our faith in the stability of architectural structures. On its own, *Orbit* is but a wall, looming and receding, enticing and defying the viewer. In the gallery it becomes a machine. The motion of the wall stimulates vertigo in the destabilised construction of space. Universal elements are not merely suggested by the work's title; the spinning wall is also analogous to a gravitational pull. A single fluorescent light radiates from the northeast corner. This beam is interrupted when the physical presence of the wall blocks the light and mimics a pseudo eclipse.

Terrill works with a variety of media crossing a number of disciplines. His upcoming photography project is foreshadowed by the use of a 16mm film processing motor, a response to *Orbit* that sets it in motion to influence future projects. *Orbit* and its spinning wall exemplify his focus on the processes of art making and exhibiting; walls are commonly regarded as the bearers of artworks and Terrill challenges us to question the purpose and function of walls. He makes us view them not as the exhibitors of art but as the art in itself.



My initial response to *Orbit* centred on its immediacy. I felt compelled to interact. Yet I still felt shy in this impromptu audition; my personal space was intruded in a scene reminiscent of 'the walls of terror' from Ian Fleming's *The Spy who Loved me*. Finally my role in a James Bond movie had been realised! I was swept up in a flood of light only to be left in the dark a moment later due to my failure to keep up with the revolution. However this claustrophobic

nightmare was short-lived upon recognition that the infringement of my space would soon disappear – what goes around comes around. Terrill's work radiates the cycle of life with theatrical expertise. With a structure that overrides content, *Orbit* is sure to upstage any of Disney's attempts.

Andrea Bell is a freelance writer based in Melbourne.

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Gallery profile: the Wedding Circle and SNO Group

un *Obscure*

by Reuben Keehan

*Below: the wedding circle front room 2
Kate Carr
Me as a teenage boy
December 2004
Photo credit: Joy Lai*

While people with small dogs, bad record collections and dreams of emulating their heroes from *Friends* would arguably be better served back in the suburbs where they belong, they have in the past decade become an ineluctable part of Sydney’s urban fabric. Needless to say that the spiralling living costs they brought with them took a lot of artists by surprise, leading to the closure of a number of artist-run spaces while forcing others into institutionalised and careerist operating models dependent on the whims of funding bodies and fleecing the pockets of younger artists. At one point you could count the number of vaguely interesting spaces in the city on one hand and, worse still, every conversation between artists involved at least one mention of the word ‘rent’.

Thankfully times are changing. Housing prices are no cheaper of course, but artists in Sydney have started challenging accepted modes of operation and indeed questioning the nature of ‘space’ itself. Increasingly familiar with the rhythms of urban renewal, a number

of new artist-run initiatives have taken up residence in once-rundown light industrial areas now clearly in the early to mid stages of gentrification, at that point where the slippage between outmoded and à la mode opens up new, if brief, opportunities for experimentation.

Occupying a former dress factory in inner city Chippendale until September (when the developers move in) is the Wedding Circle, an all-purpose studio and gallery space operated by not one but three separate collectives. Effectively a transposition of the ‘share accommodation’ model from low-cost housing to gallery management, this approach allows moving image collective Pabrik to operate a production suite, while painting group Raw Art and the more socially engaged Subito take turns coordinating exhibitions in the building’s front gallery space. To further illustrate the organisational autonomy of the groups involved, Raw offer the gallery as a space for hire, while Subito are committed to a more focused proposal-based program, and to keeping the space free of charge.

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PROJECTS

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Below: SNO factory at night
Photo credit: Billy Gruner

The idea of the rent-free space is being further explored slightly further afield amongst the factories and warehouses of Marrickville by SNO Group, an association of non-objective artists whose simple but professional looking showroom sits at one end of member artist Pam Aitken's studio. Use of the term 'showroom' is intentional: the group insist that it is not a gallery. They cover running costs themselves – kept in check by sending invitations by email only – and there is no official application process for the use of the space; exhibitors are invited or propose projects on a more casual, conversational basis. It is essentially a place for a group of like-minded artists to show and discuss work, and as such operates more as a focus for a particular community than as an expositional end in itself.

Despite the obvious differences in their practices – SNO Group being largely composed of concrete and minimal art practitioners, while the Wedding Circle exhibit more overtly politicised work, especially in Subito mode – both organisations mark an evolution of the ARI model to

meet current realities in a city dominated by granite-topped benches and Smeg appliances. The Wedding Circle and SNO Group both acknowledge the crucial role that community, sociability, discussion and debate play in contemporary art production, seeking to amplify this through their opening events: Subito encourage performances and an air of spontaneity; while SNO serve food and offer a laid back, barbeque-style atmosphere. Though this may seem glib to partisans of serious studio-based practice, both were keen to point out to me the importance of their openings as sites of creative interaction and critical dialogue. This emphasis on the centrality of communication points to a growing awareness that an artist-run space is not just a physical location, but a social, temporal and conceptual space, a discursive space occupied and managed by artists with some degree of autonomy. And you just can't charge for that sort of thing.

Reuben Keehan has too much on his mind to think about bio-lines.

Ron Adams, Liam Benson, The Kingpins, Arlene TextaQueen & George Tillianakis

Dress Code

Curated by Daniel Mudie Cunningham
16 February – 6 March 2005
MOP Projects, Sydney
by Sally Breen

I love Mardi Gras. I love the fact that for one month a year all us queer folk, or to be politically correct – Gay, Lesbian, Bi-Sexual and Transgender – GLBT (and that’s not a sandwich) get to throw on our party frocks, lace up our boots and parade about Sydney as if we fucking own it! I get a little quiver seeing our inner city streets decorated with those sexy posters bearing hot and sweaty fleshy bodies in the repose of Bakhtin’s carnivalesque. It’s a bit like the feeling I got as a kid when the Bi-Lo Christmas lift-out would arrive in the post, replete with fronds of holly and little Santa motifs skirting the ham and turkey specials – I got excited and I got wild.

This year I was not alone in my excitement – a record 450,000 people flanked the parade route to welcome in the 28th Annual Sydney Gay & Lesbian Mardi Gras and 19,000 partied on at the official MG celebration. The tagline for this year’s MG was *our freedom, your freedom*TM – that’s nice and cuddly isn’t it – not! Trade marking freedom runs analogous to the recent homogenisation of queer culture into the mainstream. The term metrosexual is bandied about in the international mass marketing of lifestyle and has been ingrained via shows like *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy* and *Queer as Folk*. The repositioning of queer has ensured that the once-potent signifiers of queerness have been gobbled up by the discourse of fashion and style. We can look at this shift in two ways: the first as a positive relocation of queerness that heralds tolerance and assimilation, the second as a negative situation underscoring a diffusing of politics – a symptom of the global amnesia towards the politics of sexuality and identity.

Now I don’t want to be the dark cloud that rains on your parade but it is of concern that basic human rights with regard to sexuality don’t figure on the political agenda, while around the globe people are sentenced to serve time in jail for their sexual orientation.¹ *Dress Code*, curated by Daniel Mudie Cunningham and presented in association with the Mardi Gras Festival sought to challenge queer style, fashion and drag – destabilising the surrounding politics and conventions. Five artists, including one artists’ collective, were asked to make new work that both

*Below: Ron Adams
Obvious and Outstanding (Like Buck Teeth), 2005
Acrylic on linen, 150 x 180 cm
Image courtesy of the artist*



considered and subverted the tenets of queer – namely transgression, subversion and pleasure. The result was a tightly curated and intelligent exhibition that folded back the heavy rug of homogeneity and returned queer to the political arena.

Ron Adams’s text painting *Obvious and Outstanding (Like Buck Teeth)* succinctly provokes reconsideration of the aesthetic of body image. ‘Like Buck Teeth’ comments on the conventional ideologies supporting images of the body across the canon of art history. Museums and galleries everywhere are crammed with paintings depicting perfectly formed, healthy white bodies. These paintings elevate an ideology: ‘this is what the body should look like,’ and this is what you should strive to behold. Adams’s painting undermines this destructive aesthetic and repositions the body within the politic of the real – unpicking the illusion of painting and the imperfection of reality. Also rupturing the hierarchical status of art practices is Arlene TextaQueen in her use of the low-fi medium of Textas, which are seen as infantile and base.



*Above: Benson Liam
Silver Showgirl
Photograph
100 x 150.8 cm*

The hype of celebrity cult status and performative aspects of style pervades the works of George Tillianakis, Liam Benson and The Kingpins. While each of these artists and collectives draw from divergent genres, their works hijack the strategies of celebrity in order to destabilise them. Performance holds a vital position in queer culture – drag being a dominant mode. George Tillianakis’s performance video work *When I Was a Stripper*, parodies drag’s various states of undress. Peeling back the layers and themes of drag (namely the adoption of signifiers of the other), Tillianakis performs to himself within the private zone of his bedroom. Pop is trashed as we witness his playing out of drag’s masquerade in front of the mirror. Liam Benson’s highly stylised photographic portrait *Silver Showgirl* also toys with the signifiers of drag. Body hair and maleness are kept in check and Benson’s identity as a sissy boy from the Western suburbs is revealed in turn.

On the opening night of *Dress Code*, several performance pieces by Benson and Tillianakis were presented. The artists lured the glitter and glitterati from a range of queer social and cultural echelons. Sweat and hype ripped and



*Above: The Kingpins
Merchandise installation, 2005
T-shirts & posters
Various dimensions
Photo credit: Ron Adams*

pumped throughout the gallery and suggested a return of queer as a visible sign of the real. Setting the scene, cock-rock posters were pasted on the gallery walls and The Kingpins lip-synched the rhetoric of parody and persuasion. The cock-rock and art-rock T-shirts piled beneath the posters conceded that style is determined by time – like the seasons they come and go.

At the Official Mardi Gras Party I caught up with Benson and Tillianakis dressed in drag from head to toe. They were making their way through the ‘Women’s Space’ and at this moment I was surprisingly fulfilled by the tag line *Our freedom, your freedom*TM.

Sally Breen is a Sydney based writer and currently Associate Curator at Artspace, Sydney.

<note>

¹ An example of discrimination was recently exemplified in Nadi, Fiji, where a court convicted and jailed Australian Thomas McCosker and Fiji national Dhirendra Nadan for having consensual sex. Sex between men is illegal in Fiji and carries a maximum 14-year jail term.

What's the Matter?

Emidio Puglielli

InFlight, Hobart
2 – 23 April 2005
by Sarah Scott

As the title suggests, *What's the Matter?* investigates the idea that a photograph is not simply a conveyer of an illusory image but has meaning as an object in its own right. The reverse side of Emidio Puglielli's photographic works hold as much significance as the front. This idea is clearly conveyed by the work hanging in the centre of the gallery in which two digital prints depicting the back and front of photographic paper are hung opposite each other. The viewer sees the illusory image of the photograph's two sides, and is able to walk between and around the prints, experiencing them as two-sided physical objects suspended in space.

One of the more successful works in the show is *Back to Front*, a lambda print of an ageing, yellowed, photograph back that casts its shadow on the tabletop surface. The edge of *Back to Front* is cut to echo the corrugated edge of the photograph back depicted. This cut edge in turn casts a shadow on the white wall of the gallery, a shadow that renders the impossibility of that photograph being reproduced in its entirety. Two lambda prints of partially open photographic albums continue the themes explored in *Back To Front*. In all these works, the surface photographic image is denied the viewer, focussing awareness instead on the physicality of the photograph.

In *Through the Mountain*, we are presented with the photograph of a photographic postcard. Here the illusion of an ambiguous mountain view is shattered by the diagonal stripes formed by the stamp of the Kodak photo paper digitally reproduced and superimposed over the image. The viewer is presented with the illusion of seeing the front and the back of the image at the same time. Photographic paper becomes the subject of the works opposite *Through the Mountain*. In these works, Fuji paper frames a rectangle of Kodak paper and visa-versa. The study of photographic paper is completed by a third work of exposed photographic paper in brilliant, fluorescent pink, highlighting the role of 'process' in photography.

Despite the unifying theme and the slick presentation of this exhibition, I feel that the relationship between digital and analogue photography could have been explored in



Above: Emidio Puglielli
From Behind the Mountain, 2004
Lambda Print
101 x 101 cm
Image courtesy of the artist

more depth. The role of photographic process in relation to the creation of illusion and the physical object of the photograph is touched on but could also be investigated in more detail. Finally, the intention behind some of the works is overly obscure whilst in others it is obvious. The digital prints of analogue photographs highlight the speed at which analogue photography – like the yellowed photograph depicted in *Back To Front* – is fast becoming a nostalgic artefact.

Dr. Sarah Scott is currently teaching Art Theory at the Tasmanian School of Art and Design History at Swinburne University School of Design.

Destiny Deacon, Willie Doherty, Frances Hegarty William Kentridge, Tracey Moffatt,
Jo Ractliffe & Darren Siwes

Co-curated by Jill Bennett, Felicity Fenner & Liam Kelly

Prepossession

Ivan Dougherty Gallery, College of Fine Arts
University of New South Wales, Sydney
4 March – 9 April 2005
& The Golden Thread Gallery, Belfast, June 2005
by Jasmin Stephens



Left: Willie Doherty
Non-Specific Threat (still from video), 2004
Courtesy the artist, Matt's Gallery, London, and Alexander & Bonin, New York

Prepossession is an ambitious exhibition full of layered ideas. Its chief idea – the notion of prepossession – is not a word commonly used. Viewing the exhibition I understood it to refer to a condition in the present that arises out of being wounded or broken in the past. Curators Jill Bennett and Felicity Fenner of the University of New South Wales Centre for Contemporary Art and Politics, and their colleague Liam Kelly from the School of Art and Design of the University of Ulster, Belfast, provide a more specific definition. To be prepossessed is to be possessed or haunted by a history of trauma and dispossession. The seven artists in the show make highly accomplished, compelling work. Several such as Willie Doherty, William Kentridge and Tracey Moffatt are prominently discussed in visual studies of the traumatic effects of institutionalised violence and political struggle. This exhibition's thesis is founded in Jill Bennett's brilliant monograph, *Emphatic Vision: Affect, Trauma and Contemporary Art*.

Complex questions are operating here. Firstly, what understanding do we gain into the contested situations of Australia, Northern Ireland and South Africa and are there resonances between these sites of occupation and preoccupation? Secondly, as artists have incorporated theoretical perspectives on power into their practices they have become less intent on transmitting a message

or documenting the effects of trauma. How is such work different to earlier, politically motivated work and what sort of response does it elicit from viewers?

The workings of trauma can be unremarkable, furtive and insidious. These qualities are present in the works in *Prepossession* but in no way should they be interpreted too narrowly as a reaction to trauma. They elude solemn, totalising explanations of their circumstances. In the case of Destiny Deacon, she coaxes and cajoles bittersweet performances from her unruly cast of beloved black dolls, friends and family. Deacon's do-it-yourself aesthetic and deadpan camera work belie her shrewd assessment of the operation of race in suburban life.

While Darren Siwes and Frances Hegarty frame themselves in stylised encounters with the viewer, they present more than their personal story. Although biography is the mainstay of political art, both these artists deploy post-colonial sensibilities. Siwes's backdrops of curated, historical buildings photographed in Adelaide, Perth and London point to more systemic questions of ownership and capital. Hegarty's video installation is reminiscent of clinical reports of female hysterics. The harsh twitching on and off of the strobe lighting, the artist's compulsive delivery on the soundtrack and her hands clapping at her

Below: Tracey Moffatt
Up in the Sky #1, 1997
 Courtesy the artist & Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney



arched neck speak of the painful, ecstatic experiences of losing and re-learning Gaelic language. *Auto Portrait #2*'s inclusion in the show is a reminder of the validity of gendered perspectives on trauma.

In the work *Vlakplaas: 2 June 1999 (Drive-by-shooting)* Jo Ractliffe seems to be revisiting the scene of a crime. Matter-of-fact black and white frames taken out the car window are of a non-descript, desolate stretch of South African countryside. When we learn from the catalogue that we are in fact looking at the site of Vlakplaas – the former government's Death Squad training camp, the impulse to memorialise kicks in as we peer into what has become a void. In the absence of any stain or marker on the landscape we wonder how the camp's location can have been forgotten so quickly and whether the need to forget subsumes the obligations of bereavement. In his wistful, hand drawn animated film *Felix in Exile*, Ractliffe's fellow countryman William Kentridge struggles with the same guilty contradictions as he can-or-can't erase the scars of degradation and exploitation that are encrusted into the abandoned mining landscape of the East Rand.

According to the curators, these artists offer such insight into the nature of trauma because the experience of viewing their work is less prescriptive than that of their predecessors. Tracey Moffatt is exemplarily with her insistence that her photo series *Up in the Sky* can be hung in any order, thereby frustrating readings of a geographical or cultural specificity. Rather than making work that necessitates a primarily cognitive response by viewers, these works engender a more embodied, affective response. This more transactional account reflects current scholarship in the fields of embodied perception and cognition. The sources of Moffatt's surreal, outback landscape range from the films of Italian director Pier Paolo Pasolini to the testimonies of the Stolen Generations. The circling crow-like figures of the nuns also invoke the shame of unwed motherhood and the stigma of being a 'bushie' growing up in Queensland country towns in the sixties, before the term 'white trash' was imported from the United States.

The only viewing conditions in the gallery, however, that support the curators' premise about the functioning of recent politically engaged work are those provided for



Left: Darren Siwes
The Tangled Skeins Of The Hoi Polloi,
 2004
 Courtesy the artist & Greenaway Art
 Gallery, Adelaide

Northern Irish artist, Willie Doherty. His video, *Non-Specific Threat*, is installed so much better than the other works that it is both spatially and curatorially privileged. Doherty's austere, olive-tinged everyman could be a terrorist, a father, an informant or a brother. He is filmed in a secretive, brutal location in a manner that owes more to dance photography than news reportage. The work's shifting subject sets up a distrust of our emotions towards him. We have mixed feelings of sympathy and hostility. At one moment he is addressing us, then he seems to be speaking to others whom we cannot see and then he is being spoken to. Passing judgement on him just becomes too complicated.

Without attention to spatial elements such as proximity, lighting and sound, viewers cannot apprehend work in an embodied way. A sense of space is needed – initially between the viewer and the work – so that other considerations such as the continuities and disjunctions between space, place and time can come into play. Due to the visual and aural crowding of the artworks there is a flattening out effect which accentuates the academic

aspect of the exhibition and which reduces viewer engagement with the works as objects. In an exhibition as conceptually challenging as *Prepossession* and with works of such calibre, more space is needed for the works and for the show as a whole.

Ivan Dougherty Gallery may not have the best viewing conditions but what *Prepossession* did offer is a reappraisal of some big names in the light of a particularly vibrant line of local and global enquiry. I was moved to reflect on the distinctive contribution being made by visual artists at a time when public debate about our collective history and sense of responsibility to one another is being increasingly couched in economic and legal, and therefore exclusively cognitive terms.

Jasmin Stephens is Senior Manager, Education and Access, at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney.

Goshka Macuga

Kate MacGarry Gallery
London

4 March – 17 April 2005
by Kathleen Madden

One of the prevailing tendencies of art production is the disruption of boundaries and conventions. Recently a major shift in curatorial practice has been apparent in a new generation of artist-curators, who have disregarded the strict definitions of what it means to be an artist or a curator, blending the two to produce a dynamic synthesis and interrogative model while examining issues of authorship and exhibition display. The Polish artist, Goshka Macuga's practice represents a provocative fusion between traditional sculpture and curatorial practices. She navigates the boundaries between the two and has inverted the language of art-institutional categorisation. The result is a lively investigation of contemporary art, which is by nature a risky and transgressive proposition.

In a recent solo show at Kate MacGarry Gallery in London's East End, Macuga exhibited *Library Tabletop* (all works 2005). The installation included a display structure, or plinth-like base, entitled *After Friedrich Kiesler – Installation study for pictures and light fixtures*, which was an oak replica of a British Library reading table. The traditional tabletop had a hand tooled leather surface that depicted a drawing inspired by Friedrich Kiesler. Upon this base further works were displayed, each referring to a major figure of 20th century art. *After Marcel Duchamp – Selected Details After Cranach and the "Relache", 1967* was (as Macuga has acknowledged her debt to Duchamp) an assisted ready-made in which she transformed Arturo Schwarz's book *The Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp* by altering its cover. She re-bound the mass-produced volume in natural sheepskin with black tooling, depicting the famous photographic image of Duchamp as Adam, holding the unidentified Eve's hand, symbolically representing the biblical couple prior to banishment from Paradise. *After Andy Warhol – Golden Slipper with Lace Stocking, 1956*, was a delicate rendition of an early Warhol drawing from his career as a commercial illustrator. It was reproduced in gold and black tooling with underlays, giving it a light textured appearance on Rainer Crone's book *Andy Warhol A Picture Show*, which was rebound in white vellum and edged in gilding. Also included were books about Francis Picabia, Sigmar Polke and Martin Kippenberger. These books all represent a reframing of art history. In



*Below & Right: Goshka Macuga
Library Table, 2005
Mixed media
84 x 140 x 206 cm*

Image courtesy the artist & Kate MacGarry Gallery, London.

this instance, you can't judge a book by its cover, but you can judge Macuga's work by its cover.

These transformed primary texts represent the artist's intervention at a level of selection: she reframes what she has selected, in a process similar to collage – or perhaps a better comparison in the Information Age is sampling culture. Rosalind Krauss has said of Ed Ruscha that his medium was not photographic, but automotive – the car gave him his perspective on the world.¹ Macuga's medium is her process of selection, her samplings. She is concerned with the circumstances surrounding the presentation of her works. By creating temporary site-specific works she oscillates between treating the exhibition space as both an object of scrutiny and an art object. Within this context, she presents pertinent information without intending us to take the time to read the full textual form she presents. Rather, we are to take meaning through her citation of these assisted ready-mades.



A year and a half ago at her first major solo show at *Gasworks*, a non-profit space in London South of the River, Macuga reinterpreted the famous 18th century Picture Gallery, which the architect John Soane had devised in his home and is now a public gallery in London's Lincoln's Inn Fields. The layout of the picture room was exploited, producing an enlarged area of display, through the use of hinged doors that open like a modern poster display, thus creating an 'exhibition viewing platform'. Within a plywood recreation of Soane's four-walled room, Macuga installed work by artists she knows and respects. This juxtaposition of other people's work within the space of an exhibition is vastly different from that of the White Cube Gallery space, where individuality and independence is the norm among works. Focusing on the site of display represented a new approach to being an artist, a curator, and incorporated aspects of being an archivist and a collector. The experience also differed from most gallery viewing in that the invigilator had to open and close the 'walls' of the gallery to expose much of the work that was installed on its interior.

Being in an entirely controlled and transformed viewing situation was fascinating: experiencing Macuga's work, yet seeing a Michael Raedecker seamlessly incorporated

into her installation was an inspiring viewing experience. She followed up the *Gasworks* exhibition with one at Bloomberg Space where she produced a *Japanese Curiosity Box*. Unlike the plywood of the Picture Room, the production values were higher here, resulting in a sleek wooden incised structure. Within this box Macuga managed to borrow works that included two odd abstract Andy Warhols, which she installed next to the suit worn by the first dog sent into space by the Soviets and other works by friends and those she admires. These juxtapositions of seemingly incompatible objects are part of Macuga's sampling act. Her work counters expectations about the traditional forms and functions of art. The fact that at this moment an artist has begun to complicate these institutional categories seems emblematic of a major shift – a de-stabilization and an expansion.

Kathleen Madden is a New Yorker living in London working on a PhD.

<note>

¹ Krauss was recently asked about this assertion at an event, *Art After 1900* at Tate Modern, Monday, 4 April, 2005, to which she reasserted her claim. This discussion has been archived at www.tate.org.uk/

Navigational Aesthetics:

Looking For Contemporary Art in Berlin

by Fiona Bate

Berlin has long been noted for its flourishing art scene. As with other major art centres, Berlin speaks with an international vocabulary that's partly due to the large number of foreigners who pitch their tents in the German capital to take advantage of its cheap living costs, compared to the rest of Western Europe. Berlin attracts most of the newcomers who move to Germany, which itself has the highest proportion of foreigners in any EU country. But visit any of Berlin's swathe of contemporary art spaces on a Saturday afternoon and you're likely to find deserted galleries that you can enjoy all to yourself, apart from the occasional chatty gallery owner willing to divulge some local gossip. For all the talk about Berlin's happening art scene, most activities take place in hidden locations that are spread across a city that's five times the size of Paris. Here the term 'public relations' is likely to describe photocopied posters on street corners rather than press releases, whereby the channels of communication are via a friend-of-a-friend.

Indeed, many of the large number of temporary residents are attracted to Berlin 'to revel in its thriving art scene'.¹ Recent newspaper articles attest to a trend – like 'For Young Artists, All Roads Now Lead To a Happening Berlin' as featured in *The New York Times* – that insists on the bohemian charms of Berlin today as if it were frozen in the post-Berlin-wall glory days of the 90s. Such superficial media reportage contributes to the perpetuation of outdated ideas, which belie the austerity of living in a city with high unemployment and a bankrupt government. In reality Berlin's contemporary art scene fosters a unique mix of transience and newness that's experienced through a diverse range of art spaces. More than 500 locations can be counted here, where it is tried regularly and seriously to show art'.² Supposedly ten new spaces are opened each month in Berlin, whilst another five close down. This rapid turnover cultivates a sense of vibrancy and a blink-and-you'll-miss-it buzz, that is more likely related to the broke-ass economy than ideological sentiments prescribing periodic makeovers.

The opening of the new space Nice & Fit in May last year evidences Berlin's continually evolving international

*Below: View of Hannes Schmidt's Dreamotor, 2004
Foam, wood, glue, transparency & slide projector
Courtesy Nice & Fit, Berlin*



artscape. The gallery's director, Helena Papadopoulos, moved to Berlin two years ago from New York City with the intention of using the openness and space of the city to experiment. She began by producing the art publication *Stripped Bare* and decided to open a gallery after meeting so many young artists who had difficulties finding venues to exhibit their work. Papadopoulos's premise was to represent Berlin based artists who were not already operating through other galleries. Since last May, Nice & Fit has presented four solo exhibitions and one group show that have included artists from Germany, Greece, Italy and New York. In showcasing these artists, Papadopoulos contributes to an international dialogue that reflects the cultural and creative conditions in Berlin. The city, however, is a tough environment for art spaces with commercial objectives, as there are only a few avid local collectors, and State money for the visual arts tends to be spent importing institutional blockbuster shows rather than supporting new contemporary works.

Yet for smaller artist-run spaces Berlin's economic challenges are less of a concern, because for many of these

*Below: Gert Bendel
Camping site version I, 2003
Wood
Courtesy Capri, Berlin*



galleries non-commercial sentiments are an important part of their ideology that enables greater freedom and opportunity to experiment. An example is Capri, an artist-run initiative that's located in the Northern part of Mitte, Berlin, in one of the few remaining corners in the city not overrun by commercial galleries. Established in August 2001, Capri is co-directed by artists Ina Bierstedt, Bettina Carl and Alena Meier, whose focus is on 'artists concerned with the policies and aesthetics of space'.³ The gallery was established on the premises of a former flower shop and some of the old equipment has been left to form a unique and site-specific space for artists to negotiate. As with many other spaces which shun the notion of the white cube as a neutral space by incorporating angular architecture and grey walls, Carl explains that with Capri 'the artists have to cope with a space blankly denying the common white cube settings, a space that insists on it's presence instead of confining itself to a background existence'.⁴ Capri's interest in the international setting has led to projects featuring Australian and British artists, and also an exchange show with Cuckoo art space in New Zealand.

This cosmopolitan spirit is an important feature of Berlin's contemporary art spaces and reflects the wider cultural setting. But due to its intricacies and transience, Berlin's diverse art scene is best experienced first-hand. Galleries are often hidden within anonymous buildings, they change location and have irregular programming – one particularly elusive artist-run space is nearly impossible to find. This gallery is only accessible by walking through four different buildings and their accompanying courtyards, up a decrepit stairwell to an unmarked door. The other thing to know is that this gallery is only open for a few hours, one day a week.

Fiona Bate is an independent arts writer and curator based in Berlin.

<notes>

¹ Richard B. Woodward, 'For Young Artists, All Roads Now Lead To a Happening Berlin', in *The New York Times*, March 13, 2005

² Spunk Seipel, "Berliner Kunstsalon" in *Berliner Kunstsalon Catalogue*, eds. Thomas Steinfeld and Edmund Piper (Berlin: Edmund Piper, 2004), p.5.

³ Bettina Carl, *Capri Concept*, gallery information sheet, p.1.

⁴ Op. cit.

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AMA April #178 2005 cover image:
Michael Doolan, *Pokemon, 2004*, ceramic with platinum lustre.

un Responsive... it's your say

un Magazine is not responsible for the opinions expressed in this segment.

Response to article *The Kingpins* by Mark Pennings, un Magazine Issue 3.

Art would be better served by artists putting forward propositions for debate and argument about how things can be better, instead of some of the current work [by the Kingpins] that seems to surrender or actively contribute to today's condition. - Mark Pennings

I am bothered by Pennings's interpretation of the Kingpins's oeuvre – as promoters of the (arguably) vacuous MTV aesthetic, as constructors of depoliticised art. Do attempts by The Kingpins to politicise our spectatorship of gender not count toward building socio-politically conscious art? In my opinion, cross-dressing and critical gender performance as developed by the Kingpins, are indeed honest attempts to open debate about the current fashion of gender and feminist politics – a politic which has become increasingly ignored and yawned at within contemporary art movements. Sadly, Pennings offers no exception to this current trend in the art world. Pushing aside the value of the Kingpins's feminist motivations, Pennings prefers to receive the Kingpins work as mere 'art as entertainment' – defined by Pennings as apolitical and apathetic to the contemporary condition.

I'd like to suggest that the 'art as entertainment' technique adopted by The Kingpins does not mean that their work is void of political commentary. The way I see it, it interconnects their oeuvre with female musicians such as Peaches, Cobra Killer, Chicks on Speed and Le Tigre, who are undoubtedly immersed in a contemporary feminist discourse. Subsequently, the connections between the musicians named above and 'entertainment artists' (insert sarcastic tone), such as the Kingpins, allows us to place these contemporary art practitioners within an expansive and diverse feminist discourse, one that is increasingly affective and political – and if that isn't critically engaging with today's condition Mr. Pennings then I don't know what is!

From Veronica Tello

Dear Anthony Gardner,

No offence, but where do you get off? When you told me about your review of Mike Conole's work, before I even read it, I felt sick in my stomach, more sick than by that video of dead people we saw together at ACMI! Now I've read the review that feeling has lapsed and I just feel sorry for you. At first, I liked your reviews of ACMI's part of 2004 and the other one, on the Biennale I think. They were funny, well crafted and insightful. Anyway, they don't really count. They don't really count because everyone who reviews those shows, as everyone knows, lives in the world of high expectations that a big art shows engender. They believe a big art show will solve all their art problems, that the show will reveal some 'mystic art truth'. Until they see it that is, and then they go crashing back to earth in a screaming heap. It applies to critics as much as it applies to the rest of the art world and the public. So what do you do?

With your sharpened critical facilities, and to be edgy (of course), you picked on a target that wouldn't defend himself. Why don't you denigrate Ricky Swallow's practice in print, or, I don't know, TV Moore, Nadine Christensen, David Noonan, Nick Mangan...

anyone! Someone who will defend themselves, someone where there is a risk involved. For my money, I saw Mike's show and thought it was fucking great. The man has more talent in the upper third of his left little finger than a lot of Melbourne artists. The work neither existed as a purely academic exercise (like a lot of art does), or as a shallow formal feat of craftsmanship. I've met Mike a couple times and the guy has more humility that the whole Melbourne art world put together.

Mike, don't let Anthony get you down. You're doin' great. You're not just kicking goals, you're moving the goal posts and a lot of people know it.

Anthony, don't let this bozo get you down. I just think in this instance your criticisms were misdirected and you're still great. If you want, we can have a bitch fight at the Builders. It would have to be on a Thursday evening, at sunset, or some such equally dramatic scene and time.

Tristian Koenig

Dear un Responsive,

As the author (no qualms about it, if that is primarily to suggest the conceiver and developer of the work) of the *Another Misspent Portrait of Etienne de Silhouette* project Christine Morrow mentions in her article 'Contemporary Art and Cultural Critique' (*un Magazine* #3 online supplement) I wanted to correct certain misrepresentations made there about the work, while trying to ignore the rather superficial and truncated analysis.

Questioning the 'honesty' of the work, Morrow thinks I 'tried to have it both ways' by referring to the contribution of those involved as a 'collaboration' but then not acknowledging them, for 'only his name appeared on the wall label (which read: *Christian Capurro et. al.*).' This statement is misleading for ignoring the fact that at the *Cycle Tracks Will Abound in Utopia* show – as with the other sites where the work was stationed for any period and at the web archive www.christiancapurro.com – the full list of 250-odd names was right there, filling one of the three A3 wall labels (I know it was dimly lit in that part of the space, especially on the opening night, but seriously, if artists and writers can't pay close attention to what's there then we're all in the shit!). The statement is also nonsensical if what is being suggested is that *all* of those names could be put directly under the title of the work.

It appears that there is a simplistic idea of authorship at work in Morrow's article, one that regards collaboration only as some neat and equitable endeavour. This may be its 'utopian' cast in certain closeted art circles but it's a long way from the more fundamental definition of the word as of '*one who works in conjunction with another or others*'; exactly what I see as having taken place. It's a shame that some of the uneasy questions marking this project – *questions, which to be 'honest' can't be skimmed over because they affect us in the real world* – like the effacement of identity in work or in the face of another image, or the appropriation of others' value for oneself ('skimming off' as Morrow calls it), are invoked in the commentary only to damn the work instead of, perhaps more intelligently and constructively, engaging *with* them as is the work's intention.

Christian Capurro, Melbourne

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Email Lily for the submission guidelines and submit your proposal by 18 June 2005 via email to <lilyhibberd@eudoramail.com>

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