

**Insect – (noun) a small invertebrate animal with a head, thorax, and abdomen, six legs, two antennae, and usually one or two pairs of wings.**

On Sunday 27th February, after Tahi and Lydia's wedding, I went to Albert Park to soak up my share of the Chinese Lantern Festival. While eyeing up the helium balloon shaped like a Brontosaurus I noticed a stall selling what looked like small hand-painted birds mounted on long plastic sticks; they averaged about  $\frac{3}{4}$  life-size if you excluded the flamingos. On closer inspection their wings were attached to their bodies with small metal springs, allowing them to clap behind their backs if you shook hard enough. I could only imagine this was some kind of revolution in wind-generated garden ornaments – at least now the wings flapped more or less in the right direction, a step forward from those poor windmill-like birds one could find in some suburban gardens, whose wings rotated forwards (or backwards!) like they were trying to swim freestyle (or backstroke!) through the garden air.

The 'ornaments' were all fanning out of a large cardboard box that had been roughly labelled with a black vivid pen: Insects \$3 each or two for \$5. Admittedly there were a few insects in the bunch, I think a dragonfly and maybe a bee or two, though predominantly the ornaments had hand-painted feathers and beaks; maybe the vendor was in a particular rush? However, tied around the neck of each of the 'insects' was a small, green, machine-printed cardboard tag. In black upper-case text it stated quite profoundly: INSECT.

Was this perhaps less of a misinterpretation than a reinterpretation, a reclassification, a condensing to make management easier? I mean, realistically a common brown duck can not be classified in the same species line as a dragonfly, though both could possibly fall into the same category of those mentioned in that 'certain Chinese encyclopaedia': n) that from a long way off look like flies. And flies are insects.

Meanwhile back at the gallery, Tahi (Moore) and I were throwing together a show at the George Fraser Gallery for the launch of the third issue of Crease magazine. The existence of the show, as an idea, had been playing around in the back of my mind for some time, though somehow (and not surprisingly) it became a last minute affair. It was to be a show without a theme, simply featuring a collection of work by twelve artists we liked – there was no preconceived consideration for aesthetic or conceptual relations.

The work started to arrive. It was an assortment of (really) small new works, on the side casual works, larger 'Poppy' works, old works re-hashed, a few kinetic and audio works, and some really delicate works. As the vendor of a stall there is that option of just throwing it all into a box, attaching a flimsy label, and hoping like hell the audience buys it (and we did employ it as a satisfactory option for one of the pieces in the show).



Three insects on someone's front lawn.

Though, the back room became like a stage; the work had initially stood in the centre with the bright and hot and heavy spotlights facing from all angles, and then stage-dived out onto the walls (in one case quite violently embedding itself about 15mm into the actual wall) and the space behind. Meanwhile, the front room carried out a private though noisy discourse, with the apple monitor in the back room hard up against the wall trying to listen in with the aid of its plastic cup. Maybe less like a muddle in a box, and more like a party at the zoo - where all the animals are invited and though they all feel a little self-conscious, even out of their element, most have a good time? And whether misinterpreted or not, surely a bird mistaken for a fly is more promising than a duck mistaken for a windmill?

I think the nature of a group show, unless you have the liberty of being able to carefully hand-select the works, is that it is a bit of a festival stall fair – a bunch of objects that conceptually and aesthetically don't necessarily compliment (or even challenge) each other, lined up side by side, grouped under the same roof (box or no box). And maybe it makes less



sense, though maybe a new sense is gained from the curiousness without sense. Or maybe we have just become accustomed to the nature of the fair, and its own revised system of logic.

*that was really great, that was really great, that was really great,*  
*Crease issue three launch, George Fraser Gallery, Auckland.*

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Digression: when I was very young I liked to drink water out of different vessels that could be found in our kitchen: egg cups, milk jugs, stainless steel bowls, even teaspoons. The water always tasted different and new, not like anything else, but not like tap-water in a glass. It did seem like more than just a novelty. It felt like the vessel really did change the nature of the water.

And then maybe the 'INSECT' label was just a clever marketing ploy – the vendor got my \$2.50 and I'm sure they wouldn't have if it weren't for that weighty piece of green card; reinterpreted sense made profitable?

#### Note

1. Re: Foucault's the beginning of *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of THE Human Sciences*.

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