



Natural Selection Magazine

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1-8

1.

And only intoxication stands between this book – and silence.

Hakim Bey wrote this at the start of his collection of essays titled 'Immediatism'. A slim paper-back volume, it is a sprawling, paranoid, part-Deleuzian rambling. Very much the kind of thing that would spring to mind if someone were to say, "theory, alternative scene, San Francisco, early 90s".

But I really love that quote. That idea that when intoxication occurs, you're willing to risk speaking! That perhaps at moments of irrationality, you can bypass a certain sort of force, a sort of cosmic tact that hinders open speech. A moment when you ignore the type of decorum that encourages people to 'hold their tongue'.

2.

I have misgivings about a certain belief in cohesion. The way cohesion has been seen as a positive goal, a situation we should rally towards. It really makes me gripe. It's been bugging me. I believe everything has an equal amount of cohesion and incohesion and that coherency and incoherency and their interchangeable nature is at the very heart of what makes things interesting. Cohesion is so tentative, provisional. To write cohesion as if it were some essential quality (whether linked by a purportedly static concept such as style, date, author) seems unnerving. Incorrect!

3.

Kain Picken has been doing paintings taken from pages in Anarchist zines. I think he collected them a few years back, but he has also been trying to go to Barricade Books to get some more. There is a page in one of the zines though that he has been reluctant to paint. I really like it and I know he likes it as well but I think he thinks people will think it's dumb. It says *Save queer kids from straight parents*. I reckon it's cool.

4.

New York artist Ester Partegas had a show at Foxy Productions with the title *Civilization is overrated*. It's a potent phrase, very slogan, and I love the casualisation of Anarchist politics. From the images I've seen the show looked like exploded consumer waste. There was packaging and an oversized black plastic bag. It looked as if it had been on an unhealthy Capitalist binge. The work was sort of attitude as politics and politics as hallucination.

5.

A friend showed me footage he had taken on his video phone. He was sitting at a flat, smoking pot with someone when a few people turned up. They were speeding off their head and came in talking, moving and over-hot. One of them was talking shit, saying he'd rack up another bag of speed. Then he took his top off cause he was sweating and he was still playing with the bag of whizz when someone on the couch



threatened to chuck a tin of tuna at him. So he said "come on, do it". And the guy on the couch did, and my friend got it on tape. The guy who got hit by the tuna got hurt, but the whole situation was engrossing.

6.

In the Cruthers Collection catalogue (Perth Institute of Contemporary Art, 1995), there is an image by Ann Newmarch, an Australian artist known for political screen prints. The work bears the title *We must risk unlearning*. I haven't been able to get those words out of my head. The image is preoccupied with make-up and patriarchy, but the title seems to reverberate elsewhere. I have been thinking of it applied in an expanded field. 'Unlearn' is potentially both catastrophic and liberating. How uncomfortable, possibly life-threatening it would be if we unlearned engineering, unlearned hygiene, unlearned civility. Coincidentally, a friend showed me his high school folder that had a sticker declaring UNLEARN. Its placement in a school folder seemed suitably charged. He mentioned it was a sticker for his uncle's band in Adelaide, but it appealed to me as pure ideology.

7.

Opinion is often concreted into something larger, made to be greater, with a sleight of hand. When attached to another element, it gains significance, becomes consequential. Think of 'critical' opinion, 'curatorial' opinion, 'commercial' opinion, even 'public' opinion is more desirable than 'just' opinion.

8.

Janet Burchill and Jennifer McCamley did a piece that states *All that rises must converge*. The statement seems to hover. I read it as declaring that everything said will have effect and resonance. Everything will become something else, but this something else is determined by what we do, think and say. The ambiguity of how things (even what has) converged is energy and friction.

I flew out of Sydney for New York November 2 just as the polling booths closed in the United States.

I flew United.

I sat next to a retired couple from Melbourne who were going to visit their daughter in Boston, he took the window seat, I always ask for the aisle.

I listened to the BBC on channel 9 on the audio program as the pilot advised rather than the flight traffic he would switch over so we could follow the election coverage.

I had that familiar sinking feeling that comes of backing the wrong horse; hope the pancreas is better Mark, even though technically I had not actually bet. I worried as Bush took a slight lead which increased until the only discussion was focused on the Ohio Electoral College.

I interpreted this through the Australian vernacular so there seemed to be a vague hope that this may go to Kerry and push him to the lead and the presidency. I was wrong.

I had to watch I Robot as simultaneously the transmission from the BBC ceased and alcohol service was suspended.

I heard the pilot making an announcement as the breakfast was being served in what I thought were joyous tones that President Bush has been returned to the White House and that John Kerry was now making his concession speech which we could listen to on channel 9 on the audio program.

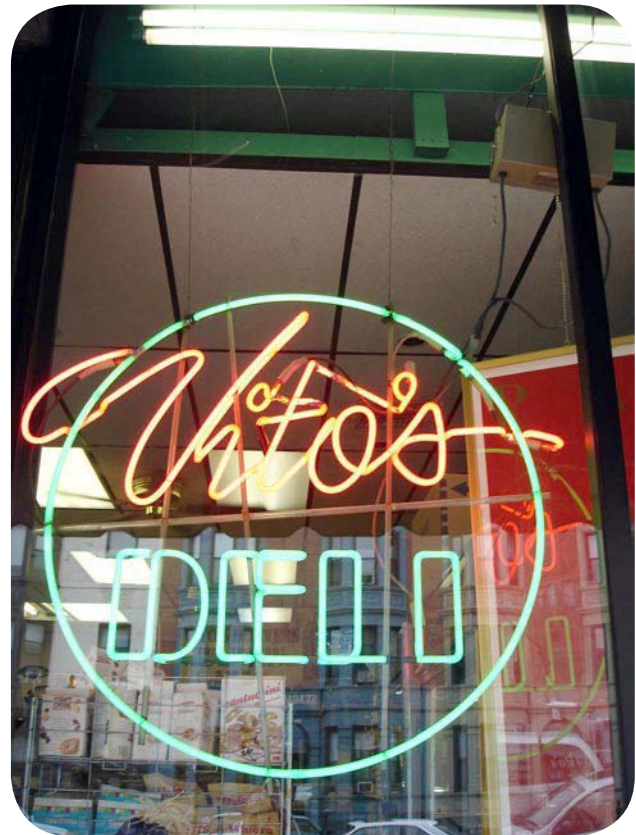
I was digitally photographed and fingerprinted entering the country under the visa waiver program (VRP) as I have a machine readable passport (MRP) and was taken aside for a bag search (BS).

I told the homeland border protection official that the only other time I had been searched at a border was by the French (I was on a night bus from The Netherlands to London and understand somewhat why that search occurred) and she said oh the French don't say that, stopped searching my bags and said that I could go.

I was struck by the peculiar orange glow of the electricity that stretched to the horizon as we flew into New York.

I heard Michael Craig-Martin say that installation of Donald Judd's sculptures at Marfa complete the landscape.

I did not hear Michael Craig-Martin say anything about the potential significance of the site from an indigenous perspective.



I learnt that Marcel Duchamp is an American.

I was advised by a girl at a party not to get a greyhound bus to Philadelphia because they are full of African Americans and all they do is eat fried chicken which stinks up the bus.

I was asked by a policeman what I was doing with my video camera at the world trade centre site and told him I didn't really know and was moved on.

I watched a John Bock video three times through at Anton Kern and thought it was the best contemporary work that I saw.

I learnt that customer service does not have to involve answering any of the customer's questions.

I saw a good Anri Salas exhibition and thought that the mayor of Tirana must be a wonderful person.

I went to Coney Island to have a go at the baseball pitching machines but it was closed.

I took the lift to the top floor of the Guggenheim and walked down the ramp.

I used someone else's card to get free admission to all the museums.

I took a photo of Guy with the girl that had a beard on the door of a bar we went to on Avenue A where ten dollars bought you all you could drink.

I met a junkie on a train who offered me methadone. I attempted to get a better deal on a camera case off a Jewish guy at JR.

I couldn't buy a Robert Ryman as the show was sold out before it opened.

I couldn't understand why the tax could not be figured into the shelf/menu price.

I went up to Lexington 125.

I tried to turn a trick at 53rd and 3rd but was one they never pick.

I caught the train to Beacon and looked at all the flagpoles.

I saw an excellent Ant Farm retrospective.

I could not believe how cheap books and electronic goods were.

I thought Lombardi's did the best slice of pizza that I ate.

I don't think that I saw anyone famous in the street but I may have and not noticed.

I heard people say right a lot.

I was surprised that you could not buy a catalogue with your credit card at Sperone Westwater Gallery and thought it lucky that I did not want to buy a Rothenberg.

I only ate two meals a day due to the size of the portions at restaurants.

I enjoyed smoking a cigarette in the herb garden at the cloisters looking at the colours of the trees across the river.

I followed a homeless guy collecting cans one night for five hours while he filled six bags with cans and tied them to his trolley.

I took a photo of Vito Acconci's old apartment building in Christopher Street where Dan Graham introduced him to Dennis Oppenheim.

I could not understand why Julian Opie's sheep were everywhere downtown.

I asked the girl at the Guggenheim bookstore if the Barney DVD was multiregional and she told me that it would not work in Europe.

I went to MOMA the day after it reopened and the sculpture garden was closed as it had been raining.

I better understood the ongoing contemporary reality that Kunst equals Kapital.

I really enjoyed the Rodney Graham retrospective at MOCA Geffen in LA especially the halcion work and even enjoyed the country self city self work which I



did not like when I saw it before in Berlin.

I ate delicious burritos at a Mexican diner on Thanksgiving and was thankful that they were open and had nothing to be thankful for.

I heard a hippy say that honey is bad for your body but taking lots of codeine is really good for your body and felt confused.

I ate at Roscoe's with TV grits and collard greens no Fuzzy.

I met a native New Yorker Italian-American who thought that all of the Anglophonic countries should form a super country and fuck the rest of the world and that the use of nuclear weapons against any country that was against us was essential to show those bastards that we aren't fucking about.

I did not know what to say when he took a dollar bill turned it over and said look at that the United States of America in god we trust isn't that the most beautiful thing you have ever seen.

I am glad I am not a seppo.

Tony Schwensen is an artist based in Marrickville, Sydney. FATWHITESTRAIGHTBALDGUY, a survey of his video performance works of the last six years, was shown at The Performance Space, Sydney (17 March – 16 April 2005).

Sacrificial Mutilation & Interspecies Love in Contemporary Art

Just after getting into bed I have an awful anxious feeling. Have I forgotten something? Did I feed the cat today? Did I pick up the dry cleaning? Did I lock the office? Did I take the Maurizio Cattelan out of the car? I couldn't remember... fuck. fuck. fuck. fuck. fuck. The sculpture was lent out for the exhibition 'Minimal Artists try to make Something look like Nothing and Conceptual Artists try to make Nothing look like Something, or is it the Other way Around'. Later I wake up in the darkness of the early morning soaked in a cold sweat. My thoughts are darting all over the place. Maurizio. Maurizio. Maurizio. Maurizio. Maurizio. More-eat-zee-Oh. More-eat-zee-Oh. Cattelan. Cattelan. Maurizio Cattelan. Maurizio Cattelan. More-eat-zee-Oh. Cattelan. Maurizio had once reported to the police that an invisible sculpture had been stolen from his car. What if my invisible sculpture is stolen? I can only think in relation to Maurizio. It seems like Maurizio was everything, everything was Maurizio. Nothing else exists except Maurizio.

Suddenly everything in my bedroom begins to rattle. A tall glass vase clammers against a porcelain teacup. Piles of CDs topple to the floor. The telephone, ashtray and adjustable lamp all vibrate towards the edge of the desk, and each fall off in sequence. My beds rolls to the wall on the other side. The room is spinning. It's a twister! It's a twister...

After an abrupt thud I find myself in an anonymous foyer. The walls are made of black marble and curve so there are no corners to the room. An unattended lectern stands at the bottom of a grand spiral staircase that leads up into darkness. Several doors lead off the main foyer. I enter the first one and find the same anonymous foyer on the other side. Another door and the exact same foyer. The next door leads to an identical room of black marble. Every room is the same and I don't know where I began. I try one more door, and this time Tracey Emin is standing behind the lectern. I walk over to her and try to speak, but all that comes out is "Maurizio". I try again and can only mumble "Maurizio". "Handbag!" snaps Tracey clutching her champagne-in-a-can. I stand there and shrug my shoulders, and Tracey rolls her eyes at me. "Handbag!" Handbag! HAAAAAND-BAAAAAGGGG! yells Tracey. I answer her, "Maurizio?", "Handbag!", she replies. Tracey and I argue between "Maurizio" and "Handbag" until Yoko Ono appears. Yoko is sporting a limited edition handbag made by the French luxury leather label Longchamp that was designed by Tracey Emin. It's one of a limited edition run of 200 bags that feature a classic patchwork design. The text on Yoko's bag read: "I've come a long way from the 4 cans of Stella, one bottle of brandy and anything that I could shove down my gullet in a night. I'm really fucked up, I've been really broken arted. I felt isolated, insecure, unloved, unwanted and pretty crazy, mad. I did used to be an alcoholic". I try to talk to Yoko but all I can manage to say is "Peace", Yoko replies, "Maurizio". Tracey begins screaming, "HAAAAANND-BAAAAAGGGG!"



Jeff Koons, *Puppy Vase* (1998) porcelain, edition of 3000.

HAAAAAAND-BAAAAAGGGGGGGGGGGG!
HAAAAAANND-BAAAAAGGGGGGGGGGGG!
GGGGGGGGGGGGGGGGGGGG!". Yoko then whispers to me, "More-eat-zee-oh", then reaches for something from inside her arty tote. She produces a small white flashlight on a key chain that is inscribed with the text 'Onochoord'. Yoko begins blinking the light on and off to transmit her own morse code that sends the message "I love you". I want to say "I love you" back to Yoko, but the slick modernist foyer begins to instantly morph into a western style saloon bar. Yoko simply replaces her futuristic shades and then vanishes in a big cloud of smoke.

Tracey heads towards the bar to order us a drink and Ugo Rondinone appears before the rows of liquor bottles to pour her two champagne cocktails. After serving the drinks Ugo reaches over the bar and casually tucks Tracey's hair behind her right ear then props a pink carnation in her hair from his jacket lapel. I recognise the razor-sharp tailoring and slim flit of Ugo's jacket from the autumn/winter 2004 Dior Homme range. Just at this moment I notice my heartbeat. It's getting louder and more intense. Then I realise that the sound of my pulse is being amplified through the speakers in the bar. Ugo winks at me. Music swells into the space and my heartbeat forms the baseline of a sexy R'n'B song. Gilbert and George then arrive via parachute to perform karaoke treats.

They begin miming the words 'my neck, my back' by Khia, and their dance moves involve alternate steps on the black and white checkerboard floor. The black squares are for George and the white squares are for Gilbert, so that they move in parallel lines without ever touching. With each step they instantly change outfits as if in a schizophrenic cabaret show. First Gilbert and George are dressed in their tweed Sunday best suits, with the next step they're in fringed cowboy outfits, then Viennese style costumes complete with powdered wigs, then white bunny suits; next there is Prada utilitarian chic from the late 90s, and so on. I wave my hand in the air to request a rendition of 'Kiss kiss kiss' by Yoko, but suddenly the music is cut as Jake Chapman springs out from the VIP lounge and starts yelling in an aggressive manner.

"The problem with critique," screams Jake, "is that it simply ornaments bourgeois life with the idea of volatility... In Britain nobody was interested in art for years and years and years. Then suddenly the press thought fuck, there's this whole community of people with caricatures, falling-outs and fights. The celebrity status has become more interesting than the work itself, so the work becomes a trace element of the trajectory of famous people." When I look up Jake is now dressed in the exact same Prada outfit as Gilbert and George, but he doesn't seem to notice. Maurizio Cattelan pulls up a stool beside me at the bar. He is impersonating himself to reveal that anyone can be or become someone else. He starts reciting quotes from the recent Flash Art interview: "To tell you the truth, I still go around on bicycle, with neither horse nor carriage. Of course you feel a different pressure and another responsibility. Mostly because money doesn't really open more doors or make challenges any easier". I want to ask him, who does he think he is, but he gets in first. "Actually, money risks trapping you, it makes you too coherent". I reply "Trussardi", and Maurizio says "Warhol". This time I speak a little more sternly, "Trussardi!". Maurizio grabs me by the throat and screams "Waaarrrrrhollll!". He fixes his hair and continues, "I am interested in working on the collective, never on the individual. I'm interested in mass fears and hysteria". Jake is still carrying on, now he's yelling about the absolute cultural saturation produced by today's art institutions. Tom Friedman arrives just now after hearing there was meant to be a Prada fashion parade on tonight. He's a little disappointed to find out the show has been cancelled, but instead he decides to ask Tracey to sing a karaoke duet with him. They begin to belt out 'Where the wild roses grow'. Jake comes up to me and shouts loudly in my face: "The YBAs are just a part of a growing cult of celebrity that is contributing to the dumbing down of art!"

As Tracey is singing: "When he knocked on my door and entered the room, My trembling subsided in his sure embrace", Jake walks up to Ugo at the bar and begins to caress him. Suddenly Yoko is back and she is wearing a bandit outfit like in her Fluxus days, but she is also carrying a wooden paddle. "Kiss, kiss, kiss, kiss me, love, Just one kiss, kiss will do", breathes Yoko whilst she grabs her crotch. Gilbert grabs Yoko's paddle and whacks it on the bar. Tracey's seductively backing up towards the ladies toilets and is trying to lure Tom Friedman to follow. Meanwhile Jake and Ugo have begun fucking behind the bar, then Ugo metamorphosises into George, no, it's Gilbert, who then transforms into Dinos, and now it's Jake

fucking himself. But I don't understand what Dinos is doing here since he doesn't really socialise much. I can't bear to look anymore and get up to leave, then Maurizio grabs me by the shoulder and tells me that he's part of the curatorial team for the 2006 Berlin Biennial and how he placed fourth in ArtReview's top 100 movers and shakers of the art world and next he plans to release a conceptual perfume line to finance his more experimental projects. I coolly take a last nip of my champagne cocktail then lunge fiercely at Maurizio and tackle him to the floor. As I get up to dust myself off I notice that I'm holding a Jeff Koons Puppy sculpture, which I'd incidentally used to beat up Maurizio with. But Maurizio seems fine, just a little bloodied and disorientated. Puppy is also still in tact and I see that there's a little message from Jeff on the underside: 'I hope Puppy communicates love, warmth, and happiness to everyone'.

Fiona Bate is a Melbourne arts writer and curator currently based in Berlin. She is also a big fan of Maurizio Cattelan.

Ghosts

It is conceited to think elderly people aren't observant but it is true my aunt is going blind. My family and I are not close with her, do not see her much, so I guess that sort of makes us even. One day we drove to her town to take her to lunch for her birthday because she is our oldest living relative and because I don't think she has many friends.

My aunt has a good appetite but a poor stomach for driving so we chose a buffet restaurant close to her home. It overlooked a hedge maze with alopecia and it had a patchy decor. We ate our meals underneath a calico life ring, breathing mayonnaise (old shoes) while my aunt spoke to no one in particular about her failing eyes.

I asked her what she did in *the war*. She said that she sent her children to the country and that while she was working as a switchboard operator she separated from her husband. One day she rode her bicycle a very far distance, from London to somewhere else (so far that she had to stay the night there). I am not sure that what she did during the war is important to her. What is left of her vision is important to her though. It might be the most important thing in the world, except for her daughter who lives in Canada.

I think it is true that we remember 'the little things' and that they become what we think of a person. Once, my aunt won a brake light in a raffle but she didn't drive so she gave it to her brother (my grandfather). He didn't need it or want it but, at whatever cost, always avoided offence. To install the light it was 100 dollars plus all the little errands she made him feel he owed her that he would have done anyway.

Someone once thought it a consolation that my grandparents died while my brothers and I were young because we never knew their adult flaws. Part of me is consoled by this because I will always remember them fondly. On the other hand, that each of us feels we have to 'deal with' our aunt is partly because we begrudge their early deaths. We feel they died before their time, and when we see her, we wish it were them.

Nick Austin lives in Auckland and collects stones.

The teeth of the underdog's saw*

1. Foul imposition alone was the cause¹

You must raise your right Hand over your right Eye – if there be another Luddite in the Company he will raise his left Hand over his left Eye – then you must raise the forefinger of your right Hand to the right Side of your Mouth – the other will raise the little finger of his left hand to the left Side of his Mouth & will say, What are you? The answer, Determined. He will say, What for? Your answer, Free Liberty.

– Police informer's letter supposedly describing Luddite password system, c.1812²

Wherever capitalism exists, 'labour-saving technology' will always mean more work done in less time, so that still more work can be imposed in the time left over. The machine-breakers of the industrial revolution understood this perfectly, although bloody state reprisals forced them to carry out their practical criticism in obscurity. Almost 200 years later Police attention has long since turned elsewhere, yet this basic axiom remains all but unspeakable, a public secret even as the effects of its application permeate social reality to an unprecedented degree. Attention to this apparently counter-intuitive premise will be essential to any attempt to grasp the mediations through which capital strives to integrate lived time into the circuit of value-production.

2. Bare life meets bare labour

Simultaneous quantitative and qualitative enclosure of social time may be as old as capitalist science and the factory. Today, however, it has advanced so far as to generate a diffuse, 'low level' manifestation of something corresponding to Giorgio Agamben's political-ontological category 'bare life'.³ Agamben elaborates this concept with reference to the bodies in Nazi laboratories and concentration camps, and to 'experimental life' and overcoma patients in contemporary hospitals. Most recently he and others have used the term to describe the physical and juridical exposure of the 'unlawful combatants' held at Guantanamo Bay.⁴ Alongside these limit cases, it is important to consider emergence of a less 'pure', more commonplace form of 'bare' working life for at least two reasons. Firstly, because 'bare life' is of little interest as a poetic image to be applied haphazardly to disparate phenomena: Agamben proposes it as a precisely situated term in a historical alignment of life, law and exception. Secondly, in order to reiterate that, within this 'biopolitical' conjunction, the concept of bare life is by no means incompatible with an understanding of history in terms of class conflict over value, work and time.

Agamben takes as a starting point the classical Greek distinction between two terms, elided in their single translation into Latin as *'vita'*, and in English as 'life'. The Greeks distinguished *'zoē'*, which expressed the simple fact of living common to all living beings (animals, men, or gods) from *'bios'*, which indicated the form or way of living proper to an individual or a

group.' Both Plato and Aristotle defined 'political', i.e. qualified, linguistic⁵ life, susceptible to being called 'good' or 'bad', precisely by its difference from simple material subsistence. In the modern period, however, 'politics' has steadily made the administration of material, 'biological' life (corresponding, despite the latter appellation, to the Greek *zoē*) its object, as Foucault's writing on 'biopolitics' demonstrates. For Agamben it is crucial that this shift not be mistaken for an abrupt, unproblematic welcoming of 'biological life' into the realm of 'politics'. Rather, it bears belated witness to the complex tension in which the two forms of 'life' have always existed interdependently, notwithstanding the Greek philosophers' attempt to separate them. Undifferentiated material or 'bare' life (*zoē* has no plural) is absolutely excluded from the politically, linguistically qualified world, yet it is maintained in a relation to this world by this very fact of its (continuously renewed) expulsion, on which the possibility of political and linguistic qualification is itself founded. However vigorously politics concerns itself with biological 'life', meanwhile, the latter remains alien to it *as the object* of this concern. This undecideably liminal relation of inclusive-exclusion could also be expressed thus: the life designated as 'bare life' is not an original form of simple, natural life, but life actively and continuously alienated from political, linguistic or 'subjective' qualities.

The structure of life-time *occupied* by 'work', in the empirically dilated but logically restricted sense considered here, corresponds to that of 'bare life' in a specific way. This form of lived duration (i.e. activity) is alienated from particular qualities except through the mediation of (qualitatively indifferent) value. In other words, it is maintained in relation to the qualitatively differentiated world solely through the mechanism of its alienation from that world, whose present constitution depends on this inclusive exclusion. Or, alternatively, work-saturated life is alienated from 'subjective' temporality, except in the (continuous) present of its being transformed into object.

An obvious limit to this correlation seems to lie in the contrast between capital's obligation to foster labour-power's survival and reproduction (surplus-labour time is defined precisely by its excess over the labour necessary for this purpose) and the definition of bare life by its essential, unlimited exposure to death. For Agamben biopolitical bare life is identical to that of the *homo sacer* in Roman law, who is ineligible for sacrifice, but may be killed by any citizen at any time. The limit of Foucault's account of biopolitics, he suggests, is that it separates life-administration too sharply from the 'sovereign' decision over life and death, rather than recognizing each as the secret condition of the other. Or, as the SPK/PF(H) states more forcefully: 'The word "biopolitics" (from Greek *bios*, meaning life) turns the facts of the matter upside down. Wherever there is talk about "biopolitics", the real issue on stake is DEATHpolitics, the politics of extermination.'⁶

But employment's autonomy from Death should not be deduced too quickly from the fact that most of the working class is allowed to go on living most of the time. *Because* capital takes charge of the worker's survival, its fostering of life is a virtual decision over his or her death. The blackmail of starvation has always been the most reliable means of ensuring that workers not only accept gratefully but compete amongst themselves for whatever work happens to be offered.

The SPK/PF(H) goes further, making bare life's exposure to death the privileged instance of value-production. The 'neomorts' imagined by W. Gaylin, legally dead but kept 'warm, pulsating and urinating' as living storage for transplantable organs⁷ lose the mystique of 'extreme' ethical crisis when considered as force of production. 'Closeness to the means of production continues to determine class antagonism', but 'in quite a different way... The earth with its "raw materials" is no longer the means of production. The new means of production is' human life and its 'body organs (100 billion brain cells each, the most valuable raw material). And the relations of the production are the medical norms, the doctors' norms, memorized and recorded in the computer programs.' In 'a great dialectical reversal... everyone is totally valuable, dead or alive... the process of alienation is being accelerated, concentrated, is made to reinforce itself (*die Entfremdung wird potenziert*). The valuable thing is no longer gold or a diamond, but the "biomatter man..."'.⁸ In this alienated disposal (i.e. *work*, minus residual superstitions about 'utility') of the human body's attributes – organs, cells, thought, language – subject to sovereign medical decision, the bare life of proletarian/patient biomatter converges with 'means of production'. Calling the site of this indistinction 'bare working life' need not mean glibly proclaiming that work equals death. A more urgent problem would be: *how* does the zone of life-death indistinction (or, rather, capital's *indifference* to 'life' and 'death' as attributes of its objects) come to be integrated into the production of value? What does this vanishing point of living and dead labour, where availability and direction of worker/patient 'matter' suffice to bring forth surplus, mean for present and future conflict over labour-time?

The SPK/PF(H) statement dismisses the question, proclaiming that biomatter has superseded abstract labour time as measure of value. However, another conclusion (not necessarily incompatible with SPK/PF(H) practice) might be drawn, if all activity and matter itself are rigorously understood to be modes of duration, in Bergson's sense. Unbeknownst perhaps to Bergson and certainly to most 'Bergsonians', such a conception is coherent with Marx's demonstration that 'means of production' are nothing more than an 'objectified' or 'dead' concentration of formerly-living labour. In these terms, running a car factory and trading in human biomatter are both examples of the appropriation and accumulation of lived duration. The kinds of extraction administered by doctors, security biometrics and lifestyle technicians only penetrates bodies more deeply and more subtly.

To say this is not to conjure away the categorical distinction between labour and living duration in general. While all activity is duration, but not all duration need be work. 'Work' should be understood here as *whatever activity, whatever part of living*

duration, is transformed into value in the capitalist social relation. Historical conditions determine which activities, which forms-of-life, undergo this operation: if, until relatively recently, apparently 'inert' biomatter and some elements of sociality, language and thought appeared to be excluded, this was because 'productive forces' (in particular, science as capital's laboratory for class-struggle weapons), had not at that time provided conspicuous opportunities for their valorization.

3. Transforming value: the mother(s) of all machines

The production of 'bare' working life, or capital's struggle to occupy lived duration with production of value, takes place simultaneously in material contexts so different that the attempt to apply a single transversal concept immediately seems doubtful. Why belittle the specificity of what's endured or accomplished in a genomics database, a 'people-smuggling' operation, a Coltan mine or a 'basic skills' training centre? The logic that binds these cases, however, is not one of abstract co-incidence, but of reciprocal dependency. The global alignment of different concentrations of labour, capital and struggle is a singularity: change (or stability) at any point affects all others.

In his 1980 essay 'The Work/Energy Crisis and the Apocalypse', George Caffentzis uses the concept of *organic composition* to account for the dynamic linking production's apparent antipodes⁹. The organic composition of any one of capital's 'organs' (Caffentzis chooses as examples 'a nuclear plant, an auto plant and a local "greasy spoon" restaurant and bar') is the mixture of living and dead labour (or the proportion of variable to fixed capital) comprising it. The higher the value of the capital investment per worker, the higher the organic composition.

In Caffentzis' essay an exceptional upheaval of capital's functioning both illustrates and is explained by 'an *essential aspect* of capitalist rule', namely *the interdependence of different levels of organic composition*, or the axiom that profit from investment in capital-intensive, hi-tech industry must always be 'backed up' somewhere by correspondingly intensive, usually low-tech, appropriation of surplus labour. The upheaval in question in this case is the 'energy crisis' of the 1970s, during which the energy price index rose by more than 200 per cent, against a 100 per cent rise in the industrial price index. Caffentzis interprets the crisis as the effect of an upward shift in the composition of investment from manufacturing industries, in particular automobiles, into the energy sector, where the value of machinery exceeds that of labour power exponentially. This shift appears not as a spontaneous innovation on capital's part, but as its response to new forms of class delinquency.

To paraphrase an already schematic account, production based on the 'Keynesian home-factory circuit'¹⁰ more or less contained class struggle in industrially 'advanced' areas for several decades in the mid-20th century, allowing wages and profits to rise simultaneously rather than each at the other's expense. This circuit had depended on two things. First, the rising wage must be bound to proportionately rising productivity. This law, kept in force through trade union and state mediation, imposed discipline on working class demands, while using the same demands to force particular capitalists to 'innovate', to invest in technology extracting more intensive work from a shorter working day ('relative surplus

value'). Second, the value ostensibly 'produced by' waged work done in factories was no less the product of a massive amount of mostly female unwaged labour: 'Housework... from raw to cooked... washing, fucking, cooling tempers, picking up after the bash, lipstick, thermostat, giving birth, kids, teaching them not to shit in the hall, curing the common cold, watching the cancer grow, even lyric poems for your schizophrenia...'. Without such 'reproductive' exertion, the waged workers' labour power might fail to appear at the factory in an exploitable condition. Women's payment for averting that catastrophe came through the husband's factory wage (the so-called 'Oedipal wage'), making the family structure a disciplinary tool, with husbands assuming the administrative burden of imposing work-discipline on wives (and children).

In the struggles of the 1960s and '70s, industrial capital was faced simultaneously with women's mass refusal of the 'natural' structures mediating this indirect but ruthless work-imposition, and with 'unreasonably' direct moves by line workers to appropriate time & income independently of productivity. 'Not only did the struggle in the factories, homes and streets force capital to pay more for factory work; increasingly, capital had to pay, through the state, *directly* for reproduction work that had previously come financed via the male, factory wage. Women and young people would no more "naturally" do what they used to do under the direction of husband and daddy. Thus, though there was an enormous increase of energy generated by the working class during that period, it proved especially resistant to the transformation into work. There was a precipitous drop in the work/energy ratio; this was translated into a "profits crisis" and a subversion of the axioms of Keynesianism.'

Under these conditions, a strategy of evacuating the worst sites of conflict, withdrawing into fortresses of extremely high organic composition, presents obvious 'political' advantages for capital. Perhaps the most immediately evident is the separation of the largest concentrations of capital from explosive concentrations of living labour, leading to the dispersal of the 'nodes of class power accumulated in the factories, mines and streets.' With longer, more complex chains of mediation from the origin of command to the scene of commanded activity, command itself comes to be experienced less as expropriation than as accidental, almost natural constraint, sometimes railed against but in the end adjusted to. This reorganization, says Caffentzis, 'centralizes the *accumulation* process while at the same time it enormously *decentralizes* the *exploitation* process.' Unlike factory workers in heavy industry, 'affective' and 'immaterial' labourers (say, phone sex line operators, or untenured assistant university teachers) don't seem to see their labour power as it crystallizes in the commodity and 'vanishes down the line': their activity barely seems 'productive' of a surplus at all, because the surplus is abstracted and absorbed elsewhere in the total social machine.

The 'interdependence' of capital's heterogeneous organs lies in the necessity of this displacement of abstracted value from one organ to another. Today, as everyone knows, enormous profits are routinely made in industries where the value of investment in machinery dwarfs that of the labour extracted. In this sense, the amount of surplus-value 'produced' by workers there is strictly speaking 'absolutely

miniscule'. Yet, as Caffentzis demonstrates, this fact by no means spells the end of the "law of value" (viz., that prices, profits, costs and the other numerology of accounting are rooted in (and explained by) the work-time gone into the production of commodities and the reproduction of the relevant workers). On the contrary, the apparent anomaly reveals the full, majestic scope and flexibility of the law's application. 'As Marx points out, social capital needs an *average rate of profit*, while individual capitalists must be rewarded differentially according to the amount invested in each organ. But each organ has a different amount of constant capital in it.' Profits made out of 'hi-tech' investment are directly dependent on a supplement of low-tech exploitation, inasmuch as *organs of capital with a high capital investment per worker, or organic composition, must be 'rewarded' with surplus value extracted elsewhere and 'transformed' into them.* This value is transferred by means of the divergence between the prices of particular commodities and the values embodied in them. 'Commodity prices in the High industries are always greater than their values. Low industry commodity prices are always below their value. High industries "suck up" the surplus value produced at the bottom of the system through this price structure.'

Thus, Caffentzis insists, raising the price of energy relative to that of other commodities (starting with labour) was the only rational way to move investment into the high sector in the 1970s, because energy commodities are what Piero Sraffa called 'basic commodities', indispensable to all forms of production as well as necessary to social 'reproduction'. Commodified energy traverses the entire field of human activity, ensuring that 'capital is able to exert its magnetic command and extract surplus from every "pore" of the social fabric; every coffee shop, every apartment, every sweat shop must pay for energy costs.' The consequent drop in real wages (i.e. the price of labour relative to other commodities) contributed directly to the imposition of the extra low-tech exploitation required, with the channeling of women's refusal of unwaged work as wives and mothers into a massive expansion of a low-organic composition, low-wage, 'service sector', extracting absolute surplus-value for 'upward' transfer. (In this sense, capital can be said to have responded to the anti-Oedipal revolt by displacing a large quantity of female labour from the domestic 'reproduction' of male labour-power to the indirect nurturing of machinery in capital-intensive 'high' industry.)

In fact, as Caffentzis notes, divergence of particular prices from values is nothing new to the late 20th century; it has always been essential to capital. 'Values (worktime) must be *transformed* into prices, and this transformation is *never* one-to-one'. All prices express a portion of the social totality of value; they are meaningless except in relation to it. However, there is no reason why the price of a *particular* commodity, the portion *commanded through it*, should coincide with the value embodied in it (the cost of reproducing it in terms of socially necessary labour time). In order to understand this, it must be remembered that the magnitude of value of a commodity is not the same thing as the actual amount of labour time 'incorporated' into it by the workers who produced it. As Harry Cleaver warns, this would be to lose sight of the immediately *social character of value*, 'to see it instead as some metaphysical substance that is

magically injected into the product by the worker's touch.¹¹ Labour time is value, but only when it is mediated via the social totality of abstract labour into a virtual, 'average' form, common to all commodities. A price does not simply reflect a given commodity's cost in terms of this 'average' value. Rather, the price announces the share of the totality of value laid claim to through the commodity by the contending subjects (classes and competing particular interests within classes) involved in its production.¹²

In practice, the possible divergence between prices and values increases as the social and technological organization of production gets more elaborate. Caffentzis refers to the claim that particular industries, particular jobs etc, have certain things naturally 'due' them, as the 'real illusion' of 'mineness', 'the deepest pettiness in the Maya of the system'. This illusion tends to break down as the number, complexity and obscurity of transactions 'transforming' value increases, so that the density of social interaction expressed in each commodity, the scope of qualitative difference between lived realities covered by the calculus of 'average' labour-time, outstrips social accountants' wildest algorithmic dreams. Thus, when 'the hand of capital' appears completely independent of 'its mouth and its asshole', when exploitation and accumulation seem to occur in parallel universes, the 'law of value' that binds them together not only stubbornly survives, but finds its purest expression.

4. Ornamental anguish

Every lucid capitalist knows that the idea of self-sufficient bastions of 100 per cent organic composition is absurd. Only in the form of abstract labour can the surplus that congeals into capital reliably be supplied, and the supply must be abstracted from real, endured activity. The technologies of abundance envisioned by bourgeois futurists would poison the social organism they take for granted; capital would implode on attaining the refinement necessary to perpetuate itself independently of living labour. Instead it must stake everything on the more modest hope for an indefinitely sustainable synthesis of dead and 'barely' alive labour, approximating the Edenic solipsism of 'self-reproducing automata' as best it can in relative security, by draining the living of its wasteful, selfish qualities, leaving little more than the bare fact of its labour power. For the most part this 'draining' is undertaken as it always has been: by extending and intensifying the working day so that work-time all but exhausts life-time, begrudging a wretched minimum to 'reproduction'. In a few privileged (and feverishly theorized) instances, meanwhile, 'draining' has come to mean absorbing formerly heterogeneous social duration into the circuit of value.

A sufficient supply of 'barely living' labour demands not only what Agamben calls the expropriation of pure 'communicability' or 'language itself'¹³, but also the full deployment of these capacities as means of expropriation in every sense, including the most crudely material. If the history of the industrial-thermodynamic period is that of the creation of ubiquitous 'need' for the commodified forms of energy, the last 30 years of accelerated capitalist development, or class struggle, have engendered a comparably 'basic need' for commodities of 'communication' and 'information'. As with energy, it is not simply a matter of putting a price on what is most common and must naturally be consumed: *information and*

communication commodities are 'producer goods' that qualitatively determine the global organization of work. They include both physically tangible technology and so-called expertise – the mastery of valorized linguistic and habitual (or, in strictly Bergsonian terms, subjective) forms.

The presence everywhere of 'need' for certain commodities does not, of course, mean they are equally present wherever they are needed. On the contrary, the claim of capital's various organs to a share of value depends on their *existing* share of command over the commodities universally necessary for 'competitive' production. In practice, this power of price-command distributes qualities and quantities of human duration, channeling flows of unexpert, low-wage, time-intensive labour as required.

Capitalist development elevated thermodynamic energy commodities to basic status relatively slowly: a global productive system so complex that no organ could survive disconnected from the combustible fuel supply represents two centuries' accumulation, pushed forward by successive explosions of class and intra-class conflict. The modalities of need for basic energy commodities are by no means eternal, but they seem slow to change, locked with 200 years into hulks of heavy infrastructural investment. The supplementary¹⁴ 'basic need' for communication and information commodities, however, is perpetually renewed, transformed, *inflated*, at a rate hitherto associated only with the most ephemeral consumer demand. This 'need' is able to mutate so fast because it manifests not in the implacable hunger and thirst of factories, but abstractly, in linguistic norms and technical specifications as condensed expressions of complex social imperatives. Inclusion in the circuit of value (and hence survival itself) depends everywhere on mastery of communication conventions (which are often but not always inseparable from particular pieces of technology). In a sense, of course, this has always been so, although a vast bulk of labour has traditionally required workers to understand little more than coercion by violence or starvation. In the last half century, however, the depth and complexity of dependence have increased, as linguistic and technical codes carry capital's imperatives directly into the subtlest fibres of subjective duration.

Mastery of, or capacity to conform to, communication standards is a special commodity of command and obedience, promising its possessor (whether a single waged worker or a multinational conglomerate) access to specific status in production, and thus the right to consume unspecified (though quantitatively limited) use values. These commodities may be spatially and temporally diffuse, but they are no less tightly wired into the mechanism of price for that reason. They are complex assemblages, effective 'possession' of which can only be maintained provisionally, by paying and paying again. (Consider, for example, the assemblage of technological hard- and software, financial instruments and linguistic operations employed by an 'old economy' company like Shell, directly and through various specialist proxies, in its attempt to acquire and maintain what is becoming an indispensable 'communication commodity': a marketing profile attuned to consumers' taste for the ethics of 'ecology'.) Certainly, no single communication or information commodity can lay claim to 'basic', transversally necessary status, any more than 'energy' should be

conceived as a single commodity, a homogeneous whole. Rather, a dense mesh of dependence-relations between particular commodities stretches so far as to engulf an entire social horizon. While *command* of communication standards is highly concentrated, dependence on them is radically democratized.

Institutional anxiety to bridge a presumed 'digital divide', fulsomely expressed at the recent UN-sponsored World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), contains a kernel of pragmatic rationality in a global economy where information and communication commodities appear as 'basically' necessary as those of energy. Neither state and supra-state actors' commitment nor the private sector's missionary zeal need be dismissed as ethical posturing if *what* they propose providing universally is clearly understood. Universal 'access to' a commodity does not mean its 'availability' will affect the lives of everyone encountering it the same way. As Harry Cleaver writes of thermodynamic energy, the same commodity may have different use-values for labour and for capital¹⁵. The quantitative concept of a 'digital divide' obscures something the information missionaries cannot fail to be aware of, namely that a subject's possible interaction with a new technology, *how* s/he commands and/or is commanded by it, is determined by the ensemble of the material conditions of his or her existence. (An obvious analogy could be sought in the drastically different experiences of 'access to' the power loom in early 19th-century England among, say, large and small textile capitalists, artisan weavers, 'unskilled' female factory hands and itinerant Irish labourers, not to speak of all the social strata involved in the Indian textile industry.) In this sense, keepers of the faith that 'there are no "have-nots", only "have-laters"' not only display breathtaking obliviousness to the fact of death (other people's at least), they pretend not to notice the way the meaning of the verb 'to have' varies according to its object, as in the difference between 'having' a diamond ring and 'having' cancer. Regardless of whether or not new PCs fall from the sky into rapturous African villages, what becomes universal as 'digital divides' disappear is dependence of one kind or another on communication commodities, integration into a productive system structured by them, and certainly not the command of and through these commodities enjoyed by a few 'expert' subjects in 'advanced' centres.

Capital's ability to administer 'inequality' by making the same commodities universally 'available' is evident both on the level of technological specification itself and on that of the juridical superstructure regulating it. 'Information wants to be free', sing the missionaries, but 'rhizomatic' information flows themselves continuously reproduce and distribute the form of private ownership. In national and trans-national law, neo-enlightenment schemes for informatic democracy like those aired at WSIS are inextricably entangled with mechanisms restricting access to the privileged forms of *relation* to information commodities. Thus the expansionist intellectual property laws that have accompanied the 'informatization' of society, most significantly the Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) annex to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trades (GATTs), have effectively reversed the notional role of IP legislation from the promotion to the limitation of techno-scientific and cultural production and experiment. Intellectual property now serves primarily to fix relations between concentrations of

high-organic composition capital (primarily though not exclusively in post-industrial states) on one hand and 'third worlds' (old and new) on the other. Post-industrial states compel others to observe laws disallowing practices likely to offer 'competitive advantage'. Copyright monopolies concentrate ownership, push up costs of entry into markets, and keep independent actors from functioning effectively. Strict control over invention and information limits workers to a role as factors in the system of global production still dominated by concentrations of capital, i.e. of the power to command, built up in the 'North' in the course of its Imperial centuries.

A model of production mediated by communication commodities greatly increases the range and flexibility of the assemblages of capital and labour possible under the law of value. Hence the importance of remembering that value-transformation, or the administration of 'inequality', is by no means primarily a question of relations between 'rich' and 'poor' *places*, as some discourses on 'globalization' imply. Writing in 1980, Caffentzis presented the high/low-organic composition circuit in terms of the heavily capitalized 'energy/information' sector and the sweat-intensive service job, two poles that necessarily co-exist within the same metropolis. A little more than 20 years later, the technological management of social life is so far deterritorialized that the high & low poles of organic composition are almost indistinguishably intermingled in space, without generating anything like a Fordist-Keynesian 'average', in which concentrations of fixed capital would depend on correspondingly powerful concentrations of labour subjectivity. In today's ineffably subtle admixture of technological investment and time-intensive waged and unwaged labour, 'service work' (with all its classical characteristics – precariousness, atomization, a disproportionately female & young workforce, etc) is extracted at the very epicentres of concentrated capital. The massive quantity of value 'transferred' here may seem to cover only a minimal physical distance (from the bodies of the workers to that of constant capital), but still it crosses the vast gulf between duration and accumulation, quality and quantity, the living and the dead.

The stereotypical example of this technologically saturated form of service work is the call centre. Research by the German workers' inquiry group Kolinko¹⁶ shows how automatic smoothness of communication, an essential component of the commodities traded by businesses such as telecoms companies or banks, becomes dependent at this nexus on highly intensive *and* extensive transformation of subjective duration into work. '[...]the team leader-hyena comes sneaking up from behind, smiling charmingly, and the stats from yesterday's work slide onto your keyboard: amount of calls, duration of each single call, total idle-time, total time in 'ready' mode, total time in 'after-call work' mode, time used between ringing and picking up... The control takes place on two levels: they collect all data to be able to quantify your work achievements. The software is timing all work-steps and delivers nice stats at any chosen moment. The other level of control tackles the 'quality' of your work. They sit next to you and annoy you with test calls (so-called 'mystery calls') in order to come back at you afterwards by going on about your mistakes, your stammering, the missing smile in your voice...' Minimal as the cost of this labour may be

compared to the value embedded in its technological prosthetics, call centre work is in no way peripheral to the enterprises it serves. It is central in that the whole process would lose its 'automatic' essence without it; moreover, the workers are literally plugged into the constant capital. Kolinko found that 'almost all' call centres use the Automatic Call Distribution (ACD) machine, which 'determines the rhythm of work based on incoming calls and serves as a supreme instrument of control. It stores all the data: breaks, post call processing, 'missed' calls, average duration of call, number of internal and external calls...'

With the spread of dependence on communication commodities, capital has found new ways to extract large volumes of unwaged labour *within* waged jobs¹⁷. The example of call centres is no more than a conveniently simple case study: the drastically increased imposition of 'free' work within wage-labour is the most distinctive characteristic of the 'immaterial' and 'affective' forms of exploitation. Unwaged labour, in this particular sense, takes place where such 'intangible assets' as workers' capacities for social co-operation and linguistic improvisation – 'communicativity itself', says Agamben – contribute to production of potentially exchangeable use-values. This can be thought of as happening on two superimposed levels; in both cases this work is unwaged in that the wage does not vary according to volume of it extracted¹⁸.

First, social activity contributes directly and decisively to the production of the particular commodities traded by the employing enterprise. Thus, as already noted, automatic procedural smoothness in many parts of the communication, technology and logistical sectors rests at a critical point on call centre workers' ability to 'adapt flexibly' – on an individual and a collective basis – to unpredictable combinations of system imperatives and callers' 'communicative capabilities or incapacities'¹⁹. Such applications of linguistic and social 'virtuosity' tend to fall outside wage claims: Kolinko found that 'communication with other workers is not seen as "work". But it is a necessary precondition of the work process...'

Second, unwaged social duration (on as well as off the job) contributes 'indirectly' to the totality of exchangeable value in fostering workers' subjective adaptation to the basic needs of the commodity-form. This is not only a matter of the grassroots improvisation of consumer desire so well documented by the cultural studies corpus: the stakes of enclosure are perhaps nowhere as evident as where sociality and language are experienced and cultivated as 'social and communication skills'. Here as in the Keynesian-Oedipal family home, exploitable labour power itself, the most basic commodity of all, appears to be produced 'naturally' because it is never directly paid for.

The extraction of communicative labour as the unwaged 'double' of work time may be the one attribute common to millions of hours of precarious, intensively commanded 'immaterial' & 'affective' work on one hand and the few 'creative' and technically expert activities most often invoked as emblematic of these sectors on the other. What Caffentzis observed of nuclear power plant employees is obviously also true of 'symbolic-analytical service' professionals engaged in certain 'problem-solving, problem-identifying, and

strategic brokering activities'²⁰: the amount of surplus labour they perform as part of their jobs is 'absolutely miniscule' in proportion to the profits that accrue. In one sense, the rhetoric of 'human resources' can be taken literally (and the SPK/PF(H)'s stark equation between bare human life and 'means of production' is borne out): 'expert' bodies function less as labour power than as part of constant capital, organic hardware storing valorized expertise. These elite occupations appear ornamental: they 'produce' less surplus value than is invested in them. Yet 'productivity' should not be understood too narrowly. A fraction of the value that bankrolls the 'experts' status as human capital could even be said to be extracted from the unwaged element of their own activity. Just like any other unwaged 'social reproduction', their ornamental 'worktime' contributes indirectly to the expansion of the total social 'bottom line'. Once again, the contribution comes from the re/production of sociality and language as 'interpersonal and communication skills', the cultivation of a subjectivity serviceable to value's 'direct' increase.

The 'form'²¹ of some of capital's most charmed lives also seems 'ornamental' in its fragility, its vertiginous dependence on particular commodities: communications infrastructure, prescription drugs, asset management, local and global policing, etc. Perhaps these subjects' anguish is most acutely exacerbated by the inevitable isolation of the struggle to preserve such private blessings. The 'expert' can entrust salvation to one commodity alone: his or her own social/communicative/technical virtuosity. Yet the rugged individualist's virtuosity consists of nothing other than perpetual receptivity and adaptation to capital's enigmatically shifting protocols. The discovery that 'flexibility' means life-time saturated by command may contain ornamental professionals' only chance of solidarity with the numerically overwhelming 'remainder' of the world's proletariat. The latter, of course, are also forced into continuous self-adaptation, but for the sake of physical rather than 'formal' survival; for a little more time to 'invest' in a future claim to the fat of capital, whether that is imagined as something to be 'earned' individually or collectively seized.

5. Disaster monitoring constellation

In his essay *Bergson: time-crystallizing machines*²² Maurizio Lazzarato refers to 'video' and 'digital technologies' as machines whose function is to *conserve time*. This characterization should be taken absolutely literally, on two levels. As Lazzarato acknowledges, these technologies' 'time-conserving' action cannot be considered independently of their historical emergence as products of late 20th century capital. Therefore, in an almost truistic sense, they participate in the abstraction or 'conservation' and accumulation of labour time, especially inasmuch as digital communication commodities currently constitute an important category of producer goods.

Less immediately evident, perhaps, is what Caffentzis identifies as the crucial role of information and communication commodities in 'conserving' the captured, abstracted form of time – i.e. capital – in the sense of protecting it, securing it from the damage it's exposed to by the need to incorporate the irreducibly antagonistic or 'entropic' force of living labour. 'Capital's contradiction is that the very agents that create the "fuck up" possess the energies it needs.

Only we are in perpetual motion: eternally energetic, crafty, obedient, cowardly, insolent, revolting, but always in a motion that is the only source of work, development, *surplus*²³. The entropic time of living labour overflows every apparatus that ever captured it, making 'security' a perpetually receding goal like 'health', requiring endless upgrading of the machines that 'conserve time' in its dead form.

In 1980, the role of information technology in conserving capital, locking down time, lay primarily in monitoring and analysing work processes, distinguishing efficient elements from entropic ones to be disposed of. 'While the feminine service worker is to provide the emotional surplus labor necessary for accumulation in the high tech sector, the computer programmer is to be the eternally vigilant Charon, identifying the stable worker, the stable situation, the stable machine: separating the quick from the dead.'²⁴ As Kolinko's experience in call centres demonstrated, this quantifying function is far from obsolete. However, the current deployment of time-conserving communication-machines seeks to go beyond isolating productive work from entropic surges of subjectivity *after the fact*: it aspires to create spontaneously stable workers, a minimally-entropic, 'barely'-living labour subjectivity.

Caffentzis articulated the 'secret thought' haunting boardrooms now and immemorably: '*Time is on their side. Time is them.*' With every failure to flee this apocalyptic truth or screen it out, capital has been forced closer to confronting it, and has more and more frantically sought harmless ways to integrate its consequences. Writing in *Mute*, Sebastian Olma realistically assesses the advanced stage this fatal process has reached: 'The biopolitical machinery of unmediated appropriation is already successfully operating on the virtual flows of social creativity... capital has well understood time as highly productive virtuality, as qualitative duration'²⁵. Perhaps for the first time, we live within a global socio-technical apparatus of accumulation consistently attuned to the fact that it cannot be sure of excluding any part of labour's heterogeneous life, but only enclose it and preserve it within the enclosure. Of course this kind of enclosure has always been the essence of accumulation. But enclosure no longer simply means regulation through the 'disciplinary' division of unruly social time. Only with capital's realization that 'there is no alternative', no final way to expel toxic temporal waste, has so much been staked on the enclosure's ability to determine the qualitative 'nature' of the life, the 'subjective' duration enclosed.

For Kolinko the physical and procedural partitioning of call centre work reveals capitalists' need to 'disguise' their reliance on potentially subversive co-operation between workers. But by reducing the partitions' function to 'disguise', the critique obscures the *positive* power of this particular enclosure to *constitute* norms of co-operation precisely corresponding to the needs of the enterprise. If Kolinko momentarily seem to forget the difference between potential and actual subversion here, Hardt and Negri build a towering monument to the same error in *Empire*. In a notorious passage, they suggest that the 'immanence' of co-operation to immaterial labour means labour power is no longer variable capital at all. Labour floats free of its former dependence on capital because its 'cooperative powers' allow it to valorize itself²⁶. 'Brains and bodies

still need others to produce value'²⁷ but the others they need are not necessarily provided by capital and its capacities to orchestrate production.' Thus immaterial labour's 'creative energies' tend towards 'a kind of spontaneous and elementary communism'. This account is exemplary in its failure to contemplate the possibility that the 'Multitude's' own deepest desire, the most intimate 'linguistic, communicational and affective' habits of its 'cooperative interactivity', might be determined by its genesis and subsistence within capital, so that it could only extricate itself, if at all, at the cost of irreversible disfigurement.

The capitalism 'of control' is not, as Hardt and Negri imagine it, an unproductive, almost ephemeral parasitism. Rather, it seeks to occupy all life through the synthesis of a working class subjectivity, a multitude's duration, always already conditioned by the requirements of value. Everywhere and on an unprecedented scale, this means the quantitative flooding of time with work: the reduction of 'life' measured in years, days, seconds to the 'bare' obligation to labour and survive. In a supplementary sense, capital occupies and determines duration by laying 'bare' to the imperatives (the protocol) of production the most 'ineffably' qualitative lived continuity, the most intractable social singularities, the most 'abstract' biomass.

The conditioning of subjective duration as work brings with it a special kind of blackmail. When life is *pre-emptively* transformed into labour, the worker cannot withhold that labour without mutilating his or her subjectivity. For this reason, a Marxist proverb acquires a new urgency: *the proletariat is the class that strives for its own abolition*. What that means has never been clearer than in a situation where subjectivity itself appears as labour power that cannot be withdrawn, but only sabotaged by *deforming* itself. (In fact the reflex of self-deformation may be older than its explicit proposition as tactic or the historical conjuncture that demands it. Once again, E.P. Thompson's *The Making of the English Working Class* suggests a precedent, describing how the centuries-old popular self-consciousness of the 1790s – that of the 'Free-Born-Englishman' of Church & King mobs and the Gordon Riots – tore itself to pieces in the first decades of the 19th century, in order to emerge recomposed in a formidable industrial proletariat²⁸.) Another Marxist proverb says that theory follows from praxis, not the other way round; this one applies here too. The social subject-object of deformation cannot rationally plan the counter-adaptation that would wreck 'self' for valorizing. If it hopes to turn illness into a weapon against capitalist 'evolution' it must live by its defective wits.

coda

We are things, say like a quantum of action
Defined product of energy and time, now
In these words which rhyme now how song's exaction
Forces abstraction to turn from equated
Values to labor we have approximated.

– Louis Zukofsky, A 9

Notes

This text is one of the many heads of a Hydraic and continuing collaboration with J.J. King. Material on intellectual property and WSIS is based on research by Alan Toner.

1. *General Ludd's Triumph*, machine breakers' anthem, quoted in E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1968
2. Also quoted by Thompson
3. Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen, Stanford, CA, Stanford University Press
4. Agamben, *Stato d'eccezione*, Torino, Bollati Boringhieri, 2002
5. '...human politics is distinguished from that of other living beings in that it is founded, through a supplement of politicity [politicità] tied to language, on a community not simply of the pleasant and the painful but of the good and the evil and the just and the unjust.' *Homo Sacer*, p.3
6. SPK/PF(H): *Stop the medical doctors' iatrobiontic warfare against all people! Make front against it!* http://www.spkpfh.de/Against_Iatrobiontic_warfare.htm
7. Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, p.164
8. SPK/PF(H): *The Communist Manifesto for the 3rd Millennium* <http://www.spkpfh.de/GENOZIDengl.html>
9. George Caffentzis, 'The Work/Energy Crisis and the Apocalypse', in *Midnight Oil*, New York, Autonomedia, 1992
10. Although Keynes' name has come to function has shorthand for it, the home-factory circuit did not suddenly appear with the so-called 'Keynesian' model of economic planning, (introduced in the USA with the New Deal and expanded after the war), as Caffentzis is careful to note. 'Keynesianism' represented an advanced phase of the alignment of wage and productivity, 'productive' and 'reproductive' labour first formulated by economics in terms of 'Marginal Theory' 'at the very time of the explosion and slaughter of the Paris Commune', and applied with spectacular success by Henry Ford.
11. Harry Cleaver, *Reading Capital Politically*, Brighton, Harvester Press, 1979
12. Contrary to a claim made by *Aufheben*, Caffentzis is not ascribing the ability to determine prices at will to a unified, all-powerful capitalist cabal. Rather it is through the mediation of price that the 'anarchy' of intra-capitalist competition produces something like a 'strategy'. Marx wrote: 'The vulgar economist has not he faintest idea that the actual everyday exchange relations cannot be directly identical with the magnitudes of value. The essence of bourgeois society consists precisely in this, that *a priori* there is no conscious social regulation of production. The rational and naturally necessary asserts itself only as a blindly working average.' ('Letter to Kugelmann, July 11 1868). It should be noted here that the history of the last century has also established beyond question that 'price' in this sense functions as something a like metonym for all paper or abstract claims, backed by state violence, on real future value, *however* that is to be embodied. Other examples, such as stocks, rent and debt, perhaps express more dramatically the logic *always present in the money-form*: namely the 'looting' of the future by *existing* accumulations of wealth (dead labour). For an account of this arrangement see Loren Goldner, *Once Again, on Fictitious Capital: Further Reply to Aufheben and Other Critics*. <http://home.earthlink.net/~lrgoldner/onceagain.html>
13. Agamben, *Mezzi Senza Fine*, Torino, Bollati Boringhieri, 1996.
14. It must be insisted emphatically that the emerging 'basic' status of information and communication commodities in no way supersedes that of energy commodities, but rather complements it.
15. Thanks to Laura L. Sullivan for drawing attention to this advertising trope.
16. Kolinko, *Hotlines*, Oberhausen, 2002. www.prol-position.net
17. 'Waged jobs' in this sense also includes freelance and self-employed labour, piecework etc: it refers to activity explicitly recognized by capital as work through payment in money.
18. At least, workers cannot choose to appropriate more income by intensifying co-operation. However, 'social' labour's opacity to quantitative measure may be useful to management in downward wage blackmail, as in the appraisal of individually competing workers. Bosses are free to measure qualitative factors according to subjective interests – ('the smile is missing from your voice' etc). 'Performance-based' pay schemes establish on a systematic basis this 'sovereign decision' exercised by employers over the work-wage relation.
19. Kolinko also discovered that the introduction of voice simulation computers, intended to reduce the cost and volatility of human labour, depended on intensive harvesting of existing workers' knowledge of vocal and eccentricities (speech defects, local dialects etc.)
20. Clinton's labour secretary Robert Reich, cited with telling approval by Michael Hardt & Toni Negri in *Empire*, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 2000
21. Agamben, *Mezzi Senza Fine*
22. Maurizio Lazzarato, 'Bergson: time crystallizing machines', apparently not forthcoming.
23. Or, as Loren Goldner (op. cit.) writes: 'Underneath everything else, the fundamental contradiction of capital is its need to mix with living labor to expand as capital, and the simultaneous tendency to expel living labor power from the production process.' Benedict Seymour (in a privately circulated annotation to Goldner's text, 2004) has formulated this contradiction in the terminology of Agamben's *Homo Sacer*: 'Its [i.e. capital's] contradiction is to expel what it must include, and to include by expulsion – the 'sovereign ban' of capitalist valorization.' (For a further rotation of this formula, see section 2 above.)
24. With some success, management of the destructive potential of proletarian 'entropy' has recently been devolved onto the proletariat itself in the form of responsibility for controlling 'risk'. Thus, for example, class antagonism may be displaced into fear of imminent 'environmental' apocalypse, to be resisted by individual renunciation (less consumption) and ultimately by more work.
25. Sebastian Olma, 'Physics Unbound', *Mute* 27, p.27
26. As Hardt and Negri unhesitatingly go on to state, 'valorization' means 'producing value'. They are less forthright in recalling that 'value' equals use value *plus* exchange value, so that 'valorization', 'self-' or otherwise, must always mean reproducing the commodity form.
27. It might also be suggested the fact of its not having done so already implies either that labour cannot be able to brush off parasitic capital quite so easily, or, alternatively, if the Multitude is really so self-sufficient, that it must have chosen freely to leave things the way they are.
28. Thompson pp. 9-939

Matthew Hyland subsists in East London, where his hotel room is a trespass order.



Ingram interviews Armanious: “the potting shed cosmologist”

This conversation emerged following on from Australian artist Hany Armanious’ artist project over summer 04/05 at the Auckland Art Gallery’s New Gallery.

Simon Ingram: We’ve talked a little about solidifying and grinding in your work. For instance, the particular way the clappers and the bells are cast makes them very evident records of filling or piling up, while the pepper mill is a common device that grinds down, and belongs to a class of tools like lathes and mills. It seems that in *Centre of the Universe (central core, softcore, hardcore)* there is a reciprocal action hidden in what comes across as a lumpen or archaic sort of system, where forces act on solid things in different directions and comprise a kind of ‘maintenance agent.’ If this were the case then the peppercorns all over the floor are a kind of cosmic remainder, a bi-product of this process. My question is what is being maintained (or balanced, subjected to pressure)? What does this evidence?

Hany Armanious: What I think is being evidenced is a type of essentialist interrogation of form. A type of system that must be doomed from the start given its strict parameters. The system says ‘go forth and reveal the nature of all things *from the centre out*.’ Yet one gets bogged down trying to define this middle point from which all things must emerge, and what does emerge are replicas of this impossible middle. Questions arise such as what came first the container or the contained? The lathe or the pepper mill? The fire or the flame? The machine is a by-product of another machine. I suppose it’s a kind of poetics of denial or an insistence on the delusions of the real.

This is very interesting to me. If I understand you correctly this second machine is art? Its job is to re-enact what can’t really be known or established. What we know as art comes about at least in part through a mad ‘needing to know’ of origins, of sources. Art shows itself as trying to get the measure of the impossibly middle which isn’t the same as saying it actually gets this measure. It’s the trying that counts?

There’s something in this knowingness of art – an accepted unspoken knowing that the whole enterprise is make believe... But it still looks for answers. In a sense the gallery or museum – or studio for that matter – could be seen as a safe-house for the playing out of some need to believe. Even when we look at art that’s centuries old there’s this sense of yearning and never quite arriving at some allusive utopia – *picturing the dream*. What this drive in art is all about isn’t so simple; once I thought it was like the ordering of one’s failed aspirations.

I don’t want to make too much of the title, but it seems the work has aspirations to universality that might immediately make the cheeks redden of



Hany Armanious, *Centre of the Universe (central core, softcore, hardcore)* (2004-5). Courtesy of Michael Lett, Auckland and Roslyn Oxley9, Sydney.

those bought up on various post-modern extrusions of post-structural thought (or at least make them nervous). Hasn’t the argument run something like ‘there’s one thing of which we can be sure and that is that there is no truth.’ Yet, here we have a complex tableau, a model of the universe perhaps, that seems to assert a systemics operative through all things. I find this very interesting for the sorts of truth effects it summons up and the way it abrogates certain modes of so-called ‘criticality’ (or thinking that run along lines of a kind of dum-ar-se-literalism) while still seeming critical. How would you respond these sorts of comments?

If the work makes some people’s cheeks redden then that’s a good thing. I’m not sure why it would necessarily contradict any post-structuralist thought because it does allude to the hopelessness of finding truth, but at the same time there is a hint of real revelation which is reached on the rocky road of bad faith. The only way I can really function effectively in the studio is when I seriously have to kid myself. You follow that silly thread till it looks like it’s nearly in tatters then suddenly vistas of beauty emerge from this psychotic pantomime. Be it the truth effect or



just a great shape that effects you emotionally, you just know that something seemingly insignificant is working in really big way.

Maybe it's a question of scale. Of a ratio of sizes between you and the work. You seem to be saying that you can't overwhelm or determine meaning. Meaning or maybe meaningful-ness comes or it doesn't and the best way for it to arrive, and arrive well, is for you to focus on building a factory for production, replete with both a firmness and delicacy to materials. Does your work work on you as much as you on it? Are you 'in' the work as Pollock used to say about his being 'in' the painting?

One does get pretty immersed at times. I don't think this is a particularly unique way of working. I try and give as much as possible a chance to exist and in the end I have to decide if a thing is worth the space it occupies. But during the process it's useless to try and understand the type of exchange that's happening and you wind up getting all self-conscious. When I do think about it I try to tell myself to be generous and light – maybe it's a way of avoiding a tendency to be ungenerous and heavy.

When you were in Auckland working on the show there seemed to be very specific parameters that you worked within. It was as if certain material and sign-oriented relationships led the way; they made decisions and one of your roles seemed to be to facilitate certain unions between things. To me your work comes across as beautiful in a particularly human sort of way; its maker is mixed in with clay of the potting shed so pretty soon we get the measure of you. Or is this too narcissistic?

That's really nice of you to say that Simon, because you never really know what sort of affect your work



Left: Hany Armanious, *Centre of the Universe* (central core, softcore, hardcore) (2004-5), installation detail. **Right:** *Untitled* (2004) 165mm x 155mm, clay, wood, wax. Both images courtesy of Michael Lett, Auckland and Roslyn Oxley9, Sydney.

is having on others. You get all caught up in this unreasonable edifice of your own making and which exists on the good will of those around you... But how much of that is about me personally seems immaterial. I'd prefer to think of myself more as a public servant.

Hany Armanious is a Sydney-based artist whom the Auckland-based artist Simon Ingram enjoys talking with.

✠ In GOD¹ We Trust the importance of the medical arts in paradise lost

“...beware the flag suckers. They will run you down and eat your flesh but not your heart or your brain, for they are unclean...”²

Prologue

When the angels crossed the desert they fell to earth with burnt wings.

They never rose up again because they believed their fall to be an emblematic defeat. Their flesh withered and they eventually slipped beneath the sand, only to return at night as dispossessed spirits drifting in the night.

Haunted by defeat, their shame poisoned the air wherever they passed. They sang songs of despair, lamenting the insoluble paradox of loss and redemption... “for ‘tis only in the caustic flame / the dead may learn to live again...”



Le soleil au zénith
Me surexcitent
Tes p'tits seins de la bakélite
Qui s'agitent
Sea, sex and sun
Toi petite
C'est sûr tu es un hit.³

When I arrived in LA, the heat hit me first, the oppressive flatness hit me second and the social theatricality hit me last. This place is a desert. The air is poison and normal living requires huge amounts of external stimulation and the unquestionable faith that true happiness may be purchased. We all know this and many of us have read Baudrillard, so what's the big deal? I am strong and I am intelligent. I can easily make the adjustment moving from small cold Wellington to big hot Los Angeles. I am doing really well. I am meeting lots of people who show genuine interest in my work. The winter rains have gone. The summer is coming on and I like the beach.

Then it started to happen. I slowly began to fall apart. It appeared as an unexplainable sense of disquiet, which I couldn't identify at first. It started down at Hermosa Beach. I didn't feel it at Venice Beach because there are too many homeless, too many crack dealers and too much going on; your senses get numbed there. But at Hermosa there is an exaggerated beach culture with a lot to take in. There are lots of cute women skating in bikinis and an aggressive beach volleyball culture. Cute mums in bikinis skate behind their strollers. They wear Oliver Peoples sunglasses. Hermosa is white, middle-class, youthful and energetic. There is almost no body fat to be seen. There are many slim, ample-bosomed women and well-built young men. But I became increasingly unsettled at Hermosa. I didn't want to go out. At home I became depressed and I stopped working. I didn't know what the problem was; that is, until I went to the dentist.

My health insurance covers all prophylactic dental care and hygiene. I had my teeth scraped and a deep enamel fluoride treatment – a straightforward procedure. I felt relaxed because my teeth were getting cleaned and polished and the hygienist was getting in where the brush will not go. Moreover, I would have no bill to walk out with and this made me feel particularly peaceful. When the hygienist had finished the dentist came in. He could find no visible evidence of caries and my gums were nice and healthy – but there was another issue. As a child I had suffered from the brutal Antipodean orthodontic practices of the sixties. As a result, according to my new dentist, my specular dental *presence* was poorly adjusted. My teeth were not perfect.

The dentist was adamant that, in America, you could buy what ever you need to be perfect and I was defiantly unwilling to accept that. I was preventing myself from feeling deep contentment of the inner me by ignoring the appearance of my outer self. My third-world NZ Anglican-Irish-Catholic-Calvinist attitude towards money and my place in the world was to fault. As a new California resident I would need to learn fiscal responsibility with respect to the appearance of my *own* body. Furthermore, I was not accepting the tacit American principle of debt before dishonour. My health insurance plan was pitifully modest, because it only covered dental hygiene. He outlined a treatment to get my teeth cosmetically corrected. It would only cost me about US\$5000 for an entry-level dental arts makeover. He also offered me the option of time payment with *generous* interest terms.

“But I floss. I have no caries and I have healthy gums,” I pathetically retorted. He would not listen. Since moving here I have tried so hard. Being polite and saying nice things to people. I thought that I was fitting in just swell. I understand the social importance of being really positive, but my body was exhibiting visible signs of cultural neglect. It was not just my teeth. I also had *visible* body hair. I felt shame.

As a quadruple Virgo (Asc ☾ ☽ ♍) I know how to research an issue. I used to teach at a university. I have read extensively and I have seen a lot of films. I read Bruce Wagner. I know how to fight a rearguard action from a defensive position.

George Clooney, as the character Miles Massey in the Coen brother's 2003 film *Intolerable Cruelty*, satirised his own cosmetically-enhanced smile. Through redemptive humour, Clooney was able to extenuate his release from the cruel clutches of superficiality. The satirical properties of the dental and medical arts are never acknowledged around Beverley Hills where the stars hang out, or over on mid-Wilshire where all the rich dealer galleries are. My defence is shaping up well. I am feeling more empowered.

French artist Orlan courageously offered her own body as cultural sacrifice by undergoing a series of cosmetic



operations. She bravely critiqued the ramifications of male gender politics by transforming herself into the female form most idealised by male artists throughout history. In 1996 I even had work in the same show as her in which both *our* works dealt with the cruel ratifications of body politics. I feel a bond with this bold remarkable woman. I recognise a precedent here and a communion of brave souls. I can logically and intelligently work my way out of any neurotic social confusion, in which I may have inadvertently found myself. Though the strength and determined reasoning I can defend any cultural assault coming out of the highly evolved social practices of Beverly Hills. I don't want a show on Wilshire Boulevard or at any boring up-start dealer gallery at Bergamot Station. Chinatown is dead. I'll show out in Orange County with the other marginal artists who work with tough issues. I mean, this is not new for me. I am brave and I am determined. And then it hit me... My tummy, oh God, my tummy.

Terrence Handscomb, *Space Invaders – black satire and the BBS* (1997) (detail) interactive computer installation.

Notes

"Sea, sex and sun" [click for audio sample]

1. Acronym for "Good ol' Democracy".
2. Hunter S. Thompson. Written as an inscription by Thompson in a copy of his 2003 book *Kingdom of Fear: Loathsome Secrets of a Star-Crossed Child in the Final Days of the American Century* – a gift to Marilyn Manson. Quoted by Manson in *Rolling Stone*, issue 970, March 2005.
3. Second verse of Serge Gainsbourg's 1978 seven-inch vinyl hit single, *Sea, sex and sun* (Phillips 6172147). Patrice Leconte also used the song in his 1978 film "Les bronzés". The verse roughly translates to "...Sea, sex and sun. The full sun (is above). I'm over-stimulated (by) your little bakelite breasts shaking themselves about. Sea, sex and sun. You sure are small (but) you are a (big) hit (to me)..." However, I don't know much French. I'm much better with German.

The Art of Nick Mangan

Usually when life is translated into a static sculptural format, the stillness functions in a secondary way; on some level it is necessary to understand the object as life frozen in time – an attribute which is not often integral to the work's concept. Much of Nick Mangan's work, whether through accident or design, sidles into an aperture which liberates it from this temporal appendage. Each sculpture in his *In the Crux of Matter* series, for instance, presents us with a common contemporary object – a photocopier, a glass coffee-table, the remains of a motorbike – whose form is being corrupted with the growth of crystals. Because crystals naturally develop at a pace imperceptible to the human eye, we are able to perceive the work as natural, rather than modelled; it becomes easy to imagine that the object of our gaze is immersed in deep time. The same can be said of *Untitled [Nest]*, in which a termite mound transmogrifies a tradesman's ladder.

In Mangan's work we are confronted with evidence of an alchemical sort of productivity which cannot be sighted through the scope of scientific plausibility. It is as though secret deals are being made between objects and structures to which we are not privy. The unnerving force of the natural elements in Mangan's work seems almost like a form of sympathetic magic, attempting to fortify the processes of an earth which suffers increasingly from human occupation. The paradox is that the origins of these objects are to be found in the cerebrum of a man and, in a sick sort of synthesis, the elements of the work which visually represent the organic are actually synthesized from the processed, the noxious and the chemical.

These objects summon a reaction which is reminiscent of early supernatural horror literature written by M.R. James, Arthur Machen and Algernon Blackwood among others. These writers spearheaded a soul-penetrating brand of horror, which was oft based in a realisation on the part of a protagonist that an inanimate object has exhibited some form of will.

With cold removal, objects which we value as utilitarian step back from our affections and allow themselves, almost wryly, to be corrected by forms for which we have no use beyond the aesthetic. These objects seem to have their own idea of what a system should be, and it hasn't got a great deal to do with human functionality.

What is it that compels Mangan to reiterate the proposition that nature craves to devour utility? Turning the focus of this model outwards to encompass all utilitarian systems, we can shift our perception of a city from being a compacted, almost exclusively human habitat, to a mass of potential fodder waiting to be devoured by natural systems of growth. In this way Mangan's objects become nuclei for new understandings of our metropolitan environments, in turn articulating a need for human



In the crux of the matter (2003) acrylic, jelutong, PVC sheeting, automotive spray, acrifix, K & H two part filler, 50 x 190 x 110cm. Courtesy of the artist and Sutton Gallery, Melbourne.

systems to acknowledge their connection to/origins in the natural, to which we have become binarily opposed. Each of Mangan's couplings involves a compromise, but never on the part of the natural form.

These couplings are not beleaguered by their status as artworks. Like much interesting work which has come to pass during the last decade, they offer terms of engagement for which a fore-knowledge of art theory is not a prerequisite. The objects are aloof without a sense of smug complicity. Mangan's works do not lead the mind of the viewer down a pre-determined path – we are presented with the physical manifestation of an imagining, which we can consider however we might. His oblique titles, reminiscent as they are of the names given to pharmaceuticals, reaffirm a sense that the work sits comfortably in a sphere where determinants exist beyond the rules of mass appeal. It would be absurd to suggest that Mangan's work is not equally at home in the commercial sphere. However, I would suggest that the commercial position does not drive the work, nor influence the ideas it expresses. It is not trying to befriend the viewer; there is no air of funky arrogance telling us 'this is where it's at'. His objects are on offer as commodities, but by begging a deeper level of consideration they utilize this position, infiltrating the 'cutting-edge' mentality of art collecting with something a lot slower and steadier. Although he is part of a system in which the personality of the artist is amplified both socially and within the media, Mangan seems to make a concerted effort to extract ego from his actual work, his objects appearing as much as possible as though they were discovered rather than constructed by humans.



Untitled (nest) 2004, aluminium ladder, western red cedar, Tasmanian oak, 275 x 50 x 170cm. Courtesy of the artist and Sutton Gallery, Melbourne.

Where the earth artists, during the seventies and eighties, asserted masculine gestures into the natural landscape, Mangan presents us with a negative of that process by asserting organic structures into the man-made. The cynical-minded among us could interpret this as an indication that places of human occupation have grown sufficiently over the past few decades to replace nature as the perceived dominant. But we could also read it as an expression of hope that the natural has not lost its power, but that the colonial hangover which laces our perception of it with threat is finally beginning to wear off, and with it our compulsion to punctuate the landscape with grand gestures of humanity. The accompanying hope is that our awareness of our own position as a dominant species, and the responsibility which should accompany it, is increasing. This is reflected in Mangan's work by the grass-roots aesthetic of crystals and lathed wood which seems to permeate his output.

There is presently a growing movement towards transforming cities into healthier environments with the help of permaculture. An increasing number of birds, animals and plants have adapted to city living¹ in the past decade, concurrent with the increasing pace of what scientists believe to be the sixth mass extinction on earth². Implicit to Mangan's objects is the hope that nature will fight back.

This leads me to a review by Alex Gawronski on Mangan's work as part of *Primavera* 2004, which was published in the December 2004 – February 2005 issue of *Broadsheet*. Gawronski said the works 'tended

to emphasise the bravura of material production and an isolated aestheticism over their communicative capacity³, and considered that Mangan's 'regressive display methodologies'⁴ (low-lying white plinths) stressed the identity of the objects as aesthetic commodities and little else. In conclusion, Gawronski stated "It is somehow vaguely distressing that so-called 'emerging art'... does not evince a greater sense of its non-complicity and that it seems more concerned to get things 'right' and to appear indisputably as institutionally and professionally 'valid'...". In response to this I would like to refer to an interview with Chantal Mouffe, a theorist of art and politics who is aligned with the left. When questioned as to how Germany might formulate a democratic alternative to the concept of 'the people', that term still having strong connections to Nazism⁵, Mouffe responds that this 'should not happen by abandoning the idea of "the people" because it's necessarily related to either a Nazi past or to a certain type of exclusion.'⁶ She argues that abandonment can be read as a form of surrender where reclamation would be a better alternative. To my mind, this model of approach can be applied to the relationship between individual artists and the expectations of the art institution – change the system from within. Making art which is political does not by default require an outright rejection of institutional vernacular. To the contrary, to engage with that vernacular is in some instances the most effective means of penetrating that sphere of understanding. If Mangan had chosen to erode the architecture of the MCA rather than install an eroded object, his work would have become political on that level – it would have been about rejecting the institution. But he is not interested in that level of politics. The issues which his work addresses exist on a far broader scale. Presenting work within an institutional context in a way which does not antagonize that context can allow a more extensive consideration of issues which the artist is addressing.

On January 24th this year, the *Meeting the Climate Challenge* report was released, put together by senior politicians, business leaders and academics from around the world. All indications suggest that we have ten years before the global warning "point of no return" is reached.⁷ On an individual level it is easy to forget this sort of information, but our disastrous environmental predicament is not going to improve without significant amounts of lifestyle change. It is for this reason that I find work such as Mangan's to be not only socio-politically relevant, but of vital importance.

To my mind there are parallels between Mangan's work and the Clock of the Long Now⁸, a mechanism which is currently being prototyped and which will run for at least 10,000 years, ticking once a year and chiming once a millennium. The clock's purpose is to remind humans of the importance of long-term thinking. Both drag our perceptions into a broader time-scale, and in this way remind us that we are an incidental life form rather than a pivotal vanishing point.

Whilst easy parallels can be drawn between the work of Nick Mangan and Ricky Swallow on account of their shared penchant for monochromatic materiality, Mangan's work contains none of the reverie for the guiltless consumerism of childhood which fuels many of Swallow's works. What Mangan's work shares with

that of other artists of his productive ilk is a tendency towards high materialism; a compulsion towards a hand-wrought delineation of form with a level of precision which in many spheres of production was lost under the rise of industrialism. The emphasis on craft within art production has grown in popularity during the past few years. Whilst this can obviously be seen as a backlash against the highly conceptual art movements which proliferated during the nineties, it can also be understood on another level as an outright rejection of mass production. In combination with this there is a general inclination towards a re-acceptance of 'fantasy' art, its politic being that by rejecting reality in favour of an imaginary 'world', an underlying dissatisfaction with reality becomes apparent. Mangan's work is effective on this level because there is an absence of social specificity to his subject matter. For this reason the work is also accessible to a broad range of people.

Within Mangan's work there is something of a fusion between dream and reality. There is a gap being bridged, and a world being imagined where humans no longer dominate. I like the way it triggers my brain.

Notes

1. For instance herring gulls in London, cougars in Los Angeles and ghetto palms in New York. There is some interesting information on this subject at the following websites: http://www.atimeforfear.blogspot.com/2003_05_11_atimeforfear_archive.html and <http://www.oliverk.org/weblog>
2. An article on the sixth mass extinction can be found at the New Scientist website here: <http://www.newscientist.com/article.ns?id=dn4797>
3. Alex Gawronski, 'Primavera 2004', *Broadsheet* Volume 33 No 4, Dec 2004-Jan 2005, p. 52
4. Ibid, p. 52
5. Paraphrased from "Every form of art has a political dimension", Chantal Mouffe interviewed by Rosalyn Deutsche, Branded W. Joseph, and Thomas Keenan, *Grey Room* 02, Winter 2001, p.101
6. Ibid, pp.98-125
7. "Countdown to global catastrophe", Michael McCarthy, Environment Editor, *The Independent*, UK, 24 January 2005
8. More information on the Clock of the Long Now can be found at <http://www.longnow.org/>

Helen Johnson is a cultural outputter currently stationed in Melbourne. Further musings can be found at <http://triangularsun.blogspot.com>.

A posthumous conversation with Bob Ross

A dim light splashes through a door left slightly open, a familiar scene in a sprawling middle-American evening, Janie is sitting at her kitchen table in what is now a familiar domestic silence since her husband (who turned out to be a psychopath) took her two beautiful (but equally monstrous) children off her hands. She juggles a used tea bag between her hands and stares vacantly into the kitchen. She is wearing a paint-smattered smock and doesn't seem to mind when excess tea from the chamomile bag splashes her wrist, it used to be perfume she thinks, but hey that's what... Slowly, silently, the light from the decouped lightshade above is interrupted by a huge round billowing shadow that engulfs the pale woodgrain-streaked laminex tabletop. Her mouth gaping open, whilst her eyes follow the shadow up a skinny body to the brightest smile this kitchen has seen in years. Crowned with an afro the light encircles a momentous globe of hair; momentarily Janie believes an angel is in her kitchen because for some people isolated on the margins of what is already a lonely and isolated world seeing an angel can suddenly seem as real as a neighbour dropping by for some gossip. A gasping primal sound threatens to erupt in her throat. Slowly the silence is engulfed by his smile, and she takes a moment to look harder and notes it's less of a halo or afro and more of a wafro stumbling down into a soft accidental beard framing the smile. His dark brown eyes that resemble quotation marks are beaming down on her in a "trust me" kind of fatherly way. The figure is dressed in a plain casual business shirt and flannel trousers, as though painted tightly round a telephone pole. She just manages to chortle out two incomprehensible muffled words: "Bob... Rossss!"

"Hey, hey, shhhhh, don't go screaming or nothing there beautiful lady. I usually knock, but I thought you might need some company here tonight. I can see from your face you know who I am?" She nods dumbfounded.

"Yeah well sometimes I just do this you know, pop in on people. I consider myself a neighbor of the world now. America is the land of neighbours you know! And well who could resist your pretty little home."

"But I thought you were... dead," blurts out Janie, as her throat finally opens the dam that held back comprehensible sounds in her speech.

"Well, that's... ahhhhh a debateable point there Miss Janie", quickly switching the topic "I can tell you liked my video painting classes" he surveys the kitchen. Numerous canvases are awkwardly crammed into remaining spaces, depicting mountain scenes with sumptuous fir trees bending in the snow, all anchored by lonely cabins in the vastness that you'd wanna stumble onto if lost in the alps. And... strangely, none of the cabins have chimneys. The painting style compliments the quaint domestic setting, as though the paint was applied with a butter knife and pastry

glazing brush to reveal mayonnaise skies and Nutella trees. He crouches and gently plomps his elbows on the table looking deep and caringly into her eyes.

"You know how many millions of people watched my videos and TV shows? How many languages they've been dubbed into? German, Japanese, Dutch, even some African dialects! Every thirty minutes on a public TV station in the US of A. I'm starting up or polishing off a masterpiece – that's everyday of the year! How many versions of that painting I demonstrated have been made? And how many thrift stores they decay in, some may say. But what I ask these cynics is, how many people still find hope with me behind the easel everyday on TV? Well Janie, it's millions and millions. So you think I'm dead eh? My mama said to me years ago that I was damn well givin' Jesus a run for his money as Mr Popular," he chuckles then takes a breath and continues his well-practised sermon.

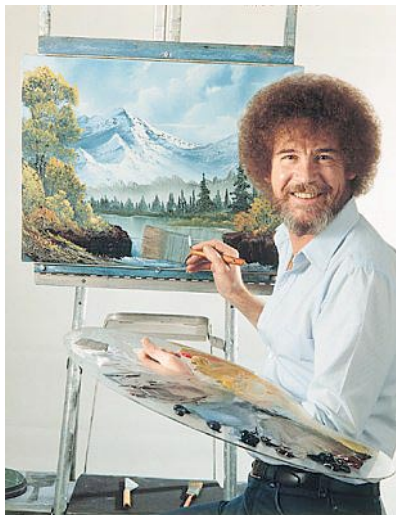
"We want happy, happy paintings, if you want sad things watch the news," he intones as though he was instantly back in the PBS studios.

"Well Janie, sweetie, it wasn't just all love and grub, you know times got hard and... well every pretty tree casts a shadow. Some people say amateur painting, paint by formula, is cheatin', but my company sold millions of my specially designed brushes that make painting easier! Everybody can be an artist; everybody deserves the right to enjoy making paintings, just like that famous German artist, what was his name... Joseph Boys? So I put love into my work. I gave a whole lotta of love, the greatest prize to all, and you know everybody understands the language of love. A puppy, a villain, a priest, and even a murderer, they all understand a soothing pat on their twisted little heads. I was the great artist of love! The twentieth century's Botticelli, Titian, Watteau! That's the best anyone can ever do! Can I tell you a story Miss Janie?" She nods staring at him as though hypnotised by his smile, peckered lips and tiny frame below the globe of his wafro.

"One night me and my wife were at dinner with a big group. I usually had to be careful dining with people I didn't know well cos, some ladies... fell in love with me from my videos. Oh you should have seen the panties regularly stuck in my mailbox. Anyways, we're at this Chinese restaurant on Lincoln Street, where we lived; this was a great restaurant called the Dragon's Leg. The house specialty is called the five-legged dragon soup, it's made with secret spices; you should go there one day. I knew it was delicious so I promptly ordered it. And this particular evening another artist, yup just like me, was there. This guy had some obscure 'conceptual practice', as he called it, sounds more like something the doctor would gravely advise you of doesn't it? Well he spoke a whole lot of jumbo about theorists, cultural this and cultural that, historical cycles... he was sayin' stuff like modern art is dead, and he even went on sayin' that art itself was dead.

Before that I was thinking at least this guy wasn't a lady burnt red with size 98 passion for me, coz as you can see I'm a little man. His conversation turned into a monologue, about stealing images, originality, philosophy, anti-aesthetics, the sublime works of Nazis, discourse of blah blah post-structuralist this, invagination that, neo-Aristotelianism, tectonic pseudo-aestheticism, placelessness and when he got onto what he called neo-conservative mercantilist aesthetic scavenging he really started to boil. He got real hot looking like a pepper in the face, he started talking louder and louder till people in the restaurant started looking around. He was burning with a passion like a steam-engine on a one-way trip to hell, exhaust pipes spewing fire from his ears and nose. Well I just stared into my five-legged dragon soup and let him power on up that fiery hill cos I never cared for all that mumbo jumbo, but I know it's got its place in all them halls of learning. Soon enough this guy was just screaming incoherently, until the restaurant went all quiet and all eyes were on him. Still, he boiled and bubbled away in his own words, consumed with a passion only I ever seen a preacher possessed by. He was like a volcano of fire, and finally he collapsed, his face was only a hair's breadth from mine and he was panting and drooling. I was always able to keep composure even when I was a kid, so I just let him breathe as he stared at me with his eyes as sharp as knives. He lay there like a man just pulled an inch from drowning in a murky soup, with that spluttering kind of breathing. Some time passed and I say to him quietly: 'So, you've never heard about my dream then have you?'. I felt like I had a little explaining to do for this confused young fella. I thought I should tell him about what it was that made me become an artist for the people. Janie, it came to me in a dream one night."

"When I was a boy I went on a camp with my dad who loved me like no one in the world. We were in a particularly strange neck of The Rockies with my scout troop. 'My dad was scout leader,' I tell him still proud as punch to that day. Whilst asleep in my cabin that night, the wind howled outside, and as I lay resting the waves of sleep rocked about me like giant waves in the middle of the Pacific. Suddenly one particularly big wave loomed; I started to be drawn up its enormous unfathomable face. The water soon changed from the green of the deep sea to the green of the dollar bill and I looked around and saw all of mankind struggling to swim up the mountain of money. But some people had bright smiles on their faces. There were professors, soldiers, mechanics, schoolteachers, pilots, waitresses, the whole lot. The sky deepened and rays of sun shot like yellow lasers from behind clouds. Angels dipped their long wings in the bills and the mountain kept growing; I looked around again and saw some people starting to drown, you could swim for them but they were always the same distance away, only those with smiles on their faces kept happily swimming up the bulging monolith of green. Somehow, I don't know why, I felt those people were drowning because of me. This scene went on for what felt like ages and we were all tired



but went on relentlessly. And then as suddenly as though the lights were cut we were on the top of that mountain and there were only a few of us left. We knew we were lucky, angels swooped around us and we could see all the phases of creation happening all around, planets being born and dying in a second, super novas, colonies of strange species flourishing and shrivelling. The group was at first silent then got worked up into a frenzy with screams of joy. The angels

were tall and slender Renaissance-style beauties that were swooping around splashing colors in the sky with paintbrushes. One little man who looked like a dental nurse started touching people, then these folks would drop languidly to the ground. It was so hazy in the disco lights of creation that I couldn't see why these people were dropping limp around this dentist type man. He came closer to me and held out a paintbrush with the handle facing me; it was covered in blood. He pressed it to my palm and motioned for me to take it. I don't know why but I took the bloodied brush and without thinking twice drove it into his stomach, once, twice, three times. As he lay wounded and dying with his warm blood trickling onto

my flannel jeans, he whispered in my ear; 'the trivial and the terrible walk hand in hand'.

"At the end of my dream story, I noticed that the restaurant was still deadly quiet and all eyes were still fixed on us. The lady friend of that fiery fella had been trying to pretend she was just part of the furniture. Then she gently helped her friend to his feet, even though he was still panting and drooling. As they left the restaurant his eyes were still fixed piercingly on me, his hair ruffled and his tie at an unusual angle against his designer suit.

"Janie, he sure did look like the man in my dream, well maybe not the clothes, but the eyes and that dental nurses' look you can spot anywhere. And me, not being some supernatural freak, I don't say that lightly. I don't know quite what I realized in that dream but after a short stint in the airforce I built an empire in paint. I began to teach love through the brush, and that's why Janie you've been sitting here crying tonight cos since watching my videos you've fallen in love with me, and your friend Marcie just told you that I died a few years ago! No, no, don't look surprised sweet Janie, I know what I'm talking about! We zombies, walking dead, ghosts, whatever you wanna call us, see all..." With those last words he bent down to Janie, brushed away her wiry fringe and kissed her on the lips.

David Keating is a Melbourne artist currently based in Berlin.

Please note this is a work of fiction and the events described are fictional scenarios invented for the sake of this essay.

'Arse Mouth'
An interview with artist, Amanda Newall



Fabulous creatures. Sculptures of feminine fingers stitched into butcher like bags. Computer games where disembodied objects float in space, a fragment of an austere building, the rubber face of a male sex doll, a dogs stomach full of maggots. Amanda Newall's art is hard to define; she works across a range of disciplines. Her work is like her personality, tough and eclectic, full of flourishes of black humour and obscure performances.

Megan Dunn talks to the artist who says, 'I like to approach my art with the ambiguity of a stranger.'

The first work I saw by you was a video of an oblique almost lumpen golden seal 'performing' outside the sky tower. There was almost a belligerent quality to this work – it was at once so public and yet so purposefully inaccessible...

I could barely breathe inside that costume and I couldn't see out which made the work uneasy. I performed in a variety of environments including outside the museum. Later, when I watched the video footage I discovered a child watching and copying all my movements, engaging at a grass roots level. I quite like to see art that is disruptive. Maybe it's a personal thing but I have always enjoyed annoying and irritating people. Not being able to understand art can be very irritating for an audience.

Arse Mouth, in the kitchen (2004) wool and stitching. Photographed at Boquitas Pintadas, Argentina.

Describe your first ever art works to me...

The first art works I remember are a series of books made out of tissue paper. When I was small I used to get really bad croup and once I was sent home from school for barking like a dog. My mother brought me an old wooden ironing board that I could stretch across my bed to draw on. When I was sick I used to sit in bed reading Mad magazines and drawing books on tissue paper. The books were always idealized stories about teddy bears. The king and queen of the teddies would go on special picnics, and decide to live happily ever after.

Your art now consists of costumes and creatures; from your Avon Lady with sheer pink talons to the retro fright wig quality of your recent vinyl costumes. Who are these creatures and where do they come from?

The creatures are based on my experience as a human being and my experience of other humans... as a child I always wondered where our local Avon lady came from. She would turn up on our door



Rubber Gloves and Guns (2005) (detail) cast glass. from 'Sic Games 2', the New Zealand Film Archive, Auckland.

step in Timaru where my parents ran a tombstone business. To me, the Avon lady seemed to have come from nowhere. I used to make up ideas of what she did when not selling cosmetics. I thought because we lived across from the gardens perhaps she liked to feed the ducks. So when I made the Avon lady costume in 2000, I videoed myself feeding the ducks... it was a kind of tribute to my idea of her. I remember convincing Mum to buy stupid things for me like three little pig soaps and a black glass panther with cologne for my father. I thought these things would keep the Avon lady and her mystique coming back to the house.

Perhaps that cologne bottle is where your fascination with panthers comes from? (In London Amanda showed me a frosted glass panther she had made, carefully packed away in a pair of her socks.)

Every time I came through customs the officers made me take the panther out of my socks and wait while they tested it for drugs?! I have always liked the sleek nature of panthers. I also like the idea of turning something large and organic, like a panther, into a small container for holding male perfume. Perfection can so easily be turned into something tacky and kitsch.

And what about your vinyl costumes? What inspired those?

Those costumes were based on the children that used to appear on 'That's Incredible'. I especially remember the kids that had that aging disease, the one that made them look about 70 when they were only ten years old. They would always wear basket ball caps and be given a trip to Disneyland out of sympathy.

Yes, then they would get to wear the silver jacket with 'That's Incredible' written on the back.

I always wanted one of those jackets. I used to wish I had a strange illness or extra long fingernails so I could get on the show too. Perhaps I could have gone on 'That's Incredible' for being great with dominos?

You have also made a lot of sculptures of waxen pink hands and bear-like claws...

I have used feet and hands in my work for a long time. When I was teaching at Waiangarei Polytechnic on a residency I made a series of raku-fired toes and fingers and morphed hands. Often I have ideas that can not be presented fully in one medium and I like to combine traditional techniques like painting and sculpture with computer art. In 'Operation Game' I inserted images of the raku-fired feet, toes and fingers into a photograph of my hand.

What intrigues you about the human body?

I like the way we strive to make our bodies beautiful yet there are always hidden grotesque elements, for example, bad feet, extra, missing or webbed toes. Recently someone told me her aunt has an extra nipple on her leg and people have been known to grow hair in their pancreas and fingernails in the folds of their flesh. The body is like a computer bug, things can come out of nowhere and act up...

Is that why you made 'Operation Game'?

'Operation Game' was based on the eighties board game Operation, where players would pull bones and organs out of a human using small instruments. If the instrument touched the sides of the human there would be terrible feedback and flashing.

Your version was quite different....

I decided to make a game using gory pictures of the palm of my hand opened up. Inside I embedded images of the raku-fired toes and fingers. The viewer could manipulate the mouse to pull the fingers and toes. When they are pulled in the right direction a video sequence gets played as a reward. I liked the idea of using this structure to view a video, cut up in pieces and embedded in a random order. The viewer sees fragments and tries to piece the story together in a manner similar to forensic evidence.

I enjoyed the thrill of spiralling into brief excerpts of a strange video...

The video called 'Tarred and Feathered' was of a marionette I took to the gardens behind Parnell, dropped into an oil tank then covered in feathers.

For some reason 'Tarred and Feathered' reminded me of the disturbing soot-faced monster who lived behind the diner in 'Mulholland Drive'...

That creature was my favorite character in the film; it was humorous yet horrific, like it had been plucked fresh out of the human psyche.

Is that a quality you strive for in your own work?

My work often has a macabre, mysterious or slightly sick nature to it. When I presented work at a conference in Edinburgh one of the professors said it was immoral.

What part does horror play in your work?

I like the comedy and intensity of horror. When I was about two and a half years old I got my thumb stuck in a baby's bottle and couldn't get it out. Being practical I smashed the bottle (with my thumb still inside) against some concrete. It was lucky my parents lived across from the hospital (even so dad drove me there). I still have lace like scars all over my thumb...

Who is Kelvin S. C. Corpus?

Kelvin S. C. Corpus is a manifestation of part of me. Corpus stands for "body piece" and S.C. stands for "Strange Creature". I made labels with cartoons of myself on them for this show. For me that exhibition was an uncanny and horrific experience because my close friend and contemporary James Wallace died just weeks before. After that the work became very much, in an esoteric way, about him. I even made a garment for him...

What was the garment?

It was a cotton shirt that looked designer-made yet was also a straight jacket. The sleeves had hands with false nails that seemed to negate the restrictive nature of the jacket by suggesting some kind of escape or freedom of movement.

Now you are making more computer games. What do these games consist of?

The games vary; what they all have in common is a reference to how we store information and experience space. One game I made, 'Tree structure,' was a



Top: *Becoming Tamarin* (2005) (detail) persona interface for 'Sic Games' from 'Sic Games 2', SoFA Gallery, Christchurch and New Zealand Film Archive, Auckland. **Centre:** *Sic Games* (2005) (detail) projection digital interactive, SoFA Gallery, Christchurch. **Bottom:** *The Avon Lady's gloves* (2000) vinyl, fingernails and netting from 'Naked Lodge' installation and video downtown Auckland.

visual representation of a tree structure. It was made up out of 1000 images set against a black space. The game starts with an interface of three floating objects, a robot Hoover, a building and a male sex doll. The sex doll was sourced from a website called 'realdoll.com' where you can build your ideal doll out of pieces, choosing everything down to the cut and color of the pubic hair.

How is 'Tree Structure' played?

When you zoom into any object a series of new objects appear, zoom in again and these objects break into pieces. The game is like an endless tunnel of things... for example when you zoom into the female sex doll a dog's stomach appears, full of maggots. You can then click on one of the maggots, which contain everything from fingernails to robots, prosthetic feet and furniture.

What work did you show on your recent trip to Argentina?

I exhibited a series of photographs called 'Arse mouth'. The work was made in collaboration with my close friend Benedict Webb who was living in Argentina at the time. He gave me a mask as a present before he went away. (*'Ass mouth' is a black balaclava with a huge crooked red mouth like a woollen gash – at once sinister, funny and obscene*). I then shot images of myself wearing the mask at a geothermal tourist site in Rotorua.

Why did 'Ass Mouth' decide to go to Rotorua?

My sister Melanie organized a family bonding trip there and I decided to capitalise on the opportunity and make some work as well. At the time there was a lot of political stuff happening about land rights that was relevant to the piece.

The photos had a grainy surveillance quality, 'Ass mouth' standing blankly in front of pools of wafting steam like an alien. What did the other tourists make of it?

The day I took the photos there weren't many tourists around although I think the staff in the shop were concerned. Royce, my brother, was extremely embarrassed when I tried to buy my entrance ticket wearing 'ass mouth'. He made me take it off.

What role does humiliation play in your performances?

In my performances if anyone or thing is humiliated it tends to be me.

I loved the animation of your flatmate Joseph wearing a pair of Tiger ears, paws and huge slipper feet. It felt like a portrait to me.

I made that costume specifically for Joseph, no-one else could have pulled it off. Joseph reminds me of a Tiger. He is sort of nice and sweet on the surface yet there is a sinister, mischievous and slightly predatory quality under the surface.

His Tiger slippers were really comfortable, I enjoyed wearing them round the house while you were in London...



Sic Games 2 (2005) (detail) networked four-player digital interactive game. The New Zealand Film Archive, Auckland.

Joseph used to wear them at home every day and night. When I was going to the conference in Edinburgh he wouldn't let me have them back – I had to steal the slippers from his room when he was out. The work itself was made up of photographic stills; Joseph – as the Tiger – spins around continuously stuck in a constant repeating motion he cannot break. It's like the space controls him.

For me 'The Tiger' sums up the mischievousness that is always present in your work, especially your performances. Are you a mischievous person?

No.

Finally, how do you want people to respond to your work?

I like it if people can add something to the work. I think that is why I have a history of making performances or interventions in the social landscape. Mystery inspires me and I like it if the public can share that mystery too. Maybe that's selfish?

Megan Dunn is the daughter of Alastair and Lee Dunn. Formerly of Invercargill.

Amanda Newall makes digital games, interactive glass sculpture and likes to dress people.

Funny and abstract

I wrote the following text last year in response to the work of Canberra-based artist Stuart Bailey. He had just had an exhibition and the works seemed to me to be linked to a particular kind of trajectory that the text extrapolates upon. While it doesn't deal with Bailey's work directly until the end, it was a way for me to locate his work within a particular context. He was going to use it as a catalogue essay but posted it on his website instead, and swapped me a painting for it – it's on my lounge room wall – a panel of good quality marine ply with a painted loop of yellow/gold chain that is attached by two painted 'nails' and it loops the internal area of the painting like a neck chain. There are three spiders also, two of which have their asses connected by a thread of green pencil 'web', echoed by a green pencil line that bisects the top of the painting about one twentieth of the way down. I should point out that Stuart would probably emphasise that the group of work I refer to was last year's – that is, he is doing different things now.... including cut out figures and images from colour digiprints pinned as collages and sequences to fat blocks of styro. He was recently awarded a gig at the Australia Council for the Arts' Los Angeles studio and he'll be heading there this year. Our blessings go with him.

Back in 1984 American artist Sherrie Levine made these works where she painted the wood grain knots on sheets of ply with gold paint. A curiously simple gesture: enhancing the natural pattern of the wood grain and making these apparently humble (or better, ubiquitous) sheets of ply into something laughably precious (using gold paint) and conceptually resonant. Oh, you could read it as a recapitulation of the honourable tradition of aestheticizing hardware-store materials; except this was pre the 1990s fashion for 'grunge' (a sheet of ply is a sheet of ply is a sheet of ply). Writing in 1988 about these works Phyllis Rosenzweig discovered all manner of conceptual game-play:

The wood grain may refer to nature, the highlighting of the knotholes to the arbitrary, since chance determined their placement and size. The painted plugs can be read as funny or touching, suggesting raindrops or tears. By painting the plugs, Levine emphasizes that something once filled them, suggesting absence. This absence is the subject of these paintings, as it had been in much of Levine's previous work. The shapes of the knotholes present a decidedly female imagery. Gilded or painted, then framed and put behind glass, they suggest traditional symbols of female sexuality – desirable but unattainable. This series thus suggests a link between absence as the subject of her work, desire for possession, and unfulfilled sexual longing.¹

Whew! Funny and touching they may be as abstract paintings that are pretty much 'found' and slightly altered. The materials (the ply) could be said to be appropriated in a similar manner to Levine's re-photographing of classic photographs by Americans including Edward Weston and Walker Evans. 'Much of her work' says Rosenzweig, 'was interpreted as a commentary on the death of Modernism and its belief in high ideals and artistic originality as well as on art's status as a commodity (her subjects were always reproductions, not the original works of art).'² Yes, but these funny abstract paintings are originals, at least to the degree that Levine has transformed these



Untitled (2004) acrylic and coloured pencil on plywood, 80 x 55cm.

sheets of ply into actual objects of art by applying some paint (and framing them).

The plywood paintings are funny; they are like a cartoon version of modern art. Tellingly, in the early 1990s Levine produced a series of paintings on ply that re-presented images from 1913-14 Krazy Kat comic strips by George Herri Itman. The masochistic relationship between Krazy Kat and Ignatz Mouse is distilled by Levine to single frames: like the one of Krazy Kat being hit in the back of the head by a brick (thrown by Ignatz). So there's a basic joke here too. The painting is funny because of its slapstick imagery, and it's funny because to make serious art about cartoons and jokes is kind of funny too, right?

American artist Richard Prince's 1989 painting *Drink Canada Dry* is text on a green background that reads: 'My father was never home, he was always drinking booze. He saw a sign saying DRINK CANADA DRY. So he went up there.' That's funny too, right? The joke is funny and groan-worthy because of its old-style humour and sweet too because of its innocence. But Prince's use of the joke (and of classic *New Yorker*

magazine style cartoons) is a conceptual ploy isn't it? He's on about reproducibility and conceptual art stuff. When Steve Lafreniere asked Richard Prince: 'Have you ever thought of your work as abstract?' Prince replied: 'The 'Joke' paintings are abstract. Especially in Europe, if you can't speak English.'³

But some of Richard Prince's work is abstract in the other sense. That is, he smears paint around on a canvas and calls it art. His recent 2003 series of *Nurse Paintings* use digitally printed scans of covers of 'medical romance' novels which he then works over with layers of smeary paint. And his recent *White Paintings* layer photographic imagery with cartoon jokes and smeary paint like Robert Rauschenberg's silkscreen paintings of the early 1960s.⁴

There's something really beautiful about the comic splat. In 2000 American artist Christopher Wool made a whole series of enamel on rice-paper paintings called *9th Street Run Down*, which were beautiful smeary splats of paint, some actual splats, some silkscreen prints of splats, and some layers of both.⁵ But these Christopher Wool paintings somehow evoke something obviously comic and, get ready, something entirely mystical, like a tough and lush Jackson Pollock.

American artist Mike Kelley's *Garbage Drawings* of the late 1980s are splats too, but rendered in comic-book style, so they are splatty drawings of splatty garbage, sometimes with apple-cores and tin-cans amongst the blobby stuff. The garbage is taken from details from the 1940s comic strip *Sad Sack* by George Baker. (After working for Disney in the 1930s, Baker was inducted into the army in 1941, where most of his evenings were 'spent drawing cartoons of army life using the Sad Sack as the bewildered civilian try to be a soldier.'⁶)

There's that re-presentation thing again, making these works abstract (as in conceptual) as well as abstract (as in messy). As is Kelley's wont (and vectoring with the 'mysticism' of those Christopher Wool splats), he places the *Garbage Drawings* squarely into a dialogue about transcendence. Interviewed by Robert Storr in 1994, Mike Kelley says:

I thought about the garbage works and the blob works very much within the discourse of the sublime. When I did the garbage drawings I was fascinated by a text about the sublime which talked about something called a 'spot syndrome.' It crops up in Romantic painting, for example in Turner's big landscapes, which generally have little figures or focal points to prevent complete undifferentiation or complete falling into chaos. You could go back to this spot and that was your grounding mark. For me the cans and the carrots and the corncocks in the garbage drawings are the grounding marks.⁷

In her introduction for the catalogue of Mike Kelley's 1993-94 survey exhibition organized by the Whitney Museum of American Art, Elisabeth Sussman says that: 'Garbage as waste has scatological implications, and excrement and other bodily excreta have made continuous appearances in Kelley's work.'⁸ In 1990 Kelley made a work called *Nostalgic Depiction of the Innocence of Childhood* which was a photo of a naked man and woman using plush toys in a kind of auto-erotic game-play. The man's ass is smeared with some shit-like substance. For the cover of their 1992 CD *Dirty*, the band Sonic Youth used a Kelley work called *Ahh... Youth!* of 1991. This was a series of portraits of home-made plush toys, and one of Kelley



Power Plant (2004) acrylic on board, plywood, 130 x 100cm.

taken when he was a teenager. The photo of the man and woman having 'sex' with the plush toys was also included in the CD packaging. Kim Gordon, of Sonic Youth, said that: 'The 'dirty' photo by Mike Kelley is shocking because we see a naked man and a naked woman doing something unconventional. They're not having sex with each other, but are stimulating themselves with inanimate objects. And someone saw it. That's very rock and roll.'⁹ Coincidentally (or not), Sonic Youth's 2004 CD *Sonic Nurse* uses a detail of a Richard Prince *Nurse Painting*.

Kelley's 'dirty' photo might be very rock and roll, and it is scatological too (as opposed to the vectoring of pissing and abstraction in Jackson Pollock's paintings, and Andy Warhol's *Oxidation Paintings* of the late 1970s where he'd get dudes to piss on copper-prepared canvases to make pretty patterns). Kelley's work has been theorized as abject too. Simon Taylor wrote of this regard as follows:

The found, handmade stuffed animals (Kelley) uses in his sculptures, ordinarily considered too trivial or unworthy to be seen in an art context, represent the epitome of low ('white trash', infantile, and regressive) culture. The disturbing proportions of these 'humanoid morphologies', as Kelley calls them, appear to reflect the self-images of anonymous makers. The animals and afghans are often dirty, soiled with the infant's bodily spit, urine and feces. We may describe these toys, to invoke the term of D.W. Winnicott, as 'transitional objects' in so far as they represent the outward trajectory in the infant's subjectivity.¹⁰

So there's abjection, two kinds of abstraction, and infantilism. But it's still funny. Kelley's 1991 painting on paper called *Minor Infraction* is two big black blobs and one little blob in the lower left corner, all emanating cartoon 'steam' or 'stink', and the big blobs say CHURCH and STATE and the little blob says MASTURBATION.

Australian artist Stuart Bailey's work can be understood within this grand tradition. It's all there:



the funny and touching abstract art of plywood and fake wood grain, the comic book references and slapstick jokes (stinky socks and lolling tongue), and visual and linguistic puns ('Sticky Palms'). Bronwen Sandland has written that 'Bailey's compositions are jarring and nonsensical,' and that 'Repetition and inevitability are the basis of most children's cartoons.'¹¹ One of my favourite works of Bailey's is *Power Plant 2004*, which is a kind of palm tree made from panels of wood. The trunk is a section of raw ply, the leaves are a kind of black silhouette against a pink background, there are two 'coconuts' under the leaves, and the thing has a clenched fist as a capital. It's like the tree is asserting defiance and revolution, but there's also a visual gag, if you consider the 'coconuts' as testicles.

In his 1979 book *Jokes: Form, Content, Use and Function*, Christopher P. Wilson suggests that: 'art and humour have comparable form but differ in the significance of their raw materials. Art is constructed from serious stuff, but humour, once comprehended, is neutral.'¹² But he's a bit clearer on dirty jokes:

Freud suggested that voyeurism and innuendo combined in a form of joking that he termed 'smut' were employed to convey sexual attraction. By referring to the audience in a sexual context, or by proposing a sexual relationship, the joker may signal his sexual attraction. If the sexual proposition expressed in 'smut' is unsuccessful then, according to Freud, the excitement generated provides an alternative end in itself. The means may ritualistically become the goal, and the individual may continue to excite himself with further smuttiness.¹³

Right. That explains everything.

Notes

1. Phyllis Rosenzweig, 'Sherrie Levine: Objects of Desire', in Susan Krane and Phyllis Rosenzweig, *Sherrie Levine*, High Museum of

Sticky Palms (2003) acrylic, vinyl and marker on wall. Installed at TCB Art Inc.

- Art and Hirshorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, 1988, pp.10-11.
2. Phyllis Rosenzweig, *ibid*, p.10.
3. 'Richard Prince talks to Steve Lafreniere', *Artforum*, March 2003, p.71.
4. See <http://www.richardprinceart.com>
5. See *Christopher Wool: 9th Street Run Down*, Edition 7L/Steidl, Paris, 2001.
6. George Baker, 1944. <http://www.sadsack.org/GBaker.htm>
7. Mike Kelley interviewed by Robert Storr, *Art in America*, June 1994, p.92.
8. Elisabeth Sussman, 'Introduction', in Elisabeth Sussman, *Mike Kelley: Catholic Tastes*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, 1993, p.29.
9. Kim Gordon, 'Is It My Body?', in Elisabeth Sussman, *ibid*, p.182.
10. Simon Taylor, 'The Phobic Object: Abjection in Contemporary Art', in *Abject Art: Repulsion and Desire in American Art*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, 1993, p.69.
11. Bronwen Sandland, 'Woodpecker', *FYA*, Canberra Contemporary Art Space, Canberra, 2001, p.23.
12. Christopher P. Wilson, *Jokes: Form, Content, Use and Function*, European Association of Experimental Social Psychology and Academic Press, London, 1979, p.31.
13. Christopher P. Wilson, *ibid*, p.173-74.

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www.stuartbailey.info

Swell maps: the pros of limits

Gwynneth Porter questions Natural Selection designer Warren Olds under duress about the Art Forum Berlin session “Publishing Without Limits: New Directions for Art Magazines” he attended in August. It featured panellists Gabriel Kuri – Casper magazine, Mexico; Power Ekroth – SITE magazine, Stockholm; Mircea Cantor – Version artist-run magazine, Bucharest; Massimiliano Gioni – Charley, New York/Milan; and moderator Anton Vidokle – e-flux, New York.

Gwynneth Porter: I thought “Publications without Limits” sounded interesting as an Arcadian (or, on the other hand, difficulty adverse?) proposition, but I wasn’t sure what it was really supposed to be about. You were there, what was it to address? (I know you are over-worked, but I thought it would be interesting for us to discuss this given that NS4 is being launched at an exhibition about self-organised publications projects¹...)

Warren Olds: I can tell you exactly if you like [quotes from the blurb]:

Rattling the chains of art magazine publishing recently has been the advent of a number of new publications whose innovations and experiments are reinventing the idea of the art magazine. Of these new journals, some have been initiated by artists in places with little access to mainstream magazines – Version from Bucharest, e.g. – while others, such as Charley, which digests and processes images, artworks, articles and previously published materials, in order to reshuffle and re-interpret information, change content and format at each and every appearance. Still others, resolved not to concern themselves with alienating readers, provide challenging theoretical content – SITE, from Stockholm, is a good example – or deconstruct the magazine format entirely. What all these new ventures have in common is their desire to bypass the limitations of conventional art publishing – e.g. distribution, circulation, structure, content complexity and nominal intellectual demands made on the readers – by re-envisioning and reinventing the hidebound practices of mainstream art magazines. Our panel takes a close look at these new publications and engages their editors in a critical discussion.

There was a bit on the proceedings where the title was talked about. The Italian guy in New York from Charley said [note with tolerance that I am recollecting this from memory and from a hastily reviewed mp3 file] that many interesting art magazines are born because of limits. The biggest limit actually being money. He talked about this as something that is struggled with by people who set up magazines, but that there is also a compelling freedom in publishers not wanting to invest a cent in someone’s magazine ideas.

Initially Charley was conceived of as less of a book or a publication, but a space, a place in which things could happen. Conceiving of it in this way allowed them to come up with the idea of a magazine where every issue reinvents itself. The basic idea of Charley is that he has no fixed format, no fixed content, except that he has to be art. He has no deadlines. When they want, they do a magazine.

Masculinising the pronoun is lovely in Europe isn’t it? I wonder how talking like that affects people – thinking of inanimate objects as masculine and feminine. Perhaps they are. She, the table... Does chivalry apply to furniture I wonder.

I dunno.

He said they set themselves some limits; and that limits have creative potential – when you have a problem, you have to find a solution. The magazine had to be extremely cheap, costing the least possible to be produced. Every issue had to be a do-it-yourself desktop publishing project. The name came about to suggest an ordinary person. He had to be based on recycling. Based entirely on recycling. Everything has already been published elsewhere, used by someone else. Which made sense coming from a place like New York where there is so much art publishing. Charley could be a place where things are digested.

That’s kind of like Warhol’s idea of left-overs – if you change your desire to match what is available as left-overs, you will always have whatever you want.

I often forget to make leftovers... But yes – if you set yourself some limits, or rules, you end up having to do it.

I also liked how he said he, Charley, was not supposed to be about them, but about what they do not know. Their role was talked about as gathering material and creating visual tensions. They try not to impose taste. It’s not about who is hot, who you should buy, who you should forget... (Charley 3 was devoted to recycling material from the 80s, focusing on artists hyped at the time but since forgotten – artists who didn’t make the reconstructed version of the 80s that Artforum was undertaking, coincidentally, at the same time.)

That runs up against the idea the all content must reflect the position of the editors, and material should be edited accordingly, and a homogenised voice established. Seeking out what they do not already know is a much more teachable editorial stance, a sort of radical curiosity...

Perhaps, their focus is more on the process rather than the product. It’s the opposite of the second habit of highly effective people (to begin with the end in mind).²

They also run a gallery that they got for free – they don’t buy sell or deal, just show.

I like how it’s just thought of as opening space generally, this project.

Did any discussion of limits really get going on the whole?

Well the guy from Version (from Romania, based in Paris) said that their magazine came from the question why do students not have a space to show? This led to a magazine initially called “no name” magazine.

That was the name of a cruiser club in Christchurch. There is also that idea that avoiding being named or classified is a way of ducking out of integrating processes...

Version can be downloaded for free. It was done with their pocket money, he said.

Really, without limits, it was one of those classic kind of debate titles where they try to be controversial. But it's difficult to think about it in the “no limits” sense because you have to have limits. If you don't have limits I'm not sure what you'd end up with –maybe a lifestyle magazine?

Mostly it was a show-and-tell type thing. The way it was sort of formatted... I guess the idea was that each presenter would talk about their magazine, and this would be followed by a broader discussion. But after about two hours of this – well it was actually 1hr 16mins – no-one wants to have much of a discussion. And audiences usually ask weird self-interest questions. Those panel things are always a bit hit and miss. This was a pretty good one though – lots of stuff packed in there, even if it didn't get discussed much.

What were some things you noticed though?

Version magazine was set up by a bunch of people who had just graduated and wanted to start a magazine. In many ways I got the sense of a fair bit of self-interest in the process of doing that.

With Version or all of them?

All of them really. The people from Casper and from Charley and the Version people are all practising artists. [Site is, their rep said, about art theory and nothing else, and in some ways the most traditional magazine there. Not really an art magazine, but they do think that art is the only meta-structure of reality. Because it has 6-point type no one reads them, she said, so they can put any kind of text in they want. It is financed by collaboration. Quarterly funding is compulsory to get Swedish funding. It can be downloaded but because it is in 6pt you probably won't be able to read it, she said.] That was something I wondered, if, in part, their magazine was a way of disseminating their practice, or promoting it. Traditionally you would say you're not respecting 'the magazine', but really they just support each other.

I've never been that convinced by the idea of objectivity or critical distance in art writing. I think a lot of artists, too, are attracted to the idea of cutting out the middle-man generally, and establishing more suitable contexts for their work.

The Charley guy talked about it as setting up their own space, the fact that they didn't have a space to do what they wanted to do. Their practice has limits placed on it that usually wouldn't extend to publishing, but it means they have to look elsewhere, generally.

An inverse relationship to real estate economics maybe...

Well, yeah, but there has always been publishing in relation to art. The e-flux guy introduced the panel by talking really interestingly about the history of avant-garde art journals and how they had the most fantastic eccentric forms, from being secret societies, to being projects to create new kinds of human beings. He specifically wanted to undermine the idea that magazines are glossy, web-offset, A4ish sized things...

He also talked about how Fluxus came out of a meeting of Lithuanian immigrants in New York – originally a cultural club was proposed, and then a magazine was mooted which is where the name Fluxus came from. Vidokle thought it was interesting to consider this in light of Fluxus' future activities – multiples, ephemera, publications, almanacs, concerts, performances and happenings... He compared this to how Rosalind Krauss described extended cinema in her Voyage on the North Sea – how the medium's aggregate condition led to a slightly later generation of theorists finding support for the compound idea of the apparatus: the medium or support for film being neither the celluloid strip of the images nor the camera that filmed it; not the projector that brings them to life, nor the beam of light that relays them to the screen, and not the screen itself, but all of this taken together including the audience and its position, caught behind the source of light behind it and the image projected before our eyes...

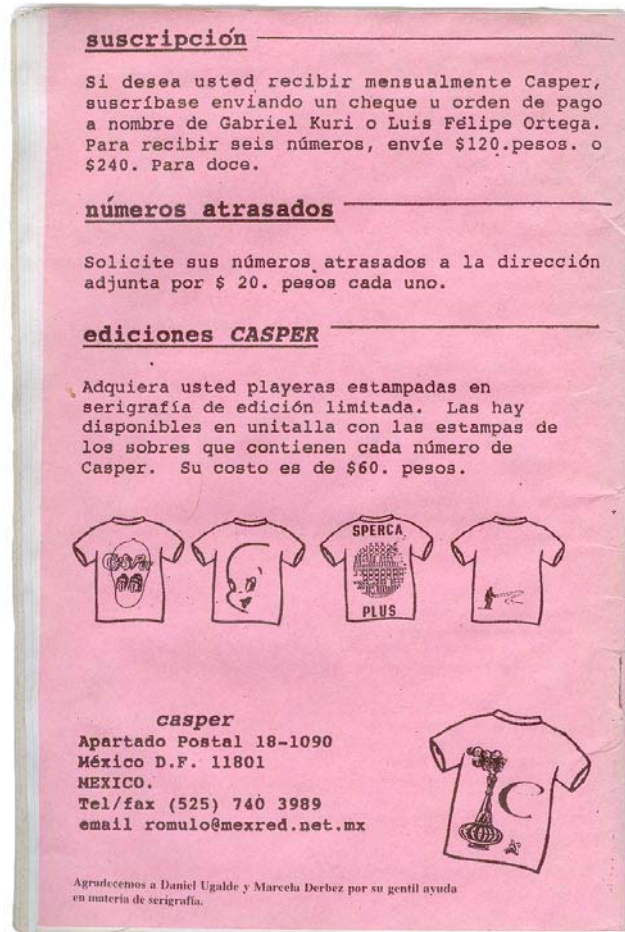
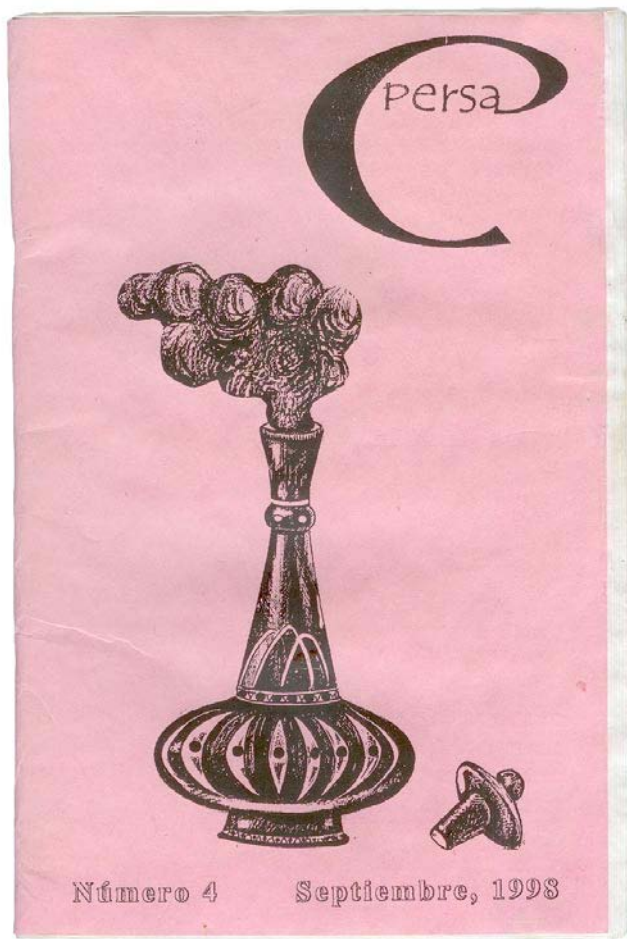
He talked about e-flux as being, similarly, a kind of expanded publication, to (quoting Molly Nesbit) fulfill a desire that art takes on the characteristics of all forms of social life.

He said when people ask him what e-flux is, he always gets thrown off by the question – it isn't a website, although they do have one. It isn't an advertising agency but they do publicise projects. It isn't a mailing list, although they do have a very large one. It isn't an NGO, although they sponsor more things than they probably should, he says. It is not a publisher, although they publish books. It is not a gallery but they have just opened a space that will house for a period their Video Rental project.

I like that refusal to identify itself at the same time as operating very widely and particularly. I like the chimeric potential of web projects – conveniently invisible and uncontrollable entities/communities...

Someone did say that by calling yourself a magazine are you placing a limit on yourself, and one of the panelists said, “but we wanted to make a magazine”.

There was discussion of establishment art magazines and the limits they place upon themselves – is there a limit between the editorial limits and economic limits, and how these have become conflated – those “not economically viable” reasons for making decisions. Does the magazine then end up being a big monster that rolls along not being that useful to anyone. I dunno. Usually in a magazine you have a redesign every now and again. Often this comes with an editorial revival. I mean Artforum went through that in the early 90s where they became more of a style mag, with film and music, thinking that this was a way of broadening their market. But it sort of dilutes it as well. It ignores that fact that people might read more than one magazine.



There was also a small amount of discussion about distribution...

For print mags?

Yeah, distribution being a problem, about it costing money. And a question about whether this resulted in a closed audience. Distribution was also talked of as being a kind of promotion in itself, and costing money accordingly.

The Charley guy talked about their use of existing magazine distribution channels. Somebody takes care of this. They didn't see the need to reinvent the way magazines are distributed.

Did they talk about the internet much? I mean three of the four magazines at the forum make great use of it...

They talked about the immediacy of print. But it was discussed in terms of the digital adding something to the possibilities of print rather than replacing something...

Do online magazines suck?

I like the idea that when something is printed out, it can be read in more than one chair.

Or, for laptop people, that reading can happen away from electrical devices and their hum. Or in bed without deleting the libido. I mean laptops are worse than TVs in the bedroom. I mean it has to stop somewhere. Also, I think there is a certain

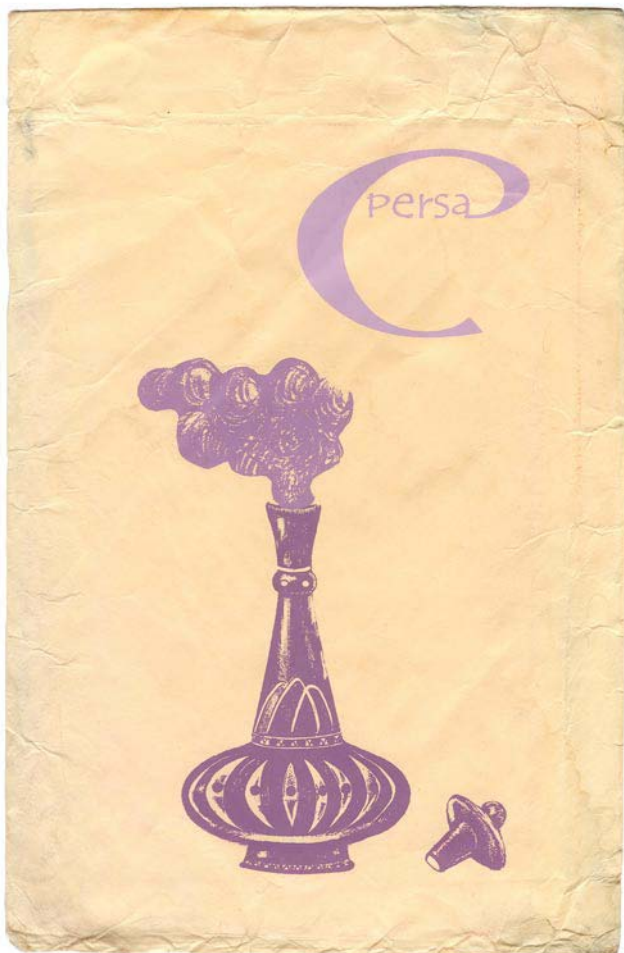
Left & Right: Front and back covers from issue #4 of Casper.

ocular nausea associated with screens...

As far as limits go, they tilted at talking about relationships with money, and homogenisation. Did they talk about criticality in relation to art magazines?

I'm attracted to an idea of post-criticality I read into an Interactivist Info Exchange posting (Tiqqun, "How To?"). It said "Critique has become vain because it amounts to an absence. (...) It reproduces absence. It speaks to us from where we are not. It propels us elsewhere. It consumes us. It is craven. (...) Rather than new critiques, it is new cartographies we need. Not cartographies of Empire, but of the lines of flight out of it. How to? We need maps. Not maps of what is off the map. But navigating maps. Maritime maps. Orientation tools. That do not try to explain or represent what lies inside of the different archipelagos of desertion, but indicate how to join them..."

I read this as suggesting that movement forward might not come out of doing negative inventories on things one hates, as this just mires one in that that is being critiqued. Better to excitedly and energetically explore that which seems to represent some sort of solution; something that is of value, or that might show the way - criticism as "swell maps" of the what's-good-now? I don't think this necessarily has anything to do with the old adage "if you have nothing good to say, don't



The envelope from issue #4 of Casper.

say anything at all". That has had way too much mileage here.

Well, I didn't get the sense that those on the panel had been forced into making their magazine or that they felt answerable to anybody. Overall their content and editorial decisions seemed more push than pull – not much bad energy at all really... Although one coked-up-seeming Berlin dealer took issue with the moderator's lengthy introduction, ironically asking him to speed up the reading of it. After agreeing to slow it down, he took up reading again at the same pace.

Did they speculate much about the future of art mags? I ask this because I was wondering a little while ago about something Alan Kaprow said about how the future of art (in a discussion with Robert Smithson in the late 60s called "What is a Museum?") that seemed to me to have interesting implications, or, rather, bode well for spirited art magazines:

My opinion has been, lately, that there are only two outs: one implying a maximum of inertia, which I call 'idea' art, art which is usually only discussed now and then and never executed; and the other existing in a maximum of continuous activity, activity which is of uncertain aesthetic value and locates itself apart from cultural institutions. The minute we operate in between these extremes we get hung up (in a museum).

The magazine existing in the realm of the hypothetical, or something, where discourse and uncertainty are valued...

As far as the future goes, Casper is re-appearing as an insert in a mainstream newspaper. The Site magazine lady talked about how they are publishing "lost" writings...

What was the highlight?

The Casper guy's manifesto... I think we could just insert it here because they plagiarise so gleefully themselves.

Sure. Tessa gave me a couple of copies of Casper back in 1999 that she brought back to New Zealand, but she had them in her backpack at the gathering the year it rained a lot and by the time they got to me they were very wavy. But the aesthetic was excellent (they seem to suit being bashed) and I immediately loved the "I dream of Jeannie" cover and the Louise XVI chair fake tattoo giveaway. A lot of it I couldn't understand because it was in Spanish, but the content I could was very excitable and a real mash-up of enthusiasms and teathy commentary. I especially loved the friendly ghost title – it gave the whole thing an imaginary or supernatural status; even undead. The way they kept changing the title by mixing up the letters of Casper was ace too. It seemed to run quickly ahead and defy the way things can become fashionable and unfashionable by being identifiable and easily available. But most of all I liked its flagrancy and liberty; how Casper as a name suggests things that cannot be killed and (i.e. we can't be killed either because we don't need anyone else's cash).

Here goes:

Casper begins not; it only restarts. This magazine supplement has lived, half-died and has reborn more than once. Casper, Sperca, Pescar, Persac, Pacers, Scrape has as many lives as it has combinations of its constituent letters and takes that shape dictated by necessity, and necessities of light doses of Caprice. This initiative of four artists – Daniel Guzmán, Gabriel Kuri, Damián Ortega and Luis Felipe Ortega – has not been miraculous, nor heroic. We did not invent boiling water, nor do we split the water in two but we do what it takes for it to be channelled into the pipeline. We do not want others to channel it for us. We do not believe in the possibility of occupying other running publication spaces. We do not believe in the conviviality of visual arts with almost anything. We do not believe that what concerns us as artists is being discussed seriously enough, nor humorously enough. We do not believe in many things but we do believe in re-incarnation. This is why we choose an organism that, starting with its name, is capable of re-invention. Casper is again a monthly project that will live for one year. We hereby announce its pending death so that it will not be interpreted as premature but more importantly so that whoever wants to get involved understands the gift of its scheduled life as one that should be lived with urgency and plenitude before convention catches up with it. The spirit of Casper, or Casper as a spirit, feeds off collaboration. We would like to channel the energies and efforts of our colleagues. We would like to disseminate information, and consume it. We would like to do this all seriously. We want to do it and why not have fun as well? We demand control over the voice but also over the tone of it, and we know that in order to do so we must open some doors, close others and allow others to be opened only by secret code. The first step to democratise the flux of information, and particularly the one that concerns and interests us, is assuming that democracy is not possible. We do not want to create consensus. We only hope to be responsible in our

nepotism. We do not want to professionalise our task but we do want to play rather seriously.

– Tentative manifesto of August 17th 2004, to appear on the front page of re-launch of Casper as a supplement insert in a major circulation Mexican newspaper.

I like how they don't have a website. Professionalism is indeed a scourge. (It is said that the history of professionalism dates back to Machiavelli.) I also love the conflation of high seriousness and high humour.

He gave some history... Casper was a monthly magazine that was produced in Mexico City between 1998-89. Produced manually and available by mail-order. Distributed to a handful of international outlets further afield. Original and plagiarised material was gathered together, neatly photocopied and sold for 30 pesos. It was deemed important that it was not given away for free so some sort of contract was sealed between producer and consumer. A magazine made by artists about art, and other topics – literature, politics, the pathetic state of Mexican comedy on TV... It came out of discussions between the people making it. Each item was printed as though it was being thrown into a conversation, somewhat like speaking out in print.

It was announced at the outset that there would be only 13 numbers, and then mutate into another form, as yet unknown. The letters were shifted in each title so it became a graphic and phonetic deception in 13 parts. Their credo (if there ever was one, he said) was having non-discriminatory attitude towards the source. They treated with equality original material and plagiarised material. Casper remains an exercise in distributing printed words as well as images, posters, stickers and other trinkets. They made a decision to not compromise the length of features, because to some extent the limits of magazines often dictate content in ways that is not very good.

It was set up initially as a response to a lack of printed critique. The same lack exists, of critical thought, so they thought a magazine produced and consumed by the art community doesn't seem to be a challenge any longer. This is why they decided to shift their energies to producing a supplement for a Mexican newspaper. They have a distaste for how art gets mentioned in one or two pages in style magazines sandwiched between an ad and a bar review. It is important, in their minds, to resist this kind of commodification; the all-engulfing element of style – the way pop culture assimilates art. It's important that art does not resist in the same terms. Art must arrange its forms constantly, reassess their own forms rather than adapt to existing circulation systems. The political efficacy of magazines depends on time but not novelty even though this might sound like a contradiction.

He ended up by saying that they are stripping the word to its phonetic constituents, and the image to its photocopy and newspaper-friendly inkblots...

Tricks have become necessary in order to gain ground, mercurially...

In the interests of getting behind what you like in the way of publications, what were highlights of your time in Holland/Belgium/Germany?

Well, we ended up discovering some wonderful people who run the Hotel Maria Kapel in the sleepy port town of Hoorn. A hotel/residency for artists with a medieval chapel as an exhibition space. When we stayed, there was an exhibition by a Glaswegian collective called Something Haptic. Their work was a life-size section of a ferris wheel, and I discovered they also operate a not-for-profit publishing house called Trajectory. Its focus is on artists' books of any form. They also do this thing called Number where they take 600-800 word submissions and publish them as complimentary or contrasting pairs. We are hoping to promote the free dissemination of opinion, and as such the project receives no funding, and neither pays nor charges fees of any kind, they say. I also came across another small art publishing house based in Amsterdam (ROMA Publications). I found the existence of these initiatives encouraging.

It would be great to see more of that happening here. It doesn't need to break the bank, does it?

Not necessarily.

What did I miss while I was away?

Well now that you live over the road from us, you know the park down the road? Well, in January, I was over there walking up that kind of abandoned bit where the steps go up to Hopetoun St. I was looking at the ground and trying to ignore this horrible smell, kind of poo, kind of rotting animal, but not convincingly either. I saw some red and pink and white spotted orchid-like flowers scattered on the ground under these big trees and I thought to myself that I had never seen flowers like them before and wondered what on earth trees they fell from. Some sub-tropical plant my temperate mind imagined. Upon close inspection I realised that they grew straight out of the ground. I mean sweet-smelling naked ladies grow out of the ground on stems with no leaves, but there weren't even any stems. And it was the flowers that were emitting the awful smell – there were even dabs of greeny-black sticky stuff on them that said smeary shit to me. I could see that one of them was coming out of a testicular pouch that was visible in the decomposing leaf matter they were growing out of. I told Tessa about it and she found out that they are funguses whose Latin name translates to 'Disgusting Red'. Next year I'll let you know when they are up again.

Cracker.

Notes

1. *Sharp Shooting: self-published journals, zines, posters and ephemera by artists and designers*, St Paul St gallery, Auckland University of Technology, 13 April – 14 May, 2005.
2. Stephen R. Covey, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 1989.

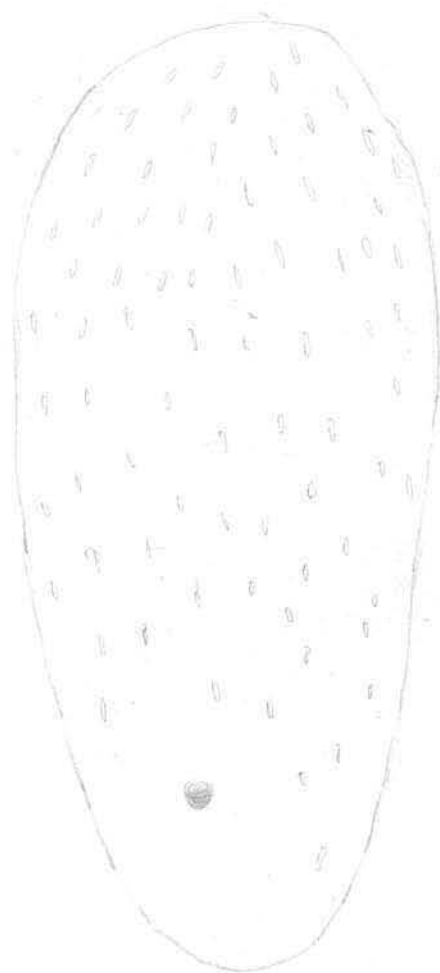
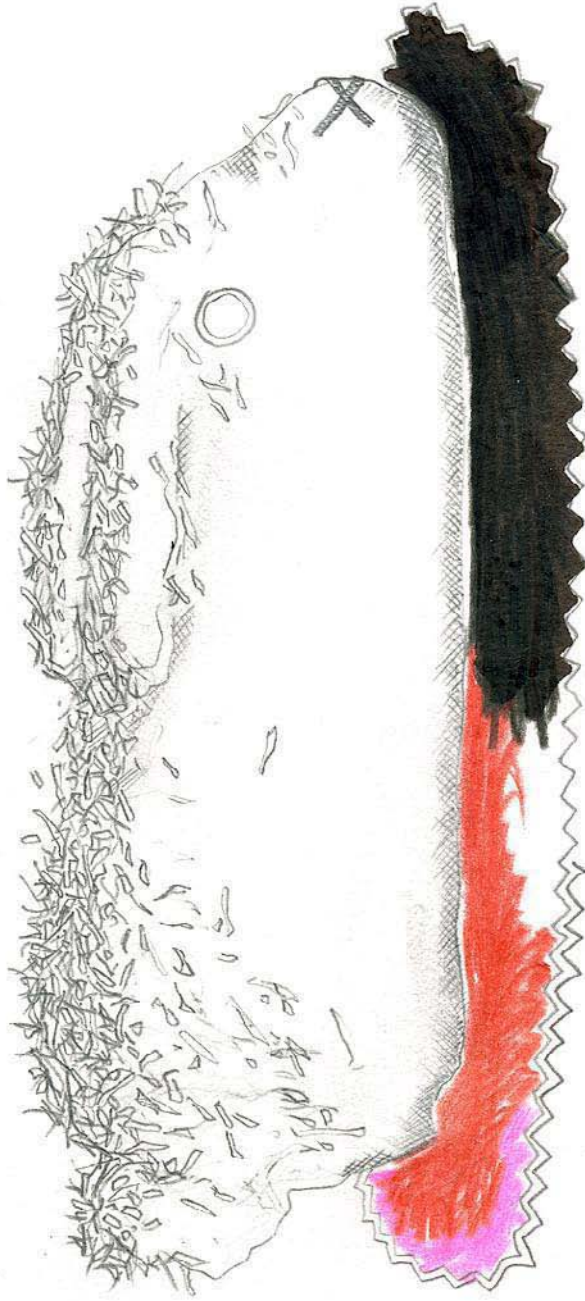


Fig. 1 Soft animal

Fig I (S1 Animal)



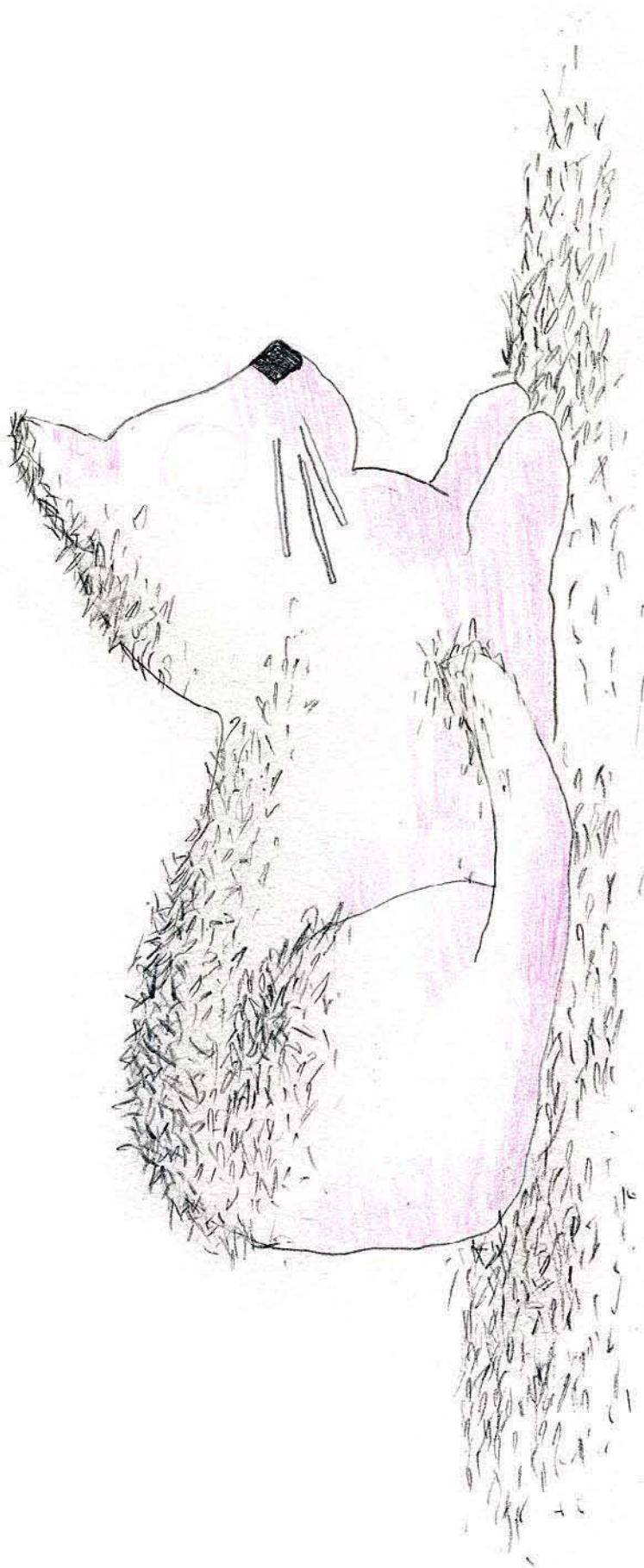


Fig II
Teleuthetic Animal

fig 2 telepathic animal

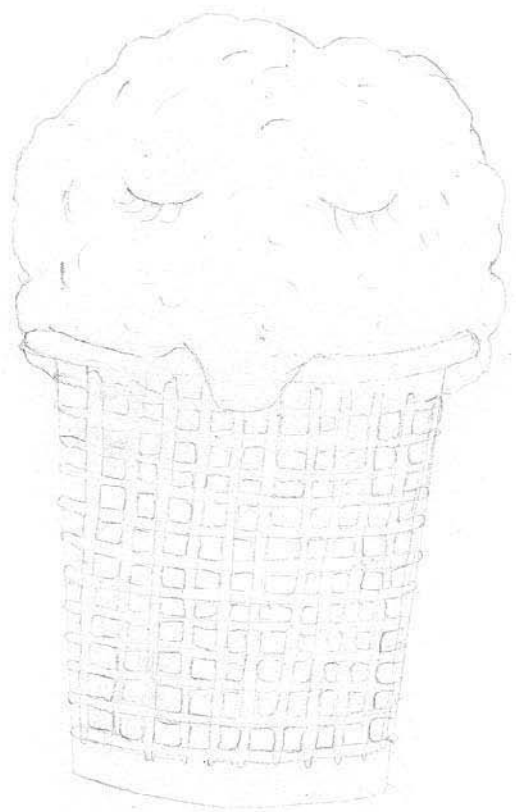


Fig III :
Telepathic Animal.

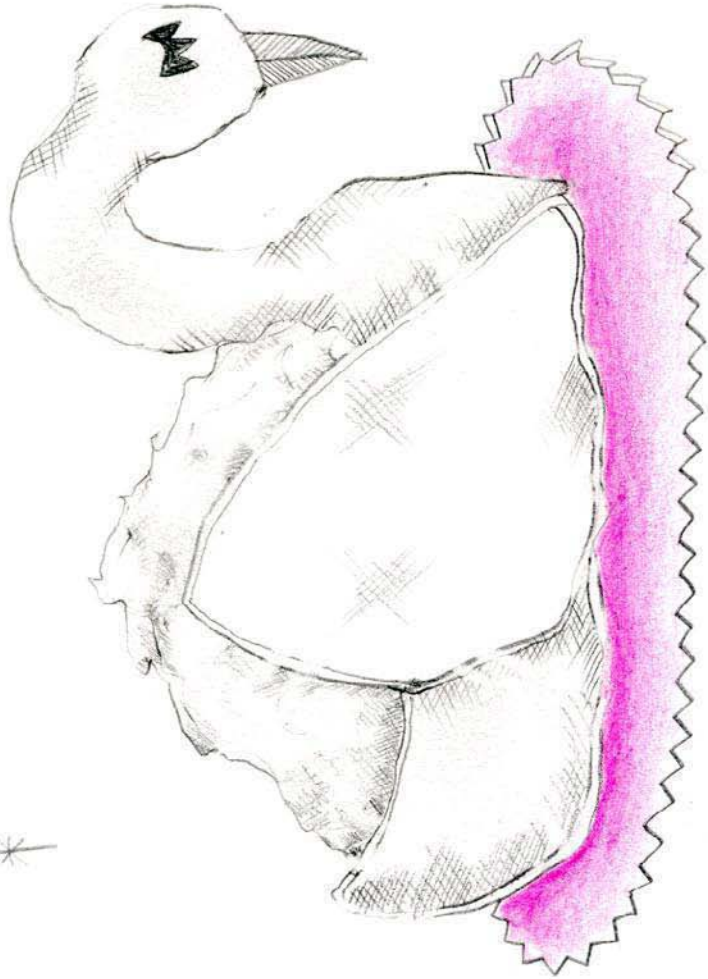
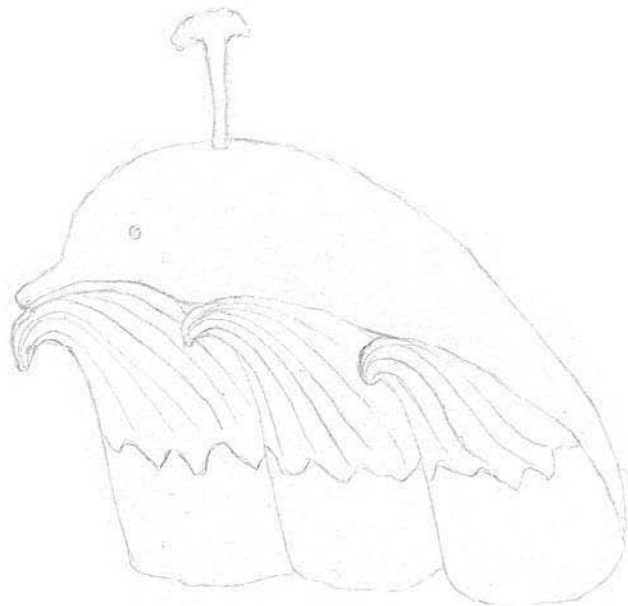


fig 3 telepathic animal



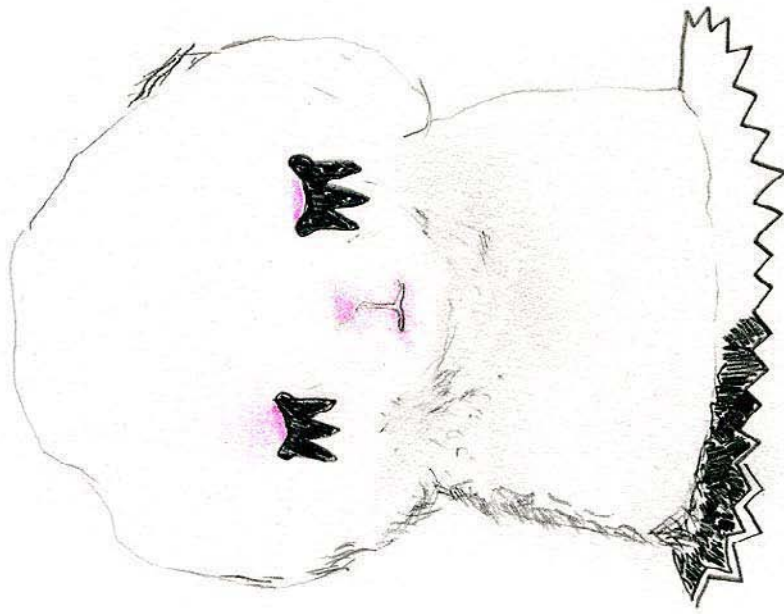


Fig IV (Hlygrail)

fig 4 telepathic animal dream creature



Fig 14.7

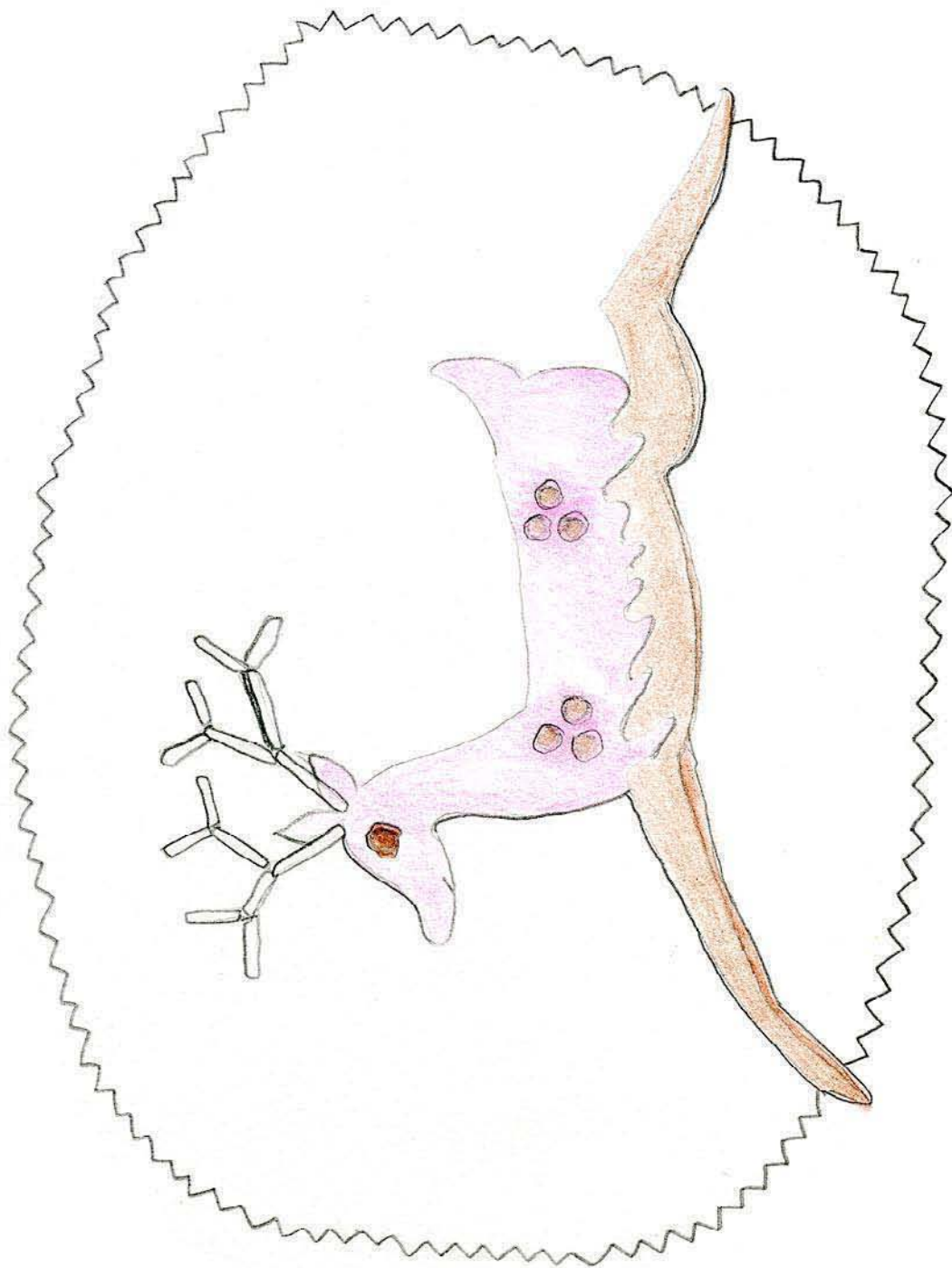
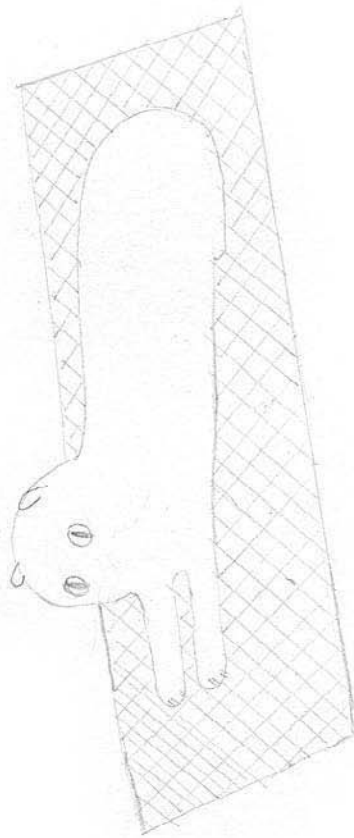


fig 5 telepathic animal



Let's Have a WRITING ABOUT ART Problem!

Dianne Peacock *A Dreaded Sunny Day* and Charlotte Hallows *On Mysticism and the Death of Art*, West Space, Melbourne February 2005.

Let's Have a Problem was the title of Cobra Killer's opening song at their show at Revolver, Melbourne, December 2004.

Charlotte Hallows: Yes Cobra Killer prompted me to return to problems: modernism, art education and psychology – a mindset that there is a problem that must be fixed – to be human is to have a problem. I'm also reminded of Kathy Temin's early Problems and Robyn McKenzie's approach to these problems as a return to the infantile body, repressed by formalist purity and autonomy-kitsch and mess¹. Cobra Killer are quite infantile but also brutal. When we saw them at Revolver it was like participating in a ritual while engaging in wild discourse about cultural resistance and feminine transgression as a practice. You raised issues of a kind of neediness in artists in relation to writing and critical recognition. And we discussed this idea of "stuff" – art matter and emotional matter.

And another problem which has interested your research and writing concerns "animals in art". I have started to also consider the problem posed when animals make art in relation to how humans perceive them – monkeys, elephants etc.

And finally another problem we have recently raised: the fate of modern Afghan architecture.

So returning to writing – you are prompted by ambivalence toward writing, by the problem of the artist's statement and on writing and architecture as a critical frame for experiencing architecture. Reading is also a productive site and practice – heterogeneous, imaginary and expressive.

Dianne Peacock: I thought Cobra Killer wanted to make a problem of their relationship to us, the audience, in their wild business. What vixens!

I am learning about artists' written statements in the gallery by noticing how everyone else does them when they have an exhibition. Some strike me as narcissistic, others as an essential part of the work.

You say all these artists recently hit on you to write about their shows and that you have had to reject the implication that as a committee member of an artist-run space, you would write about artists showing there, including committee members. Did committee members ask you to write about their work? I thought reviewers were meant to independently select their subjects. Is there a difference between "writing about" and reviewing? It's as if we're all friends now, so it's ok. You noticed that writing about art is considered hot now. Is it hotter to write about art or about the artist? Is enthusiasm greater for being written about

than for reading what is written?

I counted 41 animals out of a total of about 420 works in the art at West Space's 2004 fundraiser show, that's about 10% animals, but I think people are gaining ground as subjects. Last weekend I saw some good portrait stencils of local gangsters Gatto and Williams.

I don't know about modern Afghan architecture, just that a friend of mine employed an Afghan refugee architect last year.

Hey Dianne.

Former committee members and partners of committee members asked me straight out to review their work. It seemed like a really unequal relationship with no consideration for anything creative, intellectual or ethical – just free publicity. At the moment the space is committed to writing about art but only for the promotion of its brand name.

Yes, I think writing about art is hot, which is interesting, when once artists used to hate critics and when artists used to hate writing and just wanted to make art. I have had artists tell me that they would never read writing about their art.

I supposed you have touched on notions of how we think of community and network.

I've recently been thinking about the pet dwarfs in Baroque palaces.

Dwarfs like in Tiepolo's Banquet of Cleopatra?

I was thinking of community and networking and the way it operates in the Melbourne art I encounter and in Melbourne architecture. What do you hope to find in the artist / critic exchange?

Yes, dwarfs who are present, visible but not equal participants in the spectacle of the court-performers. I think it also raises questions about friendship and hope? I have often seen the relationship between an artist and a writer as potentially cathartic and therapeutic for both parties – that they are able to speak and listen to each other and voice their hopes. This is often a temporary exchange – not an ongoing relationship – a temporary community.

Is this about dwarfs writing? Artists now need to write for each other.

There are dwarfs in Ingmar Bergman's film "The Silence" – very grotesque and carnivalesque. They reminded me of Velasquez.

Hi Charlotte.

I want to talk about your installation and its artist's statement. Here goes:



Dianne Peacock *A Dreaded Sunny Day* (2005) West Space, Melbourne.
Photograph by David Marks.

I was intrigued by the combination of works in *On Mysticism and the Death of Art* but couldn't understand why Trčka's Egon Schiele portraits, woolly pom-poms and images from punk record covers were brought together. I didn't know what questions to ask other than "why is that there?" The colours and subjects were striking. Some painted elements seemed unresolved. Large black tassels framed the two sets of canvases on a pair of dark purple walls, putting them in a place, into a decor together. I didn't get it until I read,

"The adolescent longingly invents spaces of compulsive possession: ungainly aspirations for art, fashion, style, travel, intoxication and love. This installation intuitively explores and produces associations with a number of interiors and histories..."

And it really did. Those associations flew thick and fast. The artist's statement provided about a dozen, and from there they proliferated.

You were reluctant to put an artist's statement near your work because you didn't want to sound like a wanker. I was pretty surprised. (Some artist's statements are pretty bad, especially those making claims about how the viewer will be affected by the work. I am tired of reading that I will feel confronted.)

I went to architecture school (Deakin) when the word wanker was thrown at anyone who spoke about their work for more than five minutes. Some Melbourne architects are known for heavily referential work. Their architecture and its exegeses attract severe criticism from architects who like to appeal to truth and purity. John Macarthur had to remind us that the public are happy for complex public architecture to require a guided reading². Many people are only too happy to strap on the headphones and be guided through the references and complexities of a blockbuster show at the National Gallery or an ancient building overseas. He went on to say of the Aussie Baroque National Museum of Australia by Ashton Raggart McDougall, "If anyone

is being mocked by the architectural references it is architects who think that the meaning of buildings can be self-evident and exist without interpretation."³ It seems obvious really, that a bit of writing shouldn't hurt, but I was glad he brought it up. It is too easy to be called a wanker here if interpretation of your work requires a bit of reading.

The statement for *On Mysticism and the Death of Art* was full of references. On reading, the works suddenly became a part of this wider (and specific) world that you reference, beginning with the domestic interior and ending in the slaughter of animals. Then there is the use of interiors to suggest associations between art and art making.

The installation occupied the floor but only two of four walls, creating a scene that could be regarded in a single view, i.e., it wasn't a roomful. The statement was on one of the other walls. The two paintings of Cossi Fanni Tutti and the swastika are striking: red figures, green background, and black swastika. The paintings are on a beautifully dark purple wall and are hung with black tassels. One is much neater than the other; the second swastika is less geometrically pure and has paint dribbles. It seems that one is a swastika as symbol and the other could be a version of it redrawn by someone on a wall or on his or her school bag, without seeking to get it right like a Nazi would. Swastikas as punk provocations by Vivienne Westwood and others were rather rough versions too. Kids used to draw them on the desks at school if they wanted to be really naughty. This was in the late 1970's.

Trčka's portraits of Egon Schiele show this guy who could be a bit stoned. You say he could be many things, including a punk. You have painted what



Charlotte Hallows *On Mysticism and the Death of Art* (2005) West Space, Melbourne. Photograph by Irene Hanenbergh.

might be a decorative motif over his mouth, so he is mute. In our associative discussions it turned into a decorative moustache. That idea, as opposed to the work, recalls an adolescent practice of drawing moustaches on pictures of girls. On the topic of moustaches, I imagined a link between the emerging fashion of young men's moustaches and all those pale animals appearing in art and graphics over the last few years. I'm particularly thinking of those animals drawn with continuous lines, floating across paint. This association might be due to the way you can see the skin behind the thin hair of the moustache, and how those paintings are comprised of lines that trace out a little being over a patchy background.

Despite my many references to adolescence, I don't mean that the work is adolescent. Its use of the applied interior (an idea which has this adolescent hold) taps into a powerful way to gather the work together and proliferate associations and readings.

Macarthur regarding readings of the geometry and architectural historical references of the NMA:

The sense that these alternative readings provoke is, as in Baroque architecture, that culture is the act of proliferating meaning in the face of disorder. If one begins, as the Baroque did, with the fact that just about anything can come close to meaning something and that the most carefully wrought cultural artifacts fail to reach true significance, then the consequence is clear. One must either admit to the meaninglessness of existence or pile up stuff deliriously, without fear of contradiction or repetition, in the hope of the miracle of meaning.⁴

My artist's statement was pretty pragmatic. Its main job was to explain something about the medium because I figured that, with the exception of architects, few would know what dye-line printing was. I had this urge to be helpful. I also wanted to talk about shadow

diagrams. Then I scored a little review in *The Age*, where Penny Webb said that *A Dreaded Sunny Day* was a text dependant installation. Her view contrasted nicely with that of my architect mates who were overcome by the smell of dye-line and became nostalgic for their work experience days. Here smell overtook the visual; forget about the written. The other aspect to producing the statement was that the same piece of paper could accommodate an acknowledgement that I received an art grant from the City of Melbourne. This was preferable to having a speaker at the opening or a banner in the gallery. Even though it was printed and folded and there were copies to take away, it was a statement and not a catalogue. I have noticed you are meant to get a close friend or lover to write a little essay if you want a catalogue!

So, what is your view on the role of the artist's statement in the gallery?

I thought your work expressed dualistic impulses: modernist autonomy and self-sufficiency and also a mechanistic, carnivorous violence – dystopic but also feminine. There were memories and stains in your work associated with wall paper and domesticity – not the magazine version.

The obvious criticism of the artist's statement is whether it manages to produce what it says is happening. De Certeau comments on the writing of history:

"The bewitching voices of narration transform, reorient, and regulate the space of social relations. They exercise an immense power, but a power that eludes control because it presents itself as the only representation of what is happening or of what has happened in the past... through the subjects it selects, through the problematics that it privileges... it too arms and mobilizes a clientele of the faithful."⁵

Another aspect of the "Writing about art" problem relates to the writing of art history which at present appears archaic and redundant as an institutional discourse – a repressed heterology.

Last night I was so tired I slept straight through a Neil Young film, Greendale.

Thank you.

Wow! Thank you.

Charlotte Hallows is an artist and writer. Dianne Peacock is an architect and artist. Both are based in Melbourne.

Notes

1. Robyn McKenzie, 'Kathy Temin – Infantile Terrible, Object Relations & the Problem Child', *Art & Text*, No. 45, Sydney, May 1993
2. John Macarthur, Australian Baroque: Geometry and Meaning in the National Museum of Australia in *Architecture Australia* March/April 2001, pp. 48-61.
3. Ibid., p.56.
4. Ibid.
5. De Certeau, Michel, *Heterologies: Discourse on the Other* trans. Massumi (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1986) p. 207

“a kind of sleep”



Ann Shelton's “a kind of sleep” is the name of the show made during her residency in Taranaki, which opened in late December 2004 at the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery in New Plymouth. As the press release states, it “...features photographs of locations associated with urban myth and superstition.” There are no people here, just places. It functions loosely as a location catalogue of various historically significant events, with a bias toward the macabre: the death of Von Tempsky during the New Zealand Wars, Lovers Leap on the Otago Peninsula, the former Lake Alice mental hospital, the valley where Vincent Ward's film *Vigil* was shot. Shelton's histories are secret, but enacted through the memory of the place or the knowledge of an event. There's an undercurrent of morbidity somehow in all this, even as an aftermath. It's an attenuated moment, the latency of the past coexisting with the sombre reality of the present, after all, the photograph is always yesterday. In the last few years her work has mostly been like this – more formal and more formalist. I remember works such as “Abigail's Party” – serial reworkings of modernist interiors recreated for the camera, a kind of faux portraiture of period. But as much as her social photography project ‘Red-Eye’ (c1996) operated as a flashback to the night out you can't or would rather not remember, “a kind of sleep” is far more circumspect. These are photographs of the aftermath of action, via documentation of the historical, the mythic, and the

Ann Shelton, *a kind of sleep* (2003) installation view, Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth. Photo courtesy of the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery.

non-literal. The photograph can be too connected to itself as document sometimes, and I like these works as they traverse the poetic, rather than the overworked trope of typology, as some other more Dusseldorf school-influenced practices are prone to do.

The works are all largish, and consist of pairs of images either laterally or vertically repeated in mirror image, framed separately and hung closely abutted. From a distance this creates a strange Rorschach-like effect. On close viewing, I can't tell exactly how they were made, other than they have a large-format analogue clarity. I wondered about the formalism of Shelton's works. The mirroring forces me to see the picture as pure image, confined within its own symmetry. In lepidopteran symmetry one memory is liberated and another captured; it is the imago – the perfect, significant moment of memory.

Shelton says that death is not [necessarily] a rationale for this set of work, though it remains that most of these sites are notable for an element of violent demise. *Lovers Leap* sticks in my mind – the depth of the turquoise void in parallel symmetry pulls the



Ann Shelton, *a kind of sleep* (2003) installation view, Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth. Photo courtesy of the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery.

tender psyche inevitably towards one denouement of romantic love. The tedium of familiarity is the less picturesque, but probably far more common ending for those of us who indulge in the pursuit of the elusive. ["There must be praised, some certainty, if not of loving, well then, at least of not loving." (Dylan Thomas)] However, in a sort of collective 'altered' consciousness, this site can surrender other histories as well, as a place well known for the gathering of psychotropic fungi.

This coincidence of proximity to Port Chalmers brings me to another aspect of Shelton's work. The double projected video piece *Sisters* is a repeating extract from Vincent Ward's 1984 film *Vigil*, accompanied by a sound work from the mid 1990s by Michael Morley. The balaclava sheathed character Toss morphs in and out of herself in double projection. There is something extremely sexy about this – if one is able to dislodge any latent memory of Led Zeppelin's Robert Plant circa 1976 – and there's also a hint of the Douglas Gordon work "left is right and right is wrong..." (a double projection of alternate frames from Otto Preminger's 1949 film *Whirlpool*). I suppose *Vigil*, being from what is conventionally described as in the tradition of the New Zealand gothic in cinema, is a reasonable quotation on the basis of Shelton's residency in Taranaki, but it sits oddly here I think. Though various indignities, physically or of the soul, are enacted on the protagonists of *Vigil* in a way consistent with how I understand the permutations of transgressive behaviour in isolated communities to be, I was surprised that less fictional events were not being referenced. I'm thinking perhaps of the shooting in Waitara one night not so long ago of a young Maori man by police in dubious circumstances, or the murder by three adolescent girls of an old man while he slept in his car. That the gothic is alive and well, and living in Waitara is specifically heartbreaking in the wider context of New Zealand's post-European history, and something that art could perhaps begin to discuss.

I was interested to hear Morley's Gate project work "The Lavender Head v.3 (4,11:16)" – he is quoting too

I think – but I'm happier to allow his iterations roam in my mind. Shelton's work *Sisters* is dedicated to the late Giovanni Intra, who was a close associate of hers. I am reminded here of an aspect of Intra's obituary; that he died asleep, and a friend's comment spoken in kindness, "he probably doesn't even know he's dead." I guess that's how I see these works; containing an intangible, unreferenced sadness. One could attach any kind of theory here, as it's strong work and moving. (I can see a bit of Benjamin here, and the odd piece of Foucault; and lets aim for some Virilio while we are at it.) Some things stick in my mind and one of them is – amusingly – picnolepsy; the moment of lapse. I've always liked the idea that photography can be used to reference the less than decisive moment; moments of lapse, and moments of absence.

A while ago, I saw the 1960 film *L'Avventura*. Mostly I remember the small, barren island off the coast of Sicily. Antonioni's protagonists have arrived; there is a lot of well-dressed wandering in the landscape. I think I read that Antonioni quipped that it was "neorealism without the bicycle", which makes me laugh. It isn't. Anyway, one of the women disappears without trace. The other characters then spend the rest of the movie becoming conflicted as to whether they want to or even need to find her; and instead distract themselves with dramas of repressed and not so repressed mutual desire, and scenarios of betrayal.

But mostly, I remember the island. The isolated emptiness and the sensation of absence.

Jennifer French is a photographer living in Auckland.

Merde on the Dancefloor MIR11, Melbourne, 11.2.05-25.2.05

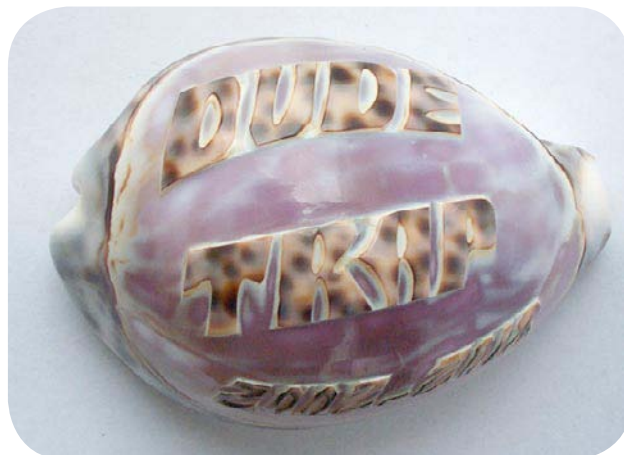
'Merde on the Dancefloor' recalls Sophie Ellis Bextor's catchy pop hit 'Murder on the Dancefloor', yet its component parts suggest a more subversive dimension. Like pop music, contemporary art often takes on the language of the everyday – the cliché, the trite remark, the commonplace – and stages them in a different way.¹ Here the language of music is invoked as a kind of visual shorthand by the participating artists.

The title of the show arose from text messages sent between the curator Matthew Griffin and his friend, who regularly try to outdo each other with plays on words. This text joke is redeployed as a comment about the conservatism of art institutions in Melbourne. In the mini-catalogue, Griffin uses the metaphor of shit on the dancefloor to describe the corruption of the local art scene. These artists are dancing around the shit in front of them, trying to ignore it and do their own thing.

While being a space of confrontation and creativity, the dancefloor is also a space of transformation, where dancers can experiment with identity, becoming 'other' in the process. Masks feature frequently throughout this show since most of the figurative works feature disguise of one sort or another. Originally conceived as a show about text and its manifestations in daily life, 'Merde on the Dancefloor' evolved into a more music-orientated exhibition, with an emphasis on subcultural phenomena. There is a definite anti-establishment, punk rock ethos discernible in many pieces, especially Griffin's ink drawings which have a vigorously abrasive quality.

Griffin's works reveal a recurrent obsession with the abject. His drawings often feature bodily excretions and disfiguration of various sorts. He likes to disrupt the aesthetically pleasing elements of his work with the inclusion of crass details, like vomit, eyeballs popping out or grossly distorted limbs. In these drawings, words are spewed out of patchy, peeling faces, declaring 'Things Fall Apart', 'Satan' and 'Decomposition Awaits', suggesting imminent decay. Versions of the artist's own face are held up as masks and torn away, suggesting the provisional nature of identity. 'Shaking Hands' shows a woman's head impaled on a middle fingertip, disembodied and smiling.

In Tony Garifalakis' 'metal theory' gouache paintings, youthful faces are made up as clowns with trickles of blood dripping out of noses and mouths. Apart from these painted markings, the faces look too well groomed and 'normal' underneath the makeup, lending a certain uneasiness to the compositions. Their direct gaze is confronting in its blankness; they stare outward with deadpan expressions, challenging the viewer to respond. Garifalakis' '13', a quirky photograph of a found piece of china also has an element of theatre. The face looking out of the studded frame is oddly distorted, like the grizzled mask of a



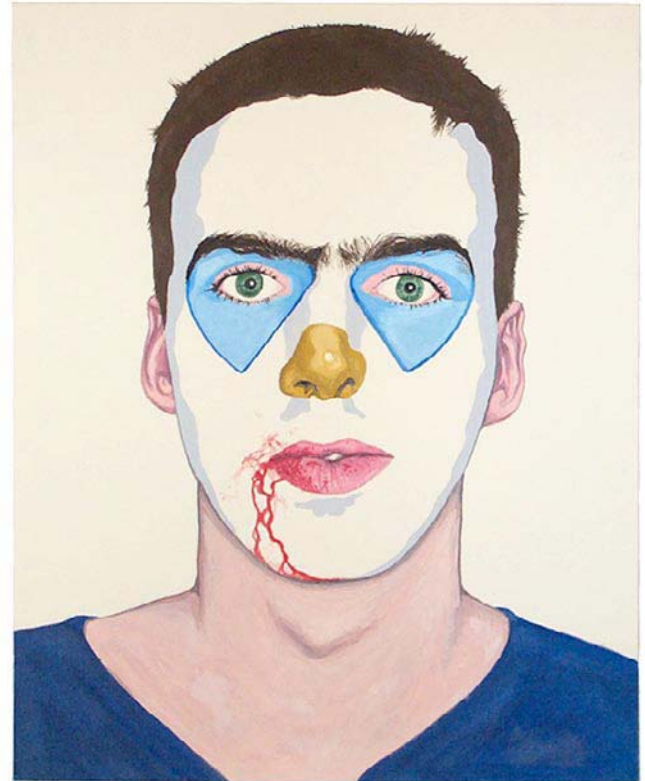
Blair Thethowan, *Dude trap*, gift for 50-something birthday, etched shell, made in Bali, 2004.

rock n' roll casualty. Topped by a feathery headdress, the figure is hopelessly out of place in its kitschness.

New York artist Rachel Howe's work humorously invokes traditions of cover art and band photography. Sewn on white A4 paper with black thread, Howe's works feature Death Metal musicians, standing around pondering their doom. Her previous drawings have featured suicidal youths wearing studded belts and committing acts of self-harm. Since her contributions had to be mailed to Australia, Howe is working in a smaller format than usual, to good effect. The economy of line makes these cotton sketches striking in their simplicity. In 'Message 2' a band member is head to head with Casper the friendly ghost joined by the caption 'Love Will Tear Us Apart' simultaneously referencing the Joy Division classic and sending up the studied gloominess of the rockstar.

Geoff Newton's 'don't go to skool' features a bunch of 'alternative' CD titles, part of an imaginary music collection. Seminal titles are referenced, indicating the considerable musical capital of the collector. This work is paired with a painting of female torso from the rear tattooed with the names of familiar Melbourne art spaces. Art institutions become mere decoration on a naked body – marks of experience the wearer must bear. Like notches on a belt, these tattoos might be read as trophies of artworld conquests or commercial branding taken to extremes.

Blair Trethowan's quirky piece 'Dude Trap' is a Balinese shell with text engraved on it. Originally gifted to an Italian-based friend as a 50th birthday present, 'Dude Trap' was flown back to Melbourne especially for the show. 'Dude Trap' is primarily ornamental but the engraved name is very suggestive, conjuring up its potential uses. Although its not musical in quite the same way as most of the other works, the shell can mimic the sound of the sea if held to the ear.



An odd collection of disparate parts linked by a tenuous theme, 'Merde on the Dancefloor' is suited to the transitory space of MIR11. Given that MIR11 feels more like a foyer zone between offices than a gallery, its not over-determined as an art venue. It allows room for marginal artists to experiment in a non-commercial environment. Due to the fact that its participants are all friends, the show gives the impression of a closed circuit at times. Griffin's 'pantonygarifalakis', a brown pantone sheet lying against the wall with a veiny eyeball poking through a hole, indicates the high level of intertextuality and mutual citation between the artists. Viewing the show is like eavesdropping on a raucous conversation full of funny quips and knowing references to pop culture.

Left: Rachel Howe, *Message 3*, black thread on paper, 2005. **Right:** Tony Garifalakis, *Metal theory*, gouache on card, 2000.

B.L. Magner is a Melbourne-based writer with an interest in rock 'n' roll.

Notes

1. John Storey, *Cultural Studies and the Study of Popular Music*, Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh Press, 2003: 126.

MJWF and SquatFest – reviews for Natural Selection

The weekend of the 26/27th February 2005 was a biggie. On the 26th was the MJWF's (Marrickville Jelly Wrestling Federation) Ripe Age event at the Turrella TerrorDrome. The MJWF is a burgeoning organization which began from humble garage and backyard wrestle events in Marrickville. It's hard to really explain to someone who hasn't experienced this kind of thing before... It's something of a cross between a DIY version of WWF (now WWE) wrestling (Hulk Hogan etc.) and a very serious costume party. Potential wrestlers undergo an audition process in which they present their character, complete with his/her history, fighting style, strengths and weaknesses, etc. From this, 16 superlative fighters are chosen to participate in the event. Match ups are determined based on the entertainment and performance value of the combinations. Some wrestlers are more entertaining than competitive – "The Love Pump," for instance, went so far as to produce his own autobiography and soundtrack for sale before the event (and then went down in the first round). Other fighters, like The Lifeguard, Syphilis, and Michael JackShit are fiercely competitive, but perhaps a little slower on the merchandising. Oh yeah, and there's jelly involved – not Aeroplane, which would take forever to make up and would disintegrate quickly in the fray, but a kind of slow release lawn fertiliser jelly crystals, which are green, and keep their shape indefinitely...

The two things which make the MJWF so interesting for me are its (1) parody/seriousness quotient, and its (2)(successful) attempt to commandeer a pop-culture phenomenon as a genuinely participatory experience. I mix up these two aspects in the following analysis:

The MJWF ("the Federation") takes itself very seriously. A tight-knit organisational structure takes full control of all MJWF publicity material and graphics. There is an aesthetic attention-to-detail here that will tolerate no half-baked hippie ideas. We're talking corporate branding big time – tickets, website, t-shirts, even laminated "access all areas" backstage passes. Perhaps paradoxically, this rigid framework allows the creative energy of contributors (wrestlers and others) to "plug-in" – helping the event to be multifaceted and extremely rich in detail. For example, besides the wrestlers themselves, there are (all appropriately costumed): jelly-slingers, beer-swilling cheerleaders, joke-cracking MCs, a droll trio of commentators, a nerdy referee who is constantly getting too involved in the action, a genius sound-effects man behind the scenes, smoke machines, a gambling system complete with alternative betting currency, a full-service bar, an inflatable gym-standard wrestling ring, and tiered seating for over 300 ecstatic punters. All these "plug-ins" accumulate to something that the organisers themselves could never hope to accomplish alone, and which, astonishingly, is free of beaurocracy and wages.

The whole event is a hoot, and the wrestlers are at their best when they combine the identity of their character



with a "signature move." Key examples include "The Horse's Arse" – who has an enormous buttock implant which he uses with a backwards motion to smother his opponents – or the Somnambulist – who incorporates the famous "Sleeper Hold" to make his enemies drowsy, thereafter force-feeding them sleeping pills from an oversized medicine bottle. "The Teacher" (our champion), of course, is in a league of her own, and has even been sought after for other (non-wrestling oriented) performance events and publications (Gurlesque, Kinky, Slit Magazine) in a sort of cross-(sub)cultural promotion deal. Beyond the sometimes superficial posturing of the other wrestlers, The Teacher has been developing an entire philosophy based (quite alarmingly) on crushing those of lesser moral strength. It certainly seems that so far, everyone she has come up against has fit that category.

SquatFest happened the night after the MJWF showdown. I had expected the vast wrestling turnout to dampen attendance, but it wasn't that way at all. An estimated 200 people showed up at the beautiful Iceland squat in Balmain, with views across the water to the harbour bridge. It was the most blissful venue yet in the five-year history of SquatFest.

SquatFest happens every year, same time, same day as the corporate cock-sucking Tropfest. It began in



2001 as a critique of the mania generated by what the SquatSpace collective regarded as the “Tropfest formula” – i.e. seven-minute films which feature some sort of moral/existential dilemma as faced by privileged white eastern suburbs twenty-somethings. Tropfest films follow a quirky narrative style, and inevitably finish with a joke or twist. Often the production values are quite high, which fails to make up for their dearth of good ideas. What we objected to originally (and having seen some 2005 Tropfest shockers, still do) is the prioritising of ambition over concept – the idea that with the right exposure, some dude with a video camera and “undiscovered talent” will “hit the big time” and get a Hollywood deal – that fairytale story with about the same odds as winning lotto.

In contrast, we envisaged that SquatFest would provide a focused event for independent artists, activists, and filmmakers to share their work with each other, in a night which was celebratory but where the art could also be critical. Oh, and there were no ads.

Looking back over five years of SquatFest, how has it panned out? Well, as an “event” it has undoubtedly been a success every year. People love coming to a different and wonderful squat each time – Sydney has been generous with gorgeous abandoned architecture. There’s never been any trouble getting enough films to screen, just from the contributions of the audience. There’s always been “live feedback” (heckling) manifesting systematically in 2004 with a “gong” system, which enabled punters to stop transmission of films they didn’t like. Fortunately, the gong itself got the gong in 2005, and we returned to a more (I hope) respectful atmosphere. (Much discussion had surrounded the fact that the gong disadvantaged those films which were more subtle or which took longer to build up to a “point,” than the zazzy, poppy ones). In my opinion, if an audience member has a problem with a film (and I am a big fan of heckling myself) they can always take the law into their own hands and yell out, with whatever consequences that might entail (debate, suppression, supportive cheering). The gong was just too... inarticulate, and I felt that somehow it dumbed things down. If SquatFest were to exist as a critique of TropFest, then surely it should give space

to difficult films too, ones that might otherwise be considered “boring.” It’s a moot point: what’s regarded as boring and interesting varies between individual viewers, right?

This year there was some discussion afterwards about the issue of “quality.” Since SquatFest is an open event, and anyone can bring along a film, how can we control the quality of submissions? This was a leading question from someone who obviously felt we should have exercised more “curatorial control.” How should we deal with that kind of criticism? While I too thought that the quality of contributions was patchy (based on my own ineffable criteria) some other folks who came along described the selection as “top-notch eccentric films,” so who is to say what is crap and what is great, anyway?

On reflection, I decided I was, after all, comfortable with SquatFest’s lack of quality control. Since the filmmakers are in the audience, it is up to them to take responsibility for their work, and there is often “live feedback” anyway. We have plenty of other opportunities to be “curators” and programme exactly what it is that we want to show. SquatFest stands as one time when we can dip our finger in the waters of DIY filmmakers, artists and activists, and see what’s going on right now.

Lucas Ihlein is a Sydney-based artist and a member of the SquatSpace collective. His blog can be viewed at <http://bilateral.blog-city.com>.

MJWF: <http://www.mjwf.org>

SquatFest: <http://www.squatspace.com/squatfest>

Tropfest: <http://www.tropfest.com>



A proportion of the works in 'Remember New Zealand' pre-installation in Sao Paulo.

Curated by: Tobias Berger

New Zealand's selected curator Tobias Berger responded to a sub-theme of the supposed free territory of aesthetics by using Hug's idea of "the image smuggler." Seeing cultural tourism as classic infiltration into the rest of the world, the curatorial concept of "souvenir" played on nationalistic show-and-tell methods commonly used at biennials. Thirty-eight artists who work primarily in sculpture, and spanning regions and generations in New Zealand, were invited to make a souvenir to be taken to Sao Paulo, where the works were displayed in a structure assembled on site by one of the artists, Jason Lindsay.

Upon return to home soils 'Remember New Zealand' received a modest showing tucked away in the 'pop-in-room' at Artspace, Auckland. A pretty secluded welcome, but nonetheless, with the large group of artists involved, the opening of the home-coming show was bound to be a biggie; a fine example of the increased sociability that the gallery has developed in recent times under Tobias Berger's directorship.



The exhibition concept supposedly addressed the way that the souvenir disperses around the world via the tourist. After reading the local exhibition's catalogue I was dubious about some of the things stated, such as: "They [souvenirs] represented and influenced the taste of the times and served as points of entry into foreign cultures." This talk of entering cultures and influencing taste has strong colonialist connotations in the missionary sense; and souvenirs, though a lively part of most human interactions with new places, embodying memories of an experience, reflect a distinctly materialistic rut of human behavior that seems also tainted by a residual colonial kind of conduct – travelling for acquisitions' sake?

Another thing I was dubious about was "This big collection of different artifacts not only underlines New Zealand's wide range of different cultures, but serves as a critical voice to biennials and cultural tourism." Mainly, the thing I am not convinced by is how is getting artists to make souvenirs of their work a critique of this aspect of cultural tourism? How does it do their work justice given that souvenirs by definition tokenise and exoticise? Firstly, over-use as a critical strategy is not really a good one, and, furthermore, if souvenirs are things that humans collect, keep and attach meanings to, why send souvenirs somewhere, only to have them return home again?

So, what was the experience of being curated into this show? One of the participating artists talked about the biennial system, saying: "...the biennial model, although having risen to ubiquity in the last ten-twenty years, is an old model. Venice has been going for about a hundred years now. As such there may be hundred-year-old ideas embedded within the format... an emphasis on vaguely competitive nationalist politics might be one of them. A colonialist discourse about centers and margins might be another."

By merely presenting a model of the biennial system this show is more a re-enactment of it; one that is informed, but that doesn't really operate critically ("...a colonialist model imposed over a post-colonial context being sent to another post-colonial context?"). Surely, I wondered, there are more effective ways of critiquing the biennial, given that this was a stated intent of the show? If there is any parody operating here, it is more of a small country trying to get noticed. ("Revealingly, one is not likely to remember any of the artists' names – there were too many of them, and they weren't listed in the main part of catalogue where the artists representing other countries were, just the curator's name was.").

Left and right: 'Remember New Zealand', installation views, Sao Paulo Bienal.

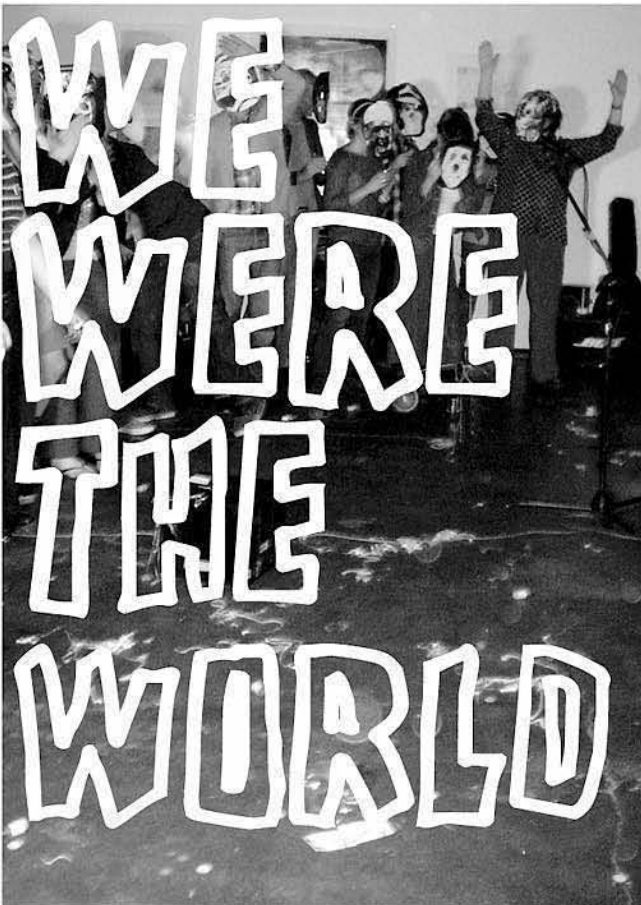
Another artist in the show shed some light on the goings-on from the inside out:

"Many of the artists initially saw the invitation to be involved as a fairly generous offer, countering the usual 'artist of the moment choice', but soon realised that the net was cast so wide as to render the catch, at best, fairly meaningless; at least subservient to the project as a whole, encapsulated as it was within an overpowering conceptual and literal frame; and at worst self-serving to the fisherman in question. If a show has no star artist, whose the star if not the curator?

Of course it's nothing unusual that the curator has a central role, but increasingly shows seem to engage their practice more than those of artists, they seem to be the 'primary producer', the artist the 'raw material'. To ask artists to make artworks as souvenirs and then use them to represent the country in a way that doesn't allow them to critique that role is absurd, especially when the locality they are sourced from is so rich in such critique. One wonders how aware of that locality such a curator might be. Instead, we got to engage in the epitome of the cringe many of us actively seek to avoid if not negate."

Because the artists were not involved in any of the project's conceptual development together, there was only a veneer of democracy. As a group show, but with no sense of collective activity, only a vague kind of group was formed by artists' work being displayed together. The overall concept managed to stagnate the great collective potential by idly using the artists as numbers adding up to a whole, as a curator's work of works. In the case of "Remember New Zealand" I think it's noteworthy to consider why it was that this country was asked to be remembered by the seemingly vague translation of our supposed Antipodean quaintness. As it appeared, the show allowed much less to happen than it could have. Potential is okay, but what's the point if those in driver's seats don't allow it to get moving?

Deborah Orum lives in Auckland and does all manner of things.



from the single, the album, the video and rela

Artists at the recording session

- Dan Aykroyd
- Harry Belafonte
- Lindsey Buckingham
- Kim Carnes
- Ray Charles
- Bob Dylan
- Sheila E
- Bob Geldof
- Hall and Oates
- James Ingram
- Jackie Jackson
- LaToya Jackson
- Marlon Jackson
- Michael Jackson
- Randy Jackson
- Tito Jackson
- Al Jarreau
- Waylon Jennings
- Billy Joel
- Cyndi Lauper
- Huey Lewis and the News
- Kenny Loggins
- Bette Midler
- Willie Nelson
- Jeffrey Osborne
- Steve Perry
- The Pointer Sisters
- Lionel Richie
- Snokey Robinson
- Kenny Rogers
- Diana Ross
- Paul Simon
- Bruce Springsteen
- Tina Turner
- Dionne Warwick
- Stevie Wonder

Putting together "Super group" will provide makes.

Latest record deals
Could you be the next superstar to these...

Sonic

directed by matt griffin

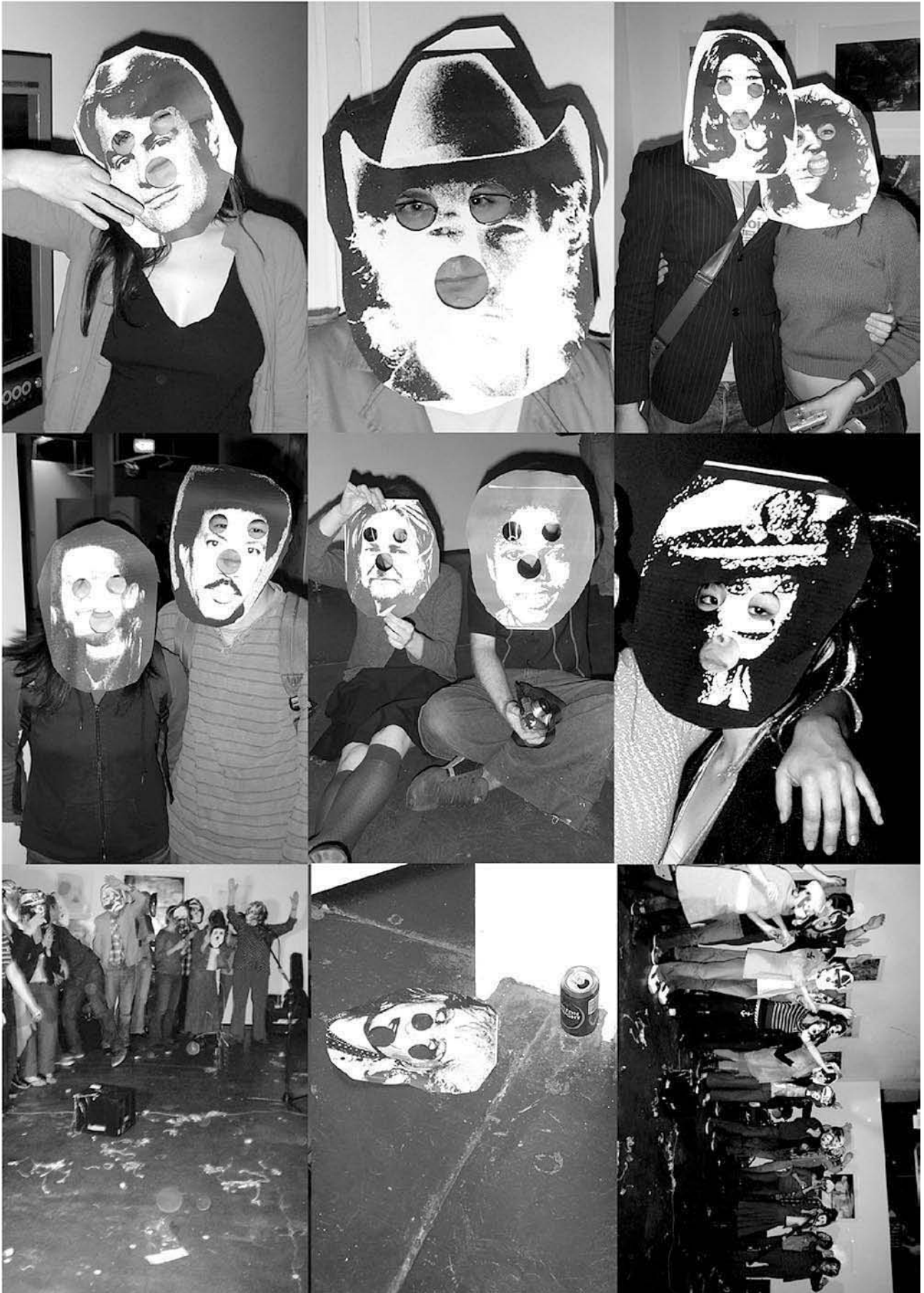


26 AUGUST 2004

a performance by
**vca painting
students & staff**







Going public

I can show you a goal with the ball in it or I can show you a goal with the ball in front of it and you can kick it in yourself, which would be more satisfying? Hopefully my work functions as a tool to intensify and activate your own imagination...

Surprisingly, when I approached Dutch artist Yeb Wiersma last spring with the idea of writing an article, I discovered our shared interests exceeded my initial expectations. As artist-in-residence at Gertrude Contemporary Art Spaces, Yeb had handed over her portfolio, a small neatly packed box full of lushly documented projects for me to peruse, I was intrigued. By the time we met again I was eager to question Yeb about her interest in site specific projects, her involvement with residency programs and her current activities in Melbourne. And so it goes.

Location features strongly in Yeb's practice and her ideas are formed from experiencing her immediate surroundings. Her work is site specific and almost simultaneously engages with public and private space. Whilst the works have an ephemeral quality evocative of a dream or memory, they also contain a sense of the familiar. Within her work is a sense of openness, which allows her to stretch and play with ideas -resulting in the subtle provocation of the unsuspecting viewer and often rousing a rethinking of ones initial response to her work. I imagine Yeb constantly observing her mental and physical environment and asking herself 'Oh... What if ...?'

Yeb's interest in public space is based on a conscious desire to disrupt the norms of public life, which are unconsciously quite formal and full of rituals and manners. As she pushes and pulls invisible boundaries important questions such as 'How public is public space?' are raised.

Walking on the streets, say for example Federation Square, you gaze upon huge billboards, advertising surrounds you and one can see the most obscene, tasteless images; but as long as one reads *David Jones*, *Versace*, etc it is fine and accepted. As advertising allows these unwritten rules to apply. On the other hand, if I felt like making a small, innocent wall drawing, it would be considered 'in the way' and therefore condemned and removed. The walls are apparently not designed for spontaneous expressions, unless you have asked permission to do so. Let's say I walked around barefoot, the majority of people would probably think 'Who is this strange woman?' and most likely I would think the same. I always find it astounding that so called 'public space' isn't so public or so open, after all and that we (unconsciously) behave differently when others are around. There is an interesting tension between the private and public, in public space. In general this relation between what we show, what is visible, and what we do not show, what is invisible (our thoughts, our past, our fantasies) has always fascinated me.



Yeb Wiersma, *Departure* (2001, NYC) photograph

What you see, is not always what you get...

Yeb has never felt that the formulation or presentation of her ideas could be limited to the traditional space of the gallery and studio, which makes me wonder where the ideas are conceived and formed.

Well my studio can be almost anywhere. Even in art school I could have had a studio. But I never used it. After I finished art school I tried to work in a studio because everyone else does (she laughs) and I ended up paying a lot of money, sitting in an empty studio and feeling scared. I noticed whenever I went out to get a coffee, the ideas would start popping up one after another and so I thought, 'Just say goodbye to the idea of a studio'. For some artists a studio environment works, but for me it doesn't. I like to see the world outside as an endless sketchbook. This is partly why I think artist-in-residence programs work well for me. Being somewhere else, (as long as I do not stay inside) having the comfort of strangers and exploring the new world around me helps keep me fresh.

Since graduating in 2001 Yeb has endeavoured to find suitable working models whereby the smaller activities such as drawing and taking photographs, which help to sustain her larger projects, are given space to breath. In doing so she has sought out specific residency programs to provide herself with an intensive living and working environment away from the routine of everyday life. When the opportunity for her to take part in the Kulturzentrum Nairs residency program in The Engadin Region in Switzerland arose in 2003 it presented an ideal physical and psychological landscape in which to dig deeper into her real and imagined childhood memories of this region. Surrounded by ubiquitous misty valleys, eerie evergreen forests and snow-capped mountains, the residency with its combined working and living spaces is housed in the beautiful and vast 19th century spa resort *Kurhaus Tarasp*.

Conjured years earlier in Yeb's young imagination was *this* dark landscape; a setting for the fantastic tales of the Brothers Grimm, later the scenery traveled through on family holidays. As a child she eagerly snuck out of bed and gripped with excitement and fear would listen to Grimm's fantastic tales on her parent's record player at early dawn. Here she created her own private universe which existed in stark contrast to the reality of the flat landscape of Holland in which she grew up. On her arrival at Kurhaus Tarasp Yeb immediately began developing a working process based on a more intuitive method of engaging in her practice in an attempt to shape those inexplicable memories. Outdoors she collected sticks and twigs and drew and photographed from the surrounding landscape. Indoors she explored the attics and sourced materials, such as woollen blankets once used by the patients, to make an assortment of knitted and sewn objects. *'Growing Dark'* was installed throughout the living/working space during her last week and cleverly considering the many aspects of 'site' presented by the residency. Consisting of soft sculptural objects such as bunnies, arrows, guns, along with drawings of children encapsulated by trees and photographs of the mysterious picturesque landscape, the work suggested disparate narratives and tableaux which the viewer could approach through their personal memories and experiences.

***'Growing Dark'* was derived from a very intuitive way of working. The only luggage or firm idea I brought to this place was my half forgotten memories from childhood. It was a very playful and revitalizing time for me. I somehow felt like a child again; disappearing for hours in the forest, enjoying the smell of the pine trees and feeling enlightened by the beauty of the scenery. I started collecting sticks and various found objects and on return to my studio, (where I also lived) began working with them, putting things on the floor but not really with any firm ideas on where they would go. Eventually I created something which blended my dark, almost faded personal memories with some aspects of the half forgotten history of the site itself.**

***'Growing Dark'* did not only talk about the installed objects, but also about the empty spaces between the objects, filling the room with a certain estranged, melancholic atmosphere. Entering the room you sense this presence, something that could only be created I think, from of the intensity**



Yeb Wiersma, *Fremdarbeit* (2004) (installation view) steel, electric lights.

in which I experienced this space: I lived, worked and slept there.

Yeb's observations and insights during her three-month stay led her to produce a new work exploring a broader collective consciousness. This was based on two German words; *Fremdenzimmer* and *Gastarbeiter*, which held strong connections to the area.

Having worked and lived in this remote place in the Swiss mountains for three months I started to feel very connected. I was not only connected to the landscape surrounding me but also to the other artists living there, the history of the site and to the wider region. I became aware of the sometimes itchy relations between the locals and 'foreigners' (as we artists were called). Although the residency has been operating for 12 years, to the villager's guest artists are still considered the 'strange people' from the valley. With this also brings a sense of freedom and fun because, like the idiots in the Lars Von Trier movie, assumptions are already made and suspicions are high. I wanted to play with this idea and came across two German words, which somehow reflected our complex situation as foreign artists-in-residence.

The first word *'Fremdenzimmer'*, when literally translated into English means *room for strangers*, or put simply, *vacancies* or *rooms available*. The second word *'Gastarbeiter'* means *guest worker* and in the political sense refers to migrants from the Mediterranean who came to both Western Europe (and Australia) in the sixties for work. As long as they remained 'guests' they were welcomed because they worked hard for little money. Later

when they wanted to stay and become citizens with the same rights as everyone else, feelings towards them quickly changed. I think this attitude is very concerning and unfortunately very alive at the moment in Western Europe. It is the thin line of civilisation. As long as one labels foreigners as tourists, it's fine as it equates to making money – but when they turn out to be something else...? So by dividing up these two words into four smaller ones: *Fremd/strange*, *Gast/guest*, *Arbeit/work* and *Zimmer/room* they started referring to more than just our situation as an international artist-in-residence.

The outcome was the site-specific public work 'Fremdarbeit' which was erected on the outside of the spa building in February 2004. Whilst resembling existing commercial signs advertising hotel rooms, 'Fremdarbeit' differed slightly in that it had a dislocated carnivalesque quality about it. As these four words, stemming from a central vertical post measuring 15 metres high, slowly lit up one letter at a time, the surrounding valley that otherwise would have been engulfed in complete darkness unexpectedly did so too. The radiance surprised even Yeb who had manufactured the work in Amsterdam during late 2003.

The installation had quite a strong impact. First of all I was indeed surprised by the enormous radiation of bulb lights throughout the entire valley, the whole scenery was a strange mixture of art installation and an advertising campaign – an ambiguous work that made you wonder.

Yeb's time residing in Switzerland proved to have a lasting effect on her practice as she continued to explore her urban environment with equal fervor. This has resulted in a quirky photographic project, which portrays an unidentifiable woman disappearing into bushes, garden plots and parklands around Amsterdam. Yeb approached the Amsterdam South City Council for funding with the idea of printing a photo book which is to be published during the summer of 2005.

Returning to Amsterdam, I truly missed the smell of the forest, of real nature. I noticed whenever I was walking through the city I was visibly relieved to enter small parks, bushes or places that simulated nature. Then the idea was born to make this 'longing' visible by literally sticking my head into these small artificial islands of green and trying to refresh, which for me is a perfume for the lungs. I thought this was funny in a way because here again I could see the importance of a certain location on the work and a longing for an authentic experience with nature in an urban environment. The distinction between the 'wild and savage' and the 'constructed' concepts of nature became much more evident and the whole project turned out to be pretty absurd, embracing a kind of slapstick aesthetic.

Yeb continues to benefit from residencies as not simply places to research and work but as sites to stretch boundaries, experiment with process and open oneself to new possibilities. In 2004 as artist-in-residence at Gertrude Contemporary Art Space Yeb worked on a still unfinished series of photographs of people sleeping in public libraries which she begun at the Cooper Union Art College in New York in 2001.



Left: Yeb Wiersma, *Photoseries* (2004) photograph (from forthcoming book).

In Melbourne I was struck by the impressive features of the State Library and felt I could continue my series 'Departure' here. What has been interesting for me to discover while observing peoples behaviour in this particular public space, is the ease and safety they felt in allowing themselves to fall asleep. This seems significant as being asleep captures us in our most fragile state because we lose control of our consciousness. It is quite beautiful to think that a library can provide this environment, this comfort. Hopefully I will return to Melbourne in 2006 to exhibit these photographs in the public domain of the library, returning the sleepers from where they came.

—
Simone Ewenson is a visual artist and co-ordinator at Platform Artists Group in Melbourne.

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.

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.

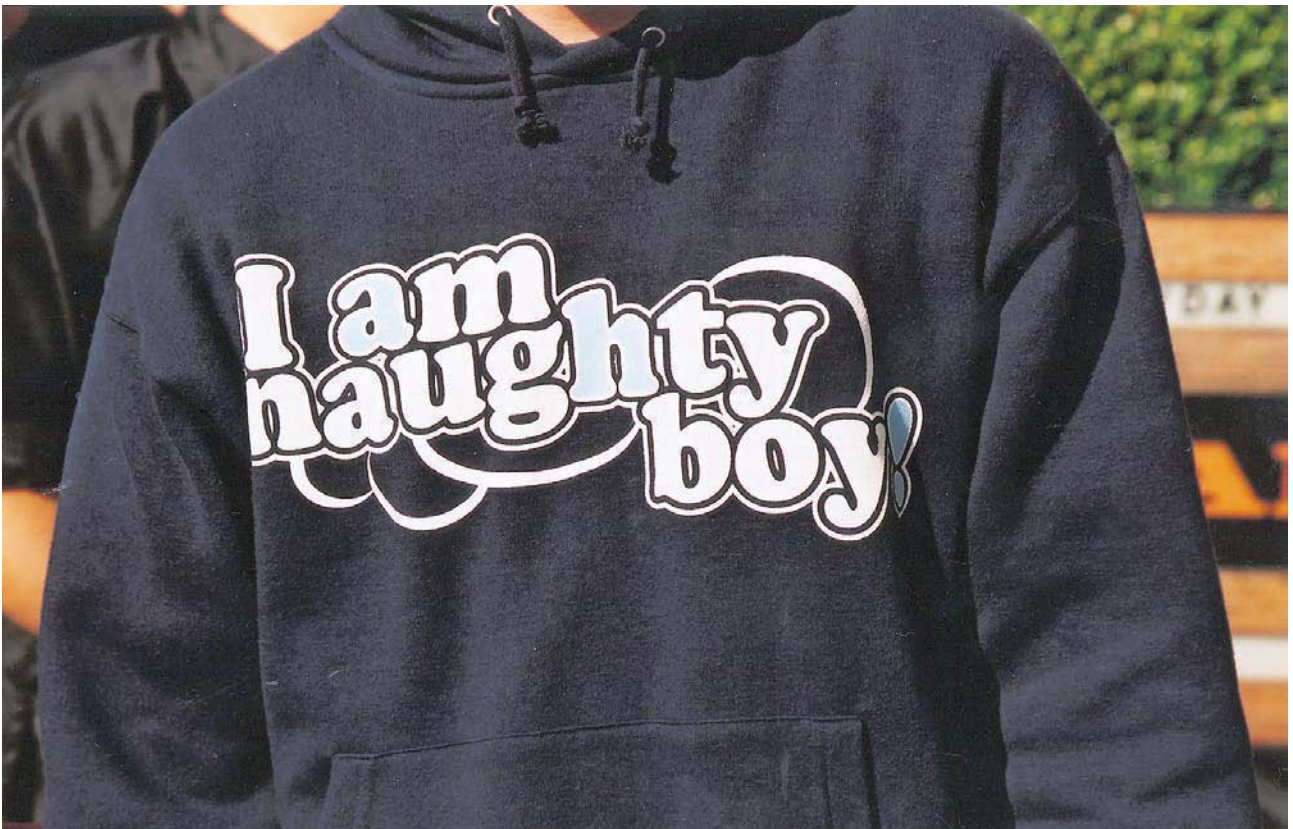
And then maybe the 'INSECT' label was just a clever marketing ploy – the vendor got my \$2.50 and I'm sure they wouldn't have if it weren't for that weighty piece of green card; reinterpreted sense made profitable?

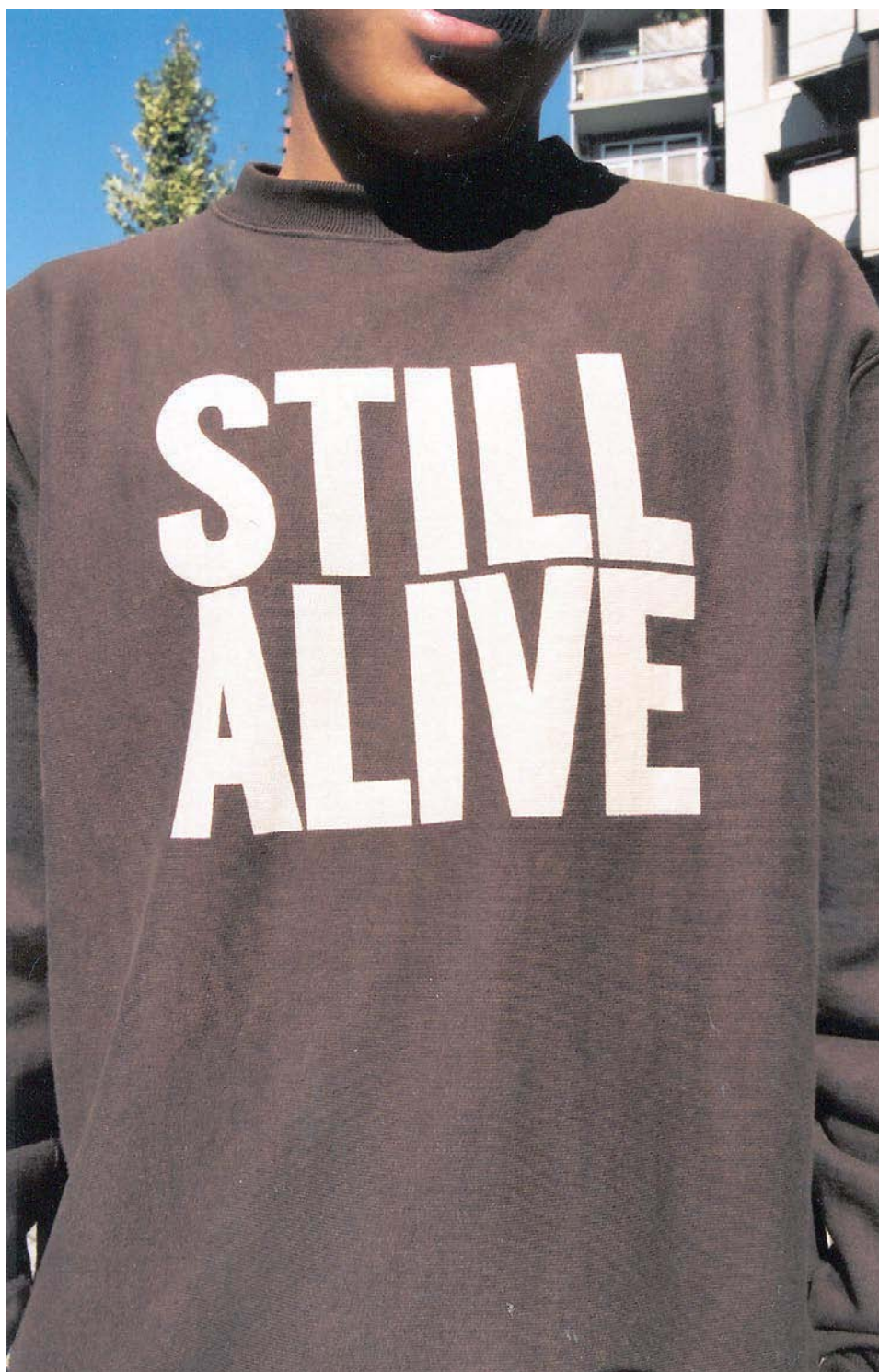
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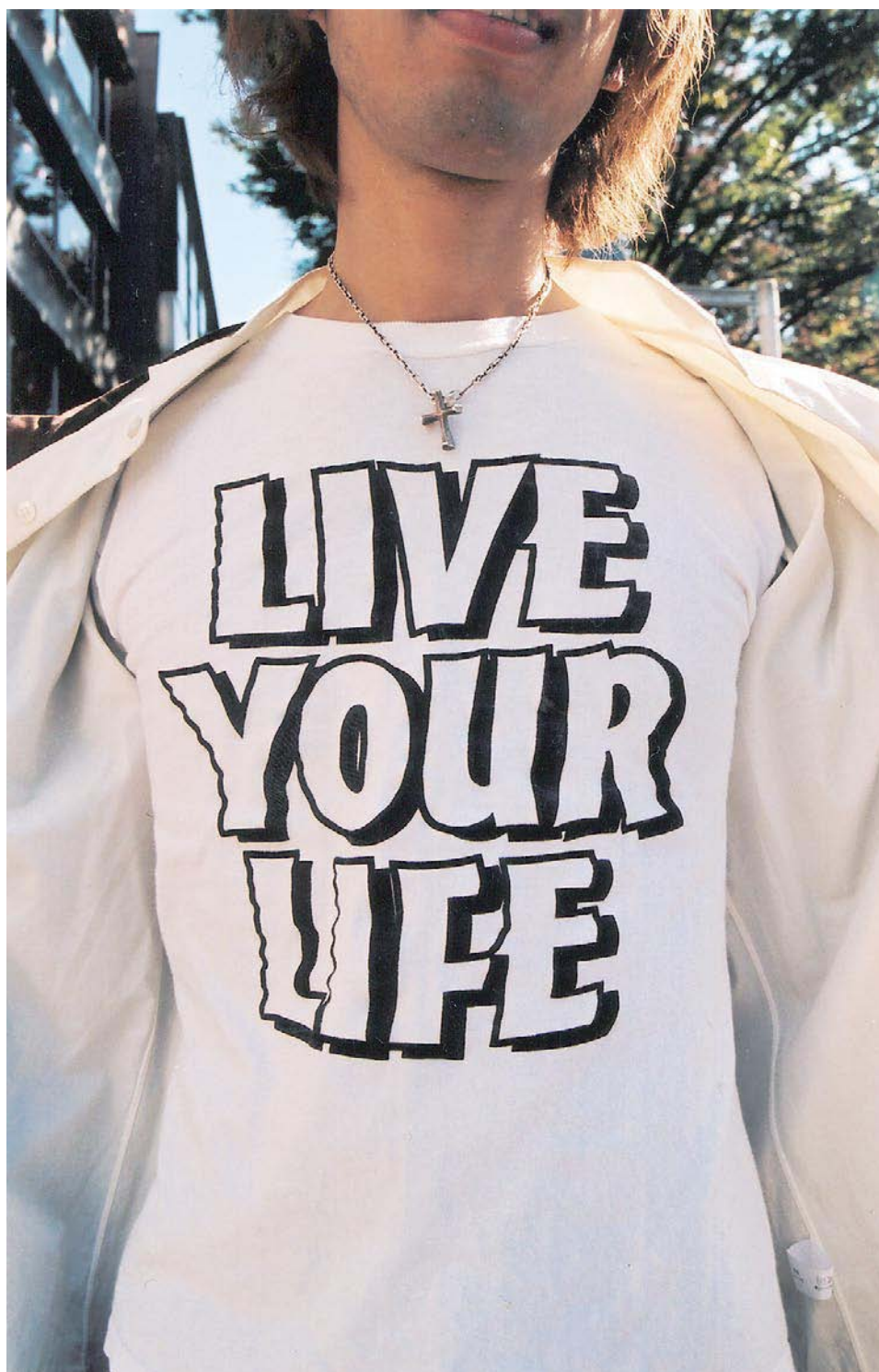
1. Re: Foucault's the beginning of *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of THE Human Sciences*.

Chloe is a new artist and writer living in Auckland who wishes she could devote more of her time to bird-watching. She also co-edits *Crease* magazine.



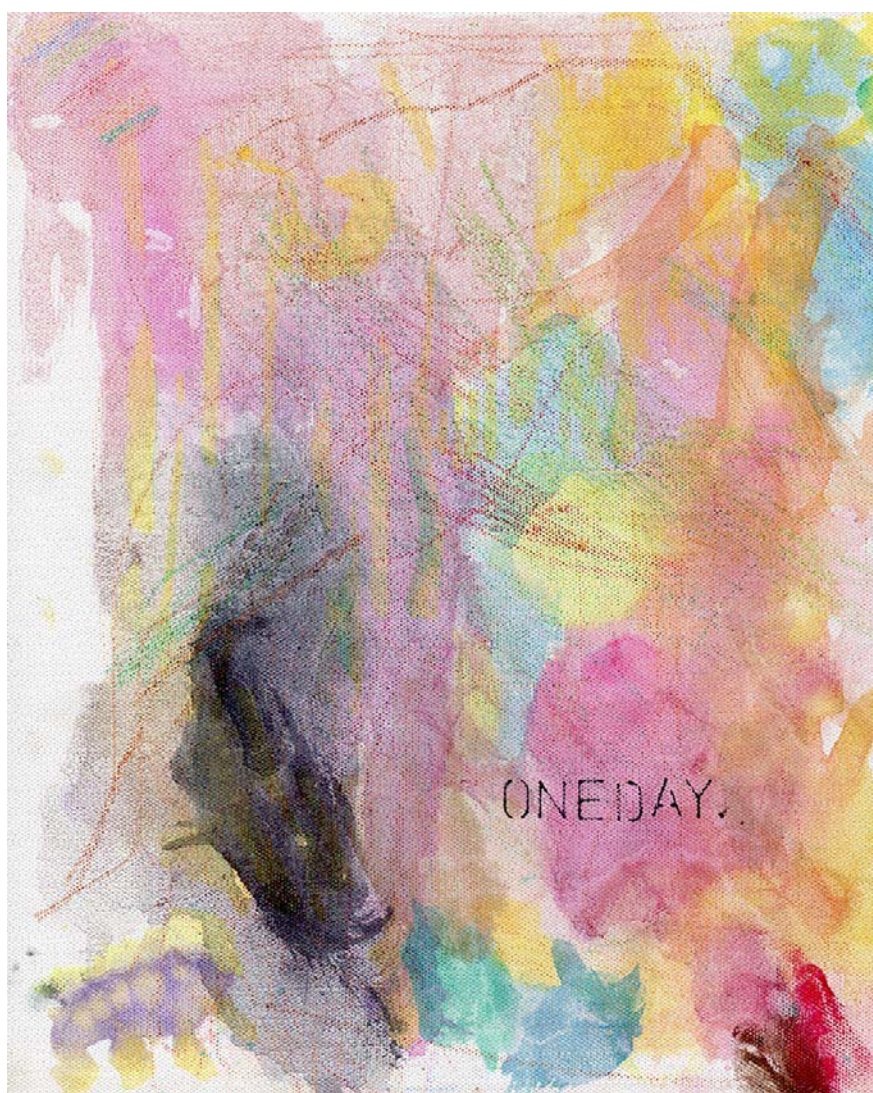


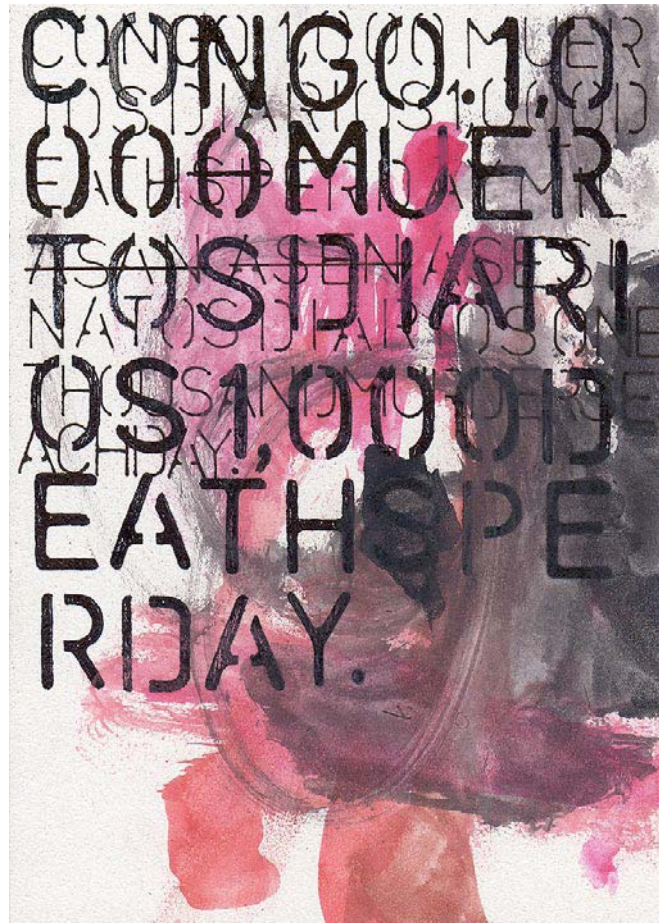




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URBAN EYESORE ASSULTS STREET AESTHETIC



Rautangi Street residents are presently dealing with an eyesore of culcutian proportions. What appears to have been the walls of a shanty dwelling have found their way onto the western end of our precious street. This lewd assemblage is devaluing property and attracting rodents. Rautangi resident's can only hope that it will be disposed of in the approved manner.

RAUTANGI ROAD DEATH TRAP

Watch out! Shoddy street maintenance could lead to pedestrian injury. Outside the stucco apartment block located at the mouth of Rautangi Road lies a treacherous death trap. A lethal combination of sharp edges and tetanus inducing rusted iron could lead to gangrene or even lockjaw. Street residents are strongly advised to consult their local physician in the event of encountering this rectangle of terror. Rautangi Reader stongly recommends the wearing of regulation shin guards at all times.



RAUTANGI READER ACCUSED!

The Rautangi Reader has been accused of having poor design and layout, by its editor. In an exclusive telephone interview the editor-in-chief said, "It just looks crappy. The print quality is poor, and as anyone in the business will tell you, the layout appalling." It is not known whether the next issue will show any improvement.

NEW FENCE AT NUMBER FOUR

Keep out! Keep Out! That's right readers, number four Rautangi Road has a new fence. Standing at least one metre tall, it obscures the view of the front lawn and undoubtedly dozens of dollars have been added to the property's value. Well done!

Rautangi Sunset Time: 6:14pm

NO EXIT BANNER NOTHING BUT A SLUR



As any Rautangi resident that's not permanently housebound will tell you, the scandalous use of the term 'No Exit' on our street sign is nothing but a scandalous slur. The eastern end of the street offers up several exciting exiting opportunities - the walkway up Mt Eden clearly being the most obvious. Scaling the stonewall with the proper climbing harness or trespass being two supplementary, if a little perilous options. Nevertheless, these are all options for exit. The Rautangi Reader urges all residents to contact the local council to accelerate the removal of this sign, as it is clearly untruthful and illusory.

BLOSSOM OF THE WEEK A Haiku



Gold and Glorious
Bellshaped nectar pods rejoice
Kowhai now in bloom

RAUTANGI READER

EDITION 2 VOLUME 1

JUBILANT EDITION

MIRE AND FILTH



The pictured 'hobo kit' was found by a Rautangi Reader staff journalist. This unsightly bag contained various kitchen implements and useful tools for the unsmiling vagrant. The Rautangi Reader, being more than an impartial observer took the initiative to rid Rautangi residents of this blemish. The 'hobo kit' has been removed from our precious cul-de-sac and repositioned on Mt Eden Road.

ALL HAIL GOD OF WEATHER!

That's right readers, an unseasonable cold snap has brought hail to Rautangi Road! On several occasions in the past week hail has been seen both falling and melting on Rautangi Road. It has not been established if the hail fell beyond the mouth of Rautangi Road.

DIAMONDS LIGHT UP RAUTANGI ASPHALT



Exquisite diamonds of an unknown origin have been sited on Rautangi Road. It is unknown whether the radiant rhombuses are lost booty from a diamond heist or were simply mislaid by the slap-dash owner. The sparkling swag seems to have been overlooked by many a pedestrian. The Rautangi Reader has taken it upon itself to cautiously and delicately remove one of the hundreds of diamonds for professional appraisal.

Rautangi Sunset Time: 6:09pm

MAKING A MOLEHILL OUT OF A MOUNTAIN

In a recent readers poll it was discovered that well over 70% of Rautangi Residents agreed that Rautangi Road would benefit from having the colossal Mt Eden budged a matter of metres in a easterly direction. The Readers poll established that the transferal would make for both a sunnier street and disposition.

Readers Poll Results

1. Are you happy with the current position of Mt. Eden?

YES: 18%

NO: 74%

UNSURE: 8%

2. If no, how far would you have the mountain moved and in which direction?

CENTIMETRES: 2%

METRES: 81%

MILES: 16%

WEST: 9%

EAST: 91%

BLOSSOM OF THE WEEK A Haiku

Lovely lavender
Springing upward under sun
It's a colour too



RAUTANGI READER

EDITION 3 VOLUME 1

BETTER LATE THAN NEVER EDITION

KICKING AGAINST THE THICKETS

Unruly thickets are overrunning Rautangi Road, blocking the view of our splendid retaining wall at the far end of the street. Given the season change the various budding wild plants are growing profusely. They are in desperate need taming and calming. The Rautangi Reader urges proud homeowners and renters alike, to get out there and do your bit to keep our princely cul-de-sac majestic.

Rautangi Sunset Time: 8:15pm

BLOSSOM OF THE WEEK

A Haiku

Soggy blossom
When it rains you fall
Evolve better waterproofing?

FENCE GETS A ONCE OVER

Yes readers, the new fence at number four has finally being treated to a lick of paint. After the wonderful fence construction work having been completed some weeks ago, the glorious edifice has being protected and prettied by a first-rate neutral tone. Well done!

DEPRAVED ADDICT SPOILS VERGE



Nicotine. It's a putrid and rotten drug. A filthy, smutty, lewd, stinking dirty habit and its thriving on our superior street. So high on toxic alkaloid, sullied smokers care not for keeping Rautangi Road pristine. This photo illustrates the plight of Rautangi's non-smokers: a discarded carton of cigarettes lies on one of Rautangi Road's many southern verges.

FANTASTIC STRATIGRAPHIC!



Deep deep deep below, in the subterranean belly of Rautangi Road they dig. In what is expected to be a six month dig, the Mt Eden Archaeological Guild (M.E.A.G.) are currently excavating what is believed to be the former site of the Mt Eden Archaeological Society (M.E.A.S.) headquarters. It is alleged that M.E.A.G. believes M.E.A.S. may have left valuable objects when they abandoned the building. M.E.A.G. are remaining tight-lipped about their discoveries thus far, however, the Rautangi Reader has ascertained that M.E.A.G. have found nothing but a rusty spanner and a fossilized chisel.

RAUTANGI READER

EDITION 4 VOLUME 1

CHRISTMAS EDITION

ALUMINUM PANDEMONIUM



It may make for great foil and hulls but aluminum has no place, nor warrantable business as a replacement for the superior wooden window frame. The Rautangi Reader is happy to report that in a recent meticulous and judicious survey of our regal roads home's, no aluminum window frames were unearthed. The Rautangi Reader demands its readers and residents to resist the temptation to cheapen our streets appearance and ruin our homes with ghastly, nasty, insipid aluminum window framing. Above is a photo of a home in Arch Hill, (an inferior neighborhood on the edge of our city), spoiled beyond repair by aluminum framing. Let this image be a warning to all homeowners.

BEAUTIFICATION NEAR COMPLETION

That's right readers, the adornment of number four Rautangi Road looks close to completion. Over several months the proud homeowners have sharpened their home's façade with the addition of a smart wooden fence, tidy paint job of the aforementioned boundary marker and now a tidy garden, pebbles and some youthful plants have spruced it to new intensity. Well done!

Rautangi Sunset Time: 8:23pm

RAUTANGI READER QUESTIONED

Rautangi Reader wishes to assert that it is indeed a newspaper. In the face of brutal allegations that the use of this term is inaccurate, Rautangi Reader wishes to remind those doubters that Rautangi Reader distributes both news, and is written on paper. End of discord.

STOLEN CAMERA BRINGS HALT

The theft of Rautangi Reader's staff photographers digital camera has resulted in not only the loss of several images that were to be used in significant, exclusive and moving stories, but has also halted its production. The Rautangi Reader has taken drastic action – employing an illustrator to recapture the stolen moments, and borrowed a digital camera in order to bring you this pre-Christmas news.



Above: Illustration of illustrator illustrating

A little pussycat was lost. Yet thanks to one kind Rautangi Reader reader and resident, the little cat had milk and food during its interim of loss. Due to the aforesaid stolen camera, the photo of the 'lost cat' poster pinned to one of Rautangi Road's curbside trees was lost. On the right is an illustration of the missing photograph of the missing cat. It is not known what befell the forlorn pussycat.

LOST CAT



BLOSSOM OF THE WEEK
A Haiku

THE NEW SPRING BLOSSOMS
ALL WEATHER THE WORLD AWAY
HERE IS JUST BROWN LEAVES

NEWSPAPER ENTERS 21st CENTURY

The Rautangi Reader now has an email address. Your correspondence might be appreciated: rautangireader@hotmail.com

RAUTANGI READER

EDITION 5 VOLUME 1

INTERESTING EDITION

CH-CH-CH-CHANGES



Wow! Changes galore on Rautangi Road over the first five months of 2004!. Below is an organized list of those changes put together by Rautangi Reader's crack team of pollsters:

1. House Painting (internal and external)
2. House Sales
3. House Purchases
4. House Building
5. House Renovations
6. Tree felling
7. Divorces

NUMBER FOUR FINDS NEW OWNER

That's right readers! No. four has brand new owners! After several months of hard slog by the entire family previously residing in the stately villa to bring number four up to Rautangi Road's exalted standards a satisfactory sale price was secured. Well done!

Rautangi Sunset Time: 5:43pm

TWO HAIKUS FOR YOU!

Rautangi Reader's haiku-ru has thankfully provided us with two haiku's for the 'Interesting Issue' of the Rautangi Reader.

#1

Parore
The Golden Rule
If you don't understand it
Don't buy it

#2

the case is hard
rigid and logical
like its crystalline structure

RAUTANGI TOLLBOOTH PROPOSED



fig1: Proposed Tollbooth

It is well known that Rautangi Road is a popular thoroughfare to Mt Eden proper. This may be of some benefit to residence of our serene street, but unfortunately opens up our asphalted paradise to any riffraff that may happen upon our mountain gateway. This will not be tolerated by this resident slash editor. I urge you all to get behind the Rautangi Reader's submission (deadline July 31) to the council to have a tollbooth installed at the western aperture of our beautiful boulevard. This will also aid in preventing drivers who fancy using our street to volte-face.

SMALL AWKWARD CORNER

Rautangi Reader has been left with a small awkward corner in the bottom left nook of this very issue.

NEWSPAPER IN DEPTHS OF 21st CENTURY

The Rautangi Reader wishes to remind readers that it has its very own email address (rautangireader@hotmail.com). The Rautangi Reader has been inundated with the most astonishing mail.

SPECIAL 'MAGAZINE'

FEAT. Tony Allen, Anya, Dan Arps, Mark Boswell,
Olivia Boyle, Marina Cains, Niki Campbell,
George Chang, Fiona Connor, Chris Cudby,
Dan 2000, Simon Denny, James Duthie,
Julien Dyne, Finn Ferrier, Chris Fitzgerald,
Marcus Fitzgerald, Rochelle Forbes,
Dave King, Robin Kydd, Hamish McLauchlan,
Andrew Mcleod, Peter Madden, Misery,
Tahi Moore, Leah Mulgrew, Jenny Murphy,
Ruben Nielson, Seung Oh, Peter Robins,
Ben Tankard, Denys Watkins

© SPECIAL 1ST FLOOR
CUSTOMS

CONTENTS:

1. Page
2. Pictures from march 2004 - february 2005
3. 'DRAWNS' AND 'DOWNTOWN FROWN'
4. 'SNIFFING ONIONED ARMPIT' AND 'LEFT DI RIGHT' AND
5. 'RAZZA 2' AND 'TIMECAPSULE 11'
6. current board members' pageworks
7. FIONA CONNOR
8. CHRIS CUDBY
9. SIMON DENNY
10. JULIEN DYNE
11. DAVID KING
12. TAHI MOORE
- DETAILS AND NOTICE PAGE

SPECIAL
1



February saw the reopening of Special gallery, an occasional project space run by artists in the foyer/sectioned off room in the front of some studio spaces in downtown Auckland. After near on a year of haphazard activity and shared space the gallery has housed another couple of projects between its halfway walls in 2005, and has a few more up its sleeve

The space itself is an odd shape, poking this way and that with half erected walls, splatters of paint on the floor, and an overhanging giant of a worn out air vent directly above it. If one looks over the top of the halfway walls (which is hardly avoidable), one sees views of stacked up artworks, bits of wood, painted out walls etc. The wallpaper of an ever changing space. It carries the casual feel that seems symptomatic of the spirit in which the room was first redressed as a gallery, almost creating itself in March 2004.

Its use as a project space came out of a need for a place to show, always serving first the artists involved, the studio users and its immediate community. Chris Cudby remembers the setup:

Done it ... if I remember correctly the setting up of Special evolved from a series of shows and performances based around downtown Auckland. In our studio at the time was Dave King, Mark Boswell, Julien Dyne and myself. We were all creating works that operated outside of the established venues in the area. Julien and Dave organised street exhibitions, Dave & I did sound performances as Golden Axe on Queen St and Mark was a high profile street/poster artist. As well as this there was a large window display space where artists regularly exhibited next to our building with openings that frequently involved people drinking on the sidewalk. So, along with rm401 and a pile of other studios nearby, there was a fair amount of a practise room in the studio, and visitors and band members would often drop by and have a chat, watch TV, have a drink etc. Consequently our lounge got filthy and after a bit of discussion the couches were thrown away. Couches gone we simply cleared out the rest of the stuff, nicked some wall panels from the abandoned building across the road, put them up and voila! Special. The idea of starting a gallery had been bouncing around for a while so it seemed an appropriate time to put it into action

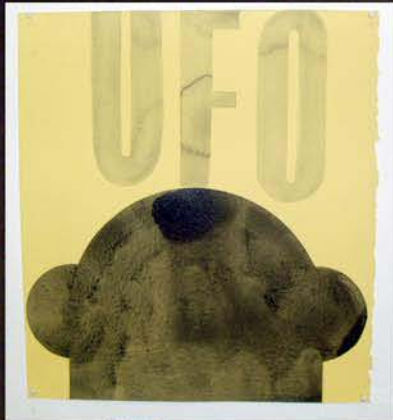
Chris Cudby

For everyone who has been with Special it has been a casual involvement. Through all the haphazard evolving of the programme and physicality, virtues can be seen in its shows, lots of odd bits, a wide range of practice coming together and then wandering off again.

From its inception the space has existed as an irregular venue, with no fixed timetable, no mission statement, no artist fees, no outside funding, and a freedom to put things on when a show came up, or an artist was interested. We hope to carry on in this vein throughout 2005, open to proposals and interest from those attracted to it.

Simon Denny

SPECIAL
2



LEFT DI RIGHT

TAHI MOORE SIMON DENNY
 PREVIEW THURSDAY 13TH MAY 6PM AT SPECIAL
 ROOM 1, LEVEL 1, 26 CUSTOMS STREET EAST
 GALLERY HOURS FRIDAY 2-5PM, SAT 2-5PM OR BY
 APPOINTMENT SORHORSESTUDIOS@HOTMAIL.COM

SPEED KILLS



RAZZA 2, Common Knowledge:
F. Connor, Leah Mulgrew,
D. Rulez.
OPENING July 1st at
SPECIAL Gallery from 6:00,
Level One, 26 Customs St.,
East, Opposite Show Girls
Gallery also open 2-5
Friday and
Saturday

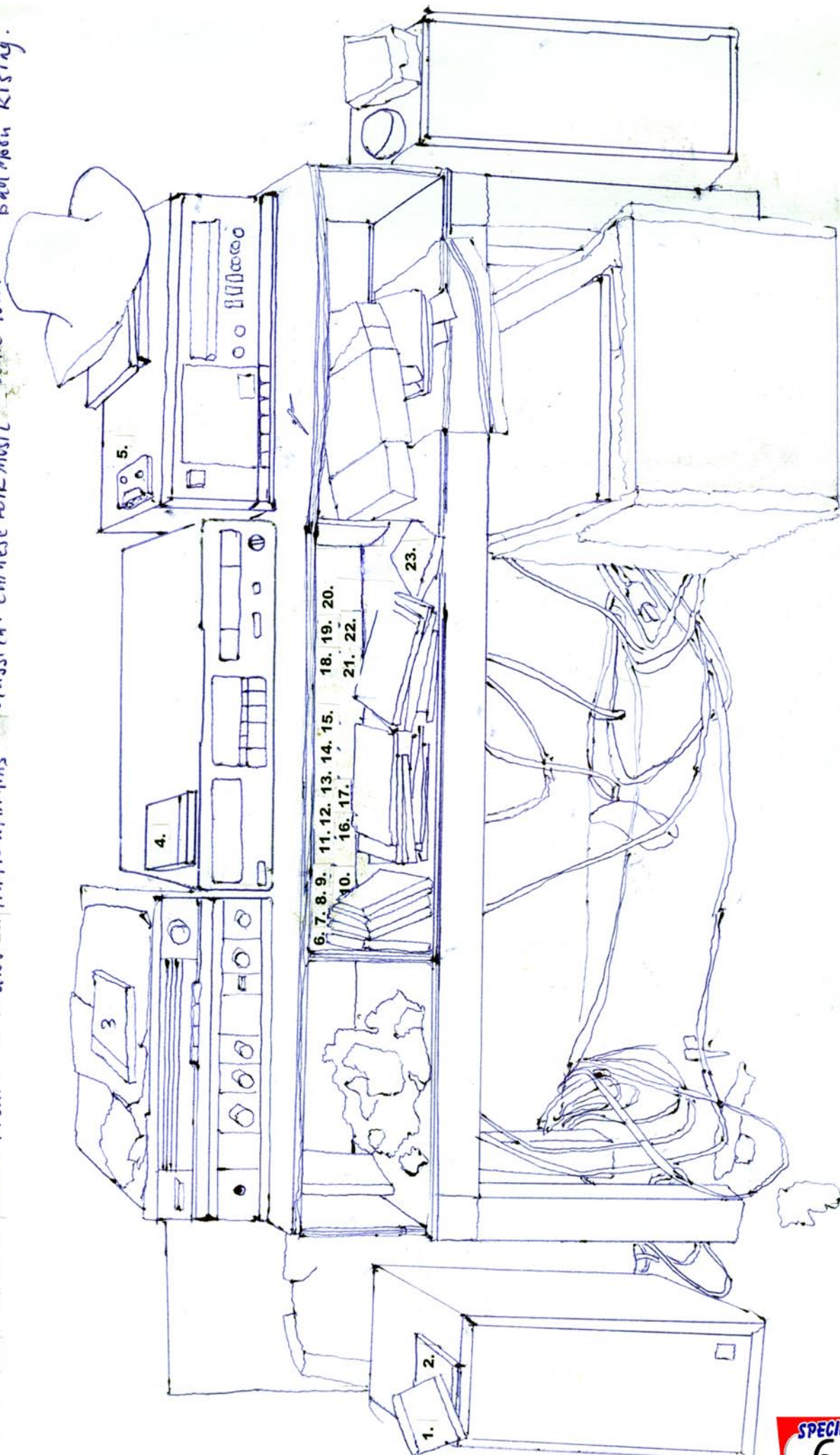


SPECIAL PRESENTS

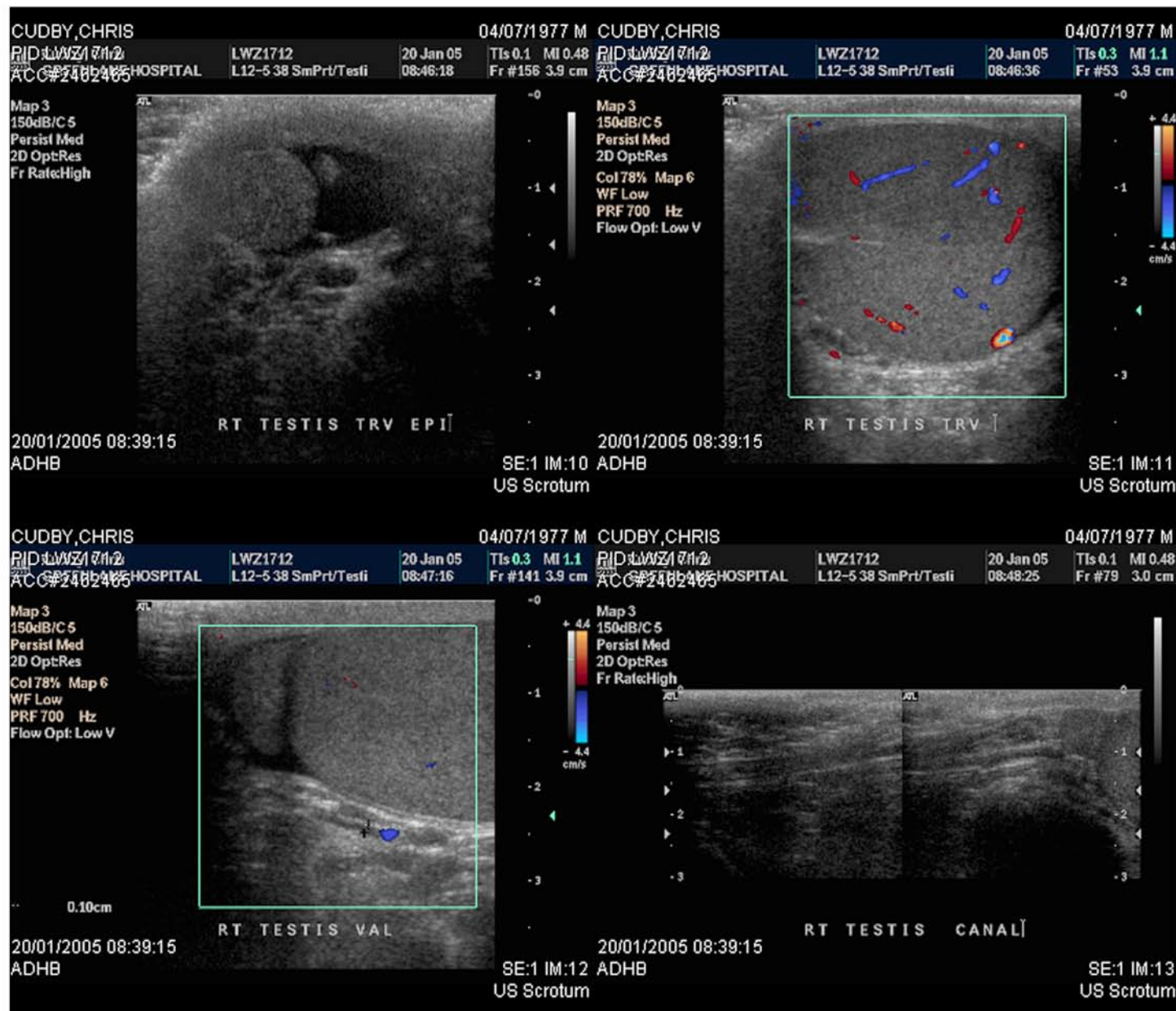
FIONA CONNOR, FIN
FERRIER, CHRIS FITZGER-
ALD & BEN TANKARD
TIMECAPSULE II
4TH-12TH FEBRUARY
PREVIEW AND GUEST PER-
FORMANCES 6:30 p.m THURS-
DAY 3RD FEBRUARY 2005



CD's in SPECIAL studio 26 Customs St. 1. Fleetwood Mac/Remours 2. Led Zeppelin/Horser of the Holy 3. The Psychedelic Sounds of
 Thirteenth Floor Elevators 4. Talking Heads/More Songs about Buildings and Food. 5. unidentified tape 6. ARVO PART/IAM
 THE TRUE VINE. 7. ORNETTE COLEMAN/BEATY IS A RARE THING 8. ORNETTE COLEMAN BEATY IS A RARE THING 9. 7 10. ARVO PART/
 PASSIO 11. The Best of Pete Seeger. 12. The Incredible String Band/The Hangman's Beautiful Daughter. 13. Leonard Cohen / I'm Your Man.
 14. Henryk Mikolaj Gurgocki. 15. Cecil Taylor 16. Bob Dylan / Time Out Of Mind 17. Bob Dylan / Self Portrait 18. Leonard Cohen / Dear
 Heather 19. KUVSS 20. Music From Twin Peaks 21. Hank Williams 22. Classical Chinese Folk Music 23. Sonic Youth
 Bad Moon Rising.



Fiona Connor





Simon Denny





Julien Dyne



Construction

Designers think that the United States, possibly in cooperation with other nations, should initiate construction on the NASA prototype space colony or a similar one now. To make the design a reality, critical gaps in present knowledge must be filled through extensive basic research. Physiological and psychological limitations of an isolated population and the dynamics of closed ecological systems are being investigated. Testing and evaluation take place on Earth, in spacecraft in Earth orbit, and later on the moon.

In the designers' scenario, the first essential components of the colony are constructed from terrestrial materials by crews from Earth. Later, materials are mined on the moon and transported to the colony for processing and construction. A space station in orbit around the Earth serves as crew quarters, construction shack, and supply depot while astronaut's assemble modules for the colony and for a lunar base.

Special attention is devoted to quickly establishing an early base on the moon. It has a nuclear power station, transportation system, crew quarters, and a processing plant. The lunar crew of 150 people requires 280 tons (250 t) of supplies from Earth and the rotation of seventy-five people annually.

At the outset colonists, supplies, and raw materials are transported to the colony from Earth. An atmosphere, water, chemical systems, and the first agricultural biomass complete the initial outfitting while the colony is in the build-up phase. Re-

Living in Space: Cutaway drawing shows organization of Earthlike community inside torus. Great wheel is 1,800 m/D, spins on axis once a minute to create artificial

gravity for colonists. Cross-section seen here is 130 m/D. Sunshine illuminates tubular city. Environment is controlled to permit days, nights, seasons. There are no skyscrapers, freeways, or cars. Tiered, modular housing makes maximum use of area. Gardens and trees soften view.

*Moon can provide building materials.
Note spaceship between spoke and rim.*



EACH STRUCTURE RISES UPON THE HOPE OF NEW MEANING FROM THE ABYSS OF FREEDOM. HE V
THE STRUCTURE TO HIMSELF HE MUST LET IT PASS. THE NEW STRUCTURES WILL RISE ALSO AN
BE LET TO RISE THROUGH THE EXEGESIS OF DYANAMIC BEING AND TRUE THINKING. TODAY WE WILL
REVIEW BUILDING MEANING.

Tahi Moore

STEP 1: PLACE YOUR EAR CLOSE TO THE GROUND IN YOUR REAL SPACE. YOU WILL BEGIN TO HEAR A COMFORTING SOUND. WAIT UNTIL YOU DECERN WHERE IT COMES FROM. MOVE SLOWLY CLOSER UNTIL IT BEGINS TO SOUND IN SHORT PULSES.

STEP 2: LOOK AT THE GROUND, YOU WILL SEE A LIGHT PIECE OF STRING. TAKE IT IN YOUR HAND AND GENTLY LET YOUR HAND PULL THE STRING. YOU WILL NOTICE THAT AN AREA OF THE GROUND OR SKY WILL MOVE AS IF IT IS ATTACHED TO THE STRING AND IS BEING PULLED ALONG WITH IT. KEEP PULLING UNTIL THE STRING LIGHTLY CATCHES. YOU WILL NOTICE THAT YOUR REAL SPACE IS NOW QUITE SMALL, SMALL ENOUGH TO COME FREE WITH ONE GOOD TUG. QUICKLY AND SMOOTHLY PULL THE STRING AND THE SPACE WILL FLIP ITSELF INSIDE OUT, REVEALING A VOID SPACE.

STEP 3: LOOK AT THE SCENE BEFORE YOU, YOU WILL BEGIN TO SEE SHAPES IN THE BACKGROUND OR DISTANCE. BEGIN TO WALK FOWARDS, YOU WILL NOTICE THAT YOU ARE NOT MOVING, BUT THAT SOME OR ALL OF THE OBJECTS WILL BE MOVING TOWARDS YOU.

STEP 4: AS EACH OBJECT COMES TOWARDS YOU, FEEL IT'S COLOUR. CLOSE YOUR EYES AND IMAGINE THAT THIS COLOUR HAS FILLED YOUR REAL SPACE. LIFT YOUR EYELIDS SLOWLY AND RETURN YOUR GAZE TO THE OBJECT, IT WILL HAVE A MEANING SENSE. OBSERVE AS THE MEANING SENSE BEGINS TO COME INTO FOCUS. THE OBJECT WILL REMAIN, BUT WILL BECOME SMALLER, AND YOU WILL SEE A TAG AT ITS FOWARD AND UNDERSIDE. THE TAG WILL BE MADE OF SOFT BEIGE CARD. REACH FOWARD AND TAKE IT, IT SHOULD COME AWAY EASILY. TAKE THE TAG AND PLACE IT IN YOUR MOUTH. NOTE HOW THE TAG TASTES, NOTICE IT'S TEXTURE, NOTICE HOW IT CHANGES AND BECOMES INCREASINGLY VELVETY AND SWEET. OPEN YOUR MOUTH AND BREATH OUT AND THEN IN UNTIL THE TAG HAS COMPLETLEY DISSOLVED.

STEP 5: LOOK FOR THE NEXT OBJECT AND CONTINUE. AS YOU WALK AND AS EACH TAG BECOMES AIR, YOU WILL FEEL YOUR FEET WALKING AS IF THE GROUND HAD BECOME FEATHER-LIKE.

STEP 6: CLOSE YOUR EYES AND OBSERVE THE MEANING SENSES AS THEY BEGIN.



VISIT: www.tahimoore.com/special

GALLERY HOURS'

3pm-7pm THURSDAY
2pm-7pm FRIDAY
2pm-7pm SATURDAY

**SPECIAL IS AT LEVEL 1,
26 CUSTOMS STREET EAST,
PLEASE RING DOORBELL AT GROUND FLOOR.**

Commerce

doorbell
1st floor
entrance
Bus Stops

Customs St.

Show girls

SPECIAL REOPENING

WHAT'S ON?

JASON LINDSAY

FROM NOW until MAY 8TH

JASON LINDSAY is building a major project in the gallery.

The gallery will be OPEN USUAL HOURS to check on the project as it evolves.

There will be a completion party on TUESDAY 26TH APRIL, 6PM.

NICK AUSTIN

Showing some new work from

THURSDAY 12 MAY - SATURDAY 28TH MAY

OPENING EVENT THURSDAY 12 MAY, 6PM

If you are interested in doing something with Special Gallery in 2005 please email special@tahimoore.com or call Simon on 0211065074. We would appreciate receiving any proposals you have by May.

DIMENSIONS OF SPECIAL GALLERY

3920

Studios

1160

Front Door 1952

2920

680

diagram not to scale

5230

2400

Shows have been:

Drawns (Group Show)

Downtown Frown (Dan Arps, Chris Cudby, Julien Dyne, Dave King, Andrew Mcleod, Peter Madden)

Left Di Right (Simon Denny, Tahi Moore)

Sniffing Onioned Armpit (Seung Yul Oh)

Razza II (Fiona Connor, Leah Mulgrew, Dan 2000)

Untitled (Chris Fitzgerald)

Timecapule II (Fiona Connor, Finn Ferrier, Chris Fitzgerald, Ben Tankard)

Side Tracked (Robin Kydd)

Special gallery board are presently:

Fiona Connor,

Chris Cudby,

Simon Denny (acting chair),

Julien Dyne,

David King,

Tahi Moore.

**SPECIAL
12**

This article was compiled, written and designed by Simon Denny

with help from Dave King and Chris Cudby

Pages 2 and 12 use details from David King's work in Downtown Frown,
Photos by Fiona Connor, Simon Denny, Julien Dyne, Seung Oh, Tahi Moore.

Dear Reader of Natural Selection,

I write to enlist your support. In the last issue of this Australasian magazine certain criticisms were levelled at our national campaign. Regrettably, this campaign is too vulnerable. It has not yet received a response from the Government and can ill afford such criticism. As I expect the writers may have erroneously thought the campaign is much stronger than what it is, their criticisms have had to be thoroughly addressed so as to limit their destruction (see blog site). For there is much to lose:

- 23 July 2001:** An Australian Federal Government media release commences with: 'A landmark examination of visual arts and craft in Australia was announced today by [the then] Federal Minister for the Arts, Peter McGauran. **Visual arts and craft are major contributors to** Australian culture and **the Australian economy, yet at the same time, visual artists and craftspeople are amongst the lowest income earners in Australia**, Mr McGauran said';
- 6 September 2002:** The resulting Myer Report makes 20 recommendations. The first recommends that direct funding be made to Artists through the reinstatement of a mandatory artists' fee and increased grants;
- 9 December 2003:** As a response over \$39 million dollars is injected into this sector, mostly into infrastructure (wages of those servicing the sector, etc...). Basically NONE goes to Recommendation One – the reason for the Myer Report;
- 8 July 2004:** Artists mount this campaign;
- 14 August 2004:** National SIT-IN to STAND UP for contemporary visual art, same day, same hour in public art galleries throughout Australia;
- 29 November 2004:** The campaign's THE STARVING VISUAL ARTIST put the cliché to rest PETITION is tabled in Federal Parliament;
- This day in March 2005:** Recommendation One remains ignored; our petition unanswered.

The systemic industrial abuse of visual artists and craftspeople who 'are major contributors to . . . the Australian economy' has been rubber stamped by the Government: its job declared done. Visual artists' dire financial situation is now far worse than in 2001 when the Myer report was called for, but the alarm bells in Canberra have been silenced. This is our last chance to make them ring loud. Let Canberra know that:



Someone else wrote the song 'Free Nelson Mandela', not Nelson Mandela. Please, be that person for this campaign. Write letters, articles, anything, everything. Let your embers flare, let us artists dare.

Gail Hastings for SASS

(For more information please go to our blog site at <http://sydneyartseen.blog-city.com>)



LITTLE BABYLON

wants you!

The Elam School of Fine Arts

Mount Street Building

ROOF-TOP GARDEN

A.K.A. "LITTLE BABYLON"

is seeking your
installation/performance/garden-
based art/love.



Please send expressions of interest to
the Little Babylon Committee (LBC)
c/- Tessa Laird,
tessa@fusionanomaly.net

Echinocactus grandis, a giant "Visnaga"