

# Natural Selection

Robert John



### Natural Selection Magazine

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## My New Neighbour

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I live in this 1970s apartment complex in a quite sought after suburb in a small capital city in Australia. It has a bunch of buildings, each with either four or six apartments. There are lots of trees around and stuff. It's really nice in an old school way. And I'm lucky because the rent is really reasonable. The apartment is entirely comfortable – and none of that floating floor stainless steel kitchen lifestyle shit that would add \$80 to the weekly rent.

Anyhow, I'm 32, and I had just been back from a weekend away, and since it has been the summer holidays, I haven't been doing much housecleaning or whatever. Plus, the weather has been really weird, kind of overcast and drizzling rain. But it will get hot into February, bush fire weather and all.

I work at a university so I can kind of make my own time, plus school doesn't really start for another week or so. Last Tuesday I went into the office for a bit to check my mail and do a bit of work on my thesis. Then went home by the supermarket and the local gay video store and rented a DVD.

Anyhow, I was planning to postpone watching it because I had to get my house in order. I stripped the bed of my sweaty summer sheets and loaded them in the communal laundry.

As it happens, my kitchen window overlooks the washing area (my living room windows overlook a nice tree-lined street). There are five or so clothes-drying hoists, and an adjacent laundry with washers and dryers for use by the apartment residents. So, when I'm doing the washing up or whatever I occasionally get a look at some of the army boys who live in the other apartments (there is a major defence academy nearby).

Anyhow, I put a load of bed linen in one of the washing machines, and kept an eye on my watch (the washing takes 25 minutes) while I put shit away and vacuumed the floor and stuff. When my watch hit 3.30 I went downstairs to get out the washing and there was this guy, I reckon about 22, hanging out his washing. I walked past him and into the laundry but my load wasn't quite done yet. Well, I'll go back upstairs and grab the stack of newspapers I've read over the last few days and take them to the recycling bins.

As I was walking back past the clotheslines, the guy says:

"Is it safe to hang clothes here?" (He was worried if someone would steal clothes from the line).

I said "Yeah, it's cool." And then, "You just moved in?"

He goes, "Yeah, I'm Dan", and I go, "Hey, I'm Dan. Mad huh?"

I tell him that I've been living here six months or so, blah blah blah. Anyhow, he said that his girlfriend was worried about it (the clothesline safety issue).

Later, I noticed that there was some skimpy girl underwear



Internet image. Photographer and subject unknown.

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but that wasn't what I was interested in. This boy wore nice shorty undies. You know the sort, not fucking skater sagger shorts, and not CK boring briefs, but nice cotton brief shorts. I could see when he was reaching up to peg his and girlfriend's clothes that he was wearing some light blue ones.

So, I pegged up my washing (get this, white sheets and pillow cases, god knows what he thought), and I go, "Good to meet you man, see you 'round." He goes "Yeah, seeya mate."

\* \* \*

This is the start of a story I was writing for an online porn story website. They've already accepted one of my stories. In this one I've lied about my name (I say it's Dan Ellis) and my age (I'm really 38), but the rest is true. The idea was to amp it up slowly. Running into the guy at the local shops, describing what he was wearing, describing his particular sexy aspects in more detail each time. I'm not sure what



the climactic denouement will be if I get around to finishing the story. It doesn't matter really. I was writing it for my own entertainment. Something to do instead of watching television.

Likewise, there's this picture post board that I subscribe to where people post non-sexual images of hot guys in their teens and twenties. Some images are actually photographed by subscribers at beaches and stuff, and these photographers have their own very specific styles. They're entirely artistic, not exploitative I don't think. I'm not being a dick when I say that they celebrate the beauty of the male form. That sounds like a half-assed defense of Robert Mapplethorpe's photos or something, but I don't mean it that way. The photos would make an excellent coffee table book that would rival the professional gay photography that you see in magazines like 'Blue' and those books put out by gay porn companies of impossibly perfect Eastern European boys dressed up as cowboys. Mostly though, the images that subscribers post are sourced from innumerable websites of photos compiled by private persons, photos that circulate and spawn copies of themselves and keep popping up on other websites. The interesting thing is that none of these images are 'owned' in the traditional sense. A rule of the posting board is that images cannot be copyrighted (and other similar boards have been closed down for copyright infringement). Usually, images of 'hot dudes' from commercial sites are marked with logos and digital watermarks, but there are plenty that aren't.

Internet image. Photographer and subject unknown.

To me, the 'amateur' pictures are the most appealing anyhow. They're 'real' in some hard to define sense. These are pictures of guys posing and flexing their muscles in the backyard, or hanging with their mates, all with their arms around each other, smiling stupidly. They're not 'arty' or over-determined which gives them a certain kind of impact (American artist Tim Gardner draws upon a similar sort of ambiguity in his watercolour and pastel versions of his brother's snapshots of college 'dudes'). My favourite amateur net pics, though, are photos that guys have taken of themselves in a mirror – holding their IXUS or digicam at shoulder height, and flexing their belly muscles. They're cute and they know it, and it's simple to upload the images to god knows where and then it filters down and outwards and turns up everywhere.

Not to get all Barthesian, but what really gets me are the telltale signs that these images give away for free: the stack of cds tells me what music the guy likes, the posters on his bedroom wall tell me if he is into reggae music or if he is into soccer. One set of images I encountered recently of a mid-teen Israeli boy look like he's taking his own photo in an upper-class Californian suburb, but the details around him give his location away (a vinyl record hung on the wall in his room has Hebrew text on the label). And a great image I didn't archive included these beautiful pencil drawings pinned to the wall that the guy had obviously made himself,



sort of in the style of the German and Israeli-born artist team Mutean/Rosenblum. It was such a sweet giveaway that this guy was an actual person, with talent and sensitivity.

There's something compelling about contemporary male identity going on here. It's about narcissism and technology but it's not 'gay'. In Canberra over summer we have a hotted up car festival called Summernats, and you constantly see all these ethnic boys driving around in their immaculate street utes, the back window plastered with vinyl letters saying FOR SALE with a mobile phone number. Likewise, at the Big Day Out concerts, boys have their name and mobile number printed on their t-shirt backs. The cars aren't necessarily for sale, and the guys don't need to advertise their number to the paramedics in case they pass out drunk. This advertising is strictly for the chicks so they can call up the particular baseball-capped 'hottie' that appeals to them and their girlfriends.

It's nice that these boys think they're hot. It's healthy really. Better than them thinking otherwise. I'm not advocating some porno or fashion ideal of attractiveness, or even a staging of coolness as a basis of identity. But the confidence that these guys display is better than not being confident (I can hope, too, that it's not an over-reaction to depression). Probably some of them would be unreconstructed dumbass misogynists if put to the test, but mostly they are probably just testosterone-fuelled boys out to get laid. At least they take pride in their appearance, even if it's (secretly?) for their mates. I know this is a complex issue, and I've read enough papers from sociology journals on homosociality, hegemonic masculinity, identity prototypes, class and race to short-circuit any argument I might make here. But I'm just making an observation, really.

For instance, through observing young male skaters in urban environments I would suggest that their decision to wear baggy pants revealing the tops of the underwear is one based primarily on the imperatives of fashion, and the self-identification, through this style of dress, with their nominated subcultural group. The 'eroticisation' of this style of dressing is one that operates at a second degree. Likewise, the fashion for long board shorts (a style of swimming trunk derived from surfer style), also worn low on the hips, relates directly to the 'cool' factor of this style of clothing. At an urban public pool last summer this style of dress was the preferred option of the majority of young men present. While it could be assumed that the revealing nature of this clothing style was deployed consciously by older teenage boys and young adult men, it seemed that the fashionability of this clothing was of paramount concern. It could be that the body display inherent in the swimming pool environment, connected with the wearing of low-slung shorts, functions to enhance the boys' sense of hegemonic (that is, of predominant influence) masculinity within their own peer group. That is, the clothing emphasises the musculature of the torso, and visually elongates the body by revealing the V shape of the lower abdominal muscles. This is old news in terms of Western modes of body display (at least since the 15th century). I think that these boys don't really understand how erotically-



Internet images. Photographer and subject unknown.

charged this type of dress is, because this kind of clothing (low-slung pants) enacts a transit between clothing and nudity, as Mario Perniola eloquently explained in his essay 'Between Clothing and Nudity' reprinted in *Zone: Fragments for a History of the Human Body: Part Two* in 1989.

I was going to say that this style of dress is 'hot', but I don't want to fall into the trap of using the word as a descriptor in the way that Bruce Hainley and John Waters do in their recent book *Art - A Sex Book* (as in 'he's so hot') as one reviewer of the book pointed out (I can't find the reference, sorry). Sure, the teenage hustler in Gary Lee Boas's 1970s or early 1980s photo could be described as 'hot' in a total boy next door kind of way (the heat lies in a sexual charge camouflaged by the appearance of unworldliness, I guess). It's an extraordinary photograph, and the guy reminds me of this angel boy I used to hang out with (solid torso, broad open features, a sprinkling of body hair that he was nervous about but shouldn't have been), but you could also use the term 'hot' to describe Jeff Burton's photo taken on the set of a gay porno film of two muscle studs engaged in vigorous analingus. So, it's fairly useless.

Weirdly, in response to the major recent survey show of

Australian artist Bill Henson at the Art Gallery of New South Wales, references have been made to the work of American photographer and film-maker Larry Clark, and American artist Will McBride. Okay, on the Australian art commentary weblog, 'The Art Life', a commentator wrote recently that it was a missed opportunity that the exhibition shop for the Henson show didn't stock Larry Clark or Will McBride books. Adolescent sexuality and all. McBride likes to photograph boys at adolescence, showing the signs of puberty and so forth. There's nothing wrong with this (McBride's work) but it's not what Henson is about (his work, while it incorporates youth sexuality, is more 'about' theatricality, and that, even though I'm a fan, and he's a brilliant artist, may be a let down). If we're talking about hotness, it might be better to think of that as heat. American artist Larry Clark has always had the heat turned way up, and for him it's aligned to both a critical point in his subject matter (sex, violence, drugs) and to his style: documentary, collage, cut-ups, mixing imagery from mass culture with his own photographs, and, in his films, fast-paced montage and soundtrack (in his 2001 film *Bully*, the soundtrack is all badass rap and pounding techno).

Portland-based film-maker Gus Van Sant, on the other hand, in his 2004 film *Elephant* chooses to treat an interpretation of the Columbine High School shootings (which took place in Jefferson County, Colorado in 1999) as an elegaic rumination on peacefulness. His film uses long takes, unscripted scenes and multi-perspectival accounts of moments in the narrative. Van Sant and Clark are comparable not only for the subject matter of their work, but are worthy of exegesis because of the different ways in which they deal with it. Van Sant appears cool and slow to Clark's hot and fast, but I don't think that's the key entirely.

The adolescent male is a complex beast. Artistic representation of his persona is a complex and contested field. As it happens, my current post-graduate research is trying to nut this out to a degree. I've tracked his representation in Western culture since medieval times, and, while the popular depiction frames his world as one fuelled by 'storm and stress', there's something about a sense of transcendence that I'm grappling with. It is, I think, equal to the physiological epiphany that occurs to all of us when we are in that transitory phase from childhood to adulthood, but there's also something more, in the work of these artists, that both rides with and challenges this formula. Clark and Van Sant manage to capture the beauty of this manifestation of identity with sensitivity. And maybe that's the key that gets lost in the representation of the culture at large. The fragile nature of an identity that is becoming is enigmatic and moving. But elegy and sympathy, even so, over nostalgia and memory, still seems to leave something unanswered. The young male characters in *Bully* and *Elephant*, both aged 18 and 19 and playing characters of their own age, are allowed to cry, not really even in response to a momentous event, but as the expression of a fleeting emotion. What's at stake is less melodrama than a challenge to the entire register of hegemonic masculinity in formation. And it's one that engages ideas of sacrifice and redemption too.

In Van Sant's *Elephant*, the conventionally 'hot' high school senior Nathan Tyson whose presence frames the film wears a red hoody with a white cross and the word LIFEGUARD on the back. Nathan was a high school senior when the film was made, and continues to pursue his interests in gymnastics as a coach. At the end of the film, Nathan and his girlfriend Carrie are discovered by Alex, who is armed with a semi-automatic rifle, and proceeds to taunt them with the game of eeny meeny miny mo. We don't know if Nathan survives or not.

\* \* \*

A few days later at about 7pm when I was buying some cigarettes from the local shops I saw Dan in the minimart deciding what kind of milk to buy. The minimart employs cute boys and girls, and one Eurasian boy in particular always makes my day. He's so straight up: friendly, and casually stylish. What's with that surfer neck-wear thing anyhow? I know it's a talisman vibe. Anyhow, as I was leaving the shop, so was Dan.

He must have recognised me kind of suddenly because he sort does a double take and says, "Oh hey man" and flashes me this grin. I go "Hey Dan, 'sup dude?" and he goes "Oh nuthin much. My girlfriend is away for the weekend." As we're walking the short distance back to our apartments he looks up to the sky and says "Beautiful, isn't it?"

I go, "Yep, it is."

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**Christopher Chapman has worked as a curator, artist and writer and now lives in Canberra, Australia, where he's working on a PhD at the Australian National University titled 'Adolescent Masculinity, Representation and Transcendence'. This text was written in early 2005.**

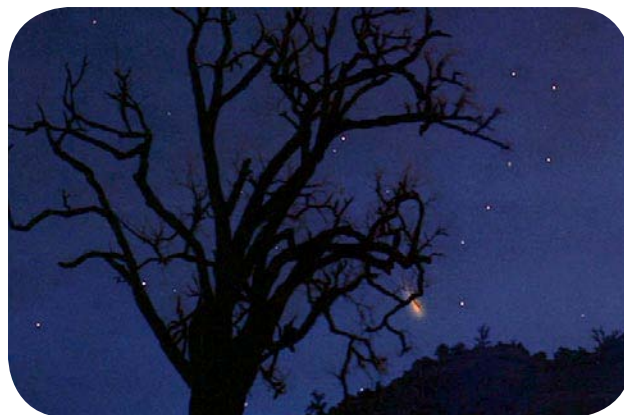
## Alien Badiou; Towards an Ethics of Universal Justice

'We do not fundamentally need a philosophy of the structure of things. We need a philosophy open to the irreducible singularity of what happens, a philosophy that can be fed and nourished by the surprise of the unexpected. Such a philosophy would then be a philosophy of the event.' Alain Badiou.<sup>1</sup>

The popular 1950s genre of the 'alien arrival' film has frequently been analysed in political terms, most commonly as a thinly veiled anti-communist narrative, but also as a critical engagement with the scientific rationalism of Fordist management systems.<sup>2</sup> While not wrong, these arguments reduce the major protagonist in these films – the alien – to a position entirely relative to the American society it threatens, and limit its significance to the existing cultural fears it seemingly embodies.<sup>3</sup> What such criticism fails to address, and what the films themselves so beautifully reveal, is an ethics, and a politics of the alien *as such*. In this sense the alien arrival is an event that marks the enigmatic appearance of something outside of thought *which must be thought*. This event of ontological emergence calls forth an ethics of contact which is invariably developed in the action that follows.

The recent work of the French philosopher Alain Badiou provides a useful account of thought's genesis in an alien arrival, and the ethical demands placed upon it by the radical otherness of this event. For Badiou the event provokes thought and provides its criteria of truth. First of all then, what is truth? Badiou starts 'from the following idea: a truth is, first of all, something new. What transmits, what repeats, we shall call *knowledge*.'<sup>4</sup> How can we know anything about that which arrives from beyond?<sup>5</sup> The problem for Badiou and for alien arrival films is not what we *know* of this event – nothing – but how it can be *thought*. How, in other words, can we think the truth of the alien itself? 'If a truth is something new, what is the essential philosophical problem concerning truth?' Badiou asks, 'It is the problem of its appearance and its 'becoming'. A truth must be submitted to thought, not as a judgement, but as a process in the real.'<sup>6</sup> The event, for Badiou, cannot be thought *in itself*, for by definition it is the irruption of the outside as such. But thought can bear witness to this event by producing a new truth, a truth which is adequate to the event's radical exteriority, and marks its obscure appearance.

How then, as a 'process of the real', does truth emerge? Here we can turn to those alien arrival films which explicitly figure this process in a protagonist who must, in the face of knowledgeable disbelief, proclaim the truth of the alien event. Steve in *The Blob* (Irvin Yeaworth, 1958), John Putnam in *It Came from Outer Space* (Jack Arnold, 1953), Dr. Bennell in *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (Don Siegel, 1956) and the



Alien arrival: *The Blob*

boy David in *Invaders from Mars* (William Menzies, 1953) must all announce the truth of the aliens' arrival, without – as yet – being able to prove it. Even in those films where such a character does not appear, the problem subsists in the impenetrability of the alien to scientific analysis, from the super-hard metal of the spaceship in *The Day the Earth Stood Still* (Robert Wise, 1951) to the immortal line of Dr. McCoy, "It's life Jim, but not as we know it."

'The undecidability of the event,' Badiou writes, 'induces the appearance of a *subject* of the event. Such a subject is constituted by an utterance in the form of a wager. This utterance is as follows: "This event has taken place, it is something which I can neither evaluate, nor demonstrate, but to which I shall be faithful." To begin with, a subject is what fixes an undecidable event, because he or she takes the chance of deciding upon it.'<sup>7</sup> This decision appears as an axiom, a simple statement of truth such as 'Aliens exist'. The verification of this axiom provides the initial narrative thrust of alien arrival films, as the subject formed in the event's appearance must force his or her community to confront its outside. The paradoxical ontology of the alien appears in the difficulty of this process, for the alien's arrival is the addition of a founding subtraction, an event of the unknown that can only appear as an axiom verified in the language of the situation.<sup>8</sup> The simultaneous appearance of the alien and the subject in an axiom of the event suggests an alternative reading of arrival films that does not simply explicate a series of more or less interesting dialectical relations between the human and its other, but instead explores the ontological emergence of truth.<sup>9</sup> The subject does not appear as the positive term to which the alien serves as negation, a negation that will eventually be itself negated in the climactic moment of the film, at least not



yet. The emergence of the human/alien dialectic occurs only after the initial verification of their founding event, and must be understood in terms of this event.

The philosophical framework of the alien arrival film is therefore the examination of a radical outside as the nevertheless immanent condition of truth. Although this problem of articulating the truth of the event structures all alien arrival films, I will concentrate on two, *The Blob* and *It Came from Outer Space*, as they state the problem according to its two possible ethical trajectories. In the first the event is betrayed by an evil (because moralistic) will to truth, and in the second the event provokes an ethical affirmation of universal justice. In both films the alien is an arrival of the outside, and establishes as the film's initial problem the truthful appearance of this event. Can the truth of the alien's arrival appear? Can the subject remain true to the foundational subtraction that begins the film, as it does Badiou's ontology? This question is answered by *The Blob* and by most alien films in the negative, because they choose instead to develop it dialectically, positioning the alien outside as the boundary defining our own humanity, and reducing the ethics of contact to "kill or be killed". Science fiction is generally a conservative genre, both in its narratives and in its politics.<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, a few films suggest an alternative, an ethical opening to the outside produced by the subject's fidelity to his founding event. I will examine the finest of these, *It Came from Outer Space*, a little later.

Nevertheless, in most films the opening problem of verifying the truth of the event gives way to the real narrative: killing the alien. Once more, this transition appears very clearly in *The Blob*. The initial action concerns the fact that Steve is the only one to have seen the murderous vitality of the Blob in action, and he must convince the town's inhabitants of its existence before it is too late. Despite the undoubted heroism of his decision, his axiomatic declaration requires verification in order to be regarded as truth.<sup>11</sup> The process of verification in both *The Blob* and in Badiou is the same, involving 'the examination, within the situation, of the consequences of the axiom that decided upon the event.'<sup>12</sup> This process of examination demands 'an exercise of fidelity' because nothing determines its course in advance, the truth of its axiom being unsupported by any rule of established knowledge. Once more, the death of the doctor confirms this point. This makes the process of verification especially difficult, because there simply is no word with which the alien can be described, for as ontological subtraction it cannot be 'counted as one', the first requirement – according to Badiou – of any linguistic naming. Steve experiences this difficulty directly when he first attempts to warn the town's police department about the alien's arrival. He begins with 'Doc Hallen's been killed', a statement well within the shared juridical language of this situation. The problem comes when he must be more specific. 'This thing, it killed the Doc' is the best he can do, and this obviously falls well outside any explanation acceptable to the police. When pressed he claims 'it's kind of like a ma..... it's kind of like a mass that keeps getting bigger and bigger.' The stutter here is a vocal ellipsis, an enforced silence interrupting his explanation

from the outside, a gap in language that he immediately tries to fill by clicking his fingers, a non-vocal sound standing in for the pure unnameable event of the Blob.<sup>13</sup> The cops, more and more incredulous, tell him to 'make sense', and the most cynical, now turned sarcastic, asks, 'Maybe the thing you saw was a monster?' Steve, at a loss, deadpans back, 'Yup, maybe it was.' Finally Steve is reduced to an appeal to empirical evidence, and implores them to 'C'mon over to the Doc's, you can see it for yourself.'

The appeal to empirical evidence and the naming and appearance of the alien as a monster are both important narrative devices by which alien arrival films deal with the problem of verification. Both elements, which are often connected in a dramatic *unveiling* of the alien's monstrosity, do not however guarantee the event's verification, nor do they guarantee fidelity to its truth. Quite the opposite in fact, for the common appeal to an empirical visual verification (an appeal to a *common sense* approach that assumes an existing structure of human consciousness) and the accompanying emphasis on the alien's monstrosity, tends to move the film away from the ontological problem of the alien and towards the moral defence of the human. Indeed, when verified empirically the radical subtraction of the alien event and its appearance as verified truth tends to be subsumed by our pre-existing knowledge of the monstrous.<sup>14</sup> The empirical verification of the alien as monster effectively transforms the unnameable event of alien arrival and its demand for an ethics of truth into the threat of the monster-alien to humanity, and the justification of its eradication in the name of the known.

Indeed it is the moment when Steve names the Blob as a monster that the film segues into the horror genre (a moment elegantly marked by the film's subsequent shot of the Doc's place as a haunted house) and its narrative stalls at the problem of the alien's extermination. This is the point at which the *The Blob* – but it is a moment typical for alien arrival films – abandons the ethics of truth as Badiou describes it, and moves towards its negation: Evil. Badiou argues that the process of verifying a truth involves the elaboration of a new subset within the situation. This subset is what Badiou calls a 'generic truth', an infinite and interminable subset that is nevertheless new. 'Invention and creation remain,' Badiou writes, 'incalculable. So the path of a truth cannot coincide in infinity with any concept. Consequently, the verified terms compose, or rather will have composed, if we suppose their infinite totalization, a generic subset of the Universe.'<sup>15</sup> The alien is a generic truth, it is universal in the same way as Badiou's examples of 'the physical' or 'revolutionary politics', but it is nevertheless always the result of a local process, of, to return to our example, Steve's fidelity to the event, to the arrival of the Blob. This subjective creation of the generic truth must be accepted by the community in order for the truth of a local and singular event to be *forced*. In other words, Steve's problem is to make the generic truth of the alien accepted, so that he can force the town to believe in the existence, and of course the danger, of the Blob itself.

This in fact is precisely what happens, but once more only

by twisting the event from its verification as an alien arrival, to that of verifying its existence according to the pre-existing category of the monstrous. How? First Steve calls upon his friends at the local cinema. They have already accepted the generic truth of the monstrous, as announced by the soundtrack of the film they are watching – ‘Daughter of horror’ – which declares; ‘Yes, I am here, the demon who possesses your soul. Wait a bit. I am coming for you. I have so much to show you.’ Dragging his friends out of the show Steve asks them; ‘Would you believe me if I told you there was something inside of that rock we found, something that could wipe out the whole town?’ He tells them he saw ‘this thing’ kill Dr. Hallen, and when asked what it is he tells them he doesn’t know, ‘but if it can kill Dr. Hallen it can kill somebody else.’ Primed by the film to accept Steve’s tales of the Blob sight unseen, they ask Steve what should be done. ‘We’re gonna find this thing,’ Steve declares, ‘and we’re gonna make people believe us.’ The kids then rush off to try to awaken the town to this as yet invisible threat. This fails to work because people either find their claims of a monster ludicrous, or banal: ‘Look, I have monsters in here all the time, so beat it,’ the barman tells them. People laugh. This situation leads to one of the best lines in the film: ‘How,’ Steve asks, ‘can you protect people from something they don’t believe in?’ The problem remains how to establish the generic truth of monsters, in order to force the truth of the Blob. The kids start blowing the horns of their cars in order to bring the people of the town to an impromptu town meeting. Steve announces the presence of a ‘monster’ and the danger it presents to the town, a claim the police chief finally accepts. Steve has successfully managed to achieve an acceptance of the generic truth of the monster, and therefore to *force* the truth of the Blob, leading to the town now uniting behind him, and despite some further vacillations of fortune, they succeed in defeating it. The storyline of *The Blob* therefore follows Badiou’s trajectory of truth quite closely: ‘The *construction* of a truth is made by a choice within the indiscernible. It is made locally, within the finite [i.e. with Steve’s fidelity to the event]. But the *potency* of a truth depends on the hypothetical forcing. It consists in saying: ‘If we suppose the generic infinity of a truth to be completed, *then* such or such a bit of knowledge must imperatively be transformed.’<sup>16</sup> The town’s disbelief of monsters is transformed, and they are forced to believe in the Blob.

Badiou now adds an element to his argument that is crucial to our understanding of how the Blob stops being an alien and becomes a monster. The problem, he argues, is whether any forcing of truth is total. My answer is that there is *always*, in any situation, a real point that *resists* this potency.<sup>17</sup> There is, he says, a point that is unnameable within any situation and that remains unforceable. ‘The unnameable is something like the inexpressible *real* of everything a truth authorizes to be said.’<sup>18</sup> This would be the real of the alien *in itself*, the real of the event as foundational subtraction. Once we try to name this unnameable singularity, to say everything, we slip into a totalitarian attempt to measure the infinite. This, Badiou provocatively claims, is the appearance of Evil. ‘Usually it is said that Evil is lies, ignorance, or



Horror: *The Blob*

deadly stupidity. The condition of Evil is much rather the process of a truth. There is Evil only insofar as there is an axiom of truth at the point of the undecidable, a path of truth at the point of the indiscernible, an anticipation of being for the generic, and the forcing of a nomination at the point of the unnameable.<sup>19</sup> This is a forceful declaration of an ethics of truth, an ethics of philosophy itself, and for us, an ethics of the alien. It means that any genuine truth of the alien must include its unnameable singularity, as what cannot be forced. This is an evocative idea in terms of alien arrival films, and alien films in general, which are almost always stories of an alien’s death.<sup>20</sup> To understand this death beyond the rather simplistic reduction of these films to anxious symptoms of a society under threat is to see them as the expressions of an evil will to truth.

The violence of this will lies in its refusal of a new truth, and its forcing of this truth into the pre-existing realm of knowledge. This occurs when Steve accepts the name ‘monster’ for what he saw, and this integrates the Blob, and Steve himself into a field defined by the very law he had been in conflict with. This integration also marks the defeat of youthful rebellion and sexuality that is from this point on reintegrated into the community entirely on the community’s terms, as Steve saves the very thing that he began the film resisting. Indeed the film initially goes out of its way to identify Steve and his girlfriend, as well as his young friends, with the Blob. The film opens with a passionate, even rather *wet* kiss, one stolen we soon learn, without the girl’s full permission, outside the city limits, and in the back of an automobile that will later confirm Steve’s virility by winning a drag race with the local hoons. Nothing strange in that, perhaps, but it does place the teenagers under the sign of a sexuality not entirely controlled by social rules, and sharing with the Blob a certain throbbing energy threatening to get out of control.<sup>21</sup> Of course it is all very gentle, but there are clear echoes of the more serious concerns of *The Wild One* or *Rebel without a Cause* (Nicholas Ray, 1955). Unlike the protagonists of those films, however, Steve will become the defender of the community, and community values (the film ends in classic horror fashion, with the re-constitution of

the nuclear family, even if this is Steve, his girlfriend and *her young brother...*), defeating the very thing he initially valued, a freedom existing on the outside, an exteriority associated with something new. In uttering this word: 'monster', Steve speaks the words of his nasty all-white, middle-American community. Words which seek to articulate the alien in terms which are already utterly understood, words which articulate nothing less (but also nothing more) than the destruction of any outside to the conservative "heartland" of small-town Amerika.

We have arrived at the inevitable conclusion of most alien arrival films of the 50s: extermination. But rather than this being an extermination *of* evil, Badiou's work enables us to see how it is this extermination itself that is evil because it is a betrayal of an ethics of truth. This is precisely the view of *It Came from Outer Space*, which shares the 'truth trajectory' of *The Blob*, along with the event of 'alien arrival' that is its genesis, but resists the term 'monster' and the violence it requires. In *It Came from Outer Space* the subject formed by the alien's arrival – John Putman – succeeds in maintaining his fidelity to this event. This fidelity explores an ethical alternative to Steve's betrayal of the truth in *The Blob*, and wards off what the film, in terms very close to Badiou's, explicitly figures as Evil. *It Came from Outer Space* elaborates an ethics of the alien opposed to *The Blob*'s morality of the monster.

*It Came from Outer Space* explicitly rejects extermination as an appropriate response to the irruption of the unknown, and despite the horror of the alien's appearance John Putman remains committed to protecting the monstrous aliens against the local law enforcement officer – Matt – who wants to deal with them Western style, all guns blazing. Unlike *The Blob* the confrontation between John as event-witness and the police is not resolved in favour of the cops. As the film nears its climax the sheriff Matt, angered by the xenomorphic aliens' subterfuge of hiding in the forms of humans, asks, 'Why don't they come out into the open?' To which John replies, in a statement of the film's critical position, 'Because they don't trust us. Because what we don't understand we want to destroy.'

Whereas *The Blob* projects the alien as a pure threat, a monstrous outside we are morally justified – and in fact compelled – to destroy, *It Came from Outer Space* explores an alternative scenario to alien arrival in which contact necessarily involves communication. In *The Blob* the outside appears as a monstrous hostility, and its defeat proves that "our" communal values are right. Contact is imagined simply as a conflict we win or in which we die. *It Came from Outer Space* rejects this formula as both simplistic and stupid, and suggests that understanding the unknown can transform hostility and fear into cooperation. Opening up to the outside, *It Came from Outer Space* argues, is the only way to avoid the cultural violence of small-town American values. In this sense the film poses the same question as that asked by Badiou: 'if our only agenda is an ethical engagement against an Evil we recognize a priori, how are we to envisage any transformation of the way things are?'<sup>22</sup>

Rather than a defence of the human (or of the American, which as we know amounts to the same thing...) understood according to essentialist and xenophobic principles, *It Came from Outer Space* posits humanity – what it is to be human – as constituted by an openness to the outside and its transformative power. Furthermore, this 'outside' is not reducible to the abstract category of 'the Other', but appears in the singularity of an event, deploying its universal truth to political effect. The consequence Badiou draws from of the event's universal address is explicitly figured, as we shall see, in the most important scene of *It Came from Outer Space*: 'the other doesn't matter'.<sup>23</sup> This means the 'real' ethical question, for Badiou and for John Putman, 'is much more that of recognizing the Same'.<sup>24</sup>

But before we can understand Badiou's rather startling and typically provocative statement, we must catch up with its development in *It Came from Outer Space*. The film begins just like *The Blob*, with a pair of lovers, John Putman and Ellen Fields, observing what they take to be a meteor falling to earth. Whereas in *The Blob* this arrival interrupted a kiss outside the city limits and of typically teenage enthusiasm, in *It Came from Outer Space* the lovers are chastely discussing their future married life together. This establishes the opposed trajectories of the films: centripetal in *The Blob*, where the event will bring the teenagers back to their community, and centrifugal in *It Came from Outer Space*, where the lovers will end up isolated and alone in defending an outside they are ethically committed to.<sup>25</sup> This distinction is emphasised by the films' depiction of the event. Unlike the faint and fleeting shot of the alien's arrival in *The Blob*, in *It Came from Outer Space* the meteor arrives immediately, exploding in our faces and establishing the alien's arrival as the central problem of the film *for us*, the shot being from our point-of-view rather than John and Ellen's. In *It Came from Outer Space* the alien arrival is an eruption of the unknown, in *The Blob* it is an interpellation, a device used to police the known.

The lovers immediately rush out to see the 'meteor', taken to the crater by a friend in a helicopter. They're the first there, and John rushes down to check it out. At the bottom he finds the alien's space ship, as in *The Blob* looking like a golf-ball, only this time big, dwarfing John. The door is open and he peers in, an action we see from within the ship, from the point-of-view of what John sees, which quickly retreats as he comes forward – peering – until the door slides shut in his face. What is so remarkable about this first contact is that it is shown from the alien's point-of-view, a fact indicated by concentric and slightly distorting circles appearing over the screen and seeming to project into its space. This will be the consistent sign used by the film to indicate that we are seeing with the alien's eye (it turns out to only have one), and the first example in cinematic history of the alien point-of-view shot.<sup>26</sup> That this is the alien's point-of-view is further emphasised by the electronic 'alien' music that consistently signals their appearance throughout the film and by the up-close sound of breathing that corporealises the camera, and turns it subjective.<sup>27</sup>

John scrambles back up to Ellen and their friend just as the





The Kiss: *The Blob*

crater around the space ship collapses in on itself, covering the alien craft. This disappearance marks the emergence of the subject formatted by the event, and the ethical trial that he must undergo in maintaining his fidelity to it. This event introduces nothing less than a radical outside to established knowledge – a new truth – that John must convince the others he saw. ‘It’s like nothing we’ve ever seen before’ he announces, a statement the helicopter pilot doesn’t believe, and Ellen clearly has her doubts. Nevertheless, he excitedly presses them: ‘What would you say if I had found a Martian down there?’ ‘I’d say hold them for the circus,’ his cynical friend responds. ‘And I’d say wait,’ John implores with all the earnestness that typifies his character, ‘and find out what they’re doing here first.’

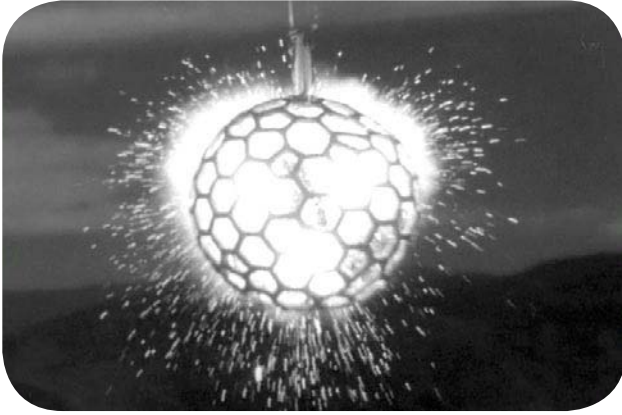
The immediate problem, however, is that no-one believes him, least of all those entrusted with extending the limits of our knowledge. John confronts Dr. Snell, a scientist from the university who is at the crater conducting some tests. Dr. Snell refuses to dig for the ship as he’s satisfied that it was merely a meteor that landed. John’s disappointed: ‘I expected you to be more open to the idea [of aliens] than the others. You’re a man of science.’ This, Dr. Snell explains cruelly, only makes him ‘less inclined to witchcraft.’ ‘Not witchcraft,’ John replies, ‘imagination. A willingness to believe there are lots of things that we don’t know anything about.’ After John leaves Dr. Snell and his assistant continue the discussion. John is ‘odd’ the assistant comments ‘More than odd,’ Dr. Snell replies, ‘individual and lonely, a man who thinks for himself.’ This placing of John outside of accepted belief in both a moral and intellectual sense is immediately amplified by John’s next conversation, this time with the town’s sheriff Matt. Matt has a paternal concern for Ellen, on account of her being the daughter of Matt’s old boss, and he ‘means to keep an eye on her.’ But this warning to leave Ellen out of things contains another more sinister one. The town, Matt explains, doesn’t understand John, in fact he frightens them, ‘and what frightens them they are against one way or another.’

The lines are drawn, quickly and starkly, between the

subject – John – formed by the event he is the sole witness to, and the community – both Sand Rock and that of science – who understand neither him nor his fidelity to this event, and who are against – on principle – both. Both Matt the cop and Dr. Snell the scientist patrol and protect the border of the known, and both make it clear that any attempt to open this border onto the outside will not be tolerated. These relationships articulate the political dimension of the film, one that pits the fidelity of John *to the outside* against the “protection” by the law *of the inside*. Badiou develops this conflict between the law and the event in terms of thought: ‘The law is what constitutes the subject as powerlessness of thought.’<sup>28</sup> The law is “statist” according to Badiou, meaning it enumerates, names, and controls the situation according to the pre-existing rules defining a community, and acts against the creative thought introduced by an event. Such is the role of the police, celebrated in *The Blob* and denounced in *It Came From Outer Space*. The event opposes the law by creating a subject existing outside of communal reality, and ‘since the event was excluded by all the regular laws of the situation – compels the subject to *invent* a new way of being and acting in the situation.’<sup>29</sup> John Putman as subject of the event must step outside the law and the community it polices in order to step towards an alien outside that has emerged as a new truth. John’s attempts at communicating with, and finally helping the aliens is what Badiou calls an ‘emancipatory project’ because ‘what every emergence of hitherto unknown possibilities does, is to put an end to consensus.’<sup>30</sup> The event is an ‘illegal contingency’, a ‘lawless eruption’<sup>31</sup> and founds a truth and a subject which arrives from outside and is necessarily militant. ‘Truth is either militant,’ Badiou claims, ‘or is not.’<sup>32</sup>

The conflict between the law and the militant is over the philosophical status of truth, and is embodied by the relationship of John and Matt. The crucial moment comes when John returns from having spoken to the aliens, and discusses what he has learnt with Matt. ‘Why,’ Matt wants to know, ‘don’t they come into the open?’ Meaning, of course, why can’t they be revealed within the situation, and therefore understood according to its existing knowledge and values. ‘Because they don’t trust us,’ John explains, ‘Because what we don’t understand we want to destroy.’ Matt naturally rejects this criticism of himself and humanity, claiming ‘I kill only what tries to kill me.’ But John immediately rebuts this claim with a practical demonstration. Why, he asks, is Matt afraid of the spider conveniently crawling close to them? Is it because it is so different, so monstrous even? What, John asks, would Matt do if it came towards him? ‘This’ Matt says with a certain satisfaction, and immediately walks over to it and crushes it with his boot. ‘Exactly,’ John says, ‘as you’d destroy anything you didn’t understand.’ Matt is not convinced, and wants to form a posse immediately. ‘When,’ John asks in a rhetorical question that nevertheless sets the stakes of their debate, ‘are you going to stop being a badge and become a human being?’ ‘That’s my job,’ Matt stubbornly insists, ‘a thing is wrong, you set it right.’

This scene dramatically enacts the conflict between a violent and repressive moral law acting on predetermined



Alien Arrival: *It Came from Outer Space*



Horror: *It Came from Outer Space*

and seemingly self-evident assumptions about humanity, and a militant ethics determined to maintain fidelity to the truth of the event, to the power of the outside to wrest the situation from the control of the police and re-invent it. As Badiou has it: 'There is only one question in the ethic of truths: how will I, as some-one, *continue* to exceed my own being? How will I link the things I know, in a consistent fashion, via the effects of being seized by the not-known?'<sup>33</sup> Matt experiences this not-known as a threat, especially the fact that the aliens are able to take the form of humans, which completely upsets his criteria of truth. 'They could be all around us and we wouldn't know it,' he complains, the outside already puncturing his humanity. John is a militant committed to truth, an ethical commitment that, as Badiou puts it, 'compels so considerable a distance from opinions that it must be called literally *asocial*.'<sup>34</sup> The film began by deliberately locating John's house outside of town,<sup>35</sup> and telling us that the town was 'afraid of' and 'against' him. It is no surprise, then, that at the climax of the film the militant John's and the policeman Matt's conflict becomes violent, and although John succeeds in disarming Matt before he can shoot an alien in town, Matt's response is to immediately call up a posse to kill the aliens.

This final, inevitable, split between Matt and John can be understood in terms of Badiou's understanding of evil. Badiou argues that evil is formed through the same process as truth, through an event that forms a subjective fidelity creating something new. But the 'evil' event is not the appearance of the void but of a "full' particularity or presumed substance of that situation', which, Badiou claims, is 'a *simulacrum of truth*'.<sup>36</sup> Badiou is writing here about National Socialism, which was founded on a fidelity to an event which named 'not the universality of that which is sustained, precisely, by no particular characteristic (no particular multiple), but the absolute particularity of a community, itself rooted in the characteristics of its soil, its blood, and its race.'<sup>37</sup> No doubt the analogy between Matt and the Nazi's is stretched, for Matt merely wants to maintain existing social borders rather than redefine them according to an essentialist event.<sup>38</sup> Nevertheless Matt's subjectivity emerges in the fidelity he shows to the closed set of a 'truth', the presence

of which he remains faithful to, and that is constructed and maintained, just as the Nazi's was, by "voiding' what surrounds it.'<sup>39</sup> Matt's alien 'Other' must, according to his dialectical logic, be destroyed in order to maintain the presence of human truth. 'And as this presence is that of *the Truth*,' Badiou argues, 'what is outside of presence falls within an imperative of annihilation.'<sup>40</sup> In this sense, Matt and John are both subjects formed by the same event, but whereas John attempts to retain a militant fidelity to the void of truth, Matt attempts to void this void – 'the void 'avoided' [*chassé*]' as Badiou puts it – in order to maintain the universality of his simulacral 'event-substance'. 'Hence fidelity to the simulacrum,' Badiou writes, 'has as its content war and massacre.'<sup>41</sup> War and massacre are the natural and necessary complements to any cinematic evocation of the term 'monster', a term which appears as a universal truth only in order to justify its extermination as the guarantee of what is truly human, all too human. Finally, despite 'mimicking' the truth process, Matt's violent reaction to the unknown is the opposite of John's. As Badiou puts it:

'the enemy of a true subjective fidelity is precisely the closed set [*ensemble*], the substance of the situation, *the community*. The values of truth, of its hazardous course and its universal address, are to be erected against these forms of inertia.

Every invocation of blood and soil, of race, *of custom, of community*, works directly against truths; and it is this very collection [*ensemble*] that is named as the enemy in the ethic of truths.'<sup>42</sup>

What is most interesting about *It Came from Outer Space* is the film's refusal to accept a dialectical relation of human and alien, and its refusal of any simulacrum of truth that would justify aggression against the outside. This produces a view of the alien that is very different from that of the 'monster' that appears in *The Blob*. We can track this difference further by considering the alien point-of-view shot in *It Came from Outer Space*, which, although placing us within the outside, exists in the film only to be gone beyond. Initially the alien point-of-view appears ambiguous, as we-the-alien observe John attempting to see us, with the shot retreating back into the ship, and behind the closing door. There is a sense



Your Otherness is my own: *It Came from Outer Space*

of anxiety proper to a being that has crash landed and is confronted not just by a strange world but by its prying eyes. This feeling of sympathy is quickly tempered, however, by a menacing tone (not the least that of the theremin) the point-of-view takes on once the aliens venture out into the world. This is amplified once the aliens start taking over humans, which involves (us in) either sneaking up on people (most notably early in the film, when a ghostly hand reaches out to grab the fleeing linesman's shoulder), or totally freaking them out (in the memorable shot of Ellen's screaming face, perfectly framed by the concentric circles of the alien-eye). But this threat is at the same time allayed, most notably, when an alien-in-human-form explains; 'Don't be afraid. [...] We cannot, we would not, take your souls, your minds, your bodies. Don't be afraid.' Not only are its friendly intentions declared here, but the alien articulates a fundamental understanding of life, neatly divided into soul, mind and body that is shared with humanity, and this common point-of-view will be further elaborated in the film's most important sequence.

John confronts the aliens-in-human-form, and explains: 'Whoever you are, whatever you are, I want to understand you, I want to help you.' They reply, equally friendly: 'We don't want to hurt you [...]. We don't want to hurt anyone.' Once the reciprocal non-violence of John and the alien's has (once more) been established, and their shared suspicions about the violence of Matt made clear, their next encounter

will finally play out the non-dialectical consequences of the event. Ellen has been taken by the aliens, and John and Matt are both worriedly arguing about what to do next. John receives a call from the aliens summoning him to the desert, and he leaves immediately with Matt. He is then led by a mysteriously glamorous Ellen to the old mine shaft by which the aliens enter and leave their ship. Here, facing the black hole of the shaft, peering into it and once more trying to catch a glimpse of the aliens who have successfully evaded his sight, he cries: 'Come out in the open, come out where I can really see you.' Here the void of the event appears before him in its literal form. The heavy darkness of the shaft from which the alien's disembodied voice reaches him seems nothing but a cosmic black hole. An effect no doubt amplified when seen in its original 3D.<sup>43</sup> The alien refuses, which simply makes John more insistent: 'Let me see you as you really are.' The aliens explain that they are repairing their ship and need John's help, but John is suspicious and accuses them of kidnapping and stealing, and perhaps of murder. The alien seeks to reassure him by once more emphasising a shared values system: 'We have souls, and minds, and we are good,' it maintains. 'Then why are you hiding?' John asks. 'Because you would be horrified at the sight of us.' John refuses this appeal to the monstrous, and finally conditions his co-operation on this revelation, this empirical ratification of what has been withheld from the community. The alien tries one last time: 'Let us stay apart, the people of your world and ours. For if we come together there will only be destruction.' But John isn't accepting this: 'I've got to see you as you really are. Come out or I can't take the responsibility of protecting you.' 'Very well,' the alien replies, finally acquiescing, 'You asked to see this, so you shall.'

The crucial scene of empirical validation of the alien however, is very different from that in *The Blob*, as it avoids the dialectical opposition of the human and the alien, of the inside and its outside as the structure of a human, all too human thought, and posits instead what Badiou calls 'an infinite alterity'.<sup>44</sup> What makes this scene all the more remarkable is that it makes its point entirely cinematically, in a fine example of the way that cinema thinks. The dialogue between John and the alien we have just recalled has been organised in a shot-counter-shot rhythm, showing a blackness John cannot see into, and the view out of the blackness, the alien seeing John not seeing. As the alien moves forward into the light we get an alien point-of-view shot (with concentric circles) of John peering into the darkness from which it emerges, then John's point-of-view as something emerges from the void. We see with his eyes as the alien appears, approaching the camera until it is seen in half-length, then CUT and we see John in half-length backing away, then CUT to the alien's head in close-up, then CUT to John's head in close-up as he screams, hides his face and turns away. There is a perfect symmetry between the alien's and John's point-of-view's as the film moves from one subjective shot to the other. But more importantly, halfway through the sequence, as the alien is revealed to John, *the alien point-of-view frame disappears*. This is most remarkable as it had been used only a moment before as the alien moved toward John, and



it is the more remarkable considering the alien point-of-view shot is the film's "gimmick", one it uses over and over to indicate a difference now suddenly disappears. Why then, should it be suddenly taken away, and why exactly at this moment of empirical contact and verification of the alien's truth?

Clearly, at this climactic moment the otherness of the aliens, an otherness so obviously insisted on by the alien point-of-view shot, has just as obviously been erased. This erasure serves to emphasise the violence of John's horror, and his gesture of turning away. When we see his horror we see it from the alien's point-of-view, but this point-of-view is now indiscernible from our own, its otherness, in other words, has become our own. Otherness has not disappeared here, and indeed John's horror establishes it once again, but its register has been altered by this symmetrical sequence of shots in which both elements – human and alien – are shown to be as other as each other, and whose points of view here converge *in reality*, at the moment when the alien *appears*. As it really appears, beyond the obvious indicator of its difference in the alien point-of-view frame, it is no different from us than we are from it. Its difference, we could say, has been equalised, or, as Badiou has it, equally distributed amongst an 'infinite alterity'.<sup>45</sup> The alien arrives.

This remarkable scene from *It Came from Outer Space* denounces any dialectically understood Other-outside and the evil announcement of its destruction as a 'monster', as seen in *The Blob*, in favour of an infinite alterity as the terrain of truth. In doing so it accepts the disruptive and impossible existence of the alien void (John *looks away*), while arguing that this "outside" exists *within* the infinite alterity of appearances as the immanent condition of the emergence of the new, of truth as such. At this point the usefulness of cultural studies in understanding this film ends, because here *It Came from Outer Space* states the problems of cultural difference according to the more fundamental question of the ontology of truth.<sup>46</sup> According to Badiou's ontology 'there are only multiples of multiples', an infinity of infinities constituted by differences without any form of unification. As a result, 'similar differences are what there is, and since every truth is the coming-to-be of that which is not yet, so differences are then precisely what truths depose, or render insignificant'.<sup>47</sup> The question then, and this is true of Badiou as it is for *It Came from Outer Space*, is not one of Otherness but rather of what is the same. As a result, the ethics of *It Came from Outer Space* are not concerned with the Other, with difference or a kind of liberal democratic impulse towards peaceful co-existence as espoused in *Star Trek*, but with truth, a truth 'indifferent to differences [... and] the same for all'.<sup>48</sup> This point is finally made in the most explicit way possible by the film, for after the erasure of the alien point-of-view the aliens appear in human form, most notably as John himself, with whom John conducts the final negotiation. Once more, this culmination of contact between human and alien is conducted as if this difference is banal, as if this difference was no more, but also no less, as Badiou himself suggests 'as between myself and anybody at all, including myself'.<sup>49</sup>



Aliens R Us: *It Came from Outer Space*

*It Came from Outer Space* is such an interesting and unusual alien film because it understands the encounter with the alien as both an ethical and political event that erases the "Other" and the police force it calls forth in favour of a new truth that demands a universal justice.

The final evaporation of the alien Other in a point-of-view indiscernible from the human articulates an egalitarian and universal principle of justice that demands fidelity to its truth in order to be thought.<sup>50</sup> This is finally John's achievement, he both resists the unjust xenophobia of Matt, and escapes his own humanity in remaining faithful to the alien event. But this insurgency is in no way a declaration of the rights of an 'Other', and instead involves a banalisation of difference in the genericity of truth.<sup>51</sup> This generic quality of truth proclaims its universality and takes us where no man has gone before by affirming – as the axiom of action – a radical equality. Finally, in *It Came from Outer Space* the truth involves the simultaneous becoming-other of the same (against the human), and the becoming-same of the other (against the alien), in a movement in which alien and man overcome their dialectical co-dependency in a shared fidelity to a universal justice. As we see both John and the aliens act ethically, we see their (and our) commitment to equality emerge despite the respective dangers it poses to both. *It Came from Outer Space* therefore extends Badiou's political philosophy beyond the domain of the human, while retaining its basic premise of an ethical action based not on individual interests but on universal truth. In this sense the actions of John and the aliens 'induce a representation of the capacity of the collective which refers its agents to the strictest equality'.<sup>52</sup> This equality – once more beautifully expressed in the scene from the film we have analysed at length – 'is in no way a social program. Moreover, it has nothing to do with the social. It is a political maxim, a prescription. Political equality is not what we want or plan, it is what we declare under fire of the event, here and now, as what is, and not as what should be. In the same way, for philosophy, 'justice' cannot be a State program: 'justice' is the qualification of an egalitarian political orientation in act'.<sup>53</sup>

Could it be possible that cinema's subjective shot, the faithful

point-of-view, achieves its greatest political militancy in *It Came from Outer Space*?

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#### Notes

1. Alain Badiou, 'Philosophy and Desire', in *Infinite Thought, Truth and the Return to Philosophy*, p.56., O. Feltham and J. Clemens (trans. and ed.) (London and New York: Continuum, 2004).
2. For the former reading see Peter Biskind, 'The Russians Are Coming, Arn't They? *Them!* And *The Thing*', in S. Redmond (ed.), *liquid metal, the science fiction film reader*, pp.318-324. (London and New York: Wallflower Press, 2004). For the latter see Mark Jancovich, 'Re-examining the 1950s Invasion Narratives', in S. Redmond (ed.), *liquid metal, the science fiction film reader*, pp.325-336. For a bit of both see J. Hoberman, 'Nearer My Pod to Thee', in G. Rickman (ed), *The Science Fiction Film Reader*, pp.140-144. (New York: Limelight Editions, 2004)
3. This understanding of the alien is consistent with the generally accepted framework for science fiction criticism, in which the genre is defined as a process of estrangement from 'empirical' reality that allows a critical interrogation of that reality. This definition of sci-fi as a critical dialectic between 'estrangement and cognition' was first proposed by Darko Suvin in *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979) For an interesting development of the theoretical background to this position see Carl Freedman, *Critical Theory and Science Fiction* (Hanover and London: Wesleyan University Press, 2000).
4. Alain Badiou, 'Philosophy and truth', in *Infinite Thought, Truth and the Return to Philosophy*, p.61.
5. That we know nothing of the alien is the starting point for many but not all alien films. There are a significant number of films which use the alien to assure us of the universality of 'human' values. Examples include *E.T.* (Steven Spielberg, 1982), *Starman* (John Carpenter, 1984), *The Day the Earth Stood Still* (Robert Wise, 1951), *Contact* (Robert Zemeckis, 1997).
6. Alain Badiou, 'Philosophy and truth', in *Infinite Thought, Truth and the Return to Philosophy*, p.61. For Badiou philosophy is the thinking of being, 'truth' is only ever the name of that through which thinking and being correspond to one another in a single process.' 'Platonism and Mathematical Ontology', in *Theoretical Writings*, p.53, R. Brassier and A. Toscano (trans. and ed.). (London and New York: Continuum, 2004)
7. Alain Badiou, 'Platonism and Mathematical Ontology', in *Theoretical Writings*, p.62.
8. The axiom, Badiou writes, 'has no basis other than the presupposed vanishing of the event. Thus every truth passes through the pure wager on what has being only in disappearing.' 'On Subtraction', in *Theoretical Writings*, p.112.
9. 'The most crucial requirement for a subtractive ontology,' Badiou writes, 'is that its explicit presentation take the form

of the axiom, which prescribes without naming, rather than that of the dialectical definition.' Alain Badiou, 'The Question of Being Today', *Theoretical Writings*, p.43-4.

10. The literature making this point is extensive. See, for example, Carl Freedman, 'Kubrick's 2001 and the possibility of a Science-Fiction Cinema' in *Science Fiction Studies*, 25 (1998); Neil Badmington, *Alien Chic, Posthumanism and the Other Within* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004); Jan Mair, 'Rewriting the 'American Dream': Postmodernism and Otherness in *Independence Day*', in *Aliens R Us, The Other in Science Fiction Cinema*, Z. Sardar and S. Cubitt (eds.) (London, Pluto Press, 2002).
11. This decision is one that cannot be taken for granted. There is a lovely scene early on in Steven Spielberg's *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* where the crews of two aircraft observe a UFO, and when both are asked by those in an airport's control tower if they would like to report it, they reply that they would not.
12. Alain Badiou, 'Philosophy and truth', in *Infinite Thought, Truth and the Return to Philosophy*, p.62.
13. The necessary relation of this vocal ellipsis to the event is explained by Alain Badiou: 'one of the phenomena by which one recognizes an event is that the former is like a point of the real [*point de réel*] that puts language into deadlock.' *Saint Paul, The Foundation of Universalism*, p.46, (italics added) R. Brassier trans. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003).
14. These problems of fidelity to an alien truth are hilariously illustrated in John Carpenter's 1982 remake of *The Thing*, where the alien has no form of its own, and exists only by occupying those living beings it comes in contact with. But the fact that it occupies various beings *simultaneously* and merges them into a single mass merely provides ample opportunity for graphic and grisly special effects displaying its monstrous physical fluidity. It is as if this horrific visibility is a response to the fact that *in itself* the alien has no form, and is a necessarily invisible addition that denies (subtracts from) the ontological consistency of the beings it occupies. Furthermore, the film famously registers the way the problem of truth tends to evaporate in the empirical verification of the alien: upon seeing a human-head-become-thing sprout spider's legs and scuttle out the door, one of the characters explodes: "You've got to be fucking kidding!" Here empirical evidence provokes the rejection of truth rather than its verification, for it announces a slippage from an ethics of the alien to a human, all too human morality of the monster. For an interesting discussion of *The Thing*, and this line in particular, that connects the problem of verification to that of spectator belief, see Steve Neale, "You've Got to be Fucking Kidding!": Knowledge, Belief and Judgement in Science Fiction', in *liquid metal, the science fiction film reader*, pp.11-16.
15. Alain Badiou, *Saint Paul, The Foundation of Universalism*, p.64.
16. *ibid*, p.65.
17. *ibid*, p.66.
18. *ibid*, p.66.
19. *ibid*, p.67.
20. The wonderful exception to this, and indeed the most Badiouian alien film in this regard, is *2001, A Space Odyssey*.
21. This dangerous sexual element also appears in the scene in a garage with two mechanics. The one under the car explains to the other that he's going on a 'hunting trip' and intends to get so 'roaring, stinking, no good drunk that I won't be able to see.' He invites Marty, who declines because 'Martha' wouldn't like it, to

which the other tells him to make up a story: 'Tell her your going away so that you'll love her more when you get back.' His friend leaves while the other continues, explaining that if he didn't 'cut loose' once and a while he'd 'blow a gasket'. This repressed sexual energy is then directly connected to class warfare. The two mechanics are the only working class characters we see in the film, and the one under the car ends his tirade by exclaiming: 'When I get in on Monday, if Mr Johnson looks at me funny just once, JUST ONCE, I swear I'll...' The response to this open rebellion? The Blob delivers instant death. The Blob may be a monster, but obviously it hates class insubordination as much as anyone.

22. Alain Badiou, *Ethics, An Essay on the Understanding of Evil*, p.13-14. Translated by Peter Hallward. (London: Verso, 2001).
23. *ibid*, p.27. As Badiou elaborates, 'The truth is that, in the context of a system of thought that is both a-religious and genuinely contemporary with the truths of our time, the whole ethical predication based upon recognition of the other should be purely and simply abandoned.' *Ethics, An Essay on the Understanding of Evil*, p.25.
24. Alain Badiou, *Ethics, An Essay on the Understanding of Evil*, p.25.
25. This centrifugal motion has already been established in the film's beautiful opening shot, where the camera flies over a rocky outcrop to reveal a town as the voice-over tells us: 'This is Sand Rock Arizona, of a late evening in early spring. It's a nice town, knowing its past and sure of its future, as it makes ready for the night and the predictable morning.' As the shot fades into one of the empty desert we know, already, that this *security* of the 'predictable' is about to dramatically change.
26. At least according to the documentary accompanying the DVD release of the film. The alien point-of-view shot enjoys a rich and varied history, and following *It Came from Outer Space* is consistently indicated by a distortion of the camera's lens to indicate the alien's look. Such distortions had, of course, already been used to indicate extreme subjective states such as drunkenness, but the extension of the subjective shot to aliens marks an important philosophical extension of this device.
27. The music featured the theremin, which was to become the standard alien instrument, most notably in *Forbidden Planet* (directed by Fred McLeod Wilcox, 1956).
28. Alain Badiou, *Saint Paul, The Foundation of Universalism*, p.83.
29. Alain Badiou, *Ethics, An Essay on the Understanding of Evil*, p.41-2.
30. *ibid*, p.32.
31. Alain Badiou, *Saint Paul, The Foundation of Universalism*, p.81 and 84.
32. *ibid*, p.88.
33. Alain Badiou, *Ethics, An Essay on the Understanding of Evil*, p.50.
34. *ibid*, p.54.
35. This is achieved very economically in the opening shots. After the helicopter shot of the town already mentioned we get a fade to a travelling shot of the desert, followed by another fade to John's house.
36. Alain Badiou, *Ethics, An Essay on the Understanding of Evil*, p.73.
37. *ibid*, p.72.
38. Badiou's argument about the Jews and National Socialism runs as follows: 'But the name 'Jew' was the name of names, serving

to designate those people whose disappearance created, around the presumed German substance promoted by the 'National Socialist revolution' simulacrum, a void that would suffice to identify the substance. The choice of this name relates, without any doubt, to its obvious link with universalism – to what was in effect already *void [vide]* about this name – that is, what was *connected to the universality and eternity of truths*. Nevertheless, inasmuch as it served to organize the extermination, the name 'Jew' was a political creation of the Nazis, without any pre-existing referent. It is a name whose meaning no one can share with the Nazis, a meaning that presumes the simulacrum and fidelity to the simulacrum – and hence the absolute singularity of Nazism as a political sequence.' *ibid*, p.75.

39. Alain Badiou, *Ethics, An Essay on the Understanding of Evil*, p.74. Badiou also discusses Stalinist communism in these terms, as well as other 'flaccid and insidious forms' such as '[t]he civilized man of imperial parliamentary democracies', for whom Matt is undoubtedly the strong arm. See, *Manifesto for Philosophy*, p.132. Translated by N. Madarasz. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999).
40. Alain Badiou, *Manifesto for Philosophy*, p.130.
41. Alain Badiou, *Ethics, An Essay on the Understanding of Evil*, p.74.
42. *ibid*, p.76. Italics added.
43. Jack Arnold's intelligent use of this effect has often been commented on. Rather than throw things out of the screen at the audience as most 3D films tended to do, Arnold prefers, as in this scene, to use it to explore an interior depth. This approach was also used in Arnold's other well-known 3D film, *The Creature from the Black Lagoon* (1954). See, Blake Lucas, 'U-I Sci-Fi: Studio Aesthetics and 1950s Metaphysics', in *The Science Fiction Film Reader*, p.75.
44. Alain Badiou, *Ethics, An Essay on the Understanding of Evil*, p.25.
45. 'Infinite alterity is quite simply *what there is*. Any experience at all is the infinite deployment of infinite differences. [...] But what we must recognize is that these differences hold no interest for thought, that they amount to nothing more than the infinite and self-evident multiplicity of humankind, as obvious in the difference between me and my cousin from Lyon as it is between the Shi'ite community of Iraq and the fat cowboys of Texas.' Alain Badiou, *ibid*, p.26. It should be pointed out that Badiou is in the process of working on a logic of appearance that would qualify these statements somewhat. For an idea of this see 'The Transcendental' in *Theoretical Writings*, translated from the forthcoming *Logiques des mondes*.
46. Badiou is at his most provocative on this point, arguing that 'post-modern' ethics rests on the untenable position of a 'radical Other' as it is understood by Emmanuel Lévinas. The 'ethics of difference', 'multiculturalism' and any other political practice based on the recognition of otherness appeals to Lévinas' theory of the Other as '*a principle of alterity* which transcends mere finite experience.' Lévinas calls this the 'Altogether-Other', and, Badiou claims, 'it is quite obviously the ethical name for God.' (*Ethics*, p.22) Badiou makes atheism an absolute condition of truth, which cannot rest on any transcendental outside. Nevertheless, alien films have sometimes explored the theological dimension of Otherness, most notably the cloven hoofed aliens that finally help to re-install Mel Gibson's faith in *Signs* (directed by M. Night Shyamalan, 2002), and the debate



between science and faith that receives its resolution in the divine aliens of *Contact* (directed by Robert Zemeckis, 1997). Despite the opposing roles for aliens in the two films (baddies and goodies respectively), both argue for the necessity of faith in a transcendental Other as the (religious) consequence of the phenomenal appearance of aliens.

47. Alain Badiou, *Ethics, An Essay on the Understanding of Evil*, p.27.
48. *ibid*, p.27.
49. *ibid*, p.26.
50. In this sense *It Came from Outer Space* poses the same political question as Badiou: 'Can there be a just politics? Or a politics which *does justice* to thought?', 'Philosophy and politics' *Infinite Thought*, p. 69. See also, 'Politics as a Truth Procedure', *Theoretical Writings*.
51. For Badiou this makes the production of truth an 'infinite production' irreducible to established knowledge and 'determined only by the activity of those faithful to this event, it can be said that generic thinking is, in the widest sense of the term, militant thinking.' *Manifesto for Philosophy*, p. 81.
52. Alain Badiou, 'Philosophy and politics', *Infinite Thought*, p.70.
53. *ibid*, p.72.

## Nightflight to Venus

In 1974, the Arecibo radio telescope broadcast a message to the stars. A string of binary code, its 0s and 1s could be arranged to form a pictograph that gave – and will give – any extraterrestrial lifeforms who intercept it basic details about human beings and the Earth. 21 years later, *Muttnik*, Sriwhana Spong's second solo show at Anna Miles Gallery, featured this same pictograph, its digital information rendered in analogue format, as a strip of batik cloth. From this side of 2000, the work at first suggests the technofetishism of the space race appears and as kitschy as mass-produced sarongs.

However, if we consider the labour that has lovingly produced this homage, struggling against the organic curves of the batik to replicate the digital image, we can't write this artefact off as a trashy souvenir version of the precise and purposeful original. Considering this, the work exposes the extent to which last century's 'scientific' endeavours were already grand gestures at the time. The Arecibo message, for instance, wasn't simply an earnest plea for somebody – or something – somewhere in the universe to answer us. Its major purpose was actually to mark an upgrading of the telescope. It's easy to think that contemporary practices are pale imitations of past endeavours that reduce them to 'mere' aesthetics. Spong's works show that the question of how we relate to the past and its aspirations can never be this simple.

Unlike the politically vapid status to which Che's image, for example, has been reduced, Spong's works seem to remain interested – if not fully invested – in the progressivist narratives that inspired space travel as well as the civil rights movements. In the photograph *Kuta Beach* banners emblazoned with slogans reminiscent of 60s and 70s civil rights and anti-war movements spread out across a patch of grass like drying washing or abandoned clothes. The photograph, though, doesn't work as an archive: this is not a way of putting these ghosts of the past to rest. If anything, Spong's work resurrects them: in the video *Zoya* she wears a skeleton suit as she reads the Indonesian translation of a Danielle Steel novel, a way of inhabiting spatially and temporally distant narratives. The Steel novel, *Granny Dan*, is significantly itself narrated by the protagonist's granddaughter.

This necromancy, though, doesn't remove the past-ness of the past. There's still the question of what the space race or 60s radicalism mean today. This is particularly pertinent for those of us, like Spong and myself, who took our first breaths as the tensions and limitations of the idealism of these visions of progress were beginning to erupt. Having never lived through the often vicious arguments, it's all too

easy to look back nostalgically to a 'simpler' time, when political action was a 'straightforward' and 'effective' reaction to 'obvious' needs. Similarly, it's tempting to imagine the possibility of innocent enthusiasm for the wonder of space travel, free of such cynical thoughts as lunar real estate.

Mette Bryld and Nina Lykke have written a book called *Cosmodolphins*, a feminist cultural studies analysis of space travel, dolphins and astrology. In it, they call for modes of critique that, while recognising the extent to which both scientific and New Age discourses are immured in racist, sexist, and species-ist understandings, nevertheless makes room for the wonder and re-enchantment that these ways of viewing the world afford. It's this sort of appreciation of the strength of these past endeavours that Spong's work enacts.

The voodoo really kicks in with the strongest work in the show, *Muttnik*, a series of video stills depicting shrines to the planets of our solar system arranged in a verdant garden. The fecundity of these images is striking, particularly in contrast to the loneliness that infuses the other works – the melancholy of the slowly rotating space mission names, the discarded slogans, the Arecibo message's hopeful plea that we are not alone. Made from fruit, bananas and oranges, arranged with black and white chequered material against the lush green of grass and foliage, the shrines recall both Gauguinesque visions of the South Seas and the seminal Afro-futurism of Sun Ra's *Space is the Place*. Placed next to *Kuta Beach*'s protest slogans, they also connect to the sort of D.I.Y. rituals invented by women in the secondwave feminist movement seeking a spirituality outside of patriarchal religions.

To raise these numerous contexts is not to suggest that Spong's work fully investigates each and every nuance of the material she draws on. This show is less about a critical interrogation of these different political and scientific endeavours, and more about investigating how they inflect, inform and coalesce through our lived experiences.

*The Shining*, a strip of fabric batiked with a pattern taken from the carpet design of the hotel in the Kubrick film, is a good example. It's a work that didn't make sense to me at first – or rather, only made half sense. The pop modernist pattern fits more broadly with Spong's aesthetic, which often evokes the 60s and 70s in its investigations of tourist kitsch. And Kubrick of course directed *2001: A Space Odyssey*, an obvious reference point for Spong's ongoing investigation into space travel. Nothing quite added up, however, until I sat down and watched, for the first time, the film. In one scene, the child-hero, Danny, is riding his bike down the carpeted



**Above:** Sriwhana Spong, *Arecibo Message*, batik on cotton (2005)  
**Right:** Sriwhana Spong, *Muttnik* production stills (2005)



hallway, and, crucially, sporting a home-knitted jumper featuring the Apollo 11 rocket. While the theme of space and space missions may stand out in this exhibition, these works are less an exploration of space travel as such and more an investigation of how our lives are infused by idiosyncratic appropriations of cultural texts. Danny's jumper, then, is an apt inspiration for these works: a homemade rendering of technologically sophisticated equipment, the sleek curves of the spaceship drawn in chunky wool, worn by a kid who wasn't even conceived when the mission was blasting off.

**Charlotte Craw painted a spaceship on a t-shirt when she was six. It looks more like a Viking helmet than a Viking lander.**





## Eucalyptus Drive

A little over a month ago on February 26 a high speed police pursuit ended with the death of two youths who slammed a stolen car they were driving into a tree on Eucalyptus drive. A residential street in the Glenquarie public housing estate situated 40kms from the centre of Sydney, in the outer limits of its western suburbs. The identity and addresses of the boys were well known to the police as they had been under police electronic surveillance for several days beforehand. Despite this, and just two weeks prior another police pursuit along Eucalyptus Drive ending with a car crashing into exactly the same tree leaving its driver with severe injuries, the police pursued the boys into the narrow street at speeds approaching 140 km per hour.<sup>1</sup>

Within hours of the crash conflict broke out between grief stricken family and friends and the police, sparking some of the worst civil unrest in recent Australian history. Over four nights 300 people violently rioted with hundreds of police as they searched for Jesse Kelly the driver of the pursued vehicle who was being hidden by members of the community. The revolt incited other outbursts of anger and rioting in St. Clair and outside the IMAX cinema in Darling Harbour where 150 youth pelted police with bottles and smashed a police car.

The NSW state government and media attempted to present these clashes as minor isolated incidents of street fighting by 'bad people'. Far from it, arrests were difficult because of support from the general Glenquarie community who joined the fighting and also provided refuge to youth. Furthermore, these riots represented a sharp hardening of police stance in the area and a new paramilitary style approach to policing. Riot squads sealed off a section of the car park in the Glenquarie town centre as a command post, road blocks were established at key intersections, baton charges and police dogs were let loose on teenagers and armed raids were conducted throughout the area in houses harboring suspects.

"There are no excuses for this behaviour and I am not going to have it said that this behaviour is caused by the social disadvantaged... There's only one blame here and that is the people who went out and threw bricks and caused riots. There's only one thing to say to them: the police will get them, because they are engaged in illegal behaviour." (NSW state leader, Bob Carr, February 28 2005)

Carr's position sums up the entire political, business and media establishment which repudiated that social conditions cause problems of crime. In an interview with Peter Perkins, grandfather of Jesse Kelly and resident of Macquarie Fields for 20 years, he outlines a rather more sinister picture of



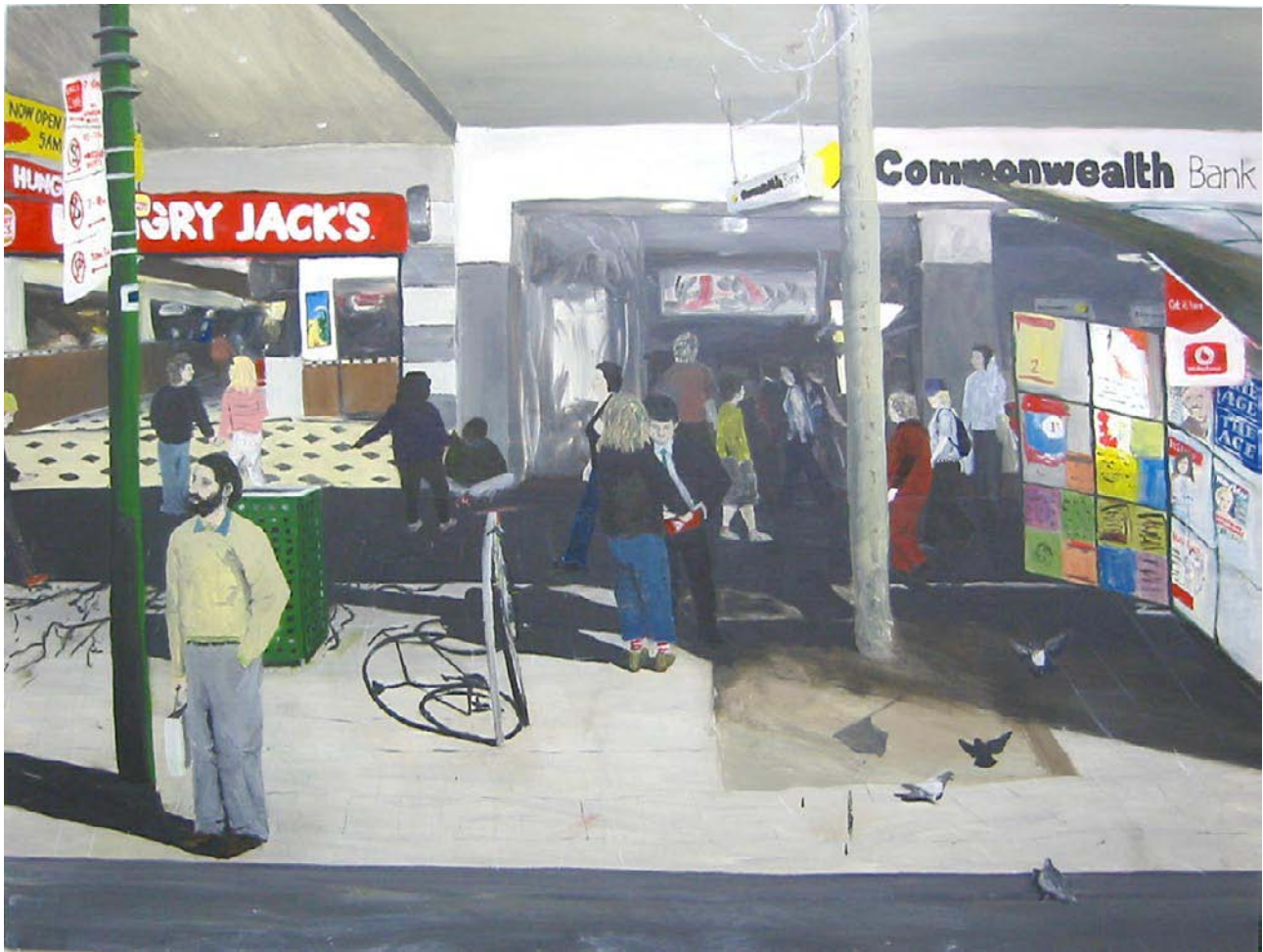
Fergus Binns, *St. Paul's Cathedral, Melbourne*, 2005, oil on board, 91.5 x 122cm

the attitude of the NSW State government. "Public housing is run down and there is a \$650 million dollar backlog on repairs and maintenance for public housing, according to the papers today. The Carr government is running it down as an excuse to bulldoze more public housing and sell the land to private developers. It is the same as in Redfern."<sup>2</sup>

The official response to social deprivation is a stepping up of police controls. (NSW has now one of the highest incarceration rates in the developed world, a 50 per cent increase in a decade.) In addition to the recent abolition of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, the pending changes to industrial relations law and the introduction of voluntary student unionism, the traditional platforms for political participation in Australia will be reduced much further. It is this climate of violent ideology by the political establishment directed towards alienating and repressing youth and the disadvantaged that heightened my appreciation of the recent work by Fergus Binns, a 25-year old emerging artist recently based in Melbourne but originally from Lismore, a rural town in New South Wales. Fergus Binns explores this shameful underbelly of the Australian cultural landscape that we all know too well, a hardened frontier of entrenched poverty, unemployment, privatisation, failed public policy, begging, consumption, abuse and telemarketing centres.

"Son, stay away from that crap – when you stir a stink, all you get is a bigger stink,' said the old GP to the aspiring psychoanalyst."<sup>3</sup>

A recognisable array of tourist nic-nacs, iconic figures and



Fergus Binns, *Opposite St. Paul's Cathedral*, 2004, oil on board, 91.5 x 122cm

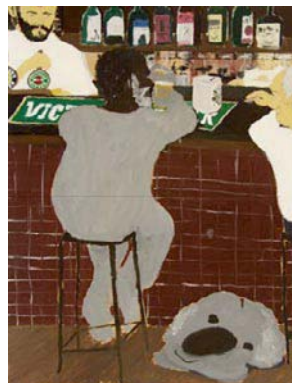
consumables such as beer, Akubra hats, Aussie flags, Uluru, dingoes, boomerangs, dot painting, koalas as well as a collection of clumsily rendered figurative paintings on bits of masonite and found cloth are the ingredients this artist mixes to create his very own undeniable stench. Vegemite helps as well, large lumps of the stuff. In his first exhibition at TCB *Galerie Vege* (2003) Fergus invited friends to contribute their homage to the shitty sticky brown substance. A salon of objects (brown monochromes, tea towels and home made ashtrays) was presented on walls smeared with the icky muck and the audience were served it on toast as well. Vegemite, once a sovereign symbol made from the surplus of beer production, is now owned by the transnational Corporation Kraft Foods. (Yet trading in the old myth is a collaboration continued by consumers and Kraft alike.) *Galerie Vege* insinuated adolescent jokes about faeces and scat parties. Some say, too, violence is a lot like Vegemite, an acquired taste and something hidden away in every family cupboard. *Galerie Vege* abounded in obscenities resulting in an embarrassing air of something gone terribly wrong.

The faulty, filthy and visceral associations reappeared in his current exhibition at Uplands. The boxing kangaroo greeted audiences ready to beat up a version of the Aboriginal flag over a messy BBQ apron. Later, audiences would discover

a bottle of methylated spirits smeared with paint and cut out pictures of tall ships stuck on it like flies on blotting paper, a deflated plastic kangaroo hung upside down from a shelf like a skin or trophy and a collection of paintings depicted various subjects, such as animal handler Steve Irwin holding a rainbow serpent and covered with paint and dirt, two hands prising open a dingo's mouth, a bunch of young people at a tourist look-out and the Australian coat of arms covered by small black handprints. Another painted panel depicted a dull stretch of a city street: a footpath; some phone booths and some public seating along Swanston street. In an accompanying panel, a family peers out the window of a passing tram at the same spot. Fairly ugly and unremarkable as pictures go, both *St. Pauls Cathedral Melbourne* and *Describing Sights (Tram, Melbourne)* portray a public stand-off that continues to occur today. The site is a tourist attraction and a meeting place for homeless and Koori groups. Like other examples of watering holes on shopping strips in Smith Street Fitzroy and Acland Street St. Kilda, they have been used in this purpose for several decades and are some of the only highly public and visible spaces left for these groups to occupy. It has been reported that public

nuisance and drinking problems have caused disruptions to businesses such as McDonalds, Hungry Jacks and KFC and to the taxi companies who use the space as a rank at night. Other complaints have supposedly come from commuters and tourists whom wish to avoid being hassled for money and have a 'clean and safe' journey home to the suburbs and from local police whose tolerance and authority is continually tested. These pictures depict an ongoing site of conflict and its observation by others. An embarrassing blot on the corporate landscape of Melbourne, that no doubt the major 'stakeholders': the town planners, developers, franchises and shopkeepers wish would just go away. In their clumsy acrid rendering these two paintings capture an immense shame, the daily reminder of our failures: the monstrous treatment we have accorded the different ones in our midst.

At art school, Fergus 'hit his straps' as they say, with a series of naively drawn and unfinished paintings depicting childhood monsters and meetings between whites, loggers and native folk. I also remember Qantas airplanes lost at sea and a group of stragglers quietly observing aboriginal figures around a campfire, which come to think of it was more like a big bon-fire, out of control. They were deliberately hung as though they were about to fall off the wall. The work was immediately appealing for its child like directness, humour and wit, a painting style that was equal parts nostalgic and brutish parody. Fergus chose to continue a rich and long tradition of Australian vernacular, a canon well versed in previous decades by Melbourne artist and musician Jon Campbell as well as the enigmatic Linda Marrinon. I can also recall other recent examples of Australiana and nationhood such as Jarred Kennedy's (Fergus's peer) video spoofs of Alvin Purple and the Australian Crawl; Raafat Ishak's complicated drawings of suburbia and abstract shapes – one particularly memorable outline of the emu from the Australian coat of arms fucking the kangaroo doggy style; Tony Schwenson's fat, white, straight, bald, guy; and A Constructed Worlds flag burning, there is much resistance to an Australian public life in purposeful denial about everything. What's different and risky about Fergus Binns' work is that he re-stages the mythical conflicts of contemporary Australian society observed very much from his own lived experience. The complicated social issues of indigenous rights, race, the environment and poverty have remained permanently frozen in stasis or have significantly regressed by the political agenda of the last 15 years. Fergus often presents a different and more confusing perspective to these stagnated disputes. In one picture for example, a white logger protects a tree from an aboriginal figure wielding an axe. His use of the Wilderness Society Koala is another example of conflict staged between social issues and experience. One of the crappier jobs recently available for the unemployed and art students alike, was fundraising for this environmental organisation. Workers would have to wear these big koala fake fur costumes and walk the pavement shaking the bucket for any loose change. A very admirable cause indeed, but the reality is an extremely tough and difficult job (especially on hot summer days) of long shifts for the minimum award and a small commission. In Fergus' paintings we can observe the



**Left:** Fergus Binns, *Koala (Does not drink)*, 2001, oil on board, 120 x 90cm. **Right:** Fergus Binns, *The fancy dress party*, 2001, oil on board, 120 x 90cm

Wilderness Society Koala having a well-earned beer at the pub with some old drunks and in a group portrait staring blankly with an aboriginal figure and Chewbacca from Star Wars. In a submission to *rubik 14* (2004) for artist pages regarding nature Fergus reprinted his official membership application form to the organisation, complimented with a funny line drawing by his girlfriend (artist Jessie Green) of himself al' naturale.

In a photocopied catalogue accompanying Fergus' exhibition at Uplands results from recent telemarketing research identifies qualities that are un-Australian. Defining in reverse, the absurdity and stupidity of what now quantifies as national characteristics. Fergus Binns' art describes an Australian public life brimming with injuries, repressed guilt and failed communication. He returns to familiar conflicts, so that the meaning and source of pain can be comprehended and the conventional and nontraditional social roles can be acted out.

**James Lynch is a browncoat who enjoys cooking one pot wonders.**

#### Notes

1. James Cogan, "Australia: Sydney suburb remains tense following four days of conflict", *World Socialist Website*, March 3 2005, <http://www.wsws.org/articles/2005/mar2005/sydn-m03.shtml>.
2. Peter Boyle from an interview with Peter Perkins, "Youth riots in Sydney: the real story", *Green Left Weekly*, March 9 2005.
3. Harvey Greenberg, *The movies on your mind*, Saturday Review Press, New York, p198.

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### **Dreaming the Jungle**

In the jungle the sun always shines  
green through ten stories of leaves.

In the jungle the radio is fuzz.  
There are no piles of newspapers.

You never need to pee, you sweat it out.  
The jungle is moist, shake and shower.

There's no overcrowding  
of eyes in the jungle, only roots.

No grill or boil  
leave the fish in the sun to steam.

You can't tell where the main stream begins  
or ends, it bends. No pavements next to no roads.

No filing cabinets, no records  
in the jungle there is no bottom drawer

no scratched CDs, cutlery, tea towels or turtles.  
No high heels, only transsexual

flowers, racy butterflies and prehistoric  
larger than your head frogs. Kiss the jungle.



### **A travel writer takes a walk through the jungle**

The touring party was a cesspool of disease. I drank from someone else's cup, and in a fever lost the crowd.

In a dip by the bank of a river I went into a tense sweat, into a pile of myself.  
Flapping my loincloth's edges cooled my fever. The crinkle cooed at my heart.

In the dark's dark, flannel palms folded me, grew fond of me and fronds around me – vines like dressing gown cords.

They call the river Noah. After a sudden rain he will rise, burst, then leave taking with him all who stood on the bank, boats and reeds, goats and girls.

In the morning light I flared, flung off my twiggy cloak and struggled up out of the grave I had scooped in the night. I sleep as thick as a stick, as deep as a spade.

In the jungle rumours, false or full, spread like fire to a lake's edge.  
In the jungle the body is adored, cuddled by claws, bones, fur, feathers, teeth, and shells.

I re-wove my hat and set out to find 1.toilet 2.coffee.  
Downstream a dilapidated sign suggested westward. And so I went.

A knotted raft with a crew of rats was departing. I bought my way aboard with rolled oats and roast almonds, with cous cous and gold.

In the jungle man can picture himself as a jaguar, a bird or an elephant.  
In the jungle mirrors are made of metal and hard to polish fully.

On the way downstream I caught some sun, as I talked to the bar staff about nibbles, the moon came out quick as the carpet from under foot.

I waited to pull into the arms of a city. I wanted to pull on to solid ground.  
I was far from sure. We pasted by the welcoming wood of many, too many piers.

On the river fish is caught.  
On the river squid are caught up in fish nets.

We passed spa pools and the steaming mouths of the sauna-gators.  
We passed off my map. I had been taken for all I was worth. I was stuck aboard with minus grains and zero gems.  
I inspected my devices. In the deck air I knotted the vessel's dirty laundry.

Stained and starched, a small craft appeared. Son of a paperclip daughter of a dart. I rode the family of folds. I made my way ashore.  
Some animals shed skin, others change their colour. Beaks open.  
In the jungle the bark of trees feels like Braille.

I was without my luggage. My precious rings and phone were gone. My favourite piece of obsidian, ancient and shaped like nail clippers, would be black in my hand no more.

Gone was my shaver, spare sandals, compass and candles.  
All I had was a hole in my pocket, and ears on my sides.

My head felt black as a match. I felt unshaven. I felt like a can of tuna.  
The jungle is only sap and plants with pep. The jungle is only raindrops and their pets.

**A travel writer tries to get out of the jungle.**

Dusk is falling and the fire that keeps the water buffalo warm at night will soon be lit. They huddle around a pond, behind them is clutter to the horizon.

Water falls like ice cubes would pelt. These few days  
I've managed to spend dry, I've spent nostalgic.

The jungle's finery is vast but chipped. The animal kingdom blends into the vegetable kingdom. Who know what's in such soup.

In the jungle, the art of human finery is king. Torsos draped in necklaces. I ask the locals why they stare at me so. I try on their heavy breast plates. They say nothing.

After a life time of reaching for berries, their fingers have deformed knuckles like knots. Who can tell if their lips are naturally bloody.

I spend my days recalling every funeral I have attended during my life.  
I yearn for a study [sturdy?] roof under which to note down such recollections.

As I lie in the night's armpit, a veil of eczema spreads out of my joints.  
The sharp grass has trellised my calves in cuts. I am a dreadful uniformity of itchiness and regret. I dream of home scarred by my absence.  
Home will become tattooed with my stories, will be a sanctuary away from snakes.

Each day my teeth are filed a little more canine by this sandy food. The finest china will be brought out for my arrival. Teacups as fine as a rooster's crow with colour as rich as a parrot. I dream of the sweet song of the telephone. The brightness of butter, the kindness of a clock, the clink of metal on glass. The straight line of life.

## Clubs project feedback sessions!

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### Background

CLUBfeedback is a service for cultural practitioners that provides a structured critical response to a presented work. Artists, writers, performers or curators are able to request feedback by approaching the co-ordinators, who then assemble a group of peers and experts to provide feedback. This 'service' has been facilitated by CLUBSproject in Melbourne since 2002.

The focus of these sessions is to explore, through conversation, the 'work' of an artwork: to investigate how an artwork functions, and how it operates within, and in relation to, its contexts. Attention is placed on relationships internal to the artwork, as well as those the artwork produces, including connections generated by the work in terms of conceptual, speculative, theoretical, imaginative, metaphoric, linguistic, political and social (etc) lines of inquiry. The aims of the session are to actively draw out these connections and extend them through intensive collective conversation.

The starting point for CLUBfeedback is the 'material evidence' of the work of art in its situation. The practitioner is not expected to provide an account of the work in the initial stages. Feedback is a service offered to the practitioner and it is an opportunity for them to listen, rather than having to defend or explain their work. In the final stages of the session, questions that have developed from the conversation are put to the practitioner and it is at this point that they join the conversation in its collective and extended sense.

It is an important principle of CLUBfeedback that the practitioner is not privileged as the singular or originary force of the work; rather, it establishes the *work as a productive force which has effects*. This is not in order to devalue the position or intent of the author, but to investigate how the work *works* as a material-conceptual reality. What becomes important is that no matter what the practitioner's intent, the work itself produces relations within the world and these have real effects. The practitioner is able to witness the way an audience encounters and engages with their work, and through conversation how they inquire into the work. This inquiring conversation can become invaluable in extending the understanding of an artwork for both the practitioner and other participants involved.

The greater aim of CLUBfeedback is to produce a space for encountering the work in which the artwork is allowed to frame *itself*, instead of this being determined solely on the basis of the authority of the author (or upon other authorizing modes). Asking the practitioner to join the conversation after others have had an opportunity to explore the work for

themselves, results in the artist being invited into a space of collective dialogue that has developed around and through the work in its field of discourse.

CLUBfeedback endeavors to develop a supportively critical dialogue that extends beyond critique or indifferent judgment. It opens a space in which the time of art's encounter is slowed to a duration in which other possibilities for investigation are unleashed. Rather than developing a definitive single account of the work in question, an aim of feedback is to generate an open-ended exploration based in diversity and difference in relation to the possibilities that have been opened, or generated by the potentialities of the artwork.

### HOW TO: A MANUAL

#### Numbers

CLUBS has found that between 6 and 10 people are a productive number to work with for a feedback session as it allows a generous discussion between all involved. Any more tends to become unruly and makes it difficult to develop a conversation beyond a superficial level.

#### Constitution of the Feedback group

In consultation with the practitioner, the Facilitator invites people to attend the feedback session. The group usually includes the practitioner's immediate peers, the Facilitator, 1 or 2 others from the CLUBS committee, as well as specifically invited guests not necessarily known by the practitioner personally. Guests are usually people suggested by the practitioner or Facilitator who it is felt may contribute an interesting focus to the discussion. It is recommended that the feedback group include one 'non-artist' from a complimentary discipline or field of research, or someone with an informed interest in art in general.

#### Location

Feedback sessions *always* take place where the work is located – be that in a studio, exhibition context, outdoors etc. It's important to be present with the work and to have it visible as a constant reference for the discussion.

#### Time Required

The session takes about 1.5 to 2 hours, although the session generally extends to an informal discussion between the artist and the attendees at the conclusion of the session.



## Record

CLUBSproject makes an effort to, and recommends, recording these sessions as we feel they are an invaluable resource not only for the practitioner but also for anyone interested in their practice or the discussion in general now or in the future. Some practitioners have also found it useful to take notes during the discussion of their work in order to respond later to particular observations or for their own record.

## Process

Sessions commence with one person being asked to give an OBSERVATIONAL description of the artwork. The OBSERVATIONAL description of the artwork is as full an account as possible of what is materially present or activated by the artwork, including the situation of the work in its location, the nature of the location and other objects that may generally be considered external or incidental to the work (such as plinths or frames or wall labels). The OBSERVATIONAL description attempts to describe the work without recourse to language which assumes prior knowledge (such as describing an object as a sculpture or a painting, or referring to a space as a gallery) or that will influence subsequent responses to the work. The aim of this description is to focus attention on all aspects of the work particularly details that might be overlooked by a more cursory engagement. All other participants listen to

Feedback Session for Nick Mangan's *The Colony* at Gertrude Contemporary Art Spaces, September 2005. Session included Terri Bird, Nadine Christensen, Bianca Hester, Laresa Kosloff, Lou Hubbard, Nick Mangan, Andrew McQualter and Scott Mitchell.

this description and at its conclusion are asked if they think something has been overlooked or needs to be qualified.

Once it is agreed that the OBSERVATIONAL description of the work is complete participants are asked to provide a RESPONSE to the work from a more subjective perspective. It is often the case that the transition from the OBSERVATIONAL to the RESPONSIVE stage of the feedback session happens in the course of the conversation and the facilitator simply acknowledges that this has occurred. Initially it can be useful if the subjective comments respond to, or seek clarification of, the observational description. However, at this stage, in general, participants freely offer their observations and comments.

After considerable discussion it usually becomes apparent that most aspects of the artwork have been covered in the conversation, often leaving points of disagreement between participants or unresolved questions raised by the artwork. At this stage the facilitator asks for three or so questions to be framed individually or collectively, which are then put to the artist.



The practitioner is invited to respond to these questions and any other aspects of the discussion. A dialogue may or may not develop at this point between the participants and the practitioner.

### **Facilitator**

The feedback session needs to be managed by someone who takes on the role of Facilitator. This person usually works with the practitioner to set up the session contacting all those participating. On the day it is his or her role to introduce everyone, outline the process and most importantly to manage the conversation.

Besides nominating someone to provide the Observational description the Facilitator's role is to ask questions of clarification following the Observational description and during the Responsive stage of the discussion. Often tentative remarks are made in relation to the artwork that when probed further open up interesting lines of conversation. The facilitator can also suggest connections or conflicts between the comments of various participants in order to push the conversation to further clarification.

It is the Facilitator's role to bring the conversation to a conclusion: initially, in order to frame the questions put to the practitioner that bring them into the conversation, and finally to wrap up the discussion when the conversation or the participants starts to run out of energy.

*This manual is a working document developed by Terri Bird, Bianca Hester and Andrew McQualter on behalf of CLUBSproject, and has emerged from extended conversations since 2002. We regard this as an open-source text to be adopted and adapted in anyway! The process outlined above is one that has developed over time and has emerged from a particular interest in art-work as generative of a relational or contextual field.*

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**CLUBSproject is an artist initiative that runs projects on and off site; ranging from publication production, forums, events, meetings, performances, actions, workshops, publication-archive, web-publishing, curatorial experiments and exhibitions. We are interested in facilitating diverse possibilities of art and related practices. We're focussed on experimenting with the way art comes about, is made public, experienced and mediated. We're interested in experimenting with the conditions of production and the relationships they have to organisational structures... and we're dedicated to the perpetually provisional!**

**We offer a site free of charge, which is above a disused pub in Fitzroy. The pub has recently been sold and as a consequence we've needed to find a new venue to run from. This new site will be above the Rob Roy Hotel, just down the road, and we'll move there in early 2006. Visit [www.clubsproject.org.au](http://www.clubsproject.org.au) for updates.**

**CLUBS is currently coordinated by Terri Bird, Nadine Christensen, Cate Consandine, Starlie Geikie, Christopher Hill, Bianca Hester, Marcus Keating, Laresa Kosloff, Lizzy Newman, Spiros Panigirakis and Michelle Ussher.**

## A to he

**Note:** 'A to he' was commissioned for a show at Clubs by Spiros Panigirakis. The show was titled 'WITH' (April 30 – May 7); conveying the associative strategy of the show's three elements. (The other two being 'Poured – The Bake Off' (a display of cakes on a volcano theme) and 'Luminous Fountain Work' (a sculpture and documenting video) both of which employed other artists and friends.

In writing the play my concerns were: continuing the vein of previous work in writing performance for voices; and pleasing Spiros, as a kind of gift, having known him since 1994: e.g. his penchant for fountains and the eighties. These things – as well as the set and the performers (the dead grass, brown water and potentially troublesome figures represented by the costumes suggesting an environmental thematic not explored by the text) – provided a non-narrative continuity. I wanted each scene to be different in presentation and feel. The play starts off-stage; during the jukebox scene the performers speak at will – often simultaneously / overlapping. The workshop scene provides a setpiece of relief – a recognisable scene parodying a poetry workshop. The whole thing went for about 12 minutes. The performers were: Fiona Harney (mushroom); Seb Harris (sun); Ben Haskin (mosquito); Louise Irving (pigeon); Adam Scott (shark) and Michelle Ussher (koala). Set and costumes by Dimitra & Spiros Panigirakis, and Joe Hill. After a suitable interlude of suspense it was every cake-eater for themselves.

A pigeon on the roof is making noises as I write this – a cross between a rooster's crow and a growl. Not a coo.

## A to he

F what were you doing in the toilet for half an hour having  
a blue poo i suppose  
C if you didnt have a blue dick up your arse  
A thats lovely language  
F did you see \_\_\_\_\_ last night  
A if you didnt have a blue dick up your arse  
F thats lovely language  
A what were you doing in the toilet for half an hour having  
a blue poo i suppose  
E id like to munch his blue button  
B blue this is serious  
C id like to munch his blue button  
E did you see \_\_\_\_\_ last night  
C blue fountains i thought he said blue mountains  
D blue this is serious



Photographs by Tim Fleming.

B i was mixing batter till i got a blue elbow  
E blue fountains i thought he said blue mountains  
A is that some kind of bluephemism  
D yes i was literally blue in the face  
D blue fountains i thought he said blue mountains  
E yes i was literally blue in the face  
F blue news

B bleautiful news

B is that some kind of bluephemism

C blue news

D bleautiful news

\* [A-F, staggered]

do you want to go somewhere

what was your favourite film of 2004

\_\_\_\_\_

i hated that

what was your least favourite film of 2004

\_\_\_\_\_

i loved that

one day my name will be \_\_\_\_\_

fountain i thought he said mountain

have you read his poetry

\*

[ ..... ] do you have a poem for us

[ ] the fountain

every day at every lake

i get mistaken for a drake

the fountains crumble to the sea

the sea laps my feet & comforts me

in every hotel hilton

every gleaming greyish stilton

makes a murmur like a moutie

close to bounty

thank you

do you want to add anything

i wasnt sure about the ending i thought maybe i could  
say something explicit about saving water or rhyme  
spouty with droughty

class

whats a fountie

a moutie you idiot theyre canadian

[.....] ...

well he is

i really liked it

read it again

it reminded me of rubbish

i

i get mistaken for drakes too

yeah

### jukebox1

C call me on the

B a beat my

E know youre

A maybe im just like my father

F youre not a fool i

D a fool i know youre not

C im just like my

B youre not a

E as

A a beat my heart starts missing

E when

C beat my heart

C i was working as a

F waitress i

A beat my heart starts

B depression starts to

B waitress i

B a fool i know youre

B working as

C i know youre not a

F the phone dont

D a beat my heart starts

F heart starts missing a beat my

D to

E us

F my father maybe im

A me on the

F depression starts to win

D know youre not a fool

F i was working as

E waitress i

F youre not a

F my heart starts missing a

F my mother

B heart starts missing a beat

B when

### jukebox2

D know youre not a

A when depression starts

E a beat my heart starts

E to win but when

D a fool i

A was working as a

F fool i know

A waitress i

D i know youre not a

B a

B missing a beat my heart starts

D maybe  
 D me on the phone  
 D with those  
 B the phone dont  
 B i know youre not a  
 D heart my  
 E win but when  
 B missing  
 C when depression starts to  
 D fool i know youre not a  
 A a waitress i  
 A not a  
 E a waitress i was working  
 F a fool i know youre not  
 A a waitress i  
 C a fool i know  
 C i was working as a waitress  
 A know youre not a fool  
 D dont call me on the phone  
 E my mother maybe im just like  
 B fool i know youre not  
 B waitress i was working  
 C the phone  
 C just like my father maybe im  
 E phone dont call me on the

### jukebox3

A just like  
 C the  
 A was working  
 A not a fool i know  
 D i was working  
 B maybe im  
 C call me on the phone dont  
 A when depression starts to  
 C heart starts  
 E when depression  
 E missing a beat  
 E but  
 F my  
 A but when  
 B my heart starts  
 D when depression  
 D like  
 D as a waitress i was  
 C a fool i know  
 D to win but when depression starts  
 E starts  
 B when depression starts to  
 A on the phone dont call me  
 B father maybe im  
 C call me on the phone dont  
 B im just like my  
 F call me on the phone dont  
 B beat my heart starts missing  
 E was  
 F to win but when depression  
 F a beat my heart starts missing

B win but when depression  
 A call me on the phone  
 E was working as a waitress i  
 D win but when  
 F maybe

### jukebox4

D on the phone  
 D im just like my mother maybe  
 A phone dont  
 B maybe im just like my father  
 F but when depression starts  
 C waitress i was working  
 F a fool  
 F a waitress  
 D fool i know youre not  
 E waitress  
 C fool i  
 E waitress i was working as a  
 C fool i know youre not  
 E a  
 D a beat  
 C the phone dont call me  
 F like my mother maybe im just  
 C the phone  
 A the  
 C the phone dont call me  
 D like my father  
 D on the  
 C like my  
 C phone dont call me  
 B waitress  
 C to win  
 C a fool i  
 E a waitress i was working  
 C fool  
 D working as a waitress i  
 A youre not a fool  
 D was working  
 D when depression starts  
 A starts missing a beat my heart  
 A but when depression starts  
 D missing a beat

### jukebox5

C not a  
 F missing  
 E but when depression starts to  
 D my heart starts missing  
 E maybe im just like my  
 F dont  
 C heart starts missing a beat  
 E i know  
 F win but when  
 F starts  
 B when depression starts to



F missing a beat  
 D starts to win but when  
 E missing a beat my hearts starts  
 F working as a  
 C youre not a fool i know  
 F i was working as  
 B know  
 C win but when depression  
 C beat  
 B win but when depression starts  
 B beat my heart starts missing a  
 E the phone dont call  
 E the  
 D phone dont call  
 D starts to win  
 F i  
 D know youre not a  
 D waitress i  
 A know youre not a fool  
 C was working  
 A fool i know youre not  
 B working as a  
 C a  
 D as a waitress i  
 D not a

#### jukebox6

D working  
 D fool i  
 F was working as a waitress i  
 B i know youre not a  
 E working as a  
 C just like my father  
 E waitress i was  
 B a fool i know youre not  
 A not a  
 E was working  
 F youre not a  
 A working as a  
 A im just  
 D dont call me on  
 A maybe im just  
 E dont  
 D maybe im just  
 C when depression starts to win but  
 C missing  
 D starts to win but  
 E beat my  
 E depression starts to  
 F my heart starts missing a  
 A when depression starts to win but  
 A starts  
 C starts missing a beat my heart  
 D when depression starts to  
 C heart starts  
 C depression starts to  
 C beat my heart starts  
 A but when depression starts

F my heart starts missing  
 C win  
 E a beat  
 C when depression starts to  
 E waitress i was working as a  
 ABCDEF jukebox

he gets up. he smiled at the thought of you. he gets kicked out. he pauses. he dances when he hears music. he dances when he hears music. he dances when he hears music. he started drinking at fourteen. he pauses. he paused. he starts drinking at fourteen. he gets up. he gets up. he gets kicked out. he.... he got up. he.... he dances when he hears music. he gets kicked out. he smiled at the thought of you. he paused. he dances when he hears music. he got kicked out. he got up. he.... he gets up. he paused. he dances when he hears music. he paused. he gets kicked out. he..... he..... he danced when he heard music. he got kicked out. he got kicked out. he..... he.... he.... he... he.... he danced when he heard music. he.... he gets up. he..... he... he... he pauses. he..... he... he hides in the car. he... he.. he paused. he..... he... he..... he..... he.. he. he.. he. he..... he ate jelly crystals. he hides in the car. he ate jelly crystals. he. he. he hid in the car. he ate jelly crystals. he.. he sits next to you at recess. he sits next to you at recess. he..... he.. he hides in the car. he.. he..... he hid in the car. he... he.. he... he... he... he .... he... he. he comes over to your house. he sits next to you at recess. he sat next to you at recess. he sits next to you at recess. he.. he sat next to you at recess. he. he... \_\_ he comes over to your house. he sits next to you at recess. he hides in the car. he withdraws. he lets go. \_\_ \_\_ he.... \_\_ he lets go. he..... \_\_ he..... he came over to your house. he lets go. he..... he came over to your house. he..... he..... he.... he let go. he..... he.... he lets go. he..... he..... \_\_ \_\_ he withdrew. he..... he let go. \_\_ he.... he..... he.... he.... he withdraws. \_\_ \_\_ he.. he.. \_\_ he.... \_\_ he..... \_\_ he.. \_\_ \_\_ he.. \_\_ he withdrew. \_\_ \_\_ he withdrew. \_\_ \_\_ he withdrew. \_\_ \_\_ he withdrew. he withdrew. \_\_ he.. he.. \_\_ he withdraws.

## Boys Who Rock: Velvet Revolver & the Gunners – gifts of nature

### Exiguity – a melodrama

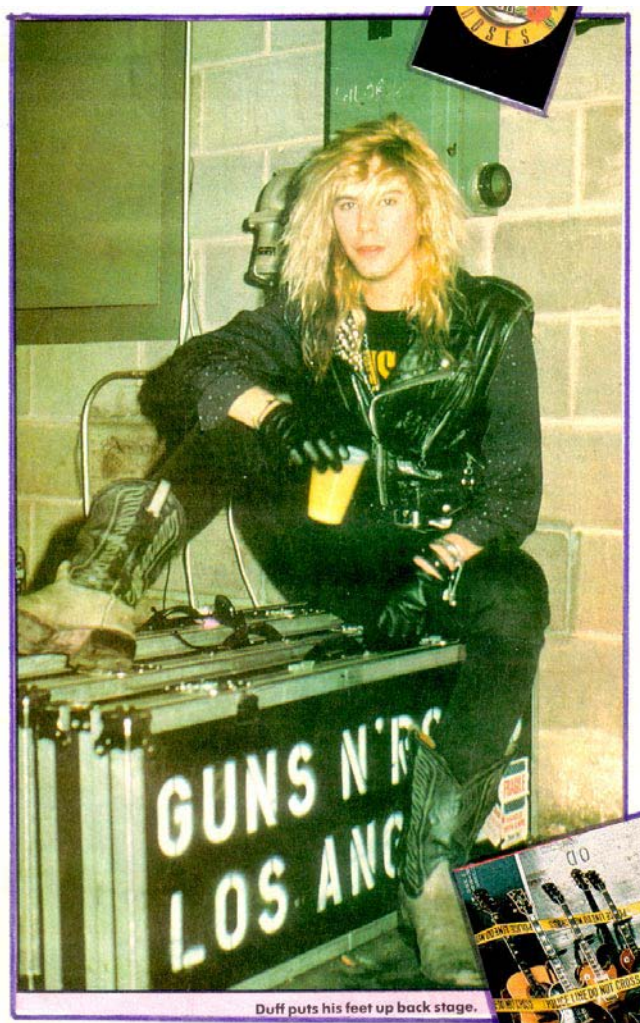
As she reached down to fetch her other green leather sandal she took a final long draw on the Buddha stick. The tips of her fingers met the floor and the pad of her silver ringed thumb lazily traced its way along the curved stem of an embroidered flower, hand-woven into the Indian mat. She felt the petals emerge from the stem and the pointed beak of a small bird, its tiny boned head dipping into the flowers coronet. The tail feathers wound away and under her chair. After some moments spent pressing her palm onto the bird to make a print in her skin her wrist finally urged her fingers toward the sandal. As she knocked into the leather her thumb touched another person's hand. She hung her head between her legs to look under her chair and discovered a pale long-fingered hand gently wrapped around her sandal. The new hand rested softly, calmly, intimately, its scarred and gold ringed thumb rolling the sliding barrel on the buckle until the whole shoe found sleep and began to dream. All of the fingers on all of the hands in the room at that party paused and then curled momentarily. A wave of excitement surged along her fingers, curled around the bones and flushed her fingernails an oriental red. The new hand on the sandal tightened slightly, waking the leather from a dream of sunshine, green grass and prairies empty of cowboys. She met his eyes. He handed her the green sandal and whispered "Earth is an edible brothel. Love is celestial. The cat sleeps sixteen hours – the old cat and the kitten sleep twenty. ALL IS GOD GIVEN WITH BOTH HANDS." She took back her green leather sandal with a hand that laughed. Her palms broadened and flexed as her entire nature drew itself into a single line of mathematical alliance. Later they performed the act of essence and a boy child is conceived. In the darkness after parties or fights or days of days filled to the top with nothing many boys are made. Years later young men with heads full of misfiring, misdirected, mistrustful impulses come together to board a pirate ship, form a gang – a brotherhood – and start a rock n roll band in Angel City.

*Superhuman: rodeo, rodeo, rodeo, rodeo, throw a rope around her neck and get the show on the road*

### Duff on Willis St, Wellington

*Dirty Little Thing: Get away from the film of sex in your life*

This tall blonde fella walked by me on Willis St the other day. He had bleached out shoulder length blow-dried messed up hair. He wore a Harley t-shirt under a black slightly girly leather jacket, leather pants, studded wristband and heavy new boots. The look wasn't cheap Wainuiomata – more



Roberto Cavalli. It may have been Duff McKagan formerly of the band Guns n Roses and now crew member of a new L.A band named Velvet Revolver. I discovered Duff's super sexy cool bass player self roughly six years after GnR had reached their creative zenith. My sister-friend G and I found we shared a passion for lean, pretty punk-ass rockers – the more cartoon-like they appeared the better. The first time I saw Donald Duck in real life (man in a duck suit at Disneyland) I drew to an abrupt halt. There is something so unnatural about a cartoon character crossing from the fantasy realm into the natural world. Seeing Duff (possible sighting) caused a collision in my brain. And what in the name of satan's tits was he doing trotting around New Zealand in his Cuban heels? Perhaps he had a brief stop over in Wellington before shooting off to buy land in Wanaka. Whoever he was he looked like a fine feathered peacock





**IZZY STRADLIN'**  
 RYTHM GUITAR  
 BORN: INDIANA  
 AGE: 27  
 FAVE BANDS: EVERYTHING  
 FROM CLASSICAL TO PUNK



**DUFF "ROSE" MCKAGEN**  
 BASS GUITAR  
 BORN: SEATTLE, WASHINGTON  
 AGE: 25  
 FAVE BANDS: AC/DC,  
 PUNK ROCK GROUP FEAR



\*\*\* Guns N

Roses have been in a LA studio since January 13 recording their new album. Two titles being bandied about at the moment are "G N R Sucks" and "Girth". The band have loads of new songs which means they might even release a double LP or a single with some EPs to follow. They might also tour Australia later in the year.



Axl and the band are "layin' down track"!!

**STEVEN ALDER**  
 DRUMMER  
 BORN: CLEVELAND, OHIO  
 AGE: 24  
 FAVE BANDS: FRANKI VALLI  
 & THE FOUR SEASONS







■ AXEL ROSE



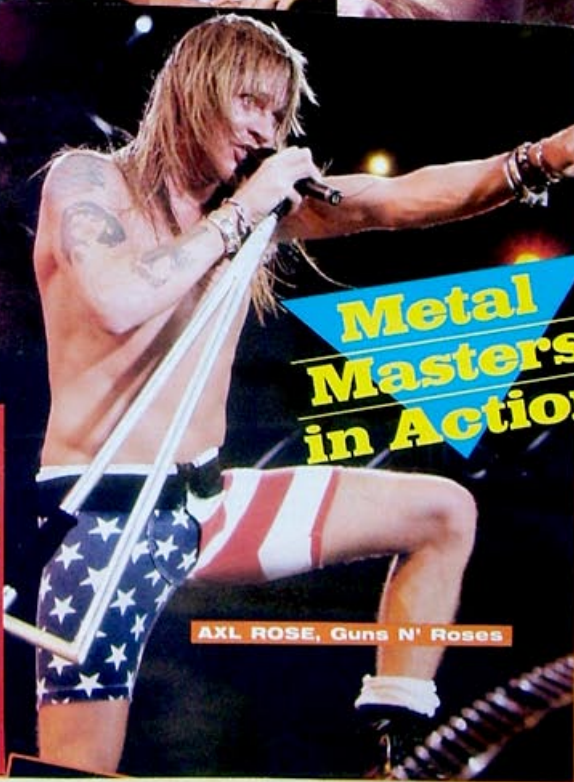
YOUNG MC, the two macho brutes from PET SHOP BOYS, and AXEL ROSE, consoled themselves after failing the audition to replace Vince Neil in Motley Crue.



PHOTO BY GENE ZEGLAND



AXEL ROSE, Guns N' Roses



**Metal Masters in Action**

AXEL ROSE, Guns N' Roses





stranded in a sea of mullet-faced grey-hued Wellingtonian 8.30-6.30ers. To my horror I caught myself sneering at his back and thinking the grey suited sharks surrounding him might just eat up a pretty bird like him. He even looked nervous – as well he should be – clearly Willis St is a long way from The Rainbow Bar & Grill. I was behaving like the worst hypocrite. I might sneer at him on this Wellington street but I would crawl over the shards of a thousand smashed Jim Beam bottles to playfully inhale the creamy sweet leather of Duff's boots on Sunset Strip. The problem was a blip on my melodrama screen – he was looking like a character from the set of Spinal Tap who had strayed into Ally McBeal land. Why do I live here again?

### **Sherry and Melodrama – a child's guide to raising yourself**

Until I reached my Thirties my two principal forms of nourishment were booze and melodrama. Both would provide crashing waves of well being and calm and were terrific when consumed concurrently. When I was a little kid I would take a day off school each week to catch up on the daytime soaps and to drink sherry. The soaps were slow, ponderous, startling, boring, and cruel, repetitive, stupid, sad and macabre Gothic indulgences. I adored violent, sentimental or emotional dramatics. I'd learned to find pleasure and entertainment and joy and pride in the things that make most people frightened and weak and miserable. Like many kids who were socialized in the 1970s I was both detached and hyper-engaged and surrounded by beer and parties and loud rock n roll. Mum and Dad checked out emotionally when I was a baby – lots of those baby boomers

were exclusively focused on fucking, fighting and getting rich so I looked for someone someplace to raise me, and of course there was the closest and most available of parents – the telly and the radio. The situational melodramas TV offered was a tremendous stress release – to seeing everyday and fantasy events intertwined and stylised was drably entertaining. Songs on the radio sent out puffs of pollens from foreign and exotic times and localities. Someone named Rachael played me Led Zeppelin for the first time and I panicked. I had been willing to give up the struggle to authentically reflect my island where there was no air to breathe. But these rockers cut a hole in my head and in poured the universe.

*Hope I teach my son how to be a man/ now before he hits 35*

### **Darwinian possibilities – rock bands & cell phones**

Cell phones trouble my friend. They thrill me. People in danger of growing outer shells like small crabs and singing lonesome cowboy songs as they wander the seabed are instead chattering all day. And all night. And to anybody anywhere. We scurry from one assignation to another – brimming with the associated joy and social ease that constant attention delivers. Love is so easily made. My friend was asked on a date by a very hot chick who was sitting in the back seat of his car – he was in the front seat. She didn't lean forward and ask him – she texted him instead, and threw in a dirty word to clinch the deal. It is an evolutionary return to the cradle of the tribe and a connectedness that industrialism threatened to sever for all but the very rich. The mirror in the tale of the snow queen magnifies the bad and minimalises the good. Sometimes things that look bad are really good.

The Gunners did a slamming good job of rocking the 90s L.A. style. Traditionally in rock n' roll transcendence is achieved through excess: girls money power stimulants depressants independence strength truth honesty loyalty narcissism risk taking play stress. Their maladaptive behaviour lead to identification with the ethics associated with the biker lifestyle: freedom sex and a common enemy. The band brotherhood represented a quasi-family or gang. BOYS WHO ROCK (the good ones) usually seem be raised in domestic battlefields but as young adults their drive to seek a way to authentically express multi-faceted privation, abundant isolation and invisibility is an extraordinarily creative act of survival and hope. To produce a creative product through expressing a dialogue with pain and stress is a sign of their unfeasibly lush and virulent natures. And then there is life after the party. Velvet Revolver is perhaps the reincarnation of The Gunners. Most of them have literally died and been resuscitated a number of times. The challenge as Lars mentions in *Some Kind Of Monster*, the movie, is to produce aggressive relevant rock that you don't have to die for. That may seem a fairly straight-forward change in personal direction but the song is the sum of its parts and the parts can be jagged little fuckers. How do you fashion a mature working relationship with those other crazy fucked-up bastards who have been in your band since you were a

crazy fucked-up teenager? Usually bonds between rock n roll outlaws are forged by sharing common interests or values – bars, broads, free speech, fighting and messing around in garages. The dedicated pursuit of these activities tends to marginalize the participants and like freedom brotherhood isn't cheap or easy. So you end up being identified as either "straight" or "bent". To attempt to deliver yourself from the encumbent self-destructive habits of the "bent" identity is mighty tricky. I know, I've tried and had some spectacular failures and some modest success. Are songs written about the struggle to stay clean and gain maturity particularly riveting when we are accustomed to and strangely energised by tunes that describe grossly aberrant and frail human behaviour?

*Loving the Alien: And I'm moving on, and I'm moving on / (sometimes I feel alone)*

### **There's a Porn Shop in my Garden. Beautiful and Foul – nature from start to finish**

*Set Me Free: Metabolizin everything that you see.*

Douglas Lilburn found a spiritual muse in his garden. He created hypnotic music that expressed the daily changes in the life between the back door and the front gate. His music was a reflection and understanding of the life cycle of nature. Consider that under the smelly leather and outlaw braggadocio that the L.A. rockers are composers too – their garden is the town of L.A., the crucible of Melodrama. It's a town that brings America to the world – self-serving war mongering stealing, lying, cheating, self obsessed, drug taking, drug pushing, infantile, adolescent. (Funnily enough American culture produces great rock.) There is the ever-flourishing Moral Majority in the U.S. whose worship of fervent Christian dogma expresses a collective nature so intolerant as to appear almost wholly fascist. Some people are born into families which have within their structures no room to stand. Axl Rose was told a big family lie as a child and through no action of his own became an outsider because of this – the trust is destroyed. The outside of the inside is an extraordinary place to find yourself. Once you get over the strangeness of your new emotional landscape you slowly realize the privilege of exclusion – of ridin' high and livin' free – which is not to say it's easy. Axl came to LA, as did most of GnR and Velvet Revolver, as fugitives searching for a new family (a brotherhood) and a lucky break.

Early Axl Rose, so full of nerve, dancing onto stage wearing nothing but his long strawberry hair and a G-string. Watching Guns n Roses was like watching a bad rock and roll accident that you couldn't look away from. Rock and roll – you are the agent of sex and springtime and love born of hate. Harmony from dissonance; harmony born of dissonance and like homeopathy the spirit of the poisonous plant prompts the mind to seek equilibrium.

*Big Machine: Comic book lives don't really have any real life do they?*



### **Life and Death and Love**

*Illegal Song: I – Don't – Anymore*

I adore weddings – they remind me of games at school when the boys would say "You go and stand over there next to that tree – it's the prison tree. Pretend your hands are tied behind your back and cry a bit and then fall down. Me and my friends will come and save you – I'll put my arms around you and then you'll be free – right GO" and with the deliberately rough shove of a rookie jailer you were on your way. The kids who played this game were about nine or ten years old and enjoying the first surges of sex hormones and associated hardwired behaviours. Nature has us on the run practising, practising, and practising for the delightfully ridiculous lives we are about to act out.

No wedding (apart from maybe Charles and Di, and let's include their engagement) has ever evoked the grown up version of this childhood play better than the video for The Gunners' November Rain. The hair, the dress, the banquet, the coffin and the rain. Top melodrama. This innate sense of theatre is again perfectly realized in the songs and video clips (short films really) from the album Contraband by Velvet Revolver. Scott Welland sings about the struggle for independence and deliverance from the deadly sins. Slash, Duff and the boys tie dirty fat rockin cement feet to Scott's laments and then throw them both in the water. And then there is Life and Death – the existential follies of a rock band perfectly captured in Fall To Pieces. "Will I find you,

Can I Find You, Lonely, I'm Falling". Duff and the gang (band) are hanging at a bar but the good times go horribly wrong when SCOTT FUCKS UP AND GETS TOO HIGH and O.d.'s. Maybe he does this cause his GIRLFRIEND FUCKS UP AND GETS TOO HIGH and O.d.'s – anthemic, operatic, situational drama and a must see if you have a taste for adult adventures. Scott writes these marvellous medieval folk songs full of pastoral rhymes and biblical struggles. Bit like Axl really.

*Slither: Like holy water, it only burns you faster than you'll ever dry*

### **The Kids are Smart and Scared**

*Do It For The Kids: Went too fast I'm out of luck and I don't even give a fuck*

In an age of self-conscious and mutual mental health diagnosis anytime someone says "NO" their critical faculty is said to signify an uncooperative character – political correctness scare crowing has got our kids afraid of saying no to anything. I work with someone who is 18. Her face is pale and beautiful and smart – her eyes walls made of glass. I'd say her style is expensive rock chick. Her friends are models and dancers. One of the model friends came running into our work in a flood of tears. One of the other models had described his extraordinary face as "borderline ugly". Later that day a stranger rushed him on Cuba St and bit him – he had to have some blood tests. Another of her friends wakes my workmate half hour early each morning. This is so she can assist him to superglue back the sound shell part of his ears to the sides of his head. I was horrified, laughed and then asked exactly how to do it.

I work with someone who is 17. He has long hair and a gentle face with bones that are calmly and confidently stretching themselves toward symmetrical perfection. He is a beautiful pale male. I'd say his style is elegant, intellectual, old-school heavy metal. His friends are just like him. One day just before Xmas I decided to give him an original Gunners t-shirt I had been gifted some time ago. The garment had been quietly waiting in my closet for me to transmutate into Bradley Pitt's girlfriend – she looks terrific in rocker chic. I don't have the shoulders I'm afraid. So I put it in a bag and blushing slightly, handed it to him at the gift-wrapping station. He had been happily flirting, flicking his hair and taking the piss while wrapping some crap for an overpaid, overweight, overfragile old tart and her bullying husband. He was delighted with the unexpected gift. We chatted about the Gunners flagrantly ignoring shoppers anxious for some tissue and a bow. He knew more about the band than me. The next day he handed me an unstuck envelope with my name on the front. He had made the card inside – it was detailed with a half inch square of cloth from a bedspread his dad had bought in Indonesia. The card read "thank you very much for the Gunners t shirt you gave me. Have a wicked holiday and thanks again." Superb manners to a disarming socially-able degree.

These kids are some of today's youngest adult rockers. Their styling is faultless – their skin is clear; they smell sweet. Their personal problems are sophisticated and broad in scope. They are remarkably well informed on everything except, perhaps, rather strangely, sex. Their knowledge of rock history easily encompasses Blondie, The Crue, Alice C, Lou R, Television, Poison, Sonic Youth, Metallica and of course The Gunners and it's 21st century baby – Velvet Revolver. The kids say yes to everything because they are modern – that's what modern is and it's as sneaky as the worst of historical manipulations. Can rockers get safely past the advertising and media giants and make it to the kids or has the cave door closed?

*Headspace: Dying with your face on a t shirt ain't all that original*

### **Until Our Hands Go Cold and Still**

*You've Got No right: And if I fall apart on the outside you would have barely seen me breathe*

My friend and confidant ROI gave me someone's GnR scrapbook collection that had found its way into his music store. Articles and band pin-ups had been chopped out of newspapers and magazines, then tenderly repasted into cheap scrapbooks. Each segment had then been outlined in pink felt tip pen. ARE THEY YOURS? The exploration of the human condition is a passionate focus for the creative artist gardener. Is Contraband a good album? Who the fuck cares. I sure don't know. I haven't really listened to it. My critical faculty with most things is inherently lazy and I find dissemination of a creative enterprise to be erroneous and dull (read: am very lazy fucker). Mr Fellini reckons that to analyse oneself and others is an entirely unnecessary act of arrogance. That man is said to have felt at his most engaged and aaaaalive when filming his reassembled doses of melodrama. I'm a girl and for me it's about the PLAY of the thing – catching the roar in the chorus and having deadly crushes on the boys who rock. I continue to daydream of trotting round a kidney shaped pool in Laurel Canyon. (For you ROI). Killer spiked high heels, pink leather bikini, lots of turquoise, sandalwood scented blue leather pants, holding the hand of a rock god with bleached-out shoulder-length blow-dried hair, a poet's soul and a pirate's twitch. We're all just keeping busy – creating and sustaining our own tiny theatres – until our hands go cold and still.

Flowers in the barrels of guns man.

*Loving The Alien: Sometimes is all the time and never means maybe*

—  
**Andre is 5ft 7 and has brown hair.**



## some notes on the practice of Chris Hill



After seeing and being in Chris Hill's *happy hard haunted haus* I find myself 17 hours later transported into another day. I'm in bed, having just woken up with sounds from all pockets of the immediate world amplifying between the walls of a room. The memory-residue of his work starts to burgeon in my brain and a call-and-response of fuzzy ideas congeal and then flow quickly, transforming into ever-shifting combinations. The pattern is erratic and explosive and currents run off in multiple directions. I attempt a mental return so as to lift them out of the electric pulse before they quickly re-submerge. I realize that this running together of multiple currents as lines of ideas is what Chris' work is and does. It's an actual-virtual, conceptual-material chamber for the amplification of \*life\* as an animate-inanimate force. And like anything alive to whatever degree, it's in and as a slippery perpetual motion; an ongoing drone and stammer; endlessly re-combining in a deliriously dis-unified event.

There isn't really anywhere to begin when being in or writing through this work, as you find yourself always in the middle

Christopher Hill, *happy hard haunted haus* (featuring special guests: james deucher, kain picken & rob mckenzie, bianca hester, sean bailey, matthew griffin, nick selenitch, jane caught, nick mangan, annie wu, masto takasaka, cove of the ken can kant, and moffarfarrah), CLUBsproject inc., Melbourne, November 2005. Photo: Bianca Hester.

of its midst. Even though the work is comprised from a thousand tiny bits, there is a large-ness to this referential milieu that is inexhaustible – everywhere you turn things are shifting or revealing themselves differently. The work, like the world, is a much greater force than our will to know it. That's the sensibility of the practice that I respond to most strongly. The work offers itself up as a glut of rearrange-able relations; *between references, people (from the past, present and future simultaneously), imagined beings, symbols, icons, spaces, states of consciousness, collective movements, ideas, art works, residues, objects, sounds, liquids, fabrics, patterns* – and in this collective conglomerate the work resounds more as an engorging practice in recurrent flight





and recombination, than an object or a thing to ever be known, as if it were something that could occupy a definite space once and for all. In this sliding space (a space that is simultaneously as real and material as it is virtual and dematerialised) there is a process of both stratification and de-stratification at play. Things everywhere are coming done-undone. The leaning towards an attitude of openness is the real-term, life-oriented politic of this work; it's a practice that embraces and welcomes in the indeterminacy of life. In that sense the work in this instance (which both embodies and produces the overall ethic of the practice) not only calls for, but activates a movement towards freedom and suggests the possibility of liberation on a small but transformative scale. It's a diagram of micro-liberation structured by notions of welcome and responsivity to the \*other\* (that thing that arrives unexpectedly) in the face of a world that by ever-increasing degree seems bent upon regulation and closure.

The material-immaterial force of homogenization pulsing through our cities right now is pretty chilling – but something in Chris' work reminds me that even the most rigid of things will meet a moment of undoing, and that the more closed something does become, then the more potential there is for an inverse process of liquification. One of the motifs that sparks this thought for me is the acid-house smiley-face emblem that has emerged multiple times in different installation-configurations; and each time it appears, it is re-made anew. The once hard acid-edge of the smiley-face

Christopher Hill, *happy hard haunted haus* (featuring special guests: james deuter, kain picken & rob mckenzie, bianca hester, sean bailey, matthew griffin, nick selenitch, jane caught, nick mangan, annie wu, masto takasaka, cove of the ken can kant, and moffarfarrah), CLUBSproject inc., Melbourne, November 2005. Photo: Bianca Hester.

(a smile that to me seemed so insistently in-your-face; so imploringly 'SMILE bitch!'... while also being an irksome little icon of a dumb neo-neo-spiritualism) in Chris' work becomes something so soft and frayed. It sits on the entrance wall of CLUBS – a wall that has been painted the usual smiley-flouro-yellow – but the smile is now so wide as it is comprised of a gentle wavering curve. It makes the wall itself smile; and in this gesture an atmosphere of benevolence and welcome hovers at the threshold of the work.

The consistent move towards re-engagement and multiplication is employed as a major tactic in this practice. It demonstrates to me that nothing can ever be fully closed-off or finished. It shows me that in everything there is the potential for a renewal if we take responsibility for clearing some space and making an opening for it. Through this process of renewal things aren't simply reinstated or harked back to via a wistful violet-hued haze. Their restitution emerges from a radical motion in which things are helped along at entering unexpected relations and contexts, and in

so doing, they become unfamiliar both to us and to themselves. This unfamiliarity is the condition of possibility for a future that is other than anything we might *ever* imagine. The process of referencing (*of ideas, art, periods in human evolutionary history, of sub-cultural movements, states of consciousness...*) that continually operates in this work evokes the glimmering spectre of a utopic impetus especially as it relates to notions of community. But this work turns no nostalgic tricks and it definitely doesn't summon the utopic in any grand or meta-sense. It poses no final outcome or clear destination, but does suggest the production of a space-time in which the micro-topic (as something in continual flight) can proliferate in a real and sustainable way.

I think that the gesture of welcome and inclusion within the work produces this little micro-cosmos reality. The work is teeming full of people, of many times and places. Some of those people are called \*the special guests\* of the project and they comprise friends and peers all involved in Chris' practice-life; people who work with him artistically, musically and organizationally. They comprise his immediate community and they've been invited into the work by contributing residues of their own projects. There are objects scattered everywhere from other assemblages across the year. Their presence in the installation opens this work up even wider – it tells us that it never wants to close itself off, and so it stretches across, and swells out from a blanket of people, ideas and things. All production inevitably emerges from and participates in a thick collectivity; and no matter how singular a work seems, it invariably exists in, and summons the company of others. Chris' practice brings this to the fore and folds it all right in. It presents a space shared by people who in turn share ideas, images, music and friendship. It shows no fear of similarities and resonances between practices; and in its acknowledgement and celebration of the overlaps that we all have with each other, it reminds artists not to suffer their meta-egos, which are often forged by the force of miserable notions of separation and competition that invariably feed the capital-machine and ultimately dis-empower us all. We are a species who find ourselves in a situation in which we can do nothing *but* live together in perpetual negotiation with each other (and with other things, endlessly). In a political climate in which relations between us are becoming increasingly structured by fear, suspicion and separation, the simple and wonderful investment of energy into constructing places in which we can share life together more, is a small and (r)evolutionary response. Amongst a million other things, this work suggests that we can start to dissolve the matter that we've used to territorialize ourselves into our current formations by using that very matter to endlessly make new spaces and times together. It reminds us that we own absolutely nothing, and that everything will flood through us and dissolve us all, magically, forever.

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**Thank you to: Chris Hill, Scott Mitchell, Helen Johnson, Spiros Panigirakis and Charlotte Craw for words and advice.**

**Michael Stevenson's show "The Gift", Neuer Aachener Kunstverein, Aachen, Germany: the big dismembering night, Saturday 21st May**



'When one is an artist one has simply no time for people who won't respond. Has One? Why come to Paris if you want to be a daisy in a field?' (Katherine Mansfield, *Feuille d'Album*, 1920)

Aachen is a fairly trim town for a butchery session. Gotta love the helpful folk giving directions to the little provincial art gallery in the German-style long grass park, past the youth hostel. Inside, backpacks on the floor, and then the rudest traveller of them all, the replica Ian Fairweather sailboat/raft on the smooth gallery floor, riding piles of National Geographics, looking weathered but OK after Sydney (where it was called "Argonauts of the Timor Sea"), the firth of Thames (near London), and now here. By the end of the night, though, it'll all be torn to bits. Which raises interesting questions about how it will be re-cycled for the 2006 Asia Pacific Triennale at the Queensland Art Gallery.

As the fat TIME magazine article on the show "Re-Mastering the Record" (Time August 29, 2005, pp58-59) breathlessly indicates, there are all sorts of affinities at work here over plenty of different distances, about art and artists a long way from home, and about how they are sustained in strange

lands, where they might need a few fraught translations to align with the institutional or art market parameters. Stevenson, it seems, is in this and maybe other cases intent on ranging over all sorts of economies and territories, trading his way round the place intersecting with whatever economies are up for grabs, and using whatever travelling apparatus are to hand. A failed 4WD Trekka in Venice, a Kiwi/English/Guatemalan proto-computer for Venice and further shows this year in San Francisco, etc. But it's the personal travel, rather than the mechanical, that tells the underpinning story.

Ian Fairweather was a quiet man, living in a beached boat down on the mangrove and mosquito edge of Darwin, and later on Bribie island, north of Briszy. Fairweather was a fringe-dweller, certainly, painting like early western desert Aboriginal artists on odd bits of cardboard, walking by the flickering light of his own fires, at a disorienting arms length from a core abstraction practice. His 1952 raft journey north across the Timor Gap went against the flow, and all up it was the frailest of crossings against prevailing sense and direction, semi-submerged. In the longer ambit across the gaps, Aboriginal Australians had sometime come from the north, in true nomadic pre-history, and so did later

generations of folk, white folk obviously through the Timor and Torres gaps, but another round of Asians too, to Darwin, and from the eighties in frail boats did they set out from Afghanistan and Pakistan and elsewhere down through the South East Asian peninsulas, and then across from Indonesia, following the old routes, and hoping for Australia, a caring wide open country. This wasn't the case, as the Sydney version of this show, with its big map of Australia showing just these trajectories made clear. In the middle of asylum seeker paranoid Europe, the distant Australian Fatal Shore brutality resonates all too well, in the simple frailness of the raft, and in its precarious cultural position, swaying uneasily on a sea of National Geographics in a temporarily installed museum hypostatisation/reinvention.

Fairweather's journey must have been pushed by epic isolated craziness, given the looseness and desperation of the raft he pulled together, now only knowable through some rude sketches, which Mike used as point of departure for his flotsam/driftwood and WW2 war relic cast-off construction. No-one in their right mind would have let anyone try what Fairweather was doing in this kind of craft: evidently, no-one knew or cared. 16 days of delirium later, the Roti islanders fished him from the sea, or he washed up, a freak survivor, drifted a long way from course. For reciprocity, they cut up the raft's aluminium floats, made from discarded Zero bomber fuel tanks after the bombing of Darwin in WW2, and distributed them among the rescuers. Fairweather somehow made it to the embassy in Jakarta, and from there all the way back to the Tate where some of his paintings had an art world home. Back home in Devon, he had to dig ditches to survive, til he made it back to southseas beachcombing.

Mike has had extraordinary international institutional support in recent times, good and ugly: but he's certainly gone out on some limbs with this project, and enjoyed a kind of frail journeyed reliance on the assistance of a surprising set of crews. Seascouts in Kent helped Mike unsuccessfully sail the thing down what might have been its home-leg had Fairweather been more successful. The Aachen collectors have sustained the far from home Stevenson too, and he's sent them rounds of gift economy treasures in return. Tonight they will help him dismember the raft. They'll choose some part of the raft to take away, and then he'll turn their choice cuts into objects for their walls. This will mean hell to pay for the Australian art institutions who are now belatedly clamouring to buy the replica raft for institutional sums of money. Water in the desert, it could be, but too late for Mike... and that's the twinge of being here so far away, relying on the kindness of strangers... that's the immediate expediency of the gift economy for you, under improvised circumstances.

So, the cut-up night in Aachen, to be presided over by the gift getting Aachen collectors ('Twodos', their tribal name, lost in translation), a famous visiting academic, and a little group of expats Kiwi travellers on variously frail trajectories through expat and residence Europe. The famous English anthropologist giving the talk on Gifting Rituals and economies came from Cambridge, and sketched a plausible



route map back from Mike Stevenson's raft into questions of currency convertibility between hybrid systems, the interface between the calculations of a gift economy and the calculations of a mad mariner, and what people did to his raft when it washed up. Three of the central pages of her talk had come adrift, and she was temporarily at sea. The collectors whispered knowingly together about the English academy's high absent mindedness away from home... There are three Kiwis, Mike, Ronnie van Hout, and me, all travelled long and separately, and tonight allied to some more expat Anglo Saxon folk, variously Berlin based. The atmosphere's a bit like an expat houseparty in some Southeast Asian developing country, with an exotic/indigenous theme: everyone feeling more at home with each other than their exotic locale, and all acting just a little off-key around the cultural borrowings. Except that here, the Germans, and in various ways everyone else, is right at home, and pretty much Euro-centred. Which makes the off-keyness around the artefact all the more palpable.

But the collectors are generous in their dispositions, if a little uncertain of what their explicit, much mentioned implication into a gift economy is leading to. They're happy to contribute in kind, however, and when the time comes and it all gets physical and bloody we cut up the beast together like we were dressing a pig for a big football club barbeque. The hand-made saw is a piece of roughly, artisanally constructed stuff, a kind of craft that is very much a part of Michael's typical self-defence against art and its institutions, even the kinder ones like Aachen. With Michael it's a skill provocation, this





art, increasingly successfully improvised across distance and time, finding itself able here, in Aachen, to do the job, render the object. It's all very hard work, involuted, but clear and pragmatic in the execution. Expatriate, clearly, in numbers of aspects, sensibility, cultural translations and misunderstandings piled up, and not fully explained by National Geographic or any other ethnography. A bit Mansfield-like, perhaps, in its spare crafting, but tonight it's a bit more Hemingway, considering affinities between his pared midwestern modernism and the primal colour of bullfight.

Fairweather and his ambiguous, wandering intent are easily swept aside in such avatistic proceedings. Down in the bullpit, the collectors, artist and Kiwi contingent quickly revert to shared ancestral barbarism, of the kind that ultimately gave us Anglo-Saxon economics and Ricardian political economy. There's more than a sniff of blood in the air. The hand-held number 8 wire-type saw slams into the torn edge of the carcass, the Jap Zero bomber aluminium bomber petrol tanks. Art collectors will have blood on their hands at the end of the evening, from heaving hard on the crude two-ended saw, rasping it across the aluminium belly of the raft according to crudely-drawn chalk territories and claims. Institutional patronage was never so visceral: the floats shriek with the blade at their tin throats. Twodos, Kiwis, and all hold down the prey.

By the end of the night, it was roadkill carnage/blood sacrifice: bits of sawn up raft everywhere littered the floor,

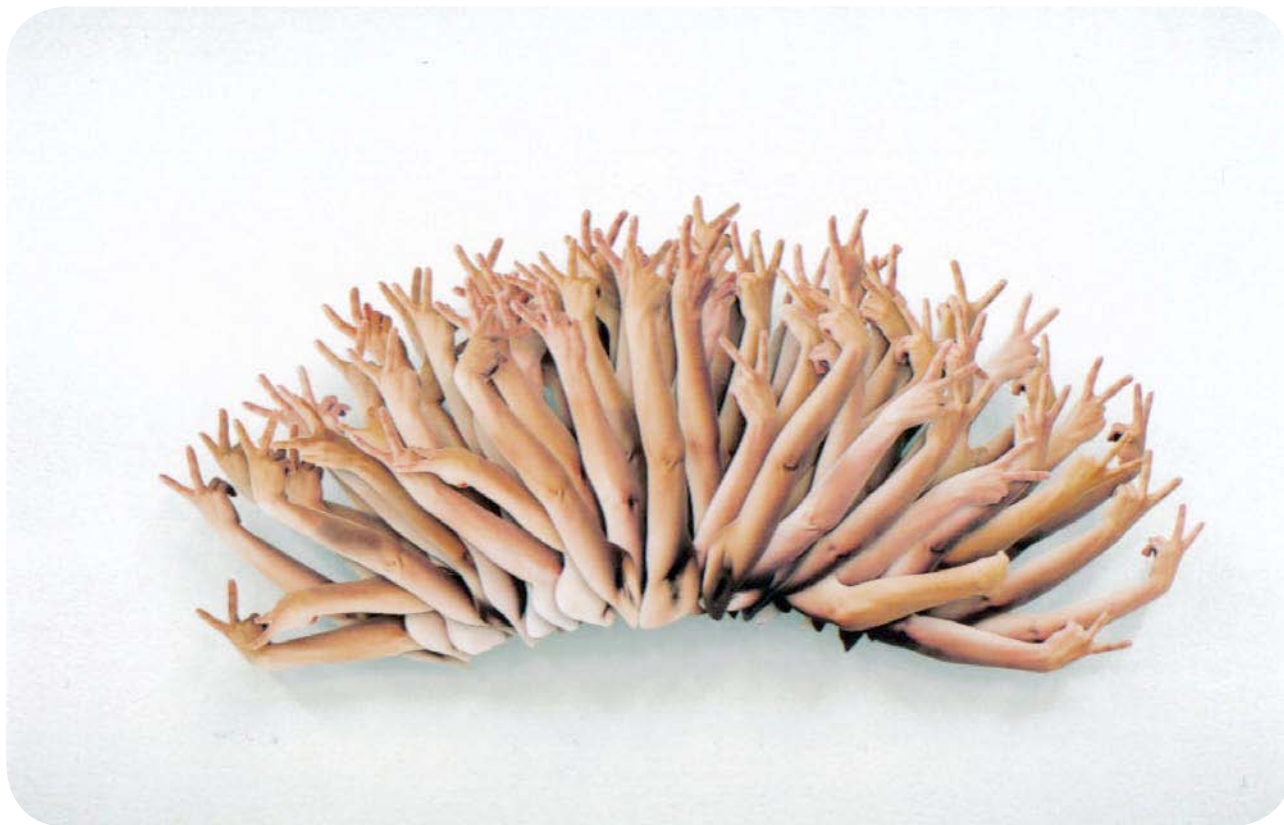
men leaning on equipment and debris, aluminium sawdust, the gang heaving after a day on the chain. New Zealand's one big abattoir, red and tooth and claw, and its artists – expat or not – live on the edge of tectonic cultural dismemberments. Art market capitalism at one level is all about creative destruction, but in the main it usually preserves its object/vehicles at whatever cost. Provincial Institutional Art at its best is a bastion of civilisation: it can be polished, generous, even noble in its sacrificial savagery, whichever civilisation you wash up in.

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**David Craig teaches Sociology at the University of Auckland, New Zealand.**

**The gaze of Medusa**  
**Notes on Justine Khamara's *Legion* at TCB**

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**A**s I enter the space four photographic collages confront me, one on each wall of the gallery. The largest is *legion*, a circle composed of cut out photos of a man's head. Shot at different angles – from full face through to side on – to create the illusion of a sphere, the faces are curiously earless.

*Double V* – two delicate fans of arms set out slightly from the wall – immediately conjures images of snakes, and Indian gods and that culture's tradition of miniature painting in their delicateness. They become more subversive when I notice the display of underarm hair and the aggressive digital gestures (one group of hands giving the victory or perhaps peace sign, the hands in the other group reversed to present a more defiant gesture).

On the opposite wall in a small self-portrait the artist's arm is raised in a similar pose, but now, with body attached, seems to address the gesture more defiantly and aggressively at the viewer. A roughly drawn black mask, invoking both fetishist rubber and New Guinean mud man, has covered the artist's face. This work has none of the spectacular, time consuming complicatedness of the first two pieces, but an unsettling

Justine Khamara, *Double V* (detail), 30cm x 15cm each (photographs, paper, adhesive tape)

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power that fascinates me.

A small triptych – a delicate portrait of the man whose face features in *legion*, each image a ghostly series of blurred layers of movement – completes the exhibition. It is the quietest piece, but on close inspection it both contrasts with and illuminates the sphere of heads, just as the self-portrait and the fans of the artist's arms play off and inform one another.

**Medusa's gaze**

Make no mistake, Medusa was the first, the most efficient practitioner of that most demonic and deadly of arts, photography – her cave littered with the frozen images of those who gazed upon her, she saw but could not be seen; photography is indeed the most captivating, the most possessive of gazes.

What does it mean to 'capture' the image of a man? And what does it mean to repeatedly capture it, then cut up these frozen faces carefully, obsessively, lovingly with a scalpel and display them on the wall of a gallery? A kind of grisly homage, a shrine even, to possession – a bittersweet love song hung on a wall, with all the obsessive love and undercurrents of pain, angst and suffering of every great pop tune whose melody haunts us.

Somehow the careful and repeated cutting out of the face articulates the captured status of the subject, and focuses one on the power of the camera, of the gaze, of the unseen photographer. And when the artist is shown in self portrait her face is hidden by a mask, shielding us from her terrible, fatal gaze, that like Medusa, like the sun, like the camera, cannot be looked at without the destruction of the viewer.

#### **Medusa's couch.**

Freud's Medusa is the castrator, the embodiment of the fearful women terrifying and destroying men (Medusa herself is of course eventually 'castrated' – decapitated by Perseus who has been made invisible and thus unable to be gazed upon by the monster – in the kind of rough justice traditionally meted out by patriarchal heroes).

The photographer is the capturer of souls, the reducer of bodies to flatness, to surface – the exposé of others to the deadening gaze. The artist plays out this trope fully, pushes the limits of destruction and manipulation of image, and sits herself on the wall defiantly gesturing into the room, watching her victim.

Make of this what you will... it is perhaps easy to read too much Freud into art, just as Freud himself perhaps read too many of his own phobias and fetishes into other's dreams.

#### **A bucket of arms.**

All those decapitated heads, all those disconnected arms...

A life-drawing lecturer of mine was once offered (rather casually) by a nursing lecturer a bucket of arms for the class to draw. The most alarming part was the offhandedness of the offer, as if they had some spare buckets of arms just lying around. Khamara offers us this bucket – obscene, brutal yet perversely funny, animated by the precision of the artist's scalpel.

#### **Obscenity of the Gods.**

If the fanning groups of hands are redolent of gods, then these are obscene gods, dangerous gods. As any animist (or Buffy fan) will tell you, the gods can be dangerous and obscene. The gods this work reminds you of are altogether more human, more animal and more excessive than modern gods, filled with lust, anger, violence, vulgarity, they embody basic, powerful drives that monotheistic religions and societies try to deny and suppress.

#### **Hair.**

We live in a curiously hairless culture, so much so that the visible bodies of men as much as women are smooth and depilated, so much so that Brazilian waxing has become an astute career choice. One has only to look at early 20th century nude photos to realise how tastes have changed.

A fundamentalist Christian (and female) friend tells me underarm hair on women is obscene; I silently wonder what her god was thinking of when he put it there. Regardless of personal preferences, such a brazen display of underarm hair as is present both in the collections of arms and the self-portrait has a certain shock value, a (pleasing) vulgarity and honesty that mirrors rather succinctly the hands' gestures, and adds for me echoes of my favourite photographic experiments coming from the surrealist movement.

#### **On the couch with M again.**

All those writhing snakes atop Medusa's scalp seem to represent to Freud the horror of female pubic hair. More specifically this is the fear of castration that the sight of the 'penis deficient' female crotch brings on for the male, but the fear is transferred to hair, and the sight of Medusa's snake coiffure is the most dreadful and dangerous. Certainly the serpentine gestures of *Double V* bring to mind the sheer otherness of both South East Asian dance and the horror of a nest of vipers that may or may not be Freudian in origin.

Possibly the great psychiatrist would himself have favoured our current hair removal trends, although Freud himself, I seem to remember, sported a rather large amount of facial hair presumably without seeing horror in the mirror every morning.

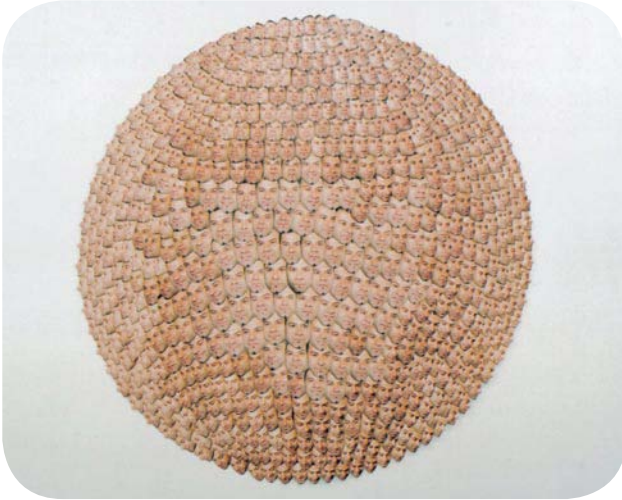
#### **Eye, eye, nose, nose, nose.**

I show the images on the computer to my two year old... She points with delight at the multiple faces. 'Eye' she says, then 'Eye, eye, eye', studiously and solemnly notating every eye, every nose, every eyebrow. *Legion* is the face as seen through the eyes of a toddler: the face exploded – all component parts, equal in importance, that never quite cement into a whole, a face, an 'I', but are nevertheless endlessly fascinating – an 'in the middle of the mirror stage' reading of the art.

She moves on to the teddy she is clutching, beginning to catalogue his face (eye, eye, ear, ear, nose, teeth...). Everything is a signifier, every bit of image has an associated name and meaning, but none are quite properly attached yet – nothing is entirely real or unreal, a drawing of a nose as real as my nose, as teddy's, as unreal as her own nose. Khamara's cut up bodies are somehow like this – more obviously two dimensional and absurd in being cut out and stuck together, yet also seen anew, refreshed in their decapitation.

#### **Repetition, repetition.**

Repetition and multiples – the last refuge of fools and



eighties installation artists, a kind of art school 'look at all the work I did' aesthetic that works to empty the content, mask the author (Warhol turning images and viewer's brains to jelly through endless repeats, sameness and otherness all in one).

But Khamara's images empty the 'I', not the eye – layering meaning, patterning, rhythm as they strip back ego and identity, fogging up the mirror. The excess of imagery, of body parts builds up into something both carnal and funny – they stink of bodies but also exhibit lightness, playfulness.

#### **Medusa, Medusa.**

For all the pain Medusa inflicts, she suffers too: once a beautiful maiden she is transformed by the jealous goddess Minerva into a picture of hideousness, into an embodiment of the fatal gaze.

I'm drawn back again and again to the small image of the artist – that defiant arm and the silence of that black mask that wipes the face from the body, ritually reconnects the head to the torso, makes the artist so much more animated, corporeal. Those she sees suffer the opposite fate, reduced to facial surface – signifiers floating horribly free of flesh – their portraits (literally) more superficial, their physicality lost in the camera somewhere.

It is perhaps all a kind of curse that the artist casts on herself, chained to her studio late at night, endlessly cutting the same face, the same arm.

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**Andrew Goodman is a writer and practising artist who most recently curated a show about toys entitled ToyUtopia.**



**Left:** Justine Khamara, *Legion*, 110cm diameter (photographs, paper, adhesive tape). **Right:** Justine Khamara, *Portrait*, 13cm x 18cm (photograph, ink).





## Indexicism

### A report on CongressCATH 2005: 'The Ethics and Politics of Virtuality and Indexicality'

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As a silk hat on a Bradford millionaire  
– T.S. Eliot

Bradford is one of those cities that pop up in films like *East Is East* as dense enclaves of Indian or Pakistani culture, their swarming markets abuzz with saris, foreign chatter and intimidating vegetables in the mode of an immense exotic 7-11. Outside of such cinematic hyperbole Bradford is generally considered a drab, dead city, its heyday as England's wealthiest town and centre of industry (milling, that is) now a distant Victorian memory; its new life as a British-Asian 'ghetto' seemingly cemented. Little would you know from the press it gets that this marginalized town is also home to *England's leading conference venue*, at *England's most visited national museum outside London*, the British Museum of Photography, Film and Television. Needless to say I was curious and bemused to be lured off the beaten track to this place so short on attractions but so long on contradictions.

The conference<sup>1</sup> was the big sprawling kind, with 106 speakers tackling the topic from every conceivable angle. 'Virtuality' probably carries some meaning for most readers, whether as a concept (referencing the space of thought, language, ideas and so on) or as a set of technologies and their products. It is usually thought of in opposition to either actuality or materiality – virtuality being an incipient, prior state of pure potentiality. 'Indexicality' refers to the index, a special type of sign that can be described as having a physical connection to its object. Its most famous theorist is the American philosopher and scientist C.S. Peirce (1839-1914). Obvious examples of indexes are things like fingerprints, footprints, bullet holes, smoke ('where there's smoke there's fire') and the big one, analogue photography (especially the rayogramme). Unlike the other types of signs (symbols and icons) indexes do not re-present the thing they refer to, but rather point to it in the manner of a clue. What they share with their referent is a time and a space, not a likeness or a code.<sup>2</sup>

The more extreme flutterings of postmodernism have led some to peddle the notion that indexicality has vanished. It is claimed, for instance, that the mass media, virtual reality, hyperreality and digital technologies can only offer us symbols and icons, simulacra yielding no authentic information about reality. But that show must be over because the speakers I heard all endorsed indexical thinking as an exigency of our time (which is perhaps why I've focused on it more than virtuality here). Digital works do operate via code and are often talked of as kinds of fakes, mere imitations. But if we read them indexically we can speculate about the actual physical events that produced

them – about the type of camera or synthesizer and so on. *Ta moko*, in addition to their symbolic meanings, bear the marks of individual tattooists and offer material evidence of a ritual undergone. This has always been the case and still is. So indexical readings are certainly possible and can impart rich nuggets of insight into our world.

Of the presentations I attended some got straight down to the nitty-gritty, defining terms with obsessive compulsion. Though dry these gave me the nourishment I needed to grapple with more scintillating, obfuscating offerings. There were bad and brilliant talks on film, music, art, design and politics, and some disappointingly laboured sessions devoted to virtual reality, gaming, technology and cyberspace. Not to mention some hardcore philosophising to keep us all on our toes. Unsurprisingly some patches were patchy, so what follows is just a grab-bag of my favourite bits.<sup>3</sup>

#### Kris Paulsen, 'Abducting the Index'

Paulsen<sup>4</sup> was concerned with the index as "not just a marker of a past event but an encounter with a sign that summons us to thought." If each kind of sign (symbol, icon, index) calls for a different mode of thought (deduction, induction, abduction), Paulsen's mission was to elevate and celebrate abduction.

To 'abduct' is to hypothesise – it involves searching our memories and guessing as to a thing's cause. We use it when all we have is a result, a clue. "The dress of a person might index a profession; a shout can index impending danger. These are empty signs directing and focusing the attention of someone present, who is called upon to fill in meaning." But why is abduction so important? Because it allows us to develop knowledge on the basis of things other than the directly observable. Even a photo-shopped Kate Moss can tell us things, but they probably won't be about Kate. Such knowledge is based on weak reasoning and operates on the level of conviction – not unlike a hunch or a leap of faith. And like these it demands explanation using the more foolproof modes of thought.

To Paulsen, abduction produces a singularly human type of knowledge<sup>5</sup> "compelled by the excitation of our bodies and minds." Indexes are pointers with spatial and temporal coordinates (they appeared as the imprint of their object at a particular place and time) and they elicit material, bodily responses – our bodies 'knowing' things our minds don't. They imply a physicality of sorts. Paulsen echoed many other speakers (and Peirce himself) when she described abduction as "the sensual element of thought."

For all this flimsiness Paulsen argued that it would be dangerous to reject the index and its companion, abductive thinking. To discount our more twisty, 'intuitive', uncanny and complex paths to knowledge (or to suspicion when we catch the whiff of dissimulation) is to cling pathologically to rational calculation and clear-cut truths - whereas the age of digital manipulation "should reinvigorate a healthy response of doubt to what *appears* to be the case." Abduction permits us to suspect, to sense, to feel. And it gives us a way into "theorising embodied and sensual experiences in virtual space." I guess even the banal email carries physical traces with it, the after-images of someone plugging in, opening, typing (jabbing, caressing, convulsing), closing. And those 'traces' force our attention to matter, offering suggestions about the email's creation before its long journey through cyberspace. Would the email have been sent at all if the sender was in a different mood...?

### **Martha Rosler, 'In the Place of the Public (Observations of a Frequent Flier)'**

I have just one note from this talk, since the lights were down and it consisted mainly of a slideshow accompanied by Rosler's wryly jetlagged and hungover voiceover.<sup>6</sup> What I jotted down is this: "On the question of the circulation of bodies above the earth in a space we didn't know existed."

Rosler's photographs were all of airports, a series that has grown haphazardly over twenty years or more. The familiar signs were all there: cavernous spaces, migraine-inducing lighting, rude furnishings, displaced bodies, crumpled clothing, prohibitive notices (No sitting, No lying, No sleeping, No eating, No drinking, No photographs) and clammy staff in a cacophony of uniforms. There wasn't much to be said and Rosler's title said it all anyway. Most of the audience had passed through no-man's-land just to be sitting here. We were all too familiar with what the airport-as-index reveals about our status.

Still, we all loved it the next day when Paul Willeman postponed his own talk to rant about the frustrations Rosler's images presented. Here are some of the juicier bits from his diatribe:

*Airports are best conceptualized as monuments (machines of congealed dead labour) to their money managers and to over-accumulated capital.*

*The public is allowed on planes to amortise the costs of VIP travel. They are known as le couillon de payon – the paying pigs... The people who symbolize over-accumulation are largely invisible except as addressees of glamour advertising. Meanwhile the paying pigs are addressed at the level of wanting to aspire to the level just above them. So, there are two spaces.*

*It's no longer true that the working class is excluded from airports; yet the proliferation of academic conferences is stimulated by the business requirement / enterprise culture*

*being imposed on academics. The gradual transformation of education into a racket is threatening to de-class us.*

As for Rosler she mostly told anecdotes and made us laugh while her photographs did the dirty work of making us wince.

### **Paul Willeman, 'Revisiting Indexicality in Cinema'**

Willeman<sup>7</sup> prefaced his talk by noting the recent groundswell of documentary films on mainstream television, "this in spite of our supposedly occupying the age of the simulacrum." No, he wasn't reclaiming any realist transparency for documentaries (he added that they convey propaganda far more effectively than fiction). Rather he meant that our predilection for documentary betrays a hungriness for 'reality' which even postmodernism has failed to dispel. "Baudrillard and Virilio aren't to be believed," he went on, "they are writers of the philosophical novel." Which is to say that they tell a good story (yet more propaganda since it's couched in non-fiction) but it's far from the whole story. And Willeman dismissed postmodernism itself as "the last gasp of an attempt to install global capitalism as hegemony." So Baudrillard and Virilio, with whom he disagrees, merely perpetuate the fantasy of the free circulation of capital.

Postmodernism has undoubtedly given us a useful conceptual toolkit (comprising semiotics and theories of representation) for analysing cultural productions. But, Willeman declared, it offers inadequate critique. Now that we're moving beyond the "psychodrama of simulacra" the toolkit needs updating – as the documentary revival amply demonstrates. And one of the things we've been lacking is indexicality. He stressed that there are not three different signs, but three different aspects of any sign whatsoever. And while the first two (icon and symbol) are the domain of representation,

*there's also the index and this is not representational. Rather, it's a direct relation between the object and its trace. Using the bifurcation between representation and non-representation as necessary in any signification opens the possibility of tracking how the material world is present within text formation.*

So we should use the index to unlock the connections between discursive formations and the historical forces that shape them. Because "the processes of industrialisation always imprint themselves on cultural production." Such imprints mark all forms of cultural production but, since it sits at the cusp between industry and culture, to Willeman, cinema is key.

His example was the film *Bladerunner*, which features architecture as star. Its giant structures are deployed in a populist, anti-authoritarian rhetoric, where they symbolise the monolithic ambition responsible for the dystopian poverty of the film's present. But whatever its narrative function, that distressed overpowering landscape is blatantly celebrated by the aesthetic of the film. As such, indexically, it celebrates the resources at the film industry's disposal.

Without exploitative, arrogant resourcing such a film could never have been made. Ultimately *Bladerunner* suggests that if you like this kind of cinema you cannot object to the social/economic conditions that allow it to be made. Aesthetics and material reality are not so easily separated. (I should add for all you *Bladerunner* buffs that Willeman refrained from judging our enjoyment, repeating more than once, “Never spit on your pleasures.”) The onus is on us to read cultural texts in every way available, and to be vigilant in our respect for what indexicality can reveal.

Someone asked Willeman after his talk about the role of the audience in sign production. He recognised the audience’s role in the reading of a text but was, he said, sick and tired of the way “the persuasion of the maker constantly gets shoved under the carpet.” Roland Barthes was no doubt turning in his grave.

### David Burrows, ‘Indexing the Fourth Dimension’

According to Rosalind Krauss’s reading Marcel Duchamp’s readymades and photographs freeze a past encounter with an object. The object is abstracted from its context and revealed in its mute, opaque aspect as a loss of meaning and hence as trauma.<sup>8</sup> David Burrows<sup>9</sup> happily challenged Krauss’s reading, saying that Duchamp was less interested in ‘indexing’ an absent past than he was in indexing the virtual – or what Duchamp called the ‘fourth dimension’.

Here the indexicality plot thickens since for Burrows some signs can index things that have not yet been actualized. Thus Duchamp, Claude Cahun, Man Ray, Robert Smithson and others “place the virtual and indexical in tension with each other.” “Such artists sought to imagine new subjectivities, realize the abstract in the figurative or vice versa, or discover the temporality of desire in the document.” They weren’t traumatized by the failure of representation, they weren’t fleeing from the real. Instead they reveled in their ability to create (and document) future realities, future selves, future desires. Suddenly documentation seems entirely possible – but only if it *precedes* the event it documents.

*Duchamp’s concern for the fourth dimension opens a hole in the indexical sign that the fourth dimension pours through. They’re ‘wrong’ indexes that affirm an erotic and subjective life...*

Such ‘wrong’ indexes, likened by Burrows to the self-fashionings of Cahun and Leigh Bowery, conjure up a world that can be circulated and participated in by others over time. The photographs of Cahun and Bowery enact *forgettings* of who they really were, disregarding the actual and calling forth presences that have never been seen before. In the viewer they produce that sensual element of thought that can only ‘feel’ its way to meaning:

*The images Leigh Bowery produced make it difficult to work out what we’re looking at. They’re not an act of transgression (which would mark out a border being crossed) but are closer*

*to nonsense, even hysteria... So what kind of world/future is Bowery indexing? Much as the urinal was a test for Duchamp, indexing a future, Bowery said the body is limitless, and that these were tests as to where it can go.*

### Ola Stahl, ‘Blow into the Freezing Night: John Coltrane’s ‘Sheets of Sound’ and the Actualisation of a Dissident Potential’

Stahl<sup>10</sup> also considered aesthetics as a programme of experimentation, this time in the context of John Coltrane’s version of ‘All Blues’. This song sees Coltrane moving towards the blues (using three chords) while also modifying it (dropping the edge chord or seventh) in favour of a more subtle emphasis. Having so few chords enables Coltrane to enact a whole range of substitutions within the one piece. And in his solo he works on a multiplicity of scales so rapidly that it sounds as though

*entire scales, all possible combinations and variations, are played simultaneously, in a ferocious tempo, rupturing, opening up both harmonic and rhythmic lines and patterns to a wider field of potential.*

These improvisations result, for Stahl, in a feeling of intensity “like a stutter.” In Deleuzian terms Coltrane effectively deterritorialises his body, the saxophone and the music until they are no longer actualized – rather as if he desires to take the instrument out of the instrument, or to *become* the instrument. What is actualized instead is the full virtual potential of all the components – an extraordinary range of differences which, thus vaporized, disrupt classical jazz modalities. Coltrane himself said he was trying to play all the things that can be played with one chord.

Stahl’s larger, more tantalizing claim concerned the ‘actualisation of virtual potentials’ as an ethico-aesthetic strategy capable of producing new subjectivities with social and political relevance. He pointed out that ultimately Coltrane’s experiments coincided with “the emergence of more radical and militant forms of left-wing and civil rights activism.” The message? That expansions of the aesthetic field can enact parallel openings of our socio-political terrain.

### Brian Massumi, ‘The Future Birth of the Affective Fact’

Massumi<sup>11</sup>, who was impressive as always, put a more sinister spin on proceedings by dissecting the neoconservatism of the Bush administration. Bush and his puppetmasters react against indexicality by working to eradicate it, and thus to eradicate the elements of doubt, suspicion and fear that are the true enemies in the war on terror.

Massumi’s argument was grounded in Foucault’s analysis of the way neoliberal government encourages individuals to pursue their personal interests by manipulating market forces.<sup>12</sup> Neoliberalism maximizes productivity while



minimizing its own intervention in the market, and only acts when there's a strong threat to general stability and productivity.

*Neoliberal governance aims to maintain the health of existence without doing anything... [It is] as productive in rest as in work.*

Neoconservatism also uses the personal interests of its constituency as its *modus operandi*, but what everyone is interested in now is avoiding terror and not feeling threatened. The problem with threats, Massumi suggested, is that they're indexical. We don't know exactly what they indicate, nor how much danger we're in; we only know that we're bloody scared.

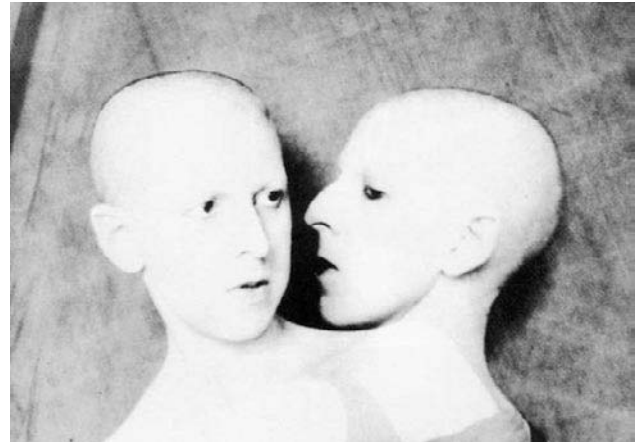
So where neoliberalism acted when necessary to *prevent* disruptions (which takes time and involves the risk of prolonging or increasing the terror), neoconservatism simply *preempts* them. Instead of wondering what might happen Bush assumes the worst and acts as though it has already happened. Instead of delaying and acting on empirical fact he acts on *affect*, on what we feel when faced with a threat (affect being stimulated by images, reports, rumours, perceptions, by indexical 'evidence' of our future danger). But in responding directly to affect, to his citizens' fear and jitters, Bush turns the threat into fact. We witness the birth of the 'affective fact'.

Thus the period of blurriness and uncertainty, the present in which guesswork and debate and decision-making would take place, is eliminated. There is no present. There must be no uncertainty. War on terror! In its place we have the lightning decision that overlays future (event) onto past (threat). The worst has indeed happened – but it's OK, we've already responded, already dealt with it, the danger has passed. So under neoconservatism the fear itself is the disruption. The smell of smoke causes a blaze yet to come. Anxiety over the appearance of white powder becomes an anthrax contamination: special forces move in, airports close, everyone evacuates, and it no longer matters that it was only flour. What matters is that we're safe. Under Bush security is an end in itself; security is freedom. And to maintain their sovereign command power all Bush et al need do is keep repeating their charge of danger until we're so terrified that it turns into fact.

In the Q&A Massumi added that this retroactive logic has become a sensibility that makes power aesthetic in basis (it certainly operates via images and signs) – and that the shift is irreversible. The best tool of resistance he could suggest was to mimic the system by inducing self-affecting affective events, "counter-affects on the affective battleground." Perhaps Cahun, Bowery, Coltrane and the rest have already shown us the way.

### Mara Zoltners, 'A Space Between'

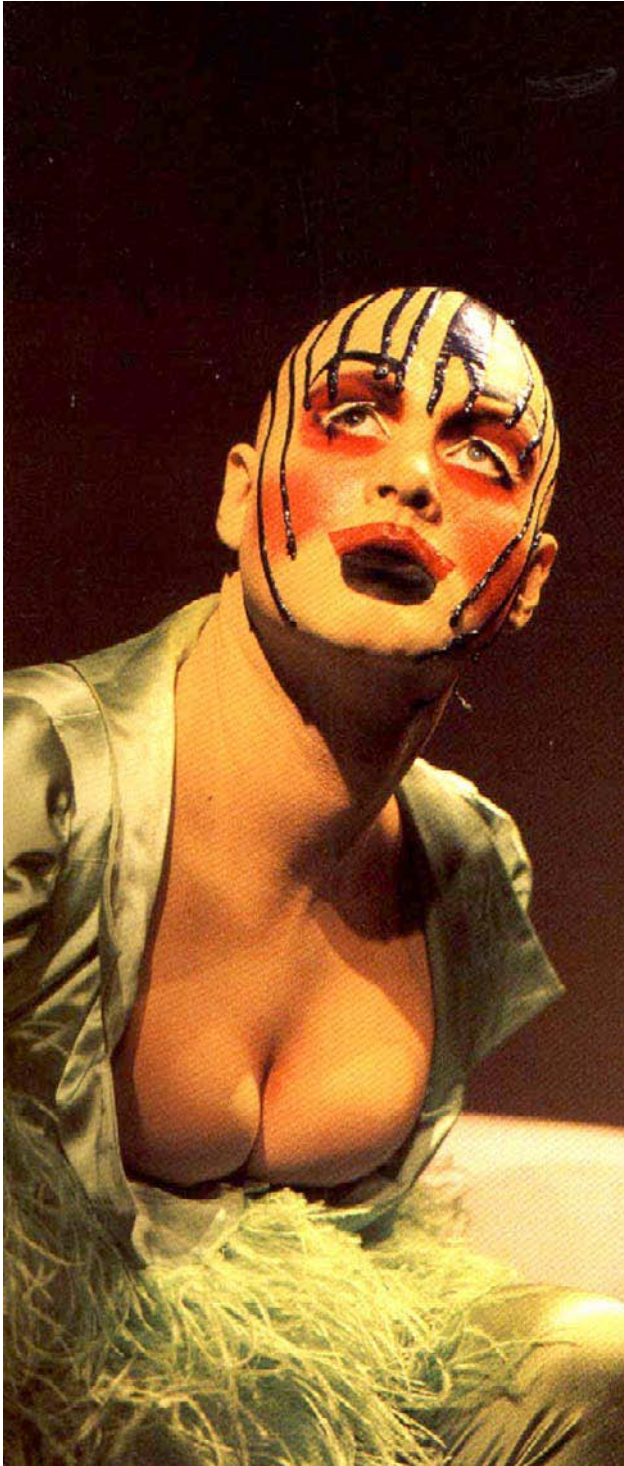
The index forces our attention to the here-and-now of



**Top left:** Claude Cahun, *Self Portrait in Barbe Bleu Costume*, 1929. From the Jersey Heritage Trust Collection. **Top right:** Claude Cahun, *Self Portrait, "Don't kiss me I'm in Training"*, 1927. From the Jersey Heritage Trust Collection. **Above:** Claude Cahun, *What Do You Want From Me?* c.1930. From <http://as0501.homestead.com/dewinter.html>. **Opposite:** Claude Cahun, *Self Portrait*, 1928.

perception, to what we perceive, how we process it and how it makes us feel (all that Bush aims to destroy). A number of artists took this as a starting point for examining stereoscopy, since we see here and now with two eyes whose separate reports are only amalgamated after the event into a single image.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, when looking at images we aren't only in relation to an object in real space (and time); we relate also to the imaginary space inside the image whether it's figurative, surreal or abstract. Our double vision is redoubled. We don't just see stereoscopically, we occupy an entire stereoscopic space halfway between the illusionistic and the concrete. We are always amalgamating multiple viewpoints. In short, stereoscopy raises serious questions about the location of the observer.<sup>14</sup>

Mara Zoltners<sup>15</sup> video works draw attention to the paradoxes of vision as a way of commenting on "the contingency, flux and mutability of perception in the formation of our imaginative lives." The videos capture small background moments of "visual noise" of the kind we frequently ignore in real spaces but will attend to once they're represented in art.



Leigh Bowery, *Session I, Look II*, 1988, photographed by Fergus Greer.

Their effect is intensified because Zoltners presents them in duplicate, side by side (rendering visible the stereoscopy), on a repetitive loop that allows the 'moment' to endure. The result is akin to what happens when we repeat a word until its meaning disappears and its strangeness sounds. Ordinarily we are trained by collective constraints into a goal-oriented seeing which narrows our vision: "observation as controlled blindness." In resistance to this habit Zoltners offers the continual presence of her looped background scenes which encourage an opening of observation, drawing the viewer into the event, broadening perception, and opening one to affect (yet another counter-affective strategy for Massumi?).<sup>16</sup>

*I'm reversing the hierarchy of perceiving; the background now takes on a subjectiveness... When recorded these moments become abstractions of reality, fragments in time torn from their context.*

The literal-ness of such image-making, which seems directly to translate theory into praxis, can often seem cumbersome. But Zoltners's works operate on a directly perceptual level and were duly hypnotic. Like assisted readymades they displace and compel all at once, forcing our attention upon the here-and-now by liberating us from everyday seeing. They mediate something strangely unmediated. And like all indexes they refer to distant spaces and times only through their absolute immediacy and presence. In this they remind me of the 'repetition' of both Kierkegaard and Deleuze, whereby the past is repeated with a difference that makes it new. (Such works highlight the importance of media-specificity: if they were digital rather than video pieces this indexical reading would not apply, though others would.)

#### **N. Katherine Hayles, 'Traumas of Code'**

I was pretty excited about hearing N. Katherine Hayles<sup>17</sup> in person and she did not disappoint. Her talk was incisive, her manner expansive and relaxed, and she even had something of the *grande dame* about her. However my enthusiasm was still tempered with doubt. Hayles is one of the theorists of cybernetics, but I am neither a sci-fi nor a gaming freak.<sup>18</sup> Sure enough Hayles's paper drew heavily on three works of contemporary science fiction, all to some extent about gaming, none of them anywhere near my radar.<sup>19</sup> Nevertheless her argument was intriguing.

Hayles' basic point was that we now occupy a world (or at least an infosphere) which deploys two systems: language and code. Since most code (e.g. binary) is inaccessible to most humans we are suffering from the trauma of being alienated from our information.<sup>20</sup> She explained by suggesting an analogy between language and code on the one hand, and the conscious and unconscious on the other. The code /unconscious analogy is, she added, particularly telling when we think about trauma: both code and trauma are normally inaccessible to the conscious self; both are stored outside of language; neither can be accessed while the 'system' is running; and both underlie our conscious

narratives. This twinning of code and trauma, Hayles argued, appears in numerous artistic and literary representations. (I must confess I found Hayles's speedy move from code to the unconscious to trauma a wee bit vague, but anyway...)

Traditionally crises occur when unconscious trauma bursts through the smooth rational surface of a narrative. But in each of the science-fictions Hayles discussed "a crisis erupts when *code* breaks through the representational surface of the fiction to announce its inevitability." We witness a similar effect in more commonplace sci-fi like *The Matrix*. Code announces itself as these fictions' trauma. But the real trauma underlying all such fictions (if you go along with the psychoanalytic transference theory) is the trauma we currently face as humans: the trauma associated with being in some sense superceded by codes that are beyond our intelligence but not beyond the intelligence of our machines. Our human-only language now depends on machine cognition, with "intelligent machines spread[ing] under the surface of human awareness." Hayles writes,

*in any computer-mediated communication, code interjects itself between humans and the language systems traditionally used for representation, thus staging an unavoidable encounter between humans and intelligent machines even when the human recognition of that encounter is suppressed.*

We have a deep, inextricable relation to code – to something we cannot understand, something that cannot be presented in totality, something that challenges our very cultural imaginary and effectively undoes us as 'human'. This code nestled in our cultural 'unconscious' is our trauma. (Relating these ideas back to the conference theme, in each sci-fi example 'code' offered indexical knowledge about the fictional world. Hayles duly read the signs she analysed not only for what their narratives represent, but for what they reveal as direct products of our own social and cultural conditions. Paul Willeman would be proud.)

So. "Is our relation to code infecting or healing us? Are we acting out or working through our trauma?" Hayles did not attempt to answer the big questions but merely left them hanging. When she did look briefly into her crystal ball it was to promise resolutely that our machines will *not* become sentient or conscious. *Matrix schmatrix!*

\*

I opened this article with a quotation from T.S. Eliot in which Bradford becomes a metaphor for culture-clash (the elegant silk hat perched absurdly on the *nouveau-riche* head). I also hinted at several other signs of the city's incongruous image (Victorian architecture versus migrant people; film Bradford versus conference Bradford). But both Eliot and I were focusing on icons and symbols. When I was physically there, on the other hand, I encountered Bradford as index and then it made perfect sense. It was present, right. Indian girls in saris and denim jackets eating McDonalds in cobbled lanes... Clues to a sensuous, complex, evocative history I can guess at but never know for sure. And though



**Top left:** Leigh Bowery. From: <http://www.leighbowery.com>. **Top right:** Leigh Bowery, *Session I, Look II*, 1988, photographed by Fergus Greer. **Middle left:** Leigh Bowery. From: [http://www.trustthedj.com/MarkMoore/news\\_article.php?news\\_id=3743](http://www.trustthedj.com/MarkMoore/news_article.php?news_id=3743). **Middle right:** Leigh Bowery, photographed by Fergus Greer. **Bottom left:** Leigh Bowery, *Session I, Look II*, 1988, photographed by Fergus Greer. **Bottom right:** Leigh Bowery, *Session IV, Look 19*, 1991, photographed by Fergus Greer.



I may represent such encounters here they leave no real trace; because as an index itself this document says little about Bradford or the conference I attended there. It says much more about a time and a place shared by *you, Natural Selection* and me.

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**Cassandra is a writer, theorist and teacher currently in transit between Wintec's Media Arts Dept and Unitec's Design School...**

#### Notes

1. Organised by the Arts and Humanities Research Council Centre for Cultural Analysis, Theory and History (or AHRC CentreCATH) at the University of Leeds, England.
2. The conference's original title was 'The Ethics of Indexicality *Versus* Virtuality'. Somewhere along the line they must have realised the mistake of polarising things in this way.
3. I'll be quoting the speakers throughout, but since all their words were subjected to my fallible note-taking skills a margin of error is inevitable – I hope they'll forgive me any skewed attributions. All quotations are from speakers' presentations or abstracts unless otherwise indicated.
4. From the University of California, Berkeley.
5. Though I wonder whether the 'posthuman' theorists – N. Katherine Hayles et al – would approve of this description.
6. Martha Rosler teaches art at Mason Gross School of the Arts, Rutgers University (when not lecturing and exhibiting around the world...).
7. Professor of Media Studies at the University of Ulster.
8. Krauss' argument is grounded in her view of photography as especially traumatic, because a photograph has no specific meaning without a caption. See 'Notes on the Index' in Rosalind E. Krauss, *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths* (MIT Press: Cambridge, 1986).
9. From the University of Central England, Birmingham.
10. An 'artist thinking about sound' from Central Saint Martin's College of Art and Design/The University of Leeds.
11. From the University of Montreal; should need no introduction...
12. See Foucault's 1978-79 lectures on 'The Birth of Biopolitics'.
13. In a practical demonstration of this fact Gavin Adams got big brownie points and plenty of giggles for handing out 3-D specs during his presentation – the kind of light relief that should be compulsory at conferences.
14. Although the tension between illusionistic and concrete realms was applied explicitly to two-dimensional images it was implied that it extends to other sites and sights, from installations to earth works to non-artistic signification of all kinds. The point being that what we see – or think we see – depends on social, political, cultural and psychological positions as well as spatio-temporal ones.
15. From the University of Leeds.
16. I was reminded here of one of the better bits in the awful film *What the Bleep Do We Know?*, which tells the story (true or false) of Native American Indians being unable to perceive Columbus's ships on the horizon because they were simply beyond their knowledge.
17. Author of *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature and Informatics* and Hillis Professor of Literature at the University of California, Los Angeles.
18. I love Philip K. Dick and Kurt Vonnegut but am yet to be seduced by William Gibson's charms – despite wading through two of his novels. As for computer games all I have are juvenile, nostalgic attachments to the least zeitgeist ones around...
19. They were William Gibson's print novel *Pattern Recognition*, Mamora Oshii's film *Avalon*, and Jason Nelson's electronic hypertext *Dreamphage*.
20. I felt slightly alienated myself at this point, as I always do when psychoanalytic terminology pops up. But trauma came up a lot at this conference so I made some effort to temporarily repress my 'Avoid Freud' prejudices...



House of paine (suits us!)



Ralph Paine, *Series Series*, Ramp Gallery, WINTEC School of Visual Arts, Hamilton, May 2005

*Terminus Hotel* (detail), indian ink, gouache and pencil on paper, 2000

Taking my cue from its title's singular multiplicity, the exhibition *Series Series* provides me with an opportunity to not only review one of Ralph Paine's recent shows, or even just discuss the various bodies of work it contains (in full or in part), but also to consider a practice I've enjoyed immensely for some time. Perhaps even to serve as a modest, albeit very personal, introduction to an artist that Tessa Laird called in a recent Listener review 'one of our cleverest and most obscure painters'<sup>1</sup>.

In fact over the almost fifteen years I've known him I have been fascinated by Paine's practice as an anomaly to just the kind of marginalising historicity that confers such obscurity. I was first introduced to his work in the early 90s alongside that of so-called 'New Image' artists like Paul Hartigan, Denis Watkins, Dick Frizzell, and especially Gavin Chilcott with whom he collaborated on a number of occasions. These artists, associated with an international 'return to painting' in the 1980s, were big names to me as

an art school student, but they were not 'hot', a category that was then burgeoning with new names in the equally burgeoning dealer scene. Nor were they the names on the lips of those of us arguing the early programme of artist-run space Teststrip (although some time later Paine showed with, and even for a brief moment joined, Teststrip). The 'New Image' painters were characterised for us by a graphic sensibility ranging stylistically from Matisse, Morandi and De Chirico, through Lichtenstein, Warhol and Hockney, to Memphis, Raw Comics and Red Grooms. They felt like a crisp, sometimes camp, wise crack of coloured vision in the face of the preceding, sometimes dour, gravity and darkness of McCahon, Fomison and Clairmont. Learning well perhaps the importance of lightness from them none-the-less, their character seemed international rather than national, and took the earlier artists introverted but authoritative autonomy and made it extrovert.

Paine, formally trained as a graphic designer at a polytech, was something of a late arrival in the 'New Image' camp, and his signature use of gouache, inks and acrylics, with occasional collage, assemblage, and installation, extended their presence in many public institutions for some time. Commissioned projects such as *Scheme* (with Gavin Chilcott, 1992) for the City Gallery Wellington; the massive scrolls commissioned for the old Canterbury Provincial Council Chambers by the South Island Arts Project for 'Tales Untold' (*Hegel's Utu*, 1994); and for what had been the Auckland Telephone Exchange, then recently renovated to become the Auckland City Art Gallery's contemporary galleries (*Call Waiting*, 1995) never led however to the inclusion that one might have expected from such major works in the then increasing number of curated shows here or overseas. I always felt it was equally bizarre for such commercially viable work that this trajectory was echoed in a dealer gallery scene which seemed only to provide one-off venues and still sees him without an ongoing dealer relationship to this day. Throughout this, having shown frequently at, and been a longtime member of, the much more grass-roots Artspace of the day, Paine has been by no means averse to showing in small-scale project and artist-run spaces (as *Xeropolis*, Artspace, 1990; *Terminus Hotel*, Cuckoo at the Moving Image Centre, 2000; and *Series Series* itself attest to). However, looking back now, all these projects appear occasional moments in a far more prolific studio practice that seems more like an on-going, but not unjoyful, going-to-ground.

The same hindsight makes me wonder if it was perhaps the same vague pleasure of anomaly that leads me to write this now that infused first meeting Paine and inflected the friendship that followed. I well remember trundling down with fellow student Martin Poppelwell to what was in 1991 Auckland's one-building SOHO, The Strand, to review Paine's show *Cypher* at Gregory Flint Gallery for our somewhat precocious weekly art show on bFM, and being completely dumbfounded by perplexing and elegant 'floor plans for tents' that seemed to hold a delicate, even secret, geometry of the history of nomadic thought and activity. Their quietness was completely at odds with so much of the brash or whimsical bravado I associated with much painting of the time yet they seemed to draw on the equally prevalent field of 'theory' without any of the dry pedantry I was already bored with in much text-based work. While Poppelwell and myself struggled rather clumsily to substantiate the importance of 'theory' in the context we felt ourselves to be working in, in a still very resistant art school environment, we found a most compelling engagement in a place I, at least, had never expected to find it. Visiting Paine at his home some time later revealed to me a practice equally sustained by the modest domesticity of a garden studio and the avant-gardism of an extensive library of continental philosophy, literature and art history as well as a rich resource for his interest in Asian and Pacific cultures. To a first year art school student exploring performance, and attracted to the most confrontational practices, delicate work like Paine's might have seemed staid and uninspiring, but I had already had such preconceptions shattered by the charismatic non-



*Emotional Geographic*, watercolour on paper, 2002.

conformist behaviour of Chilcott, whom I came to think of as a kind of suited anarchist. Certainly the sense of value that Chilcott and Paine seemed to have in their work, for their own lives and lifestyle at least, was at odds with the external accountability of context driven, and increasingly institutionalised work that I was engaged in. Now, as a teacher at the same art school I attended, I more often find myself discussing with students the difficult question of the meaningfulness of an arts practice in terms of this rather abstract value to their own lives, rather than in the specifics of social, political, or economic change. Paine taught me about the aristocracy of the artist, not in the sense of a sovereignty that sets one apart from other people so much as the sovereignty of all people.

But from here I wish to leave the artist-personae for work-itself, the work of *Series Series*...

*So here we have a series of series... To start with, four series, each with its own proper name and date:*

1. *The Battle of Erewhon* 1999
2. *Terminus Hotel* 2000
3. *Emotional Geographic* 2002
4. *Philosopheme* 2004<sup>2</sup>

This exhibition's use of the mode of the series at once affects a useful and enjoyable engagement with the activity/ thought/place of the work-itself and gently invites us to shift our own activity/thought/place as easily as we move along the wall following the work, or shift from foot to foot in front of a single work. I find in each of these series a thinking through, an active use, of the various possibilities imminent in this most fundamental of methodologies; the singular and the serial, what is shared, echoed or repeated as difference, what is different, specific to itself and a new possibility, an event to be faithful to in a series of events... The series here is an aesthetic sleight of hand that makes the infinite appear finite (as opposed to *seriality* which so-called Minimalist artists used to make the finite appear infinite). Because it is spread out before us in comfortable finitude, like a hand of cards placed face-up on a table, we are quietly drawn in



*The Battle of Erewhon*, acrylic on paper, 1999

rather than overwhelmed. The trick works a treat as the comfortably familiar, perhaps even conservative, appearance transports us to radical alterity without invoking in us a conservative defence of whom or where we already are.

The young girl maintains the pose that she has had for five thousand years, a gesture that no longer depends on who made it. The air still has the turbulence, the gust of wind, and the light that it had that day last year, and it no longer depends on who was breathing it that morning.

— Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*<sup>3</sup>

Perhaps it is the philosophical dreaming-space of the work that allows us to move into the arena of the ‘politically incorrect’. In a kind of atrium off the main gallery we walk amongst the most recent series *Philosophemes* – 26 graphic limbless busts and reliquaries of young women on plinths, each with its own letter of the Latin alphabet. Thus we are within a much greater crowd than we first see, an alphabet, an infinite combination of friendships<sup>4</sup> that can produce an infinite number of meanings. To find instead an enemy in these bodies is to overlook the opportunity to think outside of our own bodies / time / place. It is our historic body politic that we mistake for being fixed on a plinth. The *Philosophemes* are not pornographic, they are anti-oedipal, they are not sphinxes precisely because they offer infinite alternatives to strangling ourselves when we confront their riddles. If they are to be seen as portraits they are, as Paine said in his floor talk, after Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben, portraits of ‘a people yet to come’.

Moving through this almost psychedelic folding and unfolding in the tradition of portraiture, and on into the main gallery, we find the exhibition’s largest series, *The Battle of Erewhon*, itself drawn from an even larger installation first produced for the massive foyer wall of the Dunedin Public Art Gallery in 1999. In this work an ancient earth<sup>5</sup>, distant cities and gathering armies form a patchwork, this time quilted together from the traditions of landscape and history painting. Its tempestuous air is drawn up into a rainbow of golden light, arching over it high up the wall of the gallery. This form is in turn echoed on another gallery wall in the smaller scale series *Emotional Geographic*, this time in the lurid colour of National Geographic or tourist postcard photography. Each muddy landscape has its own rainbow, hanging over it like a geopolitical promise rendered dangerously close to a greeting card sentiment.

At the end of the line we find *Terminus Hotel*, certainly the most dense, and even didactic series, as it renders in text a long philosophical tract in response to the sale of the work McCahon gifted to Victoria University.<sup>6</sup> Alongside this text a stately architecture is drawn, shot through with perspectival lines that might guarantee its monumentality but appear equally like scaffolding for its dismantling. Washed in red these works are further layered and bisected by the black lines of angular gestures, appearing sometimes to be cranes implicated in the architecture’s fate and sometimes as a kanji-like calligraphy intensifying the text.



*Terminus Hotel* strikes me as a perfect place to break this review, its politics, like that running through all of Paine's practice, simultaneously singular and a launching pad, a 'place where we rest-up before making a leap into the future'.<sup>7</sup>

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**Daniel Malone is an artist and lecturer at the Elam School of Fine Arts, University of Auckland. He is a member of the Cuckoo arts collective and is currently working with Judy Darragh and Kirsty Cameron on a monographic history of TESTSTRIP Gallery to be published early next year.**

#### Notes

1. Tessa Laird, "The Future Looms", *New Zealand Listener*, volume 199, No.3396, June 11-17 2005
2. Ralph Paine, *Series Series – Notes for a floor talk*, unpublished, p1
3. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, Verso, London, 1994, p163
4. Eme is an obscure word meaning friend (Ralph Paine, op cit, p4), perhaps encouraging a reading of 'Philosopheme' beyond the tragic figure of a 'pheme/femme' fatale, to a befriending of philosophy.
5. While the title of Samuel Butler's utopian novel *Erewhon* is well known as an acronym for the related terms 'now here' and 'nowhere' I have recently wondered about it's relationship to the English word its actually closest to 'erewhile', an archaic and literary term, though certainly used in his day, itself meaning 'some time ago', and enjoyed a further complexity in its spatiotemporal collapse.
6. Colin McCahon's painting *Storm Warning* was gifted to Victoria University in 1981 and sold by them in 1999 amid considerable debate.
7. Ralph Paine, op cit, p 4



*Philosopheme* (detail), coloured pencil on canvas, 2004.



## Is it possible to think straight while orbiting?

*Six Orbits Around the Blue Moon* was curated by Nadine Christensen and James Lynch, and included works by Tony Garifalakis, Justine Khamara, Darren Sylvester, Robert Vinnicombe, Nadine Christensen and James Lynch. It was seen in Aotearoa at Ramp Gallery, WINTEC, Hamilton, 24 August – 16 September 2005, and The Engine Room, Massey University, Wellington, 12 – 28 October 2005.

I often think about how, roughly 430km straight up from where I'm standing is *outer space*. It would be like setting out from Dunedin and driving west; I'd make it to the small coastal town Haast in approximately 9 hours and 35 minutes, or from good old Hamilton I would overshoot Kaitia in 7 hours 45 minutes, conditions allowing and including sensible stopping.<sup>1</sup>

So, give me a show that includes particular linguistic triggers and I'm dressed like Sigourney, imagining new ways of assimilating atmospheric elements and waving my friends goodbye.

*Six Orbits Around the Blue Moon* is a synthetic system: each work sits neatly in its own flight path, quietly asking for attention, making it a mellow float through the lunar system on offer. With a range of traveling options for my viewing experience ranging from high speed reclines to frenetic suspensions, ideas are neatly packaged in a bank of landing possibilities. Although Nadine and James tell us the artists in *Six Orbits Around the Blue Moon* "...are restless" and that "They're interested in the 'Right to Escape'; in orbiting, double takes, perceptual spasms..." there is an ease here, a comfortableness, an open system with a way in – the works are happy in each other's company, as happy perhaps as their artists in the Melbournian landscape. Accidental connectivity and hedonistic accounts of belonging are almost tangible in these six works. Well, it's a kind of belonging – a system that records the uncomfortable distances and complimentary pleasures of making art on a small planet... and these works do appear to be orbiting a central hub.

My left eye doesn't work like most left eyes, which apparently means I see less *round* in things, so my spheres are *slimmer* than most of yours and I wondered with Justine's collage, whether I was stretching the bulge or shrinking the curve? Are the faces in this work a 'borg-like metaphor, claiming insect vision to argue our collective responsibility, or are they the territorial ownership of a new world, an isolated human stuck in the unending visual search for clarity / vision / understanding... truth?

The tricky perspectives within Roberts' drawing and the inclusion of splayed cardboard boxes allude to a perpetual



**Top:** Darren Sylvester, *Don't lose yourself in tomorrow* (2004), DVD, sound, duration 4.32 min. **Middle:** James Lynch, *Untitled* (2005), colour pencil, watercolour, tracing paper and magic tape on paper, 39 x 59.5 cm. **Bottom:** Nadine Christensen, *Verandah* (2005), acrylic on board, 44 x 60 cm. Photos: Lauren Winstone.

flux. The representations of transient locations occupied for short amounts of time are here perched for fight or flight, ready at any moment to get outta town – a useful attribute of a would-be space traveler.

Ahhh, and Tony's promise of a happy death, timely and prepared, all dressed up in 80s bling, inviting an easy slip into the underworld. Yet the actuality of the structure laughs back... not this time disco girl, the weight of you would not be sustained by this paparazzi implement of death... see how the eighties continues to let me down.

The reminders of sleep experiments and Robert Sakies' *Dreammakers* alongside the soundtrack to 'Bananas In Pajamas' all highlight that I am too old for Darren's Pikachu triggers. But I do understand the feelings of not being able to close my eyes... an almost solid connection between my optic assimilators and any electrical current emitters, or the warm breathing glow of my computer pulsing in my room while I try to sleep.

Thank goodness for the Nadine's deck chairs. I slipped into a Californian star-gazing scenario, my imagined pina colada and magazine lulling an intergalactic comfort while I wait for this all to make sense. I felt like I'd been here before, this soft waiting spot where the air is thick and reminiscent of days in hospital... or the long waiting for a reply to a difficult question.

A delicate landing into a delicate collage, and James's painting becomes the small silver ball in this visual pinball, the connector, the coagulant, the agar agar, setting the narrative into a believable form. Like those hypnogogic flashes in pre-sleep dreaming where the speed of the dream offers very little chance of understanding images, but you know they're good.

Gregory Olsen paid 20 million dollars money to hangout at the International Space Station, making him our 3rd space tourist. He circled the planet 160 times during those ten (can I really call them) days, reminding me of the likelihood that I will never get that far off the planet. I'll try and be satisfied with the subtle hover of *Six Orbits Around the Blue Moon*, knowing I have more to look forward to on my next landing in Australia, and enjoying my uncomfortable-ness at being lost in space.

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**Lisa Benson is a painter who still has aspirations for space travel.**

#### Notes

1. To gather this kind of information, if you are in the Auckland area, call the Automobile Association on (09) 966 8919 and talk with Anna.



**Top:** Robert Vinnicombe, *Untitled #1, #2, #3, #4, #5, #6* (2005), installation view, ballpoint pen on paper and cardboard. **Bottom:** Tony Garifalakis, *One man nihilistic front (noose)* (2005), ropelight, dimensions variable. Photos: Lauren Winstone.

## Kanto Voxish

For this issue Ian-john sent us audio. He said “I have made up an MP3 sound file with a theme of ‘voices of Kanto’. Over the last two years I’ve been mainly checking out Japanese sound artists and vocal artists. The programme has work by 2 individuals and 1 group all of whom we have seen this year and whose CDs I’ve bought at concerts... interleaved with various urban environs sounds that I’ve recorded meself.” It can be downloaded at <http://www.naturalselection.org.nz/archive/5/kanto-voxish.mp3>. The notes to go with it are below...

If you’ve lived in Japan  
you’ve heard it before

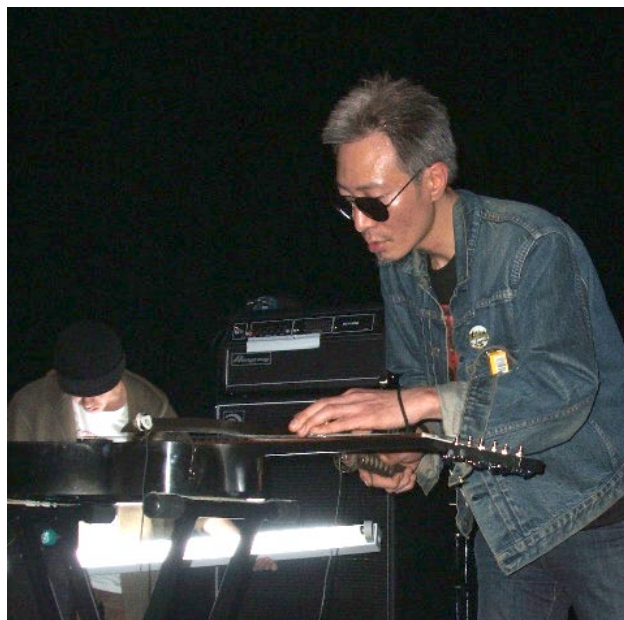
(in order of appearance)

- What the escalator said
- Kobe earthquake
- Kita city disaster education center- earthquake simulator
- Ami Yoshida from ‘Tiger Thrush’
- Asakusa Matsuri
- Tetuzi Akiyama, Atsuhiko Ito and others at Unit, Daikanyama.
- Shinkansen passing Shinkansen
- Ami Yoshida from ‘Tiger Thrush’
- The sound of Yen
- Tomomi Adachi from ‘Sparkling Materialism’

More on Ami Yoshida, Tetuzi Akiyama, Atsuhiko Ito at:  
<http://www.japanimprov.com/>

Tomomi Adachi at: <http://www.adachitomomi.com/>

All recordings (except Yoshida and Adachi) by Ian-john and Joyoti Wylie.



**Top:** Tetuzi Akiyama with sword in hand.

**Above:** Level 6 earthquake... Kita city, Kagakukan.

***Unconditional Regard***

**A Constructed World event**

**Wednesday 1 June 2005, 6.00 – 6.45 pm**

**Gertrude Contemporary Art Spaces, Melbourne**

A glimmeringly beautiful artwork was the centerpiece of the recent single evening event by A Constructed World (the collaborative duo Geoff Lowe and Jacqueline Riva) at Gertrude Contemporary Art Spaces in Melbourne. Flowing lines of multiple tea-light candles on the floor spelt out the words Unconditional Regard in the manner of handwritten script. Like a lovely two-word poem on a continuous loop, the phrase formed a flickering circle, which became the mesmerising focus of the room.

The advertised duration of the event was a mere forty-five minutes. I arrived reasonably early and so had a chance to view the work before the room became crowded, walking slowly around it and taking some moments to consider its meaning. [*Unconditional*: without proviso, total, unreserved. *Regard*: to look upon, relate to, respect, esteem or consider.] Without at that time knowing its origins in psychotherapy, the phrase conveyed to me a sense of openness, generosity, and empathy, a reading that to my art writer/curator's mind seemed reinforced by the work's inherent radiance, its bountiful glow.

The candles not only generated light, but also a surprising amount of warmth; before long many of us were stripping off our winter jumpers and coats. The mood was cheerful; people liked the work and were generally glad to be there; the simple device of the candles on the floor had proven to be an effective one, giving the room a festive atmosphere. After a while, Jacqui handed me a long match and asked me if I wanted to help re-light the candles that kept blowing out, particularly those by the door that caught the cold draft.

I was happy to join in as I was between conversations and glad of something to do. (Perhaps Jacqui, like a thoughtful host, had known this.) As I reached to the floor to re-light the candles, I felt as though I were performing a quietly symbolic, ritualistic act, though I didn't quite know what it meant. I think, more than anything, it was the enjoyment of taking part in the aesthetically pleasing and uplifting work that had brought us together that night.

It was clear that we, the guests on that night (it wouldn't be right to call us the audience) were totally part of the occasion, in a mutual embrace with the work. The invitation to the event had sounded a welcoming and inclusive note. "A convivial gathering, bring everyone", it enthusiastically announced. Though I hadn't quite known what to expect,

I knew it would be both a social and art event, except that unlike more conventional art exhibition openings, the social aspect of the night would be integral to the meaning of the work. For some time now, ACW have explored how concepts of sociability, hospitality, conviviality and generosity might be thought of within the context of art, as a means of enriching our experience of it.

Since that evening, I've discovered where the phrase 'unconditional regard' comes from. According to American psychotherapist Carl Rogers (1902 –1987), unconditional regard is when one person is completely accepting toward another person. This is not just a show of acceptance, but is an attitude that is then demonstrated through behavior. For therapy to work, Rogers argues, the therapist must have an attitude of unconditional regard toward his or her client. To me, it sounds very similar to the unconditional love that parents need to have for their children, in order for the children to thrive. So, perhaps, midst the cut and thrust of the art world, we have a work that, with a lightness of touch, evokes the shining ideals of love and respect. And what's wrong with a bit of idealism? A Constructed World has never shied away from that.

I remember two paintings by Geoff from 1995 – 1996 called *Universal Love, Unconditional Regard nos. 1 & 2* in which rays of light (like the light of the Annunciation) beam down from the sky onto the landscape below which is littered with images evoking a kind of sixties free-love/rock music/nature-inspired paradise. So there is a history to circles of light in A Constructed World's work and a connection between love and unconditional regard has been made before in their art.

Freedom from censure, of our own or others' feelings and thoughts, is implicit in an attitude of unconditional regard. It's about being allowed to say what you think without fear of judgment or reprimand, about letting down defenses and being open to others who have done the same. Of course, it is easier said than done: something to aspire towards. It's in exploring new ways of framing the relationship between artists, viewers and artworks that ACW have most typically applied these kinds of ideas. Respecting and esteeming 'ways of saying that aren't valued', as they put it, has been a *modus operandi* of their diverse and open-ended art practice. (For example, in their exhibitions, publishing projects and workshops, they've often included and encouraged amateur and non-art-specialist voices in the discussion and creation of contemporary art.)

At one point in the event at the gallery, a woman walked right through a part of the work, scattering the candles and





the word they spelt with her skirt. It was an embarrassing moment and a form of 'participation' that she neither intended nor desired. The candles were calmly replaced, the lettering swiftly re-formed, and decorum restored, but it was a reminder of how accident and chance can intervene in even the best-laid plans. Whilst the incident was minor, it made me reflect on how ACW never edit such inadvertent human foible or awkwardness from their work; after all, when our cheeks involuntarily redden and the chinks appear in our armour, we might learn something new about ourselves and our relations with others.

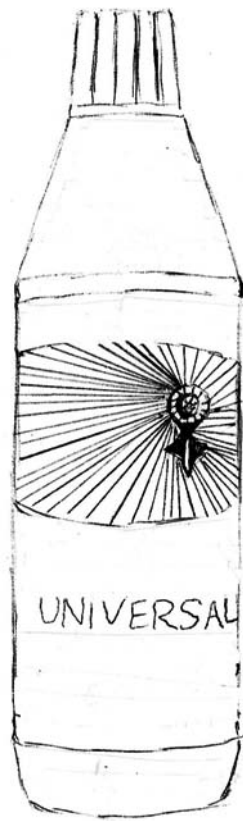
Perhaps everyone that evening had a different interpretation of what the work might have meant; many people probably gave themselves over to the experience without thinking too much about it. Indeed, it's sometimes better not to try to pin down the meaning of artworks, but to muse on their implications over time. That's surely one of the pleasures that art can offer. Even Geoff and Jacqui profess not to know what their works might mean until some time after they have been made, if ever? For me, those luminous words, little more than forty-five minutes in existence, float in my mind as an ACW sign or marker, a meeting place, and a compelling addition to their repertoire of images. Happiness

at having been the recipient of the artists' cordiality and goodwill stays strongly with me too.

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## A LIFE OF PRIVELEGED DISGRACE

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.....laden with ripening apples,  
bursting to lushly burst  
and establish dynasties  
of trees,  
a quiet empire of orchards,  
ample sustenance, proscribed queries

aching feet in an icy stream

i saw a cloud shaped like pegasus,  
muscled might of roses  
in the twilight baroque

its face eaten away  
by high gusts

(they are, in fact,  
toothless, nonomillenarian ex-avenging angels, disbanded, demobbed, now half-crazed  
ravening parasites of the upper air, drooling, muttering thunder,  
self-soiling spasms  
relegated to the periphery of mere  
sublunary space.....)

stalking damned borders eternally  
thwarted

diary entry: "disputed with gravity: escaped with a few cuts and abrasions."

new kinship laws have come into force

the books, unopened, persist as talismans

if necessary we skim-read  
graffiti's tubercular expectorations

the syphilitic composer assails another rotten fortress, proffering his mistress



persimmons

promises of amethyst,  
new moon's canthus

(dispatches the footman: mercury-laced chocolates for the long-suffering wife.....)

....while the doctors tinkered with corpses.....

"accentuated tympanic, bell-like aortic second sound"

"most tuneable silver!"

(editor's note: the corpse was once the king of dandies)

wind in the emerald  
ivy's rustling leaves,  
roar of sea

ruined church

rooks and starlings mooting  
etch circuit diagrams for telepathy,  
clints and grikes

to strike out  
west! to the east!

by

dead reckoning and the flight of birds,  
new dyes, arresting new skies

indigo, carmine and lilac

hit hard,

reeling,

bloody, blurry

vision pulsating

like a squid's skin  
speckled  
chromatophores

indigo, carmine and lilac

camouflage

inscibilia   inefabilia   nonentia

mutoid geometry, distortions of space

interim technology dictates .....

split second    tiptoe

it is a startling and little-known fact that here, in the crepuscular occident at least, the canonical art of the last half-century is forged in its entirety. the originals may never exist

like thieves' candles, extinguished in milk

“the children are down there. they’re probably doing terrible things.....”

**And so he took the thing and interrogated it until it was willing  
to speak in a way that was but only natural/**



**I want to talk about style.**

Simon writes, “I have believed in style as the right unit of measure”.

Simon talks about a plastic cup and a brown jug, trying to explain this point of my concern: style as a way of categorising, a way of lining things up, a way of making sense. My attention wavers for a moment as I take another swig of my beer, “...a nice tasteful blue”, he says. I have missed the specific context but there it is: *a nice tasteful blue*. That’s the style I want to talk about.

I do not think it is about tastefulness or niceness, or blueness, but there is that approach of his: that phrasing, that consideration, that thoughtfulness.

“I run on feelings”, he says. I nod, and he reaches for a beer.

**I am thinking about counterpoint & J.S. Bach.**

Counterpoint focuses on melodic interactions rather than harmonic effect – it is one of the most essential means

**Left & Right:** Simon Denny, *The flow of sentiment* (2004-5), Creative New Zealand courtyard, Auckland, March 2005.

in musical composition for generating “musical ironies”. A melodic fragment heard alone may make a particular impression, but when heard simultaneously with other musical ideas, or combined in unexpected ways with itself, new facets of meaning are revealed. And so an idea is developed, and shown to be conceptually more profound than merely a pleasing melody.

And so I am standing in front of a Simon Denny sculpture – specifically a contribution to the third and final instalment of his and Tahi Moore’s six week project at rm103<sup>1</sup>. A bath towel is suspended on the back of a log and mounted on the wall – the towel has a particular wavy pattern to it. The blue and yellow rope that is also attached to the log echoes the same pattern, and so too does the green crepe paper that fans its way in and out along the side of a curved piece of mdf board (also attached to the wall) – the Memphis doodling on the inside surface of the mdf can not be ignored either. This is counterpoint indeed, this is the sound of a fugue.

Together Simon and Tahi talk about conversations, about



**Left:** Simon Denny, *Winter* (2005) as appeared in a project at rm103, Auckland, with Tahi Moore and Nick Austin, July and September 2005. **Right & Opposite page:** Simon Denny, *Arranging Sympathies*, Physics Room (as part of the *Volume* series), Christchurch, August 2005.

giving and receiving. There should be understanding, though there is a want to not be completely understood – do not think you can get smug about it. There must be room for silence and other expressions; one's eyebrows should twitch.

And Simon's counterpoint: I am now thinking about a three-part fugue (for piano). Three voices take their place – the left hand, the right hand, and the imaginary hand in-between. The musician must have the question and the answer, and the other response (it is the old rub-your-belly-and-pat-your-head routine). Though it is not about dividing personalities, rather it is leaning towards a wholeness. The voices need to be directed; it is the role of the musician to present these voices to us in a way that is meaningful, to offer us a conversation that is worth listening to.

Simon writes, "What we have before us are always the same things", and it is through his self-acquired role as "designer" that he endeavours to renew our interest in these things (or this conversation). It is only a matter of thoughtfulness, reorganisation (no randomness here), or a rethinking (of the Universe, from the beginning), that is all. Simon talks about the hierarchy of objects.

*...and then there's these wobbly bits, and this axe, and the shapes want to have a conversation with it.*<sup>2</sup>

There are many questions and responses as the thing never quite finishes – though it never really feels unfinished. When I saw *Arranging Sympathies*<sup>3</sup> as an incomplete, un-installed work, despite the constant reminder that it was incomplete, I found myself observing it as being quite a happy, self-sustained whole. It was moving in a direction it was both conscious of and uncertain of at the same time – a wonderful position from which to convince. There was still a constant



juggling between the hands for the notes that do not know which end of the keyboard they should lie on. Yet always I felt a sense of direction – for the designer, like the musician, must direct with confidence, even when the thing to be directed is yet to be completely defined.

I wondered whether the sense of control I encountered was anything to do with the maneuvering of space (for studio space boundaries are there to be stretched, and some will not forget the incident with that huge obtrusive canvas tent). The thing was certainly spreading with ease, though also in a circumspect sort of way. A simply acquired northern orientation could provide a welcome sense of sanity, but this thing was far more interested in investing in a more open ended sort of exchange (or growth).

#### **I can't help but think about holistic detectives.**

If I was to continue talking about wholeness I should talk about realities, systems or truths, though I am thinking about Dirk Gently<sup>4</sup>:

*If I could interrogate this table-leg in a way that made sense to me, or to the table-leg, then it could provide me with the answer to any question about the Universe.*<sup>5</sup>

To interrogate a table leg you could be out of your mind, or you might just have a profound belief in the validity of such a thing. Though first impressions might leave an absurd sort of taste, both Denny and Gently function more than a few





steps beyond that impression. For theirs is a belief in a less well defined order, an order that needs more time (though maybe less time than expected). Simon says, “it’s all about edges” – I take that to be a tradesman’s secret.

#### **And then the naturalness.**

Things evolve; beans and dirt, and pink foam and green plastics. The transition is likelier than not, if you just get a bit closer up, take another look at the edges I think.

At another point in time Simon and I discuss his new approach to installing his sculptures. Whereas once the separate parts were forced into arrangements, maybe ones they were unhappy with, or arrangements that had an undesirable clear start and *fin*. Simon now hopes his sculptures are less contrived, and that as a result he has not told us all the story, that the conversations will continue well into the night. He talks about the “natural evolution of the object”: time, (more) conversation, more information is what these sculptures want. You should take another look at the edges, you could even try and interrogate it yourself, you know.

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**Chloe Lane is an artist and writer living in Auckland, She is also co-editor of Crease magazine. Simon Denny is an artist who lives and works in Auckland and is the Chairperson of Special gallery, an artist-run initiative.**

#### **Notes**

1. *They That Would Eat The Fruit Must Climb The Tree*, 24 August – 3 September, rm103, Auckland
2. Simon Denny, interview, 9 June 2005
3. *Arranging Sympathies*, 20 July – 13 August 2005, The Physics Room, Christchurch
4. Douglas Adams, *Dirk Gently’s Holistic Detective Agency*, Pan Books, London, 1988
5. Douglas Adams, *The Long Dark Tea-Time of the Soul*, Pan Books, London, 1989

## Meet You In Finland Angel

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### East meets West

You go to Finland and can't stop thinking about Russia. It turns out this is probably because Finland doubled as Soviet Russia in so many Hollywood films made during the Cold War, including *Doctor Zhivago* (1965), *The Eagle Has Landed* (1976), *Reds* (1981) and *Gorky Park* (1983). Finland, the only country to share a major border with Russia and not undertake a communist regime during the Cold War, functioned as a kind of Western simulation of the impenetrable East. In fact Finland was a cause for considerable anxiety for the West through the early years of the Cold War – the country was closely monitored by Britain and the US who were concerned that Finland might at any moment 'fall' to the East.

But Finland has had a long history of bobbing back and forth between East and West, buffeted geographically between Sweden and Russia, and conquered by both countries on and off for most of the last Millennium. Now independent, Finland maintains an impressive social welfare system, like other Scandinavian countries, and is a leading competitor in the communication technology market primarily through Finnish company Nokia. Everyone has cell phones.

### Popular

In Amsterdam in late July I visited the exhibition *Populism* at the Stedelijk Museum. Sprawling and ambitious, *Populism* simultaneously exhibited in four venues across Europe – CAC, Vilnius; the National Museum of Art, Architecture and Design, Oslo; the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; and the Frankfurter Kunsterverein, Frankfurt am Main; and (following on from recent 'multiple platform' projects such as the last *Documenta*) additional debates around the topic were held in Berlin, Reykjavik, Oslo, Copenhagen and Malmo. There were also publications including a free exhibition tabloid, a reader, and a catalogue.

*Populism* aimed to ask how forms of populism 'promote themselves and their quest for mass appeal through a stylistic and aesthetic consciousness'. It was a show which happily meandered down various divergent paths. Some works operated as forms of theatrical spectacle in their own right, while others engaged in more direct critiques of propaganda and 'groundswell' movements within capitalism, politics and entertainment.

Jeremy Deller's film *Memory Bucket*, filmed in Texas, George W. Bush country, demonstrated conflicting local views; from the fawning waitress at a local diner who describes the



Jaakko Rustanius, *Ensimmäinen Kirja: Suijikt / The First Book: Inüits*, Gallery Huuto, Helsinki, 2005, p18.

president's visits to the diner to eat (his favourite burger... the Secret Service have to disconnect the nearby petrol pumps prior to his visits), to members of the Quaker community at an anti-Bush protest discussing the problems with the Bush administration. It was a more abstracted work than Deller's usual style, with large chunks of footage dedicated to Gothic shots of bats flying slowly against the dusk.

Mathieu Laurette's ongoing project exploring exchange commodities documents his successful attempt to eat for free through buying food with a money back guarantee for 'customer satisfaction', and then applying to the company for his cash refund as he wasn't '100% satisfied' with the product. Incredibly, he lived off this method for a considerable time. Of course, it's a system which relies on customer laziness in returning goods to remain financially sustainable, and Laurette's project makes a nonsense of





the seeming transparency and generosity of the brands. Documentation of appearances on talk shows and in the media by Laurette promoting his strategy for others to take up feed back into the work, notching up the surreal aspect to this project.

The exhibition was housed in the temporary Stedelijk building in Amsterdam's old post office building on the waterfront while the usual Stedelijk Museum is closed for renovations for four years. This was fortuitous, because I just couldn't imagine *Populism* being shown in the rigid modernist museological framework of the old Stedelijk: all barriers, plinths and hushed tones. Within this more industrial environment the terms of display could be renegotiated, allowing the exhibition to be fluidly installed.

But it seemed that not all the gallery staff agreed with the changes to the Stedelijk, as the woman at Front of House advised us when buying our tickets, 'you might not want to come in, we don't have any of the well known artworks on show'. We indicated we were still keen to visit the Museum, and thinking we hadn't understood she repeated 'no Kandinsky, no Warhol, no Chagall'. We had noticed that several people ahead of us in the queue left without entering, so her technique of dissuasion was obviously working.

I was intrigued to see *Populism*, not just because it was a thoughtful show, but because it was curated and managed

Tanja Koistila, *Ensimmäinen Kirja: Suijikt / The First Book: Inüits*, Gallery Huuto, Helsinki, 2005, p12.

by NIFCA, the Nordic Institute of Contemporary Art, based on the island of Suomenlinna in the Helsinki harbour, where I was about to travel to take up a research residency for a month. A former Russian fortress, the converted army barracks on Suomenlinna have been converted into housing for the NIFCA offices, and studios and apartments for an artists and curators residency programme. It's an impressively open programme, supporting creative exchange between Nordic countries and the rest of the world with a view to the long-term promotion of Nordic art, beyond specific shows or immediate results. ([www.nifca.org](http://www.nifca.org))

### Man without a past

He thought, "it's dead. All the world has died while I slept. This world belongs to somebody else whom I don't know." (Tove Jansson, *Moominland Midwinter*, 1992)

Finland is bookended for me by two worlds: the Moomintrolls of Moomin Valley, from the children's books by Tove Jansson, and the slightly darker films of Aki Kaurismäki. The magical environment of Moomin Valley is filled with oddball characters, in stories which are gentle, wistful and surreal.

In *Moominland Winter* Moomintroll accidentally wakes up while the rest of his family and friends are hibernating through the winter, and discovers a new, alien world of whiteness and emptiness. It's scary, but then it becomes exciting when he makes new winter friends and realises the limitless possibilities of a winter world without the guidance of Moominpapa and Moominmama. Kaurismäki films (*The Man Without A Past*, *Leningrad Cowboys Go America*, *Drifting Clouds*) bear the same kind of quirky humour and the ability drift off into unexpectedly strange terrain.

You'd be forgiven for thinking that all this beautiful weirdness might be a Finnish thing. Helsinki-based artist Veli Grano's films and installations are marked with a similar interest in characters who fall somewhere outside the mainstream. His work at the Sydney Biennale 2002, (*The World May Be*) *Fantastic*, was called *Star Dweller*, a documentary installation which, along with the later documentary film *Meet You in Finland Angel*, told the story of Anne Pajuluoma, a Finnish woman who has had many encounters with the planet Sirius, and believes her miscarried daughter now lives among the Sirian people. Fantasy and heartache are mixed up together in Anne's story, her belief in a magical world allowing her to transcend the material hardship of her physical world.

These are works which could be glib or patronising were it not for Grano's quiet compassion in recording, and the fact that he and Anne have clearly developed a relationship of mutual trust. In *Meet You in Finland Angel* Anne tells her incredible story and reenacts her first trip to Sirius to meet her daughter, using a neighbour's child as a stand-in, dressed in a shiny white outer-space outfit. I felt gob-smacked the first time I saw this, it had such emotional punch. Clearly the film is cathartic for Anne; in an interview in *Framework* magazine between Veli Grano and Anne Pajuluoma and her husband Jarmo Ylänen (who channels the spirit of Van Gogh to paint reproductions of his paintings), Anne says that: 'the photos and film will endure, they have made my Sirius real. Now I can be what one really ought to be on this Earth: an earthly creature, a human being'.

### **Huuto means shout in Finnish**

Helsinki has a long history of artists' associations, and a more recent history of artist-run initiatives. I went to an opening at Huuto, one of a core of artist-run spaces, run collectively by an artists association or trust. The space was so tiny that everyone had spilled onto the street, drinking bad wine and talking in a mixture of Finnish, Swedish and English. I asked someone what they liked about Huuto openings and they said 'the wine is shocking, but it lasts for ages, and everyone always comes here'.

Huuto have recently opened their second gallery space several streets over from their original space, a slightly bigger, slicker white cube. Despite this, Jaakko Rustinas, the Chairperson of Huuto, (also the Director of HIAP, another artists and curators residency programme) is emphatic that Huuto

needs to resist becoming too big or too institutionalised.

'What I've found in Huuto is a safe haven... in creating our own space we've set us free. When you step out from your studio, it's a wilderness, you have no control over anything. You have to be careful of what you say and to whom. You have to be humble, and if you are going to be rebellious, you better be it in a calculated way. It's not your world, it's the art world... So when you create your own realm, with other people in the same situation, you set yourself free, at least temporarily, from the old rotten oligarchy of the art world.'

Huuto does have an immediacy and a rawness, there's a sense that something is happening right now in front of you, unmediated by too much analysis or long-term strategising. The board have made a decision not to have paid workers in the gallery, and all major decisions are made collectively. With no regular external funding the gallery, like other artist-run spaces in Helsinki, charge artists a fee to show, which covers the rent and other building costs. Artists manage the space during their exhibition, and only association members usually exhibit.

Huuto means 'shout' in Finnish. The story goes that the initiating artists behind Huuto, Vesa Vehviläinen and Tiina Mielonen, went to Norway for their honeymoon and returned with a souvenir balloon shaped like Munch's 'Shout' figure, which became the gallery's first mascot. As Rustainius says 'we try to shout loud to be heard'.

'We also call ourselves 'huutolaiset', which translates to something like 'Huuto People'. But there's a special meaning to the word. Before the welfare state was created in Finland, the orphans from poor families were sold in the markets. The municipalities had the legal responsibility to take care of the children who had lost their parents, and the officials often outsourced the job to private families, mostly to farmers and landowners. They held these public auctions, where the kids were on display, and whoever bid the lowest price for the municipality to pay for the care of the children, would get the kids. The winning bidders would receive an allowance from the municipality and they would, naturally, exploit the labour of the kids as much as they had the nerve to.'

'These kids were called 'huutolaiset', as they were bought by shouting in the auctions. And that I guess is something most of the Huuto people can associate with. Most of the young artists today are really struggling for survival, and we've thought it's better to get together, to create a space of your own, when you are motherless and fatherless in the art world.'

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**Emma Bugden travelled to Helsinki with the assistance of the Nordic Institute of Contemporary Art and the City Gallery Wellington.**



## A review of maybe the worst album of all time

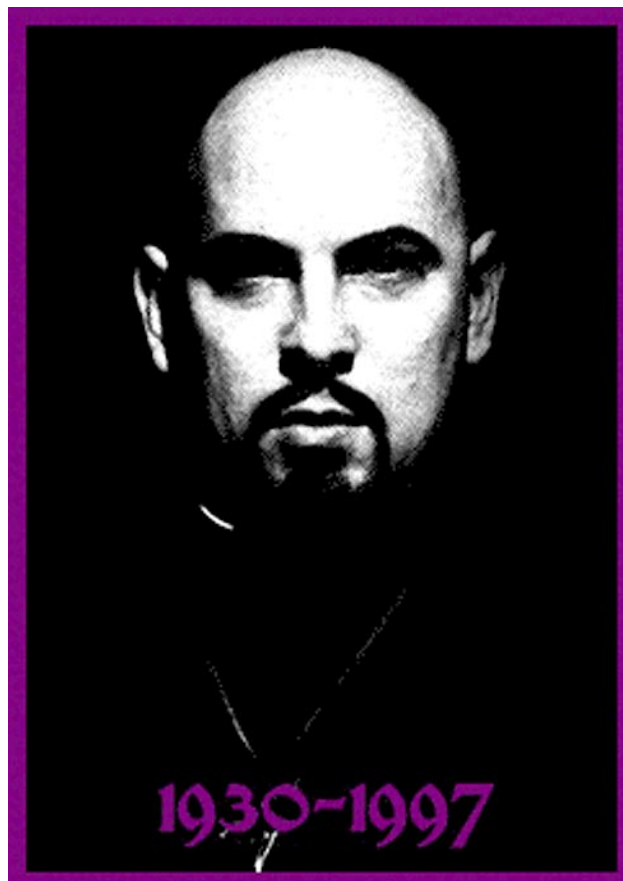
First off, let me lay it straight: I think most forms of Satanism in general are about as pernicious as a Weevil in my trusty bag of Signature Range Weetbix. In particular, the more theatrical forms of nefariousness (and it is pretty easy to tag Anton LaVey's Church of Satan as such) are perhaps most fittingly measured inversely against other pseudo-modern theologies, for instance the noxious brand of evangelism Jerry-built preacher Brian Tamaki propounds from his bling bling pulpit, very convincingly providing the act of faith with a bad name. Strangely, invert this model and I'm sure you'd possibly be close to Anton LaVey.

What am I talking about here anyway? Well, I believe I may have recently downloaded and listened to one of the most terrible (or close to it) LPs of all time, Anton Szandor LaVey's (1930-1997) 1995 album *Satan Takes a Holiday*. Give it a whirl (you may want to indeed use it as a frisbee) – it should be easy to find free to download on-line although it's also been recently re-released on CD due to enormous popularity with Satanists of varied ilks no doubt.

Apparently recorded in his kitchen on a porta-studio, it shows. LaVey is often rumoured to be the true identity of famous yet mysterious 50s organist Georges Montalba, a legend which humorously owes a lot to the grandiose, dishonest king-making habits of his organization. The talent of a great organist in this instance is sadly lacking however. The only ditty I was capable of sitting through is the classic Tommy Dorsey-penned title track which rounds up the album and on which LaVey thankfully doesn't sing, providing however the repetitive pulse of cheesy backing organ for the singer's hilarious female soubrette, delivered in old-school burlesque fashion:

The Devil started dancin'  
He was entrancin'  
When he did the "Jangle: his own way  
His bones were rattlin' loudly,  
As he began to shuffle proudly,  
That's the way that Satan takes a holiday

Growing up in Whangamata on the Coromandel Peninsula as a teenager, there still existed the archetype of post war old timers living out their days peacefully. One day when I was about fifteen, I got sucked in to visiting one of the neighbours. Bill wrote poems of the old mining days and lovingly recorded these to into his mono tape deck, accompanied by ukulele. Bill and I had no doubt regarded each other as old man and annoying teenager. But we had anyhow become fast friends after he discovered I had severely face planted in the nearby walkway one evening due to a barrier pole the council had injuriously erected just before dark that very



Anton Szandor LaVey. Image taken from Not Like Most magazine.  
<http://www.purgington.com/nlm/>

day. The same pole, as it turned out, had apparently caused a bruising encounter with Bill's scrotum the same evening, being placed at such convenient height. I had henceforth become Bill's weapon in fighting the local Council. So I got kind of stuck there for a few hours occasionally with Bill and his cool pair of usually caged love birds. Ever since those visits I've had a relatively keen ear for nice old guys and their reminiscences. In other words, I'm no snob to Burl Ives for instance nor to any 'ole' timers provided they are talented or least interesting. Anton LaVey is, for me anyway, no such old guy.

So far I've written this review without listening to the album again. Really, there is so much better stuff to listen to. Man, this album just depresses me. I thought it was funny for a couple of listens. I've thousands more tracks to listen to, so why has it been haunting my iTunes library for months

now? Such is the way of real bad albums. I guess we savor such moments of vulgarity occasionally for varied reasons and purposes, some of which I'll attempt to address soon.

Anton LaVey was a dyed-in-the-wool charlatan. Founder of the very dubious organization The Church of Satan, LaVey is not scary compared to much cooler Satanists like Alastair Crowley and Kenneth Anger (my faves); but in a sense one has to admire LaVey's dubious lifetime of obtuse achievements in the theatrical sense at least (he was sharp enough for Marilyn Manson to jump on board as a COS priest). After spending a few minutes looking over his resume one thinks LaVey could have been a cool artist had he applied himself to a Batailllean concept of Pop or Surrealism. As the stories go, LaVey's life was apparently one big lie. He claimed at various times to have slept with Marilyn Munroe, been a city hall organist (including being the 'pseudonymous' Georges Montalba), a police photographer and a psychic investigator among other things. All of these claims, I should mention, are highly disputed.

I can't recommend sitting right through Satan Takes a Holiday in case you head off down the road to strangle house cats or something like Black Sabbath may have reputedly induced in the 70s (due to back-masking or something). But in a way really awful music is good for you – at least for making undesirable visitors depart your premises on schedule. It's like suffering Paul Holmes after eating well-salted greens with your grandparents. Perhaps that's what this late Prince of Darkness secretly intended it for. I can imagine the subliminal message if you rolled it backwards at the right spot could amount to: "go home now, we don't like you here in our home anymore, this music scares you" playing secretly in reverse to his awful rendition of Nat King Cole's 'The more I see you.'

As an 80s/90s teenager, I was your run of the mill dumb ass country kid. For a while I was headed down the path of becoming a puritan, scared by devil worshipping stories about The Eagles and the Beatles White Album. Later on my proudest possessions were punk mix tapes dubbed together from mates respective visits to Auckland. Had I not adopted Jello Biafra, Sonic Youth, Black Flag and for a short while, Death Metal, I hesitate to think what sort of nationalistic loser I may have been by now. Religion wise, I hesitate very briefly to describe myself most likely as an Agnostic Humanist, hence anything to do with questioning moral and social structures was of interest to me from a relatively young age.

This self-searching brings me around to why I downloaded the thing in the first place – a kind of inverse sentimentality. These days I can look back mostly in humour recalling the ill-fated trip to Taumaranui around '93 when we got stoned on strong Coromandel weed, on the road in a mate's Mitzi Mirage. Somewhere around Matamata into the head deck was inserted a dubbed tape of militaristic bagpipes which, probably due to some no doubt troubled elder brother, had an insane LaVey spoken word LP on the reverse side, for all I know possibly containing some infamous Satanic Rites. The

King Country was never so outrageously evil to me and such a complete freak out ensued that it has always stayed with me. Fittingly, the trip was to become a disaster of decent proportions for our smelly young hides.

After the hell voyage into National country, we ended up at a party in Taumaranui. The venue was great – a freezing old house out in a paddock with the local first fifteen, surrounded by crates of Lion Red and Waikato. It was a dilapidated old villa exactly like the one in that recent drink-driving ad, with the guitar toting rugby heads and a dog out on the porch with the gumboots. The party was construed of dense-as bogans wearing Swannies and rugby jerseys, except for us, no doubt clad in over-sized yet similarly unwashed Stussy or Billabong threads. I recall we stuck it out for a while until our driver decided he would take us to the end of the dirt road and we'd all crash at Sloane's place. My mate got DICed. It turned out the local fuzz knew we were all out near the old farmhouse and waited halfway down the rough-shod metal road to catch the first driver. Bad vibes indeed. To top it off it was especially bad getting our ride impounded and having to beg parents to drive 300km for a lift back home on a Sunday morning, after hanging out in the main drag of Taumaranui in the dead of winter all night.

No doubt I'm now more likely to be hunted down, drugged, tied up and temporarily threatened with a garrote by ill-informed Satanists now, so hopefully you enjoy Satan Takes if it ever comes your way (though it's more likely you won't).

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**MJ Kjarr lives in Auckland and enjoys music.**

## Harvest Moon: Friends of Mineral Town

### 4 the garden journals

04/08/05

I just ate about two handfuls of strawberries. Out from my house over in the next street, but you can see it from my door, there is this moss garden. This strip of moss that runs above and down into the gutter. I have been collecting moss from there for about three months now. I thought it was worth mentioning because it has been a well of moss 4 me and also 'coz on the nature strip there is this fade from grass to moss and it feels like a split in the Realm occurs when I look @ it. I was there this morning. It was really cold and the wind was howling. I collected a small amount of moss to cover some browning Pearlwort, at the edge of the vegetable garden. It takes moss so lonng to grow in to itself. If you put two clovers next to each other, they would be indistinguishable within 8 days. None of the moss in my garden has really grown into itself yet, even the patches I put in @ the "Beginning". And there is that same sort of split between different patches of moss in there to. The gap between the patches is covered up and it is a singular bed, but the two different types of moss are never the same so there is this rupture that creates a new area.

The Venus fly^trap is developing what I think is like a swamp around it. The plant itself is fine, really healthy with a fast cycle of new heads coming through from the center, and as the old heads die off at the edge, they are creating a swamp land. This is a mesmerizing eco-system to watch build up. Self-contained cycles are developing within the self-contained cycle. "\*\_\_^") really healthy looking swamp, dark colors.

There are these new stems growing too. They have grown fast, in the last 4 days just near the edge of the swamp, out of the jungle. They look alive, in a thinking sense. Like the way the raptors looked different from the rest of the dinosaurs in Jurassic Park 1, 2 and 3. Maybe they are a carnivorous mutation. Maybe they know the secrets of the universe. I also just planted two cauliflower plants in the vegetable garden, in a slim row in between the \*((^ and, it is very tight and I don't know if there will be enough room for the heads to grow out of the ground.

The bean stalks, despite their browning bottom leaves, are growing well and tall. They are straighter, stronger and taller than they were. There tips are really long and thin, like a beanstalk@!@! Really spindly and twisted, plaited.

There is a canopy developing in the garden, those Jasmine flowers are turning a slight pink and they have multiplied in number, sort of moving out and up from a central cluster. This is giving the garden soooo much depth, combined with



the green that is growing down into the bottom of the tank, like moss in the under-world. Like the cenotes. They are these things in the Mayan jungles, wells of life. There were no other sources of fresh water other than cenotes. Some 2m across, the largest 50m across. Pools/springs of crystal clear water with teeming rainforest right to their edges. Cave divers have explored them and there is a massive labyrinth network of caves that links them all up, something like 500km of cave has been explored, underground linking these hidden jewels. They found mammoth tusks and dinosaur bones in them, so they weren't always immersed in water. They are full of stalactites, which formed in the dry air and it has the most infinite effect, these artificially lit caves full of jagged rock formations. They go down, and then out to connect to hundreds of others, but at the bottom before the caves begin, treasures and human bones from sacrifice were found. People threw their own into these crystal caves for good harvests.

07/08/05

The rain that has been on its way for the last few days had arrived when I woke up this morning. I know the basics of the water cycle within our atmosphere, but I am still unsure





The kind of writing that stays in your head, and then comes into your life, like it is proving itself, proving its own power through physical manifestation. He wrote about change, ideas, artists and life. I have been thinking about change in my garden. It happens on this really minute scale, the way things grow. If I look @ it every day the change is harder to notice sort of thing. Yet these changes are super complex and organic, cell division and stuff, life. All coming from this initial beginning, (with things added and changed, but essentially the same foundations), it is in some way similar to animal life. I think it is between 'non-intelligent' and 'intelligent' animal life. One plant on its own would not be so smart but the garden is in this eco-system, this intelligent dialogue with itself. It enters the realm of the cosmic, like human intelligence and infinity and whale communication and the planet Neptune. This is an incomprehensible area, for me either way. Because I am aware of how it all came together. It is more than luck; a cosmic intervention of sorts that has lead to the survival of my plants. I see things like electronic information, crude skills, lack of knowing, idea or belief in something, as things that could not ensure, or even suggest the survival of my garden. Actually, that 'idea or belief in something' might be heading toward what I am talking about. Like that is the cosmic glue holding everything together, this balance, and triangulation of force occurring outside my window. I think about ways of expressing ideas and how individuals and groups develop discourse and conceptual/aesthetic language. Particularly @ the moment I see this split between expressing the idea in terms of living it out, example in my garden, and illustrating it. I have been doing these drawings recently and I have found them liberating, but also slightly contrived and lacking a spirit. They are illustrative line drawings of cosmic relationships and inexplicable forces. I have been thinking about frame and image, as opposed to construction and idea or something. Like what would my work be if it was taken back from those things? I think both are good, and that change with understanding and exchange is good.

=.= I also trimmed the clover patch; I took out a couple of these weeds that had about 4 or 5 leaves from a long exposed root. They are very green. There is a big one growing in the corner behind the mapelmull. Also, the ling stems growing from the jungle patch appear to be more of the fern leaves, from the fern with light green graduating to dark green on the big leaves in the shape of alien hands. Two tiny yellow flowers were budding from the clover patch this morning when I watered the garden. The creeper over the white stoned near the buds is growing strong and looks very good, descriptive of time.

[illegible]

**James Deutsher is making gardens and Infinity Snake/Coil pots in Melbourne. ☺ Harvest Moon: friends of Mineral Town will be showing @ CLUBSproject Inc from 24th November – 3rd December 2005. ☺**

## Harvest Moon: Plant transplant 4 the collaborative actions

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This project arose out of a couple of things... First, clavichords. James and I found these at a friend's house and as he began to play, I began to move. He has a good sense of sound (I think this derives from an understanding of materials and spiritual action). It reminded me of Noh and Suzuki training so I started to do some stomps to the clavichord. This small action opened up a the possibility of a performance of this kind together,,

Then along came Remedy<sup>1</sup>, and James wanted to do a demonstration of a plant transplant. His work lends itself to this kind of demonstration and I had been eager to see him do this kind of thing. I had been doing some movement/stretching/dancing that was kind of evolving into a personal movement vocabulary. James asked me to dance as part of his plant transplant performance.

The day before Remedy was sunny and clear, so we took the

clavichord sticks to the Botanic Gardens. This is a really great environment to work in. We have spent a lot of time there and it feels peaceful.<sup>2</sup> So, James started to play the clavichord and I started to dance. There wasn't any discussion, it was intuitive and improvisational – I think that both of us just started to experiment based on this understanding. I think this was really effective – to just act automatically and to produce something that responded to the environment we were in and that used the energy that was available to us to explore something new.

Being in that sort of environment made me feel a compulsion to respond to/interact with the ground. All the interconnection of roots underneath the surface of the lawn, and all the life it produces above it, is quite an overwhelming idea. And movement in that context owes something to the energy of the ground. I did cartwheels and began to roll and without being conscious of it I was working through an idea

of circularity. I guess this comes from a sense of connectivity, continuum, development. (It also may have to do to exposure to James' recent drawings which use the circular line in a way that is almost hypnotising). I guess another thing is the energy that circularity creates – the focus of energy in a circular form is quite intense. It is as though the energy that occurs in the circular creates a whirlpool.

James suggested that once the transplant was complete, the plant should form a centre and that the dance, to entice it to grow, should be conducted around a focus on the plant. He threw an Iced Green Tea bottle into the middle of the area of grass I was working in. We continued, but then I did a cartwheel and put my hand on a bee and got stung. After this, some friends arrived so we stopped working.

A couple of hours before Remedy, James and I met up and went to look for a plant, as the one that he originally intended to put into the oven-baked clay coil pot looked too good in the Iced Green Tea bottle. So we walked around the outside of the Bot. James found some white flowers (à la Chanel necklace) and some pink flowers (the ones that I find funny because they grow from a ground creeper and it looks like they're just popping straight up from the soil) and some paler ones (taken from the border of the Governor's residence). But he decided this wasn't what he wanted so he replanted them back into the ground. Then he walked into a garden bed and found an above-ground root that had a plant growing from it. It was quite amazing! The root was strong, so lucky I carry scissors on me, he he. This was great. It was tall and quite thin and its situation (growing out of another tree's root) seemed unique.

In James' studio, he plaited my hair. They were the best plaits he's ever done. I felt like a pot of Spinifex! Upon request, he drew marijuana leaves on my band-aids because he didn't have any of the ones from Hong Kong left,, I think these ones are really nice. Alex Vivian performed first @ Remedy. It was a really relaxed environment that was conducive to performing (and accessing ideas). I was concerned about being involved but not being from VCA but it didn't matter,, I enjoyed Alex's performance – his organisation of the space was really nice, and lying on his stomach made it quite informal and pleasant to watch. His singing really impressed me. I have heard him sing many times before but this was really great.

James set up the space and prepared it for the transplant. He remembered that he had the marijuana leaf candle from Off Ya Tree in his bag and lit it and put it on his workbox. Incredible,,\* !! There was a microphone on the stage so he picked it up and told everybody what he was doing. This was a really good decision. I didn't know he was going to do this, I don't know if he did either. But as he talked through what he was doing, where the plant came from, how he'd care for it after it had been transplanted, etc, it all made sense. Because I already knew this information, I took it for granted. But it made me realise that his actions and processes and the origins of his materials/plants/ideas are really important to his work. By addressing these things,

he did not demystify the work, rather, he gave the audience an opportunity to access another level of meaning and understanding. This was really GrEat!! \*.\* Jon Campbell spoke to him about this afterwards and commented that the deadpan delivery was really effective. I agree. I think James' openness to use environments and to experiment with what's available informs his work in a positive way. After all, 'Chance favours the prepared mind.'

After the transplant I did a dance for the plant. I was trying to harness energy and deliver it to the plant. Having the water bottle and the candle (fire) with the plant creating a triangular connection was effective. I felt as though I was working towards some elemental understanding which would fuse these things and stimulate growth. I also think the fire and water were important because we were in a concrete gallery space, not a botanic garden. It reminded people about what forces were at work. (For this exact reason, I shouldn't have removed the plant and water so quickly at the end,, >.<)

This project was an ongoing investigation that was really an extension of spontaneous interaction with the world and ourselves. I think it benefited from the constant accumulation and improvisation (i.e. James deciding to use the candle and microphone). I have just spoken to James and he says the plant is GrOwiNg!! )\_.(

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**Olivia Barrett lives in Melbourne and believes that tanuki play tricks on humans. She released a turtle into its natural habitat in Singapore with James in July of 2005.**

#### Notes

1. Remedy, as far as we know, is organised by Jon Campbell and the VCA gallery staff. It's once a month on a Thursday night and gives artists/students a chance to perform.

## ‘On originality’

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*“What is held up as originality is a myth, given the degree to which art evolves as a collective enterprise, with artists always building on other artists’ work... To talk to other artists’ work, and simultaneously to talk about the other artists’ work... Isn’t that what constitutes originality anyway?”*

— Ian Burn in conversation with Imants Tillers 1993

Some months ago Luke Parker, a Sydney-based artist, invited me to write on the Australian artist Ian Burn (1939-1993). As I have spent much of the last decade writing on Ian I thought it would be more interesting to ask some artists interested in his work to respond to a comment he made about originality. I thank all the artists for participating particularly Luke and Tom Nicholson who brought others into the conversation.

### Contributing artists:

David Akenson, letter

Barbara Campbell, *prompt for performance #89 of 1001 nights cast in situ*, Paris, 17/09/05

Narelle Jubelin

Bianca Hester, *5 propositions; notes on collectivity*

Andrew McQualter, *untitled (when I think of Ian Burn I think about the moral work of art)* toothpaste, mirror. Courtesy Scott Donovan Projects.

Susan Norrie, *Poisonous Fly Paper*

Catherine Rogers, *THIS IS NOT A LANDSCAPE* and *WIND SAND AND STARS*

Mark Titmarsh, *The Origin of the Work of Art in the Age of Collective Discursivity, a cine-text in eleven acts, directed by Mark Titmarsh*

Robert Pulie

Tom Nicholson, *Two images from the project Flags for a Trades Hall Council*, 2005. Photography: Christian Capurro

Christian Capurro *et al.*, *Another Misspent Portrait of Etienne de Silhouette*, 1999 – 2005 +

Jeff Stewart, *Shangri-La/Benjamin/Burn*



Ian Burn. *This is not a landscape*, 1992, oil on wood panel, ink screen-printed on synthetic polymer sheet, wood, screws, 83.5 x 83.5 x 12.7 cm, collection Monash University Museum of Art, Melbourne, reproduced courtesy of the Ian Burn estate.

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**Ann Stephen is an art historian and curator at the Powerhouse Museum, Sydney. Her biography ‘On Looking at Looking: The art and politics of Ian Burn’ is to be published by Miegunyah Press in 2006.**



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Dear Ann,

Thank you for the invitation to put forward work for the magazine. While my practice is most closely associated with the material practice of John Nixon, I have great respect and admiration for the clarity of thinking Ian Burn brings to art making. As an art student in the mid 90s the game of killing – whether it be authors, originality, painting, or art itself, was the right of passage in those days. But as you know, for Burn, or indeed anyone reading Barthes or Foucault with any degree of care, the problem of authorship and originality is a complex issue. I take from Burn the conviction that art, whether it goes by the name of reduction, or appropriation, it always value adding to art history. In the case of appropriation (I risk censure here in the company of Burn) it is Kant, and not Hegel – despite the theoretical link to Hegelian systematic closure that is implicit in appropriation – that should be invoked: Beauty is only what cannot be given as determinative – there is always more. Now, if you are still here, to my point. With Ian Burn's late works appropriation is used as a strategy, not to rehearse the death of originality but to add to our understanding of it. When I make a work for instance, I try to come as close to John Nixon as possible – so close that I begin to look nothing like him. I am, at this point, "looking through a piece of glass".

Look forward to hearing from you,

David Akenson

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I would like to thank

Olive Cotton for her shadows,

Hellen Ennis for reminding us of Olive Cotton,

Jelle van den Berg for a crash-course in watercolours and  
revealing the magic of painting reversed-out words,

Narelle Jubelin for half a life-time of bullying, challenging,  
supporting and looking and for sending me on a mission to  
Sennelier's of Paris,

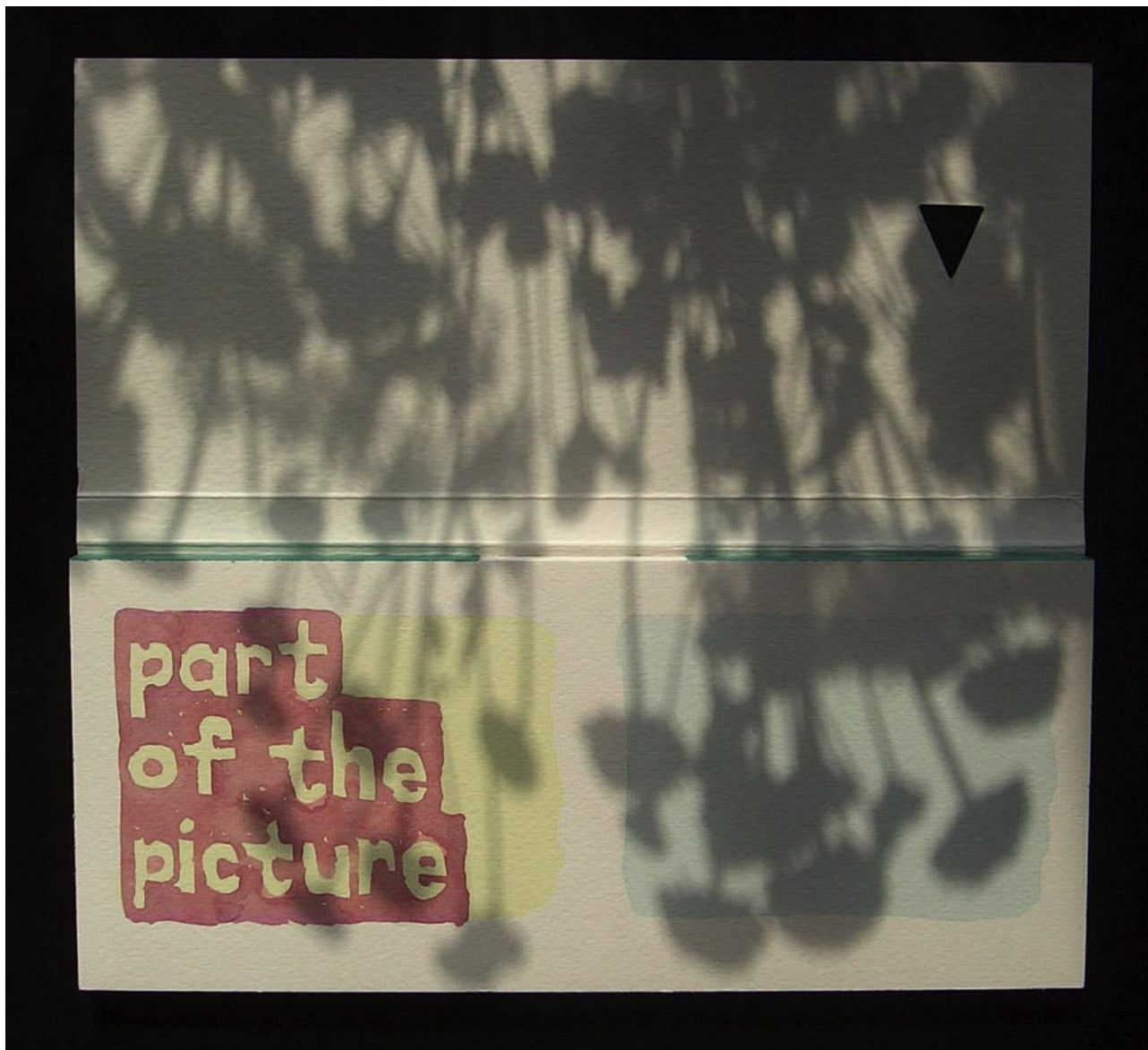
The house of Sennelier for making blocks of grain fin, format  
panoramique, papier aquarelle,

Simone and Felix Brunau for furnishing the studios of the  
Cit  Internationale des Arts with black-topped work tables,

The flower-growers of France and the florist at Monceau  
Fleurs for her 'arrangement cadeau' (I'm sorry I lied and said  
it was a gift when it was actually only for me but I wanted  
to see you perform the act of considering each stem for its  
form and colour and placing it in harmonious relationship  
with all the others and then watching as the secateurs bite  
the stems down to a unified length for the vase, and finally  
the careful wrapping in tissue, cellophane, tape, ribbon and  
Monceau Fleurs sticker. Voila! Merci bien),

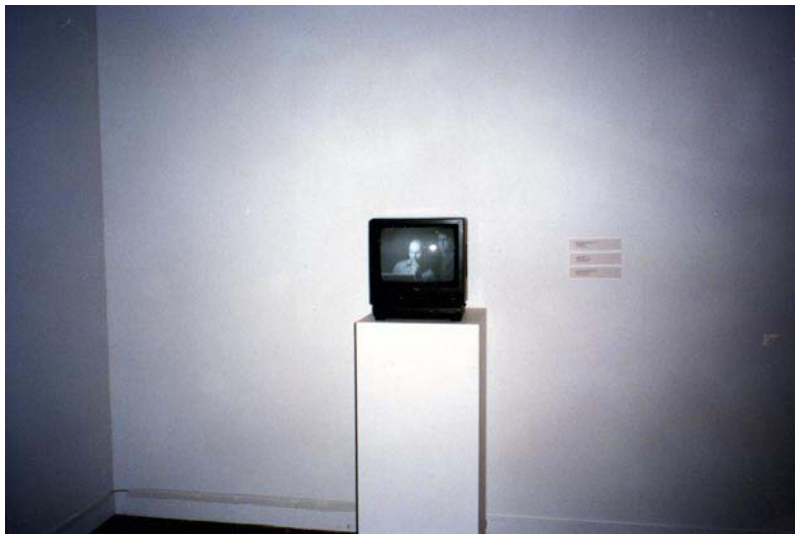
Ian Burn for taking the part for the whole,

And Ann Stephen for making this posthumous dialogue  
possible.



**Barbara Campbell**

prompt for performance # 89 of *1001 nights cast in situ*,  
Paris, 17/09/05.



**Narelle Jubelin**

Marcos Corrales, and video of Ian Burn and Marcos Corrales Nigel Lendon,  
Monash University Art Gallery, Melbourne, 1996



## 5 propositions; notes on collectivity

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1. All practices emerge from and participate in a thick communality over time. No matter how solo or singular a work seems, it invariably exists in, and summons the company of others. Each practice and each work teems with the presence of people across time. Individual activity need not be lost or subjugated within this collective sprawl, but constitutes a vital component. An individual practice exists in a multi-fold manner as a node that simultaneously draws from and contributes back into the glut.

2. Collectivity exists on many different scales and is present to different degrees and intensities both within a single work and throughout the duration of a practice.

3. Collectivity is situated by human relations; and therefore belongs to the realm of sociability, but it might also be thought of in terms that expand beyond the sphere of the human. Collectivity, imagined as a condition structured by a notion of proliferation and excess, becomes the site for material relations underpinned by the logic of difference. Collectivity posits things within the thickness of multiplicity.

4. Multiplicity proliferates identities and positions. A reductive logic of the singular distills the world down into manageable chunks, while a collective, inclusive or multiple kind of logic potentially opens things up to a myriad of ephemeral connections and transitional positions.

5. Collectivity imagined here is absolutely open, provisional and indeterminate – it is not about a uniformity of vision or about the imposition of ideals. This collectivity is unruly, anarchic, and always in a state of drift; it's a mass that holds together, but only just. A shaggy collectivity allows for, and values the desires, differences and discrepancies of the individuals who comprise it, and who set it into motion. It is not a product or an aim or something requiring maintenance, but an incidental and emergent entity that enables and depends on the supplementation of its parts.

-j note 1  
printROOM  
**Karin de Jong**  
**Edouard van Rijn**  
A month of artist-produced publications three, essays and books from all over Europe  
CLUBSProject  
June 2003

-j note 2  
CLUBSFeedback session  
with Terri Bird, Scott Mitchell, Sanna Mestrom, Karen Burns, Mia Gajdik, Andrea Tu, Spiros Panigirakis, Andrew McQuail for the work, one thing another thing, some thing other, things stagger and...  
**Bianca Hester**  
CLUBSProject  
October 2003  
<http://www.clubproject.org.au/feedback.php>

-j note 3  
Playing House  
**Michelle Ussher**  
Detail of reading room section of project including sketchbooks from Terri Anne, Kenna Dowd - Rob Mc Haffie. This was couched in a large series of water colours coupled with weekend drawing workshops.  
CLUBSProject  
December 2004

-j note 4  
Diagram poster made in conjunction with the project:  
*multipleMISCELLANEOUSalliances (mMa)*  
Organised by Bianca Hester and involving: Elisabeth Boyoi, Sandra Biddle, Terri Bird, Christian Caputo, DAMR, Josh Daniels, Kate Fulton, Tam Gibbe, Bianca Hester, Anthony Hunt, Kath Houston, Raastat Ishak, Helen Johnson, Lisa Kelly, KNOTWORK, Mick Douglas + Kate Bowman, Larasa Kosiolt, Damien Lawson, Sanna Mestrom, Azlan McLennan, Andrew McQuail, Scott Mitchell, N55 ROOMS, Tom Nicholson, Ocular Lab - Julie Davies + Alex Rickala, SPACE-PORK ADVENTURES - Julie Burke + Shelley Krycer + Jeanette Purkis + Deborah Bam King, April Phillips, Spiros Panigirakis, SPLINT - Jason Mailing + Torle Nimmervoll, STICKY books - Si-mone Evenson + Luke Sinclair, Stuart Ringhot, Office of Utopia Procedures - Bernhard Sachs,

Utako Shindo, Jessie Walsh, Helen Walter, West Space, Kyle Wilkinson, Keith Wong, Jason Workman.....  
"...multipleMISCELLANEOUSalliances (mMa) is an ongoing, unruly, ever-polluting series of linkages and collaborative connections across diverse clusters of people across Melbourne and Sydney. It is a series of projects both pocketed and piggy-backing on top of and in-between other projects. It criss-crosses and interlopes between art spaces, web forums, telephone calls, lounge-rooms, email messages, chunks of collaborative production, public actions and face to face dialogues. It is an experiment with the construction of relations based in ever-shifting negotiations and cascading possibilities. It is transient, ongoing, confusing and delicious. It is open-source, anti-copyright, independent and un-controllably miscellaneous..."  
This project was developed in conjunction with *resistance through rituals* co-ordinated by Lisa Kelly located between CLUBSProject + Westspace June 2004.  
<http://www.clubproject.org.au/workshops.php>

-j note 5  
critical mass  
Riding over the Bolle Bridge  
Melbourne  
January 2004  
\* see related essay on pages 21- 25

-j note 6  
Opening outside of Ocular Lab for the project active air  
OSW  
March 2005

-j note 7  
skipping in the Fitzroy gardens with Saskia Schut, Helen Johnson, Scott Mitchell and Gareth Malone.  
December 2004

-j note 8  
Rehearsing with Manthras  
**Bianca Hester**  
**Saskia Schut**  
**Helen Johnson**  
CLUBSProject Studios  
August 2004 - June 2005

-j note 9  
wireless connection  
**Scott Mitchell**  
Temporary wireless Internet connection set up for CLUBSProject to utilize the Gertrude broadband connection during mMa  
May 2004  
<http://hypertext.mil.edu.au/~smitchel/>

-j note 10  
Interest in the newly set-up connection in the studio of Helen Walter at CLUBSProject  
June 2004

-j note 11  
Detail of SOUL  
**Lizzy Newman**  
CLUBSProject  
April 2004

-j note 12  
Detail of MIR11  
**Lizzy Newman**  
April 2005  
\* see related essay on page 6

-j note 13  
Detail of Luminous Fountain Work from: WITH  
**Spiros Panigirakis**  
(including Terri Bird, Anna Fern, Ruth Hansen, Andrew McQuail, Scott Mitchell, Helen Radloff, Saskia Schut and Fiona Symons, Fiona Gurney, Seb Harris, Ben Haskin, Louise Ingh, Adam Scott and Michelle Ussher. Set and costumes by Joe Hill, Dimitris Panigirakis, Andrea Makisimov, Spiros Panigirakis, David Prator, Sarah Roberts, Dominic Radtman and Jonathan Symons)  
CLUBSProject  
May 2005

-j note 14  
Gravity is No Longer A Problem  
**Gwynneth Porter**  
Written + published in conjunction with the Dan Arps installation MODEL FOR A COMMUNE in Prospect at the City Gallery Wellington N.Z.  
August 2004  
<http://www.telecomprospect2004.org.nz/options/gwynneth.asp>

-j note 15  
Page detail from Gravity is No Longer A Problem  
**Gwynneth Porter**  
<http://www.naturalselection.org.nz/>

-j note 16  
CLICKOO bar  
in conjunction with *resistance through rituals*  
**Gwyn Porter, Dan Arps, Jon Bywater**  
Westspace  
May 2004  
<http://www.clickoo.org.nz/>

-j note 17  
MIKE  
Performing at mMa  
**Jon Campbell, Chris Hill, Kain Picken, Olivia Dowling, Harriet Morgan, Shannon Smiley**  
May 2004

-j note 18  
Public events poster  
mMa  
CLUBSProject  
May 2004-j note 19  
Cafe baked by Terri Bird and Andrew McQuail for the event WITH organised by Spiros Panigirakis

-j note 20  
Audience at WITH waiting to set the table of cakes

-j note 21  
a to he  
Written by **Michael Farrell** and performed by Fiona Gurney, Seb Harris, Ben Haskin, Louise Ingh, Adam Scott and Michelle Ussher during the project WITH  
May 2005

-j note 22  
Detail of costumes worn in the a to he performance (comprising of a mosquito, a meshroom, a sun, a koala + a pigeon...)

-j note 23  
Detail of construction made by SPLINT  
**Jason Mailing + Tori Nimmervoll**  
Using their materialbook kit, splint constructed a series of devices in and around the architecture of CLUBS. This was a swing device slung from the main hole during mMa.  
May 2004  
<http://www.splint.info/>

-j note 24  
Detail of scraps, food and work in the RMIT studios  
August 2005

-j note 25  
M.A.P.  
Collaboration between  
**Justin Andrews**  
**Masato Takasaka**  
Detail of the relation between Justin's painting and Masato's sculpture. The collaboration work was structured by the process of translation from painting-to-sculpture-to-painting. The result of this work was a series of 2 and 3 dimensional forms that developed relations along a line of investigation.  
Gertrude C.A.S studio 12  
November 2003  
<http://www.gertrude.org.au/exhibition.php?id=38>

-j note 26  
Image of upturned concrete taken in Albert Park while riding to the city  
September 2005

-j note 27  
Image of a pile of dirty clothes  
February 2005

-j note 28  
You must have been in Strange Places  
Wall drawing by  
**Helen Johnson**  
Gertrude C.A.S.  
February 2005

-j note 29  
Detail of plasticine-gelox-silicone rubber-object stack on black melamine floor tiles, from the project:  
thickening diagrams >> collapsing, dispensing >> events multiple material (corner + corner), and stretching  
**Bianca Hester**  
ACCA  
February 2005

-j note 30  
Detail of student work generated from series of collaborative workshops at VCA school of art. These workshops culminated at the George Paton Gallery Melbourne University  
**Jordon Wood**  
April 2005

## Bianca Hester

pages 04 - 05 from the publication; *things full of people 2002-2005*  
a partial index of events + projects; individual, collaborative, collective



**Andrew McQualter**

untitled (when I think of Ian Burn I think about the moral work of art)  
toothpaste, mirror



**Andrew McQualter**

untitled (when I think of Ian Burn I think about the moral work of art)  
toothpaste, mirror



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*"There is a tendency to treat the eye as simply a tool of recognition, rejecting an archaeology in relation to the processes of perception. To only read pictures is to rely on a rhetorical vision which treats the picture as nothing but a rhetorical surface... An analogy that keeps coming into my head is of a painting being designed like flypaper, grabbing at bits of text as they fly past; then someone comes along and writes about what has stuck to the flypaper but does not bother to look at the flypaper itself. Personally I prefer an art which generates its own options and is in control of its rhetoric."*

Ian Burn, "Less is More", *Art & Australia*, vol. 32, no.2, 1994, p.203.

#### **Poisonous Fly Papers**

Quassia chips.....150 parts  
Chloride of cobalt..... 10 parts  
Tartar emetic ..... 2 parts  
Tincture of long  
Pepper (1 to 4) ..... 80 parts  
Water..... 400 parts

Boil the quassia in the water until the liquid is reduced one-half.

Strain, add the other ingredients, saturate common absorbent paper with the solution, and dry. The paper is used in the ordinary way.

11. Potassium biochromatic..10 ounces  
Sugar..... 3 drachms  
Oil of black pepper..... 2 drachms  
Alcohol ..... 2 ounces  
Water..... 14 ounces

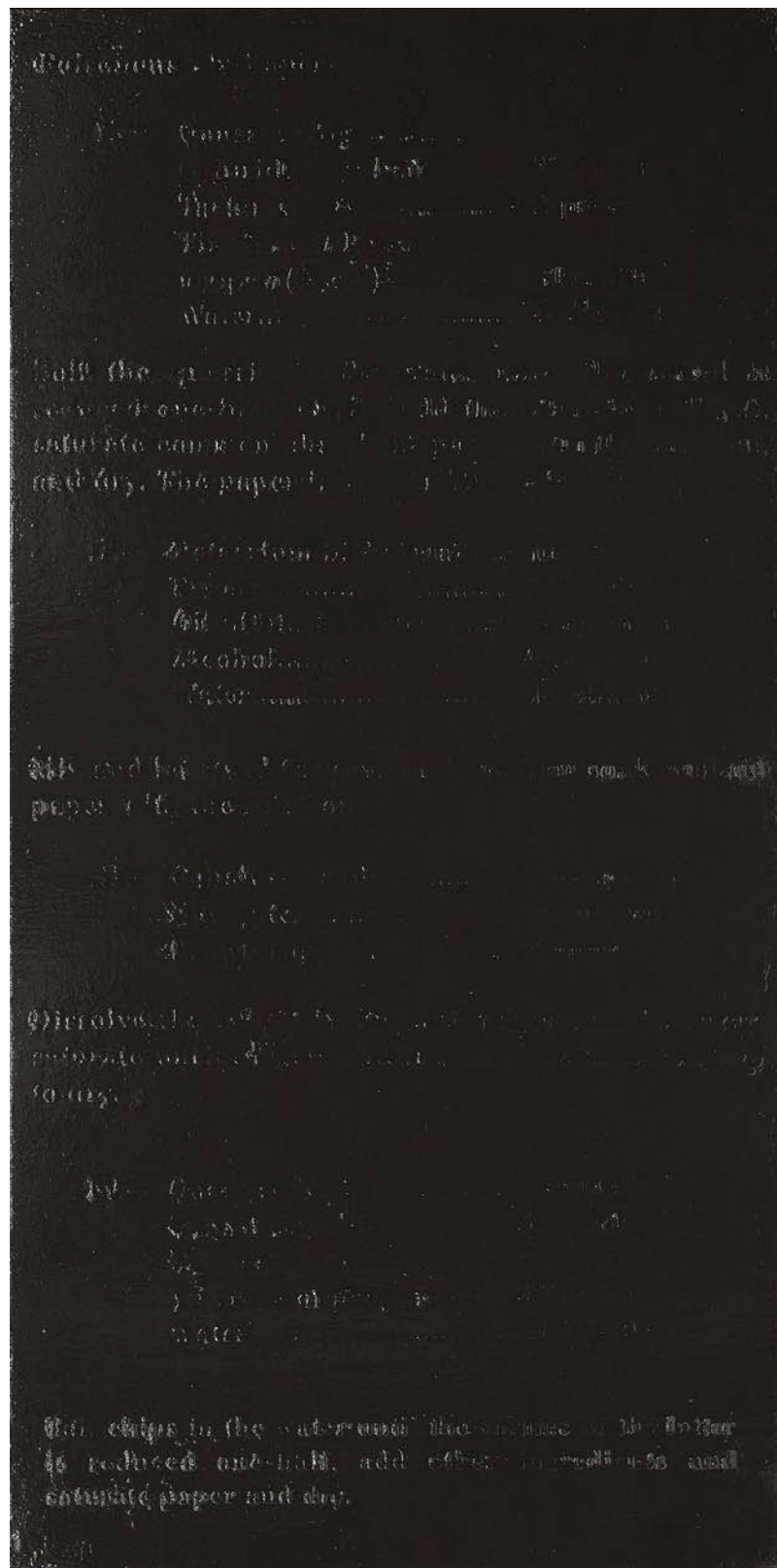
Mix and let stand for several days, then soak unsized paper with the solution.

111. Cobalt chloride.....4 drachms  
Hot water ..... 16 ounces  
Brown Sugar .....1 ounce

Dissolve the cobalt in the water and add the sugar, saturate unsized paper in the solution, and hang up to dry.

1V. Quassia chips.....150 parts  
Cobalt Chloride ..... 10 parts  
Tartrate antimony..... 2 parts  
Tincture of pepper..... 80 parts  
Water .....400 parts

Boil chips in the water until the volume of the latter is reduced one half and other ingredients and saturate paper and dry.



Susan Norrie

*Inquisition: Poisonous fly paper painting II* 1996-99

oil on canvas, 275.2 x 136.5 x 6.0 cm

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Gurnett-Smith Bequest



**Catherine Rogers**  
*THIS IS NOT A LANDSCAPE*  
digital prints on paper



**Catherine Rogers**  
*WIND SAND STARS*  
digital prints on paper



## **The Origin of the Work of Art in the Age of Collective Discursivity**

### **A cine-text in eleven acts**

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#### **Scene 1.**

*Moodie Street, Sydney, 1993.*

Ian Burn thinks for a moment, swivels in his chair and turns towards Imants Tillers saying: "What is held up as originality is a myth, given the degree to which art evolves as a collective enterprise, with artists always building on other artists' work... To talk to other artists' work, and simultaneously to talk about the other artists' work... Isn't that what constitutes originality anyway?"

#### **Scene 2.**

*The offices of Art Monthly magazine, Canberra, 2003.*

Imants Tillers stands at a window reading through the galley proofs of his conversation with Ian Burn. He thinks to himself, "Ten years pass so quickly and so much has changed. In 1993 we were still caught up in the trailing hem of the 1980s and all those issues of origins, originality, appropriation and quotation."

Narrator: In his mind's eye he sees Mel Ramsden's "Secret Painting" and his own appropriation of it.

#### **Scene 3.**

A rapid montage of the work of Hany Armanious, Mikala Dwyer, Mike Kelley, Jessical Stockholder, Tony Oursler, Katherine Grosse, Jim Lambie, Vanessa Beecroft, Rirkrit Tiravniya, Andrea Zittel and Pierre Huyghe.

Narrator: "Issues of origins and originality were made instantly historical by the end of 1993 with the arrival of grunge and abjection. And since then cyberism, relational art, global art..."

#### **Scene 4.**

*The 7th Floor of the House of Fashion, Cooper Street, Sydney, 1998.*

Robert Pulie bends down to the raw wood floor of his studio. He is taping a piece of string to a perspex sheet.

Narrator: "Yet the dynamic between art, artist and artworld as a community of doers and thinkers remains perennial. Each generation is called upon to decide where it stands in relation to this triad."

Robert holds the work up to the window, seeing through it to the canopy of trees covering Surry Hills. He reads the words

printed in vinyl lettering "A frayed knot" remembering the joke he told that night at the Beauchamp Hotel.

#### **Scene 5.**

*New York, 1978.*

Rosalind Krauss reaches through the arms of the typewriter to apply correcting fluid to one last error in her essay "Sculpture in the Expanded Field."

Narrator: It is ironic that this essay should be primarily concerned with the re-definition of sculpture. Many of the artists discussed were painters migrating to 'sculpture' as a way of escaping the formal limitations of painting. By abandoning painting they expanded painting.

#### **Scene 6.**

*In a light plane high above Amarillo, Texas, 1973.*

Narrator: As Robert Smithson's engine cut out for the last time, he felt totally calm, the plane would glide for a moment, before tipping into a steep final descent. He thought of Borges' story of the poet who was permitted to complete his unfinished work in the time a bullet paused, midway in its journey from the firing squad to his heart. And so in an infinite instant Smithson constructed a glittering configuration of all his own work interwoven with a whole generation of painters, filmmakers and sculptors. He and they were indivisible and as one they converged on the same sense of place and the same idea of expanded media.

#### **Scene 7.**

*New York, 1970.*

Ian Burn is on the phone to Roger Cutworth, "Theoretical art has to introduce a new role for artists since there is no longer any personalised actions to make... Ideas are not personalisable things, they are accessible to anyone and everyone."

Narrator: The more Ian Burn moved away from painting the more condensed it became in his work by its very absence. Even his text works are the homeopathic distillation of painting.

#### **Scene 8.**

*Cafe Sperle, Munich, 1933.*

Walter Benjamin turns to Bertolt Brecht and says, “What a pompous git Heidegger is!”

End Titles: Any resemblance to persons living or dead is entirely tangential.

Brecht: “And a fascist! I have an idea for a play, a comedy based on parodies of his tautological, blood and soil, clap trap.”

Narrator: And yet the similarity of concerns between Heidegger’s, “The Origin of The work of art” and Benjamin’s “The work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction” puts the two politically opposed thinkers into close intellectual affinity. A playful misunderstanding of Benjamin’s work will become crucial to 1980s quotational art and the question of origins. For Heidegger art was the origin of the artist and not vice versa, thereby establishing another perspective on the idea of collective originality.

### **Scene 9.**

*New York, 1971.*

Ian Burn is working at his day job in a picture framing shop. He is building a wooden safety frame around the edge of a large painting.

Narrator: “This day had been much like any other, until a collector delivered an original Jackson Pollock painting for framing.”

Ian tacks the final section together taking great care not to touch the painted surface. As he does so a single thread comes away from the back of the canvas. Brushing the workbench clean he collects the thread and puts it into his trouser pocket.

### **Scene 10.**

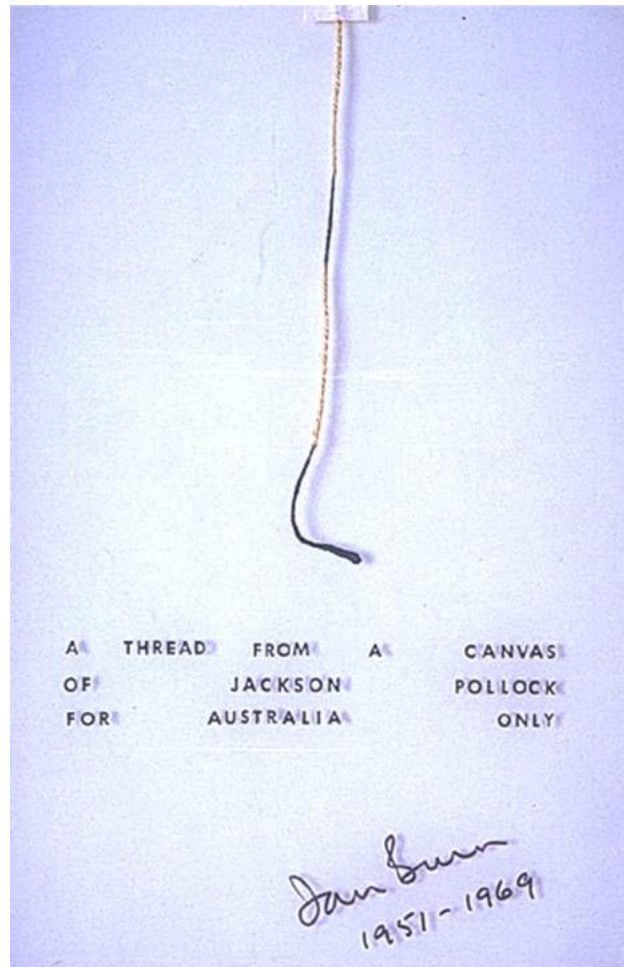
*Close up of Ian Burn’s “A Thread from a Canvas by Jackson Pollock for Australia Only” (1969).*

Narrator: This work must rank as the only referential work that contains an actual fragment of the referent. Quotational art usually figures the referent by remaking it in another appearance. This work holds its referent like a piece of the true cross and offers it as a gift, only to you, Australia.

### **Scene 11.**

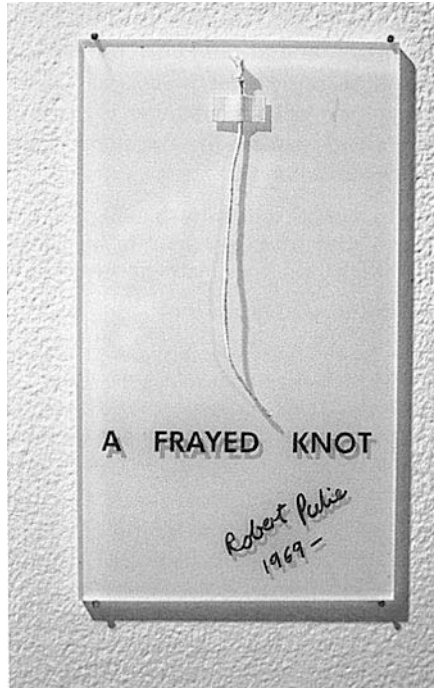
Dissolving shots of Robert Pulie hanging his completed “A frayed knot” (1998), Scott Redford taking a photo in his Berlin studio that would become “Mirror Piece” (2002), Andrew McQualter asking his actor friends to pose for his painting “Looking at a Piece of Glass – after Ian Burn” (2005) and Mark Titmarsh watching the rapid prototyper as it printed “Purple Reflex” (2005).

Narrator: The work generates an ecstatic chain of interconnectivity, reaching backwards to ever refreshing origins, reaching forwards to collective discursivity.



**Ian Burn**

*A thread from a canvas by Jackson Pollock for Australia Only*, 1969,  
canvas thread, paint, adhesive lettering on glass, 21.2 x 21.2 cm,  
reproduced courtesy of the Ian Burn estate.



**Robert Pulie**

*A Frayed Knot*, 1998, adhesive, string, vinyl lettering and marker pen on glass, 12.2 x 21.2cm, destroyed.





**Tom Nicholson**

*Flags for a Trades Hall Council, 2005.*

Photography: Christian Capurro



**Tom Nicholson**

*Flags for a Trades Hall Council, 2005.*

Photography: Christian Capurro



## Another Misspent Portrait of Etienne de Silhouette 1999 – 2005 +

**The work:** A 246 page *Vogue Hommes*, September 1986, #92 (with Sylvester Stallone cover) erased by hand by 250 or so people. This remnant of a five-year mass collaborative erasure project has been shown at various sites from early 2004 onwards with accompanying talks by invited speakers.

Informed by what people do, by the exchanges we make in our lives, both with our time and our labour, and how that is valued, this artefact of *disproportionate expenditure* (and *disproportionate attention*) could be seen as embodying the residue of those less tangible or ‘pictureable’ things in our lives brushing up against a culture obsessed with the idea of visibility.

**Its (un)making:** Different individuals were asked to completely and anonymously erase, with a rubber, a page of this intact magazine. They were also asked to write in pencil on the page both the *time* it took them to do this and whatever *monetary value*, translated into an hourly rate(s), they currently received for their time. The sum of these expenditures gave each page a nominal value which, when added to that of all the other pages, established a value of sorts, for the work as a whole. The shortest time taken to erase a page was 9 minutes while the longest was around 3.5 hours. The value accrued ‘on’ each page ranges from nothing in a number of instances (some contributors were receiving no calculable money for their time) to one page ‘worth’ over \$US1000. These disparities are central to the work.

**The sum:** 267 hours 49 minutes and 5 seconds... valued at \$AUD11,349.18....

**Some questions:** What is time well spent?

How do you hold onto an image, or sense, of yourself when you are forever (re)negotiating the value of your time in the face of others? Is ‘holding on’ a viable, or desirable, option today? And, what are the costs?

What is valued in the work we do and how is this determined and manifested?

How many disproportionate investments do we make?

What does it mean when the more you work at something the less it appears yours and the more like everyone else’s it becomes?

Where does (the) work begin and end? Where and when and with whom does it reside?



To which images do we succumb?

**Site #9:** Albert Road Clinic, 29.01.05, 3pm.

**Speaker:** Justin Clemens, “Getting off your face with a destructive character: Christian Capurro’s *Another Misspent Portrait of Etienne de Silhouette*.”

**Site #8:** St. Eustathios Greek Orthodox Church, 06.12.04, 6pm.

**Speaker:** Father Chris Dimolianis on the history, status and workings of the image in the life of the Orthodox Church.

**Site #7:** *Cycle Tracks Will Abound in Utopia*, ACCA, 07.08.04 – 26.09.04.

**Site Talks:** Sunday 5th September, 3pm, Christian Capurro.

Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> September, 6pm, Bernhard Sachs/Office of Utopic Procedures (cancelled).

Sunday 19th September, 3pm, Adam Bandt, “The octopus on the beach: fetishism, utopia, commodities and work.”

**Site #6:** The home of Louisa Bufardeci, 22.06.04 – 10.07.04.

**Site Talk:** Saturday 10th July, 3pm.

**Speakers:** Collaborators (the *et al*) on the (un)making of *AMPEdS* respond to the work in an open discussion.

**Site #5:** Collins Place Eyecare, 04.06.04 – 19.06.04.

**Site Talk:** Saturday 5th June, 1.30pm.

**Speakers:** Libby Brown (with Tony Perry), “Remains to be seen: R.E.M. and Eyeglasses of Kentucky.”

**Site #4:** Victorian Trades Hall Council, 11.05.04 – 30.05.04.

**Site Talk:** Saturday 15th May, 3pm.

**Speaker:** Adam Bandt, “The secret life of the commodity: labour, rates of pay and the value of 267 hrs, 49 mins and 5 secs of work.”

**Site #3:** Salvation Army Family Store, Abbotsford, 20.04.04 – 08.05.04.

**Site Talk:** Saturday 24th April, 3pm.

**Speaker/Performer:** Penny Trotter performs Dr. Ross Moore’s, “The dust of words: Christian Capurro’s squandered *Vogue*.”

**Site #2:** Fitzroy Public Library, 30.03.04 – 18.04.04.

**Site Talk:** Saturday 3rd April, 3pm.

**Speaker:** Christian Capurro on the *AMPEdS* project; its origins, artistic and social context and its (un)making.

**Site #1:** Worksense Haircutters, 09.03.04 – 27.03.04.

**Site Talk:** Saturday 13th March, 5pm.

**Speaker:** Tom Nicholson, “Actions and traces: Contemplating Christian Capurro’s *Another Misspent Portrait of Etienne de Silhouette* as a drawing.”

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**For further details contact Christian Capurro [mail@christiancapurro.com](mailto:mail@christiancapurro.com) or visit [www.christiancapurro.com](http://www.christiancapurro.com) for an archive of the project that includes the site talk transcripts. A signed and editioned A1 poster is also available.**



## Shangri-La/Benjamin/Burn



In *Shangri-La*, an exhibition of paintings and objects for my father, Jack, I mounted and framed a sketch drawn on the back of a used carton in coloured pencil and biro by my father and his friend Laurie of a proposed cabinet for my father's stereo. Laurie informed me that he and my father had been trying to design the cabinet over an evening of visiting and drinking together. I found the flattened carton in my father's house, *Shangri-La*, while packing up after his death. I asked a friend, Patrick Jones, to make the cabinet for me to scale. I then painted it in the approximate colours indicated by the sketch. Finally I made a small oil painting of the cabinet Patrick had made. The three objects, the sketch, cabinet and painting were hung together.

There were other works in the exhibition that had 'begun' with my father. While cleaning out the sunroom I discovered a box Jack had made to hold his oil paints, brushes, solvents and palette. There were also photographs in it of the hills and paddocks around Shangri-La. With his paint box was a small

easel he had made from scrap timber, and two unfinished paintings. One was a rough sketch of three cockatoos on an undercoated board, the other was a landscape of, and I guessed, Lake Eildon. Jack was a Sunday painter. Using my father's paints brushes and photographs I completed two landscapes. Cutting boards to match those he had begun to paint on I redrew his cockatoos and 'finished' them as a painting, hanging our works together.

The exhibition of 24 objects, paintings and drawings were exhibited twice this year. Once in the community hall of the small country town my father had lived in for the past 35 years and the other in Melbourne at the Victoria St Gallery. The visitors to the Yarck Community Hall, all of them locals who had known my father, or had known of him, related stories either based on the works displayed or from other associations they had with Jack. Norma, the woman who was in charge of the hall told me my father used to attend dances there and she had danced with him herself. My

brother who lived locally had played badminton there often. Ian mentioned talking to and about other artists, as making being a type of 'collective enterprise'. I would suggest that the collectivity of making is much broader than associations through artists and the art world. The conversation that I was attempting to hold with my father through the making of these works and their display within his own community was in part about representation, the place of work within particular contexts, but primarily it was a conversation with and about fathers. Conversation as an act of intimately living.

I also have reservations about how 'originality' is apparently dismissed in Burn's quote. One may view originality in the sense of say Martin Heidegger when he speaks of authenticity. Not as a way to denote any aura of reification, but as a way of being, that is a constant questioning of self and the world. It is, in part, 'that moment of vision' where one comes to and recognises one's possibilities. And I see this as a relation to and with others. The myth as understood is still dispensed with; and making becomes a significant relationship between maker, object, place and witness, making anew. This is Burn's collectivity but with an acknowledgement of the other's alterity, one who participates on their own terms with reciprocity.

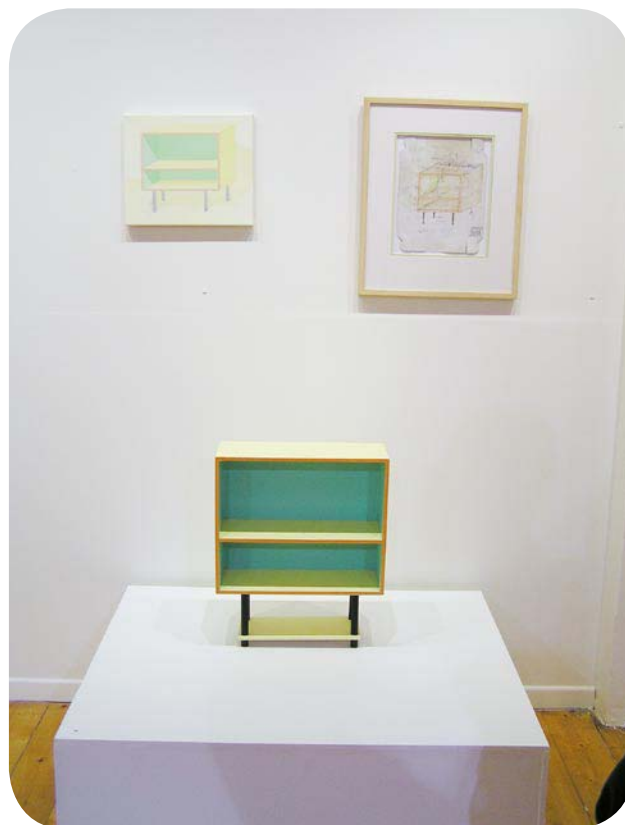
### The Obedience of Corpses<sup>1</sup>

Walter Benjamin's essay *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (1936) did much to dispel the myth of originality. Benjamin sought to expose the theoretical structures that lend themselves readily to Fascism. He hoped to introduce concepts "into the theory of art... that are completely useless for the purposes of Fascism,"<sup>2</sup> using originality and new technology as the locus. Considering both Burn's and Benjamin's concerns about 'originality' I would like to reframe the discussion by asking how is one to make and theorize in a time when Scott Parkin, a peace activist, is jailed and then deported for "encouraging spirited protest"?

Rob Starcy, president of Criminal Defence Lawyers Association says, "It basically means the end of the freedom of expression, the end of being able to question the policy of the current government."<sup>3</sup> And what does it mean when Azlan McLennan's *Canberra's 18* is disallowed from being hung as a replacement artwork in the Platform Artists exhibition in Melbourne recently?<sup>4</sup> The work depicts terrorist leaders with accompanying text locating the figures within a global historical context.

We live with violence that may not only maim and destroy, but also which makes people "play roles in which they no longer recognize themselves, making them betray not only commitments but their own substance, making them carry out actions that will destroy every possibility of action."<sup>5</sup>

A work, *please feel free to leave this bag where ever you loose*, recently emailed to a group of friends by Patrick



Jones, consisted of a photograph of a leather bag with the caption, *collision is unavoidable in nature*, in response to recent amendments of the Crimes Act. Another artist, Peter Tyndall, one of 28 others who received the email, responded by superimposing a colourful 'anarchist bomb' on the bag and sending it on to other friends who publish a What's On magazine. They will now use it as the front cover of their next edition. Patrick also sent this email:

*Date: 16 September 2005 11:39:15 PM*

*'I have just returned from 2 days in Melbourne where, together with a friend, Jason Workman, created numerous experiments based on 'social space' in the city. The briefcase image was just one 'prop' we took with us. We lay around City Square, we posted business cards on artworks in galleries, we perched ourselves on things, we used giant dice, we placed props at bus shelters which posted governmental warnings about suspicious things and events, we were unspectacular as we amused ourselves, nevertheless drawing attention from at least one undercover agent – who we went camera-to-camera with at South Bank.'*

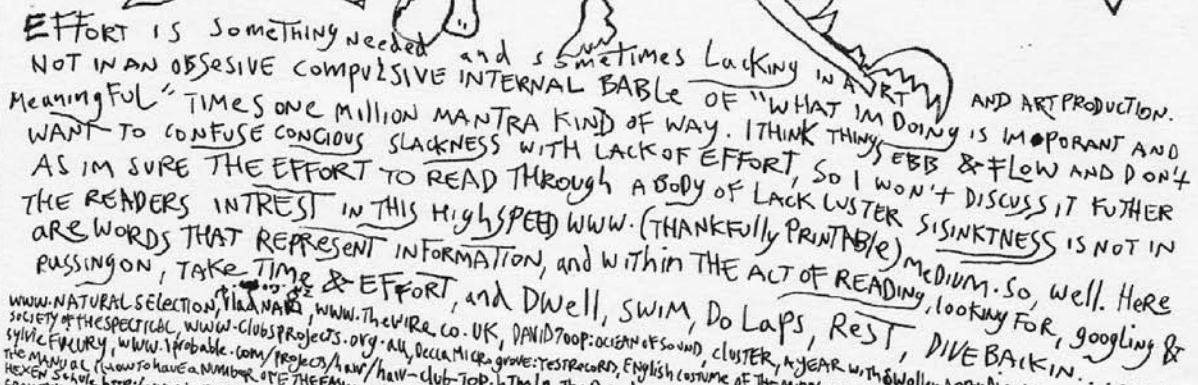
These exchanges between friends, the visiting of sites, the blossoming of a practice were enacted on the same day as the McLennan work was being discussed in the press and radio, and a day after Scott Parkin was deported. The spontaneity of exchange via the free use of technology at one's disposal acts as a happy counter weight to what is a reoccurring and disturbing drift in our political and cultural life. Benjamin was attempting to theorize a way of working,

a way of thinking that was other than one based in fascistic structures, in opposition to fascism. He suggested film was the contemporary medium to counter the rise of oppressive ideologies. This in itself has not been the case. Neither is the rise of any new technology, which has no neutrality. Text messages are to be monitored in Thailand, where they have been a source of political organization. Monitoring, attempted freedom, attempted freedom, monitoring.

With these new legislations and acts of violence we react, repeating perhaps those totalities that would enact themselves upon us. It is not the object of the emails, the bag and its bomb, or the technologies themselves for me that break these cycles, it is the humour, the attempts at open dialogue and the thinking these exchanges raise.

#### Notes

1. "Eichmann in his trial oscillated between the virtues and vices of blind obedience, or obedience of corpses, *Kadavergehorsam*, as he himself called it." Hannah Arendt, *Eichman in Jerusalem*, Penguin Books, New York, 1969, p135.
2. Walter Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction, Illuminations, Essays and Reflections*, Schocken Books, New York, 1969, p218.
3. *The Age* newspaper, 17 month? Saturday, 2005, p7.
4. See *the Age* newspaper article by Royce Millar and Lauren Martin, September 16, 2005, and interview on *The World Today* ABC Radio, 16 September also, between interviewer Lynn Bell, Azlan McLennan and Gary Singer from the MCC.
5. Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity, an essay on exteriority*, Duquesne University Press, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, 1969, p21.



WWW.NATURAL SELECTION, THE NAR, WWW.THE VIRE CO. UK, DAVID TOOP: OCEAN OF SOUND CLUSTER, A YEAR WITH SWOLLEN APPENDICES, BRIAN ENO'S DIARY, SOCIETY OF THE SPECTACULAR, WWW.CLUBS PROJECTS.ORG, ALL, BECCA MIRA GROVE: TEST RECORDS, ENGLISH CUSTOMS OF THE MODERN AGES: THIS BROKE, PRUVST, WWW.RESIDUAL FM.COM, RICK SYLVE FINERY, WWW.PROBABLY.COM/PROJECT/ANR/HAV-club-top.html, the Breeder's system.com, Jamis Varelas, ZYMUNT BAUMAN, gizgole.com, 3shotbar.com, THE MANY AL (How to have a NUMBER OF THE EASY WAY, Jimmy Cauty + Bill Drummond, CROWD OF POWER: CONCERT, WWW.INTERTELLASSIC.COM, DAFT PUNK.COM, FAUST, MOLLUSKS, HEXAGON STATE, HTTP://WWW.JOURNALOFFASTARTISANDS.COM, MARY, ROBERT FRITZ, BLANKA HESTER, PIZZA, KING BOY D, PHILIP MALOWIC, MOMIN TRAILS, STRING THEORY, BUCKHART ECKE, GROVE (GARY), WWW.SIDE.COM, ALL, PARABLES OF THE VIRTUAL, HTTP://WWW.SOCIALFUNCTIONS.ORG/PSYCHOGRAPHICAL/HOWIES.HTML, LIPSTICK TRACES, MICK ROSE, SHIRLEY COLLINS, FLAT FACE, CRYPTIC, HTTP://WWW.EUPHONIA.ORG/STEPEN MOISE, BOTAILLE THEY, UMMA SYMMA, VENTURE, SIS/LIC/ XHADA, The goldenbough, JG Ballard, ROXY MUSIC, HILMA AF KINT, SLITS, MASS, MATSUKA EYE: BOREDOM, NANNYMANNO, WEYOW, VOORADERS, HABITRASH, VIRILIO, MANSUVA, IOTUS, WWW.PAPA.COM, SEAN BAILEY, BUCKHART ECKE, GROVE (GARY), BUCKDICE, WWW.EVERYWHEREVIEW.COM, MARY, ROBERT FRITZ, BLANKA HESTER, PIZZA, KING BOY D, PHILIP MALOWIC, MOMIN TRAILS, STRING THEORY, BUCKHART ECKE, GROVE (GARY), MEDIA IS THE MESSAGE, WWW.EVERYWHEREVIEW.COM, MARY, ROBERT FRITZ, BLANKA HESTER, PIZZA, KING BOY D, PHILIP MALOWIC, MOMIN TRAILS, STRING THEORY, BUCKHART ECKE, GROVE (GARY), MCKENZIE, BLISS: BOX 6386, Albany California CA 94706, COSELNICE, FAIRPICKEN, BAYNILL, EDWARD, DELUCE, ELK, RED HICKORY, CUSHION PLANTS, GOOGLE MAPS, MCKENZIE, REBECCA WEST BLACK PAPER.COM, XHADA, THE GOLDENBOUGH, JG BALLARD, ROXY MUSIC, HILMA AF KINT, SLITS, MASS, MCKENZIE, BLISS: BOX 6386, Albany California CA 94706, COSELNICE, FAIRPICKEN, BAYNILL, EDWARD, DELUCE, ELK, RED HICKORY, CUSHION PLANTS, GOOGLE MAPS, MCKENZIE, REBECCA 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1. Forget my point

christopher [G.H.] [L]



## Lists

the flying doctors  
Dino Stomino  
Fruit market mafia  
Slutbugger  
Grace Jones  
Arch Bishop  
Jason H Christ  
Boobs  
PLEANASTICS  
Fucked-up for attention

chilli ~~plant~~

pot plant and chair  
Jellyfishes  
Rose with abstraction  
thick black line  
rats (domestic + wild)  
rainbow lorikeet  
Sparky

don-dons  
Salmon steak  
Self-saucing choc  
pudding  
Katsu Curry  
tempen  
Roast chicken  
Bread & butter  
pudding  
choc and real  
banana milkshake.

At-line drive-in in/casino/ark  
Murder City devils - Broken  
Bottles Empty Hearts  
Shellack 7 1/2  
Heaven or Las Vegas - Cocteau  
Twins  
Chocolate & cheese - veen  
Can't stop it comp  
Q and not V - different damage  
Kiosk 7"

Gerhard Richter  
Matthew Barney  
Richard Artschwager  
Jeff Koons  
Andy Warhol  
Jack and Dinos cheppin  
Sylvie Fleury

Paris Hilton  
Bjork  
Will Oldham  
Woody  
James Lynch

mini grater  
juicer  
telephone  
DVD extras  
big Mugs  
OH! BELGIUM 7" cover  
+ record.  
Interviews/articles  
from comets

Bad drugs  
poisoned food  
condoms  
Market research  
coffee come-down  
Dorian (Ian's stupid bird)  
batteries with no charge  
rent

**HAIR OF CAPITALISM**

SEMOTEXT 16

- vi. Cloudveil BPK3 Jacket
- vii. Well made grey jeans which fit (smooth, tough grey drill, not mottled denim)
- viii. A simple but elegant knee-length, long-sleeved dress of dove-grey woolen jersey lined with water-green silk, tailored to me
- ix. A well-fitting, bone-white linen shirt with a collar which does not fold over and does not have points
- x. An endless supply of comfortable underwear and black cotton stockings

9. Top 20 animals (for today – and in no particular order)

- i. Crocodiles
- ii. Emus
- iii. Flightless wrens (formerly of NZ, now extinct)
- iv. Tasmanian tigers
- v. Geese of all varieties
- vi. Land tortoises
- vii. Humpback whales
- viii. Woodpeckers
- ix. Sloths of all varieties
- x. Tortigrades (moss-piglets)
- xi. Porpoises
- xii. Electric eels
- xiii. Angler fish
- xiv. Cod
- xv. Jellyfish of all varieties
- xvi. Bisen
- xvii. All animals which employ ingenious disguise mechanisms
- xviii. Diacunculosis (guinea-worms)
- xix. Beavers
- xx. Ternites

10. Menu for last meal on deathrow

- i. A companion (not to eat, but to converse with)
- ii. A fresh, organically grown pink lady apple
- iii. A large bottle of good quality sake
- iv. A zesty green salad laced with saliva divinorum
- v. Fresh oysters topped with grated cucumber and fresh lime juice
- vi. Duck with figs
- vii. Freshly boiled plum pudding with fresh chilled cream
- viii. A small portion of my own flesh simmered in the tears of my executioner (If I'm about to die – why not?)
- ix. Fresh lychees sprinkled with moon dust
- x. A soft but vital component of the machine which has been nominated to end my life (obtained clandestinely by the friendly chef), in tempura batter with a light miso sauce

- iii. Marc Camille Chaimowicz
- iv. Ernesto Calvano
- v. Mark Leckey
- vi. Erik Orlsen
- vii. Hilma Af Klint
- viii. John Giorno
- ix. Paul Noble
- x. Matthew Buckingham

b. Top 10 films (for now – no particular order)

- i. Themroc
- ii. Fitzcarraldo
- iii. Where the green ants dream
- iv. Warm Shuffy
- v. The Return
- vi. Kes
- vii. Sedmikrasky
- viii. Dawn of the Dead
- ix. Beyond the Pale
- x. Reflections of Evil

c. Top 10 incidental objects

- i. Moulinex vegetable slicer/shredder
- ii. crumhorn
- iii. terrariums
- iv. large detailed globes of the earth
- v. Macpac camping equipment
- vi. The submarines invented by Narcis Montutal
- vii. Anechoic chamber foam spikes
- viii. Well made drawing paper
- ix. Pencil sharpeners
- x. Seed balls

7. Worst 10 list

- i. 'Super power' countries
- ii. Bureaucracy
- iii. Capitalism/Industrialization
- iv. Selfish greed
- v. Pursuit of material luxury/belief that it is a need
- vi. Falsity
- vii. Manipulative people
- viii. Laziness
- ix. Ego
- x. Other species becoming extinct because of humans

8. Ultimate wardrobe top 10 garments

- i. Moss-green woolen balacava
- ii. Slate grey pure wool thermals (including a kidney-warmer)
- iii. Weatherproofed, stitched grey desert boots
- iv. Black leather silk-lined driving gloves
- v. A sturdy, dark grey straight-cut waist-length jacket which is warm but not thick, has no collar but a high neck-line

- ii. Mine own true love
- iii. Oliver Kellhammer
- iv. Buckminster Fuller
- v. Bill Mollison
- vi. David Allen
- vii. Chris Marker
- viii. Avon from Bikes 7 (Surely if I can re-incarnate people then I can transmute fictional characters into actual ones?)
- ix. Roger Cullin
- x. Ingmar Bergman

4. a. The list of songs on a mixtape you are making for a lover

- i. Teenage Lightning P12 - Coil
- ii. Last Great Wilderness (side B) - The Pastels
- iii. The Magpie's Nest - Shirley Collins
- iv. Pissed up in SE1 - Aphex Twin
- v. Hanky Panky Know How - John Cale
- vi. If there be something - Roxy Music
- vii. Third Uncle - Brian Eno
- viii. Looking Up - Tir Na Nog
- ix. Barley and the Rye - Bill Jones
- x. Cool Black Smith - Current 93

b. The list of songs on a mixtape you are making for a roadtrip

- i. March of the White Barbarians/Why? - Donateller
- ii. Master of the Universe - Hawkwind
- iii. Esbår - Grauzone
- iv. The Garden of Jane Delawney - Trees
- v. Life like a life - Shit 'n' Shine
- vi. Let's go to Australia - Vivid Millia
- vii. Party 8 - Faust
- viii. Rowche Rumble - The Fall
- ix. Ghetto Raga - Third Ear Band
- x. I Confess - Dorothy

5. 10 tattoos you are considering getting

- i. Small white carbon molecule
- ii. Small white filled-in circle
- iii. " " empty circle
- iv. " " empty hexagon
- v. " " empty triangle
- vi. " " empty nonagon
- vii. Measurements of cm and inches along forearm
- viii. Fahrenheit to Celsius conversion table
- ix. Small false mole on my face (though I recently met someone who had one of these)
- x. Blocked out soles of feet

6. a. Top 10 artists (for now - and in no particular order)

- i. Neo Rauch
- ii. Lucy McKenzie

1. List 10 band names you have toyed with, or at some time contemplated using

- i. Mogenbrot Youth
- ii. Miras
- iii. Bad touch (not my name, but a band I was going to be in)
- iv. 3MBS
- v. That's about it I'm afraid

2. Top 10 lists

- i. Favourite ten recipes
- ii. Current favourite words
- iii. Last 10 films seen
- iv. Last 10 books read
- v. Last 10 google searches you did
- vi. Subjects of the last 10 emails you received
- vii. Ten things currently on your bedroom floor
- viii. Last 10 meals you ate
- ix. Last 5 things you bought which cost \$100 or more
- x. Five most interesting writers you are aware of

3. You are trapped on a deserted island for the rest of eternity with a solar powered record player. You can bring:

- a. 10 books
  - i. Gravity's Rainbow - Thomas Pynchon
  - ii. The Golden Bough (complete version) - J G Frazer
  - iii. The Palm Wine Drinkard and My Life in the Bush Of Ghosts - Amos Tutuola
  - iv. The Terminal Beach - J G Ballard
  - v. Vais - Philip K Dick
  - vi. The Re-Search Book of Pranks
  - vii. So Shall We Reap - Colin Tudge
  - viii. The Complete Oxford English Dictionary
  - ix. A large, blank book
  - x. A book on propagation of edible plants in a desert environment

b. 10 records

- i. A record of frequencies which will attract fish to the shore (Possibly Primal Image by Alan Lamb?)
- ii. An electric storm in Hell - White Noise
- iii. Roxy Music - Roxy Music
- iv. Paris 1919 - John Cale
- v. Dagnel - The Fall
- vi. either they were wrong so we drowned - Liers or Spideland - Slint
- vii. either The Garden of Jane Delawney - Trees or Tir Na Nog - Tir Na Nog
- viii. Beethoven's Appassionata/Moonlight Sonata (It's a particular performance of it but I don't have the pianist's name at hand)
- ix. First Ufferance - Carnus
- x. Something that I've been recommended but never listened to. Maybe one of Circle's albums.

c. 10 people living or incarnate

- i. John Maissen

- ii. Mine own true love
- iii. Oliver Kellhammer
- iv. Buckminster Fuller
- v. Bill Mollison
- vi. David Allen
- vii. Chris Marker
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- v. Hanky Panky Know How - John Cale
- vi. If there be something - Roxy Music
- vii. Third Uncle - Brian Eno
- viii. Looking Up - Tir Na Nog
- ix. Barley and the Rye - Bill Jones
- x. Coal Black Smith - Current 93

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- iv. The Terminal Beach - J G Ballard
- v. Vails - Phillip K Dick
- vi. The Re/Search Book of Pranks
- vii. So Shall We Reap - Colin Tudge
- viii. The Complete Oxford English Dictionary
- ix. A large, blank book
- x. A book on propagation of edible plants in a desert environment

b. 10 records

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- ii. An electric storm in Hell - White Noise
- iii. Roxy Music - Roxy Music
- iv. Paris 1919 - John Cale
- v. Dragnet - The Fall
- vi. either they were wrong so we drowned - Lias or Spiderland - Sinit
- vii. either The Garden of Jane Delawney - Trees or Tir Na Nog - Tir Na Nog
- viii. Beethoven's Apassionata/Moonlight Sonata (it's a particular performance of it but I don't have the pianist's name at hand)
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- i. John Mairden



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**Date:** Thu, 9 Jun 2005 21:13:55 +1000  
**From:** [redacted]  
**To:** [redacted]  
**Subject:** list

here it is!!

Top 10 lists

BBC Extra Hip Hop chart with Rodney P and Skitz  
 BBC Extra Dancehall chart with Robbo Ramx  
 Australian Art Collector 50 most collectable artists  
 BRW Rich list  
 And everyone's personal hot and not

10 records  
 xmas mix  
 wu-tang/taskforce mix  
 commercial hip hop mix  
 Horne's 80s mix  
 Cee Dee  
 Heart of the Congos - The Congos  
 Dr Dre 2001 Chronic

10 Books  
 Hatred of Capitalism  
 Henry Lawson Collected stories  
 101 of growing it and smoking it  
 Deleuze and Guattari stuff

10 people living or reincarnate  
 The people I love  
 10 tattoos  
 a hammer  
 a dogs face  
 a cats face

a mull leaf  
 a triangle  
 a rectangle  
 "hate"  
 An X  
 3 X's  
 10 artists/artworks  
 Olivier mosset  
 Sisloj Khafa  
 Jota Castro  
 Gabriel Orozco  
 Vivienne Binns  
 Giovanni Intra  
 Dan Graham  
 Juan Cespedes  
 Ester Partegas  
 10 designs designers  
 Clement Meadmore  
 Etore Sottsass  
 Archizoom  
 Superstudio  
 Joe Colombo  
 Venturi  
 10 incidental objects  
 toothbrush  
 soapholder  
 table  
 couch  
 clothes  
 backpack  
 pen  
 computer  
 modem  
 bike  
 tram  
 car  
 ultimate wardrobe  
 t-shirt  
 jumper  
 coat  
 boxer shorts  
 jeans  
 socks  
 runners  
 gloves  
 hat  
 long sleeve tshirt  
 top animals  
 beagle  
 cat  
 scotty dog  
 big dog  
 little dog  
 birds in positions 6-16  
 possums  
 echidna's  
 wombats  
 kangaroos

1. Al. Jane & the notorious V.I.V.  
La Concrete  
The Pine Cones  
Furniture  
Pepsi Max  
Homing Device  
Synthesator Maniac  
Etiquette  
Bubble-O  
Viscer of Malice

2. Most memorable dreams  
Earliest memories  
Favourite Children's book characters  
Most annoying habits of yr loved one  
Most significant events of yr life  
Things you need to experience before you die  
Lives you wish you led  
Earliest Crushes  
Most secret secrets  
Positions in a one night stand

- A. Ena - Another Green World  
Add N to X - On the Wires of our Nerves  
Pink Floyd - Umma Gomma  
MLA - Avogadro  
Deerhoof - Milkman  
Fischer & Spooner - #1  
The Clash - London Calling  
Silver Mt. Zion - We have left us alone....  
New - New  
Mo Fo Rah - Don't think of piglets foraging for truffles in the undergrowth

- B. David Malouf - An Imaginary Life  
J.K. Huysmans - Against Nature  
Georges Perec - Life a User's Manual  
Delouze & Guattari - 1000 Plateaus  
Brian Massumi - Parables for the Virtual  
Luce Irigaray - Speculum of the Other Woman  
Elizabeth Grosz - Architecture from the outside  
Astrid Lindgren - Pippi Longstocking  
Rimbaud - Complete Works  
Debord - Society of the Spectacle

- C. Björk  
Chloe Sevigny  
Christopher L.G. Hill  
Buckminster Fuller  
Vivian Westwood  
Vesna (Chris points out she has a bit of meat on her, after all)  
Nefertiti  
David Lynch  
RZA

- 4A. Look into the light light light  
by the hairs on repeat until the end.

- B. Look into the light light light  
by the hairs on repeat the whole way.

5. Shymata  
Classical medical diagram of a congenital disposition

5. Shymata  
Classical Medical diagram of a congenital transposition of the heart.  
Spores  
"Chris' Bitch"  
Oh yeah I wanted Japanese calligraphy like everyone else in that narrow window of opportunity between the release of 'The Pillow Book' & when Baby Spice did it

6. Jake & Dinos  
Thomas Hirschhorn  
Matthew Barney  
Ed Ruscha  
Barbara Kruger  
Anakaawa & Gino  
Takashi Murakami  
Olaf Breuning  
Christopher L.G. Hill

- 6.A. Atelier Bow Wow  
Eileen Gray  
Bernhard Wilhelm  
Nipple chair people  
Droog  
Buckminster Fuller  
Chanel  
Walter van Belderstock  
Chutes on speed  
Archis

- 6.B. Crochet blankets  
clouds  
unmarked vans  
bicycles  
cuckoo clocks  
glass bricks  
banana lounges  
macramé  
straws

7. Positions in a one night stand  
Reasons to kill yourself  
Reasons to kill yr boyfriend/girlfriend  
Reasons to kill yr mum  
Favourite Ads  
Hottest people you know  
Hottest poo  
Chat up lines  
Prospective Pops

8. Blouse with puffed sleeves in a solid colour, but a clear, bright one.  
skirt in the same material; worn together, they become a dress  
Vivian Westwood bomber jacket  
Tengue's Wedding outfit  
Swan Dress of Björk/Marlene Dietrich (as Tai was telling me)  
Fred Perry polo shirt (transcends even the 6 months ahead 6 months behind)  
Claude Mause hooded leather jacket  
I CONY tee (courtesy of Romy)  
Print leggings + white hi-tops  
Dior chunky bangles

9. Black Chihuahua (short hair)  
Fawn chihuahua (long short hair)  
Baby elephant  
Snowy owl  
sugar glider  
dingo  
echidna  
butterflies  
blue wren  
peacocks  
pandas  
deer  
bats  
baby giraffe  
chameleon  
urang urang  
vacaon  
otter  
snow leopard  
foxes

10. one fuck of bottle of scotch.

Google Maps on Satellite	Jim Ballard	arts Backgammon	Echidna
Cursing	Noel Coward	Prince Charles	Elk
Nunamara	Celia Green	Sir Francis Dashwood	Human Sureness
B. Davis	Radiation E.P.	Shoes	Psychotic motivation
The King in Yellow	ABC testpattern	Music	Faith
An eternal golden braid	Spade	10 Plants	Extinction
Siwsann George	Prince Jazzbo	Rod Dickenson	Meretricious Motivation
The Medaevil Sound	10 memories	Cushion plants	Arms manufacturers
Seven Pillars of Wisdom	The Street of our lady of the field	Platypus	Tasmanian <del>Forest</del> Politics
Compleat Saki	Austin Osmond Spare	Format importance	Giant Tas Freshwater lobster
A short tunic of dull red	Obelisque	Cricklewood	10 ideas
with a long gracefull mantle	Computer	Sackbut Electronic	The Bungip replacing christmas
that could be detached at will,	Giant Moth found in Thailand	Harpsichord	Black Cockatoo
since it was fastened with two	Rainforest being logged. No	Moleclamps	B7
clasps of carven silver at the	others found and that one	Ropes	James Tilley Matthews
shoulder.	taken away.	Curiosity	Luey McKenzie
Jim Cauty	10 smells	Cheese	Ring tones
Tree Kangaroo	The long goodbye	Words	T.N. S.G.
potaroo	SQ10 + MS20	Colours	T.N.W.R.A. or south
Pink robin	Quartz C. from Childhood	Sounds	Frogs
John Christopher	Exquisite Pannic	Touch	Camouflage Schemes
Defence Signals Directorate	Facial expressions	Motion	Emperor gummoth.
Rabbit	Piemar River	Longitude 51°40' Lat 4°40'	Turo
Duck	1km North of The Great Lake	Lists	Shirley Collins - Down in you

Helen Johnson	Dennis Potter	Vlad Nabo	The Creeping Nobodies
Berry Wall king of the dandys	Mt Barrow	Hexen Schule	Unit Delta Plus
Damask white	Peatina	Captain Starlight	Cymru Dagblow Nes
Azure bleue	Corina	Matthew Brady	Major Dunsannys Group
Well diapered with	Quamby	Nick Roeg	Flabby Wings
lillies new	Dry's Bluff	Where The Green Ants Dream	Flogan on Sea
Barbette	Mussel Row Bay	King Bog D	Desmond Briscoe
Crespine	Liffey	Phillip Marlowe	The Deep Fix
Vellet tunic & mantle	Lot's Wife	R.W. Chambers	Horse Lover Fat
Baudekyn	Blackwood Creek	Longhaired Kangaroo	Martin Tressider
Sawite	Ropes	Swamp Harrier	The Barney Bubbles Band
Cendal	Dugong	Badger	Glasspack
A star chart made of moles	Peter Zinovieff	The merry widow	M.R. James
The soundwaves	Tristram Carey	Dugong	A. Machen
10 new writers	D. Derbyshire	Tom Pynchon	C.A. Smith
Chris morris	10 newly discovered animals	Ceephax	A. Bierce
A good cup of tea or coffe	The unfortunate Traveller	Axe	Faulish Wives
B. Holiday	My good knife	Telescope	R. Totalle
The Paris sisters	How to teach your parrot to talk	Puffins	Queen Betty
Centrafique	Grotesque	Cats	Ker Avon
things near and far	C.O.B.	Sea lion	Patrick Magoshan
Tutola	S.A.S. handbook	Scottish W. Hound	C. Wilson
Hector Hugh Munroe	Scarlati Harpsichord Sonatas	Soliton	C. Selfs
Daphne oram	Oh Whistle & others.	Hertzog	A High Hum of Pure Agony
	10 Places to go.		Famous Apes



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