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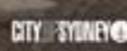
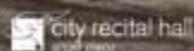
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BY HILARY BELL



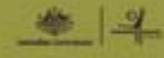
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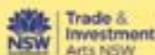
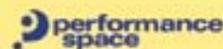
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10 AUGUST - 16 SEPTEMBER

# Everything Falls Apart

Part II:

Vernon Ah Kee  
Zanny Begg &  
Oliver Ressler  
Jem Cohen  
Tony Garifalakis  
Merata Mita

28 SEPTEMBER - 14 OCTOBER

# Gap Year

Peter Blamey  
Mitchel Spider Cumming  
Francesca Heinz  
Jesse Hogan  
Kusum Normoyle  
Baden Pailthorpe  
Zoe Robertson  
Marilyn Schneider  
Paul Williams

Gap Year is generously supported by the  
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ARTSPACE is assisted by the New South Wales Government through Arts NSW and by the Australian Government through the Australia Council, its principal arts funding body.

ARTSPACE is a member of CAOs (Contemporary Art Organisations Australia) and Res Arts (International Association of Residential Art Centres).

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Image: Tony Garifalakis, *Anti Christs (detail)*, 2012.  
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in congratulating **Jacob Leary**, the winner of the 2012 John Fries Memorial Prize for emerging visual artists for his work *Technological Causality*. We also congratulate the outstanding finalists in what was a very talented field.

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Kate Shaw (Commended)  
Jacqueline Bradley  
Georgina Cue  
Wanda Gillespie  
Catherine Hockey  
Fiona Jack  
Adam Laerkesen  
Owen Leong  
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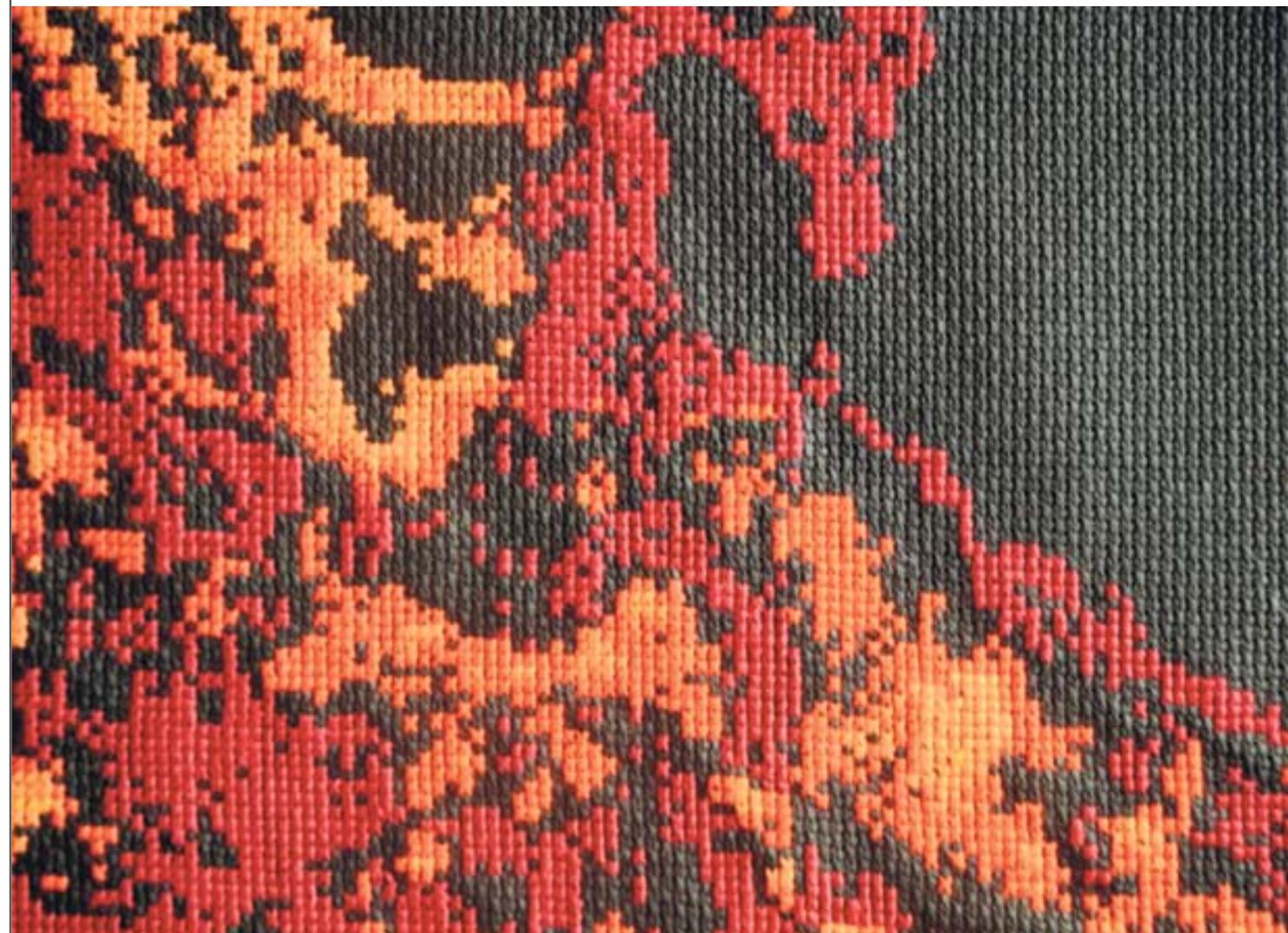
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**PRINTING** SPOTPRESS

**dasSUPERPAPER** ISSUE 24  
 AUGUST 2012. 10,000 COPIES.

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ISSN 1837-0373  
 PRINT POST APPROVED  
 PP: 255003/10007

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#### THANKS

DAS SUPERPAPER WOULD LIKE TO THANK  
 ALL CONTRIBUTING WRITERS, ARTISTS &  
 GALLERIES FOR THEIR GENEROUS SUPPORT.  
 THANKS ALSO GO TO GARY CARSLY FOR HIS  
 ADVICE AND SUPERVISION, AND BRONWYN  
 BAILEY-CHARTERIS FOR HER SUPPORT.

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 GAY SCENE IN THE 1970S AND 1980S.

# SEMANTIC NETWORKS

## FOREWORD FROM THE EDITORS

In its initial conception, this issue of Das Superpaper was going to investigate the very special relationship between the visual arts and literature. As the issue developed we realised this was a somewhat slippery question, so to organise our ideas we turned to our faithful friend: the mind map. As we drew dots and arrows, we started thinking about mind maps generally, and how they related to our question about visual arts and literature. Diagrams that visually map information have been around for centuries, of course, but since the development of the internet, they've evolved into huge and unwieldy beasts. Google maintains a semantic network (that's a fancy name for a mind map) with more than 500 million objects and 3.5 billion connections between them.

Throughout the 90s, there were scholars who thought that the internet was going to radically alter literature, encouraging a kind of multiply hyperlinked narrative that would allow you to duck and weave through the pages like a very advanced find-your-own-adventure novel. At the time, this probably felt like a natural progression for literature; the visual arts had been engaging directly with audiences for decades and hypertext provided a means for literature to do the same. But after 20+ years of this technology, literature still hasn't invited the audience in to the extent that the visual arts has. There may be different logically cohesive ways to arrange an exhibition, but can we have a coherent text if each new reading transforms it into a new literary object?

We open this issue by asking curators to reflect on the literary-type devices they use to present exhibitions. Given the way that exhibitions unfold – spatially rather than linearly, experientially rather than literally – it's not surprising that they turn to metaphors of maps, architecture and spiderwebs in their discussions.

Later in the issue, we focus in greater depth on some specific relationships between visual artists and the written word, with essays on Oscar Wilde's *The Critic as Artist*, Fluxist text scores, the visual arts legacy of Samuel Beckett, and the spilt paint within Patrick White's *The Vivisector*. We feature profiles on a selection of contemporary Australian artists who engage with the logic of performance, including Heath Franco, Stuart Ringholt and Marcin Wojcik. In specially commissioned artist pages, Wil Loeng responds to *The Decameron*, and Gregory and Watts explore Sydney's public art (with audio guides available by scanning the QR tags).

At the point of going to print, our investigation of the relationship between literature and the visual arts is more convoluted than ever. There are so many arrows covering our mind map that we can barely see the dots anymore, and there are still hundreds that we've left out. But then again, incompleteness is the whole point of a mind map – it's the ultimate case of the map not equalling the territory. In the meantime, though, happy exploring.

**ROBYN STUART & NICK GARNER**

# CURATORS ROUNDTABLE

## AARON SEETO, AMANDA ROWELL AND MARK FEARY

### AARON SEETO, DIRECTOR OF 4A CENTRE FOR CONTEMPORARY ASIAN ART, SYDNEY

The recent 4A Emerging Curators Intensive brought a group of young curators together for a workshop led by one of the foremost artists, critics, educators and sometimes curator in contemporary China – Qiu Zhijie. Over the week, we discussed the practice of curating: how exhibitions are made, what they mean, the forms they take, and the types of relationship required to develop them. In one of our first exercises the group mapped out the typologies of that behemoth of curatorial practice: the biennale. In doing so, we began to see a curious shifting between two fundamental forms: one which privileges the role of the artist in its genesis (art begins with artists, artists respond to our questions) and another which makes a firmer link between the exhibition and a more literary 'discourse' of art history, sociology, philosophy, literature and so on – an exhibition practice driven by books.

At another point in the week, our conversation turned to collections: how they are formed, their narratives, their legitimising function and the ways in which these narratives are protected. At this point it's remarked how easily the noise and context of a city gets overridden by an international language. When artist Gary Carsley asks in one of our discussions "is there a grammar, syntax or punctuation to curatorial practice?" it's hard to deny that there is. For better or worse, a structure governs how exhibitions are put together in particular institutions, at particular times. In this use of art and artist as ontology, the impossible question is: how responsive is this form of exhibition-making to what's outside the institution? How is it reflective of real life? Whose story is being told? As a reflection of the networked, intercultural and diverse contexts of our lives, seeing artists as standing in for some greater narrative is so different to the social flux and transformation which drives a lot of the work of the artists I know.

So how then to deal with narrative? Perhaps it's a question of syntax? To understand the need to be nonsensical, to be un-syntactic, and in doing so, creating or even forcing new considerations of meanings.

### AMANDA ROWELL, DIRECTOR OF THE COMMERCIAL GALLERY, SYDNEY

In the same way that the construction of sentences (as representative of linguistic units in general) involves syntagmatic and paratactic decision-making, so too does the process of selecting artists and art works for an exhibition and arranging them in relation to each other in space and within an architectural context. And there are etymological considerations. Hopefully the outcome of each decision at each step feels both natural and surprising, drawing out the innate characteristics of each individual element in a way that is more powerful than that thing in isolation, much like a good sentence. It is explanation and

puzzlement all at once. The process can favour formal or colloquial turns of phrase and different verbal forms. I suspect, however, that the process of installing an exhibition tends toward the imperative mood, given that artists and objects are so demanding, a kind of, "Look at me." And then there's all the enriching, non-linguistic 'interruption' of language like coughing, laughing, slurring.

### MARK FEARY, CURATOR AT ARTSPACE, SYDNEY

A narrative manifests in quite a different way within a gallery space than it does within a text. The narrative of an exhibition is cumulative and experiential; it unfolds spatially as the audience navigates through the gallery. This is in contrast to a text: as much as a text might weave in and out of characters, concepts and times, it can really only be read in one direction.

Within a group exhibition context, I'm always very conscious to allow an autonomy of each artist's work, to give each work the infrastructural and spatial requirements that best serve it, while also acknowledging its existence within a wider collective or conceptual framework. The relationships between particular works are quite consciously teased out from a curatorial perspective. The space between the works is a new space that enables a shift between different frameworks when moving between artists' works. Curatorially, the concern is how you create that journey – and it's quite a physical journey, not only an aesthetic one – and how you tease out the relationships between works.

An exhibition's strength is always built on its constituent works – no exhibition is ever better or more interesting than its particular works. But a narrative can form between those works in a spatial and conceptual sense. In *Everything Falls Apart: Part 2*, Tony Garifalakis' work is reiterated in a number of positions throughout the gallery space. We wanted his work to be reprised within the gallery in a way that references its source material [his works superimpose adhesive slogans taken from self-help manuals onto found paper shooting targets]. The figures in his work resemble targets that might pop up around, say, a SWAT training facility. And as you navigate throughout the space, Garifalakis' works keep popping up, evoking the sense of being a potential victim – a sense that reoccurs throughout the course of walking through the spatial dimensions of the gallery.

# HOW TO READ AN INTERVIEW WITH STUART RINGHOLT

BY TIM SPENCER

**1. PUT THE MAGAZINE DOWN AND CONSIDER YOUR LOCATION.**

**2. IMAGINE THE MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART. PICTURE THE WHITE WALLS AND CONCRETE FLOORS WITH INTERMITTENT WINDOWS LOOKING OUT ONTO THE ROCKS, OR THE HARBOUR. THEN IMAGINE THE LOFT OF A WORKSHOP IN A SUBURB OF MELBOURNE WITH A TABLE AND WORKS IN PROGRESS STREWN AROUND THE WALLS. IT IS RAINING LIGHTLY AND YOU CAN HEAR THE WATER HITTING THE ROOF. THIS IS WHERE THE INTERVIEW TOOK PLACE.**

**3. DO SOMETHING UNEXPECTED. LIVE YOUR LIFE STRANGELY FOR THE FEW MINUTES IT WILL TAKE TO READ THE ARTICLE. A FEW SUGGESTIONS: IF YOU ARE AT HOME, TAKE YOUR CLOTHES OFF AND READ THE ARTICLE NAKED. IF YOU ARE AT A CAFE GIVE YOURSELF A MILK MOUSTACHE. IF YOU ARE ON PUBLIC TRANSPORT, READ IT ALOUD.**

**4. START READING THE INTERVIEW.**

THE SEMINAR ROOM WAS LIKE MANY OTHER SEMINAR ROOMS, EXCEPT THAT IT WAS FULL OF NAKED PEOPLE. SOME MADE A LITTLE TOWER OF JEANS AND CARDIGANS BUILT ON TOP OF THEIR SHOES. OTHERS WERE FASTER TO JETTISON THEIR CLOTHING. A MAN'S COLLECTION OF CHANGE EXPLODED NEXT TO MY FOOT AS HE UPENDED HIS JEANS. THE ROOM WAS A BLANK SLATE OF TIME AND PLACE WHERE THE LOSS OF EACH ITEM OF CLOTHING GAVE A FULLER REALISATION OF WHAT WE HAD ALL AGREED TO DO. WE WERE NAKED, WE DIDN'T KNOW EACH OTHER AND WE WERE IN THE MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART.

**The naturist tours require a big commitment from your audience. How does that happen?**

How the work largely operates I think, is that I ask a question. I'm really asking a question of everyone – will you take your clothes off in public? The majority of people probably think, could I do that? Would I take my clothes off? No. Yes. I'm not too sure. And so the primary audience I think is the audience that hears that question, and the audience gets split into people that book and participate. And it's a participatory work. It requires your commitment and I guess some spiritual or emotional commitment. The notion of splitting the spectator is really quite interesting. You create many audiences for your work.

**At the same time as it creates many audiences, your work invites the spectators to become performers. How did you arrive at this particular relationship to the audience in your work?**

For me personally it came out of a question. It was after doing this series of works where I intentionally embarrassed myself in public. I learned a hell of a lot about my body and how fear manifested in my body. Then an arts writer said 'Stuart, you say your work is really practical and it's really useful and it can change your life. How can it change the spectator's life?' It was a great question and I had no answer for her. But I listened to her. I thought, well let's see. How is it useful to the audience? Well, it's probably not. But let's make it. Doing the anger workshops I ask what people think. And I try and listen, as hard as that is sometimes. It may help, and it may change the work. There is a breakdown between who's the performer and who's the authority. Artists are increasingly working in this way, and they have to. Because people don't like to be bored. Artists don't and the audiences don't. They want new experiences.

*A few unexpected things happen to you as you stand naked in an art gallery. Your posture gets better and you make eye contact with everyone. When you are desperate not to appear unduly interested in the particulars of anyone's body, the eyes become a safe haven. This creates a gentle atmosphere of courtesy and generosity. I turned corners and stumbled upon another naked person with a nod, or knowing smile. Most importantly it was fun. I had my willy out at the MCA.*

**Why look at artwork naked?**

Certain artists would be unnecessary to view without clothes, but geometric abstraction is great to view without clothes. Because you can experience colour quite physically and you can actually feel the vibration of the colour. The junctions of colour and those meeting points or those nodes, you can really consider those points quite carefully without clothes. When you're in the gallery, if someone is wearing a red jumper or a yellow jumper it becomes a pollution of colour. It also reduces the body down to a monochromatic tone as well, which isn't really of colour. I was encouraging people to feel Robert Owen's painting [*Sunrise #3, 2006*] without touching. People had their arms up in the air. Maybe that's what the naturist tours were about. Allowing you to feel. Not in a tactile way, but allowing you to feel the colour's vibration. Museums are stuffy. They don't need to be.

**Does the simplicity of the work attract you?**

Of course. It comes out of the minimal gesture. All of my gestures are very minimal. Less is more, I'm of that school. I think as an artist in these environmental times I don't like using many materials. That's what the naturist tours are about also, to create something collectively inside our bodies. You don't need anything. Generally I

can just come to the museum and just remove – you don't put on – you just remove. And that's liberating as an artist to be able to do that. To do something so simple.

**It seems like it is that simplicity that allows the show's complexity to develop.**

When everyone put their clothes on to leave in Brisbane after the first naked tour, the penny really did drop. And I thought, oh my gosh, how complex we are. How complex we are with the construction of our identity. And when everyone put all the clothes back on you were just like vroom, everyone's back on cultural line, back on the tracks. When everyone took all the clothes off, the only material left in the gallery, the synthetic stuff, is the artwork. So just get rid of all of that. We in the arts community have done that, whoever designed the museum, the directors, we've stripped it back to allow us to view the art and get rid of all the noise. By doing this, I'm continuing in that tradition, I think. We only reduced the architecture, we didn't reduce the viewer.

*The waiter was wearing a uniform but most of the naked tourists were already in the cafe so I wasn't too concerned. Apparently the guy had done well from the tours – some nude female participants had asked for his phone number last night. In the presence of a clothed staff member I felt like I was some religious zealot, serenely pitiful of their unenlightened adherence to clothing. I noticed that one gallery invigilator started their shift clothed but throughout the course of the evening the practical MCA pant suit soon puddled around her feet.*

**Did you find archetypes of people's behaviour during the tours?**

There was an archetype which was that people seemed generally very happy. That's what I felt, maybe it was just me. It's nice to talk to people after the tour. I like to talk to people. I like to talk to strangers. I always have. People don't like to reciprocate often. Which is absurd, really. We're the same. But there is a lot of repulsion in humanity. High school was always like that. There were groups. I was the person who wasn't in the group. I wasn't accepted in any group; I would brush off everybody. So mainly I'm just doing that. Continuing on in that lonely tradition.

•|• •/

STUART RINGHOLT  
PRECEDED BY A TOUR OF THE SHOW BY ARTIST STUART RINGHOLT,  
6-8PM (THE ARTIST WILL BE NAKED. THOSE WHO WISH TO JOIN  
THE TOUR MUST ALSO BE NAKED. ADULTS ONLY.)  
PERFORMANCE STILL, 2012; PART OF LOCAL POSITIONING SYSTEMS,  
PRESENTED BY THE MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART AUSTRALIA  
AND CURATED BY PERFORMANCE SPACE.  
IMAGE COURTESY OF PERFORMANCE SPACE, MILANI GALLERY AND  
THE ARTIST. © THE ARTIST PHOTO: CHRISTO CROCKER

/•

STUART RINGHOLT  
PRECEDED BY A TOUR OF THE SHOW BY ARTIST STUART RINGHOLT.  
(THE ARTIST WILL BE NAKED. THOSE WHO WISH  
TO JOIN THE TOUR MUST ALSO BE NAKED. ADULTS ONLY)  
PERFORMANCE STILL, MONA, HOBART, TASMANIA, JANUARY 2012.





# PATRICK WHITE AND FRANCIS BACON

BY KEVIN BRAZIL

THIS COMING NOVEMBER, THE FIRST MAJOR EXHIBITION OF FRANCIS BACON'S WORK IN AUSTRALIA WILL OPEN AT THE ART GALLERY OF NEW SOUTH WALES. *FRANCIS BACON: FIVE DECADES* WILL GATHER MORE THAN 50 WORKS FROM AROUND THE WORLD TO GIVE A FULL SENSE OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF HIS OFTEN NAKEDLY INTERTWINED LIFE AND WORK – A RARE OPPORTUNITY GIVEN THE ASTRONOMICAL PRICES BACON'S WORK FETCHES ON THE INTERNATIONAL ART MARKET. YET JUST OVER 40 YEARS AGO, BACON'S WORKS WERE THE INSPIRATION FOR ONE OF THE MOST AMBITIOUS EXPLORATIONS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LITERATURE AND PAINTING IN 20TH CENTURY WRITING: PATRICK WHITE'S *THE VIVISECTOR*.

In *The Vivisector*, Nobel prize-winning Australian author Patrick White casts a mercilessly un pitying eye back over his life, over the ghost of the painter that he “was not destined to become”, as he put it in his memoirs. A refracted portrait of himself, it is also a portrait of his city: “wet, boiling, superficial, brash, beautiful ugly Sydney”. Ultimately, it is a look back over the entire idea of the artist as God that had driven his career up to that point. Guillaume Apollinaire once said that “Picasso studies an object the way a surgeon dissects his corpse”. For White, the corpse is his own frustrated life, and it is unsurprising that it is Bacon's own surgically dissected and tortured bodies that hover behind the barbed prose of White's novel.

*The Vivisector* wasn't the first time White crossed paths with Bacon. In 1930s London, both had come under the mentorship of the Australian painter Roy de Maistre. It was de Maistre's abstract works that first inspired White to adopt a style he later called “the fragmentation by which I convey reality”. And it was de Maistre who transformed Bacon from a furniture designer into a painter, although it would take another decade of now destroyed canvases before Bacon, with his *Three Studies for Figures at the Base of a Crucifixion* (1944), would settle on his own style of fractured reality. At the time, however, nothing came of this chance encounter in the seedy bohemia of pre-war London that White depicted in his second novel, *The Living and the Dead* (1941). Other painters, most notably Sidney Nolan, became some of White's closest friends when he returned to live in Australia after the war, and artists such as Alf Dubbo appear in earlier works by White, for example *Riders in the Chariot* (1961).

But when he came to write *The Vivisector*, as he told his biographer David Marr, it was a sense of “Bacon-ish horror” that he wanted to get across in his fictional canvases. Since the novel is an autobiography of a fractured sort, it isn't too much of an indulgence to speculate on the similarities of the lives of Bacon and White. Both were raised in the upper classes of countries belonging to a decaying British Empire; both were homosexuals for whom inevitable repression found its way into their works through a recurring fixation with broken, disgusting bodies and the belief that even the most intimate forms of love can never be free of cruelty. One need only look at paintings such as *Two Figures* (1963) to see this played out in grim, masochistic streaks of paint. But it is in the novel itself that we must look for what it means to attempt to render Bacon's unique work in words, what it means to translate Bacon's fascination with self-portraiture into a novel in which the painter figure himself becomes a model for the writer.

Like all of White's major works, *The Vivisector* is a sprawling beast, the plot taking in suburban Sydney, 1920s Paris, 1950s high society, and an orthodox Greek monastery just for good measure. It's the kind of novel that Henry James would have referred to as a “large loose baggy monster”. James of course preferred to keep his narratives primly focalised and polished, and something of this can be seen in the way James treats paintings in his works: always neatly locked away in a stuffy Gilded Age drawing room, awaiting the detached and lifeless connoisseur's eye. But there is nothing lifeless about the works of art in White's novel, nor those of Bacon on which they draw.

*The Vivisector* tells the story of Hurtle Duffield, born to a poor, working class family and sold by his Mumma to the wealthy Courtneys, who long for a son to join, or rather replace, their only daughter, the crippled Rhoda. These two original sins, rejection by his mother and guilt at replacing Rhoda's deformed and unwanted body, haunt Hurtle's life and work through a string of loveless relationships as he eventually becomes a successful painter. In the novel's most ambitious attempt to describe a phenomenology of the process of creativity, and to render the texture of painting into words, Hurtle's attempt at a series of self-portraits condense these two sins into the conditions of his art:

As he worked at what was becoming the portrait, the razors took over...His down shivered to feel the steel. How simply awfully the blade carved through the leather strop easy as warm chocolate. *What did I tell you it isn't the damage it's the dishonesty of doing things behind my back the risk of cutting yourself or someone – Rhoda – injure somebody for life.*

This is White's statement of the Romantic concept of the artist as one who buys his creativity at the expense of being sundered from his fellow human beings. But White takes this myth down from its lofty Germanic heights and traces the scars of separation on the flesh of the body. It is in this that White's prose comes closest to getting to the core of Bacon's work.

Bacon's eviscerated slabs of flesh, which he famously studied in London meat markets, were never gratuitous, nor meant to shock. In his triptychs of the Crucifixion, based on Aeschylus' trilogy of plays *The Oresteia*, the bleeding bags of viscera serve to expel anything transcendental from the idea of myth or religion, and also to underscore our modern distance from the former promises of these classic themes of Western painting. But perhaps more central to Bacon's oeuvre are the battered and faceless bodies of the men that were Bacon's lovers, George Dyer and John Edwards. In these works the refusal of these bloodied bodies to relate in space, locked into faint white grids or congealing onto separate planes, conveys a similar sense of the artist being physically vivisected from society.

A recent show at Tate Britain, *Picasso and Modern British Art*, showed just how far Bacon departed from Picasso's own aforementioned approach to the body as object of painting. Take Picasso's *Figures on the Beach* (1931): for all their polyp-like Surrealist distortions, these are tanned curves of female flesh, glistening in the Mediterranean sun. The body is the object of desire, emphatically other from the painter's eye. For Bacon, as in the triptych *Three Studies of a Male Back* (1970) with its play of mirrors and razor blades, the body is always – perhaps narcissistically but certainly sadistically – both his own and other, and so the play of pure desire is foreclosed from the start. That particular triptych is an almost uncanny illustration of Hurtle's self-portrait.

While working, he had to recognize the almost voluptuous love with which he carved his own cheek out of the paint, down to the board: his not convincingly ascetic cheek. The nick to the corner of his not quite honest but human – he hoped – watchful left eye produced the authentic shudder of love.

But the only love Hurtle can have, as such a passage makes clear, is not even for himself, but for his work. And as the novel winds its way to a close, after a crowning retrospective in Sydney, only the crippled Rhoda is left to discover Hurtle dying in front of an unfinished canvas.

Any work of literature that attempts to explore the relationship between writing and the visual arts is threatened by the blunt response that Hurtle himself gives to one of his lovers when she asks him to explain “all this modern art”: “If I could say it in words I wouldn't paint it.” But few modern painters, Bacon least of all, ended their lives thinking they had painted ‘it’, whatever ‘it’ was: otherwise the work would long have ceased to appear. And in his dying monologue, Hurtle himself comes up against this failure: “If the hand could reach the last inch; but you would never convey in paint, in words perhaps...” And so, a final paradox: *The Vivisector*, like all successful encounters between literature and painting, is premised on failure, the failure of the individual medium's belief in itself. But from these failures, at least some of the time, some adequate artistic compensation spills forth.

**FRANCIS BACON: FIVE DECADES, ART GALLERY OF NSW, SYDNEY**

17 NOVEMBER 2012 - 24 FEBRUARY 2013



•|  
*FIGURE WITH MEAT* (1954)  
OIL ON CANVAS  
129.9 X 121.9 CM  
ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO,  
HARRIOTT A FOX FUND  
© THE ESTATE OF FRANCIS BACON  
DACS / LICENSED BY VISCOPY



•|  
*STUDY FOR A PORTRAIT* (1949)  
OIL ON CANVAS  
149.4 X 130.6 CM  
COLLECTION MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART, CHICAGO  
GIFT OF JOSEPH AND JORY SHAPIRO  
© THE ESTATE OF FRANCIS BACON  
DACS / LICENSED BY VISCOPY



•|  
*STUDY FOR A FIGURE AT THE BASE OF A CRUCIFIXION*  
(1943-44)  
OIL AND PASTEL ON BOARD  
94 X 74 CM  
COURTESY MURDERME © THE ESTATE OF FRANCIS BACON  
DACS / LICENSED BY VISCOPY  
PHOTO: PRUDENCE CUMING ASSOCIATES LTD

|•  
*POPE I - STUDY AFTER POPE INNOCENT X BY VALAZQUEZ* (1951)  
OIL ON CANVAS  
198 X 137 CM  
ABERDEEN ART GALLERY & MUSEUM COLLECTIONS  
© THE ESTATE OF FRANCIS BACON  
DACS / LICENSED BY VISCOPY



## PICTORIAL: GREGORY & WATTS ON PUBLIC ART, SYDNEY, CBD

AUDIO GUIDE DISCUSSIONS ARE ACCESSIBLE  
VIA THE QR TAGS OR BY GOING TO  
GREGORYANDWATTS.BLOGSPOT.COM



### WHAT IS CONTEMPORARY PUBLIC ART ABSTRACTION? 1 Blich STREET, JAMES ANGUS

CORPORATE SPONSORED  
CAD CURVES, HYPER-COLOUR  
IRONIC REFERENCES  
IDEOLOGICALLY NEUTRAL (WITH HISTORIC SUPPLEMENTS)  
JUXTAPOSITION AND HARMONY WITH THE SITE



### WHAT IS SITE-SPECIFIC POST-MODERN SCULPTURE? MARTIN PLACE, ANNE GRAHAM

SITE SPECIFIC, UNCOVERING HISTORIES OF PLACE  
OLYMPIC SCULPTURE WORK (BUT ANTI-HEROIC)  
ANTI-PHALLIC FEMINIST STRATEGY (SCULPTURE AS LIQUID MIST)  
POLITICS OF SITE (FLAT THOUGH SO THAT IT DOESN'T STOP STREET TRAFFIC)  
BRONZE, BUBBLING CIVIC FOUNTAIN





**WHAT IS LEGACY MODERNIST PUBLIC ART? AUSTRALIA SQUARE, SOL LEWITT**

UTOPIAN, INTERNATIONALIST, HOPEFUL  
 PERMANENT, MINIMAL, TRANSFASHIONABLE  
 EVERYDAY MADE MONUMENTAL (SO IT'S NOTICED)  
 IDEOLOGICALLY MISREAD (DO I SEE "TV")  
 STRANGELY NOSTALGIC, THE HARD BECOMES SOFT (WASN'T THIS THE POINT IN THE FIRST PLACE?)



**WHAT IS THE COMMEMORATIVE WAR MEMORIAL? MARTIN PLACE, SIR BERTRAM MACKENNA**

REALISM/ IDEALISM IN TENSION (HEROIC BODY AT ATTENTION; LEADING SEAMAN JOHN WILLIAM VARCO)  
 CENOTAPH - KENOTAPHLION - EMPTY TOMB (ONE FOR ALL)  
 SITE SPECIFIC SITE OF ENLISTMENT, HISTORIC SITE OF NATION  
 CONTEMPORARY SITE OF POLITICS (SEE WREATH LAID BY PREMIER TO RIGHT)  
 HEROIC, PATERNALISTIC, PATRIOTIC, PATRIA  
 WHAT JOY, FOR FATHERLAND TO DIE!





**WHAT IS PUBLIC ART FOR THE PEOPLE? CHANNEL 7 MARTIN PLACE, 2 CAMERAS**

REALISM COMBINED WITH IDEALISM ("HI MUM")  
 PERMANENTLY EPHEMERAL HENCE PERMANENTLY FASHIONABLE  
 CIVIC DUTY, INFORMATION POINT (WHAT IS THE WEATHER TOMORROW?)  
 PRIVATIZED PUBLIC SPACE THROUGH SITUATIONIST STRATEGIES  
 (THIS DÉRIVE WAS BROUGHT TO YOU BY KOCHIE & MEL)



**WHAT WAS THE FIRST PUBLIC SCULPTURE CONTROVERSY? PITT STREET FACADE GPO, TOMASO SANI**

ALLEGORICAL, IDEAL BUT ON THE PITT STREET FACADE REALIST AND TYPES FROM THE EVERYDAY  
 1882 PUBLIC OUTCRY OVER WHAT THEY SAW WERE CRASS AND CARICATURED (NOT SUITABLE FOR SUCH A GRAND BUILDING)  
 1884 CONTROVERSY REFERRED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE ROYAL ACADEMY IN LONDON  
 887 LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY VOTE FOR CARVINGS TO STAY  
 IMPERIAL, COLONIAL, NOT PARTICULARLY NATIONAL  
 MESSAGE OF FACADE NOW INVISIBLE



# NARRATIVE ARC: AN INTERVIEW WITH NAOMI EVANS

BY ANNALICE CREIGHTON

TIME EXTENDED, UNFOLDED AND RE-MIXED. STORIES DISJOINTED INTO NON-LINEAR SEQUENCES. MEANING SUSPENDED. SURREAL, UNRELATED SEQUENCES THAT SCRATCH AGAINST OUR INSTINCT FOR INTERPRETATION, TEASE OUR TENDENCIES TO DRAW CONNECTIONS. NARRATIVE ARC, AN UPCOMING EXHIBITION AT BRISBANE'S GRIFFITH UNIVERSITY ART GALLERY (GUAG) FEATURES A SMALL BUT STELLAR CAST OF ARTISTS WELL KNOWN FOR DOING EXACTLY THIS. THEY HAVE IN COMMON THEIR FILMIC DECONSTRUCTIONS OF NARRATIVE DEVICES AND REFLEXIVE RELATIONSHIPS TO THE WORK OF OTHER ARTISTS, FILM-MAKERS, PHILOSOPHERS. CURATOR NAOMI EVANS TAKES SOME TIME BETWEEN EXHIBITION INSTALLS AND MEMORIZING POETRY TO TELL US ABOUT HOW IT ALL CAME ABOUT.

**Since we are talking about literature and narrative I feel like I should ask, what are you reading at the moment?**

It's not prose literature, but I have had John Donne's *Holy Sonnets* on the go for a while now. I like to dive into poetry when I am between books. I am trying to commit all 18 to memory but only have about 7 down so far. There are some incredible lines like "I am a little world made cunningly", and I'm really looking forward to learning the sonnet that starts "Death be not proud...". I am saving that one.

**So, where did the concept for this exhibition begin?**

The title *Narrative Arc* only occurred to me a couple of months ago when I was proposing it for GUAG, but it probably began a few years back when I saw an early video called *The role of a Lifetime* by Lithuanian artist Deimantas Narkevičius at the Istanbul Biennale in 2009. In it, British filmmaker Peter Watkins talks about the nature of creativity and his self-imposed exile in Lithuania. His voice lilts and the ideas seem to hang in the air, while Narkevičius presents graphite sketches of Communist statuary on the screen, interspersed with grainy found amateur film footage taken in Brighton, UK. It's not clear who shot the film and so Narkevičius trades on our desire to link and find meaning between disparate art genres when there is no clear connection. Watkins' spoken reflections on life and art are deep, intimate and compelling and it became apparent to me just how much Watkins was part-producer of Narkevičius' work. It was probably this dimension that sunk a hook in me and provided a genesis for this show.

**What has been your methodology for selecting the artists in *Narrative Arc*?**

I kept remembering artworks that feature a certain connection that one artist might have with the work of another – not exactly 'homage', but contingent on that other person's ideas or sense of vocation. If we were to visually represent that connection it might look like a bridge or spanning between art practices. Benoît Maire's *The Spider Web* (2006) presents the audio from an interview with the great Italian philosopher Arthur C. Danto, against a screen that shows nothing really – an interference pattern. But over the course of the short video, we hear a discussion about art, sculpture and our own epoch, which Danto talks about in terms of the end of the art object – by which he means the move towards concepts or ideas as being the crucial stuff of art. This point is beautifully and amusingly illustrated when Danto accidentally knocks over a little tableaux Maire has constructed on the table. This work has only been seen overseas at places like the Centre Pompidou, Paris, so it is great we'll be able to present it in Brisbane.

Ann Lislegaard has made several works exploring science fiction texts and using 3D animation to re-present particular kinds of dislocation, often places or cities as with her work *Bellona (after Samuel R Delany)* which is featured in *Narrative Arc*. I was lucky to have worked with Ann Lislegaard in 2008 when I assisted curator Kathryn Weir on her exhibition *Modern Ruin* at the Gallery of Modern Art, and I knew Lislegaard's piece would be incredible to present at GUAG. The piece invokes mysterious texts and dislocates narrative contexts from Delany's cult classic *Dhalgren* (1974). This creates a totality that seems at odds with the idea of narrative, and the sensation of stasis is enhanced by the work's projection onto a 3D screen that seems to float across the corner of the gallery.

**Are there any new/commissioned works in the show?**

*Narrative Arc* came together as a way to present artists' work that would expand the conversation around expectations of narrative,

and I wanted to include the strong artworks I knew existed and that contribute to the conversation. I'm really pleased Carter's first film *Erased James Franco* (2009) could be included in *Narrative Arc*. It is not his newest, but I guess it is 'recent'. *Erased James Franco* was described in the Guardian as an example of 'cine-karaoke' – Franco performs lines from his onscreen appearances as collated and rescripted by Carter, who in addition asked him to deliver a performance at 50%. I think it is interesting to consider this 'karaoke' style in relation to the dismantling and restitching of narrative. Franco's erasure might have happened more truly in his first level performances than in this second incarnation when there is a knowing critique of performance itself. I am still thinking about this one, how it works, why it is both wilfully boring and beguiling at the same time. The work also references the action of Robert Rauschenberg who requested a drawing from the older artist Willem de Kooning to erase. As the story goes, not only did de Kooning agree, he chose a drawing that he was sure he would miss. The most recent work in the show is by French artist Benoît Maire called *L'île de La Répétition* (Repetition Island) from 2010. It is his first feature.

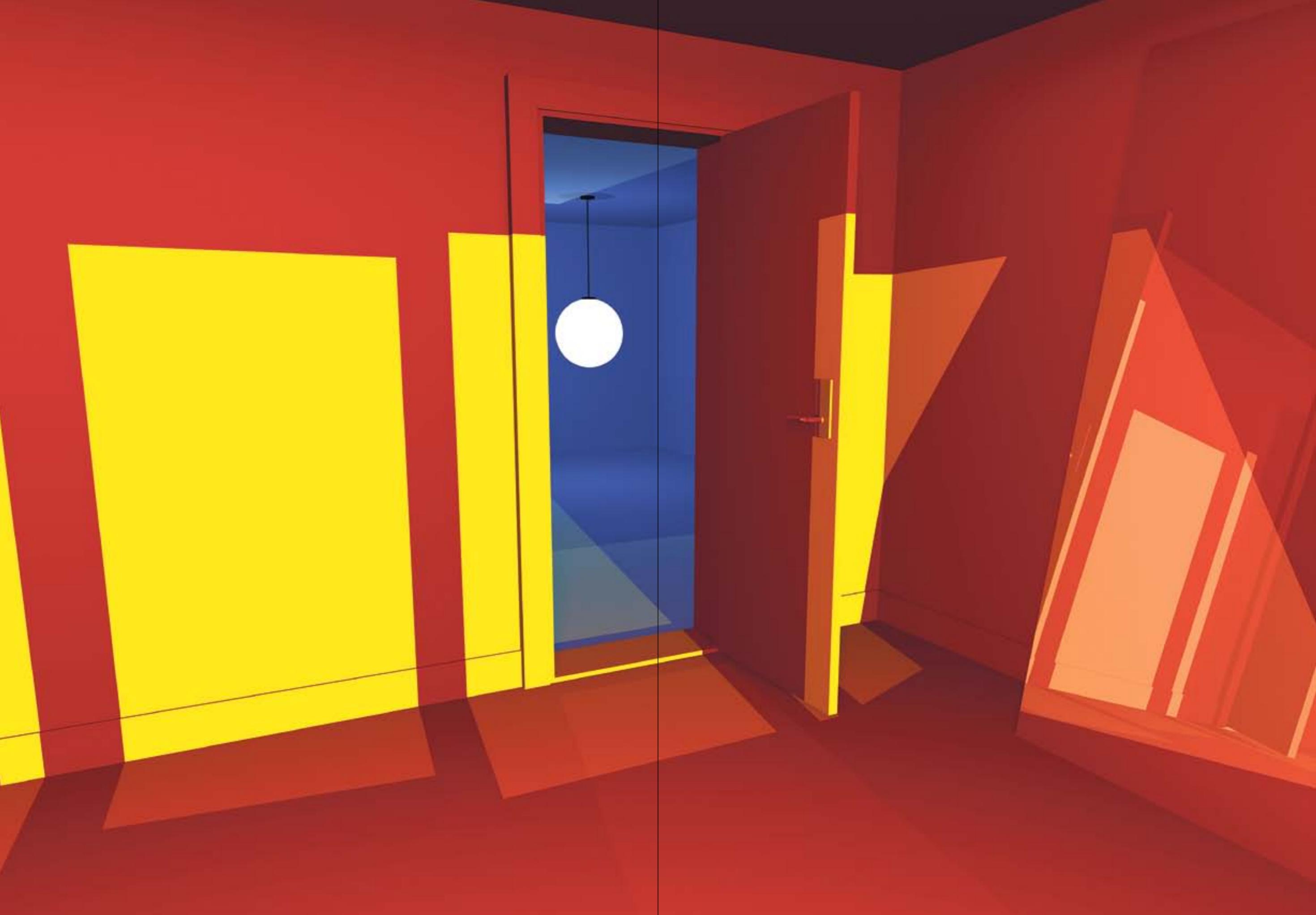
**If we imagined this exhibition to actually have a narrative arc, I think this conversation would be the exposition. Where then do you think could be the rising and falling action, suspense, denouement in this story?**

GUAG has a terrific architectural structure that lends itself so well to exhibitions of screen-based artworks and so the small, tight group of artists will be presented hopefully with the full weight of their uniqueness. Perhaps the arc would be flattened or dismembered. The suspense would probably be in the time it takes to have scenarios unfold whether through the act of listening or reading. And I hope the resolution happens somewhere else, beyond the show. Allan McCollum once referred to his sculptures as seeking the state of 'immanent meaningfulness'. I often think of this line and the way contemporary art can set you up to expect meaning, only to have it deferred.

**Do you ever think of your practice as a curator as being like storytelling? Why is this?**

I guess as a curator you have to ask if it is worth doing any show at all, or for me, can I justify the idea as having currency or weight in some way. Most ideas can be critiqued endlessly until there is very little left. I see a relationship between this way of working and the way artists use their studio or exhibitions as labs, or specific contexts in which to experiment and test ideas. I heard Julie Rrap tell a story once: she was asked what a certain work meant, and she replied that she didn't know, and said that if she did know the answer, she probably wouldn't bother making the work. I like the idea that understanding comes through the activities related to doing. I find it's really enjoyable to experience an exhibition that is crafted to allow multiple viewpoints within a meta-narrative. At this stage I would just hope to preface an idea and hope each artwork would be allowed space and respect enough to be appreciated in their own terms.

**NARRATIVE ARC,  
CURATED BY NAOMI EVANS  
GRIFFITH UNIVERSITY ART GALLERY [GUAG]  
QUEENSLAND COLLEGE OF ART, SOUTH BANK, BRISBANE, AUSTRALIA  
18 SEPTEMBER – 10 NOVEMBER 2012  
GRIFFITH.EDU.AU/VISUAL-CREATIVE-ARTS/GRIFFITH-ARTWORKS/  
GRIFFITH-UNIVERSITY-ART-GALLERY**



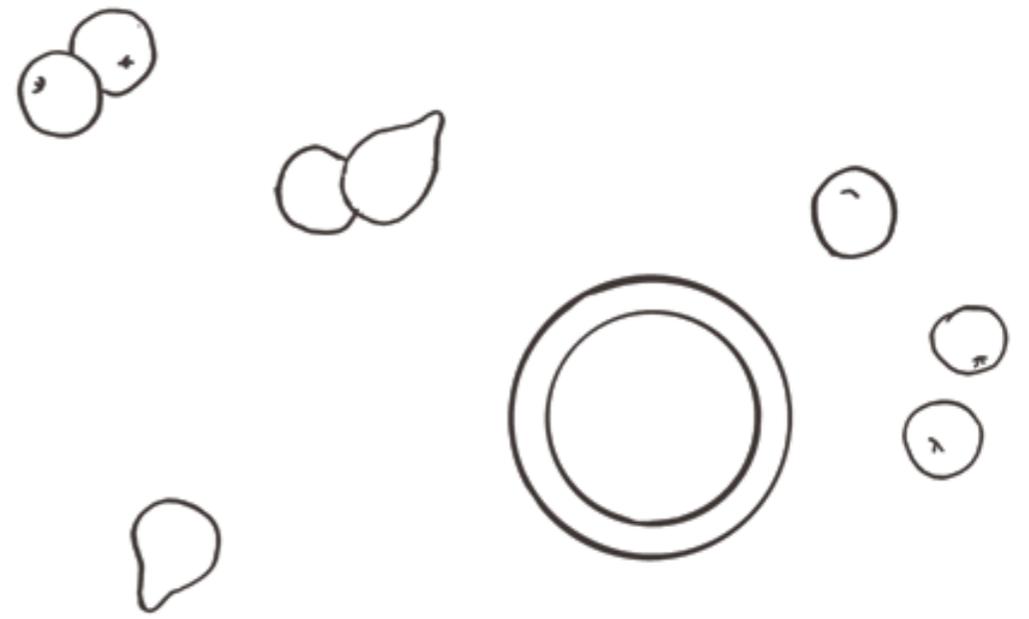


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ANN LISLEGAARD  
*BELLONA (AFTER SAMUEL R DELANY) (2005)*  
3D ANIMATION, LEANING SCREEN, 11 MINUTE LOOP, SOUND.  
IMAGE COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND MURRAY GUY, NEW YORK

•|  
DEIMANTAS NARKEVIČIUS,  
STILLS FROM *THE ROLE OF A LIFETIME (2003)*  
8 MM, SUPER 8 AND 35 MM FILM  
TRANSFERRED TO BETACAM SP VIDEO,  
16:49 MINUTES  
IMAGE COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND GB AGENCY, PARIS.

|•  
BENOÎT MAIRE  
*THE SPIDER WEB (2006)*  
VIDEO  
INSTALLATION VIEW: HALLE FÜR KUNST, LÜNEBURG, 2011.  
PHOTO: HANS-JÜRGEN WEGE.  
IMAGE COURTESY OF THE ARTIST  
AND HOLLYBUSH GARDENS, LONDON

•/  
CARTER  
*ERASED JAMES FRANCO (2009)*  
FILM PRODUCTION STILL  
IMAGE COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND SALON 94, NEW YORK

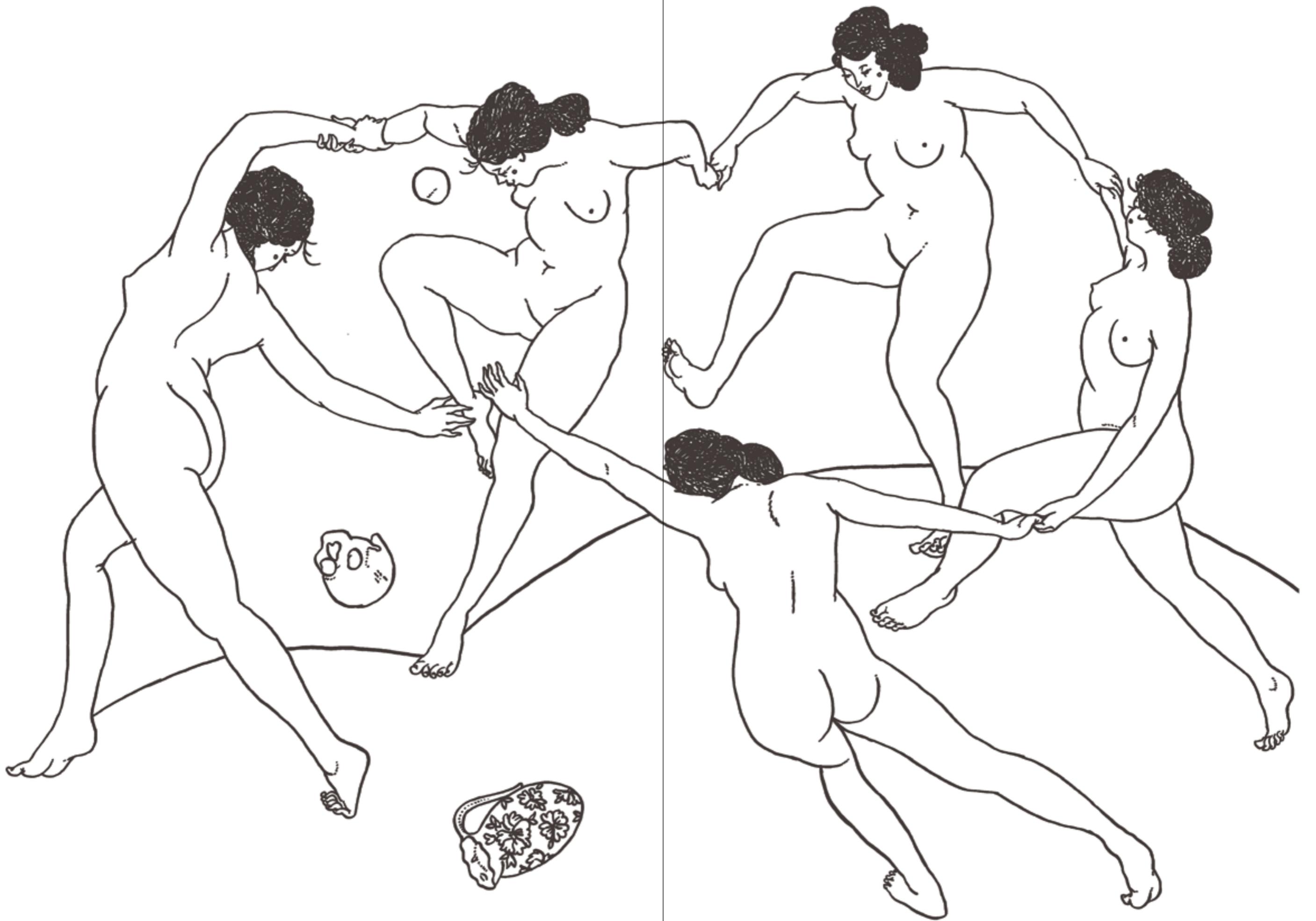


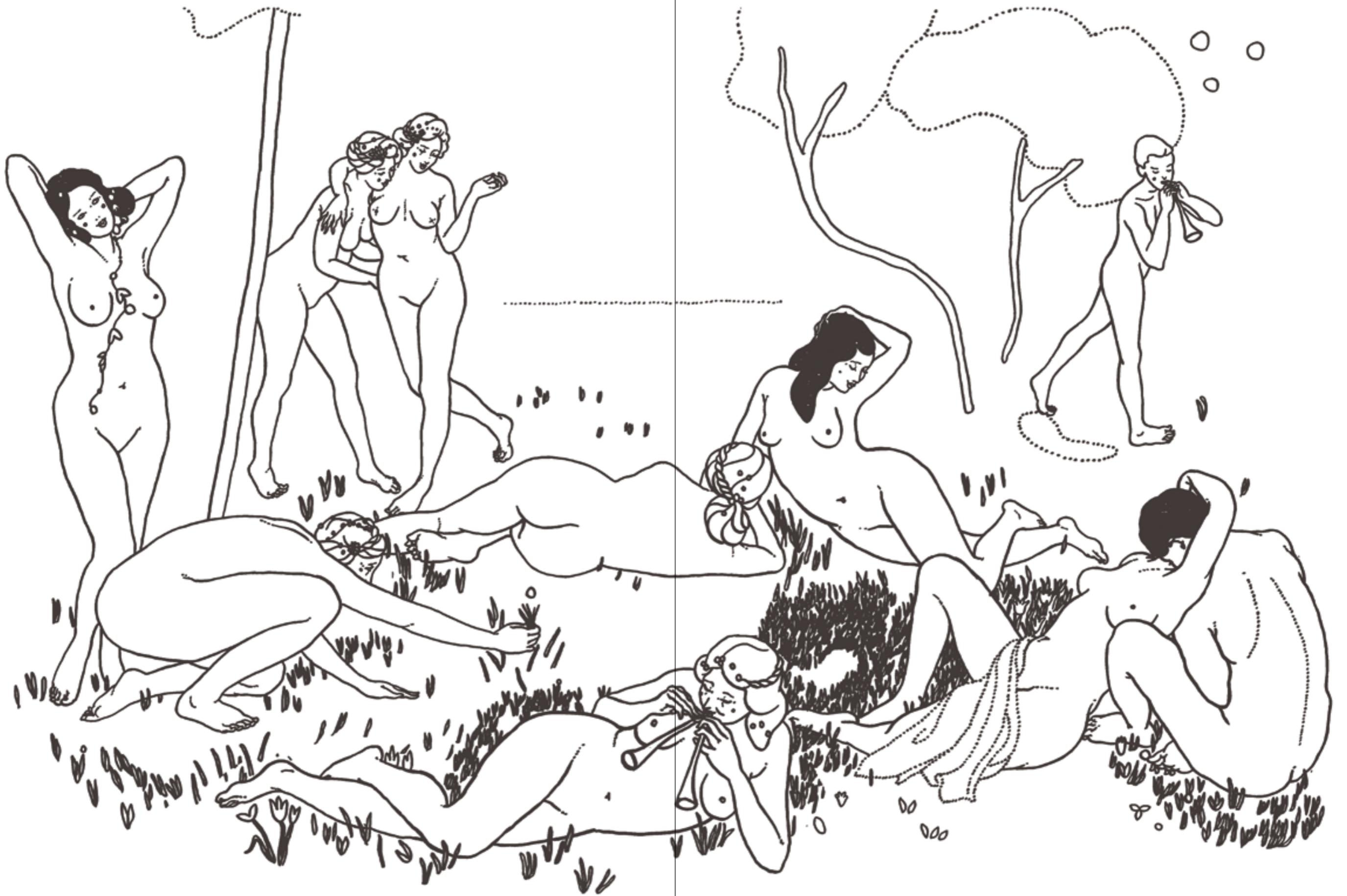
GIOVANNI BOCCACCIO  
**THE DECAMERON**

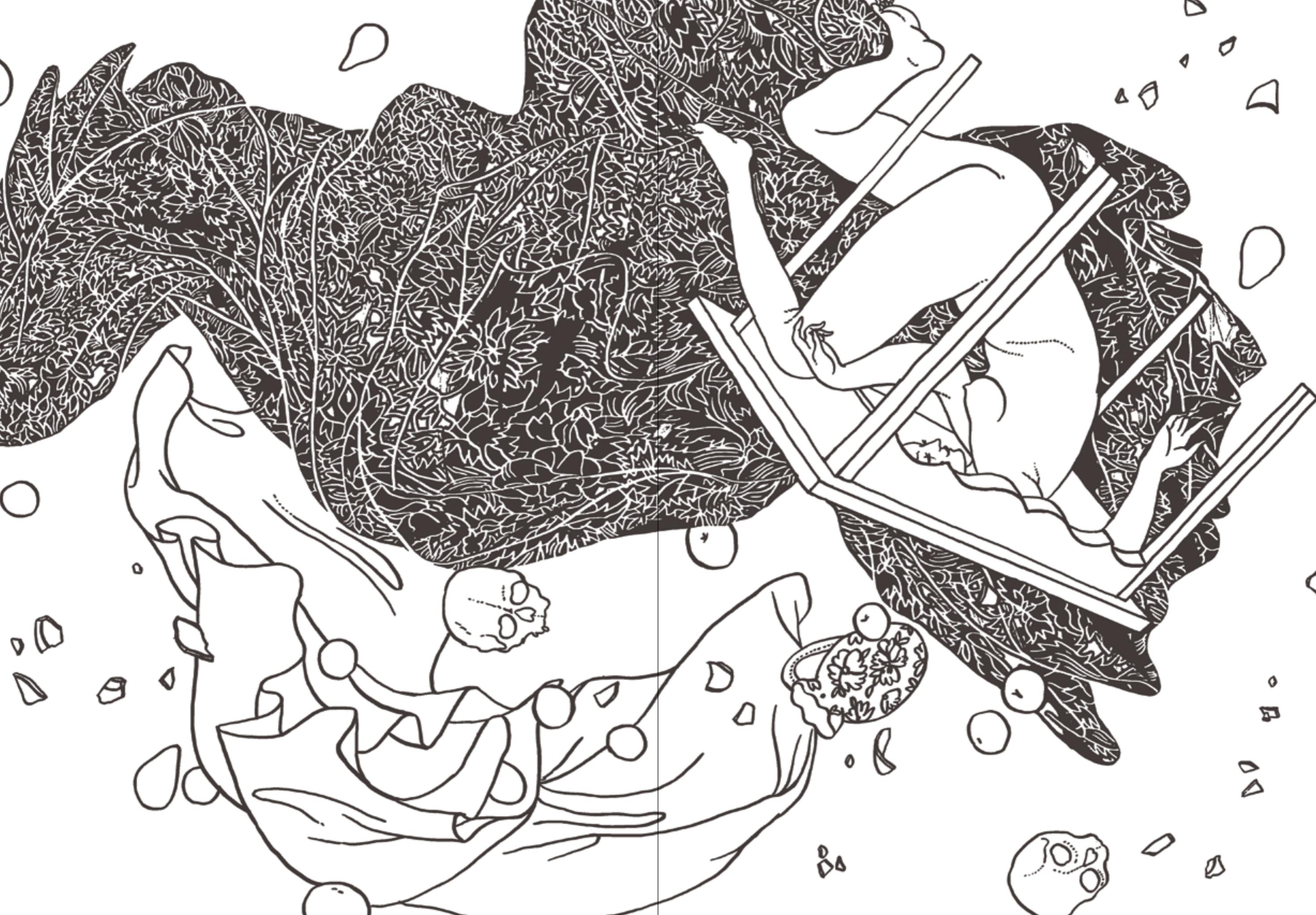


WIL LOENG









# BECKETT AND THE VISUAL ARTS

—  
BY ALYS MOODY

In literature, the work of Samuel Beckett often feels like something of a dead-end. He certainly has his heirs – we might think particularly of the work of authors such as J. M. Coetzee, John Banville and Paul Auster – but what is perhaps most striking about these literary successors is how un-Beckettian they often feel on the page. Contemporary authors writing in Beckett's wake tend to take from him a certain bleakness of outlook, an interest in old age and confined spaces, perhaps a simplicity of style. Their works – in contrast to the increasing radicalisation of form that precedes Beckett – almost universally represent a step back from the brutal reduction of plot and character explored in his later works. Beckett's literary heirs sometimes feel as indebted to realism as to him; they certainly have limited interest in the voiding of subject and paralysing of plot for which he is best known, and in almost all cases, their best work emerges when they step back from Beckett's influence and explore new paths. In this respect, Beckett's late works in particular often feel as though they represent an endpoint of literature (or at least, a certain kind of literature), a hurdle that his successors are forced to work around, resile from, or simply ignore.

But if Beckett's work has a difficult legacy in the artistic field with which it is most associated, its relationship to the visual arts could not be more different. Where writers seem to have struggled to follow or accelerate his radicalism, contemporary artists have found in Beckett an important touchstone and a spur to innovation. His importance for the visual arts can be gauged initially in the range of artistic adaptations to which his works have been subjected. His writing has long been a favourite subject for *livres d'artiste* and the list of artists who have illustrated his work reads like a role call of some of the 20<sup>th</sup> century's most celebrated names: Max Ernst illustrated a trilingual (German/English/French) edition of *From An Abandoned Work*; Jasper Johns an edition of *Foirades/Fizzles*; Stanley William Hayter an edition of *Still*; and Avigdor Arikha, a close friend of Beckett, has provided etchings to accompany a number of his texts, including *Nouvelles et Textes Pour Rien* and *The North*. In a different medium, Damien Hirst was invited to direct a controversial film version of Beckett's 30-second play *Breath* for the Beckett on Film project.

The texts chosen for these adaptations are drawn overwhelmingly from his late works, texts with which writers have tended to struggle (Coetzee, one of Beckett's most important and devoted heirs, has dismissed them as “disembodied” and “post-mortem”). A simple explanation for this preference lies in their suitability, due to length, for the kind of short book publications that characterise the *livre d'artiste*. It also points, though, to a key, if no doubt oversimplified, difference between literature and art: where literature still overwhelmingly seeks to represent or describe, contemporary art has increasingly cultivated a more direct relationship with its audience, aiming not to reflect but to provoke experience. As a writer, Beckett's works are unusually amenable to this kind of aesthetic goal. Their reticence about traditional literary categories like plot and character opens a new front for the creation of a literature that aims, as Beckett said of his play *Not I*, to “work on the nerves of its audience, not its intellect.” Seen in this light, the “disembodied” and the “post-mortem” are fascinating for the responses they provoke, not for the content they have shed – and here, such texts start to seem much closer to contemporary art than to contemporary literature.

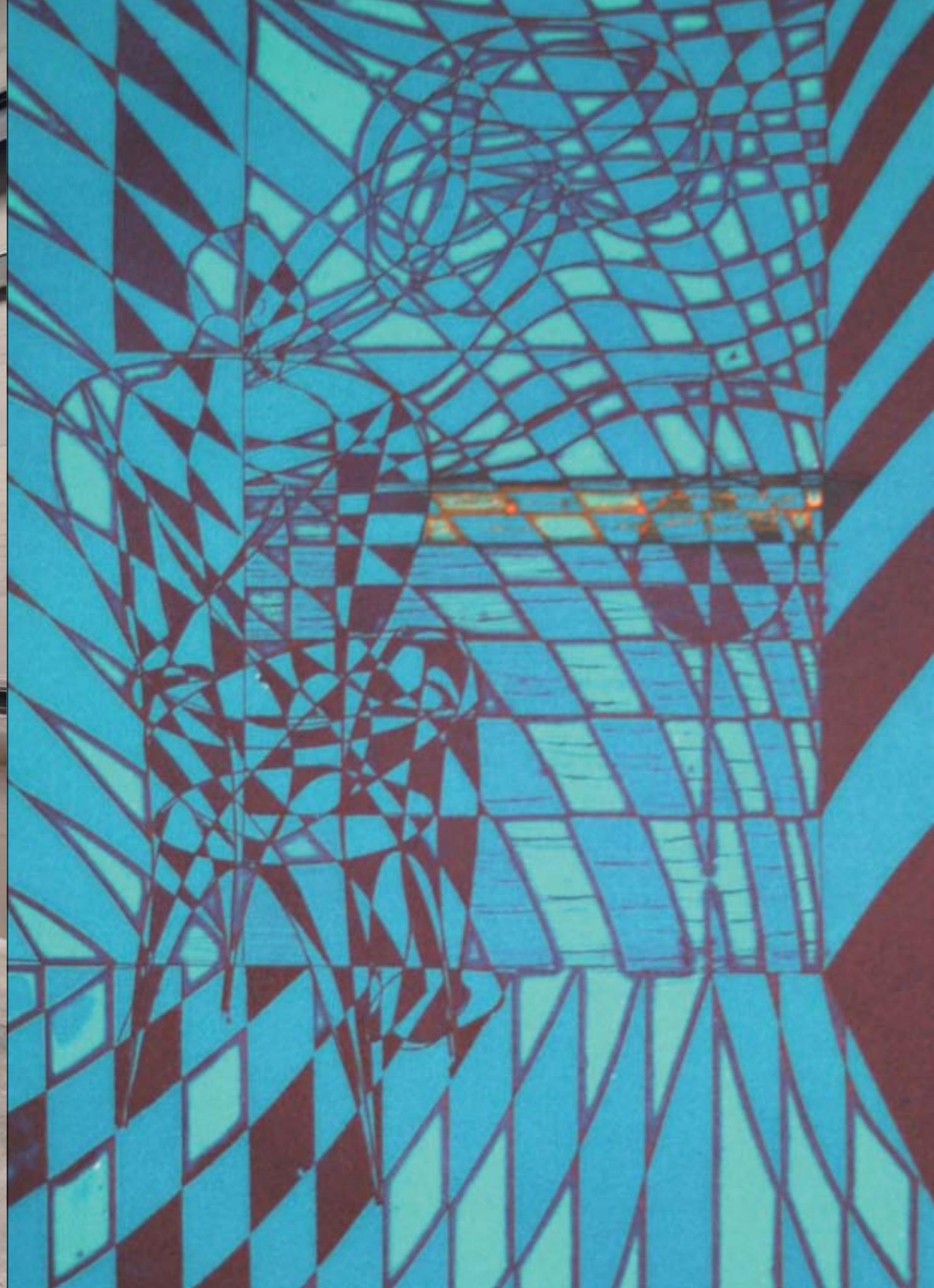
Many of Beckett's most devoted disciples share this interest in audience response, as well as Beckett's minute attention to media, materials and movement, the components from which

this response is painstakingly constructed. His influence is felt perhaps most pervasively in new media and video art – unsurprisingly, given that Beckett himself was keenly interested in new media and wrote plays for television and radio, a short film and perhaps the first stage play to incorporate a functional tape recorder. In a testament to his influence on the form, his television plays *Quad I* and *Quad II* were included in *Video: An Art, A History, 1965-2005*, a landmark exhibition of the history of video art.

In this tradition, Bruce Nauman is one of his most famous heirs. His video work often draws on the unsettling repetitions of Beckett's work, as well as his fondness for the uncannily geometric. Nauman's *Slow Angle Walk (Beckett Walk)*, for example, films a man whose awkward gait was suggested by that of the eponymous protagonist of Beckett's wartime novel *Watt*. Nauman's *Clown Torture*, a deeply creepy piece of work, recalls Beckett's unsettling and innovative use of clowning techniques in *Waiting for Godot*. If Nauman's post-Beckettian work is overtly creepy and sometimes actively terrifying where Beckett's prefers to unsettle or discomfit, the former's debt to the Irishman is nonetheless clear in their shared interest in the experiential possibilities of the excessively formal.

This formalism and its winnowed products often lead to offhand remarks about Beckett's minimalism, and in this context it's notable that Beckett has also been important to many artists working beyond or in the aftermath of minimalism. The video of Robert Smithson's *Spiral Jetty (1970)*, for example, includes a long meditation on spatial dislocation, changelessness and an aversion to meaning, drawn from Beckett's novel *The Unnamable*. More recently, Polish sculptor Mirosław Balka produced a large installation for the Tate Modern's Turbine Hall, which he entitled *How It Is* after Beckett's 1961 novel of the same name. Balka's sculpture is an enormous grey steel structure which visitors enter via a ramp, finding themselves within a cavernous and unlit pitch-black space. It recalls the purgatorial nature of Beckett's novel, which describes a mud-filled subterranean world populated by creatures who crawl through the mud in search of others to torture. As it happens, the experience of entering Balka's installation in the middle of a day, jostling uncomfortably against unseen tourists and museum-goers, does an uncannily good job of reproducing the darkly antagonistic camaraderie of Beckett's novel.

What Beckett's artistic successors share is a cluster of concerns that his followers in literature, working mostly within the novel form, cannot replicate: a disregard for representation in favour of experience, a close attention to form and material, and a radical experimentation that often defies or presses on formal or medial boundaries. In part, this no doubt reflects some of the differences between contemporary art and contemporary literature. But there is also another explanation: in pushing at the boundaries of literature, Beckett produced a body of work whose implications and force can only be properly confronted not from within literature, where it reads as a dead-end, but from without. The contemporary visual arts are, for the time being, that without.





•\ UNILEVER SERIES: MIROSLAW BALKA  
*HOW IT IS* (2009)  
PHOTO: TATE PHOTOGRAPHY



\• STANLEY WILLIAM HAYTER  
*STILL I* (1974)  
PUBLISHED BY M'ARTE EDIZIONI, MILANO  
FILICARTA HANDMADE PAPER. SHEET SIZE: 38CMS X 28CMS;  
IMAGE SIZE: 29.5CMS X 20.5CMS  
IMAGE COURTESY OF REDGRAPE GALLERY, LONDON.

•||• A PERFORMANCE OF SAMUEL BECKETT'S *QUAD*  
AT ARTSAHA! 2006 IN OMAHA,  
NE BY THE BLUE BARN THEATRE'S WITCHING HOUR.  
PHOTO: MOLLY FITZPATRICK

# HEATH FRANCO: \$2-SHOP ANARCHIST

BY STELLA ROSA MCDONALD

*TO EMBRACE DISORDER BOTH AS WELLSPRING OF STYLE & VOLUPTUOUS STOREHOUSE, A FUNDAMENTAL OF OUR ALIEN & OCCULT CIVILIZATION, OUR CONSPIRATORIAL ESTHETIC, OUR LUNATIC ESPIONAGE — THIS IS THE ACTION (LET'S FACE IT) EITHER OF AN ARTIST OF SOME SORT, OR OF A TEN- OR THIRTEEN-YEAR-OLD.*

HAKIM BEY, *WILD CHILDREN*<sup>1</sup>

In Woody Allen's film *Stardust Memories* (1980), Allen plays a film director harassed by fans that consistently voice their preference for his "earlier, funnier movies". In one scene, Allen arrives at a film festival to be greeted by a hoard of exaggeratedly monstrous fans that leer and project their own fantasies and egos onto the filmmaker-playing-a-filmmaker. The camera floats through this sycophantic crowd, who offer praise and opinions in equal measure. Then, to the side of the crowd Allen sees a young boy in a cape standing with his mother. The audio is muted and the boy takes off in juddering flight. The viewer stands at the threshold between the artist and their work, at the gap between public and private self. Witness to the split personality of the artist as they stand in reality and as they move in fiction.

This cyclical process of 'making', where the experience generated by the 'success' of the work becomes the material for the next work, represents the terror associated with production and reception. For Allen, every fan is an aspect of the artist's fears. Opinions ossify, praise stagnates, and production is threatened. Each little fear, each opinion, is a threat to the state of the work and the capacity to work more.

In Heath Franco's performative videos an exaggerated arcade of fiends and domestic demi-gods personify the fears of the

artist. He frames the screen as a grubby meditation on the particularities and invisibilities of character. As the main protagonist playing all roles, he uses video to establish a link between the production of image and the production of self, with a cast of characters who reveal the traps of language and play with the fantasy of the domestic dream.

Franco has the temperament of an ontological anarchist<sup>2</sup>, taking experience and abstracting it until it makes (new) sense. With a fine-tuned two-dollar-shop aesthetic and a shamelessly basic use of the green screen, he employs grotesque mass-produced costumes, masks, cheap make-up and household junk to characterise his world, and in turn to characterise us. His work speaks of and to that part of the suspect unconscious, the hidden agenda inherent in every exchange and framework.

In *YOUR DOOR* (2011), set on the messy doorstep of a suburban home, language is a circuitous, frustrating and threatening contract, used to keep out the other and trap prey. The ubiquitous welcome mat becomes an invitation within which we sense the terms and conditions attached. A character wearing a plastic nose and spinning moustache, resembling a sleazy uncle, repeatedly declares "*You wanna play*", while a semi-deceased looking road worker tests out the phrase "Come in, I'll getchu a cuppa." His characters' speech, a form of semantic saturation where the repetition of words both erases and ascribes meaning, resembles half-caught conversations. A snapshot of phrases out of context made into discourse, the language recalls the menacing heart of Australian friendliness depicted in films like *Wake in Fright* (1971), or the *Groundhog Day* banality of *Neighbours* and *Home and Away*. Things once inconsequential gather new, sinister meanings, and language gathers weight through repetition. Following common logic, the word 'cat'

cannot scratch you; following Franco logic, it can. Franco uses the camera as proof, a porous mirror; at times he even seems to be checking his reflection. *YOUR DOOR* seeks to find the magic in the domestic, and in doing so forgotten and innocuous objects realise their potential for animation: the camera pans across a pile of family shoes toward the entrance, a leopard skin cat comes to life from a household mug and growls "what are you doin' here?" while a saxophonist in a leotard wielding a plastic children's saxophone grows and grows on the doorstep like Alice in her Wonderland.

An actor in rehearsal practices the tone and delivery of their dialogue, testing different motivations until they find a pitch that complements the arc of their character's journey on the page. Franco undergoes a similar trial in *WUNDERCLOSET* (2011), where his characters throw dialogue and phrases around like rag dolls, teasing out possible consequences. The difference is that his characters don't have a clear journey; there is no satisfying arc that reaches completion. The characters push language to its semantic limit until it becomes taunting and threatening, making communication senseless. At DB Projects in Sydney, *WUNDERCLOSET*, which included a custom padded seat and a UV light, was exhibited in the toilet.

Franco uses costume and props to discover and determine character; he is like the sole member of a theatre troupe, striving to represent the multiple scopes of personality and circumstance. In *DREAM HOME* (2012), shown recently in a solo show at Galerie Pompom, Franco has made a boarding house for a mess of malcontents. Eleven characters inhabit a model wooden house Franco found at a Salvation Army store in Parramatta. If the characters in his previous works functioned in mad isolation, in *DREAM HOME* they are straining to communicate either with each other or with the world beyond the screen – we're not sure which. They directly address the camera, they try to get an outside phone line to order food (a "toasted toastie"), one uses a microphone to amplify his intentions, while another javelins a computer downloading bar from one room to another. Some succeed – notable is the suburban secretary who tells us "the doctor's busy", while on another screen we see her below the waist, carrying a toy doctor's kit and wearing a mask on her penis. She squirms in a pair of 'naughty nurse' suspenders. At once practical and fantastic she embodies the duality of the domestic and suburban fantasy that Franco continues to explore.

*My fiancée and I have been thinking about moving into a new place and trying to find our 'dream home'...anything you can imagine can happen in a dream.*  
Heath Franco<sup>3</sup>

*DREAM HOME* is about the potential of fantasy, and ascribes to the notion that dreaming is not without its consequences. Mirrors and doors, a motif repeated in *YOUR DOOR* and *DREAM HOME*, begin to symbolise the endless transparency of the screen and the double bind of communication; viewers who think they have found an opening or departure will be delivered to another door, another character that won't let you in or cannot get out. Like the forced perspective of a trompe-l'œil mural, we are unable to decide on the illusion at play as the images switch between interior and exterior, reality and representation.

*DREAM HOME* shows a maturing of the world of Franco's characters; as this unreal world matures it becomes parallel rather than abstract, heightening our perception of known realities. The technique of green screening or chroma keying, where digital compositing removes the background from the subject of a photo or video, is often used to exemplify the nature and manipulation

of 'time' in video. I've long been trying to understand the use of the green screen in the work of a select few artists practicing today. I'm drawn to use it in my own work because of the chromatic green itself, and its ability to disappear landscape, figures and objects, replacing them with transparent space or locations that exist elsewhere and at other times. Phrases like 'portal' and 'doorway' are often used, in relation to the work of Sam Smith and Ms & Mr for example, to infer that video has a mediumistic quality that enables the artist, acting as a pseudo-scientist, to cross the barriers of time, space and perception. In spite of these attempts to glorify the screen as a mediumistic entity it is a flat space that through its featurelessness allows the world to be abstracted, not altered. It is not a mirror, but a hall of mirrors, where each distortion amplifies one part of a whole.

In Franco's work, sophisticated feathering or the added illusion of depth are not used to hide the effect of the green screen. The images are roughly keyed giving the figures the look of cardboard cutouts. Like a good font the green screen carries its story lightly to give worlds both familiar and unknown a "cleanness, readability, and clarity"<sup>4</sup>, relieving the screen of its burden of representation. The green screen is not used here to realise a proposition; instead it is the arbiter between experience and imagination, allowing Franco to make evident what he already suspects. In this light his videos operate as coded, biographical pieces where truths are revealed through small fictions. John Updike described biographies as "novels with indexes". Histories are just stories after all.

Similar to the environment of a two dollar shop, Franco's screen worlds are an abstraction of all that is human: a concentrated representation of the jet-stream path of life, the tools of immediate satisfaction, the symbols of pleasures wasted and false ecstasy, of the lies we tell ourselves in order to live. And as with any abstraction, we search to find a resemblance to a world we know. Beneath the heightened aesthetic are small realities and slivers of recognition. The characters are perhaps the artist, the gallerist, the sycophant, and the peer. We hear our own voices, we recognise neighbours and parts of our dreams.

Through a layered environment that swings between life and the life-like, Heath Franco's videos declare themselves as a private utopia, where maligned and monstrous characters are given life by the artist. Like a true anarchist, Franco has created a series of stateless societies that destabilise frameworks like language and the hierarchies of domestic and social spheres. Franco gives voice to fear, autonomy to suspicion, and it is terrifying.

1. From Bey's essay *T.A.Z.: The Temporary Autonomous Zone, Ontological Anarchy, Poetic Terrorism*, free online at [http://hermetic.com/bey/taz\\_cont.html](http://hermetic.com/bey/taz_cont.html)

2. Also from *T.A.Z.* (above) "*Children whose clarified senses betray them into a brilliant sorcery of beautiful pleasure reflect something feral & smutty in the nature of reality itself: natural ontological anarchists, angels of chaos — their gestures & body odors broadcast around them a jungle of presence, a forest of prescience complete with snakes, ninja weapons, turtles, futuristic shamanism, incredible mess, piss, ghosts, sunlight, jerking off, birds' nests & eggs — gleeful aggression.*"

3. *Interview with Heath Franco for The Brag* available at <http://www.thebrag.com/2012/06/20/street-level-with-heath-franco/>

4. Kenneth Goldsmith on the sustained appeal of Helvetica, Arial and Verdana in





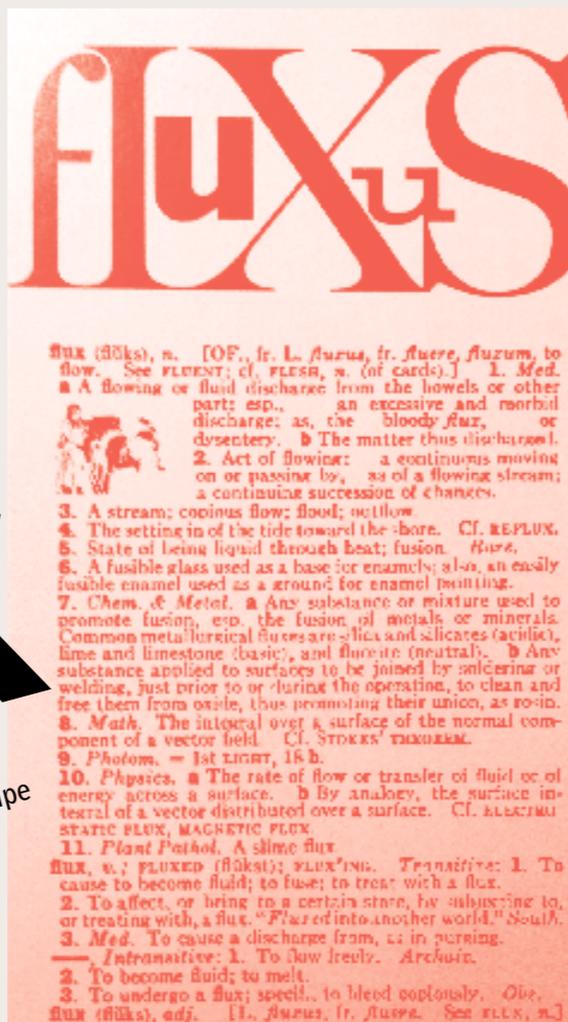
•\\•  
STILL FROM *YOUR DOOR* (2011)  
HIGH DEFINITION DIGITAL VIDEO, COLOUR, STEREO  
SOUND, 16:9. DURATION: 8 MIN 17 SECS  
IMAGE COURTESY OF THE ARTIST  
AND GALERIE POMPOM, SYDNEY

•|•  
*DREAM HOME* (2012)  
DUAL-CHANNEL HIGH DEFINITION DIGITAL VIDEO  
INSTALLATION. COLOUR, STEREO SOUND,  
16:9. DURATION: 10 MIN 45 SECS. 2 X HD FLATSCREEN  
MONITORS, PLYWOOD, OIL DECKING STAIN "MERBAU",  
DULUX "SHIMMER" ACRYLIC INTERIOR, LIGHT FILTERS  
"CT STRAW". DIMENSIONS VARIABLE.  
IMAGE COURTESY OF THE ARTIST  
AND GALERIE POMPOM, SYDNEY

Drip Music

For single or multiple performance.  
A source of dripping water and an empty vessel are arranged so that the water falls into the vessel.

George Brecht, 1959



George Maciunas, Manifesto, 1963

# in flux

Design: Ricardo Felipe

Geoffrey Gartner's take on text scores

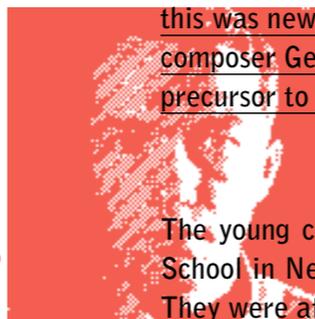
## Danger Music Number Two

Hat. Rags. Paper. Heave. Shave.

Dick Higgins, 1961

A performer climbs a ladder... then with massive dignity... begins to drip water, one drop at a time, into the bell of a tuba far below. Written in the summer of 1959, this was new music with a beat of an entirely different kind. Drip Music by chemist/composer George Brecht was one of the first great text scores. Brecht's drip was the precursor to a deluge.

George Brecht



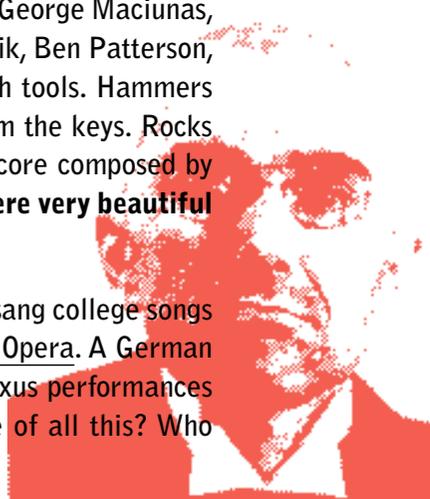
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The young composers in John Cage's experimental composition class at the New School in New York had become restless. They began calling their works "events". They were after a multi-sensory reaction.

**For composers questioning the very meaning of "music", staves were impossible. Text had become the only viable means of notation.**

It was text scores of this kind that were performed at the September 1962 Fluxus Internationale Festspiele in Wiesbaden, Germany. A whole month of performances was devoted to the newly branded Fluxus. Led by Fluxus high-priest George Maciunas, six young performers—Dick Higgins, Alison Knowles, Nam June Paik, Ben Patterson, Wolf Vostell and Emmett Williams—set about playing a piano with tools. Hammers and a giant hacksaw were used. Ivory was delicately chiselled from the keys. Rocks were rubbed on the strings. This was a performance of an event score composed by Philip Corner. **Dick Higgins said the sounds of the dismantling were very beautiful at times, belying their inherent violence.**

George Maciunas



On one of the first evenings delinquent students overran the stage, sang college songs and set fire to the three-metre text score of Emmett Williams' An Opera. A German television network got into the act by broadcasting one of the Fluxus performances upside down. What was the unsuspecting German public to make of all this? Who were these upstarts disturbing their concert ritual?

XXXXXXXXXXXXX

Fluxus is where mediums collide, where art and life blur. Fluxists don't ascribe to any one artistic medium, they just create as they see fit. The ideas of flow, flux and fusion are all included in George Maciunas' infamous Manifesto. The imprimatur of George Maciunas is all over Fluxus. Most of the Flux Boxes and multiples produced in the 1960s bear his unmistakable graphic style.

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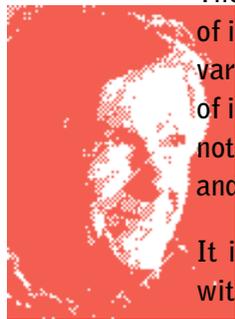
The conventional notion of a concert involves a clear division of roles:

- x The author of the score—the composer
- x Those who realise the score—the performers
- x Those who witness the performance—the audience, usually from massed seating and with the help of program notes

Text scores blur these distinctions.

Dick Higgins





There is an inevitable Cageian influence to most early text scores, with the element of indeterminacy being central. The flagrant ambiguity of text scores leads to a great variety of interpretations. Many Fluxus works do not require an enactment of a set of instructions by the performer, but present a multitude of potential readings. Fluxus not only blurs the boundaries between art and life but also those between audience and performer, serious and comic.

It is important to remember that in a typical Western concert the audience hears with their eyes more than their ears. Fluxus took these inbred sensory responses and turned them on their head. Often the audience would end up performing the piece. Yoko Ono even dared to turn off the lights and have the audience touch each other.

Most of these scores are imbued with a delicious irony. Fluxus is a celebration of the offbeat. Everything is questioned—even a work's own premise. This is readily apparent in Yoko Ono's early work. Ono was one of the pivotal figures of early Fluxus, and many early Flux performances were held in her loft apartment.

Her delightful opus, Grapefruit, is perhaps one of the most whimsical books ever produced. She instructs the reader to burn the book immediately upon completion. Her scores for Smoke Painting and Painting to be Stepped On are not complete until they have been destroyed.

By inciting laughter through puns and gags text scores operated as a way to lampoon the art establishment. There is something wonderfully egalitarian about Fluxus principles. Maciunas was aghast at the sums being paid for the works of the American abstract expressionists. His loathing of Andy Warhol was legendary.

Text scores go beyond the boundaries of music—they are an exploration of ideas and are designed to be a conceptual challenge. Why should sound be given the primary role in establishing what is or what is not music? Why can't the extra-aural aspects of music-making take precedence? In Grapefruit Ono asks, **“when a violinist plays, which is incidental: the arm movement or the bow sound? Try arm movement only.”**

Of course, such ideas faced resistance. La Monte Young's Composition 1960 #5, in which a butterfly is turned loose in a performance area, was refused performance on the grounds that this could not possibly be music. But as Young argued, who's to say that music must be heard by human ears? He got his way, the piece was performed, and the obliging butterfly flew around the hall and fluttered out the window as scripted.

Text scores often assume an idealised performer outside the traditional realms of space and time. Some of these works could potentially last forever—in order to destabilise the idea of linear time, Fluxists seized upon the ideas of double meanings, riddles, puzzles and conundrums. More importantly, they highlighted the constraints time imposes on our everyday lives. At what point is it certain that temporal structure or purpose exists? This highly unconventional music is without boundaries. There are no historical references to ground the listener. The composers were not setting out to

John Cage

Emmett Williams

La Monte Young

### Duet for Performer and Audience

Performer waits silently on stage for audible reaction from audience which he imitates.

Emmett Williams, 1961

### Composition 1960 #10 to Bob Morris

**Draw a straight line and follow it.**

La Monte Young, 1960

### Composition 1960 #3

Announce to the audience when the piece will begin and end. If there is a limit on duration. It may be of any duration. Then announce that everyone may do whatever he wishes for the duration of the composition.

La Monte Young, 1960

Proposition #2

Make a salad.

Alison Knowles, 1962

Wall Piece For Orchestra

Hit a wall with your head.

Yoko Ono, 1962

Walk Piece

Stick inside of your brains with a penis until things are mixed well. Take a walk.

Yoko Ono, 1961

please, but to transport the participant to another place. In Grapefruit Ono refers to this as "music for the mind".

Text scores generally consist of a few words, sometimes a sentence. There is an onus on the unexpected. However, this is not just empty Dadaist shock. It's a deliberate ploy to engage the senses. The amused incredulity expressed by the audience ("Surely this guy isn't going to stand there and make salad?") is frequently the shock of recognition. The audience member is forced to react and engage. This initial response quickly gives way to a sense of wonder and a more reasoned manner of listening.

XXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Fifty years after she wrote Proposition #2, Alison Knowles is still making musical salad all over the world. In 2008 Knowles and a small army of chefs made salad for two thousand in the Turbine Hall of the Tate Modern. Vast quantities of chopped lettuce, rocket, radish, tomato and cucumber were "tossed" from the bridge onto a tarpaulin far below, mixed with garden rakes and then scooped onto plates. The crowd loved the performance and enjoyed the salad.

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Of course, these scores were the prototype for a much larger way of thinking. Fluxus reinvigorated the experimental art scene of the mid 20th century through a critique of art that relied on unexpected rhetoric. In response to critics who define Fluxus as a movement, narrowly circumscribing it between the early sixties and late seventies, it seems correct to advance the notion of Fluxus as a living tradition.

But Fluxus is far more than this. It functions as a cultural representation of everyday life whose concern with the ephemeral has ensured its relevance and regeneration from pre-Socratic philosophy to the present day, and it extends far beyond the confines of a couple of decades late in the 20th century.

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Every time I leave through the front door it is a small ceremonial occasion... I'm performing Brecht's Exit Piece. Now **this** is my idea of how to use text. I shall **never** text on a phone.

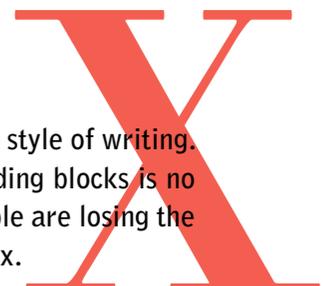
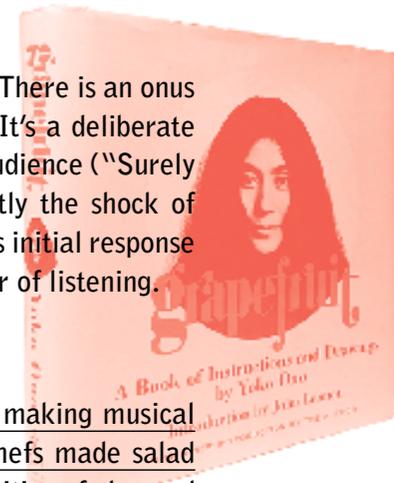
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So now evry1 is texting. Once again, a medium has pre-determined a style of writing. Everything as short as possible. The concept of using words as building blocks is no longer revolutionary, it is decidedly commonplace. Is it because people are losing the skill to work with words, or is the skill evolving? I suppose it's in flux.

Why do I always sign my name "in flux"? Because I refuse to be pigeon-holed. I'm a flat-out-freelancer, with an influ**X** of new scores, harmony assignments, rehearsals. No labels, thanks. I'm in flux.

Yoko Ono, Grapefruit, 1964

Alison Knowles



The letter X

# LOVING THE HATER: WILDE & THE CRITIC AS AN ARTIST

BY KATE BRITTON

*Without the critical faculty, there is no artistic creation at all, worthy of the name.*

Chatting over a cider with an old friend recently, I remarked on how long it had been since we'd caught up. "God, I know," she replied. "I was actually in Sydney last week for Holly's\* opening, sorry we couldn't invite you." I was intrigued; I probed her. She laughed. "I think it's kind of great actually. Apparently you reviewed her friend's show a few months back, and you didn't like it, and she didn't want you there in case you trashed her work."

I was gobsmacked. For one thing, it's rare that I across the board trash shows. In fact, I've been a careful practitioner of the 'compliment sandwich' approach since my undergraduate writing courses, in which our tutors encouraged us to be *constructively* critical, sandwiching comments between two compliments, like "I really loved the opening line, but I was a little confused about what was happening and if I even cared from that point on. I love how much you mention your cat though." Compliment sandwich.

In 1891, Oscar Wilde published a treatise on the role of criticism in art. His premise was that the critic and the artist are in fact inseparable, the one reliant on the other like the orchid and the wasp. The text, *The Critic As Artist*<sup>1</sup>, is as sharp as you'd expect and meta to boot; as a piece of criticism about criticism, it demonstrates criticism while arguing for the creative role of the critic in the Socratic style – that is to say, creatively via imagined dialogue. As meta as it comes.

Wilde advocates the role of the critic, eulogising the Greek critical mind to which, he argues, all modern life can be attributed to: *Whatever, in fact, is modern in our life we owe to the Greeks. Whatever is an anachronism is due to mediaevalism.*<sup>2</sup> For him, an age without criticism is an age without art, or at least an age in which art is immobile. It's an idea that could be particularly pertinent in *this* age, where it seems everybody is a DIY – or a bedroom – something or other; an idea that harks back to the old tree in the forest adage – if a work of art is produced without anyone looking at it, is it produced at all?

Wilde's essay is strangely prescient of Bourriaud's relational aesthetics, which for numerous years has stood as one of the defining pieces of contemporary criticism. Bourriaud follows Godard's famous mandate that *it takes two to make an image*<sup>3</sup>, proliferating the idea that aesthetics is something that happens between an artwork and a spectator or participant. For Wilde, however, your average Susie Art Lover is not enough to complete the picture. No, for Wilde, the spectator must possess additional faculties, for she *occupies the same relation to the work of art that [s]he criticises as the artist does to the visible world of form and colour, or the unseen world of passion and of thought.*

In literature, he argues, lies the highest form of criticism, making one of his most intriguing statements in support of this claim: that it is far more difficult to talk about a thing than to *do* it. *Anybody can make history. Only a great man can write it*, he states, laying down an implicit challenge to critics across the ages: that criticism should not *reflect* an artwork, but rather take it as the starting point of something new. It bears thinking about: should criticism of performance be performative itself? If writing about Monet should one be impressionistic?

Herein Wilde introduces another remarkable idea: that there is a necessary incompleteness to art that furnishes it with its value – that a work of art with but one message to reveal, having done so will become dumb and sterile. Indeed, some 30 years after the publication of *The Critic as Artist*, incompleteness would come

to the fore in mathematics via a young Austrian named Kurt Gödel, who proved that there are "always propositions in the system that can be neither proved nor disproved"<sup>4</sup>.

Applied to art, this proposition seems to echo Wilde's call for art that proves *all interpretations true, and no interpretation final*. The creative role of the critic, particularly as expressed in its literary form, offers the chance to revise criticism as we know it. There are, undoubtedly, some artists that many agree could use the odd bit of negative critique (I'm looking at you Damien Hirst). But perhaps what we should be asking of our critics is not to provide us with compliment sandwiches, or worse, to avoid our shows entirely for fear of ego damage; rather, we should be asking them *what else? What can my art do in literary form?*

The artist, Wilde quite rightly argues, might very often have no more than a particular colour or form in mind when she creates her work – these formal and plastic concerns are, after all, in many cases the truly experimental domain of the creator. It is the role of criticism, therefore, to imbue a work of art with new *concepts*. An artist may invent a colour, but she does not hold a monopoly on its emotive power. In a line that could have come straight from Bourriaud himself, Wilde writes that: *the meaning of any beautiful created thing is, at least, as much in the soul of him who looks at it, as it was in his soul who wrought it.* The unbiased critic – that elusive and unlikely literary figure – is for Wilde totally valueless. *The man who sees both sides of a question, he quips, is a man who sees absolutely nothing at all.* The compliment sandwich, it seems, should eat itself.

The critic should see art, not as a riddling Sphinx whose secrets may be guessed at, but as a *goddess whose mystery it is his province to intensify*. Intensity is the key, that indescribable inbetweenness that the truly great critics can write, not do. To like something is not enough. In fact, Wilde reminds us, there are two ways to dislike art. *One is to dislike it. The other, to like it rationally.* There is nothing sane, he cautions, about the worship of beauty. A good critic, therefore, is insane; she creates, she is for all intents and purposes, an artist. The literary forms that compose the critical faculty of the so-called art world are inseparable from the art world itself; the two seemingly opposed acts are, in fact, reciprocally defined, mutually constituted. The critic, she who arguably brings literature to art, is indispensable! Invite her to your art shows without fear! Welcome her in the spirit of the Greeks! Wilde knows. *When man acts he is a puppet. When he describes he is a poet. The whole secret lies in that.* Criticism provides the resonance that drives creation.

\* Names have been changed to avoid me copying any flak.

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.online-literature.com/wilde/1305/>

<sup>2</sup> Italicised quotes are from *The Critic As Artist*

<sup>3</sup> Bourriaud, N. (2002) *Relational Aesthetics*. Les Presses Du Reel. Paris.

<sup>4</sup> Sarah Mann-O'Donnell; 'Abstract Body, Abstract Machine: Alan Turing's Drama of Difference'; *Goldsmith's Sociology Research Papers*; 2005; ISBN 1-904158-68-4; p3-4



•|  
AUBREY BEARDSLEY  
*THE DANCER'S REWARD* (1894)  
ILLUSTRATION FROM OSCAR WILDE'S *SALOME*



•|  
AUBREY BEARDSLEY  
*THE CLIMAX* (1894)  
ILLUSTRATION FROM OSCAR WILDE'S *SALOME*

# CLAIRE HEALY AND SEAN CORDEIRO: LITERARY INFLUENCES

BY KELLY MCDONALD

Concerned with ideas of home, Claire Healy and Sean Cordeiro's decade-long collaboration has drawn inspiration from their nomadic lifestyle as artists as the conceptual and material basis for their practice. Focusing on an exploration and reinterpretation of the material things that provide shelter, Healy and Cordeiro have crafted large-scale installations ranging from a deconstructed caravan (*Wohnwagon [flatpack]*, 2006) to the entire materials used to construct a single house (*The Cordial Home Project*, 2003 and *Not Under My Roof*, 2008). Furthering this idea of the home, many of their works have been made from the possessions that transform a shelter into a home: the debris left in studios from previous residents in *Deceased Estate* (2004), and their own belongings that have been in storage while they live abroad in *Self Storage* (2006).

While much of their work has focused on themes derived from their experience of moving between studio residencies in Australia and abroad, as well as the resulting packing, unpacking and travel, *Par Avion* (2011) represents, quite literally, a departure. Previous works have used the artists' own experiences to question the way we, as a culture, accumulate, live and inhabit space. *Par Avion* reflects the impetus to travel for adventure rather than necessity.

*Par Avion* consists of a small aeroplane the artists found in a scrap metal yard in Roma, in South Western Queensland. The Cessna 172 was cut into 69 pieces which Healy and Cordeiro posted to Frey Norris Modern and Contemporary in San Francisco. The aeroplane was reassembled for the exhibition and installed on the floor, evoking scenes of the aftermath of catastrophe with the pieces laid out like a crime scene. This evocation of wreckage counters the hope and aspiration symbolised by the aeroplane in its original form. Small planes such as this Cessna enabled incredible personal freedom and adventure, but cutting it up and posting it allowed the plane to travel much further than it could have in its original form.

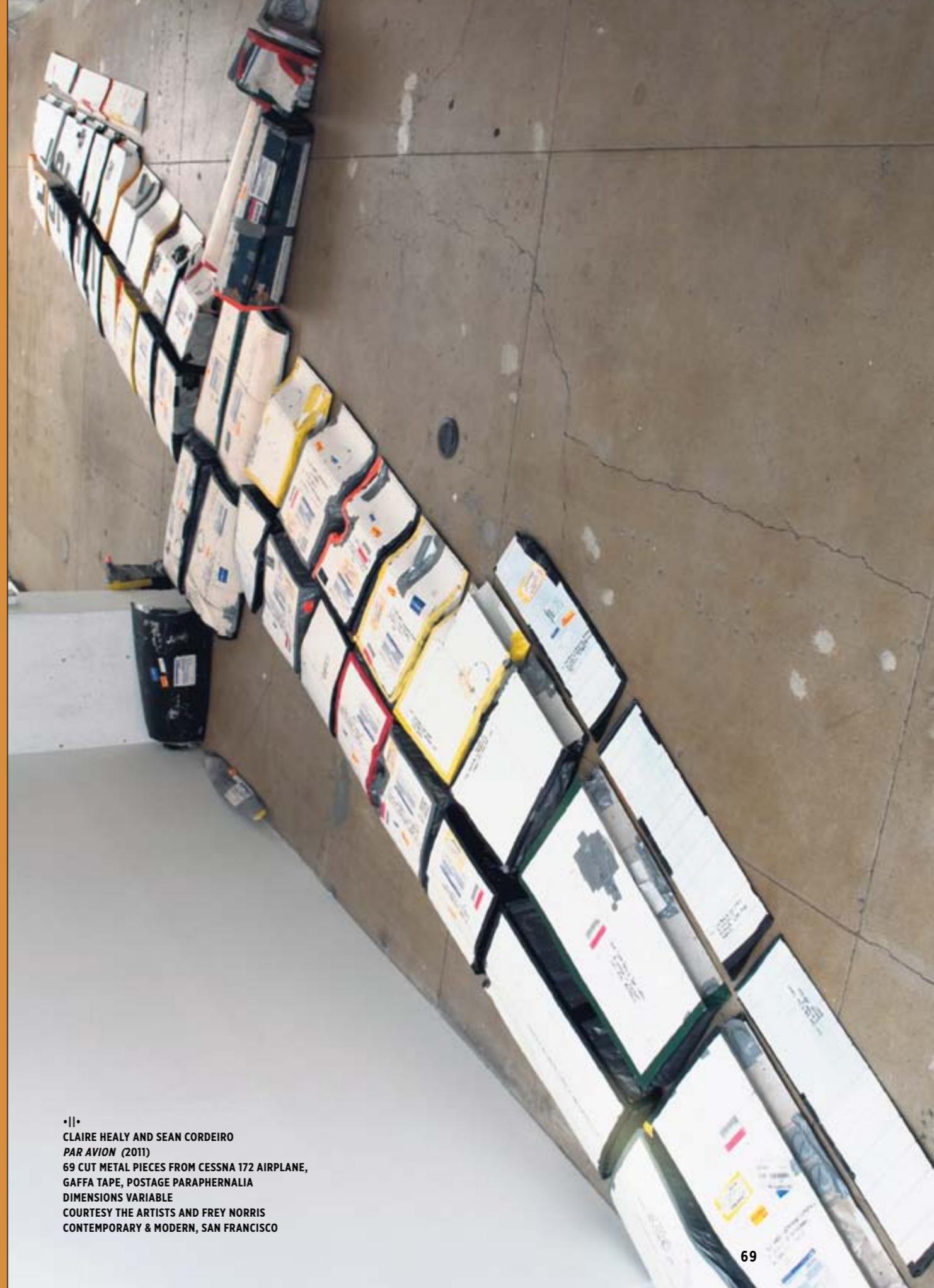
The work originated as a response to fictional and semi-fictional

tales of travel, adventure and exploration, such as *Around the World in 80 Days* by Jules Verne, *On the Road* by Jack Kerouac and *Peking to Paris* by Luigi Barzini. The catalyst for adventure in Verne's tale is the completion of the Trans-Indian rail crossing, enabling Phileas Fogg to travel around the entire world in 80 days using publicly available transport. Such mechanised modes of transport are also key to Barzini's *Peking to Paris*, in which participants travel from present day Beijing to Paris in automobiles. Continuing in this tradition, the journey of Healy and Cordeiro's Cessna 172 is emblematic of the rapid travel made available by small aeroplanes.

The parallels between the physical journey and the internal, as influenced by Kerouac's *On the Road*, reflect travel as tool to explore alternative ways of being and escaping the crowd. Gap years and backpacking through Europe still stand as a rite of passage for people on the cusp of adulthood. The possibilities invoked by a small plane are the same as those invoke by the car: the travel is done without the masses, following one's own path, discovering what's out there. Like art and literature, the tendency towards exploration is an impulse of the innate curiosity and boldness of the human spirit.

#### CLAIRE HEALY AND SEAN CORDEIRO

CURATED BY ANNA DAVIES  
4 OCTOBER - 2 DECEMBER, 2012. MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART,  
SYDNEY.



•||•  
CLAIRE HEALY AND SEAN CORDEIRO  
*PAR AVION* (2011)  
69 CUT METAL PIECES FROM CESSNA 172 AIRPLANE,  
GAFFA TAPE, POSTAGE PARAPHERNALIA  
DIMENSIONS VARIABLE  
COURTESY THE ARTISTS AND FREY NORRIS  
CONTEMPORARY & MODERN, SAN FRANCISCO

# FRAMES AND NARRATIVES

BY ROBYN STUART

In 1984, midway through Reagan's presidency, the *New Yorker* published a story called *Love Trouble is My Business*, by Veronica Geng. The story begins with two quotes. The first, from the *Sunday Times*, states that "subjects such as the Soviet Union seem to haunt Mr Reagan the way vows to read Proust dog other Americans at leisure." The second, from the *Village Voice*, dryly notes that "this may be the only time in history that the words 'Mr Reagan' and 'read Proust' will appear in the same sentence." Geng took this as a challenge. Her story is composed entirely of sentences containing both 'Mr Reagan' and 'read Proust'. "I glanced over at the dame sleeping next to me and all of a sudden I wanted some other dame, the way you see Mr Reagan on TV and all of a sudden get a yen to read Proust", it begins.

Yes, it's a gimmick – it's not pretending to be anything else. But it's interesting that Geng chose this particular provocation to turn into a gimmick. Throughout history, the likes of Reagan have been paired with the likes of Proust in all sorts of unimaginable ways. Jonathan Franzen said that Geng functioned as the "meta on the meta" by placing them in such close proximity in her story, but the meta itself is quite simple: there are Prousts and there are Reagans, and when they're together, it's funny.

There's a wonderful Proust-Reagan moment in the Living Hall of The Frick Collection in New York City. The Living Hall remains in the exact condition that Frick arranged it when he lived in the house, and Frick evidently had a flair for storytelling to parallel Geng's own. This story was originally set in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century in the court of Henry VIII, but this particular rendition plays out across a fireplace. On one side of the fireplace is a portrait of the humanist scholar, philosopher and author of *Utopia*, Thomas More. Facing More is the man who engineered his execution, Thomas Cromwell. Both More and Cromwell held high positions in the King's court during their lives: Cromwell orchestrated the English Reformation, while More, a devout Catholic, was beheaded for refusing to support the parts of this act that diminished the power of the church. Cromwell himself was beheaded just five years later, for botching the King's fourth marriage.

The portraits of More and Cromwell were painted by Hans Holbein the Younger (1497/98-1543), one of the 16th Century's greatest portraitists. At the time that Holbein was working on Cromwell's portrait, More was imprisoned and awaiting trial, with Cromwell leading the prosecution. In Frick's Living Hall, the Thomases face one another, their eyes locked together. It's fitting that they flank a fireplace, which feels like it might burst into flames from the tension.

The more of the story that you know, the more you can read into the expressions of the two men. It's a great story, albeit a strange one to stage a replay of in your living room. But there must have been parts of it that particularly appealed to Frick, an American industrialist who made it onto the list of All-time Worst CEOs for his aggressive and unapologetic anti-unionism. He was, by all accounts, a prick. He embodied everything detestable about capitalism, to such an extent that he was the subject of an assassination plot by anarchists Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman (who equated his death with the ultimate act of propaganda). Perhaps Frick thrived on the tension. Or perhaps, being such a character himself, he just loved to tell a story.

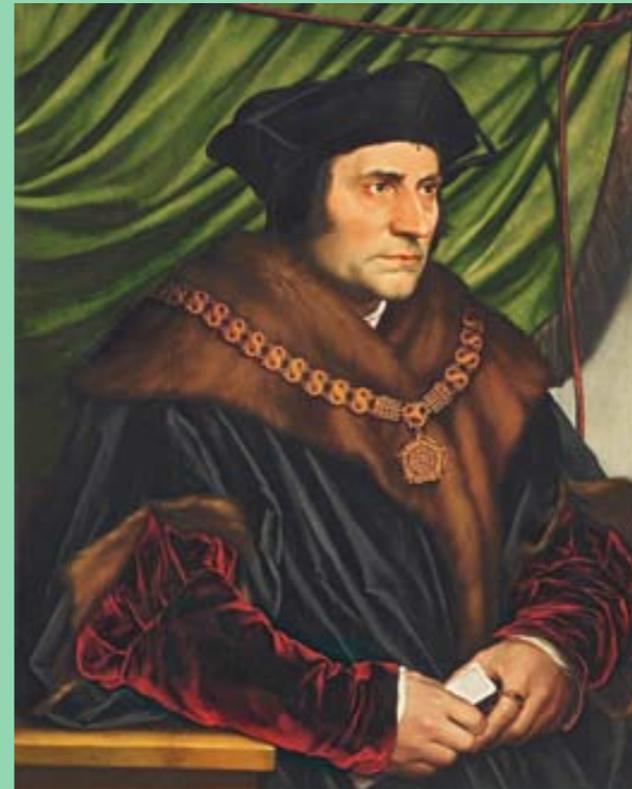
*Suppose I could prove to you that there are universal patterns of order and repetition that give meaning to the activity of this planet.*<sup>1</sup>

What's so beguiling about the pairings of Proust/Reagan and Thomas/Thomas is that the premise is so simple; the skill is in how well each story is told. After all, the air of simplicity is notoriously difficult to achieve. As external narrators, separated in time and space from the events being narrated, begin to interact directly with these events, it results in what Gerard Genette calls a "violation of the separation between syntactically defined levels". Both Frick and Geng function as both narrator of an existing story and author of a new one – and we as the audience are complicit in their game.

**A VIRTUAL TOUR OF THE FRICK COLLECTION IS AVAILABLE AT THE GOOGLE ART PROJECT, [GOOGLEARTPROJECT.COM](http://GOOGLEARTPROJECT.COM)**

**A PODCAST OF VERONICA GENG'S STORY, READ AND DISCUSSED BY JONATHAN FRANZEN, IS AVAILABLE FREE FROM THE NEW YORKER, [NEWYORKER.COM/ONLINE/PODCASTS/FICTION](http://NEWYORKER.COM/ONLINE/PODCASTS/FICTION)**

<sup>1</sup>JP Morgan to Henry Ford, in EL Doctorow's *Ragtime*



**HANS HOLBEIN THE YOUNGER (1497/98-1543)**  
**SIR THOMAS MORE (1527)**  
OIL ON PANEL  
29 1/2 X 23 3/8 INCHES  
THE FRICK COLLECTION, NEW YORK  
PHOTO: MICHAEL BODYCOMB

MARCEL PROUST AS A CHILD

**HANS HOLBEIN THE YOUNGER (1497/98-1543)**  
**THOMAS CROMWELL (1532-1533)**  
OIL ON OAK PANEL  
30 7/8 X 25 3/8 INCHES  
THE FRICK COLLECTION, NEW YORK  
PHOTO: MICHAEL BODYCOMB

RONALD REAGAN

# INDIALOGUE: ALL OUR RELATIONS

BY RHIANNA WALCOTT

For the first time in the history of the Biennale of Sydney the role of Artistic Director is being shared by two curators, Catherine de Zegher and Gerald McMaster. This break from tradition and the significance placed on the role of collaboration, in particular the creation of conversations, stories and dialogues, is one of the key ways in which the 18th Biennale of Sydney: *all our relations* differs from its predecessors.

Beginning with two curators in dialogue, the 18th Biennale of Sydney proposes a conversational model, veering away from the traditional idea of a biennale as a 'thematic compendium' exploring a single subject or notion. The current Biennale instead focuses on engaging with artists and audiences through storytelling. The artistic directors have compared the various works to "a set of storylines", with the collective composition resulting in "active generation of meanings".

One of the artists included in the Biennale is Thai artist Mit Jai Inn, whose multi-coloured abstract works at the Museum of Contemporary Art are not classifiable as either painting or sculpture, but rather deliberately blur the line between the two categories. Made with oil paint and pigment on un-stretched canvas, the colourful pieces curl and unfurl in undulating waves from the ceiling and spiral across the floor, reminiscent of banners or Chinese scrolls. The artist leaves the placement and configuration of the works to the installer, thereby creating a kind of social collaboration between artist and curator or collector or owner.

Mit Jai Inn was a key figure behind the development in the early nineties of the Chiang Mai Social Installation, a project aimed at liberating art from the confines of the art gallery. Exhibiting artworks in unorthodox spaces such as cemeteries and temples allowed them to permeate the daily life of the local community in the ancient city of Chiang Mai. These ideas and the 'politico-aesthetic' discourse which subsequently developed in Thai contemporary art have led to Mit Jai Inn being recognised as one of the most significant artists working in Thailand today.

Given his work with relational aesthetics and the social and political implications of art making, Mit Jai Inn's inclusion in the current Biennale is fitting. His practice has developed

into a means of communicating his personal views on art and life, especially the current political situation in Thailand, and his works themselves are a conversation between artist and viewer. Embodying the idea of 'eukabeuk', an invented term which means 'nothing', his works come to mean different things to each individual, thereby opening up a dialogue in which the audience is encouraged to share their unique understandings and interpretations.

Another Thai artist included in this year's Biennale of Sydney is Sudsiri Pui-Ock, a multidisciplinary artist whose work is concerned with philosophical explorations of life, death and existence. A selection of her video works being shown at the Art Gallery of New South Wales includes her seminal video/performance *The Street of Two Birds*. Filmed in Moriya, Japan, the video depicts the artist kneeling precariously in the middle of a narrow village road as oncoming traffic veers and swerves around her in order to avoid hitting her. Intent on creating a tribute to an elderly couple killed by traffic in this exact spot, the artist ignores the dangers of the situation, focusing instead on memorialising the deceased couple via the process of telling their story. Acting as a gentle reminder of the far-reaching consequences of rapidly expanding urbanisation, the work acts as both *memento mori* and a reminder of mankind's need for a slower, more peaceful existence.

With its conversational model and focus on storytelling, a major outcome of the current Biennale is the large number of works of beauty, poignancy and poeticism (ideals often denigrated in contemporary art). The result is a democratic and cohesive presentation which deals with universal themes and opens up new possibilities for the future of art.



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MIT JAI INN  
NO. 112 (2002-12)  
OIL AND PIGMENT ON CANVAS,  
DIMENSIONS VARIABLE  
IMAGE COURTESY OF OIDA ART, BANGKOK  
PHOTOGRAPH: TINNAKORN NUGUL

# MARCIN WOJCIK: COLOUR CODED

## INTERVIEW WITH BRONWYN BAILEY-CHARTERIS

MARCIN WOJCIK'S PRACTICE SPANS SCULPTURE, INSTALLATION, PERFORMANCE AND VIDEO. GROUNDED IN A CONTINUED EXPLORATION OF IDENTITY, HE USES THEATRICAL DEVICES TO DRAW VIEWERS INTO PERFORMATIVE SPACES THAT DECONSTRUCT THE NATURE OF MISE-EN-SCÈNE. I SPOKE TO WOJCIK ABOUT HIS PROJECT FOR THE MELBOURNE ART FAIR, AND THE ROLE OF LOGIC AND LANGUAGE IN HIS PRACTICE.

### Can you tell us about your project for the Melbourne Art Fair?

I have constructed two distinct environments based upon the activities of cycling and climbing, focusing on the role of acting as a means to construct a persona within a mise-en-scène. Underpinned by ideas around performance, the work employs theatrical devices, including props, a scene and a backdrop, to draw viewers into a performative space, painting the identities of both viewer and artist into a scene. The interior of this scene (painted blue to mimic the special effects blue-screen used in cinema) both frames and initiates the viewer by facilitating a kind of performative "stepping into". Augmenting the installation are the props that support both the role of the activity and the scene. These props specifically assist the suturing of the artist into the role of the assumed persona but also function as part of the scene itself. These objects leave traces of contact within each setting as some props enter the scene and others are left behind.

### In terms of your body of work, tell us about the way you approach your use of colour?

I don't see colour as 'colour' in my work as such, but rather colour/colours as a set of markers or cues, which might allude to or suggest a thought, an action, a scene, or a prop. For me colour is a set of coordinated schemes that reference a series of thought processes. How I come to choose these colours can be quite intuitive, although it has only been recently that this explosion of colour has really taken centre stage.

### The logic of your work is very clear and structured, while also being unique and almost unreadable. What's the role of logic and language in your work?

I think about this a lot: how my practice has slowly taken to abstraction. I think that by having set a series of parameters around how I approach making work, I'm able to pick and push ways to present the works. Because of this, I find myself choosing to be less direct, pulling out elements in the work that can allude to a number of things, and in doing so, leaving the work open for free association. My practice works on the imaginary – I enjoy placing the viewer within these flipped, highly constructed worlds and find comfort in knowing that perhaps only so much can be gleaned from understanding the work as a whole. I have a say in the work, although I know and accept that it is not the last!

### Finally, what can we expect to see from you over the next year?

Next year is looking to be a pretty exciting time for me. I've been working collaboratively on a major new project with my dear friend Drew Pettifer. In 2011 we took part in a residency at the Art Vault in Mildura. The result, a collaborative video piece produced during our stay, will be shown in 2013 at the Margaret Lawrence Gallery, VCA.



• MARCIN WOJCIK  
MOUNT VENTOUX (2010)  
PERFORMANCE  
VCA STUDENT GALLERY

# A COLLECTIVE INQUIRY INTO OUR PRESENT THROUGH VARIOUS PROPOSALS

BY SUMUGAN SIVANESAN

“You are worse than capitalism!” was an insult leveled at me during a recent visit to Kassel. Indeed, the overarching effects of global capitalism have occupied the minds of numerous critical thinkers over recent years, as reflected in the welcome statement of dOCUMENTA (13) curator Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev:

“dOCUMENTA (13) is driven by a holistic and non-logocentric vision that is skeptical of the persisting belief in economic growth.”<sup>1</sup>

If the first documenta in 1955 was a cultural project aimed at realigning Germany to liberal democratic values after the period of National Socialism, this 13th documenta may well be concerned with realigning the overdeveloped world to the concerns of the globalised during a period of neoliberal postnationalism.

The small contingent of Occupy protestors that set up camp in front of the iconic Fridericianum museum during the opening week has swelled since the closure of the Berlin Biennale in which they were officially included. Having been much discussed across d(13)'s program of talks and seminars, the movement was officially welcomed by Christov-Bakargiev (garnering the nickname dOCCUPY) and entered into documenta's process of historicisation, aligned with “the spirit of the moment and the spirit of Joseph Beuys”.<sup>2</sup>

Although autonomous in ideology, it is understood that art events of this scale are reliant on major corporate sponsors that must be handled diplomatically, as a quick browse of any d(13) promotional material will confirm. More problematic is the claim of local activists that Kassel remains one of the largest arms and weapons manufacturers in Germany.<sup>3</sup> This industry led Kassel to be a key target for bombing campaigns during the Second World War, which left the city in ruins and ironically shaped the conditions that prompted the first documenta as a cultural rebuilding exercise.

Such is the circuitous nature of contemporary life that even those that oppose corporate greed and the industrialised war economy are effectively sanctioned by the very institutions they are critiquing, absorbed into the boundless new spirit of capitalism. So, how do you stage a critique of neoliberal values from a position of complicity?

“Why is it easier to imagine the destruction of the planet than an end to Capitalism? Can we explore together the potential for non-capitalist life? What does it look like, sound like, feel like, move like, taste like?”<sup>4</sup>

AND AND AND are an initiative of the artists Ayreen Anastas and Rene Gabri, founders of the 16 Beaver group in New York, in collaboration with d(13)'s Maybe Education and Public Programs and Chus Martínez. During d(13) the collective are interrogating the connections between the art event, the political economy and its local context, and in doing so perform a self-critique within the organising body and its constituent subjectivities.

Based in a former gymnasium at the periphery of the d(13) geography, their Turnhalle location serves as a workshop, meeting room, kitchen and dining hall where the collective hosts talks, screenings and unworkshops according to a series of thematics that have so far included “Capitalism out of the body”, “The politics of small groups”, “Five decolonial days”, and “An anti-capitalist approach to noise and improvisation” as well as a week of anti-university teach-ins.

Collaborating with local students, activists and food producers, the collective operates a cart serving tea made from herbs cultivated in the courtyard of the Ottoneum, Kassel's natural history museum. They also arrange a food kiosk in the expansive city gardens, Karlsaue Park, selling a variety of locally sourced fruits, vegetables, boiled eggs, sandwiches and pastries, that is also the site of a Sunday morning conversation series relating to food and ecology.

As an open-to-all project of activities addressing local concerns via the process of ‘commoning’, AND AND AND are awkwardly positioned in relation to the organisation from which they emerge. The Turnhalle, Tea Garden, and Food Kiosk are all accessible without the entry ticket required for the other d(13) exhibitions. Their internal programming draws from d(13) participants as well as others not included, extending the scope and reach of the official program, connecting local concerns to a global network of affiliates.



## A CONTEMPORARY HISTORICAL PLACE.

At the opposite end of the spectrum the artist Gareth Moore pursues an obscure and isolationist alternative to AND AND AND's accessible collectivity. Moore's installation, *a place – near the buried canal*, is located in the maintenance area at the far end of Karlsaue Park. The site, although listed on the d(13) map, is difficult to find, partly due to the artist having removed its identifying peg.

Moore has lived on site since early 2010 and over that time built a small self-sufficient compound from scavenged and discarded material. Besides the cabin in which he lives, the artist has assembled an inter-spiritual temple, a kiosk selling sodas and incense, a Museum to the Rhinoceros Clara of Infinite Orange Rinds, a healing centre and a small *pensione* in which guests can stay. (Moore's artist page in the d(13) guidebook is a typewriter set advertisement which includes a cut-out coupon good for one free “Hot shower OR Coffee OR Morning Whiskey OR Beans on toast” valid with accommodation.)

Built with ingenuity and attention to detail, the work affects an outsider enthusiasm making it a word-of-mouth must see. Fenced off behind a small thicket of forest it operates to Moore's own visiting hours and requires a single coin entry fee (all coins are accepted), regardless of a d(13) ticket. Visitors are discouraged from straying from a tightly controlled planked walkway and cameras must be checked at the gate, swapped for a small chestnut on a string.

Whilst it might not be a direct critique of institutional entanglements with neoliberal capitalism, *a place...* does showcase a self-determined lifestyle and an unorthodox craftsmanship that unfolds as a surprising and delightful series of affective intensities.

Given the unstoppable advance of capitalism unbound, could it be that these documenta enabled pockets of irreality hint at a cure yet to come?

dOCUMENTA (13), 9 June – 16 September 2012, Kassel, Germany.

• AND AND AND  
THE BEGINNING MIDDLE OF A NON-CAPITALIST LIFE  
Photo: Sumugan Sivanesan

<sup>1</sup> <http://d13.documenta.de/#welcome/>

<sup>2</sup> “dOCUMENTA (13) Artistic Director welcomes the »occupy« movement”, documenta.de, 8 July 2012. URL: [http://d13.documenta.de/#/press/news-archive/press-single-view/?tx\\_ttnews%5Btt\\_news%5D=159&cHash=e26d0c1a6f7cd3f67904003cbb2aeb33](http://d13.documenta.de/#/press/news-archive/press-single-view/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=159&cHash=e26d0c1a6f7cd3f67904003cbb2aeb33)

<sup>3</sup> “Heute, Mo. 18.06.2012 // 20.00 Uhr: Andandand // 1000 Gründe gegen Militarismus”, panzerknacken, 18 June 2012.

URL: <http://panzerknacken.blogspot.de/2012/06/18/heute-mo-18-06-2012-20-00-uhr-andandand-1000-gruende-gegen-militarismus/>

<sup>4</sup> AND...AND...AND...“Commoning in Kassel”, documenta.de URL: <http://d13.documenta.de/#/programs/the-kassel-programs/and-and-and/commoning-in-kassel/>



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## DREW PETTIFER: I KEEP MINE HIDDEN

AN EDITED EXCERPT OF WILLIAM YANG'S SPEECH  
AT THE BOOK LAUNCH, SYDNEY, JUNE 2012

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In the 1990s, a group of photographers began to move away from traditional reportage and started making work in a field broadly called photomedia. This new field was centred around theory and ideas, sitting in contrast to the previous eras of documentary photography. An inevitable conflict arose between these two styles of photography. At around the same time, a new chapter of identity politics commenced, as people began identifying as queer. I believe queer has been the most lasting of all the identity issues – because it embraces all and it embraces diversity, it is inclusive.

It is through this idea of queer that we come to Drew Pettifer's work. Drew's photographs have a documentary quality to them, but his practice is also about ideas. He's read feminist theory and he wants to subvert the stereotypical representation of the desirable male, the buffed, masculine god.

From my experience as a photographer, I wouldn't have thought that anyone could actually make a career out of just photographing young men of a very specific kind, in a fairly narrow context, but Drew's managed it.

A lot of academic material has been written about Drew, so I won't go over that now. Daniel Palmer has written a very good introduction to his book. He mentions me and the kind of gritty photography we were making in the 70s and 80s: full of social angst. He also writes about my attempts to document the AIDS crisis. The social volatility of this period created very turbulent times. They led to social changes, and Drew has come out of this history. His style of photography, while embracing queer themes, is quite relaxed, which suits the times, which are arguably more accepting.

I'm no good at being analytical, so what I thought I'd do instead is give a pop-Freudian interpretation of the work, which is loads more fun.

Throughout the book, Drew puts himself in the work, which is a huge step for a photographer. I know this from my own experience.

When you move from behind the camera to being in front of it, in front of the audience, it's a huge shift. These are all quite risqué works, but they are presented in a discreet way; they're not provocative – well, they are and they aren't – but when they are, he gets away with it, by dealing with the subject in an understated way. When he presents an erection, there's no grunting soundtrack, it's all rather thoughtful.

I like the formal aspects of his photography. Some of these works are minimal and as such are perfectly suggestive. The picture titled *Untitled, Kieran Wanking* shows only a back view, and is quite still, but the position of the arm, only the barest of gestures, vividly suggests the activity of the title.

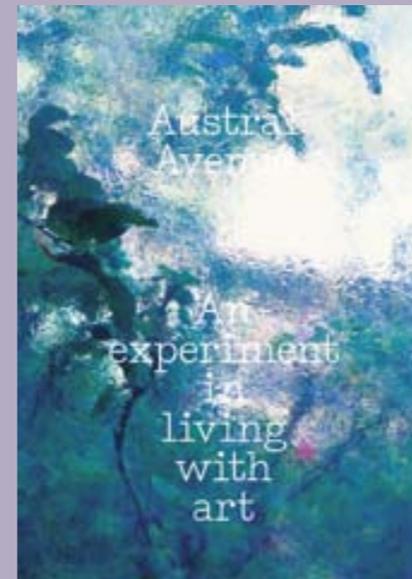
The power of Drew's work is that it contains many narratives; I'm just giving you a single narrative, but there are many possible readings. There's the morning after narrative, the share house lounge room narrative, and the straight guy who likes attention narrative. There is space in Drew's work that allows the viewer to supply their own story.

My favourite photograph as a photographer *Untitled (Steve asleep with Tyra)* because it's a photograph that Drew, who has revealed himself as a control freak in previous situations, couldn't control. There's no way he could have arranged the cat to sit on the sleeping figure – cats aren't that controllable – so it was fate working beyond his control that gave him this gift. It was his talent to see the picture and record it. It's a beautiful domestic photograph.

Drew has created the illusion of having a harem in suburban Melbourne populated by skinny, pale-skinned Caucasian boys (although there is one Asian boy!), who loll around the house, sometimes going out for a skateboard or to swim in the spa pool. Domestic scenes, carelessly erotic, are seemingly casually presented.

As an older person, I've been calling him little Drew all evening, but only as a term of endearment. I feel I am something of an uncle as we are part of the same community. I'm very happy to launch this book as I do see us in a continuum of gay or queer artists. I like this book best of all of his works because of its intimacy: it is less theoretical, more relaxed, and I sense he is more confident in just presenting sensuality for its own sake without having to justify it.

**DREW PETTIFER'S BOOK *I KEEP MINE HIDDEN* IS PUBLISHED BY M.33, MELBOURNE. MORE INFORMATION IS AVAILABLE AT [WWW.M33.NET.AU/BOOKS.HTML](http://WWW.M33.NET.AU/BOOKS.HTML) AND ON DREW'S WEBSITE, [WWW.DREWPETTIFER.COM](http://WWW.DREWPETTIFER.COM)**



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## AUSTRAL AVENUE: AN EXPERIMENT IN LIVING WITH ART

EDITED BY JANE O'NEILL, REVIEW BY MADELEINE PRESTON

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*Austral Avenue: An experiment in living with art* records the 21 shows held at the Artist Run Initiative in Melbourne from 2005 to 2007. Austral Avenue was both gallery and home. It is the relationship between domestic space and gallery, emphasised by the gallery's location on a quiet suburban street, that is one of the distinguishing aspects of the project.

Jane O'Neill, the curator, catalogue writer, and Austral Avenue's instigator describes the impetus for setting up the space as twofold: "to exhibit artists from Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane who had not had a great deal of exposure in Melbourne and to produce an essay for each exhibition."

O'Neill points out that the establishment of home galleries often occurs in cities with high rents, and acknowledges some of the home galleries that have existed in other capital cities, such as Brisbane's Pestorius Sweeney House and CBD, Pendulum and Front Room in Sydney. I can think of others in Melbourne, including Apartment and the Museum of Dirt. However, the floorless Museum of Dirt was a house that had ceased to be a home and subsequently had a very different impact.

By living with the exhibitions, O'Neill was able to "grow and change" her ideas about the work. The essays developed over time as a result of interactions with the work, with the artists and with the audience. The record of Austral Avenue's exhibitions both in the photos and in the essays reveals an intimate engagement with the artworks.

Of the 21 shows held at Austral Avenue, some involved direct interventions in the space. Artist Cathy Blanchflower painted directly on the surface of the gallery windows, while O'Neill and Catherine Clover's exhibitions both used the cornices to create work that spanned the space and made the viewer look upwards to the ceiling.

In some instances the exhibition's context went beyond the walls and into the street, as in the work of Andreas Exner, who created

coloured panels for the windows of cars and parked them in Austral Avenue. In O'Neill's accompanying essay she draws interesting parallels with the effect of Exner's panels and Ian Burn's work *Blue Reflex*. "[Burn's] finish [was] equivalent to an industrial panel beating workshop... While Burn imitated the surface of a car as a means of exploring the potential for varying the monochrome, Exner chooses the muted effect of acrylic on plywood as a contrast to the highly lacquered panels of the car finish."

The essays range from interviews with the artists to meditations on the artists' practice as revealed in the install and de-install process. The length of the essays allows for discussion of each artist's practice and the theoretical concerns or junctures O'Neill encounters after repeated viewing. The artworks are then revealed in photos on the following pages.

As you read the essays you get a sense of a totality that was built by O'Neill over the period of the gallery's existence. *Austral Avenue: An experiment in living with art* illuminates one other aspect of the Artist Run Initiative: the need for projects like Austral Avenue to be documented so the history of ARIs is, like the essays here, a more nuanced one.

**AUSTRAL AVENUE: AN EXPERIMENT IN LIVING WITH ART, EDITED BY JANE O'NEILL, IS PUBLISHED BY EMBLEM BOOKS. INFORMATION ON DISTRIBUTION IS AVAILABLE AT [WWW.EMBLEMBOOKS.COM/BOOKS/AUSTRAL-AVENUE](http://WWW.EMBLEMBOOKS.COM/BOOKS/AUSTRAL-AVENUE)**

