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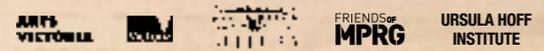
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Ian Milliss Notes on the Works

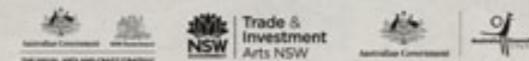
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Make a complete catalogue of all the recent works, containing all the relevant information, plus comments and interpretations, experiences and other works from which each one is inspired, and other works both by myself and others which might be relevant to their understanding.

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Artist	Ian Milliss
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Image: Ian Milliss, Notes on the Works, 1970, documentation of the artist's original research materials



MAHWISH CHISHTY
MQ-9/1 (2011) detail.
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...maybe it helps to say that as well as the usual white walls and concrete floor, the space has fluorescent lighting and a collection of weird pipes that run across the ceiling. The far end of the gallery is a floor-to-ceiling window, which overlooks a carpark but also provides a view of the first *fale* built outside of Samoa.

Next to the windows there is a large wooden desk surrounded by chairs, with a plate of some kind of food (probably rice crackers, maybe grapes) and a jug of coffee or a pot of tea. Against one wall (whichever wall you prefer) there are three portable shelves, filled with books, archive folders and an odd assortment of stationery. Somewhere near the desk is Finn, Melanie, Nick, Taarati or William. Or perhaps this time they are all here, gathered around the table.

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Image: William Kentridge, *The Refusal of Time*, 2012. A collaboration with Philip Miller, Catherine Meyburgh and Peter Galison. Five-channel video with sound, 30 min, with megaphones and breathing machine ("elephant"). State Art Collection, Art Gallery of Western Australia. Purchased through the TomorrowFund, Art Gallery of Western Australia Foundation, 2013



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IRRATIONAL AGENTS: GENDER, ECONOMICS AND AFFECT

Women (and gay men), the old story goes, are unusually emotional: they weep, they gasp, they faint, they quarrel. Even feminists, defined by their attempts to get beyond this old story, don't escape the stigma of their gender's perceived emotionality, even if they burn with man-hating rage instead of expiring with a delicate sigh. If the early women's liberation movement embraced this more aggressive emotional register as an antidote to the passivity of traditional feminine emotion, though, the history of both feminist theory and feminist art practice has tended until recently to avoid questions of affect, in favour of debates about female representation (in all senses of the word), the nature and origin of "woman" as a category, the value or otherwise of domesticity or women's lived experience, and so forth.

A new wave of feminist and queer theorising, however, has shifted the focus back to emotion, arguing that affects offer both a powerful (if dangerous and unpredictable) political tool, and a productive way of understanding how identities and social relations are structured. The earliest work in this vein emphasised the importance of affects in structuring our gender and sexual identities—we might think here of Hélène Cixous's description of a woman who trembles when called on to speak in public, which forms the basis for her claims about an essentially "feminine" writing, characterised by its inherent embodiment; or Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's claim in *Touching Feeling* (2003) that "queer" means "those whose sense of identity is for some reason tuned most durably to the note of shame," reinventing queerness as being inherently and fundamentally "about" a specific affect.

More recently, theorists have started thinking about the affective dimensions of gender and sexuality in more social terms. Sara Ahmed's *The Promise of Happiness*, for example, argues for a productive repudiation of the unquestioned advocacy of happiness, in an attempt to preserve a space in which women, queers and others can be angry, while Sianne Ngai suggests in *Ugly Feelings* that envy might be reclaimed as a way of analysing the dynamics of the feminist movement, and of relations between women more generally. For Ahmed and Ngai, happiness, anger and envy pervade the politics that run through the feminist movement and determine how it relates to society as a whole. Affect offers a way of refocusing the vagaries of personal relations and group dynamics as a key site of political action, even as these writers insist that affect is as much about how people relate to each other as who they are (or think themselves to be).

Running through all these thinkers is a sense that affect is both embodied and contagious, describing the point at which the most personal articulates with the most public, as well as the point at which emotion articulates with cognition. In place of older theories that would oppose thinking and feeling, placing affect mystically outside the political or the social, these thinkers locate affect as a dimension of language and politics, a response that is produced in and through social and cultural dynamics and that is inextricably bound up with cognition.

The contagious, social and public aspect of affect has led theorists including Ahmed to speak of "affective economies," systems in which affects circulate in such a way as to establish systems of value. But affects also animate real, monetary economies in ways that are central to the articulation of capitalism with questions of gender and sexuality. Decades of work in cultural studies has pointed towards the ways in which affects, positive and negative, are mobilised in advertising, with the goal of encouraging consumption but the side effect of cementing personal identities that often gravitate around gender and sexuality. Similarly, Ahmed's critique of happiness seems particularly pertinent in light of the way economics as a discipline orients itself towards the maximisation of utility, and suggests new ways of thinking critically about capitalism's relation to gender and sexuality.

This issue of *Das Superpaper* asks what it means to think about the conjunction of affect, gender and economics in light of contemporary art practice. It suggests that the orientation of affect in contemporary art is, as Julie Taylor argues, structured by ambivalence, both in terms of developing through the complex layering of contradictory feelings, and by generating its own kinds of mixed or uncertain responses. The writers and artists in this issue suggest that affect enters art through a number of feedback loops—between artists and publics, between members of a curatorial team, between teachers and students. Several are interested in the roles of social media and art—and particularly their intersection—in creating affective spaces that move ambivalently between intimacy and spectacle, blurring the lines between the personal, the interpersonal, and the public. In these pages, affect is staged, masked, and silenced. Art, in other words, doesn't simply express or provoke affect; it engages in a complex set of affective exchanges and evasions that implicate and weave themselves through our economic circumstances and our gender and sexual identities. It reveals us all to be irrational agents.

ROSA AIELLO is a writer and artist. Her work has been shown at the New Museum, The Modern Institute in Glasgow, and on Tank.tv.

SUSAN BEST teaches art history and theory at the University of NSW. She is the author of *Visualizing Feeling: Affect and the Feminine Avant-garde* (London: I B Tauris, 2011).

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ROBERT COOK is curator of Modern and Contemporary Photography and Design at the Art Gallery of Western Australia.

GARY CARSELY is an artist and academic based here and there. As a young thing he aspired to be a member of Captain Kirk's crew. Never totally recovering from this disappointment he subsequently tried a number of odd jobs in the building industry including caryatid, pilaster and cornice. He counts as a career highlight a period of distinguished service in the undeclared war against amnesia. It was in this latter capacity that Gary lost his long, deeply personal battle to affect interest in a repetitive and mediocre art world. In despair he has turned to gardening and furniture making as forms of creative expression.

DANIEL MUDIE CUNNINGHAM is a Sydney based artist, curator and writer. His art practice draws upon and rethinks the image streams of art history, everyday life, pop culture and fandom through video and performance. Daniel is a prolific exhibition and collection curator with over 15 years experience. He is currently the Senior Curator at Artbank and editor of *Sturgeon Magazine*.

TOM JEFFREYS is a London-based art critic, editor and curator. He has curated two critically acclaimed exhibitions – 2012's *Et Cetera* at Hoxton Art Gallery and *Nature Reserves* at GV Art in 2013 – and has been published in, among others, *The Daily Telegraph*, *Apollo*, *(H)Art*, *FAD*, and the *Evening Standard*. In 2009, Tom won the Sunday Times / Saatchi Gallery award for arts reviewing. He has spoken at various conferences and festivals, judged prizes for contemporary art, and written catalogue essays for artists, galleries and fairs. He also runs a blog about village cricket.

SARAH JONES is a writer, artist and curator based in Berlin. She graduated from the Tasmanian School of Art (UTAS) in 2007 and is currently completing a Masters of Fine Arts at the Dutch Art Institute (DAI), Netherlands. Sarah recently participated in the *NOA Language School* at SMBA, Amsterdam, 2013; *The rise and fall of the continuous cycle*, DeServiceGarage, Amsterdam, 2013; and *come to life* at the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, Tasmania, 2012. sarahjones.net.au

BRENDAN MCCLEARY is an emerging curator and arts writer based in Melbourne, with a particular interest in alternate histories and the interpretative possibilities art provides. Recent curatorial projects include a solo exhibition by Zanele Muholi, performances with Prince Rama, and further participatory projects. Brendan is currently Gallery Manager at SEVENTH Gallery.

ALYS MOODY is a Lecturer in English at the University of Waikato, New Zealand. She teaches and writes on modern and contemporary art and literature and is currently working on a book on the relationship between hunger and aesthetics in twentieth-century literature.

RAMESH MARIO NITHIYENDRAN is an emerging artist and researcher based in Sydney. He has exhibited in various contexts including the Perth Institute of Contemporary Art, Firstdraft, the Depot Galleries, Underbelly Arts festival, the Hong Kong Graphic Arts Fiesta and the Blake Prize at Galleries UNSW. In 2012 he received the Freedman Foundation Travelling Art Scholarship.

KUSUM NORMOYLE is an artist who works with voice in sound performance, video installation, augmented reality and objects. She is a PhD candidate at College of Fine Arts under the supervision of Douglas Kahn and is one half of 'band' Hard Hat with Peter Blamey. Her true love is techno.

GISELLE STANBOROUGH is an emerging intermedia artist whose practice often addresses online user generated media and the way in which such technologies encourage us to identify and perform notions of self. She graduated from COFA in 2010 with the University Medal and since then has exhibited in galleries around NSW and in Melbourne. Her work has been shown online in The Washington Post's "Pictures of The Day" and in Hennessy Youngman's "Art Thoughtz".

FRANK STILWELL is Professor Emeritus of Political Economy at the University of Sydney. He is well known as a critic of mainstream economics and neoliberal policies. He has written a dozen books and co-edited half a dozen more, linking economic analysis to social and environmental goals of equity and sustainability. He is also the coordinating editor for the *Journal of Australian Political Economy*: www.jape.org

ROBYN STUART is currently editor-in-chief of *Das Superpaper*. Before this, she studied economics at the University of Sydney and worked for 4 years as an economist.

JULIE TAYLOR is the author of *Djuna Barnes and Affective Modernism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2012) and is currently editing a multidisciplinary essay collection called *Modernism and Affect* for Edinburgh University Press. She has on-going research interests in American and transatlantic modernism, queer theory, and psychoanalysis. She is Lecturer in American Literature at Northumbria University, Newcastle, UK.

MIXED FEELINGS BY JULIE TAYLOR

From the nineteenth-century sentimental politics of sympathy to the galvanising anger of twentieth century rights-based activism, *feeling political* has tended to be understood as feeling not just strongly, but clearly, and unequivocally. Mixed feelings, it would seem, have no place in political critique: ambivalence would appear to be the enemy of activism.

Yet recent affect-based theories have suggested that a surprisingly wide range of feelings might be introduced into feminist and queer political projects: pride but also shame; pleasure as much as pain, for instance. Perhaps more radically, we have started to see how ambivalence itself might be valuable for its diagnostic power and its independence from binary models of thinking. To register ambivalence is not simply to register confusion, but to admit the logic of ‘and’ rather than ‘or’; to admit the logic of *besideness*, as Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick puts it. ‘Besideness,’ Sedgwick writes, ‘comprises a wide range of desiring, identifying, representing, repelling, parallelling, differentiating, rivalling, leaning, twisting, mimicking, withdrawing, attracting, aggressing, warping, and other relations.’¹ Capturing such relations, I think, might help queers and feminists to articulate the complexities of everyday trauma, non-normative desire, and the affective experience of ongoing confrontations with sexism and heterosexism.

To say that feelings are ‘mixed’ is not to designate them as non-specific or non-particularised: it does not necessitate collapsing all feelings into one another, impoverishing our affective register, or making it impossible to distinguish between one feeling and another. The paradigmatically ambivalent affect of shame has occupied a central place in queer studies over the last decade, yet in his influential theory of the affects, *Affect, Imagery, Consciousness*, psychologist Silvan Tomkins makes it clear that Shame-Humiliation is absolutely distinct from the apparently proximal affect of Disgust. What makes it distinct, for Tomkins, is its ambivalence. For Tomkins, shame is a negative affect that is itself dependent on the initial and only ‘incompletely reduced’ presence of a positive affect, specifically interest, excitement, or enjoyment. The shame response is both a turning towards and a turning away, an act of isolation and of communication, and an experience involving pleasure and distress. It is suggestively captured by Tomkins in the image of ‘the child who covers his face in the presence of the stranger, but who also peeks through his fingers so that he may look without being seen.’² The formulation of shame in such terms has allowed critics – most notably Sedgwick – to place it alongside, and indeed to modify and reframe, the notion of queer pride. While Sedgwick has stressed the foundational place of shame in queer identity, Kathryn Bond Stockton regards debasement as a ‘fully indispensable informant’ in understanding the connections between ‘black’ and ‘queer’, ‘two signs that would seem linguistically, historically separate. The strangeness of queerness would not seem particularly destined to meet the darkness of blackness, except in the bodies of dark queer folk.’³ Affective ambivalence is central to Stockton’s elaboration of the telling desires, attractions, excitements, affections, and aesthetic appreciations that are wedded to scenes of shame.

But if shame, as characterised by Tomkins and others, is an affect that is ambivalent at its core, we might also find it useful to consider the ways in which different and distinct affects combine to produce a state of overall ambivalence. I found the notion of affective ambivalence helpful when trying to find a way of conceptualising the queer textuality of the lesbian modernist writer Djuna Barnes. One particular

problem was resolving the tone of her semi-autobiographical fiction, her characteristic pairing of melancholy with bawdy comedy. But most problematic of all was her depiction of pleasure alongside the more expected pain in her traumatic but oblique accounts of childhood abuse. Both traditional feminist and Freudian psychoanalytic approaches (the two dominant paradigms for reading these depictions in Barnes’s work) do not allow such ambivalence to be sustained. But if we follow Tomkins in considering the independence of affect from object, and the propensity of affects to combine in unexpected ways, then such representations of pleasure need not be explained away or urgently disregarded.

Tomkins stresses that ‘Positive affect has been invested in pain and every kind of human misery, and negative affect has been experienced as a consequence of pleasure and every kind of triumph of the human spirit.’⁴ Conventional narratives of child abuse, with their set subject positions of victim and perpetrator and their predetermined connections between event and emotion, cannot account for this pleasure.

The art critic Jill Bennett emphasises the role of mixed feelings (she uses the term ‘ambiguity’ rather than ‘ambivalence’) in her discussion of Dennis Del Favero’s *Parting Embrace*, a series of photographs that, like the writing of Djuna Barnes, approach the experience of sexual abuse from an affective rather than a narrative or moral framework:

Constructed as an unfolding of memory, the imagery offers a vision from the body, embracing in the process a certain moral ambiguity. The artist says of this work that it incorporates not just the pornography and the violence of memories of abuse, but also an element of love or fantasy, and these things are not always distinct; the affects of fear, humiliation, shock, and so on, may be tied to the same objects as those of joy and excitement. In other words, ‘love’ may characterize an aspect of the relationship one has with an abuser – particularly in an incestuous relationship where the victim has an emotional attachment to the abuser, notwithstanding the pain or trauma that may accompany abuse.⁵

Recognising this fluid relation between affect and object, and the importance of allowing for a position where the variousness of feelings connected to the survivor experience may be registered, is just one area in which feminist- and queer-oriented critique may benefit from staying open to the value of affective ambivalence. Ambivalence should not be equated with complexity – feelings can be complex without being at all ambivalent – and there may be times where there is no substitute for the motivating single-mindedness of rage. Yet there may be other occasions when paying attention to, sustaining, and communicating our mixed feelings allows us to perform a critical and destabilising diagnosis.

1 Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1992), 8.

2 Silvan S. Tomkins, *Affect Imagery Consciousness: The Complete Edition*, 4 vols, (New York: Springer, 2008) II, 361.

3 Stockton, Kathryn Bond, *Beautiful Bottom, Beautiful Shame: Where ‘Black’ Meets ‘Queer’* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2006), 8.

4 Tomkins, I, 74.

5 Jill Bennett, *Empathic Vision: Affect, Trauma, and Contemporary Art* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), 28.

•/•
Dennis Del Favero
Parting Embrace, 1997

Image courtesy of
the artist



AN INTERVIEW WITH ROSA AIELLO BY KEVIN BRAZIL

Rosa Aiello is a writer and artist dealing with the limits of reason and humanness. She is currently using 3D video to explore the relationship between representations of the human body, subjectivity, and affective responses to capitalism. Her work has been shown at the New Museum, The Modern Institute in Glasgow, on Tank.tv, and, this fall/winter, at Triple Canopy in New York.

I hope you don't mind opening with a general observation about your work so far. It takes many forms, including film, stop motion, video, and increasingly CGI; and you are also a writer. In what way do you think your works in these media relate to one another?

The most important difference with computer generated animation (as opposed to drawing, sculpting, drawn animation or stop motion) is that you are building a world, or working within a default world that functions according to certain laws – laws that bear some resemblance, or are modelled on the physical laws of the real world, but it is ultimately an imaginary space. These are laws that are flexible and full of possibility as well: you can play with them, by changing the gravity of the CG space for example, and there are material settings that correspond to a particular look in the final product. My video *Ill Humours* is based, in part, on this idea. I wanted to show that it is an algorithm, and not a hand, that determines the way the cloth behaves (as silk, rubber, denim and so on). An imagined materiality corresponds to the bending and twisting of a shape. This is essentially different from figuration: drawing or sculpting the image of a bouncing ball or a falling cloth or a blinking eye, as opposed to simulating it. I see writing the same way: it is about building a world with its own logic and agency, tapping into what is latent, and coming up with an ultimate form that remains virtual.

What is it, more specifically, that writing and animation have in common? Do you mean 'animatedness' as a kind of aesthetic form or style? By that I would mean an excessively emotional, agitated, frantic type of movement, but one which tips over into being almost mechanical or forced.

I prefer to think of this 'animatedness' according to how the materiality of the medium is (or isn't) visible in the content of the images, and the degree to which the medium determines the aesthetic of the image content. From that point of view, the materiality of CG and of writing is of a different order than that of other (more concrete) artistic materials. You don't see any marks of the hand of the labourer. I like to think of this also in terms of deterioration: that the violence that is embedded in their means of production doesn't come through either in the image itself or in the way the image breaks down; the marks of history show in virtual aesthetic material in different ways than they did, say, for the Frankfurt School's understanding of the material of history, where all objects bear the traces of their passage through time. The digital image does break down through distribution, reusing, repurposing, but this type of damage is flat, longitudinal – it doesn't interfere

with, or respond to, the content of the material. The noses, penises, and the long out-flailing limbs aren't the first to get knocked off in a digital sculpture, the way they often are in classical sculptures, for example.

Going back to animation, rather than 'animatedness'. It seems to me that animation is something which appears in a lot of your pieces, whatever the medium.

Animation often feels like a process of imposing affect onto inanimate objects. Cinema has a history of demanding affective investments, and through affect these art products reproduce the conditions of their own production: cinema thus both mirrors and participates in the affective manipulation of a capitalist culture, a culture of capitalism. I observe certain moods I have, I know they are expressions of my internalisation of economic conditions – my body responds to whether or not I am having a productive day, my bowels might feel queasy, my back might ache, I'll snap at loved ones, I want to block out the whole world until I have successfully produced something – and so the mood is at the same time reproducing its conditions, perpetuating in its cure the obsessions that caused the illness. I think cinema does that too, which is not so much a value judgement about the ethics of the cinema as it is an approach to semiotics, and to design elements that are attached to certain feelings: I want to use these feelings, and be aware that there is some exploitative machinery at work, even when the feelings or motivations seems to come from inside.

So if animation is a way of putting affect into objects, it seems like it would inherently be a gendered process in many ways: depending on who is animating what, or indeed what is animating who, and for what purposes and in what kind of political economies.

Oh definitely. I want to borrow from all sorts of techniques of emotional manipulation, both benign and insidious, shuffling around the formal ingredients of affect-making – I see it as a sort of emotional-associative language, a perverted imagism in motion, which can extend to include a sound effect, the shape of a hand (or glove), a font, a colour. The film *Sunsets* is where I've tried this out most explicitly. There is a gendered, classed, racialised aspect to the way we react to these design elements, since of course these reactions are embedded in vague links between memories of lived experiences and cultural references, and cater to deep-seated fears and yearnings that we've learned from years of aesthetic consumption. What Sianne Ngai calls 'the cute' is especially relevant to me as an aesthetic category, because of the way it not only takes into account gender subjectivity, but also because it is intimately related to consumption.

For Ngai, the way in which the look of 'the cute' solicits our care – like those Kewpie Doll eyes! – is an index of our troubled relationship to commodities. The commodity is less powerful than the person, so it needs to be looked after and cared for – and this feminises the commodity relationship. Hence that characteristic look of the cute, its squished, shaped, touched look, its potential to be damaged, elicits, or rather socially constructs, a 'feminised' response to commodities in general. Which is why even the most right-on Occupy-style anti-consumerism sometimes has such a harshly macho feel. It also seems to be that such a modelled or worked look is a trait of lots of your videos. It stands out particularly in *Flee* since you have the man's moulded body against the sand, but also in *Ill Humour*, when the ultra-cool blue sheet literally 'models' a corpse when it is falling.

/•
Rosa Aiello
Ill Humour, 2012
Still from HD video

•//•
Sunsets, 2013
Still from HD video

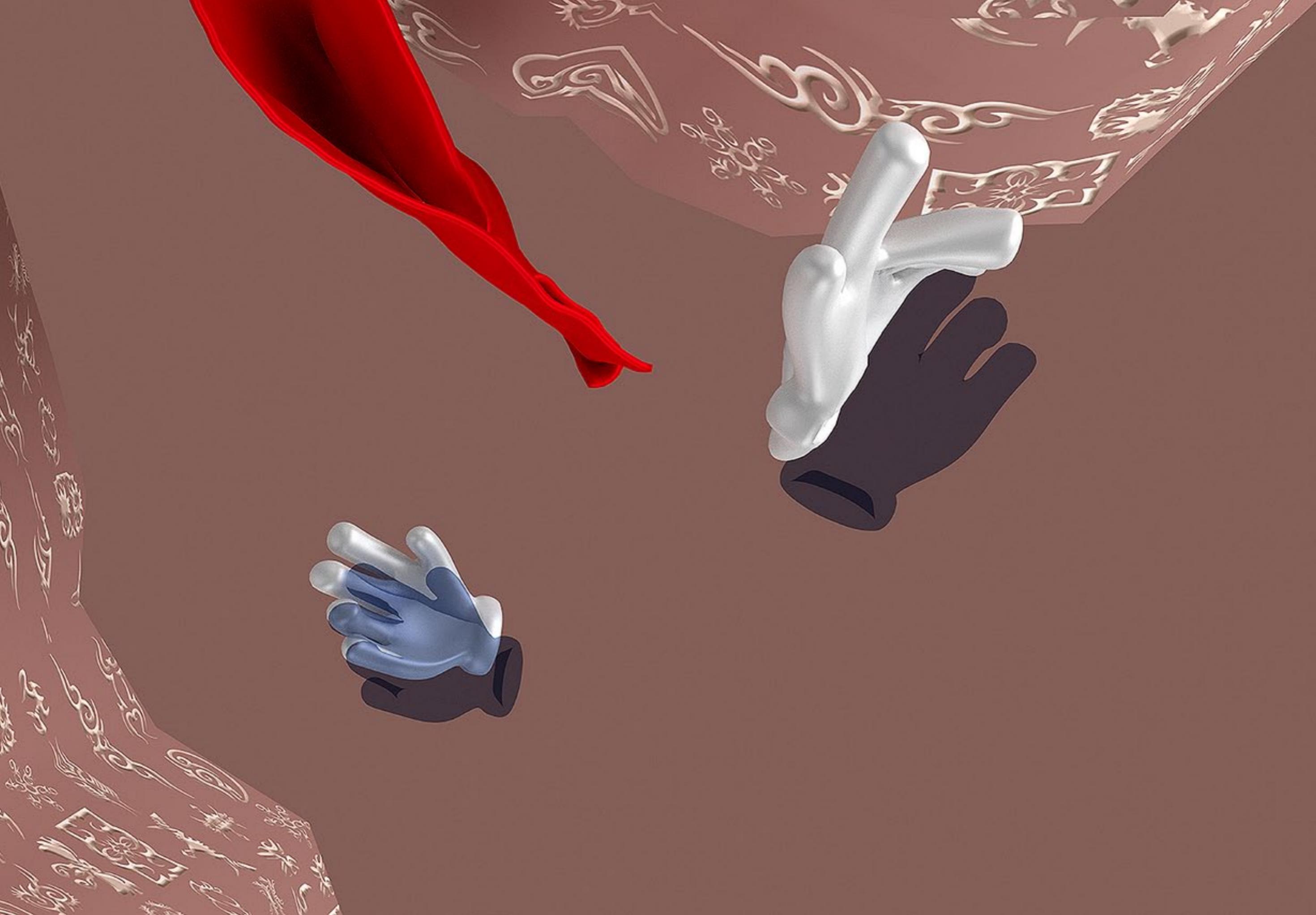
Images courtesy
of the artist

I see the cute standing in opposition to the uncanny valley, in terms of how the affective capability of a CG image relates to its complexity. In the continuum of naturalistic representation of human bodies there are these thresholds of emotion, certain types of abstraction or simplification that create a more sympathetic face or body – like the cartoon, or the soft toy. While the general trend in representations of humanness predicts that the viewer's empathy for a character will increase as its resemblance to a real-life human being increases, the uncanny valley, as roboticist Masahiro Mori shows, designates a steep falling off of a perceiver's affinity for the character in the narrow band of representations that approach (but don't cross over into) a perfect human likeness. As opposed to the simplicity of the cute, the more naturalistic representations of the human body and face fall into the uncanny valley, the consequence of which, for a viewer of CG cinema, is a flattening of affect: an eeriness blankets the characters and their actions, and prevents the viewer from truly engaging – it recalls the automaton, the corpse, the prosthetic, the bearer of excessive plastic surgery. I argue that the cute, for this reason, is intentionally simplified. It is what Sianne Ngai calls a false simplicity – because its lack of detail/complexity doesn't reflect the degree of advancement of the technology that has produced of the image (in this case, CG rendering). The cute, however less realistic it is, has an unbelievable range of emotive potential – its simplicity holds great subtlety (just think of the emoticon). And so feelings themselves, or the use-value of feelings, the economics of feelings, are central considerations in 'moulding' or 'sculpting' the bodies that we see in CG animation. The artistic expression is not a brush stroke or a thumb print, but an applied aesthetics wherein the facial expression becomes a material expression.

So this brings us back to the idea of you working with, or within, software design. Modelling and animating. That necessarily means working within a network, both the communications network, but also that of representations, the images that circulate. You are making, then, an intervention within these networks, and what you are showing is your point of intervention within a network or system. That point of intervention is politically very important – how or when do you make this visible through your process of making and in the final work?

There are many points at which I could choose to participate in the materiality of the software itself: CG can be built from scratch right down to the level of programming or coding, or it can be completely designed by hand, as drawings or a set of a instructions, and outsourced to an animation team in China. Neither method necessarily makes better art, but the point is it makes a difference when the artistic intervention takes place: it governs the type of commentary the work is able to make, and especially the degree to which the materiality, the conditions of the medium, influence the work. I don't do any programming or much modelling, so I download most of the objects, as well as the textures and the sounds that I use in my videos from these big sprawling databases. The databases set valuable limitations, and have market conditions of their own: there are obvious reasons why there'd be an abundance of toilet or kitchen or car models free for download. I do my own animation because I want the software and its limitations to influence my artistic choices. Digital images are material, but it is a materiality and a historicity that has to be read differently than when we interpret concrete objects. Like in so many Looney Tunes cartoons, I find it almost a political gesture to include some hint that the materiality of the world you're watching isn't as it seems.





AN INTERVIEW WITH SUSAN BEST BY ALYS MOODY

You open *Visualizing Feeling* by observing that this book addresses a "methodological blindspot in art history: the interpretation of art's affective dimension." Could you give us a sense of where you think art history and criticism are right now in terms of approaching this blindspot? Is there a sense that art historians – or artists themselves – are starting to think more seriously about this question?

Art history is often very slow to respond to trends in the rest of the humanities and social sciences. I have to confess I'm very slow myself! Like many people, my interest in affect began when Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Adam Frank published *Shame and its Sisters: The Silvan Tomkins Reader* (1995). It then took me a very long time to think through how and why affect had become marginal to the discipline.

Since *Visualizing Feeling* was published in 2011, there's been a trickle of publications in art history concerned with the affective dimension of art. Two, in particular, show how differently the concept can be used: Jennifer Doyle's *Hold it Against Me: Difficulty and Emotion in Contemporary Art* (2013) and Eve Meltzer's *Systems We Have Loved: Conceptual Art, Affect, and the Antihumanist Turn* (2013). Doyle's book focuses on how emotion is an important component of difficult art, particularly queer performance. In relation to conceptual art, Eve Meltzer posits feeling as the repressed bodily domain structuralism rejected, which returns, albeit in shadowy form, in the work of conceptualist artist, Mary Kelly. The term hovers in a suggestive way in her work, rather than being a central concern.

You've provoked me to think about the slow character of art history! Perhaps because it's a traditional discipline based on thorough and careful empirical research – this often involves travelling to see art, archival research, learning other languages (in my case, five years of Portuguese). Secondary research is equally important: engaging and synthesising what has already been said by other scholars, contextual research on relevant art movements and the socio-political context that might have informed the artists' work. Finally, this has to be correlated with equally thorough theoretical research – most art history is very interdisciplinary, just like literature and performance studies. If you want to do all of this thoroughly, or if like me you enjoy that deep research, it takes a lot of time.

Artists are usually faster in responding to changes in the intellectual environment. I have had a lot of positive feedback from artists, both artists who lived through the anti-aesthetic moment, and younger artists – almost all women artists, I should add. For senior Australian artists, like Joan Grounds and Vivienne Binns, I think my argument has the character Christopher Bollas calls the "unthought known," something simultaneously known and not known. Probably, they have wondered why it has taken so long to have their understanding of women's art formulated explicitly!

One of the main reasons for this blindspot, as you say in your book, has been the influence of minimalism and the sense that the legacy of that 1960s moment effectively purged contemporary art of affect and subjectivity. Certainly many artists from this period were preoccupied with the possibilities of mathematical rigour and scientific method.

But you also argue that seeing minimalism as anti-affect and anti-subjectivity doesn't tell the whole story. How did the affective dimension play out over this period of art?

In *Visualizing Feeling*, I emphasise that the early reception of minimalism still took place within an affective register. The responses just weren't coherent. Minimalism is characterised as emotional, aggressive, boring, interesting, rejective, vacant. I argue the withdrawal of feeling as a concern (by artists themselves), nonetheless still produced feeling on the part of its critics.

Despite questioning the possibility of art ever totally evacuating feeling, I nonetheless agree with James Meyer and Jonathon Flately that minimal and conceptual artists did aim for affectless art. The women artists of the 1960s and 70s I look at in the book (Lygia Clark, Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, Ana Mendieta, Eva Hesse) didn't share this aim but they were nonetheless working with the dominant art languages of the time, where it was assumed feeling had no place. Ana Mendieta is the most explicit in this regard – she said: "I'm not interested in the formal qualities of my materials, but their emotional and sensual ones."

I'm certainly not the only person to notice this. Rosalind Krauss picked up on this in her interpretation of Eva Hesse. For her, Hesse's art is clearly indebted to minimalism, but her expressiveness is a profound and shocking departure from minimalist tenets. Hesse is the only artist whose work is consistently expected to fit within, even as it challenges, the prevalent American art-historical discourses of the 1960s. Her work is identified as a kind of exception to the rule, a status that should be shared by all four artists I examine. In fact, I think there are lots of other women artists who could be considered in this way in this period, for example, Agnes Martin, or Gego's enlivening of the language of Venezuelan kinetic art.

Your next project is on shame in contemporary art photography. Could you tell us a bit more about this new book, and how it comes out of your previous work?

The initial provocation for the next project was reading Ruth Leys' book *From Guilt to Shame: Auschwitz and After* (2007). She offers a very powerful critique of affect theory that I'm still digesting. Leys' critique of Sedgwick in this book is devastating; she has followed it up with her *Critical Inquiry* article ("The Turn to Affect: A Critique", 2011), which really spells out what is at stake in the affective turn as practiced by followers of Tomkins and Deleuze. I began to think about how to combine guilt and shame and how to combine Leys and Sedgwick. So the theoretical core of the project is attempting to reconcile what looks at this point like irreconcilable positions.

It relates to the previous book insofar as it's still concerned with aesthetics and the affective dimension of art. Perhaps most significantly, I'm still pursuing the idea that women artists do something different with the prevailing aesthetic and political concerns.

The title of your upcoming book, *Reparative Aesthetics*, as well as the focus on shame, both recall Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's later work on affect. Your research, though, is obviously centrally concerned with gender, and particularly with art by women, rather than with Sedgwick's interest in queerness. In an earlier book, *The Epistemology of the Closet*, Sedgwick writes that "The study of sexuality is not coextensive with the study of gender; correspondingly, antihomophobic inquiry is not coextensive with feminist

inquiry. But we can't know in advance how they will be different." Do you find that gender operates differently to sexuality in the way it intersects with affect in art?

My concern is not so much with gender as with sexual difference; this is the legacy of being taught by Elizabeth Grosz and the way she presented the work of Irigaray. This is a very powerful ongoing influence on my work. I read a lot of queer theory, particularly on affect (Sedgwick, Cvetkovich, Berlant, Love, etc.) but I've never myself written on sexuality.

My feeling is that sexuality would intersect with affect in art very differently because an approach that emphasises sexuality sits on one side of a major fault line in feminism that isn't properly thematised in art world discussions. Australian feminism and feminists educated around a certain time (like me) rejected gender as a useful term. I'm thinking here of Moira Gatens' brilliant essay "A Critique of the Sex/Gender Distinction" (1983). When Judith Butler's work entered the art scene, it really eclipsed that distinct Australian account of these issues. Of course Butler's stress on gender as performance highlights the importance of acts (i.e. sexuality) for identity, and that's a very important political point to make, but it also loses the nuances that a play between a greater number of terms would allow, for example, sexual difference, embodiment, sexual identification, gender, and sexuality.

Shame and witnessing often seem to go together in the experience of witnesses, but there are a number of different theories about why this is so. What kinds of relationships between shame and witnessing are you finding in the artists you're looking at?

I'm curious about the recent rise of the idea of witnessing as an appropriate way to think about art addressing shameful events from the past. I find this, on one level, an odd term to use for viewing art, it sounds therapeutic and uncritical. On the other hand, it's one of the traditional functions of photography: bearing witness and capturing time. Hence, I'm looking at photography only in this book, trying to think through the implications of that idea of witnessing now. The specific artists I'm looking at (Anne Ferran, Ana Tiscornia, Rosângela Rennó, Fiona Pardington, Milagros de la Torre) could also be argued to share features and ambitions with the documentary tradition: exposing issues, revealing injustices. But the specific works I'm looking at are all dealing with past historical events (often long past), so they are part of what is now called aftermath photography or late photography.

I think shame is a necessary part of viewing art that exposes issues and injustices, even when the events are in the distant past. When people with a social conscience see images that recall the degradation suffered by others, most likely they will feel pity and shame. But shame can lead to a withdrawal from the issues at hand; it can block witnessing/hearing. Or worse, the denial of shame can lead to *ressentiment*: distancing by taking a morally superior position in the present that refuses to acknowledge the continuing operation of "our dark side", to use Elisabeth Roudinesco's term. I wonder if guilt can also be worked into the equation to have a deeper psychological dimension and to avoid the flooding effect of shame, even though this may not seem the appropriate affect when the images depict events we haven't participated in – that's the beginning of thinking about Sedgwick and Leys together. My hunch, at this stage, is that these artists are all complicating the spectatorial position in this way.

Rosângela Rennó

• | *Whip*, 2001 and

• | *Eyes*, 2001

from *Vulgo [Alias]* series

Digital photos made

from reproductions

of photographic

negatives from

the Penitentiary

Museum of São Paulo.

Digital Lightjet print,

laminated and

mounted on

masonite

each 170 x 110 cm

•/•

Anne Ferran

1–38, 2003 (details)

Inkjet print

each 32.9 x 34.3 cm

Image courtesy of the
artist and Stills Gallery,
Sydney

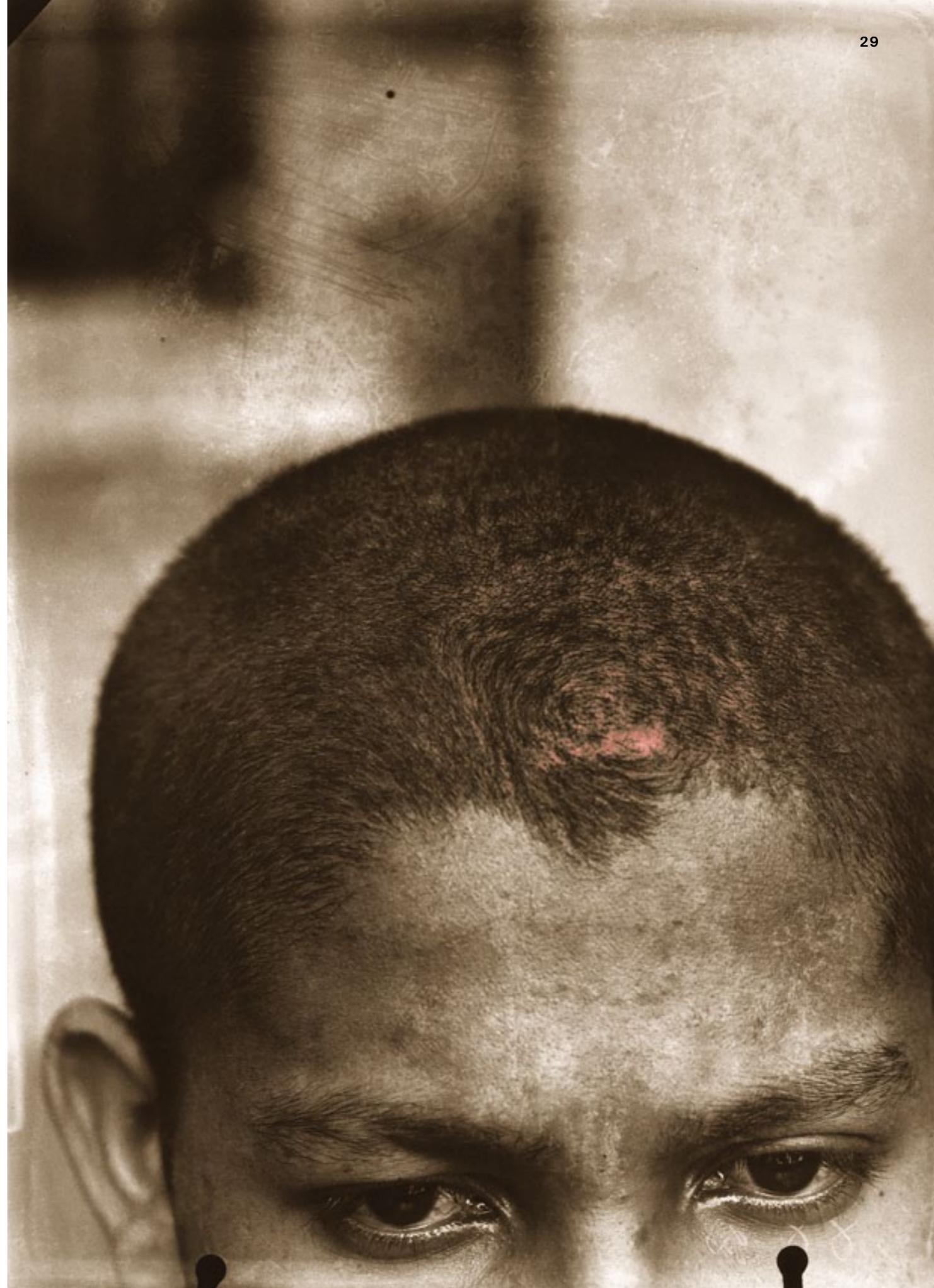


Looking at the artists that you're going to be focusing on in *Reparative Aesthetics*, what strikes me about their works is how elliptical and enigmatic they often are. For works that are centrally concerned with witnessing, they seem to leave a lot unsaid and unrepresented. What's the relationship between silence or absence, and witnessing in this project, and how does that relate to these works' powerful affective resonances?

That's very true, they all have a very light touch! That's why I think they are reparative and yet also confrontational in subtle ways. The issues they present sneak up on you, but are no less powerful for being less explicitly presented. Sedgwick's article on paranoid versus reparative reading has been my guide here. The artists are not adopting the typical paranoid postures that you often find in contemporary art concerned with shameful issues.

***Reparative Aesthetics* will draw all its examples from the southern hemisphere. Is there a specific rationale for this scope?**

The literature on witnessing and the archival turn is dominated by art from the northern hemisphere. Plus, to date I haven't seen any northern hemisphere art that broaches these issues in such nuanced, moving and complicated ways.





AN INTERVIEW WITH FRANK STILWELL BY ROBYN STUART

Mainstream economics is built around the assumption of 'rational agents'. An antonym for 'rational' could equally well be 'irrational' or 'emotional'. How do classical economists and political economists think about the role of emotions in decision making?

Economists are generally rather uncomfortable about emotions. Their central concept of rationality implies cool, calculating, self-interested behaviour. It doesn't sit comfortably with a real world of personal and social complexity. It implies that people can – at least in their economic lives – cut through all the emotional stuff in order to get to the material stuff.

There is a field of 'behavioural economics' which is a little more sophisticated in recognising that people's actions (as producers or as consumers) are shaped by habits and by patterns of social expectation. But, in mainstream economic analysis, emotion is generally supposed to be set aside. One might acknowledge that human beings in the real world are emotional creatures but, for the specific purposes of economic analysis, the focus is almost invariably on the rational behaviours.

Critics of mainstream economics have sometimes referred to the 'immaculate conception' of consumer preferences. This refers to the presumption that each consumer's preferences are innate, not properly a subject for economic enquiry and better left for psychologists or sociologists to investigate. The economists prefer to take the consumer's tastes as independently established: they simply model how, given those tastes and the prevailing pattern of products and prices in the market, each individual will seek to maximise his or her utility.

There are honourable exceptions. If you look back in the history of economic ideas, for example, you may come across Thorstein Veblen, who was writing about 120 years ago. His most famous book was called the *Theory of the Leisure Class*. In it he developed an explanation of the behaviour of the wealthiest stratum of society, the people that had plenty of disposable income and therefore were particularly interesting to study as to how they spent it. Veblen developed the notions of social emulation, conspicuous consumption, and conspicuous leisure. He was a pioneering theorist of what we now call consumerism – he was trying to understand the social processes that shape our tastes and values and therefore our economic behaviours in an acquisitive society.

Following in Veblen's footsteps was the well-known American institutional economist J.K. Galbraith, who in the latter half of the 20th century paid particular attention to the impact of commercial advertising on production and consumption. Galbraith developed an explanation of corporate power and persuasion that is largely missing from mainstream economics textbooks.

So if you extend the notion of economic analysis beyond the classical and neoclassical economic traditions, into the realm of institutional political economy, as developed by Veblen and Galbraith, you can see that it is possible for economists to grapple with these social and psychological concerns.

Many economic models infer consumers' tastes by just looking at their purchasing habits, relying on the assumption of revealed preferences.

That's true. In some of the early neoclassical economic theory there was an attempt to monitor and model preferences, albeit rather crudely. However, with Paul Samuelson's theory of 'revealed preferences' becoming the dominant view a bit over half a century ago, that went out the window. According to revealed preference theory, if consumers are utility-maximising agents then we can simply infer what they want from what they do.

The term *utility* is used as shorthand for some measure of welfare?

There are assumptions that underlie any economic theory. In mainstream economics the key ones are that society is comprised of individuals who act rationally and are in full possession of any relevant information bearing upon their economic decisions. If each individual acts in a utility-maximising way – in other words, uses their income to maximise their personal satisfaction – then economists infer, by aggregation, that what is good for the individual is good for society as a whole. If each individual is utility-maximising, such a society will be welfare-maximising for its inhabitants.

A huge assumption is being made here about the autonomy of these individual economic behaviours. In the real world, however, interdependences are pervasive. Individual utility-maximising behaviour often has negative effects on other people's wellbeing. That's what Veblen was pointing to with his concept of conspicuous consumption – the more conspicuously someone consumes, the more envious and deprived the neighbours may feel. Another example of negative interdependencies is environmental decay – if your consumerist behaviour is depleting the world's resources then that impacts adversely on my wellbeing and everyone else's as well. As soon as we recognise these complex interdependencies of individual and collective welfare the basic mainstream economic thesis collapses.

Galbraith, pushing these ideas still further, pointed out that many of the consumerist aspirations ultimately prove to be unsatisfying anyway, because their driver is not human need but the quest for corporate power and profit. The use of commercial advertising is an obvious tool to achieve those goals, creating 'needs' in the minds of consumers. On that reasoning, dissatisfaction is generated directly by the economic system in order to sell products – evidently, we have to be made dissatisfied with what we have in order to encourage us to buy more.

Political economy aims to critique the assumptions that mainstream economics makes. But it also has a role in proposing some alternative means of analysis...

Yes, political economy picks up on ideas of dissidents like Veblen and Galbraith to develop a more critical understanding of how capitalism works in the real world. It recognises that the capitalist market economy is not simply a want-satisfying mechanism: it is also a want-creating mechanism. Many tensions arise out of that – tensions that manifest in social and environmental decay and in socio-economic inequalities that cause social conflict and discontent.

What distinguishes political economy from mainstream economics is that it focuses on contradictions rather than on equilibrium. It tends to focus more on the features of the economic system that are recurrent sources of conflict.

Proponents of political economy, such as myself, argue that's helpful because (a) it tells you more about the real world, and (b) it leads into a political awareness of the need to change the world for the better.

In political economy you don't start with a set of assumptions about a perfectly functioning world and then predict harmonious outcomes. Rather, you start with observation of what is actually going on out there (well, as far as you can – obviously recognising that all our observations of the world around us are shaped by the context and our prior understandings!). An almost universal characteristic of political economists is their concern to engage with the real world and to change it. So there's no point in taking refuge in abstract theories.

In a recent interview, you quoted Jack Hirshleifer's claim that 'economics is the universal grammar of the social sciences'. He was arguing in favour of using models that assume rational, utility-maximising agents to analyse social phenomena as well as economic phenomena. Gender relations is one such phenomenon that has been analysed in this way. Presumably the same critiques that political economy offers hold when social phenomena are being discussed?

I would say that the criticism is stronger the further that the analysis moves away from the economic heartland. If you define 'economic' situations very narrowly then you could argue, perhaps, that there's a certain hard-nosed rationality that determines the principal behaviours. Profit seeking is profit seeking – which it is quite reasonable to model and explain in terms of economic variables. But if you're trying to understand people's likelihood of committing crime, or their propensity to get married and have children, I think the mainstream economic type of language and theorising is much less appropriate.

Social behaviour is not reducible to profit and loss, nor to the effects of incentives and penalties. This isn't to say that social and sexual relations are totally outside the realm of rationality. However, it seems ludicrous to me to posit that you could explain crime, for example, in terms of a rational cost/benefit analysis, whereby potential criminals weigh up the potential benefits from committing a crime against the potential costs of incarceration if they get caught, with a complex probability analysis to determine their optimal strategy. Rather, you need to look at social behaviours, at culture, at the context in which people grow up and develop their personal values...at any number of issues that need to be considered if you want to thoroughly understand the incidence of criminal behaviour. Similarly for marriage, procreation and so on. The notion that you can understand these social behaviours through the use of economic tools is frankly risible.

However, there was an University of Chicago economist named Gary Becker who got a 'Nobel Prize for Economic Science' for doing just that! His book *A Treatise On the Family* theorised about 'marriage markets', setting up theoretical models to explain which partners would be most desirable, what roles men and women would play within the household, and the probability of divorce, all using mainstream economic concepts. Gender relations are reduced to utility-maximising behaviours.

How do political economists think about gender relations?

Political economists usually have a more nuanced and historically-based view, drawing from the insights of feminist scholars in cognate social sciences. Ever since the close associate of Karl Marx, Frederick Engels, wrote

a pioneering book in the nineteenth century on the family under capitalism, there has been a strong political economic tradition of considering gender in relation to class inequalities and other sources of exploitation and oppression. Societies are analysed according to how they are structured by multiple dimensions of inequality: class, gender and race being the three most obvious, with the interactions between them creating yet more complex and difficult-to-resolve forms of economic and social inequality.

There's also been discussion around the 'rational agent' being a gendered construction, set up in order to describe the way that men have historically been able to act as opposed to the way that women have historically been able to act.

You put that nicely – the point is often expressed more crudely by simply saying that the assumed 'rational agent' is a male construct, as though there's something inherently 'male' about being rational, which I don't think is helpful. The behaviours that typify males and females are better understood in historical context. There's nothing natural or inevitable about the gendered differences that result. But I'd say it's true that the mainstream economics tool-kit is gender-biased in the sense that you imply. The emphasis on individuals seeking material gain and the neglect of altruism and societal interdependencies are hallmarks of a distinctively gendered view of economic behaviour.

The 'grammar of economics' has been used to think about how emotions work in a social setting. Theorists have argued that emotions – like currency – circulate through society, are produced and increased through the act of circulation, and establish systems of value. What do you think about this idea?

I think it's fascinating, although it's somewhat outside my purview as an economist to speak with any authority on the topic. What I think I can usefully do is to draw attention to a concept in political economy that may help to explain such a process. This is the theory of circular and cumulative causation. It was developed by the Swedish political economist Gunnar Myrdal – who was also a winner of the Nobel Prize for Economic Sciences, incidentally. The basic notion is the vicious cycle – the idea that inequalities tend to magnify through interactive processes evolving through time. The seemingly banal statement that 'a country is poor because it's poor' draws attention to the adverse consequences of having an adverse starting point – a place that is relatively poor typically suffers from 'the development of underdevelopment'. Dependency, operating through economic processes of trade, investment and migration, tends to reinforce the initial disadvantage. A similar tendency applies to many social processes too.

Social inequalities commonly illustrate circular and cumulative causation. If some subgroup of people within a country – let's call them the gypsies – lies outside the social mainstream, they'll experience problems of marginalisation, poorer education, lower income, lower standards of health and possibly personal hygiene. The gypsies will then be subject to abuse, and they'll respond sometimes by engaging in crime or other non-conformist behaviours, which will then further fuel the view that these people ought to be treated as outsiders and subject to repression or, in the extreme, genocide. So what might begin as an arbitrary disadvantage becomes magnified over time into a horrendous social and political problem.

Gunnar Myrdal explained the persistence of racism

in the United States by using this model, while other writers have also used it to illuminate the character of regional inequalities, international inequalities, gender inequalities...generally to show how economic, social, attitudinal and emotional elements tend to create vicious cycles. Whereas most mainstream economics is based on the assumption of a general tendency towards equilibrium, this is a theory which highlights movement toward cumulative disequilibrium.

Circular and cumulative causation processes can also work in more positive ways, as the way you phrased your question may imply. Indeed, there can be virtuous as well as vicious cycles. And emotions can be potentially important in this context, operating as beneficial 'multipliers' for social betterment. Indeed, much of the hope for the future of humankind rests on the hope that we, as a society, can change track by getting onto a positive spiral of increased social and environmental responsibility, egalitarianism, democracy and active citizenship.

The value of money is based on little more than its ability to be passed on to another. I wonder whether consumer happiness has a similar property – that it might simply be the ability to convince others that we look happy, by amassing goods and property...

Yes...in spite of the hollow emptiness inside! That's interesting. Personally, I think it helps to think about seeing different routes to happiness. The route offered by consumer capitalism involves amassing goods. Another route is to seek a high ratio of achievements to aspirations by keeping the material aspirations modest. This might be described as a more Buddhist type of road, involving greater acceptance of one's condition without acquisitive behaviour.

People have the ability, to some extent, to choose their level of engagement with the capitalist model. I say 'to some extent' because there are social norms that, if you fall outside of them – becoming homeless, for example – tend to create the vicious cycles that we discussed earlier. But, within certain bounds and for the broad swathe of Australian society, responsible choices can be made about turning away from overly consumerist behaviours, resulting in ultimately more contented lives. And many people are doing that.

Can you talk a little about the relationship between happiness and inequality?

Conventional economic thinking usually regards the wellbeing of a society, such as a nation, as dependent on its overall income. This is reflected in media reports that assume a direct link between gross national product and national wellbeing. The inference is that more national economic growth creates more happiness, just like night follows day! If the gulf between rich and poor is widening as that growth occurs, however, the wealthy society is probably becoming unhappier. Considerable evidence from international studies by social scientists in the field of 'happiness research' shows that inequalities undermine social wellbeing. Individuals rising out of poverty reliably feel happier, but beyond a certain point the correlation falls away. For the wealthiest people, getting even richer may make them happier, although not necessarily so. Meanwhile, the rest of the people in an increasingly unequal society will typically be feeling unhappier because they are relatively worse off.

A stronger correlation is that between economic inequality and the incidence of social problems – higher

rates of crime and prison incarceration, poorer standards of physical and mental health, greater problems of obesity, and so on. The evidence on this is paraded in a book called *The Spirit Level: why more equal societies almost always do better*, written by two British epidemiologists, Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett. Among the more affluent nations, the United States sits at one extreme because it's such an unequal society with such an intense array of social problems. By contrast, Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Finland have much lower levels of inequality and a generally lower incidence of social problems. Australia is generally more middle-ranking, exhibiting substantially more problematic inequalities than the Scandinavian nations.

This evidence suggests that mainstream economists have been operating for the last two centuries on a false assumption, or at least one that has long passed its use-by date. They've assumed that the economic problem is related to the overall level of national income, based on the belief that more income would create more happiness. By contrast, these recent observations from studying the economic causes of social problems indicate that pursuing greater equality would be a more reliable path towards happier and more sustainable societies.

Economists often talk about a trade-off between efficiency and equality, referring to how creating a more equitable outcome tends to cost more, so the overall amount of wealth is reduced if you try to spread it around evenly...

My argument is partly a negation of that conventional view. Again, we can draw on some relevant evidence to refute unhelpful economic theories. I'm thinking in this context of a book called *The Economic Illusion* by Robert Kuttner. The author points out, perfectly reasonably, that there are some policies that are good for producing both equality and efficiency, there are some that are bad for both, while there are indeed some policies where an efficiency-equity trade-off may apply. However, we should certainly reject the notion that an inexorable trade-off applies in all cases. An example of a policy that would be good for both equity and efficiency would be plugging the tax loopholes in the superannuation system from which the rich are mainly the current beneficiaries. This would generate more government revenue that could then be used for social programs or improvements in education, hospitals or public transport. A policy like that would create a more equitable structure of taxation, while also creating a pool of revenue that could be used to improving the efficiency of the economy in serving social needs.

Always in economic reasoning, the conclusions depend on the starting assumptions. If you start, as mainstream economists tend to do, by assuming an inexorable efficiency-equity trade-off and by ignoring how concentrated economic power shapes consumers preferences and economic outcomes, you get predictably conservative pro-capitalist conclusions. An alternative political economic approach creates more malleability. It opens up opportunities to see how the economic, social and environmental aspects of our lives interact. It also opens up possibilities for progressive change.



MASKED AFFECT

BY DANIEL MUDIE CUNNINGHAM

*Once upon a time there was a dark, dark cemetery
In the cemetery there was a dark, dark ground
Under the dark, dark ground was a dark, dark coffin
In the dark, dark coffin was a dead man*

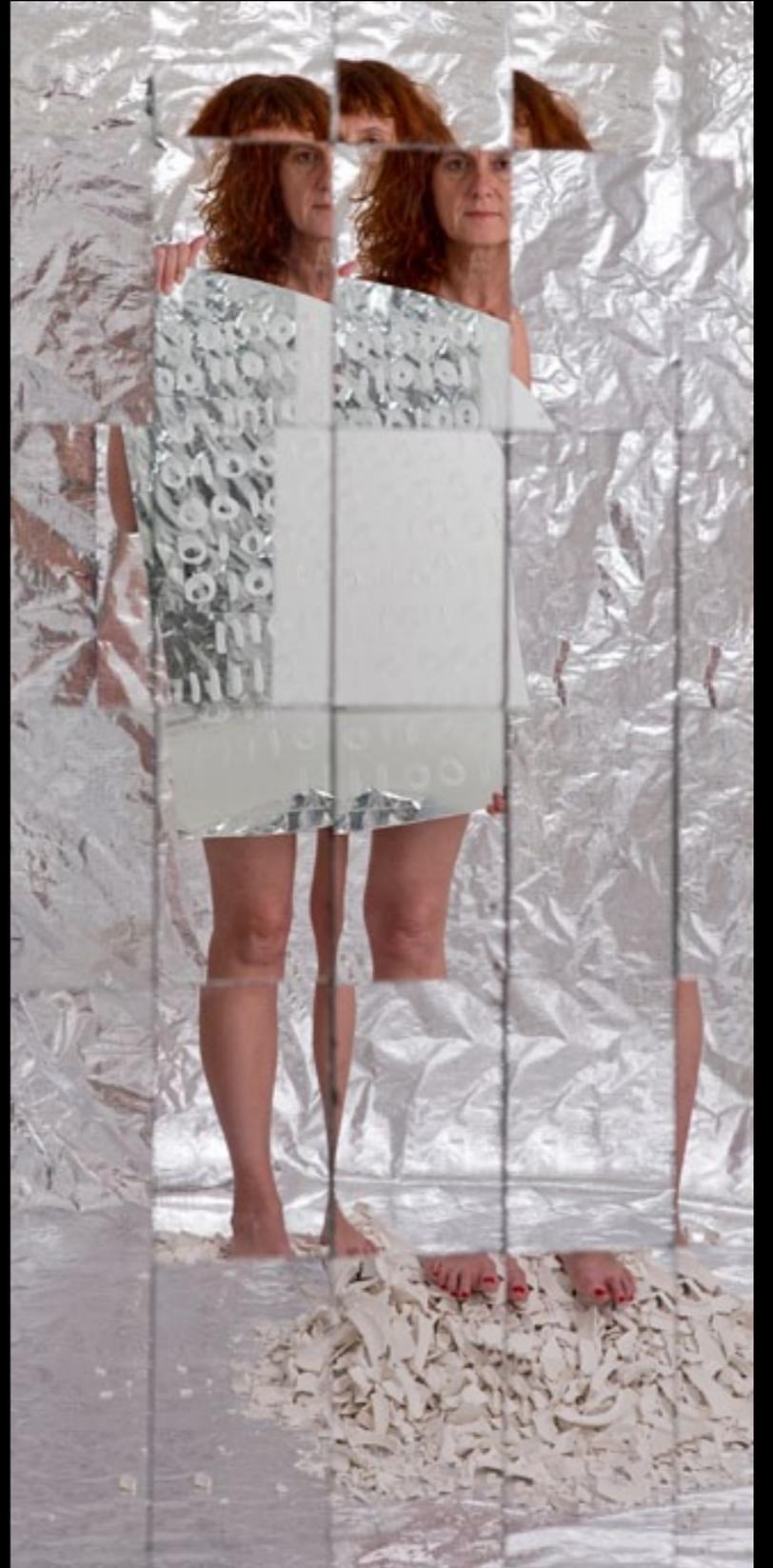
Melbourne, 1983. My name is not yet Daniel. I am wearing my eight-year-old face. Seated next to me at the dinner table is my brother Sean. He has his five-year-old face on. Our other two brothers would have been wearing their four- and three-year-old faces, but they're not there. In bed already, they're too young for the horrific ritual of the evening meal. In the present, they're similarly absent – the faces they wear – from 2001 and 2013, respectively – are frozen by the timestamp of their deaths.

Throughout dinner, Sean and I are punished for having our elbows on the table. “BOOKS!” is the command. We both run to our room and fish out two books to bring back to the table and wear under our arms. Such is the brutalising and civilising gesture of eating at the table.

One of my books is Dad's paperback of *Lord of the Flies*. I imagine flies, bees and insects swarming around the meal I'm eating. I can picture the same bugs on my dead body, in “The Dark, Dark Cemetery” of the grave I imagined earlier that day in a story I wrote and illustrated for Mrs Griffiths at school. *Tusk* plays on the radio in the other room. As Fleetwood Mac screams ‘TUSK’ over the driving tribal beat all I hear is ‘STUCK’ and I realise the face I'm wearing is a mask I'll shed thirty years on.

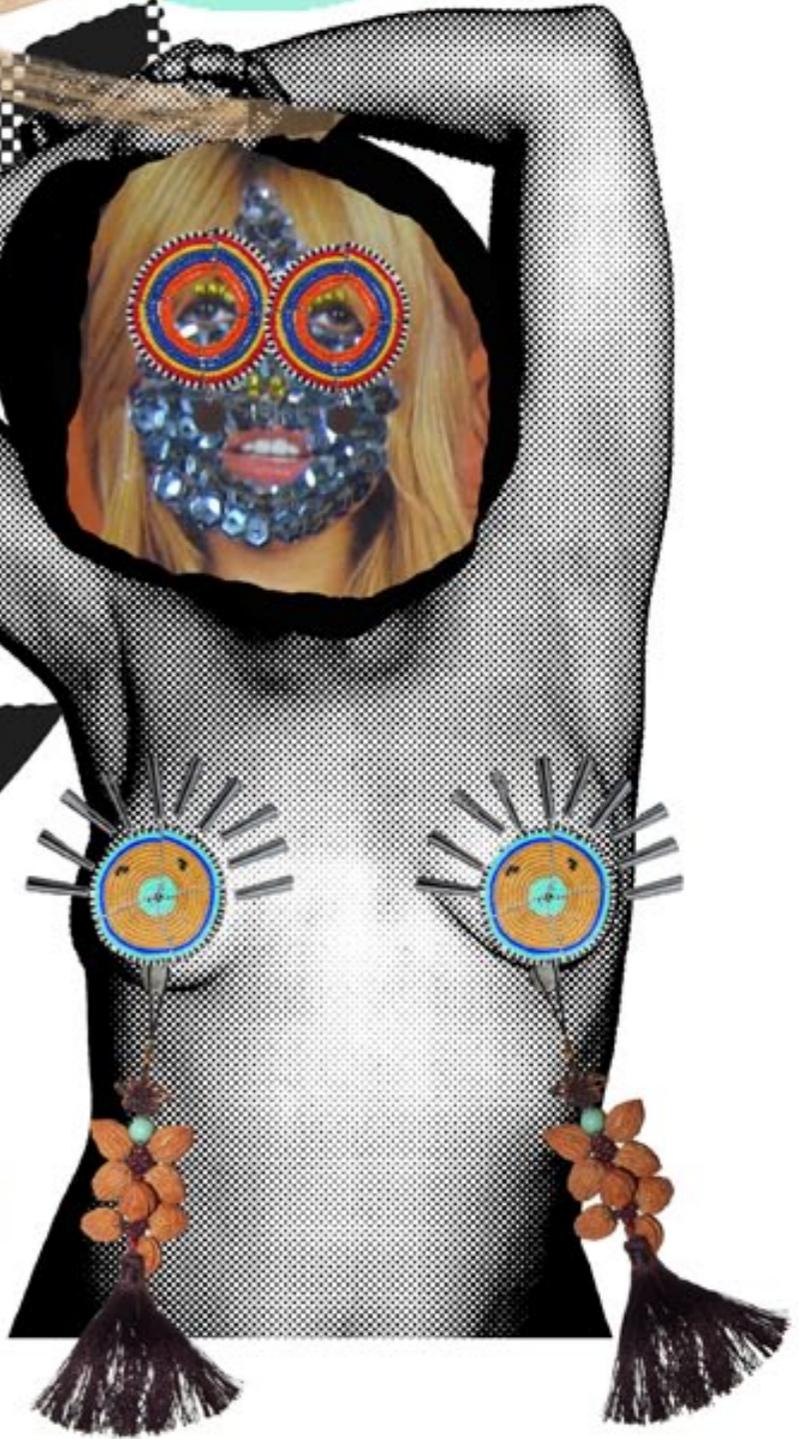
Daniel Mudie Cunningham selected the works in this pictorial to suggest the circuitously intersecting faultlines of affect as a series of real and imagined masks.

Daniel Mudie
Cunningham
Unstuck, 2013
HD single channel
video with sound,
16:9, 7:26 min.
Image courtesy
the artist













"I am crazy"

It frequently occurs to the amorous subject that he is or is going mad.

#AussieBoredom #A Lover's Discourse #MedsMyBedroom

27 notes

inventaire



To spell your name across the fog; to draw my adoration in cursive fonts; to remember this time in my life as nothing short of extraordinary.

#Right Here #Right Now #The Writing of Love and Finding It

13 notes

inventaire



'Fuck me,' he kept calling out. I was trying to but his voice was making me close. I had to pause to stop myself. No one had spoken to me like this for some time and it should have been an encouragement. But I couldn't keep my hardon and could only muster a limp, dribbling cock to express my gratitude. When he left I took this photo before getting into the shower. I wanted to remember my expression. Years earlier I would have felt like a total failure in this situation. But today I felt totally at ease with the lover I was and the lover I would be next time.

#Autopost #Life After 30 #11222 #General Intimacy

15 notes

inventaire [bunnygloves](#)



How deep is your love?

#Getting #Sounding #These Gifted Hands

23 notes

inventaire



The first time we made out he ended up on my kitchen floor with his face in the floorboards and his ass in my mouth. I was pulling his cheeks apart and his ass just opened with ease. I thought of all the cocks that had loosened him up like this and leaked all over the floor. I couldn't get deep enough.

#Doing It #Blating Out #And The Way He Smiled

9 notes

inventaire



WHEN I WAKE I WILL USE MY MIND TO FIND MORE WAYS OF APPRECIATING YOU.

#Autopost #I Have A Strange Sureness #Concerning Tumblr

34 notes

inventaire





I won't apologise for making you feel special. I don't mind if you're awkward and embarrassed by the attention. It's just that I have big plans and great intentions and little interest in taking the time to go easy with my affection.

#Today and Everyday #The Writing of Love and Finding It

115 notes

inventaire



(Everyday Magic)

Our bodies were a perfect fit. We could slot together in a perfect embrace and curl up in just the right position. It was Memorial Day and we had returned to his apartment. We were too drunk to remember climbing the stairs, or getting undressed. We had passed out in each other's arms and I had woken panicked by the prospect that I had drooled onto his chest. "I love you," he said, pressing my damp cheek against his skin. There was silence before I could reply, "I love you too...". It had been a big thing to say. I didn't want to give into these feelings in case they weren't reciprocated. But really, I wanted to shout it out loud. I relayed this and he laughed. "But you already told me..." In-between snoring, drooling and waking in a haze, I had rushed the point and said everything with a zest that seemed to impress him. I had shown what it means to be honest, comfortable and free, even if I couldn't remember doing so.

#Writing From Memory #To Describe Adoration #Memorial Day

6 notes

inventaire 📄 lamblime

What I'm looking for
Not you're typical guy

Je ne vais pas te traiter comme tu es typique.

#Same Really

15 notes

inventaire



If you want to get me going you need only refer to me as "tiger" or use the phrase "hush your mouth" when I tell you something endearing. Both will, with equal measure, make me hungry and ready to drown in your affection.

#Autopostit #From One Tiger to Another

17 notes

inventaire



As the train pulled away from the station, we leant against each other and our heads locked into place. I recalled snippets of intimacy from the day; the shape of your crotch in paisley shorts; the warmth of your mouth breathing against my temple; the leathery-smell of beard oil; an unexpected erection as we walked in the subway. My eyes softened and we passed out.

#The Writing of Love and Finding It #Summer's End

4 notes

inventaire



We'll sleep and our hearts will collide. I'll awake and continue jerking off from memory.

#Where is the Pig of my Dreams? #nostalgia

14 notes

inventaire



I can make tonight forever or I can make it disappear by the dawn.

We were crossing the bridge and 'Making Love (Out of Nothing at All)' was playing on the radio. The streets were crowded with cars and I imagined our taxi veering off and taking a leap into the dark waters. No explosion — just a single plummet, crash and the rush of water: a featureless field taking us to our grave.

#The Writing of Love and Finding It #Power Ballads





EUGENIA RASKOPOULOS has exhibited nationally and internationally for three decades. Solo exhibitions include *Read Your Lips*, Australian Centre for Photography (2013), *Footnotes*, Art Gallery of NSW (2012); *Vestiges*, William Wright / Artists Projects (2012); *Image Anxiety*, part of the PHotoEspaña 2012, Madrid's International Photography & Visual Arts Festival; *writing towards disappearance*, Arc One Gallery (2009); *words are not hard*, Project Zendai MoMA, Shanghai (2008); and *there are no words*, Artspace, Sydney (2005). She is represented by William Wright / Artists Projects, Sydney and Arc One, Melbourne.

Astro, 2013
Digital print on archival paper
100cm x 100cm

Time of shooting 10.08pm, 2013
Pigment print on metallic photo paper
208 x 110cm
Images courtesy the artist and William Wright // Artists Projects



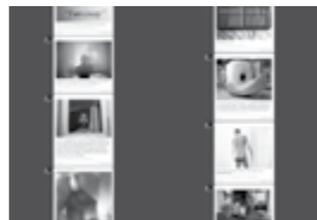
SARAH CONTOS is a multidisciplinary artist working across sculpture, collage and installation investigating themes of primitivism, exoticism and eroticism within the domestic and everyday. Influences are drawn from cultural anthropology, fetishism ideologies, folk art and arts and craft methodologies from selected tribal communities. Solo shows include *My Eyes Through Your Mountains* (MOP Projects and Kings Ari), *Souvenir* (Grantpirrie Window), *Bad Moon Rising* (Mop Projects) and *Great Expectations* (Firstdraft). Selected group shows include *Future Primitive* (Heide Museum of Modern Art), *The Social* (Campbelltown Arts Centre) and *Janis* (Alaska Projects).

Plato's Venus, 2013
Collage
Artist pages commissioned by Das Superpaper
Images courtesy the artist



DANI MARTI was born in 1963 in Barcelona. He lives and works in Sydney and Glasgow, his work encompassing video, installation and public art. Since 1998, Marti has held over 25 solo exhibitions and his work is held in the collections of several major institutions including the Museum of Contemporary Art; The University of Queensland Art Museum; City Art Gallery, Auckland; the National Gallery of Australia, Canberra; and the Gallery of Modern Art, Glasgow.

Notes for Bob, (stills) 2012–13
Multi channel 5k HD video,
Images courtesy the artist and Breenspace, Sydney



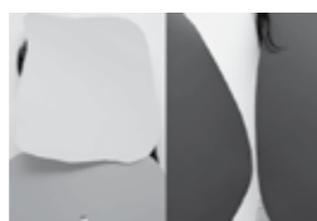
JOSÉ DA SILVA is a Brisbane based curator and intermittent artist. His tumblr collects selfies, art and pop culture references and writing that attends to the intimate experiences between men. It takes seriously the importance of archiving present-day queer experience and public displays of emotion.

José Da Silva
Archive (Elliott), 2013
Composite of posts from inventaire.tumblr.com
Images courtesy the artist



REBECCA AGNEW is a New Zealand born painter and stop animator based in Melbourne. She graduated from the Victorian College of the Arts, University of Melbourne with an MFA in 2012 and the University of Otago, Dunedin with a BaFA in 2004. Recent exhibitions include *I'm just here for the atmosphere*, NONO Gallery, Substation Contemporary Art Prize, Substation and *Femmes and Hommes*, John Buckley Gallery. Agnew had her first represented exhibition with Tristian Koenig, and was part of Sydney Contemporary 13: International Art Fair. Artbank commissioned a new stop animation from Agnew which will be launched online in December 2013.

Eve and Eve, 2012
Stop animation stills
Images courtesy the artist



CHERINE FAHD is a Sydney based artist represented in major public collections in Australia such as the Art Gallery of New South Wales, National Gallery of Victoria, National Gallery of Australia, Artbank, University of QLD Museum, University of Wollongong Collection, Monash Gallery of Art, Gold Coast City Gallery, Albury City Gallery & Casula Powerhouse Art Centre. She is the recipient of numerous New Work grants from the Australia Council for the Arts along with art awards and residencies such as the NSW Women & Arts Fellowship from Arts NSW, the Josephine Ulrick and Win Schubert Foundation for the Arts Photography Award, the National Photography Prize and the Moya Dyring Studio from the AGNSW.

Cherine Fahd
Camouflage, 2013.
Images courtesy the artist

PRIVATE COLLECTION BY ANGUS BROWN

My online relationship with Mike Hadreas has been intensely private. Listening to him perform as Perfume Genius I have felt grief, despair, and joy – enormous and cathartic. I have heard terrifying stories about incest, addiction, and holding hands. I have been transported. But I have kept it to myself. To perform, someone has to trade the comfort, the safety, and the certainty of collective privacy for individual vulnerability. In private, the pleasure I take from Perfume Genius is easy and unproblematic. Here, it is a little different.

Hadreas has been uploading highly personal music and music videos to YouTube and MySpace since 2008. The result was a 2010 album with Matador Records: *Learning*. Writing and recording at his mother's house in Seattle, Hadreas shared songs as he went along, pairing some of his arrangements with videos he found online. Always painful, the affective trajectory of these short, queer songs is cleansing, affirmative, and gingerly optimistic. The videos are a different matter. Short and grainy, the most arresting are made up of footage recycled from fetish videos with performers locked in utterly private moments. Taken as a whole, the 'perfumegenius' YouTube account constitutes a modest archive that explores what it means to tell a secret.

In an interview with *Vice*, Hadreas stresses the exhilaration of absolute privacy, shared unconditionally:

What I like about the fetish videos is it's someone doing exactly what they like [...] I'm not a prude at all, but I'm a little shameful still, so I like watching things where all that is gone from a person. They're in this moment where, no matter how weird or fucked up people will think it is, they're doing exactly what excites them

Rather than pornographic, the two most intriguing clips in the perfumegenius collection show two women doing very little. An androgynous figure in black spandex wriggles out of a pink latex bodysuit in the reversed footage of *Gay Angels*. As she does so, phrases like 'I WILL GIVE THIS TO MY TRUE LOVE' and 'GAY ANGEL I HEAR YOU' intermittently pop up onscreen like captions in a videogame. Later, hands appear, upraised, as the black body carefully drops its pink skin to the floor and curls up in a chair. In *No Problem* even less happens. A girl at the bottom of a swimming pool stares out at us. She poses for the camera, holding her breath; towards the end of the two-minute clip, she maintains her composure as her chest begins to spasm. These videos, particularly *No Problem*, offer very little emotional guidance. Watching this video, Hadreas begins to emerge as a curator for whom social media is both archive and exhibit. His refusal to hold our hands with any kind of explanatory narrative puts an unexpected emphasis on the uncomfortable ethics of watching this video. The girl at the bottom of the pool upsets me. Watching her feels like a secret too shameful to tell.

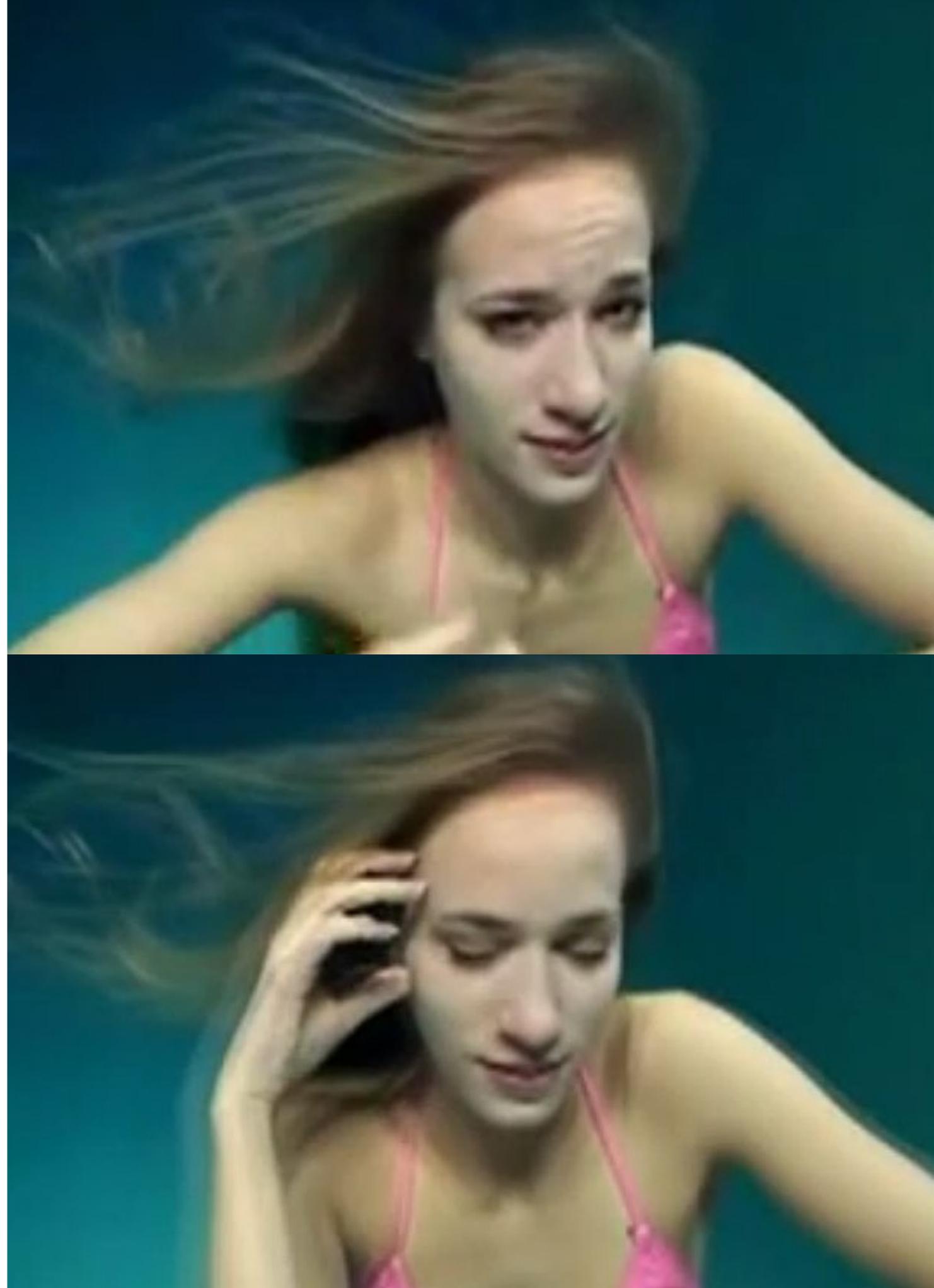
The songs that accompany these video confessions are unusually indirect for Perfume Genius. They are made out of textures and layers rather than lines of melody. Their

lyrics are carefully submerged and the fluidity of the clips corrodes any definitive story we can take from them. Our gaze, although sympathetic, gets scrambled on the way to these anonymous figures, and we arrive at them with a vague, disembodied, and compromised empathy. I think it's called guilt. Normally, our own collective privacy as viewers screens us from the inherent cruelty reserved in the act of observation. Here, we are forced to feel cruel and confused, to feel isolated: less hidden and more exposed as viewers.

The troubling undercurrents of silence, observation, and confession that Hadreas explores in his visual art attracted wider attention at the beginning of 2012 when YouTube rejected an advert for Perfume Genius' second album *Put Your Back 2 It*. The 16-second sequence was made up of footage from the music video for the single *Hood*. In the clip, Hadreas and another man hold each other, shirtless; YouTube deemed the ad "non-family safe". Watching the entire video, it's hard to find anything particularly shocking or confrontational in it. Directed by Winston H. Case, Hadreas stars alongside the porn actor Arpad Miklos in a short sketch where one man cares for another. Shot against a white, hard-lit backdrop, Miklos combs Hadreas' hair, applies lipstick to his lips, and holds him in his arms. While the sterile lighting flirts hard with the aesthetics of pornography, the vulnerability of Hadreas and the tenderness of Miklos defuse the exposure and exploitation that their set suggests. Lit softly, the clip ends with the two men holding each other as Hadreas looks up into Miklos' eyes. Rather than unsafe, the video for *Hood* is chastely sweet. At the same time, Hadreas, Miklos, and Chase know what they're doing, and the porny overtones of their tableau hint towards darker corners of addiction, depression, and sexual transaction.

In February this year, Miklos took his own life. Although the horrific and private pressures forcing that decision had nothing to do with YouTube or with Perfume Genius, the loss draws attention to the dehumanising problematics of pornography and phobic voyeurism that Hadreas draws out in his tentative experiments with video. Hadreas' and Miklos' hygienic intimacy in *Hood* tells the story of empathy achieved. *No Problem* and *Gay Angels* give us no such comfort. This pair of earlier works looks past the important and redemptive work of Perfume Genius' more recent output towards something more ambivalent and more unusual. By refusing to explain their performances, these videos invite their audience to trade privacy for vulnerability, to seek out their own uncertainty rather than the pleasure of its purging.

Stills from
No Problem, by
Perfume Genius



WELL,
THEY'RE YOUR
REACTIONS,
WHAT ARE YOU
GOING TO DO
ABOUT THEM?
ROBERT COOK
INTERVIEWS
KUSUM
NORMOYLE

Hey Kusum. There are many places to begin in relation to the idea of affect with your stuff, but I'll start with my own response to your work. And it's a totally 'non-art' type response. Basically I go to it, re/visit it on your website in video form, as a kind of sharply defined, take-away limit experience. Now that might sound trite, but there are times when I just crave your work, when I need it, the brutality of it, because it grounds me, calms me, softens me even. I see it as a tension and release thing. There's an intense build-up and a sharp letting go. And for me this kind of experience works better at unravelling me, opening me out, than, say, the slow build and then onslaught of death metal. Okay, that's ridiculously personal I know, yet, I think having this powerful relationship with your work (as a 'user') has made me appreciate it less as a spectacle, and more as actually something that is highly nuanced and modulated, and 'phased' if you will. As I enter it, I feel a lot of grain, a lot of small moments. And so, Kusum, from this gooey, starry-eyed, non-critical, non-distanced position I have a number of questions that might help me and others kind of get to know what's happening from your side of this relationship.

To start, is there even a tension and release thing at play for you? I mean, do you build up to a performance and then somehow fall away? If so, how does this work practically? Like preparation, decompression? Is the duration aspect of the performance something you need to 'feel' your way into and through?

Before we start, I want to clarify my position on affect, considering this issue of Das Superpaper, and which model I think makes sense in the context of my work. The word affect speaks to me through an understanding of Spinoza and a Deleuze and Guattar-ian way of experiencing energetic relations, and the notion that "affect arises in the midst of *in-between-ness*, in the capacities to act and be acted upon...as the passage (and the duration of passage) of forces or intensities."¹ Importantly, in this model, pressures or energetic relations gain traction in and on the world through their effects.

In short, yes to all of the above. The performances are like a ramp that I escalate, irrelevant to my desire or active choice to do so; I just have to start the process. Firstly, I need to disconnect from people's faces in the room, people I know. Individuals become part of the environment. My eyes switch off and act simply as space-negotiation tools that take lead from my ears and body, that are searching for and responding to sound vibrations. The pre-performance period is very much about going inward, like looking down a long, thin black line. The gap between being in and out of the performance is a wide phenomenological interval that I need to jump across in order to access the performance space. Without this gap, the performance risks being too safe or known to myself. Post-performance is an arrival back into an environment where people are individuals and faces again, which, after being in a deep engagement with noise and air pressure, is not fun. I usually take about 20 minutes to come off the ramp, where I experience an undeniable need to seek out grass, trees, and air/atmosphere.

My performance practice is very much about pushing amplifiers, my voice and body, as well as the audience, and one may read this as a kind of intentional process of affectation. In such a reading of the performances, where an inter-relational dynamic is revealed in effects, my body is the trace of the affect. Everything hurts afterward: my joints, limbs, my social graces, talking to people. The preparation is a kind construct that I apply to myself as a

way of accessing the system that causes this affect. As for the audience's affectation, this I can't speak to. The relationship I have with the audience is figured through this idea that subjective judgement is made upon things (in this case the performance, the loud sound etc.) via their own personally held constructs or affectations. The practice kind of looks these unconscious reactions in the face and says, "well, they're your reactions, what are you going to do about them?" The fact that you're having these reactions probably says more about the way that you perceive things than about the abstract screaming thing itself.

In light of this, the affect of others has never been my main concern. The work is by no means therapy or a way of dealing with a set of 'emotions'. For example, I perform in places totally absent of people. It is about pressing myself against audio feedback, and negotiating air pressure in the environment with a microphone and amplifier. This simple gesture is the core of my practice. I think there is a common misunderstanding in the reception of my work that I am screaming at people or about a specific politics, when I'm not (although it is highly political, for other reasons). I'm screaming at the amplifier, at all of its ontology, and it screams back.

Jesus, Kusum, I love that last sentence! You mentioned that you make a kind of construct to perform within. I wonder then, is there any split you notice between being in the work and seeing the playback? I mean are you aware of those moments of intensity and pause, and how they craft a work, while you are doing it, and also can you see yourself being transported? Are you 'foreign to yourself', I guess is what I am asking?

The split is subsumed by the knowledge of the process. I'm aware of the frame and the camera because I put them there with the intention of mediating the documentation to produce a different work, so I create this distance. The live performance aspect of the work is an entirely different work to the video work; they operate on different terms, media and variables, and are devised with different purposes. The performances are about experiencing full, amplified vocal noise in the environment, and the video works are about visualising the 'effects' of air pressure on these environments in the frame. Other than these technical strategies, I don't feel foreign to myself, no.

Huh. I also wonder, and you kinda get at this above, but for the folks at home, are you even working with affect, with emotion? It is quite possible you are in fact moving beyond these forces/formations. Like you are actually working with energy, and these energies could be given names, but then those names are about closure, certainty, containment. Maybe you are thinking and acting beyond this closure?

This is many ways is pretty spot on. You have asked if I'm 'working with affect, with emotion', which is slightly contradictory in light of the definition of affect that I'm utilising, highlighted in:

"Affect, at its most anthropomorphic, is the name we give to those forces – visceral forces beneath, alongside, or generally *other than conscious* knowing, vital forces insisting beyond emotion."²

However, the idea of working beyond the 'conscious knowing' is a good way to think about the kinds of experiences that I generate – something beyond emotion, I don't think affect is emotion. Visually, there's a bunch of unknowns about a girl with a microphone stomping around, making very strange sounds for a short amount of time,

treating the amplifiers in exactly the way they are not meant to be treated. Then there's the audible unknowns "how is she making these sounds?", and the way that feedback operates in different environments is always an excellently unhinged variable. I think these unknowns contribute to a shifted feeling in the room post-performance. People are dealing with what just happened to their ears, feeling excited, angry, confused, elated – or they left. Within this set of effects, there is certainly an unknown energy being circulated at a social level.

I'm definitely pushing sound's capacity to affect me. With a microphone and a couple of amplifiers, I have access to the parameters of the atmosphere, which elsewhere in life is a kind of nebulous notion. Here, the affectation is cultivated between the amplifier and myself, it pushes me and I push it back, further into the noise and back out the other side.

I understand what you mean by "names are about closure, certainty, containment" – semantics has a habit of reducing the capacity of things. However, as the person working with these things, it's important for me to explore terminologies for them so that I can articulate how they function, deal with them materially, and push them further. For example, sound power, the electrical power generated by sound, is very low powered, so you wouldn't use sound to drive a light bulb. But sound's capacity to affect humans or to have seemingly physical, material presence in an environment is massive. Energy, in its most simplistic terms, is a force that is generated when a disturbance occurs between two forms, or types, of materials – this I think can be applied to my work in a number of ways. I think that the energies can be given names, but it's what these energies reveal when combined that I'm now researching.

This relates to the question above I guess. A friend recently got me onto Peter Sloterdijk. I guess he's a philosopher, though more charged than that. I'm a little way into his book *Rage and Time* and he makes this stunning case for rage as an entity that is connected to dignity, and that is outside or anti- to the Christian focus on humility and apology. It's more complicated than that, but what strikes me is that rage is often pathologised – maybe that's a post-Christian thing – and so framed as something that should be repressed or expressed only in certain ways, as an 'understandable' response to a negative occurrence. So we can only have rage as a symptom, or an effect. I feel, then, in relation to this, that your work refuses this apologetic take on rage and that you use rage as a force, positively, to create a site for dignity. How do you think about this? And related, if this gels with you, do you connect to it a feminism? A strength, a femme dignity, a femme power related to a feminism of difference? Or am I waaaaaay off the mark here?

Not dissimilar is the gendering of rage where, stereotypically, men in a position of rage are feared and revered yet an enraged woman is a mad medusa, possessed and unwanted. I'm not working with feminism, intentionally. The practice we talked about above is primarily a sound and media practice. I do my best to neutralise the gendered aspect of the performances, which oddly enough, has on occasion led people to ask me on viewing an installation of my work, "who is the man in the video?"

The scream is not a reaction to a negative occurrence in the context of my work, it's a mechanism that enables a questioning of the sociological role of the voice unhinged. It's a promotion of action over stasis, which can be applied to whatever you want. It's like, "C'MON!"

This is exactly a refusal to apologise – doing something so overt and assertive and then not apologising has an

ultimately dignifying demeanour. The scream is ontologically social, it's unavoidable and captures the notion of affect directly, and my intentional, amplified scream says, "no, this was not a mistake", inviting the question, "well, what is it?". Although I've never articulated it within a feminist dialogue, I also recognise that things are imbued with inherent, ontological politics, certainly as far as art and perception goes. I am in a female body in the world that prescribes normative understandings of what it is to be a woman, and the scream cuts through this and asks for a questioning of how we deal with this.

There is a tendency to focus on your voice, but your work is not confined to this. You bring up the body, so I wonder about it. I know, as you imply, you kind of 'black it out' as a way of de-gendering (to a degree). This also, however, gives you a strong graphic presence. And your movements create a kind of meaning too I think. How do you treat your movements in terms of expressivity? How does this pitch back to the voice, but also to the land, the floor that you are in many ways performing to and against?

I can't produce the sounds without making the movements, they go together; this is one of the reasons I hate sound checks. I don't really 'treat' my movements, they just happen as a symptom of finding the right position of feedback, or the best place to be next to the amplifier to access that place of being in noise, or to get pushed by the sound. It's more like I'm dancing with the amplifiers, the sub-mixer, and the flow of sound energy. So the meaning of the movements, if anything, is still about sound/air pressure energy, about accessing noise and manipulating atmosphere.

The voice I think is important to touch on briefly, in terms of its denial of language and its history. It's a kind of post-language, and this affords a much more capacious set of considerations for its relationship to distortion and feedback. The scream for me is about forgetting, in an atemporal sense.

I must credit my friend Astrid Lorange who has all the best words to describe everything. Case in point: "Yours is a sound that is post-linguistic, or paralinguistic: it already knows the vocabularies and it's sick to death of that shit."³

Thanks Kusum. Fuck, perfect! One thing I want to say to close, and again from a 'user's' perspective, is how powerfully, implicitly evident this way that you describe of approaching your work is. I started this interview wanting to know more about your approach, but what I am seeing is that it is all there anyway: the knowing is in the experience, the experience is in the knowing. You're deconstructing ideas of surface and depth and giving this in turn a practical and concrete form that is thrilling to be outside/inside. From this, I'd like to think now (if only for myself) that your way of talking about your work also is the work in a way. It is another platform, sure, but it equally forms and performs and reforms at, as you stress, an ontological level. So this kind of thinking you're doing, the wrestling with language and the seriousness of framing your intent, is something that I'm going to read as another kind of shaping of "sound/air pressure energy" that is about "accessing noise and manipulating atmosphere". And yeah, it softens me too. And yeah I'm dealing with it.

1 Melissa Gregg, Gregory J. Seigworth, *The Affect Theory Reader*, 2010, 1.

2 Ibid, 1.

3 Astrid Lorange, email conversation on affect and gender, 24/10/13.

•|
Kusum Normoyle
Performance,
September 2013,
MCA, Sydney
Photo : Alex Davies

•/•
A Scream for
Ljubljana, 2011
Performance series
Photo : Jaka Babnik
Image courtesy of the
artist

Images courtesy
of the artist





SILENCE IS GOLDEN BY TOM JEFFREYS

“Silence is golden, but duct tape is silver.” This is just one of a non-stop torrent of threats – rape, sexual violence, death – communicated via social media to journalist and feminist campaigner Caroline Criado-Perez. Here’s another: “If you were really bothered you would just keep quiet.” And another: “You’re not silenced – look at you all over the airwaves.”

Criado-Perez shot to prominence earlier this year after the Bank of England announced plans to introduce a portrait of Sir Winston Churchill onto the £5 note from 2016. This would have removed the presence of nineteenth century social reformer Elizabeth Fry – the only woman currently in evidence on English paper currency, other than, of course, the Queen. Amid much media coverage, Criado-Perez, who had already set up an organisation called The Women’s Room to challenge the media’s gendered understanding of the “expert”, won the battle. The Bank of England chose Jane Austen instead of Churchill.



But it was a victory that came at quite a cost, as she was subsequently subjected to a bewildering torrent of rape threats and death threats that left her struggling to eat, sleep or work. “I’m functioning at just under boiling point,” she recently admitted in a speech on cyber-harassment at the Women’s Aid conference, “and it takes so little to make me cry – or to make me scream.”

At one stage, a #Twittersilence was held in order to attempt to pressurise Twitter to amend their systems for reporting abuse. Criado-Perez “refused to be silenced” but, later, her voice trailed off, as she temporarily quit Twitter: “I am going to deactivate my account. Will be back soon. Just can’t take this shit anymore and can’t seem to stop looking.”

Twelve days later, on the top floor of a private members’ club situated about a five-minute walk from the Bank of England, feminist artist Sarah Maple is also conspicuous by her silence. In a pin-striped suit she sprawls across a sofa, her oxblood Dr Martens scuffing the delicate pale green pile. She’s silently reading *The Sun* newspaper, apparently transfixed by Page 3’s topless model of the day. In the corner is a man in a red polka-dot dress washing the same plate over and over and over again. Nearby on the smooth wooden counter, the kettle – Breville, brand new – is switched off. No boiling over here, thank you. That would be unseemly.

If, as Dr Ben Anderson has argued in *Becoming and Being Hopeful – Towards a Theory of Affect*, “the politics of affect begins from the assumption that life is an intersecting multiplicity of harmonious and

disharmonious relations”, then what are we to make of the role of silence? If we are to take a narrow etymological understanding of harmony, from the Greek *harmonia* (ἁρμόζω), as a union or fitting together (of sounds), then silence, as an absence of sound, is neither harmonious nor disharmonious. It therefore exists as a singularity that both perpetually opposes and is easily overrun by a politics based on speech or sound or language in this limited sense.

Or does it? Certainly, this is one interpretation informing Criado-Perez in her sustained and admirable desire to “shout back”. But silence can function in different ways too. As Maple’s example shows, the performance carried out in silence gains a certain affective resonance by contrast with the champagne-fuelled chatter that surrounds it. Likewise, the perceived importance of the power of speech – to speak for oneself – is one of the driving factors behind the proliferation of social media, and it is in this context that silence attains a heightened state of gravitas. When a business model is based on the monetisation of increasingly large volumes of user interaction, then silence – functioning as a voice that says “no more” – can speak very loudly indeed.

This double functioning of silence is evident in the work of Tamsyn Challenger. Her 2013 exhibition, *Monoculture*, at Beaconsfield contained a series of sculptures of medieval torture instruments, painted in the instantly recognisable brand colours of major social media corporations (such as *Selfie Brank 1, Facebook*, 2013). Such works tap into a long history of enforced silence – via violence imposed on the body of the private individual through repeated public humiliation. Through a separate series of works in the same exhibition, this violence is further linked to that of the ‘selfie’ – a craze that is reliant on its participants’ willingness to constrict their bodies’ physical expressions in order to meet with public approval. In this way, Challenger explores the possibility that the impulse to self-represent, to “express” oneself, is not wholly emancipatory and, moreover, risks becoming inseparable from a kind of enforced silence.

On her ShowStudio profile, meanwhile, Sarah Maple is pictured in black and white, slightly from above, eyes left, on the verge of eating a cupcake iced with the phrase “Freedom of Speech”. Seen through the lens of Challenger’s work, this image becomes doubly ironic. There is the obvious irony of “achieving” freedom of speech through the gendered and faddish act of baking a cupcake. But there is also the additional irony of expressing the affective force of this irony through the selfie – as we’ve seen, a genre of expression that constrains and silences at the same time as it gives voice. In what context could speech ever be purely free?

Across painting, photography, video and performance, Maple’s work enacts the processes by which silence is imposed and internalised through popular culture (Disney princesses, fashion magazines), religion (she’s a Muslim) and the occasional self-reflexive pop at the world of contemporary art. She’s posed mute as a mannequin in the window of a department store (*House of Fraser*, 2009); painted herself bleeding in public (*Menstruate with Pride*, 2011) and outraged the West London Muslim community with a painting depicting a woman in a burka sporting a little, round yellow badge declaring “I ♥ Orgasms” (*I Love Orgasms*, 2008). Responses to Maple’s work are visceral, instinctive – a brick was thrown through the window of the gallery where she held her first solo show. She, like Criado-Perez, has received death threats. But her humour continues to disarm, and leave an awkward silence.

As bank notes continue to circulate with representations of women on both sides, suggesting something deep-rooted about the economies of representation, the role of silence is as complex as ever. Silence is still largely and justifiably understood as an absence of voice – or the removal, often by force, of the ability to speak for oneself, as an individual or group. But, at the same time, silence can carry with it its own authority, an otherness that threatens to undermine the straightforward equation of voice = power/freedom.

Sarah Maple
I Heart Orgasms, 2008
Oil on board, 60 x 47cm
Image courtesy of the artist

Philip looked like Sideshow Bob with tufts of wild, wiry grey hair unaffected by gravity, like fairy floss, but with the sheen and aggression of steel wool. He had long thin fingers; he was a professional cellist turned artist turned curator. He was perpetually unsatisfied in the arts but couldn't seem to get out and go elsewhere. He had a long creased face, which wore its age like a miserably cheap crepe frock on an awkward teen girl's frame. Once, after staring at his hair for too long, thinking the thoughts I am writing to you now, I told him about the rats in the walls of my ex-boyfriend's house.

When we couldn't get the rats to leave by sealing the food containers, we would coat steel wool in peanut butter and push it into their holes, or under the skirting boards, or behind the light switches. The idea is that you avoid using poison. The rats eat the salty-sweet coated steel wool and it razors the insides of their stomachs, shreds their digestive tracts and they die from internal bleeding. The thing about killing rats this way, is that they then die inside the walls. I remember smashing plaster in three different places looking for their dead bodies, sniffing the wall, sniffing the skirting board, sniffing the light switches, trying to sniff through fiberglass insulation to pinpoint the exact location of their tiny rotting corpses. If you use commercial rat poison the rats leave the walls; they go searching for water, whilst they die slowly of dehydration, as their muscles atrophy.

He really enjoyed this story. He had thousands of questions to ask. I could see them welling up like tears behind his glasses; he settled for one: "So you pulled the dead rats' bodies out of the walls together or alone?" I still don't understand this question.

Yesterday at Berlin airport there was a woman in a wheelchair. She was old but sitting very straight. She was immaculately dressed all in white, her shirt had very small pink roses on it and her silver hair was wrapped elaborately against the back of her skull, pinned with clips featuring the same tiny roses. It was as if the roses had grown up and over her like they would a garden arch. A man in an orange safety vest had wheeled her obnoxiously past the queue of passengers, towards the glass door of the tarmac-side fishtank that we were all waiting in. He wheeled her right up to the closed electronic doors, in behind the tapelines that cordoned the rest of us off. He sat her courtside, so close to the glass that had she turned her head she would have only been able to look along the reflective panes of the glass walls of the airport, she wouldn't have been able to see either side clearly, just the silver nothing space of reflection. I imagined her breath visible on the glass in front of her face. The man in orange closed the tape behind her and walked away. The other passengers and I watched her back from where she couldn't see us. She was far away from us. When we landed in Venice I was one of the last to leave the plane. As I fumbled with my backpack, lurching clumsily down the aisle, I saw her again. She was sitting a quarter of the way down the plane, alone in her row of three, and the rows of three around her – empty threes seemed to spread out from her in every direction. I approached the silver rose garden. She never turned around; she sat up straight, alone on the plane, facing forward, waiting.

Roland Barthes said the lover is the one who waits; the lover alone waits for something that it is impossible to return. Even if the envelope is addressed incorrectly and the letter is returned to sender, time corrupts it.

The best time to fly is at sunset when you cross into a new time zone. If you're flying the right (wrong?) direction, the sunset lasts forever, the sun can't escape you as you scream toward the horizon, it's cheating night, it's corrupting time. I was on a flight like this from New York to L.A. in October 2010 when Philip Watkins hanged himself in his apartment. People had been staying with him sporadically because the suicide had seemed like a likely result of his mounting depression. But no one was available that night; everybody and nobody blamed themselves.

Erotographomania might be the reason that I stopped writing letters. I don't like the confusion between *Dear* and *From* (*love*). *Dear* and *From* – to and fro – are opposite ends of the same action. They are interchangeable, and demanding of the 1st Person *I*. An *I* that writes to *you*. An *I* that *makes believe* that you could ever offer it any kind of genuine fulfilment within an exchange, like you could ever open your arms wide enough to describe anything. It is your failure within the exchange that *I* desires; it is the need to keep explaining to you, to endlessly translate – to keep writing to you – that offers the *jouissance* of the perpetually unfulfillable.

It feels like such an ugly thing to do, to write to you (myself) in the first person. Chris Kraus wrote "whenever I tried writing in the first person it sounded like some other person or else the tritest most neurotic parts of myself that I wanted badly to get beyond." I think that's a pretty apt description of how letter writing feels. Kraus got over it by writing to Dick, by cleverly examining the spaces in which women are forced into emotional pigeonholes, parodying themselves to be heard. She self-reflexively, hysterically (femininely?) wrote her way into her *I* and out of her problem with it. She became an *I* in love, which is the best place to become an *I* because it's the place that an *I* desires (desires!) the impossibility of renouncing itself to a *you* and a *we*.

I wrote the catalogue essay for *Erotographomania* as a letter to Philip. The letter was a flailing attempt to appropriate Poe's story of *The Purloined Letter* to somehow reveal the mysteries of the conversations that Philip and I had had. With *Erotographomania* as our crime scene I played the Prefect, ill-equipped to solve the crime, ill-equipped to enter the mind of the poet, the lover, the letter-writer. Philip was given the role of Dupont, the worthy procurer of the purloined letter, the poet. But ultimately Philip was Dick and Dick is Dupont, and I am Dick and therefore I am Dupont. I am the lover, the letter-writer, the poet and the thief. I am the author, the object of desire and the intended addressee. The text was fragmented and confused and it didn't make sense or do the exhibition premise justice. It sat alone and stared out through glass doors, unable to turn around. It held its arms as wide open as it could, and it was never wide enough. It died inside of the white walls of the gallery.

My letter to Philip was a disingenuous dedication. It started *Dear Philip* and it said absolutely nothing to him at all. It was a love letter (every letter is a love letter).

Love Sarah

ANASTASIA KLOSE: EMOTIONS AND THE ECONOMY OF POWER BY BRENDAN MCCLEARY

When discussing the practice of Anastasia Klose, the term “aesthetic of the pathetic” often appears. Throughout her practice, Klose has undergone moment after moment of self-inflicted humiliation. She is pathetic, and deliberately so. From her infamous *In the Toilets with Ben* (2005), in which Klose focuses a camera on her own face as she has sex on a toilet floor, and the even more uncomfortable *Mum and I Watching In the Toilets with Ben* (2005) to the more recent *Top Ten Google Searches After a Break-up* (2013), she is a master of creating situations in which she is her own victim, highlighting her suffering for her own gain.

Personal suffering is further explored in *The Red Carpet* (2010), a 10-metre roll of paper scrawled with Klose’s desperate descriptions of an unrequited love. The work tracks the artist’s obsession, the result of months of thought and process, a form of post-break-up therapy. As Klose explains, “I liked the idea of him walking all over my drawing, walking all over my words, as if he were walking all over my feelings. I also liked the idea of making money out of my suffering.” The work is embedded in her emotional need, but expands beyond it. It is a deeply personal process created for an audience, and possibly a buyer. It is a work embedded in an economy, but not just the monetary. As an emotionally charged work, *The Red Carpet* relies on further emotions produced by its being read.

Much of Klose’s practice demands a level of emotional investment. Pity, empathy and sympathy are called forth, depending on the context of viewing. In drawing forth the emotional response, the artist can then make use of it – a manipulation of power and affect. Klose is at once in a position of power and weakness, embodying a balance between the two. Similarly, viewers are given an active choice to view, but risk becoming subservient to the work’s desired responses. In actively choosing to present her own weakness, Klose affectively creates a power play between artist, artwork and viewer.

To be clear, this is not an understanding of powerful vs. powerless as polar opposites; power becomes a malleable and interchangeable tool, a fluid notion in constant flux. This is not power as an abstract force in its own right, but as a result of the interplay created.

Using the emotional responses of the viewer, Klose creates an economic system of power relations. All elements (artist filming, artist being filmed, viewer) are engaged in a transference of power throughout the relationship enacted. I refer to ‘economy’ here not as monetary value, but as a network of relationships based on exchange that is both practical and theoretical. Practical, in that what is being investigated is an actual exchange between parties; theoretical, in that there is an overriding principle that governs the systems in place.

As a relational force, all elements have the ability to be both dominant and submissive simultaneously. This is not a simple economy of give and take, act and receive. Rather, what is presented is a symbiotic relationship of positive and negative feedback.

As the viewer, you are actively engaging with the work; you have the ability to commit to an empathetic response, responding to the emotional draw of the pathos represented. You may also be drawn to your own position of humiliation through memory, or even discomfort with the personal representation within the work.

The Red Carpet, whilst depicting Klose’s own break-up scenario, is a reminder of the similar situation common to most of us, drawn out (literally) to its creative conclusion. Similarly, *Top Ten Google Searches...*, at times absurd in the



searches selected, brings to mind the ridiculous and revealing Googling we’ve all done in our moments of rejection or need.

When Klose shows herself in a position of humiliation, she is drawing on your own humiliating past to create the empathy response, drawing further upon the comfort and discomfort of the emotionally familiar. Whilst the moment of creation may have been truly embarrassing, it is only through our understanding of such vulnerability (from our own experiences) that Klose’s embarrassment may be understood. Klose comes to control the humiliation through her transference of power. In trading her humiliation for yours, Klose embraces and highlights the duality of the power economy – the ability to both produce and consume simultaneously, to control and be controlled all in the one moment.

It is within this duality that the strength of Klose’s practice stands; in her active choices as well as her weakened position within the work. Similarly, the viewer’s power (and loss of) lies as much in their empathetic viewing of the work as in Klose’s ability to enforce this empathy. Weakness, passivity and an aggressive emotional stance are combined, highlighting the malleable nature of all. Submitting to her own emotional need, Klose deconstructs the notion of power. The work becomes a response to the force of submission, submission seen as active choice and viable artistic tool.

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Anastasia Klose
In the Toilets with Ben, 2005
Video Stills

Mum and I watching In the Toilets with Ben, 2005
Video Still

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The Red Carpet, 2010 (detail)
Soft pastel, graphite pencil, Canson CA Grain Cartridge paper scroll and timber 10 x 1.5 metres

Images courtesy of the artist and Tolarno Galleries, Melbourne

BEES KNEES, THAT SHE'S SO SMART, I MET YOU
T I DONT GIVE A SHIT. BECAUSE THE FIRST TIME WE MET YOU
LIKE THE REST OF THE PARTY JUST DISAPPEARED. WITHIN 2 MIN
RY, AND STEWART HOME. I GOT TO SHOW OFF AND TELL YOU I
WHEN YOU TOLD ME YOU LOVED IRIS MURDOCH, I KNEW IT WAS
LOVES HER WRITING. I THINK WE ARE THE SAME, YOU AND ME.
IS OR GO QUIT. I TOTALLY GET YOUR HUMOUR AND HOW YOU
ER THAN EVERYONE. IT IS TRUE. I AM IN TOTAL AGREEMENT
ARE THINKING ABOUT ME? I HOPE YOU ARE LONELY, WHEREVER YOU
HE UNIVERSE, AND THAT WILL REACH YOU. BECAUSE THE ENERGY
AT THEY SUSPECTED, THAT I AM CRAZY AND HAVE NO SENSE OF PROPR
MERS BRIGS TEST, BULLSHIT, YOU TOLD ME YOU WERE ~~THEY~~ THEY ARE
KLOSE, THEIR RATIONALITY CAME OUT EMOTIONS. I JUST HAD A THOUGHT. I SILENTLY
ER LETTER. IT'S 9.25 PM ON THE FIRST DAY OF SPRING. TODAY I WAS NOT SO
LD ME YOU MISSED ME. IT WAS A BIT FRIGHTENING. NESS SAYS I AM LIKE A MA
ANYTHING, SINCE SHE IS USUALLY RIGHT. I SHOULD DEFER TO HER FOR M
BE LIKE A GIANT KNITTED RUG. LIKE A TAPESTRY ON THE GROUND. IT'S
WORK. SHE SAYS I HAVE TO TRUST IN THE PROCESS, AND THAT IT WILL BE
Y ABOUT THE GIRL WHO HAD TO KNIT 7 JUMPERS OUT OF NETTLES TO R
WEAVES UNTIL HER FINGERS ARE BLEEDING. THEN SHE HAS TO THROW
RN TO THEIR HUMAN FORM. I NEVER TOLD YOU HOW MUCH HANS CH
TORIES WERE SAD - VERY FULL OF DEATH. I BET YOU READ HIS WORK WHEN
I YOU LIKE TRAGEDY, RIGHT NOW, YOU ARE MAKING FOOD FOR YOU
HAD A BOYFRIEND DO THAT FOR ME. I THINK YOU ARE AN INCRED
THAN WORDS, BUT HERE MY WORDS ARE ACTIONS. PSYCHOANALYST
WHAT ZIZEK SAYS. AND I KNOW YOUR WORDS ARE NEVER LEFT YOUR HEAD?
WAYS, ALONE? AND YOU SAID THE IMAGE NEVER LEFT YOUR HEAD?
EVERYTHING YOU DO MUST BE PERFECT. THIS IS WHY YOU ARE S
ED TO GO TO A CAREERS COUNSELLOR TO GET ADVICE ON WHAT
AKE. YOU WANTED TO GO TO ART SCHOOL BUT YOUR DAD SAID NO.
WOULD HAVE PREFERRED I DID LAW TOO. WELL I DIDN'T GET THE M
E. IT'S BOTH FUZZY AND SCRATCHY. CANT WAIT TILL THIS COLOUR R
ER FOOD. I HOPE YOUR GIRLFRIENDS BEING A REAL BITCH AND MAK
SCHEME. THAT'S ALL STALKERS CAN DO. THIS WORK IS REALLY KIL
ESTERN FRONT. I HAVE BEEN LISTENING TO SUPERTRAMP. THE LOC
ERSTAND YOU. EVERYTHING YOU SAY OR WRITE, I KNOW EXACTLY WHAT YOU
TELL I KNOW THAT TOO. ALL YOUR FEELINGS, YOUR SENSITIVITIES, I G
YOU SAID YOU DIDN'T KNOW WHAT ANIMAL I WAS LIKE, BUT THAT
ABOUT HOW IT WAS A SHAME HER BLOKE NEVER ROLLED OUT FOR YOU.
E THAT THIS WORK IS THE RED CARPET I AM ROLLING OUT FOR YOU.
S STUPID WATER PASTEL. I WAS TALKING TO MUM, AND SHE THINKS
HE IS NOT THE SUBJECT OF THIS WORK. THERE ARE MARKED DIFFERENCES
WELL ON THAT. LATELY, FRIEND, I HAVE BEEN CONSIDERING GETTING A TATTOO
COME WITH ME TO GET IT DONE. I WILL GO TO OFF YA TREE
WORKING NOW FOR THE PEOPLE

NICE2 MECHA .COM BY GISELLE STANBOROUGH

Yep, I got Tinder. Got Skout, got Blendr, Grindr, Gaydar, OkCupid, Plenty of Fish, Oasis, Scruff, Halfet, Dating DNA, iDate, Sonar, MeetMoi, MiuMeet and DateChat. I have Badoo. I have Fullcircle. I have Gothic Match, a dating app specifically aimed at Goths and 'vampire people'. I have Bender and Brenda and SinglesAroundMe. I have Zoosk and Flurv and Meet Me and Match Mobile. I also have, evidently, no life. And I don't think I have been able to recall this many esoteric nouns since my Pokemon playing days. However, the research I have been undertaking for my Next Wave Festival 2014 project, *Nice2MEch@*, has necessitated such engagements. The piece entails meeting people through existing geosocial networks, as well as via my own bespoke geosocial mobile website (in which I am the only person profiled), and going on 'art dates' to other Next Wave Festival 2014 events. I am curious about the role that interpersonal relations play in how we engage with contemporary art, and how contemporary art can serve to expand our experience of interpersonal relations.

Affect is clearly relevant to the investigation of the interpersonal. How else would one communicate a believable experience of sentience? But what interests me about this topic lies in the performance of affect, as a kind of kitsch that can be seen in the visual tropes of geosocial dating profiles. And indeed they are observable, quantifiable, and highly gendered¹. Let me illustrate this phenomenon, through the framework of method acting. Because that's what dating is, right? The seminal Social Realist theatre director Constantin Stanislavski advises that to create a performance of profound verisimilitude, the actor must perform an action, not an affect. That is, the talented thespian will be enacting a strategy such as 'I am going to break you', rather than 'I am very angry'. This logic stands in direct contrast to the performative conventions of dating profiles: it's affect, baby. And thus we attempt to personify the values that we suppose a potential partner might desire. Just like I do so successfully do in my dating profile images.

Seriously though, if you are in Melbourne round May 2014 hit me up at <http://nice2mecha.com/>. If you're into that sort of thing.

¹ Christian Rudder, "The 4 Big Myths of Profile Pictures" January 20th, 2010 < <http://blog.okcupid.com/index.php/the-4-big-myths-of-profile-pictures/> > Accessed 16 October, 2013.



WHAT A DIFFERENCE A GAY MAKES BY GARY CARSLLEY

Gary: Hi Ramesh. Welcome to my glitter cave. Here is where, among other trophies and treasures, I keep my extensive Leigh Bowery archive. As you know the issue of *Das Superpaper* for which we are now writing is focusing on the recognition and construction of gender and sexuality as affective categories. We are going to discuss your work and Justin Shoulder's in the historical context afforded by Leigh. Before beginning, I should probably clarify something for our readers. I supervise both you and Justin in your MFA's and I curated the first international survey exhibition on Leigh *Take A Bowery* at the MCA, in 2003. Firstly, I want to ask if you agree with the statement that *Affect offers a way of refocusing the vagaries of personal relations and group dynamics as a key site of political action?*

Ramesh Mario Nithiyendran: What does that even mean?

I suppose you have identified one of the characterising weaknesses of theoretical processes as they are applied to culture. The ambiguity of its language dilutes theories' aspirations to speculative clarity. I think the statement proposes that affect has an agency that enables some of the various but undefined aspects of personal relations in the context of gender to be transformed into sites of politicised action. Do you agree and if so why?

First of all I think that these kinds of affects have currency as politicised action in themselves but that mediation of those affects into art discourses might cause some of that agency to dissipate. In this context, we need to consider the primacy of intention. While the queerie you posed is not about art, in essence I do agree because it is impossible to cleave the personal from the political.

In this issue an attempt will be made to argue that a new wave of feminist and queer theorising has shifted the focus away from the nature and origin of woman (and gay men) and onto the importance of affects in structuring our gender and sexual identities. If we can agree that by affect we mean a non-cognitive perceptual process, contrasted with volition and defined by (among other attributes) emotion but not logic. Therefore, affect can be detected but not deduced. So I put to you that affect is sensed but it cannot be evidenced. What do you think about this with regard to art generally, but more specifically the artists we are discussing.

If affect is evoked by some sort of mystique beyond language, and by extension reason, how do we even make assumptions or begin to extrapolate these purported affects as they take form in art? We can only really speculate and hypothesise. I have to reply that maybe your question goes against the very nature of affect itself. But, as I said earlier, considerations of artists' intentionality provide useful frameworks to engage with these questions. Within my work, personal experiences and projections of otherness, manifested in both racial and sexual terms, inform much of what I do.

With regards to Justin Shoulder and Leigh Bowery, I would contend that their works are unaffected. Like yours, their practices are primarily informed by intentionality, a quality that proceeds from cognition and inhibits affect. In my opinion the only way in which affect could be projected upon your practices is by confusing the term queer with other. Queerness, because it is conscious, mediated and articulated, cannot therefore be affected except in the sense of after affected. Would you agree?

Yes, queer as a conscious political and creative identity is contingent upon frameworks of resistance that acknowledge a multiplicity of factors.

Gender has been successfully theorised as something occurring at the confluence of a number of strategies including but not limited to the surgical, hormonal, performative and sartorial. I emphasise *successfully* because changes to legislation in many countries, including Germany, Spain, Japan, and South Africa not allow an individual to amend the gender assigned to them on legal documentation such as birth certificates, passports and driving licences. These changes are reflective of the positions first theorised by, among others, Judith Butler, evidence I believe of theory's capacity for effect rather than affect. Your practice, as well as Leigh's and Justin's, also occur at the conjunction of a range of strategies that in many ways can be linked back to those that enabled a reshaping of the frameworks defining gender. Could you elaborate on this assumption by firstly indicating whether you concur?

Let me put it in other terms. The strategies that enabled theorists and, more recently, legislators to contemporise gender are also properties of the best queer artists and their work.

Yes. If gender is currently realised and theorised as a performative category, articulated, rather than constituted by various processes and signifiers, the perception that the best queer artists reflect this contemporary model is perhaps commonsensical. But the methods we use to transcend dated models of gender are practical and theoretical agents that can be reused and reinterpreted in the studio.

The other day when we were upstairs in the post-graduate studios and I was looking at your new ceramic works, I raised the possibility that these new works shared a number of formal characteristics with Leigh's and by extension Justin's. I am thinking here of the way in which exaggeration, a heightened performativity and I suppose what could be termed "pimping the vernacular" are comingled. If these same attributes are also present in the reconstitution of gendered identities, do you think it is possible to extend the theoretical processes informing the gendering of identity into other authorial modes, like ceramics?

If we concede that gender can be articulated through prosthetic incorporation and attenuation of gendered symbols in one's own body, we can extend these considerations to the material decisions made within a practice like mine. Corporeally, big boobs, hair weaves and beards are hyperbolic attributes, consciously adopted to de-affect gender. When they are cognitively incorporated into one's body it is as evidence that gender proceeds from volition. In my ceramic practice, the exaggerated vernacular of the clay, involving raw exposed sections, cracks, scratching and oozing glaze imparts the perspective that the clay is consciously performing and articulating itself by amplifying its historical indexes.

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Ramesh Mario Nithiyendran
Three Headed Blow Hole, 2013.
Red terracotta, white earthenware, underglaze pencil, raw earth, glaze and plaster. Dimensions variable.
Photograph by Patrick Cremin.
Courtesy of the artist.

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Justin Shoulder
Pinky, 2013.
Photographed by Jordan Graham,
Courtesy of the artist.

//•
Leigh Bowery
Blue Leg, 1994.

Courtesy of Nicola Bowery-Bateman.

I agree. What I would now like you to consider is that, because you use clay performatively, that the artists with whom you have the greatest commonality are not ceramicists but performance artists like Justin. And as Justin sits within a continuum that includes Leigh Bowery, logically it is within a tradition of queer performance that your ceramic works properly belong. You know Justin's character *Hubbub* – a disquieting creature enveloped by a cluster of external ovum, who in an act of parthenogenesis seems, in a spray of spawn to be giving birth to itself. I would like you to consider why I think that *Hubbub* (2011) and your piece titled *Three Headed Blowhole* (2013) are related to Leigh Bowery's *Flared Leg* (1994).

Three Headed Blow Hole is similarly parthenogenic. In this instance, it is the creation and birth of the universe. I've used red terracotta and raw earth as corporeal matter. According to the Christian Genesis myth, Adam, meaning 'to be red' in Hebrew, was made from clay. I wanted to fuck with this story and the heteronormative ideologies that informed its production. The work presents a three-headed deity that births giant black cocks from the white sphincter located on its highest head. Here, the origin of life is extruded or shitted from a tight white anus. This tension between the anus and phallus and by extension, phallus and hole, reflects an intention to invert gendered binaries of internal/external and even penis/vagina.

Reversal of gendered oppositions is similarly reflected in Justin's *Hubbub*. Perceiving the numerous, black, sac-like structures as multiple ova similarly allegorises the internal made external. Additionally, the narrative element, as the character is emerging from the water, indicates (as you stated) a giving birth to itself. Leigh Bowery's *Flared Leg* offers a similar performative articulation of gender through processes of amplification and prosthesis. Perceiving the 'flared leg' as a third leg, or a giant phallus in the context of a male chest transformed into breasts through a literal shift in flesh informs ways of understanding *Hubbub* as well as *Three Headed Blow Hole*.

The editors of this issue have identified a statement of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's that claims "queer" means "those whose sense of identity is for some reason tuned most durably to the note of shame". Meaning in a sense that queerness is about a specific affect. Whilst I hold that there is a distinction between gay art and queer art that is reiterated by the difference between women's art and feminist practices I draw back from the idea that shame or affect are characteristics that are intrinsic to queer creative practices. One of the things that distinguish queer and feminist from gay and woman is that the former are commonly sites of resistance and cognition. One of the reasons that I think it is possible to link both what you and Justin are doing to the legacy of Leigh Bowery is precisely the way in which your practices are queer and feminist but not gay and girly. Could you address this please?

Sedgwick's statement is contestable. It's interesting that a discourse around shame can be elaborated around an identity that, despite having roots in sexual orientation, is ultimately a politicised one. So, if shame is an affect of queer, is it from shame that various and effective practices of resistance have emerged? Perhaps not. But in response to your question, you can reconcile a queer practice, proceeding from that of a gay male, with one that is considered feminist, but only really if you emphasise the value of cognition and volition rather than affect.

It is a rational assumption that central to many feminist projects are intentions to battle with the authority of patriarchal structures of misogyny and heteronormativity in its insidious cultural, social and artistic forms. And we all know that misogyny affects gay men in ways that are also limiting and oppressive. So if queer is a political identity, and I am confident it is, queer artists with similar intentions to resist these frameworks can be aligned with and within various feminist artistic and theoretical discourses.

Thanks Ramesh – whilst I value theory I am concerned at the way in which it occasionally segues into theology. In effect we are asked to believe. My interest in discussing these issues with you was primarily framed by our conversations around theorising over the last three years. I have been motivated particularly by engaging with your work as performative and Justin's as sculptural using Leigh's contribution to both these modes of practice as a benchmark. Terms like *affect* and *other* privilege white middle class assumptions of the primacy of their own cultural and linguistic models of the production and consumption of meaning. In the unaffected nature of the three practices and in the structure of this text as an exchange between us I hoped to establish that a reading of queer and feminist as above all informed by volition means that they are only circumstantially and not intrinsically affective.





