

# das SUPER PAPER

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## THE CRITICAL ISSUE

ELIZABETH STANTON, ANNALICE CREIGHTON,  
ROSE VICKERS & WILLIAM STURROCK  
*respond to the 17th Biennale of Sydney*

SIÂN MCINTYRE  
*on Indigenous Art Collective Papunya Tjupi*

SAM ICKLOW  
*on Experimental Cinema at the Berlinale*

JULIET GAUCHAT  
*on SAFARI biennale*

ANNALICE CREIGHTON  
*on the Asia Pacific Triennale*

GENEVIEVE O'CALLAGHAN  
*on the Auckland Triennial & Art Basel*

RACHEL FULLER  
*on participating in Structural Integrity at The Next Wave Festival*

ELIZABETH STANTON  
*on ART MONTH SYDNEY*

ADRIAN GEBERS  
*on MOVE AT GOMA*

JENNIFER HAMILTON  
*on SYDNEY'S WINTER WONDERLANDS*

BRIDIE CONNELL  
*on THE ORDINARY COLLECTIVE*

RACHEL ELLIOT-JONES  
*on TROPICAL GLASSHOUSE*



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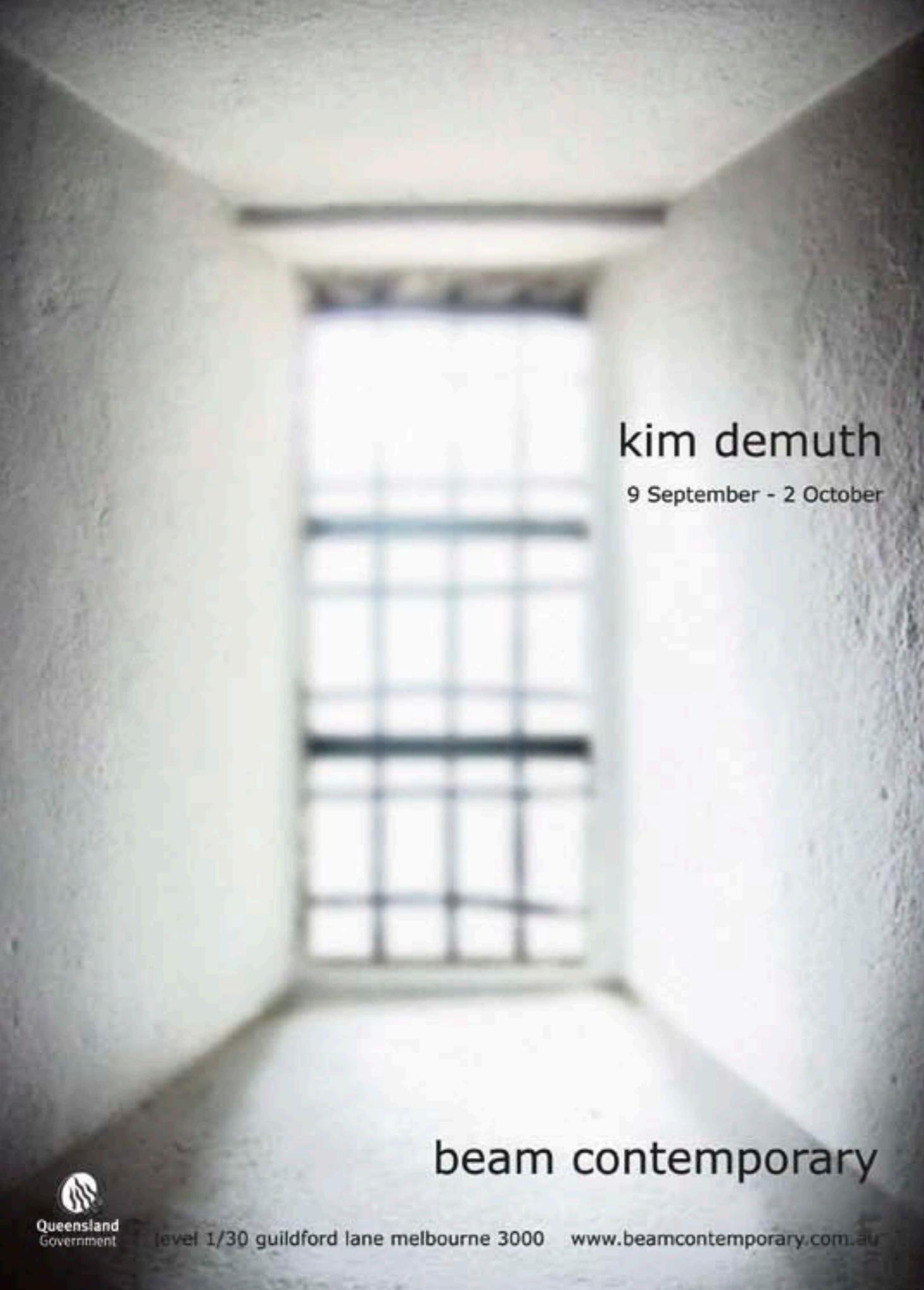
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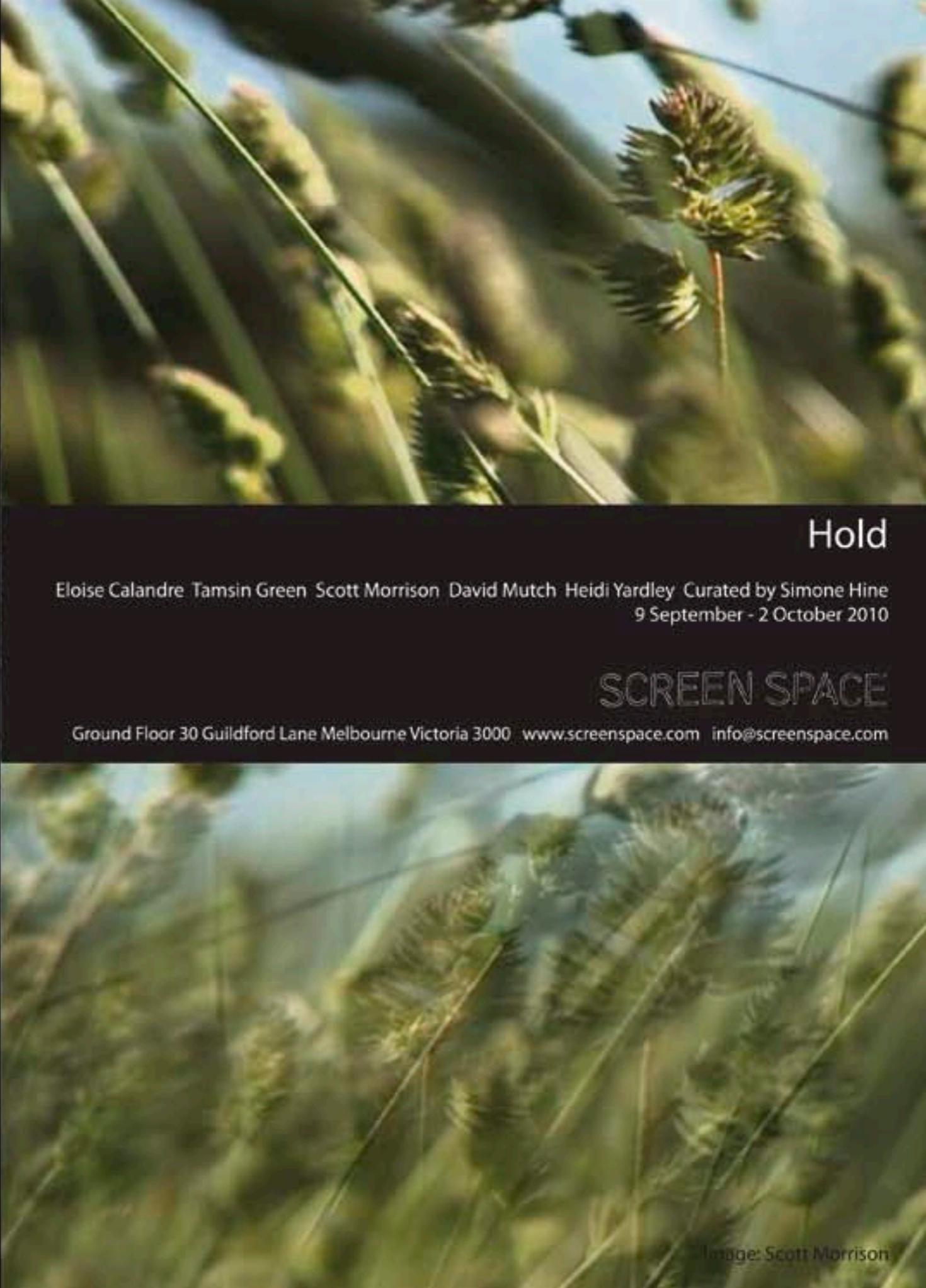
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# THE CRITICAL ISSUE

'The Critical Issue' came about from a wanting to celebrate the art of writing about contemporary art. It is also a celebration of the many writers who make and have made this super paper possible. While the first ever issue of Das Superpaper's content page is laughably short with only Nick and my name on everything, thankfully from issue 2 until now we have been very lucky to have art writers jump on board this art-loving train.

'The Critical Issue' sees Das Superpaper step away from its traditional interview model to celebrate the written word. It is a special skill to be able to explain and create a world for a reader through words. We here in Das-land are not interested in writing and voices that sound like everyone else. A homogenised hum, though peaceful and creepy, is not what we hope for in a writer. This issue is a celebration of the writers who, like artists, rarely don one hat only. These people are writers, thinkers, artists, ARI members, commercial, public and community gallery workers, art school nerds and beauty school drop outs, and incessant gallery and art event goers. These people take the art off the walls, try it on for size and share with us a digestible portion of what went on and what it might all be leading to.

Along with this issue we also celebrate a new online place for critical writing, Das500. It's very exciting to be launching these two new initiatives together, as they have a massive bundle of talented writers and artists wrapped up in them. Das500 is a place where we will hear many voices and can enjoy the international and the local, the immediate and the interesting aspects of contemporary art brought to you by a gaggle of exciting emerging and established writers.

This is our first Critical Issue. I hope there will be more. A piece of critical writing is not afraid to say when something went wrong and to speak up when something special might have been over-looked. From our Australian perspective this issue has a decidedly international focus. We look at art events globally, including biennales, triennials, art fairs and film festivals, then we take a much closer look at the blockbuster Australian shows — the APT and Biennale of Sydney — then finally we get into Das500, a chance to take a closer look at the art scene in terms of local and often artist-run spaces.

This issue is dedicated to all the hard working and talented writers who have contributed to this issue and past Das Superpapers. Without their insight, their finesse — their ability to seduce words into meaningful moments, we would not have a magazine.

BRONWYN BAILEY-CHARTERIS



## PAPUNYA TJUPI ART CENTRE

RESPONSE SIAN MCINTYRE

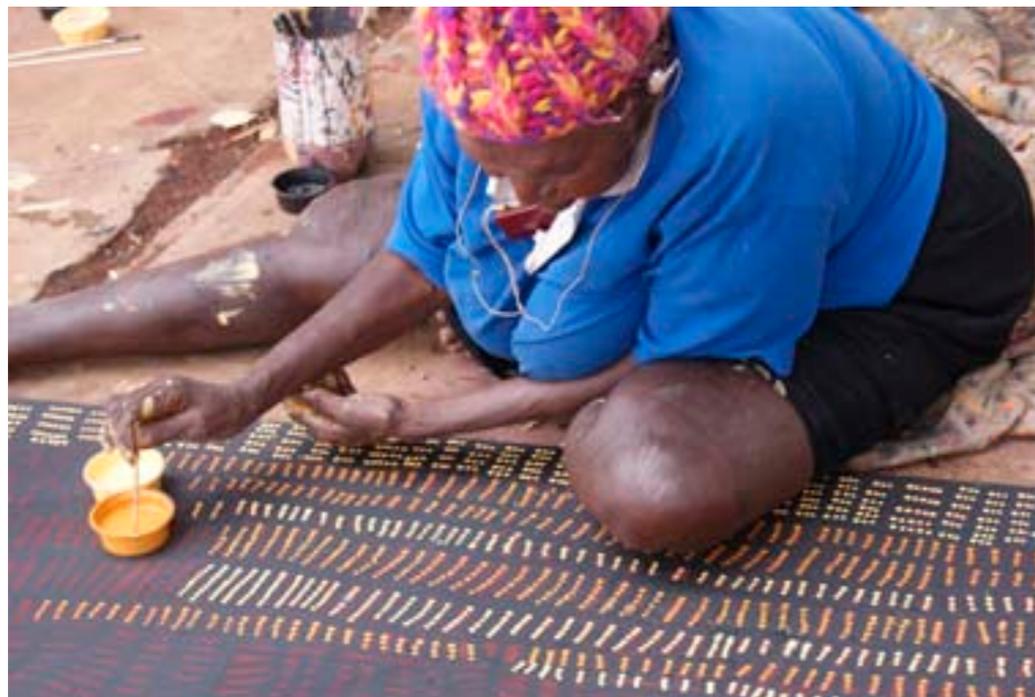
Papunya at dusk: the orange sunset reflects over the ridges and dips in the red soil of the mountain ranges. This image is especially poignant when discussing the art of Papunya, as the land is a constant of the multilayered, intricately detailed acrylics synonymous with Papunya painting.

Papunya shot onto the art world main stage in the early 1970s and is widely recognised as the birthplace of the Central Desert art movement. The community is approximately 300km north-west of Alice Springs, with a general store, a school, a medical centre, a police station, and recently, an art centre.

There has been a long history of art centres in Papunya. Papunya Tula Art Centre was first established 1972, representing artists such as Clifford Possum Tjapaltjarri, Billy Stockman and Johnny Warangkula Tjupurrula. In the early 90s Papunya Tula relocated to Kintore and Kwiirrkurra, where they are still based today. Papunya Community Council established Warumpi Arts in 1994. Warumpi represented Papunya Artists until 2004, when it closed, leaving artists without representation and at the mercy of private, often unethical art dealers. In October 2005 the Papunya artists approached Professor Vivien Johnson of the College of Fine Arts (COFA) to help them establish the first community-based art centre in Papunya.

SIÂN MCINTYRE graduated from COFA in 2009 with First Class Honours. Siân has worked with Papunya Tjupi, a not for profit Indigenous Art Centre in Papunya since 2008. Her relationship with Papunya Tjupi has influenced her practice heavily, particularly in her strong interest in issues surrounding colonisation and belonging. Siân's current project is The Paper Mill, a new ARI space soon to open in Sydney City. Visit, [sianmcintyre.com](http://sianmcintyre.com), [thepapermill.org.au](http://thepapermill.org.au)

>>



Art centres such as Papunya Tjupi have an essential role in the community. Other than providing the community with a space to work and materials to work with, art centres act as a go-between body for artists and the indigenous art market, ensuring artists receive fair payment for their work. Papunya Tjupi is owned and run by the community, with a board of directors responsible for key policy decisions re-elected each year. Art sales are split between the artists and the art centre, which uses funds to maintain facilities and promote community projects. Some art centres have been able to fund swimming pools, dialysis units and make other general improvements to benefit the community.

In June 2008, Kasumi Ejiri and Simon Taylor (both COFA graduates) became managers of Papunya Tjupi Art Centre. The development of the centre in the last two years is staggering. Once based in an Education Department house, the centre has now relocated to the old Papunya Store, boasting a large open structure, air conditioning, indoor and outdoor working spaces, and a printing press. Papunya Tjupi is represented in multiple galleries and has successful shows throughout Australia.

Kasumi and Simon have been particularly passionate about spreading the message of ethical sales of art, ensuring that they deal with reputable galleries that support and stock work from art centres. Recently, Kasumi teamed up with Belinda Carrigan from Gecko Galleries in Broome to represent Papunya Tjupi and push the importance of the ethical sale of Indigenous art at the Melbourne Affordable Art Fair.

The painters of Papunya have obviously benefited from the achievements of Papunya Tjupi Art Centre. Work from the art centre has a real sense of joy and freedom, with immediately striking colours and motifs, and obvious movement and life. These paintings are not created following specifications or formula for sales; they come from joy and knowledge, respect and connection to the land. There is something deeply spiritual watching an artist like Doris Bush paint, hearing her whisper quiet stories about dingoes leading women to water... ●

For more information visit [desart.com.au](http://desart.com.au) and [papunyatjupi.com](http://papunyatjupi.com)

| Peter Kreibich  
*Vorhang auf - The Curtain*, (2010)  
The Curtain in front of the Brandenburg Gate.

## FORUMS EXPANDED: EXPERIMENTAL CINEMA AT THE BERLINALE INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

RESPONSE SAMUEL ICKLOW

To the unfamiliar observer, the decision to hold the Berlinale International Film Festival in mid February might seem slightly puzzling. At a time when a bitterly cold winter seems unwilling to relent, presiding over deserted

streets, layered with ice and snow, the festival turnout is a testament not only to the organisers but to Berliners themselves.

>>



SAM ICKLOW is a Berlin-based filmmaker, photographer and part-time writer. He has produced and directed music videos for emerging Sydney artists like Sui Zhen and teenagersintokyo, is an active member of The Gang Festival exploring Indonesian/Australian creative exchange, and has been known to dabble in reality TV. [www.icklow.com](http://www.icklow.com)

• Peter Kreibich  
*Vorhang auf -  
The Curtain*, (2010)  
Close-up of The  
Curtain in front of the  
Brandenburg Gate.

For the local audience, which was the focus of this year's 60th anniversary of the event, the arrival of the Berlinale in the final and iciest month of winter, its scope and the energy that surrounds it, represents something of an awakening. This year a series of 'star portraits' were the centrepiece of the campaign, lighting up the city streets. Simple headshots of cinema icons, from Hollywood starlets to obscure *auteurs*, are democratised against a plain grey background; no text clutters the frame.

As with the festival itself, these images invite a certain level of investment. While still paying homage to the glamorous side of the industry, they invite an intimate investigation into the minds that constitute it. Unlike its heady, star-struck cousins abroad, at Cannes or Sundance, the Berlinale has an avid interest in pushing beyond the surface of the image, beyond cinema itself. With an ambitious program of over 10 sections, and nearly a thousand film screenings, installations and performances, the Berlinale both celebrates the glamorous narrative traditions of cinema, and provides a forum for a critical interrogation of the medium itself. It is audacious, and there will be failures. But it is the willingness to tread the fine line between failure and success that has earned the festival its reputation for being on the cutting edge.

Nowhere was a challenge more directly leveled than in the fresh-faced 'Forum Expanded' section of the festival, which this year brought over 40 films, installations and performances to venues throughout the city. 'Forum Expanded' talked this year of using contemplation to counter the assumption that audiences have a limited attention span, and this was put to the test most pronouncedly in *Intermission Green*. During the selection of 10 experimental shorts, the audience went from being transported by the likes of Danish quartet Clausen, Aagaard, Larsen and Michaelsen's whimsical exploration of the world of dance in *Shall We Dance*, to squirming in not-quite-so-polite agony as 3360 cuts from two identical shots of a rhinoceros at a zoo played out for an interminable 14 minutes.

The *vernissage* of the 'Forum Expanded' at the Akademie der Künste was a less arduous experience. As the snow drifted down outside, the audience was invited into a series of darkened rooms lit with digital and film projectors offering up delicate meditations on space, thought and the act of looking. João Maria Gusmão and Pedro Paica's *Tarisco (Series of 3)* invites the viewer to contemplate a series of enigmatic actions presented as beautifully textured 16mm film projections; Christian Giroux and Daniel Young's methodical *50 Light Fixtures From Home Depot* is an amusing and transfixing study of consumer culture and domestic space; while Angela Melitopoulos and Maurizio Lazzarato's *Assemblages* is an intentionally esoteric juxtaposition of archival footage, text and sound exploring the practice of French eco-sophist Félix Guattari. Even those familiar with Guattari would have been stretched with this dissertation. However, just when you think you've exhausted yourself, tucked away in the quiet final room past the mingling crowds lies James Benning's *Tulare Road*, a triptych of immaculately composed landscapes of the same Californian road filmed at three different times of the year. A surprisingly pure and evocative structural analysis of image, both cerebral and lulling, it is the kind of work that makes you want to settle into the nook between the floor and the gallery walls, and transform the space into a private cinema.

Maybe it is the slow, introspective winter months themselves which invite such quiet contemplation. But it certainly won't go on uninterrupted. The Berlinale is not there, after all, to put you to sleep. ●



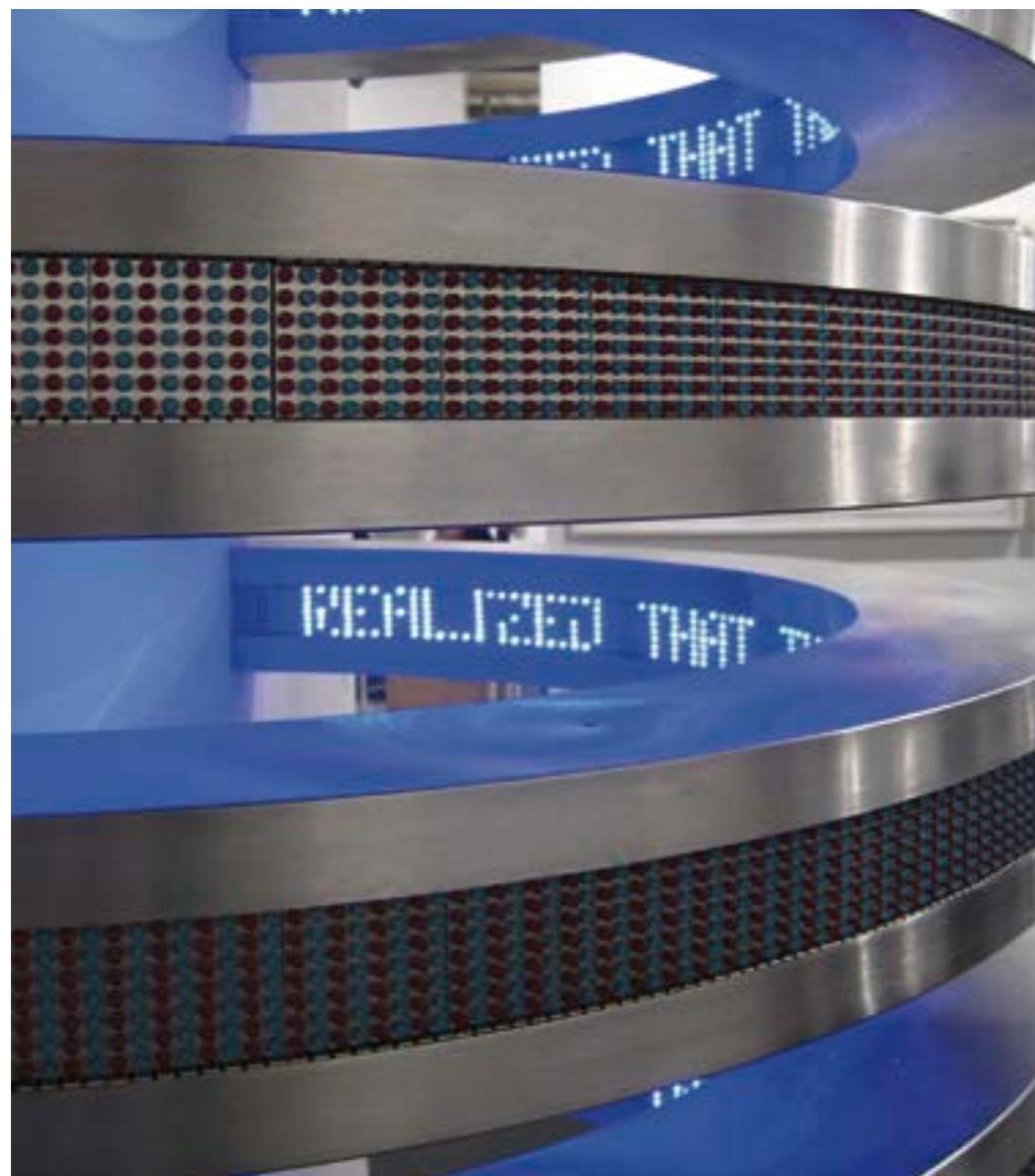
## JOURNEY TO THE CENTRE OF THE EARTH

RESPONSE GENEVIEVE O'CALLAGHAN

Someone recently emailed me a hand-drawn Simplified World Map. This crude depiction of our wondrous world outlines the continents and regions and sums these sections up with witty one-liners. Slightly offended by how I factored into this simplified world I traced the lineage of the map: it had come from a Briton, to an Australian and then onto me, a fellow Australian. Now,

while none of us should put too much stock in this document – Australia is labelled 'RACISTS', Russia stands for 'MAIL ORDER BRIDES', and New Zealand is apparently full of 'HOBBITS' – I was interested, and slightly envious, to see that Western Europe remains the domain of 'ART'.

• Jenny Holzer  
*Torso* (2007)  
Image courtesy  
of the artist



On the ground in Switzerland, at the 'Queen'<sup>1</sup> of the world's commercial art fairs – Art Basel – you'd be forgiven for thinking you were at the centre of the art world. In its 41st year there's a level of sophistication and experience to the fair that cannot be emulated, and Art Basel has been so successful that a number of satellite fairs – Liste, Scope and Volta – have sprung up throughout the city.

Art Basel hosts around 300 galleries and over 2 500 artists, incorporating both a commercial section – Hall 2 houses two levels of gallery stalls – and a curated one: Hall 1 comprises large, solo installations, moving-image works and 'emerging' gallery stalls. Despite this scope there was a poor representation of art developments in the Southern regions. Australia was present, with Shaun Gladwell at Anna Schwartz Gallery, and Big Fag Press at *Off Press*, a print-matter exhibition hosted by Art Basel; and New Zealand appeared with Sriwhana Spong at Michael Lett. Yet considering the strict selection process for galleries and the allowance of the work of deceased artists – a feature which characterises the fair – the primarily Northern, Old Masters perspective at Art Basel is understandable.

Finding a common thread of Art Basel, and the city's concurrent art fairs, was simple: light. It seemed everywhere you turned artists were illuminating their ideas, or their ideas were illumination itself. From using neon as scrawled line in Tracey Emin's *You Made Me Love You* and light as sculpted form in Jenny Holzer's iconic running-text works, to lighting a wall in fluorescent tubes only to coat them in thick black paint as seen in Andrew Dadson's *Black Painted Light* (2010), light was indefatigable.

The king of lights, Dan Flavin, was present in the curated section with three sets of tangented arcs in daylight and cool white, *to Jenny and Ira Licht* (1969), and several other works were for sale in the gallery section of the fair (if you had a spare \$US850 000). The simplicity of design in the three sets – the near-invisible shift in light tone – belies a calm beauty that, while contained in its room, reaches beyond its parameters, casting light far. Gazing at the repetitive curvature of the line of light is like watching waves on a shore, or the moon wax and wane.

So prevalent was light that Volta, an art fair held in both Basel and New York, had an entire space dedicated to the medium and it was in Volta's *Lightbox* I came across the Spanish artist Fernando Gutierrez. Gutierrez, from *Espacio Liquido*, alters gallery spaces in whispering marks and here he created a coterie of drawn characters linked by light. The quirky and cartoonish figures seem to carry their lights, like beating hearts, and call to mind constellations of the night sky.

The clear benefit to art fairs, and having access to so many artists in one city, is the explosion of creativity which is both reassuring and inspiring. I admit to a feeling of excitement at being at the 'centre' of the art world – the slick sophistication is alluring – but then I chide myself for even believing in a 'centre' and consider the conditions laden upon a term like 'contemporary'.

Looking back on that map (which I didn't forward) I realise my initial sense of piquant is ungrounded: to the person who drew this map, 'ART' must be as big of a joke as finding South America synonymous with 'DRUGS AND SUPERMODELS'. ●

<sup>1</sup> The Neue Zürcher Zeitung am Sonntag reported 'The Queen gleams in new brilliance – no sign of crisis', 14 June 2009, while Le Figaro observed 'Art Basel remains the Queen', 12 June 2009.

## UP, UP AND AWAY

RESPONSE GENEVIEVE O'CALLAGHAN

When you witness a solitary helium balloon drifting willy-nilly upwards, it untethers something within. There's a glorious sense of freedom yet, if you were the one who let it go, you're probably feeling the sting of loss. As you watch it ascend you wonder: will it land or will it burst?



The balloon in *Last Ride in a Hot Air Balloon*, The 4th Auckland Art Triennial, has much the same connotations for me: naively, I think of baskets and dare-devil pilots, having kissed their loved ones goodbye, floating to head-poppingly dangerous heights (head-popping, however, is not the issue, rather the danger of fabric on flame, the inescapable hardness of the earth below). The balloon, in particular the hot air balloon, is heavily symbolic and has

been employed here, in curator Natasha Conland's rationale, to interesting lengths. She draws out several broad themes within the framework of 'risk and adventure'. However, that flighty feeling of release and elevation – the untethered balloon – is, overall, missing from this triennial.

The first theme to come out of the balloon is the exploration of material and materiality. It has long preoccupied artists and abounds with opportunities for risk and adventure. In Philippe Parreno's *Marquee* (2008), a replica of a classic movie theatre façade suspended at a gallery threshold, the grandeur of yesteryear – flashing neon, a name in lights – seems dulled by the dense opaque plastic and dim lights. In another exploration of the luminescent, Marin Boyce has created a fluorescent spider web which, hung above our heads, is novel but unprovocative.

Necessarily, politics plays a part in *Last Ride* and the theme 'freedom from political polarity' is elaborated by a somewhat diverse group of artists. *Agent provocateur* Richard Bell is present with two video works, *Broken English* (2009) and *Scratch an Aussie* (2008). Both reek of riskiness, but viewing them on small screens with headphones curtails any sense of adventure they possess. In a nod to the periphery, Mahmoud Bakshi and Shahab Fotouhi presented an Iranian perspective. Bakshi's work was unfortunately yet to be installed during the opening weekend, while Fotouhi's medley of works, showing previously unreleased footage of a riot, seems to trump everyone else's idea of risk.

Conland interprets physical freedom as a potent political tool and signifier, and looks to Alicia Frankovich and others to illustrate the theme. Eschewing the expected, Conland chose the sculptural works of Frankovich's over her renowned performance pieces, so visitors to the Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki hoping to see the artist suspended from the ceiling were sorely disappointed. Unfortunately, Frankovich's room of sculpture felt anything but 'physically free'. Laresa Kosloff's Super 8 films of public spaces and group activities shot from a voyeuristic distance are not only retro in aesthetic but make us question the freedom at play here. Her distance from the action shows the activities in a new light: what was considered free can be read as conventionalised.

>>

- Marine Hugonnier  
*The Last Tour* (2004)  
16 mm transferred to DVD,  
16:9 ratio, colour, sound, 14:7 min.  
Image courtesy of the artist  
and Max Wigram Gallery, London
- Mike Parr  
*Facts About the Room* (1970)  
An imagined performance,  
stencilled lettering on wall,  
dimensions variable.  
Image courtesy of the artist.

- lxxix. From time to time I bump into the walls.
- lxxx. The walls lead to corners.
- lxxxi. Finally I sit down and rest.
- lxxxii. By lying on the floor I can think about the ceiling (I lie on the floor).
- lxxxiii. If I stand on the window sill I can reach the ceiling.
- lxxxiv. As I jump down from the sill I am moving in the space of the room.
- lxxxv. ... If all the walls have edges ...
- lxxxvi. The six walls fit together.
- lxxxvii. By moving in circles I am at the disposal of the room.
- lxxxviii. I lean on the windows.
- lxxxix. After all nothing can be seen.
- xc. By moving sideways I am walking on the edge.
- xc. Now I can always come back to the windows.
- xcii. It is impossible to see anything beyond the windows.
- xciii. The windows are bare.
- xciv. Then the windows are at the disposal of the room.
- xcv. The room in a sense is now finished.
- xcvi. If I sit in the dark I can close my eyes (just for a short time).
- xcvii. By sitting very still the room remains silent.
- xcviii. By being silent I am alone.
- xcix. Neither the room nor the windows (I didn't put the light on).
- c. I was thinking of the walls.



The hot air balloon is in essence linked to alternatives – it represents a 17th century innovation in travel. *Last Ride* draws from this reference the notion of alternative ecological and economic structures. The most literal interpretation of this theme, and the most successful illustration of it, is *Learning Site's The House of Economy* (2010). The living sculpture is by no means a pretty thing, made up of earth and mushrooms, but it's a contemplative and practical experiment in biodegradation.

From an entirely different perspective, Michael Stevenson draws parallels between the life of a hermit and artist called Man, who lived on the coast in Spain, and meditations on reason and logic.

The final theme – the history and experience of risk and adventure – involves representation and a heightened sense of distance from the event. The risk run here is that this distance renders the artworks conservative, un-risky. While ballooning across Switzerland's Matterhorn peak is undoubtedly adventurous, Marine Hugonnier's documentation of it *The Last Tour* (2004) is wholly unadventurous and cautious. This is similarly true for Tom Nicholson and Alex Monteith's representations of adventure: their works are wanting.

Is this representation's conundrum: that the artwork itself is not risk and adventure, rather the translation of it? When we see that solitary balloon floating skyward, are we the balloon or are we its observer?

Translating that untethered feeling presents a challenge. Mike Parr stands out for the seemingly inane *Facts About the Room* (1970) in which he milks an ordinary room for all its got in a tone unhinged from normalcy. Parr's work draws on similar ideas to Nick Austin, who references 16th century explorer Xavier de Maistre (author of *Voyage Around My Room* and *Nocturnal Voyage Around My Room*) in his exploration of the ordinary. Johanna Billing approximates the adventurous feeling with her documentation of a group of musicians learning to sail, *This Is How We Walk on the Moon* (2007). The unscripted action and succession of quick cuts make for captivating moments.

- Johanna Billing  
*This Is How We Walk on the Moon* (2007)  
Video installation, co-produced by the One Mile programme,  
Collective Gallery, Edinburgh.  
Image courtesy of the artist and Hollybush Gardens, London

To embody risk and adventure, rather than translate it, seems somewhat simpler. In fact, it is just as complex. How does the artist transport the viewer from the exhibition space? Tino Seghal gets it right with the performance work *Instead of allowing something to rise up to your face dancing bruce and other things* (2000) which plays on the audience even more once we've left the exhibition space. The piece, in which a lone dancer performs a series of floor-based moves (slow-time, awkward postures such that the viewer may think they've happened upon someone collapsed in a unused gallery) unsettles and asks us to ponder what goes on when we're not looking. Shilpa Gupta similarly creates a sense of risk with *Singing Cloud* and *Untitled* (both 2008–2009). In a response to the 2008 Mumbai bombings, Gupta collaborated with psychologist Mahzarin Banaji and political thinker Noam Chomsky to create a hovering mass of black microphones that seems to breathe and conjures the image of a swarm of wasps. The timetable, replete with random messages, puts the visitor on guard to the temporality of the piece and transports us to a busy railway station. Sharon Hayes articulates both risk and adventure in her broadcast work *Everything Else Has Failed! Don't You Think It's Time For Love* (2007). A political protest of sorts, Hayes stood outside the United Bank of Switzerland in New York and not just read, but performed with tremulous and desperate voice, love letters aloud.

With any biennale or triennial we find ourselves wondering: what is the purpose? What are the terms of inclusion? By nature, these exhibitions run the risk of alienating either the global or the local. *Last Ride in a Hot Air Balloon* consists mainly of New Zealand, Australian and European artists. There are several from the Middle East, Asia and the Americas, and one Polynesian artist. The absence of Māori artists at an Auckland Triennial is glaring and the interpretation is that the local has been ignored. This exclusion is at odds with the exhibition's all-encompassing curatorial rationale and leaves us to wonder if the absence of Māori art is a question of personal taste.

There are some moments of elevation in *Last Ride in a Hot Air Balloon* but when I look back, I still feel as if I'm looking at a balloon safely tethered to earth, wondering when it might float away. ●

For the last five years GENEVIEVE O'CALLAGHAN has managed a Sydney-based gallery and organised exhibitions. Shunning the regular pay check, she is now an independent arts writer and editor with a particular interest in (and love for) contemporary Indigenous art. A graduate of COFA's Master of Art Administration program, Genevieve hates parking tickets (even though she doesn't drive) and would like to say she doesn't miss a regular income ... but she does.

## THE BEAUTY OF RETROSPECTION

WILLIAM STURROCK , ELIZABETH STANTON, ANNALICE CREIGHTON, ROSE VICKERS  
FACILITATED BY BRONWYN BAILEY-CHARTERIS

Four contemporary arts writers critically engage with the 17th Biennale of Sydney in a shrewd and sharp roundtable discussion.

**[ES]** With over 440 works, 166 artists, seven venues, and one very confident curator – international art world semi-celebrity David Elliott – it’s hard to know where to begin a discussion on the 17th Biennale of Sydney. Do we focus on the success or failure of the curatorial vision? Assess how comprehensive Elliott’s selection of artists is? Praise the post-industrial chic of Cockatoo Island as a venue, regardless of how it almost swallowed the art whole? Consider the Biennale from local and international perspectives? Delve into an analysis of geography, post-colonial politics, aesthetic beauty and folk music, as the title *The Beauty of Distance: Songs of Survival in a Precarious Age* suggests?

My suspicion was that the personality of the curator would loom large over this Biennale, and I think the resulting exhibition unveils a wryer humour across the venues, perhaps best exemplified by the kick up the arse re-enacted on loop in Rodney Graham’s video work *City Self / Country Self* (2000). Faith that art can still raise social awareness was restored in Dana Claxton’s video installation, *Sitting Bull and the Moose Jaw Sioux* (2003), and a love of aesthetic and technical virtuosity was seen in Angela Su exquisite ink drawings at the MCA and Liu Jianhua’s porcelain *Container Series* of blood-filled ceramics at the AGNSW. It was apparent, though, that Elliott works better inside white cubes, as come Pier 2/3 and Cockatoo Island, the works became lost or miniaturised within the impressive venues – with the exception of the jewel-in-the-stone that was AES+F’s mega 9-screen masterpiece, *The Feast of Trimalchio* (2009).

**[BBC]** I imagine we all agree that the AES+F was a serious highlight? For me the mishmash of cultural symbols were so cleverly incorporated into this beige and extravagant magazine world.

**[WS]** I most certainly agree – AES+F’s *The Feast of Trimalchio* is as visually resplendent as it is engaging, every bit as seductive as the glossy pages of the magazines it imitates. Projecting over seventy-five thousand digital stills in stop-motion across nine panels, nearing a 360 degree panorama – it’s a ground breaking feat, even for the fast-paced world of media art. The soundscape which

accompanies, a Bach rendition, assists the luxurious imagery develop a sense of high-bourn privilege versus servitude, a parody of those who may afford to desire and what others must perform for these desires to be achieved. I am in awe of this work, but by the time I had explored several other Biennale venues on the way to the far side of Cockatoo Island, I had begun to conjure up an alternative title for the exhibition – ‘the Biennale of multi-screen video works, and a few other things...’ Or is this unfair? In earnest, it is a powerful work and deserves the praise I have already seen it receive.

**Did the Biennale of Sydney live up to its claim of Songs of Survival in a Precarious Age; The beauty of distance? What were some of the highs and lows?**

**[WS]** I have no doubt that I, as well as many readers of DSP, look into such things with greater concern than is necessary, but ‘the beauty of distance’ is an expression that automatically evokes a slight sense of unease from me. Does it suggest a distance is necessary to appreciate art, or for us to recognise beauty? Are the things closest to us not the most beautiful? I am not sure these are pressures Elliott is imposing on us, but he would like us to employ distance as a means to appreciate the differences that make people both individual and collective, each with different but important stories to tell. And so in this Biennale the artists’ stories, however they may be told, are presented contextually as ‘songs of survival’. I am comfortable with this notion, but what makes this age the ‘precarious age’? Could it not be argued that every new age is precarious until it finds its feet, as it were, right before it’s toppled over by the next age?

**[RV]** Elliot has put forward the lyrical idea that ‘all art is folk art’, just as ‘all music is folk music’. Either phrase invokes the truth that all art takes root in lived experience, whether that of the individual, or a society, or a collective. And of course, in the writing of history – including art history – not all songs are heard. This Biennale takes an inclusive approach to such a state of affairs. There is a distinct focus on what arises from the margins – in particular, the re-imagining of historical events and their recording – I’m thinking of Kent Monkman’s *The Death of Adonis* (2009) and others in that same series. There is the inclusion of artists who are not renown on the international Biennale ‘scene’ and a great deal of work by first peoples, like the Australian Yolngu artists.

The violent undertone of several of the curated works – those that touch on colonialism and postcolonialism – convey something that seems close to a sense of urgency. My impression of *The Feast of Trimalchio* was tinged with a strange kind of dread, something akin to the rather uncanny premonition of impending catastrophe. At a floor talk with the director some weeks into the running of the Biennale, a well-heeled member of the audience posed a question – where to draw the curatorial line at gratuitous violence in art? Elliot’s response was succinct – if art is conduit to life, that is, if it is in some way a reflection or a representation of the real, then violence is an appropriate and necessary element.

Perhaps what makes an artwork not gratuitous is its ability to present something of the complexity of lived experience – tragedy and violence balanced with hope and redemption – which is the same cathartic sequence that appears in all of the great folk songs. This is evident in *Trimalchio* and its placement on the historically significant soil of Cockatoo Island, but also in other works that sit comfortably short of the epic. Where *Trimalchio* waves the red flag, two works at the entrance of the MCA present a synchronistic, albeit quieter, tune – Brett Graham’s fighter jet *Tē Hokioi* (2008) and Angela Ellsworth’s *Seer Bonnet* series (2009), both employing subtle strategies of adornment to the same knife-edge effect.

The age of Enlightenment may or may not be drawing to a close, but a craving for connection and explanation remains. I think this is what Elliott is suggesting with reference to folk music – that there is a place for art across cultures and within peoples – it is intrinsic to our humanity. >>

[ES] I agree Rose, some of the more subtle works spoke with equal volume – Makoto Aida’s *Dog (Typhoon)* (2008), a drawing depicting a female amputee provocatively posed and wearing a dog collar, was almost hidden in a corner at the MCA but was unforgettably powerful. A high for me was seeing emerging Australian artists included in the line up – specifically Pilar Mata Dupont and Tarryn Gill on Cockatoo Island. Regarding the title, all I will add is that I certainly sang my own ‘song of survival’ after it took me three full days to see all the works.

**Were there any surprises from this edition of the Biennale?**

[AC] A particular surprise for 2010 is the dynamic space of SuperDeluxe – a Japanese nightclub faces off against performative video and participatory evenings that make Artspace into a hub of carnivalesque play.

**In comparison to Sydney’s last Biennale, *Revolutions: Forms that Turn*, how did this one differ in content, and how did it deliver its show differently?**

[AC] The Biennale 2010 has certainly built upon the successes of *Revolutions* – the utilisation of a tight selection of venues on the harbour foreshore being the most visible example. 2008 opened the space of Cockatoo Island at the precise moment of its transition from industrial graveyard to tourist destination. It became our equivalent of the Venetian *arsenale*, and the free ferry is a charming slow-paced *vaporetto*. 2010 is similarly plagued though by the romanticism of this derelict architecture, which again threatens to be more interesting than the work it houses. Pier 2/3 is a particular disappointment after the unforgettable sonic narrative of Cardiff/Bures-Miller’s *The Crozvs*. The eclectic combination of Dakic, McCarthy and Harry fails to engage most visitors for more than a few minutes. 2010 lacks the presence of a showstopper worthy of this theatrical venue, like Huyghe’s *Forest of Lines*, and the most engaging work at the Opera House, Mundine’s *Song of Bennelong and Pemuikway*, has not yet begun construction.

In 2008 Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev plated up a lush conceptual pin-board of works, framed around the re-semanticising of language, the re-visiting of history, and the greatest hits edition of 20th century art. Elliott, by contrast, has presented work in a format that is more like an exotic curiosity cabinet than a linear narrative. 2010 sidesteps the ghosts of biennales past, addressing critical issues and the contemporary condition, eschewing canonised frameworks in favour of multiple perspectives and postcolonial readings through the inclusion of multiple artists that are not brand-name biennale regulars. Something about 2010 seems a little less warm, nostalgic and poetic than before, but I suspect this is because *The Beauty of Distance* is inviting and initiating dialogues that are increasingly relevant to the time, place and audience of this exhibition.

[RV] Moving away from a linear art narrative towards multiple perspectives – and here, via multiple venues – is certainly coherent with the current critical aversion to metanarratives. The distribution of works across seven venues may serve to dilute the impact of an overriding curatorial vision, yet I feel this is a deliberate statement. The ‘curio cabinet’ approach represents a powerful anti-commodification gesture. Elliott’s aversion to value – whether the market value of art, or simply an acknowledged canon, apparently avoids elevating any one work over another. I would agree with Will – I’m not so sure that this is a realistic goal, but it’s undoubtedly significant as a stated aim.

**While there is always more to say about the Biennale of Sydney we draw this forum to a close. The engaging discussion presented here about this years Biennale of Sydney leaves us with plenty of meat to chew through in terms of thematics, narratives, site specificity, and Elliott’s ambitious and dare-I-say-it ‘successful’ biennale. What is most beautiful about this biennale’s framework is the position that it offers for the artist – to be a singer of songs, variously beautiful, terrible, comedic, sombre, dream-like and bitingly truthful.**

After abandoning his law degree WILLIAM STURROCK walked away from a prospective legal career to study art history and theory at the College of Fine Art (COFA, UNSW), from which he holds a Bachelor of Art Theory and Master of Art Administration. He is currently Gallery Manager at Australian Galleries Glenmore Road (Paddington, Sydney). William regularly contributes to Das Superpaper as well as exhibition literature and has written for Art Month Sydney, the Biennale of Sydney and Artwrite.

ELIZABETH STANTON is a Sydney-based curator and arts writer. She is Communications Manager for SafARI which exhibits the work of emerging artists across Artist-Run Initiatives during the first three weeks of the Biennale of

Sydney. She has previously contributed to the publications Runway, Art Monthly Australia and Art Guide Australia. Her exhibitions as curator include The IKEA Home Project, Carriageworks, Sydney (2009) and Mixed Dozen, Gaffa Gallery, Sydney (2009).

ROSE VICKERS is a writer and editor, contemporary artist and model. An advocate of independent Australian print media, her portfolio includes Oyster, Das Superpaper, Un and Art World. 2010 sees the helm of Blitz, the weekly student magazine of the University of New South Wales, and a second solo show. Right now, she’s probably working on a new project: ‘World Garden’.

[www.rosevickers.com](http://www.rosevickers.com)

ANNALICE CREIGHTON is an artist, writer, freelance dance teacher and arts administrator. Like most arts workers she enjoys multiple professional identities, Visitor Programs Officer at the Australian National Maritime Museum, Gallery Educator at the MCA, casual administration assistant, and perpetual volunteer. During 2009 Annalice undertook internships with Museums & Galleries NSW and Casula Powerhouse, and conducted fieldwork research into site-responsive curatorial practice at the 53rd Venice Biennale. She studied at UNSW COFA, completing a Bachelor of Fine Arts/ Arts and Masters of Arts Administration. Annalice has contributed to publications including Das Superpaper, the Art Month Sydney Blog and Artwrite.

## STRUCTURAL INTEGRITY 2010 NEXT WAVE FESTIVAL

RESPONSE RACHEL FULLER

Curated by Ulanda Blair and Jeff Khan, Structural Integrity was one of the keynote exhibitions of the 2010 Next Wave Festival held in Melbourne in May of this year. An ambitious undertaking, Structural Integrity saw eleven artist-run initiatives (ARIs) from Australia and Asia participate in a one month residency on location at the

Meat Market in North Melbourne, prior to the opening of the Next Wave Festival, in order to execute their individual works. Locksmith Project Space was chosen as the Sydney representative ARI and as a co-director I spent four weeks in Melbourne with my fellow directors, Yasmin Smith, Kenzee Patterson and Samuel Villalobos.

As a project, Structural Integrity attempted to a) provide a platform for the development of relationships between ARIs in Australia and Asia and b) discuss the differing social, political and cultural conditions that led to the establishment of each ARI or collective.

During the residency there were numerous locations in which the ARI directors were housed throughout Melbourne, although the main abode was the 'big brother' house in East Brunswick so called for its characteristic sprawling, sixteen bed townhouse complete with Astroturf and what we were sure were two-way mirrors for a post-residency reality TV show. The work produced for Structural Integrity had already been proposed and OH&S okayed all before the residency even began and as such our days in the Meat Market were very much spent purely hard at work. No time for meeting, greeting or chatting, the Meat Market became an open factory floor where each ARI was in charge of their particular allocated area and it was here alone that each group toiled. It was not until we all returned home each day to our temporary share house that we could relax with cups of tea and barbeques to get to know each other and our respective collectives. This process of THE-ARI-PY was hugely beneficial as finally we met others, outside of our own small communities, who knew first hand the pressure of the volunteer. Here we met six\_a, Box Copy and FELTspace – all ARIs located in different capital cities throughout Australia and all ARIs who have been operating for around the same just-about-paid-our-dues three-year ARI life span as Locksmith Project Space. All exhausted people. All tired of the prohibitive government funding process. All looking for solutions, or just looking for a way out.

The exhibition opening came and went. There have been other articles written purely on the work exhibited within Structural Integrity, yet obviously or not, it is not my place to critique the projects produced within the Meat Market. On Sunday 16 May the Structural Integrity forum was held to introduce each ARI and discuss the differing or similar objectives of each collective. It was here that the directors of Locksmith Project Space suddenly started to sense the death knock of home-time deflation. As an ARI, Locksmith Project Space was established in direct response to what we felt was a need for a free, reputable exhibition space for emerging artists in Sydney. As a residence Locksmith is able to provide exhibition space free of charge to young and emerging artists as the residential tenants pay for the rent for the entire building. We also saw a demand for spaces which directly support the professional development of artists and as such the small amount of funding we receive goes towards an artist financial package which includes the payment of artist fees, the provision of subsidised professional photographic documentation, printed promotional material and commission free sales. As a relatively financially sustainable model it also allows Locksmith Project Space to uphold a high standard within our exhibition program, as we are not reliant on sales or rental income.

Other Australian ARIs like the fore-mentioned Box Copy, FELTspace and six\_a spoke about their births as responses to the general lack of art spaces in their respective home towns, they were spawned more as draw cards to keep the 'good' artists from treading the path outta town.

When time came for the Asian ARIs to introduce themselves it was vastly evident that a line had been drawn in the sand. In general the Asian collectives were not established in order to serve artists but rather to speak about political or social issues where artists and art are used as a vehicle for communication. For example, Post-Museum in Singapore hosts a weekly soup kitchen within their gallery space in order to feed the local homeless. Other Asian ARIs are more directly political such as Tutok in Indonesia who have no fixed abode and thus take their art to the street. It is here that they use visual imagery to create public awareness surrounding political killings in Indonesia. Tutok have also used art to raise the legal fees for families affected by governmental massacres. Countless godly acts later, needless to say, we hung our heads



RACHEL FULLER is a Sydney-based artist and writer. Since 2008 she has been a co-director of Locksmith Project Space. She is also one half of the creative collaboration, bams & ted.

and stared at the floor for a little while, wishing the whole bloody thing could be over. Had we been dragged into a room with Mother Teresa and Gandhi I don't think we could've felt less like we had spent three years feeding our egos and not the hungry mouths or empty pockets of Redfern street.

Naturally we returned home to Sydney more than just a little lost. Were we really not doing enough? Was it not enough to serve the Sydney young and emerging artist? Already disheartened by years of thankless servitude for artists and audiences alike we started to question our motives. Coincidentally, upon our return we sat down to write our 2011 Arts NSW ARI funding application, a process which anyone who has ever had the pleasure of participating in will know is one fraught with the terms culturally and socially diverse audiences, engagement and participation and as a result we found ourselves concocting a grant proposal full of community-minded project ideas. Residing in the historically contentious site of Redfern meant that it was all too easy – we would create a sort of art drop-in centre, a place where the residents of Redfern could learn, develop and express themselves. Coming from rural NSW I also decided that I would like to assist those artists living in rural and regional areas and thus we would provide a residence and studio for short term residencies in the city, a place where artists from the country could develop relationships with Sydney-based artists, curators and gallerists. Excitement ensued, we could help people! And yet, once we put pen to paper we realised that yes, we would be sure of funding success through a careful splattering of indigenous and regional but at the end of the day, why do funding bodies demand such conditions? Again, why is it not enough to just make art?

It is an age-old question and one not easily, if at all, answered. In essence, should art be integrated or isolated? For others or itself? Are we too much the product of our educations, where depressingly our post-modern lecturers pummeled us with the startling line, 'sorry, everything had already been done!' and so art can only be derivative, in and of itself?

I have no answers. I wish I did. All I can say is that we never submitted the Arts NSW grant application. We decided to have a couple months rest. We have programmed exhibitions until the rest of the year. And that is all I know for now. ●



**Structural Integrity participating ARIs included:**

Art Center Ongoing, Tokyo, Japan  
Boxcopy Contemporary Art Space, Brisbane, Australia  
FELTspace, Adelaide, Australia  
House of Natural Fiber, Yogyakarta, Indonesia  
Locksmith Project Space, Sydney, Australia  
Post-Museum, Singapore

Six\_a Artist Run Initiative, Hobart, Australia  
Tutok, Manila, Philippines  
Vitamin Creative Space, Guangzhou, China  
West Space, Melbourne, Australia  
Y3K, Melbourne, Australia

## SAFARI 2010: RIDING THE SLIPSTREAM IN A PRECARIOUS AGE

ARTICLE JULIET GAUCHAT



SafARI 2010 marked the third edition since its conception in 2004 as the 'unofficial' fringe event to Biennale of Sydney. Co-curated by Lisa Corsi and Danielle Hairs, SafARI exhibited the work of 14 unrepresented and emerging artists in selected artist-run initiatives (ARIs) around Sydney including MOP Projects, Firstdraft, Locksmith Projects, Serial Space and the FBI building. With no curatorial theme or festival sized budget, SafARI opens its arms to experimentation, exploration,

community engagement and critical dialogue. While the Sydney Biennale presents more than 440 works by 166 artists and performers from 36 countries, SafARI is a small feat by comparison. Danielle Hairs states: 'It is a celebration of the bold new paths being forged at the grass roots level.' What is more, SafARI allows the artists the opportunity to unabashedly piggyback on the mainstream contemporary arts scene without the restraints of commercial viability.



- Nils Crompton  
0340 Photuris Street  
Still from *Former Corner Stores* (2009)  
Image courtesy of the artist

Sydney-based artist Nils Crompton was selected to exhibit his work at Locksmith Projects and on the façade of FBI, both new venues for SafARI 2010. Crompton is a new media artist whose practice explores the reinvention of urban spaces in a kind of quirky, out of control evolution. *Former Corner Stores* (2009) and *Solitary Electricity Substations* (2010) depict animated footage of free standing buildings that have been superimposed with brightly hued animal camouflages and warning patterns. Crompton further invites the anthropomorphic projection of animal personalities onto man-made structures by naming each building according to a certain animal genus. For example, *6082 Felidae Rd* mimics the orange and black striped pattern of the feline. The shop front display of Crompton's video work expands out of the traditional gallery space allowing for a wider audience and local community engagement. >>

- Nils Crompton  
0487 Myxinidae Drive, 2835 Equidae Crover,  
0687 Apidea Street, 6082 Felidae Road,  
& 0340 Photuris Street  
Stills from *Former Corner Stores* (2009)  
Image courtesy of the artist



Extending beyond conceptualism to reality, Crompton's FBI design, *Future Maypole* (2010) was a genuine transformative space featuring a site specific 12 x 3 metre retro vinyl cut design covering the façade of the building. The space itself sits outside the conventional definitions of an ARI yet embodies the spirit of the initiative wholeheartedly and literally. Purple and blue beams representing sound waves were emitted outward (or inward, depending on how

you see it) from two points acting as a centre amid fragmentation. Crompton created a work about the site itself, seamlessly closing the division between art and everyday life, energising the building's image with bright, graphic and illuminative materials.

Equally compelling was Biljana Jancic's laser installation in the main gallery room at Locksmith, investigating the illusion of space and the materiality of the ephemeral. *Reaching Green* (2010) involved the re-ordering of the gallery space using an installation of six green lasers placed in an ascending half-moon shape. As a symbol of civilian security in contemporary society, lasers often have a sinister association with alarm systems as well as usage in weaponry. In contrast to this, Jancic used her lasers in a friendlier manner, drawing attention to the volume and spatiality of the gallery. The lasers have a sense of incongruously dense materiality, giving the illusion of slicing and dividing the space with light. The sensory qualities of the installation were enhanced by the inclusion of a smoke machine which engulfed the space in a hazy, unpleasant grey smoke. Like Crompton's transformative video works, Jancic not only de-centered the viewer but consciously included them as part of the artwork.

Although only two artists were reviewed here for SafARI, this year's program reflected a dynamic group of emerging talent and a thoroughly engaging display of work. The appeal of the program lies in its underground nature and mobile spaces, although this can be a challenge for disseminating information to the wider public. Interestingly, SafARI, which is seen as a transportable exhibition initiative, has now been officially recognised as an ARI by the Australia Council for the Arts, which brings into question the traditional role of artist-run spaces located outside the gallery, and the potential for future unexpected initiatives. With this in mind one can hopefully look forward to more innovative developments for SafARI 2012. ●

- MICHAEL ZAVROS  
*Winning is Easy* (2009)  
Bronze, ed.18  
Image courtesy of the artist



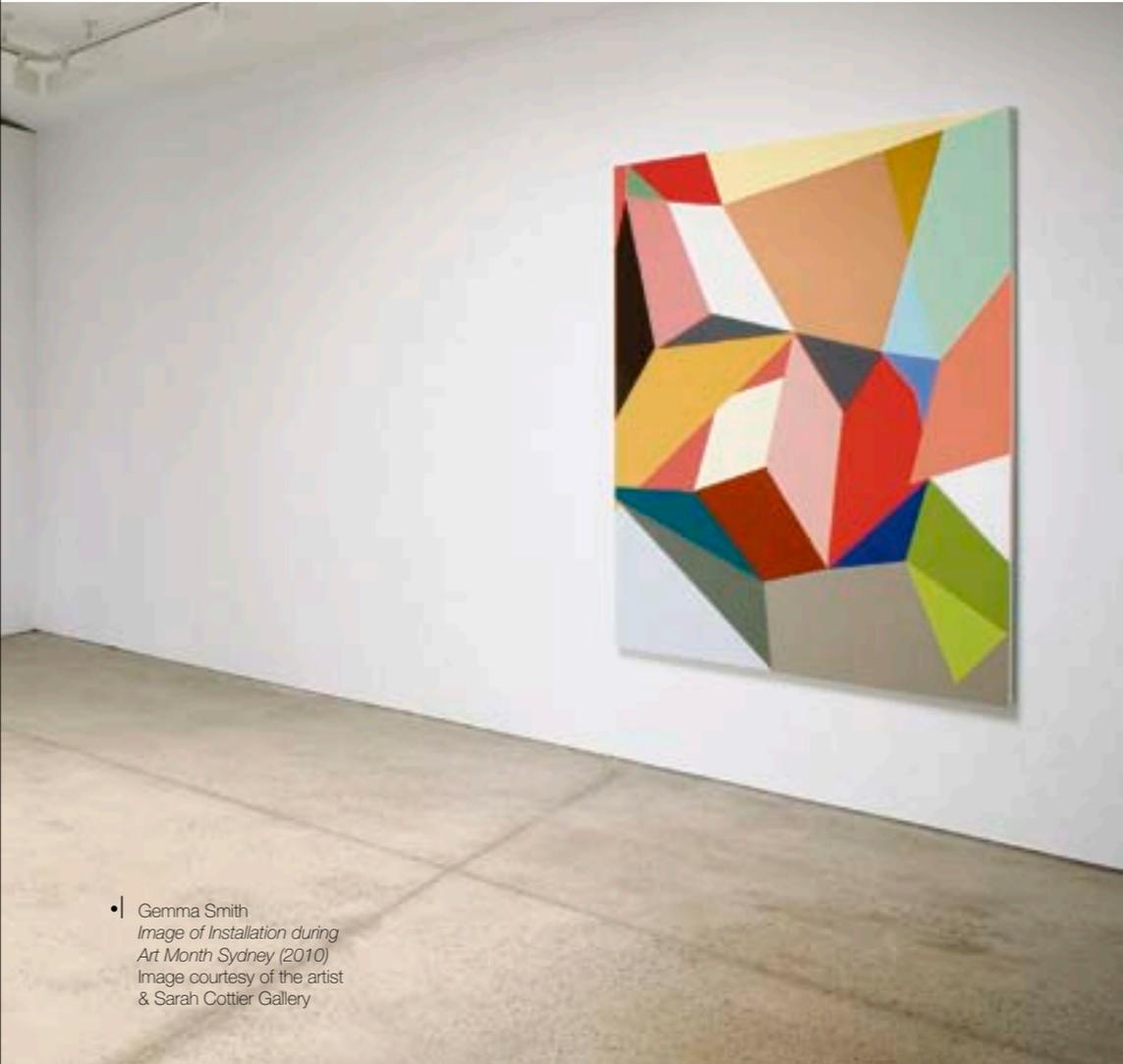
## THAT WAS THE MONTH THAT WAS ART MONTH SYDNEY

ARTICLE ELIZABETH STANTON

The Sydney art world tends to slumber through the mid-summer months, re-emerging slowly each February with a sleepy stretch of commercial gallery group shows and palatable public exhibitions. In March 2010, the inaugural

Art Month injected a new energy into the art calendar, bringing together the city's diverse visual arts scene and laying a tentative foundation for increased community awareness and engagement.

The brainchild of gallerists Michael Reid and Vasili Kaliman, Art Month was born from both the lagging economic climate and the absence of an annual event to unify the ecosystem of commercial galleries, public institutions, artist-run initiatives, art schools, auction houses, private galleries, corporate collections and individual artists' studios. Reid observes that Art Month saw the 'coming together of all the different segments of a very large industry, [enabling] all these incredible individuals to speak in one voice.' In a quiet time for the commercial art world, Kaliman notes Art Month was instrumental in 'creating noise and synergy to put the focus back on art and back on the galleries.' >>



• Gemma Smith  
*Image of Installation during  
 Art Month Sydney (2010)*  
 Image courtesy of the artist  
 & Sarah Cottier Gallery

From the outset, it was clear Art Month would be a strategic exercise in arts marketing and profile building. The Art Month logo rapidly appeared on gallery windows, websites and invitations, allowing those unfamiliar with the gallery circuit to easily connect the dots. Partnerships were forged between a spectrum of venues and publications, from Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery to the Surry Hills Library; Vogue Living and the Sydney Morning Herald to the street press Drum Media. A strong online presence sought to put the cherry on the cake by broadening the reach of an industry that often finds itself preaching to the converted.

As the rich offering of exhibitions during March were programmed by the majority of the 70-plus participating galleries long before they came under the Art Month umbrella, Art Month's most interesting aspect came in the form of new supporting programs that focused on audience, collector and professional development. An interest in collecting art was encouraged by 'Appreciating and Collecting' information sessions on site in diverse galleries (Chalk Horse, White Rabbit Gallery and the Museum of Contemporary Art among them). A series of limited edition etchings by artists including Elisabeth Cummings, Euan Macleod and Luke Sciberras were offered through the Herald at a price within reach of its readers. Recognising the limited word allocation given to art in the Australian press, a small army of emerging writers were herded to provide critical content for the Art Month blog, covering events and exhibitions. A 'Family Gallery Trail and Activity Program for Kids' (in association with Art & Australia) sent the message that it was okay now to let children loose in the halls of art, and potentially get in very early with the next generation of collectors, whose school art classes wouldn't normally take them to commercial galleries. Moving into the night, pop-up 'Art Bars' (bars within existing bars) provided what Kaliman called 'social lubricant for community formation'.

Like a child learning to walk, there were some unsteady moments. Arriving at an artist-run initiative gallery (a traditionally grass roots venue) and being accosted by a very PR-looking Art Month representative who handed me a sleek 'pass' to the closest 'Art Bar' felt a little bit wrong considering the traditional ARI migration naturally goes from the gallery to the local pub; my experience felt like it was being manufactured.

Overall, the shortcomings of Art Month appeared to be the result of an ambitious and inclusive approach from the organisers, who perhaps at times reached beyond their resources. It will be interesting to see how Art Month 2011 develops from this first enthusiastic effort, and if it will follow in the footsteps of the celebrated marathon of 'Gallery Weekend Berlin' or the criticised 'Art Fortnight London', considered by some to be unconsolidated.

So what's in store? 'We're growing the organisation and growing the participation a bit like a ripple in a pond,' says Reid. 'We're covering greater geographic diversity – more ARIs, more studios, more art museums, more galleries – with the idea that this will spark interest in other states and other cities, and the idea of Art Month will catch on around Australia.' ●

## APT6

RESPONSE ANNALICE CREIGHTON

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Swaying willows caught in shifting mist, a diaphanous curtain of paper sheets, that familiar glass-bubble-encrusted elk and a tripped out combie van-cum-cubby house decorated in kawaii-sheike ephemera.

This was my first visit to the 6th Asia Pacific Triennial (APT6) and Brisbane's enviable Gallery of Modern Art

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(GOMA) and I was impressed. Critics talk about APT as a tired political adventure born out of Keating's aspirations to tie us closer to our Asian neighbours, a triumph of spectacle over content with its penchant for large scale installations by global brand artists. They mourn that the APT has been spiralling ever since version one and two, at which point it reached some critical peak. >>





Letting loose the hyphen and flowing unhindered in every direction, the APT has consistently pushed the definitions of Asia-Pacific. The sixth edition included artists from Iran, Turkey, Tibet, Cambodia, Myanmar and, controversially, North Korea. Three collaborative projects and a film-festival-sized cinemathèque program stand alongside an ambitious one hundred plus artists from twenty-five nations, colonising the spaces of GOMA and the Queensland Art Gallery (QAG). The regional focus of APT is arguably more successful than thematic structures that proliferate elsewhere in periodic exhibitions, bringing work that is variously beautiful, participatory and fascinating, and that holds responses to living and working in some of the world's most inequitable societies and politically uncertain nations.

Choosing the constructs of Asia and the Pacific as its goalposts has also allowed the APT to point out the problematic assumption that the Tri/Bi exhibition could be a place for canons, forecasts and narratives of contemporary art. The APT is also bound within a public institution, which brings with it the imperative to educate and expose the audience to works from artists who they might not have the opportunity or impetus to see outside of this context.

This kind of surveying gives rise to the inclusion of international art stars and that peculiar breed of aesthetic large-scale installation dubbed as 'biennale-art'. This is an undeniable crowd-pleaser at APT6 as much as elsewhere. Standing inside Shinji Ohmaki's *Liminal Air*, I can't seem to care that it's not critically engaging, it's still the kind of art you want to spend time with, take off your shoes for, wait in line to see, touch, stop, and listen.

The successes of APT6 lie equally in less spectacular works, those which are laden with potent backstories, such as the collaborative projects of the Mekong and Pacific Reggae. The deeply personal and political resonances of Chen Quilin's video *Garden and Xinsheng Town 275-277*, a traditional wooden home salvaged from one of the regions destroyed by the Three Gorges Dam, mobilise a kind of discursive site that considers the lives of individuals in the greater narrative of China's industrial progress. Diaspora, memory and migration are also explored in the Aquilizans' *In Flight Project*, perhaps the most visually captivating of the '17 Kids' APT' projects.

APT6 laps at the shoreline of QAG, its former residence, with only a sprinkling of works housed at the entrance and watermill. I wonder if this exhibition would be better off spilling into the city it has put on the cultural map. It seems that a logical extension for APT would be to become an active initiator rather than a destination point. While it has not yet passed into the glossy comfort zone of pre-approved selections and predictable politics, there are risks this exhibition should be taking that we can only hope are lying in wait for 2012. ●

• Shinji Ohmaki  
*Liminal Air - Descend* (2007)  
 Nylon string, fluorescent light, glass  
 Installation at 21st Century Museum  
 of Contemporary Art Photo: Tadasu Yamamoto  
 Image courtesy of Tokyo Gallery + BTAP

• Kibong Rhee  
*There is no place - Shallow cuts* (2008)  
 Glass, fog machine, artificial leaves, wood, steel,  
 sand, motor, timer  
 Installation view, Kukje Gallery, Seoul  
 Courtesy the artist and Kukje Gallery

# DAS500

DAS500 is the a new online critical arts writing space – a platform for the generation and presentation of new ideas and dialogues within the arts.

All articles, responses and reviews are limited to 500 words and are a direct response to what's currently being produced and shown. This is

a place where shorter, punchier and up-to-date critical writing is shared.

It's a chance to develop, promote and engage with the work of emerging and contemporary writers and to map the works being shown around the country and internationally. DAS500 is a curated investment in the communication of ideas beyond the gallery walls.

Here in 'The Critical Issue' we kick off Das500 with a selection of responses to local arts events in Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane. We hope you enjoy and even contribute to DAS500, and make it a regular stop-over on your arts media trail-blazing.

## UNDERBELLY ARTS THE ORDINARY COLLECTIVE

ARTICLE BRIDIE CONNELL

Memo to Sydney: The Ordinary Collective does not require any more televisions. With the development of their new project *It Just Leaves Me With An Empty Feeling* as part of Underbelly Arts, this trio is turning traditional technology on its head in the face of the iGeneration. An initial mailing-list callout for screens prompted an unanticipated oversupply, so this threesome have quite enough antennae, thank you very much. 'It's unbelievable how many TVs people have lying around,' says co-creator Tega Brain. 'This used to be a prized object that people would steal from each other and Dad calls me everyday with three more!'

Sydney based and bred, The Ordinary Collective are anything but. As the creators of webzine *Ordinary Magazine*, Tega Brain, Caddie Brain and Brendan Phelan are testing the boundaries between publications and installations, with a keen interest in critiquing digital artworks. With just a dusty rug, two recliners and a doggy webcam in early stages of their Lab project, the three were hell-bent on creating something that beeped, something that whirred, and something that flickered; a digital art installation to challenge our reliance on tech-innovation rather than the meanings within.

'Having been in attendance of a lot of media art and installation art we were quite interested in those genres - what they mean and how they add anything to artistic practice,' says one third of the mindtank, Tega Brain. 'Our work is a bit of a critique of that in a way and we try and look at [media art] from a different angle, not to be so focused on all the technological gimmicks. It could be a bit more human.'

Co-creator Brendan Phelan agrees, momentarily pulling himself away from battling a scruffy taped-up television. 'We've certainly participated in media art projects that are sometimes very much about putting the technology first, in ways that really left you quite cold,' he says. 'It was like people were almost in service of the technological aspect.'

Phelan and the Brain sisters are concerned artists have become sidetracked with the 'how' of their work, as they argue a dazzling ten-computer render conjures nothing new to think about. 'I think people get really blinded by the ability of technology to do things, and things about things doing things, and things and things and things,' says Phelan. 'It's all about minute changes to what the technology can do rather than what major changes can happen to the participant.'

With a lo-fi approach to digital art, the ten-day Lab saw the construction of an oversized and immersive Test Pattern Lounge on the warehouse floor, with a surveilling Playstation webcam painstakingly erected on the rafters above to capture the results. With a floor grid, a series of televisual effects, and a loungeroom ensemble, the installation attempted to place human before technology in the construction of something beautifully traditional, rather than embrace the alienating forms of media art so common to contemporary projects. 'It's sort of Ordinary [in a technological manner] but it's very much about people,' assures Phelan. 'The technology is in service of the idea.'

In their Underbelly ventures for 2010 The Ordinary Collective certainly proved gadgetry is anything but a necessity for human life, with their innovative media installation even seeing the trio enact onscreen bicycle activity to prove human superiority. But with a little bit of a flicker; this was never going to work with a bunch of slick plasmas. 'We like old technology,' says Tega. 'It's a friendly analog experience. ●'

BRIDIE CONNELL is a Sydney born and based artist, writer and curator. She has exhibited in numerous group shows and held solo exhibitions at ATVP and Mori Gallery. Curatorial projects include Shire Girls at Hazelhurst Regional Art Centre (2009) and the MCA Staff Show (2010), and she is a regular contributor to Sydney street press The Brag.

## TROPICAL GLASSHOUSE

ARTICLE RACHEL ELLIOT-JONES

RACHEL ELLIOT-JONES is the Fashion Editor of [threethousand.com.au](http://threethousand.com.au) and a freelance writer and editor at Right Angle Studio in Melbourne. She is also the resident scribe at independent Australian creative agency The Jacky Winter Group, and has worked for clients including VICE, Tourism Vic, MINI, and London's Future Laboratory. In her spare time she reads books about mariners knots and works on her jewellery project.

Melbourne's NO NO Gallery is a hot-pink blip in a damp, dark alleyway. All sex-shop neon outside, I found a handcrafted gesture of intimacy within. A simple, understated incident reflecting the simple, understated photography mounted on the walls. Larger works were hanging among creeping foliage, punctuated by smaller pieces resting upon self-made wooden wall plinths. I had entered Jessica Brent's first solo exhibition, *Tropical Glasshouse*.

Brent captures moments, ideas, friendships, objects and experiences with the aid of a 35mm point and shoot she carries in her handbag. This collection is made up from small junctures in Brent's widely varied times and travels, but it is far from an amorphous assemblage. Each image is kindred to the next in its muted palette and dull glow, forming one harmonious story; albeit one that crosses oceans, forest trails, and local lounge rooms.

This immediate sense of harmony made me think about the act of photo-taking, and why I found Brent's photography so particularly engaging. Anybody can take a photo, but the beauty comes from selecting the focal point. Each snapshot will tell you what the photo-taker sees at that single moment and what they find value in overall. Brent's images capture hulking great rocks, trickling leafy falls, friends caught unaware in darkened caves and frozen plains, frogs making out, sea creature play equipment, and several seating arrangements.

The harmony I had identified was not an appendage of the chosen subject matter. It was derived from the personal insight that unfurled within the room. Brent chooses to focus on things from her every day, delivering a touching story of where she has recently been. It is in this way that the Shimokitizawa train track tentacles are at home alongside the pizza ducks. They are worlds apart yet seamlessly grafted to one another in the universe of Brent's memory. ●



- | Jessica Brent  
Image from *Tropical Glasshouse* (2010).  
Image courtesy of the artist

## MOVE THE EXHIBITION

ARTICLE ADRIAN CLEA

Away from the crowds gathering to see the Ron Mueck exhibition at the Gallery of Modern Art (GOMA) in Brisbane is a little room with twelve videos playing. The twelve videos have all been produced by Australian artists and are to be included in a traveling exhibition.

The exhibition is the product of a Kaldor Public Art Project, *MOVE: Video Art in Schools* and forms a part of the syllabus for the majority of government schools in Victoria, New South Wales and South Australia. It's also available to private schools for a small fee. It has been around for a few years now in the states mentioned, and is about to be introduced into Queensland where GOMA has begun conducting regional workshops.

Although video art has been established for half a century, it is yet to be fully understood by artists or the public. The project is then timely, as video art is increasingly prominent (a walk around Cockatoo Island during the recent Biennale of Sydney will verify this). As a new medium it has its own language and concerns that a traditional art education will not give a viewer access to; video has previously been ignored because it takes too long or is seen as obscure.

This new language is the focus of many of the works included in *MOVE*. Each artist uses video to display unique concerns that relate to their practices. Shaun Gladwell, in *Blue & white linework composition* (2008), traces road markings on a skateboard and mountain bike, exploring the formalist aspects of the medium through a study in experimental drawing, using the body as marker and the video as record for a canvas too large to be replicated by any other means.

Similarly John Tonkin in *air, water part 2* (2007) embraces the digital world and chooses not to try and replicate our reality but rather creates a digital landscape almost entirely foreign, bar the natural laws that the objects seem to obey, embracing a virtual reality entirely possible; a shift from the imaginary worlds concealed in paintings.

Video is a medium that relates to how we perceive the world. The fear that enveloped society decades ago has been forgotten, and technology is now embraced whole-heartedly. Such is the commitment that much of our interaction with each other and the world is mediated through a monitor. If art is to truly fulfil its role in society, then video will remain a prominent medium, and having a society that is able to understand and communicate with the medium will become vital.

Thanks to Detached all secondary schools in Tasmania will be receiving *MOVE*, and in October the program will be launched in Western Australia to the government secondary schools. Perhaps if we'd had this a decade or so earlier the crowds would be in that little room with the twelve videos, instead of taking photos of Mueck's giant baby... ●

## FROLIC AND PLAY, THE ESKIMO WAY, IN AUSTRALIA'S WINTER WONDERLANDS

ARTICLE JENNIFER HAMILTON

In July, two competing festivals aimed to recreate a winter wonderland in Australia. The festivals were built around temporary ice-skating rinks. CarriageWorks' rink was unfortunately small, and Australian Winter Festival rinks in Sydney, Melbourne and Bondi were fenced in, much like football fields, with full-colour advertising banners and flags. While the rinks were at the heart of the festivals, they only constituted part of the whole experience. An artificial environment was created around the rinks, designed to invoke the atmosphere of winter and to create an aesthetic experience to compliment the ice-skating. These festivals basically aimed to recreate the winter we do not get in Australia. Thus, both festivals derive their aesthetic inspiration from a cliched idea of what constitutes winter in Europe and America.

• Image from *Winterland*.  
Photo Declan Kuch



When you think closely about it, this idealised cliché of winter is actually a conglomerate of images and activities: log cabins, snow covered landscapes, trees covered in ice, one-piece ski suits, happy couples ice-skating arm in arm, Christmas, wall-mounted antique skis, hot chocolate, open fires, fir trees, fur trim, apres ski, rosy cheeks, mulled wine, gingham table cloths, hunting trophies with antlers, and piano accordion music. It is a beautiful, transcontinental romantic winter pastiche. The problem with trying to recreate this particular idealised winter is that there is always already a gap between the ideal image of something and its actual reality. Ice-skating in Central Park and apres ski in the French Alps are both part of the same the cluster of activities we use to invoke this cliched idea of winter, but neither of these things are part of the same reality. As someone who is very fond of this impossible cliché, who holds this wintry ideal close, the promise of its realisation, in festival form, in Australia, is something I take quite seriously. Unfortunately, I don't think the festival organisers took the complexity of their concept seriously enough.

In very different ways both festivals fall short of fulfilling their romantic alpine promise. Winter Festival was a much bigger event than Winter Land, occurring in Sydney and Melbourne CBD, and at Bondi, and not only did it fail to capture the atmosphere of this idealised super-winter, there was not even enough visual coherence to the event to enjoy it ironically. In Winter Fest's Bondi incarnation, fake plastic trees used to invoke an evergreen fir forest were barely waist high, and were dwarfed by the flags or major sponsors; splendidly kitsch, *tromp l'oeil* canvases that lined the walls of the bar were also disrupted by digitally printed advertising banners promoting gas heating and throat lozenges. Australian Winter Festival fell somewhere between a lazy approximation of an ideal winter wonderland and a cynical, exclusively commercial exercise banking on the pull of the idea. CarriageWorks' Winter Land gains some points over its more commercial rival simply because of the lack of disenchanting banner advertising. Winter Land organisers also chose to interpret the theme, rather than try and replicate the image. The festival aimed for abstraction rather than realism, getting local designers to create sculptures and backdrops that invoke, rather than represent, winter. But in this, CarriageWorks did not go far enough, the cavernous foyer of the old rail shed was not really transformed; the sum of the parts did not quite create a whole winter world.

Both these festivals seem to be built on a great desire to recreate what we absolutely do not have in Australia, but they never really attempted to rigorously design the experience. It is a fundamentally theatrical idea to aim to create a microcosm in which an entirely participatory audience come to experience an imaginary winter world; it is like going to the theatre and inviting the audience to hang out on stage. But, on the Winter Festival stage the illusion was so quickly broken, you did not want to hang out for very long. CarriageWorks' stage just looked too much like CarriageWorks' foyer with a few blue artworks. So, perhaps next year, if we merge the Australian Winter Festival's money with CarriageWorks Winter Land's creative interpretation of the idea, we would be a little closer to frolicking the Eskimo way in Australia. ●

# WHAT'S ON

**02 Jul to 03 Oct**

*A Generosity of Spirit: Recent Australian Women's Art (QUT Collection)*

**QUT ART MUSEUM**

2 George Street, Brisbane QLD

**30 Jul to 25 Sep**

*Robin Fox, Kodak Salon, Valerie Sparks*

**CENTRE FOR CONTEMPORARY PHOTOGRAPHY**

404 George Street, Fitzroy VIC

**06 Aug to 26 Sep**

*Gestures & Procedures, Bianca Hester*

**AUSTRALIAN CENTRE FOR CONTEMPORARY ART**

111 Sturt Street, Southbank VIC

**11 Aug to 4 Sep**

*Grant Stevens*

**GALLERY BARRY KELDOULIS**

285 Young Street, Waterloo NSW

**12 Aug to 24 Aug**

*Jack Randell*

**GAFFA**

281 Clarence Street, Sydney NSW

**13 Aug to 10 Sep**

*Grande Farther Para Docs: Ms&Mr*

**ARTSPACE**

43-51 Cowper Wharf Road, Woolloomooloo NSW

**14 Aug to 12 Sep**

*Laughter*

*curated by Victor Medrano*

**CAST**

27 Tasma Street, North Hobart TAS

**18 Aug to 05 Sep**

*Dara Gill, Greg Hodge, Paul Greedy*

**FIRSTDRAFT**

116-118 Chalmers Street, Surry Hills NSW

**19 Aug to 05 Sep**

*Brent Grayburn, Tim Silver*

**MOP** 2/39 Abercrombie Street,

Chippendale NSW

**19 Aug to 21 Nov**

*Runa Islam, Primavera 2010*

**MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART**

Circular Quay, Sydney, NSW

**21 Aug to 11 Sep**

*Caroline Rothwell*

**TOLARNO GALLERIES**

Level 4, 104 Exhibition Street, Melbourne VIC

**21 Aug to 15 Sep**

*Ballan Bolton, Simon Fieldhouse*

**ROBIN GIBSON GALLERY**

278 Liverpool Street, Darlinghurst NSW

**25 Aug to 18 Sep**

*Romance Was Born & Kate Rohde*

**KAREN WOODBURY GALLERY**

4 Albert Street, Richmond VIC

**25 Aug to 18 Sep**

*Carly Fischer, Toby Richardson*

**HELEN GORY GALERIE**

25 St Edmonds Road, Prahran VIC

**27 Aug to 19 Sep**

*Jarek Wojcik*

**GALLERY EAST**

94 Stirling Highway, North Fremantle WA

**31 Aug to 11 Sep**

*Brook Morgan*

**KUDOS GALLERY**

6 Napier Street, Paddington NSW

**02 Sep to 02 Oct**

*Roslynd Piggott*

**SUTTON GALLERY**

254 Brunswick Street, Fitzroy VIC

**03 Sep Onwards**

*The Big Bang*

**WHITE RABBIT GALLERY**

30 Balfour Street, Chippendale

**03 Sep to 25 Sep**

*Psychometropolis:*

*Danielle Clej & Claire Robertson*

**INFLIGHT ARI**

237 Elizabeth Street, Hobart TAS

**03 Sep to 25 Sep**

*Killing Time: Christopher Koller, a video retrospective*

**KINGS A.R.I.**

Level 1, 171 King Street, Melbourne VIC

**03 Sep to 09 Oct**

*Kirrily Hammond, Songs of Solitude*

**GALLERY SMITH** 170-174

Abbotsford St North Melbourne VIC

**03 Sep to 09 Oct**

*Dream Home*

**AUSTRALIAN CENTRE FOR**

**PHOTOGRAPHY**

257 Oxford Street,

Paddington NSW

**09 Sep to 26 Sep**

*Penny Byrne*

**SULLIVAN + STRUMPF**

**FINE ART**

44 Gurner Street, Paddington NSW

**09 Sep to 09 Oct**

*John Wolsley, Nyapanyapa*

**ROSLYN OXLEY9**

8 Soudan Lane, Paddington NSW

**11 Sep to 24 Oct**

*Objects to Live by:*

*The Art of John Meade*

**PERTH INSTITUTE OF**

**CONTEMPORARY ARTS**

Perth Cultural Centre, James

Street, Northbridge WA

**14 Sep to 25 Sep**

*Tim Olsen Drawing Prize*

**KUDOS GALLERY**

6 Napier Street, Paddington NSW

**15 Sep to 09 Oct**

*Wendy Beatty*

**GILLIGAN GRANT GALLERY**

1B Stanley Street, Collingwood VIC

**17 Sep to 16 Oct**

*Stephen Eastaugh [air]*

**TURNER GALLERIES**

470 William Street, Northbridge WA

**23 Sep to 08 Oct**

*Christian Thompson*

**CHALK HORSE**

94 Cooper Street, Surry Hills NSW

**23 Sep to 23 Oct**

*James Jirat Patradoon,*

*Heartaches Ben Frost,*

*Art Of Noise*

**BOUTWELL DRAPER GALLERY**

82-84 George Street, Redfern

NSW

**24 Sep to 06 Nov**

*Janet Laurence*

**BREENSPACE**

289 Young Street, Waterloo NSW

**25 Sep to 20 Nov**

*Pieter Hugo Nollyrwood*

**INSTITUTE FOR MODERN ART**

420 Brunswick Street, Fortitude

Valley QLD

**25 Sep to 21 Nov**

*James Dodd, FAC Print Award,*

*Poppy van Oorde-Grainger*

**FREMANTLE ARTS CENTRE**

1 Finnerty Street, Fremantle WA

**30 Sep to 13 Nov**

*Les Mason, Epicurean 1967 – 1979*

**THE NARROWS**

2/141 Flinders Lane,

Melbourne VIC