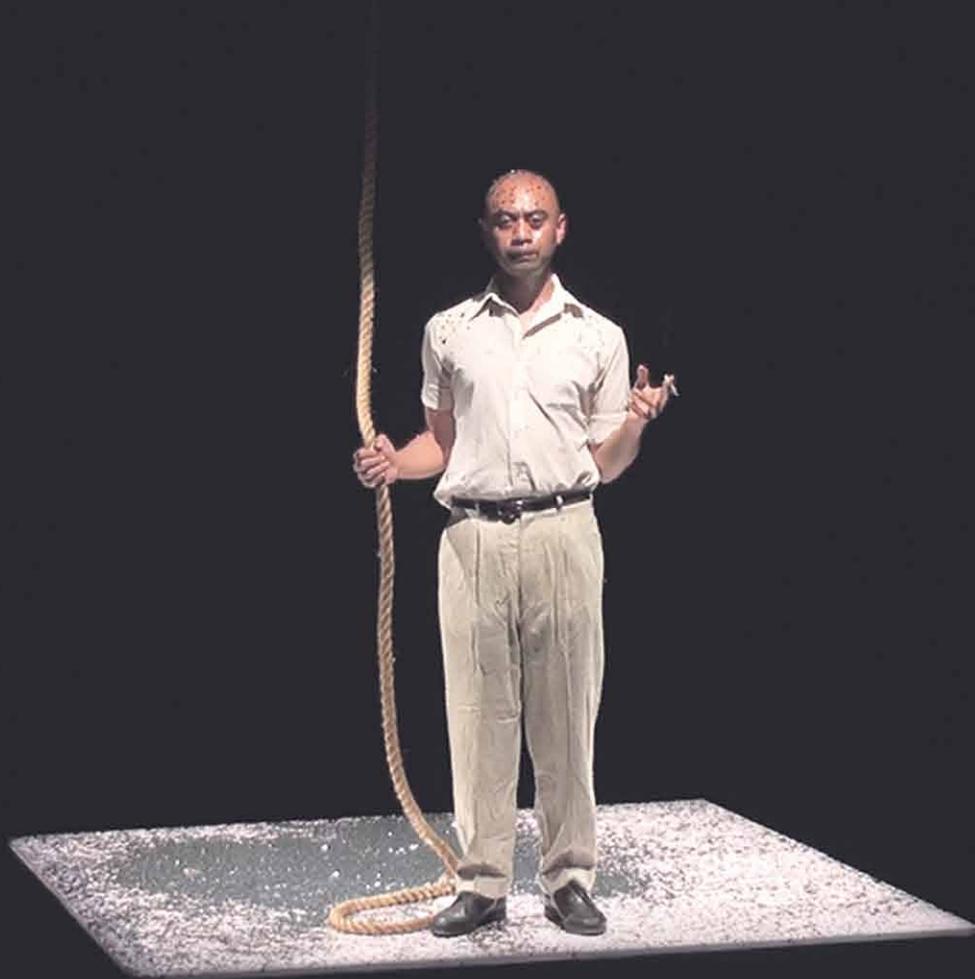


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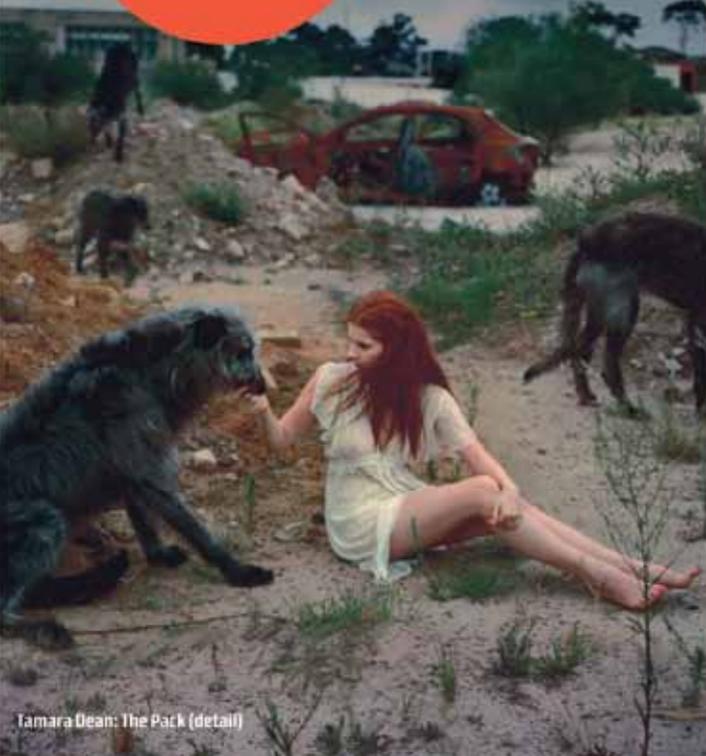
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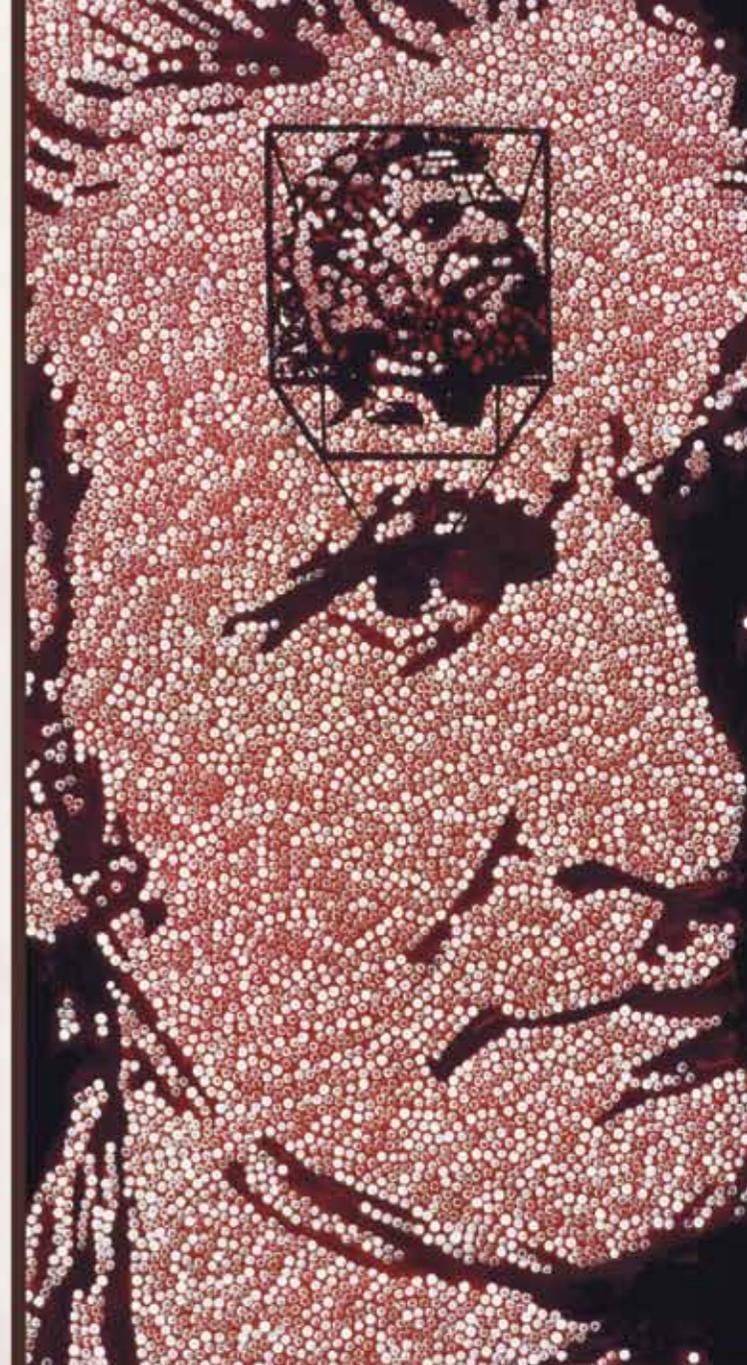
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Image: Dominic Redfern, 20000 (detail), 2005, still from digital video



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Still from *The Pink Piece* (2010)  
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**ARC**  
UNSW Student Life



# GREEN TIDE

I stand in a busy foyer, with stairs going up and down.  
Paths cross, conversations spontaneous, hugs, laughter,  
people with tears, drunk larakins, the moved and unmoved  
make their way through the foyer. A city can be described  
as a folio of stories, a myriad of snail paths glistening in the  
moonlight. This foyer is a city. The art happening at the end  
of its halls is dynamic, original, expressive and important.

This issue takes us out of the foyer and into the street, down  
a narrow lane and into the rose gardens. This issue discusses  
the intersections of environment and art. It sees our art as  
an integral demonstration of our beliefs and how we live.  
The environmental concerns in front of us will not be solved  
by thumb twiddling. Art will not remain integral by existing  
in a silo. These are our concerns. As artists we are given the  
responsibility of discussing and directing conversation and  
experience in a manner that consumerism and capitalism  
cannot fathom.

This issue is dedicated to all the spontaneous flora that  
fights the good fight and remains optimistic. Greening the  
corners of our concrete centric arenas with gusto, much  
like our artists.

BRONWYN BAILEY-CHARTERIS



•| Stephen Vitello  
*Documentation of Kimberley* (2010)  
Image courtesy of the artist

•/ Stephen Vitello  
*Image of Picnic and Hanging Rock* (2010)  
Image courtesy of the artist

## STEPHEN VITIELLO: A FURNACE OF SOUND

ARTIST PROFILE ROBYN STUART

They say that one of the hallmarks of having achieved true public notoriety is when people quote you without realising it. When words or works take on a life of their own, separated from their creator and evolving into stand-alone entities, it seems fair to say they have seeped very deep into the collective mind. The average person unknowingly quotes Shakespeare once a day, for instance, and not just the exceedingly well-read person (that's one...). So if Shakespeare's influence on language is measured by the fact that we don't even realise it's there, what's the equivalent measure for an artwork? The silently powerful works, so deeply ingrained in the public conscience that we experience them without realising it?

This brings us to public art: art that isn't confined to galleries, but which exists among the office buildings, parks, streets and grimy city squares. This is a form which might cover anything from the poo-on-stick sculptures near Sydney's Kings Cross; to the giant waterfalls installed in New York City; to street theatre. And whatever you might think of these, there's no denying the impact of art that brazenly asserts itself in the streets, as opposed to the type that you have to trek out to a gallery between 10am and 5pm Wednesday-Saturday to see. Artworks in the public domain exert a silent and urgent pressure, shaping and changing the way that we view the world in the same subtle and unstoppable way that Shakespeare changed our language.

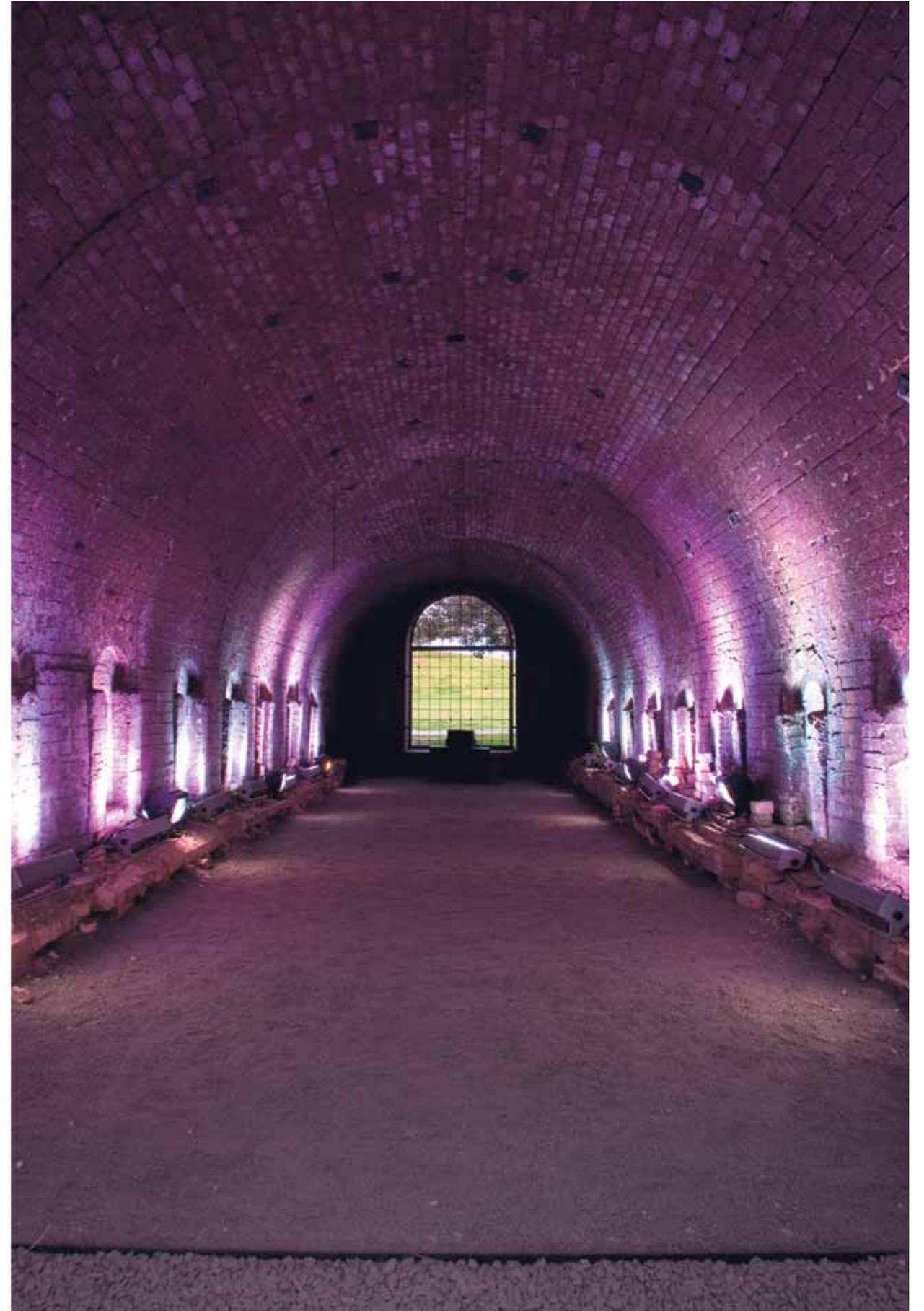
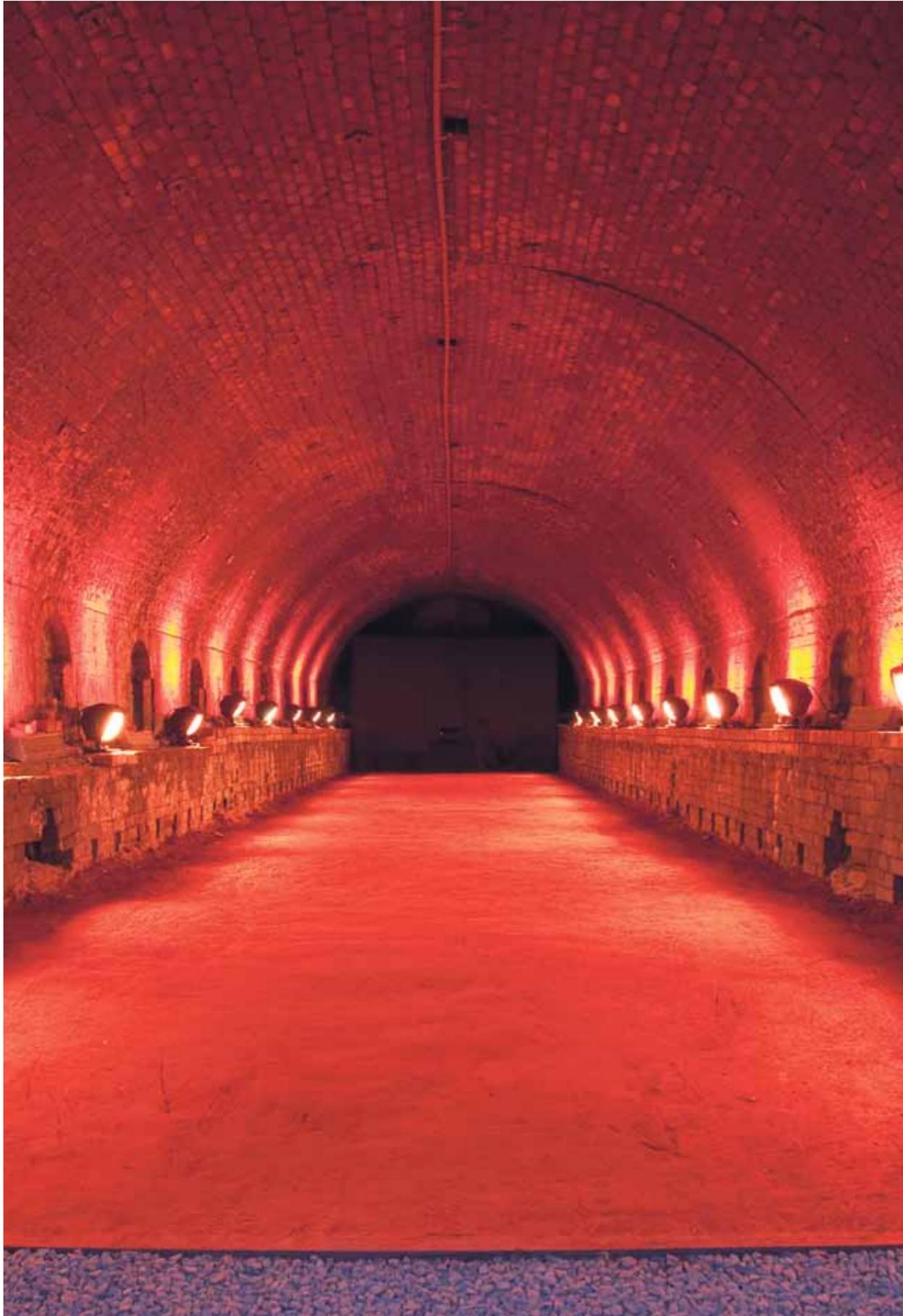
Within Australia, Kaldor Public Art Projects is the pioneering organisation bringing art projects to public spaces. The organisation celebrated its 40th birthday last year with a retrospective at the Art Gallery of New South Wales, but if you missed it, don't worry; there's no sign of a slow-down. The 20th Kaldor Public Art Project opened in Sydney recently, and two more are on the way later this year in Melbourne and Brisbane.

The latest Kaldor Project was created by US-based sound artist Stephen Vitiello. It's in two parts: *The Birds*, installed in the entrance portico to the Art Gallery of New South Wales, and *The Sound of Red Earth* in the brickworks of Sydney Park. To mark the opening of the project, on Wednesday 11 August the entrance foyer of the gallery was treated to a live performance of Vitiello's work, in collaboration with Australian-based artist/musician Lawrence English. The two have been collaborating since 2006, but this was their first live performance. Until now, their collaboration has been a long-distance sculpting of sound files, continually resent and reworked until they reached a convergence. The nature of this interaction was evident in the live performance, with each artist first presenting individual works, before the two melded together to create an epic minimalist soundscape. Both artists make liberal use of analog electronics and field recordings, and the performance ricocheted between the unnerving and pacifying as these new layers of sound were combined.

Being presented in a gallery, of course, Vitiello and English's soundscape was accompanied by the shuffling of chairs, the murmuring of voices and the squeaking of high-heeled shoes. Strangely enough, these additional sounds gave an unexpected edge to the performance. How often do we think of galleries having a sound? The sound of the street, a crowded bar, or a supermarket are familiar to us. But galleries are a place of quiet, or so we think – until Vitiello and English force us to reconsider.

While Vitiello is a sound artist, he also describes himself as a phonographer – after all, if good photography is painting with light, then Vitiello's works are the equivalent with sound.

>>





If you find this a difficult idea to comprehend, you are not alone. Speaking last week to a group at the Surry Hills Library, Vitiello described the process of teaching students to understand soundscapes:

'If you take a student out to photograph a landscape, they will zoom and tweak and adjust the aperture and so on for hours, fully understanding that the difference between a great photo and a blur is a matter of infinite care. But when you take them out to the same space to record sound, most of them will just stab at the air with a mike for awhile. You have to stop them, make them listen, in the same way that they are accustomed to looking.'

Certainly Vitiello is accomplished in the art of listening. He describes floating head-first down a river in Amazonian forests to record the sounds of fish jumping in and out of the water. He plays excerpts recorded during his residency on the 91st floor of the World Trade Centre in 1999, where he stuck contact microphones to the windows and recorded the sounds of the city mingled with the now-ominous sounds of planes flying overhead. Most recently, he travelled to the Kimberley region and spent days there recording the Australian outback.

For his second installation, Vitiello has taken over the brickworks at Sydney Park, transforming them into his three separate soundscapes of the Australian outback, collectively entitled *The Sound of Red Earth*. This will be the first time that the brickworks have been officially open to the public. It's an unbelievably eerie space to walk through, like a crossover of *Picnic at Hanging Rock* and a

scene from 'Underbelly'. The blood red of the brick walls is supposed to evoke images of the remote Australian outback, but for inner-city dwellers, which make up most of the visitors, the colour is more closely associated with images of violence drawn from too many crime series.

At first it forms a strange contrast with the soundtrack of native birds, creating an unsettling dissonance. But walking further in, the sounds of the city are blocked and the unsettled feeling gradually disappears, as the beauty of the space and the distant sound of the wind take over. It is a painstaking sculpture of the Australian landscape carved into the soundwaves. Emerging at the end and looking back, the brickworks hide their secret well: no-one would know, from this distance, about the secret landscapes within.

Significantly, Vitiello describes how everyone takes different things from his works. The sense of hearing is very strongly tied to memory – far more than sight – and so the submersive, experiential nature of his works evokes different sensations and memories for everyone. It was like Burke and Wills in reverse: he carves his name in the tree, leaving us the task of digging. ●

## CLIMBING THE WALLS

RESPONSE GENEVIEVE O'CALLAGHAN

*gesture*: a movement of the body, head, arms, hands or face expressive of an idea or an emotion.

*procedure*: the act or manner of proceeding in any action or process. Both essentially relate to the human experience; both rely on us for their definitions.

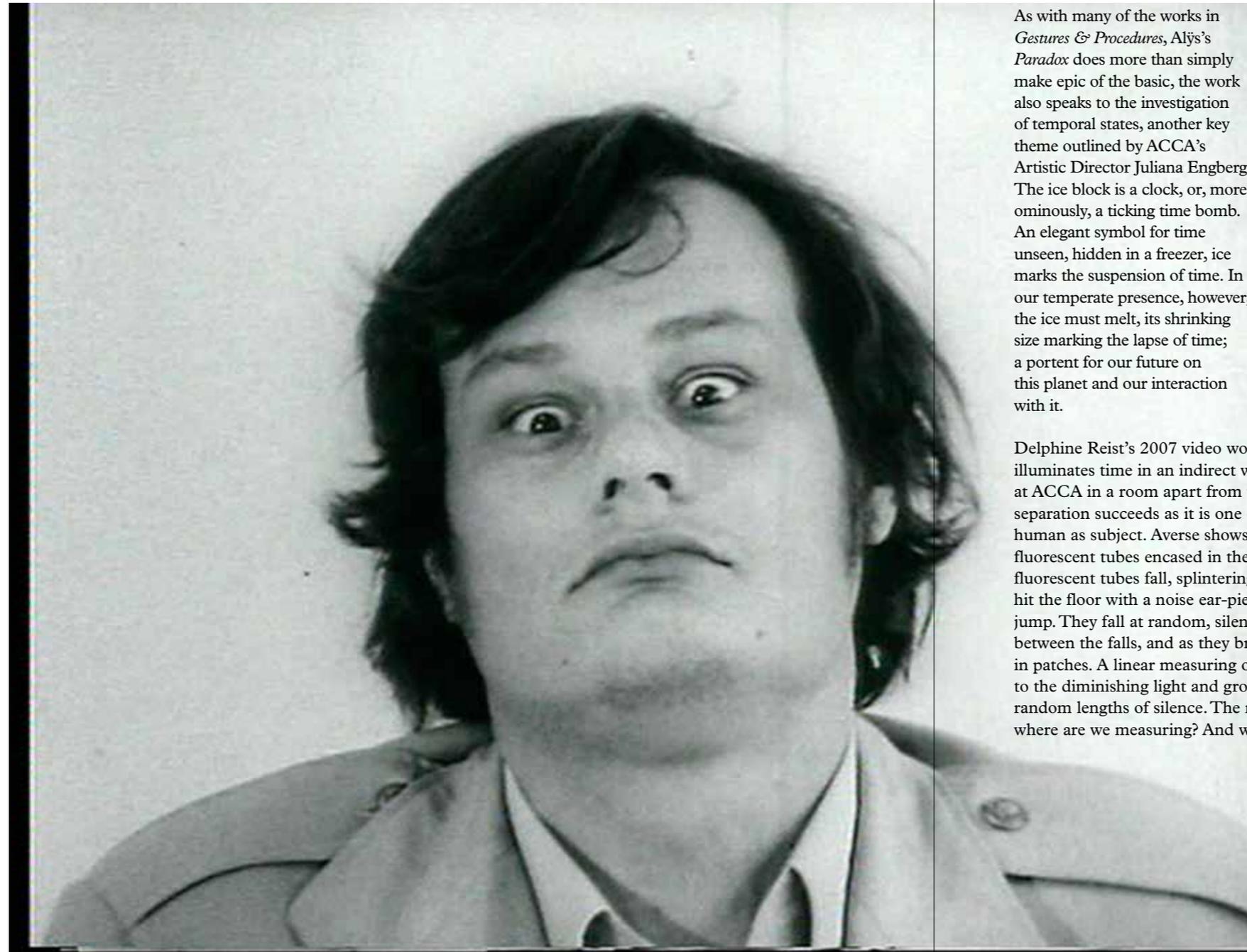
The Australian Centre for Contemporary Art (ACCA) explores these notions with the exhibition *Gestures & Procedures*, a survey of conceptual artists united by a pursuit of stretching these definitions. Artists like Bruce Naumann, Paul McCarthy and Daniel von Sturmer present artworks which address simple and recurring actions and processes; some explore the potential of this simplicity while others reach beyond to the innate.

*Gestures & Procedures* presents video and photographic work displayed in a dimly lit series of chamber-like rooms. The feeling is one of a vault; a solemn and contemplative space. At times this separation works against the coherence of the show as the rooms seem to distance, mentally, some artworks from others. But these small cell-like spaces also allow for interesting couplings or 'conversations' to emerge. Mike Parr's 1972 films *Hold your finger in a candle flame* and *Hold your breath for as long as possible* converse with Marina Abramovic's *Art Must Be Beautiful / Artist Must Be Beautiful* (1975): here the artists enter a discussion about conditions and endurance, and their faces, which cover most of the screen, complement each other across the divide.

A central objective of the exhibition is to address the way conceptual artists use simple actions to make epic statements. This theme is most obviously conveyed by Francis Alÿs's *Paradox of Praxis* (1997) where the artist pushes a block of ice down a city street in Mexico City DF. Ice is a common and recognisable material in contemporary art and a potent symbol, signalling both the past and our precarious future. The action of moving the ice down crowded, dirty streets shifts from pushing to kicking as the size of the block diminishes. That final action – kicking – has such a lackadaisical disrespect wrapt up in it, like a truant high school kid kicking a can down the sidewalk, that Alÿs's message regarding disrespect for our environment is clear. The notion of a simple action speaking volumes is also illuminated in Bas Jan Ader's *Nightfall* (1971) where the burden of human existence is >>



- Mike Parr  
*Hold your breath for as long as possible* (1972)
- Francis Alÿs  
*Paradox of Praxis I* (1997)



simplified to a man, a stone and a light. Lucy Gunning's *Climbing Around My Room* (1993) similarly takes what is simple and expands its possibilities. In a room, bare except for some built-in shelves and cupboards, the artist sets off to explore the vertical axis and all the nooks and crannies of her abode. What's amazing is not Gunning's climbing prowess, although she does get herself into some precarious positions, inviting trepidation from the viewer as she pauses to contemplate her next move, but her ingenuity at transforming a space as overlooked as the bedroom. Gunning urges us to double-take our everyday spaces and consider their adventurous potential.

Are we approaching the end? Or the beginning? At the same time Reist tells a narrative: what began as a whole, a community, is slowly decimated, until only one remains ... and finally, the screen is dark, signalling the end.

Engberg outlines a theme of *Gestures & Procedures*: 'Aspects of durational and endurance performances demonstrate a link to mythological feats and failures'. With no two artists is this better embodied than Mike Parr and Marina Abramovic. Set up as they are in conversation, *Hold your finger* and *Art Must Be* are both works of endurance in their own ways. Parr's work,

As with many of the works in *Gestures & Procedures*, Alÿs's *Paradox* does more than simply make epic of the basic, the work also speaks to the investigation of temporal states, another key theme outlined by ACCA's Artistic Director Juliana Engberg. The ice block is a clock, or, more ominously, a ticking time bomb. An elegant symbol for time unseen, hidden in a freezer, ice marks the suspension of time. In our temperate presence, however, the ice must melt, its shrinking size marking the lapse of time; a portent for our future on this planet and our interaction with it.



Delphine Reist's 2007 video work *Averse* addresses and illuminates time in an indirect way. This work is projected at ACCA in a room apart from the others and its separation succeeds as it is one of the only pieces without human as subject. *Averse* shows a room lit by thirteen fluorescent tubes encased in the ceiling. One by one the fluorescent tubes fall, splintering their fine glass as they hit the floor with a noise ear-piercing enough to make you jump. They fall at random, silence lapsing large and small between the falls, and as they break, the darkness grows in patches. A linear measuring of time runs tangential to the diminishing light and growing dark, and to the random lengths of silence. The result is unclear: from where are we measuring? And what are we measuring?

along with *Hold your breath*, is exactly as it sounds, and calls on memories of being burnt while Abramovic's video portrait, in which she brushes her hair aggressively while repeating the mantra of the title, correlates the pressures placed on women by society with the pressures placed on the artist and their art. What expands these works to the 'mythological' is the undeniable presence of the personalities behind the artworks. Both Parr and Abramovic have arguably crossed the threshold from artist to celebrity, with events like Parr's vomit-inducing early performances and Abramovic's farewell to artistic collaborator Ulay on the Great Wall of China, being recounted to art school initiates as if classic mythology.

*Gestures & Procedures* is simultaneously ordinary and extraordinary. Simple actions like street sweeping and turning off a light speak epic volumes about the human existence, as the recurring motions echo not only the rhythm of our daily lives but the pulse of the world. ●



## **IN THE BALANCE: ART FOR A CHANGING WORLD**

INTERVIEW JULIET GAUCHAT

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*In the Balance: Art for a Changing World* at the Museum of Contemporary Art (MCA) comprises works by over 30 Australian and international artists and collectives, which respond to the current ecological issues in Australia and overseas. I talked with Senior Curator, Rachel Kent, about how artists address ecological issues today.

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- Janet Laurence  
*Cellular Gardens (where breathing begins)* (2005)  
Stainless steel, mild steel, acrylic, blown glass, rainforest plants  
Dimensions variable  
Museum of Contemporary Art, purchased 2005  
Image courtesy and © the artist
- Catherine Rogers  
*Red road* (2007)  
Photograph, pigment print on rag paper, 59 x 180 cm  
Image courtesy and © the artist
- Andrea Bowers  
*Step It Up Activist, Sand Key Reef, Key West, Florida, Part of North America's Only Remaining Coral Barrier Reef* (2009)  
Coloured pencil on paper, 56.52 x 76.2 cm  
Courtesy the artist and Andrew Kreps Gallery, New York  
Image courtesy the artist, Andrew Kreps Gallery, New York and Suzanne



**Let's start with the title of the exhibition. Where did it originate?**

The title of the show, *In the balance: Art for a Changing World*, refers to the environmental educator and politician Al Gore and his book, *Earth in the Balance; Ecology and Human Spirit*, which he wrote in the early 1990s. It was a book that was very important for its time because it heralded the question of climate change as an issue that we were going to need to address urgently. Of course in the 10-15 years since, climate change has become a major issue on the environmental and political spectrum.

**Would you say that *In the Balance* is the first major exhibition and publication devoted to the subject of Australia's contemporary environmental debate?**

I think that *In the balance* is a very timely project because it comes at a moment when world attention is trained towards these pressing environmental issues – you know, the use of fossil fuels and their decline in the future, what

are we going to do about the seas, the land – how are we going to adapt our lifestyle or cut carbon emissions? It's one of a number of artistic voices. There have been some really wonderful smaller projects within Australia but I guess this is the first really physically substantial exhibition in this country that's brought together such a large volume of artists and works within and beyond the museum... and also documented in a substantial publication, which is carbon neutral by the way!

**How long did *In the Balance* take to complete?**

This has been quite a quick response project by the museum. One of the nice things about working in a contemporary art museum, which is slightly smaller and more dynamic than a bigger state gallery where you plan for years, is that you can respond when things are on the public agenda, you can say, 'Right let's run with this, let's do this now and not in five years.' We've had exactly 12 months to turn the entire exhibition around, which is a huge task!

**The works in this exhibition incorporate performance, photography, drawing, sculpture and also extend outside the gallery to include internet art, public art and gardening. Was it a challenge to curate such a diverse exhibition?**

It's very ambitious but we've had all four curators, including myself, working on the project. We've all brought out a range of ideas, names, and images to the table, and in a way it's been a very thought out project because we've had four heads to thresh through every artist and examine every angle.

**Can you tell me about the thematics in the exhibition?**

The exhibition really falls loosely into a couple of key themes, because it's about the here and now, about what's going on in this country, in this time. It really takes into account, as its starting point, a consideration of Tasmania and the relationship between art and activism from the

1960s to the present. It's looking at questions to do with the damming of the Franklin River, the flooding of Lake Pedder, logging and the deforestation of our pristine land in Tasmania – but also the complexities between different communities trying to survive and adapt – and how you can maintain a culture during a time of profound and quite detrimental change.

The exhibition also looks at things like the environmental damage done to say, Lake Bonney down in South Australia through Nici Cumpston's profound water mismanagement, but at the other end of the spectrum the exhibition looks at making use out of refuse and making good out of the river systems. For example you've got the indigenous artist Yvonne Koolmatrie using the sedge rushes from the Murray to weave traditional eel and fish traps.

The other thing we've been looking at in the exhibition is the impact of human systems and I guess human technology on the land, specifically mining on the land, not just as a catalyst for environmental change but as a catalyst for environmental catastrophe. We're looking at oil and gas drilling both regionally and internationally, uranium mining up north in Kakadu, and with that, questions of traditional indigenous custodianship versus corporate multinational mining interests, which are very vexed issues today for this part of the world.

The final thematic in the exhibition is really looking at change for good – what artists can do on a practical daily level – so we're looking at the issues of recycling, sustainability, looking at the role of plants in a changing eco system. How plants, humans, cohabite urban spaces, and looking at the way artists can take detritus and turn it into beautiful, poetic materials and artworks.

**Is it didactic?**

No, it's not trying to be didactic, rather it's exploring a whole range of concerns. For example the work of James Newitt is looking at the confrontation between two communities – the logging community and the activists – and presenting both sides of the story. On the one hand you've got the loggers who've got families to feed and >>



support, and on the other side you've got conservationists who believe that all preservation of the pristine wilderness is paramount. So neither side is wrong.

**What do you see as the role of the artists in this exhibition?**

I'd like to think artists are both active participants in the community but also commentators, reflectors, provocateurs for change. So really I think the works in this exhibition do invite discussion and debate, it asks the community to get involved.

**Art today takes so many different shapes and forms. Not all works are institutional and comprise a painting on a gallery wall or an object within a gallery space. What constitutes art today?**

I think art today involves a degree of human interaction. It's a good opportunity for a contemporary museum to really look at the way it operates because as you say not all works are institutional, they might comprise a

performance, an event or an installation on the front lawn, or a community garden project. These are some of the ways that artists are able to address a whole range of concerns and do so in ways that are more 'traditional' and perhaps less conventional.

**Speaking of unconventional, Sydney artist Lucas Ihlein has turned the spotlight back on the MCA in an environmental audit of the Museum's practices. Was this quite a challenging process to open up to?**

Yes, well when you consider the amount of art freight that comes in and out of the building – the packaging, the air miles, artist travels, power usage and other public operations – it really made us stop and analyse our output. So I guess we've managed to make this exhibition a reflective exercise too beyond the individual artist out to the larger system of the art world, and hopefully it's one we can learn from and improve our game.

**Do you hope there will be other projects like *In the Balance* in the future?**

I'm sure there will be. This is a persistent issue that won't go away and all of these questions about the environment, about climate change, about sustainability and about fossil fuels and their alternatives, we have to deal with, and I think that artists, among others, will be looking at these issues for a very long time.

**Finally, is the environment *the* defining topic for artists today?**

I wouldn't say that it is *the* defining topic of today, but I'd say it's very high on the agenda for a number of artists working today. I like the idea that artists can raise awareness – that they can contribute to the debate – that they are part of the wider community like me or you, and that they can have that voice and hopefully prompt people to think and ask questions, and perhaps reveal things that we weren't aware of before. ●

*In the Balance: Art for a Changing World* will be on view until 31 October 2010. The MCA are looking for volunteers to participate in Dadang Christanto's two hour silent protest performance, *Survivor* (2010), on Saturday 30 October. If you are interested please contact the MCA or visit [mca.com.au](http://mca.com.au) for more information.

## DIEGO BONETTO

INTERVIEW MARISSA BATEMAN

As the global pace of urbanisation accelerates and the world's agricultural resources diminish, Diego Bonetto's use of organic material and exploration of agrarian botanical themes emphasise key eco concerns such as temporality, the fragility of nature, the randomness and the impermanence of life. While exuding social responsibility Bonetto's body of work critiques modern society in all its forms. Politics, urban planning, identity and technology fall prey to this artist's intelligent and observant cynicism, making his works both poignant and accessible.

**Diego! What better place to start this conversation then where we first met – Venice! I remember vividly walking on the island of Burano (just off Venice) with you and having to constantly stop for all your plant collecting and specimen inspection. When did your fascination with plants begin?**

I grew up as a farmer, so plants have been in my life since I was a young boy. As an artistic journey then they just merged into it, as I kept my thumbs green while working in orchards and garden centres.

**In a completely man made city such as Venice, plants seem all the more sacred, did this influence your practice at all?**

That was not my first time working at the Biennale di Venezia, having been there two years before with Callum Morton... but anyway, no, the experience didn't shift my practice, rather Venice was just another point of reflection, a very important one though.

It was in Venice that modern western societies were first introduced to the east, with the commercial dealings spearheaded by Marco Polo's family journeys de-facto opening a floodgate for a number of new species to spill onto the European continent.

Venice, with its commercial past, is a great example of the shifting of species by human hands, species that otherwise wouldn't have been able to make the journey.

Since winning the esteemed Helen Lempiere Travelling Scholarship eighteen months ago for his work *The Cabinet, the Planter and the Bonsai*, Bonetto has followed the botanical seasons of Spring/Summer to artist residencies in northern Italy and Brighton (in the UK), only breaking the cycle to exhibit at Sydney's current MCA exhibition *Art For A Changing World*. Before Sydney Spring breaks again and we lose Bonetto to a field of weeds, we talked about his new work, inspirations and observations.

I spent much of my free time walking in gardens and searching for traces of botanical archaeology, and whilst the old 'botanical collections' of the 12th century are gone now – there was an important one on the Giudecca island according to texts I found in the Biblioteca Marciana – the other islands still have some remnants. It is definitely worth further investigations, but I could only suss out possibilities while working there.

So, to answer your question, Venezia didn't influence my practice as such, but it developed into a rather important piece of the puzzle.

**A highlight from the Venice Biennale was the Belgium exhibition *Quadra Medicinale* which photographed and documented the medicinal qualities of various neighbourhood weeds/plants on maps for the people who lived in those neighbourhoods. Your work *The Hanging Gardens* jumped to mind when I was viewing it. Can you tell the readers more about this work?**

*The Hanging Gardens & Other Tales* was a neighbourhood-specific installation in Sydney at Carriage Works Arts Centre, made up of pot plants on loan from local residents. The project was a collaboration with Makeshift and took place as part of the 'Underbelly Public Arts Lab + Festival', July 2008. It involved collecting plants and personal stories from participating 'neighbours' over a period of two weeks, and slowly hanging both stories and plants from the remnant structural components of this historic converted rail yard. >>





•\ Diego Bonetto  
*bedaForager > Biella (2009)*  
Portrait at Fondazione Pistoletto, the plants of the game  
Image courtesy and © the artist, Photograph: Stefano Ceretti

Tessa Zettel, Karl Khoe and Diego Bonetto  
*The Hanging Gardens and Other Tales (2008)*  
Installation of pot plants with hand written notes from owners  
Image courtesy and © the artist, Photograph: Diego Bonetto

As each plant was delivered to our reception desk, its owner filled in a registration form with care instructions, plant & owner details et cetera. At some point this form was filed, and an individual ink drawing of the plant was made. The plant was then added to the installation on tiered or hanging platforms, where it was looked after until the close of the festival. Eventually, its home location was also marked on a 1989 map of the area nestled within the installation.

All the stories we collected, and accompanying owner-plant portraits, were eventually published on a dedicated blog ([hanginggardens.wordpress.com](http://hanginggardens.wordpress.com)), which will ensure the survival of the ‘botanical relationships’ snapshot created in the process.

**I read recently that an Italian artist Giuliano Mauri created a ‘vegetal cathedral’ from four rows of bundled branches arranged into organic Gothic vaults and after completion declared: ‘My works are not made to last. Some will return to the earth where they originated.’ Does this sentiment fit with your organic works? How will we see your work installed in galleries in decades to come?**

Oh dear, I fear the ecological urgency we are facing nowadays will dictate a whole bunch of new rules on how we use resources. White cubes are some of the locations where ecological guilt laundering happens. I am not concerned with how my work will be displayed, new ways to objectify the ephemeral will be championed, and in the meantime there will be the priorities of issues that need to be addressed.

**In your new, highly satirical work *WeedBook* you ask audiences to ‘Adopt a Weed’ on Facebook. Here, your artwork and audience exist in a totally virtual space. Is there a dichotomy between the environment and technology – or are they not at distinct odds?**

I would like to answer this one starting from Pistoletto’s art. One of his current projects dives into a hypothetical new reality that he calls the 3rd paradise, and over and over again he said that what I was doing on *Weedbook* was the perfect example. In his mind there are two distinctive worlds, the natural one and the fabricated one, and what he’s proposing is to push art into the division of the two to create a new reality which touches the two despite being its own thing. In his view that is the aim for the human race, to foster a new understanding of reality which has both the

natural and the fabricated within it, yet is its own thing. With *Weedbook* I have people using technology to get to know the spontaneous flora, and in his mind this was the perfect example.

Now, this sounds a bit like like home-grown philosophy, and indeed it is, and I wasn’t really keen to be heralded as the proof that such an extravagant theory was actually solid science. I think simplistic ‘illuminated’ readings of the complexity of our daily existence are to be avoided, being arrogant and bound to be useless.

That said, there was a fantastic piece of writing by Ian Millis, which appeared in the last issue of Art Link, talking about the underground as ‘alternative critical culturality’.

He writes: ‘One thing I will put a bet on: in the future, the artists that matter – will not be the richest or most publicised or those who get the most grants or have the most exhibitions in the most prestigious institutions, but the ones that actually matter- won’t be producing the useless cargo cult fetish objects that fuels Biennales and the art market. They’ll be adaptively reusing culture and technology, reshaping them into something utilitarian and meaningful that may help us avoid the extinction we are now headed for.’

So in short, Facebook is an evil social tool, purposely engineered to collect marketing-sensitive information. Typical of humans to forget that we are not alone – ‘society is not me and my friends’ I say with this work – society is the whole of the biosphere. Peak oil, climate change and depletion of water resources will make sure a new understanding of how society, its cultural practitioners with it, is fostered.

**And for all cultural practitioners out there. Any words of wisdom to finish up?**

Apply to everything possible, the process will focus your mind on what you actually want to do.

Collaborate – what you can do in a group is far more impressive and socially relevant than anything you can dream up and craft away in your own little studio.

Be humble and truthful.

Never give up. ●

## MATTHEW HUNT

PICTORIAL

Matthew Hunt continues his project of making something out of nothing and meaning out of everything. With texts taken from his everyday experience, Hunt negotiates incidental encounters, problematic internal voices, distant memories, odd descriptions, wordplay and mundane expressions. Looking for the connections between us collectively, Hunt asks ‘Can a simple day to day life provide the material to elevate and provide meaning to life?’

Hunt’s text works embrace the notion we are words, we are formed by words, they enter us, inhabit us and explain us, yet our interpretation of them is unique. This interpretive slipperiness allows Hunt’s texts to become our words, our narratives and our worlds.

New works include his antiquated, outdated but beautiful scraperboards, new colour gouache works and a new set of prints printed by The Big Fag Press.

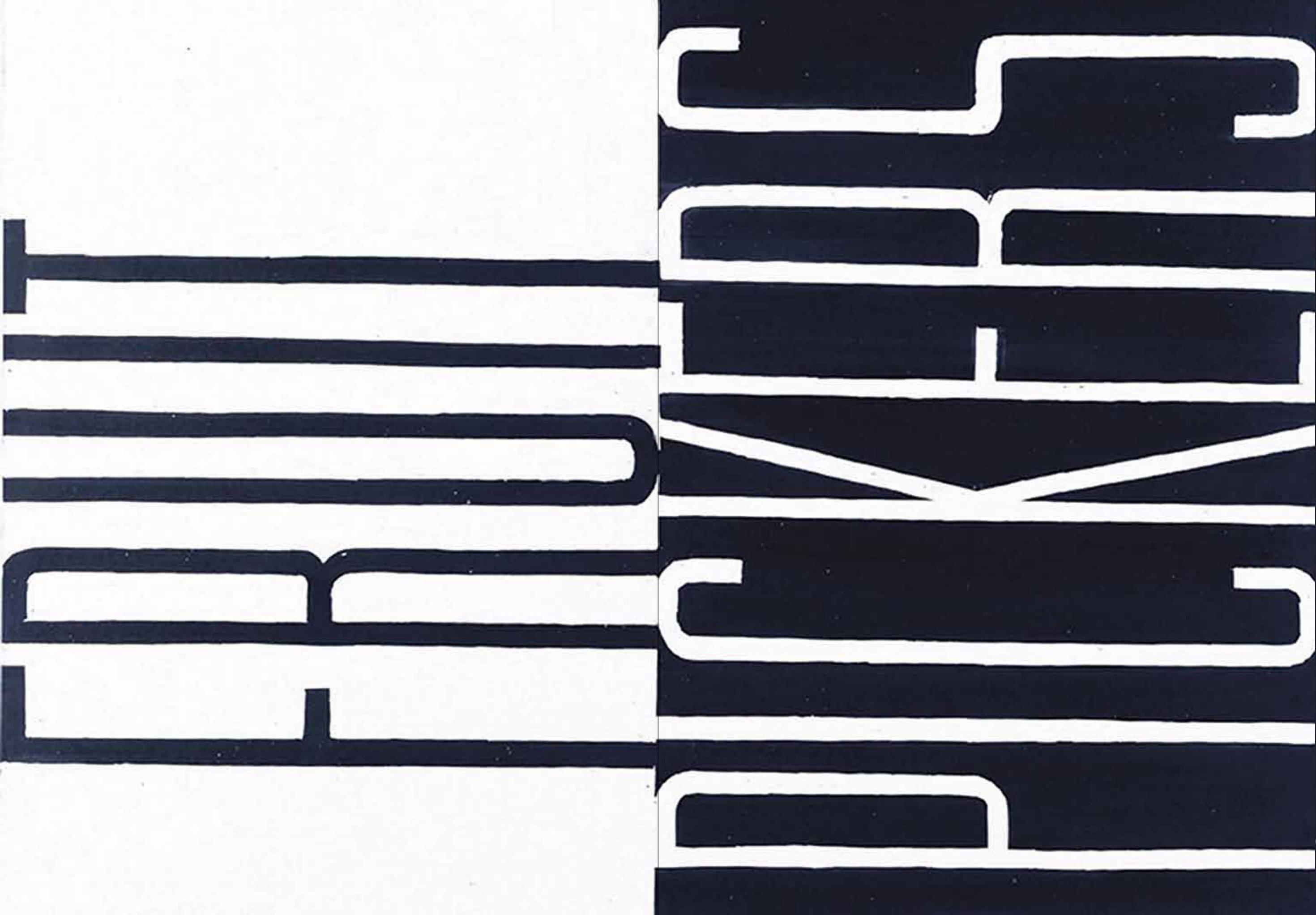
ALTO  
SUGGESTIVE

THE  
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BOOK

STATE  
OF  
HICK



PLASTER  
WORKS

ROXY  
NEW  
RHYTHM



Matthew Hunt  
Big Fag Press. Printers: Mickie Quick, Lucas Ihlein & Matthew Hunt  
*Auto Suggestive, State of Hick, Plaster Works, Magic Happens, Fruit Pickers, Amateur Hour, The Commercial Artist, The Vanishing People, Continental Shelf & Telegenic* (2010)  
Offset prints on Arches BFK, edition of 10 with 2 artist proofs  
Image size: 30.5 x 22.9cm, paper size: 52.5 x 37.5cm

## SECRET LOVE

### WHY BROADWAY MUSICALS ARE TOTALLY GAY

ARTICLE ZOE COOMBS MARR

I love musicals. There. I've said it. I should know better, but I love them. Fucking LOVE them, in that truly joyous and embarrassing way that my year nine science teacher really loved frog paraphernalia. You've got no choice. You can't hide it. All you can do is fill your flat with froggy tea cosies. Or, put your foot up on a chair, slap your knee, sing 'Whip Crack Away!' and throw in some improvised air fiddle.

As a kid, I was obsessed with Calamity Jane to an unhealthy degree, so I don't think anyone was surprised when I came out. And while eventually, like so many others, I would look back and realise 'my own taste' really just amounted to a big gay cliché, at the time I was blissfully unaware.

I mean, at seven, you're not thinking: 'Oh wow, this musical is really existing on a level of queer temporality, which is amazing, because it also totally embodies those traditions and structures which it's simultaneously subverting! Judith Halberstrom, you were right!'

It's not conscious, it's instinctual. A love of queer-icons precedes an awareness of sexuality. And at seven, you don't even know enough to be embarrassed yet; it just feels good, like rubbing yourself against the sprinkler.

Considering their uber-hetero narratives, it's weird that musicals have such a queer following. It's too simplistic to dismiss as an attraction to sequins and feathers, because musicals appeal not just to flaming queens of Judy 'diva worship', but also to people like me; cranky, bolshy dykes who just might insert the word heteronormative into conversation at a party. Musical is complex, subversive, and intrinsically queer.

My friend Fran is developing a show called *The Pink Piece*, exploring a reversal of the musical spectacle into something more absurd and intimate, looking at alternative and queer imaginings of time, particularly in voodoo trance rituals and endurance performance art. Fran's theory is that in western culture musicals occupy the same space as a trance ritual. And while it does seem insane at first, the more you think about it, the more it makes sense. Just look at the audiences in *Mamma Mia* as the finale plays and everyone dances in the aisle. A seething mass of middle-aged mums, waving their arms in the air in some kind of mass release: the cult of Broadway.

Fran explains: 'Trance ritual is a socialised way of accessing healing, protection, celebration, or release. And musicals are the Western version of that. Because in order to get to that other state, you need a communal experience, you need music, you need bodily involvement, and you need narrative, something to hold onto. And voodoo has a narrative as musicals have a narrative – it's all about accessing another state.'

>>



• Still from  
Calamity Jane (1953)

As a performer sings how they feel, they step outside of themselves, simultaneously embodying character and performer, imagined and real; a dichotomy that neatly parallels the voodoo trance state of ‘two headedness’, with one head in the physical world and one in the spiritual. Because we read music through our bodies: toes tap, we hum along, and even our breathing and heartbeat are altered, the experience moves from a logical to a kinaesthetic one. It becomes a communal event, as the audience are linked as a congregation in a shared bodily experience.

Of course there are tons of ways that musicals are nothing like voodoo. Although hardcore fans may argue Barbra Streisand’s 19 second belt notes approach a level of impossible virtuosity, voodoo’s glass eating, fire walking feats of strength and endurance are noticeably absent on Broadway. So too is the pursuit of an altered trance state. Fran & co. tried to reach this state (not by replicating a voodoo ritual, but by constructing their own, using endurance performance art) but it didn’t work. After dancing for hours to repetitive drumming they didn’t transcend anything – they just got tired. They put this down to a lack of belief.

‘We realised you’d have to be socialised to get to that point... In western thinking you’re trained to be sceptical of spiritualism or ecstasy beyond other bodily states. If you have a sceptical brain, you need something tangible – narrative, form – so you can believe something without your brain going ‘that’s stupid’. You need to go through a rigid structure to then enable that anti-structure.’

So perhaps in a socially conservative Western society (particularly during the 1940s and 50s ‘Golden Era of Broadway’) the safe release of the musical is the best we can do.

In fact, it is precisely because musicals are so conservative that they work at all. And this is what makes them so great, because their straightness is a total lie. Just as African slaves disguised prohibited Voodoo ‘Loa’ (spirits) by renaming them after Catholic Saints, so too did the overwhelmingly queer showbiz industry of McCarthyist

America embrace the aggressively traditional hetero narratives expected of them. The dual form of expression in post-Oklahoma! (1943) ‘integrated’ musicals (which demanded the songs come out of the story) perfectly mirrored the duality of queer existence at the time.

The result is a veneer of straight romantic narrative atop a fluid and undefined musical layer where Calam and Katie can gaze into each others’ eyes, clasp hands, and sing ‘A Woman’s Touch’. (Of course, the form can be used for both good and evil. Take away the subversion and you get High School Musical, an empty, bastardised version of the Broadway format, which simply reinforces the surface level homogeneity of the romantic narrative.) What we see in musicals of the 40s and 50s is a covert response to the bursting queerness of the time. It’s the undercurrent gathering the moment before it was spoken out loud; an unspoken naughtiness that you can’t put your finger on, the intense feeling of a secret.

I think it was this covertness that drew me to the musical as a kid. The possibilities outside a norm I was already sensing I wasn’t quite part of. The absurdity of breaking into song and the fact that no-one bats an eyelid. It’s the self-conscious wink, like an in-joke existing somewhere in the gaps and cracks between the narrative and music. I tried to define this by saying: watching a musical is like watching a very prim lady posing perfectly for a picture, while doing the rabbit ears behind her own head. But Fran did me one better:

‘It’s like a hat, like you can put on the musical like a hat, and it’s a really lovely hat. A ‘My Fair Lady’ hat with feathers and flowers and lace. But underneath is a butch doing a poo into her hand. And her nipples are clamped to two Rottweilers... on leashes.’

Thanks Fran. ●

**The Pink Piece** is being developed by Fran Barrett, Emma Ramsey, Nat Randall, Brian Fuata and Kate Blackmore, with support from Pact’s Vacant Room program, and The Bundanon Trust.

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## MACHINIMA

DAS500 KATE WOODCROFT AND DANIEL MCKEWEN

*Machinima* is an exhibition curated by Lubi Thomas and Michaela Hartland, featuring over forty screen-based works by artists exploring Machinima: a growing field of practice involving the repurposing of 3-D gaming engines. These engines, code-based 'architectures' upon which a video game is built, are modified in order to construct and record virtual worlds, characters and scenarios, that range from the conceptually sophisticated to the sophomoric. The exhibition at QUT in Brisbane generously surveys a full spectrum.

This democratic approach to selection and the spatial solutions necessitated by The Block induced a video art-fair type atmosphere, and tended to bury the few works that provide the best examples of machinima's potential as a medium. These more cogent examples co-opt the conventions of feature films, talk shows, comedy series, and also make aesthetic and conceptual interventions more typical of contemporary video art. It is these interventions that begin to fulfill the potential of machinima as an 'interpretively amorphous vehicle that questions and challenges our understanding of what is static, dynamic, alive, sentient, responsive, or automated, and what is not' (Erik Champion 2009).

These ideas are explored in several of Chris Howlett's works. First, a two-player game, *Bushstalkers*, based in a 'first-person shooter' world, which conspicuously bears the absence of the 'fire' button, frustrating any anticipation of virtual violence. Another of his works *Homestead*, built using The Sims, traps a Kevin Rudd doppelganger in a labyrinthine glass house. These conceptual interventions are shown alongside works such as *Red vs. Blue*, a sitcom set in the Halo universe that effectively parodies the basic tenets of multi-player gaming.

Unfortunately, the successes of these works are undermined by works like *4jetpacks4*. *4jetpacks4* is an experiment in Second-Life, a documentary of a semi-orchestrated event in which three avatars hosted a fiction that was encountered by various other second-life inhabitants. The work presented at *Machinima* is documentation of this event edited into a short silent film. However, any thematic interest generated by the original performance is squandered in the attempt to realise it as narrative cinema.

Criticisms aside, it would be a disservice to judge *Machinima* as an exhibition under the same terms as most other exhibitions of new media art. Machinima is an emergent practice that works in and between the value systems of the gaming community, the film industry, and more recently, the art world. This broad audience base precludes a distinctly art-critical approach, and has seemingly compelled the curators to simply present a systematic range of film and video made with games. ●



Images from Machinima

## TRIPPING OVER THE PINK GLASS SWAN: DON'T TELL NANNA AT HORUS AND DELORUS

DAS500 ANNALICE CREIGHTON

Barry Crocker is staring at me intensely through sequin bedazzled eyes.

Two steps back, over the fur-trimmed novel, the iron and the false eyelashes, an unassuming stack of cassette tapes glued into a minimalist square creeps into my peripheral vision. Behind me, glossy midnight-black sheets of board scratch up against mattress springs and stretch pantyhose into asymmetrical tension, propped against the wall on an un-slipped pillow.

This is *Don't Tell Nanna*, an exhibition of emerging female artists and co-workers Ella Condon, Bridie Connell, Sarah Contos, Micheala Giffney, Leahlani Johnson, Bernadette Jones and Nicola Walkerden at Horus and Deloris contemporary art space.

There is something about this show that is heart-warmingly familiar, three shades of pastel and two cups of tea, but unhinged, filled with subversive relics from some unseen performance.

In the age of *post-post-feminism* it can be easy to overlook the value of such spaces, created by a community of women artists, generating work that discusses femininity, gender stereotypes and the lineage of the domestic realm which we inherit and continue to build upon. *Don't Tell Nanna* gauges this temporary myopia, it pulls out the contents of the glory box and puts them on trial.

There is a delicate interplay here between the melancholic romance of op-shop collectibles and craft-based practices, and the subversive hand of the artist. Johnson's *Larger things at hand*, initiates a conversation between textures, forms and the eye of the beholder, inviting them into experimental compositions. In Contos' *Kill Your Idols*, record covers of Barry, Dame Joan, Olivia Newton John

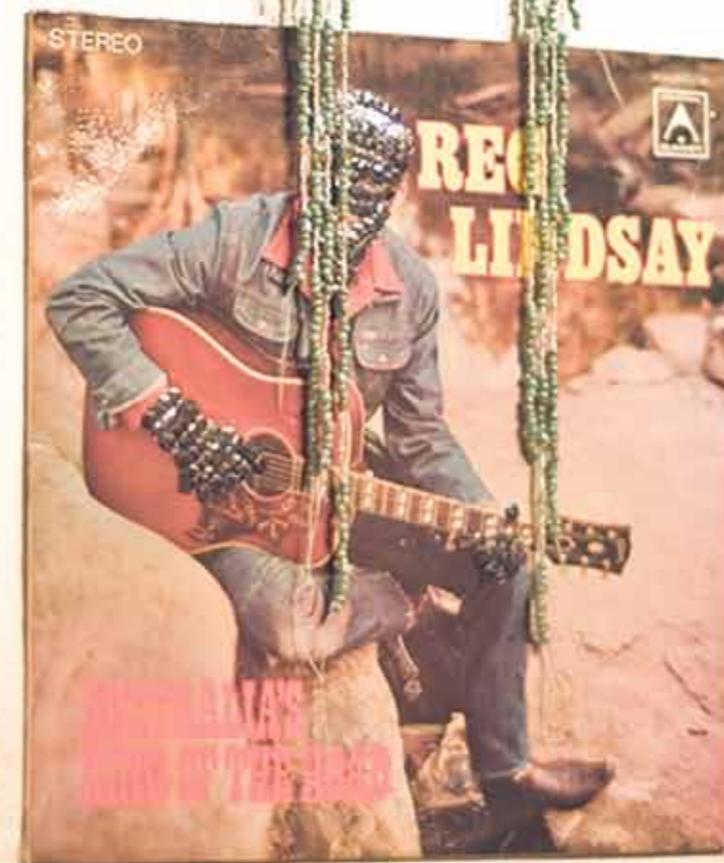
and co. pile up in a vertical altar of once-were-famous-faces. They are delightfully humorous and disarming, dripping with fetishist applications of beads, sequins and spangles. Connell's *Hanky Panky Fiction*, six white-on-white embroidered handkerchiefs, bear the titles of erotic literature hidden in the most polite stitches of polycotton thread. Pinned in a neat row they speak of broken romance and the clichéd femmes of popular fiction.

For some artists the domestic retro-chic item is the raw material for their compositions, such as Giffney's *Black Square* and Be Jones' assemblage *Day, Night*. It is Giffney's drawings however that I find myself captured by: the understated poetry of a canine astronaut in an absent landscape, or the lonely architecture of the *Palace of Culture*.

In dialogue with Walkerden's *Kasia and Rosalie's revolt* or Condon's *Embodied Spaces*, these scenes provoke a consideration of the psychological and narrative forms embedded in site. Condon's photos of dilapidated rooms in Gladesville Mental Hospital resist easy consumption through small scale prints, drawing the viewer close to reveal powerful resonances of forgotten histories and traumas. Walkerden's video, filmed at Trial Bay Gaol, uses the abandoned site as the set for a compelling fictional narrative about entrapment.

In the quiet hours of a Thursday afternoon *Don't Tell Nanna* has successfully transported me into a world of charming, disturbed domesticity, held together by a captivating curatorial framework that is almost an artwork in itself. ●

[horusanddelorus.com.au](http://horusanddelorus.com.au)



• Sarah Contos  
*Kill Your Idols* (2010)  
Image courtesy of the artist

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## WHAT'S ON

**19 Aug to 21 Nov**

*Runa Islam, Primavera 2010,*  
**21 Aug to 31 Oct**

*In the balance: art for a changing world.*

**MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART**  
Circular Quay, Sydney, NSW

**03 Sep Onwards**

*The Big Bang*

**WHITE RABBIT GALLERY**  
30 Balfour Street, Chippendale

**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

**18 Sep to 18 Oct**

*Brent Harris*

**TOLARNO GALLERIES**  
Level 4, 104 Exhibition Street, Melbourne VIC

**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, Nollywood*

*Brook Andrew, The Cell*  
*Christian Marclay, Looking For Love*  
**INSTITUTE FOR MODERN ART**  
420 Brunswick Street, Fortitude Valley QLD

**25 Sep to 12 Dec**

*Heaven Is A Place Where Nothing Happens, Nathan Coley*

**AUSTRALIAN CENTRE FOR CONTEMPORARY ART**  
111 Sturt Street, Southbank VIC

**30 Sep to 13 Nov**

*Les Mason, Epicurean 1967 - 1979*

**THE NARROWS**  
2/141 Flinders Lane, Melbourne VIC

**30 Sep to 17 Oct**

*Daniel Mudie Cunningham, Michael Butler, Christopher Dean*

**MOP** 2/39 Abercrombie Street, Chippendale

**Oct - Nov**

*Enter At Your Own Risk: Joan Ross*

**GALLERY BARRY KELDOULIS**  
285 Young Street, Waterloo NSW

**01 Oct to 23 Oct**

*Killing Time: Christopher Koller, a video retrospective*

**KINGS A.R.I.**  
Level 1, 171 King Street, Melbourne VIC

**02 Oct to 23 Oct**

*Fiona Williams*

**INFLIGHT ARI**  
237 Elizabeth Street, Hobart TAS

**05 Oct to 06 Nov**

*Mimili Maku Arts*

**GALLERY GABRIELLE PIZZI**  
Level 3, 75-77 Flinders Lane, Melbourne VIC

**06 Oct to 07 Nov**

*Pixel/Stich*

**QUT ART MUSEUM**  
2 George Street, Brisbane QLD

**07 Oct to 21 Oct**

*Reality vs Illusion; Fires I Have Lit; Satellites & Shipwrecks;*

**GAFFA**  
281 Clarence Street, Sydney NSW

**07 Oct to 24 Oct**

*Sam Leach*

**SULLIVAN + STRUMPF FINE ART**  
44 Gurner Street, Paddington NSW

**07 Oct to 06 Nov**

*Elizabeth Gowar*

**SUTTON GALLERY**  
254 Brunswick Street, Fitzroy VIC

**12 Oct to 23 Oct**

*Emerging Artists and Designers Award Exhibition*

**KUDOS GALLERY**  
6 Napier Street, Paddington NSW

**14 Oct to 30 Oct**

*Oliver Watts*

**CHALK HORSE**  
94 Cooper Street, Surry Hills NSW

**14 Oct to 13 Nov**

*Girringun, Jiman and Bagu*

**GALLERY SMITH**  
170-174 Abbotsford Street, North Melbourne

**15 Oct to 06 Nov**

*James Angus*

**ROSLYN OXLEY9**  
8 Soudan Lane, Paddington NSW

**15 Oct to 20 Nov**

*Afghanistan: The Perils of Freedom 1993 - 2009, Stephen Dupont*

**AUSTRALIAN CENTRE FOR PHOTOGRAPHY**  
257 Oxford Street, Paddington NSW

**16 Oct to 10 Nov**

*Untitled*

**ROBIN GIBSON GALLERY**  
278 Liverpool Street, Darlinghurst NSW

**20 Oct to 13 Nov**

*Aida Tomescu*

**KAREN WOODBURY GALLERY**  
4 Albert Street, Richmond VIC

**22 Oct to 13 Nov**

*Garry Pumfrey*

**TURNER GALLERIES**  
470 William Street, Northbridge WA

**22 Oct to 14 Nov**

*Martin Heine*

**GALLERY EAST**  
94 Stirling Highway, North Fremantle WA

**25 Oct to 06 Nov**

*Nick Brown*

**KUDOS GALLERY**  
6 Napier Street, Paddington NSW

**25 Sep to 21 Nov**

*James Dodd, FAC Print Award, Poppy van Oorde-Grainger*

**FREMANTLE ARTS CENTRE**  
1 Finnerly Street, Fremantle WA

**27 Oct to 20 Nov**

*Tony Cran: Ghosts and Flowers*

**HELEN GORY GALERIE**  
25 St Edmonds Road, Prahran VIC

**29 Oct to 20 Nov**

*Emerging Artists Residency and Exhibition Program*

**KINGS A.R.I.**  
Level 1, 171 King Street, Melbourne VIC

**30 Oct to 21 Nov**

*Hangbang (nightshift), John Vella*

**CAST 27** Tasma Street, North Hobart TAS

**03 Nov to 27 Nov**

*Andrew Gordon*

**GILLIGAN GRANT GALLERY**  
1B Stanley Street, Collingwood VIC

**04 Nov to 21 Nov**

*Kate Shaw*

**SULLIVAN + STRUMPF FINE ART**  
44 Gurner Street, Paddington NSW

**05 Nov - 06 Nov**

*New Imaging: transdisciplinary strategies for art beyond the new media*

**ARTSPACE**  
43-51 Cowper Wharf Road, Woolloomooloo

**12 Nov to 24 Dec**

*David Haines, Monika Behrens*

**BREENSPACE**  
289 Young Street, Waterloo NSW

**27 Nov to 21 Jan**

*Home Open: Fremantle Artists and their Collections*

**FREMANTLE ARTS CENTRE**  
1 Finnerly Street, Fremantle WA

