

NEW WORK SERIES.1

July 21 – December 10 2004

Enjoy PUBLIC ART GALLERY

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GALLERY HOURS:

12 – 6 PM: WEDNESDAY – FRIDAY

12 – 5 PM: SATURDAY – SUNDAY

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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New Work Series.1

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New Work series

July 21 – December 10 2004

Liberated by newness – By Jessica Reid

The flip-side to all the disadvantages of being a struggling, fledgling initiative, is the incredible liberation this situation brings. In a similar scenario to being 'the new person' in a job. Allowances are made for you, your mistakes are forgiven, you are given encouragement and support more freely. But as time goes by, once you've been in the position a while, the employer may not be quite so lenient and you are asked to really prove yourself. The pressure comes on to affirm the value of your contribution and things become challenging once more. These transitional times can be crucial for your survival, when you're asked to come up with something new.

The New Work series represented a transitional period in Enjoy's vision and development. By the second half of 2004, the gallery had passed the four year mark and was ready for a fresh direction. Moving away from the gallery's hands-on, thematic approach of the past, *New Work* set the loosest of theme requirements yet, and this will probably be the last of such dictated restrictions. Confident enough to take a step back, the gallery relinquished some curatorial control and set the art and artists loose to spread their wings and fly.

The proposal call-out requested that the work be 'new'. Of course, as ever in contemporary art, things are rarely as straight forward as they initially appear and the definition of this, seemingly simple word, 'new', was up for grabs. Debate ensued over the difference between work being newly created and new to any given audience. While much of this discussion turned out to be academic, it all helped in the process of evaluating and directing the status of Enjoy as a venue for experimental projects.

There was an inclination towards music and performance in this series which, because they play with an element of chance, sat comfortably with the series aims of showing work which hadn't been seen before. The blur between the forms of art and music brought new audiences to the gallery and captured the interest of practitioners who would not previously have considered Enjoy a potential venue for their work.

Another way in which this 'newness' was reflected was that the majority of the artists in this series were new to exhibiting and the work of many was new to Wellington. Miranda Parkes' *Hullbreach*, the first show in the series, came from Christchurch as did Clare Noonan, James Oram and Zina Swanson whose group show was titled *Drawing*. The collaborative team of Chris Cudby and Dave King, *Golden Axe*, resides in Auckland. Enjoy was able to offer two nascent artists, Tim Armstrong and Amy Howden-Chapman, their first solo shows. Armstrong's *A Christmas Story* was an entertaining exhibition which gained a lot of media attention and Howden-Chapman's *A Story of Three Sentences* was a poetic examination of the space between words and meanings. Charlotte Huddleston, by no means new to Enjoy, took her first steps in the artist role by working in collaboration with Richard Lewer for *In*

Between, an exhibition based on their research and interpretation of local ghost stories.

As well as these exhibitions, the series programme was completed with the addition of some Enjoy-initiated ventures. The stand-out example was the inaugural *Performance Week* which ran in mid September and was a complementary follow-on from *Golden Axe's* performances and inhabitation of the gallery in the weeks prior. Through the curation of board members Marnie Slater and Louise Tulett, a different artist or group of artists was selected to perform in the gallery within an allotted twenty four hour time-frame. All six performances pushed personal and art-form boundaries and it was heartening to see many both new and repeat audience members on each day.

Another programmed week, to expand the gallery's audience draw, was Enjoy's first involvement in *Wellington Architecture Week*. Taking a more lateral interpretation of the definition of architecture, musician Bevan Smith was invited to create a sound work for the gallery. Bevan, with the assistance of specialty computer software, created aural maps of different Wellington venues, including Enjoy gallery itself. Gallery visitors were invited to speak or clap into a microphone which layered this noise through the mapped space giving it the effect of taking place within that recorded location. The installation ran for a week and ended with a closing performance by Bevan Smith and Dino Karlis in which, by removing gallery floorboards and placing amplifiers underneath, the resulting vibrations from the mellifluous drones of guitar and drums further emphasised the relationship between sound, architecture and bodily presence within a space.

Enjoy gallery was also host to a week of public lectures in late September. In an introductory talk, law student Bevan Marten addressed issues of copyright in relation to artists, and this instigated a lively discussion with members of the audience. The following evening called for a *Performance Week* evaluation and re-group, giving audience members the opportunity to ask questions of, and give feedback to, the week's performers and organisers. Friday night saw Stuart Shepherd and Charlotte Huddleston each impress with their tales of overseas travel in relation to their own practices, as artist and curator respectively. It was clear that Stuart had a great love for a recently purchased digital camera and was willing to embrace all that 'power point' had to offer in a highly amusing and entertaining display of his holiday slides. Charlotte, meanwhile, had the audience envious of her being selected to attend a Venetian symposium hosted by, proponent of relational aesthetics, Rirkrit Tiravanija. Charlotte recounted tales of boat trips, ice cream and wine shop visits and firework displays in the company of other select international art writers and curators. The successes of these three ventures mean they will be incorporated into Enjoy's programming as repeat events for 2005.

The year was capped off with something less new and a bit more in keeping with gallery tradition: The *Enjoy Buy 100* Fund-raiser. It was a truly fresh and beautiful show, and support from artists, visitors and buyers was overwhelming. Invigorated with this burst of self-assurance, I look towards the 2005 programme, confident that Enjoy will continue to show exciting, experimental art, encourage artists to push art-form and personal boundaries and enhance the successes of the past with work and initiatives which are new.



Hullbreach

Miranda Parkes
July 20 – August 6

By Jessica Reid

Every so often we are told that painting is experiencing either a crisis or a resurgence. Most recently, and particularly during last year's Whitney Biennial, there was debate about the renewed interest in painting, especially figurative painting. For the committed painter it's all very confusing. In July 2004, Enjoy, in a rare move, had a show of painting, when it exhibited the works of Miranda Parkes. Besides the works themselves of interest was the artist's willingness, in her artist's talk, to address the conceptual difficulties which painters face today. Parkes admitted that many painters struggle with questions of how, and even why, they should paint in this day and age. Well, the resulting works are a vibrant celebration of painting and vindicate her decision to work in that medium.

A recurring theme in World War II naval movies, I am told, is when a ship has been torpedoed. The hull of the boat bursts. Sailors run around yelling 'hull breach'. Ripped metal, sea water gushing, sirens screaming, rivets popping. But in Miranda Parkes' exhibition despite the paintings' 'leakages' off their two-dimensional surface, **Hullbreach** appears to have been made with a more considered hand and critical eye than the chaos the title would imply. Although all works are wall-based, none lie flat against the wall. They are playful experiments with the traditional basics of the medium. Frame-making, canvas-stretching and ground-painting are all processes employed but instead of being 'art that conceals art' they are blatantly brought to our attention and shown as interesting in themselves. One untitled work seems to be, almost comically, struggling to maintain its wall attachment. Rather than spewing forth, it pathetically clings to the wall, but is so weighed down by its baroque folds that it can hardly hold on.

The real explosion, that causes the hull breach comes from the colours. Sizzling and vibrant; lime green and orange stripes form one work painted on acetate. Being painted from the underside, the plastic has the smooth, shiny surface finish of a glistening wet shower curtain, catching the sun's rays in the morning.

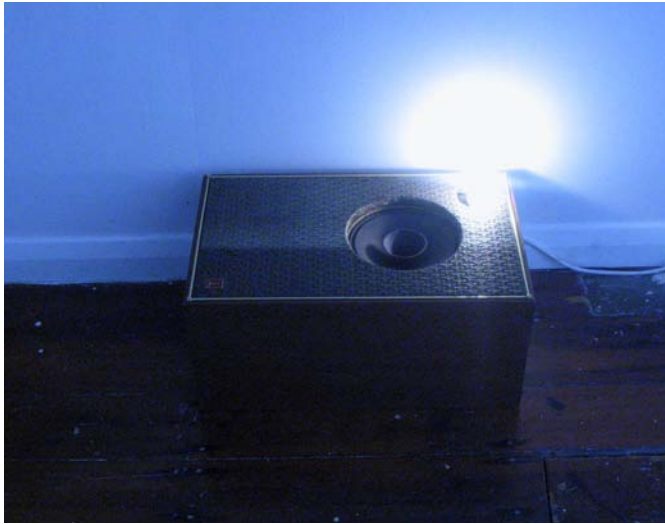
Parkes recalled in her talk how she was influenced by the sculptor and installation artist Jessica Stockholder, and how both shared an interest in the blur between painting, installation and sculpture. Her confident use of bright colour is her most obvious debt to Stockholder. What a startling rarity it is to see such uninhibited use of colour, in anything, but particularly in painting. More cautious artists might fear that gushing colour will swamp anything else present in a work. They might dread the accusation of being frivolous and childish and that the viewer won't be able to see anything beyond this. Yet in Parkes's work, her use of colour actually 'brings out' and emphasises the forms and materials she employs.

Parkes' paintings pay all the attention to form and detail as the careful nips, tucks and folds in a seamstress's handiwork. The surfaces are bunched-up like pleats in a skirt. 'Black cross' is made of hat fabric, a stiffer material than canvas, but also used, I'm sure, for the material's references to dress. The fabric has been sculpted to curve and fold in arcs coming out of the wall. It is painted in glossy black, almost lacquer-like, paint, but pin-stripes of colour below peak through the surface. It is made from two separable parts which twisted over each other forms the cross- though perhaps not immediately apparent, a reference to Malevich's painting (1916-17) of the same name.

Other visual allusions to clothing and their wearers abound. Gathers in a large green canvas's surface suggest an ankle provocatively poking out from underneath a skirt. A plastic bag adhered to a board is of black polka dots on white in the style of eighties fashion-revival ra-ra skirts. A vinyl work, in a colour best described as a 'tarty-pink', looks like the miniskirt of an amply-bodied woman, stretched to breaking point across her voluptuous thighs. The folds and creases suggest the material bunching as the woman struggles to walk in her restrictive garment. Or maybe the work suggests the folds of sagging pantyhose. Whatever the garment suggested here, the size of the painting gives it a human, bodily-scale.

The most successful part of 'Hullbreach' is its installation, which creates something much greater than its parts. Evenly paced in its hanging, the viewer finds interest in every work. Miranda Parkes brought to the gallery many more works than could be shown. Over the days prior to the show opening, she experimented and interacted with the space with various combinations. The thought and effort she put into the show's hanging is clearly evident. Indeed the bold arrangement of the works gave everything else an ambience. One viewer remarked how any object placed in the room; a coat or handbag left in the corner, was imbued with an art object aura. 'Hullbreach' demonstrates that with careful consideration to methods and materials, painting need not be in any crisis.





The story of three sentences

Amy Howden-Chapman
August 11–27

By Rita Langley

It's never-ending. Heaving in, pushing out, heaving in. Cloying, wet respiration, coming from a modified box-speaker, thrusting a light-bulb rhythmically out of its own fabric front. Although hard to listen to, it is impossible to ignore. Viewers voice their concern for the perpetuity of Bevan's asthma, the story of which is told through a looped audio of heaving breaths. The sound is so guttural that the speaker membrane shudders and twitches as if miming Bevan's beleaguered respiratory system. And it goes on for ever. As do the reflections, if you can swing the mirrors to just the right point in Swing to infinity, baby. As does the washing and grooming in Rachel gets ready to go out drinking. Art – like beauty – is worth suffering for. "I'd like to thank Bevan," declares the artist, "for giving himself asthma so I could make this work."

As part of Enjoy's 'New Work' series, Amy Howden-Chapman's work contributes a lot that is certainly different, if not entirely new. At a gallery whose existence corresponds to the introduction of the fine arts degree at Massey, her background as an art history major at Victoria University sets her apart. She draws inspiration from a wide range of artistic sources, styles and big ideas, which act as filters to the expression of her own, more tentative epiphanies. At her artist's talk, she showed the audience things that inspired her including a drawing of a sculpture of a photo of a performance work. "I don't remember the name," she admits. "But it's very, um, post..."

The link between images and words has long been explored in art, and clearly Howden-Chapman is post that. It is not simply images that the words in each of her sentences relate to, but rather works occupying all three spatial dimensions, as well as a chronological one. This time element in the work is a role-reversal between text and object in the visual art context. In the classic art gallery model the narrative, which orders events over time, is contained in the text accompanying the work; in Howden-Chapman's exhibition the written element becomes a syntactical snapshot, Bevan's Asthma, which is given its chronological 'story' by the gasping, dripping assemblage. She references this idea to works where the title plays a key role in viewer response to works. An example is Damien Hirst's dead sheep in a tank of formaldehyde, at first distant but brought into an emotive context with the title Away from the flock. But the 'stories' and their 'sentences' share a much more symbiotic relationship than artwork and title. If the line between the work of art and its title is the border of the work, in Howden-Chapman's art we no longer need a passport to cross.



3 Works: Bevan's Asthma – Rachel gets ready to go out drinking – Swing to infinity baby

The second sentence, fun and frivolous *Swing to infinity, baby*, sits uncomfortably alongside its 'story' which manifests as an intimidating pine framework bolted to the gallery's floor and ceiling. The scale of the piece and its hard-edged, brittle appearance make it vastly less inviting than the words. For a viewer to actually swing at all, usually takes some cajoling from those who are already familiar with the contraption. Infinity is reached when two mirrors align to create infinite depth of space situated where the viewer should be able to see their torso. Howden-Chapman finds mirrors to be "great value for money" in visual currency, following a long tradition dating back to Van Eyck and Velazquez. Conceptually, it is a work whose material creation was far preceded by its initial written concept, concerning the feeling of losing sense of your stomach when reaching a high point on a swing. Its final design was greatly influenced by the early Bauhaus aesthetic, in particular a wooden sideboard that followed the typical form-follows-function, truth-to-materials spirit of Bauhaus teachings. Fittingly, its fate mimics that of the great modernist designs. While attempting universality (or infinity) through a strictly regimented functional structure, the swing alienates its human audience. Uncomfortable as Rietveld's Red Blue Chair, the swing restricts its use to those who in their own physical form adhere to certain design rules. Anyone too short, too tall, or too wide is excluded from the friendly offer in the sentence.

"Explosions of meaning," says Howden-Chapman, "are the goal of these works." This is particularly true for the third piece, *Rachel gets ready to go out drinking*, a digital video work. She partly intends this to be an interrogation of the principles of gestalt, a theory of perception based on patterns or configurations. She attempts to upset this through odd camera angles and, again, through mirrors. The disjunctive employment of kitchen utensils as implements of beautification seems ungainly at first. But it becomes a compound for an explosion, or a juxtaposition Howden-Chapman hopes will light the fuse. The psychologist, Lev Vygotsky writes that "Words die as they bring forth thoughts." Perhaps this is Howden-Chapman's intention: that in the explosive deconstruction of perception, the sentences and their stories give off enormous energies in the form of meanings. However, the opposite is claimed by Schopenhauer: "Thoughts die the moment they are embodied" - by either words or objects. It may be that these explosions of meaning actually already occurred in the artist's own mind, so the resulting objects would be residual - ash, or art.

The pleasure in this exhibition is that the artist really wants to impart understanding, and offers the sentences and stories to the viewer with an uncommon generosity of ideas. There is no prerequisite knowledge - despite historical influences and inferences, the works themselves may stand alone. The written word in the sentences parody the role that Howden-Chapman's art history studies play in her reading of works by art's heroes, illuminating the background, the meaning, and the social context. Her exhibition works at usurping the old art history's overburdened and often moribund role in contemporary art viewing. Without aggression, this exhibition simply offers a better alternative to studied interpretations in the form of her sentences. She gives the viewer all they need to enjoy this exhibition. To infinity, maybe...





Golden Axe

Chris Cudby and David King
September 1 – 17

Interview by Jessica Reid

Auckland-based music/performance group Golden Axe (Dave King and Chris Cudby) exhibited at Enjoy in September of 2004. I talked to Chris about the successes and challenges of the exhibition.

JR Not long before coming down to Wellington for the exhibition, the building that you had your studio in, in Auckland, was sold. In that instance you had turned your studio into a gallery (SPECIAL gallery). In this case though, you turned a gallery into a studio...

CC It was pretty handy to use Enjoy as an alternative studio (SPECIAL had closed about a month before, but re-opened in February 2005). With SPECIAL we had a walled off entrance/foyer area which was the gallery space and studio/practice areas next to the gallery. We were keen to show our process of putting together sounds and tunes and making merchandise for the band, as well as displaying the found materials from which we constructed a stage area. We made each Golden Axe CD package as a unique object. The ones we made at Enjoy had different logos to the old ones and had an original drawing slipped inside, so a lot of our time in the gallery was spent making packaging. Every 'Golden Shakehands LP' CD has a different cover made from old record sleeves with stenciled artwork.

JR The exhibition worked with some difficult aspects of art practice; collaboration, in a new city, using a 'process-based' style of show. What did you find most challenging about this particular show?

CC Dave and I have been collaborating on-and-off for a few years now. We'd never placed ourselves on display in a gallery space for two and a half weeks though, and the reality of the gallery being a public space did take some adjusting to. It was interesting to put ourselves in that position. The exhibition developed in spurts. We had our basic opening show, and then we started recording and bringing up stuff we found on the street and in Op shops.

The new city element was interesting. The Meatwaters festival was going on at the same time, so we got to meet and hear lots of new and unique people play. We didn't know many people when we went down, but the hospitality of people we barely knew was really amazing.

JR How did visitors react to being able to see you at work? I wonder if the reality of watching someone at work in their studio is as interesting as it might sound. Have you heard about those art-interest groups who do tours of artist's studios in Auckland?

CC Everyone had their own reactions, most people were keen to have a chat but we didn't mind if people would have a quick look and then leave. It was good to do our closing performance to a crowd on Friday night when we were practicing in the gallery for most of the day; people could have come up earlier and seen the same show! An art group of Remuera housewives would have been good but we had to make do with a visit from an Art history class of Catholic schoolgirls and a ninja. Aside from us working in on the closing performance, there was video documentation of previous performances, computer animation, prints, and our walking frame/pram constructions which were displayed as sculptural objects.

JR How much, if any, of a distinction do you make between your work as an artist and as a musician?

CC I don't make any distinction between the two ideas, though I think it's interesting when people try to separate them out. For our show at Enjoy, we were writing all of the music that we played at our closing performance inside the gallery space. That blurred things a bit and it took time to adjust to people coming into the gallery when we were figuring out how to play our tunes. Improvisation is a big part of Golden Axe. We record chunks of us jamming for hours then we listen back and pick out sections that we like, and then structure things from there. It's a fun way of doing things. I'm not a very good musician so I have to practice lots. We generally play composed tunes with some improvised parts. If we're playing outside it gets a lot looser. For points of reference we enjoy the works of Boredoms, Destroy All Monsters, the Forcefield collective and Suck Dog among many others; groups that work confidently and in both sound and visual mediums. Plus, it's not a total revelation these days that visual artists are involved in music/sound projects, is it?

JR What you wear on your heads is one of the most distinctive things about Golden Axe. You describe them as masks, but they seem to me more like disguises, as they're a combination of things which seem designed to distract attention away from you as individuals. I found it amusing that people would confuse you and Dave a lot.

CC People do get us confused when we play. If anyone wants to know, I'm usually the one with the pram, David's got the walking frame and wave-form generator. When we played outside the last Sonic Youth concert Dave had his hoodie pulled over his head and trucker shades on and I wore a lampshade on my head. I don't know if you could define those as masks or not (it's illegal to wear a mask after sunset in public), but they were definitely disguises. We wear different outfits at every show, mainly made from found materials. At a recent show, Dave strapped some tree branches to his body and you could see his smiling bearded face clearly.

JR One of my favourite parts of your show was the catalogue/comic which you gave to everyone at the closing performance. As I was quite involved with your show I was interested in your interpretation or spin on the way the exhibition panned out. Was this part of your motivation to produce the comic?



CC Thanks. I'm glad you liked it. The aim of the catalogue was to clarify some details about the show and to give credit to the people who worked with us on the exhibition, as well as to give some idea of the processes involved in putting the show together. It was good to produce something that people could take home as a souvenir. Producing the catalogue dovetailed nicely with the series of 'Fast Comics' I've been making, which were recently available at both Enjoy and Room 103. Yep, I definitely put my own spin on the exhibition, but I think it was pretty faithful to what happened.

JR It was also a very generous gesture. Would you agree that GOLDEN AXE has a philosophy of involvement and generosity?

CC The main reason the catalogue was free was that it hardly cost anything to make and I wanted as many people to get a copy as possible. We've generally been pricing our CDs quite low so that they're affordable to people who want them. We're working under the assumption that, like us, most people in the gallery won't have too much disposable income kicking round. Thanks for saying we're generous, we ask people to be generous too sometimes.

JR You said your only other experience of Enjoy was when you visited the 2004 summer residency (Liz Allan, Mendt) and this mode of working influenced your perception of the sort of projects Enjoy facilitated. Do you think your proposed project would have been different had you come at a different time of year?

CC The content of our proposal may have been influenced more by the Enjoy proposal guidelines, specifically how exhibitions should 'engage with the politics of the space'.

JR Tell me about your busking experience in Wellington. I think I recall you guys earned about \$17 after half an hour in Cuba Mall on a Saturday afternoon.

CC I forgot to bring my battery-powered amp down to Wellington, which initially nixed any outside performance plans. However, someone told us about these outdoor power points which are free to use in the middle of Cuba Mall, so we took our gear down the road and did a show. We got a good crowd and the weather was good too.

Enjoy Performance Week

curated by
Marnie Slater and Louise Tulett
September 20 – September 25

By Marnie Slater

Performance Art has a rich history both internationally and locally, with a tradition of both artist collaboration and institutional support. However, as an artistic medium, performance remains difficult to quantify or define; this may go some way to explain the reluctance on the part of contemporary New Zealand institutions to programme, support, or market performance-based work on a regular basis. Enjoy is in no way exempt from this difficult position- setting three week programme slots when calling for proposals would seem to leave little room for temporal, event-based projects.

So, in what we promise will become an annual event, Enjoy programmed a Performance Week. As we began thinking about possible artists it became clear that we were going to be dealing with an incredibly broad range of work. From each 24-hour period to the next, the walls of Enjoy would witness a complete shift in performer/s, duration and audience. At some points the gallery would be overflowing with noise and people and at other times an artist would be performing alone in a completely empty gallery.



Ease by Colin Hodson

Colin Hodson opened the week with his evening performance *Ease*. Colin (who recently departed the shores of Wellington for the narrow streets of Amsterdam) bound fellow film maker Campbell Walker and partner Grace Russell, lay them on the wooded floors of the gallery, and invited viewers to stand and sip a beer with him while his captives lay at their feet, heads resting on folded newspaper. Repetitive music loops emanating from speakers wrapped in plastic shopping bags added to the general un-ease of the atmosphere, as eventually Colin's strategy revealed itself: to tie up as many people from the audience as he could. And while Colin's overly attentive behaviour to his participants suggested trust, some brief Internet research to assist in the description of Colin's tying methods led me to bondage websites and on-line sex shops; my wish to avoid public association with dominant/submissive role-play meant I gave Colin a definitive NO as he navigated the gallery during the performance prospecting for volunteers. Months after Performance Week had finished I still got strong responses to *Ease* ranging from anger to frustration to bemusement to humour.

Tuesday's performance *Who am I Where am I* involved the arduous wrapping of the artist in the gallery over a two and a half hour period. Vivien Atkinson employed a woman from Grace Removals to wrap her as she would a prospective package in preparation for transit. After Vivien was completely covered in newsprint and sealed with brown packing tape her employee would step back to watch Vivien struggle out of the many layers of paper leaving behind a ghostly body-shaped shell. Vivien would then lay this shell on the floor; eventually making a crumbling semi-circled wall separating her from the mostly silent audience. A dog-tag (specifically made by the artist) was yanked from Vivien's neck and ceremoniously placed on each discarded shell. *Who am I Where am I* was part of Vivien's continued investigation into the contemporary manifestation of geographical Diaspora.

From 12 noon till 12 midnight on Wednesday *The Amateur Music Club* (aka Shay Lauder and Louise Tulett) performed the same song on the hour every hour; a public display of the process and concept of practice (an appropriate word that straddles both the music and art communities).

The Amateur Music Club played on into the night to an audience consisting of drop-ins (myself included) and die-hard fans who occasionally joined in. I dropped in for the 7pm showing and watched Shay and Louise (both had removed their shoes) plucking at electric guitar/bass and singing into amped microphones with a rare rock'n'roll sincerity as they attempted a version to beat 6pm. After debuting at Enjoy Performance Week *The Amateur Music Club* graced the stage at the Enjoy Christmas party and are currently working on extending their oeuvre.

Thursday welcomed Kaleb Bennett, Eugene Hansen and James McCarthy in a performance commissioned by *The Artbruit Department for the Development of the Sonic Arts*. Interested parties could visit the gallery from midday onwards to catch a glimpse of the packing in and practice process. At 6pm a full gallery watched as Eugene and Kaleb (faces illuminated by the glow of computer monitors) brought a plethora of equipment alive as they cut, sorted and rearranged existing material from various popular and underground sound and visual sources. If anyone in the audience was feeling a lack of 'performance' by the DJ/VJ duo, James McCarthy's entrance from



Who am I / Where am I by Vivan Alvinson



Arcad<ia> by Johanna Sanders

stage left would have put their minds at ease as he amped first a carpet sweep and then a skill saw- transforming these utilitarian objects into dynamic instruments (after the performance I watched as a Wellington photographer tentatively 'played' James' carpet sweep). Kaleb, Eugene and James continue to maintain individual practices that encompass collaboration.

Friday night saw the culmination of The S.T.A.F.F Project, drawing together five weeks of public fundraising led by Bex Galloway and Sarah Miller that included a car wash, bake sale and sticker appeal involving over 30 local artists, writers and curators. Billed as the event's 'Grand Finale', The S.T.A.F.F Project invited members and guests to a night of self love and Polaroid madness featuring photographers Victoria Burkinshaw, Gavin Hipkins, Courtney Lucas, local DJ's Jack Uzi and The Hollywood Alpha Male, and the welcomed support of 42 Below. Part clap-happy nepotism and part critique, The S.T.A.F.F Project commented pointedly on the self-sustaining nature of our creative community.

The final night of Performance Week presented Arcad<ia>. Initiated by Johanna Sanders, the Arcad<ia> programme brought together Daniel Agnihotri-Clark as Anaesthesia, Rayzordoll, sporeX, DIRAC, Bek Coogan as FEMALE and Johanna herself in a night of 'funtronica'. Complete with a smoke machine and pulsing coloured lights, Enjoy played host to interactive projections, turntable meddling, 'serious electronica' and some professional looking d'n'b DJ behind-the-deck-booty-shaking. FEMALE's carefully crafted hoax was perhaps the night's most memorable chapter, with Bek spoofing the DJ button-happy persona to everybody's complete belief and hysteria.

In association with Wellington Architecture Week, Enjoy presented a week-long sound installation...

...by Bevan Smith
October 4 – 10

By Katie Duke

I have a passion for art and for pretty things. I am, like most westernised human beings thoroughly reliant on my vision and value it as a means to survive and appreciate the world in which I live.

Technology has developed throughout the last two centuries to create a visually voyeuristic society where the dominance of the sense of sight is unrivalled. From the camera obscura to photography, film and digital technology, we think it normal to see the most intimate of imagery from invasive surgery and forensic pathology to sexually indecent (or not) acts.



The knowledge that vision is privileged is discursively well-known and has inspired forward thinking individuals to challenge its dominance and to broaden our understanding of how other senses affect actions and emotions and influence our way of life. For artists such as painters and sculptors, this provides an interesting challenge because art, historically, has most often been about the aesthetic, at least until the 1970s when conceptual art and theory gave rise to new ideas about what constituted art and shattered many established norms.

However there is still the preconception that when one walks into a gallery space one will see something, whether it is pretty, shocking or merely dull, it will still be there for the 'viewer' to consider. It was therefore with trepidation that I entered Enjoy knowing I would encounter a 'sound installation', but not knowing what to expect visually or aurally.

I decided to write about Bevan Smith's sound installation because it was exhibited during architecture week and architecture and its general rigidity

and, therefore, potential to be deconstructed has always interested me. Architecture is also a multi-sensory artistic experience. The theorist Juhani Pallasmaa, in his essay 'Hapticity and Time' has argued that qualities of architecture such as matter, space and scale are measured by the eye, ear, nose, skin, tongue, skeleton and muscle. Architecture can speak to all the senses at once; it is the 'simultaneity of experience and sensual interaction'.

Pallasmaa goes on to discuss the sense of touch, arguing that all the senses are extensions of touch, and that our skin is proof of the primacy of the tactile realm. Using medical evidence about the skin being the oldest and most sensitive of our organs he states that 'even the transparent cornea of the eye is overlain by a layer of modified skin' thereby confirming touch as the parent of our eyes, ears, nose and mouth; before we see we touch. Touch is, however, the most underrated of the senses and the main point in Pallasmaa's essay is that, because architecture is a fusion of all the senses, it is therefore its task to make visible 'how the world touches us'; to get away from the retinal based wank of our time and to conceive of a haptic¹ and sensuous architecture:

¹ Haptic is to touch or grasp, it is related to the sense of touch: dependent on feeling rather than seeing

Our culture of control and speed has favoured the architecture of the eye, with its instantaneous imagery and distant impact, whereas haptic architecture promotes slowness and intimacy, appreciated and comprehended gradually as images of the body and the skin. The architecture of the eye detaches and controls, whereas haptic architecture engages and unites (Pallasmaa, 1999).

For me a 'sound installation' as an exhibition conjured up notions of a noisy construction, a kinetic sculptural piece that might project sound into the gallery space. However knowing that Smith is a recording artist I also (wrongly) conceived of an instrumental ensemble. On entering the gallery space, I was confronted with whitewashed walls, glaringly devoid of decoration and causing my pupils to contract. Enjoy contained only a trestle table placed in the middle of the gallery and set up like a listening post in a library – there for the comfort of the 'listener' only. On the table was a portable CD player, a set of headphones and opposite, a microphone. Cables were neatly taped down running across the floor. There were four chairs around the table and at each place was an A4 sheet of paper explaining to the participant what to do and what was on the CD in the player.

The CD contained an archive of voice and music samples that had been recorded through different spaces and materials. There were eight tracks each containing four audio samples repeated eight times after being processed through the space or the material. The first track – the Adam Art Gallery; second – St James Car Park; third – hallway at Smith's home; fourth – Massey, Buckle Street, upper hall; fifth – stairwell at Enjoy; sixth – Steel Handrail; seventh – Wooden Floor; and the eighth – Concrete Floor.

The samples were Smith's voice recorded in his home studio repeating the words 'One...Four', a snare sample from Akai MPC sample library, and a Gibson guitar chord played by Les Paul through a Peavey Classic Amp.

On reading the information in the silent, empty gallery space I slipped on the headphones and listened. It was bizarre knowing that only I could hear, it internalised the experience making it seem almost imaginary, no one there to confirm the sound I was hearing, no one to share the experience with. In some respects it was an intimate insight into an ulterior reality similar to the experience of hearing different music for the first time without the distraction of people or other sensual stimuli. After hearing the words 'one...four' over and over I could feel them being etched onto my mind. As words go they sounded like commands repeated into a microphone to see if it is working, 'testing... testing... one... four'. Smith's choice of words was, I believe, random and they served only to illustrate the difference inherent in the sound as it is recorded through architectural space and element.

After listening to the sound recordings I eyed up the microphone, and read the instructions – speak, sing, clap hands, make a noise into the microphone – and depending on the day of the week it will be processed through a range of architectural spaces and elements, from the Adam Gallery to a concrete floor. The white noise inside the white space of the empty gallery seemed deafening; I was overcome with timidity at the thought of hearing my voice through a steel handrail, so I left the gallery. The installation played on my mind and the extent to which the recording samples distorted according to the space and element they were processed through was interesting.

The installation made me think of Pallasmaa's essay 'Hapticity and Time'. Beyond the tactility of architecture our experience of it is influenced by the sounds we hear while in a space, from necessary and perhaps more abstract noise like movement around a space, footsteps and breathing, to deliberate noise like voices and music. Sounds enacted in an architectural space take on many different forms. We are all too aware of the aesthetics of a space, but when faced only with the aural qualities of an architectural space, one's interpretation of that space alters. The visual aspect of space, in Smith's installation, was left to the imagination, aside from instruction prompts and one's personal knowledge of Wellington. I tried to guess where the sample was recorded in each track, the car park was the easiest, the sample echoed slightly and came across as deeply oppressive, and I could almost smell the petrol fumes and feel the cold concrete, airy space. Smith worked with a computer software technique called 'convolution', whereby a physical space can be plotted and recorded aurally.

Art as an activity and as a product has always battled with the assumption that it (as Oscar Wilde stated) has no inherent use, that it is essentially useless. At times I have considered art a frivolous luxury, decoration for the affluent. It is not practical. It does not portend to cure cancer; but to deny art a use is to deny culture, or worse, to deny a culture the means of expression. If the accentuation is most often on the visual in art, it is easy to neglect other senses and it is easy to wonder what the role of art is or should be. The viewer will remain detached, looking at, but not involved in art. If, however, the experience of art is all encompassing, something we can touch, hear, taste, smell and see, we are more likely to remember it. It is more likely to alter our reality and way of thinking and affect us emotionally, even if just for a moment. Smith's installation, in my opinion, seeks to redress the sensory imbalance, privileging the aural. It does not attempt to address other senses but humbly draws the listener's attention to the pervasive sense of sound and how we experience it depending on what space we are in. The installation requires interaction and involvement without which there would not be art.

Bevan Smith is an internationally recognised musician who initiated New Zealand's Involve Records. For more information see www.involve.co.nz.



Drawing

Janes Oram, Zina Swanson,
and Clare Noonan
October 13 – 29

Drawn by Jessica Reid

As a title, DRAWING at first seemed like a misnomer for this modest exhibition. Although the show included drawings, it predominantly comprised of three artist's discreet sculptural works. Each work had a quiet stillness and delicacy to it and a timeless quality brought out through the objects' skillful fashioning. Recent Ilam graduates Zina Swanson, James Oram and Clare Noonan had put together an exhibition which demonstrated the processes of attempting to pin-down and work through the multifarious ideas which floated around in their heads, as they have described happens in the act of drawing. But these are not notebook doodles; there was too much of an interest in order and structure and an aesthetic link between the works in their super-slick crafts-personship, even when the materials used were Op shop second hand. Perhaps the title makes the most sense when the many meanings of the verb are considered; as viewers we are asked to draw links between, conclusions from and meanings out of the works. This is further highlighted in the artists' decision to not give any indication of who the creator of each work was, thus instigating an audience guessing game of compare and contrast.

James Oram has created a net of men's ties, which lends a sinister tone to one corner of the gallery. Although physically knotted together the net was also unified by the repetition of dark maroons, browns and navy, colours which made me think of nineteen seventies civil servants (probably wearing walk-shorts and short sleeves too) and therefore had, in my mind, a rather depressing mundanity to it. The lights of the gallery cast a bold shadow which solidified it as an object, as did the masculine power symbolism of the neck ties. It was strung up to appear almost like a drift-net wall or restrictive screen. Here in the gallery it was static. But this is a net, an item for use, to catch and tangle you in. It feels inevitable that you will be caught and if you're caught at sea you'll be drawn down to drown.

A separate but related work also by Oram was a pair of tennis rackets fashioned into the shape of heads and are hung face to face. The networking pun was continued here as the faces appear to be talking to each other, but whatever they're saying is probably, like the heads, empty. The net metaphor changes from the drift to the tennis variety when viewed in light of this work and therefore makes both works seem more light-hearted.

Clare Noonan displayed a beautifully crafted dark wooden viewfinder positioned to look out to the pine-lined green-belt of Mount Victoria. In one eye's view is a photography slide of the Christchurch property she grew up on and through the other you can see the Wellington view. This created a woozy optical effect as the two views almost, but didn't quite, line-up. While your brain tried to make sense of the scene, there was also a tension and sense of dislocation in not being able to see either view properly.

Noonan's other two works dealt with related ideas of home, identity and journey. There were two colour contact-sheets of images, documentation of a performance where she collected earth from the boundaries of her home farmland in Christchurch. A pair of painted wax feet, cast from her own, stick out from the floor beneath. The feet are incredibly life-like but for the torturous infliction of a compass inserted into the ball of one foot. This was furthered by their positioning on the ex-fireplace concrete slab embedded in the gallery's wooden floor, giving the appearance of a person who's been up-turned and set in concrete and conjures stories in my mind of Sicilian underworld justice. But somehow I don't think this is the path Noonan wanted to take us down.



Zina Swanson made three pseudo-scientific drawings in ink, tea and pencil with accompanying glass objects placed beside them. There seem to be botanical and zoological references but they also possess a fanciful delicacy. The sepia colour of the tea gives the drawings an aged authority; like neglected museum artifacts re-discovered in a dark and dusty trunk, water-damaged and faded they still meticulously document an imaginary scientist's experiments. A moth is contained in one glass vessel like a memento mori, another glass sphere is covered in dried lily petals giving it the appearance of a glass onion (however I doubt this is a reference to The Beatles.)

All the works in this show have stillness to them, objects which reference or suggest the potential of movement but are too quiet and contained to carry out their intended actions. DRAWING is a show which requires contemplation and time to absorb.





In Between

Charlotte Huddleston
and Richard Lewer
November 3 – 19

No need to be afraid by Jessica Reid

Perhaps one way to divide the world would be into people who believe in ghosts and those who don't. Charlotte Huddleston and Richard Lewer would claim to belong to the first category and their exhibition, while highlighting the desire to neatly categorise in this way, revels in avoiding being fitted neatly into one group or the other. We are left with an ambiguous smoky, floating grey world of shadows. 'In Between' examined the divides of both physical and metaphysical distance, the way in which personal narrative develops and the 'Chinese whispers' nature of urban and family legend.

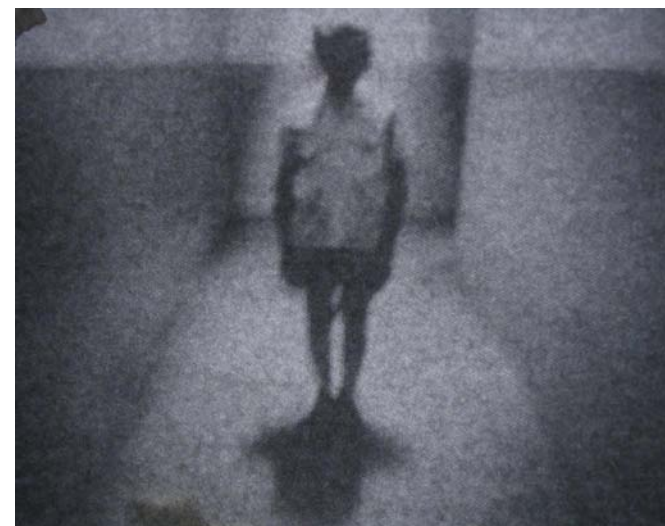
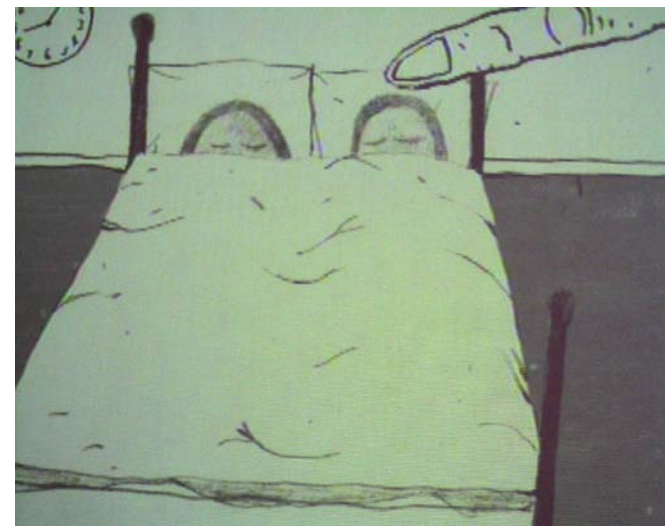
Telling ghost stories is often like trying to explain dreams. As soon as they're put into words they've already transformed into some other separate entity. I know that my own stories are progressively solidified, simplified and exaggerated from one telling to the next. I remember being at a school camp or slumber party telling ghost stories, but with added dramatic embellishment, of course, to keep my audience's attention. Invariably though, I'd find at the end of my story everyone was asleep and I was left awake scared of the very thing I'd created. If to the very person who owns the story it can be so malleable, so amorphous, what happens when it is passed into someone else's hands to be interpreted, tied down and fixed? While this may be the process the artists employed (interviewing subjects and then developing a script and accompanying animation based on this research) their own positions are not so clear in the end result.

The front windowed wall of the gallery was covered in psychotically obsessive layers of black and white photocopied images, stuck up with sticky tape in a make-shift fashion. The outside world broke through in dusty shafts of light. They had an almost spiritual sense to them, like God's fingers breaking through a gap in the dark clouds of a stormy sky.

There were several images recognisable from horror films (*The Exorcist*, *The Omen*, *Nosferatu*) as well as the artists' own photographs and pictures sourced from the Internet. This was contrasted with an austere office-like set-up at the other end of the gallery displaying the research undertaken during the project. Charlotte took on the 'Scully' investigator/researcher role in the collaboration and these were her X-files. Photocopied enlargements of maps and images filled the files which Charlotte called the 'evidence of her research', but perhaps not the evidence of the existence of ghosts. Photographed in a slightly removed topographical style, houses looked as if they were under surveillance from a stalker or psychopath. Gallery visitors were to be neither encouraged nor dissuaded from taking these files down from the boxes on the shelf and flicking through the many papers. The answers were all there, but you had to be curious to discover them.

In keeping with the division motif, Huddleston and Lewer's process of production was also influenced by the division of the Tasman Sea. As Richard was living in Melbourne at the time of creating the animated video-loop projection, he used ex-patriot Kiwis to do the 'voice-overs', thus adding another layer to the story's re-telling and questioning the need for its authenticity.

Lewer's style of animation has a humorous, faux-naivety to it, particularly when compared to his effectively darker creepy catalogue 'Goodnight' produced in conjunction with an earlier show. Maybe it was the grating Kiwi accents of the female voice-overs, or the cutesy clay-mation horse which appears in one story, that prevents these stories from being truly sinister. The tone seems to vacillate between the comical and the ridiculous. But perhaps this is the point the artists want to make: if you accept the unknown as part of everyday life then there's no reason to be afraid.



A Christmas Story

Tim Armstrong
November 24 – December 10

You better watch out... by Jessica Reid

A few years ago when I moved up to Auckland I found myself left out of the clique of those who had in common the terrifying childhood memories of the large fibreglass Santa, annually brought out to adorn the roof of Whitcoulls on Queen Street. Like the bucket fountain to Wellingtonians, Aucklanders shared a love/hate relationship with this creepy, three storey high monument to kitsch. The overall shoddiness of its construction, his inane grin and, perhaps worst of all, the mechanical finger beckoning customers inside were the key to its uncanniness. Tim Armstrong's exhibition 'A Christmas Story' had touches of this same unnerving celebration of tackiness.



Tim refrained from perhaps the more obvious strategy of bombarding the gallery visitor with Christmas paraphernalia, and instead presented a somewhat restrained and minimal exhibition. The central work was a life-size fibreglass Santa Claus whose benevolent smile was belied by the scythe (in place of the usual sack of toys) he held in his hand. It seemed apt that the intended motorised action, ambiguously either a jolly ho ho ho/stabbing movement, failed early on due to technical difficulties. This blobby creation had the well-worn look of a mannequin who'd seen far too many Christmases, ravaged by time and sun but still placed in a shop window to get shoppers in the festive mood. Here in the gallery he seemed to look out the window to Cuba Street, casting a judgmental eye over the people passing by, ready to slice up naughty children and adults alike.

Two smaller figurines were roughly modeled out of paper-maché WAREHOUSE brochures. They were lumpy and disfigured creations, as if the blurred images of frantic shoppers in motion. But in their spacious surroundings they also had the appearance of Ancient Romanesque statues. Gods and goddesses of shopping and THE WAREHOUSE is the temple at which they are worshipped.

A small portrait of Santa hung in one corner, painted in a faux-naïve style, looked like the type of painting you'd find in a Salvation Army family store. However in this instance he had become a 'dirty old man' standing at the top of a Shopping Mall escalator, finger crooked and without pants, showing off his bright pink bulbous thighs.

The video-loop was the most confronting work in the exhibition, aurally filling up every inch of the gallery space. Tim took a few seconds of fuzzy security camera footage from THE WAREHOUSE and looped it to play ad nauseum. The shot is framed within what could either be a Christmas star of Bethlehem or the star burst shape so commonly seen in post-Christmas shop sales. I felt the video accurately captured the sickening experience of sensory overload one can feel when entering THE WAREHOUSE. The size, the scale, the shoppers, the lights and colours seem designed to dazzle and confuse. The accompanying soundtrack was recorded from a 'Christmas in the Park' event at the very moment when 'Santa' arrived. An excited warbling Jackie Clarke led a band in a rendition of The Bee Gees' 'Night Fever', her voice getting increasingly shrill. The audio was recorded by such lo-fi means that other voices interrupt and the music crackles with distortion. The customers in the video seem to disco dance, jerkily strutting forward and back, captured for eternity as slaves to the music. This brain-dead shopper idea is one that has seen in pop culture before, most memorably in George Romero's 'Dawn of the Dead', a horror set in a shopping mall. THE WAREHOUSE location transplants the concept to a recognisably New Zealand context.

Tim's interest in Christmas was originally ignited by his study of ancient pagan mythology. The Father Christmas figure has throughout time featured in several different cultures in various incarnations of the same theme, our modern concept being a marketing invention of Coca-Cola. Subtle references to this study were sprinkled throughout the show; Santa's scythe a reference to the pagan figure of Saturnalia who also carried one for example, but Tim's focus was really on the contemporary.

Tim's conclusions may not have been surprising or profound, but were enjoyable nonetheless. 'A Christmas Story' was a fun examination of festive consumerism, society's complex relationship to kitsch and our blind following of mainstream traditions.

