Enjoy Gallery PDF Catalogue 2006

Enjoy

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Arts Council of New Zealand Toi Aotearoa

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Dear Reader,

Welcome to the 2006 PDF Catalogue. In these many pages you'll find essays, short fiction or interviews to accompany each Enjoy show for 2006.

The relationship of art and art writing is an important one. Writing can articulate latent ideas within an artwork, help you come to enjoy the work further and extend the exhibition experience. Text can bring out conflicts within work and leave you with more questions than answers. Some writing featured in this catalogue takes the exhibition as a departure point and leaves you in the wilderness, far from where you set off. Dear Reader, I would argue that all of these textual adventures are worth the time you spend taking them.

Enjoy places importance on writing both as a support to art and as a creative form of its own. Putting our money where our mouth is, Enjoy stumps up to produce writing which supports every exhibition within the program.

This approach has led to the development of writers and editors, and has naturally supplied the exhibiting artists with valuable written support.

In late 2006, I picked up the Writer/Publicist baton from Jessica Reid, and, in 2007, I am in the lucky position of Enjoy Writer and Publications Manager. The new role was extended to establish a range of written dialogue; a program of publications that can add to the critical resonance created in our exhibition program. The annual PDF catalogue is one means currently used to disseminate this written matter.

Circumventing high print production costs, the online catalogue is available free, to be compiled by the reader. Catch up on an exhibition you missed, or an artist or writer you've been following.

I'd like to thank the contributing writers for their strong pieces, volunteer proofreaders for exercising their sharp eyes, and to Jayne Joyce for her choice design work.

Paula Booker
Enjoy Writer and Publications Manager

2007

Eve Armstrong

Good Willing
By Rachel O'Neill, in conversation with Eve Armstrong

Eve Armstrong's work has a commitment to navigating the distance that exists between people, before they even start using gestures and words. Thinking through this, I began talking to a phrase in my head: 'moral phenomenology'. This conversation looks at how Eve's work adapts to its metamorphosis. In art this is some way to wake up in the morning.

Rachel O'Neill: *Adaptives* was a project in which you made a catalogue featuring tools that people had invented, primarily to help them improve the use of things encountered in their daily environment. Is your work driven by an interest in the ways people must often adapt against their will?

Eve Armstrong: I think we are always operating in relation to something else; be it another person, an object, infrastructure, whatever. Although we can have a degree of control in terms of how we relate, many things are out of our control. My interest lies in how individuals might negotiate, and where or how an individual fits in relation to a larger structure. Often we can adapt to these situations or environments quite easily. For instance, if you don't make desired changes when you first move into a new house (basic stuff like adding shelves, painting) then you just get used to things, adapt and don't make the changes. You learn ways around them – you adapt rather than adapting your environment.

With *Adaptives,* I saw these simple objects as examples, moments when the makers had actively tried to effect change. Rather than simply accepting the object or structure as it was, they have tried to make it work for them. The thing that I found particularly interesting was how the methods used were very simple or ad-hoc. From my own experience, sometimes I'll make adjustments like those in the *Adaptives* and intend to do a 'proper' job later, but I never do. I just get used to them and adapt.

RO: There is a marked process of visual formalism in your detritus works. You photographed stacked cardboard boxes and garbage bags as if about to be collected for rubbish disposal, as well as further re-enactments of such all-natural arrangements in gallery spaces. These are works that I'd connect with the shock of adaptability; how easily people are able to fit into a new environment, though they might experience this as alienating at the same time. How does the "ergonomic" treatment of contradictory experience function in terms of the adaptability of your process? For example, the "cleaning-up" of the dumpsites via photographic representation or the move from the street to gallery floor? If you would formulate what I have tried to describe as aesthetic or "ergonomic" formalisation in a different way, how would you do this?

EA: In terms of aesthetics I have an interest in what I call "accidental formalism". You might also think about it as an aesthetics of activity. These are beautiful arrangements that you see around, for example on the street. Like those recorded in my photographic collages, they are records of activity and appear to have a strong formal quality – for instance, piles of bricks, wood or cardboard that recall minimalist stacks or scatter pieces. These things have a very real energy – they are about the activity not the aesthetics – the activity generates the form and thinking through form gives you plenty to work with.

In terms of a "complexity of adaptability", my inquiry is two-fold. I want to engage with these rich materials that are in the world, and to also engage with sculptural or formal processes. So it's art and it's rubbish. I've seen and continue to see the detritus or rubbish in many ways, from a precise system of ordering and recycling to a strange form of public sculpture. They document the activities of a place. I'm currently fascinated by how these rubbish collections might describe a place by what it professes not to be, or what it does not want to be. With bringing these things into a gallery, sometimes it helps to make the inquiry clearer, sharpen the focus and allow for time and space to consider these ideas – not just for me, but also for an audience.

The gallery is not the only place for these things of course. I see them as pausing in the gallery. An intervention in the standard processes or cycles for these materials and objects, not a radical shift, just a nudge. For me that's where the "complexity of adaptability" comes in, finding quite light or gentle ways to adapt these materials, with methods which don't heavily alter how they really exist in the world.

RO: Subtle alteration is a dynamic process to think about in terms of supports in place around the work. I just recently discovered CLUBS feedback system, run by the Melbourne-based CLUBSproject, where artists receive critical discussion of their work by request. You mention that *Small Local Improvement Projects (SLIPs)* are an ongoing project and have since produced a *SLIPs Update*. There is often an imperative need for dynamic critical support for work such as your own that does not have a pre-determined deadline of sorts. This work is most rigorous where it engages in existing misunderstandings, including concepts of self or community improvement, of experiential artistic process, and "just being available to help". Did you consider the need for greater critical support of *SLIPs* due to the complexity of the work's relation to the gallery and wider public? What kind of critical framework did you envision for the project?

EA: One of the reasons for my project was to try to set up a structure that would investigate and open up critical dialogue around the work and other similar practices.

I had some questions in mind around the artist's responsibility when working in a participatory way, including ways in which art might offer a productive method to work with social concerns. *SLIPs* are a direct response to this. It's difficult with projects like *SLIPs* because so much of your energy is taken up just trying to make the project work, so that's when an external critical framework is great. You're right, as an artist there is a tendency to do it all yourself – to try to action the project and have a critical component present. Each project might require a different critical framework. *SLIPs* was interesting in that it's closest or primary audience wasn't really the art community but pockets of different people within the community. Obviously, someone who has participated in the project might have quite different discussion points than those who are looking in on the project. Both are relevant and interesting.

RO: There seems to also be an internal process of coming and going in *SLIPs*. When moving between spaces with different agendas and concepts of social site, often the less-than social aspects of such spaces are reflected. Understandably, institutional spaces, galleries and community spaces foreground a functional social environment to inspire participation and attendance. How do you think it is possible to construct an approach or re-approach that maintains its friction in relation to such aspirations?

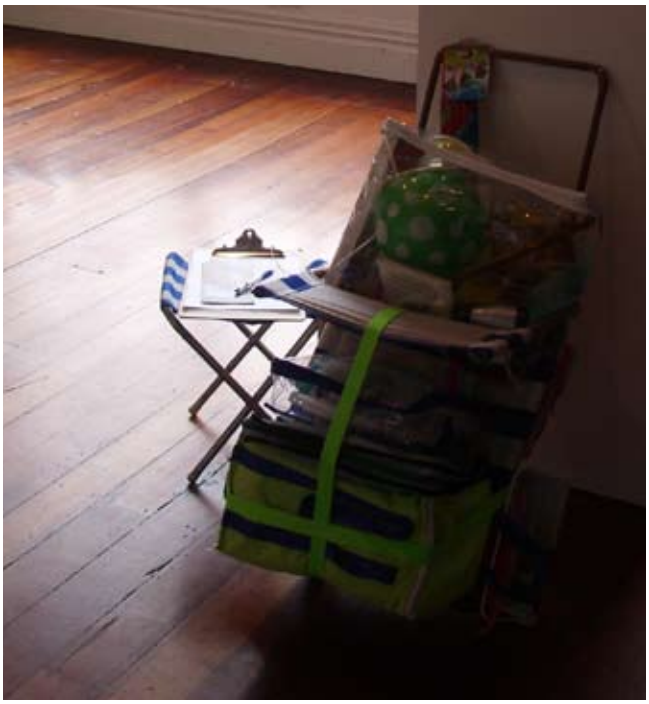
EA: I guess as an artist you have to decide how you want to operate within these spaces. You just have to hold strong to your own way of doing things. I'm interested in finding ways to work within or extend a structure. Rather than knock it

down I'll tend to adapt it to suit my needs. For me that was part of what *SLIPs* was about – this focus on an individual's interpretation of what would benefit a community. I think artists should do what's right for the work. For *SLIPs* I focussed on the process because there was already too much to do. The gallery space didn't get as much attention as the space outside it, which was right for the project but also problematic. In consideration of the short residency timeframe, I wanted the residency to work primarily for me as an artist and for the immediate participants. That was my call.

RO: Yes, interactions in the gallery and outside of its general parameters do not always thrive on their relative adversity to each other – as definable foe or opponent. It's never simply gallery vs world. Your work more specifically engages with how a viewing public assumes their roles as participants in various viewing situations. Does your work deliberate on a concept of naturalisation – is there, for example, a specific aspect of public interaction your artwork aims to keep intact to show how resilient certain interactions and responses are?

EA: Well, I guess you can relate it to processes of naturalisation in the sense of adaptability. Actually I have often referred to my structures (be they objects or otherwise) as "adaptable support systems". I came to this name because I am interested in creating open structures. Not so open that they sit on the fence, but open in the sense that they consider their fallibility or other potentials. At the very least they consider or are receptive to external influences. How can you not be?

Processes of collaboration also tie into ideas of naturalisation and adaptability for me. The word collaboration generally has a positive connotation "oh it's collaboration, it must be inclusive and good". But I want to make work that explores and articulates the complexity of collaborations. How do we come to collaborative decisions? My work looks at an individual in relation to a larger community or society. How can an individual have agency, and work within a community too? There is potential for so much richness within that basic interaction. It's always give and take. Things are always gained and lost.



RO: Naturalisation is a process that SLIPs engages with – less as a method of deconstruction but more as a provocation to an attitude of relentlessness that is inherent in deconstructive method. Your work process, however, does utilise deconstructive avenues since you tap into blurry undercurrents guiding what is visible. Ideas around Relational Aesthetics come to mind here, though not just for obvious reasons that would link your work directly with the strategy's emphasis on human connectivity over a structural pre-programmed model. Your work more specifically engages with restlessness in human interaction, restlessness that isn't necessarily constant or particularly "social". But instead a parallel to the exhaustive human connectivity I've just mentioned, in terms of the relational paradigm. Restlessness – as your work opens onto the dynamic of hope – that a person might follow through to a new point of space or interaction that copes with the strain of loose-ends, altered conceptions of past and future, most significantly a metamorphsis that recognises its productive fallibility. Does your work engage with the strain of endeavours by citizens or viewers to live up to the ideal or requirement that stresses always making the best of the situation, of being constantly aware of responsibilities associated with one person connecting with another?

SLIPs: Small Local Improvement Projects Eve Armstrong. *The Lakeside Leisure Kit* available free for hire, photo by Jessica Reid

EA: The process of decision-making fascinates me. The idea of "making better" or "making improvements" seems ingrained. Renovating, upgrading, increasing productivity, working smarter…

"Better" is always changing too. There'll probably be a "better" version of "better" tomorrow. Which is great if you have a product to sell because you can always bring out the next "latest" model, but difficult if you're trying to make improvements in a less commercial context, in places where you want to make a more lasting improvement.

In *SLIPs*, The Arlington Community Gardens was one project with the potential to investigate these ideas more thoroughly. The Arlington gardeners are basically trying to contribute something positive to the local community. By rescuing and replanting plants, taking care of an overlooked reserve and trying to engage locals in being part of this project too. However, the immediate community surrounding the gardens, primarily those in the sprawling Arlington flats aren't that involved. Maybe it's because they don't know they can be, as many do not speak English. Maybe it's because they don't want to be. Maybe it's because the land is not exactly premium – it's pretty boggy down the back. I'm sure all of these apply. It's a complex situation. I wonder if the immediate community will want to take some ownership in the gardens, since they didn't generate the idea themselves. At the same time, if the Arlington gardeners overwhelmed themselves with all these doubts then nothing would happen and the reserve would be even more under-utilised. At the end of the day, I think improvements are really about hope and possibility.

RO – in conclusion: In the *SLIPs Update* Eve states: "I was interested to see if good intent could carry a project." Morality is a very unfashionable terminology, though ethics has become a versatile expression for the monitoring and greater politicisation of human relationships. I sense Eve's practice as a whole challenges the compatibility we now share with ethics. By this I mean that there is a moral phenomenology at play in her work that does not simply set out to administer the values on which we should rest, or relentlessly fulfill our ethical quota. Instead, a relentless desire to do good collides with restless intentions (time, space, responsibility and ethical fallibility) that don't have as yet a reputable character to fall back on or justify the desired outcome or hope. This is how Eve's work begins to adapt to its metamorphosis – to adapt its good intent.

SLIPs: Small Local Improvement Projects Eve Armstrong. Reception area photo by Jessica Reid

Eve performs in The Real Hot Bitches dance troupe during the *SLIPs* community soccer tournament

Chris Cudby

By Pippin Barr

A video in a storage area, projected onto a white wall: a figure with bread dough on its head, pulled down over its face. There is ambient noise and the figure is reading, scanning its head back and forth. The dough has two eyeholes that are becoming elongated as the dough is pulled down by gravity. The figure breathes through a narrow black straw.

Five stills from *The Fly* printed with an inkjet printer on A4 paper: Jeff Goldblum's character in the teleport capsule; computer text about the teleportation sequence; two LEDs, one on, one off; the capsule with smoke rolling out of it; Goldblum emerging naked from the capsule.

A UV tube-light is mounted in raw wood materials, standing upright on the floor. "15/15" is written in black vivid on the end of one piece of wood.

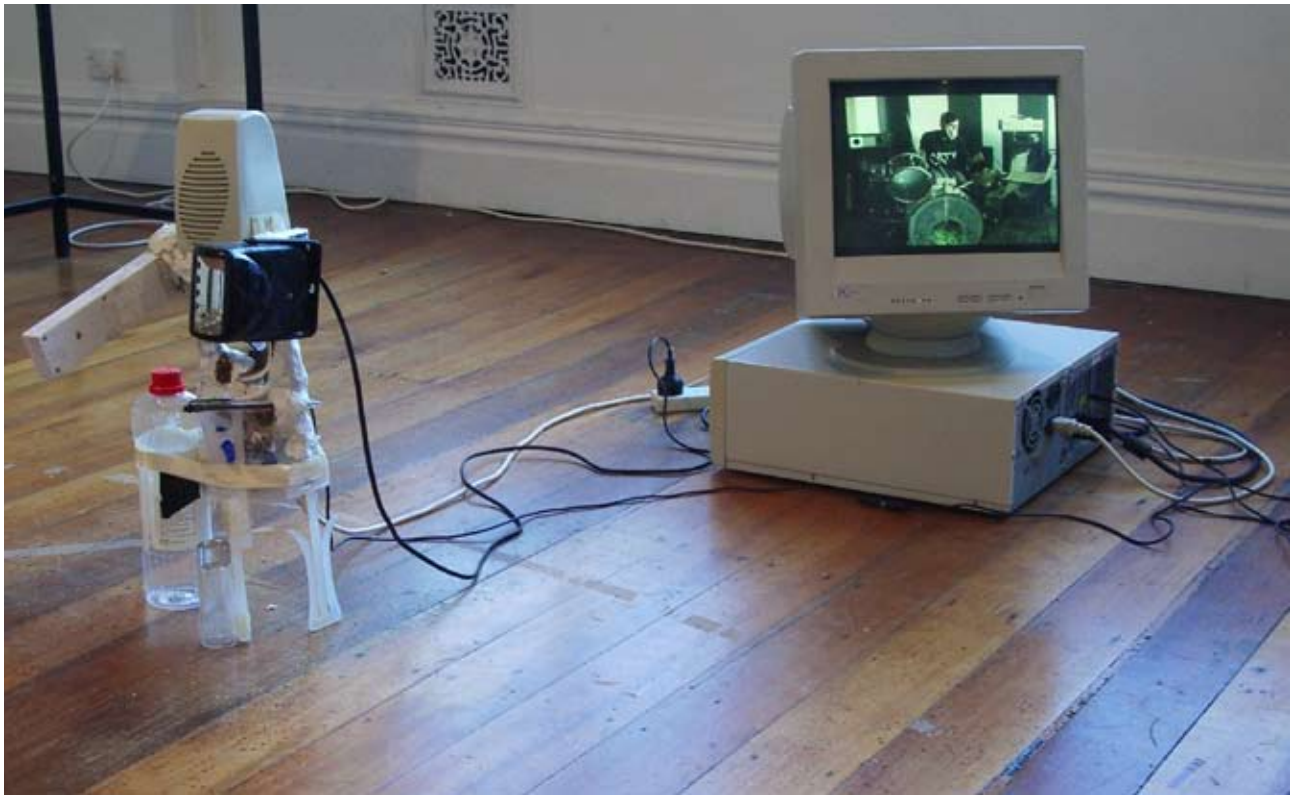
A shelving unit in the corner: music equipment, paints, adhesive hooks, a glue gun, various plugs, 90 minute cassette tapes and modeling paste.

Two detailed drawings in black pen on canvas. They include geometric shapes, mountains with windows, eruptions, pyramids, and objects emerging from water.

Two men experiment with audio equipment on a desk in one corner while discussing the possibility of a Karaoke night at Valve and the effects pedals they have borrowed. Behind them, a large keyboard leans against the wall. More keyboards, effects machines and a drum machine are on the desk and on the primary-school brown chairs. An amplifier sits on the floor with a cable plugged into it. A tripod-mounted camera points at this set-up with a directional mike attached, not recording. Two rainbow-coloured slippers sit under the desk, a cream jacket hangs on a chair.

An old CRT computer monitor sitting on a beige computer is connected to speakers built into humanoid figures. The figures are made of modeling paste and various items. One has a power-strip and a light for its arms and a meths bottle and shot-glass for its legs. Its body includes pens and more modeling paste. The other figure rests on a full, wooden, twenty-CD organiser (e.g. Destroy all Monsters – "Bored"; Six Finger Satellite – "Law of Ruins"; Fushitsusha – "The Caution Appears.") One arm includes a ring of colouring pencils pointed outward. Embedded in the body is a miniature disco ball and a car or television telescoping antenna.

Rhythm is best considered fractally ...
15 February – 10 March 2006



The monitor shows a man wearing a black *CATS* t-shirt, drumming with a white object strapped to his face, slightly to the left of his mouth. He is surrounded by drums, other musical equipment, and a cane chair. There is a green blanket in the bass drum.

Attached to one wall at eye level is a brightly coloured card in cellophane along with a white, six-track CD called "Miami Beach". The package says it costs ten dollars on a small dot-sticker. There are more in a clear plastic container attached to the wall below.

In the middle of the room, toward the door, is a display of yellow booklets that cost fifteen dollars each. The catalog pinned to the wall says they are colour-coded, weekly, and come with a CD. The display stand can be folded into a carry-case.

Near the entrance to the gallery is a roll of masking tape lying on two key-rings. Standing inside the roll of tape are pencils, a blue biro, and golden, bullet-shaped objects in yellow foam.

The men in the room discuss leads for musical equipment and long-play tapes. Behind them, a pair of modified sunglasses sits on a high shelf. The sunglasses are painted yellow with blue eyes on the lenses. On the desk is a similar pair of sunglasses, painted green.

The men play music with the equipment on the desk: a beat, modulated tones, the sound of static, and heavy guitar.

The dough in the projected video is deteriorating, pulling down further over the figure's head. The eye-holes are longer, as is the hole the straw protrudes through. The figure is still reading and there is the sound of turning pages.

Rhythm is best considered fractally ... Chris Cudby. Installation photo by Jessica Reid

Chris Cudby photo by Jessica Reid

Rhythm is best considered fractally ... Chris Cudby. Video in the storage cupboard, photo by Jessica Reid

Caroline Johnston

The Lucky Sod
By Melanie Oliver

Caroline Johnston frequently admired this particular upended tree root as she passed it on walks in Aro Valley before deciding to haul it away for a new life. Transplanted from the side of the road to Enjoy's gallery space, the stump was set afloat, drifting far from both its original home and the site where it had subsequently been abandoned. The *Lucky Sod* was elaborately decorated with wooden finials; gilded, varnished and beautified. Blood and bone fertiliser, glitter and dirt were applied to create a loose pattern around both the base of the stump and the circumference of the gallery in a late-nineteenth century Victorian style. The installation was elegant, in a polite Anglican way, but executed with unrefined materials – the contrast generating a satisfying sense of incongruity.

On warm days, the stench of the fertiliser wafted through the space. Its odour was reminiscent of gardens, the systematic selection and organisation of nature, of efforts required to encourage growth when settling plants in new conditions. Here on display was a structure developed to efficiently obtain nutrients from the soil, rendered obsolete – dug up, dislocated and severed from the rest of the tree – now considered useful only as an ungainly object.

An intriguing entity nonetheless, the stump was somewhat over-adorned, like an older woman wearing excessive jewelry. The imposition of colonial trappings and artificiality of the turned wood finials were juxtaposed with the organic curves of the unruly tree roots. Although the tree stump was cleaned up and swept into order, clumps of dirt and soil remained. This created an unusual or inconsistent combination of natural and synthetic, a hint towards the futility of attempts to enforce conformity and in general our inevitable human fallibility.

Johnston's dusty, decorative frieze extended around all edges of the room, echoing the skirting board, and so the entire gallery space was utilised, thus incorporating and referring to the institutional architecture. Despite critique of the white cube aesthetic and ideology being an old and favoured argument, the clinical white gallery space still operates as the primary mode of presentation, even in less formal spaces such as Enjoy. With the introduction of a grubby brown stump and little piles of earth, this habit was mocked, the notion of a revered space devoid of external interference and the autonomy of art objects sent up or exposed as foolish.

The solo forlorn stump situated within the spacious room also evoked concerns over deforestation of native bush. In this way, it also offered a connection with New Zealand painting of the 1930s and 1940s. The dead tree theme has played a significant role in New Zealand art history, as numerous representations have created discussions of this mournful and nationalistic motif within the landscape.[1] Painters of the time articulated an ecological awareness but also proposed the dead tree as an emblem of settlement, the transition between natural wilderness and cultivated farmable land; an important sign for our national identity. *Lucky Sod* makes a pastiche of New Zealand art's obsession with landscape and identity. It offers a critical sculptural reading, re-using the tree stump as a symbol for the clearing of indigenous land in the assertion of colonial ownership, as well as the dislocation associated with urbanisation.

In Johnston's *Lucky Sod,* the once-living form was revealed as static and immobile when transferred to the gallery. Its organic appeal was distilled or cloaked in stuffiness and the emphasis shifted to its unusual character and beauty as a functionless object. Perhaps this was also a reflection on the attempts of contemporary artists to bring certain aspects of everyday life into art. When housed within the confines of the gallery, sometimes interesting or poignant observations and interactions lose their potency, becoming illustrations or artifacts.

A few weeks after the conclusion of the show, I walked through a side street in Aro Valley to discover *Lucky Sod* returned to lush pastures. Happily bedded amongst the weeds, the decorative elements remained but the stump was in familiar territory once again and it appeared relieved. I heard that a short while later the wooden finials were anonymously removed and *Lucky Sod* was thus repatriated and independent, or maybe just pleased to be out of the limelight, ordinary and back to earth.

1 Michael Dunn, "Frozen Flame & Slain Tree: The dead tree theme in New Zealand art of the thirties and forties" *Art New Zealand* Vol 13 (1979), 40-45.

Lucky Sod Caroline Johnston. Installation photo by Jessica Reid

Lucky Sod Caroline Johnston. Installation photo by Jessica Reid

Interactions series of seminars and workshops

Treading the Boards
By Andrea Bell

From March to May 2006, I served as Enjoy's inaugural intern for the requisite professional practice-based term of my Melbourne MA. I chose Enjoy because I wanted to meet artists, to work on a project that would connect people, and because I was homesick for Wellington. I can remember my first meeting, entirely unsure what I was letting myself in for – while shyly sipping whiskey and gingerale I listened to stories of summer holidays gone wrong, and tried to make sense of my new surroundings. Alas, the whiskey ran dry but I was given the responsibility of coordinating Enjoy's series of seminars and workshops.

The launch of the Interactions series was bittersweet with a farewell party for *Enjoy*'s first ever fanclub member; Emma Bugden. The fortnight that followed consisted of a wide range of forums and floor talks covering both practical and theoretical concerns, as well a number of informal reports hosted by speakers back from exhibitions and festivals internationally.

Some personal highlights included Liz Allan and Louise Menzies' engaging talk on relational practices – aptly titled *Face to Face: Observations on Art and Sociality* – and Charlotte Huddleston's report back on Govett-Brewster happenings, Jessica Reid's impressions of *Next Wave* festival in Melbourne, and Tao Wells' unrelenting critical provocations throughout. Nick Spratt also came down from rm103 especially to share with us the highs and lows of the rm project's recent events – including specially produced loot bags made for *Next Wave*, and Stuart Shepherd narrated a chaotic home video of his folk-art centred trip to New York and India. During this time Enjoy also began its own satellite version of the traveling art-publishing archive *Kiosk*[1] with a generous number of contemporary art publications donated to the new Enjoy library.

As a project, the seminar series attempted to re-affirm Enjoy's position as a space that "facilitates contemporary art projects … to actively promote critical dialogue."[2] Due to the open format of the presentations and the many interactions that took place, new audiences were drawn and current networks were consolidated. This enabled members of the Enjoy community to re-examine their practices in a critical yet supportive environment, calling for reflection and transparency.

Australian artist Alex Gawronski has spoken of the political autonomy of artist run spaces. He argues that, at best, "the autonomous, self-determined aspects of artist-run activity produces discursive social spaces as significant and indispensable to the actual art exhibited."[3]

A particular strength of initiatives like Enjoy is the ability to locate artistic and other diverse art-related practices independently from wider institutional and commercial constraints. Enjoy is a hub, and the seminar series verified

this as the gallery was transformed not only physically but socially, intellectually and emotionally for the duration of the *Interactions* seminar series.

Hosting an intern might be seen as a sign of maturity for an artist run space such as Enjoy. At the SPARK 04 artist-run space forum, while in his role as Arts Advisor at Creative New Zealand, Rob Garrett said "project spaces potentially have a role there as one of the pilots who can help build sustainable careers for us. Not just for artists but also for writers, curators and art administrators, people who will become something else in the art profession."[4] Though I was wary of using Enjoy exclusively as a training ground it is typical that such spaces pick up the slack of public galleries.

During a seminar featuring Tina Barton, Jenny Gillam, Courtney Lucas, and Maddie Leach titled *Documentation* – a session which is ironically survived only by a low quality MP3 recording – Barton spoke candidly about the level of debate in contemporary art institutions, praising Enjoy for staging the seminars "on the smell of an oily rag." She criticised the reticence of larger art institutions with greater budgets for not delivering challenging public programmes to their audience concerning the consumption of contemporary art.

A number of art professionals from public galleries around the country attended Enjoy's free seminar series. While it is important to acknowledge the discrete differences in the agendas of public and artist-run galleries, the presence of those professionals gave me some hope. One day public institutions might realise their role as facilitators rather than arbiters, adopting discussion-based formats over didactic lectures when addressing issues surrounding contemporary practice.

Naturally, there were a number of limitations placed on the seminar series – with nothing but a petty-cash budget for the entire fortnight. Chocolate biscuits and cordial didn't quite correspond with the amount of time and effort donated so generously by our speakers. The seminars were also brought forward by three weeks due to a slight program re-shuffling – giving those who agreed to present little time to prepare. Publicity thrown together at short notice also meant that on some occasions attendance was somewhat more intimate than we'd planned, however, this gave the seminars a more relaxed feel and allowed for more open discussion.

All in all, the seminar series brought a diverse range of people

Artist Maddie Leach presenting during the *Documentation* seminar
Curator Sarah Farrar in discussion with artist Courtney Lucas post-seminar

together. From an outsider's perspective I came to see the seminar series as integral to Enjoy's role in the Wellington art community. Enjoy promotes itself as more than just a gallery space for exhibitions, but rather somewhere that "actively promotes critical dialogue."[5] Opening up the polished wooden floors to discussion, the seminar series enabled Enjoy to prove this was more than mere spin.

Andrea would like to thank Paula Booker for her editorial assistance.

1 Curated by Christoph Keller (Revolver), *Kiosk's* New Zealand venues in 2006 were ARTSPACE and the Physics Room.

2 Enjoy Public Art Gallery *Mission statement*. http://www.enjoy.org.nz/enjoy-about.php (accessed June 2006).

3 Alex Gawronski "Against the Centre: the Political Autonomy of Artist Run Spaces" in *Situation: Collaborations, Collectives and Artist Networks from Sydney, Singapore, Berlin*. Eds. Russell Storer and Elizabeth MacGregor (Sydney: MCA, 2005), 19.

4 Rob Garrett speaking during "Spark 04 Panel Discussion. An Artist-Run Space Forum" in *Canary Annual '05, Conversation, Critique and Community*. Ed. Paula Booker (Auckland: Canary Gallery, 2005), 28.

5 Enjoy Public Art Gallery, *Mission Statement*. Ibid.

Violet Faigan

Old Money
By Jessica Reid

Violet Faigan's interest lies in re-assessing the value of by-gone objects, whether through managing her vintage clothes and jewellery store "Modern Miss" in Dunedin, or creating works which incorporate second-hand or old materials. Tessa Laird described Faigan's approach to the past as being redemptive, that her practice incorporates a charitable act of resuscitation, but notes that Faigan feels no pity for the objects she salvages.[1] It is the changing world that deserves our pity rather than beautiful, restored remnants from the past. Invited by Enjoy to stage an exhibition of new work, Faigan wove together a collection of recovered objects, things from the past forgotten or ignored. With money (literally) taking a central position within the exhibition, and its coincidental relationship to events in New Zealand at the time, *Deflation* established a critique of worth and exchange.

When it comes to a matter of economics, it seems we are far more likely to hear and use the inverse term, "inflation", than that chosen as the title of Violet Faigan's exhibition. For me, the verb "deflate" is more connected to feelings of disappointment, a sense of anti-climax and dashed expectations, rather than being connected to ideas of the rise or fall in the purchasing value of money. These more poignant associations are intentional I'm sure, as Faigan positioned this exhibition within a larger questioning of how we value both things and people within our culture. It was only after Faigan had developed her exhibition that she discovered its timeliness – the added poignancy arising from New Zealand's phasing out of our five-cent coin and introduction of new legal tender.

The space was moodily lit; reminiscent of a temple or memorial. Selected works were picked out with humble desk lamps, sourced from another time, focusing our attention – or perhaps worship – towards make-shift icons and relics. Centred within the square of the gallery an ornate disc-shaped formation on the floor was lit from above, as if a heavenly shaft of light beamed in through a hole in the ceiling. Like the Tibetan sand paintings this resembled in its mandala shape, the work was intricately composed. The process and detail of the formation also questioned the prosaic and readily available materials used.

Tibetan sand paintings, constructed often by teams of Buddhist monks, can take days or weeks to finish as thin straws of dyed sand are poured into patterns. Shortly after the painting is finished it is swept away, its destruction used as a metaphor for the transience of both material possessions and life itself. To Western minds it is perhaps a bizarre practice, the monks' labour having no visible remnant after the work's completion.

This central mandala-shaped feature was comprised of coils of fake pearls and beads, New Zealand's now-redundant bronze one and two-cent coins intermittently spotted with clumps of dust and lint. Beads have been used throughout history as stand-in currency, particularly in some West African countries where barter is still readily practiced. The pearls spoke of another era, yet together these disparate materials gave the appearance of a large antique jewel, a dusty and hugely enlarged brooch found in your Grandmother's jewellery box.

In a cursive script running along the length of a wall were the words "Artist's fee" fashioned from stacks of five-cent coins. This sight stirred nostalgic remembrances of being a child and trying to comprehend that there were ONE HUNDRED CENTS in a dollar, and what an impressive manifestation of this could be constructed with towers of coins. Here Faigan allowed herself this child-like fantastical indulgence, converting the two hundred dollar fee provided to her by the gallery entirely into our smallest denomination of coin. It reminded me of the studies done on our now decommissioned five-cent coins. Researchers discovered that most people would not value a five-cent coin with the effort required to pick one up if spotted on a footpath. But what if there were twenty or one hundred five-cent coins on a footpath? Small coins are what you find in between the cushions of the couch or annoyingly get sucked up in the vacuum cleaner or catch in the frayed lining of old jackets.

The coins gave the awe-inspiring sense one gets when anything that is usually seen individually is collected and shown en masse. They also made visible a part of the gallery's business-side of operating, which is not usually openly talked about or made overt to the audience. It reminded us that the exhibition itself is the result of a transaction, Faigan's lint and one and two-cent coins are still inescapably commodities.

Faigan made it known that this money would be given to busker and friend Paul Honeybone at the exhibition's

Deflation Violet Faigan. Installation photos by Jessica Reid

conclusion, a collaborator in the realisation of the exhibition. In the right-hand side corner of the gallery a video work was projected. Faigan had filmed Paul, Dunedin's iconic busker, in action outside a supermarket, clapping and shuffling in time to his unaccompanied singing. Paul predominantly sang songs from another time: The Beatles, The Carpenters, and The Seekers. Singing with brio and an idiosyncratic cadence, using unexpected syncopation and emphasis, these were individualised interpretations of familiar tunes. Faigan's inclusion of Paul in the exhibition elevated him to a sort of outsider/cult/performance artist but also provided the 'bite' of the show, imbuing equal parts humour and pathos. Busking, one can surmise, is work at its most basic and honest, but also at its most uncomfortable – the constant possibility of public humiliation and one's ability to make a living held at the total mercy of strangers.

As a captive viewer I felt awkwardly voyeuristic and realised the weight of power a busker places upon their audience. I could imagine the deflation a busker would experience after spending a day performing and earning only small change. However, Paul was not presented in order to elicit pity from us. Faigan explained that he enjoyed busking and lived comfortably. It became clear that visitors needn't feel like passive observers of this performance. On the floor a violin case was filled with Faigan's own currency. Each note had a five-cent coin embedded within its pink plasticky paper and could be "purchased", or more accurately swapped, by viewers for a self-nominated amount of money placed in the case.

For some time Canada had a twenty five-cent note. In that country notes with a value of less than a dollar are known as shinplasters, due to the thin and easily destroyed paper used, like a plaster you'd put on your shin. Shinplasters were literally worth the paper they were printed on. Faigan played off this notion, for her shinplasters were clearly 'worth' at least the five-cents of each note we could see, but surely much more as the whimsical ink drawings printed on them made them objects of beauty too.

While buying money is in some respects odd, I mused on the various occupations in our society of banker, stockbroker, insurance sales people and loan sharks for whom this is normal. *Deflation* set up a series of oppositions which Faigan then proceeded to confuse; between old and new, Western and Eastern, insider and outsider, work and art, art and life. This was political art at its most seductive and beguiling.

1 Tessa Laird, "Oh You Pretty Things", *Tomorrow People* (Christchurch: The Physics Room, 2001), 8.

Deflation Violet Faigan. Video detail photo by Jessica Reid

Julien Dyne and Hamish Palmer

Sex and Agriculture
By Jessica Reid

P.R.I.E.S.T. (or Pacific Rim Inaugural Emergency Shelter Trienniale) saw Hamish Palmer and Julien Dyne in collaboration once again. The pair has made work together over a number of years, with ideas often originating from the underbelly of contemporary culture: relishing bad jokes, poor taste, and low or popular culture. An interest in seriality is also apparent. These ideas are most evident in their exhibition titles: *Space Invaders* (1999), *Traveling midget circus hometown beauty pageant* (2000), *That's not some object you're talkin' about, that's my baby* (2001), *Weekend at Bernie's* (2003, with Dave King) and *Weekend at Bernie's 2* (2004, with Dave King).

Nothing is above, or below, or too banal for their parody. Contemporary art is first in the firing line. That this one room, one gallery exhibition of two artists could constitute a 'Trienniale', one of those glitzy über-exhibition, artworld Meccas (and shouldn't that be 'Triennial'?) is ridiculous and hilarious. The pair's exhibition aspirations are undermined further in their proudly lowest common denominator content.

The kumara or sweet potato, grown for its edible swollen roots has a long history of cultivation in New Zealand. Brought here by the early Maori settlers over one thousand years ago from its Pacific Island source, it was widely grown especially in the semi-tropical regions of the North Island.[1]

P.R.I.E.S.T. is about things, everyday banal things like Auckland's inorganic rubbish collection, detergent bottles and tennis balls. It is also about its anti-thesis: big things, weighty things like National Identity, New Zealand's history as a colonised country, the introduction of Christianity and the cultivation of the land which we have historically relied on for exports and economic growth.

The adaptation of a plant … to the temperate New Zealand climate, involving an annual storage phase, constitutes one of the major achievements of early Maori agriculture. Pre-European Maori grew several different varieties of "bush" kumara, but compared to the varieties we eat today, were very small in size, being no bigger than a person's finger.[2]

Palmer approaches the objects of his work with reverence. The manufacturing lines of a kumara factory are portrayed like temples complete with a mystical glow and the kumara depicted as a holy relic. A sunny yellow plastic kumara protector, with the word KUMARA (at first appearing more like a geometric abstraction of triangles and points) emblazoned upon it, has been hung like a religious tapestry displaying an icon or banner celebrating its subject. In another moodily dark image a small church stands guard over a kumara patch, blessing them with its presence. The kumara, we are told, needs protection like a fragile creature.

New Zealand had 1,622,329 hectares planted in radiata pine as at 1 April 2002. In the year ended 31 March 2003, New Zealand exported 8.1 million cubic metres of logs valued at NZ$744m.[3]

Dyne's work is less earnest. He mixes organic and inorganic, confusing synthetic and natural. Blobby, gunky termite mounds emit pseudo-futuristic critter noises. His blobs could be meteorites or boulders. Dyne's sculptures are like drawings that have jumped off the page into the next dimension. A geometrically precise, synthetically square-angled log sprouts light bulbs. An otherwise un-modified tree branch sprouts tens of tennis balls. Real and fake are mixed elsewhere too: a man's elastic neck-tie hangs, the apparition of an indigenous bird, amongst found mossy branches.

The production of veneer, plywood and fibreboard and particleboard has increased dramatically in New Zealand in the last ten years.[4]

The viewer walks around the show, intrepid like an explorer in a foreign land. Do you speak into the microphone? Or look inside the bird huts? Peek into the peepholes? Notice the paint-covered kitsch religious icons or the polystyrene props for paintings?

The kumara we eat today has evolved from a larger variety that grows on a creeping vine. It was imported in the early 1850's, and was quickly adopted by the Maori for its superior size and taste.[5]

At first, *P.R.I.E.S.T.* seems like a drug-induced game of free-association. Ideas repeated over and over, turned around and upside-down. Overwhelmed, you feel you dare not look at any object too long, lest there's something bigger, better, weirder or more new to be seen on the other side of the room. Then later, much like the experience one has in an art biennale (or the eponymous 'Trienniale') you need some respite. Freud's "uncanny" is described as being the sense of unease one experiences when an object is all-too-familiar, rendering it unsettlingly unusual. In *P.R.I.E.S.T.*, this familiarity is manifested not as anxiety but as humour. The all-too-mundane is amusingly, titillatingly surreal. Floating forms gel together and click into place. You decide that you must come back in three-year's time for the next round.

1 A.H. McLintock, Ed. "An Encyclopedia of New Zealand". (Wellington: Government Printer, 1966).

2 "Kaipara kumara", http://www.kumara.co.nz (retrieved July 2006).

3 Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry website, http://www.maf.govt.nz/mafnet/index.htm (retrieved July 2006).

4 Ibid.

5 "Kaipara kumara". Ibid.

P.R.I.E.S.T. Julian Dyne and Hamish Palmer. Photos by Jessica Reid

P.R.I.E.S.T. Julian Dyne and Hamish Palmer. Installation photo by Jessica Reid

Jenny Gillam and vjRex

Mowing down the puppies, and other suburban stories
By Sandy Gibbs

"I have lost something ... I didn't always feel this way ... so sedated". Lester Burnham[1]

In the opening sequence of *American Beauty,* the camera flies over a suburban street while Lester drearily intones "in a way I am dead already ... " giving cynical voice to the oh-so-bloody obvious: suburbia equals death. In fact, suburbia equals sedation, then death.

Upon walking into the exhibition *Green Belt Video Suburb*, I am greeted by that same sense of soporific suburban death. The hypnotic rhythm of a fake heartbeat anxiously wraps itself around me, uncomfortably. This slowed-down musical sample transmogrifies into an unrelenting, suffocating memento mori. Here, suburban objects and fragmented images are glued together by this pounding reminder-of-death.

Suburbia, sedation and death.

The heartbeats emanate from two speakers. On top of one speaker, the artists vjRex and Jenny Gillam have carefully placed a pristine lawnmower so that its handles point upwards. Duchampian-like, there is a wry humour at work: the lawnmower's pose is up-thrusting and phallic, and yet its presence smacks of impotence and neutered manhood, recalling mindless hours spent rhythmically pushing a hand mower up and down the same-old patch of land. Suburban masturbation.

Behind the lawnmower, there is a decorative motif on the gallery wall. Brown vinyl-cut silhouettes of long uncut grass – disorderly and chaotic – subvert the notion of an orderly suburb. If the lawnmower is about impotence and societal control, this grass is about transgression. This juxtaposition highlights both the emptiness of the suburban promise, and the fenced-off "reality" of the suburban desire for order. Fences feature in the production of suburban normality: markers of ownership, they also function in a disciplinary role. Guarding against disruption that threatens to spill out beyond the manicured lawns and neat paths, the disciplinary nature of the fence is crucial to the possession and ordering of space.

Bulent Diken and Carsten Bagge Laustsen discuss social order in their text *The Culture of Exception*, noting that taking possession of land is what gives society its order and orientation: "The origin of culture and law is not the word, which links strangers together, but the fence, which separates them."[2]

Within *Green Belt Video Suburb*, these ideas of separation are framed by two constructions. One is a circular mosquito net, which hangs from a spider-like skeleton fixed to one of the gallery rafters, draping to the floor and forming a giant spider web enclosure. It is empty: but is this a warning or an invitation? The artists seem to be cheekily asking: are you in or out? If you believe the promise, step right into the spider's parlour. But there's an underlying suspense – if you enter, then how do you get out?

The other construction is a cheap mass-produced plastic greenhouse. Like the empty wine bottle cooler propped up in the corner, it speaks of indoor / outdoor entertainment, the promise of The Good Life. Here suburban aspirations and keeping up with the Jones's have been staged for the gaze of those poor unfortunates who are excluded. This enclosure also houses the second heartbeat-emitting speaker, plus two flimsy outdoor lanterns with built-in bug zappers. There's a dawning awareness of something a little darker at work here. Break the rules, and horror lies in wait. Fly too close to the light and – zap – you're dead: the exhibition is a darkly humorous comment on life in the 'burbs.

"We are witnessing a cyclic process of creating spaces of indistinction: discipline followed by control, followed by terror, and then the return of discipline as the reversed panopticon."[3]

In *American Beauty*, the new neighbour Ricky Fitts is presented as an outsider. We learn he has been in a mental institution – a place where those who transgress are locked away. Once back in the suburbs, his very presence disrupts order and discipline. He is a paradox: implicated within the suburban patina, and yet still an outsider. In this exhibition, the artists are interested in this paradox of inclusion / exclusion, themselves travelling nomad-like through a suburban landscape. Like Fitts, they document and make observations, measuring the distance between idealised fantasy and reality.

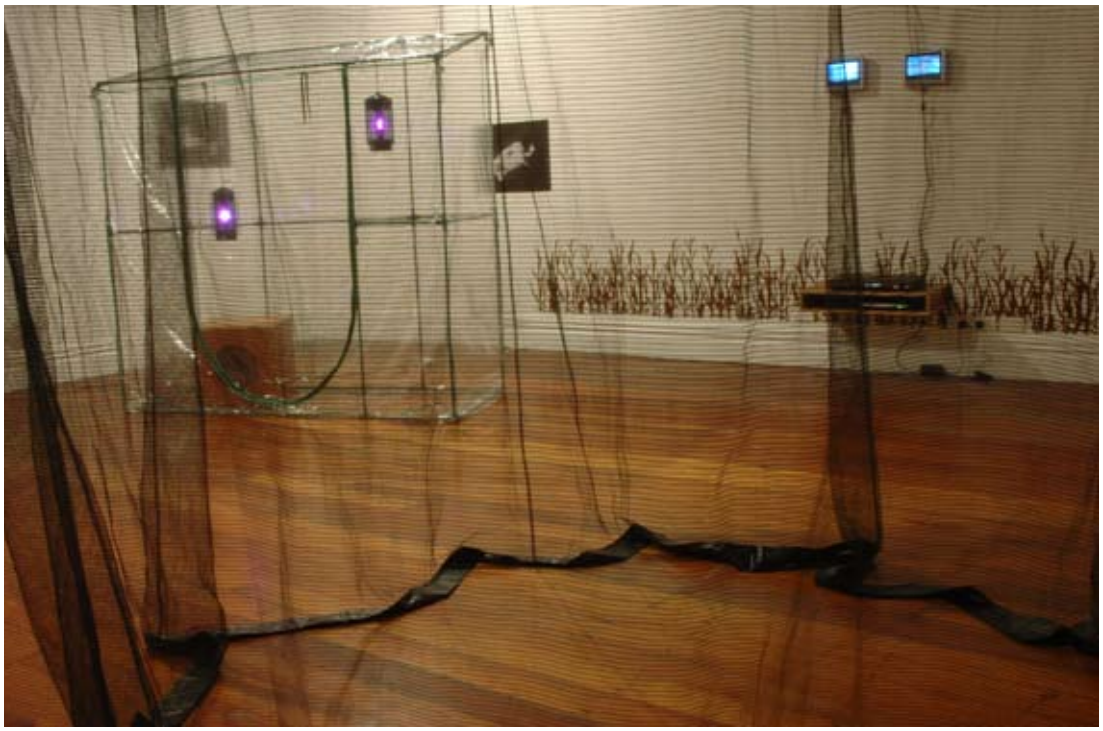
Installed on the Enjoy gallery walls, there are two photographs of a white horse. Tellingly, one image shows the horse behind a fence; the other is a close-up. The white horse is an idealised symbol of potency and fantasy but, contextualised within this exhibition, this white horse becomes another symbol of suburban inclusion/exclusion. Pony clubs and little girls' fantasies. In or out. Closer inspection reveals that Jenny Gillam has instead presented a photograph of an old nag. Once white, this mare is pictured grass stained and looking – quite frankly – a bit past it. Dog tucker. Fantasy crashes into realism: we're looking at an already dead horse. And dead puppies. That's what Gillam calls the three photographs of young pedigree dogs.

The wall mounted photographs present puppies caught in time, like stuffed trophies twisted and posed to look 'natural'. Frolicking in long grass, there is something potentially horrible in their playful innocence. As if the pristine lawnmower will roar into life and – like a bad Stephen King movie – mow them down. Perhaps this fantasy belongs in the video edits playing out on the four small screens. Attached to the walls in pairs, these are the kinds of video screens you see attached to the back of car seats. Portable sedation, look, you can pack it up and take it with you!

The videos play mixed-up images of violence, horror, murder and angst. The source movies are a mix of 1970s American horror movies, New Zealand films – the kinds of movies you'd pick up from any suburban video store – and downloads from the internet. Audience members familiar with Jenny Gillam and vjRex's previous collaborations will notice the snippets of videos that have appeared elsewhere, re-contextualised and re-edited for this exhibition. This time the script is murder, sex and violence in the 'burbs: women being stalked, women screaming, murders that have happened, murders about to happen. Dead bodies. An eternally buzzing fly punctuates a mountain scene featuring a grainy black and white hand holding a brutal looking knife. There is an almost David Lynch-like surrealism, where the logic of a narrative is de-stabilised and then somehow re-interpreted but never explained. These unstable, floating images magnify a sense of anxiety, displacement and disquiet.

A twist to the story was played out at the closing night performance (in collaboration with fellow artist Kaleb Bennett). An intense forty-minute performance that built upon this base layer of suburban anxiety, turning up the volume into a king-hit of violent imagery and full-on noise.

Physically uncomfortable in its aggression and rawness, the performance marked a clear shift from this show being an observational experience to that of being an experiential, bodily experience. Julia Kristeva describes this kind of



transformation when she talks about the dynamic of performance which "drives, charges, bursts, deforms, reforms, and transforms the boundaries the subject and society set for themselves."[4] Similarly, the Enjoy gallery audience experienced a distinct shift of corporeal boundaries as the murder script cranked up into a tight edit of bloodied mayhem, terrified women, dumped cadavers, mutilated bodies.

Working reactively to the installation and audience, Bennett's sound work meshed with the moving, morphing, repeating visuals being played out on the video screens. Together, the three artists set up their own suburban 'abrasive encounter' and forced it right back on us. Theatrical and transgressive, their performance was in itself a kind of confrontation with the authority of disciplined society – as much as it was an encounter with middle-class suburbia.

Suburbia could be described as a cultural wasteland between the vibrant, edgy inner city and the rural idyll. But Jenny Gillam and vjRex's suburbia is nothing of the sort. Not only does their suburbia have the trappings of middle-class aspirations bordered with neat paths, it also has sex and violence. It is a culture of contradictions informed by late-night horror movies, and yet it still exists in an everyday world. It acknowledges the debt to schlock horror movies where the screaming female victim is chopped up into little bits, as much as it pays homage to K-Tel wine coolers specially designed for those endless summer evenings of indoor/outdoor entertaining.

But theirs is not a sedate stroll through suburban detritus. Instead, the artists have presented us with a Joseph Conrad[5] journey into a lush kind of anxiety and darkness, complete with machete – or was that a free set of steak knives?

1 Protagonist Lester Burnham in Sam Mendes' 1999 feature film, *American Beauty*.

2 Bulent Diken and Carsten Bagge Laustsen, The Culture of Exception: *Sociology Facing the Camp* (London & New York: Routledge, 2005), 39.

3 Ibid, 73.

4 Julia Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language*. Trans. Margaret Walker (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), 103.

5 Joseph Conrad is a Polish-born author, who is noted for his novella *Heart of Darkness* (First published in London: Blackwood's Magazine, 1902).

Green Belt Video Suburb Jenny Gillam and vjRex. Installation photo courtesy the artists

Green Belt Video Suburb Jenny Gillam and vjRex. Installation photo courtesy the artists

CLUBSproject Inc. & Christopher L. G. Hill present:
14 – 30 June 2006

Work by Christopher L.G. Hill, James Deutsher & guests

Call & Response
By Louise Menzies

The CLUBSproject exhibition for Wellington came at the invitation of Enjoy, who were interested in starting a conversation with other like-minded groups and establishing a programme of exchange across the Tasman to Wellington. Stridently taking the situation for what it was, CLUBS nominated Christopher L.G. Hill to travel to Wellington and produce the show, who in turn asked James Deutsher to collaborate with him, who together moved to open the project to all who were connected and interested.

The resulting project presented many ways to understand, appreciate and ruminate on the condition of conversing. Participating artists included: Dan Arps, Sriwhana Spong, Kain Picken & Rob McKenzie, Louise Menzies, Tao Wells, Helen Johnson, Hao Guo, Josh Petherick, Nick Mangan, Masato Takasaka, Annie Wu, Sean Bailey, Teracid & Inverted Crux, Liv Barrett, Daniel du Bern, Arie Hellendoorn, Kate Kelly and Daniel Malone.

Intent on openly investigating themes of hosting and authorship, work for the exhibition began in Melbourne where both Hill and Deutsher are based and where they gathered contributions from those around them. On route to Enjoy this continued. Landing in Auckland they made an open call for donated works in the weeks leading up to the realisation of the Enjoy project.

Hill and Deutsher's desire for inclusivity blurred the role of author, curator, holiday, space, object, gallery and anonymity – to result in a collectively authored and wonderfully mixed-up collection of objects and processes to be experienced through the Enjoy installation.

Many materials spoke of the everyday, of recycling and impermanance. In particular, the motif of the take-away paper cup pervaded the space – with its bright, chipper smiley graphic grinning alongside less iconic, but still familiar cultural icons. Buckets inverted to form hour-glass shaped assemblages, used plastic drink bottles, small repeating stacks of wrapped chocolate and a wall drawing made from apple prints also featured strongly.

Installation of the CLUBS show was typically done late at night as the FIFA World Cup was on at that time, broadcasting from 3am to 7am. Duetsher himself was responsible for the papier mâché models of the "new ball" featured in the football World Cup games.[1]

CLUBSproject Inc. & Christopher L. G. Hill present:
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I remember talking with Hill and Deutsher while they were installing and our discussion often returned to the simple notions of movement or flow. In the same way that matter may shift or change as it exists in the environment – or even internally, within a game of soccer for instance – the sharing and influence of ideas are a necessary and vital part of making and experiencing art. Amongst the piles of detritus and donated work that made up the installation, a green plastic bottle with its wrapper still on symbolically offered something – Chi.

About CLUBSproject:

CLUBSproject Inc. is an artist-initiated project that initially resided above the old Builders Arms Hotel in Fitzroy, Melbourne, Australia. They developed a program from this site for three and a half years from September 2002 – August 2005. Since the closure of this pub, coupled with the force of gentrification in the Fitzroy area, CLUBS encountered a difficult political struggle with the new landlords, and it became untenable to remain on the premises.

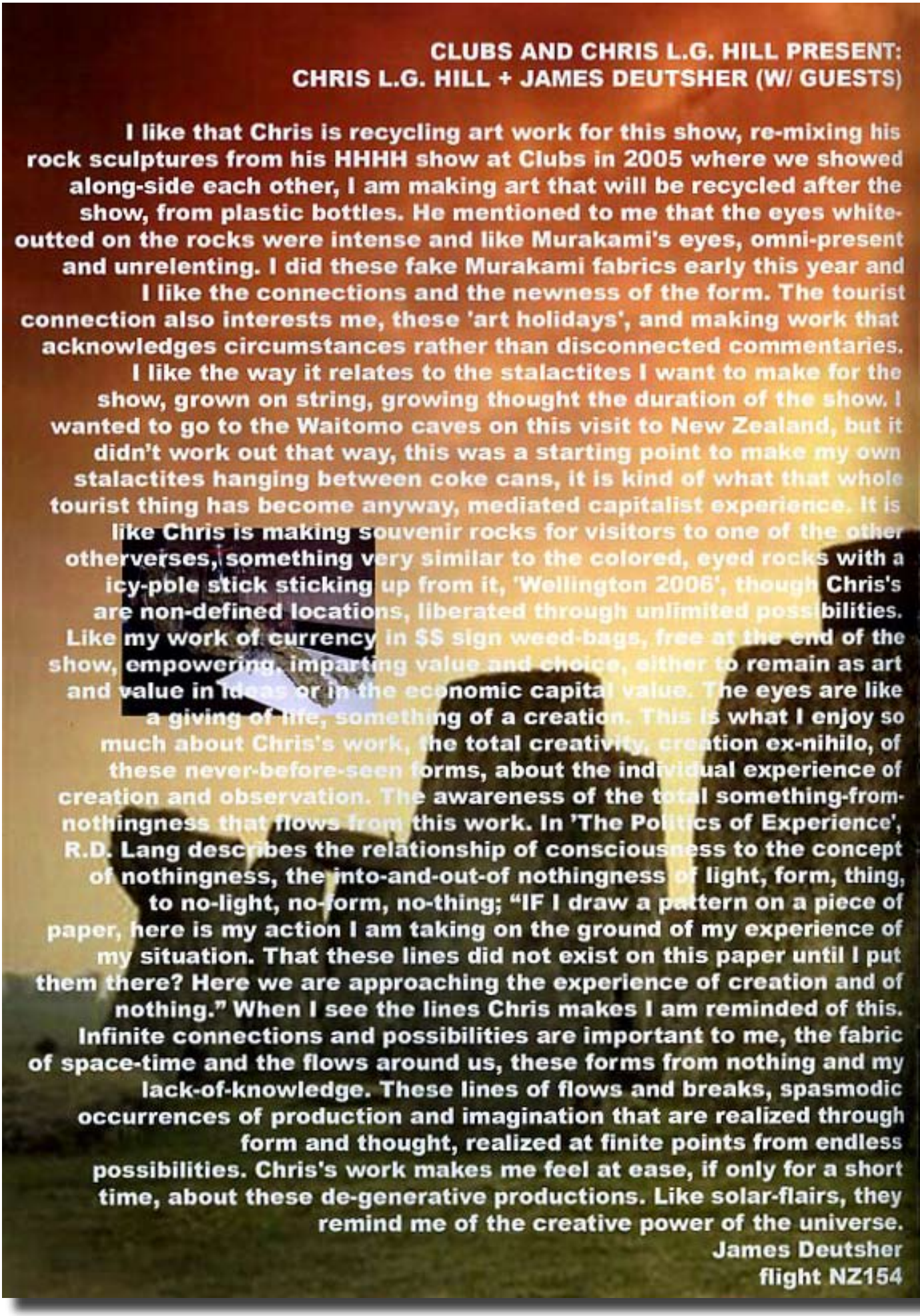
This situation opened up the possibility for CLUBS to become a more nomadic project. No longer having a fixed address, CLUBS is currently operating as a more event-based outfit, finding temporary landing-sites within which different projects can be pocketed for brief moments of time.[2]

1 Some claim that the 2006 World Cup official ball is a lot more than a mere ball, saying it should perhaps be referred to as a Ball, or the Ball. http://www.mienet.com/sports/soccer/2006world_cup/documents/DE9349C9955F59D98BAF4817B44D7FC0BFE6C4E1.html (Retrieved December 2007).

2 http://www.clubsproject.org.au/ (Retrieved December 2007).

Work by Christopher L G Hill & James Deuthsher, and guests. Installation photo by Jessica Reid

Work by Christopher L G Hill & James Deuthsher, and guests. Installation photo by Jessica Reid



CLUBS AND CHRIS L.G. HILL PRESENT:
CHRIS L.G. HILL + JAMES DEUTSHER (W/ GUESTS)

I like that Chris is recycling art work for this show, re-mixing his rock sculptures from his HHHH show at Clubs in 2005 where we showed along-side each other, I am making art that will be recycled after the show, from plastic bottles. He mentioned to me that the eyes white-outted on the rocks were intense and like Murakami's eyes, omni-present and unrelenting. I did these fake Murakami fabrics early this year and I like the connections and the newness of the form. The tourist connection also interests me, these 'art holidays', and making work that acknowledges circumstances rather than disconnected commentaries. I like the way it relates to the stalactites I want to make for the show, grown on string, growing thought the duration of the show. I wanted to go to the Waitomo caves on this visit to New Zealand, but it didn't work out that way, this was a starting point to make my own stalactites hanging between coke cans, it is kind of what that whole tourist thing has become anyway, mediated capitalist experience. It is like Chris is making souvenir rocks for visitors to one of the other otherverses, something very similar to the colored, eyed rocks with a icy-pole stick sticking up from it, 'Wellington 2006', though Chris's are non-defined locations, liberated through unlimited possibilities. Like my work of currency in $$ sign weed-bags, free at the end of the show, empowering, imparting value and choice, either to remain as art and value in ideas or in the economic capital value. The eyes are like a giving of life, something of a creation. This is what I enjoy so much about Chris's work, the total creativity, creation ex-nihilo, of these never-before-seen forms, about the individual experience of creation and observation. The awareness of the total something-from-nothingness that flows from this work. In 'The Politics of Experience', R.D. Lang describes the relationship of consciousness to the concept of nothingness, the into-and-out-of nothingness of light, form, thing, to no-light, no-form, no-thing; "IF I draw a pattern on a piece of paper, here is my action I am taking on the ground of my experience of my situation. That these lines did not exist on this paper until I put them there? Here we are approaching the experience of creation and of nothing." When I see the lines Chris makes I am reminded of this. Infinite connections and possibilities are important to me, the fabric of space-time and the flows around us, these forms from nothing and my lack-of-knowledge. These lines of flows and breaks, spasmodic occurrences of production and imagination that are realized through form and thought, realized at finite points from endless possibilities. Chris's work makes me feel at ease, if only for a short time, about these de-generative productions. Like solar-flairs, they remind me of the creative power of the universe.

James Deutsher
flight NZ154

Floating, contradictions duality/multipliscity of moments ambences of noise and reversed, the posibility that counts A utopia of the moment. A geodesic abstraction of practicalised objects that are in fractalised, in readyness to morph and configure in a multitude of shapes and colours. Consectively the actualised and un actualised.

Fleeting forevers, others work by us and them, temporily shared, temporarly each of ours. The shared personal politic is almost a blush worthy exchange of poetry, But is areality that within our challanges we can only but be mini or solo [illegible] syndiclasms

-christopher l g hill.

Work by Christopher L G Hill & James Deuthsher, and guests. Installation photo by Jessica Reid

Fiona Connor

The Reconstruction and Retrieval of Enjoy Public Art Gallery
By Michael Havell

A photograph taken during the installation and working bee for Fiona Connor's Enjoy exhibition represents something that I have been trying to avoid whilst engaging with this artwork. Her reconstruction of the original Enjoy Public Art Gallery within the site of the new gallery brings to mind the often over-used terminology that denotes "community" as the basis for an analysis of site-specific and relational art works.

Miwon Kwon devotes two chapters in her seminal text *One Place After Another: Site-specific Art and Locational Identity* to community based, or community-centric artwork.[1] I am not suggesting that Kwon is in any way paying undue attention to something that clearly deserves analysis, but rather that the idea of community can be hard to escape from, and is a tempting critical tool. The language used to explore the significance of community can also become a structural endeavour where the organization assumes prominence over the function of a space. This places a distinction on the semantics of hierarchical systems, over the delivery and reception of an artwork. The outcome of this kind of community-focused discussion means dwelling on something that is self evident, when one has documentation in the form of ephemera or archived material to augment the fact of its operational motifs. These are the most common methods of reconstructing a history using a conventional format. Newer methods however utilize multiple subjective viewpoints, such as oral histories, allowing the subject/s to build a historical narrative through their own agency.

Perhaps then, it is more pertinent to explore the historicizing gesture employed by Fiona Connor in the act of recreating and replicating the old space that was Enjoy (full stop) and re-embodying it in the new. The resulting re-creation reinforces the historical relationships signified by locating and identifying the old, whilst implying continuation via the new. In this context, the work utilizes the idea of documentation with a historical prerogative, and the fact would remain that Connor's work relies on a pre-existing knowledge – and relationship with the old – for the work to operate to its fullest extent.

At this point, I refer the reader back to the construction photograph. Does it in fact represent the documentation of a community activity, or the act of constructing meaning? The argument could be made for both, if one were merely to separate out this image and apply a context.

Interpretation can in this regard be problematic. As a temporal activity of reconstruction and extrapolation, to

assume the mantle of authorial witness would be distasteful. Connor's exhibition operated multiple functionalities. On one level, it reclaimed a historical perspective accessible to those who had previous association with the old space, yet on another, it acted as a functioning exhibition space within an exhibition space.

This show has possibly made the most important and eloquent statement about Enjoy Public Art Gallery that I have encountered ever, full stop. Connor's *Inner City Real Estate 174/147* never forgets the purpose of the art space as an exhibition space, as evidenced in the inclusion of the works of artists like Kate Newby or Sarah Hopkinson. The site-specific elements of the exhibition – the reconstruction of the old Enjoy gallery space – co-exist with and reinforce the methodologies of representation inherent in other visual mediums that share this historicized imperative.

Any historical contextualization is subject to broader implications as to whether it functions as a closed or open system of interpretation. Because Fiona Connor's work acts as an invitation to explore the roots of Enjoy Public Art Gallery, as it exists now, and what it was before its move, every person who had a stake in the gallery must have been forced to contemplate this artwork on a self reflective level. The idea for the work itself must have been almost irresistible as a kind of bridging mechanism. On one hand it certainly caters towards those who have a prior relationship with or knowledge of Enjoy Public Art Gallery, yet this is possibly only true of Connor's gallery before other works were exhibited within her constructed space.

A broad conceptual understanding of community-based art deals with the social distinctions found in society at large. This perspective does away with a more specialized, closer look at the intricacies one finds in any complex organization. In the case of the arts community centred on Enjoy Public Art Gallery, the argument for different means of understanding community-based art is important, because the community contains a certain amount of nostalgia.

The show's title *Inner City Real Estate 174/147* infers at once a desirable location, yet something that is also hard to attain without a certain kind of capital. In this case, Connor could be said to be generating capital in the form of art's most fundamental commodity, the exhibition space. Connor's hyper-realistic reconstruction of the old Enjoy site was imperfect in a number of distinct and important areas. The outer or real gallery was visible behind the inner gallery's windows and next to the office. The office was entirely open to the exhibition space; one was required to walk through it to experience the work.

In other words, the original spectacle of the work was collapsible, one could see through the illusionary aspects of the first stage of the exhibition. The inclusion of other artists' work signified Connor's intention towards ongoing art-based practice for the purposes of exhibition.

In the first stage of the exhibition, the room was left unfilled and empty of works. During this stage, the viewer was encouraged to explore the room as an actual space, as architecture manifest. This created an experience reminiscent of Dan Arps' site-specific work *Viewing Platform no 2* from the first series at Enjoy, *Viewfinder*. Transporting that concept into the current site is poignant to me, as a fan of the origins of Enjoy, and site-specific art. However, it was the transformation from seemingly straightforward site-specific work, to a more complex artwork transcending the dualistic old/new binary opposition, which defines the exhibition for me.

Connor's *Inner City Real Estate 174/147* moved beyond the initial signifier of Enjoy Public Art Gallery as a space and embraced constant change. In short, it is in the temporal aspects of the show that momentum was gained. The processes of construction and installation became interchangeable through the continual transformation of Connor's artwork. Sound-based performances by The Stumps and Birchville Cat Motel were staged during the exhibition exemplify this aspect of the work.

The relationship between the old and new Enjoy is made complex by the inclusion of artworks and performance: Connor created new parameters by actually operating her work as a gallery. This enabled a certain amount of slippage that in turn generated a further context for her work to operate in.

The problem, if there is one, is that site-specific art can be subject to what Kwon calls an open-ended predicament, a predicament related to the complex temporal and spatial locations of site-specific art.[2] This predicament is linked to the classifications and manifestations of site-specific art. As a comparative tool, the interpretation of site-specific art can use an exploration of binary oppositions. This position was made implicit in a work that transcended boundaries, creating a bridge from Enjoy. to Enjoy Public Art Gallery. In doing this, Connor managed to retrieve something and move forward. In the process, she created a new context for the reflection of the Enjoy Public Art Gallery narrative, embedding that within the continuation of the gallery. In much the same way site-specific art is a constantly changing delivery system in art practice.[3]

Within the context of Fiona Connor's show, and even within the pre-history of the site that Enjoy Public Art Gallery inhabits now – the former Alba Bett Gallery – both galleries, Enjoy Public Art Gallery., and its predecessor, Enjoy., provide an interesting historical motif for the operation of art in the confines of an artistic community. Fiona Connor's work in this instance creates a convergence between different sites of art production and gives them a significance that is at once monumental, in its signification of the original Enjoy site, and productive, as it manifests in the continuing production of art work. In this sense, it could be characterized as being both nostalgic and anti-nostalgic concurrently. This brings me to a comparison between Connor's show and the beginnings of Enjoy.

Artists Cairan Begley and Ros Cameron graduated from Ilam in Christchurch. The most significant show that Begley, in particular, had exhibited in before the move back to Wellington was an Oblique Trust event: *Thoroughfare,* held in the Christchurch suburb of Sydenham.[4] The artists involved were asked to contribute site-specific works towards a show that was concerned with signifying the history of interacting with, and reflecting, social imprints within the commercial sites left empty in Sydenham.

Founded by Begley, Cameron and their friend Rachel Smithies, Enjoy initially got off the ground, in 2000.[5] The submissions for the initial series of exhibitions called for a proposal that engaged with the particular architectural and structural elements of the site of the gallery itself. The very first show involved the removal of the windows facing towards Cuba Street.

Inner City Real Estate 174/147 Fiona Connor. Working-bee photo by Jessica Reid

Dan Arps responded by including a viewing platform in the entrance to the space, inviting the viewer to experience the gallery as some kind of visual spectacle. With *Inner City Real Estate*, Fiona Connor was able to articulate the duality of that which occurs in art spaces and the importance of the spaces in themselves, by embedding the two within one spatial location.

1 Miwon Kwon, *One Place After Another: Site Specific Art & Locational Identity* (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2002).

2 Miwon Kwon, Ibid. 8.

3 I am referring to the name of the gallery originally being Enjoy (full stop) later becoming Enjoy Public Art Gallery (full stop). The two mean quite different things and this marks another change in the gallery.

It is this very concept that Kwon seeks to explore in her introduction to *One Place After Another*. "The resilience of the concept of site specificity as indicated by its many permutations, with its vague yet persistent maintenance of the idea of singular unrepeatable instances of site-bound knowledge and experience manifests this doubleness. Countering both the nostalgic desire for a retrieval of rooted, place-bound identities on one hand, and the antinostalgic embrace of a nomadic fluidity of subjectivity, identity, and spatiality on the other" In Miwon Kwon, Ibid. 8.

4 An Oblique Trust event, 1 – 28 May 1999, Sydenham, Christchurch, New Zealand.

5 Rachel Smithies noted: "I became involved, I guess because of an interest in art, but probably more accurately because I knew Ciaran and Ros and I knew they could do with help on the administrative front – given that I am a bureaucrat by training." In "Is Less More? A response from an art project space" *Artforums 2001* http://www.victoria.ac.nz/adamartgal/artforums/2001/rachel-smithies.html (Retrieved November 2007).

Part II: *Inner City Real Estate 174/147* Fiona Connor with Amit Charan, Daniel Du Bern, Sarah Gruiters, Sarah Hopkinson, Kate Newby and Nick Taylor. Photo by Jessica Reid

Part I: *Inner City Real Estate 174/147* Fiona Connor. Photo by Jessica Reid

Presented by Cryptozoologist G. Bridle

Becoming Animal
Essays on Aura 2006
By Anna Sanderson

What set her apart was her passivity. While she did vast amounts of internet research and daydreamed about receiving accolades from the Cryptozoological community, she never did anything to physically search for the beast or increase her chances of seeing it after that first sighting. That night it had separated itself from the shadow of one of the trees, strode quickly through the orchard toward the mountain, and turned to look over its shoulder at her. She only wondered and hoped that it would reappear in the orchard again. It was almost as if the beast was a deity from whom she hoped for a visitation.

The possibility of connection between Kohler and the beast remained a mystery. She was preoccupied with a validation of her sighting and this smothered the other stream of possibility in the story, the feeling that underlies one's thoughts when reading about people to whom elusive quarry appears; that the beast would not appear to another person. If someone else had been in the orchard would she have seen it? There was an element of deliberateness to the creature's appearance in her own domestic space. Such a creature would of course be able to keep itself hidden if it wanted to. The thought is that special things come to special people, and that no amount of contrivance can bear upon that reality: the creature was drawn to her. In some way she herself didn't understand, she was a lure.

I thought about Kohler as Bridle's station wagon wound through a steeply mountainous area that was still blackly silhouetted against a wispy pastel dawn. Here he was: one of the luminaries that Kohler had so dearly wanted to impress, busy on the other side of the earth taking his technology to the ineffable, setting up multiple lures in promising sites. This was a part of the country he hadn't ventured into yet so the prospects were hard to gauge. It was a more substantial trip than he often took, pure wilderness not being a prerequisite for Mirrorical occurrence.

I was to be allowed to view the pool that we were driving to, but would need to make myself scarce over the intensive eight-hour observation camp at the pool that had become part of his Mirrorical search strategy. Bridle had, however, consented to my request to interview him during the hour's drive to and from the destination. I switched on my Dictaphone and asked him what he understood by the word Cryptozoologist.

"It's not really the title I'd choose, but I'm part of the community now whether I like it or not. There are so many

kinds of Cryptozoologists around, it's ceased to mean much, it's like calling yourself an artist: it could mean anything."

"Why did you choose this next location to visit? Is it intuition or are you guided by pre-gathered information?"

"All I really know … is that the habitat of what I'm looking for is a certain kind of pool. Through map study, research and my own personal contacts I can find out where the pools are around the country. Once we arrive at the pool I find it's a case of knowing it when you see it."

We drove over a wide river, its surface unbroken. The sky was becoming a delicate pale blue. The bare bits of rock face between areas of green above us were beginning to be faintly visible, in fact, slowly everything around was beginning to glow with early morning light.

Bridle was surprisingly young; in his early twenties he had told me. He had stylishly unkempt blonde hair. Although his attire was practical enough - today he wore an old brown suede and knit jacket, stovepipe trousers over boots and a woollen herringbone hat – there was a kind of deliberateness about his dress that made me suspect him of being the type of person who considers even the simplest of daily decisions to be aesthetic in nature. I wondered what connection this could possibly have to his tireless search for the Mirrorical.

G. Bridle's current operation had an almost fetishistic level of organisation. Parts of the dismantled feeder gleamed in the back of his station wagon with the recording equipment, chilly bin, and carry bag of books and files packed in snugly like a completed jigsaw puzzle.

"Which do you prefer best, the search or the capture?" I asked.

"The capture doesn't exist in the time frame we normally work with. It's not like a possum getting caught in a box, an action occurring in a moment. It's very hard to identify the capture as we are dealing with something that comes in different forms and is not always immediately recognisable. That's why I have so many devices of capture in operation at one time. I spread many nets … in actual fact, the idea of capture is misleading, what I'm really aiming for is recognition."

"Do you think you could try to explain what the Mirrorical is?"

"Well, there's no way of knowing ... I mean, if I knew exactly what the Mirrorical was I wouldn't be driving to find a pool in the bush today ... "

"But you must know ... well, you know enough to name it 'the Mirrorical' ... "

"It's almost like you have to name an area, to create space for the thing to be found in.

Calling the Mirrorical: Deep Dives into the Deepest Depths Cryptozoologist G. Bridle. Photo G. Bridle

It's the kind of thing I know for moments and then lose grasp of. Trying to recall that prior certainty has the frustration of trying to remember a good idea you had during a dream. I know at least that I shouldn't limit even the terms the Mirrorical could exist on. The Mirrorical could be an event but it could also be an entity. It could happen or it could *be*."

"Is it dependent on you for its existence?"

"I never used to think so but certain things of late have confused me."

"Like what?"

"For a while I had the idea that the Mirrorical might be an animal which came to the pool to drink and feed, or it might come with an animal to the pool to feed. I started to feel that there was a closely intertwined relationship between the feeder, the animal coming to the pool to feed, and the Mirrorical, but I couldn't tell specifically what the relationship was."

"What made you think that?"

"Well, because once or twice animals have come to the pond and behaved interestingly around the feeder. Unusual things have happened when the three things coincide. Just little things, like they repeat movements or forget to feed, but instead seem to be trying to look into the pool. Once it happened with just an ordinary domestic dog, other times hedgehogs, and once a heron. The problem is that recently nothing's happened with animals. Just when I was starting to think I could really begin to put my evidence out and look for the patterns to pin down this phenomenon further the animals stopped coming. According to my tracking systems and night watches no animals have come near the feeder. It is demoralising. Recently I've started to think that actually monitoring the sites is leading me off track and that more might be gained from analysing photographs of the pools recorded, or even photos of pools sent by people that go to my website, or even ones that I've found in books."

"What have you learnt from the photographs?"

"They seem to fall into different categories, and I'm not sure whether one is truer than the other, but the images seem to either be quite resonant – sort of conveying a hazy, slightly mystical atmosphere, while others appear to be quite Non-Auratic. Each of these seems to contain some visual information, though, my instruments tell me."

"What are your instruments?"

"Well, some of them are actual instruments which measure incidences of energy etcetera, and others are built in to my own self ... "

Calling the Mirrorical: Deep Dives into the Deepest Depths Cryptozoologist G. Bridle. Installation detail courtesy G. Bridle

"You mean built in, as in naturally, or a piece of technology that has been embedded?"

"Just naturally built in."

"Are you sure you shouldn't factor yourself into the equation? That you, as well as the feeder and the pool, somehow call the Mirrorical to the place?"

"I have considered that – that the luring mechanisms I'm putting into place are actually tailored to one specific entity and that I couldn't set about luring any Mirrorical except this one."

"I have read you quoted as saying that the Mirrorical is your spirit. Do you mean a spirit that you have a proprietorial relationship to, or the spirit you are, as in your essence or whatever, because how can you be walking around now without your spirit?"

"A spirit doesn't have to be in one place or another. The answer to that isn't clear yet, but these are the kind of things that can be discovered in the retreat."

"The retreat?"

"The retreat always generates some kind of enlightenment. It's a kind of meditative, concentrated atmosphere that's very conducive."

"So that is an entirely different project?"

"While this intervention we are about to make on a specific location is my most current investigation, the retreat has been a part of my work for a long time. It is a process that underlies the other projects in a way."

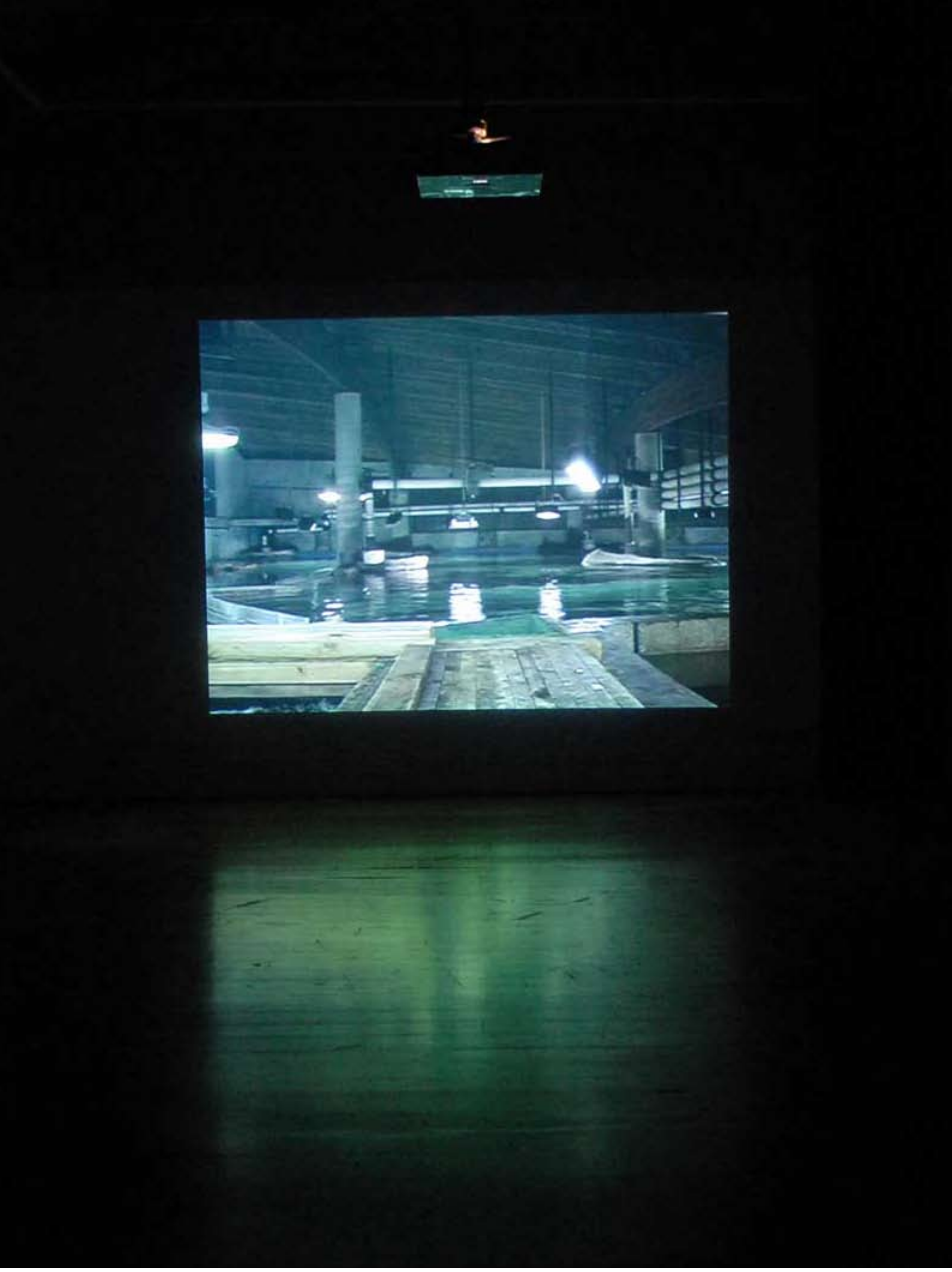
"How is that?"

"Because they do the same thing, but internally or without the aid of props or equipment. But what happens is therefore hard to detect so I devise the interim projects, such as the Mirrorical feeder, to enact the interaction with the spirit in a more tangible way. Because it's all so hard to understand, sometimes it's a relief to position yourself physically apart from the experiment – to be able to set up a situation, document it, and study the documentation later."

"Is there something you can see in these photos that the viewers might not be able to?"

"The variations are all visible. It's just a matter of having the training to interpret subtle molecular signals – what some people refer to as aura ..." Bridle trailed off.

By this stage daylight was coldly illuminating the landscape of piney grandeur and the novice and the Cryptozoologist turned off onto the gravel road, which would lead them to the pool.



Calling the Mirrorical: Deep Dives into the Deepest Depths Cryptozoologist G. Bridle. Photo G. Bridle

Douglas Bagnall

Looking Up
By Louise Menzies

"Is there an art that can be greater than the beauty of the sky?" Yoko Ono[1]

Discussions of the weather form some of our most rudimentary encounters. As a perfectly neutral point of conversation, we are able to avoid the personal, while sharing – in the most mundane of ways – our understanding of the world.

What a relief it is to be able to state my dismay at the pending rain to someone I do not know as I wait to ride the bus. As these encounters make obvious, weather generates language more efficiently than it does knowledge – for while weather is always with us, its exact properties are not always clear. Douglas Bagnall's online project *Cloud Shape Classifier* uses the general subject matter of weather to tap into our recognition of clouds as the shapes and colours of meteorology, translating visually the temperatures and winds that shape our atmospheric experiences.

History has shown clouds to be elusive in our attempts to come to terms with an accurate set of descriptors for their many vaporous forms. It was not until the early nineteenth century that at last a full system for their classification was determined by the British scientist Luke Howard. Amidst the heyday of Enlightenment taxonomy, Howard's terms of *cirrus, stratus, cumulus* and *nimbus* provided a welcomed understanding for the scientific and artistic communities at the time.

Studies by the English landscape painter John Constable, of the sky above Hampstead Heath painted over the summer months of 1821 – 22, embody both the awe and curiosity for the natural world so prevalent in Europe during this period. In their attempt to capture the science of these forms equally with the emotions of wonder, turmoil and change, one can see in these small paintings an almost fierce attempt to capture the world as it might exist.

As it happened, Te Papa Tongarewa was host to the touring survey exhibition *John Constable: Impressions of Land, Sea and Sky*, concurrent to Enjoy's presentation of Bagnall's *Cloud Shape Classifer.*[2] This coincidence usefully provided a background for the way in which the *Cloud Shape Classifier* appeals to a tradition of landscape painting through its mimicking of our natural world and use of customs familiar to us from the wider history of representation. However, rather than Howard's orderly observations – as illustrated so finely by figures such as Constable – Bagnall offers us an open classifying system, which answers to taste in place of reason.

Cloud Shape Classifier
18 August - 1 September 2006

The history of taste is almost as old as the history of weather; and here we can usefully compare a series of watercolors depicting a historical English landscape setting with digital snapshots of the air above Wellington – more precisely the sky out of the window of a small gallery on upper Cuba St – as a way to reflect on the very human act of showing the world back to ourselves. From landscape painting to Ono's *Sky T.V.* to online weather cams, the *Cloud Shape Classifier* continues this idea of mediating our experience of the natural world.

In many ways the classifier is like a small brain. A basic model of artificial intelligence works to make sense of our aesthetic decisions that, as we develop it to our own taste, proffers images of clouds for us to enjoy. Through a careful mathematical scheme, the classifier deciphers and then illustrates our taste for us. Via the computer program Bagnall has built we are given the tools to create our own archive of aesthetic choices. This trained tastemaker narrows our selections over time to arrive at an individually determined visual scheme and, similar to the processes of adaptation we understand species to undergo within the concept of Natural Selection, each classifier evolves over time toward its own entity.

For Enjoy, a projection was focused on the wall showing a version of the online public classifier. Split into four, the projection refreshed itself every two minutes as more data was captured from the sky through a digital camera placed upwards at the window. Next to each image on the wall was a small button that when pressed constituted a vote, and fed back to the classifier as if this button had been clicked online. The public classifier is fascinating in its confusion. Here is a classifier endlessly grappling with the different decisions of its many contributors, muddled and left dangling for a sense of direction after the numerous and varied votes it receives daily - as preferences for dusky pink-capped cumulus fight it out with grey and melancholy swirling masses of air and light.

As a result of its own means, the Internet is full of sites that show off the ability of the World Wide Web to harvest and analyze people's judgments. These rating schemes include the useless yet compelling examples: Rate My Rack (www.ratemyrack.com, where visitors can view and rank images of breasts uploaded by women seeking a public rating of their own "racks") and Hot or Not (www.hotornot.com, this is a tamer site where visitors are shown more portrait style home-photography of both sexes to assess).

Cloud Shape Classifier Douglas Bagnall. Internet screen shot, training the Louise Menzies classifier

At the other end of the spectrum are the more practical likes of Amazon's "recommended" function, which compiles raw statistics with personally crafted lists to accurately suggest titles of relevance, through to the mass-posting heights of the open-source encyclopedia Wikipedia.

Where does this locate the *Cloud Shape Classifier*? As an art project? As something offering functionality? As both? Similar to other projects of Bagnall's, the *Cloud Shape Classifier* works as art allowing us to consider the media space of technology together with aesthetics. Through the use of technology for romantic means the *Cloud Shape Classifier* opens up a multitude of relationships within an online environment, between the natural world and its reproductions, authorship and taste, accessibility and participation.

1 http://www.orbit.zkm.de/?q=node/24
(Retrieved September 2007).

2 The Te Papa exhibition: *John Constable: Impressions of Land, Sea and Sky* was held 5 July 2006 – 8 October 2006 in Te Papa's Tower Gallery.

Cloud Shape Classifier Douglas Bagnall. Image courtesy the artist

Cloud Shape Classifier Douglas Bagnall. Installation photo by Melanie Oliver

Sandy Gibbs

Powder Pink and Sky Blue Dreamland
By Rob Garrett

There's a lot to look at, listen to, sense, and think about here. After a while, having stepped into the room and eventually begun to look around, I have the feeling I've walked into the middle of one of those moments when I've turned on the TV part way through a story crowded with characters whose names I don't recognize and whose back-stories I can only guess at, I'm trying to make sense of the fragments of conversation unfolding between them. Trying to make a single sense of this is futile, and what I find I'm more interested in is getting to know the complexity.

When I first walk into the gallery, I am caught by the dreamlike quality of the woman and man floating before me in the two-frame video projection and by the haunting allure of sensual orchestral music filling the gallery space. It's not so much mesmerizing as calming, lulling – a lilting eroticism – especially after climbing the gallery stairs from the busy and noisy Cuba Street, Wellington's melting pot neighbourhood.

Artist Sandy Gibbs has filmed a woman and a man each riding a mechanical bull. With all but occasional glimpses of a saddle or a patch of hide, we do not see the bull. The projected video is played in slow-motion and the figures, as previously mentioned, seem to float, brightly lit against a white background. The camera is in each case stationary, as a result the two figures slide in and out of frame, back and forwards from close up to leaning away. In some moments the frame catches their head and shoulders, in the next their waist and hips slide into view. We see her jeans, crimson top and rhinestones, bare midriff, red lips and fingernails, dark crimped hair; his pale blue satin cowboy shirt, white embroidery, tassel trimming, satin pants and cowboy hat.

These are the costumes of metro-sexual cowboys and dating-scene disco girls. Powder-blue satin is definitely dodgy territory for all except fancy dress revelers, if we assume that even the urban cowboy represents heartland masculinity. Gibbs's setting and characters anticipate an audience aware that such myths of gender may be unstable, so she uses this pale blue satin costume to knowingly pull and push us back and forwards across the masculinity border, just as the hydraulic rams under the two bull riders are jerking them around.

Perpetually unbalanced, each character has their right arm in front of them as they hold the hand grip which sits between their thighs, and their other arms floats out to the side or circles above their head. Mostly the camera only catches their head and shoulders, glimpses the floating arm, and caresses

the studied expression each face holds. Each character has a look of calm concentration on their face, mostly gazing down into the space in front of them or between their legs – yes, of course it occurs to me too, that this is like looking at a lover between their legs – and occasionally they smile or register some small flicker of surprise or extra effort and the bull swings them in an unexpected direction. But beyond this, their expression has a quality rarely found in non-documentary film; an introspective delight that transcends acting. Each actor concentrates so much on staying atop the gyrating bull, and therefore remaining in role, that they have an almost-acting, almost-being-themselves quality that reflects – I hesitate to use the well-worn phrase, but none other will do – being *in the moment*, unselfconsciously. Other factors enhance this state: both the slowed down tempo of the footage, and the fragmented reality created by the absence of the figures' own breathing and straining, replaced instead by the dreamy soundscape of lyrical orchestra and cello – Franz Joseph Haydn's Cello Concerto No. 2 in D major. The actors provide a visual presence only and this concentrates the impact of them being-in-themselves rather than being-in-character.

The artist, Sandy Gibbs' first thought to put the woman actor on the mechanical bull as an archetype of the feminine sitting astride, yet in the power of the masculine. Instead Gibbs found that as she progressively edited the footage, she edited the bull out. In the end, and with the suggestive absence of the bull, the sequence permits us to concentrate on the lyrical dance of the two figures that begin to look as if they might be riding each other in a sexual encounter. The absent bull has become a kind of stand-in for a sexual partner of any gender and either sexuality. Him, her, feminine, masculine, straight, gay – is it clear? Does it matter?

The sliding and floating figures hold my attention for a while before I begin to take in the rest of the gallery space, a densely populated room. Gibbs has peopled her first solo project with a whole bunch of walk-on characters: soft furnishings, soft erotica, hard bodies, Burt Lancaster swimming, a blue unicorn, kisses, slaps, spurs, a dying stag, TV monitors, pink curtains, Jacqueline du Pré's cello and a boy bouncing on a diving board over the dirty puddle in the deep end of an almost empty swimming pool.

In front of the video projection of the bull-riders is a bright pink upholstered pouf – almost the colour and texture of a plump strawberry – and at its centre, a small fountain, burbling and splashing water from the pouf's central dimple. What started as a piece of feminine furniture to act as a foil to the thrusting power of the image of the bull has turned into a transgender object – sweet, taut, wet and ejaculating.

Sometimes a kiss is… not just a kiss Sandy Gibbs. Video stills courtesy of the artist

Sometimes a kiss is … not just a kiss
6 – 23 September 2006

As I turn, bathed in the rosy glow of daylight filtered through powder pink curtains drawn across the gallery's large windows, I see there is a video monitor on the wall behind me showing a split-screen montage of films– Michael Cimino's *The Deer Hunter* (1978), Michael O Sajbel's *The Ride* (1997), Frank Perry's *The Swimmer* (1968), George Butler's *Pumping Iron II: The Women* (1984), and documentary footage from the Tokyo Olympics. Gibbs' montage juxtaposes Burt Lancaster – fondling a teenage girl, trying to take on a horse in a foot race, rescuing a boy from jumping into an almost empty swimming pool, and swimming through seven or eight Los Angeles backyard swimming pools to return home to find his marriage has fallen apart – with Robert De Niro's character Michael Vronsky apparently shooting a stag, a suburban fire screen with a stag decal, rodeo cowboys, and Bev Francis; 1977 Australian shot put record-holder, six-time powerlifting world champion, and controversial professional bodybuilder.

Bev Francis's story epitomises much of the troubled complexity that compels artist Sandy Gibbs to continue to explore images of femininity and masculinity. Francis was catapulted to fame through her role in *Pumping Iron II: The Women*, as the world's strongest woman powerlifter. The film casts her in a controversial role within the ongoing debate over femininity and female muscularity, with her naturally massive size and muscular development challenging preconceived notions about the limits of female bodybuilding. In her lifetime she failed to win a single major bodybuilding competition; some surmised it was because officials decided that TV viewers were not ready to see someone with Francis's physique win first place.

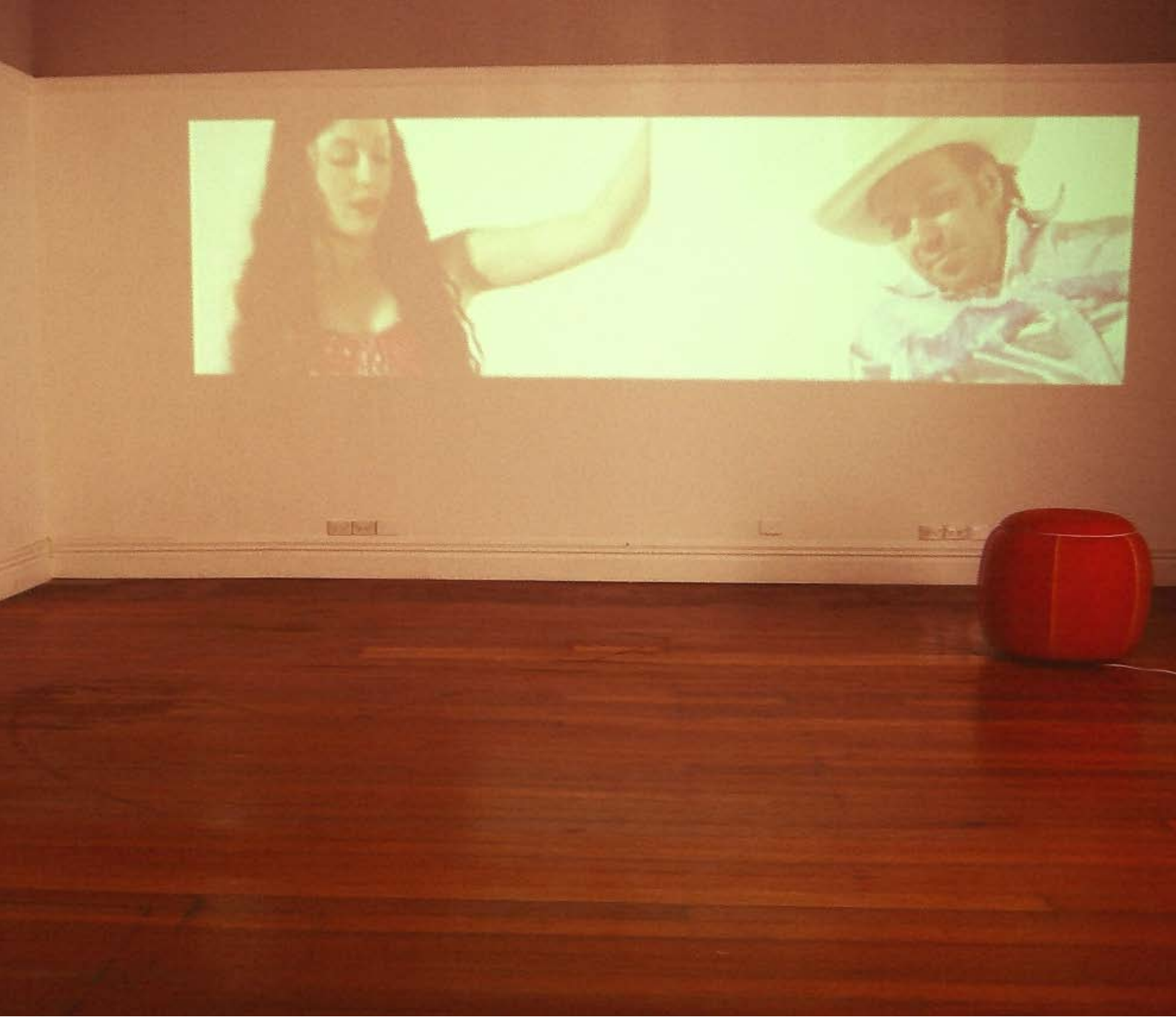
I am drawn back to the title for this installation – often a suggestive reference point for thinking and feeling one's way into an exhibition. This title is no exception, for it conjures both sensations and ideas. I'll leave the sensations to your own memories, while I talk a little about the thinking it conjures with me. "A kiss is not just a kiss". What is it that the kiss could be if were "just a kiss" – simple, innocent, pure, uncomplicated? When it is more than this, and when the phrase "not just a kiss" is used, it is often in the context of accounts of sexual harassment and acts of infidelity, the duplicity of politicians who kiss in public while stabbing each other in the back. Perhaps strangest of all, a kiss is 'not just a kiss' for people with extreme food allergies entering the dating arena – a kiss can be fatal! This kind of kiss, that is not *just* a kiss, hides something more complicated, sinister, dangerous or wonderful than might appear at first.

Sometimes a kiss is… not just a kiss Sandy Gibbs. Video still courtesy of the artist

Gibbs's exhibition title seems to suggest that we should not think of the images we see, the sounds we hear and the things we feel as innocent, simple, or uncomplicated. What we find, after scratching the surface a little might not be that terrible or dramatic but it's likely to be more than what our first impressions reveal. The starting point for Gibbs's project seemed simple enough but as she developed the work it began to take on a life of its own and showed her a few things she had not expected.

This idea that art might leave us someplace other than where we started is at the heart of the experience for me: sometimes a micro movement; sometimes a transformation.

Where Gibbs started was a place where she expected the show would explore a collision between gender stereotypes. Where did she end up? Somewhere more complicated and slippery: a place where there is less of a collision, more a collusion. The idea of a collision suggests the brutal and damaging encounter of fixed positions, definite articles or concrete realities. Alternatively, collusion suggests agreement, conspiracy, complicity and consent. For the artist, it is as if the definite articles she brought together – archetypal feminine and masculine characters and props – conspired against (and with) her and reached a slippery agreement. As Gibbs manipulated her medium and the ideas moved with her, each began to play each other's roles, rather than playing the roles Gibbs originally had in mind for them.



Sometimes a kiss is … not just a kiss Sandy Gibbs. Installation photo by Paula Booker

Enjoy Lasting Performance Series
27 September – 7 October 2006

Slowly, Gently, Confidently
Performance 27 September 2006 6pm
Enjoy Public Art Gallery

Gemma Tweedie

Action Buckets
By Melanie Oliver

Slowly, Gently, Confidently proclaimed the beauty of the humble bucket. Through a video projected at one end of the gallery space and a distributed handout, Gemma Tweedie offered exuberant suggestions on how this simple but essential everyday item could be enjoyed. "Throw and catch a bucket!", "Put many buckets on!" and "Stroke a bucket tenderly." These directives, reminiscent of Austrian artist Erwin Wurm, encouraged the audience to actively explore a bucket's potential, to consider and find enchantment in such an ordinary vessel.

As audience members arrived, Tweedie was carefully stacking buckets to create a long wall that divided the gallery in two. Shiny, red and new, the many buckets gradually obscured visibility between the artist and assembled crowd. On the audience side, buckets lay scattered ready for use. On completion of the wall, a video of Tweedie performing various activities with buckets commenced, projected on the back wall of Enjoy. The sounds emanating from her side of the wall, of buckets crashing or water sloshing, were echoed by our own noises and it slowly became apparent that Tweedie was also performing the activities in time with the video.

Like Bruce Barber, who performed Bucket Action in 1974 with a bucket on his head and a fish in his hand, Tweedie was performing blind, with no opportunity for gauging audience responses to her slightly ridiculous gestures. However, in keeping with shifts in strategies towards interactive engagement since the performance practices of the 1970s, Tweedie hoped audience members would actively participate, as suggested: *Slowly, Gently, Confidently.*

The handout featured Tweedie supposedly smiling encouragingly from behind a bucket and the project was designed as a supportive environment for joining in. The audience was not shy. Some modestly followed Tweedie's video prompts or created their own actions, whist others revelled in the opportunity to play. One participant even dumped an entire bucket of water over his own head. In this way, the relationships between audience members

were important. A sense of comradeship developed as they shared in this experience and performed for one another.

The conclusion of the performance unearthed the delight of the audience at their role in the project, as together artist and audience brought the wall down, before the buckets were packed ready for return to The Warehouse, their place of purchase.

En masse, the buckets were a striking sculptural feature. A luminous construction, the wall also exposed the buckets as yet another cheap disposable plastic consumer item. With the current cacophony of environmental issues and renewed anti-capitalist convictions, these objects poetically assumed a political stance. By selecting only red buckets and then dividing the room with a wall of these, Tweedie emphasised their industrial production, hinting at our increasingly globalised economies and communist histories.

Slowly, Gently, Confidently embodied optimistic ideals for the individual and the collective, democracy and freedom, even utilising the bucket, a tool frequently used for cleaning. However, as nursery rhyme character Henry found when attempting to fix the hole in his bucket, there are no easy solutions for mending things. Though means for stemming a leak abound, significant commitment and resources are required to improve a situation. What Tweedie offers us is a substantial supply of enthusiasm and buckets at the ready.

Slowly, Gently, Confidently Gemma Tweedie. Installation photo by Paula Booker / performance photo by Liz Allan

beeline
Performance 28 September 2006 8am
Lambton Quay, Wellington CBD.

Beth O'Brien

Whose Street is it Anyway?
By Melanie Oliver

Beth O'Brien's *beeline* was based on the everyday path of Wellington's Lambton Quay workers. Designed to consider ideas of group migration, mobility and pedestrian movement within the Wellington central city, *beeline* also prompted questions around audience, participation and authorship. Does devising a work for the street make it more accessible or more democratic?

Artist David Hammons once said "I like doing stuff better on the street, because the art becomes just one of the objects that's in the path of your everyday existence. It's what you move through, and it doesn't have any seniority over anything else."[1]

Beth O'Brien invited a range of people she knew to meet and walk their normal route to work, but this time together in line formation. The choreographed performance took a common commuter route and conservative attire was requested. For those viewing the work from the suggested courtyard area above the street, it was a subtle thing to observe. Participants melded with the ordinary early-morning foot traffic and the brief glimpse of *beeline* was like catching a mirror image of oneself passing a glass storefront.

O'Brien had closely considered the documentation of her project and the lingering photographs and video footage capture this momentary reflection, intended to incite a shift in perception of one's own journeys and routines.

The idea of distilling a moment could translate to any activity or form of travel, but is particularly resonant with walking. There is a sense of purposefulness to striding, or even strolling, of having a destination and getting somewhere. There is also a feeling of personal space within public areas, as though when amongst strangers on a busy street you are invisible, even if simultaneously exposed and vulnerable. There are other factors to consider – loitering can be difficult and different areas necessitate and encourage certain pedestrians over others, but a busy street is assumed to contain a range of people and to be a mixed-use space. There is a rich history of performance art conducted on the street and an accompaying notion that this is somehow a site of freedom and equality, or that by taking art out of the gallery space you can engage with society at large.

Situated on Lambton Quay, *beeline* played on the proliferation of workers heading in the direction of the

Beehive parliamentary buildings. Predominantly corporates, professionals and those that serve them, the herd on this street hasten between home and office each morning and night. As she co-ordinated and followed a group instead of an individual, O'Brien investigated our collective actions and behaviours, highlighting how our movements are prescribed by the architecture of public spaces and perhaps not as independent as we believe. Despite the ability for individuals to contradict the norm, *beeline* deployed a very particular pathway to emphasise how urban planning influences our movements and how a general collective consensus on appropriateness defines and governs some lives.

Observers and other pedestrians may have noticed something slightly peculiar about these performing walkers, but *beeline* was intended primarily for a select art audience. Rather than proposing her work would find a significant reception with those already on the street, it was the audience solicited through Enjoy that O'Brien nudged outside to take a look around. The audience gathered to watch the procession from an office courtyard deck. By dislodging the act of walking to work from the customary vantage point of the street, and magnifying it through the lens of art, the artist detached it enough to open up discussion. The act of separating and giving 'seniority' to art, as distinct from everyday existence, is precisely what enabled our consideration, review and commentary on the commonplace. In requiring the audience to deliberate on a simple part of life with *beeline,* O'Brien asked what democracy and liberty mean within society, instead of assuming they exist in any greater quantity outside of, compared to within, a gallery space.

1 http://www.brown.edu/Department/MCM/people/cokes/Hammons.html (Retrieved June 2007).

beeline Beth O'Brien. Performance photo by Jeremy Booth

Enjoy Lasting Performance Series
27 September – 7 October 2006

Untitled
Performance 30 September 2006 2 - 4pm
Enjoy Public Art Gallery and undisclosed remote location.

G-fab and the meat pack

Can you hold the line please?
By Melanie Oliver

A telephone receiver was strapped to a makeshift microphone stand in the middle of Enjoy Gallery. From a couple of speakers set on the floor, experimental sound compositions breathed into and animated the space. It could have been unusual hold music, played while you waited for a real person to get on the line. Inversely, it was G-fab and the meat pack, live, ready and willing to respond to whoever entered Enjoy.

People drifted through the performance over this quiet Saturday afternoon. Offsite, and as such unaware of the idle atmosphere, G-fab and the meat pack energetically broadcast down the telephone from somewhere across town. Despite their dislocation the performers were offering the opportunity to join the band. The enticing empty microphone and apparent lack of surveillance lured some audience members to contribute their voices and brave participants were rewarded with immediate replies. In other cases their input was incorporated into ensuing sound. During the performance occasional questions, prompts or directives were issued, otherwise G-fab and the meat pack forged on happily, leaving their invitation as an open call for contributions and allies.

Operating from a distance, radio broadcasters often become an integral part of our lives. Transmitted to our living rooms, bedrooms, kitchens and cars their chatter and musical choices accompany our daily routines. Over time, listeners learn many facets of their personality and through selection of station choose to align themselves with certain characters over others, as though they are omnipotent friends. Although presented in a semi-public space, there was a similar sense of intimacy to the G-fab and the meat pack performance. With the possibility for comments and exchanges and the acknowledgement that this was a performance for a specifically Enjoy audience, it felt personalised despite the absence of physical immediacy. Like a chatroom where those participating can communicate without identification, here was the chance for both sides to play up personas or unorthodox relationships.

The space became a room for bouncing ideas and sounds. Without the demands of a live performance or obligation to a radio network, G-fab and the meat pack were free to perform uncensored, liberated to perform in truly narcissistic fashion. At a remove from the public interface, they allowed access to their usually personal rehearsal activities, and encouraged

more active participation in return. However, the audience members were also performing the work for one another. Highly aware of their positioning and appearance, visitors in the space could be viewed and implicated, making the interactive role one of playful but vulnerable exhibitionism.

In some ways the performance structure harked back to the age of adolescence. It evoked the clichès of teenagers hibernating in their bedrooms, simultaneously devoted to solitary creative ventures and the telephone, mobiles and internet friend sites. Holed up in a venue across town, G-fab and the meat pack leaked their practice out into the world in a way that invited quick-fire appraisal. The fabulous/fabricated G-fab and her invaluable sidekicks the meat pack enlivened the Enjoy space, offering commentary on contemporary forms of communication whilst plying others to connect with their adventures in music production and reception. In constructing a unique ambient environment they stressed the importance for us all to both plug in and listen out.

Untitled G-fab and the meat pack. Remote location musical performance photo and Enjoy installation photo by Jeremy Booth

Enjoy Lasting Performance Series
27 September – 7 October 2006

Untitled (Musical Performance)
Performance 30 September 2006 2pm
Opera House Lane, Te Aro, Wellington.

Murray Hewitt

Ghetto Gospel
By Thomasin Sleigh

"Performance" is a problematic word to pin to Murray Hewitt's piece in Enjoy's 2006 Lasting Performance Series. We were in a back alley off Courtenay Place. I had never been there before and found it surprisingly beautiful – covered in vibrant graffiti, and the rampant green of ivy and weeds. The hurry of Courtenay Place was just a step away, where myriads of small performances are being played out constantly and the public eye is open wide. Instead, Hewitt chose to stage his song in this secluded spot and through this subtle repositioning, reworked the traditional notions of performance.

The small crowd who gathered received a gospel song, sung by Hewitt and accompanied on his small ukulele. He was painted completely red and wore a Coca Cola t-shirt and matching cap, red Adidas track pants and shell-toes with aviator sunglasses. He was like a walking billboard; offset by the brilliant orange wall behind him. Alongside Hewitt sat an American eagle and the Disney character Pluto – further signifiers of consumerism, American cultural imperialism and popular culture.

The lyrics to Hewitt's song rung resoundingly hollow, "I still believe in non-violence. I will run to be with Jesus. I don't believe what they say on TV". Like the vivid brands and mass produced products surrounding him, these earnest words were vacuous and superficial. There was nothing here. It was almost an anti-performance, as every aspect seemed so devoid of real meaning. These were empty words, empty symbols and entirely distanced from this place and time. There was barely even a human performer, as the real Murray Hewitt was hidden beneath layers of red paint. He himself had become a walking signifier of cultural nothingness.

Hewitt's previous works have dwelt on the visual vocabulary of America and its attendant meanings. Similarly, in this performance we were given a display of the disposability of culture and the way in which meaning can be warped by the re-contextualisation of American cultural artifacts. Everyday life is so inundated by the symbols of America that they are commonplace now, but held up here and displayed in such a blatant way, they are emptied of their significance. As Hewitt so nonchalantly sung his gospel song in a side street of Wellington, he examined the intersection of place and culture and void.

Untitled (Musical Performance) Murray Hewitt. Performance photo by Jeremy Booth

Enjoy Lasting Performance Series
27 September – 7 October 2006

Channel Chants
Performance 3 October 2006 6pm
Enjoy Public Art Gallery

Raised By Wolves

Hot Air
By Paula Booker

Two women sat aside each other, under a confusion of wires in the centre of the gallery, each delivered verbiage from sheets of conflicting narrative prose.

Snippets of stories, anecdotes and poetry were detectable, yet the brevity of each speaker's delivery, and the likelihood of interruption by the other made comprehension difficult. Their pace became more wearying as they speed up or slowed down unexpectedly.

Each woman seemed dressed in the uniform of another era. The buttoned up and buttoned down dresses reached beyond the knee, reflecting the conservative values of 1950's New Zealand.

An electric kettle was boiling. This prop, a sage-green kettle in the rear left corner of the gallery also seemed to be on loan from another era – one of lesser domestic convenience. The pluming exclamation of the kettle became increasingly urgent as the water passed boiling point. No one stopped to shut it off.

This was Raised by Wolves, featuring Amy Howden-Chapman, Biddy Livesey and Bevan Smith conducting an investigation into the effect of atmosphere on human interaction and perception.

I saw it as a telephone exchange, with Bevan Smith acting as master operator. In a process that remained mysterious to the audience, Smith controlled the flow of information, creating a layered and interesting collaboration. At the conclusion of the spoken ruckus Biddy Livesy brewed tea. Surely the water was spoilt.

Channel Chants Raised by Wolves. Performance photo by Jeremy Booth

Enjoy Lasting Performance Series
27 September – 7 October 2006

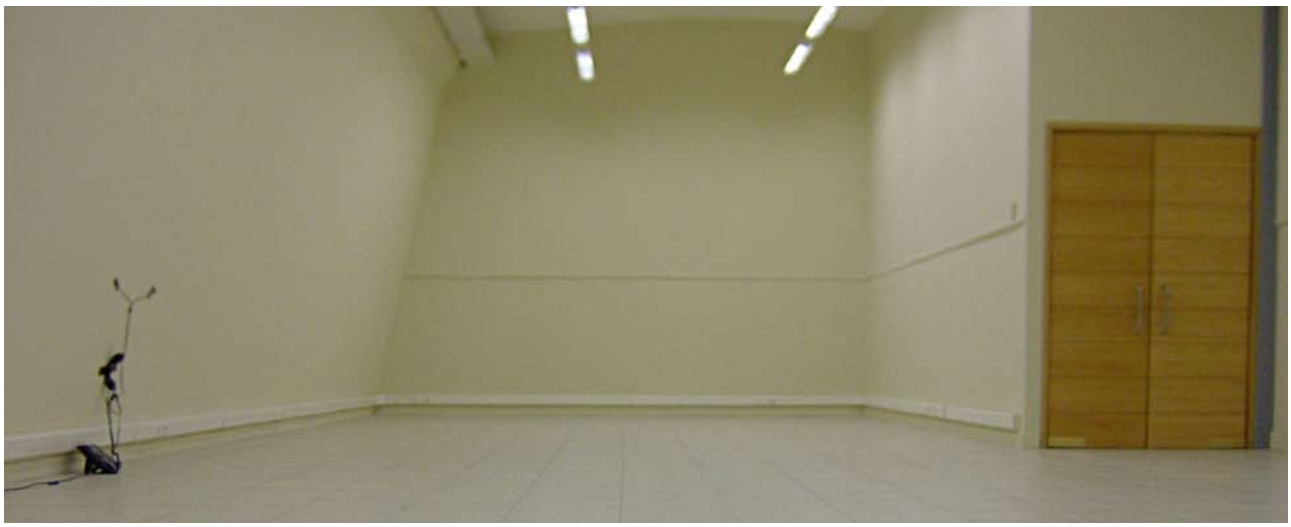
The Threshold of Feeling
Performance October 4 2006
7:30 pm Museum of Contemporary Art,
Santiago, Chile

Kaleb Bennett

Statement

On Wednesday the 4th of October 2006 at approximately 7:30pm, I undertook an action in a closed room in the Museum of Contemporary Art, Santiago, Chile. The action was witnessed by one person other than myself, who was present via a telephone call placed from New Zealand.

The action was brief and physical, and utilised only a body in a closed space. It was intended to last as long as the body could facilitate the desired action. The action took place in total darkness and lasted approximately 20 minutes.



The Threshold of Feeling Kaleb Bennett. Image courtesy the artist

Nate Harrison, Rebecca Hobbs, Fiona Jack, George Kontos, Kim Schoen and Josh Stone
Curated by Fiona Jack
14 – 21 October 2006

Royal Alumni

Amigos
By Paula Booker

In late 2006, New Zealand expat artist Fiona Jack brought together a group of Los Angeles-based artists for a curated group exhibition: *Royal Alumni.* A dislocation of context and relationships occurred when a small selection of artists from another part of the world assembled for a Wellington exhibition, allowing the visual arts community here to see how another community presents itself.

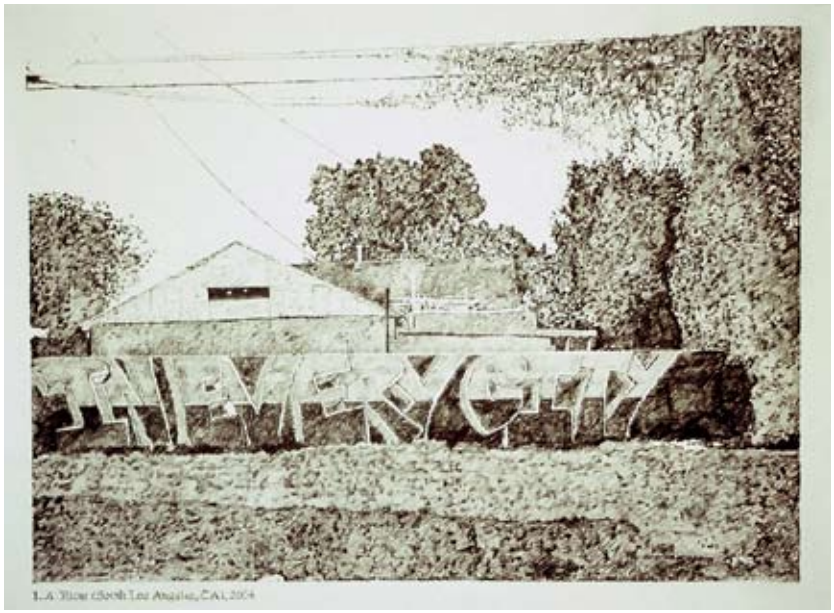
An earlier version of the exhibition's title is telling: *Mis Amigos de LA*. The show is premised upon a group of friends bringing their work together, as its curator Fiona Jack explains: "It's pretty much people I like who make work I like, all CalArts people." Beyond this, a loose thematic thread also draws these works together – many of the artists engage with the notion of spectacle as it pertains to the LA context.

Upon entering the gallery, visitors were met by a conversational but sparse arrangement of mainly singular works by each artist, including large drawings on paper, unframed photographs, a collection of small sky-blue flags, a slide and an audio installation. Happily, the display and scale of the works belied their arrival by airmail.

Josh Stone's large sketches rendered the details of streets, traffic signs and suburban shrubbery and created a sense of another place. His drawings seem to disrupt the cultural and spatial stereotyping of the Los Angeles area's history. Stone, an artist and DJ, employs his Jewish-American perspective to rethink aspects of LA folklore.

Also reflecting on historical folklore, Nate Harrison used musicology to uncover issues relating to copyright and information sharing. His work for *Royal Alumni* was an audio installation titled *Can I Get An Amen?* Harrison's work unfolded a critical and historical perspective, delving into the history and subsequent use of what the artist claims is the most sampled drumbeat in the history of recorded music – the *Amen Break*. A deeply intoned and monotonous narration by the artist discussed this six-second drum loop, which originated from a 1969 soul track by The Winstons called *Amen Brother*.

Harrison's work scrutinizes the techno-utopian notion that "information wants to be free" and highlights the *Amen Break's* peculiar relationship to current copyright law.[1] First sampled in the late Eighties by hip hoppers NWA, the break has since been chopped up and re-configured to create the majority of rhythms used in all ragga and breakbeat music produced around the world in the last ten years. Harrison presented his work as an acetate record, a dubplate. The dubplate is an affordable pressing technique for limited runs – artists' pressings for example – however the heavyweight vinyl degrades with each play, rendering the disc unplayable after about fifty uses. While the installation set-up was similar



to a listening post in a record shop, the work's banal, informational qualities, combined with its temporal fragility, made it a strangely compelling piece.

A large colour photograph by Rebecca Hobbs was mounted unframed on the wall and injected some South Pacific imagery into the exhibition – the image showed a single Nikau palm on a steep, grass slope, being scaled by a small figure. Working with a stuntman, Hobbs created a series of photos that are surprising and unnerving.

Fiona Jack's own artwork for the exhibition, *75 Cuban Revolutions*, is the second part of a project developed for a show in Havana in 2006, about the illegal Cuban libraries that loan out banned books. Her wall of sky-blue flags was a melancholic homage to the strength of the heroes of Cuba's resistance. They flapped quietly and flaccidly, each of the 75 flags bearing the Christian name of a librarian in memorial: Arturo, Juan, Maria, Lazaro ...

Also featured was George Kontos, a Greek artist now based in Los Angeles, whose earlier career as an architect and VJ has helped shape a fascinating practice of cultural and architectural critique.

The author of the ongoing *Living History Project*, which questions the construction of history, artist Kim Schoen is also no stranger to historical precedents. Schoen invited a group of people to photograph a fireworks display held over a dry lakebed in the Mojave Desert in Southern California. She then collected and edited their images into an ambiguous collection depicting explosions suspended against a blue sky.

Recent public debates and publications such as Jens Hoffman's *The Next Documenta Should be Curated by an Artist* have called into question the relationship between artists and curators.[2] Exhibitions like *Royal Alumni* add to this dialogue in a small way, bringing to our attention the multifarious works of "etc.-artists". These are the artists – according to *The Next Documenta'* contributor Ricardo Basbaum – who do not fit easily into categories, who question the role of the artist.

"When an artist is a full-time artist, we should call her/him an "artist-artist", when the artist questions the nature and function of her/his role, we should write "etc.-artist" (so we can imagine several categories: curator-artist, writer-artist, activist-artist, producer-artist, agent-artist, theoretician-artist, therapist-artist, teacher-artist, chemist-artist)".[3]

I think the value of *The Next Documenta Should be Curated by an Artist* is in its questioning of power structures and discussions about the changing roles of the artist and the role of curator as *auteur,* which has developed in past decades. The inherent value in the exhibition *Royal Alumni*, however,

LA Riots (South Los Angeles, CA) Josh Stone in *Royal Alumni.* Photo by Daniel du Bern

Nate Harrison, Rebecca Hobbs, Fiona Jack, George Kontos, Kim Schoen and Josh Stone
Curated by Fiona Jack
14 – 21 October 2006

is the way it brought to light nuggets of artistic production in small creative communities that may otherwise be difficult to unearth by an institutional curator. Fiona Jack would probably be happier in the artist-artist role, but with a little coaxing, she became a curator-artist, bringing together architect-artist, DJ-artist, activist-artist and more. Her access to and friendship with these artists enabled an Enjoy audience to see newly produced work from a community like their own: work that is centered on a particular location and hinged on personal relationships. Although *Royal Alumni* was not an explicit meditation of the place of the artist in contemporary practice, such debates indeed sit effectively against Jack's warm depiction of an art community.

1 This phrase became a motto for the free content movement, a group responsible for creating a shift towards liberalisation of information ownership and copyrighting. The quote "Information wants to be free" is originally attributed to Stewart Brand, delivered during his speech at the inaugural Hackers Conference in 1984. Brand is cited here: http://www.anu.edu.au/people/Roger.Clarke/II/IWtbF.html (Retrieved October 2007).

2 Hoffman asked: What happens if artists take over and occupy the territory that is usually reserved for curators? He asked artists to propose a concept for a large-scale group exhibition such as *Documenta*. This turned up varied types of responses – from proposals for the curated project to a rejection of the mantle of curator and all it connotes. Jens Hoffmann, Cur. *The Next Documenta Should Be Curated by an Artist* (New York: e-flux, 2003).

3 Ricardo Basbaum, "Documenta, I love etc.-artists" in Jens Hoffmann, Cur. *The Next Documenta Should Be Curated by an Artist* (New York: e-flux, 2003),14.

Can I Get an Amen? Nate Harrision in *Royal Alumni*. Photo by Daniel du Bern

75 Revolutions Fiona Jack in *Royal Alumni*. Photo by Daniel du Bern

Bronwyn Smith

S.O.S. Save Us From Ourselves
By Mark Williams

In 2006, the media, politicians and public interest groups once again convened to debate the merits of the annual Guy Fawkes fireworks celebration. With increasing call-outs for emergency services, destruction of property and general acts of terror towards animals and ourselves, many called for private sales to be restricted or banned.

The Labour government, already tainted with the talkback whiff of the "nanny state", warned of a possible ban should people once again act irresponsibly. However, with this particular issue it seemed the public might just agree – after all, it's all fun and games until someone loses an eye.

Scheduled during the Guy Fawkes public sale period from October 27 to November 5, Bronwyn Smith's *Wildlife* project spanned several sites around Wellington. It took the form of an installation at Enjoy, a selection of films that played on the after-hours screen at the New Zealand Film Archive, and a one-night-only detonation of the *Celebration Crate* on the beach at Oriental Parade.

With the spirit of Guy Fawkes being one of public celebration it seemed appropriate that Smith chose to take *Wildlife* out of the gallery and into the public domain. I didn't see the installation at Enjoy – so this essay will constrain discussion to the public elements of the project.

The New Zealand Film Archive window screen on Taranaki Street is one of the latest attempts by galleries to join the growing phenomena of 'after dark' single-channel public video spaces. In this case, screening is daily from 7pm until 7 am. The journey past this window is a common route for those on their way to a movie, the booze barns of Courtney Place or the city council's waterfront fireworks display.

Smith selected four film and video pieces for the window including her own *Mighty Box*. While *Mighty Box* was concerned with aesthetics and the temporal nature of fireworks, the Film Archive footage screening concurrently with her video traced historical glimpses of Guy Fawkes and foreshadowed the anarchy associated with the event today.

E.J. Brown's 1932 home movie *Guy Fawkes* begins with a group of children wheeling a pram into a suburban backyard. It's daytime, and sitting atop the pram is the Guy – a sort of bearded scarecrow traditionally sacrificed in a fiery blaze. The kids are around six to ten years old and jostle to push the pram before joining forces to haul their prey onto the grass. Perhaps intoxicated by the presence of the camera or simply unable to wait for nightfall the children spontaneously decide to attack each other, at which point their mother intervenes, and the film abruptly ends.

Thirty years later, John Bridson's 1962 film (also black and white, amateur, silent and titled *Guy Fawkes*) begins abruptly with a massive night-time bonfire. Children run in and out of frame while uniformed boy scouts light sparklers by holding them to the flaming base of another firework. The camera cuts to a woman in her forties holding a pudgy-faced toddler who waves a burning sparkler and smiles at the camera. The image is immediately at odds with contemporary sensibilities, but the child smiles benignly.

Shot by freelance television cameraman Rex Wilmshurst in 1989, *Hazardous Guy Fawkes Activity at Mission Bay* is a dramatic shift to digital colour and sound. The film begins suddenly with fireworks shooting into the sky before cutting to a procession of cars trawling slowly through an open public area. People are walking in all directions, as if moving from one carnival attraction to the next. The ground is littered with dead fireworks. Off-camera we hear the sounds of laughter and screaming mixed with the piercing shrieks of skyrockets hurtling upwards and their distant exploding bubblewrap-like pops.

Wilmshurst records a number of memorable images. A man hands a fiery Catherine Wheel to his young child; a group of Asian youths stand by an open car boot holding burning fireworks and laughing. Someone inspects the remains of gunpowder on his burnt hand and as the camera comes up behind him, he pushes dumbfoundedly at his burnt skin. A pregnant woman walks through a crowd smoking a cigarette and two drunks start a fight.

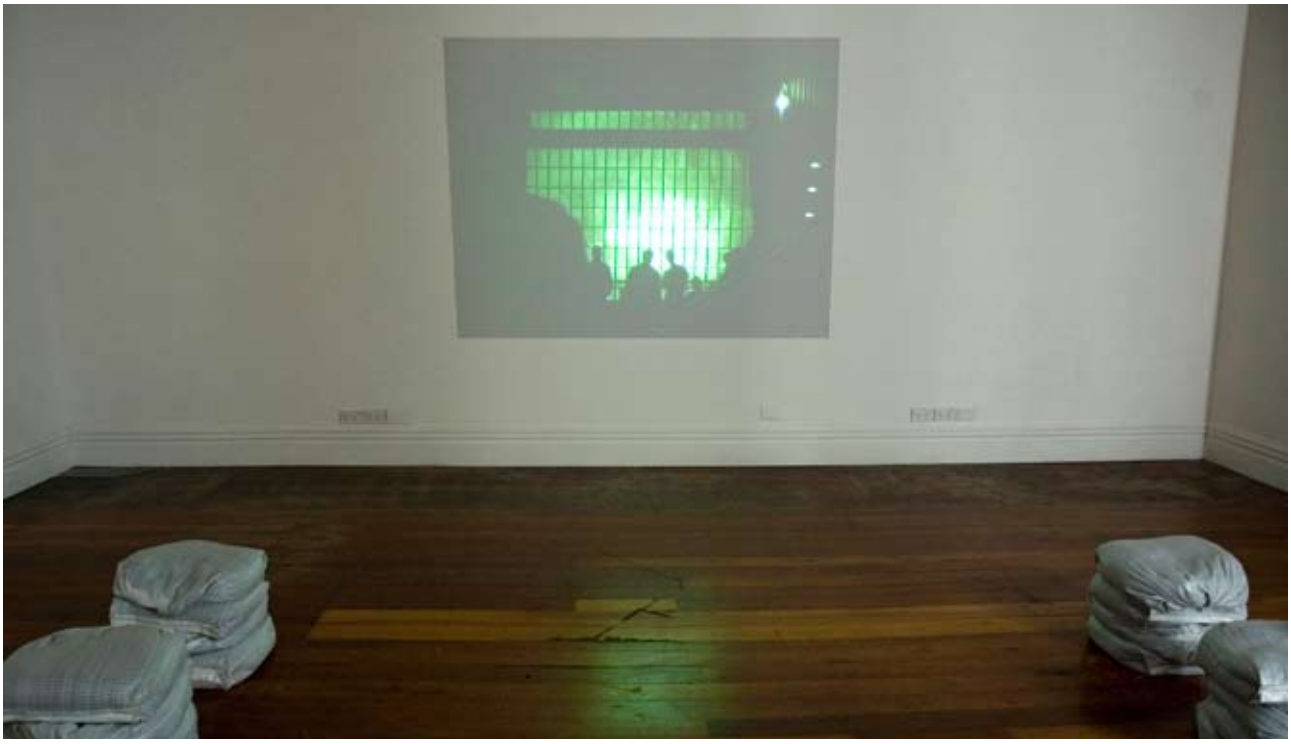
It was put to Smith that screening this film in public might perhaps be considered irresponsible. Her decision was to include it in the programme. I guess we'll never know whether *Hazardous Guy Fawkes Activity at Mission Bay* inspired anyone to new heights of reckless behavior. Certainly, no one burned down the Film Archive, and if anything it probably confirmed some people's belief that the event is a public menace.

While these pieces presented Guy Fawkes as a social activity, Bronwyn's work *Mighty Box* shifted the focus squarely onto pyrotechnics. In segments entitled *Step into the Earth, Cuckoo, 10 Shot, Eye Poppin Strobes* and

Cosmos Smoke, a fixed camera recorded Smith walking in and out of frame to light five fireworks. *Step into the Earth* exploded with a dozen upward shots in pink and white. *Cuckoo* and *Cosmos Smoke* both flamed brightly. *Eye Poppin Strobes* had plenty of pulsing white light action to dent the retina for a good thirty seconds, while *10 Shot* was a weak collection of upward shots that nevertheless illuminated the surrounding foliage in ethereal shadow. The fireworks in Smith's *Mighty Box* video work are over pretty quickly. I wondered if perhaps there was a hint here of one of the home truths about fireworks – they often promise more than they deliver.

Smith put this to the test with the opening night detonation of the *Celebration Crate* on Oriental Beach. At the appointed hour, a group of intrepid Enjoy visitors made their way to the Parade. Smith walked to the beach. The wind blew hard. Postponement was briefly mentioned and ignored. Smith's assistant Melanie Oliver, grimly shoved one hand in her pocket against the cold while holding the programme in the other hand, announced the name of each offering. Smith lit the fuse and stepped back.

Top: *Wildlife* Bronwyn Smith. Sound element of Enjoy installation, photo by Jeremy Booth



A range of explosive effects followed; from flaming candles that poured sparks upward to bright explosions that popped in series. Some fell over or failed to light, but most exploded for brief seconds in combusting showers of pink, red and green.

After each one I yelled "YEAH!" in my best Mission Bay/ New Year's Eve leave-yer-brains-in-the-carpark voice, but sadly, none of my fellow art enthusiasts joined me in the cause. A few people passing by stopped to look and occasionally chat or smile but didn't stay long. The odd passerby stopped to watch from a distance. At the end, we joined Smith on the beach to light sparklers which blew sideways in the Wellington wind before we put the burnt remains in the bin.

The lighting of the *Celebration Crate* was a good time. If the fireworks struggled to light and surge upwards in the Wellington wind this didn't dampen the artist's enthusiasm for the event. Luckily for the emergency services, no one got hurt and afterwards we adjourned for a cup of tea.

Walking away from the beach, I wondered what Fawkes might have thought of all this. While we host an annual celebration in his name we only have vague notions of his plot to blow up parliament. We don't dwell on the act as an attempt by a religious extremist to bring down the state; just as Christmas is viewed by most as a holiday, Guy Fawkes is a party.

Likewise, I doubt Smith was seeking to inspire a resurgent band of Fawkes-ists to storm the Beehive with a skyrocket and a double happy. Rather, in defining Guy Fawkes as "a celebration under threat" she reclaims some of the middle ground in the debate.

Her three chosen films from the Film Archive's collection suggest that foolish behaviour is not unique to our age. We are left to muse why law now mediates the sale of those small explosives, once left to common sense or calculated risk. Have we become more stupid or more aware of our actions?

The lighting of the *Celebration Crate* and the screening of *Mighty Box* both demonstrate that for most Guy Fawkes is a brief, benign spectacle with historical origins that are more or less bypassed by a festival of noise and colour.

On the closing weekend of the public sale period, the Wellington City Council staged its annual free public display. Watching the explosions from outside a downtown bar it struck me as ironic that the state – through the city council – should sponsor an event whose origins arose from a violent attempt to destroy it. It seems the form this celebration should take in the future is up for debate. If the banning of firework sales to the public does increase outcries over Government intervention, maybe Guy Fawkes will end up having the last laugh.

Above: *Wildlife* Bronwyn Smith. Enjoy installation, photo by Jeremy Booth

Wildlife Bronwyn Smith. Image courtesy the artist

Rachel O'Neill

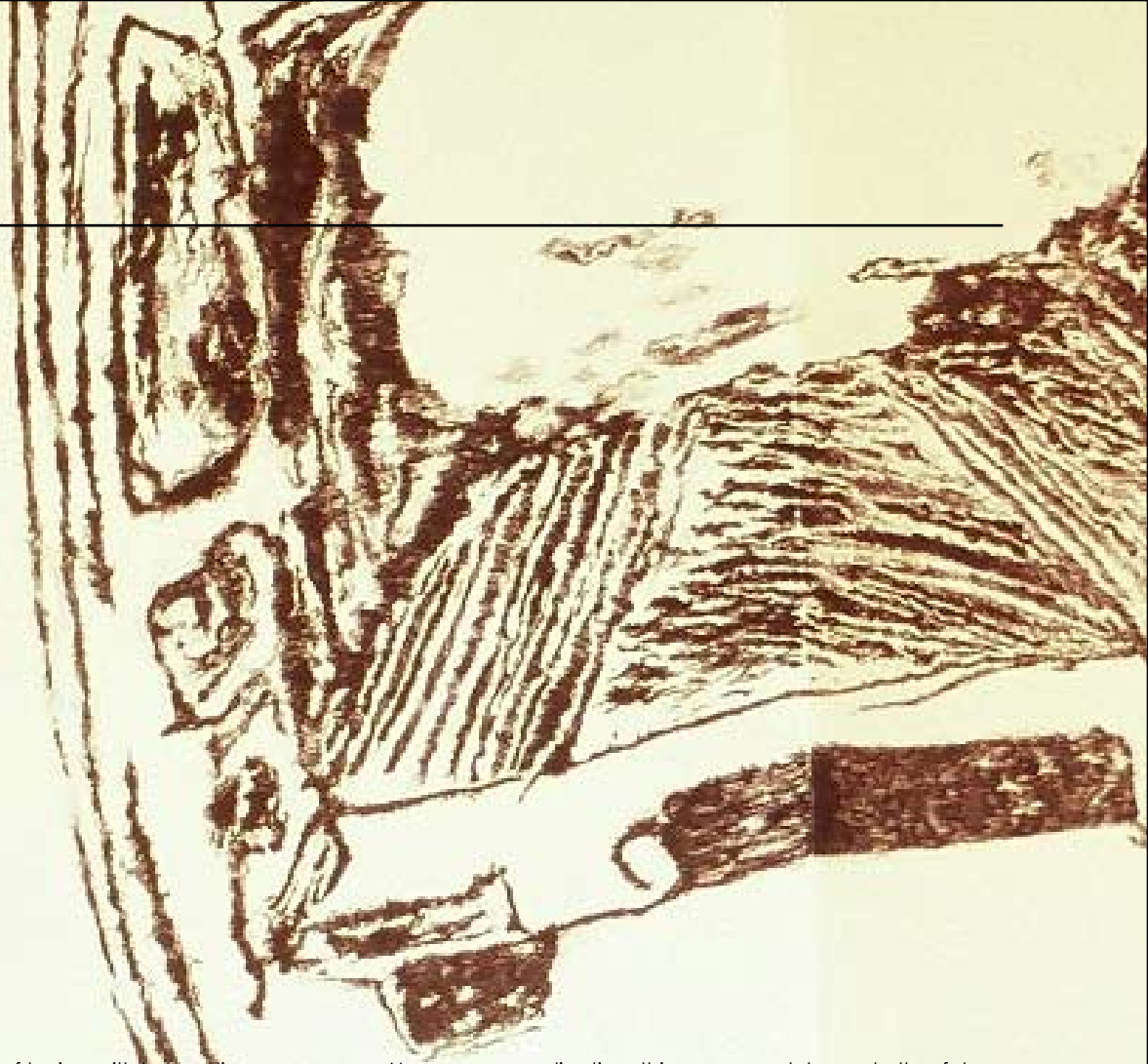
Time warp
By Thomasin Sleigh

I like the idea of science for the non-scientist. It means simplifying things for those of us without the detailed technical knowledge. Science for the non-scientist works to make things less cluttered, to clear out the pesky equations and confusing words. It seeks to lay things out clearly and cleanly like washing on the line. I find it appealing that this genre is predicated on leaving bits and pieces out. The extraneous details that cluster around core theories are carefully skirted in the myriad of pop culture books that outline the theory of evolution, quantum physics and Galileo's discoveries. I think that it takes talent to identify what is of most importance and what is not. It is more useful for lots of people to know the basic idea than for just a few people to know the detail.

Rachel O'Neill's work explores the conflation of pop culture and science. While *Hallways of Lives* is particularly complicated, ideas layered upon ideas, I think the artist is also making science for the non-scientist; she is adept at leaving bits and pieces out.

Much of *Hallways of Lives* is built on absences. O'Neill's works, which mull over equations and theories, are constantly dropping hints and suggesting wider, more inexplicable ideas. While the photographs in her show hang quite confidently on the wall, seeking to explain and delineate, they are surrounded by the quiet whispering of unsolved questions. Her delicate drawings pose their papery questions. They combine symbols and ideas to instruct the reader, but all the while we are aware of the most complex ideas left out. *Hallways of Lives* works on this level of suggestion. While some parts seem to be self-evident, laid out clearly like the drawings on the table, I think it is most interesting in its absences and negative spaces, in its science for the non-scientist.

The works explore the construction of narrative, of scientific theory, black holes, romance novels, and innumerable other issues. Talking to O'Neill is similar to approaching her exhibition – we branch from one topic to the next, and on and on. We are talking about Barbara Cartland, about Stephen Hawkins; we are talking about eternity accelerators and archives and driving schools. There are so many ideas going on here. I make careful lists that later just confuse me. Why have I written "How do you manage" then three underscores? Tracing the trajectory of O'Neill's thinking is to go on a long, complicated wander; accompanied by the feeling that there is always something she is not telling you.



This sly humour, this sense of toying with her audience, comes through in a subtle pop aesthetic which pervades the show. O'Neill's references to Barbara Cartland – romance writer extraordinaire, who churns out novels at an alarming rate – are innately funny. Cartland is a writer who omits nothing, and whose novels bend under the weight of adverbs and adjectives. In the show, O'Neill writes to the novelist, as a kind of muse overseeing the proceedings. Discussing "eternity accelerators" and "space catchers", these letters combine elements of Cartland's over embellished writing with O'Neill's interest in space, and particularly time.

Time is a key component of this show. Its title, *Hallways of Lives*, suggests a duality, and a moving forward. It raises the notion of two hallways being walked at the same time, but in different spaces. This movement towards the future is compounded by the image of the car, which crops up in all of the media that O'Neill has employed the drawings, the video work, the photographs and the distinctive image of the car driving forcefully into the white space of the wall. This image brings with it connotations of movement, of progression and of acceleration into the future.

However, complicating this movement towards the future are the elements of nostalgia always pulling us back to the past in O'Neill's work. Her drawings are pervaded with retro imagery, old style 'learner' plates and empty promotional promises, including: "at your service always". Even the large hand-drawn image of the car driving into the gallery's corner looks antiquated and clunky.

In a performance that accompanied the show, O'Neill projected old black and white footage from the New Zealand Film Archive of a baby contest. The artist gave the babies the names of car models; names such as Corona, Cortina and Escort almost sounded like plausible names for kids. However, given the age of the footage, the children would have been adults when these cars came into use. Having been retroactively branded with signifiers of the future, they are accelerated into eternity.

In O'Neill's performance, as in her exhibition, the old and the new work concurrently. While O'Neill is looking to the future and to the potential acceleration of time she is still firmly tethered to the past. There is an image of a car in the small artist's book that accompanied the exhibition, entitled

Hallways of Lives Rachel O'Neill. Installation photo by Daniel du Bern

Love letters to Barbara Cartland. The old car has the horizon line drawn in behind it; its past is clearly identified and described. The space in front though is empty and waiting to be filled. The potential of the future and the importance of the past are both outlined in this small sketch.

This is the position that O'Neill enjoys; a position that recognizes and explores two opposing positions. The artist sees no need to resolve the dichotomy of the future and the past, but instead sees how these two positions are able to exist concurrently. She is interested in examining the way in which time can arrange itself and this is where Stephen Hawkins and black holes come in, being both massively complicated and recognizable pop culture symbols of time and space.

In *Hallways of Lives*, the past and future are able to exist comfortably in tandem but also autonomously. O'Neill is interested in the process of opposition. Much of the show is structured around opposites, their processes of exchange and how they function in relation to each other. The drawings in the exhibition are made in duplicate but represented in *Hallways of Lives* by only their pink carbon copy. These works deal with the potential of negative and positive space, fiction and non-fiction, dystopias and utopias, and past and future.

These ideas are carried through the entire exhibition, expressed through video, photography and performance. O'Neill presents these dichotomous positions as problematic, but also as enormously exciting. In the artist's perception, through the arrangement and structure of her work, opposites are able to exist autonomously and without their conflicting partner. Each negative drawing exists in and of itself, without its original positive copy to define it.

There is an enormous amount of optimism in *Hallways of Lives*. Unashamedly branching out over a wide terrain, both conceptually and materially, the show is somewhat of a balancing act, with a huge number of ideas constantly at play. This is an exhibition that doesn't simply look to the future; it bounds towards it like a happy dog. That's a slightly embarrassing metaphor, but I think I'll finish there.

Hallways of Lives Rachel O'Neill. Installation photo by Daniel du Bern

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Louise Menzies, Ella Bella Moonshine Reed and The Association of Collaboration
Curated by Melanie Oliver
29 November – 16 December 2006

Every Now, & Then

The show seemed more about a journey over time than about objects in space – entering Enjoy during the exhibition *Every Now, & Then*, one could feel a sense of something in progress. The only constant factor throughout the exhibition's duration was the presence of a curatorial essay and table displaying documents and images of work by David Mealing, an artist who practised in Wellington through the 1960s, '70s and '80s. Works by two other artists and a collaborative group – Louise Menzies, Ella Bella Moonshine Reed and The Association of Collaboration – changed over the course of the exhibition. Things were rearranged or removed, or simply took over the gallery for a single afternoon.

Mealing's work was presented through documentation of performances and installations. Videos, papers, clear-files, photos and photocopies formed a modest archive offering an introduction for a younger generation of artists, perhaps unfamiliar with Mealing's practice. Curator Melanie Oliver sums up Mealing's practice as having an "emphasis on re-engaging with society."

Art exists through reflecting on society and therefore must remain at a distance from it. Following a logical trajectory, Mealing's desire for his artwork to engage with the community eventually led him to swapping his role as artist for others such as a curator, mediating knowledge about a local community's history, for example during his twenty-year term as Director/Curator of the Petone Settlers' Museum.

The presence of Mealing's work suggests continuity exits between his practise and contemporary practises that embrace non-object based art forms which privilege process, site-specificity, and community engagement. However, the show also suggests that where contemporary practise might diverge is by more fully investigating communication and dialogue as an abstract entity. In her essay, Oliver pointed to the process and politics of communication as the common theme between the younger artists shown in *Every Now, &Then.*

Oliver's curation sought to materialise and visualize process in order to bring to light ideas that have been commonly discussed in the Enjoy community, rising to the challenge of presenting residues of actions. *Every Now, & Then* took on the ambitious task of showing the breadth of relational practice in Wellington. The three contemporary works all took the subject of engaging with communities, but across a variety of forms – a talk, a work that dissipated as it was purchased, and finally a work that built up connections between

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individuals, allowing a group to form that then went on to create projects beyond the exhibition.

All the works were also enriched through engagement, that is the work actually changed with participation – evolving over the course of the show in both expected and unexpected ways. These three works avoided the pitfalls of more uncritical relational practices – sometimes termed "picnic work" – that seem to only engage with people or audience in order to make them feel good.

Menzies' talk created a forum for local knowledge, a place for stories to be swapped. The Association of Collaboration left chairs in a circle, preserving the experience of a group meeting while also leaving questions unresolved as to how they should function as a collaborating artistic entity. A string of scarves left for sale by Reed asked the viewer to consider the cost of producing such engagements or relationships.

Although each of the works privileged process over product, in each case there remained some sort of visual or text deposit by which the process was flagged – Menzies' poster images and accompanying handouts, an online blog established by the Association of Collaboration, Reed's slight curtain of colour.

Menzies' public talk, *Oriental Bay's Carter Fountain, Loved and Exposed*, had the most clearly defined duration (the audience clapped when the speech was over) however when the structured part of the event finished, more casual discussion took over with the audience offering up their own myths and experiences of the fountain.

The Carter fountain talk was a way of bringing back into focus an aspect of the city we take for granted. Menzies exchanged concrete information she had gathered about the engineering and design of the fountain and the story of its benefactor with personal stories from members of the audience. The project can also be seen as a continuation of Menzies' broader investigation of what the gallery space can be used for; be it personal expression or to document and celebrate distinctive aspects of the cultural communities, including those to which she herself belongs.

Ella Bella Moonshine Reed's work *untitled (twelve pieces, Enjoy, 147 Cuba St, Wellington)* considered how value is constructed. The work highlighted how what an art object comes to be worth is due to the communication and discussion that surrounds it, as well as by being able to connect an object to a distinctive place or culture. Her work highlights how objects often become precious when associated with community, or institution.

Louise Menzies' public talk: *Oriental Bay's Carter Fountain, Loved And Exposed*. Photo by Rachel O'Neill

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The scarves' means of production was concealed. It was unclear if Reed had made them herself, finely stitching the edges (the art of hemming), if she had out sourced the task, or if she had purchased the pieces and was simply selling them on.

The inclusion of the gallery's street address in the title of Reed's work connected it to a previous show held at Enjoy's old location further up Cuba street; a show in which Reed rearranged the office space and thereby the functions of the gallery. This re-jigging of gallery uses included crystals being laid out for sale, crystals brought – rumour had it – from Christopher's Crystals further down Cuba street. In both works, light travels though simple but beautiful objects, and the culture of colour is transferred from the crafty market stall to the space of the gallery. Here objects that are associated with a culture that seeks to simplify modern life are placed in an aesthetically minimal context. Over the duration of *Every Now, & Then*, the rainbow of scarfs continued to be slowly simplified, as its elements were purchased. Colours disappeared, leaving the gallery draped around shoulders and necks.

The Association of Collaboration's self-explanatory titling of their project shared the straightforward approach adopted by Menzies and Reed. However, it was not the naming of a work produced or performed by a single artist, but instead of a group structure for producing artworks and critical responses into the future.

Signs of the discussion that were held in the gallery during the exhibition included small interventions and rearrangements. These were remnants of people communicating about the best circumstances under which they might effectively and creatively communicate in the future. Above the aforementioned circle of chairs, a bare light bulb was wrapped with paper, a small poetic act, acknowledging how the architectural elements of a space can influence the outcome of a situation. The shading of the light also acted as a test intervention of a group learning to decide how to make collective decisions. The act could also be seen as metaphoric – the cartoon light bulb that often appears signalling an individual's bright idea, is here a group's joint idea. Over-bearing brightness has been replaced with the soft and comforting, a slow-food movement equivalent of thought – becoming political purely though refusing to be rushed, talking all decisions through while seated in a democratic arrangement.

Menzies' chairs wait for the public talk. Background: scrawlings left by The Association of Collaboration. Photo by Jenny Gillam

Foreground: The Association of Collaboration. Background: Ella Bella Moonshine Reed. Photo by Jenny Gillam