

scope

Contemporary Research Topics

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2010/11

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Scope (Art & Design) aims to engage discussion on contemporary research in the visual arts and design. It is concerned with views and critical debates surrounding issues of practice, theory, history and their relationships as manifested through the visual and related arts and activities, such as sound, performance, curation, tactile and immersive environments, digital scapes and methodological considerations. With New Zealand and its Pacific neighbours as a backdrop, but not its only stage, *Scope (Art & Design)* seeks to address the matters which concern contemporary artists and arts enquirers in their environments of practice.

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scope

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VISUAL ARTS PRACTICES

Leoni Schmidt

This issue of *Scope: Contemporary Research Topics (Art & Design)* demonstrates the wide range of ways in which artists, writers and theorists engage with the visual in the Dunedin School of Art and its networks.

George Petelin explores practice-based research in the visual arts and questions assumptions about what may constitute research as process rather than outcome. Jane Venis demonstrates research process through a practice report focusing on a current public exhibition of her work. Jenni Lauwrens explains how visual arts practices have challenged the boundaries of art history as a discipline and how visual culture studies have opened up new avenues for teaching. Peter Stupples questions Eurocentric notions of aesthetics and argues for openness to other ways of coding visual conventions.

A second set of contributions to the current issue involves responses to the visual arts practices of others. Kura Puke writes about encounters with the work of Warwick McLeod; Jane Davidson responds to three particular encounters with images of the female body; and David Green interacts with the images and words collected through interviewing and filming the work of Māori and Pasifika artists in Aotearoa.

A next group of items include practice perspectives contributed by artists Peter Belton and Hannah Joynt. Belton responds to an image by William Hodges in which a Māori figure is outlined against a landscape. The conventions of anthropomorphism through shadow play find resonance in his own work. Joynt generously shares her studio process with the reader, while thinking through the concerns which interest her in this process: the roles of intuition and the unconscious.

Creative writing processes concern Maxine Alterio where she reflects on how her novels come into being and how specific locations with their familiar visual imagery have played into this process. Narrative plays an important part of her work as a writer; as it also does for Rachel Byars, who explains the format of the meal menu as a carrier of narrative about location, ambience and culinary traditions.

A fifth set of contributions roams further afield. Lily Hibberd's response to a project by Pat HOFFIE and Stefan Purcell explores the role of water and its representations within the histories of the Australian continent. Neil Emmerson contextualises an image of torture at Abu Ghraib within the 'pathos formula' through which images of victims become carriers of ecstatic martyrdom. Rekha Rana Shailaj explains how her art fashion practice harks back to conventions of making and wearing in her first country, India.

Kerry Ann Lee considers travelling as an artist-in-residence from small cities in New Zealand to immensely large Shanghai and responds to questions in an interview about what can be managed within the short timeframe of a residency. Michael Greaves reports on his experience of travelling and seeing famous art works for the first time in situ. Anita DeSoto shares her experiences of being an artist-in-residence in Leipzig.

Qassim Saad writes about his travel to his first country, Iraq, after the recent war there. His disorientation concerning changes in design — for example to the architecture of family homes — shines through in the writing. Peter Stupples's article on early twentieth-century ceramics in Russia also transports the reader to other times and other places; we can identify with the trials and tribulations of artists far away from our own zone.

A sixth set of contributions consider teaching and learning within particular settings. Sudhir Kumar Dupatti argues for an integrated curriculum in schools and points out how much this initiative can learn from arts practices in India and Africa. Kathryn Mitchell explores the museum as a “holy shop” and shares her critical views of how the functions of the museum and public gallery in New Zealand have shifted from education to consumerist concerns and a struggle for financial survival. David Bell is more optimistic where he considers learning outside the classroom within museum and public gallery spaces after research undertaken in New Zealand and in the United States of America.

The penultimate pair of contribution responds to the recent 54th Venice Biennale. Rebecca Hamid provides information about the event and writes about highlights, concluding with critical questions regarding the New Zealand exhibition featuring work by Michael Parekowhai. In contrast, Rachel Gillies lauds the work of this artist in Venice and points out how her experience amongst his pieces extended her understanding.

A final pair of contributions focus on the work of sculptor Scott Eady. Michele Beevors provides perspectives on his work from the point of view of a colleague who sees his work take shape directly next to her in the Dunedin School of Art Sculpture Studio. Rebecca Hamid speaks from the position of a gallery owner who has presented the work of Scott Eady in Nelson.

This issue of *Scope (Art & Design)* ends with a short contribution by Christine Keller. She writes about an application for a visual arts position at an institution in Europe which shall remain unnamed. While still a member of the Dunedin School of Art at Otago Polytechnic, Keller responded with a formal letter critiquing the ways in which that – other – institution treats applicants for positions. The letter suggests that there are better ways to go about relations with staff. This contribution forms part of institutional critique as recently evidenced in Keller’s writing.

Scope: Contemporary Research Topics (Art & Design) is likely to become themed in future. At present, the editorial team for this issue hopes that readers will enjoy the far-ranging and eclectic content within the pages to follow. Many practices, views and responses come forward within the context of an art school, with even more contributed by colleagues within our networks. I hope that a vibrancy of ideas – some still partly in the making – shine through in this issue.

IT'S RESEARCH, BUT NOT AS WE KNOW IT!

George Petelin

Although art practice as research is increasingly recognised in universities, what distinguishes its methodology remains a vexed question. Publications such as Laurie Schneider-Adams's *The Methodologies of Art*¹ and, more recently, *What is Research in the Visual Arts?*² edited by Michael Ann Holly, misleadingly deal with the methods of art history and theory rather than of art itself. Writers such as Graeme Sullivan have argued, by recourse to the history and analysis of art, that art is indeed research.³ But if art can be research (and surely it is not *all* research just as all chemistry, or all of any other discipline, is not necessarily research), the principles of art practice itself should have a role in determining this status. And, if methodological rigour rather than assertions is what characterises research, surely procedures rather than artifacts should be the key consideration.

My own research into the perceptions of RHD candidates in visual art found that "the role of methodology was fairly well understood for conventional research, but tended to remain transparent for studio practice," in the sense that it was left invisible and unexamined.⁴ Although 'contextualising' their own artworks has become commonplace for artist researchers, critical examination of the studio method itself is still largely avoided, perhaps in the romantic belief that understanding this mysterious process might somehow rob it of its effectiveness. Many candidates in studio-based postgraduate research degrees informally confessed to just 'scanning for images and knowledge' in the hope of finding something that attracted them. What I concluded to be urgently needed is a re-theorisation of art from a point of view that can elevate practice rather than just critique its consumption and use or misuse, as does cultural studies, or interpret its products and chart its biographies in relation to social change, as does art history. In short, the art product has been overly theorised while its process remains relatively neglected. A study of the methodologies of artmaking; the significance of strategic decisions within them; the psychological, aesthetic, political and semiotic strategies available to artists for their own motivation and effective functioning, as contrasted with those for analysis of the reception of their works, need to be updated from the days of Romanticism and Formalism. What is significantly absent from the debates is a *pragmatics* of art based on reflective practice.

So what I set out to do is to explore the problem through practice and through direct reflection on that practice. The strategy I adopted was informed by phenomenology to the extent that phenomenological method requires one to examine experience as directly as possible, and by the social sciences in terms of my relation as a researcher to my object of study. Although the methodology employed in the present case study is centred on practice, it could be argued that it also has roots in the ethnographic tradition. It tries to overcome a major pitfall identified by ethnography – that of observing and describing its subjects entirely in terms of the researcher's own perspective and values, i.e. (in most cases to do with art as research), that of the art historian.

My empirical study of research training at university art colleges borrowed from ethnomethodology to describe how my subjects described themselves, and from symbolic interactionism in collecting data informally in order to interpret more accurately its value to the participants in my study.⁵ The current strategy, however, is somewhat like participant observation – acting as an artist, in order to convey as closely as possible how it feels to make art. And its goal, like that of emancipatory ethnography, is to assist the class of subjects under study to interpret themselves as equals within the research culture. My aim in this project is thus to assist artists to explain their methodology on their own terms instead of pretending to entirely conform to conventional expectations of research drawn from other disciplines.

These references to social science traditions clearly imply that, while I want to emancipate art practice from marginalisation, I do not assume artmaking to be self-sufficient as research – but neither, I would contend, is any other discipline. In fact, an amalgam of disciplinary traditions invariably brings about the richest insights. What I am arguing is that studio practice should at least have a role in the definition of its own status as research. Allied with these strategies is the aim to, as far as possible, develop a grounded theory – letting the research experience determine the outcome rather than impose a predetermined theoretical perspective onto the data. In other words: let artmaking experience provide the fundamental information, and only then relate it to theories derived from other disciplines.

In the present study I therefore resolved to adopt a dual role, not unlike that required of students engaged in a studio-based doctorate, operating both as a practitioner and an observer. This process is being conducted routinely on several continents, but nowhere to my knowledge is it meta-analysed. Typically, candidates adopt a theoretical rationale regarding the object of their practice or of their end product, rather than the practice itself. Where the present research would differ from these is that the observation would be focused on understanding the artistic process rather than its outcome.

Certain complications in this strategy have to be considered. As a descriptive case study, the present project provides an account of a specific experience and may therefore be limited in its generalisability. It may be said, for example, that my methodological tactics, as well as my interpretation of their significance, are to a large extent determined by a specific personal disposition, cultural origins, educational background, and choice of medium. However, this may be the very reason for repeating such studies. So, at least, the form of this investigation may provide a basis for insights in further observation by others, in the spirit of empathic understanding referred to within the social sciences as *verstehen*.

In contrast with Merleau Ponty's famous account of the phenomenology of Cézanne's working process based on second-hand accounts of Cézanne's life and on the analysis of Cézanne's completed pictures, I set out to examine the creative experience directly. Phenomenologists hold that what we principally 'know' is not the external world, but our own experience of that world. Therefore, to confront that knowledge and to examine it rigorously, we need to stand back from the experience – 'bracket' out prejudices and preconceptions for what phenomenology calls eidetic reflection. However, I wish to emphasise that, to do this, I adopted a radically different stance from analysing everyday subjective experience. If artmaking itself was to be used as a phenomenological enquiry, my *noema*, the entity whose essence I am trying to grasp, was also to be my *noesis*, or the means by which it is investigated. I inevitably *constructed* the conditions for my artistic experience according to preconceptions and hypotheses formed from my recent research, as well as out of years of involvement in various roles related to the discipline. Would this still allow for new insights? To triangulate this research path as much as possible away from a tautology, I consciously adopted two different mindsets – modelled on the one hand on an artist whose starting goal is to simply manipulate images for pleasure, and on the other the 'scientific' researcher:

I resolved that the first mindset or intention would be directed towards just making pictures; the second intention would be to examine not the pictures or the decisions, but my rationale for any tactical decisions that emerged *during their making* and their subsequent sequential development. A third analytical phase would adopt a stance closer to the tradition of *erklären*, or explanation, in an attempt to identify some pattern that might typify a form of artistic research and relate the artistic success or otherwise of tactical decisions to existing theories. Michael Baxandall's *Patterns of Intention* traces such tactical decision-making in Picasso's *Portrait of Kahnweiler* and in other artifacts such as the Forth Firth Bridge.⁶ However, Baxandall, like Merleau-Ponty, rather than directly observe bodily experience, extrapolates his conclusions from a finished product.

My basic premise regarding the studio practice component of the present project, supported by logic and the observation and comments of studio researchers previously interviewed, was that if practice were to merely 'perform' to a theoretical plan, it would not itself contribute any new knowledge. Therefore, the relation of art

practice to theory, for at least the beginning of the process, had to be ad hoc rather than systematic. I would not preconceive an image, but allow the ideas to develop through play with images that attracted me. I would be systematic only with regard to a general theme that emerged from the process – not from a pre-existing intention. Note that this is contrary to the normal stance of many exegeses, in at least Australian studio-based higher degrees, which usually adopt the conceit that the artist has pursued a theoretically coherent plan from the outset. As I have observed elsewhere, in most universities in Australia “the written component need be neither the vehicle nor evidence of reflective engagement, but simply a clarifier of what is already in the practice. This is still typically accomplished by contextualising the images using art historical and cultural studies methods.”⁷

However, although adopted here solely to test a contribution of pure practice to studio-based research rather than as a preconception of how art *has* to operate, the resolve to start with unplanned visual ‘experimentation’ coincidentally corresponds with the way that, in my experience, many visual art studio researchers report they actually do operate.

These ad hoc explorations evolved in the following sequence:

1. ‘Playing’ with images appropriated from the Web using Photoshop.
2. ‘Playing’ with analogue snapshots I had taken in the past and scanned into my computer.
3. Taking new digital photographs to augment ideas derived from the previous play.
4. Manipulating and combining both self-photographed and appropriated images.
5. Producing new meanings that occurred to me during practice by imagining narrative connections among the visual components being combined.
6. Generating single, more physically autonomous, images referring to the whole narrative.

After each stage I reflected on the process by which ideas occurred and the relation of the works to theory.

Finally, I prepared an overview suggesting possible theoretical explanations for the way that the process unfolded. This is the phase that, in social science terms, moves away from *verstehen* towards the tradition of *erklären*.

I will describe here samples of each mode of visual experimentation from 1 to 6, with the reflection upon each, and then conclude with a discussion of theoretical explanations that might support the experiential evidence.

Playing with the capabilities of Photoshop as a medium, without conscious decision, I found myself constantly referring to existing art. My first experiment started from the simple discovery that Photoshop could run and drip images. Practicing to control this technique, it seemed amusing to reverse Jackson Pollock’s effect on his medium. Appropriating one of Hans Namuth’s *Life* magazine photographs of Pollock in his studio, I made the artist’s body melt and drip onto his canvas. It became apparent that what an effect counted on was not its technical difficulty, but the judiciousness of its application and its resonance with a context. This then suggested the title ‘Pollock’s Last Painting’ and led to further ideas for imaginary last paintings by notable artists. Thus Australian artist John Nixon’s obsessive use of a constructivist cross could be made to reach the *ad absurdum* limits of minimalist avant-gardism through the capability of Photoshop to leach out all colour from one of his images and supplant it with an embossed ‘white on white’ effect. The opportunity to ‘take the piss’ out of Serrano by producing a row of lime, orange and lemonade ‘Christs’ became irresistible. And framing Broodthaers’ candid diary entry about wanting to make a profit out of artmaking in one of his home museum frames completed the ‘last painting’ series. These, however, struck me as merely visual jokes, one-liners rather than art. My next set of experiments used images I had photographed myself.

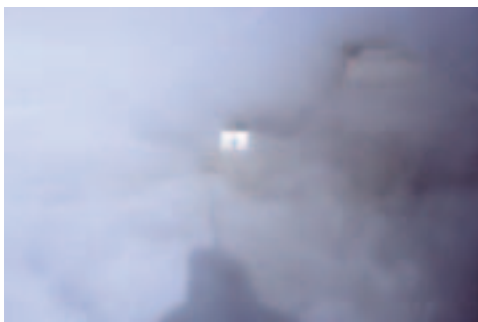


Figure 1. George Petelin,
Centrepont 1.

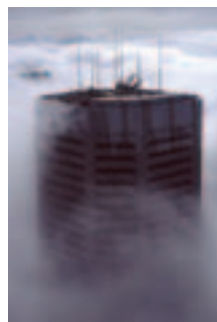


Figure 2. George Petelin,
Centrepont 2.

Figure 3. George Petelin,
Centrepont 3.



Centrepont 1 and *2* were analogue photographs I had taken of Sydney shrouded in fog or smog. Arguably already somewhat artistic, they offered an opportunity to further explore whatever had prompted me to take them. I scanned them into digital form and experimented further. Apocalyptic visions emerged in *Centrepont 3* as I played with tone manipulation, inserted the faintest tints of complementary colour into the centre of each sunburst, and smudged clouds into vague suggestions of hideous faces. This was no longer motivated by humour, but by the power to magnify the aesthetic and emotive potential of captured reality by digitally 'painting' with it. I must also report that, although drawing on a screen with a mouse seems at first remote from the directness of applying paint with a brush, there emerged a curious sense of tactility, like a phantom limb, whose haptic feedback, however virtual, seemed to guide my response as much as visual feedback. I felt a powerful urge to smudge and blur the precise ordering of digital pixels. This bears out Merleau-Ponty's contention that perception is a whole body experience.⁸ Whatever coherent meaning these images gained clearly either emerged through this haptic intuition (and here I use the term in its phenomenological sense as direct apprehension rather than as mystical premonition), or by chance, or as a product of my unconscious.

Conscious reflection on the above experience, however, led to a more deliberate experiment. This time I thrust an image associated with international terror onto a familiar local context, the Brisbane City Hall, and overlaid it with artificial smoke or clouds. The scale and obscurity of the jetliner made it to my mind more a metaphor for contemporary anxieties than a reality. This somehow seemed closer to being art.

However, the explicit theme of global terror and its attendant social issues still seemed too obvious, and, for no conscious reason, seemed to me to need tempering with satire. I thus set out in my subsequent experiments

to merge my local context with the premonitions of disaster that global anxiety generates. I photographed the idyllic, crassly hedonistic and sometimes bizarre culture of Surfers Paradise on the Queensland Gold Coast and inflicted it with digitally generated catastrophes – the rising tides of climate change, nuclear devastation, aerial bombardment, toxic pollution. And into each scenario I placed that iconic media image of refugees: the overcrowded Tampa lifeboat. Each image then suggested an unfolding narrative, a continuing adventure of boatpeople looking for Paradise; but maybe a futile quest as the paradise crumbles before their eyes. To emphasise the narrative quality and evoke the cinematic tradition of disasters, I arranged the images into triptychs.



Figure 4. George Petelin, *Fear of Flying*.



Figure 5. George Petelin, *Looking for Paradise 1*.



Figure 6. George Petelin, *Looking for Paradise 2*.

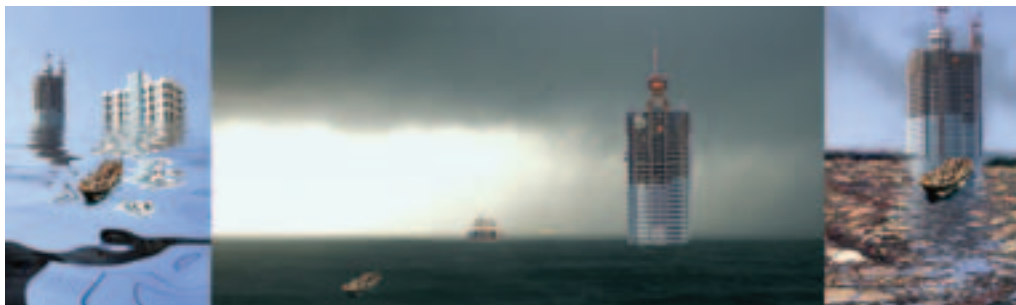


Figure 7. George Petelin, *Looking for Paradise 3*.



Figure 8. George Petelin, *Looking for Paradise 4*.



Figure 9. George Petelin, *Looking for Paradise 5*.

Through largely unplanned association the images came to combine commentary on globalisation, the shallowness of tourist culture, and the dangers of ecological neglect. In hindsight this is somewhat frightening, as these prophetic images occurred to me long before the spate of 'natural' disasters we experienced in 2011.

I was pleased enough with the results to print them and submit one to the Gold Coast Regional Art Gallery for the annual Schubert and Ulrik Award. Experiencing the physicality of large prints on various grades of paper impelled me to return to single, more iconic, symmetrical, 'metaphysical' statements (figures 10 and 11) that seemed now to gain coherence by referring back to the narratives that the earlier triptychs had constructed.



Figure 10. George Petelin, *Dark Paradise*.

REFLECTIONS ON THE PROCESS

How does my experience compare with that attributed to Cézanne by Merleau-Ponty and with that attributed to Picasso by Baxandall? Merleau-Ponty has little to say about Cézanne's imaginative process. Instead he explains his painting in terms of a perceptual process that appears to be equally shared by all of us, but obscured by our expectations of a 'photographic' realism and geometric perspective. Cézanne, according to Merleau-Ponty, paints as we all *actually* see.

If one outlines the shape of an apple with a continuous line, one makes an object of the shape, whereas the contour is rather the ideal limit toward which the sides of the apple recede in depth. Not to indicate any shape would be to deprive the objects of their identity. To trace just a single outline sacrifices depth – that is, the dimension in which the thing is presented not as spread out before us but as an inexhaustible reality full of reserves. That is why Cézanne follows the swell of the object in modulated colors and indicates several outlines in blue. Rebounding among these, one's glance captures a shape that emerges from among them all, just as it does in perception. captures a shape that emerges from among them all, just as it does in perception.

For Baxandall, Picasso similarly paints what he perceives, and not only in his subject but also on his canvas. Like Cézanne, Baxandall notes, Picasso is concerned with how each new brushstroke sets up a new problem for him to solve. Artmaking is concluded by Baxandall to be a series of problem-setting and problem-solving actions. What my own experience suggests is that it may be more a series of *opportunities* prompted by preconscious and conscious associations rather than problems. And it is curious that Baxandall, while acknowledging Picasso's claim that an artist's role is not to 'search' but to 'find,' still chooses to privilege Kahnweiler's problem-solving explanation of the process.

REFLECTION ON THE PRODUCTS

My third set of experiments clearly begins to approach the status of art in a way of which the earlier ones arguably fall somewhat short. This judgement is supported by the fact that one of the triptychs, *The Boatpeople Look for Paradise*, was accepted for the annual Schubert and Ulrik Award exhibition at the Gold Coast Regional Art Gallery in 2006 and that the whole set was exhibited within a solo exhibition at the Queensland Centre for Photography in 2008. What then are the components that make it so, and what processes enabled them to come about?

Four qualities seemed to me to characterise the triptychs: humour, tragedy, occasional beauty of form, but above all else an ambiguity of these. Whereas the one-liners of Experiment 1 were clearly jokes, and the terriblisms of Experiment 2 tended to rely on cheap thrills, the triptychs could be read numerous ways: Are the boatpeople arriving or escaping? Are they behaving as refugees or tourists? Why are buildings still being constructed as the waters rise? Which is slime and which is fresh water? And which of the former looks the more pictorially attractive?

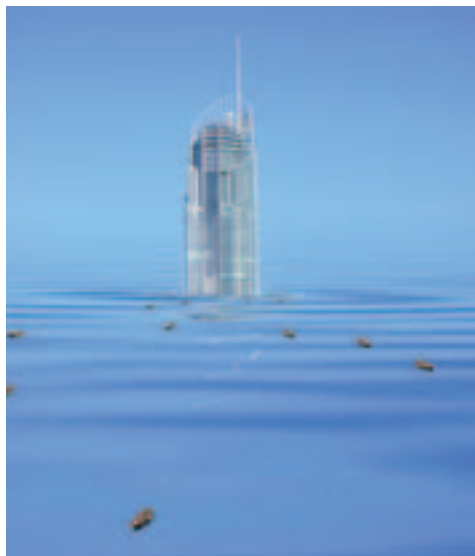


Figure 11. George Petelin, *Expulsion from Paradise*.

In conventional research, a conclusion gains strength when one form of evidence confirms another: This is the process of 'triangulation' – similar to identifying a location in surveying. In art, however, there is a tradition of deferring certainty. Edmund Burke, for example, argues that the highest form of beauty, 'the Sublime that dazzles and overwhelms us,' in fact has to remain somewhat 'obscure.'¹⁰ And William Empson refers to the tropes that characterise the poetic creation of meaning as 'seven types of ambiguity.'¹¹ As Formalist theorist Viktor Shklovsky argues, the job of art is to prolong perception.¹² This means making the familiar strange, setting puzzles and mysteries in place – in other words, enabling multiple interpretations.

But while art seems to thrive on ambiguity, to constitute *knowledge* it must not do so at the cost of overall coherence. There must still be a promise to make sense although each of its 'triangulations' involves some slippage, so that an exact meaning remains uncertain and a level of mystery is never lost. Thus art could be considered to employ an approximate triangulation of more than two vectors resulting in an *area* of knowledge rather than in one precise point. Because mathematically an area contains an infinite number of points, the same artistic problem can be said to have an infinite number of equally valid solutions. And a picture can thus have an infinite number of meanings – but *within circumscribed limits*. Although ambiguity is desirable in art, it needs to remain within a coherent ideological and ontological boundary. Maybe it is this that can qualify works as both research and art.

FURTHER REFLECTIONS ON THE PROCESS

What does this imply for the procedures of making art as research? First, as I initially hypothesised, if the product is not entirely pre-planned, it can potentially generate new knowledge that is intrinsically artistic – i.e., rich with a coherent ambiguity. Second, to produce artistic knowledge, the process must both allow that ambiguity and restrict it.

Consequently, the practitioner is constantly torn between being too clear and being too directionless.

The literature on creative 'thinking,' deriving from HP Guilford's 'Structure of Intellect' model, makes the distinction between convergent and divergent operations.¹³ Guilford theorises that generating diverse alternatives, a 'divergent' operation constitutes a qualitatively different process from that of selecting and thus reducing alternatives in a 'convergent' way.

Guilford's contention that creativity is highly dependent on divergent operations has led these to be popularly identified with creativity. However, this is a dangerously reductive notion, for it could suggest that any novelty at all equates with creativity. Undervaluing convergent thinking neglects the critical faculty by which creative persons finally arrive at the most satisfying of alternative solutions, or at least reduce the alternatives to a circumscribed area. But what research indicates is that the convergent processes should ideally not occur simultaneously with divergent processes. As psychologist Alex Osborn first made clear, a premature application of convergent or critical thinking necessarily inhibits the generation of alternative ideas – in effect becoming a censoring mechanism that prevents new ideas from forming.¹⁴ And being able to generate a greater range of ideas from which to choose – even unconsciously – increases the likelihood of subsequently selecting particularly apt ones. For this reason, the ability to 'defer judgement' has been identified as both a key learnable skill and a personality trait conducive to creativity.

Incidentally, deferral of judgement is also a precept of the *epoché* – another term used by phenomenologists to describe the process of bracketing or *eidetic reduction*. But would it be a mistake to assume thus an equivalence between phenomenology's goal of focussed apprehension and the divergent demands of artistic imagination? No doubt some forms of art or stages of artmaking demand a similar kind of concentrated meditation and, by a disciplined exclusion of the clichés, arrive at the most authentic insights. However, that may be something to investigate in future research.

My current experience suggests that free experimentation plays a significant but ambivalent role in permitting creativity at all stages. What artists term free experimentation can sometimes be an almost random process of

trial and error; without any clear definition beforehand of what constitutes error or success. My first stage of play with the medium was like this, but as a set of random discoveries of the capabilities of Photoshop they would have ultimately provided no sense of purpose or coherence. Putting these discoveries to use made them creative *but not necessarily artistic*, for they soon evolved into a theoretically determined cliché. Originating out of practice, the works of the 'Last Paintings' series had the potential to generate knowledge that was *essentially* artistic, but focusing them narrowly made them too predictable. As one-line jokes they relied on an intersection of two vectors only. The air disaster and the bomb-lit cityscape on the other hand reached for broader, less specific, resonances, but without sufficient coherence. What proved most successful was the continued use of playful association together with increasing, but nonetheless partial, constraints of deductive logic and theory as the project developed.

What I have labelled 'artistic tactics' are not necessarily irrational. Charles Sanders Peirce theorised what he called 'abductive reasoning': the process of forming a hypothesis in circumstances that are too complex or where there are insufficient proven premises to form a conclusion or insufficient instances to form an inductive principle.¹⁵ The 'experimental guessing' and association-forming that I began with can be explained in these terms. To me, they seem to act as a deduction in reverse – reasoning from observable 'effects' in order to find unanticipated associations, rather than reasoning from known premises in order to make a predicted effect. Thus an artist might often work backwards – first finding 'a solution to which there is not yet a problem,' or forming an image, or making a mark, and then looking for ways it can be made more meaningful. And while critical processes and deductive problem-solving are at some stage necessary for the creation of greater coherence, opportunistic abduction appears to remain always indispensable.

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- 1 Laurie Adams, *The Methodologies of Art: An Introduction*, 2nd ed. (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2010).
- 2 What is Research in the Visual Arts?: *Obsession, Archive, Encounter*, ed. Michael Ann Holly (Williamstown Mass.; New Haven: Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, dist. Yale University Press, 2008).
- 3 Graeme Sullivan, *Art Practice as Research: Inquiry in the Visual Arts* (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications, 2005).
- 4 George Petelin, *ACUADS Research Training Benchmarking Project 2002-2003* (Perth: Australian Council of University Art and Design Schools, 2005).
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 Michael Baxandall, *Patterns of Intention: On the Historical Explanation of Pictures* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985).
- 7 George Petelin, "Visual Art Doctorates: Practice-Led Research, Quasi-Research, or Research Per Se?," *Media International Australia, incorporating Culture & Policy*, 118 (February 2006), 25-33.
- 8 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (London; New York: Routledge, 1962).
- 9 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "Cézanne's Doubt," in *Sense and Non-sense*, 3rd ed. (Evanston: Northwestern Univ. Press, 1978).
- 10 Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990).
- 11 William Empson, *Seven Types of Ambiguity* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1949).
- 12 Viktor Shklovsky, *Knight's Move* (Champaign: Dalkey Archive Press, 2005), <http://www.seekbooks.com.au/book/Knights-Move/isbn/9781564783851.htm>.
- 13 HP Guilford, *The Nature of Human Intelligence* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967).
- 14 Alex Osborn, *Applied Imagination: Principles and Procedures of Creative Problem Solving* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953).
- 15 Charles Peirce, *The Essential Peirce: Selected Philosophical Writings* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992).

THE CHINDOGU GYM: OR ZEN AND THE ART OF EXERCYCLE MAINTENANCE

Jane Venis

Inherent in every chindogu is the spirit of anarchy. 'Chindogu are man-made objects that have broken free from the chains of usefulness. They represent freedom of thought and action: the freedom to challenge the suffocating historical dominance of conservative utility; the freedom to be (almost) useless.'

Kenji Kawakami, *Chindogu: 101 Unuseless Japanese Inventions* (New York: WW Norton, 1995), 4.

The above quote is Tenet Three of Kenji Kawakami's Ten Tenets of Chindogu, "which in effect, form a manifesto for makers and consumers of chindogu."¹ It is the starting point in the creation of *Gymnauseum: Pimping of Body and Machine*, an interactive 'gym' which is open at the Dunedin Public Art Gallery in New Zealand from October to December 2011. In this project, I critique the usefulness of products which are designed and promoted to achieve the impossible for most people – a perfectly toned body attained with a minimum of energy expended.

Chindogu is a Japanese art form for producing absurd and useless design objects. "It can be used as a useful lens to critique the proliferation of an endless stream of consumer goods produced on a planet with diminishing resources."² Some current gym equipment could already be given a reading as chindogu if placed in a different context. Consider the exercycle as a bicycle that goes nowhere or the rowing machine placed on dry land. Many of these machines, once purchased on a whim (or the good intention of a New Year's resolution), become obsolete, 'involuntary' chindogu stored under the bed.

At a time when the baby boomer generation is aging, an obsession with fitness and weight loss has resulted in a proliferation of machines designed to trim the body. Millions of people worldwide attend gymnasias in their efforts to balance an over-extended diet with obsessive fitness regimes in the face of worldwide poverty in developing countries. Makeover weight-loss programmes on television such as *The Biggest Loser* further encourage this obsession by promoting dramatic weight loss and focus on violent exercise by very unfit people to create a curiously compelling spectator sport.

Design solutions used in the manufacture of some home gym equipment result in machines that force the user into a series of movements that are truly hilarious. The Ab Circle Pro, a machine whereby the rider swings their hips from side to side with their buttocks raised in the air, is a current favourite of mine for this reason. It is yet another machine which purports to solve the not-so-pressing problem of creating perfect abs in under five minutes a day.

More complex exercise machines are set up as part of professional gymnasiums and health clubs. While these don't offer such absurdly quick-fix solutions as home-gym machines, they are part of a system which offers technologies for body transformation which create the desire for an increasingly distant goal of an 'ideal' toned and trim body – a desire which, according to sports theorists Frew and McGillivray, "serves both to capitalize on and perpetuate cycles of embodied dissatisfaction."³

Although the humour of chindogu is used to access the work on a direct level, there are darker issues of power and control of the body that underpin this project. I am focusing on relevant theories from Bakhtin, Foucault and Bourdieu to articulate this.

THE GROTESQUE BODY

Russian theorist Mikhail Bakhtin's concepts surrounding the carnivalesque can be useful when discussing situations in which taming the 'grotesque body'⁴ is attempted. Bakhtin's analysis of the carnival in the era from the late Middle Ages to the early Renaissance is now famous. He used the picaresque writing of subversive French monk François Rabelais (1494-1553) as a starting point to give a worm's eye view of the world in which accepted social hierarchies were suspended, parodied and upended.⁵ This inverted world-view or a World Upside Down (WUD) is at the very heart of the concept of carnival.

Bringing Bakhtin's thinking into the present, Pam Morris discusses his notion of grotesque realism and its central image, the grotesque body.⁶ The grotesque body is a communal body, an exaggerated human form that emphasises bodily protuberances, eating and excrement. This grotesque body is a vital limb of the communal carnivalesque body.⁷

Looking at bodies engaged in activities within the latter-day gymnasium we see how social hierarchies are obliterated, as all involved are brought low in their endeavour to make docile the grotesque body to lose weight. Even the wealthy and the famous are in need of such exertions, and they are the ones who can afford going to the gym. The gymnasium becomes its own hierarchy of the fit and the trim, subsuming other hierarchies within itself. Thus it constitutes a carnivalesque context particular to our era.

Traditionally, carnival was a short time for the peasant population to let off steam before the deprivations of Lent and then the return to their daily lives of long hours of hard work. In First World Western countries in the twenty-first century it could be argued that we are now in a situation of perpetual carnival, indulging in excessive amounts of alcohol, fattening food and constant entertainment. The traditional time frames of carnival appear to have been reversed, and the period of Lent could be seen to correlate with shorter periods of strict dieting and hard exercise programmes for the penitent in their endeavour to lose weight.

In gym programmes like "Only Six Weeks to a New You" and workplace initiatives such as "Spring 2 It" (offered in my workplace at present), the status quo of the 'ideal bodies' forming a healthy, fit population is the message being pushed by health officials, employers and governments as they fight the much touted 'obesity epidemic.' The media hype regarding obesity has ensured that the fitness industry has a never-ending supply of grotesque bodies to be made docile. The obese or overweight 'underdog' may briefly obtain physical capital by achieving an 'ideal body' in the masochistic setting of the gym or on home gym equipment.⁸ However, the 'ideal body' is virtually impossible to maintain when the lure of the 'carnival' is so pervasive and accessible and the return to the 'carnival body' is virtually inevitable for many people.⁹

THE DOCILE BODY AND BEYOND

Another useful theoretical position in looking at how bodies are constructed and function within a gym setting is Foucault's concept of the 'docile body'.¹⁰ Michel Foucault has alerted us to what Mark Jackson calls the crisis of 'governmentality' or the disciplining of docile bodies.¹¹ In "Docile Bodies", Foucault discusses the connection between the discipline of repetitive exercise and political control of the body. He discusses how the ideal soldier was a machine that could be constructed to become an "automatism of habit."¹² The discipline of the repetitive nature of a series of exercises is the basis for exercise prescriptions in the non-military setting of the gymnasium.

Repetitive exercise prescriptions are also available on do-it-yourself home exercise on video with the help of celebrity presenters, a lineage which started with Jane Fonda in the early 1980s.

Connections between the machine which works through a series of repetitive movements and the “automatism of habit” of the docile body is the starting point for consideration of looking at the gym as a factory. Issues of consumption and production arise again whereby the gym users are the raw material, the workers and the product in a self-sustaining system. “Consumers displaying a lack of physical capital, who willingly locate themselves within the health and fitness club, in repentant acknowledgement of their sins and dreaming of physical transformation, provide the essential substance of physical capital.”¹³

In another discussion of power issues (related to surveillance in prisons), Foucault's discussion of Bentham's panopticon prison system could also be applied to the contemporary gymnasium whereby the constant surveillance by other gym users and personal trainers creates a self-regulating system of discipline.¹⁴ The ever-present mirrors also increase the effect of a panopticon within the gym. The complex question of the gaze in the gym – who can look at whom, when and for how long – is an issue being perpetually addressed by the users.

THE WORK

In *Gymnauseum*, the complexity of current gym equipment, bristling with digital screens that give up-to-the minute performance and calorie-burning data, is critiqued by the creation of nonsensical chindogu-inspired fitness machines. Ludicrous personal ‘data’ such as random BMI, weight readings and stomach contents is presented on screens attached to some of the equipment. The finished sculptures are sleekly seductive by the use of chrome, shiny wet-look vinyl and mirrors. They are lustrous fetish objects that invite the gaze (echoing the hopes of their riders for an equally buff appearance). The dark humour of a vicious spike-laden punch bag and weights echoes the notion of self-flagellation and repentance in exercise.

Obsession is an ongoing focus within the studio research. This is reflected in both the compulsive need for repentant exercise (sometimes to the point of physical illness; hence ‘gymnauseum’) and in the ‘pimping’ of the equipment, also to the point of obsession. In *Gymnauseum*, classic low-rider bikes have a makeover and become highly ‘pimped’ exercycles. These are gleaming fitness-machine equivalents of mid-life-crisis Harleys, inviting their overweight riders to obtain the bodies of their lost youth.

The concept of ‘pimping’ low-rider bikes with numerous rear vision mirrors began in Southern California in the early 1990s, reflecting an earlier craze developed by scooter-riding British ‘Mods’ in the 1960s. This was the visual catalyst for having multiple mirrors on my exercycles. The mirrors can be focused on specific muscle groups, which allows the rider a proscribed gaze on themselves and others while exercising and also references the panopticon and issues of surveillance.

Exercising on the spot on treadmills, steppers and bikes going nowhere is a metaphor for perpetually trying to make up for lost ground in the quest for physical capital. It is appropriate that the zen-like conundrum of trying to obtain the unobtainable body of one's youth is (un)solved by the use of chindogu. The intrinsic riddle of purpose versus practicality inherent in chindogu makes it a suitable genre to critique products within a system that “has been freed from the chains of usefulness.”¹⁵

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Figure 1. *Lower than Lowrider* and a *Sidecar* named *Desire*
Close up view. Photographed by Simon Higgs.





Figure 2. Foreground - *Lower than Lowrider* and *a Sidecar named Desire*, Materials, 'Pimped out' lowrider bike, chromed steel, and fake fur: Side car named desire: Chromed steel, aluminium, 1960's beehive salon hairdryer; fake fur and DVD infomercial.

Background: Low - Fat Lowrider; Materials 'pimped out' lowrider bike, polished aluminium, chromed steel, velvet and electronic and computer components. Photographed by Simon Higgs.

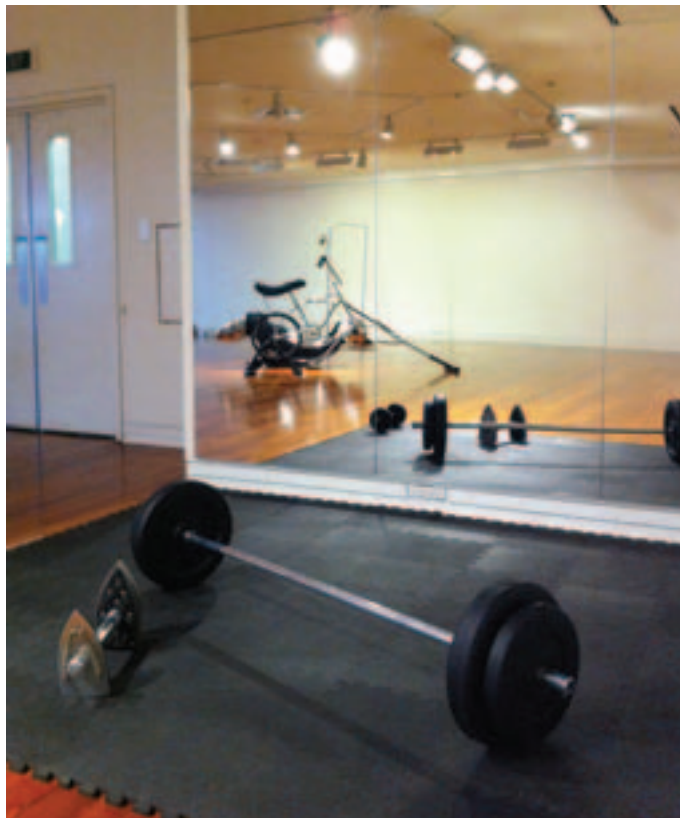


Figure 3. *Weightless Weights* and *Pumping iron*, Materials, Aluminium, plastic, recycled steam irons and glass. Photographed by Jane Venis.



Figure 4. Live at the opening: Lucy Weston Taylor lifts the Weightless Weights.



Figure 5. Duo of punch bags *Jab* and *Shiner*, materials, Wet look vinyl, stainless steel spikes, chains and electronic components. Photographed by Simon Higgs.

- 1 Jane Venis, "Chindogu: Not So Useless after All," *The International Journal of the Arts in Society*, 5:5 (2011), 189.
- 2 Ibid., 202.
- 3 Mathew Frew and David McGillivray, "Health Clubs and Body Politics: Aesthetics and the Quest for Physical Capital," *Leisure Studies*, 24:2 (2005), 161.
- 4 Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1984). Original ed., 1965.
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 *The Bakhtin Reader*, ed. Pam Morris (New York: Edward Arnold, 1994).
- 7 Susan Stewart, "The Imaginary Body," in her *On Longing, Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1993).
- 8 P Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984).
- 9 The notion that the grotesque carnival body can be expressed as a binary opposite of the classical 'ideal' was proposed by Featherstone in 1991. It is discussed in Frew and McGillivray's article "Health Clubs and Body Politics," in which they discuss Bourdieu's proposition that the classical ideal body is a form of physical capital. Matthew Frew and David McGillivray, "Health Clubs and Body Politics: Aesthetics and the Quest for Physical Capital," *Leisure Studies*, 24:2 (2005), 161-75.
- 10 Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage, 1979).
- 11 Mark Jackson, "Ethics of Design," paper presented at the Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Art Educators Conference, Dunedin, New Zealand, 2009.
- 12 Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 135.
- 13 Frew and McGillivray, "Health Clubs and Body Politics."
- 14 Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*. Frew and McGillivray, "Health Clubs and Body Politics."
- 15 Kenji Kawakami, *Chindogu: 101 Unuseless Japanese Inventions* (New York: WW Norton, 1995), 4.

DISCIPLINING IMAGES IN VISUAL CULTURE STUDIES: PLOTting A COURSE

Jenni Lauwrens

ON LAPSED ART HISTORIANS

In their recent publication, *South African Visual Culture*, Jeanne van Eeden and Amanda du Preez describe themselves as “lapsed art historians”.¹ They are referring to their experiences at the South African Association of Art Historians (SAVAH) annual conference in 2002, where they found that their research interests were “slightly at odds with [the] topics and emphases” of the other papers presented there. This label indicates their “close, yet awkward, relationship to art history”, since their topics and methodologies somewhat “transgress[ed]” the traditional disciplinary protocols of art history and the other topics addressed at the conference.² Van Eeden and Du Preez are certainly not alone in their transgressions. This example serves to show that, it is not only Euro-American art historians and art educators that are adapting their teaching programs and research to include the wider sphere of visual culture, but that transformations in the study of the visual are now occurring globally. Nicholas Mirzoeff, in his foreword to *South African Visual Culture*, confirms that, with the publication of this anthology, there are now five continents “with publications centered on the field of visual culture” (Figure 1).³

But, although visual culture is now recognised as an important field of study globally, as the example above shows, some anxiety still exists between art history and the field of visual culture studies,⁴ resulting in uncertainty about whether or not art history – which has undoubtedly been the field that has traditionally ‘disciplined’ a selected group of images – has a future at all. For, not only has art history’s turf – or, its objects of study – been recognized as firmly positioned in the territorial space of visual culture studies, but its on-going commitment to the essentialist premises on which the discipline was originally founded has, in great part, led academics to this disjuncture.⁵ In light of the curricular minefield in which art educators now find themselves, the aim here is to briefly sketch an overview of what has been proposed for the study of the visual thus far. Thereafter, this research suggests ways in which some of the conflicts that have already arisen where attempts have been made to ‘discipline’ images – under the rubric of either art history or visual culture studies – may be ironed out in the future. I begin with a closer consideration of changes to the disciplinary scope of art history over the last three



Figure 1. *South African Visual Culture*, book cover. (Courtesy of Van Schaik Publishers, Pretoria.)

decades wrought by the emergence of visual culture discourse. Thereafter I consider how changes in the discipline of art history filter into art education curricula.

ART HISTORY AT THE CROSSROADS

While it is now thirteen years since Thomas Crow (1996) described art history as a “field of inquiry under siege”⁶ art history is arguably still at a crossroads due mainly to suspicions about the discipline that emerged in the last decades of the twentieth century. These suspicions hinge on the following assumptions: that the discipline primarily relies on connoisseurial judgments of value; that distinctions between high art and low art continue to govern the inclusion and exclusion of works into the canon; that aesthetics remains associated with universalising judgments; and that art history has failed to interrogate its own role in the construction of vision.⁷ Margaret Dikovitskaya confirms that these suspicions are on-going when she argues that, despite the revisionist voices that attempted to transform art history in the 1980s by adding a social dimension to its agenda, new art history (as the revised discipline was termed) “has failed to revise the category of art – the foundation for the entire enterprise of art history”.⁸ As Keith Moxey pointed out earlier it is particularly art history’s allegiance to some “natural notion of cultural value” in determining its disciplinary parameters that visual culture studies challenges.⁹

Following on, in some ways, from James Elkins’ (2003) informative overview of the emergence and varied constitutions of visual studies in *Visual Studies: a Sceptical Introduction*, Margaret Dikovitskaya provides an overview of the development of visual culture (or visual culture studies, as I prefer to refer to it), in her book *Visual Culture: the Study of the Visual after the Cultural Turn*.¹⁰ In this publication Dikovitskaya lists a substantial range of books and readers dealing with images, vision and visibility from the perspective of visual culture studies. Based on the interviews she conducted with key thinkers in the field of contemporary visual inquiry, such as Michael Ann Holly, Martin Jay, Nicholas Mirzoeff, Tom Mitchell and Janet Wolff, to name but a few, the book provides insight into key debates in the field as well as the ways in which the study of visual culture has emerged in various academic programs mainly in the United States of America (U.S.) and the United Kingdom (U.K.). While there are several issues regarding the aims and protocols of visual culture studies as an academic endeavour that evade consensus amongst its practitioners, from this overview, it is clear that the relationship between art history and visual culture studies, in particular, remains tenuous. In short, as Deborah Cherry concludes, authors are specifically divided on the topic of whether art history and visual culture studies are “distinct, antagonistic, or complementary enterprises”.¹¹

In some respects, visual culture studies may indeed attend to problems that have plagued art history. For, while art history continues to support a notion of art as mainly an object of significant cultural value and status, visual culture studies takes its objects of study from a broad range of image production and reception. This has led Kevin Tavin to suggest that, instead of preserving art history as the history of art, a democratic approach to images is required according to which all images can be studied in terms of their cultural and ideological meanings instead of their aesthetic value.¹² In contrast, Mitchell emphatically argues that, while a course dealing with the history of images is important, it is different from the history of art.¹³

Although the question of art history’s disciplinary justification has ultimately remained unresolved at a discursive level, institutional curricula must nevertheless reflect the latest developments in critical theory. This has meant that some art history classrooms across the globe have widened their purview to include the broader sphere of visual culture, and as a result, less attention is assigned to art history in these programs. But is disintegration¹⁴ art history’s only prognosis, and if so, how should courses in visual culture studies be constituted? In short, what are the possibilities for art history/visual culture in the future?

A ROUTE PLANNER

A number of roads have tentatively been suggested for the future of the disciplined image. Whilst art historians and theorists¹⁵ have specifically considered the relationship between the discipline of art history and visual culture studies, and art educators have for some time now argued that art education should also deal with popular visual culture, none have offered practical solutions to the disciplinary conflicts which beset such endeavours.¹⁶ The notable art historian and theorist, Keith Moxey¹⁷ and Brent Wilson,¹⁸ who are internationally recognized for their research in art education, have, however, attempted to resolve some of the disciplinary battles involved. In the following discussion I examine each suggestion closely in order to flesh out the implications of each for our practice. Moxey suggests that there are two paths for the study of images in the future. On the one hand, he proposes that an academic field - visual studies - "could study the image-making capacity of human cultures in all of their manifestations ... both past and present ... [including] digital and electronic imagery ... comic strips and advertisements."¹⁹ On the other hand, Moxey argues in favour of a model in which "all images for which distinguished cultural value has been or is being proposed" are analysed based on his assumption that "certain objects have been and are being given special cultural significance."²⁰

Undoubtedly, the first option reveals Moxey's concern over the past distinctions made in art history on the basis of an object's presumed quality and value. But he rightly admits that the first approach would lead to such a vast spectrum of topics being studied that it may be impossible to determine the pedagogical agenda of such an enterprise, let alone gauge the results. However, wouldn't his second option simply reinstate precisely those elitist assumptions concerning legitimate culture that must now urgently be challenged? For, who will decide what sufficiently constitutes objects of "distinguished cultural value"?²¹ And whose culture will be valued in such an exercise of selection and exclusion?

Wilson on the other hand, proposes four more possibilities for the future of the disciplined image and sketches out the dilemma facing art educators in even more specific ways than Moxey has done. Therefore, I examine each option more closely here. Firstly, Wilson suggests that curricula could simply maintain the status quo and art history could continue to largely ignore contemporary art and popular culture, which, according to Wilson "many teachers still think ... is kitsch" and, therefore, "the enemy of high art".²² This kind of thinking adheres to the assumption that "worthwhile art education" is only that kind which supports art works that reflect presumed "timeless aesthetic qualities".²³ That Ralph Smith²⁴ supports this view is evident in his statement that "the development of an appreciation of the excellences of outstanding works of art [ought] to be the core of art education"²⁵ Critical of popular culture, Smith suggests that the task of art history ought to be to "combat the hegemony of the *merely* [italics added] contemporary and its constricting effects on mind and sensibility".²⁶ According to Smith the "major monuments of Western culture ... [provide] ... the young ... with important background knowledge for future aesthetic experiences".²⁷

Is Smith arguing that aesthetic experiences do not reside in the realm of popular culture? If that were true then why are we so easily seduced by the images that bombard us into adopting and perpetuating stereotypes of body image, gender roles and racial identity? Is it not time to "deal with both the sensory reasons audiences are drawn to [images], to understand their sensate appeal, their lure, and, at the same time, to confront the sometimes dubious ideas they impart"²⁸ as Paul Duncum points out? Surely this is necessary in post-industrial societies where the young are continuously surrounded by a plethora of images that suggest how they should look, think and act? For we live in the age of "hypervisuality"²⁹ whereby the complex intersection of seeing and being seen characterises modern life. This is quite aptly shown in the artist's impression of how contemporary life is increasingly intertwined with technologies (Figure 2). And precisely because of the new visual regimes that govern everyday life, art educators ought to deal with the visual with a view to affording students opportunities to develop critical thinking skills about their own interaction with the visual.³⁰

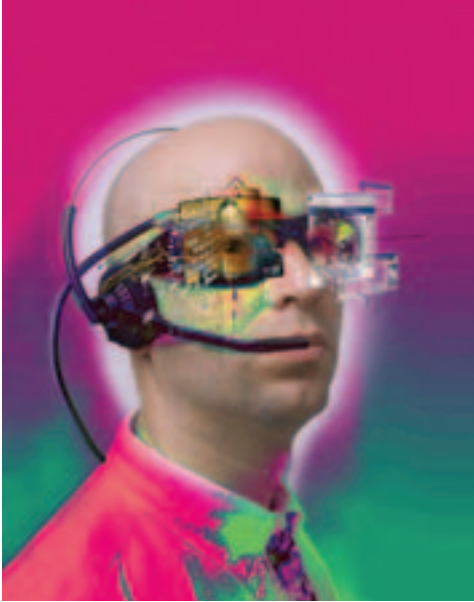


Figure 2. An artist's impression of the human interface with technology. (Courtesy of The Bigger Picture/Reuters.)

Wilson's second option is that we add a few images from the wider domain of visual culture to the existing canon of art history. Evidently, many art educators have already employed this tactic in their programs as argued by Mieke Bal who points out that this may have occurred due to a widespread belief – particularly by so-called “art-historians-turned-visual-culture-enthusiasts” – that art history urgently needs “the connotation of innovation and cutting edge”.³¹ On the other hand, Steve Edwards argues that, in many instances, it is merely a case of terminology that has been amended.³² Edwards explains that the words ideology, power or desire replaced words like exquisite, delightful or genius when dealing primarily with the same set of objects. Consequently, the focus of many so-called revised courses is still on the same individual artists, periods and institutions, with the artwork as commodity fore-grounded in determining its artistic status. In this way, the so-called ‘new’ art history merely offers “a modernized version of traditional art history”, which Edwards points out, “only develop[s] new ways of valuing and appreciating the standard list of artists and objects”.³³ Likewise, Cherry maintains that this tactic amounts to “little more than re-branding”.³⁴

If it is neither feasible to maintain traditional art historical protocols, nor desirable to insert additional objects into the traditional canon, should art history surrender entirely to visual culture studies? This would entail, according to Wilson's third option, that the curriculum be “destructure[d]” or “disordere[d]” to the extent that “teachers and students become nomads . . . wandering about the newly emerging terrain of . . . visual culture”.³⁵ Following Susan Buck-Morss, who argued that art history cannot “sustain a separate existence, not as a practice, not as phenomenon, not as an experience, [and] not as a discipline”³⁶ within a visual culture discourse, this approach may well be what is needed now. A strong case for the replacement of art history by visual culture studies in art education rests on the assumption, as Kevin Tavin suggests, that “while art educators place art from the museum realm at the center of their curricula, their students are piecing together their expectations and dreams through popular culture”.³⁷ Kerry Freedman reinforces the argument that visual culture must occupy an important space in art programs, stating that art education must give “attention to the ways in which students engage with a range of mass media, computer games, rock videos, and so on”.³⁸ Although popular culture is not the only topic in visual culture studies it no doubt holds much fascination for students, especially when held up against art history. Does this entail that the topics of old art history may increasingly become “aligned with the Classics or Archaeology departments”³⁹ as suggested by James Elkins?

According to the articles and textbooks already circulating that deal with visual culture, visual culture studies analyses all images, including art, in terms of their ideological implications – that is, in terms of how they construct seeing and thereby construct identities. Mitchell phrases this somewhat differently by arguing that the object domain of visual culture studies is “not just beyond the sphere of the ‘work of art’, but also beyond images and visual objects to the visual practices, the ways of seeing and being seen, that make up the world of human visibility”.⁴⁰ By critiquing the way of seeing constructed by art history, visual culture studies analyses and interprets images in pursuit of distinctly different goals than traditionally undertaken by art history. Understood in this way, visual culture

studies is an “outside”⁴¹ to art history as the former lodges its critique against the latter. And, if art history and visual culture studies have very distinct disciplinary protocols, how can visual culture studies completely replace art history? On the other hand, if ‘visual culture studies’ is to be the discipline that critiques art history and points out its shortcomings, what would be left for art history?

Wilson rightly admits that not one of the aforementioned ‘routes’ is entirely viable and, instead, proposes a “pedagogical tactic” that allows students to “play with content”⁴² while the teacher is a negotiator between conventional art, emerging art, and student-initiated content. Wilson imagines an art education that seeks not to limit the terrain of visual media to be analysed, but rather to broaden the range of media by encouraging student-generated topics drawn from their own field of interests. By this account, Wilson argues that, while “teachers have responsibility for presenting the structured and the conventional dimensions of the artworld”, students ought to be challenged to “connect school art content to their own interests”.⁴³ Wilson terms this space – between the school curriculum and topics chosen by students according to their own interests – a “para-site alongside the main site”.⁴⁴ He argues that in choosing topics from students’ own realm of interests – such as the comics that they create in their own time – “students do much of the work on their own time,”⁴⁵ thus solving the problem of too little time for an extensive range of content.

It is useful to ask if Wilson’s “para-site”⁴⁶ would result in the (mis)conception that only traditional art should be examined in the structured teaching time, while visual culture is excluded from the intellectual framework of the curriculum. If so, instead of producing a democratic and open relationship between art and visual culture, the investigation in class time of the “structured and conventional dimensions of the artworld”⁴⁷ may perpetuate existing disciplinary divisions and hierarchies between ‘high’ art and ‘low’ art. At the same time, assessing the outcomes of this type of broad analysis of student-initiated content would potentially be quite problematic. Perhaps we should consider what we hope to achieve when we deal with images in the disciplined space of our curricula rather than a compilation of a randomly chosen list of objects.

PLOTTING A COURSE

Having now considered six possible roads for art history, we still stand at the crossroads, contemplating how to proceed. Of the options available, Wilson’s para-site seems the most viable; even so, that road is marred by uncertainty and confusion. For we ought to ensure that visual culture studies does not become a “Mickey Mouse project”⁴⁸ and an easy and more interesting alternative to art history?⁴⁹ My suggestion is not entirely different from Wilson’s para-site, but aims to inject some direction in what risks becoming a superficial delving into popular culture. For we cannot assume that when our students “play with content”⁵⁰ they are critically engaging with the ways in which that content constructs their own identities. As the *October* questionnaire (1996) pointed out, visual culture studies as an alternative to art history may ultimately create adept consumers of popular culture rather than critical investigators of its seductive agenda. Without solid methodological underpinning I fear that Van Eeden and Du Preez’s concern over the possibility of a superficial analysis of images in visual culture may very well be the future of the disciplined image.

Some time ago, Gayatri Spivak,⁵¹ suggested a somewhat different perspective on the topic which I suggest bears revisiting, in a somewhat different way, now. She argues that what is necessary when constructing a course in the visual is to allow “the questions that we ask [to] produce the field of enquiry and not some body of materials which determines what questions need to be posed to it”⁵². This means that in visual culture courses we take a different strategy to that taken by conventional art historical surveys. Instead of working from the chronological development of art, courses could be structured around themes that would include the study of visual art and visual culture. The following are some possibilities: representations of the body in visual culture; images of death in visual culture; narrative in visual culture; shock and horror in visual culture; viewing visual culture; visual spaces/visual places; images of power; to suggest only a few. Such an approach could prevent the pitfalls of delineating the field of enquiry

according to a particular object's conformity to a closed concept of art, or even visual culture. At the same time, the field will also not be completely open. Instead, in such an amorphous terrain of study, objects could be selected in terms of the topics that are addressed in the exploration of focused questions. Based on the suggestions of Mitchell and Irit Rogoff the following questions could direct such a course: what is an image?⁵³ How do images communicate and signify;⁵⁴ what is the work of visual art;⁵⁵ who do we see and who do we not see?⁵⁶ What are the visual codes by which some are allowed to look, others only to peek, and still others are forbidden to look altogether⁵⁷ and Mitchell's now very familiar question: what do pictures really want?⁵⁸ To this list I would add my own: how do images lure us in; what is the relationship between art and visual culture; how has the category of art constructed a particular way of seeing; what is being represented, why and to what effect; how does art/visual culture construct the world through the operation of myths and ideologies; who has power/who is powerless in a particular visual regime? These questions can be applied to a wide range of visual examples, including the buildings that operate as signifiers of particular ideological positions in socio-cultural contexts such as the *Voortrekker Monument* in South Africa (Figure 3). Finally, we must also investigate how images mean different things to different people and how the meanings assigned to images can be transformed, as in this, now controversial South African monument.



Figure 3. Voortrekker Monument, Pretoria, South Africa, (photograph by the author).

In this way, the distinctions between images need not be erased, and the concept of 'art' as a category need not be dissolved. What is, however, required is recognition of the diverse functions of images and a critique of how each medium has constructed vision according to cultural and historical circumstances. In this kind of endeavour, there is no difference between visual culture studies and art history. The only exception is that visual culture studies, rather than art history, would appear to be a more suitable term to describe this approach.

Much debate surrounds the 'proper' terminology used to describe courses dealing with the visual.⁵⁹ But, surely what we do in our courses is more important than what we call them?⁶⁰ Ultimately, our approach ought to be an analysis

of the economic, political, ideological and aesthetic functions of art and visual culture across various times and places supported by an open and democratic approach to images. A combination of both the traditional art historical methodologies, as well as new critical perspectives (such as the identity politics of gender and postcolonialism, for example), should be the framework around which we structure our courses.

Ultimately, visual culture studies need not be regarded as a threat to art history – as is still heard in the corridors of art departments – but as an enriching critical tool in the construction of knowledge about images and in our experience of images. This would require both a critical analysis of the ideological functions of images, while at the same time acknowledging that images affect us in deeply inexplicable ways. The collapse of long-established scholarly assumptions not only about the aims and protocols of art history but also the meaning of aesthetics does not indicate the disintegration of art or the disappearance of a history of art, but rather signals an opportunity to question how (and why) we deal with both art and visual culture.

CONCLUSION

The questions suggested above are not intended to offer an entirely new approach to image analysis, nor did I hope to resolve all of the conflicts explored earlier in the article. For, whilst some long-suffering art educators continue to bemoan the 'collapse' of traditional art history into visual culture studies, the suggestions posed above are far from ground-breaking to those who have already engaged with images in this way. After all, Norman Bryson, as only one example, employed similar strategies in art history classrooms in the 1990s at Harvard University, with many art schools throughout the Euro-American world following suit, using a variety of programme titles, as already pointed out. Far from finding solutions to the awkward and tenuous relationship between art history and visual culture studies, this article has indeed raised even more questions about the slippery ties between the two fields. For example, further exploration on this topic could address whether or not we should aim to define visual culture studies more specifically at all? Does the process of definition – read mapping – not also require a type of colonisation of our field, whereby we impose a particular set of rules, attitudes and constraints, based on ideological and discursive interests – in short, 'discipline' – onto images? On the other hand, if visual culture studies does not define its aims and protocols more explicitly, how are 'experts' in this field to be distinguished from specialists in fields such as media studies, anthropology, history, communication science and so on? In this scenario, what is left for visual culture studies other than to lament its epistemic unsustainability? I suggest that the future of the disciplined image – whether art or the broader image field – may hinge on the specific ways in which it is conceived in its unique institutional location. What I am arguing is that visual culture researchers and educators ought to define their analytical models from the outset in order to justify and validate their research findings within the broader disciplinary arena on which their arguments are staged. This is not to deny Jean-François Lyotard's⁶¹ significant critique of regimes of knowledges produced by modern foundationalism. For the postmodern critique of the supposed stability and order created by the "meta-narrative" (of art history for example), exposes such ideals as inherently flawed. Indeed, visual culture studies emerged in the 1970s as an interdisciplinary intellectual site in response to the so-called "crisis of narratives"⁶² in academic organisation. But, if visual culture studies is to continue as an 'indisciplinary'⁶³ project combined with its resistance to totalising narratives, then it will surely struggle to find a home within institutional frameworks, where, presumably it may (or may not, according to Elkins' provocative title for the final Stone Summer Theory Institute seminar in the current series, *Farewell to Visual Studies* to be held in July 2011) very well now be taking centre stage. What this means is that our field needs ongoing conversation between art historians, art educators and theorists in wide-ranging disciplines. When art can again become relevant in the lives of the youth through an engagement with popular visual culture – arguably, the place from which students derive an interest in images – it can become a dynamic, engaging, even controversial field without succumbing to the limiting disciplinary constraints of so-called 'straight' art history, and also not slipping into a treacherous free-for-all. We should therefore continuously acknowledge the complexities of the visual field and the ways in which it is interpreted, always encouraging new kinds of questions to be asked that cannot easily be raised in conventional classes of traditional art history. Only then will the future of the 'disciplined image' no longer hang in the balance.

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- 1 Jeanne van Eeden and Amanda du Preez (eds), *South African Visual Culture* (Pretoria: Van Schaik, 2005), 1.
- 2 Van Eeden presented a paper entitled "The Lost City: Gendered Space and the Consumption of Otherness" and Du Preez presented "The machine is a woman: an analysis of how technology is sexed and gendered in selected South African advertisements."
- 3 Van Eeden and Du Preez, *South African Visual Culture*, v.
- 4 The questions raised by the respondents to the notorious *October* (1996) questionnaire, concerning the disciplinary status of visual culture studies and the future of art history, are very telling in this regard. Amongst others, see especially Thomas Crow, "Untitled Response to Visual Culture Questionnaire", *October*, 77, (1996), 34-36.
- 5 See for instance the following authors: Jonathan Harris, *The New Art History: A Critical Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2001); Otto Karl Werckmeister, "Radical Art History", *Art Journal*, 42, (1982), 284-291; Henri Zerner, "The Crisis in the Discipline", *Art Journal*, 42, (1982), 279; Donald Preziosi, *Rethinking Art History: Meditations on a Coy Science* (London: Yale University Press, 1989); Christopher B. Steiner, "Can the Canon Burst?", *Art Bulletin*, 58, (1996), 213-217.
- 6 Crow, "Untitled Response to Visual Culture Questionnaire," 35.
- 7 See the following authors: Steiner, "Can the Canon Burst?", 213-217; Jenni Lauwrens, "Do Good Fences Make Good Neighbours: Reviewing Disciplinary Borders in Art History and Visual Culture Studies", *De Arte*, 72, (2005), 49-57; Steve Edwards, *Art and its Histories: A Reader* (London: Yale University Press, 1999); Michael Ann Holly and Keith Moxey (eds), *Art History, Aesthetics, Visual Studies* (London: Yale University Press, 2001); William J. T. Mitchell, "Showing Seeing" in *Art History, Aesthetics, Visual Studies*, eds Michael Ann Holly and Keith Moxey (London: Yale University Press, 2002), 231-250; Keith Moxey, "Animating Aesthetics", *October*, 77, (1996), 56-59.
- 8 Margaret Dikovitskaya, *Visual Culture: The Study of the Visual after the Cultural Turn* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2005), 67.
- 9 Moxey, "Animating Aesthetics", 59.
- 10 Since the emergence of early manifestations of visual culture studies in the 1990s, several variations of terminology have been used to designate similar kinds of discussions/courses. These include 'critical studies', 'visual studies', 'visual culture', 'visual culture studies' and 'visual and critical studies'. Following John Walker and Sarah Chaplin in *Visual Culture: An Introduction* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997) I use 'visual culture studies' to refer to the discipline (although I acknowledge that, as yet, visual culture studies is not a discipline in the traditional sense), and 'visual culture' to designate the object of study.
- 11 Deborah Cherry, "Art History Visual Culture", *Art History*, 27(4), (2004), 479-493.
- 12 Kevin M. Tavin, "Wrestling with Angels, Searching for Ghosts: Toward a Critical Pedagogy of Visual Culture", *Studies in Art Education*, 44, (2003), 197-213.
- 13 Mitchell, "Showing Seeing", 231-250.
- 14 I am referring to the fact that many course managers have opted to replace the title of a course that previously dealt with the history of art with some variation of visual culture studies supposedly because history is now a contested term. While the courses still deal with the history of art, to a greater or lesser extent, the eradication of a name might be understood as the 'disintegration' of the discipline.
- 15 See the following authors: Mitchell, "What is Visual Culture?" in *Meaning in the Visual Arts: Views from the Outside*, ed. Irwin Lavin (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 207-217; David Carrier, "Current Issues in Art History, Aesthetics, and Visual Studies" in *Art History, Aesthetics, Visual Studies*, eds Michael Ann Holly and Keith Moxey (London: Yale University Press, 2002), 251-259; Stephen Melville, "Theory, Discipline and Institution" in *Art History, Aesthetics, Visual Studies*, eds Michael Ann Holly and Keith Moxey (London: Yale University Press, 2002), 203-213; David Peters Corbett, "Visual Culture and the History of Art" in *Dealing with the Visual: Art History, Aesthetics and Visual Culture*, eds Caroline van Eck and David Winters (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing, 2005), 17-36.
- 16 See the following authors: Paul Duncum, "Visual Culture: Developments, Definitions and Directions for Art Education", *Studies in Art Education*, 42, (2001), 101-112; Paul Duncum, "Visual Culture Art Education: Why, What and How", *Journal of Art and Design Education*, 21, (2002), 14-23; Kerry Freedman, *Teaching Visual Culture: Curriculum, Aesthetics and the Social Life of Art* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2003); Tavin, "Wrestling with Angels, Searching for Ghosts: Toward a Critical Pedagogy of Visual Culture," 197-213.
- 17 Moxey, "Animating Aesthetics," 56-59.

- 18 Brent Wilson, "Of Diagrams and Rhizomes: Visual Culture, Contemporary Art, and the Impossibility of Mapping the Content of Art Education", *Studies in Art Education*, 44, (2003), 214-229.
- 19 Moxey, "Animating Aesthetics," 57.
- 20 Ibid.
- 21 Ibid.
- 22 Wilson, "Of Diagrams and Rhizomes: Visual Culture, Contemporary Art, and the Impossibility of Mapping the Content of Art Education," 224.
- 23 Ibid.
- 24 Ralph Smith, "Building a Sense of Art in Today's World", *Studies in Art Education*, 33, (1992), 75.
- 25 I acknowledge that this reference to Smith is not current; however, I argue his view is not outdated. Some art historians and art educators remain sceptical of the integration of popular visual culture into curricular activities based on their uncertainty as to the educational worth of such forms of cultural expression. See Haanstra, Nagel and Ganzeboom, "A Preliminary Assessment of a New Arts Education Programme in Dutch Secondary Schools", *Jade*, 21, (2002), 164-172 for more recent research dealing with teachers' and students' attitudes to a more liberal arts education programme in Dutch secondary schools.
- 26 Smith, "Building a Sense of Art in Today's World," 77.
- 27 Ibid.
- 28 Paul Duncum, "Holding Aesthetics and Ideology in Tension", *Studies in Art Education: A Journal of Issues and Research*, 49(2), (2008), 122.
- 29 Nicholas Mirzoeff, (ed.) *The Visual Culture Reader*, (London: Routledge, 1998), 4.
- 30 Lauwrens, "Sightseeing in art and visual culture", *Image and Text: A Journal for Design*, 14, (2008), 18-28.
- 31 Mieke Bal, "Visual Essentialism and the Object of Visual Culture", *Journal of Visual Culture*, 2, (2003), 11.
- 32 Edwards, *Art and its Histories: A Reader*.
- 33 Ibid.
- 34 Cherry, "Art History Visual Culture," 479.
- 35 Wilson, "Of Diagrams and Rhizomes: Visual Culture, Contemporary Art, and the Impossibility of Mapping the Content of Art Education," 225.
- 36 Susan Buck-Morss, "Untitled Response to Visual Culture Questionnaire", *October*, 77, (1996), 29.
- 37 Tavin, "Wrestling with Angels, Searching for Ghosts: Toward a Critical Pedagogy of Visual Culture," 197.
- 38 Freedman, *Teaching Visual Culture: Curriculum, Aesthetics and the Social Life of Art*, 134.
- 39 Elkins, *Visual Studies: A Sceptical Introduction*, 23.
- 40 Mitchell, "Interdisciplinarity and Visual Culture", *Art Bulletin*, 77, (1996), 542.
- 41 Ibid.
- 42 Wilson, "Of Diagrams and Rhizomes: Visual Culture, Contemporary Art, and the Impossibility of Mapping the Content of Art Education," 225.
- 43 Ibid., 227.
- 44 Ibid., 225.
- 45 Ibid., 226.
- 46 Ibid., 225.
- 47 Ibid., 227.
- 48 Van Eeden and Du Preez, *South African*, vi.
- 49 Elkins, *Visual Studies*, 63.
- 50 Wilson, "Of Diagrams and Rhizomes: Visual Culture, Contemporary Art, and the Impossibility of Mapping the Content of Art Education," 225.
- 51 Irit Rogoff, "Studying Visual Culture" in *The Visual Culture Reader*, ed. Mirzoeff (London: Routledge, 1998), 16.
- 52 Ibid.
- 53 Mitchell, "What is Visual Culture?" 210

- 54 Mitchell, "What Do Pictures Really Want?", *October*, 77, (1996).
- 55 Mitchell, "What is Visual Culture?" 211
- 56 Rogoff, "Studying Visual Culture" in *The Visual Culture Reader*, ed. Mirzoeff (London: Routledge, 1998). 15
- 57 Ibid.
- 58 Mitchell, "What Do Pictures Really Want?".
- 59 In the department where I teach – the Department of Visual Arts - at the University of Pretoria, South Africa, we have had long discussions about what precisely we should call our course which is no longer only about the history of art, and also not about the entire realm of visual culture. For visual culture is also dealt with in other Departments at the University, (for example, the Department of Journalism and the Department of Language, Culture and Communication). We have had to ascertain what it is about our dealings with the visual that set it apart from other approaches to images, such as from the point of view of media studies and communication science, for instance.
- 60 This fact has become very clear in Secondary School art education in South Africa, where the term art history has been eliminated from the curriculum in favour of visual culture studies. However, a closer study of what is being taught in the classroom is not visual culture studies understood in the sense described above, but rather, art history as usual.
- 61 Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, translated by Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Manchester: University Press, 1984).
- 62 Lyotard: 1984, xxiii.
- 63 Mitchell, "Interdisciplinarity and Visual Culture", *Art Bulletin* 77(4), (1995), 540-544.

ART AND AESTHETICS

Peter Stupples

From the beginning the question of aesthetics is always a non-dialogue between those who subscribe to the conditioned world order and those who stand to gain from a reconstructed forum.

Clyde Taylor; "Black Cinema in a Post-Aesthetic Era," in *Questions of Third Cinema*, eds Jim Pines and Paul Williams (London: British Film Institute, 1989), 90.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the beginning of the twenty-first century we live in a globalised and increasingly globalising world. Assumptions about the universal application of the Western traditions in fields of intellectual endeavour are making room for the claims of other epistemologies, histories, points of view. It is perhaps a mark of the strength of the Western Enlightenment project that this 'making way,' in part, comes out of Western challenges to its own intellectual hegemony, out of the very fecundity of its own thinking by way of forms of Marxism, feminism, postcolonial theory and revisionist histories. Western theories, histories, and the intellectual foundations upon which visual art is assessed, judged and evaluated have been vigorously challenged.¹

In the Western tradition a well documented and elaborated history has been built up around the notion of aesthetics – the way we understand, feel about, judge, appreciate and apprehend works of art, particularly the so-called Fine Arts as taught in the academies, those institutions teaching art practice and assuming guardianship over the economy of taste.

This 'making way' has also been forced upon the Western tradition through the fast-moving social changes of the past hundred years. Many parts of the world are now multicultural, having populations that have come together for various reasons from different intellectual traditions. Other formerly colonised, or politically dominated, societies are asserting their own values and traditions. The social history of our times is dynamic, fluid, even explosive as political and intellectual tensions arise on the borders of cultural conflict.

In the comparatively quieter waters of art history and theory it may well be time in the West to reconstruct our thinking about aesthetics, to take into account changing ideas about global history, multicultural complexities, to examine the games we play with language when making statements about the arts in a multicultural world.²

As William McEvilley pointed out as long ago as 1985 in *Artforum*:

We no longer live in a separate world. Our tribal view of art history as primarily or exclusively European or Eurocentric will become increasingly harmful as it cuts us off from the emerging Third World and isolates us from the global culture which is already in its early stages. We must have values that can include the rest of the world when the moment comes – and the moment is upon us.³

2. CULTURAL COMBATIVENESS

Notions of taste often differentiate a dominant, authenticating élite from the disenfranchised masses, one culture from another – in the crudest terms, the West from the non-West. Gadamer claims that “what is valid in a society, what taste dominates it, characterises the community of social life. Such a society chooses and knows what belongs to it and what does not. Even the possession of artistic interests is not random and universal in its ideas, but what artists create and what society values belong together in the unity of a style of life and ideal of taste.”⁴ There is a dynamic history of cultural combativeness – one set of social forces now dominant, only to be replaced in time by another, itself temporarily more successful in controlling the way reality is perceived. All societies are driven by the desire for power; to control others through economic and cultural domination, wielding the clubs of ideological aggression. One aspect of that ideological aggression is the imposition of rules of taste and notions of aesthetic approbation.⁵

Part of the West's ideological armoury is its adoption of the idea of a universal aesthetic, that “no longer permit[s] any criterion of content and dissolv[es] the connection of the work of art with its world.”⁶ The strength of this position lies in its total lack of definiteness. Gadamer goes on to point out that in these circumstances “the connection of the work of art with its world is no longer of any importance to it but, on the contrary, the aesthetic consciousness is the experiencing centre from which everything considered to be art is measured.”⁷

Processes such as these, creating aesthetic, and therefore, social differentiation, exist both in the West and the non-West, in various cultures and times, usually for the purpose of claiming superiority for systems, both in time and place, of evaluating ‘works of art.’ These systems are socially constructed. In claiming a monopoly over questions of taste by a mobile feeling for quality, through a dominating aesthetic system, élites exclude from their purview the products and practices of ‘Others’ and develop what Kaja Silverman calls “dominant fictions.”⁸ They are driven by the desire, often unconscious because it is regarded as self-evident, for ideological and political hegemonic authority, rather than a sense of egalitarian pluralism.

With ideas of universalising ‘aesthetic differentiation’ now spreading from the West to the culturally colonised world, the artist, both in the West and in the non-Western world, is changing the sense of volition and vocation formerly embedded in the customs and traditions of local art histories, and is tempted to function by competing for a place amongst the galaxy of those chosen for favour by the gate-keepers of a still-Western-dominated international aesthetic consciousness.

At this time in history, we may feel the need to rethink our position as historians of the visual arts, to shift out of our aesthetic comfort zone and move into the wider world's pluralism, both ideologically egalitarian and simultaneously and experientially biased to fashion and the market, and start by exploring the ground for a theory of culturally inclusive aesthetics, rather than re-adapting Kant and Hegel to an inappropriate present.

3. AESTHETIC VALUES

Artworks are socially valued objects in the world. They serve a range of cultural purposes relevant to the society in which they are produced, function and have value. Those functions and values change within the specific histories of artistic traditions and the wider processes of world history, those traditions and processes themselves being subject to the reflexive push and pull of cultural conditions.

Some of the values accruing to artworks may be described as ‘aesthetic.’ This is an adjective, sometimes used ideologically, but generally with a range of unspecified meanings. It is deeply etched into the Western history of art, into discussions about the qualities of artworks and the ‘aesthetic disposition’ of the viewer (consumer), about ‘aesthetic experience,’⁹ responses and judgements. It can be used, amongst other things, to mean ‘having good taste,’ ‘beautiful’ (often related to ‘good’), ‘worthy of appreciation.’¹⁰ ‘Taste,’ ‘beautiful,’ ‘worthy,’ are themselves multivalent, having meanings produced by the context of their use. Those ‘meanings’ may disguise other, often complex, values: for example, ‘beautiful’ might contain within it symbolic values, such as being ‘culturally prestigious,’ ‘culturally

appropriate,'¹¹ 'effective in ritual,' 'ordered,' 'harmonious,' 'at peace,' even having 'a shimmering brilliance.'¹² Above all we need to examine "the occasions on which [such words as 'beautiful'] are said – on the enormously complicated situation in which the aesthetic expression has a place, in which the expression itself has almost a negligible place."¹³

Aesthetic values are relative, subjective and fugitive,¹⁴ yet they are often strong markers of social groupings – those experiencing the sensation of an art object's effects in the body; those with, as opposed to those without, taste; those educated in the norms of the cultural élites; those with a knowledge of the philosophies of aesthetics; those subscribing to aesthetic ideologies, either Western or local.

'Aesthetic' can be used as a term of approbation, for example confirming 'aesthetic validity.' Those with sufficient intellectual capital or social standing to give access to an aesthetic disposition, to aesthetic judgements, often regard themselves, and are regarded by others, as in a privileged position, as charismatic compared with those too insecure in their social standing to make pronouncements of taste. It is the élites who grant or preserve prestige, elaborate the criteria of aesthetic mediation.¹⁵ "The very complicated competition and collaboration between 'experts' from the artworld, dealers, producers, scholars, and consumers is part of the economy of taste in the contemporary West."¹⁶ In other words 'aesthetic' and 'aesthetics' are terms often used as weapons in sites of social contestation, as emblems to mark social distinctions. For Wittgenstein that contestation is marked by the language games of aesthetics, those games being played within specific socially embedded contexts.¹⁷ Those who play the game successfully dominate the kingdom of aesthetic judgements: those who cannot grasp the language or the rules well enough to dominate accept the values of their intellectual masters.

4. THE WESTERN UNIVERSAL AESTHETIC

Part of the intellectual armoury of the West is the assumption of a universal aesthetic that, as Gadamer says, "dissolves the connection of the work of art with its world."¹⁸ The Western "aesthetic consciousness is the experiencing centre from which everything considered to be art is measured."¹⁹ Yet all attitudes, ideological, political, value-laden, are socially constructed within particular cultural configurations of history for specific, but essentially transient, local purposes. The exercise of aesthetic judgements, the expression of feelings and opinions, are related to current dominant cultural fictions. Just as there are period-specific aesthetic, ethical and ontological codes, so too are there culture-specific aesthetics, of which the West's is only one. These codes have their own histories, are in constant flux, change their character and their social bases of construction, influence one another, merge, are replaced by the codes of others and so on.

Aesthetic theories, such as those of Kant,²⁰ are themselves the product of intellectual endeavour within a specific historical and social matrix.²¹ Bürger argues persuasively that the process of the autonomy of art in the West, and the concomitant process of the developing concept of aesthetic pleasure, began in the early fifteenth century in Italy: "the works in which the aesthetic offers itself for the first time as a special object of pleasure may well have been connected in their genesis with the aura emanating from those that rule, but that does not change the fact that in the course of further historical development, they not only made possible a certain kind of pleasure (the aesthetic) but contributed toward the creation of the sphere we [in the West] call art."²² Certainly since the late eighteenth century art in the West became more and more assigned to an autonomous field of production calling for a purely aesthetic disposition, provided with a theoretical framework, and institutionalised in the museum or art gallery. That disposition was, and is, dependent upon a certain cultural competence. That competence is acquired, and endlessly re-produced, through education. It enables its possessor to identify, among all the candidates for appreciation offered to the gaze, the distinctive features of an 'artwork,' as Pierre Bourdieu points out,

by referring [it], consciously or unconsciously, to the universe of possible alternatives. This mastery is, for the most part, acquired simply by contact with works of art – that is, through an implicit learning analogous to that which makes it possible to recognise familiar faces without explicit rules or criteria – and it generally remains at a practical level; it is what makes it possible to identify styles, i.e. modes of expression characteristic of a period, a

civilisation or a school, without having to distinguish clearly, or state explicitly, the features which constitute their originality.²³

It is the aesthetic point of view that makes the aesthetic object.²⁴

The omnipotence of the Western aesthetic gaze is made manifest in choosing, on occasion, to describe ethnographic objects from dominated societies as the stuff of 'material culture' or, often under pressure from the flux of ideas and politics, to raise certain of these objects to the status of 'works of art.' This arrogation of judgement to Western aesthetics was highlighted by the controversies surrounding the exhibition "'Primitivism' in 20th Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern" at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1984.²⁵

5. ART AND LIFE

The 'pure' gaze in the act of Kantian judgment implies an aesthetic disposition for its own sake, an elective distance, a disinterestedness, a moral agnosticism, what Arthur Danto mischievously calls a "narcoleptic pleasure," quite distinct from the types of looking utilised in the day-to-day social world.²⁶

The aesthetic disposition which tends to bracket off the nature and function of the object represented and to exclude any 'naïve' reaction – horror at the horrible, desire for the desirable, pious reverence for the sacred – along with all purely ethical responses, in order to concentrate solely upon the mode of representation, the style, perceived and appreciated by comparison with other styles, is one dimension of a total relation to the world and to others, a life-style, in which the effects of particular conditions of existence are expressed in a 'misrecognisable' form.²⁷

Bourdieu goes on to distinguish between this pure, *élite* gaze and the popular reception of art.²⁸ For the *élite* it is the form of the artwork that has precedence over any obvious function, the representation rather than the thing represented – art is separate from life, the aesthetic is autonomous and seemingly unencumbered by either ideological or political considerations.²⁹ For the masses, however, the work must have some functional value, even if only as a sign – there must be continuity between art and life. In addition art has about it – and this seems to bear on the fact that for the *élite* it has 'aesthetic' value – some relationship to the Good. 'Aesthetic,' in this context, tends to bear an ethical value.

The *élite* may elect to confer on some object of popular culture its aesthetic approbation: "nothing is more distinctive, more distinguished, than the capacity to confer aesthetic status on objects that are banal or even 'common' (because the 'common' people make them their own, especially for aesthetic purposes)."³⁰ This act itself confirms the power of the *élite* to determine values operative in the culture as a whole. Bourdieu maintains that even "the definition of art, and through it the art of living, is an object of struggle among the classes."³¹ Western "legitimate" aesthetics has been constructed "by an immense repression."³²

"The easiest, and so the most frequent and most spectacular way to 'shock (*épater*) the bourgeois' by proving the extent of one's power to confer aesthetic status is to *transgress* ever more radically the ethical censorships ... which the other classes accept even within an area which the dominant defines as aesthetic."³³ As Pop Art demonstrated, it was even possible (in terms of language games) to have an aesthetic that was anti-aesthetic: "The style is happily retrograde and thrillingly insensitive ... It is too much to endure, like a steel fist pressing in the face."³⁴

In the West, within the confines of art galleries and museums, and in the popular press, spectators and readers (consumers) are expected not only to follow the lead of the 'experts' in terms of the hierarchies of approbation, but also to have a rudimentary grasp of the history of artistic periods, the biographies of artists, some words with which to 'appreciate' artworks. In other words, spectators are expected to collude with the socially consecrated illusions of aesthetic value of the *élite*.³⁵

6. OTHER AESTHETIC CODES

This aesthetic disposition is almost exclusively discussed in terms of Western art. Culturally complex theories of aesthetics exist in other cultures – in China³⁶ and Japan,³⁷ in Islamic calligraphy and architecture,³⁸ for example, with elaborated languages and literatures, used not only to mark the educated élites, but also, more widely, to distinguish types of artistic practice and qualities of value (not unlike 'connoisseurship'). Here too there are changing histories of taste, of class differences between art-for-art's sake and art functioning within spheres of specific social behaviours.

It would be an error to claim that every culture has a similarly elaborated ideational system of aesthetic judgement comparable to those in the West, India, China and Japan and the Islamic world. Nevertheless in all societies judgements, conscious and unconscious, from simple reactions to complex, reasoned and nuanced explanations, are made about objects of ritual, of symbolic value, about artworks. Though there may be no word corresponding to 'aesthetic,' aesthetic principles (or something like them) are mobilised in the course of social interactions within the parameters of particular social relationships, of local language and customs, predicated on systems of values and governed by rules that are culturally specific and historically determined. Only the most insensitive intellectual hubris would lead anyone to claim that this is not the way Western aesthetics also operates.

In non-Western societies objects are often judged on their effectiveness, not only in terms of magic, or as totems, emblems, but also as substitutes for other symbolic objects. For example the Ancient Greeks made art objects as offerings to the gods, as records of piety, being at first a substitute for an actual sacrifice. The third century BC carving in bas-relief of a *bucranion* (the skull of a bovine) on one side, and the skull of a wild boar on the lateral faces, of a stele from Thespiae, as an offering to Zeus Karaïos, was a substitute for the real head of a bovine or a boar.³⁹ Anthony Shelton has described the offerings, the symbolic mats, arrows and votive bowls, made by the Huichol of northwest Mexico, to procure rains, to bring the sun, to celebrate marriage.⁴⁰

In these examples art is commemorative, connecting the celebrants with their history (their collective memory), their customs, their belief systems, their cultural identity. Image and function are interdependent: art is used to commemorate the relationship, the contract, between human beings and the supernatural powers to which they are in thrall. Art as ritual offering was, and is, widespread in non-Western societies. In these circumstances aesthetic value is related to appropriateness, how well the rules are followed, how effective the substitute, how acceptable the object is to the gods.

In all societies 'beauty' exists as a significant commendation of art, however that word is used within different cultural contexts. We are familiar with its use in Western aesthetics, even if we are unsure of its meaning outside of a particular context. Other aesthetic codes also commend 'beauty,' but using their own metaphorical terms for this elusive concept. For example, Biebuyck points out that the Lega of Zaire explain their sense of 'the beautiful' by reference to forms in the natural world, bongo antelopes, white *bubulcus* birds and white *kinsamba* mushrooms, objects that possess the colours and glossy textures associated by the Lega with 'beauty.'⁴¹

Other artworks – heirloom shell valuables among the Lelet peoples of New Ireland in the Pacific, for example – enter into the psychological realms of the forbidden, the taboo. Heirlooms are dangerous and must be kept away from children. Yet their possession confers a sense of identity, of solidarity with those sharing a cultural history. They even project their owner's identity into the future. They are called 'the bones of the clan.' Their manufacture, out of commonly found things like spiders' webs, vines from the banyan tree, shells, is not associated with skill. Their aesthetic arises entirely from the histories their owners have woven about them, often narratives of settlement and migration. They become most obviously fetishes. "Like the clan or lineage itself, these valuables should ideally remain seated and immobile. Should they be lost, the clan and lineage are considered to be without a place to sit."⁴² The revelation of particular wealth in heirlooms is a mark of power; just as in the West the revelation of the extent and significance of a private collection of art, in terms of the aesthetic criteria of experts, is a mark of wealth, of social standing.

Those objects that have power (charge or eloquence), that have elaborated histories – stories attached to them – are designated ‘sacred,’ and become models of aesthetic approbation. They assist a culture to make available, even visible, often in symbolic form, the invisible, the supernatural. Medieval Christian images acted in this manner in Europe.⁴³ The cultural context also supplies the criteria for their evaluation. “Aesthetics as a discourse [may] not exist, but aesthetics as an ethical codification of the use, significance, and purpose behind sacred and ritual arts pervades metaphysics and ontology.”⁴⁴ Value is based on occult rather than visible criteria: but isn’t this similar to the conferment of aesthetic approbation in the West? “Beauty is a form of revelation which explicates what is implicit and reveals that which is occult.”⁴⁵

In non-Western societies there is often less distinction between signified and signifier: art is not so much a representation of invisible powers but a manifestation of them. Signification becomes actualisation. (The wine is the blood of Christ.) We may generalise Shelton’s remarks about the Huichol to cover a wide range of non-Western cultural uses of aesthetics: “Aesthetics is not concerned with passive reflection, but with an active attitude to maintain or adjust a system of ethics, inherited from ... ancestral deities, which organises the world and defines appropriate activities and relations within it.”⁴⁶

7. COMMON FEATURES OF AESTHETIC CODES

Aesthetic codes are often divided in the West between aspects of essentialist thinking – ‘beauty,’ ‘form,’ ‘truth to materials’ and so on – and institutional theories, such as those elaborated in the 1960s by Arthur Danto and George Dickie.⁴⁷ Social theories of art treat these avenues of enquiry as just two prospects in a wider landscape of art making, use (consumption), evaluation and appreciation. Art and identity is another aspect of the subject, related to art and psychology. None are as all-embracing as art and culture, which itself includes the way art’s concepts operate for the individual mind, within the group, in the wider society and multi-culturally, both dynamically over time and space.

8. AESTHETICS AND IDENTITY POLITICS

The word ‘aesthetic,’ used as a noun, has come to stand for a style, or a point of special approbation, “a view of the beautiful (the good) from a special-interest point of vantage”, “a particular type of approbation radically different from the theory and history of Western aesthetics.” Often ‘an aesthetic’ is undefined, its sense comprehensible only through immersion in a sub-culture in which that particular ‘aesthetic’ becomes clear through experience or through the close study of special-interest literature.⁴⁸

For example a Black Aesthetic is associated with Afro-Americans. At its most intense, this explores notions of the beautiful (the good) through an unequivocal, an uncompromised association of the art of West Africa and of the descendents of slaves in the North American continent, marking off European and white American influences, rendering them extraneous and Other. The Black Aesthetic is characterised by the 1960s slogan ‘Black is Beautiful.’ Kobena Mercer takes a more nuanced approach, naming this a neo-African aesthetic among those of African descent, however recent or remote in time, in cultural diaspora in both North America and Europe.

The patterns and practices of aesthetic stylisation developed by black cultures in First World societies may be seen as modalities of cultural practices *inscribed* in critical engagement with the dominant white culture and at the same time *expressive* of a neo-African approach to the pleasures of beauty at the level of everyday life.

Black practices of aesthetic stylisation are intelligible at one ‘functional’ level as dialogic responses to the racism of the dominant culture, but at another level involve acts of appropriation from that same ‘master’ culture through which ‘syncretic’ forms of diasporan culture have evolved.⁴⁹

The Black Aesthetic has its own history, moving from the aesthetic of negation – where it was characterised as 'not-European' – to an aesthetic of de-negation, seeking its own cultural criteria of value.

A similar history can be traced for a feminist aesthetic.

There are aesthetics of liberation, aesthetics of nature (as opposed to artifice). Teshome Gabriel has theorised a nomadic aesthetic, the values given to artworks in nomadic cultures. She characterises the aesthetic as having two essential social functions, to consolidate a community through ritual and performance, and through its collective participation in the production and reception of art.⁵⁰ Above all it stresses the transience of life and art, and the social necessity of creating ephemeral, or at their most permanent, mobiliary (that which can be habitually carried from site to site) artworks.

There is even a 'consumption aesthetic'.⁵¹

Essentialist aesthetic qualities, such as beauty, purity, clean lines, truth to nature, truth to materials, are evoked as ethical virtues in the politics of art movements, of art histories, of social change, of urban renewal, making over what is now regarded as redundant into the currently useful or even simply fashionable.

9. THE PSYCHOLOGY OF AESTHETIC PLEASURE

Aesthetic delight or pleasure is also a psychological quality related to cultural experience, including that of the dominant ideology of a culture ingested through parental models, the home, the extended family, the local community, through schooling and educational institutions, through reading and seeing, through listening to wise women and men with an elevated social status acting as mentors, as spiritual guides, as cultural gatekeepers, as tastemakers. The experience of aesthetic pleasure, aesthetic delight is generated within us, but what is within is constructed by our cultural experience.

Artworks themselves are inert. It would be a fundamental conceptual error to ascribe any intrinsic attractiveness to an object, such as an artwork. We may fetishise the object 'in itself,' focussing attention on the emblem itself, rather than what it is emblematic of. We may use it to sublimate our primary desires. In Barthes's dramatic metaphor: "The text [image] is a fetish object, and *this fetish desires me*. The text [image] chooses me."⁵²

Apart from our genetic inheritance we are structured by the world, including the art of our particular culture and time. Artworks have a dynamic, a reflexive influence over our ways of seeing, our view of the world, our actions. To some extent they structure us, determine us.⁵³ We turn Barthes's bland 'readerly' experience into the creative 'writerly,' driven by our desires and the cultural matrix in which those desires are free to express themselves. Even though Freud and Lacan explored the intimate psychological underpinnings of our individual personalities, those 'underpinnings' are created within social parameters. The images of art may remind us of what we have lost. They may give us a sense of recovering what we cherish and desire. They may resonate with our longing, with the inchoate material residing in our unconscious. The systems by which these acute desires are activated in the self, the very pleasures of desiring, often provide the material with which psychoanalysis works, but the shape and strength of our desires relate to infancy, to childhood, to places and relationships, which are themselves embedded in social realities.⁵⁴

Social realities operate in the production of art in all societies, Western and non-Western. The artist is embedded in a social order; but psychological motivations play a part in the constant recasting of that order. For example, Marion Wenzel has shown how house decoration in Nubia followed certain prescriptions laid down in tradition, but that individual artists were free to play with, to extend the canon according to their own aesthetic impulses. They could even develop quite new styles, such as those created by Ahmad Batoul from the 1920s. Nevertheless the Nubian artist's aesthetic freedom was constrained by the need to receive regular work as a plasterer and decorator

attached to a building team.⁵⁵ This tension between aesthetic striving and tradition, between creativity and paid labour, is a dynamic process changing within time across differing social spaces. This is not unlike similar tensions existing between artist and patron in Italy in the Renaissance.

10. AESTHETIC JUDGEMENTS NOT ABOUT ART

In all cultures things other than art – objects, movements and events, such as the world of nature or performance in sport – call into play aesthetic sensibilities and aesthetic judgements. It is possible, and indeed some would prefer, to talk about aesthetics quite separately from art altogether.⁵⁶

11. THE SOCIAL REGISTRATION OF ART

The triple registration of the work of art in the realms of the real, the imaginary and the symbolic, as Ellen Spitz puts it, “comes into being at the intersection of the reflex arc of (sexual/scotophilic) satisfaction; attenuated experience marked by frustration, delay, and disguise; and the values, expectations, and beliefs imposed by a culture.”⁵⁷

In order to secure a place for ourselves within a social group we may identify with its collective sense of taste, its language of aesthetic pleasure, its systems of valorisation. We may be eager to honour the customs of our forebears, to slot into tradition. We may tailor the expression of our desires, of our aesthetic pleasures to the dominant fictions in the groups to which we seek to belong. In that collective process we may shift the parameters of those fictions, in ways often difficult to detect. At times we may even join those seeking to undermine the dominant in order to replace it with one to which we aspire.

12. AESTHETIC AND SOCIAL HISTORY

The task of the social historian of art is to restore to the art object its cultural significance, to recognise it as a context-specific signifier. This does not mean to ignore its aesthetic effects, quite the contrary, but rather to understand their cultural roots and trace their transformation through the processes of history. Aesthetics are of central concern to the social historian, whose role it is to co-opt the dynamic history of aesthetic effects into social history, to examine, as the young Clement Greenberg wrote, “the relationship between aesthetic experience as met by the specific – not the generalised – individual, and the social and historical contexts in which that experience takes place.”⁵⁸ In other words, to focus on the social ontology of art, including aesthetics.⁵⁹

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- 1 Both challenged and confirmed in Homi K. Bhabha's *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994).
- 2 Ludwig Wittgenstein in his "Lectures on Aesthetics" discusses the 'language games' used to make judgements in particular cultural circumstances. See L. Wittgenstein, *Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief*, ed. Cyril Barrett (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1966), 5-6.
- 3 Thomas McEvelley, "I Think Therefore I Art," *Artforum*, 23:10 (Summer 1985), 74-84.
- 4 Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (London, 1975), 76.
- 5 The word 'rules' is used here, not unlike Ludwig Wittgenstein in his "Lectures on Aesthetics," to mean the underlying particular historical system, the 'language games,' used to make judgements in particular cultural circumstances. Wittgenstein, *Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics*, 5-6.
- 6 Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 76.
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 Kaja Silverman, *Male Subjectivity at the Margins* (New York, 1992), Chapter 1. 'Dominant fiction' is the phrase used by Kaja Silverman to "retheorise the operation of what most often passes ideologically as 'reality.'" Kaja Silverman, *The Threshold of the Visible World* (New York and London: Routledge, 1996), 239 n. 13.
- 9 Peter Bürger claims that "aesthetic experience is the positive side of that process [within Western Modernism] by which the social subsystem 'art' defines itself as a distinct sphere. Its negative side is the artist's loss of any social function." It rebels against the praxis of life. Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 33-4. See also Noël Carroll, "Art and Aesthetic Experience," in his *Philosophy of Art* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), 156-204.
- 10 As Wittgenstein pointed out: "It is not only difficult to describe what appreciation consists in, but impossible. To describe what it consists in we would have to describe the whole environment." Wittgenstein, *Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics*, 7.
- 11 See, for example, Alfred Gell's discussion of 'beauty' in relation to codes of dress among the Muria Gonds. "Newcomers to the World of Goods: Consumption among the Muria Gonds," in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, ed. Arjun Appadurai (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 120.
- 12 Robert Layton, *The Anthropology of Art*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1991), 13, 16, 98, 197; and Howard Morphy, "From Dull to Brilliant: The Aesthetics of Spiritual Power among the Yolngu," in *Anthropology, Art and Aesthetics*, eds Jeremy Coote and Anthony Shelton (Oxford, 1992), 181-208.
- 13 Wittgenstein, *Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics*, 2.
- 14 Some philosophers have even wondered whether 'aesthetics' has any basic subject matter. See Stuart Hampshire, "Logic and Appreciation" (1952), in *Art and Philosophy*, ed. W.E. Kennick (New York: St Martin's Press, 1979), 651-7.
- 15 "Aesthetic codes operate as mediating influences between ideology and particular works of art by interposing themselves as sets of rules and conventions which shape cultural products and which must be used by artists and cultural producers." Janet Wolff, *The Social Production of Art*, 2nd ed. (Basingstoke and London: Macmillan, 1993), 64-5.
- 16 Appadurai, *The Social Life of Things*, 45.
- 17 Wittgenstein, *Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics*, 8. Wittgenstein: "What belongs to a language game is a whole culture."
- 18 Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1975), 76.
- 19 Ibid.
- 20 Such as outlined in *Critique of Judgment*, trans. Werner Pluhar (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1987). This paper treats Kant's ideas as exemplars of the Western tradition. The complexity and significance of Kant's thinking, in all three of his *Critiques*, is not the subject of this paper.
- 21 For example, Kant's work lies on the intellectual frontier of a change in the central focus of Western aesthetics. Before Kant, philosophical aesthetics was focussed on questions of beauty and sublimity in nature; after Kant, the emphasis is refocussed on works of art.
- 22 Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, 39.
- 23 Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1984), 4.
- 24 Ibid., 29.
- 25 In particular the article by Thomas McEvelley, "Doctor; Lawyer; Indian Chief: Primitivism in 20th-Century Art at the Museum of Modern Art," *Artforum*, 23:3 (November 1984), 54-61.

- 26 Arthur Danto, *The Philosophical Disenfranchisement of Art* (New York and Chichester: Columbia University Press, 1986), 11. See also Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, 41-5. Martha Rosler also talks about "a hedonic-aesthetic respite from instrumental 'reality.'" Martha Rosler, "Video: Shedding the Utopian Moment," *The Black Reader in Visual Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 259.
- 27 Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 54.
- 28 Bourdieu relates the pure gaze to a bourgeoisie able to enjoy 'leisure.' Ibid., 55-6.
- 29 For an amusing, but perceptive, take on this position see Danto, *The Philosophical Disenfranchisement of Art*, 12. Peter Bürger has demonstrated the historical process of that separation, led by the avant-garde, eventuating in the crisis in Western art after the First World War, with some artists seeking to re-engage with social life and others intent on pursuing the autonomy of their production. Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*.
- 30 Bourdieu, *Distinction*.
- 31 Ibid., 48.
- 32 Ibid., 485.
- 33 Ibid., 47.
- 34 Ivan Karp, "Anti-Sensibility Painting," *Artforum*, September 1963, 26.
- 35 Pierre Bourdieu, "The Production of Belief," *Media, Culture and Society*, 2 (July 1980), 261-93.
- 36 Such as Hsieh Ho's *Six Principles of Chinese Painting* (c. 550 BCE).
- 37 As an example, the following titles give a sense of the depth of scholarship in Japanese art: Kuki Shūzō, *Reflections on Japanese Taste: The Structure of Iki* (1930), trans. John Clark (Sydney: Power Institute of Fine Arts, 1997); Sōetsu Yanagi, *The Unknown Craftsman: A Japanese Insight into Beauty* (Tokyo, New York, London: Kodansha International, 1972); Itō Teiji, Tanaka Itō and Sesoko Tsune, *Wabi, Sabi, Suki: The Essence of Japanese Beauty* (Hiroshima: Mazda Motor Company, 1993); *Japanese Aesthetics and Culture: A Reader*, ed. Nancy Hume (Albany: SUNY Press, 1995); Leslie Pincus, *Authenticating Culture: Kuki Shūzō and the Rise of National Aesthetics* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1996).
- 38 Oliver Leaman, *Islamic Aesthetics: An Introduction* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press: 2004).
- 39 The stele is now in the museum in Thebes. K Demakopoulou and D Konsola, *Guide to the Archaeological Museum of Thebes* (Athens, 1981), no. 154.
- 40 Anthony Shelton, "Predicates of Aesthetic Judgement: Ontology and Value in Huichol Material Representations," in Coote and Shelton, *Anthropology, Art and Aesthetics*, 209-44.
- 41 D Biebuyck, *The Lega: Art, Initiation and Moral Philosophy* (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1973), 178-9.
- 42 Richard Eves, *The Magic Body: Power, Fame and Meaning in a Melanesian Society* (Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1998), 142-7.
- 43 See, for example, Umberto Eco, *Art and Beauty in the Middle Ages* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1986).
- 44 Coote and Shelton, *Anthropology, Art and Aesthetics*, 235.
- 45 Ibid., 236.
- 46 Ibid., 241.
- 47 Arthur Danto, "The Artworld," *Journal of Philosophy*, 61 (October 1964), 571-84; George Dickie, "Defining Art," *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 6:3 (July 1969), 253-6, *Art and the Aesthetic: An Institutional Analysis* (Ithaca and New York: Cornell University Press, 1974) and *Art Circle: A Theory of Art* (Chicago: Spectrum Press, 1997).
- 48 Wittgenstein frequently highlights the need to be vigilant with our use of words. 'Aesthetic' is such a word calling for care. See Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*, trans. Peter Winch, ed. GH von Wright and Heikki Nyman (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980), and *Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics*.
- 49 Kobena Mercer, "Black Hair/Style Politics," in *Out There: Marginalisation and Contemporary Cultures*, eds Russell Ferguson et al. (Cambridge, Mass. and London: MIT Press, 1990), 257.
- 50 Teshome Gabriel, "Nomadic Aesthetics and the Black Independent Cinema," *ibid.*, 396.
- 51 See, for example, Alladi Venkatesh and Laurie Meamber, "The Aesthetics of Consumption and the Consumer as an Aesthetic Subject," *Consumption Markets and Culture*, 2:1 (2008), 45-70.
- 52 Roland Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1975), 27.

- 53 Peter Stupples, "Neuroscience and the Artist's Mind," *South African Journal of Art History*, 25:3 (2010), 43-55.
- 54 These ideas owe a lot to reading the work of Kaja Silverman, for example, *The Subject of Semiotics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983).
- 55 Marion Wenzel, *House Decoration in Nubia* (London: Gerard Duckworth, 1972).
- 56 For example, Jacques Marquet, *Introduction to Aesthetic Anthropology*, 2nd ed. (Malibu, Calif.: J. Paul Getty Museum, 1979), 45, and *The Aesthetic Experience: An Anthropologist Looks at the Visual Arts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 33; Nick Zangwill, "Aesthetics and Art," *British Journal of Aesthetics*, 26:3 (1986), 257-69; TJ Diffey, "The Idea of Aesthetic Experience," in *Possibility of the Aesthetic Experience*, ed. Michael Mitias (Dordrecht: Nijhoff, 1986), 3-12; Stefan Morawski, *Inquiries into the Fundamentals of Aesthetics* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1974); Coote and Shelton, *Anthropology, Art and Aesthetics*, 245-8.
- 57 Ellen Handler Spitz, *Image and Insight* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 14.
- 58 Clement Greenberg, "Avant-Garde and Kitsch," in *Clement Greenberg: The Collected Essays and Criticism, Volume 1*, ed. John O'Brian (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 6.
- 59 See John Searle's *The Construction of Social Reality* (New York: Free Press, 1995) and *Making the Social World: The Structure of Human Civilization* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

IN PURSUIT OF MEANING: MANA AND THE SGEULACHD GHAISGE¹: THE WORK OF WARWICK MCLEOD

Kura Puke

Pakaitore, stretched between Whanganui's hill and the *awa* below, still retained, in the year 2000, its salience, as another seven years would pass before its return to *iwi* ownership in 2007. The habitation of Pakaitore in 1995 not only set the path for *iwi* consolidation by the *mana whenua*, Te Ati Hau Nui a Paparangi, but it created an opportunity for wider Whanganui to begin to build a stronger cultural identity. Pakaitore marked a decade when awareness of Pakeha and Maori worldviews became discussed increasingly, with many in the Aotearoa community engaging in meaningful dialogue, with an often brutal honesty. It was a time of self-reflection; a heady time for the focus of cultural awareness and the refashioning of a bicultural identity – marked by, along with Pakaitore, such maturing events as the construction of Te Papa, literature such as Michael King's *Pakeha: The Quest for Identity in New Zealand*, and the films Jane Campion's *Piano* and Lee Tamahori's *Once were Warriors*. Out of this dialogue came an enhanced recognition of the colonial plight of all, but also the importance of dignity, of roots, of *turangawaewae*: of acknowledgement of the vast ancestral lines attached to any individual.



Figure 1. Warwick McLeod, *Sons of Leod* (2005, detail).
Aratoi Wairarapa Museum of
Art and History, Masterton.

Figure 2. Warwick McLeod, *The Prophet and the Birdman*
(2000). Sargeant Gallery, Whanganui.

As vividly as other events in Whanganui at that time, I remember an exhibition on the hill above Pakaitore. In the year 2000 Warwick McLeod's installation *The Prophet and the Birdman* featured in the central dome of the Sargeant Gallery, while *Sons of Leod* occupied the same gallery's north hall. This latter installation kept watch with giant wooden toes digging into and over large rocks, and leathery bull-kelp hands and heads presented on booms above them; while beneath the dome the Prophet's arms hung from a 6-metre-high washing line, as sleek suspended strips of brass terminating in open-palm hands. On the periphery loomed the Birdman, a tall but grounded figure standing vigil like a votive authority.

These installations were visual storytelling; ballads in the rhythms and tones of lost languages. They were tribal, organic and raw; looser notions tied up with intricate and refined elements of visual contemplation, constantly sprouting unfurling iterations and deviations of characters, events and situations.

McLeod was born in New Zealand, with descent tracing back to the mid-nineteenth-century settlement at Waipu by the followers of Reverend Norman McLeod: Gaelic people who had been the kelp-gatherers of the Hebrides before their crisscrossing of the Americas and the Pacific.



Figure 3. Warwick McLeod, *Sons of Leod* (2000, detail). Sargeant Gallery, Whanganui.

Like the Greek *Odyssey* or the tales of the Fianns from the Gaelic Fenian cycle, McLeod's works are poems that delve into the psychology or the inner spaces of this epic journey and its characters.

McLeod is a student of medieval Celtic literature, but these installations are not literal narratives; rather the elements of epic or heroic sensibilities resonate within the work. McLeod brings an embodiment of that psychology to life, in the understanding of its ways, intent, intuition and genetic drive to realise a need.



Figure 4. Warwick McLeod, *Knot* (2005). Aratoi Wairarapa Museum of Art and History, Masterton.



Figure 5. Warwick McLeod, *Knot* (2005, detail). Aratoi Wairarapa Museum of Art and History, Masterton.

McLeod's 2005 installations, at Lopdell House Gallery and Aratoi Wairarapa Museum of Art and History, featured sculptural works such as the bull-kelp whare *Knot*, the kelp, wood, and stone *Sons of Leod*, and *Be Ye A Brazen Wall*. *Be Ye A Brazen Wall* is a grand brass sculpture, made up of a series of sleek cupboards opening into vistas or cavities of prophetic lands and perhaps dreamlike states, of varying perspectives and scale. Doors open into both intimate and panoramic situations, some featuring mechanically driven figurative movements and musical tunes. The figures move smoothly, whisking through at varying pace, compounding multidimensional time and space. These works are powerfully absorbing and experiential – reminiscent of the doors of the remarkable medieval Hildesheim Cathedral in Germany.



Figure 6. Warwick McLeod, *Be Ye A Brazen Wall* (2005). Aratoi Wairarapa Museum of Art and History, Masterton.



Figure 7. Warwick McLeod, *Be Ye A Brazen Wall* (2005, detail). Aratoi Wairarapa Museum of Art and History, Masterton.

I have seen earlier cycles in the journey of McLeod's characters in exhibitions of his paintings and etchings at Gallery Fifty2 in 2006, and at WHMilbank Gallery and Chaffers Gallery in 2008. In July 2011 McLeod exhibited their most recent cycle, with his first New York solo show at InRivers Gallery in Williamsburg.

The paintings are luminous; spacious, but thickly atmospheric, with figures asserting form and weight. Soft, densely mixed planes delineated by minimal, refined marks create intriguing canvases. The characters are somehow ludicrous, almost caricatures of the strong but maimed, troubled, and incomplete – what McLeod calls 'vestiges of people,' their remnants as heads, hands and feet. They have tasks to perform. To fulfil their tasks they reassemble themselves, or reassemble each other. One character must make a hearth; another must make a washing line; another character has his hands tied to the end of a bandage wrapped around his head and ankles.

The figures are poignant, reminding me foremost of narratives surrounding some Maori prophets, in their stages of initial realisation: characters uniting a disparate group, alienated together as they, alone, must accept their fate; heeding the signs and accomplishing their tasks.

McLeod conveys this through the main character's physical solidness, moving within the spacious but psychologically visceral canvas plane. The figurative solidity feels like a great weight, heavy with the responsibility of the knowledge, and with the challenge of the journey. The journey is as much a mental discipline and a psychological exertion as it is physical action. These actions require the collective – and it is in the devising of their strategies that they will shift their outcome to forward their situation. But it is in the performance of the tasks that the creative cultural meanings spring out: and hence the light, rich hues, clean spaces and finishing highlights. These are visual narratives of the process of complex projects, through journeys filled with strife and insight, problems and milestones.

The characters become more intriguing, but still both odd and familiar. They tell me a little about myself as I observe them, studying the performance of their tasks, finding a new angle. They pay for the consequences of their actions and then move on, meditative, dutiful, familiar, always ready with an eye to maneuver a situation.

What is the situation? My imagination flits between images of the bleak, rocky, northern Scottish isles and the migration out, some landing here in Aotearoa, where perhaps for European immigrants the forgotten genealogy is held mutely in the repositories of mannerisms, or tactics, or aesthetics, but never explicitly addressed. In line with the odysseys of Homer and ancient Ireland, the main character must return to his rightful land and people, accompanied by the constant resurrection of the ancestors: their names, their deeds, their land.

In these paintings, Iron Age and postmodernism meet in a multiplicity of signs and genres from today's vocabulary. In witness of our current situation, termed 'technoculture,' we are involved in the shaping of relationships between humans and technology, forming a vast and interconnected global network,



Figure 8. Warwick McLeod, *Murder* (2006), oil on tin.



Figure 9. Warwick McLeod, *Rider* (2008), oil on canvas.



Figure 10. Warwick McLeod, *Mervin and the Pig* (2011), oil on canvas.

with a majority of us immersed in this disembodied virtual reality. To me, engaging in McLeod's work at first feels like remembering a pre-digital era, where ancestor remembrance seems to be at odds with the emergent technoculture. McLeod is a consummate artist and journeying poet. Very quickly, I realise how easily I take for granted my tribal connections that hold me firmly to the land, to whichever part of the land that life takes us.

There is little surety we can really have for ourselves, except that of where you have come from. It is the resilience of the remembering of a vast lineage that ensures global kinship, sustainability, and respect, no matter how noisy or crowded our data-filled world. The implication of knowing your genealogy is that you have *mana* and therefore must act accordingly.



Figure 11. Warwick McLeod, *Burial* (2011), oil on canvas.

Kura Puke Te Ati Awa and Ngati Pakeha, is an artist and educator. He is a lecturer at the College of Creative Arts at Massey University in Wellington. Kura has worked with paint and glass with a focus on light transmission, colour and *matauranga Maori*. Since 2005, he has worked primarily with light-emitting diodes, fibre optics and software, with a strong conceptual content pertaining to Indigenous visual culture. Recent exhibitions include "Muramura," first shown in the Pataka Museum of Art and Culture in Porirua (2008) and subsequently at Puke Ariki in New Plymouth (2009) and Te Manawa in Palmerston North (2009-10).

Kura is actively involved in two research groups: 'WATT,' which recently hosted the Wellington Lux symposium, and SuRe Sustainability research network. Kura participates in the Nga Aho Network of Maori Design Professionals and Te Atinga: Contemporary Visual Arts network.

Warwick McLeod is a senior lecturer in the School of Design at Victoria University of Wellington. He read Medieval Studies at the University of Toronto, and Painting at Krakow Academy of Fine Art, at Massachusetts College of Art and at Yale University.

I 'Sgeulachd ghaise' translates as 'legends of heroes' or 'heroic tales'.

ICONOLOGY IN SECULAR TIMES: TRUE STORIES

Jane Davidson

iconology: noun. *The branch of art history that studies visual images and their symbolic meaning (especially in social or political terms).*

Webster's online dictionary, www.websters-dictionary-online.com/definition/iconology

As a practising artist and writer living within an incrementally pervasive graphic art environment – a commercially-driven media culture bombarding the world with ever-increasing reach – I am interested in some of the resonances around the intersections that occur between professional visual art and mainstream pop culture. In an era dominated by discourse on postcolonialism, post-feminism and even post-humanism, real-life issues around the creation of and responsibility for image-making prove complex, problematic and enduring.

This small collection of writings includes a story involving iconography versus ethical advertising; an illustration of the punctum within the photograph from a personal perspective; and a review of iconography from recent Anita De Soto paintings. Coincidentally, all three pieces deal with imagery of the female body and the relationship between image and viewer. With the spirit of Hannah Höch (s)nipping at my heels, this montage is hopefully intended to inform, stimulate, entertain.

THIS IS NOT A LOVE SONG/ HUNTSMAN MEAT-LOVE

Picture this: a newspaper ad in the centre of your mid-weekly, Dunedin-produced *D-Scene* magazine, issue 18, February 2009. A 13 x 21 cm colour reproduction, in a two-page advertising feature directly targeting the newly inducted Otago University student market over Orientation Week. An advertisement for a commercial dining establishment designed for family patronage. Featuring an oval-shaped photograph of a naked and very pale-skinned, lank-haired blonde woman posing limply against a garish yellow background, holding two larger-than-life, almost glaring red, raw beef-steaks in front of her own bare breasts.¹ She does not look very happy to me.

"HUNTSMAN STEAKHOUSE ..." it proclaims,

"Under new ownership

THE BEST STEAKS IN TOWN

Talk to your parents about our great pre-pay Steak a Week and Steak a Month Deal!!!

...COME IN AND STEAK YOUR CLAIM NOW!"

An image of a naked woman advertising meat? Well almost; a steakhouse (not a butchery, as I had first thought) advertising women? Women advertising wot? My brain attempted to unscramble the mixed messages (not to mention bad puns) inherent in this text-and-image storm in a d-cup! The text suggests parental guidance might be

necessary to facilitate decision-making at the same time as it invites gastronomical colonisation: Steak that claim!? What territories ARE we taking here? Whose fantasy is this, I wonder? Why aren't those students not insulted?

By now, feeling creeped and disturbed by this strange horror vision, it wasn't until several weeks later that I remembered to try and track the original image down. Strangely, the Huntsman advertisement seemed to have disappeared – it had only been seen once, and was rumoured to have been pulled out of circulation after public complaints were made. I locate the *D-Scene's* local office, and find a copy of the ad in the last issue at the bottom of the stack of the archive stand.

I talked to the staff and discovered that the Huntsman Steakhouse had in fact just that day lost an objection case that was won through an Advertising Standards Authority appeal instigated by individuals from the local community, effectively shutting the ad down. The warning story for the press turned up several weeks after the initial ad was published, in the Monday 25 May 2009 issue of the *Southland Times* and on Channel 3 news.² The results of the Advertising Standards Authority's investigation – *Complaint 09/106 vs Huntsman Steakhouse* – were also published in their entirety on the ASA website on 20 May 2009.³

The ASA Complaints Board is a media authority put in place to act as a mediating forum between advertising media and the general community. Their Code for People in Advertising is concerned with meeting standards of public acceptability. The areas the board covers and crosses include the ethics of offensiveness (decency) and human rights issues.

Objections to "offensive and socially unacceptable" standards in the Huntsman advertisement formed the basic dialogue for this case.⁴ The ASA ruled that "the image in the advertisement of a topless woman holding pieces of steak in front of her breasts used sexual appeal to draw attention to an unrelated product and degraded women in general, thereby breaching Basic Principle 5..."⁵ Taking into account "the product, audience, context and medium and in particular, the association of the image of the woman and meat products," the majority of the board "was of the view that the advertisement crossed the threshold to be likely to cause serious offence..."⁶ The ad was rejected on both a Code of Advertising to People principle and a Code of Ethics rule.

This story is a current example of both the potency and dilemma posed by an image, expressly in this case a photographic image of a naked female, here multiplied by the mass media for general delivery, and some of the reactions and mechanisms engaged in this debate. Deep issues of female representation (self-determinism), consumerism (marketing), and fetishism (desire) intersect at the crossroads of sexuality and advertising.

Manly meat or meaty mammaries? According to one objector, "It is clearly sexualizing meat." This complainant seems confused: If anything, I had thought the ad was mostly about over-objectifying and commercialising women's bodies.⁷ The steakhouse owner not only mistakes 'his' mammary glands for meat, he also tries to demonise and belittle his detractors by calling them "a small group of activists."⁸ Taking responsibility for image-mongering is a serious issue.

This cautionary tale ends with a sad curly tail. In the ASA transcript, the Huntsman Steakhouse business owner steadfastly upholds his version of the moral majority, never apologises and partially lays the responsibility at his business team's door. The *D-Scene* publisher apologises to the public, deflects some of the heat onto the general manager of the parent publishing company, Fairfax, and attempts to diffuse the issue by pointing in the direction of its own in-house advertising production team. Fairfax's general manager even publicly assures us that the ad has since been deleted from the archive files of *The Southland Times*!⁹

So even though justice is seen to be done, I wonder: "Not only is this ad degrading to women but it further entrenches the heterosexist notions circulating within society." This was the final quote from one objector.¹⁰ It refers to a view that is so entrenched that by putting two such basic images together (even *sans* text), the message is: women are meat (dead or live). I find it sad that Mr Huntsman and Co. find this attitude so acceptable and normalised.

Endnote: As a self-volunteering operator in this charade, the female restaurant floor manager was both co-designer of the concept behind the photograph and the consenting naked model in the ad.¹¹ I doubt she is aware of the multiple jeopardies of appearing in this way. Not only has this female employee put herself in a vulnerable position (professionally, let alone physically), she is also posing as 'every (white) woman,' a fairly crude concept to start with. There is an additional conflict of interests inherent in the situation for, although full consent is implied, the work context for this agent (without cover) is complex. Resolutely mute and nameless, her (personal) agency is implicit, but simultaneously seriously undermines her own intent.¹²

This restaurant manager has multiple agency: a) in her role as instigator of the enactment, as acting manager providing a service. She is also an active agent: b) as a worker on the floor; consenting to put her body forth as a metaphor for an item of product display that happens to be meat. The over-identification and consumption of woman in service, and woman-as-commodity (to be in turn re-consumed) is a multiple abuse of power. The conflicting statuses of her roles are unequal and, as perpetrator, she has in fact colluded in her own demise twice over:

In our time, crude metaphors linking women-flesh and meat-flesh are no longer socially acceptable or ethically responsible, as the active (image-consuming) community has indicated. I wonder if the model gets an apology? I wonder if she got to apologise to herself? I wonder if she's OK?

BROKEN BREAST/ ST AGATHA REVISITED

An introduction: My new client, a small elderly woman, wise, brown eyes owl-enlarged by large-lensed specs. In command of her own kitchen; inquisitress, giving me the third degree; friendly, feisty and large with humour:

*Where do you come from?
I live out of town ...
O do you know ...?*

I know a friend, a hospital work colleague of hers. Dunedin is so small ... gaining trust by proxy; I'm in with a grin ...

Quiet cul-de-sac, immaculate house, sunny kitchen. I am employed as domestic help; there is not much to do ... a retirement life circumscribed by diminishing returns. A raspy cough, the ubiquitous cigarette, a way to pass the time and muse on memories ...

This charge is active, alive, but compromised. A lifetime of smoking, a wrestle with lung-disease. Tally: one lung down, but alive to tell the tale. A spotless house; my task, with damp cloth, to keep control of invisible dust and fluff disastrous to a body with one lung. ... Not to mention, have another cigarette ...

Another round with Auntie Death, this time a breast, a near miss, an operation, a severance. Confidentiality and confession:

Come over here. Have a look at this ...

Before I know it, I'm seduced by the invitation, hooked, lined and sunk. Produced from inside a handy nearby kitchen-table pile of books, papers, cigarette packs, asthmatic nebuliser; she matter-of-factly hands me a glossy A4 full-colour photographic print. A near life-size breast, half-severed from the chest. A slash, a gash, brutal and mid-operation: full-bleed print. Resolutely honest, opened-up, exposing layers of fatty tissue, lobules and ducts. In all its gory glory, an unidentifiable scrambled necrotic mess. A matter-of fact, semi-detached, pragmatic throwaway observation:

Look, it looks like creamed corn ...

My horror. Too late. A split-second glance, I try to look away; too late. My hand tries to shield my eye. I can't undo what's already done. A document, an event, a moment: taken in. This image now becomes my memory too.

Why did you do that (to me)?

I want to ask. Her *modus operandi*, her status: an in-house request. For momento or a fascination with the macabre? A confession, an exhibition of intimacy? Selective; a privileged status, mine? Document or evidence? Proof of lives lived, a dice with death: survivorship. She tells me she wanted evidence, to show her friends and family. Proof, for herself as well, I think. Over-identification with personal trauma, I wonder? A picture of a scar would suffice surely. I want it stitched up, contained, a neat or ragged zip (she has that too):

You wicked thing, I say.

She laughs. She tells me she is without vanity. The doctors still give her a hard time about her smoky habit. She says she is concerned at the rate young ones are still taking it up, her teenaged granddaughter included. She tells me they give the younger family member a hard time whenever she lights up:

Woops, there goes a lung ... there goes another breast ...!

Speaking from experience ... she can.

Still impressed, metonymically, by this photographic event I cannot forget, I think about the intention, acquisition, the collection and presentation of this image. Not a family album picture. This is an unusually commissioned institutional document obtained for private consumption. Not a revelation (sharing) or revealing (intimacy) of one's glory days. More a lasting legacy, a war-wound. A trophy, perhaps. Momento of a battle fought and won.

Barthes, memory and disruption ...

ANITA DESOTO/ SKIRT REVERSED



Figure 1. Anita DeSoto, *War Widow* (2008), oil on canvas, 214 x 167 cm.

Figure 2. Anita DeSoto, *A Jesus of Your Own* (2008), oil on canvas, 103 x 76 cm.¹³

Anita DeSoto is an accomplished local Dunedin painter engaged in a personal iconography containing myth and metaphor, with an autobiographical narrative told through a post-feminist lens.

Many of her photographically detailed visions focus on strong figurative symbolism, with references to fifteenth- and sixteenth-century religious iconography as well as surrealist-influenced styles. Frequently employing self, family and friends in naked or semi-clothed poses, persona and body are used as a metaphor for larger themes in life. Forming semi-realistic tableaux rendered with an idealising 'smoothed-out' painterly trademark style, Anita's subjects frequently inhabit a space situated between cruelty and seduction, transcendence and sublimation.

Although I am not a photographic practitioner (as most of my 'community of practice' referents are), a recent painting of Anita's, *War Widow*, seen in the "Art in Law" group exhibition in the Law Faculty building, Otago University, August- September 2009, engaged me on several levels. As an example of a contemporary, feminist, and semi-nude portrait, also employing Dadaesque strategies of survival (for example, layers, inversions, and juxtapositions of both form and theme), an unresolvedness within an otherwise technically assured composition lets me know this is an invitation to query, that a dialogue is being opened ...

War Widow features a three-quarter-sized woman's half-clothed and half-exposed figure, suspended upside-down in space. The inverted pose alerts us to things being not what they seem. The woman hangs in mid-air; gloved arms outstretched in a reversed crucifixion pose, her naked body both revealed and concealed by a wedding dress falling downward.¹⁴ The skirt covers her torso and face, but reveals her naked lower half, her feet encircled, caught in a beribboned funerary wreath.

The entwined greenery, with the inverted skirt, refers to the burden of shame and grief (veiled) and speaks for the plight of the war-bride victims of the Anzac wars. Trapped, feet bound, caught in a dilemma not of her own making, this war widow represents the martyred plight that war brought to the womenfolk left behind. Without men – in some instances a whole generation of young men was annihilated – the young war bride is condemned to a solitary fate, thwarted in her prime.

Initially a kind of shocking icon, this upside-down travesty is painted in Anita's seductively beautiful 'airbrushed' style. I was interested in the feedback this image may have generated for the artist. Given that Anita frequently represents her self/own body in her paintings, I wondered if she had encountered any negative feedback on this image, especially as it overtly links symbols of national war iconography with a naked female form (complete with bridal accessories), transgressively combined with a religious pose – the placement and juxtaposition revealing a female-centric critique of the futility and tragedy of enforced patriotism.

In conversation with the artist, in front of the painting displayed in the hallway of the Law Faculty at Otago University, Anita revealed something surprising – contrary to expectation, this large and iconographically complex painting had survived without incurring a backlash. Instead, it was the smaller neighbouring painting of hers, *A Jesus of Your Own*, featuring a eurocentric version of Christ portrayed with naturalistic, long, slightly straggly hair; engaging in a direct and possibly suggestive gaze with the viewer; naked torso situated beneath a bell-jar; hands in supplication mode, pushing out against the opaque wall of confinement that had caused a reaction.

In fact, between the hanging of the work and the official public opening event, a formal complaint had been made to the dean of Law, about *A Jesus*, from a senior law student who appeared to be disturbed by the anti-religious sentiments perceived through the formal reading and interpretation of the title of the painting. The dean, to his credit, had initiated a meeting between the artist and the unhappy viewer:

A *Jesus of Your Own* refers to the Depeche Mode song "Personal Jesus" (the version covered by Johnny Cash). The lyrics include the lines:

...
Your own personal Jesus
Someone to hear your prayers
Someone who cares ...

I'll make you a believer
Take second best
Put me to the test ...

I will deliver
You know I'm a forgiver
Reach out and touch faith
Your own, personal, Jesus ... ¹⁵

It seems a home-grown version of Christ still proves too disquieting a dilemma for a twenty-first century audience – but maybe we are mature enough to accept the awkward inversion an alternative tale of the sanctity of war reveals.

These three tales look at some of the issues involved in the interpretation and functions of visual art. Private viewing versus public ownership – both aesthetic arenas arrive with questions unavoidably entangled with politics. As with these real-life samples, a study of the complex interpretations of the underlying iconography within its contextual setting can reveal the practice of art to be an ongoing cultural discussion.

Jane Davidson has had a varied art career including over 20 years of art training, practice, exhibition, and event and gallery work. In 2011 she completed a Postgraduate Diploma in Visual Arts at the Dunedin School of Art, these examples from her writing incorporate themes relevant to the ongoing issues of viewpoint and self-representation from a feminist perspective.

- 1 On a second look, the yellow foreground surrounds the model, providing an underlying uneasiness by suggesting a key-hole, 'peeping-tom' viewpoint.
- 2 www.3news.co.nz [accessed 23 May 2009]. Channel 3 is D-Scene's Fairfax-owned parent company.
- 3 www.asa.co.nz/display.php?ascb_number=09106.
- 4 Advertising Standards Authority pdf, "Decision: Complaint: 09/106" (2009), 4, accessed 25 May 2009.
- 5 Ibid., 5.
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 Deductible from ibid., 2.
- 8 Ibid., 3.
- 9 Ibid., 4.
- 10 Ibid., 2.
- 11 According to several statements made by the owner of the ad.
- 12 This woman's name, words or opinions were not identified, expressed or defended once in the entire saga.
- 13 Photographs reproduced with kind permission of Alan Dove.
- 14 Thanks to conversation with the artist on 10 September 2009, I have been alerted to a more detailed symbology of the upside-down posture: the inverted crucifixion as a symbol of martyrdom was traditionally represented by the Christian disciple and apostle Saint Peter; who was crucified upside-down at his own request (hence the Cross of St. Peter), as he did not feel worthy to die in the same way as Jesus.
- 15 "Personal Jesus" was originally a dance-floor electronic pop hit written by Depeche Mode, UK, 1990.

Paradigm An example: a model

Parataxis The juxtaposition of clauses in a sentence without the use of a conjunction.

Parapraxis

Paraphrase A restatement of a text, giving the meaning in another language. The writer does this to quote, clarify, or to indicate a contrasting idea. Paraphrasing is not the same as summarizing, which is a brief restatement of the main idea.

Parallel *parallel* (adjective) (of a road, railway, etc.) running in the same direction; (of lines, etc.) not meeting; (of two or more things) done at the same time; (of a computer system) consisting of a number of processors working together to perform a task.

Paralytic

Parad

Parasymbiont The symbiotic relationship that occurs between certain species of fungi and tobacco which are thought to synthesize auxin between a tobacco plant and a fungus.

Parabola

Parasitology

Paracosm

Parabiosis

Loss of a large block of interrelated resources of two organisms

Amnesia

Parablepsy

Paracusia

Paradise

Paramorph is not to be confused with the genus of homopodid flies and others (especially from other members of the species in which a sub-species is distinguished) and the genus of homopodid flies and others (especially from other members of the species in which a sub-species is distinguished).

Parasitic An animal or plant that lives in or on another (the host) from which it obtains nourishment. The host does not benefit and is often harmed by it.

Parabola

Paraphilia

Sexual arousal to objects

Paramour — an all-time word for beloved

Paralysis

Melanesia

Parachromatism color blindness

Paraplegic paralysis of both lower limbs after a fall from a height

Micronesia

Indonesia

Paranormal

PARANESIA

David Green

PARATEXT

Paraphasia

The 'Pacific' ocean was so named by Ferdinand Magellan around 1519 in one of a series of remarkable errors made during his ever-diminishing crew's relentless westward voyage round the earth by mistake via the southern oceans. He called this ocean 'peaceful' because, in an uncharacteristic spate of good luck, the weather systems he encountered while on it happened to be unusually friendly. He himself was far less agreeable. In the course of this hostile peregrination Magellan's life was cut short, having fallen prey to a cultural weakness for the ceaseless bullying of indigenous peoples. In the end, with very few crew having managed to survive the insane ordeal, it took years to firmly establish the fact that a circumnavigation had actually occurred at all.

Paralogism



"When your knowledge has been taken and ... because it's got a different name ... written at the bottom of it and that person 'owns' that knowledge, you know, someone who is not of your culture reads that and then teaches that back to you, I mean that's been my experience ... and it's really dislocating and quite confusing"

Bridget Inder

PARAGLOSS

paraphasia, n.

Pronunciation: Brit. /,parə'feiziə/ , /,parə'feizə/ , U.S. /,perə'feɪz(i)ə/ , /,perə'feiziə/

Etymology: < para- prefix1 + ancient Greek φάσις speech, utterance (< φάναι to say (see ...Med.

Disordered speech characterized by unintentional substitution of incorrect words or syllables; an instance of this.

paralogism, n.

Pronunciation: Brit. /pə'ralədʒɪz(ə)m/ , U.S. /pə'rælə,dʒɪz(ə)m/

Forms: 15-16 paralogisme, 16- paralogism.

Etymology: < Middle French, French *paralogisme* (1380) < post-classical Latin *paralogismus*

1. A piece of false or erroneous reasoning, esp. one which the reasoner is unconscious of or believes to be logical (as distinct from a sophism, which is intended to deceive); an illogical argument, a fallacy.

2. False or erroneous reasoning; illogicality.

parable, n.

Pronunciation: Brit. /'parəbl/ , U.S. /'perəb(ə)l/

Forms: ME pable , ME parabele, ME parabil, ME parabol, ME parabole, ME-15 parabyll...

Etymology: < Anglo-Norman and Old French *parable*...

1. An allegorical or metaphorical saying or narrative; an allegory, a fable, an apologue; a comparison, a similitude. Also: a proverb, a maxim; an enigmatic or mystical saying (now arch.).

parasitic, adj. and n.

Pronunciation: Brit. /,parə'sɪtɪk/ , U.S. /,perə'sɪdɪk/

Forms: 16 parasiticke, 16-17 parasitick, 16- parasitic.

Etymology: < classical Latin *parasiticus*...

A. adj.

Parable

Words can sometimes coalesce out of an experience.

This one emerged during the process of compiling interviews with six Maori and Pasifika artists on digital video.

Just as little souls hover above the meticulously distorted corpses on display in the 'animal attic' at the Otago Museum, a word coalesced in my mind's eye. Like a thoroughly modern Madam Blavatsky, I saw it emanate from the cold textual corpse of the mythic 'Polynesia' ...

In this time of postcolonial transmogrification, how is that cold composite useful or relevant? ...Where in the world did it come from?

In the video document, as a selection of artists speak about their lives and practices, it becomes evident that the content of their works and thoughts reflect an insoluble interweaving of *Tangata Whenua* and Coloniser:

Parasitic

I used to direct and film TV commercials. Now shiny stuff tastes saccharine, foamy and pink.

Parabiosis

In August of 2010 Peter Stupples and I travelled from Dunedin to Auckland to gather treasures from a number of Pasifika and Maori artists towards compiling a web-delivered course around the history of art in the Pacific. I had a camera and a tripod. Peter had a two-page list of questions starting with "Why are you an artist?"

I was quietly prepared for defenestration.

Parody

Peter was born in London and I was born in Detroit. Peter is as white as a lab rat, and if you came upon me wandering around the foot of Mt Sinai you would likely ask me directions.

So we took the 6.50 a.m. from Dunedin and headed north to go a-gathering, shy only a pith helmet and a Borsolino.

I am alien. I am unwitting orientalist.

Of, relating to, or characteristic of a parasite (parasite n. 1a); having the nature of a parasite, sycophantic; feeding on or exploiting others.

parasite, n.

Pronunciation: Brit. /'parəsəɪt/ , U.S. /'perə'saɪt/

Forms: 15 parasyte, 15 paresite, 15–16 parasit, 15–16 parrasite, 15– parasite.

Etymology: < classical Latin *parasītus* (also *parasīta*...

a. A person who lives at the expense of another, or of society in general; esp. (in early use) a person who obtains the hospitality or patronage of the wealthy or powerful by obsequiousness and flattery; (in later use, influenced by sense 2a) a person whose behaviour resembles that of a plant or animal parasite; a sponger. Occas. also in extended use (of things). Chiefly derogatory.

a. Biol. An organism that lives on, in, or with an organism of another species, obtaining food, shelter, or other benefit; (now) spec. one that obtains nutrients at the expense of the host organism, which it may directly or indirectly harm. The term parasite originally included (and is still sometimes used for) animals and plants that are now considered to be commensals, mutualists, epiphytes, or saprophytes, as well as birds or other animals that habitually steal food from, or use the nests of, other species.

parabiosis, n.

Pronunciation: Brit. /,parə'biːə'sɪs/ , U.S. /,perə'baɪəsəs/

Etymology: < para- prefix1 + -biosis comb. form. In sense 1 after French *parabiose*...

1. Entomol. and Ecol. An association between two species of ants in which they share the same nest without mingling.

2. Biol. The joining of a pair of animals, esp. as an experimental surgical procedure, usually so as to create a common vascular system; the state of being so joined.

parody, n.2

Pronunciation: Brit. /'parədi/ , U.S. /'perədi/

Forms: 16 *parode*, 16 *parodie*, 16- *parody*.

Etymology: < post-classical Latin *parodia*...

1.

a. A literary composition modelled on and imitating another work, esp. a composition in which the characteristic style and themes of a particular author or genre are satirized by being applied to inappropriate or unlikely subjects, or are otherwise exaggerated for comic effect. In later use extended to similar imitations in other artistic fields, as music, painting, film, etc..

Amnesia

In Aotearoa I am a spectator. Having arrived here 22 years ago at the advanced age of 31 (or perhaps because at the age of nine I fell from a galloping horse onto my head), I will undoubtedly speak my last word with the brogue of the Virus as disseminated by such virions as Paris Hilton and Donald Trump.

Parasymbiosis



"I see it like this, like my mother is Samoa and my stepmother is New Zealand and I love them both."

Shigeyuki Kihara

Though I have been a citizen of Aotearoa (and the Queen's loyal subject) since 1994, I acknowledge and accept that I have no ticket to the national discourse.

First things first ...

Parallax



"... but you can see where it comes from because we're colonized, so we have to deal with the different levels of thinking and the different levels of perception and the different frameworks ... that's what I'm really learning about ... is language framing who you are? ... but it's not who you are, it's how you are being framed ..."

Tracey Tawhaio

amnesia, n.

Pronunciation: /æm'ni:siə/ /-ziə/

Etymology: modern Latin, < Greek ἀμνησία forgetfulness.
Pathol.

Loss of memory.

parasymbiosis, n.

Pronunciation: Brit. /,parəsɪmbai'əʊsɪs/ , /
,parəsɪmbi'əʊsɪs/ , U.S. /',pərə,sɪmbai'əʊsəs/ , /
'pərə,sɪmbi'əʊsəs/

Etymology: < para- prefix1 + symbiosis n., after German
Parasymbiose (W. Zopf 1897, in *Ber. der Deutsch. Bot. Ges.* 15
90).(Show Less)
Biol.

Originally: a relationship in which a lichen supports another lichen or fungal species growing in close association with it, without apparent disadvantage. Later more widely: a commensal or other association short of full mutualistic symbiosis.

parallax, n.

Pronunciation: Brit. /'parələks/ , U.S. /'pərə,læks/

Forms: 15 paralex, 15-16 paralax, 15- parallax, 16 paralaxe, 16 parallaxe.

Etymology: Partly < Middle French, French parallaxe...
l.

a. Difference or change in the apparent position or direction of an object as seen from two different points; (Astron.) such a difference or change in the position of a celestial object as seen from different points on the earth's surface or from opposite points in the earth's orbit around the sun. Also: (half of) the angular amount of such a difference or change; (Astron.) the angle subtended at a celestial object by the radius of the earth's orbit, giving a measure of its distance from the earth; any of various similar measures of distance calculated by methods incorporating the motion of the sun relative to the local region of the galaxy, the proper motion of the observed body, the motions of a cluster of bodies having similar distances and speeds, etc.

b. fig. and in figurative contexts. Distortion; the fact of seeing wrongly or in a distorted way.

† 2. A change, an alteration. Obs. rare—I.

3. Photogr. A defect in a photographic image caused by differences in the positions of parts of the camera; spec. incorrect framing of an image due to the differing positions of the viewfinder and the lens.



"If you'd asked somebody 20 years ago ... whether we would be even be discussing ... whether New Zealand was a Pacific Nation, or saw itself as a Pacific Nation, I mean ... they would have looked at you as if you were off your rocker ... maybe 20 years ago ... but it's the reality now... and certainly where I live out in South Auckland, where you've got a huge population under 20 of Polynesian descent and mixed heritage ... it's massive... it's a reality and it's going to continue to be a reality."

Giles Peterson

Parapraxis

Words can slip out by mistake on purpose. Words can be blunt instruments. Words can be sharp and laser-like. Words can be mushroom clouds ...

Parataxis

'Polynesia' is a dull thud of a Greek epithet.

Paraphora

'Poly' is license not to have to consider. It is the thin mental lasso you rope round a maelstrom. It is the concrete you barrow into rip, or bust boxing when there's complicated terrain and you can't be bothered quantifying the details. It is 'terra incognita' minus the admission.

'Nesia' is the plural form of Nesos, it means 'islands.'

Parablepsis

Together they form a threadbare colonial artifact in a White Settlers Museum languishing under dusty glass in an old oak cabinet right next to stinky 'Terra Nullius.'

Parability

The word/concept 'Polynesia' was synthesised in

parapraxis, n.

Pronunciation: Brit. /,parə'praksɪs/ , U.S. /,perə'præksəs/

Inflections: Plural *parapraxes*.

Etymology: < para- prefix1 + praxis n. Compare earlier parapraxia n.

A minor error in speech or action, (supposedly) representing the fulfilment of an unconscious wish; a Freudian slip.

parataxis, n.

Pronunciation: Brit. /,parə'taksɪs/ , U.S. /,perə'tæksəs/

Etymology: < ancient Greek *παράταξις* a placing side by side < *παρά*-para- prefix1 + *τάξις*...*Grammar*.

The placing of propositions or clauses one after another, without indicating by connecting words the relation (of coordination or subordination) between them, as in Tell me, how are you?.

parablepsis, n.

Pronunciation: Brit. /,parə'blepsɪs/ , U.S. /,perə'blepsəs/

Etymology: < Hellenistic Greek *παράβλεψις* looking askance at < ancient Greek *παρά*-... (Show More)

Thesaurus »

Categories »

† I. Med. False or abnormal vision. Obs. rare—0.

† parability, n.

Forms: 15 parabilitie, 16 parability.

Etymology: < parable adj. + -ity suffix; compare -bility suffix.

Obs.

The quality of being easily procured or prepared.

paraphilia, n.

Pronunciation: Brit. /,parə'filiə/ , U.S. /,perə'fɪljə/ , /,perə'filiə/

Etymology: < para- prefix1 + -philia comb. form.

Psychol. and Psychiatry.

Sexual desires regarded as perverted or irregular; spec. attraction to unusual or abnormal sexual objects or practices; an instance of this.

1756 by Charles de Brosses, a French writer with praeternatural visions of strip-mining antipodean El Dorados. He was very keen to foment European 'exploration' of the earth's nether region, inventing a term to encompass every island in the southern 'Pacific' Ocean – even though he himself never ventured further south than Italy.

(It is not surprising that Charles De Brosses is equally famous for distilling the spiritual out of the word 'fetishism,' discarding it, and leaving behind a rich modern signifier as useful to Freud as it was Marx.)

In an 1831 lecture to the Geographical Society of Paris, Jules Dumont d'Urville improvised a Greek etymological flip-flop game to draft off a more aspirational 'Polynesia' from other islands of the 'Pacific,' thus segregating the largely Black neighborhood ('Melanesia:' Melas = black) and the mainly Filipino 'hood comprised of thousands of little islands ('Micronesia:' Micro = small) from the dusky maiden.

(*Science, Empire and the European Exploration of the Pacific*, ed Tony Ballantyne (Aldershot, Hants, and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004). De Brosses, pp. 262-3; d'Urville, pp. 308-14.)

Paraphilia

'Polynesia' is the perfect appellation to procure and fetishise nearly one sixth of the planet while remaining deaf to its voice; to systematically destroy or appropriate its indigenous biota (while adding a select few of your own to do a clean-up operation on any survivors).

Paratonnerre

Later when you feel like giving something back, it is a word you can nuke the out of in order to prove Empirically (if not scientifically) that God is dead.

Paracosm

It is the nineteenth-century utopian promotions and London-drafted land allotments parceling tidal swamps and cliff faces into neat rectilinear plots. It is the antipodean buildings architecturally doomed to face the South Pole.

Here the words of the artists in concert with 'para' words take over the argument:

Paratonnerre, n.

Pa`ra`ton`nerre"\\, n. [F., fr. parer to parry + tonnerre thunderbolt.] A conductor of lightning; a lightning rod.

paracosm, n.

A prolonged fantasy world invented by children; can have a definite geography and language and history.

paradox, n. and adj.

Pronunciation: Brit. /'parədɒks/, U.S. /'pərəˌdaks/
Forms: 15-16 paradoxe, 15- paradox.

Etymology: < Middle French, French *paradoxe* (1495 as noun; 1372-4 in plural *paradoxes*... (Show More)

A. n.

†1.

a. A statement or tenet contrary to received opinion or belief, esp. one that is difficult to believe. Obs. Sometimes used with unfavourable connotation, as being discordant with what is held to be established truth, and hence absurd or fantastic; sometimes with favourable connotation, as a correction of a common error.

b. Rhetoric. A figure of speech consisting of a conclusion or apodosis contrary to what the audience has been led to expect. Obs. rare.

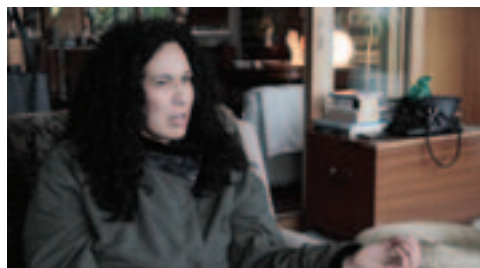
a. An apparently absurd or self-contradictory statement or proposition, or a strongly counter-intuitive one, which investigation, analysis, or explanation may nevertheless prove to be well-founded or true. Twin paradox.

b. A proposition or statement that is (taken to be) actually self-contradictory, absurd, or intrinsically unreasonable. Some scholars have denied statements to be paradoxes when they can be proved after all to be true, or have called them 'apparent paradoxes' when they are paradoxes in sense.

c. Logic. More fully logical paradox. An argument, based on (apparently) acceptable premises and using (apparently) valid reasoning, which leads to a conclusion that is against sense, logically unacceptable, or self-contradictory; the conclusion of such an argument. Freq. with a descriptive or eponymous name. Grelling's, prediction, Russell's paradox: see the first element. paradox of the liar:

4. A composition in prose or verse expounding a paradox. Now rare.

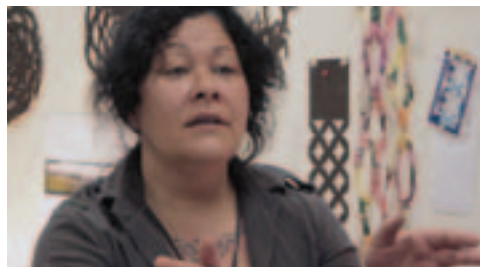
Paradox



"The Maori cultural aspects in my life are ... my Marae, my grandparents ... any language courses I have had to take ... in a specifically Maori way ... 'cause we are living in a European society now and when you talk about tradition, it's talked about as something in the past ... it's gone ... and when you are creating, everything is in the present ... and so it's beautiful when you are in the present to have this sort of pool of ... missing aspects in your life to draw in now and have it now, and not be separated from it and for it not to be gone, and for tradition to be existing now ..."

Tracey Tawhaio

Parallel



"There is a different aesthetic between Maori and Polynesian art practitioners in New Zealand and Pakeha or European that live here in New Zealand. But there's also a difference between Pacific and Maori artists who practice in New Zealand and ones who are born and raised in Australia"

Lonnie Hutchinson

5. A person or thing whose life or behaviour is characterized by paradox; a paradoxical phenomenon or occurrence, spec. one that exhibits some contradiction or conflict with preconceived notions of what is reasonable or possible. hydrostatic, Olbers' paradox: see the first element.

parallel, n., adj., and adv.

Pronunciation: Brit. /'parəleɪ/ , U.S. /'perəˌleɪ/

Forms: 15 paraleles , 15 paralizes , 15 parellell, 15 poralel , 15-16 paralell...

Etymology: < Middle French *parallèle*...

A. n.

1. Physical uses.

1.

a. Each of a set of imaginary circles of constant latitude on the earth's surface, or corresponding lines drawn on a map or globe; also with reference to other bodies. Also more fully parallel of latitude.

2. Freq. in pl. More generally: a (usually straight) line that runs side by side with and equidistant from another. Also in extended use, applied to things running side by side in this way, or pointing in the same direction.

3. Mil. In a siege: a trench (usually one of three) that lies alongside and equidistant to the face of the fortification under siege, providing protection and a means of communication for the besieging forces. Also fig. Now chiefly hist.

†4. The state of being parallel; parallel position. Obs.

5. Printing. A pair of parallel vertical lines (||) used as a reference mark for footnotes, etc.

7. a. Close correspondence or analogy; a point of comparison or similarity between two people or things. Hence also: an act of drawing such correspondence or analogy; the placing of things side by side mentally or descriptively so as to show their similarity. Freq. to draw a parallel .

b. A person who or thing which corresponds to another in such a way; that which is equivalent in essential features, function, role, etc.;

Parachromatism, n.

Partial color blindness.

paraculis, n.

Pronunciation: Brit. /,parə'kuːsɪs/ , U.S. /,perə'kʊsɪs/

Forms: 16 18 paracousis, 17- paraculis.

Etymology: < Hellenistic Greek παράκουσις defect of

Parachromatism



"I am an artist of Samoan and Pakeha heritage ... My artwork is about where those two cultures meet ... about that in-between space ... the belonging to both but not quite belonging to either...."

Bridget Inder



"... the Patersons are actually a line of priests and on my Maori side I'm from a line of tohunga too ... so it's a ... [smiles] 'Spooky Magic'...."

Reuben Paterson



"You know, I'm an artist ... and ... and my ... ancestry ... my descent ... is Maori/Samoan ... and English ... and a bit of Scottish ... as well, and I'm sure they come through a bit as well in my work."

Lonnie Hutchinson

hearing (Galen) < ancient Greek *παρά...* *Med.*

Disturbance or impairment of hearing; spec. †(a) (in early use) tinnitus (obs.); (b) (more fully paracusis of Willis) an apparent improvement in the ability to hear conversation in the presence of loud background noise, thought to be characteristic of certain types of conductive hearing loss, esp. otosclerosis.

paramnesia, n.

Pronunciation: Brit. /ˌpærəmˈniːziəl/ , /ˌpærəmˈniːzəl/ , U.S. /ˌpærəmˈniːʒ(i)əl/ , /ˌpærəmˈniːʒiəl/

Inflections: Plural *paramnesiae*, *paramnesias*.

Etymology: < para- prefix1 + amnesia n. Compare French *paramnesie* (J. Lordat 1843, in ... Chiefly *Psychol.*

Memory that is unreal, illusory, or distorted; spec. the phenomenon of *déjà vu*; an instance of this. Also: loss of memory for the meaning of words (disused rare—0).

paraenesis | parenesis, n.

Pronunciation: Brit. /pəˈreɪnɪsɪs/ , /pəˈriːnɪsɪs/ , U.S. /pəˈreɪnəsəs/ , /pəˈriːnəsəs/

Forms: 15- paraenesis, 16 paranaesis, 17- parenesis.

Etymology: < post-classical Latin *paraenesis*... (Show More) Chiefly *Rhetoric*.

Exhortation, advice, counsel; a text or speech composed in order to give exhortation or advice.

paragram, n.

Pronunciation: Brit. /ˈpærəɡrəm/ , U.S. /ˈpɛrəˌɡræm/

Etymology: < Hellenistic Greek *παράγραμμα* play on words, pun (as a Greek word in Cicero ...

A play on words in which a letter or group of letters in a word is altered so as to produce or suggest another word.

para, n.3

Pronunciation: Brit. /ˈpərə/ , U.S. /ˈpərə/ , N.Z. /ˈpɹɹə/

Forms: 18 *pura* , 18- *para*.

Etymology: < Maori *para*.

N.Z.

A large evergreen tropical fern, *Marattia fraxinea* (family *Marattiaceae*); (also) its swollen rhizome, formerly used by Maoris as food. Also called *horseshoe fern*, *king fern*.

parawai, n.

Pronunciation: Brit. /ˈpærəwɪ/ , U.S. /ˈpɛrəˌwaɪ/ , N.Z. /ˈpɹɹəwɪ/ , /ˈpɹɹəwɪ/

Paracusis



"I think the system in place in New Zealand today doesn't allow a platform for diverse voices to be heard. It all has to do with money and the management of resources that contribute to the alienation or exclusion of ... of ... of voices of community ... that are at times powerless ... and ignored."

Shigeyuki Kihara

Paramnesia



I've been trying to learn Maori for years ... but to learn your native tongue as your second language ... at an older age ... is like ... it's ... it's ... it's like doing a body twist that's impossible to do ... it's really difficult ... and ... I feel almost like ... things have grown in a certain way in me that I can't even ... achieve that ... it's depressing ... but I am happy that I have my art to express that part of myself, and I've got poetry that ... can ... deliver my thoughts better than just writing in a normal structured English sentence. ... Poetry is my Maori language in English."

Tracey Tawhaio

Etymology: < Maori *parawai*.

N.Z.

A traditional Maori flax cloak or mat of superior quality. Cf. korowai n., kaitaka n.

paradise, n.

Pronunciation: Brit. /'parədais/ , U.S. /'perə,dais/ , /'perə,daiz/

Forms: ... (Show More)

Etymology: In a forms < post-classical Latin paradisus, paradysus... (Show More)

1. Theological uses.

The abode of Adam and Eve before the Fall in the biblical account of the Creation; the Garden of Eden.

Note: With the exception of 'parachromatism' and 'paracosm,' all of the above definitions come from the *Oxford English Dictionary*, 3rd ed., June 2005; online version, March 2011.

Most of the definitions in the Paracloud graphic are taken from Dictionary.com.



"... when you are learning about your own culture in your school, which would be a little odd anyway ... you are being taught by people who are not of your culture and could ... I've heard stories of someone ... correcting pronunciation ... it's just ... well, surprise! You've got Polynesian students dropping out."

Bridget Inder

Paranaesis

It is time to pull off the old nappy 'cause it was saturated with when they pinned it on.

Here is a boom to absorb the churning iridescence of 'Pacific' colonisation past and present:

Paragram



It's New! New! New! Custom-built to describe the postcolonial paradox formerly framed as 'Polynesia.'

(I have no right to name.)

'Paranesia' is more than a word; it's a word cloud.

Sure it's Greek. But it's Maori too:

Para



Photograph by Phil Bendle

The *para* or *tawhiti para* (also called the king fern) was an important food source for pre-European Maori:

Ptisana salicina is a species of fern native to New Zealand and the South Pacific. Large and robust with a distinctive tropical appearance, it has fronds up to 5 metres tall that arise from a starchy base that was a traditional food for the Maori. ... King fern is in serious decline, seriously threatened throughout its range by feral and domestic cattle, wild pigs and goats. Large plants no longer exist except in areas where there has been rigorous control of animals.

<http://www.terrain.net.nz/friends-of-te-henui-group/nz-ferns/king-fern.html> [accessed 25 May 2011].

Here's the amazing part: The *sori* of the *para* look like *waka tiwai* – one leaf contains a whole fleet of them travelling in tight formation!



Photograph by Phil Bendle



Photograph by Phil Bendle

Parawhai

Is this the mesh onto which these *motu* are woven?

'Paranesia' is post-coconut: It's the fruit salad served up in the coconut.

'Paranesia' is post-kumara: It's the whole Sunday Roast.

Paradise

We inhabit a hyperobject* least well described by a chauvinistic eighteenth-century word that signaled bad news from its conception. By perpetuating the 'Polynesia' tag, not only do we passively participate in forsaking what was, we actively negate what has become.

Artists work at the coalface of the zeitgeist. They contribute most valuably as our cultural critics, whose life experience runs on a continuum with their arts practices. It makes perfect sense that their voices and their works have agency in both identifying and reflecting this vibrant cultural landscape.

Can we be located where we actually are?

For me, 'Paranesia' simply emerges from a word cloud. On reflection, I have to admit it is very nearly as bad as the incumbent.

It goes without saying that this complex consanguinity holds the inalienable right to name itself.

So I mark this wall in semiotic protest and await the Messignifier.

*Hyperobject is a term created by Tim Morton, author of *Ecology without Nature*, (2007).

Note: This publication references the 70-minute digital video document called *Paranesia* created by the author with Peter Stupples.

David Green is a lecturer in Electronic Arts in the Dunedin School of Art and a collaborative filmmaker.

THE FACE IN THE MOON

Peter Belton

INTRODUCTION

There are images which cause us to do a double take and look again because shapes and spaces in their construction suggest something 'other.' The ambiguities of representation arising – an 'in-betweenness' of meaning and metaphor – invite conversations between the artist and viewers. These can provoke questions about procedures and their effects, about motivations and contexts, and we might look further for explanation of these associations. This essay looks at the effects of visual ambiguities which take anthropomorphic and zoomorphic form and, in doing so, it takes a phenomenological position familiar to readers of Merleau-Ponty and Maldiney.

My project started with the discovery of a reproduction of a watercolour study by William Hodges for his *Maori Before a Waterfall, Dusky Sound* (1773) – a reproduction with faded colour values, yet enough tonal contrast to make a rather startling effect. In this study, Hodges had made a careful drawing of a Maori warrior standing on a rock, holding a curiously large double-ended taiaha. The subject was presented as a noble savage, seen in a classical contraposto pose. What was much more evident in this study, compared with the four oil painting studies that followed, is the curiously anthropomorphic treatment of rocks, cliff face and forest in the composition.

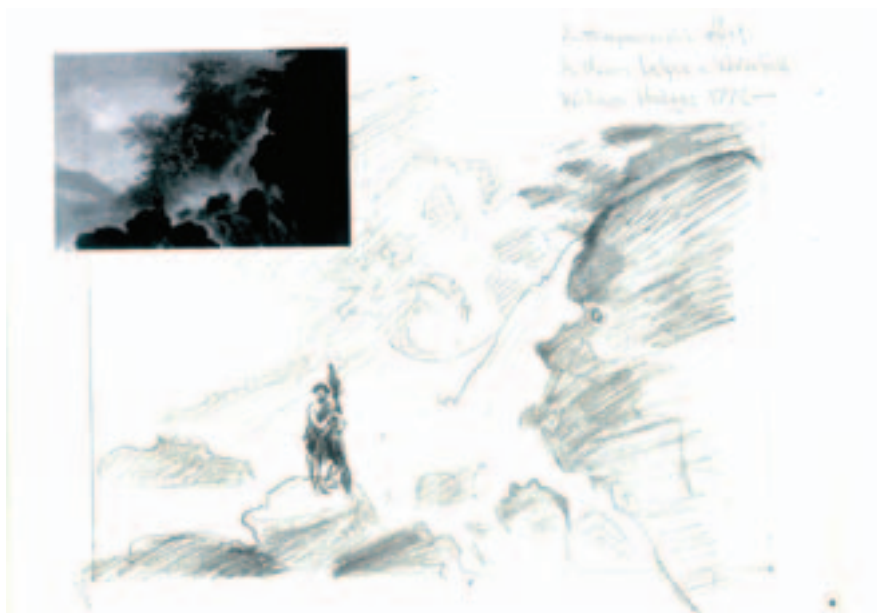


Figure 1. Peter Belton, analytical sketch showing anthropomorphic effects. From William Hodges, *Maori Before a Waterfall, Dusky Sound* (1773). Artist's 2010 Journal (1).

My first illustration is of my analytical sketch rendering from the Hodges study. There is suggestion of silhouettes in the shadow play in the photograph from which the sketch was generated. Not only did skiagraphic (shadow) theory of the origin of painting find credence amongst the artists and scholars of Hodges's world, but the shadow-tracing technique was being practiced on a vast scale to meet the demand for the new fad for silhouette portraiture. With this in mind, the reduction of information to representative silhouettes is an act of sympathetic interpretation, and the point from which the viewer may begin to make connections to a suggested 'other.' Indeed, when we are cognizant of the process of 'filing' images, we say that we see; we interpret and, in so doing, we construct understanding from the perspective of what we think we know.

If, then, the lens of our seeing is a construct, representations come to us through those filters of culture affected by time, the significance of place and events, and the production of beliefs, fears and desires. If representation is a conscious act which entails selection and the consequent privileging of some ways of seeing over others, then this process entails procedures about how we depict; it appears to be purposeful. From this position, we might ask the question as to how artists proceed. Are effects in imagery, which might be described variously as automatisms or intuitions, really produced without decision? If the artist recognises happenstance associations of image with an idea, the decision may be made to leave such effects when they are seen to be an effective means to representation.

On the subject of skiagraphics, Alberti quoted the opinion of the Roman Quintilian that the earliest painters simply traced the outlines of shadows cast by the light of the sun. It seems to me that Michaelangelo's development of the foreshortened image and its distortion on flat and curved plane surfaces in the Sistine Chapel was suggested by his practice of using torchlight at close range – the result of his need to work on scaffolding. He would have seen how the proximity of torch- or candle-light to his own person would cast shadows on the wall which registered optical distortions which might, at various times, stretch, compress and bend his shadow shapes into expressive and suggestive silhouettes. It is easy to see how a suggestion of depth in a limb projected toward the viewer; for example, is achieved by enlarging a foot or hand as it comes 'forward' and reducing its relative size when it is depicted as being 'behind.' And, the effect of such decisions, premised on a discovery arising from shadow play is, in this instance, expressive; an enhanced sense of the drama of an action which reaches out to the viewer.

Michelangelo's contemporary, Leonardo Da Vinci, in his *Treatise on Painting*, exhorted students (and here I paraphrase) to look at walls splashed with a number of stains of various mixed colours. This is when you may find there some resemblances to a number of landscapes, adorned in various ways with mountains, rivers, trees, plains, valleys and hills. Moreover, you can see various battles, and figures in rapid action – and that these happenstance stains invite being read into and elaborated.¹



Figure 2. Peter Belton, *Dotard* (2010), zoomorphic sketch from a photograph of an ancient beech tree. From S Schama, *Landscape and Memory* (London: Fontana, 1996), 531. Artist's 2010 Journal (1).



Figure 3. Peter Belton, *Iron in the Forest* (2010), coloured drawing, mixed oil media on board, 100 x 120 cm.

AN EXPLANATION OF MY OWN PRACTICE

Iron in the Forest is one of five painted drawings produced for the “Seaward Bush” exhibition, shown in the Eastern Southland Art Gallery, Gore, in September 2011. This exhibition is premised on Paul Star’s doctoral thesis on the history of the loss of indigenous forest on the plains of Southland and represents the work of seven artists. My other titles signal a similar imaging: *Spectres*, *The Wind Remembers the Trees*, *Habitué*s and *Iron over the Forest*. My idea with *Iron in the Forest* is to suggest the incongruous and invasive presence of iron amongst the wood of the forest, signaling a culture/nature dichotomy. The ambiguity of its appearance and my ambivalence over the idea of an ironic reflection on and response to the subject is given shape through the representation of the iron objects as allusions to medieval armour (helmets) and, at the same time, recognisably common objects from the colonists’ daily existence: a ventilator cone, a coal bucket and a spherical weight on top of a squashed kettle.

One of the images for the wood came from a photograph in Simon Schama’s *Landscape and Memory*, and the other images are drawn from my own sketches, photographs and silhouette impressions of trees in the remnant of Seaward Bush, the Orokonui Forest near Dunedin and other sites. My other images in this exhibition include four carbonised planks presented in a row, each with the image of a spectral white beech tree trunk and each with a gaping dark maw in which the ghost of a kaumatua figure is just discernable. For this figure I used Rodin’s iconic

statue of Balzac, in various rotations, as my model. Another image is of the spiraling energy of wind and blown sand seen, in the absence of trees, to configure a tree-shape through a moment of remembering. In each of these compositions there is a hint of animistic reference and, perhaps, in the case of the illustrated example, an allusion to totemism inasmuch as inanimate things have been suggested as dynamic agents of change.

In *The Problem of Form in the Figurative Arts*, Adolf von Hildebrandt challenged the ideals of scientific naturalism as an explanation for the phenomenon of art by appeal to the psychology of perception.² It is from reading Hildebrandt, a sculptor who celebrated physical practice as much as he was a theoriser; that I can make a link to the phenomenological positioning of Merleau-Ponty and Maldiney. What does this mean for us and our search for a connection between the happenstance of *looking at* and the act of seeing?

The whole idea of imitation of nature, of idealisation or that of abstraction rests upon the assumption that what comes first are sense impressions that are subsequently elaborated, distorted and generalised. We have what psychologists call an ego which tests reality and shapes impulses from the id. And so we can remain in control while we half surrender to counterfeit coins, to symbols and substitutes. Our twin nature, poised between animality and rationality, finds expression in that twin world of symbolism with its willing suspension of disbelief. One example can suffice. It can be argued that we respond with particular readiness to certain configurations of biological significance for our animal survival. The recognition of the human face, on this argument, is not wholly learned. It is based on some kind of inborn disposition. Whenever anything remotely face-like enters our field of vision we are alerted and respond. We know the feeling when fever or fatigue has loosened the trigger of our reactions and a pattern on the wallpaper suddenly appears to look and leer at us ...³

The human face would seem to be the archetypal model for demonstrating schemata. The first comprehensible drawings by children are almost always schematic faces. No matter how basic, the wobbly circle with its two dots and a slash is instantly recognised as a signifier which tells us 'face.' The child's schema is not, however, the product of a deliberate process of abstraction, of a tendency to select and simplify. Rather, it signals an exploration through approximation, a loose association with an idea which translates into a sign for something remembered.

The illustration reproduced below is, however, an example of an artist working an idea from a schema into the particulars of a caricature. We might ask, is it the drawing of a pear which reminds us of King Louis Phillipe, or is it the image of King Louis Phillipe which reminds us of a pear? In New Zealand it is not uncommon to hear an impractical intellectual type described as an 'egghead.' In nineteenth-century France one pejorative term for an idiot was 'pear'; perhaps the closest English equivalent is 'fathead.' Through the illustration, the artist shows a progressive metamorphosis from royal physiognomy to fruit – as, indeed, today we also describe somebody who is silly as a 'fruit.' These images first appeared in the satirical paper *Le Charivari* in 1832 and earned the publisher, Charles Philipon, a spell in prison for libel.



Figure 4. Honoré Daumier; *Les Poirés* (1832), caricature of King Louis-Phillipe of France. Illustration, *Le Charivari*, ed. Charles Philipon. From EH Gombrich, *Art and Illusion* (London: Phaidon, 1960), 291.

DISCUSSION

In Ronald Bogue's study, *Deleuze on Music, Painting, and the Arts*, he says:

The 'face-landscape' forms part of a visual 'gridding' that Deleuze labels 'faciality'. ... The human face Deleuze sees as an important constituent of every social configuration of language practices and power relations, and [just] as composers deterritorialize refrains, so painters deterritorialize the facialized 'grids' whereby bodies and landscapes are structured by the gaze. In every society, discursive and nondiscursive power relations are organized according to a 'regime of signs,' within which the face functions as an active visual component. A general 'visibility,' or mode of organizing the visible, emerges from each regime of signs, extending from the face to bodies and finally to the world at large. ... The task of painters is to disrupt the patterns of faciality and disengage the forces that are regulated and controlled by the prevailing regime of signs. When painters succeed in this task, they capture and render visible the invisible metaphoric forces that play through faces, bodies, and landscapes, thereby inducing transverse becomings that allow the emergence of something new.⁴

To summarise key points made by Bogue on Deleuze. Elsewhere he says that the face is a 'component of a discursive practice,' meaning that it can be found, often when unlooked for, in the fields of tactile and visual encounter. It is essentially present in discourse about the experienced world, yet seems irreducible to language. 'The face' is a gestural, expressive, visual surface that accompanies verbal enunciations and interacts with them in ways that, in the search for order and identity, reinforce power relations. In our everyday speech, we invoke such terms as 'facet,' 'interface' and figures of speech such as 'on the face of things.' In addition, we can turn the relationship between signified and signifier in another direction when we see the face as a topographic domain with swellings/hills, eyes/pools and ponds, nostrils/lairs/caves, mouths/maws/caldrons, ears/cirques/quarries. "Recognition of a face is a component of discursive practice which leads us to widen this apprehension by noting the existence of similarly gestural, expressive visual appearances of the body that resonate with the facial surface and create an echo effect with [the] face's nondiscursive encodings."⁵

Insofar as the visual can be recognised as having any potential for reflecting rational order; its truth becomes subsumed in the process of textualisation, of being codified. Its truth is realised in the 'event' of its fall, or dissembling, a product of the accident of seeing; what Bogue calls a 'sliding into error.' Bogue claims that the 'event' opens up space and time in such a way that the order of past, present and future is disengaged. The space of the event is also disturbed by the organised dimensionality of (Merleau-Ponty's model of) the phenomenologically constructed 'lived body' and, in its stead, discloses a dimension of 'disorganised visibility,' what Lyotard calls 'figural space.' Merleau-Ponty's analysis of the 'lived body's' initial experience of space also suggests a realm below consciousness, but sees this space as the theatre for recognition and the organisation of the co-ordinates of sensory information.⁶

In his essay *The Theory of Rhythm and its Relation to Form* (1971), Henri Maldiney identifies a connection between sense experience and aesthetic outcomes which are phenomenologically premised.⁷ Here sense experience and movement are inseparable, as both are joined in the temporal moment of the 'event.' The outcome is more than just seeing; it becomes making visible the invisible, so that the image's essential function is not to imitate but to appear. Or, to paraphrase Paul Klee: the function of art is not to show the visible but to render visible. And, it follows through the unfolding of patterns which may present as analogies that we are brought to recognise a dynamic realisation of forms as signifiers.

Bogue tells us that the aesthetic has its origin in motivation from a moment of dislocation, in an unexpected moment when we are challenged by a world in which presumed temporal and spatial markers do not seem to cohere. This is what Cézanne called 'a moment of germination' in the 'iridescent chaos.'⁸ At this point it is appropriate to recognise Bogue's notion of the diagram as a visual synthesis of thought; a system of represented sensations and impressions, which works through the presentation of an analogy. We understand that this is not a reconstruction, but rather an approximation to 'that' – an appearance signifying 'that.' The instruments used to present visual analogies include

spatial co-ordinates, planes, bodies and colour: These in turn, depending on how depiction is fashioned, produce effects which can be seen as signifiers which, in turn, given temporal location in culture(s), can be construed as signs. To this end, we can on occasion recognise zoomorphic and anthropomorphic ambiguities as signifiers of and for cognitive repositioning.

In *What is Philosophy?* (1996) Deleuze and Guattari argue that becoming, or coming into being, is the act through which something or someone ceaselessly becomes 'other,' and that this alterity can be read as 'expression' and its signals understood when we unpack the process of its coming into being.⁹ It is well known that when a physically or emotionally exhausted body enters that liminal zone on the edge of sleep, the mind goes into a freefall. When we enter the liminal zone of impressions, we are freed from the constraints of logical associations and structured place. It is here we encounter phantasms and the invisible is rendered visible.

There is possibly some physiological explanation, too, which can be found in the symmetry of our own physical bodies which must necessarily function through reciprocation and balance. Extended through time, this need for symmetry manifests in the phenomenon of cycles. On a macrocosmic scale we recognise, with regard to all living phenomena, genesis, maturation, reproduction and death as states of being. Perhaps the human tendency to be drawn to find anthropomorphic and zoomorphic spectres, or to impose facialised pattern, is a product of these off-guard moments of apprehension? And is it also, as I suspect in the case of Hodges, an unconscious reversion to the security of a habit learned in the training of mind and hand?

On his return to London from New Zealand, William Hodges worked in his studio on at least three paintings of *Maori Before a Waterfall*. These were generated from his primary source material of studies of Maori and from landscape field notes. When it came to making the landscape settings for the several paintings of *Maori Before a Waterfall*, Hodges appears to have ad-libbed from these notes and slipped into an error of habit.

Indeed we might ask, were those slips of anthropomorphism, those discernible bits of body and face, a conditioned and unconscious response we might recognise in the return to the safe habit of 'correct drawing,' instilled from studying antique sculpture at the Royal Academy? We might ask to what extent does the event, in this case the conditioning of the artist through his training, load preconceived furniture into his perceptions. Any subsequent conception, development and representation of form and content will, in all probability, hold close the ghosts of perception and memory. And for us, the readers, the liminal furniture of dreams may reveal not just the *how* but also fashion the *what* of that which we think we see.

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- 1 EH Gombrich, *Art and Illusion* (London: Phaidon, 1960), 159.
- 2 Adolf von Hildebrandt, *The Problem of Form in the Figurative Arts* (1893), cited in Gombrich, *Art and Illusion*, 13.
- 3 Ibid., 87.
- 4 R Bogue, *Deleuze on Music, Painting, and the Arts* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 5.
- 5 Ibid., 92-5.
- 6 Ibid., 113.
- 7 H Maldiney, *The Theory of Rhythm and Form* (Lyon, 1968). Cf. Bogue, *Deleuze on Music, Painting, and the Arts*, 113.
- 8 Bogue, *Deleuze on Music, Painting, and the Arts*, 135.
- 9 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?* (New York: Colombia University Press, 1996). Cf. Bogue, *Deleuze on Music, Painting, and the Arts*, 116-21.

PAINTING ON A HUNCH: IMAGE-MAKING INFORMED BY INTUITION

Hannah Joynt

ABSTRACT

In this report I will describe my painting process and discuss the role of intuition and memory. During the making of a painting I don't always know what I am doing or why. I am in a sense 'painting on a hunch.' In a bid to articulate and make sense of the origins of my recent body of work I decided to undertake a self-review. I discovered that I use my intuition as a tool to select fragments of memory, both conscious and unconscious, which I then paint into visual narratives. (I use the term intuition like instinct, to describe knowing without 'knowing.') The reflective process brought to light things on the edge of my awareness.

INTRODUCTION



Figure 1. Hannah Joynt, *Landscape with Flyers* (2010), oil on canvas, 180 x 76 cm.

In July 2010 I had an exhibition at the Centre of Contemporary Art (COCA) in Christchurch. "Never Trust Your Cape" was a series of eight oil paintings. The content depicted childhood-like adventures and the phenomena of flying dreams. In *Landscape With Flyers* (2010) and *Big River Crossing* (2010), perspective and panoramic formatting were used to create a sense of endless open space and to include the viewer in the work. In both of these large diptychs, the figures I painted embodied the freedom and spontaneity that naturally comes with being a kid; I wanted to provoke the viewer to remember this feeling. Six smaller works were more like windows looking into snippets of fantasy-type memories. Individual characters have a surreal awareness about themselves, evident in their expressions. Though they are clearly children, they seem to possess qualities that only age bestows.



Figure 2. Hannah Joynt, *Big River Crossing* (2010), oil on canvas, 180 x 76 cm.

My mildly naïve aesthetic reflects my content, as does the very act of painting. Lighthearted tragedy seems to bleed from the works, which echo my inner child and fragments of memory that speak of loss. I paint nostalgically. Painting for me is playful and feels young.

There was a time when I could fly, a time when there was no sense of danger or real understanding of gravity. No self-doubt. The part of my brain that exercised caution had not yet developed. I could go anywhere I could imagine and with enough thought and the right equipment I could even fly. But, at some point I realized the truth; I couldn't fly and I wasn't ever going to. There was a great sadness about this knowing. Reality seemed somewhat dull. I wanted to hold onto my colourful fantasy but I could no longer pretend that I didn't know what the truth was.¹

Although sadly it is impossible to fly unassisted, most of us have a perception of what it would feel like. Dream flight is ageless and notably a favorite dream experience. Memories of my childhood are ones in which imagination and lived experience were enmeshed. "Never Trust Your Cape" was about both celebrating and grieving the loss of the perceptions of a young mind.

Rather than directly illustrating my past times, I constructed paintings from fragments of found images that expressed my left-over feelings. It was during the making that the themes emerged and upon reflection that I saw myself mirrored in the works. The whole process is hinged on intuition, a tool I repeatedly use. Intuition is how I get away from conscious reasoning, to become more in tune with deeper, hidden aspects of my personal narrative. My painting process also serves as a method of enquiry into things such as perception, consciousness and memory.



Figure 3. Hannah Joynt, *Flying with my Favourite Table Cloth* (2010), oil on board, 58 x 58 cm.

Figure 4. Hannah Joynt, *The Flying Dream* (2010), oil on board, 58 x 58 cm.



THE PROCESS

My process is a repetitive cycle that doesn't largely change. There are four main phases: collecting images, painting, exhibition and reflection. These phases don't always occur in a linear fashion – in fact they are often happening all at the same time, though the exhibition is a sure marker of the cycle ending. I will discuss each phase of the cycle as it relates to the main discussion about intuition.

The collection phase has three components: the act of collecting, the collection itself, and selecting the images to be used for painting. I collect images obsessively, regardless of time and place, photocopying, photographing, downloading, borrowing and sometimes stealing. If I see a picture that grabs my attention I have to have it. At the time, I have little or no insight into what I am collecting. Insight comes later. I don't know what I am looking for but when I see it I know that I have found it.

The small 'caught-my-eye' moment represents something far greater than it appears. I see many images every day, most of which are not that stimulating, but occasionally one is. In a split second, the image that 'caught my eye' has triggered a rapid, unconscious response² – and for a moment I feel somehow displaced, caught out, exposed. This feeling is usually accompanied by some short internal dialogue such as "Ooh" or "Hmm?," or "now that's interesting" Like a baby or an animal, this reaction is instinctive and I have no control over it. "It operates – at least at first – entirely below the surface of consciousness. It sends messages through weirdly indirect channels ... It's a system in which our brain reaches conclusions without immediately telling us that its reaching conclusions."³ Knowing but not knowing; working in this way is most enjoyable – maybe one of the key ingredients of creativity.

To insist on the priority of cognitive reason over other forms of knowing and feeling is to make human reason the ultimate measure of things and thus to leave out a vast range of human experience ... this then is why subjectivity is in crisis today, and why many of us seem to have lost touch with any deep centre of self.⁴

I have been collecting images in this way for approximately eight years. Over this time I have accumulated hundreds if not thousands of images. Like some sort of torturous initiation, the fresh images coming along spend a mandatory month or two pinned to the studio wall before getting filed into scrapbooks. I want to study them and remember them so they become ingrained in my memory, ready for recall at any moment. Like my set of paintbrushes my image collection is another tool. It shows me where I have been and, due to the continual arrival of new imagery, where I am going. In one sense I will never get to where I am going because the destination is always changing. And in another I am already there, because the thing that drives the process is constant: intuition.

I flirt with the edges of consciousness, trying to reveal my own hidden mysteries. It is a somewhat vulnerable way to work. Unsure about what may be uncovered, I put my subjectivity on display. (I question the drive behind this somewhat exhibitionist need, though my suspicion is that it comes from a deep out-of-awareness need to be seen.) Even though I deliberately welcome a lack of control in the studio, it has made me question; if I am not thinking about what I am doing, then am I always looking for the same thing? On the surface it appears not – though from a Freudian perspective, perhaps I am always seeking an underlying sameness. Unconscious pathological ways of thinking and behaving due to childhood experiences reverberate in the adult mind.⁵



Figure 5. Hannah Joynt, *Never Trust Your Cape* (2010), oil on board, 58 x 58 cm.

The idea that we have conscious control is a bit of a hoax. It is generally underestimated the power unconscious influences have.⁶ We tend to think of our brains as processing information from the environment in a dualistic way: I am here and the world is there, as separate entities. But the vast majority of the input in our heads comes from what is already inside the brain.⁷ Our experience is informed by perception and memories (both conscious and unconscious) and perception and memories are built out of experiences. "What we see resonates in the memory of what we have seen; new experience always percolates through the old, leaving a hint of its flavour as it passes. We live, in this sense, in a 'remembered present.'"⁸ This brings clarity to the déjà vu-like⁹ feeling in my painting that I may be simply telling the same old stories again and again, but with different characters, colours and formats.

In a way, we are in a continuous state of fiction – reality is a construction of consciousness. Cozolino (2010) writes about the illusions of consciousness through which we construct reality in his book *The Neuroscience of Psychotherapy*. He outlines three misconceptions of consciousness: the first is that consciousness comes together in one place in the brain.¹⁰ Of the four main areas of the brain (brainstem, diencephalon, limbic system and neocortex), it is in the neocortex that most of the components consciousness appears to consist of are located, such as personality, goal-setting, decision-making, concrete and abstract thought, organising and self-monitoring, as well as all aspects of cognitive memory – facts, figures, faces, names, dates, songs, phone numbers, etc.¹¹ It is likely that 'consciousness' is not actually housed anywhere, but is the result of the coming together of many parts and functions in the brain.¹² And the idea that specific parts of the brain are singularly responsible for particular functions is very controversial. The current understanding of the human brain is still largely primitive.¹³

The second misconception is that we are able to be in the present moment. In fact we are always half a second behind. It takes 50 milliseconds for the brain to react to a stimulus (be it internal or external), but it takes 500



Figure 6. Hannah Joynt, *The Great Flying Fox In the Sky* (2010), oil on canvas, 90 x 76 cm.

milliseconds to become consciously aware of it'.¹⁴ In the delay, the stimulus is being processed in ways that we are completely unaware of. The information is processed according to a neurological system of pathways, which is automatic and unconscious. Therefore, the third misconception is that we have conscious control over our thoughts and behaviours.¹⁵

As I seek to gain insight into the origins of these 'intuitive' paintings, it is of importance to be aware that consciousness itself is full of illusions. But also that having consciousness does not necessarily mean that one has awareness. In the intuitive moment, realistically it is not 'the image caught my eye,' but rather my 'I' caught an image. My abandonment of conscious cognitive ways of making is rather justified.

The final part to the collection phase is choosing which images I will actually paint – taking the most potent images, the ones that irritate me the most, the ones that resonate the most. The whole first phase of the cycle is very much a process of distilling, through my intuition filter; which sets the boundaries. It gives a flavour to the body of work and helps to locate it.

The painting phase comes next. I generally paint the entire body of work at the same time. With all the paintings on the go, I can better see the threads of narrative and recurring themes and how they inform each other visually. It is difficult to anticipate how the paintings will turn out, as they don't start to reveal themselves until they are near completion. Delayed gratification can be both rewarding and frustrating.



Figure 7. Hannah Joynt, *Prayer* (2010), oil on board, 58 x 58 cm.



Figure 8. Hannah Joynt, *The Girl and The Man are Both Anticipating the Same Thing* (2010), oil on board, 58 x 58 cm.

Beginning with a blank canvas or board I will paint the entire surface with one colour using a large brush. I first look for composition and form within the colour field and imagine my selected images in it, locating them amongst the brushstrokes. Then, following my insight, I map the figures and forms in with a thin layer of paint. Layering, revealing, refining, removing, the figures come to life over the duration of the making. My relationship is different with each work. Some works I struggle with until the very end, and others seem to just paint themselves.

The less I try to control the painting process the better it turns out. I generally focus more on aesthetic qualities rather than the implications or symbolic meaning of the content. Simply looking, painting, and intuitively making decisions, I endeavor to set up for graphic surprise. Graphic surprise is when something happens in the painting that was unintended and unexpected. This phenomenon, according to Schön (1983), is the first stage of reflection.

In their book *Learning Through Storytelling in Higher Education: Using Reflection and Experience to Improve Learning*, McDrury and Alterio write about the three key stages of reflection. The first stage of reflection arises when there is a difference between what is known and what is happening¹⁶ or, as Schön (1991) describes it, the experience of surprise or a feeling of inner discomfort. For me this occurs as moments of frustration, when I know that something is not quite how I want it to be, and as graphic surprise. "We often cannot say what it is that we know. When we try to describe it we find ourselves at a loss, or we produce descriptions that are obviously inappropriate."¹⁷

Sometimes when I'm feeling really frustrated with a painting I will sit in front of it, with one of my scrapbooks, and flick through until I find the thing that is missing. It's like I am looking for friends of the painting. Looking for a match, an ingredient. The intuitive way of working permeates through all areas.

About three quarters of the way through the painting phase, I begin to transition into the second stage of reflection: processes of critical analysis of feeling and knowledge.¹⁸ It is about this time that I am able to see the connections between what I have painted and the significance it has for the links between my past experiences and recent or present experiences. The back-story unfolds, thus confirming my hypothesis that, through the intuitive process, I reveal not only my stories that have been (or are starting to become) lost, but also bringing to light my subjectivity. This work is totally autobiographical. When I leave the studio, I set up the paintings so when I walk in the door the next visit they are the first things I see. Catching myself by surprise, to cultivate reflective practice.

As I make the decision that the work is complete, write my artist statement, as I pick up my paintings from the framers, as I wrap the works carefully with newsprint and bubblewrap, as I make the five-hour trip to the gallery in Christchurch with my car loaded with paintings, reflection is inevitable. I paint autobiographically, with intense attachment, and these steps are a ritualistic part of letting go, and moving to the third stage of reflection: the emergence of a new perspective on the situation.¹⁹

The notion of reflecting on one's life as an ongoing autobiographical narrative? ...while personal meanings constantly shift because they are contingent on context and oneself and others.²⁰

I get to the end of the cycle, having been through self-reflection and reflection on my practice. Back in my now empty studio, sitting on my couch, I think, "Gee, what should I do? Well, I could always paint something." Then I start to look through my scrapbooks.

Hannah Joynt moved to Dunedin in 2003 to enrol for a Bachelor of Fine Arts in the Dunedin School of Art. Since graduating in 2006, she has been teaching drawing and painting part-time in the School of Design at Otago Polytechnic. Hannah has had two solo shows at COCA Gallery in Christchurch ("An Alien Snuck into Class and No One Noticed," 2009, and "Never Trust Your Cape," 2010) and two solo shows at the Temple Gallery in Dunedin ("Grieving Over A Dead Fish; Secret Men's Business," 2011, and "A Small Act or Something," 2011). In addition, she regularly enters competitions and has contributed to numerous group shows.

1 Hannah Joynt, *Never Trust Your Cape*, artist statement (Christchurch: COCA Gallery, 2010).

2 Malcolm Gladwell, *Blink: The Power of Thinking without Thinking* (London: Penguin, 2005), 10-17.

3 Ibid., 10.

4 Veronica Brady, "The Sway of Language and its Furtherings: The Question of Subjectivity," *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Art, 'Subjectivity'*, 1:1 (2000), 7-14.

5 Marcia Cavell, *Becoming a Subject: Reflections in Philosophy and Psychoanalysis* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 10.

6 Shelley E Taylor and Jonathon D Brown, "Illusion and Well-Being: A Social Psychological Perspective on Mental Health," *Psychological Bulletin*, 103 (1988), quoted in Louis Cozolino, *The Neuroscience of Psychotherapy*, 2nd ed. (New York: Norton, 2010), 135.

7 James J Gibson, *The Senses Considered as Perceptual Systems* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1966), quoted in Cozolino, *The Neuroscience of Psychotherapy*, 135.

- 8 Adam Zeman, *Consciousness: A User's Guide* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), quoted in Cavell, *Becoming a Subject*, 10.
- 9 Déjà vu occurs when a fragment of a memory is activated by a present situation but cannot be remembered explicitly, so what is happening for the first time seems to be happening 'again.' Daniel Schacter; *Searching for Memory: The Brain, the Mind, and the Past* (New York: Basic Books, 1996), quoted in Cavell, *Becoming a Subject*, 14.
- 10 An idea first articulated by Descartes as the Cartesian Theatre. See *The Cartesian Theater*, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cartesian_theater; accessed 1 Nov 2010.
- 11 David Ziegler; *Traumatic Experience and the Brain* (Phoenix, Az.: Acacia Publishing, 2002), 12-14.
- 12 Cozolino, *The Neuroscience of Psychotherapy*, 135.
- 13 Ziegler; *Traumatic Experience*, 14.
- 14 Jaak Panksepp, *Affective Neuroscience: The Foundations of Human and Animal Emotions* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), quoted in Cozolino, *The Neuroscience of Psychotherapy*, 135.
- 15 JA Bargh and TL Chartrand, "The Chameleon Effect: The Perception-Behavior Link and Social Interaction," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 76 (1999), 893-910, quoted in Cozolino, *The Neuroscience of Psychotherapy*, 135.
- 16 Janice McDrury and Maxine Alterio, *Learning Through Storytelling in Higher Education: Using Reflection and Experience to Improve Learning* (London: Kogan Page, 2003), 24.
- 17 Donald A Schön, *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action* (New York: Basic Books, 1983), 49.
- 18 McDrury and Alterio, *Learning through Storytelling*, 24.
- 19 Ibid.
- 20 Ibid.

MEMORY MATTERS

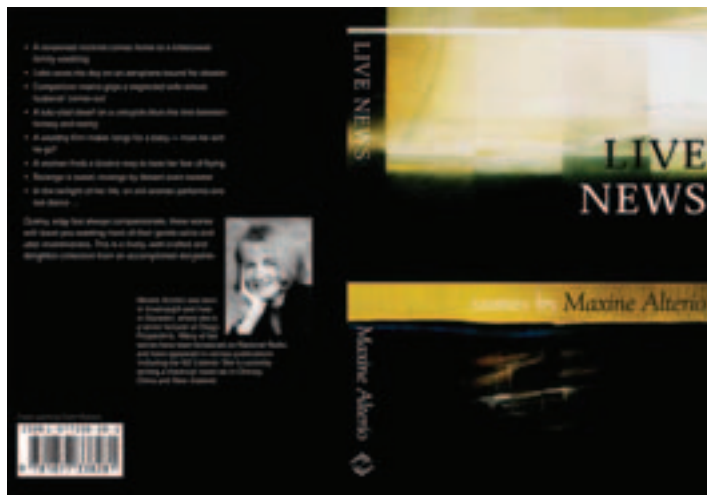
Maxine Alterio

As long as we are alive, our memories remain wonderfully volatile. In their mercurial mirror, we see ourselves.
Jonah Lehrer; *Proust Was a Neuroscientist* (Melbourne: Text, 2007), 95.

Throughout childhood, I kept a notebook for 'Ideas.' My jottings contained fantasies about flying unencumbered by machinery – I poked feathers into my jumpers, ate birdseed and studied the habits of birds prior to launching myself off the henhouse roof – through to writing circus scripts that stipulated I had to ride the much-coveted unicycle belonging to the boy next door:

I was also a voracious reader, and I harboured a secret. I wanted to be a writer. However, I had no idea how to go about it. Writers were not visible in Invercargill where I grew up. Readers were though. My parents filled our home with books. At bedtime, my father often deviated from an original story to make it more exciting, scary and memorable.

Imaginative play and creative storytelling were part of my life. So were physical adventures, many of which took place in Arrowtown, where, along with my siblings and cousins, I was free to roam the hills, river and gorge as long as I was home by dark. I particularly relished the occasions we congregated in the remnants of the abandoned Chinese Settlement. Our most daring activities took place in Ah Lum's dilapidated and deserted store, where we locked ourselves in the gold room and made up murderous goldfield tales.



My fascination with Chinese sojourners deepened when at the age of twelve I attended a New Year's party with my parents. While eavesdropping on an adult conversation, I overheard one man tell another, "Well, when they laid out that Chinese miner, they discovered he was a she." This tantalising fragment was the genesis for my first novel, *Ribbons of Grace* (Penguin NZ, 2007), which I wrote 40 years later.

Prior to publishing this novel, I put together a short story collection, *Live News and Other Stories* (Steele Roberts, 2005) and co-authored an academic text entitled *Learning through Storytelling in Higher Education: Using Reflection and Experience to Improve Learning* (RoutledgeFalmer UK and US, 2003). Working with story, in fiction and non-fiction contexts, strengthened my understanding of what it means to develop an empathic understanding of human behaviour. Invariably I strive to make meaning of experiences from other people's perspectives as well as my own and to learn from the reflective process because, as Welty¹ notes, "Each of us is moving, changing with respect to others. As we discover, we remember; remembering, we discover ..."

Ideas for my fictional work also come from multiple sources: experience, observation, imagination, eavesdropping, dreams, historical events and snippets from newspapers and magazines. For example, after reading an article on embalming in the *Otago Daily Times*, I wrote a short story called "Stories Bodies Tell," which Radio New Zealand National broadcast in two parts. I cannot always explain why particular topics, themes or ideas capture my attention but I have learned to trust the creative process, to go with what 'feels right.'



Early in my writing career, an astute reviewer observed that I wrote about "love, loss and letting go, and sensual power,"² which, on reflection, is accurate, although I was not aware of it at the time. I suspect three states of consciousness are at work when I write – the conscious (what I already know and want to explore), the subconscious (what I hook into without fully understanding), and the unconscious (aspects that may or may not become overt after the work is finished). The degree to which I am aware of these states depends on the project.

For instance, I did not fully appreciate, at the onset of writing my new novel, *Lives We Leave Behind* (for publication, Penguin NZ, 2012), that family connections had in part guided me to this work. Initially I believed the sole driver was a story a friend told me of a troopship that was torpedoed by a German U-boat on 23 October 1915, in the Aegean Sea, resulting in the loss of ten New Zealand nurses. However, while writing a preface – a bridging narrative between my novel (creative component) and my thesis (critical component) for a PhD in creative writing³ – I was able to 'see' that several ancestors who had links either to nursing or to the First World War had been nudging me along too.

Mostly I write because an inner 'unexplained' force compels me to make sense of experience, history, ideas and human behaviour through story. A day without writing, reading or storytelling feels to me as though it has not been well lived.

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1 Eudora Welty, *One Writer's Beginnings* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), 102.

2 Mark Peters, *Dominion Post*, 5 February 2005.

3 I am undertaking this PhD at the International Institute of Modern Letters, Victoria University of Wellington.

STORIES THROUGH MENUS

Rachel Byars

Menus play an integral part in the design and communication of food and beverage businesses. Menus have been described as being similar to a programme at a play, indicating what the customer can expect from the restaurant.¹ Thus the menu is a reflection of the image, design, cuisine and characteristics of the surroundings, providing a friendly conversation point and tool for connoisseurship regarding the setting and personality of the restaurant.

Menus may be considered works of art, artifacts which tell stories through a variety of narrative forms or can be left to the imagination of the viewer. These stories may be retold through words, images or improvisation, and are often embellished to educate, enlighten, amuse and engage the audience. The author has used the theme of storytelling through menus in her teaching practice, sharing her experiences and information on restaurants, gastronomy, 'servicescapes' and customer experience. It is not just the story, but how the story is told that matters, and the emotional connection that is made through the menu. Experiences must be created so that there is an intimate connection between the menu, restaurant and the customer, so that the latter will want to return.

For many customers, the dining experience involves seeking an experience of indulgence and pleasure, and this aim will be assisted through the design of a menu. The menu may be viewed as the starting point for a performance, a visual artform which is later depicted by the culinary dish itself and is experienced directly by the customer. More often than not, the menu tells a story about the restaurant, the chef de patron and the food itself.

Sundbo and Hagedorn-Rasmussen's definition of a customer experience shows that the customer must be actively involved in some way. According to them, a customer experience is a mental journey that leaves the diner with memories of having been part of something special, having learned something, or simply had fun.² The dining experience is viewed as a social and cultural act in a context that reflects the consumer's aspirations and lifestyle, and one where people look for the fulfillment of certain desires and the expectation that certain moods will be created.³

The menu is integral to the servicescape of the restaurant – one among a multitude of factors that might entice the customer to enter and participate in the dining experience.⁴ The menu provides a snapshot of the dining experience and serves as the first impression for any customer. The imagery, atmosphere and sense of prestige of the restaurant are conveyed subtly in the design of the menu, which is not only used to define the product range of the food and beverage operation, but provides an opportunity for the promotion and sale of items on the menu.

The menu acts as a 'lens' on the dining experience that is about to be enjoyed. The creation of the menu is inspired by the chief 'artist' at the venue – the chef, who may be viewed as the gifted producer of an 'original work,' or as an 'artisan,' crafting handmade products that will later be consumed. The inspiration that chefs are able to draw from their craft is paramount, ensuring the authenticity of the food produced; the challenge is in the way it is promoted to the customer.

Thus a menu can be used to persuade and tempt customers, and each one tells its own story through a range of visual elements such as the artistry employed, the culinary language used, accolades and awards listed, through to simple descriptions of the delicacies and delights on offer. Each menu will tell a story that can be unraveled by the customer, whether through interpretation, imagery or direct enquiry.

Within my own teaching practice, I have had the opportunity to share my work and life experiences with students in a number of different ways, especially through storytelling. This method offers a means of recounting and expressing experiences, emotions and ideas in different forms and is advocated as a teaching tool by reflective practitioners and researchers.⁵ It is not just the story, but also how the story is told that matters. Menus may be used as catalysts to elicit a range of stories and are an ideal method of ensuring student participation.



Figure 1. The Le Gavroche logo.

Stories provide an opportunity for collaborative discussion and reflection within a group of learners. While perusing an eatery's menus, taking in its style, students may consider such topics as menu engineering and design, but it is the stories behind them that often intrigue them most. Three menus, along with their illustrations, have been chosen for discussion from restaurants in the United States and the United Kingdom. The stories elicited from each menu are the author's personal interpretations, and of course may differ from person to person.

STORY ONE – LE GAVROCHE, LONDON

The first story I want to present relates to the highly respected and influential two-star Michelin restaurant Le Gavroche, situated in the heart of Mayfair in London. It is viewed as a culinary institution in the United Kingdom. The restaurant is named after the fictional character Gavroche, from Victor Hugo's novel *Les Misérables*. The image is of a scruffy boy or 'gamin' (a young homeless boy who roams the streets), also aptly referred to as an 'urchin.' This image of the gamin is poles apart from the elegance and style espoused in the surroundings of Le Gavroche. Nevertheless, it illustrates the humble beginnings of a celebrated restaurant which has influenced the British culinary scene since 1967.

The menu cover depicts the totality of the experience of Le Gavroche, foregrounding the chef de patron, Michel Roux Jnr, with his father, Albert Roux, founder of the restaurant along with his brother Michel Roux, peeping out of the tableau in the background. A feast of food and wine surrounds the portrait of Michel Roux Jnr, set above the golden lettering of the words 'Le Gavroche.'

The story told on the menu cover is one of pedigree and heritage; it conveys the strong impression that the restaurant is an iconic gastronomic institution, one which has produced many prominent chefs. For the appreciation of art lovers, the restaurant walls are adorned with original works by Picasso, Dali and Chagall, which aspire to feed the mind as effectively as the artists within the kitchen feed the appetite. Table settings are crisp, some remarkable sculptures provide an effective talking point for guests, while the flawless service is designed to impress.



Figure 2. Le Gavroche Menu Cover.

STORY TWO – A VOCE, NEW YORK



Figure 3. A Voce Menu.

The design scheme of this New York Italian restaurant reflects the clean lines and minimalistic approach of Italian designers Armani, Ferrari and Lamborghini. The menu is likewise simple and minimalistic in design, and matches the layout and sophisticated urban setting of the restaurant. Inspiration for the culinary fare is drawn from the regions of Italy, along with the freshest ingredients that are in season. Rustic undertones ensure that the simple pleasures of Italian cooking blend into the sophisticated modern ambience of A Voce. A sense of authenticity is suggested by some of the menu descriptions: 'country style,' 'My Grandmother's,' and 'Paul's.' This culinary language gives the diner an impression of homeliness and familiarity, a feeling which aims to both gratify and delight.

The chef encourages the use of words like 'yummy,' asserting that customers should feel good about their dining experience. He would rather have a diner say, "Wow, that was delicious," than "Wow, that was interesting."

STORY THREE – SPARKS STEAK HOUSE, NEW YORK

Sparks Steak House has a worldwide reputation for its steak and wine list. Opened by brothers Pat and Mike Cetta in 1966 as Sparks Pub, 11 years later they changed the name to Sparks Steak House. The restaurant achieves a delicate balance between tradition and big-city chic, although many regulars prefer the term 'old school.'

The interior is spacious yet cosy, elegant but informal. The term 'classic' comes to mind when considering the wood-panelled interior; the grand carpets under foot and the chandeliers overhead. From the moment you are greeted, you know that dining here is going to be a memorable experience.

The oversized menu, the extensive wine list and the 'mobster' ambience – referring to the assassination in 1985 of mafia boss Paul Castellano on the orders of John Gotti as he entered the premises – all make Sparks a restaurant to remember. A copy of the menu itself costs US\$80, along with authentic splashes of meat juices and wine!

The sharing of stories like these allows students to gain from their culinary experiences and also provides the opportunity for them to bring their menus into the classroom and share the interesting stories that lie behind the printed words. This exercise cements the connections that have been created through the imagery of the menu and the overall dining experience



Figure 4. Sparks Steak House Main Menu.

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- 1 LH Kotschevar and MR Escoffier, *Management by Menu* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1994).
- 2 J Sundbo and P Hagedorn-Rasmussen, "The Backstaging of Experience Production," in *Creating Experience in the Experience Economy*, eds J Sundbo and P Darmer (Cheltenham: Elgar, 2008).
- 3 I Gustafsson, A Ostrom, J Johansson and L Mossberg, "The Five Aspects Meal Model: A Tool for Developing Meal Services in Restaurants," *Journal of Foodservice*, 17 (2006), 84-93.
- 4 MJ Bitner, "Servicescapes: The Impact of Physical Surroundings on Customers and Employees," *Journal of Marketing*, 56 (1992), 51-71.
- 5 J McDrury and MG Alterio, *Learning through Storytelling in Higher Education: Using Reflection and Experience to Improve Learning* (London: Kogan Page/RoutledgeFalmer, 2003).



Figure 5. Sparks Steak House Dessert Menu.

WINDWELLS: A SUBTERRANEAN HISTORY OF WATER IN QUEENSLAND

Lily Hibberd

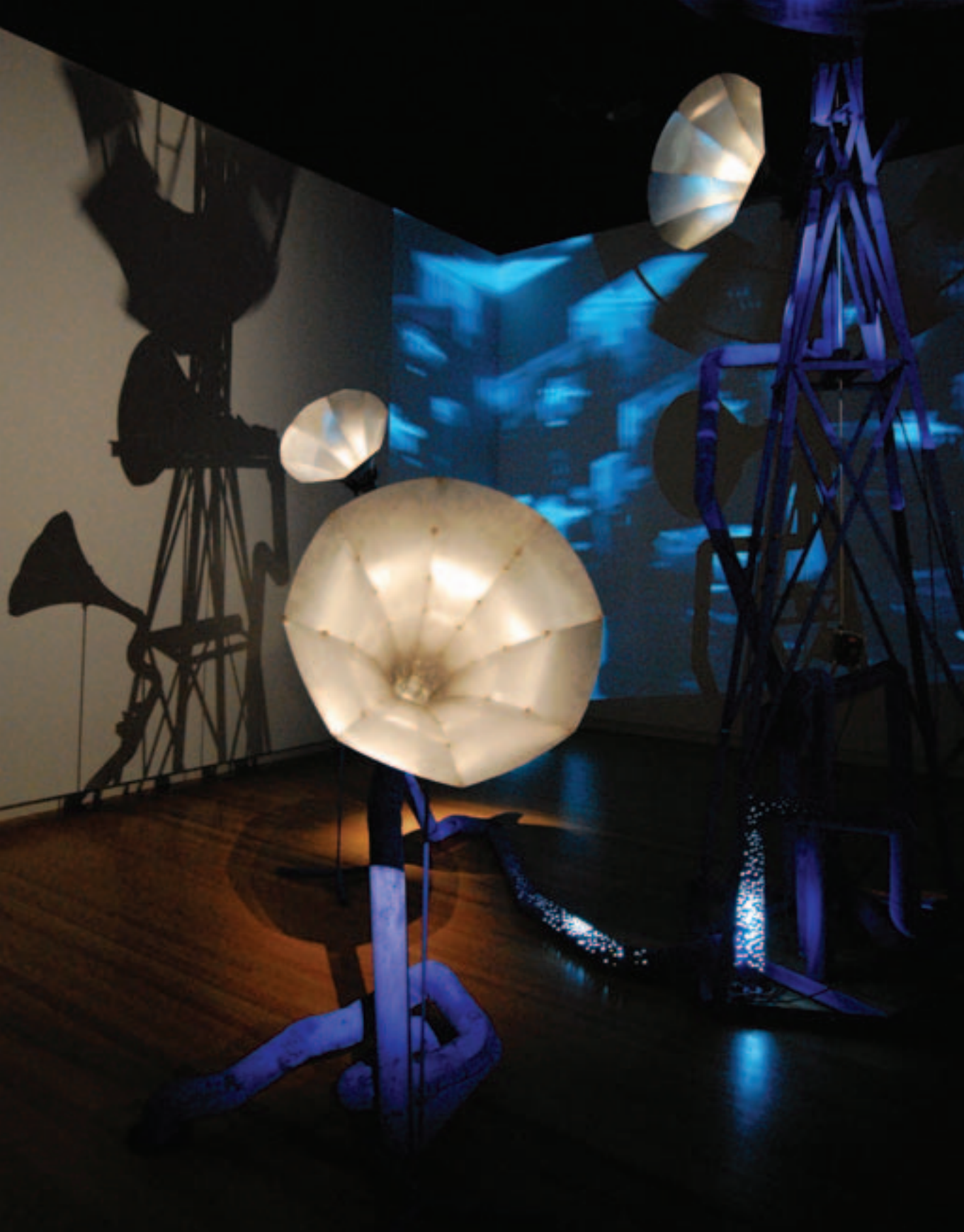
Suspended between myth and history, Pat HOFFIE and Stefan Purcell's *WindWells: Channelling & Divining*¹ proposes a new yet contingent relation to the interpretation of the past. It is a re-telling of the story of water; and an attempt to differentiate the narrative from rationalist notions of water as a constant and reliable resource that is nonetheless unmanageable. Fierce disputation surrounds the use and supply of water in Australia, yet as a continuous history water is a singular narrative of colonisation. For this country's non-indigenous population, the ongoing failure to understand this substance is Australia's least popular historical concept. From the first moment of European contact with the Australian landscape, securing this resource for commercial and governmental purposes has been a major priority. To this day, state and federal squabbling covers up the overwhelming negligence of these operations.



WindWells demonstrates the crucial role of art in the revision of culturally represented collective memory, for it questions the politics of history-making while showing a delight for the self-made as reminder of the motivating force of progress in early Australian settler culture. Firmly situated in nineteenth-century southern Queensland, this artwork examines a period during the state's rural adaptation from localised subsistence cultivation to large-scale mechanised agribusiness. Until that time, the legend of the pioneer prevailed in public imagination; a legend based on an individualised conception in which European exiles and migrants struggled to make livelihood in a foreign land. At the end of the 1900s, however, this autonomy was wrested away by the commercialisation of agricultural labour.

Figure 1. Professor Pepper the Scientist. "Analyst and Rainmaker Professor J H Pepper." John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland (image number 110743).

Figure 2. Pat HOFFIE and Stefan Purcell, *Windwells: Channelling and Divining* (detail) (2010), mixed media installation involving video projections and sculptural objects. State Library of Queensland Gallery.



The exhibition calls up the story of water in Queensland, retrieving three fantastic tales about the contrivance of water in the region from the John Oxley Library archives at the State Library of Queensland (SLQ), including the invention and fabrication of the legendary Australian Southern Cross windmill; the coming of the celebrated British sideshow magician and chemist Professor John Henry Pepper to Brisbane in the 1870s; and the renowned work of the successful Toowoomba water diviner Joseph Gordon Palethorpe in the late 1800s. Presenting their work in the SLQ exhibition space, Hoffie and Purcell employ devices of illumination to create an installation that melds myth with history in order to differentiate what is tangible from what is fabulous in the narrative of water, as it has been told since the start of European colonisation of Australia.

The lighting is low in the gallery. Shadows fall over the floor; cast from spots behind the looming structure of a full-scale Aussie windmill. On the far side of the space, the windmill's turning blades rotate over a massive projection of stock footage showing factory workers in an industrious mode, churning out metal parts one after the other. According to the exhibition catalogue, this film documents the production of machinery parts in the town of Toowoomba, Southern Queensland, where in fact the Griffith Brothers first invented and developed their windmills in 1876.² In front of the windmill, two large cylinders bear an obvious resemblance to corrugated iron water tanks, even though they are made of hundreds of books removed from their covers, with their pages splayed outward. A network of ultramarine blue pipes runs from the windmill across the floor; up the walls and into the tanks, while, on the right-hand wall of the entry, two electromagnetic devices continually charge and release concentrated electrical zaps in their small glass chambers. Right next to these, a large circular projection shows thundering storm clouds.

Passing around the tanks, a large plate window is visible, jammed into an alcove in the far right-hand corner of the space. An apparition projected on the angled glass comprises part of a scene that resembles a magician's set, with a chair and a table covered with a Persian rug. In this apparition a top-hatted and suited man repeatedly walks on and off the stage. He motions with the conjuring gestures of a magician without producing any resulting spectacle. A recreation of Pepper's Ghost, this world-renowned cinematographic contrivance was invented by Pepper in the 1860s and quickly embraced by countless European and American magicians, illusionists and filmmakers. With its stagy aesthetics announcing a theatrical play, *WindWells* is redolent of sideshows and nineteenth-century vaudeville, genres that are recognisable for their rough but decorative appliqué of bright colour and glitter; makeshift proscenium arch constructions of flimsy plywood, and featuring bodies that are often strangely out of proportion. Hoffie and Purcell use the term 'steampunk' to describe this aesthetic, thus making an oblique reference to the material and visual impact of the industrial age on vaudeville in Britain, an aesthetic that was crucial to the travelling shows that Pepper brought to Queensland in the 1870s.³ Highly popular across America, England and in Australia, in these shows the presentation of science was embraced as an extravaganza, a spectacle suitably conveyed through the vernacular of stage magic (recently exemplified in Terry Gilliam's 2009 fantasy film, *The Imaginarium of Doctor Parnassus*).

After the initial enjoyment of its carnival aesthetics, other components of the installation become apparent. Twanging guitar chords, emanating from the tanks and out of a glammed-up gramophone horn attached to the end of one of the pipes, make groans from the belly of the earth, piping up by the windmill or perhaps channelled by Professor Pepper. As we close in by the water tanks, the text of the coverless books is almost legible. As diverse in their languages as Spanish, Turkish, Arabic, Persian and Farsi, they form an ironic Tower of Babel, emptied out like the aridity of monolingualistic and anglocentric Australian attitudes.⁴ Yet these books are as rich as the ethnically heterogeneous stories that make up contemporary Australian society. Countless indigenous and migrant cultures offer alternative notions and experiences of survival in this land that are not part of popular Australian history. For example, we only hear fragmentary tales of desert Afghanis and their camels in the 1850s; or mythic accounts of Indian trader caravans selling bolts of cloth and buttons to isolated farming women in the early twenty-first century; or the occasional acknowledgment of the numerous aboriginal guides who helped European explorers to read the land for signs of water.



Figure 3. Pat HOFFIE and Stefan PURCELL, *Windwells: Channelling and Divining* (detail) (2010), mixed media installation involving video projections and sculptural objects. State Library of Queensland Gallery.

Yet it remains possible to defy this forgetting. Photographic reproductions in the installation recover memories of the deeply anxious search for the mysterious wellsprings of Queensland water. On a series of small turntables, alongside one of the water tanks, images of men undertaking water divining are adhered to small upright pieces of cracked mirror; spinning eccentrically. These are prints from Palethorpe's 1903 booklet, *Water Finding by Means of Magnetism and the Divining Rod*. *WindWells* reveals the extraordinary Australian quest for subterranean water; 'channelling and divining' other material held in the SLQ including archives on early local windmill development and the material on Professor Pepper, whose time in Queensland was documented in the *Journal of the Royal Historical Society of Queensland* in 1974-75.⁵

How often do we recount heroic tales of the 'acquisition' of territories by European settlers and conflate it with their search for water. But, what if these pasts are spectral and restless like Pepper's Ghost? Or phantasmagoric, as *WindWells* suggests? For none of this exhibition is static, and the constant activity of the fantastic blue windmill, the old footage of factory lines in action and the conjuring of Pepper's Ghost are an allegory of the endeavour for water. In a contingency of fact and fiction, this installation channels histories from deep beneath our surface consciousness. Being dispersed, displaced or subverted, the strange juxtaposition of mythology and memory in a project like *WindWells* prompts a curious interrogation and revision of seemingly immutable conceptions of the past. It poses a challenge to the Australian conceptualisation of water as a representation of European thought.

Where water is usually emblematic of the logic of human management of the uncontrollable aspects of Australian nature – which for the British is conceived of as being one of the most confronting of all colonial frontiers – in a peculiar conflation of images of water divining, windmill, industry and magic, HOFFIE and PURCELL expose a host of contradictions. Early attempts to survive on the Australian continent are usually told in terms of the failure of the Australian environment to provide for human life, rather than the settlers' lack of ability to interpret the land and its secrets, even if this was not for want of pioneering imagination or paucity of desire to uncover its mysteries.

Coincidentally, at the same time as *WindWells* was on display, the adjacent Queensland Museum presented "The Last Days of Burke and Wills." The story of the duo's hopeless and tragic search for a north-south continental crossing is familiar to most Australians, although not everyone concurs with it. In 2009, Australian historian Michael Cathcart offered a critical questioning of the mythology surrounding these accounts of water in Australia in his book, *The Water Dreamers: The Remarkable History of our Dry Continent*. Cathcart examines the impact of settlers' visions of a water-rich land and the aspiration to make their dream a reality. Most of us see this dream realised today in the massive irrigation and hydro-engineering schemes in the Snowy Mountains and Tasmania, which continue to devastate many Australian river systems. All the while, the heroic tragedy of Burke and Wills maintains a claim over the Australian imagination, even though, as Cathcart asserts, their supposed mission to locate the great inland sea is yet another untenable myth.

WindWells takes on the challenge of this contested history by making it a productive and playful questioning of the construction of history within the institution itself. The State of Library Queensland is bursting with exhaustive and rich archives. It is sandwiched between the Gallery of Modern Art and the Queensland Art Gallery, not far from The Museum of Queensland, so that *WindWells* is located at the physical and conceptual crossing point of contemporary art, state archives and historical and curatorial analysis. Once the sole domain of the scholar, Australian artists are being called upon by state institutions to take up fellowships; recent examples are Tom Nicholson and Tony Birch's work with the State Library of Victoria to create the *Camp Pell Lectures*, presented in 2010 at Artspace, Sydney, or the creation of exhibitions within state library exhibition spaces like *WindWells*. HOFFIE and PURCELL's work confidently participates in a dialogue with its host institution, generating a dynamic interpretation of history that has the capacity to call up some of the secrets that scholarly or archival practices tend to bury away within their own inherently categorising processes.

Contrary to popular conception, history is not a static entity. It is in a continual state of indeterminacy, a flux that gives rise to consternation and backlash from affected social and governmental forces. This is because collective cultural consensus notably forms around the 'positive,' 'useful' or 'truthful' aspects of the past, a consensus that is geared to suit the prevailing interests of the privileged or ascendant members of that society. All of this plays out in the form of radical forgetting because inconvenient truths are always too close by. Such is the basis of German philosopher Walter Benjamin's contention in his *Theses on the Philosophy of History* (1940), where he propounds that amnesia operates at the service of 'historicism,' maintaining a set of coherent views that preclude any challenge to its official narrative.⁶ Writing on the eve of the Nazi devastation of Europe, in this essay Benjamin foretells a warning that he claimed would come as a flash in a moment of danger: He warned that this apparition would take the form of the spectre of a suppressed past which was about to be raised from the dead (namely Fascism). Nowhere is 'historicism' more apparent than in Australia, a nation that holds to the same ideology that came with the British explorers who were sent to claim the great southern continent as a yet unmapped, unpopulated and timeless territory. We would do well to pay heed to Benjamin's warning, for the global spectre of amnesia is all the more dangerous today for being concealed within pantomime campaigns with no-names like the 'War on Terror,' the ubiquitous 'Peacekeeping Mission', and, in Australia, the ongoing 'Northern Territory Intervention', and mistreatment of asylum seekers.

Water is caught up in the triumvirate mythologies of progress, self-subsistence, and the notion that it is a controllable and stable resource that can be tapped into at any time. It is therefore a central character in the narrative of our behaviour towards the land. The story of water represents the paradox of Australia's imagining of itself, in the contradiction of an impossible conception of a nation laid over a very different reality. It is the one substance that has refused to compromise to ideological impositions from the first moment of attempted European inhabitation until today. Yet the settler myth prevails, while capitalism has taken over the mega-management of resources, so that the greatest access to and most unregulated use of water – our most uncontrollable and critical resource – is in the hands of private corporations, agribusiness and irrigation companies. The futility is unrelenting in the ongoing liberal access to water given to mining companies and large-scale farming operations of non-essential but highly profitable yet water-sapping crops such as cotton and rice. The ownership of Australia's water has very recently become a widespread concern because of substantial increases in foreign investment in water rights; the sale of these rights totals millions of litres, according to Deborah Snow and Debra Jopson in their 2010 *Sydney Morning Herald* article, "Thirsty Foreigners Soak up Scarce Water Rights." The privatisation of water supply is yet another area where commercial interests have dominated, so that since 2001 an estimated 25 percent of Australia's drinking water has been owned and controlled by foreign multinationals.⁷

The extent of the problem is hard to fathom, except when it is related to us in narrative form. The tale of one of Professor Pepper's failed feats of artifice is, for instance, an account of the impracticability of the European mindset in Australian conditions. According to documents located in the SLQ archives, in 1882 Pepper staged a spectacular rainmaking demonstration at the Eagle Farm raceway, Brisbane. It was an ostentatious event, held during a period of extreme drought, making an explicit link between water conjuring and magic arts. But, despite fanfare and



Figure 4. Professor Pepper the showman. "Illustration featuring Professor J H Pepper in the centre." John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland (image number I 10744).

explosive fireworks, Pepper failed to produce a single drop of rain, hopelessly raising the crowd's excitement only to let them down.

Even though attempts to subject the flow of water to all kinds of practical strategies have seen short-term benefits for civil usages of waterways through extensive management in the form of dams, weirs, locks and barricades, these manipulations are known to have had disastrous and irreversible effects on the complex ecologies of the vast systems that cover millions of hectares of what was once much more arable land. The absurdity of such practices still seems to escape Australians, evident in the language of the media and in everyday discourse, where the ebb and flow of water is often described in rational terms as a 'resource' to be managed or contained. This mindset repudiates any notion of water's true complexity, and denotes a refusal to consider how as a nation we might be subject to water's continual adaptation and the fact of our total dependence on change itself.

According to Georges Bataille in *The Accursed Share: An Essay on General Economy*, our ongoing disregard for the material basis of life causes us to err in our understanding of the forces that drive life itself.⁸ Bataille claims that in our exploitation of resources we only acknowledge the earth's forces in so far as they are useful to us, and yet every "living organism ... ordinarily receives more energy than is necessary for maintaining life."⁹ Life as an excessive, unknowable and transforming process is treated with the same apprehension, and again it is the fixity of the sciences of epistemology and knowledge production that censure the unknown. In the *Accursed Share*, Bataille proposes that the generative excess of the cosmos is greatly feared by the human race and that this fear gives rise to humanity's destructive impulses. This corresponds with Charles Darwin's evolutionary paradox, based on the process of natural selection, which Elizabeth Grosz has argued shows us how life hinges on a practice of overcoming itself to evolve into something completely unforeseen, unknowable and different.¹⁰ Water is an utterly evolutionary substance and is equally indomitable – so what better means to understand the effacement of what we know to exist yet refuse to see than to seek out the mysterious existence of subterranean water on the Australian continent?

The 1919 picture of "Mr Tilney and son water divining," reproduced in the *WindWells* catalogue, illustrates the mix of resourcefulness and mythology invested in the search for water by European pioneers.¹¹ The whole scene is oddly staged, like a magic show. Fashioned in the style of its time, the backdrop and shallow setting contribute to its theatricality. The strangest feature of all is the most obvious: the two men have cast their gaze to the studio floor and

are looking intently at a pile of dirt that has been placed there, staring at nothing but dust. By doing this they show that divining water is not simply about locating underground wells, but that water can be called up from the deep. Tilney and his son demonstrate how the search for water might be a reciprocal process in which the land is listened to, and a spiritual practice to which the diviner applies faith. European empiricism is evidently immaterial to the practice, not because the diviners were spiritualised by finding water in this way but because they tapped directly into a watery consciousness of that particular place.

Anyone who has ever attempted to map continental water in the past has discovered first of all that nothing is constant. Its underground lakes and wells constitute a byzantine system of interlocking, porous and fluid networks and channels. On the other hand, the dependence of European settlers on surface apparitions of water that came and went subsequently formed an increasingly unproductive story of fixed catchments and controls of waterways that denied the greater flow of water beneath the surface. Again, the behaviour of successive Australian governments portrays a political premise that comprises a *prima facie* Imperial narrative of the continent of Australia. Two powerful ideologies continue to emanate from this story: first is the denial of the unknown in ourselves, and second is the maintenance of an ordered idea of nature.



Figure 5. The never-ending search for water: "Mr Tilney and son water divining" (1919). John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland (image number 38204).

Paul Carter tackles the predicament of the Australian desire to order and deny our relationship to the environment in a 2008 article called "Dry Thinking, on Praying for Rain."¹² In this article, Carter contends that water in this country does not behave according to the Eurocentric notion of constantly flowing rivers and full reservoirs. He adds that this false imaginary alienates us from a metaphysical experience of our continent, with its constantly fluctuating and irregular but rhythmic cycles of wet and dry, which arrive in uncontrollable and seemingly useless extremes. What Carter proposes is that we should cease trying to change the way water works and start acknowledging how we might be changed by the behaviour of water and how we are adapting to this change. To reiterate the politics of the situation, 'dry thinking' is Carter's way of describing an authoritative and imposing attitude to inhabitation and our avoidance of a necessarily contingent, responsive and reciprocal relationship to place. This shift in mentality would, in Carter's words, "call on us to relocate our thinking in the environments that have inspired it," to arrive at a new metaphysics of belonging that encompasses water's contrary nature.¹³

In contending with such concerns, HOFFIE and PURCELL's installation fortunately avoids truisms or superficial answers in relation to water. Over and above issues of climate change and sustainability, *WindWells* makes a far more significant point by questioning the primacy of the institution of knowledge itself. Water and its lack of reliability are central to the Australian psyche today and *WindWells* raises an allegory of our repressed desire for water. Everything in the gallery is dry, the writhing blue pipes are hollow, and the tanks are empty, while the turning windmill and the images of water-seekers and water-makers create a sense of yearning for the elusive liquid. The interpretation of the history of Queensland's water in this project highlights the unspeakable aspects of the dilemma, which underpin the ongoing contested relationship that non-indigenous Australia has to this continent.

When unitary histories are offered up one of the most important questions to ask is, why were other versions left out of the picture? In the case of a mythical imagining of water in Queensland, it is clear that state government can ill afford aberrant artesian stories mingling with the meta-management water plan. Yet the elision of these irreconcilable truths reveals that such acts are not only about forging a one-dimensional national identity, they constitute an erasure of a political kind. This assertion might seem like a stretch, but the constraint of individual autonomy in Australian society is more widespread than ever; and the practice of a self-sustaining search for subterranean water is a lawless activity, just as it was for pioneers. While an attitude persists that nineteenth-century practices like water divining are incompatible with contemporary Australian environmental wisdom, and the pioneering ethic is for the most part insupportable today, there is much that we might learn from their techniques. Further scrutiny reveals that the politics of water governance is scarcely more progressive today, with the prevailing notion that the Australian continent should act as a giant aquifer or a non-porous container for water. This 'catchment' ideology was established in the early 1900s, with massive damming projects like the Snowy Mountains Hydro-electric Scheme and the Ross River Dam. And catchment thinking still drives policy today, evident in the recent commissions such as the enlarged Cotter Dam in the Australian Capital Territory and New South Wales's latest project at Tillegra. Floods, nonetheless, pose as great a problem as droughts, not only because of the immediate havoc they wreak but also because water managers have no idea of what to do with all that 'useless' water afterwards.

In its alternative, somewhat anarchic historicisation, *WindWells* aligns icons of the industrial age with mythic histories of water. Rolling rainclouds gather force, machinery parts are forged, while the windmill turns without wind. Professor Pepper's ghost endlessly returns in his top hat, cane and waistcoat to call up a forgotten period of popular European culture in which the inexplicability of the sciences were gleefully elucidated by illusionist arts and where magic was thought of as easily interchangeable with logic. Coming at the end of the first hundred years of Australian colonisation, the magic show was popularised during the mid-late nineteenth century alongside the birth of photography, which was widely imagined as yet another manifestation of the supernatural in a material form.¹⁴ Other conceptions of photography existed at the time but, with an emphasis on the staged imagery of Tilney the water diviner and the carnivalesque Pepper, Hoffie and Purcell chose the psycho-spiritual incarnation of photography over its rational or empiricist lineage.

Situating the search for and production of water at the juncture of three powerful forms of conjuring – the windmill, the magician and early photography – Hoffie and Purcell have not shied from presenting their ideas as illusionism. Although sympathy for magic has a profound place in the project, as viewers, the main job we have is to recognise how the icons of illusionism are embedded in the continuum of history. Already lodged in our consciousness, the windmill, for example, is an icon of pioneering endeavour; yet Hoffie and Purcell reconceptualise the legend by reinscribing the machine as a 'windwell.' And, technically speaking, the common moniker is inaccurate, because a windmill's primary purpose is to sluice water to power a mill to grind down grains into various kinds of flour, while the Australian version is a glorified pump. Still, in collective Australian imagination, the windmill is both ubiquitous and enigmatic, its rusty cries an unforgettable reverberation for anyone who has ever visited the countryside.

The windwell is inseparable from its practical purpose of plumbing the groundwater; but this is a fiction because its blades turn without any wind and the well is dry. We know this because the blue pipes in the SLQ Gallery have been perforated with thousands of tiny holes, each one emitting a beam of light, creating an array of twinkling stars instead



Figure 6. Pat HOFFIE and Stefan PURCELL, *Windwells: Channelling and Divining* (detail) (2010), mixed media installation involving video projections and sculptural objects. State Library of Queensland Gallery.

of spouting water. Yet the pipes wend their way through the gallery, in and out of the walls, feeding subterranean wisdom into the empty tanks via its magic plumbing system.

Our relationship to the Australian environment is not so different: in dry country you never know the next source of water. Survival depends on a constant search for a new supply. Except, during the last two centuries of colonial habitation in Australia, such contingency has been difficult to conceive. The imaginary European vision of constantly manageable supplies of water, of flowing rivers, consistent rainfalls, temperate seasons and full reservoirs was a fiction from the start. We now face a time in which a new awareness of the land constitutes the best prospect of sustainable habitation. If the underground waters could be heard, as they are in the pipes and tanks in *WindWells*, they would intone to us that instinct should be our guide. But, like the coming of new languages to a country, the diversity, underworldliness, inaccessibility and irrationality of intuition is like a thousand babbling tongues: we understand nothing. That is where Palethorpe and Pepper's practical magic reminds us how we can be resourceful with knowledge, to know how to intuit a future that is more in tune with the metaphysics of the land.

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Dr Lily Hibberd is an artist and writer. She is founding editor of *un Magazine* and lectures in the Faculty of Art & Design, Monash University.

- 1 Pat HOFFIE and Stefan Purcell, *WindWells: channelling & divining*, 26 July-17 October 2010, State Library of Queensland Gallery.
- 2 State Library of Queensland curator Trudy Bennett describes these windmills in her essay, "Watery Treasures from the John Oxley Library", reproduced in the *WindWells* exhibition catalogue, Ross Woodrow, Louise Denoon and Trudy Bennett, *WindWells: Channelling + Divining* (Brisbane: State Library of Queensland, 2010).
- 3 See the interview with the artists by Gavin Sawford in the exhibition catalogue.
- 4 Exacerbated by the fact that the mostly foreign-language books in the installation had recently been de-accessioned from the SLQ collection.
- 5 Concisely presented in a small secondary room, with a wall of framed documents including Palethorpe's handbook and details of Professor Pepper's work in Queensland.
- 6 Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (Fontana: London, 1973), 245-55.
- 7 "Future Ownership of Australia's Water", Media release on Kellie Tranter's webpage, 30 January 2007, <http://www.kellietranterattorney.com.au/tranter-86.htm> [accessed 22 Sept 2010].
- 8 Georges Bataille, *The Accursed Share: An Essay on General Economy*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Zone Books, 1988), 21.
- 9 Ibid.
- 10 Elizabeth Grosz, *Time Travels: Feminism, Nature, Power* (Crows Nest, N.S.W.: Allen & Unwin, 2005).
- 11 Woodrow et al., *WindWells*, 11.
- 12 "Dry Thinking and Human Futures" was originally published in German in December 2008, in the *Lettre Internationale*; on 29 April 2010, Carter delivered an English-language version of the paper at the Institute of Postcolonial Studies, North Melbourne. See www.ipcs.org.au.
- 13 *Institute of Postcolonial Studies Newsletter*, 30 (July 2010), <http://ipcs.org.au/publications/ipcs-newsletter> [accessed 22 Sept 2010].
- 14 See Clement Cheroux et al., *The Perfect Medium: Photography and the Occult* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005).

(I MUST CONFESS ...)

Neil Emmerson



ONE

In 2005, I had been at once shocked and intrigued by the amateur photographic images coming out of Abu Ghraib Prison in Iraq of the torture and humiliation performed on Iraqi prisoners by American defense force workers. One of these images – of a cloaked and hooded man perched precariously on a flimsy box, arms spread with hands connected by wire to the wall behind him, his body slumped in constraint, shame and supplication – drew on a repertoire of well-known visual tropes. This particular image I saw as loaded with historical references from both the fine arts and popular culture.

In *The Abu Ghraib Effect* (2007), Stephen F Eisenman outlines what is called the 'pathos formula,' whereby the willing victim of physical anguish and torture has been depicted throughout the history of the Western visual arts as a figure of glorious suffering; this trope begins in the Classical period and is turned by Christian visual culture into an equally sensuous and ecstatic martyrdom. These images and their effects, Eisenman argues, have served across the years "as an instrument of imperialist self-justification and racist violence."¹ Ironically, many examples of such paintings and sculptures employ sensuous, nude, muscular male bodies as the vehicles of their depictions of divine chastisement and punishment. It might be interesting to note at this point the range of homosexual acts that prisoners of Abu Ghraib were forced to enact in order to humiliate and shame them.

In the not-so-distant past, images of or based on Classical and Christian art in printed publications offered one of the few opportunities where some homosexual men might be able to identify their desire. Gazing at these pictures of either naked or semi-naked men in the throes of an ecstatic agony could be passed off as an interest in the history of art, in certain other Grecian or Christian ideals, or even in health and body-building.

In *Confessions of a Mask* (1949), Yukio Mishima describes the effect of the recognition of his homosexual desire on his first viewing of a reproduction of Guido Reni's *Saint Sebastian*: "That day, the instant I looked upon the picture, my entire being trembled with some pagan joy."² In *Iconology and Perversion* (1988), Allen S Weiss considers the possibility of "a 'hermeneutics of misreading' where the effects of libidinal oscillations are factored into the interpretive scheme as the feature of its very indeterminacy."³ He points out that it was the affective power of the image rather than its particular semiotic intent that raised Mishima's passions. Mishima consequently posed for a famous photographic parody of Guido's St Sebastian and, in so doing, produced a "perverse inversion of the roles of iconographic features and incidental details within the picture," by playing up such incidental details as the "white, matchless nudity" of the martyr; and with his pose or attitude alluding more to beauty and pleasure rather than to pain or suffering.

What sort of 'pagan joy' might be ignited by the viewing of this picture from Abu Ghraib, laced as it is with pathos, and how might it be reconciled with the guilt of implication in an acknowledgement of the desires operating in the correspondence between victim and perpetrator, or the politics operating between a poetics of sadomasochism and 'imperialist self-justification?' A 'hermeneutics of misreading' here might invert the direction of this rupturing of the public realm via the secret whereby the affective power of this public image penetrates back into the private, subconscious zone of the viewer; giving form to its secrets and lighting up places seldom revealed.

TWO

Working on from a series of projects that involved the use of found images of anonymous, hooded, male figures sporting outfits worn in the contexts of chemical warfare, camouflage and capture, I began a project by constructing garments with the aim of hybridising elements of these designs with elements of garments from the psych ward (straightjackets), the penitentiary (stenciled jumpsuits), the religious (sacramental robes) and body bags – outfits associated with the institutions that, presently and historically, have played a role in labeling, controlling and eliminating homosexuality. As if the terror of torture, or for that matter the anguish of the closet, has ever really gone out of



Figures 1-5. From a set of 20 AV digital and screen prints on Velin Arches paper: 105 x 75cm.

fashion. Labeled *G O D (gay on demand) exclusive outfits for espionage and terror*, this range of hybridised uniforms was initially installed as *the glass closet* in 2009. Under the sign of international haute couture, it imitated an up-market fashion boutique on the main shopping street of Dunedin in New Zealand.

Presented here are a series of photographs of one of these costumes, out of the closet, and now inhabited by a young, male model. Through the use of transparent and semi-transparent fabrics the sensuous nude is discernable. Across a series of 'poses,' supplication is traded for confession; resignation; seduction; and, finally, ecstatic transcendence.

In regard to the use of the artist's model, I draw on Moe Meyer in his book *The Politics and Poetics of Camp* (1994), where he refers to various figures in Oscar Wilde's writing: "The artist's model ... signals what appears to be his use of the 'pose' as an organizing metaphor through which to codify the surfaces of the Other's body."⁴ (Can this 'organizing metaphor' be seen at work in the modeling of prisoners at Abu Ghraib? Surely not consciously, although the choreographed interactions of prisoners indicates a planned and collaborative management of this situation.)

According to Meyer, considering Wilde's construction of the artist's model and the pose, we discover a remarkable phenomenon: "The model as pastiche, divorced from his own interiority, offered up his body surfaces and made them available for inscription by the artist. The artist, in turn, used them to signify his own inner state. The effect achieved by the model was the construction of a 'neutral' surface, a *tabula rasa*, acting as an objectified site of the artist's desire."⁵

Wilde considered art to be primarily the conjunction of desire and vision. Meyer uses Jonathan Dollimore's term 'transgressive reinscription' and quotes him again "to indicate a subversive, resistant and destabilizing maneuver in which identification with, and desire *for*, may coexist with parodic subversion *of*."⁶

Through his experiments with this theory, Wilde was attempting to construct a public homosexual identity in an historical situation where one didn't yet exist. Yukio Mishima may not be doing exactly the same thing, but the methodology is similar if not the same. He realises his desire by recognising it projected onto the portrait of St Sebastian, and then later appropriates that desire back onto the surfaces of his own body. Does he become at once both desiring subject and desired object? This relational movement between inside and outside, between the private and the public, secrecy and disclosure, provides a schematic model for the operations of the closet. Wilde might have gone some way towards creating a physical presence for the public recognition of a homosexual interior identity, but inadvertently he also helped to create the reign of the 'telling secret.' His trial and incarceration operate as a public emblem for both the announcement of the modern homosexual and simultaneously the "exactions, ... deformations, ... disempowerment and sheer pain" of the closet.⁷

THREE

In 2008, a report appeared in the world news media that MI5 in Britain was seeking the help of the gay lobby Stonewall to recruit 'out' homosexual spies. It seems that, with the rapid growth of the intelligence service since the London bombings of 2005, a certain turnabout had occurred in a situation where, until relatively recently, gays were barred entry into top jobs in the spy business due to the perception that they were more prone to blackmail than their straight counterparts. Should I contemplate a change of occupation, I asked myself?

How might self-identified, 'out' homosexual spies be of particular help in this 'war on terror,' considering that it is directed towards the more fundamentalist elements of the Muslim world? Surely in the places where homosexuality is outlawed – indeed heavily sanctioned, with dreadful punishments – it would be an enormous disadvantage for precisely the same reasons that it was officially avoided in the British intelligence services some years ago? The idea seemed absurd. Why would MI5 engage 'out' gay men in a situation that would require them to go back into the closet and compromise them so gravely?

Then again, maybe it is precisely the closet that MI5 is interested in. I wondered about whether there was a kind of transnational, homosexual underground operating in the Middle East. Clandestine connections between private individuals, groups and communities have certainly been developed before on the basis of a commonly oppressed homosexual desire and can connect people from disparate backgrounds both locally and beyond the intolerant, indeed hostile, worlds in which they live. Discrete relations between homosexual men seeking connections, community and sex with other men these days can be effectively facilitated by the internet. The skills derived from living a double life would not go astray in the spy business, I would imagine. Could these networks, with their clustered communities that operate below the radar, appear to be functioning somewhat like terrorist cells? Or might they not be fertile recruiting grounds, where those whose freedom of sexual choice is being denied might become sympathetic collaborators in this war on terror?

Here, a professional investment in secrecy could further complicate its function as “the subjective practice in which the oppositions of private /public, inside/outside, subject/object, are established, and the sanctity of the first term kept inviolate. And the phenomenon of the ‘open secret’ does not, as one might think, bring about a collapse of those binarisms and their ideological effects, but rather attests to their fantasmatic recovery.”⁸

As Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick points out in *Epistemology of the Closet* (1990): “There are risks in making salient the continuity and centrality of the closet, in an historical narrative that does not have as a fulcrum a saving vision – whether located in past or future – of its apocalyptic rupture.”⁹ She identifies the risk of glamorising the closet and by default rendering it inevitable or, in some manner, of value.

By switching the terms of what is valued in regard to the sexuality of its spies, does MI5 then risk glamorising the closet as well as capitalising on it at the same time?

Sue-Ellen Case is critical of refashioning queer culture into the dominant culture’s discursive metaphors. “The danger incurred in moving gay politics into such heterosexual contexts is in slowly discovering that the strategies and perspectives of homosexual realities and discourse may be locked inside a homophobic ‘concentration camp’.”¹⁰

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- 1 Stephen F Eisenman, *The Abu Ghraib Effect* (London: Reaktion Books, 2007).
- 2 Yukio Mishima, *Confessions of a Mask*, trans. Meredith Weatherby (New York: New Directions, 1949/1958).
- 3 Allen S Weiss, *Iconology and Perversion* (Melbourne: Art & Text Publications, 1988).
- 4 Moe Meyer, *The Politics and Poetics of Camp* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 88.
- 5 Ibid., 83.
- 6 Ibid., 78.
- 7 Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1990), 68.
- 8 Sedgwick quoting DA Millar; *ibid.*, 67.
- 9 Sedgwick, *ibid.*, 68.
- 10 Sue-Ellen Case, quoted in Meyer, *The Politics and Poetics of Camp*, 113.

MY METAMORPHOSED FASHION DESIGN PRAXIS

Rekha Rana Shailaj

This report explores the ever-changing identity of fashion which is constructed through various subjectivities that determine dressed bodies. Designers are now working with not just the commercial realities of the fashion world, they are also questioning its role and how it can educate both the designer and the consumer: While fashion participates in the pursuit of bringing new 'looks' seasons after seasons, it also exhibits itself as an object of desire and criticism. In her article "Slow + Fashion – an Oxymoron – or a Promise for the Future...?" Hazel Clark subjects the fashion system to a new critique. She argues that "in this refocusing, 'fashion' is presented as an individual creative choice rather than as a group mandate. Slow + Fashion refocuses our attention on earlier definitions of the term 'fashion' to do [with?] making – clothes and identities, rather than only with looking."¹ She presents the debate around the slow approach to fashion, where clothing demands a considered, thoughtful, meaningful and sustainable consumption.

It is the art of making rather than the designing of consumption that is drawing the attention of many creative endeavours. Many designers are finding their practice at the interface of art and design. It is this relationship between fashion and art that has found relevance in my practice of fashion design. It is informed by childhood memories of my mother working with creative media such as painting, sculpture, dressmaking and embroidery. These media in conjunction suggest that my work often finds a place between fine art and applied design. My approach to my work is strongly contextualised by my personal background and hence reflects an individualised aesthetic. This combination is evident in my work – the fine arts component resides in my approach to creating clothing that brings past and present, known and unknown, my culture and memories from the past into context; the applied design aspect is evident in challenging conventional methods and using unconventional methods to create designs for fashion.

'Art-fashion togetherness' is being celebrated by the avant-garde designers who are now questioning the role of fashion. Rei Kawakubo's first show in Paris in 1981 conceptualised fashion as more than a social construction of 'woman' as the beautiful, graceful gender. Barbara Vinken elaborates on Rei Kawakubo's collection as an artist's response to the old "monopoly of [the?] French in matters of elegance, and the expertise of French couture." With her Lace Collection, Rei Kawakubo pushed the boundaries and conventions of fashion and rapidly entered into the realm of art. The Victoria and Albert Museum in London now houses this famous collection. According to Vinken, "her aesthetic is, in the end, not an aesthetic of poverty, even if much of the provocative effect of her work comes from this direction. Rather it is a negative aesthetic, based in a contestation of the idea of fashion itself."² The *International Herald Tribune's* fashion journalist said of her work: "[her?] show was the first that made a big impact in Paris; when the clothes were destroyed, when there were sweaters with big holes in them The whole idea that there could be beauty in the unfinished was very extraordinary."³

Many other designers are seeing sense in how Rei Kawakubo works with her creative vision to give clothing its long-desired freedom. As photographer Paolo Roversi puts it: "I consider Rei Kawakubo to be an artist. Because she always bets everything in [on?] the outcome, and she always follows her own instincts, imagination and spirit. And all the rest is made to contribute to her own free creativity. She continues to defend at all price the liberty and independence that oppose the commercial aspects of the fashion industry ... and she does that in order to defend her artistic spirit. And that should be the first priority within an artist's work."⁴

Rei Kawakubo is a prime example of a designer who embodies visual artistic references in their clothing designs. Martin Margiela could be considered another fashion designer who exhibits his work in the sphere of art. Martin Margiela explains that, besides direct references, the designer's approach to their practice can embody artistic qualities: "the more individualistic the approach in relation to the current climate of the overall aesthetic referred to as 'in fashion,' the more that approach may be linked to art."⁵

For many designers, the fashion process comes in contact with the subjectivities of the designer and is born out of an intangible resource of personal experiences particular to their cultural bank of memories and emotions. As a designer, I have been working with elements of clothing that I have experienced through my Indian culture. An example is *pajama* – a kind of trouser made from a bias bag or a tube with fabric walls that stretches with the movement of the body, commonly worn as a component of an Indian ensemble. The seams creating the bias bag appear in different areas of the garment, with the designer having only partial control over their placement. It brings into play the known fit with the unknown placement of the seams in a garment, as shown in Figure 1. Here the dress is created using the constructed bias bag.

This technique uses elements of sculpture to create forms for which fabric is the main material. Sometimes it is hard to predict the true form of the sculpture before its completion. Working with a known body form, but also with the unknown sculptural elements of fabric has been explored in the garment shown in Figure 2. While the bodice is fitted on the body, the flow of the garment around the abdomen and legs creates concealment of the actual form within the layers of fabric of the bias bag.



Figure 1. Rekha Rana, *The Purple Dress*, made from bias bag; the seams appear in unanticipated areas of the dress, 2007.

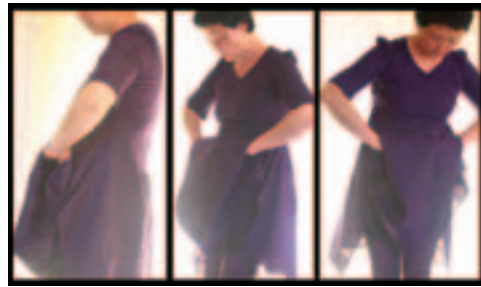


Figure 2. Rekha Rana, *The Purple Dress*, layers of fabric around the skirt area formed with a bias bag, 2007.

Living in Western cultures over a number of years, my Indian cultural identity has encountered an acculturation process. Fashion springs from the pluralities that characterise postmodernist society. My practice is based on a reflective studio practice engaged in fashion-creation around the plurality surrounding the relationships between dress and wearer; wearer and society, the signifier and the signified. Elements such as memories, cultures and identities can be contextualised and materialised through clothing signifiers. While similar contexts become the basis for interaction, differences in contexts facilitate dynamic negotiations between relationships. In line with this idea, my studio work is actuated in a multicultural environment which mixes the familiar with the unfamiliar; the past with the present, the known with the unknown. My work is born out of lived differences examined and expressed through a narrative of identity.

While clothing elements can construct cultural meanings, they can also constitute fashion when they signify a sufficient level of change as sought after by fashionistas. However, in my practice this quest for significant appreciation by fashionistas has given way to an exploration of identity created through the dialogue between internal and external worlds. This dialogue involves both differences and similarities, as both are important to our being – this is what is significant, central and essential to my artwork practice. This process of *decentering* as an artistic technique of

postmodern culture has been included in the discourse of many analysts. According to Marcia Morgado, decentering is a "technique [that] involves reconfiguring relationships within and beyond a work, so as to devalue what has previously been central, to call attention to what has been ignored, and to force reconsideration of the place and significance of previously marginalized elements."⁶ Ethnographic clothing is a part of my fragmented, postmodern experience and hence essential to my study. An appreciation for clothing signifiers originates from the intangible design process which involves our past memories and emotions as embedded in our cultures and identities. These go deeper into one's being than might be imagined by the uninitiated, as they elicit fashion statements that speak of innate values and not just of the desire for a beautified appearance.

The Indian fashion context embraces key elements such as drape, jewellery, embellishment and embroideries, and these have influenced my fashion practice as well. Embroideries have lived with me since childhood and, more recently, as past memories have surfaced again in my present practice. The embroidery in Figure 3 was created with herringbone stitch. The linear pattern is worked in a specific way on sheer fabric and forms the boundary of the design on one side of the fabric, and a criss-cross pattern on the other side. The sheer fabric allows the crossed yarn to show through on the surface as its shadow. In an Indian context, this type of stitch is termed 'shadow work.' In this piece, the stitches travel between the inward and outward curved lines, expanding and contracting to fit them, reflecting the crossing over of various journeys I have taken so far in my life. Even though each 'journey' has been bordered between the curved lines, the entire piece is not seeking any borders or boundaries. Its trajectories are fluid, feeding into each other and changing with no finality of interpretation.

Vilém Flusser describes human beings as more restless than other animals, and explains that "not only are they constantly on the move, but they gather and transmit experience."⁷ The longest curve, that passes through all the other curves in the embroidered work, evokes the first 27 years of my life lived in India, when I was single.



Figure 3. Rekha Rana, *Journey of Life*, synthetic screen mesh, embroidered with off-white pearle yarn using herringbone shadow work, 116 x 16.5 cm.

This was the time when I felt most rooted and settled. Since then I have not felt settled, as I have been on the move, like a restless animal. Maurice Merleau Ponty described his own early experience:

It is at the present time that I realise that the first twenty-five years of my life were a prolonged childhood, destined to be followed by a painful break leading eventually to independence. If I take myself back to those years as I actually lived them and as I carry them within me, my happiness at that time cannot be explained in terms of the sheltered atmosphere of the parental home; the world itself was more beautiful, things were fascinating, and I can never be sure of reaching a fuller understanding of my past than it had of itself at the time I lived through it, nor of silencing its protest. Tomorrow, with more experience and insight, I shall possibly understand it differently, and consequently reconstruct my past in a different way.⁸

I understand this process as a mixing of contexts which can lead to expressions of creativity as contexts collide.

In my embroideries and embellished work, situated within a palimpsest of cultural encounters, neutral colours have replaced bright colours. There is now a strangeness I feel in using colour as it has become exotic, the other; in my current cultural context, living with mostly European people in New Zealand. What colour brings out, black and white diffuse and soften. The use of neutral colours has provided me with the possibility to explore the form, shape, shadows and the occupied space of the embroideries without being distracted by colour. As my work progressed, the word 'shadow' started to appear to an increasing extent, as well as in my thinking. While shadow needs a physical form – object, person, form – to cast it, I wanted to 'cast' shadows of my past memories and experiences, thereby materialising them. The *kurta* (Figures 4 and 5) has been in the repertoire of Indian clothing for a long time, and I recreated its form as a flat drawing using a soldering iron to burn holes where embroidery had once been. This process has given visibility to the garments which I wore growing up in India.



Figure 4. Rekha Rana, *Memories of the Past Rooted in Today*, beige crepe wool, burnt-out holes using soldering iron, 90 x 23 cm.



Figure 5. Rekha Rana, *Memories of the Past Rooted in Today*, beige crepe wool, burnt-out holes using soldering iron, 90 x 23 cm.

These miniature embellished pieces were transposed onto a huge scale by being projected onto walls. Their presence was materialised through the play of light passing through the transparent fabrics and holes created in the fabrics. These images were then projected digitally. The narrative of a past interacting with a present was shaped further as my daughter moved with these projections and I recorded her movements through digital video captures (Figure 6).



Figure 6. Rekha Rana, projections of embroideries with artist's daughter interacting with them.

My metaphorical shadows question the historical iconographic status of shadows elaborated by Nancy Forgione as merely ephemeral, fragile and secondary to the light source.⁹ For my work, the relative permanency of these captured shadows suggest the endurance of past memories that live in the subconscious, shifting between transient and stable frames of mind. Memories are embedded in associations; they are reminders, awakening our subconscious mind, triggering access to our inner subjectivities. Shadows offer a means of making past memories of creation more visible for me. The embroideries here are not used to embellish the garment. Instead, the garments with their projected embroideries are worn by the performer to allow for a dialogue between the body of the wearer and the history of the signifiers of garment, embroidery and shadow.

In the process of connecting with like-minded designers, it is important for me to understand how design is born within their own particular contexts. Yohji Yamamoto's designs often embody human elements that are important to me. Vinken provides a marvellous account of his work:

Yamamoto's clothing seems to be based on a poetics of memory that has remained untouched by the shocks and traumas of the modern period. His work mutely collects and registers the affective traces which make up the individual. What is important is the individualised sum of experiences which are collected in its course. For him, the ideal look is that of the vagabonds, the gypsies, the travellers, those who carry their life on their back, everything that they possess, their memories, their treasures, their secrets.¹⁰

Much lies in the process and how it connects with your inner self. Reflecting back in time, I can recollect how my mother would stitch garments for us during summer vacations. She worked straight on the fabric, marking key vertical and horizontal measurements for fit, and her scissors never experienced any doubts concerning their track. I would watch with amazement, trying to understand the art of making. These experiences are part of who I am today. As a designer, I want to start with a clean slate for making sculptural clothing objects. However, the acquired knowledge underpinning the making of these objects will always inform the results, and most of the time my method of working takes into account the impulses inherited from my early memories. My garments are made not just to clothe a body, but also to communicate a world of experience materialised through them. Again, the design of the garment in Figure 7 has been informed by the process of marking and cutting openings for neck and arms, as used by my mother in the past.

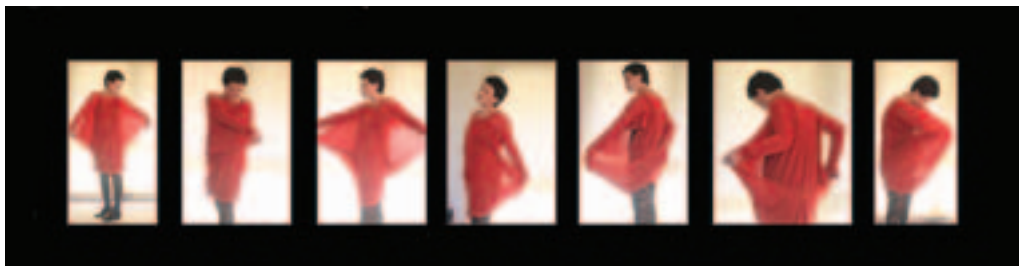


Figure 7. Rekha Rana, *The Red Dress*. This garment transforms and moves with the wearer: 2008.

Figures 8 and 9 show how the tube is drafted by stitching the two parallel sides of the rectangle marked as 'B,' and how the circles and oblongs are cut from the tube for neck and arm insertion. The body then passes through the long tube, creating excess folds in the fabric for movement. The garments shown in Figures 7 and 11 have been designed using this technique. Such a garment transforms as the body moves and interacts with it, bringing out the mood of the wearer. These garments (and the one discussed previously) are 'historical' in the sense that they contain traces of my past experiences. They create a fluid space that allows the wearers to express themselves through movement.

As a designer, I have been working with elements of clothing experienced through my Indian culture. I have gone back to my home address D-73 where I grew up, and gained the lived experiences of clothing myself in Indian

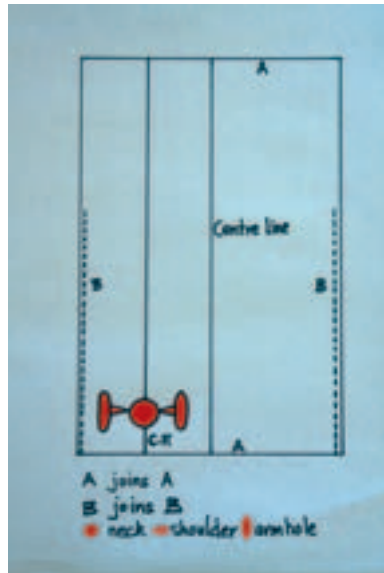


Figure 9. Rekha Rana, fabric tube made using pattern as in Figure 8, 2008.

Figure 8. Rekha Rana, pattern for a garment made out of fabric tube, stitched to a level indicated by dashed line B, 2008.

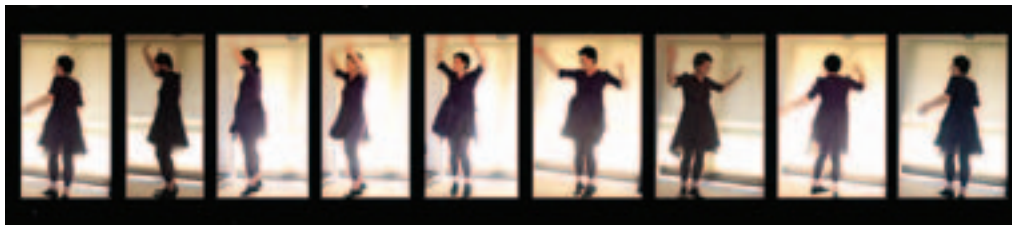


Figure 10. Rekha Rana, *The Purple Dress*, This garment transforms and moves with the wearer: 2008.

garments. The *kurta*,¹¹ *dhoti salwar*,¹² *churidar pajama*,¹³ *angarkha*¹⁴ and *abho*¹⁵ (some of the traditional garments worn in India) that I wore have come back to me as garments that seek to find visibility in the Western context.

My lived experiences have accumulated, manifesting as the depth and variety represented in my clothing designs. Today, articles of clothing such as trousers, jackets, blouses, vests and pants which can be categorised as Western form the repertoire of my design. At the same time, clothing articles from an Eastern aesthetic such as *kimonos*, *kurtas* and *abhos*



Figure 11. Rekha Rana, *The Charcoal Dress*, with back and front pouch. This garment transforms and moves with the wearer: 2008.

are part of who I am as a consumer and a producer of design. I have interpreted these Western and Eastern aesthetics in a collection of six outfits entitled "D-73: Homeward Bound". This was shown at the 2010 fashion show at the School of Fashion, Otago Polytechnic, and then exhibited at the Dunedin School of Art Gallery. In this body of work, Eastern and Western identities have come together as a harmonious entity. The collection is based on a number of key concepts: hidden structures, multiple identities, body and shadow, different positions and the *kurta* as a monumental piece. Fabrics such as leather and fur, which are not traditionally used in India, have been mixed with Indian silk and organza fabrics. The collection is characterised by a bricolage of unusual fabrics and different aesthetic codes. Minimal, simple, clean and sharp cuts have been used with overindulgent, rich fabrics, hence bringing minimalism and opulence together in a dialogue. Handcrafted, layered, ethnographic garments have been compiled into feminine shapes, providing a subtle realisation of the body inside the garments.

Within the spectrum of minimalism and opulence, West and East, fitted and loose, geometric and draped, fashion has the strength to manifest subjectivities and create multiple identities in various contexts. My collection has resulted from a study of such varied spectrums, bringing the past into the present. According to Susan Kaiser, Richard Nagasawa and Sandra Hutton, "postmodern culture offers new opportunities for individuals to 'construct an identity' and 'invest' (their lives) with meaning and that postmodern culture holds out the possibility of greater acceptance of others, based on cross-cultural exchange and appreciation of others' material artefacts."¹⁶ Having confidence in this aspect of postmodern culture, I want to work between art and design to explore the potential of presenting and perpetuating culturally diverse experiences for my audience. The collapse of the distinctions between elite, mass, and street fashion (as stated by Morgado) has opened new possibilities for a scholarly critique of fashion which I want to term 'postfashion' (a term coined by Barbra Vinken): raising awareness of fashion beyond consumerism.



Figure 12. Rekha Rana, *The Bubble Dress*, 100% wool, 2010. Photographed by Simon Swale. Modelled by, Eva Duncan at Ali McD modelling agency.



Figure 13. Rekha Rana, *The Pleated Dress, The Abho and Kimono Jacket Outfit*, 2010. Photographed by Simon Swale. Modelled by from left Georgia Ferguson, and Eva Duncan at Ali McD modelling agency.

The Bubble Dress shown in Figure 12 conceals its structure which is based around a fitted garment called a *choli* combined with a *kurta* which lends sensuality to the body. These hidden structures also operate in other garments in the collection. *The Pleated Dress* in Figure 13 is another adaptation of the *kurta*, where horizontal seams have been hidden in the constructions of pleats.

It has been vital for me to explore alternative methods of creating garments, challenging the methods that I have learnt while studying for the Bachelor of Design (Fashion) in order to extend the boundaries of my knowledge outside its comfort zone. Using unconventional pattern shapes brings an element of interest and a twist to what can be produced as a garment. This is a process which trusts the designer's understanding of body, form and fit. Many Indian garments – and, broadly speaking, many Eastern garments – originate from geometric shapes. The assembly of different rectangular patterns to form a *kurta* is the method used in the construction of the leather jacket in Figure 14. In the exhibition space, this monumental piece hung like a relief sculpture, becoming the interface between fashion and art, construction and sculpture. The visual seam lines have been emphasised with topstitching to draw the viewer's attention to the angularity of its rigid form. Suspending the garment and stripping the body from it also brought out the strong sculptural elements.



Figure 14. Rekha Rana, *The Leather Jacket*. The seams echo the structure of a *kurta*, 2010. Photographed by Ted Whitaker.

The exhibition “D-73: Homeward Bound” sums up the several processes that have informed the making of these garments. There is a space between the making, wearing, exhibiting and viewing of the garment which needs to find visibility. While the garment on a body has movement, once exhibited it becomes a sculpted object. Its complexity can be deciphered by means of a closer view.

The exhibition space was divided into seven sections:

- a row of four outfits with spotlights
- a long *kurta* dress against a backdrop of a *kurta* pattern image
- a leather jacket
- a sheer top hung from the ceiling, projecting shadows on a wall
- a video of projected embroideries
- projections of modelled outfits
- a window with image and text.

The collection of four outfits exhibited in a row in the gallery space had previously been shown on the catwalk (Figure 15), and now found visibility as sculptural pieces in their own right. These pieces have movement when modelled on the catwalk and, as sculptural pieces, they feed the interest of the viewer; who can now focus on the

details within the material selection and construction, and on the surfaces and construction of the pieces. Displaying them in a row formalised them into an order which the viewer unravelled through an inquisitive engagement with materiality and detail. These dressed body forms were lit up to cast shadows behind them, thereby echoing multiple identities (Figures 16 and 17).

The long *kurta* dress stood alone by itself. It had as a backdrop a large pattern drawing of a *kurta*. It is usually worn knee or calf length; however, this garment touches the floor. This particular garment shows my ethnographic context very clearly, and hence its placement within the gallery space needed isolated attention. In a sense, it provided a key to the reading of the other garments in which the flow of Indian dress mutates under the influence of Western elements and overtones. The opaque fur with sheer panels shows hints of a body inside, like a shadow (figure 18).

While the leather jacket is rigid and not open to distortion with movement, its opposite in the exhibition was the drift of the sheer shirt, which has hidden parts in its construction. These were made visible with the play of light. This garment blurs its origins as a shirt, *kurta*, *kimono* or *abho*, as all are interpreted in it as an expression of multiple identities. The garment cast its shadow on the wall as one, a shadow which changed as it moved in a circular track on its own axis.

While the shadow of the drifting sheer shirt highlighted the details within the shirt, the shadows of the embroideries captured in the video next to it embraced my childhood memories of dress within my practice. The embellishment which is crucial to

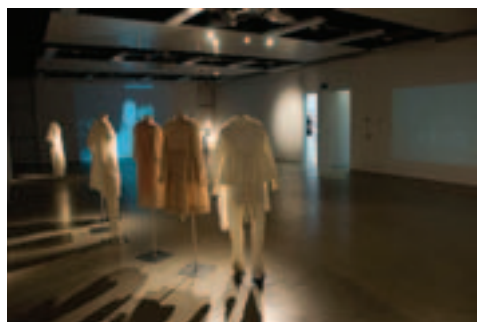
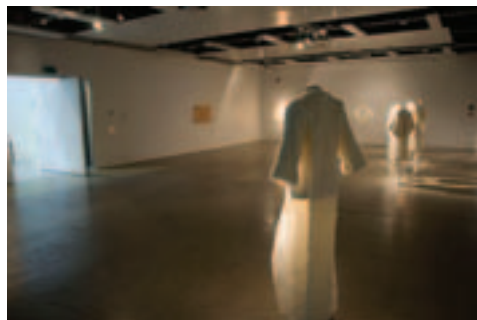


Figure 15. Rekha Rana, *D-73 Homeward Bound*, shown at School of Fashion, Otago Polytechnic 2010 fashion show.

Figure 16. Rekha Rana, *D-73 Homeward Bound* Exhibition shown at The Dunedin School of Art Gallery, 2010. Photographed by Ted Whitaker.

Figure 17. Rekha Rana, *D-73 Homeward Bound* Exhibition shown at The Dunedin School of Art Gallery, 2010, showing shadows of garments worn by body forms. Photographed by Ted Whitaker.

Figure 18. Rekha Rana, *D-73 Homeward Bound* Exhibition, *The Fur Kurta* Dress with side panels in sheer fabric, 2010. Photographed by Ted Whitaker



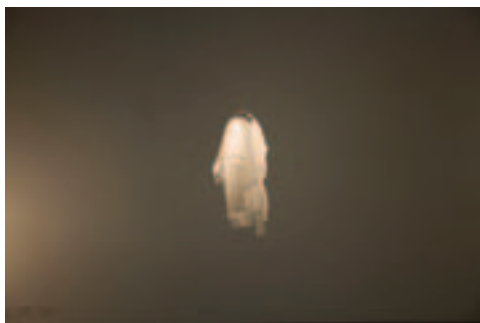


Figure 19. Rekha Rana, D – 73 Homeward Bound Exhibition, The Sheer Shirt, 2010. Photographed by Ted Whitaker.

Figure 20. Rekha Rana, D – 73 Homeward Bound Exhibition, embroideries projected on the wall, 2010. Photographed by Ted Whitaker.

Figure 21. Rekha Rana, D – 73 Homeward Bound Exhibition, model wearing The Bubble Dress and Kimono Jacket projected on the centre wall, 2010. Photographed by Ted Whitaker.

the Eastern aesthetic had been captured in a video of projected embroideries (Figure 20). These embroideries had a journey starting with real embroidered samplers, magnified through projections and then deconstructed into other forms of surface embellishments such as knitted bubbles, pleats and slashes.

These garments are now shown as sculptural pieces. However, they need to be worn in future to further maximise their aesthetic and functional aspects. Their use on the model is made visible through ensembles shown through projections (Figure 21). The scale of these digital projections had a substantial presence in the exhibition, and this reflected the dynamic effect of the work as seen on the catwalk.

Fashion has its own journey, which I have tried to understand through observation and scholarly activity. Vinken talks about the era of 'postfashion,' which has arrived after the completion of the 'hundred-year fashion' era – where designers, instead of inventing and reinventing woman, are now deconstructing 'woman.'¹⁷ Such a deconstruction seems also to be critical of a previously unitary notion of Western fashion. My own work challenges this notion as it deconstructs it through the inclusion of elements from my own non-Western past, elements signifying cultural difference, albeit now incorporated into my current hybridised culture. Through my work I am deconstructing a woman who is a narrative of my own being, created from lived differences and commonalities. I understand that my two worlds cannot always be reconciled, nor do I want them to, but their encounters can be innovatively presented through creative attempts. Cornel West claims that "a new kind of cultural worker is in the making, associated with a new politics of difference The new cultural politics of difference consists of creative responses to the precise circumstances of our present moment."¹⁸ My studio work will be challenging, and also be challenged by, the multiple positions presented through my circumstances.

For me, the 'postfashion' era defines a time where designers are conscious of a new space, wherein fashion is not just for the mere gratification of physical appearance, but for evoking and connecting to the inner self and its cultural values, emotions, memories and experiences. The postfashion era validates the complex design processes through which I want to

establish a bond between the garment, body and space. While I can say that fashion design has allowed me to express my social and aesthetic needs, it has also made me explore new methodologies of work which are going beyond consumerism and questioning the very notion of fashion design. In response to this, my exhibition *D-73: Homeward Bound* has been presented within a visual arts context. This is a new form of empowerment that needs to be tapped into in order to bring change to contemporary culture and contribute to the discourses of fashion, clothing and art.

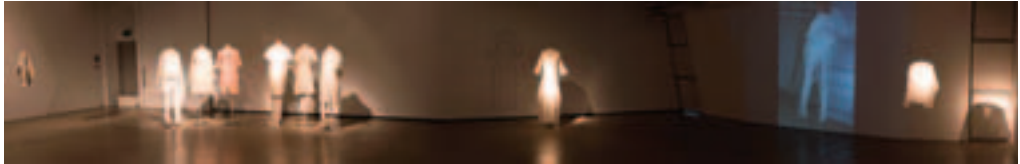


Figure 22. Rekha Rana, *D – 73 Homeward Bound Exhibition*, Panoramic View. Photographed by Emily Hlavac Green.

Rekha Rana Shailaj graduated with a Diploma in Design (Fashion) in 1997 from Otago Polytechnic. In 2004 she translated the diploma into a degree with a research paper on embroideries from the western region of India. In 2011, she completed her Masters of Fine Arts (Design) at Otago Polytechnic. As a conceptual designer, Rekha's research is situated in a diverse multicultural environment where social enquiry is tolerant of social differences, ambiguity and conflicts in the creation of identities. Presenting her work regularly at national and international conferences and in exhibition spaces has allowed her to contribute to current debates on fashion.

- 1 H Clark, "Slow + Fashion – an Oxymoron – or a Promise for the Future ...?," *Fashion Theory*, 12:4 (2008), 445-54.
- 2 B Vinken, "Yohji Yamamoto: The Secret Sewn In," in her *Fashion Zeitgeist: Trends and Cycles in the Fashion System* (New York: Berg, 2005), 110.
- 3 "Revolution," in *Unlimited: Comme Des Garçons*, eds S Shimizu and 'NHK' (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 2005).
- 4 "Body," in *Unlimited: Comme Des Garçons*, eds S Shimizu and 'NHK' (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 2005).
- 5 *The Fashion Business: Theory, Practice, Image*, eds N White and I Griffiths (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2000), 82-3.
- 6 MA Morgado, "Coming to Terms with Postmodern: Theories and Concepts of Contemporary Culture and their Implications for Apparel Scholars," *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal*, 14:1 (1996), 41-53.
- 7 V Flusser, *The Freedom of the Migrant: Objections to Nationalism*, trans. Kenneth Kronenberg (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 2003), 25.
- 8 M Merleau-Ponty, "Other Selves and the Human World," in his *Phenomenology of Perception* (London: Routledge, 1962), 405-25.
- 9 N Forgione, "The Shadow Only: Shadow and Silhouette in Late Nineteenth-century Paris," *Art Bulletin*, 81:3 (September 1999), 490-512.
- 10 Vinken, "Yohji Yamamoto: The Secret Sewn In," 110.
- 11 Ritu Kumar explains that "Kurtas are made up of straight panels of fabric stitched together at the selvedge to form a tunic to which wide sleeves are attached at right angles." R Kumar, "Women's Garments," in her *Costumes and Textiles of Royal India* (London: Christie's Books, 1999), 246.
- 12 The *dhoti*, an uncut draped garment (menswear in India), has been converted into a stitched trouser called *salwar*.
- 13 *Churidar pajamas* are trousers fitted around the lower legs and loose around the waist, tied with a draw string. They were traditionally worn in Mughul courts.
- 14 The *angarkha* can be broadly defined as a long-sleeved gown or coat. The key distinguishing feature of the *angarkha* is the round-edged, sometimes triangular opening and the inner panel known as the *purdah*, which is inserted into the cut-out portion of the yoke to cover the chest.
- 15 The *abho* is a variation of the *kurta* that appears like a dress which is gathered into the waist.
- 16 Morgado, "Coming to Terms with Postmodern."
- 17 B Vinken, "What Fashion Strictly Divided," in her *Fashion Zeitgeist: Trends and Cycles in the Fashion System* (New York: Berg, 2005), 3-36.
- 18 S Seidman, *The Postmodern Turn* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 65.

SMOKE AND MIRRORS: PAINTING, ISOLATION AND TRADITION: EUROPE 2010

Michael Greaves



Figure 1. Michael Greaves, *Monumental Hoxton* (2010), oil on canvas, 74.6 x 71.6 cm.

In the cold month of July 2010 I boarded a small aircraft early in the morning at Dunedin Airport, embarking on what one might liken to a contemporary version of the 'Grand Tour,' part of the cultural 'lore' of New Zealanders' right of passage or 'OE.' I had a huge sense of anticipation. Every aspect of the trip had been considered and planned, but in that all-too-virtual way where the interface between accounts from friends, images, ideas, collections of words seem somewhat magnificent and inadequate at the same time. All of this, all the planning fades in a millisecond like the illusion of smoke and mirrors at a cheap magic show when you are confronted with the actual experience.

As the now much larger plane descended to land at Frankfurt International Airport some time early in the morning of Wednesday 14 July 2010, I saw my first European monument. It was a defining structure of the power of the twentieth century. It seemed to be breathing, belching actually. Vapour rose under power; in a very unnatural way, from the cooling towers of a nuclear power plant some 200 metres to my left; the red and white checkers of a geometrically challenged building attached to this gigantic thrown pot seemed most alien to me, just the tip of the blurring sensation of history I would encounter in the next six weeks.

What impressed me most about this introduction to Europe, reflected in its people and in its art, was exposed right then in a strange way. In this case a nuclear reactor; which would ignite historical tropes of devotion and remembrance encountered in less industrial corners of Europe. This fascinated me.

This very public and civic monument, both utilitarian and invisibly threatening, expressing a gargantuan form of fear, really reflected some of the histories of the continent. Upon reflection, I have never encountered so many expressions of implicit and explicit violence as in the galleries of Europe, and here I was considering the imposing threat of a 'thrown pot.' These contradictions engaged me more than I expected and became real considerations in the work I was going to make in Europe for a show titled "Smoke and Mirrors: Painting, Isolation and Tradition" planned for my return. Following this short introduction to Germany in transit, I began my 'Grand Tour' in London; first stop was the National Gallery.

At the National Gallery I made an effort to find *The Baptism of Christ* by Piero della Francesca. I had never seen a painting made by the godfather of perspective and I was eagerly anticipating my first 'hair-standing-on-the-back-of-my-neck-moment.'



Figure 3. Michael Greaves, "Smoke and Mirrors," installation, September 2010.



Figure 2. Michael Greaves, *What Now? What Next?* (2010), watercolour on paper; unframed, 20 x 12 cm.

The painting didn't disappoint, but it was so unlike what I had expected. It was hidden away in a dimly lit room, curated into a mini show that included the *The Arnolfini Portrait*, another incredible moment. To see these works as they are, without text, out of the page of a book, is a strangely surreal experience. The surfaces were seductive, unlike the reproductions. The painter's 'hand' was visible, even in the deft brushstrokes of the van Eyck. This was and is an important part of my engagement with painting, one that I find challenged in much New Zealand painting where the surfaces are almost 'too' pure.

Piero's work was much larger than I imagined, even though I knew and had measured out the dimensions many times, 168 x 116 cm, tempera on panel It seemed so collaged, so constructed, so unnatural. I understood Piero's method, his mathematical numerations on proportion; I just expected these to be more fluid. The real surprise of this painting, however, was constructed from Piero's over-rationalisation of the painting's application and scale. There was monumentality in this painting, an architectural order

and an iconographic status. Regardless of my geographical environment – London, Paris, Dresden, Leipzig, Prague or Berlin – the elements of Piero's painting were revisited over and over in all that I saw.

I began to see this painting reflected everywhere, in the city environs of Europe, in the spaghetti-like arterial routes entering Prague. The way Paris was ordered post-Hausmann. The way that everything is seemingly rational and proportional, based upon some invisible rule. In life, the monuments, reflecting civic ideals, are also in proportion to their place, but not to the public who observe them. There is a disproportionate scaling in the civic architecture and art objects of Europe, either greatly enlarged or small and minutely detailed. As in painting, these objects/monuments project a kind of imaginative space, contained in connectivity with narrative, history and a visual discourse. The narrative, though, is ever-changing with the interpretations and interactions the viewing public/tourists bring and reinvent daily. These spaces are both contained and reflected, in terms of what comes before in relation to what is added after; as the city space changes and shifts through time, a layering of present sensibility and devotional formulations of space. I found a connection here between the geometry of Piero and the intention of these public monuments – the connection being a collaging of elements, ordered by a rational plan, but altered in physical space that was legitimised in the imagination.

The gold and bronze architecture was static, while an ever-changing cultural and colourful collection of people somehow managed to navigate, maneuvering without seemingly even noticing or acknowledging it. The monumental, static sculptural elements of the city acted as ambivalent traffic lights and geographical place markers. Touchstones like the statues that span the Charles Bridge in Prague, the elephants at the entrance to the Berlin Zoo, and of course the Albert Memorial in London – all of which created crossing zones of cultural significance to me in my wanderings.

The work that I made for a show to be held in the Dunedin School of Art Gallery upon my return in September, was made either in response to Piero's work or in a projection of some other kind of space that I was encountering in both the painted image or the European terra firma. A strange kind of geometric space began to realise itself. There was less of a concern with the relationships and proportionalities of the objects that I was considering in the work, more of an overpainting of a kind of geometry, a connective intangible element associated with painting and painting's history. It was apparent to me after seeing Piero's work up close that his painting was a nexus of problems that on graph paper may be rationalised and pure, but in fact are far from pure – much like painting in general.

Impurities realised in seeing the Piero up close – scale, mistake in application or line, problematic colour value or disproportionate importance of object – became for me the most important considerations, above anything else. I set about painting/drawing/erasing every day, either in situ or upon reflection. I did not make preparatory studies; whatever was made during the day was important. The work existed as a single act, both a reflection and a construction, using simple and quick materials on simple and cheap media. I was concerned primarily with the



Figure 4. Michael Greaves, *The world around here is made of gold*, graphite and glitter on paper; unframed, 20 x 12 cm.

relationship between the value of what I was making to that of what I was observing. The cheapness of the souvenirs I had brought back with me and the decorative embellishments that I could propose were important, while at the same time trying to render an idea of 'impossibility' in the painted works.

These works are a record of my relationships with the valued and constructed masters of Europe isolated from their tradition – a mere apparition of smoke in my view.

"Smoke and Mirrors: Painting, Isolation and Tradition" is only a beginning, a first entrance into the impurities of painting for me, illustrating the ruse inherent in the monumentality of the medium.



Figure 5. Michael Greaves, "Smoke and Mirrors," installation, September 2010.

Michael Greaves is a painter and lecturer in Painting at the Dunedin School of Art at Otago Polytechnic / Te Kura Matatini ki Otago, in Dunedin, New Zealand. His own work and research is driven by the seemingly contradictory world of the maker and the object, isolation and irrelevance, common memories and collective histories, failed utopias and relationships between seemingly uncooperative imagery. Michael holds a BA in Art History and Theory, a BFA in Painting and a postgraduate degree in teaching.

DECONSTRUCTING HEAVEN: THE FABRICATION OF URBAN UTOPIAS AND REALITIES

Kerry Ann Lee



Figure 1. Kerry Ann Lee, *Electric Warrior* (2009), raw wire sculptures on overhead projectors. Photograph: John Lake.

"Da Shi Jie/The Great World: Shanghai Works 2009-2010" [大世界：2009-2010 创作于上海] was an exhibition by Kerry Ann Lee held at Toi Pōneke Gallery in Wellington. This was the first presentation in New Zealand of works created as an artist-in-residence and solo exhibiting artist in Shanghai. From 29 April to 20 May 2011, the gallery was transformed into a 'deconstruction site' – incorporating visual and material meditations on culture, scale and monument, where big dreams are built on top of shifting terrain.

The following excerpt is taken from a public discussion held at Toi Pōneke Gallery, on Thursday 19 May 2011, at the opening of "Da Shi Jie/ The Great World." A conversation about cityscapes and cultural production in flux in

Shanghai and Wellington was had between the artist, Kerry Ann Lee, and guest speakers Sophie Jerram (curator, Letting Space), Dr Luo Hui (lecturer, School of Languages and Cultures, Victoria University of Wellington, and director of the Confucius Institute) and David Cross (associate professor, Massey School of Fine Arts).

David Cross: The first area of discussion that Kerry Ann floated to me was of the city as a dynamic site for memory, mythology and identity formation. I wanted to begin by putting something to all three of you to pick up and respond to it as you choose to, and it's about this idea of the city and what we might mean by that: What do you understand by the notion of the city in our contemporary context, and is it possible to connect Wellington and Shanghai in any meaningful way beyond the putative identification that they are both 'cities?' Wellington, in contrast, seems like a small town; you could nearly blink and miss it – but at the same time, unlike Shanghai, it has the international cachet of being a capital city. There is little swirling multiplicity that I'd associate Wellington with Shanghai, but then I haven't been to Shanghai.

Kerry Ann Lee: For me, the understanding of the city as a site for possibility and change is really important. A city can mean different things for different people. Like how Wellington is a big city for some people, and we can take that for granted if we've grown up or lived here long enough to feel it's more like a village. Shanghai has a different sense of scale and identity as a 'dynamic future city,' that it wants to be a model for a future notion of the city. It's interesting, because I felt in Shanghai a noticeable difference between Eastern and Western understandings of the city.

Luo Hui: It never occurred to me to compare Wellington to Shanghai. It's quite a stretch of the geography and of the imagination because in terms of scale, as Kerry Ann mentioned, they are vastly different. One's a smallish city and the other's a big supercity. As for similarities, they're both port cities. Although Shanghai's not on the ocean, it has that culture associated with it – that it's some kind of hub, and that really is one of the major factors in the formation of a Shanghai identity: that it is a portal, China's connection to the world.

Kerry Ann, you play a lot with the sense of scale in your work. How much of it has to do with a visceral reaction, moving from a smaller country, smaller city to a huge country, huge city? Artistic concerns aside, how much of it is a desire to control your own environment?

KAL: One of the key concepts in the show is the interface with what I felt was a very alien space, in that I felt like somewhat of an alien there. There were these strange disconnects with being in China. I'm of Chinese descent, but my sense of Chinese space is very different moving from Wellington, doing work and looking at Chinese identity in New Zealand to going overseas and looking at Chinatowns – like in Manhattan, where I was based doing a residency.¹ So from Chinatowns to 'Chinaland' things shift quite a bit. The mythology – what you read and understand and what you formulate about these places – is totally blown out of the water when you are actually there. When you ask about a visceral experience of Shanghai, it was very much a sense of trying to locate myself in such a big, huge, swirling, vibrant, shifting city. For example, the wire works in the show, *Electric Warrior*, was the first body of work that I did, and it was a conscious shift in materials where I built my own armoury to protect myself in the city. It's a collection of 1:1 scale-size objects I made and it was sort of tongue-in-cheek, talking about the difficulties of working and using things in this new environment I found myself in – whereas the more immediate pieces, the photomontages, are projecting aspects of the New Zealand landscape tradition onto some of the futuristic building forms I was encountering.² These were really amazing spectacles. Structures felt like they were constantly collapsing and moving around me in Shanghai.

Sophie Jerram: In response to your question, David, about what cities might be, I think of cities as a commons, and that's the reason we don't all want to hang out in the suburbs – because we don't share memory in the suburbs, we share memory in the city. I'm really intrigued to know, Kerry Ann, if shared memories are possible in a city the size of Shanghai. I imagine there are pockets within Shanghai that you can locate other people within, but I'm interested to know as a whole: is it possible to do that?



Figure 2. Left to right: Luo Hui, Kerry Ann Lee, Sophie Jerram and David Cross in conversation. Toi Pōneke Gallery, Wellington, 2011. (Image courtesy of the artist.)



Figures 3 and 4. Kerry Ann Lee, *Lilliput* (2010) and *The Diamond Republic* (2010), digital montage, 48 x 68 cm. From the "AM Park" series. (Image courtesy of the artist.)

KAL: It's like asking whether or not you can get the helicopter out of the scene to try and make sense of that space. For me, the idea of collective memory or collective stories is what I was trying to make sense of through a heavy process of reflection during and after the residency. I was over there for four months and the first month I found a real extreme hit, and I was spending a lot of time on my own exploring the city and getting lost, riding buses and having these really amazing 'lost in translation' moments getting purposefully culture-shocked, which was one of my

intentions for going over there. What I brought back and what I've been synthesising since then have been from my own experiences, so I've been trying to touch on other stories, memories and narratives in the city. Things like me capturing events outside the bus window on the way back home to the studio villa from downtown Shanghai at night. I found my experiences were very fleeting and precious. That's probably why I try and take care in creating work that responds to those moments.

DC: One of the things I find really curious about the idea of the residency, especially a place like Shanghai, is how you're forced to orientate yourself very quickly, but there's so much chance kicks in, like where you stay, who you meet, what time of year it is. What I'm interested to hear more about are your processes for engaging with the residency in a place like Shanghai where you have marginal context, and how you approach that engagement with the city. Do you plan intensively, do you go on Google Maps and suss out week after week where things are, or do you just turn up and let chance take effect? A place like Shanghai only exists in my imagination. I am really curious about that sense of orientation and the strategies you put in place, negotiated over that period of four months. Can you maybe talk a little bit about your method to deal with Shanghai as a city?

KAL: Orientating myself in Shanghai for the first time involved intensive strategic military planning each night in preparation to travel around the city to get materials and to attend scheduled meetings. island6 Arts Centre, who were overseeing my residency in 2009,³ were really good in making sure I got to meet the necessary people in the Shanghai arts scene (gallerists, critics and other artists) to get a sense of what was going on. Also, I had the help of an assistant, who helped me with translation and would sometimes accompany me on my trips. One of the interesting facts about Chen, my assistant and friend, was that he didn't know much English, and I didn't know much Chinese. He taught me some of the local ways, like how to catch the buses and the subway lines. I really loved getting underground and going through the subway systems and geeking out on maps and visual diagrams. I also attempted to keep up some level of conversational Mandarin Chinese, so I took it upon myself to visit a good Chinese tutor once a week and practice some basic Chinese. Each night I would map out my routes, where I'd need to go and how I'd get there, any particular phrases or conversational terms I'd need to be prepared for in case of any strange encounters. As much preparation as I did, each time I'd go out on any of my missions there would always be chance. This would either make or break or help or hinder what I had to do, and that was part of the thrill. I had some amazing times and some really unexpected encounters. I don't think there's any straight methodology with it.

DC: In the art world we're becoming increasingly concerned about people turning up and making superficial statements about cities, knocking out an artwork then bugging off again, to put it in a colloquial way. Over a four-month period there are only very finite things you can ever pick up, and I'm interested in that aspect of the residency in terms of place responsiveness. Did you identify some particular themes or ideas that were pertinent to your practice that you focused on, or was it very much 'turn up let it soak in,' come back and respond to it?

KAL: I always imagined it to be this unfinished piece, because it's quite a personal line of interrogation – ideas around identity formation and notions of authenticity were themes that came out, and again, I mentioned about scale. That was probably more pertinent when I got there and was experiencing the city. Language is also interesting for me, and not just spoken language but visual language and looking at print media, with my background in graphic art. I knew I wouldn't be able to eat the whole cake. One of the most important things I wanted from it was to get a sense of putting myself in that city and learning about how it works through my own positioning. It's a unique privileged position being an artist in residence. There are expectations that you'd go over there and have that time, create some work, seal it up in a box and put it on a shelf – but these experiences, when you let them get under your skin, they're a bit harder to shake off.

SJ: You're talking about identity there and I'm curious to know broadly whether you felt, as a New Zealand-born Chinese person, you had more of a sense of mandate, towards utopia, towards these new cityscapes you constructed. The idea of utopia or aspiring towards what a possible future city could look like – you've clearly imagined and spent some time considering. Did you feel your view was largely different to, say, that of Chen about

your ability to effect change? I guess I'm asking about your sense of agency. Did you think that as a New Zealander you had more of that elbowroom conceptually?

KAL: I think the sense of agency is a very good area to discuss as a visiting artist, and how much freedom you have to express or expand your wings. My residency in Shanghai was at a time right before the 2010 World Expo.⁴ The Expo's motto was 'Better City, Better Life,' and all those kind of utopian messages, translated in Chinese and in English, were freckled around the city through media and was really part of that world that I dropped into in Shanghai in 2009. I think it's a very pure vision – the idea of the city as being great, but it could be better, and here are some ways of making it better, and here are some sketches. I felt like I was tuning into that dream. The aspirations and feelings about it, outside of the actual realities, are coming from a people-focused place. As someone coming from New Zealand, the conceptual space you occupy can sometimes feel a bit wider.

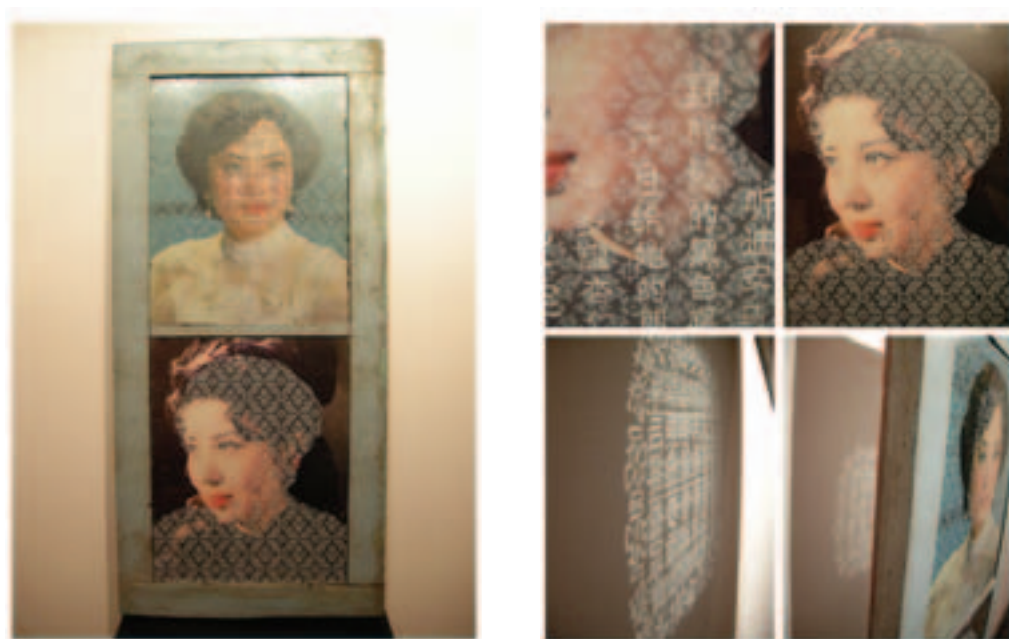


Figure 5 and 6. Kerry Ann Lee, *Ladyface/Almond Sugar* (2009) (detail), paper cutting on digital print, found window frame, glass and plastic adhesive, 80 x 37 x 3.4 cm. From *Chinese Relatives 2*. (Image courtesy of the artist.)

LH: I wanted to say I really like the show, congratulations. There's a lot going on. There's playfulness, as how you've handled the landmarks, icons and the signature buildings of Shanghai. There is this nihilistic gleefulness that I like and there's tenderness, with the picture frames salvaged from demolished buildings, the posters on the walls and your playing with the Chinese characters.⁵ There's also intimacy and eroticism, seduction with the miniature sculptures and the screen, and in the video⁶ I see the gritty side of the work and city as well, so I think it's a really very rich exhibition. Like how it's put together: there are different bodies of work to create one whole. I think there's an underlying narrative, but it's not spelt out – it's implicit and it's up to the viewer to make the story out of it. Certainly I have my version of the story, but back to Shanghai as the subject of your work.

I've visited Shanghai several times and I feel that it's a world of its own and is a very insular kind of city. You can feel incredibly lonely in that bustling, exciting city. And being Chinese, I feel that. Interestingly, paradoxically, part of that has to do with language. Because we're not just talking about the Chinese characters, the written form

of the language, also spoken language. Shanghainese people speak Shanghainese Dialect and it's very difficult to understand, perhaps more difficult than Cantonese for me. It's really a foreign language if you're not brought up in that language environment – so being an outsider; being non-Shanghainese, people can always tell that you're not from Shanghai. It doesn't matter how you dress, how you behave. Even with your best friends in Shanghai it's very funny. They all speak very good Mandarin Chinese, which is the standard language spoken in all the major cities and official media across China, but as soon as they talk amongst themselves, they switch back to Shanghainese as if it's some kind of exclusive club membership you're not part of. So it's quite frustrating.

I was thinking of how Kerry Ann might have experienced that kind of alienation on a different level. I remember reading an interview somewhere with you saying, "I don't speak Chinese, I'm Kiwi Chinese, I can get away with playing with the characters." But the question is how much do you think you can get away with? I really like the creative way you construct grammatically incorrect Chinese sentences, and yet they're comprehensible to me as someone who understands both Chinese and English. I actually quite like them because it reflects who you are, and visually they're beautiful. But my only little problem was when I was reading the flyer where you provided English translations to those sentences – you provided very fluent, smooth English sentences so I wonder, because I'm a real stickler to translation as I do literary translation myself, if you'd actually have to create English sentences that were just as awkward to really reflect that dilemma or in-between position you found yourself in – maybe that the translation part reflects your own linguistic relationship with the culture.

Kerry Ann Lee is a visual artist, designer and educator from Wellington, based in Dunedin as senior lecturer at the Otago Polytechnic School of Design. Lee has exhibited internationally and is also known for her self-published fanzines with titles such as *Help*, *My Snowman's Burning*, *Celebretard* and *Permanent Vacation* enjoying international exposure and readership over the past 13 years.

- 1 Artist in residence at the School of Visual Arts (SVA) Summer Residency Program, June 2009.
- 2 A series of large-scale photomontage prints by Kerry Ann Lee were exhibited at "AM Park," a solo exhibition at an art space, Shanghai, in June 2010.
- 3 Wellington Asia Residency Exchange (WARE) residency 2009, supported by Asia New Zealand Foundation, Wellington City Council and island6 Arts Centre.
- 4 The 2010 World Expo was an international exposition aimed at a domestic Asian market. The organisers anticipated 70 million visitors to Shanghai over the period of the expo, which ran from May until October 2010.
- 5 *Chinese Relatives* series (2009).
- 6 *Electric Warrior* (2009), *Geometricity* (2011) and video clips taken from bus windows (2009).

LOST IN LEIPZIG

Anita DeSoto



Figure 1. Anita DeSoto, *Other Wordly* (2011), oil on canvas, 183 x 137 cm.

'Lost in Leipzig' sums up my three-month artist's residency experience in 2010 at Leipzig International Art Residency programme. Located in the continent's largest former cotton mill, the Spinnerei is now dedicated to art-related businesses and artists' studios.

Leipzig is an East German city of around half a million people, and is still in the process of realising the reunification of Germany. The enormous cultural impact of this political upheaval has given rise to an impressive new school of painters over the last 20 years. Of particular interest to me was the work of Neo Rauch (b. 1960), hailed by some as Germany's greatest living painter; his wife Rosa Loy (b. 1958) and friend Tilo Baumgartel (b. 1972).



Figure 2. Anita DeSoto, *Coming Home* (2011), oil on canvas, 183 x 137 cm.

All three are natives of Saxony and feature the human figure extensively in their work. Their formal artistic training in the GDR laid a highly skilled technical foundation for their now abstracted and surreal figurative scenes combined with strong narrative elements reflecting GDR history. These artists had their studios neighbouring mine and, while I had little contact with them, the Spinnerei celebrated their work with much enthusiasm, and the influence of their work was everywhere.

I became engrossed in absorbing the recent and ancient history of that part of the world, and this had an immediate impact on my ideas.

When I began this residency, I had anticipated what I was going to paint there. How could I have been so wrong? Instead, I experienced an artistic crisis that had me thinking I would never paint another figure. Ironically, I had flown across the world to the most exciting location for figure painting. It has taken many months for me to translate all that inspired me into a context relevant for me, and embrace figure painting again.

The critique offered by visiting artists to the residency programme was challenging and valuable, and mostly relevant. The approach offered by the Leipzig School of painters has encouraged me to work towards the creation of a mood in a work, rather than the use of symbol to create a narrative; using the uncanny, the *heimlich* and the *unheimlich*.



Figure 3. Anita DeSoto, *Primal Wound* (2011), oil on canvas, 90 x 123 cm.



Figure 4. Anita DeSoto, *Portrait of Abigail* (2011), oil on canvas, 50 x 60 cm.

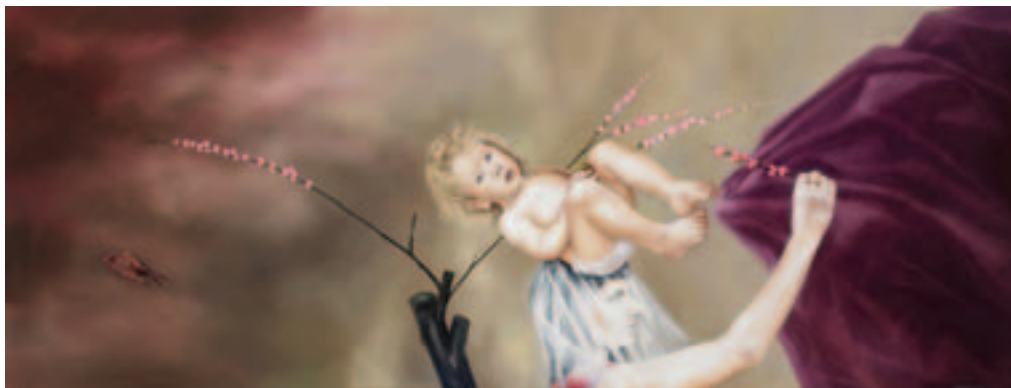


Figure 5. Anita DeSoto, *Mater*, (2011), oil on canvas, 76 x 200 cm.

Anita DeSoto is a lecturer in drawing in the Dunedin School of Art at Otago Polytechnic. She has been exhibiting nationally for the last 11 years. Located within the Neo-Romantic style, DeSoto's paintings point to a recurring theme of perception coloured by desire – nothing is quite what it might first seem. There is an evocation of the uncanny in her work, a continual playing off between the *heimlich* and the *unheimlich*. Her life-size figures are often engaged in, or subject to, inexplicable activities. Oils on canvas, her paintings use classical Renaissance brush techniques. Anita DeSoto is also inspired by the surrealist tradition, her work invoking the romantic surrealism of artists such as Leonora Fini.

TRAVELLING TO POST-WAR IRAQ IN 2010-11: HISTORIES AND DESIGNS IN CONTEXT

Qassim Saad

INTRODUCTION

Since I left Iraq in 1991, I have made only two trips back to visit family; politics, uncertain situations and instability are the main reasons keeping me in exile (*ghurba* or *manfa* in Arabic). I made the first trip back to Iraq at the end of December 2003 and early January 2004. This timing was repeated for the second trip, at the end of December 2010 and early January 2011. On both trips I stayed in the family home in Fallujah.¹



Figure 1. Flight path to Baghdad; the total flying time from Dunedin to Baghdad is 24 hours one way.

The period between the two trips was associated with great tragedy for us as a family, as well as for the entire population of Fallujah, resulting from the first and second battles fought by the US army in the city during mid-to-late 2004. On 3 April 2004, a few days before Fallujah was plunged into the first battle, my family and I experienced a massive loss when our mother passed away; her death reflected the absence in Iraq of basic health services, which she needed to treat her diabetes.

Then shortly after, during November and December 2004, the entire civilian population of Fallujah was forced to leave the city before the second battle took place, one since described as the “bloodiest battle of the Iraq War.”² After two months in exile, my family returned to Fallujah to find the family home destroyed by fire, while the building housing our factory which produced domestic furniture had been bombed. For more than a year during these tragedies, I had no way of communicating with my family.



Figure 2. The Saad family home in Fallujah; the main entrance following the 2004 battle.

In this paper, I will consider my experience as a designer – thinking of design within its wider contexts – in post-war Iraq, discussing issues and presenting examples collected during my most recent trip to Iraq with the aim of articulating this travel experience from my position as a person “out of place.”¹³

HOME – TRADITIONS AND MATERIALITY

My memories of the design of our home were disrupted during this last trip. After my family had returned from their period of exile in 2005, the first job they did was to rebuild the family home, as well as their business. Because of the large size of our extended family, the original structure of our old family home was restored after the fire to accommodate my younger brothers' families. A new house was built on a section created by joining a small part of the original family home with land taken from its 'front garden.' This new house now accommodates the family of my third younger brother, as well as my three sisters, and is again known as the 'family home.'

My hardest task during my last trip was to familiarise myself with this 'new' family home. I kept asking where this and that was, and walking between the two houses in order to retrieve memories associated with specific spots, designs and material objects from the previous home. My memories of our earlier home keep my strongest emotions anchored there. I had personally designed and crafted all the joinery for it, as well as most of the indoor furniture, which had long remained a model of style and quality workmanship. Unfortunately, none of these objects had survived, except for a few pieces that were located on the second storey. “When our home is destroyed, or irrevocably changed, or is inaccessible to us (after emigration, for example), it can seem as if we ourselves are no longer whole, or are suffering bereavement.”¹⁴

The designs of newly built domestic houses in Iraq as I saw them during my last trip were totally different from the styles that were dominant from the 1950s to the 1980s. During these decades, Iraqis lived in an atmosphere of modernisation and the implementation of energetic state policies for economic development, activity reflected in their transformed lifestyles, especially in urban areas.⁵ New architectural styles were created to fill the massive demand for modern constructions in both public buildings and private houses. Certainly, local technical skills were stretched during this modification process, resulting in hybrid styles of modern architecture influencing the design of domestic houses — throughout the Middle East and in Iraq especially.

Iraqi families are used to living collectively. Because they comprise large extended families (my family, for example, has 12 members: two grandparents, two parents, and eight brothers and sisters), the traditional design of Iraqi houses provided creative solutions to the problem of accommodating large numbers of people living together. One solution was the 'open courtyard' (*houshe* in Arabic), designed to provide the family with a central meeting place during the day.⁶ This area was surrounded by utility rooms and bedrooms, and had effective links to the hospitality section of the house, to ensure privacy for the family and hospitality for their guests. The design of houses built since



Figure 3. Hybrid styles of modern architecture influenced the design of domestic houses in Iraq during the 1950s-1980s.

the 1950s has not coped well with the traditional lifestyle of Iraqi families, especially regarding their collective way of living – despite the many studies undertaken by respected Iraqi architects (such as Rfiat al-chadirjy) to create unique designs for domestic houses in Iraq.

In place of the 'open courtyard' of traditional designs, architects of modern houses introduced a 'living area' created by joining the kitchen, dining and family sitting room together. However, from the point of view of practicality, in many houses this 'living area' failed to fully accommodate Iraqi customs and traditional ways of living – a subject addressed in numerous architectural and anthropological studies of the living practices of Iraqi families. Although these modern houses provided sound, durable structures, improved utility rooms and many modern conveniences, they failed to meet the needs of family members for appropriate interaction.

In design terms, these modern houses were functionally structured, mainly built from flat-planed walls clad in cement and brick or stone, with steel-framed glass windows on the exterior. In average-sized houses (3-4 bedrooms), the interior spaces were divided between two storeys; the first floor was dedicated to living and hospitality areas which covered 30-50 percent of this part of the building. Families sought to provide the best-quality furniture and accessories suitable for the hospitality activities of sitting and dining. The bedrooms were divided between the two storeys.

However, the new designs of domestic houses in some Iraqi cities and towns that I saw on my visits home have totally changed from my memories of previous architectural styles. The exterior façades of these new buildings

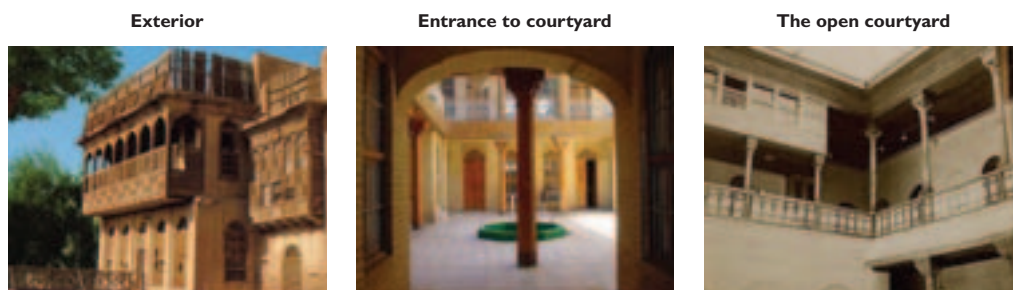


Figure 4. Some traditional designs of domestic houses in Iraq during the 18th and early 19th centuries.

display a style of heterogeneous architectural composition obtained by borrowing and modifying – with reference to local tastes and construction techniques – classical elements from ancient Western architectural styles mixed with traditional Iraqi ornamental elements. One popular current design features two long columns dominating the house entrance associated with both flat and curved walls, the whole edifice rising to two storeys and exhibiting a spontaneous mix of natural and synthetic construction materials such as marble, ceramic tiles, cement and wood, with large aluminium windows and lots of ready-made accessories. The interior design shows an attempt to restore the concept of the 'open courtyard' – although the open space in the contemporary version lies between the two wings of the house and is covered by a flat or dome-shaped roof. At the same time, these new houses maintain old traditions by dedicating an even larger proportion of the site for hospitality purposes than their predecessors, areas furnished extensively with accessories in a mix of styles.

There is no doubt that the contemporary design of houses in Iraq is addressing local experience – but in the sense that experience “is not something that is exclusively internal to the individual but is affected by the environment.”¹⁷ By attending to their inhabitants' collective ways of living, these new designs offer a way of adapting individuality to the living environment. The rebirth of tradition in the design of Iraqi houses exemplifies Dewey's dictum: “every experience both takes up something from those which have gone before and modifies in some way the quality of those which come after.”¹⁸

Nevertheless, from a design perspective, many contemporary buildings are disfigured by the use of fakes and poor imitations, reflecting the country's profound, long-term deprivation and isolation, weakening its continuity and connection with the past. Essentially, political and administrative corruption in Iraq is hindering progress towards developing policies and building codes based on consultation with professional designers with a view to accommodating the country's current needs and lifestyles.



Figure 5. An example of the contemporary design of domestic houses in Iraq.

THE TRANSITION OF MATERIAL OBJECTS

The process by which humans give value to products is a fascinating subject. The sophisticated philosophical arguments that fuel the constant debate on this subject in design studies circles are aimed at very practical solutions – to help manufacturers produce quality products and allow designers continued recourse to classical solutions through modifying the product's physical characteristics of form, function, materials and production methods, with the ultimate aim of producing consumer satisfaction.⁹ However, the principles of human-centred design (HCD) are introducing designers to the new phenomenon of 'user experience.' This approach offers specific design methods for designers to enhance the relationship between objects and people. The concept of experience, according to Margolin, is about “the Human interaction with products – material or immaterial things that are conceived and planned. This interaction has two dimensions: Operative and Reflective. The operative refers to the way we make use of products for our activities. The reflective addresses the way we think or feel about a product and give it meaning.”¹⁰

At this point I would like to present an interesting example that helps us reflect on the subject of user experience. My example relates to the potential of a consumerist lifestyle which now faces Iraqis. The realities of war and economic sanctions greatly limited the importation of new products, and Iraqis managed to sustain themselves very well with what was available in their homes — especially 'old-fashioned' and 'quality branded' consumer products. However, since 2003, a massive flood of cheap and imitation-brand products has suddenly appeared and continues

to fill the markets, forcing Iraqis to change their buying habits in the direction of a voracious consumerism.

During my stay at home I noticed a brand-new water cooler in the house; my family clearly appreciated it very much, and had even covered it with a nice hand-stitched cloth. They told me that this was the best brand of the many available in the local market, and then my sister said:

“Qassim, have you noticed?”

I said, “Noticed what?”

“Your laptop [a MacBook] has the same logo that’s on our water cooler!”



Figure 6. The brand-new water cooler! The Saad family home in Fallujah, 2011.

POLITICS AND ART EDUCATION

During my stay in Iraq, I received some unexpected and unwelcome news regarding the future of art education in the higher Iraqi arts institutions. Here is the news as I heard it on the radio, and cited as commentary from bloggers:

The Iraqi Ministry of Education has banned theater and music classes in Baghdad’s Fine Arts Institute, and ordered the removal of statues showcased at the entrance of the institute. No explanation was given for the move.

Some students consider religious reasons to be the real motive.

“Prohibiting theatre and music in the institute for its so called ‘violation’ of religion is only an individual opinion touted by some people hailing from religious parties, but it is contradictory to the opinion of most religious clerics and scholars,” writer and politician Dhaya al-Shakarchi told Alarabiya.net.

Students also fear that the ban will extend to include other arts such as photography, directing, sculpting, and drawing.¹¹

Living in modern Iraq means being prepared to face all the problems that may arise from the absence of basic services, including security and safety for oneself and one’s family. Or, to put it another way, one must always be ready to accept the worst possible scenario, any time and anywhere. This is the reality of life for the majority of Iraqis today. However, at the time of my last visit I was temporarily ‘in place’ – a departure from my almost permanent situation of being ‘out of place.’ My peculiar circumstances caused me to spontaneously retrieve my previous memories in order to evaluate and deal with issues that arose while I was there.

However, this news of the banning of specific disciplines from being taught in Baghdad’s Fine Arts Institute probably did not mean a great deal to many Iraqis. For them, it is only one tiny issue amidst a mountain of contradictions. In fact, I failed to detect a serious reaction even from Iraqi artists to this move by the Ministry of Education. Irrespective of the criticism directed by some at the extensive role played by turbaned mullahs in the present process of overhauling education and rethinking educational philosophy in Iraq, their participation is part of a larger project aimed at rebuilding the education system. This project is sponsored by USAID and began following the occupation of the country in 2003. It also has the support of UNESCO, which directed participants at an international conference held in 2008 “to turn the education system around, reclaiming education’s capacity to reconstruct the intellectual, cultural and social quality of Iraq society.”¹² What, I wonder, will be the shape of such a future?

There was a time, which I and many Iraqis still remember; when Baghdad was a famous capital in the region, well known for its vibrant cultural life and particularly for the numbers of large-scale statues scattered throughout its urban fabric. In fact, Iraqis are still proud of their 'liberty' statue, situated in the biggest square at the busiest intersection in Baghdad. Sculpted by Jawad Salem, founder of the first sculpture programme in the Baghdad Institute of Fine Arts, the statue tells the story of the 'epic of liberty' from ancient Iraq. I used to pass it every day, driving from my home to the Academy of Fine Arts to study and then to work during the 1980s. I also drove past the building housing the Fine Arts Institute, the country's first modern art school, established in 1941 and teaching the disciplines of painting, sculpture and music with the aim of supplying schools with fine arts teachers. The institute, which is the cornerstone of the contemporary art movement in Iraq, still plays a unique role in promoting the arts in the region. I remember the pleasure I often felt just looking at the building, which was surrounded by large trees and had many statues from student projects displayed in and around it.¹³



Figure 7. Jawad Salem, *Liberty Monument* 1961, Nusub Al-Hurreya-in Arabic, Baghdad.

CONCLUSION: THE "WICKED PROBLEMS" THAT PERSIST

My visit home in 2010-11 was pleasant and enjoyable; I loved seeing my home after a long period of exile, and enjoyed staying with my family and meeting new generations of adults and children – 'new' members of my family whom I had never seen before, even though they all know me through photos and phone calls. Also during this trip, I met up with many of my friends; they are all older than the images I have of them in my memory. Here again, I found myself in places I had left behind for decades. Some of these places now seem very different and even gloomy – in fact, I felt very sad being 'in place' in particular locations, especially when I visited the industrial design studios in my old college.

Design specialist Richard Buchanan has coined the term 'wicked problems' in an attempt to address the massive contradictions facing contemporary social systems. According to Rittel (cited by Buchanan), these meta-problems constitute "a class of social system problems which are ill-formulated, where the information is confusing, where there are many clients and decision makers with conflicting values, and where the ramifications in the whole system are thoroughly confusing."¹⁴ Furthermore, in his analysis of the types of problems impeding efforts to improve these systems, Banathy shows how these obstacles form a "system of problems rather than a collection of problems."¹⁵ Peccie went further in analysing the nature of these problems or, as he termed it, 'problematique,' and was cited by Banathy: "Within the problematique, it is difficult to pinpoint individual problems and propose individual solutions. Each problem is related to every other problem; each apparent solution to a problem may aggravate or interfere with others; and none of these problems or their combinations can be tackled using the linear and sequential methods of the past."¹⁶ One of the tasks of design studies is to propose new methods and practices that can help facilitate other disciplines' efforts to achieve a better understanding of the problems aligned against the development of social systems.

In my current doctoral studies in industrial design, my research is focused on creating new design methods and adapting existing methods to help solve these complex and seemingly intractable kinds of problems embedded in social systems – specifically for the benefit of Iraqis. The interdisciplinary nature of my research is directing me to the importance of human development studies and the theory of the "capability approach." According to Sen, this theory "is a broad normative framework for the evaluation and assessment of individual well-being and social arrangements ... The core characteristic of the capability approach is its focus on what people are effectively able to do and to be; that is, on their capabilities."¹⁷



Figure 8. The shape of the electricity grid in Iraq – the linesman's view.

In conclusion, I remain optimistic and look forward to the day when Iraqis will redirect their energies to find their way out of the dark tunnel they are living in right now. This time of darkness is not new for Iraqis; historical narratives from ancient times to the present tell of the many dark times through which Iraq has passed – a history of suffering reflected most poignantly in their love of sad songs.

Qassim Saad is a senior lecturer and academic leader in the Bachelor in Design (Product) programme in the School of Design at Otago Polytechnic in Dunedin. He is also a PhD candidate in Industrial Design at the School of Architecture and Design, Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology–RMIT University, Melbourne.

- 1 "Fallujah (Arabic: فَلْجَة) is a city in the Iraqi province of Al Anbar; located roughly 69 kilometers (43 miles) west of Baghdad on the Euphrates. Fallujah dates from Babylonian times and was host to important Jewish academies for many centuries." A small town in 1947, the city grew to a pre-war population of about 425,774 in 2003; in 2006 the population was estimated at 250,000-300,000. Within Iraq, it is known as the "city of mosques" for the more than 200 mosques found in the city and surrounding villages. Source: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fallujah>.
- 2 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Battle_of_Fallujah (accessed 24 Jan 2011).
- 3 Edward Said, *Out of Place: A Memoir* (London: Granta Books, 1999).
- 4 Elizabeth Teather, "Introduction: Geographies of Personal Discovery," in *Embodied Geographies: Spaces, Bodies, and Rites of Passage*, ed. EK Teather (London and New York: Routledge, 1999). Cited in Rose McLeod, "Te Waka me te Haereenga: An Artist's Journey to Te Waipounamu," *Scope:Art* 3 (2008), 32-41.
- 5 Albert Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples* (London: Faber and Faber, 2005).
- 6 Elizabeth Fernea, *Guests of the Sheikh: An Ethnography of an Iraqi Village* (New York: Anchor Books, 1989).
- 7 Victor Margolin, *The Politics of the Artificial: Essays on Design and Design Studies* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2002).
- 8 *Ibid.*, 40-41.
- 9 Jean Baudrillard, *The System of Objects*, trans. James Benedict (London: Verso, 2002).
- 10 Margolin, *The Politics of the Artificial*, 41-2.
- 11 http://www.thememriblog.org/blog_personal/en/print32654.htm (accessed 20 Jan 2011). See also <http://www.bassamsebt.com/2010/12/new-islamic-republic-of-iraq.html#more> (accessed 20 Jan 2011).
- 12 UNESCO, "Stop Jeopardizing the Future of Iraq," *International Conference on the Right to Education in Crisis-Affected Countries* (Paris, 2008), 4.
- 13 Stop press 2010: the new minister of education (from the opposition party) has cancelled the former minister's resolution on the banning of the teaching of specific disciplines in the Baghdad Fine Arts Institute.
- 14 Richard Buchanan, "Wicked Problems in Design Thinking," in *The Idea of Design*, eds Victor Margolin and Richard Buchanan (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1996), 14.
- 15 Bela Banathy, *Designing Social Systems in a Changing World* (New York and London: Plenum Press, 1996), 29.
- 16 *Ibid.*
- 17 Ingrid Robeyns, "The Capability Approach: A Theoretical Survey," *Journal of Human Development and Capabilities*, 6:1 (2005), 93-117 at 94.

THE MIKULA AND VOLGA FIREPLACE

Peter Stupples

I. CERAMICS AT 'ABRAMTSEVO'

In 1870 the Russian railway tycoon, music-lover and patron of the arts, Savva Mamontov, bought 'Abramtsevo,' a culturally significant but rundown estate north-east of Moscow, situated on the banks of the lazy river Vorya amid rolling wooded countryside. Now Abramtsevo is on the edge of the fast-growing metropolis.

Mamontov, like many Russians of the merchant classes at the time, was both proudly self-conscious of his Russianness and fatally attracted both to the arts of 'civilised' Western Europe and the economic drive of industrial capitalism. He gathered around him artists, composers and writers all equally riven by these two antithetical passions. Part of the reason for buying 'Abramtsevo' was to focus on the Russianness, to revive the arts based upon the icon and the folktale, the romance of Russia's past, but ever conscious of the fashions and achievements of the present. Ironically Mamontov's fortune was in part based upon driving a railway across the wastes of Northern Russia, bringing industrial development and commerce to a region celebrated by the artists associated with 'Abramtsevo' for its myths and folktales, remote monasteries and mystical ascetics.

In 1876 the painter Ilya Repin wrote to a Russian friend from Paris that "everyone was busy with ceramics," meaning painting on blank plates and dishes, giving durability to the image after firing. Painting on ceramics, Repin claimed, would make possible a greater use of coloured images and decoration on the exterior of buildings where it could replace mosaics. "Imagine a whole frieze painted in this way! ... The method is quick and easy, like fresco painting, and for that reason is not an expensive method."¹

Repin, who frequently visited 'Abramtsevo' after his return to Russia, was particularly enamoured of the ceramics of Joseph-Théodore Deck with its enamel polychrome faience surface, appealing to the Russian traditional taste for bright colours, high gloss and vivid surfaces, from icons to frescoes, including architectural detailing and what for some Western visitors was the garish Russian version of mid-seventeenth century Baroque.

In 1880 the artist and designer Elena Polenova, a member of Mamontov's circle, travelled in Western Europe to study the applied arts with a view to bringing knowledge back to Russia in order to revive craft skills that seemed in danger of being lost. She visited Deck's studio. She also studied limoges enamel glazes with Paul Seifert. In 1888 she instituted 'ceramic Thursdays' at 'Abramtsevo,' when visiting artists were invited to decorate plate blanks and other objects with overglaze paints. Mamontov also dabbled in modelling from clay, as, more significantly, did the Russian artist Vrubel when he stayed at 'Abramtsevo.' Some of all this work was in Moscow.

In the early nineteenth century a kiln at 'Abramtsevo' had been used to make decorated majolica tiles in the long-established tradition of central Russia. When Mamontov bought the estate the kiln was in ruins, but some of the old tiles still existed and were added to the museum of Russian folk art he established on the estate. Probably as a result of the enthusiasm for ceramics brought about by the 'Thursdays,' the kiln was restored in 1889, becoming operational in 1890.

2. PIOTR VAULIN

The painter Mikhail Vrubel was appointed artistic director of the ceramics studio with assistance from a technically trained ceramicist, Piotr Vaulin.

Vaulin was born into a peasant family in the remote Urals in 1870. In 1888 he was awarded a scholarship to study at the Krasnoufimsk Agricultural Technical College. In addition to the basic course Vaulin studied ceramics, where he immediately displayed both skill and talent, qualifying as a ceramicist in 1890. On graduation he was invited to establish a workshop in heat-resistant and chemico-resistant ceramics in an as-yet-to-be-built technical institute in Chukhloma, a branch of the Technical College in Kostroma. In preparation for his appointment, Vaulin was funded to make a study of the contemporary ceramic industry in Russia and Finland and also to practice his craft in the newly restored ceramic workshop at 'Abramtsevo.' Due to the unexpected and sudden death of the director of the Kostroma Technical College, the Chukhloma appointment was not confirmed and Savva Mamontov invited Vaulin to stay on at 'Abramtsevo' to work as technical assistant to Vrubel.²

Soon Vrubel and Vaulin were making pottery responsive to 'an intimate national music,' a distinctive Russian style.³ Confident in his technical background, Vaulin 're-discovered' Russian majolica, low-fired tin-glazed pottery and, like other artists working at 'Abramtsevo,' was encouraged to add his own creative ideas to traditional forms and methods.

Majolica-ware⁴ had a long history in the Russian applied arts, reaching a peak of national expressiveness in the tiles produced in the seventeenth century to face the exterior walls and window surrounds of palaces and churches, interior walls, stoves and stove-benches. Though majolica-ware was produced in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in Russia, the style and manner of working was deeply influenced by Central and Western European prototypes. Vaulin proudly wrote: "I set myself the task of reviving Russian majolica in all the distinctive beauty of its Russian exotic character; of being a pioneer in this type of work."⁵

Natalia Polenova recalled that "the master craftsman Vaulin turned out to be talented and well-informed. The atmosphere of creativity that we all experienced [at 'Abramtsevo'] embraced him as well, and he was drawn to the whole variety of artistic moods. He began to contribute his own colourful glazes from his knowledge of chemistry and ceramics. The success of his innovations in this specialised field brought him the attention of artists ... he began to feel not simply a master craftsman, but a participating member of the artistic world, giving himself up completely to this interesting task."⁶

3. VAULIN AND VRUBEL

Both Mamontov and Vrubel began to model in clay before Vaulin's arrival, but lacked the skills necessary to glaze and fire their work. After his arrival, Vaulin and Vrubel began working together on projects for the 'Abramtsevo' estate – tiles for stoves and decorative friezes. From the very beginning their partnership was a joint venture in design, decoration, tile-making, bas-relief modelling, glaze technology and experimentation, but always based upon the heritage of Russian majolica from the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. In 1890 they created two Russian stoves, including the famous 'stove-couch' that is still to be seen at 'Abramtsevo.'

Natalia Polenova again: "He [Vrubel] was closely associated with Vaulin in his work, shared his creative daydreams with him, sketched these ideas for him with watercolour, which excited him and which he wanted to realise in some actual form. Technically Vaulin tried to obtain the desired tones and in a practical way assist Vrubel to realise his fantastic dreams."⁷

In the stove-couch, the room-facing plane of the raised 'pillow' has the form of the head of a crouching lioness in a blue glaze to pick up the same colour in the tiles and column heads and feet of the round Russian arches that decorate the stove chimney façade. Mamontov placed versions of the lion's head (1891) on the gate of his Moscow house at 6 Sadovo-Spasskaia Street. The eclectic elements of the stove-couch make it seem like something older than its years, as if it were put back together carelessly during renovation, or of something that has grown over time, history being held in the accident, the asymmetry. This is certainly Vrubel's contribution, but the brilliance of both the smooth and faceted, glazed surfaces belongs to Vaulin.

It is interesting that in the literature Vrubel get almost all the credit. The technical potter is seldom mentioned. This reflects the lowly position of the ceramicist in the community – Vaulin is never present in the many photographs of the artists gatherings at 'Abramtsevo' – and became a cause of his later departure. Soviet sources also seldom mention Vaulin as he later became a victim of Stalin's displeasure: it is ironic that the worker, the practical man, was not treated to the romantic adulation of the eccentric painter.

When the reconstruction of the fireplaces and stoves had been completed at 'Abramtsevo,' and the fashion for Vaulin to fire and glaze small pieces by other artists had run its course, in 1896 Mamontov shifted the ceramics workshop to larger premises in Moscow which was known as 'Abramtsevo at the Butyrsky Gates.'

4. ABRAMTSEVO AT THE BUTYRSKY GATES

Immediately, the new workshop began to produce majolica figurines to designs and models by Vrubel based upon characters in operas produced under the patronage of Savva Mamontov, particularly those on Russian themes by Rimsky-Korsakov. Products from the workshop were sold in Moscow and St Petersburg. At the same time Vrubel produced canvas wall-friezes, easel paintings and designs for ceramic vessels of a greater intensity of colouration and intricacy of design, almost disguising the subject matter under the weight of detail, enamel-like colour and the near fusion of subject and ground.

In 1896 Mamontov obtained a commission for Vrubel to decorate two semicircular walls at either end of a central hall dividing two galleries in which the Art Section would be displayed at the All-Russian Exhibition in Nizhny-Novgorod.⁸ One of these panels was based upon a sketch Vrubel had made the previous year of the subject of Mikula Selianinovich.



Figure 2. Mikhail Vrubel, *Mikula Selianinovich* (1896), sketch, watercolour and white over graphite on grey cardboard, 12.1 x 41.3 cm, Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow (inv. 3551).

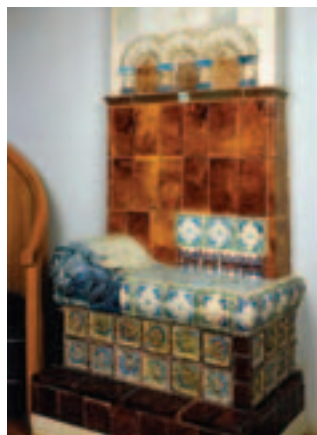


Figure 1. Mikhail Vrubel and Piotr Vaulin, the stove-couch, 'Abramtsevo' (1890).

The story of Mikula is based upon an ancient *skazka*, an oral folk tale, first written down in the fifteenth century. The peasant Mikula is resting from ploughing to talk with a warrior on horseback, Prince Volga Sviatoslavovich, together with a band of henchmen. Mikula represents the link between the strong peasant, the soul of Russia, and the earth. His plough, made of gold, silver and maple, is so heavy no one else can lift

it. In one version of the tale he marries 'Mother Russia,' a rich widow. In another version he is the son of Moist Mother Earth. The independent spirit of the peasant farmer is opposed by the arrogant desire to dominate by the warrior-sorcerer. A trial of strength takes place in which Mikula proves his worth and, as a reward, is given the office of tribute-collector by the prince.

There are at least six extant preparatory sketches for the final panel, which was, however, rejected by the commissioners of the fair and then exhibited separately nearby by an irate and slighted Mamontov.

Vrubel fused many of the visual aspects of Prince Volga in his 1898 panel depicting a *Russian Mythical Knight (Bogatyri)* astride a Russian war-horse (*bitiug*). The work is related to the right half of the sketch in the Tretyakov Gallery, but differs markedly by its almost comic monumentality and static weight.⁹



Figure 3. Mikhail Vrubel, *Russian Mythical Knight (Bogatyri)* (1898), oil on canvas, 32.15 x 22.2 cm (top triangular). Russian Museum, St Petersburg (inv. Zh-1837). The original canvas was made to fit an arch in the house of M.V. Malich, the first owner of the painting.

5. THE MIKULA SELIANINOVICH AND VOLGA FIREPLACE

The All-Russian Fair in Nizhny-Novgorod served as an ideas platform for the Russian pavilion at the Exposition Universelle in Paris in 1900. The government decided to take a national theme, to design the pavilion as a fairy-tale Russian kremlin/monastery complex from the seventeenth century and to display Neo-Russian arts and crafts – the very objects made and promoted by those associated with 'Abramtsevo' and the ceramic workshop at the Butyrsky Gates.



Figure 4. Russian Pavilion, Exposition Universelle, Paris, 1900.

In 1899 Vrubel designed a fireplace surround depicting the legend of Mikul and Volga. On the left he depicted a massive sun-studded peasant standing four-square behind the horse-drawn plough, whilst on the right Volga sat astride his long-maned *bitiug*. Both *bogatyri*, folk heroes, glare silently at one another, gods of the land and water of ancient Rus, earth-loving ploughman and haughty warrior; both magic tricksters. On either side of the central arch of the surround perch winged female figures, the *sirins* of Russian legends, the angels or mother-gods of an even older northern Euro-Asian mythology.

The design richly wove the figures into a complex whole dominated by strong patches of contrasting colour and swirling forms to create a feast of textured surfaces where the apprehension of realistic representations was obscured by the sensual richness and delight of colour and facture.

Instead of using rectangular tiles in the ceramic version, Vaulin created individual pieces to fit the contours of the figures and elements of the ground. They were fired using the method of local reduction. The fettled seams (grouting) acted like lines in a drawing and this graphic dimension was accentuated by the creation of false fissures in the wet clay. This method of ceramic composition is known in Russian as 'false mosaics' (*lozhnaiamozaika*). Vaulin was also able to use a new range of lustre glazes he had only successfully fired for the first time in October 1899.

The fire surround, following Vrubel's original drawing, used a range of Russian sixteenth and seventeenth-century decorative forms including the central pendant (*girkka*) and eyebrow arches, the surround itself resting on decorated short columns that in later versions Vaulin makes more reminiscent of *dynki* (melons), the ornamental swellings found on columns decorating window frames or doors in Russian architecture of the same period.

This original fire surround was lauded as a masterpiece of the Neo-Russian/Byzantine style and earned Vrubel a gold medal at the Exposition. Vaulin was awarded a Diploma of Honour for his developments in majolica technology. The Paris fire surround was sold from the Exposition and remains in France.

A second fire surround was also made in 1899-1900 for a Moscow mansion at 14 Sadovaia-Samotechnaia ulitsa. This was not an exhibition piece but made for use. It was attached to the walls with metal wire and concrete. There was a firebox and other fireplace furniture. In the 1960s the building was turned into an embassy. During the renovations the fireplace was broken up and hastily removed. The fragments were given to the Tretyakov Gallery. It was not until 1986 that the Grabar Centre for Artistic Restoration was commissioned to put the fireplace back together. It took ten years for the team, led by V I Cheremkhin, to clean each fragment, remove traces of soot and the rusted metal fastenings, and, like completing a complex jigsaw, gradually reassemble the fireplace. In 1994 the surround was finally restored. It took a further two years to redesign and remake the firebox and fire irons from the evidence of the single photograph that still existed of the original fire surround in situ.¹⁰



Figure 5. Mikhail Vrubel, Mikula Selianinovich and Volga (1899-1900), sketch for fireplace, watercolour on paper; 25.3 x 31 cm. Russian Museum, St Petersburg (inv. R-2436).



Figure 6. Mikula Selianinovich and Volga (1900), fire surround, photographed at the Exposition Universelle in Paris.



Figure 7. Mikhail Vrubel and Piotr Vaulin, Mikula Selianinovich and Volga (1899-1900), majolica, 225 x 275 cm. Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.



Figure 8. Mikhail Vrubel and Piotr Vaulin, *Mikula Selianinovich and Volga*, Kolomenskoe Museum version.



Figure 9. Novikov apartment house, 11 Kolokol'naia Street, St Petersburg.

Three other versions seem to have been made in 1899-1900. One, in a dismantled state, is now in the Russian Museum, St Petersburg (acquired in 1957); a second is in the All-Russian Museum of Russian Decorative-Applied and Folk Art in Moscow (transferred from the collection of the Sergei Morozov Museum of Folk Art in 2003, where it had been acquired from 'Abramtsevo' in 1910); and a third is at the Kolomenskoe Museum, also in Moscow (transferred from the State Ceramic Museum in 1934).

Vaulin resigned his position at 'Abramtsevo at the Butrytsky Gates' in October 1903 as a result of growing disagreements with the somewhat overbearing Mamontov and a desire to work more independently. He then took up a teaching position, running a studio-workshop at the Gogol Art and Industry College in Mirgorod, where he stayed for two and a half years, from October 1903 until June 1906.

One of his commissions at Mirgorod was to make the ceramic decoration for the Neo-Byzantine apartment block of the architect Nikolai Nikonov in St Petersburg (Kolokol'naia ulitsa 11). The result was a triumph of Vaulin's talents, every recess in the façade being decorated with multi-coloured ceramic panels, false mosaics and decorative *dynki* columns. It was through this commission that Vaulin's talents became widely known and appreciated in the capital, particularly among other architects working on town mansions in the Neo-Russian style for rich merchants.

6. THE GELDVEIN–VAULIN CERAMIC ART COMPANY, KIKERINO

Vaulin left Mirgorod in 1906 to go into partnership with Otto Geldvein, establishing a commercial ceramic studio-workshop in the village of Kikerino on the Baltic railway line to the south-west of St Petersburg. Vaulin's studio was soon overwhelmed with orders to decorate the interior and exterior of apartment blocks, offices, churches, cathedrals and mansions, some, like the Novikov building, in the Neo-Russian style, others in the style of art nouveau.

In 1908 the Kikerino workshop made a further version of the Mikula fireplace for the reception room of a mansion built (1907-09) for the merchant Filadel'f Bazhanov at 72 ulitsa Marata (formerly Nikolaevskaia ulitsa) in St Petersburg, where it complemented a 'northern art nouveau' *Bogatyrsky* (*Mythical Knight*) frieze by Nikolai Roerich, a painter



Figure 8. Mikhail Vrubel and Piotr Vaulin, *Mikula Selianinovich and Volga*, Kolomenskoe Museum version.



Figure 9. Novikov apartment house, 11 Kolokol'naia Street, St Petersburg.

who had worked previously with Vaulin.¹¹

In addition to the surround Vaulin also designed the cast-iron trivet, fire irons and fire bars, as well as the brass serpents on the firebox, all in a combination Neo-Russian/art nouveau style. It seemed entirely appropriate as a complement to the Legendary Knight frieze decorating the reception room.

Apart from the Bazhanov and Tretiakov fireplaces, both of which had been at one time regularly used, all other variants were made as 'exhibition pieces.'

The Mikula fire surrounds are the highest achievement of co-operation between an artist-designer (Vrubel) and ceramic artist (Vaulin) in Russian pre-revolutionary art. They both access the spirit of Russian ancient folk tales, seventeenth-century architectural decoration and majolica, glaze – particularly lustre – technology, the innovative assemblage of ceramic pieces (false mosaic) and their placement in Neo-Russian architecture. Their rediscovery and partial restoration are entirely in keeping with the intense interest in pre-revolutionary art and architecture in Russia in the twenty-first century.

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- 1 Vasilii Dmitrievich Polenov: *Elena Dmitrievna Polenova: Khronika semi khudozhnikov* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1964), 728 n. 57.
- 2 Alison Hilton, *Russian Folk Art* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995), 325 n. 50.
- 3 Vrubel in a letter to his sister, summer 1891. *Vrubel': Perepiska, vospominaniia o khudozhnike*, eds EP Gomberg-Verzhbinskaia et al. (Leningrad: Iskusstvo, 1976), 56-7.
- 4 Clay is pressed into plaster of Paris moulds, fired to biscuit at 1100 degrees, then covered with an opaque tin/lead glaze, decorated with coloured metal oxide glazes, then fired a second time at 750 degrees.
- 5 Mark Kopshitser, *Sava Mamontov* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1972), 133.
- 6 Natalia Polenova, *Abramtsevo: Vospominaniia* (Moscow: Izd. M. and S. Sabashnikov, 1922), 81.
- 7 Ibid., 82.
- 8 A summary of the history of Vrubel's panels at the All-Russian exhibition is to be found in VI Lapshin, "Vrubel' na Vserossiiskoi vystavke 1896 goda," *Iz istorii russkogo iskusstva vtoroi poloviny XIX-nachala XX veka* (Moscow, 1978), 78-91. See also the chapter on the 1896 All-Russian Fair in Kirsten Harkness, "The Phantom of Inspiration: Elena Polenova, Mariia Iakunchikova and the Emergence of Modern Art in Russia," Unpub. PhD dissertation (University of Pittsburgh, 2009), 248-52.
- 9 See Piotr Suzdalev, *Vrubel'* (Moscow: Sovetskii khudozhnik, 1991), 304-5.
- 10 For a fuller version of the restoration of the Tretiakov version of the fireplace, see <http://www.virtualmuseum.ru/exhibition/vrubel/en/conference/mikula.html>.
- 11 The frieze consisted of seven large canvases and 12 of a smaller size that are now in the Russian Museum, St Petersburg. In addition to the Mikula fire surround, Vaulin's studio-workshop supplied the Bazhanov house with six majolica corner stoves and four centre-wall fireplaces to designs by the architect Pavel F Aleshin.

INTEGRATED ARTS CURRICULUM AT SCHOOL LEVEL: A CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE

Sudhir Kumar Duppati

This paper attempts to examine New Zealand arts education programmes, beginning with the primary through the secondary school curriculum, to search for the possibility of integrating the independent arts disciplines currently existing in the schools. A learner-centred interactive interdisciplinary pedagogy is intended to draw a paradigm for arts education that has two similar, yet different, integrating points of inception. One is rooted in the indigenous concept of the art form embedded in cultures like those of Africa and Asia, while the other is identified in the modern educational psychoanalytical theory of multiple intelligences proposed by Howard Gardener. Parallel kinds of integration are found in these two approaches – either between the disciplines or within an individual's intellectual development. Interestingly, it is clear that these two approaches, integrated into a curriculum, would enable a discipline-based arts practice with an interdisciplinary outcome.



Figure 1. Women performing a *waiata* during the *hui* in Ruatoria to award the Victoria Cross to Te Moananui-a-Kiwa Ngarimu, October 1943. Apirana Ngata is in the foreground. Courtesy: Alexander Turnbull Library.

The current New Zealand Ministry of Education arts strategy states that: "The Arts develop the artistic and aesthetic dimensions of human experience. They contribute to our intellectual ability and to our social, cultural and spiritual understandings. They are an essential element of daily living and of lifelong learning."¹ On the one hand, the curriculum operates with the four disciplines of dance, drama, music and the visual arts. Each of these disciplines offers learners unique opportunities to develop creativity, understand cultural and traditional issues, and experience



Figure 2. *Kapa haka*. Courtesy, Gisborne Boys High School.

emotional and cognitive growth. On the other hand, many arts activities also integrate across the curriculum into language arts, social studies, and life skills and values education. Examples are mime, role-play and dramatisation, craft work with puppets, shadow figures, and masks, drawing and painting; working with patterns and design, and spaces and shapes in mathematics; the use of waste materials in environmental studies; dance and mime in physical education, and so on.

Considering Aotearoa/New Zealand's bicultural context, where values differ across and even within cultures, will integrating the arts ever be possible? Indigenous Maori performances embody a concept of integrated arts akin to the American Indian, African and Asian context. The *waiata* (Figure 1), *kapa haka* (Figure 2) and *poi* are similar to other indigenous arts, where performances are integral to a culture (Figures 3, 4). To what extent can this be considered as an educational model? Do art forms from one culture apply to another culture? Or does a culture need to understand or accommodate other cultural art forms? Integrated inquiry and learning have the potential for making learning at school more relevant and engaging, but what are the risks of losing discipline-based knowledge, and does it matter? Many schools are working hard to engage their communities, but does the wider community want to be involved in education? What opportunities does the community have to engage with future-focused ideas about education, and whose responsibility is this? These are a few questions I will engage with in this article.

PSYCHOANALYTICAL CONTEXT/APPROACH

Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences is another intervention in making possible an integrated arts curriculum. In his book, *Intelligence Reframed: Multiple Intelligences for the 21st Century*, Gardner expands the conventional definition of intelligence.² Essentially, intelligence is the ability to solve problems or create products that



Figure 3. Burratha Katha dancers are minstrels who tour villages in Andhra, typically in groups of three or four; singing and relating stories from the ancient epics. The art is passed on from generation to generation and the couple on the right, Gandiah and Veeramma Sadula relate a tale from the Mahabharata – wherein queen Draupadi is publicly disrobed. The man on the left is their son Bhikshapati. A conch shell hangs around his neck – and its blowing is the first sound that opens this scene. Burra Katha is now a dying art, rapidly being replaced by TV. The couple's sons have taken to construction jobs to make ends meet.

Source: <http://www.domalpalli.com/Documentaries.html>.



Figure 4. An Eritrean Ethnic Dance. Photograph: Sudhir Duppati.

are valuable in one or more cultural setting. He believes that people are not born with all the intelligence they will eventually have – we are able to keep on learning and improve our intelligence throughout our lives. This theory dovetails with my vision of information-literate students as lifelong learners.

When interpreting the world in terms of perceptions and concepts, the arts become a learning tool through which learners can experience, reflect upon, express and communicate their thoughts creatively and holistically, while challenging their imagination and fostering reflective thinking. These competencies are essential to all learning processes.

Gardener's multiple intelligences distinguish between several different types of intelligence or strengths in learning. The body-kinaesthetic the visual-spatial the musical and the interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligences are of special interest for arts education, which integrates visual art, music, drama and dance at primary school level. These intelligences can be developed systematically through planning a learning process that enriches children's art "languages." Each expressive form has its own language, which must be learned for conscious integration to be possible.

Figure 5. A flow chart illustrating the renewal of thinking about and integration of the arts in the European context.
Courtesy Dr Roger Antwerp.



Figure 6. The spiral pathway reflecting Balkin's Theory of Integration and Howard Gardner's theory of Multiple Intelligences.
Courtesy: Eritrean Arts Education Curriculum Development Panel.



This theory is significant and applicable in addressing individual student performance, which is basically assessed via a set of discipline-oriented tasks in drawing/painting, music and drama. Figure 5 depicts how an integrated model can combine various elements of the arts to form a new whole. This integrated whole is further extended to inter-relate disciplines at various times within a course curriculum, which is depicted in the spiral diagram in Figure 6. At planned intervals during the year; each discipline contributes its own fundamental course which will be applicable to the final project. This final project involves learners integrating concepts, and is thus a holistic learning situation.

THE CULTURAL CONTEXT

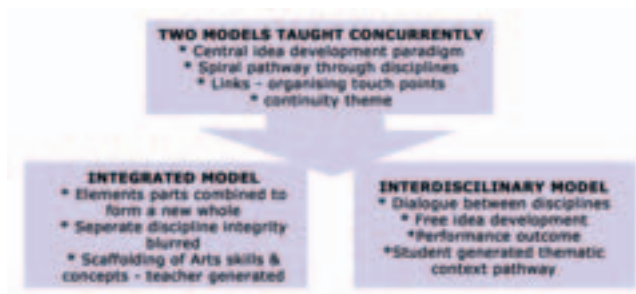
In their appreciation of the arts, children have encountered many kinds of artistic, musical and dramatic events and activities long before they enter school, and have begun to form their own opinions about them. These early experiences need to be used and expanded on in school. Responses to artworks need to be placed in a broader social context so that children can understand that there are many approaches to art and cultural appreciation. Cultures are not static. They have histories and contexts, and they change, especially when they come in contact with other cultures. Interaction between different cultures should play an important role in arts education, so that learners recognise the value of their own culture and arts as well as that of others. Art education has to operate in a curriculum which reflects the social, political and, if appropriate, religious background of learners. These conditions have always affected how artworks are made, what forms they take, and how they are interpreted and used. Thus, the process of identifying the conditions which are considered essential to forming and maintaining a given culture, and appreciating the artistic forms existing in a particular society, becomes a significant aspect of artistic practice, which reflects social conditions while at the same time stimulating learning activity. For example, we can compare songs sung by children to those recorded by popular singers, pictorial symbols made by a child to patterns produced by a designer, or role-plays within the family to situations depicted on TV shows.

The transition of fine arts to visual arts in education and practice not only reflects an expansion of terminology but also a new conceptual inclusiveness in the arts. Social and pedagogical changes in the European concept of

Figure 7. Flow Chart depicting Design and Technology paradigm reflecting integration of Arts and Crafts. Courtesy Dr Roger Antwerp.



Figure 8. Model of Balkins' creative learning process suggesting collaborating individual discipline-based activities into a single-end performance outcome.



the arts during the twentieth century challenged the traditional paradigm of education whereby the fine arts were mostly the preserve of the upper and middle classes from which they originated.³ The new skill-based approach to the arts was popularised in order to establish greater equity in education while, on the other hand, crafts were defined as a lower-class form of manual production (Figure 7). The European model presupposes the separation of art forms and emphasises three major traditional paradigms: the aesthetic paradigm, dealing with teacher-directed formal learning of the separate art forms; the skill paradigm as a learning mode, either teacher-directed or teacher-facilitated; and the developmental paradigm whereby learners express themselves freely and become competent in the use of art forms, media and skills through teacher facilitation.

On the one hand, art education models commonly arise out of the diversified streaming of disciplines with little or no interrelation (the European model), while on the other hand we have contemporary art practices which reflect interdisciplinary art concepts that are rooted in both indigenous and popular cultures. A major challenge in the current educational system is developing a curriculum, which addresses contemporary issues in art and culture while incorporating it into art education. However, despite the persistence of a few conventionally separate art forms, there has been a major shift to integrated art forms both in the experimental arts, mass media and the popular arts such as film, music, performance art, happenings, installations, multidisciplinary arts, comics, graphic novels, environmental art, music videos, and computer graphics.

It is important to note at this point that industrialisation – as the most historically significant movement of modern times – has given way to technological advances in which design has emerged as essential to a sustainable future. This phenomenon has been identified as a fusion of art and function in technology, ergonomics and commerce, providing the potential for some systems to shift their focus from “the arts” to art, design and technology/craft. Integrated art concepts are being processed using efficient technology. This meeting of art, design and technology is regarded as the product of a change of paradigm in technology and technical applications. The traditional skills and processes required in the past to produce a finished product using varied materials and media have now been replaced with technology. The weaver, quilter, designer, artist or architect has been freed from the need to produce complex technical drawings and need only sketch their ideas and enter them into a computer to see an emerging finished product. “In these approaches it is not only the integration of skills and forms which is characteristic, but also the emphasis on creativity through processing skills of idea-design-modelling-testing-production, and cognitive skills of analysis, evaluation and decision-making.”⁴ This is the design and technology paradigm which reflects the integration of arts and crafts using a process approach, developing cognitive, affective, technical, aesthetic and social skills (Figure 7).

Roger Antwerp has drawn attention to the ways in which the inclusion of crafts (traditionally a lower-class skill) in African and Asian art practices culminates in “artistic” performances and drama. According to him, the closest African expression for the arts – which for them is totally different from the European concept – is the term *ngoma*, which integrates story, song, music, drama, mask and costume into a single performance. This phenomenon exemplifies the African influence in the renewal and integration of the arts in the European context. Namibia, South Africa, Eritrea and other African nations have redefined their arts curriculum to include “the arts in culture” or “art and culture” (Figure 8).⁵

Within the Asian context, this development can be compared to Indian dramatology where, in the *Natyashastra*, an ancient treatise on the Sanskrit drama (200BC to 200AD), the author Bharata explains performance as the culmination of all art forms. He discusses every aspect of the theory and practice of drama, which for him is a composite art. He laid down some key aesthetic concepts and conceived the art of the actor according to a fourfold scheme – *vachik* (speech), *angik* (bodily movement), *aharya* (costume, makeup and scenic design) and *sattvika* (psychic states), see Figure 9.⁶ Despite this, arts education in India is yet to revise its curriculum to make sense of its traditional culture, as it still follows the British colonial model of discipline-oriented curricula at school level.



Figure 9. Kathakali, a traditional Kerala dance – one of the oldest forms of theatre performance in the world. The dancers take various roles in performances traditionally based on the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* (stories from Hindu mythology). Photo Credit: S Chris Chopp source: <http://www.fullstopindia.com/> and Rahul Sadagopan. source: <http://www.photoscape.co.in/blog/posts/11>

OTHER SIGNIFICANT RESEARCH ON AN INTEGRATED ARTS CURRICULUM IN NEW ZEALAND

In 2005 Dr David Best, Professor of Philosophy, University of Wales, Swansea, in his draft curriculum on arts education in New Zealand stated that “the important point is that there can be no general rule here: the value of a multi-media performance, or combined arts activity, will always relate to a particular case. It will depend ultimately upon the informed, imaginative judgement of teachers as to whether combining the relevant art forms is likely to produce a worthwhile result.” He advocates interdisciplinary learning (learning transfer) but not integration, as applying concepts proper to one culture to other cultures can generate semiotic disparities through the use of terminology. What constitute distinct art forms in Western cultures may not do so in other cultures.

In New Zealand, a team of researchers from Waikato University experimented with an interdisciplinary and integrated curriculum model at school level by assigning undergraduate student teachers to art classes, a tactic which proved that a concrete approach can foster arts skills, knowledge and concepts while deepening ideas (Figure 3).⁷ The study found that the “spiral pathway” form of the idea development paradigm is workable and replicable; the “re” factor, as embedded in Balkin’s creative process (re-flect, re-do, re-fine), could be applied for further refinement (Figure 4).⁸ This approach suggests an amalgamation of activities pertaining to individual disciplines (drawing/painting/sculpture, music and drama) into a single end performance. At each stage of the learning process, these disciplines are introduced as a collaborative component into the main task, which contributes to the end project. This kind of integrated arts model risks jeopardising the integrity of independent disciplines.⁹ Collaboration in the creative process, performance and teaching strategy demanded time from students and teachers alike for planning and reflection. Research has shown that few teachers are equipped to teach beyond an initial skirmish with this approach in any arts discipline. Hence, a new course structure is needed to train New Zealand teachers to become competent in teaching all four arts disciplines in an integrated way from Years 1-10.¹⁰

CONCLUSION

If concepts and ideas make art forms, the various media tend to become modes of expression. Within such multidisciplinary artistic activity, process takes precedence over the finished form. "For the purposes of the course, *integration* was defined as the bringing together of elements or parts to form a new whole. Within this paradigm, boundaries are not evident between the parts, and these may well be subsumed within the whole."¹¹

In my understanding, the process of art lies in *making a mark on a surface with a tool = event/performance*. (*Making* = process, application, performance, act –time. *Mark* = objects, images, pictures, sensations (like feelings, emotions, taste, touch and smell), illusions, imagination – virtual and physical. *Surface* = space and anything contained by it. *Tool* = that which can make a mark – from a whisper to anything that can be contained or animated.) In 1954 British conceptual artist John Latham said of his use of a spray gun filled with black paint: "The instant mark is created by a spray-gun; it signifies an 'event' which represents a form of inherent energy, while the surface on which it is made represents space in time. The result of this is not a static object, but the trace of an event, or several events made at different times."¹² The concept of a contemporary multi-disciplinary art practice, together with this expanded notion of a contemporary art "form," comes close to the indigenous African and Indian concepts of the art form. In a way, what is proposed here as an integration of art forms and disciplines is already present in our cultural practices.

The above considerations all point to a paradigm for art in the curriculum which results in an integrated arts/crafts model given an important place, where painting, drawing, music, dance, drama, craft, design and technology are combined using a process approach, developing cognitive, affective, technical, aesthetic and social skills. This revolution includes a learner-centred education model with an education-for-all policy which could be identified as either "arts in culture" or "arts and culture" (Figure 8).

An arts education which enhances concentration, self-awareness and self-confidence prepares the learner for life – both for living and lifelong learning – placing a key emphasis on cooperation, problem-solving and inventiveness. This will be an essential and significant contribution to education and society as a whole, as it keeps alive the spirit of adventure in learning.

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- 2 H Gardner, *Intelligence Reframed: Multiple Intelligences for the 21st Century* (New York: Basic Books, 1999).
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- 4 Roger Antwerp, *Proposal for Integrated Arts Education* (2004). Eritrea.
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- 6 Ajit Hari Sahu, *Performance Tradition: Aesthetics and Practice*, 29 August 2005, <http://www.whereincity.com/articles/traditions-and-customs/1699.html>. K. Krishnamoorthy, *Aestheticians - Cultural Leaders of India*, (The Director, publications division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, GOVT. of India. 1990)
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- 8 A Balkin, "What is creativity? What is not?," *Music Educators Journal*, 76:9 (1990), 29-32.

- 9 P Dunn, "Integrating the Arts: Renaissance and Reformation in Arts Education," *Arts Education Policy Review*, 96:4 (March/April 1995); J Lovano-Kerr and N Roucher, "Can the Arts Maintain Integrity in Interdisciplinary Learning?" *Arts Education Policy Review*, 96:4 (March/April 1995).
- 10 Clare Henderson, Graham Price and Viv Aitken, "Interdisciplinary Arts: Old Wine in New Bottles," *The International Journal of the Humanities*, 3:6 (2001), <http://ijh.cgpublisher.com>. The project was based on experiments with student teachers and model classes. The analysis reveals significant findings about the Integrated and Interdisciplinary Arts Curriculum. Henderson explains that, in a pressured curriculum, the four compulsory disciplines in the arts are competing with each other, resulting in a reduced amount of time available. In these circumstances, the integrated curriculum could accommodate multiple disciplines based on a final performance outcome, thus reflecting arts practices found in real-world activities such as formal and informal multimedia presentations. Such integration would reflect the postmodern approach to the NZ arts curriculum with its tolerance of multiple perspectives, and also acknowledge that engagement and empowerment can be heightened when learning is embedded in one's personal life-world and cultural ways of knowing. On these last points, see A Efland, *Art and Cognition: Integrating the Visual Arts in the Curriculum* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2002); R Bishop and A Hall, "Teacher Ethics, Professionalism and Cultural Diversity," paper presented to the First Conference of the Teacher Education Forum of New Zealand, Christchurch, 2000.
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THE MUSEUM AS HOLY SHOP: THE CHURCH, THE MALL AND THE FACTORY

Kathryn Mitchell



Figure 1. Holy Shop, acrylic on mirror; 2005. Kathryn Mitchell. Collection of the Forrester Gallery, Oamaru

Having worked in the gallery sector over the past ten years, I have become interested in the way art galleries and museums in New Zealand are evolving, from both a public and a 'grassroots' vantage point. The discussion that follows considers the role of the regional public museum in relation to my own painting practice, focusing on the contradictions inherent in the desire to create a spiritual space of contemplation and education, as against the issues surrounding the funding and management of such publicly accountable facilities. Underpinning my thinking about the museum as 'holy shop' is an attempt to understand the "interaction between what is displayed and how it is displayed."¹

In this article I attempt to analyse the contemporary public art museum as church, mall and factory, and speak to the way in which museums knowingly or unwittingly embody such contexts. I propose that the resulting amalgamation of contexts positions the museum as a 'Holy Shop.'

This shifting or dislocation of context is examined in reference to Walter Benjamin's *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, in an attempt to refer to the museum's adoption of attributes associated with the mall and the factory, for example, while simultaneously attempting to retain a sense of the sacred. In essence, I propose that the reproduction of such contexts within the contemporary museum environment contributes to its loss of authenticity or its 'aura.'



Figure 2. Self Portrait 2008, acrylic on mirror, 2008. Kathryn Mitchell. Collection of the Eastern Southland Gallery, Gore.

Although I refer here to both public art galleries and museums, the terminology adopted refers to cultural institutions generally rather than specifically, as the lines or boundaries between the two are fluid rather than rigid, and these institutional definitions have also been considered and applied in a myriad of ways in various regional contexts. In terms of the public art museum, I draw predominantly from my experience as manager/curator of the Ashburton Public Art Gallery over a six-year period. The Ashburton Public Art Gallery opened in 1995 in the partially converted former county council building and serves the Ashburton district community, a population of around 30,000.

THE DECAY OF THE AURA

In *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, Walter Benjamin reflects on Marx's critique of the capitalist mode and examines the impact of the reproduction on art-making. The reproduction, he proposes, even if well executed, dislocates the work from its original context – its time and place – thereby eliminating its 'aura'.¹² So what is an artwork's aura, and how does Benjamin's argument relate to this discussion on public art museums as 'holy shops'? An artwork's 'aura' relates to its particular place in time – involving the history, traditions, practices and processes which drove its production. This "original" artwork, Benjamin proposes, is "authentic," and therefore what is affected by the reproduction is the work's authority. The authentic artwork is not, according to Benjamin, reproducible.

According to Benjamin, the introduction of photography made a work accessible by enabling a displacement of time and space: "The cathedral leaves its locale to be received in the studio of a lover of art"¹³ While such situations of displacement lack any physical contact with the original, authentic, work, they nevertheless bear a trace or presence which is nevertheless "always depreciated." It is noteworthy that Benjamin addresses the issues surrounding reproduction not just in art-making, but appropriately links them to the technique of reproduction as a process which "detaches" the reproduced from the bodies of knowledge and tradition which drove their creation. A "unique existence" is substituted by something else, and this "tradition-shattering" is delivered in such accessible forms as photography and film which effectively present a trace, ghost or illusion of the authentic to the masses on a daily basis.

Benjamin points to a cultural change in perception as being responsible for the “decay of the aura” – the desire to shift experience to a place or space where one is able to gain a sense of having “been there.” This is offered in the form of a like-ness, creating an “adjustment of reality to the masses and of the masses to reality.”¹⁴ Since the ‘aura’ of the artwork is inseparable from its history, it has foundations in ritualistic and religious practices; however, “for the first time in world history, mechanical reproduction emancipates the work of art from its parasitical dependence on ritual.”¹⁵

THE CHURCH

This discussion dates back to my earlier work, beginning perhaps with the painting *Holy Shop* (2005), acrylic on mirror: I stumbled across the Holy Shop, a small art deco building in Oamaru, after a visit to St Patrick’s Basilica which is located directly opposite. I was looking at the architecture of churches in respect to their relationship to public art museums. After leaving the church I was immediately attracted to this small, humble, slightly worn building, sign-written with the words ‘Holy Shop.’ I was so intrigued by the name and the extreme contrast between the overwhelming grandeur of the Catholic church and this modest structure with big aspirations, that I was compelled to visit.

What could one expect to find in a ‘Holy Shop,’ I thought to myself – perhaps ‘holiness’ could be purchased in rural New Zealand? Little could be seen of the interior as I peered through the glass of the door; my view obstructed by venetian blinds; however the sign on the door indicated that it was open for business. The interior delivered on the promise of its signage as I was confronted by a multitude of ‘holy’ consumables ready for eager customers to snap up in the hope of comfort, support, protection, redemption or possibly, more simply, just the vague promise of some kind of fulfilment. St Christopher’s protection on one’s journey, or the Virgin Mary’s nurturing aura can, I discovered, be obtained for the sacrifice of a few dollars. The love of Jesus can be expressed by the adornment of one’s car bumper with a glittery sticker’s exclamation.

My encounter with the spectacle of the Holy Shop’s merchandise influenced a rethinking of perspective in terms of the evolving position of the contemporary public art museum in relation to my painting practice. Guy Dubord says: “The spectacle is capital accumulated to the point where it becomes image.”¹⁶ While invoking the image of the church through architecture and the conventions of curatorial and exhibition installation practices, public cultural institutions, particularly in rural areas, are dominated by the overarching pressure of market forces. Because these market forces demand that culture is palatable as a consumable for the masses, it could be said that the public art museum delivers a product on which a service delivery agreement is based. These service delivery agreements notoriously become more and more ambitious in periods of economic and political transition when mission statements are reviewed, changing demographics re-examined and benchmarking exercises undertaken.

In 2007 the Ashburton Art Gallery hosted the exhibition “Modulations: Cantata Reconfigured,” by Lyn Plummer.



Figure 3. Whatever it takes, acrylic on mirror; 2008. Kathryn Mitchell. Collection of the Ashburton Art Gallery.

My engagement with Plummer's practice reinvigorated my interest in the positioning of the public art museum as church or as a sacred, ritualised space. Plummer declares "[a]n interest in the nature of space ... and especially in the secular, ritualized space of the gallery and its relationship to the historic, religiously charged ceremonial space of the spiritual. This attention focused on changing and charging the gallery space into one which demands that we reflect upon our private responses to ceremony and ritual and their multiple readings and meanings."⁷

"Modulations: Cantata Reconfigured" was the first exhibition the Ashburton Art Gallery toured nationally, and it was intended to change as it travelled. Here Plummer's role shifts from what is traditionally considered to be artist to that of curator: Her spatial focus was integral to the evolving presence of the work in each venue. Thus the gallery worked as a facilitator to manage the administrative and practical aspects of the exhibition, allowing Plummer to focus on the various manifestations that would come about as a result of identifying the spaces in which the work would be shown.



Figure 4. *Modulations: Cantata Reconfigured*, Lyn Plummer; Installation view, Ashburton Art Gallery 2007. Credit Photography Rodney Brown

Having secured the venues, Plummer liaised directly with each museum in regard to the form that the exhibition would take. As the notion of transition was a major component of the overall work, Plummer created a series of detailed architectural replicas or maquettes in order to resolve the way in which the space would feature in each manifestation. These maquettes captured something of the essence or 'aura' of the individual museums, allowing specific spatial exploration and the consideration of how each interception or transformation would function. While Plummer's 'modulations' used space in a way that utilised the museum as medium, it is arguable whether the museum provides a space devoid of meaning – a neutral ground ripe for manipulation. In my experience these spaces are unique, and loaded in their own way with what could be thought of as an 'aura.' In many cases, particularly with respect to museum conversions or extensions (rather than purpose-built structures), the buildings themselves appear intimately connected with the history and traditions of the space and place in which they stand, as Benjamin suggests.

In *Art and the Power of Placement*, Victoria Newhouse notes that “Alana Heiss, a pioneer of alternative viewing spaces and currently the director of MOMA’s PS. 1 Long Island City, wants the museum ‘to make you feel as if you’re in the presence of God.’”⁸ While I assert an interest in the exploration of the sacred within the public museum environment, I believe my own practice seeks more to address the conflicts associated with the merging and reproduction of contexts and the assumed loss or decay of the aura of the original. In the exhibition “Holy Shop” (Ashburton Public Art Gallery, 2007/8), I presented a series of paintings on mirrors hung in a cross formation, having first posterized the gallery wall with a repeated A3 low-resolution image of a white gloved hand (my own) reaching for a jar of screws. In the far corner a plinth was piled with hundreds of white gloves, which were also reflected in a mirror hung on the wall nearby. The work was visible through a multitude of reflections. On entering the space, viewers became part of the space and part of the work itself as their own gaze was captured and reflected. The exhibition sought to question the concept of the original, authentic, artwork as a manifestation of the sacred – in this case small detailed paintings on second-hand mirrors, in opposition to the notion of mechanical reproduction as a manifestation of the accessible consumable – multiple photocopies. The exhibition also poses the question, What is the authentic original in which Benjamin’s notion of ‘aura’ resides? Are the paintings “authentic,” to use Benjamin’s term, even though they shift the context of the mirrors and have been painted predominately from photographs? Does the exhibition in any way create or contribute to the ‘aura’ of the gallery space?

In his introduction to Brian O’Doherty’s book *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space*, Thomas McEvilley proposes that within the “white cube” we “accept a reduced level of life and self. In classical modernist galleries, as in churches, one does not speak in a normal voice; one does not laugh, eat, drink, lie down, sleep; one does not get ill, go mad, sing, dance, or make love.”⁹ Here McEvilley introduces O’Doherty’s argument by addressing this disconnection from life, reality and perhaps self. The gallery space is, curiously, perceived by some as a neutral blank canvas as it were, for the artist to “paint,” as in Plummer’s case. However, Plummer’s practice concentrates on the use of the museum’s unique attributes or ‘aura’ to reinterpret the original manifestation of her ‘modulations.’

It could also be said that the role of the public art museum has changed, and no longer seeks, in totality, to evoke or retain the sacred space of the church; in order to find ways to increase the audience for visual art, museums enlarge their viewer numbers by creating attractive public spaces complete with restaurants, cafes and retail outlets. Many frequent museum visitors today may experience spaces in which laughter, babies crying, teenagers txt’ing, baby-boomers World Wide Web surfing, children x-boxing and students coffee-drinking is the norm. According to David Carrier, the museum “shows an amazing capacity to rework its interpretation. The history of art has ended; the historical expansion of the museum has been completed; and high art must cohabit and compete with the novel culture of mass art.”¹⁰

THE MALL

In her essay “The Architecture is the Museum,” Michaela Giebelhausen identifies a fundamental shift from the museum traditionally being perceived as church or temple-like to being more appropriately viewed in terms of contemporary purpose-built structures such as malls.¹¹ Dating from around the mid-eighteenth century, the purpose-built museum confronts its public with the space between the traditional – the sacred – and the new – the modern. Does museum architecture inherently define and frame its purpose, or seek to do so? In terms of its role as a maker, Giebelhausen’s claim that the architectural configuration of the museum shapes meaning and therefore the experience of the museum seems a given. Why, then, do so many modern museums appear to have little grasp of this principle when planning redevelopments?

“In the late 1970’s, Richard Rogers and Renzo Piano, the architects of the Pompidou Center in Paris, described the new institution not as a museum but as a centre of information and entertainment.”¹² The persistent isolation of art from its cultural history may have changed in the sense that market pressures have forced institutions to appeal to the masses and produce a consumable product. Does this development echo Benjamin’s theory of the loss of ‘aura’?



Figure 5. *Modulations: Cantata Reconfigured*, Lyn Plummer; Exhibition Advertisement, Oamaru & Gore. Credit Design & Photography by Rodney Brown

If, as Giebelhausen proposes, “the architecture is the museum,” then is the reproduction of museum architecture, and of associated practices, contributing to the death of the museum – in the sense that its aura or place in history and tradition has been displaced in favour of presenting a wider public with an institutional replica, in order to draw us closer to the experiences that we now expect to be available to us? Although we also expect to see life and self represented in the public art museum, our perspective on this has vastly changed and we are, it could be said, increasingly comfortable with a ‘franchised’ environment which simply replicates experience and reconstitutes it in its most palatable forms, as required (depending on context).

My work, *Whatever it Takes* (2008), acrylic on mirror; was inspired by a new kind of ‘holy shop.’ In place of the demolished historic Somerset Hotel in Ashburton, a new structure rose up from the rubble – a mall. As the concrete slabs were erected, clearly visible from the gallery, a large central cross was formed by the negative space between the slabs. At the time, there was debate raging about the future of the historic Ashburton Railway Station which had been empty and derelict for some years. Many members of the community wrote to the local newspaper about their personal and family histories and narratives connected with the station. Although it was suggested that the station be moved, many felt that the building’s removal from its site would compromise or even destroy its significance to the people of the Ashburton district.

Ashburton has lost numerous historic buildings to demolition, and what replaces them are structures that – if we support Benjamin’s assertions – perform the role of replicas or reproductions, in that they seem to bear little relationship to their own time and place. However, it must be said that in undertaking these particular reconstitutions of the built environment, Ashburton is perhaps presenting us with a signifier of its own – a rejection of the ‘aura.’ According to Jon Goss, “our desire is such that we will readily accept nostalgia as a substitute for experience, absence for presence, and representation for authenticity.”¹³ Here the preference for the new in the form of a mall resonated for me in the ongoing debate surrounding the redevelopment of the Ashburton Public Art Gallery. Initially, the community elected to retain and revamp the former county council building to house the gallery. While subsequent proposals included the institution’s relocation to the historic Ashburton Railway Station, a preference for a purpose-built facility rather than investigating any further extensions to the current building was the model

pursued. The proposed purpose-built facility is of concrete tilt slab construction and is modelled on the county council building, but allows for additional floor space.

Considering Goss's article on the "Magic of the Mall," it is remarkable how closely our public art museums echo the imperatives of the shopping mall. James Rouse, one of the pioneers of the modern mall, claimed (in 1962) that malls "will help dignify and uplift the families who use them ... promote friendly contact among the people of the community ... [and] expose the community to art, music, crafts and culture."¹⁴ History and nostalgia are, conceivably, evoked in the mall to bestow an 'aura' on a replicated environment in order to lend it a sense of authenticity. According to Goss, the universal new feature of the contemporary mall is the clock; previously banished, today the mall clock serves as a reference to respectable, historic, civic and religious institutions.

According to Victoria Newhouse, "Placement has affected the perception of art ... since the first cave paintings. Where an artwork is seen – be it in a cave, a church, a palace, a museum, a commercial gallery, an outdoor space, or a private home – and where it is placed within that chosen space can confer a meaning that is religious, political, decorative, entertaining, moralizing, or educational."¹⁵

It is within this framework that *Whatever it Takes* begins to contemplate the political space in which it was made. As discussed above, this space impacts on all aspects of museum practice. The title of the work is the Ashburton district's motto and features alongside the Ashburton District Council's logo on all council correspondence. The work is built on the underlying structure of this logo, but replaces its elements with an amalgamation of the new mall – concrete slabs – and the historic Ashburton Railway Station. The image of the lily is used as a kind of brand or signature indicative of self which here seeks to portray something of the political struggle between red and blue – Labour and National.

In his discussion of art as commodity, Paul Wood references the work of Manet, an artist of modernity who was compelled to represent truth – a notion of truth described as "the commodification of everything."¹⁶ Wood's point is illustrated in works such as *A Bar at the Folies-Bergère*, where the celebration of the commodity is depicted "from bottles to barmaid as well as what you cannot see – the spectacle behind you that all those people in the mirror have paid to consume."¹⁷ Rather than referring to a history of cultural meaning, Wood presents Manet's image as a collection of props, seeming to imply that their connectedness is simulated or artificial. Wood argues further that it is possible for an artwork to directly engage with the commodified world while maintaining a sense of critical distance. In discussing Manet and the commodity, Wood appears to refer to an awareness of loss. Loss of a kind of authenticity or connectedness to a history of cultural meaning may also be described as a loss of 'aura.' His concept of the commodified world as both "seductive and lacking" again refers to our desire to consume art, often without satisfaction. Citing Benjamin's *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, Wood refers to "a change represented in our terms by shifting attention from the symbolic dimension of art's representation of commodification to its condition as commodity."¹⁸ He questions the idea of truth and whether art has effected a "strategic withdrawal" from the commodified world. If so, then it is clear from Wood's discussion that such a withdrawal has been damaging or has at least left its mark.

In Sarah Thornton's essay in *Seven Days in the Art World*, this mark is reflected in a conversation with Paul Schimmel, director of MOCA, on the work of Murakami Takashi. According to Schimmel, "Takashi understands that art has to be remembered and memory is tied to what you can take home."¹⁹ He defends Takashi's inclusion of a Louis Vuitton boutique within the MOCA show – Louis Vuitton produced a limited line exclusively for sale as part of Takashi's show – and supports the artist's intention as an "institutional critique." Schimmel accepts this critique, arguing that branding is deeply meaningful to younger generations and that one can't ignore "the elephant in the room." In planning the exhibition of some 90 works for this show, the curator spoke of creating "a wonderfest temple quality,"²⁰ and Schimmel refers to the desire to "gesture to a commercial art fair from within the museum."²¹ Takashi's first studio, the Hiropean Factory, set up in 1995, was originally named in homage to Warhol's Factory, but was later renamed Kaikai Kiki after its distinctive four-eared rabbit and mouse mascots.

THE FACTORY

En route to Invercargill, freighting “Modulations: Cantata Reconfigured” to the Southland Museum and Art Gallery, I was struck by the dominance of industry along the main road, specifically the Edendale milk processing plant. Before reaching Edendale, I had become aware of the significant number of milk tankers on the road, a constant flow of traffic coming and going from the processing plant. The initial experience of the plant, for me, was like approaching an enormous beehive – slightly threatening in scale and with trucks streaming from a central opening in the building. The structure itself offers no obvious relationship with its surrounding area – almost as if it has been dropped in amongst the green pastures of Southland from above. The large rectangular boxes in which the milk powder is packed, horizontally striped in lavender and white with green tops and bright red detailing, accentuate the aesthetic of something constructed by a child from a box of Lego or a recreation of a *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* movie set.

At this stage I had been working as the manager/curator of the Ashburton Art Gallery for around three years. During this period I had, like many before me, been involved in a constant financial struggle to secure the gallery's ongoing operations and at the same time was working to build a case for the institution to gain an increased level of operational financial support. Unfortunately – despite a concerted and successful effort by the staff and committee to lift the gallery's community profile, increase and diversify services and lift visitor numbers – there was little support for the notion that the gallery should undergo development consistent with population growth in the area, or operate at a level comparable with institutions of similar size and community demographic.

This seems a very common story in cultural institutions in rural New Zealand. At the same time, it is also difficult to see that any meaningful attempt, in a wider sense, by policymakers nationally is being made to resolve these issues. The seemingly never-ending cycle of fundraising events, initiatives and grant applications required in order to carry out the basic operations of a rural public art museum is an exhausting process which, in my case and others, dominates the role, mission and vision of the institution. Not only are our public cultural institutions encouraged to become more and more productive in terms of turning over ever more ambitious annual public programmes, but this expectation often comes with no incremental increase in resources – let alone any consideration of the extraordinary work undertaken by committees, Friends of the Gallery, members and staff to keep our public museums afloat. Does the contemporary public museum director in rural New Zealand have any time to participate in professional forums, further training or seek advice and support from wider networks – or do they find themselves isolated in a constant struggle to attract funding and increase production while making cuts to basic operational requirements?

It was in response to these questions that I produced *Self Portrait*, 2008, acrylic on mirror, which reflects on the museum as factory, a centre of efficient production, churning out consumable products to meet visitor number targets. I used the image of the Edendale milk processing plant to explore my own position within the institution of the museum as a facilitator of production. According to Christian Witt-Döring, a curator at the Museum für Angewandte Kunst (MAK) in Vienna, “If we couldn't see the same objects differently at different times, they would die.”²² The constant re-contextualisation predominant in current museum practice, then, could be seen as the desire to revitalise the museum object/artwork/space which would otherwise die. In this sense, the loss of ‘aura’ could be presumed to be necessary in keeping the museum and its contents alive to new generations of visitors.

The adoption and amalgamation of the attributes of the church, the mall and the factory by the contemporary public museum, both architecturally and ideologically, leaves us to question what this new context may be. Over a period of time I have come to understand, and question, this reality in my art practice – not just through my own experience as manager of a regional public art gallery, or as an artist, but as a member of the community who views such shifts and changes in relation to the space and place in which they are located. Art museums do not operate in isolation, but are significantly affected by their communities and the ongoing flux of social, political and economic pressures. While the presence of the church is still felt by museum visitors, I believe this is being subsumed by the

more dominant models of the mall – centres of consumable desire and entertainment – and the factory – centres of efficient and profitable production. What remains then in terms of Benjamin's notion of the 'authentic' or the 'aura' may be thought of as a trace, ghost or illusion – a remnant or what was the original. While the answer to the question of whether this dislocation results in the destruction of the original or contributes to a reconsideration which consistently adds meaning and therefore preserves the 'aura' continues to be elusive. Contemporary museum practice reassuringly continues to support a level of self-assessment and critique encouraging artists, curators and directors to work together in the ongoing debate over how commodification and the reproduction have changed the lens through which we see, make and place the work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction.

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- 17 Ibid.
- 18 Wood, "Commodity," 397.
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- 20 Ibid., 206.
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A GREAT DAY OUT: MAKING THE BEST OF YOUR MUSEUM VISIT

David Bell

Museum education programmes offer opportunities for enriching knowledge, skills and understandings, changing attitudes and values, enhancing enjoyment and creativity. Museum experiences can transform 'traditional conceptions of learning' to embrace collaborative and community initiatives, e-learning and local partnership.¹ Recent research, however, suggests that classroom teachers themselves might contribute to more purposeful museum learning.² Teachers can be more proactive in negotiating meaningful museum experiences and extending them in their own classrooms and beyond. This article draws on teaching observations and interviews from research in 16 New Zealand and North American museums to propose 20 strategies classroom teachers could adopt to enhance the learning provided by museum educators.

PROMISE AND PRACTICE IN MUSEUM EDUCATION

Quality programmes draw on a wealth of institutional and human resources

Museum experiences can complement classroom teaching, informing enhanced learning through collaborations between teachers, education officers, caregivers and students. Museum educators draw on diverse backgrounds of teaching, curatorial, art history, arts administration or art practice. Their different experiences inform the broad range of stimulating, knowledge-rich and critically literate experiences they can provide. They can embrace students' ideas and provide rich experiences outside their classroom lives while simultaneously providing professional development for teachers.³

These experiences can familiarise, acculturate and nurture first-hand engagements with artefacts – but do we exploit their potentials fully? In 2006, over 600,000 New Zealand students enjoyed LEOTC experiences from over 60 contracted providers.⁴ Though 'not much short of the national school enrolment',⁵ this number did not represent a corresponding breadth of engagement. Many schools do not visit museums,⁶ and LEOTC services have experienced a recent decline in access.⁷ Anecdotal evidence suggests some visits are one-off experiences, little related to classroom programmes. Museums provide quality services, but how can teachers themselves capitalise on them more purposefully and profitably?

A survey of practice: research aims and rationale

Changing patterns of use suggest different strategies may be required for encouraging more purposeful museum visitation. This paper will suggest that classroom teachers themselves have much to contribute to the development of richer museum, and associated classroom, learning experiences. In doing so it draws on a research project developed through 2009 and 2010. The project sought to identify the ways that effective arts teaching models in museum settings might best inform teachers' own classroom practices. It gathered data through a broad spectrum survey that included museum visits, resource analysis, discussions with museum educators, observations of teaching sessions, and meetings with stakeholders including teacher advisory panels in 16 art museum education programmes in the United States and New Zealand. These combined observations suggest a range of interrelating strategies

classroom teachers could adopt to inform more profitable classroom learning, in visual arts and across the wider curriculum, from the museum visits they currently enjoy.

BUILDING PURPOSEFUL MUSEUM LEARNING EXPERIENCES

Engage with a sense of purpose tailored to the character of the museum

Quality experiences are built on clearly framed philosophies, principles and goals. Both tacit and explicit principles are provided in *The New Zealand Curriculum*.⁸ The Ministry of Education's requirements in its "Learning Experiences Outside the Classroom Provider Guide" lists core principles for building shared goals for all participants for interactive learning with different tools, objects and artefacts.⁹

The diverse collections and individually tailored practices of each museum may require specifically framed agendas. Teachers can draw on goals from museum education programmes. Those of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, for example, are achieved through diverse pedagogies for the visual or tactile analysis of original artefacts, inclusive and sharing learning, interactive engagement, finding group and personal relevance in learning, and informing independent skills for life-long enjoyment, delight and cultural understanding.¹⁰

Minimise risk factors

Any participant – students, parent/caregiver supporters, members of the public, and even teachers themselves – has the potential to compromise the museum experience. In one teaching observation, an educator carefully established her expectations with a small group of new-entrant children, and then took them into the gallery to talk about early Māori domestic practices. The parents and teacher went to the museum café, returned to the front of the *wharenui*, sat down and sipped their coffees. They challenged protocols for appropriate behaviours both at the *wharenui* and the museum. In other instances, educators noted inappropriate interjections (especially on sensitive cultural issues), disruptive conversations or inappropriate management of children, by parents or teachers. Some simple safety strategies include:

Use museum protocol materials. Though almost every museum surveyed supplied schools with comprehensive information on their expectations and protocols in hard copy and on websites, many claimed these resources remained unused, and that only regular participants seemed familiar with expectations.

Pre-arrange expectations and roles for all participants. In some sessions observed in the research, teachers and caregivers seemed at a loss what to do. Teachers can play a proactive role in managing student behaviour, organising students into groups, moving them between activities.¹¹ They can meet with educators to clarify procedures and roles prior to a visit, with all caregivers to establish expectations and appoint roles as group leaders, with instructions in writing, allocating practical, useful tasks like distributing lunches, collecting bags, guiding children to the cloakroom or guiding learning conversations with small groups.

Pre-negotiate visits to promote diverse, quality, multidimensional, learner-focused experiences

LEOTC research verifies the value of pre-visit negotiation.¹² Most providers supply comprehensive pre-visit information on risk-management, maps, bussing arrangements, parking, caregiver support, or cloakroom arrangements.¹³ Most websites provide extensive free downloadable teaching resources to inform visits. The "Guggenheim Guidelines for Planning Visits" pdf resource, for example, supports programme design; their complementary "Inquiry Checklist" pdf provides suggestions for developing open-question technique strategies. Pre-visit preparation is informed through links for *Current Exhibition Previews*, *Arts Curriculum Online* and a database of selected artworks from the New York, Bilbao, Venice and Berlin collections. Guggenheim resource kits include image downloads, contextual material, and teaching and learning pathways. Teachers can draw on an extensive range of thoroughly researched, scholarly and user-friendly resources developed through focus 'lenses' of media, place, meaning, character, genre or narrative.¹⁴

Pre-negotiated engagements proved meaningful when the museum learning was related to that of the classroom. This is consistent with the 2010 LEOTC findings.¹⁵ The survey found polarised policy and practice in this area. At the Asian Arts Museum of San Francisco, most visits are chosen from a prepared programme seen to be appropriate for working with unfamiliar cultural content and the docent facilitation model employed there.¹⁶ Auckland Museum found joint planning more attractive to lower-decile schools.¹⁷ At the Dunedin Public art Gallery, however, every visit is individually negotiated against the broader classroom programme to build on prior class learning and inform longer-term learning experiences and curriculum goals.¹⁸ Teachers can make excessive demands of museum educators. One observation saw Getty Centre educators asked to lead 108 students through the learning tasks outlined in a teacher-prepared 18-page worksheet requiring close study of 15 art objects (exhibited in different parts of the museum) in a 60-minute visit.¹⁹

Use all institutional facilities

Asked what he remembered after an overnight stay at the museum, one child answered “breakfast at the café.” This was a positive learning outcome. Enjoyment and acculturation are as important as the cognitive benefits of museum visiting. The museum environment itself can impact on learning experiences. The Richard Meier-designed Getty Centre Museum in Los Angeles realises a vision of the museum itself as an artwork. The tram-ride from car park up to the museum complex physically and psychologically separates the aesthetic experience from the world below. The discrete displays in each gallery encourage close-focus and in-depth learning engagements. The central garden is a commissioned artwork by Robert Irwin. The buildings are interspersed with restful garden and piazza areas and panoramic views across Los Angeles or Malibu, or framed views within the complex. Experiencing these areas is an important part of each school visit. The Getty complex’s active contribution to learning is a practical realisation of the Reggio Emilia notion of the environment as the third educator.

Capitalise on quality museum resources

Many museums offer extensive, clearly presented and well-illustrated resources to inform independent class learning. In most they are free of charge. At the Art Institute of Chicago, teachers can access extensive loan materials onsite through the attractive, well-appointed Crown Educator Resource Center.²⁰ Through the online “Borrow Materials” link, teachers can access collection- or theme-based teaching manuals, art historical and artist resources, poster packets and videos. The “Collections” database allows teachers to search groupings by subject, resource type, pictorial category, curriculum subject area or lesson plan. The resources include fulsome historical contextualisation, artist and work studies, detailed, curriculum-linked lesson plans and activities, glossaries, timelines, maps, bibliographies and image lists. Their scholarly quality reflects the Institute’s agenda of empowering teachers and schools. They are designed to inform classroom programmes that may develop quite independently of the Institute visit or tour. Most Crown Center users access its resources online. Using the “My Collections” link, teachers and students can make their own collections by selecting artworks from Institute collections and adding their own notes to create student resources or virtual exhibitions.²¹ Other museums also offer online resource access and embrace media like facebook, youtube, ArtBabble, itunes or Mac applications into their resourcing strategies.

Through the MFA Boston *Educators Online* site teachers can access 360,000 objects, with reproductions of 150,000.²² Though this initiative was developed in collaboration with teachers and specifically for teacher use, it is open-ended and accessible also for children of almost any age. Museums provide great resources: use them.

Generating opportunities for linking and connecting the museum experience back to the class programme

How can teachers sustain what they learn in museums beyond the visit itself, taking the museum experience ‘home’ to inform longer-term individual or class engagement? Educators at Rotorua Museum give every child a small, brightly coloured sticker to wear, inviting others to ‘Ask me to tell you what I learned in the Rotorua Museum today.’ Classes visiting the Museum of Transport and Technology in Auckland are issued with a digital camera or video

camera for children to document their visit. Many art galleries allow this, provided the documentation depicts the visitors and works together.

LEOTC providers encourage teachers to establish clear links between the museum learning, the learning intentions of the visit, and the objectives of the broader classroom programme by referring back to the 'big idea(s)' or 'big question(s)' introduced at the beginning of the visit, and asking students what new thoughts, ideas or knowledge they could apply to these questions now, and relating this to their own lives or classroom learning.²³ Though LEOTC providers pose these questions, they work best when teachers proactively meld them into their classroom learning before and after the museum experience itself.

Seize opportunities for multi-visit participation

Repeat visits acculturate and encourage depth learning.²⁴ A Year 1 and 2 class observed at the Govett Brewster Art Gallery in New Plymouth was enjoying its fourth visit in six months. For some children new to school this was a first visit, for others it was their fourth. The gallery was familiar territory. Children knew the place, the locations of cloakrooms, toilets, and gallery and class spaces. They knew and were comfortable interacting with gallery staff. They were familiar with museum protocols – no running, shouting or touching. Most importantly, they felt comfortable responding, talking, making and acting amongst works in the gallery, and prepared to take risks when talking about art. These children were acculturated, aware and active engagers. Some North American museums offer programmes combining outreach school visits with museum-based programmes.²⁵

Develop partnership programmes to promote extended engagements with art and art-world networks

Some North American museum education teams broker learning partnerships that synergise community resources to broaden teachers' and childrens' views of art-world engagements. The Guggenheim "Learning Through Art Initiative" is an artists-in-schools programme. Teachers and artists collaborate to develop cross-curricular inquiry learning engagements and hands-on art-making explorations. Teachers are closely supported in the development and critique of inquiry plans, and the museum offers opportunities for teachers to share these, together with their own evaluations of their effectiveness, on the education website. This programme helps students build important critical thinking, art and literacy skills. Placing artists in schools puts children in the company of artists, has them working in adult contexts and validates or legitimises art as a worthy life pursuit. Schools currently pay \$US7000 for this. Where schools are from low-income areas, the museum takes a part-payment from the school and fundraises the remainder.

Close mentoring partnerships are less common in New Zealand, but those like the one being forged between Monte Cecilia School and The Pah Homestead in Auckland offer rich opportunities for extended collaborations.

Engaging learning experiences are often thematic

Thematic classroom programmes complement curriculum integration for holistic learning. Thematic explorations enhance the cohesive melding of individual, class and museum learning. In museums, thematic pathways provide links between sometimes diverse collections of objects. These investigations are generally pre-negotiated to inform broader class programmes in ways that are consistent with both curriculum and local community requirements. "Learning Through Art" explorations at the Metropolitan Museum of Art New York guide children through themes like Communities Around the World; Faces, Masks, Hats and Headdresses; A Look at Animals; or Observing the Four Seasons. At the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, themes of cultural identity, spiritual belief, change and transcultural interaction provide accessible introductions to the diverse worlds of Asia.

Quality programmes foster somatic, sensory engagements and pose evaluative questions

Immediately experienced somatic engagements encourage children to move through and around art objects, touch them, weigh, smell, listen to, even taste them. The Robert Irwin Garden at the Getty Center is an artwork with its own dedicated education programme. Challenging the conventional 'look and don't touch' axiom of museum behaviour invites provocative opportunities to extend learning beyond observational, descriptive or socio-historical engagements. 'Is a garden an artwork?' 'Which of these is a work of art?' At the Oakland Museum of California, children cast their votes against a Native American object, a woven work, or an object made from grass. At the Dunedin Public Art Gallery, John Neumegen challenges children to make choices: 'The gallery is on fire – which work will you save?' 'You are culling the collections: choose the first work to throw on the skip.' 'What does this work mean for you?' 'How does it make you feel?' provoke enthusiastic debates or invite personal reflection. These are aesthetic engagements; provocative, thoughtful and evaluative, and high-order learning experiences.

EMPLOYING DEDICATED TEACHING STRATEGIES FOR LEARNING WITH OBJECTS

Quality museum learning benefits from interactive learning

Interactive learning experiences are engaging, and provide accessible opportunities for applying knowledge, transferring learning to new contexts, or inventive problem-solving. At the Govett Brewster, dance and role play invite children to respond to artworks experientially, emotionally and empathetically. Play encourages quality learning. Most museums surveyed embraced interactive activities into their learning. The DPAG, Govett Brewster and Puke Ariki in New Plymouth and Te Papa all provide classroom spaces to enhance gallery learning through art-making, or role play or dance interpretations relating to gallery learning. Most United States museums had similar facilities, and some have dedicated spaces for exhibiting children's works. All of these can transfer to classroom contexts.

Many museums maintain interactive experiences for public audiences. At the DPAG, children can enjoy a range of age-dedicated 'art hunt' activities designed to promote exploring, close looking, interpreting and articulating personal responses to questions or riddles. At Getty Villa, children can climb right inside an antique grain-storage jar, make rubbings for vase decoration, explore tactile qualities in 'feelie' boxes, or recreate their own antique theatre with a range of props and costumes against a silhouette screen. The Natural History Museum in New York offers a dramatic team role-play engagement in a 'race for the Pole.' Te Papa's Mixing Room attracts engaging and challenging multi-media interactions.

Quality museum-based learning is realised through inclusive transactional pedagogies

Learning with objects invites strategies different from those of teaching with text.²⁶ Inquiry learning encourages children to make diverse responses and interpretations in relation to the facts of objects, enhances cross-curricular learning connections, and benefits literacy and broader learning skills.²⁷ All museums surveyed employed transactional inquiry pedagogies consistent with the constructivist philosophies of New Zealand and North American curricular constructs. Within this commitment, however, lie different theoretical paradigms, approaches and outcomes.

Inquiry is a learned skill. The Guggenheim web resource guides the development of teachers' own inquiry strategies through a three-step sequence.²⁸ Through step 1, 'Find – an inquiry plan,' teachers can access a range of prepared inquiry pathways. Having trialed exemplary materials, teachers are guided to 'Create – your own inquiry plan.' A step-by-step planning demonstration leads from a curricular theme to a selection of art technique and artist, into developing questions to guide observational and interpretive engagements. Having developed their inquiry pathway, teachers are invited to 'Share – your inquiry plan' for museum staff critique and advice. The best get added to the Guggenheim database. Online "Classroom Troubleshooting Tips" provide guidance for initiating question-and-response sequences, encouraging close observation, embracing diverse contributions, guiding legitimate interpretations, extending conversations to elicit fuller explanations, eliciting valid evidence for interpretations, and drawing conversational inquiries to a conclusion.²⁹

Quality learning builds on appropriate pedagogies: Visual Thinking Strategies

The Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) project embraced by the Museum of Fine Arts Boston and Boston Public Schools guides conversational engagements through a sequence of three basic questions: 'What is going on in the picture?' opens up the discussion; 'What do you see that makes you say that?' asks for evidence from the objects; 'What can you find?' gives students the opportunity to look further and stretch their visual and critical thinking abilities.³⁰ Teachers support the engagement by paraphrasing and linking responses, pointing to features under discussion, maintaining neutrality and guiding depth – 15 minute – engagements.³¹ This encourages close scrutiny, description, and sharing and justifying interpretations, and it empowers both shared and individual appreciations. These skills are transferable to other learning and other aspects of daily life.

VTS claims to answer the teacher problem of 'I don't know anything about art.' Certainly it appears to have been transformative for teachers, students and school communities.³² It has been promoted as a school curriculum, and as a teaching method that can develop critical thinking, communication and visual literacy skills; engages rigorous examination and meaning-making through visual art; increases observation, evidential reasoning, and speculative abilities; facilitates conversational, respectful, democratic, collaborative problem-solving class interactions; nurtures language skills; and nurtures growth in all students, from challenged and non-English-language learners to high achievers.³³

... though not all learning is open-ended – pedagogies in debate

A place for cognitive transmission. Though popular, VTS has its limitations. Senior students, for example, require more definitive historical, contextual, biographical or theoretical knowledge about art objects and ideas. Some knowledge may be negotiable, but some is not, and valid understandings often need to be supported by evidence beyond the work itself. Children's own experiences might encourage them to misinterpret what they see. At the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, for example, children interpret signs like swastikas in Buddhist iconographies in ways that differ radically from those of the social, spiritual or historical contexts that informed the works' own generation and use. The museum needs to support the development of legitimate understandings by referring to evidence that may lie beyond the artwork. They do this by focusing learning experience and discussions on contextual fact more than on interpretation or response.

For similar reasons, educators at the Art Institute of Chicago favour a balance between open-ended negotiations between art objects and children, and prepared, academically informed delivery drawing on sound historical, biographical or media knowledge. Maintaining a balance between negotiated interpretations and valid knowledge about artworks contributes to more reliably legitimate understandings of the works. Educators develop informed learning pathways through a framework of interrelated cognitive learning skills:³⁴

Questioning and Investigating	Comparing and Connecting
Reflecting and Responding	Observing and Describing

Teachers can use these entrées selectively or non-sequentially. The model complements the 4-strand ('Arts Making,' 'Arts Literacy,' 'Interpretation and Evaluation,' 'Making Connections') Chicago Public Schools arts curriculum and favours inter-curricular subject integration to enhance historical and cultural contextualisation. It adapts readily to level-specific learning requirements of elementary and secondary school contexts, and provides a pluralist and culturally inclusive model to serve a broad range of community interests.

Quality museum learning develops through appropriate pedagogies: critical thinking in visual art experiences

Inquiry strategies at City Gallery Wellington have drawn on the United Kingdom 'enquire programme'.³⁵ Helen Lloyd describes critical thinking as a strategy for 'developing active, reflective and questioning critical thinking skills for visual arts engagements'.³⁶ She cites diverse benefits, including critical reflection, questioning, challenging, investigating problems, discovering, analysing, classifying, comparing, drawing conclusions, hypothesising, predicting and connection-making. Open critical enquiry engagements can be facilitated through questions that engage looking and analysing, explaining or interpreting: 'What?' 'When?' 'Who?' 'How?' 'Why?'³⁷ In practice, Lloyd develops searching questions through categories of meaning, ideas, contexts, values, opinions, beliefs, intentions, feelings and narratives.³⁸ A question sequence might follow: 'What can you see?' 'What does it remind you of?' 'How does it make you feel?'³⁹ 'What if?' questions encourage thoughtful and imaginative discourse; in relation to a Yayoi Kusama installation: 'What if ... the dots were not dots, but holes you could put your hands inside and feel something, what might you feel? What if ... you had a switch that could turn the sculptures on so that they can move? How might they move?'⁴⁰ Critical thinking informs close scrutiny and description of children's experiences of artworks, and encourages searching questions about how artworks might be conceived, made, transported or owned, and discussions about aesthetic and artistic ideas.⁴¹ Critical thinking strategies are easily adopted into classroom learning exchanges to promote the 'thinking' key competency of *The New Zealand Curriculum*.⁴²

Open pedagogies challenge through imaginative engagement

An art gallery is a bug-free zone ... For John Neumegen at Dunedin Public Art Gallery, imaginative challenges provide a segue between classroom subject focus and accessible engagements in the gallery.⁴³ School themes like dinosaurs, fairy tales or bugs are often difficult to relate to the gallery exhibition programme. Challenging children to find insects, dragons or dinosaurs amongst the artworks encourages them to explore the exhibitions, look with a searching eye, and make inventive associations between the smeared paint of a Judy Millar painting and a slimy snail trail on the pavement, or between a glittering installation by Reuben Paterson and the iridescent surface of a butterfly wing or the scales on a dragon. These provide an entrée into questions about the art objects themselves: 'What do you think the artist had in mind when she made this work?' develops the conversation into a deeper encounter.⁴⁴

Quality museum experiences allow space for enriching subjective responses through reflection and contemplation

However sociable the debates they provoke, aesthetic responses are inevitably subjective, individually experienced. Mostly teachers seem to expect intensive, information-packed engagements at the museum, but this is often at the expense of richer appreciations of artefacts. Thoughtful responses require time for each child to reflect on objects themselves, in their own ways, in relation to their own cognitive stock or sensible dispositions, as they form their own evaluative judgements and responses to the works they experience. They need 'a space in which [each] will act by his own light to his own ends ... To offer a pregnant cultural fact and let the viewer work at it is surely more tactful and stimulating than explicit interpretation?'⁴⁵ Allowing time and opportunity for the crystallisation of individually reflective responses against the pressure for intense cognitive engagement emerged as a key issue during this research project.

THE QUALITY OF MUSEUM SERVICES CAN BE MEASURED AND EVALUATED

How do we know if museum education programmes are successful? *Implicit* or *tacit* approval is indicated through positive questionnaire evaluations⁴⁶ and repeat visits. During a conversation with stakeholders, members of the Art Institute of Chicago's teacher advisory panel agreed that museum learning contributes positively to childrens' learning, informs integrated cross-curricular links and enhances literary skills.

As the teachers described their own relationships with the education team, the benefits of multiple visits, collaborative partnerships and customised activities for developing a rich synthesis between museum and school classrooms became apparent. However, what became clearly evident was that positive negotiated pathways began not with the museum, but with the classroom teachers themselves. Teachers identified the gaps in their own art knowledge, and cross-curricular links with areas like literacy or sciences, and museums provided resources for 'filling in' the art knowledge and providing something of a springboard into learning about art for its own ends and values. One teacher noted that her fourth-grade class came to the Institute four times a year; enjoying 'shorter' teacher-led 90-minute visits, and focusing the art engagements through learning in the social sciences. Her visit focus and the resources she used were negotiated prior to each visit. Her school has a particular museum focus – it is called a Museum Academy – and each grade-level class is allocated a different museum through the Chicago "Museums in the Park" arrangement; hers is the Institute. They see only three or four art objects, in only two rooms, in each visit, and really synthesise what they learn into the broader classroom learning unit. The visit experience can be developed into an appropriate art-making experience like printmaking back in the classroom.

Some teachers found the museum website useful for pre-visit preparation around specific works of art – one had set up a gallery in his classroom so children could walk around and learn how to behave and engage in a gallery space. By seeing works at half- or quarter-scale on the smart-board, they could explore ideas about how we engage with artworks. Prior to their museum visit, the children had to find an art object relevant to them, then find it online, reproduce it, and then prepare a piece of work explaining its personal relevance. Mastery of technology was critical in achieving this. Extending the museum experience back in the classroom, using reproductions of works children had seen in the original, around 'what if?' propositions was a useful way of extending learning. All agreed on the benefits of proactive teacher participation in developing close relationships. These inform more specifically customised activities that can further enrich children and empower teachers to extend their role in self-conducted tours, and in children's independent dispositions to positive museum learning.

Museum learning offers first-hand, inquiring engagements with real art objects; it informs and empowers teachers for developing their own museum and class-based art learning engagements; and it favours dispositions for lifelong engagements in the arts. This was confirmed in an informal observation during a Sunday afternoon visit to the Art Institute of Chicago several days after the research visits. The Institute was crowded. Huge numbers of family groups filled every gallery and corridor. Children and parents were enthusiastically engaged close-up with art objects of every kind, scrutinising closely, pointing excitedly and most of all talking, arguing, comparing, sharing their experiences as they moved around the museum. They were thoroughly acculturated, knowing and inquiring, confirming the positive role of museum learning for informing broader life engagements in the arts.

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Context" strands of *The New Zealand Curriculum*, as well as on the visual arts and culture of Japan. His most recent research in museums-sited teaching and learning in the arts has taken him into the diverse settings in New Zealand and North America from which this article has developed.

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“BRING IT ON!”: SCOTT EADY’S RHETORIC

Rebecca Hamid

“It is that phenomenological shift that brings uncertainty; that asks the question – what are we looking at? And I hope that somewhere in that is a moment of poetry.”¹

It is September 2010 and Scott Eady’s “Bring It On!” exhibition has been installed in the RH Gallery at Woollaston Estates, Mahana, Nelson. The owner of the premises acted quickly to censor one work, removing *Ivan; ‘Kick Me’* (2010), an orange-painted 70 kilogram cast brass ball with a small hand written sign “Kick Me” cello-taped to one side. After protracted and tense negotiations, the director of the gallery secured the return of the sculpture to its original position; but now without the sign, and with the addition of a brass plinth to protect the gallery floor:

There is a recurring anecdotal scene of censorship, communication, power, annunciation and reception with minimalist sculpture. In her essay “Minimalism and the Rhetoric of Power,” 1990, Anna Chave describes two teenage girls in the Museum of Modern Art who walk over to a Donald Judd gleaming brass floor box (1968), kick it, laugh and then putting its reflective surface to good use to rearrange their hair before bending down to kiss their images. The guard watching did not respond.² Chave’s writing examines the relations of power in annunciation and reception behind minimalist art. She observes minimalism’s departure from offering neither negative nor prophetic moments that have previously placed it at the vanguard of modernist art. Chave concludes that where minimalism offers non-discourse, presented as non-art, or offers nothing new, only more of the same, the viewer is left disillusioned and possibly hostile.³ Moreover, where the artist’s trajectory is deliberately aimed at a discourse of power and violence or disinterest in the viewer; it is not surprising that such art may illicit responses of violence or mockery, or both.



Figure 1. Scott Eady, *Ivan; ‘Kick Me’* (2010), bronze, enamel paint, paper, 36 cm diameter.

Minimalist sculpture has long been associated with art historical rhetoric including the gambits of such luminaries as Carl Andre, Donald Judd, Richard Serra, Tony Smith, Sol LeWitt and Dan Flavin. During the 1960s minimalist artists considered it their role to redefine societal values; though it is problematic whether or not they ever effected any real social change.⁴ The types of materials used, their weight, size and construction were associated with the values and rhetoric of power and politics. Richard Serra’s mammoth corten steel structures which tower and lean over the viewer are some of the most explicit examples of this. Art which aspires to be non-art⁵ is often only recognised

as art by the viewer because it is located in a gallery, curated by an art professional or created by a 'named' artist. Complicated nuances of association and referencing of other art objects have been the underlying premise of much of this minimalist art practice. Most often this is demonstrated in its conception and construction, which is to further complicate the deliberate non-narrative objective. Increasingly, the degree of difficulty in understanding what the artist intended became the primary trajectory and this, not its meaning – if it had any at all – was what gave the artwork its intrinsic and elevated value.

Tony Smith's *Die* (1962), with its complexity of meanings by association and with only the title offering hints about its content, is typical of minimalist artists' sculptures of that period. Like Donald Judd, Smith was effectively offering this work as non-art or as an object that denies art as it is commonly thought of. Judd wrote in his essay "Specific Objects" about 'plain power',⁶ expounding his minimalist platform of stressing the physical, phenomenological experience of objects. Like Smith, Judd aimed to remove all natural form, all traces of the artisan, inventiveness or uniqueness from his sculpture, denying viewers the usual prerequisites customarily used to engage their attention with a work of art. Mass-produced, commercially fabricated, machine-made and with minimal intervention by the artist, this trajectory of non-art, as Chave points out, has initiated not only a violence against the art itself but also against its audience.⁷ There is also the explicit denial of any motivating humanist endeavour or any sense of moral or spiritual inspiration. Not surprising then that a viewer's reaction would be hostile or violent.



Figure 2. Scott Eady, "Bring it On!", installation.

Eady's installation "Bring It On!" included *Ivan*; 'Kick Me' and two other brass sculptures, 'Jonathan you were Wrong' (2010), and *Into the Light: Crazy Little S of Fools* (2010). The installation also included an exploding wooden castle, two catapults and several small photographs mounted on one wall. As with Smith's *Die*, the titles are deliberate and significant as they contain a multitude of complex references which in the minimalist idiom, unless explained, are not readily discernable. 'Jonathan you were Wrong', a 30-kilogram cast brass pretzel painted a pale pink and cellotaped to the gallery wall, rests on a biscuit tin with a landscape of Mitre Peak on the lid. Its reference to a gallery owner's refusal to install sculpture against a wall is obscure. Unless explained to them, viewers would be unlikely to 'get' its meaning. The multitude of complex art historical references are all there, but only the very well-informed punter would realise this.

Ironically, through referencing the Judd anecdote cited above, Eady was inciting his audience to kick his artwork, which resulted in the censoring of *Ivan*; 'Kick Me.' There was concern that viewers might break a toe, not that the artwork might get damaged. Intentionally, the artist had cast this 70-kilogram solid brass ball and coated it in a soft ice cream orange texture like paint [correct?], presenting it as a disguised soft toy, a product of children at play. The sort of trick one brother might play on another. Old enough to read the sign, one would surely clue up to the trick. That aside, the minimalist ruse of power over and violence against art conventions and the art audience is all there.

One would have to be a barren soul not to enjoy Scott Eady's art. Eady's sculptures delight. They present us with artful masquerade and if we let them, they ignite our imagination and can make us smile. Mostly, they are images which include a tongue-in-cheek glimpse at many of the things in this world that we often take too seriously. Or, as we read here, others take too seriously. Eady's aesthetic appreciation of objects is reflected back to us, larger than life.

While referencing the minimalist sculpture of Judd and others, Eady offers his own unique and engaging discourse. There is a humanist motivating endeavour and a sense of moral inspiration and prophetic moments in his art. The human touch is apparent, and deliberately juxtaposed with the manufactured, mass-produced non-art of the minimalist idiom he is referencing.

Eady is a self-reflective spirit. He is an eloquent artist, using visual expression for his musings on the meaning of life and the meaning of art per se for his audience. His trajectory charts complex relationships and incidents he has shared with art professionals, curators and gallery owners. In the past, the discourse has included a focus on the deconstructive exploration of what it is to be an adult male in New Zealand, entwined with a playful affection for objects and trappings, processes and artifacts. More lately, he has shifted this focus to his experience and reflections on what it is to be a parent, and more specifically, a father of young boys.⁸



Figure 3. Scott Eady, 'Jonathan You Were Wrong' (2010), bronze, enamel paint, biscuit tin, cello-tape; dimensions variable.



Figure 4. Scott Eady, *Castle* (2010), wood, hardware, paint, crash net; dimensions variable.



Figure 5. Scott Eady, *Catapult I (Ping)* (2010), wood, hardware, rubber balls; dimensions variable.

If it was Eady's dialogue with and observations of masculine culture that cast the central focus of his work from the mid-1990s to early 2000s, it is his experiences of fatherhood and collaboration with his children that have influenced his practice in recent years. Earlier sculptures consisted of constructions of vastly over-scaled models of a chainsaw, nail gun and bolt-cutters.⁹ The massive amplification of these objects, their form and their loss of functionality, portrayed male culture, intimacy with tools and a relationship stated in terms of something larger than their utility value.

Eady moved into portraying the contradictions of male culture and expressions of masculine fantasy. Eady's jovial and tongue-in-cheek sculptures twist contemporary narratives about being a real man's man, the tough New Zealand bloke. He often contrasts the dilemmas of whether to conform to this or to more recent stereotypes such as the metrosexual through objects that caricature both extreme masculine and effeminate notions of manhood.

Sculptor Anish Kapoor talks about the importance of the artist's work in their studio and the creation of sculpture through the process of play. This is something Scott Eady's practice readily embraces. Inside and outside the workshop, his sculptures are about play and the relationships integral to that play – the play of young boys and his observations and delight as a parent experienced in observing children at play. "Bring It On!" extended this play into the gallery. The installation included *Catapult 1 (Ping)* (2010), and *Catapult 2 (Pong)* (2010), and *Castle* (2010), which provided interactive play for children and adults firing rubber balls across the gallery at each other and at other sculptures. The *Castle* had walls which exploded by means of a mousetrap mechanism set off when its door was opened. The resetting of this and the catapults sorely tested the intervention of gallery staff, another poignant reference by Eady to the Judd museum anecdote above and juxtaposition with it.

Eady mines the life-experience and imagination of his children (and himself) to resolve issues about himself and his relationship to others. In the process, some of the deepest and most complex existential states, including fear, power, joy and self-doubt, are exposed and materialised in sculptures memorable for their unabashed honesty and insightful ambivalence. As we follow the interplay between fragment and whole, past and present, we become voyeurs; we feel the oscillations of his life, his challenge of being a man and a parent. More sustaining is the artist's ability to encourage an empathy with parenthood and reflection on our own experience and what it means to us to be a parent, or to have been parented. As parents we have mused and been amused by the imaginations and insights of children and their games. Reflections on the passing of time and what this means in our adult lives are equally absorbing. The questions raised are important. The politics of war games and toys, the identity we gain from these, and whether we should censor these or, like our parents, invest in our children's imaginations and trust in their ability to develop into mature discerning adults, provide much to reflect on.

On another level, these works of Eady's have a powerful and captivating abstract component to them. This is revealed to us through continuous looking and experiencing, through anticipation, observation and recollection. Eady's use of colour; the painted surface he applies to the cast bronze, and the pristine surfaces of some pieces are crucial to our appreciation of their abstract qualities. As Barnett Newman noted, abstraction and the use of a single colour is about "a real time of dreaming; not just something static, but deeper and beyond its sculptural confines."¹⁰

Meaning and experience are personal and our own. There is no prescribed view, no preferred way of looking, no defined explanation nor understanding. Each person will take in the gallery space differently. There is an unlimited range of individual experiences, which may take place over time and in more than one session of viewing. Eady's sculpture is about us. The meaning of the sculpture we see is held within our imaginations. There are moments of recognition that hold power for us whether this is perceptual, or aesthetic, or emotional or psychological. *Into the Light: Crazy Little S of Fools*, is a powerful example of this. Two Dollar Shop plastic, battery-fired candles light up a marshmallow-like cake, cast in solid brass and painted a pale yellow, placed on a stand which is more like a plinth than a cake stand. The discourse is complex. Yellow and blue are fundamental to the aesthetic appeal of this sculpture. Simultaneously satirising and revering minimalist sculpture, while contextualising this in the play and pranks of children and a parent's response to these, are just something of what Eady touches upon here. The ambiguities,

the aesthetic qualities and the deliberate minimalist overtones and complex references combine to encourage a multitude of responses from the viewer. There is much more besides the purposefully perplexing title to engage the audience.

Thus the power or success of Eady's sculpture lies within the audience. It's not about the sculpture by itself. If it can act as a catalyst for thought or change people's ideas or encourage people to think new thoughts, then that is more encouraging than just thinking about the possibilities of what these sculptural objects could be. As sculptor Ai Wei Wei argues, "Life is about art, politics and exchange."¹¹ While embracing much of what the art audience appreciates in minimalist art, Eady's sculpture offers much more.

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Figure 6. Scott Eady, *Into the Light: Crazy Little S of Fools* (2010), bronze, candlelite candles, aluminum, wood, enamel paint; dimensions variable.

- 1 Anish Kapoor; audio recording, Guggenheim Bilbao, Spain, September 2010.
- 2 Anna C Chave, "Minimalism and the Rhetoric of Power," rptd in *Minimalism*, ed. James Meger (London: Phaidon Press, 2000), 274-84. First pub. 1990.
- 3 Ibid, 282.
- 4 However, by the late 1960s Judd and others denied their art had anything to do with societal values, theories or institutions. The contradictions in their claims were that, while negating many of the attributes traditionally associated with fine art, their work was presented as 'valued' fine art for the consumption of a fine art audience.
- 5 Clement Greenberg, *American Sculpture of the Sixties*, ed. Maurice Tuchman (Los Angeles: County Museum of Art, 1967).
- 6 Donald Judd, "Specific Objects," rptd in *Donald Judd: Early Work, 1955-1968*, ed. Thomas Kellein (New York: D.A.P., 2002). First pub. 1965.
- 7 Chave, "Minimalism and the Rhetoric of Power," 279.
- 8 Richard Lummis, "Big Time, Major Works by Scott Eady," *Art New Zealand*, 99 (2001), 74-7.
- 9 "The Big Time," an exhibition held in Artis Gallery, Parnell, Auckland in 1997.
- 10 Anish Kapoor quoting Barnett Newman, audio recording, Guggenheim Bilbao, Spain, September 2010.
- 11 Ai Wei Wei, artist quote from video about his installation "Sunflower Seeds." Recording by Tate Modern, London, October 2010.

SOMETHING LOST, SOMETHING FOUND IN THE WORK OF SCOTT EADY

Michele Beevors

*For want of a nail the shoe was lost;
For want of a shoe, the horse was lost;
For want of a horse, the rider was lost;
For want of a rider, the battle was lost;
For want of a battle, the kingdom was lost ...*

Proverb

In the last ten years, the work of Scott Eady has undergone a complex transition which saw a movement from a simple engagement with masculine identity politics and female masquerade to a series of works that examine the provisional nature of such identities in relation to marriage, fatherhood, nationalism and late capitalism. What is lost in the works from 2001-11 is the bravado and self-confidence of youth, as in works such as *BIG TIME*. In his article "Big Time: Major Works by Scott Eady," Richard Lummis suggested that this impulse is replaced in a series of exhibitions whereby Eady literally tries on different masculine stereotypes such as John Wayne, a pathetic clown, a metro-sexual, a barbecuing bloke, and a rugby-playing thug.¹ This response will examine a selection of Eady's exhibitions in relation to the notion of the fallible masculine, which I have defined elsewhere as the masculine response to the demands of a politicised feminism.²

THERE WAS NOTHING TO SEE

For "Sculpture on the Gulf" at Waiheke Island in 2010, Eady buried a treasure, *Booty*, and as a result there was nothing to see.³ The visitors – those out for a nice stroll in the sun – became frustrated, followed instructions and tried to figure out where the sculpture/booty was buried, but no-one succeeded.

For children the game of 'pirates' is exciting, replete with buried treasure, swordplay, and X marking the spot. It was played long before Johnny Depp taught a new generation of moviegoers that pirates were a little bit daring, a little bit stupid, a little bit cunning, a little bit camp, a little bit tipsy and a little bit schizophrenic. Our treasures and swordplay though were imaginary, our violence benign, constituting ourselves through roleplay and games.

Eady's treasure was there alright, for anyone to find; the map indicated a depression in the earth, X indeed marked the spot. A bronze cross-bone with a clue as to the whereabouts of the 'booty' was cast into the ground and was designed to frustrate the expectations of the art-loving public who gather at such events. Those who expected to see something – enticed by the prize at the end, entertained by the thrill of treasure – caused fences to be erected, not to keep the viewers from their treasure, but to ensure the safety of those who thought that the treasure may have slipped off the island and into the sea.

In these big "Sculpture by the Sea" and "Sculpture on Shore" events, the work on offer seems entirely predictable, and giant metal palm fronds and seed pods abound. Eady's practice lies entirely outside of the parameters of such



Figure 1. *Stupid Daddy*, 2010. Mixed Media, Photographed by Scott Eady.

a show, which has more to do with the expectations of an audience ready to be entertained than primed for an encounter with art of a serious or critical kind. In the already picturesque setting of the island, plonking down any old piece of coloured tin or timber take the place of the idea of site specificity as it fades into history. It has been 42 years since Robert Smithson strode around in the deserts of Utah, after all. Eady's work dealt directly and in a novel way with both the site of Waiheke Island and the conspicuous consumption that such an event entails.

The "Sculpture on the Gulf" website asks us to "make a summer's day out of it, see the sculptures, then explore Waiheke's seaside cafés, beaches, vineyard restaurants and cellar doors." This website, and the curation that tags along with it, equates the viewing of art with the leisure activities of fine wine and fine dining. Eady's work both comments on and sidesteps these issues, for Eady never gives away just what the 'booty' is (it could after all be a child's booty or a set of plastic boobs or any number of absurdities). Is there any booty at all? You really don't know. The artist may never have buried the treasure in the first place, and that's why no one could find it. Some people

were angry. This denial of expectations is a perfect foil to the greedy, ready to consume the next best thing – art as entertainment.

This is also the kind of thinking that led to Jeff Koons's *Locomotive* (proposed for the Los Angeles County Museum of Art), a commission with a \$25 million price tag. Contemplating Koons's train, there is nothing left for the audience to think but 'WOW, that is a lot of money to spend on art.' What has been traded for gold, and what is at stake in works like this, is any kind of critical engagement. No one has stopped to consider if it's worth the trade. Art is reduced to the status of every other commodity, fulfilling its investment potential. Art is entertainment, culture is reduced to capital.

Money as well as 'booty' is at stake, too, in Eady's work. The show "Lost at the Bottom of the World," at the Sargent Gallery in Whanganui, featured a *Money Train* which is literally made of recast, obsolete New Zealand currency. Resembling a cat or dog chasing its own tail, the tiny nickel train (in N scale) is connected at front and rear; a never-ending loop of coming and going, and going nowhere⁴ Frustration is again employed as a strategy to undermine viewer expectations in the work *HANNAH*, a double-ended rowing skiff. A push-me-pull-you, this work demands that the viewer imagines being both rowers, facing off against one's opposite number; again going nowhere as each rower rows against his or her other self – a self that is constituted through a mirror image. One can imagine the outcome as both rowers are completely spent or torn apart in a violent manner. Within the same exhibition, two pieces, *the grass is green* and *the grass is greener* (photographs of two perfectly green lawns, with a great white inflatable cloud hanging overhead) lead the viewer to believe that in suburbia everything is rosy, each day a perfect day. On one level, these works represent the blue-sky optimism inherent in nationalistic sports advertising. The other, more pessimistic viewpoint suggests that the Land of the Long White Cloud and the facile optimism of suburbia have given birth to relationships where both sides are working hard at going nowhere.

In modernism, pictorial space disappeared, the figure gave way to pure ground, and the masculine subject of modernity – the hero, the adventurer and explorer of past centuries – was replaced by the idea of the anti-hero, the tragic figure of a James Dean. John Wayne was replaced by the image of Clint Eastwood, doing the wrong thing for the right reasons. (Eady's version of Wayne in the exhibition at Mary Newton Gallery, "As the World Turns," is a more domesticated one.) After waves of feminism and the onslaught of postmodern thinking in response to the effects of colonial power, the euromythocentric subject of modernism gave way to a more provisional and fallible masculinity. Soon there was no room to stand, with all the partial bodies and part-objects around.

If there once seemed to be a clear transition from boy to man, the myth of a happy, uninhibited childhood has been superseded by its representation in the media as a place of lurking dangers and controlled play. In *Stupid Daddy*, Eady plays with the possibility of the subject as defeated, as a tragic clown consumed by grief at a world he cannot control. He sits with a cloud of grey balloons amidst bronze monuments to the lost innocence of childhood, blobby bits of high-key colour. These small bronze works cannot reference anything other than the abject nature of childhood and the scatological bent of schoolyard jokes – the objects on display resemble something that has been extruded from the body; tarted up to look like lollies and desirable designer fluff, they leave one with a sinking, slightly sick feeling in the presence of that sad clown.

The search for an impossible masculine subjectivity, defined against stereotypes as distinct as the sad clown and John Wayne (from the exhibition "The World Keeps Turning"), becomes a futile grasping at straws as the idea of subjectivity itself proves equally ill-fitting. For what now stands for the subject is a mass of posturing, like Johnny Depp's portrait of the fictional Jack Sparrow. Representations of the 'nearly whole' conflict with multiple viewpoints, the subject in motion, a blur, a hybrid: one whose identity is casual, an identity in infinite flux. Eady's early work raised some interesting questions about the shifting masculine subject; the labourer of *Big Time* gave way to the fetishist car painter of *Posy Pony*, moving to the just-married man of *Honeymoon on the Pigroot*. But while these works hinted at the shifting identity necessary to maintain the status quo, they also hint at some cracks in the image of the perfectly controlled ego (and repressed subject) of modernism.⁵



Figure 2. Dickkopf, 2006. Plastic skeletons, wood. Photographed by Scott Eady.

Cracks begin to appear in the image of the perfect man because, along with the kind of masculinity portrayed by John Wayne goes a conservative, jingoistic nationalism; along with the image of the clown as happy and fun is the clown who can't hide the tracks of his tears. The Perfect Man as advertising imagines him – for example, in the campaign for Perfect Italiano Cheese – blatantly illustrates that such a notion is completely farcical, while also challenging notions of the masculine as a definition of what women want. In the ad, a handsome man tells a largely female audience that he “is practicing listening,” or that “I love to listen to the problems of your friends,” or “I’m listening and painting.”

The cheese ad plays on an idea about the kind of ideal masculinity that undermines feminism. The masculine subject becomes pro-feminist, defined through a stereotypical notion of what he should be, how he should behave. Sensitive to the point of nausea, he becomes another stereotype (straight off the cover of a Mills and Boon novel), one set against the overt masculinity of the Speight’s ad: “It’s a hard road finding the perfect woman, boy.” This former image is equally impossible to imagine, and requires repression of all aberrant desires. Just as the stereotypical perfect woman has nothing to do with real women, the perfect man is a shell, a construction. Eady’s version of perfection is parody. In Eady’s version of the Speight’s ad, *She’s a Hard Road*, masculinity and new-found feminist skills clash. In this billboard work, Eady dons a plastic apron (featuring false boobs and a French maid’s garter belt), barbecues the sausages, beer in hand, to the same tune – “She’s a hard road finding the perfect woman, boy;” about as hard

as it is to define the perfect man. In fact, to find the perfect woman, a man has to walk a mile in her shoes, literally scrambling together in an ill-fitting amalgam with homoerotic undertones.

WHAT IS A WOMAN/ BOY, AFTER ALL?

What is lost on advertising is found in the works that deal with play and imagination – candy-coated niceties with surprising overtones of violence.

Boy #1, Boy #2 and *Boy #3* – three children/mannequins in camouflage pyjamas – hold onto the leg of a monster which is a maquette for the sculpture *Dickopf* of 2006 – the same monster that recurs in the bronze works from that show. Depicting monsters engaged in scenarios such as a rape scene, death (a recurring motif throughout the show, down to the whitewashed plinths that resemble funeral caskets) and a rugby scrum-cum-war zone, these works reflect the violence implicit in childhood games (such as pirates, war games and cowboys and Indians) and offer a version of where this kind of 'role play as conditioning' can lead. In *Beautiful Terrors*, Eady assembles a video work together with *Boy #3*. The video work recreates the Travis Bicknell role from *Taxi Driver* – "Are you looking at me? What are you looking at? ... bang, bang, bang," as he aims his gun at the screen. But it is a child who is repeating these lines – a cute, cherubic but somewhat disgruntled child, and the effect is chilling.

Children use drawing as play to discover the world. Eady's children are the inspiration for nearly all his works of the past decade, helping by doing what they do best – playing at making stuff. Eady faces a moral dilemma by using his children in this manner; having to discern the difference between fun and exploitation. The bronze works in *Stupid Daddy* were inspired by a session of fimo sculpture made by the children. The bronze sculptures, which are painted in highly toxic oranges and blues, both hide the monumental nature of traditional sculpture and bring it down to the level of child's play.

In another work, *Ian's Castle*, sports mats surround an exploding castle. Like a mouse trap, it waits until someone opens the door; then springs apart; the audience is more than slightly dismayed by the fact that they have destroyed the work. In the last of these works, *IVAN*, a note is crudely taped to an orange blob sculpture the size of a small boulder or a large leather medicine ball – but the ball is bronze and the note says 'kick me.' Like so many schoolyard pranks, you only find out its true character when you kick it and it bites back. Eady's work recalls the seemingly uninhibited spaces of childhood as the sole occupier of the imaginary, a time when it was easier than now to slip between play identities as pirates and cowboys. He offers us a new source for the imagination; by re-enacting childhood play, a temporary and partial subjectivity is formed where once the illusion of a whole subjectivity was to be found, presenting us with new and old frontiers to plunder.

What is at stake in the recent work of Scott Eady is not so much the idea of a unified subject constructed out of the stereotypes of masculinity, but a subjectivity that is partial, fleeting and temporary. Through various encounters with feminist discourse, the idea of the perfect man is defined as what women want. Eady remakes his own image according to the expectations of others; no wonder that the clown is sad, or the rugby scrum is reduced to bare bones. In a last defiant and wilful act, his persona ruts about in a duel to the death. Eady's work examines the dark places where displays of masculine posturing lead to the humiliations of Abu Ghraib and to the constant threat of annihilation and war. *Boy #1, Boy #2* and *Boy #3* play out this reminder: "from little things, big things grow."

In work after work, expectations of masculine subjectivity are examined and are found to be flawed. From the billboard work, *She's a Hard Road Finding the Perfect Woman/ Boy*, to *Dickopf, Lost at the Bottom of the World, Boy #1, 2* and *3* and *The World Keeps Turning*, role play is a recurring motif. It is through a parody of such stereotypes that Eady proceeds to unpack the baggage of consumerist culture and address the advertising industry directly – for it is through advertising that these stereotypes are perpetuated, until the values they represent are normalised.

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- 1 Richard Lummis, "Big Time: Major Works by Scott Eady," *Art New Zealand*, 99 (Winter 2001), 74-7. Lummis celebrates Eady's use of masculine tropes and stereotypes and links these to homoerotic content borrowed from stereotypes of femininity – "pink equal girls." I would disagree with Lummis that the toolshed is feminised (because the internal fit-out, it seems to me, is a display of a clearly feminine masquerade – what some men might imagine femininity to be), while the clearly phallic form of the car in *The Desert Fox* becomes another example of a tool (albeit a pink one). Lummis mistakes this as feminine – but since it has no opening, no windows and doors, its rigidity can equally be described as auto(erotic) or resigned to self-pleasure, rather than the coupling Lummis desires for the work.
- 2 M Beevors, "Mamma Don't Let Your Babies Grow Up to be Cowboys," *Scope: Contemporary Research Topics: Art 1* (November 2006).
- 3 'Bootilicious' is a slang term which signifies a male desire for an overripe version of female sexuality. While not evident in this work, this idea it is at the heart of a work like *Scotty's Place*.
- 4 N scale is 1:160 in the United States and 1:144 in the United Kingdom.
- 5 Eady's examination of identity through playing pirates, clown and cowboys, and the notion of men at war and at play echo the early work of Cindy Sherman, who exposes images of feminine masquerade caught in the headlights of an all-too-male gaze. Eady's work, focused as it is on the self as constituted by the necessities of family, shows us just how equally damaging these stereotypes are, and how difficult they are to live up to – just as much a masquerade for the camera as Sherman's versions.

WHAT ARE WE LOOKING AT? MICHAEL PAREKOWHAI AT THE 2011 VENICE BIENNALE

Rebecca Hamid



Figure. 1. *Chapman's Homer*, 2011, bronze, stainless steel, two pieces: 251 x 271 x 175 and 56 x 87 x 37 cm, Photograph by Judith Cullen.

"But he isn't wearing anything at all!" In a fable by Hans Christian Andersen, "The Emperor's New Clothes," only an innocent child, without guile, can openly declare what it is they are all looking at. More concerned with being judged ignorant or incapable, the Emperor, his ministers and subjects all play along with the tailor's swindle, admiring the suit of clothes which simply does not exist.

We perceive in Anderson's allegory the ubiquity of the tale, the sudden recognition that it brings, certain archetypes of the adult human psyche and behaviour. It exposes the compelling reality of childishness and universal configurations of narrative that are understood subconsciously and collectively. The application here to the world of 'high' art is revealing and pertinent. It provides a valuable reference point when looking and writing about art.

Michael Parekowhai's entry to the 2011 Venice Biennale, *On First Looking into Chapman's Homer*, is an extravaganza the like of which New Zealand has never entertained before. In the context of Venice, touted as the most prestigious of all international art fairs, New Zealand's and the artist's gambit is an ambitious one. With the

announcement, national pride and enthusiasm gained momentum. Parekowhai's credentials confirm him as one of Aotearoa's most accomplished contemporary artists. He is a popular choice. Given its destination, the decision to go for scale and grandeur may have been an astute call. If he pulls it off, this could be a career-defining move for the artist. The stakes are high – "Venice remains a high pressure engagement."¹

But has the artist and his team pulled it off? With the emphasis on 'installation,' does it work as the catalogue and reviews claim it does? Mindful of Parekowhai's past achievements, how does this collection of sculptures compare to previous work? The decision to send Parekowhai has taken ten years. Has this belated decision compromised his installation?²

Walking away with the Golden Lion is to pick up a coveted prize. Nations, artists, their dealers, curators, directors and commissioners, and some heavyweight corporate backers, all line up for a piece of the action. Ideals that art is sacrosanct and not a commodity are dismissed by the capitalist ethos that prevails. As Simon Rees muses in "Pavilions and Palazzi," there is a "current and murkier tendency for the nationalization of production funding and the privatization of profit for sale."³ It is the nation's taxpayers who fund some or most of the entry, but it is the artist and their dealer who benefit from the sales.⁴ The dilemma here is not the rights and wrongs of public funding or support for the arts, but whether or not the profits realised should repay the public purse so as to sustain support for the arts on an ongoing basis. There is also the moral predicament of using public funds to boost the coffers of the private sector:

The scale of this event grows each year: There is nothing scrumpy about Venice. Everything is on a grand scale. It has for centuries been a destination for the wealthy and powerful, appreciative of its elegance, opulence, decadence and cultural diversity. A major power until the eighteenth century, Venice became a byword for decadence. Leading up to the 1800s, vast inherited fortunes were squandered by the aristocracy in gambling and lavish parties. A revival came in the 1870s with the opening of the Suez Canal; Venice became a destination for rich Europeans and wealthy socialites. The Venetians' predilection for liberalism infused the arts and nurtured a setting for the radicalisation of art practice. With the founding of the Biennale in 1895, Venice became a European epicenter of creativity for music, writing and the visual arts.

During the opening days of the 54th Venice Biennale in 2011, "ILLUMinations," the febrile clamour of the festivities resonate glamour, glitz and extravagance that at times overshadows the art itself. Referred to as the Cannes Film Festival of world art shows, it exudes excitement and excess. En route to the Giardini, the crowds of art-goers and press representatives pass by the super-sized yacht owned by Roman Abramovich, reputed to require a staff of 45. President Berlusconi arrives for the Argentinian pavilion opening, complete with an entourage of speedboats and bodyguards on jet skis dressed in matching wetsuits. It all seems reminiscent of a James Bond movie.

In shipping containers alongside the cocktail parties, three artists from the impoverished nation of Haiti have



Figure 2. *Kapa Haka* (Officer Taumaha), 2011, bronze, 182 x 60 x 45 cm, Photograph by Judith Cullen.

installed their collages of human forms sculptured from junk. *Death and Fertility* (2011) offers a trajectory on Haiti's ability to regenerate itself after tragedy. From the Atis Collective, Andre Eugene, Jean Herard Claude and Jean Claude Saintilus include fetish effigies constructed from lavishly coloured textile fragments. Juxtaposed with its opulent setting, the Haitian pavilion makes Venice seem all the more extreme and surreal. Apart from its location, this installation makes a powerful political statement about the excesses of both capitalism and art, the distribution of the world's resources and the spirit of human survival against all odds. While other nations, including New Zealand, reference Marcel Duchamp's ready-mades by choice, it is by necessity that these Third World artists use discarded and trashed objects to form the basis of their discourse. Powerful and haunting images of human experience have inspired these sculptures. As with Ernesto Vila's cut-out silhouettes of the missing and persecuted, *Imágenes (des)*, in the 2007 Beinnale Uruguayan pavilion, the conceptual ideas behind these sculptures command much more than a disengaged and intellectual response.

Contradictions abound between wealth and paucity, parochial and global, virtual and real, grand and simple. There is a deluge of art both serious and lightweight, some inspired but much of it repetitive, or tired, or just trying too hard. From the alluring to the very dull, each year the event grows and this year's Biennale offers a greater breadth of art talent than ever before. Of particular interest this year is that some of the privately funded exhibitions offer more depth than the official events, many of which feel weighed down by conventions of conceptual rigour.⁵



Figure 3. *Untitled*, 2011, wax, pigments, wicks, steel, installation dimensions variable, edition of 2 + 1 AP, Photograph by Rebecca Hamid

The 27-page list of exhibitions in the official press pack includes separate exhibitions housed in the Giardini and the Arsenale. No surprises that previous and current bastions of imperial power dominate the Giardini, the gardens containing the major permanent national pavilions.⁶ The USA occupies the central position, a location it secured in 1986. Britain is at the end of the main avenue, with France and Germany on either side. Pavilions belonging to other countries are in supporting roles, the largest of which is the Palazzo delle Esposizione, a Fascist-style building formerly known as the Italian pavilion.

Since the first Biennale in 1895, the number of national participants has grown rapidly, with a noticeable jump from 77 in 2009 to 89 in 2011. Venice is indisputably the oldest, largest and grandest of international art fairs. In 2011 Andorra, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Bangladesh and Haiti exhibited for the first time, and several countries returned after absences in recent years. Countries committing to permanent pavilions have spilled out from the Giardini to the nearby Arsenale, a series of old armaments warehouses, and across Venice into various palazzi. This year, 37 collateral events supported by international organisations and institutions, spread across various locations around the city,



Figure 4. *Constitution Hill*, (olive saplings), 2011, Polychromed bronze, 110 x 35 x 35 cm approx, Photograph by Michael Hill.

have further swelled the number of exhibitions. Some nationally and privately sponsored shows are on a par with those in the Giardini and Arsenale. There are exhibitions of big-name artists including Anselm Kiefer, Sigmar Polke, Andrei Monastyrski and James Turrell. Galleries with permanent collections, including the Gallerie dell'Accademia (Italian medieval and Renaissance), the Peggy Guggenheim (Modern), and the Ca'Pesaro Galleria d'Arte Moderna, are also staging one-off feature exhibitions. The Guggenheim shows a special exhibition by Robert Rauschenberg, "Gluts." In the Palazzo Grassi and Punta della Dogana, and now the recently opened Palazzo Ca'Corner della Regina on the Grand Canal, rival fashion house magnates Pinault and Prada vie for position with the biggest and best of their contemporary collections.

The theme for the Biennale involved literally shedding light on the institution itself. In announcing it, director Bice Curiger drew attention to "dormant and unrecognized opportunities, as well as to the conventions that need to be challenged." "ILLUMinations" "points to light, a classical theme in art that closely relates to Venice." To make her point, she negotiates the installation of three huge canvases by the radical Venetian Renaissance painter Tintoretto in the front gallery of the Palazzo delle Esposizioni. This is a daring and controversial move, which nevertheless proves popular with many visitors.⁷ In effect a dual theme, the

2011 title also accentuates the element "nations," alluding to predetermined notions of nationhood as exemplified in the conservative Venice construct of national pavilions. Curiger intended her initiative to challenge artists "to explore new forms of 'community' and negotiate differences and affinities that might serve as models for the future."⁸

Curiger's premise is to encourage art that "explores notions of the collective, yet also speaks of fragmentary identity, of temporary alliances, and objects inscribed with transience." Her hope is that Venice will host art that demonstrates the vibrancy of life. Citing an age when humans' sense of reality is profoundly challenged by virtual and simulated worlds, she called for art that expresses its potential, is inspired, questions assumptions and strives to be the best.⁹

Looking at what is on show, some of the national events are disappointing. The United States pavilion has a deserved reputation as a must-see venue. In 2005, Edward Ruscha exhibited early urban black-and-white landscapes alongside new, full-colour canvases. These were unsettling yet engaging and beautiful paintings. The 52th Biennale entry showed an installation by the dead Cuban-born artist Felix Gonzalez-Torres. This was a controversial choice and questions have been raised about the curatorial logic behind this, as well as previous and current artist selections. Choosing dead, mid-term or high-profile artists has proved to be both frustrating and exhilarating. Gonzalez-Torres's rigorously conceptual artwork, *America* (2007), included replenishable paper stacks, take-away candy spills, light strings, public billboards and photographs. His minimalist refinement of black and white, coupled with social commentary and personal disclosure, ensured that the installation was engaging and fresh. Both his and Ruscha's installations filled the US pavilion as one connected and complete exhibition. In 2009, the multifaceted American

conceptual artist and sculptor Bruce Nauman, a pioneer of post-minimalist video and performance art, won the Golden Lion.

In 2011, Costa Rican collaborative artists Jennifer Allora and Guillermo Calzadilla have created six works, titled *Gloria* (2011), for the US pavilion. Drawing a clear distinction between not representing the US but being "honoured to be included in the history of the US pavilion," Allora and Calzadilla have been strongly critical of American culture.¹⁰ Their multimedia works are about US presumption and military and financial might, as well as nationalism in its various expressions including Olympic sport. In each multimedia work *Gloria* references the theme of grandeur, whether military, religious, Olympic, or economic, using paradoxical and often absurd aesthetic forms to provoke discussion about critical contemporary issues. With a big budget, a permanent fixture and one of the best pavilions in which to work and plan their installation, Allora and Calzadilla had the ideal opportunity to produce some of their best work. But *Gloria* lacks synthesis. The sculptures and the various realisations of athletic performances do not flow as one coherent whole, or from one room to the next. With the not-so-subtle use of juxtaposition and symbolism, the references, narrative and ideas are too obvious to allow the audience to think for themselves. For the rest of the world, the chronicle of US ideology, politics and militarism offered by *Gloria* is 'old hat' and lacks sophistication.

In the eight rooms of the Palazzo Pisani, in a collateral event, Scots artist Karla Black exhibits new work. Described as intimately and painstakingly worked in situ, her pieces are exquisitely detailed. These sculptures float in aesthetic forms of varying materials and colour. They are abstract sculptures, suspended and spilling throughout the rooms and across the floors. Some sculptures were inspired by her interest in scientific theories about quantum particles. Using a vast array of materials including marble dust, sugar paper, cellophane and soap, Black has made sculptures that are at once gestures and serious attempts at creating things of delicate beauty which she describes as having "no image, no metaphor."¹¹ The installation cleverly transitions from one room to the next to form a compelling and complete work.

Christian Boltanski's *Chance* (2011), in the French pavilion, consists of print works sketched in metal scaffolding, resembling a cage or jail, and a press running off a belt of baby photographs, their faces ticked off by digital clocks. As an installation it is complete, integrated and coherent. The noise of the press fills the vast spaces of the scaffolding. Finding it unpleasant, the audience want it to stop; they are encouraged to press a button to do this. However, an alarming new noise takes its place. Boltanski's sculpture is a baby-factory. It is a portrait of the Darwinian drive to extinction and the human predilection to over-populate. It successfully juxtaposes the lightness of the scaffolding structures with the innocence of the newborn and the human predicament, involving a mix of misguided actions and inertia.

Despite its sombre content, the British entry has attracted lengthy queues. Mike Nelson's installation, *I, Impostor* (2011), is made up of a labyrinth of interiors, corridors and squalid corners, workbenches, dusty and derelict appliance and utensils and a make-shift photographic darkroom. Nelson's experiment in 'pavilion-vanishing' has been acclaimed by a few critics including Rachel Withers: "the skylight is gone, and the effect of stepping out from the installation's dim, dusty, intimate spaces into the teetering, sunlit 'courtyard' is breathtaking."¹² Charles Darwent also praises the installation: "its homelessness makes it at home in Venice."¹³ Comparing Nelson's work with Michael Parekowhai's, he implies that both negotiate global exchange and migration such that national identities become blurred. Given that Nelson – inspired by his 2003 Istanbul Biennale entry – intended his installation to replicate an old Ottoman workshop, Darwent's analogy is problematic. Nelson's work misses its mark. It is tediously repetitious and it is very hard to take in anything except dusty rooms and rusty junk in dead-end passages. It contains little which is fresh or provocative or inspiring.

Highlights at the Giardini include Maurizio Cattelan's entry *The Tourists* – 2000 dead pigeons hung from the rafters of the Palazzo delle Esposizioni. This entry appeared at the 1997 Biennale, but shows that art which is apparently 'old hat' can, if well executed, remain fresh and vital with repeat showings. We can compare this installation to three huge Tintoretto's, borrowed by Curiger from various Venice museums and installed in the first room of the same pavilion.



Figure 5. *Untitled*, 2011, charcoal, acrylic and oil on canvas, 157.48 x 279.4 cm, Photo credit: Jeffrey Sturges
Courtesy Haunch of Venison

This was heralded by many critics as a courageous attempt to weave Italian Renaissance art into the twin curatorial themes of light and the nations. Tintoretto's paintings are characterised by dramatic use of light and gestures, bold use of perspective and muscular figures depicting biblical scenes. Curiger intended their placement here as an act of provocation, a challenge to the self-reflective preoccupations of contemporary art. However, this intended juxtaposition has fallen flat. The contrast is too stark and disruptive, causing a disconnect rather than a transition into the adjoining rooms of contemporary art. Curiger's preferred artists, chosen for reasons of contrast rather than homogeneity or 'best fit,' compound this disjunction. In the end, her choices come across as a mishmash of genre, ideas and intentions. One of the starkest of these contrasts is formed by the mismatch of artist Monika Sosnowska's trite and empty wallpapered corridors alongside South African David Goldblatt's haunting and thought-provoking black-and-white photographs.

In the German pavilion – wittily re-emblazoned 'Egomania' from the original 'Germania' – Christoph Schlingensief's installation, *A Church of Fear vs. the Alien Within* (2011), described as "a protean and unsettling creativity," is installed by curator Susanne Gaensheimer.¹⁴ Schlingensief died within months of being selected for the 2011 Biennale. Simon Rees judges that, like many other exhibits, "works that delved into elements of insanity impressed."¹⁵ Schlingensief's work clearly impressed the judges, who awarded it the grand prize. Having visited this pavilion three times over five days, I concluded if the concepts, or narrative – or both – do in fact impress, then it is difficult to understand why. The church-style pavilion, with the films, objects and altar that make up the installation, does little other than to accentuate the obsession of the German people (and the artist), with themselves or their past, or both. The artist portrays an unflattering view of the human condition and reveals an obsession with his own imminent death from cancer. Combining film, theatre, sculpture, opera, political events and realpolitik, the piece features numerous chaotic images and ambiguous connections marked by excess of every kind. It is difficult to comprehend whether these portrayals of gross indulgence are to be attributed to others, the artist himself, or the judges who awarded it the Golden Lion.

In contrast, the Czech/Slovak pavilion, which features Roman Ondak's sculpture, is a salutary reminder that much of the art at Venice is vicarious or virtual. This exhibit is made up of a walk-through continuation of the Giardini's gravel paths, with shrub planting on either side. The point of this is to affirm the act of being present, in the Giardini, here and now. It is an expression of the artist's belief that being present and in the moment should be enough. It provides a simple reminder that less can mean more.



Figure 6. Gelatin Pavilion - 'Some like it Hot', 2011, installation.

In the Arsenale, the American artist James Turrell has presented one of his dreamy installations in which changing light creates an alternate universe of space and colour. Turrell's aesthetics and conceptual articulations of light and space can be awe-inspiring. The curatorial theme of "ILLUMinations" would have been sadly lacking without this piece. Like Ondak's work, this installation provokes moments of reflection that Schlingensief's work fails to achieve. Swiss artist Urs Fischer attracts the crowds with monumental functioning wax candles. One is a full-scale replica of Giovanni Bologna's sixteenth-century sculpture *The Rape of the Sabine Women*; the sign on the wall says 'Untitled, dimensions variable.' The other two pieces are in the forms of a computer chair and a well-dressed middle-aged man. The figures will gradually self-destruct during the months of the show as the wax melts and limbs drop off. These sculptures are clever in conception and expertly executed, but beyond this they do not offer much to sustain longer contemplation.

In addition to the five national pavilions of Arab nations at the 54th Biennale, a pan-Arab collateral event, "The Future of Promise," involving 22 different artists, is presented in various buildings in the Dorsoduro district. Across Venice, Arab countries represented include Iran, Iraq, Syria, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Lebanon. Much of the art presented is gritty and politically engaging. Israel's long and ruthless oppression of the Palestinian people is eloquently portrayed in *Al Maw'oud* (2011; the title translates as 'The Promised'), by Ayman Baalbaki, who examines the human quest of Palestinian freedom fighters.

In the Giardini, one of the most compelling and inspired presentations is provided by Egypt. The artist, Ahmed Basyony, was killed by sniper fire during the 2011 Egyptian revolution against the Mubarak regime; he became a symbol of hope to millions of Egyptians seeking to oust their repressive government. The installation is a two-fold presentation of work by the artist. Curated by Aida Eltorie and Shady El Noshokaty, it is designed to reflect a random display of incidents. *Thirty Days of Running in the Space* (2011) is a digital and performance-based concept exploring the changes involved in our everyday consumption of energy. This is juxtaposed with another set of screens showing raw footage of the chaotic events on the streets of Cairo during the uprising of early 2011. Basyony and his colleagues filmed events unfolding around them, and Basyony returned home each evening to download all the footage onto his laptop. Exposing the audience to the raw footage that survived Basyony's sudden and violent death, this installation is a homage to the artist behind the project. A reflection on Basyony's life and his commitment to social change, all the events recorded in this exhibition are documented on film, and occupy five screens in the exhibition hall, showing their material randomly side by side.

Sponsored by the Gervasuti Foundation, Iraq has a national pavilion for the first time, featuring six internationally renowned contemporary artists. Thirty years of war and conflict has taught these artists a great deal about artistic isolation. Venice offers these Iraqi artists an international audience to present ideas and cultural themes which extend much wider than the way the West views Iraq. Representing two generations, the artists include Ali Assaf, Azad Nanakeli and Walid Siti, who were all born in the early 1950s and who experienced the cultural richness of the period leading up to the 1970s; and the second generation, Adel Abidin, Ahmed Alsoudani and Halim Al Karim, who have experienced at first hand the Iran-Iraq war, the invasion of Kuwait, UN economic sanctions and then the invasion of the USA and its allies. All are part of the Iraq diaspora who have fled their homeland to study



Figure 7. *The Fisherman's Shoes*, 2011, bronze, two pieces dimensions variable, Photograph by Michael Hill.

and practice art abroad. Having forged ties with contemporary artistic practice outside of Iraq, they have all been able to relate the global situation to their Iraqi experience.

These artists represent an experimental approach that is both sophisticated and credible on an international stage. Water is the thematic choice for all six, and they provide provocative and convincing interpretations of the gravity of the crisis confronting their nation. It is the critical lack of water, not terrorism or civil war, which creates the real sense of urgency for Iraq, and provides a rich source of inspiration for these artists' use of video, documentary, photography and sculptural installations.

Behind the Arsenale, discreetly positioned in a well-kept garden of perennial borders, Gelitin, an Austrian artist collective, present *Gelatin Pavilion – Some like it Hot*, (2011). With a core group of four, other performers from across the globe join them to chop wood to fuel a wood-fired furnace, play music and flirt with each other. A tall naked man plays with his penis while conversing with other participants. A man in crutchless leotard tights mingles with the crowd. A large oven is fed glass taken from broken champagne bottles and glasses previously used by spectators and performers. The hot liquid glass is regularly extracted from the furnace, a reference to Venice and its history of glassblowing. Installation art in action, this 'happening' combines a variety of elements including live music, audience participation and simulated sex.

In the Dorsoduro, close to the Parekowhai exhibition, the Taiwanese *Le Festin De Chun-Te* (2011) by Hseih Chun-te includes elements of photography, theatre, cooking, music, dance and performance – combined to shocking and dramatic effect. Like Gelitin's successful installation art, this piece requires good timing and patience from its audience. Being present for the entirety of the performance is critical in order to comprehend the complexities of meaning it embodies, but given the frequency of performances, this isn't always possible. The four-day cycle of Gelatin's performance, on the other hand, is sustainable. As with so many others, the Taiwanese and New Zealand entries aim to last out the full six months of the Biennale.

With no national pavilion of its own, the site chosen for the New Zealand commission is the imposing Palazzo Loredan dell'Ambasciatore on the Grand Canal. Jenny Harper, the commissioner for the entry, announced it as a major sculptural installation that, in the context of other national presentations of the Biennale's "ILLUMinations" theme, will be "timely, compelling and memorable." Prior to the exhibition being installed, anticipation ran high in the New Zealand art world. Michael Parekowhai is a popular and respected artist whose previous sculptures, including *The Indefinite Article* (1990), *Kiss the Baby Goodbye* (1994), *Patriot: Ten Guitars* (1999), and *The Big O E* (2006), have gained him widespread appreciation and recognition. He draws strongly on a Maori-Pakeha cultural narrative that strikes a chord with a wide cross-section of the New Zealand art-loving public. If the narrative is at times complex and intricately woven, the visual impact of his work and its familiar symbolism can resonate with instant impact. It is this familiarity and sense of cultural identity that draws his audience to take a sustained look at his work. The credentials of the artist, the people involved in the project – the commissioner, curators, supporters and patrons – the considerable costs and media hype all created an expectation that Parekowhai's pianos would impress the Venice crowds, woo the punters, position the artist to attract international commissions and, most immediately, gain the judges' attention.

In the official brochure and Creative New Zealand's website page for Michael Parekowhai's Venice commission, it is described as an installation. The work is made up of a number of sculptures as well as performance – there are three



Figure 8. Wood, brass, automative paint, mother of pearl, paua, upholstery. Two Pieces: 103 x 275 x 175 cm and 85.5 x 46 x 41 cm

very large grand pianos, live music and singing. "The works that make up the installation include: *He Korero Purakau mo Te Awanui o Te Motu: Story of a New Zealand River*, 2011 (a carved Steinway grand piano), *A Peak in Darien*, 2011 (a bronze bull resting on a piano), *Chapman's Homer*, 2011 (a standing bull and piano), *Kapa Haka (Officer Taumaha)*, 2011, and *Constitution Hill*, 2011, (olive saplings)."¹⁶ The Steinway piano is wooden and intricately carved with Maori and European symbolism, and is embellished with paua inlay and Parekowhai's siblings symbolised as carved lizards on the lid. First painted shiny black when launched at the New Zealand Patrons' debut in Henderson, it was then painted a brilliant red before being installed in Venice. *He Korero Purakau mo Te Awanui o Te Motu: Story of a New Zealand River* is played throughout the exhibition along with a programme of special performances including one by Aivale Cole, who sang several arias at the exhibition opening.

Music is intended to link the sculptural works and 'fill the space' to complete the installation. According to the artist: "While the objects in *On First Looking into Chapman's Homer* are important, the real meaning of the work will come through the music. Just as my work *Ten Guitars* was not about the instruments themselves but about the way they brought people together; performance is central to understanding *On First looking into Chapman's Homer* because music fills a space like no object can."¹⁷ The dilemma with incorporating performance is how to maintain it as a constant element of the installation. While Creative New Zealand has engaged pianists for the first three months of the exhibition, for the remainder of the Biennale, and during the interludes, the audience will not have the benefit of music as a unifying element. Further, the music and performance require the carved piano. The music connects the bronze pianos and the potent bull/piano stool symbolism. When the show is over and the sculptures go their separate ways, the symbolic potency of the unplayed pianos will be lost.

The artist points out that "It's not the size of the object that matters. It's the scale of the idea."¹⁸ Nevertheless, the size, materials and grandeur of the three pianos don't fail to impress. Much has been written about their weight,

cost and the difficulties of transporting them the great distances to Venice. The sculptures have been meticulously executed. The carved piano is beautiful and opulent, and the bronze versions are exquisitely made. Their boldness and daring commands a respect that sits well in Venice and the Palazzo. The accomplishment of their making, getting them to Venice and putting on a first-class performance sends a powerful message to people who know little about New Zealand. The challenge, then, is not to let national pride and parochialism subsume the art. Jackie Wullschlager comments briefly on Parekowhai's entry in reference to her claim that "Nationalism – even parochialism – is the intoxicating paradox of every 21st Century Biennale." The New Zealand pavilion "could not open without first receiving a Maori blessing." Not a word about the art itself.¹⁹

Parekowhai's carved piano has been ten years in the making. The artist put himself forward twice for selection and was overlooked a third time when he rejected the competitive process. During this time, he discussed various installation scenarios for his carved piano including Venice, the Piazza San Marco, a live concert and the possibility of staging a performance with Dame Kiri Te Kanawa. Pianos have featured in many of Parekowhai's previous sculptures. With the exception of *The Fisherman's Shoes* (2011), a bronze pair of Crocs modelled on some belonging to the artist's brother, who died aged 12, and the Spanish bulls on the pianos, all the other sculptures in the installation have been used before in various forms.²⁰ The delicately cast bronze potted olive trees are a new version of *The Moment of Cubism* (2009). The security guard, *Kapa Haka (Officer Taumaha)*, who watches from a corner of the garden is a version of his bronze *Kapa Haka* (2008) and *Kapa Haka* (2003), figures set in white and black painted fibreglass. Pianos have featured in his practice for over ten years, and include *Horn of Africa* (2006) and *My Sister, My Self* (2007). Parekowhai has employed animal figures and performance frequently in the past, interweaving these with his ideas of showmanship and Duchampian wit. In the context of Venice, Parekowhai has all the ingredients for success. But the wit is missing. The sculptures are serious. Unlike his previous combinations of performing seals, ready-mades, animals and pianos, the bulls on the grand pianos do not make us smile at the artist's sense of humour.

Finding a suitable pavilion space was not easy. Making the installation work when the artist did not have a predetermined space in which to work was a difficult task. Five months out from the opening, a suitable palazzo was found. Parekowhai and art curator Justin Paton have both reflected on the suitability of the space, agreeing that the Palazzo Loredan dell'Ambasciatore was their second choice, a 'best fit' compromise. In the exhibition catalogue, Paton writes that the three pianos are to be placed in the Palazzo, with one of the bronze instruments in the garden at the back; the other in the portico, the entrance off the Grand Canal; and the third, the carved piano, in a room adjoining the other two. The purpose of this arrangement is that visitors will either pass through the garden on the way into the building or enter via the canal, thus achieving what Parekowhai calls a 'moment of reckoning.' In reality, few will enter by way of the portico – most will arrive via a side door and enter the room where the carved piano is positioned. As the garden is surrounded by a high wall, it is in effect not possible to experience *Chapman's Homer* without first entering the room with the carved piano. The positioning of part of the installation in a beautiful garden also questions the relevance of the sculpture itself. So, in the end, are we left sitting in a park listening to music?

On First Looking into Chapman's Homer refers to the poem by the nineteenth-century English Romantic poet, John Keats. Keats describes a Spanish adventurer climbing to the top of a hill in what is now Panama and looking out over the Pacific to survey its potential riches for the first time. Simon Rees questions this referencing of Keats and asks, why not Byron? – given the latter's closer association with Venice.²¹ Rees's comments are not persuasive on this point. Keats's poem provides a compelling reference, as it implies an epiphany – an eye-opening moment and a sense of discovery. The use of the poem for the title works well, both for the installation and *Chapman's Homer* itself. Rees also calls into question the use of an American Steinway instead of a European make, and the performance by a soprano rather than a baritone. He argues that a baritone would have been a more appropriate choice, given that Inia Te Wiata was well known in Europe both as a singer and a master carver.²² Although Rees's own references are a little flimsy here, it is relevant to ask these questions given the heavy reliance on cultural and historical narrative to support the works. The layers of postcolonial references apparent in the work – such as the connection between the craftsman who carved Parekowhai's instrument and the piano in the film *The Piano* – alongside the layers of historical connections, produce an impression of self-indulgence. Likewise, the interwoven

references to migration and re-migration, culture and art are not altogether convincing and burden the works with further layers of narrative.

The titles of the sculptures, as well as the exhibition texts and catalogue essays include references claiming to shed light on the meaning of the works – not to mention the many subsequent critical reviews. None have been less convincing than Mary Kisler's interview on National Radio where she discussed the prominent role of animals in Venice's cultural history, linking the symbolism of crocodiles from Africa with the bronze Crocs in the palazzo garden.²³ Likewise, Sue Gardiner's reference to Molly Macalister's *Little Bull* (1967) in Hamilton, and her linking of New Zealand's rural economy with bronze Spanish bulls in Venice, is a little thin.²⁴

Of necessity, the exhibition catalogue and accompanying publicity material were prepared before the works were installed. These are revealing in what they omit. Given Parekowhai's status as a "one of New Zealand's most dynamic contemporary artists," commissioner Jenny Harper expresses confidence that his exhibition will be a major event. However, commenting on the actual installation, her references are to past work emphasising the deliberate juxtaposing of his sculptures; the topical and polished quality of his work; his use of drama and surprise; his engagement with both Maori and Pakeha culture; his sense of New Zealand identity; and his use of pastiche, wit and the savvy. These comments are made both in reference to past work and in anticipation of what was to come. Paton and Harper had visited the artist in his workshop and had seen the intricately carved piano in the making. They saw the work again, including the two bronze pianos, bronze bouncer, olive trees and 'Crocs,' five months prior to their departure for Venice. Paton is intrigued by the layers of meaning that have come to be synonymous with Parekowhai's art. His bull figures, for example, weave connections between the meaning of bulls in art and myth. He refers to their space-invading 'bullness' and compares them to solid landscapes, with haunches and neck muscles reminiscent of lowlands and rolling hills. We are also reminded that heavily layered narratives are a prerequisite of Parekowhai's art practice. There are symbolic references to centuries of animal sculpture. Paton explains the significance of the two large bulls, both in terms of their physicality and their undeclared meaning – they belong less to official civic statuary, celebrating history or a military victory, and more to the realm of fables and inner-world realities such as conquering a fear or solving a mystery.²⁵

Like the Emperor in the fairy tale, did Michael Parekowhai get distracted by the hype and grandeur that is Venice, seduced by the lure of this international stage? Was he trying too hard to impress? The artist and the nation risk a great deal in pitching for Venice. It's tough when the verdict isn't all praise, but perhaps this is the price of pitching for the world's oldest and most prestigious art event. Parekowhai is aware of this more than anyone. On the occasion of his presentation in Venice in 2007, he noted: "the art world has become such a self-promotional universe."²⁶ Nonetheless, Creative New Zealand Arts Council chairman Alastair Carruthers observes that progress has been made after ten years of New Zealand entries at the Biennale. Now the focus is on the art itself, not whether or not to enter or what the artist should send.²⁷ However, this puts the weight squarely on the shoulders of the artist to come up with the goods. It also means that critics and art writers need to see and write about what they are actually looking at.

When you make a piece of art, is it really 'lucky' when it works? A happy surprise? A pleasant mistake? All artists think carefully about making it look too easy. "Tennis looks easy, so grab a racquet and knock yourself out."²⁸ In the past, Parekowhai has made it look easy. He has the ability to see what we can all see, but can't express. Unlike anyone else, he wraps it up in smart, chic, intelligent and heart-warming art. Pieces like *Cosmio* (2006) make us smile. The idea of music 'sculpting' a space and the openness of the performance to public interaction was a hallmark of his Venice entry. The downside was a certain awkwardness about the objects themselves that didn't allow them to work well as sculptures, and failed to draw a smile. If this is art as narrative for the sake of narrative, why wrap it up in sculpture? With this one, the artist wasn't so lucky. Neither are we.

Rebecca Hamid is director of RH Gallery on the Woollaston Estates Vineyard, Mahana, Nelson. She has a Postgraduate Diploma in Art History from the University of Otago (with Distinction), is executive director and trustee of the Nelson Sculpture Trust, and curates philanthropist Glenn Schaeffer's NZ and US private art collections.

- 1 Tom Cardy, *Dominion Post*, 26 May 2011, Arts Section, 5.
- 2 Venice has hosted official representatives from New Zealand on four previous occasions. Peter Robinson and Jacqueline Fraser were the first in 2001, followed by Michael Stevenson in 2003. Following a government review sparked by a public controversy over the entry of *et al* in 2005, there was no official entry in 2007. Despite this, Brett Graham and Rachel Rakena installed *Aniwaniwa*, their installation of sculpture, music and video, in a salt warehouse in the Dorsoduro, as an unofficial entry. Judy Miller and Frances Upritchard comprised New Zealand's dual entry in 2009.
- 3 Simon Rees, "Pavilions and Palazzi," *Art New Zealand*, 139 (Spring 2011), 52.
- 4 In 2011, Creative New Zealand (funded by taxes) contributed \$700,000 as well as the additional costs for staff time and expenses to support the event; the patrons' group contributed \$315,000. Each of the three pianos is reputed to have a price tag (or have sold) for \$1.3 million or more. The private dealer gallery representing the artist usually claims a commission on art sales of 40-45%, the balance going to the artist.
- 5 This was a claim made in reference to New Zealand's 2005 entry made by the collective *et al*.
- 6 Michael Archer, "Not Seeing but Drowning: My Visit to the Venice Biennale," *Guardian*, 10 June 2009.
- 7 Jackie Wullschlager, "Arts & Books," *Financial Times*, 4 June 2011.
- 8 Bice Curiger, "Introduction: Art," 2011, www.labiennale.org.
- 9 *Ibid*.
- 10 Elaine A King, "Art as a Monster: A Conversation with Allora & Calzadilla," *Sculpture*, 30:5 (June 2011), 20.
- 11 Charlotte Higgins, "Karla Black at the Venice Biennale: 'Don't Call my Art Feminine'," *Guardian*, 1 June 2011.
- 12 Rachel Withers, "Mike Nelson at the Venice Biennale," *Guardian*, 3 June 2011.
- 13 Charles Darwent, "The Venice Biennale, Various Venues, Venice," *Independent*, 12 June 2011.
- 14 Stephance Malfettes, "Christoph Schlingensief," *Art Press*, Supplement (June 2011) (trans. L-S Torgoff).
- 15 Rees, "Pavilions and Palazzi," 54.
- 16 Michael Parekowhai, brochure in Creative NZ press pack, June 2011.
- 17 *Ibid*.
- 18 Kim Knight, "Parekowhai to show at Venice Biennale," *Sunday StarTimes*, 22 May 2011.
- 19 Jackie Wullschlager, Arts & Books Section, *Financial Times*, 4 June 2011.
- 20 'Crocs' is a trademarked name for synthetic sandals or shoes.
- 21 Rees, "Pavilions and Palazzi," 54.
- 22 Inia Te Wiata died in 1971. This weakens Rees's argument somewhat; after 40 years it is questionable how well Te Wiata is remembered in Europe.
- 23 Kim Hill, "Art with Mary Kisler: Power Animals," *Saturday Morning*, National Radio, 2 June 2011. ("Senior Curator; Mackelvie Collection, International Art, at the Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tamaki discusses Michael Parekowhai, Venice, and symbols of animals.")
- 24 Sue Gardiner, "Musical Epiphany," *Art News* (Winter 2011), 87.
- 25 Justin Paton, "Weighing In, Lifting Off: Michael Parekowhai in Venice," in *Michael Parekowhai: On First Looking Into Chapman's Homer: New Zealand at the 54th Biennale di Venezia 2011*, ed. Mary Barr (Auckland: Michael Lett and Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, 2011), 22.
- 26 Gregory Burke, "The Virtuoso Effect," in *Michael Parekowhai: On First Looking Into Chapman's Homer*, 38.
- 27 Charles Anderson, "Bullish in Venice," *NZ Herald*, 4 June 2011.
- 28 *Ibid*.

ARE YOU EXPERIENCED?
A REVIEW OF MICHAEL PAREKOWHAI'S
ON FIRST LOOKING INTO CHAPMAN'S HOMER
AT THE 54TH VENICE BIENNALE, PALAZZO LOREDAN
DELL'AMBASCIATORE, VENICE, 4 JUNE – 26 OCTOBER 2011

Rachel Gillies

With more than 100 artworks seen in a space of three short days, I left the Venice Biennale with only a handful of key works that stuck in my mind. The work I *experienced* best was that of New Zealand artist Michael Parekowhai.

The international experience of the Venice Biennale is often short-lived, art-packed and overwhelming for the visual tourist. One lands, one looks, rushing from exhibit to exhibit across the city, and usually one leaves with a sense that one's feet haven't quite touched the ground. It is rare in this environment to have much time to collect one's thoughts during the visit, and often the works that resonate most prominently in the mind are the ones that remain long after you have left the Italian shores.

It was a rare and beautiful experience, then, to be seduced by Michael Parekowhai's exhibition before I even entered the building; to find myself instantly slowing down; and to spend an extraordinary amount of time experiencing his work.

In the heat of the afternoon sun I came across Parekowhai's exhibition sign, pointing down one of Venice's charming alleyways. It had been an exhibition on my list of course but, albeit out of sequence, here we were. As I followed the signs round a corner or two (then over a bridge and round another corner), the first thing that hit me was the gentle sound of piano music emanating from an upper window. Instantly excited about the music – I had hoped it would be played throughout the biennale and not just at the opening events – I entered the Palazzo Loredan dell'Ambasciatore on the Grand Canal and wandered into the main chamber and up to the first piece.



Figure. 1. "He Kōrero Purākau mo Te Awanui o Te Motu: story of a New Zealand river" Michael Parekowhai (2011)
Installation Detail from 'On first Looking into Chapman's Homer' at the 54th Venice Biennale, Palazzo Loredan dell'Ambasciatore, Venice (2011),
Photograph by Rachel Gillies, 2011.

The room was dim and cool; I sat down, closed my eyes and let the music flow over me. Once rested, I began to look. In front of me, the piano being played was a most intricately carved and red-painted Steinway piano. The craftsmanship was stunning, and one couldn't help but revere the skill and enormity of the work that lay behind it. From my position in the room, I could look left and right and see the other two piano works. In a small ante-room positioned directly on the Grand Canal was the first of two fabricated bronze pianos, with an enormous cast bronze bull atop it. Positioned lying prone on the piano, the bull's head rests almost at eye level with an imagined player seated at the keys. The folds of the bull's bulk echo rolling hills – a landscape associated with both the poem by Keats to which the title of the exhibition refers and the individual title of the work, *A Peak in Darien*.

Keen to see the next bronze piece, I headed back past the carved Steinway and out into the garden area at the back. Stepping back out into the sunlight, I was amazed and pleased to see families and other visitors 'hanging out.' Some were having lunch, others were talking in the shade and surveying the sculptural works. In the middle of this reverie, *Chapman's Homer*, the second bronze-bull-and-piano were holding court. This time the bull is standing, confronting visitors with its sheer size in a direct challenge to anyone who might dare to take the stool. Circling the work, I spied the bronze figure from Parekowhai's *Kapa Haka* series, *Officer Taumaha*, nestled amongst the foliage in the corner, keeping a keen eye on the scene.

What happened next surprised even me; I sat down again. I sat down and I looked and I listened, and I experienced the work. People wandered round, floating almost, in the atmosphere of calm and tranquility surrounding the installation. I viewed each work again, circling each piano, looking at the detail, the fall of the light, the work's position in its space. In a response almost unheard of in this international art supermarket, I spent more time here than at any other (non-time-based) work and Michael Parekowhai made me do it. He made me stop and look. Really look, and really experience *On First Looking into Chapman's Homer*.

For further information on the artist, the individual works and New Zealand's history at the Venice Biennale, see the website: <http://www.nzatvenice.com/>.

Rachel Gillies is a lecturer in both the School of Art and the Design Department at Otago Polytechnic and has backgrounds in photography, multimedia technology, contemporary art gallery management, graphic design and electronic arts. Her research practice includes electronic arts, photography and contemporary exhibition practices, and she is directly involved in the development of digital literacy resourcing at Otago Polytechnic.

DISMAL TREATMENT OF THE DISMISSED

Christine Keller

In the current economic climate we hear more and more about restructuring and redundancies. This puts an ever-increasing number of people in the situation of looking for new employment. I was made redundant in 2010 and, during my subsequent job search, I found an interesting position advertised in the *Guardian*. Intending to apply, I faced application processes from a UK university which I felt compelled to comment on. A slightly edited version of my letter to that institution is printed in this article. In it, I firstly questioned the treatment of applicants who are asked to disclose huge amounts of private information with the alleged intention of 'treating everybody fairly'. In my view, simple principles of respect and privacy are at risk. Secondly, I believe the practice of not replying to unsuccessful applicants is dismissive and should not be accepted. This practice is supposedly 'in the interest of economy'. I finally want to raise discussion about what that actually means. What is the interest of economy? Who is economy?

In some countries, it is illegal to ask job applicants for personal details of the kind I was asked in this application process. I remember that these questionnaires were put in place some years ago to make sure that no person would be discriminated against, but I think it is time to speak up and say that we have thrown out the baby with the bathwater. Also, the practice of not replying to applicants is just plain rude. The kind of position in question here is not a casual labouring job, but requires a high degree of long-term commitment from the applicant. 'In the interest of economy' is a lame excuse here. Economy means actually 'the wealth and resources of a country and region.' Think about that. Wealth and resources are not limited to monetary aspects. That is what, in a growing atmosphere of financial pressure and collapse around us, we tend to forget. In my opinion, we will not achieve a sustainable society if we do not change our focus and evaluation (the S- word is so trendy right now, isn't it?).

Recently, I came across the website of the New Economics Foundation in the UK (www.neweconomics.org) and found their ideas worthy of investigation. Their catch phrase is: 'Economy as if people and the planet mattered.' I am waiting for a time when more of us stand up for practices developed in the interest of the people and stop using money as the sole indicator of wealth and resources!

I sent the institution where I had applied the following letter:



Dunedin 11.10.2010

To
Human Resources and the
President of University

I am writing this letter after reading all the application requirements for your institution and I would kindly ask you to forward this to Human Resources as well as to the head of the university.

My name is Christine Keller and I am presently a Senior Lecturer at the Dunedin School of Art at Otago Polytechnic in southern New Zealand. With huge interest I read your job add in the Guardian. As the government in New Zealand is cutting funds for education, I am facing a redundancy and need to look for a new perspective. I planned to write an application and to let you know that I will be in Germany in week 48 (where I am shortlisted for a textile professorship). It would be easy for me to come and present myself to you, as I am 'next door'.

I read that your institution states they want to work to best practice to "attract, retain and develop staff of the highest calibre". That sounds fabulous! As an award-winning designer with an international network, a good teaching record, industry experience and student success I would not hesitate to see myself on that level.

You may not have chosen me, but I would like to tell you why I decided to not even apply: the recruitment policy suggests that there is no discrimination in the application selection process. I wonder why in 2010 any university is asking for the sexual orientation and religion of their applicants and needs to have that information on file. What does the university learn from us ticking a box on those subjects? I have nothing to hide, but wonder if ticking one of the boxes will make me a better person or seem a weirdo. (I grew up in the Lutheran tradition by the way; does that make me a Christian?) And my sexual orientation - who is asking? I live in New Zealand, 'the T-shirt says "Kiwis do 'it' with sheep" (well I don't, but that is nobody's business). And the details in the questions on race and disability; could you not ask the relevant questions of the people considered for interview? What points are relevant to being a good lecturer? The important thing for lecturers is to be tolerant towards different practices and religions and personalities and to be able to cater for all students of all different beliefs and orientations (and race and abilities and so on). You need to be concerned whether my skills and personality will make me a good reliable teacher, administrator and staff member. Other private issues, if they are not used to discriminate, should not be asked about!

As a German whose parents were teenagers in the last war, I am very aware how this information on file can overnight become relevant beyond reason. I am concerned; my 81 year old mother was shocked when I told her about the form.

The point which really put me off is this:

In the interest of economy only those candidates selected for interview will receive a communication; may I thank you for your interest in employment with the University.

To put all the information together for an application as important as an academic position needs an applicant's competence, knowledge and heart. A lot of work is needed for an application and it potentially has big consequences for people's lives. To know that you are not chosen might be an important piece of information for the future decision-making of an applicant. It is simply not good enough to not even reply in case of rejection. If a prospective employer of academic teaching staff cannot come up with a system for decent rejection letters, albeit standardised and emailed as today's technology allows us, how can an applicant believe that the employer will look after the people in the institution according to the highest standards?

The relationship between people, the economy and technology has recently become one of my research interests. My discipline of textiles is a fantastic example of the development of technique and its consequences for society. Your application process is another example of how 'far' we have come. We are looking for progress and innovation but we must not forget whom we are doing this for: The point is not 'the interest of economy' - the only decent and sustainable way forward is to consider the economy in the interest of people.

I hope you will find the best person and future colleague for your job. I have been working in a great team over the last 5 1/2 years and am sorry that I will stop working here, but I have learned that there are some qualities that are very important: team spirit and support for each other. For example, I would define one major quality of my school here in terms of the fact that I still give my present boss a hug. She is the person who had to tell me that I was being made redundant, and I did not get the impression she enjoyed that.

In the interest of respect and in the hope that you will review your practice,
Kindest regards,

Christine Keller
Senior Lecturer; Textile Studio



Christine Keller is German-born and was the head of textiles at Otago Polytechnic School of Art in Dunedin, New Zealand, between 2005 and 2010. Her work is positioned between traditional textile design and weaving and new media art and innovation. She is interested in the clash of tradition and new technologies and its social and political implications. Her work has been exhibited internationally and was featured in the publications *Techno Textiles 1 & 2* (1998 and 2005). She is an award-winning designer for her woven and felted work produced for the Handweberei im Rosenwinkel workshop in Germany (1998-2001). She has taught textile design, weaving and textile arts in Germany, Mongolia, Australia and Canada.