#P_THE SITE OF PUBLICATION IN CONTEMPORARY PRACTICE

Fiona Grieve and Monique Redmond

Publication platforms establish an expanded field of contemporary thinking and practice, devising new ways to negotiate design and visual arts discourse. The *publication platform* is a description we have coined to describe what we see as a series of "places," relational to each other in the sense of a geographical cluster – a site of creative speculation and critical reflection. We see the *platform* as a series of venues for discussion, dialogue and presentation of practice, thinking and thought. The *platform* signals our interest in the critically reflective nature of publication practice that we ourselves are engaged in as initiators, collaborators, practitioners. One of the motivations behind this discussion is an observance of how "printed spaces" have encouraged expanded practice to occur by means of collaborative relations.

These sites operate as places to publish work amongst a diversity of discourse and intentionality for the editorial team, their collaborators, artists, designers and writers. The various projects examined in this article can be differentiated from a larger category of art and design magazines in that they are strongly premised on the notion of creative practitioners being both speculative and reflective. Side-by-side, page-to-page, artists and designers exhibit, are profiled and display their artwork, whilst critically reflecting on the nature of practice through interview, reviews, articles, page works, etc. Of significance is the proliferation of opportunity led by creative individuals and teams; artists are engaging in print-based projects, designers are working collaboratively in design teams or with artists – creative practitioners are building their own galleries. What interests us is how the "publishing space" inside these scenarios engineers critically distinctive modes within a spectrum of *platform* possibilities.

Multi-faceted in its make-up, the *platform* or venue of dissemination has shifted to incorporate alternative sites for exhibition, interview, discussion and display.¹ What is distinctive about these categories is the way they both overlap and individualise a self-critical and reflective approach in the context of an editorial stance. For example, the inclusion of a photographic essay; this may simply profile and survey a photographer's artwork – versus a photo-documentary artwork made specifically for print format cognisant of the nature of the "book" form as an exhibition site. The projects we discuss here assume the site of publication as the primary point of viewing in that they each advocate a distinctive "*platform*" mode of criticality that is context-sensitive or, as we see it, "publication-format savy,"

THREADED

Threaded magazine is Fiona Grieve and Kyra Bradcock's collaborative research project. Collaboration is a key focus and occurs in a number of ways. Threaded seeks collaboration; guest designers and artists are invited to design their discussion across three double-page spreads. A theme is set for each edition, and previous issues include the themes: hope and glory, for the love of it, method in the madness, arrivals and departures. Practitioners can circumvent or intercept the conceptual theme or consciously ignore it as a strategy. The cover and gatefold is a sub-project



Figures 1 & 2: Threaded ED.4, hope and glory; guest designers, Designworks Enterprise IG. Cover and inside gatefold by guest photographer Holli McEntegart (Bachelor of Design, photography, 2007).

within the *Threaded* scheme – there is a macro-micro theme that runs through the gatefolds of each issue. This particular approach was instigated during collaboration with Designworks Enterprise IG for the *hope and glory* issue (ED.4), which utilised the aesthetic of handcrafted tattoos to illustrate hopes, dreams and success as a mapping and storytelling device.

The *Threaded* editorial ethos deliberately constructs concurrences between the thematic and the conceptual ideation. Consequently, personal references emerge – *for the love of it* incorporated the editor's grandmother by asking her to handwrite the editorial onto one of her recipe book pages, which was then photographed. This succinctly reinforced the theme and the endless years of home baking undertaken "for the love of it."



Figures 3 & 4: Threaded ED.5, for the love of it. Contents (pages 2-3) and editorial (pages 4-5).

In *Threaded* ED.6, the *method in the madness* issue, Alt Group designed the cover and gatefold. They employed photography to construct a stage of designed artefacts that became an index to their upcoming three double-page spreads, which expanded on the conceptual and contextual "method and madness" of each artefact. The front-page lead-in of "DO DISTURB It doesn't matter what people say, only how they laugh" exudes the distinctive attitude that exists within their design group, which is humourous, quick-witted and conceptually smart. Alt creates a series of commentaries, describes the context behind each artefact and then catalogues this information.

#3 Wine bottles. Seasoned Greetings, Alt Christmas 2007.

Alt likes to cook, eat and talk. Lunch is an institution, sometimes it's early, sometimes late, but it's always different. Meat in its many forms constitutes a large part of the diet, there are neither vegetarian options nor vegetarians, and the only vegan who has ever joined the team has since renounced his beliefs. Christmas is a time of celebration of things that are born in mangers, barns and stables. Just like our kiwi summer, barbeques and Xmas were meant to go together. For the recipients of this gift, duck, pork and rabbit are this year's seasoned greetings. Each wine variety is paired with a young tasty animal. Quack – flame grilled duck with fresh summer salsa. Crackle – Best pork fillets with grilled asparagus and spicy spuds. Hop – Skewered rabbit in smoked bacon with grilled veg.²



Figures 5 & 6:Threaded ED.6, method in the madness. Guest designers, Alt Group. Inside gatefold (detail), #3"Do Disturb" (pages 44-9).

The design for the dialogue that took place between painter Mark Braunias and photographer Paul Johns for ED.7, *method in the madness*, necessitated a different type of collaboration, in the first instance between themselves and secondly with *Threaded*. The layout design undertaken by *Threaded* had to embed the artistic methodologies, sensibilities and attitudes of their collaboration. In conversation, Mark and Paul often amuse themselves with boys' club gossip; hence the title, "The Gail Manifesto – Images Will Dominate" (where they refer to "Gail" on *Coronation Street*). This piece employs a conceptual overlay that binds the interview into a work in its own right. Cell-phone texting documented over three months locates the dialogue as a personal, responsive text. *Threaded* employs the construct of the interview in a number of ways; collaborators are encouraged to exploit critical conventions whilst simultaneously being humorous, highly self-conscious, disruptive or domineering in approach. The interview is essentially used as a critical device through which to critique the nature of the dialogue in action. Practitioners profiled lead and present themselves, as they want to be seen. Often the designer/artist is positioned as both interviewer and interviewee, encouraging an open-ended dialogue between participants.



Figures 7 & 8: Threaded ED.6, method in the madness. Mark Braunias and Paul Johns, "The Gail Manifesto" (pages 38-43).

PILOT

PILOT is a high-end production new to the *platform*; editor-in-chief is Andy Pickering, editorial design and layout is by Inhouse (Arch MacDonnell), and display typefaces are by Klim Type Foundry. *PILOT* draws on a very particular group of expertise. It is an evolving project; the curatorial aspect is highly selective with regard to whom they profile. This is demonstrated through the inclusion in Issue 1 of critically informed and sophisticated pieces such as *Fetish* by film director David Lynch and shoe designer Christian Louboutin, and James Jean's *Flip Fantasia* for Prada's Spring–Summer 2008 campaign. Both contribute to the authenticity of the Zeitgeist concept *PILOT* champions: they are intent on capturing an elusive quality that purports to embody "the spirit and ambience of an era." "Pilot aspires to be something new by blending different qualities to create a crafted hybrid of manifesto, art gallery, magazine periodical, archive, and yes, book."³

PILOT's curatorial approach utilises the editor as director; articles are "curated" in some sense, and there is evidence of highly choreographed art direction via fashion photography styling, and astute management of subject, object and image relationships. This is coupled with the feeling that the directorial policy is responsive to the commissioning of works through the exclusive calibre and selection of featured practitioners. *PILOT* works strongly with the theatrics of the photographic medium to transport stories and pictorial investigations, which in turn intensifies the stylish production quality as demonstrated in "The Origin of Species," an interview with still-life photographer Flora Olbiensis. With "The Cabinet of Curiosities," *PILOT* takes on the original intent of a museum "cabinet" and focuses their design as an iteration of this format. *PILOT* institutes a historical take on the idea of a cabinet of curiosities. The editorial presence is strong in leading the reader through an experience of viewing and uncovering a "collection." The pictorial cabinets impart a museological aesthetic and reinforce the relationship between editor and designer and *PILOT's* focus on high-end construction.⁴ It is this type of articulation and reference to other modalities, such as the museum, the studio subject and the construed object that critically locates *PILOT* on the *platform*.



Figure 9: PILOT Issue 1, "Fetish" exhibition. Photography by film director David Lynch, in collaboration with shoe designer Christian Louboutin (pages 90-5).



Figure 10: PILOT Issue 1, "Flip Fantasia." James Jean, imagery for Prada's Spring-Summer 2008 campaign (pages 160-67).



Figure 11: *PILOT* Issue 1, "The Origin of Species," interview with still-life photographer Flora Olbiensis by Erwan Frotin (pages 50-57).



Figure 12: PILOT Issue 1, Hyungkoo Lee, "The Cabinet of Curiosities & Animatus" (pages 96-113).

CERTAIN WORDS DRAWN

Certain Words Drawn is the most significant collaboration between designer Arch MacDonnell and John Reynolds to date. The design scopes the diversity of John's practice – drawing, painting, installation, photography, performance – and sensitively responds to the conceptual variance of each of his projects. The book has been deliberately managed through the commissioning of different writers, adding a multi-voiced component to what is essentially a critical anthology. Arch and John together infuse an autographic presence into the publication; as a reader, you are very aware of John's "hand" at play in the design process. The limited-edition series of hand-sprayed covers illustrate the one-off original artwork typical of John's modus operandi, and reveal a quality that replicates the immediacy of his drawing process and artistic approach.



Figures 13 & 14: Certain Words Drawn, John Reynolds and Arch McDonnell, limited edition covers, 2008.

The contexts that John's work operates within are key signifiers for understanding and "seeing" John's work. *Certain Words Drawn* exemplifies a form of context-sensitive print practice; different design formats are employed to speak to these qualities. Where John takes on a pseudonym, a character called Marcus Aurelius, the design for this section operates between diary and documentary, and the performance of "being Marcus Aurelius." The format entertains the nature of the character and his subsequent activities and meanderings. "In December 2007, John Reynolds in high shape-shifting mode, travelled to New York and checked for signs of infectious displacement, dizziness and vertigo which he recorded as entries in a travel diary."⁵ Daily commentary in the form of random text and observation, alongside snapshots of Marcus Aurelius in New York, form the documentation of the project. Situating this type of "passage" inside a book of artistic practice establishes a critical focus that is distinctive to this publication; it is both anthology and artwork.





Figures 15 & 16: Certain Words Drawn, John Reynolds drawing on Marcus Aurelius posters. John Reynolds at Sue Crockford Gallery, Auckland (pages 193-207).

CARDBOARD BOX

Cardboard Box is Auckland-based and is co-edited by Sharon Russell and Nicola McNabb. Both Sharon and Nicola went to art school at AUT University, New Zealand; Sharon majored in photography, Nicola in print. During their time at AUT they rented a space in Canterbury Arcade and ran a gallery for a short time. Their new space is *Cardboard Box*. There is a fun tone to *Cardboard Box*; it is relatively scrapbook-like in its manufacture and outer appearance, and shows a variety of visual arts research and design activity. There is a little bit of an art club feel going on ... the regulars are their pals from art and design schools across Auckland. *Cardboard Box* is not overly specific about its contents page, using section divisions such as art, craft, music, fashion, interviews, profiles, rants, reviews of events, blogs. As a platform for "what they have been doing lately," *Cardboard Box* offers a post-art school site for publication. Artist profiles are presented through question-and-answer-type formats. There is a strong influence of the autographic in the cobbling together of interesting stories, write-ups and projects, using devices such as hand-drawn and cut-and-paste.

What is interesting about Cardboard Box in reference to the *platform* is the links it makes between sites of production; it moves between art and craft in an explorative deployment of the "art meets craft/ craft meets art" manner, instigating an expanded practice approach. Sharon Russell (co-editor) utilises a craft base in her art practice (drawing and photography). Her graduating show at AUT presented photographs "depict(ing) a young woman clad only in various curiously non-functional items of knitware." The "works create a tension between comfort and discomfort. Where there is the sacredness that knitting connotes, there is then the profanity, albeit familiarity, of the body - the hair, the blemishes, the unkempt nails are all recognizable in their vaguely grotesque yet beautiful monstrosity. In this series I aim to provoke a visceral response by spotlighting a fleshy self-consciousness."⁶ Russell's business card states she is a "Knitter Photographer." Cardboard Box endorses the new modes of criticality and practice licensed by the publication platform.



Figures 17 & 18: Cardboard Box covers, Issue #1, #2, #3. Cardboard Box Issue #2, Natasha Cantwell interview.



Figure 19: Sharon Russell, series: A fleshy self: consciousness, 2007.







Figures 20, 21 & 22. Cardboard Box Issue #2 – Sharon Russell, Profile; Sharon Russell, Lightbox, 2008; Sharon Russell, Guerilla Knitting project, K Road Business Association commission, 2009.

THE NATIONAL GRID

The National Grid is Jonty Valentine and Luke Wood. This is a serious "made in New Zealand" international graphic design publication. Serious because these boys are all about graphic design – they both lecture in graphic design and practice as graphic designers. They have a point of view about graphic design and are keen to share it. *The National Grid* is their platform for expounding their ideas. There is a particular design value evident in the editorial statement, which also manifests in the visual look of the publication and the selection of participants and projects. *The National Grid* retrieves historical practice and invests it with a currency through its inclusion of articles on graphic design histories. They invite submissions, stating. "Our interests are varied, but submissions should be (even if tangentially or divergently) relevant to contemporary graphic design."⁷ On their website, in the "About Us" section, they have a diagram instead of the usual background blurb. In conversation with Monique Redmond, Jonty Valentine explains their take …

MR: It reads a bit like a manifesto – is that how you see it? It has a different tone to other "About Us" – it seems more grounded in a research context ... and it has words like cannibalism, alchemy ...

JV: It is definitely pretty tongue-in-cheek. So we didn't really intend it to mean much initially – more just words we like. However, after doing it, it was weird how it actually did kind of make sense. ... The other thing is that the idea of doing a diagram or a map of *The Grid* was partly a dig at the meaningless "Better By Design" report/manifesto from a few years ago. It is a crazy pseudo-scientific salvation narrative funded by the government, and it has all sorts of Venn diagrams and bar graphs explaining how Design is going to save NZ industry. I'll attach it (see pages 30, 34, 36, 50). ... And lastly, we have a recurring theme of (nonsense) diagrams going through each issue of *The National Grid*.

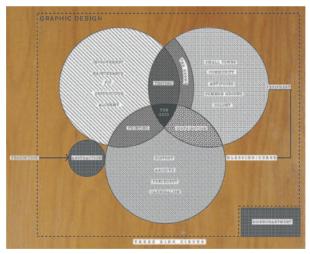
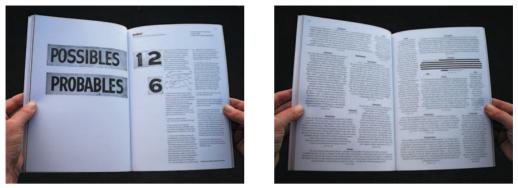


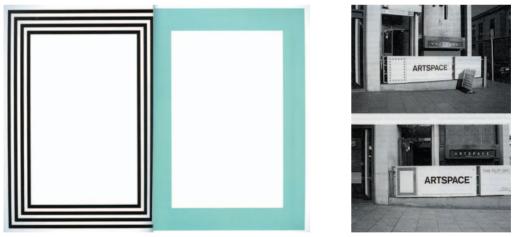
Figure 23: The National Grid website, Jonty Valentine and Luke Wood. "About Us," http://www.thenationalgrid.co.nz/.

In *The National Grid*, Issue I, there is what appears to be an editorial, titled "Index* More paranoid-critical map than editorial."⁸ It is embedded with a series of small commentaries listed under various subheadings – these are not ramblings, but articulated concepts that are linked intrinsically through their common conversation.⁹ The form of this layout is non-hierarchical, the text reads as the sum of its parts, maintaining the sense that each point is of equal importance.



Figures 24 & 25: The National Grid # I, Jonty Valentine and Luke Wood. "Index* More paranoid-critical map than editorial," (pages 35-9).

The National Grid #5 presents Tween, initiated by Kelvin Soh (who is one half of The Wilderness). Tween, the project, is an ongoing intervention in the form of a poster positioned in the slippage of time between shows (dead time) – located out the front of Artspace on K'Rd in Auckland. Referred to as an "inhibition poster" (as opposed to exhibition poster), it operates as a placeholder or intermission.¹⁰ In some sense, it is an exhibition in an "in-between" site. Copies of the posters are inserted at intervals into The National Grid #5 – again operating as markers, but in this instance between articles.



Figures 26 & 27: The National Grid #5, Kelvin Soh and Sarah Hopkinson, Tween (pages 30-3).

A COMMONPLACE BOOK

The artist publication A *Commonplace Book* was the "first event" for the ATTRIUM project. Attrium is a research collective that comprises eight researchers from AUT and RMIT universities.¹¹ Jonty Valentine, in describing the proposed design concept for the publication, states "that the conceptual framework for our exploration of the idea of *publication* will be prompted, as a starting point at least, by a re-examination of the concept of the Commonplace Book.¹¹² The form of *A Commonplace Book* is treated as an everyday item, with reference here to the Collins Diary. The book itself contained no text outside of the imprint and back cover artist text. The first page of each artist's section has 01-08 printed on the bottom right corner, which refers to the "Index" that is embossed in gold on the

back cover. A *Commonplace Book* does not follow the usual form of a book. Whilst it is representative of "book" form, the pages are compiled as a series of folded posters (A1®A4/A5), bound with two edges trimmed. The top edge (perforated fold) has to be ripped open by the viewer. The performative nature of having to "rip open" the poster-pages of each artist section was, in part, a means to engage in a new form of exhibition space as well as a take on the artistic concept for the project – "event."



Figure 28: Attrium project, A *Commonplace Book*. Jonty Valentine, Publication Design, 2008.





Figures 29 & 30: Attrium project, A *Commonplace Book*, Nova Paul artwork & poster, *Pink and White Terraces*, 2006, 16mm film stills.



Figure 31: Attrium project, A Commonplace Book. David Thomas artwork, 2008.

Sally Mannall's *Case*¹³ took the notion of the event as a point of "discovery." Sally found a case in a second-hand shop, admiring it for its suitcase character. It was a complete surprise to her to find that this seemingly beautiful object was actually a gun case. This experience in itself came to be seen and understood as an event. The unfolding of the poster, in a literal sense, had the potential to enable a certain level of discovery to occur. The perforations of the poster folds contained the interior view. Sally wanted her pages to conceptually mimic the experience of looking inside the case. Parallel to this, she made a video work for the two Attrium exhibitions¹⁴, where different people were invited to enter a room and investigate the object on a chair, the gun case. The video work both actuates and records this experience.

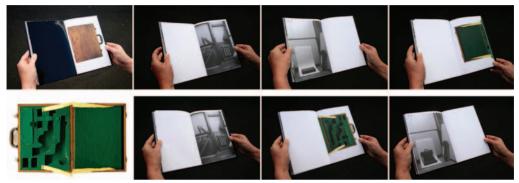


Figure 32: Attrium project, A Commonplace Book. Sally Mannall artwork, Case, 2008.



Figure 33: Sally Mannall, stills from Case, 2008. DVD, 12.14 minutes (exhibited in Attrium exhibitions, July-August 2008).

Monique Redmond's *The Visit*¹⁵ documents a visit to see "Ayrlies" in Whitford on 19 June 2007, a 12-acre country garden near Howick begun in 1964. The work itself is a documentary of a morning outing. Monique was interested in the idea that both the book form and poster could offer an encapsulated experience, a documentary, a reenactment of the event – and that by viewing the pages the visit would be translated within a section of time. The book pages demand being read in book form, unlike the poster. The first images are moving documentaries, a series of driveby photos that record the glance, the moment of noticing. They track the journey to and from the garden site. The black and white images are an archive of every image taken on the visit. Monique photographed walking, noting everything she saw. "I wanted to create an index of my wanderings."¹⁶ Time recordings are listed under each image to set up a sense of actuality and recall to the event. The colour images are richer; they formalise the experience, objectifying the view, the object and the site, and are in a sense more idyllic in nature. *A Commonplace Book* enables a different type of collaboration to occur. Here the environment of the book positions the artist and designer in a collaborative tryst, the publication a product of this interaction.



Figures 34 & 35: A Commonplace Book. Monique Redmond artwork, The Visit ["Ayrlies," Whitford, 19 June 2007], 2008.

In surveying *Threaded, PILOT, Certain Words Drawn, Cardboard Box, The National Grid* and A *Commonplace Book*, the key characteristic that interweaves and locates their relevance to the *platform* is a performing of criticality. What is most interesting about these publications is their collaborative undertakings and how they each challenge the conventions of "promotional-style packaging of practice." A central argument in this discussion is the idea that content is in effect practice, and that the criticality of a publication is reliant on the authenticity and intelligence of the collaboration at hand. The idiosyncratic aspects that belong to a publication reveal the aspirations of the editorial group, exposing particular curiosities and attitudes whilst incorporating a sense of criticality and distinctiveness. The *publication platform* consists of a mass of overlapping discourse, intentionality and difference. What we see as being intrinsic and interesting in this discussion is the capacity of publications to interconnect and construct new sites of expanded practice whilst being engaged in critical speculation.

Fiona Grieve is a Senior Lecturer in Graphic Design and Animation at Unitec, Department of Design and Visual Arts, in Auckland. Her interest in design and visual art curriculum development and pedagogy has most recently resulted in the co-authoring of a one-year certificate and a three-year practitioner-focused degree in design and visual arts. Along with Kyra Bradcock, she is a founding member of the Threaded Project that intersects both educational and professional domains of practice.

Monique Redmond lives in Mt Albert, New Zealand. Her art practice is focused on documentary, event and everyday occurrence – particularly in relation to suburban contexts, with an interest in site, habitation, planting and gardening. Recent projects include *Treespotting*, a collaboration with Tanya Eccleston for *Threaded* magazine (July-October 2009); *Pohutukawa Forest* for The Enchanted Garden at the New Gallery, AAG (December 2008-February 2009); and the Attrium Research Collective publication and exhibition project, Project Space, Melbourne and St Paul St Gallery, Auckland (July-August 2008). Monique is a senior lecturer, programme leader and postgraduate strand leader for visual arts at AUT University.

- I "Exhibition" incorporates artist-initiated projects, artists/designer collaboration, work made specifically for publication, photographic essays, artwork, illustration, drawing projects, text-based projects. "Interview:" profiles, questions posed, interview as discussion/exchange, informal conversation, template interviews, profiles that are biographical, autobiographical, based on pseudonyms. "Discussion:" critique and analysis, reflection, response, articles, review, diagrams, research, art projects, design projects. "Display:" artworks, graphic and typographical work, pageworks, book projects, artist/designer/maker profiles, documentation of artistic work. See F Grieve and M Redmond," "#P_Intersections in Practice," in *MahiToi,ANZAAE Conference*, Dunedin, New Zealand, 2009.
- 2 Alt Group, "Do Disturb: Seasoned Greetings, Alt Christmas 2007," Threaded, ED.6 (2008), 49.
- 3 Editorial statement, PILOT, I (2009), I.
- 4 "WELCOMETO PILOT'S WORLD-RENOWED CHAMBER OF WONDERS, THE CABINET OF CURIOISITIES. The original Cabinet or Wunderkammer was an alternative universe housing a collection of objects, specimens, relics and ephemera from the fields of natural history, geology, ethnography, archaeology, anthropology and the antiquities. A sacred space for scholarly contemplation, The Cabinet is best understood as a microcosm or memory palace, symbolising the patron's mastery of the world through the symbolic arrangement and display of a collection of artefacts ... In The Cabinet things are not always as they seem, objects relate to each other in unexpected ways to reveal a greater truth ... Welcome." Ibid., 97-113.
- 5 John Reynolds, Certain Words Drawn: John Reynolds Continued, ed. L Simmons (Auckland: Random House, 2008).
- 6 From artist's statement on the series A fleshy self: consciousness (Russell, 2007).
- 7 Jonty Valentine and Luke Wood, "Submissions," http://www.thenationalgrid.co.nz/.
- 8 Jonty Valentine and Luke Wood, "Index," The National Grid, 1 (2006), 37-9.
- 9 Sub-headings: Peripheral, Manifesto, Resonance, Print, New Zealand (crossed out), Somewhere, Research, Negotiation, Garage, Better, Borrowing, Intentions (mostly crossed out), History, Grid, Pseudonym, Commonplace, Loose-ends, Peripheral, Print, Manifesto, New Zealand (crossed out), Somewhere, Resonance, Research, Negotiation, Garage. Ibid.
- 10 K Soh and S Hopkinson, "Tween," The National Grid, 5 (2009), 30-3.
- 11 Attrium is a research collective/project that comprises eight researchers, four from AUT University, NZ, and four from the 'Art, Time and Space' Research Cluster in the School of Art, RMIT University, Australia. The title of the project, Attrium (an anagram of RMIT and AUT), promotes the sense of a gathering space, an open-ended and negotiable research site.
- 12 The idea of commonplace books dates back to antiquity. Originally employing them as a memory aid, orators would "go" to metaphorical "places" to gather their arguments. As the places took physical form and became literal places (i.e., books), commonplace books became the precursors of modern reference books. They were often personal collections of things that their owners found to be important, but ranged from random collections to thoroughly researched scholarly volumes. See J Valentine and M Redmond, Event: Artistic Collaboration inside the Research Space of a Publication (Auckland: AUT University, 2007).
- 13 "Case" an intimate environment that encloses a threat that stretches across the world's community, if only in our minds.
- 14 "Event: The Attrium Project" exhibition at Project Space/Spare Room, Melbourne, and "The Buzzing Confusion of Things" at St Paul St Gallery, Auckland, mid-2008.
- 15 "The Visit" the idea of a visit as an event, where you go somewhere just to look at something. An outing,
- I6 Grieve and Redmond,"#P_Intersections in Practice."