
edited by
David Cross
Iteration:Again
13
public art
projects
across
Tasmania

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This publication was produced following the *Iteration:Again* series of 13 public art commissions which took place across Tasmania from 17 September – 15 October 2011.
www.iterationagain.com

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ITERATION
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Foreword

Michael Edwards
Director, Contemporary Art Spaces Tasmania (*CAST*)

Between 17 September and 15 October 2011, one curatorial director with seven associate curators, 13 Australian and nine international artists activated public space across Tasmania in a diversity of ways; ranging from a bus timetable aligned to Earth's orbit, through to an intensive, discursive educational curriculum predicated on the exchange of generosity and reciprocity inherent to hospitality. Artists occupied airwaves, airways, waterways, race-ways; they infiltrated media and technological space; and they engaged sites of agriculture, bureaucracy, civic space, commerce, communications, education, history, munitions and a sanctuary for birds.

The second* in a series of international projects commissioned by Contemporary Art Spaces Tasmania (CAST) and seed funded by Arts Tasmania under the 'Locate/Situate' programme banner, *Iteration:Again* was based on two key propositions. First, to deliver a programme of temporary public art that introduced new forms of contemporary practice and critical culture. Second, to grow expertise and connection in the Tasmanian curatorial field. Fundamental to the programme was access to international practitioners and trends for Tasmanian artists, curators and audiences.

In an initial conversation in 2008 with Dr David Cross, Director of Litmus Research Initiative at Massey University in Wellington, we introduced our ideas on developing an expanded art programme due to his experience with presenting the One Day Sculpture series across New Zealand over 2008/09. He proposed a project that extended the ideas of duration and place from that series which was also centred on a curatorium model to build networks and draw on the expertise and resources of the various curators' institutional affiliations. *Iteration:Again* was conceived as a programme of temporary interventions or responses by artists to public sites and environments to be developed and delivered under an iterative framework. Underlying the curatorial frame was an idea of the transformation of an artwork over the course of a four-week period to offer a number of different moments, acts or forms contained within each discrete artwork.

Offering extended focus and increased levels of activity and discussion around the field of public art, *Iteration:Again* was also supported by an information hub housed in the CAST gallery, a variety of social media tools and a dedicated website (*www.iterationagain.com*) where regularly updated critical responses from 13 commissioned writers tracked the incremental development of each work.

The project closed with a dedicated symposium presented in conjunction with the Tasmanian School of Art (University of Tasmania) in Hobart. Dialogue around notions of 'temporality,' what constitutes a 'public', and the transforming or changing an artwork over the course of its existence were exchanged. The discussion reflected upon and analysed what had transpired over the course of the 13 commissions.

The production of this retrospective publication concludes what for CAST has been a large, extraordinary and, at times, exhilarating project. The generosity of the many artists, curators, colleagues, interns, writers, volunteers, technical providers, partner organisations and institutions across Tasmania and beyond who contributed to

the presentation of *Iteration:Again* – and without whom it would not have been possible – is warmly acknowledged. Finally, our gratitude goes to David Cross for his vision, energy and his determination to see through the large, complex and important project *Iteration:Again* has been for public and contemporary art in Tasmania.

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*The first project in the series, *Mr Clevver*, came through the commission of UK artists, Heather and Ivan Morison, to work with Tasmanian artists in a mining community on Tasmania's West Coast. There, using local materials and skill sets, they created a travelling sculpture that later journeyed across the island and gave performances at small settlements in out-of-the-way places.

Essays
David Cross
Marco Marcon


LUCY BLEACH
DAVID CLEGG
MARLEY DAWSON
BETHANY J FELLOWS
ANNIE FLETCHER
CHRISTOPHER HANRAHAN
TOBY HUDDLESTONE
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DAMIEN QUILLIAM
PAULA SILVA
JANE STEWART

Life X 4: On Iterating Public Art

David Cross

Separated from the Australian mainland by 140 miles of the treacherous pitch and toss of Bass Strait, Tasmania is a byword for remoteness.
— Nicholas Shakespeare, *On Tasmania*

Fucking internet! I can't even move to somewhere remote where they still speak English like Tasmania.
— Douglas Coupland, *The Gum Thief*

Iteration:Again began as a very open brief; the second in a series of international commissioned projects Contemporary Art Spaces Tasmania (CAST) had developed called *Locate/Situate*. Where the first project was a nomadic performative work by British artists Ivan and Heather Morison, CAST decided with the second event to invite a curator to make 'an exhibition of some kind'. The precise brief was equal parts joy and mild alarm: it had to take place in Tasmania and should involve at least some Tasmanian-based artists (all good) yet at the same time, I could undertake practically anything subject only to the financial bottom line (daunting). Such generous parameters, exciting for a curator used to a bevy of constraints, also seemed at the outset to be a double-edged sword: I knew little about Tasmania beyond a cursory knowledge of a few artists and a pedestrian series of factoids, and at the same time I was largely interested in working in an informed public context with newly commissioned work.

Realising quickly that a paucity of constraint was a brilliantly effective constraint, the unknown and unnamed project began with a research visit in April 2010 involving a tour of Hobart and Launceston and three days of meetings with artists. CAST had assumed (correctly) that the project was unlikely to involve gestural figurative painting and scheduled mostly sculptors, a few video makers and a significant number of artists who had worked in the public sphere. It was both the quality of the later in tandem with a palpable excitement and energy for temporary public art that indicated from these initial meetings there was a genuine capacity to build a project around this mode of practice.

Alongside these discussions, I was keen to gauge interest from Tasmanian-based curators who had worked or wanted to work in a public context. Together we conceived of a project of 13 commissions, one for each of the associate curators and six developed by myself through CAST. While the majority of projects would take place in Hobart, where most of the curators were located, two commissions were Launceston-based and two further projects (Maddie Leach and Ruben Santiago) operated between Hobart and regional Tasmania.

The curatorium model of drawing a number of curators together to work on an overarching public art project was a feature of the *One Day Sculpture* project in New Zealand that I had developed with Claire Doherty in 2008/9. The idea of revisiting this multi-modal approach of collaborative curatorial practice appealed for a number of reasons. On the one hand, the pan-institutional model of a range of organisations contributing commissions would help address the issue of viability and support structures. This is no small deal in a context like Tasmania where there are of course finite resources in the area of public art practice. Equally as important, the aim of drawing an assortment of curators into the project would serve

to expand both knowledge and opportunities in the area of commissioning temporary public artworks.

In Tasmania – The Vagaries of Place and Time

The extraordinary 'story' of Tasmania inevitably frames the potentiality and possibility of a public art project. Through its rich, tragic and often extreme histories as a penal settlement – as a colony that had through an assortment of policies and intolerances almost eradicated the indigenous population – and, as an incredibly unique habitat that has been fought over since colonisation, the former Van Diemen's Land is not a place to be cavalier with so-called place responsiveness. There are of course always tensions and contested terrain in every place but in Tasmania the tension James Boyce outlined in his colonial history *Van Diemen's Land* between its hostile origins as a British gaol and the remarkably benevolent land itself still lingers.[1] Even as an artist or curator familiar with this place you cannot but be caught up in the complex resonances and legacies of these histories, yet at the same time their profundity has the real potential to be overwhelming.

Artists working in the public sphere are increasingly reflexive in terms of responding to the specificity of places. This is partly a reaction to being more attuned to the depth and value of complex historical knowledge and an incorporation of the potential pitfalls outlined by Miwon Kwon of making pseudo-ethnographic art in one place after another.[2] Claire Doherty and Paul O'Neill have pointed to the contradictory pull between those seeking to establish a stable, knowable place such as government and civic authorities promoting cultural tourism, and place as a context that is always in a state of flux, an event-in-progress.[3] This tension could be seen to inform all temporary public art projects and the authors outline with some precision the complex series of negotiations the curator-producer has to undertake. These include resolving their role as active negotiators in the production of artwork while demonstrating a commitment to an informed and embedded position with regards to place. At the same time the curator-producer is required to navigate a profound responsibility to account for considerable expenditure of public art funds all the while developing a project that must be both locally relevant and internationally significant.[4]

Even though the idea of neutralising place as a determining curatorial focus of *Iteration:Again* was both futile and foolhardy, another strategy was to establish a framework through which place might be examined as one strata of a broader thematic context. Of the range of assorted possibilities, time or duration once again wafted to the surface. Invariably a matrix or glue of temporary public art projects, temporal investigation is something of a staple in this mode of practice. Dave Beech points to this in his essay 'The Ideology of Duration in the Dematerialised Monument' where importantly he cautions against the employment of duration as a solution for art's social contradictions. For Beech, there is something wrong about the way in which the ideology of duration has been keeping tabs on time.[5] Such a cautionary note is salutary in thinking about how time might or might not function in a project such as *Iteration:Again*. What is clear is that simply substituting place with time as a curatorial armature does not offer an easy or ideologically neutral out to the systemic problems and limitations of making public art in a specific context.

Keeping Partial Tabs on Time

Beech does, however, offer a number of strategies or modalities to consider in productively utilising duration, each of which suggest possibilities that

Tasmania, Australia

are especially salient for this project. 'Let's think', he tells us, 'about delay, interruption, stages, flows, of instantaneous performances and lingering documents, of temporary objects, and permanent mementos, of repetition, echo and seriality'.[6]

While many of these modes are present to varying degrees in *Iteration:Again*, delay, interruption, repetition and echo could be seen as front and centre issues that permeate and flavour all 13 commissions. In shaping the curatorial premise, I wanted each of the artists to think through how a highly specific time sequence (four changes over four weeks) could operate as a potentially productive constraint; one in which they could test out what it might mean to draw an audience to a public artwork at least four times over a period of just under a month. This idea of deferral where there is not a privileged point or moment of encounter but a series of moments unfolding or collapsing across space and time, functioned in part as a challenge to the idea of a static unitary artwork. Yet it also sought to challenge the artists to devise ways of activating audience engagement so that they would willingly defer a codified or at least resolved picture until the presentation of the fourth iteration.

Such a sense of delay, while potentially frustrating, or being too onerous, or simply too weird for many people, also offered artists the opportunity to draw audiences into a more fluid understanding of public artworks. In activating weekly shifts, or in some instances weekly repetitions, the artists nudged, coaxed and occasionally coerced their respondents towards a greater openness to art being an inherently fluid and process-driven activity without a definitive encounter or resolution. Central to this approach is the idea that artworks can never be complete in themselves, but are instead always provisional: enveloped in a constant programme of contingency and transition over time.

Of course these lofty aspirations have to be met by simply getting audiences motivated to engage with artworks in non-gallery locations multiple times and sometimes in multiple locations. The inherent difficulty in framing a coherent and graspable project and subsequently drawing a broad level of audience response should never be underestimated. Through a mixture of website information, commissioned critical responses posted weekly on each project and a project Hub at CAST Gallery with artists documentation and support material, we sought to offer a range of ways for audiences to access the project. The

detailed, or more accurately *approximately* detailed, location guide available at the CAST hub with its maps and directions was a challenge to be mastered for some people and a bridge too far for others.

Public Art: Learning to Love Your Niche Audience

There is a paradox at the heart of this enterprise: public art has a limited public it is in dialogue with. Public art that asks an awful lot of people, such as *Iteration:Again* did, certainly cuts the cake slice even thinner. The narrow and contingent audience base that runs counter to the potentially enormous audience numbers waiting to be engaged is fertile ground for the predictable criticism of elitism and art for the art world from those who expect a readymade audience (the public no less) to be inherently larger and more proactive than it often is. Relatedly, there is the suspicion of a discrete and once-off project showing up and then leaving town before the month is out, possibly never to return.

Without doubt one can never take an audience for granted by presuming there will be a small army of enthusiasts at the ready to go anywhere at any time. It takes a certain kind of person to willingly listen to commercial radio for two hours so that they might catch the first 22 seconds of a Serge Gainsbourg song. Or, to stand on a promontory in drizzling rain at Glenorchy observing in the distance an artist who has seceded and is encamped on his own island. This is one of the reasons why the biennale model/franchise is so popular in that it creates a frame by which an audience can be directed to such activities in anywhere from two to 10-yearly cycles. It is easy to skewer the biennale-type event as little more than a highly codified template for displaying a lot of art in a scattered site event, but it does have the distinct advantage of being able to nurture and develop an audience at regular intervals over time. While logic might suggest, as many artists and writers such as Mark Hutchinson, Grant Kester and Nato Thompson outline, that audience engagement takes a lot of committed building over significant periods of time, this was not a viable option in this instance. Yet counter to this model of deep and sustained connection, I would suggest that there is still real value to be gained from the short, sweet but intense approach.

With the above limitations in mind and contrary to the perception of a closed shop, the number of people contributing and engaging across the 13 projects was impressive. Whether they be marching girls, tug boat operators, the editorial team of the *Mercury* newspaper, or the shop attendants at Taroona Shot Tower, the number of participants who were drawn into an active and in-depth dialogue with artists significantly expanded and made this project's audience richer. While difficult to quantify in number, it is these embedded and dynamic relationships whereby the artist directly engages with a broad range of contractors, volunteers, community groups et cetera and works directly with them to shape the project, that is a potentially profound outcome from this mode of public art practice.


LET US KEEP TOGETHER
MERCURY
LET US
KEEP
TOGETHER


HOMING
FAILURESPACE


BESTPRACTICE

Observing Maddie Leach explain to licensed Hobart aeroplane dispatcher Peter Fenton her project *Let us keep together* and why she wanted him to fly to Antill Ponds in central Tasmania to drop off a bundle of newspapers every Monday at 7.17am was quite a thing to behold. I was struck both by the care and respect shown by the artist to talk this through, and by Fenton's attention to getting right his crucial role in the re-staging of a *Mercury* newspaper stunt from 1919.

Similarly, Lucy Bleach in her project *Homing* engaged in a dialogue with truck drivers, council authorities, concrete fabricators, a refugee support group, a well-known American diva and a group of pigeon fanciers as just some of the collaborators. While not all of these engagements are necessarily deep, two-way and ultimately game-changing, a significant number opened up a dialogue around new ways of thinking about art that were likely to be without precedent.

Bleach managed to endear herself and her project to both David Lynch muse Rebecca Del Rio, and the Moonah Racing Pigeon Club, and she has the merchandise and photo album to prove it.

Paul O'Neill's *Our Day Will Come*, while based in large part as a temporary annexe to the Tasmanian School of Art, was in no way restricted to this audience or context. Through a carefully curated programme of events and works, O'Neill invited a further 10 European-based artists to develop projects or contribute components that unfolded diverse yet carefully nuanced meditations on the possibilities inherent in rethinking the art school model. From laughter workshops in a public park, to presentations in a night club, to weekly dinners that drew a large and evolving audience over time, *ODWC* built a plethora of connections with Hobart art students, writers, academics and anyone fortunate enough to get caught up in the array of discourse and discussions. That those discussions continued formally and informally after the caravan was packed away says plenty about the work's continuing ripple effect.

Likewise, Raquel Ormella's multi-modal, multi-venue project *I live with birds* brought together an assortment of publics through site-based installation, the production of zines and a series of performances. Her layered exploration of bird watching and in particular 'twitching' activated an assortment of responses, not the least of which was a profound isolation of sound in the form of real and virtual birdcalls. Sitting in a shelter at dusk deep in the Cataract Gorge focusing intensely on the possible call of the Nankeen Night Heron, I was struck by how, with careful framing, natural occurrences can be so affective and intimate as artistic experiences. Connecting the possibility of intimacy to a setting as sublime as the world-renowned gorge was the result of great care, audacity and ambition.

On the basis of live audience numbers Bethany J Fellows *Hobart Illumination Project* was a distant last. You could count on two hands the number of participants who sat white knuckled and incredulous while the artist drove her modified vitamin D emitting Land Cruiser through the streets of South Hobart at dawn each Saturday morning of the project. Yet this performative intervention into the lives of sleeping South Hobartians impacted well beyond the few of us who braved both the elements and the palpable sense we would be beaten senseless by an enraged citizen. Her 'benevolent' prescription for overcoming the lack of sunlight in this suburb brought about by the towering impact of Mount Wellington, was to drive the streets at a painfully slow speed and shine light where it does not ordinarily shine into people's houses. Accompanying this dawn patrol was a blasting – and I mean blasting – soundtrack of

sunshine-friendly pop hits from Dolly Parton to Nina Simone.

While the initial articulation of the work had a limited audience, to say the least, the audience will not doubt continue to grow as the sleeping Hobartians slowly discover in years to come at social gatherings the source of their Dolly Parton hallucination one frigid morning in September/ October 2011.

Time and Time Again

It would not be a curatorial premise worth its salt if certain artists did not try and mess with it. Fiddling with dates, times, beginnings and ends is one thing but for a small coterie of artists, the bigger prize was to neuter the premise of revisiting or re-staging the work four times. What would happen, they asked, if there were no discernible transitions (additive or subtractive shifts) but a constant and sustained repetition of action or event. Marley Dawson and Chris Hanrahan responded by staging the same event, an amateur motocross competition over successive weeks. Their petrol frenzy *MCR* on the roof of the Museum of Old and New Art had a different winner and a surprising array of thrills and spills each week, but the premise was fundamentally the same. Replete with grandstands, flash signage and a commentator who could talk under wet cement, the project spoke to the pleasures of devotion to weekend racing as an entertaining skilful yet largely vernacular activity.

Anthony Johnson took this even further with his work *Eclipse*, where he staged a very short bus journey each Saturday afternoon. Given little more information than a time to turn up to CAST, the audience were ushered onto a luxury coach and effectively driven around the block before being deposited again out the front of the gallery a few minutes later. Exactly the same thing happened in the following weeks, creating a perception that the work was a public art homage to John Cage and Samuel Beckett. While the subtle shifts in time, weather and audience marked each iteration, it was only towards the final weeks that the full measure of the artist's project was comprehended. Bit by bit, the staggering scale of the work was recovered by perceptive audience members who began to forensically assemble fragments of activities taking place on the journey by an assortment of 'performers' doing everyday actions and activities.

Toby Huddlestone signalled his intentions very clearly in titling his work *Interruption:Again*. Part tongue-in-cheek salvo at the curatorial premise and part interrogation of the alignment of public art and popular modes of information dissemination, his project staged a series of actions and interventions across radio, television, newspaper and the postal system. Like Johnson's project, the seemingly simple announcements each week delivered internationally via email belied an astonishing level of organisation whereby the Tasmanian audience were given instructions as to how to 'find' the work. But to do so you had to search for a small line in a newspaper, or a fleeting colour bar flashing in the blink of an eye during a television broadcast. Such tiny interruptions into mass media and information dissemination systems required significant levels of patience, visual and sonic dexterity, and a forensic determination to pick the needle from the often turgid and banal haystack of popular media.

Delaying Tactics

In specific ways, the curatorial premise with its iterative focus required a certain level of delay to operate within and across each artwork. By stipulating the necessity of some kind of transition every week, artists were encouraged to keep their works open and necessarily unresolved. Having


TPRACTICE
LUCY BLEACH
DAVID CLEGG
MARLEY DAWSON
BETHANY J FELLOWS
ANNIE FLETCHER
CHRISTOPHER HANRAHAN
TOBY HUDDLESTONE
ANTHONY JOHNSON
MADDIE LEACH
JAMES NEWITT
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JOHN VELLA
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NICOLE DURLING
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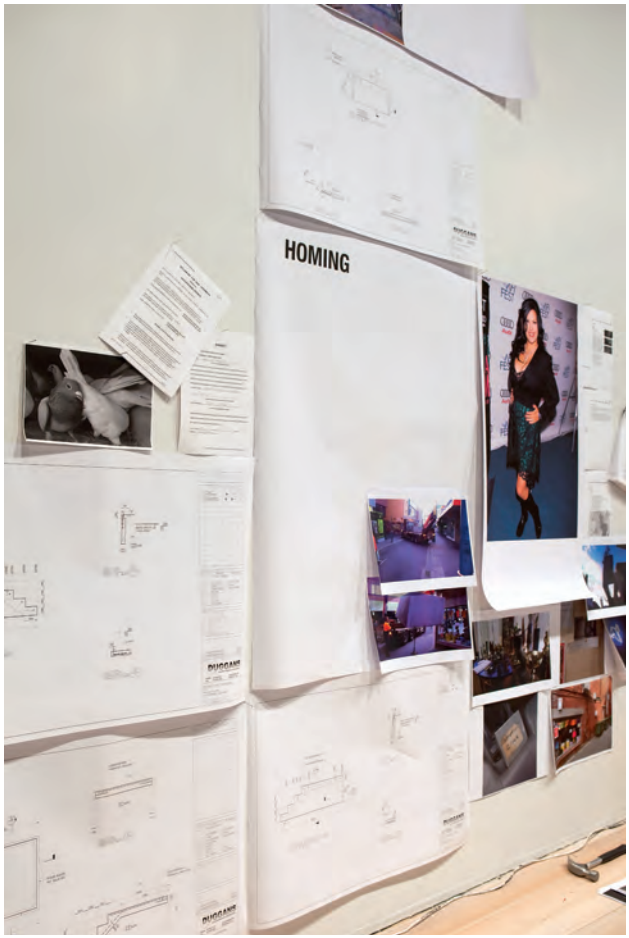
FIONA LEE
DAMIEN QUILLIAM
PAULA SILVA
JANE STEWART


HOMING


MERCURY'S AERO DELIVERY
YESTERDAY'S FLIGHT TO THE NORTH
A STIRRING ACCOUNT
ENTHUSIASTIC RECEPTION EVERYWHERE
RECIPROCAL AERO MESSAGES
LET US KEEP TOGETHER
MERCURY
LET US KEEP TOGETHER

to stage in some way the deferral of closure or completion placed a particular onus on process privileging fluctuations and shifts over time at the expense of a definitive and stable *dénouement*.

As a riposte to employing spectacle and a 'fixed' location as go-to devices for temporary public art, David Clegg sought a more complex navigation of place specificity and time. His project *failurespace* was located in a series of unannounced dropped photographs on the streets of Hobart and on a tumblr blog site. Precisely where the sound recordings of ambient street noise and overheard conversations were drawn from was not recoverable in the images or text, which offered a similarly partial and elliptical sense of locatedness. These daily postings became over time a rich but elusive documentary archive of the sites and sounds of Hobart framed as composite fragments. Clegg employed a method of delay, of offering only clues and cues, which required the participant to both imagine and build stories that might potentially connect or align the assorted pieces. Unlike Johnson, whose use of delay built a tension that for many led to a kind of *dénouement*, Clegg's system continually deferred the possibility of narrative closure.

James Newitt's gesture of secession from Hobart/Tasmania/the world in general highlighted the allure of removing oneself from political, social and geographic systems of organisation and control. While the act itself of promoting, celebrating and ultimately leaving the terra firma of Hobart for an 'island' in the Derwent River estuary was a temporary one, *My Secession Party* spoke of a quasi-utopian aspiration for leaving the world behind. His action, while clearly only an interlude of a few weeks, functioned as a delay, a period in which we might reflect upon whether secession is an activity for libertarian cranks or is a latent aspiration we share in a world of constant and occasionally oppressive social navigation and necessary compromise.

Ruben Santiago also kept the idea of narrative closure firmly in check in a project that charted the history of lead mining in Tasmania. Working between the mining town of Rosebery in the states northwest and the Taroona Shot Tower in suburban Hobart, Santiago examined the complex mechanisms by which the meanings of lead mining and production are embellished and neutralised in the formulation of olde worlde tourist attractions like the Taroona Shot Tower. With its Devonshire tea and faux-historical recreations and artefacts, the Tower formulates a largely benign and mythologised version of mining that is challenged and redirected by the artist's strategic and carefully measured interventions into the site. Yet the added components were not didactic or overt but functioned to push the seamless Shot Tower story slightly off its axis.

Fictive Spaces – A Book in Four Chapters

Although many artists chose an additive or reductive process over time, from the outset the curatorial brief suggested a potential to respond to the iterative programme from a narrative or chapter-based perspective. Seeing the potential to develop a story over time, Voice Theatre Lab with their work *Two Houses* chose to work in one of the first thoroughfares in Launceston, now a mall. At the entrance to this civic plaza two opposing buildings representing different eras and value systems formed the backdrop for an experimental staging of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. Using live performance and pre-recorded sound broadcast from the colonial building (Macquarie House), VTL staged and re-staged different thematic aspects from the tragic tale of the Capulets and Montagues.

John Vella's *BESTPRACTICE* was less fictive than a humorous if barbed meditation on the minefield of mid-career artist status. Created as a carefully programmed series of events and activities that evolved over time, Vella sourced every artwork he had made that was not in a private or public collection and turned the Arts Tasmania gallery, 146 Artspace, into a workshop/display space. He proceeded to drill a uniform hole in each sculpture, painting or photograph thereby producing a limited edition miniature collectible. Accentuating an artistic persona that suggested equal parts vanity and neurosis, this act of destruction curiously brought about new objects to be sold, or if you had managed to grab one of his promotional balloons scattered across Hobart, you could exchange it for an artwork. The whole enterprise was full of manic energy from the cutting itself to the marketing and promotion featuring regular spruikers on the street pitching the project as a once off opportunity to buy the work of a leading Tasmanian artist at bargain prices.

Remote Control – A Conclusion of Sorts

Remoteness is not necessarily about distance. Having grown up only a few hundred kilometres north across Bass Straight in Melbourne, Tasmania was always close by but at the same time a veritable world away. My father's cousins and aunt lived in Hobart and I grew up expecting to one day visit them at Sandy Bay, but prioritising places with brighter lights, I never did. The 'Apple Isle', as my gran fondly described it, existed in my mind as a place where reliably good Australian Rules footballers came from and the home of exotic animals (one as rare as the Loch Ness Monster!). Somewhere between these barely formed mythologies and the random grasping of uniquely Tasmanian facts (the homosexual law reform only happened in 1997) was my knowledge/comprehension of the southernmost Australian state. Like the fashion designer who accidently left Tasmania off the map of Australia that adorned the 1976 Olympic swimming apparel, until *Iteration:Again* I had chosen to overlook the former Van Diemen's Land in a way I have since learned Australians often do with New Zealand.

As the quotes that began this response attest, Tasmania is something of a go-to reference for things remote. Paul O'Neill framed an entire issue of his zine series for *Our Day Will Come* around remoteness and what this might mean at a given time to a group of people in Hobart in September/October 2011. From love letters to considered theoretical positions on the topic, the zine offered a surprising array of textual and artistic responses that sought to unpack and in certain instances *dérivé* the meaning of this term. Amid a range of complex perspectives, I was a struck by a very simple and seemingly straightforward story told by Olivia Bowman. She recounted:

How a man named Graeme once told me something that someone told him: "a human being is a network of conversations." Perhaps remoteness is not having those conversations that help make us human.[7]

With a little over a year's hindsight, I realise that conversation was one of the fundamental components of *Iteration:Again*. This was in part a response or even an over compensation for making art in a place or series of places that are collectively often framed rightly or wrongly as remote. The unusual mixture of international visitors and locals embedded tightly for a month no doubt played a part as well. Of course remoteness is complex, romanticised and above all highly relative, but the project more broadly pushed artists, curators, writers and the cavalcade of participants, to consider what it might mean to be located and

to make temporary artworks on an island south of the Australian mainland.

Even if the artists on the whole chose not to preface this idea or condition in the commissions, or to position locality as a principal driver of concern, an awful lot was said about looking outwards while always traversing the precariousness of insularity. It is perhaps a curious distortion at the heart of *Iteration:Again* that the gnarly chestnut of remoteness framed in an assortment of ways from provincialism, to seclusion to the more enticing idea of escape was discussed *ad infinitum* but not significantly enacted in artistic forms.

Discourse in its many permutations was the other side of the project that perhaps erroneously takes a back seat to all the compelling images and stories that make up the basis of this publication. Mick Wilson's notoriously engaging, boozy and boisterous Tuesday night dinners, a part of the curriculum of the *Our Day Will Come* school, live on only in a few grainy and haphazard pictures that capture too many people slumped in too few chairs arguing and postulating as if their lives depended on it. They are only fragments now but I distinctly remember the sentiment expressed that 'we never usually talk like this, about art, locality, each other's work'. That in itself is not apparent here in these pages but it was and is no small beer.

As the beautifully ragged *Iteration:Again* troupe rolled out of town just shy of a month after it arrived, it left behind a mixture of excitement, annoyance and to my mind quite a lot of loose ends. For some, these frayed tendrils constituted a lack of precision, a chaotic quality, that belied a problematic enterprise. The fact that no one, including the curatorial director, saw the entire project added fuel to the perception that *Iteration:Again* was definitively incomplete: a series of partially experienced fragments impossible to tally and reconcile. Yet even these partial threads left dangling could at the same time be grasped and engaged with as ends in themselves, provisional pieces of a bigger system with their own complexity and resonance. Experiencing even two iterations of one project might be enough to challenge audience members to consider what it could mean to temporarily occupy, negotiate and reveal specific locations and contexts over time. More is better, richer even, but this transition across one week is still capable of affecting a shift in thinking and experiencing in unexpected places and times.

With a mixture of forensic research, occasional physical risk, storytelling, insane logistical co-ordination, just the faintest whiff of spectacle and an idiosyncratic timeline, the artists collectively pushed against the grain of so-called public art. In challenging audiences to rethink where art is produced, what its parameters might conceivably be, and why it might be a good idea to return to a work over and over again, the assorted practitioners nudged us to consider art and life as elusive components in a potentially thrilling, if always uncertain, accord.

1. James Boyce, *Van Diemens Land*, Melbourne, Black Inc, 2008, p. 3.

2. Miwon Kwon, *One Place After Another: Notes on Site-Specificity*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004.

3. Paul O'Neill and Claire Doherty (eds), 'Locating the Producers: An End to the Beginning, A Beginning to the End', in *Locating the Producers: Durational Approaches to Contemporary Art*, Amsterdam: Antennae, Valiz, 2011, p. 3.

4. Ibid., p. 3.

5. Dave Beech, 'The Ideology of Duration in the Dematerialised Monument' in Paul O'Neill and Claire Doherty, op cit, p. 325.

6. Ibid., p. 325.

7. Olivia Bowman, 'Page Work', in Paul O'Neill, (ed.), *What is Remoteness*?, self-published zine, September 2011.


MY SECESSION PARTY
MY SECESSION PARTY
OCTOBER 1 - 15
OUR DAY WILL COME
: OUR DAY WILL COME
MERCURY'S AERO DELIVERY
YESTERDAY'S FLIGHT TO THE NORTH
A STIRRING ACCOUNT
ENTHUSIASTIC RECEPTION EVERYWHERE
RECIPROCAL AERO MESSAGES

Reiterations: Notes on the Aesthetics of Post-studio Practice

Marco Marcon

In discussing *Iteration:Again*, one is inevitably drawn to reflect – again – on the evolving nature of non-studio-based practices. What do we expect from them? What do they promise? What do they deliver? What kind of audience do they require or construct? Over 40 years have passed since Lucy Lippard and John Chandler kick-started this debate[1], and yet, after all this time, the question remains an issue for us. Postmodernism – remember it? – fooled us into believing that the reign of the white cube, and all that it stands for, was over. How far off the mark that was! Despite decades of aggressive and persuasive challenges to its domination, the Modernist paradigm keeps expanding, economically, institutionally and geographically turbo-charged by Neo-liberalism and globalisation. Wherever real power resides in the art world, the shadow of arch-conservative critic Hilton Kramer is never far off, albeit sometimes disguised under a thin layer of pluralist veneer.[2]

Yet, as projects like *Iteration:Again* remind us, efforts to rethink the meaning and function of works of art that transcend the confines of commodity fetishism, autonomous aesthetics and the gallery system, are continuing, albeit in forms different from in the past. 'Temporary public art' is one of the labels that has been attached to some of these new crops of practices. And as far as labels are concerned, this is a commendably straightforward one, telling you exactly what to expect without recourse to recondite metaphors or awkward circumlocutions. Its taxonomic clarity can be fully appreciated if one compares it to the definitional hand-wringing that always accompanies the naming of that type of socially engaged practice which, while related to temporary public art, we are still unsure whether to call relational, participatory, dialogical or any of the many other extant iterative monikers.

But niceties of terminology aside, the fundamental advantage of temporary public art is logistical. Compared to their permanent counterparts, these transient works are less expensive, less dependent on the approval of local authorities and less likely to attract the ire of the inevitable 'concerned citizens'. Because of this, artists and curators can get away with experimental hijinks that would have been unthinkable had the works been commissioned to last. It is a way of making art that, to borrow Glenn Murcutt's dictum on the aesthetic ideal of Australian architecture, 'touches the earth lightly'. Of course, like other forms of experimental art, temporary public art also aims to bruise and tear the surface of ordinary experience; but they are bruises and tears that heal quickly. For one thing, they are often subject to a propensity to fade into the background, becoming random events that punctuate the flow of the everyday, and as a result barely register in our consciousness.

For this project David Cross commissioned artists to rework and re-present their projects in four stages, hence establishing iteration as the main rule of the game. This was a fertile curatorial conceit, potentially opening the way to all manner of restaging, *détournements*, *déjà vu* and temporal *doppelgängers*. Iteration relativises the work, turning it into a series of successive, partial manifestations or stages, each a facet of a whole that is never fully present. This could be seen as a

manifestation of what one may call the 'ontological weakening'[3] of the work that characterises certain strands of contemporary art. Such weakening of the artwork's essential mode of being occurred when art started to eschew the sensorial shock celebrated by High Modernism to favour temporally and spatially dispersed aesthetic experiences.[4] Instead of the instantaneous encounter with the auratic otherness of the finished masterpiece, these new practices offer an experience that relies on memory, narrative, associations and the onlooker's ability to imaginatively and cognitively grasp a network of contextual relationships, such as – for example – the specific historical and social conditions or events into which the work intervenes.

Of course artworks have always depended on a context; they have always reflected their historical and social situations or made reference to previous and subsequent works by the same artist or school. They have also, with few notable exceptions such as Modernist abstraction, always represented a subject matter. But all of this – history, society, artistic precedents, subject matter – was thought to be extrinsic to the work; that is to say, a successful work was meant to *transcend* its external conditions by transforming them into fully resolved artistic expression. But works such as those featured in *Iteration:Again* are *immanent* in the world in which they intervene and from which they emerge. The world is not a catalogue of interesting subject matters to represent but both the medium and stage of artistic production, and because of this aesthetic/artistic intervention does not disappear in everyday life, it simply exists side by side with it, they cohabitate the same world in which they affect and reflect each other in different ways.

The artists' responses to the curatorial brief varied greatly. In some cases the mode of encounter between audience and work was very tightly controlled. This was the case with Anthony Johnson's exquisite *Eclipse*, a work that distilled repetition down to its purest essence. To experience the work the audience had to board a tourist coach which was then driven each Saturday afternoon for four weeks around the same inner-suburban block in North Hobart. There was no information on what one was to expect and nothing that would claim the observer's attention. One vainly looked around for 'art' to show itself (it was a slightly uncomfortable time for those of us with a professional reputation to protect). The aesthetic MacGuffin became apparent when we started noticing how some of the humdrum micro-events that occurred along the way seemed to have happened in previous weeks, and were strangely happening again. There they were – the same woman walking the same dog, the same window cleaner wiping again the same spot of glass, the same cyclist turning the same corner, each re-enacting four times their staged everyday routines. The set-up had the flavour of a cinematic *mise-en-scene* that made you feel as if you were an extra in a re-enactment of the opening scene of François Truffaut's *Day for Night*, or in some rather uneventful episode of the *Twilight Zone*.

Other artists opted for a much more open-ended approach that erased the separation between onlooker and participant. Paul O'Neill's *Our Day Will Come*, for example, was an exercise in dialogical co-creation aimed at rethinking ideas underpinning art education. The artist created a temporary 'art school' which was housed in a transportable booth placed – literally and metaphorically – on the doorsteps of its institutional host, the Tasmanian School of Art at the University of Tasmania. This embryonic school-within-the-school ran a varied programme of para-educational activities, mainly based on loosely structured conversations open to anyone willing to join. The tone was both playful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COME
SEE
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COPIES


THE HOBART URBAN
ILLUMINATION PROJECT

and critical while being largely free from the confrontational overtone such a project would have assumed decades ago (Beuys' Free International University comes to mind).

In some cases the public presence of the work was kept deliberately elusive, to the point of almost being reduced to conjecture or hearsay. Ruben Santiago's *Long Drop of Water* was one such piece. Working mostly out of sight, within the almost windowless interior of Taroona's Shot Tower, Santiago's wove a subtle web of planted memories and displaced expectations that were addressed to both the traditional visitors to the site – a well-known local historical touristic attraction – and the specialist art crowd. The aim was seemingly to disrupt the codified historical narratives that frame the site's cosy, and slightly sedated, ambience by introducing barely noticeable disruptions which opened the way to alternate and less comforting tales of environmental wreckage, economic exploitation and colonial oppression.

James Newitt and John Vella opted for a performative approach that theatricalised their public personae with gentle self-deprecating humour. Newitt's idea was to temporarily secede from Tasmania/Australia by living offshore for several weeks on a floating raft complete with tent and fake palm tree, as if he were one of those bearded shipwreck survivors stranded on tiny islands who are favoured by cartoon artists the world over. Vella carried out a series of public actions that culminated in a kind of potlatch during which his previous works were cut to pieces and given away as souvenirs. Both projects hinged on the ability of the artists to present themselves as characters of quasi-mythical narratives in which they featured a self-mocking protagonists of quixotic feats of endurance or sacrifice.

The great diversity of responses to the curatorial brief reflects the almost limitless range of social, environmental and historical contexts that were potentially available to artists as sites of potential intervention. Each project inevitably required a rewriting, or at least a revision, of received rules of engagement between work and audience (although one has to question if the concept of 'audience' is still applicable to these types of projects). But one cannot make art in a institutional vacuum, so if artists operate out of designated and tangible institutional sites – such as the gallery, museum, the art school or the magazine – a virtual, invisible

institutional shell is still needed for the work to have meaning and value. For Miwon Kwon the intangible, but absolutely real and effective, institutional cocoon that underpins and legitimises the work of artists who intervene in a public context is the authorial function.[5] As artists move from site to site, from community to community, they carry with them an invisible institutional shell – that is, the attributes and prerogative of the author – like a survival pack ready to be deployed when art is being made and art's dues and prerogative need to be claimed. Hence when Ruben Santiago created a mock didactic video for Taroona's Shot Tower he was asked to label it as a work of art lest visitors mistook it for a 'real' political statement. So, in the end, regardless of where it takes place or how it is conceived and planned, art can't escape the privilege, and the curse, of its separateness. Art's distance from what we insist on calling 'life' is of course essential to preserve its freedom to disrupt, or reinvent, our perceptual grasp of the historically and socially specific world in which we find ourselves thrown. But the question whether this is in itself enough, as Jacques Ranciere seems to argue, to also affect 'real' change is another matter.

1. Lucy Lippard and John Chandler, 'The Dematerialization of Art,' *Art International*, 12:2, February 1968, pp. 31–36.

2. The persistence of Modernist ideals of formalist connoisseurship is evident in Anne d'Harnoncourt's reply to Hans Ulrich Orbist when asked what advice she would give to a young curator: 'look and look and look, and then to look again, because nothing replaces looking ... I am not being in Duchamp's words "only retinal", I don't mean that. I mean to be with art'. Hans Ulrich Obrist (ed.), *A Brief History of Curating*, Zurich: JRP|Ringier, 2008. One wonders how this non-retinal looking and 'being with art' actually works, and also whether curators shouldn't do a bit of thinking in addition to all this looking.

3. The use of 'weakness' or 'weakening' as positive terms to describe a new mode of thinking was espoused by Gianni Vattimo in the 1970s and proved very influential on French and Italian Post-structuralism. See Santiago Zabala (ed.), *Weakening Philosophy: Essays in Honour of Gianni Vattimo*, Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007.

4. This anecdote on Clement Geenberg's viewing habits encapsulates what was expected from the work: 'The story goes that the great modernist critic Clement Greenberg had a rather special ritual when looking at a new artwork. He would stand in a darkened room with his eyes closed, turning his back to assistants hanging a picture on the wall and adjusting the light. When ready, Greenberg would turn around saying, "hit me".' Anna Bentkowska-Kafel, Trish Cashen, Hazel Gardiner (eds), *Digital Art History: A Subject in Transition*, Bristol : Intellect, 2005, p. 58.

5. Miwon Kwon, *One Place after Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002.

Projects

John Vella
BESTPRACTICE

Wk 1 17 September, Saturday,
Salamanca Market stall, Hobart.
18 – 24 September, daily, helium
balloon vouchers released across
the Hobart CBD.

Wk 2 25 September, Sunday, *Presale (cutting)*.
26 – 28 September, Monday – Wednesday,
Presale (viewing).
29 September, Thursday, *Wholesale*.
30 September, Friday, *Setsale*.
1 October, Saturday, *Saleaway*.
All events at 146 Artspace, Hobart.

Wk 3 2 October, Sunday, *Presale (cutting)*.
3 – 5 October, Monday – Wednesday,
Presale (viewing).
6 October, Thursday, *Wholesale*.
7 October, Friday, *Setsale*.
8 October, Saturday, *Saleaway*.
All events at 146 Artspace, Hobart.

Wk 4 9 October, Sunday, *Presale (cutting)*.
10 – 12 October, Monday – Wednesday,
Presale (viewing).
13 October, Thursday, *Wholesale*.
14 October, Friday, *Setsale*.
15 October, Saturday, *Saleaway*.
All events at 146 Artspace, Hobart.

Curator
Jane Stewart

John Vella, B. 1969, Sydney, Australia.
Lives and works in Hobart, Tasmania.
www.johnvella.com.au

Curatorial Statement

Jane Stewart

BESTPRACTICE harnessed familiar marketing tools to the question of cultural value. Over the four weeks of *Iteration:Again*, John Vella reached out to the general public using devices commonly employed by promotional companies such as a brand identity, helium balloons, the lure of something 'free', amped-up spruikers, a market stall, street signage and fliers.

These methods created their own spectacle as they took action in and around the *BESTPRACTICE* shop/warehouse/gallery. Every morning for four weeks the artist would tie helium-filled balloons throughout the city to be sought out or accidentally discovered. The balloons were key: printed with the *BESTPRACTICE* logo and instructions describing how they could be swapped for an original Vella artwork if brought to the 'gallery' at a specific time.

The project circled around the artist's 'new' body of work that comprised circles (10 centimetres in diameter) cut from 100 or so original Vella artworks spanning the past 16 years. For three consecutive Sundays, the artist hole-sawed one, two, then three circles from his own works, laying them out for sale over the following five days. Prices escalated each week, encouraging buyers to get in quick. The circles that didn't sell within the week were given away to those who brought a balloon to the gallery on each Saturday.

For years, Vella's practice has involved a persistent questioning of systems: hierarchical, commercial and otherwise. His dramatically irreversible re-use of his artworks, which have significant commercial value, is confronting in a world where physical art is often sanctified. However, what some might perceive as sabotage, the artist sees as opportunity if not value-adding.

Increasingly, Vella's works and projects are embroiled in a process of artist-led reinvention, reconsideration and mutation – his entire oeuvre is an evolving palimpsest richly matched with the changing nature of the *Iteration:Again* brief.

BEST**PRACTICE**

BALLOON VOUCHERS WILL BE DISTRIBUTED THROUGHOUT THE CITY OF HOBART FOR THE DURATION OF *BESTPRACTICE*, AND AT A LOCAL MARKET DURING WEEK ONE.

OVER THE FOLLOWING THREE-WEEK PERIOD CIRCULAR SECTIONS WILL BE HANDCUT FROM HUNDREDS OF ORIGINAL CIRCA 1996 – 2010 ARTWORKS BY JOHN VELLA.

THE NEW CIRCULAR WORKS WILL BE MADE AVAILABLE FOR VIEWING, SALE AND DISTRIBUTION IN THREE DIFFERENT WAYS:

WHOLESALE
PURCHASE THE ENTIRE COLLECTION FOR ONE FIXED PRICE

SETSALE
PURCHASE INDIVIDUAL ARTWORKS OF YOUR CHOICE

SALEAWAY
BALLOON VOUCHER HOLDERS MAY RECEIVE A FREE ARTWORK

WHILE THE SIZE AND NUMBER OF AVAILABLE UNITS WILL REMAIN THE SAME EACH WEEK, PRICES WILL DRAMATICALLY INCREASE.

THE BEST THINGS IN LIFE ARE FREE
BUT SOMETIMES YOU HAVE TO PAY FOR THEM

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

WEEK ONE 17 SEPT – 24 SEPT	**SALAMANCA MARKET,** HOBART				**SAT 17/09** BALLOON 'VOUCHER' STALL 8AM TO 3PM
146 ARTSPACE 146 ELIZABETH ST	**PRESALE (CUTTING)** 10AM TO 4PM	**PRESALE (VIEWING)** 9AM TO 5PM	**WHOLESALE** 9AM TO 5PM	**SETSALE** 9AM TO 5PM	**SALEAWAY** 10AM TO 4PM
WEEK TWO 25 SEPT – 01 OCT	**SUN 25/09** VIEW THE CUTTING PROCESS LIVE	**MON-WED 26-28/09** VIEW THE WORKS	**THUR 29/09**	**FRI 30/09** GUEST SPRUIKER 11:30AM TO 1:30PM	**SAT 01/10** GUEST SPRUIKER 11:30AM TO 1:30PM
PRICES			**$5,000** FOR COMPLETE SET	**$100** PER UNIT	**FREE** ARTWORK WITH VOUCHER
WEEK THREE 02 OCT – 08 OCT	**SUN 02/10** VIEW THE CUTTING PROCESS LIVE	**MON-WED 03-05/10** VIEW THE WORKS	**THUR 06/10**	**FRI 07/10** GUEST SPRUIKER 11:30AM TO 1:30PM	**SAT 08/10** GUEST SPRUIKER 11:30AM TO 1:30PM
PRICES			**$10,000** FOR COMPLETE SET	**$200** PER UNIT	**FREE** ARTWORK WITH VOUCHER
WEEK FOUR 09 OCT – 15 OCT	**SUN 09/10** VIEW THE CUTTING PROCESS LIVE	**MON-WED 10-12/10** VIEW THE WORKS	**THUR 13/10**	**FRI 14/10** GUEST SPRUIKER 11:30AM TO 1:30PM	**SAT 15/10** GUEST SPRUIKER 11:30AM TO 1:30PM
PRICES			**$20,000** FOR COMPLETE SET	**$400** PER UNIT	**FREE** ARTWORK WITH VOUCHER

Critical Response

Kylie Johnson

Wk 1 17 September, Saturday,
Wk 2 Salamanca Market stall, Hobart.
Wk 3 18 – 24 September, daily, helium
Wk 4 balloon vouchers released across the Hobart CBD.

12.10pm Saturday 17 September, Salamanca Market

Hobart's Salamanca Market is a bustling and eclectic mishmash of stalls competing for the attention of a meandering crowd. I have come to see the first iteration of John Vella's work *BESTPRACTICE*. I spot a single black balloon tied to a rock placed in the middle of a wooden trestle table with a stack of slick black information cards. In stark contrast to the stalls that flank it, *BESTPRACTICE* is very sparse. There are no crowds of people clambering for free merchandise, just a woman looking perplexed as she reads the card. At first glance the stall seems unmanned, but then I see Vella fixing a balloon to the hydrogen cylinder at the far end of his designated area. The balloon reads: 'BRING THIS BALLOON TO 146 ELIZABETH STREET, BETWEEN 12 – 4PM ON SATURDAY OCTOBER 8 OR 15 FOR YOUR CHANCE TO COLLECT A FREE PIECE OF ART BY JOHN VELLA. FIRST IN BEST DRESSED – ONE WORK PER PERSON – BESTPRACTICE THE BEST THINGS IN LIFE ARE FREE.'

The vast majority of people walking by do not read the text on the cards or the balloon. Without reading the texts, there is very little to enlighten the shoppers on what, if anything, is being offered at this almost empty stall. Vella has intentionally positioned himself and his work smack bang in the middle of Tasmania's most popular weekend market. He isn't playing the market's game, but is being deliberately evasive. Instead of hawking his wares, he stays in the background whenever possible. A low-key persona is thought-provokingly at odds with his generosity of the offer of free artworks. Over the next half hour I witness: a boy stand uncomfortably at the table wanting to take the balloon but unsure of the protocol (he walks away empty-handed); a woman read the balloon and then take it from the rock (Vella replaces each balloon); several people use the stall plot as a shortcut to a grassed area beyond; a few people ask Vella what it's all about (he directs them to read the balloon); and two women – obviously in the know – enthusiastically taking a balloon each and commenting excitedly about redeeming it for a free John Vella artwork. Depending on where you sit, *BESTPRACTICE* at Salamanca Market could be an intimidating and uneventful stall or a smart and playful eschewing of art market hierarchies. It's a provocative and very considered first instalment that suggests Vella is publicly questioning his role (art maker and promoter) and his artworks' 'value' and importance in the world.


BRING THIS BALLOON
TO 146 ELIZABETH ST, BETWEEN
12-4PM ON SATURDAY OCTOBER 1, 8
OR 15 FOR YOUR CHANCE TO COLLECT
A FREE PIECE OF ART BY JOHN VELLA
FIRST IN BEST DRESSED
ONE WORK PER PERSON
BESTPRACTICE
THE BEST THINGS IN LIFE ARE FREE
WWW.ITERATIONAGAIN.COM

~~Wk 1~~
Wk 2 25 September, Sunday,
Wk 3 *Presale (cutting)*.
Wk 4 26 – 28 September, Monday – Wednesday, *Presale (viewing)*.
29 September, Thursday, *Wholesale*.
30 September, Friday, *Setsale*.
1 October, Saturday, *Saleaway*.
All events at 146, Artspace, Hobart.

BESTPRACTICE Moves into 146 Artspace, Elizabeth Street, Hobart

Since John Vella's market stall last weekend, black and white voucher balloons have been appearing all over Hobart, tied to bike racks, posts and public sculptures. Vella has moved *BESTPRACTICE* into 146 Artspace, Elizabeth Street, the Tasmanian government arts funding body's gallery. Vella is using the gallery as an active workspace, pop-up shop and a place for talking about the project. Spread around the space are all the works he made from 1996 to 2010 which are not secured in public or private collections. Each day of the week, for the remainder of *Iteration:Again*, the artist embarks on an elaborate series of activities: Sundays are *Presale (cutting)*, where Vella cuts pocket-sized circular portions from past works; Mondays to Wednesdays are *Presale (viewing)*, where the space is open to visitors to view works laid out on the floor and leaning against walls; Thursdays are *Wholesale*, where the artist offers complete sets of cut-out circles for sale and Fridays are *Setsale*, where an energetic guest spruiker, working on the street in front of the gallery, encourages people to enter the space (which they do), talk to the artist and buy a portion of work (which they are also doing). The spruiker returns on Saturdays for *Saleaway*, where lucky balloon holders can make the exchange for a free portion of a work of their choice. The riddle (and there is always a twist with Vella) is that the complete sets and individual circles perversely go up in price every week. Complete sets sell for $5000 – $10,000 – $20,000 and individual circles increase from $100 – $200 – $400.

Vella spends much of his time in the space talking to people, either to those specifically there to experience the work or those who wander in off the street. While most conversation operates as polite enquiry, some relates specifically to Vella's concerns: what does an artist do when they have made more work than the market can initially consume? How long should an artist archive their work, waiting for interest from curators and collecting institutions? By breaking something up are you sharing it among more people or destroying it? Is selling through a commercial gallery the best way to distribute work and/or generate an income from making art? All are significant areas of enquiry within contemporary art practice and fertile ground for discussion.

~~Wk 1~~
~~Wk 2~~
Wk 3 2 October, Sunday,
Wk 4 *Presale (cutting)*.
3 – 5 October, Monday – Wednesday, *Presale (viewing)*.
6 October, Thursday, *Wholesale*.
7 October, Friday, *Setsale*.
8 October, Saturday, *Saleaway*.
All events at 146, Artspace, Hobart.

My *BESTPRACTICE* Souvenir

On Saturdays visitors to *BESTPRACTICE* can redeem their balloon for 'A FREE PIECE OF ART BY JOHN VELLA'. They are invited to walk through the amassed artworks and choose a circle that sits beside its parent work having been previously cut in *Presale (cutting)*. Once a circle has been chosen, participants are ushered into an adjoining office to discuss the 'next step' with the project curator, Jane Stewart. They are asked to read and sign a contract providing Vella with the rights to a photo he is about to take of the participant holding the chosen circle while shaking the artist's

hand. The participant is also asked if they are interested in being placed in contact with other people who have acquired a circle from the same Vella artwork. Both of these questions lay the foundation for Vella to continue iterating *BESTPRACTICE* well after *Iteration:Again* ends.

I have my *BESTPRACTICE* circle sitting on my kitchen table. Since I went through the process of obtaining my 'free artwork' I have spoken to people who are very happy with their circular 'artworks'. They have their circle because of an interest in the conceptual nature of the project or they have chosen specific circles based on an admiration for the parent work. The mass of redeemed balloons pinned to the wall at 146 Artspace and the crescendo of images of the artist posing with 'artwork' recipients on the wall in the CAST information hub, reveal the level of interest in *BESTPRACTICE*. The images look deliberately staged, the same backdrop, the artist always shaking the recipient's hand, the artwork always held prominently in the foreground. I'm in a photo, looking awkward but happily playing my part. So what has changed for me since then?

The dilemma comes from my personal connection with the original artworks, specifically a great fondness and nostalgia for many that Vella is now destroying. I obtained my circle because I loved the work it was cut from, but I have come to realise that by having the circle I am implicated in the original artwork's demise. My circle sits on my kitchen table as a reminder that I didn't try to purchase the parent work when I had the opportunity. And while mourning the death of a familiar old work, I've been lead astray – focusing attention on the decoy object rather than on the performative artwork.

By walking into 146 Artspace, Elizabeth Street on Saturdays to redeem a voucher balloon for a free John Vella artwork, you become an active participant in *BESTPRACTICE*. The 'free artwork' operates initially as bait; a prop around which the performance functions and, ultimately, as a relic of the event.

~~Wk 1~~
~~Wk 2~~
~~Wk 3~~
Wk 4 9 October, Sunday, *Presale (cutting)*.
10 – 12 October, Monday – Wednesday, *Presale (viewing)*.
13 October, Thursday, *Wholesale*.
14 October, Friday, *Setsale*.
15 October, Saturday, *Saleaway*.
All events at 146, Artspace, Hobart.

Close of Business Saturday 15 October 2011

At the close of business, John Vella was left to transport back into storage the carcasses of old, damaged works and the remaining new relics from *BESTPRACTICE*.

While the work was centred on commodified exchange, it was also about the intimate exchange between people and the practice of being an artist. Vella gave away bits of his work – a generous act and a fun marketing strategy to tempt the audience. The stuff of *BESTPRACTICE* was simultaneously a distraction from, and the props for, his performance as an artist engaging with his market. To get beyond the decoys and connect with the performance took me a few return visits interspersed with quiet times of reflection. The great strength of the work lay in the close proximity of the artist to his audience. Vella nurtured a complex range of


BESTPRACTICE

relationships with all who crossed the threshold. It was this act of generosity that made the work so compelling.

Every person had a part to play. Official performers had scripted roles – the accomplice circle cutter, the curator, the spruikers, Arts Tasmania venue staff, et cetera. And visitors improvised performances while negotiating the space – taking part in conversations with the artist, curator and each other, by choosing a *BESTPRACTICE* circle and redeeming their balloon and entering into a contract with the artist. Ultimately *BESTPRACTICE* was a richly layered, collaborative performance undertaken by the artist and a surprisingly wide-ranging group of audience participants.

Of course woven through the layers of *BESTPRACTICE* were Vella's personal concerns: being an artist approaching mid-career status, and the battle between the cultural versus monetary value of what he produces. By laying all of his unsold past work out in such a theatrical and irreverent construction, he gently goads us to reflect in often surprising ways on his practice specifically, but more broadly on the profession of being an artist.


250

Anthony Johnson
Eclipse

Wk 1 24 September, Saturday 2.52pm, departing from the CAST Carpark, 27 Tasma Street, Hobart.

Wk 2 1 October, Saturday 2.59pm, departing from the CAST Carpark, 27 Tasma Street, Hobart.

Wk 3 8 October, Saturday 4.07pm (DST), departing from the CAST Carpark, 27 Tasma Street, Hobart.

Wk 4 15 October, Saturday 4.16pm (DST), departing from the CAST Carpark, 27 Tasma Street, Hobart.

Curator
David Cross

Anthony Johnson, B. 1974, Sydney, Australia. Lives and works in Hobart, Australia.

Curatorial Statement

David Cross

Not a lot seems to happen in Anthony Johnson's *Eclipse*. The audience were given instructions to turn up to CAST at designated times on four successive Saturday afternoons, with no other information forthcoming. Just before the precise time specified each week, a luxury coach pulled up in front of the gallery and a guide invited the waiting audience to climb on board. The bus then departed creating a distinct expectation that we were being taken somewhere – to an unspecified location, or perhaps even an event of some kind.

The bus pulled out from Tasma Street, North Hobart turned left into Argyle Street, left again into Burnett Street, then left into Elizabeth Street, before once again turning left back into Tasma Street and pulling up where we started less than five minutes before. Nothing of any significance seemed to happen throughout the trip. The guide then thanked the audience who disembarked mostly bemused as to what had just transpired. With what seemed to be precious little to recover from the work, the audience left with the sense or hope that potentially more would be revealed in the coming weeks.

Cut to the following Saturday, and the audience once again are waiting with perhaps a slightly heightened sense of expectation. Seven minutes later than the previous week, the coach once again arrives with the same guide and amiable driver. As before, the audience boards and waits before the driver pulls out and the journey starts again. Any hopes of a different scenario are quickly dashed as the coach turns left and begins to chart exactly the same course 'round the block' as the week before. Once again in under five minutes the audience are deposited back at CAST even more nonplussed than the previous week. Is this a work about nothing, a strange amalgam of *Groundhog Day* and *Waiting for Godot* where the audience are locked in a peculiar staging of banal repetition? Is the artist building the tension to a final dénouement, or are we missing something crucial? Curiously, *Eclipse* managed to both excite and bore in equal measure, consistently deferring the audience's need to 'get' the work and thereby allow a certain narrative closure.

Weeks three and four take place in much the same way, the only differences being the incrementally later time of departure of eight and nine minutes respectively. Yet the audiences approach has begun to shift. Less compelled by the onboard conviviality, they are far more attuned to the assorted occurrences taking place on the streets of North Hobart on a Saturday afternoon. 'Wasn't that taxi there last week?', 'That's the lady with the dog!', 'Did we see that guy washing the same window last week?' The audience begin to talk to themselves and their fellow travellers simultaneously. Seemingly out of nowhere the audience is alive to the world the bus is moving through. Pushing visual acuity and memory, Johnson interrogates the experience of *déjà vu* by constructing a complex, if meticulously subtle, theatricality of repeated actions, movements and gestures performed by a large, but crucially indeterminate, cast of people.

Critical Response

Seán Kelly

Wk 1 24 September, Saturday 2.52pm,
Wk 2 departing from the CAST
Wk 3 Carpark, 27 Tasma Street,
Wk 4 Hobart.

A Journey without a Destination

We know where to meet – CAST car park. We know we are going somewhere. The destination is not provided. We arrive and encounter a huge silver luxury coach parked outside the CAST office. A small group of people gathers. A woman in a nice uniform with a clipboard smiles reassuringly and advises the departure time. It's a Mystery Tour.

2:42pm is the specified gathering time. This is what we have, expectations, anticipation. A shimmer of contained excitement runs through the group.

2:52pm departure time. I have addressed the passengers with some bonhomie as I make my way to my seat. I am a little excited it seems. Most of us would never have been in a coach like this; it's the type they reserve for the European tour. It has drop-down monitors and a camera on the front, just like a plane. Foldaway footrests and comfy seats. We are taking photos of the interior of the bus. We are very interested in our new world, like new fish tipped into an aquarium.

We move off and begin to chatter and settle into it. Left into Argyle, (it's one-way so that makes sense). Then left again into Burnett (a two-way street). Those who already know the artist's work must now be a little suspicious. Left again into Elizabeth (another two-way street). Left again into Tasma. We arrive again in front of CAST. The bus stops, the door opens, hesitation – we alight.

The fog clears, the dust settles and ultimately John Cage's '4' 33"' comes to mind, a performance of which I call up on YouTube soon after. It has over 7000 'Like' hits and just over 2000 'Don't Like' hits. The experience is clarified – Mystery – Anticipation – Excitement – Adventure – Dénoument.

The bus is called Isabella. I think of the Queen of Portugal as I take a photograph. I think of Columbus, of his great mistake and how the Chinese were Indians, of how America was still waiting to be discovered anyway. How these famous mistakes became his final prize. I even think of Amerigo Vespucci and can't remember what he did.

~~Wk 1~~
Wk 2 1 October, Saturday 2.59pm,
Wk 3 departing from the CAST
Wk 4 Carpark, 27 Tasma Street,
Hobart.

Déjà Vu

I saw it quoted in a book I picked up in the bin at the Salvation Army about the making of *Exile on Main Street* – 'It's déjà vu all over again'. Technically though I don't regard that as a tautology.


BES
LIGHTING
NOW OPEN
KEEP LEFT
01/10/2011 15:01

Departure point – same place, CAST car park. There's Isabella, our luxury coach parked in exactly the same spot. There's the nice lady in the uniform with the clipboard. There's the same driver and here's the group of travellers, many the same as last week. This week there's a different departure time 2:59pm. Last week it was 2:52pm. I had checked the two remaining departure times and they were different. Before setting off today I checked the differences in the times. Was the incremental rate the same? No. Did the totals of the gaps reveal a clue? No. The total of the differences? No. The grand total? Still no. This is a mystery but it's also a game, and a compelling one.

We head off, into Argyle, left into Burnett, left into Elizabeth and left into Tasma, just like last week. It's only approaching the intersection of Argyle and Burnett that the penny drops. This time I really look; I mean vulture eyes. I don't know what I'm looking for; I think it must be difference, the unfamiliar. Yes, he's doing to my eyes what Cage did to my ears. I'm staring holes into the familiar streetscape. We are high up – is it high? Is it a message, resembling a band poster in the pub window? Is it an altered sign? Is it some juxtaposition? Is it semiotic? Semioptic?

We arrive and a clue has appeared. I re-run the trip and I think I have it; I'm sure I have it but I won't know until next week and I can't reveal it anyway. If you have not been on this trip there is no point going on the last one but maybe, if you are sharper than me, you will get it in two. That is of course assuming that I am right. I'm still not sure myself and it will take the third trip to know.

Where I had perhaps been hoping that each trip would be different I now need them to be exactly the same. Then I'll know. If I'm wrong I'll still have the artist to thank for the Augenblick that ate North Hobart but I know there's more.

~~Wk 1~~
~~Wk 2~~
Wk 3 8 October, Saturday
Wk 4 4.07pm (DST), departing from the CAST Carpark, 27 Tasma Street, Hobart.

Shadowing

I'd arrived early, about 20 minutes before the 4.07 departure time. I noticed Anthony Johnson getting into his car. Then I watched from the side street as he pulled away. The temptation to follow him was overwhelming. I watched him drive around the corner. What to do? I could follow and I might learn something, but I might learn something I really wanted to find out the hard way. I gave in to the impulse, pulled my hat low, donned my sunglasses (although it was raining), and pulled out into the traffic. He was about four cars ahead; I was in the middle lane. He turned right into Burnett Street and then the better me killed off the gumshoe me, so I turned left instead. Those few seconds of tailing were sweet and seductive but this was no way to learn. Which satisfaction is greater: the demystification or the deconstruction? I chose the latter. Olivia (again), the nice lady (*sans* clipboard, apparently insignificant). People boarding. I put my earphones on, turned Josh Ritter up high, took my seat alone at the front of the bus. Spoke to no one and off we went.

Route the same, all exactly as before. Then I saw it, then I saw another and another. Three confirmed sightings – unequivocal. I knew, there was no doubt, this layer was revealed. Had there been more of them? Were there other layers? Both of these questions will hold till next week but I knew that the riddle was solved. And then finally that one, just as before. Case closed?

On the bus I'd got to thinking about how we construct the world, how all relations, all collaborative conceits, originate in the imagination. We can orchestrate the world; we do it all the time. The artist constructs a conceit, it is articulated, and from that point a series of implications follow. We conceive and that idea alters lives. This idea could have stayed inside the artist's mind but no, it is out in the world and constructing action in the lives of others. We are all implicated, David had an idea, gave that to Anthony who had an idea which he gave to me and now I'm sitting on a bus in the rain and the better part of my brain is playing this game. We all act out of the brains of others.

~~Wk 1~~
~~Wk 2~~
~~Wk 3~~
Wk 4 15 October, Saturday 4.16pm (DST), departing from the CAST Carpark, 27 Tasma Street, Hobart.

The Reveal

Now I can tell you. Anthony Johnson created a work which, on first experiencing it, seemed to be almost nothing at all. Imagine this – a four-minute ride around the block and return to the point of departure. Most of my focus was inside the bus at times but no matter how hard I'd been looking I still would have seen nothing out of the ordinary. Life just went on and we just circled the block. For me it played straight back into Johnson's offbeat, wry humour and I was kept scrambling for any other thing to hang this experience on. Like many writers I thought I had to fill a vacuum with some small shred of associative meaning, which I did, and which was correct. But I could not escape the feeling of having been a little short changed. I thought of other things I'd seen which were just as slight or less, and put it down to a gesture. (Don't even go near the value of the taxpayer's money.)

The second iteration would, I hoped, be different. It wasn't; in fact it was identical – perhaps too identical. The same Maxi Cab stood on the bus parking area as last week. Then I remembered that the window cleaner had been cleaning the lighting shop windows last week and was again this week – odd, but hardly implausible, even given the shift forward in the departure time. I also seemed to recall that older lady with the dog who crossed in front of the bus at Tasma Street, and wasn't there a young woman with a baby at Burnett Street and what about that guy on the scooter who turned into Tasma Street as we were pulling out?

The third iteration was conclusive. The cab was there, scooter guy came around the corner, the woman and the baby were crossing, and the man was cleaning the windows, the older lady and her dog all were in the same places doing the same things. I had noted others but needed to wait a week to confirm. The guy looking

at the car in the car yard, the girl with the bike, the girl texting as she walked up the street, the guy in the hoodie and so on, the girl with the movie camera, and there were more.

At the fourth iteration some of these characters reappeared but some did not. I wondered how many there could be but this game was over.

Nikos Papastergiadis made the point that contemporary art used to use the everyday as a source, an influence; now, he asserts, it uses the everyday *constitutively*. The sheer elegance of the complex choreography and meticulous crafting of this work are crucial to its success. The concept expressed in the most artless way. By that I mean lacking artifice. All drama, spectacle or any overt intervention have been eschewed and that is the reason why it is an enormously satisfying work – slow to unfold but rich in its rewards. My whole second journey was spent looking for the 'intervention' but it was too subtle, to embedded to show itself in any overt way.

That this work was produced without anything identifying it as art also assists in proving that entering public space and public time and not only creating an intervention or insertion that on the face of it is 'real' and 'natural' is the sweetest form of subversion, and entirely seductive in its manner of worming itself into one's consciousness.

Finally, all the subtexts are still relevant – John Cage in particular. The artist told me that when the bus movies were edited down the mean average time was 4 minutes and 33 seconds – what an unforseen elegant and entirely appropriate symmetry.


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David Clegg
failurespace

Wk 1 18 – 24 September
Daily, Hobart CBD.
failurespace.tumblr.com

Wk 2 25 September – 1 October
Daily, Hobart CBD.
failurespace.tumblr.com

Wk 3 2 – 8 October
Daily, Hobart CBD.
failurespace.tumblr.com

Wk 4 9 – 15 October
Daily, Hobart CBD.
failurespace.tumblr.com

Curator
David Cross

David Clegg, B. 1953, New Plymouth, New Zealand. Lives and works in New Plymouth, New Zealand.
www.davidclegg.net

Curatorial Statement

David Cross

There is an assortment of public locations both real and virtual in David Clegg's *failurespace*. While working primarily with the globally accessible realm that is the internet via a tumblr website, the precise geographic locations of his public art commission (where it was produced and where the audience experienced it) is carefully problematised. The artist constructed a series of fragmentary aural, textual and photographic 'grabs' of unspecified sites and locations within the inner city of Hobart and located them in an indexical and sequential form to be viewed on his tumblr blog day by day over the course of the four weeks. Each entry provided a short mp3 soundtrack made up of fragmentary voices and situated noises in indeterminate public sites; a black and white photograph of a seemingly unremarkable urban setting; and a short written text which appears to be fragments of overheard conversations. In addition to this blog site, the artist also dropped at assorted locations throughout the city individual photographs with similarly elliptical words written on the reverse side. The locations were never advertised or specified and the photographs may or may not have been picked up and examined.

How these elements are connected – or not – is part of the artist's working method and as such they function as fluid and elusive markers of urban experiences carefully framed to be both abstract and straightforwardly real. These multi-sensory combinations are poetic yet at the same time also redolent with a straightforward approach to simply capturing what is there on the streets and alleyways in an unmediated manner. Each instalment is a slippery armature of the artist's very particular experience of inhabiting Hobart and because of this he asks us, almost requires us, to be highly active contributors.

Where a number of artists prefaced a marked shift or changing of gears from week to week, Clegg's iterational transitions were markedly more subtle. Yet by paying close attention to each element in the work, it is possible to identify small deviations, insertions and a sense of drift towards slightly different places and situations over time. Each week his involvement approached more invisible and obscure zones of signal and data, and it is possible to discern shifts in movement from initially static locations to the sounds of the artist moving through assorted streets and passageways. There are definite clues embedded across and between the sound, image and text that the artist has discovered something distinctive and compelling in his shuffling about town. Each dropped photograph, for example, was always placed back at the location where it was taken, creating a layered form of re-transmission with the work constantly folding back upon itself. Clegg's transitions, while never obvious, are at the same time accessible and it is up to us to calibrate our senses and, like him, become attuned to the minutiae of spatial and aural shifts that take place with each step forward.


WARNING
GAS MAIN IN VICINITY
DIAL 1100
BEFORE DIGGING

Critical Response

Eliza Burke

Wk 1 18–24 September
Wk 2 Daily, Hobart CBD.
Wk 3 www.failurespace.tumblr.com
Wk 4

'The paths that correspond in this intertwining, unrecognized poems in which each body is an element signed by many others, elude legibility.' — Michel de Certeau[1]

The history of the city is littered with footpaths – trajectories of good will and intention, they are designed to guide the human body on its route from here to there and facilitate the best way forward. Footpaths regulate the spatial use of the city. They provide us with safe passages to navigate its edges and thoroughfares. They organise our mobility through concepts of the orderly and the placed.

Footpaths are of that special breed of infrastructure so visible that we don't really see them. This 'invisibility' is a product of the successful civilising power of the city, but David Clegg refuses the code. He asks us see footpaths otherwise – as zones that lead to the elsewhere of experience, to the fragile ground of the lives they carry and the possibilities of time and space beyond the prescribed continuum. In Clegg's work the footpath is not just a means of passage, but a point of deviation and departure.

In *failurespace* Clegg continues his exploration of the spaces between the known and the unknown. His photographs of footpaths take us to ground level, to the familiar stretches of pavement where we make our way as individuals, but where we also get lost in the crowd. The seemingly random shots of pedestrian space casts light into a transit zone – a localised point within a network of pathways made knowable only by our acts of passing through.

We can see the footpath and hear its activity, but the relation is not continuous. The stillness of the photograph is offset by the noise of the soundscapes – the hammering bell of the pedestrian lights, the dropped cup, the high heels spiked with intent and direction. Clegg's juxtaposition of soundscape and photograph moves between the place of the footpath and the unknown – and perhaps unknowable – spaces beyond it, disorienting us from the co-ordinates offered by vision or language.

Transcribing a path between these realms, Clegg makes a nomadic poem from the voices of others. He tunes our ears into the brief intimacy of the subjective utterance amid the sprawling sound of the city's chattering consciousness. These variations on the public voice are comforting in their familiarity, but the fragmented identities are unsettling. They are as much indices of the absent subject as they are a record of the intermittent nature of our public lives. Like the sound of disembodied

1. Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Steve Rendall (trans.), Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984, p. 93.


Hudsons Coffee
http://failurespace.tumblr.com


http://failurespace.tumblr.com

footsteps, the voices displace the footpaths of Clegg's city, marking spaces where things fail to appear and words are spoken but no one arrives.

~~Wk 1~~
Wk 2 25 September – 1 October
Wk 3 Daily, Hobart CBD.
Wk 4 www.failurespace.tumblr.com

Everywhere Else but Here

The footpaths from Clegg's first iteration led to walls, corners and thresholds. Pushed up against the surfaces of the city they make the sense of place harder to reach. Sounds echo and reverberate off the streets in a random set of beats, hums and human noise. In these smaller spaces you can still hear the pedestrian lights telling us it's safe to walk, but now I'm not so sure. Now, there are people running.

I imagine Clegg tuning the city on a radio dial, picking up human frequencies like stations. Voices come and go as cars and birds do. No one stops for long. Someone calls out, someone agrees. Everyone is talking to someone else, somewhere else.

I think of these people and wonder whether they are tuning in now online to find their own voice by surprise. I wonder whether they recognise themselves – one among many, in public? I imagine them trying to remember where they were, who they were talking to, why they were there.

There is no sign of them in the photographs now. Before there was a foot or a hint of activity, but now the space of the photograph is abandoned and discarded, just as Clegg drops the real photograph in the street. This sense of departure makes the gaps in sound all the more spacious. The silence between each iteration is like a momentary void, a hole in consciousness where the record of experience fails.

I am beginning to distrust the photograph. Its quiet presence seduces me and seals over the gaps in sound, saying 'It's okay, everything will fit together, look there is ground beneath your feet.' The photograph tries to restore stillness and silence, make language cohere, sit still, record, narrate – but language is not listening. Language wanders off following every nuance, every tune and bird call, everything that sounds like it, but isn't.

Language has no truck with the photograph.

I have begun to see the photograph as the stoic parent of this schizoid child who constantly displaces it, and ruins its attempts to say 'Here we are, there you go, we better get your lollies.' Clegg's footpaths walk between this stillness and this trouble, – never reconciling them, always keeping their banter alive, letting meaning run everywhere else but here.

~~Wk 1~~
~~Wk 2~~
Wk 3 2–8 October
Wk 4 Daily, Hobart CBD.
www.failurespace.tumblr.com

'There is always something there to remind me'

In the third iteration, Clegg has moved away from opaque, hard edges towards the transparency of windows and light. Looking upwards there is a sense of flight, and breakable surfaces now blur the boundaries between inside and outside. The

windows of towering buildings reflect what is outside but tell nothing of what they contain. The pop melody soars like a memory over the surrounding noise but falters and breaks before falling into static.

The more time I spend in *failurespace*, the more I become aware of the pressure Clegg brings to bear on the idea of the archive. As a record of public activity, Clegg's method is archival but it is always displacing its own demands and fragmenting any notion of a cohesive or knowable public. Just as each sound recording interrupts the stillness of the photograph, the archival gesture seems constantly disrupted by what it cannot contain. Clegg's archive is a fragile organism, surviving only by the persistence of its trace elements and the subtle interchange between past and present moments.

I am beginning to see *failurespace* as an archive of failed experiences – a collection of moments that have exceeded our capacity to register them *as experience* or that have failed to register in the present at all. In this sense, it seems to be an archive of what we cannot grasp in the present and is always, already relegated to the past – a testament to the incomplete nature of experience at any given time.

Rather than seeing this as a negative gesture, I see its fractured components as part of an alternative organising principle that harnesses the power of missing information to create new pathways. It is perhaps a method that is not about creating public art as a fixed space of public information or record, but rather one that taps into a radical sense of a public *in-formation*, and this seems key to both its disruptive power and creative potential.

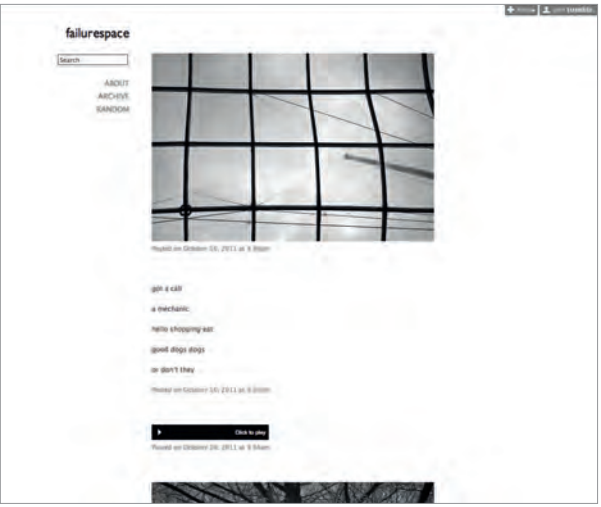
I like the challenge to knowledge and recognition that *failurespace* fosters and its resistance to the requirements of visibility and accessibility that we associate with public art. The only trouble is that I cannot visit the city now without hearing the pedestrian bell telling me when to stop and when to go. It is a sound that haunts the terrain of *failurespace* with its regular beats and demand for conformity – a sound I hadn't really heard like this before.

~~Wk 1~~
~~Wk 2~~
~~Wk 3~~
Wk 4 9–15 October
Daily, Hobart CBD.
www.failurespace.tumblr.com

Letting the Noise In

Clegg casts his net wide catching signals in the atmosphere, vibrating intensities and occasional words still cutting through the din. The sound field has expanded again, picking up frequencies beyond the range of the human ear. Consciousness is amplified and returned to us as static. There is high pressure now on the idea of place, a more immediate sense of a boundary being pushed.

It is as though Clegg has opened all the doors of the city and let the noise from outside in. It's coming in through the grids and the window frames, through the trees and the locked gates. It's scratching along the streets, intruding in the space. The



noise is at times intense and unstable, but its presence is fragile – an anxious mix of crossed, accidental and mis-aligned connections, interrupting us *en route*.

In this last iteration, I sense that *failurespace* is less about those gaps between the known and the unknown than what is available for us to know in the present moment, but which we cannot contain. I had initially thought of this as the outside or 'elsewhere of experience', but I now think it is perhaps more about the moment of collapse and its residues than the transgression of boundaries.
The unsettled relations between the photographs, sound-bites and words seem to point more to a sense of fallout, the remains of an overburdened present rather than any attempt at integration or seeking it as a whole. Certainly, the present is vulnerable and we are vulnerable within it, but Clegg wastes no time lamenting the fact – his strategy seems directed at re-distributing what's left of the present along new material and immaterial pathways and seeing where it goes.

In his recordings of different fragments of experience, Clegg's persistent challenge is to the question of our connectedness and our sense of co-habitation within public spaces. Are our cities cages or networks? Do our footpaths entrap or connect us? How do we connect to the spaces beyond our grasp, the life that goes on around us but to which we do not belong and cannot access fully let alone contain? These spaces where the noise comes in challenge our desire for the city to contain us, protect us, tell us who we are. The static in this last iteration seems to be about both the ambiguity of the messages being sent from this public space and an anxiety about us as individual sites of their reception. There is no assurance here that the message has got through.

In Clegg's spaces failure is a gesture towards the infinite combination of connections and disconnections in our daily lives and the reducibility of none. He does not offer a way out, or any way to recuperate those lost moments, or to resolve the inherent anxiety in these positions. Rather, he simply records tensions that inform the contemporary cityscape and asks us to recognise ourselves within it. Failure is a space of vulnerability in Clegg's work but it is also a gesture towards the indomitable, 'fearless' truth of the present: '... failure is always in the here and now. Failure is absolute this-worldliness. And this is its chance.'[2]

2. Hans-Joachim Muller, 'Failure as a Form of Art' in Lisa Le Feuve (ed.), *Failure: Whitechapel Documents of Contemporary Art*, London: The White Chapel Gallery (published in association with MIT Press), 2010, p. 200.

Lucy Bleach
Homing

Wk 1 18 September, Sunday 6.15am, Dawn Service. 19 – 23 September, Daily, Clothes Donation.

24 September, Saturday 6.00am, Dawn Service.

24 September, Saturday 10am – 12pm, Sewing Circle in Save the Children Fund second-hand clothing shop, Criterion Street, Hobart.

Wk 2 26 – 30 September, Daily, 10am – 4pm, Sewing Circle in Save the Children Fund second-hand clothing shop, Criterion St, Hobart.

1 October, Saturday 6.15am, Dawn Lament in Mathers Lane, Hobart.

Wk 3 2 October, Sunday 9.30am, Lament.
3 October, Monday 10am, Lament.
4 October, Tuesday 11.30am, Lament.
5 October, Wednesday 12.30pm, Lament.
6 October, Thursday 2pm, Lament.
7 October, Friday 4pm, Lament.
8 October, Saturday 6.30pm, Dusk Lament.

Wk 4 9 – 14 October, Daily, Posters.
15 October, Saturday 4.45pm, Pigeon Release.

All events in Mathers Lane, Hobart (unless otherwise noted).

Curator
David Cross

Lucy Bleach, B. 1968, Sydney, Australia. Lives and works in Tasmania, Australia.
www.lucybleach.com

Curatorial Statement

David Cross

Taking the complex permutations of our attachment to place as her starting point, Lucy Bleach's *Homing* investigated four distinct thematic threads around spatial longing and attachment, all of which were played out in a small laneway off Criterion Street in central Hobart. Beginning with a dawn performance where a modest neon sign of a pigeon was illuminated in the laneway, the artist then had a concrete set of steps deposited in the middle of the laneway just as the sun was coming up. Following in quick succession, another truck delivered a recycled clothing bin on top of the concrete steps and for the rest of that week the bin was an unmarked and quietly iconic fixture of the site.

The sophomore week began when the unusual pop-up charity depository was opened to reveal a full bounty of donated clothing. The material was then put to use in a temporary sewing workshop installed in the Save the Children store fronting the lane. This was run by an expert seamstress, and Bleach herself, for recently arrived immigrant women. Together they worked on making colourful segments of fabric that expanded in the shop window over the course of the week. During this time the steps were bare until at the end of the second week its purpose was again reconfigured.

At dawn in the beginning of the third week, a powerful and unaccompanied voice filled the empty streets of the CBD with a yearning lament. The performer proceeded to sing two songs of lament in English and Spanish standing atop the steps. She wore a cloak decorated with a piece of the hanging fabric and the sound echoed through the surrounding streets was extraordinary. Each day for that week she performed two laments, one of which was always 'Llorando', the cloak growing in colour and form over this time. The week concluded with the performer, accompanied by a large trailing audience, finally shedding the cloak at the end of a shopping arcade a short walk from the steps.

The final week began with the laneway at first seemingly empty, though over the course of a few days black and white bill posters appear of birds. These pictures are on closer inspection all pigeons and, true to the reproductive power of the species, more and more accumulated in the laneway as the week and the work itself drew to a close. On the final day a curious object in the form of a compartmentalised trailer sat unattended until at dusk a crowd begins to form and the artist herself appeared. With the help of another she opened the trailer doors and released hundreds of pigeons into the sky, a brief visual cacophony of flapping wings and dodging spectators. In a moment they collectively arc for the sky and make for home.


JANOME

Critical Response

Lucy Rollins

Wk 1 18 September, Sunday
Wk 2 6.15am, Dawn Service.
Wk 3 19 – 23 September, Daily,
Wk 4 Clothes Donation.

24 September, Saturday
6.00am, Dawn Service.

24 September, Saturday
10am – 12pm, Sewing Circle
in Save the Children Fund
second-hand clothing shop,
Criterion Street, Hobart.

Early morning rising. Ripped from sleep by the alarm, struggling to remember Lucy Bleach's directions to the right street. Through bleary eyes, I drive on a frigid Saturday morning to the little laneway, a small nook down a side street in Hobart's CBD. I arrive to find a couple of people waiting with the artist. We gather at the side of Mathers Lane, familiar faces huddled together, largely passive witnesses to events Bleach has set in motion.

As the appreciative crowd of the Hobart art community grows, Bleach flicks a switch and a neon pigeon is illuminated, hovering over the lane. Delighted murmurs rise at this abstract symbol; then concrete reality, as a big truck pulls up – silver bulldog on the front contrasting with the pigeon. It backs up close to the nook, bringing a set of concrete steps into view. Instead of dawn silence (neon bird in flight), the lane is filled with the raucous noise of the truck's mechanisms, reversing lights and creaking hydraulics as the driver hooks the steps to the crane, lifting and rotating them. For moments they become a stairway to heaven spinning slowly on an invisible axis in time and space. Lowered to the ground, the steps become a portal to a newly created space that feels somehow sacred. A monument – but to what is as yet unrevealed.

A second truck grumbles up the lane. A gavotte ensues as Truck One leaves and Truck Two repeats the process, this time placing a *Vinnie's* clothing donation bin at the top of the steps. Prewarned, I've brought my own donation and run up the steps, ceremonially opening the shaft of the bin; in they go, my offerings to this new temporary/permanent place. Others do the same, then it's time to disperse before breakfast to begin our day. I reflect on this dreamlike encounter all day. The simplicity of this monumental piece of work. The shared early morning experience charged with the excitement of coming to see a new art work being made.

The following Saturday I rise early (again) and watch another truck pull up. Bleach unlocks the belly of the bin, and I am delighted as the rainbow of contents spill out into the lane; the invitation to donate has been fruitful, and I offer my services to help relieve the bin of these gifts. The lane is lined with bags and piles of clothing as the driver lifts the bin back onto the truck and drives it away, its role in this unfolding drama over.

Only a ring of soil remains on top of the steps, remnants of a plant offering left by a passerby earlier in the week. The end of this first part of the work. The stairs remain. The pigeon remains.

~~Wk 1~~
Wk 2 26 – 30 September, Daily,
Wk 3 10am – 4pm, Sewing Circle
Wk 4 in Save the Children Fund second-hand clothing shop, Criterion Street, Hobart.

1 October, Saturday 6.15am, Dawn Lament in Mathers Lane, Hobart.

The second part begins with Bleach emptying the donated items into the front window of Save the Children fund second-hand children's clothing shop that fronts the laneway.

Bleach and a costume designer, Roz Wren, spread out a large section of mossy green material (some old curtains, I think), and map out sections to be torn up and re-stitched to form a cloak.The cloak is to be worn by an unnamed Hollywood diva who will be coming to Hobart soon to sing/lament about loss and notions of home.

I return many times that week. Bleach and Wren are working on the garment, a multi-coloured patchwork of our collective memories – the sentimental attachments we have, threads of material removed and reconfigured – now gifted as important components of this evolving piece of costuming. The shade of the cloak begins in purple, a piece of a top here, a bra and sock there. Then red, orange, yellow, until it turns green and finally blue. The colours represent the shades of skylight, from dawn to dusk. Divided into sections, the cloak is displayed in the windows of the shop for passers-by to admire, while Bleach and Wren work on Singer sewing machines, sewing for our singer.

Bleach has also invited a group of women to come work with her, the ladies of 'Stitch', a sewing group for newly arrived refugee women; it's an opportunity for them to begin to feel comfortable in their new home. Those who donate clothing let go of a tiny part of themselves, small reminders of past experiences. These women have let go of many things. The cloak holds all of these stories.

Recycled clothes, recycled opportunities. We await the singer, whom we now know is Rebekah Del Rio, famous for her version of 'Llorando' in David Lynch's *Mullholland Drive*. She is our storyteller. A new dawn service awaits us cloak and all.

~~Wk 1~~
~~Wk 2~~
Wk 3 2 October, 9.30am, Lament.
Wk 4 3 October, 10am, Lament.
4 October, 11.30am, Lament.
5 October, 12.30pm, Lament.
6 October, 2pm, Lament.
7 October, 4pm, Lament.
8 October, 6.30pm, Dusk Lament.
All events in Mathers Lane, Hobart.

At sunrise on Saturday morning Del Rio laments to us, singing about loss and notions of home. She begins, standing on the concrete steps wearing the cloak created for her in the previous iteration. Just the hood on the first day, but at each performance over the week the cloak grows. Gradually, it cocoons her. A new panel added each day, matching the colour of the natural light over the course of the day from dawn to dusk. The singing times during the week echo these transitions.

Bleach's intentions for *Homing* were to explore what public space can be and how we engage with it. These fragmented moments begin as intimate early morning performances for the audience. As they take place later and later into the day, there are increasing minor disturbances, the background noise of people walking through the laneway, traffic roaring past. These effects only add to the experience. Something about Del Rio's voice transcends the space. And these uncontrollable noises give us a reality check – yes, we are still in the real world. I focus on how the passers-by interact with the work. Some stop, some don't. I guess even the beauty

of Del Rio's *a cappella* singing cannot pierce the internal monologues of some people's minds.

However, for those who do stop, the audience shares the raw emotion created by Del Rio's voice. There's something magical about this space and what happens in these moments. Overwhelmed, a number of people have tears in their eyes. Perhaps it's the choice of songs? Indeed, the common thread that runs through each performance is 'Llorando', a Spanish version of Roy Orbison's 'Crying':

Yes, now you're gone and from this moment on
I'll be crying over you.

What makes these moments so special is the choice of site and the people who unknowingly contribute to the work. During her final performance, a dusk lament, there's a moment when Del Rio leaves the laneway and walks across the road to sing in the arcade, the crowd following at a distance. The acoustics project her voice into the space, drawing people out of the shops. Some drunks leave The Oasis, a local pub and gambling venue, and begin to holler at her. Unfazed, Del Rio makes her way to the end of the arcade and in a flash sheds the cloak and is gone.

For those of us who were expecting her, and those who weren't, Mathers Lane has become imbued with the memory and resonance of the encounter. Marked by this iteration, I wait to see what will become of it next.

~~Wk 1~~
~~Wk 2~~
~~Wk 3~~
Wk 4 9 – 14 October, Daily, Posters. 15 October, Saturday 4.45pm, Pigeon Release, Mathers Lane, Hobart.

The final day of *Homing* arrives. I return for the last time to the little area off Criterion Street that has become so infused with expectation and meaning. The time is 4:45pm – fitting, not long till dusk. Nature is changing gear for the night. But there is the usual disconnected bustle from shoppers and workers returning home. I wait, transfixed, pondering the precise time (why not 5pm?), for Bleach to orchestrate the final event, the final 'happening' of *Homing*. Just the word, 'final' has already evoked in me that feeling of loss so potently explored by Del Rio's laments – 'Llorando' – 'you're gone and now I'm crying ...'

Throughout the week following Del Rio's departure, Bleach taped up big black and white prints of pigeons, photos taken by pigeon fanciers of their trophies and homing paraphernalia. This display, introducing yet another different community with its own shared experience and associations, has grown incrementally on the laneway wall to which the neon pigeon sign is attached. Lucy said she wanted it to look like guano. This makes me consider the ambivalence of pigeons. They are creatures that typically live in public spaces. Children often delight in feeding them. But others find them pests, fouling areas humans wish to claim as their own. Diversity of perspective tends to polarise judgement.

One hundred and twenty homing pigeons have been in cages, in a trailer parked in the laneway, all day. Bleach rigged a microphone in the centre of the trailer so the sound of their cooing was amplified eerily and sweetly throughout the public space.

At 4.45pm Lucy Bleach and David Cross release all 120 birds. With a loud clamour they rush out of their cages, fly straight towards the crowd and then up over our heads. I watch them stream off into the dusk. Bleach later told me that they all arrived home within nine minutes! Then I understood the significance of the precise time. By 5pm the pigeons were all in their homes, and we were returning to ours.

Bleach's last act was to turn off the neon pigeon on the wall; no longer the 'abstract' symbol it had seemed at the outset of *Homing*; now infused with the flight of the birds as they headed for home. I wonder now if 'home' is really what I thought it was, before *Iteration:Again* ...


CATHOLIC WOMENS LEAGUE
STATE HEADQUARTERS
WOMENS REST CENTRE
CHILD HEALTH CENTRE
AND CRECHE
7
8
9
10
11
12
ARB
Racing Pigeons


the Children

Raquel Ormella

I live with birds

Wks 1 – 4 18 September – 15 October
Daily 10am – 4pm (Sept), 9am – 5pm (Oct), Zine Library at the Tamar Island Wetlands Interpretation Centre, Launceston.

Each Wednesday – Friday 12pm – 5pm, Saturday 12pm – 4pm, Zine Library and Video Work at Sawtooth ARI, Launceston.

Each Saturday 9am – 4.30pm (Sept), 9am – 5.30pm (Oct), Sound Installation at the John Hart Conservatory, City Park, Launceston.

Wk 3 6 October, Thursday 10am – 2pm, Show Day Grow Day (Native Garden Guerilla Project), artist-in-residence Cottage, SVPA, University of Tasmania.

6 October, Thursday evening performance in King's Cottage, Cataract Gorge Reserve, Launceston.

8 October, Saturday 11am, Performance at the Tamar Island Wetlands Interpretation Centre, Launceston.

Curator
Fernando do Campo

Raquel Ormella, B. 1969, Sydney, Australia. Lives and works in Sydney & Canberra, Australia.
raquelormella.com
www.tokyobirdsong.blogspot.com

Curatorial Statement

Fernando do Campo

When we visit a site we employ all our senses to put together a list of visuals, sounds and experiences. This constitutes a diagnostic record that we add and return to when forming that place in our memory. Raquel Ormella is a twitcher. She lists birds as one of these variables. By observing the relationships between people, birds and sites, *I live with birds* saw Ormella engage in dialogue, collaboration and intervention in order to study the ecologies of communities and landscapes.

Through research, interviews and public participation, Ormella mapped notions of co-inhabitance with birds within Launceston. Working across varied sites and platforms she triggered multiple readings and exchanges with the local community. Outcomes included a sound installation, video and performance. These conversations were then experienced outside of this geographic and cultural region through a blog and series of zines.

Four distinct sound installations were introduced into the John Hart Conservatory (JHC), a Deco greenhouse located in an Edwardian park that is known for its highly mannered display of exotic plants. The sounds of birdcalls were matched to specific plant species in the conservatory with a field guide zine identifying each pairing. The result was a menagerie of overlapping calls from habitats worldwide. As the endemic New Zealand Tūī calls over the Mexican Tuxtla Quail-Dove, visitors begin to reminisce about a zoo experience, re-evaluating the need for these artificial sites to present fictions of nature and ecology.

Show Day Grow Day invited people to join a guerilla gardening action at the university artist-in-residence cottage. Following several weeks of list-keeping on this site, Ormella became aware of the birds that frequent it and the potential native birds that would visit after this domestic-scale contribution to native regeneration.

The Cataract Gorge Reserve is one of two Australian sites where a twitcher can tick a sustainable population of Indian Peafowl. A twitch-tip from a local suggested a twilight stroll, because this was also home to the inconspicuous Nankeen Night Heron. Under light rain, Ormella handed out a small DIY field guide to accompany the performance. Participants were invited to listen in the dark, to reconsider their spatial awareness sonically – landscape framed itself through an auditory experience. A second performance took place at Tamar Island Wetlands Centre (TIWC), where Ormella silently held up posters of onomatopoetic versions of birdcalls present in that area, subtely reminding us of ways in which we classify and give language to the birds around us.

As Ormella's first sighting of a Chestnut Teal occurred at TIWC, this site now joins her life-long list – the Launceston Seaport too, as a memorable sighting of the Nankeen Night Heron. These two 'ticks' imprint an exchange and add to the artist's construction of a landscape. While the Common Blackbird's mechanical song is inescapable in this region, the Grey Goshawk (White Morph) continues to haunt the artist as her 'jinx' bird – present yet unseen, waiting to be twitched in this place.

Critical Response

Marie Sierra

Wk 1 Daily Zine Library at the Tamar Island Wetlands Interpretation Centre, Launceston
Wk 2
Wk 3
Wk 4

Wednesday – Saturday Zine Library and Video Work at Sawtooth ARI, Launceston

Saturday Sound Installation at the John Hart Conservatory, City Park, Launceston.

Reading Ormella's blog of 30 September:

> 'Yoko and Zorro are the names of the two birds [tethered] at the Melbourne Cricket Ground to scare off the Silver Gulls. Yoko is a Peregrine Falcon and Zorro is a Wedge-tail Eagle.'

This makes me realise that I have nine bird scares in my vegetable garden. I have both a bird problem, and a large veggie garden.

Over the last few days there were several radio news items about the numbers of native birds declining, robbed of habitat and nest sites by introduced birds, with the Common Starling cited as the example culprit. They are particularly bad, as they can fly far so are also a threat to flora through the spread of seeds in their droppings. Starlings are my biggest problem in the veggie patch, flinging the pea straw mulch around, eating the seeds I've just sown. Originally imported to control crop pests, they have become a pest themselves throughout Australia.

As I was approaching the Conservatory in Launceston's City Park to hear Raquel Ormella's audio work of birdsong within it, I paused when I realised the only birdsong outdoors in the park itself was Starlings. The park is full of exotic trees, brought by those who colonised Launceston, so they are at home there.

As a maidenhair fern nods in the Conservatory's breeze, visitors hear chirp chirp chirp zing zong zang. Orchids, asters, salvia, cordylines; others I recognise but can't name today. Boop boop boop. Squawk. A little girl on a scooter pauses, and digs through the pot plants to find where the squawking bird is; her mother tells her its 'just pretend'. Such a good term to describe artwork, but heard as rarely in serious art circles as some of the birds in Ormella's recordings. I think of Ormella's paper birds in last week's slightly jumpy video, and their somewhat 'just pretend' quality that leaves room for memory, for interpretation, for representation akin to the way a name does.

In Ormella's zine *One Week with Birds*, a bird nesting and watching site built on mud flats in Japan is revealed pictorially and through text. It has a parallel in Launceston's Tamar Island, a 'constructed wild space' as Ormella notes, a small island in a tidal estuary, once inhabited but now a bird reserve.

The White-cheeked Starling occurs in Japan. I go out to the veggie patch and turn over the whole bed with a long-handled spade, which takes until dark. I move the bird scares around. The Starlings won't be fooled by something too 'just pretend'.

~~Wk 1~~
Wk 2 Daily Zine Library at the Tamar
Wk 3 Island Wetlands Interpretation
Wk 4 Centre, Launceston.

Wednesday – Saturday Zine Library and Video Work at Sawtooth ARI, Launceston.

Saturday Sound Installation at the John Hart Conservatory, City Park, Launceston.
And
1 October, Saturday 11am, Performance at the Tamar Island Wetlands Interpretation Centre, Launceston.

In Ormella's performance/reading in Launceston's Gorge on the evening of 6 October, she noted that to play back owl recordings is a 'no no', because they are territorial and can be disrupted by recorded calls, in particular in their search for a mate.

It so happens I experienced this performance the evening after watching the movie *Biutiful*, which begins and ends with a dead owl, which in the film is said to spit out a hairball when it dies. While that might be the case, it certainly is true that owls regurgitate 'pellets' of undigested bones and fur on a regular basis. A smattering of these pellets on the ground is one of the ways of spotting the site of an owl's nest. Four of the bird scares in my vegetable patch are owls; all of them a plastic, non-pellet producing species.

On Ormella's evening search for the Nankeen Night Heron in the Gorge, she handed a small leaflet for identification, with the birds not found in Tasmania trimmed out. I was momentarily snapped back to a snipe hunt in my childhood. (For the uninitiated, a snipe hunt is a mischievous search for pretend animal, designed to snare only the gullible.[1])

The group walked up the Gorge to the shelter that is made of pretend tree trunks formed from concrete. We sat in the shelter, listening to the drizzle, and to Ormella reading about bird spotting. She noted that the Indian Peacocks in the Gorge are one of only two self-sustaining populations in Australia. And that in Sweden you don't have to see a bird to tick it off your list, you can tick it off merely by hearing and recognising it; a respect for the sonic landscape which perhaps can be attributed to a country of snow and cold air, where sound is particularly thrown into stark relief. Twice she asked us to just listen, and let the sound in.

One of the most interesting aspects of the bird world into which Ormella draws her audience is the consideration of the relationship we make with other animals. The next performance, a few days later at the Tamar Island bird sanctuary in the warm lunchtime light, gave a focus to the words we give to bird calls, such as 'falling laugh' and 'thin zizzing musical trills'. The pretend bird sounds we make to help us know who they are, and to confirm who we are in relation to them.

We learn that the elusive Australian Bittern continues to evade Ormella's tick, 'like a bunyip'. Perhaps it is a snipe hunt after all.

1. *www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Snipe_hunt*, accessed 10 October 2011; note that ironically in the context of Ormella's work, a snipe is a bird.

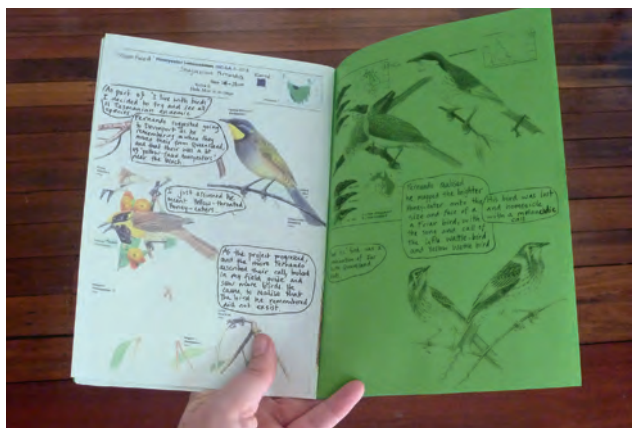
~~Wk 1~~
~~Wk 2~~
Wk 3 Thursday evening performance
Wk 4 in King's Cottage, Cataract Gorge Reserve, Launceston.

Daily Zine Library at the Tamar Island Wetlands Interpretation Centre, Launceston.

From the outset, Ormella's Launceston project *I live with birds* declared its first-person position. When this shifted to *One Week with Birds* in the second week, the sense of a diaristic reflection of an individual experience in a different ecosystem over a month of *Iteration:Again* was established, and through Ormella's blog and zines, linked back to the body of work she developed while in Japan on a residency. The question of our relationship with nature, wilderness, other species and


ONE WEEK
BIRDS


WELCOME TO LAUNCESTON
JUNK BIRDS




IMPORTANT BIRD!
BUNYIP BIRD!
JUNK BIRD!

Wednesday – Saturday Zine Library and Video Work at Sawtooth ARI, Launceston.
And
Thursday Show Day Grow Day (Native Garden Guerilla Project), artist-in-residence Cottage, SVPA, University of Tasmania.

Saturday Sound Installation at the John Hart Conservatory, City Park, Launceston.

conservation is foregrounded in Ormella's work; perhaps best known is her white-board drawings of the interiors of Wilderness Society offices, which highlighted the professional and political aspect of such an organisation's work. While the *Iteration:Again* body of work had the same individual quality and investigative methodology, its attention to the political has been much more subtle, and has only now started to show itself.

The political dimension of the environmental movement is deeply relevant in Tasmania, as it not only splits the political parties of the state, but also cuts across the social strata. The home of the world's first green political movement is also home to some of country's most right-leaning. Like the demography that has established itself primarily in the north or south of the state, there seems to be little middle ground established – the 'midlands' underutilised as a place, literally and metaphorically, for coming together. Ormella reflects on this north-south divide in her final zine for *Iteration:Again*, the cover of which features two sets of birds, the Australian Shelduck and the Chestnut Teal, or 'Junk Bird' and 'Important Bird', respectively. Ormella's search for the Chestnut Teal (and the bunyip-like Nankeen Night Heron, likely heard but definitely not seen), have left her with unfinished business in Tasmania.

The personal approach of Ormella's Launceston work has made an easy entry for me, whose brief it was to focus on the personal and descriptive dimension, something that would let readers who were not able to experience the work, imagine it. This has been an interesting position to take, as when you live in any non-capital city in this country, you are constantly in a position of asking others to understand a point of difference. Further, anyone involved in environmentalism feels such a difference, manifested in a felt obligation to provide agency for what is 'other', to redress the social construction of nature and how it equates 'usefulness' with value. Currently, nature can only exist for humans as a social construct, and any change to this is unlikely in our lifetimes. As with Ormella's bird list, these things are never finished.

~~Wk 1~~
~~Wk 2~~
~~Wk 3~~
Wk 4 Zine Library at the Tamar Island Wetlands Interpretation Centre, Launceston.

Wednesday – Saturday Zine Library and Video Work at Sawtooth ARI, Launceston.

Saturday Sound Installation at the John Hart Conservatory, City Park, Launceston.

When I walk into the Launceston City Park Conservatory, something I do often, I causally note which plants I know, and which I don't but 'should'. As many of the plants are European, I don't know their Latin names, only their common names, if that, my interest being primarily in Australian natives. The Conservatory is small, quaint, and usually quiet, except for two ejaculatory fountains in the centre of the space. At one stage in my late thirties, I nearly changed direction to study landscape design and horticulture; having had enough of a career path in art and academe, especially in a country that funds neither adequately. It remains an interest.
On entering the Conservatory and hearing birdsong recordings that are Ormella's

work in the space replacing the splashing fountains, I'm reminded further of things I don't know. On a recent four-day trip to Canberra, where Ormella lives and works, I was reminded how different the bird life is to the Tasmanian and Victorian bird life I have come to know in my years living in those two states.

Ormella works on the level of a collector of song, of the pursuit of identification, and recordkeeping of what she's seen – a 'list maker'. Her video work at Sawtooth recounts in short, dreamlike, slightly choppy sequences, how she first identified herself as a bird watcher; a 'ticker', one who ticks off observed birds on a list. To her, knowing the name of a bird 'conjures up a moment of joy and beauty', and keeping a list of what species she's seen 'evokes a landscape and a moment in time'. She only realised how important this was to her when a Pink Robin, not a Rose Robin, displayed itself to her in Tasmania. She then understood that to know the name of a bird was part of her experiencing it completely.

When I visited her blog, I saw many pictures of the native plants I do know well, each in a vase held in an extended hand, like an offering. The callistemon: only the hybrid doesn't require annual pruning behind the spent buds to keep it from getting scraggly. Ah.

The stance of Ormella's work is reflexive. It has quality of alighting on a realisation, almost fleetingly, like one of the paper birds in her video, that something is quietly but deeply important, such as knowing that bird, or that plant, in order to experience it more fully. There is so much I don't know.

Toby Huddlestone
Interruption:Again

Wk 1 24 September, *Interruption:Radio*, 10am – 12pm, all FM radio stations in the Hobart CBD.

Wk 2 1 October, *Interruption:Post*, mass mail out throughout Hobart CBD.

Wk 3 8 October, *Interruption:Newspaper*, in the daily newspapers *The Mercury*, *The Examiner*, *The Advocate*, and *The Cygnet and Channel Classifieds.*

Wk 4 15 October, *Interruption:TV*, 6pm – 7pm, selected television channels: ABC, SBS, WIN Television and Southern Cross Television.

Curator
David Cross

Toby Huddlestone B. 1980, Goole, England. Lives and works in London, UK.
www.tobyhuddlestone.net

Curatorial Statement

David Cross

Toby Huddlestone sought to tackle the premise and location of *Iteration:Again* remotely with a series of carefully staged media interruptions. His four components focused on different modes of information dissemination across radio, television, newspaper and post. Each week, the artist advertised that he would conduct or more accurately stage, a strategic insertion of specified information into each of these popular media or modes of communication across the whole of the island. Huddlestone was especially interested in employing information/entertainment modes that while globally ubiquitous had specific and particular local resonances particular to Tasmania.

Beginning with radio, Huddlestone let it be known that between the hours of 10am and 12pm on Saturday September 24, he would insert the first 22 seconds of Serge Gainsbourg's paen to love, 'Je t'aime' into every commercial and public radio broadcast across Tasmania. Deliberately not specifying the precise time of the broadcast, the audience were forced to choose a station and be at the ready for Gainsbourg's languid, breathless musical intro to suddenly start up. Changing stations was not an option as the risk of missing the interruption was too great. That many people missed the interruption, together with the astonishing logistical complexity of the premise, created in the minds of the audience a sense of uncertainty that the ruptures actually took place. The artist responded to this suspicion with his own convincing *touché* by providing as evidence a range of different taped recordings through speakers at the *Iteration:Again* Hub at CAST.

In the weeks that followed, Huddlestone set in train equally outlandish acts of media intervention asking the audience to find different needles in the veritable haystack. From eight-centimetre lines printed somewhere in the Saturday newspapers, to four frames of the SMPTE colour bar briefly interrupting prime-time viewing on all the television stations in the state, Huddlestone conjured the slightly alarming personae of a British conceptual artist with Rupert Murdoch-like Australian media reach.

By asking the audience to accept his game of searching for the rupture, the artist established a clever exchange whereby the constant potential of success was countered by the sheer weight of information that had to be patiently dissected over significant periods of time. Where a newspaper might be scanned and flicked through, Huddlestone asked for forensic examination. Where the television might be on in the background, he urged an unheard of and optically painful scanning of the screen for an hour. And where he promised that 2000 people would receive postcards in their letterboxes, local residents were forced to sit it out for that day's mail just in case they were one of the lucky ones. Although clearly an irreverent and audacious assortment of actions, *Interruption:Again* challenged us to consider the reach, scope and materiality of public art and how it might be possible to draw audiences into a complex and critical engagement with popular sources of information.

Toby Huddlestone, *Interruption:Post*, 2011
http://www.iterationagain.com

Critical Response

Bryony Nainby

Forgettable Encounters I'll Always Remember

I knew I would need to keep my wits about me when I was assigned Toby Huddlestone as the artist I was to respond to during *Iteration:Again*. He was notoriously slippery. His previous projects had included placing barely noticeable obstacles on footpaths that people occasionally tripped over, and bumping into passers-by on crowded streets, jolting them into an awareness of others in a relational stealth-attack. In *Protest Apathy* (2009), Huddlestone staged 'an apathetic demonstration' in Trafalgar Square, London in which participants waved limp placards bearing statements such as 'It's All Fine' and 'Carry On'.

In each project his prankster tactics and arsenal of humour and irony were unerringly deployed to create scenarios where audiences were forced into an encounter with that which they normally would barely notice – their immediate social, cultural and political surroundings. It was slightly unnerving.

Wk 1 24 September, *Interruption:Radio*,
Wk 2 10am – 12pm, all FM radio stations
Wk 3 in the Hobart CBD.
Wk 4

Interruption:Radio

Between the hours of 10:00 and 12:00 on Saturday 24 September 2011, the first 22 seconds of Serge Gainsbourg's 'Je t'aime', will be played across all radio stations within the FM bandwidth in the Hobart CBD area, Tasmania.

Despite loathing commercial radio, for art I was willing to endure two hours of aural discomfort. After all, the artist was promising a love song. Determined not to miss this steamy encounter I scribbled down every ad, every inane voice-over, every trashy hit …

Like a Duchampian pawn, I waited to be moved.

10.00 News: Hoax collar bomber arrested in Sydney. Dollar down against US currency – Tourism Australia predicts more holidays in Queensland as a result. Pope Benedict meets Catholic Church sex abuse victims in Germany. Collingwood into the AFL Grand Final. Wallaby fractures cheekbone thrashing the US in rugby. Possible showers later.

… HOFM home of variety one-hit wonders weekend presented by euphoria furniture. Love plus one haircut 100. Think fresh think tasty think national pies great oozy pies. Cheap cheap cars at tilford trade clearance centre. Better sport a better way to bet on sport drop into your local tote. Ready to go panic at the disco. HOFM hobart's home of variety another one hit wonder. Born to be alive patrick hernandez.

By 11am I was feeling desperate. It was an impenetrable fortress of commercial social engineering. Could Huddlestone's 22 seconds of love in a foreign language somehow cut through?

One-hit wonder sale euphoria furniture. Garden supplies tolosa quarry tolosa street. Better sport from the tote a better way to bet on the footy. Yes yes yes luxury seven seat suv big savings performance autos. Coogans famous no deposit terms. Good sports fishing tackle toys bridges brothers. Savage garden I want you. HOFM price breakthrough panasonic limit one per customer …

The first time I sat through a performance of John Cage's '4'33"' the experience of observing time passing was profound. Consciously attentive of every passing car, footsteps in the corridor, the distant strains of sudden laughter, each moment was rich with the sound of human existence. This was not like that.

This was a portrait in sound of a world bloated by consumption and informed by sensationalist, commercially driven headlines, where people who just wanted to enjoy the footy were being persistently encouraged to gamble on the outcome while watching the game on a new 60-inch plasma screen, no deposit required. A portrait of a world without silence, without reflection and heading for bankruptcy.

Later, at the *Iteration:Again* Hub, I found recordings provided by the artist as proof that several radio stations had in fact played a fragment of 'Je t'aime'. HOFM was not among them. But was this a clever post-production con? Did any of the stations actually participate? Or had Huddlestone falsely promised an encounter with art in one expected form, only to substitute it with another which could only be properly experienced in a state of expectant misapprehension? No one else seemed to have heard it, and the artist, all smiles and clearly amused, wasn't giving anything away.

~~Wk 1~~
Wk 2 1 October, *Interruption:Post*,
Wk 3 mass mail out throughout
Wk 4 Hobart CBD.

Interruption:Post

On Saturday 1 October 2011, 2000 postcards will be hand-delivered to residential addresses within a four-kilometre radius from the political centre of Hobart, Tasmania.

The artist's next intervention involved a junk mail strategy, dispersing his postcards in letterboxes along with the glossy catalogues, community newsletters, lost pet notices and Hobart City Council election leaflets. I luckily lived in the designated zone, but no postcard arrived. Had my street been missed? Had he delivered them to anyone?

The next day at the *Iteration:Again* Hub the postcards, along with photographs of the artist placing them in letterboxes, were on display. They were white with his four proposed Interruptions printed in plain black text. For some time this was my only experience of the work, and it relied on knowledge accessible only through the documentation provided by the artist. But instead of acting as proof, the photographs emphasised Huddlestone's action as unverifiable. Should we believe


NO JUNK MAIL
Thank You !
NO JUNK MAIL
Thank You !
NO JUNK MAIL
Thank You !

the artist's claims? Unless we witness the action ourselves (as I later discovered others had), we can only believe that Huddlestone undertook this activity because he tells us so. And we know that he is sometimes unreliable.

In engaging with Huddlestone's work it is impossible to ignore his conceptual predecessors. Vito Acconci's *Following Piece* (1969) presents a similar public/private performance for which the only evidence is ephemeral documentation, and in thinking about Huddlestone's work the first question which arises is, 'In what way is this work contemporary?' Is it merely a derivative re-working of an old idea, or perhaps a deliberate homage to his conceptual art heroes from the 60s and 70s? A deconstruction of what artists do? A cynical satire of the contemporary art world?

Perhaps it's just advertising, nothing more than the artist's shameless self-promotion. Or maybe it was a discrete co-opting of this border zone between public and private as political space. If so, in my neighbourhood several mayoral candidates beat him to it. In the end I was left asking, 'What is it that Huddlestone really delivers?'

~~Wk 1~~
~~Wk 2~~
Wk 3 8 October,
Wk 4 *Interruption:Newspaper*, in the daily newspapers *The Mercury*, *The Examiner*, *The Advocate*, and *The Cygnet and Channel Classifieds*.

Interruption:Newspaper

On Saturday 8 October 2011, an eight-centimetre line will be printed horizontally at random in *The Mercury*, *The Examiner*, *The Advocate*, and *The Cygnet and Channel Classifieds* newspapers, Tasmania.

Huddlestone's postcards set me on a journey to revisit conceptual art's finest moments. Among other seminal texts I read Sol LeWitt's 'Sentences on Conceptual Art', and for this iteration by Huddlestone Sentence 33 seemed particularly apt: *It is difficult to bungle a good idea*. Like LeWitt, Huddlestone understands the power of a line to make us aware of space. For Interruption:Newspaper, the artist organised a line to be printed according to prescribed conditions in Tasmanian newspapers. Positioned centrally on page seven of *The Mercury*, Huddlestone's line didn't jostle for attention among the strident advertisements, shrill headlines and narrative-laden photography. It was still, perfect, eloquent in its silence. Surrounded by a slim border of white, it commanded the entire page.

I was reminded of the Futurists who printed their Manifesto on the front page of the French newspaper, *Le Figaro*, in 1909. Was this line a representation of Huddlestone's own manifesto? Is he perhaps some kind of anti-Marinetti, proselytising principles of calm and consideration, order and linearity?

LeWitt's method for his line drawings was to devise a set of instructions, such as '50 randomly placed points all connected by straight lines' (Wall Drawing No.118), which could be implemented by assistants, or in fact by anyone. His approach

Skirl of bagpipes heralds MONA FOMA

EMMA HOPE

THE annual MONA FOMA festival was launched in Glenorchy yesterday with a band featuring bagpipes and drums parading through the shopping centre.

Earlier this week the festival had a glamorous launch underneath the Sydney Harbour Bridge, but yesterday curator Brian Ritchie donned fluoro green Dr Martens boots and a kilt to lead the band playing guitar while Northgate shoppers looked on in bewilderment.

"The idea was to make a lot of noise, get a grin on people's faces and let the people out here in Glenorchy know that MONA FOMA is afoot again and coming at them in January whether or not they want it," Ritchie said.

"One of the sub-themes this year is bagpipes. At several different times during the festival in different, non-traditional formats we have bagpipe players."

MONA FOMA runs from January 13-22 with events every day at Princes Wharf No. 1 Shed as well as City Hall, Theatre Royal and a range of other venues.

British superstar indie rocker PJ Harvey headlines the festival with a concert on January 21.

For bookings, go to www.mofo.net.au

hopee@news.net.au

QUITE A PERFORMANCE: MONA FOMA curator Brian Ritchie puts a grin on people's faces at Northgate yesterday. Picture: SAM ROSEWARNE

Hodgm protest

ZARA DAWTREY

GREENS leader Nick McKim should "rein in" anti-logging protesters planning to rally outside Hobart's Harvey Norman store today, Liberal leader Will Hodgman said yesterday.

Protesters will target the retailer as part of an international campaign against the use of Australian timber.

Mr Hodgman said activists had previously damaged Harvey Norman stores and disrupted business in a way that was "anything but peaceful".

"Rather than being attacked, Harvey Norman should be supported for selling furniture made from sustainably harvested Tasmanian native forest timber, creating jobs for Tasmanians," Mr

attempted to remove subjectivity from the thought processes of art-making, but in carrying out his instructions the expression of individuality through the handmade mark returned.

In his art practice Huddlestone explores an awareness of our surroundings and the power of mediums of communication. In *Interruption:Newspaper* the artist seemed to adopt LeWitt's approach by providing instructions regarding the printing of the line to several newspapers, entrusting the work's execution to the layout department. The power of the piece comes precisely from this handing over of the creation of the mark to others. Regardless of where the line appears Huddlestone knows it will create a clear break in the relentless transmission of media messages. His simple line creates a space of consciousness that brings its surroundings into sharp relief. Among the entertainment, the petty political machinations, the births and deaths and public notices, the systems of trade and commerce, it acts as pointer to the communication mechanisms which mediate our engagement with the world. Huddlestone's line points to itself, then its surroundings, and ultimately at us.

~~Wk 1~~
~~Wk 2~~
~~Wk 3~~
Wk 4 15 October, *Interruption:TV*, 6pm – 7pm, selected television channels: ABC, SBS, WIN Television and Southern Cross Television.

Interruption:TV

Between the hours of 18:00 and 19:00 on 15 October 2011, the SMPTE colour bar and tone will be transmitted for four frames simultaneously across ABC, SBS, WIN TV and Southern Cross television stations, Tasmania.

Unsurprisingly, I missed Huddlestone's television interruption. Despite my scepticism, I diligently sat through an hour of ABC TV which included a travel show in which the presenter tried rotten herrings and other Scandinavian delicacies, and a no-nonsense gardening show. At a broadcast rate of 25 frames per second, seeing four frames of a test pattern was always going to be a challenge. Perhaps I looked away at the wrong moment, perhaps I blinked, perhaps my vision just isn't that acute.

Perhaps what happened instead is that Huddlestone offered one thing, but delivered something else to those who were looking for it. In a conversation following *Iteration:Again*, someone spoke about Huddlestone's work as attempting to 'go beyond the aura' of art. He offers a prospect, a possibility, but the work is only realised through its reception by those willing to participate in his conceptual game.

For those who chose to play along, his Interruptions created memorable encounters with the forgettable detritus of our everyday lives by magnifying our awareness for brief concentrated periods. His conceptual tactics might echo those of the past, but his mobilisation of them in our contemporary context provokes us to reflect on our current situation in fresh and surprising ways.

Maddie Leach

Let us keep together

Wk 1 19 September, Monday 7.27am, airdrop at Antill Ponds, flags and posters at the Mercury building, 93 Macquarie Street, Hobart and posters at selected newsagents in Launceston CBD.

Wk 2 26 September, Monday 7.27am, airdrop at Antill Ponds, flags and posters at the Mercury building, 93 Macquarie Street, Hobart and posters at selected newsagents in Launceston CBD.

Wk 3 3 October, Monday 7.27am (delayed until 5 October, 8.30am), airdrop at Antill Ponds, flags and posters at the Mercury building, 93 Macquarie Street, Hobart and posters at selected newsagents in Launceston CBD.

Wk 4 10 October, Monday 7.27am, airdrop at Antill Ponds, flags and posters at the Mercury building, 93 Macquarie Street, Hobart and posters at selected newsagents in Launceston CBD.

Curator
David Cross

Maddie Leach, B. 1970, Auckland, New Zealand. Lives and works in Wellington, New Zealand.
www.maddieleach.net

Curatorial Statement

David Cross

During a number of research trips to Tasmania, Maddie Leach became interested in a small cluster of what initially seemed disparate and unconnected threads. She was initially fascinated by the systems of pre-telegraphic communication used on the island from the nineteenth century, especially the different semaphore codes employed in the north and south of the state. Leach was at the same time also struck by the distinctly bifurcated split of Tasmania between the two major towns of Hobart and Launceston. Like a curious social cartographer, she became focused on plotting the liminal space or contested boundary that demarcated these two distinctly partisan and competitive rivals. Ultimately, it was in the daily newspapers of both centres – the *Mercury* in Hobart and the *Examiner* in Launceston – that she found key points of connection, which would draw together the twin concerns of communication and trans-city rivalry.

In research at the state library archives, the artist discovered a long-forgotten event that was largely a stunt by the *Mercury* newspaper to get the jump on their rivals up north. Showcasing the first commercial flight in Tasmania, they staged a highly theatrical drop of free papers from a small aeroplane along the length of the road between Hobart and Launceston early one Monday morning in 1919. The *Examiner* got wind of it and rushed a truck along the route southwards to try and pip the enemy at the post. After the plane got lost in fog, the result was a small propaganda win for the north, albeit with the south securing a pyric victory based entirely on sheer audacity.

For her commission, Leach borrowed elements of the story to restage an aerial newspaper drop, this time at the site of a tiny farming outpost called Antill Ponds, where a ruin of the old 'Halfway Hotel' sits crumbling in a paddock.

Each week for four weeks an aeroplane dispatcher aimed a bundle of *Mercury* newspapers as close as humanly possible (which wasn't very close) to a flagpole the artist had set up in a farmer's paddock. The pole stood out from the landscape because it flew two flags, both taken from International Signal Code in use at the time of the original newspaper drop. Combined, the flags spelt out the strangely prescient words '*Let us keep together for mutual support (or protection)*'. At the same time, both flags also flew on the elegant flagpole atop the Mercury building on Macquarie Street in Hobart with day bills below in the street front vitrines promoting the Monday headline '*Let us keep together*'. Leach also negotiated for these Mercury day bills to be placed out the front of assorted 'Mercury friendly' newsagents in Launceston. Attempts to have the *Examiner* reciprocate both gestures each Monday were firmly declined on the grounds that there was no benefit to stirring up a perceived rivalry between the towns.


WATER
THREAT
Trag details
help

Critical Response

Michael Edwards

Wk 1 19 September, Monday 7.27am,
Wk 2 airdrop at Antill Ponds, flags
Wk 3 and posters at the Mercury
Wk 4 building, 93 Macquarie Street, Hobart and posters at selected newsagents in Launceston CBD.

We were halfway between the two main towns in Tasmania and halfway between a lopsided game linking the two major national news corporations in the local sphere: Murdoch and Fairfax; Hobart and Launceston. And in her nod to 1919, Maddie Leach had designated a time near enough to halfway between now and an era when an unsavoury citizenry was ruled by a Lieutenant Governor of Van Diemen's Land (northern half) and a Lieutenant Governor of Van Diemen's Land (unspecified, but based in the south). Clear as hell then, but less clear now. The artist set up conditions to unravel the regional loyalties and idiosyncrasies fermented under the originating governing culture – bringing into playful relief the contemporary attitude retained under the parochial politics and veiled civility on the island today.

It was around 7.30am at Antill Ponds and the plane was late. A small, obedient audience was marshalled in a designated safe area – acclimatised to galleries, they fidgeted against the chill. In view was an unusually verdant scene typical of a colonial-era painting – a gentleman's park surrounded by hills peppered with native shrubs; bright sunlight threatened remnant fog and pretty cirrus clouds, while a refrigerated breeze stirred the magpies, ancient cherry trees and two semaphore flags. At full mast, the flags' synthetic colours and immaculate patterns secreted their mysterious codes while offering up the wind direction and, had we been thinking, revealing the flight path of a tardy Cesna.

Finally, amid mounting anticipation, the Cesna droned in from the south-west to pass near the drop zone. Following an unhurried circle, it then crawled back through a useful headwind, low and purposeful. When almost overhead, a bundle of neatly strapped and wrapped newspapers arced away from the plane, rotating earthward on a barely perceptible trajectory. At some point in those few seconds, the quasi-historical spectacle shifted into a sharp moment of awkward fear – the apparent danger rapidly switched to concern for those closer to the line of the fall. A winded-sounding thump of wood pulp returning to earth was quickly followed with the hollering of excited relief – art and prank were laconically and momentarily conflated. The bundle was then inspected, patted, documented and finally left where it had landed – closeby the stone remains of the original Half-Way House – to await connection with future iterations.

All that day, under a set of immodestly bright semaphore flags identical to those at Anthill Ponds, a day bill poster on the façade of the Mercury building in Hobart

announced active participation, albeit enigmatically, with '*Let us keep together*,' Monday, September 19, 2011'. Not without some irony, that message faced boldly away to the south.

~~Wk 1~~
Wk 2 26 September, Monday 7.27am, airdrop at Antill Ponds, flags and posters at the Mercury building, 93 Macquarie Street, Hobart and posters at selected newsagents in Launceston CBD.
Wk 3
Wk 4

I'm saturated from the knees down and it's freezing. Last week's grass has turned out to be very damp, fast-growing, newspaper-eating millet – or wheat. The Cesna did an encore pass over and I waved, unconvinced about where the bundle had landed. But I clearly saw it leave the plane – the size of a new lamb – and fall in an easy and curiously animate tumble. The impact was surprisingly loud too; wood fibre displacing muddy earth displacing air through plastic wrapping – a decidedly woodwind thump reverberated through the paddock. Like space junk, its first pervasive message was as an ominous warning to the rabbits and assorted macropods resident in the area. Just the one definite sound, the epicentre of the artwork, and a few sheep looked about.

I alone witnessed the first repeat of a dramatic gesture. (The sheep merely heard a noise.) Drawn-out months of negotiations and applications eventually gave up the suite of permissions (mostly from men who control farms, corporations, clubs and the airspace of the birds) to eject nine kilograms of newsprint from a plane on multiple occasions and in the middle of nowhere. The compliance of those men is testament to the artist's skill in telling a story – or part thereof – in which they knowingly, yet unwittingly, were part. Warm and dry in New Zealand, Maddie Leach kept up her frenetic texting throughout, living vicariously through her 'plan'. Prior to the drops, the news media had dutifully disseminated their self-interest with a few other misconstrued facts, often segueing into the potential for ovine sacrifice. Through them, Leach's germ had been dispersed – for when the *Mercury* and the *Examiner* newspapers are so deliberately coupled, islanders are want to consider their tribal stances and inherited prejudice, before again politely relegating such thoughts with other disavowed histories long buried in Van Dieman's Land.

But Leach's strategies reach far beyond the hoe-down drama of the falling newspapers. Nearby in the paddock, her flaccid signal flags effect an intermittent and intangible broadcast that is echoed on the day bills posted in their brass-bound cases around 80 kilometres to the south, and in their wire frames, equidistant to the north. Her message infiltrates through radios and permeates random conversations; it rides through the web and pops up in blogs; it gets muttered in bars where newsprint workers or 'aero-buffs' drink; and it resonates in the minds of distracted commuters and passers-by. Her open-ended appeal is not incessant; it is simply repeated each Monday, and from there it builds a register of familiarity, along with another invitation for misinterpretation. *Together, us, let, keep*: these form intriguingly a well-meant offer, a pledge; or, then again, it just may be feint mockery.

~~Wk 1~~
~~Wk 2~~
Wk 3 3 October, Monday 7.27am,
Wk 4 (delayed until 5 October, 8.30am), airdrop at Antill Ponds, flags and posters at the Mercury building, 93 Macquarie Street, Hobart and posters at selected newsagents in Launceston CBD.

The third iteration and the plane is devilishly late (a crook magneto). A perfect day, the package tumbles rapidly and lands in a cushioning plant in full flower located in the remains of one of the larger rooms in the original house. Nice one lads. Three days earlier, on impeccable schedule, the Mercury building flew the signal flags and day bills. I was surprised by their emphatic presence.

Later, back in the paddock, I am drawn to the flags signifying a central point for the work. Starkly visible from the highway, they are in fact around 70 kilometres east of the Surveyor's Monument announcing the centre of the island at Bronte Lagoon. Up close, Leach's deep connection to the sculptural object is revealed by a 'truth to materials' in its components. The signal flags – pattern cut from dyed linen and immaculately double stitched in Lithuania – are supported on marine-grade ropes and guides; the flagpole was professionally crafted from Tasmanian oak; the newspapers are industrially bundled, while the authenticity of the day bills is clearly evident as they *are* genuine Mercury day bills. Nothing is simulacra and the dense materiality would allow these commissioned articles to shift back into the world as functioning objects. The groaning authenticity is as reassuring as it is unsettling, but to view these few objects as the sculptural residue of a project over 200 kilometres in breadth, reveals that the work is really very minimal indeed.

Nothing, also, is chanced. At least nothing that can be managed. Or is it? Unable to gauge its public relevance beyond immediate connection, to overhear a local politician refer to the work excitedly, allows me to experience its integral extension into the population, out there in the spectral public realm. The composition orchestrated by Leach exists here in its true form – a kind of discursive vapour occupying an elusive and fluid social space. Triggered by media placements, nourished by history and sustained by hearsay, innuendo and the reiterative structure in play, the work's viral form as a mutable narrative will find receptive hosts throughout the population.

I receive the message, 'a day bill has been sighted in Launceston', and another lingering doubt subsides.

~~Wk 1~~
~~Wk 2~~
~~Wk 3~~
Wk 4 10 October, Monday 7.27am, airdrop at Antill Ponds, flags and posters at the Mercury building, 93 Macquarie Street, Hobart and posters at selected newsagents in Launceston CBD.

The final drop, and I know the artist is above me in the plane as the newspaper bundle gets despatched with such force that it starts on a 40-degree angle before disappearing in front of the blinding sun, only to reappear momentarily and then disappear again into the waiting wheatgrass. The angle and the grass diffused the expected sound, and as my anticipation dispersed I considered it one too many repeats for an observant person, while it was probably just right for the less so. Familiarity had rendered it normal.

Months earlier, Leach traversed the north-south axis of the island, bouncing along in an oversprung ute through the ancient agrarian landscape. Looking for


MERCURY
TODAY'S THE DAY
NOW OPEN
The Sunday Tasmanian
YOUR DAY YOUR PAPER
MERCURY
Sunday Tasmanian
THE VOICE OF TASMANIA
MERCURY
LET US KEEP TOGETHER
MONDAY, OCTOBER 10, 2011

signs, she eventually found the subtle discrepancies and divisions that permeate this place. Sifting conversations, dredging archives and trawling through the relic systems of communication revealed that the original codes and ideologies of the regions were different and incompatible. The artist visualised two trucks setting off at the same time and on the same journey – each starting from the opposing towns, loaded with trade goods and information – and she wondered where *en route* they would cross.

Antill Ponds. Not 20 metres from the newspaper bundles an old headstone remembers William Hawkins. A good man by accounts of the time (1861), but he trusted his mare too much. We can assume the rein-less horse was as indifferent to the effect of the dray's wheels on his chest and throat as he is to the slow rain of newsprint over recent consecutive Mondays. Four times the Hobart *Mercury* courted attention from her northern counterpart, the Launceston *Examiner*. Each Monday newspapers were despatched, day-bills were posted and signal flags flown. Sourced from the 1916 *Brown's Signalling* code, the flags' code, 'I for India' over 'N for November', black circle on yellow background over a blue and white check, signalled the meaning, *Let us keep together (or in company) for mutual support (or protection)*. The offers were each ignored. The frisson of their 1919 exchange – when they raced their papers by aeroplane and lorry to jostle in a fledgling marketplace unearthed by then-new transportation technology – simply could not be reignited. As daily papers begin to go the way of the semaphore, the telegraph and other redundant technologies, perhaps there just isn't the will.

Applied to Leach's oeuvre, the term 'romantic conceptualism' initially caused me to snigger, but I've come to learn that that Leach's site-based propositions frequently cover vast areas, plumb earlier eras and rouse odd beliefs and economic forces. As her works filter through local understandings of space, time and incumbent social dimensions, they probe, tease and often induce a faint, ineffable yearning; as un-locatable and unknowable as anything other than a benign and playful phantom.

After travelling 640 kilometres to experience the mechanics of *Let us keep together*, I think about Leach's imaginary trucks. I need one of the drivers to be a retired seaman who understands the 1969 International Code of Signals in use today. As he passes the other truck, he glimpses some sheep marooned in a landlocked paddock. Below the line of the highway and a backdrop of dry sclerophyll-covered hills, these sheep stand beside a flag signal that he understands clearly, a black circle on yellow background over a blue and white check – he reaches for his iPhone – they *require a diver.*

Ruben Santiago
Long Drop Into Water

Wk 1 24 September, 1pm – 3pm
RAW MATERIAL at The Taroona Shot Tower, Channel Highway, Taroona.

Wk 2 1 October, 1pm – 3pm
LEAD SHOT PRODUCTION at The Taroona Shot Tower, Channel Highway, Taroona.

Wk 3 8 October, 1pm – 3pm
ARBITRARY RULING at The Taroona Shot Tower, Channel Highway, Taroona.

Wk 4 15 October, 1pm – 3pm
POINTS OF INTEREST at The Taroona Shot Tower, Channel Highway, Taroona.

Curator
Paula Silva

Ruben Santiago, B. 1974, Sarria, Galicia.
Lives and works in Madrid, Spain.

Curatorial Statement

Paula Silva

The island state of Tasmania is presented to the world in stunning photographs of pristine landscapes and small quaint settlements. Often highlighting its iconic colonial sandstone buildings, the state is depicted through an imaginary prism of nineteenth-century penal settlement and unique flora and fauna. Official hopes for the economic future of the island rest on the packaging and delivery of such elevated experiences of nature, history and more recently, art.

Ruben Santiago, a Spanish artist based in Madrid, accepted the invitation to produce a site-specific work for *Iteration:Again* immediately choosing to occupy the position of 'tourist'. In line with his explorations into the construction of collective memory and the consensual granting of its symbolic value, Santiago chose to stage his work in the Tasmanian heritage site and touristic attraction, the Taroona Shot Tower located in the south-west suburbs of Hobart. Built in the late 1800s, the tower is one of the many architectural structures that were constructed around the world which sought to improve upon earlier techniques of casting shot in moulds. The new buildings were more efficient, allowing both for faster and more cost-effective production of lead ammunitions. Technical developments like this one and related activities such as lead mining profoundly impacted on Tasmania's economy, politics and, crucially, its environment. The lead mining town of Rosebery is a key example of how industry began to encroach on the pristine and internationally significant forests of the Tasmanian West Coast.

Staged in the Shot Tower's shaft and performed across four distinct, yet related, chapters, Santiago re-enacted the original lead shot casting process as the basis for *Long Drop Into Water*. Working with lead sourced from Rosebery he sought to examine the tensions between different elements in interaction – lead, water and air – that ultimately resulted in the cast of a perfectly rounded canon ball.


MMG
ROSEBERY MINE
AUSTRALIA'S SAFEST MINE?
NOT YET - WE'RE WORKING ON IT!
ROADWORK AHEAD

Critical Response

Jeff Malpas

Wk 1 24 September, 1pm – 3pm
Wk 2 RAW MATERIAL at The Taroona
Wk 3 Shot Tower, Channel Highway,
Wk 4 Taroona.

Raw Material

The Shot Tower at Taroona is entered by walking past postcards and souvenirs, tourist brochures, advertisements for icecreams, and a sign to the tea shop downstairs (the scones are exceptionally good). An interpretation area provides information about the tower's history, including a video, yet something jars. A map of Tasmania is shown, and in detailed and matter-of-fact terms, a voice-over talks about mining, heavy metals, and the contamination of sites and rivers – Rosebery, Royal George, the Arthur, the Pieman. It is, one hears, 'not just about lead'. The video cuts to shots of the tower, but the voice-over, and the colonial tune that now accompanies it, is slowed down, almost parodic, distorted and off-key. Explanatory panels fixed to the wall set out the tower's history, yet again, there is something odd. A smoothed-out slip of paper, fixed to the same sort of white panel as the information sheets above it, reads: 'NOTICE TO VISITORS PLEASE ASK NO QUESTIONS'. The interior of the tower, entered partway up, is filled by the wooden frame of the stairway, constructed so as to leave a central shaft of open space – a single and very long drop (elsewhere the phrase refers to a type of outhouse or a method of execution). Artificially lit, the space is dusty, cobwebbed, without interpretive signs or notices. Were it not for the window slits that allow glimpses outside, one might think this to be a space underground rather than above, a tunnel rather than a tower. At the base of the tower stands a white rectangular platform on which rest three stacks of shiny ingots and a handful of rock. A voice echoes from below as if intoning an inventory: '37.5 kilograms of arsenic and lead alloy … one rock of galena containing up to 96% lead … one rock of arsenite pyrite crystal'. What took place at this tower, the casting of shot, was once an 'industrial secret', hidden like an alchemical process, using the materials of alchemy itself – lead, arsenic, antimony – valuable elements, yet poisonous. They are the same 'heavy metals' that the video outside tells us contaminate Tasmanian land and water. Strange that what is taken away should leave so much weight behind. 'NOTICE TO VISITORS PLEASE ASK NO QUESTIONS'. Don't forget the postcard.

~~Wk 1~~
Wk 2 1 October, 1pm – 3pm
Wk 3 LEAD SHOT PRODUCTION
Wk 4 at The Taroona Shot Tower,
Channel Highway, Taroona.

Lead Shot Production

Just so there is no mistake, a small printed notice on the entrance door now informs the visitor that what is going on here is an artwork. The notice is a response to concerns that the video showing inside may be seen as unbalanced in its

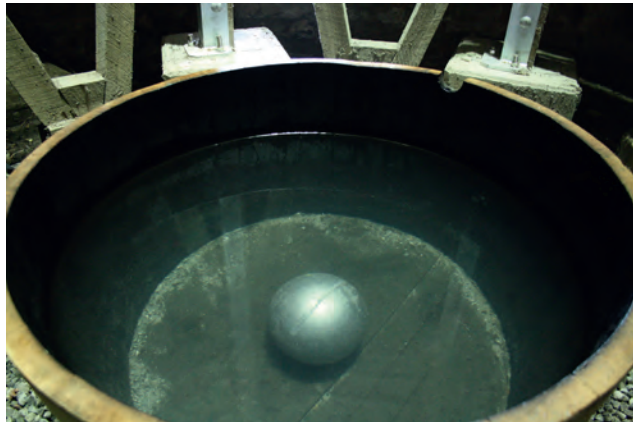

NOTICE TO VISITORS
PLEASE
ASK NO QUESTIONS

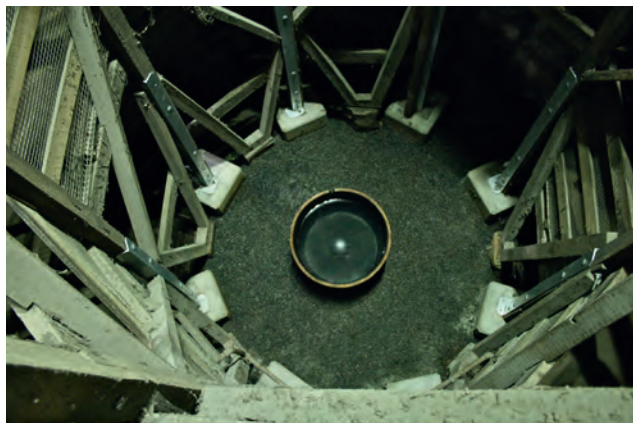
presentation of the issues relating to mining in Tasmania. A small crowd has gathered to witness the production of lead shot that seems scheduled to occur. As a heritage site, the tower re-presents the past, presenting what is historical, factual, real – and so what is expected is a re-enacting of what used to take place here. But the casting takes place behind the tower's closed door, viewable only through a second video monitor in the interpretation area. Health and safety prevent visitors being allowed into the confined space while the casting occurs – the molten lead is dangerous, and its fumes toxic – but the exclusion also re-affirms the secrecy of the process. A new notice, almost identical to that already there, has appeared on the wall, close to the floor: 'NOTICE TO VISITORS YOU ARE FREE TO DO AS WE TELL YOU'. There is some disappointment from those anticipating the re-enactment. Noises can be heard, but it is unclear what is going on. On the video, molten lead is shown being poured through a colander positioned on a metal frame over the central shaft. The dark metal showers down into the half-barrel that now sits at the tower's base – dropping rapidly down toward the earth, metal into water, heaviness into liquid. The original video with its images of the Tower, its claims about mining and heavy metal toxicity, continues to run. It begins with dark water, handfuls of shot dredged from its depths. A map of Tasmania appears and a voice is heard – 'I want to really get into Rosebery because that is connected with the lead stuff from the Sort Tower.' Again there are details of mining activity, claims of contamination, control of information, governmental inaction. Yet the origin of the information, the identity of the voice remains obscure. Who speaks here? What are 'the facts' being recounted? *What has been produced?* When the entry to the tower is opened once more, lead shines from below, staining the sides of the barrel and the tower floor around. This is a heritage site; it is also a health risk, a site contaminated.

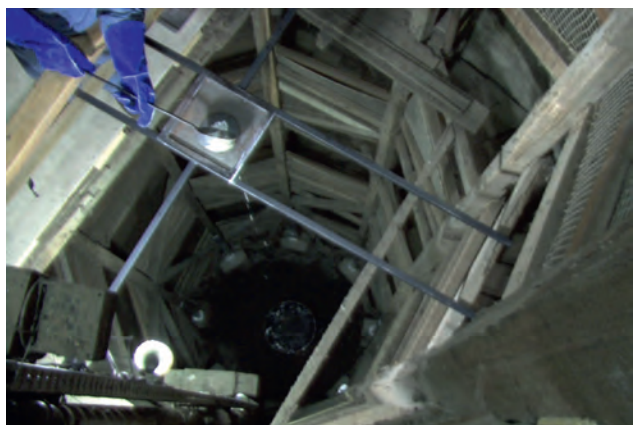
~~Wk 1~~
~~Wk 2~~
Wk 3 8 October, 1pm – 3pm
Wk 4 ARBITRARY RULING at The Taroona Shot Tower, Channel Highway, Taroona.

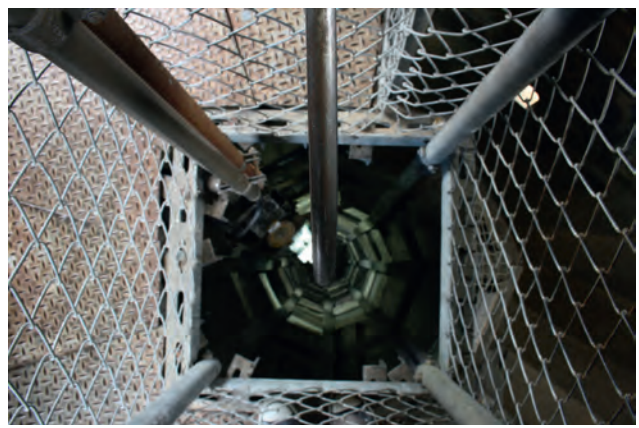
Arbitrary Ruling

There is a new sign at the tower: 'NOTICE TO VISITORS I MADE IT TO THE TOP'. The long drop makes for a longer climb. A voice echoes down the turning of the shaft: 'Dear Visitor. Make it to the top. You will find an artefact. Make it spin. Align it with the tube and release the sphere of your choice.' Emerging onto the upper platform, the spectacular views promised by the video beckon from outside, but inside, within the cramped room of the tower, a metal globe, like a large football, appears fixed to a frame attached to the platform's inner rail. The globe is of complex manufacture and has a form reminiscent of an armillary sphere: encircled with five upright bands, 12 segments form two hemispheres bolted tightly together; the device is mounted on a central axis, rotated by a handle; it is so balanced that when at rest the globe connects with a thin metal tube that runs to the Tower's central shaft, and then points downwards to the water far below. The handle turns, the globe spins, and a









~~Wk 1~~
~~Wk 2~~
~~Wk 3~~
Wk 4 15 October, 1pm–3pm
POINTS OF INTEREST at
The Taroona Shot Tower,
Channel Highway, Taroona.

metallic rushing is heard. Turning a small tap when the globe is properly aligned releases a single lead ball which shoots into the emptiness of the shaft and down towards the tower's base. The ball is tiny, and it is immediately lost in the gloom of the shaft, until, seconds later, if luck holds, sudden ripples appear in the watery surface at the end of the downwards view. Here is the long drop repeated – lead into water. But the repetition is singular. There is no poured shower of liquid metal, just one small sphere sped into space, down to earth, towards water – what made it to the top is thus returned below, but in the tiniest of measures. The globe is beautifully constructed, not some crude device of rapid manufacture, but machined and polished, a precision device for a specific task – like the chamber of a bespoke weapon with the long shaft of the tower as its barrel. Back down in the interpretation area the video continues to run, and although the soundtrack remains the same, new images have been added. Previous shots of painted depictions of mining activity, of water dripping from the yellow metal of a machine, of a sign that reads 'MMG Rosebery – Australia's safest mine? Not yet – we're working on it', are juxtaposed not only with the map over which hand and pointer move, but with shots of bushland seen through a chain mesh fence, of water rushing over rock and gushing from a pipe, scenes of a cloudy, damp townscape, rows of houses, mine buildings … and two hands, strangely lethargic, distended, oddly held. Whose hands are these? What weight do they carry? How far is it from Rosebery to Taroona? What rules here? And how arbitrarily?

Points of Interest

Another sign has been added to those fixed low down on the wall of the interpretation area: 'NOTICE TO VISITORS EXPLORE THE POSSIBILITIES'. A black and white flyer, a single folded page, is handed out to visitors. It has the circular image of the Shot Tower logo on one fold and details of the installation on another. The remaining folds carry the texts that appear on the wall with attributions in small type beneath:

NOTICE TO VISITORS PLEASE ASK NO QUESTIONS
Joseph Moir (1809 – 1874), builder of the Taroona Shot Tower
NOTICE TO VISITORS YOU ARE FREE TO DO AS WE TELL YOU
Bill Hicks (1961 – 1994), American comedian, social critic and musician
NOTICE TO VISITORS I MADE IT TO THE TOP
Taroona Shot Tower promotional material
NOTICE TO VISITORS EXPLORE THE POSSIBILITIES
Tasmanian Government positioning statement.

On entering the Tower all is quiet except for the muffled voices of visitors and the echo of their feet on the wooden steps. In the still water of the half-barrel that stands at the Tower's base a large cast-lead ball lies submerged at the very centre. A climb to the Tower's top, and the strange device on the upper platform remains fixed to its frame, but no shot can be fired. Its nozzle closed off, the globe spins freely, with what sounds like a single piece of lead rattling inside. The fullness of the ball below is matched by the emptiness of the globe above – one seemingly expended to produce the other. What possibilities were here now seem closed off, agglomerated into the quiet water below. A climb back down, and out into the interpretation area. A new version of the video is running. Another image has been spliced into the middle of the existing sequence: hands holding a heavy metal casting mould seen against dilapidated walls. The same walls appear again at the point where the video previously came to an end, a handwritten message scrawled across them, the image zooming close: 'This house will kill you'. This is Rosebery, and in another distorted soundtrack, a news report recounts some residents' claims of contamination and illness, resulting conflict and division, violent and abusive messages sent to those who make trouble. The images that now emerge, and that run until the video ends, are striking. They have their own spectacle, their own obscurity, their own violence. Molten lead is poured, not into water, but into and onto the heavy solidity of the mould. Lead spills around it, onto the floor, onto fragments of carpet and linoleum, heat rises and metal splutters. Lead seems to run everywhere, and when it is finally exhausted, the mould is cooled and solidified with a dose of water, spitting and steaming as it hits. Here, it seems, is the ball that now sits at the base of the tower. What possibilities does it explore? What possibilities, what 'points of interest', does it carry from Rosebery to Taroona? Whose possibilities, whose realities, whose interest? What lies in that half-barrel of water; what lies within those abandoned walls; what lies here in Taroona; what lies in Rosebery? 'EXPLORE THE POSSIBILITIES', but please 'ASK NO QUESTIONS'.


TFH
TFH
TFH

Marley Dawson & Christopher Hanrahan
MCR

Wk 1 17 September, 4 – 6pm, Race on the MONA Roof Terrace, Museum of Old and New Art, Hobart, Tasmania.

24 September, 4 – 6pm, Race on the MONA Roof Terrace, Museum of Old and New Art, Hobart, Tasmania.

Wk 2 1 October, 4 – 6pm, Race on the MONA Roof Terrace, Museum of Old and New Art, Hobart, Tasmania.

Wk 3 8 October, 4 – 6pm, Race on the MONA Roof Terrace, Museum of Old and New Art, Hobart, Tasmania.

Wk 4 15 October, 4 – 6pm, Race on the MONA Roof Terrace, Museum of Old and New Art, Hobart, Tasmania.

Curator
Nicole Durling

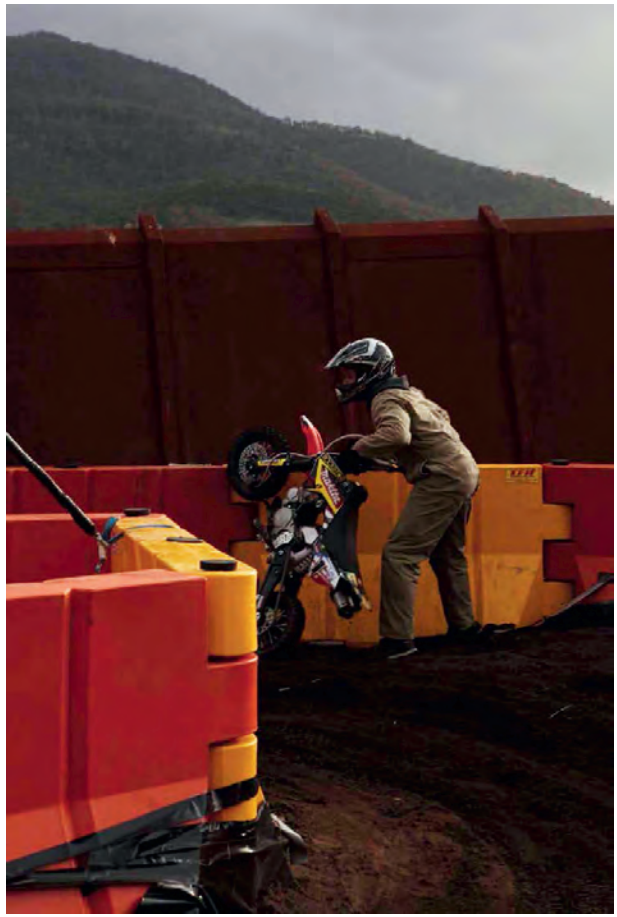
Marley Dawson: B. 1982, Sydney, Australia.
www.roslynoxley9.com.au
Christopher Hanrahan: B. 1978, Mudgee, Australia.
www.sarahcottiergallery.com
Both artists live and work in Sydney, Australia.

Curatorial Statement

Nicole Durling

MONA City Raceway (MCR) **built on the momentum of an earlier collaboration between artists Marley Dawson and Chris Hanrahan. For *Iteration:Again* the artists created a scaled-down motocross track on the sparse rooftop entrance to MONA. Every Saturday for five weeks, mini motorbike races were run repeatedly throughout the day. The skill level of the competitors varied wildly. They chased each other around the track, to the great amusement of the audience, hoping to secure the unique, handmade winner's trophy. We played music, flashed lights and sent puffs of smoke onto the track as the race-caller chattered relentlessly and the audience watched, cheered and ate their hotdogs. At the end of the day the tally was reset to zero, ready for the competition to start again the following week.**

Dawson and Hanrahan are, patently and unashamedly, lovers of large-scale spectacle sports events like demolition derbies: it is this that informed the aesthetics of *MCR*. The brazen celebration of these kinds of mass cultural events was further realised by the placement of the *MCR* track, with all its pleasurable trappings, next to the permanent, full-size tennis court on the MONA rooftop. The effect was to transform the museum – an institution that, traditionally, revels in cultural reverence and exclusivity – into some sort of absurd sporting precinct. This opens up a rethinking about how we locate certain kinds of shared cultural experiences, and moved the usual signifiers of art – artists, curators, audience, institutions – to the sidelines.




MCR

Critical Response

Andrew Harper

Wk 1 17 September, 4 – 6pm, Race
Wk 2 on the MONA Roof Terrace,
Wk 3 Museum of Old and New Art,
Wk 4 Hobart, Tasmania.

24 September, 4 – 6pm, Race on the MONA Roof Terrace, Museum of Old and New Art, Hobart, Tasmania.

MEMORY: *There used to be a service station called The Jet in lower Sandy Bay. Run by one Vern Reed and his tribe of mechanic sons, he sold dirt bikes and was forever trying to get my dad to buy one for me. Vern had a voice gravelled-roughened by smoking and dressed like some 60s racer in a beret and a pale leather jacket. 'You should get that boy on a bike in the bush,' he proclaimed to my dad, who wanted me to surf, and said so. Vern Reed spoke of the dangers of sharks knowingly.*
I did neither of course.

It's ridiculous.
Of course it is.
The alteration of context throws everything into relief.
I would never attend this kind of event in my actual life. I have no interest in it.
I have nothing against it but I have no interest. Do I?

Actually, that is possibly untrue; the jettison of assumption generally makes things easier to consume – let them be what they are, warts and all, take in the actual sight, watch it with fresh eyes.

Hah. Fresh eyes. Who has them? How ridiculous.

I don't know a damn thing about motocross. I have an idea that whoever indulges in it loves the very idea of motorbikes: loves Crusty Demons, loves a thrill and the potential danger.

There is not all that much danger to be observed because really, in this scaled-down and safer context, the participants are not fanatical devotees of this sport of rubber and dirt, and for the most part seem a bit like people learning to walk too late in life. It's a bugger, learning to do dangerous things when you really understand the potential for injury. All I could think of was my badly healed right ankle and how it limited me.

The surprise is that it's funny, especially when the ineptness of one of the curators sprays mud all over the piss-taking commentator; and my cynical considerations are removed by laughter. As I ate an egg and bacon roll that I had to wrestle from cling wrap while having beer from a plastic cup, context could get stuffed. It can be ridiculous exactly at the same time as being hilarious, and the mud will get all over everything no matter what.

I hope it pisses with rain at the next one but I bet it doesn't. Nature never does what you want it to do.


MCR
MCR
MCR

~~Wk 1~~
Wk 2 1 October, 4 – 6pm, Race
Wk 3 on the MONA Roof Terrace,
Wk 4 Museum of Old and New Art,
Hobart, Tasmania.

MEMORY: *We are in Hanoi, trying to cross the road. The traffic, mostly motorbikes of all kinds, streams by without any discernible control until we realise that there is a rhythm, just not one we know. With eyes front I walk into the flow of bikes and cross the road, looking ahead, not making eye contact. If I saw you I must avoid you. I keep walking. An accident, although so near, does not occur.*
This is normal.

I cannot tell if I want the commentator to shut up or not.
He's funny, but it's shaping this thing too much for me; it's not all comedy. There's an element of serious fun here, hidden, though emergent. Something about the effort required for this kind of fun, this complex play that needs these elements, all dragged and dropped here, as authentic as it can be in this totally artificial version. If you add in some people who have a level of competency with the small motorbikes, things are different. The comic notions of watching people stumble and limp around the loop of dirt go, and something else emerges: that there's quite a bit of skill involved in doing this with any degree of success. It's a task with multiple components, balance, tactics, controlling the bike, controlling yourself, anticipating the track. Ruts get etched into the dirt very quickly. Are they a problem? I like them. They're a hazard born of usage. You have to deal with what you have made; with what everyone has made.

I can see something else now, amid the smoke and the comedy.

The comedy. The commentator. I know this guy. He's a prankster – the certified one who is allowed to behave in particular way. He heckles the mayor at art prizes, critiques festivals from the hustings and is a professional nuisance, not just tolerated but encouraged: he throws a good dollop of bedlam into proceedings around Hobart. He's doing exactly what he does, but amplified, lengthened and cantankerous.

His wash of piss-taking is a smoke screen over the dirt and the bikes.

I ignore him (it's an effort, his bluster and parody is very engaging) and take in the view: all around this buzzing nest of combating mechanical insects (those helmets make people look like bugs) there is the most wonderful view of Hobart, of the river, the clustered houses, the landmarks.

~~Wk 1~~
~~Wk 2~~
Wk 3 8 October, 4 – 6pm, Race
Wk 4 on the MONA Roof Terrace,
Museum of Oldand New Art,
Hobart, Tasmania.

I Know Best What This Is NOT

It is not a comment on masculinity. *MCR* may have been made by male artists but there is nothing that is truly gendered in any kind of traditional way about riding very small motorbikes around a dirt track. During the course of this work, I've seen plenty of women ride the bikes, and they have been no better or worse at it than any of the men I have seen. To say it is men investigating a male pursuit is lazy, as a cursory Google reveals the existence of Women's MX at a professional level. Not that anyone said anything more than 'boys and their toys' – at least not that I heard.

~~Wk 1~~
~~Wk 2~~
~~Wk 3~~
Wk 4 15 October, 4 – 6pm, Race on the MONA Roof Terrace, Museum of Oldand New Art, Hobart, Tasmania.

It's not about class. My first two-second analysis (read: elitist put-down) was about class, because increasingly, I have a Marxist outlook. That's my cross to bear: I make class readings of many things, but *MCR* is not an appropriation of an inherently working-class activity; motorbikes just cost too much to purchase and maintain. The appropriate gear costs heaps, the gaudy outfits and special helmets are worth a frigging fortune.

I could claim this was a bogan activity, because bogans are wealthy now. In his charming and witty tome, *The Bogan Delusion*, David Nichols suggested this phrase had implications of 'how dare you get rich, you bloody oiks' and I concur, but MX, whoever is doing it, is mostly the pursuit of the wealthy, be they rich farmer's kids who board or hard-working plumbers, but what the hell does it mean to claim something is bogan? Perhaps the desire is that some sort of earthy authenticity rubs on with all the mud.

It is not an analogy for the art world.

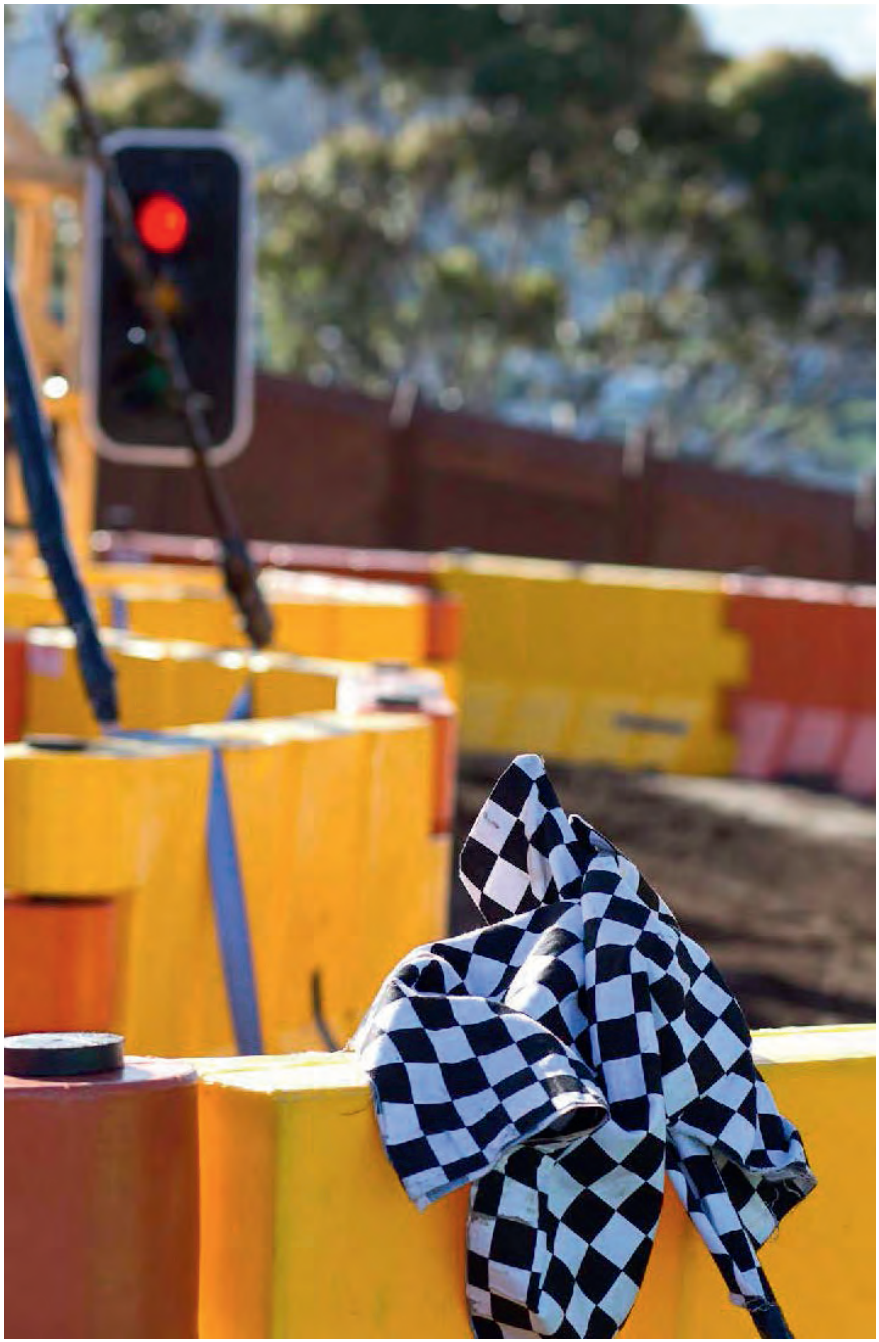
MCR produces obvious winners and losers and none of the losers describe their losing as interesting, although snapping bits off the bike is pretty funny. Sheer skill is rewarded above effort. I may be able to talk about these bikes and this activity quite well and it is possible for me to stand near someone who can ride them, and they may be able to give me pointers, but this is unlikely to allow me to win even one those short, mock races.

No, it is nothing like the art world at all. So, what is it?

The most interesting thing in the end was Jeff Blake, the commentator. He said a fair bit, and managed to say a fair bit about the work. He was an accident and an afterthought, it would seem, but he came to be, over the course of the weeks of *MCR*, the dominating factor.

He did not move and would call the riders of the motocross bikes to him for a discussion, and tease them with little mercy. He would ask the audience to count down and involved the spectators in the antics. He got very excited but still watched the AFL Grand Final. A slim distinction must be made though: MCR did not become about Blake, it just allowed him to be himself – you get this performer and this is what he does. It is his job, his shtick, his skill, his burden, his cross to bear and his place in the social fabric. If you ask a jester to do a job, he will do his job, which is to invert, mock and satirise, and that is what you get him for. He is supposed to tell everyone the emperor's genitals are flapping in the breeze.

So you can't complain, really, and I have no doubt that Marley Dawson and Chris Hanrahan rather enjoyed Mr Blake. I was in stitches at points, but it occurred to me that if *MCR* could be so totally swallowed and subverted by a rogue element, then perhaps there wasn't that much there to begin with beyond the idea of putting



something into a space where it usually isn't and getting people who wouldn't usually do it to have go. Which is fine. There is no secret or great comment, it's just – well, it's a small but perfectly formed motocross track on top of a privately owned museum, with smoke machines that seem a bit futile in the wind and a soundtrack of odd grunge-era Triple J hits accompanying the whole thing.

Actually, do you know, I think my single favourite moment, greater even than when that poor lass snapped off the mud guard of one of the small bikes with a violent crack, was when The Smiths got played as the soundtrack. That really was just wrong. I did grasp at an idea about masculinity then but it was just Morrissey, that crafty chap, tricking me. *MCR* is an exercise in creating an incongruity that you can play with, and part of that play is that as an artwork, *MCR* is wide and blank enough that you can read what you might wish to into it. Read anything into it: it's an empty signifier.

If I have a favourite empty signifier, it's vampires, because there is possibly no better metaphor for anything you don't like than it being some sort of monster that takes your blood, but motocross really isn't a bad one: here, in a track that goes nowhere on expensive machines that are not really for anything beyond going around the track to nowhere, we can watch a mockery of competition undertaken by people who don't really know how to do it.

Luckily, we have a distraction to make it funny rather than futile, and the fun can be found, which is fortunate, because without that, it might have been futile.

James Newitt
My Secession Party

Wk 1 24 September, Saturday
11am – 3pm, Flyer Walk, Glenorchy.

Wk 2 1 October, Saturday 12pm – 2pm, Procession, Montrose Foreshore Community Park, Glenorchy.

Wk 3 2 – 8 October, Daily, View the Island in Elwick Bay, Glenorchy.

Wk 4 9 – 15 October, Daily, View the Island in Elwick Bay, Glenorchy.

15 October, Saturday 3pm – 5pm, Farewell Celebration at Montrose Foreshore Community Park, Glenorchy.

Curator
David Cross

James Newitt, B. 1981, Hobart, Tasmania.
Lives and works in Lisbon, Portugal.
www.jnewitt.com

Curatorial Statement

David Cross

James Newitt's response to the curatorial brief was to carefully plan and execute his removal from Hobart's terra firma for the duration of the project. The artist, with enormous care and dexterity, planned to secede not only from Hobart but also from Tasmania and Australia by locating himself on his own self-declared territory in the Derwent River estuary just north of the city in Glenorchy. Beginning with a promotion campaign that sought to draw attention to the impending event, Newitt, via a mix of advertising and old-fashioned street politicking, worked to pique the curiosity of Glenorchy residents. His aim was to lure as many people as possible to join a procession of marching performers along the waterfront to see him off on his self-imposed exile.

The subsequent march saw a pipe band, cheer squad and assorted performers create a festive and celebratory send-off for the artist who at the designated point climbed into an inflatable boat and rowed off to his new home approximately 100 metres offshore. For the next two weeks the artist lived alone and without visitors on his man-made island complete with cabbage trees, a string of lights and requisite utilities. Newitt's island evoked a strong, if eccentric, visual appeal for joggers and dog walkers using the waterfront pathway with many people stopping to ponder what the man was doing reading books, moving around the strange floating platform or simply staring off into space contemplating nature. Many were concerned for his welfare in the often frigid conditions, but were relieved to see a friendly wave that suggested he was not being held prisoner by some unseen malevolent force.

Surprisingly quickly the island became a fixture on the river and people came to see Newitt as a neighbour of sorts who was simply doing his own thing. By invoking an 'each to his own' ethos, the locals on the whole decided to see the act itself as a gesture of individual freedom rather than a hostile turning against the collective social bonds of the community. Perhaps it was the quietly fierce pioneering spirit or the implied sense that there were joys to be had in living a frugal island existence, but Newitt's secession no doubt activated a heightened level of self-reflection in the many people who passed by. Who was this man and why would he choose to live among the elements? Throughout his elusive quest, the artist resisted the urge to explain that he was seceding under the aegis of art.


MY
SECESSION
PARTY
JOIN THE PROCESSION
12PM, OCTOBER 1

Critical Response

Mick Wilson

Wk 1 24 September, Saturday
Wk 2 11am – 3pm, Flyer Walk, Glenorchy.
Wk 3
Wk 4

Come to My Party – I'm Leaving

A man walks through a satellite district of Hobart with a small drum beating out a rattling, somewhat martial clatter of rhythm. He is announcing the approach of another man who walks 10 steps or so behind the drummer. This second man is wearing a sandwich board with placard raised and distributing small coloured flyers that declare in the graphic idiom of a local election campaign: 'My Secession Party, Join The Procession, Saturday 1st October, Meet at 11.45am in the carpark, Montrose Foreshore Community Park, Bring instruments, balloons, banners, Refreshments provided, ALL WELCOME, something lost will be something gained.' For several hours the somewhat awkward and occasionally self-conscious man with placard distributes flyers in letter boxes accompanied by the drummer. Along the way, through the suburban streets, on the doorsteps and in the shopping strips, he talks to sometimes bemused, sometimes curious, sometimes chatty, sometimes reserved passers-by and Saturday shoppers. Some question the motive – 'Are you protesting something?' Some question means – 'Are you getting money for this?' Some query the details – 'Secede to an island in the Derwent?' 'Leaving our Tasmanian state?' 'What's the point?' 'A *pro*cession or a *se*cession – what's up?'

In these conversational exchanges, the artist James Newitt, wearing his blue sandwich board and bearing aloft his red placard, indicates an intention – 'I'm an artist and this is my work ...' The project, it emerges, is to process with all due ceremony to the bank of the river on the following Saturday, and from there to boat out to an artificial island. On this island he will – he announces prosaically – have seceded from his Tasmanian homeland and the community of friends and strangers that constitute that home, place and polity. Throughout the walking, drumming, talking and handing out of flyers, there is no arch showmanship, pushy salesmanship nor self-regarding assuredness. This is not the suave posture of haughty abandon. It is the very cautious, though a little brazen – that rattling drum rolling along and those brash blues and reds – and all the more ambivalent, declaration of intent. It is tinged with a gentle but unmistakable melancholy. Perhaps it is the strange intellectual melancholy of a self-annulling wish for future recognition *in absentia*. The affect here, the mood, is subtle but decidedly off-beat and anticipatory. There is a slight nervousness, as when a politeness announces a rudeness. There is a concern to not mislead, but also to not give the game away – if indeed there is a game in play. What

is it to want to secede? What is it to want a passerby to know that you are passing them by, but that you want them at the goodbye party too?

~~Wk 1~~
Wk 2 1 October, Saturday
Wk 3 12pm – 2pm, Procession,
Wk 4 Montrose Foreshore
Community Park, Glenorchy.

'I will be loved where I am lacked.'

A week passes and the appointed hour arrives. A small crowd of well-wishers and curious souls has assembled at the nominated spot and balloons and hooters have been distributed. A marching band now leads the way down to the river shore and a troupe of cheerleaders chants the noisy procession to the place of disembarkment and the moment of secession. The secessionist rows out in a small yellow and grey inflatable dingy. There is a hint of comedy as in a silent movie's relentless rehearsal of a rowing-boat heading for its destination. He now installs himself on a small artificial island platform that is covered with artificial grass and furnished with one ersatz palm tree and a small pitched shelter. The shelter is just enough to provide a modicum of respite from shoreline viewers and the rain. Now that the secession is enacted, it seems to be all over bar the after-match analysis.

The art criticism blog *supercritical* has pointed out that secession has a multiplicity of references ranging from an older sense of personal separation from one's former friends and associates to the political re-ordering of sovereignty; from a formal withdrawal of association to an avant-garde strategy of self-institution beyond official state culture. But how does it operate in this instance?

In a discussion on 'autonomy' held in the courtyard of the University of Tasmania Centre for Creative Arts two days after the secession party, one participant hazards a connection with the question of Tasmania's potential to secede from Australia. Another suggests that the issue is about leaving Tasmania itself. Someone else indicates the paradoxical dependency of the newly seceded islander on his support systems and friendship networks onshore. Others reflect on the need or wish or hope for the artist to assert a cultural agency that exceeds the demands of representing and announcing the local and all its particularities – most famously Tasmania's natural environment, landscapes and ecologies and their related tropes in the visual culture of Tasmania. The artist himself has, in an earlier and informal conversation with me, indicated a degree of ambivalence about the condition of self-enforced isolation on a tiny platform with rudimentary hygiene facilities and minimal personal comfort. So what's going on here – political secession, personal separation, counter-cultural self-institution, psychological withdrawal, social refusal, inchoate protest, self-dramatisation, faux-spectacle or something else altogether? Playfulness or hubris? Provocation or protestation? Which way of reading the significance of the work works best?

This mode of questioning – questions of the order of 'How should we read the work?'– may need to be asked cautiously and with a little circumspection. Indeed,

why is it appropriate to assume that we are looking at something that requires 'reading' as opposed to some other mode of engagement such as 'witnessing' or 'celebrating' or 'playing', for example? These other modes would seem to require some degree of 'reading' (i.e., we need to ascribe meanings of some order to recognise the work as a celebration or a game or an event to be truthfully attested). However, these other modes of engaging the work do not prioritise the action of ascribing meaning – the process of reading-off our interpretations. Rather these other modes of engagement suggest activation of the work as salient for usage in ways that exceed the priority of interpretation. On the other hand, and purely on an anecdotal and preliminary basis, it seems that the actual effect of the work, in its first two moments of iteration, is to seed discussion and posit itself as a 'thing-to-be-interpreted'. But will this be the sustained reception of the work? Will the man who withdraws himself from circulation among us continue to circulate within our *discursus*?

~~Wk 1~~
~~Wk 2~~
Wk 3 2 – 8 October, Daily, View the
Wk 4 Island in Elwick Bay, Glenorchy.

'There's a man on an island over there.'

Some days have passed, and I am standing in an alleyway expecting to hear a singer perform and forming myself into part of a temporary public gathering around another *Iteration:Again* project, Lucy Bleach's *Homing* in Mather's Lane in central Hobart. I am waiting for this other work to unfold, anticipating the mournful yet charismatic song of Rebekah Del Rio. While standing and watching the small audience build, I begin talking with the woman beside me about the larger context of these projects – the *Iteration:Again* curatorial strategy. This is the framework authored by the Curatorial Director David Cross, whereby curators and artists are asked to realise temporary public artworks that are 'iterated' or re-authored in someway over a four-week period. Further folding a process of critical writing – and mediation – into this strategic construct, writers have been invited to evolve a critical text on four occasions, thereby following in response to the iterations of the artworks.

My partner in the casual conversation that structures our time, and our short relationship of waiting together in the street for a singer to sing, shares with me some of her sense of the problematics that are at work here. She introduces a number of themes. Firstly, my interlocutor expresses some concern about the nature of the 'public-ness' entailed in these iterative temporary public artworks. She seems to be proposing a distinction between an informed or elective public (people who know there's stuff happening and actively seek it out) and a casual or accidental public (people who come upon the work unwittingly). But, there is a sharper critical edge to this – it seems to be also a matter of suggesting that there is a kind of 'in-crowd' formation at play whereby a kind of self-selecting group

~~Wk 1~~
~~Wk 2~~
~~Wk 3~~
Wk 4 15 October, Saturday
3pm – 5pm, Farewell Celebration at Montrose Foreshore Community Park, Glenorchy.

of cognoscenti are constituting themselves as 'the insiders'. She elaborates the analysis further by citing the James Newitt work in the Derwent. 'It's not serious. He hasn't seceded. He is in the river there, close enough that you could throw a burger out to him.'

Both these criticisms strike me as important (i.e., worth thinking and talking through further), though neither seems to me to be exhaustively true or necessarily as delegitimising as my partner in conversation appears to believe them to be. But they are interesting challenges and good provocations for thinking. I tell her that there is this really interesting and recurring issue about the desire for critique and the apprehension that the conditions of critique are somehow compromised in the local milieu. I carry her criticism with me in my head, thinking through the questions that this text has set out above: 'Will the man who withdraws himself from circulation among us continue to circulate within our *discursus*?'

The Ersatz Palm Tree

It is later. I am in that great huddle of sociable chat again down at the city's central waterfront, having left the suburban park in order to adjourn to the harbour and the handsome quayside.

I'm on the comfortable couch inside, looking out at a smoker sneaking his last blast before accepting the waiter's instruction to retreat. And as I watch, I keep thinking of the man on the island; and the ersatz palm tree – more properly a New Zealand cordyline, I have since been informed. I think of the old Robinson Crusoe device and the novelistic nature of the narrative conceits in this text you are reading. I think of the 'insider' group I appear to be inside; about the pro-filmic nature of the performances I have seen; about the documentation imperative that is so strong, especially when there is an unresolved ambivalence about the geographical and cultural particularity of the place of initial production; and now, finally, I think about the artist reading this later and being irritated that his work has become the occasion for my diaristic indulgence. But then I think, 'Well, after all, it was he who left me behind first.'


Jaiyologist

Paul O'Neill
Our Day Will Come

Wk 1 19 – 23 September, weekdays, 11am – 4pm, Free School at The Tasmanian School of Art, Hobart.

Wk 2 26 – 30 September, weekdays, 11am – 4pm, Free School at The Tasmanian School of Art, Hobart.

Wk 3 3 – 7 October, weekdays, 11am – 4pm, Free School at The Tasmanian School of Art, Hobart.

Wk 4 10 – 14 October, weekdays, 11am – 4pm, Free School at The Tasmanian School of Art, Hobart.

15 October, Saturday night, *Death of a Discourse Dancer*, Disco, Hobart.

Curator
Fiona Lee

Paul O'Neill with Mick Wilson, Annie Fletcher, Rhona Byrne, Jem Noble, Sarah Pierce, Garrett Phelan, David Blamey, Liam Gillick and Garreth Long.

Paul O'Neill, curatorial artist, B. 1970, London, UK. Lives and works in Bristol, UK.
www.pauloneill.org.uk

Curatorial Statement

Fiona Lee

The concept of an 'alternative' art school immediately sets up the notion of challenge – contesting the status quo of what is already present. *Our Day Will Come*, the durational project by curatorial artist Paul O'Neill, used a pedagogical framework, not so much to educate through some democratic substitute, but to facilitate a platform for generative discourse – a mode of production that was entirely contingent on the collaboration of others.

O'Neill's methodology was an extension of his ongoing interest in exploring the consequences of encroaching into curatorial, educational and other formal structured systems. Participants would sign up for the 'school within a school', which was physically located in a small 1950s portable council tea hut, strategically located in the courtyard at the entrance of the Tasmanian School of Art, an institution that is automatically linked to hierarchical paradigms of education. Rather than being antagonistic, the odd relationship between the two schools created a symbiotic affiliation where the big school fed off the little school, and vice versa.

The four-week iterative structure of *Iteration:Again* lent itself to the idea of a syllabus or curriculum which was delivered around the asking of its participant body four key questions, one each week: What is a school? What is usefulness? What is autonomy? What is remoteness? The concept of Socratic dialogue – based upon the asking and answering of questions – was a strategic move used by O'Neill to drive discourse.

The project involved bringing together in Hobart a core group of invested participants, to work alongside nine international artists: Mick Wilson, Rhona Byrne, Annie Fletcher and Jem Noble, whom came to Hobart; with Sarah Pierce, Garrett Phelan, Gareth Long, Liam Gillick and David Blamey, who delivered works remotely. The artists produced dialogical, performative and social works of art that did not so much seek to answer O'Neill's questions as to set up the possibility for further engagement and discourse with the collaborating participants.

Additionally, artists, writers and theorists from across the world gave further input remotely, which was disseminated through the production of a weekly zine that captured the dialogue around the week's question. Over 100 local and international contributors generated material for the publications, providing discourse, continually resurface in discussions, in cafés, artist studios and reading tables around Hobart, thus prolonging O'Neill's idea of an open-ended conversation.


Our
Day Will
Come
TODAY
I AM
WHAT IS
USEFULNESS?
HERE!


Day Will
Come

Critical Response

Maria Kunda

Wk 1 19 – 23 September, weekdays,
Wk 2 11am – 4pm, Free School at
Wk 3 The Tasmanian School of Art,
Wk 4 Hobart.

What is a School?

Paul O'Neill's writing didn't prepare me for *him* as artist-curator. His oft-cited essay 'The Curatorial Turn: From Practice to Discourse', accounts for exhibitions as emerging as *discursive* events post-1989 or so, with the curator in an authorial and creative position. It encapsulates O'Neill's own practice.

The first sign of *Our Day Will Come* was the arrival of a shabby workman's caravan in the courtyard of the Tasmanian School of Art. Passers-by witnessed its makeover. Painted magenta, it was emblazoned with a logo, flanked by a wooden deck supporting a two-seater, 'conversation table' designed by New York artist Gareth Long, and cloaked by a shade-cloth sail. It serves as an outpost of the Tasmanian School of Art, where I work as an associate lecturer. A bunch of variously expectant, curious and bewildered folk congregated for the first day of the Free School to discuss the topic question, 'What is a school?'.

The inaugural conversation was, frankly, rather excruciating, but fascinating nonetheless. Since I wasn't a teacher in the situation, I had no sway over the discussion and this caused me some discomfort. My secret lack of support for free speech caused me more discomfort still. The demeanor of the two guests, O'Neill and the first of his string of visitors, Mick Wilson, was statesmanlike. Their bearing was diplomatic and poised. They engaged, but were studiously neutral. At first they were non-interventionist and one or two voluble participants ran on unchecked. After lunch, the contingent was smaller and O'Neill deliberately steered the agenda and sketched the desired outcomes for his project. These are, roughly, to pose a question per week ('What is a school?' for last week, and for this week, 'What is remoteness?'); to run a series of discussions; offer a weekly Free School Dinner, host conversations with individuals on the weekly topic question; and to produce and launch a zine by the Friday of each week. The first zine, as it turned out, is a ripper.

I no longer know what a school is; I'm wondering whether there is such a condition as remoteness; I am in some doubt about what constitutes a project. I'm quite pleased with these results.

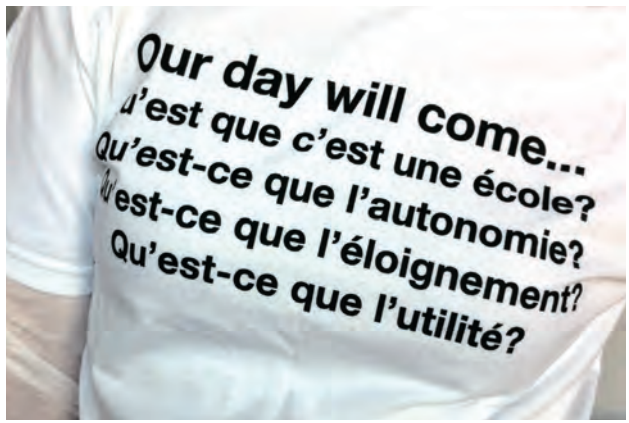
~~Wk 1~~
Wk 2 26 – 30 September, weekdays,
Wk 3 11am – 4pm, Free School at The
Wk 4 Tasmanian School of Art, Hobart.

What is Remoteness?

Momentum and volubility increased considerably this week. By now, many participants of *Our Day Will Come*, including me, are sporting fetching black


Our
Day Will
Come


: OUR
DAY WILL
COME


Our day will come...
C'est que c'est une école?
Qu'est-ce que l'autonomie?
Qu'est-ce que l'éloignement?
Qu'est-ce que l'utilité?

and white t-shirts designed by Paul O'Neill, Liam Gillick and David Blamey. I think this signifies that some of us have assimilated and become collaborators. On Tuesday night, at Mick Wilson's second Free School Dinner event, we went a bit 'birko'. Grant Dale's Barthesian approach to Lady Gaga's 'Judas' drove us to the edge of reason. The following day, some of the same people came to their senses when Annie Fletcher gave a sharp, illuminating talk, about the Vann Abbemuseum in the Netherlands, where she is curator of exhibitions. She talked about that institution and her independent curatorial practice.

Annie drove discussion at the caravan about topics such as 'independence', 'emancipation' and 'freedom', and instigated a group performance, but I'm afraid I can't comment on these developments first hand as, predictably, now that things are in full swing, I am missing out on some of the action of *Our Day Will Come*. It pains me, but I can't give up my day job.

I caught a bit of one of Garrett Phelan's live performance works on Edge Radio. Phelan's contributors had to speak on his behalf for an hour on a topic of his nomination, such as the colour black. Phelan himself only interjects, to challenge and censor, when his interlocutor veers from his opinions. A woman's voice held forth for an hour on the virtues of *common sense*, holding the airwaves in tension by her own conviction. It was exhilarating to hear it broadcast live. Dizzyingly, like a Philippe Petit high-wire act, she made progress speaking off the cuff, going step by step and indeed her proclamations made remarkable sense.

Mick Wilson gave the Art Forum at the School of Art on Friday. It was an historic event as he said he hadn't talked about his own practice for 13 years. It was my privilege to introduce him, but I had no idea what was in store. More vertigo. He was deadly serious and ribald, pedagogically robust and desperately funny. I was tickled by his slide show work of 2000, *Trains Made Mary Vague*.

~~Wk 1~~
~~Wk 2~~
Wk 3 3 – 7 October, weekdays,
Wk 4 11am – 4pm, Free School at The Tasmanian School of Art, Hobart.

What is Autonomy?

The week's topic, What is autonomy? is a question embedded in an ongoing project that Annie Fletcher, last week's visitor, is involved in. She flew to be here from the Netherlands for a mere four or five days and then embarked on her return journey after facilitating the Monday Free School session, her travel taking longer than her stay. Partly participating, I sat at the caravan marking a pile of essays from the 'real' Art School while, at the Free School, the conversation slid from the autonomy of the work of art, to the role of the artist, and spiralled out to broader issues. Later, Professor Jeff Malpas ran a Philosophy Café session in the Art School Cafeteria.

Wilson's Free School Dinner this week was bursting at the seams. We had a screening of *Them*, Artur Zmijewski's 2007 work shown at Documenta 12. Squashed

as we were in the small sitting room of the Hobart Writer's Cottage, it was a privilege to see it after having heard so many references to it. The premise of the 'experiment', set in Poland, was that four teams were invited to create large, emblematic depictions of their values on paper banners. The teams comprised older Catholic women, young socialists, a right-wing Polish nationalist youth group, and what might be a Jewish youth group (the Hebrew word for Poland emblazoned their insignia). The 'game' consisted of the teams being invited to add or subtract from each other's banners. Each team battled to reinstate their original expression and erase or deface that of the others. Ultimately there was no yielding or renegotiation of any symbolism. Some players chose to abandon proceedings when tensions escalated. Participants emerged as lodged in a shallow ideology, unable to renegotiate or reimagine their symbolism.

At the zine launch, five students performed Sarah Pierce's piece, *Exaggerate! Strengthen! Simplify! ...*, which participants had developed and rehearsed over a series of workshops via Skype from Dublin. Also at the zine launch I heard from colleagues that Mick Wilson had addressed a group of third-year Art School students, none of whom had heard of the Australian journal *Broadsheet*. Perhaps it takes an outsider to expose such a level of deficiency and docility.

~~Wk 1~~
~~Wk 2~~
~~Wk 3~~
Wk 4 10 – 14 October, weekdays, 11am – 4pm, Free School at The Tasmanian School of Art, Hobart.

15 October, Saturday night, *Death of a Discourse Dancer*, Disco, Hobart.

What is Usefulness?

The resonating empty space in the forecourt of the Art School signals that the *Our Day Will Come* caravan has left town. The final week's iteration upped the carnavalesque nature of the four-week enterprise and was marked by hilarity and galvanisation.

The titular question, What is usefulness?, cast a therapeutic focus over the last week and this lens offered me some insight into the value of the project as a whole. A student remarked that the *Our Day Will Come* caravan resembled one which used to visit her country Tasmanian school, heralding a visit from either the school dentist or the sex educationalist. Sighting the conveyance, pupils didn't know whose intervention they were about to receive.

Irish artist Rhona Byrne's focus was *Laughter*. She ran a workshop with a laughter therapist; I missed the procession of Rhona's whopping black balloon cloud, carried aloft through the streets by a band of jovialists. Bristol-based Jem Noble arrived to pursue the topic of *Self-Improvement*. One of Noble's priceless contributions was a performance that mashed-up various self-improvement discourses, merging the dictates of an aerobics instructor with pellets of Eastern philosophy, relaxation therapy and pop psychology. It was magic.

The *Our Day Will Come* finale was *Death of a Discourse Dancer*, held at the low-rent Halo nightclub in the Hobart Mall, off the social map of most, if not all,

of those involved in *Iteration:Again*. Part of the gambit of the night was to infiltrate an existing nightclub and interact with the usual clientele. Some *Our Day Will Come* participants took part in a programme that obliged them to give both a short lecture and take a turn at DJ-ing. The mix of lectures and amateur DJ-ing, as well as the fact that we were mingling with someone's hen night, should have been bacchanalian. Interestingly, it felt subdued, though apparently the vibe picked up after I retired.

The circus is perennial, but we are left to ponder what has been and gone, in four cycles, just the once, and what remains of the event, apart from the t-shirts.

These are straitened times. The financial imperatives imposed by university management teams means that these days those of us who work within art schools as teachers and students are worn down by many seasons of policy shifts, goal post moves and budget cuts. We risk becoming docile in our mental habits, dull in spirit and insensitive to the needs of others – at a time when it is all the more crucial to be agile and critical in our intellectual and creative endeavours. How do we maintain the faith and stamina? From where do we receive a blast of inspiration and encouragement when we most need it?

Our Day Will Come caused a ruction that was revivifying and joyous and, personally, I experienced it as revitalising. It created an environment that brokered cultural reciprocity. It was a reminder to spend time thinking from first principles and to consider basic human values about mutuality and respect for difference. Over the last week, some of the participants pondered continuing some aspects of the project, like the Free School Dinners, but concluded that these could not be possible without the facilitation of strangers. The ongoing effects of *Our Day Will Come* will be seen – or not – in the way that participants weave what they have acquired into their standard practices. In his closing address to the *Iteration:Again* symposium, Mick Wilson drew together ideas about ephemerality and hospitality, pointing to the host-guest relationship as transient by its very nature. A guest promotes temporary adaptive extensions to habitual behaviours of the host. Such accommodations are sustainable only in the short term. It's their precariousness, spontaneity and unsustainability that are the poetry and value of temporary social relations.

Bethany J Fellows

The Hobart Urban Illumination Project (THUIP)

Wk 1 24 September, Saturday 5.28am, Dawn Drive through Hobart CBD.

Wk 2 1 October, Saturday 5.15am, Dawn Drive through Hobart CBD.

Wk 3 8 October, Saturday 6.02am, Dawn Drive through Hobart CBD.

Wk 4 15 October, Saturday 5.50am, Dawn Drive through Hobart CBD.

Curator
Sarah Jones

Bethany J Fellows, B. 1983, Tucson, Arizona. Lives and works in Melbourne, Australia.
www.bethanyjfellows.com
www.hobarturbanilluminationproject.blogspot.com

Curatorial Statement

Sarah Jones

The project started with a drive. Artist and curator – tourist and tour guide – slowly trawling the neighbourhood, the city, the suburbs, the south of the southern-most state. It was winter. On the way home from one of these winding tours, past the tip, the badminton courts, around the base of Mount Wellington, Bethany J Fellows commented on how especially *dark* one of the streets looked in the waning afternoon light. 'The shadow of the mountain,' I replied lazily, without really thinking, then added, '... some of these houses don't see the sun in winter.' After a minute or two she proposed that perhaps she should move the mountain.

In the following weeks I received a barrage of emails containing links to YouTube videos, scanned drawings, photographs and the results of countless (but never fathomless) internet searches. In between what Bethany had diagnosed as a potential *problem*, and her decision to provide a possible solution, lay a plethora of suppositions, questions and experiences. From a song about the sunshine that her mum had sung to her as a child, to the purported proof of the discovery of Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD); from anchovies (apparently very high in vitamin D) to artificial lighting schemes, Bethany mapped out *The Hobart Urban Illumination Project* (*THUIP*). She had come to the conclusion that the *solution* was not in fact to move the mountain. So, in keeping with an interventionist, performative practice, in which the artist has often cast herself as concerned public servant, Bethany set about moving the sun.

In late August Bethany flew to Rockhampton. She returned to Tasmania a few weeks later with her father's Land Cruiser, 16 yellow dolphin torches, two high-powered workman's spotlights, eight LED lamps, a custom-made light rack (and the faint hint of a suntan?). 'You Are My Sunshine ...' blared from the newly installed car stereo. Between 18 September and 15 October 2011, approximately 15 seconds of extra 'sunlight' was delivered by Bethany to the unsuspecting residents of Hobart's darkest streets.


http://hobarturbanillumination project.blogspot.com

Critical Response

Claire Krouzeky

Wk 1 24 September, Saturday 5.28am,
Wk 2 Dawn Drive through Hobart CBD.
Wk 3
Wk 4

It's 5.05am, still dark, but only just. There are six of us in the car; blankets on knees, Bethany J Fellows at the wheel. All the windows are wound down, and atop the car a grid of yellow camping torches and spotlights illuminate one side of the street.

A nervous hesitation, a brief uncertainty, overcome quickly with the sound of jazzy trumpets and the languorous warmth of a voice I recognise as Nina Simone's – loud, louder, now blaring through the open windows. With this the car begins a slow, steady crawl forward and will travel through the surrounding streets for the next 30 minutes. Beaming light and sunshine-related tunes toward each home, Fellows simulates the typical light therapy treatment prescribed for vitamin D deficiency – but on a suburban scale.

One by one houses have their moment in the spotlight as we pass them. These are houses Fellows has identified as being deprived of sunlight, shadowed by Mount Wellington. I catch glimpses of the car in fragments, reflected in the windows of the houses. Occasionally the windows offer a full, dazzling reflection.

I think about the people in the houses – in their beds, awakening, still half-asleep, but with a vivid awareness. Do they notice us?

Day breaks and we are back where we started. An elderly man hobbles across the road. A sufficient conclusion to the morning escapade, Fellows receives her first interaction:

'Can you turn that down! Have you *seen* the time?!'

~~Wk 1~~
Wk 2 1 October, Saturday 5.15am,
Wk 3 Dawn Drive through Hobart CBD.
Wk 4

Round two: an experiment in whether *The Hobart Urban Illumination Project* actually works. I wanted the Bethany J Fellows breakfast treatment, this time delivered to me in the comfort of my own bedroom. So it is arranged for the following morning.

I awake several times during the night, anticipating the event – afraid I might sleep through it. Finally, at 5.45am, now deep in sleep, an intrusion stirs me: advancing disco beats and the trundling sound of a car engine. This racket swells, louder, and I open my eyes to see golden light that shimmers through the bedroom windows, wrapping around the corners of the room, while the disco beats now take shape as the song I requested earlier in the week – Boney M's 'Sunny'. I am laughing. This is very funny. The downright zaniness of this is at odds with an experience that is most glorious in my sleepy state – there is no way I could have

slept through it. I peek out through the blinds, watch as the emblazoned Land Cruiser loops and then trundles back down the hill, Boney M trailing off into the distance.

Throughout the day these events come back to me in hilarious glimpses. I am positively charmed by Bethany J Fellows. But was my experience enjoyable simply because I was expecting it? Without this prior interaction does Fellows' work fall short? As a facilitator of these exchanges, she treads a fine line between charmer and pest, and I still wonder about the experiences of people who are receiving this 'treatment' unknowingly and unwillingly. Politics of choice, the borderline between public and private space, and autonomy over experience are at stake here. What are the rules? And ultimately, does this factor into Fellows' concern?

~~Wk 1~~
~~Wk 2~~
Wk 3 8 October, Saturday 6.02am,
Wk 4 dawn drive through Hobart CBD.

In order to preserve the integrity of this 'critical response', I wanted to avoid too much personal contact with Fellows. But it's been difficult. Given the nature of her project, the awkward times and irregular locations for the work, there has been a necessary involvement on my part in each of her activities.

This week I was thrown into the role of navigator during her Dawn Drive. Much later that night I found myself lying on the living room floor of her temporary accommodation; ankles nestled in a bizarre contraption called the 'Chi Machine', while my body was wiggled from side to side for 15 minutes – realigning my Chi at Fellows' recommendation. Today I enjoyed a vitamin D-rich breakfast-in-bed at 2.30pm, served on elegant antique crockery by a hospitable Fellows out of her portable kitchen/bedroom/Land Cruiser.

I'm coming to realise that resistance is futile, and it's also kind of missing the point. This work is all about these encounters – the ways we relate, and the variant modes of facilitating this. It would seem that hers is an aesthetic of pleasure, hospitality, generosity – of *conviviality*. But it's also not that easy: Fellows does not just serve it up on a plate (so to speak) without requiring you put a little effort in yourself. The work calls into play tensions of trust and – paradoxically – discomfort. There are social hurdles to overcome, uncertainties about what is allowed, what is normal, expected, and what (if anything) is being asked of you.

It is this incongruity in her work that intrigues, and resists being easily dismissed as mere relational aesthetics. It can be as bighearted as it can be invasive. It poses a challenge, or even a threat, to what we might deem as acceptable social etiquette. But at its core there is goodwill and an intent that is well meaning. Perhaps this indicates not so much a contradiction within the work as it does a conflict in our handling of unfamiliar social situations.

These ideas notwithstanding, it is difficult to deny the potency of Fellows' candour, and her acknowledgement of our relational inconsistencies. Although she evidently

revels in her own quirkiness, she maintains a not altogether unreasonable idealism that I am beginning to subscribe to. And so I write this with a certain disclaimer – I think I have made friends with Bethany J Fellows. But maybe that's the point?

~~Wk 1~~
~~Wk 2~~
~~Wk 3~~
Wk 4 15 October, Saturday 5.50am, Dawn Drive through Hobart CBD

'If I was a morning person, I'd do this every day.'
(Bethany J Fellows driving the final stretch of the *Hobart Urban Illumination Project*, approximately 6am).

Whereas in the first week 'Team BJF' comprised a crew of six, after four weeks numbers had dropped and on the of the final Dawn Drive it was just Fellows and me.

I watched for the last time as one by one Fellows turned on the grid of torches and array of other illumination devices attached to the vehicle. The music this week was to be a little more subdued, Fellows told me. It started with Harry Belafonte's 'Day-O', a solitary Calypso cry to the quiet morning.

There was a matter-of-fact sadness to this drive that made it very beautiful and also pointedly different to the other Dawn Drives. There was a quiet familiarity now, with each other, and with what we were doing. We were no longer nervous about the disturbance we caused; instead, a newfound certainty and conviction allowed me to view that morning and this activity with new eyes.

I can see now the fluidity with which Fellows' project has developed – her concepts mobilised, free-forming in whichever way seems most appropriate for that point in time. One week, for example, she might take music requests to be arranged into a perfectly harmonious mix of good and bad taste that would seem so crucial a part of her work. The next week she might decide that a particular suburb needs more *Illumination* attention and so will revisit it. And then the following week she is cooking breakfast in bed for anyone who is willing, taking into account dietary requirements, ambience and time preferences.

To me, the free structure of the work does not necessarily indicate a lack of focus or clarity, but instead an approach that is flexible and organic in its evolution – one that is *responsive*, sensitive, to a context, a time, and a place that is itself ever-dynamic. Her DIY approach extends beyond the making of contraptions to her continual improvement of the initial idea. In an intuitive way she feels the work out, adjusts and modifies, experiments, adds new elements and removes things that are no longer important. Her open-ended method is refreshing within a curatorial brief that risks rigidity.

To have had such an intimate experience of this final iteration is particularly memorable. The night before Fellows had sent me a text message checking that I was still coming, concerned that she might have to do the final drive alone.

Reflecting on this I realise the importance to her of the shared experience, which I have felt during all the drives, but perhaps found heightened with just the two of us.This connection through shared experience radiated beyond also, to the interstices of those streets, homes and residents. The glimpses into the lives and interiors of the locals as their front windows were flooded with light. The comical moment as we drove by the bakers, who, at work already, paused bemusedly to watch. The stillness and peace of the street itself (punctuated by our hubbub) as I got out to video the vehicle driving around the roundabout. And especially, dashing back to the car to notice a drawn-back curtain and a curious head, poking out to see what was going on – so I waved, and *he waved back*!

Answering my questions from the previous weeks, this drive confirmed the positive value of what Fellows is doing, indeed the witnessed effect of the work. But it also reified the potentiality in the work – the multifarious (but largely unidentifiable) ways it may have permeated 'public space'. There is magic in the unaccountability of experiences of the work, the unknowable nature of these encounters. Whether folkloric, marginally registered, or fully recognised, the project functions on a number of levels, and equally facilitates multi-levelled possibilities for engagement, or perhaps even none at all.

Two days after the final iteration Bethany J Fellows boards the *Spirit of Tasmania* with the Illumination Vehicle and departs our fair isle. Notably, the weather has taken a turn since this final Dawn Drive, taking up where Fellows left off with some glorious sunny days. I'm going to let BJF take the credit for this.

Voice Theatre Lab
Two Houses

Wk 1 17 September, Saturday 12pm, Performance in Civic Square, Launceston.

23 September, Friday 5pm, Performance in Civic Square, Launceston.

Wk 2 30 September, Friday 5pm, Performance in Civic Square, Launceston.

Wk 3 7 October, Friday 5pm, Performance in Civic Square, Launceston.

Wk 4 14 October, Friday 5pm, Performance in Civic Square, Launceston.

Curator
Damien Quilliam

Voice Theatre Lab
Robert Lewis: (Director), B. 1977, Adelaide, South Australia. Lives and works in Launceston.
Laura Bishop: (Performer), B. 1986, Bruny Island, Tasmania. Lives and works in Launceston.
Chris Jackson: (Performer), B. 1984, Burnie. Lives and works in Launceston.
Shannon Foon: (Performer), B. 1991, Launceston. Lives and works in Launceston.
www.voicetheatrelab.blogspot.com.au

Curatorial Statement

Damien Quilliam

Two Houses was developed as a reaction to site, history and culture. The project operated as a devised, experimental sound sculpture that explored the relationship of the work to these contexts through a contemporary reworking of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*.

The choice of the core script was as a metaphor and exploration of the 'life and relationship' between the Two Houses – Macquarie and Henty which face each other on Civic Square in Launceston. The use of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, was not literal, with the script acting as a core document while the sound sculpture and performances were devised works that sought to explore the limits of theatre and performance. This work sought to engage the audience both aurally and visually with the sound sculpture running for four weeks and incorporating elements of live performance. The sculpture (and its live aspects) was highly experimental, utilising theatrical elements of Butoh, Suzuki and crises points (voice in crises and body in crises) to explore the key concepts and emotions of the text.

The performances were located between the two houses with speaker systems located within the Macquarie House building. This created an echoing of the 'voices' between each house, representing the opposing voices of the Capulets and Montagues. However, at times these 'voices' would merge before breaking away, representing the coming together and unity of the characters of *Romeo and Juliet*. The 'voices' of the houses was not a recital of the script but a devised reaction to it as a central text of the project. The work explored four separate iterations throughout the duration of the project, each being a devised reaction to the four core *concepts* and their corresponding *emotions* within the text: conflict, unity, betrayal and death.

Each iteration explored a specific concept/emotion and continued to play and evolve for one week. All four were initiated with a live experimental performance that instigated the 'emotional resonance' that would be conveyed through the pre-recorded sound sculpture for each iteration, creating the feeling and intention of the emotional echo of the work. As the week progressed, the sound sculpture would merge and evolve into the next emotion with the next performance setting the next iteration.

The climax of the four weeks was a final performance that acted as the closing of the project. This incorporated all the elements of the four iterations into one devised performance.

Critical Response

Wendy Newton

Wk 1 17 September, Saturday 12pm,
Wk 2 Performance in Civic Square,
Wk 3 Launceston.
Wk 4

23 September, Friday 5pm,
Performance in Civic Square,
Launceston.

Art writers put words to mystery, not to define it, but to keep the ambiguity resonating. So a response to *Two Houses*, the first in a tetraptych of experimental physio-vocal performances and sound sculptures by Launceston-based Voice Theatre Lab, calls on both description and disguise. A writer's voice that carries no sound, a sound production that has no text, and the beguiling job of translating an elusive conceptual performance begins.

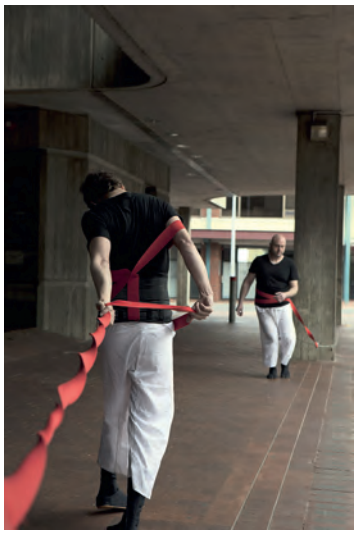
The scene is set in Civic Square, the people's square, between two houses: Henty House, with its imposing 1970s brutalist structure, faces the gentrified Georgian-built Macquarie. Already the opposition has begun. They are prop and set; characters to set our performers in motion in a captivating ephemeron of restrained movement and primal sound.

The performers are bound with wide red elastics straight-jacketing arms to sides. The genders are divided: two men are lashed to Henty House, two women to Macquarie, their coiled chests of crimson trussed as they wait, poised. There is no curtain to rise, just the auspicious striking of the Town Hall clock that starts their movement, almost imperceptibly. It is a slow unwinding, a meditative unravelling of body from strap, with only the sound of wind, birds and the slow drone of cars to score this fascinating unfurling.

It is an evolution of controlled movement by highly skilled performers using their physicality as medium as the pairs stretch towards their opposing twins and retreat in neutral silence. But what begins as contained gestures and taut facial expression suddenly explodes into primordial sound as the tide of movement draws and recoils gender pairs. Vocal declamations take the form of hissing, siren calls, haka-like cries and guttural animal grunts as genders meet between Houses. This is a language in itself, a show of bravado, as characters are caught by the appeal of the opposite; there is naked confrontation and anger, but there is also yearning for the conflicting pull of the other.

Two Houses is incredibly engaging as performers use abstract movement to create the symbolic resonance of relationship and place. Bodies control the atmosphere, articulating as eloquently as voice. There is a sense of story yet to be revealed: perhaps the undeniable appeal of the 'other' that confronts, frightens, draws and repulses, but requires a push from and against the familiar and safe way we attach to our world – like the way we need to approach the arts.

~~Wk 1~~
Wk 2 30 September, Friday 5pm,
Wk 3 Performance in Civic Square,
Wk 4 Launceston.



Love is a Palimpsest, Reworked, Reinvented

There is a slow breathing coming from Macquarie House. Slow breathing and the sense that something living, yet unrecognised, inhabits the space between it and Henty House, where before there was only dislocated routine and dormant potentiality.

The audience arcs one sweep of an imaginary stage, the bollards on Charles Street the other, as if together they periphery the show 'in the round'. This fictitious marking of boundaries makes for awkward encounters as people stumble upon a space filled only with expectation. Some skirt around, others perimeter as spectator, but each must sense the accident of fortune that has transformed the space from brick-and-mortar thoroughfare to a living playhouse.

The performers are bodiced by wide red elastics that attach but don't bind. The genders are divided: two men are lashed to Henty House, two women to Macquarie House, their arms stretched towards their diagonal opposite. Marking the spot, a red cross of elastic lies on the cobblestones between the Houses.

Love is a middle ground.

It is the striking of the Town Hall clock that starts their movement, almost imperceptibly. There is no unwinding, no unravelling of body from strap, just a determined movement towards their opposite.

Love is an unfurling.

Loose motion eases them to their fated place. Silence is their score as twins crouch, pick up a strap and truss their wrists together.

Love is a binding.

In a tender moment, an untethered hand touches their opposite's face, condensing the play of love into a skilful gesture. But love is an earthly thing: there are cries, struggle, a pulling apart, a muddle of straps left behind as the Henty men follow the women into Macquarie House.

Love is a blood-letting. One drop for love, two for grief.

It is the essence of moment that makes for such a captivating performance. The body has a language; it falls between stillness and tension, impulse and movement, feeling and gesture.

There is a slow breathing coming from a window in Macquarie House. Breathing, and a soft lament. It might be words, unintelligible, or a language that is not immediately recognised. The voice of dreams and the slow call of netherspaces. It feels familiar, remembered. The call of love, perhaps, or maybe


HENTY HOUSE

the portent of loss, it's hard to tell; but then love and loss are as bound together as twin performers, tangled and dancing in red ribbons.

~~Wk 1~~
~~Wk 2~~
Wk 3 7 October, Friday 5pm,
Wk 4 Performance in Civic Square, Launceston.

People are talking. *What's going on*? Tasmania Police receives distress calls, *indeterminate* noises coming from Civic Square. Council is asked to explain. But still there is a slow breathing coming from a window in Macquarie House. Breathing and a soft lament. The voice of dreams and the slow call of netherspaces – calling, but to whom and to what?

More people have gathered to watch this unpredictable encounter, to join the performance in a creative intersection that finds them on the edge of mystery. The performers are bound to the Houses with wide red elastics that straight-jacket arms to sides. The set-up is the same, but love has changed everything.

It is the striking of the Town Hall clock that starts their movement, almost imperceptibly. A Henty man and a Macquarie woman, diagonally opposed, start to move towards each other. This is not discovery: it is a fierce and silent accusation. Her shoulders shake at him; he creeps towards her, face contorted in anguish. Couples change place, repeating the reproachful action. Elastics are used to strike. Sounds are harsh words stuck in throats. It is a betrayal of feeling: indictment, blame, treachery.

Love tears them apart.

The body has a language; it falls between desire and fate, between intimacy and betrayal.

People are congregating for the second-to-last performance. This is what happens now at 5pm Friday, in a space that was empty but is now the scene for conjuring: the audience has become part of the recital.

The performance starts like any other. But where before bindings were something to fight against, now there is the palpable feeling of yielding disconnection. The pairs aren't looking at each other as they back into middle ground. They are at the end of their tether, writhing together, entwined in pain and dislocated silence. Groans, cries, red-faced struggle, anguish, screams, tongues rolling, a man cries, 'Montague!', a woman, 'Capulet!', then, a word wailed by each: grief – that – foils – anger. The pairs crawl back to their Houses, dying on their steps; tangled, strangled, by bright red elastic.

There is a slow breathing coming from a window in Macquarie House. Breathing and a soft lament and screams of anguish. Grief is a living thing that has taken up residence in Civic Square, and we all feel it; in the bricks, the heart, the bones, the heavy places, where once love was liquid and light.

~~Wk 1~~
~~Wk 2~~
~~Wk 3~~
Wk 4 14 October, Friday 5pm, Performance in Civic Square, Launceston.

The Ties That Bind

Everyone should read Shakespeare this way. Of course, *Two Houses* isn't an adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet*; it's a distillation, the *jus* of anger, love, betrayal and grief that sits at the core of the story and all human experience.

It doesn't require reading, either, unless it's taken with poetic licence. Through William Blake's corporeal eye, not with it. Words mislead, description limits, text encumbers. A rich narrative is conjured, nonetheless, without prose, from the concentration of the performers' physicality. A story written on the body, where all good stories are told. The important ones, anyway. The ones we remember. The body has a language, a text printed on muscle with its own peculiar physical vernacular.

The body is a palimpsest. Reworked. Reinvented.

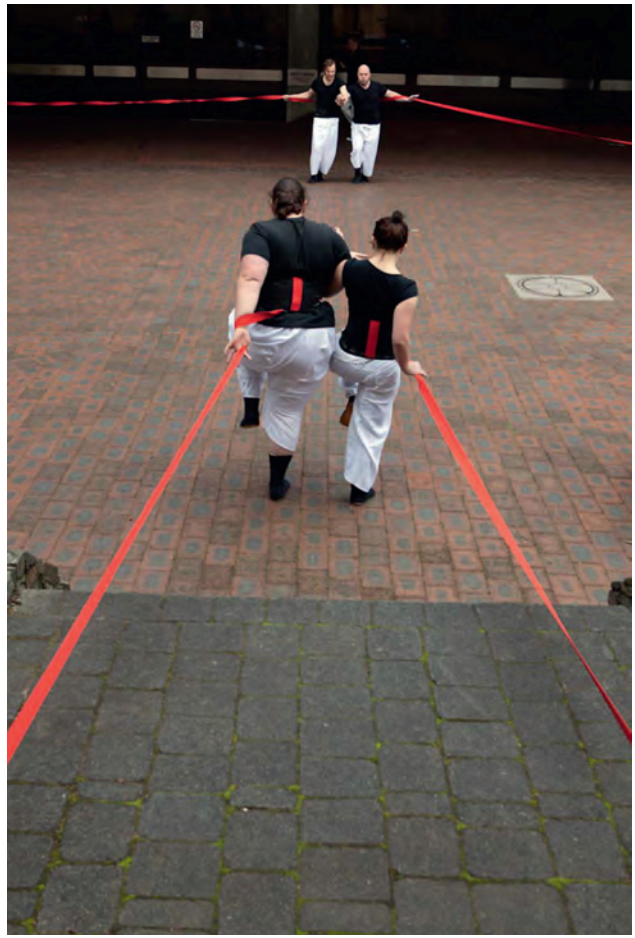
The scene is set in Civic Square, the people's square, between Two Houses: Henty House, with its imposing 1970s brutalist structure, faces the gentrified Georgian-built Macquarie. Already the opposition has begun. Here, tension resides between colloquialisms and reminds us that place has a language that evokes a fate.

The performers are bound with wide red elastics straight-jacketing arms to sides. There is no curtain to rise, just the auspicious striking of the Town Hall clock to start their movement, almost imperceptibly. It is a slow unwinding, a meditative unravelling of body from strap, with only the sound of wind, birds and the slow drone of cars to score this fascinating unfurling. Place has a context, geography, a spatial reality.

It is an evolution of controlled movement, bodies articulating as eloquently as voice. Elastics bind, strike, act as maniples through the iterations – a silent code that provides punctuation to the dramatic physical text. Character is lost; they are raw emotion, the neural impulse that drives.The heart of the story, where all things are recognised and remembered. Its earthly denouement. We feel it in the heart and in the gut, the skin, where the raw nerves of feeling are closest. Here, place has a physicality. A symbolic resonance. Memory.

Place is a palimpsest. Reworked. Reinvented. Remembered.

There is no longer a slow breathing, a soft lament, or screams of anguish coming from Macquarie House. The window is closed, posters are stolen from its doors, and Civic Square is now marked by what is no longer there. Still, something important has passed through here and lingers, if only mytho-geographically. But then place and imagination are as bound together as twin performers, tangled and dancing in red ribbons.



Information

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Map of Tasmania, Australia. Image: Open Lab

Pages 35, 37 (top right, middle right, bottom left, bottom right), **39, 40 and 41**
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Courtesy the artist. Photo: John Vella

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Anthony Johnson, *Eclipse*, 2011
Courtesy the artist. Photo: Anthony Johnson

Pages 52, 55, 57, 58 and 61
David Clegg, *failurespace*, 2011
Courtesy the artist. Photo: David Clegg

Pages 65 and 69
Lucy Bleach, *Homing*, 2011
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Pages 72, 75, 77, 79 (middle right, bottom left, bottom right) **and 81**
Raquel Ormella, *I live with birds*, 2011
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Toby Huddlestone, *Interruption:Again*, 2011
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Serge Gainsbourg, 1970
Courtesy Toby Huddlestone. Photo: www.dimagi.com/mobile-language-lab/jeanloup-sieff-serge-gainsbourg-1970/

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Maddie Leach, *Let us keep together*, 2011
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Ruben Santiago, *Long Drop Into Water*, 2011
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Ruben Santiago, Long Drop Into Water, 2011
Courtesy the artist. Photo: Ruben Santiago

Pages 125, 126, 127 (bottom left, bottom right), **130 and 131**
James Newitt, *My Secession Party*, 2011
Courtesy the artist. Photo: Fred Assenheimer and Hannah Olding

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James Newitt, *My Secession Party*, 2011
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Rhona Byrne, *On Laughter*, 2011 (part of Paul O'Neill, *Our Day Will Come*, 2011)
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Page 135, 137 (top left, middle left) **and 141**
Paul O'Neill, *Our Day Will Come*, 2011
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Garrett Phelan, *'... One truth teaches another/ Common sense ...'*, 2011 (part of Paul O'Neill, *Our Day Will Come*, 2011)
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Page 137 (bottom left)
Paul O'Neill, *Our Day Will Come*, 2011
Courtesy the artists. Photo: Brigita Ozolins

Page 137 (bottom right)
Jem Noble, *The Matter of Self-Improvement*, 2011 (part of Paul O'Neill, *Our Day Will Come*, 2011)
Courtesy the artists. Photo: Paul O'Neill

Cover page, 138 and 139
Paul O'Neill, *Our Day Will Come*, 2011
Courtesy the artist. Photo: Paul O'Neill

Page 140
School Dinners by Mick Wilson (part of Paul O'Neill, *Our Day Will Come*, 2011)
Courtesy the artists. Photo: www.supercritical.com

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Bethany J Fellows, *The Hobart Urban Illumination Project*, 2011
Courtesy the artist. Video stills: Sarah Jones

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Bethany would like to thank Sarah Jones, Eve Melgaard, Marian and Michael Fellows.

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Rhona Byrne (*Our Day Will Come*) is an artist and lives and works in Dublin, Ireland. Her practice employs an interdisciplinary approach using a combination of media, some of which are sculptural installations and interventions and sometimes collaborating with diverse industries, groups and individuals.

Fernando do Campo is an artist, writer and curator based in Launceston where he is director of Sawtooth ARI, and teaches sessionally at the College of the Arts, University of Tasmania.

David Clegg lives in New Plymouth, New Zealand. His project-based practice uses sound recordings, photography and text to engage with aspects of public space and the archive.

David Cross is an artist, writer and curator based in Wellington New Zealand. He is postgraduate director at the College of Creative Arts, Massey University.

Marley Dawson completed a Masters Degree in Visual Arts at the University of Sydney in 2008. He works across sculpture, installation and performance, constructing scenarios and kinetic machine sites that assemble and disassemble motions, ideas and aesthetics.

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Bethany J Fellows is an artist born in Tuscon, Arizona. She now lives and works in Melbourne, Australia. Her practice is decidedly participatory and usually cited in public and non-traditional space.

Annie Fletcher (*Our Day Will Come*) was born in Carlow, Ireland and lives and works in the Netherlands where she is the current curator of exhibitions Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven.

Shannyn Foon (*Voice Theatre Lab*) has a background in dance and musical theatre and is currently performing in various roles in Melbourne.

Liam Gillick (*Our Day Will Come*) is a British-born artist based in London and New York. His art is underpinned by rigorous theorising: he is as much a writer as a maker of objects. Gillick's work is shaped by a very visual awareness of the way different

properties of materials, structures and colour can affect our surroundings and therefore influence the way we behave.

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Chris Jackson (*Voice Theatre Lab*) graduated from the University of Tasmania's Academy of the Arts in 2005 with a Bachelor of Contemporary Arts majoring in Theatre. He recently completed a Master's degree specialising in the connection between performance art and theatre.

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Sarah Jones is a curator, writer and artist based in Arnhem and Lisbon currently undertaking a Masters of Fine Art with the Dutch Art Institute.

Maddie Leach is an artist based in Wellington, New Zealand. She is also senior lecturer in Fine Arts at Massey University.

Fiona Lee's research-lead art practice explores discursive and pedagogical forms of art production, with a specific interest in conversation as a methodology for knowledge production. She is currently undertaking a PhD at the University of Tasmania.

Robert Lewis (*Voice Theatre Lab*) is a lecturer in Voice and Theatre at the Academy of the Arts, University of Tasmania and is a practising director, performer and voice coach.

Gareth Long (*Our Day Will Come*) is a Canadian born artist living and working in New York. His work centres on processes of transference, translation and collaboration as a means to question authorship and the mechanisms of cultural and knowledge production.

Marco Marcon is a Perth-based writer and director of IASKA.

James Newitt is an artist and associate lecturer in Fine Arts at the Tasmanian College of the Arts, University of Tasmania. James is currently based in Lisbon on an Anne & Gordon Samstag International Visual Arts Scholarship.

Jem Noble (*Our Day Will Come*) is an artist who lives and works in Bristol, UK. Encompassing moving and still image, sound, music, text, sculpture, site-based gesture and social encounter, he works in conversation with histories of conceptual art and its resonance in questions of framing, indeterminacy, reception and agency across a broad constellation of critical platforms and practices.

Paul O'Neill is a curator, artist and writer who has curated or co-curated more than 50 projects. As author and editor, he has published widely in books, anthologies, journals, and art magazines. He lives in Bristol, UK. His new book *The Culture of*

Curating and the Curating of Culture(s) has just been published by The MIT Press (2012).

Raquel Ormella is an artist and lecturer at the School of Art, Australian National University, Canberra. She works with various media including video, installations, blogging, and zines.

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Sarah Pierce (*Our Day Will Come*), born in Connecticut, lives and works in Dublin, Ireland. Her ongoing project *The Metropolitan Complex* draws on her broad understanding of cultural work, articulated through various working methods, involving papers, interviews, archives, talks and exhibitions.

Damien Quilliam is a writer, art historian and curator based in Launceston, Tasmania. He is curator of Contemporary Australian Art at the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery.

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Voice Theatre Lab is Robert Lewis (director), and performers Laura Bishop, Chris Jackson and Shannon Foon. Since its inception in 2006, Voice Theatre Lab has developed exercises that integrate body and voice, exploring and developing rigorous and highly energised physical and vocal training methods. The company is renowned for fusing contemporary East and West theatre practices and contemporary art to create a physio-vocal training aesthetic.

Mick Wilson (*Our Day Will Come*) is a Dublin-based artist, writer and educator whose research and professional interests are eclectic, ranging from the reputational economy of contemporary art to the rhetorical construction of knowledge conflict, and from the contested reconstruction of the contemporary university to the general arena of critical cultural pedagogies.

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170gsm Lumi Silk matt art (internal)

Iteration:Again is a publication that documents thirteen public art projects by twenty-two Australian and international artists which took place across Tasmania from 17 September – 15 October 2011. Working to transform our experience of time and place, each commission sought to address the idea of transforming or re-working an artwork four times over four weeks. This premise resulted in a compelling array of temporary artworks in largely unexpected places throughout Hobart, Launceston and across the state. Produced by David Cross and Contemporary Art Spaces Tasmania, in conjunction with seven partner curators, *Iteration:Again* brings together documentation of each project together with curatorial statements, feature essays by Cross and Marco Marcon and commissioned responses from thirteen writers.

Iteration:Again features
Lucy Bleach
David Clegg
Marley Dawson
Bethany J Fellows
Chris Hanrahan
Toby Huddlestone
Anthony Johnson
Maddie Leach
James Newitt
Paul O'Neill with
Rhona Byrne
Annie Fletcher
Liam Gillick
Garreth Long
Jem Noble
Garrett Phelan
Sarah Pierce
Mick Wilson
Raquel Ormella
Ruben Santiago
John Vella
Voice Theatre Lab

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