

An Act

Rethinking
artist-run initiatives
through place

Of

Showing



Edited by Maria Miranda and Anabelle Lacroix

An Act of Showing



AN ACT OF SHOWING

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Acknowledgement of Country

We respectfully acknowledge the Boon Wurrung people of the Eastern Kulin nation as traditional custodians and ongoing carers of country on which we work, and where the exhibition and symposium took place. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging. We recognise that sovereignty was never ceded.

We would like to thank all the artists, artist-run initiatives, speakers and authors involved in this project. Your time and ideas meant a lot to us. Thank-you to Arweet Carolyn Briggs for her warm Welcome to Country. Thank-you to Paul Irving, and all the artists who generously helped installing the exhibition and to Testing Grounds for their kind support. And thank-you to Elwyn Murray for his creative contributions to the project and for his inspired design of the book.

This project would not have been possible without the support of the Australian Research Council, the Australia Council for the Arts, the City of Melbourne and the Faculty of Fine Arts and Music, University of Melbourne.
Thank-you all.

[5] Acknowledgement of Country [9] Introduction
Maria Miranda & Anabelle Lacroix [18] List of Works
[19] Contributors [21] **Environments** [44] Directory
[47] **Essays** [49] Maria Miranda *...here in the midst of things:
some thoughts on artist-run initiatives and place*
[59] Anabelle Lacroix *A shared space in between*
[69] Paola Balla *ARIs and Whiteness* [77] Kirsten Lyttle
*Holding space: the importance of Blak ARIs (from a brown
girl's perspective)* [83] Dominic Redfern *the conscience of
the body* [95] Chris Kraus *Kelly Lake Store* [109] **Regional
Dialogue: A conversation between MES 56 / OCAC / Bus
Projects** [121] **Placing artist-run initiatives** [122] Open-
Contemporary Art Centre [128] Ruang MES 56
[134] Waringarri Aboriginal Arts [140] Watch This Space
[146] Boxcopy [152] One Place After Another
[158] The Laundry Artspace [164] Raygun Projects
[170] The Walls [176] Cementa [182] Articulate Project Space
[188] AirSpace Projects [194] FELTspace [200] The Garage
[206] Blak Dot Gallery [208] Trocadero Art Space
[214] c3 contemporary art space [220] BUS Projects
[226] West Space [232] BLINDSIDE [238] Sawtooth ARI
[245] **Being There**



*That place knows me, that place loves me*¹
—Frances Tapueluelu

An Act of Showing: rethinking artist-run initiatives through place accompanies and expands upon the eponymous exhibition and roundtable symposium held at Testing Grounds in Melbourne from 17 – 27 May, 2017. This project was developed as a collaboration between Maria Miranda and Anabelle Lacroix and was initiated by Maria’s Australian Research Council (ARC) project *The Cultural Economy of Artist-run Initiatives in Australia*. The exhibition itself was curated by Anabelle Lacroix.

The place of ARIs

Artist-run initiatives (ARIs) are now well recognized in Australia as important spaces to show work, to meet other artists, audiences, and to continue engaging in

1 Artist Frances Tapueluelu talking about her experience at Blak Dot Gallery during the Roundtable Symposium alongside *An Act of Showing: rethinking artist-run initiatives through place* at Testing Grounds, Melbourne on 20 May 2017.

questions around art practice and philosophies of art. Once considered 'alternative spaces' and initially the product of radical ideologies about art and its site of exhibition, artist-run initiatives have now evolved into significant institutions for artists and audiences. What makes ARIs distinctive from other places of exhibition is not just the key role played by artists themselves but also their physical spaces—both inside and outside. Even though many ARIs are experimenting with an online presence and projects, the physical space of the gallery has maintained its allure and artists continue to support its endless creation. This continuing support speaks to the importance of place, to being situated and to the force of material presence for artists and their needs and desires to create communities and social spaces of reflection, contemplation, conversation, interaction and simply to hang out. Yet the sort of spaces /places that ARIs occupy today are significantly different to the traditional white cube, where art was imagined as timeless and placeless. There are, of course, still many ARIs that inhabit a white space, but even then, the space is not a sealed off white cube, but often porous and leaky with artists making connections beyond the space itself. Our sense that place matters for ARIs—in particular ways for each, given their history and location—was a starting point for the exhibition and symposium *An Act of Showing: rethinking artist-run initiatives through place* (2017).

Another inspiration for the exhibition and symposium was Chris Kraus's short text *Kelly Lake Store and Other*

Stories (2012), a text that speaks to the dilemmas of globalization and the growing inequality that the current form of globalized capital is creating. For Kraus, place and where you are in the world matter. In the context of our constant connection through the internet, it can seem as if actual, physical and material place has diminished in importance in the globalized art world. The proposition of the exhibition and this publication is, on the contrary, that physical, material place is still of the greatest importance and, as Kraus suggests, necessary to the understanding of art.

This project recognized that one of the strengths of artist-run initiatives is their appearance and presence in a specific place and at a specific time. The focus on place recognized the importance of local production and local knowledge. By inviting a range of ARIs from across Australia and the Asia-Pacific to participate, the exhibition performed a program of 'trans-locality.' Curator Nina Möntmann describes this as "the local in relation to local rather than local to global" (2010, p.13). She concludes that it is small artist-run spaces and initiatives that hold out the possibility for an alternative to the dominant and ubiquitous neoliberal economies, which fuel the international and globalized, 'branded and franchised' art institutions. Möntmann's argument gels with Dominic Redfern, writing later in this book of how the 'decentred' biennale circuit can distort practices in the name of the global. Concurring with Möntmann's critique of our current situation, this project—both the exhibition and symposium—invited a

range of ARIs to send us artworks that would engage in a material conversation about the importance of place for them. These material objects of expression became testament to the connections and networks that were made in the course of the research project.

In focusing on the significance of place within the Australian context it is necessary and important to consider Indigenous relationships to place. As non-Indigenous Australians we acknowledge that the places where we live and work are Aboriginal land on which sovereignty is still unceded. We are particularly mindful and respectful of Indigenous ethics of care and reciprocity. As Arweert Carolyn Briggs explained during the symposium, the concept of *looking after country looks after you* is very important. If, as the writer Paul Carter suggests, art can play a significant role in the “ethical project of *becoming* (collectively and individually) *oneself in a particular place*” (Carter, p.xii), it is important to begin with such an acknowledgement. Carter goes on to write:

For societies—and most obviously colonizing white settler societies—are mythopoetic inventions. Their myths of immaculate origins and unnegotiable destinies are historical inventions, and one function of the artist is to show, by rematerialising these metaphysical myths in the creative process, how more sustainable artificial myths can come into circulation ... brokering a new relationship... (xii)

Given this, another proposition of the project was connecting with Indigenous artist-run spaces—often not included in the tacit understanding of the term ‘artist-run initiative’—to create a rich dialogue

foregrounding and deepening the importance of place and of being situated in a place. The hope was that this could contribute to a richer understanding of both the diversity of artist spaces and the importance of the places in which they are located. Further, if the exhibition and project was to be a conversation between artist-run spaces across Australia, First Nations art spaces are a vital part of that conversation. It is also important to acknowledge that there are significant reasons that Indigenous artists might feel some wariness about white artists and white artist-run spaces — something that both [Paola Balla](#) and [Kirsten Lyttle](#) discuss later in this book. Nevertheless, we hoped that by inviting Indigenous art spaces and centres we could begin a more inclusive and nuanced conversation to create new connections and networks, new stories and 'mythopoetic inventions' across Australia's art spaces.

Place is always experienced in relation to other places and other people. For us, this meant that in considering ARIs and place, it was also important to consider the broader context of Australia's regional place, especially within the Asia-Pacific region. In order to open the conversation to this broader context we invited two significant artist spaces from the region, Ruang MES 56 from Yogyakarta, Indonesia and Open-Contemporary Art Center (OCAC) from Taipei, Taiwan. These spaces presented themselves as significant participants because they were already engaged with Australian ARIs and their unique model provided an

important point of contrast to the Australian scene—and the conversations and connections were vigorous and open to being expanded.

It is important to note that this project, including the exhibition and this publication, is not a survey. Like many projects, we had a limited budget and time restrictions, so, unfortunately, it was not possible to include all the ARIs that we would have liked. Selection was extremely difficult, given the many vital and significant ARIs that exist across Australia and the Asia-Pacific region. Thus, we aimed to create a meaningful balance between ARI models, sites and engagement with place. A number of those invited were, however, unable to participate in the exhibition due mainly to the changing and volunteer-based nature of ARIs. In particular, we would like to acknowledge Boomalli Aboriginal Artists Co-operative, Paper Mountain, and Richard Bell and Megan Cope (ProppaNOW) among others for their early interest in the project.

The book is organized around five sections. The first section, **Environments**, features images of the outside entrance, building or door of each participating ARI to situate them in their immediate contexts. In a refrain of sorts, this section may act as a salute to the artist Andrew Hurle who photographed 76 defunct artist spaces in Sydney and Melbourne between 2002–2003. Like all things, these ARIs too are waiting to disappear, a process accelerated by rapid gentrification. In both this section and section four, **Placing artist-run initiatives**, the order of the ARIs has been inspired by

their geographical place in the world. That is, each ARI is listed through their latitudinal position, rather than alphabetical listing.

The second section, **Essays**, features texts by Maria Miranda, Anabelle Lacroix, Paola Balla, Kirsten Lyttle, Dominic Redfern and Chris Kraus. In *...here in the midst of things: some thoughts on artist-run initiatives and place*, Maria Miranda writes on the importance of place for her research visiting ARIs across Australia and the significance of place in social and political thinking. In *A shared space in between*, Anabelle Lacroix reflects on her curatorial role in this project and her experience visiting art centres in Western Australia and proposes a remapping of artist led projects in Australia. In *ARIs and Whiteness*, Paola Balla points first to the ancient and unacknowledged Indigenous practices of ceremony and art making. She outlines the troubled history of the relationships between ARIs and Indigenous artists, but also points to the immense potential and opportunity for Indigenous artists and ARIs. Kirsten Lyttle's essay, *Holding space: the importance of Blak ARIs (from a brown girl's perspective)*, explores her own experience of the unique and important role that Blak Dot Gallery has had in creating and maintaining space for Indigenous, Pacific and artists of colour in Melbourne. Dominic Redfern's essay, *the conscience of the body*, uses the significance of place in his artistic practice to reflect on histories and theories of artists' engagement with place from the local to the global context, arguing that the significance of the local is a return rather than a new direction for artists.

Art writer and critic Chris Kraus generously offered to reprint her perceptive and cogent text *Kelly Lake Store*. In the text Kraus weaves three separate stories into a compelling narrative of poverty and redemption. Crisscrossing the USA, she shows the damning impacts of globalization on small towns like Kelly Lake and then crosses the US Mexico border to visit the artist space Mexicali Rose where redemption can be found in small and local actions of intent.

Section three, **Regional Dialogue: a conversation between MES 56 / OCAC / Bus Projects** is an edited transcription of a conversation between Channon Goodwin from Bus Projects, Ama Bahas from Ruang MES 56 and Lo Shih-Tung from Open-Contemporary Art Center (OCAC) who were invited to participate in the exhibition and symposium. Through this dialogue we aimed to uncover the current strategies and visions of these spaces, as well as their histories and how they have evolved in relation to their unique places.

The fourth section, **Placing artist-run initiatives**, includes both pages created by the participating ARIs that respond to the question of what *place* means to them as well as images from the exhibition. Rather than serving to simply document the exhibition, we wanted these pages to help expand ideas expressed within the exhibition.

The fifth section, **Being There**, seeks to capture the atmosphere of the opening night and its performances at Testing Grounds.

Finally, a brief word about Testing Grounds—a place

that played an important part in the exhibition. As an infrastructure project, rather than a gallery space, it created a unique experience for the audience and neutral ground for an exhibition that aspired to create a horizontal conversation across multiple art spaces. As a congenial space, Testing Grounds also gave audiences breathing space to wander and sit, to have a drink and perhaps a conversation. As the generous host of *An Act of Showing*, Testing Grounds reflected and also further contributed to our understandings of place as involving labour and care.

Maria Miranda and Anabelle Lacroix
Editors

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For further information and documentation of this project, visit www.act-of-showing.net

Open-Contemporary Art Centre: Chen Chia-Jen, Cehn Chia-Lan, Cehn Szu-Han, Kuo Po-Yu, Kao Hsua, Lo Shih-Tung, Lin Wen-Tsao, Rebekka Reich and She Wen-Ying, pop-up book, 21 x 31 cm, 2017. **Ruang MES 56:** Ruang MES 56 Collective, site-specific installation with wall drawing, digital frames and books, 2017. **Waringarri Aboriginal Arts:** Phyllis Ningamara, Judy Mengil, Peggy Griffiths, Kittey Malarvie, Agnes Armstrong, Brian Murielle, Gloria Mengil, Louise Malarvie and Philomena Armstrong, *Bush Medicine Mural* and *Baobab Nuts*, 2012. **Watch This Space:** Pamela Lofts, *Silence*, 2010. **Boxcopy:** Joseph Breikers, *No Joke/ End Times: A Listening Party*, 2017. **One Place After Another:** *One Place After Another*, online ARI platform, business cards and QR code. **The Laundry Artspace:** Aishla Manning, Naomi O'Reilly and Chloe Waters, *Makeshift*, single channel video, 2017. **Raygun:** Tarn McLean and Alexandra Lawson, participatory work for Raygun, tea towels, 2017. **The Walls:** Byron Coathup, *Miami Magnets (Blue into Gold)*, Digital print magnets, 2017. **Cementa:** Jenny Brown, *Parallel play: developmental psychology for capitalists*, various materials, 2009. **Articulate Project Space:** Sue Callanan, *Cold in the space of breath: device for circulating air*, performance, sculpture and video 2015. **AirSpace Projects:** Sally Clarke and Jacqui Mills, *Revolving Door*, single channel video, 2017. **FELTspace:** Luke Wilcox, *An ARI saved my life*, site-specific drawing, 2017. **The Garage:** Peter Maloney, *Hot Shop*, works on paper, 2017. **Blak Dot Gallery:** Frances Tapueluelu, *Technological Colonisations*, various materials, 2016. **BUS Projects:** SI MA VA, *lonsdale2525*, 2017 **Trocadero:** Georgia Banks, *#whoisspittman*, installation with text and performance, 2017. **c3 contemporary art space:** Jon Butt and Ben Woods, *c3/Testing Grounds- 2 Signals*, 2017. **BLINDSIDE:** Steven Rendall, *147*, 2016, Digital video, 7m 6s. Georgie Roxby Smith, *Fair Game (Run like a Girl)*, 2016, GTAV Online Intervention (longshot machinanima) HD Video, 13m 57s. Alicia Bryson Haynes and Claire Robertson, *Opera & Art in Question*, 2015, Single-channel HD Video, 16:9, stereo, colour, sound, 9m 40s. Beth Caird, *What will I do now, with my hands?*, 2016, Single-channel video, 2m 27s, Courtesy the artist. **West Space:** Volunteer publication coordinated by Thea Jones with Eliza Tiernan, Benjamin Baker, Eva Quinn-Walters, Shannon Lyons, Gussie Vinal Richardson, Isabella Darcy, Charlotte Taylor, Sarah Brasier, William Hawkins, Nicole Thomson. **Sawtooth ARI:** Daryl Rogers, *Of Place*, digital photographic collage on aluminium, 2017.

Paola Balla is a Wemba-Wemba and Gunditjmarra woman artist, curator, writer and lecturer based at Moondani Balluk Indigenous Academic Centre, Victoria University. Centring Aboriginal women's voices, art and activism, her work situates Aboriginal sovereignty, matriarchy and First Nations ways of being, knowing and doing.

Balla's recent curatorial projects include *Sovereignty* (2016) at ACCA co-curated with Max Delany, and *Executed in Franklin Street* (2015) City Gallery. Her art work has been included in numerous group shows as well as being exhibited in solo shows across Australia. Balla established the Indigenous Arts and Cultural Program at Footscray Community Arts Centre, Melbourne, and the Wominjeka Festival in 2010. Her writing has featured in books, journals, and magazines and she is a regular guest speaker, including recently at the Emerging Writers Festival (2017) and a keynote for WOW (Women of the World Festival), 2017.

Balla is a PhD candidate at Victoria University, focusing on the ways Aboriginal women artists and activists/protectors disrupt artistic terra nullius by speaking back and BLAK to patriarchal and colonial narratives.

Chris Kraus is a Los Angeles-based writer, art critic, and editor whose novels include *I Love Dick* (1997), *Torpor* (2006), and *Summer of Hate* (2012). Her writing navigates and mediates seamlessly between autobiography, fiction, philosophy, and art criticism. She teaches creative writing and art writing at The European Graduate School / EGS and has been a visiting professor at the Art Center College of Design, the University of California at San Diego, New York University, the San Francisco Art Institute, and the Los Angeles Contemporary Archives. In 2017, Kraus published *After Kathy Acker*, a biography of Kathy Acker. In 2016, Jill Soloway adapted the novel, *I Love Dick* as a TV series, produced by Amazon Studios. Her next book, *Social Practices*, will be published by Semiotexte in Fall 2018.

Anabelle Lacroix is Curator for Public Programs at the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art. She has worked on local and international projects with Asialink (2012), Liquid Architecture as a Curator, Program Manager and General Manager (2014-2017) and Melbourne Festival, where she produced the visual art program (2016-2017). She is also a freelance curator and writer with experience across ARIs, independent organisations, and institutions. She tutored a curatorial intensive at RMIT University (2015-2016) and was a research assistant at the Victorian College of the Arts, University of Melbourne (2016-2017). Lacroix graduated from the international program in curating art at Stockholm University, a master in art history at University College London and a bachelor in art history and anthropology from University Paris X. She has been based in Melbourne since 2011.

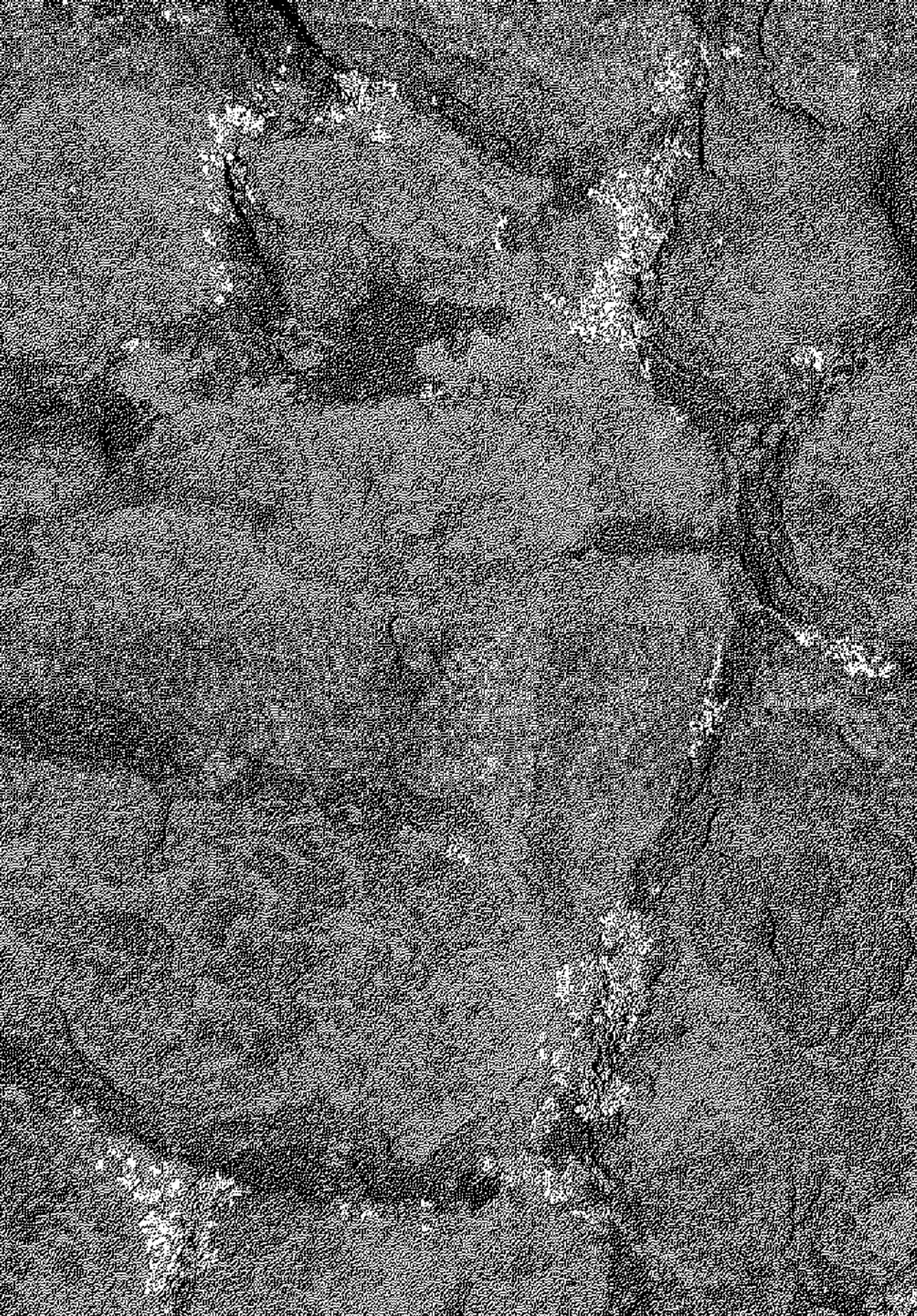
Kirsten Lyttle is a Māori-Australian artist, academic, doctoral candidate and researcher. Her Iwi (tribe) is Waikato, tribal affiliation is Ngāti Tahinga, Tainui A Whiro. She trained as a photographer (Fine Art) at RMIT University, in 2013 she was awarded a Master of Fine Art (RMIT University). She is currently completing her PhD at Deakin University and teaching photography in the School of Community and Creative Arts, Deakin University.

Kirsten has exhibited widely in Australia and internationally including, Indonesian Contemporary Art Network Yogyakarta (Indonesia), Galleria 291 Est. Rome (Italy), and Oedipus Rex Gallery Auckland (New Zealand). In 2016 was a finalist in the 2016 Bowness Photography Prize (Monash Gallery of Art). She was the 2015 indigenous artist in residence as part of the *RMIT/University of Lethbridge, Indigenous Residency Gushul Studio*, Blairmore, Canada.

Community engagement and development has also been a large part of her arts practice. Recent projects include *Women, Art and Politics* at Footscray Community Arts Centre 2016, *Weaving Worlds* at the Australian Tapestry Workshop, 2016, and *An unorthodox Flow of Images*, curated by Naomi Cass and Pippa Milne, presented with Melbourne Festival 2017.

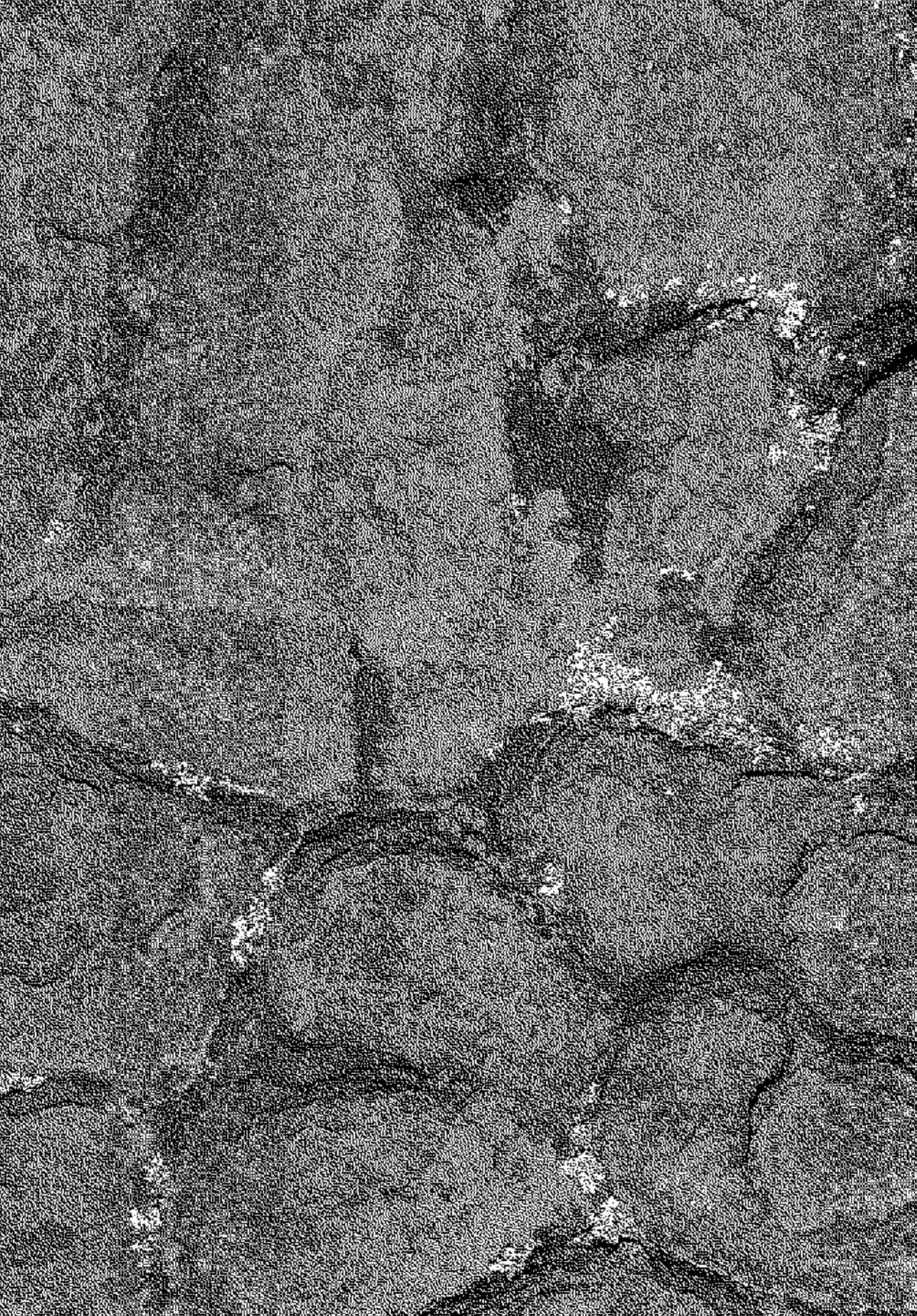
Maria Miranda is an artist, arts worker and scholar. She is an ARC DECRA Research fellow based at the Victorian College of the Arts, University of Melbourne. Her research project *The Cultural Economy of Artist-Run Initiatives in Australia* engages with the experience of artists involved with artist-run and artist-led spaces and initiatives (<http://the-ari-experience.com> and Instagram @ari.experience). She has maintained a collaborative art practice with Norie Neumark as Out-of-Sync since 1993—making work that engages with questions of culture, place and memory (www.out-of-sync.com). Their work has been exhibited widely in Australia and internationally. She has written and co-authored numerous journal articles and book chapters and is the author of *Unsightly Aesthetics: uncertain practices in contemporary art* (Errant Bodies Press, 2013)

Dominic Redfern. I work with video to look at the intersection of natural and social history. Working often around urban waterways I use studies of plants, insects, microbes and rubbish to examine often overlooked elements of the environment that can tell us important things about how we are enmeshed within ecosystems. In 2017 I have had two exhibitions in the CLIMARTE festival whilst in 2016 I gave performance lectures in Sweden and Norway. Over the last couple of years, I've had exhibitions at home as well as in Tokyo, Stockholm and Shanghai and been part of the Spatial Dialogues Australian Research Council project on water in the Asia-Pacific region. I work as an Associate Professor at RMIT University's School of Art.



Environments



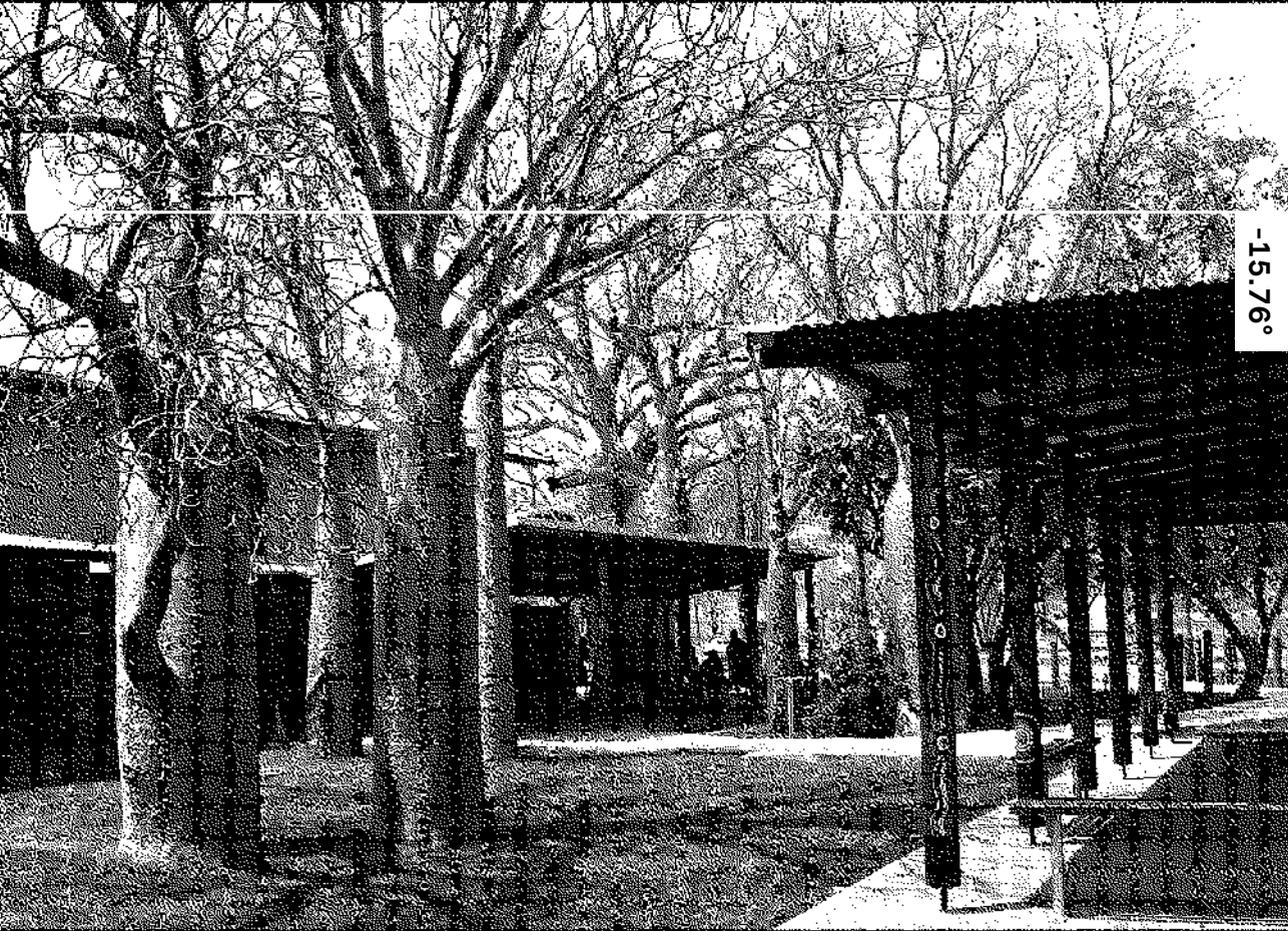




Open-Contemporary Art Centre (Taipei)



Ruang MES 56 (Yogyakarta)



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Watch This Space



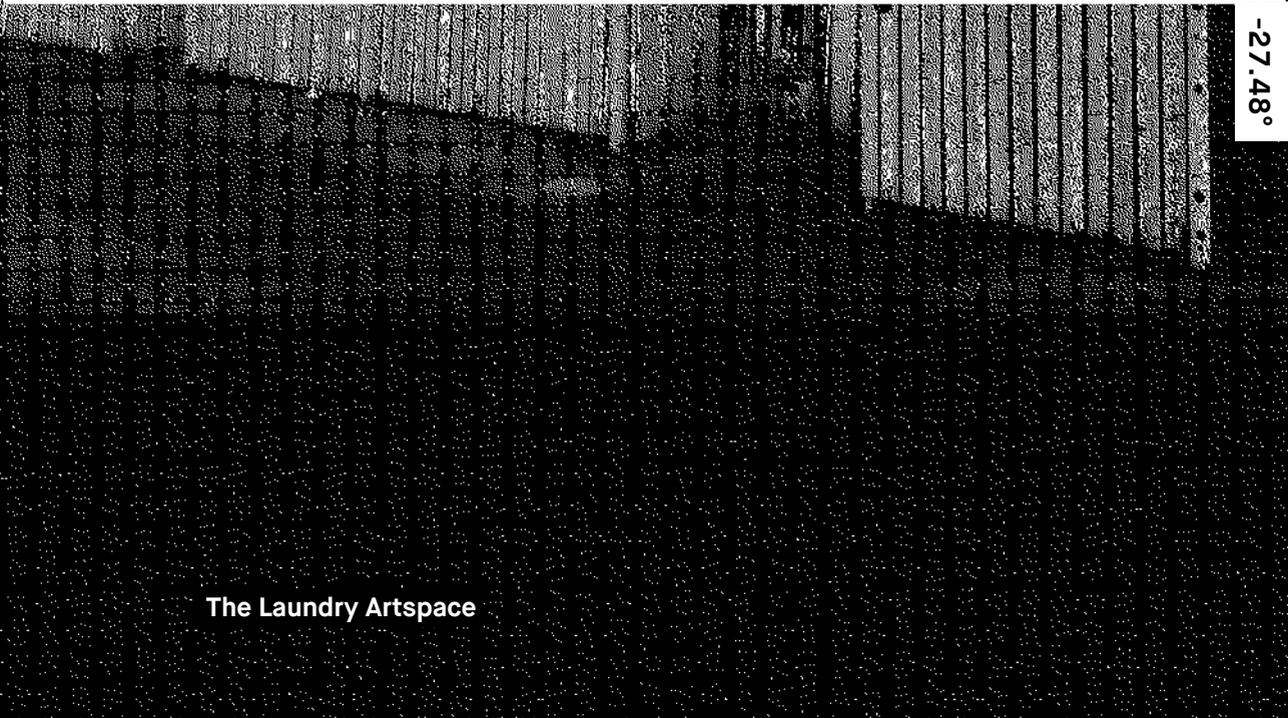
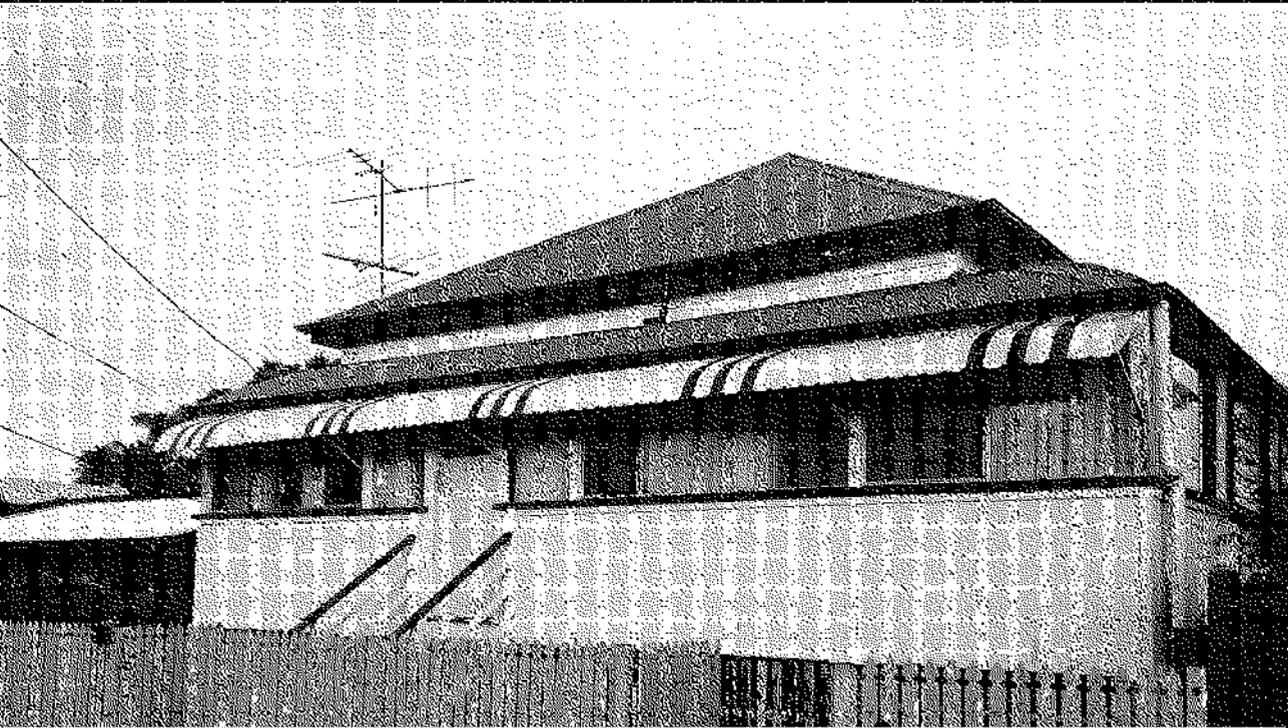


Boxcopy



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One Place After Another



-27.48°



CHANGE
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CHIROPRACTOR
& Back Pain Relief
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Flora

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Raygun Projects



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Blak Dot Gallery

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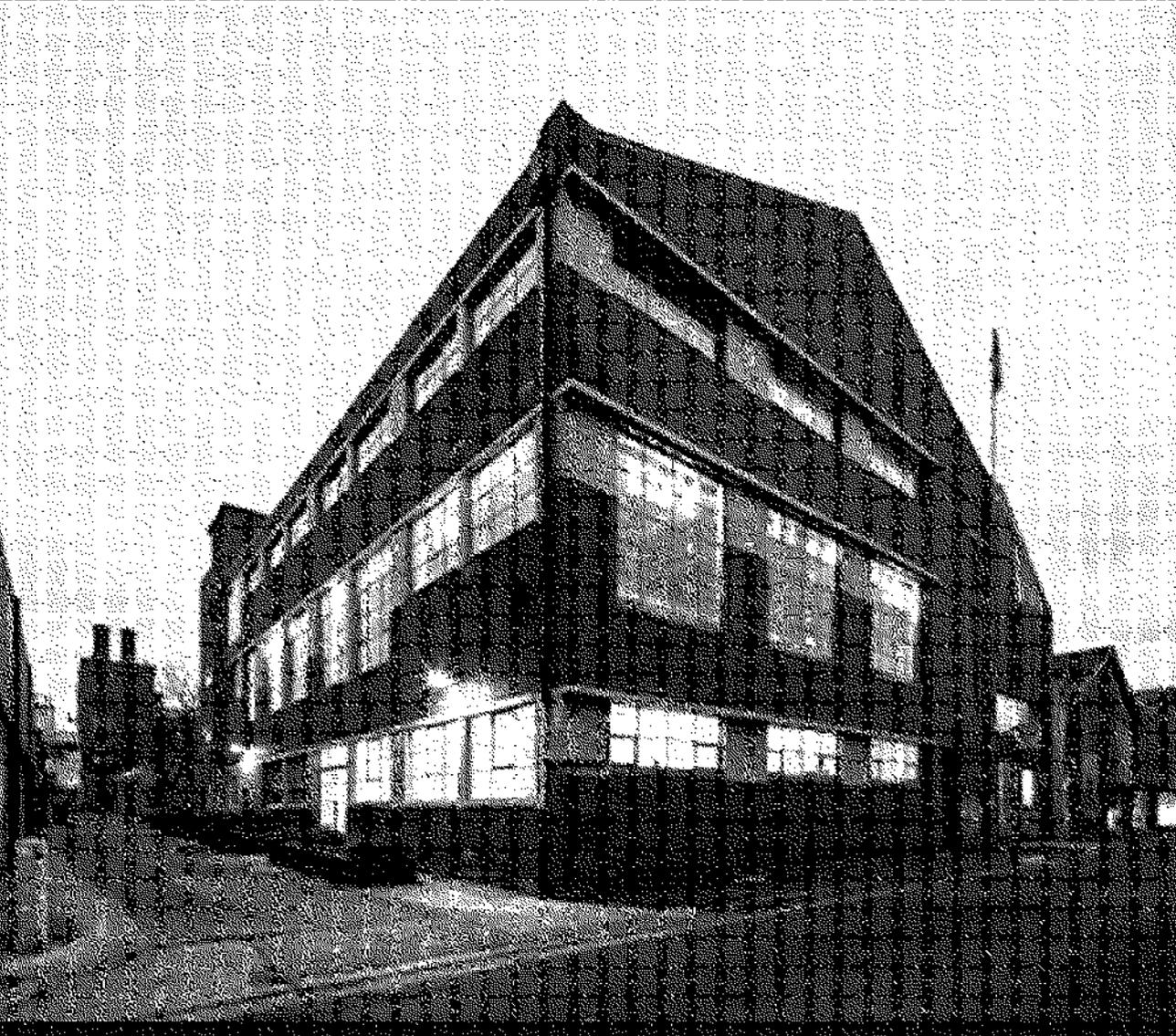
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BUS Projects



COMMONWEALTH BANKING CORPORATION

West Space

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BLINDSIDE



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A black and white photograph of a dense thicket of trees and branches, with a dark rectangular box containing the word 'Essays' in white text.

Essays



Placing place

Place is a difficult concept to grasp. Its meanings can be varied, dispersed and hard to hold onto. And to complicate matters, place has a twin—space. The two terms are entangled in a fierce dance to hold our attention. It is space that dominated scientific and philosophic thinking in the West from the age of Newton and

the Enlightenment, while place was dismissed as trivial and parochial. In recent decades though, things have changed for these troubled twins, with place looming large once again. A key philosopher of place, Jeff Malpas, argues that in contrast to space, place is relational: “no places exist except in relation to other places” (1999, p.4). Space, on the other hand, is non-relational. It is tied to notions of the void—an empty, homogenous and undifferentiated realm—which acts as a container.

The question of place is particularly important when thinking about art spaces. In tandem with modernist thinking, it was this concept of the empty container that once dominated the spaces of art exhibitions—what Brian O’Doherty dubbed “the white cube”. And as O’Doherty points out in *Inside the White Cube: the ideology of the gallery space*, the ultimate goal of the white cube was to create timeless and placeless art, autonomous and separate from the everyday so that art could be transcendental. Contemporary art practices have shifted enormously since O’Doherty’s critique—and one gauge of that shift has been the emergence and success of artist-run initiatives (ARIs). These small operations hold out the possibility for a different sort of art, where the emphasis is on the verb ‘practice’ rather than the reified object. In this scenario of potential, the practice of art is a dynamic activity practiced within a local context and community of artists and audience.

While we still speak about the *spaces* of ARIs, space here is not timeless and placeless and the spaces always exist within the larger concept of place. Indeed, place is crucial, given that one of the most important aspects of ARIs is their location—*where* they are rather than *what* they are. Once thought to be situated primarily in the inner-city—much like art and its institutions—ARIs today can be

...here in the midst of things¹: some thoughts on artist-run initiatives and place

Maria Miranda

1 A quote from Marcia Cavell (qtd in Malpas, 1999, p.17) “Philosophy begins in the only place it can, *here*, in the midst of things...” Marcia Cavell, *The Psychoanalytic Mind*, p.41.

found almost anywhere and everywhere. In this essay I want to entangle place and ARIs—to look at them and turn them through different prisms of thinking, asking how and why does place matter for ARIs and artists? How can we think about place—philosophically, culturally, economically and ethically—in ways that help us understand how ARIs shape and maintain practice for artists and their communities?

All over the place

The seeds for thinking about this project, *An Act of Showing: rethinking artist-run initiatives through place*, came from a wider project: *The Cultural Economy of Artist-Run Initiatives in Australia*, my ongoing research of artists' experiences of ARIs in Australia. For this research I criss-crossed Australia visiting ARIs and talking to artists about their experiences of working and being involved in these small, local, not-for-profit organisations. I've sat in coffee shops where the noise was sometimes so loud, I could barely hear anything; or on uncomfortable seats in art galleries, worrying about the effects of the hard surfaces on my sound equipment; I found myself inviting artists to visit me in my hotel room to talk about their experiences; another time finding a quiet place in a library to talk; and yet another walking along a river chatting about what it means to be an artist and what it means to work in an ARI.

In a way, the interview was always a ploy, a guise to enter and engage. And going to each particular ARI was immensely important. Checking websites and gathering facts and data online is one way of gathering information. But information is not experience or knowledge, nor, importantly for my research, the transformational embodied knowledge that unfolds in place. And while some artists have created a virtual ARI online,² most ARIs I visited maintain a physical space. So, for now, I want to think about the physical place and its attractions. Resonating with Tim Ingold's insistence that "[a] participant observation is *absolutely* not a technique of data collection ... [but rather] ... a way of knowing from the inside" (2013, p.5), I tried to visit as many ARIs as possible, understanding that information can never replace the material reality of each ARI. The smell and feel of the rooms and spaces. The particular dimensions and colours. The feel of the air against your skin; the sometimes stuffy pungent smell of the just-painted walls; and importantly, meeting artists and listening to their thoughts and ideas. For Ingold, the pursuit of *knowledge* and *understanding* are practices that entail acts of watching, listening and feeling and vitally, paying attention to what the world has to tell us. In thinking of 'knowledge' in this way,

2 *One Place After Another* is one such ARI that operates only as a website. Nevertheless, the project is singularly engaged with questions of location, place and site by pairing "emerging artists with locations to initiate an open dialogue between site and art." <http://www.oneplaceafteranother.org>

Ingold challenges traditional academic epistemologies based only on reason and instead insists that knowledge requires a bodily engagement with the world. In my case, visiting actual ARIs themselves fulfilled this promise. And perhaps it is this sense of a bodily engagement which propels artists to continue to set up these spaces/places where people can meet in the flesh, so to speak.

ARIs often occupy 'found' places which are already layered with memories and atmospheres. They are places that were built for other purposes, such as, warehouses, offices, shopfronts, food courts and garages. ARIs almost always exist in someone else's lost place, where something or someone else existed or lived. The walls and floors are testament to other lives, other sounds, other beings. There are often complex histories embedded in the buildings that they occupy and this is an important part of their attraction and atmosphere.³

Places exist in other places, nested

Walking along busy laneways, in inner-city Melbourne, crossing city streets, people drinking coffee, walking fast, walking so slowly I have to pass them. I hear voices.

"...John just got back."

"are you coming tonight?"

"yeah, I know."

"oh, no, really."

"have you tried...it's so great."

"you've gotta go."

Cars slide past, a tired-looking boy sits motionless, his back against the grimy street, holding a sign that explains his plight in great detail. He's hungry, homeless and one suspects, feeling hopeless.

I climb the stairs. These stairs are wooden, old and rickety. I go up to the first floor, turn the corner and cross the threshold into an art space. An artist-run initiative. The sounds of the city still there, muffled. Connected through sound.

Places are always connected to other places

Walking to the spaces. Through quiet streets, noisy streets, busy streets. Street

3 In recent theories of affect and non-representational theory, *atmosphere* has emerged as an important trope in understanding the forces that affect and effect everyday life. These theories understand humans and their activities and perceptions as part of assemblages or networks of movement, forces and activities. In this understanding of the world, the spaces and places of ARIs can be apprehended through a shift of emphasis – a shift in figure/ground, so to speak, where the background objects, such as the air and smells and something as intangible as the atmosphere is now actually tangible. In her PhD thesis, (2016, unpublished) *Vibrant Compositions: Atmospheres of Creativity in Sydney, Australia*, Alyssa Critchley gives a compelling account of informal creative spaces in Sydney through attending and attuning to their atmospheres and what she calls their 'vibe.' This vibe is what animates the spaces and, in fact, enables them to create the specific subcultural production that flourished between 2005 -2015. See also Kathleen Stewart (2011), Nigel Thrift (2008), Ben Anderson and James Ash (2015).

walls filled with graffiti. Bare streets. Walking through one place to get to another place. Moving through the streets, the town, the neighbourhood. The smells of coffee, pastry, fast food. Dirty air, clean air. Blue skies. Heavy rain.

Situated Knowledges

Writing in 1987 in a highly influential essay *Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective*, Donna Haraway argued for a situated and embodied knowledge. She called for knowledge that was locatable, knowledge that could be called to account (p.583). Knowledge is, indeed, always situated. We are always somewhere, even when we're working online. We do not leave behind our body, or 'meat', as the old saying went.⁴ In this sense ARIs are expressions of the locatable local, even if connected through various networks to other places, globally and nationally. Being situated and locatable, ARIs can give artists a sense of accountability for what is shown and who is showing—a relationship where the space of the ARI allows things to appear. ARIs can create and nurture local practices far away from the abstract centres of the art market and this maintains the possibility of local expression, local knowledge and local responsibility. This is what Chris Kraus, in describing an artist-run space in Mexico, called a “radical localism”:

... instead of leaving they have chosen to practice a radical localism, privileging authentic relationships and shared experience over the dislocation and competition of the international art world. (2013, p.38)

From the Ground Up

It's a truism that humans affect the environment. Think of climate change, deforestation, urban environments, road building, dams and other human impacts on the earth. Yet we too are affected by the “environing world” (Malpas, 1999, p.1). We live *in* the world and we are *of* the world and in important ways we cannot separate ourselves out from the world. Which means we can't simply act *on* the world as if outside it. In his book *Place and Experience: A Philosophical Topography*, Malpas argues that the significance of place is not to be found in our experience *of* places so much as in the grounding of experience *in* place:

The crucial point about the connection between place and experience is not, however, that place is properly something only encountered 'in'

4 In early cyberpunk science fiction, notably William Gibson's early novel *Neuromancer*, from 1984, 'meat' was the favoured term for the fleshy part of the body as it was imagined integrated with machine parts, in a world where people existed in 'cyberspace.'

experience, but rather that place is integral to the very structure and possibility of experience. (1999, p.31-32)

For Malpas, binding to place is not a contingent feature of human existence, but derives from the very nature of human thought, experience and identity as established in and through place. Indeed, he proposes that we can only understand human thought and experience through understanding place—an understanding through *where* we are—from the ground up.

For Indigenous Australia this is not news. The word ‘country’ in Aboriginal English expresses a profound connectedness to land and place that goes far beyond its simpler meaning in English. As Catherine Liddle explains:

The connection that Aboriginal people feel to our country is one of the hardest concepts to explain to the layman. Trying to frame this concept in modern language is like trying to grasp a two dimensional cup out of a piece of paper, it's the layers that make the cup palpable not the drawing of it.

Connection to country is inherent, we are born to it, it is how we identify ourselves, it is our family, our laws, our responsibility, our inheritance and our legacy. To not know your country causes a painful disconnection, the impact of which is well documented in studies relating to health, well being and life outcomes ... We are indistinguishable from our country which is why we fight so hard to hang on. (Liddle, 2015).

For non-Indigenous Australia considerations of place are always a troubled business—given the different relationship to land that is country and the colonial history of appropriation. Writing of an Australian spatial poetics, in the light of reading Bachelard in Australia, Jennifer Rutherford notes, “The production of space for white settler culture occurs always in a space of pre-existing spatial memory, imagination and invention, in which every act of housing is co-terminously an act of unhousing” (2010, p.114).

Keywords

Place is a relatively recent concept in the contemporary academy. Flicking through Raymond William’s influential text *Keywords* first published in 1976, I find no reference to ‘place’ or ‘space.’ Yet since the late 1970s there has emerged an enormous literature on *place* across all disciplines and fields from human geography, anthropology to philosophy and literature.

In his book *Getting Back into Place*, Edward Casey tells us that for “the past three centuries in the West—the period of ‘modernity’—place has come to be not only neglected but actively suppressed” (1993, p.xiv). Instead, time and space have been the privileged foci for philosophers and scientists alike: “For an entire epoch, place has been regarded as an impoverished second cousin of Time and Space, those two colossal cosmic partners that tower over modernity.” (1993, p.xiv). But this has not always been the case even in western philosophical thinking, where Aristotle, according to Casey, considered place to be fundamental. Significantly, Aristotle was following Archytas of Tarentum (428–347BC) who wrote a lost treatise on place and who himself, a Greek, was displaced and living in Tarentum, a Greek colony in southern Italy (Casey, 1993, p.14). Homesickness, that unfathomable sickness that befalls those far from home, has a long history, it seems.

In the updated *Keywords* (2005), place and even space have their own reference. Perhaps this reflects the last forty years of free-market economic dogma accompanying an expanded globalisation and accelerated mobility of capital and goods, all of which has highlighted the unequal relations between one place and another. Eco-feminist philosopher Val Plumwood uses the term ‘shadow places’ to make evident the often unseen and unrecognised connection between ourselves and those places that provide “our material and ecological support” (2008, p.1). She reminds us that a simple celebration of one’s own sense of place can be problematic—it can obscure the relations of power, where “privileged places thrive at the expense of exploited places” (2008, p.5). In bringing attention to the brave new world of globalisation that now connects and transects places across the globe in uneven and unequal relations of power and in questioning the anodyne notion of place as ‘dwelling,’ Plumwood unsettles any singular or romantic connection to one place. This raises questions of economics and place that chime with thinking about ARIs.

Faustian Economics: ethics, limits and ARIs

ARIs are a particular way of doing art. If we only think about art as a commodity or as merely part of the art market, then we miss ethical questions about why art (and ARIs) are important.

In *Faustian Economics: hell hath no limits*—a compelling essay of ethical outrage—Wendell Berry writes against our society’s deluded fantasy of *limitlessness*, where we imagine ourselves as potentially omniscient and omnipotent. He captures this current condition in biting terms like ‘industrial fundamentalism’ and ‘autistic industrialism’ and rails against waste and greed as the true reasons for global warming and climate change (n.d. 2008).

However it came about, this credo of limitlessness clearly implies a principled wish not only for limitless possessions but also for limitless knowledge, limitless science, limitless technology, and limitless progress. And, necessarily, it must lead to limitless violence, waste, war, and destruction. (n.d. 2008)

Berry understands that contrary to this doctrine and fantasy of limitlessness there are older traditions and understandings where human and earthly limits invite deeper and more meaningful relationships. And—boldly suggesting that current thinking, limited to science and technology solutions, needs to be re-evaluated—he calls for a return to the arts. In this he imagines a particular sort of art practice where limits are a defining and necessary requirement—the framing and composing that art practice draws upon, for instance.

In arguing against ideas of limitlessness Berry is aware of the gaps and losses of such an ideology. These include the importance of caretaking and neighbourliness, and rich cultural experiences—all significant features of ARI culture.

To deal with the problems, which after all are inescapable, of living with limited intelligence in a limited world, I suggest that we may have to remove some of the emphasis we have lately placed on science and technology and have a new look at the arts. For an art does not propose to enlarge itself by limitless extension but rather to enrich itself within bounds that are accepted prior to the work. (n.d. 2008)

Berry reminds us that an important aspect of respecting our limits is that of maintaining and sustaining our habitats and environments. To grow is one thing, but to maintain is quite another. ARIs maintain. It's these hardworking places that sustain, support, nurture and maintain, and it is simply these critical qualities that underline the importance of local places for artists and art making. Until something else emerges that performs this task, it is ARIs, fully employed, local and near that fulfil that role.

Boundaries and Connections

Just as Berry emphasises the need to understand our limitations and our place in the world, Malpas too proposes that place gives room to things and is essentially tied to limit and boundary (2016). He argues against dominant technological-modernist notions. This is welcome counsel in face of digital technology boosters for whom there are no limits. According to these enthusiasts,

we live in a boundless world of universal, globalised connection—connecting at such a speed that any possibility of responsibility is denied. It's too complex anyway, they say. But as Malpas cautions, there can be no ethics in the spatialised world of the technological. Ethics are necessarily tied to place and its boundaries, as ethical behaviour depends on the possibility of recognising others and this in turn depends on what he describes as “a boundary or horizon which allows things to appear, which allows others to appear before us” (2016). Malpas raises important questions about the modern project where ideas of progress reign supreme, fighting hard against any bounds or limits, and needing constant expansion with the heady desire to abolish any limit on human endeavours. In this sense the modern project of limitless growth is problematic for any consideration of place and ethics. This shines a different light on the way ARIs come and go—inviting us to appreciate this flux as counter to aspirations of limitless growth.

Oneiric Spaces

Just as place demands that we think about ethics, so too does it call for understandings of poetics. When Gaston Bachelard wrote of the “intimate manoeuvres” of the oneiric house, he certainly didn't have in mind the small spaces that many ARIs occupy. Yet in re-reading Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space* (1994) I was struck by the deep wells of reverie that Bachelard unfolds for the reader. Of course, as Rutherford and others have pointed out, reading Bachelard—with his universalising and innocent imaginary of the ‘house’—is obviously problematic for an Australian poetics of place, where any local poetics must always be “cognisant of a history of cross-cultural misdialogue, mistranslation, and misappropriation” (Rutherford: 2010, p.115).

It is Bachelard's notion of daydreaming that seduces me. Nobody talks about daydreaming anymore. Daydreaming needs solitude and boredom—or train travel—and this is something we as a culture have lost in our distracted days of podcasting, game-playing, fantasy and zombie TV shows. Travelling by train recently I notice that everyone is glued to their small screens—no daydreaming here, even as we're rocked by the steady movement of the train. It's as if we've simply forgotten how. Nevertheless, through this enormous distance of time and culture I glimpse a tiny connection with the places of ARIs. Oneiric spaces, intimate spaces, places for daydreaming. Like the intimate spaces of Bachelard's domestic dwelling, there is a strong connection between oneiric space and small spaces. For ARIs, small spaces allow for a poetic engagement and an easy sociability denied in larger, grander places. The smallness of ARIs is their strength, and their smallness creates a sense of intimacy and intensity. The small spaces of

ARIs may not have entered our deepest dreamscapes, yet they do hold a singular position within local histories of art and they can be of enormous importance for those who engage and get involved.

Conclusion

Visiting artist spaces has been, for me, a journey through other places. Each place is bounded and connected. Bounded and nested. And it is this boundary that allows things to appear. This matters, because in these bounded and intimate art spaces people, relationships and practices are engaged and can flourish. These art spaces are, on the whole, not cut off from the world around them, as previous white cube spaces aspired to. On the contrary, for now, the white cube leaks.

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A shared space in between

Anabelle Lacroix

I CAME TO artist-run initiatives at about the same time as I came to my own geographical thinking in 2011, when I relocated to Melbourne. Having lost personal anchors, I felt ungrounded and my eurocentrism was loud. The

westernised common-language of the international art world provided familiarity in this new experience, but I needed to find a voice to bridge my two geographies. Some would argue that this comes from a practice of “getting lost” (Solnit, 2005). For me, this happened through working in, and with, artist-run initiatives (ARIs). These experiences generated many encounters and conversations that have shaped my work—many of which continue until today, while demonstrating that established structures and methodologies in the artworld can be challenged through collective ventures. This is how I met Maria Miranda, years before we came to work together and co-edit this book.

A geographical thinking can be applied to further understand artist-run initiatives, and critically reflect on their role within the arts. I will draw on reflections from curating *An Act of Showing* (17-27 May 2017), an exhibition at Testing Grounds in Melbourne, which involved 21 ARIs and an Aboriginal-owned art centre—as well as research undertaken as part of *The Cultural Economy of Artist-Run Initiatives*, Maria Miranda’s research project. To me, a geographical thinking doesn’t only include a rooted practice of radical localism (Kraus, 2012). It requires balancing with an act of looking outward: thinking through our relationship with others in a wider context. In the exhibition *An Act of Showing*, two of the ARIs were situated in South-East Asia to explore relationships within the Asia-Pacific region. As such, the concept of a world existing in constant relation opposes the western-centric and colonial idea of a ‘third world’. This was conceptualised by Edouard Glissant, who was a poet-theorist and philosopher from Martinique¹ By conceiving the world as an archipelago—a set of interconnected islands of cultures in relation to one another through processes of cross-fertilisation and creolization²—Glissant offered a new world-view. It is only through a geographical shift, the experience of the world from the south, that I came to truly understand the meaning of Glissant’s worldview beyond established binaries and hierarchies.

1 An island and French territory in the Caribbean. It was colonised in 1635.

2 A mix between Black and European cultures that results from colonisation, especially in the Caribbean.

An archipelago became a powerful image informing how I see artist-run initiatives. As a result of this post-modernist characterisation, the exhibition *An Act of Showing* endeavoured to reflect the ARIs as their own independent island of cultures that have sprung up for one reason or another, barely keeping afloat through a constant flux of incoming and outgoing artists, board members, funding crises, and ideas. The underlying principle of each organisation was always driven by self-determination and existing in relation to their own localities and the world. Glissant's powerful notion of culture being built in relationship with others in a colonial context is echoed by Australian scholar Nicholas Thomas, who defines 'colonial cultures' as a hybrid mix of coloniser and colonised voices (Thomas, 1994) to challenge colonialism's perceived monolithic character. In the arts, this monolithic character can still be felt and this is why I will also discuss research undertaken on Aboriginal-owned art centres and how connections between art centres and artist-run initiatives could enrich our understanding of contemporary art in Australia and support emerging voices.

An Act of Showing: curatorial approach, artistic responses

We often think about ARIs from within, focusing on organisational structures, funding and the projects that happen inside them. ARIs are characterized by an important commitment to collaboration and a shared vision (Jones, 2007). Yet each ARI is also necessarily and constitutively different. With the exhibition *An Act of Showing*, we aimed at providing a specific lens through notions of place and localism, to think about the reasons why there are differences between organisations—rather than presenting an unhinged celebration of these alternative art 'spaces'. Place is not a unified concept, and for this reason it suited this exhibition well. It acknowledges the many layers of personal, geographical, socio-political and cultural subjectivities that layer-up in one space. Localism accommodates the movement of what might be considered a centre from which relationships radiate. It suggests a reversing of hierarchical structures of the art world, from capital centres to peripheries, from institutions to underground spaces. This view seeks a more egalitarian starting point from which objects and subjects exist in relation to one another; as entities in their own right.³

3 A shift in positioning ARIs between outsider to insider was striking in *Institutions by Artists* (Podveska, K., & Khonsary, J., 2012) which set an example for thinking about the role of artists within the institution of art and the value of self-organised activities on an international scale. In Australia, there were earlier projects such as the exhibition *Pitch your own tent* at Monash University Museum of Art (MUMA) in 2005, the festival *Making Space* in Victoria in 2007, or *We are Here* symposium in Sydney in 2011. These were all accompanied by significant publications that also contributed to a repositioning and re-valuing of the network of DIY activities that were traditionally considered 'minor'.

In Australia, culture is continuous for Indigenous people over time immemorial.⁴ Yet, Indigenous led projects were not often included in artist-run surveys, festivals or networks. The idea that ARIs in Australia originated in the 1970s and 1980s in Sydney and Melbourne is also very well established.⁵ However, Aboriginal artists had already come together as collectives in spaces in the 1940s and 1950s. For example, Albert Namatjira started a collective painting studio in Hermannsburg (Ntaria) in the Northern Territory, getting the Hermannsburg School started as a movement—the first Aboriginal movement that was accepted by the art world as modern art (McLean, 2011). The way in which the studio operated from a mission, as well as many others in remote regions, originates in Australia's own colonial and contested history. However, such studios generated some of the oldest and continuously running art centres in Australia to this day, such as Ernabella Arts, established in 1948. Therefore, I came to think that ideas of localism, artist agency and self-determination could enrich our understanding of contemporary art. For this reason we invited ARIs, Aboriginal owned art centres and First Nations galleries to take part in the exhibition.

My methodology had to enact core ideas of the project: collaboration, autonomy and sharing agency. During the development of the exhibition Maria Miranda and I collaborated on every level as part of Maria's research project *The Cultural Economy of Artist-Run Initiatives in Australia*. Consequently, the curatorial role was very much shared between us and we chose to divest curatorial agency to each ARI—to exhibit the exhibitors, so to speak. We asked each ARI to choose how they would be represented in the exhibition, by commissioning an artist to send an artwork in response to what place and localism meant to them. Their responses had to be generated through a creative process and these grew beyond what we had imagined, from a sculptural pop-up book, collaborative videos, installation, new works and existing ones, all of which spoke to the ideas important to the ARI who selected them.

At Testing Grounds, agency and autonomy were also enacted in the exhibition through the stand-alone presentation of the works, off the walls. Artworks were displayed both on an independent structure in the gallery space—which resembled a line drawing of a house⁶—and throughout the site and its overhead superstructure. To my surprise, the exhibition was regularly renamed “An Act of *Sharing*” instead of “An Act of *Showing*” by many participants of the project. This, I

4 It is said to be between 65,000 and 80,000 years for modern day science. <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2017/jul/19/dig-finds-evidence-of-aboriginal-habitation-up-to-80000-years-ago> Retrieved 1 June 2018.

5 For example, Inhibodress Gallery in Sydney in 1970 is seen as Australia's first artist-run space. <https://artguide.com.au/mike-parr>. Retrieved 28 May 2018.

6 This is also a visual metaphor in reference to the many ARIs established in residential spaces.

thought, was telling of the level of generosity, investment and openness that was happening all around us in the preparation of the exhibition. Collectively, the exhibition constituted a material conversation between the works, and a breadth of voices in relation to ARIs at a point in time. This device generated questions and highlighted differences about current concerns and methodologies. The show also reflected the nature of ARIs more broadly, with some projects unable to go ahead due to changes of conditions or time constraints, and others that generated new collaborations, expanded social networks or conversations. And there were totally unpredictable works, such as c3's project exploring the place of practice, a collaboration between Jon Butt and Ben Woods composed of technological site responsive beacons, photographs, online blogging, walks and the carrying of a rock in a pocket.

Aboriginal art centres and artist-run Initiatives

Art centres and artist-run initiatives are small-scale spaces for the production and exhibition of contemporary art. Both are often (but not always) associated with artist studios, have very few staff and resources, and work very closely with (or are run by) their boards. For example, established art centres such as Ernabella Arts and Ananguku Arts on Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Lands or APY Lands (South Australia, est. 1948), or Warmun Art Centre, Gija Country (Western Australia, est. 1998), proudly trace their establishment to artists of their region.⁷ To explore this connection further, and the histories of art centres through the lens of artist agency, I undertook a research trip in Western Australia in February 2017, where I was hosted by independent artist Alana Hunt and Chris Griffiths, the Cultural Programs Coordinator at Waringarri Aboriginal Arts.

At Waringarri Aboriginal Arts in Kununurra in Miriwoong country, which is one of the oldest and the first established art centre in the Kimberley region in the late 1970s, community leader Teddy Carlton explained how the history of the art centre is entwined with the Aboriginal corporation in this area—which includes a now separate radio station and other businesses—as well as the local politics of the town. The art centre is thriving and growing. Cathy Cummins, the art centre Manager openly said, “yes, we are artist-run. The board of Aboriginal Elders are my bosses.”⁸ Cummins, a non-Indigenous Australian, explained the two-way relationship that had developed over twelve years with the Elders of the community in developing and delivering projects for Waringarri Aboriginal Arts. The life of the art centre is the studios. It was there that I met Ben Ward, who comes to work every

7 Statements on art centres websites: <http://www.ernabellaarts.com.au/about-ba/>; <https://www.anangukuarts.com.au/about-us/>; <http://warmunart.com.au/history-culture/>. Retrieved 15 November 2017.

8 Interview with Cathy Cummins, Art Centre Manager at Waringarri Arts, 28 February 2017.

day to paint his family's Country, now submerged under Lake Argyle, the second largest fresh water dam in Australia, covering 1,000km² of land. These paintings were celebrated a few months after my visit, at the 2017 Sydney Art Fair. Links between art centres and other contemporary art organisations or networks are rarely explored; more often they are simplified. The work that art centres do rests on meaningful relationships and trust between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. As Alana Hunt argues, "it is important to critically reflect on, and try to understand the multiple functions Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people play as creators, collaborators and consumers ... a significance that is beyond providing a story to the art market" (Hunt et al., 2016, p.59). As such, stories of success, and problematic ones especially, are not often discussed or critically reflected upon with or outside of the community.⁹ It appears that the work of art centres isn't well discussed and understood. This contributes to a certain isolation within the art world, whereas art centres and artist-run initiatives often share similar origins and future goals.

Waringarri Aboriginal Arts supports over 100 artists and has developed programs to support experimentation in art making, particularly for its emerging practitioners. The centre runs a gallery, educational programs, public art projects and has recently developed cultural tours for visitors and local businesses. Studios, framing workshop, gallery and office are staffed with Indigenous workers. Education, job creation and economic sustainability are priorities for the art centre, it is a key component of the wellbeing of the community, as Elders are artists as well as leaders of their community. Consequently, the context of art centres is unique, and gives each art centre its specificity. At the same time, we can't ignore the fact that ARIs are diversifying in the same way, becoming semi-commercial, or developing educational programs, such as *Blindside* or *BUS Projects* among others, who provide curriculum tours or work with local schools. This, and similar organizational structures and scale, illustrate that there are relevant points of connections to be made, and new conversations to be had, between ARIs and Aboriginal owned art centres.

Two hundred kilometres south of Kununurra on Gija country lies Warmun Art Centre. When I asked about the origin of the art centre, current studio coordinator Gabriel Nodea brought me to the front of the building and pointed to a hill. He explained the significance of the site in the region through its story, the Kangaroo Dreaming. The origin of the art centre is, literally, the Ngarranggarni,¹⁰ the dreaming. In the gallery space, artist Lindsay Malay further explained to me the deep connections of art, land rights and navigating everyday financial

9 Conversation with Alana Hunt, Kununurra, 03 March 2017.

10 Miriwoong and Gija word for Dreaming. Visit to Warmun Art Centre, 01 March 2017.

pressures—all of which, he explained, were tied to place.¹¹ This echoes a comment made by Chris Griffiths, Cultural Programs Coordinator at Waringarri Arts, about the sensitivity of art production: one can't just paint, but needs to know what to paint and if they are allowed to paint it.¹²

Waringarri and Warmun art centres work closely together, as there are cultural overlaps in the region that stretch back in time as much as they are alive in the present. Both centres are also part of the Association of Northern Kimberley and Arnhem Aboriginal Artists (ANKAAA), an Aboriginal artist network that includes 48 remote Art centres in total.¹³ It is exciting to see that ANKAAA has stood strong over 30 years of changes in funding and government priorities, while Contemporary Art Organisations Australia (CAOA) which was established much later than ANKAAA, in 1995,¹⁴ and none of the ARI networks have survived this period of time.¹⁵ For this reason, and the deterioration of funding conditions for small to medium organisations, BUS Projects initiated All Conference in 2017, a national ARI network modelled on Common Practice (UK).¹⁶ It aims to generate advocacy through knowledge production with research, online library and public programs.¹⁷ The resilience of art centres as well as the strength of its industry network is unprecedented and needs to be celebrated. Finally, as we pointed to commonalities between ARIs and Art centres in this section, it is important to also remember that there are differences between the two types of organisations. These differences should account for cultural specificities, for Indigenous-led methods of working as well as the role that art centres play in the dissemination of the artworks to the art market and museums. Increasingly, both ARIs and art centres share common goals—to support the production of Australian art and their artists.

11 Lindsay Malay explained that for him painting is a way of getting freedom, a way to look after country in return of country looking after him, to pass the Dreaming onto others and express culture in its current form. It's also a way of surviving as Malay won his land title but ongoing land taxes create enormous financial pressure. Interview with Malay at Warmun Art Centre, 01 March 2017.

12 Cultural tour at Waringarri Arts, 02 March 2017 .

13 ANKAAA is the peak advocacy and support agency for Aboriginal artists working individually and through 48 remote art centres spread across a vast area of approximately 1 million square kilometres. ANKAAA serves four regions, including Arnhem Land, Darwin/Katherine, the Kimberley and the Tiwi Islands regions. Many of its 5000 members are internationally acclaimed artists and important community leaders. <http://ankaaa.org.au/> Retrieved 7 March 2018.

14 CAOAs website <http://caoa.com.au/about/>. Retrieved 18 March 2018.

15 Such as VIA-n, the Victorian Initiatives of Artists Network which generated the *Making Space* project and publication in 2007.

16 Conversation with Channon Goodwin, Director of BUS Projects, Autumn 2017. Common Practice was founded in 2009 as an advocacy group in London. It includes a small number of like-minded organisations that take turns in administrating the network. <http://www.commonpractice.org.uk/home/>. Retrieved 29 April 2018.

17 All Conference website <https://allconference.org.au>. Retrieved 3 March 2018.

Beyond a bland approach to place

In *An Act of Showing*, we presented a large number of arts organisations in a small exhibition, and their diversity was a choice—a political choice. For Australian eco-feminist philosopher Val Plumwood, a critical understanding of place can only be achieved through owning multiplicity. For Plumwood, a “sense of place” is celebrated too often through a singular, globally dominant narrative that dismisses what she calls “shadow places” that are kept outside our attention and knowledge by mechanisms of capitalism (2008, p.1). Therefore, a critical multiplicity is urgently needed. This can be achieved by rescuing forces and ideas that are perceived as minor or silenced, to bring complexity and diversity to a nonlinear understanding of place (2008, p.1-3). This multiplicity should itself not be uncontested; rather, power relationships also need to be analysed and understood. Plumwood argues that shadow places can be widely applied, from daily life to the art world. This is critical to the understanding of Australian contemporary art and its places of production and exhibition of art. We need to ask ourselves whose place is made better, whose is made worse? Plumwood argues that shadow places are also connected globally through exploitation that benefits some places to the detriment of others. Both ARIs and art centres can be seen as the shadow places of large art institutions and museums—overlooked spaces whose relevance and connections need to be further analysed for a more complex and inclusive understanding of contemporary art that allows a deeper understanding of the multiplicity that composes culture around the country.

This project has shown that there are greater links that can be drawn between ARIs and Aboriginal art centres. In doing so, a greater criticality needs to be developed to address both the type of organisation and an analysis of power relations. A lot can be learned from the resilience of art centres—their connectivity, the support they provide to artists, emerging voices and art forms, and their educational programs. The possible connections between ARIs and art centres were reinforced during the symposium; for example, for supporting the development of emerging Aboriginal artists in art centres that are not yet included in the institutional circuit through museum commissions or acquisitions. Curator Kade McDonald, who has extensive experience working with art centres and was a founding member of BUS Projects in 2001, shared ideas about how ARIs could support the presentation of works by emerging Aboriginal artists, with emphasis on reciprocity being at the centre of projects, rather than generic application processes. ARIs and art centres can also help artists further understand the complexities of making work on Aboriginal land, as well as an atonement and sensitivity to time and place. This has been an interest of Watch

This Space in Alice Springs through recent artist residencies and exchanges with other ARIs in Australia.

Finally, the multifaceted nature of art centres reminds me of the way some artist-run spaces in South-East Asia eschew a traditional exhibition program, but rather favour adaptable projects with studios, residencies, exhibitions and publications. These ARIs, such as Open-Contemporary Art Center (Taipei) and Ruang MES 56 (Yogyakarta) both of which took part in *An Act of Showing*, are primarily places to work and collaborate rather than a gallery for exhibition full stop. It is my view that this approach generated some of the most interesting curatorial projects¹⁸ and offers a more sustainable alternative to the increasingly expensive 3-week gallery rental model that is widespread around Australia.

Returning to Glissant's image of the archipelago and our ARI-islands, we can conclude that the space in-between them is really what requires our attention. This is a space full of potential connection, exchange and transformation of a common world unit. Glissant's position on this one-world—which refuses hierarchies of North and South—deserves celebration for the way it pre-empted the development of global connectivity as we know it. As such, the contemporaneity of art has to be seen from a global context—and this is why it is critical that organisations share urgencies and address their different positions.¹⁹ Only through these questions can we create alternative models for cultural production and social currency. For political scientist and feminist Françoise Vergès, the ocean is also the space between colonised and coloniser. It is a space that is not often explored and demands criticality.²⁰ It is everything but an empty space, because cultural transformation is not something that happens in isolation. This space in between is the juice we bathe in.

18 OCAC's CO-TEMPORAY or *ThaiTai: A Measure of Understanding*, visit <http://www.ocac.com.tw/> or MES's restructure with responsive series Café Society, Applied Theory and Raw Power workshops, visit <http://mes56.com/> for more information.

19 *Epistemologies of the south*, A dialogue with Zdenka Badovinac, Patrick Flores and Jesús Carrillo. Recorded at Moderna galerija (Ljubljana, Slovenia). L'Internationale Online Magazine, http://www.internationaleonline.org/dialogues/3_epistemologies_of_the_south retrieved 6 March 2018.

20 Françoise Vergès, *Politics of Forgetfulness*, keynote address at Face Value Transmediale conference 2018, retrieved 15 April 2018.

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ARIs and Whiteness

Paola Balla

WE ARE DIVERSE mobs right across Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island communities, and as Richard Bell's Theorem explains, the construct of the Aboriginal art industry and the notion of Aboriginal art is, "a white thing" (2002).

ARIs are a white thing too ... they are largely mainstream, white spaces. But the first artist-run spaces were actually Aboriginal with our Peoples on Country making work collaboratively, in stone quarries, women's basket weaving circles (like my Wemba-Wemba Matriarchs), women's and men's string making, tree carvings, scar trees, possum skin cloak making, weaving eel traps like my Gundijtmara People have for generations, and countless other art and cultural practices.

These were centres where Aboriginal kids played with toy boomerangs and boats, and our grandmothers, mothers and aunties made flour out of grains for cake and bread making—as seen in the beauty and rituals documented lovingly by Bruce Pascoe in *Dark Emu* (2014, p.22–23). These were and are 'art centres,' as are the urban, regional and remote art centres that produce community art from Ancestral stories, lived experiences and new stories.

White history has lied about us being here in this place, saying that we had not built structures when we had, that we didn't live in villages when we did, or that we didn't travel purposefully but we did—up and down well-worn roads and tracks that we deliberately travelled Country with.

This false narrative stands planted in the social fabric of Australia but is challenged by First Nations artists, writers and activists in their work. Without challenge, these stories remain like murdered trees, dead from salt and pesticide poisoning from irrigation, with their branches lurching dangerously above.

The genocide of our Peoples is perpetrated along with an ongoing ecocide of Country, making the work of First Nations artists of urgent and serious consideration by all others, particularly as we face ongoing traumas, deaths in custody, escalating suicide rates and our life expectancy remains lower than all others in our lands.

These lies were about our built structures, villages, houses, grain pots and stores, our intricate and complex eel traps, fish farms, paths, tracks, caves, dance and ceremony circles, cemeteries, boundary markers, murals, sculptures, carved

and scar trees. Lies about their presence after destroying and stealing them—some sent to England and then to other nations in Europe to stagnate and in museums around the world, and in Australia where they are still held hostage and against their spiritual will and ours.

Others were burnt, smashed and hidden, crushed, buried, like our bones, skulls and remains. My Aunt told me a story that around three years ago, a white farmer that she knew from outside of Echuca, in north east Victoria, on Yorta Yorta Country had witnessed another white farmer smashing the skeletal remains of an Aboriginal person with an axe in his yard, including a skull. When the farmer feebly suggested that this was wrong, the axe wielding farmer just laughed. Don't want bloody Aboriginals showing up and creating a fuss, or making a part of 'his' property, even the smallest part returned to *'them.'*

Our notion of place, belonging, participation with Country and all it encompasses escapes the white axe-wielding farmer. It's actually likely that his wealth, extracted from that Country, ends up in the white bread and white milk that I end up ingesting—via a supermarket in Footscray where I live on Kulin Country—and my well-being is compromised by relying on ration foods once again.

Healing and Repair

My place making through my art making and all that relates to it, like writing, speaking, teaching, curating and collaborating with others, is a process in which I attempt to articulate the tensions, anguish, grief and loss that the ongoing colonial project causes and to create places of healing and repair.

My presence living on Kulin Country is always in respect and acknowledgment of Kulin Country traditional owners, the Boon Wurrung and Wurundjeri specifically. It's where I gave birth to my children, and where my mother gave birth to me. My Wemba-Wemba and Gunditjmara identity is embedded in my blood, my history and my lived experience of growing up Koorie in my family and community. My identity is also informed by my father's Calabrese identity and his experience as a migrant and the racism he experiences but does not suffer from.

One of my very first solo exhibitions was at Trocadero Art Space in Footscray. The opening was busy and full of mob from my community, heaps of black fullas from the west and others who schlepped over from the north with the obligatory jokes about *Footscary* and *Footscrazy*, both of which I find insulting, predictable and boring. Now we see it as desirable, and even worse, acceptable with the rate of gentrification in Footscray escalating, with rents sky rocketing, house prices out of control, and the proliferation of coffee shops, burger joints, Americana

style restaurant names that appropriate black American rappers flourishing and somehow making the area more *normal* i.e. white. This is a crassly curated and contrived street credibility. I thought it was just fine before. I mean I love good coffee too, but at what cost?

We have a lack of artist-run spaces owned by our community, but we have Footscray Community Arts Centre (FCAC) and all that offers us in collaboration. Along with Uncle Larry Walsh, Aunty Carolyn Briggs, Karen Jackson and former Director Jen Barry, I established the Indigenous Arts and Cultural Program and Wominjeka Festival there in 2010. I was so passionate about, and almost desperate for, a black cultural space that was safe for us to be in, visit and create in. One award winning outcome of the program was the online project and exhibition, *Blak Side Story*.¹

WICKED—an earlier Aboriginal arts collective that I co-founded with friends Mandi Barton and Annette Sax, and which included Leanne Clarke and Andrew Travis—became an important moveable collective (without a space) to create exhibitions. We had a couple of successful grants from the City of Melbourne and Creative Victoria and a few shows, including *Connecting to Country*, at Birrarung Community Gallery, Bunjilaka Aboriginal Cultural Centre, Melbourne Museum and the Hunt Club, a Brimbank Council gallery.

We all needed somewhere to gather safely in the west. We had a community of around four thousand First Nations mob in the western suburbs, which included Mandi, Annette, and significant leading artists like Maree Clarke and Vicki Couzens and musicians Robbie Bundle and Bart Willoughby.

Making art and exhibitions creates temporary spaces of safety and belonging for us as displaced in urban spaces if we are not Traditional Owners of Country—and most of us are off our own homelands. We come to Melbourne for the same reasons non-Aboriginal people do, for work, education, to participate in city culture.

But, in considering showing our works, we don't often think of ARIs first. I think there are a number of reasons for this—one is the demographic of ARIs themselves, which are predominantly young white middle class art graduates and this doesn't include us. I know I'm making a generalisation here, but predominantly it's true. There are individual Indigenous artists who have shown with ARIs like I did, or others that collaborate with non-Indigenous artists regularly.

As First Nations artists, we don't all go to art school. Our artists are incredibly diverse with a broad span of experiences and generations of art making, and we may not be familiar with ARIs if we are not city-based artists familiar with contemporary art circles.

1 <http://www.blaksidestory.com/quilt.html>.

Invitation and Reciprocity

We often go where we are wanted and invited. Invitation is such an important cultural protocol practice, as is reciprocity. Reciprocity is never undervalued in First Nations communities. Linda Tuhawi Smith writes of it with the Three Rs—“respect, responsibility and reciprocity.”(2012)

We as First Nations Peoples are expected to give so much, yet often receive so little in return. Requests to speak or perform for free still occur, as do invitations to make art for free with the dangling of the limp carrot, “it will be good for your career” as I was told by an AFL club a few years ago when invited to design their Indigenous Round jumper for nothing. I declined and informed them that working for nothing is not good for my career, or any Indigenous artist as we already give a lot to our communities and others already benefit from our disadvantage. I could only deduce that this organisation wanted to be seen participating in a reconciliatory way without actually practicing it.

There is a growing awareness, though, particularly in the Melbourne arts scene—which I think does it particularly well—and I am often encouraged at the amount of support we find outside of our communities. Important symbolic practices, including having an Acknowledgment of Country, at all openings, not just First Nations shows, but to recognise whose Lands you are on is vital to authentic change and meaningful cultural contributions.

Inviting First Nations artists to exhibit, curate, take up residencies and hand over some of the power of having place are privileges that need to be acknowledged, even in unfunded ARIs. Giving doesn't always equate with money, but demonstrating respect and responsibility is priceless. When we ask allies, *what are you willing to give up or share?* We mean it. We're challenging you to think deeply, critically and analytically. We're really good at it. We've been doing it while we survive the apocalypse of invasion, genocide and ongoing colonisation, including gentrification.

Though many artists struggle financially, they do not struggle the same way that we do as Indigenous artists. We are disadvantaged at a greater rate through trans-generational traumas, structural racism and ongoing colonial injury. Not only is it financially difficult, but the majority of Indigenous curatorial roles are held by non-Indigenous people, and by white people. Curator Leuli Eshraghi's important online survey of Indigenous Curatorial Roles in galleries and museums is a critical resource. Indigenous funding rounds are highly contested and the pressure is increased by constant changes to programs—community cultural and arts programs are often funded over relatively short periods.

Aboriginal Identity is a Lived Experience

Our Aboriginal art communities are also populated with newly identifying Indigenous people who often seek jobs in the arts, and seek identity building through attempting to become a part of our art community, whilst avoiding and ignoring existing family and grass roots community histories and relationships.

These people also fail to identify their living families and communities and instead make vague comments relating to an Aboriginal Ancestor, and someone in their family having recently 'discovered' their Aboriginality. Instead of taking time and investing in the long practice of cultural knowing, being and doing, they dive head first into jobs, roles, projects and positions that should be reserved for people who are culturally competent and aware of the responsibilities of community connectedness. This takes time and practice, guidance and commitment.

A hindrance to the progress of collaboration with white organisations is the experience of being invited into projects, funding applications, events and publications at the very last minute without proper time for consideration. This hinders the development of relationships or trust with organisations. We know that we are often used to assuage some kind of white guilt or funding requirement. Surprisingly and refreshingly welcome is when we are invited because our contributions are recognised and respected as vital to having an honest and relevant dialogue about the truth of the past, present and imagined future.

Colonial narratives are entwined with the guilt of perpetration, mistakes, and failing to listen to us—and are spoken back to and pushed back on by blak artists. We are always striving to create spaces and opportunities in organisations that benefit from dispossession of Aboriginal peoples, in particular city spaces that centralised the colonial frontiers on rich, fertile accessible Country to coasts and waterways.

What has frustrated me is when I meet non-First Nations artists who situate themselves as 'outsider' artists, but neglect to acknowledge actual fringe dwelling peoples, dispossessed First Nations Peoples. It is incongruous, white-centric and exploits white privilege.

Acknowledgement

Looking at a number of ARIs exhibiting in the exhibition *An Act of Showing*, it's interesting to note which ARIs do and don't acknowledge Aboriginal Traditional Owners and local Aboriginal communities in which they are located and the communities in which they operate.

A statement on a website homepage is either absent or present and immediately recognizes that they are on Country and what their presence is in

relation to this. These early signposts indicate things to us, how aware the space may be, how welcoming or interested they are in not only acknowledging us, but potentially interested in working with us. Acknowledgement of Country also demonstrates a critical self-awareness. For example, ACE Open in Adelaide has a beautiful acknowledgment of Country in hand painted lettering just as you walk into the space, written in both English and Kurna Language acknowledging Kurna Country of Adelaide. I felt assured, encouraged and relieved to see Kurna Country respected in this way. Of course, these are symbolic, but they mean something to us, culturally our lives have always and will always be tied to symbols; these are the ties to our identity, our blood our People and Country. These signs are inexpensive and easy to achieve in art spaces. Just get it done.

One of the reasons, too, I think we don't show in ARIs widely is that the cost of staging shows, paying for spaces and having the time to sit shows are challenging for many First Nations artists. And we are often working across generations and experiences, from young artists—sometimes including children in community projects—to Elders. The notion of an Elder having to chase funding, pay for gallery fees and sitting their own show is unreasonable and insulting. They deserve to be supported, respected and supported to show their work and not have to worry about how.

The other reason is that we often show where we are invited and the financial costs are lightened through the spaces being funded. For example, council galleries or our own community spaces, such as the Koorie Heritage Trust or Blak Dot Gallery. These spaces know that we are disadvantaged financially and by whiteness itself and are funded to support our participation without excessive costs to artists. There are huge cultural differences in the experiences we have in spaces like these, where we are understood culturally and feel safe—we don't have to explain our identities or our needs, and our ways of being and doing. Going into unknown spaces for us is risky business.

The opportunity for Indigenous artists to collaborate with ARIs is full of potential and waiting to be fulfilled. The opportunity for ARIs to be more inclusive, culturally competent and open to collaborative curatorial models with Indigenous artists, curators and community people is an invitation waiting to happen. We are sovereign, self-determining peoples and are the experts, knowledge holders and willing collaborators when the respect and honesty is there.

My dream includes more First Nations run ARIs and more invitations and collaborations between existing ARIs and our Peoples. Let's see what happens.

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AS A MĀORI-AUSTRALIAN artist who is living, working and making in Narrm (Melbourne) on the unceded territory of the Kulin Nation, I am accustomed to being one of the few brown faces in a cultural landscape (namely, the Melbourne arts scene) that is predominantly white. Narrm (Melbourne) is where I have lived continuously since I was eight years

old. Narrm (Melbourne) is certainly a multi-cultural city and yet the following is also true; I was the only Māori in my art school as an undergraduate. I was the only Māori (or indigenous student) in my MFA (Masters of Fine Art). Currently, I am the only Māori PhD candidate in my Art Faculty. I am unaware of any other Māori, Fine Art PhD candidate in Victoria right now.

Often, I am not only ‘the only Māori’, but in some instances, I am the first Māori within these spaces (but certainly not the last). It is only as recently as 2002 that Maureen Lander became the first Māori ever to gain a Fine Arts Doctorate from a New Zealand University (Aho, 2017). Given this, it is not surprising that the numbers of Māori students studying fine art at doctorate level in Australia is so small. In November 2016, I gave a paper at the 7th Biennial International Indigenous Research Conference, hosted by Ngā Pae o te Māramatanga, Auckland University, Aotearoa, New Zealand where the majority of Māori doctoral students were studying law, psychology and nursing, rather than fine art.

The weight of being ‘the only’ representative of Māoridom, or at times, of any indigenous culture within fine art academia and art institutions, does not always sit comfortably on my shoulders. Sometimes I would like to have the luxury of being able to identify as just ‘an artist’ rather than having to ‘represent’ a people, a region, or the entire world of indigeneity, as if that were even possible! However, as there are so few of us in these spaces and while I have access to resources that others in my community do not (such as my education), I am bound to represent my community—sometimes by choice (in the way I identify myself) and sometimes by how I am perceived by others (simply by being brown in a white space). I can only try to represent in a way that makes my community feel pride, not shame. Studying, working and making within the walls of institutions whose culture does not reflect my own can be tiring; it is exhausting explaining the basics

Holding space: the importance of Blak ARIs (from a brown girl’s perspective)

Kirsten Lyttle

of colonisation and white privilege to those who live under the invisible cloak of its normalisation. Blak Dot Gallery in the Wurundjeri lands of Brunswick, is for me and for many artists of colour I've spoken to, one of few truly culturally safe arts spaces in Melbourne.

Initially, when I was approached to write a piece on Blak Dot Gallery, I was interested but wary. Blak Dot Gallery is an artist-run space that I feel strongly about. Blak Dot is a safe space where I am one among many, instead of one of a few. My guard was up for a reason—I, along with many indigenous artists of colour have concerns that their inclusion, especially in art projects, is tokenistic. Too often, Blak and Brown names act as an addition made to tick a box in a grant application or some other government or institutional qualifier. I have seen cases where the organisers of said art projects are the ones who reap funding rewards and social prestige, while Blak and Brown artists and their communities are left out in the cold. Moreover, how can I, as a Māori-Australian artist, talk about Blak Dot Gallery, art-making and notions of place, when I am not **tangata whenua**? (the local indigenous people born of the land. In indigenous knowledge systems, the people who have authority in a particular place). I have wrestled with this question and sought out conversations and meetings in order to figure out how, and if, my voice can have resonance on this topic. From the organisers of this project *An Act of Showing: rethinking artist-run initiatives through place*, Maria Miranda and Anabelle Lacroix; to the unstoppable force that is Kimba Thompson, Blak Dot Gallery Director, independent curator and all-round Boss at making things happen for indigenous, pacific and artists of colour; my peers, namely, other artists of colour who see Blak Dot as 'our' Gallery; and Aunties in the community—how do I explain the unique and important role that Blak Dot Gallery has in holding space (creating and maintaining safe space, physically and conceptually) for indigenous, pacific and artists of colour?

I have decided that I can only speak of my own experience, of what Blak Dot Gallery means for me. It's a space I have extensively shown photography, woven photographs and video artwork in. It's a space where I have participated in several workshops as both a facilitator and as a participant. It's a space where I have given artist talks and listened to others speaking about their art practice. It's a space where I have had too many wines and laughed so hard my face ached. It's the space that I have chosen for my PhD examination exhibition, to be held in 2018, because it's so important for me to bring my academic markers out of the predominantly white walls of their institution/s and into a Blak space to evaluate my artwork and thesis.

The first time I ever visited Blak Dot Gallery was in 2011, when I went to the opening of the Melbourne Fringe show *Re:Appropriate*. I cannot put into words

how uplifting it was for me to walk into the gallery and see a crowd of brown faces with features and colouring mirroring my own. It was the first time in my career that I was one of many, surrounded by peers, who, like me, were exploring issues of indigenous identity, representation, colonisation and urbanisation, among other things through their art-making. In the catalogue, I was touched to see Tongan-Australian artist Frances Tapueluelu's dedication to one of my art mentors from Aotearoa, Jim Vivieaere (Cook Island Maori artist and curator) who had recently passed. I have since experienced many links, connections and intersections like this through Blak Dot gallery. Someone you meet at an opening knows other people that you know from Queensland, or Aotearoa (New Zealand), or somewhere in the Pacific, or reaching across the Pacific Ocean to Turtle Island's (North America's) First Nation and Metis People. When, in November 2013, the National Gallery of Victoria opened its *Melbourne Now* exhibition, I should not have been surprised that the majority of the indigenous artists displayed, I had first seen at Blak Dot. Or, that when I meet a Māori or Pacific Islander artist who has just arrived in Melbourne, Blak Dot is one of the first places they know to visit.

Blak Dot is not just a gallery, or an artist-run-space, or a community gallery. It's bigger than that. It has had several different physical manifestations. Originally opening in Lygon Street, Brunswick East then collaborating with Counihan Gallery in Brunswick for the exhibition *Both Sides of the Street* (2015), before moving to its new home within Siteworks at 33 Saxon Street Brunswick, where the site recently celebrated its first birthday. In every manifestation, the spirit of Blak Dot Gallery has remained the same—a culturally safe space. It is the only gallery in Melbourne that supports and shows local and national contemporary Indigenous artists, Oceanic Indigenous artists (Māori and Polynesian, Melanesian and South Sea Islander artists), First Nations people and world cultures and their diaspora in the same space simultaneously. Furthermore, Blak Dot supports artists who are minorities within the minorities. For example, POC (people of colour) who identify as LGBTQIA (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual). That is not to say that Blak Dot's intended audience is only POC or LGBTQIA communities. Blak Dot is a safe and neutral meeting place for all communities—white, black, brown and the range of colours and genders and sexualities that exist in between the binary definitions of contemporary culture. It is a site of **kōrero** (to tell, talk, address; conversation, discourse, discussion) between different peoples and cultures. The importance of face-to-face conversations in indigenous communities cannot be underestimated. Oral histories and physical movements record our knowledge systems, they tell of our genealogies, our landscape, our names and our lived reality. For Māori, and

many other indigenous people, oral histories and speech are valued as fine art forms, prized as highly as carving or weaving (when done well). Stories, debates, speeches and especially jokes make good **kōrero**. Many outside of indigenous and First Nation communities do not know how funny our communities are, or that the dirtiest jokes are often told by the most respected Aunties (because they love to shock us with their naughtiness and because they know they can get away with almost anything). Through exhibitions, performances, workshops and other events, such as, film nights, artists talks etc., Blak Dot encourages the greater community of Brunswick and Melbourne to have meaningful and positive exchanges with members of the communities, they may never have interacted with socially before, to see the gifts of our artistic expression, to share in our laughter, to witness and learn from our different knowledge systems and to hear of our lived realities of indigeneity within contemporary Australia.

Artist-run initiatives have a great deal of value for contemporary and indeed emerging artists. They provide a space to publicly show works and test ideas of art practice that commercial spaces may not show. They provide a practical training ground for future curators, artists and writers to learn what it takes to put a show together, from making the work through to install, organising opening night events, media and advertising, gallery sitting, de-installing and documentation. Blak Dot Gallery does all of these things and something more—it creates safe spaces for conversations, interactions and exchanges between people of different cultural backgrounds through a range of art practices—challenging stereotypes of what it is to be both indigenous and an arts practitioner. Personally speaking, Blak Dot has been important in my career as an emerging artist. I've been blessed to be a part of award-winning shows that Kimba Thompson has curated (Melbourne Fringe Award Winners, 2016) and to be part of broader discussions on contemporary indigeneity. Equally important to me, is hanging out at Blak Dot gallery, especially at an opening event. It gives me the chance to drop my guard, to have a yarn and maybe a wine with some sistas and peeps in the community who are funny as.

Author's note

This article is in no way endorsed by Blak Dot Gallery.

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the conscience of the body¹

Dominic Redfern

IN EARLY 2009 I was riding on a bus in Almeria province in the south of Spain. As we rolled through the sea of plastic greenhouses (over 400km²) that supply half of Europe's fruit and vegetables, I was ruminating on the work I had been planning around them (Kaushik, 2013). I was looking out for places where the tumbles of loose plastic sheeting that blow about the vast area collect. These are typically against fences and in *arroyos*—the dry creeks so typical of this arid area. The greenhouses are a rich topic in so many ways for an artist like myself: they're notorious for the inhumane and illegal treatment of foreign (mostly African) workers (Wockner, 2015); their discarded plastics wreak havoc—most spectacularly in the death of a sperm whale which washed up on a local beach with 37kgs of greenhouse plastic in its stomach (Tremlet, 2013); and they've begun to impact the historical Sierra Nevada National Park—home to many threatened, and endemic, species of flora and fauna (Garcia, 2016).

As a video artist who makes work about the intertwined social and natural histories of places, it was perfect. And, stepping down from the moral high ground, plastic is the kind of thing I love to shoot—visually complex, flipping between pattern and irregularity, moving by turns in predictable and unpredictable ways.

But in that moment, I determined it was not my story to tell.

My partner, Siobhan, and I had spent the previous eight months driving around Europe in a 1983 Volkswagen Westphalia. We were considering whether we might leave Australia and try our hand living in Europe. I was firmly discouraged in this by our friend, the artist Jan Svenungsson. Having visited Australia on several occasions and seeing me gainfully employed, he wondered why I would leave when prospects for an artist moving to Europe—considering the oversupply they were already dealing with—were so poor. Jan even recruited a jaded Berliner-Kiwi ex-pat artist to corner me at an opening and impress upon me how hopeless it all was. In that moment, on the bus in Spain, heading to the airport to begin the long trip home I determined that I would stay in Australia. Not for the eminently sensible reasons Jan had tried to impress upon me, but because I did not wish to be a parachute artist. If I wanted to make work centred on the relationship of people to place then my best chance of doing that with any

1 From the saying attributed to Diogenes the cynic, 'Modesty is the conscience of the body'.

authority, in a manner that had meaning, was in my home.

A few years earlier, in the summer of 2003–04 I was undertaking a residency at the Australia Council studio in Santa Monica. There, I was befriended by a young Angelino Philippina, Christina Mora. I tagged along to openings with her and after it was made clear I was an artist, I was invariably asked, “Who are you with?” I had no idea what I was being asked initially. They meant who represents you? Who’s your dealer? In the seven or so years since I’d graduated I had never been asked this in Melbourne. When I left undergraduate study in 1996 we set out to get shows with artist-run spaces (they were spaces—Australia’s real-estate psychosis had not yet de-materialised them into initiatives²). My career trajectory may, or may not, have been somewhat different had I considered the mercantile dimension of art practice. But that is another story. My point here is that in our place, in Melbourne, our little universe was constellated by Grey Area, First Floor, West Space (then in picturesque downtown Footscray), Penthouse and Pavement, T.C.B etc.—there were many. They were our context and that was how we, perhaps naively, defined our art world.

As an art educator, I believe that half of what an art school offers students are the other students, the cultural context. This is the first setting with—or against—which an emergent artist defines themselves: it is their microcosm of origin. The next concentric circle of habitation extending out from the academy are the ARIs. Yes, they are, and were, a stepping stone to CAO spaces (Contemporary Art Organisations Australia, 2017) and beyond, but to me, circa 1997, they were also an end in themselves. I believe they still perform this vital function today, not simply for graduates but for all of us involved in contemporary art in Melbourne. In other fora, I have spoken against the insular, self-congratulatory, in-joking art born of the fashionable and safe world of the Melbourne ARIs. But they are also our most critical, most open and democratic spaces. And if there is anything the art world could do with more of, it is democracy. The ARIs were, and are, the local context.

Artists need a context, they cannot exist in a vacuum, they are always in relationship. Art needs an audience, without one it is play.³ Ever it was thus. It is here I take some exception with the notion of localism as something new. Perhaps localism might be better seen as a return rather than a new direction. For artists reflecting upon their immediate environment is as old as art. I would argue that’s

2 I applaud the endless flexibility and ingenuity of artists and their capacity to think outside the box of the gallery. Certainly, this has been born of theoretical positions relative to the white cube, the discrete art object, and the re-negotiation of the audience encounter, but also of a real estate market in which the dingiest hovel is a priceless first home buyer’s opportunity.

3 There’s nothing wrong with play, it can be profound and it’s a key generative process in art making. But the definition of art I am dealing with here is concerned with the next step, the encounter with the audience. Socially engaged, it is a form of communication.

what art is—sense-making in body and material. Art is the means by which we begin to consider, by which we try to take our experience and process it by getting it out in some form. Whether it be the exograms of visual art, the transient gestures of the performing arts, or the poetic application of language (Donald, 1991⁴).

The decentred, internationalist, spectacularism of the biennale circuit is the new thing here, and it is also what distorts and mutates these practices in the name of the global. Despite being a home to practices that often exist outside of the art market's machine, the biennale circuit is also the home of big art business, as the market can, and will, co-opt anything as it refreshes the fiction that this is something more than a business. There is really no need for examples but let's just take in a few big ones: Duchamp's re-making of all his ready-mades in the 1960s; Martin Creed's *Work No. 227: The lights going on and off* (2000) acquired by the Tate Gallery for an undisclosed sum but valued at over £110,000 at the time (Clark, 2013); and Manzoni's beautiful self-fulfilling prophecy *Merda d'artista*, from 1961, which last sold for €275 000 late in 2016 (Manzoni 'Artist's Shit', 2016). Different as they are, these influential artworks are united by a quality probably best illustrated by the final scene of Paul McCarthy's 1995 *Painter*, in which collectors cue to sniff the artist's bum (McCarthy, 2012).

Whilst the golden age of the biennale that we are living through is occurring after modernism, it is clearly its child. The notion of an art that can transcend the local, that can bridge cultures, educations, experiences—contexts all—is a modernist ideal. Art for art's sake, in a succession from Zola to Whistler and on to Clive Bell led, ultimately, to the notion of an art devoid of representation in the sense it had previously been understood (Zola, 2000; Whistler, 1967; Bell, 2005, loc.306⁵). One of the objectives of the modernist abstraction project was the creation of an autonomous art (Bell, 2005, loc.161⁶). This autonomy sought a Platonist ideal realm of pure form, an archetypal language independent of representation, place, religion, philosophy, language—everything really. Like

4 Exograms are external symbolic devices that allow humans to manipulate complex systems of representation externally as opposed to internally/mentally. This neologism was coined by Professor Merlin Donald in his *Origins of the Modern Mind*, 1991.

5 "Painters, especially Édouard Manet, who is an analytic painter, do not have this preoccupation with the subject which torments the crowd above all; the subject, for them, is merely a pretext to paint..." Emile Zola, *Edouard Manet. Biographical and Critical Study, 1867, 1867*

"Art should be independent of all claptrap — should stand alone [...] and appeal to the artistic sense of eye or ear, without confounding this with emotions entirely foreign to it, as devotion, pity, love, patriotism and the like." James T. Whistler, *The Gentle Art of Making Enemies*, 1967.

"To appreciate a work of art we need bring with us nothing from life, no knowledge of its ideas and affairs, no familiarity with its emotions... we need bring with us nothing but a sense of form and colour and a knowledge of three-dimensional space." Clive Bell, *Art*, 1915.

6 "What quality is common to Sta. Sophia and the windows at Chartres, Mexican sculpture, a Persian bowl, Chinese carpets, Giotto's frescoes at Padua, and the masterpieces of Poussin, Piero della Francesca, and Cezanne? In each, lines and colours combined in a particular way, certain forms and relations of forms, stir our aesthetic emotions. These relations and combinations of lines and colours, these aesthetically moving forms, I call 'Significant Form'." Clive Bell, *Art*, 1915

I said, it was to be autonomous. The idea may seem a little ridiculous now, but certainly it was the aim. And like the tower of babel, that other grand hubristic internationalist project, it fell.

When the end came, typical of modernism to that point, we flipped 180 degrees. Andy Warhol brought us crashing back to the earth we live in, a world of canned soup and washing up afterwards (Andy famously claimed that he ate Campbell's soup for lunch every day for 20 years, I'm not sure who had to do the washing up, maybe it was Candy Darling). For the sake of this convenient little narrative let's call that the end of the moment of FORM (Zola and Bell's ideas were followed through to their degree zero of a total absence of representation as we would understand it) and the beginning of the moment of CONTEXT. Indeed, Arthur Danto claimed that from Warhol's Brillo Boxes onwards we were in the age of art theory (Danto, 1981). Said another way, art was not autonomous anymore — if ever it was — but rather came shrouded in a veil of theory, something external to it, surrounding it. It was situated within a context.

Since then, an experiment with the limits of this definition of art has similarly been exercised. We might consider relational aesthetics, social practice, consultative or dialogic art to be the current high-water mark for contextual art. In this mode, having dematerialised anything recognisable as art in historical terms, we now have art defined by its set of relations, or, to use Nicolas Bourriaud's term "a specific sociability"—yes, its context, I know, that's my point (Bourriaud, 2002).

This year, 2017, a decade later, Siobhan and I returned to Europe together, and attended Documenta XIV, Kassel. As we walked down the hill into town, our entrance was marked by the shrouded gate towers of old Kassel. The shrouding was the work *Check Point Sekondi Loco 1901–2030* of Ghanaian artist Ibrahim Mahama. In the words of Bonaventure Soh Bejeng Ndikung,

The artist uses tattered jute sacks obtained from traders in exchange for new ones. The currency is memory. The sacks—made in Asia, distributed around the world, and used in Ghana to package cocoa, coffee, rice, beans, and charcoal for export to the Americas and Europe—materialize a history of global trade. (Ndikung, 2017)

Here is a work born of Mahama's place, Ghana. I think it is a fantastic strategy to use the jute sack to address global trade and the distorted benefits and

impacts it creates. They are gorgeously worn, rubber hits the road, foot soldiers of international trade. Cocoa is the chief agricultural product of Ghana and central to its economy. It is also infamously cruel and dependant on child labour, including in Ghana where children are still sold into slavery for the industry (United States Department of Labor, 2016; Ubelong, 2016). Jute bags that ship cocoa internationally certainly have the potential to speak to this issue. Ironically, or perhaps perversely, when I visited the factory floor where we were invited to take part in the making of Mahama's artwork by getting down and sewing a few bags together, amongst the handful of twenty something art students were the real workforce: several women in headscarves who were not volunteers.

After collecting the sacks, a group of people the artist calls 'collaborators'—mostly intranational rural-urban migrants—stitch together the huge jute sculptures in a convivial atmosphere. (Ndikung, 2017)

I found this disturbing and was frankly offended by the feel-good, 'we're all in it together' proposition of helping out. Clearly the curator is alive to the problem, they felt the need to characterise the atmosphere, as 'convivial', and to place 'collaborators' in inverted commas, clearly designating this as Mahama's notion rather than a self-evident one. Certainly it was quiet, it was well organised, but were they having a great time? I'd say they were people at work doing a repetitive, meaningless task that produced nothing of value. But it is important to dispel any sense that there was something other than piecework being done here. Conviviality and collaboration designate the means of production as community building, relational, social. On the contrary, I felt the work had become that which it sought to critique. Dressed up as critical, the work had been effectively co-opted by the biennale industry to become hypocritical: a possibly unwitting symptom of the globalist distortions that it purports to condemn. The work seemed cynical, just something BIG, because biennales—and quinquennales—need BIG stuff. Yes, the gatehouses seemed sad, the material transformation was post-apocalyptically theatrical, but it seemed to be just that, theatrical window dressing. That's ok but let's call it what it is and not pretend it still critiques anything.

I do not lay this at the feet of Ibrahim Mahama, I accuse him of nothing. I am saying this is what the international contemporary art machine does: it reduces something authentic to shtick. To continue with the simple distinction between collaborators and employees, as articulated by Maria Lind via Doherty to Claire Bishop's quoting of it in her seminal 2006 article from *Artforum*, it is the difference between Thomas Hirschorn and Oda Projesi (Bishop, p.181). Lind establishes

an ethical hierarchy in which those who give a project's authorial power over entirely to the community with which they are engaging, like Oda Projesi, are superior social artists compared to someone like Hirschorn who maintains authorial direction of his work, despite his collaboration and partnership with communities. I do not wish to adopt the ethical high ground of Lind, placing authorial denunciation over pedagogy or artistic direction in a politically correct hierarchy. But I do wish to point out how quickly what is important about an artwork becomes confused. It matters who made it, where, and for what reason. That was true in one way in Warhol's factory, in a different way for Koons, and yet another here. Not because there is a correct or right way to do art but because it all inflects the meaning of the work. Not simply its reception, but also the mechanics of power that construct it, and should be seen to construct it.

Scale here is a big part of the problem: the scale of the industry and the scale it requires of art because of the scale it requires of ticket sales because of the scale of the industry it must support... and around we go. Good people with good intentions no doubt but the machine is so big it all gets ground into *Soylent Green* (Fleischer, 1973). It is in this circumstance that it becomes something radical to do something small, local and with no potential to make a BIG SPLASH. It is an understandable existential response to the meaninglessness wrought of the distortions that the art super scene creates. But it is not radical, it is what we have always done. We try to make sense of our experience, we try to take that which is significant in us, that which means something, and give it form. And it is the matter of form that leads me to next stop upon my travelogue of locales.

In February 2016, I was in London for work and I had a day to myself. I went to The National Gallery and took a million photos of Dutch landscapes and still lifes. Then I went to Whitechapel Gallery to see the *Information Super Highway (1966–2016)*. I was worried because I had very little camera battery left. As it turned out I only took three photos at the Whitechapel. I was bored out of mind by the show with about five exceptions—two of which were paintings. I studied and taught media art, this was my world, I should have been the perfect audience. The lack of skill, finesse, craft, control of the form all left me cold.

So, I am deep into curmudgeon territory here taking on the de-skilling of art and social practice in one chapter, but in for a penny. Here's where I bring this journey through my back pages to a conclusion.

What is it that localism, critiques of social practice and the de-skilling of art have in common?

Aesthetics.

To return to Lind's polarising example of Hirschorn and the Turkish trio Oda Projesi, one trades in aesthetics and one believes aesthetics to be

“dangerous” (Bishop, p.180). Despite critiques of beauty in modernism, and aesthetics more broadly in post-modernism and beyond, aesthetic judgement is central to our discipline. Certainly, theoretical engagement with aesthetics has been side-lined from a great deal of the consideration of art since the advent of post-modernism. Aesthetic judgement as a means of understanding art’s cognitive and affective effect has been largely disregarded in favour of essentially semiotic understandings of art throughout the late linguistic turn. Conceptual Art, the hangover of which we are still living through, was an important part of the rejection of aesthetic considerations, and by no small coincidence the concomitant de-skilling of art. The limits of language were as much a part of the Conceptual Art project as its powers, but that was lost somewhere along the way. This may be seen as a symptom of the return to representation in the 1960s (and the attendant emphasis on content) and the dawning of Danto’s age of art theory with its emphasis on the heritage of structuralist (read linguistic and language like) preoccupations in philosophy popular within art in the second half of the twentieth century.

Without taking up an argument around aesthetics beyond the scope of this chapter, let me set some ground rules with a simple definition. *Æsthesi*s is from the Greek to perceive, to be aware of sensation. This notion of art as attuning to one’s environment, or being sens(e)itive to it, is considered a little quaint in the contemporary academy. But we lose sight of the fundamentals of our discipline at our peril. Seeing (substitute your favourite sense here) anew the traditionally banal or overlooked is an established principle, nay truism, of art in the modern era. In the words of Callum Morton, etched in my mind as a third-year art student, “the history of modernism is the history of the elevation of the banal” (Morton, 1996). In my own terms, I consider this process as a circuit breaker for the standard semiotic glasses we wear. Instead of ‘reading’ the world in linguistic shorthand— ‘dog’ ‘road’ ‘tree’ ‘boy’—we see the rhythm and flow of form and line, surface, texture, depth, volume—the lessons learnt in life drawing 101. In so doing we register wonder, delight and awe; experiences grounded in our body and its perceptions. To be clear, I am not advocating an art of dogged naturalistic adherence to appearances valued above all else, but simply an acknowledgement of the primacy of the body and its perceptions in the artistic process. And, of course, it also matters what we look at, not merely that we look. I have seen many times as an educator (Elkins, 2001)—and in myself—that as our skill with material and medium develop we move from a simple agnostic formalism, understanding the limits of medium and material, to placing our work at the service of our values—finding subject matter that matters. When, and if, we make that move the control of form continues to enable a degree of nuance and subtlety that cannot

be simulated, commissioned, or thought up. It is in the hands or it is not.

For artists who lived through or emerged during post-modernism, immersion in a world of pure signification turned out to be something of an unnourishing artistic impasse, just like high formalism before it. Looking back to that moment when Abstract Expressionism's proclaimed victory was overturned we saw, as we do now, the Real reasserting its place.⁷ In the 1950s artists from Arman to Rauschenberg turned their attention away from the high ideals of non-representation, internationalist and so-called autonomous art to the world at their feet. Nouveau Realisme, Pop, the Situationist International, Fluxus, neo-DADA, and Happenings all called for art to immerse itself in the world around it in all its filth and wonder.

What had this moment to do with the first coming of Realism one hundred years earlier? Courbet similarly challenged the politics of representation by painting everyday people at an epic scale reserved for historical, aristocratic, mythic or religious subjects. A similarly revolutionary move led the Barbizon School and the Impressionists into the landscape. Through the Barbizon artists' embrace of John Constable's work, like Monet's of Turner, the hierarchical genre system was further upturned, taking the lowly landscape (above only still life and topography in the generic ordering) to the peak of artistic innovation. Both Turner and Constable trace a direct line back to the Dutch and their immersion in the Real, the world in which they lived, as expressed in their mastery of the landscape and still life genres. Revolution? Bowls of fruit? Yes, because they represent a shift in values, away from the rich and powerful, the official histories and grand narratives of power to the world at our feet and fingertips: the land, the table, some flowers, a dish. The Dutch Golden Age and its subject matter may also be attributed to their rising middle class and its demand for subject matter that reflected their experience, as opposed to a revolutionary political conviction, or insight, on behalf of the artists in question. But these are two ways of saying the same thing, the rise in living standards in the middle classes is democratisation. It is a flattening of the hierarchy. My bowl of fruit, my daughter pouring milk, the river nearby, these are as subjects as worthy as Napoleon, the Sabine women, or Moses. And this is the power of the local, it decentralises, it democratises. These subjects represent the physical and immediate world of the artist, the world their body inhabits. Here is localism, a localism that artists have always practiced, making sense of our senses. Here is the democracy of the local, of the bodily, for we each only have one, only one we may speak for.

Again today, Realism has found its way back to the top of the pile of artists

7 The 'real' in this context derives its definition from Critical Realism which asserts the existence of an objective reality, external to our thoughts and representations, which is accessible in some part by our senses.

concerns in the various realist moves from New Materialism to Critical Realism, all of which engage with the non-human and re-assert its value. All three of these realist moments have this shift in common; a shift in perspective, a shift in value/s. Despite their significance, they each share an investment in modesty, a quality rarely valued since the modern period and its investment in shock, rupture and polemic. As James Elkins discusses in *Why Art cannot be Taught: a handbook for art students*, we are so enamoured of “dramatic effects and innovations” that thinking outside of it, to an art based in restraint or modesty—“decorum” is Elkins’ term—is impossible (Elkins, 2001, p.loc.216). I am arguing here for the modesty of an art at a human scale, based in an attendance to the body’s physicality and extending from there to the physicality of the world it inhabits. Not for all and not above all else, but as a value, to help connect us with the world we occupy.

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Kelly Lake Store

Chris Kraus

Forget about the Southern strategy, blue versus red, swing states and swing voters—all of those political clichés are quaint relics of a less threatening era that is now part of our past, or soon will be. The next conflict defining us all is much more unnerving.

That conflict will be between people who live somewhere, and people who live nowhere. It will be between people who consider themselves citizens of actual countries, to which they have patriotic allegiance, and people to whom nations are meaningless, who live in a stateless global archipelago of privilege—a collection of private schools, tax havens and gated residential communities with little or no connection to the outside world.

—Matt Taibbi, "Greed and Debt: The True Story of Mitt Romney and Bain Capital," *Rolling Stone* 8/19/12

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IN ONE OF the opening shots of Dana Duff's remarkable 2012 documentary *The Gringas*, an anonymous man places small bales of hay in a circle in a dusty dry field at the base of some mountains. The man and his bales are center-frame, long shot. It could be the present. Then again (were it not for the row of white polymer grow-houses deep in the background) it could be a period film set in the 19th century.

Duff is a Los Angeles artist who spends part of her time in a north Baja *campo*. Owned and administrated by Mexican families, the *campos* provide an alternative form of home ownership to non-Mexican nationals. Residents purchase their houses or trailers, but pay a fixed rent to the Mexican landowners. In *The Gringas*, Duff set out to record the days preceding an American girl's *quinceañera*, the Hispanic traditional 'coming into womanhood' that occurs on a girl's fifteenth birthday. The girl, Lena Davies, lives with her elderly parents in a broken down hippie bus that has come to a permanent rest in the hills of Ejido Esteban Cantu. Not far from Duff's campo, Ejido Esteban Cantu sits ten miles south of

Ensenada on a peninsula overlooking the small town of Maneadero. As in *El Field* (2011), Daniel Rosas's documentary meditation on a day in the lives of Mexicali industrial farm workers, and Chantal Akerman's *From The Other Side* (2002), set on the Arizona/Sonora border, each shot of *Las Gringas* is almost painfully long. All three films capture the protracted movement of time in the global economy's backwaters. These are places where time and space haven't imploded but instead, like the Davies' old bus, have slowed to a point of absolute stasis.

Born in the US, Lena Davies is an unlikely *quinceañera*. She has blonde hair and blue eyes and the wide-open face of a Midwestern cheerleader. Cheerful, athletic and strong, Lena looks like an American teenager dressed for a day at the mall in her short cut-off jeans, gold cross and gold satin halter. Before the bus came to its final rest, she spent the first eight years of her life traveling between west coast communal pagan 'events' where her parents supported themselves running a merchandise table. When her German-born father was arrested on charges of selling drug paraphernalia, they drove south and enrolled her in a Mexican grade school.

Now fifteen, Lena speaks fluent Spanish in Maneadero's local teen dialect. She attends the town's only high school. Maneadero has just two fully-paved roads and a dusty *zocalo* (central plaza), but its youth is split into the 'north' and 'south' gangs, based on a demarcation known only to them.

The family's bus, solar-powered by one salvaged panel, sits in a no-man's-land of unused ground owned by the local *ejido* (an organization of long-term residents who maintain communal land ownership.) On both sides of their salvaged-wood fence, seasonal workers who arrive every year from Oaxaca to work on the region's small industrial farms inhabit improvised shelters. In order to keep their own family plots in their own *ejidos* they must be resident on them for three months a year, so they are in constant migration. A few yards from the bus, a boy rides a horse up a dirt track on the hill. A few Jersey cows forage for grass. The hillside is just two-and-a-half hours south of San Diego. Its farms produce flowers and the Trader Joe's Los Cabos brand of tomatoes. In a plaintive letter I read online, *ejido* leaders implored the UABC (University Autonomous Baja California) Geographical Science department to study their region's potential for eco-tourism "so we don't have to leave, and ... we can keep our land."

The Gringas follows the Davies family throughout the three days leading up to Lena's *quinceañera*. Having already attended the *quinceañeras* of most of her friends, Lena knows all the customs. Her microspace on the crowded bus is packed with an old desktop computer, books, clothes and make-up. She and a few of her girlfriends, whose families live in Maneadero, have started a dance group, devising their own routines. Prompted by Duff, she steps outside the bus to

demonstrate one of their dances. Limber and all fluid curves, she's an amazingly accomplished dancer. Lena is *hoping* her Maneadero friends will all come to the party, but she's aware this might not happen. *Quinceañeras* are large celebrations staged by a girl's family, as much for their own friends as for their daughter. But her parents don't know the Mexican parents of her high school friends. She has no other family here except for her parents, Lezli and Peter, who don't drink or party and are at least three decades older than the parents of most Maneadero teenagers.

Sitting on white plastic chairs outside the bus, the Davieses discuss the *quinceañera* on a long afternoon preceding the party. Both parents and daughter are well versed in the rituals, not all of which are observed universally. The Thanksgiving mass?—only if the people are really religious. The Court of Honor is supposed to consist of fourteen friends and relations, but it can be smaller. But everyone has a beautiful dress, and has her hair done, and wears plenty of make-up. And there's the Last Doll—*La Ceremonia de la Ultima Muñeca*—where the girl sheds her childhood by tossing a tiny doll over her shoulder. Lena doesn't know if she will have that. But the Change of Shoes—the moment when the *quinceañera* sits on a throne while her father replaces her flat childhood shoes with a pair of high heels—that's essential. It's all—as Lena's mother Lezli, a frumpy woman wearing a plaid flannel shirt and gray sweatpants, explains—very *Catholic*. She and her husband Peter—an overweight, elderly man in a tight singlet, whose foot-long gray beard is braided—are *pagans*. Lezli, whose voice still retains a trace of what might be a girlhood private school accent, thinks the Change of the Shoes is degrading to women. Still, for Lena's sake, her parents are otherwise game. Peter has sent out thirty-five invitations in English and Spanish. Since local custom is for entire extended families of ten or more people to attend upon one invitation, he's expecting a crowd. Although no alcohol will be served, the women will soak and boil a few pounds of hominy to make a *posole*. Lena is hoping her girlfriend Berenice can serve as her *chambelan*, or official escort, a role usually played by an older male cousin or brother. But Lezli insists that Peter should be *chambelan*. He is the *father*. For the first time on camera, Lena's face appears cloudy.

On the day of the party, Lena's half sister Dani, a student at Cal State LA, comes down to help her get ready. They visit a hole-in-the-wall hair salon where the beautician arranges Lena's blonde hair into a stunning up-do. Peter rigs a makeshift tarpaulin tent outside the bus, unloads some borrowed dusty, white plastic chairs from a truck bed and hangs lights from a roof pole. By the time Lena steps out of the bus in a gorgeous black-and-white halter dress, two of her girlfriends are already there.

But as the sky darkens, no one else comes. Peter and Lezli are wearing the

same flannels and sweats they had on two days ago. Soon, they'll put some Mexican music on an old boom box. People from the migrant encampment—all of them better dressed than Lena's parents—smiling, drift over the fence in search of the party. A small tribe of dogs yips through a cluster of people. Dancing and hugging her friends, Lena's excitement at turning fifteen exceeds her despair at the lackluster party. By now the night is pitch dark. Across the Bay of All Saints, the low shimmering lights of Ensenada emit a deceptive urbanity.

Two hours south of the border, we are transported into a parallel universe—a collapsing of time, culture and space—available, it seems now, to anyone, at the price of absolute poverty.

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Earlier this year, I co-organized the exhibition *Radical Localism: Art, Video and Culture from Pueblo Nuevo's Mexicali Rose* at Artists Space in New York City. Mexicali Rose was founded by filmmaker Marco Vera in 2006, when at age 28 he returned home to Pueblo Nuevo from Echo Park, LA's hipster neighborhood. The space began as a media workshop for local kids. Since then, it has grown into something much larger: a gallery, radio station, cinema club, and informal clubhouse for artists on both sides of the border. The space is open to journalists, activists, craftspeople, gang members, scholars and neighborhood teachers. People from all over the world have passed through. Still, it continues to operate, both geographically and existentially, from the heart of the working class, border-adjacent Pueblo Nuevo *barrio*.

Set on the Baja California desert directly across from Calexico (a small town in California's Imperial County) Mexicali is best known for its heat. For five months a year, temperatures climb as high as 120 degrees. The central city is a jagged collage of colonnades and arcades, sex clubs and discount pharmacies ringed by the northern wall that separates Mexico from the US. The poorest of California's 58 counties, Imperial County reports unemployment at 30 percent. Nevertheless, Mexicali's population includes, on any day, hundreds of transient people arrived from the south who have recently failed to cross the border, or are awaiting a chance to try. Windowless hole-in-the-wall bars stay open all night, and men in white cowboy hats stand around on the boulevards. In Daniel Rosas's *El Field*, squads of agricultural workers cross the border in darkness to ride busses that take them to work in industrial farm fields. The first impression Mexicali makes on the casual visitor is, *Who could ever live here?* Yet the city inspires a fierce loyalty from its inhabitants, who affectionately refer to themselves as *cachanillas*, a wild and virtually indestructible desert plant.

As Mexicali writer and critic Gabriel Trujillo notes in his catalogue essay:

“Of all the border towns, Mexicali would appear to be the least inviting to settlers. What is it about this place, then, that its inhabitants find so appealing? Probably its plentiful and elemental nature ... but also its cultural resources: a society of expanding horizons that, curiously, has yet to raise barriers against newcomers or self-impose a pedigree of entitled families to be the framers of its community. ... [T]he city has a predominantly working class history ... Mexicali people do not need to believe that they are the center of the universe to compensate for what their home lacks as a city. They know what they have and what they don't. ... We in Mexicali like to laugh at ourselves. To be presumptuous here is a form of suicide ...”

The Artists Space show was more than a year in the making. It included documentary photographs by Rafael Veytia and Odette Barajas; paintings by Pablo Castañeda; an installation and zines by Juan Salcido; an original mural by Fernando Corona; a digital replication of *Mexicali* (2012), the stunning block-long mosaic mural installed on a derelict wall in the central city by a group of artists and municipal workers; and a dozen short films created in and around the Mexicali Rose media workshop. The work of Barajas and Veytia features portraits of gang members, transients, ancient old men, and transgendered performers: subjects that, if depicted by someone from the outside, might seem exploitative and sleazy. But these photos are backlit by intimacy. They convey a sincere relation: *these people are known to us*. Banners from Julio Torres and Dino Dinco's 2011 Mexicali Rose show *Todos Somos Putos* (We're All Faggots) were installed at the rear of the gallery. Several vitrines contained a selection of news clips and photographs donated by Sergio Haro, the Mexicali journalist whose legendary career tracing the 'stories behind the stories' of Baja's narco-wars and political violence is chronicled in Bernardo Ruiz's film *Reportero* (2012).

In Spanish, the word 'culture' connotes not just high art, but a person's entire background and knowledge. Using the terms 'art, video and culture' in the Mexicali Rose exhibition title reflected the fact that the work of these artists—even those who have studied and exhibited throughout Mexico, Central America and the US—is inextricably linked to the city's geography, history and politics, and signaled the intangible value of culture beyond any one cultural product.

My first visit to Mexicali Rose was for the July 2010 opening of a group show called *Puro Personaje* (Characters Only): a remarkable mix of photos, paintings

and sculptures (both found and composed) by professional and amateur artists on both sides of the border. Family portraits, strange home-made porn scavenged from empty apartments ... The space had just hosted a workshop for local women in the making of *alebrijes*, the popular indigenous soft sculptures that create fantasy animals by crossing two different species. The opening started late, and continued well into the morning. People arrived in groups. There was music and food. It felt more like a block party. I was struck by the way that some of the artists made sure to point out that, while their parents might cross the border sometimes to work on Imperial Valley farms, they were *Mexican*, not Chicano. We talked nonstop over beers at downtown cantinas, at the state museum where Vera's collaborator Israel Ortega works by day as a conservator, and driving around town in Vera's silver Camry. There was a seriousness to these proceedings, a desire to share not just information, but an experience. A great deal of my art-writing work is conducted online: the airless exchange of carefully worded prompts and artist statements. But this, and all of the subsequent visits to Mexicali, felt as reckless and eager as an undergrad road trip. What drew me to Mexicali Rose, beyond my admiration for all of these artists, was the sense that this singular enterprise seemed like a realization of a desire, circumstantially manifested in less totalized ways, running throughout the centers of the international art world.

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GUGGENHEIM FOUNDATION FELLOWSHIP PROPOSAL

Chris Kraus, September 2011

Kelly Lake Store, Kelly Lake, Minnesota/ 2012–13

I propose to use Guggenheim Fellowship funds towards the lease/purchase and operation of the now-vacant Kelly Lake Country Store in this hamlet outside of Hibbing, Minnesota. Reclamation of this once-functioning store will form the heart of my project. Though my involvement with the store will be finite, my intent is for it to become a self-sustaining, ongoing enterprise.

As Mike Davis reported in *Planet of Slums*, more than half the world's population lives in large cities. By 2070, urban concentration throughout the world will exceed 70 percent. More than one billion people live in slums of third-world cities. But this massive urbanization isn't occurring just in the global South. In 2008, according to the CIA's *World Fact* report, 82 percent of the US population was gathered in cities and suburbs. On any given day, 200,000 people live in the streets and vacant land of LA. At least 18,000 are gathered within the downtown half-mile concentration of transient parks, food pantries, sidewalks and shelters known as Skid Row. Meanwhile, since last summer, the population of Hibbing,

MN decreased more than 15 percent to 16,203 residents. Anyone driving even half a mile north or south of American interstate highways will see the collection of dying or abandoned towns between the two coasts.

For the last decade, an awareness of the depopulation and dereliction of small towns and cities across the US has been central to my work as a writer and art critic. My novel *Torpor* (2006) describes the negative entropy gripping a small rural town in upstate New York. In recent columns for *Art in America*, I've described the role artists play in the process of gentrification/urban revitalization. As Visiting Critic at Westminster University's Studio Art program in London, I suggested that a group of MFA students, who'd received \$20,000 funding contingent upon their agreement to undertake a group project, use those funds to purchase, rehab, and occupy repossessed Detroit residential property. To the best of my knowledge, this hasn't happened. But in *Kelly Lake Store*, I propose to take up the challenge.

Since 2009 I've rented a cabin each summer near Kelly Lake to write in seclusion. Founded in 1905 as a mining community, this village of 350 residents—some of whom live in the same houses where they were born—maintains a community/historical center in what once was its Catholic church. When I arrived, the Kelly Lake Country Store sold gas, frozen pizza and convenience store food to residents and cyclists on the adjacent Mesabi Bike Trail. In 2011, the store closed and hasn't reopened. Joe Terzich, the 62-year old son of the store's original owner, still lives in the beige house next door to it.

According to Town Historian Erica Larson, "When Terz owned it, he sold meat, apples, and groceries. You could go there and shop for a meal. The problem wasn't the Wal-Mart [built six miles away in 1990] ... it was more like the new owners turned it into a 7-11. They took out the ice machine and put in digital gas pumps. It used to be, you'd go in and pay for your gas, and Terz would trust you to pump what you paid for. Nobody wanted to go there for an instant cappuccino. The things you went to the store for weren't there any more."

Small local business is the lifeblood of every community. Once important, informal town centers, the diners, cafes and coffee shops across Route 169's thirty-mile stretch between Hibbing and Grand Rapids have all gone out of business.

Kelly Lake Store will entail the lease/purchase of these vacant premises, and the operation of business during the one-year Fellowship period. Students from international MFA art and critical theory programs will be invited to 'participate'—i.e., work in the store—on paid, semester-long internships. Staffing will be augmented by local residents who, like the interns, will be paid the prevailing local wage of \$10–\$15 per hour.

The business of *Kelly Lake Store* will be the store: selling gas, groceries, cigarettes and other convenience store items. The store will not be used as a venue for art exhibitions or performances. Instead, interns and staff may choose to keep and/or create documentation of the store's work—photographs, drawings, texts, journals, videos, notebooks and ledgers—that may be exhibited at a later time. However, the project's primary goal will be to make the store's business economically viable, and then transfer it to new, local owners at the end of the Fellowship cycle.

My forthcoming novel *Summer of Hate* describes a similar enterprise (the purchase, rehab and operation of 36 low-income apartments) undertaken in Albuquerque, New Mexico in 2005. Since 2004, The Invisible Committee, a formerly Paris-based anarchist group, has resided in the small Limousin town of Tarnac, where they own and operate both the bar and the general store.

Kelly Lake Store can be seen as a radical revisioning of Claes Oldenberg (and Elaine Sturtevant's) *Store Days* installations of the 1960s, offering practical items for sale in place of papier-mache sculpture. In these terms, *Kelly Lake Store* will address both a present-day need (in Kelly Lake, for a store!) and a paradigm shift in the definition of artistic practice since that decade.

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Date: Tues, 25 Oct 2011
From: xxxxxx@gf.org
To: ckraus@sonic.net
Subject: Guggenheim Competition

Dear Ms. Kraus:

I am writing to inform you that, upon further inspection of your application and supporting documents, we must withdraw your application from consideration in the 2012 United States and Canada competition. Support of the kind you are seeking lies outside the scope of our activities. Our Fellowships are not available to assist with the purchase and operation of a store or any type of business.

Sincerely yours,
John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation

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Reviewing Documenta 13 in *New York* magazine, Jerry Saltz coins the term 'Post Art' to describe work that "doesn't even see art as separate from living ... things that aren't artworks so much as they are about the drive to make things that, like art, embed imagination in material and grasp that creativity is a cosmic force ... A chemist or a general may be making Post Art every day at the office."

Visiting UC San Diego's MFA Fine Art program last year, I observed that 70% of the work produced by its students could not be described as painting or sculpture or video or even as installation. Kate Clark was co-founding Knowledge Commons DC, an interdisciplinary free school in Washington, and custom-making piñatas in San Diego. She'd developed the 'business' through posters and blogs. "I use the word 'business' in quotation marks," she emailed me later, "because I consider [it] to be more about a trade than a creative practice." Danny Cannizzaro was writing a novel that he plans to self-publish as an ebook. Iranian-born Elmira Mohebali was studying ancient Akkadian in order to translate *Gilgamesh*. Tomas Moreno was compiling an archive of his father's work in the Chicano community of the 1970s, and DJing club nights at several LA Central American venues. Gary Garray was working on music. Trained as an architect, Lebanon-born Rayyane Tabet was preparing an ambitious project tracing the forgotten history of the Trans-Arabian pipeline. He has since returned to Beirut to complete and exhibit the project.

Jerry Saltz on 'Post Art': "It's an idea I love. ... Things that couldn't be fitted into old categories embody powerfully creative forms, capable of carrying meaning and change."

But what meaning, what change? One of art criticism's great limitations is its inability to look beyond its own context and language. Why would young people enter a studio art program to become teachers and translators, novelists, archivists and small business owners? Clearly, it is because these activities have become so degraded and negligible within the culture that the only chance for them to *appear* is within contemporary art's coded yet infinitely malleable discourse.

As the loose network of underground cinemas and film/video workshops established during the 1960s atrophied during the 1990s, documentary and non-narrative filmmaking migrated into the art world. Films and videotapes that formerly would have been produced and exhibited on the underground film circuit came to be re-defined as part of an 'artistic practice.' William E. Jones, Laura Parnes, Andrea Bowers, the Bernadette Corporation, Sung Hwan Kim and countless others produce films that demand continuous viewing but can only be seen in museums and galleries. The work is supported by the conscious production of artifacts: associated drawings, still photographs, multiples and

other objects.

Viewed and discussed more in the context of these artist's careers than in terms of their meaning and content, the visibility of these films has been gained at the cost of their volatility.

Likewise, as the genre of 'literary fiction' has regressed to describe only well-crafted, accessible stories, the writings of Josef Strau, Moyra Davey, Mark Von Schlegell, and countless others have been forced to exist not as books but as installation components and art catalogue writing. Oulipo member Harry Matthews, arguably one of the most important American poets of his generation, discusses his work with Bernadette Corporation member Jim Fletcher in artist Nik Gambaroff's most recent exhibition catalogue.

When artists Amy Lien and Enzo Camacho (based in New York and Manila, respectively) wanted to study the growing subculture of the 'call center crowd,' in Camacho's native Manila, they created an art installation. As Lien explained in an email:

These call centers have developed into 'communication mills' that extend Filipino service cache (friendliness, politeness, good English skills, social familiarity with American pop culture) into virtual assets. Generally young, earning a relatively very decent living, the call center workers storm clubs and bars during late nights and weekends and are known for their wild and sexually promiscuous behavior. Rumors abound. Because of the demand on many employees to work long shifts during unconventional hours (designed to accommodate American time zones) many of the call centers have sleeping rooms built into them which are believed to be sites for cruising and scandal. We imagined this knowledge transference, this indoctrination of cultural difference via strange mantras delivered during call center training workshops ('there's America and there's the rest of the world,' 'Americans value fact over feeling,' etc.) The US is something of a dream, pervasively present in every living moment in Manila due to the country's colonial history with the US and the continuing soft-colonial management of its political and economic policies.

Perversely, even as I write this, Journatic, a Philippines-based agency that supplies outsourced 'local content' to US newspapers has been exposed for its use of manufactured bylines. In LA, the staff of a leading business espionage bureau includes former investigative reporters and Pulitzer Prize-winning war correspondents. Is it any surprise that Camacho and Lien would choose to

transmute their research into visual metaphor, photographs and installations that can be shown in a gallery? *There is a tremendous desire to know the world ...* a desire that seems greater to me than the involvement with visual art's intrinsically formalist questions. As Lien emailed me, "I feel like I really need this engagement with the Phillipines, in order to avoid total cynicism while living and working in New York." Market-driven though it might be, contemporary art offers a context for work that might once have been done within humanist disciplines now on the verge of becoming as extinct as ancient Akkadian.

It is no longer accurate to refer to today's generation of young artists by nationality. Rather, they are Greek or Estonian or Australian or South African *born*, leaving those places for international cities to launch their careers in their late teens or early 20s. Consequently, the idea of a 'national' art has become an anomaly, found only in places like Mexicali. The story of international contemporary art is a story of dislocation.

Based in Berlin, Korean-born artist Sung Hwan Kim returns to Seoul to make *Summer Days in Keijo*, a twenty-five minute film in which a Dutch woman wanders through mid-20th century architectural projects slated for demolition, while reading a 1937 Swedish ethnographic text on Korea in voice-over. Greek-born, Berlin-based artist Yourgos Sapountzis stages videotaped sculptural interventions upon the city's historic landmarks. As he explained in an interview, "When I moved to Berlin, I didn't know who the public sculptures depicted, I just knew they were important for somebody. But on the other hand, I loved to visit them and wonder: Why are they here, will they always be here?" In New York, New Zealand-born artist Kate Newby places an ultramarine plastic pellet into a hole in the asphalt on Grand Street and then photographs it (*Grand St.* 2012). Shaped like a teardrop or pill, the pellet fits perfectly into this small berth of space, a tiny industrial corpse in a snug coffin. In her *Notes to Contributors* for a book on her work, Newby writes:

In the street: puddles, pavings, falling stones

Interior design

Feelings and experiences

If I were to suggest a few things I would say ... well, puddles are big for me right now. As are plastic bags caught in trees. I guess incidents or situations around me that seem simple.

In Ruben Marrufo's short documentary *Aqui Seguimos* (Here We Stand, 2012), which comprised part of the video loop in the Mexicali Rose exhibition, a group

of middle-aged *locos* (or potheads) gather at night in a trashed public square to create an enormous mosaic mural. We're in Estacion Delta, about 30 miles southeast of Mexicali. Once a village of 5278 inhabitants, Delta has shrunk to a handful of people in less than a decade. Some of its residents left when their homes were destroyed by the 2010 earthquake. Others moved to Mexicali or the US looking for work.

The muralists' goal is no less than to reclaim their town. Dressed in sweatshirts, hoodies and baseball caps, they look just like the day laborers you see standing outside any US Home Depot. They're joined by a couple of women and a toddler who sits in a white plastic chair, just like the ones outside the bus in Duff's *The Gringas*. Carrying buckets of fresh cement, the men talk to the off-camera director:

- *Tell him the story of the bench.*
- *You tell him, buddy.*
- *No, come on, tell him about Rafael Martinez and all the locos ...*
- *When the first courtyard was built, we were here building it –*

As the camera pulls back, we see the same cluster of low stucco buildings found in every small north Baja town.

- *With all the construction workers, the Garnicas.*
- *Well some of them have passed away, may they rest in peace. But, here we stand. Struggling to bring back this town that we need so much.*

While they work, the men recall yesterday's parties.

- *We had a good time.*
- *But when they moved everything to Ejido Nuevo Leon, Estacion Delta started to come down. They moved the bank, they also wanted to move the police station but they didn't. They moved the community bank and the other bank that was here ... And they also wanted to move the post office ... they were gonna leave the town barren –*
- *Good that didn't happen.*
- *And we are here.*

As night falls and more pieces of reflective glass and expertly cut colored tile are cemented in place, the mural takes shape: a huge yellow wheat stalk, a man with a guitar leading a child through a field, the scene ringed with arcs of color; a

shiny white tractor. Clamp lights are rigged with extension cord. Passing a joint, the men stand around an open fire, and the leader, whose name is Chope, sings an original *narco-corrido*.

- *Goddamn it's fucking cold!*

Once a mariachi, he now works in a train yard.

- *You want to wash your hands?*

- *(Pouring water from a plastic milk jug) The son of a bitch feels like ice.*

- *Keep pouring, buddy.*

- *Wish it was like this in the summer.*

Maruffo's film was commissioned by the PRI's Municipal Office of Culture, which reportedly was not very pleased by it.

- *Fuck this.*

- *I think you don't even bathe, man!*

- *This hit went straight to my heart, it reminded me of—*

- *You'll come back to the same hood where you were born.*

By the end of the night, the mural is practically finished. A radiant sun, shaped like a fan, beats down on the jagged hills. Concrete benches and planters are covered with mosaic daisies. When the camera pulls back, we see these agrarian scenes framed by swathes of mosaic curtains, as if set on the proscenium stage of a theater. It is the village at its most beautiful: a prototype of a past that might never have been, idealized through emotional memory.

The last scene of the film finds Chopo the next day, at work, in the flat dusty rail yard. No community, no community art. Vera has described his work with Mexicali Rose as "activities born out of the necessities for cultural exchange latent not only in Mexico, but on both sides of the border, therefore establishing cultural and personal connections." There are no commercial galleries in Mexicali. Its artists rely on museum exhibitions, local collectors, mural commissions, and affiliations with US border galleries. Instead of leaving, they have chosen to practice a radical localism. Exiled from Mexico City, where artists are fully enmeshed in the international grid, the Mexicali artists are aware of their opportunity to remain in their own community and assert an alternative ethos.



Regional Dialogue





DURING THE EXHIBITION, *An Act of Showing: rethinking artist-run initiatives through place* (2017), a roundtable discussion was organised with visiting artist-organisers from the Asia-Pacific region—Ama Bahas from MES 56, Yogyakarta, Indonesia; Lo Shih-Tung from Open-Contemporary Art Center (OCAC), Taipei, Taiwan; and Channon Goodwin, Director of Bus Projects in Melbourne, Australia, with Anabelle Lacroix and Maria Miranda as moderators. Bus Projects has a longstanding relationship with MES 56 and a keen interest in developing relationships between Australian art spaces and spaces in the Asia-Pacific region.

The discussion happened at the Lenton Parr Library, Victorian College of the Arts, Melbourne and the following is an edited version of a wide-ranging conversation about the particular spaces, their histories and how they have evolved in relation to their unique places.

We began with brief introductions and descriptions of each art space.

Ama Bahas (AB): What I can tell you is something that has been passed on to me. It's not really what I experienced firsthand, because I joined MES 56 only two years ago. MES 56 is an artist collective which also has a space. It all started very organically, with a group of photography art students who lived together in the same boarding house. In Yogyakarta, locals rent their houses as boarding houses so students can pay and stay in one room, it's very common. In one particular house [...] there were four rooms occupied by students and they just hung out, they'd invite their friends to stay. It's very natural to let their friends stay there, with ten people sleeping in one room. They also lived side-by-side with other people. Small families. They had a particular interest in art, which meant they wanted their photography to be more than conventional photography that was taught in their school. After discussions with friends they managed to set up the boarding house as a gallery.

Lo Shih-Tung (LST): I'm from OCAC (Open-Contemporary Art Centre) in Taipei, which was founded in 2001. But actually the movement started in 1999. We think of the founding as 2001, because that is the first time we had a place. Currently we have about eight members. I cannot specify who is a current member because we've had a policy change in the last year, we think that a more

Regional Dialogue: A conversation between MES 56 / OCAC / Bus Projects

flexible structure could help us to the next step ... where any artist or friend can join our project at anytime. Officially we have seven or eight members.

Channon Goodwin (CG): Bus Projects is in Australia and sits under that title 'artist-run', which means a few things I guess. One is that it's communally run on a voluntary basis. Bus [Projects] also started in 2001. Bus has now evolved to be more institutional. It has staff, but it still gives agency to artists to realise their projects and allows them to be in control of their creative projects. All the staff are artists as well. So, in a sense, it is symptomatic of the sector, the way it's structured, available funding, the way that people work together here means that the structure has kind of formed where we are today—an artist-run space that has government funding which still has an open call program that people can apply to show.

Maria Miranda (MM): Ama, in looking at and engaging with MES 56's contribution in the exhibition I noticed that MES 56 began in one place and moved to four different places. Did that change the relationships between the artists at all? And did moving affect people's art practice?

AB: Well, yes. It's really important to talk about relationships between people. But what really matters about moving house is that... most artist-run initiatives in Yogyakarta, and even here, rent space, they don't really own space, right? What's really interesting with MES is the way they used the house. From the beginning, they lived there and it's also their home. Then they needed to move on from the boarding house, they needed something more serious. They gathered money to rent a house to be used as a collective because they realised that what they had been doing was something more than just staying in and making exhibitions. They rented the first house—that's after the boarding house. In the first house, they still all lived there and they shared domestic responsibilities. The way they work is to help each other, in terms of care, and things like that. They were really comfortable with that house because it had a big yard, so they could have parties. And what's interesting is that there was a Mosque in front of the house which began to be problematic for some people, but they managed to engage with the neighbours, even though they had parties on Friday—and Friday is a holy day for Muslims. But they managed to make their music and parties. They managed to engage with people in the neighbourhood, so people tolerated the MES guys in return, which stopped any problems. That was because of the way they interacted, and because their works are mostly engaging with the local people. They realised that by working with local people they would be more accepted. Most of their works in that first house engaged with people, with communities and kids. One of the works in the exhibition was about how people celebrate Independence Day. They also engaged with people from the earthquake damaged area in 2005.

Their work was more engaged with community than the public. That's how they got accepted. They were pretty comfortable with that house, but the owner of the house was in debt and so they had to move and the owner returned their money. They had to move into another house, it was a very sudden move so they didn't really think things through. In the next house, there were only two people living in it. Other members got their own houses and their own studios, and moved out. In the new space only two young members lived there because they just got out of school, while the older ones had moved out.

MM: Is it difficult to be an artist in Yogyakarta? In terms of rents and cost of living? It can be difficult to live as an artist in Australia.

AB: Artists from Melbourne always like Yogyakarta because the rents are easy and the scene is very dynamic.

CG: I think we admire that. The tendency to buy a big house or rent an apartment here is becoming out of reach. A lot of people admire the DIY feisty nature of a lot of the practitioners that we visit there, or that visit us here. I think there's a lot of admiration for the scene.

Anabelle Lacroix (AL): It's the fluidity between different artist-run initiatives and different projects, and communities, that happens in Yogyakarta, helping each other, which I admire. Different artist-run spaces are so close together, friends would go to one place and everything feels very communal.

MM: So artists don't separate themselves off from a wider community?

AB: That's what we've been trying to avoid. That's what everyone has been trying to do, they want to be part of the larger community. By talking about it, it will also make us separate from the others. We try to avoid talking about artists and then the 'community'. It's one social life.

AL: It seems that with the different moves of MES's houses there was an opportunity to renew the format or methods each time, with art practices changing and bringing new priorities. Do you want to tell us more about that shift, Ama?

AB: In the second house, the priority was also to work with the community. In the third house with only two people and the shared responsibility of maintaining the house—sharing the domestic work—the sense of collectiveness had faded because less people came to that house, less gatherings, only exhibitions and people would come only for openings. In this new house people from the neighbourhood don't really talk or socialise, there's not much social interaction.

MM: We call that normal.

AB: In Jogja, there's some areas like that but it's not really comfortable. Everyone was angry with that house, because there was no place to hang out. It changed the way they worked, even individual artworks became angry and

gloomy. It changed the mood. Now we are changing our model, the 'young ones' are developing a program of studio based workshops and projects that move away from traditional exhibitions.

CG: We felt the same when we moved from the Donkey Wheel House. This is why we felt such a fellow feeling with MES56 people who we got to know, because those moves we had experienced as well. We moved from our own place—our own separate venue with a gallery and a community and backyard and a tree—to an underground space in the city. It was dark and unfriendly, and people would use the sides of the building as a toilet, it felt like you were sitting in a bathroom. How do you create a gallery and a community in that space? It was also quite a scary place because it was dark and cavernous. We had a little room in this black basement. Very unfriendly. It felt gloomy and sad. It was a dungeon.

AL: Architecture really does impact on your work.

CG: We moved to where we are now located, which has an outdoor area for sitting, and suddenly the community came back.

MM: Shih-Tung, does 'open' in OCAC refer to the community?

LST: In the beginning the word 'open' was a message that we wanted to send specifically to our faculty in our university. At that time, our education in Taiwan was still very conservative, only painting all the time. That's why our seniors founded Open-Contemporary Art Centre. It was actually revolution-based, against our education in our faculty. Most of our friends or members were from our faculty. They selected the first venue, the location, the place, near our school. They brought students, they posted some posters, and gave lectures that the faculty wasn't providing about modern and contemporary art. I saw one of the posters, and it was introduced by one of the professors as well—I mean one of the good professors. I went to this Open-Contemporary, I was surprised. Wow, a bunch of people in this really hot summer were wearing short pants, there was air conditioning, and they were very serious, talking about contemporary art.

AL: You mentioned previously that 'open' in Chinese has a slightly different meaning to the one in English. That is, it is an active word with a stronger impact that signifies a counter movement.

LST: Yes. In a way, yes. Our name, Open-Contemporary, purports to gain something or to open something...

AL: You talked about the movement of opening something that is kind of closed. The word has a more forceful action?

LST: Or a need to open something, especially in the early time of Open-Contemporary...

MM: I found that sentence, "OCAC stands for a public space and a union of artists that cannot be separated", I wondered in this context what you mean

by that? How is the space open? And how do you consider it a public space?

LST: The space is a very crucial element to the members and friends who gather there, especially in the early days, when the professors who taught painting would always tell us to feel; to draw something from our expression as if art was a kind of mystery. We understood the actual space to be an important material. For example, for one of the projects, which we did for two years, we invited all the members and friends from the faculty and told them that they could do anything, experiment, and not necessarily needing to do a finished work. During the two-month summer break we had several discussion panels to debate and discuss with different participants. We also changed the space, even moving our friend's artwork, or turning it into our own artwork.

CG: One of the things we share in common is the relationship with universities and schools, to some degree. Whether it was in the early days, when it brought friends together, or whether there are layers of community that we continue to engage with from those centres of learning. I think that's an influencing factor on the way that galleries form in Melbourne, and at least in Australia more broadly, the way that artists understand their career trajectories, their expectations of what an art practice is and how the galleries service those needs. One of the things that we find here is that socialising is less foregrounded, the shows are there and lots of galleries try to be useful, career building spaces and the socialising around those activities rather than a place for community. They fulfil that need, but it's interesting how the university system here influences the way that galleries present themselves, and the way that potentially they don't emphasise that 'hang-out' atmosphere. It's more about the gallery program here, the showing, the CV building, the credential building in the hopes of developing your practice. I don't think that's something that's necessarily unchallenged, I think that people are starting to challenge that, especially now, when they realise who is included and excluded from that trajectory.

MM: What about the idea of the region as a place?

AL: OCAC is the only artist-run initiative that I know that has moved its whole project to another country in the region. I understood it was partly due to having to leave the big gallery that you were in, being space-less and reconsidering what it means to be a collective. That was a meaningful engagement when OCAC moved to Bangkok for a year. Shih-Tung, could you tell us more about this project which had a beautiful title, *Tai-Thai: a measure of understanding*?

LST: The whole project, collective and space moved. We were more than ten. There were invited artists for the project, as well as, another extra ten. That was the first time we tried to do an international project. Before that we were focused on the local, our education and [art] scene in Taiwan. And also at that time we

didn't have an actual space. The contract for our space was about to finish. That's why we thought it could be great if we just moved our space to Bangkok, in parallel with the project. Because the space is like the DNA of OCAC, in that we combine everything with the actual space, that's how we gather and share. So when we were about to do this international project we thought it was also very crucial to have an actual space not just for the artists, but for our members as well. In every project, we try to do everything through our members, the curatorial work, design, every detail of the project.

MM: When you say members who are you referring to?

LST: Members are the artists, mostly from the university. This project was a really amazing experience, especially in a strange, unfamiliar, country like Thailand. Having a space helped the whole process, because the space itself became a hub where we could encounter the locals—and in Thailand there isn't many artist-run spaces, especially in Bangkok. In Chiang Mai maybe some, but in Bangkok most artists work individually, and own their own studio. They do have some galleries, but no artist-run spaces. It was surprising, it seemed like something strange had happened during six months when a bunch of Taiwanese just appeared in Bangkok and tried to run a space. It was really fun. We were able to reach out, and many people helped with the whole project. In the last two years, we have continued to work with our friends in Thailand with some community-based projects.

MM: How long did the project last?

LST: It lasted six months, then we all moved back, because the project had two stages. The first stage in 2012 in Thailand, then the second [stage] in Taiwan in 2013. There were about ten Thai artists who came to Taiwan and stayed in our space or at the Taipei Artist Village.

AL: Being in Bangkok for a long time seemed to have created relationships that enabled a meaningful exchange over two years.

LST: The experience during that six months also elaborated the whole project. In the first stage of the project we selected only ten Taiwanese artists and ten Thai artists, which is a very basic format, but the second time when the project came to Taiwan we had about 30–40 artists, or projects within a project. It really helped to expand the whole thing.

AL: This shows a point of difference between OCAC and MES56 or Bus Projects, in the way that the collective focuses on a series of projects directed by a loose vision or framework, and each time the projects are specific while the space doesn't impact too much on how things should be or look, like in traditional exhibition spaces. At OCAC, the artist-run space, which is a house, is the place for things to happen and each time it would be different. Exhibitions could happen

in the space or outside of it. What's mostly happening in the space are gatherings during which the project is being developed, workshops would happen, everyone would come together around a big table and work together. At OCAC, running a space is feels less about having a gallery and showing works from one show to the next etc. It's more about a collective of artists working together, and projects, timelines, formats and members would change. This is quite different to a lot of Australian artist-run spaces, but closer to other collectives, artist collectives.

MM: What about the internet? How does that work for artist-run spaces and collaboration across the Asia-Pacific region?

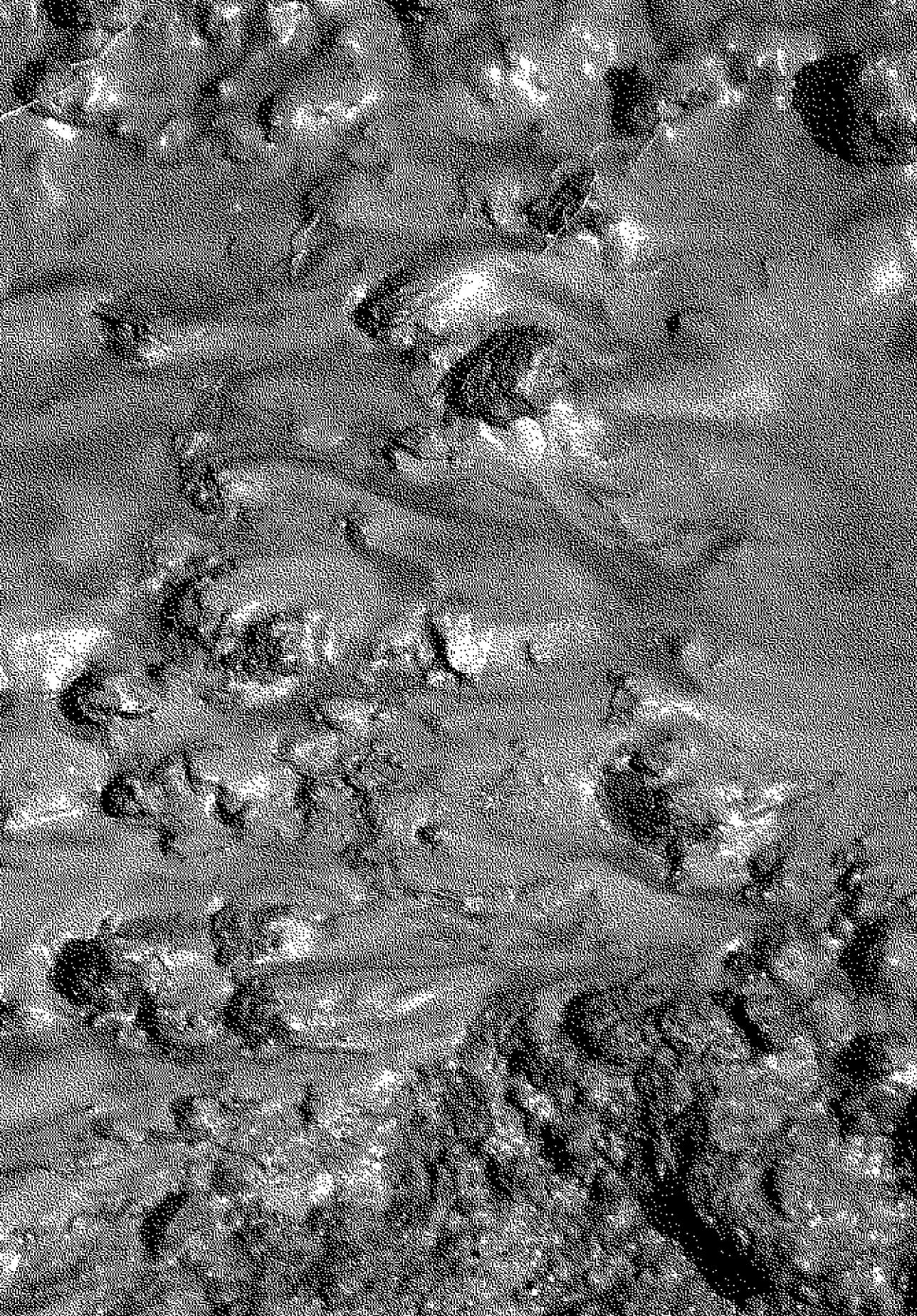
CG: For us it doesn't influence form or anything. It doesn't replace face-to-face interaction, working together—it's a pretty cold replacement for real collaboration. It's good for research. It's good for organising. It's good for people who have little infrastructure. It allows you to organise a lot, which is nice. It doesn't become a new community.

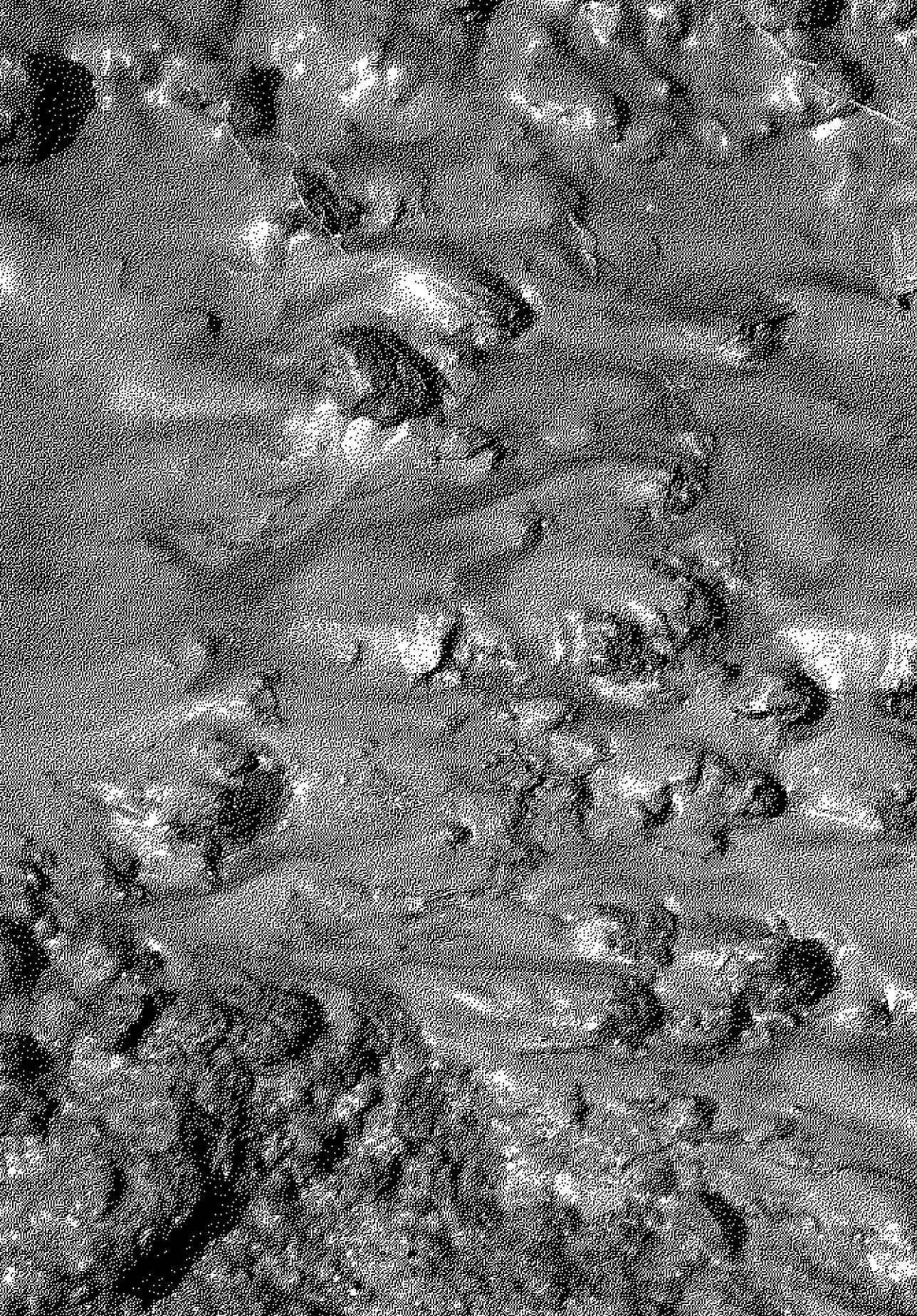
AL: It's a connection. Thinking about the region in the past five years, connections between artist-run initiatives in several countries have become stronger and stronger. A few projects that have engaged with the Asia-Pacific and South-East Asia specifically have happened between ARIs. OCAC hosted one and Zero Station in Vietnam just had a big seminar a couple of weeks ago. As the idea of coming together in the region becomes stronger, these in-person events become increasingly important. Bouncing off Channon's comment about the place of ARIs in post-colonial Australia, it is quite relevant to look at post-colonialism across the region. From my experience visiting Taiwan, I found that a post-colonial discourse was becoming stronger and uniting a lot of practitioners across the region, being in dialogue, generating collaborations, sharing research, and of course, the Internet helps that.

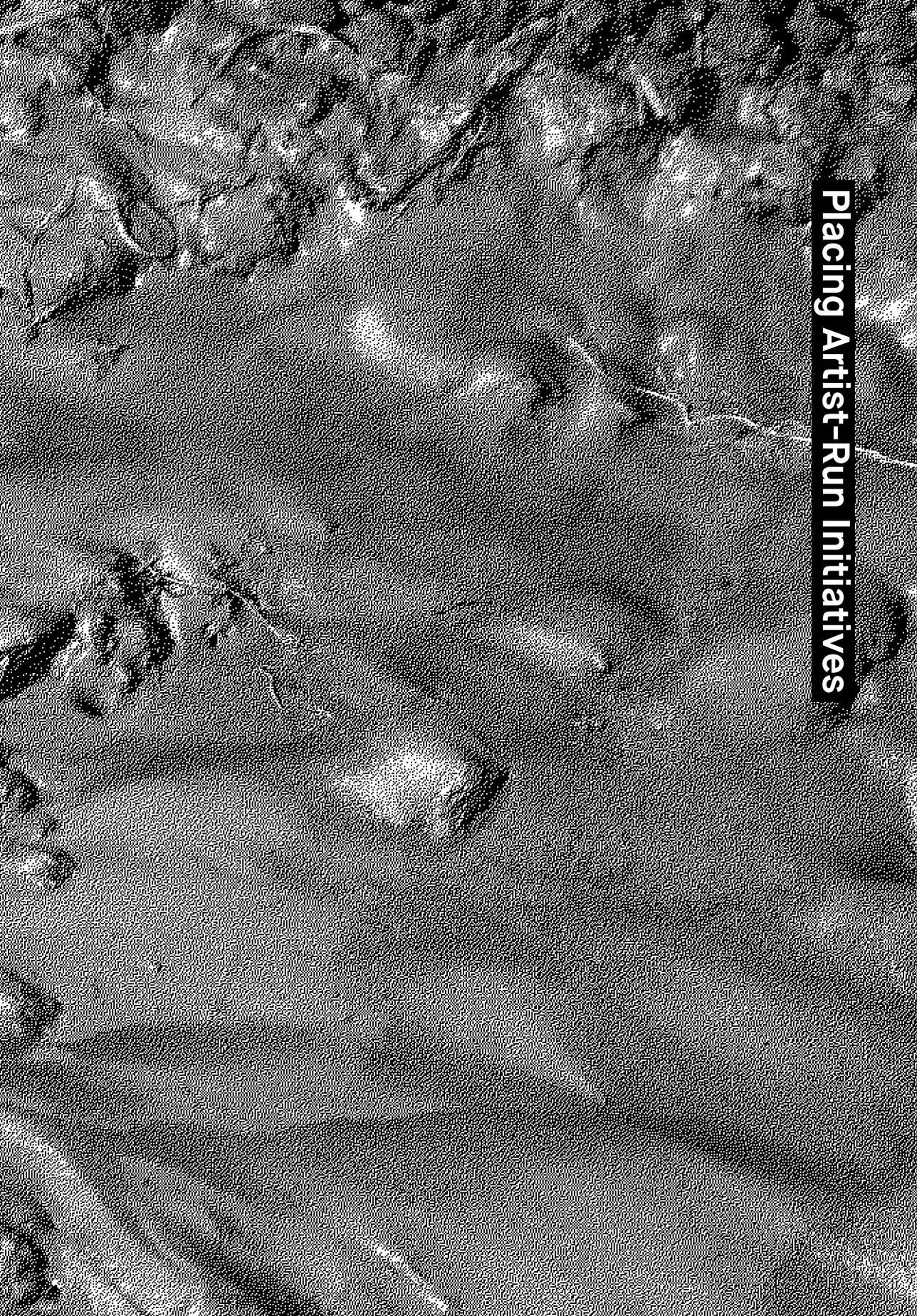
CG: These artist-run centres or organisations are often access to a community. They are often very grass roots entities, which is why their collaborations tend to be quite impactful in terms of not only working institution-to-institution, staff-to-staff. It can be relatively insulating from the real world if you're working with big institutions. This community-to-community exchange or discussion, especially for Australia, is really important and may be a challenge to existing power structures which may create change in the future. There has been a stylistic attempt to relink us to Europe more than to the Asia-Pacific, which is a championing of the colonial spirit. It's an attempt to link to that history and not to further understand its role in the region. That's the perception of the current government strategy. Therefore, I think that our role as instigators of collaborations and dialogue within our region becomes more important, a kind of resistance of the closing down and conservativeness within our society. We

know that Australia has deep problems with racism and still at break point with First Peoples. Artist-run spaces have a real potential to contribute because they're community-built, or linked, and for me this becomes a really important question around discussion and collaboration in the region.

AL: It is interesting to link this to how most artist-run initiatives started—usually from a real need, or counterpoint, or reaction against something. Whether ARIs are more or less politically engaged, I found that many of them are doing projects that challenge the effects of imperialistic and globalising forces by coming together and doing meaningful projects locally. With the examples we discussed here through your projects, it seems to me that there's a will to understand what these effects, histories and cultural aspects mean on a deeper level. It seems that artist-run initiatives tend to create projects that open another door: to future projects, reflections, or create change—even if it is on a small scale—and that's really important.







Placing Artist-Run Initiatives



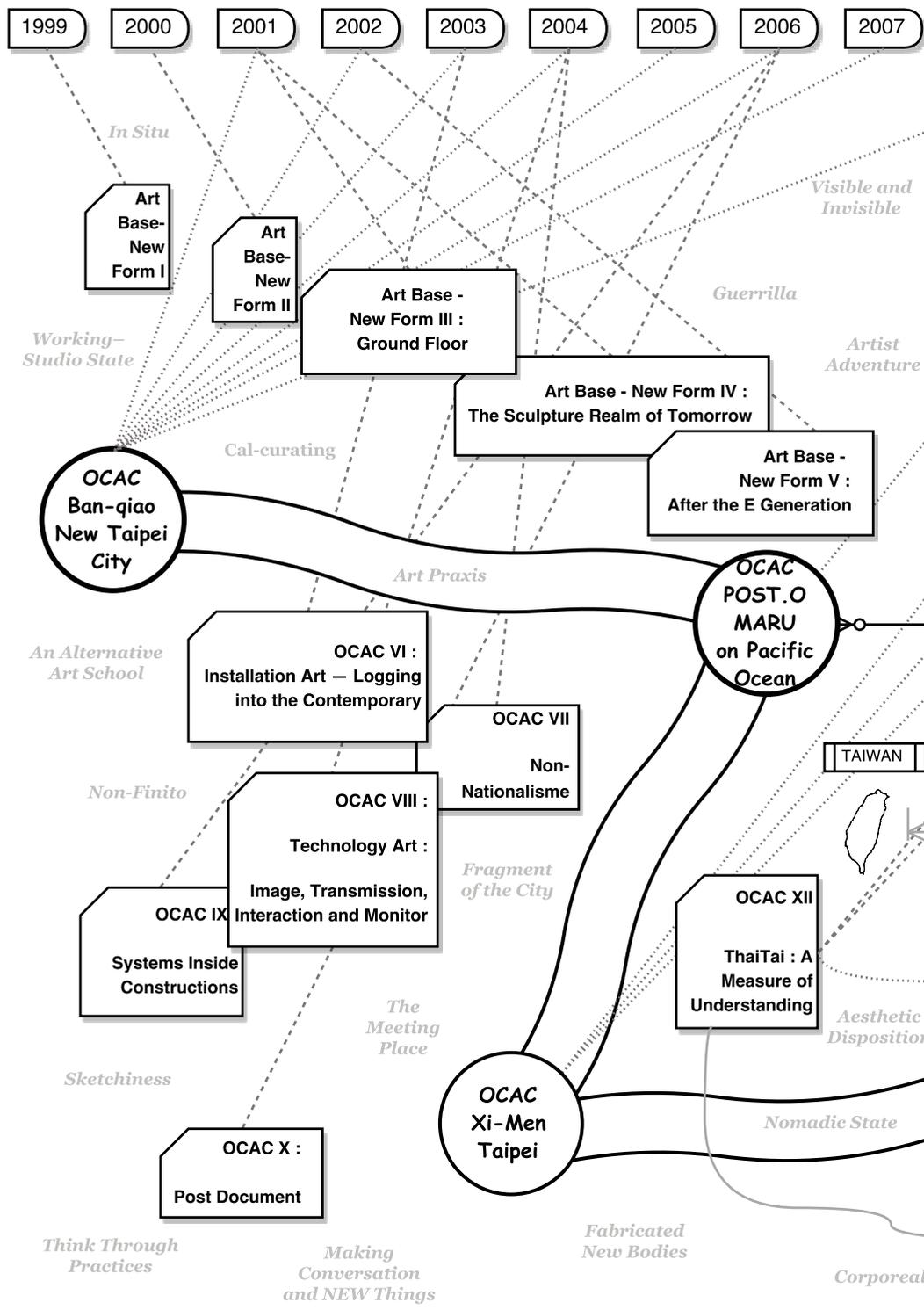
CHEN Chia-Jen, CHEN Chia-Lan, CHEN Szu-Han, KUO Po-Yu, KAO Hsueh, LO Shih-Tung, LIN Wen-Tsao, Rebekka Reich, SHE Wen-Ying, Pop-up book, 21 x 31 cm, 2017

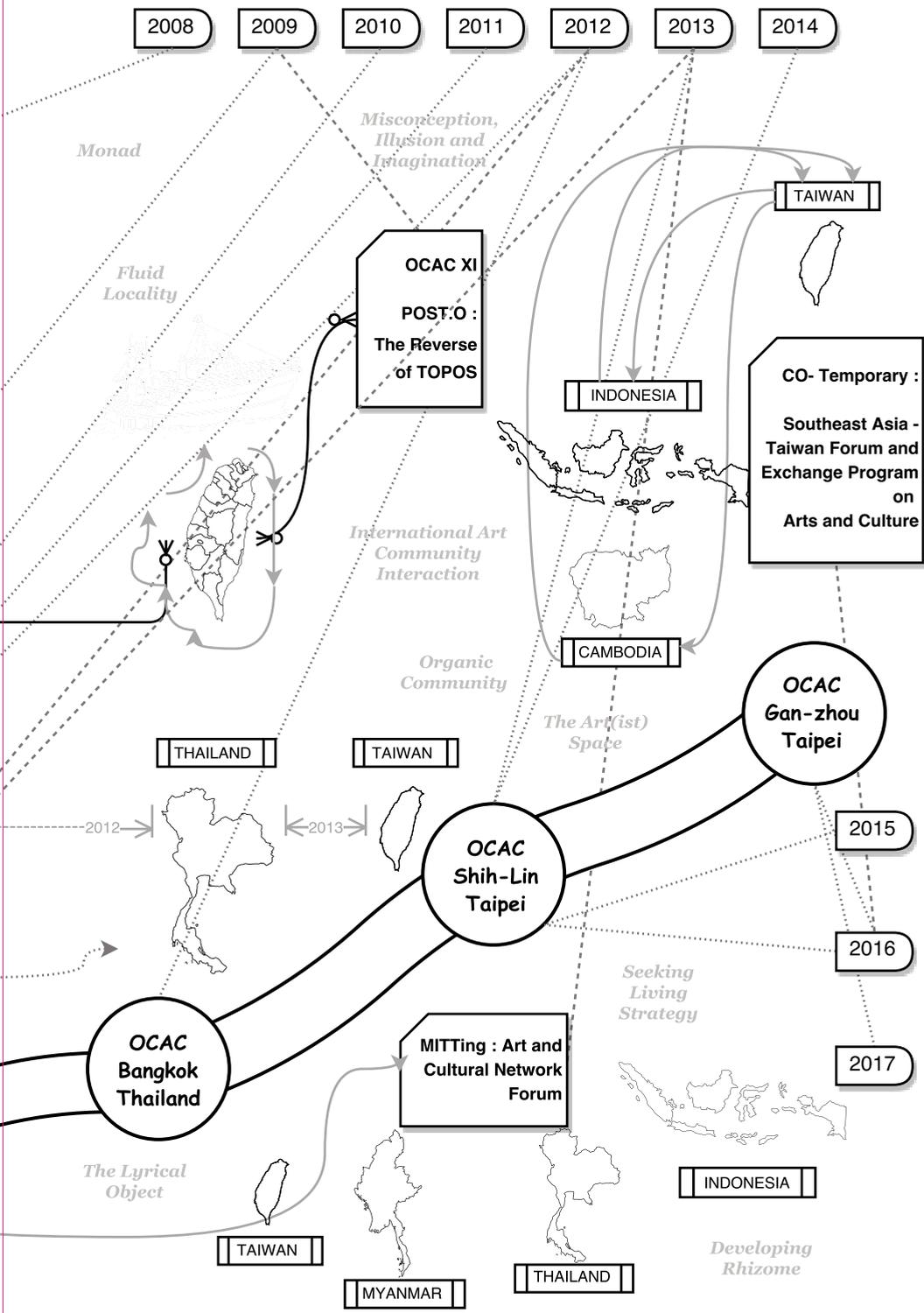


打開—當代藝術工作站

The new space of OCAC is however a great challenge to our imagination. We rented a small house with concrete façade, and realized it is much older than we thought when we started plastered with earth, old newspaper beams, the traditional walls made of woven bamboo hidden inside the structure, in addition to its history as a local grocery shop and a teahouse for sex service. Many layers of historical traces provide a rich and plural context to the site while suggesting its precarious status. We try to keep its partial remains with care to continue their second life in a new coexistence with many OCAC members' artwork installed at different corners. From Banglao, Chengchung, Bangkok, Shilin to Datong district, OCAC's fifth venue stands with our fifteen years' history. This year we are developing residency exchanges with Indonesian, Malaysian, Singaporean and Cambodian artists and hosting a conference in summer. There will also be study group, presentation and other exhibition and event presented. Meanwhile, we also hope to attract new members and energy.









Open-Contemporary Art Center (OCAC) is an artist-run space founded in Banqiao (Taiwan) in 2001. Our tasks include curation, interdisciplinary exchange, art forum, study and publication. We believe that contemporary art permeates our lives more broadly than ever. People need guidance as to “what is contemporary art?” and they need imagination. We look at this and attempt to dedicate ourselves to create diverse forms so that the public can interact with contemporary art.

CURATION

OCAC was first established by a group of artist-curators to illustrate our fundamental philosophy in art. We as artists feel most obligated to (or capable of) developing a theory of practice. Reflecting on art production and contemporary society, our curatorial purpose has always been discovering and putting forward new perspectives. In the process of thinking carefully about Taiwan’s (art) feedback to the world in terms of art production, we examine our contemporary art under the influence of globalization in art.

ART/ARTIST STUDIO

The artist studio today may be the most openly liberal space among others. OCAC stands for a public space and a union of artists—which cannot be separate. We expect to do more than just simple production, storage and exhibitions in the art space; rather we strive to generate more conversation, radical thoughts and guerrilla activities. Through artists’ practice in the space, we attempt to create a proposal for living against capitalism in contemporary society.

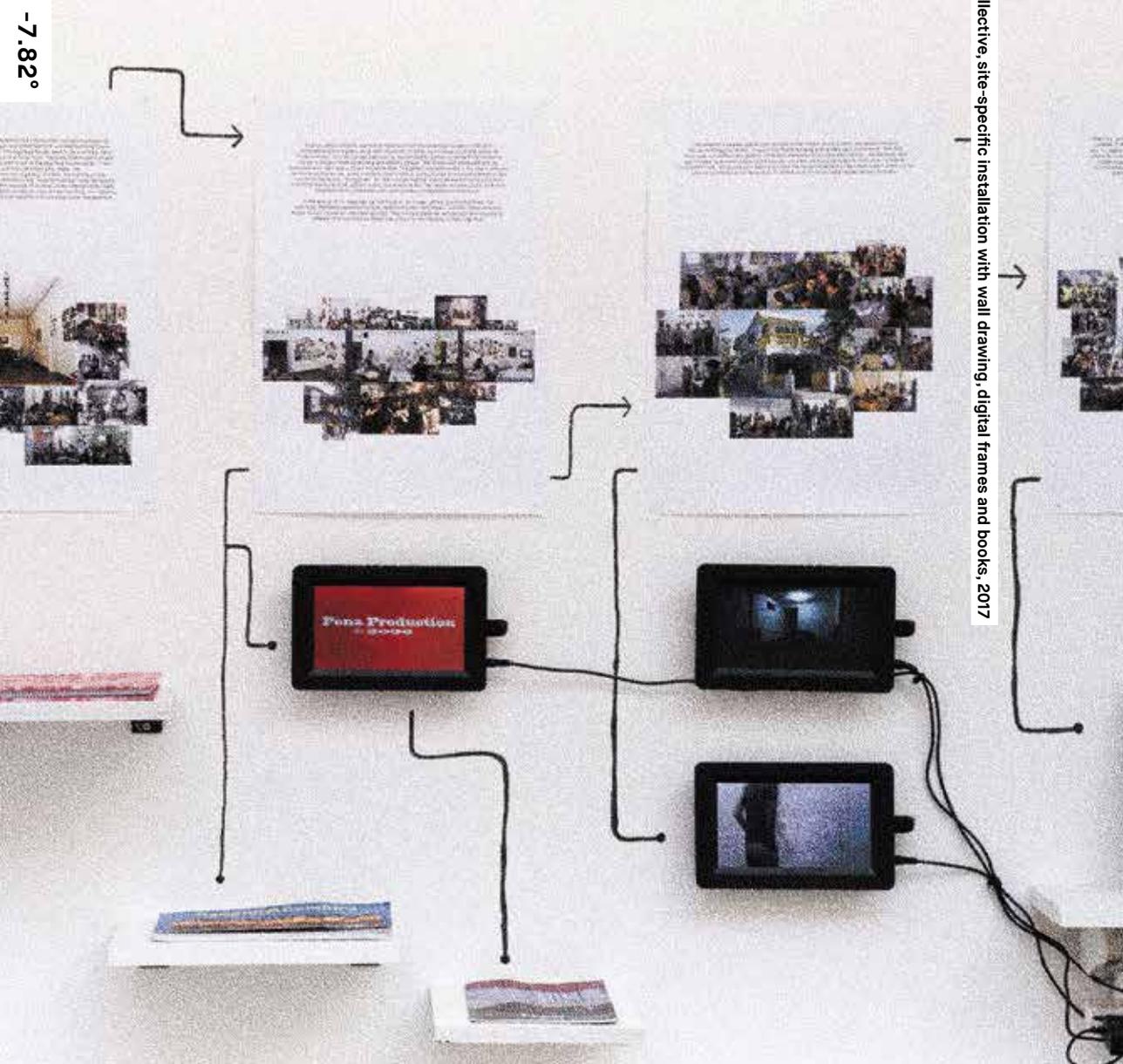
COMMUNITY DIALOGUE

With the trend for public involvement in art, contemporary art becomes vital and open to almost any non-art fields. OCAC is committed to opening up a dialogue of new possibilities and exchange. We continue to promote art in different communities via artists’ active participation and diverse practices in culture, which brings us to explore art’s influence on people in everyday life.

The operational model and development strategy of OCAC has been influenced by the members of OCAC, the physical location, and the contemporary art scene in Taiwan. Recently, OCAC created cultural exchange activities among south-east Asian countries as its main direction. We took the “pop-up book” as a source of inspiration, trying to present the histories of OCAC, its aesthetic progress and mode of operation. The use of the term “OPEN” responds to the concept of artist collaboration and praxis as key ideas behind OCAC.

Through different paper-cutting skills, the visual illusion factor and mechanical movements, the pop-up book concretized an abstract concept through its various performances on paper. Pop-up books give readers a totally different reading experience. The pop-up books have multiple ways of reading much like the organic, experimental and diverse possibilities that are generated in an artist-run initiative space.





-7.82°



A House/Home and The People In It Ruang MES 56

In Javanese culture, a house and land are not merely property or functional places. They represent a 'soul' and identity beyond a cultural one, with certain functions and roles in the structure of the community. We can relate this to how, in Bahasa, the usage of the word *rumah* refers to both house and home. We don't differentiate between a house, describing a physical space, and a home, describing a space's psychological and spiritual quality. It is a claim we make about a place, constructed through social relations and cultural practices.

In the 90s, a group of photography art students lived side by side with various types of people, such as army personnel, *dangdut* singers and small families in a mixed boarding house located in Kolonel Sugiono Street, Yogyakarta.



This boarding house used to be a military mess—number 56—consisting of several bedrooms and a living room. It was in this house that students hung out and discussed arts, music, etc. We later called this house Kolonel Sugiono House.

Living in a diverse environment made the students accustomed to diverse social interactions. We managed to transform the boarding house into a gallery. The first attempt was conducted in 1997 when the hallway of the boarding house was set for *Langkah*, which exhibited experimental photography works produced by art college students. However, by 2005 some reasons caused us to move out of Kolonel Sugiono house and we were without a space for a year.

In 2006, upon realizing that our sense of ‘collectiveness’ was built and maintained through ‘space’, we decided to gather up some funds to rent a house in Nagan Street as a living and working space (Nagan House). The house had an extensive front yard and a big, shady sapodilla tree. Besides serving as a gallery and studio space, the house was also used as a living space, with some of the members residing in the remaining rooms. Living in a new environment gave us new concerns and experiences that slowly changed our art. Some of our practices changed when we moved to the new space, while others were carried over from the previous space, like cooperating with

neighbours in managing parking spaces for exhibition openings.

As time went by, we started to get more recognition as professional artists. We began to work with our neighbours and collaborate with other groups and organizations around us. However, at the end of 2011, we returned to our 'no house' state as the owner of Nagan House had to sell it. During that time, individual members began to get recognition and career stability. Many of them began to rent houses for individual studios. This created distance, emotionally and physically, between the members because there was a drop in the intensity of 'quality time' as a collective.

The need for a shared space once again returned in mid-2012 when we rented the third house on Minggiran Street. It was a two-story building with a little yard in the front. The first floor functioned as a gallery, while two members lived on the second floor. As the house was surrounded by a more conservative society, we often received complaints from other residents. During this time, some members rarely visited the house because its construction was not comfortable for hang-outs. It looked as if the house was neglected and forgotten.

In 2014, after two years on Minggiran, we decided to move. Luckily, some of our members found a new place on Mangkuyudan

Street, in the centre of a tourist area. This fourth house has an extensive yard, just like the one on Nagan Street. Our neighbours are hotels, restaurants and some residential houses. The distance between us and the residential houses and hotels is very close. We still get complaints from our neighbours because of the loud music on openings or at parties. However, we keep trying to maintain a good relationship with our surroundings, particularly by participating in community activities such as monthly community gatherings.

Physically, the Mangkuyudan Street house has numerous small rooms (10 in total, all with built-in bathrooms). The structure of this house suits our expectations as a collective: a big yard and lots of rooms, with a long, narrow alley as an entrance. However, with a bigger house, new challenges began to appear. The bigger house requires higher rents and additional operational costs. To pay for the first rent, we staged a fundraising exhibition. To maintain sustainability we began experimenting with a new platform of a studio-based system, maximizing the function of the space, human resources and networks.

Shifting houses from time to time marked the journey and changes of our art, collectively and individually. Places always change, so do people, and we, as a collective of people and ideas, change too.



Bandung Street

Unfolded City



Bandung Street

Unfolded City



Bandung Street

Unfolded City

Phyllis Ningamarra, Judy Mengil, Peggy Griffiths, Kithey Malariye, Agnes Armstrong, Brian Murielle, Gloria Mengil, Louise Malariye and Philomena Armstrong, *Bush Medicine Mural (detail) and Boobab Nuts*, 2012

-15.76°



'Waringarri Aboriginal Arts was established by Mirirwoong and Gajerrabeng elders to lead in working together to retain and share culture following Ngarrangarni law.'

Collective Statement 2017

'The art centre gives me cultural connection with our older people. It is a place to help us feel good and take away our stresses. It's a meeting place for our families and community and it is a place to learn and connect to culture for our younger generations.'

Jan Griffiths 2017



**WARINGARRI
ABORIGINAL ARTS**
Celebrating Art and Culture

Photo courtesy Cole Bennetts



***‘Waringarri Aboriginal Arts is a place
for community to come together to feel
good in understanding culture through
the arts and to build Aboriginal
enterprise and employment’***

Collective Statement 2017

Photo courtesy Wesfarmers



*“Ngenjayinga dawanga ngoondenintha
birrgamib-gerring. Ngoondengig yirremadayin
ngenjaying dawang Miriwoong. Yawroobtha
yirrb yirroowindayin warrgeb-gerring
woorngib-gerring, birrgamib-gerring.”*

*It’s a good art centre - this place. We do good
things in this Miriwoong Country. We all come
together here to dance and sing and make things.*

Statement 2004

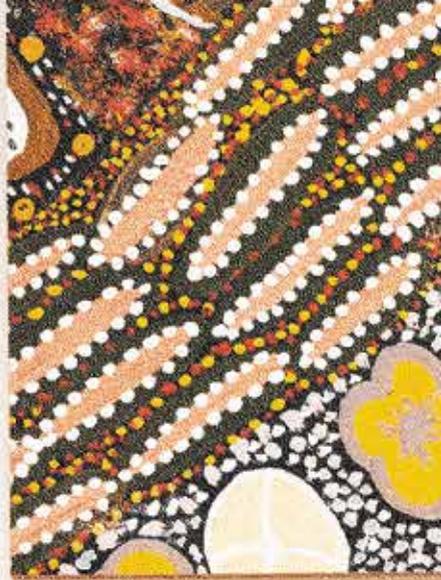
**‘This art centre gives us opportunities, it provides
employment and training and career opportunities as
artists and arts-workers. It helps us be leaders in our
community. It keeps our community strong. What we do
here keeps us connected to our culture and keeps our
culture strong for younger generations...’ Helen Carlton 2016**

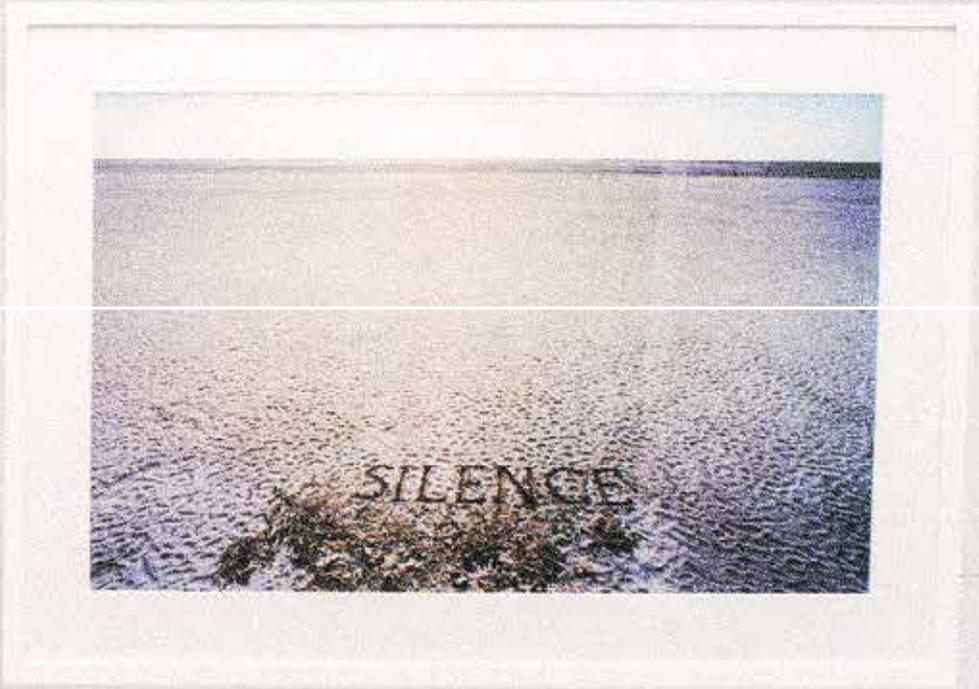


-15.76°

‘The Art Centre is an idea; a way forward for our young people to get experience both in our culture and in getting their first job. The textiles project is a great idea. The women have moved forward with this project - really taken this on. A lot of people just do something for money but these projects are more than that. These projects have heart and they are about showing young people how to work in a way that gives them heart. We develop lots of projects that give our community support to do things. A lot of people have difficulties with life; our projects mentor young people, community and everyone. It teaches us all how to be leaders. It’s about helping people to deal with their life. The arts shows you a pathway for what you can be doing.’

Ben Ward 2016





-23.70°

Watchthis SPACE^{inc}



Watch This Space Artist Run Initiative was incorporated in 1994 by a vivacious art gang and driven especially by the energies of much revered local artist Pamela Lofts. The artists were among a wave of people drawn to Central Australia in the 70s & 80s - part of an emerging middle class made possible by viable careers generated in the wake of the institutionalisation of Aboriginal social justice movements. The RI now remains responsive to the enthusiasms of those who feed it, maintaining a diverse program of local and visiting artists and supporting work in many forms. A travelling residency program has formalised the dynamic of transient and artist visitors who come because this place roams large in the imaginary. Watch This Space has established triennial government funding, a position affording stability and possibility alongside the challenges a paid position brings to generating committed voluntary activity. The arid & lush rocky country that one is compelled into an immediate relationship with and surrounding Mparntwe (a specific site within the town known as Alice Springs), coupled with a visceral sense of being among a society in the grip of the ongoing colonisation of Arrernte country, form a dense scene for art-making.

-23.70°

Mparntwe - Alice Springs, is loud, in a way. It's a dog story, a caterpillar story, it can't be summed. There's a question hanging over it. It's Australia's question, but for some people it's louder here.

This golden mwekarte (meaning hat) is a political device via any number of conversations that might happen under the shade of its peak. The word mwekarte is ripe for an enquiring mind trying to make sense of Central/Eastern Arrernte orthography and a classic example of how in its written form it is unlikely to make pronunciation apparent to an English speaker. That Arrernte is considered 'hard' by settlers locally because of its orthography is evidence of the centring of English (which has one of the most inconsistent orthographies of all written earth languages). We English speakers can't seem to accept that it is a system unto itself, not created for us.



The mwekarte emerged as one among a series of ideas for material items we could create as part of Apmere angentye-kehne / A place for language, a project Watch This Space is generating in collaboration with a group of Arrernte language speakers and cultural custodians. The project is activating discourse concerning language and its implications, through the inherent collaborations and conversations involved in making such a project, and via an experimental pedagogical space opening for three weeks in June/July 2017.

We are asking ourselves, "who form the target audience/market for the mwekarte?", this semantic distinction of the potential public consciously blurred by producing merchandise as art. There's choices to make about how strategic to be about where to sell/place the hats, who to gift them to. Do we watch to see what happens and see who else's strategies might emerge? A hinge between art and activism is momentarily revealed, between the tendency to observe vs the impetus to push. The population of Alice Springs is around 27,000 — a size that sometimes feels able to be reckoned with as a social body. This mwekarte - still just a tiny seed, it's not that radical, a hat that says hat, but it's so loaded with potential to hear afresh this little sound mapped by roman numerals - that apparently originated on the Adelaide plains from the mouths of Kaurna people and travelled up through the centre with the arrival of hats and hat wearing people.

Creative Time's Nato Thompson (2016) describes a process of 'producing a public' as an "undergirding set of social relationships that deal with power in order to support an aesthetic gesture." The ability for us as a group to imagine fifty heads for the fifty caps to sit upon is grounded in a huge body of respective local knowledge in the project team, and in a network of conversations grafted between profoundly different demographic layers of the town.

If, under this beast, patriarchal capitalism, an artist's work/life delineation is already an opportunity for alternative modes of operation, a small town like Alice Springs gives attempts to compartmentalise ones 'work' another layer of real. Here we take it for granted that an inter-disciplinary network of friendships and relationships will augment an art practice - types of collaborations lorded in urban art discourses are inherent here.

Some of those mwekarte conversations will be postures, the hat-wearer performing fresh knowledge in the semi-conscious pursuit of social capital. The mwekarte may function in some cases — like Aboriginal art often also does — as a way for settlers to purchase a kind of redemption from colonial complicity, This posturing — albeit cringe inducing — is evidence of a value economy that is shifting, and whether that value shift has real implications for the redistribution of power should be a part of those discussions, on the street, every day.

Pamela Lofts was an effervescent babe by all accounts and established Watch This Space with her pals in the early nineties. In her MFA thesis some years later she explored the idea that an arc of movement was necessary and informative to her practice, traversing the shifting modalities first between the city and Mparntwe/Alice Springs and then out more remote parts of Central Australia — which have almost as profound difference again. Pam's artwork at times seemed to respond to the tension in what her friend Kim Mahood (2016) described as "when the body feels an almost cellular affinity to a place that has been constructed by a different cultural imagination." Relating to place as not from produces multiple dialectic responses, operating at different tempos, interrupted and informed by economic and material necessities that draw one in as agent. The ability to be quiet and to listen long is a constant challenge in being a white artist or writer here — it is so easy to contribute to a white picture of the red centre.

Is this word carved neatly in a salt lake a call for our silence? Kieran Finnane (2012) describes a philosophical approach for Pam's understanding of the desert, "You must travel into it, walk, eat and sleep in it, return and return, opening yourself through listening and watching — the mode of Aboriginal learning — to its voice, in- voking as Lofts has discerned, "a necessary nomadism" that leads to rethinking our place in the 'sunburnt country' This place can teach an imagination to grasp that land and people are one. Watch This Space plays host to artists interrogating the questions this place invokes. Am I allowed to love this country? Can I make work here? Is this bit of country able to be engaged with, walked on, camped on, photo- graphed, painted etc? What does it mean to make work here that may not be seen

-23.70°

or read by Aboriginal people, yet is so often questioning one's own involvement with place in relation to them? Can I make work without showing it?

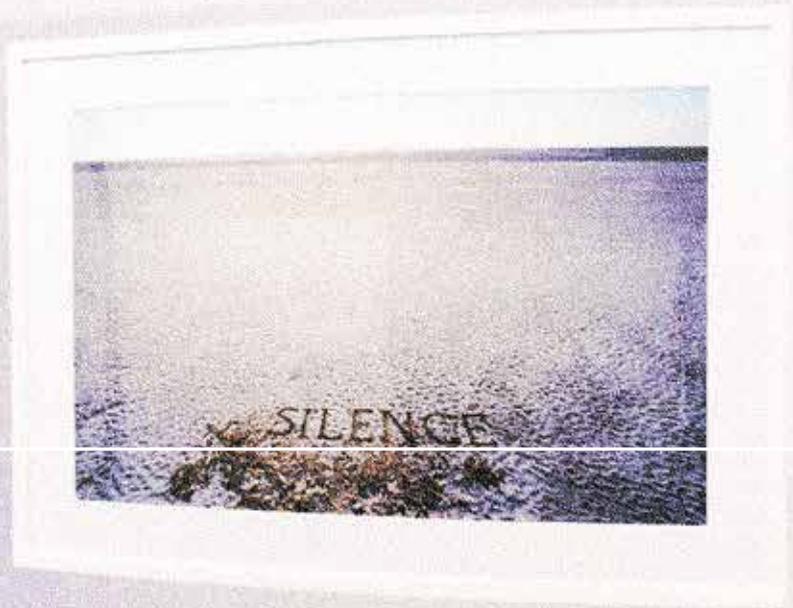
Pam was anticipating her coming silence. Narrated by Kim Mahood (2016), the trip in the Tanami where Pam made this work was when she first described "a peculiar sensation, a thrum in her voice" and she was anxious about what might be wrong. Her diagnosis with motor neuron disease came within months. The day, about 18 months later that she gifted me this work, I was visiting her at home and she was almost unable to speak, as the disease had advanced significantly. I left after not so long because she became overwhelmed with a severe coughing fit I got the feeling she would rather be alone with. Pam continued to make and exhibit beautiful work that engaged with her experience with impending death, and remained invested in Watch This Space.

Stories of individual legends are important to the way we make place here as settlers — I mean this as both steeped in colonial mythology but also in the sphere of those who attempt to be here with new senses of responsibility. As time goes by in this long term relationship full of plot twists and new moods that to look to those who have come before me here as artists becomes increasingly critical to my survival. Watch This Space acts as a conduit for artists to know one another in this way.

In a time of hyper-mobility and imagined and real and digitally projected exotic international art careers it can feel like an inhibiting choice to commit to one scene, to the "thousand year process of knowing a place" (Berry, 2002), to an unreproducible logic or format and to a specific set of challenges. It is a long love and you're not always in love, what does it say about you when so many others haven't chosen it? There may be a tipping point where you suspect you are more useful to a place than it is useful to you and feel uncertainty over whether equilibrium is possible. Over time this can eat away at commitment, catalyse a consumed reckoning of an economic equation. As knowing becomes unknowing and entering the story space desires demotion and to let others see you not knowing - or this other way of knowing. SILENCE seems to hum in this void.

Beth Sometimes — Secretary of board, studio artist and Apmere Angkentye-kenhe project artist at Watch This Space Artist Run Initiative, Alice Springs.

Berry, Wendell. *The Art of the Common-Place: The Agrarian Essays of Wendell Berry*. Counterpoint, 2002,
Finnane, Kieran. "Rethinking a Place in the Sun: The Desert Art of Pam Lofts- (1949-2012)." *Artlink* 32, no. 3 (September 2012): 74.
French, Blair, and Anne Loxley. *Civic Actions: Artists' Practices Beyond the Museum*, 2016,
Mahood, Kim. *Position Doubtful: Mapping Landscapes and Memories / Kim Mahood*. Brunswick, Vic: Scribe Publications, 2016.
Turner, Margaret Kemarre. *Iwenhe Tyerrtye: What It Means to Be an Aboriginal Person*. IAD Press, 2010.



-23.70°



...on
beyond Grace
Gods Must Die – Nile
Apes of Wrath – GWAR
Coma of Souls – Kreator
The Blood of Power – Dying Fetus
Malthusian Collapse – Origin
Wholly Night – Arsis
Necropolis – The Black Dahlia Murder
Forest King – 3 Inches of Blood
My Last Sunrise – Demons and Wizards
Relentless – Strapping Young Lad
Toxic Garbage Island – Gojira
Frozen Planets – Artificial Brain
...And Soon the World Will Cease to Be – Amon Amarth

-27.45°

boxcopy

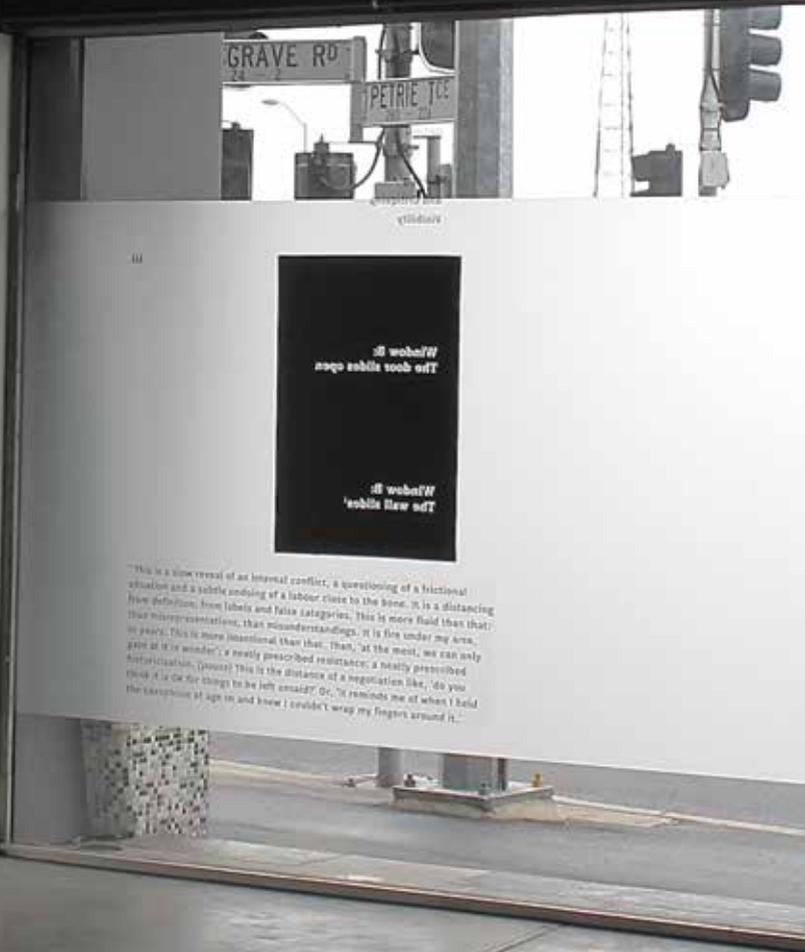
is an artist-run organisation dedicated to creating a platform for the experimental and innovative practices of Australian artists. We support artists to develop and present new works in a critical context, through our program of exhibitions, events, publications and discussions. As an artist-run initiative we embrace experimentation, collaborative processes and a d.i.y. approach to art practice.

Celebrating our ten year anniversary in 2017, Boxcopy is one of the longest running artist-run spaces in Brisbane. Boxcopy was founded as a collaborative project by seven art school graduates in 2007, initially operating from the basement of a Queenslander house in New Farm. In 2008 Boxcopy was selected as the inaugural ARI-in-Residence at Metro Arts. The gallery was then established in the historical Watson Brothers Building in Brisbane's CBD, until relocating to our current space at the Normanby Fiveways, on Petrie Terrace in 2013.

In 2012 Boxcopy became a not-for-profit organisation run by a small volunteer gallery staff led by Gallery Director Rachael Haynes, and supported by an advisory board. Boxcopy is also a proud member of All Conference - a national organising network launched in 2017, comprised of 15 artist-led, experimental and cross-disciplinary arts organisations.

...on
beyond Grace
Gods Must Die – Nile
Apes of Wrath – Cy
Coma of
The

-27.45°



"This is a time reveal of an internal conflict, a questioning of a fictional situation and a subtle nodding of a labour close to the bone. It is a distancing from definition, from labels and false categories. This is more fluid than that; this misrepresentation, than misunderstandings. It is fire under my arms, in years. This is more intentional than that. Then, at the most, we can only gaze at it's wonder, a newly prescribed resistance; a neatly prescribed authorization. (Growth) This is the distance of a negotiation like, do you think it is OK for things to be left 'around' Or, 'it reminds me of when I held the telephone at age 10 and knew I couldn't wrap my fingers around it."

Sarah Rodigari, *Options* 2016.
Graphic Design Ella Sutherland. Commissioned for the Summer School series.



Metaphor is one thing;
use is another!

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WnohW A
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"If not you, then who?"

-27.45°

Boxcopy provides a space for artists to play and test ideas; a space for projects that are process-based, speculative and collaborative. This approach is reflected in our current project, from which our contribution to this exhibition is drawn.

Decade: Project for Future Alternatives invites artists to re-imagine the use of the gallery space and the possible directions of artist run practice. Building on our recent collaborative projects with local, national and international artist run spaces, which considered the provocation that 'small acts of resistance can create change' - this project is focused on the future imaginings of artist run activity in the context of Boxcopy's ten year celebrations.

From April - July 2017, artists will be in residence at Boxcopy: Joseph Breikers, Erika Scott and Archie Moore, and Simone Hine.

No Joke/End Times: A Listening Party is the culmination of Joseph Breikers' residency in April 2017. Boxcopy's first space in New Farm was formerly Joe's studio - now ten years later, as a form of historical restitution, Joe has taken over the current Boxcopy gallery as his working space.

The Listening Party 'began with the playlist and heavy metal's obsession with the melodrama of The Great Themes, particularly the apocalypse. The playlist has a sense of urgency...because of the current political climate, and this kind of historical amnesia which seems in vogue at the moment.'

“ARE WE

R EVER

TWISTING,

UNTWISTING,

THE
SAME
ROPE?”

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One Place After Another

152

one place after another



one





ONE PLACE AFTER ANOTHER

The Internet is a place that goes from place to place to place.

When we decided to create our own artist run initiative, our first concern was the space we would inhabit. We looked into old shop fronts, our own homes, hiring community halls, public pools and various other sites together, and talked about it for nearly a year before we realised online was the right place for us to be. We decided that we did not want to be confined to one place (hence the name). Instead we would be site specific, transient and mobile and ask our artists to respond to a particular environment/site of their choosing.

The internet does not have any physical architecture, no defined walls and floors. But what defines being online as a place to exist in? The internet, a tool to access a large amount of widespread information, but to also share our own personal information. We have conversations, share images of our daily activities and meet like minded people. As Annette N. Markham articulated in her essay *Metaphors reflecting and shaping the reality of the internet: Tool, place, way of being*; the internet is accustomed to creating meaningful relationships with other like minded people, and that place is distinct from space as it is not to be defined by its physicality, but by it being communal in context.

There's a lot of freedom in this place, an artist has the chance to do whatever they want, to explore ideas about place outside of the parameters of a physical exhibition space. We hope to provide room for artists to move a little sideways in their practice, to do something just for the sake of it, because it's interesting, or important to them. Meanwhile, One place after another will grow as a gallery, an archive. A series of places, that you can carry with you, and access any time.

Markham, A. 2003. *Metaphors reflecting and shaping the reality of the Internet: Tool, place, way of being*. Paper presented at the conference of the International Association of Internet Researchers in Toronto, Canada, October 2003.

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EMBRACING UNDER THE LAST MOON / THERE IS ONLY SUN NOW /
WE BECOME WATER / ONE AND THE SAME

Romii Fulton Smith. Last Moon.

Our work for An Act of Showing gives you something to take home, keep, consider. A business card, a QR code, that when accessed will lead to one of several destinations - a commissioned artwork, a personal message, a site we think is interesting or simply amusing, words that have stuck with us. Destinations shared with you from our own wandering, navigating and searching the places we found online, for you to view in public or private, at any time.

It's purely up to chance which link you will encounter, but completely up to you how to engage with it. We're thinking about where we sit when we are curating site specific works in a digital environment. We like the different ways the work can move, to the exhibition, to a hand, to a pocket, opened via smartphone and opening up a digital window to a hand picked place.

This work sums up the feelings we have about the web as a place to inhabit. It is endlessly accessible, with opportunities for beauty, and genuine connection. It is a place where experimentation can take place, where works can be trialled. It can give, generously, in tangible ways, the gift an artwork that you carry in your pocket, a page that only you can see. Words that stay with you. Of course sometimes all that you receive is not much at all... an absurd video, an image without context. Often you're going to need to create your own context for what you're seeing.

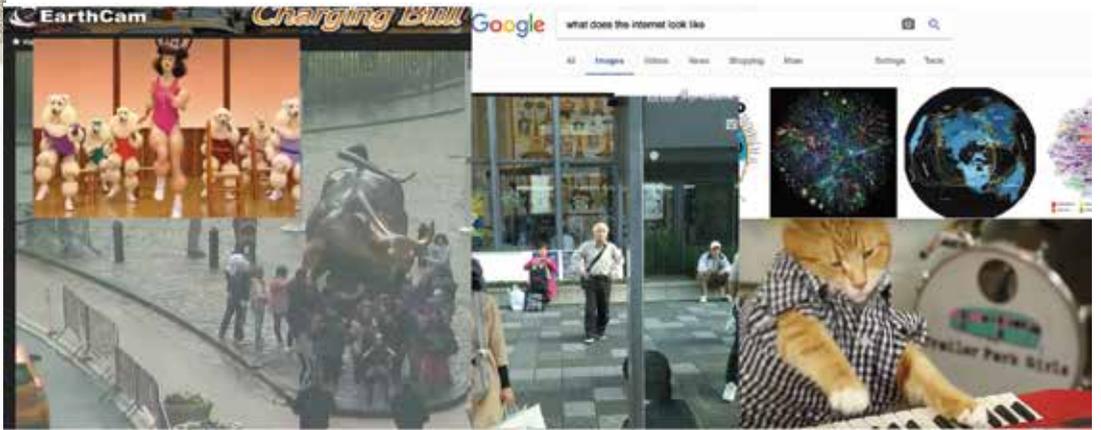
As a place, of course, it is easy to ignore, but that's fine too, we're not here for the hits. We look forward to being surprised by the way that artists share their places with us as we keep building and sharing our archive.

Welcome to One place after another. Please, take a piece of it. Put it in your wallet, access it on your phone, come back to it a few weeks from now. Give something back if you'd like. We'd love to share your place too.



Grace Kevill-Davies. Untitled (video still)

-27.46°



Sean Kenny. One place after another.
 (Top) One place after another. An act of showing.

one p

One place after another



one place after another.

one place after another.

One place after another.

One place after another.

One Place After Another

Aislinn Manning, Naomi O'Reilly and Chloe Waters, *Makeshift*, single channel video, 2017



-27.48°

MAKE | SHIFT

Aishla Manning | Naomi O'Reilly | Chloe Waters
The Laundry Artspace | Brisbane, Australia



The Laundry Artspace is a Brisbane Artist Run Initiative, established in April 2015. The space is dedicated to exhibiting contemporary artists with a focus on interdisciplinary, collaborative and experimental practices. Characterised by its location in the basement of an old Queenslander, we are interested in exhibitions that engage with the quasi-domestic space, critique the traditional gallery aesthetic and develop other critical discussions; contributing to the current broader discourse. Rather than attempt to change or hide the makeshift exhibition space, artists are encouraged to make site-specific works and embrace this aesthetic and break away from the traditional gallery model. The Laundry holds one-night-only events, with the aim of fostering camaraderie and collaboration among artists, strengthening the local arts community, and promoting a sense of support and pride amongst all artists in the current political and economic environment.

MAKESHIFT is a response from The Laundry Artspace Directors – Aishla Manning, Naomi O'Reilly and Chloe Waters. The work responds to the demanding nature of running an ARI and the supportive structure of the directorial team. All three Directors are practicing artists, with a focus on performance and time based media, and an interest in artistic collaboration. MAKESHIFT draws on their shared experiences of curation, installation, administration and collaboration. These experiences are shaped through their relationships with each other and their reliance and trust in each other as colleagues and friends. The experiences are framed by the site. The artists have developed an intimate knowledge of every peeling wall and fragile ledge in The Laundry Artspace. MAKESHIFT focuses on the site, the tensions that arise from working in the space - the constant cleaning, zip-tying, balancing, taping and levelling that are needed to keep it all together.

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MAKE | PLAY

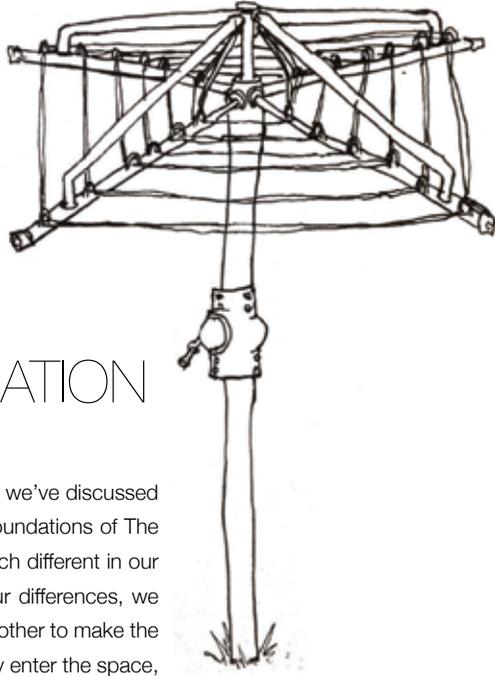
Like any art student who thinks they know what they are doing, I had no idea what I was getting myself into when I started The Laundry Artspace during my Honours year. My understanding of what an ARI could be was limited, mostly shaped by a handful of experiences at ARIs around Brisbane (Boxcopy, Addition and The Hold: all of which loosely follow a white gallery model). I felt that I was a part of something big and exciting, I could tell from the art community's unprecedented support at Laundry events. But it wasn't until the ARI scene boomed in late 2015 and I prodded into Brisbane's ARI history, that I became fully aware of just how wholly artists relied on these pockets of energy.

Brisbane is filled with these essential spaces, they are often makeshift, short-lived and irregular: existing under houses, in garages, in the back of a truck. These spaces provide essential platforms for artists to experiment, break boundaries and show work to audiences. They are run by some of the most dedicated people in the arts community and rely on the rest of the community for its engagement as a critical audience. The use of domestic and temporary spaces has seen the tradition of the one-night-only show take over in Brisbane. This has meant a rise in experimental practice and site-specific play within these spaces, and within the art practices of the Brisbane artists who exhibit in them.

In 2015 my institution made 'space' a luxury that lay behind frustrating barriers of bureaucracy and walls of OH&S. I could see that my art school peers and I needed a space to exhibit our work. I had just moved into a new rental property which had a downstairs space with concrete floors and off-white walls – it was perfect (enough). We didn't need a white box: we had an empty laundry; we had a city filled with amazing emerging artists; and we had a ton of 3M hooks. The laundry became The Laundry. It became a site of experimentation for early career artists and curators and it enabled myself and the other two co-directors, to focus on exhibitions that included our interests of interdisciplinary, time based and collaborative practice.

Aishla Manning





MAKE | COLLABORATION

Collaborating can be a funny thing. It's something we've discussed as a team and we come back to as one of the foundations of The Laundry. We don't act as lone wolves. We are each different in our art practices, and approaches to work, but in our differences, we grow and find strength. We collaborate with each other to make the space work. We collaborate with artists when they enter the space, negotiating ideas and set ups before a show, pushing the artist, and us, to work through uncharted territory.

Experimental, playful, hard work. It is important to us that we are constantly pushing ourselves to evolve our understanding of the downstairs laundry of Ashfield Street. We expand our ability, and the artist's ability, to think about the implications of the space in which we operate. The nature of the group exhibitions also means collaboration between artists.

The Queenslander share house is makeshift in nature. We don't have the security of knowing how long we have the space for until the next lease is signed. We have the limited collective resources of the three of us, often relying on the support of our artistic community to source equipment. Our space continues to exist because of our active audience, in part the unmentioned collaborators of the Laundry. In isolation, we couldn't hope to achieve all we have. Collaborating has enhanced our practices, enriched our shows and produced some truly extraordinary results.

Chloe Waters

MAKE | SHIFT

All we can hope to do is leave a trace

- create a bit of a dent -
- make an impact.

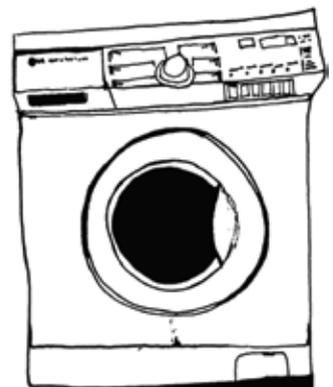
There is an immediacy to ARIs. Ideas are realised in these spaces and everything is happening now. The stakes aren't too high yet so artists can experiment with their practice. They can try new things, push in new directions, have spectacular failures and brilliant successes. They can learn and develop. It's dynamic and progressive and energetic. ARIs are the testing ground.

ARIs fill a hole that has been left in the arts industry. That gaping one between art schools and the institutional/commercial sector. We are the support as artists cross this terrain, accompanied by new writers and guided by the next curators. It's not just the future creatives who are reliant on the ARI gap filler. Institutions feed off the energy and efforts of these passion powered projects. ARIs are the foundation.

This fundamental work is being done in a share house basement, the back of a hire truck, in your friend's garage. It's a model that is hard to sustain. We are pouring our own resources into these projects - our own equipment, funds, homes and countless hours of voluntary work. We know we can't do this forever. We'll have to go find work that pays. But while we have the opportunity, we press forward.

We will continue to make. We're artists. It's what we do. And the more we make the more things will shift. We're shifting perspectives. We're making change.

Naomi O'Reilly



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RAYGUN PROJECTS TOOWOOMBA



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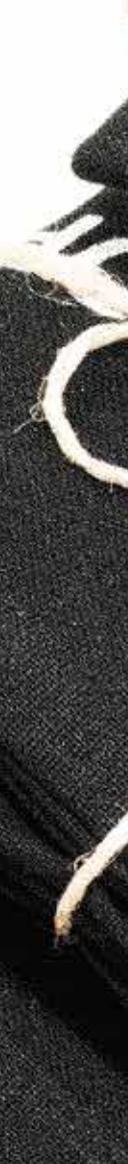
RAYGUN PROJECTS

Now operating in its seventh year RAYGUN PROJECTS provides cultural innovation and a contribution to artistic development, benefiting both artists and the local Toowoomba community. With over twelve month-long projects a year RAYGUN facilitates a platform through which the community can develop networks and new skills with artists currently practicing around Australia and throughout the world. The main premise of RAYGUN is to incorporate artists working within various fields, in particular contemporary painting as well as a focus on social practice. Social practitioners use people as an integral element of their work, which allows the community to actively participate in work that is specific to their region and everyday lives. The positioning of RAYGUN in a regional setting creates intrigue; artists are interested in Toowoomba as a geographically obscure location in turn provoking the execution of experiential outcomes not otherwise realised. By bringing artists to Toowoomba, and encouraging them to experiment with new ideas, RAYGUN is enabling a collapsing of parameters within their artistic practices. By facilitating these critical, participatory outcomes RAYGUN provides a critical platform, both online and in the gallery context, stimulating arts discussions and involvement with a global audience.

SHARING LOVING GIVING

An Act of Showing

For this project we are hand screen-printing (with love) black tea towels with RAYGUN PROJECTS, TOOWOOMBA and instructions on them. The instructions request the participant take a photo of the tea towel and email it back to us (Directors Ali Lawson and Tarn McLean). Each tea towel will be wrapped as a gift and piled into a Perspex box and installed on the wall. Once the individual takes the tea towel (a gift from us) and emails the image of it hanging in their kitchen/environment to raygunlab (a gift of sharing back to us), their image will be compiled on the Lab at www.raygunlab.com. This project is fundamental to how we value operating an Artist Run Space. It brings together all the Melbourne people who participated in the project with the Toowoomba ARI directors and extended community. It will become a part of the SHARING LOVING GIVING archive and catalogue, as have other SLG projects that we have done in the past between Toowoomba and Copenhagen. This project is our love project. It enables us to connect through art, with people beyond our regional community. Gifting and sharing reveals our conceptual intent, where ideas are valued and exchanged around the world.



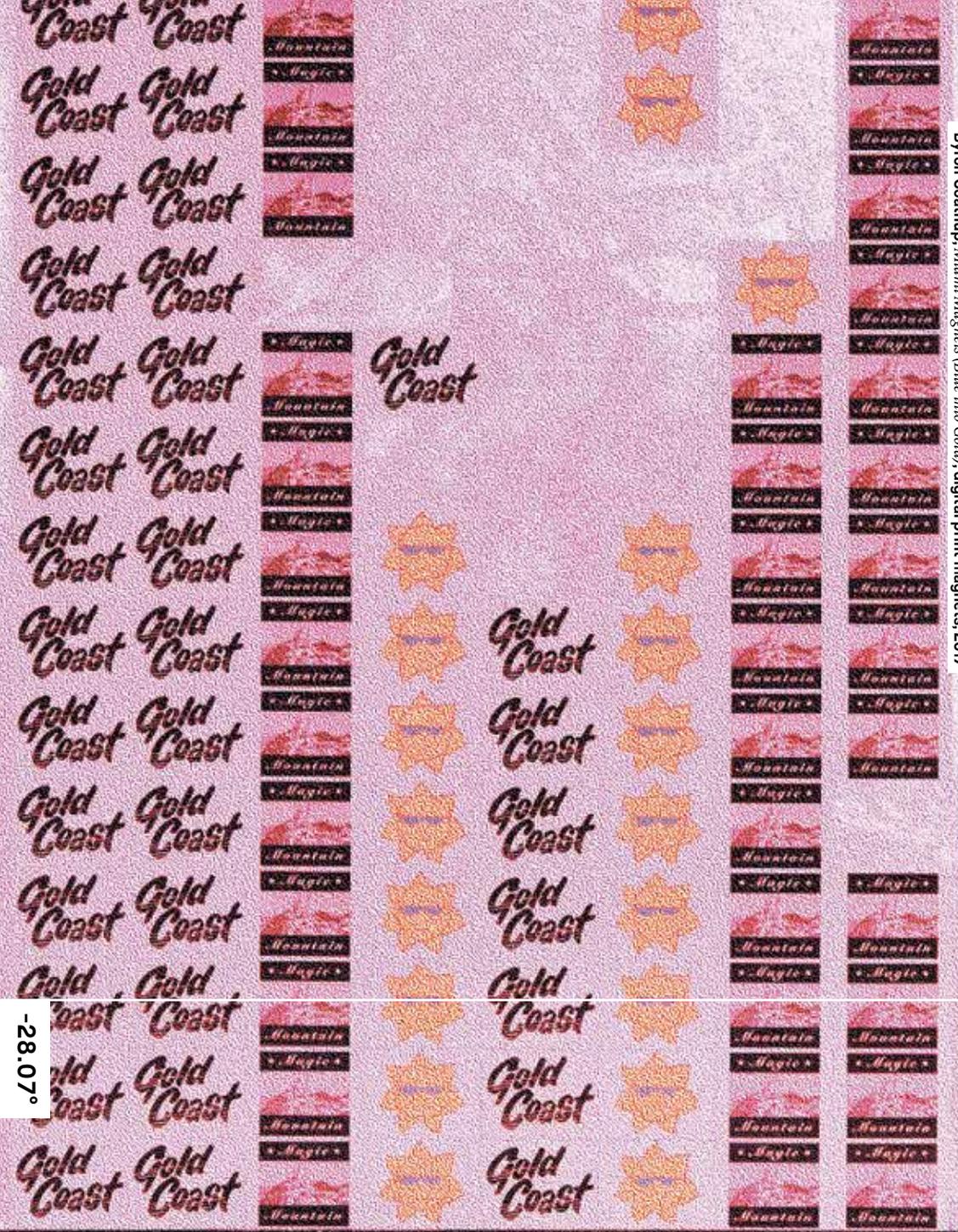
**TAKE A PHOTO OF THIS
TEATOWEL
AND SEND IT TO**

RAYGUN@RAYGUNLAB.COM

www.raygunlab.com



-27.56°



Byron Coathup, Miami Magnets (Blue into Gold), digital print magnets, 2017

-28.07°

THE WALLS ART SPACE

BLUE INTO GOLD

As a place, the Gold Coast is built on the public display of natural and artificial wonders.

Out to see

The Gold Coast is set within two key coordinates: the famed 55km of sandy beaches, and the Coral Sea. Snaking beside these is the continuous strip of the Gold Coast Highway, a north-south dividing line to rival the QLD-NSW border some 18km to our south. To that highway's east, the primest of all real estate - the dearly-coveted, tightly-held, hotly-traded, ever-appreciating waterview blocks. To its west, the rest.

The Walls is situated west of the GC Highway. Since 2013, our activities have taken place in the suburb of Miami, postcode 4220, Mountain View Ave, in the aluminium shed with the blue rollerdoor next door to the mechanics' shop, where we mount exhibitions, host artist residencies, performances, talks and dialogue about contemporary art and ideas. Our artistic program brings together artists from our community, and those from further climes, in a space that's grounded in feminist thinking and encourages experimental processing, as well as the exhibition.

We at The Walls are working with Traditional Owners from the Yugambah Language Group the Kombumerri People of the Gold Coast Area, on whose ancestral lands our Mountain View gallery is placed, and with the Ngugi People (who describe themselves as Yulu-Burri-ba - People of the sand and seas) of the Quandamooka (Moreton Bay), whose sea country receives the flows of fresh waters from the hinterland ranges. Through ongoing collaborations with Indigenous artists, leaders and organisations, we strive to share the privilege of our position as white curators to pay respect to First Nations people and proceed with greater awareness of the Indigenous knowledge and cultural practices embedded forever in country. Through specific projects, including HEAD LAND [2014], FMX [201] and ENTER THE MAP [2017] featuring Libby Harward, and FOUNDING FATHERS [2017], featuring Archie Moore, we are learning how to sensitise our process to indigenous ways of knowing and doing in the context of a contemporary art space on the Gold Coast today. We are committed to supporting indigenous artists to explore conceptual approaches to making art in a framework of trust, reflection and critical dialogue, and proud to be presenting this work to the world.

Sunny Faces, Shady Times

These magnets adorning the exterior walls of the Testing Grounds space, our contribution to the exhibition, are by Coolangatta-based artist Byron Coathup. We work with Byron often - he designed our 2017 Program, and in October 2017 will show with us. In these magnets, Byron explains,

"our city's visual archetypes (sun, sand and surf motto) are appropriated in order to build a hyper-sense of the ultimate holiday playground via the form of the souvenir. As small, common and useful objects, the tourist magnet that you might find on your hotel reception desk or at the corner store is typically then used by you to display images of such a destination, such as in postcards".

everyone's made a spectacle of themselves at some point

We make our place in a city as indexed by tourism as it is chronically unburdened by planning regulations. This is a dangerous landscape if you don't know the currents, the undertows, the hidden rips and holes, the tides, the storms, the seasons. Even if you do, it's easy to underestimate - the shifting, glittering surface can still blind you to the implacable force beneath. It'll sweep you away before you know it.

It's fun and it's seductive and we are all here for a good time, but in a town of 660,000 residents welcoming 12million guests a year, that's usually a short time. Things on the GC need to be big, bold and bright to make an impact, to have that wow factor, to leave an impression.



The image of the Gold Coast - the one you probably remember from your childhood, the beach-holiday-theme-park-meter-maids-highrises montage in your head - should confirm this. This is both because those memories are true, but also because they have been put there by our city; or, more precisely, its operatives, the delegates and envoys who craft its brand message, design talking points, select hero images, control its message. What looks like a superficial culture of display is actually a highly managed system of discursive agents maintaining the conversation, keeping the party going, ensuring that everyone's Gold Coast*, Australia's favourite playground*, is always Famous for Fun*.

Among whom - slowly, the realisation is dawning - among whom, as hosts, we also number.

Like many art spaces in this country, we are doubly implicated in questions of white possession: we occupy stolen lands, and our activities invariably contribute to the gentrification that continues to dispossess, marginalise and bleach our landscape for the powerful few to control and enjoy at the expense of culture and memory. For us, mapped over the spectral spaces of stolen land is a peculiar fantasy edifice, a flickering special-effects landscape that reshapes the present as it consumes the past in its projection of promised pleasure. The thief has become the exhibitionist.

Instead of rehabilitation, however, or resignation, we think collaboration: One of the possible ways in which we might resist the dominant leisure discourse - both the here and in our sector at large - is by instigating active remembering through our work and listening in our processes. We invite artists to join us on experimental projects that start by diving in together, to observe and question and share what we find beneath the surface. To do that, we have to be prepared to hold our breath, duck beneath the froth, and open our eyes to the greenwater beyond.

We like Byron's version of this image, and his idea of the souvenir as a useful object that calls to one place from another place. To us, its appealing, sunny grin refers to the professional smiling face that is hospitality, and the complex, paradoxical and possibly impossible conditions underlying the dynamics of "host" and "guest" in any situation, but especially here. Its basic form speaks to the cheapened, unconsidered, unironic short-form of tourist vernacular - but then again, stylisation is also a local tradition, simplified doesn't necessarily mean simple, and to us it shines with a very GC approach to condensing and concentrating the iconicity of leisure for maximum effect. The sun is wearing sunnies, after all.

Also: this image is an archive. The sunnies-wearing sunny sun is an image from a building, the much-loved Miami Ice iceworks, which, despite public opposition, was torn down in 2013 to make space for a new high-end residential development. It's a much-loved image from a much-loved place, which, like its neighbour Magic Mountain, lives on now only in memories, and fetishised consumer objects - mementos like these souvenir magnets, and their elite cousins, new luxury residential complexes (<http://www.miamiice.com.au>; <http://www.magicmountain.com.au>): The Miami Ice sun is quintessentially Gold Coast.*

*All slogans of Gold Coast tourist agencies, or the Lord Mayor

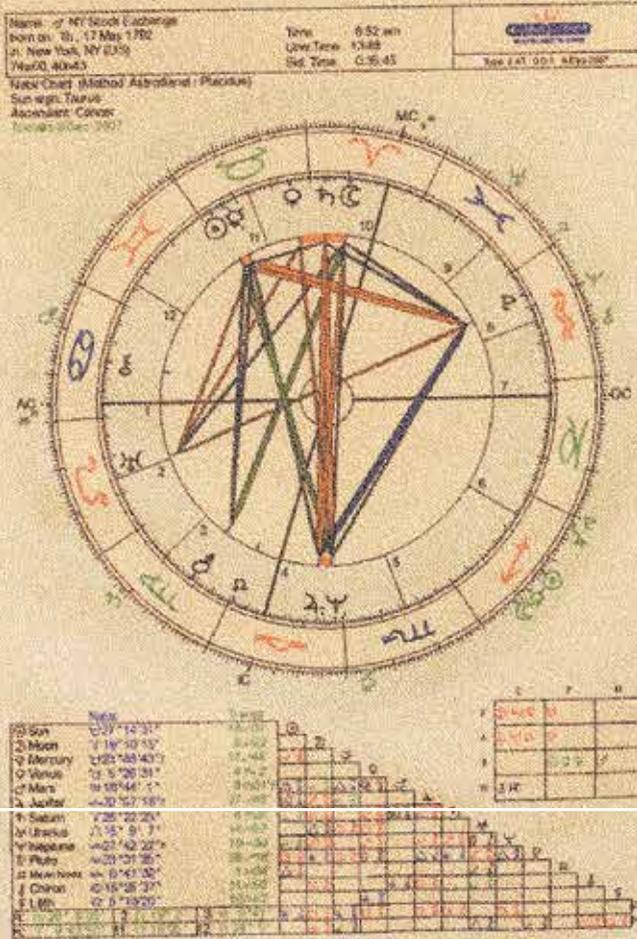
— Danni Zuvela & Rebecca Ross, THE WALLS, 2017

With thanks to Aunty Glenda Nalder

Centre-Fold: BYRON COATHUP, *Culture Sculpture (Miami Ice Sun)* (detail) [2016]



-28.07°



-32.85°



Cementa: an overview

By Ann Finegan

Based in the small regional town of Kandos, in central west NSW, Cementa Inc. is a not-for-profit incorporated association dedicated to cultivating contemporary Australian art in regional Australia. At its core Cementa is an artist residency and public program during which works are developed for Cementa's major production of a biennial festival of contemporary art that brings together artists from urban and regional contexts for a 4-day celebration of the state of contemporary art in Australia.

Drawing on local support, more than 60 artists exhibit video, installation, sound, performance and 2D and 3D artworks in a broad range of more than twenty venues and locations across the town and its surrounds. The local community has kindly lent shopfronts, vacant blocks, the scout hall, the Kandos museum, the community centre, Henbury golf course, the CWA rooms, St Laurence Church, Dangar Street church buildings and the gardens and chapel of the former mission style Sisters of Mercy convent. In its most recent iteration the festival and public program expanded to a Travelling Stock Route, Ganguddy in Wollemi National Park, Birds Hut, and Marloo - the current home of the Andrews' family and Natural Sequence Farming.

The aim of the residency and the various forums and exchanges of the public program is to situate both urban and regional artists in Cementa's regional environment in order to develop work that is relevant to the local audience and environment. We don't just parachute work in from elsewhere, but encourage risk and experimentation within the local context. The idea is for core festival works to be developed in situ in Kandos through our flexible residency program and to foster links and engagements with the local community and regional artists. Many of the festival works are longitudinal projects based on multiple residencies and a development period that can last for more than a year. Examples of longitudinal residencies include Jenny Brown's activist work with the Wollar community under siege from multiple expansions of an American owned coal mine, Liz Day's year-long collaboration with local knitters, lace-makers and crafters, and Genevieve Murray's TSR project with traditional owners, Lyne Syme and Kevin Williams, which involved the walking of several long paddocks. In our public seminar program Futurelands 1 and 2, the latter in association with the Ian Milliss inspired Kandos School of Cultural Adaptation, Cementa addressed activism, art and innovation in the agricultural community.

Our public program has included workshops in drumming for performance (Tina Havelock-Stevens), hacked electronics (Michael Petrovksy), arduino programming for interactive installations (Damian Castaldi and Solange Kershaw), installation from found materials (Sarah Goffman), zine production, and hacking light for sound (Sam Bruce and Daniel Green). Accessible Arts Studio A and Delineate ran workshops and supported their artists Skye Saxon and Thom to participate in Cementa17. Through our indigenous program Adam Hill (aka Blak Douglas)



Claire Conroy, *The City of Ladies*. Image, Ian Hobbs





conducted workshops in the local high school, and left a lasting testament to the local Dabee clan with a mural on the local swimming pool. Djon Mundine's collective mural, composed of more than 80 thumbprints by the local Dabee clan, honours elders Jimmy and Peggy Lambert, from a photograph taken in the 1860s. This mural now proudly overlooks the town from the wall of the Kandos museum.

Cementa has an active engagement with youth and indigenous programs, and multiple partnerships and collaborations with local and regional schools (in particular, Mudgee and Lithgow High Schools), and regions as far afield as Dunedoo and Peak Hill. Our partnerships include Bathurst Regional Gallery, Western Plains Cultural Centre (Dubbo), First Draft Gallery, Articulate Gallery, Campbelltown Arts Centre, Parramatta Artist Studios, D'Lux, and New Landscapes Institute, all of which have supported artists to participate in Cementa or provide residency and/or host exhibitions of Cementa's regional and emergent artists. Blue Mountains based MAP has been generous in hosting Cementa-related exhibitions and artist exchanges, with many MAP artists participating in Cementa. Through its regional artists outreach, Artbank generously supported Cementa17 by including Kandos on its national roadshow.



Cementa also has strong ties to the Western Sydney region, exhibiting many Western Sydney artists. Another core strength is our promotion of intergenerational exchange through our programming mix of older established artists, many of whom are women, and younger, emergent practitioners.

With a strong commitment to regional artists and the development of the culture of contemporary art, Cementa aims to introduce best practice to the region, and from its inception, exhibited award winning electronic, sound, performance and video art in its inclusive mix—high-end technological interfaces not usually



-32.85°

associated with art practices in small rural towns. Hinterding and Haines gave the inaugural Cementa13 a local version of an interactive gaming installation that had recently won the Ann Lander at the Art Gallery of NSW, and other Australian artists of international standing, Starrs and Cmielewski, based a video work on the burn outs at Street Machine, the town's major car culture event. In the field of robotics, Wade Marynowsky exhibited *The Acconci Robot* in Cementa15. The University of Western Sydney, in conjunction with Sauce Towney of Merrill Findlay's *Big Skies Collaboration*, generously supported our Cementa17 project of dome video projection (with thanks to UWS producer, Kate Richards, and UWS astronomer Andrew Leahy, and UWS programmer Ain de Horta).

Anne Graham, *Shade and Shadows*. Image Ian Hobbs



In sum, through a mix of innovative, emergent and best practice works, Cementa aims to celebrate the rich and diverse voices within contemporary arts practice and to address the identity, history and current social, environmental and economic context of the town of Kandos and its region.

Kandos Projects, which hosts Cementa, was a residency program founded in 2010 by Ann Finegan.

Cementa Inc was founded in 2013 after the inaugural festival. Founding co-directors were Ann Finegan, Alex Wisser and Georgina Pollard.

Current co-directors are Ann Finegan, Alex Wisser and Christine McMillan.

cementa.com.au

Scott 'Sauce' Towner's *Wirrodjuri Murrumbidgee Sky World*, projected onto a dome courtesy of UWS. Producer, Kate Richards in association with *Big Skies Collaboration*. Image Ian Hobbs







Sue Callanan, *In the space of a breath: device for circulating air, performance, sculpture and video*, 2015

-33.88°



articulate project space

Articulate began six years ago when a group of artists with a common background in the Sculpture Studio at Sydney College of the Arts found an opportunity to fill a gap in the Sydney art scene that had long affected them and other installation artists.

The gap was caused by the increasingly institutional nature of otherwise sympathetic exhibition spaces, that might welcome installations but then expect them to be constructed within a few days.

Twenty-four-hour access to devise and construct work in situ had become harder to find. We wanted a place where artists are welcome to work with the relationships that can be formed between artwork and location by actually devising and making artwork in it.

These frustrations and enthusiasms brought us to accept an opportunity to rent a former smash repair workshop on the ground floor of 497 Parramatta Road, Leichhardt.

The name 'articulate' was proposed, to emphasise our intention to give voice to space—to 'articulate the space'. We called it a 'project space' rather than a 'gallery' to signal our interest in the open-ended and process-oriented nature of experimentation and live art, to invite artists to experiment with exhibition-practice as much as art-practice, and to remind ourselves that an exhibition space is also a live space that is not contained by the building's walls but can extend to include the physical, cultural and political space beyond.



In the space of a breath: device for circulating air

by Sue Callanan, 2015

Air conditioning duct, $6 \times 0.6 \times 0.5\text{m}$ is occupied and animated by a performer so that it appears to hover between utilitarian object and living form. Once the performance is completed it takes on other configurations in its resting form.

Each new ARI springs like an emergent life-form, drawing breath, creating breath, opening out a new possibility, a new way of conceiving and thinking about art, and taking its place within a bigger ecosystem.



Displacement

by Perrine Lacroix, 2017

As part of her residency in Articulate, Perrine Lacroix's project produced an in situ work by letting herself be saturated by space and the city in resonance with the political, spatial and cultural context at the local as well as global level.

She is interested in human 'displacements', political, tourist and artistic migrations. How are they conditioned and how do they interact?

Displacement is the thirteenth project space project, a strand of Articulate's programming that began in 2011 to see how artists respond to project spaces as an exhibition practice.



Reading to the River

by Chantal Grech, 2017

This project concerns two performances and two texts and an attempt to bring them into the present by creating an oneiric space through the use of various materials (light, words, felt, plastic) which link the space of the image with that of the viewer.

The first reading (Sept. 2015) was by the side of the river Seine, which symbolically represented, for me, the flow of French words through my life like a major artery runs through the body.

Yves Bonnefoy's poem, *The curved planks*, relates the tales of a homeless child who wishes to cross the river. The child represents poetic awareness in its perilous search for home. The second reading of the text takes place outside articulate project space on busy Parramatta Road (August 2016). This work extends the theme to a meditation on loss, memory and the personal as a fractal of a larger community.



Inside-out Sculpture

by Rose Ann McGreevy, 2015

Inspiration taken from the Pompidou Centre Art Gallery in Paris, France whose 'working' bits are mostly on the outside—not hidden—a transparent architecture. How something is made is fascinating to me and to have that articulation seen is paramount to this sculpture. Inside will be white, sheer clean lines and the exterior will have all the marks and mechanisms of its construction. The inside will bring to mind the unmitigated perfect white walls of a gallery. It will be tall enough so that the viewer will have to peek in

and therefore be made aware that they are looking into the sculpture as opposed to looking at it—a transparent sculpture which cannot be seen through but looked into as one might a crevice and yet like all sculpture it will envelope, employ, contain and define space.

This work formed part of a large retrospective. Rose died before the planned exhibition took place. However, the work was constructed in articulate project space by a team of workers, reflecting her concept as closely as possible.

*Curator: Barbara Halnan;
Exhibition Coordinator: India Zegan*



-33.88°

Sally Clarke and Jacqui Mills, *Revolving Door*, single channel video, 2017



-33.91°

AirSpace Projects

Art+Ideas+Residencies



10 Junction Street
MARRICKVILLE

www.airspaceprojects.com



-33.91°

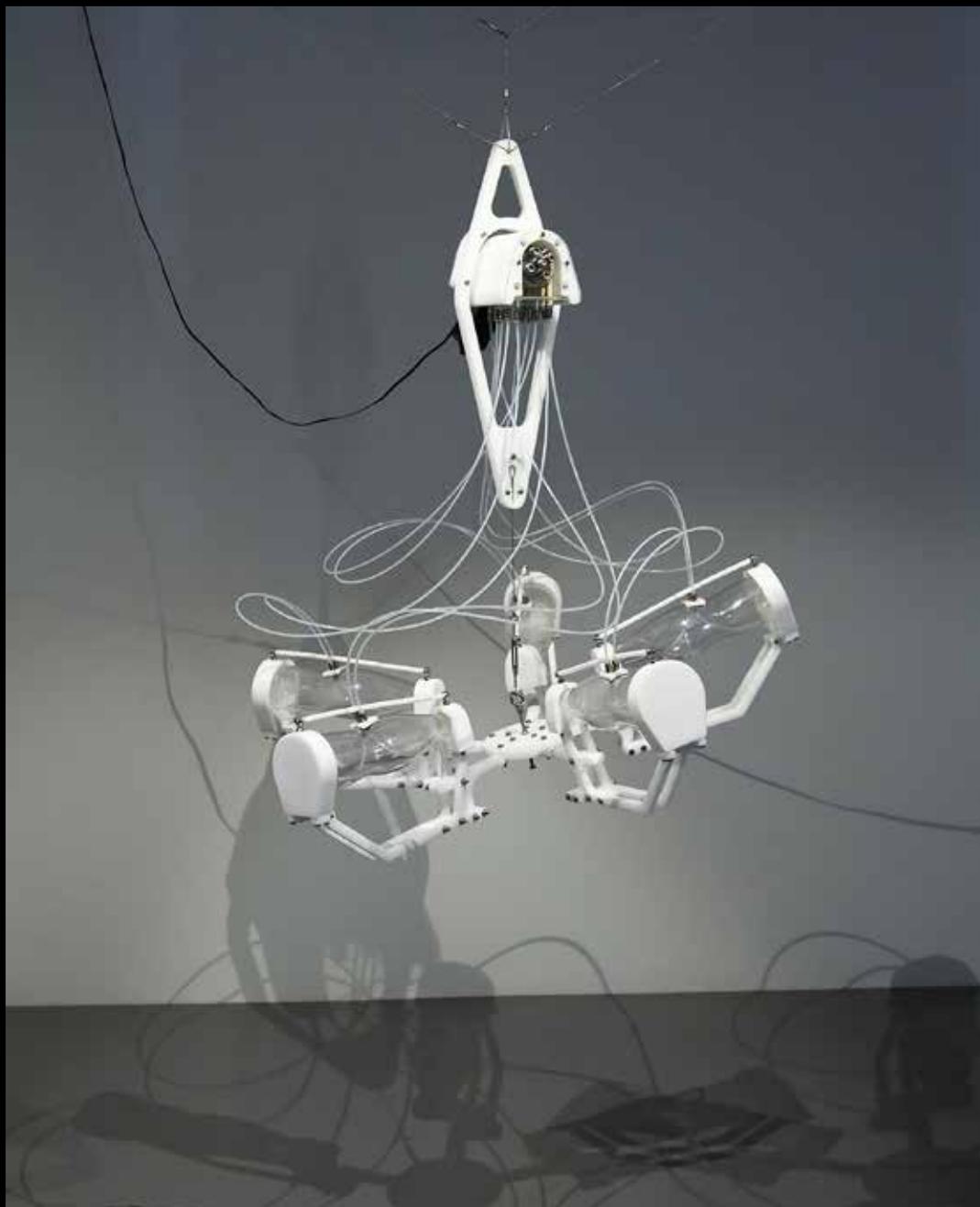
AirSpace Projects is an independent, destination art gallery located within the vibrant community of Marrickville, Sydney. The space is run by Sally Clarke, artist and former lecturer, and Brenda Factor, artist and director of the adjoining SquarePeg Studios. AirSpace Projects houses four unique exhibition spaces of varying sizes and an outdoor residency project space in a warehouse environment.

AirSpace Projects is dedicated to exhibition and curatorial ideas from both established and emerging local, national and international practitioners who make ambitious, inspiring and inventive contributions to art processes and discourses. We aim to pursue both solo and thematically curated exhibitions to extend and deepen understandings of artistic practice while facilitating critical and cultural explorations of art and its relationship to the ever-changing world around us.

In addition to curating invitation-based exhibitions, AirSpace Projects accepts high quality proposals from individual artists and groups.

Since its inception in February 2014, AirSpace Projects has exhibited the work of over four hundred artists.

Images on previous page: Stella Chen, *Facade of Memory: Caged*, 2015-17. Image: Franz Anthony; Brenda Factor, *Mrs Little*, 2016; Paula do Prado, *Bomba Process Sample*, 2017; Jacqui Mills, *Something in the Room*, 2016. All images courtesy of the artists.



Laura Woodward, *Ongoing/Reverse (detail of Resonate installation)*, 2016, acetal, acrylic, water, nylon hose, santoprene hose, fasteners, air fittings, motors, dimensions variable.

Image: Laura Woodward and Jem Selig Freeman



Yiorgos Zafiriou, *Exterior Foil Landscape*, 2014, performance, 12 minutes. Part of *Danger Will Robinson* curated by Sally Clarke. Image: John Douglas.



Luke Wilcox, *An ARI saved my life*, site-specific drawing, 2017



-34.93°



LAST NIGHT AN ARI SAVED MY LIFE

Adelaide is known for churches and cults, wine and bodies in barrels. In the midst of this, FELTspace is an artist run organisation supporting, developing and presenting emerging, experimental and diverse exhibitions and public programs. FELTspace seeks to question the prevailing culture and has quickly become a centre for the emerging contemporary visual art community. It remains an important site for the development, exhibition and discussion of new work by emerging and recognised visual artists in South Australia. FELTspace has a focus on promoting emerging and early career artists, with opportunities for more established artists to show in a non-commercial and non-institutional space.

Three years ago I was in a deep hole. I could not comprehend purpose in my life, the existential dread was real. I grew up with religion and growing out of that in my twenties proved a difficult task. The sense of community that religion can provide appealed to me, and it still does. You don't have to have had my upbringing to appreciate the cult-ish dedication that an ARI demands and the array of blessings it provides its followers. At FELT, gatherings are held and rituals are performed regularly. The ritual of sharing bread and wine has been amended to include beer and hot chips, and we skip the bread. It impedes upon the desired drunkenness. Earnest discussions take place. It is truly a matter of life and death.



-34.93°

Ash Tower, *Studies Of Nature* (2017). Photo by Steph Fuller.

Then eventually, painting and re-painting the walls. And then painting again. They must be clean. The search for answers may be futile but along the way, there is a place to belong. Aren't we all just searching for meaning after all?



Art requires subconscious movement, it is not simply intellectual thought. Knowing an answer does not equal behavioural change. There is a need to tap into something beyond material and Positivism. Most people think in these terms but they cannot sustain us. It does not ask the right questions. There is more to life than utility, what is rational, what makes sense, what furthers my career. The need for discussion of things apart from this has all but died, which is why it is important to present more than mere objects. Maybe doing this will aid our understanding that people are not rational beings.

Drawing and words by Luke Wilcox. Photograph by Steph Fuller



Kieron Broadhurst and Jack Wansbrough, *Earth Coincidence Control Office* (installation detail, 2017). Photo by Steph Fuller.



-34.93°

Peter Maloney, *Hot Shop*, works on paper, 2017



-35.27°

THE GARAGE



Natalya Hughes, *Woody*, 2016, installation in a garage;
photograph by Nicholas Shearer

The Garage is a project born in Canberra in winter 2015. It has no gallery space, no program, no board and no full time employees. We could say that "The Garage" is just a title, linking different exhibitions held by different artists in different non-artistic spaces, like garages, shops, design studios, bakeries. The exhibitions are always organised by the same two persons - artist Sabrina Baker and independent curator Sara d'Alessandro Manozzo - who ask mid-career or established artists to imagine their work in a new context, and interpret that context with their artworks. Most of the time, the result is more an installation than an exhibition: *Woody* by Natalya Hughes, in March 2016, merged so much with the private garage hosting it that it ended up including pre-existing objects in the exhibition; *Forget, Forgo, Forsake, Forgive* by Rosalind Lemoh, in October 2016, invaded the space of a popular bakery using

their marble desk for a food based installation. The response to the space could be more subtle, like in Peter Alwest *Here and There*, June 2016, where the finiteness of the digital prints created a quite violent contrast with the abandoned shop that hosted the show; but the response can also be ironically literal, like in *Space*, featuring Peter Vandermark and Kael Stasce, with artworks made of industrial materials - "bricolage" materials - shown exactly where they belong, in a small shed; or, more recently, in the group show *A Walking Exhibition* (April 2017) with the ironic, non-sense actions by Nathan Gray and Oscar Capezio exhibited in a designer's studio, a place of real craft, of serious object making. At the origin of The Garage we can find two sets of ideas. The first, more practical, is connected with the nature of Canberra itself: the bush capital, a city conceived as an utopia of a perfect living, able to preserve individual spaces large enough to



Rosalind Lemoh, *Forget Forgo Forsake Forgive*, 2016, installation at Silo Bakery;
photograph by Damien Geary



Oscar Capezio and Nathan Gray for *A Walking Exhibition*, 2017, Skeehan Studio;
photograph by Sara d'Alessandro Manozzo

guarantee everyone a private life and, at the same time, a city where meeting points are hidden, invisible to a foreigner - and by foreigner I mean everybody who is not familiar with the city. Canberra might be living proof of the impact that town planning, architecture and city design have on everyday life: spread out as a number of diverse suburbs, it lacks the big, sophisticated gathering areas of larger cities, so that the community transforms private places into public ones, creating galleries in bedrooms, showcases in living rooms, ephemeral theatres in squares (the article *Backyard and back room conversations* by Raquel Ormella on November 2016 Art Monthly offers a deeper understanding of this Canberra phenomenon in the field of visual art). In this context the idea of using space - almost an excess of space - to start a free artistic project seems almost unavoidable (strangely enough, though, not many ARIs operate in Canberra, with the exception of the recently founded Tributary Projects).

If the practical reasons have been the first engine of The Garage, more abstract reflections were raised by the decision of creating an ubiquitous project, a gallery continuously changing its setting. The idea of getting away from the "white cube", the "frame" of contemporary art, as theorised back in 1976 by O'Doherty on Artforum, is not new: through the last decades, it has been embodied by a number of major tendencies, from public art to participative projects. It has evolved so much that, in some cases, even museums have tried to escape to their very own nature, becoming places of coordination and connection of the artistic process more than physical spaces. On the other hand, it is still true that the more free and "dematerialised" the artwork is, the more it needs a frame, something helping to recognise its status: otherwise, how can you guarantee that it is art? How can we validate it and communicate it? The Garage lays between these two polarities: the escape from the gallery space and the need for it. We put the artworks in a real, living, urban context, but then we treat every space exactly as a gallery - most of the time transforming it, as you would do in a proper White Cube. Moreover, its ephemeral quality might be another attempt of merging art and life, using familiar, everyday venues, and transforming them in accidental art spaces, transitory "passages" - to use a Benjamin term. No more eternal artworks and no more stable galleries shaping them. (obviously this doesn't need to be taken too seriously, we perfectly know how much institutions are vital to a system that otherwise wouldn't survive).

Peter Maloney's *Hot Shop* (2017), the work he chose for *An Act of Showing*, shares the same contrasts: it is a stack of photocopies, a modest, everyday material, and yet in every single page you find a magical sense of composition, pictures and lines, sometimes words and colours. Peter Maloney often uses photocopies as a starting point for his paintings, manipulating and magnifying the images; therefore, they are as intimate as drawn sketches, but their mechanical quality gets rid of any remaining of the artist's hand, mocking the aura of authority. As a bakery or a garage, these photocopies look immediately approachable, familiar, engaging: to see them all you have to touch them, move them, shuffle them, as you would do with your own stack of photocopies. The relationship with the viewer is frank and direct, and yet these pages are the result of a million manipulations, showing layers of images consumed by their own repetitions. Browsing the sheets of *Hot Shop* for a while we might have the sudden feeling that we were wrong, we are not familiar with them, cause they are actually fragments of someone else's life, a sequence of moments and memories, cut and reconstructed multiple times and every time with a different arrangement. Like *voyeurs*, we look through a little personal treasure of visions and desires, where we discover personal obsessions, sarcastic nonsenses, and a subtle anguish that passes through the repetition of abstract gestures and photographic details - a flux of conscience with no sequence and no logic, where everything and everyone might find, for a moment, a place.

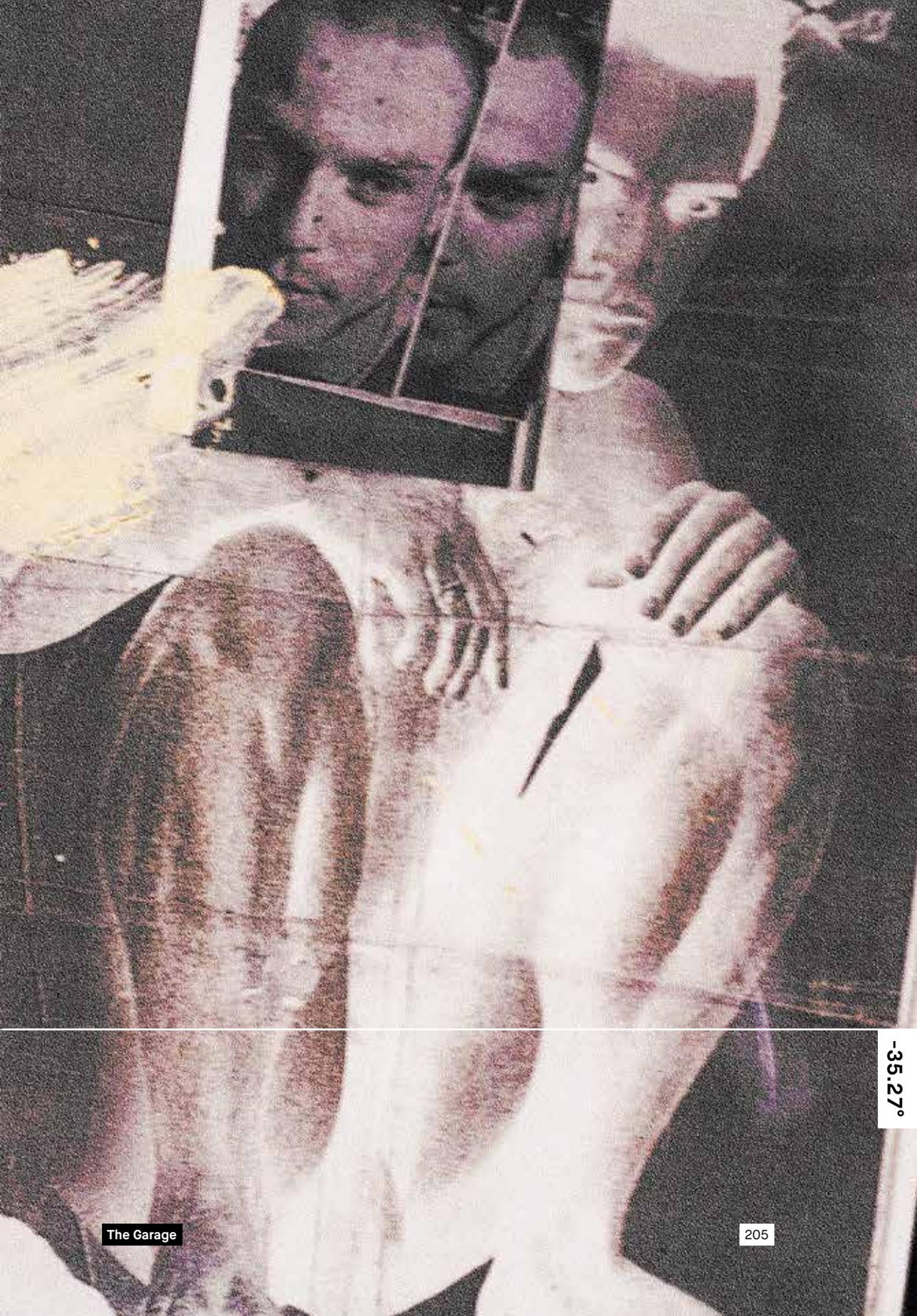
Text by Sara d'Alessandro Manozzo

The Garage is based in Canberra and directed by Sabrina Baker and Sara d'Alessandro Manozzo www.thegarage.gallery

Opposite page image: Peter Maloney, *Hot Shop (detail)* 2017, stack of A3 photocopies; photograph by Sabrina Baker



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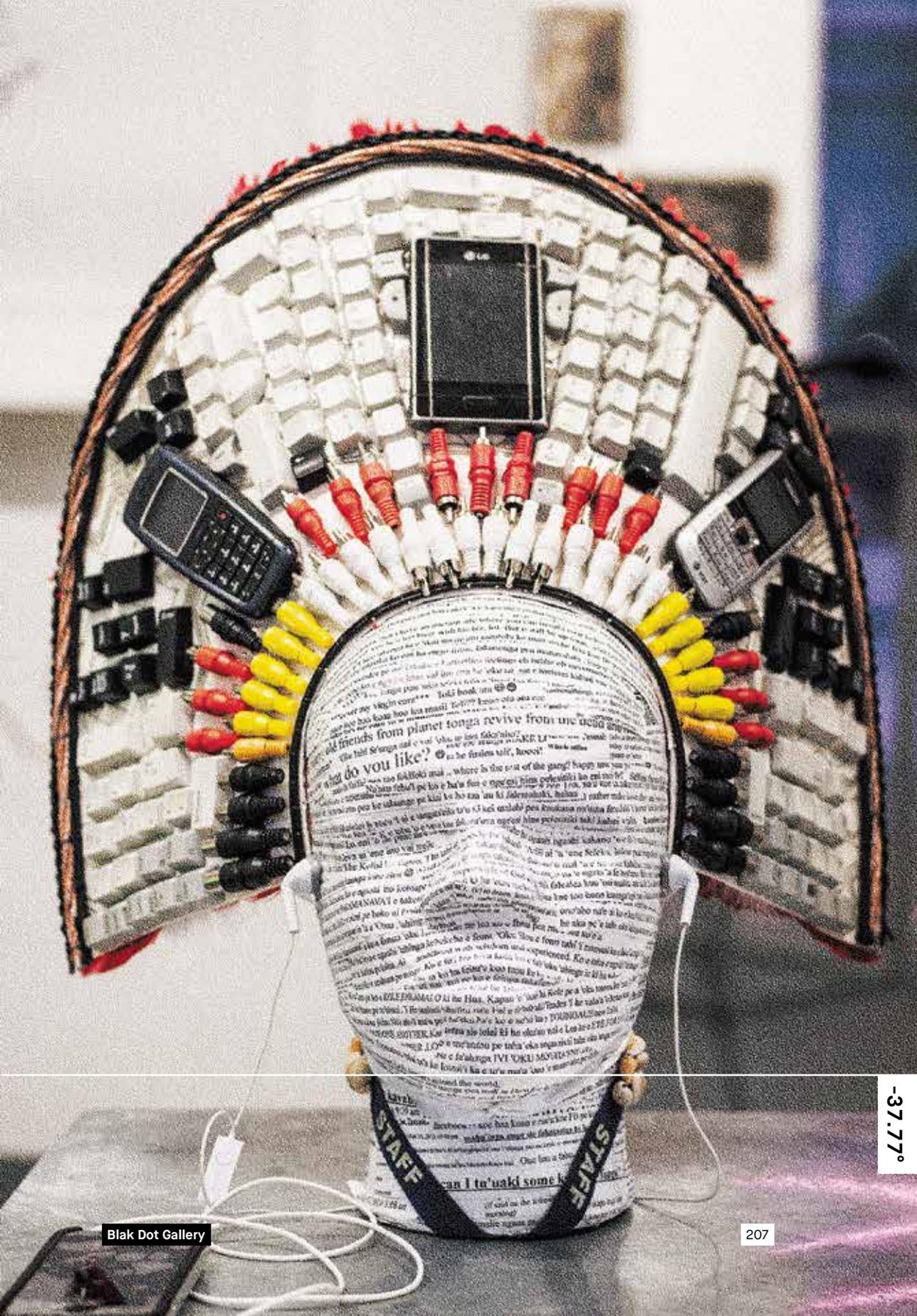


Frances Tapuelulu, *Technological Colonisations*, various materials, 2016

Handwritten text on a dark, textured surface, possibly a piece of fabric or paper, displayed on a table.



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Georgia Banks, *#whosyminn*, Installation with text and performance, 2017

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ARI's exist in a state of flux. Board members come and go, and with them come and go one version of that space.

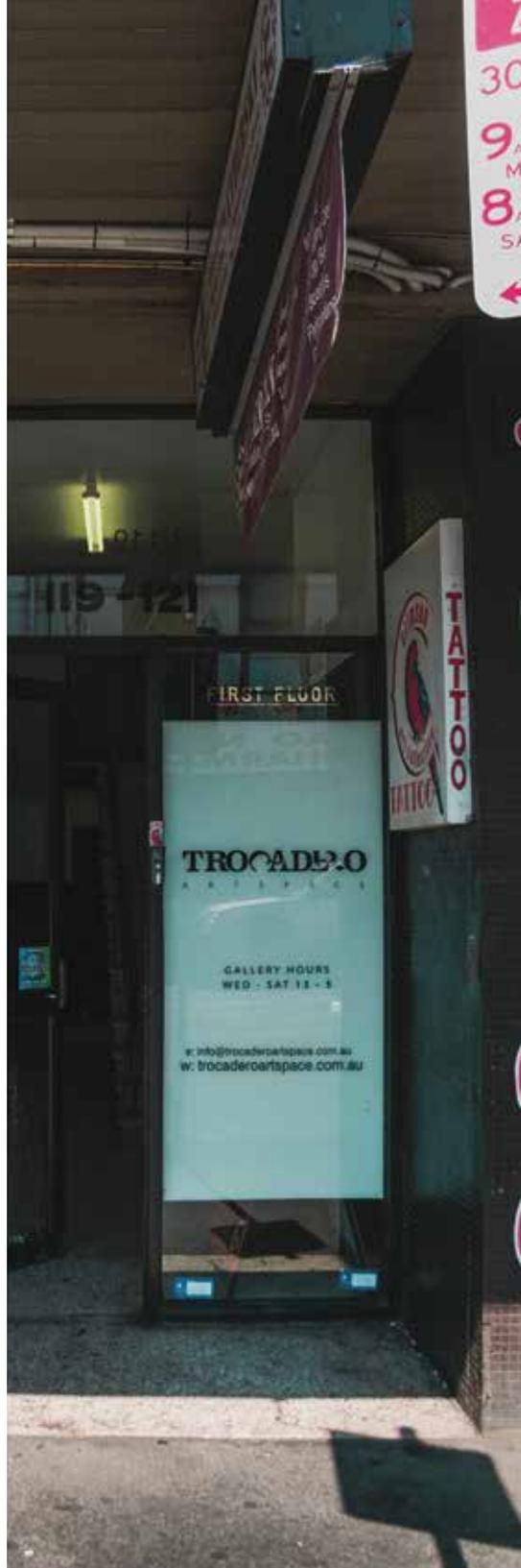
ARI's are ever evolving, always changing, never the same.

At this moment in time – Thursday March 16, 2017 – Trocadero Art Space is dedicated to fostering experimental practices at an emerging and mid career level. We are dedicated to showcasing strong female talent through our annual International Women's Day Exhibition, and to performative practices, with our new space Nooky, which predominantly exhibits live work.

But who knows what Trocadero Art Space will be a year from now. A month from now. A week from now. Tomorrow.

That's why we chose to engage with this project through something that outside of the hands of who sits on the board, and what we feel Trocadero Art Space stands for.

#whoisspitman explores an element of the ARI from before our time, and most likely beyond it. It encompasses elements of working with an ARI as banal as forgetting to pay a window washer, and as broad as the shape of the artist community in Footscray.





#whoispitman



Most Recent

1 public post

There is someone in Footscray who spits on our front door

Like, a lot

It's a problem we inherited, from before our time

The final Wednesday of each month our glass guy comes by for payment. Every time I forget. I stare at him blankly for 2 — 3 second until my brain registers his face

I go to pay him from petty cash but there's never any money in petty cash I think the whole concept of cash being petty is beyond us

I rummage through the pencil case in the safe until find \$50 in an envelope marked takings or proceeds or float. I slip his invoice in its place and hope Gen gets it

Aaron thinks the spit comes from someone with a deep-seated grudge against the gallery. I can't imagine anyone maintaining such a wet seething rage across such a stretch of time. It would take commitment

Steve says he caught a glimpse of a hand or a back once. Maybe hair? I can't remember

He was going to photograph the 'offerings' track them across time

#whoispitman

It gets brought up at another meeting; we should hire a CCTV camera. We should buy a fake CCTV camera and install it in the doorway. We should stay up all night and catch them

I think about how someone keeps something up for this long

Do they have a bucket or a bottle they carry with them always; a spit receptacle?

Is it one person or a collective?

Is it passed on like a vigil?

I Google how much saliva one person produces in a day

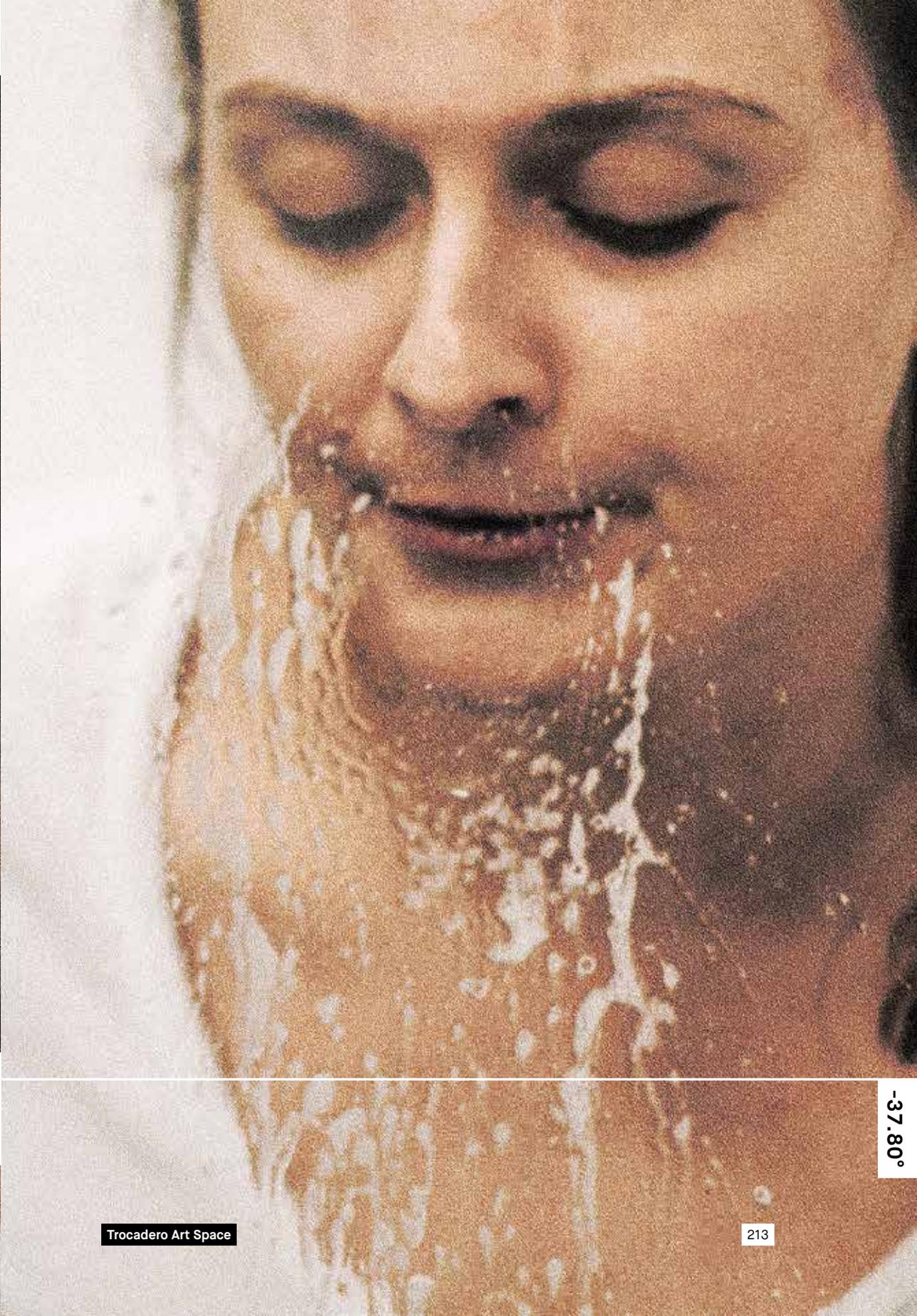
I admire their dedication

I don't even know if it is spit, that's just something I've been told by someone who was told by someone who was told

The conversation always ends with someone laughing a little and shaking their head

"Well, this is Footscray"





Jon Butt and Ben Woods, *c3 Testing Grounds- 2 Signals*, 2017





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For a little while I have been practicing without showing — this has taken the form of a private practice, with little to no “public” representation or advertising. One opportunity of such a practice is that there is wider choice and sensitivity around what gets shared, how sharing happens, and what sharing does. Part of this process is noticing what is already being made and what is already being shared.

When Jon rang me from c3 about this book, I was most interested in the phone signal connecting us in conversation. This signal, for me, was direct contact as place — place as an immersion within what is actually happening now: placing. So this connection included the situations I inhabit, satellites, and the situations Jon inhabits as a representative of c3.

I currently live at Altona beach, Narm/Melbourne, and I regularly go swimming in the bay. For this publication, I felt I might learn something about place by staying where I am, swimming in the bay off Altona beach. Some observations emerged: because of this project, while I place myself submerged in the bay I am also placing myself in c3 (my placement in the bay is what I find I can bring to a discussion about placing ourselves in c3); swimming offers an experience of immersion; there is no outside in swimming, there seems to be no outside anywhere; when I took a GoPro swimming, the camera saw things that I couldn't see and my freestyle changed; when you look at these pages you will be somewhere else.

I think it is the most obvious of observations that call out just how complex placing ourselves is. Within that complexity, questions find a voice: when we speak about places as if we are outside them and can see them, what kind of connection is happening? If placing is immersion within what is actually happening now, what is community and how does community flow? If a community is a steady placement of people/practices/sites, how can we move freely both together and apart?

Swimming might appear to be an attempted escape from questions like these, but it only amplifies them. *BW, 20th April 2017



there is no outside, Benjamin Woods, underwater GoPro image and text, 2017
c3/Testing Grounds: 2 Signals, Jon Butt + c3 (technical assistance by Alexander Radesvki & Ryan Ralph), Internet connected LED beacons, motion sensors, 2017

This project is a shared, open and moving discussion around ideas of place in context of the space/ place that c3 provides to develop arts practice.

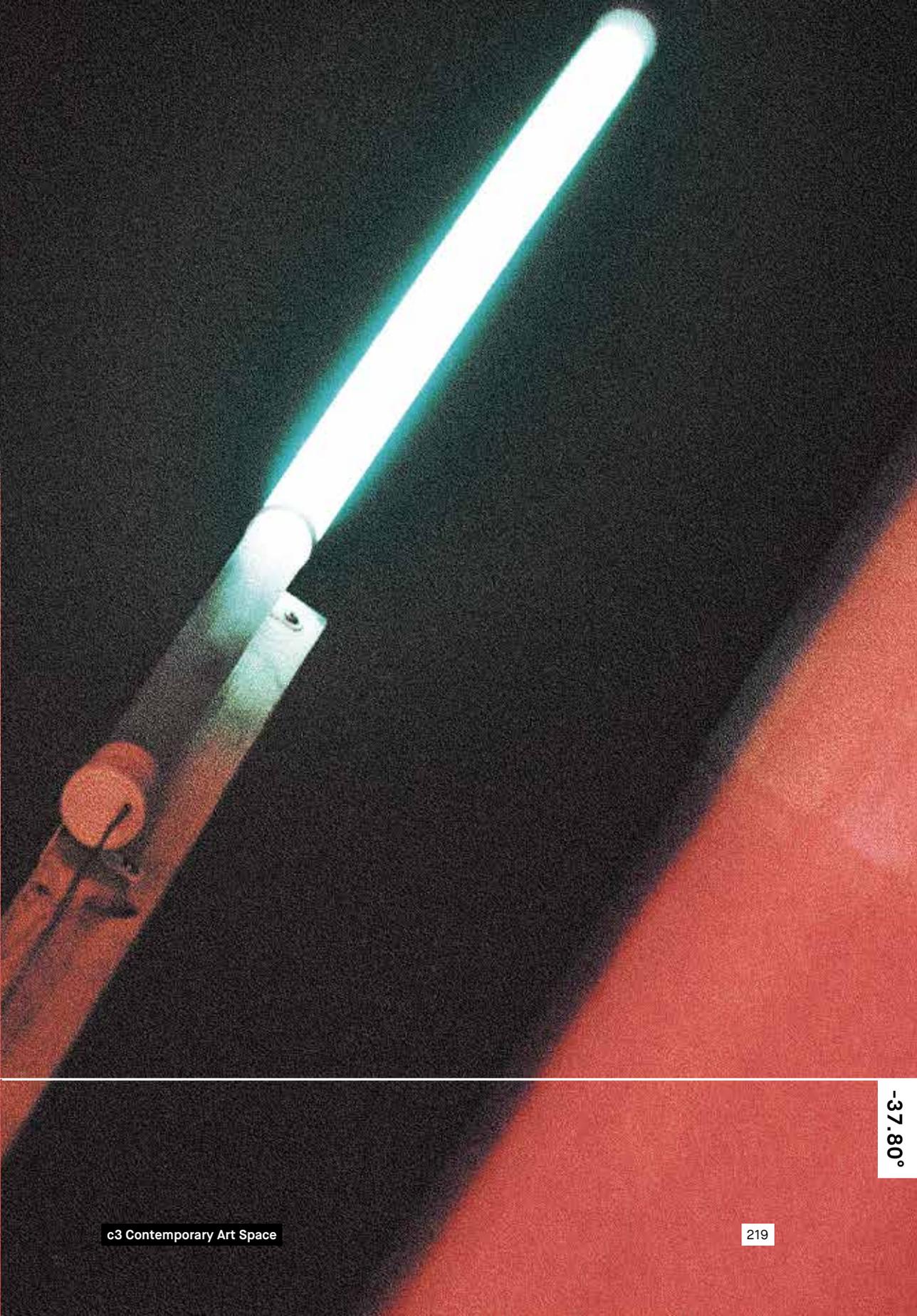
This project will expand through c3's Online Project Lab www.c3artspace.com.au/lab/project-lab-5/

c3 is an artist-led contemporary art space, located at the Abbotsford Convent arts and culture precinct in Narm/Melbourne. Established in 2008, the gallery supports open, ambitious (or quiet), personal and critical approaches towards making and experiencing contemporary art. Risk, experimentation and direct audience engagement are encouraged. Central to c3 is the development of professional practice skills, mentorship and opportunities for artists/curators, and a focus on connecting critical practice with a large, diverse audience. The six-room gallery is housed in the main Convent building facing expansive gardens, Birrarung (the Yarra river) and adjacent bush parkland within its inner city location. The site has a multi-layered and complex *continuing* historical journey: a meeting point for the Wurundjeri and Kulin Nation peoples, settler occupation, a convent, a university, a large multi-practice creative precinct. The gallery has a reciprocal relationship with community, in that it simultaneously builds and is built by community, allowing for an open, nimble and active curatorial vision.

Images: Pages 1 + 4 - *c3/Testing Grounds: 2 Signals*, Jon Butt + c3. 2017
Pages 2 + 3 - *there is no outside*, Benjamin Woods, 2017

(Map data: Google, DigitalGlobe)





SI MA VA, Jonsdalle 2525, 2017

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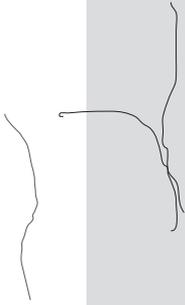
PROJECTS



Bus Projects is an artist-run organisation dedicated to supporting the critical, conceptual and interdisciplinary practices of Australian artists. In addition to its core gallery-based program of exhibitions, events and residencies, Bus Projects collaborates with a range of artists and arts organisations to produce projects off-site and within the public realm.



Out



Christina Apostolidis, Monika Bognar, Kim Brockett (*Vice-President*), Anita Cummins (*Treasurer*), Caraline Douglas, Channon Goodwin (*Director*), Hugh Griffiths (*Secretary*), Nina Mulhall (*Program Coordinator*), Madé Spencer-Castle (*Gallery Curator*) and Nella Themelios (*President*).

Last modified by si ma va: 28.04.2017 22:58:28

PROJECTS





-37.81°

West Space

West Space is a contemporary art space that provides an experimental and responsive platform for the development, exhibition and contextualisation of artists' work. We are distinct in being a non-for-profit organisation that blends the creative freedom and risk-taking of an artist-run space with the professional infrastructure of a contemporary art institution.

Photo credit: Mathew Stanton, 2012. Details.



West Space

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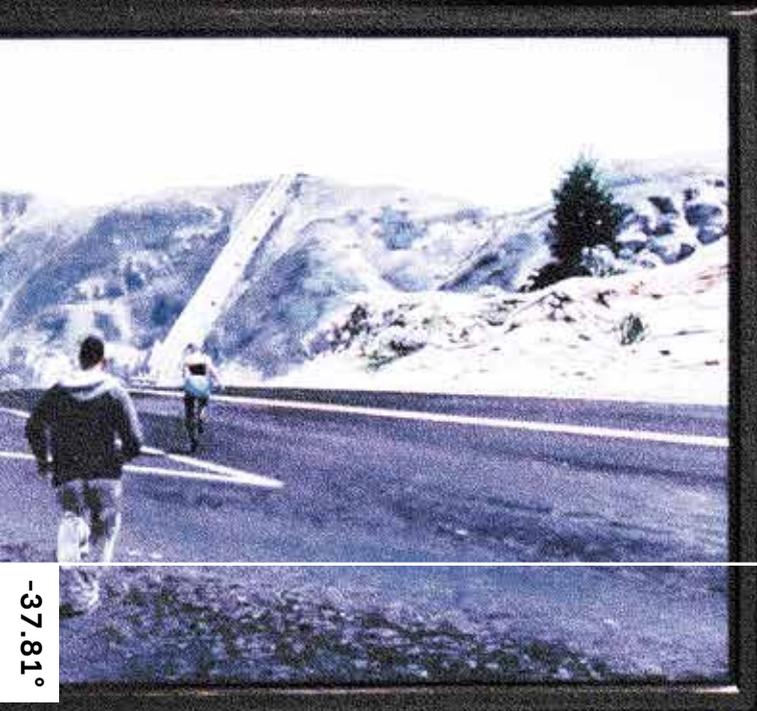


West Space has a large and dedicated community of peers that regularly participate in the organisation. The volunteer group in particular plays a vital role in the daily operations of the gallery. The artists involved in West Space's contribution to this project are all regular volunteers in the space. Volunteers sit a three-hour shift in the gallery on a weekly basis, and help out regularly at exhibition openings. For this collaborative work, each volunteer has contributed a text or drawing, reflecting on their time spent in the gallery, and the experiences they have had there. The idiosyncrasies of West Space's current location at Level 1, 225 Bourke St, hold a particular influence over the volunteer experience, and by extension, their contributions to this project.





Top: Steven Rendall, 147, 2016, Digital video, 7m 6s, Courtesy the artist
Bottom: Geogle Roxby Smith, *Fair Game (Run like a Girl)*, 2016, G1AV Online Online Intervention (longshot machinima) HD Video, 13m 57s, Courtesy the artist



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**“A SHIP IN
HARBOR IS SAFE,
BUT THAT IS NOT
WHAT SHIPS ARE
BUILT FOR.”**

JOHN AUGUSTUS SHEDD

Author + Professor

1928

BLINDSIDE is located on the seventh floor of Melbourne's iconic Nicholas Building, the home to a hive of creative practitioners of all sorts. This community, along with the million-dollar view and the constant hum of the city that filters up through the windows are some of BLINDSIDE's defining features. BLINDSIDE is not only the people who exhibit in it, nor the visitors that wander through the doors; it is itself a place. As inhabiting a space in the centre of Melbourne city becomes more pressurised—as rent increases and small businesses are shuffled outward—the notion of place has become critical for BLINDSIDE. BLINDSIDE's longevity and resolute commitment to the Nicholas Building is a direct response to place—its very presence is evidence of the power of location, community and environment.



BLINDSIDE was founded in 2004 by four artists who migrated from Brisbane to create a space for artists, writers and curators to experiment with their work and connect with one another. Securing the location in the Nicholas Building was a critical decision and a defining moment. This labyrinth of artist studios, creative niches and tiny hubs of activity provided a readymade community, and BLINDSIDE became a galvanising agent for them; a place to come together, a place that nurtured innovation and a place that supported (and even enticed) artists to push themselves and their practice. As it grew, BLINDSIDE's links and roots into the building grew stronger and deeper. Over time, exhibiting artists have responded to BLINDSIDE (and



therefore, the Nicholas Building) through site-specific and site-responsive works that draw on the site both physically and conceptually, exploring its historic features, strange quirks and diverse communities. The Nicholas Building has long been an important site of cultural significance—it is in many ways Melbourne's grassroots creative heart—and it is celebrated as such.

Over the past 14 years, BLINDSIDE has established itself as not simply a space for exhibition but also as a site for community and social-minded engagement.

THIS PAGE, FROM TOP: **BOE-LIN BASTIAN**, *Jellies*, PLAY 2014 | **BENJAMIN PORTAS**, *Idolatry Ratio*, PLAY 2017 | **CHANTAL FRASER**, *It Hangs With Rattlesnakes And Rubbish*, PLAY 2016

OPPOSITE PAGE, FROM TOP: **KAWITA VATANAJYANKUR**, *Soaked*, PLAY 2014 | **TROMARAMA**, *The Charade*, PLAY 2015 | **TANIA SMITH**, *Untitled (Refrain)*, PLAY 2014



BLINDSIDE has a particular interest in activities that develop, support and celebrate a diversity of discourse, art and people. While BLINDSIDE itself might be fixed to a physical location it is not limited or confined by its site; its borders are porous and open, its program is expansive and its connections extend beyond its walls. BLINDSIDE's 2016 festival *On the Verge* transformed the gallery into a headquarters—a hub that provided a cup of tea and a directory to a variety of offsite art interventions—a starting point rather than an endpoint. Over 11 days, *On the Verge* presented the work of 29 artists across 18 CBD sites, and included installations, walking tours, guerrilla theatre and intimate creative encounters. The gallery walls were temporarily forgotten and our floor plan was reimagined to include alleyways, back rooms, shopfronts, domestic space and other hidden spaces. redefining place became a way to support a different kind of project and to visit, interact with and influence a different kind of audience.



In 2014 BLINDSIDE developed pLAY, an online gallery space dedicated to exhibiting single-channel video work. The initial intention was to transform an online platform (BLINDSIDE's website) into a virtual gallery—a space for viewing video works on demand and in their entirety. This was at odds with the institutional approach at the time, which presented only the installation documentation or video-stills of moving image projects. pLAY offers online audiences both near and far the chance to view the work. In a different way to *On The Verge*, pLAY redraws the lines and expands the gallery's reach past its physical limits.

A screen was later introduced into BLINDSIDE's foyer to house pLAY and to reconnect the virtual with the physical. The result was a new gallery of sorts, a place that runs in parallel with the online. This more-physical version of pLAY connects in a different and more immediate way to the artworks presented in the galleries, and provides the opportunity for an audience to view (and re-view) a work across two very different sites and contexts.





ALAN WARBURTON (UK), *Training Camp* on fedTV at federation Square, curated by Queertechnology for PLAY², 2017

PLAY soon grew another arm—PLAY² (pLAY Squared)—which, in partnership with federation Square, presents single-channel video work off-site on fedTV. PLAY² gives artists the opportunity to present their work at one of Melbourne's most-visited sites, and provides the public with unexpected artistic content. The largest of fedTV's screens is conveniently visible from BLINDSIDE seventh floor perch overlooking federation Square, a feature which quietly but tangibly binds the programs together. Despite BLINDSIDE being hidden away and nestled in the centre of the city, its various projects enable it to extend beyond its walls and onto the streets, into the public and even in the privacy of one's own home. The BLINDSIDE Video Archive presented in *An Act of Showing* is a mixed bag of video works sourced from PLAY and PLAY² and represents BLINDSIDE's provocation and experimentation with the presentation of artwork in different contexts, and a commitment to shifting technologies and screen-based culture. BLINDSIDE's digital and offsite program has made more space (both physically and digitally) for video work and proactively suggests alternatives to the presentation of contemporary single-channel moving image.

for BLINDSIDE, the physical gallery is both an alluring force and the foundation of our existence—as it is centred in the power of presence and the ability to engage in real-life space—however, the ability to be porous, to expand beyond and occupy multiple places is both an opportunity and a privilege, one that cements BLINDSIDE's place as one for ideas, dialogue, and connections—a central node that breathes both in and out.

blindsided.org.au

Top: Alicia Bryson Haynes & Claire Robertson, *Opera & Art in Question*, 2015, Single-channel HD Video, 16:9, stereo, colour, sound, 9m 40s, Courtesy the artists
Bottom: Beth Caird, *What will I do now, with my hands?*, 2016, Single-channel video, 2m 27s, Courtesy the artist

BLINDSIDE

237

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Daryl Rogers, *Of Place*, digital photographic collage on aluminium, 2017



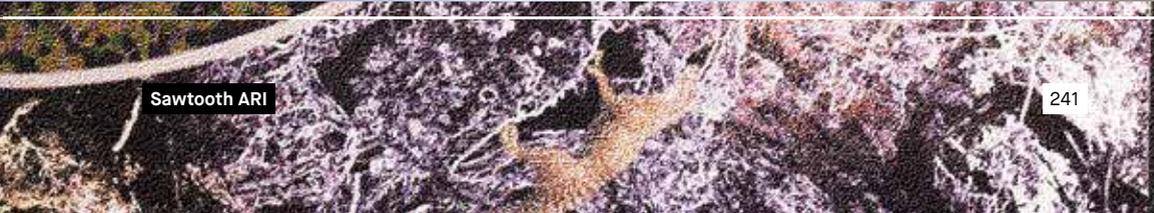
An artist-run initiative: the outcome of members of the local creative community coming together taking at its heart the gallery as a process. In a regional centre, defined by its distance from other geographical centres, it reaches out to bring in artists and visitors from the outside. It creates a platform for local practitioners, grounded in this place, to extend themselves: to try something different, to invite feedback, to call into being something they have imagined. Sawtooth invites disparate groups together around the table, offering a space for communities to come together: as a recurring gathering or as a temporary collective.

This work serves as a digitally layered narrative of moments, experiences and observations informed by a cyclical nomadic existence of living and working in and around Launceston. At its centre, place, identity, and imagination defined by the built and natural environment of the island.

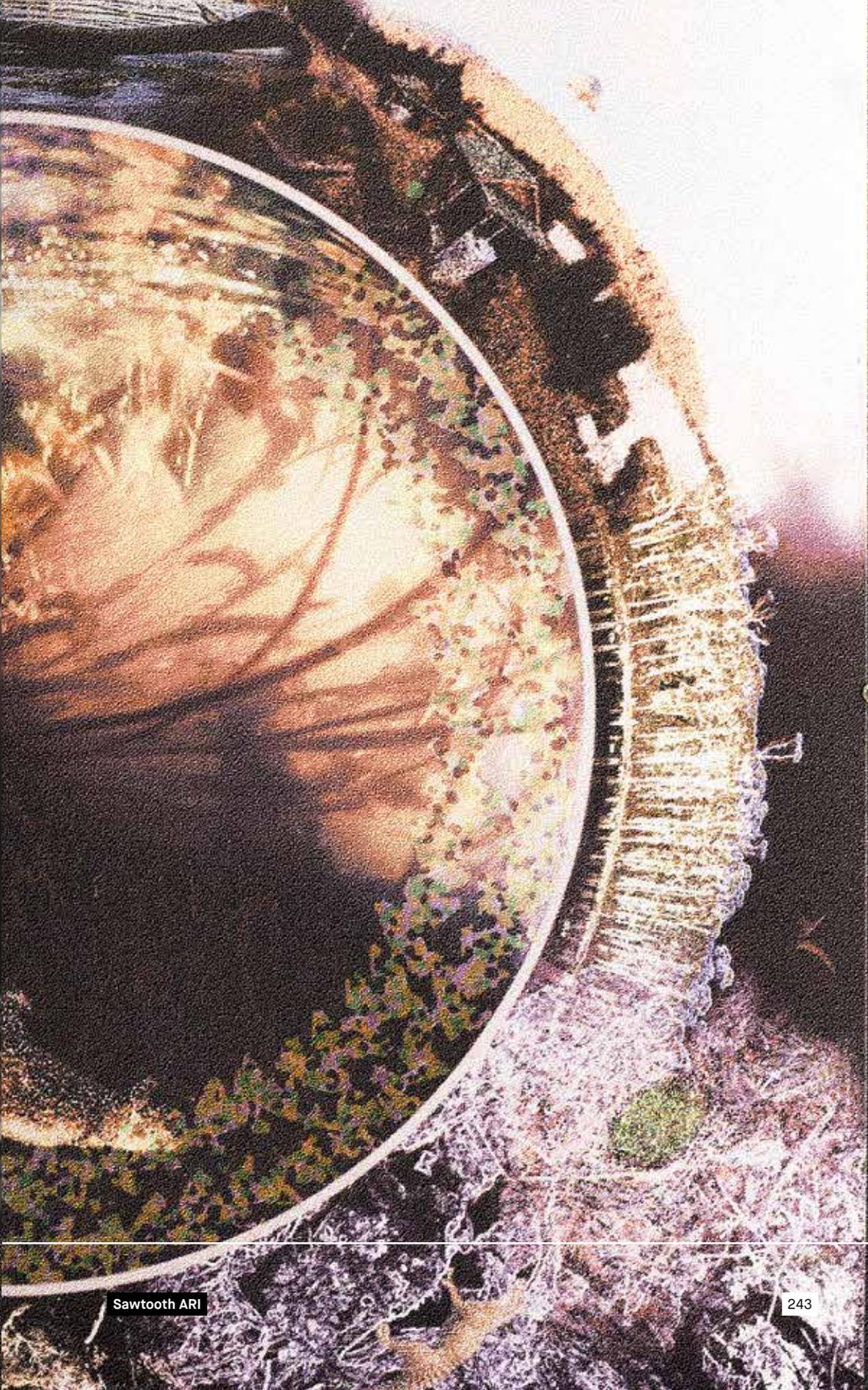
Sawtooth is a dialogue about the emergent possibilities of making in this community, this space, this moment.

-Karen Hall, Darryl Rogers, and Patrick Sutczak.









Sawtooth ARI

243

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Being There



**An Act of Showing
17-27 May 2017
Testing Grounds**



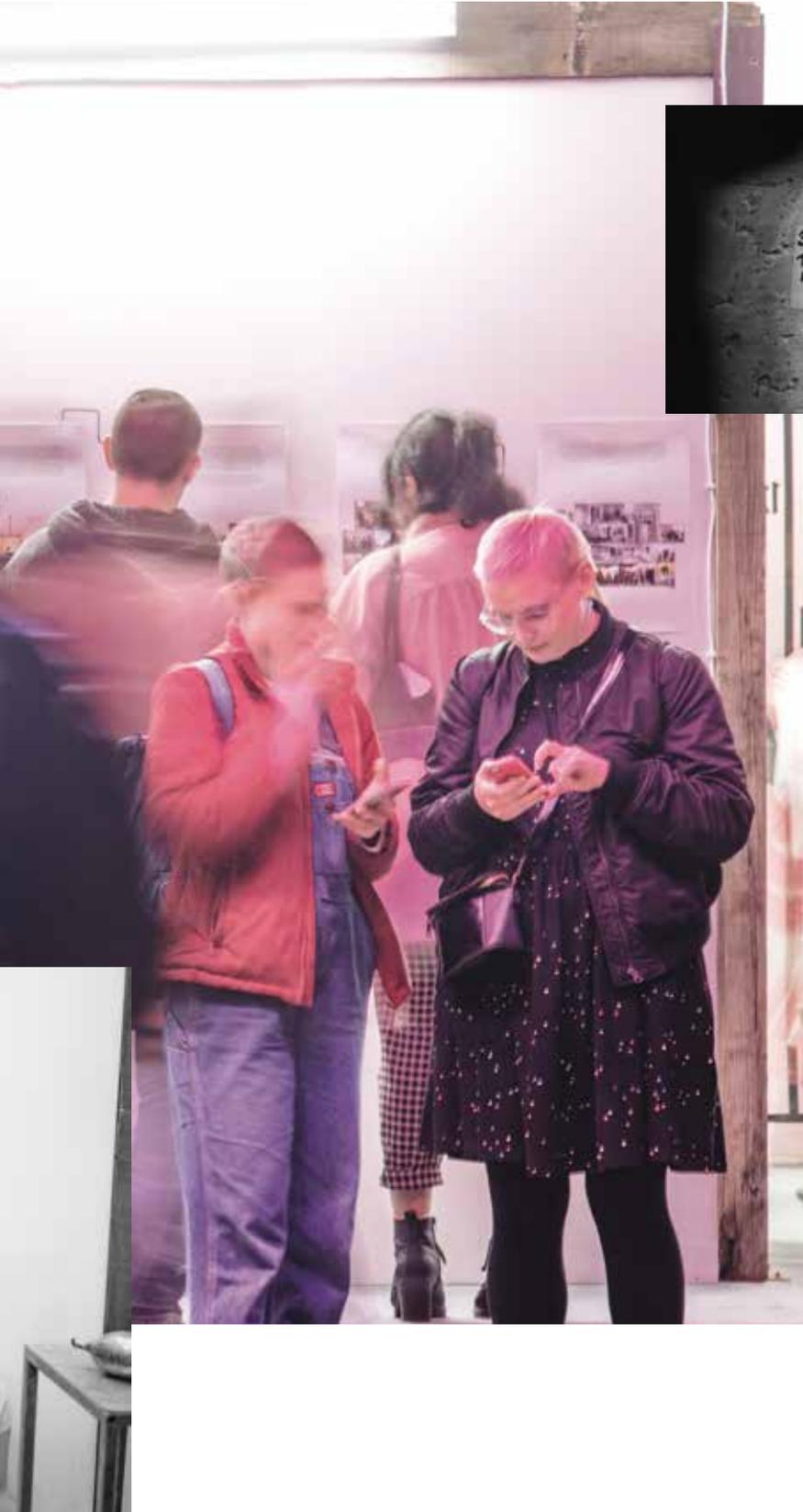












ISBN: 978-0-9871189-4-3

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Authors and artists

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Copy editing by Laura de Neefe

Book design by Elwyn Murray

Published by

Unlikely publishing

Melbourne

www.unlikely.net.au

Printed in Australia by Printgraphics Pty Ltd under ISO14001 certification. Printed with soy-based inks on PEFC certified, 100% recycled paper stocks, made from post consumer waste.



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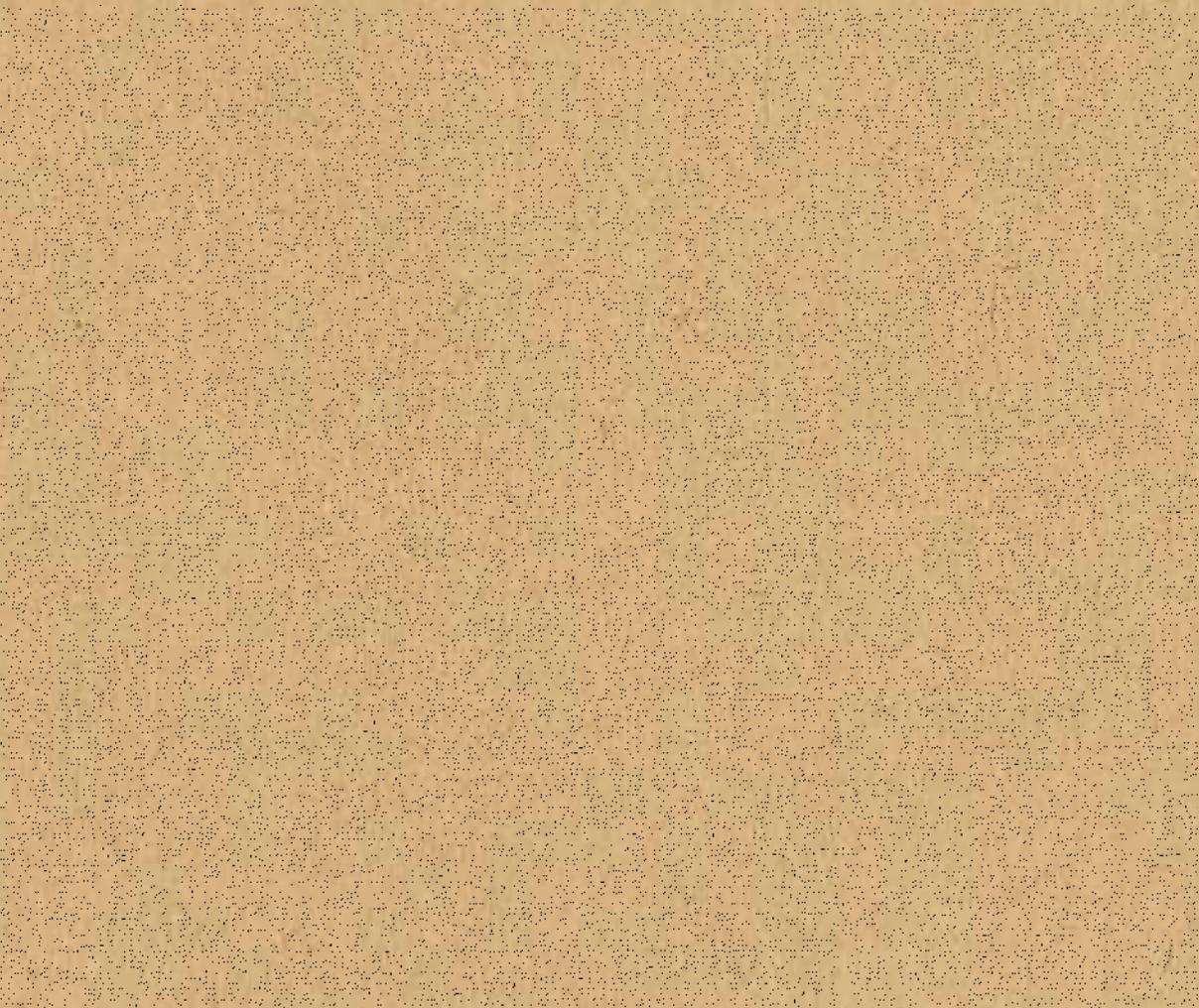
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