

SNO 129 EXHIBITION NOTES

The exhibition is devised in 9 related parts. Such a curatorial grouping is designed to operate as a proposition. Works in this exhibition question the status of the work of art as a discrete and static *museumed* artefact. Language and structures using visual signs are the common thread that link work through a network of perceived relationships. Museum is a way of making the idea linked as a relationship imposing often idiosyncratic categorisations on a collected subject. The artefact may appear to share common values or ideals that form a proposition. An exhibition can be a method of enquiry seeking not simply to assert the commonalities or an index of kindness relating a thesis that forms a recognisable pattern. The museum can take those themes further, expanding the knowledge of a subject by the way of suggestion. Such speculation is another philosophical tool and one using such a method, a scheme of things, can propose any sort of formalised situation, and 'one where logic can take care of itself'.

FOYER + OPENING PERFORMANCE

Garry Bradbury

Over several years SNO has regularly presented sound and video works by contemporary Australian and international composers, musicians and sound artists. Garry Bradbury is an electronic musician active in Sydney's experimental music scene since 1979 where he was an early member of the pioneering post punk / industrial band Severed Heads, from 1982 to 1983. His early work specialised in found sound manipulation, especially tape using reel to reel and tape decks, as well as experiments with customised pianola scrolls.

GALLERY 1

I was moved into a spacious new room, Salt Museum 2016

Alexander Jackson Wyatt – Nicolas Jasmin

"I was moved into a spacious new room, Salt Museum" made in 2016 is one of a series of ongoing works that uses video and sound. This work is devised as a slide-show sequence using 'constructed video stills' in constant repetition: abbreviated by monochromatic colour pauses and superimposed with subtitle texts. This piece borrows from typographic style of cinema subtitles, designed to reference foreign cinema as a remote access point to something else or to understand the 'other'. The sound components are samples extracted from a recording collaboration between myself and artist Nicolas Jasmin.

"I was moved into a spacious new room, Salt Museum" follows different encounters and research episodes engaged with an examination of capitalism, travel, art and dark tourism. The video takes the form of a narrated description; a walk through the city centre of

Jogjakarta, Indonesia, unpacking a certain machine of capital production reference to that refer to a number of 'overlooked' museum environments.

Jackson Wyatt has developed his recent projects around an abandoned medical museum in Bulgaria and the Vesuvius Volcano Observatory Museum in Naples. Through personal recollection, the remote 'institution' displays to the artist the ambivalent role they have in maintaining an idea of history in today's contemporary environment.

For example, the video 'I was moved into a new spacious room, Salt Museum' uses a photograph from a Salt Museum in Pag, Croatia, the subtitling text is describing the urban situation surrounding the place, and the contents of the Sultan's Museum in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. This simple word play reflects on the specific function of both these institutions in terms of their geographic location, their history, on tourism and mode of capitalism. The work treats the spaces removed from both context and time in order to perhaps re-discover the phenomena of those kinds of spaces through an unlikely comparison.

Both the videos and image-objects are linked thematically using written word and text. The writing has developed a fictional unnamed female character as the narrator who attempts to describe these situations. The writing unpacks this research, giving a voice to what it is like 'to be distracted in the museum' as a form of critique linking capitalism, art, travel and dark-tourism.

The stories of the fictional character follow their own abstract logic, as do the image-objects. They are ambiguous and clouded in doubt but invite the viewer (or reader) as a guest into this dislocated world. The piece addressed the false timelessness of museum collections as objects of history, addressing the role of artists as player in this specific shape-shifting of the past.

Alexander Jackson Wyatt, Vienna

Alexander Jackson Wyatt's current practice is multidisciplinary and more commonly collaborative. By using photography, video, performance and installation he seeks to find alternative logics through everyday misunderstandings in the occupation of public space. Vienna-based artist Nicolas Jasmin has been described as a "reconstruction worker" for his scratch video "miniature" works which are mergers of video and sound, short, repetitive and abrupt. Jasmin uses sampled images and sounds, does digital editing to loop and synchronise tracks and adopts hip hop's methods in a video format. He appropriates and channels found footage, creating a meditative state of suspended animation. Jasmin and Jackson Wyatt have created a new work for this exhibition called 'Museum of Salt – structures of combinatory forces', which was initially devised in a former architecture studio and office of the late architect Helmut Heisteringer. Formed partly by conceptual writing, video and projection and edited sound quotations, the work has been commissioned with the generous assistance from the Copyright Agency Limited (CAL), Cultural Fund.

GALLERY 2

This series of lithographs on vellum by Agnes Martin is derived from a commissioned box-set that was created on the occasion of her exhibition "paintings and drawings 1974-1990" organised by the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, that subsequently toured venues in France and Germany (1991-92). In 1994 art historian Eva Hallen has written, "close up you can distinguish how the sharpness of the line is sometimes enhanced and sometimes seems to dissolve in relation to the surface. No technical devices have been used, the hand has simply followed the texture of the surface. From a distance this manifest materiality is suspended, the treatment of the surface and the bands of colour rather seem to create an immateriality, a play between light and shadow. At the same time, the austerity of the composition contributes to the opaque, closed impression."

During the 1970s significant works by Martin were added to collection of the NGA in Canberra. Her work was also seen in Sydney in exhibitions at the Garry Anderson Gallery. It was here in the same gallery the Central Arnhem painter Philip Gudthaykudthay held his first solo exhibition of innovative bark paintings and ceremonial poles, some of which were also purchased by the National Gallery of Australia and Art Gallery of NSW. Anderson, a great admirer of the work of Martin since his early years working for the NGA, and in a generous gesture of reciprocal maintenance he sent gifts of paintings by Australian bark painters to Agnes Martin who was then living in New Mexico. SNO has brought these artists together, partly as a signal to this mysterious gesture of exchange of the 1980s, a kind of return spirit to do with the social life of things. Here perhaps for the first time, one of these 1983 paintings called Guryunmirringa faces the ten untitled lithographs circa 1990. We do not know what Martin or Gudthaykudthay's reception to each other's work might have been, but this construction is partly made with an uncertain belief, partly as a logical proposition. In many of Martin's poetic writings and interviews and even in her only experimental film, the painter speaks about the egoless appreciation of the quality of the grid without the viewer making or taking a preferred perspective. Perhaps like Mondrian, Martin has likened this effect to the normal experience of contemplation we have looking at the deserts or sitting in front of an ocean. Gudthaykudthay's *mintji* design Guryunmirringa is more definitively about place and the rituals of conception.

GALLERY 3

The judgement of equals in a possible world.

In a further speculative way, the gallery decided it might be interesting to invite 3 artists to join this exhibition as respondents to some or all of the above. A certain confluence might appear this way, one that is reflective, or pays homage or simply stands as an acknowledgement that a common language can be observed in the work of formalist non-objective artists today.

Agatha Gothe-Snape's practice stems from improvisational performance. It draws upon and records interpersonal and spatio-emotional exchanges around art and art contexts. It takes many forms: prosaic performances (including dance), looped PowerPoint slide shows, workshops, texts (including correspondence, found texts as well as texts of a poetic character), visual scores and collaboratively produced art objects. It is often marked by a minimal idealisation of colour and language and a frontal visual tactility. It results from agency being given to impulsive responses. Her process is without fixed limits and fosters transparency. The work inhabits spaces that are both physical and non-physical. It occupies thresholds that are negotiable.

Emma Langridge

During an interview with the artist Dave Hagger observed, "the final taped sections are peeled back, the raw elements of the constructed line, their proportions and base colour resonate in complex geometric forms. The bleeding paint remains, marking human touch, and creating tension between object and observer." He further remarks, "Langridge draws inspiration from the structural fundamentals of electronic music, architecture, and literature. It is in these practices that she finds the most basic of functions, the passing of information, to be at its crucial juncture. Here, the foundation, the make-up, and the communicative layering are vital, for without them nothing can exist."

Describing the complex act of listening Langridge draws parallels with the visual, "I like that juxtaposition between the so-called perfection and the fact that it's hand made, and that you get this kind of visual static. I like the 'dirtiness' in a lot of electronic music as well: that looped static has a rhythm. I find a lot of this music has to be listened to for a long time and in a disinterested fashion, before you really see it for what it is, and are rewarded with enjoyment. I find this happens a lot with abstract work.

'The work is made using self-imposed rules and limited materials and explores the space where change itself develops, given these restrictions'.

Kerrie Poliness

Agnes Martin spoke of each of her works appearing to her, fully formed, although the size of postage stamps. Her task being to reproduce and scale them up correctly, true to their intent. The scaling up and materiality produces physically immersive portals, places, that can be tuned into and explored. In 1998 I had the honour of meeting and lending my studio to Phillip Gudthaykudthay, and therefore also the privilege to watch as he deftly and magically transformed a piece of cardboard into a portal with pigment. Something I will never forget.

It seems appropriate to include one of these snowprints in SNO 129. There are 24 colour variations of the same motif, the results of practising tuning into and out of places...

While waiting for my companions to finish a business meeting, alone, in an empty kiosk at Falls Creek ski resort one early spring afternoon (in between seasons) I recalled the dark and narrow corridors of the deserted 1970s-style ski lodge that we had just wandered through, endlessly criss-crossing multiple floors lined with brashly stuccoed walls painted mission brown, with the heating turned off (in between seasons) like some hellish labyrinth – I wondered what material presence might possibly transform these passages into somewhere else. While enjoying the bright spacious kiosk, the icy sun-light-filled air, intricately stunted snow gums and the last traces of snow on the ground the snowprints emerged, fully formed, as moments of clarity, like snowflakes, all different but all the same.
Kerrie Poliness, Melbourne

Since 1989 Kerrie Poliness has been working on a series of abstract wall drawings created by random and often unknown collaborators. Following a detailed instruction book that accompanies the work, her collaborators are instructed, step-by-step, how to 'draw on the wall'. Her instructions have been followed by collaborators in San Francisco in 1995, where passers-by were asked to draw; in Bendigo, where local artists provided the public spectacle of making a large blue drawing over several days; and in Wollongong, where volunteer lifesavers installed the work in a university foyer over the course of a month as a fundraiser in 2008. Through these artworks and investigations into systems, repetition and symmetry of force Poliness embraces the differentiation of all objects in nature and the ironic impossibility of perfect mass production

PROJECTION ROOM

Eric Bridgeman

Filmed in Kudjip in the Jiwaka Province of Papua New Guinea, 'The Fight', 2010 was produced with the assistance and participation of a large number of my relatives from the Simbu province, who resided in blocks of land in the Kudjip tea plantation.

The Fight as an idea was conceived by an elderly man who, over-excited about the possibilities to film a drama in the area, rounded up the young and old men to participate in the scenario. The men came up with plans to create a genuine re-enactment of a tribal war between two opposing clans; my only role was to hold the camera and film the proceedings. On the day of the act, the entire village came out to witness the spectacle, and it seemed everybody wanted a role. In one take, the intended seriousness of the acting became overwhelmed by melodrama. Boys faked dead while smiling, women and mothers wailed and laughed, and the village kids disturbed the proceedings.

Processing what had occurred, I considered the films of the Leahy Brothers amongst other footage of fight sequences in the PNG Highlands, and concluded that our fight possessed many different qualities that made our drama unique. In all of the participant's flagrant displays of imprecision, 'The Fight' provides insight into the role of documentary video in Papua New Guinea, the relationship between subject and camera, and how the viewer may consume and appreciate tribal performances based on authenticity.

Eric Bridgeman, Brisbane

The video documentary called THE FIGHT which appears in this exhibition references two earlier non-Indigenous filmmakers who worked in the Wahgi Valley region of the Western Highlands of Papua New Guinea namely the Leahy brothers and later Bob Connolly, who incorporated and reworked Mick Leahy's colonial frontier footage and archival photographs. It is from this filmic archives that fragments of the dynamic narrative structure of The Fight can be traced to and the theatrical gestures of the contemporary performers echo from. Part of the device of editing differs from the language of the earlier filmmakers, given that the fame of the hand-held video camera and the instantaneous nature of play back or revision provides the subject/actors the opportunity to input, and negotiate a collective undertaking of representation. In the process the other characters the village onlookers and spectators appear outside the conflict. We can see the land on which the performance occurs and the backdrop of mountains and the village gardens, in what is essentially a reframed enactment or idealisation of what an (authentic) inter-tribal fight once would have been like.

The improvised nature of The Fight is testament to their own control over information transmission. Performance is a living part of people's existence in these parts of the world and much of the *play-ful-ness* that Bridgeman leaves stand raw in this work is itself a useful structural device. In a different way Bridgeman's technique capturing the full extent of these improvised gestures, like the momentary glance of the wounded actor in the moment of recognition of the presence of the camera given fairly by the grieving family members of the 'dead' enhances the dramatic qualities that confront us as viewers of this work. The theatrical tension found in Bridgeman's ethnographic record is structured like Western forms of theatre, with evidence of a gaseous space and dramatic trance that Jean Luc Goddard refers when talking about multiple studio camera positions. Here multiple points of directorship is the main technique and method used to maintain their animated continuum.

Production note: In 2009, Bridgeman travelled through remote parts of the Chimbu Province, his mother country, in the Highlands of Papua New Guinea. As he was born in Australia, he became increasingly conscious of his own 'white' Australian presence.

The Fight is based on ethnographic conventions, from National Geographic to Irving Penn, which once aided in the promotion and consumption of PNG as Australia's next frontier. Bridgeman filmed two groups of men from his own clan, the Yuri. Through acting out Western stereotypes of tribal war, The Fight parodies the history of representation and the subsequent impact on the national and cultural identity of PNG.

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