

FRAMEWORK

#4 | *the untitled issue*





EDITORIAL

This final issue for 2013 sees Framework go rogue. After exploring Renewal in Issue 1, Sex and Gender in Issue 2, and giving a nod to Artsweek in Issue 3, we're fed up with themes!

Heralding in a new era of open-ended critical writing is Issue 4, The Untitled Issue. Abandoning the rigidity of themes, The Untitled Issue is packed with as many topics, styles and ideas as you can poke a proverbial stick at, leaving a clean slate for the 2014 Framework Editor to boldly explore new territories.

The Untitled Issue sees a whole bunch of COFA artists, writers and curators represented, including an artist profile of JD Reforma by the irrepressible Michael Do, a Q&A with Kudos Award winner Dominic Kirkwood by yours truly, an exhibition essay by Djon Mundine OAM, and an article and image gallery of the 55th Venice Biennale from Rafaela Pandolfini. We've also got not the usual two, but three exhibition reviews from Amy Rowe, Erin Wilson, and Alyce Neal, covering shows from Kudos to Campbelltown. Bonus!

As this is my final Framework as Editor, I'd also like to extend a huge and final thanks to all the talented writers and artists that have been involved in the first few issues, and look forward to seeing our little mag grow in the future. You're all legends. Massive thanks also to Penelope and the Arc team, without whom Framework would not exist in the first place.

~~ Kate Britton ~~

Image: Don't Go (chasing waterfalls), I Want You (to rock the boat) (detail) digital compositions on archival paper, various mounts, dimensions variable, 2013. Courtesy the artist.

**THE
UNTITLED
ISSUE**

ARTIST PROFILE

JD Reforma



Q&A

**DOMINIC
KIRKWOOD**



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persona**

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review

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by alyce neal

FRAMEWORK

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 4

EDITOR

Kate Britton

CONTRIBUTORS

Michael Do
Djon Mundine OAM
Rafaela Pandolini
Amy Rowe
Erin Wilson
Alyce Neal

DESIGN

Chris Vernon & Kate Britton

THANKS

Arc@COFA

ENQUIRIES

cofa@arc.unsw.edu.au
[arc.unsw.edu.au/
cofaframework](http://arc.unsw.edu.au/cofaframework)

Front cover image

DJON MUNDINE OAM PERFORMING
AT LISMORE REGIONAL GALLERY.
COURTESY THE ARTIST.

Back cover image

DOMINIC KIRKWOOD, 'GOLDEN
CIPHERS', 2012, DUAL SCREEN
VIDEO INSTALLATION, DIMENSIONS
VARIABLE, SURROUND SOUND, VIDEO
STILL #4, COURTESY THE ARTIST.

A MAVERICK JD REFORMA IN

WORDS by *A*



K'S MAGIC: CONVERSATION

Michael Do





The art of JD Reforma is designed, no doubt, to intrigue. A scroll through his back catalogue reveals an expansive array of mixed media installation works that concern the modern everyday, and the intriguing mystique of this experience.

JD's latest project, again exploring this modern everyday experience, takes the form of a two-part exhibition, co-curated with Sandra Di Palma, a Sydney based art administrator and curator. The pair has used Oprah Winfrey's 2011 "Great Aussie Adventure" as a vehicle to map the nature of the cult personality as it is found in Western democracies – the celebrity.

The ubiquity of celebrity is not new subject matter, but it is one that remains totally and overwhelming relevant in every iteration of the twenty-four hour news cycle. The show is built around seven artists and their unique and insightful perspectives of the woman who forever changed the daytime discourse on emotion.

Reforma's craft is subtle. He manages to engage in deft pop cultural inquiry rather than tired pop cultural critique of the

TV and computer screens of the Oprah generation. Reforma elaborates, explaining that the exhibition was "not so much a question of why we were exploring it – that much is self evident – but more, who has already explored it."

It is this unique perspective which sets Reforma apart from others who have tried to grapple with the subject matter, and possibly explains why Reforma's CV includes a litany of residencies, awards and exhibitions.

I sat down with the artist to discuss his practice, and in 3 words, he summarised his modus operandi - "gym, tan, laundry". The response seemed to strike a resounding chord, and cement Reforma's identity as an artist as we spoke. His practice interrogates our society-wide obsession with sensationalist images and twenty-second screen grabs. After all, this is the modern everyday for audiences of Reforma's generation.

My favourite piece by JD's (which is incidentally also his favourite) is a photograph titled *Horizon*. The hypnotic work, printed on self-adhesive vinyl, caresses the wall with an



expanse of rhythmic blue aquamarine lines that coalesce into a vibrant off-white horizon.

He describes this work as a form of “product-assemblage”. The image originates from a stock image agency, from which Reforma has purchased the right to reproduce it. He has then manipulated the photograph through Photoshop to heighten its perfection, and voila - a star is born. The calculated formula is one not foreign in the realm of celebrity and the modern everyday.

When asked whether he had any further thoughts on the work, Reforma quipped, “I think people like that work. I’m sure that I’ve made work that people don’t like, but if I have: no one’s told me to my face. Yet.”

TALK SHOW (AFTER THE BREAK) OPENS AT KUDOS GALLERY ON THE 15TH OF OCTOBER. IN ADDITION, JD REFORMA IS CURRENTLY A FINALIST FOR THE QANTAS SPIRIT OF YOUTH AWARD, AND WILL TAKE PART IN A GROUP EXHIBITION AT GOULBURN REGIONAL GALLERY AND THE NSW VISUAL ARTS FELLOWSHIP FOR EMERGING ARTISTS EXHIBITION.



Q&A WITH
KUDOS AWARD WINNER

DOMINIC K





KIRKWOOD





FRAMEWORK: TELL US A BIT ABOUT YOURSELF! I UNDERSTAND YOU'RE A MASTERS BY RESEARCH STUDENT? CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT YOUR PROJECT A BIT?

Dominic Kirkwood: I began my MFA mid-way through 2011. The original premise of my project was to continue on with themes that I had researched in my honours year, which was a dual concern between non-space and its audio-visual potential. In practice, much to ire of the general public, this meant turning up to a shopping centre/railway station/drain/park/pedestrian tunnel etc with a camera and a field recorder. I was quite drawn to the visual potential that could be found in these spaces but even more so I was enamoured with what happened once the sound and 'soundtrack' was treated in a cinematic fashion. What could be considered quite banal subject matter became riddled with incongruities, yawning metaphoric chasms if you like, that were ripe to experiment with.

As I trawled over old academic ground (Marc Auge, Philip Brophy, Michel Chion etc) and expanded out to into unfamiliar territory (Deleuze, Guttari, Kelley, Foucault, Kraus) it dawned on me; video has been subsumed into a host of other art practices but it has also expanded out into this realm of the 'cinematic'. What did this term mean? I had bandied it around without ever considering

its genesis, its place within art. So I began thinking about my videos in relation to theorists, artists' and filmmakers whom had a troubled relationship to sound and screen; in particular I was interested in how their use/analysis of sound drove their work. For instance, there are some interesting linkages between minimalism / structural film practice and the development of recent multi-screen video 'extravaganza' by artists' such as Doug Aitken, particularly in the way they treat sound and image as a spatial,

CONGRATS ON YOUR RECENT WIN AT THE KUDOS AWARD! CAN YOU TALK US THROUGH THE WINNING WORK?

DK: The initial idea for *Golden Ciphers* began with the scene that ends the piece, which is two figures walking and disappearing into the water. From there the work became a face off between two people on an inexplicable march through dilapidated parkland and a host of scenes from spatial dead zones around Sydney. It was a bit of gung ho attempt to experiment with the soundtrack across two screens and see (and hear too!) whether the sound could still drive the piece. Lastly, although it may not look obvious there are connections with this piece and some earlier experiments in Structural filmmaking. In this instance I'm thinking specifically about Michael Snow's 'Two Sides to Every Story', which in hindsight is an important bedrock for *Golden Ciphers*.



HOW DOES THIS VIDEO WORK COMPARE WITH THE REST OF YOUR PRACTICE? DO YOU ALWAYS WORK IN VIDEO?

DK: *Golden Ciphers* is very emblematic of my art; I've always worked in video.

WHO ARE THE ARTISTS THAT INSPIRE YOUR PRACTICE? OR THE NON-ARTISTS OF COURSE!

DK: Ed Atkins, Philip Brophy, Maria Kozic, Jean Luc Godard, Vera Chytilova, Marco Fusinato, Bruce Nauman, Mike Kelley, Tony Conrad, Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guttari, Chris Kraus, Janet Cardiff and George Bures Miller etc, etc...

HOW DOES YOUR RESEARCH INFORM YOUR ART PRACTICE?

DK: Apart from helping to situate my art within a broader theoretical and cultural field it informs my art at the most fundamental level. You read, watch or listen to something and it settles on top of other stuff that you've watched, listened to, or read. As more stuff is added onto the pile the brain composts it into other recombinant, mutated forms; from there it helps in shaping my ideas at the most

liminal stages of development.

READ ANYTHING GOOD RECENTLY?

DK: This is a good one! Branden W. Joseph's 'Beyond the Dream Syndicate: Tony Conrad and the Arts After Cage'. This book re-examines Tony Conrad's early career from his time as a violinist in La Monte Young's 'The Dream Syndicate/Theatre of Eternal Music', to his experiments in film-making and film-collaborations like 'The Flicker' and 'Flaming Creatures', as well as his music career, including his collaboration with Faust on 'Outside the Dream Syndicate'. Via Deleuze and Guttari's concept of a minor history, Conrad's practice is re-evaluated within a framework that peers into the minutiae of influences, from just intonation to the 'acognitive' theories of Henry Flynt.

WHAT'S NEXT FOR YOU? ANY NEW PROJECTS IN THE PIPELINE?

DK: No new projects on the horizon. I'll be spending the next few months finishing my thesis and prepping for my grad show at Kudos in late March 2014.



BUYUHYN-WANA: THE TRANSFORMATIVE PERSONA

WORDS by *Djon Mundine OAM*

BUYUHYN-WANA – THE TRANSFORMATIVE PERSONA, CURATED BY DJON MUNDINE OAM AND CURRENTLY SHOWING AT LISMORE REGIONAL GALLERY, BRINGS TOGETHER HISTORICAL AND SPIRITUAL OBJECTS FROM THE COLLECTION OF ROBERT BLEAKLEY AND CONTEMPORARY SCREEN-BASED WORKS ALLUDING TO IDEAS OF TRANSFORMATION.

In the beginning was the word - a sound - a sonic action - an emotional response that leads to reflection and thought. Hearing was believing - time and space in an acoustic, horizon-less, boundless, olfactory space (Marshall McLuhan).

In Aboriginal society in the north, Wanggarr, the original creative spirit, gave Aboriginal people the Yidaki (didjeridu), and it's particular high note, the voice of the Rainbow Serpent, similar in tone to the Conch. In many religions the word 'truth' is from 'what is heard' (from God) – the direct sound or word from God. The revealing of a type of truth and often a trace as in a mark (a design), a scar, is left behind. Wanggarr smelt a rotting beached whale coming with the northeast wind bringing the 'nose', the beginning, of the wet season to transform the world.

The Soul is born old but grows young. That is the comedy of life. And the body is born young and grows old. That is life's tragedy.
Oscar Wilde.

An Aboriginal life is one of transformation from the spirit world to the secular, and with each successive revelatory ritual or life experience returning to the spirit world. It begins at conception, not birth. And then with puberty, a sequence of increasingly deeper exposures to the spirit world.

Children begin by loving their parents; after a time they judge them. Rarely if ever, do they forgive them.
Oscar Wilde.

We must all rationalize our relationship with our parents if not forgive them. Especially after their death, when we become the parent. How much can we forgive? Can forgiveness in a personal issue – so as not to be held hostage to the past – be

applied to societal issues and a history approaching a 'holocaust'? How does the personal and the societal relate to each other? The Jewish response to the Holocaust and how it was largely ignored by civilized western society was a defiant 'Never Again', not 'I forgive you'.

Melbourne-based Aboriginal artist Bindi Cole explained to me in 2011 that in order to progress in her own life, upon her mother's death, she had to rationalize and forgive her mother for any and all possible deficiencies in Bindi's upbringing. She had to let go of the past. She then suggested to me that in order for Aboriginal people at large not to be held hostage to the trauma of a colonial past that they should also now forgive 'white' Australian society for this brutal history. She proposed to record and make public these statements of forgiveness. A number of Aboriginal people volunteered to perform this 'absolution' for her and the resultant powerful moving image artwork is called *Seventy Times Seven* (2011).

I did not agree with the proposition; yes, there may be a need to let go of, to be free of the personal psychological baggage, but there is more to a society and a history than me. I cannot speak for all Aboriginal people, and very serious historical and political consequences need to be resolved before the trauma can be healed. Of course there can be forgiveness, but within that must be a willingness to secure and retain the truth. Forgiveness is not about forgetting but remembering. As a companion performance work in conversation with the artist I wrote 'I forgive you – I will remember' seventy times in columns alongside the video image. As an involvement of audiences, visitors were offered the opportunity to write the own forgiveness-remembrance line on a short wall near the entrance of the exhibition.



I have used the body to perform the absence of space. I have incorporated the presence of cloth as object to really write and speak through the movement of the physical body. These women have impacted on my understanding of this place. I asked your sister and niece to take part in the film too; I asked them 'what is your freedom?'

The third major transformation; to be in communion with the spirit – to become the spirit through dance, whether singularly or in social grouping. Aboriginal dance appears in short, repetitive, almost Butoh-esque movements, over and over again. In Nicole Foreshew's video *belong to all yet to none 3* (2012), women (her close family) play-twirl, styled and arranged in Wonder Woman fabric. Wonder Woman has her 'lasso of truth' that she spins, twirls, and throws over, capturing escaping villains.

Women spin as a centrifuge, to throw off their outer every day coating, to reveal their inner power (John von Sturmer). The simple silent graceful movements

here could be said to be seductive; and it is part of the performance, but also expressing a powerful, warm, purposeful yearning. Vanity – but a modest coquettish vanity – a display of affection and tenderness beyond words. Men divest themselves of their outer garments to expose their power differently – tear open their shirts to reveal their chests and power (Superman) (John von Sturmer) .

In traditional Aboriginal society you wrap sacred objects, ritual gifts, special foods, valuable ochre-colours, bodies living and dead. You use paper-bark or specially decorated fabric. And what is a more sacred site than a woman's body?

*Toe to toe
Dancing very close
Barely breathing – almost comatose
Wall to wall-people hypnotized
And they're stepping lightly
Hang each night in Rapture
Blondie*



SANYO

Angelica Mesiti's silent evocative 'Rapture' (*Rapture, silent anthem*, 2009) captures the young transformed by music, dance, physical and social exertion to a state of pure spiritual bliss – a touch with God. Their faces becoming another being, mirrored in a set of open mouthed African masks across the short centre room of the gallery space. It was not accidental that Mesiti's work won the 2009 Blake Prize for religious art.

It's interesting that this work of intense emotion is in silence – most people find silence difficult to endure. Catholics say that in silence you hear the true word of God. The very word 'rapture' has associations with the bible and the believed final transformation of the second coming when "God" carries away the repentant converted to heaven leaving the rest to perish.

In Xanadu, did Kubla Khan
A stately pleasure-dome decree
 Samuel Taylor Coleridge

Around the time of the arrival of British colonists in Australia, English poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge wrote and published *Kubla Khan*, as well as the *Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner*. Coleridge was a very frequent user of opium, which he thought necessary to see his visions. Philosophers talk of the majority of the population living in a dream world, unaware of the reality of existence. It is this point alluded to in Fiona Foley's *Bliss* (2006); where the general population lives oblivious to the true history of race relations in Australia, it's consequences and their responsibilities; and where opium was woven through it.

When the British came to what is now Sydney they saw light dance across the physical landscape but failed to see the dark matter – the cultural, social, and spiritual Aboriginal space. To see the truth one must focus and be conscious of things beyond the obvious. Look at the dark and not the stars. Scientists now tell us that there is in fact three or four times more dark matter than light in the universe. The space could be the miniature of the inner atomic world or the infinite manifold stars of the universe. Physicists now talk of an energy field; the Higgs Field, that joins everything in the universe. Daniel Boyd's work references landscape, not just the physical but also the social, cultural, and experiential landscape, surrounding art objects.

Certain inherent features of a technology can make it appear as magic but can also shut particular people out from access to it, from knowledge of it, or a system of power associated with it. A previous exhibition, *Shadow Life*, described projected contemporary art as a shadow, a soul, disembodied art, visible but transient and intangible. It is to this purpose that I have juxtaposed evocative contemporary moving images with images of God (deities in differing forms), masks, and metal figures, to attempt to draw out direct emotional responses to the objects here across temporal and cultural spaces.

THE MOVEMENT OF THE CROWD



WORDS by *Rafaella Pandolfini*



I NATURALLY LOOK TO THE MOVEMENT OF THE CROWD IN PLACES WHERE PEOPLE ARE PREOCCUPIED CARRYING OUT CONTEMPORARY RITUAL. ART OPENINGS, PARTIES, CLUBS, THE BEACH AND THE PARK. I AM INTERESTED IN THE WAY PEOPLE MOVE TOGETHER AND ALONE, THEIR SHAPES AND PATTERNS AGAINST VAST OR MODEST BACKGROUNDS. THEIR OBJECTS, THEIR DRESS; WHAT THEY USE AND DISCARD.

In July 2013 my partner, daughter and I made the pilgrimage to Venice to experience the oldest event on the international contemporary art calendar, the 55th Venice Biennale. I decided to photograph the movement of the crowd and see the Biennale through the audience.

What I love is the moment when the viewer is so engrossed by what they are seeing and experiencing they become physically immersed, bodies leaning in or away, perhaps fidgeting or standing completely still, lost in the idea or the image; not noticing anyone around them. This is often fleeting in a busy exhibition space as someone brushes past, interrupting the connection with the work.

Witnessing these unintentional emotional reactions allows me to see the meaning [I devise] of the work. In the Central Pavilion, which housed the main exhibition of the Biennale, *The Encyclopedic Palace*, photographer Kohei Yoshiyuki's perverted cycle of the gaze was complete; I watched a striking viewer peer in at the

famous park pervert photos. The domino 'peering affect' was there again with American realist painter Ellen Altfest's painstakingly detailed works, which demanded particularly close viewing. Austrian artist Maria Lassig's bright paintings 'depict her body as she experiences it rather than as it appears', a perspective that seemed to resonate with the frozen audience, as they were once again asked to reposition their own bodies.

In a beautiful open space at the end of the Arsenale Bruce Nauman's video installation *Raw Material with continuous shift – MMMM* (1991) was showing. It was calling out for the audience to move with it but only our two-year-old daughter Rozsa took up the challenge when we were there. She spun around and around, imitating Nauman's head, giggling uncontrollably. People stopped and laughed – a warmth and connection amongst the audience.

The Encyclopedic Palace, curated by Massimiliano Gioni, was enormous and unrelenting. Returning to





Australia, trawling through my documentation and reading about the Biennale, I wondered about the volume of work shown and the desperate need we felt to see it all in such limited time. Meticulously and ambitiously curated by Gioni, the point was just this, to produce 'an exhibition about the desire to see and know everything, and the point at which this becomes an obsession.'

In an article titled 'How to survive the Biennale', Owen Humphries uses the term 'art flaneurs with iPhones'. It seemed to me like an oxymoron. The iPhone seemed rather to take from the viewer the possibility of flaneury, any deeper thoughts or feelings overtaken by the need to capture what was seen. As we became obsessed with wanting to see and understand it all, rushing through armed with iPhones, the viewers' behavior in fact became the point of *The Encyclopedic Palace*. 'The exhibition examines the roles of images the functions of the imagination... and in doing so questions what is left for our dreams, visions and hallucinations in an era

besieged by external images", Gioni writes.

Leaving the Central Pavilion, we enter the very lively Great Britain Pavilion, where artist Jeremy Deller and curator Emma Gifford-Mead had provided everything an art tourist could possibly need: a brass band, free tea, greenery, an outdoor area and David Bowie tour photos. It was colourful, spacious, light and bright, and yet the work was completely sobering in its exploration of the people, icons, myths and folklore of Great Britain. His use of pop culture was intentional and successful in captivating a lively audience, but I wondered whether the message would linger.

In the Australian Pavilion artist Simryn Gill and curator Catherine de Zegher had created a subtly strong show to demonstrate what mining is doing to the beautiful landscape of Australia. There wasn't a whole lot that demanded iPhotos, and when we passed through people were hanging around looking at the delicate works, taking their time to



piece together what was being shown. The political character of the show reminded me of Thierry De Duve's paper on Biennales, which explores the value of aesthetics to again be a pivotal part of art criticism.

"The mixed feelings I have about the proliferation of art biennials have little to do with the phenomenon as such, they have to do with the way some of the works shown at art biennials confuse the aesthetic cosmopolitanism art stands for with some cultural globalism or other, and deliberately use art as an umbrella under which to advance well intentioned critical or political agendas with, however, sometimes poor aesthetic results," he writes.

De Duve calls on us to use our ability to discuss the feelings we have in relation to a work as the basis of the argument that what we have experienced is art. I welcome this idea, looking for these feelings as I scrutinised the exhibition and reactions of the crowd through a camera lens.

The final work we encountered was the Polish Pavilion, with Konrad Smolenski's installation *Everything was forever until it was no more*. At first, there was nothing happening. In the room two very large bells sat, filling the assembled viewers with nervous tension as they waited, ears plugged, for quarter past the hour, when the bells would toll. As they began we saw Rozsa about to join the tadpoles in the mossy pond outside and it was time to depart, our own movement within the crowd inevitably affected by our daily lives. Feeling uplifted and exhausted, we limped towards our 'aperitivo' at the close of our second and final day at Venice, just as intrigued by the crowds that still moved through the vast exhibition spaces as we were by the art itself.



References:

01 Owen Humphries, How to Survive the Biennale. <http://www.spectator.co.uk/spectator-life/spectator-life-culture/8936601/the-biennale-carnival/>

02 Thierry De Durve Reflections on Art and Culture in the Global World, *Third Text*, vol. 21:6 (2007), 681-682.

Image Credits:

01 Installation view, Everything was forever until it was no more, Konrad Smolenski. Image by and courtesy of Rafaela Pandolfini.

02 Installation view, The Park, Kohei Yoshiyuki. Image by and courtesy of Rafaela Pandolfini.

03 Installation view, Maria Lassig. Image by and courtesy of Rafaela Pandolfini.

04 Installation view, Ron Nagle. Image by and courtesy of Rafaela Pandolfini.

05 Installation view, Australian Pavilion Here art grows on trees, Simryn Gill. Image by and courtesy of Rafaela Pandolfini.

06 Installation view, Russian Pavilion, Danaé, Vadim Zakharov. Image by and courtesy of Rafaela Pandolfini.



LÉA DO WHISPERIN



WORDS by .

ANNAN'S BIG GALLERY



Amy Rowe

PULLING BACK THE BLACK CURTAIN AND STEPPING INTO LÉA DONNAN'S THE WHISPERING GALLERY FELT LIKE ENTERING A HAUNTED CAVE. KUDOS WAS TRANSFORMED FROM A WHITE CUBE INTO AN IMMERSIVE, BUBBLING, ALIEN ENVIRONMENT. THE BACKGROUND SOUNDTRACK ON AN ENDLESS LOOP, IT'S HARD TO KNOW WHETHER THE MULTIPLE VIDEO PROJECTIONS ARE ENDING OR BEGINNING. UNLIKE A TRADITIONAL FILM, WHERE IT FINISHES OR SOMETHING HAPPENS TO RESOLVE THE DRAMA, THERE IS NO "AH-HAH" MOMENT. WE ARE NOT OFFERED THAT MOMENT OF RELIEF.

More than anything, *The Whispering Gallery* gives a sense of being out at sea. When you're on a ship on the ocean, there's a constant, inevitable tension. Although there can be moments of calm, the movement of water beneath you is inescapable. Traces of the sea are also in the audio, which has the lingering resonance of whales and crashing waves. There are oceanic hints in all the works, both in imagery and sound.

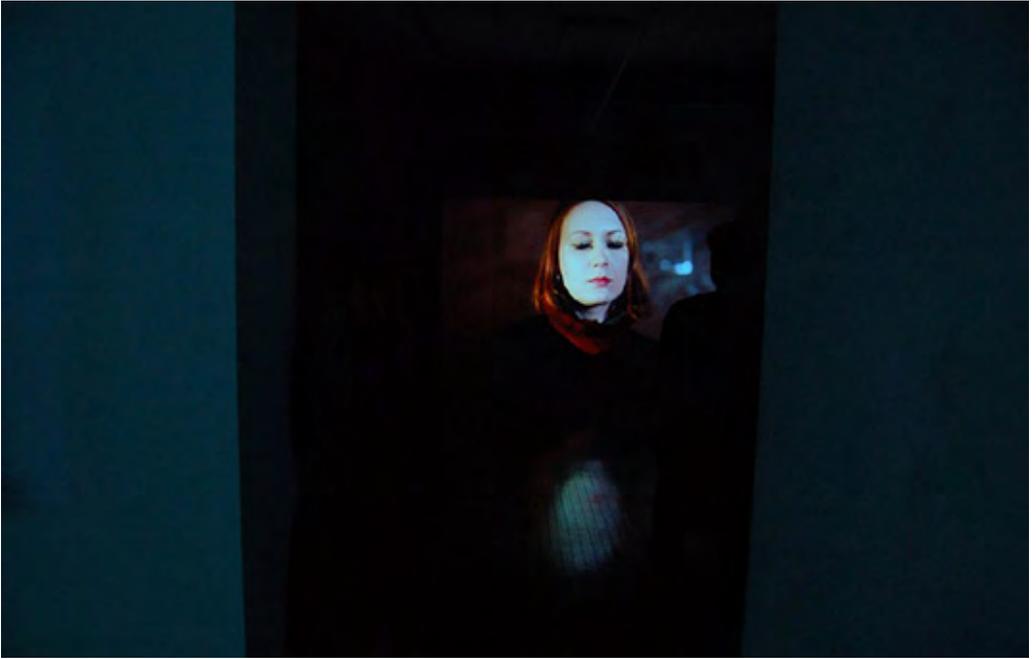
An otherworldly first impression of Donnan's exhibition transmutes fluidly into the of-this-world experience of being aboard a ship. Perhaps that's something we do as humans; search out and try and draw connections to what we know. This theme of connection seems to underpin the show; we become tangled in *The Whispering Gallery's* entwinement of biomorphic, artificial and natural imagery. We are gently let know we are part of this world and its systems, we.all.have. connections: to the earth, and to each other.

The show visually sweeps over cinematic landscapes of colour and texture. The feature projection, the namesake of the show, evocatively pans across brightly dyed woven materials and forms. What appears as a meticulous composition of sumptuous layering, is actually discarded fishing debris found in a small Icelandic village, where most of the footage was taken. It feels like we're being asked to see beauty in objects that would normally escape our attention. This piece is beautiful in a way that speaks of the interlaced nature of our lives here on earth, standing as an emblem for the entire show.

This feature video also includes footage of two milky skinned women, who oscillate between being serene and frantic, looking for something with only the help of a torch in a darkened tunnel. Who are they? What are they looking for? As human anchors to the work, these seeking and searching motions reflect Donnan's own attempts to reconcile her identity as a global citizen and nomad, part what she articulates as a "third culture."

As well as the visuals pathways constructed in the videos, there are also spatial pathways, as we physically navigate our way through the gallery. The two works *One ton drag* and *North south* seem to converse with each other in their oppositional placement. *One ton drag* consists of a car dragging a huge block of ice around an isolated road. Visually the clearest of the projections, it's shot in broad daylight and seems to reveal the absurdity of human interaction with our natural environment.

More than any concrete ideas, Donnan has been most successful in creating an experience, a series of sensory vibrations that are absorbed rather than rationalised. It is Donnan's ability to materialise and evoke the feelings of globalisation, of networks, of beauty and decay, which truly makes this exhibition important. Her work beckons us like the salty sea breeze, whispering at us to step into her murky waters, only to pierce us with a coldness that is both uncomfortable and refreshing.



THE NATIVE INSTITUTE

WORDS by *Erin Wilson*

THE TITLE OF BLACKTOWN ARTS CENTRE'S LATEST EXHIBITION, THE NATIVE INSTITUTE, MAY NOT BE OF GREAT SIGNIFICANCE TO MANY PEOPLE, LOCAL OR OTHERWISE. FOR SOME, HOWEVER, THIS TITLE RECALLS A TROUBLING AND OVERLOOKED PERIOD OF AUSTRALIAN HISTORY, WHICH DESERVES THE AWARENESS THIS EXHIBITION RAISES.

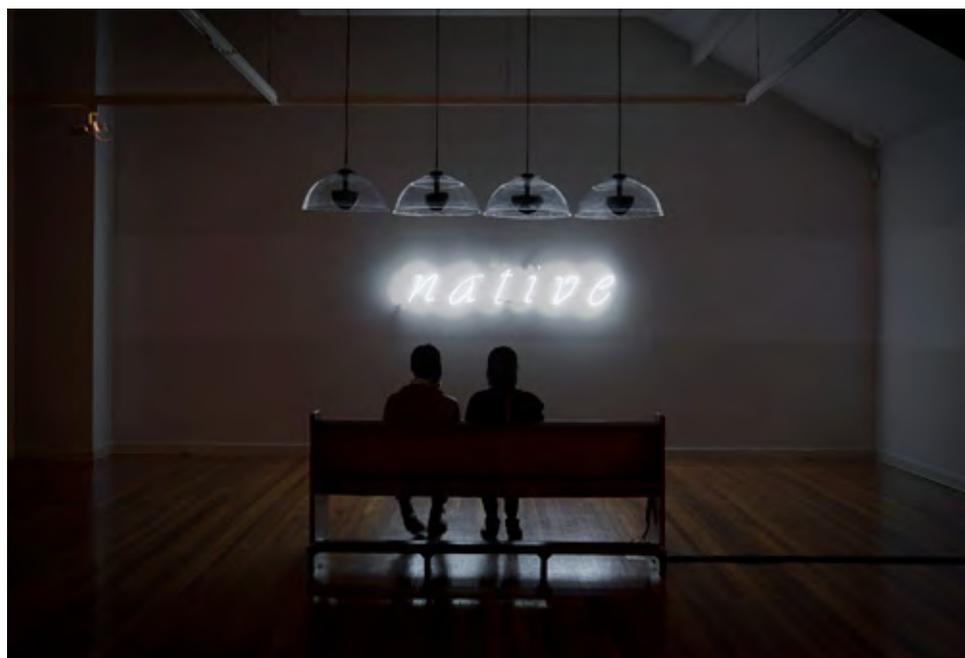
The Native Institute refers to a Blacktown school opened in 1823, with the purpose of civilising and educating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children for assimilation into the white population. The institution, run by the Church Missionary Society, was one of the first documented sites of the removal and institutionalisation of Aboriginal children in Australia, thus marking the beginning of the stolen generation era. Situated in the area that became colloquially known as 'The Black Town', the institute operated until 1829, at which time it was deemed a failed experiment in assimilation. The site, to this day vacant and fenced off, remains of key significance to the Aboriginal community, acting as a reminder of the dispossession of land and the removal of a generation of children by missionary groups.

Acknowledging the significance of the site, *The Native Institute* is a collaborative project involving six artists along with the local community and academics, amalgamating the history of the Institute with contemporary, personal responses to the site and its history. As Australia lacks an institution dedicated to acknowledging the mistreatment of Aboriginal people, this exhibition temporarily fills a void, allowing for a

focused reflection on the immediate and lasting impact of this Institution on the Aboriginal community. As the local community continue to petition for the establishment of an Aboriginal Cultural Centre on the vacant site, *The Native Institute* acts as a means of highlighting the significance of a site that to many is no more than a vacant lot.

While each artist's work provides a personal response and insight into the intentions, realities and repercussions of the Institute's history, the collected works create a multi-sensory environment that allows for a deeper understanding and empathy than any one work alone. The vast range of mediums explored provides no distraction; rather it creates a series of entry points into the narrative of the people who were a part of the Institute, engaging with this history from deeply personal and emotional perspectives.

Entering the first of two rooms, you are immediately challenged to accountability, as Robyn Caughlan's large Aboriginal portraits hang diagonally across the space, preventing an easy route into the exhibition. These works must be maneuvered, making a passive engagement with the work difficult. Before encountering





the visual in the second space, a muffled child's voice is heard resonating through the space, stumbling while reading passages discussing the Native Institute. Although an element of re a's individual work, this voice enhances other works throughout the space. Jason Wing's installation of empty tents evokes human warmth through their internal spot lighting, this presence being heightened by the resonating child's voice. Nearby, Leanne Tobin's painting depicts children of the institution, who may have inhabited these tents, and spoken these words. This interplay between works aids in building the narrative of the children of the Institute, and creates a multi-faceted experience that demands attention and evokes empathy.

The Native Institute does not seek to victimise or villainise those involved in the history it references. Rather, it provides stimuli for empathy and engagement, with articulations including 'how would I feel if this were done to me' and 'good intentions' prompting

us to consider the issue's depth. This unwillingness to communicate a prescribed thought is reinforced through the supplementary written material. Aside from an initial historical contextualisation, no wall text is provided. Instead, a room sheet allows each artist to explain their work, their experiences, or their thought processes. There is no curatorial essay- the artists, and the works, are free to speak for themselves.

Leaving the exhibition space you again manoeuvre the blank, white backs of the Aboriginal portraits. With no final work to be viewed, you are left to reflect on the exhibition as a whole. No answer is provided; rather you leave with a new awareness, and the resonating child's voice asking: how would you feel?



TOWARDS THE MORNING SUN

WORDS by *Alyce Neal*



Campbelltown Arts Centre has welcomed spring with *Towards the Morning Sun*, an exhibition of contemporary Pacific art. Curated by Keren Ruki, the exhibition features Niki Hastings-McFall, Latai Taumoepea, Salote Tawale, Samuel Tupou and Brett Graham. The exhibition presents traditional and contemporary cultures as one, erasing Western ideas of the traditional as static, timeless and unchanged through a juxtaposition of materials, opening new avenues of exchange. Climate change, identity, cultural customs and geopolitics are explored through satire, play, performance, installation and sculpture.

The serene glow emitted from Niki Hastings-McFall's *Home from the Sea (Cloud Series)* (2012), sees numerous white synthetic leis adorning numerous ordinary lampshades. Juxtaposed, the leis and lamps create illuminated lifelike organisms, mimicking the duality of identity for the artist – being of Palagi and Samoan heritage. Identity here oscillates between the urban and natural, bringing the ritual of adornment with leis into the

contemporary. This practice of adornment also privileges the functional lamp, elevating the ordinary object to a new autonomy. Hastings-McFall skilfully plays with these ideas, reflecting the collaborative engagement she and all the exhibited artists share with the community in the Macarthur area.

Latai Taumoepeau's performance piece *i-Land X-isle* is an emotional demonstration of the effect of rising sea levels. Suspended underneath a large block of ice by Tongan architectural techniques used for binding, Taumoepeau is at the mercy of the gradual melting ice. The global impact is dramatically encapsulated within the performance, contextualising the inevitability rising water on a very personal level. Her face is contorted, her skin chaffed while the two tonne ice block melts, slowly falling upon her body. Taumoepeau's body by extension becomes a contested site of geopolitics, voicing the unheard reality of Pacific nations. One is left feeling bereft, almost in mourning for the sense of loss felt in witnessing her performance.



In contrast, Brett Graham's confronting *Mihaia* (2010) promotes a sense of commonality across Pacific and Western cultures through the ritual of warfare. His MDF engraved, close to life size Russian BDF-2 scout car explores colonial history and power relations through conflict, characteristic of Graham's practice. This duality of material and symbols creates a fantastical object that almost appears to be on the brink of springing to life. The use of Maori carving techniques on a symbol of Western warfare connects them via a shared aesthetic of the ritual of conflict that continues today.

Towards the Morning Sun reflects the collaboration of Campbelltown Arts Centre and its local community. Campbelltown Arts Centre, like all art centres, needs to respond to the community to maintain cultural relevancy. Through installation, photography, video and performance, *Towards the Morning Sun* appropriates traditional and contemporary Pacific culture to engage with issues such as climate change, identity, culture and tradition to a broad and diverse audience.

√ FRAMEWORK

