

FRAMEWORK

#17 | TRANSFORMATION

The big man gave me one piece of advice about editing Framework: "just make sure you stick to your theme".

And stick to the theme, I did. In this issue we traverse some wildy diverse transformative fields; we open with June Miskell's consideration of *No / Vacancy* and it's transformation of the 'non-place' of the gallery into the 'non-place' of the motel, before Isabella Chow takes feminism's pulse and determines that yes, it's still alive and constantly changing. Graham gives us a personal insight into the violence of gentrification, we have multiple interviews with organisations that are changing things up in 2017, and a whole lot of other goodies before we end with a link to the weirdest and coolest thing Framework has EVER PUBLISHED. Jenny Anagnostopoulus has kindly published a link, some instructions and a bit of info about *The Relaxation Plug-In* - a nightmarish chrome extension that'll ruin your desktop and your life.

So sit back, relax, and enjoy the bombastic dream sequence that is Framework #17. You've earned it.



TRANSFORMATION



ART AS PUSHBACK AND THE
PUSHBACK AGAINST ART

GRAHAM



NO / VACANCY
REVIEW BY JUNE MISKELL



MONSTROUS WOMAN
THING FEEDS YOU
DILEEPA DAYANANDA TALKS
TO AUDREY PFISTER



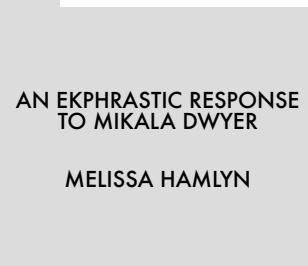
AN EVOLVING DIAGNOSIS
ISABELLA CHOW



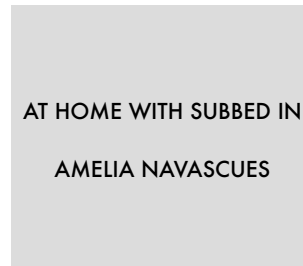
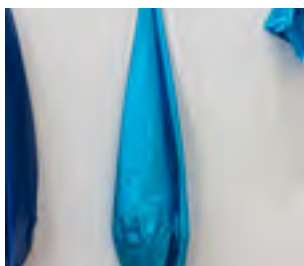
DARE TO MEME: SOME
THOUGHTS ON ART IN THE
PUBLIC SPHERE
LEWELLYN RILEY



ON MOSS AND WAR
ANNIE JIANG IN
CONVERSATION WITH
STELLA CHEN AND DARA
WEI



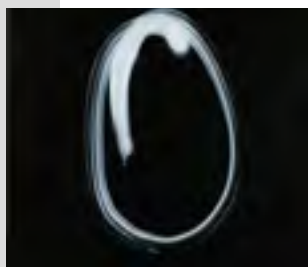
AN EKPHRASTIC RESPONSE
TO MIKALA DWYER
MELISSA HAMLYN



AT HOME WITH SUBBED IN
AMELIA NAVASCUES



IN PARADISE WITH KATIE
WINTEN
COFFEE AND A CHAT WITH
A WOMAN IN THE ARTS



LET'S TALK ABOUT TEXT
REVIEW BY EMMA-KATE
WILSON



RELAXATION PLUG-IN
TRANSFORMATIVE
CODE BY JENNY
ANAGNOSTOPOULOS

FRAMEWORK

VOLUME 5, ISSUE 1

EDITOR

Emma Size

CONTRIBUTORS

Amelia Navascues
Annie Jiang
Audrey Pfister
Emma-Kate Wilson
Graham
Isabella Chow
Jenny Anagnostopoulos
June Miskell
Melissa Hamlyn
Lewellyn Riley

DESIGN

Emma Size
Kieran Butler

THANKS

Arc @ UNSW Art & Design

ENQUIRIES

e.size@arc.unsw.edu
arc.unsw.edu.au/framework

Front cover image:

Courtesy of Artbank.

Back cover image:

Courtesy of Jenny
Anagnostopoulos.

Copyright 2017 Authors,
Artists, Contributors and
Arc @ UNSW Art & Design

NO / VACANCY

A REVIEW BY JUNE MISKELL



No / Vacancy playfully explores notions of presence and absence within transitory spaces through the installation of a motel room, a temporal environment by design, in *Down / Under Space*. This exhibition marks the second installation-based collaboration between Sydney-based artists Amelia Skelton and Tango Conway, developing upon their *88 Howard St* exhibit at last year's NAS graduation show.

As the title of the exhibition suggests, the staged motel room isn't vacant. Rather, the audience is led to believe that the room has been recently occupied and may still be in use. The collaborative pair are known for their interest in the role that inanimate objects play in emoting an environment and aim to create transient settings in which the audiences interactions with the space are directly influenced¹. Skelton and Conway challenge the audience's sense of intimacy and ownership over the space by reminding them that they are only temporary passer-by's. The audience's brief encounter with the space is brought into focus and juxtaposed against the only real hint of permanence – the furniture that remains.

When viewers enter the exhibition they encounter a dimmed room that is softly illuminated by vintage lamps and down-lights, which splash deep red light through the open-planned room onto each separate configuration of

furniture. The mood is set: it's evening and it's intimate, nostalgic and sensual. Organised into five distinct sections: the entryway, mini bar, lounge room, bedroom and combined bathroom-laundry, the room is minimal by design. The furniture and decorative objects in the space create a convincing model of a generic middle-class budget Australian motel room – from the Bible, which lay inside an open bedside table drawer, to the landscape painting crookedly hanging above the bed, to the motel book that comically reads "*Motel Amore*", which sits atop the coffee table.

The first encounter we have with the motel room itself is with a trunk suitcase that stands in the hypothetical doorway, acting as a trace of its occupant and invoking

the feeling of intruding into an already inhabited space. There are no obvious signs of use as the room appears to be spotless and untouched – a possible indication that the room has only just been vacated. The minutiae of a transient life included in the installation, such as teabags, mini-milk sachets, mini soaps, a guidebook, toilet paper and an iron, all appear to be intact and in their place. For a space that is supposedly non-vacant, it appears to be the opposite. The power of the installation hinges on the authenticity of the smaller inanimate objects housed within it, which fill the room and give it a sense of verisimilitude. There's a sense of comfort in moving around the room despite the initial feeling of intrusion and perhaps it's due to these smaller intimacies, which allow visitors to feel a sense of familiarity.

However familiar and inviting it may seem, the room is clearly not there to be used – it exists to be observed. To vacate this exhibit is to vacate it as a passive spectator. This is emphasised by Skelton and Conway's statement that the room acts "as a vessel filled with the residue of human experience"². The only real sense of trace left from visitors in the space is in the small interactions that happen through conversation and movement. An interesting characteristic of *Down / Under* space that works particularly well with this exhibit is the flat wooden block of seating that lines the right wall. Those not moving through the space are able to sit on the periphery and watch those who do. In this act, the room itself is no longer a focal point; the way in which people occupy the space becomes the spectacle and within this there is a certain degree of reciprocal voyeurism. We cannot help but feel conscious of our own interactions and movements as we move through the room, being watched by others at the same time while we are watching them.

Skelton and Conway's design choices ironically imbue their replicated motel room with personality – a space that is intended to "remain devoid of personality"³. It is an interesting decision to ascribe nothingness and neutrality to a space that is heavily coded. Though the room is generic in design and there is no indication of any temporal or geographical specificity, little nuances such as the choice in lighting, style of furniture, objects used (a humorous plucking from each decade since the 60's) and the saturated Microsoft screensaver-esque image of a sandy palm tree island on the TV screen create a sense of playfulness and character. We may not be clearly aware of where we are in time and space but these luxuries in the room connect us to our own sense of familiarity with the generic Australian motel room. As such, we enter an implicated socio-economic



space that assumes our own privileged encounter with a typical middle class motel room. These little nuances disrupt the claim that a space can be completely neutral and devoid of personality.

As successful as the installation is in creating a transitory effect on the audience, there are intentional 'gaps' in the design of the room that at times halt the flow of the exhibit. For instance, there is an aesthetic choice in placing small squares of flooring (whether it be carpet, lino or wood) underneath chosen pieces of furniture. It is just enough to create a sense of what the room may look like if it were designed differently - perhaps if it were to precisely replicate a motel room. While this would typically invite a curatorial critique, it's a strength of the exhibition as the confusion it inspires in the viewer demands that those entering the space fully consider what is and isn't around them. In this decision, Skelton and Conway bring the viewers attention to the specific materiality of the space so that they are always aware of its artificial nature. A decision that appears to be deliberately non-cohesive encourages a questioning of the actuality of the space around us; it's a careful slippage in reinforcing the non-reality of the space.

By playfully negotiating vacancy and emoting a false sense of familiarity, *No / Vacancy* encourages a consideration of the faux-reality of the space and our temporal occupation within it. What this exhibition cleverly brings into play is the detail of objects, design and spatial configurations that collectively toy with binaries of occupying and vacating a space - it is all at once familiar and unfamiliar, intimate and distant, personal and impersonal. In this consideration, Skelton and Conway present an engaging and unique approach to the ways in which we occupy and interact with space.

¹Anonymous, *No / Vacancy*, exhibition catalogue, *Down / Under Space*, 2017.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.



ART AS PUSHBACK AND THE PUSHBACK AGAINST ART

SOME MEMORIES OF MILLERS POINT BY GRAHAM



In the 21st Century, a belief that art is a social necessity might appear idealistic, even naïve. Yet, in 2003 the United Nations staff ensured that the 1937 Pablo Picasso painting *Guernica* was discreetly covered over during a Colin Powell press conference - the one in which the then US Secretary-of-State infamously announced the United States' intention to invade Iraq. This was certainly an on-message photo opportunity for the world press, but did anyone genuinely think that a painting could alter the way the world received the US announcement? In the time since the 1972 Nick Ut photo 'Napalm Girl' was published, it would seem so.

A similar, yet far more effective attempt at a staged announcement occurred in March 2014, when the Hon. Prue Goward MP announced the total sale of government owned assets in the Millers Point, Dawes Point and Rocks area. The Minister courted the attendant press with the usual ministerial sanctioned spin, paraded as economic prudence, on the sparkling Sydney harbour foreshore. Some distance away, swarms of public servants were simultaneously and quietly unleashed on these unsuspecting suburbs bearing blunt eviction notices. A shocked and teary elderly neighbour of mine commented that it felt like the area had been over-run by the Gestapo; shocked by the military nature of the operation, I can't disagree with her analogy even as it sits uneasily with me. The press was divided down political lines and it soon became clear as to what daily news source individuals visiting or commenting on the area patronised. Pledges of support from some were countered by vilifying attacks by others. The community push back began immediately.

Overnight, it seemed, Millers Point became a hub for artists and their interventions. Chris O'Doherty (commonly known as Reg Mombassa) donated two paintings to the community. One of these, *No Surrender*, was painted specifically in response to the announcement and proliferated proudly, in various forms of reproduction, over the entirety of the proposed government sales area. Will Coles began visiting the area and his iconic concrete *L.O.L Skulls*, *Gloves* and *Disabled Machine Guns* street sculptures regularly began materialising overnight, much to the delight of residents. Local resident John Dunn organised a photographic series featuring personal stories and suburban histories that began widely circulating in reproduction. Eventually, these photos were to become the Millers Point window dressing of choice. As an artist, all this spontaneous artistic activity was genuinely inspiring.

Thus, after years of arguments with Housing NSW about the derelict nature of the building I lived in, I began a series of public works in August 2014. These were installed over the most damaged areas of the exterior walls to improve the buildings overall appearance. After all, Housing NSW staff insisted that repairs would be a waste of money. The building was to be sold and demolished, the site redevelopment plans already approved by Sydney City Council planners.

The first piece, *Eradication*, was spontaneous and largely a community collaboration. Whilst I focused on inspirational poetry and prose panels, the well-being of the community psyche a central concern, local children began applying butterfly and flower stickers to the area I designated for an aesthetic facelift. As a collective, we managed to cover over the recently applied 'selfish pigs' and 'dole bludgers' graffiti. The piece lasted three months and grew to 1.5m x 1.2m before, without notice, it disappeared overnight. No one witnessed the removal, however Housing NSW had recently employed security guards using the ruse of security concerns and they had, with increasing frequency, been observed attempting to covertly record local tenant activity. My second piece, *Expression*, was made to cover the disgraceful mess left by the removal of the first - and lasted all of one day, before disappearing overnight also! This time however, the wall where the removed art had been was left tidy and freshly painted.

After some great community feedback, I decided to feature political caricature in my third piece, *Examination*. It included political memes of my own creation and credited reproductions of work by artists I enjoyed. Other residents assisted in the installation of the work, arriving with ladders and re-fill liquid nails tubes. This piece sadly lasted only a week before also disappearing. The subsequent installation *Exposition* was a blend of local, state and federal issues that had caught my interest. As had become a thematic feature of these pieces, inspirational poetry and quotations were included. I stumbled across the Housing NSW representative tasked with removing the piece early one morning. At first he appeared nervous when I identified myself as the artist who had created the piece but quickly relaxed when he realised I was unconcerned by his efforts. He even provided some great suggestions as to how I might obtain a more expansive paint job from Housing NSW!

Around December 2014, several neighbours began writing and complaining about the apparent use of public money to suppress community dissent and, more generally, an open public discourse. It was eventually

announced by the local community group that Housing NSW had agreed that artwork attached to occupied residences would no longer be removed. Thus, my sixth and final piece, *Eviction*, remained relatively intact from January 2015 until August 2015. It grew to become my most cheerful piece. Local children became enraptured with the Angry Birds and Grumpy Cats that were used to replace 'souvenired' pieces. When Housing NSW asked whether I would give my consent to its removal in August 2015, I gave it. It was a temporary installation and had long since served its purpose.

The bureaucratic response to the plethora of public art in the area had been to eradicate it. After all, the work was not on-message and served to potentially disrupt the government's carefully constructed spin. Even the iconic local Brett Whitely sculpture, *Black Totem II*, failed to resist the gentrification push, being quietly removed from its Millers Point perch. It had, after all, served to remind all who observed it of the Point's history as a site of displacement and disenfranchisement.

Exposition, Graham, installed at Kent St, Millers Point 7-12 December, 2014.

Eviction, Graham, installed at Kent St, Millers Point 18 January - 13 August, 2015.

AN EVOLVING DIAGNOSIS

ISABELLA CHOW



march 2017

~

I have recently been a bit sick and a bit sad.

The medical system calls me a "charming 23 year old girl" with anterior vertebral compression fractures of the thoracic T7, T8, T9 and a 25% height loss in the T6. Pop culture might call me Regina George. Centrelink calls me co-dependant. My bank account calls me a broke bitch.

And while the worst of it is over, and my experience pales in comparison to others, a friend recently reminded me that pain is still pain.

In the midst of this, I thought of what I'd lost and what I would regain. I thought about what it means to be sad and sick and dependent, and what it means to battle through these overwhelming tides as a woman.

There are many shades of feminism, many ways

to identify as a woman and many ways to protest the injustices that plague us. Now, more than ever, feminism must assume a fluid form. FRAMEWORKS | 17

Throughout history, we have recognised resistance and revolution through political, and therefore public, actions. New modes of thought give a voice to the marginalised, under-represented portion of the population - to deconstruct the binary between public and private.

Here are two women who are reimagining what activism looks like.

Johanna Hedva, a woman who lives with chronic illness, asks the question, "how do you throw a brick through the window of a bank if you can't get out of bed?"¹ This question forms the crux of her Sick Woman Theory - a desire to expand the net of intersectional feminism, a rejection of the typical 'heroine' and a response to Wollen's Sad Girl Theory and the question of "what happens to the sad girl when, if, she grows up?"² The Sick Woman challenges the institutional labels put upon her, the classifications society imposes, and the perceived vulnerability of these categories. She promotes the necessity for interdependency as a foundation for intersectionality.

Audrey Wollen sits at the helm of what she calls sad girl theory: a body of research that situates the internalised suffering of women as an act of resistance and a subversion of the patriarchy. She claims that all the sorrow, hardship, and self destructive behaviour that is often labeled as mental illness or narcissism, is actually a "screw you" to the oppressor's of their time. Now, navigating the digital landscape of our generation, Wollen has taken this concept to the home of fluid identity: Instagram. Between recreations of Renaissance paintings and a stylishly tragic selfie aesthetic, Wollen says that while gender inequality still exists, we should be as miserable as want, as publicly as we want, in order to reclaim our agency and autonomy - "what if the naked horizontal girl wasn't a symbol of subordination, but a symbol of rebellion?"³

Wollen's theory is polarising, but pain is still pain, sadness is still sadness. We cannot claim to be inclusive or intersectional, or attempt unity if we don't recognise the validity of each other's emotions. The women behind Exquisite Misogyny, an online critique of the male dominated arts industry, responded to Wollen's version of the femme fatale by asking, "Is lying on the ground drowned by the mortal anguish of womanhood and recording that experience of lying there in misery via selfie dissemination online, a potent mode of feminist resistance for these sick sad times?"⁴ Their conclusion is that pain is not our fate. To glorify and glamourise our pain is not conducive to feminist resistance; it's better to use that pain and sadness as a driving force instead.

So here I am, sad and temporarily broken, writing about being sad and temporarily broken in an attempt to create a positive byproduct to an otherwise unfortunate series of events. Somewhat ironically, Wollen has since withdrawn her Instagram presence, recognising that people often "understood [it] at its most reductive, instead of as a proposal to open up more spacious discussions abt what activism could look like"⁵.

I want to simultaneously call out this Instagram sad girl archetype while supporting the notion that sadness in any form has the potential to be a weapon. We have the power as women to reject, protest and redefine our individual and collective identities. Activism has many faces.

The Sick Woman, by contrast, has no Internet paradigm or parameters. Hedva makes it clear that her Sick Woman Theory is not just for cis-women. It's a gesture of solidarity within a world that makes women: "the un-cared for, the secondary, the oppressed, the non-, the un-, the less-than"⁶, that creates and defines people by their cultural, political, social and economic conditions.

"The Sick Woman is an identity and body that can belong to anyone denied the privileged existence - or the cruelly optimistic promise of such an existence - of the white, straight, healthy, neurotypical, upper and middle-class, cis- and able-bodied man who makes his home in a wealthy country, has never not had health insurance, and whose importance to society

is everywhere recognised and made explicit by that society; whose importance and care dominates that society, at the expense of everyone else."⁷

Our vulnerabilities, sicknesses, fragilities, and dependencies are no longer atypical. Hedva declares that the most anti-capitalist protest is to care for one another - to recognise our weaknesses as a form of empowerment and to support each other, honouring our respective differences and using care as its own form of resistance.

So love yourself, care for others, be sad, cry - shed the categories you're placed in. No matter where you stand, sit, or lay, whatever form your activism takes, bear witness to each others realities. It's through this interdependency that we may reclaim our collective agency and render a united front.

"The female subject-position is linked not to specific modes of 'feminine' experience, but to ways of thinking identity as emerging out of patterns of becoming."⁸



¹Johanna Hedva, "Sick Woman Theory", Mask Magazine, January 2016.

²Johanna Hedva, "Sick Woman Theory".

³Lucy Watson, "How girls are finding empowerment through being sad online" Dazed Digital, March 2016.

⁴Aurora Linnea, "The 'feminist resistance' of taking it lying down", Exquisite Misogyny, November 2015.

⁵Audrey Wollen, Instagram.

⁶Johanna Hedva, "Sick Woman Theory".

⁷Ibid.

⁸Christine Battersby, *The Phenomenal Woman: Feminist Metaphysics and the Patterns of Identity*, Oxford, United Kingdom: Polity Press, 1998.

MONSTROUS WOMAN THING FEEDS YOU

DILEEPA DAYANANDA TALKS TO AUDREY PFISTER



The following is a transcript of an interview by Audrey Pfister with Dileepa Dayandana, about Dileepa's artistic practice. Some of the questions have been edited for brevity and clarity.

Hey, Dileepa. Are you feeling fresh?

Absolutely not! [laughs] No... no.

How would you describe your art practice, in five words?

Monstrous woman thing feeds you.

Can you tell me a little bit about anything you've been working on recently?

At the moment, I'm sort of just finding out costumes. I'm trying to get back into the ceramics studio to make some more masks. I'm sort of just trying to pump out my ceramics at the moment. Because I've realized, whilst I've loved performance, it's also kind of like, you get a gig, and then you go and earn the money, then you're like: where did it go! So, I'm trying to focus on creating more of my masks at the moment. I'm also planning a lot of performance stuff. I'm sort of getting into performance stuff at the moment, because I feel like every performer should know how to sew! [laughs] At least in some regards.

Yeah, do you do any textiles?

No, I don't. I mean, usually when I perform it's quite minimal. Like, I'll buy a pair of skinny jeans for instance. Then it's a lot of duct tape. I feel like I use a lot of duct tape.

Yeah, I remember that time you had like baby bottles nipple things taped to your nipples, was it?

Yeah, that was at Gaffa. Even since then, I've been duct taping a lot of things onto my tits. So? [laughs] What other way is there to make costumes?

So, I've seen you perform a couple of times. I can think of the times at Gaffa, Airspace projects, and at Heaps Gay. I'm always interested in how you feel the transformative aspect or process of doing a performance? Do you transform into a certain headspace?

Actually, I was talking to a friend about this just the other day, because I usually perform in my ceramics masks which are inspired by Vesmuhunu masks in Sri Lanka, which are like devil masks. And I know for the Heaps Gay performance that you saw, I was performing in this white mask, for this Snow White-face character. I feel like there is a very different experience performing in a mask and performing in make-up - in that performance I did take off my mask, and I had make up underneath.

My performance persona is Ponnaya Devi, which in Sinhalese, "Ponnaya" means like 'faggot' or 'tranny' or sort of a slur, and "Devi" means like female goddess. I performed at the Red Rattler recently, and while I was performing, I sort of realised that it's almost like a possession. When I perform in make-up, it's kind of like I'm trying to tap into the essence



of Ponnaya Devi, but when I'm wearing a mask it does feel like I'm quite possessed. I remember I went backstage after my performance and just cried - not out of anything sad, there was just this huge discord between Dileepa backstage, having a smoke in the rain, and Ponnaya Devi who had gone on stage, and was this huge big, insane, lap-dancing, breast-feeding, thingamajiggy. It's just a bit mad, to be honest. The transformation in that sense is quite intense.

Do you think the Sydney arts community, in particular, has modified or changed your practice in any ways?

Um, I mean, absolutely. In the beginning, [laughs], I was so, I guess, obsessed with the idea of putting works into galleries. I know when you met me at Gaffa, it was a huge deal for me. I still like to perform in galleries, and I love it because your relationship with the audience is very different when you have complete control, but, as I have sort of been around the Newtown, Marrickville-type performance scene, I guess, more recently I have been more influenced by, like, the Sydney drag and gender performers. I think it's made my practice and my performances, in particular, much more dynamic.

Do you think coming to Uni changed your practice at all?

I just felt restricted in high school. I came to Uni and started dipping my feet into different stuff, installation and sound art stuff. I remember not wanting to do performance at all. Then I did a class with Bontia Ely - love Bontia, [laughs] - and after I did that it, like, blew my mind! I never felt so totally in control of my body and my image before. It was interesting, because the first time I did a performance piece, I shaved my hair and eyebrows off, and it was the same time I started wearing make up. So it was, sort of discovering myself as an artist, but also gender discovery at the same time. I used to say that I liked performance because it let me buy my make-up for me. Whenever I'm doing a performance, and buying makeup, and I'm like: "I need this exact colour for this performance", it was just my way of saying I like that colour. I want that for my life.

The personal becomes the collective through a continuous dialogue of expression. They uncover small thoughts or behaviours of people that may have otherwise been overlooked or undisclosed.

While my analysis of changing attitudes to street art and the emergence of Aesthetic Memes has been tragically brief, it's evident that the public space has changed. Behaviour that previously occurred in the cityscape is now occurring on the newsfeed, reflecting why the Facebook wall is named after its IRL counterpart. The practice of graffiti still exists in the streets but has also transmogrified into, or given birth to a tangential practice of, mass DIY production of memes online. The content of these memes is obscure and encoded with contextual meaning that requires expertise to decode – but it's also self-deprecating. The Internet meme, that straddles short lifespans and paradoxical longevity, entertains masses of online users without breaking a sweat. The almost global acknowledgement of the meme is hard to miss, therefore there is a growing base of academic literature that will result in many arguing over their worth within cultural and aesthetic frameworks in the future. Will they be claimed by the art world as a true medium for the people? Or will they be treated as a passing fad?

Both practices of street art and Aesthetic Memes, in my opinion are similar in nature. They both operate in an indeterminate zone between legitimacy and illegitimacy - yet their presence in both physical and digital public spaces question how art and culture is being transformed. Where else could they go next?

ON MOSS AND WAR

ANNIE JIANG IN CONVERSATION WITH
STELLA CHEN AND DARA WEI



Stella Chen is a Taiwanese artist and UNSW A&D alumnus based in Sydney, Australia. Inspired by the healing properties of Sphagnum moss, Chen considered its use during World War I in her recent exhibition *Living in the Past*, curated by Dara Wei at Stacks Gallery. In her researched-based, philosophical work, sphagnum moss is a trace of the healers lost during the war. The moss is ephemeral, alive and beautiful but disturbing as it questions whether humans have become too distant from nature and it's nurturing qualities for their own gain.

The following is a transcript of an interview by Annie Jiang with Stella Chen and Dara Wei, conducted during their recent exhibition Living in the Past. Some of the questions have been edited for brevity and clarity.

I know this sounds bizarre, but your use of Sphagnum moss is disturbingly therapeutic to look at. It's creepy that it's alive but presented in such a beautiful way. How did you come across Sphagnum moss?

Stella: I found Dr. Clark's article about a bunch of women in Dublin who went to great lengths to collect and treat Sphagnum moss for wounded soldiers during WWI. There was a low supply of cotton wool at the time so an alternative material was needed for surgical

dressings. This was a time when the government was prioritising the production of explosives, in a way choosing to fund more trauma instead of setting aside funds for medical supplies and the wounded soldiers in the trench. As we all know, WWI was the first modern war with massive weaponry - bombs and guns and bullets and those kinds of things. The medical system at that time wasn't as advanced as it is nowadays so the trauma physically created during the war was very severe - if you look into history, you'll see the beginnings of research into PTSD, and the start of the research of cosmetic surgery, a lot of searching by people looking to feel better again.

Those who stayed behind during the war were actually the ones who really cared about the wounded and they wanted to contribute to the health and healing of their soldiers. They deserve to be noticed and they deserve to be recognised for their efforts.

How do you think materiality operates in *Living in the Past*?

S: Material to me is quite important to me, I think it speaks a lot and quite loudly - for me, like, after you enter the room, like, oh my god, this material is so loud!

There's this philosopher and writer called Barbara Bolt who talks about materials and how materials can think and act and feel... she says that we have control over the material but actually we don't. During the process of making *Mosko*, 2017, the materials really started to transform.

Last Tuesday, I finished the final touch of the gold leaf. The sphagnum moss is so elegant and pretty, everybody was just looking at it like, "wow, it's so grand." It was just perfect. Then I was in Hong Kong for a week and I came back yesterday. I walked into the opening last night and I was just shocked because the material had transformed and oxidised... Sphagnum moss has a high water absorbency and Sydney has been raining for like months so it's been sucking everything in. The edge of the gold leaf became kind of a rainbow colour and absorbed into the paper.

I look at it now and I'm just like, "oh my god, you are alive, you are a living being. I just want to bow. I'm so sorry I treated you like an object when you are alive". This transformation actually transformed my way of thinking about the material I've been working with for three years.

Dara: But that's exactly proving the point that, what we think we can control, isn't actually completely within

our control and it's probably the other way around. We are actually influenced mentally and physically by objects, maybe without our notice even, because if this moss paper transformation didn't happen, you would probably think, "oh, okay I just made this, I just let it stay." But it was always experiencing its own time.

Talking about time, what do you think humans can learn from moss? In this high moving society, what do you think is the benefit for humans for going into the past?

S: Mosses face displacement and disconnection, but they're resilient at the same time... the oldest moss has been found in Antarctica that grew on the cliff there, a rock cliff facing the coldest ocean - this moss was just on a rock facing all this terrible coldness and wind and it's just be there for 5,500 years. They also grow very slowly, creating this rich layer of oxygen layers in order for other creatures to live upon.

But in the West people see moss like a pest because wherever moss grows in the western gardening landscape, it changes its environment. You can see moss growing on bricks, on the pavement; people don't like it because it makes things crumble.

But I think it's interesting, there's a moss temple in Japan, it's called Kokedera. In Japanese Buddhism, Zen philosophy, they put moss in the Zen garden and they meditate on it just because of the slow growth of the moss. Your perception of time changes when you meditate on moss because we have our own human time, we have mechanical time, but moss time in contrast is very slow; they grow only a few centimetres every few decades.

Was there like a particular direction you want to take your practice into?

S: Yeah, for me, the direction of my work for the last three years has been drilling into trauma, abandonment, ruins, memory and the healing property of nature... I think the notion of nature having healing properties is romanticised by humans because nature doesn't think of itself as a healer/s, it's just being nature. We've tried to utilize nature's chemical properties to help us for centuries, thousands of years, like we've been doing that in Chinese medicine and stuff like that.

So, it's not so much about the medium. For me it's more about researching into areas that I'm interested in, related to the notion of memory, trauma and nature in the areas of psychology and philosophy, herbology...

Are you working on anything new right now?

S: There's this piece of performance that I want to do, should I keep it a secret?

D: Up to you.

S: Okay, it's about Sphagnum moss actually but in particular it's about Peat Bog, where Sphagnum moss grows.

Peat bog has been used a lot for preserving human sacrifices. There are a lot of bog bodies that have been discovered in Northern Europe, like you can see them in museums in Copenhagen or ... up north. It's all very interesting and related to WWII, another period of war and trauma. During that time there were a lot of soldiers who got buried in the bog, in Russia. They were preserved very well.



A LOGICAL EXPLANATION ON THE ORIGINS OF CONCEPTUAL RAMBLINGS A FACTOR REPORT AND LITERARY ANALYSIS ON GEOMETRIES.

AN EKPHRASTIC RESPONSE TO MIKALA DWYER

6 pieces of fabric pinned to the wall

gradients of blue

hung in a neat vertical line

gravity has its ways with them

pulling them into shape

yielding to the visible pull of gravity

languid inflated forms

loosely hanging figures

shapes of blue,

diamond circle triangular

soft edged abstracted geometries

organized fabric replicating sculptural forms

usually associated with bronze and stone

I lean in to read the blurry

and do a quick objective scan

Triangle navy blue semi sheer

more purple-ish now

Diamond transparent visible seams

similar length

Square semi sheer dark opaque

Oblong has a seam

semi sheer dark blue

Abstract oblong aquamarine

visible seams

longer than the others

shiny

Square

smallest

visible lines

sheer and opaque

AT HOME WITH SUBBED IN

AMELIA NAVASCUES IN CONVERSATION WITH A COUPLE OF LOCAL WORDSMITHS/GO-GETTERS/DOG PEOPLE

In a time when ePublishing often seems to be the only option for emerging writers, Sydney-based DIY literary organisation Subbed In is reinvigorating support for traditional print media.

What began as a series of 'open call' backyard poetry readings two years ago, developed amongst close friends as a space to experiment against the stuffy confines of more rigid reading events, has now evolved into an ever-growing grassroots community of writers and publishers.

For co-founders Dan Hogan and Stacey Teague, the Subbed In community offers a space for diverse writers to engage with each other and the public, with a focus on new and underrepresented voices. Whether this is through a beer in the backyard at a reading event, contributing to a zine or chapbook, or even partaking in a comedy writing workshop, Subbed In is seeking to support the vast range of voices Sydney's diverse creative landscape offers.

The following is a transcript of an interview by Amelia Navascues with Dan Hogan and Stacey Teague, conducted at their home. Some of the questions have been edited for brevity and clarity.

What would you say marked the beginnings of Subbed In? Was there a trigger or a moment that started the movement?

Dan: I guess the impetus was that we wanted to put on a reading series because we liked going to readings but struggled to find access to any. It ended up that we started putting on events ourselves and we organised them either in someone's house, or backyard and just wanted to make sure it was always super informal and fun.

Stacey: A lot of poetry readings are really stuffy and boring and we kind of just wanted to make a reading that we wanted to go to. Since none existed, we had to make it ourselves. There are a lot of academic and older types of poetry out there.

D: Sydney's truly the Martin Place of poetry.

S: And I guess Melbourne's always seen as 'hip and happening' when it comes to literature. I guess for us, in Sydney, it was just more a matter of bringing all of the different groups and pockets of people who were already making things together, to create something even bigger.

There seem to be a lot of different facets to what Subbed In now does. This year, Subbed In will be publishing its first chapbook too. What was the tipping point that started changing things from it being a spoken word night to a literary organisation?

D: I remember it exactly. There was an event that changed everything. It was about a year ago at 'The Barn' (a place where Dan used to live, with a huge backyard).

S: We'd quite often have the readings in that backyard, and the last one was just absolutely packed. It was crammed, and there was no space. And it was strange because we were always worried previously, thinking 'oh, no one's going to come'. After that event, we didn't have to worry about that any more.

D: It was that kind of a turning moment when you realise 'there are more people here that I don't know than do'. It's lovely when you get chatting with people, as it's a

social event as well, and been so nice in that journey, meeting people along the way.

What do you think print media can provide that eBooks can't, given the trends towards ePublishing at the moment?

S: I love physical books. Within literature, print media is so important. And especially for poetry, I think having a poetry book matches the medium. You can always read poetry on a computer screen, but to have it, there's nothing else like that.

D: I think print media will always have value. I personally don't feel like digital publishing is at odds with print as much as people sing it up to be. There's that panic people seem to have, where they say that 'print media is dead' and I don't really think that's the case. The way I like to read poetry is in print.

What's the idea behind home-run spaces and what thoughts do you have about running or starting up creative grassroots projects in this way?

S: Aside from the factor of having no money to back the project, I guess the fact that we both aren't from Sydney (Dan is from the Central Coast and Stacey, New Zealand) meant we didn't exactly know how to start.

D: Sydney has a pretty funny landscape when it comes to venues of any kind, things are always popping up and down. But when it started, 'Subbed In' also began fresh off the back of the lock out laws. That alongside the institutional feel of Sydney and academic spaces was something we didn't like, so we thought 'fuck it all, let's just throw a house party that's also a "read".' I think the party aspect drove a lot of that, and combining a house party with a reading event allowed that.



IN PARADISE WITH KATIE WINTEN

COFFEE AND A CHAT WITH A WOMAN IN THE ARTS

I sat down with Katie Winten at Morris when we should have been doing other work things to have a chat about some of the changes happening in the Sydney art scene. As a director at Firstdraft, one half of the powerhouse duo behind Women in the Arts and FBI's radio show Agenda and part-time campus cheerleader at Arc @ UNSW Art & Design, she's got her finger on the pulse and in multiple pies. Let's see what we talked about while we waited for Sana, my favourite waitress, to bring me a mixed berry smoothie without the coconut.

Full disclosure: I work with Katie at Arc and I'm also about nine months into a three month writer's residency at Firstdraft. So this interview is professionally incestuous and borderline unethical. But maybe that's just a statement on the state of affairs in the Sydney arts ecology. ldk hehe

The following is a transcript of an interview by Emma Size with Katie Winten, conducted at Morris café during working hours. Some of the questions have been edited for brevity and clarity.

Let's kick things off by checking in with what's happening at Firstdraft. How do you think Firstdraft has changed, or is changing, this year from last year? What's on the horizon?

At the moment nothing is entirely set in stone but we're working on the writer's program, developing the program to be a more formally outcome-based residency - so next month we're trialling that by holding a specific event, an Around the Outside for some of our recent writers. We're also looking at offering a mentor component to the program, so depending on what writers' needs are we can offer different kinds of support for their different projects. Basically we're just working on improving the Writer's Program so there's even more support than there currently is for writers to explore critical writing, writing as an artistic practice, or writing that operates at the intersections of those two modes. Firstdraft wants to support all kinds of writing and all kinds of theorists and practitioners exploring their place in the arts ecology.

We're also in the process of presenting our first international collaboration with London ARI Auto Italia, and we're looking at our next international collaboration (which involves working with an international ARI). We've also just brought on a new staff member, Nina Gibbes, so we now have three staff members, which is great because it means that the directors can focus on programming and bigger picture issues with a bit less pressure on us to do day-to-day admin jobs - although we'll still be involved in that! We also have our callout deadline for exhibitions, curators and writers coming up April 9th so we'll be excitedly going through all those proposals soon!

That's awesome. So being a director of Firstdraft, as well as an all-round curatorial, administrative, cultural warlock with goddess power, I think you have the authority to speak on some bigger picture issues. How do you think the Sydney arts ecology has been changing in the last couple of years?

I think it's been really hard on a lot of smaller organisations, because no one has money anymore with budget cuts. It's that tricky thing where people in the arts are already so underpaid and having to work for free so it's quite dire, but there's also a whole movement of younger people coming into this

underfunded context in the art industry who are finding really creative ways to get around it. Of course that has its own issues as there's a certain amount of privilege needed to operate in a space devoid of financial support and security, so that's probably one of the worst part of funding cuts, in my opinion - the fact that it essentially separates out people who can afford to work for free and those who can't, and that certainly feeds into the landscape of ARI's at the moment. But it is still exciting to see how people are navigating that shift, for example with Down / Under Space opening an artist space underneath a bar and you and Jenny wanting to start that coding support network. That sense of community and hard work is pretty important for Women in the Arts as well - we've never applied for funding. We've somehow managed to do what we do without having to get funding involved and we've found ways to exist within the funding context we find ourselves in.

So how is Women in the Arts evolving/regressing this year? I mean it's still such a young organisation, although you've done a lot already!

Yeah, yeah, I mean Women in the Arts kind of started as a conversation, we wanted to bring the conversations we were having some-what privately into a more public sphere and that was the impetus for all the panels we facilitated. But now I think we're still having those conversations but we're looking at different ways in which we can also work towards greater visibility for female and female-identifying artists and we're doing this in a few ways... one way is working in radio, doing Agenda is really important to us as it gives us a much broader reach than a one off panel does. We're also doing film screenings and trying to incorporate musicians into events... we're just looking to be part of a conversation that perhaps is even broader than just looking at women in the arts, that is also looking at broader culture.

LET'S TALK ABOUT TEXT

A REVIEW BY EMMA-KATE WILSON





Let's Talk About Text, is an exhibition at Artbank in Waterloo that explores text in its sculptural form as well as the semiotic connotations that lay behind the works. The text based art in the exhibition act as representational icons in which several layers of art history are being explored. Artbank have pulled together pieces of art that interrogate the use of language in contemporary society through various means; some works respond to canonical uses of text in art, while others use language to confront its role in the formation of identity and power.

Anthony Johnson's *Five Words in White Neon*, 2016, is the first piece that welcomes the audience into the exhibition. The white neon glow engulfs as light creeps from the piece, dominating the entrance to the exhibition and speaks volumes from its simple five words. *Five Words in White Neon* is an anagram of 'I Won't Find No Wives Here' whereby Johnson's sculpture poses a critique of the conceptual era of Joseph Kosuth and the lack of female artists represented in art history. Johnson's work mirrors Kosuth's sculptural and minimalistic style, which leaves the viewer contemplating the text, pertaining to the legacy of early contemporary art in a satirical voice.

The work is about the physicality of the letters and their formality on the wall as much as their meaning. What is Johnson trying to get at in his work? By appropriating and subverting the work of a conceptual icon, the viewer has no choice but to reflect on the 50 years between Johnson and Kosuth and the lack of progress we've seen with women's rights in the art world - and perhaps the inability of five words in white neon to spark institutional change.

Another artwork that draws on the sensibility of the audience to escape within its minimalism is *Untitled 99-00*, 1999-2000 from Czech artist Eugenia Raskopoulos. This work features the one letter that could be so much more, the simple O. An infinite line of unescapable thought, Raskopoulos' O glows a soft white calming aura, which allows for space and contemplation. The gestural marks enunciate Zen-like shapes which are emptied of conventional meaning through repetition.

Erasure is another theme within the exhibition which Nasim Nasr takes on literally in *Erasure*, 2017. The work is a two channel video piece, in which Nasr contemplates the complexity of gender and culture through the poetry of feminist Iranian Poet Forough Farrokhzad. In the video a performer in a niqab erases words, blending their form and disposition onto

black cloth. The eraser's identity is hidden, leaving the viewer to explore both the space that is left behind and the value of the words once that have been stripped of traditional form.

Clinton Nain also considers absence and the implications of what is not said, with *What Are You Saying?*, 2007. *What Are You Saying?* is an example of Nain's attempts to navigate the histories and injustices faced by Australia's Indigenous population and the shame that appears in the cover ups. Nain paints onto her canvas with bleach, in order to literally erase the black painted canvas. The letters are barely readable and instead take on a sculptural form, which conceptually embodies the tracking done by Colonial figures who first came to Australia in their quest for death and domination. Nain balances between the ambiguity of language and text whilst creating visually stunning pieces that tell volumes to the audience.

Let's Talk About Text also explores ways in which a collection of text can be used in paragraph or composition on the canvas to create a unique form. Two artworks in the exhibition that adopt this style are Lane Cormick's *Untitled (Study for Unearthing the Hawke)*, 2008 and John Demos's *Antitoxic and Home*, both 2013. From a distance the art works look like abstracted patterns, yet up close the repetition of words create anxiety and friction for the viewer. When looking at either one from their own retrospective positions they resemble organised chaos of sculptural construction. Is this image or text? What distinguishes one from the other?

Let's Talk About Text is a powerful exhibition that plays with language and text as both literal representations of meanings and as unique forms with sculptural aspects, evocative natures, and the aesthetics of a material encoded with dense information.

Let's Talk About Text

16th March - 16th June, 2017

Artbank, 1/198-222 Young Street Waterloo NSW
2017

THE RELAXATION PLUG-IN

TRANSFORMATIVE CODE BY JENNY ANAGNOSTOPOULOS

URL:

<https://chrome.google.com/webstore/detail/relaxation-plug-in/jcfigbfadlodaenbaphdadgijpkelk-ab?hl=en-US&gl=AU>

INSTRUCTIONS:

Download the extension for free on any Chrome browser [here](#).

Open up any social media page, university portal or Google search before activating the extension. Once you have installed it, refresh the pages and watch the language and images glitch into the meditative script.

Be patient! This may take a few seconds.

To disable, type in chrome://extensions in your browser then click 'disable' on the plug-in icon.

ABOUT:

How do we engage with text online and what happens when our regular modes of reading are disrupted? Once downloaded, this Chrome extension takes over the coding script on every IP address and transforms it into a 'digital Feng Shui' through soothing beach visualisations and images of tropical locations. Made to forcefully transport users into a serene, digital paradise, the extension ultimately leads to a series of visual glitches, illegible interfaces where text and image overlap, which render the user's web browser unintelligible and dysfunctional.

Glitch poetics allows *The Relaxation Plug-in* to exist amorphously across pages, changing and adapting itself into the HTML coding. Each line of code is swapped, re-arranged and replaced accordingly, which is why the meditative text was produced in short ambiguous sentences to accommodate for this continual re-shuffling. Even when refreshed, the same web page takes on a different form, a different story. It's anything but calming.

Looking at the Internet as a portal comprised by millions of hyperlinks and IP addresses, searching through these a user finds themselves in a metalinguistic position.¹ Finding an answer on Google, for example, demands that the search engine extract meaning from the individual word and present a series of "word collections"². Here, this process is rendered futile as every search automatically regenerates the meditative text.

Juxtaposing the formalities of guided meditation and informative/navigational text was crucial in allowing

the usefulness of each to dissipate. Increasingly, more tasks are performed through computers that blur the boundaries between work and leisure, where work tasks often extend beyond the typical 9-5 hours. Looking at studies conducted into the benefits of stretches, yoga and guided meditation executed from the office chair, the instructional texts found in these increase body awareness and breathing, ultimately sending participants into a state of relaxation. If *The Relaxation Plug-in* is an attempt at that, it is a monumental failure of it.

¹Boris Groys, *Google: Words Beyond Grammar, Berlin, Germany*: Hatje Cantz, 2011.

²Groys, 5.

melt away into the ocean.

FRAMEWORK



Start
to
let
the
current
take
you
back
to
the
beach.
You
are
energized
by
the
sun's
warmth
above
you,

Let the current take you from one end of the beach to the other. You see a small fish, swimming slowly by you. Imagine it is puncturing the ocean's surface. Feel free of worries. No stress. Calm. Enjoying this holiday. You are at peace. You are free.

Smell the moisture in air, it's warm, sweet. You are completely submerged in the warm, crystal blue water. The sun's rays, soothed you. You are at peace. You are free. The ocean a bright blue abyss.

Your breath to flow smoothly, also ever-repeating like waves. You are energized by the sun's warmth. Let the current take you from one end of the beach to the other. Relax your body.