

FRAMEWORK

#2 | *the gender & sexuality issue*







Editorial

Welcome to Issue 2 of Framework. Firstly, huge thanks to the excellent Liz Nowell, who handed the Framework reins over after creating Issue 1. The Renewal Issue set the tone for what Framework will be – a platform for smart, readable arts writing in and around the COFA community. This issue – the Gender and Sexuality Issue – continues the work started by Liz.

For as long as people have created art, it has been used to explore and represent our gender and sexuality – and the distinction between the two. From the Venus of Willendorf (created around 24,000BCE) to emerging COFA artists like Ramesh Mario Nithiyendran (profiled in this issue), artists have created as many visions of sex and gender as we can imagine – and more!

This issue presents a snapshot of such visions. Whether Ramesh's playful Dickheads series or Redlands Art Prize winner Cigdem Aydemir's poetic Bombshell; Kate Mitchell's action-packed Lucky Break (pictured) or Brad Buckley's Slaughterhouse Project, Bulli Boys or Brisbane girls, the artists featured in this Framework engage with gender and sexuality in their work – some more explicitly than others.

I'd like to extend thanks also to the wonderful writers featured in this issue. If you are interested in contributing to Framework, please do get in touch at: k.britton@arc.unsw.edu.au and be sure to keep an eye out for the next issue in Semester 2!

- Kate Britton

THE GENDER & SEXUALITY ISSUE

ARTIST PROFILE

*Ramesh Mario
Nithiyendran*



Q&A

**KATE
MITCHELL**

Public Notices

LOST A BET

Artist looking to carry a 75kg
or under business man to work.
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COEXISTING

by Louise Mayhew

‘BULLI BOYS’ GARY LEE

BY DJON MUNDINE OAM



REVIEW REDLANDS ART PRIZE

BY MIRIAM GRUNDY

REVIEW THE SLAUGHTERHOUSE PROJECT

BY ERIN WILSON

FRAMEWORK

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 2

EDITOR

Kate Britton

CONTRIBUTORS

Lydia Bradshaw

Louise Mayhew

Djon Mundine OAM

Erin Wilson

Miriam Grundy

DESIGN

Chris Vernon

THANKS

Arc@COFA

ENQUIRIES

cofa@arc.unsw.edu.au

arc.unsw.edu.au/cofaframework

FRONT COVER IMAGE

RAMESH MARIO NITHIYENDRAN
DEITY # 4, 2012
EARTHENWARE AND GLAZE, DIMENSIONS
VARIABLE.
IMAGE COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

BACK COVER IMAGE

KATE MITCHELL
FALL STACK (PRODUCTION STILL), 2012
5 CHANNEL HD COLOUR VIDEO
IMAGE COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

Ramesh Mario Nithiyendran

by *Lydia Bradshaw*

Embracing the phallus as a central motif in his powerful, somewhat confronting and at times humorous body of work, COFA artist Ramesh Mario Nithiyendran presents a celebratory and highly charged homoeroticism. Spanning across a multidisciplinary art practice of painting, sculpture, and printmaking, these works serve as manifestations of unrestrained libidinal energy and highly ambitious yet grounded conceptual agenda.

Nithiyendran's work has been highly commended through numerous prizes and exhibitions. He was chosen to exhibit at PICA's graduate show, 'Hatched' and was winner of the Tim Olsen Drawing Prize in 2012. More recently, Nithiyendran secured The Freedman Foundation Traveling Art Scholarship that funded a pilgrimage throughout India and Sri Lanka earlier this year, allowing him to extend his research and enquiry into eastern sexuality and phallus worship.

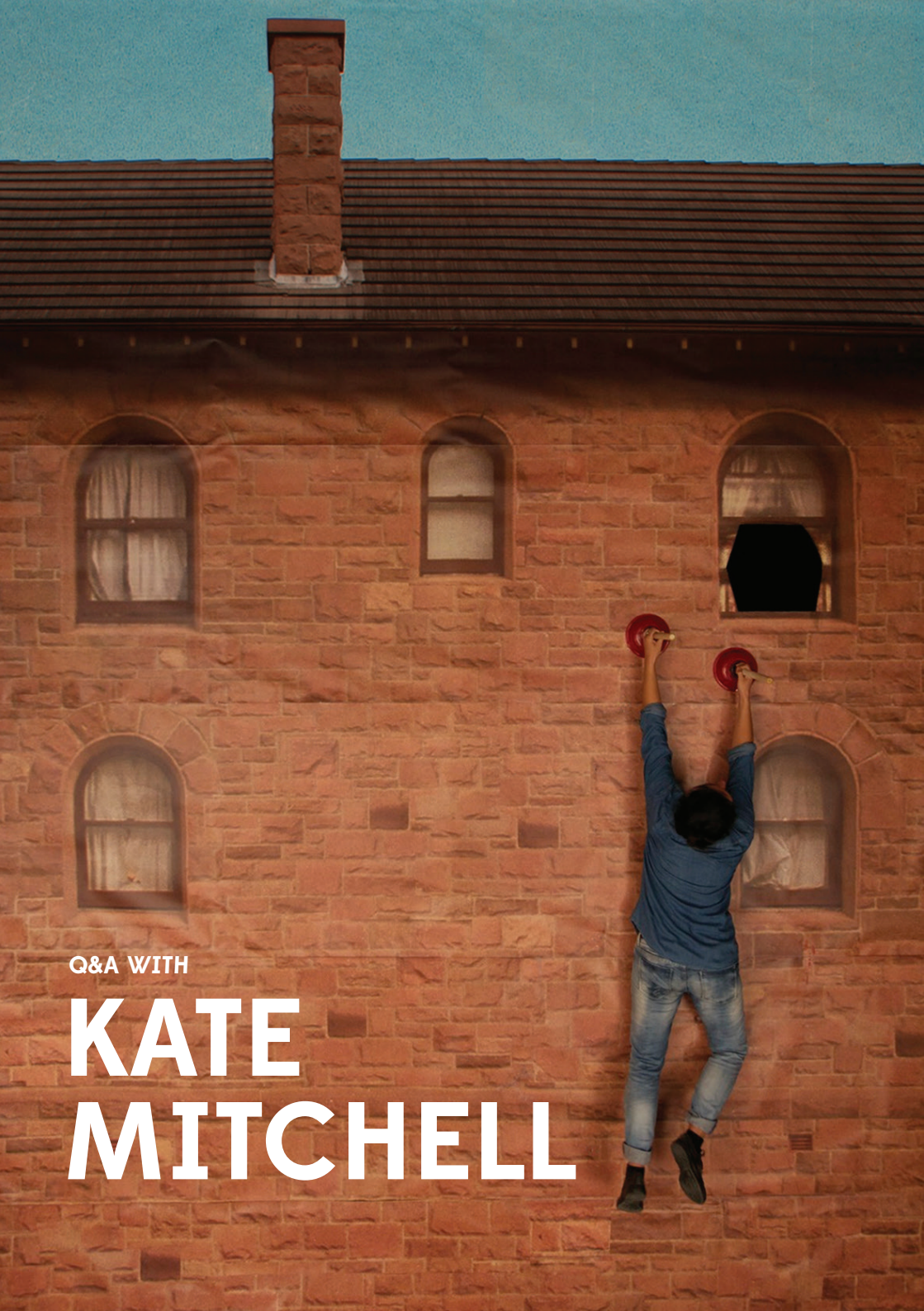
'It's more a fascination with the symbol of the phallus, rather than erect penises in their literal senses,' Nithiyendran says. 'I am interested in its status as a symbol of worship, power and

domination in historical and cultural contexts.' By (re)constructing the phallus in a way that is liberated from oppressive Western, hetero-patriarchal domination, the artist transcends connotations of misogyny typically derived from phallocentrism. In this way of representing the penis, Nithiyendran re-negotiates its place in visual culture and by extension, the viewer's relationship with this symbol.

In Nithiyendran's more recent work, the artist explores the male rectum in the context of normative masculinity through his key motif, the phallic turd. This symbol can be understood as a means by which the artist seeks to masculinize the conception of the anus, a metaphorical site where masculinity is buried. Central to this stream of practice is his ceramic series, DICKHEADS. These represent anally-birthed figures coated in a clumpy brown glaze. These works posit a new/ utopian form of birth, and explore opportunities for equality in sexual agency across genders.

To see Ramesh's work
online, or for more
information, go to
ramesh-nithiyendran.com





Q&A WITH

KATE MITCHELL

COFA GRADUATE AND ARTIST KATE MITCHELL HAS GAINED RENOWN FOR HER PHYSICALLY DARING AND FREQUENTLY HUMOROUS WORK. EXPLORING NOTIONS OF WORK AND LABOUR REDUCTIO AD ABSURDUM, HER BODY OF WORK IS A CATALOGUE OF TOM AND JERRY-ESQUE ACTIONS, CAUGHT ON CAMERA. HER LATEST WORK, LUCKY BREAK (2013), A FINALIST IN THE 2013 ANNE LANDA AWARD FOR VIDEO AND NEW MEDIA, SEES THE ARTIST LEAP THROUGH SEVEN PANES OF COLOURED GLASS – A FEAT THAT WOULD HAVE PROFESSOR JONES BACK AT HIS DESK BEFORE YOU COULD CRACK INDY'S WHIP.

BUT BENEATH THE SLAPSTICK, THE SISYPHEAN TASKS, AND THE ACTION HERO PERSONA, WHAT WE BEAR WITNESS TO IN MITCHELL'S PRACTICE IS A VERY PRAGMATIC PROJECT – THE EXPLORATION OF HOW AND WHY WE CHOOSE TO SPEND OUR TIME. FRAMEWORK CAUGHT UP WITH THE EBULLIENT ARTIST IN THE OPENING WEEK OF THE ANNE LANDA AWARD (ON VIEW AT THE ART GALLERY OF NEW SOUTH WALES UNTIL JULY 28) TO CHAT WORK, LABOUR, AND CARRYING A 70KG MAN TO WORK IN THE CBD.

FRAMEWORK MAGAZINE: I READ THAT YOU IDENTIFY THE BEGINNING OF YOUR PRACTICE AS YOUR 2003 WORK WITH TODD MCMILLAN NO VISIBLE PECULIARITIES. IS THIS A FACT? WHAT ABOUT THAT PIECE MARKS IT AS A BEGINNING?

Kate Mitchell: Fact!

That endurance performance with Todd McMillan marks the starting point of my practice. It was at an ARI called Gallery Wren and I wrote on the walls of the gallery, going around and around, and Todd followed my path erasing everything I wrote.

We continued this game of cat and mouse for 12 hours and we filmed the entire performance. In the end all that was physically left of our effort was a beautiful smudged HB pencil smear that ran around the walls of the gallery and a pile of eraser crumbs on the floor of the space. The gallery was open for the entire time so people were free to come and go.

It was an early work where various elements of an artwork fell into place. So it's the perfect work to mark as the beginning.

YOU'VE DONE A LOT OF WORK THAT PLAYS ON WORK AND LABOUR – DRAGGING A LOG FROM BRONTE TO ANNA SCHWARTZ (A LOG DRAGGED FROM ITS ORIGIN TO HERE, 2011), BECOMING A HUMAN SUNDIAL (9 TO 5, 2010), PIGGYBACKING A MAN TO WORK (LOST A BET, 2011). WHAT IS YOUR RELATION TO WORK?

In my practice the idea of art as work and the artist as both manager and worker is crucial and is outlined superbly in Helen Molesworth's essay 'Work Ethic'. Work is both inevitable and inescapable, and permeates through my practice in the performative recontextualisations of what is required, what is necessary and what are the alternative ways for undertaking an action.

We live in a world where we are all required to perform to a certain extent, be that at work, at home, or with particular people and my preference is to take certain tasks and to push them to the point of ridiculousness. Perhaps this is in a bid to question what we take seriously, why we behave the way we do and why we believe the things we do. It's also just my sense of humour, to do things the hard way.



ALBERT CAMUS ONCE SAID THAT WE SHOULD ENTERTAIN THE ABSURD, WHILE NEVER AGREEING TO ITS TERMS. IS THERE A RELATION BETWEEN YOUR WORK AND ABSURDISM, WHICH SIMILARLY PLACES ITSELF SOMEWHAT PRECARIOUSLY BETWEEN OPTIMISM AND PESSIMISM?

I am Pessimistically Optimist or Optimistically Pessimistic!

Either way, there definitely is a self-effacing nature to my work. The actions may be odd or unlikely but I like to embed these actions into the realm of the normal; that is part of the beauty of them. Going about these actions as though they are the most normal things in the world (like buying bread and milk), I particularly like that rupture in the expectancy of the everyday.

Take, for example, old Tom & Jerry cartoons. The adventures and skits that take place reside within the realm of normal in that world. It's normal to climb up a ladder and saw all the rungs out from underneath, it's normal to saw a hole in the ground and fall through and so on. The actions are dangerous but they are deactivated because they are humorous. You can see what's going to happen, like setting up dominos, and you

watch transfixed till the end to make sure it happened the way you thought it would. It doesn't always go according to plan, that's the crux, that's the risk, that's what it means to participate.

PART OF WHAT MAKES YOUR WORK SO GREAT IS THE TENSION IN THE ACTIONS, THAT 'AHH I CAN'T WATCH!' MOMENT THAT COMES FROM THE CAPACITY FOR FAILURE. FAILURE BECOMES A CONSTITUTIVE PART OF THE WORK. IS THERE A POINT AT WHICH YOU WOULD SAY THAT A WORK HAD 'FAILED', OR WOULD THAT BE FOLDED BACK INTO IT?

There is a space between intent and outcome where risk, chance, and happy accidents reside. Things go according to 'A' plan, not necessarily 'The' plan. I am always trying to get at this space since the tension serves as a good reminder of the precariousness of life.

The performances are like a science experiments; I set up the scenario, shoot it in one take and present the findings regardless. I usually have a pretty good idea about how I want an action to pan out, but I have failed the fail many a time. You just have to roll with it.



FACT: YOU ARE A TOTALLY AWESOME ACTION HERO. LUCKY BREAK (2013), AT THIS YEAR'S ANNE LANDA AWARD, IN WHICH YOU LEAP THROUGH SEVEN COLOURED PANES OF GLASS, IS A PERFECT EXAMPLE. WHAT DRAWS YOU TO THIS KIND OF PHYSICAL PRACTICE? IS IT IMPORTANT TO YOU THAT YOUR BODY IS SUCH A BIG PART OF YOUR WORK?

There is something about the immediacy of the body that I find enormously appealing, the way you can grasp it's 'existence' in a brutally physical way. The body is my medium and I always pass through some sort of intense experience when making a work. It's a to-do list of actions merged with conceptual rigour. Only a handful of people are present when I shoot a work due to the complexity of the work and so video is the best medium to present concepts in a gallery context.

SPEAKING OF VIDEO, CAN YOU TALK A BIT ABOUT THE RELATION OF THE ACT TO THE DOCUMENTATION IN YOUR WORK?

I get quite excited about the relics of performances and actions. Even though I don't always work in this way, I really like works that set up an idea in the viewers

mind, like the game Mouse Trap. Setting up indicators for them to come to their own conclusions of the 'How', 'Why', 'When', and 'Where'. It could just be the title that makes you understand what has happened to an object, and I especially like the idea of viewers thinking about the action that took place. I like the power of tall tales. I'm more inclined to think of work in layers like Joseph Kosuth's One and Three Chairs (1965). For me the actual action of the live work is it, the video is it, and the re-telling is it too. All levels are just as significant, vital and potent.

LUCKY LAST - THIS ISSUE IS EXPLORING GENDER AND SEXUALITY. DOES THIS PLAY OUT IN YOUR WORK AT ALL?

Histories are important to acknowledge and it's important to understand the lineage of your practice. I generally think of myself as a human making work, not 'I am a woman making this work and that is the reason to be making it'. I never approach my practice in that way.



COEXISTING

by Louise Mayhew

IN CONTRAST TO THE OTHER ROOMS OF KALDOR PUBLIC ART PROJECT 27: 13 ROOMS, IN WHICH DANCERS, ARTISTS, VOLUNTEERS AND RECRUITS PERFORMED IN RELATIVELY SHORT SHIFTS, COEXISTING BY CLARK BEAUMONT WAS THE ONLY WORK IN WHICH THE ARTISTS THEMSELVES WERE PRESENT. ACKNOWLEDGING THE INSIGNIFICANCE OF A CURSORY STROLL AND MOMENTARY CONTEMPLATION OF THIS EXTRAORDINARY, DURATIONAL PIECE, I APPROACHED SIX WOMEN—ALL OF WHOM I GREATLY RESPECT—FOR THEIR VARIOUS TAKES ON THE PIECE. THIS ARTICLE EXPLORES THEIR THOUGHTS.

In an empty, white room atop a small, white plinth perched two young artists. With eyes downcast and legs entwined they sat, shoulder-to-shoulder. They silently readjusted each limb, in a forlorn attempt to find a comfortable position. As I slowly circled the room, contemplating this living sculpture, they silently readjusted again. Fatigue and boredom hung heavily in the air.

This was *Coexisting*, the work of artists Nicole Beaumont and Sarah Clark. Operating as the collaborative duo, Clark Beaumont, the pair negotiated shared space above a plinth-top for eight hours a day, 11 days in a row.

The work was part of John Kaldor's most recent project, *13 Rooms*, held at Pier 2/3, Walsh Bay. Curated by Hans Ulrich Obrist and Klaus Biesenbach, the exhibition was comprised of the enactments and re-enactments of 13 performance works by internationally renowned artists, including such art world stars as Marina Abramovic, John Baldessari, Damien Hirst and Santiago Sierra. Amidst these names, Clark Beaumont featured as the young, and relatively unknown, Australian addition.

Final day of 13 Rooms, my third visit: small bruise marks visible on the girls' legs, the wear and tear of coexistence. Gilbert & George never shared such a tight plinth.

—Ann Stephen, Art Historian.

In 1973, Kaldor brought Gilbert & George to Australia for the work *The Singing Sculptures*. Standing on a table at the Art Gallery of New South Wales, donned in suits and painted in gold, the duo sung along to the depression-era song 'Underneath the Arches' as it played on repeat . . . 112 times a day. Clark Beaumont utilise Gilbert & George's example of 'living sculpture'; art and artist become one.

While the other works featured different performers, Clark Beaumont's was the only room in which the artists were literally present. How does the artists' physical presence affect or change the viewer's understanding?

—Harriet Field, COFA PhD Student.

Walter Benjamin argues that the 'aura' of an original work of art, that which is unique to the original, becomes lost in reproduction. In performance work, this idea is transferred to the artist's body. What is lost in reproduction becomes what is lost in re-enactment. While performers function as facsimiles; authenticity, originality and intent coalesce with the artist's body—implicitly and irrevocably stamped with the artist's signature.

*It's often difficult to comprehend the physical and psychological struggles performers have to navigate and overcome. What I really empathised with during my experience of *Coexisting* was the bruised legs of one of the girls, the only visible sign attesting to their extreme endurance.*

—Emma Crott, COFA PhD Student

Torture the women, torture the artist. Endurance, pain, suffering and the potential for danger and damage are leitmotifs of performance art. The extreme and viscerally disturbing works of Abramovic and Ulay, Burden and Parr—arrows pointed at the heart, gun shot wounds, burning palms and the breath held for far too long—stretch back to Romantic understandings of the artist: a creative genius, yet tortured soul. Creativity is mythically entwined with suffering. In this much more subtle work, the gentle patterning of bruises belies the stress and strain of shared space.

Coexisting made me a little uncomfortable. Looking at the two very tired young women perched on a small plinth with bruises up and down their legs was distressing. Coexistence often suggests a warm and fuzzy feeling of being together, it sounds easy and desirable. They presented a more difficult and complicated picture of coexistence.

—Sue Best, Art Historian.

The negotiated space of *Coexisting* acts as a metaphor for collaboration. Diverging from the dominant understanding of collaboration—championed as the working method of the new millennium—as producing ‘more than the sum of its parts’, Clark Beaumont reveal the subtle realities of collaboration. In each other they find support, rest, encouragement and understanding, whilst simultaneously competing for the same space. The bruises act as signifiers of the impact we have upon one another, even throughout successful journeys.

I noticed the familiarity between the girls; one touched the other on her head affectionately. I watched them manoeuvre carefully to change position. They needed to work together, anticipating each others’ movements . . . I was also aware how ‘natural’ it seemed for women to be this close together. On reflection if it had been two men, or two mature women, there would have been a whole different energy, a different feel, not the same sort of cosiness or naturalness.

—Sue Burrell, Mother.

There is a stage of feminine companionship unique to young women. It’s the stage of holding hands, lying with one’s head in another’s lap, languidly stroking and twirling hair. It’s the friendship of Puberty Blues, innocent, naïve, familiar and tender, tinged so very lightly with hints of sexuality. In their gentle compositions, Clark Beaumont present a delicately powerful portrait of female friendship.

[This room] was full of feeling, as the women cooperated to literally accommodate each other’s needs in a fraught situation. As a metonym it brought to mind all kinds of dire situations where people, women and men, have stuck together to help each other. When I saw it, the women were wrapped together in the most beautiful compositions of combined bodies, which heightened the affect.

—Bonita Ely, Artist.

As living sculptures, in addition to ideas of conception, endurance and realisation, histories of performance work, notions of art and artist, Clark Beaumont also present their bodies as sculptural pieces to be viewed. On a tall plinth, raised above eye level, they mimicked classical sculpture, their forlorn faces recalling faces forever frozen in pain.

In a plain white room by an empty white plinth stand two young artists. Arms wrapped around each other, they smile widely for the camera, Kaldor by their side. The feeling of joy, pride and relief is overwhelming.







30a



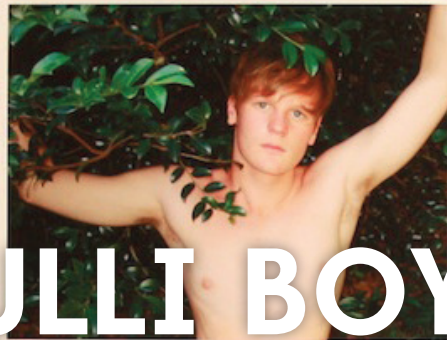
31a



32a



33a



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36a

'BULLI BOYS' GARY LEE

by Djon Mundine OAM



37a



38a



39a



40a



41a

MY PHOTOGRAPHY IS A WAY TO RECORD THE BEAUTY OF ORDINARY MEN. THIS BEAUTY IS NOT JUST A MATTER OF YOUTH OR MATURITY. IT'S PARTLY ABOUT AN ATTITUDE, A LOOK. THE MEN MIGHT EXUDE INNOCENCE AS MUCH AS SEXUALITY. OFTEN IT'S A KIND OF BEAUTY THAT THEY AREN'T EVEN AWARE OF – AND THAT ATTRACTS ME.

(GARY LEE, 2010)

Much photographed film model Derek Zoolander had a number of dramatic looks: 'Blue Steel', 'Ferrari', 'Le Tigre', and lastly, the ironically photographically named 'Magnum'. 'Magnum' is generally defined as 'to magnify', 'to make big', 'the big work'. It also means 'to maim'.

It's wrong to flog a man. It's against his being a man.

(Herman Melville, *Billy Budd*, 1924)

Herman Melville constructed the young Billy Bud character as an unformed, illiterate man and as a foil of innocence and goodness against the evil of men. Billy Bud's surname is a trope of the bud of new unopened flowers, the new buds of youth. The original Aboriginal name for the Bulli area was Bulla or Bulla Bulla, and a phallocentric meaning of 'two mountains' (Mt. Kembla and Mt. Keira). Other meanings of the name Bulli have been given as 'white grubs', and 'place where the Christmas Bush grows'. As a friend commented, the unformed bodies of the boys photographed in Gary Lee's *On the Verge* series are like white pupae or grubs, puppy fat, yet to undertake metamorphosis.

Billy Bud's unformed character is full of potential and 'character'. The admiration of the beauty and youth of these young men doesn't need to be sexualised, nor need to be homoerotic. For older viewers there's an identification, an identifying with the young. To them you show affection through care – you see yourself in those young men, you can relive your life in their images. The impulse of the individual young can be generally good for the individual and constructive for the society.

Teenage boys are innocent, naive, thoughtful and sensible but are young and can be extraordinary. Gary Lee has placed them as Adam; among foliage in the

garden as the original innocent man. They can be vain, stupid and incredibly self-centred. Remember South Park boys are teenage boys. They historically have been pressed into action by society in 'cannon fodder' service into many projects, endeavours, adventures, wars, and crusades – and generically a testing of their mortality.

Teenage boys, for various unkind reasons, are often seen as troublesome, irritating and stupid. However one must remember, the greatest number of victims of violence in our society, are young men. Inside each youth a struggle between good and evil, and deep thought often belies long teenage silences. They are often seen as moody, exhibiting anger, resistance, questioning and what is often unjustly seen as laziness.

You know, Seymour, there are some men who cannot stand too much perfection. They see it as a disease, which must be stamped out at its first rash showing.

(Captain Vere in *Billy Budd*, 1962 film).

Some disgruntled bitter cynical older people have trouble with all this energy and beauty; indeed that these young are actually liked! There is the cynical saying; that 'youth is lost on the young'. Missionaries of all denominations and ideologies prefer to convert and work with young girls than teenage boys. For many years the name Bulli was used for all the country from Wollongong north to Coalcliff. It's where the mountains run along the coast and the edge is a sharp steep drop to the Pacific Ocean. It's on this edge that local young men, striking coal miners built the Clifton School of Art building for the local district in 1911. Appropriately *On the Verge*, shot over a day, was hung in the 'Doug Luck Room', named after Private John Douglas Luck, a local young miner, and an art student, not much older than these present day boys, killed in action aged twenty-two in WWII.



*I'm eighteen with a bullet, I got my finger on the trigger
I'm gonna pull it.*

(Pete Wingfield, Major Seven Ltd, 1975...reference?)

Only one of the boys in this series is eighteen and finished school. The photographer Gary Lee had an incidental pathway to Bulli and this project. Although a Larrakia man from Darwin a world away to the north, his nephew, Callan, lives here, and his gang: Daniel, Declan, Luke, Michael, Paddy, Stephan, and Tomas, that then led to the present assignment. His mission, his practice, is the widening of the idea of what is beautiful and concerns ideas of male beauty. Until now many have perceived this as mostly a white colonial gaze on a 'Black body'; so although a really local affair we should say something, and beyond just a fond parent speaking.

The fox in *The Little Prince* tells the young boy: 'It is only with the heart that one can see rightly. What is essential is invisible to the eye.' The fox also alludes to the idea that if one has a response to making art and viewing art, then one has a responsibility: 'You become responsible, forever, for what you have tamed.' The camera is a 'hands-off' technology.

*I hear words like 'beauty' and 'handsomeness' and
'incredibly chiselled features' and for me that's like a
vanity of self-absorption that I try to steer clear of.*

(Hansel, in *Zoolander*, 2001)

There is the Greek story: an artist, a sculptor, who in trying to make a figure, approached anonymous, beautiful young people in the street to be his models. Although perfectly beautiful, he found that something was lacking – character, intelligence, or spirit, and so they failed him in the figure he created. They couldn't rise to be the extraordinary role he asked of them.

I, and many other people, look for flaws and small imperfections indicative of character. They are at a threshold into another consciousness that will encompass a myriad of issues about the Aboriginal experience from both sides of history. Billy Bud had a speech impediment and metaphorically was without voice. All young men feel a type of restricting speech impediment through their lack of confidence and vocabulary. It's a struggle to face the taunts and temptations, and personal fight to remain true to their culture, and to themselves. The young quite often feel one can't wait and waste periods in time with conversations with the dead (older generation).



In Kipling's *Jungle Book*, Mowgli is a 'boy cub' who grows up with a pack of wolves and only interacts with other humans when he reaches puberty and has to rationalise where his life will turn. For any male, as one moves from childhood to manhood, one comes to interact with the wider adult world of humans. For most teenagers, a new relationship has to be developed with parents, an absent father perhaps, a mother who was determined to keep her children when officials wanted to remove them following the death or absence of their father. They're exploring stereotyping, identity and race relations in what is a small country town setting, but is there more to life?

I'm pretty sure there's a lot more to life than being really, really, ridiculously good looking. And I plan on finding out what that is.

(Derek Zoolander)

Note: On the Verge is a series of portraits of teenager boys from Bulli, photographed by Gary Lee. The series was first exhibited at Clifton School of Art, February 2010, and was shown at Woolloongabba Art Gallery, Brisbane, April/May 2010, and at Campbelltown Art Centre, Sydney in June 2010. The set have become part of the touring 'Shadowlife' exhibition, 2012/3, and Beauty, Vanity, and Narcissism exhibition (Crossarts Projects) 2012.

Essay first published 2010 - Art & Australia 48 no.3

Redlands Art Prize

WORDS by *Miriam Grundy*

THIS IS THE SECOND YEAR OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE REDLANDS ART PRIZE AND THE NATIONAL ART SCHOOL GALLERY, DARLINGHURST, A POSITIVE COUPLING THAT UNITES CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS WITH A FANTASTIC, CENTRAL EXHIBITION SPACE.

The prize is unique for its big brother and sister artist duos, where each invited artist brings an emerging artist with them for the ride. The dynamics of these relationships aren't reflected in visual cues or styles; all you can assume is that the big 'A' artists really want audiences to see work of the little 'a' artists. Not a bad way to increase the exposure and circulation for lesser known artists, and to remind audiences that every established artist was once emerging as well.

With this issue's theme of Gender/Sexuality being front-of-mind, what struck me right away how sexless the exhibition appeared to be. Not to be confused with not sexy, sexless is the new 'it' thing across numerous creative disciplines from music to performance to dance. Sexless has become the new 'international', an obtund sensory language that is all-inclusive and endlessly neutral. The works in the show take this up in numerous ways.

Cate Consandine's work *Colony* engages with the idea of The Boy and his 'condition of becomingness', pointing of being suspended between the states of boy and man, aka puberty. This work could have had much more potency had it been focused on the one form of expression. Instead audiences have to link a video of a hapless nappy-clad adolescent on his back, arms

and legs flapping, with an adjacent buffed-steel spear suspended from the roof and corresponding ring on the floor, which are menacing and visually striking. This thematic relationship is not easy to arrive at, which is a shame as the video and sculpture possess enough interest on their own, whereas combining them dilutes and confuses their meaning.

Jen Broadhurst's three channel video *Abstract Feminism* delivers exactly what the title promises, three screens of white leotard clad women exercising, wriggling and moving in a vision of pure abstractionism turned physical. The rigid principles of primary colour and pure line and form are made comfortable and soft-edged in this fun and welcoming work.

The winning team is clearly Deborah Kelly and her chosen partner, Cigdem Aydemir. Aydemir won this year's prize for her work video *Bombshell*, a continuous shot of a towering woman dressed in full burqa mimicking the famous Marilyn Monroe hot air vent shot. The imposing black clad figure is the anchor to the whirling, buoyant garment that, just like that bombshell Monroe, teases the audiences with what will never be seen. Perhaps it is a comment on the vocal offence the West's takes to veiled women, devoid of the superficial



identifiers that we see as female qualities, but which are perhaps just a bit of marketing-induced hot air.

Kelly's work *The Miracles* reiterates her preoccupation with gender roles and society's hetero-normative assumptions on notions of the family. Kelly's work consists of modern and religious icons. The modern icons are classicised portraits of families who have used Assisted Reproductive Technologies, essentially immaculate conceptions. The composite work is a projected photomontage of actual icons and Renaissance visions of family. *The Miracles* is warm, loving and a joy of discovery.

In order for art to engage with ideas around gender and sexuality they must be clear and central to the work. The male/female binary has and will always exist, but what can change is how we express it without collapsing into a gender-neutral heap on the floor.

**Redlands Art Prize is at
the National Art School
Gallery, Forbes St,
Darlinghurst,
3 May-1 June 2013**

The Slaughterhouse Project

WORDS by Erin Wilson

FOR OVER A DECADE, NUMEROUS ITERATIONS OF BRAD BUCKLEY'S SLAUGHTERHOUSE PROJECT HAVE PROVIDED SITES FOR THE CONSIDERATION OF HOW CULTURAL DISCOURSE INFLUENCES INDIVIDUAL PERCEPTIONS AND BEHAVIOR. BUCKLEY'S LATEST OFFERING AT THE AUSTRALIAN CENTRE FOR PHOTOGRAPHY CHALLENGES AUDIENCES TO QUESTION THE PROCESSES OF TRANSMITTING AND RECEIVING INFORMATION: WHAT WE ARE TOLD ABOUT GENDER AND SEXUALITY, AND WHY WE BELIEVE IT.

Entering the space is reminiscent of an Alice down the rabbit hole sensation, as the aggregation of the visual, textual and physical becomes clear: a high chair, oversized book, towering human silhouettes, snippets of text, a photograph and an echoing voice. You are bombarded with competing elements, and in an attempt to establish the bigger picture you instinctively select a focus. Unable to identify a discernable narrative, you move to establish a link between the elements on show- the female. Latching onto this common theme, you begin to travel a road of assumptions, imposing the fragmented narratives communicated through text and voice onto the silhouetted figures. Unsure of your speculations, still seeking the 'real' meaning of the exhibition, you demonstrate Buckley's cultural thesis- that we are inclined to seek the 'given' meaning without questioning how it became the given and why we accept it as such.

With no given path to follow, personal choice is required. Unable to engage with all competing elements simultaneously, you are forced to privilege one. You quickly become aware you will never attain all the information, instead relying on your prior knowledge and experiences to fill in the gaps. The ambiguity is a deliberate tactic, forcing us to construct our own meaning and acknowledge that no two experiences, and therefore no two interpretations, will be the same.

This ambiguity is reflected in the physical elements of the work. A black book, bathed in gold light, invokes connotations of sanctified knowledge. Ironically, this book displays no information, expels no knowledge, revealing its sanctified status as a façade. Having exhausted the visual elements, the spoken fragments of seemingly random texts engage your focus. With the promised performer not present, the omniscient recorded voice fails to emerge victorious in the fight for attention, with only snippets of *Animal Farm* recalled, "too many farmers had assumed...". Buckley's refusal to communicate a given meaning extends further to his use of fragmented, decontextualized text, disrupting the cultural assumption that text communicates an explicit meaning.

While themes of gender and sexuality are identified, no hint of how to respond to these themes is provided. Gender and sexuality are not the subjects of the exhibition; rather it is the transmission of cultural discourse influencing our perceptions of gender and sexuality. While it is possible to passively pass through the space, simply looking and listening, acknowledging personal assumptions and speculations is key to understanding. Leaving the space you may feel something was lost in translation, but this assumption that there is a given that wasn't 'got' is entirely the point.

**Brad Buckley's
Slaughterhouse Project was
on at the Australian Centre
for Photography, Oxford St
Paddington, until May 19**



O1. Brad Buckley, *The Slaughterhouse Project: Alignment and Boundaries (L'Origine du monde)* and *I wonder whether that's Joanna Hiffeman with a Brazilian (revisited)*, 2013. In-situ photo by Rowan Conroy courtesy the photographer and the artist.



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