

FRAMEWORK

#7 | the collaboration issue







EDITORIAL

In the spirit of collaboration, your usual Framework programming has been interrupted by an exciting co-editing effort between the wonderful Louise Mayhew (who recently submitted her PhD on the history of collaboration in Australia) and myself. It has been such a pleasure to work with Louise and put this issue of Framework together. I hope you enjoy reading about the spectrum of collaborative practices cultivated within the COFA artistic community. Thank you very much to Louise, and to our contributors.

Happy UNSW Artsweek to everyone!

After this inspiring edition, I bet you're interested in writing for the next issue of Framework. Drafts are due in week 8. Launch in week 10. The theme? Social Change. We're looking for juicy reviews, features, and student profiles of politically engaged art practices.

Get in touch: m.white@arc.unsw.edu.au

- **Maria White**

Collectives, collaboration, cooperation, community. These words flood our contemporary artworld. There is something warm in such words, they speak of togetherness, nourishment, time well spent. It's this aspect of collaboration that urged me to reach out and suggest to Maria that we co-edit this issue of Framework.

In the pages that follow, we encounter many versions of collaborative practice: playful [myself on Louise Zhang], unplanned [Bryant on Brown Council], imperceptible [Witsey on Claire Healy and Sean Cordeiro], diverse [Gallo on It's Timely] and curated [Demou on Binns + Valamanesh].

There is also something significant, strident and political in collaboration. Inflections of this can be found in our three major articles [Constant on Benjamin, de Biasi on Soda-Jerk and Field on collaborative history].

And this brings us to the crux of contemporary collaboration: as group practices proliferate they point to the long and rich history of artistic collaboration, and, simultaneously, remind us that no artists exists or succeeds in isolation.

- **Louise Mayhew**

THE COLLAB- ORA- TION ISSUE

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FRAMEWORK

VOLUME 2, ISSUE 3

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Front cover image:

APPEARING ACT (2011)

IMAGE COURTESY OF DIANA SMITH &
BROWN COUNCIL, VIDEOGRAPHY BY
WILLIAM MANSFIELD.





HERS AND HIS

by *Alicia Dulnuan-Demou*

For the exhibition BINNS + VALAMANESH, the work of Australian artists, Vivienne Binns and Hossein Valamanesh, has been curated together and the result is surprising. On a good hunch, curator Toni Bailey selected and arranged over 70 pieces: paintings, sculptures, drawings, prints and installations, in the cavernous space of the Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre. The distribution of works is not symmetrical yet still they beg comparison.

Fixations with pattern, abstraction and human beings harmonise the works on display. Binns addresses post-colonialism, female sexuality and the repression of women, while the work of Valamanesh has been deemed transcendent, spiritual and universal. So both artists have a vital connection to humanity and this gives the work an underlying global significance. Both artists also embrace collaborative practice: Binns working with whole communities of people, local residents and distant individuals, and Valamanesh with wife Angela.

As one moves through the exhibit the distinct visual style of each of the artists becomes clear. Difference maintains equilibrium. The meditative nature of Valamanesh's work, as well as his continued use of candles, raised the curatorial challenge of lighting. This distinction, Valamanesh in darkness, Binns in bright light, allowed a natural contrast, just as the vibrancy of Binns' vast colour palette welcomed the more neutral shades of Valamanesh.

There is a play with two and three-dimensional forms. Valamanesh's *Longing Belonging* (1997) features a scorched rug, presented on the gallery floor, before

the two-dimensional photograph showing the rug ablaze. His mosaic-like creation, *Lotus Vault* (2011), is an arrangement of lotus leaves flattened and cut. In contrast, Binns' technique of combing acrylic paint on canvas gives her work a psychedellic depth, as seen in *Captain Cook in Spinifex* (2002) and the swirling grooves created by intricate dot patterns in Japanese fabric III: *In memory of the unknown artist* (2001). Her optical illusions reach out from the wall, creating a third dimension that plays well against the real physical space and form of Valamanesh's sculptures, such as his *Untitled (Ladder)* (2008), a near seven-meter ladder attached to a one by one-meter mirror on the ceiling.

Why have two well-known artists partake in a curated collaboration when they could easily stand alone? One particular answer, expressed by Binns, was that Valamanesh reveals something new in her work and vice versa. The game I played of labelling "Hers" and "His" was quietened once I saw links could not be forced between these two artists, the exhibition is not set up that way. Each piece exists as an entity in its own right. It seems there is more of Binns' work on display although the larger scale of the Valamanesh pieces puts them in equal stead.

In the context of Liverpool, the Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre facilitates the meeting of artistic expression and the industrial complexes of the area. The Powerhouse has a strong community focus, both local and global, and the curated collaboration of Binns + Valamanesh stays true to this objective.



COFA STUDENT PROFILE:

Louise Zhang

by *Louise Mayhew*

I met Louise Zhang while waiting in queue at the COFA coffee cart. It was one of those lovely moments where the embarrassment and awkwardness of not knowing one another's names was delightfully overturned. We are both Louise. Since that morning, I've been drawn into the mania, pastels and 'monstrous cute' of Zhang's life and practice.

Painting is at the core of Zhang's work, although she sometimes ventures into the worlds of installation and sculpture. In a series of expanding foam and polyurethane works from last year she created small, seemingly sticky and somewhat sickly sculptures, reminiscent of melting ice cream scoops. In this series we encounter the colourful, playful and organic aesthetic that is immediately recognisable as Zhang's. She speaks of 'discovering herself' in the third year of her BFA and extending her interest in the Blob and associated ideas of repulsion and attraction through Honours and into her Masters.

Ace Wagstaff met Louise Zhang through Instagram. Over the past few months, the two artists have shared likes, comments and photographs of works-in-progress with each other from their respective homes in Melbourne and Sydney. Although the two are yet to meet in person, they recently began a long-distance collaboration, with Wagstaff posting an

incomplete acrylic-on-vinyl work to Zhang. At first, Zhang says, she was scared of contributing to the piece and found this different process of working very challenging.

As the two continued swapping pieces, and as Zhang and I continue talking, the joy and excitement Zhang feels towards this project overshadows these initial feelings. Zhang describes the project as fun and relaxing. She talks about the anticipation of waiting, and gleeful surprise of seeing, how Wagstaff contributes to and changes the pieces she sends him. In these new collaborative works, Zhang's amorphous and colourful shapes are layered and combined with bold geometric contributions from Wagstaff. There's an extraordinary sense of trust, freedom and pleasure in the project, qualities that are at the heart of successful collaboration. I hope, as do the artists, to see them exhibited soon.

MORE ON LOUISE ZHANG:

www.louisezhang.com

Instagram: [louise__zhang](#)

MORE ON ACE WAGSTAFF:

Instagram: [acewagstaff](#)



01 Louise Zhang and Ace Wagstaff, *Work in Progress* (detail) 2014, Image courtesy the artists.

02 Louise Zhang, *Dopey*, 2013, Image courtesy the artist.





Q&A WITH

DIANA SMITH



BY KIERAN BRYANT

WE ALL KNOW TO COLLABORATE IS TO WORK TOGETHER BUT IN SITTING DOWN WITH DIANA SMITH, COFA PHD CANDIDATE AND MEMBER OF BROWN COUNCIL, I DISCOVERED COLLABORATION CAN GO FURTHER THAN SIMPLY THAT. IT WAS SUCH A PLEASURE TO INTERVIEW DIANA AND TO NOT ONLY LEARN MORE ABOUT HER OWN PRACTICE, RESEARCH AND THAT OF BROWN COUNCIL BUT TO GAIN A UNIQUE PERSPECTIVE ON THE NATURE OF COLLABORATION.

For those who are less familiar with their work, this quote from Brown Council's website [browncouncil.com, 2014] is a useful explanation of their collaborative practice:

"Their work engages with concepts of spectacle and endurance, as well as the dialogue between 'liveness' and the performance document or trace. Starting from simple conceptual provocations devised in group discussions, Brown Council combine elements from high and popular culture with moments from the everyday to create works that critique why and how it is that we perform. Often switching roles amongst members or outsourcing the performance to hired help, Brown Council complicate distinctions between actor and performance artist, performer and self, and the role of the audience as passive observer or active participant."

KB: WHAT DOES COLLABORATION MEAN TO YOU?

DS: I've found that in order for collaboration to work really well you have to be able to let go of ego and not block other's ideas. It helps when you're friends! There are great life skills in collaboration. Brown Council formed organically; there was no pretence

or plan. We were four students at COFA who had a love of theatre and performance. It also helped that the spirit of collaboration is embedded within COFA. Much of our early work was based around play and experimentation, theatrical costuming and props. There reached a point in which it became more serious and we turned towards video work.

KB: COULD YOU TELL ME MORE ABOUT BROWN COUNCIL AND THEIR COLLABORATIVE WORKS?

DS: Brown Council is the collaborative practice of Frances Barrett, Kate Blackmore, Kelly Doley, and myself. As I earlier said we started collaborating at COFA in 2007, and since then have used both performance and video to straddle the contexts of gallery and stage, and draw on the historical lineages of both the visual and performing arts.

KB: An earlier work of the Council, *Appearing Act* (2011), seems to do this. Seemingly exploring the performative trace and classical stage paradigms the four members magically 'appear' out of thin air through simple trickery.

DS: A black empty video frame begins to move and shake. A small hand saw pierces through the surface



to reveal us on the other side of the frame, shrouded in puffs of smoke. Wearing the same black and gold costumes, we clumsily climb through the hole and quickly take our positions in front of the locked off camera to form a classic tableaux vivant pose. This image is held for an extended period before we exit frame and the loop repeats.

KB: AS AN ARTIST WHO PRACTICES INDIVIDUALLY AND COLLABORATIVELY HOW DO YOU MANAGE BOTH? DO THEY INFORM EACH OTHER?

DS: They inform each other to a degree, I suppose there is more connection between some works than others. Brown Council's ongoing project *Remembering Barbara Cleveland* [2010-] has strong ties to my PhD research. Within that research (which focuses on performance, feminism, and art history) I examine the use of fiction and how it can disrupt ingrained narratives or ideas of identity. I've found fiction can operate as an act of subversion within the model of performance art.

Through this research we discovered Barbara Cleveland (via a box of typed lectures deep in an archive!) Seemingly a largely forgotten and unsung Australian performance artist she worked predominantly in Sydney in the 1970s and up until her untimely death in 1981. We were surprised to find that despite her significant output of work, Cleveland remains largely unknown in the history of Australian

art and the canon of performance art internationally.

By honouring the life and work of Cleveland, we seek to question who is written in and out of art history, and how narratives are constructed and re-presented.

KB: TELL ME ABOUT YOUR CURRENT COLLABORATIVE PROJECTS. WHAT ABOUT THEM HAVE YOU ENJOYED?

DS: At the beginning of the year Brown Council were commissioned to make a work or 'environment' suitable for children with special needs. Situated in the Jackson Bella Room, at the National Centre for Creative Learning in the Museum of Contemporary Art, the area is a dedicated, interactive space designed for students with specific learning needs to explore the work of contemporary artists.

It was such an honour to be asked and also quite a challenge for us, since we had never done anything on this scope before. We transformed the space into an immersive and interactive performance 'funhouse' designed to be both accessible and stimulating for young people with specific needs. *Performance Space* draws on a diverse range of sources, including the histories of performance art, absurdist theatre and children's television programs such as Pee-wee's Playhouse and Mulligrubs. Playschool meets Performance Art.



One of the works within *Performance Space*, '15 Actions for the Face', presents a series of simple instructions communicated through title cards and read aloud. Each of the instructions can be performed with the face and include statements such as, 'Say "hello" without moving your face' and 'Touch your nose with your tongue'. Through two screens we took turns attempting to achieve these directions. The children were encouraged to follow these instructions, becoming performers and collaborators in the work. By taking centre stage under the 'spotlight' or on one of the coloured circles they could activate the space like performers in a theatrical set, realise certain body movements and just have fun.

A third screen investigated collaborative action, which would also be enjoyable for the children. It involved all four of us slowly 'piling on' each other, compressing our bodies together. Often they would follow suit and copy our actions!

Our costumes were heavily influenced by Dadaist

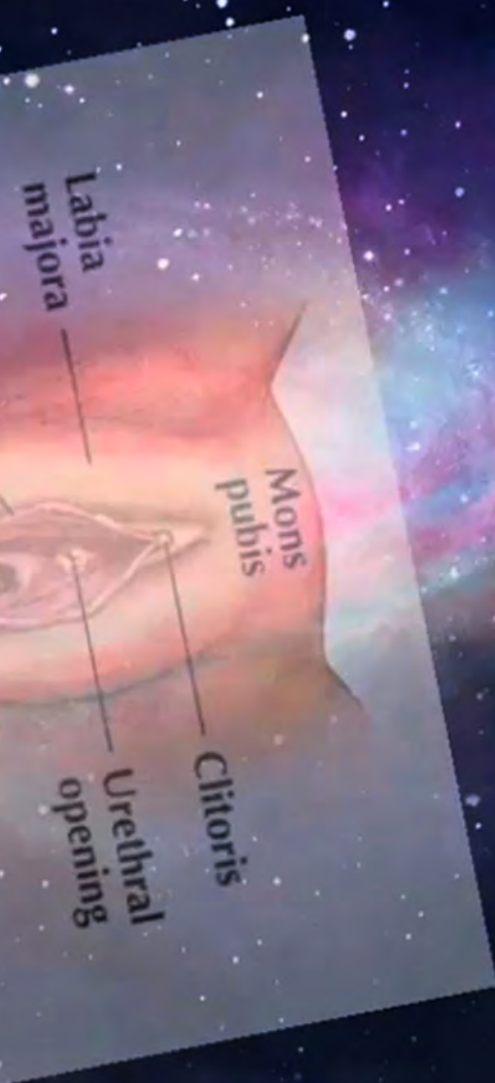
Hugo Ball; however we made ours out of cardboard and crepe paper which lent them to a format familiar to shows such as *Play School*. There were black and white geometrical wall paintings in the space which related to our longstanding interest in Constructivist, Bauhaus and German Expressionist theatrical and film sets. Interestingly we found high contrast patterns such as these have also been used to demonstrate and stimulate the development of visual acuity in infants. Similarly, the literal activities and clear directions we presented in the work were able to connect with many of the children.

The opportunity to extend collaborative practice beyond the four of us was incredibly interesting. Navigating within an artistic institution, educational facility and among children allowed us to challenge ourselves in ways ordinarily we wouldn't have been able to. I guess it demonstrates that collaboration can occur anywhere and between anyone; the most important thing is to be open to ideas.

02. Brown Council, *This is Barbara Cleveland* [still] Image courtesy of the artists, 2013.

03. Brown Council, *Performance Art (Group Action)* [still] Commissioned by the Museum of Contemporary Art Australia for the Jackson Bella Room, Image courtesy of the artists, 2014.







02. Soda_Jerk, Astro Black: Destination Planet Rock, Image courtesy of the artists, 2010.
 03. Soda_Jerk, Terror Nullius (Research image for work in development), Image courtesy of the artists, 2014.

WHO ARE SODA_JERK?

by *Georgia De Biasi*

THE EARLIEST EXAMPLE OF COPYRIGHT LAW, ESTABLISHED FOR WRITERS IN 1710, IS KNOWN AS THE STATUTE OF ANNE. IT WAS NAMED AFTER ANNE, QUEEN OF ENGLAND AT THE TIME AND A PATRON OF CULTURE AND THE ARTS. I WONDER WHAT SHE WOULD MAKE OF SODA_JERK'S CONTROLLED CHAOS, VIDEO-REMIX INVESTIGATIONS INTO IDEA-OWNERSHIP, ORIGINALITY, CULTURAL TRAJECTORIES AND THE PARADOX OF TIME?

Soda_Jerk is the two-person art collective of siblings Dom and Dan Angeloro. Their career, so far, spans a decade and during this time they have been living, working and exhibiting all over the planet.

The duo are a member of what I would like to call the 'Snipperati', artists who tirelessly (compulsively? lovingly?) locate, sample and remix fragments of moving images, audio and visual material that will best contribute to what they want to say. They manipulate audiovisual works of fiction, mostly films, music and television from any genre and era. Soda_Jerk examines concepts of culture, time, death and cinematic non-death, race and alternative realities.

Curator and writer Andrew Frost placed them among contemporary artists whose use of music and sound, that might typically be employed for film and TV sound tracks, is integral to their practice. The effect of remixing both audio and visual snippets is labyrinthine and lucid chaos.

Much like any developing work that relies on found material, the directions of their projects evolve as the sisters locate or discover the samples they most wish to work with.

WHERE DO THEY BELONG?

You might come across these words, which the artists and others have used, to refer to their methods and ideas:

- the remix
(recently, as a moving-image art practice)
- détournement (1960s)
- copyright (1710)
- popular culture (when did 'cool' start?)
- hauntology (Derrida, 1993)
- sampling
(since vinyl records... or patchwork?)
- originality (some guy)
- architectonics (Kant)
- Lastly, the 'supercut'

(apparently, blogger Andy Baio on 11 April 2008.)



WHAT IS THEIR WORK LIKE?

Soda_Jerk shares excerpts of their current projects and tantalising images of works-in-development on their website. They arrange their work into what could be called ‘functional groups’, which is actually a term used in chemistry to define groups of molecules that tend to do similar things. We see extracts of videos produced as part of three series, or video ‘cycles’, (Astro Black, Dark Matter, The Lessons), longer pieces that stand independently, (Hollywood Burn, in collaboration with artist Sam Smith, and forthcoming Terror Nullius), performance lectures (The Carousel, Vertical Cut, Decompositions, the latter two are works-in-progress) and three other works-in-development.

Watching the brain-melting Hollywood Burn on Vimeo at home seemed strangely appropriate after watching Ant Farm’s Media Burn (1973) the previous day. It was interesting to compare these two rather joyously destructive (in their own way) works, made approximately 30 years apart, protesting the ways that the TV and film industries exert control over aspects of culture, information

and ideas. The title Hollywood Burn also alludes to hip-hop group, Public Enemy’s, track Burn Hollywood Burn, which attacks the stereotyping of black Americans in films. The group also features heavily in Soda_Jerk’s Astro Black series.

SO, COLLABORATION.

The importance of the sisters’ collaborative practice is pertinent in the context of originality and ownership of a creative output. Louise Mayhew (fearless co-editor of this issue) asserts that “collaboration refutes . . . belief in creative genius as a discrete consciousness”, and that the practice often stems from “shared artistic concerns . . . [and a] desire to overcome the isolation of individual practices”. (i) In relation to Soda_Jerk’s practice, Mayhew comments that remix and collaboration function to “question the validity of authorship and ownership as characterised by the creators of cultural material and the related laws of copyright”. (ii)

A successful collaboration demands that the ego be displaced in order to create something that

you would not (or could not) do alone. There is more than one name on the artist statement, or the name is that of a group, and this denotes a collective effort. Theatre director, Rufus Norris, and actor, Rory Kinnear, reach similar conclusions when discussing the development of a work. Norris comments that “it is not about a hierarchy”, noting the importance of not caring about the source of any ‘single individual ideas’ in a finished piece of work. (iii)

Is it easier as an artist to face this era with the company of others? In a world with increasingly dispersed peers, audiences and critics, and occasionally diffuse authorship, generating greater professional resilience through shared research, ideas, processes or outputs might be a wise tactic.

COLLABORATION MEETS INCEPTION.

Tracey Emin and Harland Miller spoke about collaborating on their work *The Black Cat*, based on Edgar Allen Poe’s short story of the same name. The pair describe their collaboration as not just with each other, but also, posthumously, with the author Poe. (iv) Soda_Jerk share a similar perspective: “we think of the creators of the source material that we sample as our wider sphere of collaborators”. (v)

HOW ABOUT OTHER ARTISTS?

Similarly to Soda_Jerk, Belgian artist Nicolas Provost also makes work with found footage, but with a slightly different aim. He too recognises the myth-making powers of film, and its storytelling methodologies, commenting that one great quality of found footage from mass cultural production, such as classic Hollywood feature films, is that it eventually becomes a part of the collective memory. (vi)

But while someone like Provost exploits filmmaking techniques, samples and visual references to maintain the idea of film as source and repository of collective imagination and memory, a form of audiovisual poetry as he describes it, Soda_Jerk’s aim, according to Andrew Frost, is to disrupt these deep-coded control signals of mainstream media. (vii) They have become our collective memories,

after all, we can do what we like with them. The artists posit that there is “no exclusive claim on shared culture”. (viii) Ann Finnegan, quoted by Ross Harley, identifies this process of extraction and recombination of audio-video DNA as having the power to reveal the “psychic underside” of the sampled work. (ix)

WHAT ARE OTHERS SAYING?

The voracious appetite that Soda_Jerk brings to their mining of audiovisual history is in part possible due to the presence of archives. In their own words, theirs is an archival image practice. (x) Avant-garde poet, Kenneth Goldsmith, wrote in a brief article, *Archiving Is The New Folk Art*, in 2011:

“the ways in which culture is distributed and archived has become profoundly more intriguing than the cultural artefact itself. What we’ve experienced is an inversion of consumption, one in which we’ve come to engage in a more profound way with the acts of acquisition over that which we are acquiring . . . Our primary impulse, then, has moved from creators to collectors and archivists.” (xi)

He likens the act of archiving to the process of quilting, “the obsessive stitching together of many small found pieces into a larger vision”. (xii)

Soda_Jerk’s work does not, however, seem to rest within the process of selection and storage that we know as archiving, but in the selection and then exploitation of existing material. Harley describes the process as dislocation and re-animation, with Soda_Jerk dislocating archival material from its original placement -that of posterity or reference- and re-animating aspects of culture to speak their ideas of what culture might present and misrepresent.

Ironically, in researching this article, certain earlier articles about Soda_Jerk had disappeared or moved, leaving behind nothing but a 404 message: the trouble of our obsession with ever-fresh content, digital continuity and the digital amnesia that accompanies it.

In this temporally integrated world where we stand on the fringes of complete digital existence and where being catalogued and 'discoverable' is everything, for better or worse, is it better to have had one's work seen, snipped and remixed than to have never been seen at all? What would Queen Anne say?



(i) L. Mayhew, *Sisterly Love: The collaborative art of sisters in Australia*, unpublished book chapter, shared with the author.

(ii) Mayhew.

(iii) On Collaboration: Rufus Norris x Rory Kinnear, Video, <http://www.nowness.com/day/2013/7/31/3207/on-collaboration-rufus-norris-x-rory-kinnear> (July 2013) (iv) Mehlman, J. (1993). *Walter Benjamin for Children : An Essay on His Radio Years*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press. Pg 4.

(iv) On Collaboration: Tracey Emin x Harland Miller, Video, <http://www.nowness.com/day/2013/10/17/3393/on-collaboration-tracey-emin-x-harland-miller> (October 2013)

(v) T. Maybury, *Soda_Jerk Versus Reality: the Myth Science Improv Remix Approach*, *Das Platforms*, http://dasplatforms.com/magazines/issue-05/soda_jerk-versus-reality-the-myth-science-improv-remix-approach/ (March 2009)

(vi) I. Stevenhagedens, *Cinema as a Powerful Dreammachine*, *Argos Mag*, <http://www.nicolasprovost.com/text/> (February 2012)

(vii) A. Frost, *The Samstag Alumni - The 2013 Australia Council for the Arts and Anne & Gordon Samstag ISCP Residencies*, <http://w3.unisa.edu.au/samstag/scholars/scholars13/soda.asp> (not dated)

(viii) Mayhew.

(vii) Benjamin, W. (2008). *The Author as Producer. The work of art in the age of its technological reproducibility, and other writings on media*. Cambridge, Mass., Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

(ix) R. Harley, *Cultural Modulation and The Zero Originality Clause of Remix Culture in Australian Contemporary Art*, *The Fibreculture Journal*, Issue 15 2009: remix

(x) Soda_Jerk, <http://www.sodajerk.com.au/about.php>

(xi) K. Goldsmith, *Archiving Is The New Folk Art*, *Poetry Foundation*, <http://www.poetryfoundation.org/harriet/2011/04/archiving-is-the-new-folk-art/> (April 2011)

(xii) Goldsmith.

(xiii) Harley.



5.Soda_Jerk, The Carousel, [still] Image Courtesy of the Artists, 2014.

6. Soda_Jerk, Undaddy Mainframe [still] Image Courtesy of the Artists, 2014.

WHERE CAN I SEE THEIR WORK?

Online:

Hollywood Burn (Video, 52 mins, 2006)

<http://vimeo.com/45360616>

18th January 2015 - Forever

Forever Now

MONA FOMA 2015, Hobart, Australia

Soda_Jerk has been commissioned to make work for Forever Now, a contemporary golden record to be sent into space, curated by Willoh S. Weiland, Brian Ritchie, Jeff Khan and Thea Baumann. Their new video Undaddy Mainframe will be exhibited at the Forever Now launch at MONA FOMA in 2015.

22nd January - 1st March 2015

Dark Matter

The Substation, Newport, Melbourne

Soda_Jerk will be in Melbourne for the exhibition of their Dark Matter series at The Substation, alongside works by Swedish artist Erik B  n  ger. They will also perform their live video essay The Carousel on Saturday 24th January.

LINKS!

The coolest old tapeworms never talk direct (2014)

Soda_Jerk take to the written word in this cut-up article, after William Burroughs.

<http://www.othercinema.com/otherzine/the-coolest-old-tapeworms-never-talk-direct/>

Sam Smith – collaborating artist with Soda_Jerk on Hollywood Burn

<http://www.samsmith.net.au/>

Cinema Remake – art & film (2014)

A recent exhibition at EYE, Amsterdam, featuring artists working in the area of audiovisual remake.

<https://www.eyefilm.nl/en/expositions/tentoonstelling-cinema-remake-%E2%80%93-art-film-1>



01. Fig 1, Illustrations by Epona Rowan. Courtesy of the artist. 2014

TRANSDUCTION:

CULTURAL AND ENERGY FLOWS OF RADIO

By Heather Contant

Πάντα ρεῖ (panta rhei) “everything flows” – attributed to Heraclitus of Ephesus

In 1934, an article appeared in the *Frankfurter Zeitung* by Detlef Holz describing his debut as a radio presenter. (i) The program director gave him the following pieces of advice, which are still fundamental rules of radio today:

- 1) Speak directly to the listener.
- 2) Be on time!

Holz recounted the struggle all too familiar to anyone who has sat in front of the live microphone: be calm and friendly, but stick to your allotted time. For Holz, “[w]hen the clock hit forty, I had to be done.” (ii) [Fig. 3]

An announcer introduced Holz and then exited the studio, leaving Holz all alone to deliver his speech. At first, everything flowed smoothly, exactly as rehearsed. Then Holz looked up at the clock, misread it, and thought he had just a few minutes left for the entire second half of his script. “Only a brazen decision could help—entire sections would have to be sacrificed.” (iii) He switched into action mode. No one else could possibly defuse this time bomb. If he finished too late, his mic would be cut. If he finished too early, there would be dead air.

He rushed to the end of his script. Suddenly, the realization came crashing down on him that he had accidentally read the second-hand of the clock instead of the minute-hand. He still had 4 minutes (an eternity) left to fill and nothing left to say. Detlef Holz was defeated. *He had let the world go silent!* [Fig. 2]

This particular account of the agony and ecstasy of radio presentation may or may not be factual. “Detlef Holz” was a pseudonym. The article was actually written by Walter Benjamin, who practiced radio until 1933. It’s hard to know what exactly happened during Benjamin’s real radio debut. The script from his first lecture in 1927 is missing and no broadcast recordings have ever been found. However, unlike Holz, who felt abandoned in the studio, Benjamin’s radio career illustrated the third rule of radio, which Detlef Holz might have found useful:

- 3) Radio is fundamentally collaborative.

Beyond the walls of the studio, a network of producers, administrators and engineers worked together to make it possible for the voice of the speaker, whether it was Holz, Benjamin or anyone else, to flow throughout the land. Artistic, cultural and literary forces also simmered in the political and economic heat of Post-World War I society, causing clouds of creative energy to gather in the form of collaborative movements.

Benjamin wandered through this creative climate like the minute-hand on the face of Europe's cultural clock. One minute, writing a letter to his friend Gersholm Scholem, the next minute, chatting with Adorno and Kracauer on the street corner, in five minutes, he will be playing chess with his new mate Bertolt Brecht (iv) [Fig. 1]. Inspiration reciprocally flowed back and forth during these encounters and had a profound role in shaping Benjamin's illuminating yet complex ideas. These collaborations even played a prominent role in Benjamin's radio career, where they gave him access to the broadcast studio, and helped to supply him with material to discuss on the air.

The first radio lecture that Benjamin gave originated from the Frankfurt station Südwestdeutschen Rundfunk (SWR) on March 23, 1927. He discussed "his insights into the artistic and literary scene" of Moscow during a program entitled, "Young Russian Poets." (v) Having just returned from an extended stay in Moscow to visit his collaborator and girlfriend, Asja Lacis, Benjamin provided the perfect programmatic follow-up to a lecture given by her husband, theatre critic Bernard Reich on SWR, one week prior. (Yes, these were intense and intimate collaborations). Lacis and Reich acted as Benjamin's ambassadors to the Soviet literary sphere. The "very impressive experiences and adventures" recorded in his travel diary became fodder for his first lecture. (vi) Benjamin not only secured his radio debut via his connections in Moscow, he also made this closely connected group of individuals the topic of his lecture.

After this initial broadcast, Benjamin did not reappear on the radio until 1929, when his childhood friends Ernst Schoen and Hans Flesch both received promotions in the German radio institution. (vii) Previously, Benjamin and Schoen participated

in Berlin's influential, yet historically overlooked, G-Group as peripheral members. Core members, including Hans Arp, Tristan Tzara, Mies van der Rohe, Moholy-Nagy, Man Ray and Naum Gabo, met at the house of Hans Richter to discuss art and politics. They had a profound effect on Benjamin and "it would be hard to overestimate the importance" of their discussions on the entirety of twentieth-century culture. (viii) Even after the group dispersed, it continued to reverberate for years because Schoen invited former members, Kurt Schwitters, Raoul Hausmann and, of course, Walter Benjamin, to speak at the Frankfurt radio station. (ix) The "traces of the vital, creative forces and energies of becoming" that circulated throughout G-group seeped Benjamin's production material and were transformed into physical electromagnetic energy as Benjamin delivered his lectures over the radio. (x) Like so many of his ideas, those inspired by his participation in the G-Group also became manifest as "Benjaminian miniatures, theoretical 'toys,'" that everyone could play with. (xi) Benjamin's involvement with this avant-garde collective helped contour the theories that he subsequently put into practice when Schoen gained the power to pay him for further collaboration on the radio.

The activities that simultaneously brought Benjamin into the broadcast studio, and gave him material to discuss, demonstrate how the radio apparatus can "channel the literary energies of the present." (xii) His correspondence with friends, participation in collectives and reciprocal influence on a number of creative groups speak to the abundance of cultural energy that surrounded Benjamin. Furthermore, the concrete results of these collaborations illustrate how figurative forms of intangible creative energy might be transformed into physical electromagnetic energy, which can flow (xiii) throughout society and flood the listener's imagination with possibilities.



02. Fig 2, Illustrations by Epona Rowan. Courtesy of the artist. 2014

03. Fig 3, Illustrations by Epona Rowan. Courtesy of the artist. 2014

(i) Walter Benjamin, "On the Minute" *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility, and Other Writings on Media*, translated by Thomas Y. Levin, Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008. pp. 407-409

(ii) *Ibid*, p. 408

(iii) *Ibid*, p. 408

(iv) Benjamin did not meet Brecht until 1929, when Asja Lacin introduced them personally. See Momme Brodersen, *Walter Benjamin: A Biography*, London: Verso, 1996. p. 184

(v) Sabine Schiller-Lerg, *Walter Benjamin Und Der Rundfunk: Programmarbeit Zwischen Theorie Und Praxis*, München: K.G. Saur, 1984. p. 42

(vi) *ibid*, p. 345

(vii) Momme Brodersen, *Walter Benjamin: A Biography*, London: Verso, 1996. p. 192

(viii) Michael W. Jennings, "Walter Benjamin and the European Avant-Garde." *The Cambridge Companion to Walter Benjamin*, edited by David Ferris. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004. p. 22

(ix) See the online archive Schriftsteller Vor Dem Mikrophon. Autorenauftritte Im Rundfunk Der Weimarer Republik 1924-1932, <http://www.dra.de/rundfunkgeschichte/schriftsteller/index.php> (accessed 25 May 2014)

(x) Detlef Mertins and Michael W. Jennings, "Introduction: The G-Group and the European Avant-Garde." In *G: An Avant-Garde Journal of Art, Architecture, Design, and Film, 1923-1926*, edited by D. Mertins and M.W. Jennings: Getty Research Institute, 2010. p. 5

(xi) Walter Benjamin, "The Author as Producer." In *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility, and Other Writings on Media*. Translated by Edmund Jephcott. Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008. p. 82

(xii) For more discussion of flow and panta rhei in radio, see Tetsuo Kogawa, "A Radioart Manifesto" http://www.translocal.jp/radioart/20080710AcousticSpaceIssue_7.html (accessed 25 May 2014). and Armin Medosch, Rasa Smitte, and Daina Silina. *Waves - Electromagnetic Waves As Material And Medium Of Art*. Acoustic Space #6. Riga: RIXC, 2006

COLLABORATIVE MOMENTS

By Harriet Field

In its simplest form, collaboration in art is ubiquitous. If no man or woman is an island, then it follows that no act of creation can ever be called entirely one's own. If we conceptualise collaboration as no more than creation by more than one hand, then the presence of collaboration in art has a long history. Therefore the invisibility, or at least obscurity, of collaboration in art prior to the twentieth century is largely a matter of perception.

But, this is not how we conceptualise collaboration. Collaboration now has a more complex meaning than the one offered above, possessing its own ethos, its own evolving philosophy, intricately designed and ever-changing. The twentieth century saw the dawn of a collaborative moment in art, a moment that overturned the long-standing preference for individual authorship that had long negated collaborative practice.

Collaboration in the twentieth and now twenty first centuries lies upon a foundation that emphasises the inherent value offered by collaborative art practices. Inextricably tied up with concepts of authorship, identity, agency and creativity, collaboration's adopters have long challenged the established understanding of these ideas. Contemporary collaborations often see artists as individuals subsumed into an overarching collective identity: I becomes we, and the lone author does not exist.

What follows here is a concise snapshot of collaborative practices that have come before, the group practices that have led to the contemporary climate of collectivism. Through a series of selected moments, I offer a particular account of collaboration's growth and transformation.

"What, in fact, excited us in these composite productions was the conviction that, at the very least, they were stamped with a uniquely collective authority and that they were endowed powerfully with that power of drifting with the current which poetry should never undervalue." (i) -ANDRÉ BRETON

We begin with Surrealism's Exquisite Corpse, or Cadavre Exquis. Adapted from a parlour game, the Exquisite Corpse was a collaborative exercise involving small groups of artists each contributing to a single drawing. The results were discordant, often monstrous, creations that appealed to Surrealism's sense of absurdity and interest in the unconscious mind.

Collaboration held a fascination for a number of avant-garde groups in the early decades of the twentieth century. Dada, Surrealism, Constructivism, and other groups, all flirted with collaboration. Their interest in collaboration stemmed from a desire to disrupt accepted notions of originality.

The artistic collaborations of these groups produced co- and group-authored works, but rarely resulted in long-term collaborative practices between artists. Collaboration was limited to a tool, a means to an end, rather than an integral part of their art making process.

"Words, sounds, human beings in motion, painted constructions, electric lights, movies and slides—and perhaps in future, smells—all in continuous space involving the spectator or audience; these are the ingredients." (ii) - ALLAN KAPROW

The roots of collaboration's ascendancy may be found in the early decades of the twentieth century, but it was during the 1960s that the underlying conceptual framework of collaboration and collectivism began to take hold. Armed with anti-establishment political beliefs, performance artists, Fluxus artists and others on the art world's fringe, saw their relationship with the viewer as an integral part of their practice. Happenings, the art events that defined this form of collaboration, focused on the performer's action itself and the viewer's input or response. In these practices the work was approached as an evolving conversation between artist and spectator.

"It's not a collaboration. Yes, we are two people, but one artist." (iii) -GILBERT & GEORGE

Gilbert & George are perhaps art's most famed collaborators and certainly among the most enduring. The pair began collaborating in 1967, after meeting at St Martins School of Art in London, and their partnership continues to this day. Their collaboration pioneered a subservience of individual personality to the greater collaborative whole.

Their particular brand of collaboration, which saw them shed their own skins to take on a shared form, was transformative. The two artists entirely effaced their existence as individuals, melding into a single artistic entity. Their collaboration is completely symbiotic; one cannot exist without the other. This mode of collaborating has been highly influential,

ushering in an era of collectivism that emphasises a shared artistic identity.

"Do women have to be naked to get into the Met. Museum? Less than 5% of the artists in the Modern Art Sections are women, but 85% of the nudes are female." (iv) - GUERRILLA GIRLS

Though entirely anonymous, the Guerrilla Girls are the art world's most renowned feminist collective. Formed in 1985 by a group of artists frustrated with the lack of representation and opportunities afforded to women artists, their poster campaigns ignited debate. Donning gorilla masks for public appearances and naming themselves after deceased women artists, the Guerrilla Girls continue to practice and draw attention to the inequalities faced by women artists.

The Guerrilla Girls follow in the well-worn footsteps of pioneering collectives of the feminist art movement, a movement that embraced collaboration and communal art making. This interest in collaboration stemmed from a number of political ideas that were at the heart of the feminist movement, in particular, a belief in the social and activist potential of art and a desire to reclaim the history of traditionally collaborative, women's art forms, such as quilting.

"While in some arenas the 'death of the author' facilitated the birth of the reader, in others it has begun to bring about the emergence of an author grounded in the collective and social politics of identity formation rather than in the traditional and rarefied realm of identity affirmation." (v) -IRIT ROGOFF

Collaboration may not have led to the death of the author, but perhaps to the death of established notions of authorship. Collaboration has firmly taken hold: art collectives proliferate, and the vocabulary of collaboration evolves to encompass an ever-broadening spectrum of artistic practices. The history of collaboration is a story still being told, but its prevalence shows no signs of abating.

(i) André Breton, "The Exquisite Corpse, Its Exaltation," in *Surrealism and Painting*, André Breton, trans. Simon Watson Taylor (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), 290.

(ii) Allan Kaprow, Robert Watts, and George Brecht, "Project in Multiple Dimensions," in *Off Limits: Rutgers University and the Avant-Garde, 1957-1963*, ed. Joan Marter (Newark: Rutgers University Press, 1999), 157.

(iii) Slava Magutin, "Full Version: The Business Satire of Gilbert and George," <http://whitewallmag.com/art/full-version-the-business-satire-of-gilbert-and-george>.

(iv) Guerrilla Girls poster, *Do Women Have to Be Naked to Get into the Met. Museum?*, 1989.

(v) Irit Rogoff, "Production Lines," in *Team Spirit*, ed. Susan Sollins and Nina Castelli Sundell (New York: Independent Curators Incorporated, 1990), 39.



01. Claire Healy and Sean Cordeiro, (Installation) 2014, Courtesy of the artists and Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney.

CLAIRE HEALY + SEAN CORDIERO

WORDS by *Harrison Witsey*



OVER THE PAST DECADE, CLAIRE HEALY AND SEAN CORDEIRO HAVE BECOME WELL KNOWN FOR THEIR COLLABORATIVE ARTISTIC PRACTICE. HAVING UNDERTAKEN NUMEROUS RESIDENCIES ACROSS EUROPE AND ASIA, THE DUO'S NOMADIC LIFESTYLE INFORMS THEIR CREATIVE INVESTIGATIONS INTO NOTIONS OF HOME AND THE SHIFTING TRENDS OF GLOBAL CONSUMER CULTURE. THEIR PRACTICE IS CHARACTERIZED BY PLAYFUL REINVENTIONS OF PREFABRICATED MATERIALS. THE WORKS ARE TECHNICALLY AND VISUALLY IMPRESSIVE AND UNDERScoreD BY THOUGHTFUL CONCERNS ABOUT THE OFTEN UNNERVING TENDENCIES OF MODERN MATERIALISM.

In their latest exhibition, *Venereal Architecture*, presented at Roslyn Oxley9 gallery, we see the results of a year-long residency in Rimbun Dahan, an artist's colony on the fringes of Kuala Lumpur. The show consists of a number of full size Lego animal sculptures, each entwined somehow within a piece of Ikea furniture. A yellow deer is pierced by a workbench, a red lion is caught by the bars of a baby's crib, an octopus sits entangled in a dining chair. Clad in their vibrant plastic brick camouflage, these animals appear as if pixelated, their perfectly glossy surfaces work with the equally pristine modern furniture to create an uncanny clarity, instilling the work with a strange otherworldly characteristic.

Described by the artists as 'tools of aspiration', the materials of Ikea furniture and Lego have an appeal that lies in their ability to be manipulated and reconstructed. This innate ambition for individuals to reorganize and restructure their environments is a key subject of Healy and Cordeiro's work. This is perhaps best exemplified by their *Cordial Home Project* (2003), for which the artists undertook a venture to carefully dismantle an entire suburban home and reform all of its components into a single large stack within a gallery space. These primal urges to organize and 'nest' are manifested in these ghostly animal figures, as if apparitions of biological desires gone awry, they haunt the furniture, questioning our growing separation from nature. The global prevalence of these materials gives the work a universal identity. The contrast between the local

and international successfully evokes notions of globalization and highlights the worldwide scale of these concerns.

Offset against the sculptural works are a number of Lego wall mosaics. Vaguely discernable as images, we learn that they are manipulated screen shots taken from pornographic films that utilize Ikea furniture in their set design. While initially the connection to the sculptures may seem curious, after consideration unsettling trends emerge between the materials of porn, Lego and Ikea. Each being universal, they all offer manufactured realities, cheap mass-produced experiences that drive at human desire. There is a thought-provoking dialogue between the ideas surrounding consumerism and those surrounding pornography; a haunting parallel emerges in the equally strange and synthetic universes of porno films and Ikea showrooms.

The strength of Healy and Cordeiro's sculptures lies in their ability to engage us with vibrant shimmering surfaces, and moments later to invoke a reflection upon important questions regarding trends of modern living. Just as animals are put on exhibition in zoos and museums, Healy and Cordeiro have presented these sculptures as revealing displays of inbuilt human desires and aspirations. *Venereal Architecture* attests to the enduring ability of Claire Healy and Sean Cordeiro's practice. These are works of visual and conceptual rigor that demonstrate the lasting power of successful collaboration.



02. Claire Healy and Sean Cordeiro, Downstairs Dining Room - Octopus, 2014, Courtesy of the artists and Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney.
 03. Claire Healy and Sean Cordeiro, Kitchen / Pantry - Seal, 2014, Courtesy of the artists and Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney.

It's Timely:

DEMOCRACY, HISTORY AND COLLABORATION.

by *Rebecca Gallo*

It's Timely, an exhibition staged to coincide with the anniversary of historic campaign speeches by Gough Whitlam, mirrors elements of the social democracy that Whitlam worked to instate. The ex-PM instigated Medicare and brought about free tertiary education (albeit short-lived), alongside various other policies geared toward social equality. For *It's Timely*, well-established Australian artists such as Simryn Gill, The Kingpins and Deborah Kelly are shown alongside historical exhibits and a specially-commissioned series by a local wedding photographer. This sort of curatorial democracy is unusual in Sydney galleries and institutions, where demarcations of emerging, mid-career and established artists, and conceptual and commercial art, are stringently applied.

It's Timely is a joint curatorial project between the artist and Blacktown Arts Centre (BAC) curator, Paul Howard, and artist, curator and COFA academic, Gary Carsley. It marks the 40-year anniversary of Whitlam's game-changing Labor Party Policy speeches, most famously the stirring 'It's Time' campaign speech. These orations were strategically delivered from what Whitlam identified as the new locus of Australian culture: the outer fringes of the city, home to large migrant and Indigenous populations. BAC is mere metres from Bowman Hall, where those significant speeches took place.

A section of *It's Timely* is dedicated to campaign paraphernalia and reproductions of the written speeches, complete with hand-

written corrections. This historical element grounds the exhibition in the past, whilst the selected artists riff on themes that resonate with the present. In Grant Stevens' immersive video, lines from Whitlam's speech appear and dissolve on an increasingly tenebrous sky. The fragments come and go at a mounting speed, their optimism increasing in pitch until they read as a desperate plea. It's a chilling reminder of the way in which the current government is systematically dismantling many of Whitlam's initiatives. In a play on the traditional Union slogan, Deborah Kelly's plush protest banner is emblazoned with the words 'THE BILLIONAIRES UNITED WILL NEVER BE DEFEATED'. The substitution of 'workers' with 'billionaires' speaks to the current context of ongoing Union corruption and the corrosion of ALP principles since the Whitlam era.

Both Isabel and Alfredo Aquilizan's tin crowns and Simryn Gill's paper beads suggest a disconnect between perception and reality, whilst Carsley's photographic version of a painstaking stone inlay technique proposes time and labour as the artist's primary tool for resistance and communication. The Kingpins have created an homage to Auntie Jack of the eponymous risqué 1970s ABC sketch show, complete with padded velvet limbs akimbo that frame a strategically-placed video screen.

Blacktown artist Darren Bell presents local street scenes alongside intimate images of friends and family, forming a collective portrait of people and place. Treated with a range of filters, Bell's images read as similar to an

Instagram feed. Anthony Barbari and Enrique Urrejola's commercial studio portraits of Blacktown locals are, by contrast, orderly and consistent. Their subjects were all present at one of Whitlam's 1972 or 74 speeches, and the images are accompanied by autobiographical text relating the memories, experiences and impacts of Whitlam's visits on the subject.

Carsley hatched the idea for this commemorative exhibition several years ago and, over the last 18 months, Carsley and Howard worked in tandem to produce it. Together they selected artists for inclusion, commissioned new projects and worked with

Eric Sidoti, Director of The Whitlam Institute, to organise the historical exhibits. Howard explains that the curatorial process came about quite naturally and, in a sense, his job as curator at BAC involves ongoing collaboration with the local and broader community. The works created for *It's Timely* will no doubt become important historical documents that will go into local archives, alongside copies of Whitlam's speeches themselves.

01 (Installation) Gary Carsley, D.106 The Annunciation (Whitlam in China), 2014, Deborah Kelly, Night falls in the valley, 2014, ; Simryn Gill, Pearls: Gough Whitlam, Courtesy and © the artists. Photography by Jennifer Leahy, Silversalt Photography.



FRAMEWORK