

# CATALOGUE

ISSUE ONE SHEPPARTON ART GALLERY, AUGUST – SEPTEMBER TWO THOUSAND AND TEN



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## Public Lounge

14 August to 26 September 2010

Featuring a series of portraits from the collection, a reading room containing a selection of the gallery's research library of art books, journals and catalogues, and a selection of artworks to compliment the act of reading, Public Lounge is a place of looking, reading and reflecting.

The initial ideas behind the *Public Lounge* exhibition came together from a range of different sources. I had just written a catalogue essay on a public art project located within the Frankston Library. The experience of viewing this artwork within a public space such as a library, allowed me the pleasure of recollecting my own personal experiences of visiting libraries when I was younger and the amazement of discovering the world through the pages of books. Alongside this, in my new role as curator at the gallery, I found myself utilising the gallery's research library of art books, journals and catalogues to track down little tidbits of information. This library – a small but vast space of knowledge, reflection and ideas – seemed quite stagnant and under-utilised; although obviously an extremely important and unique resource that had grown considerably over the past decades. *Wouldn't it be a great idea to make this resource accessible to the general public within the context of an exhibition?*

Around this time I was also thinking of the different uses of space, how areas can be defined as either public or private, and how space can be adjusted and changed to suit varying needs. The idea of creating a 'Members Only' space, similar to that at the National Gallery of Victoria came to mind, but this concept seemed counter-intuitive to the motivation of attempting to open up the gallery so that more people could feel comfortable and share in the gallery's activities. There are enough pre-conceived ideas that art is elitist, and a Members' Lounge would only exacerbate this perception. This is really when the idea for the *Public Lounge* clicked together. The title of the show is a direct inversion of the notion of a 'private lounge.' It also references familiar terminology used in local pubs, the public bar and the lounge. Furthermore, the idea of the lounge also relates to a space of relaxation and contemplation.

*Public Lounge* is an exhibition, but also an experiment with transforming space within the framework of an exhibition. The gallery is already a public space; it becomes further activated by including a reading room that allows visitors to share in the appreciation of art within the pages of a catalogue or art book.

The exhibition features a series of portraits from the Shepparton Art Gallery collection. Oil paintings by Hugh Ramsay (*Head of an old Man* c1900) and Nora Gurdon (*Her Son* c1920), are presented next to modern portraits by Ivan Durrant (*Van Hefflin* 1973), and Noel Counihan (*Mexican Girl* 1971). The oldest portrait on display is by little known artist Alice Currie. Her delicate *Portrait of Curator of Melbourne Museum* c.1886, is a modest unframed oil painting that bears the marks of time with nail holes piercing the ragged corners.

The *Public Lounge* is completed by the inclusion of a selection of contemporary artworks. Matt Hinkley's almost imperceptible hand drawn dots accumulate across the surface of a newspaper page and a series of

1. Alice Currie *Portrait of Curator of Melbourne Museum* c.1886. Oil on board. Shepparton Art Gallery Collection. Gift of Mrs D. Neill, 1993

2. Hugh Ramsay *Head of an Old Man* c.1900. Oil on canvas Shepparton Art Gallery Collection. Gift of Mrs J.O. Wicking, 1947

3. John Longstaff *Self Portrait*. Oil on canvas Shepparton Art Gallery Collection.

4. James Quinn *Muriel*. Oil on canvas Shepparton Art Gallery Collection. Purchased 1941

books, while Kylie Stillman's book carvings create form by the removal of carefully incised shapes directly into the printed page. Both of these artists painstakingly change the nature of how we interact with the book as an object, transforming our reading from physical to conceptual.

Also on display in the *Public Lounge* is a series of site specific interventions featuring clocks, and a special collaborative flower arranging project by Liv Barrett and Josh Petherick that sits brightly and brilliantly alongside still life flower paintings from the 1940's. These contemporary works add depth and context to the existing works from our collection, and also compliment the reading room.

By bringing together contemporary art, historical reference material, and collection works, ideas relating to public space, and the acces-

sibility of art and the past are bought into focus. In particular, the reference material and past catalogues place these new interventions and even this broadsheet in a context of exhibitions which have come before. The influence of historical exhibitions and art making is further extrapolated by consideration of Arlo Mountford's solo exhibition on show in the neighbouring room upstairs. Mountford uses Art History as a primary source for his own art practice, referencing famous and iconic artworks, many of which you will find reproduced in the books located in the *Public Lounge*.

One of the most remarkable pieces of printed matter I found while relocating some of the library into the *Public Lounge* was a promotional flyer for a series of 22 weekly lectures titled Understanding Modern Art that was presented by the Shepparton Art

Gallery in association with P.A.C.E in 1976. The Director of Shepparton Art Gallery at the time, Peter Timms, delivered these lectures which presented an overview of modern art from the 1840's through to the present. Material like this flyer is sometimes the only remnant of a past event, aside from actual memories carried by the people who attended them. It is important to treasure these special items and also to share them for they serve to remind us of the historicising of our own art activity which is just around the corner. •

DANNY LACY, CURATOR

#### Artists on show in the *Public Lounge*

Gracius Broinowski, Noel Counihan, Alice Currie, Frances Derham, Ivan Durrant, William Frater, Leonard French, Anne Graham, Matt Hinkley, Dermont Hellier, John Longstaff, Bea Maddock, Tom Nicholson, Hugh Ramsay, Arnold Shore, Kylie Stillman, Alan Sumner, Chris LG Hill, James Deutsher, Liv Barrett & Josh Petherick.

#### Sam Jinks

21 August to 7 November

Sam Jinks' hyper-real sculptures have been described as 'poignantly beautiful' as his works create a dialogue on both a technical and emotional level through a strong sensitivity to detail. Sculpted from clay, these heartbreakingly exquisite and mesmerising works are then moulded and cast in silicon. Additional materials such as fabric, human hair, composite marble and calcium carbonate are also incorporated into his current work. Jinks' works are irresistible in their striking resemblances to real life causing one to ponder larger universal ideas associated with life, death, and intimacy.

### Director's foreword

Programming galleries is notoriously done years in advance, where dialogue between institutions, and artists and institutions, starts through conversation, then ebbs and flows through email toward a final flurry of final investment in the last weeks proceeding opening. Planning for the suite of five exhibitions which this broadsheet accompanies, began on 1 July 2010 in an *oh my god* moment, *our building program is not proceeding as planned, we have several hundred square foot of exhibition space to turn into something fabulous.*

A feeling of panic was replaced with some excitement as projects and exhibitions began to emerge hidden up our various sleeves. We were energised by the responsiveness and adaptability of the exhibiting artists who by nature of their practice are on the look-out for ideas, synergies, new collaborations, and who have taken up the opportunity to respond to our program. In particular to Lynda Draper and Arlo Mountford who have undertaken significant solo exhibitions, and have responded to our premise of the collection based 'partnering' exhibition. In Arlo's case the *Public Lounge* incorporates a curated selection of reference books and essays which include art historical texts, artworks and design sentiments included in his animated videos. While downstairs, *Animal Island*, an exhibition curated for primary school aged children, looks at the collecting of mass produced commercial kitsch, showcasing the kinds of objects which have inspired the artworks in Lynda's *Home Altared*. We are also delighted to be exhibiting Sam Jinks hauntingly beautiful and also frighteningly real sculpture *Woman and Child* (2010) officially opening the new Drawing Wall Commission by Anna Kristensen *Pyramid* (2010) and exhibiting works by Tom Nicholson, Kylie Stillman, Matt Hinkley, James Deutcher, Chris Hill, Liv Barrett and Josh Petherick for the first time, in the *Public Lounge*.

And so perhaps it isn't such a bad idea after-all, to refuse advance planning, forcing an institution to

de-escalate its bureaucracy, to be responsive, active, challenged and slightly panicked. Not an entirely new idea with spaces such as PS1 New York in an effort to be a true artistic laboratory, supposedly only programming ahead six months at a time. However, as much as a chaos driven frenzy of exhibition administration might open doors to timely invitations, bold loan requests and place an excited spring in the step, it is perhaps not a permanent state of waking/working which could be sustained. Congratulations are undoubtedly due to Curator Danny Lacy for pulling together the program and the team of staff at Shepparton Art Gallery to deliver this suite of fantastic exhibitions. •

KIRSTEN PAISLEY, DIRECTOR

#### Shepparton Art Gallery Exhibitions

*The Drawing Wall#2:*  
Anna Kristensen  
1 August to 31 October 2010

*Public Lounge*  
14 August to 26 September

*Arlo Mountford*  
14 August to 26 September

*Home Altared: Lynda Draper*  
21 August to 23 September

*Animal Island*  
21 August to 3 October

*Sam Jinks*  
21 August to 7 November

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#### Shepparton Art Gallery

Eastbank Centre  
70 Welsford Street, Shepparton VIC 3630  
POSTAL Locked Bag 1000, Shepparton VIC 3632  
T 03 5832 9861  
E art.gallery@shepparton.vic.gov.au  
www.sheppartonartgallery.com.au

#### Opening Hours

Monday to Sunday 10.00am to 4.00pm  
Public Holidays 1.00pm to 4.00pm

#### Gallery Staff

Kirsten Paisley, Director  
Danny Lacy, Curator  
Tina Lee, Registrar  
Rhonda Chrisanthou, Education Officer  
*Curriculum-based programs*  
Angie Russi, Education Officer  
*Community*  
Mark Cain, Technician  
Sheron Stevens, Administration and Marketing  
Amina Perona, Assistant Administration and Marketing  
Lynne Parker, Shop Coordinator  
Romola Hopman, Shop Assistant  
Lyn Patone, Shop Assistant

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Facing page: Sam Jinks *Woman and child* 2010  
Mixed media. Courtesy of the artist and Karen Woodbury Gallery, Melbourne.

SHEPPARTON  
ART GALLERY



ARTS  
VICTORIA





# Home Altared Lynda Draper

## Home Altared: Lynda Draper

21 August to 23 September

As a young girl of about 11 years I remember making a huge tableau of all the ornaments and objects I owned. Working into the night I made an assembly of possessions, a tiered altar to my life up to that point. Reflecting on this 'altar', it was an unconscious drive to deduce something about myself, through the collection of stuff which I had accumulated through Christmas stockings, birthday gifts and weekend visits to the Croydon market, the burden of pocket money carefully doled out. I then took a photograph of the installation, a marker in time from which to grow up. I remember it particularly because the photograph failed to capture the magic which had been connected to these figurines, the camera flash deadening the little desk lamp spotlight I had set up to create drama, highlighting the secret life of these figurines. Associated with this moment was a sense of loss, where on inspection these trinkets which had provided a screen through which I mediated my life and family relationships, did not hold fixed meaning. The deadness and lack of focus of the photograph of possessions created a shifting of meaning; the objects were revealed to me as cushions, gifts that had protected me from parental absence, and a looming awareness of actually being alone in the world. The title of Lynda Draper's exhibition *Home Altared* captures the idea of how we use possessions, particularly collections of objects to create altars of meaning in the home. And further, how through the passage of time and ageing, the meanings of these objects are revealed to us as unfixed and 'alterable'; ultimately becoming useful helpers in the mediation of loss and change in life. On viewing Draper's work for *Home Altared* this extraordinarily vivid memory came back to me and I dug through boxes of archived letters and trinkets to find my photograph, re-enlivening a feeling of nostalgia for my childhood bedroom, its soft furnishings and animal ornaments, and the psychological narratives that I constructed with them. On the other hand the image is kind of pathetic, the objects inane and vacuous. Yet it reinforced for me how Draper's work contends a human function for nostalgia, which can be understood in terms of its usefulness in coming to terms with the past and transitional periods of shifting meaning.

Draper returned to her own family home in Cronulla NSW after some 20

years, and rescued from it a collection of ornaments which she had grown up surrounded by as a child. The objects include mass produced commercial figurines of both Disney and Australian animals and characters. These objects appear in a series of work titled *Wonderland* 2006-2007, (some pieces included in the exhibition) as recast white porcelain ornaments at times placed in little diaramas; gardens of butterfly hair clips or daisies. The sculptures of *Wonderland* are pretty, sweet, almost prosaic and read as bleached decorative ornaments, similar to the figurines they appropriate. They evoke feelings of safety and girliness and operate on a surface fascination with fantasy and escapism. Here, Draper engages with the cast objects still caught in a child/adolescent state inside the pleasure dome that is her 'Wonderland'.



Kirsten Paisley Collection of crap 1987

Donald Winnicott's 1951 essay *Transitional Objects and Transitional Phenomena* identified that the young infant does not differentiate itself from its mother, and that it is through maternal attunement that a baby is enabled to become aware of its separateness, developing an emerging ego. The growing awareness of a baby's sense of 'me' and 'not me' is mitigated by what Winnicott coined as 'transitional space'. A space which provides room for a baby to develop play, come to terms with being alone, and can often include the use of 'transitional objects'; substitutes for the mother's body. The transitional object can last long into toddler hood and beyond, becoming a comforter at night or during anxiety. This physical substitution/attachment to our first objects in life arguably informs later object/subject relations, and hence collecting. These ideas are inferred in Draper's return to the childhood ceramic figurine in the *Wonderland* works. By way of comparison, Shepparton Art Gallery's own enormous collection of commercial figurines from the same period, have been drawn together in the

accompanying children's exhibition *Animal Island*; providing an interesting counterpoint for Draper's work, querying the making and attachment of significance and value to low brow commercial ceramics.

Breaking out of an intense experience of nostalgia for the transitional object and the comforts and safety of the childhood home, Draper has gone on to produce a new body of work making up the exhibition *Home Altared*. Where the figurines of *Wonderland* were placed in their own little garden diorama of butterfly hair clips, here they have become an entirely new play thing capable of being inscribed by a new audience. By altering the shape of the cast object and a very slight difference in surface treatment, there is an inferred artist/child hand. The *Kangaroo* 2009 for example, reads as though an appendage has been applied to a toy like blu-tak over a dolls orifice. These child-like gestures are at once playful and explorative but infer in an adult (parent) mind, other more complex associations and fears. Here Draper has altered, defaced even her own ornament, and in doing so, importantly, validates the cast object as a new original.

Following on, the spout coming out of several works such as *Owl* 2009 and *Squirrel* 2009 infer the filling up and emptying out of meaning and significance, the way meaning attached to objects shifts and changes, sometimes leading to more menacing associations to the uncanny. Where the garden in Draper's work began as flowers and butterflies creating a context/home for



Photographer unknown

*My Childhood Home* 1957-2007 1957

the figurative ornament, here branches and roots have taken hold of the figurines themselves and are engendering more complete transformations. The *Wonderland* works show the objects polite and nestled in little garden settings, where as the later gestures are more whole-scale and menacing. There is a loss of innocence in the penetration

of the garden into the cast ornaments, and a morphing between subject and its environs; a nod to the role of place in the system of symbols. There is also a sense that the child has grown older and less satisfied with the toy's capacity to deliver escape and wonderment and is taking greater control, morphing it and defacing it. There is a switch in power between the toy's mimetic potency and the child, or perhaps a struggle for it.

If my contention that the progression of Draper's making reflects in some-way the development of a child's play, the last work in the exhibition could follow this trajectory. *Dumbo* 2010 has the inclusion of a stuck on googly eye located on Dumbo's whale-like pedestal. This gesture seemed lighter and optimistic, as though Draper is playing again with these objects having shackled off past associations to them, and is reconstituting new meanings using other introduced mediums. Perhaps Draper was considering her own child's play when she made this addition, which together with the raised trunk and sprightly march of the elephant riding the whales back seemed to be going forwards, if anchored downward by the creature beneath.

There is a desire in the exhibition to consider a younger viewer, perhaps the child Draper, Draper's child or born of a desire to make an adult audience engage in remembering. The exhibition references the display of objects in the family home and a more formal relationship to collected figurines however there is also at play a familiarity characterised by acts of handling and appropriation. Furthermore ideas of Animism, objects capable of embodying their own spirit which serves a function of ushering us between the conscious and subconscious realm are inferred, in both Draper's exhibition and the curation of the partnering *Animal Island*. There are relationships between parts, enabling narrative readings to be put onto the tableau's. Horse is looking remorsefully down on the maimed Gnome while Dumbo is preoccupied with spurting water in Rabbit's irreverent face; and so we remember our play and play at remembering. •

KIRSTEN PAISLEY, DIRECTOR



Lynda Draper *Home Altar* 2010 Variable sizes. Porcelaneous stoneware, multiple glaze firings, Courtesy the artist and Gallerysmith, Melbourne.

### Nostalgia and the Uncanny

Excerpt from Lynda Draper's MFA thesis *Home Altar*, The University of New South Wales, March 2010

The suburban home of my childhood and its artefacts returned to my midlife projecting an uncanny aura derived from an eerie feeling of recognition that was both comforting and confronting, familiar and strange. The house and its artefacts functioned as mnemonic devices returning ghostlike images from the past, initially triggering a nostalgic response that projected fond memories of growing up in the suburbs, the solace of old domestic rituals and a childhood fantasy world. However, something disrupted nostalgias' seduction and comfort; uninvited unwelcome feelings invaded the present, prompting me to question these ambivalent responses and the unsettling of time, space and memory. To answer this question I have engaged a wide range of research in psychology and the visual arts, in particular the studies of Celina Rabinovitch (2004), Sigmund Freud (1919), Margaret Inverson (2007), Anthony Vilder (1992), Andrew Arnzen (2000), Nicholas Royale (2003), Svetlana Boym (2001), and my own experience to demonstrate how my childhood home and its souvenirs could evoke such seemingly contrary reactions.

The research of writer, artist and professor Celina Rabinovitch (2004) has been significant in the comprehension of the phenomena evoked by material culture of my childhood home. Rabinovitch identifies the conflicts between the secular and the sacred forces and the strange conflation of influences that impact on the subconscious, and continue to effect the modern imagination. Her research explores the threshold between the conscious and unconscious

imagination in relation to religion and art. She would direct us to Sigmund Freud's (1856-1939) essay *The Uncanny* (1919), and his discovery of this phenomenon's ambivalence, as a significant starting point in attempting to comprehend the uncanny and its relationship to nostalgia. Freud has been recognised as the first to identify 'the uncanny' as sensation that is not simply eerie or mysterious but specifically 'strangely familiar'.<sup>1</sup>

Freud's essay traces the word 'Uncanny' and its complex etymology in which a connection to nostalgia can be recognized; the Sanders German Dictionary provides a starting point for Freud's investigation.<sup>2</sup> This definition is derived from the study of German words *Heimlich* and *unheimlich* (canny/homely, uncanny/unhomely).<sup>3</sup> The term *Heimlich* conjures the comfort and shelter of the home, its' root meaning moving from homey, cosy or intimate to hidden and concealed. The *Unheimlich* reverses the comfort of the *Heimlich* into something threatening, obtaining its power from the unfamiliar; at the same time *Heimlich* also suggests that which is hidden and concealed.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, as Freud suggests, 'Heimlich is a word the meaning of which denotes that it develops in the direction of ambivalence until it finally coincides with its opposite *Unheimlich*.'<sup>5</sup>

The sensation of the uncanny is difficult to precisely define, deriving its power from its mystery, its 'sense of lurking unease' and uncomfortable 'sense of haunting' rather than any defined 'sense of fear'.<sup>6</sup> As Royle suggests (2003) it is not just an experience of 'strangeness or alienation'. It involves a 'peculiar' blending of the familiar and the unfamiliar; 'taking the form of something familiar unexpectedly arising in a strange and unfamiliar context or of something strange and unfamiliar unexpectedly arising in a familiar context.'<sup>7</sup> The uncanny involves feelings of un-

certainty; of having experienced something before. It challenges ones sense of self, destabilising ones interior world. Royle indicates it is often associated with 'an experience of the threshold, liminality, margins, borders, frontiers...it inhabits a peculiar limbo- part of and separate from, before and after, what follows it.'<sup>8</sup> Sarah Koffman comments on the uncanny and its ambivalent character:

*The ambiguous nature of the uncanny-its volatile passage between inside and outside, order and chaos, life and death, real and fantasy, present and past- is reflected in the ambivalent emotions it provokes, incorporating both pleasure and horror. Even positive feelings, it has been argued, always contain an element of the uncanny and draw on childhood fantasies.*<sup>9,10</sup>

Nostalgia and the uncanny have been identified as reactions to uncertainty, to something alienating in the present. It appears they are both linked to remembering and forgetting and share common ground in the mediation of loss and change. The uncanny is that which unsettles the familiar implanting it with an aura of strangeness. A key to this understanding could be found with the research of Arnzen (1999) who suggests the uncanny is an encounter with change.<sup>11</sup> He cites Lars Engle (1989) in his essay on the resistance to apartheid who describes that, 'the *unheimlich* lives at the juncture of the will to interpret and the fear of what will be revealed... The uncanny event is trying to change one's mind, to admit new categories or reject old ones, and such forced change is painful, the mind defends itself by shying away'.<sup>12</sup> In my circumstance it produced an innate nostalgic reaction. Nostalgia could be seen as the mind defending itself or functioning as a 'screen memory' against the fear of something it didn't want to comprehend.

Arnzen suggests it is important to remain attentive to this juncture between 'interpretation and

revelation' and to examine one's experience. This fear of what one may reveal about oneself and the past if confronted and explored, can raise awareness contributing to a sense of personal and social consciousness, a recognition of one's ideological make up and the effects of external influences on our wellbeing.

The estrangement from the familial home and the place of my childhood induced an instinctive retreat, a 'shying away' from the reality of the situation, to 'screen' my anxiety with nostalgic memory.<sup>13</sup> The souvenirs I had rescued from my family home initially offered comfort through enabling me to retreat into the past, to an imagined place of serenity, innocence, security and pleasure; to what Freud would suggest, a retreat '...to something...known of old and long familiar.'<sup>14</sup> These souvenirs embodied a strange familiarity eliciting a contradiction of attraction and perturbation. The attraction may have come from a desire to interpret and understand the memories conjured by these objects, the unease from the uncertainty of what might be revealed. Confronting and exploring these responses to loss and change raises our awareness and modifies responses to stimulus that may be confronting.

Svetlana Boym's book *The Future of Nostalgia* (2001) was pivotal to understanding my nostalgic reaction to the past. Boym suggests that nostalgia can be a constructive or destructive force and distinguishes two kinds of Nostalgia, 'Restorative' and 'Reflective'. The 'Restorative' nostalgic objective is about reconstructing the past, rebuilding their lost 'home',<sup>15</sup> and often presenting itself in social or collective memory rather than personal memory. In con-

trast the 'Reflective' nostalgic muses on the reverie of another time and place, and the imperfect process of memory.<sup>16</sup> Boym suggests Restorative nostalgia is characterised in nationalism, religious revivals and a return to national symbols and myths.<sup>17</sup> It can manifest itself in incidents such as the Cronulla riots of 2005 and can be seen in the renewal of interest in Australian nationalism and commemoration over the past few years.

My nostalgic reaction to the technological, social and environmental change in the Cronulla area and the demise of the family home was one of reflection and melancholy evolving from loss and longing, and the imperfect process of recollection. Although my emotions were overwhelming, the focus was not to 'conquer' and restore time but rather to reflect upon fragments of memory.<sup>18</sup> •

#### LYNDA DRAPER, ARTIST

<sup>1</sup> Nicholas Royle, *The Uncanny* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), vii.

<sup>2</sup> Jon Bird, "Dolce Domum," in *Rachael Whiteread*, ed. John Lingwood (London: Phaidon Press, 1995), 114.

<sup>3</sup> Sigmund Freud, *The Uncanny*, trans. David Mc Lintock (London: Penguin, 2003), 26.

<sup>4</sup> Mike Kelly, *The Uncanny* (Liverpool: TATE Liverpool, 2004), 58.

<sup>5</sup> Sigmund Freud, *The Uncanny*, trans. David Mc Lintock (London: Penguin, 2003), 26.

<sup>6</sup> Anthony Vidler, *The Architectural Uncanny: Essays in the Modern Unhomely* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1992), 22.

<sup>7</sup> Nicholas Royle, *The Uncanny* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 1

<sup>8</sup> Nicholas Royle, *The Uncanny* (Manchester: Manchester University Press,

2003), vii.

<sup>9</sup> Sarah Koffman, *Freud and Fiction* (Cambridge: Northeastern University Press, 1991), 123.

<sup>10</sup> Mike Kelly, *The Uncanny* (Liverpool: TATE Liverpool, 2004), 78.

<sup>11</sup> Andrew Arnzen, *The Popular Uncanny* (Michigan: UMI Dissertation Services, 2000), 322.

<sup>12</sup> Lars Engle, "The Political Uncanny: The Novels of Nardine Gordimer," *Yale Journal of Criticism* 2, no. 2 (1989), 115. In his essay on resistance to apartheid Engle suggests it is necessary to resist shying away from one's ideological constructiveness. For Engle the key is to examine the experience whether it manifests itself in sublime transcendence or an abyssal breakdown of reality.

<sup>13</sup> Andrew Arnzen, *The Popular Uncanny* (Michigan: UMI Dissertation Services, 2000), 232.

<sup>14</sup> Sigmund Freud, *The Uncanny, The Standard Edition of the complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1964).

<sup>15</sup> Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), 41.

<sup>16</sup> Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), 41.

<sup>17</sup> Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), 41.

## The Drawing Wall#2: Anna Kristensen

1 August to 31 October 2010



The artwork at Shepparton Art Gallery is a wall painting of an oriental carpet. Its formation alludes both to the architecture of an ancient step pyramid and to carpeted steps – as seen in historical European paintings bearing nobility, royalty or religious figures. In its representation of a garden of paradise and its function as a prayer mat, the oriental carpet is intended to transcend the confines of an interior space. The magic of this enigmatic object could be paralleled with that of painting itself, in its ability to transform a two-dimensional wall into a three-dimensional object in space.

### Artist Biography

Anna Kristensen is an artist from Sydney, Australia. She completed a Master of Fine Arts at the College of Fine Arts, Sydney in 2008, and was a visiting student at the Universität der Künste, Berlin in 2007.

In 2009 she was artist in residence at the Art Gallery of New South Wales Denise Hickey Studio, Cité Internationale des Arts, Paris, supported by the Ian Potter Cultural Trust.

Anna is represented by Gallery 9, Sydney, and Uplands Gallery, Melbourne. She is currently a lecturer at the UNSW College of Fine Arts.

Anna Kristensen's recent work explores the illusory capacity of painting to transport audiences from the physical limits of architectural space into a natural or imagined world. Recurring motifs in her artwork such as caves, tunnels, vortexes and staircases suggest a crossing, the passage between one place and another. The idea of crossing also occurs in subject matter; the ambiguity of her selected imagery makes it possible to switch between two quite different interpretations. Her practice has been exploring the potential of these spaces in-between to author new fictions and transformations.

## Arlo Mountford

14 August – 26 September 2010

### List of Works

*Murder in the Museum* 2005

Digital Animation, 4:28 minutes

Original Soundtrack: Friday 13th part 2

Originally released with issue 6 of *Runway*

*The Pioneer Meets the Wanderer* 2006

Digital Animation, 6:27 minutes

Sound design by Robert Stewart

Originally exhibited as a part of *Imagine... the creativity shaping our culture*, Heide Museum of Modern Art, Melbourne, Australia

*Return to Point* 2006

Duration 14:15 minutes

Digital Animation

Sound design by Robert Stewart

Additional drawing by Emily Schinzig

Originally exhibited at Conical Inc Melbourne, Australia

*We Wanted Something More* 2007

Digital Animation, 4:30 minutes

Originally exhibited as a part of *The Flux of the Matter*, Gertrude Contemporary Art Spaces, Melbourne, Australia

*The Triumph* 2010

Duration 9:11 minutes

HD Digital Animation

Sound design by Robert Stewart

Previously exhibited at Hong Kong International Art Fair and Centre for Contemporary Photography Project Space Melbourne Art Fair.

All works courtesy of the artist and GRANTPIRRIE, Sydney.

## Q&A with Arlo Mountford

Arlo Mountford uses sound, video and animation. His work, often humorous, explores ideas relating to art history and contemporary art practice. The characters within Mountford's animations reinterpret art events, works and ideas, while attempting to decipher their own current environment and situations. The exhibition at Shepparton Art Gallery presents a selection of recent animated video works made over the past five years.

**Danny Lacy:** Arlo, your most recent video work *The Triumph* (2010), is set within the frame of the famous painting by Pieter Bruegel *The Triumph of Death* c.1562, an apocalyptic vision of death and destruction. You've used Bruegel's paintings as a backdrop in previous works, including *The Folly* (2009), Why reference Bruegel, and in particular use *The Triumph of Death* in your work?

**Arlo Mountford:** I think many of us grew up with Bruegel and there is an element of pop cultural value to his work. *The Folly* was very reverent, a homage to his paintings and his depiction of European peasant life. *The Triumph of Death* for me at least, represented a more juvenile aspect of his work which appealed to certain elements in my own practice, so I was much less reverent of the painting treating it as scenery and a starting point for my own depiction of twentieth century art history.

**DL:** How long did it take you to make this work and what programs did you use?

**AM:** I started the work in 2007 at the same time as *The Folly*. However I worked on it off and on, between other works. Added up, my works usually take around six months to complete but this is usually over a few years. I use a combination of computer programs to complete the works including the Adobe Production suite.

**DL:** The sound component of *The Triumph* includes snippets from various sources, a soundbite from 'Old man river' and Jimi Hendrix' 'Star Spangled Banner' to name a few. Can you explain some of the sound references?

**AM:** The sound component in my work is as important as the visual. The musicians I am referring to contribute to the broader cultural context that I am dealing with, providing both references to periods in the Twentieth Century. In some cases such as Hendrix' 'Star Spangled Banner', the sound provokes particular ideas of change which propelled the century in a certain direction. Whereas Paul Robeson's 'Old Man River' sits as a counterpoint to Duchamp's Dylan style statement about R. Mutt.

**DL:** The central character within many of your video works including *The Triumph* is a simple black stick figure. What is the idea behind using this character.

**AM:** This figure originates from the standard black silhouette figures found on road signs, toilet doors or

instruction booklets. I use the characters as a substitute for either artists, myself, or audience members depending on the work.

**DL:** *The Triumph* features an endless procession of art history and pop culture references seemingly at war with the past. Can you discuss the narrative of this work and perhaps also the ending which cleverly references English artist Martin Creed's 'The lights going on and off' (1995).

**AM:** I'm not sure the art historical and pop cultural references are at war with the original *Triumph of Death*. I see them more as indifferent to their surroundings, sometimes responding but with their own agenda's. The narrative is constructed by two ideas firstly each artist figure replaces a skeleton figure from the original painting and secondly a very loose chronological order. The reference to Martin Creed's *Lights on, Lights off* is as an end point – I love entertaining this idea that the simplicity of Creed's work is an end to the question posed by Duchamp's readymade, though not necessarily an answer, that it represents the culmination of something. •



Arlo Mountford *The Triumph* 2010, HD digital animation still. Courtesy of the artist and GRANTPIRRIE, Sydney.

# We always want something more

Arlo Mountford loves to peel away the intertwined layers of art history, exploring, parodying, and subverting it in often humorous and outlandish ways. Born in the UK and currently practising in Melbourne, Mountford's visual language which includes animated video works and interactive installations, references imagery of iconic artworks and popular culture such as Pac man, JFK, and YouTube videos. We are all familiar with this imagery – works of art that we came across when we were in high school, pop culture icons that we encounter in the media as we go through our daily rituals and artworks that culturally inform how we perceive the world around us. It is this sense of familiarity that is picked apart and broken down as Mountford skilfully engages with and re-interprets these famous artworks to understand their context and indeed their subject matter within his own practice.

Embracing the post-modern strategy of appropriation – the notion of taking references from established tropes and histories in order to re-configure them – Mountford's work *The Pioneer Meets the Wanderer* (2006) is an animated homage to Australian art history. Here we encounter the rudimentary stick figure style figures which feature so prominently in his practice. Perhaps these black dot-matrix style figures are representations of Mountford himself, exploring and understanding the constructed world that envelops them – a kind of digital doppelganger? In *The Pioneer Meets the Wanderer* however, Mountford cleverly leaves this unanswered, as we encounter two figures lying aimlessly on a visually flat computer rendered beach as vivid blue waves lap onto the shoreline.

The relative calm of this scene is punctured as a unicycle unnervingly appears from the depths of the water. Seemingly random and out of context, it takes a few moments to realise that this is a reference to Marcel Duchamp's *Bicycle Wheel* (1913)<sup>1</sup> – a key European modernist artwork which formed part of a series of artworks termed the 'readymade'<sup>2</sup>. As the scene pans across, we become swept up in Mountford's game of show and tell, as references from Frederick McCubbins' *The Pioneer* (1904) and the film *Picnic at Hanging Rock* (1975) begin to emerge thick and fast. After rocking out to a punk soundtrack juxtaposed with familiar sound grabs from the film, Mountford's two art renegades negotiate an awkward encounter with two new figures. As they descend down a flight of stairs you notice that one of the new figures appears without a circular head, but featuring instead a series of interchanging motifs from iconic Australian artworks by John Brack, Sidney Nolan and Albert Tucker – a visual slideshow of the Australian modernist movement. Not leaving any chance to re-contextualise art history, Mountford irreverently shows this figure being decapitated, concurrently dissecting and subverting the iconic imagery that came to represent a new modern Australian aesthetic.

Traipsing through the annals of Australian art history makes way for a self consciously ironic tribute to the artworks that framed the Abstract Expressionist period in America during the mid twentieth century in *Return to Point* (2006). There is a sense of playfulness and discovery that permeates throughout this video work which sometimes belies the serious na-

ture of the social and cultural upheaval that inherently characterised this period of American art history. It's hard not to at the same time, explore these social events as artists like Robert Rauschenberg, William de Kooning and Jackson Pollock created works that not only displayed a sense of brashness and bravado, but also exhibited a kind of new modern visual language that actively sort to subvert established art aesthetics. In *Return to Point*, Mountford skilfully renders and re-interprets these moments into flat two-dimensional representations – from Pollock's vibrant movement as he haphazardly throws down paint onto a canvas to Rauschenberg's appropriation of found materials to create strange sculptural works. Juxtaposing these flat representations against montages of the Kennedy assassination and a soundtrack which includes HAL3-like narration, Mountford provides the viewer not only with an artwork that explores social context and its role in the informing art history but he also carefully negotiates multiple conceptual layers – from representation versus the original work to the post modern strategy of parody. Aesthetically, the naive flatness of the animation positions the original images that they are based on, as somehow lifeless, detached from their original context. Describing this combination of the original and its digital copy in a recent work *The Folly* (2009), Mountford characterises this as a kind of conflict:

"There is a conflict of sorts between the original images and my animation of them. When the redrawn images are static they are beautiful but when they move they become crude and simple because they are limited by their two dimensionality. The audience is reminded of the author and the work becomes about my concept and intentions."<sup>4</sup>

It is this reminder of the original work and its author that ultimately promotes a visual double take from the viewer as they move between the moment of recognition and interpretation. In *Return to Point*, Mountford skilfully reconfigures these images, concurrently employing a strategy of wry social commentary whilst also investigating their place in art history.

Applying the same amount of cheekiness and wit when exploring the world around him whilst also critiquing our current media over saturation, *We Wanted Something More* (2007) is a work that expands on Mountford's deconstruction of barriers between 'high' and 'low' culture. In this video work his trademark black figures reappear once again, sitting down to a game of chess. Making one carefully strategised move after the other, the relative stillness of the scene is fractured repeatedly by crass and often humorous YouTube video clips which document the everyday in its purest form. These mini scenes depict everything from acts of stupidity to the parading of hungry animals in front of a raucous audience – an act that could only result in grievous bodily harm. By animating and layering these banal and decidedly lowbrow YouTube videos – videos that gain popularity in an arbitrary nature purely fed by the internet – over a slow and mesmeric game of chess, Mountford positions the game of chess as an insignificant sideshow fading into the background. Mountford places these videos of slapstick stupidity front and centre, cleverly inverting established cultural hierarchies in one fell swoop.

Art institutions that play an integral part in maintaining these cultural hierarchies feature prominently

in Mountford's video work *Murder in the Museum* (2005). New York's Guggenheim, Museum of Modern Art and the Tate Modern in London all act as backdrops in this animation that self-consciously parodies slasher films such as *Friday the 13th* (1980). In the first scene of this animated triptych, we witness a wheelchair bound protagonist aimlessly calling out "Vicky, is that you?" before he is ruthlessly stabbed in the head by a kitchen knife – the famous architectural spiral viewing platform of this building is then transformed by Mountford into a nightmarish spiral into death. In a deserted Museum of Modern Art, lovers caught in a moment of coital embrace in front of Barnett Newman's sculpture *Broken Obelisk* (1963) are stabbed by an Indian hunting spear. Finally, a female protagonist is dismembered whereupon the killer cheekily pokes his tongue out and writes 'DOM' on the screen in digital droplets of blood. It's hard not to have a wry smile on your face when you watch these mini narratives which act as humorous parodies of the movie genre but also morph into a critique of the reverence in which we hold art institutions. Mountford's pop culture slasher/murderer is as much as subversive tool, as he is a character delightfully embedded with loads of black humour.

Always surprising, unnerving and humorous, you never know what lies around the corner in Mountford's animations or what interesting situations his cheeky black figures will find themselves in as they playfully move from one scene to the next exploring the digital world around them. •

LEON GOH, FREELANCE WRITER

<sup>1</sup> Marcel Duchamp's *Bicycle Wheel* (1913) also features in Mountford's work *Return to Point* (2006)

<sup>2</sup> *The Readymades* (1914-1923) by Marcel Duchamp was a series of artworks where an ordinary object such as a toilet bowl and bicycle wheel was appropriated and by manipulating this object, it became art. This represented a dramatic shift in how art was perceived – Duchamp's series showed that you could create artworks from the everyday.

<sup>3</sup> HAL 9000, (1968) 2001: A Space Odyssey, Stanley Kubrick. <sup>4</sup> Cass, N. (2009). *Artist as Higher Lifer*, Flash magazine, Issue 2. Retrieved July 26, 2010 from: [www.ccp.org.au/flash/author/naomi-cass-interviews-arlo-mountford/](http://www.ccp.org.au/flash/author/naomi-cass-interviews-arlo-mountford/)