

Octopus 13



Drawing the Negative Space

I did not go to the Roman villa
It was five o'clock, & closed.
The custodian gave me
a glass of water.
I saw the bluebells
in a pool of blue
under trees
I inspected carefully &
with distaste brickwork
that was not Roman
but British Railway
I did not go
to the Roman Museum
at Bath
but sitting outside, sipping
medicinal waters
from a glass, our eyes dwelt on
angels, climbing ladders
up the abbey wall
angel no-one had interfered with
in eight centuries.
I did not meet Richard
Davenport, but saw him from above
like a villager in a Stanley Spencer
painting, hover in the garden
talking, gentle in the Cotswalds
light. I picked white hyacinths
& white daffodils
from a Cotswald orchard.
I did not draw them.
I did not go to Hampstead.
Did not see the artist, the private view
I did not go to Charleston
I did not go to Kettles yard
Did not enter the Queens House at Greenwich
Or the noble Banqueting House by Jones
I saw the outside only.
I never found the Physic Garden
I looked for the Physic Garden
But stepped over a small cord at Kew
to walk up a pleached walk
walking with my sister.
I did not go to Lyme Regis
I did not take the bus
that went there & back in a day
I did not go to Lyme Regis.

on this day alone

Ansel Adams
Tim Burns
Kushana Bush
Agatha Gothe-Snape
Patrick Hartigan
Joanna Margaret Paul
Madeleine Preston
Luke Willis Thompson

Curated by Glenn Barkley
Gertrude Contemporary
26 July– 24 August 2013

Ansel Adams

Typing (recorded by Mary Alinder), c. 1983
cassette tape transferred to digital file
15.00 minutes
Courtesy Centre for Creative Photography
University of Arizona

Ansel Adams had very bad handwriting. He was also an avid note writer. He employed a typewriter so his notes could be read and understood. At a certain point he was recorded writing a note. Or it could be a letter.

Ansel Adams lived from 1902 till 1984. That's a large part of the twentieth century. As archivist Amy Rule has noted Adams saw his first typewriter in 1915 at the Panama Pacific International Exposition.¹

People don't use type-writers very much any more and by the end of Adam's life typewriters were being replaced by computers and word processors.

I asked the CCP for a copy of this recording. I think it is a bit conceited of me to try and turn it in to an artwork. I also wanted to show it on a CD player as they, like typewriters, will soon no longer be with us.

The great poet Frank O'Hara used to go during his lunch break from his job at MOMA to the Olivetti store nearby and write his famous Lunch Poems on the typewriters they had there.

¹ *Ansel Adams, Amy Rule Original Sources: Art and Archives at the Center for Creative Photography*. I found this book at a second hand shop on Oxford St in 2012. It was in the former premises of a gay sex club. The man at the counter told me he still had the license to run the club as it was very valuable. He had a lot of art books and the shop was very cluttered. I have tried to go back as I found some very good things there but it always seems to be closed when I go.



Patrick Hartigan

The People Will Be Healed, 2012

digital video

8.00 minutes (looped)

I went looking for the religious folk sculptures after discovering them in a (Czechoslovakian) book called "Ludove Plastiky" (Folk Sculptures) in a second-hand bookshop in Adelaide. I eventually found a collection of them in a small, semi-abandoned ethnographic museum in the Slovakian spa town of Bardejovské Kúpele, located in the Carpathian Mountains (some 60 kms North-east of Lenka's village).

The mineral waters of Bardejovské Kúpele are well known for their curative effects ranging, historically, from hypochondria to cancer. Since its establishment in the thirteenth century the spa has attracted a number of dignitaries, including Napoleon Bonaparte's second wife Marie Louise, Duchess of Parma (Lenka's grandmother visited here with pancreas-related problems in the 1960s). On the day of my arrival the town was quiet and subdued – somewhat like an outdoor palliative care unit – as its patients soaked in the baths, strolled up the wooded trails or sat drinking the mineral water from specially designed mugs. (When returning here to film a month later I was naturally surprised to find markets, jumping castles, a band playing Strauss waltzes and miniature driving circuits – a once a year event, according to the man selling T-shirts in the car park.)

The sculptures were made by Slovakian 'amateurs' during the 18th and 19th centuries. While their local 'professional' counterparts – working after the 'masters' – were being shown in museums, these sculptures, having been made for homes and small churches, proved difficult to find. Interestingly, unlike most things relating to art and religion they came into a moment of prominence during the Soviet occupation. We have conjectured that they were raised to prominence because they were by 'the people' and as such fit nicely within the ideology of Socialism (there was a wider appreciation of all things 'folk' at this time). By contrast, they are today all but dismissed; having been briefly 'upgraded' to the status of art, they now lie forgotten by the museums entrusted with owning them - once again displaced by the work of aristocrat masters.

At the edge of the town, where the trails snake up into the surrounding woods, I came upon an ethnographic museum: peeling, closed, perhaps abandoned. In the open-air museum of folk architecture next door, I took a long shot and asked the woman in the ticket booth, whose smiles and manner defied the status quo of unfriendliness in the service industries of all such countries, about the sculptures I was looking for. On hearing of my search and where I had come from, she then gave me a set of keys to visit the museum unattended. When later returning the keys and thanking her she told me there wasn't enough money to employ somebody to manage the museum but insisted I tell everyone in Australia about it all the same.







Tim Burns

WHISTLE AND CLAP OVERVIEW, 1973

Super 8 film transferred to digital file

17:31 minutes

THE COUCH, 1974

Super 8 film transferred to digital file

Incorporating *A PERFORMANCE TO SEE IF THE POLICE WILL ARRIVE*
and *WATER EXPLOSION 73'*

60:04 minutes

'73 I bought my first movie camera, a Minolta 6 Super 8 with an attachable intervalometer or single frame time lapse attachment and I started recording stuff after Bill Clements had made a Super 8 film of the '73 Mildura triennial sculpture exhibition which featured the destruction of my work 'Minefield' by the town council. Later that year I was doing a show in Melbourne called 'Liverpool plus one' which originated with the Liverpool art prize that Donald Brook was judging. My work titled 'Whistle and Clap' was a Lego train switch or a sound to voltage converter that started and stopped an electric train. I wired it to a series of one foot cube wooden boxes that with the right frequency sound created by either a whistle or clap would blow up and spray the surroundings with vermiculite. In the Liverpool art prize speeches were made people clapped!

As a result I wanted to record the event so Jim McDonnell of Optronic Kenetics from the Tin Sheds wired the Super 8 camera so that a photo electric cell would shoot a single frame and we would have some record of the event. When people walked thru the beam the camera would click and this led to an interaction from the visitors that overshadowed the original purpose. Each day I moved the camera and posted a number on the wall and I developed the black and white film myself in a Russian omo tank.

I repeated this idea as a stand alone work by showing the film as I developed it in Central St Gallery for a series of performances by a number of artists over a 2 week period in 1974, including Aleks Danko. Tim Johnson. Mike Parr, Mitch Johnson, Noel Sheridan, John Fischer plus others. My 'Performance To See If The Police Will Arrive' was part of it.

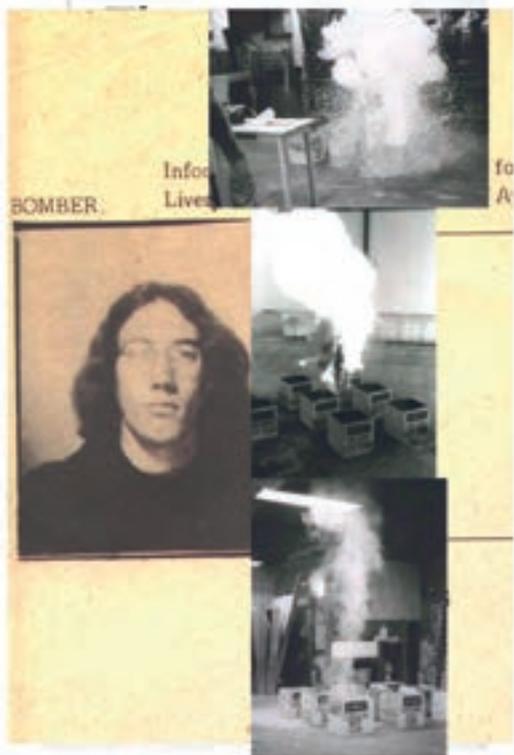


Whistle & Clap Installation, Toorak Gallery, Melbourne,

ID FILE

Information is sought regarding the following individuals in connection with a major scientific programme in the investigation during the month of April 1974.

	<p>WOMAN Marie, Toni. 40-year-old blonde and two children, middle-class. Approach with caution.</p> <p>Height: 5' 7" Weight: 120 lbs. Eyes: Blue Hair: Brunet Other: Lives at 1001 ... - Responsible for T & B "Marie" may be a pseudonym in file.</p>	
	<p>LYTTONAGE Alan. 20-year-old man, in a badly needed room, living in a rooming house.</p> <p>Height: 5' 7" Weight: 85 lbs. Eyes: Blue Hair: Dark Other: Responsible for ... - concerned the sign may affect and work programme.</p>	
	<p>INCIDENT & EXPOSURE Andrew, Tony. 30-year-old man, living in a rooming house, approached by Philip ... - responsible for the sign "Lap" in South ...</p> <p>Height: 5' 8" Weight: 120 lbs. Eyes: Blue Hair: Brunet Other: ... - responsible for ... - responsible for T & B.</p>	
	<p>DOB MAN Stanley, Joe. 35-year-old man, married and employed, he has a long record of manufacturing work and worked throughout T & B.</p> <p>Height: 5' 7" Weight: 120 lbs. Eyes: Blue Hair: Brunet Other: He is a ... - responsible for ... - responsible for T & B.</p>	
	<p>ARMIST Andrew, John. He has documentary proof that his findings have been submitted to the ...</p> <p>Height: 5' 7" Weight: 85 lbs. Eyes: Blue Hair: Brunet Other: He is a ... - responsible for ... - responsible for T & B.</p>	
	<p>FORGER Andrew, Paul. This man is a ... - responsible for ... - responsible for T & B.</p> <p>Height: 5' 7" Weight: 85 lbs. Eyes: Blue Hair: Brunet Other: He is a ... - responsible for ... - responsible for T & B.</p>	



Kushana Bush

Woman among potted plants, 2012

Gouache and pencil on paper

77 x 57cm

The Rioters, 2012

Gouache and pencil on paper

76 x 56.5cm

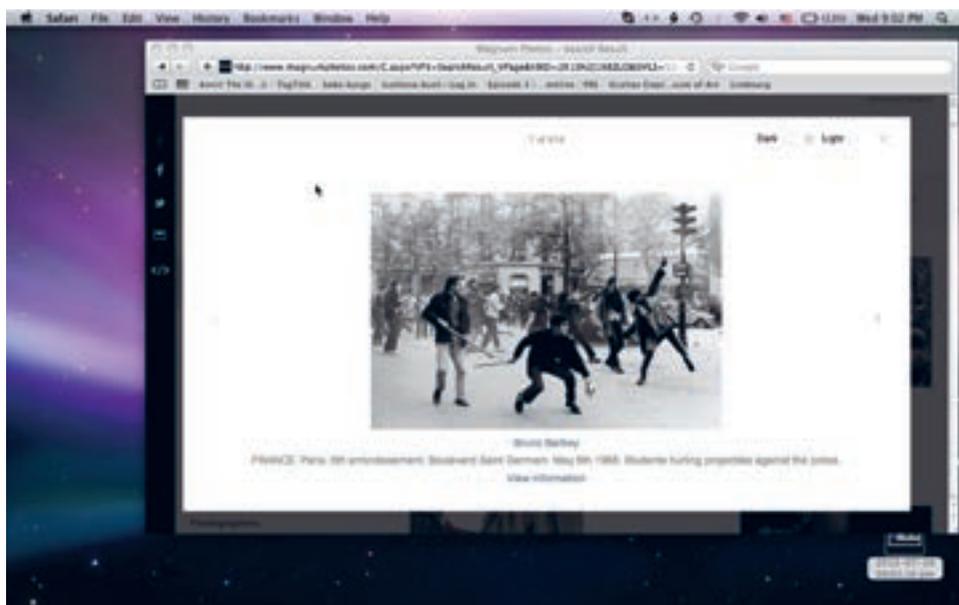
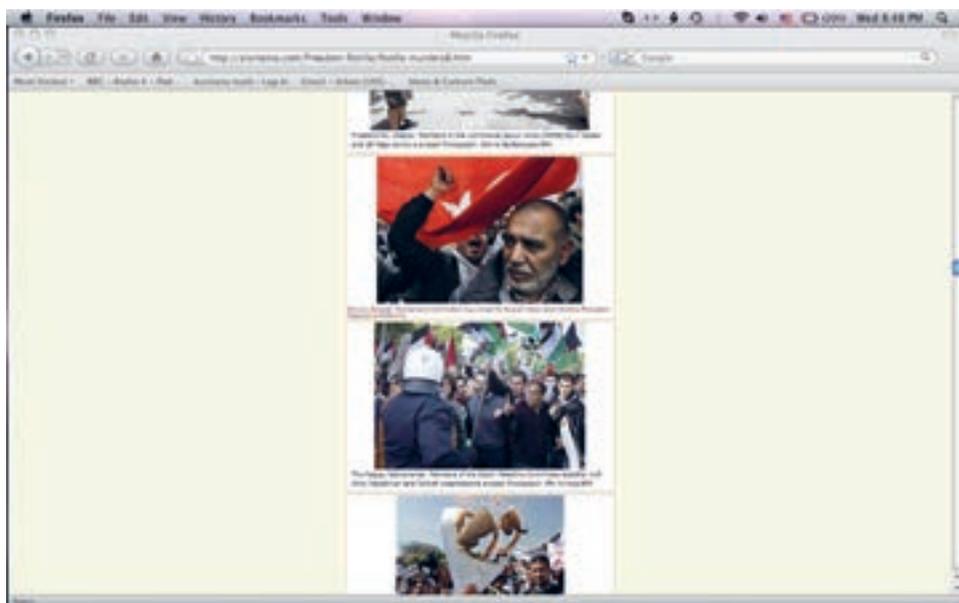
I grew up exploring the world of art through books. My experience of art through small reproductions has shaped my attraction to flattened images rather than painting from life. Painting from life seems to be a bit too real for me. Some things are too beautiful to paint from (I cannot calm down enough to sit and draw from pots at the V&A) or too frightening to paint from in the flesh. Painting from two-dimensions cools the experience off a bit.

Some of the inspiration for 'Woman among Potted Plants' is from photos taken in museums in London and Seoul. When I finally travelled to museums on the other side of the world. Time there was concentrated and photography was a way to recall and properly digest those wondrous forms, to bring them back-pocket sized, to the studio. (Stanley Spencer never visited frescoes in Italy, but instead had a small black and white pocket book of Giotto's frescoes to work from). Painting it out from a photograph allows for a slow worshipping or honoring of the object/image. Painting from a photo also allows for a kind of 'wandering away' from the original context, it brings the object to New Zealand, to create a new outcome. The removal of context gives birth to a whole new form.

For 'The Rioters', I could hear yobbos outside the studio at night, I borrowed photographs of men fighting or protesting from the Internet.

This way I can pick these specimens up with tweezers, arrange them, catalogue them and put it away again. Experiencing the world from the studio, I can join in with the world without having to be a part of it. In the case of this painting, depicting overt aggression helped me to contemplate human nature at a safe distance.

In essence the photo serves as a flattened-safe-pocket-sized experience that I can borrow power and meaning from.







Agatha Gothe-Snape

The Surface of the Moon, 2012

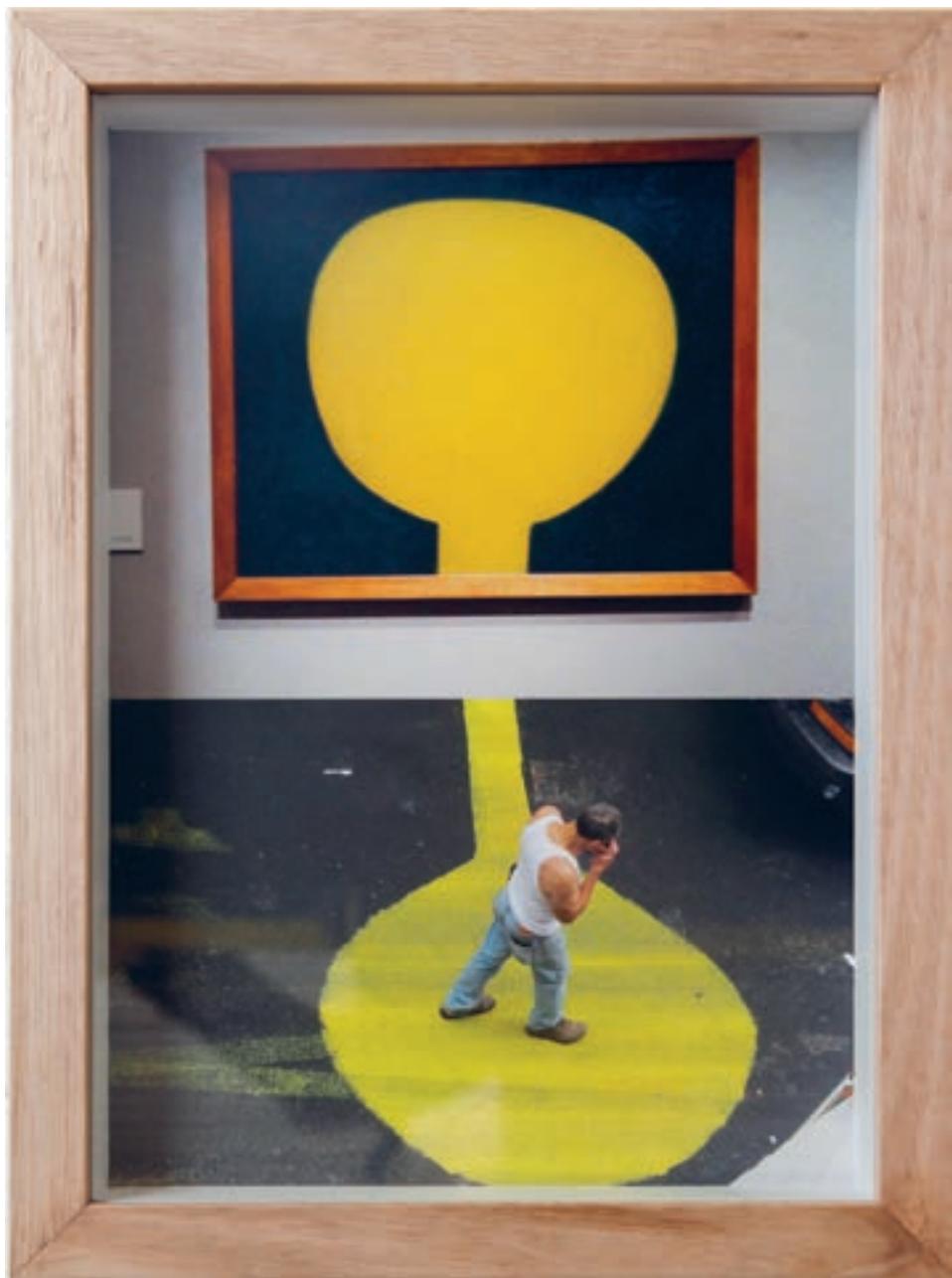
digital print

Edition 2/3

Walking on the Surface of the Moon consists of two synchronous images in juxtaposition: firstly a photo taken on my iPhone in March 2012 of Sidney Nolan's iconic work *Boy and the Moon* (1939) while visiting the National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, and secondly a view from the window of the loft I recently stayed in (recently-deceased art patron Ann Lewis's loft) down onto Mulberry Street in New York City. The road had been marked to alert market stallholders of a fire hydrant position during the Little Italy Festival. The scale of the marking also had an uncanny resemblance to Nolan's installation of the *Boy and the Moon* motif on the roof of Heide in 1941 - 1942.

For me, this work speaks to the possibility of events and images occurring and appearing across time and space - meaningful coincidences that suggest we are not restrained by the linearity of history or the physicality of location and can emancipate ourselves from this perception.

Something like that.



Joanna Margaret Paul

Aberhart's house, 1976

Super 8 transferred to digital file

2.54 minutes







Luke Willis Thompson

Fountain (Fountain), 2013
mixed media

Discussing post war American household design, Ellen Lupton and J. Abbott Miller describe the disappearance of human consumption and waste as a process of elimination.¹ Visual referents of waste and consumption instead of being outsourced and moveable beyond the confines of the household, say a bedpan or bucket, have rather taken prominence in the household's ritual of living through being fixed to the architectural skeleton of the home. The kitchen became the heart and the bathroom a private but prominent aspect of the house. They are both sites where the self regulating and disciplining of our bodies, in the Foucaultian sense, becomes aestheticised through ritual, process and objects. It was also during this period in design that whiteness became synonymous with hygiene.

These aesthetics of consumption, whether through the ideological aspirations of lifestyle via fashion, or through the banalities of sustenance such as a drinking fountain, enveloped consumers within a civilizing ritual of compliance and control. Elliot Erwit's 1950 photograph of a segregated drinking fountain in North Carolina documents design which considered exclusion, subordination and an aesthetic of hate. The "coloured" drinking fountain, positioned adjacent to the luxury of it's master, demands a slightly lower lean from its consumer revealing a subjugation to structures of power. By aestheticising the experience of racism, the work *Fountain (Fountain)* (2013) considers a ritual involved in encountering an artwork eliciting memory of trauma through an object. The prototype on exhibition was not always hypothetical but existed within a period where everyday design brutally considered privileging some over others.

Visitors might look at this artwork as an object inciting a response of awe, repulsion and curiosity. How can people be so cruel? As if the violence has stopped happening. This object as memorial, now subject to museumification, has become enveloped into the civilizing rituals that museums, galleries and heritage provide. The experience is regenerative. The visitor receives a sense of duty in honouring an awful past still understudied and subconscious. This visitor is deemed worthy, virtuous citizen because of engaging with difficult material.

Consider this museum experience through Tony Bennett's exhibitionary complex. We become part of an empowered public which is viewing this object on the human rights violation spectrum allowing us to see and be seen seeing.² Performing this ritual and conducting ourselves according to it's decorum, we become complicit within a circuit of culture.³ There are obvious links between *Fountain (Fountain)* (2013) and Duchamp's original readymade. In order to go beyond a dominant Western art history around the aestheticisation of everyday objects, we must link gestures such as Luke Willis Thompson's work to others enveloped in trauma through a violence of ethnography allowing the prominence of the museum visitor as civilized consumer. This cultural tourist becomes one which absorbs the awfulness of humanity for a mere second before the thought becomes subscribed within a process of elimination.

Vera Mey

1 Ellen Lupton and J. Abbott Miller, *The bathroom, the kitchen and the aesthetics of waste: a process of elimination*, (New York, Kiosk, 1992).

2 Tony Bennett, "The Exhibitionary Complex" in *Thinking about exhibitions*, edited by Reesa Greenburg, Bruce W. Ferguson, Sandy Nairne, 81-112. (London: Routledge, 1996).

3 Stuart Hall, "The work of representation" in *Representation: cultural representations and signifying practices*, edited by Stuart Hall, 13 - 74. (London; Thousand Oaks, Calif: Sage in association with the Open University, 1997).







Madeleine Preston

Darlinghurst Eats its Young, 2010 – 2013

archive of various media

The photos were left to me when my best friend Maggie killed herself. I remember getting the call from her sister. The water police had found her body floating in the harbour. She was found near the notorious suicide spot The Gap. I had been there with her a few years earlier and she had shown me where you could climb down through the sad little safety fence, crawl through a hole and appear to anyone behind the fence as if you were floating. I took a photo of her waving goodbye from just behind the hole.

People always say photos are a way of remembering. Photos are also a way of forgetting. They can replace the moment and fill it with what is in the frame. Now when I think of Maggie and that day at The Gap the humour is tempered by what came next.

Maggie loved photography. She loved it much more than me. I hate having my photo taken and I don't photograph well. Maggie always said you don't know how important these photos will be to you. She was right. She meant that it is important to know who you once were.

At RMIT I made a series of paintings from Maggie's photos. The assessor was unimpressed, his words stuck and I gave up on the photos for ten years. When a Facebook friend posted a series of photos of Sydney in the '80s it prompted me to think again about the photos.

Darlinghurst Eats Its Young was shown in a barbershop window. The work was an analogue version of a Facebook wall. The show ran for three days. I wasn't convinced people would think the work anything other than an indulgence. When the show came down I put the images up on Facebook. The response was immediate, and overwhelming.

People tagged and commented on the photos for weeks. What struck me about the response was that the photos meant different things to different people. I became the person everyone asked questions of: the inadvertent authority on all the people and places in the photos.

The second show about the photos – *Darlinghurst Eats Its Young – Redux* was held at Sawtooth ARI in Launceston and included posters of the photos and comments from Facebook.

The ongoing interest in the photos prompted the third show *The Future is Known*, held at Firstdraft DEPOT. The title came from a Russian expression – The future is known, it's the past that's always changing. The expression is particularly resonant for post communist countries, but equally applicable to any attempt to address the past. Photos and objects take on the attributes people want to give them at a particular point in time.

Work from or about Darlinghurst and Woolloomooloo in the 1980s was exhibited as part of *The Future is Known*. The work included sound art, a slideshow of over 400 photos, architects models, posters and Super 8 films.

The photos are now on display again, this time at Gertrude Contemporary as part of *On this day alone* OCTOPUS 13. Seeing them for the first time is an experience I can no longer have. I use the photos, or try to, as Maggie intended, as a means of (remaining)' ...on nodding terms with the person I used to be, whether (I)... find them attractive or not'¹

1 Didion.J., 2008, *Slouching Toward Bethlehem: Essays* (Farrar Straus Giroux Classics)







List of works and image captions

Ansel Adams

Typing (recorded by Mary Alinder), c. 1983
cassette tape transferred to digital file
15.00 minutes
Courtesy Centre for Creative Photography
University of Arizona
photo: Alex Davies
(p. 3)

Tim Burns

Enclosures from Assembly book, 1974
Book of printed postcards
Private collection, Sydney
photo: Alex Davies
(back cover)

WHISTLE OR CLAP OVERVIEW, 1974
Super 8 film transferred to digital file
17:31 minutes
(p. 10, p. 11)

THE COUCH, 1974
Super 8 film transferred to digital file
Incorporating A
PERFORMANCE TO SEE IF THE POLICE WILL ARRIVE
and *WATER EXPLOSION 73'*
60:04 minutes
All works courtesy the artist and Damien Minton Gallery, Sydney
(p. 9)

Kushana Bush

Woman among potted plants, 2012
Gouache and pencil on paper
77 x 57cm
Private collection, Sydney
(p. 14)

The Rioters, 2012
Gouache and pencil on paper
76 x 56.5cm
Private collection, Melbourne
(p. 15)

Type c photographs
National Museum of Korea, Seoul
May 2009
Victoria and Albert Museum, London
December 2010

Screen Shots from artists archive:
Photo by Bruno Barbey, Paris, France. May 6th 1968. (Boulevard Saint Germain, Students hurling projectiles against police).
www.magnumphotos.com
Photo by Bruno Barbey, Paris, France. May 29th 1968. (Demonstration of the French trade union CGT).
www.magnumphotos.com
Photo by Francois Lenoir (Reuters) Brussels, Belgium, May 31st 2010. (Demonstrators hold Turkish flags outside the Belgian foreign affairs building during a protest about Israel's storming of a Gaza-bound aid flotilla).
www.ziomania.com
All works Courtesy the artist and Darren Knight Gallery, Sydney
(p. 13)

Patrick Hartigan

The People Will Be Healed, 2012
digital video
8.00 minutes (looped)
Courtesy the artist and Darren Knight Gallery
(front cover, p. 5 – 7)

Agatha Gothe-Snape

The Surface of the Moon, 2012
Edition 2/3
digital print
Private collection Sydney
Courtesy the artist and The Commercial, Sydney
(p. 17)

Joanna Margaret Paul

Aberhart's house, 1976
Super 8 transferred to digital file
2.54 minutes
Courtesy Circuit, Artist Film and Video
Aotearoa/New Zealand
http://circuit.org.nz/film/aberharts-house
Preserved by The New Zealand Film Archive
(p. 21 – 19)

Luke Willis Thompson

Fountain (Fountain), 2013
mixed media
Courtesy of the artist and Hopkinson Mossman, New Zealand

Yaw, 2010
mixed media
dimensions vary
installation view: RM, Auckland
Courtesy of the artist and Hopkinson Mossman, New Zealand
Work not exhibited (p. 23)

Untitled, 2012
spray paint, garage doors from Mahia rd, Manurewa
2000 x 2500mm each approx.
installation view: *Between memory and trace*, Te Tuhi, Auckland
Photo: Sam Hartnett
Courtesy of the artist and Hopkinson Mossman, New Zealand
Work not exhibited (p. 24 – 25)

Madeleine Preston

Darlinghurst Eats its Young, 2010 – 2013
archive of various media
Collection of the artist
Image courtesy of the artist
(back cover, p. 27 – 29)



Octopus 13
on this day alone

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Curated by Glenn Barkley

26 July – 24 August 2013
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Catalogue design: Yanni Florence

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All of the artists and their representatives; a special thanks to Patrick Hartigan for ongoing conversation.

Gertrude Contemporary would like to thank Yanni Florence, who has supported Octopus since its launch in 2000, and Proclaim Management Solutions who have supported Octopus since 2004. Without their generous support Octopus would not be possible, and we are extremely grateful for their ongoing involvement with this flagship project.

Gertrude Contemporary is supported by the Victorian Government through Arts Victoria, the Australian Government through the Australia Council, its arts funding advisory body, and by the Visual Arts and Craft Strategy, an initiative of the Australian, State and Territory Governments.

Proclaim **ARTS
VICTORIA**



**GERTRUDE
CONTEMPORARY**

Tim Burns

Enclosures from Assembly Book, 1974
printed postcards

Glenn here we go

I was always fascinated by man made enclosures that somehow contained or constrained the natural flow of environmental aspects of the landscape, such as a fence or a ploughed paddock carved out of the natural landscape. When I first came to Sydney, I was captivated by the swimming pools at the edge of the beaches where the water surface was contained inside a frame against the unconstrained sea. I started photographing them as found objects or scenarios under the banner of, and eventually as postcards, which ended up in the artist anthology book as 'My favorite spots'. I was also really influenced formally by these and they were subconsciously inserted into my work starting with large ploughed work across 600k of the West Australian wheatbelt, later on doing a 'Wheat Belt' which was a linked series of aerial photographs looking at paddocks salt lakes and dams from Perth to my brother's farm in Hyden. These were followed by 'fences to climb' at Watters Gallery, a series of paddocks made of urethane foam with wooden fences that one had to climb to traverse the gallery. Then, Minefield in Mildura with 400 sq metres of red pindan spread out on river saltbush scrub reminiscent of earthart, but with black powder mines laid within it. 'A Change of Plan' at the AGSNW created a room within the gallery. Although formally unseen, it still operated on similar principals as 'Whistle and clap, as did a number of early Super 8 timelapse films of water surfaces. In a performance genre, 'start- finish event' and 'A Performance to See If The Police Will Arrive' all hinged on the formal relationship of freedom and constraint. This subtextual theme has influenced most of my work up to the present quarry works 'property is theft'.

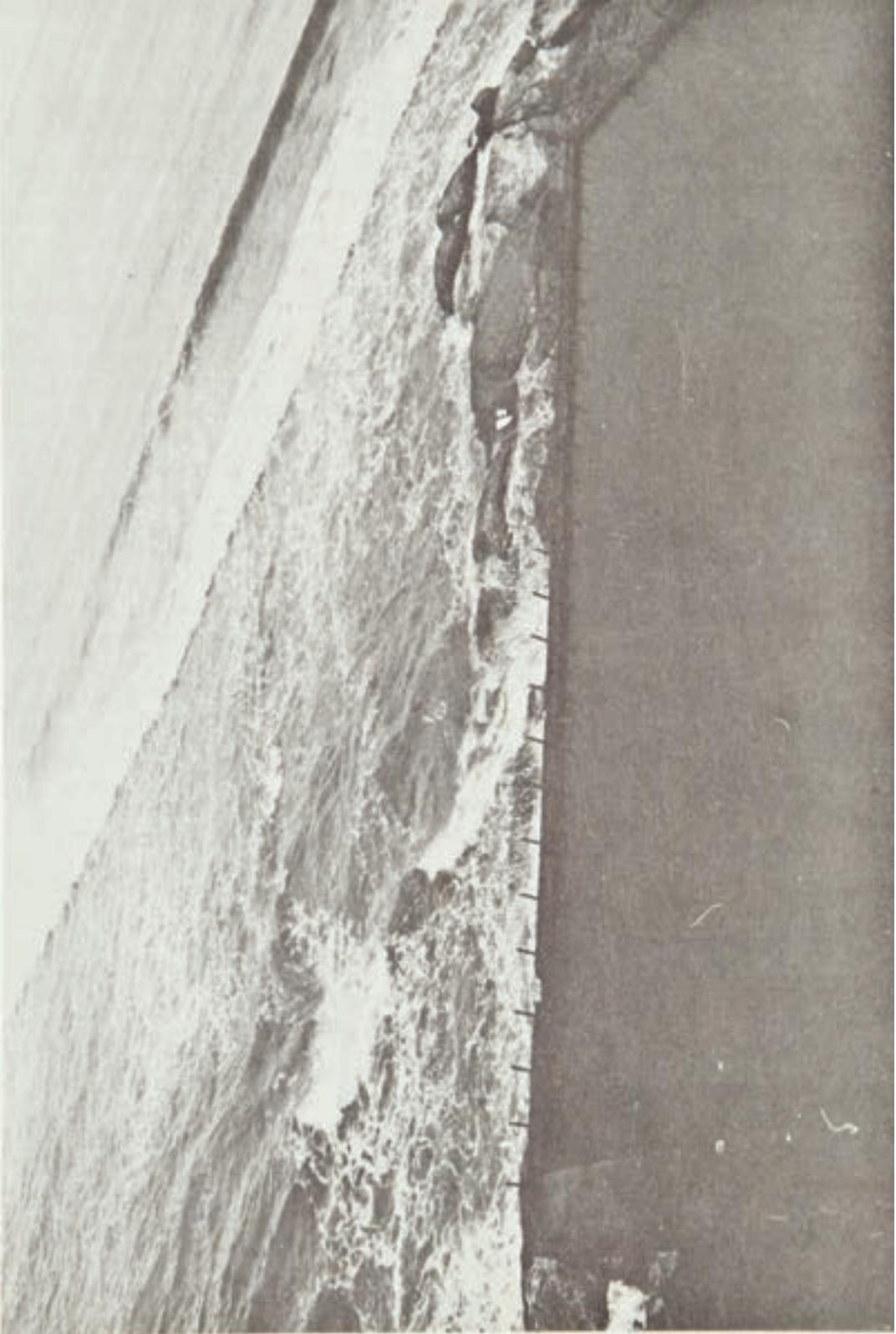
POSTCARD

AFFIX
STAMP
HERE

My Favourite Spots
BILGOLA POOL

©Copyright May 1974

Tim Burns, Box 456 Wentworth Building, 174 City Road Darlington 2008



on this day alone

on this day alone is about photography, but apart from one very notable exception, Ansel Adams, none of the artists would be called photographers. In some instances photography is fairly tangential to their practice. It is a means to an end rather than an end in itself.

All reveal image and image-making as being in constant dialogue with the object. That photography is a 'thing'. That it can be both primary document and source material. Moving, like a film, or still, like a sculpture. It can document an action or the way light might fall through a window and across a room.

It might be made from one material and function in a way particular to that media, yet conceptually transforms into another.

None of these ideas are particularly new or groundbreaking. Photography fundamentally altered the course of art history at its inception. But in a world filled with selfies, digital image-distribution and a retrograde obsession with its own past – often on a purely formal and aesthetic level – aren't these ideas always worth looking at anew?

Glenn Barkley

GERTRUDE
CONTEMPORARY

