

# VITAMIN

MAY CONTAIN TRACES OF VISUAL CULTURE

EPISODE ONE MAY/JUNE/JULY 2004



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## Episode One: The sound of history.

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“When I hear the word ‘Culture’, I reach for my gun”

[Hanns Johst, Playwright, often attributed to Hermann Goering, Cultural Theorist]

.....

I feel I should say something.

At least, it would be a shame if I misrepresented *myself*.

I landed in the free colony of Felicitation, later known as ‘Adelaide’, in February 1990. I had recently left behind my happy life in Sunny Newcastle NSW. Six weeks earlier, I had experienced Australia’s only fatal earthquake.

Shortly after disembarkation, I discovered an arts festival about to commence. Mark Kimber’s imagery was joyfully emblazoned throughout the province. Robert Hughes delivered the keynote address at Artists’ Week. As would turn out to be the usual, there was more audience than there was room. I found a spot up the front, on the floor, and soaked up the buzz as Hughes rattled cages.

It was great being in the big city. I thought that maybe the world might be my oyster.

Having been reminded that the burghers of Adelaide were free settlers, I had hoped that they might also be free *thinkers*.

.....

Practicing throughout the 90s, I had the opportunity to experience first hand the direct correlation between economic strength and cultural diversity. The debacle of the State Bank, having been underwritten by the State Government, led, as you know, to a severe downturn in the state’s economy. A great pall descended on Adelaide, from which we are only now *emerging*.

The commercial gallery system in this state had virtually collapsed by the mid 90s. Although this was partly due to an anti-object trend

at some artschools, the underlying cause was the economy. Galleries closed, and with them went opportunities. There was only one commercial space that, to the credit of its director, actually prospered.

With no viable commercial sector, publicly assisted spaces grew in authority, (and orthodoxy) and came to control, almost *exclusively*, what was considered 'good' art in this city.

Words popular in 1998 included 'arcane' and 'opaque'.

.....

I know I shouldn't dwell, but in an arid landscape, I found the Festivals to be *oases*.

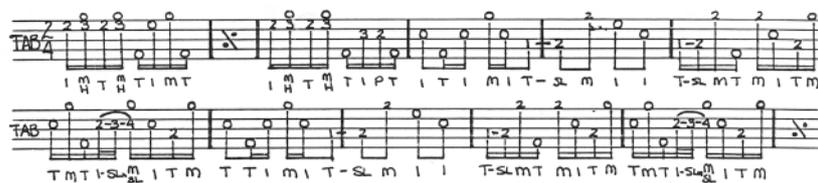
The invention of SALA Week (later known as 'Festival') heralded a time of change in the South Australian art *world*. Here was an inclusive event that welcomed the good, the bad, and even the ugly, so long as it was made by *us*. SALA created a sense of community that no Festival Artists' Week had ever contemplated.

In the last three or four years, a number of new spaces have opened, the economy is stronger, and a new generation has entered the culture business. I feel as if the world might be our oyster.

It is my hope that this little magazine might become a kind of open forum for those of us who like to write, read, and think about the visual world.

Time will tell.

## Shaw Hendry



# PULP ART

Pulp Art ... I am talking about those images on the covers of Pulp magazines and novels. For me there are times when nothing quite does it like a choice piece of vintage Pulp... Who can resist? What with titles like 'The Other Side of Desire', 'The Sin Travellers', 'Strange Fulfilment', 'Dial "P" for Pleasure', and one straight out of the box and heading for your local hospital corridor, 'Lavender Love Rumble' ... It's been rumoured that some of those covers have been known to leap off the shelf, grab people by the neck and whisper in their ears "take me home, little girl, you will love me!"

Well I have heard the whispers .. I have fallen for Pulp Art.

It's not that easy to find good vintage pulps these days though, especially with undamaged covers. By their very nature they were never made to last, after all they were generated by formula and printed on below-newspaper-grade "pulp". Cheap in every sense of the word. Maybe it's strange to put these publications on a pedestal. But then maybe their weaknesses were also their strengths. They had to tap directly into our primal nervous system: the fight or flight reflex, the pleasure centre, the gut and the tear ducts. They represented the fringe of print media ... but at times there were flashes of genius to be glimpsed.

It's a shame that this art has been neglected ... for one thing, most paintings were literally trashed after they had served their purpose. Of an estimated fifty thousand paintings made for Pulps, only one percent has been recorded to survive today. As well, most research or interest in the Pulp era has consistently downplayed the art.

Most of the best artists of the Pulp format - Walter Baumhofer, Rudolph Belarski, Norman Saunders, Earle Bergey, J. Allen St. John,



George and Jerome Rozen, to name a few - are completely unknown in art-historical circles but are pursued by cult following. Many of the original paintings have never been seen or exhibited for the public.

Art without contrived artsiness ... direct and fresh ... born out of the need to attract ... this is what sold the Pulps. In some cases artists would attempt to adhere to the text within, while in others the cover art had nothing to do with the story, completely misleading the public. Sometimes the actual story was written to suit the artist's sample.

Ah ... let me find that illusive pile of Pulps stacked under someone's bed ...

“SHE GOT WHAT SHE WANTED The story of the predatory female.”

“She was Lovable, Kissable ... and Killable - DON'T EVER LOVE ME’

“The Man From C.A.M.P Yoo Hoo Lover Boy”

“BEACH PARTY (lovers no more) “One kiss won't wreck you”, he said...”

“ABNORMALS ANONYMOUS Never has so desperate a group of human beings banded together”

“The Clubhouse was her bridal suite - GANG GIRL The novel of a child ... with the desires of A WOMAN”

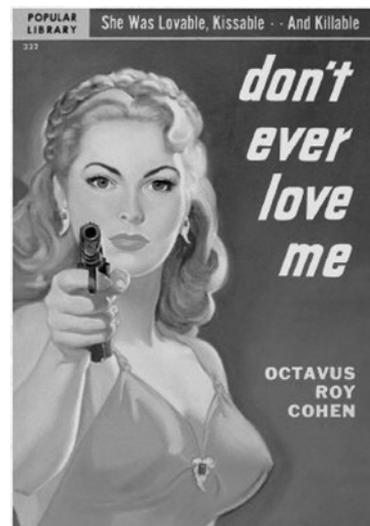
“She traded her body for drugs and kicks - MARIJUANA GIRL”

“TOMCAT IN TIGHTS”

“JETMAN MEETS the MAD MADAM - Pow! Zowie!”

The pile could go on forever...

I hope a little of the art lasts that long.



## Deidre But-Husaim

## **Spaces and Spectres: Displacement and the 2004 Adelaide Biennial**

2004 Adelaide Biennial of Australian Art: contemporary photo-media

The Art Gallery of South Australia.

28 February – 30 May 2004

Exploring the overlaps between photography and other realms of visual culture (film, video, installation, painting, and popular culture) sets the scene for this year's major Adelaide Festival exhibition, the *2004 Adelaide Biennial of Australian art: Contemporary Photo-media*.

In her catalogue essay, curator Julie Robinson explains how the Biennial “*focuses on artists working in contemporary photo-media and video. It is timely to consider these media together, as increasingly, artists are creating related works across both these media*”. Some of the notable exponents of such a multimedia approach, according to Robinson, include artists as diverse as Tracey Moffatt, Mike Parr, Liu Xiao Xian, Adam Geczy, Destiny Deacon, Deborah Paauwe and James Geurts. Respectively, contributions by these contenders (and many others) are showcased in this exhibition which, according to Robinson, “*has no theme as such, and hence no catchy title*”, other than being premised on photo and video works.

Perhaps. Whilst there may be no single, unifying theme to the Biennial, some of the artworks and their particular treatment of photography, film and other media, appear to engage with the notion of displacement, in intriguingly diverse ways.

In their collaborative video *Love* (2003), Tracey Moffatt and editor Gary Hillberg, wrench and reassemble scenes from a wide range of films (from the 1950s right through to the '90s) to deliver an amusing commentary on the volatile and violent facets of cinematic love.

Moffatt's mammoth menu of films (among them *Sleeping with the Enemy*, *Bound*, *Aliens*, *Grease* not to mention a reel full of others) are spliced and sutured under Hillberg's crisp, machine-gun fire editing, resulting in a tantalising 21 minute clip that alternates from sugary scenes of canoodling and schmoozing to more furious and frantic footage of feuds, fights and gunfire. Watching *Love*, I strangely found myself mumbling the anguished lyrics of Pat Benatar's hit '80s anthem 'Love is a Battlefield'.

In the art of Liu Xiao Xian, the theme of displacement is scrutinised within the context of family life and collective and national mythologies. Xian's seductive *Home* series of digitally manipulated panoramic photographs (2003-2004), utilise the genre of the family portrait as a springboard for exploring issues of migration, memory, community and intercultural exchange.

In his three individual prints *Home (London)*, *Home (Sydney)* and *Home: (Paris)*, a Chinese family huddles together and poses for their photograph, standing amidst one of the momentous monuments synonymous with each of these mighty metropolises; Buckingham Palace, Sydney Harbour Bridge and Opera House, and the Arc de Triomphe.



Liu Xiao Xian, *Home (London)*, 2003-04

Intriguingly, images of a distant homeland are digitally compressed into these photographs as delicious *mise en abimes*, providing a provisional backdrop for each family. Composed in creamy blocks and batches of flat, fluffy colours, these soft tableaus conjure iconic Chinese sites and structures (Tiananmen square, the Great Wall), and operate as mnemonics for culture and place, and the negotiation of existence across, and between, geographic borders.

'NO MORE BLOOD DOLLARS!' 'WE DON'T NEED BETTER BOMBS, WE NEED BETTER DIPLOMATS!' and an old favourite 'GIVE PEACE A CHANCE'. These are some of the statements that one finds glaring at them from Silvia Velez's massive installation *Not In My Name* (2004).

Row after row of Day-Glo post-it notes plaster a whole section of the gallery wall like an amazing technicolour paper fresco. On each of these sticky, fluorescent squares, Velez has digitally inscribed a line drawing of a photograph showing anti-war protests conducted both before, and during the recent invasion of Iraq. In *Not In My Name* some 700 photographs have been displaced from their previous context (the internet) and transferred (and transformed) to a new medium; a banal item of office stationery. The linear, ghostly stencils that reverberate against the saucy and gaudy tones of more than 4000 post-it notes, testify to the intense coverage and commodification of the war and serve to remind viewers of the urgency behind their messages of protest.

Finally, Derek Kreckler's *Holey* series of mixed media works visualise a more physical displacement of photography and its relocation and application to three-dimensional objects. In Kreckler's framed diptych of a cosy, congested beach (*Holey 1*, 2003) and his portraits of comparatively empty coastlines (*Holey 2 & 3* 2003), circles of detail are removed like gigantic gaping bullet holes, only to reappear, digitally imprinted, on aluminium and vinyl spheres displayed below on the gallery floor.

It has been construed by a number of theorists that photography and film furnish a fragment of reality that straddles the poles of presence and absence, truth and fiction, art and science, and life and death. The multimedia works of the above mentioned artists are compelling in the different ways in which they elucidate the fragmentary and dislocating tendencies of photography and film, and their fascinating fusion with other media.

## **Varga Hosseini**



Rebecca Dawson, *Captive Series*, 2003

# Cool hunting

Art is a foreign country, they do things cooler there. In the movies why is it that homes are carefully decorated as if they were some kind of display capsule of the fashion of that time, and came perfectly formed with appliances and furniture and interior design, brand spanking new. All seamless and perfect, with no bleeding in of previous ill-fitting or misplaced items, as if culture can be cut off in neat segments and doesn't kind of slump along chewy and half-digested, stretching out over time.

In film and television, every pedestrian development is an exquisite existential challenge negotiated with wit and glamour. TV as a cultural site acts as a portal, being both a mirror and a viewfinder to identifying cool. Things are either cool or they suck. Cool is about realising desire. By necessity then, advertising is based on the premise of envy. You want the thing that is cool because then you will be cool and will be envied for your coolness. Perversely, envy's inner logic is that if you can't have that thing, then you don't want anyone else to have it either. And the more we desire to emulate media determined images of reality the more desire tends to chill, congealing like coagulated milk into disappointment. The actuality of the experience itself seems colourless when measured against the filmic qualities of our expectation.

In the global marketplace, it is the job of the professional 'cool hunter' to research new ideas of coolness and to predict future stylistic trends, because although some people think they are born hip, it is a slippery and evasive thing that constantly needs refining or reinventing. What is new always has a shot at being cool. What is the most new as well as innovative is deemed the 'cutting edge'. Emerging visual artists are often hailed as cutting edge and as in fashion and music, it can be an overwrought term used by the capitalist market to sell all things new, hip and heading for mass appeal. I want to look like the girl in *wallpaper* magazine. I want to make art that looks like the art in the art magazine.

Artists really only make art to be cool (it's sure as hell not about making the world a nicer, better place), and curators are the cool

hunters of the visual arts world. Parasitically, their job is to trade in cool because vicariously they will be made to look cool too. A recurring mental image appears when I think of the word curator (in the heavyweight sense). It is of a Damien Hirst shark, endlessly prowling but rendered numb (and a bit ratty around the edges) through self-importance.

Three Facts about art world cool:

Fact 1. Attractiveness, bravado and insider knowledge are the hallmarks of cool.

Fact 2. Emerging artists' fear of not being cool is almost as pathological as their thinly disguised fervour to succeed. The two are intertwined. What is fashionable in music, film or clothing gets transcribed into a visual art language and it has that look that is so right now that it works, because that's what art right now looks like. I think. Well it looks like the art in magazines doesn't it? The lines are getting blurrier.

Fact 3. Rigour means rigorously cool.

The problem with cool is it tends to have a homogenising effect, dissipating complex and difficult ideas into a sanctioned form of art correctness. E.g. this art is important because it is about biotechnology.....ooooohhhh. And it comes with instructions in case we don't 'get it'. It's a kind of All-bran mentality, the art we have to have because Mum and Dad said so. Pay attention kids this is good for you. Why are emerging artists and art students desperately trying to find some kind of acceptable dogma to tack their practice to, thereby reducing potentially dissenting work into some easily digested chunks of 'art coolness'? Apparently 'beauty' is back in, as well as 'narrative', but that's been fashionable for a while now. Adopting the dominant aesthetic seems a hollow and blatantly superficial strategy.

But I could just be tired, or not 'rock-cool' bored enough.

**Katrina Simmons**





Daniel Torchio, *Discovered Model #32*, 2004

## Gone in 3 seconds visual culture

I'm sick of getting reminded that herbal penis enlargements really work and how we can now clear our debts in a second while, at the same time, getting a free college degree in the U.S. Well, maybe we are so saturated by those reminders, we don't even care. Deleting e-mails has become almost a second-nature-like activity.



The time may be right to invite better e-mails to your inbox so that you won't be deleting them every second. Instead, maybe you can delete them after 3 seconds.

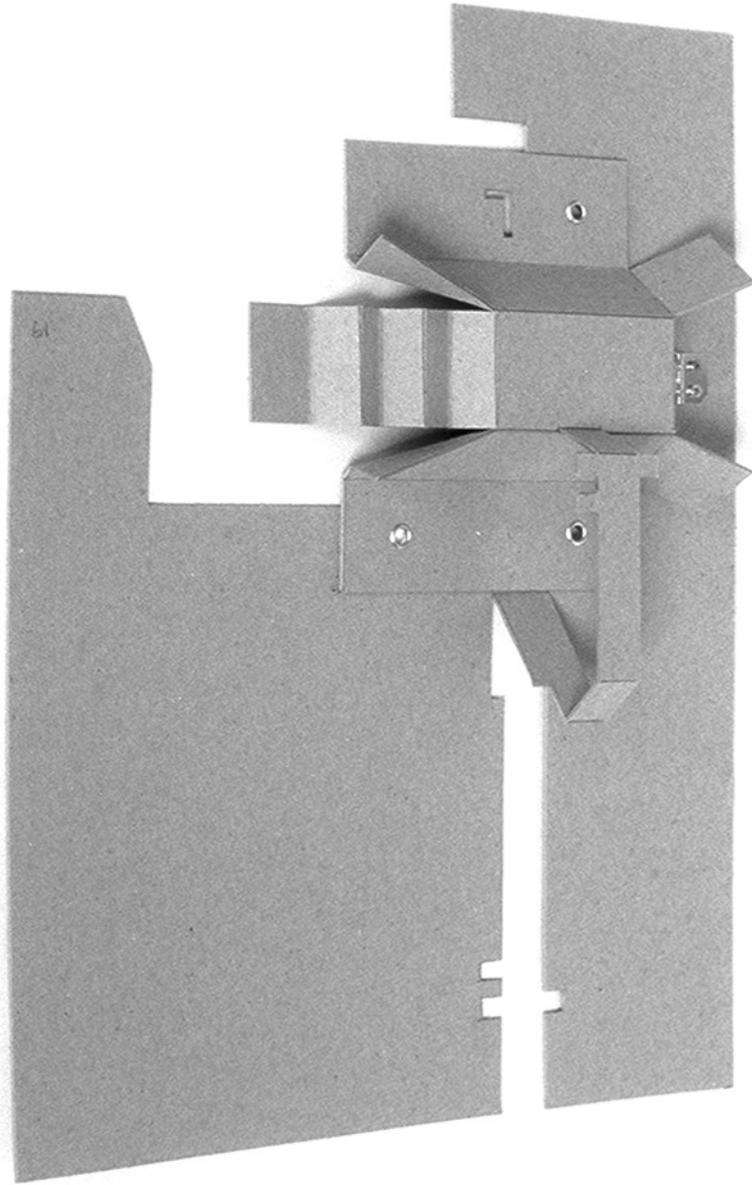
You can sign up for a newsletter at [www.e-flux.com](http://www.e-flux.com) Before you know it, your inbox will be bombarded by the so-called 'latest things' on visual culture including cinema, contemporary art, art theory, various publications and conferences. Mind you, more often than not, you won't be bothered even opening the newsletter.

If you want to stare at the computer screen even longer, [www.villagevoice.com](http://www.villagevoice.com) might do the trick. Their weekly e-newspaper is full of interesting stuff. So interesting that I keep them in my inbox for checking later and then never read them.

Well, whatever your interests may be, I'm sure there will be millions and zillions of newsletters waiting for you, well, waiting for you to register so that you can delete them in a few seconds but never bother to unsubscribe. Yes, no doubt you are receiving these zombie newsletters even while you read this. You better rush to the computer and delete them. QUICK!!

Ah, by the way, if you find anything worth receiving, please let me know so that I can delete them too. My e-mail is: [pixy142@hotmail.com](mailto:pixy142@hotmail.com) And please don't send anything to do with Paris Hilton!

**Akira Akira**



Roy Ananda & Julia Robinson, *Thousand Fold*, 2004



Roy Ananda & Julia Robinson, *Thousand Fold*, 2004

# Art as a tea-towel

The road between art and consumerism is a hazy and hazardous one. Until now, there have been labels such as ‘sell out’, ready to throw at artists whose glossy practices appears to value economic growth over development, and barriers ready to shield contemporary art from the glare of blatant celebrations of the commodity and/or commercial selling. Artists such as Ken Done and Jeff Koons come to mind as two tarnished with the ‘sell out’ name for marketing the reproductions of originals into touristy aprons, tea towels and the like, or the sublime celebration of all consumable. But in stark contrast, the recent reaction to a newly commercialised practice not unlike that of Done’s, has not resulted in a ‘sell-out’ label, but a lucky number seven in *Art Review’s* ‘The Art World’s Top 100 Players’. Contemporary Japanese artist, Takashi Murakami, has designed the latest colourful range of Louis Vuitton leather-ware.

Murakami’s art preceding this latest collaboration with Marc Jacobs from Louis Vuitton, pushed the boundaries between art and consumerism, for a variety of purposes it seems. He explored with tongue-in-cheek, current Japanese underground and pop cultures (the emphasis being on Japanese, as opposed to non-Japanese cultural influences) effectively by promoting anonymous young artists and making their work available and affordable to people without generous disposable incomes. At his own exhibitions, Murakami has sold merchandise and replicas of his work, seemingly to critique pop culture through mimicking its own formula. By joining forces with Louis Vuitton, Murakami has effectively raised his profile from a popular contemporary artist into a serious promoter/supporter of an exclusive label on par with Gucci, Prada etc; a cultural icon. Murakami has no qualms about his aim to become a world famous artist and this venture shows the lengths he will



take, but will this discard him to the commercial section of art (otherwise known as 'sell out') or is his apparent success a reflection of changes in contemporary art?

Arts writer, Juliana Engberg in 'Say What?!' (Photofile, no65, May 2002) suggests that art's modification into, what she believes, is a flawless equivalent with fashion, is devastating. Perhaps contemporary art could be applying an 'art fatigue' strategy (in the same vein as the 'advertising fatigue' phenomena is applied). Fatigue in advertising ensures that new methods are employed to sell to the consumer; an ironic self-awareness the latest ploy. In art, the course has been redirected also; artistic responses to consumerism have altered from



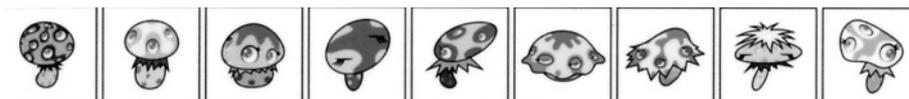
a mish-mash of collaged protests into slick and glossy photos and objects that appear to be spawned by advertising themselves: think Patricia Piccinini and photographer, Darren Sylvester. Although there are many protest worthy elements to the post-modern life, not least, the value we imbue in materialism, there seems to be a current cringe factor to 'anti' art forms within the contemporary art realm, ambiguity is the new 'cool'. This is to me, the subtle critique of



consumer culture from within consumer culture. We have moved on from the yelling voices of the political posters and have placed a monotone, yet mildly determined voice into the chatter that is the dominant media of current culture.

So with this in mind, is the Murakami leatherwear a symbol of art's new form of subtle critique to our slick cultural surrounds (so subtle it has indeed become a part of it), or, has Murakami cashed in and turned his artistic name into a designer name for a very large sum? But what is more questionable is the apparent success awarded to Murakami through this venture. Closer to home, recent initiatives such as the *Affordable Art Fairs* are indicative of, not only the lucrative average-wage investment market, but the potential for art to draw a crowd. This potential, coupled with regular arts funding cuts and findings that in Australia there are around 9000 professional visual artists, earning a median income of \$3,100 from their art (in the ongoing survey of Australian professional artists commissioned by the Australia council), leaves a tempting predicament for artists trying to earn a living. The threat of *spectacularisation*, or in the words of Terry Smith in his paper 'What is Contemporary Art?' (Artspace Visual Arts Centre, Sydney, 2001, p. 8), 'the retreat of Contemporary art into being just another brand of entertainment' is very real. But in our capitalist world, art is, amongst all of its other qualities, a consumable product and Murakami (whether to stick it to the high art world or to fund future projects) has taken the money-grabbing 'sold out' option. Only time will tell if he will receive the 'sell out' label too.

## Sera Waters





# **Matthew Bradley**

## **GIANT**

*Matthew Bradley is an Adelaide based artist whose exhibitions include Gold Card at the Experimental Art Foundation, Primavera at the MCA, and Z at Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery. He will hold a solo show at the new Downtown space in June. Andrew Best spoke to Matthew at his exhibition Dark Crystal, held at the Project Space, Contemporary Art Centre of South Australia.*

Andrew Best: In this exhibition you seem to repeat ideas of weightlessness. Except for this huge, branch-like, light box structure, which feels like an intense weight - perhaps to the point of collapse.

Matthew Bradley: I wanted to keep the shape organic. I always have ideas of overcoming gravity, overcoming resistance. A lot of people have said it looks like a plane that has crashed. There are a few things I like to think it's like. One thing perhaps is as a fragment of my neural network. Just a very small part, chopped out and enlarged a million times. It's like the section that stores the memory of TAA (Trans-Australia Airlines).

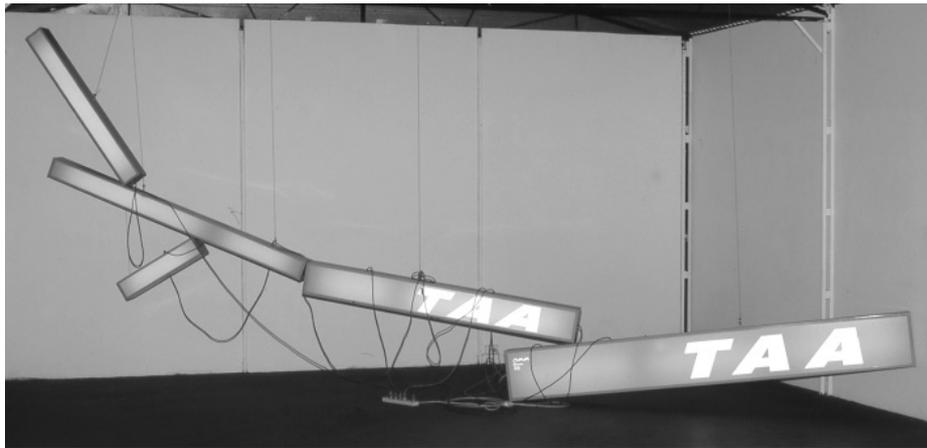
AB: Why TAA?

MB: I think that TAA, when I was a child, sort of gave me an early philosophy. Because I wanted to travel, TAA provided both the actual physical means - planes, routes you can fly - it also suggested a state of mind that facilitated travel. It was sort of downloaded into me. If my brain had a branding of any sort, it would probably be TAA.

AB: There is a large photograph next to it of an upside-down aeroplane. It looks like some sort of spacecraft - a super-plane - that can go further than TAA.

MB: The meaning of planes has changed - they are a lot more ominous in the sky now. One of the first great symbols of Modernism, they've been turned back against the modern world. I want this type of

image to suggest implications. If you came across this in nature, either it's falling out of the sky, or it's going along - an alien force has taken over it. So you have to speculate about that other force.



AB: There are also a series of stencil paintings that refer to a character *Giant*. Who is Giant?

MB: Giant is one of a few different characters that I feel reside inside me. Sort of bordering on multiple personalities, but I have a little bit more control over when they came up. All these characters have different traits I think maybe I don't have a lot of. So like if I'm doing something and I need a bit of extra strength, I can call on Giant to come on line. It has come about because of other effects as well, like feeling like I am able to I see through his eyes. I get a view of the world he comes from. I feel like he has an equal part in creating these pictures as I do.

AB: All of these stencils are part of Giant's history?

MB: His domain. I kind of see events unfolding and objects, I'm not really aware of the narrative that binds these places and things together. I'm sort of cataloguing them at the moment - beings, landscapes, perhaps an interpretation of politics, geography - a map slowly being put together in my head. I think there's a narrative or a role for a spectator or me to speculate.

AB: You've talked before about your works as maps, filling in important parts of your physical actions in, say, Adelaide. These works seem to depict an internal, psychological map. How do you see these two 'maps' interacting?

MB: It is interesting to me that these earlier places, you can find them on the map, the titles refer to real places. I maybe *disappear* off of the official map, because I've moved in a way that avoided a proscribed way of moving through space - by jumping a fence or off of a building.

AB: The earlier explorations seemed to be of physical extremes, dangerous ones like travelling from great heights or distances. This work maybe is going on some extreme inward path.

MB: I think that my body has always been the site of works, and the movements either go outwards or inwards. I think that, well, both *Giant* and *Ghost Gum* are deeply embedded works - in my mind or consciousness. An extreme level of digging is required to get to these places.

AB: But there doesn't seem to be any real danger in the paintings. An unnerving sense, perhaps.

MB: The only danger with *Giant* is getting *Giant* angry. He shoots lasers out of his eyes. Everyone else is soft and friendly. Yes - *Giant* is a bit of a worry.



**Andrew Best**

# T W O T I M E S T W O

That point, that point, not a pause, more a breathless, breath expelled moment of shock. A sound like a train crash, a fire cracker in the middle of a pre-performance reverie, swept across us all, the audience, we were held, grabbed and frozen. Two huge screens glowed and a woman walked on to the apron of the stage. She held a digital camera connected to some unseen engine-room via a cable.

Two bodies launched into air, visually captivating, driven by a hissing energy like a particle accelerator. FLASH, mid flight, the bodies caught, captured, held in a digital block of solid air.....represented. That point had another form, in space and time, well really, two forms of parallel presence, present.....gone. The image projected just outside real time, in real time, several metres square, lingered on the two screens, stage left and right, superb, immaculate, caught and held in the parabola of flight while the bodies flew on.

Sound pumping like the rhythm of an express train; loud, insistent, an ocean of aural water, drowning us, we were held.

Beautiful athletic bodies, formalist instruments, being composed, thrown, flung, and tossed in a fierce demanding choreography hungry for space.

Image follows image in space, of space, in a documentary of explosive forces while we witness, eye witness the momentary act, the dance, the ordeal of it.

That gap, momentary, between witness and document. Who can hold what, how long? Could a dancer hang in space long enough for us to



*Photo: Chris Herzfeld*

gather the geometry of beauty and strength or the geometries/trajectories of decision? The dancers breathing, gasping for oxygen to feed the hissing/frying muscles. The audience, breath held, holding, willing, surfing the choreography of remembered freedoms of the body.

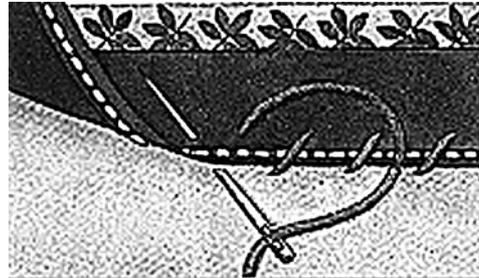
End, sigh, like a person drawing, who, at the last mark, releases breath held for hours and can see the invisible made visible.

This was HELD, Australian Dance Theatre, Gary Stewart, Adelaide Festival of Arts..... remarkable. We stepped out of the rolling car crash into faster time and watched the wind pick up a paper bag.

Slow, excruciatingly slow, long time tremulous movements, breath heavy, measured like the bellows of an ancient practical joke; responding to pain.

A needle passes through flesh trailing a long, precise thread. No blood, not there. The breath, through the nose, long inhalation, an injury gasping the sedative of oxygen, loud, urgent.....slow release over vocal chords, muffled chorus, a thousand voices.

Another slow, precise puncture, the needle pushed through a pinched fold of skin. This time the earlobe responds like a puppet of flesh to the tension of the thread as it passes through the upper lip, the lower lip and is knotted off, caught fast, sealed.



The face begins to fold along the seismic lines of thread; a package tied tight, the sound through the mouth muffled now by lips puckered in a wicked tryst, a baroque contraposto horizontal across the face.

People squirm, leave, return, enter, turn to each other, gasp, breath, remember, think about what we have become.

He did this years ago, 1970s, C.A.S gallery, 16 mm film, black and white. Buttons, thread, fish, toothpicks, fuses; his body, one arm, fierce. It was the time of the American war in Vietnam, its now the time of the American war in Iraq and detention centres in the deserts of Australia. Its about truth and lies, paranoia and power, men behaving badly and assumptions that art can directly confront distortions of power, should do it, must do it.

The video documentation of the suturing of Parr's face lasted 9 minutes, interminable, unflinching; a mirror held up to whoever could, would watch and watch and watch.

Michael Parr has a lot to say, he says it without fear or favour and can and does divide a panel discussion leaving, at times the shards of whole ideas as he crashes about looking for the light switch.

All is not lost.

## **Christopher Orchard**

# ART on the STREETS

I am struck by those old men in orange overalls who roam my neighbourhood zealously painting out what they consider to be unsightly graffiti. Curiously, they painted a monstrous dark brown rectangle on the side of my house to cover a small, delicate tag which really wasn't troubling me at the time. I want to shout at



those old men but I don't want to disturb their contented self-righteous busy-ness. I'm sure they believe what they are doing is good and useful and I bet it even is from time to time. I would love to shake them and insist they be more discerning about what they obliterate. They even paint over beautiful blotchwoman stickers on stobie poles with drab, wrong colours that look way more unsightly.

So....as an antidote, and to see how beautiful painting on the street can be, look at this.....

<http://www.urbanartofficial.co.uk/>

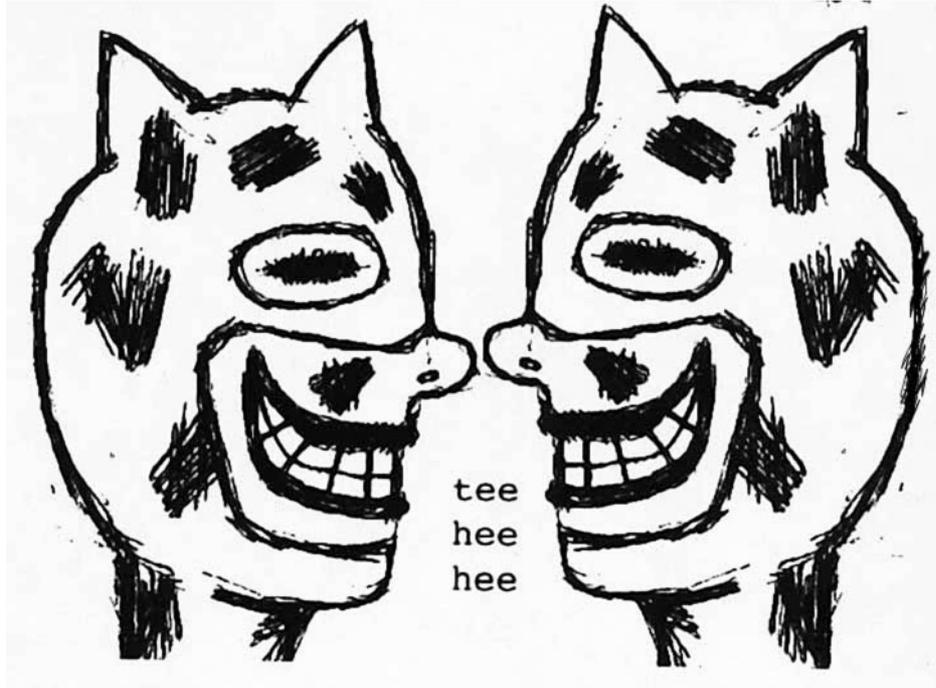
(thank you Linda-Marie Walker for turning me on to this one)

Especially check El Tono and Nuria.

Could some of you art students get out on the streets and do something like this please?

Or I might.

Blotchwoman makes someone angry, maybe someone religious who thinks Blotchwoman's ears are horns and that she looks a little devilish. Someone scratches a cross through every Blotchwoman sticker they come across. Is it paranoia or incomprehension?

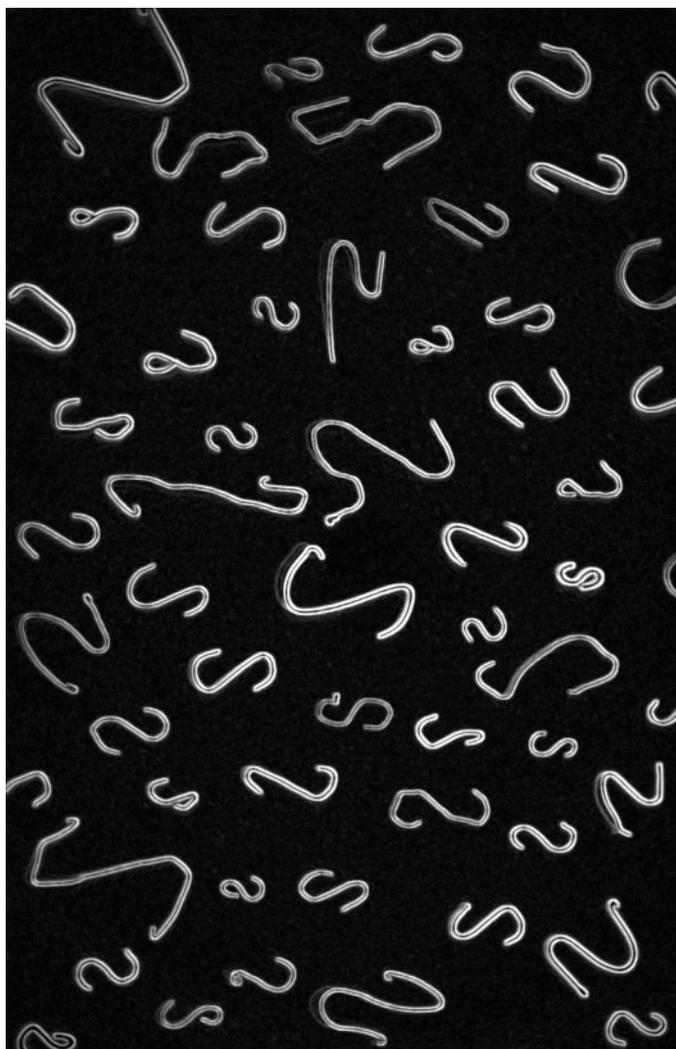


And what about this?

Recently, Maurizio Cattelan, one of my favourite artists, stuck posters of Arabic text around the streets of London perhaps making some people anxious because it looks like fundamentalist propaganda. On translation the text turns out to be words of love. Maurizio is playing with our fears and preconceptions about what we don't understand.

The monstrous dark brown rectangle grew on me after a while; it seemed so outrageously obtrusive and somehow way more subversive than the common old tag. It grew to look like art - you know, a bit constructivist and designer Malevich. It was only my ongoing bitterness towards the graffiti busters that stubbornly led me to eventually paint over it with tasteful wall-matching earthy lime wash. What am I like?

**Sarah crowEST**



Lee Salomone, *Extreme Individualisation*, 2004



Victoria Kate Benda, *Once Removed*, 2003

# VITAMIN

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MAY CONTAIN TRACES OF VISUAL CULTURE

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