



nothing

ARTSPACE

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nothing

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Curated by Nicholas Tsoutas

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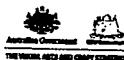
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text **Ann FINNEGAN**

A project of Honours Graduate students from the
School of Contemporary Arts, University of Western Sydney

1 - 17 December 2005

ARTSPACE is about promoting the freedom of artists in their investigations and unique ways of expressing their insights into the world; to facilitate this objective, one of its specific policy directives, which it shares with other contemporary art spaces, is to foster and promote those non-commercial practices which would otherwise not find their way in the world. Under the curation of Nicholas Tsoutas, Artistic Director, Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre, Artspace is hosting **NOTHING**, a specially curated event of the work of honours graduates from the University of Western Sydney's School of Contemporary Art. The works have been selected on the basis of Artspace's curatorial and exhibition guidelines, which positions conceptual rigour as vital to the construction and transaction of contemporary art. **NOTHING** is not an inclusive show and offers a rare opportunity for the selected artists to be curated by an international curator and exhibited in an international contemporary art gallery, where many of their mentors have shown. Normally their competitors for the space would be established artists of high standing, but Tsoutas, passionately sympathetic to the plight of young non-commercial artists and their need for professional development and support, has generously made Artspace available for this exhibition.

nothing

Ann Finnegan

nothing the title of this show echoes Derrida's famous pronouncement in *Of Grammatology*, a seemingly innocent statement which is later echoed in his discussion of Mallarme's *Mimique* in respect of mime, and of representation in general, "Nothing takes place." Derrida is describing Mallarme's paradoxical and slippery text in which the mime, in imitating, is imitating no-thing. The mimed murder of Pierrot wife's by his tickling her with a feather never actually takes place, because as a mime it is only ever a represented event. Further, the doubling of nothing multiplies through a series of deferred events – a *mise-en-abyme* - as Derrida goes on to deconstruct Mallarme's brief text. A clown in white face on a white page [the blank of a nothing] is said to act out a mime of a crime – a laughing to death by tickling which leaves no trace and can be said not to have taken place. This in turn is but a copy of a report in a booklet which Mallarme can no longer trace. The replication of a no-thing replicates another no-thing such that nothing ever takes place. The play of representation turns around this absent centre, the absent presence of a deferral or difference.

Nicholas Tsoutas, in curating this show has picked up on the play of the nothing which subliminally manifests through all these works. The gap of representation is never fully closed. A thread of nothing, of the mimed no-thing which undoes being-as-presence, runs through the exhibition, begging the question as to how this trope of Derridean theory inseminated itself. It begs the question of the role of theory in art institutions, of the subtle workings of indirection and the circulation of ideas which filters down through work even though none of this group has studied Derrida per se. Perhaps it's the influence of Heidegger, of Merleau-Ponty, of Lacan, and the resonances of this conversation which come to the surface in Derrida's *oeuvre*. For, in his ongoing critique of western metaphysics and its foundation in a being-as-presence, Derrida consistently counters origin with representation, presence with absence, be-

ing with erasure, and mimesis to a *mise-en-abyme* such that there is deferral and difference, all elements of this show.

It is impossible to ever confirm a full presence-to-self, to ever subsuming oneself within oneself in self-identity. Representation, whether of language, of gesture, of image will always intervene in the systems through which humans interact in the world, and even with oneself.

Daniel Green, in *Experiments in Self-Amusement: Level-1 I, Toy and Level 2 Life is Waiting* sets up a system akin to Mallarme's doubling of nothing in *Mimique* by creating just such a *mise-en-abyme* of mimed events in which the mimer is mimed in a loop which is endlessly reproduced. *Level-1 I, Toy* consists of two monitors, a Playstation 2 console with an Eye Toy peripheral. The monitors face each other in a self-contained system, isolated in a perspex box. The Playstation 2 console and the Eye Toy console is in full view as it reads and replicates the mimed gesture of the mimer playing air-guitar on the monitor directly opposite [the air guitarist is acting out the nothing of another mimed event, further confirming another layer of *mise-en-abyme*]. In other words, nothing – no real event - takes place in this mimed circuit which endlessly repeats, the Eye Toy capturing the motion of the air guitar mimer and generating the paradoxical real time liveness of the mimed event, which, in endlessly happening, is not happening at all in real terms, being only the system of deferral and replication.

Level 2-Life is Waiting more literally reproduces life as the "nothing's happening" of a deferred event. Nine screen savers simultaneously load over and over, opening into a zone which Derrida termed the in-between, which is both a zone and a period of deferral which will never be closed. Green interrogates the systems of representation as they multiply through our lives, excluding us from experiencing a real of existence, or, in effect, squeezing us out. The no-thing of representation marks and defers lived time.

Daniel Kotja in *Alien Presence IV [Cathedral Perception]* also engages with the deferral of an absent presence, or at least a gap which can never be closed. Here, it's not a question of miming, or the dead time of the in-between, but a gap between perception and presence, a gap which puts perception always ahead of presence. The installation consists of an immaculate garden shed, and a peephole through which a shadowy presence can be glimpsed. You hear it, you nearly see it, but on entering the shed whatever you saw is gone in the intense glare of banks of neon white lights, a Blanchot full noon, his blinding light of day. There is nothing to see; it's too white, it's too bright. Whatever it was escaped in the fullness of bright light. No uncertain gothic shadows. If this were a film it would be Jean Pierre Melville's white noir, *Plein Soleil*, the thriller that takes place in full sun. Clearly nothing is there now; nothing that can be seen. The sound now appears to come from the outside, setting up a Derridean game of the gap between inside/outside, exterior/interior, an in-between in which the hapless viewer is caught. Your seeing and hearing perception is always at a distance, reaching out beyond your capacity to bring your body to bear on the event. Unable to catch up, the body lags behind sense perception. No matter how quick

you are you will never quite catch up; never eclipse this distance which always puts the alien presence at a further remove.

Kotja is clever with prosthetics, understanding how our sense perception of seeing and hearing at a distance are already not only extensions of ourselves, but always potentially dividing us from ourselves, as beings who are present-to-self. (Derrida, in *Speech and Phenomena*, deconstructed this illusion of self-presence. Even in the thoughts which we think out aloud to ourselves, in our inmost interior, we are divided by the time of spacing, the blink of an eye, that it takes for us to register the thoughts which are already unfolding in language, as representation,. There is no instant presencing of self-to-self which doesn't pass through some system of representation). Kotja amplifies this process by extending it though the perceptual loop. The alien comes in a flash, the blink of an eye; we hear it but don't fully glimpse it in this near imperceptible moment, through which we are invaded as if from within. Disturbed just a little, we then suffer the glare of eclipse. The alien is almost inside us, the 'nothing' of a glitch in perception which makes us doubt ourselves.

Stephen Fox in his video installation *The Birds* also disturbs this border of inside and outside of Hitchcock's *The Birds*, working on a similar principle of erasure which leaves only the invisible traces of the movement of the birds' obliterated presence. Through Fox's digital manipulation, these traces register as a kind of invisible trembling across the screen. This shifts perception of the birds to a disturbance in the mind. What menaced from without in Hitchcock's film returns as an alien interior trace, something not quite right. And as counterpoint, Fox leaves in the 'normal', exploiting Hitchcock's patina of 1950s elegance and assurance, in the persona of Tippi Hedrun, whose poise, stilettos, and carefully styled hair ooze classic Hitchcock blonde cool. Just enough of these normalising scenes from the original film stabilize the shimmer of psychic trembling which replaces Hitchcock's real birds. A pastiche of kissing is torn into the image of the man with his eyes pecked out. This confirms the psychical territory with a symbolic castration, condensing and underscoring a favourite Hitchcock motif. Fox also includes the famous overhead shot from the birds' perspective as they seem to enjoy the mayhem around the exploding petrol station far below. Erased as a series of rippling traces, menace from this god's eye view compounds a sense of terror and psychical fragility. Aesthetically, erasure takes the literal birds away, transforming a thriller/horror into a form of digital painting which registers the 'nothing' of inner terror.

Mary Donnelly, in *making the invisible visible*, works with absence/presence in an entirely other mode, one which is paradoxically more material in employing the traditional mediums of painting and photography – photography, in this context, alluding to Barthes' notion that contact is maintained with original referent, the something which exists or once existed in the real world. For Barthes this connection is recorded in the physical changes to the silver gelatin emulsion of black and white prints [even digital prints in black and white could be said to fake the material contact of this chemical medium]. However

while her mediums insist on a certain engagement with material reality, Donnelly's choice of subject - empty shopping bags - conjures notions of absence.

There is therefore a tension between something and nothing, between a seemingly inconsequential content plane of what is literally to be thrown away, and a technique which wants to add something more, to make a mark of material presence. If photography, according to Barthes, always presupposes the replication of a real somewhere, an original something, Donnelly toys with the value of the original things, offering only the meagre presence of their supposed material remainders - the packaging of empty shopping bags and paper sacs, beautifully rendered in the full plentitude of expanded emptiness. Their contents gone, what remains is the plumped out forms of nothing, multiplied over and over again.

Her 'nothings' pile up as the reminder of so much waste, or so much expenditure; the products vanished, her expanded forms testify to departed contents. Even so, painterly layers of transparency, representative of plastic bags, are carefully built up to give the illusion of a presence only just maintaining a fragile visibility, hence her title of *making the invisible visible*. Donnelly's bags fill out their shape. None lie desolate, flattened and abject, mourning what has gone as an empty signifier waiting to be filled. Rather, Donnelly's upright bags prop each other up as a series of shells retaining the traces of a fullness of presence.

As such, her bags trade with the full plentitude of consumer culture, - even a sense of well being, expanding horizontally as signs of purchasing power and recent spending, without, however, giving in, to the brashness of advertising and marketing particulars. Unlike Warhol, or pop artists working with the vernacular of recently arrived consumerism, in the 1960s, the arrival of the supermarket and a rapidly expanding advertising culture, Donnelly's references are resolutely painterly, recalling the work of Luc Tuymans and Gerhart Richter.

Like Richter she both photographs and paints, painting copies of photos and layering back some of the substance lost to filmic capture; and, like both Richter and Tuymans, she paints in a style that gives presence to traces, in her case to the ghostly forms of her transparent plastic bags. Tuymans, of course, has been tagged a deconstructionist, indicating the appearance of objects as the barest painterly trace, and Donnelly's technique of building up semi-transparent layers easily resembles acts of erasure and the merest presencing of the visible. Indeed, in several of her works, Donnelly's representation of semi-transparent form seems to undecidably both build up and deconstruct.

In *Stuttered light for surface 1,2 & 3* **Alex White** also engages with erasure, in Situationist terms, engaging in a *détournement* of cinematic technology. He effectively eclipses the aim of cinematic projection apparatus by creating conditions such that the equipment is no longer showing films in the conventional mode, revealing instead the equipmentality of the equipment itself - in other words what is inherent in its function as equipment.

First, White takes technology backwards, initially shooting nonede-

script images [his back lane, out the window] with a digital camera. This is then transferred to 8mm film-stock, the better to explore the cinematic apparatus in its pure form. Long ribbons of film-stock are then strung up to feed through his five projectors which are set up to operate within the ambient light of the space. There is way too much light to make out exactly the subject of the image, and in a gesture familiar to Fox's version of *The Birds*, or the obliterating white of Kotja's interior, any representation on the films is subject to erasure. White's equipment shows nothing but the function of the apparatus itself: to project a cone of light onto a wall while the film clicks through its cogs. In this mode of nothing to see but the function of the passage of light, emphasis is thrown back onto the sound. *Stuttered light for surface 1,2 & 3* is a noise work, exploiting the sound of technology playing itself as it runs; the stuttering effect of the whir of the projectors breaks into the white noise of the image struggling to represent. Only by not functioning normally, by not reproducing images in the dark, does the inherent equipmentality of the assemblage's 'what-for-ness' deconceal.

Like Kotja's rejection of occularcentrism, refusing direct vision in a deliberate obscuring [both too shadowy and too light for any discernment of being-present-to-sight], White refuses re-presentation and replication in favour of an elaborate act of erasure, even of an aesthetics of image failure, the better to throw the emphasis back onto equipment itself.

The work could be contextualized alongside Martin Creed's recent Serpentine Prize, in which Creed simply switched a light on and off in an empty gallery - erasure achieved with a flick of the switch in both directions [alternately obliterating the dark, obliterating the light, in a game of presencing and absencing]. Other antecedents include the expanded cinema of Malcolm Le Grice and Nam June Paik, for example, Paik's turning on of an empty projector to exhibit the form of the light.

White's connection with Fluxus extends further to the event score, and the Destruction symposium. The long feeds of the film strips will eventual run through, giving the installation the duration of an event. Over time, broken film strips will litter the floor as after several replays the work will have self-destructed. Indeed, Heidegger's original term for deconstruction, as borrowed by Derrida, was originally translated as destruction. Thus in Heidegger's original text the term destruction was directly linked to the notion of putting under erasure.

By contrast, **Adam Costenoble** in his installation *The Mountain* is so obviously there, so large, and so looming, epitomizing being-as-presence, that it's hard to conceive of it as nothing, of having anything to do with Mallarme's 'nothing' of the mime of representation, or, indeed of any acts of destruction or erasure. From a certain perspective White's *Stuttering* on its way to faltering destruction is the antithesis of the enduring monumentality implied by the immobility of a mountain. *The Mountain* is there in itself, stolidly begging the gallery-goer to climb its ladder and enter inside the secure construction of its pendulous form. Sitting squarely it manifests as a solid pile of dirt, a reliable and familiar thing of the earth. Costenoble debated whether its outer layer should stay at that - referencing the considerable mass and

volume of an extinct volcano crater – or to cover it with turf which would then die off, reducing its referential stature to that of a grassy knoll. He was torn between making a mountain or a molehill, and deciding on the resulting changes in perception based on differences of scale.

Of course, either choice sets itself up in the context of a perceptual trap, *The Mountain* references Turrell's *Roden Crater*, the extinct desert volcano purchased for the sole pleasure of looking out from inside. Turrell's art is about structuring perception: on one occasion he installed a viewing platform inside four walls in the centre of a swimming pool. Visitors had to don black and white striped one-piece trunks and dive under the walls. Vision was directed upwards in order to reward the viewer with the perfectly framed view of the sky. Turrell, an aviator, also famously bounces light off the particles in the air creating the sense of a solid particulate infinity, a seeming solid through which a viewer can pass their hands. Costenoble's *The Mountain* is only marginally kindred in spirit. Given its gallery location it's not so much about the view from inside, looking out, but rather about the 'carving out' of space, a hollowing out [the molehill aspect of the mountain].

Another way of regarding *The Mountain* is to see it as an enclosure around a hole. *The Mountain* only thrusts up because permission was not likely to be granted for Costenoble to dig into the floor. But then again, there were too many close antecedents. Maurizio Cattelan, dug down in order to exhibit a neat pile of excavated earth next to the actual work which took the form of a hole in the floor. How else to structure something which technically is nothing? Because, given that non gallery-goers were not going to get down and experience the hole first hand, how else could it be exhibited if not through the inverted mirror form of the dirt taken out? Costenoble has found another solution to the problem of exhibiting the form of nothing. You can climb up into *The Mountain* to experience the space of a hollowed out – or rather hollowed in – inside. If it wasn't possible to dig down, like Cattelan - already gesturing towards Smithson's excavative art (besides *Spiral Jetty* Smithson also dug into the gallery floor) - Costenoble went up in order to enclose a space large enough to be experienced. Also he was to give the impression of a hollowing out, a taking away. This is why the inside is lined with dirt, some of which will inevitably stick as the tactile remainder.

So in a sense the gallery-goer who climbs and enters *The Mountain* will be seeing nothing: there is nothing to see but dirt piled up around its interior hollow, taking the gallery-goer back to what Costenoble, referencing Bergson's *Matter and Memory*, calls a "preconscious affective" state, in confirmation of the primal, infantile aspect of messing around in dirt, exploring space in a tactile way.

Overall, a "nothing / no-thing to see" runs as a subliminal conducting thread throughout the exhibition, throwing the viewer back onto other modes of perception and the conditions of presencing. Through an innocent play of the nothing – which rather than adding takes away – the viewer is encouraged to engage in Derrida's one more turn of philosophical reflection.



Adam Costenoble



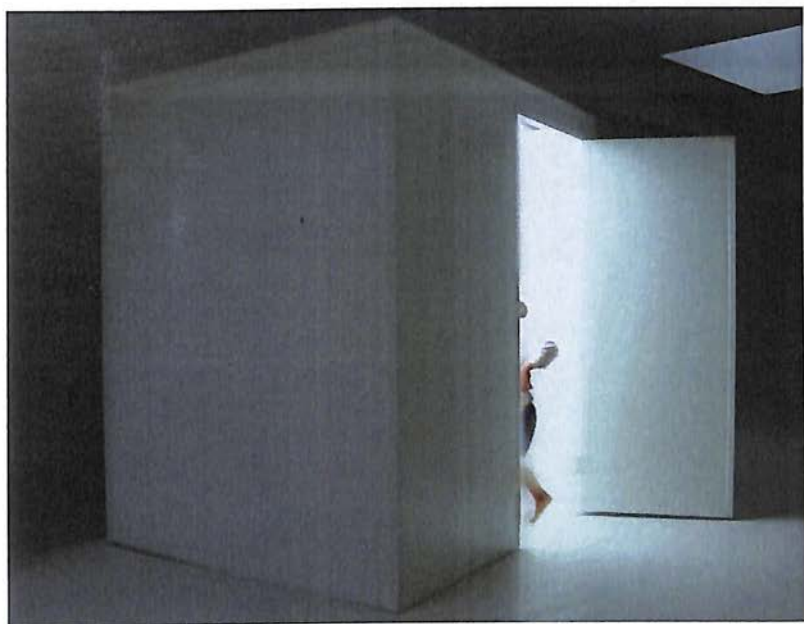
Adam Costenoble

Daniel Green



Daniel Green



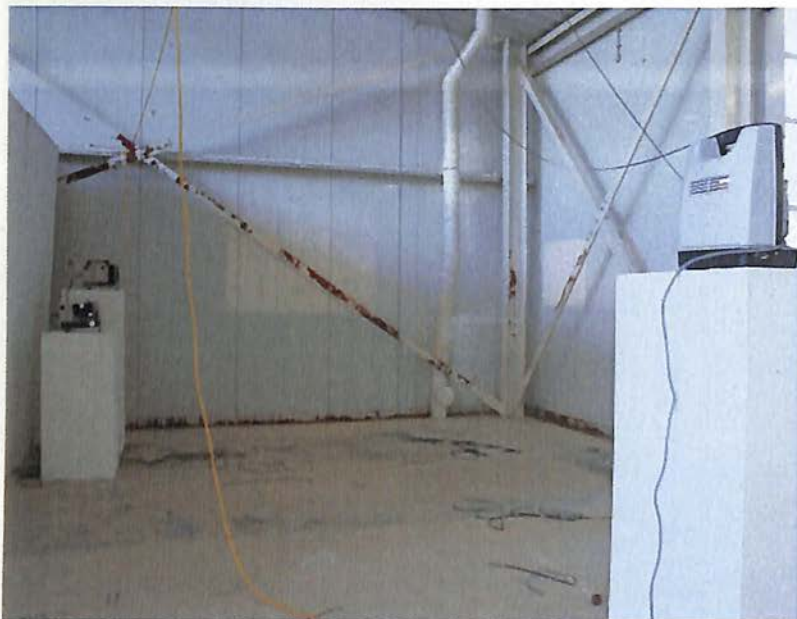


Daniel Kojta

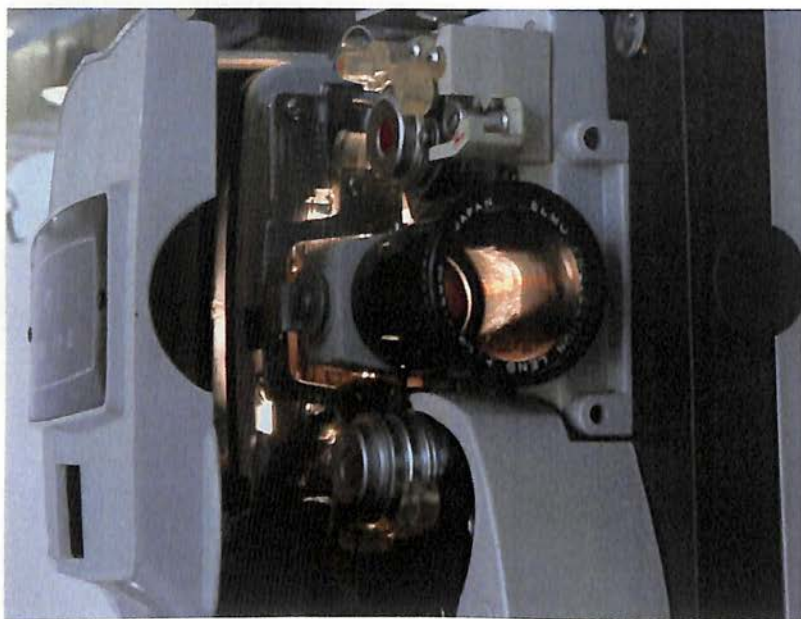


Daniel Kojta

Alex White



Alex White



Adam Costenoble

The Mountain

In *The Mountain* I have built an installation that is both architectural and natural, visible and invisible, external and internal. This work communicates on a level that all human beings are equipped for, it asks little of the mind yet through its character inspires much in the imagination. It asks you to enter it with your body, to interact with it through its and your own tactile and physical qualities and to open up your perception to an actual world. It demands you open up to an encounter with the real, a glimpse of the invisible, and experience natural being.

The Mountain is a work which puts the viewer into silence and the dark. Should you attempt to extract metaphor or sign from this work you would be left unsatisfied and disappointed, this work calls for you to operate on its level of the physical through bodily response. In discarding my usual practice of video representation I have attempted to remove language, image overload, and virtual illusionism: disrupting the privilege given to the eye in favour of an actual experience of and with the "flesh of the world". Through dirt, wood, steel, and physical engagement, I invite the viewer to "be" with the work, to exist like it does, in the tactile world; totally physical, totally tangible, and entirely real. An experience perceived through and of the body, affectively and proprioceptively, as was naturally intended. The Mountain, through silence and patient beckoning, opens up an encounter with the "invisible" "essence" of the tactile world and brings the viewer closer to their sense of Being.

Mary Donnelly making the invisible visible

My work uses the genre of Still-life to draw attention to our increasingly 'throw-away' culture. What is it that we are buying – happiness or personal identity, a dream of fantasy and illusion, or is it just the thrill of the purchase that excites us. My subject matter is the peripherals; the detritus or our culture's modern vanitas. By the use of the medium of egg tempera, my aim is to make the invisible, visible.

At present, we live in a society, which can only be deemed to be that of a 'throw-away culture'. More and more we are confronted with the realization that it is more expensive to repair as opposed to replace; and the mere fact that as technology moves at an ever increasing rate of speed, what we are left with is quickly outdated. Economic models reinforce the idea that if we have enough material goods we will be happy, as it has defined the idea of 'well being' and the 'objective of life' in purely materialistic terms.

In my work I have concentrated on the use of egg tempera as a step away, a step back from technology, "downshifting", so to speak; a way of returning to natural materials. This act in the selection of the medium used became a reaction against consumerism; it became necessary to use natural materials to balance the machine-made products around us – objects that only express the efficiency and speed with which they were produced.

The genre of 'still life' became the platform, in which I was able to focus and make visual; that of the ambiguity of the purchase. Our lives are filled with images; images that seduce, images that inform, images that educate on the subject of happiness. Today, industrialization makes it impossible any longer to distinguish with certainty between luxury and necessity; at times it is the purchase experience, rather than the anticipated pleasure of owning or using something that is the impetus or impulse to buy. It is the complete shopping experience that businesses today are now about creating. The term, 'experiential shopping' or 'experience shopping' is a new phenomenon engaging today's consumers. It taps into consumer confidence by the inclusion of the five senses; that of sight, sound, touch, taste and smell.

In my works I wanted to appeal to the sense of sight, to lead onto a connection to the viewer's cognitive level; to reassess what is presented within that image. I purposefully negated narrative – the subjects stand to be examined, to be scrutinized. Chiaroscuro echoes / reflects, quotes advertisers who glorify matter, putting objects of desire on show, on stage. The bags and wrapping become, not so much a question of peripheral trappings, but the whole question of production-consumption-waste cycle that needs be addressed. Can we simply keep making and abandoning so many goods?

Stephen Fox

The Birds

The Birds attempts to penetrate the visible object in order to reach the force behind/within it. The birds in Hitchcock's classic film *The Birds* (1963) have been erased, frame-by-frame, leaving a trace of their existence. The trace, born out of the erasure of a physical object, still refers to that which once was, while there is an added anticipation of something else slipping through. Like phantom limbs, the trace is neither absent or presence, past or present. Perhaps this trace allows for the 'seeing' of the invisible essences of the birds themselves, as they continue along their path of destruction. This is the nature of both *The Birds*, and *The Birds* before it; there is clearly a force in action, yet it is surrounded by a representation that only serves to deceive us as to its true nature. Through the transformation of birds into birds, the false object that covers the hidden force is removed. The traces left (remainder) serve as an accumulative memory (reminder) of that which is now removed, invisible. A rem(a)inder is then formed, that is neither past nor present, but allows for a connection to be made with this force in time.

Daniel Green

Experiments in Self-Amusement: Level-1 I, Toy and Level 2 Life Is Waiting

If we are to believe Guy Debord's claim in *The Society of The Spectacle*, that "In a world which really is topsy-turvy, the true is a moment of the false," then the creation of a deliberately flawed act of spectacle would serve as an interesting dialogue between ourselves and the vices that entertain us. Both of the works that comprise *Experiments In Self-Amusement* have been developed with this in mind, addressing the spectacle through the field of video games. In the presentation of these works, there is a superficial normality, almost passivity, in their dialogue with their audience. On closer inspection it becomes apparent that there is something out of place.

Spilt into two 'Levels' [*Level 1 – I, Toy and Level 2 – Life Is Waiting*], these works highlight these illusion of choice and interactivity in the medium of video games, exposing their repetitive and overtly linear nature; to the point where the gameplaying experience becomes a mechanised chore. In *I, Toy*, this mechanisation is quite literal, as a situation is constructed where a Sony Playstation 2 is forced to play itself in an endless cycle. This is achieved through an exploitation of the Playstation 2's Eye Toy peripheral, which allows players to control certain games with their body movements. On one monitor runs the Playstation 2 and the Eye Toy, on another is a pre-recorded DVD loop of the artist. His movements trick the camera into believing he is front of the screen, and sets the cycle in effect. The Playstation 2 in this mode is rendered useless; so is the now disembodied artist, sacrificing his essence to the machine. *Life Is Waiting*, by contrast, is a more passive process. An arrangement of 9 monitors is presented, each with a loading screen from a different video game which never progresses. Usually, the loading screen embodies the point between the decision of action and the point where action occurs. By removing the context from either end of this point the viewer is locked into contemplation; a perpetual state of flux.

By removing the video game from its position as tactile object, a sense of confusion is evoked. If it can't be played with, what purpose does it serve? It is intended that this question will linger after the experience. At the simplest level, one could merely walk away, and engage in a different experience. This is still an active choice on the part of the viewer however, and as such is the most important action that can be hoped for. Through the act of thought, the spectacle can be combated; at least enough for a new situation to occur.

Daniel Kojta

Alien Presence IV [Cathedral Perception]

Travel through the remote regions of Outback Australia, has instigated the directions of my creative exploration - the infinite space and the ever-present sense of phenomena, the horizons free of targeted perspective. The elements are naked to the senses: wet is wet, and dry burns. Senses are heightened, perceptions fluid. The expansive, cinematic areas of the desert inspire the 'immersive' experience of abstract perception. The elements provide an incredible mise-en-scène for mystery, for Government conspiracies and Alien's disguised as Swagmen abducting sheep.

My practice examines modes of perception and the relevant perspectives influencing the senses. Within our current mediated society subject to the consistent maelstrom of images at speeds which prevent contemplation and reflection, we hover in anxious anticipation of the next, the 'update'. In response, 'abstract perception' or 'awe' provides a momentary experience of the present.

'Perception Cathedral' bypasses traditional sense assessment by continuously offering a portion of presence, which avoids identification and the slick sheen of the semaphore, offering the participant presence through absence.

Through this focus on perception and alternative sense models, my installations examine and challenge the role of the audience as passive observer at distance, toward a direct relationship with the artwork. Avoiding focus on technology, the installations provide an ambiguous experience, which encourages the audience to utilise alternative modes of perception beyond ocular-centrism.

The *Alien Presence Series* explores the absence of narrative time through a focus of space perception in the present. An invitation to 'now', these flashes of present unite in chaos to escape the dissolution of the mystery.

LIST OF WORKS

Adam Costenoble

The Mountain

Installation

Kikuyu grass, timber, steel, wire mesh, dirt, motion sensor, dvd player,
2 channel audio loop, speakers

Mary Donnelly

making the invisible visible

paintings

egg tempera on canvas

Stephen Fox

The Birds

Video Installation

dvd loop with stereo sound

Daniel Green

Experiments in Self-Amusement:

Level-1 I, Toy and Level 2 Life Is Waiting

New Media Installation

MDF, perspex, monitors, Sony Playstation 2 with Eye Toy Peripheral,
Eye Toy Play 2 software, DVD player, DVD loops

Daniel Kojta

Alien Presence IV [Cathedral Perception]

New Media Installation

steel, digital video, lighting, noise, sensors, sec camera

Alex White

Stuttered light for surface 1, 2 & 3

Installation

super eight projectors, handprocessed super eight films

Alex White

Stuttered light for surface 1, 2 & 3

The shutter speeds are not in sync; a shared film is torn between two projectors. The film itself blocks projected light.

These works utilise the essential apparatus of the cinematic illusion, turned back upon themselves and outwards amongst the world that the cinema space inhabits. These works do not present a screen world to draw the viewer in; rather they have moved into the field of vision of the audience and attempted to quietly reside there. Through an opening out of, and emphasis of the materiality and side effects of the operating technology, these works completely fail to achieve this subterfuge. Mechanism forms the language within these works and the means in which this failure is intentionally carried out. The unique nuances, materiality and failings of super 8 film are exploited as accent and phrase. It is at once a dirge for the imminent passing of a technology and a celebration of the unique terrain formed as a media fades from use.

The hand-processed films used in this work are exposed to digitally edited and manipulated video recordings. The original footage consists of selected recordings of sunlight formed patterns on external and internal walls. The projectors then attempt to simulate these phenomena in a new space. The viewer is confronted with a space in which the utilised technology is grossly exaggerated and stressed; through this the works fail to create any serious or even earnest light phenomena simulation.

Failure is the primary operation of these works, a viewer's experience of the installation space may be more as a witness to the aftermath rather than to the event itself. At this stage the projectors are left running without film and the film itself lies where it has fallen.

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