

VITAMIN

MAY CONTAIN TRACES OF VISUAL CULTURE

EPISODE NINE JULY 2006



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A = 440

During the first half of the last century, you could hear the melodious tones of the “Boomerang” mouth organ ringing out from Cobar to Kimba and all the way to the hearths of Sunny Adelaide (gentry notwithstanding). Albert’s Music stores promoted the “Boomerang”, and rival music seller, Allan’s, promoted the “Crackerjack”. These were Australian instruments (manufactured, though they were, overseas). I’ve never seen a “Crackerjack” in real life, although I have a “Boomerang”. I’d love to find a “Cooee” - wouldn’t you?



Boomerang mouth organ once owned by Marcus Spinks

There was an annual eisteddfod in Ballarat. There were Australian harmonica champions whose names were revered. The history is amazing. There were

harmonica bands in every city and town, often associated with places of work. Where did they all go? Why is the harmonica now considered a child’s toy?

The harmonica is the most perfect musical instrument; playing one actually improves your health (and your soul). Few instruments are as versatile or expressive, and none will fit as neatly into your pocket. A Hohner Blues Harp will set you back \$45 and is an excellent investment, provided you actually play the thing. If a more serious musician should deride your humble harp, bear in mind that such people are vexations to the spirit - confined to their ivory towers, they can only dream of the freedoms we harmonica players take for granted.

Which reminds me, I wrote to Correctional Services: I’m sorry to say, harmonica ballads



I have played many a tune on this one



won't be enhancing your stay in the pokey due to the hardware being so useful in the art of weaponry. If you keep your nose clean though, and you get transferred to a low security prison, you can apply to have a nylon string guitar in your cell.

....



This is from the 30s, a gift from my grandfather, Marcus Spinks

Every bird knows how to sing its song. It doesn't need to go to bird school. We are more sophisticated than birds: As children we sing ourselves to sleep, but soon enough we graduate to being sung to.

Sometimes you will hear it stated that all the possible combinations (and permutations) of musical notes have already been played. This view betrays a fundamental misunderstanding of music and of language (of which music is a form) generally. The possibilities of language are endless.

When you hear people speak like they used to speak, doesn't that sound like music? Or imagine if you could hear your mother's voice again. What kind of music would that be?

....

It's good listening to records. Maybe it's nice having pop star heroes like that guy from Pulp sticky-taped to your bedroom wall. Having lots of MP3s on your iPod could be good too I suppose. Whatever - or whichever - there is nothing like actually making some music of your own.

I remember one time, at Art School, for a theory project, I wrote and recorded a wordless song, "Even Fresher, Even Longer". It was



a homage to menthol cigarettes. At the time they were terribly popular with girls. Girls are great aren't they? My wordless tune was set within an A minor pattern. My efforts earned me an ungraded pass (no girls).

Art, music, writing - so much, and yet so little. Once music was the world; it was the air that I breathed, sweet and complete - like burnt metal, lead, sulphur, seawater, and kerosene. So long ago, but it seems like today.



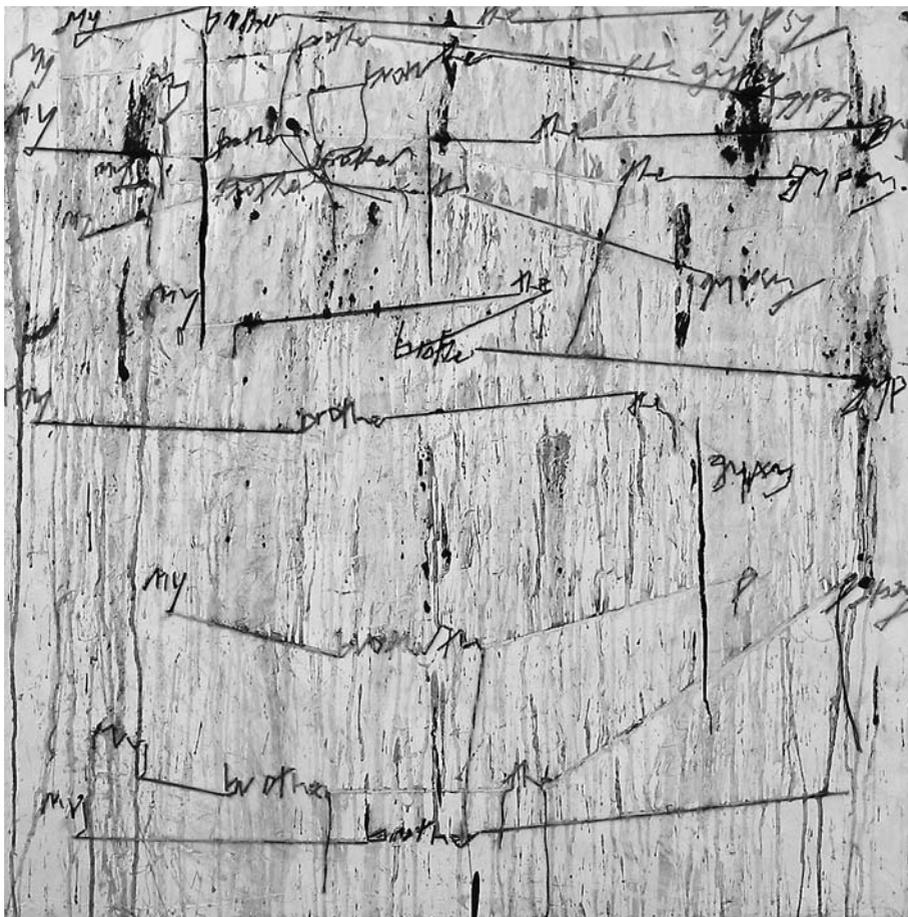
My favourite harp

There came a time when I decided to give up music; I quit my last band, and sold or gave away my gear. My hair had become too long, and so I cut it too short by way of balance. I became a day person. A while later, I was asked to play bass on a short tour with friends and I did that for the friendship and the cash (and with borrowed gear). I had played in groups since I was 12, getting more or less caught up by the time I was 14, and then on 'til quarter past 26. I kept a souvenir of those times; a Japanese hand-made acoustic guitar bought new in '81 when I was with the State Bank of New South Wales (studying in the evenings for an incomplete Economics degree). If you are holding that dangerous instrument, you will discover that as you speak, the strings vibrate. I used to keep it in an abandoned office at Underdale.

For 14 years I stayed away from music. Why did I do that?

Shaw Hendry





Michelle Dixon

My Brother the Gypsy

Cotton string, canvas, indian ink, acrylic paint

101 x 101 cm, 2005

Vitamin Episode Nine - 5



iPo(n)d(er)

I am a relatively new convert to the world of the iPod. Just like my mobile, until I had one, I believed I didn't really 'need' an iPod, but it is interesting how quickly 'need' develops. The iPod, released in its first generational form in 2001, is a contemporary version of the 80s walkman. Its technological revamp into the age of now makes it an advanced and glorified music machine that offers other functions beyond music; games, contact lists and images, to name just a few. According to the iPod sales statistics (which can be found



The Happy iPod family

on Wikipedia – another brilliant and recent development), as of 2005, most of us already own an iPod, some people even have two. From these facts and the rather successful dancing silhouette ad campaign, it is clear that the pros and cons of this marvellous little thing need not be further promulgated, rather, iPo(n)d(er) the iPod effect upon the visual arts.



Art and the iPod interact in a variety of ways and perhaps the most straightforward is the latest release of a range of downloadable art fit for your screen. Straight out of Japan, a portable gallery of Yoshitomo Nara works seems to be one of the first art collections that will be sold en masse to iPod owners. This is art on an iPod and from my understanding doesn't differentiate too much from flipping through the pages of an art book.



By contrast, recently in the Art Gallery of South Australia biennial exhibition, 21st Century Modern, we witnessed Slave using an iPod and its promotional stickers as art (or at least as part of an installation). The stickers of the large white apple logo, that are given to consumers upon buying an iPod, had been stuck on wooden board and mounted on the gallery wall and the iPod (a shuffle) was left hanging on the wall to be listened to by interested viewers (or listeners). The inclusion of an iPod blaring rebellious music to accompany the disorderly collection of art by Slave members Nick Selenitsch, Rob McKenzie, Kain Picken and Christopher L. G. Hill initially seemed an unusual inclusion given the overly commercial and orderly nature of the iPod. But despite gestures that could seem to be anti-iPod, Slave also embrace this fairly low-fi technology in their work to give a soundtrack of sorts to a viewer's Slave experience.

In perhaps the most bizarre of contrasts, this idea of a soundtrack through which to view art recalls some methods we have seen thrown around over the last few years in television culture; the first time perhaps in a very early episode of Ally McBeal. Many years ago, what caught my attention was a scene which featured Ally strutting the streets with her very own personal soundtrack playing in her head. As the viewer, we were privy to her soundtrack which was shaping her approach to life that day, but those around her were unaware. Although the same could be said of a walkman



Vitamin Episode Nine - 7





or discman, anyone who owns an iPod would have felt this sense of creating a soundtrack to life, or a walk, going to the studio, the bus, the gym etc etc. An iPod is a means to create a soundtrack to any of life's experiences.

This leads me into another realm where the iPod is having an effect (to what extent we will have to see) upon art. Some galleries, such as the Mori Art Museum in Roppongi, Tokyo, or the MoMA in New York have willingly used iPod's as audio guides to accompany their shows. To give a viewer an informed tour of the art on show these official audio guides are generally recorded by curators, artists and other art experts. Basically the use of an iPod replaces those clumsy Star Wars style guides, or the big headphones that never stay at the size you try to adjust them to. This iPod function isn't too revolutionary. However, what has become more interesting is that MoMA has been struck with an unauthorised range of people making podcasts that discuss particular pieces of their collection. This project by David Gilbert and students of Marymount Manhattan College invites people not informed in artspeak to submit podcasts that can be downloaded by people intending to visit MoMA. Seen as a form of gallery-hacking and 'sound seeing', the podcasts consist of humorous anecdotes, musical ensembles, critical opinions, declared love for artworks and sound effects made by everyday people. Is the iPod going to bring art back to the masses?

For good or bad, iPod's are shaping a generation. In fact the generation born from the late 1980s onwards are quickly becoming known as the iGeneration (a sub-generation of Generation Y) renowned for their personal freedom, multitude of choice, global awareness and materialistic decadence. Perhaps more than anything, the iPod is creating an incredibly informed culture, perhaps a little insular and non-communicative with hearing problems, but subject to a wide variety of inspirations nonetheless. Just like we've pondered how the invention of paints in a tube, science, computers and mobile camera phones may affect art, iPo(n)d(er) the iPod affect on art and visual culture.

Sera Waters





Louise Flaherty

bird

Video still, 2006





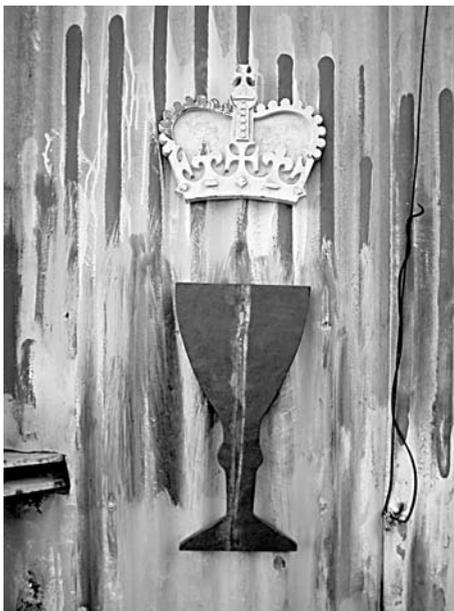
Fringe Boathouse

Waterbirds was the title of my Fringe exhibition this year, at Bill Porter's Boatyard, Jenkins St, Port Adelaide. The site is on the northern bank of the Port River, just west of the Birkenhead Bridge, and is home to the last few remaining dockyards left on the river.

The area is part of the Port's so called 'Renaissance', soon to be developed as a multi-million dollar Marina Project etc.

At present, Bill's Boatyard and Marina is an industrial site, with boats up on ancient slipways for general repairs and major rebuilds, and I guess an unlikely place to hold an exhibition, but I relish in finding unusual 'spots' around the Port. I like to awaken people's senses with unfamiliar surroundings, while at the same time adding another dimension to my artworks.

The Boatyard is nestled on the banks of the Port River amongst some of the State's first boat sheds, dating back before WWI. The old timber gangplanks and floating pontoons give access to the 'peppercorn rent' marina, where people are living on their boats and going about their daily lives. Some of these fellas surfaced throughout the course of the day I was setting up to offer advice as to how I should install the art works, their conversations dotted with sea faring stories along the way. This group of river dwellers used to be known as "The Flying Squadron" because they couldn't stay still for long.





One of the things I liked about the boatyard was its grunginess. Things had been left around to rot or rust, to let nature take its toll, and in turn the yard has created its own artefacts of marine life which I took advantage of.



The installation of the artworks was along the slipway and up on the walls of the buildings. Most of the works were recycled from existing artworks or ready-mades. Some were incorporated into the built environment, in the river, or just stood alone telling a different story. I tried to integrate the artworks with their surroundings, making subtle political / social statements along the way.





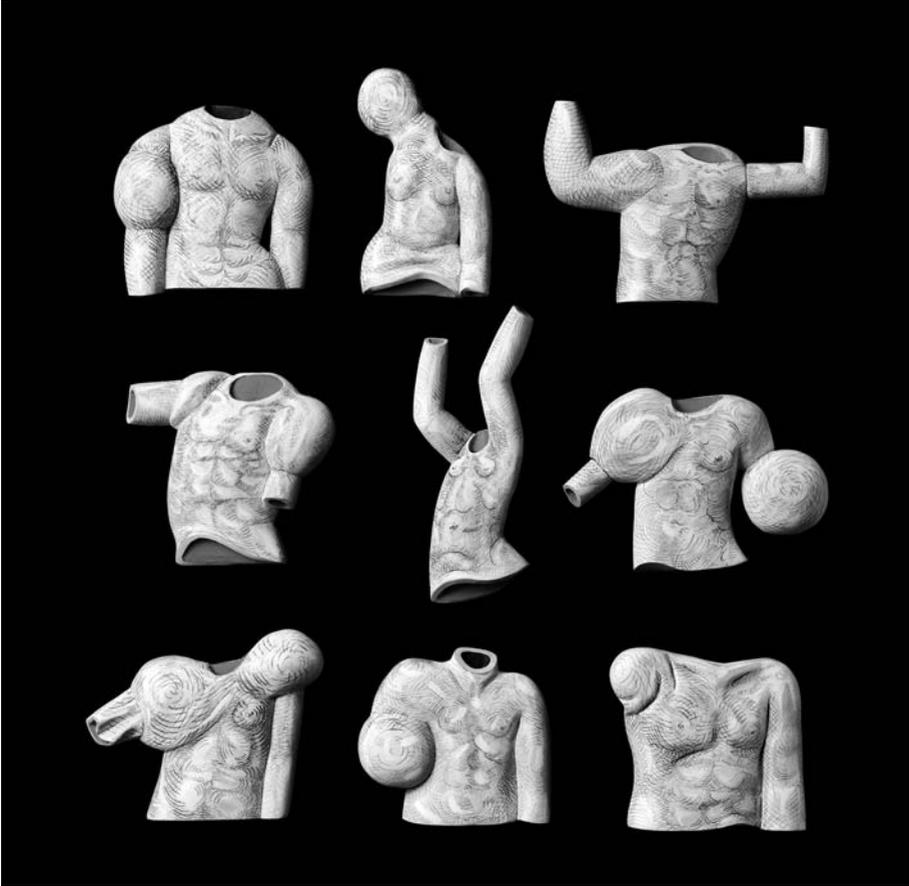
My exhibition included an open-air guided tour; I was the guide of the course, and answered questions along the way which created interesting dialogues between artist and viewer. Others preferred just to wander around the site trying to distinguish the difference between what was already there and the artworks.

The exhibition was well received with some people making it the last 'port of call' on their Fringe gallery runs. Viewers were very conscious of the smell of the river and the surrounding sounds of harbour life which, after a few weeks of working there, I had forgotten about.

By the time this edition of Vitamin hits the news stands, the majority of the boatyard will have been cleaned out. This chapter in the history of Port Adelaide is closing fast.

Trevor Wren





Catherine Truman

Fugitive anatomies

Carved English lime wood, paint, graphite

Largest dimension 8 cm, 2005



Palmer Sculpture Biennial 2006

“Why do art; why not just plant trees”

Ian Hamilton - Palmer 2006 Catalogue Essay

In the last episode of Vitamin I wrote about my affection for the small sculpture park in the Waite Institute Arboretum. The influence of Greg Johns was evident in the park, as it is throughout Adelaide. During the Fringe Festival, Greg held the 2006 Sculpture Biennial at his property at Palmer. If there's one thing I like it is tradition, especially if that tradition has barely started and I can be in on the ground floor. This is only the second Biennial that has been held at Palmer but I hope that Greg is encouraged by the positive response he has had about the exhibition to keep it going.

The omens were good that this would be a special experience as I had taken half a day off work to get to the site and then the pleasures of the drive to get there, through the lush countryside of Chain of Ponds, Gumeracha and Tungkillo until I arrived in a strange land. I

was at Greg John's property just a few kilometres outside the town of Palmer. The setting is of rolling hills, but not the green rolling hills of England, this is unmistakably Australian country.

The land exposes the mistreatment it has received from settlers whose experience was of the fertile fields of England not the harsh marginal soil of South Australia. The sight of the property is still quite breathtaking for it's physical starkness and a deeper metaphorical resonance of what has happened to the ecology



Craig Andrae



of Australia since European settlement. If Australians need reconciliation with the indigenous inhabitants of the land, Palmer shows the need for reconciliation with the ecology of the country. Greg's work with the local land care group and friends in restoring the land is impressive. Greg's unique artistic response, through his permanent work on the site and the Sculpture Biennial, reflecting the landscape and its social history, is something for us to admire and enjoy. It's local but with global implications.

Craig Andrae, the sculptor of one of the most publicised exhibits,



Deb Sleeman

met me at the entrance. Craig's sculpture 'Tree' was firmly 'planted' on one of the hills in the distance. Craig explained that he had wanted to make his contribution stand out like a sore thumb. It certainly did that, the bright green 'Tree' clearly identifiable among the muted natural colours of the landscape, its cartoon like quality served to highlight the desolation that had been imposed on the landscape by former generations, but it is a cheerful piece and suggests optimism about the future.

At the entrance, the visitor was given an elegant catalogue with a fine essay by Ian Hamilton

that explains much about the Palmer project, also provided was a less elegant mud map of where to find the exhibits on the site. The map seemed appropriate for an exhibition where hiking boots and a Gore-Tex jacket were essential equipment. Even with the help of the mud map, exhibits had a tendency to pop up at unexpected moments and enhance the surprise provided by their variety in both materials and subject matter.

The materials used in many of the works echoed the futile battle





Ted Jonsson

that early settlers waged against an environment they didn't comprehend. Annabelle Collett's 'Lace Cover' constructed out of plastic bags, dropped like a crocheted doily across the land. Deb Sleeman's 'North West Wind', a dress constructed out of pressed tin used to line settler's huts; Sascha Grbich's metallic rock pool 'Thirsty Work' and Greg John's own contribution for the Biennial 'Settling for Explorations - The Settled Explorers', an underground room consisting of earth, stone, corrugated iron and burnt redgum, intimating an invitation to look below the surface not just at this exhibit but the whole exhibition.

Altogether there were twenty exhibits, too many to describe here, but all interesting and making for an outstanding exhibition which made a firm statement in answer to Ian Hamilton's question "Why do art?" How else do we come to an understanding of our past, present and future? The drive, the landscape, the walk, the works, and finally the vision of Greg Johns all contributed to a rich artistic experience that makes me look forward to the next biennial.

John Hewson





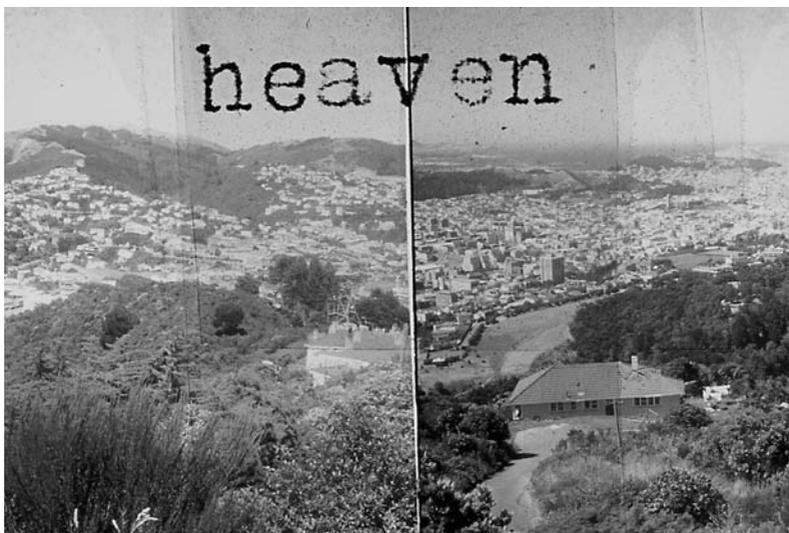
Christine Aerfeldt

*The two ladylike ladies (with curly hair) preen their
pretty brown horse (with curly hair)*

Oil on linen, 167 x 150 cm, 2006

Vitamin Episode Nine - 17





Gavin Blake
'heaven' and 'out to sea'
hand-made 35mm slides, 2005



REFRACTION

Vitamin (Online) Gallery
www.vitaminarchive.com

*DEB JONES, PAUL HOBAN, CRAIG BUNKER, FRAN CALLEN, LARA TORR,
DALE ROBERTS, SHAW HENDRY, CHELSEA LEHMANN, LISA YOUNG,
JONATHAN DADY, KATRINA SIMMONS, JESSICA SANGUESA, LOENE FURLER*

We associate lots of things, both metaphorical and real, with rainbows. Children love to see them after storms and also when they are standing near fountains or waterfalls. A properly educated adult will not see rainbows very often though, if at all.

Rainbows are transient apparitions created by the refraction of light as it passes through water droplets. No two observers, in the field, can ever see the exact same rainbow, and interestingly, neither can both your eyes. Rainbows, as seen in the natural world, are based entirely on point of view. Seemingly real, they are untouchable and unreachable.

The insert object in Vitamin Episode Eight was the rare and collectible vitaminarchive.com rainbow pencil. The pencils are at once useful and loaded with allusions. None the less, it was a risky venture to base an exhibition around them. What would the artists do? What would people think?



Fran Callen

The invited artists in REFRACTION were given an envelope containing an information sheet, two vitaminarchive.com rainbow pencils, and a white board. They weren't allowed to incorporate any other mediums, and neither were they allowed to use the materials to construct a sculptural object. Apart from those minor considerations, they had complete freedom to do whatever they wished - it was just the artist (more or less), the pencils, and the board. The resulting works are reflective and personal. Some of the works have stories behind them. All of them are interesting, and all of them reveal much more than simply how this or that artist uses a medium.

Shaw Hendry



Josh 2000
Good vs Evil Character, Series 2
Duty Now for the Future
Painted wood, 13.5 x 16 x 9.5 cm, 2006





Torpedo Shark



“Torpedo Shark” is bizarrely reminiscent of nuclear missiles driven around on semi-trailers by terrorists in Hollywood movies.

If this were a movie, the somehow pig-like truck would make grunting, snorting and squealing noises.

This truck has no exhaust pipe: it’s a new generation zero-emission carrier. However the flat tyres and sprouting shrubbery both suggest limited speed.

The shark dreams of the day it will be launched, with billowing clouds of cotton wool tumbling from its tail.

This technically rigorous and inventive setting is absurd.

Nonetheless, the monster of the deep still awakens in us a faint taste of primal fear.

Tom Moore

Vitamin Episode Nine - 21





Monstrous Modernism: Kafka & the 2006 Adelaide Biennial

“When Gregor Samsa awoke one morning from troubled dreams, he found himself transformed in his bed into a monstrous insect”, so begins Franz Kafka’s *The Metamorphosis* (1916). This enigmatic and uncanny tale about a travelling salesman’s macabre mutation, with its haunting vision of a universe beset by anxiety and uncertainty, provides a potent epigraph for 21st Century Modern: 2006 Adelaide Biennial of Australian Art; an exhibition which documents another case of metamorphosis, namely modern art’s manifold transformations in the work of contemporary artists.

Surveying several generations of practitioners whose work is “influenced by modernism”, the Biennial, according to curator Linda Michael, chronicles a transition from the past to the future, whereby



Anne Wallace, Eames Chair, 2004

“artists respond to the collaborative, experimental or utopian spirit of modern art movements, give a digital twist to modern forms, pay homage to modern artists, and revive childhood encounters with modern design across its multidisciplinary forms”.

In framing her subject, Michael adopts curator Robert Storr’s definition

of modernism as “an ominous label for a wide range of aesthetic tendencies, quantifying that all modernist art in some way ‘takes itself... as its primary subject’”. Significantly, Michael observes how essentialist versions of this definition contributed to the critical spurning of modern art during the 1960s, where it became associated with “a patriarchal, Euro-American canon, as a formalist tradition most identified with New York critic Clement Greenberg, and a discredited, failed idealism”.





However, the universalising and teleological aspirations of Greenberg's notion of modernism were fervently contested, Michael explains, during the 1970s by feminist, psychoanalytic, postcolonial and postmodern theory. It was particularly the latter's interdisciplinary practices and interrogations of originality which, Michael insists, offered a "corrective" to the entrenched formalism of art schools across Australia.

In the wake of these crucial reassessments of modernism's totalising narratives, the diversity and strength of modern art has, according to Michael, resurfaced. Modernism now signifies a broader, "more complex terrain" and a wider range of aesthetic tendencies.

In the context of the Biennial, Michael underscores the explicit connections between her chosen repertoire of artists and pre-1960s modernism. Some of the sources that explicitly inform the art include: artists such as Hepworth, Malevich, Mondrian, Picasso and Tzara; the Bauhaus and early Russian propaganda art; German Pottery & 1950s colour field painting; and modern design and architecture.

The scope of work on display is vibrantly vast and varied, as is perhaps customary of a Biennial: paintings, screen-prints, sculptures, ceramics, furniture, installations, video and multimedia works which incorporate movement and computer-generated animation. However, the presentation of this material is delectably refreshing: the bustling body of art is arranged with pomp and panache.

The painted panels that comprise Rose Nolan's *Flat Flower Work* (2004-06) proliferate across the gallery walls like a contagious virus or a rampant vine creeper, culminating in a frieze of sharp, angular, scarlet roses blooming against a glaring white field.

Similarly, Brook Andrew's glitzy group of screen-print collages scream out against their coal-black backdrop. Wiradjuri patterns and text, Day-Glo colours and neon tints, trenchant tricoloured slogans, commodities with slick packaging and upbeat labels, Swarovski crystals: this scintillating concoction of elements shake and shiver, dance and quiver in prints like *Blackblack* (2005).





“We will glorify war — the world’s only hygiene”, the Futurist F.T. Marinetti wrote in 1909. His manic manifesto became a portent of things to come in his own century and our own. In an age where warfare is justified in the name of freedom and justice, acts of resistance, hope and peace become lucrative commodities in the form of celebrity athletes and consumer goods (chewing gum, cigarettes, tobacco), as boldly showcased in Andrew’s *Peace, The Man and Hope* (2005).

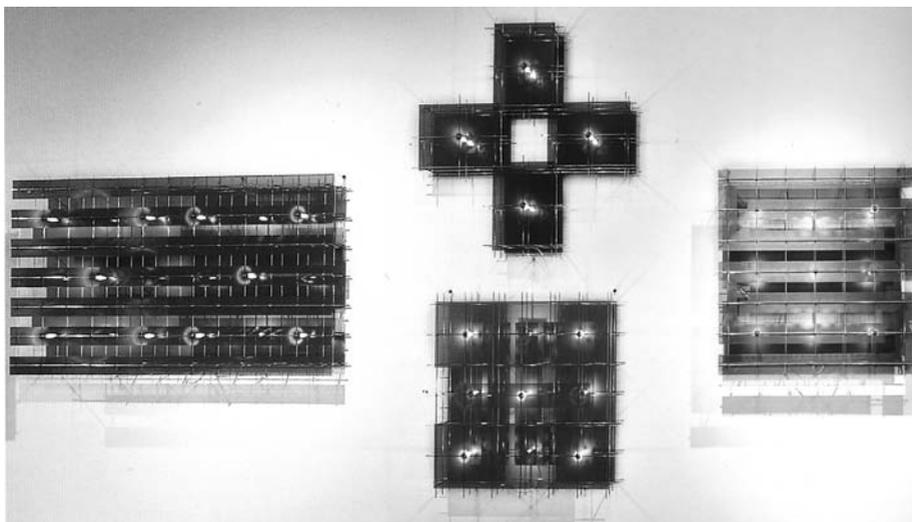
In Andrew Petrusевич’s audio-visual installation *Laminex Malevichs* and *ethink* (2005), smooth, gleaming geometric forms sprawl around a plasma screen television like a ring of blocky planets orbiting a flat, flickering star. Where Kazimir Malevich aspired in 1913 to “free art from the ballast of the objective world” by navigating the white space of infinity with his Suprematist squares and rectangles, Petrusевич situates Malevich’s iconic forms around our own world, as it is mediated through the high-definition screen and narcotic glare of television: a world plagued by fear, anxiety and paranoia.

“Movement, action, frames per second. This is the era we’re



Brook Andrew, *Untitled*, 2005





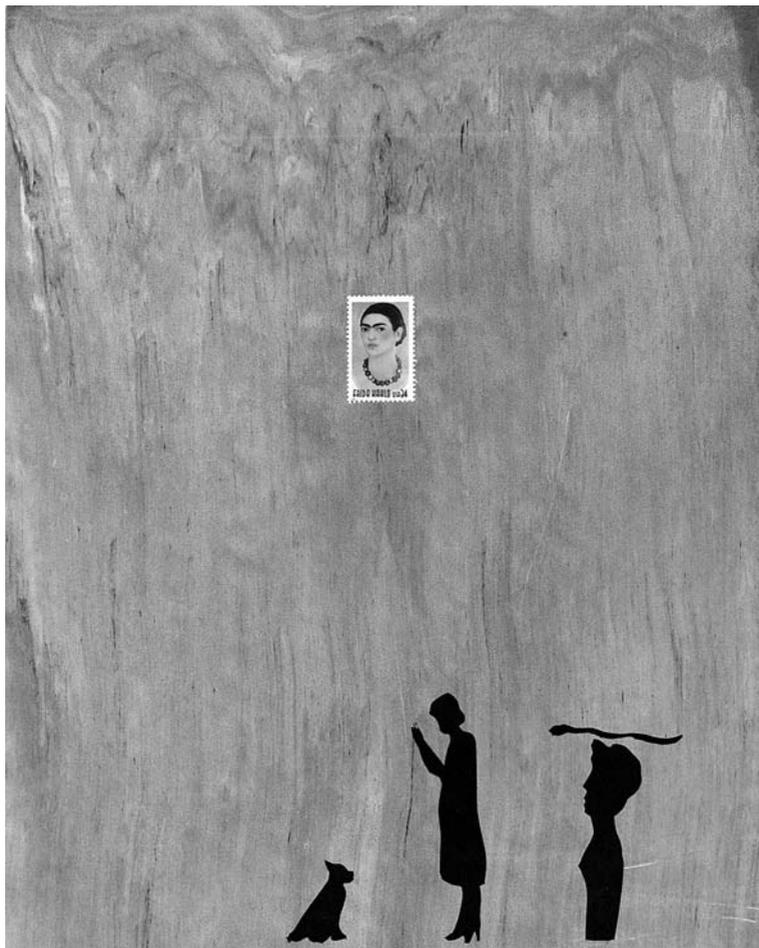
Frank Bauer, *Lichtbild* #16, #19, #18, #17, 2004

in, for better or worse”, writes Don DeLillo, acknowledging one of the twentieth century’s most exemplary art forms. Film revolutionised the perception of movement and flight, inspiring artists like Duchamp to incorporate its findings through paint. Film’s translation to digital video sees Daniel von Sturmer explore the dynamics of painting. In his entrancing video sequences *Into a Vacuum of Future Events* (2005), von Sturmer captures the lush, erotic fluidity of pigment as it spreads, expands, blends, bleeds, and mutates.

This is but a slim sample of work from a sumptuous compilation which strives to convey the inescapable legacy and enduring relevance of modern art. For Michael, the accomplishments in 21st Century Modern are “neither nostalgic nor melancholic; they belong indisputably to the 21st century, when new histories and practices generate new meanings”. If this is so, then the quirky, composite contributions to this stirring exhibition suggest that ours is a century which, in Derrida’s words, is announcing itself “in the infant and terrifying form of monstrosity”.

Varga Hosseini





Sandra Starkey Simon

the letter

Silkscreen, collage, 39 x 29 cm, 2005

Vitamin Episode Nine - 26





Zoe Freney

Crop

Oil on canvas, 90 x 80 cm, 2006

Vitamin Episode Nine - 27



EPISODE EIGHT LAUNCH

22ND FEBRUARY 2006, SYNAGOGUE STUDIOS, CITY



Photographs by Philip Hind, Dianne Longley, and John Hewson





VITAMIN

EPISODE NINE - Super Special Late Edition - July 2006

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ISSN 1449-6429 (Print)

*The Vitamin Archive is assisted by Arts SA:
www.vitaminarchive.com*

Dianne Longley - Technical Support

The photocopying of this publication
was kindly provided by the
South Australian School of Art

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**Cover images, 'Stumpf' (front cover) and
'Stumpf and bird friends' (back) by Hans Kreiner**

Insert Art: by Christian Lock

Published by Vitamin Publications, Welland, South Australia



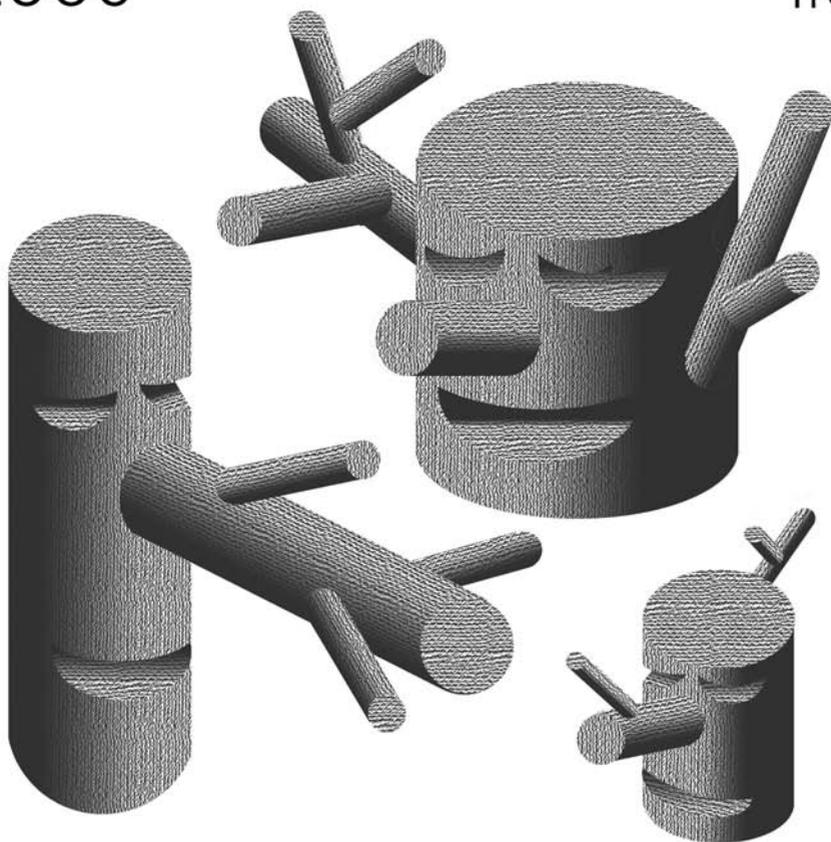


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free



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