

CRITIQUE:

7 Writers for 15 Artworks

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Gertrude Studios 2015, Gertrude Contemporary, 6 November–19 December 2015.

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FOREWORD

For the last ten years, Gertrude Contemporary has run the Emerging Writers Program, in which emerging arts writers (usually four per year) are mentored by a more established writer, with the intention that at the end of the program they will publish a catalogue essay for a Gertrude Studio Artist and a review in a local art magazine. This year, six emerging writers were selected to be mentored by art historian Rex Butler, and it was decided that, instead of publishing in local art magazines, they would all write accounts of the works of the sixteen Studio Artists participating in the end of year *Gertrude Studios 2015* exhibition.

Each writer, along with Rex Butler and Helen Hughes, was asked to write a concise paragraph on six artworks each, along with an introduction and retrospective reflection on the exhibition as a whole. Altogether, seven writers participated, and their various contributions are grouped anonymously for each artwork. We hope that the results are a testament not only to the vitality of Melbourne's emerging art scene, but also to the critical discourse surrounding art in this city. The reader will find all kinds of attitudes, allegiances and methodologies here: unsorted, unhierarchised, unselected. But let the reader judge what speaks to them—not only each work of art, but what each of our writers has to say about the art.



Left to right: Debris Facility, Danae Valenza, Sean Peoples. Photograph: Christo Crocker.



Left to right: Debris Facility, Danae Valenza, Sean Peoples. Photograph: Christo Crocker.



Left to right: Sean Peoples, Sarah crowEST. Photograph: Christo Crocker.



Left to right: Brooke Babington, Minna Gilligan, Sean Peoples, Moore Dahlgaard, Claire Lambe. Photograph: Christo Crocker.



Left to right: Brooke Babington, Sarah crowEST, Minna Gilligan. Photograph: Christo Crocker.



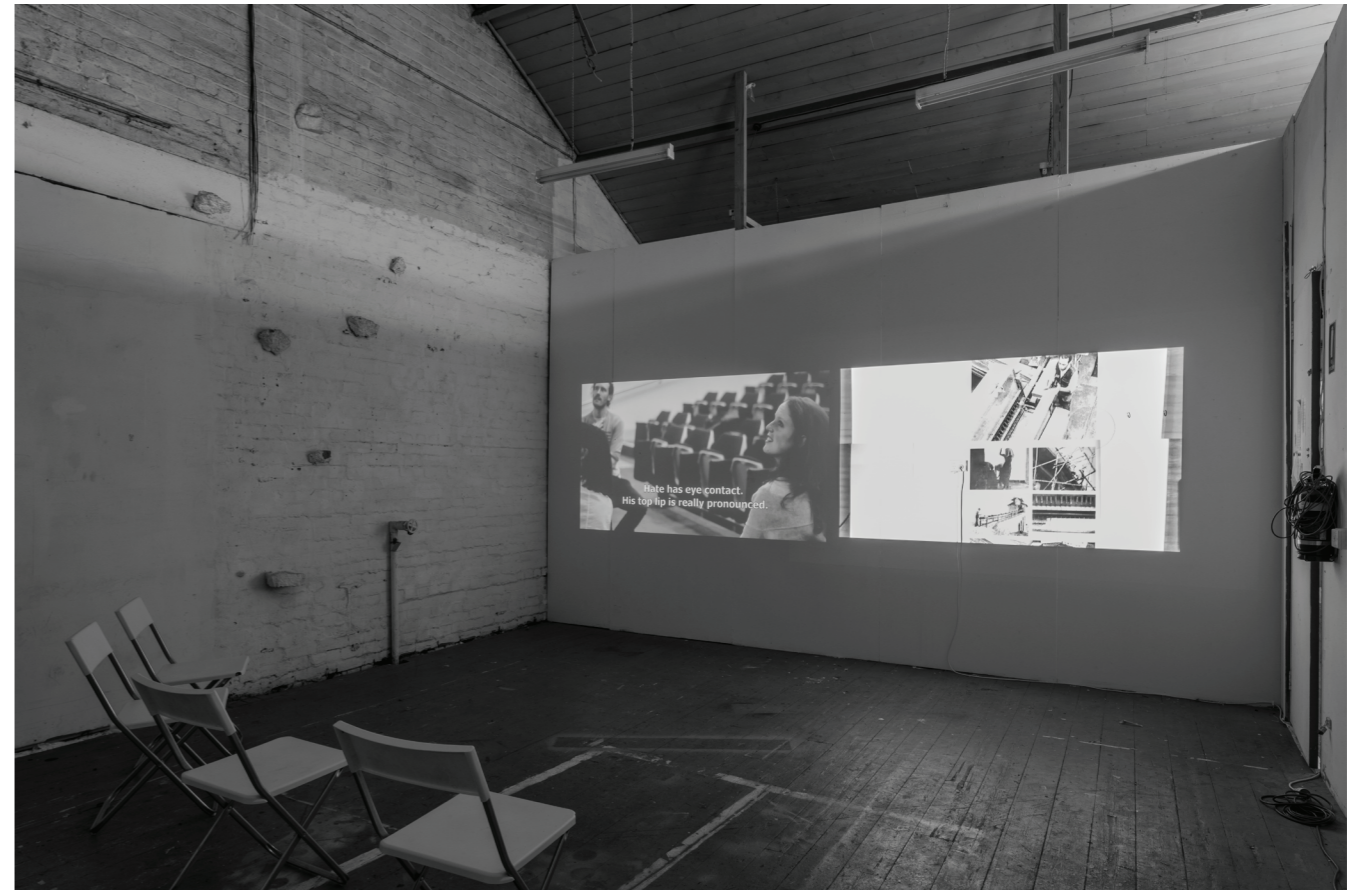
Left to right: Brooke Babington, Minna Gilligan, Sean Peoples, Moore Dahlgaard, Ry Haskings. Photograph: Christo Crocker.



Left to right: Fayen d'Evie, Liang Luscombe and Lisa Radford, Moore Dahlgaard, Brooke Babington. Photograph: Christo Crocker.



Left to right: Claire Lambe, Fayen d'Evie, Liang Luscombe and Lisa Radford, Moore Dahlgaard, Helen Grogan. Photograph: Christo Crocker.



Adelle Mills and Danae Valenza. Photograph: Christo Crocker.



Hamishi Farah. Photograph: Christo Crocker.

- Debris Facility
Unfolding, 2014–2018
polyester, plastic, ceramic tiles, bismuth, rope, pumice, perfume, monosodium glutamate, copper, rose gold, acrylic, ink, pigment, glue, mirror, glue, glitter, magnets, sea sponge, chain, bread, paint, salt, spit, dust, phosphorescent powder, water, tyvek print, light, micro organisms, eyelash, nail polish, thermo chromatic pigment, iron ore, crumpets, charcoal, frankincense, rose resin, cuttlefish bone, powdered green tea, turmeric, tattoo ink, oranges, etcetera
1 X 10 X 100 X 1000 m
- Danae Valenza
Sound Paintings (#2 to #7), 2015
digital type C print
42 x 59.4 cm
- Sean Peoples
Irrational ~ Non-cartesian ~ Emotional, 2015
3D printed plastic, sticks, branches, plumbing, garden matter, miniature furniture, found objects, screws, paper
100 x 120 x 65 cm
- Sarah crowEST
Orifice and Monolith with Strap-on Paintings (destined to be hung horizontally) and lurking Detachable Balls with Bullet Head Plain Shank Nails, 2015
linen, steel, wood, acrylic paint, existing gallery structure
dimensions variable
- Sean Peoples
Sticks and Branches as Metaphors and Analogies, 2015
3D printed plastic, sticks, branches, PVC pipe, screws
13 m
- Minna Gilligan
That's the trouble, 2015
digital print on polyester
180 x 300 cm
- Then again no*, 2015
acrylic, ink, bleach, spray paint and collage on found fabric
101 x 121 cm
- Ry Haskings
Hipercor, 2015
plasterboard, wood, and acrylic on board
dimensions variable
- Tully Moore and Søren Dahlgaard
Gnome Painting, 2015
painting, video
120 x 120 x 600 cm
- Claire Lambe
Remember me me, 2015
digital print on cotton rag
123 x 190 cm
acrylic stand and digital photo on cotton
164 x 65 x 36 cm
- Fayen d'Evie, Liang Luscombe and Lisa Radford
Foot-notes, Appendix 1: The Reconstitution of a Long Term Horizon, 2015
digital video projection
6:16 min
This work has been supported by an Australian Artists' Grant. The Australian Artists' Grant is a NAVA initiative, made possible through the generous sponsorship of Mrs Janet Holmes à Court and the support of the Visual Arts Board, Australia Council for the Arts.
- Helen Grogan
UNTITLED (STUDIO FLOOR WORK), 2014–2015
LCD monitor, gallery (corner), extension power cable, steel, screws, paint, power socket, floor, USB flash drive, single channel video
duration 6:15 min looped
dimensions variable
- Eric Demetriou and Herbert Jercher
Untitled, 2015
digital audio
28:15 min
- Brooke Babington
Goodwill Gesture, 2015
marble, peanuts, melamine
140 x 87 x 60 cm
- Sergey Rozhin
Grandfather Street Art, 2015
digital video
6:23 min

- Ross Coulter
Storm Cloud
5.1 surround sound
4:07 min looped
- Adelle Mills and Danae Valenza; with Eva Birch, Chelsea Hopper, Paris Lettau, Jack Swinson, Brigid Fitzgerald and Nell Reidy
As It Happens, 2015
video installation
dimensions variable
- Hamishi Farah
Galerie Always Get Confused, *Winter - Black Thoughts; Spring - Sober Actions, Warm and Safe* with Liam Osborne; curated by Helen Hughes.
PayPal: hi@hamishi.asia Gallery, *Only Problem in the World, Pandora's Box* with Joanna Neumegen, Calum Lockey, Oscar Miller, Isabella Mahoney, Alex Vivian, Grace Anderson, Zac Segbedzi, Sean Peoples; curated by Zac Segbedzi and Calum Lockey.
Bodies within Hearts Gallery, *Live-in Whale Idea Instead of Nation-State Idea; Hanaswartz 1: Working in a Cold Attic, It's More like a Collab, Mousse Magazine* with Sanja Devic, Jordan Mitchell Fletcher, Jessie Kielly, Virginia Overell, Natasha Havir Smith; curated by Hana Earles. 2: *Global Warming* with Audrey Tan, Constantina Iacovou, Darren Nedza, Kara Baldwin, Hayden Stuart; curated by Hayden Stuart.
Peer Controlled Enterprise, *the Terms and Conditions; Love in the World; Toastie Press Sandwich Maker* arranged by Christopher L.G. Hill; with Natasha Madden, Emma Jo Davies, Christopher L.G. Hill (ft. Isa Genzken unauthorised).
FKA Gallery x Lives in Studio, Don't Tell Admins. Clean Welcoming Room w Refreshments, *Against Dissatisfaction: Trauma of Eros INVITATION*
Hamishi Farah; curated by Anna Schwartz
2015
dimensions variable

I need to become anonymous. In order to be present.
The more I am anonymous, the more I am present.

—Tiqun (collective), *Introduction to Civil War*, trans. Alexander R. Galloway and Jason E. Smith
(Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2010), 2.

*

Walking through *Gertrude Studios 2015*, a diverse range of images and objects proliferate, forming a series of vignettes collaged together to create a dynamic and plural whole. Within the gallery one can encounter a straggly window dressing, peanuts atop a table and rain amidst the buildings' upstairs hallway. The artists' approaches to objects, materials and surfaces produce a broad range of images and describe multiple ways to form political and aesthetic positions. In the instance of most of the works, there is an implication of the building of Gertrude as a physical site that has contributed to the formation of the works, or as a symbolic structure that has been struck and infiltrated. Considering the logic of walking through the spaces of Gertrude, I have written the proceeding excerpts as observations that aim to unpick elements of each piece to comment on how their visual and physical features produce ideas, frame experience and operate within the context of the *Gertrude Studios* show.

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There was no predetermined thematic for the *Gertrude Studios 2015* exhibition, but staff and Studio Artists did joke about the number of literal and metaphorical dicks in the show: Sarah crowEST's modular blue penis with floating 'bollocks'; Tully Moore and Søren Dahlgaard's elongated paint brushes extended through two holes in the floor to drip paint below; the cock'n'balls etched into the marble surface of Brooke Babington's marble table top; and, of course, not one but two gigantic photographs of a golden penis in Claire Lambe's installation *Remember me me*. How to account for this overabundance? Perhaps the dicks represent the Studio Artists' collective subconscious glibly responding to its participation in the *Gertrude Studios* show itself—the expectation that the Studio Artists will jostle for viewers' attention, either through vast 'land grabs,' or by exhibiting something spectacular or shocking. Running counter to the vast number of dicks in the exhibition was another obvious trend: the fact that many artists came up with ways to reduce the clutteredness that typically accompanies the end of year *Gertrude Studios* show. This year, artists collaborated (Dahlgaard and Moore), or found other parts of the building in which to exhibit their work (Ross Coulter in the upstairs corridor; Adelle Mills in her own studio; Hamishi Farah in Director, Emma Crimmings's, office). Perhaps this use of the entire building, as opposed to the two designated gallery spaces downstairs, speaks to the impact of Tara McDowell's 2014 curated Octopus exhibition, titled *Nothing Beside Remains*, which forced viewers to explore Gertrude's dark corridors and dead ends to find the exhibition's various works. Overall, the *Gertrude Studios 2015* exhibition and its sixteen artists demonstrated an intimate knowledge of the conventions and history of the annual *Gertrude Studios* show (which has been running now for some twenty-seven years)—its strengths and weaknesses, its capacity for humour and reflexivity, and how to leverage the opportunity that working together provides.

Rather than attempt to place this exhibition within a conceptual framework or to add curatorial credence when there is none, all one can do is to try to identify a 'glue' that binds. While there is an interest in putting a finger on this consolidating substance, it cannot be forced through theorising in an attempt to build an argument. Rather it would be more constructive to simply withdraw and see how it unfolds. What can be said is that this varied artistic display speaks directly to the present: to the new; to our state within creation; to the Anthropocene that is our contemporary age. And yet, there is no need for the works to speak directly to such theories; the exterior eyes' interest is in the unconscious, unaffected way in which these works have come to be shown together and in their very existence. But without manipulation or coercion these artworks form a part of this epoch, of the Anthropocene, and simply by virtue of living in the now they speak to a larger set of dialectics—whether they want to or not.

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The works produced for the *Gertrude Studios 2015* exhibition are what you would expect. I say this both approvingly and critically. First, the institution has come to support the production of highly experimental work, and this year we see a lot of work that resists the lure of commercialisation and that speaks to a growing desire for contemporary art to be read contextually—much of the work is site-specific or ephemeral. This is what Gertrude is good for. In years to come, many of these artists will have commercial representation, at which point their works will necessarily be pared back for selling purposes. However, despite the lack of a set theme, certain aesthetic currents run through these works—I am thinking in particular of assemblage. This is characteristic of many institutions of art production, that consciously or unconsciously, foster very identifiable aesthetics. Finally, I want to emphasise that, even for an arts writer, these works are largely inaccessible without a good deal of prodding. Contemporary art, more than any other art before, is an index of much larger, disparate themes. Maybe this is cold comfort. But I also think the viewer can harness this fact to their benefit—multiple readings can legitimately be applied to single artworks, as is exemplified here.

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Studio exhibitions lack focus—if lucky, they reflect an overarching aesthetic that informs an institution; more often, they are disconnected, joyless affairs, each artwork sitting in a room, barely on speaking terms with its peers. They feel more like high-school detention than a considered, consistent exhibition. 'Curatorial vision' be damned: it's a tough world out there. *Gertrude Studios 2015* coheres more around spatial arrangement than any set of particular concerns. Each work allows its colleagues breathing space. There are some smart choices made in the positioning of various works: you can triangulate Grogan, Demetriou and Jercher, and Peoples; similarly, Lambe, Moore and Dahlgaard, and Demetriou and Jercher are in a sort of conversation with each other, bisecting the space. Upstairs, different concerns play out between Mills and Valenza, and Coulter, and the presence-through-absence of Moore and Dahlgaard's performative tactics on opening night. None of this work really speaks to any homogenising force; there's no singular voice articulating an aesthetic—or if there is, I'm too dumb to get it. More accurately: if there is a singular voice connecting all artists—and that's a big if—it's speaking into a void of its own creation, trying to attract the attention of the institutions it quietly covets, even while engaging in an 'institutional critique' that requires further rigour.

Julia Murphy and Helen Hughes speak in their introductory essay for the catalogue *Gertrude Studios 2015* of the way a number of the artists selected for the program sought to draw attention to the gentrification of the area in which Gertrude Contemporary has been located for some thirty years. The suburb has become increasingly high-rent real estate and art has played no small part in this. (But, then, its job being done and the area having become aestheticised, the art itself can be done away with, and indeed at the end of next year Gertrude Contemporary will close and move to a new location.) One of those Murphy and Hughes mention in this connection is the artist and curator Brooke Babington, who co-curated Slopes gallery within a property development on Smith Street, putting on exhibitions next to an apartment display suite, separated only by a pane of transparent glass. In a related work, *Dog Maws, Dog-Shaped Chew, Concedes Neighbourhood Has Gone to the Dogs* (2015), she places a cast-iron sculpture of an ornamental Daschund on a plastic garbage bag to comment on what we might call—horrible pun intended—the “yappification” of the Fitzroy area. For the opening night of *Gertrude Studios 2015*, Babington rather desultorily scattered a few handfuls of peanuts in their shells, some eaten and others not, on a broken marble table upon which had been scrawled a number of crudely drawn penises. It was certainly a rude rebuttal of the “conviviality” of the currently fashionable relational aesthetics. Babington, for one, is not welcoming us into her space. For her at least, art should not play the role of sniffer dog for real-estate developers.

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A squat, extremely provisional marble table appears like a riddle: an object that deploys signifiers in a hermetic language that one can invest in interpreting, or not. Whilst these signifiers amount to something against a rubric known by a select few, the work itself, due to the way it employs signifiers, has unintentionally become about the conditions of reading, interpreting and authorship. Peanuts, cock and ball drawings, melamine and marble are combined to create a tension between what is meant, what can be interpreted and how constraining the language of an object—its material and subjective associations—produces obscurity. The sculpture, uninterested in a formal reading, appears to be more invested in a stringent linguistic framing that can be didactically relayed. This disconnection between the things that are present in the gallery and the way it can be read is disarming to the viewer. Either we are asked to invest in the prescribed interpretation of the motifs, thus making the work legible, or we can attempt to form our own associations

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Babington’s *Goodwill Gesture* attempts multi-layered referentiality—a block of marble, marked up with directives (presumably from the block’s previous life), toyed with cock’n’balls, strewn with peanuts: the nexus of gender and commerce playing out across re-purposed material. Her artist statement points toward “expressive mark making (and) bravado” as loaded with potential, awaiting an interpretive unveiling. With *Goodwill Gesture*, though, the energy of the work—the force of the peanuts crossing the marble table—loses out to metaphor: the peanuts, as visual markers both of a play on words, and on the everyday phrases that let slip our understanding and tacit acceptance of capitalism’s repressions (“you’re paid peanuts”), render *Goodwill Gesture* reductive, its word-play and puns blocking the force of greater ambiguity for curatorial angst. I was left thinking, instead, of that other *Peanuts*—the mordant wit and depression of Charlie Brown, particularly in those moments of flat affect, which reveal much more about everyday life’s power play, amidst the oblique combination of materials.

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Consumption has an amnesiac effect, coercing us into forgetting that detritus is the end product of the process. Brooke Babington makes literal this refuse, going to the quintessential source of the term consumption; she presents edible consumables—peanuts—strewn across a piece of marble. A plethora of spent husks, the contents of which have been hastily consumed and discarded, sit amongst those awaiting their fate. The choice of product has a humorous connotation, evoking the idiom that things of no value are worth peanuts. *Goodwill Gesture* reminds us of how certain products can be so valuable to us one minute and then, quite quickly, lose their worth once their purpose is served. The marble is indicative of this. On the one hand, marble, a very expensive material, has an intrinsic economic value, say \$200 per square metre. On the other hand, this piece has clearly been cut to size—perhaps it was used in a kitchen or bathroom—and now, removed from the site it was required for, appears awkward and ugly, as opposed to a desirable marker of wealth. Thus, the pairing of consumables that sit at either end of the value spectrum serves as a reminder of the indiscriminate pervasiveness of the consumption/refusal binary. The effect is ugly—none of the elements in the work gel, and each material only highlights the unattractiveness of the other.

Standing in the upstairs hallway of Gertrude, the intermittent sound of rain hovers above. The sound doesn’t reveal the texture of water meeting a surface, but is a torrential facsimile produced by the clicking of fingers. The clicking-rain generates various images as we are offered a momentary glimpse into an imagined-scape of the industrial interior being flooded. This romantic image of abandonment, and the feeling of trespassing on a squat, quickly gives way to its theatrical origins, as what comes to the fore is the use of the clicking rain motif by the choir Perpetuum Jazzile in their performance of Toto’s *Africa*. In this light, the interior flood finds humour as a threat becomes a momentary ruse—a joke that takes the romanticism of architectural decay and aligns it with a viral YouTube video. That is not to say that the work is entirely without pathos. Given the current state of Gertrude’s housing, the work could also be read as a lamentation, imagining the building as vacant, open and exposed to the weather conditions outside. These possibilities, hovering like the work above, procure a range of images whilst maintaining a sense of humour through the quotidian action that is the basis of its form.

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Disappearance is more provocative when you can’t really grasp it, when the absence haunts. Looking up in the Gertrude Contemporary studio corridor, I see mesh holding in place a speaker. Whether this is how Ross Coulter’s *Storm Cloud* is being broadcast into the corridor or not is largely irrelevant. The speaker held in place by cross thatching talks more loudly than Coulter’s sound art, which is not entirely dissimilar to other sound art works undertaken in Melbourne in recent times, such as Ann Fuata’s seamless wave of clap, pause and whistle. What these works share is a strange, almost oxymoronic, leaning on the gestural to evade the potential of sound as physical force. In the context of the corridor, Coulter’s work sits uneasily: neither ‘blending into the space’ to allow for any seductive power, nor drawing your attention to something ‘out-of-place,’ it neither grabs attention nor repels desire. ‘Sitting’ there, inert and shapeless, it plays with absence and spatial arrangement, but risks ambient blandishment. But what of that speaker, and the repressive function of those structures—the way the exit sign and the red piping build narratives of mobility and escape into restricted movement?

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The interplay between the space and sound is key to Ross Coulter’s *Storm Cloud*, a work that epitomises concealment as an effective mechanism for creating intrigue. The artist’s pieces are poetic and resistant to singular conclusions. Here, it is impossible to work out whether the recording is of a true storm, or perhaps it is a number of tracks of clapping, layered to create the same effect. Rain, as a concept, carries very romantic connotations—particularly rain on a tin roof, which is what this recording sounds like. If the installation represents a very romanticised theme, the mechanisms of which are unknown to its audience, then it reflects the status of Gertrude as an institution with an idealised history unpinned by an inability to access it all. In waiting for the track to loop or for it to become audible over other noises in the space, the visitor becomes acutely aware of their surroundings—the dark and long hallway, the seemingly futile recesses in the wall, the meshed ceiling—which extends the theme of idealisation to the institution itself. The viewer’s desire for full knowledge or access is denied; the doors to the artists’ studios are only sporadically open and only ever for a select few. Just as we are intrigued by the technique creating the sound, we are also mesmerised by Gertrude, a mystique upheld by virtue of the fact that only partial access is granted.

Sarah crowEST's work, *Orifice and Monolith with Strap-on Paintings (destined to be hung horizontally) and lurking Detachable Balls with Bullet Head Plain Shank Nails* (2015), is made of two binary symbolic elements, which have been deconstructed and rearranged in an installation that spans the corner of the front gallery and the doorway into the main gallery. The first element is the aforementioned cock and balls or *Monolith*, comprising of five baby-blue monochrome paintings (each decorated with a single short vertical or horizontal black line) and two 'lurking detachable' bollocks made of white-painted cardboard, tacked rather ruthlessly to the base of the wall with a spray of black bullet-head nails. The blue *Monolith* towers high above the viewer's head, an imposing totem—if it were not somehow infantilised by its baby blue colouring. The second symbolic element is the doorway between the front and main galleries, *Orifice*, which crowEST has painted black and framed with a characteristically geometric abstract design. To the right of the door-void on the adjoining wall is a large black vertical rectangle, echoing the negative space of the door-void—both are symbolic of the womb. crowEST's architectural installation vaguely recalls Salvador Dali's entrance to the 1939 Paris World Fair: two gigantic splayed legs flanking the doorway, through which viewers entered the pavilion. The other doorway work that comes to mind is, of course, Abramovic and Ulay's famous performance work, *Imponderabilia*, of 1977, in which the naked heterosexual couple stand facing each other within a doorframe at the Museum of the Galleria d'Arte Moderna Bologna—forcing viewers to pick which artist/sex they would turn to face in order to squeeze through. Both Dali and Abramovic/Ulay's works draw some sort of equivalence between the architectural space of the doorway and the human birth canal. crowEST's work operates on a slower, more subtle register than either of these. Recognition of the male/female genital pairing in her work is delayed—it is perhaps even missed by some viewers (unless, of course, they read the roomsheet). This slow reveal is, one guesses, precisely the point of the work: gender discrimination still lurks in contemporary art galleries, loitering in corners and, indeed, propping up walls and doors.

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Orifice and Monolith with Strap-on Paintings (destined to be hung horizontally) and lurking Detachable Balls with Bullet Head Plain Shank Nails—it's one hell of a title. Researching crowEST's work, once past the 'mound activity' that marked many years of her practice, led to stranger, more allusive terrain—the most compelling was a tangential, service-function text on 'Construction Technology':

The remaining screws are of more modern design. They have either csk or pan head shapes—easily distinguishable—and have either Phillips or Pozidriv recesses for a screwdriver. Up to around 40 long, the thread is formed for the complete length of the shank. Over 40 long the proportion of thread to plain shank is the same as the traditional pattern, the real difference being that on many this plain portion of shank is smaller in diameter than the given size of the screw nail.

The threaded portion is parallel and there are actually two threads running one inside the other—twin start threads. Note how sharp the points are in comparison with the traditional screw nails on the right.

Orifice and Monolith, in turn, lands us near a catalytic converter for increased thermal functionality: the patent yields the unintentional poetry of 'An automobile catalytic converter of extruded ceramic monolithic honeycomb structure for treatment of automotive exhaust gas.' After this, I was drawn back to the conversations between materials and colour in crowEST's work, the way they appear to speak with each other in an uneasy consort, and her work's intrusion into the gallery structure, marking either side of the entrance into the main space, as though an element of ritual is built into your passing. But those conversations between materials are still bugging me. Being explicit is often boring—but so is evading criticality through endless chains of signification. Discussions of the 'economics of cultural production' require a thorough 'getting to grips' with the nuts and bolts—no pun intended—of material, lest the work end up all talk, no traction. The potential in crowEST's work needs a nudge.

Of course the act of a frame is to do just that, to add structure and context to what it holds within its edges; but what of the frameless, or, to be more specific, the filled space or the void? Two elements of Sarah crowEST's installation speak of this in particular: one is a blackened space large enough to hold the viewer in an unknown anthropomorphic gaze, and the other—likewise in its human relations—frames an entry into actuality. This second instance is architectural in its hold, further accentuated by the thick application of black paint; it frames the obvious, a reality, a singular 'real' condition. Looking into the framed reality, that is all we see; there is no scope for anything more than this, we can walk through into the corporeal world and continue. But what of the frameless void? Here we peer into an unreality, one closer to spirit than to body. The black monochrome acts as an entry into something deeper; whilst looking into it we find infinity and the absence of reason. It is a relief, a moment to release reality, before registering the corporeality still surrounding you and wondering, is this then the frame of the frameless void?

In the main gallery, there are two works that resemble each other: Ry Haskings's *Hipercor*, a small orange wooden panel covered with a brown wavering scrawl; and Eric Demetriou and Herbert Jercher's untitled work, a series of light marks or flecks applied directly onto the wall. They, along with Minna Gilligan's *That's the trouble*, are the three remains of 'painting' in the show, hung together as if for protection. But Haskings, and Demetriou and Jercher, although appearing superficially the same, are in fact opposed: Haskings's work, for all its graphic wavering, ultimately appears computer graphic-like; Demetriou and Jercher's is not only hand-made but delivered by whip, the aftermath of or complement to a performance that takes place with a professional whip cracker. In the performance Demetriou and Travis John provide improvised music (one playing a randomly plucked electric guitar, the other electronica from a laptop), while Jercher cracks his whip: striking objects; popping balloons; toppling Styrofoam cups in a series of minor tests the artist sets for him. At one point, air let out of a balloon with a classic high-pitched squeal is paralleled by Demetriou sucking the air out of a 44-gallon drum until it collapses. It is a soundpiece of a kind, with the difficulty of actually making the whip crack at any particular moment an important part of what we hear. Its snap is like the sudden introduction of the real, just like the presence of an actual countryman in urban Fitzroy. We are left at the end of the performance with shredded Styrofoam cups, torn balloons, shrivelled drums: a typical 'unmonumental' sculpture or what is less politely called nowadays 'shit on the floor,' but it's not often brought about by an artist wearing a real checked shirt.

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Marks forming a loose circle on one of the walls of Gertrude Contemporary appear as a process-based drawing that are the result of highly gestural bursts. It becomes evident listening to the stark sound of a whip being cracked across the 'drawing' that the scattered marks on the wall are the result of the recorded action. The whip cracking initially procures images of subordination and masculinity associated with a regional cultural tradition. However, the work does not sustain these readings for long, as its lack of context and the distillation of the action to its aural and visual remnants heightens the sensory experience of the lashes, acting like a slap against the silence of the gallery. The slap, a startling call to 'snap out of it' momentarily stultifies, making one simultaneously hyper aware of the body, yet unable to reconcile the rush of emotion caused by the strike. It is this sensation that the work pursues, positioning the viewer between the incredibly loud crack and the image of lashes. The work makes one think of being struck as we imagine our body to be the wall of the building, or alternatively we are vicariously placed in the position of the person who whips. Whichever role we adopt, what is intended is for a thrill to be generated through the simulation of whipping or being whipped within the confines of a safe situation once removed from both.

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Prior to the performance, listening to the undulating hum of audio feedback interspersed with whipping, guitar-bashing and some kind of mechanical malfunction, one can view the aftermath of what appears to be a kind of architectural BDSM—whip marks on the wall. The white gallery wall becomes either the ass of the masochistic institution or the artists themselves begging for more. By contrast, the performance in Studio 18 reveals Jercher's science-fair playground meeting Demetriou's kinetic sound-based sculptural works—a more accessible and mischievous context for the work in the main gallery. The artist and another performer (Travis John) giggle as they throw everyday and musical objects into the path of Herbert Jercher's whip and mock the potential of their bodies to be hit and marked by the whip. As a result, their work seems to anticipate a reception typical of noise art: one of ironic distance, humour and masculine DIY 'gear' culture. I recall two avid marijuana smokers sitting in the lounge room of my first teenage share-house, plugging an amp into itself, marvelling at the wailing drone teetering on the edge of short-circuit and saying simply, 'how DIY is that?!' While the untitled work in the main gallery could conceivably be a commentary on the artists' sadomasochistic relationship with the gallery and their work, their performance suggests that the work is not as self-reflexive as it first appears, and rather works to short-circuit their clumsily constructed institutional mayhem.

Fayen d'Evie, Liang Luscombe and Lisa Radford's video *Foot-notes, Appendix 1: The Reconstitution of a Long Term Horizon* (2015) consists of two shots—a long take out the rear-window of a moving vehicle driving around a very grey airport, capturing buses and trucks passing by, and clusters of workers dressed in yellow safety gear—and a shorter shot of Russian President Vladimir Putin's face, pictured behind a glass or plastic transparent mask. These shots are interspersed with intertitles—what appear to be fragments of transcripts of conversations about a biennial, presumably the 3rd Ural Industrial Biennial of Contemporary Art, for which these three artists collaborated on an artwork—transcripts because every now and then the conversations are interrupted with the word '[inaudible]' accompanied by a time-stamp. The long backwards-looking gaze out at the airport connotes complex, bicephalic temporalities: Benjamin's Angel of History, his face turned towards the past, or Robert Smithson's film *Spiral Jetty* (1970), which jump-cuts between the past and the future through visions out the front and back window of his pick-up. The smoothness of this single-shot downstairs is drastically contrasted with the jittery, hand-held movement of the video by Sergey Rozhin titled *Grandfather Street Art* (2015) in a corridor upstairs, which depicts crowds of people hurriedly pacing through corridors, rooms and a bathroom, in which a creepy sack-creature with glowing, pulsing eyes sits in a bath ignored by those passing by. The two videos act like portals onto another time and space, particularly Rozhin's, which has been placed face-down above a wire-mesh ceiling, hovering above the viewer as if boring a tunnel through the centre of the earth.

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It's hard to be enamoured of a work so unremittingly grey-scale in its presentation and emotional tenor, and yet *Foot-notes, Appendix 1: The Reconstitution of a Long Term Horizon* has something going for it, as hard as this 'something' may be to articulate. Tellingly, the points where *Foot-notes* snares the attention shift according to where you are in your (repeated) viewing(s) of the six-minute video, though there are a couple of 'hooks' that always grab you: particularly observations about rumour and the art world, and the monolithic building that sits, ominously, in the background for some of the clip. There's a touch of Chris Marker's oppressively critical films here, a moment where *Foot-notes* plays out like a reduced, politically numbed *La Jetée*, with all the poetry evacuated and replaced by a grim, at times almost callous, art world self-reflexivity. If anything, I wanted the institutional critique deepened, the rigour sharpened and hastened, the commentary blunter, more forceful, removed from any gesture toward the poetic. Shift the focus and the politics of the moment will surface and multiply. Leave it un(der)said, in this context, and there's risk that the gesture reads as empty. All the decisive blows are struck left-handed.

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'It occurs to me that one thing that art and politics share in common (in their operation, if not their theory) is the central role of rumour.' The collaboration between Fayen d'Evie, Liang Luscombe and Lisa Radford is the critical précis of *Foot-notes*—a meta-narrative comprised of fragmented dialogic texts from contributors both remotely and locally in Yekaterinburg, Russia: the site of the 3rd Ural Industrial Biennial, the theme of which was 'mobilisation.' A cyclic backward transit through EKB airport in Abu Dhabi reveals the liminal space between destination and origin that could easily be mistaken for an industrial wasteland or military base—a barbed-wire purgatory within which the artists are tourists. It is largely desolate save for a few workers identified by their yellow Hi-Vis workwear, yet only made visible through the mobile lens of the artists' moving vehicle. Their stories are abstracted through the documentary lens of contemporary art—accentuating the unreliability of histories beginning with text or dialogue and ending only with the continued mobility of the few and implied immobility of 'the rest.' In this work the post-Fordist discourse of market 'mobility' is primarily concerned with accessibility, labour relations and private wealth in the West. Upstairs, installed above the chain-link fence that separates the Gertrude studios' ceiling from the labyrinthine hallways, a television screen rests against the grid through which the viewer must look up into Russia, a work by Sergei Rozhin filmed in the bathroom of the Iset Hotel, which is concurrently showing in Yekaterinburg. The short looped video features a character gently repositioning itself in a bathtub. Much like a Star Wars 'Jawa,' the character is cloaked in 100-year-old hessian discarded from furniture re-upholsters, through which only its bright mechanical yellow eyes are visible. The Jawa, natives of the deserts of the wasteland Taotoine, sought out technology for sale or trade in huge sandcrawler transports—here technology is isolated from its use-value and is reduced to its market value. Intimately tied to the work on more prominent display in the main gallery, this metaphor functions to interrogate the visibility and invisibility of labour as it relates to accessibility, unreliable histories (or fiction and non-fiction), and the questionable potentiality of the collusion of art and politics to mobilise.

To the far end of the front window of Gertrude Contemporary, a sea sponge that has been blackened sits atop a utility meter. The sponge's ability to absorb, and its porosity, is stifled by its coating. The blackened sponge appears atrophied and deadened, and is indicative of the incremental threat that the proliferating range of materials pose to completely obscure the front window. The work, through a felt and opportunistic approach, appears to revel in the tensions between suffocation and decoration, organic and inorganic, hygiene and abjection, expressed in the diverse range of materials ranging from bathroom tiles to saliva. Fluidly gliding between binaries, confusing visual, temporal as well as taxonomic systems, the work becomes a morphological space unrestrained by definition, open to constant permutation and proliferation. This marks an ideological position that infiltrates and parasitically untethers 'things' from their social and spatial mooring. And, like a parasite, the work has interred within its dissent an acknowledgment of the need of the host it inhabits in order to proliferate. In this case the infrastructure of the gallery becomes the symbol of a hegemonic structure that the work, like the covering of the sponge, aims to incrementally take over.

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Debris Facility's work makes the gallery breathe. Every day, friends, colleagues and staff members walk through the gallery and studio complex upstairs adorned in jewellery by the Facility. Upstairs, where they keep their studio on the third floor, large sheets of fluoro yellow shibori-treated fabric hang from the windows and blow with the wind, age with the rain. Downstairs, in the front window of the gallery for their *Gertrude Studios* work titled *Unfolding*, objects are sporadically moved, loaves of bread mould, and MSG crystals grow. For the Facility, every surface—static or moving—is an exhibition opportunity, whether a window, a wall or an acquaintance's earlobe. And almost every material can be absorbed into the work of the Facility. In *Unfolding*, a black cloud of partially scratched-away paint descends upon the surface of the window—a leftover from the previous exhibition, which required blacked out windows for the number of video works on display inside. The floor of the Facility's window work is also lined in shiny white rectangular tiles—leftovers of a former Studio Artist, Bridie Lunney, scavenged from the loading dock in the alleyway behind Gertrude Contemporary. Everything is in flux, moving and mutating, and always will be. This constant change is anticipated long into the future of the work, as is evinced in the date of production that the Facility bestowed upon it: *Unfolding*, 2014–2018.

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On the surface, this installation is chaotic. Drapes of garish yellow and blue span the length of the window, and white tiles create a path on the floor, but neither appears to serve a utilitarian purpose. Other items are disparately strewn around the installation. Some have been prettified, using expensive materials to make them more enticing. Rocks, for instance, have been painted blue and then gilded with random spots of gold and silver paint. Through such tantalising titbits, the viewer is coerced into paying close attention to the micro-details of the installation, which subsequently ushers in the realisation that there is nothing random about this assemblage. Everything has been carefully placed in the front of the iconic front window of Gertrude Contemporary. The 'debris' is, in fact, not trash. A smashed mirror has been carefully arranged so that each piece is beautifully splayed out like the way the body of a person who has jumped from a building is arranged neatly on the pavement in films. Of course, I think to myself. Of course, this is not refuse. The fetishisation of randomness has actually been negated insofar as there is nothing random about creating an assemblage to look random. Everything is intentional. Herein lies the slow revelation of the container in which the piece is made—the neatly bureaucratic institution.

As a non-fully assimilated cultural functionary without a traditional art education, Studio Artist Hamishi Farah is the exception, not the rule, in his interrogation of institutional bureaucracy. Whereas artists like Eric Demetriou, Helen Grogan and Brooke Babington maintain a dichotomous relationship as both partner and adversary to the art institution, Farah positions himself (dangerously) as an unembellished and uncompromising opponent—renegotiating not his complicity in and reliance on the institution, but the confines of institutional critique itself. Farah's gestural work included contributions from seven different curators and twenty-three different artists featured prominently in Melbourne's 'off-site' contemporary art world renaissance. The curators included first year undergraduate students of fine arts alongside art-world mogul Anna Schwartz, all of whom were directed by Farah to curate exhibitions inside various white-goods and kitchen appliances positioned in the Gertrude Contemporary Director's office, as opposed to the main gallery. The Director would then be in a position to choose who accessed the exhibition simply by closing the door to her office. Schwartz's curatorial contribution was a printout of Farah's initial invitation email; perhaps a wry nod to Farah's practice of making his institutionally implicated emails public via social media and often including them in his work. Regardless of her intention, her agreed inclusion—by name alone—collapses the centre-periphery relationship that dictates institutional and aesthetic legitimacy. In his email to Schwartz, Farah cites this relationship as one that restricts the visibility of those on the periphery and thus also revises or curates cultural identity. Whilst the poetic, aesthetic, and critical response of each curatorial project within Farah's overarching work stood independently from his gesture, the result was one of unprecedented institutional critique as it relates to accessibility. Ultimately, the works were removed entirely from the Director's office two days into the six-week exhibition.

Although the Director suggested that Farah could move the works to his studio, the contextual disarticulation would completely transform the principal terms of the work. Those terms, being the agency of the Director in granting or refusing access to the office-gallery, were most poetically enacted in the reasons she cited for the work's removal: the upcoming Gertrude thirtieth anniversary fundraiser and an imminent grant application. By bringing the off-site so centrally and pointedly 'onsite,' and for unapologetically engaging in arguably the most contemporised dialogue of institutional critique since Fred Wilson and Hans Haacke, Farah's work was ejected from the institution entirely. In this case, the expression of discomfort and eventual censorship reveals the power structure that determines the hidden expectations that limit the critical potential of artists supported by the institution and reveals how effectively cultural institutions control the organised experience of art. As Farah notes in his video work for Minerva gallery in 2014, *Marginal Aesthetics*, 'didacticism by marginal practitioners is commonly lauded and invited by Australian institutions ... [The] commissioning of marginal didacticism is deftly mistaken for institutional critique. However, this misreading correctly positions a ruling majority within the institution.' Farah's 'marginal didacticism' was, in this case, 'uninvited' while other iterations of 'institutional critique' remained—perhaps because unlike other works, his engagement could not be 'co-opted into the museo program to satiate and alleviate a ruling class guilt.'

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Curating by association or: How I learned to love my fellow artists so long as we are accurately identified, seems like a fitting title to speak of the state of the co-op within much of the Melbourne art world—actually, it is most likely fitting for a great number of 'worlds.' Here in the sphere of Gertrude Contemporary, smaller worlds have been dealt out; a slot is given to each studio artist to populate as desired. More often than not this structure comes with an obvious presentational preference—a singular showing of the said artist—but within Hamishi Farah's space we are presented with an amalgam of variations, most of all in creator and curator. For in this instance, the key work by Farah is the room sheet and the list of shows within the show, which adorns the door to the show, not the standard singular work of the Gertrude Contemporary Studio Artist. Farah has given over this allocated space to his associates, which he reiterates in print, an act that holds just as much conceptual rigour and artistic decision-making as any contemporary art object. Here, the co-op exists under the overarching entity of Farah, pieced together by the cooperative society of the correlated masses, giving rise to the already abundantly clear reality of the artistic group's ability to change its colours to march under a singular vision but that cannot hide its changing flags.

Biting the hand that feeds you is one way of looking at Hamishi Farah's position within the Gertrude Studio Artist stable. However, one should not disregard his method of antagonism, which pushes all the buttons of the institution while allowing Farah to remain within it. In a recent *e-flux* article, artist Ahmet Ögüt discusses the various possibilities by which contemporary artists might revolt against, but remain within, the confines of the institution. Ögüt touches upon the concept of 'para-sitic practice' as developed by Janna Graham. It 'aims at broad social transformation by taking advantage of the high profile of cultural institutions, using a "problem-posing" approach instead of a "banking approach."¹ Farah's para-sitic practice comes to a head in *5th Melbourne Biennial* by infiltrating the office of Gertrude Contemporary's Director with collaboratively curated exhibitions, which break down the hierarchy between the plebeian public and the ivory tower of arts bureaucrats, inviting gallery visitors to inspect the various refrigerators. The subsequent removal of Farah's installation prior to the gallery's fundraiser points at the complex system of para-sitic practice. The institution is now the parasite, superseding Farah in the hopes of gaining from its benefactors. Refusing the institution would be far too easy, not to mention futile: doing so removes the artist from the very short-term memory of those within the arts industry. Instead, he sucks as much as he can from the institution, pushing the boundary of permissible possibilities to expose the ingrained class culture within the arts. It is undeniably befitting that the curated refrigerator exhibitions feature perishable products as the exhibited works—decay is the embodiment of parasitic.

¹ Ahmet Ögüt, 'CCC: Currency of Collective Consciousness,' *e-flux Journal*, February 2015, URL <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/ccc-currency-of-collective-consciousness/>.

For the *Gertrude Studios 2015* exhibition, Minna Gilligan has hung a brightly coloured painting titled *Then again no* on top of a large sheet of digitally printed polyester fabric pinned to the wall, titled *That's the trouble* (both 2015). The fabric flows vertically, like a waterfall. The pattern that is printed upon it is a significantly enlarged photographic image of paint brush strokes upon paint brush strokes, in pink, blue, green, red, orange and yellow, which together build up a dense layering of colour and textures. The image has obviously been cropped on a computer as Gilligan's expressive brushstrokes end in abrupt straight lines around the four corners of the work. These abrupt endings demonstrate that the work, like a grid—as Rosalind Krauss wrote in her famous 1979 essay—is presented as a virtual 'fragment, a tiny piece arbitrarily cropped from an indefinitely larger fabric.'² Extending Krauss's logic, Gilligan's *That's the trouble* compels us to acknowledge the world beyond the work's frame. Only the world that Gilligan gestures towards in *That's the trouble* and, indeed, in her painting *Then again no* (as Jeremy Eaton convincingly argues in his essay for Gilligan's Studio 12 exhibition, *On a clear day you can see forever*) is not a landscape but a digital scape glimpsed through a computer window. This fragment cut from a larger cloth belongs to another realm entirely. Gilligan's work may, then, encourage us to think of gallery walls and Facebook walls as somehow equivalent: both repositories of visual/social culture, as well as the site of their construction.

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Gilligan's pop-referentiality has always had certain charge: from Madonna (*I Made It Through The Wilderness*) to The Beach Boys (*Feel Flows*) and beyond, she's selected moments of strange, uncanny wistfulness, from El Ciccone's sexual charge and the *Like A Virgin* video's driftwork through the canals of Venice, to the man-child SoCal innocence of The Beach Boys (*Feel Flows* was written by Carl Wilson and Jack Rieley, and subsequently appropriated by Madonna). But as Jeremy Eaton notes in his essay for her current show, *On a clear day you can see forever*, she's shifted sideways, moving from the nostalgic reverie to the situatedness of the branded self. *That's the trouble* and *Then again no* are both riots of colour and reverie, but their brash strokes and vibrant collisions mask a much subtler understanding that underpins the work: of the need to assemble selves from the swarm of knowledge that constitutes the mediated world. The success of *That's the trouble* and *Then again no* is provisional—it is just as easy to read Gilligan's work as twee—but closer attention reveals gentle force, particularly in the juxtaposition of the two works, where they interrupt each other's logic, undoing any sense of certainty that either piece may have on its own.

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Without delving too deeply into the oft-quoted words of Walter Benjamin's 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,' its crux—that of the aura of an artwork—seems a fitting lens through which to look at the burgeoning occurrences of the digital print hanging upon the gallery wall. Whether or not this medium is truly representative of the art of painting, or of studio practice, is of no consequence here. The intrigue of this particular example, in the work of Minna Gilligan, is the location of the digital in context to the analogue. For within Gilligan's contributions to the *Gertrude Studios 2015* exhibition and Studio 12 display, there is—in most instances—a clear pairing of these differential formats. The friction between these elements is a blatant battle here, one that neither digital nor analogue have arrived at properly equipped. The digital is on display, large and vibrant, but without structural support, while the museum-grade hanging of the stretched and physically painted work is not all it appears to be. For Gilligan's traditional paintings are built upon an ancillary layer of the found material, the un-stretched and not-to-be stretched fabric that has become the backdrop to an acrylic application. Perhaps an instance of pure happenstance, but this visual dialectic seems to examine the role of the aura further by virtue of its multiplicity in the use and application of the materials and techniques that brought it into being in the first place.

² Rosalind Krauss, 'Grids,' *October* 9 (Summer 1979): 61–3.

Helen Grogan's is a lovely piece—my pick of the show—whose quietness and subtlety was in danger of being lost on the packed and noisy opening night. *Untitled (Studio Floor Work)* is a six-minute looped video showing (I presume) an everyday moment of Grogan's residency by placing a camera before a large black curtain that covers almost all of the screen, allowing us to see the floor of Grogan's studio only when the wind momentarily picks the curtain up and blows it into the space of the studio. From off-screen come the sounds (again, I presume) of the Gertrude Street traffic, locating us (it is a little hard to tell) either outside Grogan's studio window or standing in the corridor looking in through the door. Of course, in this indirect, in which we see only glimpses of the action off to the side of the image, we are reminded of something like Michael Snow's *Wavelength* (1967), where the camera slowly zooms over a 45-minute period onto a spot on a faraway wall while the drama (involving the murder of a man) takes place largely off-screen. Here in *Untitled*, we literally lift the curtain onto the scene—and its Jackson Pollock-like drip-painting floor—almost as though Grogan had designed a stage or theatre set. In other words, we move between life and art, reality and theatre, separated only by the lifting of a curtain or the whispering of the breeze.

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A steel triangle does not support or protect a television's cord; rather, it ever so slightly elevates it and defines the transition of the cord from the monitor to the wall. Despite its superfluity, the triangle has now enacted a relation that has formed a system of reciprocity and contingency between the work, the slight details of architectural setting and a utilitarian object. The texture of the floor, the flutter of a piece of fabric, lighting conditions and the scrawl of a cord are the solicited actors in the contained choreography of the enclosed system of the work. These spare details become central characters, which are framed, revisited and re-framed, in a choreographic unravelling of a process that converses with objects, ambiences and architectural features at the periphery. The monitor and its accompanying triangle feel like a snippet or model of this process, yet the detail of the cord and triangle emphasises the basic tenet underlining the artist's practice. It is not functional except as a frame for the cord and, like the high-resolution video exposing a slither of studio floorboards, the triangle momentarily sharpens, distils and focuses a moment.

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The parameters of assigned spaces; the limits and boundaries between the seen and the unseen; and thus materiality and time, are recurring themes in Grogan's work. A black sheet blows gently in the wind revealing a peek (not a reveal) of Grogan's studio floor. To the right of the screen, a steel, right-angled (or is it scalene?) triangle sits with the extension power-cable leading to the LCD monitor. If anything, the work seems to underscore the emptiness of the gallery, the studio, the artist and the art under the special requirements of the artist-in-residence paradigm. Is this institutional critique at its lowest common denominator? Triangulated by Eric Demetriou and Herbert Jercher's untitled whip marks on the gallery wall and Brooke Babington's *Goodwill Gesture*, featuring peanuts on a cracked marble surface, it appears that institutional critique from within the warm embrace of the institution is the *raison d'être* of this year's *Gertrude Studios* exhibition. If the question was, 'what is the artists' relationship to the conditions and possibilities of institutional critique?' these artists seem to respond with 'Stockholm syndrome.'

Hipercor, an upscale chain of Spanish hypermarkets, shares its name with Haskings's work. The 1987 Hipercor car bombing caused a hole in the ground floor of the shopping centre that was five metres in diameter. Haskings's work includes a plasterboard extension of the gallery wall, protruding into the main space some centimetres, to accommodate a traditionally minimalist acrylic painting. At a stretch, this could imply a metaphor for the radicalisation of commercial space. Yet a comparison between a violent, radical religious act of terrorism and the addition of a small wall in the gallery seems unlikely. Perhaps it speaks less to the bombing and more to the broader concept of the hypermarket itself—the combination of supermarket and department store. The hypermarket typifies internationalised retailing of a global service economy and the spatial dynamics of market penetration by U.S. franchises, such as *Wal-Mart*, in foreign economies, and could conceivably associate Haskings's work with the popular theme of globalisation. In this case, perhaps *Wal-Mart* would have been a more appropriate name for Haskings's work—a less obscure hypermarket chain with a casuistic nod to Americanisation and the gallery wall itself. And yet, this is all in a name.

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Hipercor is indicative of Ry Haskings's ongoing use of abstraction as a method of indexing both private and public histories, and as a tool for analysing the place of the art object within the exhibition space. Haskings's abstraction is based upon various formulas, which he applies as a way of marking his place at that particular moment in time. In this sense, the works are personal despite their flat, automated aesthetic. Recently, Haskings has been thinking about the Hipercor bombing in Barcelona at the hands of the Basque separatist group, the ETA (Euskadi Ta Askatasuna), largely because he will take up a residency in Spain in 2016. The year of the bombing, 1987, becomes the core framework for this work. Using a formula of 1cm, 9cm, 8cm and 7cm as the measurements for the box in the painting, Haskings condenses the complexity of history down to standardised abstraction, which can be subsequently revisited and unpacked. It seems counter-intuitive to use abstraction to work through a massacre, but the painting is not *about* the event; rather, it is a mnemonic marker of Haskings's life. Moving on, then, to the artificial wall built by the artist to hang the image, Haskings evokes a 'mesh network system,' where each element feeds into another, creating an interlocking model. The purpose-built white wall draws our attention to this elemental collaboration. As neither part of the pre-existing structure, nor part of the exhibited painting, it calls into question the compulsion to separate artwork from space. Furthermore, the size of the wall—Haskings generally builds them around 2 metres high and 70cm wide—necessitates that people view the painting individually, the effect of which is that they are then neatly embedded into Haskings's mesh system along with the wall and painting.

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There is a contemporary painting conundrum, one that has been going on for the better part of two decades, which few artists have tackled in a way that sees a continuation to their practice as painters, nor as a continued embrace of their artistic language. It seems to speak of an internal struggle with the pictorial, whereby painters feel as though they need to become more spatially aware with the view that installation art is this century's 'new black,' or simply due to a belief that spatial development is the key to progression in their practice. But folk-styled ceramics are not the answer; such ventures into object-making rob the painter of their 'painterliness' and thereby their artistic language. By all means, stray further into three dimensions, but do so with a consideration for your known language, and not with a heavy hand. Indeed, Italian artist Rudolf Stingel has ventured outside the tradition of painting while continuing to personify 'the painter' within varied exhibitions: covering the entirety of the Palazzo Grassi interior with Persian-inspired carpeting for his 2003 exhibition, and likewise in his *Untitled (orange carpet on floor)* works, particularly as illustrated in 1991 at Paula Cooper Gallery in New York City. These ventures are still 'paintings-about-paintings,' and rather than becoming an aside to painting, they allow for the language of both the art of painting and the artist to grow. This impulse to build on the language of painting is evident in Ry Haskings's constructions, which accompany his pictorial works. With *Hipercor*, Haskings seeks to provide the medium of painting with another platform; like Stingel's Persian wallpaper, Haskings gifts his paintings with a new framework, both spatial and ideological, from which to operate. In so doing, Haskings diversifies the role of the painter without losing his language: he is able to venture outside of the pictorial whilst remaining true to it.

A funny thing happened every time I was standing near Claire Lambe's *Remember me me*: someone would see the work, step closer to it, as if to assess whether it was really there, or to make sure it understood its own function in the world; they'd take another few steps back, to take the work in in its entirety; and then they'd invariably take a photo of it. Often I was standing near, but not in front of the work, so I decided it was my job to work my way into the photo, to somehow, surreptitiously, photo-bomb Lambe. It struck me, after it happened the second time, that this 'spectaclisation' was the force of Lambe's work: a moment of unbelieving leading to a need to somehow document the work's existence, to place it within a frame that allows for its reception, articulation, and maintenance. But that is also a moment that voids the work of its specific charge and suggests that it only exists in its subsequent talked-about-ness, as a rumour-mill of abstraction. Such voiding is mirrored by the literal voiding of urination documented in the work itself. The gold penis, of course, leads us back to Makavejev's *Sweet Movie*—the oil tycoon that the 'most virgin' Miss Monde 1984 marries has a golden cock. The through-lines here—of Makavejev's critical engagement with capitalism's sexual repressions, and the cauterisation of communism by Western values—remain unexplored. But certainly, for decades, *Sweet Movie* was talked about, but never seen. Perhaps the privations of censorship and concealment are the connecting force.

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The painted bouquet of flowers is synonymous with the still-life form, most notably that of the Dutch and Flemish painters of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and is representative of the season and the senses, just as the skull is of mortality and earthly remains. Its symbolism becomes even more explicit with the selection of blossom: the rose representative of the Virgin Mary, Venus, love; the lily of virginity and purity; the violet of modesty and humility; sunflowers of faithfulness and divine love; the columbine of melancholy; poppies of power and death; and so on it goes. Rather than being front and centre in Claire Lambe's *Remember me me*, we find the still-life bouquet taking an aside: its multiples of symbolism here are redundant against the charged portrait of a young man in gold. And like the flowers on the man's shorts—which may be poppies—one finds oneself inwardly reeling off the multitudes of references called up by the colour gold, attempting to pair the right one with Lambe's chosen representation, not to mention the act it is a part of. For in this picture, the gold is the chosen flower and the man the bouquet. But then it dawns: we have already been advised that there is no need for a singular reading. Lambe presents the scene not once but twice with the adjustment of in-image composition, changed presentation method and scale—offering up multiple readings simply through the duality of the image. With a slight compositional adjustment, Lambe offers us a double take: the opportunity to think twice about the still life and the portrait.

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Lambe, who so often considers the female body, turns her attention here to the male anatomy. Her image of male genitalia carries simultaneous meanings. Painted gold, it is imbued with a monumental status, resembling some kind of sacred, ahistorical symbol. In this sense, it is phallic—a symbol of fertility, virility and, of course, patriarchy. However, the phallicism of the gilded penis is just as quickly undone by the very fact that it is a real penis *and* by virtue of the fact that it is flaccid, not erect; pissing, and not ejaculating. Furthermore, the floral fabric, and the clumsily stained fingers and pubic hair remove from the penis the power of phallus. In depicting the penis so blatantly, Lambe negates the patriarchy that it has traditionally elicited. And then there is the repetition, of the image and in the work's title. Travelling along the same quasi-psychoanalytic trajectory as the analysis of the phallus, it is not difficult to want to deconstruct the doubling effect through the lens of Repetition Compulsion—the Freudian theory that events are experienced repeatedly by people who have experienced trauma. But, again, Lambe sets this framework up to simply contradict this default interpretation. Repetition Compulsion is associated with the Uncanny, experiencing doubles of the living, which are typified by such things as ghosts and robots. While Lambe presents a smaller double of the hanging image, this effect is void of an uncanny quality. In fact, it is more numbing than jolting. If the large image shocks or titillates the viewer, the smaller one is already passé, going against the usual effect that a close-up of a pissing gold penis should conjure.

Adelle Mills and Danae Valenza's *As it Happens*, playing in an upstairs studio, is a video of a group of young Melbourne art history students talking about a work of art. In what appears like classic tutorial mode, the camera pans around a series of intent young faces, while behind them just out of frame shines the screen with the projected image of the work they are presumably discussing bathing them in its light. It takes quite a while before we realise that not only are we not seeing the image they are talking about, but in fact there isn't one at all. They are speaking about nothing. (We cannot quite tell whether they are following a script given to them before the video or each is improvising from the comment made before, in something like a game of Chinese whispers.) The point is that at some point as the video goes on we realise both that the work of art does not exist and that each successive comment is helping us—and maybe them—see something of it. And is this not close to the truth of speaking about art? That our closest engagement with the work arises not from any direct ekphrasis or evocation of something actually there before us, but paradoxically from our very inability to describe it, the sense of our language falling short, referring to itself? Is not something like this the secret of all good art writing: the fact that it is the most powerful sense of an absence within the writing that gives us the most powerful sense of something outside of it? That is why deciding to have images accompany a written text is always a double-edged strategy. We might say that exactly what we gain we also lose.

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There's an economy of presentation to *As it Happens*. While viewing elements of the work, I found myself taking photos to document particularly charged moments, or pithy observations. Watching the work a number of times, I would return to the photographic images instead—they felt more accurate to the pacing and (dis)comfort of the work. They also framed the work in a more baldly architectural manner. The corner of a room, two projections against one wall, a blank wall as perhaps the ultimate commentary on the work, at right angles to the first wall. This blankness bisected by a common desk, its leg somehow reflecting the marked-out space on the floor of the room. Mills's discussion of bodily movement, body language, commonalities of expression, are somehow 'upset' by this conjunction—though the desk, gently encroaching on the photo above, points also to the subtle address of institutional surveillance that takes place when Mills films in university spaces. What of the institutional privilege though—the various languages of access, social mobility, selection and grading, the bald reduction of the individual to a TER—where does this sit within Mills's spatial dynamics? This remains perplexingly undiscussed (or the conversation undisclosed).

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A group of variously styled chairs are congregated in front of two videos. One video consists of a group of people that initially appear as though they are engaged within some form of market research and I, the viewer, am attempting to put together the pieces of their task indicated by the fragmented lines of their conversation. For some time one takes in the familiar faces and comes to realise that what they are saying is less the focus of the work, as the overly curious eye of the camera seems to touch on posture, a set of crossed legs, a slightly unnerved facial expression and peoples' shoes. These slight yet mounting details begin to form a narrative that, not unlike the task being undertaken by the participants, we begin to read into. These subtle articulations of mood, temperament, confidence and identity are mirrored by the various styles of the chairs. And like the distinct armrests, backings and surfaces, a description is being formed of the unconscious details of conversation. These details often sidelined by language are focused on, making one aware of the way you perceive the gestures of another and are in turn perceived.

I watched Tully Moore and Søren Dahlgaard's *Gnome Painting* being painted—or, better, performed—on the opening night of *Gertrude Studios 2015*. The two artists hidden in an upstairs studio looked down at the gallery through a video camera and manipulated brushes attached to long sticks through a hole cut in the ceiling. They were trying to paint a statue of a small garden gnome by dipping their brushes in nearby cans of paint, giving him green britches, a red cap and a jolly gnome-like complexion. Of course, it was difficult to do so, and mistakes were made: paint was applied to the wrong places, one colour dripped down into that below. It was a bit tedious too, seeking to apply minute dabs of paint by remote control seen through closed circuit TV. A kind of party atmosphere reigned upstairs as Moore and Dahlgaard wielded their long brushes like swordfighters, cheered on by spectators. Eventually the little gnome was knocked over—accidentally or deliberately, it was hard to say—and chaos then ensued. The artists proceeded to paint the floor green, tip over the cans of paint, apply colour to the now toppled gnome in the most inappropriate places. It all went to show how aggressive the act of painting actually is, and how removed the artist is from the final product, despite all the clichés. Has anyone ever been with a serious painter when they have finished a work and seen them, wishing to break their attachment to it and view it more objectively, turn their back on it and look at it through a mirror held before them? *Gnome Painting* was a little like that, except that in this case the painting didn't stand up.

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The extended hand-of-god wooden paintbrushes penetrate Gertrude Contemporary's main gallery ceiling from the imagined comfort of the artists' studio above to paint a readymade plaster gnome on Astroturf surrounded by the necessary paint-tins. A failed mechanical art production line is evoked as the artists become increasingly frustrated by their inability to paint the gnome precisely from their remote location with the aid of go-pro cameras attached to the end of their extended paintbrushes. Their perceived irritability is made more apparent by the increasingly violent movements of the wooden extensions in an attempt to better position the brush. Moore's typical subject-matter involving an interventionist approach to design and urbanity is combined with Dahlgaard's transformation of familiar objects to create a work that ultimately questions authorship under the authoritative gaze of the prescriptive institution from within which they work. Their identities are effectively conflated with and consigned to that of the gallery itself as they ineffectively and frustratedly produce an item that was, first and foremost, intended for mass consumption. The effect is one of an uncomplicated and romanticised longing for the lost revolution of avant-gardism and criticality under capitalism.

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At long last it would seem that the character long viewed to be lacking in movement, whilst also under suspicion of mischievous deeds, has been given an opportunity to shed some light on the issue and become performative. But not without limitation. For the gnome style-guide is one of historic substance, and even with its entrance into Pollock's world of abstract drip painting it still cannot exist without the red coloured hat without which this creature is nothing more than a waste of terracotta. Our human condition demands that we latch onto the recognisable—at least an element, both artist and viewer. If an attempt had not been made to paint the gnome's hat its rightful colour it may as well not be sitting atop its synthetic green turf, for it would be equally as synthetic. This singular element is that which gives the object its correct reading, allowing for the secondary construct of the silent and still creature as captured by three cameras and countless eyes (with their cameras too no doubt). This inert being is given movement by the gestural act of painting; it comes to life via an elongated and estranged version of easel painting, reminding us of the performance of painting that is forgotten with our eyes so often focussed on the final effect.

There are two works by Sean Peoples in *Gertrude Studios 2015*. In the front room, there is *Irrational ~ Non-cartesian ~ Emotional*, and in the main gallery *Sticks and Branches as Metaphors and Analogies*. And the question is, even though the two works are separated by a wall, are they connected? Does *Irrational* in some way lead to *Sticks and Branches*? Is *Sticks and Branches* *Irrational* gone somewhere else? *Irrational* is a small bird's nest of materials—sticks, branches, plastic tubing, plumbing materials—screwed into the wall chest high, throughout which are scattered miniature rocking chairs, small plasticised cards, photographs of dollhouse furniture, and even H.R. Giger's famous monster from *Alien* (1979). *Sticks and Branches* is a long winding stick, connected by 3D-printed plastic joinery, coming out of one disused pipe in the ceiling and going back into another. (And we are almost tempted to see Ross Coulter's video *Storm Cloud*, installed on the first floor of Gertrude, as some distant continuation of *Irrational* and *Sticks*.) Peoples had already come to attention for such works as *Sorting Demon* (2015), made up of a series of interlocking plastic pipes running through well-known brand name tins and cans (Spam, Coke, Dry Idea), as though to mix them together, in parody of those legendary underwater cables through which all of our information is received today. Peoples proposes art as a sort of anti-principle: unsorted, unclassifiable, mysteriously connecting with us even though there is no way of explaining it. Indeed, we might even say that to the very extent the work contains or folds back upon itself (the photo of dollhouse furniture in *Irrational* features a chair that now sits in the bird's nest), it is able to bring about a dispersion and transmission through walls and across surfaces that nothing can stop.

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Sean Peoples's bird-nest comprised of miniature furniture, woven into a web of twigs as if for the visual merchandising of a faux antique dollhouse, is fixed to the wall by plumbing infrastructure reminiscent of an Ikea showroom. The agents of connectivity—things and consumers—accompany and generate the imagery used. A small printed image of a costume from the 1979 film *Alien* is a museum-like documentation strategically placed in the convoluted maze of global visual culture contained in one birthplace—nested on the gallery wall. In addition to *Irrational ~ Non-cartesian ~ Emotional*, larger connected twigs branch from the ceiling above the work through to the back of the gallery suggesting that the imagery is informed by the normative commercial fields from which they emerge, the shop front-meets-museum, and materialises through intervention and entanglement with the gallery. The diorama-like quality of Peoples's work seems to imply a 'model' or proposal for a future reality akin to that of 1970s and '80s science fiction yet remains uncannily relevant in contemporaneity. Like the outdated and unnecessarily complex air-conditioning system of *Brazil* (1985) that encompasses the dual function of facilitating surveillance (as social and mechanical infrastructure), the ceiling work, *Sticks and Branches as Metaphors and Analogies*, speaks to the intimate connection between the bureaucracy and deceit of images, infrastructure and people.

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Gone are the days of Super Mario Brothers. There is little of 'the journey' that we are no longer aware of; now—more often than not—we are given supplementary information, attendant plot, short films as interludes before the next chapter of role play. No longer are we able to jump out of the very structure of the game itself, running atop the frame of the screen, lapping up all of the gold coins found in the black space once believed impossible to venture. Equally missed is the magical 'nothingness' that filled the screen when you were transported from one place to another via the green pipes that littered Mario's world, moments that did not need filling with directorial cuts, but were accepted as miracle and forgotten. Sean Peoples's pipe-like vis-à-vis found object ensembles represent these 'nothing' moments, but not in the Hollywood way the twenty-first century has dealt us. Rather, Peoples has directed his own tale within the fictitious space that lies in-between the reality of the entry and exit. Peoples crafts this linking space with his own tale of the unknown 'in-between' using everyday elements in compositions that are so far removed from the reality of their entry and exit points that we forget where we have come from and where we were intending to go.

Sean Peoples wants to free his chosen materials of all historical anchorage set up by the modernist framework and, in the process, reminds us how ingrained in the thinking of modernity we remain to this day. Within the modernist framework, the pipes and other manmade objects are representative of rationality and progress. The natural materials, on the other hand, represent the archaic and untameable. The artist overcomes the nature/technology schism, combining twigs with plumbing materials, natural and manmade trinkets, to ahistoricise his works and create fantastical microcosms which defy categorisation—in *Irrational ~ Non-cartesian ~ Emotional*, tiny dollshouse furniture, photographs and found objects co-exist, defying logical explanation. But the work avoids the trappings of pastiche which, in the Jameson sense of the word, resembles ‘blank parody, a statue with blind eyeballs.’³ Peoples’s peculiar mash up of natural and synthetic materials previously considered to be incompatible has the opposite effect. The works are brimming with life. The subsequent play with the architecture, particularly seen in *Sticks and Branches as Metaphors and Analogies*, is a playful anthropomorphising of the artist’s chosen materials. Sticks and pipes take on a symbiotic relationship, producing a strangely poetic relationship that also gives life to the gallery’s walls from which these works sprout.

³ Frederic Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, the Culture of Late Capitalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991).

The hand has had a long history in art. Perhaps it is nothing less than the history of art itself. When Vasari challenged Botticelli to tell a story in painting—the result was *The Calumny of Apelles* (1494)—it was through the various characters’ hands that Botticelli thought he could do so. In a self-portrait, it is actually the eyes and hands that are in a dialogue, the one seeing, the other touching, in a way on opposite sides of the word/image split. Danae Valenza’s *Sound Paintings* try to speak through their hands. A series of brightly lit hands photographed against a black background mime playing various musical instruments (piano, brass, woodwind, strings), but without the instruments themselves. We have to imagine them, or hear them. In a work like Nam June Paik’s *TV Cello* (1971), in which Charlotte Moorman plays a cello made up of stacked television monitors broadcasting a slightly delayed image of her playing, Paik was trying to insinuate a minute distance between the performer and their performance. It would be as though—the very thing a good performance is meant to overcome—Moorman were merely repeating a score that existed before her, emptily going through the motions. In Valenza’s *Sound Paintings*, by contrast, we hear the work as though for the first time, as though the performer were actually composing it as they played it. Or at least it is as though these photographs impossibly hold this coming-together of the performer and the music they are playing, the performance and its recording, for a moment before it disappears again back into the dark from where it came.

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Hands in various positions gesture from amidst a blackened background. Like a conductor rising to the spotlight waving his baton, the hands emerge indicating for the next musician to play, a shift to occur in the tempo, or for silence to pervade. Aligned in black and white on the wall, the hands read as a series of musical notes that have been framed and positioned in a sequence. They could be interpreted as a graphic score to be played, or as the title *Sound Paintings* indicates, to those well versed they might procure particular notations or sounds that are communicated through the slight point of a finger or an open palm. These gestures indicate the physicality of music, the way communication between participants can occur through subtle signals and the defining role that the ergonomics of the hand play in the production of sound. The spacing of the hands’ fingers, the spread of its palm and its movements define the scaffold for the structure and potential for the expanse of notes to be played. In the extreme, virtuosic violinist Paganini could play three octaves at once across four strings due, in part, to his Marfan syndrome, a genetic disorder that altered his body’s connective tissue. That the range and limit of sounds produced by the body are largely defined by the dexterity of the hand forms a language that can be understood aurally as an attenuated or tensile finger corresponds to notations, chords or silence.

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It surprises me that Danae Valenza has chosen such a traditional medium—amongst the other works exhibited, hers appears extremely demure. She has set herself up with a challenge, creating works that are just about as medium non-specific as they could get. In so doing, she asks: how does one imbue the purely visual with the energy of music when all usual sensorial associations are removed, and all that remains materially is flatness and identical forms? There is no doubt that the theme of these six framed pieces is music, a common thread within Valenza’s oeuvre; hands are poised in various positions that suggest the playing of instruments and, if that isn’t proof enough, the title—*Sound Paintings*—removes all doubt. However, the photomontage medium renders music mute. This exploration of the visual to encompass the aural is pertinent insofar as, to this day, the visual prevails as the most valued sense (in Western society at least). In steering the aural into the field of the visual arts, Valenza breaks down this hierarchy, working towards a horizontal model where each discipline can feed into the other. Indeed, the hands, lacking instruments, are poetic, conveying a real beauty that comes to take the place of the musical affect. At moments, this visual representation borders on clichéd—we can’t help but wonder whether the images would have the same effect if the romantic black and white were switched for colour. Despite this, Valenza achieves a fluidity of mediums, refusing the Greenbergian doctrine of medium self-reflexivity, by presenting images that refer to music rather than only what occurs within the frame.

Overwhelmingly, this year's *Gertrude Studios* exhibition revealed a convergence on themes of 'institutional critique.' Fifty years after its first appearance, institutional critique as praxis is in dire need of contemporising—for an improved critical self-reflexivity on the part of artists involved in participatory institutional projects and processes—in order to renegotiate potential frameworks for the analysis of relevant power relationships. While Melbourne is experiencing an off-site exhibiting model renaissance, the publicly funded cultural sector has experienced increased pressure to actively engage with external communities and thus broaden in-house audiences. The vast majority of this year's Studio Artists' work appeared committed to a particular strand of institutional critique: the romance of longing for the lost revolution of avant-gardism and criticality. While these artists stood dichotomously with and against the institution, Hamishi Farah aimed to give creative expression to voices unrepresented within the political power structures experienced. This was an action that worked to expose the hidden expectations that limit the critical potential of artists supported by and within the institution. Artists committed to intervention in economies of cultural production must necessarily negotiate the tensions of the contesting agendas of patrons, commissioners, participants and directors alike. Likewise, those with institutionally declarative commitments to cultural democracy must reconsider their responsibility to and relationship with artists willing to act in the face of the uncertain outcomes of relatively new and uninhibited forms of criticality. The outcome, however, can never be the resolution of social contradictions, but rather the increased visibility of these contradictions.

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Standing across the street from Gertrude Contemporary, the window work appears as if it has stretched to take over a large portion of the façade. I can see Helen Grogan tussling with a tripod and some paper in an upstairs window as it falls to the ground. Whilst the *Gertrude Studios* show becomes the locus of attention for the works of the artists, it is, as is hinted by many of the works, a series of extracted fragments of a broader practice. These are intended to 'represent' each artist and can at times feel like a modular reflection on an artist's work for the year or like the end-point of a larger project. Collating these fragments together creates a diverse, dynamic and at times contradictory exhibition that appears on the surface to be an exercise in showcasing Gertrude's local cultural value. Whilst demonstration of this value is present in the exhibition, I believe its egalitarian approach to exhibiting is perhaps a clearer reflection of the conditions of contemporary art—whereby the exhibited artwork is a snippet of a broader process that requires a reading of its methodology in order to understand the way it articulates an aesthetic and political position. This becomes apparent standing across the street watching the activity in the studios above, as the material, spatial and temporal processes motivating the work continue to unfold, forming methodologies that articulate ways to perceptually, aesthetically and politically encounter the world.

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My initial desire was to read the work through a financial lens. Release the exhibition financials; 'price'/'value' each work according to cost of labour, cost of materials, cost of production, venue rent, administrative toil. Charging at the bar. Because there's a lack voiced somewhere within each of these works, it's tempting to fill this with pragmatic realities. There is nothing wrong with this lack: every work carries it. However, if these works are aiming at institutional critique, very few of them seem willing to undertake a similar interrogation of their own position within their socio-cultural web. (Hamishi Farah's work is the exception that biting proves the rule.) Perhaps institutional complicity disallows this engagement, though 'Out The Window,' the introductory catalogue essay co-written by Julia Murphy and Helen Hughes, suggests a form of institutional self-awareness, and goes some way toward positioning Gertrude within the ever-encroaching gentrification of its geographical community, at least. Walking through the space, I was repeatedly struck by Steve Kilbey's early moment of off-hand genius: 'deep without a meaning.' That this could expand out to much of the world of contemporary art isn't in any way the fault of the artists here. But neither is it a reason to simply keep on being your bad self. I left *Gertrude Studios 2015* bemused, more often than not, and waiting for *l'esprit de l'escalier*.

In hindsight, perhaps aforementioned notions of the exhibition's moment in time do serve as an attempt to put a finger on what it is that makes up the 'glue.' That is, to simply recognise our present and exhibit works that share in this presentness. Maybe this impulse for identifying what we see here is the reality that the artworks' shared relationship is their collective proximity to time, and that this relationship is representational enough of something worth representing, that time/presentness is enough to bind everything together.

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A few concluding thoughts—these points are not indicative of every work in the exhibition, but do respond to some of the main currents seen throughout.

- 1) Institutional critique has been replaced by a paler comment upon the institution as neo-liberalism. In other words, artists are less likely to attack the institution than they are to subtly allude to the neo-liberal bureaucracy of the gallery (save for Hamishi Farah). Of course, this is indicative of the larger power structure within the Melbourne arts scene where a few institutions hold a lot of influence, rather than power being dispersed across many cultural sites.
- 2) In relation to the above point, if a Marxist criticality is the technique of choice in the assessment of neo-liberalism's all-encompassing effect, then artists must necessarily think of alternative methods of critique that is neither mediocre nor so dramatic that they are erased from the collective consciousness of the arts community.
- 3) I would like to see a return to technique—not necessarily limited to traditional mediums, but also with contemporary mediums including video and site-specific installation. The ready-made assemblage rife in this exhibition has, sooner or later, to become worn out. I think it certainly has value, as has been evinced in the individual analyses but my fear is that viewers will eventually become numb from experiencing it over and over to the point that they don't question the underlying motives of works that, quite frankly, look so similar.

Colophon

Critique: 7 Writers for 15 Artworks

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Gertrude Contemporary is situated on Kulin Nation land. We respectfully acknowledge the Wurundjeri people as the original owners of this land.