Hatched
National Graduate Show
2011
Education Notes
by Tara Daniel

spark_lab
growing future innovators
Suggested ways to use your *Hatched Education Notes*

- Teachers may distribute the notes (or selected sections) to students by photocopying, printing onto cards or emailing the contents of the CD for students to print themselves.
- Primary school teachers should read the content of the secondary level notes in order to familiarise themselves with the artists’ work, as the primary level notes are more general.
- The primary level education notes have been written for upper primary students and the secondary level education notes are aimed at year 11 and 12 students. Modify and/or extend the *Questions for students* and *Activities for students* as you see fit for your particular students, to best suit their needs.
- If you print the *Education Notes* onto cards and organise them in a folder, you could add copies of your students’ answers to the *Questions for students*, so they have these as additional resources in the classroom. You could also add photographic documentation of any *Activities for students* that they undertake.
- The *In conversation with the artist* sections are designed to encourage a dialogue between viewers and artists. Encourage your students to contact me with any further questions they have for the *Hatched* artists and I will forward questions and return responses to your students. For many of the *Hatched* artists, this is their first experience of exhibiting their work in a professional gallery context and they are generally very appreciative of engaging in conversations with their audiences.
- If any of your students submit written answers and/or art work of a high standard in response to the suggested questions and activities, please forward a copy to:

  **Tara Daniel**  
  Education Program Manager  
  PICA  
  GPO Box P1221  
  Perth, WA, 6844  
  or education@pica.org.au

  We are always looking for outstanding examples of student work that has been sparked by our exhibition content.

**PLEASE NOTE**

The education notes regarding the art work of Amy Thornett (*Jasmine & Mia*) are designed for senior secondary students. The content is of a mature nature and teachers are advised to use this material at their discretion.

All images used in the Education Notes are reproduced with the artists’ permission.
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Adam Adelpour

medium density fiber board, disposable cameras, electronics, strapping, digital video

155 x 50 x 40 cm
**Artist details**

Adam Adelpour  
b.1985, Sydney, NSW  
University of Sydney (UoS)  
Bachelor of Visual Arts (Honours)

**Artist statement**

The post 9/11 era of counter-terror has been marked by heightened national security and xenophobia in Western countries, including Australia. In *Alakazam*, visual deception and bathos are employed to explore the ways we perceive others and ourselves in this context. *Alakazam* is a prop-based, site-specific action in which a specially constructed camera-vest is used. Basic electronics and mechanics enable me to wind and discharge five body-mounted cameras simultaneously. In a public action that took place at the Sydney Opera House the vest was worn and all 25 shots of film were discharged consecutively. The initial visual impression produced by the vest evokes a suicide-bomber. However, upon closer inspection the mechanism of the camera-vest becomes evident and I am revealed to be exaggeratedly aping the tourist photography characteristic of the site. The work consists of the camera-vest on a display stand and the video documentation of the action.

My sculptural work has two main threads, one dealing with playful minimal forms and the other with the representational re-figuring of mass media imagery. In addition I have worked with performance, drawing machines, structural video and traditional drawing. Themes explored are diverse and include imaginative perception in public space, the psychological state of confusion, the traditional theme of love, and, more recently, the themes of authority and violence.

**In conversation with the artist**

Describe your approach to art making. Do you begin with an idea, a concept, an issue, or do you start by exploring materials and/or processes?

I either work outwards from experimentation with materials to a theme or inwards from a theme to the materials. It differs from work to work.

Did you undertake your usual process in making this piece for *Hatched*? How does this work sit within your more broad ‘body of work’?

In this work I began with a spontaneous sketch of the camera vest and built around that both physically and conceptually. In parallel with building the prototype of the vest, I looked into historical performance art practices which had used elaborate props similar to mine. I found the Dadaist practice of ‘traumatic mime’ a useful point of reference, especially as it was an attempt to deal with the political climate of the time.

I jump around a lot in my practice in terms of medium and theme but most of my work involves careful fabrication and some of it has involved site-specificity. In this work I combine those two things but also extend into public performance.

How do the formal, stylistic and technical elements contribute to the function or meaning/s in your work?

This work is in part a demonstrative criticism. The initial visual impression of the vest as a weapon (it appears to be a stereotypical explosive vest) contrasts with the subsequent recognition of the vest as an absurd photographic device. This disparity between first impression and subsequent recognition calls to account the divisive, Islamophobic, media-driven narratives which inform our understanding of what we see, especially in urban public spaces.
How do you classify your work?

Photography, video, documented form, wearable, site-specific, mixed-media, performance.

With regard to Alakazam, what effect would you like it to have on its viewers?

I see this work in the context of the divisive public discourse surrounding terrorism in the West since 9-11. As such, I think those who reject this discourse will like the work and those who identify with it will find the work offensive. However, I think the inventive customization of a familiar object, the camera, is something people find generally appealing. In addition, I think people are seduced by proximity to danger and that this gives the work a magnetism.

How evident or present are your personal beliefs and values within your art?

My political believes and values are central to the work. I think dissent is always important and this is reflected in the theme of my work. The last ten years in the West have been characterised by legislation and extraordinary police powers which threaten basic civil liberties and unfairly target Muslims whose loyalty is considered suspect. My work is an attempt to critically engage with the divisive narrative of ‘us’ against ‘them’ which underpins these developments.

How do you envisage your work within the context of contemporary arts in Australia, or in the world?

Would you call your work (or elements of it) postmodern?

Post-modernism in art is broadly characterised by an antagonism or ironic relationship to artistic authorship and originality as well as a rejection of the assumption that art can communicate truth. I think my work can only be seen as ‘art’ because of the influence of post-modernist pluralism on the art institution (which once exclusively privileged abstract painting) but it is not explicitly post-modern.

Within the contemporary art institutions – schools, universities, public museums, private collections, galleries, biennales, artist run spaces, books and journals – experimental performance based work is widely recognised, written about taught and collected in documentary form.

In terms of contemporary work that engages with political themes there is that which is made in order to positively change society (social sculpture) and that which aims to direct a critique. My work falls into the latter category.

Name artists or other practitioners who have influenced your practice.

For this work: Valie Export, Hugo Ball, Stephen Birch, Chris Burden.

What is innovative about your artwork and/or your practice?

This work is a sort of mock innovation in that it is an absurd exaggeration of the figure of the camera-toting tourist. This was emphasised by the fact that I performed at the Sydney Opera House, which is an iconic tourist location, even more so since the 2000 Olympics.

Is there a quote that you think sums up an idea expressed in your artwork, or is particularly pertinent to your process as an artist?

"If you see something, say something."

- NSW State Government public transport anti-terror campaign poster (2003-present)
Questions for students

1. Research the Dadaist practice of traumatic mime and discuss in comparison to tactics you see Adelpour employing in *Alakazam*.

2. Discuss *Alakazam* with reference to the art elements and principles shape, form and contrast.

3. Adelpour states that he “aims to direct a critique” with his work, rather than trying to “positively change society”. Do you think it is possible for art works to satisfy both of these aims?

4. Investigate the art work of Valie Export, Hugo Ball, Stephen Birch and Chris Burden. Compare and contrast their exploration of concepts and their use of materials with Adelpour’s.

5. Discuss Adelpour’s *Alakazam* with reference to these quotes:
   “If you see something, say something.”
   “Be alert, not alarmed.”

6. Look at Adelpour’s prior work, *Image Fulgurator*, below. Adelpour constructed this sculpture using black cardboard to depict a real device, patented by Julius von Bismarck in 2007 called the Image Fulgurator. The device manipulates the content of photographs taken by other cameras by projecting an image onto the subject/object being photographed. It effectively enables other images to be “smuggled” into the photographs of others. Research the use of this with reference to Adelpour’s sculpture and his more recent work, *Alakazam*.

*Image Fulgurator (2010)*
Activity for students

The activity links to my artwork Alakazam both technically and conceptually. Prop-based performance is used, as is site-specificity and documentation, while a connection between bodily extension and cultural rupture is also maintained.

Students should be encouraged to experiment with cheap anti-aesthetic materials to each create a bodily ‘drawing-extension’ prop. These props are then used in a performance in which students draw on paper en plein-air (outside). These performances could take place in a public place or around the school grounds. Paper could be mounted directly onto walls, stairs, the ground, poles, trees or other objects. Drawings could be of something the performer can see, imagine, remember, or it could be abstract. Performances could be documented with Polaroid photography or video as an introduction to the convention of ‘documentation’ pervasive in contemporary performance art.

This activity links to Alakazam through an emphasis on bodily extension and site specific performance. Drawing leaves a trace, a mark of something past - the medium thus resonates with the physical and conceptual spaces in which it is placed. The reference to en plein air image-making, a cornerstone of traditional art training, also positions the activity within the contested space between tradition and innovation.

Materials
Provide an assortment of materials for construction such as: Clips, rags, pegs, elastic bands, string, ink, wire, paint, permanent markers, pencils, masking tape, box tape, gaffer tape, old boots, old clothing, belts, paper, cardboard, dowel, wipes, rubber gloves, sponges, blu-tac.

Process
• Discuss Adelpour’s work and answer the student questions
• Look at additional stimulus art works (below) and discuss
• Build your drawing-extension props
• Find a site (go for a wander)
• Choreograph your performance (individually or in pairs)
• Perform for your group (ensure people are assigned to document performances)

suggested performance length is up to 5 minutes
• Give each other constructive feedback
• Write a self-evaluation of your work, noting ideas for improvement
• Consider performing for a broader audience

Stimulus Imagery
• Stelarc’s The third hand (1981) • Hugo Ball’s Karawane (1916)
• Valie Export’s Touch Cinema (1968) • Rebecca Horn’s Pencil Mask (1972)

If you’re stuck for ideas
• Construct a prop that allows you to stand at the top of some stairs and draw on paper at the bottom.
• Attach long wires to your fingers with permanent markers on the end.
• Swing a marker on the end of a string like a whip and use it to draw.
• Put a tube of cardboard round each of your arms and try and draw with them.
• Put brushes on your feet and dance on paper or walk up paper-covered stairs.
• Build a torso extension or a face extension or an eye extension.
• Make a weak extension and draw until it breaks.

NOTE: Any feelings of anxiety about ‘looking weird’ are part of the workshop. These feelings are a product of the behavioural norms that govern public spaces. Participants may like to reflect on the way ‘incorrect’ occupations of public space are policed through anything from disapproving looks to hostile comments.
Amy Thornett
pigment print on premium photo paper

JASMINE & MIA (2010)
**Artist details**

Amy Thornett  
b.1988, Epsom, Surrey, England  
University of New South Wales (UNSW)  
Bachelor of Fine Arts (Photomedia - Honours)

**Artist statement**

*Jasmine and Mia* is from a series focused on the female adolescent in contemporary society and looking specifically at the cultural dichotomies between child and adult, innocence and sexuality, and the ambiguity that is located within this transition. The images allude to photography's role in the representations of the child and its ability to control and distort the real. Jasmine, 11, and Mia, 13, have adopted a pose; the only thing asked of them is that they direct their gaze towards the medium-format film camera. By 'allowing' the adolescent females to pose themselves within the confines of my gaze and the camera's, I am allegedly giving them control, however it is a false sense of control because they remain within the authoritative gaze. They compose themselves yet they have no choice, and as such, the mimicry of their behaviour is palpable – of the society in which they live and of the adults that they will become.

When I started photographing adolescents two years ago it wasn’t about children being sexualised, or压抑ing sexuality until the age of consent or moral panics in society. The fascination with the age group was located in their naïveté and youth – the feeling of being invincible. For as much as this is a study of society and the way it shapes us, it is also a way of trying to recognise myself – a human desire felt by all. I am articulating myself within a contemporary political and socio-cultural framework, and thus it cannot be discussed without alluding to ‘Lolita’ or Bill Henson or the unscrupulous media and advertising world that we are so heavily inundated by.

**In conversation with the artist**

Describe your approach to art making. Do you begin with an idea, a concept, an issue, or do you start by exploring materials and/or processes?

It often begins with an image in my mind, which I generally don’t understand initially until I explore the possibilities behind it. I spend a lot of time trawling through the Internet, researching images, books, essays, journals and articles, because I believe it is incredibly important to understand the historical and cultural context of your work as well as have the ability to articulate your thoughts both verbally and in written form. However this approach can be limiting, and I find when I get trapped in an academic frame of mind, the best solution is to temporarily overlook all the knowledge/history/information I have come across and instead, do.

How do you consciously identify this frame of mind when you’re in it? How might students learn to recognize these mindsets & work constructively with them?

I’m certain it is different for every individual. It is definitely about balance though, and learning when too much research can become overwhelming and almost detrimental to the creative process. Basically, when my mind becomes unclear, almost hazy, I know it is time to be creative!

How does this work sit within your more broad ‘body of work’?

*Jasmine and Mia* is part of a much larger series that has developed over the last 2-3 years. Focused on the female adolescent in contemporary society, my praxis looks specifically at the cultural dichotomies between child and adult, innocence and sexuality, and the ambiguity that is located within this transition. My previous works consisted of large black and white portraits of twelve-year-old girls. As the photographer, there was little need to direct and intervene with the subject’s disposition, (other than asking each girl to stand and look at the camera), as they would unconsciously act as if they were given a prompt. The portraits displayed their hands, creeping to the front of their body as a means of protection, their feet, arching sideways in an awkward manner, and their facial expressions, beset with uncertainty.
The current series, now in colour, carries the concept further. The images specifically allude to photography’s role in representations of the child and their ability to control and distort the real. The subjects adopt a pose; the only thing asked of them is that they direct their gaze to the camera. By “allowing” them to pose themselves within the confines of my gaze and the camera’s, I am allegedly giving them control, yet they remain within the authoritative gaze.

**With regard to your artwork exhibited in Hatched, what effect would you like it to have on its viewers?**

The act of looking, which goes beyond the power of the photographer and the subject, limits what is acceptable and inoffensive to a public audience. If a photograph can be a pointer to something beyond the frame, that which we don’t see, how can any image of a child remain complacent? Where do we draw the line? How do we define something as obscene or pornographic if the definition itself is intangible? Certainly we cannot simply follow the notorious phrase by Justice Stewart, “I know it if I see it”, for we each as individuals have the ability to look at an image and be offended while another could find the exact same image desirable, or simply beautiful.

The censorship debate surrounding images of child sexuality is a large topic in itself, and I do not want to dwell on it here. However I do want to point out a considerable paradox that we are faced with in society today: in an attempt to control pictures of children, we must photograph them in a way that emphasises their innocence. This innocence, which is defined entirely by the adult, must be portrayed without appearing to be too attractive, and thus what doesn’t fit must be edited out. Professor Anne Higonnet argues that:

> Photographs of children that appeal to a large consumer audience have to accomplish simultaneously two contradictory goals. They have to make children look physically charming, but not intentionally. They have to provide child bodies to their audience without making those bodies enticing or even available. They have to allow us to enjoy the sight of children and think ‘cute’ not ‘desirable’ let alone ‘sexy’.

This is a significant component of my studio practice. Essentially, by asking the subjects to choose how they would like to pose, my ability (as an adult and as a photographer) to define them is restricted. I cannot ask them to pose as I want them to appear. I cannot ask them to look cute or sexy, and I cannot control the audience’s perception. However in saying this, the power I am allegedly giving them is never theirs to control either. In **Who is Speaking Thus?**, Abigail Solomon-Godeau refers to the photograph as “a double act of subjugation: first, in the social world that has produced its victims; and second, in the regime of the image produced within and for the same system that engenders the conditions it then represents.” This quote on the nature of photography corresponds with my method of allegedly letting the subjects pose themselves. For even with the limited power the adolescents are given, the camera, the artist and eventually the viewers of the image ultimately control them. They pose themselves yet they have no choice, and as such, a mimetic behaviour is palpable – of the society in which they live, of the adults that they will become.

Upon commencing this work, I initially (and perhaps somewhat naïvely) walked into family homes to photograph adolescent girls, unaware of the fear this could potentially generate. Yet if we look at the dichotomy between photography and the child, the widely projected fear is palpable. The photograph, as the most susceptible and permanent construct of the real, is required to portray the child as a symbol of ephemeral innocence, and thus the danger of destabilising this becomes visible; what if such an image of a child (particularly at a time of potent self-becoming) isn’t as innocent as a conservative society requires to function? What if the issue is not the pose of the child, but what the adult makes of that pose?
I understand your desire to explore borderlines (between acceptable & unacceptable, & what is deemed “sexy” etc) however there are some instances where it is more obvious that a child is trying to appear sexy – girls who deliberately send raunchy shots to boys, for example. Surely there is a line somewhere, beyond which the adult cannot be held completely responsible for the meaning-making of the image? Or can there?

I definitely agree that adults cannot be held completely responsible. Having said this, I don’t believe that these sorts of cases should be dealt with the way they are. To a certain extent, the problem lies in our definition of what childhood is. Generally speaking, the child is viewed as an innocent being in contemporary society, devoid of all things that adults represent: the naïveté and immaturity of children directly opposes the knowledge and maturity of adults, rendering them intrinsically dependent and controlled. Within our Western culture, one of the most rivaling paradigms between child and adult is the sexuality of children, or lack thereof. Contrary to Freud’s belief that the child is sexual from birth, the majority of society believes that children are not naturally sexual beings (and if they think otherwise they daren’t speak of it!).

Childhood and innocence are in such a peculiar relationship that their definitions involuntarily overlap. Childhood is innocence and innocence is childhood, and disrupting this nexus is to move into dangerous territory. Sex (outside of the heterosexual marriage) and evil, on the other hand, are still regarded as mutual ideologies that pervade social and cultural dialogues. To place these binary oppositions together – innocence and evil, or alternatively children and sex – is to create an anxious and fearful society, dedicated to guarding the virtue of the child from what is perceived to be a hostile world. Not only this, but the innocent child essentially validates and binds the institution of the conventional ‘cereal packet’ family. Distorting this image ultimately means subverting the wholesomeness of the nuclear structure, inciting the fear of sex within the family.

Essentially, the implementation of the body of work is not achieved until the viewer engages with each image; in the same way that the perception of childhood is entirely constructed by the adult, the work too can only be defined once the adult participates and returns the gaze of the subject. Ultimately, I am left not knowing how each viewer will translate the images or what their personal narrative is. It warrants visiting James Kincaid’s view that, “what the child is matters less than what we think it is”, which could similarly be purported: what the image of the child is matters less than what we think it is.

I agree; what we see as a child looking deliberately sexy may actually be a child showing insecurity and a presumption that one should (by cultural standards) attempt to present oneself the way that fits that culture’s standards of beauty, femininity etc.

What responses have you had from the parents of your subjects?

“I would like to see the photograph of my daughter before it is published. I want to make sure the dress she was wearing on the day doesn’t look too short and she doesn’t look too promiscuous.”

Mother of subject, 2009

Is this a common parental response?

It is an extreme version of a common parental response. What I found interesting about this response was the fact that the fears were formed through the image. Why do fears surrounding the perception of childhood always seem to linger around the photograph? From my own experience in producing this work, it has become evident that in many situations the act itself is not questioned but to photograph it generates a lot of controversy and turns our fears into a moral panic. The strange sensation of continuously walking into family homes with a large camera and tripod, all eyes upon me, has never ceased, and it is this experience that fascinates me. What is it about the nature of photography that provokes suspicion or fear? Is it the notion of visibility? Is it the permanence of the photograph, particularly in terms of its potentiality to be lost in the virtual space of the internet? Or is the photograph, through its indexical nature, taking over the power of the real?
How evident or present are your personal beliefs and values within your art?

When I started photographing adolescents two years ago it wasn’t about children being sexualised, or repressing sexuality until the age of consent or moral panics and fears in society. The fascination with the age group was located in their naïveté and youth; the feeling of being invincible. For as much as this is a study of society and the way it shapes us, it is also a way of trying to recognise myself; a human desire felt by all. If it is possible to understand more about what we once were, maybe we can try to make sense of what we are now.

This work reads as though your focus has completely shifted. You could have chosen to pursue your other, initial aim by working with boys (for instance) or younger children.

Nonetheless, by actually creating this work, by taking these photographs, it has become impossible to deny this connotation. I am articulating myself through a cultural field that is extremely aware of its contemporary surroundings, and thus it cannot be discussed without referencing Lolita or Bill Henson or the unscrupulous media and advertising world that we are so heavily inundated by.

I don’t really know what looks good so I think I will just stand here.

Subject, 2010

The form of femininity, which the young girls in my portraits are gradually becoming, is relatively distant in contrast to the biological reality, and exists more as a societal manifestation, or as Judith Butler terms it, a “cultural performance”, that is predetermined and defined. From a young age, girls learn how to perform the language of adults by taking on this femininity, and also inadvertently discover how to be objectified. As is most often the case – and as several images in my body of work display – the mimetic performance of femininity is over performed rather than under performed, and it is the adult world that progressively amends this and provides the “correct” codes of conduct. By learning the customary ways of acting and appearing in society, which involuntarily entails pleasing the opposite sex, girls are submitting to the gaze of society; that is, the patriarchal ‘gaze’. If the image of a female (or a girl pertaining to be feminine) is one of objectification, then does the audience unconsciously objectify all images of girls? In Picturing Childhood: The Myth of the Child in Popular Imagery, Patricia Holland remarks: “a little girl may be denied the knowledge of sex, but as a feminine creature...her image cannot fail to indicate sex.”

You mentioned pleasing the opposite sex, but it’s not necessarily just the opposite sex, and also not necessarily even consciously pleasing in a sexual way.

Over the last two years, I have been asked numerous times why I choose to photograph female adolescents rather than male adolescents, or a combination of the two. The answer isn’t simple, and I am not entirely sure of the motivation behind this preference yet. I recognise, however, that I do not have a compelling desire to photograph males, and thus I have not pursued this option. Perhaps it is as Christian Boltanski states:

“I think we all have somebody who is dead inside of us. A dead child. I remember the Little Christian that is dead inside me.”

The “dead child” in me is a girl, and growing up in a contemporary patriarchal society, with a white-majority population, has inevitably had an effect on me. Without my explicit assertion, the subjects that I photograph reflect this.
Name a few artists or other practitioners who have influenced your practice.

American photographer Wendy Ewald is a particularly strong influence on my work. She inverts the concept of the child repressed and controlled by the authoritarian. Over the past thirty-five years Ewald has collaborated with various groups of children in order to depict the way children view themselves. She has taught children about photographic equipment and then asked them to create their own photographic self-portraits, the result being a mixture of real and imagined visualisations. Of interest is the way in which the children envisage themselves, with many photographs displaying violent and disturbing scenes, such as Where’s My Head? – Andrew Legge, Durham, North Carolina (1997), which shows the body of a child, his head hidden behind a block of wood with an axe lodged into it.

What does it mean for a child to photograph a child (in this case, himself) like this? If an adult were to produce the same image, would it be read in the same way? When Ewald gives the control of the camera to a child and allows them to represent themselves in any way or form, there is a noticeable shift in the parameters of the adult representation of innocence, exemplifying the possibility of another definition of childhood, one defined by the child.

This “childhood defined by the child” sounds like a concept that is worth exploring. How can children be given more agency in the world in which they live? And the environments in which they frequently find themselves e.g. school.

Perhaps this is the fear that is propagating in society around images of children? If children have the aptitude to control their own image, thus controlling their own sexuality, then the child as a symbol of purity and innocence must be redefined.

Not only are children viewed as innocent beings in our culture, they are also essentially rendered passive: legally, morally and politically, adults speak for them. This is exemplified in legal terms within Australia, where sex with a child under the age of sixteen is considered a criminal offence (child sexual abuse), even if consensual.

Up until the age of sixteen children fundamentally have no rights or voice, thus a statement such as Kevin Rudd’s “let’s just allow kids to be kids” becomes entirely redundant. It is increasingly being confirmed that society isn’t able to contend with the notion that a twelve-year-old girl might conceivably be in control of her own sexuality. Perhaps in the case of Henson, it is not her sexuality that we are denying, but ours. Is it as Georges Bataille states: “Man goes constantly in fear of himself. His erotic urges terrify him”, and as Michel Foucault describes it, “a fear that never ends”?

This fear that adults are impressing onto children, above all, saddens me. For it says more about the nature of the adult, of the adult ‘gaze’, than it does of the child.

Australian artist Bill Henson and the controversy surrounding his photographs of a naked female adolescent have also unremittingly influenced the way I perceive my work. The image that caused the most concern displayed the girl’s “budding breasts”, with her hands placed over her crotch. Henson’s work was subject to a media campaign, which led the police to shut down his exhibition before the opening night. Regardless of the child’s (and parents’) consent to being photographed, it was claimed that she could not possibly make that decision for herself.

Or are ‘we’ worried that she will grow up and then take issue with the incident and call to blame the “responsible adults”? 
When the Henson case exploded in Australia 2008, fears and anxieties that had been escalating in the past few decades reached a new level of intensity. What was previously a topical subject transformed into a nationwide censorship debate that conflated art, pornography and paedophilia. Every individual had a line of reasoning, whether they thought Henson’s works were sexually explicit, were divided between the artistic and unwarranted, or considered the photographs not even faintly pornographic. It is almost as if we can analyse the period prior to this and subsequent to this as two separate spheres; Before Henson and After Henson. This is not to say that before 2008, concerns for the virtue of the child weren’t already proving to be disproportionate and erratic – conversely they were precisely that – but rather Henson was merely the trigger that was needed to generate the explosion and solidify our fear.

I like the notions of BH & AH and see them as indicative of past and future (in relation to the ‘event’ of Bill Henson).
Patricia Holland states: “Can an adult man in this day and age enjoy an image of a naked baby, a pre-pubescent girl or a feminised boy without fearing an accusation of paedophilia?” In this sense, it is extremely beneficial (yet wrongly so) that I am not a male photographing twelve-year-old girls After Henson, and I expect it is a fundamental reason why many shoots have proceeded without question. My presence as a female merely allows this stereotype to remain.

I wonder how differently your work would be perceived if you photographed pubescent boys (as a female artist). The stereotypes that are placed around the paedophile are simultaneously placed onto the objects of their desire: despite the fact that victims of child sex abuse are both male and female, the fear of the paedophile is imposed onto girls, and it is perpetually the girls that must be protected. Precisely because Henson’s photographs displayed the body of a girl – who was in the vulnerable pubescent stage of adolescence – the immediate response was one of panic. In 2010, After Henson, the mere mention of my work involving adolescent girls elicits a projected response that is both infuriating and understandable, and effectively highlights the current political context in Australia.

Do you think there would have been an outcry if he had portrayed a nude pubescent boy? I don’t believe so. Aside from the fact that he has on several occasions over the last 30 years photographed pubescent boys (and girls), the focus of the controversy that made people uncomfortable was the exposure of the girl’s breasts. David Marr examines the affair in his book The Henson Case: “Perhaps it would have passed un-remarked. But those are budding breasts, rarely seen and almost never celebrated. In our culture, budding breasts are extraordinarily private . . . Henson had broken a powerful little taboo.”

How do you think the Australian context differs or is similar to the rest of the world? I would say that Australia is fighting its own political and social battles within a much larger war, so to speak. The Henson Affair (2008) was a significant and contentious topic within the public sphere in Australia, and generated a large debate concerning child pornography and paedophilia. However the question of art as child porn has been an ongoing societal problem dating back to the late 1980’s and early 90’s. This is patently displayed through the investigation into American photographer Jock Sturges in April 1990, where FBI agents raided his Californian home and confiscated thousands of negatives and images that were deemed pornographic. American Photographer Sally Mann has been closely linked with Jock Sturges. Her work portrays vulnerable and ambiguous portraits of adolescents, and also the prepubescent lives of her own children. Unlike Sturges, Sally Mann was never investigated or prosecuted as such, however Mann’s works *Immediate Family* (1992) and *At Twelve: Portraits of Young Women* (1988) both caused controversy in the media and the public domain. Other artists such as Tierney Gearon and Robert Mapplethorpe were similarly condemned.

I mention all this as the universal debates surrounding child sexuality almost demand Australia’s attention and it was perhaps naïve of Henson to not acknowledge this. It is worth mentioning that Henson has been photographing vulnerable and naked teenagers since the early 1980s, with minimal controversy and legal disputes. However, when the unseemly Henson affair exploded in 2008, it felt as if society had not only fallen into a new era, but into an age of hyper-excitement. It has since been a reminder of how much we’ve changed in just two decades.
photography was delivered. In a culture post 9/11, the widespread response has been one of "political disengagement", which essentially means a retreat to the family home: escaping the reality of the outside world, which can no longer be controlled. This is manifest in Australian television trends. In 2003, studies demonstrated that ratings of Australian ‘lifestyle’ shows such as *The Block* had exceeded the previously popular Australian drama programs, indicating a societal shift in viewers’ attitudes that focused inherently on the family home. Managing director of Audience Development Australia, David Castran explains "recent world turmoil has brought people closer to home to focus on what they control". Indeed, the war on terror cannot be controlled; however the adornment and colour scheme of the family living room can be.

Thus the notion of family has become a site in need of protection. With the rise of the political party, ‘Family First’, which unequivocally believes in “defending the institution of marriage”, Australia is witnessing a political advocacy for family values (of a particular kind), irrespective of the emphatically diminishing structure of the nuclear family. Far from helping this crisis are the endless media reports on child sex abuse and allegations of paedophiles surreptitiously living in the house next door. Regardless of substantial evidence of child sex abuse predominantly occurring within the family home, the image of an outside threat is maintained. The fear induced from any external force threatens to collapse the protected foundation of the family; and so perhaps it should come as no surprise that a photograph of “budding breasts” elicits such an extensive response from the public sphere.

**Questions for students**

1. Thornett classifies her work as photography, performance and documented form. Comment on these art genres with reference to *Jasmine & Mia*.
2. Compare and contrast Thornett’s work with Wendy Ewald’s with regard to their attitudes towards giving authority to child subjects.
3. Investigate the controversy around Bill Henson’s photographic works of a pubescent girl. How have these events impacted on Thornett’s practice as a photographic artist?
4. Professor Anne Higonnet begins her book, *Pictures of Innocence: The History and Crisis of Ideal Childhood*, with this statement:
   “Pictures of children are at once the most common, the most sacred, and the most controversial images of our time. They guard the cherished ideal of childhood innocence, yet they contain within them the potential to undo that ideal.”

Discuss this quote with reference to Thornett’s work.
Boni Cairncross

turmeric, wool batting, pva glue
Artist details
Boni Cairncross
Born: Sydney, NSW, Australia
University of Wollongong
Bachelor of Creative Arts (Visual Arts)

Artist statement

*Negotiations* is an installation that utilises existing architectural forms. Working within the space, I have hand-applied turmeric directly onto the wall. The pattern was inspired by Islamic textiles, and uses horizontal banding and geometric forms with more intricate detailing featured at the top. This patterning was created with considerations to the space and took on features already there. Plastic lace was used as a stencil to construct the detailing within the pattern. The floor was covered with unbleached wool batting. *Negotiations* is an exploration into the sensory qualities of materials and how these can be utilised to evoke a response from the audience. This sensory experience is underpinned by considerations of cross-cultural influences.

*Negotiations* is an installation that utilises accessible materials, such as turmeric and wool batting, to explore Australia’s current relationship with the Middle East. Turmeric, as a commodity, is a product of India yet due to its history of trade through the Middle East to greater Europe is still largely associated with this geographic location. For some, the richly patterned walls and soft pristine floor evokes a meditative space, similar to a temple. For others, the repugnant smell of the turmeric can be assaulting and overpowering. For many the artwork does not exist in stasis, but instead shifts between the inviting and the repulsive. The encounter of the installation is informed by the viewer’s own background and position: it is they who negotiate the space and its conceptual underpinnings.

In conversation with the artist

Describe your approach to art making. Do you begin with an idea, a concept, an issue, or do you start by exploring materials and/or processes?

I generally start with a very broad concept, which may be nothing more than a word – for instance I think this particular installation come from an interest in ephemeral art. I was really interested (and still am) in creating something temporary; that only lasts for the length of time it is exhibited. And of course I had this fascination with turmeric. So this was just as much about the actual material and all the ideas and thoughts associated with that. From there I spent a lot of time looking into the history of turmeric; its place in the world and its many, varied uses. It was really quite interesting as it has such a long history in trade; it has many connections to many places – India, Asia, the Middle East, Europe and of course turmeric is very accessible here in Australia. So it has this great cross-cultural connection. And the uses are just as varied – it is obviously used as a flavor enhancer in food, but it is also a preservative, a fabric dye and for some cultures a medicine.

After undertaking all of this research and investigation I’m ready to start experimenting with the actual material. I think this background knowledge of the materials you’re working with is important though, because it will inform your work, and it will inform the way other people will read your work. And for me, what I discovered in the research became an integral, conceptual aspect of the work. I was interested in communicating this rich cross-cultural heritage as a way of exploring contemporary issues of multiculturalism, globalization and the mobility of people and goods. I think these ideas are very subtle in the final artwork, but they definitely informed it. The choice of patterning was important too, as it reflects my interest in cross-cultural influences.
Did you undertake your usual process in making this piece for Hatched? How does this work sit within your more broad ‘body of work’?

I did. This installation for Hatched is a variation of a previous installation, so the groundwork – all the research and experimentation - was already done. But, as is the case with ephemeral installations, it needed to be adapted to respond to the particular space it is being shown in (the PICA gallery). So there was a little more experimentation with the patterning and materials just to be sure the concept was still carried through.

I think there are underlying ideas within this artwork that relate to my broader ‘body of work’. There seems to be a constant reference to time and hand-labour that creeps up in my work which I think is evident in this installation. But there are also notions of movement - both physically, with the viewer’s eye moving across the wall and maybe physically, with the viewer being drawn in closer to the work, and metaphorically, with the subtle references to cross-cultural exchange – which is also a recurring theme in my practice. And of course there are the techniques of repetition and patterning, which I use quite a lot in my artwork.

How do the formal, stylistic and technical elements contribute to the function or meaning/s in your work?

They really underpin the work the meaning of the work. The stylistic elements of the patterning in the installation are really concerned with the adoption and adaptation of patterns from other cultures. For example the geometric structures and the repetition of the pattern are derived largely from Islamic designs – mainly textile designs but also mosaic patterns. Yet the stencil I’ve used to create these patterns is a very accessible everyday material from a Spotlight store. I hope that the patterning evokes a sense of this rich exchange and influence. However I think this is only evident in conjunction with the use of material, turmeric, and the technical aspects of how the pattern has been applied to the surface.

Discuss the elements and principles of art and design that you feel you used most prominently in Negotiations II.

My work is centered on the use of colour, texture and rhythm/pattern to create its effect, with the additional use of scale (proportion). I think the colour helps to capture the viewers’ attention. The rhythm/patterning helps to hold viewers’ attention and to bring them in closer to the artwork. The texture gives it a real tactile quality that for me evokes a sense of textile practice.

What effect would you like Negotiations II to have on its viewers?

Viewer engagement was of primary concern to me when making this work. I really wanted the work to draw people to it, to make them want to get up close, to want to touch it. How people relate to the artwork will be largely informed by their own cultural backgrounds and how they relate to these materials and patterns. The cross-cultural influences may be more evident to some viewers than to others. I don’t think it would be challenging to the viewers, I think any political ideas that arise from this kind of topic area are quite subtle (the political ideas being notions of multiculturalism in a contemporary society like Australia).

How evident or present are your personal beliefs and values within your art?

I think my personal beliefs and values are present in the artwork purely because I can’t take them away from what I’m creating, but I don’t think they are particularly evident. I was more concerned with allowing viewers to consider the ideas on their own terms. Which is why perhaps the political and social aspects of the artwork are quite subtly suggested through the patterns and materials. The title, Negotiations, I think gives the viewer an indication of this positioning, it suggests the negotiations of cross-cultural exchange, but also the viewers’ personal relationships to the artwork – they need to negotiate the ideas and make their own decisions. I think ‘negotiations’ also has currency in the Australian political sphere; being a key word used by Julia Gillard, thus pointing to a wider consideration of these ideas in Australian culture.
Name the artists or other practitioners who have influenced your practice.

Wolfgang Laib, particularly his *Pollen* series, for his use of colour, scale and meticulous hand labour. Laib’s *Milkstone* also deals with ideas of ephemerality and cross-cultural exchange. Ernesto Netto for his use of spices in artworks. Olafur Eliasson, particularly the *Take Your Time* exhibition at the MCA (2010), and the way this engaged viewers. Eliasson used scale, tactile materials and intangible materials within the gallery to influence the way you as a viewer moved through that space. I want to evoke something similar by drawing people in to my artwork.

What is innovative about your artwork and/or your practice?

I think the use of the material, turmeric, is quite innovative. It is essentially applied to the wall in a manner very similar to screen-printing, only it is quite three-dimensional as the turmeric paste is quite thick, and of course it was challenging working vertically instead of horizontally on a table top. I had to experiment to work out ways to make the material stay put; to not seep out and blur the pattern, which in the end resulted in my using a mixture of turmeric, water and PVA glue of the right consistency.

How do you think younger audiences will engage with your work?

I’ve had the pleasure of watching a bunch of younger kids engage with the original installation – they were fairly excited by it all. I think maybe it was because it was different from what they might have expected in an art exhibition. The scale of the artwork, the vibrancy of the colour, the unusual material and the detailing I think give people a lot to enjoy visually.
Questions for students

1. Undertake some research into the origins and uses of the spice turmeric. Discuss your findings with reference to Cairncross’ work.

2. Cairncross classifies her work as textiles and installation. To what extent do you agree with these classifications?

3. Compare and contrast Cairncross’ *Negotiations II* with Laib’s *Pollen* series, discussing their use of colour and scale and referring to the hand-labour they employ in their art making processes.

4. Analyse Cairncross’ use of the elements of texture, rhythm and pattern and their contribution to meaning in her work.

5. Compare and contrast the work of Olafur Eliasson in the 2010 exhibition *Take Your Time* and Cairncross in *Negotiations II*, with particular reference to techniques they employ to engage viewers.

Activities for students

- Experiment with different powdered substances as media for print work. Consider silk screen printing, stencil-making and using ready-made objects such as doilies to create patterns. What difficulties do different materials and processes present? How do different surfaces impact on your process?

- Experiment with ways to create an artwork on a vertical surface, such as a wall or a window.

- Research the use of pattern in your local community. Document your findings through photographs and/or sketches. Create an artwork based on one of the patterns you discover.

- Choose a location you are interested in exploring as the basis for an artwork. Research the natural resources and other products that are commonly sourced from that location. Select one material as your primary medium and experiment with ways to use it in your artwork.
IN(SIDE)OUT (2010)

Claire Krouzecky
Pine frame, cotton screen, optical lenses, found objects
Artist details
Claire Krouzecky
b.1986, Perth, WA
University of Tasmania (UoT)
Bachelor of Fine Arts (First Class Hons)

Artist statement
*(side)out* involves the live projection of direct natural light through a series of lens apparatus onto a suspended diaphanous screen. It stems from an attempt to sustain chance observation through the assemblage of materials at hand, maintaining a sense of immediacy and sincerity in the construction process. Here, a simple ‘picturing’ takes place: ‘outside’ is re-pictured ‘inside.’ *(side)out* fluctuates in tandem with its environs, and as the light shifts, brightens, diminishes, so too does the work evolve, illuminate, and disappear. Movement occurring through the picture plane (passersby, birds flying outside the window) provides dynamism and moments of subtle drama. The viewing experience is much akin to that of wonder, triggering an unraveling of consciousness and a locating of oneself within the mechanisms of the work.

We are constantly surrounded by transitional, fluctuating phenomena. Each moment is infinitely folding into the next, and in the act of perceiving we too partake in a continuous mutual exchange of sensation – directly or indirectly, knowingly or unknowingly, in obvious and also subtle ways. What is it that makes us recognise a moment of sensation as remarkable or noteworthy, aesthetically captivating and somehow inexplicable? There seems to be an opportunity to seek these moments out in our everyday encounters with light – its dynamic states of emergence and disappearance, development and ‘becoming.’ I want to explore the possibility of suspending these transitory moments through an immersive state of wonder, where seemingly ordinary observations reveal something of an extraordinary quality.

In conversation with the artist
Describe your approach to art making. Do you begin with an idea, a concept, an issue, or do you start by exploring materials and/or processes?
My approach to art-making is fairly intuitive – I often select a site that I’m interested in exploring – something that has taken my attention, and I spend a lot of time at that site measuring things up, making note of the details (architectural, atmospheric and conditional), and generally observing it and the activity (shifts in light, movement, how people use the site) that occurs there over a period of time. I often document these things, make sketches, video, take photographs; and then return to the site with objects and materials to experiment with different ways of interfacing with it, exploring different processes and how you see/experience the space differently when you start constructing work in it. I try to embrace uncertainty, failure and chance occurrence as much as possible and allow things to unfold of their own accord.

Did you undertake your usual process in making *(side)out*? How does this work sit within your more broad ‘body of work’?
Yes, I did – this work is especially characteristic of my intuitive approach to materials and processes of construction, and you can see in its tenuous construction and aesthetic that it is very much about that immediate interaction with the site at the particular moment I was making the work. It changes with each incarnation of the work, and is very much responsive to the conditions of the site. Amidst the rest of my practice, it is very eclectic, and has a much ‘busier’, bordering on excessive, aesthetic. However I see it as just one way of exploring the same interests in shifting the perceptual framework, in this instance taking a very playful approach.

How do you classify your work?
As site-specific installation.
How do the formal, stylistic and technical elements contribute to the function or meaning/s in your work?
In all my work I try to have the formal elements of its composition and construction feeding into the overall experience of the work, even if in subtle ways. For me, these are integral components in informing the way the work might be read or interpreted, and I think often offers further depth to the work. Whether or not these elements are picked up on by the viewer is not necessarily essential, and for me the most important thing is always that people can take something from the work without NEEDING to understand the way it was made or technically possible (in fact, it is often a suspension of these facts that make a work more interesting). However I often find that consideration of the formal/technical components and rationalising stylistic decisions by trying to make links back to my original intentions/concepts certainly help me in making the work and finalising certain aspects. Of course, having said that, there should always be room for intuition and last-minute crazy decisions that don’t always seem to tie in – often I find that later on, upon reflection, these seemingly coincidental aesthetic choices actually sit well within the aesthetic of the work and make more sense than I realised at the time!

Discuss the art elements principles that you feel you have used most prominently in In(side)out.
Balance: the work requires balance both literally (in order for it to stand up!) and compositionally (in order for it to aesthetically ‘work’)
Space: the work both integrates, and contributes to, the space it exists within
Rhythm/pattern: the work draws on elements of rhythm and pattern through its use of repletion/re-presentation of imagery, and in the fact that there is a strong element of time, and therefore rhythm, inherent in the work (time taken to create the work, and the images existing in and of time)

With regard to In(side)out, what effect would you like it to have on its viewers?
I want viewers to be immersed in a state of wonder, a state of suspended present, when they are looking at/experiencing it. This response is indeed the impetus for the work – it is about my own aesthetic encounter, and my way of communicating that to others through interaction with the space (using particular materials) with the intention that they might have their own individual aesthetic encounter with the work. This is an intuitive experience that I would hope everyone, irrespective of social and cultural backgrounds is able to allow themselves.

How do you envisage your work within the context of contemporary arts in Australia, or in the world? Would you call your work (or elements of it) postmodern?
I would hope that my work provides a renewed focus and emphasis on the aesthetic experience as an artistic impetus in itself, and a concept around which to make artwork. There are subtle references within my work to its historical contexts, and an awareness of the trajectories out of which it springs. In this sense it is aligned with other contemporary artwork in its pursuit of creating a new expanded dialogue about the function of art, whilst acknowledging its place within a much bigger history.

Name the artists who have influenced your practice.
Ann Veronica Janssens, Spencer Finch, Janet Cardiff, Tacita Dean, Olafur Eliasson

What is innovative about your artwork and/or your practice?
Everything and nothing! Artists have worked the same way for centuries, and yet they continue to believe they have a unique approach, or at least endeavour to seek new methods of communicating old ideas. This is what keeps art alive.

How do you think younger audiences will engage with your work?
Hopefully in the same way, if not a more open and uninhibited way, as adults. I encourage audiences of all ages/backgrounds to explore the work on a very open human level, and simply revel in the perceptual experience. I also want it to be an experience that makes them think and unravel the mechanics of the way the work ‘works’ the more time they spend with it. It is a work that should charm and intrigue on an immediate level but also that rewards a deeper engagement.
Questions for students

1. Stand and look at one of the projected images for 3 minutes. Can you see anything changing? Write down what you notice has changed. Now look outside the window. What can you see? Now think about the image in the artwork - how are they different and how are they the same?

2. Can you notice what is positioned between the window and the canvas, and what is it doing to the view from the window to the image on the canvas?

3. Discuss In(side)out with reference to Krouzecky's use of tone, shape/form, space and light.

4. Research the work of the artists Krouzecky lists as influential to her practice. Choose one to compare and contrast the use of materials and processes as well as the conceptual ideas behind the work.

5. Discuss In(side)out with reference to Krouzecky's comment about innovative art practices: “Artists have worked the same way for centuries, and yet they continue to believe they have a unique approach, or at least endeavour to seek new methods of communicating old ideas. This is what keeps art alive.”

6. Because In(side)out is a site-specific work, Krouzecky had to substantially modify its design and structure in order to install it in PICA’s gallery space. How has her work changed because of this relocation?

Activities for students

- Look out of the window in your classroom, or your bedroom. Make an artwork that reflects the changing images you see through these frames.
- Create a site-specific artwork in your bedroom based on the changing view you see through your window over the course of one week. Consider using found objects that you feel are personally appropriate.
MUM’S RECORD
(THE HARDEST GOODBYE) (2010)

Courtney Prettejohn
archival inkjet print, three media slideshow viewers
Artist details
Courtney Elyse Prettejohn
b.1986, Blyth, SA
TAFE South Australia (TSA)
Bachelor of Visual Arts and Design

Artist statement
Global trends of consumerism and commodification encourage contemporary society to hoard personal objects of which most (if not all) have very little value, beyond a single purpose. This obsessive compulsive tendency towards the collection of these objects is fulfilled by the projected emotional, historical, societal, or capital values, which often exceed the actual worth of the physical object. In *The Hardest Goodbye* I have drawn from the language of high speed flash photography in order to come to terms with my own materialistic dilemma. The act of methodically recording and destroying them offers me an uncompromising and permanent end to this attachment, and is possibly the hardest goodbye of all. The scrolling digital photo frames which accompany the photographs allow the audience an insight into the extensive personal process that is behind this project.

Photography is more than a means of documenting or creating; it has continually helped me to identify who I am as a young woman, and as an artist. The photographic act has become a part of my everyday life. *The Hardest Goodbye* began as an investigation into a photographic technique I was determined to master. It was a confluence of both process and personal concern that resulted in my investigation of these objects as containers of personal memory, and a search to discover or discredit their assumed value or importance through their destruction.

In conversation with the artist
Describe your approach to art making. Do you begin with an idea, a concept, an issue, or do you start by exploring materials and/or processes?
As any artist I am continually experimenting with new materials, methods and contemporary techniques in order to keep my work modern and forever in a state of flux. The core of most of my works, however, lay within a solid conceptual foundation.

Did you undertake your usual process in making this piece for *Hatched*? How does this work sit within your more broad ‘body of work’?
This particular body of work begun as an amalgamation of concept with a specific photographic technique that I was experimenting with at the time. I had been playing around with the idea of personal belongings and the hoarding or collecting of these objects for a while, but had not yet found an interesting way to present or photograph these objects. However I began to find interesting correlations between these ideas and the photographic possibilities of High Speed Flash Photography and decided to experiment with both the technique and the concepts together.

How do the formal, stylistic and technical elements contribute to the function or meaning/s in your work?
The technical elements were integral to the formation and function of these works. The original idea, in part, came from the technical experimentation, however in order to create images as I imagined, I was required to overcome certain technical issues. The stylistic value is also vital to the meaning and significance of this body of work. The earlier images use bold and vibrant colours in order to pull the viewer in to the work. This is a technique widely used by advertisement companies in order to sell their products. These are the same products, or objects, that end up filling our homes. There was a beautiful sense of irony in using the same colours in the destruction of the objects that are also used to sell them. The earlier works became commercial images in themselves. Although the images became dissimilarly and increasingly dark towards the end of the project, the colours of the objects are still kept bright and bold.
With regard to your artwork exhibited in *Hatched*, what effect would you like it to have on viewers? I believe that viewers will look inwardly at their own collections and belongings and maybe challenge the significance and necessity of these objects within their own lives. I feel that there is also a degree of sadness in the images at the sense of loss and destruction of objects that meant a great deal to someone at some point in their life.

**How evident or present are your personal beliefs and values within your art?**
My personal beliefs and values are very present in all of my work, especially in this particular work. This body of work documents a very personal project and journey and I feel that it is quite evident by my connection to the objects used within the images.

**Name a few artists or other practitioners who have influenced your practice.**
As a young female Australian photographer/artist I feel a particular connection to artists such as Marian Drew, Fiona Hall, Jane Burton, Tracey Moffat and Olive Cotton. Artists who create work that have some sort of connection with or portray an issue concerning environmental factors or Australian Landscapes inspire me a great deal.

**What is innovative about your artwork and/or your practice?**
I feel that it is the way in which I have approached the subject of collecting/hoarding and the emotional torment that is felt at the loss of or separation from certain objects. I believe that mine is a unique approach to such a topic, shot in a very contemporary method of photography.

**Questions for students**

1. Discuss Prettejohn’s work with reference to her use of the elements and principles colour, shape/form, movement and contrast.
2. Choose one artist from the following and compare and contrast her work with Prettejohn’s, also citing examples you believe evidence her influence on Prettejohn’s work: Marian Drew, Fiona Hall, Jane Burton, Tracey Moffat and Olive Cotton.
3. Discuss Prettejohn’s work with reference to Marcus Lyall’s video work, *Slow Service* (exhibited at ACMI in 2006).

**Activities for students**

- Make a clay sculpture and purposefully break it. Document the making and destroying processes. Write reflectively about the experience.
- Sort out your clothes, or your CDs, or your books, or your ornaments, or your gadgets with the aim of discarding one quarter of your “collection”. Which possessions do you value most and feel as though you couldn’t live without? Make an artwork about your relationship with material possessions.
- Prettejohn’s work shows moments of suspended time; events in hyper-detail. Reflect on the concept of slowed or suspended time and consider what subject matter you might use to create artwork to elaborate on these ideas.
- Find an item of clothing you no longer wear but haven’t been able to throw away. Bring your items to school and document your stories in audio and/or video form. Each student could talk about when they first acquired the item, the occasions on which it was worn, why it is still precious etc. Other students could suggest ways the owners might use the item to create an artwork.
TALKING TO STRANGERS (2010)

Chris Thiel
oil on board
Artist details
Chris Thiel
b.1961, Adelaide, SA
Adelaide Central School of Art (ACSA)
Bachelor of Visual Arts (Honours)

Artist statement
I am interested in the way painted images have the potential to create an experience of the uncanny - that particularly intense sensation of strangeness. My paintings hover between figuration and abstraction, drawing on my memories of childhood fears and anxieties, both real and imagined. Such memories are not nostalgic nor can they be recalled at will. Rather, they are the formless potent forces that persist apart from conscious memory; which rise up with force and vitality when some fragment from the outside world connects with them. By painting them I attempt to give them shape, name them, draw a circle around them. Otherwise they remain invisible, stalking on the edges of my gaze, unseen but felt, until they evaporate as memories are prone to do.

I feel paint has the unique ability to embed thought in a viscous substance so is an effective medium to negotiate my subject matter. Talking to Strangers is an ambiguous series of painting which resist being fixed, preferring to hover in a state of ‘becoming’. They are like lullabies, full of paradox, invoking the very dark they sing against and in doing so, they also sing of the delicious, decadent beauty of strangeness.

In conversation with the artist
Describe your approach to art making. Do you begin with an idea, a concept, an issue, or do you start by exploring materials and/or processes?
My approach varies depending on the nature of the project I am working on. Sometimes I will start with an idea or a theme; other times it might be a process or materials based approach. This series of 12 paintings (10 of which are in the Hatched exhibition) evolved out of a compulsion I had to visualize, through paint, memories of childhood fears and anxieties. I began by thinking about – through ‘doing’ - how I could use paint to do this most effectively.

How do the formal, stylistic and technical elements contribute to the function or meaning/s in your work?
There are many elements tied up in memories: sensations, emotions, thoughts and actions. I knew from the outset that I didn't wish to merely describe or illustrate my memories but rather, present them poetically. Besides, these memories defied being reproduced exactly because they were incomplete; over time parts of them had been lost. It follows then that I had to rely totally on my mind’s eye to create these paintings. Of course I could have used photo references to assist me once I had the imagery loosely down on the support but I chose not too because I was afraid I would jeopardize the process of remembering. In the book Camera Lucida: Reflections on photography, Roland Barthes says that photographs “actually block memory, quickly becoming counter-memory”. (Strange when you consider how much we all rely on photography these days in order to preserve our memories.)

I chose to paint because it is my preferred medium and because it has “the mystical ability to embed thought in a viscous substance”(Jerry Saltz); it is of the body and the mind, and it is layered, complex, ambiguous and imperfect. Therefore, it shares many of the same characteristics and qualities as my subject matter i.e. memories/fears/anxieties.
It was a battle to draw some of these memories out (probably because they were ‘made’ a long time ago!) and this struggle is perhaps evident in the resulting paintings. I made use of bushes, scrapers, rags, sponges etc to help me find and pin down the imagery – all of which helped in creating interesting surfaces.

I chose to work somewhere between figuration and abstraction because it seemed to fit well with the ambiguity of the subject matter. The paintings literally emerged from dark grounds – red/blue/black- and I began each painting without any preconceived compositional ideas. It was all very spontaneous and organic, but usually the painting most recently finished would influence the next painting in some way. Working in this way allowed me to keep the paintings from becoming too ‘fixed’ which was important because I needed them to feel groundless, dislocated and in a state of flux; much like memory. It also allowed the viewer to ‘add’ to them in some way.

Which art elements & design principles do you feel you have used most prominently in the Talking to Strangers series?
Colour and texture (I described my use of these in my last answer). Also space and contrast. There is a lot of ambiguous space in these paintings that I hope is imbued with mystery/ pregnant with potential drama. High contrast adds to the sense of uneasiness/drama and pays homage to film noir.

What effect would you like your work to have on its viewers?
All of my choices are underpinned with a desire to affect the viewer. I like what Rick Amor says about this; “art has to engage you, to have an effect on your imagination and feelings. It’s about looking in silence at things; it operates on parts of the brain where words are superfluous”.

While I recognize that I cannot dictate the experience of the viewer, nor would I want to, I do wish to hold the viewer for long enough in the hope they might see or recognize something previously overlooked that might ‘prick’ them and cause their own memories/fears/anxieties to rise up and move them.

Which artists or other practitioners have influenced your practice?
Eric Fischl, Marlene Dumas Peter Doig, the Bay Area Figurative Painters (E Bischoff, D Parkes, R Diebenkorn etc), Anna Platten, Chelsea Lehmann and, more recently, Euan Macleod.

What is innovative about your artwork and/or your practice?
Given that in art there is nothing new in the world, I feel that by working from that fertile zone which is the intersection of memory and imagination, I am deviating from a practice upon which many of today’s painters rely i.e. the use of photo references and projection.

Questions for students
1. Thiel states that she “didn’t wish to merely describe or illustrate” her memories, “but rather, present them poetically.” Do you think she has achieved this aim?
2. Thiel quotes Barthes’ assertion that photographs “actually block memory, quickly becoming counter-memory”. Discuss this with reference to Thiel’s Talking to Strangers series.

Activity for students
Record your dreams every day for one week. Choose imagery from one or more of your dreams as stimulus for an artwork. You might choose to work with paint, or in a different medium such as sculpture.
ONE HUNDRED WAYS TO SAY I LOVE YOU

Jaynie Langford
PowerPoint slides, eight printed postcards
Artist details
Jaynie Langford
Born 1964, Hobart, Tas
University of South Australia (USA)
Bachelor of Visual Arts (Hons)

Artist statement
One Hundred Ways to Say I Love You explores the influence of handheld apparatus, such as the mobile phone, on contemporary language. Saddened by the rapid extinction of indigenous languages, I seek to define, through the prescriptive form of the popular acronym, the possibilities of an emerging language driven by the interfacial systems available on common apparatus. In contrast to the digital realm of program and device I have intentionally maintained a distinctly handmade quality in the cutting of paper stencils used in the animations, inferring a human quality that the codified system of symbols, numbers and letters belie. This work then is also a reminder that behind all technology is a human, a hand and an emotional sensory core. By constraining the studio process to ‘low tech domestic’ technology such as PowerPoint, and Windows Movie Maker, the resulting work is a multimedia interpretation of Vilém Flusser’s Apparatus/ Operator Complex.

Intrigued by the impact of digital apparatus on contemporary communication I have found the emerging language of acronym and emoticon a rich source of inspiration. From ‘lols’, to ‘ilys’, and hideous yellow smiles, I sense the prescriptive element of acronymic exchange is affecting a significant challenge to the descriptive powers of future dialogues. From this core concept I am driven to create works exploring digital language through the process of low tech technological experiments, driving me away from traditional materials and onto the potentially unstable platform of power dependant programs and apparatus.

In conversation with the artist
Discuss the three elements and principles you used most predominantly in this work?

Colour: My use of colour reflects the perception of the colour of love as found through a Facebook survey I posted. The colours I have used are the most common responses to the question: What colour is love?
Movement: The looping animations create a moving surface that reflects the randomness of mobile communication. Movement is pertinent in expressing this busy, hyper-connected world.
Rhythm/ Pattern: The rhythm of the work is dictated by the PowerPoint program that platforms the work as well as the power and speed of the computer that runs it. The rhythm is important as it is entirely defined by the technology that built and displays it.

What effect do you hope One Hundred Ways to Say I Love You will have on its viewers?

I would love people to see the work as a declaration of love. I would be delighted if the viewers could piece together these common codes and understand the simplicity of the message. I think someone with little or no experience in mobile phones may have trouble interpreting the work. I don’t perceive it as challenging personally, but it may be difficult to read without some insight into mobile communication.

How do you envisage your work within the context of contemporary arts in Australia, or in the world? Would you call your work (or elements of it) postmodern?

As a text based work it certainly has some postmodern influences within its structure. As a new media work, I am inspired to say that the work in some manner reflects a world beyond Postmodernism, though I’m not sure what that is defined as. I am told that digital work like this (available as a file on usb) is the direction of art in the 21st century. But I am unsure where that positions my work in the context of contemporary Australian art.
Name a few artists or other practitioners who have influenced your work.

Umberto Postal, Bruce Nauman, the futurist movement.

What is innovative about your artwork and/or your practice?

Utilising low tech technologies allowed me to create the work without a perceived outcome. I think using these overlooked platforms allowed an originality that paint certainly couldn't. Pushing these programs to their limit may be innovative, as is synthesizing technology with the hand-made.

Questions for students

1. Langford classifies her work as painting, photography, digital work, animation, installation, film/video, and documented form. To what extent do you agree or disagree with these classifications, having now experienced One Hundred Ways to Say I Love You?

2. Langford states that her work discusses the operator apparatus complex suggested by Vilem Flusser as well as technological influences on language and communication in general. Do you think Langford has been successful in communicating these ideas through her work?

3. Discuss Langford’s work as situated in the context of contemporary Australian art.

4. Compare and contrast Langford’s work with the artwork of Umberto Postal, Bruce Nauman and the futurist movement. Consider their use of materials and processes as well as the concepts that underpin their work.

Activities for students

• Make an artwork that comments on your relationship with mobile phone technology.

• Write an artist statement about your work in abbreviated, text-message style language.

• Write a script for a short performance that comments on our use of mobile phone technology.

• Think about the last conversation you had using a mobile phone and create an artwork based on that dialogue.

• Record the ‘melodies’ a mobile phone plays when you enter a text message. Is it possible to create a musical score to accompany a text conversation? How might you present this as an artwork?
Johan Oevergaard

TERMINAL (2010)
cartridge paper
120 x 90 x 21cm
Artist details
Johan Oevergaard
b.1984, Trondheim, Soer-Troendelag, Norway
Monash University, (MU), Vic
Bachelor of Fine Arts (Sculpture and Spatial Practice)

Artist statement
Terminal is made of two stacks of approximately 25,000 sheets of plain, white cartridge paper, standing half a metre apart, which then have been pushed simultaneously towards each other to meet in the middle, forming a single, self-supporting structure. In the cliché of the white cube the plinth still reigns as a pedestal of meaning, endowing the object resting on it with value and significance. Only isolated and cut off from the outside world can the vacuum stay intact. If one part of this system collapses, the illusion risks disappearing with terminal speed, rendering the mechanisms visible. This work aims to illustrate human interconnectedness in a way which not only is decorative, but also factual - gravity alone holds the structure together. Terminal exists within the parameters of 'the outside world', subject to chance and potential interventions by the subjects entering its habitat. Individuals are rendered invaluable. Everything is collaborative.

My practice has increasingly become more and more site-specific and adaptable to the contexts that I encounter in exhibition situations. A variation of traditional sculptural materials ranging from bronze, concrete, plaster, wood and found objects are used in my work through various configurations, blurring the distinctions between origin and originality. Conceptually I have been preoccupied with issues of male identities and masculine stereotypes within an art context, often referencing sport, infrastructure, warfare, religion or other systems 'outside' the field of art in particular. I'm also interested in the dematerialisation of the art object, prioritising the conceptual and site-specific conditions and ideological framing within those particular settings.

In conversation with the artist
Describe your approach to art making. Do you begin with an idea, a concept, an issue, or do you start by exploring materials and/or processes?
This varies from project to project, work to work. Sometimes I am limited by economic means, or I consciously only make use of free, found, recycled materials. Sometimes the idea demands particular materials or processes in order to make it manifest. My practice has been twofold in this way, with some work being laborious and time consuming, planned and visually predetermined, and some work happening by being sensitive towards site, place and situation; local history etc. Some work can linger for years, or just come from 'nowhere' when reading a piece of fiction that is totally unrelated. Research is also a powerful tool; allowing time and space to research, without necessarily producing anything physical. More often than not, not adding anything seems to be the better artistic practice; productive passivity is political.

Did you undertake your usual process in making this piece for Hatched? How does this work sit within your more broad 'body of work'?
I happened to come across a lot of paper and did not want to just recycle it for it to made into paper again, but make a work that I could recycle, as a cycle within the work. My initial response to the material was to start stacking. At one point the stack 'solidified' and the malleability totally changed and I could move it around and control thousands of sheets as if it were one block. If the stacks collapsed, I could rebuild it using the same sheets. It felt like such a work-generator and I was hooked. After a lot of experimentation in height and distance apart etc. I found I could prop stacks onto each other making them autonomously support each other. I built bigger and bigger and realized I needed help to do it, which led to many performances where my and friend and I would stack for hours separately, then merge and make structures that would stand and fall. After many of these sessions we decided on an 'ideal' form which encapsulated a lot of what we talked about and were experiencing while we were building these futile, pre-destined works together.
Do you recall if your conversations were about civilisation crumbling at all?

Indeed I think it was essential to the work, "with its futile existence", "the same way we try to conquer and harness nature only to be defeated", "a megalomaniac endeavour bound to fail", "entropy is inevitable" - we were talking a lot along these veins as we were working. The work became a personal monument, or a counter-monument in relation to phallic obelisks and commemorative public monoliths, seeking to represent all in its architectural grandeur. The work, in its material and form, acknowledges its own predetermined destiny to regress back to its origin.

Do you have video documentation of this process?

Yes I do. I have video documentation of the stacks merging from inside the wedge looking up to the ceiling with the stacks merging in the middle. I also have a lot of photos from these sessions.

You classify your work as drawing as well as sculpture. In what way would you describe your work as drawing?

The same way that drawing with a pencil on a 2-dimensional surface/support (paper, board etc.) is a documentation of the way your hand moved, the pressure applied, the type of lead used, the pointedness of the sharpening, the way your body expressed itself in the process of mark-making, whereas the actual drawing itself is evidence of this action - this can be transferred to sculpture where the sculpture itself is full of clues and traces and empirical data which lead back to how my body acted upon the materials for them to take that particular shape. The fact that the paper sculpture itself remains animated/kinetic after I have left it in the gallery means it effectively takes over this act of making itself. Historically and categorically drawing remains a medium bound to its nomenclature, however, dance too is a way of drawing in space with your body, leaving fluid and ephemeral traces that exist on a more abstract and less concrete level. The actual marks left do not necessarily have to exist on a single plane. Language plays a big part in how we receive and comprehend phenomena, and it is sometimes better to be put aside in to avoid reductive readings.

How do the formal, stylistic and technical elements contribute to the function or meaning/s in your work?

*Terminal* could be seen as hovering between the kinetic and the static.

Select the three art elements & design principles from the following list that you feel you have used most prominently and make a brief comment about each in relation to your work (for *Hatched*).

**Shape/Form:** Almost anthropomorphic in form and scale, *Terminal* is like two animate entities supporting each other back to back. The wedged arch also connotes a power structure where the apex ultimately consists of a limited amount of components (individuals). Conceptually owing a lot to Post-Minimalism, whilst harking to a Minimalist aesthetic.

**Balance:** A crucial part of making the actual stacks merge is the collaboration between myself and another person, whereby we must negotiate the stacks simultaneously for them to support each other. This process is highly personal and performative, and is the invisible human interaction of the hands of the artists in the seemingly machine-cut paper sheet structure.

**Movement:** The stacks never stop moving entirely, and over the course of days and weeks, the form changes slightly and moves when people walk past etc. This fragmented, super-slow kinetic quality fascinated me in relation to actual experienced time.
How evident or present are your personal beliefs and values within your artwork?

In this particular work many of my own ideologies comes through, I think it is important to acknowledge that everything is collaborative. All materials come imbued with their own narrative, their own history and exists in an expanded order of value, significance etc. Ideas, just as materials always have an origin elsewhere - fragmentary composites of multiple inputs - channeled through individual transformations, this happens both for the creator/author and for the audience, and these lines more often than not blur - whereby no work can be controlled as we bring ourselves into the reception and perception of an artwork, and yet another instance of creation occurs.

How do you envisage your work within the context of contemporary arts in Australia, or in the world? Would you call your work (or elements of it) postmodern?

Inevitably, after 9/11 - any two rectangular objects standing tall next to each other will summon the iconography pertinent to the architecture of the Twin Towers - an almost universal was created by the omnipresence of this event in the media which one cannot escape at any time soon. As much as this work initially and predominantly was about a common denominator analogy to how all is connected, the formal properties cannot be ignored. The merged stacks itself is suspended in between states, in a liminal trope - evidently imbued with a history and a physical present, silently kinetic, slowly entropic towards a future unknown - a future which the audience can affect.

Name a few artists or other practitioners who have influenced your practice.

Roman Signer, Mark Dion, Andrea Fraser, Chris Burden, Janine Antoni, Felix Gonzales-Torres, Martin Creed, Gordon Matta-Clark and Werner Herzog

What is innovative about your artwork and/or your practice?

Personally I get a lot of pleasure from exploring the properties of paper as a material in its own right, not as a support or medium to express yourself on by other means, but to employ paper as building blocks for sculptural work. I wanted to strip the paper back to its most prosaic form, the A4 Cartridge paper, the pariah of papers - the invisible everyday. Not only tapping into the corporate/business/office world, but also more symbolically the white slate of a blank page holds whatever your imagination projects onto it and can be a stand-in with almost limitless variations. Stacked in the thousands, differences appear in the cross-section of strata, somehow linking the lifeless inanimate paper back to its roots from where it once came. In terms of what is innovative I think it is hard to say but maybe the work resides in a state that is felt on a bodily level, the stacks are so precarious and present when you see it - the work adheres to physical laws which you innately can understand and grasp, maybe because you yourself is subject those same laws and in that can enter into a dialogue with the sculpture that requires no words or explanation for you to engage with.

How do you think younger audiences will engage with your work?

I think they will distrust the integrity of the structure, that they potentially won’t believe it’s only made up from paper held together by natural forces (gravity etc.) - to believe it is a trick. I think they will want to touch it, but will self-regulate this and don’t do it as they realize they have the potential to collapse the stacks.
A prior work

*Decoy* (2010)

Soil, hessian bags, plastic bags, tape

2500 x 450 x 550mm

*Decoy* was made for a group show I participated in in 2010 at Conical in Melbourne. The gallery space itself was on the first level, accessible only via three flights of stairs. To get into the main gallery where the other exhibitors were showing, viewers had to pass through a hallway before the space opened up. 18 bags containing approximately half a tonne of soil were propped up to form a small wall blocking up the entrance from wall to wall, about half a metre in height. To enter/exit viewers had to traverse this barricade. Each bag carried instructions on how to move the bags, for example, it required two people to move one bag etc.

Questions for students

1. Oevergaard classifies his work as drawing, animation, sculpture, interactive, documented form, environmental and performance. To what extent do you agree with these classifications?
2. Conduct some research into the artists Oevergaard lists as influential to his practice. Choose one and compare and contrast his/her artwork with Oevergaard’s. Are their uses of materials and processes and the concepts they explore similar and/or different?
3. Discuss this quotation with reference to Oevergaard’s *Terminal*:
   “We stand alone together.”
4. To what extent do you consider Oevergaard’s process of making to be part of the resulting artwork?

Activities for students

- Using copy paper – or newspaper – experiment with constructions that do not use tape, glue, staples or other means of attachment to hold your structures together. How large can you make them?
- Extend this experiment by using other recyclable materials, such as molded packaging.
- Conduct physical experiments in pairs. How many ways can you find to support one another’s weight so that you are both reliant on the other in order to balance? Document your experiments with photography and or video.
- Create an artwork based on your concept of *futility*.
BEAM ME UP KENNY!  [2010]

Kenneth Kronberger

Laser print, MDF board, chain, rivets, linoleum, acrylic paint
**Artist details**
Kenneth Kronberger
Born 1963, Fremantle, WA

Ballarat University (BU)
Bachelor of Arts (Fine Arts)

**Artist statement**
*Beam Me Up, Kenny!* is composed of a pair of text-mobiles designed to be suspended side by side in an exhibition space. On the floor beneath each mobile is a circular linoleum disk upon which the visitor is invited to stand. One brightly coloured mobile reads ‘Stand here to feel happy’ the other ‘Stand here to feel beautiful’. The piece is about the human condition. It strives for both physical and spiritual interaction from the viewer as they step beneath each of the text-mobiles to take a moment to reflect upon their inner state and just what it means to ‘feel beautiful’ or ‘feel happy’. The use of painterly hand rendered text and semi-organic materials serves as a reminder that the quest for pleasure in modern day life is often overly reliant upon technology.

Last winter I had a dream that I came upon a beautiful sign in a public place, it read ‘Stand here to feel happy’. This piece is derived directly from that dream. In day to day reality we are bombarded by signage demanding our physical obedience, or attempting to coerce us into to making unnecessary purchases. The second ‘Stand here to feel beautiful’ sign offers the viewer freedom of choice, which I believe to be the key to a happy and beautiful existence. The use of organic hand rendered text rather than sterile authoritarian font not only refers to my broader practice as a painter, it also personalises the written invitation to feel at one’s best. I consider my handwriting to be a silent and intimate extension of my own speaking voice. I hope that those individuals who are ‘beamed up’ by my work experience a subtle though lasting elevation of the spirit.

**In conversation with the artist**
Describe your approach to art making. Do you begin with an idea, a concept, an issue, or do you start by exploring, materials and/or processes.

I do lots and lots of little black and white drawings about the size of a postage stamp. Some people might call them doodles or scribbles. I guess their proper name is ‘thumbnail sketches’. I just do them for my own amusement; it’s spontaneous and quite compulsive. I find it clears my head.

I draw in the blank edges of the telephone book when I talk to people on the telephone. I usually scribble on the borders of newspapers while sipping a cup of tea and on both sides of any old envelopes that come my way. If I have a good piece of paper, I draw little postage stamp size boxes and then fill them with pen or pencils drawings. The drawings are usually of imaginary people. I like making up the patterns in their clothing and trying different hairstyles. Some of the drawings have tonal qualities and try to be realistic; others are in a cartoon style. I often do a blend of the two. Either way, noses are hard to draw. I never draw from photographs.

Sometimes, when I look back at all the little drawings of people I have done, I start to wonder who they are. Some look happy, some look sad, some look bored while others might look shocked or bewildered. It makes me wonder if the people in my drawings show a certain emotion because that’s the way I felt at the time of doing the drawing, or if in the back of my mind I was thinking about someone I knew who was happy or sad at the time. Sometimes a drawing will stand out to me and I will use it as a starting point for a larger painting.

Halfway through the painting I usually forget about the original little drawing and the painting takes on a life of its own. It’s also different from the drawing because it is in colour. When the painting is dry I look at it and try to figure out not only what the person is feeling, but what they are thinking. I try to read their mind, and whatever I think they might be thinking becomes the title of the piece. Last year I started painting hand written text above the heads of people in my paintings to help show what they were thinking.
Did you undertake your usual process in making *Beam me up Kenny!*?

How does this work sit within your more broad 'body of work'?

The piece for *Hatched* 2011 evolved from the process of writing words above the heads of people in my paintings. What happened was that I did a series of paintings of people and then looked at them to try and figure what they were thinking and feeling. There was a large painting of a woman in a party dress with a fancy drink in her hand and flowers in her hair. She looked self-contented. I decided that what she was thinking was 'I like to wear frangipanis in my hair!' When I discussed the idea of painting the word on the painting with my tutor, she said that it might ruin the painting, and that it would be better to put it the words on a separate canvas. That's when I started painting signs, to hang near my paintings. I painted them on panels of wood.

There was a painting of a man in a black t-shirt. After looking into his eyes I decided he was thinking 'I'm getting mags on my Monaro.' So I painted a separate sign for this. There was a painting of a woman in a floral dress, looking like she might curtsey. I made a sign for her which read “Everyone has been so awfully kind!” I found the idea of someone being “awfully kind” bemusing. There was a also man screwing up his face and rudely poking out his tongue, the sign that went with his painting just said ‘Naaghhhhhhh!’.

I guess it was about this time that I had a dream that I came across a sign in a grey sort of public place. It was a beautiful sign which said ‘Stand Here To Feel Happy.’ I can still remember the dream. It occurred to me that I could make the sign, so I did along with another one which read 'Stand here to feel beautiful'. I wanted to give people a choice. I believe in freedom of choice. Anyway, when no one was around I hung the signs up in my shared student studio space at Ballarat University. The next day students started interacting with them, standing under them and looking up, trying to feel happy or beautiful. Then people who I didn’t know or usually see came from other departments to stand under the signs. A girl turned up and told me she was feeling sad and needed to stand under the ‘feel happy’ sign. The piece is like my paintings, only the words are over the heads of real people, rather than imaginary painted people.

How would you classify your work?

I like to think of the signs as being interactive mobiles. They can in part also be classified as...

**Painting:** The words were written using a brush, consideration was given to the use of colour. I wanted to use happy and beautiful colours. The signs originate from my paintings.

**Graphic design:** I didn’t want to use standard fonts found in most signs. It’s too authoritarian. I wanted the words to look human rather than mechanical. I wanted it to be personal. The font is my handwriting. I am proud of it being in the piece as all my life people have told me that I have messy handwriting.

**Photography:** I am conscious of the fact the piece creates ‘photo opportunities’. I think of the photos of people interacting with the piece as being an extension of the piece. The taking of the photograph is also part of the interaction.

**Sculpture:** The piece has three dimensional qualities and can be viewed from different angles. People become a living sculptural element of the piece when they stand beneath it.

**Interactive:** The piece encourages interaction.

**Installation:** The piece needs to be installed to function. People then ‘install’ themselves in the piece to see if it ‘works’.

**Performance:** At times it seems that the people who stand under the signs are putting on a small performance. They put out the palm of their hand to see if they can feel ‘the rays’. They pull facial expressions and their postures change.

**Mixed Media:** The piece uses chains and bolts as well as paper and an inkwell print origination from a hand-painted sign.
How do the formal, stylistic and technical elements contribute to the function or meaning of your art?

The formal elements: Although the signs originate from handwriting, which is organic in nature, I have retained the formal use of the rectangle, which is associated with the geometric forms used in most signage. The use of the rectangle allows the signs a degree of ‘officialdom’.

Stylistic elements: The use of handwriting makes the piece personal. The pointing hand component is used rather than an triangular arrow as it is more human, it contributes to a more personal meaning, while remaining highly functional in showing viewers where to stand.

Technical elements: The lack of technology in the piece contributes to its meanings. These days we are often tempted to turn to technology in our quest for happiness or a sense of beauty (e.g. computers, television and other must-have-gadgets). I hope that viewers are reminded that these emotional qualities can be sought without a dependence on technology.

Discuss *Beam me up Kenny!* with reference to three specific art elements.

Colour: I have chosen colours to use in the signs that I feel are joyous; they are designed to help people on their way to feeling ‘Happy’ or ‘Beautiful’ (whatever these qualities may be). If the signs had been in black and white and in a hard, formal font, I do not think they would look so inviting.

Space: The space beneath the sign is very important as it provides the arena for interaction. I think the space between the two signs should be slender so that the two can be compared side by side. People should be able to easily step from one to the other. This also allows a photo-opportunity for two people to interact within. The signs attempt to imbue the space beneath them with special qualities. When people stand beneath signs and look up, they can no longer see the signs properly. They are left to deal with the space in which they are standing.

Emphasis/focal point: The pointing hands and the words ‘stand here’ contribute to the focal point of the space beneath the signs, which is further emphasised by the two floor mats that the participants may stand upon.

What effect/s would you like to have on viewers of your work?
I hope viewers are tempted to stand beneath the signs. I hope they reconnect with the notions of happiness and beauty. I hope they feel happy. I hope they feel beautiful. I hope that those who see the signs, even those who don’t stand beneath them, contemplate what happiness or beauty might be.

How evident or present are your personal beliefs and values within your art?
Very evident. The notions of happiness and beauty are elusive. Sometimes we have to be reminded that happiness is an option. I wonder about the links between the sensations of feeling happy or feeling beautiful; if they are one and the same. There are big differences between ‘looking’ and ‘feeling’. Someone who might be considered ugly by certain cultural standards can feel beautiful. Happiness doesn’t necessarily result in a smile. Emotional existence is more important than physical existence, but we still need to keep an eye on our health.

How would you place your work within the context of contemporary arts in Australia?
I feel that it is an experimental piece which reflects the open minded attitude Australians have towards what constitutes art today. I see the work as a cross between a ‘conversation piece’ and a ‘photo-opportunity’ and in that way it has links to those elements of the arts that are associated with global tourism. I guess it might be classified as post-modern, but I can’t help wondering if it is a piece of Pop Art. The use of text might position the work next to Barbara Kruger’s work (“I shop therefore I am”), but I have never been a big Kruger fan myself.
Describe the artistic and environmental influences on your work.

I like signs and advertisements. I collect them. A favourite enamel sign of mine reads, "Worm digging prohibited". I like reading street names, I think they change the way a street feels to walk down.

I liked the way that Roy Lichtenstein had words in his comic paintings ("I’d rather drown than call Brad!" and ‘Wham!’). I also liked the use of text in some of Andy Warhol's early work; little quotes lifted from print media advertisements.

I can’t remember where the quote comes from, but someone once said that "text can bring something akin to music to the image". I think this is true.

Pictorially, my paintings are influenced by the tonal qualities in the works of William Blake and the palette and techniques of Sidney Nolan. In regards to painting technique, I think Pro Hart had some wonderful methods, but was limited by a colloquial narrative.

Describe how the concept of innovation is related to your work.

The use of free-standing text has been innovative for me on a personal level. In a broader sense I think the idea of directly requesting viewers 'to feel' something may be innovative. I don't know of any other 'interactive mobiles'.

How do you imagine younger audiences will engage with your work?

I haven't witnessed a younger audience interacting with the piece. I think it would be a joy to see. I think they might stand beneath the signs and smile or even give themselves a hug.

Questions for students

1. Find examples of artists who include text in their paintings and present an argument against the notion that adding text to a painting “ruins it.”
2. Discuss this statement: “Concepts of beauty and happiness are universal.”
3. In our western, contemporary culture, how tied do you believe our concepts of beauty and happiness to be?
4. Kronberger states that his paintings are “influenced by the tonal qualities of the works of William Blake and the palette and techniques of Sidney Nolan.” Investigate Blake’s and Nolan’s work and compare and contrast with Kronberger's with reference to his statements.

Activities for students

• Stand on a spot outdoors and count how many signs you see. Who can see the most signs? What sign is the closest? Which sign is the furthest one you can see?
• Draw a circle on ground using chalk and write...’stand in this circle to feel happy’, or ‘stand in this circle to watch the world go by’...etc.
• Look at the faces of the portraits in the gallery and try and put in words what you think the person is thinking. What would they be saying if they could speak?
• Write your own sign on a piece of A4 paper and pin it to a lamp-post or tree. Put all the signs up and walk in a circle, try and obey the sign as you walk by.
• Draw a picture of something or someone that makes you feel happy.
Kate Vassallo
photographic installation of 20 photocopied prints & 10 inkjet prints
Artist details
Kate Vassallo
b.1989, Canberra, ACT

Australian National University (ANU)
Bachelor of Visual Arts (Honours)

Artist statement
Materiality, medium and experimentation play an important role in my art practice. I work across a range of media with a focus on performance, photomedia and drawing. By stretching the physical quality of materials and crossing mediums unexpectedly, I enjoy the push-and-pull I can create between unique art objects and reproducible, cheap techniques (such as photocopying and digital video). By employing my background in dance, I use my body to explore physicality and attempt to preserve the tangible experience of making. An important concern of mine is to deconstruct the conventions of Performance Documentation, attempting to find a medium with which ephemeral moments can be adequately represented once they have passed. Within my practice I place the most importance on process, always attempting to illustrate this in the form of a public exhibition.

One-Hour Studios refers to a series of performances using different rooms of my art school as a personal artist studio. The project examines the process of creative production, building on the historical dialogue of ‘the artist working in their studio’. My emphasis is on the performance of making, which I present in both mundane and absurd ways. I intend to raise questions about what artists do, why certain performative actions are undertaken and subsequently what can be called ‘art’.

In conversation with the artist
Describe your approach to art making. Do you begin with an idea, a concept, an issue, or do you start by exploring materials and/or processes?
My practice is quite varied. Often my works come from playing with and exploring materials (including the body), but some of what I do is very much theory based (such as the work being presented in Hatched). When making work in this theory orientated way I start by reading about a subject I’m interested in and then thinking how this can be translated into a visual form. As a whole in my practice I prefer not to make a distinction between these two working methods. Instead I choose to experiment with what happens when I make a single body of work using both approaches concurrently.

Did you undertake your usual process in making this piece for Hatched? How does this work sit within your more broad ‘body of work’?
The process I undertook in making this work was similar to what I describe above, the theory that I was reading and then writing about deeply influenced the shape the this body of work took. However it was sustained for a much longer period of time than I would usually spend making one thing (the process took a whole year). This resulted in a much more planned execution of my ideas, which had both good and bad consequences. It is a much more resolved piece than I have previously made. Conversely, the extended time period spent making this work has meant a loss of some of the experimental and innovative aspects of my process.

How do the formal, stylistic and technical elements contribute to the function or meaning/s in your work?
The technical elements of this work (the medium and process) contribute to one function of the work, which is to question or investigate how best to document a temporary/ephemeral performance. By investigating the formal structures of the work and using imagery that has been mediated (from live performance, to video, to digital stills, and then to prints) I have questioned the use of documenting performance, its history and styles (the way it can or can’t look).
Another meaning I’ve been looking at with this work is the nature of the artist’s studio. I have tried to portray somewhat iconic imagery that evokes the idea of the heroic artist working in their studio by using particular lighting, tone, framing of images, costume, scale and colour.

Discuss three art elements and principles you used to create One-Hour Studio.

**Space:** One-Hour Studio playfully incorporates the idea of space both within the images presented and more obviously in the way they are hung. Each image is like a little spatial pocket or window for a viewer to peek into. Often the images have been arranged in such a way that the figure in one window looks as though it is interacting with the others around it, alluding to spaces in between works and even space that is not visible.

**Movement:** One goal of this body of work is to try and present movement through the use of still images. By using materials, textures, colours and through the hanging of the work I am trying to allude to movement and time. By using the technique of extracting still images from video to print, the interlacing of unprocessed video becomes visible alluding to the images being snapshots of continuous movement and performance.

**Emphasis/focal point:** By hanging work at different levels, on different paper surfaces and sizes and in different colours, I am playing with the idea of focal points for the viewer to engage with. Which focal point will you choose? Will it be the work that is hung at eye-height, the work that has got the brightest colours, the biggest sized prints or the work that is printed on the glossiest paper stock? The answer seems to be different for each person that views the work.

With regard to One-Hour Studio, what effect would you like it to have on its viewers?
The main effect I would like to have on people when they view this work is to slow down their viewing speed, so they really investigate the images presented and then ask themselves lots of different questions about what they see. I think the nature of the work is quite ambiguous, leading people to ask questions both materially and figuratively. This probably means each person will interact with it quite differently, though it would not be particularly challenging for any viewers and it can be viewed in either a very simple or a more complex way.

How do you envisage your work within the context of contemporary arts in Australia, or in the world?
Would you call your work (or elements of it) postmodern?
The main ideas of this work are of the artist in their studio and the artist’s body. Currently, both in Australia and overseas, investigating the studio within arts practice is having a resurgence as is the use of performance and the body. There have recently been large curated exhibitions to this effect (Most notably Production Site: The Artist’s Studio Inside-Out at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago, and also Gestures and Procedures at ACCA, Melbourne). My practice draws heavily from conceptual and post-conceptual artists’ work, sometimes resulting in postmodern elements. The work in Hatched does not draw so heavily on that, but my most recent body of work does contain appropriation of Daniel Buren’s work.

Name a few artists who have influenced your practice.
Bruce Nauman, Daniel Buren, Mikala Dwyer, Tony Schwensen, Vito Acconci, Olafur Eliasson and more recently Daniel Buren.

What is innovative about your artwork and/or your practice?
My practice is innovative in a number of ways. One is in the way that I try and combine multiple disciplines (performance, photomedia, drawing, video, installation…) into single bodies of work. I also feel that the ideas I explore (the artist’s studio, the nature of performance documentation, the physicality of making, etc.) tend to be investigated in quite serious and severe ways. However, I always try within my work to create an element of playfulness and a bit of tongue in cheek humor.

How do you think younger audiences will engage with your work?
I think that my work may appeal to younger audiences because of the way it provokes questions from their viewer. I think in younger audiences they would see images of a figure in a space doing ‘something’ and ask, “Who are they?”, “What are they doing?”, “Why are they doing it?”
Questions for students

1. Vassallo classifies her work as photography, video, documented form and site-specific installation. To what extent do you agree with these classifications?
2. Research the artists Vassallo lists as influential to her practice as an artist. Select one and compare and contrast the processes and concepts underpinning their work.
3. Michael Ginsborg (when he was the Head of the Center for Drawing in London) defined a studio as:
   “a liminal space where transformations seem to emerge with more fluidity, a space where the ‘what would happen if?’ questions are asked, material in hand…where process can run the gamut between calculation and improvisation and be privileged above product.”
Discuss Ginsborg’s conception of a studio as compared with your idea of what Vassallo might consider her studio.
4. How would Vassallo’s work differ if she presented video footage instead of still imagery?

Activities for students

• Consider your daily routines as movement exercises. Choose one, for example making and eating breakfast. If you were to document this movement sequence using ten photographs, what would you choose to show your viewer? What if you only chose three photographs?
• Choreograph an abstract movement sequence that relates to the daily routine you explored in the last activity. You may wish to first list the words and phrases you associate with the routine, for example daily ritual, nutrition, start to the day, chore – whatever feelings you have about the daily routine you have chosen. Then make a list of words that describe your feelings towards the routine. Make up a simple movement sequence that incorporates some of these ideas. Play with your movement phrase by speeding it up and slowing it down, by making the movements huge or making them tiny, by making them forceful or making them light, by making them angular and jerky or rounded and smooth. Document your movement sequence on video and watch the footage. Decide on key moments to photograph. Present your work to your classmates. Provide constructive criticism as you discuss each other’s work.
GINGER SWAN (2010)

Michal Wojtowicz
kinetic sculpture
1180 x 100 x 150cm
**Artist details**
Michal Wojtowicz  
Born: Malopolska, Poland  
University of Western Australia (UWA)  
Bachelor of Fine Arts  

**Artist statement**
*Ginger Swan* is a fully functional machine assembled from scrap metal, car components and farming equipment powered by an internal combustion engine. Its purpose is to exist in the ‘grey zone’ between the art object and the everyday functional appliance. It is a surreal piece utilizing very crude engineering, married with a complex structure. Whilst many have drawn references to the works of Jean Tinguely, I believe it to be an experiment proving functionality to be the relative element and form to be consistent, as it is a work of art regardless of the function the spectators might choose. The work is not excessive - although the assembly does not appear to work, no element exists without its mechanical necessity. The functional arrangement of components creates the aesthetic experience. The *Ginger Swan* is equally ridiculous as it is confronting - easy on the eye but challenging to those who attempt to dissect its mechanics. My love of sculpture and mechanics has led me to create such hybrids which can exist only in the realm of art and stimulate the minds of their audience. I sculpt, I paint, I make video art. I have been introduced to the incredible medium of video in the last five years through university, prior to that I've stuck to the 'brush and chisel'.

**In conversation with the artist**
Describe your approach to art making. Do you begin with an idea, a concept, an issue, or do you start by exploring materials and/or processes?
I believe art to be an experience. The process of art creation is a form of experiencing oneself through one’s own ideas about the world and the self, and allowing others to benefit as a result of the process. My ideas come from my observations and, to some degree many of my earlier works have been a critique of myself and the world around me. Today I see myself as an observer and a creator of what my life and my art is about rather than a respondent to situations and ideas I agree or disagree with. Art is never a struggle though it can be challenging at times. I rather think of it as an element of intelligence that occurs naturally as a result of creativity, which everybody has. I would prefer my work to be seen as a conjunction of interesting forms rather then a statement of my personal interests. I prefer people to form their own idea about my work and find how it fits into the context of their own experience rather than seek to match the sculpture with my situation.

I cannot imagine a better way express my love for life than through my art. I cannot think of any better way to bring people together than through the process of creation, where everybody can be part of something and still remain individual. I cannot think of any other way to discover what surrounds us than through creative curiosity. Art overcomes all limitations; I believe anything is possible when the objective is to create. I started with two notions: parody and illusion. I began constructing an artwork that entailed both. It became a challenge and the challenge led to the mechanical process that led to the form of the sculpture.

Did you undertake your usual process in making this piece for *Hatched*? How does this work sit within your more broad ‘body of work’?
Yes, I undertook the usual process - I found an object and I added to it other objects I found, and which seemed to work appropriately mechanically and aesthetically. The work fits in the line of evolution that my art constantly undergoes - it is more complicated yet less dramatic than my previous works. In the future I intend to simplify my sculptures aesthetically and mechanically to remove any doubt from the minds of the viewers as to their purpose. My work was never intended to be excessive. Not one element of the exhibited work is not functional, all elements are necessary for the proper functioning of the machine. The aesthetic of each individual element creates a visual impact and as a whole it creates a sculpture.
How do the formal, stylistic and technical elements contribute to the function or meaning/s in your work?
Each element of my sculpture is functional and is crucial to the correct functioning of the whole of it. I left nothing out. It is not built to look great. Just as the aesthetics of an oil rig exist only as a result of its function, the same is true in my work. The objective has always been to get ones teeth clean and there are many ways and techniques available in the 21st century. My work depicts just one of them.

Select three art elements & design principles that you feel you have used most prominently and make a brief comment about each in relation to Ginger Swan.
There must be balance: of weight, vibration, fuel flow, head pressure of water, water pump gearing, etc. There must be harmony: no elements can interfere with each other. The overall vibration when running under load needs to be contained, balanced out. All of the elements need to work harmoniously with each other in the exact sequence as designed in order for movement to occur.

What effect would you like Ginger Swan to have on its viewers?
I think it may be challenging to those who believe creativity comes through effort. The manufacturing of the work was effortless for me - each part fell in place the moment it fell into my hands. I conducted no prior drawing or research in order to construct the work. I hope it inspires many viewers to create equally interesting art. I hope it opens minds to possibilities available within the realms of recycling and primitive engineering. I hope it inspires all those who have thought about working with metal but thought of it as too difficult and time consuming. I think the subject of dental hygiene is universal for all peoples and cultures around the globe. The only challenging comments I have received so far are in regard to the excessiveness of the internal combustion power source - the rig and hydraulic clutch being linked to an object that does not require such torque. I would prefer that the audience see my work as an art object and not an engineering phenomenon.

How evident or present are your personal beliefs and values within your art?
My art is saturated with my truth and my values, it is an expression of that creative part of me that I value and love most. As my ideas about myself constantly change so does my art, it complements my mental and spiritual growth. There are many places from where my inspiration comes, as many as there are and will be forms in my sculptures.

How do you envisage your work within the context of contemporary arts in Australia, or in the world? Would you call your work (or elements of it) postmodern?
I think my work fits within the context of contemporary art in Australia. I believe it to be universal and easy enough for any person to understand and relate to. It is not a work criticizing any trend or political situation, nor does it perplex viewers to the degree that they might need to suffer whilst looking for some embedded ideology. Personally I would call this particular sculpture primitive, many have said it looks like a device from the 19th century. Truth be told, since then not much has changed in the world in terms of power generation - we apply vintage technology daily without thinking twice about its origins, function and environmental implications. Red dirt and rusty steel seem to make sense to people in WA. It is a common and natural sight within the landscape, and this no doubt is a powerful association people link with my work. I believe my sculpture fits comfortably in the realm of contemporary art in Australia, although it seems to be something people have not seen for some time.

What is innovative about your artwork and/or your practice?
There is nothing overtly innovative about my work. All I did was that which many consider a waste of time. I have not implemented any material or technique unknown to man, nor have I developed any new technology. The secret to my work has been the illusion of what it is, and that may be seen as innovative.
How do you think younger audiences will engage with your work?
I hope they will feel excitement, joy, laughter, amazement, intrigue, inspiration and motivation to go out and be creative. I hope to evoke positive feelings from everyone who takes the time to stop and look at this work. Especially kids - their minds will make the art and the world of our future. I believe the more creative the future is, the better life will be for all of us. I hope there are those who try to figure out how it has been assembled; I hope there are those who instantly see the illusion; and I hope everyone can learn from it and enjoy it.

Questions for students

1. Wojtowicz states an intention to work with notions of parody and illusion in the Ginger Swan. Discuss evidence of these in his work and evaluate the success of these aims.

2. Discuss Wojtowicz' artwork with reference to this quote from Shakespeare: “There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy.”

3. Look up Rube Goldberg machines and discuss with reference to Wojtowicz' Ginger Swan. You may wish to look at the video clip by the UK band OK GO, as evidence of their growing popularity.

4. Try making a Rube Goldberg machine of your own. How many connecting parts can you include?

5. Experiment with kinetic elements in your sculpture work. How many new ways can you discover to connect two materials together? How many new ways can you find to incorporate movement into your work?
Ruth Feeney

ground tea leaves
approximately 2m diameter
Unfilled is a fragile floor piece made from ground tea-leaves. It challenges the current progression toward cheap, mass-produced, poor-quality furniture. This work explores the idea that these near-disposable home furnishings have become a reflection of our diminished capacity to appreciate the value in taking time to do things well. It was appropriate to employ the time-consuming process of collecting, drying, grinding and then sifting used tea leaves before laboriously hand cutting each furniture-shaped stencil to make a work that would last for only a fraction of the time it took to make. The finished piece is reminiscent of a mandala.

My practice consists primarily of temporary installations. The general intent of my work is to defamiliarise overlooked, pedestrian objects and spaces by presenting them to audiences in an unexpected or unconventional manner. By rendering an object or space with unfamiliar, audience’s perceptions are separated from the automated and nondescript and guided toward new interpretations. I deliberately choose vulnerable, fragile materials that are highly susceptible to change over the course of the installation. As such, the degeneration of my arrangement becomes an integral part of the work. Currently my works manifest themselves in repetitive circular patterns made with both a restrained ethos and selection of materials.

In conversation with the artist

Describe your approach to art making. Do you begin with an idea, a concept, an issue, or do you start by exploring materials and/or processes?

My practice always involves a carefully considered materials palette. However, my approach to art making oscillates between having an idea and then sourcing materials, and acquiring objects that I think should be made into an artwork. I try not to store too many things, so I also consider what will be left of the work after it is exhibited. Where possible I make something that will either naturally degenerate over the course of the exhibition, be given away, or can be flat packed and later re-exhibited.

Did you undertake your usual process in making this piece for Hatched? How does this work sit within your more broad ‘body of work’?

This piece is typical of my recent works. My practice is primarily concerned with recontextualising salvaged objects, spaces or conversations and imbuing them with my own meaning. They are often circular, fragile, ephemeral and are comprised of subverted materials. Though they have no clear spiritual link, aesthetically my works are frequently compared with mandalas. Like mandalas these pieces are made using concentric circles which emanate from a centre point, and are destroyed soon after completion.

How do the formal, stylistic and technical elements contribute to the function or meaning/s in your work?

Though I often use repetition for aesthetic reasons, Unfilled deliberately utilises repetition to represent time and to emphasise the disposable attitude society at large has adopted with industrialisation. Where mankind once crafted items designed to endure several lifetimes, today’s mass-produced products are practically disposable.

I had sifted flour in other works; for Unfilled, it was appropriate to employ the time consuming processes of collecting, drying, grinding and then sifting a substance (I chose tea leaves) and I laboriously hand cut each furniture-shaped stencil. I wanted the meticulous tasks to emphasise the value of the process itself and to make an ephemeral work that would last for only a fraction of the time it took to make.
With regard to *Unfilled*, what effect would you like it to have on its viewers?

Ideally viewers of *Unfilled* would experience a series of enlightenments. Firstly, observing the size and smell of the work. I hope the tealeaves retain their smell over the course of the exhibition. Secondly, identifying and understanding the material and the way it has been treated. Next, a closer inspection of the void spaces revealing cyclic furniture motifs. Finally, the viewer deciphers or invents a link between the material, the process and the theme.

**How evident or present are your personal beliefs and values within your art?**

Some of my values are evident within my works. These include my passion for recycling and reducing waste.

**Name a few artists or other practitioners who have influenced your practice.**

Dani Marti, Tara Donovan, Sydney artist Hannah Bertram and Melbourne artist Carl Scrase.

**What is innovative about your artwork and/or your practice?**

The materials; the transformation of the familiar or mundane. Innovative refers to the application of new ideas and functions. My familiar and mundane materials have likely been used by many artists, but not in the same way. I challenge myself to use salvaged materials whenever possible; however I am conscious of not being lumped in the more kitsch ‘waste as art’ movement. I have a fairly clean and refined image in mind, and I don’t want to compromise that. I want viewers drawn to a work for more reasons than the fact that it is recycled. Through thoughtful transformation and recontextualisation, I defamiliarise those overlooked materials and provide opportunity for renewed appreciation of their qualities. I would say that my practice resonates with the aforementioned artists and is similarly innovative.

**How do you think younger audiences will engage with your work?**

People are inclined to try and touch this work to decipher the material (it is often mistaken for dirt). This is even more likely for young people. In a previous exhibition of *Unfilled* I witnessed a small child enter the space and immediately walk right up to the work. She stopped just on the edge and left tiny toe prints, if she hadn’t been stopped by her mother she would have delighted in walking right through it. I like to think that response was just her way of exploring of the work, a strange new thing.

**Have you ever left a piece without the “don’t touch” instruction? If no, how do you think your work might shift over the duration of the exhibition (e.g. what if the child had walked through, and possibly others too)? Would your idea of the “transformation of the mundane” change too?**

One week into that same exhibition a group of teens did walk through the work and ‘tagged’ it with their fingers. As the disruption was extensive, I considered this an act of vandalism and had to repair the work. Initially the damage angered me but I went on to enjoy the consequential evolution, which offered insight into how the work was constructed. That said, I wouldn’t encourage this kind of interaction! Following that incident I did provide a ‘Do not touch’ sign.
What was the concept behind this work?
This work was borne from playing with word arrangement, finding two words that ran onto each other because they shared common letters, and then illustrating the new word or phrase they created, i.e. Hippopotamoustache, Gingerbread mandala. Naturally having the word mandala in the title dictated how the work would look but it unconsciously became an exploration of the link between industrialisation and domesticity. I have since ground these cookies into a powder for sifting in another work.

You play with positive and negative space; in Unfilled the spaces form the recogniseable objects, in Gingerbread Mandala we see the shape of objects (the biscuits) themselves, but in both we also notice the opposite; in Unfilled the we see the shapes made by the ground tea leaf “background” and in Gingerbread Mandala we look at the spaces between the biscuits forming their own pattern. I’m presuming you have specific ideas in mind when considering your use of positive and negative space, especially given that your Hatched work is called Unfilled. Is this a new direction in your work?
Stencils are perfect for my general practice because they draw attention to previously unnoticed spaces. In Unfilled I wanted to create positive and negative spaces to allude to the notion of the ongoing un-fulfillment of consumerist society, and the fleeting lifetime of a poorly crafted piece of furniture. However the actuality of what was filled or unfilled was a logistical decision. In Unfilled the positive space (the tea) is one large connected shape. It was more practical for me to make individual stencils that could be laid out as I made it and later stored then one large stencil. This meant that the voids were the furniture shapes.
Questions for students

1. Feeney’s work emphasizes the value of the making process. Comment on this with reference to your own artistic practice. Would you consider your own work process-based or more intent on the creation of a product? How does this consideration impact on your art-making?

2. Feeney classifies her work as environmental, interactive, site specific, installation and drawing. To what extent do you agree with these classifications?

3. Discuss the following elements and principles with reference to Feeney’s *Unfilled*: shape/form, rhythm/pattern and contrast.

4. Conduct research into the artistic practices of Dani Marti, Tara Donovan, Hannah Bertram and Carl Scrase. Compare and contrast their work with Feeney’s with regards to their use of materials and processes, as well as the conceptual ideas behind their work.

5. Feeney encountered problems installing her work at PICA as the gallery floor was painted a dark grey colour, making it difficult to discern the patterns in the tea leaves. She considered painting a circle on the floor in a lighter colour to help make the patterns more visible. How would doing this change readings of her work?

Activities for students

- Create a stencil using the silhouetted shape of an object. Use your stencil to create an artwork exploring positive and negative space. You might choose to experiment with media other than paint.
- Use a fine, powdered material like flour or sand to sift over arranged objects or stencils.
- Experiment with powdered materials using doilies or lace fabric as your stencils. What patterns and pictures can you create?
- Consider other materials you might use in your art making. How might you recycle materials you would ordinarily throw away?
Ryan Presley

watercolour on Arches paper
100 x 75 x 3cm each
1-4 series Blood Money (Dundali, Bembulwoyan, Waloa, Oodgeroo)
**Artist details**  
Ryan Presley  
b.1987, Alice Springs, NT  
Griffith University (GU)  
Bachelor of Fine Art (First Class Honours)

**Artist statement**
Given that money plays such a crucial role in every facet of day-to-day life, it holds an assumed intrinsic value that is deeply integrated with wealth and ownership. This value stands as a visible symbol of sovereignty that often goes unquestioned. The *Blood Money* series probes the assumptions promoted by currency in the Australian context. An analysis of the link between the economies of Australia versus the non-monetary economies of Aboriginal Australia is presented and investigated. This centres on revisions of bank notes that promote Aboriginal people who embody strength, defence, struggle and pride. Moreover, this series is centred upon the design and role of money as part of the Australian contemporary, 'post-colonial' milieu. Watercolour was used because of the medium's attractive appearance and its similarity to ochres in aesthetics and application.

A descendent of dual heritage, my focus is kept on identity and repatriation of knowledge and culture. This involves a questioning and negating of experienced historical to contemporary contexts. Having been born in Alice Springs, I have always experienced a de-centering from traditional homelands whether European (Danish) or Aboriginal (Jongmin). Recognition of Aboriginality is through my father’s family. This descent originates from the Moyle River region (Peppimenarti/Port Keats, Northern Territory). This background is a driving influence in relation to my inquiry into Australian values and standards and I scrutinise how it has been constructed and maintained over its short (European) history. I’m interested in the mainstream-Australian psyche, its influence/s and effects. I make responsive work for reasons of personal curiosity and catharsis and as a means of better understanding, in order to act and counteract in ways which are most beneficial for the community and myself.

**Questions for students**
1. How do you think Presley aims to affect viewers of his *Blood Money* series?  
2. Discuss the concepts behind Presley’s work in relation to his chosen medium; watercolour.  
3. Research the four figures Presley has chosen to depict in his *Blood Money* series. What values do you think he was considering when he made these choices? Research the figures who are currently depicted on Australian currency and consider the values implicit in these choices.  
4. Present an argument for a figure (of your choice) to be depicted on an Australian banknote in 2011. List the attributes, qualities and achievements of this person that led to your choice.  
5. What do you believe to be innovative about Presley’s artwork and/or his artistic practice?

**Activity for students**

*Create a banknote*
- Create a new design for an Australian banknote of your choice.  
- Present an argument as to why you would remove the current figure depicted and replace him or her with your selected person.  
- Choose your media with which to create your design. You could consider drawing with ink, with textas, painting with oils, acrylics, printmaking with a variety of inks or using textiles other than paper.  
- Exhibit your work. Consider a variety of ways to present your work in order to maximise viewer engagement.
GOING PLACES (2010)

Stephen Genovese
shoes, batteries, wheels, DVD
1 minute video, 15 minute live performance
**Artist details**

Stephen Genovese  
b.1981, Perth, WA

Central Institute of Technology (CT)  
Advanced Diploma in Visual Art and Contemporary Craft

**Artist statement**

The work comprises nine black business shoes placed on the ground in a 3 by 3 gridded arrangement. Each shoe has a hidden motor, batteries and wheels embedded into their soles. Upon activation the shoes begin to move frantically in tight one meter circles on the ground. The effect is a chaotic yet mesmerising pattern produced by the shoes which synchronise and run out of synch with each other at different moments whilst also gradually drifting away from their original location. The piece runs for approximately 15 minutes once activated, with the shoes eventually slowing down and completely stopping, one by one. The work deals with the repetitive cycle of the every day work routine, at the same time highlighting the absurdity of ‘business as usual’ in this current day and age.

Technology, the environment, humanity. These three themes relate to the core of my practice. With a background in engineering, I was always taught how to solve problems but never to ask why. My work seeks to ask questions while at the same time merging, melding and reusing concepts and materials that are often overlooked in our day to day lives. The goal of my practice is to engage with the viewer on current social and political issues using media which is most relevant. I like the pieces/performances to actively interact with the viewer, whereby making the audience complete the work. I draw upon the concept of Relational Aesthetics where the audience is viewed as a community rather than an independent being interacting in a private space.

**In conversation with the artist**

**How do the formal, stylistic and technical elements contribute to the function or meaning/s in your work?**

In terms of form, I think the general repetition of black office shoes along with their minimal setting help reflect the monotony of everyday life. The constant yet overall chaotic movement, and eventual slowing down of each shoe, adds to this while also highlighting the excitement that our working lives take on. On the other hand the repetitive movement and eventual slowing down of each shoe reinforces the fact that no real progress is really being made.

**Comment on your use of the elements and principles space, rhythm, pattern and movement in Going Places.**

The use of space in my work is important, with the shoes being on the same level as the viewer. This I feel provides a strong connection with the viewer as well as makes the piece more interactive too. Pattern and rhythm are present in the piece with the random synchronization of moving shoes, general hum of electric motors and repetitive motion of each shoe adding to the effect. The movement in the work, either through the video or physical shoes moving in circles, is critical as it reflects the everyday distractions we are presented with, while also embodying the monotony that lies beneath.

**With regard to Going Places, what effect would you like it to have on its viewers?**

Ultimately I would like it to encourage people to take a look at their lives and question whether what they are doing is really making a difference to themselves and the world around them. Are they really “going places”? With different social and cultural backgrounds, the viewer’s responses will most likely change – in fact I believe it is very difficult to make artwork that is “one concept fits all”. In terms of challenging any particular views, it would be great if this piece could challenge the views of the more conservative, “business as usual” type.
How evident or present are your personal beliefs and values within your art?

My personal beliefs and values are heavily embedded in my art. A quote from the late artist Ben Shahn (Lithuanian-born American artist) sums it up:

"I’m interested in life, and only in art in so far as it enables me to express what I feel about life… I feel that the painters who can... concern himself with a bowl of pansies or pure abstractions is dodging issues and is afraid to participate in life around him."

Name a few artists or other practitioners who have influenced your practice.

Agnes Denes, Francis Alys, the art collective Superflex and all the invaluable lecturers and staff at the Central Institute of Technology.

Questions for students

1. When viewing Going Places, viewers look down at the work. Do you think Genovese’s intention was to encourage viewers to look down at the shoes as they would their own? How would readings of the work change if it were recontextualized from a gallery to another, possibly more public space?

2. Discuss Agnes Dene’s intention to comment on “human values and misplaced priorities” (through her 1982 work Wheatfield – A Confrontation) with reference to Genovese’s Going Places.

3. Compare and contrast themes in Genovese’s work with Francis Alys’ Barrenderos.

4. Discuss Genovese’s Going Places with reference to the following quote:
   “In order to maintain our way of living, we must tell lies to each other, and especially to ourselves.” Derrick Jensen, Endgame: Volume I: The Problem of Civilization.

Activities for students

- Read Endgame Volumes I and II by philosopher and author Derrick Jensen and discuss its concepts in relation to Genovese’s work.

- List the routines you regularly undertake in your day to day life. Use items from your list as stimulus for art making. Consider using different media. Once you have made a work, try transforming it into another art form e.g. from a sculpture into a performance.

- Document one of your daily routines e.g. record yourself cleaning your teeth each morning (using video and/or audio). Add a personal comment each day. It could be as simple as something about the weather, or it could be a goal you have for the day; what you hope to achieve. If you recorded this routine at the end of the day, you could list the day’s high and low (the best and worst things that occurred).

- Create a list of routines that you see others undertaking in their daily lives. Share your list with your fellow classmates. Choose one that you would like to see changed. Make art works that have this idea as their focus.

- Create a floorplan drawing of your house. Each day for one week, draw the paths you take as you move around your house. At the end of the week, compare your drawings. You could also use your drawings as a form of choreography; using the patterns you have created as a guide for a new movement-based work.
Teagan Hunter

thread on silk organza
**Artist details**

Teagan Hunter  
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University of Wollongong (UoW), NSW  
Bachelor of Creative Arts; Major: Visual Arts

**Artist statement**

*Transcend* consists of 36 embroideries, each depicting famous photographs from various political and social moments that have transcended their original times and places, becoming important images in the public memory (such as the Vietnam War and the Great Depression). These and other well known photographs have become increasingly ubiquitous with the phenomenal amount of information shared through the internet. Has the easy access to these images meant that the original significance is lost on younger generations? Through hand embroidery, the images are presented in a form that people will be inclined to examine more closely. The images were ‘sketched’ directly onto silk organza using black and blue thread - no guide lines were drawn in pencil or other medium. The work combines photography and embroidery as a way of exploring the past.

My work predominantly examines memory; remembering and forgetting, through different textiles processes. Often my work is intricate, using time consuming processes to explore concepts and ideas. I am using embroidery as a way of painting and embroidery as a way of sketching on fabric. My work often consists of many smaller parts that come together to form one large work; yet all of the smaller parts often have the ability to stand alone. I am interested in the visual idea that small intricate works can come together to form large, monumental works.

**In conversation with the artist**

Describe your approach to art making. Do you begin with an idea, a concept, an issue, or do you start by exploring materials and/or processes?

I usually begin by exploring and experimenting with materials and processes that interest me, and from there develop my concepts to explore using those processes.

Did you undertake your usual process in making *Transcend*? How does this work sit within your more broad ‘body of work’?

For the most part, yes. This work is a continuation and refinement of my previous work. For that first work, I began by looking at artists that interested me, and explored the processes and materials that they had used.

How do the formal, stylistic and technical elements contribute to the function or meaning/s in your work?

I consider my work to be both drawing and textiles. Using embroidery is important in my work - it is a very tactile and time-consuming medium in which to work. It is important that it is so time consuming - people appreciate work they know has taken a long time to create (which unfortunately isn’t as obvious with some other processes). Embroidery is also (generally) highly aesthetic. These qualities of embroidery mean that people generally spend time to look at works that are embroidered. In my work, this is important - if people spend time looking at my work they will hopefully recognise some of the photographs I reference.
Comment on the three art elements & design principles that you feel you have used most prominently in *Transcend*.

**Line** is the most prominent element in my work. The images are essentially sketched with thread, and every thread creates a line. **Colour**, or lack of colour is also evident. The only colours present are black and blue, being biro colours. This reinforces the style of sketching, but also creates a sense of **harmony** across all the images. As there aren’t any colours in any of the images to create a focal point, they are all equally important. Lack of colour also creates a quieter mood.

My earlier works were embroideries based on personal photographs, such as this work:

I experimented with different fabrics and threads, some patterned fabrics, and often using the thread to “colour” areas of the embroidered drawing. One of the pieces was embroidered on tulle and the stitches appeared to float, and looked less like stitch and more like an ink drawing. I explored these materials further in my current body of work. I also started working with famous photographs in an effort to expand my audience beyond friends and family, who had engaged strongly with the works that were based on my personal photographs.

**How do you envisage your work within the context of contemporary arts in Australia, or in the world? Would you call your work (or elements of it) postmodern?**

There is definitely appropriation in my work, so yes I would call it postmodern. Embroidery has been making a comeback in art across the world, and contemporary embroideries from across the world have been huge influences on my work.

**Name a few artists or other practitioners who have influenced your practice.**

Questions for students

1. Some viewers consider embroidery to be a medium of craft rather than art. Discuss Hunter’s work with reference to the craft/art debate.
2. Hunter considers her artwork to be drawing and textiles. Discuss her use of colour and line in these two art genres.
3. Compare and contrast Hunter’s *Transcend* series with the work of Darrel Morris and Shizuku Kimura. Investigate their use of materials and processes as well as the concepts driving their work.

Activities for students

- Curate a series of photographs that show significant event/s from your life. They could be a series of birthday photos or they could all be from one event.
- If you do not have much experience in embroidery, sketch your ideas on paper first.
- You might try making your embroidery look as similar to your drawing as possible.
- Experiment embroidering with a variety of media until you find the most suitable and appropriate to your ideas. Some materials to try include rubber, vinyl, soft plastic, household recyclables, old clothing and accessories as well as paper and fabrics.
- Try using threads of various thicknesses for different effects. You could also try using wire.
- Consider how your use of colour impacts on the work.
- Experiment with a variety of methods of presentation of your work. Hunter’s work is pinned to the gallery wall. Consider other options for engaging your viewers’ attention.