Perth Cultural Centre

Non-Permanent & Ephemeral

Public Art Project
Public art helps to bring vibrancy, character, and creativity to our city. This public art program has focused on ephemeral and non-permanent artworks in the Perth Cultural Centre, an open public space that was seeking to redefine itself.

This pilot project, a collaboration between the Metropolitan Redevelopment Authority (formerly East Perth Redevelopment Authority) and the Department of Culture and the Arts, was, for this location, deliberately ambitious.

Pivotal to the success of the project was the engagement of a professional curator who selected local, national and international artists to respond to the space in a fresh, spontaneous and site specific manner. The project responded to a brief of activation and engagement in line with State Government plans for revitalising the precinct.

Fifteen innovative and explorative art installations were commissioned from a variety of art practices that included digital projection, sound and light sculptures, performance works and sculptural installations. Audiences were invited to view art outside the confines of a traditional gallery and engage with some original and interactive experiences. The Perth Cultural Centre is a unique environment that houses many of our cultural institutions and attracts a diverse mix of people from within and outside Western Australia.

This project enabled people to appreciate the artworks during daylight hours and at night, enlivening the space, generating enquiry and inviting participation.

I hope you enjoy this catalogue.

John Day
Minister for Planning, Culture and the Arts
The role of public art is a contentious one precisely because it inhabits the public space, where it is open to a range of opinions on who it is for and what its function should be. Urban planners and the public alike have varying views on what should be placed in the spaces that people inhabit.

The history of public art traces a range of shifting attitudes - the 1960s saw the erection of artworks unrelated to the site, by artists who didn’t value the idea of visiting a site to inform the work; the late 70s saw the move to align public art with the production of public amenities, bringing it closer to architecture and environmental design; in the 80s the success of the work was measured on its ability to disappear into the site in the form of street furniture or architectural elements (bridges, walls, stairways, etc.). More recently we’ve seen examples of public art as spectacle and also an investment in works that define the identity of a city with the aim of encouraging cultural tourism. Overall what is significant is that public art has the ability to speak about the identity of a place; the type of artwork in the public sphere, or in some cases the absence of it, can communicate broadly the actual or projected identity of a place.

As a pilot project, the program of ephemeral and non-permanent public art in the Perth Cultural Centre provided the opportunity to test ways of addressing the space with the aim of bringing interest and diversity to the site while simultaneously showcasing the cultural vitality of Perth. The overriding curatorial premise of this project was to bring critically relevant contemporary art to the public spaces of the Perth Cultural Centre and to engage artists and artworks that reflect the contemporary artistic landscape of Australia as well as including international voices. Artists were invited to engage with the physical, cultural and social identity of the site through both existing and new work. The aim was not to try and find work that would offer a ‘solution’ to the question of the representation of the Perth Cultural Centre, but rather to offer a series of diverse scenarios, take divergent slants and offer multiple points of view on the site.

By definition ephemeral public art is connected to immediacy and change. As such it has the ability to generate more dynamic and relevant responses to a site than in permanent work, which, as seen in some monuments and commemorative statues, becomes invisible through its inability to keep up with the changing face of society. This program was shaped to invite projects that provided a spectrum of approaches to the site - projects that lasted for four weeks and ones that had the duration of only one hour; that activated the space during the night and the day; that ranged from contemplation to participation; that created a spectacle; provided a quiet moment in the space; that appeared unannounced and asked to be discovered by walking throughout the site; that made novel use of the space and those that interacted with the cultural institutions at the site.
These varied approaches have the ability to connect to diverse audiences. The project looked to engage people who use the space daily as well as occasional visitors to the site and tourists. It aimed to provide experiences that could make people think differently about the space, that disrupted their regular use of it, that challenged or entertained and that provided something out of the ordinary.

The program sought to present a series of ideas on an engagement with public space that confirmed the relevance of ephemeral and non-permanent public art. It aimed to present meaningful responses to the site and interactions with audiences, to activate the space and communicate the vitality of the cultural environment of Perth.

Consuelo Cavaniglia
Project Curator
Non-Permanent & Ephemeral

Projects
The first in the program, Carl Scrase's project was one that made an immediate and audacious visual impact in the central grassed area of the Perth Cultural Centre. At 10 metres in height the gigantic white inflatable sculpture was a striking and unexpected sight. Implausible in its scale, the oversized hand dwarfed the buildings around it and in keeping with Claes Oldenburg's famous oversized soft sculptures, became both a surreal and humorous addition to the site. Yet unlike Oldenburg, the giant hand is more concerned with the meaning of gestures rather than the rendition of everyday objects and here the two fingers up are both friendly and mildly irreverent as the gesture flips between the 'peace' and 'up-yours' sign.

Connecting to the language of fairgrounds and festivals through the use of a giant inflatable, Scrase's work has its origins in a gesture made by hundreds of hands held up high at concerts. Originally developed through the Splendid program (run alongside the Splendour in the Grass music festival, Byron Bay, Australia), the "Generative Power of Opposites" takes this common gesture as a way of looking at collective actions. In more recent work Scrase has extended this to consider demonstrations and the power of collective sentiment and action.

In keeping with its festival origins the work also tied in with significant events held during the exhibition period that included Fringe World (Perth's fringe festival) and the Perth International Arts Festival. A playful and energetic work, the giant inflatable hand became like a waving beacon that visitors to the site were drawn to - with cameras in hand.

Thanks to the Splendid Program and Lismore Regional Gallery for their assistance with this project.

**Artist Statement**

My generation has seen both the peace and punk movements fail before us, we became disheartened, and we have been entrained in the belief that we can’t effect change. But we are remobilising, from Tahir Square to Wall Street, people are participating in what I am framing as the greatest social sculpture ever. We can sense a new way, we have new tools for mass communication, we are co-creating from the ground up using direct democracy.

The work is about transcending oppositional perspectives, finding a third way, not through argument but through acknowledgement, communication and empathy. It is all about recognising that others have different perspectives than you, and that is great.

**Biography**

Carl Scrase (born 1983) is a Melbourne-based contemporary artist who has exhibited widely around Australia and overseas, and is represented by John Buckley
Gallery in Melbourne, but his work is notably cross-disciplinary with a focus on projects that are not necessarily suited to a gallery setting. Scrase has received various awards and grants for his multi-disciplinary work, including the New Work Grant by the Australia Council for the Arts, the City of Melbourne Presentation Grant, the St Michael Art Prize, Freedman Foundation Scholarship, CAL Cultural Fund and the Michael Schwarz Travel Award. In 2012 Scrase undertook a residency at the world renowned SymbioticA, an art/science biology laboratory in Perth.

“Generative Power of Opposites” (2009)
28 January – 7 February, 2011
(canvas inflatable, blowers, water weights, 1000 x 700 x 700cm)
“Bomb da Site” peppered the Perth Cultural Centre with artworks over a period of almost three months. From a series of banners, to a run of posters pasted up sequentially on the single poster bollard at the site, and finishing with a mirror vinyl text piece – the work launched a silent invasion of the space.

Hunt’s text work finds its origins on the street and in popular culture; fragments of signs, number plates, popular speech, song titles, writing on walls – words that are at times misread and half-remembered. The artist’s collection of words is re-worked into texts that are open-ended and ambiguous. In the gallery these take form as discretely sized works on paper but in the public space these unlikely combinations of words confounded visitors to the site - becoming an expected form of signage and advertising, using paper posters, adhesive vinyl lettering and banners yet delivering an altogether different message. Indeed passers-by were seen taking a second look and stopping, in a puzzled and amused manner, to try and decipher the meaning of words like ‘cut snake’ and ‘deep freeze’ within the context of the site.

“the work refers to the functions of the institutions within the cultural centre. The texts can seem incongruous but they act to build upon each other”

The project saw Hunt test varied approaches to the site, trying out different texts and applications, working off responses from audiences, teasing reactions out of the passer-by, all the while applying a subtle yet insistent hold on the site. The work tested expectations and threw up a series of questions on the placement of text in public spaces and how we absorb it, who places it there and how it mediates our experience of the world.

Artist Statement

In 2004, while on residency in Switzerland, I made a work titled, “Everywhere, Always, Today, Was.” The work was a large foam text work that read ‘Centre of Everything’. I was able to move these words around and position them at will. The work was made in response to the overwhelming notion held by the Swiss that they were the “Centre of Everything”. I found the idea disturbing and I continue to think about it.

The work created for the Ephemeral and Non-Permanent Public Art Project therefore follows this line of critique. The location of the work is the Perth Cultural Centre and, as the name implies, the Perth Cultural Centre is deemed to be the epitome of Western Australian culture. It is within this framework – the ideologies of Centre, of Excellence, of Knowledge, of Collection, of Expertise – that my work situates its critique.

By introducing text into the site, the work refers to the functions of the institutions within the cultural centre. The texts can seem incongruous but they act to build upon each other, teasing the viewer into thinking about possible contexts concerning where they are and who they are, both in a contemporary sense and an
historical sense. “We are not where we are going, but where we have been.” I aim to engage people in a way that validates their own life experiences. I believe this build-up of experience, of language both in the form of the individual and the institution are of equal importance. Within this framework there is no ‘Centre’. 

**Biography**

Perth-based artist Matthew Hunt (born 1967) is a conceptual artist working largely in prints, drawing, painting and sculpture. Hunt has exhibited extensively throughout Australia, including at Dianne Tanzer Gallery + Projects, and Gertrude Contemporary Art Space in Melbourne, Museum of Contemporary Art in Sydney, the Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts, Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery, Turner Galleries and the Art Gallery of Western Australia in Perth; he has also exhibited internationally at Govett-Brewster Art Gallery in New Zealand, Kunsthau Baselland and Frontstore in Switzerland and Gitte Weise Gallery in Germany. He has won several awards for his work, including the WA Printmakers Association Competition in 1995, a New Work Grant from the Australia Council for the Arts and a Mid-Career Fellowship from the Department of Culture and the Arts, both in 2009. His work is held by several public and private collections including the Art Gallery of Western Australia, Artbank, Curtin University, Murdoch University, City of Perth and the Kerry Stokes Collection.

“**Bomb da Site**” (2011)
9 March – 27 May, 2011
(hand-painted banners, hand-painted paper posters, adhesive vinyl, dimensions variable)
“These objects then brought up a series of questions about nurturing, protection, defence and control of the natural environment.”
Dotted through the Urban Orchard, Bevan Honey’s birdhouses and animal traps sprung out of the leafy green landscape in bright fluorescent colours – pink, orange, green, blue, yellow – drawing viewers in to investigate further on what these conspicuous objects were that appeared, unannounced, at the site.

Disturbed by the traps and delighted by the birdhouses, visitors were perplexed by the nature of the engagement with animal life that these objects suggested. The bright colours and placement rendered both ineffectual; the traps were too obvious to ensnare animals, and the birdhouses drew attention to the birds they intended to house rather than protect them through camouflage. These objects then brought up a series of questions about nurturing, protection, defence and control of the natural environment.

“PUSHMEPULLYOU IN UTOPIA” extended from Honey’s previous work, which has consistently been concerned with architectural structures, particularly in relation to the domestic space. The traps and birdhouses were sculptures that set against the backdrop of the city buildings were easily read as miniature versions of architectural constructions. In his handling of these forms through design and function Honey intended to hint at the aesthetics of modernist architecture, a particular interest that has influenced much of his work, and by extension considers the utopian ideals of modernism in relation to the space of the Urban Orchard – a space that is ordered, controlled and idyllic.

**Artist Statement**

Located in the Perth Cultural Centre, the Urban Orchard can be seen as an attempt to introduce a structured version of nature to the urban environment, and lends itself to discussions surrounding urban habitation, pre and post colonial survival strategies, places of exchange, and Perth as a business centre. The idea is to place a number of brightly coloured rudimentary animal traps around the orchard, in conjunction with a number of birdhouses mounted to existing light poles.

Together the works can be read on many levels; the bright fluorescent colours of the trap seduces the viewer into focusing on aesthetic concerns and sculptural potential of their forms in relation to the built forms of the orchard, whilst denying them the camouflage needed for their intended function. In parallel, the birdhouses will also employ a modernist aesthetic, relating to the structural order of the orchard and our own urban dwellings. Similar to the traps, they will also be brightly coloured denying them any camouflage from predators, and although they will remain functional as potential homes for birds, they will ultimately also fail. The intersection of the two elements for this project is the tension between the destructive nature of the traps and the nurturing aspect of the
birdhouses - that is to say that the traps themselves become a point of nurture (for human consumption/control) and birdhouses themselves can be considered as some form of trap (for taming/controlling nature).

**Biography**

Fremantle-based artist Bevan Honey (born 1968) has exhibited nationally including solo shows at the Monash Faculty Gallery in Melbourne, Galerie Düsseldorf, the Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts, Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery in Perth, Canberra Contemporary Arts Space in ACT, and the inaugural exhibition at the Tinsheds Gallery in Sydney. A significant element to his practice is art in public places including the Bon Scott Project at Fremantle Arts Centre and an ephemeral installation of drawings on the lawns of Parliament House Canberra for the Canberra Biennial of Art and Architecture. Honey has won awards and commissions throughout Australia including the Mark Howlett Foundation Commission in 2008, the Joondalup City Art Award in 2002 and the Fremantle Print Award in 1993. Honey has works in various private, state and institutional collections throughout Australia, including the National Gallery of Australia, Art Gallery of Western Australia, Art Gallery of South Australia, Artbank, Curtin University, Edith Cowan University and The University of Western Australia.

“**PUSHMEPULLYOU IN UTOPIA**” (2011)
8 August – 25 September, 2011
(plywood, acrylic paint, wire animal traps, dimensions variable)
Bennett Miller’s project started as a residency at the Western Australian Museum - Perth, where the artist was given the rare opportunity to access the main parts of the building as well as the mysterious rooms that are off-access to the general public - including the courtroom, holding cells and partly walled-off rooms in what was Perth’s old gaol. In these spaces Miller encountered decommissioned exhibits, vacant vitrines, display cabinets and improbable half rooms, all of which led the artist to consider the museum as both a place that holds information and a device used to display, present and communicate this information to an audience. The residency was intended to serve as an intense research time during which Miller would collect material - photographic, filmic and conceptual - to interpret into works which, once installed in the public open space of the Perth Cultural Centre, would manifest as small portals to the museum.

Taking the idea of the human nervous system Miller considered these portals as nerve endings connecting peripheral sensors back to the core system of the spinal cord - the museum. What was presented in the Perth Cultural Centre were small screens that showed various clips on perpetual loop. The screens, scattered across the site, behaved like black-framed vitrines that visitors would discover and peer into, like small windows to the museum or indeed vitrines holding specimens of the museum itself. The boxes created almost a trail that visitors would seek out – rather than advertising the locations the artist allowed the work to be discovered as people experienced the site. “NRVS SYSTM” connects to Miller’s ongoing interest in museums, zoos and other institutions that hold information and interpret the cultural, physical and natural world that we live in.

Generous thanks to the Western Australian Museum - Perth and staff for their support of this project.

**Artist Statement**

The nervous system is an organ system containing a network of specialised cells called neurons that coordinate the actions of an animal and transmit signals between different parts of its body. In most animals the nervous system consists of two parts; central and peripheral. The central nervous system of vertebrates (such as humans) contains the brain, spinal cord, and retina. The peripheral
nervous system consists of sensory neurons, clusters of neurons called ganglia, and nerves connecting them to each other and to the central nervous system.¹

“NRVS SYSTM” reinterprets this idea for the Perth Cultural Centre. Four black boxes spread throughout the site act as the (video) peripheral system, each containing a video of animal or plant. Each individual component responds to the aspect of the (cultural) central ‘system’ that it is located closest to. There are two boxes aligned to the Western Australian Museum – Perth building and one each for the Art Gallery of Western Australia and the Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts. Connections can also be made through observing the degree of movement in each image. These ‘signs of life’ refer not only to the individual components but to the (cultural) system as a whole.

Biography

Bennett Miller (born 1980) is a sculptor and installation artist based in Perth. Miller has been an active exhibitor throughout Australia for the last eleven years, showing major installation works at Meat Market, Bus Gallery, Gertrude Contemporary Art Spaces and ACCA in Melbourne, IASKA, Breadbox Gallery, the Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts and Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery in Perth, Chalk Horse in Sydney and Canberra Contemporary Art Space. Miller has won several residencies throughout his career; in 2006 he undertook a residency at the International Art Space in Kellerberrin where he presented the solo exhibition “Ed Devereaux” and in 2007 he was the recipient of an Australia Council for the Arts New Work grant, which resulted in a residency at Artspace in New South Wales and in 2012 undertook a residency at the Green Street Studios in New York City. His multi-disciplinary art projects have recently featured at the Next Wave Festival and NEW12 in Melbourne, the Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney and Ikon Gallery Birmingham.

¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nervous_system

“NRVS SYSTM” (2011)
31 August – 2 October, 2011
(metal boxes, mini LCD screen and DVD player devices, 4 digital video works (various lengths) on perpetual loop)
“The screens, scattered across the site, behaved like black-framed vitrines that visitors would discover...”
Laura Adel Johnson
“Marigold” (2011)
Vacant shopfront, Cnr William & James Sts, Northbridge

For “Marigold” Laura Adel Johnson took over a vacant retail space creating a striking light work, which animated the street. The placement of the work in the vacant storefront was intended to make use of a very visible site and provide access for the artist to a unique architectural space in which she could explore the site-specific potential of her work. In recent years Johnson has been developing a distinctive drawing style that involves using fairy lights to delineate a form. In “Marigold” she employs this approach again, this time drawing a female figure on a large temporary wall and stretching stray ends of the light string across the wooden floors, filling the space.

The work cleverly makes use of the display potential of the shopfront to connect to the street, and it is here that “Marigold” finds its daring as Johnson consciously places a reclining female figure within the mix of lights and activity of Perth’s main nightlife district. Elegant and lyrical, the figure distances itself from the more obvious value some of the area’s venues give to the female form, and instead holds its own, celebrating femininity in a work that curiously mixes window displays with votive shrines, bringing a transformative energy to the street.

The artwork was equally successful during the day unlit as it was at night, when the lights drew pedestrians to the window to take a closer look – while people at the traffic lights nearby leaned out of car windows to take in the entrancing artwork.

**Artist Statement**

In my recent work I have been inspired by cultural ceremonies and festivals that make shrines to venerate gods, saints and the dead. In particular I have been researching ‘El dia de los muertos’ (day of the dead), a Mexican holiday when people create shrines to commemorate the life of their loved ones. Adorned with candles, fruit and marigold flowers, these shrines are elaborate, entrancing and joyful tributes to family and loved ones.

Light has been a key element in my practice. In my most recent work I have chosen to represent and celebrate the female form, creating lustrous, glowing portraits. I am interested in representing the female nude as an empowered image, highlighting its delicate and elegant form.

In this two-dimensional light drawing I aim to make a ‘shrine-like’ installation that is a tribute to everyday beauty and intimacy.

**Biography**

Laura Adel Johnson (born 1984) is a Perth-based multimedia artist. Since 2004 she has exhibited in numerous Australian galleries including at The Moores Building Contemporary Art Gallery in Fremantle, the Perth Institute
of Contemporary Arts, Perth
Galleries and Breadbox Gallery in
Perth, and Chalk Horse in Sydney.
Johnson spent the earlier part
of 2008 working and living in
Omaha, Nebraska where she was
involved in a three-month residency
program at the Bemis Centre for
Contemporary Arts. Johnson also
spent six months in Brooklyn,
New York where she worked as an
assistant to an established New
York-based artist. Her work has had
considerable presence in online
blogging zines, including Sweet
Station, Mooks, PSFK, and She
Walks Softly.

“Marigold” (2011)
9 September - 9 October, 2011
(fairy lights, tape, dimensions
variable)
A one-off project, Huseyin Sami’s “Painting Machine no. 10 (Group)” offered a unique live experience to visitors at the site – the unusual structures and unexpected activity drew people in close to experience an electric and intimate performance that proposed a clever twist to what is commonly understood as the production of a painting.

The potential of paint as an active medium takes centre stage in Sami’s work and is constantly tested, stretched and provoked. The project in the Perth Cultural Centre has given Sami the opportunity to focus exclusively on the action of painting and its performativity – here the structure and physical set up in the public space are all geared for the performance of painting, which is an end in itself rather than being the action that then produces a work.

“Painting Machine no. 10 (Group)” sees the artist, and one assistant, pour paint from the top of the multi-tiered wooden structures allowing it to flow through. Members of the public lingered, taking delight in the materiality of the paint as they heard the rush of paint pouring and then watched the luscious globs drip from layer to layer. The ‘painting machines’ are structures that as the artist says, allow ‘the painting to paint itself’ – this is a playful approach to the production of art work that counters the sentiment of 1940s and 50s action painting or abstract expressionism, to which his work can clearly be linked. Sami’s work shows an obsession with painting and a willingness to explore it to its fullest in every which way possible.

Generous thanks to Ben Kovacsy, Brendan Van Hek and the Central Institute of Technology for their assistance with this project.

**Artist Statement**

My work questions the process of painting and its support structures by deconstructing and re-evaluating traditional methods of production and display. As a result my working methodologies explore old and new traditions, exploring the possibilities inherent in the painted process by playing with the definition of painting.

“re-charging existing visual languages of Abstraction, the conceptual parameters of Seriality and formal structures to present renewed and unexpected forms.”

Painting for me entertains the possibility of the impossible, the possibility of uncovering something, of re-charging existing visual languages of Abstraction, the conceptual parameters of Seriality and formal structures to present renewed and unexpected forms.

The working process that I undertake within the “Painting Machine” series relate strongly to ‘structured improvisation’, a process that incorporates chance and intuitive elements into its initial codes. It involves initiating the
activity of pouring, which explores how material can convey movement and challenge the norms of painted space and conventional paradigms. The series of “Painting Machine” structures fuse the performative and conceptual activities of painting into one process.

I have developed numerous activities that engage with making paintings, exploring the possibilities of potential outcomes and developing an idiosyncratic approach to my work. Within the “Painting Machine” series there is particular invested interest in the notion of employing a single process of pouring household paint as a method to produce paintings. The work becomes an investigation of polemics (chance and control) and practical experiments (cause and effect) within artistic production. It’s about playing with rules and boundaries, the conceptual, and transformation of existing parameters. The “Painting Machine” structure is presented as a model, for both public (performance) and private (studio) activity, renegotiating familiar traditional paradigms of painting and the space in which it is presented.

**Biography**

Sydney-based artist Huseyin Sami (born 1979) is known for his performative approach to painting and sculptural construction that explores the material supports of those disciplines. He has exhibited both in Australia and internationally, including at 4A Centre for Contemporary Asian Art, Sarah Cottier Gallery and Artspace in Sydney, Uplands Gallery in Melbourne, Galerie Perpetuel in Germany, Bell Street Project Space in Austria, and Zenshi Gallery in Japan. He has won several awards for his work including the Janet Holmes à Court Artists’ Grant in 2008, an Australia Council New Work Grant in 2008 and the CCA Contemporary Arts Centre Scholarship in 2006.

“Painting Machine no. 10 (Group)”
(2011)
5 November, 2011
11:30am - 12:30pm
(acrylic household paint, plywood, pine; four parts, dimensions variable)

All artworks courtesy and copyright the artist and Sarah Cottier Gallery, Sydney, Australia.
“an absurd take on a grass roots participatory democracy and an experiment to see how tug-of-war would fare as a replacement for current systems of governance.”
In their inimitable style the pvi collective took to the open spaces of the Urban Orchard in “resist: Perth Cultural Centre”, for a one-off performance and participatory work.

“resist: Perth Cultural Centre” is a work that has been staged previously (Santiago, Chile; Junee, Australia, Australian Performing Arts Centres’ Association conference, Perth, Australia) and in each re-staging takes a simple formula of public engagement to the specific context of the place where it is presented. The aim in the work in this case is for the people of Perth to voice their opinions on the public space of the Perth Cultural Centre within the framework of the artwork, which ties in physical performance with public expression of free speech.

pvi’s approach is to take on the very means of public control and management – its use of language, printed material, uniforms, actions – and to parody these within their performance work. Their performances are completely convincing, having the dual effect of generating a mild unease about their activities within the administrative bodies managing public sites (how far could this very organised collective go in pursuing freedom of speech?), and a vague sense of confusion and amusement on the part of the public about what and who has initiated this exercise in public engagement (are they really being asked to take part in a tug-of-war match in order to resolve issues of public concern?).

The outcome in the Urban Orchard on the day was a tightly delivered performance open to all, that was high energy and instantly engaging, entertaining, darkly humorous and with a grounding in genuine considerations on the state of contemporary society.

Artists’ Statement

“resist: Perth Cultural Centre” is a participatory performance work that invites audiences to step up and champion a cause using the ancient art of tug-of-war, which was historically used as a means of peaceful conflict resolution. Over the course of two hours, participants publically wage war one-on-one with the pvi conflict resolution team over a series of issues that the community feels passionate about.

The work is an absurd take on a grass roots participatory democracy and an experiment to see how tug-of-war would fare as a replacement for current systems of governance. Dilemmas and solutions were all sourced from members of the public with members of pvi spending one week on site conducting interviews with people, asking them what they want and need from the Perth Cultural Centre. Charged with the task of speaking to as wide a demographic of the population as possible, a final list of issues and possible solutions was collated for the tug-of-war contest.

Fifteen contests were held, dealing with such issues as the people vs.
shade; the people vs. liquor; the people vs. boredom; the people vs. entertainment; and the people vs. something big.

As the results are considered ‘legally binding under the ancient rules of tug-of-war’, pvi dutifully forwarded our results to Mr John Day, the Minister for Culture and the Arts, Minister for Planning and Minister for Science and Innovation for him to take into ‘consideration’.

pvi’s suggestions were passed on to East Perth Redevelopment Authority for their consideration in future planning.

**Biography**

Perth-based artist collective, pvi was co-founded in 1998 by artists Steve Bull and Kelli McCluskey. They are known for their playfully political actions, which they have performed throughout Australia and internationally, including at Biennale of Sydney, the Fremantle Arts Centre, Plimsolle Gallery in Hobart, Raw Space Gallery in Brisbane, Carlton Studios in Melbourne, the Adhocracy Festival in Adelaide, the Awesome Arts Festival in Perth, Galerie Weimar in Germany, Surge Festival in Scotland, and the Singapore National Museum.

**“resist: Perth Cultural Centre”**

(2011)
12 November, 2011
11:00am - 1:00pm
(performance, duration: two hours)
Paradoxically titled “Still Life,” Philip Gamblen’s new work commissioned for the Perth Cultural Centre involved a series of moving images. The work consisted of a number of videos that depicted objects but rather than being still, as the title suggests, these objects were animated in a series of projected vignettes that took them across the surface of the large Cultural Centre Screen, and onto various surfaces across the site.

Gamblen’s work has long been concerned with the activation of still objects and has seen various inanimate forms break into unexpected action – vibrating, breathing, emitting sounds – in what are often quietly humorous works. In “Still Life” a series of fairly ordinary objects are activated: an hourglass has sand flowing upwards, a flower extends through a robotic stem, a feather rotates slowly mid-air, creating elegant and mesmerising floating images that command the Cultural Centre Screen.

“...created a sense of magic in the space – objects levitated, feathers were pulled out of the side of a building.”

Gamblen’s deftness with electronics, film and projection saw him produce works that created a sense of magic in the space – objects levitated, feathers were pulled out of the side of a building. This is about special effects and illusions, where worlds are created within the flat space of a screening surface and in which, through a range of approaches from lo-fi to the technically complex, very common objects find themselves in an imaginary sphere. These unexpected visuals interjected into the activities of the festive season program that the artwork was imbedded into, creating unexpected, arresting, curious and humorous encounters for the crowds at the site.

**Artist Statement**

The video project “Still Life” is an attempt to examine the dialogue or relationship that we have with objects all the time without really thinking about it. Our entire physical existence revolves around interaction with objects, our lives are filled with ‘things’ and so it is ‘things’ that are the main players in the video.

This work might also be known under the more apt but oxymoronic title of “moving still life.” Rather than being a narrative, it is a collection of scenes and an observation of objects. Some are easily recognisable and others a little more quirky and distantly placed from our normal realm of identifiability, but each one displays or is affected by movement in some way or another. In reality everything exists in four dimensions, nothing is truly still; movement and our perception of time are intertwined and irrevocably linked.

The video projectors, the projection surfaces and the LED Cultural Centre Screen are also objects and as such are part of this equation.
The camera too is included in this category and therefore reveals itself in one scene. When we watch a film or video we are looking at a screen of some sort and not just at the content.

**Biography**

Perth-based artist Philip Gamblen (born 1964) works at the overlap between art and science in a variety of media. He has exhibited extensively throughout Australia and internationally, including at the Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts, Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery and Heathcote Museum and Gallery in Perth, Australian Centre for the Moving Image in Melbourne, TarraWarra Museum of Art Victoria, National Art Museum of China and ZendaiMOMA in China, the Biennial of Art and Technology in Brazil, ARCO in Spain, Eyedrum Gallery and Eyebeam Gallery in the USA and Ars Electronica in Austria, among many others. He has won many residencies, awards and grants, including a STAR residency in 2009, the Gunnery Residency in 2001 and the Ward Award in 1998. His work is held in several Western Australian collections including the Kerry Stokes Collection, Curtin University, Western Mining Corporation and Claremont School of Art.

"Still Life" (2011)
9-11 & 16-17 December, 2011
8:00-9:00pm nightly
(video projection, 14:36 minutes)
In the central space of the amphitheatre a group of people wearing headphones and MP3 players were seen shaking out their hands and arms – to loosen up and “shake off any apprehensions or negativity” – before skipping off across the Perth Cultural Centre. A soothing female voice asked the group members to look around and orientate themselves in the centre; to breathe and stretch out their spine. She led them to the waters of the small State Library of Western Australia pool to “cleanse sorrows and negative thoughts”; led them to skip and pirouette through the site and then finally join hands in a uniting circle dance under the glow of the giant Cultural Centre Screen. Here the disembodied voice of the audio-guide took form as a sultry woman who sang about deliverance from loneliness.

“The Dance of Death” is a humorous and ironic participatory work that crosses between guided tour, pseudo self-help session and instructional audio guide. Expertly produced and performed over a weekend, “The Dance of Death” is an existing artwork that was reviewed to respond directly to the Perth Cultural Centre. This is an entertaining work that references synchronised formation dancing, yet as the title suggests there is a darker underside to the work – one that indicates the complexity of ideas at the core of the artists’ work. This performance forms part of a broader body of work that explores the dehumanising character of crowds – consider for instance the unbelievable circumstances of the 1964 slaying of a young woman under the gaze of 38 people who watched, inactive, which gave rise to the term the “bystander effect.”

Generous thanks to the Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts for their support of this project.

**Artists’ Statement**

“The dance of death unites us all”
- Danse Macabre late-medieval allegory

“The Dance of Death” is an investigation into the dehumanising effects of the crowd and effect this has on individual behaviour. “The Dance of Death” places the audience within the work to decide whether formation dancing really is the greatest act of conformity and in turn death of the individual.

Jess Olivieri, originally from Victoria and Hayley Forward, originally from Goomalling, Western Australia, make rigorous work that opens up space for social critique and discussions around the ways space is inhabited, collectively and individually. “The Dance of Death” is part of a larger body of work that has, as its conceptual heart, the bloody murder of Kitty Genovese and the subsequent behavioural research that followed, in particular the Bystander Effect. The case of Kitty Genovese was the instigator of a shift in crowd theory, moving away from the fear of the rioting crowd, to an understanding of the disempowering effects that
a crowd can have when people take cues from each other and in effect becoming synchronised in inactivity.\textsuperscript{2} Dance of Death explores how we mediate our behaviour to fall in line with those surrounding us.

The moniker Parachutes for Ladies acknowledges the collaboration at play in the making and execution of the work. This framework is used to identify and collaborate with an often transient, site-specific community who gather under the collective name the Parachutes for Ladies, in the case of “Dance of Death” it is the participating audience who become the Parachutes.

Thanks go to Consuelo Cavaniglia, the Western Australian Government, Markela Panegyres, Jen Jamason and the Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts for their assistance on the West Australian iteration of “The Dance of Death” as well as Quarter Bread for their assistance on the Sydney iteration.

**Biography**

Jess Olivieri (born 1982) and Hayley Forward (born 1982) with the Parachutes for Ladies create works that span performance, sound, video, dance and installation, their practice investigates the social and cultural factors that influence how we inhabit public space. They have shown work at numerous venues including Queensland Gallery of Modern Art in Brisbane, the Campbelltown Art Centre (once in a solo performance and later in collaboration with the Sydney Chamber Choir), the Museum of Contemporary Art and Stills Gallery Australia in Sydney, West Space in Melbourne and the Perth Cultural Centre. They have participated in several festivals, including facilitating a 3 week residency for 10 South Australian artists at VitalStitix, Port Adelaide as part of the Adhocracy festival and the 2010 Next Wave Festival. Their work is held in major public and private collections and their practice has been supported by numerous organisations.

**“The Dance of Death”**

(Perth version, 2011)

16 - 18 December, 2011

(audio performance guide, duration: 30 minutes, total of five performances.)


\[2\] BBC Radio, Case Study, 7 May, 2008, Harold Takooshian
“Pressure/Compression” is a mesmeric work that is simply and elegantly executed. Depicting a soundless, pared-back scene showing a young man and woman in profile at either end of the large Cultural Centre Screen, the work created a slow, poetic moment for visitors to the site.

Elise/Jürgen’s practice is largely based on the idea of collaboration and they consider the full definition of this by touching on notions of dependence, support and rivalry. In “Pressure/Compression” the artists are the protagonists of a work that is based on a single, simple action. In the vein of Shaun Gladwell and Bill Viola the footage is slowed down to allow the consideration of each action – to take in the nuances of every movement.

In the work the artists join together in the effort of blowing on an unseen pile of powder, which rises at the centre of the Screen in white, billowing plumes. Seemingly a combined effort, as we continue to watch the work begins to take on a disturbing edge, and the violence in this simple act becomes apparent. The powder accumulates in the pair’s eyes and noses, becoming visibly uncomfortable for both and yet they continue to submit themselves and each other to this seemingly interminable and increasingly torturous task.

The work is subtle and multi-layered – it initially draws viewers in through its elegant aesthetics and then rewards extended contemplation through its breadth of reflection on the complexities of human sentiment, tied to the act of collaboration. Inserted into the Cultural Centre Screen program over a period of six weeks, “Pressure/Compression” was a distinctive viewing experience for visitors to the site.

Artists’ Statement

“Pressure/Compression” is a work originating from a series of video works entitled “Experiments in Convergence.” Within this series, we were interested in notions of synchronicity and how within a two-person collaboration the blending of identities and bodies can describe the subtle tensions that arise through bodily and non-verbal communication.

Working with the idea of breath as the ephemeral link between each other and our surroundings, we began to investigate at what point two separate entities appear to start working together, and what constitutes this possible convergence.

“.rewards extended contemplation through its breadth of reflection on the complexities of human sentiment...”

Having recorded our actions onto video, we began to discover how the mimetic use of another body provides a context to contrast different perceptual and experiential information, thus transforming our ideas of self and other.
Biographies

Elise/Jürgen [Elise Harmsen (born 1987) and Jürgen Kerkovius (born 1984)] are collaborative artists from Perth, Western Australia who are currently based in Sydney. Working with performance, video and projection, they experiment with the ways we communicate through these mediums and how they influence and affect our understandings of the corporeal body. Together, they have exhibited in a number of group exhibitions including at Interface Galerie, Dijon, France, Fremantle Arts Centre and the Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts. In September 2011 they were awarded the Artsource/Artspace Gunnery residency in Sydney. Both artists completed their Bachelor of Arts (Art) (Honours) at Curtin University in 2009.

“Pressure/Compression” (2007)
10:00am and 6:45pm daily
(single channel video, duration: seven minutes)
“you know the way” is a new work commissioned for the Perth Cultural Centre. Based on Robert Drewe’s novel “The Shark Net” (2000), the work considers the cultural history of Perth, and in particular how this is narrated through this celebrated novel.

Van Hek has long been influenced by literature and often makes reference to literary works either through titles or the ideas behind his work. Here he uses words either taken directly from the novel or that are an interpretation of it to develop a series of lyrical text works produced in bright yellow neon. In a continuation of his use of neon as a primary material and his distinctive use of text, “you know the way” uses the power of the written word and the visual call of neon signage to draw the audience’s gaze to the work, inviting them to literally read their way through the site. The audience therefore is mobile, moving through the site to locate each of the components and view the work in its entirety.

In a first for the Perth Cultural Centre this project draws together the main cultural institutions as partners in presenting an artwork. Simultaneously presenting text pieces in the windows of the State Library of Western Australia, the Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts, the Western Australian Museum – Perth and the Art Gallery of Western Australia, the work created a connection through the site between these institutions. It also connected the interior of the buildings and the exterior public space through the interface of the windows. Easily visible through the day the work came to full life at night when the gold of the neon shone across the site.

Grateful thanks to the Art Gallery of Western Australia, the Western Australian Museum – Perth, the Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts and the State Library of Western Australia for their support of this project. Thanks also to Write Light Neon for assistance on this project.

**Artist Statement**

Australian author Robert Drewe’s novel “The Shark Net” (2000) is his own personal account of growing up in Perth, Western Australia during the 1950s and 60s. In his memoir Drewe draws on a dark part of Perth’s history to talk about the sentiments of the place, its geographical make-up, location, isolation and loneliness.

Over recent years there has been much discussion about Perth’s development as a city and considerable attention given to building its cultural identity. Such issues as isolation and geographical distance have been raised as concerns and continue to be key in the way that civic spaces develop and are used by the public.

In recent years I have developed a number of projects that consider the development of Perth through its history and cultural identity. For
this project I have taken up a few key features of the city – geography, history, isolation and the future – to create a series of illuminated neon text works that have been installed in windows of the four main institutions in the Perth Cultural Centre; the State Library of Western Australia, the Western Australian Museum - Perth, the Art Gallery of Western Australia and the Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts - to generate a conversation that considers Perth’s cultural history, its separateness and isolation, and its future development. The texts are words chosen directly or are an interpretation of words from “The Shark Net”.

“...uses the power of the written word and the visual call of neon signage to draw the audience’s gaze to the work…”

Art Award in 2009, and was the recipient of the Artsource Gunnery Studio residency in 2007 and the International Studio and Curatorial Program New York residency in 2012.

“you know the way” (2011)
(yellow neon, clear acrylic boxes, dimensions variable)

Biography

Brendan Van Hek (born 1968) is a Perth-based artist whose work makes extensive use of neon, though he continues to span a variety of approaches including, drawing and installation. He has exhibited in galleries Australia-wide, including at Anna Schwartz Gallery in Sydney, Linden Centre for Contemporary Arts in Melbourne, Galerie Düsseldorf and the Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts in Perth, and Fremantle Arts Centre. Recent exhibitions have included “Some kind of love story,” a solo at Anna Schwartz Gallery in Sydney, “TarraWarra Contemporary 2010”, TarraWarra Museum of Art, Victoria, “NEW11” at the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art Melbourne and “remix” at the art gallery of Western Australia. He has won the City of Joondalup...
Where the blue of the night Meets the gold of the day, Someone waits for me.
WE MUST CULTIVATE OUR
“WE MUST CULTIVATE OUR GARDEN” is a work that has been shown previously internationally and that marks the first exhibition of celebrated Scottish artist Nathan Coley’s work in Perth. In each presentation of the work the choice of site is carefully considered, as the reading of the work is invariably affected by the context in which it is placed.

In the Perth Cultural Centre the green light text piece was installed on the roof of a small amenities building in the centre of the site - placing the work just in front of the Urban Orchard and utilising the city’s skyscrapers as its backdrop. In this context the work relates to the Urban Orchard yet also connects to the city and the entire Perth Cultural Centre and suggests that perhaps the cultivation needs to be of culture itself.

As Perth rapidly grows it is significant to consider what is fostered and developed within our environment. In its original context, as the last line in Voltaire’s Candide (1759), this sentence had various shades of meaning, yet in essence referred to the idea that that which is in front of you is what is most valuable and worth tending.

The text is open ended in terms of its intention yet the wording is very specific as the use of the words ‘we’ and ‘our’ makes everyone complicit and equally responsible – we are all in this together. The use of the word ‘must’ is also significant as it slants the sentence away from a suggestion or an invitation and instead charges us into action. Boldly positioned this highly successful work spoke both globally and specifically to regular users and to visitors to the site.

Thanks to Write Light Neon, Ron Hill Electrical, ADV Scaffold and the City of Perth for their assistance with this project.

“WE MUST CULTIVATE OUR GARDEN” is presented courtesy of the artist and Haunch of Venison (London).

Artist Statement

All of the text works I make are found from an existing source; from stories I have heard, popular song titles, radio programs or written texts. “WE MUST CULTIVATE OUR GARDEN” is a quote from the last line of the book Candide, written by French author Voltaire in 1759. It is commonly held up as a masterwork of the Enlightenment.

“WE MUST CULTIVATE OUR GARDEN” has garnered worldwide praise since first being conceived in 2006 and has been exhibited widely in the UK and Europe including Edinburgh, Paris and Stockholm.

Biography

Glasgow-based artist Nathan Coley (born 1967) investigates the social aspects of our built environment, working across a diverse range of media including public and gallery-based sculpture, photography,
drawing, and video. He has exhibited extensively worldwide including at The Fruitmarket Gallery in Scotland, the Centro Cultural de Belem in Portugal, the Westfalischer Kunstverein in Germany, Tate Britain in England, Haunch of Venison in Germany and England, Bergen Kunsthall in Norway and at the Folkestone Triennial in England. Coley was nominated for the Turner Prize in 2007 and has won numerous awards in Scotland, including the Artist Award from the Scottish Arts Council in 1996 and 2003, a Henry Moore Fellowship in 2001 and the RSA, Art for Architecture Award in 1997. Coley’s work is held by many collections worldwide.

“WE MUST CULTIVATE OUR GARDEN” (2006)
3 February – 2 March, 2012
(metal support and illuminated text, 50 x 1000 cm)
Transforming the Perth Cultural Centre “Siren” filled the site with engulfing sound and light, holding the space and its visitors captive nightly for a brief 10 minutes. The work was intense and exhilarating; it commenced unannounced and then proceeded to saturate the space with the growing intensity of singing voices.

A fleeting work, it surprised and delighted visitors in a momentary disruption of their routine experience of the space. Delicate, wistful and then tragic and dramatic, even grating, the sound work transported audiences, asking them to cast their thoughts to ideas of loss and recovery as explored through stories of the sea – people lost at sea, sirens calling men to their deaths, lighthouses warding ships away from dangerous coasts that would surely mean shipwreck. The installation of the work at the top of the clock tower of the Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts was intended to hint at the idea of a lighthouse – from there the sound work was projected, along with a lighting routine.

The work continues Costantino’s interest in stories and the re-telling of tales to destabilise their sense of logical narrative development. In “Siren” the story that shapes the libretto comes from a mix of threads, as the members of the choral group that Costantino worked with provided their own tales of loss and recovery as a starting point for the work. “Siren” brings Costantino together with Tim Cunniffe, who composed the music and mixed the final work, in a collaboration that generated an engaging work full of surprise and fantasy.

Grateful thanks to the Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts and staff for their support and assistance with this project.

**Artists’ Statement**

Nightly, as darkness fell, “Siren” temporarily transformed the landscape of the Perth Cultural Centre. Disembodied voices travelled on the night breeze, building into a flood of sound and harmony, while the Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts tower transmitted accelerating pulses of light. Both sound and light grew in intensity, reaching a frenetic pitch before fading back into stillness and silence.

This momentary and evocative work, activated at nautical sunset, loosely references the maritime symbols of the lighthouse, which guides lost ships away from a hazardous shore, and the siren, whose haunting voice lures sailors to their deaths. “Siren” plays on tensions between drowning and drying, loss and desire, memory and forgetting, consciousness and oblivion.

This sound installation was developed through a collaboration between artist Thea Costantino, composer Tim Cunniffe and a local choir, the Churchlands Choral Society. The choristers have shared
not only their voices but also their experiences in the creation of this work. Costantino developed the libretto based on the choir’s thoughts about loss and recovery, from which Cunniffe constructed “Siren’s” sound world, leading to an ephemeral and poetic reactivation of public space and an opportunity for pause and reflection in the night streets.

Biographies

Thea Costantino (born 1980) is an interdisciplinary artist based in Perth whose work explores a range of ideas related to the representation of the past. She holds a PhD from Curtin University, where she also works as an academic in the School of Design and Art. Costantino is a member of the collective Hold Your Horses, formed with Tarryn Gill and Pilar Mata Dupont in 2009. She is a recipient of the 2011 Qantas Foundation Encouragement of Australian Contemporary Art Award and the 2012 Artsource / Gunnery Artist Exchange Program, Artspace, Sydney. In 2013 she will be undertaking research at the Freud Museum London and Glasgow Sculpture Studios.

Originally from Busselton, Tim Cunniffe moved to Perth to study Classical Piano at the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts (WAAPA, graduating in 1994). During his third year he received a scholarship which enabled him to study with Frank Iogha at the State University of New York, and more recently studied conducting with Dobbs Franks. Tim has built a reputation as a leading conductor, accompanist, and Musical Director for theatre productions. His first major composition, the chamber opera “African Queen” was given its premiere performance at the Dolphin Theatre, The University of Western Australia, Perth, in March 2009, and his first musical “Some Kind Of Beautiful” was premiered in July 2009 by the Brainbox Project at His Majesty’s Theatre, Perth. He is currently based in Sydney.

The Churchlands Choral Society is a mixed choir of around 80 amateurs who sing a wide ranging repertoire including sacred music, songs from musicals, folk songs, jazz, world music, opera choruses and also major works like Fauré’s “Requiem" and Handel's "Coronation Anthems".

“Siren" (2012)
23 March - 15 April, 2012
7:00pm nightly
(sound, light and video duration: 10 minutes)
“the work came to consider notions of home from an Indigenous perspective”
This project made unprecedented use of the space of the Perth Cultural Centre by considering one of the most frequented areas at the site – the underground car park. Over a number of site visits artist Jonathan Jones considered the site in terms of areas of open access, dead spots, possible areas of shelter, and responded with a site specific work that was presented completely below ground.

“untitled (car parks)” consisted of three sculptural works, each taking up the full space of a car parking spot with a temporary structure that in its use of materials connected to temporary architectural structures and makeshift dwellings. The works were striking, glowing blue light sculptures – unexpected forms that surprised and delighted, placed in a functional site they disrupted the daily interaction with the site by hundreds of people.

These conceptually sophisticated works grew from Jones’ interest in temporary housing and the notion of ‘home’ more broadly – of refuge, of a place of origin and a way of delineating the place that you call home. This is all the more relevant when considered from the artists’ position as an Indigenous person. Indeed the work came to consider notions of home from an Indigenous perspective more pointedly as its presentation coincided with tension around a complex land claim over the State’s south west - which escalated in events at the tent embassy peacefully erected on Matagarup (Heirisson Island), Perth. These circumstances allowed the issues raised by this work, and Jones’ work overall, to be discussed more broadly; firstly in Clotilde Bullen’s insightful catalogue essay and then at the open public discussion held at the artwork’s launch.

Grateful thanks to Genevieve O’Callaghan, Clotilde Bullen, Kim Collard, Ben Proudfoot, Ben Kovacsy, Graeme Burge and Tonne Gramme for their contribution to this project. Thanks also to the City of Perth. This project was supported by the Sherman Contemporary Art Foundation, Sydney.

Artist Statement

This site specific artwork sheathes cultural patterns, as mapped out with fluorescent lights, in the banal and pervasive material of blue tarpaulin. The domestic components of the work and its temporary construction, which reference housing and accommodation, speak to displacement and concepts of ‘home’ and the ‘refugee’ – issues relevant to both a global and Australian, in particular Indigenous Australian, context. The physicality of the structure quotes the principles of ephemeral architecture where rules are bent, reinterpreted and broken to allow the construction of places like homes and shelters; this, in turn, also encourages the viewer to reimagine their own environment and reinterpret the concept of home for others.
“untitled (car parks)” (2012) follows principles of political and social engagement and quotes acts of protest and civil unrest to directly reference the Nyoongar Tent Embassy on Matagarup (Heirisson Island), Perth, and the Nyoongar Land Claim where the Western Australian Liberal Government seeks to extinguish Nyoongar native title. In this way “untitled (car parks)” draws upon recurring concerns, specifically the notion of creating a sense of ownership, and evokes a common memory by working with domestic materials, minimal form, and political moments. In doing this, it seeks to shift our understanding of place.

Biography

Sydney-based artist Jonathan Jones (born 1978), a member of the Kamilaroi and Wiradjuri nations of south-eastern Australia, is best known for his site-specific installation pieces, which explore Indigenous traditions, relationships and ideas of space. Jones has exhibited both in Australia and internationally, including at the “18th Biennale of Sydney; all our relations”; “unDisclosed: Second National Indigenous Art Triennial” in Canberra, and “Parallel Collisions: 2012 Adelaide Biennial of Australian Art”; Sherman Contemporary Art Foundation and Museum of Contemporary Art in Sydney, Palazzo Della Papesse Centro Arte Contemporanea in Italy and Winnipeg Art Gallery in Canada. He has won several awards for his work, including the New South Wales Indigenous Artists Fellowship from the New South Wales Ministry for the Arts in 2003 and the inaugural Xstrata Coal Emerging Indigenous Art Award from the Queensland Art Gallery in 2006. His work is held by numerous public and private collections throughout Australia, New Zealand and Canada.

“untitled (car parks)” (2012)
29 March – 29 April, 2012
(Aluminium, Perspex, fluorescent tubes and fittings, electrical cable and tarpaulin, three structures each 204 x 233 x 447 cm)
“...this work questioned how WA citizens understand themselves and their State in the light of history.”
Starting as a residency, this project saw Hayes and Forster presented with the unique opportunity to spend time in the State Records Office and access archives that hold records of the complete history of Western Australia since settlement - from personal histories to details of buildings and legislative charters. The State Records Office provided an unexpectedly rich resource for the artists - one that will quite possibly inform their practices well beyond the scope of this project.

The artists spent one month in the archives consulting records and being guided by senior archivists in their searches and investigations. The State Records Office proved as much an inspiration in terms of its holdings as in the means of storage. Hayes and Forster took this information out onto the space of the Perth Cultural Centre in the form of projections that essentially created a window into the archives, giving viewers a rare chance to see a selection of holdings. The artists skilfully recreated the sensation of flicking through records and pages and scanning across shelving, stopping at moments to focus on the black and white photographic portrait of a young man, a convict, or dwell on the portrait of the last woman to hang in Western Australia.

This project was a first for the State Records Office, providing the opportunity to work with artists and in turn see glimpses of the history of Western Australia externalised in the public space of the Perth Cultural Centre. The work gave audience members the sensation that they were momentarily transported into the archives through an engaging, thoughtful and rich artwork.

Generous thanks to the State Records Office and staff for making this project possible. Thanks also to the Art Gallery of Western Australia and the Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts.

Artists’ Statement

“WA 1828-1988: A Luminary Series of Records Played in Parallel” was created during an enriching four-week residency at the State Records Office. Passers-by experienced thousands of unique and thought-provoking records abruptly unfolding from the architectural façades of the Perth Cultural Centre.

This ‘expanded cinema’ work was constructed utilising a diverse series of documents sourced from the State Records Office, on a range of subjects from the political, through the bizarre, to the everyday. Examining the archives both aleatorically and through constructed narratives, this work questioned how WA citizens understand themselves and their State in the light of history.

This work was process-based on two levels. Firstly, in undertaking a residency at the State Records Office, we constructed a simple process for navigating the impenetrable volume of the State Records. Not wanting to narrow
ourselves to a single topic, but rather in an attempt to represent the entire archive, we asked each of the archivists to reveal to us their favourite items. From there we systematically documented and catalogued every item that was presented to us, creating our own annotated subset of the State Records. This raw documentation was to act as both a portrait of the archives as an institution, reflecting the interest of the people who make it function, and as a representation of the variety of the collection. Secondly, the resulting artwork is not the projected imagery but rather the active process by which the archives are revealed. It is a system that operates on the content of the archives and utilises the methodology of archiving in order to reveal content.

Biographies

Sohan Ariel Hayes (born 1975) is a Perth-based media artist working in the fields of ‘expanded and interactive cinema’, pervasive games, systems theory, locative media. Hayes has exhibited widely, including at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Sydney, Fremantle Arts Centre, the Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts and Goddard de Fiddes Gallery in Perth, Plimsoll Gallery in Tasmania, the Jerwood Gallery in London, TAV Gallery in Taiwan, and the Post Museum in Singapore. He has received several national and international awards for his work, including from the British Multimedia Industry Awards in 2002, Laval Virtual (France) in 2011, Atom Awards (Australia) in 2002, the Freeplay Independent Game Awards (Australia) in 2010 and in 1997 he received a nomination for Most Outstanding Patron of the Arts, Western Australia.

Benjamin Forster (born 1985) is a Perth-based artist, whose practice explores drawing, bringing together digital and biological technologies, installation and performance. He has exhibited and performed work throughout Australia, including at Canberra Contemporary Art Space, Fremantle Arts Centre, 24HrArt in Darwin, the Museum of Contemporary Art in Sydney, the Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts, Venn Gallery and Paper Mountain in Perth and eMerge Media Space in Townsville. He has been awarded several awards and residencies, including the Fremantle Arts Centre Print Award and SymbioticA Research Residency in 2010, Australia Council for the Arts New Work (emerging) Grant in 2011 and Department of Culture and the Arts Quick Response Funding in 2012.

26 April - 13 May, 2012
7:00pm - 10:00pm nightly
Multi-channel video installation playing endless permutations from a custom data visualisation program
The program of ephemeral and non-permanent public art in the Perth Cultural Centre generated 15 distinct projects over the course of an 18-month period. This meant a consistent engagement with the site and an almost uninterrupted exhibition season to engage the public.

The program successfully tested different approaches to the site by appointing artists who employ varied conceptual strategies and work across art forms. It proposed works that ranged from large sculptures, providing an element of surprise and even humour (Carl Scrase “Generative Power of Opposites”), to participatory works (pvi collective “resist: Perth Cultural Centre”; Parachutes for Ladies “The Dance of Death”), sound works (Thea Costantino and Tim Cunniffe “Siren”), works that dealt with the social history of the site (Jonathan Jones “untitled (car parks)”; Brendan Van Hek “you know the way”) and works that engaged the potential of the cultural institutions (Bennett Miller “NRVS SYTSM”; Sohan Ariel Hayes and Benjamin Forster “WA 1828-1988: A luminary series of records played in parallel”).

These projects engaged the public in a range of ways – through aesthetic encounters that are out of the ordinary, by involving them through participation, by changing the way they experienced the site and indeed disrupting the flow of their general use of the space. Jonathan Jones’ work in the underground car park for example,
disrupted the habitual action of a person who pointed out to the artist that he parked his car in the same spot every day. For one month that spot was occupied by a glowing blue sculpture, forcing him to reassess his actions in relation to the site. The program aimed to provide unexpected and stimulating encounters with artwork for audience members, to encourage a new sense of interest in how they experience public space.

The participating artists had the opportunity to access a vast range of viewers and garner new responses to their work. The program fostered the development of 10 new works. It provided local artists the rare opportunity to respond to their cultural centre, while national and international artists brought a range of voices to the space that went towards contributing to a discussion on culture in general and on the space of the Perth Cultural Centre in particular.

The ambitious nature of the programming established a number of ‘firsts’ for the Perth Cultural Centre - the first-time use of spaces for the presentation of artwork, such as the underground car park; the first artist residency in the State Records Office; and the first time collaboration by all the cultural institutions to simultaneously present an artwork. Significantly this sets up precedents that can lead to future projects, building on what was attempted within the parameters of this program. Future projects of course will also benefit from assessing the levels of success of the projects presented in this pilot and develop increasingly sophisticated and considered responses to the site.

The program overall activated the Perth Cultural Centre and initiated a number of relevant encounters with the site for both artists and audiences. It presented a model for engaging with a site that differs from a more common one based on permanency, allowing the engagement to be dynamic active and responsive to the changing nature of the site. The success of this program indicates the importance of supporting contemporary public art for the cultivation of art itself rather than for the more limited scope of promoting a site or a city - an investment in the cultural future of Perth.

This project was initiated by the Metropolitan Redevelopment Authority with support from the Department of Culture and the Arts; curated by Consuelo Cavaniglia in her role as Art Consultant with Artsource.
Acknowledgements

The curator would like to extend special thanks to
Art Gallery of Western Australia
Artsource
Central Institute of Technology
Marcus Canning
City of Perth
Eva Fernandez
Light Application
Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts
State Library of Western Australia
State Records Office
Urban Screens (formerly Circus)
Western Australian Museum – Perth
and the staff at the Metropolitan Redevelopment Authority and the Department of Culture and the Arts who worked on this project.

Photography
All photography by Eva Fernandez unless otherwise indicated below:
All photos of “Generative Power of Opposites” by Consuelo Cavaniglia.
Photos of Matthew Hunt’s “Bone to Pick,” “Blanket Ban,” and “Night Chemist” by Consuelo Cavaniglia;
Photos on pages 60-61 by Sohan Ariel Hayes; page 60 below right is from the State Archives: Cons 1820-2a, “Royal Commission to Inquire into the Treatment of Aboriginal Natives by the Canning Exploring Party,” 4 Jan 1907 ~ 25 Jan 1909, page 3, detail. Photo on pages 62-63 by Daniel High.

The State Government is committed to supporting people with disabilities. The information in this publication can be provided in alternative formats (large print, electronic or Braille) upon request.

If you are deaf, or have a hearing or speech impairment, contact us through the National Relay Service (NRS) www.relayservice.com.au:
TTY users phone 133 677 then ask for 08 6552 7300

Speak and Listen users
phone 1300 555 727 then ask for 08 6552 7300

Internet relay users
connect to the NRS
www.iprelay.com.au/call/index.aspx then ask for 08 6552 7300

For more information
Department of Culture and the Arts
+61 8 6552 7300
1800 199 090
(toll free country WA callers only)
info@dca.wa.gov.au
www.dca.wa.gov.au
PO Box 8349
Perth Business Centre WA 6849

Metropolitan Redevelopment Authority
+61 8 6557 0700
reception@mra.wa.gov.au
www.mra.wa.gov.au
Locked Bag 8
Perth Business Centre WA 6849