

THE LEVELer

SUMMER 2010/2011

A note from LEVEL

BNE-LA-LDN-NY-LA-BNE

I recently spent a short time in London, New York and Los Angeles at the end of last year. During this time I was fortunate enough to meet with Kat Griefen, the director of A.I.R. Gallery in New York. A.I.R. (Artists in Residence) Gallery was founded in 1972 as the first artist-run gallery for women in the United States. It was interesting to talk to Kat about the trials and tribulations of running an artist run space, discussing the current relevance and role of womens spaces within contemporary practice and ways in which these spaces can develop sustainable models and facilitate longevity. Although our structure at Level is quite different to A.I.R, we view them as an influential model that sustains a political awareness and voice through lectures, symposia and a Fellowship Program for emerging women artists, which strive to develop a new understanding to attitudes about women in the arts.

In 2011 we are looking forward to building on dialogues with women artists, curators and writers in a national and international context with some exciting exhibition projects including *Gathered in a Clearing*, featuring 8 LA-based artists, curated by CamLab and an exchange project with ARI six_a in Hobart when *The Holy Trinity* comes to town. There are some new faces at Level - as Nicole Beaumont, Felicity Sniekers, Candice Halfpapp and Launa Winship join our Volunteer Program and we welcome two members to the Level team, Anita Holtsclaw and Rachael Parsons. Anita was a founding member of Brisbane ARI Boxcopy and is currently completing her PhD focused on contemporary feminism and cinematic codes in screen culture. In 2011 Anita joins us as Events co-ordinator and will be organising a series of one-night events featuring performance, sound and video art practices. Rachael has recently completed her Masters at QUT exploring the potential of democratic curatorial processes within new media exhibitions and will be co-ordinating public programs at Level, building dialogues around gendered practice through artist talks and forums. This year we are also launching an emerging curator-in-residence program. Recent graduate Hilary Perrett, after taking part in our volunteer program in 2010, will be mentored at Level to curate a series of solo shows in the Project Space.

ALICE LANG

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IN THE GALLERY

I'm Okay, You're Okay

27 August - 17 September 2010

Agatha Gothe-Snape, Kate James, Sanja Pahoki

Curated by Alice Lang



L to R: Kate James *Pony Tales* 2009-10, Agatha Gothe-Snape *Major Major* 2009 and *Compass* 2008-09

I'm Not Okay - You're Okay¹ (the anxiety of creation)

It's a couple of days before the show opens, nothing is up, equipment still needs to be picked up, work still has to arrive and the essay isn't anywhere near completion. I spent the whole day yesterday driving around in circles; I bought some books because I felt guilty about using the bathroom at this bookstore without buying anything. One of them is about the lives of Hypochondriacs. That'll be an interesting read. But when do I ever have time to read?

I need to read more, improve myself. What if I learned Russian or something? Or took up an instrument? I could speak Chinese. I'd be the screenwriter who speaks Chinese and plays the oboe. That would be cool. I should get my hair cut short. Stop trying to fool myself and everyone else into thinking I have a full head of hair. How pathetic is that? Just be real. Confident. Isn't that what women are attracted to? Men don't have to be attractive. But that's not true. Especially these days. Almost as much pressure on men as there is on women these days. Why should I be made to feel I have to apologize for my existence? Maybe it's my brain chemistry. Maybe that's what's wrong with me. Bad chemistry. All my problems and anxiety can be reduced to a chemical imbalance or some kind of misfiring synapses. I need to get help for that. But I'll still be ugly though. Nothing's gonna change that.²

Nothing gets done. I'm starting to feel nauseous. A friend sends me a cute animation of a talking conch shell. Michelle the shell.

That makes me feel a bit better. Rather than working on the essay I spend the night drinking wine and watching TV. My friend Gerri tells me to make sure I eat a banana a day, that's supposed to be a good way to alleviate anxiety. Camomile Tea, Magnesium and some TLC. You'll be fine! Listen to some Cat Stevens Alice! Vodka and lots of it! *Do I really need to write this essay?* I'm not much of a writer. One of my lecturers once told me that when it came to writing essays I was a good short distance runner, good at sprints, but I needed to practice and train to be able to go the full distance of an essay, run the marathon. I haven't done much training in the time between now and then. As an artist, curating a show makes me a little anxious as well. A friend told me to approach it as an extension of my practice. *Can I even call this an essay? It's not academic enough. Maybe it's an article.* Courtney said to embrace it. It's Feminist. Feminism is about making things accessible. But let's not get into Feminism right now. When it comes to anxiety, that's a whole other ball of wax.

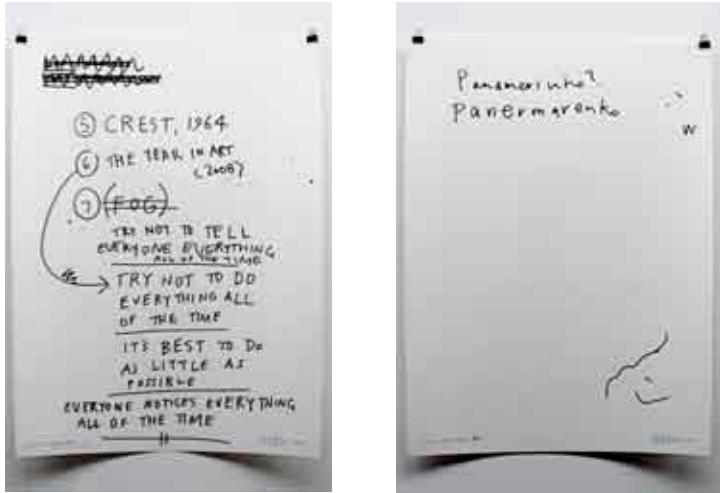
Okay, time to stop watching youtube clips and start writing.

To begin... To begin... How to start? I'm hungry. I should get a coffee. Coffee would help me think. Maybe I should write something first, then reward myself with coffee. Coffee and a muffin. Okay, so I need to establish the themes. Maybe banana-nut. That's a good muffin.³

The act of creation is often a source of anxiety as it brings with it the impending possibility of failure. Artists assume "a future-oriented mood state in which one is ready or prepared to attempt to cope with upcoming negative events".⁴ A component of Agatha Gothe-Snape's practice explores this relationship between anxiety and the creation of an artwork through documenting the inner dialogue associated with the early stages of planning a work. *Compass* (2008-09) is a series of prints that are reproductions of pages from her journal created in developing the work *Major Major* (2009). Shown alongside the completed projection, the process of making the work is folded into the subject matter of the work itself. The mind map contains a list of unedited fragments of ideas, not all of which were used in the final work. While it gives insight into the concepts that were developed in the lead up to making the work it does not necessarily give an intelligible explanation of them. These reproductions can be seen to reflect anxieties associated with the explanation and justification of an artwork. Mirroring the artists understanding of their work, as something layered, multiplicitous and not always easy to explain. Reflecting the anxiety of the general public in relation to the reading of a work of art and the subjectivity of art as a whole. When there is no wrong or right answer, this in itself can make some people anxious.

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The coping mechanisms become the concept of the work itself. The subjectivity of these statements enables them to relate not only to the creative process but also reflect universal feelings of anxiety in the viewer associated with everyday life. The viewer and the artist bond through their shared experiences of anxiety. *How do you balance time between your personal life and your art practice? Is it even possible to separate the two?*

By using the easily accessible low-fi program of PowerPoint to create the work, these statements are a mantra to which Agatha Gothe-Snape abides. She creates a new media work without the stress of malfunctioning equipment, non-compatible formats and corrupted files. Quick and easy. Keeping it simple. This ethos extends to the installation of the work. Projectors are often installed on the floor; screens lent up against the wall, whatever is easiest.

"TO MAKE ART I THINK, WHAT DO I HAVE? I HAVE MY CIRCUMSTANCES (A EXHIBITION IN A GALLERY), MY HISTORY (WHAT I HAVE DONE BEFORE, MY FAMILY HISTORY, MY ART HISTORY), MY EXPECTATIONS (WHAT CAN I DO, WHAT WILL THIS DO TO ME, WHAT WILL THIS DO TO THE WORLD?) AND MY FEELINGS (HOW DO I FEEL NOW IN THIS MOMENT?). I USE EACH OF THESE ELEMENTS TO CREATE A PROCESS (USING MY RULES AS A GUIDE) THAT PLAYS OUT IN THE CREATION OF THE WORK. THE WORK REALLY SHOWS ME WHAT TO DO NEXT. I NEVER REALLY KNOW WHERE IT WILL TAKE ME. I GUIDE IT WITH THE RULES. I WORRY AND FRET ABOUT IT. I DREAM ABOUT IT. I HAVE A FEW REVELATIONS (BIG STEPS) THROUGHOUT THE PROCESS. I PIECE IT ALL TOGETHER IN MY MIND. I WRITE ABOUT IT. I DRAW IT. I MAKE IT. I PAINT IT. I SIT ON MY COMPUTER USING POWERPOINT. I TALK TO BRIAN. WE DO SPINAL ROLLS. WE TRY TO RETURN TO THE BODY. I TRY TO BE CALM AND IN THE MOMENT BUT OFTEN THE SWIRLING THOUGHTS IN MY BRAIN DEFEAT ME. SOMETIMES I STOP TRYING. I READ ARTICLES, LOOK AT BOOKS. I TRY TO WORK WITH NOTHING. WITH ONLY WHAT IS THERE INSIDE ME. I MAKE DIAGRAMS AND MIND MAPS AND EMOTIONAL DRAWINGS OF THE TERRITORIES I AM MOVING THROUGH. I GO TO THE STUDIO. I ORGANISE WORKSHOPS AND SHOWS AND GROUPS. I FEEL TRAPPED IN IT AND I FEEL FREE IN IT. I KNOW ITS CONTRADICTIONS AND I NOTICE MY OWN."⁵

TRY NOT TO DO EVERYTHING ALL OF THE TIME and IT'S BEST TO DO AS LITTLE AS POSSIBLE are statements that form the content of the work *Major Major*. Projected in bold text, one after the other; they become mantras for the artist to manage stress and anxiety associated with the creation of the work.



Top Left: Agatha Gothe-Snape *Compass* 2008-09
Above: Agatha Gothe-Snape *Major Major* 2009

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I'm not Okay - You're not Okay (shared anxiety)

My brother-in-law used to have a blue heeler called Jack that was very protective. When he moved in with my sister and I, it took a long time for Jack to warm to me and accept me as one of the pack. Within that time there were a couple of close calls. I used to get really anxious whenever friends came around, stressing over and over not to go near Jack, don't even look at him. Even after I was accepted by Jack I still felt a little anxious around him, and I could tell that he knew, there was this almost apologetic way that he would walk up to me whenever he wanted a pat.

I have had experiences of shared anxiety with other animals as well. I grew up riding horses and you could always feel when a horse you were riding was frightened or nervous and vice versa, you would adopt each others emotional state. The work of Kate James explores this shared experience of anxiety that occurs between humans and domesticated animals, reflecting the unsettling, intrusive and relentless nature of anxiety as a whole.

In the series *Pony Tales* (2009-10) James employs the labour intensive process of rope making to form a series of ropes made from horse hair: "Held together by counter-twisting forces, rope, in many ways, can be seen as analogous to the tension that arises from anxiousness. As a fundamental tool when working with horses, rope is an apt medium through which to explore notions of control and escape. Similarly, fluctuations between feelings of control and loss of control, restraint and release, are common features of the anxious experience."⁶

There have been some studies into the connection between the repetitive actions utilized in craft practices such as knitting and the alleviation of anxiety. It is hypothesized that the simple action of doing something over and over generates alpha waves in the brain similar to those experienced during meditation. The adoption of such repetitive and painstaking techniques by James in her practice, allows the process of making her work to take on a therapeutic quality. "Anxiety is the result of threats that are perceived to be uncontrollable or unavoidable."⁷ Following simple actions over and over provides a feeling of control over the materials, control over the work, control over a situation. For the artist, the process of making becomes as important as the final work itself, the completed artwork an expression of their subdued anxiety.

The Rapunzel-like rope that is generated also "alludes to the well known fairytales and stories in which the troubled protagonists relentlessly toil, spinning gold or braiding hair, in the hope of escaping from their place of confinement. However, the employment of horsehair rather than human hair, brings to the fore the historic ties between the female and animal subject, weaving together their shared experiences of coercion - into domesticity or captivity - and the resulting anxiety this inevitably provokes."⁸



Left: Kate James *Pony Tales* detail 2009-10

Above: Kate James *Pony Tales* 2009-10, Agatha Gothe-Snape *Major Major* 2009

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Sanja Pahoki *The Test* 2001

I'm Okay - You're Not Okay (Performance anxiety)

I found out recently that I had been mispronouncing a friend's name for the entire time in which I have known her (the past eight or so years). It came up when she told me about someone else who had been doing the same thing and she was always too polite to say anything. The knowledge of sharing this mistake with someone else was a bit of a relief. Mispronouncing words is a fairly common social phobia. Some people even have phobias of certain words or phrases (onomatophobia), or even find it very difficult to say their own name for fear of mispronouncing it.

In *The Test* (2001) Sanja Pahoki explores the social anxiety associated with the mispronunciation of words. "Here Pahoki's subjects are presented with cards containing words popularly considered difficult to articulate; words easily registered in the mind but which people often falter or hesitate to pronounce

out loud. We watch headshots of the artist's acquaintances as they pause and prepare to announce words such as *voilà*, *awry* and *dénouement*. In these small moments of uncertainty - which flush the face, quicken the heart and often elicit an awkward laugh - we can identify the universal signs of performance anxiety."⁹ Almost everyone in the video either mispronounces or is not totally confident with the words that they are presented with. This re-enactment of a familiar social anxiety seeks to act as a comfort to Pahoki's audience. There is a reassurance in watching several people mispronounce commonly used words such as "Voilà". We may feel a slight superiority to her subjects who are placed in this situation intended to cause them slight anxiety, but overall we feel a connection to them through anxiety as a shared experience. "Pahoki's work offers nuanced observations on the human condition without becoming too personalised. In this way she conducts her own psychological assessment through a series of works of appealing yet surreal familiarity."¹⁰

I'm Okay - You're Okay

Wow, I've cracked the 2,000 word barrier. Didn't think I would get that far. I got some good feedback from Rachael and Courtney today. They liked the essay. I hope you have too. I still have to print the pamphlets and finish installing the show before tomorrow so I think I'll keep this short and sweet. There is something to be said for bonding with others through dysfunction. A realisation that everyone is human, we're all in the same boat. It's a relief to be reminded of that sometimes. Agatha Gothe-Snape, Kate James and Sanja Pahoki each reference anxiety in their practice to form something positive. There is a sense of hope in the artist's ability to manage and cope and aid others to do so through their art practices. A kind of contemporary art therapy. If you ever see me wearing a shirt saying TRY NOT TO DO EVERYTHING ALL OF THE TIME maybe give me a little hug or a cup of tea. Chances are I'm feeling a little stressed or overwhelmed.

1 Harris, T., 1973. *The Four Life Positions*. In *I'm OK - You're OK*, London: Pan Books, p.42.

2, 3 Charlie Kaufman (Nicolas Cage) voiceover from *Adaptation*, directed by Spike Jonze, 2002.

4 Wikipedia contributors, 'Anxiety', Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 20 August 2010, 09:42 UTC, <<http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Anxiety&oldid=379932114>> [accessed 24 August 2010]

5 Gothe-Snape, A. 2010. Artist Statement.

6 James, K., 2010. Artist Statement.

7 Wikipedia contributors, op cit

8 James, K., 2010. Artist Statement.

9, 10 Mathews, H., 2009. Sanja Pahoki: notes on melancholy and anxiety. *Artlink* (29) no. 3 p.38.

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IN THE GALLERY

broadcast

24 September - 15 October 2010

Sarah Byrne, Svenja Kratz, Catherine Sagin, Heidi Stevens, Louise Tahiraj, Danielle Woolbank and Michelle Xen.

Curated by Courtney Coombs, assisted by Maggie McDade



Broadcast installation view

Girls and new media; in, outside of and around art

Emily Wakeling

When a contemporary art exhibition chooses new media art - most frequently represented by various forms of photography or video - as a theme, attention is drawn to mediums that are so ingrained in society, so close to a default mode of expression in contemporary culture, that my biggest question now would be, "why not use it?" This essay is an exploration of how the social relevance of one form of new media, photography, has been utilised in a time and place and art movement I have been studying for a while now. Level's new exhibition, *Broadcast*, features works by several local Brisbane artists, all of whom incorporate new media in the form of video. While there are differences between photography and video, both are mediums that have been used by artists to make reference to their integral role in contemporary culture and society. Perhaps more than any other demographic, this is true of young women and young women artists.

Inside and outside contemporary art, the term "new media" is inevitably problematic when it comes to where to draw

the line between what is new technology and what is old. Photography is certainly a format that, despite having existed for over one and a half centuries, keeps renewing itself with new technological developments. Video is a much more recent invention but, similar to photography, its format and usage keeps evolving. Video and photography keep changing—cameras become smaller, built in to your phone, more stylish, easier-to-use, makes people look better—to appeal to and create a market. As camera technology becomes more accessible to the mass-market, the more ubiquitous photography and video have become in contemporary culture. Almost anyone can be a photographer and capture a news story, the birth of a child, the meal they prepared last night, evidence of a crime, or portraits for a dating site. And, of course, it is possible to make a work of art.

Some artists act as guardians of vintage camera technologies in danger of becoming old and redundant, and some are eager to follow the latest technologies to capitalise on their artistic possibilities. Most importantly, more and more artists use these media without making a statement. Sometimes cameras or handycams are used simply because they are the "natural" choice; because the artist owns one and can use it with ease to make their intended visual and/or audio expression. It may be the format they are most comfortable with, compared to painting with oils or making a bronze sculpture. It may be the best format in which to communicate with their audience. In *Broadcast*, this seems to be the motivation behind many of the featured art works. However, before discussing the exhibition, I shall explore one story of how women and technology and contemporary art have intersected that I have been interested in for a while now.

In Japan in the late 1990s, many magazines and other press reported a craze sweeping the nation: "girl photography". Its impact is still felt a decade later. The term, "girl photography", is a translation of *onna-no-ko shashin*. The first word means girls—female children—and the second word is for photographs or photography. It can also be translated as an adjective, as in "girly photography". This hype not only affected the world of contemporary art. It actually married two recent phenomena: the promotion of young women photographers, and the wide-spread use of new camera technologies by young women and girls across Japan.

In the 1990s, taking photographs suddenly became very fashionable among young women and girls. They weren't interested in the bulky, heavy SLRs of "serious" photographers. They chose small, stylish cameras with automatic functions,

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Michelle Xen *Crush Pop Box* 2010



such as the Konica BiG mini, and carried them everywhere. Carrying a camera doubled as an interesting accessory for one's outfit, so style certainly mattered. Novelty formats such as key-chain cameras and fish-eye cameras were also popular. Fujifilm Instax cameras, which make instant Polaroid-style pictures, are a popular item still found in camera stores and art-book stores. Photo developing stores are found in every shopping street, offering all kinds of cute albums to match your pet photos, travel photos, friend photos, etc. And, of course, the ubiquitous mobile phone camera and internet camera have become a part of everyday life as well.

The Japanese girl's love of photography is a very conspicuous female-driven technological development. The close relationship between the Japanese girl demographic and developments in camera technology—and more generally speaking, communication technologies such as mobile phones—are well observed by Larissa Hjorth¹. Generally speaking, Japan's reputation for technology production is often coupled with its *kawaii* (cute) customisation of otherwise cold and impersonal technologies². In mid-1990s Japan, additional technologies were added to the standard photo booth to appeal to Japan's—and especially Japanese girls'—love of cute.

Purikura (short for "print club") was the invention of a woman, who designed it for a young female demographic. In 1994, Sasaki Miho, an employee of a Tokyo-based games software company, thought of combining the current teen craze for stickers with photos³. She proposed a photo booth in which participants can pose for photo-portraits and then decorate or graffiti the pictures for fun before printing them as stickers. By 1996, the coin-operated machines were found in almost every games arcade and shopping mall in Japan's major cities. Ever since, many teenage girls have fanatically collected albums and albums

full of sticker-photos featuring all their friends in various pairings or groups. After the photo has been taken, there are endless varieties of "graffiti" editing: such as text; green-screen backdrops; borders; cartoons; the opportunity to re-colour one's hair; or add accessories like glasses and hats. After the participants are happy with their edits, they print out the photos as small stickers. Then, each friend can cut and take away their personalised mementos.

Despite the prevalence of the distinctively pretty, starry-eyed, flowery aesthetic in most girls' culture in Japan, as found in *shōjo* manga, cultural academic Laura Miller examined *purikura* as a potential site of resistance to prettiness in a society that puts extreme value on girls' appearance.⁴ According to Miller, original touches and personal expression are prized above all when girls and young women take photos. Often, what makes girls' use of camera technology unique is not the format itself but the personalised touches, like the "graffiti" added to the image after it is shot. Miller focused on girls who use their creativity to add big ugly teeth, snot, rude comments and so on to their portraits for humorous, even subversive, results. In addition, many make fun of themselves in faux-sexual poses, such as flashing their knickers. Miller argued that these are subversive gestures that are appropriated to defy the sexualised schoolgirl stereotype, especially the hyper-sexualised role of girls' "panties" in this particular fetish. Primarily, it is an act of comic relief. However, as Miller argued, it can also be regarded as a "gendered form of resistance"⁵.

As well as the increased social role of photography for young Japanese women and girls, girl photography was an idea that lumped in a whole generation of young female photographers and photographic artists. These two seemingly unrelated trends—an increase in young women debuting their photography and the schoolgirl photo craze—were no longer

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assumed to be happening separately. The young female photographers' quick fame and media attention was mixed together with more general reports of Japan's young female demographic taking up photography in a big way.

These "girl photographers" did not make purikura-style images. Most of these photographers used automatic cameras in a point-and-shoot method, and then selected their images once developed. Typically, their subjects were lifted from their immediate urban surroundings with little or no use of studios or prepared lighting. As a body of work, the photographs provided glimpses into the photographer's youth. One of the most famous names to come from this hype, Hiromix, presented images of her friends, her pets, her bedroom, her taxi ride home, her delicious breakfast, her knickers, etc. When she won the Canon New Cosmos of Photography Prize in 1995, she became a media sensation. Today she continues her career as a photographer and painter. All Hiromix's photos are taken in what appears to be a "snapshot" moment. One of the judges was the well-known photographer Araki Nobuyoshi. In words that show the kind of gender stereotypes the drove the girl photography hype, he commented on Hiromix's work: "girls tend to hold nothing back, and don't think too much. Without thinking too much, they let their feelings rule their actions"⁶.

Yurie Nagashima's photographic practice challenges such stereotypes and backhanded compliments. While she also took many photos of her immediate surroundings, and still does, her most interesting photographs are very conspicuously driven by ideas about what she sees and what she wants to see in her personal world. Nagashima's career has gone beyond—I could even say survived—the girl photography label. Her debut was comparatively much bolder than Hiromix. She won an award in 1993 for a series of photos in which she and her mother, father and brother posed for family portraits: in the nude. Her many self-portraits include one taken while on the toilet. Another one was taken during her pregnancy; in a perfect "fuck you" pose, she sits on a sofa in her leather jacket and knickers, cigarette in her mouth, giving the finger to the camera. During the girl photography hype, Nagashima left Japan and studied art in the United States. She has since returned to Japan and continues her photographic practice in Tokyo.

The hype surrounding this new generation was documented in photo-books, special editions of photography magazines, and art exhibitions. *Shutter and love - girls are dancin' on in Tokyo*, by Iizawa Kohtarō, compiled a list of young women photographers from this time. Exhibitions such as the *Mito annual '99 private room II* historicised the phenomenon, and the more recent *Sweet and bitter: the intimate mirror of*

contemporary Japanese "girl photography" retrospectively showcased the trend. Some of the featured artists went on to publish a string of their own photo-books, such as Hiromix, Nagashima Yurie and Ninagawa Mika. These three artists found a career beyond the context of girl photography. They could even be described as survivors of it. This was an interesting moment in Japanese contemporary art, but ultimately a damaging association for the emerging artists. While their use of automatic cameras and the showcasing of young women's lifestyles was fresh and exciting, their close association with a teen craze denied the young photographers' meaningful artistic critique. However, looking back, it is possible to see the significant impact young women photographers have had on Japan's photography scene and contemporary art scene since the late 1990s. The successes of Nagashima, Hiromix and Ninagawa show that, despite the haze of hype, there were some important artists coming out of that time and place who have in turn inspired more emerging artists.

While many of the young women associated with girl photography are deserving of critical analysis as artists, not just photographers, I also believe photography was their chosen medium because of its social relevance. By using automatic cameras, at a time when girls and young women were taking up photography in a big way, the photos make reference to the experience of being a girl. It's a deliberate rejection of the technical skills and the auteurism associated with manual photography; a tradition paved by men like Araki, Sugimoto Hiroshi, and Ueda Shōji. The automatic camera was practically made a "feminine" type of photography in the writing surrounding girl photography. This is enhanced by the chosen subject matter of the artists—that is, the young woman's—personal worlds. They captured cute, silly funny, pretty, surprising, perhaps even subversive, images from



Sarah Byrne *Us VS We: alversion* 2010

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Louise Tahiraj *Breathing Cycles* 2010



their everyday life. Displayed on gallery walls and published in photobooks, these artists produced a collection of authentic visual expressions about their experiences as young women in Japan at the turn of the century.

I believe that many of the artists included in *Broadcast* also invest in the social and cultural importance of photography and video. These two formats are globally relevant carriers of information, entertainment, and social interaction. It has superseded the role of other, traditional visual mediums in many situations. Architects, for example, debate the relevance of building physical models when a virtual tour of the proposed building is just as easy to make and much easier to send over the internet. Popular internet sites that facilitate video and photography, such as Facebook and Youtube, are an almost inescapable aspect of contemporary culture. Moreover, to be an artist, to put on an art exhibition, photography and/or video are necessary. If you are not using photography or video as your medium, you are at least required to use these media for documentation. The same importance on photodocumentation can apply to art writers and critics when studying works from another time and place.

The artists in this show primarily use video. Video and other moving image formats, such as television and film, are a major part of contemporary global culture. While my interest lies in contemporary visual culture and young women in Japan, the young female Australian demographic is also greatly invested in these mediums in their daily activities. Japanese, and Australian, girls and young women are an active part of an increasingly global culture greatly facilitated by the sharing of photography and video.

This point is well-understood and embraced by the artistic expressions on display in *Broadcast*. This show features many

of Brisbane's most interesting artists, many of whom use videos of self-made performance. This may be a response to the Skype/Youtube/vlog/webcam role of video in contemporary culture. It may also be about the artists' closeness with the documentation side of video. Documentation is certainly something a performance artist would have to deal with, in order to share the work with an audience or curator or teacher beyond that particular time and space, so it is natural then for the sake of a long-term exhibition for the performance to be presented through the format of video.

The role of video as documentation and its role as a work of art are not so separate. However, this utilitarian aspect of video by no means takes away from the artistic merit of the work. In fact, their choice of medium shows an acute sensitivity to the contemporary world. It is a medium that says something about the social importance of the moving image in contemporary society and especially its importance to young women. Also, the audience will know "how" to view it because it is such a ubiquitous part of everyday contemporary visual culture. Video and photography, because they exist dually in art and society, can make for a complex blend of both worlds.

1 Larissa Hjorth 2009, 'Game girl: re-imagining Japanese gender and gaming via Melbourne female cosplayers', *Intersections*, iss. 20. Retrieved from: <http://intersections.anu.edu.au/issue20/hjorth.htm>

2 Hjorth 2009.

3 Laura Miller 2003, 'Graffiti photos: expressive art in Japanese girls' culture', *Harvard Asia Quarterly*, vol. 7, iss. 3. Retrieved from: <http://www.asiaquarterly.com/content/view/138/1/>

4 Miller 2003.

5 Laura Miller 2005, 'Bad girl photography' in L. Miller & J. Bardsley (Eds.), *Bad girls of Japan* (pp. 127-141). New York: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 128.

6 Judge's comments: <http://www.canon.com/scsa/newcosmos/gallery/1995/hiromix/index.html>

Messing Archaeology: Chantal Fraser

20 November - 10 December 2010



Chantal Fraser *Messing Archaeology* 2010.



Kellee Uhr

A silent psychological landscape is created in *Messing Archaeology*. Using materials that are charged with personal significance and suffused with meanings accumulated over years of use in everyday life, Chantal Fraser takes a specific exploration toward discarded materials and spatial relationships to create her own archaeology. The creation of a pseudo-interior that is not constant or permanent reflects the acting out of a portion of human life through construction and performance. The recovery of clothes and other fabric based articles from her parent's home provided the artist with the task of sorting and examining the needs and wants of a new living situation. Articles that no longer had the presence of life but still held memory enabled the artist to create her own ritual of discard and renewal, constructing a meta-space of memory and human interaction.

Fraser's process when selecting the items for reconstruction was one of attachment versus necessity. As personal possessions that were invested with links to 'home', Fraser worked through discarded materials that signified a place and time in her life. Prompted by recent shifts in her life, the artist creates a 'nest' within the gallery space with furniture made from clothes that use naturally shed hair as thread. The construction of furniture in this process was laborious and time-consuming, two elements that allowed duration to dictate the look of the work that is shown. The psychology of letting go and moving onto new beginnings was prevalent throughout this process leading Fraser to explore the interchange of incidental materials and memory. Memory itself became a working material. Existing on the cusp of past and future, the artist let duration take over, and through these discarded materials came a new interior.

The use of clothing and discarded hair references participation and life lived, although there is no immediate reference to what this material is. The discarded clothes offer a reference point to the past and having not been embodied for some time, have a dormant absence. Through the process of cutting and re-configuring, Fraser has given another dimension to these as material. By using naturally shed hair as thread, she embeds a presence back into the material. The hair is used as a bonding mechanism, referencing the link between the items of clothing and furnishing's significance to the past and her new surroundings. Historically, the cutting and growing of hair has been related to control and the artist uses her own hair to maintain control over her own person in a new environment. The act of collecting naturally shed hair and then reusing it in this way enables Fraser to bridge the gap between the objects that existed in discard and the new objects that exist in the gallery space.

The systematic study of past human life through remnants of material culture establishes the overarching theme of *Messing Archaeology*. Through the re-establishment of materials into new objects, Fraser is taking charge of her unwanted possession and creating a pseudo ritual of cleansing and memory. This study of material culture enables an insight into history through seemingly incidental objects from domestic life. The construction of interior objects such as chairs, a table and a bed with these materials means that Fraser is literally messing with her own archaeological evidence. The remnants of her previous living situation are no longer in the realm of their own time and space; they are reconstructed into new material, born again in concept and use. This point of departure enables the materials to exist in the realm of past, present and future all at once, conveying burdens and conflicts of the past and the renewal of the future in tandem. The finality of time when reading material culture is

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IN THE GALLERY



not evident in *Messing Archaeology*, time is reconstructed and the evidence of 'use' is multilayered. The presence of a person in these materials exists as discarded items of home and body, embodied with memory and place; however as reconstructed items this presence becomes reabsorbed into a new function through object. Through reconstruction the past is honoured and re-embodied in a new form.

Messing Archaeology explores the dialogue between relational objects and spatial interaction. Through the construction of a particular interior, Fraser uses objects that are easily identifiable by the audience; chairs, stools, tables, bed, lamp. With the relocation of these objects into the gallery space, the audience are challenged to experience them as they were originally intended to be used. The audience are enticed to lie in the bed and sit on the stool. However in this space, the objects do not react the same as they would in the 'real', and the performative action of the audience sitting or lying is a simulated action that is relational to the object's preconceived visual language. Due to the material used to construct these objects, the physical interaction differs from the experience of 'real' interiors. The relationship between interior objects and the audience is one of recognition and knowledge of everyday space and experience.

When a stool is next to a table, the audience reads that as a place to sit, but Fraser has created these objects as part of a meta-interior; an interior that exists on its own plane of reference that is dependent on the knowledge of the audience. To experience these objects in this constructed interior, the audience performs a mental interaction. The construction of a meta-space is one of a visual space in which the audience stands back and incorporates themselves in the space they are observing. The relational display of the objects connects a mental and spatial interaction at once. This is an advancement of the artist's broader concept, where object becomes a precursor to memory and interaction. Through the recreation of an act of memory, these objects re-inhabit this space both physically and psychologically. This interior acquires a state of invisible presence that exists because of familiarity. Remaining as an invisible presence, mental interaction with this interior manifests the visual language of domestic spaces and interiors. Fraser has transformed the normalised interior of a home but not the memory itself. This interior disrupts the audience's sense of comfort and security yet conjures up memories in the audience. The secure environment of home exists in this space but it is a temporal space that is destined to be experienced solely within the gallery environment. This space questions what home means and what personal affects and energies are invested into the space to make it a home.

The relationship between the interior and objects in *Messing Archaeology* is one of morphing performance. Fraser has created an interior where her own cathartic landscape is expressed. Through the use of a commonly experienced space, the representation of an interior; meta and/or physical, the audience is challenged to experience the objects in a mental void that allows them to simulate interaction. The construction of objects from discarded clothing and household items offer a presence to a new work that resides in its own time, space and place.



Top and above: Chantal Fraser *Messing Archaeology* 2010
Images courtesy the artist. Photos: Christopher Handran

CamLab to jemimawyman, bcc: laura, bcc: Rhett, bcc: elizabeth_mayer, bcc: [show details](#) 12/1/09 [Reply](#)

Dear Friends,

This is a request that we're sending to a small group of people who are familiar with our collaboration. When making work as CamLab, we consciously take into consideration our psychological needs (individual and collective) and, often, those of the viewer or participant. Much of our performance-based work has capitalized on already-existing personal relationships in an effort to create or reveal intimacy through proximity. Our "circulating suits" works make a physical proposition to a series of participants who interpret the material conditions of the garment as they see fit. These propositions for proximity intend to facilitate heightened interactions between people.

For our current body of work we are continuing our exploration of the propositional, this time as expressed through language. To this end, we're asking friends and colleagues (you) to email or post us a one-sentence-or-more proposition. What we have in mind is that you'll consider our collaboration and propose an experience for us. The experience does not need to be able to be actualized. This process is about having a hypothetical exchange from a distance. The proposition can be fantastic, abstract, impossible, directional, fictional, and/or relational. We're not looking for performance scripts. It may have already happened?!

In that one of our interests is for this casual experience to be useful for you as a register of your psychological needs, we give you the option of submitting anonymously (via post). Otherwise, email is great.

We know that this is a busy time of year for everyone, but if you decide to participate, would you be able to send us something by Dec 10? Spontaneous, off-the-cuff responses are fine. Please note that your contributions will be treated with care and not made public without your permission.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Love,

CamLab (Anna & Jemima)

to me [show details](#) 12/1/09 [Reply](#)

hola favorite ladies of love and wonderment.
my proposition is one of those spontaneous types. so here she goes.

i would love to see what you ladies would do with reclaimed fabric (found, bought, traded or gifted). also maybe something involving you guys visiting more intimate unexpected spaces. like my closet.... what if you appeared in my closet?! how wonderful. no but really. something where you would visit a home virtually or in reality to perform in or make something or live in. like leave your mark. that would be so terrific. maybe you interact with my cat too. and i always love when there is singing involved.

hmmmmmmmmmmmmmm

i will think about this some more.

your email was so well written. i always learn so much from you ladies.
love you very much.
xoxo
b

to me [show details](#) 12/2/09 [Reply](#)

Hi y'all!

I would like to see something that meets my psychological need to validate my life through experiencing epic hugeness.
Bert

to me [show details](#) 12/2/09 [Reply](#)

Proposition one:

curl up together, taking turns to be the outside spoon.

This may be a bit too physical and not linguistic enough! But it is what came to mind.

Also I thought you might enjoy these instructions I wrote some time ago, which I will send as an attachment.

much love, L xx

to me [show details](#) 12/2/09 [Reply](#)

anna and jemima,

my proposition is a rather immediate personal thought. this meaning it just popped into my head. i don't know what this is called in psychological terms, but just a spurt of the moment thought process. i propose you both try to switch bodies. this is general, but try and switch bodies, minds, it all. this may be something you have already done. good luck!

love,

a

☆ to me [show details](#) 12/2/09 [Reply](#)

Dear CamLab,

Here is my proposition:

I would like to see CamLab create a suit that could accommodate both members of CamLab and one terminally ill, paralyzed, or dead participant. I'm thinking of a kind of hammock, but I would leave the engineering up to CamLab. What I propose is that this suit be able to fully support the paralyzed, dead, or otherwise immobilized individual; in other words, if the three participants/suit-wearers need to get around, the immobilized individual will not need to rely on wheels, prosthetics, or any other mechanisms or devices in order to travel with the group. It would be optimal if the immobilized person were undeniably "into it" from the start so that they won't end up feeling like a mere prop. As for the possibility of a dead person, it would help if it would be someone generally despised or who had some kind of contentious and bitter relationship with their family or their community. Camlab could then take this dead person to on a long journey to somewhere like a mountaintop or a secluded State Beach and perform a redemption ritual.

Thanks,
J

☆ to me [show details](#) 12/2/09 [Reply](#)

Communicate using carrier pigeons.

- Show quoted text -

[Reply](#) [Forward](#) [Emilie is not available to chat](#)

☆ to me [show details](#) 12/6/09 [Reply](#)

Hey there CamLab,

I propose that you exchange the totality of your psychic structures, conscious and unconscious, for a period of 72 hours, and over the last 4 hours of this period that you independently record the experience of this inhabitation of the other.

Love
M
xoxo

- Show quoted text -
- Show quoted text -

☆ to me [show details](#) 12/7/09 [Reply](#)

Hey CamLab

Damian and I suggest: Initiate a public hokey-pokey.
And/or tie individual strands of your hair together. Cut and paste may be equally effective.

Good luck. xx L

☆ to me [show details](#) 12/8/09 [Reply](#)

Hi CamLab,
Thanks for inviting us to participate,

*****create a constellation for yourselves*****

[Reply](#) [Forward](#) [Invite john smith to chat](#)

☆ to me [show details](#) 12/10/09 [Reply](#)

Dear Labies,

I've been working on something other but realize the deadline is here.
So I propose this prop in lieu of another knowing the show is near.

"watering potted plants the previous tenant left"

I'm looking forward to Sunday!
xo,
D

Project Wall, Level Studios



Kat Danger Sawyer Works in Progress, November - December 2010



Danielle Woolbank Honey, keep on while I slip into you Januray - February 2011

space+ship BARI

13 - 15 October 2010

The BARI Festival is an initiative that draws attention to the breadth of creative and cultural contribution of the artist run initiatives pervading Brisbane. As part of BARI, Level installed a satellite studio space to allow our studio artists to work and collaborate with each other and the public. Under the tent in King George Square Rachael Parsons spoke to Alice Lang, Louise Tahiraj and Chantal Fraser in the satellite site about Level's open studio program.

Rachael Parsons: So I thought we could start with talking about Level and what it is trying to achieve and contribute to the current art culture and how you as artists have responded to this initiative. When looking at Level's objectives and stated purpose it seems aligned with women's collectives that emerged from the 60's, which were focussed on organising and educating women, supporting their creativity and also to challenge more traditional hierarchies of authority. Do you feel that you are tapping into that legacy and energy, in having a collective space that focuses on women's art practices?

Alice Lang: When we were starting the space it was initially aimed towards exhibiting the work of female artists, but once we encountered the space and developed the studio program those broader aspects of supporting and developing critical practice emerged. Given that the studio is designed to be open, we were interested in seeing what would happen in that environment and through the programs. We were also interested in creating connections between emerging and established artists - to instigate collaboration, exchange and dialogue.

RP: Have you seen that process of exchange occur with the artists that are in the studio now?

AL: Yes I think so, we do monthly critiques and the artists provide general feedback to each other while working in the studio environment, and in developing our own practices, the process of collaboration is starting to become involved in how we work in the studio.

RP: So as artists working in the Level studio, how have you found not only the open environment but also the other collaborative structures such as critiques? Do you think they have had an impact on how your practice is currently developing?

Louise Tahiraj: Definitely, when you are at university you have critiques on a weekly basis, tutorials that discuss works and

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IN THE STUDIO

theory and you are a part of a group culture. Once you are outside of that you are much more on your own and all of that continual discussion and interaction becomes much harder to find. So to be a part of a group where you can show your work and get feedback and can also practice your skills in reading other people's art is really valuable.

RP: Do you think that has helped to develop and move your practice forward over the past five months that you have been at Level?

LT: Yes, the crits have been significant. It is not just talking about your work, it is also about developing relationships with the other artists and being able to trust one another to talk about the work honestly and critically over a period of time. This allows you to take those comments and responses and use them to work through how you are thinking about the work and to develop and push your practice.

Chantal Fraser: I also think the critiques are really important because they are something that you only really get used to doing while you are a student and when you haven't been a student for a few years you don't have much of an opportunity to hear your peers respond to and talk about your work unless they are either at your opening or writing about it, any other time it is curators or writers or the arts community who discuss your work...

LT: And those discussions usually happen at the end of making work or having an exhibition...

CF: Yes, and I think to have that rawness of your peers who are in the same process or at the same time of practice is very good and gives you a completely different angle to what is said by people at an exhibition where the work is resolved. It also gives you a chance to build networks that you may not previously have had, with people who are on the same trajectory as you but may have been at university a couple of years before or after or from a different place. So it is a nice rhythm to get back into.

RP: This idea of trust and networks that you have brought up also relates to the idea of a communal space, so for your time at BARI you are working in a public, communal space and also at Level you have open studios, is that something that has any affect on your process for making or how you work in the studio?

CF: It has changed the way I perceive the studio. For the last five years my practice has been just me in my own space and at times a few people have physically helped me now and then.



Louise Tahiraj *It's a Jungle Out There* (video still) 2010

Now I'm not just in a small space on my own and to actually make work in a shared space means that I am not solely focussed on my own practice. The space is really supportive and co-existing and that is really good for making me look at other people's art and process of making and to talk quite openly with each other, and wanting that conversation and interaction. So talking to other people about their work, not to constantly critique, but more to be aware of what others are working on and thinking about and making that awareness and dialogue a part of my process in the studio while also focussing on making my own work. And since I see the same people on a regular basis there tends to be a flux of activity.

RP: So for BARI the Level artists have moved into this public satellite studio, what have you been up to?

LT: I moved in just yesterday, originally I was going to set up a live feed and then project it out into the public but it wasn't plausible so recently in the studio we had been talking about how I wanted to create an oasis so when I came in yesterday I started to move all the plants around to experiment with making a kind of habitat and I did some performing and filming myself and Megan was taking photos of me. There was another girl, who I don't think was an artist, but was hanging around; we did some collaboration for about half an hour moving and playing with some props. Today has been more social, talking to people who have come into the space.

CF: I have only been working here for a few hours today. I have had some work more up and running and people have been coming in to talk so I have been looking at this more as an opportunity for editing a work I already have and then talking to people that come in about what it is I am doing or what it is that Level does. So working quite casually and allowing discussions to occur which is quite similar to how we work in the studio at Level.

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IN THE STUDIO



Judy Ann Moule enjoys a studio visit from Courtney Pedersen, October 2010.



Danielle Woolbank *Cut Piece with Rope and Tape* performance at *Present* (Annual Studio Artists' Exhibition) December 2010



Elizabeth Willing and Dhana Merritt at studio crit, November 2010



Chantal Fraser *Trinket*, 2010 as part of *Present* (Annual Studio Artists' Exhibition) December 2010



Danielle Woolbank and Judy Ann Moule at the Level BBQ January 2011



Louise Tahiraj *Mirage* 2010 as part of *Present* (Annual Studio Artists' Exhibition) December 2010

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IN RESIDENCE

Carly Scoufos

Artist in Residence: August - October 2010



Courtney Pedersen and Carly Scoufos in October studio visit

Rachael Parsons

When I look at Carly Scoufos' practice I see art that exists at a point of contradiction; at once industrial and organic, masculine and feminine, architectural and viral. Whether creating large scale wire installations or intimate object works Scoufos' maintains a signature style characterised by her ability to skillfully transform banal, common place and industrial materials into delicately crafted sculpture. Sitting in Scoufos' meticulously organized studio space at Level, we discuss her practice and how it has shifted since her stay in Japan, her work currently exhibited at Level and the intricacies of paper.

Rachael Parsons: So last year you were doing a residency in Japan, how was your experience there and what were you working on?

Carly Scoufos: It was amazing; it was my very first time going overseas for a residency and of having that complete luxury of time solely devoted to my practice. I was a little wary before I went, because I had all these ideas and preconceived notions of how much work I would have to make, but I spoke to friends and other artists who had done residencies, and the first thing they said was to not have any plans and to allow yourself to have a genuine first time experience of the country and culture, which you can never have again. They said to take the first week and just see how you respond and how you feel. I took that advice and I didn't make any work for the first month, instead I just took time to explore.

RP: How long were you in Japan?

CS: I was there for three months; the residency was for two months with an exhibition at the end. It was not until I was there that I knew that I had an opportunity to exhibit, so I opted to have an exhibition that was in an open studio style, which was still formal but without the pressure of have finished saleable works. So for that I ended up doing an installation work that was completely different to where my practice had come from initially.

RP: Was the difference in this installation due to your response to, and time in Japan?

CS: Definitely, my practice was very much sculptural based using materials like wire and metal, and I had thought before leaving that if I could get access to those materials while over there then I would continue to use them. It was once I was there, that I really took on the materials that were available to me, paper was the most obvious thing, and it was so cheap and so much a part of the culture. There is this respect towards it. For example in the screens in Japanese homes, in western houses these would rarely last, they would get torn to shreds, or get holes in them, and even on the trains there were these really delicate advertisements made of paper and a friend of mine from Ireland commented that in Ireland there would be no way that paper would be used because it would be ripped apart or vandalized.

RP: I have been to Japan also and made a similar observation, and for me it was not just this respect that struck me but also how aesthetic their use of paper and other materials was, seen in decorative origami and lanterns but also in wrapping things in shops using beautiful paper and techniques, that attention to detail and making everyday actions aesthetic was something that really struck me when I was there. So when I was looking at images of your earlier work and then also the work currently being exhibited I certainly saw the departure and difference that you have mentioned, most notably in the materials used. However I also see a number of commonalities, the exploration of space, negative and positive space, architectural and installation space seem to be consistently explored through both bodies of work.

CS: Space has always been an important element of the work and why I consider myself first and foremost a sculptural artist because of that idea of space and that use of an object existing in three dimensions. I have always had a connection to natural phenomena and organic growth so it's not something that is entirely planned but it comes naturally and organically through my process. From the beginning or the point where I start to make something, while I can see what a work may look like it takes on its own organic creation as it goes along.

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The idea of architecture was one of the first things that struck me about Tokyo, I just fell in love with it, I had never before seen architectural structures as something of pure beauty and form, and I guess I saw these structures as large sculptures. That's in a way what architecture is with the only difference being that we get to inhabit that space and make it our own internally.

So that was something I really wanted to explore when I was there but I just felt like I didn't have the time. I was going to start to make these small detailed drawings but it was going to be too much, and the studio space was huge and I felt that these tiny drawings wouldn't work in the space, so that concern led onto the start of the work where I began to sew together these large washi sheets of paper, like calligraphy scrolls, together. I got large packs of paper and started to sew together hundreds of sheets of paper, lining the room, and that was a response to the space which is something I have always been interested in with installation, not only is it site specific but you are taking on board the history of that site and the fact that you can't ignore what has come and gone before you. So previously the space was a tuberculosis clinic and my studio was where the beds were and I was very aware of that when I was making the work, not in a morbid way, not focused on death, but just that every space that we inhabit has a history that you may not be aware of. So with this lining I was exploring the idea that if you could encase the interior with these sheets of paper you could make it almost a neutral space that takes it back or cleanses it.

RP: In your artist's statement for this show you talk about that in drawing on an object you neutralize its history, and when I was looking at the objects, which have been painted white and have been made quite minimal, I was wondering if the history you are referring to was solely the history of the object or if you were also referring to art history, Minimalism and similar themes?

CS: I think first of all with these objects, I was taking the materials and process that I had explored in Japan in a large installation into a much smaller scale and I was really interested in seeing what would happen if I used the same process of sewing and wrapping with objects that were really rich in history. A lot of the objects are from my grandparents or parents, so the big case, that was a video camera bag of my Grandad's in the 60's and one is a tea chest that my parents got as a wedding gift. They were these things that had been passed on to me but that I hadn't done anything with, they were just sitting there. You can smell the age to them and I began pulling out the interiors of the objects, for example one was an old cutlery set box and it had all the dividers where the cutlery went, so I was pulling that apart trying to peel back the objects so that it removes all the connotations of what it was, making it a plain object or a space



Carly Scoufos *Repositories* installation view 2010



Carly Scoufos *Disperse* 2010

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Carly Scoufos *Disperse* 2010

that doesn't hold anything more important than itself. That was another thing that I was interested in, the idea that repositories or cases are not usually seen as important in themselves, it is what they hold that is valuable and I wanted to flip that on its head and make them the significant art object that have these drawings on them rather than focusing on what was inside. I wasn't sure at what point I was going to do the drawing, or how much I would do and at one stage I was thinking of just having the drawing on the inside so you could barely see it, or couldn't see it at all but I would know that it was there and part of it, so it was very much an experiment to play around and see how it may be read or how it might work.

RP: Given the fact that these objects are so personal to you, was your process of peeling them back and altering them difficult or cathartic maybe?

CS: I think it was, again when I was in Japan, because everything was so foreign to me and I was there by myself, I found something reassuring with having a process, and the work is very process based so sewing the paper was something I would do sitting in the studio eight hours of the day, just sewing, as time went by I found comfort in that because I had a purpose, I knew that today I would need to sew so many sheets and in a way it was similar here. Whenever you move into a new studio or start a residency it can be very overwhelming as to what to do, how much work do you need to do, where to start but once you get into the mind set where you decide on an action like lining these objects first, get that done and then move on from there, there is something really reassuring about that for me. So I could just come in and sew and get the objects back to their neutral state and then I can continue on and experiment with the drawing or think about ways to present them.

RP: So is that usual for your process then, you start with a material rather than an idea of a finished work?

CS: I think I am always a little too obsessed with the finished product; I have to see it in my head and envision what it would be like finished. Even if it is a large scale wire sculpture I can't start until I have an idea of the end output, so often I will make small models to plot how a work may look, and once I have that idea or image then I am happy to go ahead and start the process of working through it.

RP: Also in your work materials are important and pushing the material, so that your treatment of it is beautiful and organic and using a material continuously so that you develop a definitive style as you have done with wire, you can see the progression over time in your work and now also with paper; how do you determine what materials you are going to use or what attracts you to them?

CS: Over the last few years I have been pushing to introduce new materials and I will start by playing around with something, so I have used rope and different tactile materials, but you just know if it's not quite right or if it is not doing what you want it to do, and I think sometimes you need to invest a lot of time with a material because you find things as you work with it, things you didn't expect or things that you can't anticipate. Even with paper, it seems like such a simple material, but then you discover the huge varieties of paper and the colours, and the slightest change in the texture or weight of it can change what you can do with it and how you can work with it and so I think the paper was something that came around because of Japan, and the plastic was a balance to the paper. Again it is the Japanese aesthetic of using natural materials like paper and wood as in the scrolls, and then introducing this completely man made, consumerist material which causes huge waste as it is builder's plastic which you can get in monstrous rolls which is just put down to cover the floor and then thrown out. I wanted to play with the idea of combining those and making a cheap, disposable material have the same value almost as something natural, like paper, and then combining the two. The series that is being exhibited now is following a new direction that came from my playing with these ideas and materials.

RP: When you are talking about that juxtaposition and combining of materials it is something that is apparent throughout your practice. In the wire works you take a material that is man made and industrial and you sculpt them into something that is very fluid and organic, and likewise with your current work you have this combination of paper and plastics along with manufactured objects and very delicate fluid drawings, so is this a theme that you are constantly working through?

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CS: Definitely, I really love those juxtapositions or those things that don't seem to fit together. With the wire what I have always been interested in is that it is a very masculine kind of material. Originally it was fencing wire, I grew up on a property so for me it wasn't even really a material, it was wire, it was on every fence, in spools and rolls and was everywhere. It wasn't until I went to art school that I started using it, and it was for that very reason, it had a purpose made use, and that's all it was, and to treat it as something woven and malleable with a feminine sense in that it has an association with textiles, or lace making or knitting and then create fluid organic forms with it, drastically alters the original purpose of that material.

RP: So does gender politics come into your work with that idea of a masculine material and feminine treatment, is that an intentional concern in the work?

CS: It was initially something that I was very aware of. One of the dangers of leaving art school is that that critical examination of the work can take a back step, but it is something that I want to explore and focus a lot more on, the reading and the critical analysis. You can get very caught up on trying to get work done, flat out making without taking time to think about your choices and the conceptual side... reading books and resources so that you have that grounding.

RP: Sure, one of the nice things about still being attached to an educational institution is that dual focus on practice and research or exploring the work in terms of theory and critical analysis and that can be one of the elements that drops away first once you leave that environment. Some of those questions I think get worked through internally on a more subconscious level. So with the work in this exhibition as we have discussed there is a lot of personal experience and experimentation imbedded, how do you expect, or how do you want the audience to interact or read the work, what meaning do you think is communicated to the viewer?

CS: I have already experienced instances at the opening for this show, where friends of mine who are artists took a completely different reading than what I had intended. It is so easy to think that you know what it means and what people will understand but you have to remember that people will naturally read into it based on what they see and experience. One of my fellow artists saw a strong connection to travel, seeing all the boxes as suitcases and travel containers and then seeing the different places and locations in the architectural drawings, and that was something that I had never thought about. I was aware of the different locations in the drawing but was more concerned with the form of the architectural structure rather than where they were from. As for the cases I haven't thought too much about how they may be read other than hoping that they are



Carly Scoufos *Repositories* 2010



Carly Scoufos *Repositories detail* 2010

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seen as an alternative to a standard 2D drawing on a wall, which is the natural way to present 2D work. But to take that drawn surface and then turn it into a sculpture blurs those boundaries between 2 and 3D and questions the perceived need for 2D work to be presented as flat against a wall, so I am interested in drawing being shown or interpreted in a different way.

RP: When I was looking at the cases and the box I was quite taken with the difference between internal and external space and the void that existed within the containers, also how space may be defined, be it through an object that exists in space and also encloses space, or through marks that interact with space and how these things link to architectural form and also the gallery. You use a very reduced monochromatic palette which seems to link to minimalism and do have this strong focus on structural form, both are elements that come out of the modernist tradition, is that something that you are intentionally exploring?

CS: Minimalism is something that really interested me particularly when I was working on the smaller sculptural works where I was trying to combine minimalist forms and geometric shapes that would then have some sort of growth or woven pattern that resembles bacteria growing over it as a contrast or juxtaposition. The monochromatic palette is something that I have always worked with. At various points I have considered introducing colour but I ask myself what that colour would do and how it may change the reading of the work and if it is necessary. Bringing it back to Japan I found that I related to a lot of the work and a lot of the Japanese artists that I saw, especially in installation because it is very similar in that elimination of colour and just keeping the work really pared back and this is part of the culture, where simplicity is so sublime, a sparseness that realises a balance between nothingness and just enough.

RP: I agree, and I think that in Japan it is also their focus where no matter what you do you do it as a craft, you become an artisan and whatever you do, you do it as beautifully as possible, so the way you fold paper or arrange food on a plate. Your work I think ties into that, you are using simple, common place materials, paper, plastic and wire but you use them in a way that is refined and highly aesthetic. Even looking around your studio space here that awareness and sensibility is apparent, with everything put in its place and organized in a way that works visually.

CS: I was aware of that whilst working in here, I was thinking about space and places that we inhabit and when I first moved in I had initial responses to this space, so how the light comes in and the foliage outside the window and it having a relationship to somewhere else that I have been earlier, but once you work in a place you kind of fill it with yourself in a weird way, so every

time you come back into the space there is a familiarity, but it started off as a completely foreign strange little room and then it becomes a homely and occupied space and so in a way that relates to these objects in that idea of ownership over space and things and objects. One artist who I really admire who deals with some of these issues is Rachel Whiteread in England where she casted the interior of a block of flats and then took away the building, that was a beautiful and perfect example of a solid form of space that had been occupied.

RP: So in your residency you have been experimenting a lot, your work has moved forward in quite dramatic ways with distinct departures from your wire works which as we have discussed began in Japan but seems to have significantly developed throughout your time at Level. How have you found this residency, do you see long-term movement coming out of your time and work here?

CS: Absolutely, I think, like in any residency it gives you not only a space to work in, but also a drive to work towards an end result. Even with a residency in your own city where you still have work and family and all the same responsibilities. So in this case having an exhibition to work towards and needing to make work to present is something that is very useful to being productive and pushing the work forwards.

RP: So what is next for you, are you looking forward to taking a break or are there more works and travel to look forward to?

CS: Well, I am working on a few large scale, private commissions, so that is one reason why this residency has been so refreshing as it has given me an opportunity to move away from the wire and sculpture involved in these long term projects that are going to be very time consuming over the next year or so. I wanted to have something to work on and continue with in my own time and practice.



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