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The spectacle of performance drawing

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The Spectacle of Performance Drawing
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Statement of sources/authenticity

I certify that the work presented in this exegesis is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, original, except as acknowledged in the text, and that the material has not been submitted, either in whole or in part, for a degree at this or any other university.

I acknowledge that I have read and understood the University's rules, requirements, procedures and policy relating to my higher degree research award and to my exegesis. I certify that I have complied with the rules, requirements, procedures and policy of the University.

Kellie O’Dempsey
14 March 2011
Abstract

This exegesis addresses a series of Performance Drawing events staged between March 2008 and March 2011. Collectively, the series is titled *The Spectacle of Performance Drawing*. Using a practice-led research methodology, this document discusses my drawing performances as emergent practice and research.

The data from this research consists of a collection of drawings, photographs, digital video recordings and diaristic accounts of my experiences while engaged in Performance Drawing. The research process is constructed and described throughout this exegesis and the research artefacts were created through discussion, performance and reflexion. My multi-disciplinary practice is expanded and investigated in order to broaden my understanding of the potential of drawing.

The aim of the project is to develop my practice – the emergent and skilled process of drawing, through a strategy of using Performance Drawing itself as a mode of enquiry. This exploration endeavours to identify new understandings and methods of image generation in live drawing. Using this strategy, I seek to create an inclusive form of cultural interaction which incorporates the artist, the act of drawing as performance and the audience.

Through performance as enquiry via drawing, I identify and unravel notions of public and private space that reflect aspects of my identity. This investigation discusses the interconnected experience of human engagement through Performance Drawing as an immediate means of response, the aleatoric processes of collaboration and improvisation, the contemporary definition of site-specific practice, the artist as social leveller, the potential for apolitical social interconnectedness through performance, and the possibilities of transformation through art-making.

Responding to music, to the performances of collaborators, and to the audience I spontaneously translate my experiences into
line, form and gesture. These drawings become the dialogue of my performance. This research has resulted in a series of public performance installations, the generation of new imagery and the discovery of a projector-drawing device that will enable this experience to be shared by a larger audience. Central to my practice is the notion that human contact through the cultural experience of visual art is transformational.
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Introduction

Encounters
As a child, entering a smoke-filled parlour to present a personally designed card to a patron.

Disguised in an old hat and an overcoat, hiding in inner city doorways, drawing the passing parade.

Serving beer in a pub whilst responding to the clients’ post-swill dispositions by means of graphite on paper.

Sandwiched between an international rock band and 40,000 fans in Spain, documenting the musicians in action on a sketchbook.

Producing a large improvised drawing of circus performers and insisting the drawing be taken out onto the street so a car can drive over it.

A child’s landscape of smoke, beer and disguise – these encounters are some of the seminal experiences from which my current approach has emerged. This research project, titled The Spectacle of Performance Drawing is an enquiry into my live public drawing practice, its origins and the heritage that led me to a rich and captivating approach involving drawing, performing and the public. The project takes the form of a series of documented live performance installations and this exegesis.

The aim of this research project is to develop an inclusive description of my practice, which takes place at the point of contact between the artist, the work and the audience. This exegesis seeks to contribute to a broader understanding of the practice of contemporary drawing. I describe my current practice of drawing through a strategy of Performance Drawing. Performance Drawing is also the subject of this research project.
In my search to understand where Performance Drawing may fit into a broader understanding of contemporaneous art production, I have first identified that I am a product of my time. My vision of art was incubated in what in today’s terms may be described as a modernist paradigm. Early artists of interest include the social realists Daniela Vassilief, with his depiction of the street life in Australia, and Noel Counihan, with his drawings and passion for civil rights. They also include the theatricality and dynamism of works by German Expressionists such as Max Beckman and Otto Dix. I studied Western art from a modernist perspective through the traditional language of drawing.

The act of drawing is an immersive, emergent, primal and performative process (Hill 1966). I believe drawing requires response and involvement from the hand, the eye and the spirit. It involves fine judgment, impulse, selection and daring – a total involvement by the artist. For me it requires a commitment to drawing form, the dynamics of movement, the passage of time and the personality of gesture.

In developing an understanding of my current practice I will expand and identify the elements that define my understanding of Performance Drawing.

Firstly, performing for me is the execution of an action. Performance Art is the conscious engagement with a concept by the artist in a series of actions directed to an audience. Drawing itself is an action and an object: one performs a drawing when making a drawing. A performance is an action and can be referred to as an act, a section of a program or play.

Hence, to draw is performative. Performativity ‘enacts what it names’ (Butler 1997, p. 43), as do the terms drawing and performance.

Drawing as a performative act is physical: a surface is marked by an instrument guided (in my case) by the hand, and simultaneously, this movement or action becomes a conductor
for the response of the artist in that moment (Naute 2009). The residual artefact is the drawing created via the act of drawing.

In my practice, Performance Drawing is the amalgamation of my passion for drawing as an immediate and responsive form of art making with my aspiration for visual communication to be an inclusive and interconnected form of cultural interaction. Using conventional artists’ tools, inks and charcoal, my visual arts practice is activated by situations that provide environments that are peopled with the invited and the uninvited. My engagement in Performance Drawing has propelled my practice towards the public arena and the public arena has in turn become my studio.

This exegesis describes and investigates a highly diverse series of events, attitudes and methods. The process of Performance Drawing attempts to weld together the disparate.

This document discusses elements of my performance-based drawing practice and its heritage via the performances I describe. It does so by investigating multi-disciplinary and informal collaboration through reflexion. Reflexivity, according to Haseman and Mafé (2009, p. 9),

occurs when a creative practitioner acts upon the requisite research material to generate new material which immediately acts back upon the practitioner who is in turn stimulated to make a subsequent response.

Each performance I undertake in this project is primary research. Each performance generates new material as data. The insights gained in each performance inform the strategies for the next performance.

Through Performance Drawing I explore notions of public and private space and consequently their autobiographical origins in my practice. I examine the corporeal (pertaining to the body) and liminal space (transformational state) in relation to the act and action of Performance Drawing, thereby investigating the roles and responses of the audience and the artist. My enquiry is informed by the work of William Kentridge, Marina
Abramovic and Joan Jonas. I discuss their contributions to a multi-disciplinary and performative approach to socio-political discourse in contemporaneous art production.

This project recounts the fluid and creative relationships between the artist as performer, other performers and the audience as active participants. The audience is the subject. As Marina Abramovic points out, ‘without the audience the work does not exist. The work does not have any meaning’ (Abramovic 2010). Hence, the audience is a participant. Through live drawing installation, this project seeks to allow the possibility of a rich and inclusive audience experience.

I have documented my Performance Drawing process through a series of exhibitions, performances, and this exegesis. The practice-led research methodologies adopted for this project are employed at the intersection of performance and studio practice.

The ‘Spectacle of Performance Drawing’ project identifies a sequence of performance drawings called events, and these events have produced a collection of artefacts. These artefacts or data include drawings, photographic documentation, digital video recordings and this exegesis.

Practice-led research has emerged as an appropriate tool, both for producing my work and for enquiry. Therefore, I work as a practitioner-researcher. The principal architect of the term ‘practice-led research’ is artist and researcher Carole Gray. Gray defines practice-led research as:

Firstly, research which is initiated in practice, where questions, problems, challenges are identified and formed by the needs of practice and practitioners; and secondly, that the research strategy is carried out through practice, using predominantly methodologies and specific methods familiar to us as practitioners. (Barrett & Bolt 2007, p. 147)

Brad Haseman, a researcher into the dynamics of practice-led research in the creative industries, asserts that Carole Gray’s conception of ‘practice led-research’ assigns primacy to practice
and insists that because creative practice is both ongoing and persistent, practitioner researchers do not merely ‘think’ their way through or out of a problem, but rather they ‘practise’ to a resolution.’ (Haseman & Mafé 2009).

This fluid method of research via production enables a range of emergent developments. Using a flexible approach, I applied this research paradigm by using cognitive and interdisciplinary procedures in collaborative improvisation drawing and performance events. These events, as site-specific processes, generated visual and audio data in the field; in other words, ‘practice’ leads to a resolution. Haseman and Mafé explain that, ‘The collected data determined the procedures for each subsequent event employing strategies characterized as practice-led research’ (Haseman & Mafé 2009).

The performative research paradigm provides a structure with which to audit this action generating process (Haseman 2007). As each event required planning, design, action, production and data collation, ‘The research process inaugurated movement and transformation. It is performative’ (Haseman 2004, p. 150). Carter points out that ‘this flow of action response solution can only be analysed in reflexion’(Carter 2004, p. 6). Through a reflexive process, the parameters of each event were determined by an emergent, or developing, site-specific rationale which in turn was negotiated as a new appropriate project plan for (in the case of this project) the next site. This is consistent with Haseman’s description of the process:

The ‘Spectacle of Performance Drawing’ as an enquiry stages each event at a different location where symbolic data is generated in the forms of practice, still and moving images, music and the sound of live action and digital code (Haseman 2007, p. 151).

James Meyer describes multiple events and sites as ‘functional sites’. According to Meyer, a functional site is:

a process, an operation occurring between sites, a mapping of institutional and discursive filiations and the bodies that move between them (the artist’s above all). It is an informational site,
a locus of overlap of text, photographs and video recordings, physical places and things.... It is a temporary thing; a movement; a chain of meanings devoid of a particular focus (Kwon 2004, p. 65).

Meyer describes a nomadic narrative, a sequence of events and actions articulated by the artist corresponding to the electronic spaces of the internet and cyberspace. The experience is of transivity or, to put it another way, it is a work in transit like a train passing through stations. This Spectacle of Performance Drawing project can be seen as a collection of transitive sites as it is a series of events that progresses from location to location where each event informs the subsequent event.

The preliminary organisation and production for each event included securing a venue, inviting collaborating performers, informing the public, and gathering and installing materials. The performance and the generation of images was the result of a multi-disciplinary approach of improvisation and collaboration continually resulting in the creation of new data through experimental development.

Haseman and Mafe’s and also Gray’s (Gray & Burnett 2007) theoretical works describe this process of Practice-led Research as being both revealing and fluid. Mafe says of performance artists, “our aim is not to be prescriptive or limiting. We highlighted the generative nature and necessary fluidity of this form of research instead” (2009, p. 28). I realised the accuracy of this description in my first performance and in all subsequent ones. For instance, for my first performance at the Southern Cross University next Art Gallery *Hang live, hang still – suspended animation*, I proposed and publicly advertised an improvisational performance art installation, inviting collaborators to participate at a specified time. I had no real guarantee of anyone’s attendance and did not know what the exact result of the art production would be. Thus, resolution was revealed, reached and understood only through process and application and the materiality of the means by which I practice. Paul Carter describes this process:
Part of my practice is to dissolve the conventional distinction between writing/thinking and drawing/making. Common to both is a recognition that the production of meaning is inseparable from the tools and media used to produce it. This is material thinking (Carter 2004, p. 13).

Through action and practice, strategies were invariably altered and reassessed through reflexion. Each event was systematically designed, and the structure of the each event was refined through process. The outcome of each event informed the ones that followed. This exegesis is complemented by documentations which map the progress of each event and which consequently serve as documentations of this method and form secondary research.

The residuum arrived at through the act of engaging with and occupying each site contributed to and informed a gestalt or overview, leading to a greater understanding of the possibilities for my practice. The following chapters will delineate this exploration of Performance Drawing.

**Roadmap – how to navigate this document**

This exegesis is organised into chapters which I summarise below. After the introductory chapter, Chapters 1 to 6 describe the performance drawing events in chronological order. Each event has been assigned a chapter. The events are titled and dated so as to catalogue and locate the events. Chapter 7 concludes the exegesis.

The descriptions of the events include summaries, statements and documentation. The modernist heritage of performance in visual arts and related theoretical discourses inform these event descriptions. The emergent outcomes of each event are understood as a consequence of employing a reflexive methodology, which means that each event informed subsequent performances.
Sections of the document are written in a diary format, describing particular segments of the performances in the present tense. This use of the present tense seeks to invoke for the reader the immediacy and pace of the events so as to revisit the reverie and to recreate the trajectory of the performances.

The description of each event also highlights the particular aims most relevant to that performance as outlined in the introduction. Dispersed throughout these present-tense descriptions, my enquiry unfolds through documentation, reflexion and descriptions of origin, heritage and research, locating this project in the present.

**Introduction**

This introductory chapter presents early encounters which informed my practice. It then outlines the research topic, the research methodology and the aims of the enquiry. I also outline my practice method, an approach that uses aspects of a site-specific transitive rationale. The introduction concludes with a road map describing in chronological order the performances as events.

**Chapter 1: Event 1: Hang live hang still – suspended animation**, Next Art Gallery, Southern Cross University, Lismore, NSW.

For this event, the first in the series, I invited the local community of Lismore to witness and participate in the making of an art event using drawing, performance and music within a restricted time frame. The gallery space is located in the CBD of Lismore. The event was arranged to occur during the middle of a working day in a space surrounded by cars, shoppers and itinerants. I have included an excerpt from the exhibition proposal followed by a description, presented as word pictures, in the form of a diary extract. Digital images that are located throughout provide a parallel description of the event. Literature which I read at this time on the subject of studio practice as research, material thinking, emergent practice, the construction of identity, the history of the circus, the carnivalesque and artist as performer
informed my practice and led me to reconsider the potential of
documentation using digital images. The above template is applied
to the description of each event in the subsequent chapters.

**Chapter 2: Event 2: Hang live hang still in the Valley, Gallery Artisan, Fortitude Valley, Brisbane, Queensland.**

This was a live drawing event that responded to both street and location. It took place in conjunction with an exhibition of drawings, which had been completed in the studio. The venue for both the exhibition and the live drawing event was the display window of a gallery that became a portal between the artwork and the street. Nothing was fixed. During the exhibition the glass of the window was smashed and this was brought into the focus of the main players. The performance involved a chance or aleatory process, which could only be analysed through reflexion. Through recounting the process of this event by means of photographic documentation I present aspects of practice-led research, material thinking and aleatoric processes. Included are formal descriptions of artworks that were produced both as studio-based and site-specific works. Due to variables experienced through happenstance, this event is explained in four stages: Stage 1: pre-production, Stage 2: installation, Stage 3: the break and Stage 4: the removal.

**Chapter 3: Event 3: Home studio, Lismore Regional Gallery.**

This work took place in a display window at Lismore’s Regional Gallery, and was exposed to the street. It remained on exhibition from 21 November until 17 January 2009. As the title suggests I installed the contents of my studio into the art space, which became a facsimile studio and I continued working as performance. In this chapter, the project is described through diary extracts, reflexive descriptions and photographic documentation. I also acknowledge the impact on my work of growing up in environments that were public places. In this chapter I explore the romantic notion of the artist, the artist as site-specific sculpture as revealed through the heritage of performance and the notions of public and private.

*Shanghai 2009–2010* was a series of performances that confronted the notion of leaving the white cube of a gallery space and venturing into a social entertainment venue where I was an artist in residence cum entertainer confronting and responding to the musicians, the audience and the venue. Central to this performance was the theatrical intrusion into the Glamour Bar. I describe the successes and failures of the drawings and the success of these performances through photographic documentation and descriptions from the audience, including an interview with Chinese contemporary artist Zhang Jian-Jun. I examine the possibility of continuity of cultural engagement through process, site-specific work and drawing.

Chapter 5: Event 5: *Site and sound*, Tweed River Art Gallery.

Realised through digital photographs, the installation, called *Site and sound*, documents a performance made in collaboration with musicians while working on four large panels over four performances during May 2009. The description of this event is through digital photographs by Cal MacKinnon and Peter King, digital videos by Raymond de Weerdt, project descriptions, correspondence from the gallery director Susi Muddiman, and Exhibitions curator Gail McDermott, and a description of the event by members of the audience. Through these descriptions I investigate liminal space and corporeality. My subject was the musicians, the surrounding landscape and the audience. The experience allowed me to enter a transforming liminal space and the document suggests the liminal space became available to others. The multi-faceted performance gave the experience of action and corporeality.


This work is ongoing and is as open-ended as a drawn line is long. The final performance in this project will be designed from elements harvested as knowledge from the previous performances to restructure the design for *Moving Lines*. This work introduces video projections as an inclusive device. The
drawings will be embellished through the use of Tagtool, an electronic drawing device discovered during this research project. A work of art that makes use of all or many art forms to create a complete artwork can be referred to by the term *Gesamtkunstwerk*. I review the notion of *Gesamtkunstwerk* in relation to this performance event. I discuss the final design through references and discussion on William Kentridge and Joan Jonas. The photo documentation of the final performance will be added as an appendix.
chapter 1
Event 1: **Hang live hang still – suspended animation**

In this chapter, I describe Event 1: **Hang live hang still – suspended animation**. I locate the event in time and place and then list the crew in attendance. The next part of the description locates the components of my practice and the subject of investigation by providing an excerpt from the exhibition proposal supplied to the gallery director. This proposal acknowledges my multidisciplinary practice as an established method and provides evidence of my previous work.

This event is primarily described through diaristic documentation written in the present tense after the event. Each moment of the performance becomes a word picture that is Fultonesque\(^1\) in style.

This personal voice is a device that transforms the reader into a witness of the event, even though the account was initially designed purely as documentation. Embedded in the description are the artist’s biographic and personal precedents, a predisposition on the part the performer to adopt a disguise, and a reference to readings on the circus and the carnivalesque. Upon subsequent reflection of the potential of this mode of representing the event, my use of the word pictures was designed to list my inclusive internal processes and to capture the convivial mood of the performers, the collaborators (called the crew) and the audience.

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\(^1\) Hamish Fulton describes his work by providing us with details he feels are essential to a greater understanding of the efforts and route he has undertaken to complete the work, and the walk. Walking… The words become images - or image triggers (Anderson n.d.).
The final activity in the gallery employed the framing of new constellations of imagery to assert the now visible physical and narrative contexts. These actions, described through diaristic documentation and digital images, locate the frame as a traditional compositional tool and a meaning-making device capable of enhancing the spectacle and bringing the performance to a temporary state of closure.

At the conclusion of my description of this event I express additional aspirations for future spectacles of this kind.
Event 1: **Hang live hang still – suspended animation**

**Location:** S.C.U. Next Art Gallery, 89 Magellan Street, Lismore  
**Performance:** 25th March 2008, 12pm to 5pm  
**Exhibition:** 26th March dates 2008

**Crew**  
Musicians: Vasudha, and Jem Edwards  
Performer: Laticious (Lindsay Welch)  

**Original Proposal**  
The following is an excerpt from my exhibition proposal to the director of Next Art Gallery:

Hang live hang still – suspended animation investigates the symbiotic and vulnerable relationship between artists and their work. This exploration transpires through the integration of performance and the application of the constructed images in conjunction with completed studio works.

This investigation takes the form of a live process based drawing performance. Works on paper will be drawn and collaged and the surfaces will be manipulated in response to the physical and narrative contexts of the SCU Next Art Gallery. The performance is the installation and the live construction of the images. Investigating the interplay between the actions, the animated movements and gestures of the audience and image manipulation using a variety of transferable frames to explore the notion of the ‘finished’ artwork. The result is a symbiotic art happening where the work is spontaneously created and recontextualised through a live framing process.

By means of an interview on the ABC’s regional breakfast program I extended a public invitation for people to attend and possibly engage. This invitation was to the community of Lismore, performers, students, friends and passers by to come
to the gallery space to witness and participate in an event that had a loose schedule, which included five hours of improvised performance during the occupancy of the gallery. The intention was to create an active and inventive environment that was indebted to the performance venue ‘Cabaret Voltaire,’ founded by Hugo Ball and Emmy Hennings in Zurich in 1916 at the birthplace of Dada. At the time, this venue, ‘stood for a wholly eclectic freedom to experiment; it enshrined play as the highest human activity, and its main tool was chance’ (Hughes 1980, p. 61).

In preparation for the event I approached musicians, performers and artists to take part in the performance as an improvisational collective using the gallery and the surrounding streets as the venue. This invitation for people to attend, perform and or play was unconditional. I endeavoured to bring together a group that, through the flow of osmosis involved in the improvisational process, would embark on the transient possibilities of liminal space.

This approach of planning and setting the parameters of the event allows for future possibilities. Through the experience of production and practice I provide the performance environment with a multitude of information to allow for innovative spontaneous outcomes. This facilitates an emergent practice.

The following is my diaristic account of the event.

**25th May 2008:**

**12 noon:** Wearing a long black evening dress and white sneakers, armed with rolls of paper, paints, charcoal, buckets, brushes, bamboo poles, rags and coffee, I am ready for a start. Unravelling a roll of drawing paper, I clip it to a drawing board on an easel in the front window of the gallery. The sound of my first sheet of drawing paper unfurling echoes in the empty space. I position myself
so I can look out the window and the doorway onto the street. People crossing roads cars parking turning moving bins bags trash dogs prams signs

I reach for a stick of charcoal. With it I scratch fleeting impressions onto the paper. I observe the machinations of the street. “One of the skills which I regard as absolutely primal in any art making is that of looking.” (Petherbridge 2003) My desire is to capture a moment of the constant flow of traffic … the stick breaks. As I continue to draw as I look, the crew and audience are arriving and moving around the gallery. Watching pedestrians cross the intersection in front the gallery, the outline of a male figure in full stride emerges from the transcriptions I have made on the paper. Under my hand visual descriptions of the urban narratives begin to emerge from the white of the paper. Individuals negotiate their paths, people peer in through the window at the curious spectre I present. The light changes as the afternoon arrives. I am still scratching with charcoal, pastels, an eraser, trying building some surface on the paper. My preoccupation with the intrinsic qualities of materials and the formal elements of composition are paramount during this phase.
I look,
draw,
mark,
capture, stroke, move, climb,
transpose, smudge,
decipher, scratch...
I look.
The musicians arrive. I breathe a sigh of exhilaration and relief. In a full costume of pink and black burlesque bodice and a platinum blonde wig, Laticious the stilt-walker arrives ...

They’re selling postcards of the hanging
They’re painting the passports brown
The beauty parlour is filled with sailors
The circus is in town
Here comes the blind commissioner
They’ve got him in a trance... the circus is in town.²

² Lines from Bob Dylan’s 1965 song Desolation Row (Dylan 1965)
I continue drawing. People mill around the space.

A Bach fugue filters throughout the room and out onto the street. It propels us ... and together we are passengers on an ambiguous and transient ride of investigation.

occurrence

movement

flow

disturbance

edit amendment alteration

pentimenti

I am drawing vigorously, intensely, and rhythmically; the surface of the paper is under constant strain. Continually moving while I draw, the images shift as fast as the environment I am depicting. I climb the ladder to reach the top of the paper.

shifting balancing

SNAP

Using and breaking charcoal ... a constant pulse. I add thick, bold strokes of black ink. Flesh coloured chalk pastel. The musicians change composition. The studio becomes infused with the collective energy of the crew and the audience. I scramble to begin another image. I fix more paper to the picture rail and let it fall and run along the floor.

I draw Laticious. The carnivalesque beauty on stilts.

My recent readings into the discourse surrounding the Carnivalesque led me to reconsider my drawing performance.
The transgressive presence of a circus performer signified to an informed the audience that this was a playful, inclusive tableau ... an event of wonder and spectacle. Traditionally, a defining feature of the fairground or carnival has been the involvement of two social extremes – low and high culture. There, people gathered together to watch the spectacles on display. These dynamic, paradoxical, and creative social events are termed by Mikal Bahktin as the Carnivalesque.³

1.30: Catching a reflection of myself wearing a black evening gown with paint-covered hands, I recalled a photo of Hugo Ball. I begin to consider the role of artist as a disguise.

I recalled myself in 1993, hiding in doorways disguised in a large hat and coat. I would draw street urchins, the displaced persons living in parks and the many weird and wonderful denizens of St. Kilda. Fascinated with the passing parade, I was compelled and record this spectacle through the language of drawing. I rapidly transposed the vision before me in secrecy; it became almost like a sport or game, a performance. This event was not private; I was working in public, wearing an evening gown in the middle of the day.

³ “Carnival is the place for working out a new mode of interrelationship between individuals . . . People who in life are separated by impenetrable hierarchical barriers enter into free and familiar contact on the carnival square” (Bakhtin 1984, p. 123).
Suddenly, the act of drawing felt unfamiliar. I realised that both Laticious and myself were falling into the loaded template of the ‘artist and model scenario’. The studio tradition of artist and model also alludes to an arranged and formalised composition and location. The intrusion of this unwanted hierarchical relationship prompted me to subvert it by initiating the following intervention:

2:15pm: I begin to draw using a thick piece of charcoal fixed to a bamboo pole. Drawing and walking, I mark the paper with long lines. I am making an ephemeral record of my occupancy. The bamboo serves to distance my body from the paper. The extension acts as a metaphor for the space between artist, the subject and the passing parade.

I grab a jar of shellac. I pour the contents down the image.

The paper becomes unhinged from the wall. It collapses. Laticious lunges effortlessly and places the paper back on the picture rail. Using the ladder I continue to move up, down, round and across. Laticious stands frozen in an impromptu pose.
2:35pm: I ask a crewmember to take the drawing out onto the street to encourage cars to drive over it. Laticious goes out the front of the gallery and, looming 12ft in the air, graciously persuades the cars to stop. The drawing is placed on the road and a car is encouraged to drive over it. The car draws onto the paper. Car tyre and ink strikingly tarnish the paper. An intervention. An inversion. An improvisation. The drawing again becomes subject to the spontaneous vagaries of location, chance and happenstance. An aleatoric strategy.

**crash!**

I knock over a jar of ink while descending the ladder. Ink pools on the floor. Simultaneously, an elderly woman enters the gallery and tells me that she had heard me on the radio this morning. She offers me her paper shopping bag as material. A new subject. She pours the contents of her bag onto the floor then hands it to me to use. I tear it up and use it as collage. This found object becomes a trace of the audience. The work now contains physical remnants of the location.
This is an example of Material Thinking in action. As Carter points out, ‘...the production of meaning is inseparable from the tools and media used to produce it.’ (Carter 2004, p. 13).

At my request, the crew scavenge for more paper remnants and scraps. Community notices and gig posters, aged and compacted by weather, time and grime were bought in from the street.
I recall those poetic words of Jacques de la Villegle: ‘The posters’ words and images provide the raw materials that are worked over by anonymous gestures, rain and wind (Phillips 1990, p. 3).

Lengths of paper are taken out to the road and my new associates place ink-soaked rags in front of the paper to make more car tyre markings.

During this performance the overwhelming feeling of unfamiliarity encouraged me to employ aleatoric methods of marking or to modify performative acts, restricted by time and punctuated by spontaneity, in order to explore and develop a personal and responsive visual vocabulary. The tyre tracks and long, black lines were produced anew in direct response to this unanticipated dimension of drawing as performance.
4.00pm: I begin to focus upon framing and reframing as an endgame strategy to express the physical and narrative contexts of this redescribed space. Hanging a large gold frame on the wall between two hung drawings gives agency to a crew member to install a poster remnant in the now encased surface. A small ornate frame, earlier placed to frame a figure in the background, is repositioned to frame a small, and previously marginalised figure. Framing a figure sitting on a bench amongst a group in intense conversation elevates the nobility of this sedentary activity. Framing a randomly selected floor space reminds the audience of the contribution to the spectacle located in the loaded meanings of the space itself.

At the conclusion of this event my aspirations for future performances involved narratives that acknowledged Nicolas Bourriaud and Paul Eluard Bourriaud who proposed that today’s artists, ‘traverse a cultural landscape saturated with signs and create new pathways between multiple formats of expression and communication’ (Bourriaud 2009).
These images of day after day  
The vices the virtues so imperfect  
The transparency of men passing among them by chance  
And passing women breathed by your elegant obstinacies  
Your obsessions in a heart of lead on virgin lips  
The vices the virtues so imperfect  
The likeness of looks of permission with eyes you conquer  
The confusion of bodies wearinesses ardours  
The imitation of words attitudes ideas  
The vices the virtues so imperfect  
(Eluard 2001).

5.00pm: The work was hung. The exhibition was officially open, yet it was never closed.
chapter 2
chapter 2

Event 2: *Hang live hang still in the Valley*

In this chapter I describe Event 2: *Hang live hang still in the Valley*. I include in this description an adaptation of the proposal written for the gallery director that focuses upon: the relationship between artist and work; the integration of a live drawing performance and studio production and works; live integration of drawings; works on paper and perspex that were drawn and collaged in response to the physical locale; the window as a portal between the artist and the spaces beyond; what is considered a ‘finished fine art object and what is considered a work in process; gathering information from the site; drawing and using objects in situ to create collage that is a direct response to the site.
Event 2: **Hang live hang still in the Valley**

**Location:** Artisan Brisbane, Ivory Street 24/7 - corner, Brunswick Street and Ivory Street Fortitude Valley, Brisbane

**Performance:** 21st June 2008, 12:00pm

**Exhibition:** 3rd June to 28th June 2008

Event 2 *Hang live hang still in the Valley* began with the writing of a Project Proposal for a performance at Artisan Gallery in Fortitude Valley. The name is assigned and a relationship to Event 1 held at Southern Cross University’s (SCU’s) next Art Gallery is made evident. The location is known as a professional site within a vibrant commercial and Entertainment district. The proposal anticipated an extended integration of a live drawing performance as a component of a site-specific practice. During the act of writing the proposal, moments of learning and fragments of knowledge gleaned from the next Art Gallery event in Lismore were acknowledged and embedded in the project design.

As an extension to the previous performance in Lismore I intended to make drawn and collaged works that responded to the site. It became clear that this approach would be challenged and intensified by my proposed performance installation at a significantly smaller city location. Originally a display window, Ivory Street 24/7 literally acted as a portal to the activity of city street life. The original intention was to exhibit works made both in the studio and on site from data gathered from the field in the form of drawings and photographic information. These images consequently became frozen reflections of the location, enabling a platform for the emergent process of responding and representing the site.

There are important links between this event and Event 1 held in Lismore in the SCU next Art Gallery. For example, I intended to make drawn and collaged work that responded to the site as I had done in Lismore. I also found that I had included in the Brisbane proposal fragments of knowledge and experience that I had gained from the Lismore performance.
There were significant challenges that arose. Firstly the Brisbane space itself was smaller while the gallery was in a more densely populated area. There was no direct doorway access to the street. The public could not enter the space, and in order for me gain access, I had to go though a shop and behind a counter. The window gallery was a tight, thin corridor. It felt like a glass-fronted cage. Individual strategies were developed in response to various situations that occurred during the event.

I describe the event and its processes in four stages.

**Stage 1 – Pre-production**

Surveying the footpaths, streets and the alleyways surrounding Artisan, walking, photographing and drawing I collect field data.

Streetlights,
Posters,
graffiti,
busy footpaths,
cars, horns, humming traffic,
pedestrians appear
move
cogs in motion
mottled concrete
discarded rubbish,
shops,
windows
became my subject matter.

These observed and recorded moments become documented fragments of experience. Taking this data into the studio I fashion a series of works as reflections of the site.

Referencing the collected data I construct images on purpose-cut sheets of plexiglass varying in size. These images are designed to be installed as segments of a larger composition
using the window frame as a device. My drawn descriptions are captured between transparent planes. I recall Marcel Duchamp’s The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even (The Large Glass) of 1915–1923. The unfolding of form recalls the figures moving through space like the machinations of a busy city street.

Now in the studio referencing a photograph of a man wearing a suit, drinking a can of cola while waiting for the traffic lights to change next to the Artisan gallery, this figure is transcribed with wax pencil, semi-transparent turquoise and indigo ink onto perspex. The mediums are agitated by the nature of the plastic surface. The wax pencil, the ink separate, fuse and reduce the applied lines, abstracting the drawn work now titled Blue suit. This struggle with medium and surface reinterprets aspects of intention as indeterminable results left to chance, allowing for the flow of happenstance.

Using the digital photographs taken on site for field data I make
a series of mixed media works on plexi-glass that I install in a simulated window in my studio in preparation for the event at 24/7 Ivory Street.

**Stage 2 – Installation**

Installing the studio-produced works into the exhibition space is complicated. There is no existing hanging-system; I make a system from lengths of bamboo. This proposed hanging method is difficult to set up, given the 75cm depth of the exhibition space. My movements are restricted. Each plexi-glass image is hung with nylon line suspended from the bamboo poles (hidden above the window). The nylon allows the images to appear as if suspended in space.

In the final stages of installation I begin drawing on the window with wax pencil (wax, as I can ensure the gallery director that wax is easily removed and will not damage existing fixtures).

Finally, drawing on the interior surface of the window in direct response to the view from inside the window, the window as a portal feels activated. On the opposite side of the street in front of me, a man, standing momentarily motionless under an elongated streetlight is waiting for the traffic lights to change.
Drawing this vision, the subject, the model, the participant, with long gestural strokes of black wax, slipping fast and stuttering on the now sun warmed glass, a drawing is performed.

I draw a statuesque form in a purely linear manner (I recall Giacometti), grounding the forms with long horizontal shadows which speak of the late afternoon.

On finally viewing the installation from out on the footpath, I realise the highly reflective nature of the exhibition space at that particular time of day. As a result the works now installed on the inside cannot be seen. I had placed small reflective boxes into a highly reflective display window, which in turn is acting as a mirror for the constant flux of the street. A progressive palimpsest.

Returning to the site later in that evening to set the lights, the appearance of the installation is again unexpected. At night the images appear to diminish in the expanse of the exhibition window. Through the installation process, I come to a true understanding of the nature of the site.
Stage 3 – The break

A week later, the window has been broken. It is suggested the break in the window is the outcome of an unexpected incident resulting from the surrounding entertainment district. The window is made of shatterproof glass; the break is more of a suspended shattering that forms concentric circles in the top right-hand section of the 12-millimetre thick pane. As the pane is to be replaced at the end of my exhibition, the gallery director gives me permission to paint the surface of the window, without restriction.

I am due to draw another series of works inside the window as a public performance.

However gaining the freedom to paint all over the window gives me the chance to work inside as well as outside the space.
without caution. Frank Auerbach in a rare interview in the documentary *Auerbach* when discussing his painting process describes ‘real style is not having a program - it’s how one behaves in a crisis’ (Auerbach 2001). He also states that he is involved in ‘destroying things every day in the act of working and I often recall a picture I had considered finished in order to rework it’. The break in the glass gives me the opportunity to rework the installation. With the knowledge that the surface is to be destroyed, I feel a sense of autonomy.

**Back at the site:**

21st June, 12.00pm: using shellac-based ink and acrylic and chinagraph (wax) pencils I take to the surface of the window. With new-found freedom and vigour I simulate the curvilinear rhythms of the break in the pane, following the cracks with brush strokes of turquoise and scarlet shellac-based ink that drips vertical lines down the glass. It is boiling hot in here. The strength of the morning sun is magnified by the glass and it feels like a sweat lodge. Restricted both by the width of the space and the works I have installed, drawing is difficult. In addition ABC radio broadcaster Vicky Kerrigan comes into the space to interview me and document the process on video.

**Interview excerpt:**

**Kellie:** I’m wondering how I can highlight that break – make it red or blue. I’d make it red wouldn’t I?

1:50 pm: Kellie gets the red ink and begins to work around the break. They talk about what it will look like in the morning light. She continues.

3:28 pm: The brush moves around the glass with the red paint

**Kellie:** Like an injury.

The ink constantly drips down the surface of the glass. Now dizzy with
excitement, using black ink I extend the perspective lines of the central drawing of the road out along the window. Observing people on the streets I draw small characters.

While I’m doing this, a friend comes up and leans on the window. I instruct him to stay and I trace the outline of his figure in black. By drawing in certain areas intuitively, I am structuring the composition inward and holding the various forms together with active tension. The small designed works from the studio which are installed in the site now have bold multi-directional line work to restrain and hold the previously floating composition. I work live in the space for an hour.

Having the parameters of time-based performance and knowing the window painting is essentially an ephemeral/terminal piece, I feel licence to be bold. I put my trust in an aleatoric process, as there is nothing to lose and everything to gain through a spirited application, which permits the condition of invention.

‘The condition of invention,’ according to Paul Carter, is the state of being that allows a state of becoming to emerge – is a perception, or recognition, of the ambiguity of appearances. Invention begins when what signifies exceeds its signification – when what means one thing, or conventionally functions in one role, discloses other possibilities (Carter 2008, p. 11).

The reinvention of this space is made possible by an intervention. The broken window allows a new performed work to emerge with no ownership of the outcome. What it does result in is a series of fresh, sharp and concise images that appear related to the graffiti walls in the back alleys off Brunswick Street. The images can now be seen at a distance with the new application of bold gestural marks. When attempting to understand the demands and the life of the space, I respond best at the site as opposed to designing work in the studio. The intention, the materials and the
location have to coincide to produce the flow of an ‘optimal state’. According to the psychologist Mihaly Cziksentmihalyi, optimal states result when there is order in consciousness. This happens when we are focused on realistic goals with our skills matching the opportunities for action. Goals allow people to concentrate attention on the task at hand, forgetting other things temporarily (Cziksentmihalyi 1990, p. 1).

I am able to let go of any preconceived designs for the installation and act accordingly.

**Stage 4 – The removal**
The final episode to this window performance is the removal of the window at the closing of this exhibition. The removal of the extremely heavy pane of glass is a precise organised event involving seven burly glaziers using suction caps to carefully hold and pull the glass out of its frame – a dangerous operation. If the glass breaks it could sever an arm. What had merely been my drawing now becomes something potentially lethal.

*Final window, Artisan. Photo Christine Johnstone.*
I watch as the men remove the window, strap it on the back of a truck and drive away. The broken window reflects the life in Brunswick Street as it is driven down the street.

This event proved to be multi-faceted and involved unanticipated outcomes. The initial strategy of combining studio and site drawings did not have the intended resolution. Only after the installation did I fully understand the nature of the site. In hindsight, I realise I was timid and precious in the studio. However, by happenstance an intervention altered my program. My experience was consistent with Gray’s description of practice-led research – questions, problems and challenges were identified and through the action of practice a resolved conclusion to the installation evolved (Gray 1996). I practised to a resolution (Haseman & Mafé 2009). This enabled me to gain an understanding of the site through the physical engagement of performance drawing where aleatoric processes of production took hold. Once I began working on site, momentum facilitated a dynamic response, allowing for invention through tactile application and material thinking which in turn, facilitated an optimal state, the state of innovation.
Glazier in front of the window, Artisan. Photo Kellie O’Dempsey.

The removal. Photo Kellie O’Dempsey.

The window on the truck. Photo Kellie O’Dempsey.
chapter 3
Event 3: Home Studio

In this chapter I describe Event 3: Home studio. I include in my description a revised version of the exhibition proposal submitted to the Director of Lismore Regional Art Gallery and a chronological description of the program. In the revised exhibition proposal, and in reflexive descriptions and photographic documentation, I explore the romantic notion or myth of the artist studio and the heritage of the site-specific artworks. I also explore this notion through a personal examination of the concepts of public places and private spaces and of the artist as a site-specific sculptor and sculpture. I describe the romantic notion of the artist in the studio as a performance following the chronological description of the event.
Event 3: **Home Studio**

**Location:** Lismore Regional Gallery - 24/7 - 131 Molesworth Street, Lismore NSW  
**Performance:** 21st November 2008, 6pm  
**Exhibition:** 21st November to 17th January 2008

**Crew**  
**Musicians:** Vasudha Hart, and Jem Edwards

The following is a revised version of the exhibition proposal submitted to the Director of Lismore Regional Art Gallery.

Home Studio is a performative drawing event to be held in the 24/7 window project space of Lismore Regional Art Gallery in Molesworth Street. The event will span two days.

As a fine art exploration the project is a combination of live drawing performance and material thinking\(^4\) with mediums such as charcoal, collage and paint. It investigates the vulnerable act of making drawings in public view in a historically loaded space, the gallery. Home Studio is a satellite of the larger exhibition titled Home that is mounted inside the gallery. From the window space 24/7, I will record and respond in situ to the street life of Lismore through a series of drawings and collage objects. To this constructed environment I will introduce trademark studio works that act as grounds for new palimpsests, as original stories to be inhabited by new narratives.

As an outcome of reflective processes focussing on Event 2: *Hang live bang still in the Valley* at Gallery Artisan, in Fortitude Valley, I aimed to explore the 24/7 window space as a viewing platform, a tableau that allowed me to observe and to be observed and as a portal to a multitude of personal, artistic and theoretical sites. As Kwon (2004) points out,

[a] characteristic of today’s site-oriented art is the way in which the art work’s relationship to the actuality of the location (as

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\(^4\) According to Paul Carter (2004, p. 179), ‘One who thinks materially has to be a specialist in allotting. Some materials and behaviours disclose elective infinities; others repel one another. The combination creates the cohesion, on the one hand, and the volume, on the other emerging work’.  

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site) and the social conditions of the institutional frame (as site) are both subordinate to a discursively determined site that is delineated as a field of knowledge, intellectual exchange, or cultural debate (p. 26).

Kwon here refers to site-specific art production reaching beyond the confines of the gallery and the ‘institutional frame’ so as to connect with everyday existence. In the case of Home studio, the exhibition and the performance could be accessed by the community of Lismore and provided the opportunity to engage people on the street.

Through the installation of artefacts of studio production into Lismore Regional Gallery’s annex, 24/7, I reinvented my studio I signified my studio culture and I revealed to public viewing the traditionally private working space of the artist.

Exploring the mutability of the notions of home, public places and private spaces I designed a performance in which this tiny exhibition space became my studio and performance site – a transposition of the artist’s home studio into a small window-fronted gallery location.

To locate this performance within the site-specific art-making heritage, I refer to the origin and history of site-specific practice as described in Miwon Kwon’s text, One Place After Another. In this seminal essay Kwon discusses the last 40 years of site-specific art predominantly from the United States and Europe. Simon Townsend writes:

Kwon defines early site-specificity as a tacit or direct critique of the institution of the gallery space and what could be accomplished within it, symbolically, politically and experientially. She begins with early practices, citing artists such as Robert Barry and Daniel Buren (1960s and 70s), that redefined the museum/gallery space as a physically contextual site or the phenomenological site, in which the one of a kind ‘art-piece’ cannot be divorced from its physical relationship to the space (Townsend 2008)
This almost political site-specific practice was a direct response to the gallery space also referred to as the white cube, which contained what can be described as traditional art production such as painting and sculpture. These artists challenged the ideological and institutional dominance of gallery spaces that existed under modernism (Bourriaud 2009). Han’s Haake’s 1970 installation, *Moma Poll* employed a direct institutional critique to challenge the dominance of traditional gallery spaces.

According to Kristine Nielson:

> from the cultural site, we move toward a discursive site. Site specificity attempts here to engage in everyday life beyond the walls of the institutions of art so as to embrace non-art and social issues’ (Nielson 2003, p.1).

Gaiger (2009) discusses the role of multiple sites in Mark Dion’s 1991 project, *On tropical nature*:

> This was realized in 3 different locations: an uninhabited part of the rainforest in the basin of the Orinoco River in Venezuela, the Sala Mendoza gallery in the Caracas, and the American Fine Arts Co. in New York, where Dion displayed the specimens he had collected in the rain forest as works of art (p.49).

Dion’s work brought to the gallery artefacts from the rainforest site as reference to that site. In doing so, it made an immediate contribution to the political discussion on the global environmental crisis. This direct political act enabled a 5th site, which is the on going discourse about the installation.

Street Art contributes to Kwon’s site-specific discourse as a constellation of the abovementioned site-specific paradigms. Can street artists be described as rebelling against the art institute and traditional means of art production? These artists engage in everyday life beyond the art galley and also practice in a variety of transitory sites (Nielson 2005). Street Art’s non-commercial and transient codes can be translated as a means ‘to reveal the ways in which institutions mould art’s meaning to

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5 Alberro and Stimson (2009, p.3) explain that in the late 1960s and early 1970s, some artists revisited that radical promise of the European Enlightenment, and they did so precisely by confronting the institution of art with the claim that it was not sufficiently committed to, let alone realising or fulfilling, the pursuit of publicness that had brought it into being in the first place.
modulate its cultural and economic value’ (Kwon 2004, p. 88).

Street artist Banksy hides his personal identity and his vigilante art production antics as a means of self-preservation. Ironically his practice is heralded by some of the significant international art institutions. Peter Bengsten in his article *Site specificity and street art*, relates Banksy’s work to Kwon’s phenomenological paradigm: ‘a street artwork’s meaning is influenced by its fixed, ephemeral and non-commercial street context’ (Bengtsen 2013, p. 4) and it can be argued that, like Robert Barry’s wire installations, street art is ‘made to suit the place in which it was installed… [and] cannot be moved without being destroyed’ (Kwon 2004, p. 12).

Kwon describes the transitively experienced site as a mode of production where:

> model is not a map but an itinerary, a fragmentary sequence of events and actions through spaces, that is, a nomadic narrative whose path is articulated by the passage of the artist (Kwon 2004, p. 95).

This transitive site sits parallel to the spatial experience of the superhighway which corresponds ‘to the pattern of movement in electronic spaces of the Internet and cyberspace, which are likewise structured to be experienced transitively, one thing after another’ (Kwon 2004, p. 95) like watching graffitied walls through the window of a moving suburban train. In *The Spectacle of Performance Drawing* project, I practise from venues, window spaces and performance places.

Transforming the gallery into a ‘transitively experienced site’ (Kwon 2004) or transitive site requires the artist to be an instigator, an interventionist or ‘trickster’. In folklore the trickster is unconventional, the subordinate clown who equalises and ‘helps us reshape, validate, revolutionize, subvert, or reinforce cultural categories by re-instituting their very semiotic properties’ (Spinks 2001, p. 9).
In this project I am the artist or trickster who turns into a nomad, travelling from one public space to another to engage, to perform and to produce art work before your very eyes whilst concealing the cleverness behind the hand gestures that make drawings live.

*The Spectacle of Performance Drawing* project can be viewed as taking place in a series of transitive sites, as a series of events that progresses from location to location where each event informs the subsequent event. The exact itinerary only became apparent over time through direct experience, material thinking, and as a consequence of repeated episodes of reflection and reflexion.

Haseman and Mafe use the term ‘reflexivity’, to define the following process:

[It] occurs when a creative practitioner acts upon the requisite research material to generate new material, which immediately acts back upon the practitioner who is in turn stimulated to make a subsequent response. Within this looping process authorial control can be fragmented raising doubts about purpose, efficacy and control. A kind of chaos results and it is from within this chaos and complexity that the results of the creative research will begin to emerge and be worked through. (Haseman & Mafé 2009, p. 9)

This involvement in the intricacies of the process is fundamental to an emergent visual arts practice. For me as a practice-led researcher not only does reflexion enable the development of a better understanding of my own practice – I also I see it as active analysis that through practice and engagement enables the possibilities of a broadening and contribution to knowledge to be introduced in the field.

*The Spectacle of Performance Drawing* project utilises performance as a strategic invitation to the gallery as a destination for viewing invention. This project sought to entice the community back into the white cube, the gallery, a formal site. Hence, the gallery as a space and a site of invention and art making was again made available to audiences through a direct engagement with
the artist, the visual vocabulary of the artist, and the materials and spectacle of production. The focus of my engagement was an intervention directed at the street, an informal and often overlooked site. This engagement was initiated to encourage dialogue across a diverse cross section of the community. It was a classical inversion practice employed to decode and reinvent the gallery as a space for the local community.

The following passages describe the project through playful quotations of entries from my journal.

20th November 2008:

9 am: I remove items from my studio and pile them into my car. I drive them to Lismore Regional Art Gallery. I relocate and rearrange my studio in the tiny exhibition space. The 24/7 space is full of paintings, easels, personal photos, a sculpture by Fiona Fell titled ‘spoo’, an old bakelite telephone and plastic crayfish imitating Dali’s Aphrodisiac Phone, a plethora of drawing and painting materials and a pile of Women’s Home magazines from the 1950s. This small display window becomes my new place of residence.

The space becomes too small to be a workable studio space. The works are hung from the floor to the ceiling in a manner that quotes a ‘salon hang’. My frames, framed blank surfaces, and finished and unfinished works are crammed in together on purpose-built timber stands.

This collection of artefacts became an impressive snapshot, a cubicle view of my studio. My faux studio space was subsequently open to public scrutiny.
Installation of the studio, Lismore Regional Gallery 24/7. Photos Kellie O’Dempsey.
Friday 21 November 2008:

4.30pm: I enter the window from inside the gallery. Oh god this space is tiny! In the hot and stifling airless space I knock the unsteady portable easel. Immediately the focus shifts.

I WRITE A PROPOSAL THAT VAPORISES ... I WRITE WHAT THEY WANT ... WHAT I CAN WRITE ... AND IMMEDIATELY ENGAGE AT A HIGHER, DEEPER LEVEL ... I ORDER THE CONTEXT OF THE PROPOSAL AND THE PRACTICE ... AN EMERGENT PRACTICE, IS PROBLEMATIC, UNRESOLVED ... SHIT! I KNOCKED OVER THE INK!

I notice two people sitting on the step on the street and leaning on the window of my faux studio. I am not seen. Talking, they are unaware of my presence. I want to draw them. Carefully reaching for a prepared surface behind me I take one of the frames from the shelf. I can see traces of past work under the lightly gessoed board - traces of moments in the studio. The tiny performance space with lots of equipment restricts my movements. Avoiding disturbance I shuffle around the space cautiously. People arrive. I should stand up and draw images of the people on the
street. Observers come up close to the window with cupped hands to dismiss the reflection and peer in. People are acknowledging me, waving and saying hello! Being spoken to whilst in a performance situation? I feel awkward and anxious. I fumble with brushes and ink. The crammed space is claustrophobic. The space makes me feel both psychologically and physically vulnerable. I draw in order to disappear. I draw in my studio. My subject, the people I see on the street.

I draw in order to be present.

In my performance works I place myself in situations to enable response from both my self and the audience. I owe and acknowledge the exploration of the interrelationship of artist; gallery and audience to the performance art makers of the 1960s and 1970s where a publically performed acts and ‘happenings’ directed by the artist became Performance Art.
In Paris in 1960 Yves Klein’s live painting with a human brush; painting with the model as opposed to the studio practice of painting from the model in *Anthropometries of the Blue Period*. Carolee Schneemann hung naked from a harness drawing on the walls of the gallery in *Up To and Including Her Limits 1973-76*, she explains, “My entire body becomes the agency of visual traces, vestige of the body’s energy in motion.” Marina Abramovic investigated the body’s limitations in endurance performances inviting audience to witness, participate and act on her during her *Rhythm 10* series 1974.

In an interview Marina Abramovic accurately describes the experience of being a performance artist: ‘I test the limits of myself in order to transform myself, but I also take the energy from the audience and transform it’ (Abramovic, quoted in O’Hagan 2010).

*The artist is present*, a work of Abramovic’s, redefined the parameters of performance art, and the process became a huge cultural event discussed on talk shows and news features. It took the form of what Abramovic calls ‘a pared down, long durational piece that destroys the illusion of time.’ To this end she sat motionless and silent on a wooden chair inside a circle of light in a huge atrium of MoMA (the Museum of Modern Art, New York). Sitting for seven hours a day people queued so as to sit in Abramovic’s presence and so as to stare quietly into her eyes.

The spectator could sit for as long as they desired before being replaced by another, Abramovic remained, seated, still and silent. She suggests that ‘the presence of a live body, in the flesh, is irreplaceable’ (Howe 2010)

The performance in *The artist is present* was the direct result of a demanding work process. Direct engagement with the audience was invited and carried out. Both Abramovic’s performance and my own are designed to elicit a response from the audience through physical endurance undertaken as a political act of engagement. My performances and works, discussed in this
thesis, are intended to be inclusive acts that invite members of the audience to become participants.

I invite members of the audience to participate by contributing their personal experiences and interpretations. The performance drawing act is the exposure of the role of process in the act of art production. This alchemic and vulnerable process allows the artworks and the activity of the artist to become a collective experience. During this performance drawing act, the gallery, a public place of exhibition, becomes a studio, a private place of artistic invention. The public and the private encounter coexist.

If the motivation and the selections an artist makes belong to their inner being, and have their genesis in who they are and how they developed, my public upbringing put me in direct contact with community. Having grown up living in country hotels living above a noisy public bar, as the daughter of publicans, I have a personal understanding of what is regarded as public and what is considered private space. My bedroom was separated from the business of the hotel by a hallway and a staircase. By making work in public I attempt to create pathways to the viewer, to create a relationship between my creative processes and their biography. This strategy establishes an interconnectedness and empathy through the works and the assignation of the window as a liminal or sensory zone. In this instance, for those present, a transformation state may occur during the performance of the works. This experience is often realised post-performance. At the reception after the performances is where the audience and myself can confer and recall the event.

I do not enter this place of interdisciplinary public performance alone. The space is not inhabited by my direct experiences but rather by descriptions penned by those folk who were there! Cage describes some of the innovative performances that took place at Black Mountain College when he was a student:

Disparate activities, dancing by Merce Cunningham, the exhibition of paintings and the playing of a Victrola by Robert Rauschenberg, the reading of his poetry by Charles Olsen or hers by M.C. Richards from the top of a ladder.
outside the audience, the piano playing of David Tudor, my own reading of a lecture that included silences from the top of another ladder outside the audience, all took place within chance-determined periods of time within the overall time of my lecture (Kaprow 1993, p. 15).

I follow the multiple notions of collage medias acknowledging as forefathers the futurists, the Dadaist and the Surrealists whose collage fused music, performance, painting, drawing, sculpture and theatre as a form of rebellion in the aftermath of World War 1.

My performance continues…

**Friday 21st November 2008:**

*5pm*: The musicians arrive and unpack their instruments onto the footpath (their studio), to the right-side of the window, my studio, rolling out a red tribal carpet to make a home for their part in this menagerie. Musically they too will make improvisational decisions in response to my performance, the audience and each other. They begin playing outside to passers by and to the stationary audience now
seated on the street. They burst into a bold Spanish-style tango. With the crescendo of the tango I recall Alan Kaprow’s description of:

A hundred iron barrels and gallon wine jugs hanging on ropes swinging back and forth, crashing like church bells, spewing glass all over. Suddenly mushy shapes pop up from the floor and painters slash at curtains dripping with action (Kaprow 1993, p. 15).

Now standing, using a wax pencil, I draw on the window. The musicians accompany me as I draw rhythmically. A friendly face approaches.
the window and stands up close. I gesture for him to move right up against the pane and stay pressed up against the window. I trace his outline, the contours of his face. His presence offers comfort. The onlooker sometimes becomes an active participant, as Alan Kaprow points out: ‘you come as a spectator and maybe you discover you are caught in it after all...’ (Kaprow 1993, p. 15)

Some of the audience stay to witness the entire performance, while others are passing and may only view snippets of the event. After the performance the remains, the detritus, the artefacts are left on exhibition – the echoes and traces of the assembly of the artist. I left my brushes in water and half finished drawings on the wall.

Ink spills, dirty rags, broken pieces of charcoal and dust on the floor.

The installation is contained within or constrained by the framed window. Or is it struggling to burst beyond? It alludes to spaces, events and discourses beyond this static site. It speaks of production. My responses to my view from the window, to people watching the performance, to street musicians outside the window, and to passers by are now all inked onto surfaces, a half-frozen relic. The nature of the performance drawings in public alters, challenges and reframes the romantic myth of the artist in the studio.
If this romantic notion refers to the space where the solitary driven artist toils privately in their studio, this laboratory from where art works emerge is an essentially private space. This recontextualisation through *Home studio* is one of artist and artist studio as sculpture and installation, both as a performance and as a trace enables the audience to see into the privacy of the creative process as a public act.

An example of this fascination with the artist’s studio manifest is the immense operation by the Hugh Lane Gallery in Dublin to move (after his death), Francis Bacon’s studio from Soho, London to Dublin in 1998. Bacon’s studio has been famed for the disarray of mountains of used paint tubes, dirty jars of turps, masses of paintbrushes in varying stages of disintegration, piles of utensils, tin cans, bottles, sticks of pastel, ripped and

*Installation of the studio, Lismore Regional Gallery 24/7. Photo Kellie O’Dempsey.*
collaged photographs (found underneath the refuse), cans of spray paint, household paint, paint splattered walls and an incalculable numbers of sponges and rags. Archivists rebuilt his studio as an archaeological installation. This installation, an act of reinvention and relocation, can be seen as a direct example of the wonder the artist’s studio. Francis himself stated: ‘I feel at home here in the chaos because chaos suggests images to me.’ The artist’s private space is a personal laboratory of discovery, and the venue of alchemy can become an exhibit, as did the refuse artefacts of the performance of Home studio at 24/7.

During the performance Home studio I made drawings of people moving on the street in front of me, an informal site, while working from a formal site, the gallery, behind me.

The Romantic artist Gustave Courbet describes his picture, The artist’s studio in a letter to the critic Champfleury in 1854:

It’s the whole world coming to me to be painted, on the right are all the shareholders, by that I mean friends, fellow workers and art lovers. On the left is the other world of everyday life: the masses, wretchedness, poverty, wealth, the exploited and the exploiters, people who make a living from death (Harrison, Wood & Gaiger 2005, p. 370).

The artist is in the centre of this painting, the mediator between everyday life and the benevolence and the critique of the art world.

Home Studio was, to use the words of Rosalyn Deutsche, ‘an assimilative model of site specificity in which the art work is geared toward integration into the existing environment, producing a unified, ‘harmonious’ space of wholeness and cohesion’ (Kwon, p. 58). My drawing practice is stimulated by the movement and the integration of people and music.

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6 The relocation Francis Bacon’s studio from London to Dublin in 1998. This operation was conducted with the assistance of a team of archaeologists who mapped the space, and tagged and noted the positions of the objects. The reconstructed studio features the original door, walls, floors, ceiling and shelves. Over 7,000 items were found in the studio and these were catalogued on a specially designed database before their replacement in the studio (Dublin City Gallery The Hugh Lane n.d.).

7 Rosalyn Deutsche makes an important distinction between an assimilative model of site specificity – in which the art work is geared toward integration into the existing environment, producing a unified, ‘harmonious’ space of wholeness and cohesion – and an interruptive model, where the art work functions as a critical intervention into the existing order of a site. See Winter (1992, pp. 22-27) and Winter (1988, pp. 3-52).
Hence, the public venue fulfils my studio requirements. The transitive nature of this project allows me to move from venue to venue, interacting through production and performance. The intention was for *Home studio* to be an integrated, unified event that offers a dialogue between the artist, the artwork, the gallery and the surrounding life of the street. The street and our surrounds are (as stated by Jacques Villeglé) full of ‘knowing how those who came before us lived, sensing the continuous chain of all of us who have lived on Earth’ (quoted in an interview in Bourriaud 2007, p. 12).
chapter 4
chapter 4

Event 4: Shanghai

Event 4: Shanghai transpired over a series of performances at the Glamour Bar in Shanghai, China, in 2009 and 2010. In my account of the event I investigate the emergent developments of my practice-led research via Event 3: Home Studio and Event 4: Shanghai, discussing the correlation between the diversity of performance venues and audiences. For instance, in Event 3, I performed in a small window to people in the street in a public gallery, whereas in Event 4 I drew publicly titillating adult entertainment in an international bar. Shanghai is divided into two part 1, Shanghai 2009 and part 2, Shanghai 2010. Firstly, I locate and describe Shanghai 2009. This includes a brief description of the process of my performance. Secondly, I describe Shanghai 2010. As artist in residence at the Glamour Bar I undertook five performances over a one-month period. This description includes a photographic record of the musical events held during my time as artist in residence, and two descriptions of audience experiences.

In my description of these events I catalogue the successes and failures of the drawings and the success of these performances through digital documentation, audience experience and internal dialogue. In addition, site-specific mark-making as an investigation is also addressed via an interview I conducted with contemporary Chinese artist Zhang Jian Jun. Through descriptions of his work I discuss the possibility of continuity of cultural engagement through process, performance, site-specific art making, drawing and cultural engagement.

Shanghai was a series of performances that confronted the notion of leaving the protective white cube of a gallery space and venturing into a social entertainment venue where I was an artist in residence cum entertainer confronting and responding to the musicians, the audience and the venue. Central to this performance was the theatrical intrusion into the Glamour Bar.

Tenth anniversary celebrations of ‘M on the Bund’, The Glamour Bar
10th January 2009, Shanghai China.

Accepting an invitation from Michelle Garnaut (an acclaimed Australian restaurateur now established in Asia) to document the tenth anniversary celebrations of her restaurant M on the Bund, I landed in Shanghai in late 2009. Michelle requested her guests when dressing for the event to ‘think tassels and tail feathers and fishnets, garters and glitter, sexy and sizzling’. Performing were the burlesque dance troupe and band, The Atomic Bombshells from Seattle. This international bar was a completely new environment for a Kellie O’Dempsey drawing performance. This type of environment was not completely unfamiliar to me with my experience of the hotels and public bars in my youth. As a result I could navigate the carnivalesque environment with confidence.

Dressed in a watermelon-coloured 1970s full length Sunray pleat evening dress, wearing a head dress of pink feathers and wielding long handled calligraphy brushes and buckets of paint, I entered stage left. I was a theatrical intrusion, painting the reflection of the party. Trying hard to remove from my consciousness any absurdist fears of disaster, I moved up and down a stepladder in a drawing frenzy. As Martin Adamov points out, ‘The theatre must show simultaneously but well differentiated, both the curable and the incurable aspect of things. The incurable aspect, we all know, is that of the inevitability of death. The curable aspect is the social one.’ The theatre of the absurd By Martin Esslin Adamov
Kellie during performance. Photos Anonymous Audience members.
The Spectacle of Performance Drawing

Chapter 4

Atomic Bombshell member posing in front mural. Photo Kellie O’Dempsey.

M on the Bund Proprietor Michelle Garnaut and niece, viewing the work. Photo Kellie O’Dempsey.

Atomic Bombshell members posing in front mural. Photo Kellie O’Dempsey.

Members of the audience posing in front mural. Photo Kellie O’Dempsey.
As a performer at a commercial venue, not only was I invited as an artist to produce a work in response to the event, I was also hired entertainment. This was an opportunity to gather divergent field data to enhance and extend my enquiry into my emergent live public drawing practice. As a direct comparison to the Event 3: *Home studio* the Shanghai performance signifies not only a shift in location but also a vastly different audience situation. As an emergent practice, elements of *The Spectacle of Performance Drawing* project can only be evaluated in hindsight. In writing about the events post-performance I was drawn to the difference in venue and audience. Event 3: *Home studio* was (as explained in the previous chapter) took place in a small enclosed window space where members of the Lismore community viewed the performance through the glass. Hence, the performance was not as immediately accessible to passers by as were the drawing at next Art gallery, Event 1. Where I literally took the work on to the street. The Shanghai performance was in a large open space where expecting guests were invited to party. The similarity: all the performance drawing events I present in these projects are apolitical. They are performed free of political agenda as a shared experience. My intention is to remain as responsive and
present to the performance drawing process, to the guests in Shanghai as to the passers by in Lismore.

The day after the extravaganza, I was asked to come back into the bar. The employees who were told to clean up all the mess from the glamorous party had taken the artworks off the wall, still wet, and folded and tied neatly into small packages. I burst into laughter at the discovery. I was completely astonished that the cleaners could fold canvas of that dimension into such small neat packages, like wontons. It was an intervention of the site where the works, evolved under such ostentatious conditions, were recontextualised by the removal and reshaping by the local staff. For me this was a poetic parody. At the request of my host I unfolded the work and proceeded to find someone to stretch the work for display before I had to board a plane for Australia.

In Shanghai, outside the white cube, outside of the institutional critique and far from the loaded but protective arms of the art gallery, I was operating in the commercial industry and being contracted to perform. In order to obtain feedback on the success of the performance and external perceptions of my practice, I asked Michelle Garnaut ‘What aspects of my performances recommended me as a contributor to your program?’ Her response:

I’d say the spectacle first and foremost and the participatory nature of painting in front of an audience... people were
fascinated to watch you producing work before their eyes and could not believe the speed at which you worked.

Michelle’s answer confirmed that the audience was absorbed by the public act of drawing and the performance was indeed a success as a theatrical event.

As data collection and research, *Shanghai 2009* led me to explore an unknown and for me an unprecedented site, where the organisational and preparational challenges, including communication and location difficulties, were overcome. The indeterminate state between what you can prepare for and where the unexpected occurs is often where new ground is investigated. In this *Shanghai 2009* I responded to the challenge and delivered myself up to the performance situation. In doing this I performed my response through practice. The experiential energy, dynamics and spirit of the performance now exist as an artwork, the artefact, the documentation, which is now a permanent feature of the venue. This event broadened my knowledge of my own practice, as I had to be true to my process as a practitioner and also meet the requirements of the task.

*The Glamour Bar, 2009. Photo Myn Chan*
Event 4 (part 2): Shanghai – 2010

Artist in Residence at the Glamour Bar, M on the Bund – June and July 2010, Shanghai, China

The Glamour Bar invited me back to Shanghai to be the artist in residence for one month. My first performance was to draw live to the sounds of a ten-piece band called the Afro-Sonic Orchestra on June 11 at 10.00 pm.

During the live painting process I transcribed components of the Shanghai 2009 painting onto this new work. Somehow I felt awkward imitating my own work. As a result the work felt trite and somewhat fake. I felt I was producing a product rather that responding to the site, and at the time I saw this as a failing. The audience and the band and the proprietor were excited and responded positively to the performance.

By ‘producing a product’ I lost the zone. I was motivated by a desire to produce an artwork that I thought would please the
patrons, my host and the musicians. This seemed to contradict my initial intention – the unfolding and the deciphering of my response to the site as an all-consuming act of drawing. This internal process is part of the performative nature of manifesting ideas. According to drawer and animator William Kentridge, the starting point for all his work is the insatiable desire to draw. He states:

Drawing for me is about fluidity. There may be a vague sense of what you are going to draw but things occur during the process that may modify, consolidate and shed doubts on what you know. So drawing is a testing of ideas; slow motion version of thought. It does not arrive instantly like a photograph. The uncertain and imprecise way of constructing a drawing is sometimes a model of how to construct meaning. What ends in clarity does not begin that way. (Chrisov-Barargiev 1999, p. 8).

The artwork as artefact was initially secondary to the performative act of making large-scale painted works live in the Glamour Bar. Performance drawing is the unfolding of an aleatory process. In effect, the work of art is not only the artefact that is produced by the action, though this is a part of it, but includes the action and performance itself.
The following photographs document the musical events from my residency at the Glamour Bar.

Max Hay, musician and subject commented on his experience:

Kellie O’Dempsey’s quietly contagious aura of urgency gave me a tangible piece of validation that performing musicians crave. As I began to see how her approach to the evening involved thoughtful choices of her tools, surfaces, and lighting, I felt inclined to take the same care in my own decisions. Kellie’s interpretation of the stage gave us reflective visual insights into our performance, in real time, as it happened! After the show, Will and I agreed that Kellie’s presence was more like that of another musician than that of an audience member. She gets right into the scene and captures feelings, dynamics, images, and memories in all the ways a photograph or audio record can’t.
June 27, 4pm: Tang Jin (piano), Wu Shu Ting (violin), Li Cong (clarinet) and Fan Ya Tin (mezzo) from Ensemble Les Amis with Jensen Lam (viola) from the Shanghai Conservatorium performing in the Crystal Room, 7th floor of M on the Bund

July 1, 10pm: Abigail Washburn and friends. Singing, songwriting, Illinois-born, Nashville-based clawhammer banjo player Abigail Washburn pairs venerable folk elements with the sounds of China, from songs she has written in Chinese.

Drawing Ensemble Les Amis with Jensen Lam from the Shanghai Conservatorium was a highlight of this residency for me. Using traditional Chinese brushes and black ink I responded to these classically trained musicians as if I was
engaged in a dance. I have a vague memory of the performance as I crossed the threshold into a meditative space. As a result of this performance and the artwork I was asked to take part in an exhibition in Shanghai the following year. The exhibition that will be dedicated to the 110th anniversary of the birth of Buddhist monk Hong Yi.

Nancy Pellegrini, the Classical and Performance Editor of *Time Out Beijing/Time Out* was present during the performance with the Chamber Music Ensemble. Nancy responded to my June 27 drawing in the following email:

> Having visual art and performing arts going on at the same time was thrilling, and left me with an incredible feeling of completeness, as if the furthest reaches of my brain were being touched all at once. Kellie’s work was never distracting or obtrusive; she was an equal partner to the musicians, turning out work of equal value. The work itself so captured the emotions of the afternoon, and the feeling of mental fullness I so enjoy but so rarely find, I was sorry that the work was already sold, because I was afraid to think I would never have that feeling again.

The audience plays a major role in the physicality of my performance. They contribute to how I feel and the provision of spontaneous and unchartered anecdotes that I may respond to (or not) in the constructing of my experiential, drawing process. In the absence of a discourse or agenda to drive the work, the performance is shaped essentially by means of response to, (in this case) the musicians and the audience.

During my residency I met Shanghai-born artist Zhang Jian-Jun who also engages in a performative site-specific multi-disciplinary practice.

I met with Zhang Jian-Jun, or JJ, as he is usually called, and he explained to me that his artworks and performances insist on involvement, action, heritage, change and the connectivity between the old and new. One of his better-known works *Vestiges of a process*, is a video recording of a performance in which
JJ set up an easel facing a shikumen (a carved stone doorway) in Shanghai. These doorways are associated with Shanghai’s residential alleys or lilong. In the performance, JJ painted the image of a carved doorway with a brush and water on fine rice paper on a black board. A ghostly image appeared. As the water dries and the image fades, leaving the paper blank. The event was digitally documented. This documentation is the final existing artefact, as the original drawings, like the traditional shikumen carvings, have now been destroyed (Cohen). JJ believes that ‘the Vestiges [referred to in the title] are not a negative comment about progress; rather, they are a response to the cultural change occurring’.

JJ described to me one performance which he has repeated on various visits to Shanghai (as he now lives in New York). It involves eight children under the age of eight. They all draw on the surface of a road with ink and graphite. JJ takes photographs of the surface of the road as it changes and fades away under the pressure of bicycle tyres, scooters, people and cars. The drawings become allegoric through the process. His work investigates the continuity of culture and of human values through time and space.

According to Edward Hill ‘drawing diagrams experience’ (Hill 1966, p. 8) and promotes a heightened sense of seeing and perception. JJ, by performing works on the streets, is diagramming experience as witness to environmental and cultural change, not only through the drawings but also through the performative life of the image itself.

As an observer and a scribe I recorded events as an act of performance drawing. This immediacy of drawing facilitates the recording of personal, social and a cultural understanding through transcribing movement through time and space. As we move through time and space we carry our experiences and live out our stories. The personal, emotional and physical act of drawing is a method by which I can locate and define myself in my environment. Through the act of drawing, as observing and recording, I engage as a research practitioner.
Event 5: Site and sound

My subject for Site and sound was my response to the surrounding landscape, the musicians, and the audience. This was a collaborative performance realised by drawing on four large canvases. It was a collaboration with four professional musicians and involved the use of digital photographs. Important to the project were diaristic accounts, correspondence from the Gallery Director Susi Muddiman, and descriptions of the project. The experience of the drawing performance allowed me to enter a transforming liminal space; the documentation suggests the liminal space became available to others. This multifaceted performance gave the experience of action and corporeality.
Event 5: Site and sound

Location: McNaughton Focus Gallery, Tweed River Regional Gallery, Murwillumbah
Performance: 15th May – 21st June 2009
Exhibition: The spectacle of performance drawing

Crew
Collaborative Musicians: Michael Dick (Double Bass), Azo Bell (Guitar), Vasudha (Piano/vibes), and Jem Edwards (Piano/Vibes/Percussion)
Photographers: Cal MacKinnon, Peter King, Georgina Tait
Digital Video: Raimond De Weert

Description of the original proposal
My proposal to Susi Muddiman, Gallery Director of the Tweed River Art Gallery, outlined the physical nature of the performance and the suitable organization within the gallery. The intention was to work on four large canvases during four individual events. I proposed to make drawings in the events in collaboration with four professional musicians responding to the internal and external environment surrounding the gallery. The musicians, photographers and I agreed to respect the safety specifications required by the public gallery for the use of the Grand piano, personal and other infrastructure considerations.

My intention for this series of performances was to allow the drawn line as performative documentation to be available to an audience via a direct encounter with the site and the musical experience.

Through reflexion I extended the performance into a series, as opposed to the one off events as I had undertaken in the previous performances. This extension made it possible for more people to access the work. This access is an invitation to the audience to participate in the evolution of the image as they, the spectator, have the opportunity to follow fluid nature of creative processes and the material thinking involved in developing a drawing over a passage of time.
I was requested by the gallery to have the first drawing performance on the Thursday before the official opening of the exhibition. I agreed to this request and my audience for that first performance happened to be a class of teenage high school students from the Gold Coast on an excursion. No musicians were to play with me that day. I was flying solo. It was the most frightening gig to date. I was intimidated by the bored looking teenagers as they plonked their bodies on the floor in front of the blank canvas waiting for the commencement of ‘real life Kellie TV’.

In her opening speech for *Site and sound* director of the Tweed River Art Gallery Susi Muddiman, describes her responses to the exhibition and the performance event:

> When Kellie put in a proposal for a show here I was both excited and perplexed as to how it would work in a static exhibition space. I was of course, silly to even doubt the proposal, as Kellie had come up with the idea of her show being a drawing ‘work in progress’ exhibition, with her series of performances adding to the exhibition as it went along. The idea really is genius and a credit to her. I hope you all had the opportunity to see her in action this evening. She really is a spectacle in herself!

**15th May 2009:**

It is difficult to begin with the absence of music. I begin nonetheless.

**12 noon:** Using a wide brush and indigo ink I paint broad strokes across the four canvases in response to the skyline of Mount Warning. I spy through the long thin architectural window that punctuates each canvas panel. I transcribe the contours of the landscape through and onto the glass and the canvas. Fence posts, barbed wire, trees. I reach for pastel.

I need to acknowledge the audience in the
I now see this progression of the live drawing process as a transitional moment. The notion of flow is, according to the psychologist Mihaly Czikszentmihalyi, the combination of action and experience. Csikszentmihalyi explains: “Creating meaning involves bringing order to the contents of the mind by integrating one’s actions into an unified flow experience”. As I am absorbed in the act of drawing I engage in a ‘unified flow experience’. Through the act of drawing and performance, which for me is a full bodied or corporeal experience, I cross a threshold that enables me to go into the zone. This zone is like a meditative or transcendental state. It is often referred to by athlete’s as the runner’s high. Sports psychologist Sachs (1984) describes it as: “a euphoric sensation experienced during running, usually unexpected, in which the runner feels a heightened sense of well-being, enhanced appreciation of nature, and transcendence of barriers of time and space” (Sachs, & Buffone 1984, p. 274).

I am bought out of this state by an individual (whom I asked earlier) to subtly indicate to me when a certain time has passed. This is an indicator for the end of the performance.

After this first episode in Site and sound I spoke with some of the students and their teacher. They told they had been excited and stimulated by this event. At the end of a drawing performance I am quite euphoric, overwhelmed and I often have difficulty recounting specifics from conversations. The following comments from two students present were emailed to me by their teacher Fiona Altof, after the event:
During our excursion to the Tweed Gallery we had the opportunity to observe an artist at work.

Thirty Marymount College seniors were mesmerised by the simple, yet intriguing techniques of Kellie O’Dempsey when she applied her washes and charcoal with huge strokes. Creating wonderful movement in her large-scale action pieces. For several moments the viewers in the gallery were wondering what Kellie was drawing/painting, but then it was clear she was actually depicting the beautiful scenery outside the gallery. Kellie also included portraits of people’s faces and forms from the audience. The way she subtly incorporated us into her artwork with such detail was amazing, and an experience we won’t forget.

Sharna Hupfeld and Olivia Reddy
yr 11 students Marymount College Gold Coast Queensland.

The second instalment of Site and sound was to be the official vernissage. The four-panel drawing was to evolve to the next stage. This second installation was to include improvised accompaniment by invited musicians. We were to jam together. I was on the charcoal and the pastels.

**Saturday 16th May 2009:**

**4.30pm:** Michael walks into the Focus Gallery with his double bass and opens the proceedings with an inviting bass line. The guitarist follows. Connected to the amplifier remotely, the musicians can move around the space without cords and attachments so as to remove the perception and separation of a stage.

The music sets the space for me. Minutes later I float into the gallery in a black gown, through the overwhelmingly large crowd and take my place in front of my drawing.
**4:35pm:** In a fog of nervous anticipation I stare down at the trolley of inks, pastels, brushes and charcoal. The audience a constant hum in front of me. The deep comfort of the bassline pulses through the anxiety.

Where to start? What to choose? Grab something. Reaching for a pastel and a stick of charcoal. Turning towards the surface of the canvas. I touch the surface. Too low, I need the stepladder. Ascending carefully so as not to stand on my dress. Now at the top of the ladder, my vision closes in on the beautiful menacing shape, the scroll of the double bass. How do I resolve this conflict between the jolting fear of the performance and the anticipated visual response? I draw.

I draw. Continually looking over my shoulder to spy Michael and the shape of the bass. I am drawing. I find solace in its rhythms and intonation as together we ascend.

I experience an improvised communion in collaboration with these musicians. This communion is described by Silvana and Gabriella Mangano (2006) as a seemingly spontaneous, action that might be located somewhere between choreography and embrace. Though ostensibly a dual act of simultaneous portraiture, the work is predominantly a dance of identity. Now leading, now following, now separated, now joined.

My allies continue to move around the space. They weave in and out. Improvised music, the bodies of the musicians, and the shapes of the instruments, the compelled audience and the drawn line in constant flux.
Michael Dick commented on his experience as one of the collaborating musicians:

We walked through the site and, as we had previously discussed, we occupied the space with audience so we (the performers) could move freely as opposed to a formal setting. The audience was not only part of the painting, but also related to the music. Anything we picked up from the audience could be included. It was fantastic to be so close to the audience, shoulder to shoulder. I could hear them breathing and commenting on what they were experiencing.

This participation in a group event, in a location where there was no clearly defined boundary between the audience and the performers, was a corporeal encounter. Corporeality (pertaining to the body), is an experienced bodily interaction, in this case in a social gathering and the sharing of the experience became for all present a form of embodied communication. O’Loughlin describes embodied communication as “the way in which over time people grasp things in common and come to partake of communication in a common understanding” (1998, p. 286). Everyone present at the performance participated and shared in the evolution of an artwork.

Performances such as *Site and sound* are an integrated visual and musical encounter. In his book *Art as experience* John Dewey (1980) describes such an experience as an “interaction of organism and environment which, when it is carried to the full, is a transformation of interaction into participation and communication.” Another form of transformation is that of liminal space. Cultural anthropologist Victor Turner, drawing on an analysis of ritual, described this as “a character of being or dwelling for extended periods of time in a spatial, social, and spiritual threshold, like pilgrims.” (Turner 1970). The word liminal originates from the Latin word *limen*, meaning threshold.

According to June Boyce-Tilman,

[a] *limen* that is crossed from ordinary knowing especially in the space/time dimension; a sense of encounter; a paradoxical knowing so that diversity can exist within it easily; a sense of
empowerment, bliss, realization; a sense of the beyond, infinity; a feeling of an opening-up in the experiencer as boundaries start to dissolve; a sense of transformation, change; an evanescent and fleeting quality that cannot be controlled and which may result in a sense of givenness; a feeling of unity with other beings, people, and the cosmos (Boyce-Tilman, 2009, p. 189).

This transformational or liminal space I experience as a result of the live performance drawing act. Through the music and the act of drawing, I fall into a kind of meditation that I identify as a threshold for exchange. I am the artist, the performer, and the trickster making drawings that evolve in front of ones very eyes. For “the trickster, liminality is their original state…The trickster may flit across the borders at any time, penetrating the social structure at will, but he cannot stay there” (La Shure 2005).

For the final instalment for this series, on Sunday 31st May, it was important to bring all the musicians I had worked with on this project together, which meant I had to fit a quartet into a small space which also had to be occupied by people, instruments, drawing equipment and myself. Just before showtime I was told that the percussionist’s set-up had created the impression of a separate stage – something that I had wanted to avoid. I surrendered to whatever was going to happen. The environment was set.

Kaprow defines happenings as “an art form in which an action is extracted from the environment”, our happening was not only one produced in response to the environment but also by what each performer could extract and bring the site. According to Kaprow’s a ‘happening’ “replaces the traditional art object with a performative gesture rooted in the movements of everyday life where these performances suggest an event other than everyday life” (Kaprow 1993).

The keyboard player Vasudha recalls the experience:

I am drawn over the line from our combined improvised sounds into her world of make it up as you go and let it show as it happens I like to move around, as Kellie likes to move, and
the whole event is a dynamic, transforming occasion. I pick up the melodica and I have the freedom to stand anywhere and move any which way, not confined to standing behind my instrument. With the melodica I can be playful … it’s another novel instrument which dances on the border.

The following description of this event is through digital photographs by Cal MacKinnon and Peter King.
Photos Cal MacKinnon
Photos Peter King
chapter 5

Photos Cal MacKinnon
chapter 6
chapter 6

Event 6: Moving lines

This installation at the 4Folds Art Space in Lismore is where I harvest elements from all the previous performances to restructure the design of Event 6. This work introduces video projections as an inclusive apparatus. The projections were embellished through the use of Tagtool, an electronic drawing device discovered during this research project. A work of art that makes use of all or many art forms to create a complete artwork can be referred to by the term Gesamtkunstwerk. I review the notion of Gesamtkunstwerk in relation to the planning of this performance event. I discuss the final design through a discussion of the work of William Kentridge and Joan Jonas. The outcome of the final performance is described through digital photographs and will be added as an appendix.
Event 6: Moving lines

Location: 4Folds Art Space, Norris Street, Lismore
Performance: 26th March 2011, 7pm to 8pm

Crew:
Musicians: Michael Dick, Azo Bell and Peter
Performer: Joe Jurd
Assisting Artists: Mick Moynihan and Mark Searl
Lighting and video: Ian Slade

The final instalment in this project will occur at the intersection of performance drawing, performance collaboration, video projection and the audience. I will introduce a combined video projection as a new and concluding element to this project. This new discovery has vast possibilities for future live Performance Drawing events. Adding an extra visual dimension, the projections will make it possible to make larger images than I have previously produced which in turn will be available to a much bigger audience.

Through my research into Performance Drawing I discovered a crew in Austria called OMA International. They are the inventors of a shareware electronic drawing device called the Tagtool. The Tagtool Project describes Tagtool as:
   a performative visual instrument used on stage and on the street. It serves as a VJ [video jockey] tool, a creative video game, or an intuitive way of creating animation (Tagtool 2010).

In 2010 I built my own Tagtool.

In the late 1960s and the early 1970s Joan Jonas was one of the pioneers in multi-disciplinary performance using video, drawing and live interaction. For Jonas, “drawings can be lasting and autonomous objects or they may be ephemeral and destroyed during a performance” (Jonas 2010). For me, identifying with this notion that drawings can be ephemeral made me relate drawing to production and performance. The Tagtool produces the drawn line in light via a projector. The existence of this live
image is momentary; it exists until the projector is turned off. This corresponds to the transformational process of drawing: through addition and erasure, images appear are altered during production and can ultimately disappear or be erased.

The skilled performance artist William Kentridge also uses drawing, the projected image as film and performance as his primary means of production. Kentridge explains that a part of his transformation drawing process is:

very simply made with a sheet of paper on the wall. There’s a camera half way across the studio; a drawing is done on the paper and filmed for a couple of frames. I walk back to the drawings and then erase and alter the drawings slightly and shoot it again. And so the film evolves as this ongoing walk between the paper and the camera, in the hope that somewhere in the middle of that walk some idea will emerge of what the rest of the drawing or the next sequence should be. Once a few sequences are done, I look at them together to try to see what they suggest (Kentridge 2004).

I identify with Kentridge’s almost automatic improvised process where the nature of the image is revealed by the active engagement with the drawing process. In a live drawing performance the surfacing image informs its own production and the trajectory of its evolution. This in turn tells me how it will evolve.

Time, rhythm, and movement are the narrative in the unfolding of the emergent drawing performances I undertake. The intention of Event 6: Moving lines is to enable paths for dialogue between these elements by way of an improvisational performance. The performance will combine the application of multimedia projections, performance drawing, collaborative partnerships with three musicians and a dancer. In calling this performance a *Gesamtkunstwerk*, or a total work of art, I refer to Joseph Beuys’ performances. According to Nicholas Primich, Beuys’s “goal was to erase the line separating art and life” (Primich 2002, p. 4). Beuys combined a range of theatrical elements and “as performer-shaman” (Primich 2002, p. 4) he invited observers to
witness his events and installations, asserting the component of time and space. The intention was to allow the possibility for the performance to live in a visually compelling and humanistic way.

Producing a series of drawings and projections that respond to the immediacy of the venue the 4Folds Art Space in real time, in accordance with the previous events, my final work intends to investigate dialogue between aspects of the improvised process, chance and transformation.

In keeping with the emergent nature my practice, this new luminous drawing tool creates and facilitates a broadening my understanding of knowledge in the field of live drawing while simultaneously expanding and developing a new and innovative direction for my practice. What will remain will be a drawing that participates and reflects a shared experience.

Kellie in Austria at “Chink Chank” conference, collaborative drawing with Frances Sander. Photo Frances Sander
I close this chapter with the words of the performance artists Abramovic and Ulay who travelled continuously, living in an old Citroen van (the van itself was in the MoMA exhibit, *The artist is present*), fully devoting their lives to their artistic experiment. A statement they wrote at the time (1975) reads:

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ART VITAL
no fixed living-place
permanent movement
direct contact
local relation
self-selection
passing limitations
taking risks
mobile energy
no rehearsals
no predicted end
no repetition
extended vulnerability
exposure to chance
primary reactions
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Following is a documentation of the final event *Moving Lines*, through a series of digital photographs by Alberto Sanchez.
Photos Alberto Sanchez
The Spectacle of Performance Drawing

Photos Alberto Sanchez
Chapter 6

Photos Alberto Sanchez
Kettle O’Dempsey: The Spectacle of Performance Drawing

Chapter 6

Photos Alberto Sanchez
The Spectacle of Performance Drawing

Photos Alberto Sanchez
The Spectacle of Performance Drawing

Photos Alberto Sanchez
Chapter 6

Photos Alberto Sanchez
The Spectacle of Performance Drawing

Photos Alberto Sanchez
Chapter 6

Photos Alberto Sanchez
Photos Alberto Sanchez
The Spectacle of Performance Drawing

Photos Alberto Sanchez
Photos Alberto Sanchez
chapter 7
chapter 7

In conclusion – the moving line of drawing itself

In this project I have examined, investigated, and defined my current practice of Performance Drawing by using a practice-led research methodology. Performance Drawing has been both the methodology and the subject.

The aim of the project is the development of my practice of the emergent and skilled process of drawing, through a strategy of Performance Drawing. This strategy also generates new methods of understanding in the field of live drawing production a practice in which numerous artists are currently engaging (including Gosia Wlodarczak, active street artists and the brothers Zhou). I seek and make available an inclusive and interconnected form of cultural interaction between the artist, the act of drawing as performance and the audience.

Through active analysis of my performances I have broadened the understanding of my practice in the field of drawing. This research has broadened my understanding of the possibilities of drawing through site-specific performance.

The research methodology, practice and subject of my research were strategic in locating me as a research practitioner. Both practice led-research and the act of performance drawing identify questions and problems but are simultaneously and constructively revealing and fluid. In both performance drawing and research, through strategies and action-propelled outcomes, my processes were invariably altered and reassessed via reflexion. The generated data as artefacts, consist of documentation, drawings and this exegesis. Informed by the same trajectory as the events the stages of writing the document have evolved through reassessment and reflexion. Each stage was systematically planned and refined during the process of its creation. A model for emergent practice, the outcome of each event informed the following strategies, action and practice and enabled new innovative approaches.
I discovered that the fluid creative relationships that exist between the artist as performer, other performers and the audience can enable an inclusive cultural exchange through shared experience. The events documented in this exegesis involved and required a corporeal relationship between the artist, the work and the audience. Through my investigations and performance practice I have observed the interconnected experience of human engagement.

The intersection of my practice and performance has enabled me to develop an inclusive description of my practice as research. A transformation happens at this intersection of myself (the artist), the performance art work and the audience. Through the immediacy of the drawing performance I am mesmerised, and inspired by the movement, the music and the presence of the all people participating in the event. I translate this experience through the skilled language of drawing. Line, form and gesture become the dialogue of the performance. Via these events I witness an apolitical social interconnectedness that artworks and art making can enable through performance. This experience or witnessing “demonstrate(s) the great role works of art can play in the ethical project of becoming (collectively and individually) oneself in a particular place” (Carter 2004, p. xii).

As an emergent practice Performance Drawing allows for unanticipated outcomes. For example, the broken window incident in Event 2 at the Gallery Artisan in Brisbane’s Fortitude Valley clearly demonstrated the nature of improvisation. This facilitated an aleatoric process, allowing for invention that in turn initiated an innovative tactile approach to redesigning the installation.

Through the research process theoretical elements of my practice were revealed. Through my readings about the heritage and history of Performance Art I reconfigured the context in which I worked. My construction of identity through my public upbringing and my ongoing Performance Art practice was expanded in the light of notions of Bahktin’s carnivalesque and the Trickster (Spinks 2001). These socio-political elements level
the hierarchical barriers between individuals (Bakhtin 1984). Hence as artist and performer I have the opportunity to enable and/or establish an inclusive environment for the audience and the site.

Definitions of site were influenced and disseminated through Kwon’s theories of site specificity (Kwon 2002). Through these definitions I located the heritage of the artist’s environment – the studio and the gallery as sites. These discussions about these environments were not only investigated in this exegesis; they were also performed; specifically in Event 3: Home studio, at the Lismore Regional Gallery. This performance revealed the artist’s studio as installation and the artist as sculpture, displaying publicly the privacy of my studio, thereby exposing the vulnerable relationship between the artist and the creation of artwork as a performance spectacle.

As an observer and a scribe I have recorded Events 1 to 6. This act of recording personal, social and cultural understanding by transcribing movement through time and space is realised through the skill and the act of drawing. Drawing for me is a personal locator, social transformer and a research practice.

I initially undertook this research project to develop an inclusive description of my practice. I describe my practice through my confidence in the emergent nature of drawing as a practice, a skill and a language.

During the later stages of this this enquiry into my drawing practice I discovered the digital Tagtool. This unexpected multi-faceted device as an additional element in the live drawing performance has vast possibilities as an innovative drawing tool that can project drawings as big as buildings. This will allow larger audiences to experience live drawing. This discovery and the experimental possibilities it brings is where I conclude this document. The final performance, Event 6, is the springboard from which future possibilities for the continuum that is my drawing practice begin.
The continuum stretches between finito and non finito, between private and public, between the conceptual and the abstract, and the perceptual and the mimetic. The binary oppositions that pull drawing between extremes – sketchy and finished; spontaneous and measured; self generating or outwardly directed; one-off or part of a series; line and tone; colour or monochrome – are linked by the moving line of drawing itself (Petheridge 2010, p.16).
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