Cover: VestAndPage FEAR vs LOVE vs FEAR 2012, Alumnos47 Foundation, Mexico City. Performed as part of the project Proyecto Líquido: Miedo curated by Jessica Berlanga Taylor. Photographer: Lorena Alcaraz M.
Two Bodies in Space
Durational Performance: The Quest for Authenticity in the VestAndPage Experience
Andrea Pagnes

Affects of Industry and Environment in the Experience of a Domestic Object
Guy Keulemans

Using Creative Thinking Methods to Enhance Studio Practice and Research
Donald Welch

Posing Zombies: Life Drawing, Performance, and Technology
William Platz

An Unbearable Beauty: The Call of Beauty and the Sublime
Robyn Glade-Wright and Barbara Dover

Editorial Board

Contributors’ Notes

Acknowledgements
In March 2015, the Australian Council of Deans and Directors of Creative Arts (DDCA) conducted a three-day symposium in Melbourne entitled “The Outstanding Field: Artistic Research Emerging from the Academy”. This symposium, organised and chaired by Barbara Bolt, the Associate Director of Research and Research Training at the Victorian College of Art and Melbourne Conservatorium of Music and a Studio Research Board Member, presented a showcase of twenty-six exemplary Australian and New Zealand practice-led PhD projects from the past decade. A full spectrum of creative arts research was included in the selection: visual art, film, design, dance, and music. The aim of the symposium to showcase quality through the breadth of the sample naturally emphasised individual excellence, and, unsurprisingly, no single methodology or approach emerged as dominant. Nevertheless, it was interesting to see that the number of research projects engaged with science and technology equalled those affiliated with, or critically connected to, philosophy, cultural studies, or the humanities more generally.

This issue of Studio Research similarly eschews thematic or methodological coherence by including five very different papers.

Andrea Pagnes, from the performance art duo VestAndPage, presents a reflective piece that will become essential reading for anyone interested in durational and related performance practice. The particular focus on research concentrates the importance of the insights in this piece. Pagnes demonstrates the use of performance as a form of personal expression that leads to a greater capacity for sensitive interpretation and understanding.

Guy Keulemans presents a dissertation on the failure of the design system to critically consider the impact of production and consumption on the environment; in this case, marble production. Keulemans takes a cracked unsaleable slab of marble to build a room divider that challenges notions of functionality to highlight the metaphoric or symbolic potential of the bolted stainless steel, pulleys, and sailing cord along with the repaired marble used in its construction.

Over many years, Donald Welch has investigated the potential for teaching creativity, and his essay is a distillation of his thinking based upon practical application in the teaching studio. Welch’s proposal for teaching creativity in the design studio foregrounds the more radical proposition that designers will set their own problems and seek their own solutions.

William Platz presents a full-frontal attack on the moribund or ‘feeble’ status of life-drawing practices, and what better way to do it than with a legion of zombies? Platz’s insights are both quirky and compelling, made all the more potent by his prodigious drawing skills. The photographs that Platz exhibits of his performances associated with his drawing practice betray his American heritage, since they invoke the ghost of the most famous nineteenth-century drawing teacher in America, Thomas Eakins. Eakins attempted to disrupt the etiquette of the life-drawing class by stripping naked and joining the models, an intervention that cost him his teaching post at the Pennsylvania Academy in Philadelphia.

In their joint piece, Robyn Glade-Wright and Barbara Dover bring together beautiful work to confront disagreeable or horrific environmental degradation and present a complex analysis of the potential for an ethical dimension to aesthetics.

Thus, like the presentations in the DDCA symposium, the authors’ approaches to research in this issue of Studio Research are idiosyncratically
heterogeneous. However, a more eccentric or expansive freedom is expressed here. This is because, unlike the majority of the presentations in Melbourne, these authors are not constrained by the formal requirements of a PhD investigation.

Ross Woodrow
Executive Editor
Studio Research

1 The DDCA Symposium was held from 19 to 21 March 2015 at the Victorian College of the Arts, the Melbourne Conservatorium of Music, and the National Gallery of Victoria.
We see that all that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is still profaned, and we—a man and a woman—are at last compelled to face with sober senses our real condition of life, and even more, our presence in this world.

—VestAndPage

As the performance art duo VestAndPage (figure 1), we adopt and re-adapt the well-known “all that is solid melts into air” quote from Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels’s Manifest of the Communist Party ([1848] 2014). We do so because it sounds like a poetic call for authenticity, while at the same time striking a chord with the urgency of performing durational art today—hinting at its interior cause, necessity, and emotional/impulsive drives.

Our performance art is underpinned by pursuing what ‘authenticity’ means in this century, a time where humankind’s needs are increasingly artificial and induced. Participating in producing this obscure activity and elusive entity is even more complex when time-performing lapses are considerably expanded.

Searching for authenticity is an issue often disguised by or hidden behind related but secondary matters in theoretical analysis, such as methodology, spontaneity, and hybrid working strategies. However, the measure of authenticity is not something intrinsic to its form. As a category relevant to the sphere of ethics, it implies, among other things, the theory of recognition and perception, consistency, coherence, and even stamina.

Authenticity is not determined by anything prior. To fully understand it requires deep self-awareness, constant application, and humble dedication; one needs to comprehend “Being-in-the-world” (Heidegger 1927, quoted in Mehta 1971, 95) and to practice “courage and more courage” (Sartre 1948, 230) so as to recognise and acknowledge the significance of one’s existence. Authenticity contributes to implementing our emotional intelligence (Goleman 1996) and, with it, the ability to sense and understand the value of our inner actions on which, for instance, Jerzy Grotowski and Thomas Richards developed their theatre performance praxis (Richards 2008).

Because of our present perception of art and culture, authenticity cannot be initiated or pursued with intentional exercise and neither can it be claimed presumptuously (thus romantically) as a special unique status for performance art itself. For us, performing is a profound necessity, since we incessantly ask ourselves to perform...
in the most honest, sincere way, abandoning all pretensions and imitations. To function at our best, while being a couple (in life and work), we have the duty of being fully truthful towards ourselves as single individuals, and trustworthy towards each other. By doing this, we take and accept only what is given—life and art—not by stealth, but by means of ‘Self’ that may become inwardly sensitive. We believe that to achieve complete authenticity, one must fully dedicate themselves to it through deep concentration and self-awareness. It is a continuous practice, and it ought to be the urgency of every human being.

For us, performing durational art actions as a duo represents ‘another chance for encounter’ in an unusual situation—the ideal, ever-lasting moment before the long goodbye, the edge of longing—where we can strip off our dispositions from any individualistic intentions, opening ourselves towards a new process of creative endeavours, even by fully accepting our most intimate fears and fragilities. By breaking through the sensitive membranes of possessiveness, infighting, ownership, and all that unites and separates us, the space into which we perform metaphorically transmutes into an elastic diaphragm. It is like moving through a blurred hazy path, sharing the same shield, investigating a labyrinth where our cultural identity is not reflected in the fixity of the aesthetic canon, but rather in the metamorphosis, the process of making, and a continuous exchange that tells of transformation and spiritual-psychic growth.

**TOTAL RESOLUTION**

Our actions reflect who we are, and since ‘what we are’ is generally disjointed (be it the ever-changing midpoint between the many ‘I’s’ that speak in us or the inner voices that encourage them), our actions express what and who we are. However, there is still a lack of unity, cohesion, and resolution. We never operate at our best, and performance is a
good exercise to practice awareness, and to clearly comprehend what the word ‘everything’ means: to act in total resolution.

The Self awakens with the effort, not the chatter. While the effort feeds it, the inertial drift rocks it to sleep. In the beginning, we can’t resist inertia for more than a few seconds. The secret is not to fight against, but to move ever forward in activating the awakening of the Self. Once this action is metabolised, it enriches our being. It is an action that honours life. Even to pick up something from the floor becomes a gesture that has the flavour of a kind of prayer to the infinite. After some time, we will still clearly remember our simple gesture made with total resolution.

For example, as part of the performance Thou Twin of Slumber: Cocoon II (figure 2), a durational piece that formed part of the 2013 performance cycle Thou Twin of Slumber, I walked, blindfolded, on a very narrow rough edge of an ancient well, which we had previously filled with sharp broken glass pieces and spiky stones. I balanced seagull feathers on my fingernails, while my partner, Verena, wrapped the space around me with fishing lines, shaping a net to cage both of us inside. The aim of this action was to enhance our concentration on the main action to the point where we acted without thinking while simultaneously reaching a higher sensorial perception and activating of an inward atmosphere of confidence and serene peaceful force. By the end of the action, we were no longer pointing out the limit between time and space; we were dancing on it.

Practice teaches us to distinguish between being awake and sailing into oblivion. Acting with total resolution is to enter into the sphere of the inner silence, while awareness changes the automatic sense of time created by the surface of the mind. This means to wake up, honour, and make our presence sacred, because this is of primary importance. We don’t need anything else to enter into the abode of darkness to achieve and increase our essence. We only need to practice relentlessly, inflexibly, and inexorably. It can take time to transport ourselves to this new and achieved state of being, but, once done, everything becomes bearable, simple, beautiful, and even unfinished as all that is True.

DURATIONAL WORK AND THE INNER SILENCE
Context is the overall situation in which an event occurs. It can also be defined as the set of circumstances in which the act of communication occurs. In performance art, context is paramount. During the process of a durational performance, it is as if the context is a live component/entity that flexibly expands and shrinks back, repeatedly. It consists of sequential phases that unfold and shape the time-space situation in which the act of communication occurs. Within this dynamic/situation, the actions are structured (in an almost definite way) and stimulate the cognition, the perception, and the psycho-affective sphere, both of the performer/s and the audience members. Attention, memory, reasoning, processing sensory information, applying knowledge, changing preferences, and expectations (which can be conscious or unconscious) are activated between the parties (individuals) involved (each in their own way), and contribute to shape the image that one has of the other.

While performances should be organised in a precise way, unexpected accidents may arise. In a durational performance, it is often during these very moments that the hidden meanings of the work emerge. Informed by the lesson of artists such as Tehching Hsieh, Alastair MacLennan, Marina Abramovic and Ulay, and others in matters of patience, endurance, isolation, time, suffering, imbalance, permutation, transformation (here as elevation from suffering), and understanding that a pure, intense creativity can be accessed also through grief, pain, risk-taking, and failure, we have deepened our research on those issues.

Thus, we have performed blindfolded many times—such as in Terra Nova (2012, figure 3); La Promenade du Sceptique (2011, figure 4); A Morphologic Journey (On the Boarders of Our Bodies) II (2014, figure 5)—or in almost-complete darkness, such as in Panta Rhei II: Thoughts (2011). We did this because we are interested in exploring what it means and what can happen when only relying on perception, therefore limiting the tricks that the sense of sight can cause by transmitting impulses to the brain that can be erroneously elaborated by the mind. For us, it is like playing with the lightness of the dream and the density of a dark blindness; to visit the limit that runs along the sleep and nearby the dying,
Figure 4 VestAndPage La Promenade du Sceptique 2011, Accademia di Belle Arti, Venice. Photographer: Andrea Morucchio.

Figure 5 VestAndPage A Morphologic Journey (On the Boarders of our Bodies) II 2014, KARST Gallery, Plymouth [UK]. Photographer: Dom Moore.
along the remembering and next to oblivion. Of course, we allow ourselves to be vulnerable to accidents, but in our performances, we play the most serious game. For example, during the twenty-four-hour performance *FEAR vs LOVE vs FEAR* (2012, figures 6 and 7), we exerted ourselves to produce change by shifting and transforming a situation produced by a constrictive situation.

To be its best, a durational performance requires enormous risks, and performing durational works helps us increase our potential on how to look at and ‘see through’ things with a concentrated eye. For this, we rely not just on our mental and psychic strength, but also our hearts. This way of practicing is like resurrecting unlived energies. For us, it means constant experimentation, training ourselves to understand what it means to activate the Self and to explore new possibilities to broaden our life perspective. All of this is not only concerned with the mind, but also with the physical body, its own memory, and the body-spirit. In our view, the body-spirit is a quiet, intact, conquerable space that we access through non-reactive expression of negative emotions and the resurfacing of the profound mind. As we noted in our performances *Speak That I Can See You* (2007), *Fratres* (2009), *SUITEnovus* (2009), and *One Earth’s Dreaming* (2009), this space of pure observation, accessed through time extension, creates the fertile ground where the fundamental power of the human as evocative being—weakened and turned into an easy prey due to the emotional currents induced by the challenges of the external world—appears and grows. This faculty brings us back to being what we really are, and the pure observation—which is, however, an action—is the space of the inner silence, a peculiar state of being in which all thoughts are erased and where it is possible to live at a different level of everyday awareness. Because the inner silence means suspending inner dialogue, it is a peaceful state to be in. In this state,
any attempt at identification triggered by the superficial layers of the mind literally disappears by reaching the acme of deep concentration.

However, this is a state of extreme vigilance and awareness produced by an absence of thoughts in the form of words, consequential images, and associations. Here the superficial mind is effectively disconnected from the perception of its own existence; hence, it has no more power to determine and establish the ego. The field of energy is now the one of the hyperconsciousness. While Descartes thought he had discovered the fundamental truth when he stated “I think, therefore I am”, he had contrarily given expression to the error key: identify thought with awareness and identity with thinking. While performing durational works in a state of inner silence, any attempt of distraction caused by the mind is instantly recognised and let go. As performers, we believe that if we are able to transform the inner silence into our greatest ally throughout the whole creative process (the quest), we can achieve the unexpected, previously unknown, and therefore new.

In 2010, we travelled to Patagonia to shoot the first episode of our performance art movie trilogy *sin∞fin The Movie* (figures 8 and 9). Due to the isolation and ruthless conditions of the location, our usual prosaic daily thoughts progressively ceased to exist. Living in those remote lands for weeks, we had to circumscribe the source of a stinging sense of melancholy and astonishment that we felt and were slowly drowning into. The tangible realisation of the human frailty, the solitude, the silence, the emptiness, the merciless beauty that shines from a nature so immense and desolate, helped us to set the parameters for the performances we did for the movie. Moreover, it helped us to crystallise what would become one of our main objectives as a performance duo: expanding the perceptual space of inner silence.

By performing durational works in the perceptual space of inner silence, we work to become aware of things through the full activation of our senses (and not just the five ones) and to comprehend situations in non-conventional ways. In our work, we sense and perceive by physical sensations (i.e., with our skin, nerves, muscles, and organs) and we also feel through our emotions, intuition, and in terms of a past experience (i.e., memory). Following Sufi philosophy, which is very clear on this matter (Bayatly 2001), we try to awaken and activate our own ‘inner archives’ of visions, remembrances, and sensations through our work.

For the durational work *Endangered Species* (2008), we performed inside a three-cubic-metre glass cube. I lay naked on top of 350 crystal glasses, with my whole body covered in river pearls. I kept my eyes closed while Verena delicately began to remove the glasses from underneath my body with her hands and the pearls with her mouth. After three hours, only my spine, arms, and legs were lying over a few lines of glasses—just enough to sustain my weight—and my body became numb. I not only had the feeling of being held precariously by few fragile supports, but I also had to think about how to get up gracefully and naturally without touching the ground or breaking the glasses. The only option I had was to entrust myself completely to the glasses, as if I was made of the same matter, as if my whole body could acquire the transparency and lightness of glass. What I felt next is hard to explain; it was as if I had become liquid, soft, weightless. This allowed me to stand on my feet and thus end the performance. From this moment on, we decided to explore this working ‘method’ in depth. In fact, for Verena and I, being a performer is about an attitude towards the world, oneself, and others; a settled way of thinking and feeling about someone or something to be transformed creatively into action. Our art expresses this.

Sometimes, we perceive what is not there; consequently, we have illusions and misinterpretations of reality. These often trigger a new action in response. To only perceive by the five senses can be misleading. Even if using them feels more immediate and recognisable, there are also other senses that operate more subtly and ineffably and bring us to perceive our state of being in a specific condition or place. Other elements that trigger this process are elements of risk and fear. We also use dynamic breathing practices as a fundamental part of the way we conceive of and design performances. For instance, during the five-hour outdoor durational performance *In.Sight.Out* (2008), we repeatedly dived into a circular pool filled with artificial white liquid. This action lasted almost all night and was conceived after a session of dynamic breathing.
VestAndPage \textit{sin\infty fin – Performances at the Holy Centre} (still from the art film trilogy) 2011, India & Kashmir.

VestAndPage \textit{sin\infty fin – Performances at the End of the World} (still from the art film trilogy) 2010, Patagonia & Tierra del Fuego.

Figure 9 VestAndPage \textit{sin\infty fin – Performances at the Holy Centre} (still from the art film trilogy) 2011, India & Kashmir.
We work this way since we believe that to perceive is an action that allows us to become conscious and instinctively aware. Through our work, we aim to realise, see, or understand a situation mentally, emotionally, and spiritually at the same time as the expansion of the inner silence entails the expansion of a consciousness and a reconfiguration of our energy.

To make space for the inner silence during the durational process, we have to gradually focus our attention to what is happening in each moment. Detaching our thoughts from the superficial layers of the mind, we bring our attention to the confines of the present—doing this as much as possible, for as long as possible. It is like remembering that we are alive and present. Moreover, we give our whole attention to the action we are doing while we collect information about the environment and ourselves: What is our posture? How should we breathe? Are we acting quietly? Do we inwardly perceive a sensation of discomfort? What about our body, and the place where we are located? Deep focus is key.

For the seven-hour performance Thou Twin of Slumber: Imago (figures 10 and 11), another piece from our 2013 performance cycle Thou Twin of Slumber, we tried to avoid re-enacting by eliminating almost every kind of installation setting—which has since become a feature of our work—and opted to assemble scenic elements while performing. In this process, the deepest layers of the mind resurfaced. Decoding reality through perception, the mind is an ally that allows us to come into contact with our field of consciousness, and this razor’s edge of the present moment creates a barrier that is, or aims to be, inaccessible to distraction. As long as we remain in this state, the superficial layers of the mind can’t distract us, because, to do so, they need us to believe in what they produce and say. In other words, they need us to fall back to the energy level of useless listening and automatic identification with them, therefore degrading the level of our emotional intelligence.

Inner silence is crucial while performing: forms of control cease to be, which consequently frees...
our space for the perception of those inner sources that are what we really are—the expression of our lives and what we really want to express. When we perform durational work in a state of complete inner silence, we walk, hand in hand, towards the door of the infinite, as we experienced in Without Tuition or Restraint (2011, figure 12), a durational performance that dealt with the idea of freedom, held in a gallery space for five days and four nights. However, we have concluded that reaching the inner silence is not the prerogative of one practice over another, but the prerogative of a determined intent of those who want to achieve it. Expanding the inner silence during the durational process means to progressively deactivate all of our automatic instincts, and convert them into a set of forces allied to our need to communicate and express our quest for the meaning of life. To perform in this way is to act to awaken in us the power of awareness that is our heritage and our right as human beings, without distinction. This choice is in every breath we inhale, in every little thought that we have, in every word we say, and in every little action we make.

**AUTHENTICITY, FAILURE, AND SELF-AWARENESS**

Socrates suggests that “a self-aware person must act completely within his capabilities to their pinnacle, to become aware of every fact (and its context) relevant to his existence, if he wishes to attain self-knowledge” (quoted in Sahakian and Sahakian 1993, 32–33). As such, we have begun to perform proceeding from the premise that we should never interpret something a priori assumed, but primarily act in accordance with our human nature to realise our full potential. Consequently, for us, it is useless to imitate or interpret because this could cause distract us, as truth-seeking performers, and the viewer.

Of course, many others aside from Socrates have offered poignant philosophical arguments, which continue to be sources of inspiration for our performative practice. For instance, Sartre, when reflecting upon Heidegger, examines the concept of authenticity, taking it to the extreme. By discussing different ways of living abstractly, he comments on the detachment of the individual from factual reality. For Sartre, this is not a fallback to shy away from the problems of the world and to avoid external influences in order to preserve one’s integrity. Rather, this represents the only ideal situation from which to critically and radically engage with social and political conventions that people have created but that have proved to be a complete dramatic failure (Martinot 1991). Additionally, Eric Fromm writes extensively on “genuine individuality” (1942, 208), suggesting that an authentic person is one who attempts to live their life according to the needs of their inner being, rather than letting themself be influenced by the demands of society or early conditioning. Nowadays, Fromm’s notion of authenticity as genuineness, openness, and self-disclosure has become a common definition in psychological science (Wood, Wood, and Boy 2010). We believe that authenticity refers to art as an expression of the artist’s self (see Kivy 1995), while a personally authentic performance is faithful to a performer’s individual genius and interpretation (text, score, concept, etc.) (Young 1988).

Nevertheless, it is important to note that Fromm’s idea of genuine individuality also represents an “illusion” (Fromm 1942, 221). People are social beings who are often under social pressures that continually interfere with and affect

![Figure 12 VestAndPage Without Tuition or Restraint 2011. Performed as part of Performance Transition, The Exchange Gallery, UK. Photographer: Steve Tanner.](image-url)
their authentic being. In fact, distractions come from internal and external sources, which can cause a state of mental confusion in performers that can mislead them during their action, resulting in losing the necessary, required, and intimate attention to their main task: unveiling their own Self. If their energy level drops, the action will progressively lack intensity and the communication will be impoverished; the whole work might fail. However, there are other ways of reading an apparently unsuccessful, unsatisfactory action without considering it as a ‘mistake’ or a ‘failure’. Something of this nature happened during our performance *Thou Twin of Slumber: Chrysalis* (2013, figure 13), when I badly cut my middle finger with a sharp knife. This was a technical mistake. The blood streamed down, but instead of interrupting the piece, I took a book and kept it open on my wounded hand. With the other hand, I started writing words with my blood poured on the floor on an old Victorian door we had previously installed in the space. As part of the performance, I burnt the book while my hand was still dripping blood. These series of events, which were the result of an accident, created an unintentional but very powerful image.

The notion of failure is ingrained in human nature itself, and the promise of modernity for freedom from fear has tragically failed. Our Western philosophical tradition abounds with anticipation, consideration, and affirmation in this sense, and, as Kierkegaard indicates in his *Fear and Trembling*, “one must make an active choice to surrender to something that goes beyond comprehension” (Kierkegaard, quoted in Holt 2012, 6). Sartre’s concern with the vertiginous experience of absolute freedom also implies the concept of failure, since people are incapable of maintaining such a level of freedom for the great anguish that it causes (see Crosby 1988). István Mészáros comments on Sartre’s importance “as a thinker whose lifework is manifestly representative of our time” (2012, 141). And, as Dominic (2012) notes, “In demonstrating Sartre’s strengths and integrity, Mészáros also reveals how his very failures are also sources of illumination.”

Lacan stated that “the object is failure (*un raté*). The essence of the object is failure” (1998, 58).
This concept takes on remarkable connotations in modern psychology: the conditions of barely succeeding, of always failing, lead us to learn how to live, to the point that it is through failure that love may approach the infinite (Webster 2009).

More recently, according to some later pedagogical/psychological analysis (by theorists such as Michael Nagel, Brian N. Goldman, Michael H. Kernis, Stephen Wright, Martin Seligman and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, who were part of the new era of Positive Psychology in 1998), the concept of failure has begun to be interpreted as a positive force for social/personal progress, because it allows the individual to move into other territories where their creative resources can be more productive and highly valued.

In our performances, these ideas translate into actions. For example, if we have to move on a slippery surface, we need to adapt our movements to that surface without trying to dominate and resist it. This will help us to avoid repeatedly falling over and to discover new movements. Failure opens up new possibilities.

By practicing and finding ways to render through our performative works' concept of failure (and using the memories of our personal failures as creative material to produce art), we have realised that we are operating in an original and, most importantly, an honest way. For example, if, at a certain moment of one of our performances, the act of falling on the floor becomes necessary, we will create situations that actually make us fall—rather than pretending to fall. Thus, we will pour a huge amount of oil (or liquid soap) onto the floor to make it slippery; we will set huge ice cubes that make us slide or lose our balance; or we will suspend large, thin, glass plates some inches above the ground, and perform over them until they break under our weight, either by stepping, running, or dancing on them.

Performing by being in accord with the true Self—that is, expressing what one really thinks, feels, and believes (Harter 2002)—leads to achieving and expressing personal authenticity, and also contributes to reaching a higher level of self-esteem. For us, a performative work acquires authenticity, originality, and consistency when the performer accepts both their strengths and weaknesses (Kernis 2003) as natural constituents parts of their being. When the performer tries to overcome their limits without fully succeeding, it is vital that they continue the action with the same level of energy and attention, by letting themself be completely guided by their internal values instead of by external threats, inducements, and expectations (Ryan and Edward 2003).

An example is Chris Burden's work *B.C. Mexico* (1973), which he describes in the documentary *Chris Burden Documented Projects 71–74* (1975) as a project that grew out of a utopian fantasy and conceptual turn. The only thing viewers found when they arrived at his Los Angeles gallery for his scheduled exhibition was a note describing his absence; he was paddling a small kayak from a town on the Sea of Cortez in Baja California. He spent eleven days on a beach before declaring the end of the performance and paddling back to town. For Burden, this project was about isolation and about ‘being gone’.

To respond and adapt to unpredictable contingent factors that can abruptly change the contextual situation in which one is performing (i.e., public or open spaces), a performer needs a flexible mind, a blameless heart, courage, humility, and adaptability. Considering that a performance action works once it discovers/unveils the Self (of the performer and of the audience), which hopefully will arise renewed and transformed, to be a performance artist means to stir up and provoke not just reflections, but also tensions and emotions (in ourselves and in the others)—to externalise what is hidden inside our own hearts, souls, and life experiences.

**WHAT IS THE EVIDENCE IN THIS WORD ‘AUTHENTICITY’?**

The word ‘authenticity’ is usually used in relation to objects. For example, the authenticity of a work of art is judged by the fact that it was produced by a reliable author or a person who is recognised as being genuine, sincere, and spontaneous in their being and behaviour. In legal terminology, authenticity is related to the truth of a legal act, not for its content but for the form and the origin of that act itself. A document is authentic when completed in the manner prescribed by law or by those who have the authority to draw it up, not for the reasons contained therein. Any well-compiled dictionary can provide comprehensive definitions of the word ‘authenticity’.
On authenticity, the philosophy of existentialism refers to the kind of existence that reflects the inner Self of the individual and the true reality it shapes, which is characterised by uniqueness and by possible anguished choices, as opposed to the false security of an existence based on repetitive, externally imposed, quotidian social schemes that tend to cause superficial and hypocritical behaviours, and disrupt the possibility of having a mindful life (Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy 2004).

As VestAndPage, we believe that in performative practice, existential authenticity is determined by the embodiment of the action—action made, filtered, and given back through the body of the performer—which makes feel the performer alive, and gives a full meaning to their ideal of life as a human being. Consequently, if the existential authenticity is made possible by the embodiment of the action, it can be also said that through the performer’s body, the concrete existence of the action is achieved, and that this way of existing claims the unity of the being with the act. Theoreticians, critics, and performance artists tend to agree that the performer is the tool, the neutral agent of the action, and that the action, once completed, is positioned beyond the performers who performed it, which is as if to say that the action (and not just once it’s over) is no longer the performer’s.

Hypothetically, if we take into account an audience (even a super-audience) called to identify and determine the ‘degree’ of authenticity of a performative action by means of the senses and knowledge, the result always implies each audience member’s (the perceiver’s) and performer’s (the doer’s) motivational state and emotional mood in the here and now. In fact, even when more people share the same place/space, their motivational state and emotional mood may differ considerably from one another, given that the sensorial information that each brain receives is often incomplete, fragmented, and fluctuating. To remain authentic, when we perform, neither of us plays or pretends to be what we are not.

If the concept of authenticity has an objective and a subjective connotation, a coherent external behaviour has to correspond with a spontaneous and genuine interiority. There must be an agreement between one’s true inner characteristics—what someone makes and does—and their relationship with others. Translated into our performative practice—and, assuming that to perform means life in itself—coherence to oneself means facing and showing entirely who we are. As Beuys said, it means not disguising our wounds, or finding easy ways out.

As in life, performers who work as a pair or in a group can become destructive to the other(s) and a prison for themself. Because of this, a higher degree of humility is required to set the Self into an experience that is mutual and authentic. This level concerns the quality of the ideal that attracts and shapes the vital energy of the one who performs in that particular period/lapse of time, and then in the extension of its duration. When we perform as a duo, humility allows our actions to be sober and measured, and lets us enter into a dimension of fruitful reciprocity, positive confrontation, and continuous dialogue. For these reasons, in the last four years, we have mainly chosen to work on performance cycles, investigating one concept through several actions, and then performances that progress from one another. This choice gives us sufficient time to evolve and deepen the investigation through performing, just as a writer who writes the chapters of their book. At the same time, we confront ourselves more rigorously and we give more free space to each other, without excluding or overlapping our actions.

In other words, observing these parameters, a collaborative durational performance work allows an encounter between two or more individuals (each other) in a common territory of opportunity, where it becomes possible to give up and change personal beliefs and passions, in order to harmonise ourselves to what is true and right, not only for us personally, but also for others. In this way, the subjective dimension is deepened: we leave ourselves to find something higher or more profound, bigger than ourselves, which then deserves to be activated into proper actions (as it must be lived in the moment), which acquire a particularity. It is like delivering our beings to something unknown, which doesn’t annihilate because it is there that we become truly who we are.

For Levinas, sincere behaving and sincere attitude according to one’s Self—in term of ethics—represents a moral responsibility for the well-being of another, as “there is something more
important than my life, and that is the life of the other” (Levinas in Wright, Hughes, and Ainley 1998, 172). Indeed, for the French philosopher, subjectivity itself is constituted through bearing witness to the existence of another, and it is constantly put into question by the force of that ethical obligation. In terms of self-reflexivity and specular recognition, and by assuming the risks that exposure involves, to be authentic for oneself is also to be authentic for others, because a being for itself is a being for others, a being concerned for others (Levinas 1981).

According to this, a whole series of factors come into play: mutual respect, vigilant presence, compassionate commitment. These are fundamental to our performances if we are to be totally present and “in there” for one another, to support and help each other, particularly in potentially dangerous scenarios. To reach this state of togetherness, we constantly train ourselves to perform with ‘listening eyes and listening hearts’, for being fully operative not just with the action that each one of us is completing in a particular moment of the performance, but for one another always. As Levinas remarks, there is a transcendent, ineffable, almost inexplicable quid in all this that exceeds our phenomenological existence and can neither be reduced to formal representation or statement (Hanna 2013).

All these insights lead both of us to a more authentic interpersonal dialogue. The empathy that develops between us may also deeply involve the audience, shifting them towards a more participative and less passive habitual level of watching. For us, a performance must always be a moment of sharing, and, even more so, a gathering and union.

CONCLUSION
A durational creative (performative) process suggests principles such as consistency/coherence and interior unity/integrity. It may be intended as an expression of an inner transformation; that is, a return to someone’s own essence. On the external level, however, are the concepts of enlightened action—clear and honest communication, coordination, and harmony with each other (and others) and with reality. The inner and external dimensions are closely connected.

Pure creative drive can be intended as an expression of consciousness and as a way of being that deeply resonates with us. For every performer, reaching a level of coherence, unity and integrity within their artistic expression is a very complex and arduous process. However, it is achievable if one actively strives for it.

Accepting and integrating aspects of ourselves, we reach a state in which there is coherence between the internal and the external, and the equilibrium of reality is altered. Hence, the concept of integrity is not a reference to some moral precept that stops only at the surface of the mind, but rather has to do with the re-encounter between us: two beings who attempt to complete one another by being and acting together on the same ground.

A chance is offered to understand that our habits and mechanical reactions are no longer the expression of rough and crude programming induced by an unbalanced cultural system, or even worse, by intention. Mechanical reactions are replaced by creative interactions, where each outer event matches a manifestation of its own uniqueness. To cross the threshold of our essence, recognising its strength and spreading it in the space–time dimension contextualised by the creative (performative) process, along with the performed actions, means to be able to act existentially, intensely, and with meaning.

For VestAndPage, a performative durational work is primarily intended as a path of research: we move together and we look for new approaches that can effectively accelerate the necessary steps towards our personal rebirth and transformation. It is a new dimension of self-expression.

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ENDNOTES
1 VestAndPage are German artist Verena Stenke and Italian artist and writer Andrea Pagnes. Please see our website, www.vest-and-page.de, for links to all the performances discussed in this paper.
2 The original is “All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned, and man is at last compelled to face with sober senses his real conditions of life, and his relations with his kind.”
3 Sartre’s definition of authenticity from an existential viewpoint is: “Authenticity, almost needless to say, is having a true and lucid consciousness of the situation, in assuming the responsibilities and risks that involves, in
accepting it in pride or humiliation, sometimes in horror and hate. There is no doubt that authenticity demands courage and more courage. Thus it is not surprising that one finds it so rarely."

4 For Grotowski and Richards, to understand and identify the inner actions (and their source) helps to clarify the uptake of the process of energy transformation and individual permutations, at the same time counting on a wider range of possibilities to create poetry outside the conventional, and be original.

5 According to Rebecca Erickson (1995, 139), authenticity is not just a question of "being true to self", but also of being true to "self-in-relationship." Authenticity also has to do with the "self and world" (Terry 1993, 145).

6 The twenty-four-hour durational performance FEAR vs LOVE vs FEAR took place in an abandoned two-story villa in the heart of Mexico City in summer 2012, as part of Proyecto Líquido, organised by Fundación Alumnos 47. In each of the twelve rooms of the house, we created a different situationist installation, which we would perform twice (one hour during the day, one hour during the night in each room, moving in a circular pattern). The performance also involved about fifty young street girls sheltered by Yolla Youth Residence, who had participated at our preparatory workshop during the two weeks preceding the performance (see https://fearisfear.wordpress.com/). The performance began with the girls writing their names on my naked back with pens without ink, scratching my skin until it bled. Blindfolded, and wearing a white bridal skirt, I then lay over four large blocks of ice for some time. My partner arrived once my mouth was almost blue and my body completely rigid and cold. She invited some of the audience members to touch my back with their hands, to feel and acquaint themselves with how cold a body can be and how it is possible to warm it up again through merely hand contact, which is one of the most powerful vectors of energy. Once I stood up again, I invited the people who helped me, one by one, to experience a dance with me on the slippery ice (exacerbated by the fact that I was barefoot). In another situation within this same performance, I entered a room we had filled with a few rooms of broken glass pieces the day before. Some audience members followed me and helped bury me in the glass, using some shovels. I stayed underneath the glass for as long as I could. After half an hour or so, I slowly tried to extricate myself, moving my naked body carefully so as not to cut myself too much. Yerena came to assist me, removing the broken glass, piece by piece. Once I was out, she cleaned my skin of the glass splinters with a sponge and water. Then she turned on some music from a small device, and invited me to dance out, she cleaned my skin of the glass splinters with a sponge and water. Then she turned on some music from a small device, and invited me to dance with her on the broken glass pieces. Some members of the audience joined us. The room was no longer an imaginary graveyard, but a real, though unusual, dance floor. These descriptions exemplify that in our performances, components and elements expand, dilate, and amplify, not just for a mere change per se, or by means per se, but to possibly reach a catharsis (See http://www.crest-and-page.de/#fear-vs-love-vs-fear/1712).

7 See http://www.sinfin-themovie.de/SINFIN/sinfin_The_Movie_Trilogy_Project.html.

8 In the installation Show Your Wound, Beuys said: "And when I say: Show it! Show the wound that we have inflicted upon ourselves during the course of our development, it is because the only way to progress and become aware of it is to show it" (quoted in Borer 1996, 25).

REFERENCES


INTRODUCTION
In this paper, I use the concepts of affect from Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari to reflect on my practical work *Marble and Steel Room Divider* (2013, figure 1) and its photographic and experimental videographic documentation. My analysis intends to uncover a flow of affects through the work, mediated by designed material, that move in and across relational fields connected to issues of production, consumption, and the environment. For this work, these concerns include aspects of contemporary global marble production, industrial repair, and human perceptions of industry and geology.

The aim of the work is to potentialise the perception of interconnected systems and practice that form and extend from designed products. In general, such systems include manufacturing, global shipping and supply lines, marketing, logistics, consumption, and, ultimately, reclamation, waste, or disposal into the environment. These systems can have serious social and environmental consequences, such as pollution, toxicity (Lu 2014), resource depletion (Monbiot 2013), and, perhaps most seriously, carbon and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, increasing the advancement of global climate change (IPCC, 2013). The context for the work discussed in this paper is the marble industry. The manufacturing systems of this industry are reported to negatively impact river ecologies (Mulk et al. 2015), cause localised air pollution and soil toxicity (Hanieh, AbdElall, and Hasan 2014), and produce a large amounts of waste, especially those associated with traditional explosive quarrying techniques (Liguori et al. 2008). Additionally, marble manufacturing and transportation are typically fossil fuelled and emit GHG (Liguori et al. 2008). Transportation is a key concern, making up the bulk of manufacturing and marketing channel costs combined. In spite of the expense and environmental impact of marble transportation due to its bulk and weight, marble is still shipped around the world to places that have their own marble of comparable quality, and even exchanged between marble-producing countries (CEPI 2004).

Design theorist and critic Andrea Branzi (1984) observes that such practices are the logical outcomes of complex, interconnected systems of production that are contingent on globalised relations and specific market-based economic conditions. For marble production and many other types of production, these logics include, but are not limited to, differences in labour costs, regulatory systems, subsidies, tariffs, and exchange rate fluctuations (Stock 2011). Branzi (1984) notes that such logics open temporary avenues of profitability at the expense of...
of environmental wellbeing, and, furthermore, that the logics are obfuscated by the construction of aesthetic techniques that are appealing to consumers. Branzi’s claims are reflected in Nigel Thrift’s (2010) more recent proposition that normative industrial product design techniques of surface design and glamour, such as shroud design, black-boxing, and other techniques of decoration and concealment, are used to appeal directly at the neuro-physiological level, an affective level, which distracts the consumer from contemplating an object’s production conditions and troubled relations. The problem of the logics of production being unclear or hidden within the sensory experience of products is that consumers—and producers too—may act in ignorance of their harmful environmental effects.

However, I intend to show that concepts of affect can potentialise the perception of such relations within the sensory expression of objects. In my practice, I attempt to capture the object’s complex material relations. Deleuze and Guattari’s (1994) concepts of affect are suitable for illuminating this approach because of their concern for understanding materiality in complex, relational ways that do not just refer to simple materials or objects themselves. Their concepts of affect help interrogate the sensory expression of materials by finding the connections between material and relational conditions, and explaining how relational conditions are folded or compressed back into material as durations and intensities of sensation. It is a folding and compressing of relations into perception, specifically those relations of the marble industry and those of damage and repair, that I map in this paper. As I will show, through sensation and sensible materiality, users can re-situate their thinking on industry and environment.

The Marble and Steel Room Divider presents an industrially repaired marble slab, that suggests some of the complex systems of marble production. The frame that hangs this marble slab for its function as a room divider is designed to open up the viewer to an awareness of industrial marble production, accentuated by the use of features, such as cleats and pulleys, that potentialise perceptions of tension, weight, and collapse. As I will explain, the crack within the marble has the role of suggesting and prevailing against the stigma with which broken stone objects are treated in typical producer–consumer relations and, furthermore, prompting contemplation of industrial practice and its effects in the world. To show how these perceptions are potentialised, I will first introduce Deleuze and Guattari’s concepts of affect.

**AFFECTS, ASSEMBLAGES, AND PERCEPTS**

Deleuze and Guattari develop their concepts for affect from the works of Baruch Spinoza (1632–77), with whom much of the modern study of affect begins. Deleuze understands Spinoza’s work as a non-dualist philosophy of mind and body, in which thinking and acting are in a continuum (Deleuze 1988). Determining the value of an affective relationship is a matter of evaluating the capacities and activities produced by an encounter. If an encounter with something, such as an object or designed product, increases one’s ability to act, then the encounter is a good one. If it decreases the ability to act, the encounter is weak. The point is openness; a body should strive to become open to the “greatest number of things” (Deleuze 1988, 71), rather than closed to new affective relations and their possibilities. According to Deleuze and Guattari, affects are human/non-human hybrids—“non-human becomings of man” (1994, 169)—which they term “a clinch”, a complementary relationship of forces that produces the affective world of human experience (1994, 182). This is a ‘becoming’, an affective clinch that changes us and our relations with things. In light of Spinoza’s conception of affect, such a change is a ‘transformation’, opening us up to new affective connections and thereby strengthening affective powers.

As an example, consider the relationship of humans to the problem of landfill. If heavy metals or other toxic components of products end up in landfills and then leech into groundwater, the capacities of the ground are weakened because the potential of the soil has been closed down for purposes such as farming. There may be nothing that can be done with polluted soil besides attempting to clean it up. In turn, this weakens the capacities of humans who are in relation with the soil—they must spend time and energy
depolluting, rather than engaging with, the soil to strengthen their options regarding life on it, off it, or through the many types of farming possible. This is not the end of the process; other non-humans are also weakened, including all the animals, insects, and microbes that depend upon soil for food and habitation. However, if consumers choose not to purchase or discard products into landfill (or producers choose not to produce such products), then the soil may remain unpolluted—or, at any rate, less polluted—and consequently open to a larger number of affective capacities. Among other uses, it can be farmed for food, landscaped for recreation or building, planted with trees for furniture, or restored to wilderness, all of which have effects at the human and community level. The notion of ‘clean soil’ can therefore potentialise a vast array of movements, happenings, or events at the social level.

An affect-based inquiry can extract a great amount of detail from works of design, and from their social or environmental relations, through the study of the sensations they transmit. Such sensations are experienced in relation to one another, but also connect and ‘open up’ to a larger affective field of sensation (Deleuze and Guattari 1994). This is the transformative experience possible with objects: an experience of moving through material and into a broader set of relations with factors of production and consumption. Within the field of design, affect gives us a way to explore the human and non-human together as entangled relations, rather than conducting limited inquiries into such things as ‘the product’ and how it functions or who produced it. The affective opportunity is to re-situate thinking and grasp the connection and passage between production, consumption, and ecological concerns simultaneously, rather than as discrete areas of investigation.

Affect lends itself to such inquiry because of its principles of openness and connectivity. Affect connects material through sensation to human and non-human experience and back again to matter (Deleuze and Guattari 1994). Brian Massumi notes that affect works like a “world-glue”, transforming a multitude of contiguous experiences into a seamless affective field of “self-continuity” that facilitates sensory transitions from one thing to the next (2002, 217). According to Massumi, affect enables movement from one thing to another—a flow of passages that generate affective fields in which assemblages form from sensory intensification.

Assemblages are a territory extracted from the affective field. This extraction gives them a form or shape that has resistance to disintegration or absolute connectivity (Deleuze and Guattari 1987). The process of design is an act of intensification that forms assemblages using material tendencies. These assemblages are beyond the conception of affect as merely a set of experiences; the idea that the subject becomes part of the assemblage is pivotal. Thus, an object such as a designed product can activate a passage—a set of relations—between a user, consumer, or producer to sensations in material flowing from the non-human world. There is no privilege to the human component, however, in that all things that are human are connected in some way to those that are non-human (Deleuze and Guattari 1987).

The area of ‘new materialism’ is one of the ways in which Spinozist and Deleuze and Guattarian concepts of affect have been explored in regard to the human/environment relationship. Jane Bennett extends Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of assemblage in A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia (1987) to consider a vitalistic agency across all forms of matter and material—whether human, animal, plant, mineral, or other—for the discovery of ecological and political interactions (Bennett 2010). Bennett’s project, which destabilises anthropocentrism and author-intentionality, uncovers the affective forces that influence and react, shape, and modulate our world, including its people, social systems, and matter itself (Bennett 2010). Bennett proposes that matter and material have a force, a vibrancy, with unique “trajectories, propensities and tendencies” (2010, viii) that form assemblages working at scales both small and large. Bennett believes that the traditional view of matter as inert may encourage the “earth destroying” practices of contemporary production and consumption, and that a converse view of matter as alive and active can foster improved ecological awareness (Bennett 2010, ix). My practical work tests these kinds of proposals, as I will explain in the next section of this paper.
My forthcoming analysis is prefigured by the work of geographer Tom Roberts, who has applied a new materialist analysis, grounded in Deleuzian-Guattarian concepts of affect, to explore the design of retail spaces and how they modulate consumer behaviour. He first notes the way that commercial public spaces, such as airports and shopping malls, are designed so that affective capacities encourage “economically desirable choreographies” (Roberts 2012, 2518). It should be noted, then, that affect is itself neither politically desirable nor deplorable, but can be captured to enhance consumerism. In his case study of IKEA (perhaps the most airport-like of retail stores), he observes how designed features, such as the music system and distribution of coffee, compel the body to shift from passive observation into active consumption via autonomic and chemical effects (Roberts 2012). Having examined the consumption system, Roberts then uses the same theoretical principles to explore the extension of materially based affective relations outwards into IKEA’s production systems. He argues that IKEA can be perceived as immersed in a huge affective assemblage with ecological considerations extant throughout, “from petrochemicals to pine” (Roberts 2012, 2526). It should be considered that such extended assemblages are not clear to consumers while in store. Some material affects overtly express their material origins (furniture applications of unpainted pine clearly originate from within a tree), but there is also a lot of trickery and surface play at work. Chipboard furniture is coated in melamine polymer plastics in a range of palettes and finishes—the interior material is only glimpsed at the seams later when the pieces are being assembled in the home. Likewise, the mild steel interior structure of IKEA’s white, polymer-coated bathroom and kitchen products is only later perceived when the surface coating cracks and rust emerges between the fissures. The later experience of such products, as they age and ruin, is significant because they pull consumers into assemblage with the products’ environmental relations. These relations extend from the products’ original design, manufacture, and use, through to their degradation and disposal, or (possibly) reclamation.

In this paper, I will explain how assemblages form from the compounding of affective intensities transmitted through the designed materials of my work. Such intensities in material are captured by design to draw out form, colour, and other sensory qualities. These qualities work on the senses and, in doing so, place humans into a transformative relation with the world (Smith 1996). By way of a transitional process, they fold qualities of matter into us, qualities that change as they come into relation with us, as do we ourselves. In Deleuze and Guattari’s ontogenetic account of the forces that compose the world, this is the practice of art.

Through their collaborative works, such as A Thousand Plateaus (1987) and What Is Philosophy? (1994), Deleuze and Guattari develop the concept of art as a generalised sensory force, rather than disciplinary distinction that works to compose the world through the extraction and transmission of sensation from material. This account defines art as in production all around us, at all times—in the sonic or territorial world of animals, the character development of literary figures, and in many other things (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 1994). As the sensible expressions of art, affects course through designed products, objects, human and non-human systems and experimental practices. In What Is Philosophy?, affects are described as coalescing into blocs or compounds of sensations, which are extant in matter and preserved by the ontogenetic force of creativity. Deleuze and Guattari use the example of painting to show that it is difficult to know when sensation begins and matter ends. The content of the canvas is material and sensation, but so is the “preparation of the canvas” and the “brush’s hair” (Deleuze and Guattari 1994, 166). Sensation is “realised in the material”, but also passes from and through the material (Deleuze and Guattari 1994, 193). Sensations are therefore concatenated or threaded together into compounds, subject to increases and decreases in intensity, density, duration, and strength.

Sensations exist in compounds because affect has an innate connectivity that pulls sensations together. These compounds can be simple or complex and infinitely variable; the nature of sensation is as infinite as the matter or materials
into which they can invest. Yet, Deleuze and Guattari make some effort to categorise various compounds of sensations. They note varieties of sensation such as the “vibration”, the “embrace or clinch”, and the “withdrawal, division, distension” (Deleuze and Guattari 1994, 168). Using the example of painting, Deleuze and Guattari (1994) find these categories in the work of Francis Bacon, Paul Klee, Piet Mondrian, Vincent van Gogh, and Paul Gauguin. Regarding Gauguin and van Gogh, they find tensions between the areas of flat and plain colours, or between areas of recovery (technically, often backgrounds or representations of walls or floors) and details of flesh or flowers with “broken” tones and more complex colour work (Deleuze and Guattari 1994, 181).

Of particular relevance to my own practice are Deleuze and Guattari’s investigations into the affects of Mondrian’s abstract paintings. Deleuze and Guattari discuss slits or small openings in the paint at the edges of plain areas adjacent to the bold black lines that divide the canvas. These slits are observed to be broken and cracked, not because this is the way they were painted (although it is the way they were painted), but because they are charged with an energy as “the bearer of glimpsed forces” from which the dividing black lines break free and construct their architecture on the canvas (Deleuze and Guattari 1994, 181). From this observation, it can be inferred that Deleuze and Guattari recognise the physical forces within the paint, such as dissimilar material properties of base paint, top coats, and adjoining colours, which might induce cracking as they dry at different speeds. Such analysis goes beyond the intentionality of the artist and reveals a force embodied in matter as blocs of sensation, captured by the creative manipulation of materials. In the forthcoming analysis of my practical work, I will indicate how the material properties of marble, embodied into the marble by geological forces, likewise flow into the sensory world.

However, the sensory forces transmitted by art are not just affects, but ‘percepts’ too. Percepts are “packets of sensation” that move through the things of the world (Deleuze 1995, 137). They are not perceptions because they come before and after perceivers; they are “independent of a state of those who experience them” (Deleuze and Guattari 1994, 164). This distinguishes them...
from the hybrid becomings of affects. Deleuze and Guattari claim that through both affects and percepts, art has the ability to “think” (1994, 66). The purpose of the percept is to make perceptible the “imperceptible” forces of sensation (Deleuze and Guattari 1994, 182). Weight, a quality sensed directly by lifting an object, or indirectly by watching an object become lifted, can be considered a percept. Many other forces persist as percepts in human or non-human activity. For example, the forces of smashing and splitting affect us, but also retain an autonomy independent of when, how, by whom, or by what they are experienced. These examples are very general, but Deleuze and Guattari also refer to very specific and unique percepts, such as the percept of the ocean as infinite. Such percepts survive their affective lives—their immediate effect on the body of that which senses them—and are retained as perceptions. This is the aim of all great artists, Deleuze claims, because it concerns the creation of a sensation that endures beyond the affective experience of any one particular artwork (Boutang, 2013). Percepts maintain a consistency altogether different from the continuous modulation of affects.

**MARBLE AND STEEL ROOM DIVIDER**
The *Marble and Steel Room Divider* is a slab of marble suspended in a frame made from square, cross-sectioned steel tube. The marble slab has a long, natural crack running its diagonal length, which the quarry’s stone masons re-joined with glue and reinforced by using a fibreglass-and-polymer textile backing. The textile backing is observable on the reverse side of the divider, where it has been partially ground off to expose the non-cracked areas of marble (figure 2). The backing close to the crack was left in place to preserve its purpose of holding the marble together in one piece. The slab has been drilled with two holes near the left and right top corners, strung with a 2mm diameter length of sailing cord, hung via the use of pulleys (figure 3), and tied off with cleats (figure 4) positioned near the bottom of the frame. While the frame is solid and appears
adequately sized in relation to the marble slab, the cord is thin and visually light.

The crack in this work is a natural feature commonly found in quarried marble. While the slab itself may have split during extraction, the genesis of the crack is geological, not human, a product of the regular tectonic grinding and compression of the earth. It snakes through the marble, following a line of impurities—a dusting of iron oxide, carbon, and sediments—that infiltrated a body of limestone carbonate millions of years ago. As the forces of the earth transformed the limestone into marble, by heat and compression, these impurities were compacted into a thin layer trapped within the marble. The crack is a cross-section of the marble’s layered structure, contained and neutralised by the compressive force of bulk marble around it. Just as with Mondrian’s paint, the crack is a bearer of glimpsed forces captured within the marble. Yet, the crack is disruptive to the marble’s structural strength, as evidenced by the need for its repair.

Industry and consumer attitudes regarding repair can be discerned from the features of this repaired crack. The glue used to repair the slab is a translucent type of synthetic glue, which minimises the visibility of the repair and is intended to maintain a natural appearance. Such practice attempts to modulate the perception of the crack as a natural, perhaps desirable, imperfection and not the result of industrial accident. Indeed, the stone mason from whom I received this slab told me that it was inspected and rejected by customers, and subsequently deemed unsellable. This circumstance suggests that affects of the crack within the marble are under-appreciated or off-putting to consumers. Though this crack was geologically derived and developed independently of human agency, such cracks are not affectively independent from human experience. Though perhaps rare, people do die from rockslides and falling boulders potentialised by cracked stone and earth, and such events are familiar to us through fictional and non-fictional sources. The perception of cracks shares other potential risks of injury, pain, or failed function across a broad affective field, as in the examples of cracked glass or ceramics.

However, a pivotal difference between the consequence and magnitude of geological cracks that may scale up to the calamitous potential of earthquakes and the cracks within consumer products is that the cracks in consumer products are often domestically repairable. Though all cracks, as blocs of sensation, share negative affective forces, I contend such forces, as they present in consumer products, should not potentialise the rejection and disposal of the product. Rather, I propose that such cracks should catalyse an urge to repair. My design response based on this proposition was to design a structural and conceptual frame that revitalises and enhances the affective transmission of force, weight, and energy from the cracked marble. In doing so, the repaired slab is composed as an object of attention through which the perception of affective relations becomes potentialised.

This design response involved using the suspension system to hang the marble in order to accentuate the perception of the stone’s weight and produce visual tension. The slab is held by a cord thin enough to suggest that it could break, or come loose, and drop the marble to the floor. A viewer, drawing their eye along the cord, through the holes pierced in the marble and through the pulleys, then finally down towards the ground, will notice that the cord is tied off with sailing cleats. The task of tying off a sailing cleat produces a sensation of slowly decreasing tension as the line is wrapped around the cleat. This is felt as an incrementally diminishing force sensed kinaesthetically by the hand and body, an experience that contrasts with the sensation of tying off a proper knot, which stops the force of tension in a concentrated point. The difference is that a knot counteracts the tensile force with an equally strong force; it converts or folds the force of tension in the line back into itself as a compressive force. The cleat converts tensile force into compressive force too, but at incremental points—every time the line is wrapped around one of the two cleat posts. In a cleat, unlike a knot, there is a haptic sensation of a reversible lock-off event. The cleat expresses the delicate, contingent qualities of the cracked marble and the possibility that the tension-compression conversion holding the marble can be quickly and easily undone. The cleat’s lack of a lock-off point has an implication for its sensory speed and duration; the slow incremental graduation of diminishing...
force in the line can reverse if unwrapped without proper care, resulting in a rapidly increasing force of release. The excess line that dangles loosely from the cleat does not present a finality, but rather an entry point inviting the reversal of the wrap—an unleashing of the tensile force—which would break its resistance to gravity and send the marble slab crashing to the floor. Accentuating this possibility is the placement of the slab uppermost within the frame, producing a void underneath the marble that indicates the space within which movement would occur should the slab fall.

This description of potential events serves to unpack an immediate and tacit understanding of the hand and body in relation to tension, cord, and cleats. These sensations, mediated through the observation and experience of the eyes and hand, compound a tension, concern, or intuition of potential sensation—what may arise in the future, should the marble fall: a kind of threat profile. Together, the experience and its concurrent intuitive projections correspond to qualities of implicit form. As Massumi (2002) describes, this is a concept in which objects transmit affects to the body, from one sense to another, and in feedback across all the senses. Implicit form becomes the sum total of such sensory interaction minus the object itself (Massumi 2002). Implicit form is sensed immediately, without contemplation. For example, we don't need to walk around a solid object to know it is voluminous; a volume is an “abstract experience of volume” (Massumi 2011, 42). Being voluminous is not a quality that can be seen directly, yet its sensibility is activated by the act of looking, through the process of exploratory, perceptive movement along the object’s visible edges and surfaces. The movement of such a process indicates that movement in objects is not limited to the physical movement of which such objects are capable; rather, the perception of objects is infused with potentialities of movement within the object’s materiality and form. Just as Massumi describes the way that the voluminousness of a volume can become immediately sensible, the potential of imminent collapse is sensible within the form of this hung marble. The concept of implicit form indicates that the room divider is much larger than it visually appears because our senses flow into the object through touch-points, such as the cleats and the cord, in an extended nervous system feeling out the forces contained within objects.

Some of the sensory compounds formed by this process of ‘feeling out’ implicit form can be described as percepts, which, Deleuze notes (1995), are persistent, consistent, captured by sensory apparatus and capable of preserving themselves through changes in materials and expression. The preservation of certain percepts that exist beyond the form of the divider is uncovered by sensory investigation. For example, the tension of the cord and its suspended weight has a relationship to surrounding architectural material. Suspension is also a property of roofs and ceilings. My task with this work was to compose the material expression of the slab to open up its affective field to extend to the surrounding environment and outwards to a broader context of production. The slab's expression of potential collapse might also extend to include perceptions of the transport and mining industries as likewise potentialised for collapse, or complicit in a potential collapse of the environmental resources they utilise.

This proposition can be illustrated by an analysis of photographs of the room divider placed within the industrial workshop where I obtained the marble. In these images, the divider stands among loose slabs, stone-cutting equipment, and refuse. These elements construct an assemblage on a relational field, giving context to the room divider's threat profile and its relationship to production. The threat profile is modulated because workplaces such as these produce affects of danger and risk, accentuated by the experience of wearing safety equipment (hardhats, gas masks, safety glasses, etc.) and the presence of warning signs. Other less-immediate experiences also contribute to this perception, including news reports and fictional or factual descriptions of industrial accidents. Such perceptions of risk and safety are affective, but the elements themselves can be categorised as percepts because they retain a consistency through different expressions, places and experiences. Consider the perception of a cracked human head or broken toe, falling weight, or the perceptions of dust particles and smoke. The background equipment, sounds of industry, and products of industrial manufacture
pull these threats into the affective field of marble production. Features of the room divider itself have relationships to background objects: the hung slab associates with spare slabs resting against vertical shelves (figure 5); the cord suspending the work associates with various cables and electrical cords; the steel frame associates with the similarly proportioned steel framed wheeled tables (figure 6); and the suspended, framed slab associates with a skip haphazardly filled with waste stone slabs and dust (figure 7). These images express an assemblage in which the marble room divider is connected to a scenario of production and the bloc of sensations that comprise it: lifting, cutting, grinding, moving, cleaning, and finishing.

To open up different perceptions of the project and explore these relationships to the processes of industry in a different medium, I also produced Marble and Steel Room Divider, Video (2013, figure 8). It is a single-channel video of the divider being installed in the stone mason’s yard, intercut with found footage of container ships, quarry machines, and marble cutting. I manipulated the material of the video, its time-based imagery and sound, by applying video and audio effects that attempt to express the haptic dimension of marble and its material tendencies—particularly its weight, granularity, solidity, and the way it can break and fall apart into rock and dust. The digital effects shake and vibrate the sound and image to emulate such material events. I conceptualise these distortions as disrupting or breaking through the surface of the video track in the same manner as a crack may propagate through marble. There is the potential to jolt the viewer affectively with an expression of force, energy, and movement that pulls together an assemblage, re-situating the perception of marble and binding it to human and geological processes.

Additional editing techniques were deployed to simulate the splitting affect of cracks. Two minutes and 19 seconds into the video, an animated infographic of the earth is intercut. The animation shows the earth cut away to reveal the layers of the earth, titled ‘crust’, ‘mantle’ and ‘outer core’. It provides further context to the geological
formation of marble, though this just refers to its content. More pertinent for this paper is the affective character of the edit. The animation is stylistically and graphically discordant to the rest of the footage in the video. This aesthetic strategy intends to disrupt the viewing experience and ‘split’ the textural consistency of the video (in the understanding that texture is perceived as material quality of digital video). The bodily response may then accentuate the percepts of geological time and process potentialised by the content of the edit. In summary, I consider the video as experimental documentation that creatively attempts to capture the affective forces that flow from the geological formation and manufacturing of marble and express it within the medium of digital video.

However, the focus of my practice is on domestic products. The room divider itself is conceived as a functional and long-lived object that compresses industrial affects into a domestic context for the generation of new percepts. The room divider is designed for a domestic environment and my intention was to atypically fill such an environment with expressions of industry, so its industrial features are domesticated, in the sense that they are designed to suit the home. For example, the cord and pulleys are smaller and shinier than their industrial counterparts, and the open ends of the steel tubes at the tops are sealed with a pale peach-coloured silicon rubber to prevent the trapping of dust. The steel used is stainless in order to avoid the patina or rust that develops on mild steel and to preserve a clean and shiny appearance appropriate for the home. This modulated exchange of parts serves to bind the worlds of industry and the domestic together. In doing so, the room divider may be perceived as anomalous—a bridge between worlds—because it generates new percepts totalising the interrelation of industry with the domestic. While the divider has yet to be permanently installed in a home, it is
photographed with such an installation simulated (figure 9), in which the divider’s legs are sunk into floorboards. Functionally, this installation removes the trip hazard posed by the object’s long feet.

Prior to domestic use, my conceptual works tend to spend time in public exhibition, the presentation of which also requires design. Preparing for the work’s exhibition in a public space (figure 10), I painted the divider’s feet in striped yellow-and-black hazard zone colours. I did this to indicate the trip hazard posed by the object’s feet, but also to intensify affective relations to industry. This is purposeful because viewers may only have a few minutes to reflect on the work in an exhibition context. Conversely, when permanently installed in a domestic space, a viewer/owner may have much longer—many years, perhaps—to reflect on such affective relationships, obviating the need for the intense affectivities of the hazard zone striping.

The Marble and Steel Room Divider attempts to show how framing the presentation of broken and repaired material can enhance the experience of materiality; the weight and presence of the repaired marble is accentuated by the suspension of the marble slab and the association of design components with the tools and machines of the marble industry. The process was to fold the large and unwieldy scale of global marble production, and its environmental contingencies, into the experience of a domestic object. The matter of speeds and durations, too, is relevant to the ways in which this object is sensed, because marble production takes place over long time frames (considering either human production and transport or the geological timeframes in which marble forms from limestone). The experience of the Marble and Steel Room Divider compresses these long durations into a moment of affective intensity that might decompress its relations within sensation and perception instantly, just as the marble slab itself embeds a potential to crash to the floor.

This paper has proposed that, with a theoretical framework of affect, experimental product design incorporating repair can give rise to new perceptions that might create the conditions for new relations between users, designers, producers, consumers, and the environment. The work discussed in this paper illustrates this
theoretical proposal by leveraging the capacities of marble, metal, and cord. The condition of failure in marble is mobilised to produce a percept of material and environmental emergency. This percept may jolt or repel, yet the framing of its repair may also bind us to material capacities. This twofold operation of jolting and binding depends on affective forces and intensities that flow from what Deleuze and Guattari (1994) discuss as the sensory compounds of the ‘crack’ and the ‘clinch’, respectively splitting and pushing away, and binding and pulling together. The two forces are deployed to firstly assert the calamitous potential of material/environmental negligence (a push away from normative perception), and secondly to bind the user to new affective relations (a pull towards ecological thinking). The proposition of my work is to combine repair with domestically scaled industrial features to extend the consumer understanding of industrial systems, such as manufacture and transport, and of material durabilities in a way different to the typical expression of manufactured products, in order to potentiate new perceptions. It is not necessarily my intention to embed a polemic attacking the environmental problems of marble production, but rather strengthen an awareness of how industrial practice flows into the rest of the world external to industry, and raise the possibilities of repair as a productive technique.

ENDNOTES
1 As much as 76 percent of quarried stone is wasted during extraction, cutting, and finishing. The waste in the form of slurry presents the greatest risk of pollution and resource depletion to local water ecosystems (Nemerow 2009, 42).
2 ‘Shroud’ or ‘sheath’ design was pioneered by industrial designer Raymond Loewy in the early-twentieth century and refers to the practice of hiding functional components with a cover to protect them from the user and the environment—and vice versa (Herman 1975; Loewy 1979). ‘Black-boxing’ is a term borrowed from computer science that refers to an outcome of this practice in which users are unable to access or understand how to repair or modify the internal components of a product.
3 ‘Good’ or ‘bad’ are not to be understood in absolute terms, but only relative to the capacities of strengthening or weakening the sensory being. Deleuze reiterates this aspect of affectivity in his book Spinoza: A Practical Philosophy (1988), in which he describes affect as a basic relationship; an affective encounter that strengthens the capacity to be affected is good, and that which weakens the capacity to be affected is undesirable.
4 “Perception necessarily comes after affect, in that it is an affective projection ‘gathered by a receptive organ’ of the body (Deleuze 2006, 109).
5 These tectonic forces shape our continents and form the environments in which we mine stone and metal, and the ground on which we live, farm, and take shelter. These processes belong to what has been called “deep time”, named by the eighteenth-century geologist James Hutton for the philosophical concept of geologic time, and are, in the vast majority of human experiences, unknowable and benign (Palmer and Zen 2000).
6 Though, in actuality, the cord is over-specified and has no risk of breaking.
7 The video can be viewed at http://vimeo.com/user4072939.

REFERENCES
We are expected to be creative because we're in an art college, but hardly anyone teaches us the techniques to be creative.

There is now a compelling body of evidence that indicates creativity can be developed and enhanced in almost everyone. No longer seen as being on the fringes of education as an optional extra, developing creativity is being considered a core aspect of education (Craft 2006; Robinson 1999; Robinson 2001; Starko 2010). The discussion has moved from whether creativity can be taught to how it is best taught and how it can be assessed (Jackson and Sinclair 2006; Sefton-Green 2008; Lassig 2011; Vessey and Mumford 2012). There are many creativity courses being taught worldwide that use a range of methods known to enhance creative thinking. The National Creativity Showcase held in Brisbane in 2007 highlighted the work of thirty academics teaching across twenty-one Australian universities (Dawson 2007). One such course is 2545QCA Creative Thinking, which has been taught at the Queensland College of Art (QCA), Griffith University, since 2003 and thus it provides a source of information and evidence on the topic.

This course, which combines theory with practice, is highly experiential. While students from virtually every studio area in the College have taken the course, with the majority of them have been enrolled in Interior, Product, and Visual Communication Design disciplines. This is unsurprising as the course was originally intended for design students. However, by the end of its first year, it was being offered as an elective available to all QCA students. The design background is important in the present context as it frames the very concept of teaching creativity implicit in the course. From a fine art perspective, teaching creativity may be considered quaint or unnecessary, although the students enrolled in Fine Art who have taken the course have all declared how much they gained from the experience. In this respect, the point of interest lies in praxis, and whether this is fundamentally different between designers, fine artists, photographers, etc.

Designers are generally presented with a problem to which they are expected to find a solution. Crucially, this is usually a problem not of their making. Artists may also be presented with a problem (‘commission’) for which they are expected to produce a solution/outcome, although, more frequently, they will set their own problems and seek their own solutions. Either way, they are expected to produce a highly personal interpretation of ‘the brief’, and it is their very idiosyncratic response that is valued. By contrast, designers are so often required to perform within narrow parameters, subject to exacting demands, and within specified timeframes. There is an overriding need for the designed product or service to function on a practical level.

In the present context, however, the concern is less about disputing the demarcations between disciplinary practice and more about the techniques themselves and their application to studio/professional practice, personal development, and their potential to inform research. The quote at the start of this essay indicates the importance of creative techniques to students in their academic studies and subsequent professional practice. The following extract is from an unexpected e-mail received in 2011 from Maya LaCroix, a former student of the course who graduated in 2005 with a Bachelor of Film & TV Production:

You may or may not remember me from a class on creativity in 2004? . . . It was one of the most invaluable and fun classes of my (nearly) 2 degrees/6 years at uni! I use the...
stuff we learned every day and I’m so glad you ran it—don’t know where I would be without it . . .

The ‘stuff’ referred to by Maya are the creative methods that have been refined and developed over the intervening decade but retain their essential features. This paper describes the ‘stuff’, the most successful creative methods as rated by students, and how they may provide a framework for artistic and design research. As an essential aspect of research, a methodology includes a systematic strategy with methods of evaluating experimental outcomes, a timeframe in which this happens, and a stated purpose in relation to outcomes (Noble and Bestley 2005). In relation to the creative aspects of studio art practice, action research and reflective practice are particularly relevant methodologies. Identified as being especially important in practice-based research in design (Yeo 2012), they feature prominently here.

To give a context against which creative methods may be examined not only in terms of their efficacy in producing a ‘solution’, but also in their potential to further studio research, I will briefly discuss the modus operandi of ‘Studio Anybody’—a graphic design studio that operated in Melbourne from 1998 to 2004—since it provides an exemplary case study.

**STUDIO ANYBODY: A CASE STUDY IN DESIGN-AS-RESEARCH**

The practical and commercial imperatives facing designers do not preclude a design-as-research approach: “Design is a way of inquiring, a way of producing knowing and knowledge; this means it is a way of researching” (Downton 2003, 1). Studio Anybody provides a case study of how a graphic design studio may foster a speculative culture through practice-led research. This critical space for speculation allowed designers to explore original concepts by stepping aside from the familiar and derivative, as well as stepping outside of the evidence-driven culture of much academic research, allowing practice to lead research. It embraced an approach to researching where the starting point is a hunch rather than a defined brief. Over time, it was possible to identify the conceptual and formal threads that formed the basis of the practice, and that provided a critical line of enquiry. These were culture sampling, imperfect beauty, and public intimacy. Such studio-initiated projects influenced the commercial work of the studio and helped to develop a collaborative approach between designer and client where each gained from the speculative poetic process. This was a particular form of action research that courted the unknown and posed the question ‘What if?’ (Grocott 2006; Poynor 2002). The term ‘creative assemblages’ has been applied to such practice-led research projects where the assembling process of creative practitioners, development, alliances, circulation of information, etc., gives rise to the creative rather than it being identified with a single author (Wilkie et al. 2010).

The exploratory and reflective practice of Studio Anybody, which interlaced the roles of practitioner and experimenter, manifested Donald Schön’s collaborative reflection-in-action model. His model, which combines the researcher with the practitioner, allows the individual to alternate between the two roles over time (Schön 1983). Notably, a design approach that seeks a solution to a particular problem has been described as effective research, inasmuch as its intent is to effect change, while the artistic approach has been cast as evocative research as it forefronts human experience (Hamilton and Jaaniste 2009). Studio Anybody’s allowance of the ‘hunch’ to initiate researching resonated with artistic practice, with the evocative, but it also embodied the effective and essentially melded both forms of research.

The methodologies of action research reflect the heuristic creative process by effecting change as it continuously gathers and interprets data, and thus amalgamates enquiry and application in a mutually interactive cycle. Action research formalises aspects of the practice of design and art, and relates to the experience of both the undergraduate and professional (Swann 2002; Yeo 2012). These methodologies are largely heuristic by nature, an aspect that needs to be examined.

**HEURISTICS AS A MEANS OF ENQUIRY**

The essence of creative problem solving is to find solutions that are “new and useful” (Batey 2012, 56). An heuristic provides the means to find new
and useful solutions. Researchers use heuristics to solve a problem through discovery by finding a close-to-optimal solution, one that may then be refined by the application of a further heuristic. A heuristic approach is flexible and responsive to perceiving links between ideas. It uses cognitive strategies known to engender potentially useful ideas and, perhaps through trial-and-error, arrives at a variety of potential solutions from which one is selected. If that solution doesn’t work, then one or more of the initially discarded ideas are revisited, perhaps even combining with the original solution to produce a hybrid concept that leads to a ‘surprisingly’ effective outcome (the exploration or divergent thinking phase). The surprise can be the result of insight, whereby new linkages between concepts and new patterns of thought may emerge apparently spontaneously from the unconscious. Examples of creative problem-solving heuristics are brainstorming, mind mapping, and backcasting, all of which are discussed below. Each provide a starting point, a framework and set of guidelines, but the outcome is not known until after the process is undertaken. These are cross-process heuristics, that is, they may influence multiple cognitive processes (Vessey and Mumford 2012, 46). For example, brainstorming and mind mapping are variability heuristics that produce a large number of ideas and thus plenty of material to work with. Paradoxically, backcasting is a forecasting heuristic that helps identify critical issues. Creative Problem Solving (CPS) is a meta-cognitive heuristic that organises and structures the thinking process, including exploration and causal analysis heuristics. Indeed, identification and analysis of causes are vital in producing creative solutions (Vessey and Mumford 2012).

By contrast, an algorithm will impose a structure of logical progression that ultimately produces a single answer, using a defined set of steps that produce an outcome (essentially predetermined), at which point the process terminates. An algorithm does not allow for deviation from the rules or chance encounters. An example is a cooking recipe that states what you will achieve, lists precisely the ingredients you need to mix together, specifies each step in the process, and defines the time involved. Using methods known to give the same answer every time is helpful in many contexts, but not when it comes to searching for ‘new and useful’ solutions.

Some heuristics may affect a wide range of processes, while others may apply to a particular process—that is, they are context specific—and a heuristic that can benefit one situation may not work in a different situation (Vessey and Mumford 2012). The example of Claude Monet’s self-imposed constraints supports the notion that heuristics that are focused on varying specific aspects of a process can produce higher levels of creativity. By restricting himself early on in his career to how light falls on objects, Monet induced variability within narrow boundaries. This led to him to produce work of great originality (Stokes 2001). Used judiciously, imposing constraints on a work may produce highly original outcomes, but applying the same heuristic in every instance, whatever the problem may be, can lead to stagnation and a dearth of new ideas.

As with Monet, problem-finding is a characteristic of many creative individuals. However, the very term ‘problem-finding’ is problematic and variations such as ‘problem construction’ have been used to describe the variety of generative processes involved in creative thinking (Mumford et al. 1997). Problem construction has a playful aspect, but it requires dogged determination to keep on grappling with an idea that may be vague, at least in the beginning. This often involves a change of perspective—using the same data but rearranging them to create a new pattern—similar to the visual gestalt experience of seeing marks on paper as one thing suddenly ‘flip’ to be seen as a different thing entirely. Many of the methods described below attempt to help the brain ‘flip’ and produce novel ideas as a result. Metaphor is highly successful in this respect, and has even been identified as a major element in the categorisation of theories of creativity.

CATEGORIES OF CREATIVITY

Some of the numerous theories surrounding creativity involve heuristics. In reviewing theories of creativity, Kozbelt, Beghetto, and Runco (2010) identified the following ten major categories: Developmental; Psychometric; Economic;
Stage and Componential Process; Cognitive; Problem Solving and Expertise-Based; Problem Finding; Evolutionary; Typological; and Systems. Given the inherent difficulties in delineating creativity theories, some of these categories gain prominence over others, particularly Cognitive, Problem Solving and Expertise-Based. This is apparent in many established methods used to initiate and develop creative thinking. An example would be using synectics, where exaggerating an attribute, such as weight, could easily link with a synaesthetic relationship to deeper musical tones or to darker colours. Connections such as this often occur as insight and are not amenable to logic and clearly have a strong metaphoric orientation. Another example, and one that also touches on problem-finding, is CPS (discussed below).

In broad terms, Kozbelt, Beghetto, and Runco (2010) grouped theories according to their being either predominantly scientific or metaphorical. Considering within-category variation, the authors make the point that there may be equally valid orientations, the clearest being between the scientific, empirical reality of creative phenomena versus more metaphorical theories. Nevertheless, as they point out, “metaphorically oriented theories are often underwritten by rigorous empirical study; likewise, more scientifically oriented theories often use metaphors (e.g., the mind as an information processor) to illustrate key principles” (Kozbelt, Beghetto, and Runco 2010, 21–22). This highlights the inherent difficulties in attempting to clearly differentiate between perspectives on creativity as well as the difficulty of considering any form of creativity that does not encompass metaphor. The distinction between scientific and metaphorical (i.e., non-scientific) approaches could perhaps be reframed in terms of quantitative and qualitative approaches, although, even then, the contrast between metaphor and meaning, and the scientific precepts of objectivity and truth, remains problematic. Semiotics show that figures of speech (i.e., rhetorical devices) are not mere ornaments; rather, they are the very stuff of language. As Hawkes writes, “in the long run the ‘truth’ does not matter because the only access to it is by means of metaphor. The metaphors matter: they are truth” (1972, 91). Put another way, bald ‘factual’ statements may be less clear than metaphorical ones. Indeed, Aristotle’s description of the primary aim of language to make manifest the “bare facts” is itself metaphorical (Hawkes 1972, 11). Linguists have been unable to find a language that does not include metaphor, and attempts to eradicate figures of speech result not simply in sterility of expression and loss of meaning, but in a linguistic cul-de-sac (Hawkes 1972). The rhetoric of science has had a powerful effect in blinding many people to the power of metaphor. Rhetorical figures may be seen to be not just unavoidable but, in fact, essential elements of language, while the pervasiveness of metaphor in how we construe meaning has been apparent for some time (Lackoff and Johnson 1980). The pervasiveness of metaphor is equally apparent in many of the creative techniques described below.

**CREATIVE TECHNIQUES THAT MATTER**

The 2545QCA Creative Thinking course introduces students to the importance of creative thinking on a personal, professional, and societal level. Students learn and apply numerous techniques of enhancing creativity, learn to take risks, and to engage in individual and group creativity. Included in these techniques are attribute listing, synaesthesia, mind mapping, multi-sensory awareness, the Six Thinking Hats (de Bono 1985), accessing the unconscious, team creativity, and challenging assumptions. Students are asked to reflect upon these experiences in a journal, and finally to demonstrate an application of these methods in the context of specific issues within their own discipline to produce a creative/innovative outcome. The course is fundamentally about facilitating personal development and of achieving ‘self-actualisation’ (Rogers 1967; Maslow 1970) through learning creative strategies.

Because of individual differences, a technique that might resonate strongly with one student may leave another unimpressed. The methods that the majority of students have found most valuable are discussed here. The feedback is based on student evaluations of course content obtained at the end of each semester, and from students in their second and third years who had taken the course in their first year of university. Mind mapping
has consistently been identified as one of the most useful tools in the course. Other techniques that have rated highly include a systematic approach to team work in order to maximise its creative potential, team creativity (including ‘improv’ activities/humour/playfulness), synectics, sympathetic synaesthesia, attribute listing, accessing the unconscious, and CPS. A closer look at a selection of these methods provides insights into how they may contribute to practice-led research.

MIND MAPPING

Concept and mind mapping have proved to be exceedingly effective in exploring ideas and finding unlikely and valuable new connections and directions (Novak 1998: Buzan and Buzan 2006). The basic idea for mind mapping is simple: define your initial concept in one word or a short phrase and write this in the centre of a large sheet of paper. Allow your mind to find every possible idea connected with this central concept and, using just one word or phrase for each associated concept, write these around the edge of the main concept and join it to a line. Then, consider each of these secondary ideas separately and write words associated with it, joined by a line, and then further links to that word, and so on. This results in a large quantity of associated ideas, branching out from the centre, which can offer new insights into the problem. Concept mapping is similar although more hierarchical. As presented in class, having defined the central concept, the application of these techniques is usually preceded by brain writing. This requires participants to silently list as many associated ideas as possible that come to mind and then eventually to share these ideas within the team. The ensuing discussion frequently gives rise to more associations. Consequently, brain writing and mind mapping tend to be concatenated by students as a process in itself. During the first few years of the course, brainstorming (Osborn 1963) was used to focus the mind on the given problem and to generate ideas prior to mind mapping the concept. However, a growing body of evidence has identified deficiencies associated with brainstorming, such as the dominant personality guiding the process and no quiet moment in which to gather one’s thoughts (Geschka 1996: Heslin 2009: Runco 2010). This led to it being replaced by brain writing (Geschka 1996: Heslin 2009), which has proven to be more successful as well as personally satisfying to the majority of students.

Students use these techniques for the remainder of their program of study and beyond. A graduate of the course, Emily Burgess, reflected on her experiences in the course as follows:

I strongly believe that my studio project was greatly enhanced and realised due to the creative thinking . . . The course provided me with both understanding and application of methodologies that informed my research and subsequently continue to assist my current creative practice . . . As an artist and illustrator, I find mind-mapping essential for effectively and creatively matching text and images. I understand ‘brainstorming’ more to do with the activity of the mind, which becomes externalised on paper, using visual thinking methods such as mind-maps, free-thought sketches and diagrams. (e-mail to the author, 2014)

For Burgess, who is currently a practising artist and art teacher, brain writing and mind mapping proved to be of particular benefit, which, along with other techniques learned in the course, have allowed her to explore and extend her art practice.

One valuable creative aspect of mind mapping occurs only after there are many branches and sub-branches to each idea. A word is blindly selected from the end of one of the outer branches, then a second word blindly selected from a different outer branch, and every attempt is made to find a connection between the two and the original concept written in the centre of the sheet. These forced relationships may point to the most bizarre, unlikely, and creative possibilities. Many of these associations are made through simile and metaphor.

TEAM CREATIVITY

A major means of identifying and developing creativity extends beyond the individual and concerns team work. Until fairly recently, the focus of creativity research was on the individual.
The examples shown here comprise only part of Emily Burgess's exploration of this topic.

**Figure 1** Emily Burgess Mind Map 1: Idea Zones 2008

**Figure 2** Emily Burgess Bat Brellas 2008, one outcome from Mind Map 1 (fruit-bat wings are black, stretchable, and foldable like an umbrella).

**Figure 3** Emily Burgess Mind Map 2: Idea Zones 2008

**Figure 4** Emily Burgess Guava Vitamin C Supplement 2008, outcomes from Mind Map 2 (fruit bats feed on guava fruit)

**Figure 5** Emily Burgess Emily's Rorschach Test for the Tactile Minded 2008. This is the final outcome of the exploratory process. The globe, shown from both sides, is covered with intricately delineated sections of appliqué material. You interact with it by closing your eyes and exploring the surface by touch. This embodies Rorschach patterns arising from earlier 'bat splat' shapes while alluding to the dark of the night when bats are active (closed eyes), along with the texture of bat wings.
While interest in individual creativity remains dominant, interest in group creativity has grown significantly. This has been driven predominantly by business in an attempt to gain market share and maximise profits through innovative ideas that may be turned into new products, and more efficient organisational practices. As well as refereed journals on management that aim to bridge the gap between theory and practice though praxis, such as *Creativity and Innovative Management* and *Journal of Management*, there are more scholarly publications such as *Creative Behavior* and *Creativity Research Journal*. Consequently, a considerable body of experimental data supporting the value of team creativity exists.

Most designers do not work in isolation; they are often members of an interdisciplinary team. This is also the case with artists involved in collaborative projects that involve the input of a multiplicity of skills beyond the capabilities of any one individual. Even if working independently, designers and artists will almost inevitably have to cooperate with others to attain their goals. Understanding how teams form and function at an optimal level is therefore important (Luft and Ingham 1955; Moxon 1998). Students greatly appreciate a supportive approach to helping them develop their team skills, and in understanding the creative capacity inherent in well-integrated and high functioning teams (Sawyer 2007).

Team creativity is always in flux and involves the dynamic relationship of a number of individuals and factors. A purely logical understanding of teams is difficult to sustain given the idiosyncratic nature of individuals. Thus, the influence of the emotions, the irrational, is implicit in teams and this has been considered at the organisational level (Ekvall 2002).

As well as providing an introduction to numerous creative methods, the QCA course explores the consequences of design decisions and how these frame human behaviour. It focuses attention on the sort of information gathered and how this is analysed through the use of hypothetical scenarios. For example, by presenting ill-defined problems, such as ‘Why should women in cities find it unsafe to walk home at night, in the dark? Envisage ways of making the urban experience safer for women’, students are confronted with the consequences of separate design decisions that arise out of building regulations, neighbourhood planning, street lighting, public transport, etc., that coalesce to produce what may be unintended consequences. Complex issues like these are introduced towards the end of the course when students have learned and applied numerous creative methods and have expanded their awareness of thinking more creatively. Typically, backcasting is employed to envisage the ideal situation. This technique is an exercise in teamwork and imagines the ideal outcome as its starting point. By creating a clear objective, the process avoids all those reasons that come to mind as to why it could not happen; i.e., being too difficult, too expensive, too time-consuming, etc. Initially using brain writing and mind mapping to explore the issue and to identify possible solutions, the team then works backwards to identify the steps necessary to achieving this goal by using a sequence of storyboards, thereby literally envisioning the process. Student feedback has indicated this method offers a fresh and optimistic way of tackling problems. Backcasting has become of strategic importance as a means of analysing alternative futures, particularly in areas of sustainable development (e.g., Transition Network 2014).

The CPS process is then applied and the appropriateness of the concept is either reinforced or remodelled based on the rigorous analysis of the problem demanded by the process. As a methodology, CPS is a type of action research; it is not simply about solving a problem creatively, but is a distinct process that contains a set of heuristics embodying fundamental ways of engendering creativity through divergent and convergent thinking (Treffinger, Isaksen, and Stead-Dorval 2006; Puccio, Mance and Murdock 2011). The main stages of CPS are as follows: understanding the challenge; generating ideas; preparing for action; and building acceptance. Each stage has its own subset of heuristics. Overall, CPS is a comprehensive approach that demands considerable application and is best suited to large, complicated problems that appear to have no clear solutions. While written feedback indicates some students find CPS overwhelming, the majority of
them value knowing that such an holistic approach exists. It forces participants to confront the realities of putting into practice their decisions.

SYNECTICS
The associative nature of creative thought—that is, producing novel outcomes through making unlikely connections between two or more different things, be these concepts or material objects—is fundamental to many of the heuristic methods used to enhance creativity. Synectics, which uses twenty-three trigger mechanisms based on analogy, metaphors and similes, is a prime example. These mechanisms include substitution (what other idea can you switch for some or all of your concept?); distortion (twist your subject out of its true proportion, shape or meaning); contradiction (deny or reverse the function of your subject; e.g., reverse natural laws by allowing heavy objects to float and light objects to sink); parodying (make fun of your subject; e.g., mimic or caricature—make a visual oxymoron), etc. Many of the metaphors and similes used in synectics are drawn from nature (Gordon 1961), referencing animals, insects, plants, or natural systems, such as the atmosphere or the water cycle, where solutions to similar problems may suggest themselves. While artists and designers make such connections every day, the value of synectics is that it identifies all possible associations, likely and unlikely, and systematically explores their potential. The most extreme or ‘silly’ connections are encouraged as these may lead to the most creative outcomes.

SENSORY AWARENESS
The preeminence given to vision over the other senses has been well documented, as have the negative effects this has consequently had on the built environment. Ways of providing a more inclusive approach to design have been developed and promise a much richer environmental experience (Malnar and Vodvarka 2004; Pallasmaa 2005; Schifferstein 2011). Sensory awareness and synaesthesia have become increasingly important as means of engaging with our environment. Synaesthesia is the sensation of a stimulus exciting two or more sensory modalities at the same time; for example, sound being experienced simultaneously as colour. Our understanding of the world is permeated linguistically with synaesthetically allusions e.g., a loud shirt, sharp cheese, a sweet child, etc.). While most of us are not natural synaesthetes, it seems possible to enhance our sensory awareness to a level that may be termed ‘sympathetic synaesthesia’. This helps ground the animate in the design of objects and the environment, and lends itself to an action-research methodology. Multi-Sensory Design (MSD) is an example of how this approach may be put into practice. MSD explores all sensory modalities and is explicitly incorporated in the design process (Schifferstein 2011). There is a need to be sensitive to different sensory modalities: “A bus stop may look attractive and welcoming, but may leave the waiting passenger standing in a cold breeze, next to a smelly trash can, or with a lot of traffic noise” (Schifferstein 2011). MSD comprises the following eight steps: selection of the target expression; conceptual exploration; sensory exploration; sensory analysis; mind mapping; user-interaction scenario; model making; and multisensory presentation.

The simple expedient of blindfolding students and taking them on a carefully guided excursion leaves a lasting impression on them. Following this exercise, and by referring to a sensory chart that provides the means to analyse the auditory, haptic, taste/smell, orientation, temperature/humidity, and visual (Malnar and Vodvarka 2004, 281), students are able to identify and reconnect with all of their other senses in ways that transform their appreciation of space and place. The results can be quite profound, as evidenced in the reflection of an Interior Design graduate:

Specifically, the methodology that I used in my final class assessment, the sensory exploration of space, is naturally not the literal approach that I now use in my professional practice. But this exercise did shift my paradigm of the understanding of space and the way people experience it, so it has informed the way I consider spaces and my design practice, adding an extra layer of consideration to how I think about spatial design. (Chloe Smyth, e-mail to the author, 2014)
THE UNCONSCIOUS

Consciousness varies along a spectrum that has been termed the "conceptual-primordial cognition continuum" (Martindale 2007, 1778), which ranges from rational, reality-oriented wakefulness through to different levels of reverie, to irrational dreaming. The less focused our thinking, becomes the greater the likelihood of making associative connections between unconnected and unlikely subject matter: the deeper one plumbs the unconscious, the more original the ideas are likely to be (Martindale 1990).

This is achieved by tapping into the associative connections of memory, in a non-linear manner. Memory is fundamental to intuition, to sudden insight, which relies on mixing existing information into new and unexpected combinations to generate entirely unlikely, unforeseen, and remarkable outcomes; as Dietrich comments, “associated combinational creativity during altered states such as dreaming or daydreaming can play a vital role in the creative process for the arts and the sciences” (Dietrich 2004, 1018). Some of these strategies are explained below.

Dreams, whether occurring naturally or induced artificially, lay at the heart of Surrealism. Indeed, a defining characteristic of this artistic movement was recording and unravelling the meaning of dreams, and portraying the highly subjective results through enigmatic and disquieting imagery. Surrealists attempted to circumvent moral strictures and socially imbued by delving into the unconscious. In their search for a means of spontaneous expression (Picon 1983; Wach 1993), they placed themselves in a state of receptivity using hypnosis, dreams, automatic writing, and collage. (Picon 1983; Wach 1993). For example, Salvador Dali would hold a metal key above a plate while allowing himself to fall asleep. The moment conscious control was lost, the key would slip between his fingers and the sound of it hitting the plate would wake him. At this point, he would record the imagery from this hypnagogic state.

There are fairly simple means of accessing the unconscious, such as recording one’s dreams, or inducing a hypnagogic state or lucid dreaming (Welch 2012). Outcomes from students who have explored these techniques can be entrancing, disturbing, or both. One method that can be surprisingly vivid is to imagine yourself selecting a volume from a bookshelf full of books, and reaching out and looking at it, describing the binding etc., then opening it and reading from it, describing any illustrations that it may contain. I call this exercise ‘My Book’. This may seem rather fanciful and results depend on the propensity of the individual to respond to this method, but when it works, it can produce a vivid experience that has its own ‘reality’. On one occasion, doing this myself, I found I was reading a poem, which I then wrote down. The result is unlikely to find itself in anyone's anthology, but that's hardly the point. That one can read from a non-existent book gives pause for thought, and provides every reason to further explore such techniques. These strategies were part of Keith Johnstone's approach to theatre, which emphasised improvisatory techniques and exercises to foster spontaneity and narrative skills (Johnstone 1981). Student outcomes, whether individual or collaborative, included video movies, stop-motion videos, slide shows and static artworks (hand drawn and/or digitally produced). These have been based on a single strategy, such as recording dreams, or a mix that may have included personal dreams, dreams of friends, daydreams, automatic writing, 'my book' exercise. By contrast, in pursuing intensely personal and introspective means of expression, many fine artists may find they ineluctably cover much of this ground in the development of their art practice.

CONCLUSION

As indicated by the opening quotation, potential creativity is not the same as explicit instruction in creative thinking, and learning techniques of creative thinking is fundamental to everyone involved in the creative arts. The methods described in this paper are those that a cohort of QCA students has reported as being most useful. Mind mapping (associated with brain writing) has been exceedingly influential in developing concepts and making unlikely and 'surprising' connections. Team creativity is valued for a number of reasons, including its social nature. The power of metaphoric association is brought out strongly in synectics. Sensory awareness is growing in significance, with implications extending to every aspect of our environment.
The unconscious offers a source of extraordinary originality and individual exploration. Particular methods have had a profound effect on students and graduates who continue to apply them in professional practice and in their individual art practices. While accepting differences between design and artistic practice, the creative methods described offer a common currency between the two. In terms of the creative aspects of studio art practice, action research and reflective practice have been identified as especially relevant methodologies. The methodologies of action research, as well as being generally heuristic, also mirror the exploratory and recursive nature of much creative endeavor in both art and design, and in practice-based research.

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ENDNOTES

1 In the present context, I will sidestep discussion on the social and political framework that frequently drives such research, as this is a topic in its own right and is beyond the scope of this essay.

2 On 24 May 2010, in daylight and with eyes wide open, I imagined a bookshelf in front of me filled with many volumes. I selected one, reached out my arm, extracted it, and ‘read’ the title, which was Impossible Dreams by Michael Flanderung. Holding the book in one hand, I opened it at random to what I saw as page 69, and then ‘read’ the following poem: Fir trees darkly standing In the forests of the night Left alone and straggling Not the life imagined Or the dream outright Just the thud of horses passing Out beyond the candle light. (In retrospect, I detect associations with William Blake and Walter de la Mare, and even, by way of the ‘author’, with Michael Flanderung.)

REFERENCES


USING CREATIVE THINKING METHODS TO ENHANCE STUDIO PRACTICE AND RESEARCH

Donald Welch
This essay addresses a simple question: What takes place in the life-drawing studio? More specifically, what does an artist do with a model, and what does a model do with an artist in the life-drawing studio? To clarify the problems embedded in these questions, this paper will approach life-drawing methods somewhat unusually; it will invoke the cultural rhetoric of the zombie. As I will show, the zombie is an ideal vehicle by which to illuminate the structures, theatrics, and technologies of life drawing. Inviting the zombie into life-drawing practice, or revealing its occluded presence there, can provide the educator, student, model, artist, and spectator with a reformed strategy for understanding what takes place in the life-drawing exchange.

This research into life drawing is informed by emerging concepts of narrative inquiry and narrative methodologies in arts-based research (Connelly and Clandinin 1990). Using a fantastical construct in a theatrical matrix—the zombie in the life-drawing studio—immediately engages fiction, storytelling, re-enactment, and play as strategies of inquiry and interpretation. In Method Meets Art, Patricia Leavy addresses fiction as a methodological tool:

Fiction is one lens or tool that can be used to shape narrative inquiry ... the elements of narrative, fiction, and autobiography can make their way into research projects in many different ways, spanning a continuum from mostly ‘found’ or ‘co-created’ data, to that which is largely fictionalized ... fiction can be expressly used as both a part of narrative practice as well as the form representation takes. (2009, 43, original emphasis)

Although Leavy’s focus is short stories and fictional writing, her framework applies equally well to synchronic, diachronic, and interactive visual narratives. While I will argue that many functional aspects of the zombie are directly implicated in the ways in which artists and models interact in the life-drawing exchange, I will freely mix the metaphorical and the literal as can only be done in narrative arts-based research. The structures of life-drawing performances will be entangled wholeheartedly with the myths and tropes of zombie culture. The use of such an overtly fabulated fictional method can yield insight into the life-drawing process that would be impossible using any other methodology.

Life drawing suffers its own cliché: a ragged arc of mute watchers draws the strained and static body of a poorly paid performer. This circumstance is repeated daily in thousands of grimy studios all over the world. Life drawing persists in recreational art, professional practice, and university arts curricula. For such a ubiquitous form, it has received scant critical examination until recent times. In my twenty years of practicing and teaching life drawing at universities in America and Australia, I have had innumerable conversations about the (ir)relevance of life drawing, most of which have revolved around either the pathological absence of a critical discourse in the studio on labour, gender, and skill, or the dread inspired by the casual use of adjectives such as ‘academic’ or ‘traditional’. Yet, life drawing endures—in many cases, as a form that has largely unchanged since the 1950s. It is already tempting to invoke a zombie metaphor in the same manner as applied in ‘zombie capitalism’ and ‘zombie computers’. Perhaps life drawing has been dead for years, but is still shambling around, infecting hobbyists and art students. Perhaps it is kept in a barely animate state by an entrenched coterie of instructors and stalwarts who wield a debased ‘power’ to command models and render the human form on paper. Or, perhaps it was never fully alive or fully dead, but something else:
something for which the binary metaphor cannot account. Margaret Mayhew’s 2010 PhD thesis on life drawing contains a thorough analysis of the stereotype of life drawing as an inherently ‘rear-guard’ practice. Through texts and interviews, it provides a detailed account of the proclaimed ‘death of life-drawing’ at the hands of contemporary theory and practice (Mayhew 2010).

This instinct to critically re-evaluate life-drawing practices is gaining momentum in disciplines ranging from medical anatomy and psychology to performance studies, art education, and interactive technologies. Over the past twenty years, a number of scholars and artists have directly and indirectly attempted to fill the substantial gaps in life-drawing research. Articles and papers with titles such as “The Monstrous Model: Shape-Shifting in the Life-Drawing Space” (Grey 2002) and “Human-Computer Interaction in Life Drawing, A Fine Artist’s Perspective” (Kane 2014) have joined a body of feminist literature related to life drawing, modelling, and posing. Emerging in these studies is a specific critical examination of studio methodologies rooted in pedagogical conventions. This discourse requires expansion and direct implication in the drawing studio if life drawing is to be unbridled from its prosaic conventions of teaching and practice. As well as referring to my own classroom and studio practice, this paper will discuss works by Dana Lawrie and Zoe Porter—contemporary Australian artists whom I have known as fellow students and colleagues—to provide evidence for this inquiry.

Life drawing necessitates a particular kind of studio transaction. In theatre, this would be called a ‘two-hander’—a production featuring only two players. In the drawing studio/theatre, the conventional roles are ‘artist’ and ‘model’. This matter is complicated in circumstances in which the artist casts the self as model—relying on an apparatus, such as a mirror or camera, in order to sever the two performances. Each role, however, remains articulated, and the method of life drawing remains indistinguishable from transactions involving separate bodies. Whether employing a model or using the self, the representative function of the model is clear; the model poses experimentally, according to experience and convention, in anticipation of the desire of or at the direction of the artist. The artist then confronts the pose in the graphic act—experimentally, according to experience and convention, in anticipation of the desire of or at the direction of the model.

The poses are usually faux-static. The body cannot be utterly still, so a rigorous contortion is performed to create the illusion of stasis. Increasingly, lens-based referents are used to amplify this illusion of immobility. In the past, devices such as looped ropes and hooked props were employed to relieve the pressure on the model’s body and further mortify the silent pose. From my undergraduate years, I recall the drawing resource cage at Pratt Institute, which contained the strange crutches and dusty harnesses of decrepit life drawing. Now, steel stools and chairs, tatty sofa cushions, and foam mats are the props of the life-drawing dais. It has also become fairly common in contemporary drawing pedagogy to employ movement in the pose. Kinetic poses can be overtly performance-based—narrative theatre, dance, acrobatics, burlesque—or can be subtle repetitive tasks, such as walking or simply changing positions. Whether it is static or kinetic, the pose is the phenomenon with which the artist and model transact, and it is neither completely inanimate nor completely animate. Additionally, whether vigorous or mortified in the pose, the facial expression of the model typically remains unchanged, hovering somewhere between the stoic and the vegetative. The blankness of the expression amplifies the pose’s uncanny, insensate quality.

Observations, drawing practice, and drawing classes have led me to further investigate the opacity, stasis, and silence of the life-drawing exchange. I recently conducted an experiment with a life-drawing class in which I illuminated the model on the dais with a split-screen video. One half was a cold white screen that projected a bright pixel grid on the model. The other half was a video capture of ‘Zoe’, a digital avatar designed at Cambridge Research Laboratory to pantomime emotion and provide personality to synthetic, voice-based mobile assistants such as Apple’s Siri. In the exercise, the model recited dialogue from one of Zoe’s promotional videos, including Zoe’s demonstrations of happiness, sadness, and anger. While the life model repeatedly said “I can be very angry!” Zoe mouthed the words
silently, her face morphing into a strange, waxy pantomime of emotion. This produced an unusual effect in the students’ drawings, with an emphasis on the model's mouth, and vectors around the mouth manifesting in their works. Students who normally rendered the entire body of the model began drawing only large mouths and sets of teeth. The performance of speech and emotion, filtered through the simulation of speech and emotion, radically altered the students’ relationships to the model's acting body. The model was reduced to a static, synthetic fragment rent from the mortified body.

Whether static or kinetic, performed for the lens or the easel, the pose is both a counterfeit of life and of death. It is a performance of body that may feel more- or less ‘convincing’ or ‘good’ in each of its manifestations, but, like Zoe, it can never fully cross over into the living or the dead. The defining quality of a ‘good pose’ is its mimicry of vigour or cadaverousness. I have participated in countless drawing groups in which some enthusiastic draughtsman has complimented the model on a ‘dynamic’, ‘energetic’, or ‘expressive’ pose. These compliments are made with no consideration for the cramping and straining model who has, for the last twenty minutes, been trying to hold a pose that simulates activity. However, if the model had actually moved in the ‘energetic’ pose, grumbling and dissatisfaction would have quickly emanated from the group. Paradoxically, then, a deathly stillness is essential to the theatre of vitality. Unfortunately, the taboo of death is almost never broached in the life-drawing studio. Zombies have been staggering across the pop cultural landscape with an ever-increasing frequency since the turn of the millennium. These are typically not the Haitian-Voodoo zombies of the colonial and postcolonial Caribbean, but the infected and reanimated flesh-eaters of George A. Romero's 1968 film *Night of the Living Dead*. While this movie is credited as being the one that introduced audiences to the concept of the cannibalistic, infectious, living-dead zombie, the word ‘zombie’ is not applied to the creatures within it. Once a low-brow, splatter-fest creature of the horror genre, zombies are being deployed across practices and disciplines, from flash mob protests and performance art to philosophy, epidemiology, and genetics. There are several explanations proffered for the ubiquity of zombie culture. Common among them is the assertion that the zombie (apocalypse) is a convenient canvas on which to paint a range of imperialist, dystopian, and social-critical pictures. Nick Muntean and Matthew Payne write, “However blank the zombie may be, it is nevertheless a culturally productive and expressive vacuity. Indeed, it is this very blankness that perpetuates the creature’s sustained cultural relevance” (2009, 242). But this essay isn’t concerned with the why of zombies; rather, the specific how. How do zombies operate, and how can this operation reveal both the malfunctions and the potentials of life drawing? In philosophy, a construct called a *p-zombie* is employed as a foil in discourses about physicalism, volition, and consciousness. Daniel Dennett’s (2005) sceptical appraisal of the invocation of zombies in philosophy is an excellent primer on the phenomenon. I propose a new construct—the *d(rawing)-zombie*—that can be
employed as a foil in discourses about life drawing, liveness, and posing. As drawing is predicated on the performative action of its processes and the physical movement of the drawing body, it follows that deploying an acting corporeal construct such as the *d-zombie* can be an effective strategy in the investigation of life-drawing exchanges.

**REFERENT/REVENANT**

Assumptions about the necessity of a live model and a live artist in a life-drawing exchange reveal a specific privileging of bodies in a shared space. The ‘liveness’ of the performance asserts the dominance of our notions of Western individualism and subjective expression. Liveness is a topic that circulates most prominently in theatre studies and is often framed by Peggy Phelan’s *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (1993) and Philip Auslander’s *Liveness* (1999). Phelan posits a fundamental disparity between the live and the mediatised, whereas Auslander argues for an inextricable relationship between them. Although corpses, casts, and mannequins have a particular pedigree within the life-drawing studio, the reciprocal liveness of the acting/posing model and the acting/posing artist is traditionally held as irreconcilable with mediatised imagery. The paradox of the life-drawing exchange is that the posed model-body in the studio is no more ‘live’ than ‘live television’ or a ‘live’ zombie. Moreover, the defining attributes of the living individual—such as politics, sexuality, identity—are absent from the pose to allow for a slippery transformation from body to picture. In her work on horror films, Patricia MacCormack describes zombies as having “no race, no gender, no sexuality, just baroque fleshy unique viscera-configuration” (2008, 104). The privileging of the meat-body-referent erodes the vivifying forces of the self. The human referent dies off but remains on the dais. The pose both destroys and reanimates the revenant model. How, then, is the artist to approach this dangerous and threatening performance? If Leslie Bostrom and Marlene Malik’s account of one of the pathologies of life drawing is accurate—that the ‘aesthetic distance’ created between artist and model pollutes the transaction—that specific strategies are required of the artist and model to participate explicitly and honestly in the zombification of life drawing.

Bostrom and Malik define aesthetic distance as the traditional approach to the nude in which the model is treated “as an arrangement of formal elements ... exempt from common human behavior” (1999, 43–44). The environment of life drawing should be one in which infection, death, appetite, proximity, transmission, and action become dominant considerations. Furthermore, conventional considerations, such as decorum, distance, silence, stasis, antisepsis, and passivity, should be discarded.

Zoe Porter’s performance drawings evince the peculiar and uncanny nature of the zombie-Other. Donning elaborate costume-bricolage, Porter stages loud, dark performances in which she typically turns her back on the viewing crowd and aggressively gestures in drawings of chimeras, zoomorphs, and zombies (figure 1). The costumes she and the other performers wear—a blending of Surrealist counterculture, Mad Max-wasteland-chic, and prog-rock assemblage—speak the language of a civilisation reframed by anarchy and apocalypse. Porter often works in collaboration with her sister, a circus performer. Porter draws while her sister, also in costume, poses, prowls, and menaces the audience (figure 2). By acting/posing/drawing the zombie, Porter stakes herself out as both a voyeuristic object of loathing and desire—a ‘fleshy unique viscera-configuration’—and a rebellious hyper-identity set against the mob. Her works actively transgress the binarisms of self/other and life/death that dominate life-drawing practice. Porter’s method is participatory and performative. She begins as one of the infected—in post-apocalyptic community with the models and spectators. Her drawing materials, surfaces, and bodies are undifferentiated from the shabby environments she inhabits (figure 3). The drawings have no distinct edges and no discernable organisation. This dis-ordering of the acting body is crucial to zombie culture, and it signals alternative methods for approaching the life-drawing exchange. MacCormack refers directly to ‘gore’ and ‘disorganisation’ in her analysis of the body in zombie narratives, particularly in the films of Lucio Fulci (MacCormack 2008).

In most life-drawing circumstances, a fairly conservative conclusion may be made about the animating force of the macho genius observing
Figure 1 Zoe Porter In a Landscape No. 2 2012, performance from Current Rising Festival. Photographer: Eli Illis. Image courtesy of the artist.

Figure 2 Zoe Porter and Olivia Porter Strange Playground 2011, performance from Woodford Folk Festival. Image courtesy of the artist.

Figure 3 Zoe Porter In a Landscape No. 2 2012, performance from Current Rising Festival. Photographer: Eli Illis. Image courtesy of the artist.

Figure 4 Zoe Porter Untitled (Couple) 2011, found photograph and ink, 20 x 12cm. Image courtesy of the artist.
the passive fleshiness of the model-object. It may be tempting to invoke the Haitian Voodoo-zombie master/slave dialectic and conclude that the mark of the artist contains the resuscitation and mastery of the model-body—a posed body from which the self is absented. In his essay on the ontology of the zombie, Kevin Boon shifts emphasis from death to this lack of self:

A zombie lacks conscious experiences separate from physical processes ... Zombies cannot retain a sense of self—a unique, human consciousness. This defining characteristic is often muddled in literature and film, but it is more central to the zombie myth than death, as you can have a zombie who isn’t dead, but you cannot have a zombie that retains its sense of identity. (2007, 36)

The zombie may lack consciousness, but the revenant-zombie is not a passive agent. The zombie hungers. The zombie seeks to impose its pure-body on the conscious flesh of the living, obliterating it. The zombie also rejects a stable identity that precedes life-death. Films, video games, and literature often try to impose a fantasy of identity on the zombie through photographs, memories, places, and objects. What all of these dreary reminiscences really indicate is the pervasive absence of a stabilising self in the person of the (still) living. In Porter’s work, the monstrous bodily forms are often imposed on ephemera—bits of torn books, newspaper photos, magazine spreads—in a gesture of grotesque reorganisation and effacement of objective and aesthetic distance (figure 4). Porter’s performance drawings suggest the aftermath and detritus of revolution and catastrophe.

Zombie scholar Sarah J. Lauro describes the paradoxical complexity of the zombie construct in regards to rebellion and revolution: “A figuration of both the slave and the slave rebellion, the zombie always connotes the annihilation of revolution at the same time that it embodies revolutionary drive” (2011, 225). The banality of violence, mayhem, and extinction in zombie narratives exists to the point that anarchy, revolution, and liberation become defunct, but the zombie also images the pre-apocalyptic presence of the mob, and its implicit threat of becoming an invincible horde. Confronting the passive conventions and aggressive rebellion of the d-zombie should constitute the core of life drawing. Instead, we are often presented with rote gestures, photographic illusions, or the pale shadows of clever mimesis. The revolutionary d-zombification of the pose is necessary to reveal its established limits and open them up, like soft flesh. Peter Dendle argues, “Zombification is the logical conclusion of human reductionism: it is to reduce a person to a body, to reduce behaviour to basic motor functions, and to reduce social utility to raw labour” (2007, 48). It would be all too easy to remove the word ‘zombification’ from this sentence and replace it with the phrase ‘life drawing’. Porter’s performance drawings demonstrate that the establishment and acknowledgement of the zombie–revenant-pose, which erases the social and institutional constraints of conventional life drawing, can move the practice beyond academic mediocrity and into a dangerous, unpredictable and performative sphere.

Dana Lawrie actively courts pale mimesis and photographic illusionism in her drawings. Her use of the conventions of academicism and photo-verity allows a subtle revelation of the pose. Lawrie works her paintings and drawings from the digital and the photographic. She deliberately employs methods that facilitate the easy exchange of the graphic and photographic in order to expose the fissures in life drawing practice into which death and disorder can creep. In Camera Lucida, Roland Barthes (1981) expresses his anxiety about the presence of his self in the photographic exchange. Barthes describes “the whole photographic ritual: I lend myself to the social game, I pose, I know I am posing, I want you to know that I am posing, but (to square the circle) this additional message must in no way alter the precious essence of my individuality: what I am, apart from any effigy” (22). He laments the lack of a “neutral, anatomic body” that could liberate the self from the pose (Barthes 1981, 22). Like Barthes, Lawrie pursues a transhumanist fantasy of a body from which the self has been emancipated. She draws uncanny, prosthetic bodies—bodies that cannot be corrupted or annihilated by the lens, nor reduced to mythic ideal by the academic drawing process (figure 5). The zombie-body, unlike the
self, is not vulnerable to the mortification of photography. The revenant zombie-body can survive its death-by-picturing. The process of picturing that Lawrie initially employs—the ‘self-shot’—yields a photograph, but the photograph is not the referent. The referent is the pose, or, more precisely, the aberrant nature of posing.

Lawrie utilises analogue and digital projection techniques to begin marking her large surfaces. Specifically, she works with pencil and oil washes on prepared panels in a method that mimics an effect most commonly associated with ink and transparent watercolour on paper (figure 6). The linear contour in Lawrie’s paintings signifies the photographic. Precisely rendered, the silhouette of the photographic figure and the contour line mirror one another. The line, that fundamental graphic abstraction of edge, denotes the limits of the body—that which the lens can detect and abstract. The outlining of the body then comes to symbolise the lethal vector of the photograph. The relationship between photography and death has been widely discussed; Amelia Jones refers to the photograph as a “death-dealing apparatus” (2002, 949), Susan Sontag calls the portrait-photograph a “soft murder” (1990, 14–15), and Maurice Berger calls the portrait “photography’s little murder” (1995, 92). The metaphors of ‘shooting’, ‘firing’, and ‘capturing’ are thinly veiled sublimations of the aggressive vector of the lens. Washes, however, are visceral and unstable. The wash disorganises the surface and the body in fluid creep and transparency.

The relationship between the wash’s dysgraphia and the d-zombie is clarified by MacCormack’s work on gore. MacCormack reads Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s radical critique of the semiotic ordering and control of the body, its ‘legibility’, through the zombie films of Lucio Fulci. MacCormack (2008) argues that opening the flesh, and exposing and spilling the organs ‘detterritorializes’ the body, liberating it from its organisation. She writes, “The horror of gore films comes from the horror of viewing the illegible ‘human body’—therefore the Body without Organs is inhuman” (MacCormack 2008, 103). Lawrie’s method of rendering simultaneously dematerialises the skin, seeming to expose a rough ecorché of her body, and amplifies the surface—an impenetrable ‘skin’ stained pink and green by the cadaveric body. Rather than penetrating the skin with prick and gash, Lawrie’s bodies egest and congeal. The paintings also specifically depict faces and specifically efface genitalia. Just as zombies have no sexual organisation, legibility, or humanity, but require a face by which to hunt and infect, Lawrie’s bodies indicate a pathological life-drawing code—faces ruptured from their sexed and human bodies. In many of her works, Lawrie eliminates or erases the cranium to the point of invisibility, retaining only the face. This is a potent gesture of the d-zombie. The face and de-sexed body remain, but the seat of consciousness is absented. Lawrie’s methods offer a specific critique of the values and standards of conventional life drawing in which effects of surface, anatomy, and graphic dexterity actively resist critical inquiry.

Picturing the d-zombie is particularly problematic because, unlike in the movies, this zombie is not Mom, or the neighbour, or some other stable character transformed into
a maybe-fast or maybe-slow monster. In life drawing, the zombie is the act of drawing. The act is all post-mortem twitch and bloat. It is the performance of the posing model intersecting with the performance of the posing artist. The \textit{d-zombie} informs the action of life drawing but is not a product of the action. The zombie can indicate the pose and the drawing act but cannot substitute for them. In late 2013, I was invited to participate in an exhibition in Brisbane that surveyed international performance drawing. Titled \textit{Drawn to Experience}, the show was curated by Kellie O’Dempsey, an artist and lecturer who specialises in drawing. This exhibition was the first in which I presented a coherent collection of \texti{d-zombies}. Consisting of an installation of three videos on mobile TFT screens, thirty instant photographs, and over fifty drawings ranging in size from a few square centimetres to over three square metres, the work was the result of a pair of performances enacted in a hired studio space (figure 7). In each performance drawing, the models and I play-acted the dramatic clichés of zombie iconography and re-enacted several well-known scenes from zombie cinema, while dragging our charcoal lumps and charcoaled bodies across the papered floors and walls (figure 8). One outcome of this work is an untitled instant print of the model and I racing around the studio in mock pursuit while the unfortunate cameraperson pedalled backwards (figure 9). In zombie drawing, as in zombie narratives, a tension exists between the performance of conventions and the engrossment—usually as a result of terror or tedium—of the players in the action. The terror of the zombie attack is not in being consumed—the wet pain of disgorged bowels—but rather in being transformed. There is always a gap in the transformation from the living to the zombie. Zombification isn’t instantaneous. Like the instant print, there is a pause filled with concealment, infection, transference, and reification.

The physical and temporal gaps between the living, the dead, the posing, and \texti{life/death} manifest in four primary ways in the performance drawing of the \texti{d-zombie}: in the gap between the performing artist and the performing model; in the gap between the documentary camera and the performance arena; in the gap between the liveness of the encounter and its presentation; and in the gap between meat-space and simulation. My current inquiries are directed towards developing and testing studio methodologies that interrogate and exemplify these gaps. My goal is not resolution, but reformation.

It would be amiss to conclude this essay on the doings in life drawing without mention of the heterosexist frame in which life drawing operates (Nead 1992; Mayhew 2008). Although the potent critiques of the life-drawing exchange offered...
by those such as John Berger and Lynda Nead have had some influence on the implementation of performance and a gender discourse in the life-drawing studio, the form remains largely unchanged from its mid-nineteenth-century structure. Although women artists now outnumber men in many contemporary life-drawing courses, the structures and preferences remain for employing female models of a certain age and morphology. Zombies have been proffered as de-sexed and de-politicised creatures of ambiguity and disorganisation. On the whole, however, zombie narratives are every bit as heterosexist as conventional life drawing. Examples of the most well-circulated visual zombie narratives of the twenty-first century— *World War Z* (2013), *The Walking Dead* (2010–), *Game of Thrones* (2011–), *28 Days Later* (2002), *Shaun of the Dead* (2004)—all share the same central theme: paternalistic male heroes attempt to reassert themselves as the dominant centres of failed societies in which their power and privilege have been marginalised.

There are certainly exceptions to this template, as there are in life drawing, but the popularity of these narratives coincides with the resurgence in so-called atelier life-drawing groups, classes, and texts that attempt to re-enact eighteenth- and nineteenth-century academic modes of learning, seeing, and drawing production. Arguably, zombie narratives and atelier models both signal the same sense of longing to resuscitate a flatlining macho framework. As such, the forms of zombie narratives and academic life drawing offer an ideal framework from which to subvert this persistent pattern from within.

Whether binding the artist and model together with gore, utilising de-centred, web-based lensing, repeatedly reprising re-enactments, or freely mixing avatars, cyborgs, and zombies, an active participation by the immense collective of life-drawing practitioners in d-zombie methods can begin to construct a new knowledge base from which conventional and experimental life-drawing exchanges can be examined. The
Figure 8 A/M Zombie Drawing Performance 2013, still from single-channel digital video

Figure 9 Untitled (A/M Zombie Drawing) 2013, instant print, 10.8 x 8.5cm
question of what is or is not being done in the life-drawing studio does not demand answers as much as it signals the feeble critical position of life drawing—a position that we are obligated to reform. Contemporary life-drawing practices and pedagogies require further experimentation and ongoing communication between instructors, artists, and models if such a coherent reformation of life drawing is to occur.

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In the twenty-first-century context of an increasingly pressured, changing, and complex world, there is a disquieting recognition of the plight and struggle for survival that plants and animals endure. This sense of disquiet underpins the individual practices of artists Robyn Glade-Wright and Barbara Dover, who both engage with aesthetics in a distinctive manner for similar ethical purposes. Their aim in making art is to engender reflection about the kind of life we impose on sentient beings and the impact of human agency on the habitat of living species. As this paper will demonstrate, Glade-Wright’s and Dover’s works of art suggest a sense of disagreeable horror in an agreeable or palatable form. Their conflation of beauty, precision, and horror provokes further contemplation of these terms, along with a reinterpretation of notions of the sublime. Significantly, the deep moral concerns at play in their works of art belie their delicate and alluring forms.

In broadening the concept of aesthetics in relations to the realm of the ethical, philosopher Paul Crowther argues for an idea of critical aesthetics, which he sees as a striving for objectivity in aesthetic judgement that can, in turn, facilitate the deepening of aesthetic experience. Moreover, critical aesthetics construes art and the aesthetic “as modes of synthesis—in the sense of actively bringing together different capacities, in relation to different sets of objects” (Crowther 1993, 26). This involves keeping the aesthetic domain in proper social perspective through grounding judgements in historical knowledge, and being “... squared off against complex ethical and political considerations” (Crowther 1993, 210) to inform the subjective or felt character of the experience of art.

Objectivity in aesthetic judgement, Crowther argues, is a case of offering an artwork from which others can learn, and presenting a critical assessment that enables people “to experientially appropriate the aesthetic object ... in a new way” (1993, 209). Such an approach focuses on the way art and aesthetic experience “involve an interplay between what is constant and what is historically determined in our engagement with the world” (Crowther 1993, 206). Crowther suggests that reciprocity of the visible and invisible is basic to the structure of perception itself and, importantly, is an essential feature of all art by virtue of being a perceptual object; therefore, art has the capacity to disclose different aspects of our most basic contact with the world. However, there are also numerous other constants involved in art and aesthetic experience. Central to aesthetic empathy, Crowther maintains, is another constant, which... is our need to recognise and articulate what we are as individuals through recognising, identifying with and learning from the achievement of other people. The work of art facilitates all aspects of this, in so far as it involves the creation of a sensible manifold inseparably bonded to a symbolic content. It draws on capacities for synthesis such as imagination and rational comprehension which are necessary features of our cognitive relation to the world. More than this, it places such capacities in a mutually enhancing reciprocal relation. (1993, 207)

This reciprocity between the viewer and the work of art is central to the process and aims at play in Glade-Wright’s and Dover’s works of art. While aesthetics—and ideas of beauty in particular—might be intrinsic to their art, these artists do not necessarily create aesthetically pleasing works of art to incite pleasure and delight. Rather, their aim in making art is to focus attention on the predicament and survival of both plants and animals. To achieve this, Glade-Wright
and Dover press aesthetic forms to function as an enticement to attract the attention of others. This attention might lead to new ways of imagining and feeling about the changes in the environment in which people live and the life that humans afford other animals.

For example, the merging of deep moral concern and beauty is evident in Glade-Wright’s *Exodus* (2014, figures 1–3), exhibited at KickArts Contemporary Artspace, Cairns, in 2014. *Exodus* was produced in response to the knowledge that half of the coral in the Great Barrier Reef has been lost over the past few decades. This majestic reef has been silently dissolving as millions of tiny algae, which once lived in a symbiotic relationship with the coral providing nutrients and much of the vivid colour to the reef, have died. These microscopic algae are sensitive to increased sea temperatures, with rises as small as one degree causing heat stress, and prolonged exposure potentially killing them. With the death and exodus of millions of live algae, the coral is starved (Sheppard 2014). Devoid of life, the reef bleaches: there is a loss of life and a demise of natural beauty. *Exodus* is a symbolic representation of bleached coral that takes the form of a long boat or canoe, spanning eight-and-a-half metres from bow to stern. The boat form floats quietly in the gallery, carrying its cargo to an unmarked grave. The white-washed forms in *Exodus* recall Arnold Bocklin’s painting, *Isle of the Dead* (1880), in which a shrouded white form ferries a recently deceased soul, human cargo, to its resting place. The boat form used in *Exodus* suggests the passage of coral to an imagined watery ossuary.

**Figure 1** Robyn Glade-Wright *Exodus* 2014, vegetation, paint, nylon, 90 x 880 x 20cm

**Figure 2** Robyn Glade-Wright *Exodus* (detail) 2014
Through *Exodus*, Glade-Wright poses the following question: Can a work of art with a beautiful form be beautiful when it represents carnage on the reef? In *Exodus*, Glade-Wright’s representation of a bleached coral reef, while beautiful in form, evokes an awareness that the fragile beauty of the reef, suffering from heat stress in a warming global climate, is collapsing in an underwater wasteland. *Exodus* raises the spectre of beauty but menacingly fuses this beauty with its immanent loss. Those of us who deride the loss of life are plunged into an unpleasant quandary: a disagreeable horror. Glade-Wright thoughtfully and purposely uses beauty as a method of articulating her concerns and generating a moral call.

Glade-Wright premises her aesthetic on a theory by Immanuel Kant, who writes that judgments of beauty are mediated by our moral nature. Kant writes that judgments of beauty are located halfway between those of the “logically necessary”, such as a mathematical theorem, and the purely “subjective”, such as a preference for a certain colour (quoted in Whewell 1995, 251). According to this view, judgments of beauty are not merely subjective because when the view is expressed that a *thing is beautiful*, it is assumed that others will understand what is meant, even if they do not agree. Therefore, such a claim for beauty is made with the demand for universal assent (Whewell 1995). In an effort to explain this curious double nature of judgements of taste, Kant postulates the notion of a *sensus communis*, or common sensitive nature, among people. Kant claims that “we cannot understand aesthetic experience except by relating it to our moral natures as followers of universal principles” (quoted in White 1995, 293). It was only through linking the moral and the beautiful that Kant could “justify the demand for universal agreement that aesthetic judgments bring with them”, and claim that “the beautiful is the symbol of the morally good” (quoted in White 1995, 295). Therefore, aesthetic judgements are not only subjective judgements; they are also mediated by our moral nature as followers of universal principles. This raises the question: Can a work of art be beautiful if it is judged to be morally wrong?

This linking of beauty to justice is not unprecedented. For Plato, beauty was inseparable...
from goodness. The philosopher Paul Guyer reminds us that aesthetics has been both integral to, and yet under attack by, philosophy from the beginning, when Plato initiated Western philosophy with an assault on Greek assumptions about the cognitive and practical value of the creation and experience of art. Yet, in so doing, Plato was also aware of the compelling nature of beauty and, as Guyer observes, attempted to guide our admiration of earthly beauty into an admiration of a higher kind of beauty otherwise inaccessible to the senses, such as “... the Form of Good or Justice” (Guyer 2005, x). Nevertheless, Guyer argues, the questions that Plato raised in the third to fourth centuries BC, such as

... what is the nature and value of beauty?
what is the connection between art and knowledge? and what is genius, the source of artistic inspiration? ... have always remained at the heart of aesthetics, no less so when aesthetics became a recognized academic discipline early in the eighteenth century than before, and no less now than at any other time in modernity. (Guyer 2005, x)

Elaine Scarry is a more recent writer who is convinced of the compelling connections of ethics and aesthetics. In her book On Beauty and Being Just (1999), Scarry argues that beauty can lead to justice. She claims that both beauty and justice are available to the senses but justice cannot be seen as easily as beauty. On the one hand, the beauty of the sky is widely available to all people at most times. Justice, on the other hand, is not as readily accessible. We might observe, for example, that people in cars are obeying traffic rules; however, generally, we do not see justice because it is too dispersed over an area much larger than a car, such as a whole city (Scarry 1999).

Scarry writes that when both aesthetic fairness and ethical fairness are present, a stable situation exists. However, when one of these terms is absent, “the term that is present becomes active, insisting, calling out for, directing our attention towards what is absent” (Scarry 1999, 109). Therefore, when beauty is present and justice is not, beauty may act as a lever in the direction of justice. Moreover, Scarry maintains that during the stasis of an experience of beauty, a radical decentring occurs. At this time, a person undertakes a cognitive journey through which they cease to stand in the centre of their own world, and the cluster of feelings that normally promotes the ‘self’ dissipates. The space formerly used for self-protection is now available to serve another cause, and “a more capacious act is possible” (Scarry 1999, 113). In Exodus, Glade-Wright employs this notion of beauty acting as a lever in the direction of justice. It is hoped that the work of art will initiate a process of decentring that might trigger moral justice for other living entities.

A further facet of Glade-Wright’s use of beauty is the recognition that people value and actively seek beauty out. This explains why people want to live in beautiful places, find beautiful partners and visit beauty spots while on vacations. Philosopher John Armstrong writes that “Awareness of beauty makes the ugliness of existence all the harder to bear” (2004, 84). It is hard to fathom how the beauty of the reef might be replaced by an unbearable ugliness. Exodus aims to elicit a response of beauty along with an understanding of loss and, in doing so, becomes a plea for the consideration of the moral and ethical consequences of human impact. Works of art such as Exodus seek to foreground instances of loss to create a means of recognising, imagining, and feeling the changing nature of our environment.

The value attributed to beauty has been associated with a form of stewardship, which is a “reciprocal welcoming” or salute to the dignity of the other, between the observed and the observer (Scarry 1999, 95). This might seem to be a curious standpoint; for example, how can we imagine that an object such as an urn could be capable of saluting another? Armstrong offers an explanation of the power of beauty that might explain the idea of a reciprocal welcoming to the dignity of the other. He writes of beauty in terms of a physical/spiritual binary, arguing that human life is experienced in two guises: the physical and the spiritual. In similar fashion, beauty is both physical, “(the qualities inherent in beautiful objects)”, and spiritual, “(the intuition at play when we experience beauty)” (Armstrong 2004, 163). For Armstrong, the experience of beauty consists of finding “spiritual value (truth, happiness, moral ideals) at home in a material setting (rhythm, line, shape, structure) and in a
AN UNBEARABLE BEAUTY: THE CALL OF BEAUTY AND THE SUBLIME

Barbara Dover

Figure 4 Barbara Dover And No Birds Sing 2014, deconstructed book, found feathers, acrylic, 135 x 100cm

Figure 5 Barbara Dover And No Birds Sing 2014 (detail)

Figure 6 Barbara Dover And No Birds Sing 2014 (detail)
way that, while we contemplate the object, the two seem inseparable” (Armstrong 2004, 163). Therefore, Armstrong provides a metaphorical thread that ties the idea of stewardship, or the reciprocal welcoming or salute, to the dignity of the other to the realm of the possible.

If we accept Armstrong’s notion of a physical and spiritual binary, then Scarry’s idea of a link between beauty and stewardship becomes more acceptable. The point of stewardship is that it elicits a desire to protect and nurture existing beauty and to bring new beauty into the world. The desire for stewardship and to protect the beauty of the reef and the life it nurtures are part of the motivation for *Exodus*. Armstrong (2004) writes that an experience of beauty involves a sense of kinship between an object and one’s soul, and that people find purity, perfection, harmony, and order in physically beautiful objects. The loss of perfection, harmony, and order apparent in a bleached coral reef can sever the kinship we share with other sentient beings. This disruption of perfection, harmony, and order can upset one’s soul. In this way, beauty is pushed into a subversive role that foreshadows a dire end.

This dissenting beauty also underlies Dover’s work. *And No Birds Sing* (2014, figures 4–6), exhibited at Canopy Art Space, Cairns, in 2014, is a lamentation about the pressure that human activities put on animal life. Constructed with a sensitive aesthetic and principled beauty, it is concerned with the absence of animals. It references the clearing of land for human use, which has an untold impact on birds (among other species) and their habitats. In some cases, it has meant the loss of bird species. *And No Birds Sing* imagines a world without birds, a place devoid of the sounds of their rich and varied vocalisations that are taken so much for granted; a world where all that is left in ordered libraries and museums are written words and records that these birds, and their sounds, once existed.

Dover reflects on contemporary dilemmas, particularly concerning animals with which we share this world, by considering our moral responsibility for them. Her work intentionally intertwines moral principles and ethics with aesthetic principles. These principles are expressed in *And No Birds Sing* by seven transparent acrylic shelves on which sit slightly crushed small boxes, filled with small white feathers, constructed from the pages of a taxonomic book of bird species, titled *The Illustrated Encyclopaedia of Birds*. The work is fragile and delicate. Text of the calls of various birds is faintly etched on the shelves, barely visible, but seemingly floating beneath the boxes. *And No Birds Sing* suggests a quiet urgency for the animal life that is fading away, barely being noticed. The kind of beauty aspired to in this work is one of restraint, subtlety, and refinement, interlocking with imaginative insight and with such ethical principles as responsibility, moral reasoning, and empathetic agency.

During the construction of the work of art, Dover considered the importance of cognitive implications of the links between aesthetics and ethics and morality. Dover’s decision-making processes were directed towards realising both aesthetic and conceptual intents, and connecting these with the material chosen for the work as seamlessly as possible. For example, the deconstructed book was the source of information on the sounds and calls that various species of birds make as well as the physical material for the construction of the boxes. The bird call text was digitally and graphically converted to a finely graded sandblasted adhesive lettering, which was subsequently applied to the seven transparent acrylic shelves, in an apparently random arrangement. This text on the shelves, then, became a background to the text boxes. The boxes were crushed gently after construction to imply the crushing of the habitats/homes of the birds (signified by feathers).

The text boxes themselves were filled with small white feathers collected from beneath roosting trees used by flocks of cockatoos and ibis. These fallen feathers were from the birds preening themselves each night before resting. The small lidded boxes were placed at precise and regular intervals on the shelves. Some boxes were taken out to create gaps, that is, space for absent boxes. Like other such works focussing on vexing moral issues as that of animal mistreatment, this work suggests foregrounding such qualities as force, direct confrontation or discord. While qualities of beauty and subtlety appear to be the antithesis of confrontation, they have the capability, albeit
covertly, of embodying the potency of moral opposition and ethical resistance.

The idea that we could all soon live in a world where no bird sings points a sharp and exacting focus on the vulnerability of animals and a worrying suggestion that our future might be diminished. There is a perturbing realisation that the natural world we have known in our lifetime might not be robust in a climate of change. Furthermore, on an individual level, we might feel seemingly powerless to halt the demise of the environment and life it has supported. A world bereft of birds evokes an experience of terror. Far removed from the delicacy of its form, the meaning of And No Birds Sing is chilling and capable of instilling a sense of fear. Eighteenth-century British philosopher and theorist Edmund Burke argued that the sublime is in some way terrible and, hence, capable of instilling fear (quoted in Gardiner 1995, 56). Similarly, a sublime terror lies behind the delicate facade of And No Birds Sing.

Glade-Wright’s and Dover’s works of art present a dialogue between a delicate beauty and the fear at play in the sublime. This use of beauty in combination with the sublime reunites the division in aesthetics instigated by philosophers such as Burke and Joseph Addison in the eighteenth century (Mothersill 1995). The aesthetic realm was subdivided into those of the sublime and the beautiful, with the sublime the dominant member, and beauty the diminutive member. The sublime was considered to be masculine, principled, and great, while the beautiful was cast as “female, small and charming” (Kant quoted in Scarry 1999, 82). By the twentieth century, the term ‘sublime’ was entrenched in aesthetic discourse, with artists such as Mark Rothko claiming that paintings must be capable of “overwhelming the senses with works of sublime directness” (quoted in Read 1974, 290). While achieving a sense of the sublime became the goal of many artists at this time, beauty languished and was cast into the shadows.
The modernist reverence for meaning and privileging it over the suspicious nature of beauty continued until the late-twentieth century, when the writer David Hickey questioned its exiled position. Hickey claimed that art professionals, those benevolent wardens of the public institutions, contended that they “must look carefully and genuinely care about what artists ‘really’ mean—and therefore they must mistrust, almost of necessity, distrust appearances, distrust the very idea of appearances” (1993, 16). The mistrust and suspicion of beauty in art during the mid-to-late-twentieth century was, in part, due to its capacity to sell, which was a problem, according to Hickey, who noted that “if it sells itself, it is an idolatrous commodity: if it sells anything else it is a seductive advertisement” (Hickey 1993, 16). In this milieu, beauty was seemingly abandoned (Steiner 2001, xv). However, Hickey’s comments instigated a re-evaluation of beauty in the visual arts from the mid-1990s onwards, leading to a contemporary aesthetic landscape that could embrace beauty (Brand 2000).

Thus, the former division of the sublime from the beautiful and the privileging of the sublime over the beautiful have been reassessed in the contemporary arts landscape. Indeed, in his essay, “Overflow: Tales of the Sublime”, writer and curator Daniel Palmer argues that while the sublime might be viewed as, in his words, an unfashionable term, it has contemporary relevance and is a big concept. Notably, he contends that “The aesthetics of the sublime have always been associated with confusion in the face of destruction” (Palmer 2014, 70). Palmer points to the need for “a more complex understanding of ‘nature’, seriously complicating traditional formulation of the sublime” (Palmer 2014, 70). Relevant to and evident in the work of Glade-Wright and Dover, Palmer reasons that “a more radical eco-sublime is required to imagine new ways of feeling” and “new forms of collective empathy towards all manner of human and non-human others” (2014, 70).

This contemporary understanding of the term ‘sublime’ that Palmer makes a case for—that is, one that coincides with global environmental disasters in the name of progress—might well apply to Glade-Wright’s work of art, Vulnerable Animal Egg 1 (2011, figures 7–8). This is a fine, transparent, large yet delicately embroidered, egg, whose very material of white silk thread and white organza conveys an air of fragility; it might float away into nothingness at any minute. This work was part of an exhibition entitled Red Listed, which comprised digital and embroidered images of extinct and vulnerable plants and animals from across far north Queensland. The embroidery work, finely and skilfully made, is beguiling because of its beauty. However, on looking upon it, one realises that its precariousness on the gallery wall is suggestive of the existence of many plants and animals across Australia and the world.

Reflecting on Vulnerable Animal Egg 1, the viewer considers the chilling thought and the gravity of the decline and loss of species: it tugs our conscience and wrenches our hearts. It is indicative of the concept of eco-sublime suggested by Palmer, seeking to create new ways to imagine and new ways to feel about the vulnerability of human and non-human others. The delicacy of
Vulnerable Animal Egg 1, and its borderless form, symbolically unites the idea of the individual egg with new life. The idea that this egg—and, indeed, all eggs—may be vulnerable beauty becomes an unbearable one. The horror of the eco-sublime might become a contemporary equivalent of sublime suggested in the past and illustrated by Milton’s hell.

Palmer’s attachment of the prefix ‘eco’ to the word ‘sublime’ catapults the outmoded term most powerfully and convincingly into contemporary relevance. Moreover, the further attachment of ideas of uncompromising in his use of the word radical with eco-sublime propels beauty straight into the realm of ethics and morality. It is within this way of thinking about the sublime that we might understand an alternative perspective on nature; hence, we might imagine then, as Palmer argues, “new forms of collective empathy towards all manner of human and non-human others” (Palmer 2014, 70). It is here, within these complicated and complex connections with nature and the animal world that Dover considers and creates her works. For example, her work Barrier (2003, figure 9) might well be viewed from the perspective of a radical and, indeed, a visceral eco-sublime.

Barrier discloses a darker side of beauty and sublime. It tackles the dichotomy inherent in human attitudes towards those animals seldom considered as being part of nature: farm animals. Barrier reveals the beauty of cattle through the realia (tail hair) of this animal, carefully placed in a clear, clean, and clinical format—a transparent acrylic tube—so that the exploitation and dreadfulness behind the beauty of the soft and subtle hues of the hair unfolds slowly. The form of Barrier—ten one-metre tubes placed horizontally, one above the other—suggests enclosures, railings, fences, or the trucks that transport cattle from the farm to market to slaughterhouse. The work unambiguously interrogates our relations with another side of nature, those hidden animals we eat. Barrier engages with, as Palmer contends, “…alternative ways of thinking about our contingent place within ‘nature’” (2014, 70).

The prospect for art to raise awareness of the eco-sublime within a beautiful, ordered aesthetic can reveal a range of new understandings, with ethical implications for both the artists and the audience of their work. This capacity of works of art is noted by the philosopher Karen Hanson, who writes,

Art’s capacity to keep alive certain moral perspectives, even if these views diverge radically from our present moral outlook, can help us remain alert to life’s possibilities and our own potentialities. This is a benefit that is neither merely aesthetic, not solely moral: it is both at once. (2001, 222)

The capacity for art to integrate moral concern with aesthetic form is the labour many contemporary artists undertake: they are cognisant of the potential of conflating beauty and the sublime in art to address ethical concerns. In coalescing aesthetics and beauty—and, explicitly, a more contemporary perspective on the sublime that Palmer puts forward, an eco-sublime—within the ambit of wider considerations of our experience of and interaction with the natural world, both Glade-Wright and Dover seek new ways of thinking about the present existence and place of plant and animal life with which we share this planet. Palmer’s words that “art that renews our vision in the process of moving us beyond ourselves, a sublime realisation if ever there was one” (2014, 71) resonate with the works by Glade-Wright and Dover discussed here.

These artists’ works deliberately and simultaneously critique ideas of beauty, the sublime, and ethics. Glade-Wright addresses the tragedy of extinction and, more urgently, the vulnerability of species in a beautiful and yet sublime form. On the one hand, for Glade-Wright, stewardship of the natural environment is a pressing ethical concern. Glade-Wright’s works of art attempt to create a reading of beauty and terror to raise an awareness of the options, possibilities, and potentialities for the future of life. These possibilities may be “good or bad, better or worse, closer or distant from an ideal” (Wittgenstein quoted in Budd, 446). The crucial aspect for Glade-Wright is that these options, possibilities, and potentialities are openly revealed and assessed. On the other hand, for Dover, the fundamental basis of the work is the equal consideration and recognition of the sentience of non-human animals. Ethical questions and drivers
are at the centre of her work and are closely tied to and, indeed, are a part of the aesthetics of the work. Without doubt, moral responsibility for animals and ethical issues regarding animals are paramount at all levels of the work, from the conceptual underpinnings to the technical and creative decision-making process. The works of art by Glade-Wright and Dover ask uncomfortable questions that might provoke contemplation and a renewed vision about ourselves and the potentialities for the future of life.

ENDNOTE

1 As this paper discusses the artists’ works individually, it is written in the third person.

REFERENCES

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William Platz is a lecturer in Drawing and Art Theory at the Queensland College of Art, Griffith University. An American-Australian artist, educator and writer, Platz is interested in pedagogies of drawing, life drawing and portraiture with an underlying focus on the studio transactions that occur between artists and models. This research brings theatrical and performative frameworks into alignment with conventional frameworks of skilfulness, material processes, and drawing artefacts.

Donald Welch is a senior lecturer in Design at Queensland College of Art, Griffith University. Specialising in visual communication design, he has been researching and teaching ways to enhance creative thinking for over a decade.