

the
uncertainty
principle



The Uncertainty Principle
Catalogue of the Twenty-fourth Faculty of Arts & Design Staff Art Exhibition
ANCA Gallery, Dickson, 29 September – 16 September 2018
Curator/Catalogue Designer: Caren Florance

Cover image: UK Frederick & Katie Hayne, *Flat Impressions*, 2018 (detail).
Clay, plants, paint.

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the uncertainty principle

The uncertainty principle says that we cannot measure the position (x) and the momentum (p) of a particle with absolute precision. The more accurately we know one of these values, the less accurately we know the other.

Werner Heisenberg

the uncertainty principle

This exhibition, presented by members of the University of Canberra's Faculty of Arts & Design, is inspired by Heisenberg's famous phrase that points to the fuzziness in the natural world, and the impossibility of knowing in any certain way what things are, and how they operate. While we respect the specialised understanding of this concept, grounded as it is in physics, we read it as a metaphor for art practice. Artists are, we suggest, always feeling their way into new works, often not certain about what they are doing or what it means. Nonetheless, we keep going, hoping to keep finding new ways to make, see and understand – however uncertain or how partial that seeing and understanding might be. We explore these concepts in a range of media: artist books, video and sound art, works on paper, and both sculptural and interactive media.

The exhibition has been developed by the Centre for Creative and Cultural Research in the Faculty of Arts & Design. It is one of the Centre's aims to encourage and develop creative practice in research. In the exhibition submission process, therefore, each artist was required to write both an artist statement and a research statement. These are included in this catalogue to provide a framework for understanding the dual identity of their works: as the product of both creative and research practice.

The 24th University of Canberra Faculty of Arts & Design Staff Exhibition

ANCA Gallery, 1 Rosevear Place, Dickson ACT, 29 August – 16 September 2018

Find past exhibition catalogues at <http://www.canberra.edu.au/research/faculty-research-centres/cccr/resources>

Hakim Abdul Rahim

Saskia Beudel

Anthony Eaton

Dianne Firth

Caren Florance

U.K. Frederick & Katie Hayne

Ross Gibson

Michael Jasper

Shane Strange

Jen Webb, Paul Munden,
Paul Hetherington & John White

Jen Webb

Short biographies

References

All measurements are h x w x d in cms

If there are no measurements, the dimensions are variable.

Hakim Abdul Rahim

thrust.your.nipple.into.the.ocean.just.one.

2018. Mixed media 3D assemblage, mostly organic + a little bit of ether

Artist statement

My work explores the intimate, complex, and entangled nature of the relationship between humans and nature, specifically those between humans and non-animal beings. How do we interact with specific aspects of nature and create new perspectives to understand our place in the world? How do we cross the vegetal/petrological divide or we stand on the margins never knowing what is on the other side?

Research statement

How do we encounter vegetal beings? As humankind encroaches more and more into nature, blurring the lines and boundaries that separate the two worlds, how do we interact with the otherness of vegetal beings that populate the boundaries of our existence. Drawing upon the works of Michael Marder, this work explores the philosophy of plants; questioning the existentiality of vegetal life and glimpsing to the vegetal soul.

This work explores the vegetal death of the Carrot, *Daucus carota subsp. Sativus*. A vegetal being that lived and died at the UC Community Garden. The Carrot sprouted, grew, flowered and set seeds while providing food, pleasure and shelter for many beings. As such, it is fitting at the end of Carrot's biological life, we gather and honor such a life well lived, and reflect upon the life and death of the botanical self.

Photo credit: the artist



Saskia Beudel

Into the Woods & Power Lines

2018. Digital prints. 78 x 60

Artist statement

'In August 1992, when the dog days were drawing to an end, I set off to walk the county of Suffolk, in the hope of dispelling the emptiness that takes hold of me whenever I have completed a long stint of work.' So begins WG Sebald's *The Rings of Saturn*, one of the most haunting books in a long lineage of literature sprung from a convergence of walking, thinking, encountering place, and the unpredictable workings of memory and association. Sebald's book is based upon a particular journey – 24 miles across East Anglia, from Brundall Station to Orford Ness.

But what forms of remembering and encountering spring from less programmatic and circumscribed walking journeys? From more incidental and everyday walking? It is uncertain during such walks whether some particular place might seize hold of the imagination to trigger those individual and cultural memories that 'lie slumbering within us for months and years, quietly proliferating, until they are woken by some trifle and in some strange way blind us to life' (Sebald, *The Rings of Saturn*). And yet it seems certain that, no matter how unpredictable, this process shall occur – again and again.

Research statement

Investigation into the relationship between walking, place, memory, and diverse knowledge systems is for me not so much a discrete research project. Instead, it is an enabling framework, methodology and practice that at different times has triggered and focused different research projects. Most recently, this has involved the idea of not only walking a place understood as some kind of discrete journey, but walking stitched into the idea of repeated visiting. This requires not just reflective and observational processes (as in nature writing traditions of old; Carson 1952; Killingsworth & Palmer 2000), but participation in and contribution to activities at a particular site. A recent example is my involvement in a citizen science climate change project, which requires nocturnal weekly visits to field sites to record frog calls, resulting in an essay 'Frogwatching: charting climate change's impact in the here and now' published in *The Conversation*.

Photo credit: the artist



Anthony Eaton

The writer is (occasionally) present

2018. Performance: type on paper. Typewriter, desk, chair, paper

Artist Statement

The reality of life for many professional writers in the contemporary publishing world is that much of their time is spent not in the act of writing, but in the performance of life as ‘a writer.’ Appearances at writer’s festivals, schools, guest lectures, the careful curating of social media profiles and blogs all make up a significant element of a ‘writing life’, and often comprise a significant proportion of the artist’s annual income. This work seeks to explore the liminal space between writing as performance, and writing as an intimate and animate act of creativity. By inviting the viewer of the artwork to step into, and perform, the act of being ‘a writer’ the piece will interrogate the degree to which all writing, no matter how planned, nevertheless stems from uncertainty.

Research Statement

Turner (1979) suggests that reflection (or reflexivity) – a notion intrinsically tied with the act of ‘reflective practice’ that is so entwined with creative writing – is not necessarily incompatible with acts of drama, despite the fact that the two ideas seem at first glance to be counterintuitive. He theorises that the unpredictability of liminal space and time feeds effectively into the creative process, and that public exploration of this unpredictable space is a fundamental element of cultural discourse;

“Essentially, public reflexivity takes the form of *performance*... public reflexivity is also concerned with what I have called ‘liminality’... liminality is full of potency and potentiality. It may also be full of experiment and play. There may be a play of ideas, a play of words, a play of symbols, a play of metaphors. In it, play’s the thing.” (1979: 465-466)

The Writer is (occasionally) Present seeks to explore this notion with specific reference to the ideas of presence and performativity demonstrated by Abramovic (2010) in her artwork *The Artist is Present*, and using the notion proposed by Duchamp that “the creative act is not performed by the artist alone...” (1973: 140) as a methodological framing device. By allowing both the artist and the viewer to position themselves in the liminal space of ‘performing writing’, this piece seeks to interrogate the degree to which the cultural role of ‘the writer’ is as much about performativity as about published output.

Photo credit: the artist

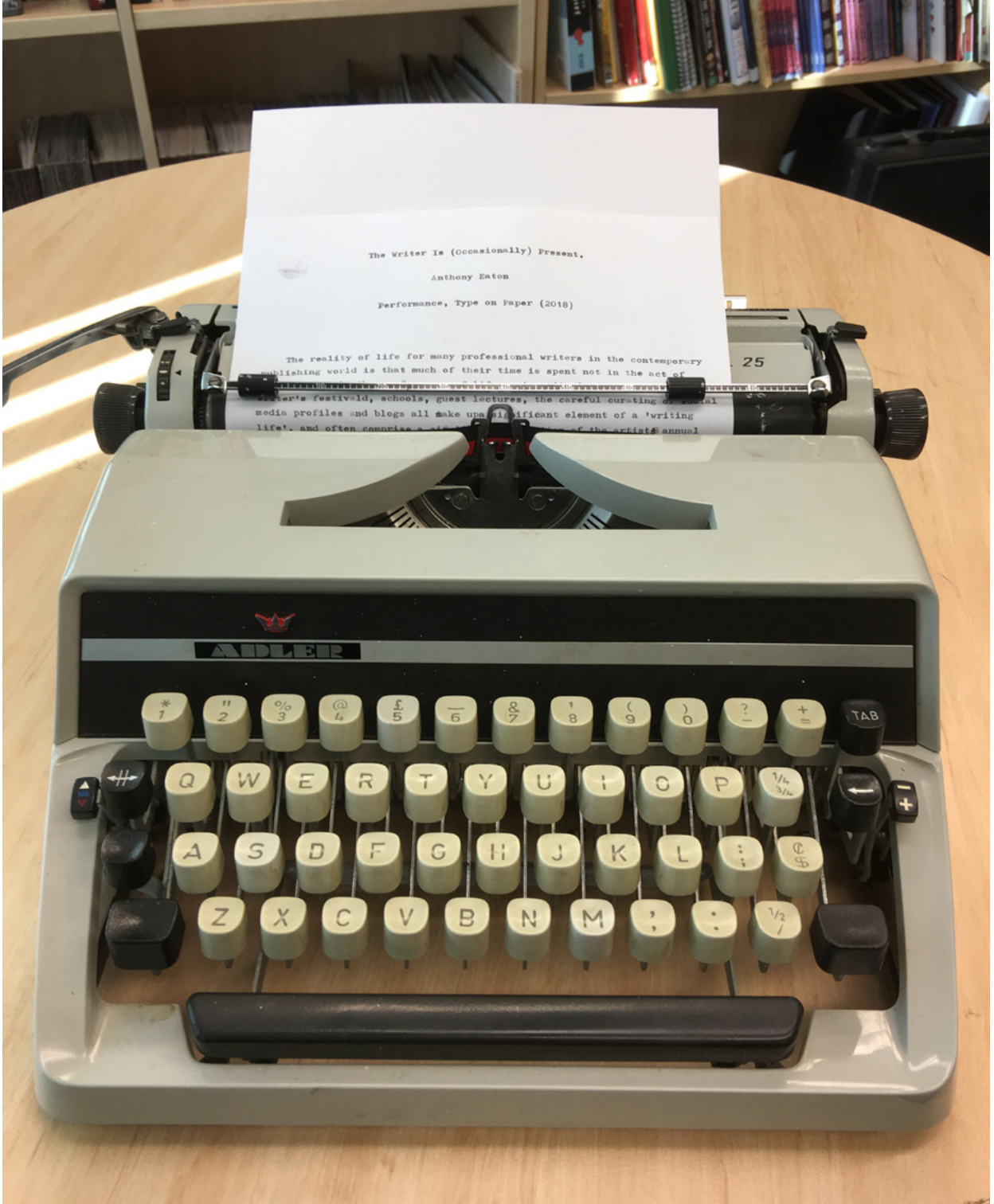
The Writer Is (Occasionally) Present.

Anthony Eaton

Performance, Type on Paper (2018)

The reality of life for many professional writers in the contemporary publishing world is that much of their time is spent not in the act of writing but in the act of promoting their work. At writers' festivals, schools, guest lectures, the careful curating of social media profiles and blogs all make up a significant element of a 'writing life', and often comprise a substantial part of the artist's annual

25



Dianne Firth

Erosion

2016. Textile (felt and thread); 100 x 40cm

Artist statement

I am a landscape architect as well as an artist. Landscape and environmental issues inform my creative work. Erosion was made in 2016 as a response to the environmental damage from storms on Sydney's northern beaches, particularly at Collaroy. Using base colours of black and orange to represent land and water I have developed an abstracted form to capture the dynamic nature of coastal erosion. The work is constructed of layers of felt that are stitched with lines to represent land contours.

Research statement

Australia's coastline is a diverse landscape. The coastal zone comprises rocky and sandy shorelines, dunes and coastal lakes. Over 50% is composed of sand and mud and it is shaped by complex interactions of waves, tides and currents. It is subject to dynamic change. Sometimes the coast migrates seawards, but other times it erodes landwards. This is a natural process that usually occurs over a long period of time. However, climate change, more frequent extreme storm events and rising sea levels are adding a level of unpredictability to these coastal processes.

Human settlement in Australia is predominantly along the coast and in New South Wales it is home to almost 85% of the population. As the population grows new urban settlements, industrial and commercial activity, tourism and recreation have brought pressure to develop on land that may be prone to erosion. In the past remedial coastal protection works such as seawalls and groynes have tried to solve the problems, but they have only moved it to other areas.

More recently federal, state and local government areas have focused on understanding historical coastline changes, collecting data, mapping habitats and ecosystem health, understanding processes, and undertaking hazard and risk assessment as a basis for developing better coastal management plans and land use planning. Their adequacy will only be tested following future extreme weather events.

Photo credit: the artist



Caren Florance

Released

2018. Wood veneer, Perspex, book. Object: 38 x 131 x 20; book: 14.8 x 10.5

Artists' Statement

Wood veneer is thinly-shaved and joined strips of tree, glued onto a surface – like a table-top – using extreme amounts of pressure. It is then usually coated with a skin of something clear and protective. If this skin is scratched or the veneer is damaged, the surface is compromised and moisture makes it stress and release.

My family's simple pine kitchen table was a prop for my brother's suicide. It was present that day, and I was absent. This is often the root of a relic's power. There are no definitive answers as to why he chose this action, and we often mull over the variables. I have kept the table with me for over 30 years. When it was irreparably damaged in a recent move, I tried to let go by exposing it to the elements and allowing it to decay; within a short time the top began to curl into itself and separated from the body of the table. I kept this top piece, because I realised that it was the element that actually mattered to me: the site of death. It is like a portable roadside memorial. The book contains ideas, research, uncertainties.

Research statement

The event that this table witnessed has shaped my life and textured my work. The table itself was a thing that held meaning for the family as a gathering place, and it has now transformed into another kind of thing by acts of releasing control. However, my 'final' act of release also reversed the gesture: I find I now have an thing that I cannot let go and which has intensified in meaning.

I use the word *thing* deliberately. I have been making work about translation for many years, and this show's theme prompted me to think about objects and *thing-ing*, the transforming of an object by a human relationship (Gaul, 2008). I have also thought about *grief and place* (Clark and Franzmann, 2006), and *nostalgia* (Stewart, 1993) when considering how to present this body of wood to a public gaze. All of these ideas, combined with statistics relevant to the time and circumstances of the event, have generated a printed meditation on the physical relic as talismanic companion and of the inability of anyone to have certainty about complex emotional matters.

Photo credit: Brenton McGeachie



U.K. Frederick & Katie Hayne

Flat Impressions

2018. Clay, plants, paint.

Artists' statement

Canberra's Northbourne Flats were built in the 1960s as public housing for government employees and their families. Since then, 'The Flats' have predominantly become home to people who needed affordable accommodation close to the city, including the elderly, students and refugees. It is expected the 20 blocks will soon be demolished and replaced with high-rise apartments for the wealthy. For Canberra commuters driving down Northbourne Avenue these buildings may have only been fleeting impressions but they were a persistent reminder of a democratic community that has retained a space for housing support on its main arterial road.

Research statement

Following from scholars such as Renfrew (2003), Schneider and Wright (2005), and Sansi (2015), Katie and Ursula seek to explore the potential of art-archaeology/art-anthropology approaches in their work, in an effort to make sense of the worlds we inhabit. This artwork relates particularly to their previous collaborations, *Love on the Rocks* and *Talking to Strangers* (2016), which also utilise fragments and found materials as a means of questioning how we value the fabric of our physical and cultural environment.

In *Flat Impressions* Katie and Ursula collected direct physical impressions of the exterior surfaces of the Northbourne Flats, as well as plant cuttings from the surrounding garden beds at the time that the final residents were being vacated. Their understanding of the site was informed by Katie's MPhil fieldwork at Northbourne Community Centre, where over a six-month period she regularly visited the Centre as a 'participant-observer' as well as sketching, photographing and conducting archival research. Ursula concurrently experimented with the materiality of surfaces and texture through clay and photography as part of her ARC DECRA Project (DE170101351), which explores creative practice as a mode of heritage engagement. The artists' interests come together in this work to draw attention to the overlooked aesthetics of the exposed river aggregate walls, and soon-to-be-lost localised ecologies. In their efforts to retrieve structural elements of a lived environment – what was a home – for a community of people, they suggest that we can only gain glimpses of what relocation actually means.

Special thanks to the Ceramics Workshop at the ANU School of Art + Design and Joanne Searle for their support of this project.

Photo credit: the artists



BLOCK 7

Ross Gibson

Muttering Ovoid

2018. Video projection (no sound).

Artist statement

Here is a scene that is full of strangeness. And here are utterances that simultaneously tame and goad that strangeness so that you can feel you know scene whilst never feeling finally certain about that.

Research statement

Movie sequences are inherently mysterious. Or more accurately, they have too many possible meanings. It's why silent movies quickly developed the need for inter-titles, to tie down a story within the profusion of possibilities unfurling on the screen. But what if 'profusion of possibilities' is what your movie is 'about'? How then could you develop a mode of writing that ties down SOME of the meanings bristling from the imagery whilst also keeping open an imaginative space for a productive ambiguity, keeping open a space that prompts the viewer to consider a range of thoughts and feelings that are feasible within the imagery, within a framework of uncertainty?

Photo credit: video still



somnolent

muttering

looming

Michael Jasper

On and around (the) El

2018. Table mounted piece: coloured acrylic, four colours, 38.7 x 22.5 x 22.8.

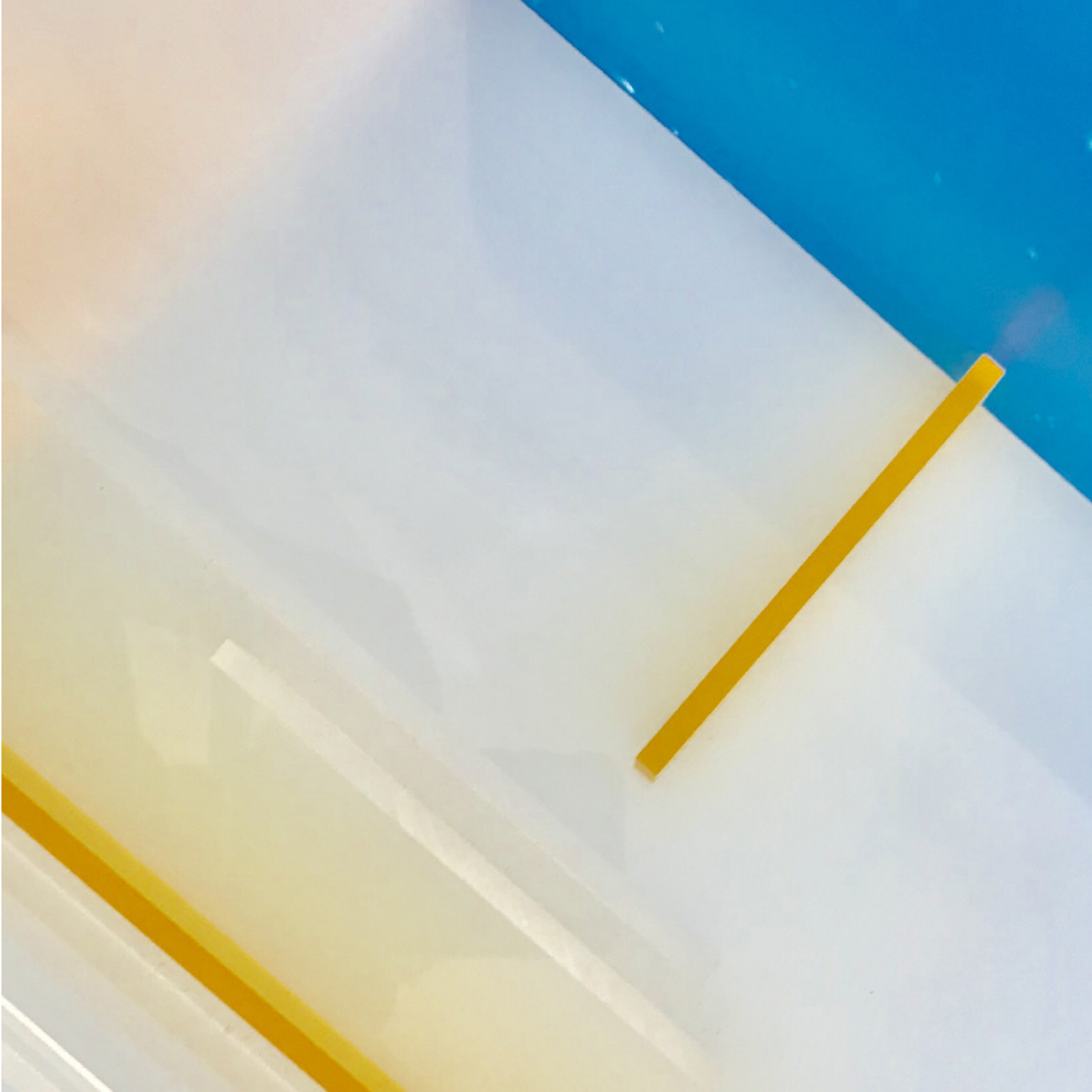
Research statement

This project inaugurates a multi year research project around the issues and problems revealed in modernist objective sculpture, including those of Anthony Caro, Ellsworth Kelly, and Donald Judd. The work picks up and continues strands of early twentieth century aesthetic investigations. One strand runs from the radial, pinwheel approach of DeStijl that voids the centre: van Doesburg and van Eesteren's counter-constructions exemplify this approach that empties or alternately fully charges the centre. Another strand engages layered planar space, denying frontality through an intensification of edges and corners in order to charge the periphery with forces in a manner best illustrated in axonometric or oblique views.

Three propositions organise the opening research, and suggest the theoretical, thematic, and methodological terms of reference of the project: first, the composition principles and spatial ideas rendered in neo-plasticist and objective painting have yet to be fully explored in sculpture; second, the concept and operation of El (L) figures delimit a portion of the conceptual profile of the space mode specific to modernist objective sculpture; third, the creation of theoretical plastic works contributes to investigating the problem.

In initial explorations, I study the creative latent potentials in modernist objective sculpture through studio-based plastic activity, making small-scaled sculptures as diagrams or theoretical models of specific aspects and issues associated with the larger study. In his analysis of the works of Anthony Caro, Michael Fried describes the sculptures with a set of terms that suggest in part the extent of ideas and formal relations at stake. These include: planarity; relation to the ground plane; obduracy; inside and outside; overhead and below; size and scale; literal, literalist, inert; non-situational; enclosure; edging. Each of these aspects could generate a series of works as a demonstration of the characteristics of a modernist plastic practice. Part of this larger research effort, *On and Around (the) El* considers the potentials contained in El (L) figures, both in 2D and 3D applications and with four colours. Actual realised and released form conditions and space effects are uncertain as consistent with the exhibition title and theme.

Photo credit: the artist



Shane Strange

The end of laughter

2017. Images and letterpress on archival paper. 8 images, each 42 x 30.

Artist statement

These images are uncertain. They were taken at a defense base – Fort Macleod in Alberta, Canada – in the late 1940s. Though they show specific people, places, friendships and community, each of the 54 photographs in the collection are captioned as follows:

*The donor of the photos purchased them at a garage sale in Pincher Creek. Who are these people?
What are they doing? Who were the photographers? What are these places and buildings?*

In a sense, they are memorials to forgetting: a reminder that, with all our capacity to record and archive the fleeting moment, we may yet be unanchored, forgotten, lost.

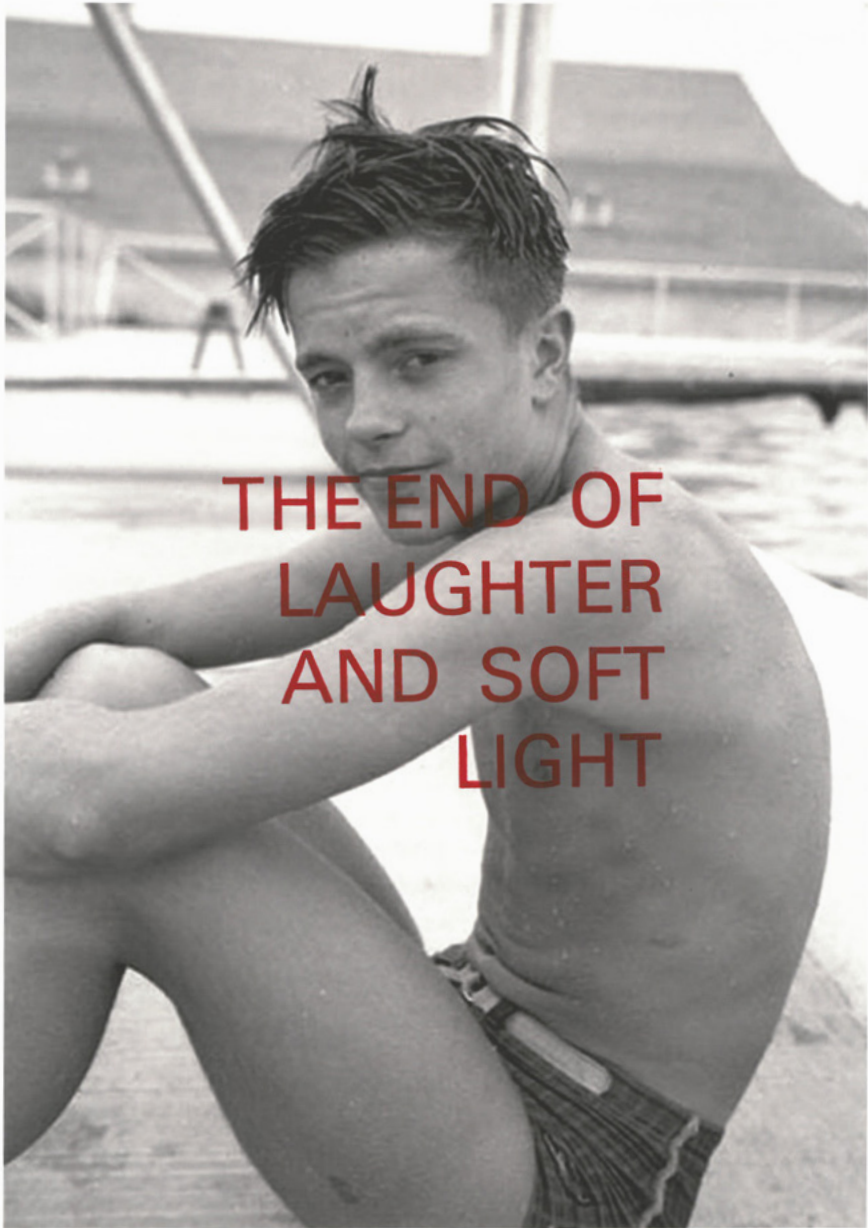
Overlaying the images are song lyrics taken from the final moments of the Doors' (in)famous 1967 song 'The End'. When I was around the same age as many of the uncertain, hopeful young people in these images – I began listening to the Doors with a sense of fear and foreboding that mirrored my own perception of the life I saw ahead of me. 'The End' came down the wire as if transmitted through lost faces, and broken moments. It scared me that I liked it so. This phrase, taken from the song, cycles around my head from time to time, seemingly at random moments, as perhaps song lyrics, or poetry are meant to. How do these things persist? How do these images persist? What do they say? What do they leave behind?

Research statement

This work is a continuation of my interest in combining found images and text to create 'new' versions of existing things, where the final works can be said to exceed its parts and yet haunt its origins. John Robert Colombo, suggests found art has:

[a]n... ability to make us respond aesthetically to the universe around us, not just to those separate parts of the world called works of art. It is possible to act as if the universe itself were an immense piece of art, a collage perhaps (Colombo n.d.).

Here I am combining found images with remembered fragments of song lyric. These are not whole song lyrics, and more than 'remembered song lyrics' but phrases or moments arising in my memory, sometimes over decades, unbidden. In this work I am contrasting the persistence of these kinds of memory to the sense of loss that these historically unanchored images convey. In this sense I am contrasting an older tradition of cultural memory (the oral, the lyric) with newer forms of memory allowed by technology (the photograph, the archive).



THE END OF
LAUGHTER
AND SOFT
LIGHT

Jen Webb, Paul Hetherington, Paul Munden and John White

The ontology of pain

2018. Wall hanging: plastic medicine containers; poems and poetic phrases, overall size 100 x 100 x 5

Artists' statement

Pain is the opposite of uncertainty: every living being is certain to suffer pain, in various forms and to various degrees, simply as an effect of being alive. But how to express pain, or understand its effects on our individual sense of self, and connection to others, is far less certain. Each of drug containers that make up the wall hanging contain two very powerful doses of a prophylactic designed specifically for cluster headaches. On a bad day, a sufferer might use four or five doses, so the containers in this wall hanging comprise about a month's worth of pain relief. Cluster headaches, like many conditions that cause unendurable pain, have only limited etiology, and their origin, treatment and explosive presence in the self are always uncertain. This installation draws on personal experiences and observations in its attempt to articulate pain, and render it sayable.

Research statement

Despite the premise that the human body is a cultural, discursive construct (Hayles 1993), bodies seem to have their own logic, one that extends well beyond the limits of discourse or language, beyond temporal or cultural contexts. Pain is a physical condition that fully reminds humans that they are flesh, and not merely discourse, not least because pain 'resists objectification in language' (Scarry 1985): as the literature demonstrates, it cannot be adequately expressed or represented in words. This creative experiment engages pain in both its physical reality and its discursive uncertainty (Cohen 2000). The objects exhibited in the installation are attempts to articulate pain through the medium of affect, engendered by the images, phrases and textual experiences combined in this work.

Photo credit: the artists



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AUST R 69076



Jen Webb

Taking care of the pennies

2018. Pennies, broken glass. Dimensions variable.

Artists' statement

Those who survived the Great Depression must, I would guess, never have felt entirely secure in the world. The coins in this work were provided by Trish Fletcher; they are fragments of a long life, carefully collated, carefully categorised by her aunt, school teacher Una Nolan, who completed the organisation of this small change after her retirement. This collection of coins captured my attention because the collector, the survivor of a hard century, chose to collate penny pieces: arguably the least valuable of liquid assets. Surely she did not see these as her bulwark against future disaster. For me therefore the collection operates as a powerful statement of refusal to be caught within the terminal logic of economic triumph. My intervention has been to make them visible, in their categories, protected by the domes of broken wine glasses. Art has consistently been deployed as a tool to reflect on social events and personal experiences, and in this work I attempt to honour the efforts of an elderly lady I never met to sort out the detritus in her life, and draw around her devices directed toward consolation.

Research statement

For Pierre-Michel Menger, uncertainty is both 'the seat of creative activity' and that which 'characterizes the gap between efforts invested and the goal to be reached' (2014: 117, 118). The literature observes that uncertainty avoidance is included in the list of important contributors to business stability (Kaufman & Sternberg 2010), but also stifles innovation. The unknown collector of the 'assets' exhibited in this installation exemplifies, for me, all those creative workers who can gather considerable cultural and social capital, and contribute richly to the bottom line of their nations, but who live in precarity (Lahire 2010). The status of creative careers, and the ability of artists to make a living from their work, is an enduring problem in Australia and elsewhere, and for academics whose job it is to teach new artists, it is a continuing ethical and intellectual issue. This installation is a fragment of my ongoing research into the uncertainty of artistic careers and the precarity of our sector.

Photo credit: the artist



short biographies

A wearer of many cardigans, **Hakim Abdul Rahim** is a conservator, curator, gardener, botanist, crafter, professional road sign reader and very occasionally, a nuisance.

Saskia Beudel's books include *Borrowed Eyes* (Picador 2002), *A Country in Mind: Memoir with Landscape* (UWAP 2013) and *Curating Sydney: Imagining the City's Future* (with Jill Bennett UNSWP 2014). Her research interests encompass history of science, environmental writing, life writing, narrative nonfiction, environmental humanities, place studies and contemporary art.

Anthony Eaton has been writing for children, young adults, and adults since the late 1990s. He is Associate Professor of Creative Writing at the University of Canberra where he researches the changing nature of young adult fiction in Australia and the lived experience of creative practitioners at the nexus of creative and academic work. He is editor of the journal *Papers: Explorations into Children's Literature*, and president of the Australasian Children's Literature Association for Research (ACLAR).

Dianne Firth OAM is Adjunct Associate Professor at the University of Canberra. Australia's landscapes and heritage are the focus of her research, publication and lecturing and many ideas from this research provide inspiration for her art. Her creative textile works are held in public galleries in Australia and the USA.

Caren Florance is a 2018 UC CCCR Donald Horne Creative & Cultural Fellow and was Critic in Residence for ANCA for the first half of 2018. She has recently completed her creative Phd with the CCCR, titled *Collaborative Materiality: Poetry, poets, letterpress, artist books*. At the moment she is teaching a class at the ANU School of Art + Design, and working a number of small research and arts-related jobs, but is uncertain about what will happen next. www.carenflorance.com

UK Frederick is an artist based in Canberra and an ARC Discovery Early Career Researcher at the ANU. She is currently undertaking a three-year interdisciplinary project examining the relationships between creative art practice, contemporary archaeology and heritage.

Ross Gibson is Centenary Professor in Creative & Cultural Research at the University of Canberra.

Katie Hayne is a research development officer at the University of Canberra and is currently studying a Masters of Philosophy (Painting) at the ANU School of Art & Design. Her broad creative practice and research interests include 'the everyday', local social issues and visual anthropology.

Paul Hetherington has published thirteen full-length collections of poetry and won the 2014 Western Australian Premier's Book Awards (poetry). He is Professor of Writing in the Faculty of Arts and Design at the University of Canberra and head of the International Poetry Studies Institute (IPSI).

Michael Jasper is an architect, educator, and scholar based in Australia. He directs the Master of Architecture course at the University of Canberra where he also leads the major projects studio and advanced architectural analysis units. He was Visiting Scholar (2015) at the Columbia University Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation and is the author of *Architectural Aesthetic Speculations* and *Deleuze on Art*.

Paul Munden was a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the University of Canberra until mid 2018. He has published five collections of poetry, most recently *Chromatic* (UWAP, 2017). He is co-editor with Nessa O'Mahony of *Metamorphic: 21st century poets respond to Ovid* (Recent Work Press, 2017).

Shane Strange is a teaching fellow and doctoral candidate in Creative Writing at the University of Canberra. He tutors and lectures in Writing and Literary Studies. He is also a publisher and editor at Recent Work Press, a small poetry press based in Canberra, Australia.

Jen Webb is director of the Centre for Creative and Cultural Research at the University of Canberra, and a poet who works in prose poetry and material poetics. Recent publications include *Watching the World* (with Paul Hetherington 2015), *Stolen Stories, Borrowed Lines* (2015), and *Sentences from the Archive* (2016).

John White worked for many years in cultural institutions in Victoria and Canberra, including a lot of frontline exhibition work, which still comes in handy. As a curator, even as he was taking the treatment, he appreciated the neat functionality of those little blue boxes.

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