THE DUALISM OF DISORDER

The works of Keith Deverell 2004–2007 curated by Richard E. Pike
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‘A FINISHED WORK IS EXACTLY THAT, REQUIRES RESURRECTION.’

John Cage
FORWARD BY KEITH DEVERELL.
forms of art was growing. I had recently borne witness to works by Doug Aitkin, Bruce Nauman, and other installation artists. Within these works I could see a semblance of my desires as a designer. The works that I had witnessed situated conversation and engagement differently from the work that I was creating as a practising designer. These works also resonated with personal arts projects I had initiated to explore the recursive nature of time, space, and encounter. Through experiencing the works of Doug Aitken, Bruce Nauman, and others a desire developed to find alternate visual languages and modes of communication. Languages and communication models that deviated from the finished forms and absolute messages of corporate communication, mainstream media and consumerist marketing materials. I was particularly interested in the idea of a sensory language, and the introspective capacities of the outcomes of such a language. At the time I had an idea that ‘time’ would play a crucial role in the design outcome of the future. However, I had little understanding of how this would manifest.
or even what I understood by time and its role in designed outcomes. ¶ In retrospect I was also naive as to the potential makeup of a sensory language. I believed it would come through a multitude of media, sound, light, text, moving image etc. What I failed to understand, or did not give adequate thought to, was the importance of the activity and behaviours of people interacting with the work. I was still caught with the idea of a passive audience. An audience that is spoken to through the artefact of a design process. This I believe was a penchant left over from working within the commercial world of graphic design. Midway through my candidature I realised that my desire for design outcomes was not to deliver a message, rather to provide a space or a mode of communication, expression and exploration. ¶ The outcome of this study has been two-fold. At the fore is the development of an arts practice that informs a design practice, and visa versa. Underlying these is a practice of ‘system creation’ through machinery and code. This has developed into a hybrid design practice with spatial and aesthetic concerns around places of interaction. Through this unification of practice I have come to better understand the nature of my design outcomes. The outcomes, or artefacts are not described in terms of being finished and solid. Instead they are located within the creation, experience, and encounter of objects, and are thus ephemeral and performative in nature. ¶ The following conversation entitled ‘Locating disorder’ and the subsequent exhibition of works disclose the need for contrary positions and statements within spatial design. The exhibition and essay place ‘the other’ as a mode of creating flux. That through flux we can move from positions of stability to instability. Being stable and unstable simultaneously creates places of location and dislocation respectively. It is through being located and dislocated at the same time that we engage with the world around us and the world within. We encounter a world of experience that becomes a meld of our cognitive make-up and the cognitive make-up of others. Through this dualistic realm of engagement we dethrone the singular and the pure. We prompt the collective.
THE WORKS PRESENTED IN THIS DOCUMENT WERE CREATED AS PART OF A MASTER OF DESIGN BY RESEARCH AT RMIT UNIVERSITY. THIS RESEARCH WAS CONDUCTED THROUGH A PRACTICE-LED-RESEARCH METHODOLOGY. PRACTICE-LED RESEARCH INVOLVES A PROCESS WHEREBY THROUGH REFLECTION ON PRACTICE WE REVEAL THE KNOWLEDGE THAT WE HAVE THROUGH MAKING.

By developing a practice of reflection we are able to identify procedures and behaviours that were previously existing, but unknown. This process enables the review and understanding of our practice and our design outcomes, both positive and negative. Through identifying procedures and behaviours that lead to design outcomes and their success, we are able to engage in periods of critique with peers. We are also able to draw upon knowledge from outside of our field of practice, in my case Phenomenology, Installation Art, and New Media Theory. Through this we are able to develop a languages of practice.

Developing a language of practice enables us to further communicate with people directly related to our field of design and with people from other design related fields. Through inter-disciplinary communication with collaborators in the fields of fashion, architecture, music, and video, we find that we are often confronted with similar design problems, and that knowledge and solutions can be applied to these problems from these other disciplines.

The development of critical and reflective processes within my practice has also enable me to better communicate the complexities of design problems and outcomes to non-design audiences.

This form of research/practice is an exploration of Chris Argyris’ and Donald Schön’s, work on Double Loop Learning. A process of learning through reflection on our actions in order to understand the outcomes generated through them. This results in multiple loops of deepening awareness. We can described this process of reflection in terms of recursion. Recursion is the process of calling a function from within itself once a property has been met or found. This ‘loop’ enables the traversing of unknown data within a coding environment. This data, that is unknown, is unknown with a framework. This framework enables us to assume and search for these unknown properties.

The nature of the loop within a recursive function is progressive as it builds upon what it finds. This is where we find the parallel within reflective based practice. As stated before we take what we find through reflection back into the work. The practice, or the questions that the practice is focused on, provides the framework for discovery. We build on practice through this progressive or generative loop of doing, reflecting, and doing.

Through the process of communication and reflection we are able to critically engage with the actions that we have instigated to understand the problems that we are trying to solve. Periods of communication and reflection enable periods of objectivity. Through dissemination of findings we place our thoughts within a critical sphere. The work, the actions of practice and the outcomes of practice (artefacts in the case of design) stand as evidence of process. They enable the locating of a discussion around a particular activity.

The act of making gives room for the subjective, particularly important within creative process. The subjective is where the imagination comes in, or the unknown. It is the place of the ‘hunch’. An argument for using this form of methodology is that in purely objective research we outline what it is we want to find. It is based on rational assumptions of what ‘is’.
Reflective based research and research through practice provides space for the subjective and the irrational. Within the subjective we ask about the things that we can imagine, things we may not be able to rationally described. That is, until we have made and reflected. Rosenberg describes this process as being a poetic process. ‘The poetic process works in paralleling the rational and the irrational.’

In his paper ‘The Reservoir’ : Towards a Poetic Model of Research in Design, Rosenberg uses the metaphor of land and water as a way of describing these acts. On land he says ‘the element lies outside the person digging or building and is very much controlled by them.’ The ocean on the other hand immerses the person and moves them in ways they do not control. The loss of control enables the position of discovery outside of the realm of the rational. ‘And as such it is more a finding than a seeking...’

In recursion we do find problems. Recursion can go on forever through poor definition. In a loop that is poorly defined we can find an infinitum, that is until the program crashes. If we cannot get the data out of the loop, we can then not break the loop. Indeed the question of where to break the loop is a question that defines the success of the function.

This is also the case with practice-led research. To engage with practice-led research is to swim in the deep blue sea. To avoid infinitum we need periods upon the land. How we do this is unique for each practitioner engaged in this form of research methodology. Personally I feel I bathed with the fishes more so than I walked upon land.

However, the remainder of this section maps out my travels ‘on land’ and ‘in sea’, and my attempts to root my research in an objective discussion.

The Works

Through this process I have created a body of work comprising of twenty projects. This excludes the vast number of hours of video produced in real-time performance spaces. These performances are mainly undocumented, but did serve as reactive laboratories. These laboratories positioned me in close proximity to a participatory audience, and numerous collaborators.

By creating this work I have been able to explore the roles and outcomes of my design process in relation to designing spaces of participation for generating poetic representations of our worlds. The projects have spanned various design disciplines (audio-visual performance, graphic design, fashion exhibition, programming, and system architecture) and media. Through this variance of practice I have gained a detailed understanding of ‘meta’ issues of designing for interaction and participation. As well as creating works that reveal a personal reflection upon the world, what I term poetic interpretations.

The Reading

Underpinning these works has been a substantial body of text. These texts include the fields of phenomenology, installation art, video art, and new media theory. These texts have provided a theoretical framework for understanding and describing the work. They have helped to provide a language from where I can explore the work, and a language from where I can describe the work and the processes involved. They help to build the bridges needed to elucidate the things we know through doing.

Reading within these fields has expanded my design practice by extending me beyond the limitations of my field (graphic design). Through this I have developed a deeper level of design thinking within my outcomes.
and my processes. This has moved the design practice away from purely material outcomes. This move away from the material sees the practice engaged with the ethical and social implications of design and the politic involved in making and designing space.

In reading within the field of phenomenology through texts by Merleau Ponty, Martin Heidigger, Michel de Certeau I have been able to move my design thinking past the idea of finished and totalised works. By this I mean that each our ours world, and the way in which we understand that world is built through moments of experience. That our past encounters or perceptions of these experiences are built into the current interaction that we are having. Through this we draw conclusions of the encounter that affect the reading of the encounter.

By reading texts concerned with new media theory and practice I have become aware of a practice that I am becoming concerned with, the mapping and locating of data objects. Through new media we are witnessing the growth of abstracted spaces, new spaces of habitation, and data storage. These ‘virtual’ spaces are becoming as real as the world we touch. Through this we see a shift in our perception of the world and the worlds that we encounter and interact with.

The third area of reference, video and installation art, was undertaken to expand my knowledge of these disciplines, and explore their relevance to my practice. Of particular interest is the field of Installation Art where we find work centred around the creation of spaces, with outcomes defined through our sensory perception of the encounter. These works often use techniques of immersion in displacing the sensory experience of the audience. In both video art and installation art we also discover an arts practice that has a high degree of design. These disciplines blur the boundary between what is perceived as a design process and that which is an arts practice.

Frame of Reference

To understand the work, its position, and relevance to the Masters, I have created Diagram 1. This diagram plots each project in relation to a number of axes. These axes are art/design, participation/audience, and ephemeral/tangible. The diagram is a 3d representation that has been presented via two connected, 2d planes. On one plane we are plotting the tangible and ephemeral nature of the artefacts generated. On the other plane we are plotting process and engagement, design/art and audience/participation respectively.

Design vs. Art

It is important to understand the relationships between art and design that have been explored through the works. I have stated in the forward that I have created a design practice and an arts practice that are mutually influential.

Firstly the diagram demonstrates that it is hard to clearly define a project as art or design. Instead we find a spectrum whereby a project can be placed closer to design or art. By positioning a project closer to design I am describing the work in terms of having a function. Projects that are concerned with the creation of systems and structures for interaction are closer to design. These systems and structures, such as databases and maps, mediate interaction and communication. However the difference between now and the time before this candidature is the change in focus of these systems. These systems are now focused on collaboration that provide frameworks and spaces for alternate views; an array of voice.

It is here that we find the ridge that joins my artwork and my design outcomes. Through mediation of interaction and communication with collaborative systems we find can alternative outcomes, collaborative systems are experiential frameworks where individuals and technologies interact and collaborate to generate and regenerate their environment.
It is in the above reference that I locate my arts practice, a practice that is concerned with poetics. In particular, poetic exploration and enquiry into the world that we live. Through the explorations and enquiries we “generate” and “egenerate” environments. The arts practice then is particularly focused around the personal, be it emotion, expression, or interpretation. I engage in art because I value the position that it can afford for positioning us to re-look or to look again: “...perhaps the art of making art is to release the global in the particular.”

Victor Shklovsky, a Russian Formalist, uses a more poetic framework to describe this idea of removing the familiar (or global) from an object: “The purpose of art is to impart the sensation of things as they are perceived and not as they are known. The technique of art is to make objects ‘unfamiliar’, to make forms difficult, to increase the difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged. Art is a way of experiencing the artfulness of an object; the object is not important.” (Shklovsky, “Art as Technique”, 12)

What is not represented in this diagram is the learning around the processes that I engage in when I work. In the same light that I have positioned the intentions of projects as being art or design, I can do the same for methods of working. On one level I engage in a design approach to solve questions of functionality. This leads to the creation of architectures and systems—such as audio visual systems and online environments. On another level, the art, is the sight of eye and touch of hand applied through the making process. This is where personal sensibilities come into play. These sensibilities place warmth and humanity within design outcomes. Through this approach to work I can say that I am an ‘artily designer’ and ‘designerly artist’.

In conclusion, what this shows is that my practice is both an arts practice and a design practice. My arts practice is centred around poetic visualisa-
tions of expression and interpretation, with the design practice focused on systems, architectures, and structures for interaction. The design practice then creates the platform for the arts practice to emerge. In turn the arts practice pushes the boundary of visualisation and experience within my design practice.

The other conclusion to draw, is that having a art/design practice, my practice is located within a hybrid place. Having an arts practice does not mean that it desires works to be placed in galleries, but it does desire poetic outcomes. It also means that a design practice can be involved in projects within the realm of art.

Participation vs. Audience

The need for establishing a definition for participation and audience has arisen due to the split focus of my work. To ask if a project is focused on audience or participation is to ask about the nature of activity around the work; the way people interact.

Firstly I would like to state that in ‘audience’ we have passive participation. I would be liable to considerable hypocrisy if I were to say that as an audience we do not conclude the thing we are watching. My differentiation between audience and participation is the form of activity or behaviour geared around the work.

In some respects we can explain participation as being actively mobile within a project’s outcome. That people involved in the work participate in creating the ‘physical’ artefact. Through the actions of people the parameters of the project are directly altered.

Whereas works positioned for ‘audience’ have outcomes that can’t be physically changed through people’s behaviours. These works provide a ‘finished’ representation of something. They are presented in such a way that people can look, watch, read and listen, but they cannot change the physical form or content of the work.

We need to acknowledge here that by positioning design outcomes in this manor, we may have periods of miss-communication. In fact miss-communication within these design outcomes can be perceived as a good outcome. By acknowledging this idea of miss-communication we are in effect letting go of communication control, and placing communication within the realm of conversation and discussion.

What is apparent is that design projects can be focused on audience and participation, as can art projects. For instance **fashion city** was a design project that invited participation. We designed and built a system for submitting images to the **fashion city image stream**, and a process for scripting sequences to control their presentation on screen.

In contrast, the **noble rot** signage and information graphics produced for the exhibition had an audience focus. These graphic artefacts were positioned to be a source of information as people viewed the exhibition. In one we have a project whereby people directly affected the artefact. In the other, we generated a number of artefacts that could not be affected by other people, they served as guides and information resources.

Many of my arts projects have outcomes that are presented for viewing on projected screens, these projects are not physically changed by people outside of the performance. They are then audience based works. However, an arts project can be directly affected by people. As part of **fashion city** we created poetic walks that I would argue are art works that required people to participate within them. The participation and the artefact of these art works were the journeys that people had within the city.
The dualism of disorder

The distinction between being ‘audience’ and ‘participatory’ is complex and fuzzy. When viewing the chart we can see that a number of the projects sit near the middle of the axis. The learning from this exploration of audience vs. participant is that when designing for interaction we need to understand the behaviours of people within the design. If we design for participation when we should have been designing for audience problems will arise. The behaviours established through the design will conflict with the needs of the people interacting or the desire of the design outcomes.

This need for understanding behaviours has always been a given within my work, but a clear understanding and description has not. The shift in my practice is that I now have a spectrum by which I can position the interactive intention of design and art outcomes.

Ephemeral vs. Tangible

In reading within the field of phenomenology through texts by Merleau Ponty, Martin Heidigger, Michel de Certeau I have been able to move my design thinking past the idea of finished and totalised works. By this I mean that each person’s world, and the way in which we understand our world, is built through moments of experience. Our past encounters or perceptions are built into the current interactions that we are having. Through this action we draw conclusions of the encounter that affect the reading of the encounter. This process removes the objectivity so often regarded as being ‘the world’ to a far more subjective interpretative space, a world built through our perceptions and encounters.

In positioning projects as ephemeral I am saying that they only live for a period. They are products of a situation; they are time based and so governed by vectors of movement. The hours of video that I have projected through audio visual performance is most defiantly ephemeral.

The scenes crafted are only available in the brief moments that they exist. Put simply a tangible artefact has materiality whilst a ephemeral artefact exists only in its time of existence.

More than ever we are interfacing with spaces that are conceptually invisible, housed within networked environments. In building and describing these spaces we need to reconsidered the world around us and our interactions with it. Mark Federman claims the ephemerality of artefacts is also created in relation to these networked modes of communication: Under today’s conditions of instantaneous, multi-way communication, our experiences and perceptions of time and space differences change. The cultural artefacts that emerge from our culture are ephemeral in nature—they exist precisely in the present, and can only be experienced, creating a narrative by which we are telling our stories to ourselves.

Can we claim that the coming together of people, places, music, and video creates an artefact in its own right? During such periods of experience we hold together a tangible mode of expression. Through reflection on audio visual performances I have witnessed, and performed in, I have begun to describe these periods of expression as artefacts. In positioning situation as artefact, I am saying that they exist and that they exist within a time structure. In our account of them, the history is held in the memories of the individuals who were there. This means the descriptions will change. They will have some form of solid basis—the collective render—but the details will change. By positioning the account as ephemeral, we are recognising the potential for multiple outcomes or artefacts, and as Federeman said: “telling our stories to ourselves.”

The period where Derren, Corey and I explored the three spaces for BIKE.TRAIN.BRICK could also be explained as ephemeral. We did bring back material evidence of our journey, audio and visual recordings; however this material has the potential for multiple constructions, and in this way is ephemeral.
This brings into question the materiality of collections and database. Are they material, and thus tangible? Or is their materiality describe through our interaction with them? Are the collected video clips ephemeral in that they do not exist until they are played? Or through play, do we give them a materiality in that we can, through sensory perception, touch them?

We can argue that all work is completed and manipulated by the viewer. This role of the viewer in completing works of art, design, literature etc., is reasonably established as a given. Roland Barthes argued in The Death of The Author, that; there is no other time than that of the enunciation and every text is eternally written here and now. The shift or change in practice that has developed with a deeper understanding of the role of the viewer, is that I now centre my work around this role. I intend from the outset of each project for the viewer to be apart of it, to draw a final conclusion. Through this, my practice has become centred around the creation of spaces of dialogue, interaction, and expression, rather than a practice that represents a sole perspective through the design of systems that broadcasting a single voice.

Designing for Disaster.

The final diagrams [dia.2, dia.3] for discussion present the theoretical understandings of the work. Here we attribute the core themes of the study; order and disorder. In the first diagram ‘Two states of order’ we find the stable and the familiar housed within order. Through these attributes we can argue that order is a position of strength. Things are placed in such a way that we can easily account for them. In the diagram we see that order is presented as a field of dots where each dot given its own place and location.
Possibility is a property that Merleau Ponty attributes to his description of space. That space is the means where by the position of things become possible. In reference to order and disorder we can observe that an order is latent. Disorder is the passage of someone or something moving through or drawing from order. In order we find organisation, the positioning and description of data.

In disorder these dots move and shift, making or taking the space between them. In this we find a sense of instability. Instability gives us activity and movement. The patterns that emerge are unfamiliar. Through this we can argue that disorder is a state of weakness. Weakness in terms that it’s a place of the ordinary, the using and creating of space for our own needs, the other. Certeau defines this as tactic: ‘The space of a tactic is the space of the other. ... a tactic is an art of the weak’.

In this diagram disorder is not presented as a chaotic array of dots, the dots do hold a pattern. This has been represented because of disorder’s relation to order, they are the dualistic other of each. We can not achieve disorder without order and the dualism of order is concerned with the nature of orders in creating disorders. We can establish the stable from where we can create the unstable.

The second diagram brings light to this phenomena. The key to this phenomena, which ‘creating disorder’ reveals, is that we need at least two orders coming together to create a disorder. That it is through the collision of two or more things that enable the weakness to emerge. This weakness then is a disruption or redistribution of selected orders.

Through this we can argue that disorder is a plurality, it combines a number of differences. Drawing on descriptions of space and place by Merleau Ponty and de Certeau, we can describe disorder as the creation of space. Space then is an place of activity, where by things move into new positions. Thus space is composed of intersections of mobile elements.
can happen due to the singularity of order, in order all things are in a single location distributed and described by the things they sit next to. This drawing on de Certeau’s work positions order as place.

In conclusion the Dualism of Order has revealed the need of ‘the other’ in design. Design can create both space and place, order and disorder. Through design we can create the structures for participation that enable a position of the weak from which the personal and the subjective can be explored. By creating space for exploration we find alternate representations of our world and society, a world that dissolves the myth of truth set through the acquisition of power. This enables us to re-engage and re-discover ours and other’s worlds.

{ FOOTNOTES }

LOCATING DISORDER: AN INTERVIEW
WITH KEITH DEVERELL.

(A creative process—a navigation through Keith Deverell’s Research Masters)

by Richard E. Pike, 8 April 2007
RP: IN ORDER TO WRITE THIS INTRODUCTION TO YOUR WORK, I WANT TO INTERVIEW YOU AND EXPLORE THE WORK TO ENSURE I UNDERSTAND THE BASIC PREMISE FOR YOUR RESEARCH AND THE REFERENCES YOU FOUND KEY IN DEVELOPING THOSE THEMES…

RP: What are the intentions of your work?

KD: Through the works that I create, spaces are made that are geared around the way in which people interact. The intent is not to offer any form of absolute message or any particular viewpoint. It’s rather that people who are members of an audience or are participants play an important role in the outcome of the work.

RP: Why are you interested in people participating in your works?

KD: I suppose I am interested in discussion and dialogue rather than message. As a commercial graphic designer I believe we’re too often involved in making communication that is linear or one-way—a top down model, where the designer is the vessel used to tell the audience what to think. It’s like, well, wouldn’t it be nice if we provided return address envelopes instead?

RP: So is it fair that I say that engagement lies at the heart of your works?

KD: That’s right. But what I am interested in is making incomplete artefacts. That my work is never finished. That it’s only through the experience of the people watching or participating that the work is completed. What this enables is the idea of multiple outcomes and interpretations. It circumnavigates the message.

RP: So how would that finished work represent itself?

KD: That’s really interesting, actually. Well, sometimes there is a finished product or artefact (for example the THE NOBLE ROT BOOK [ sec4:80 ]) and sometimes there is only an ephemeral artefact constrained by the time-space of engagement. And another possibility is that a work is continually made and unmade. That it’s finished for each person that encounters it. Each time a work is encountered it is unmade, ready to be remade by a new encounter. Whereas traditionally people see the artefact as the outcome of the process; for me it’s the experience of the work that is important.

RP: So your work as a designer is only the beginning of the story?

KD: That’s right, it’s a trigger or a place of departure. Yes, in a departure we have a place, a location to start a journey. Through the point of departure we describe the potential for the journey and give place for an end. We locate the journey. But when designing departures we are not setting the route in stone, nor are we writing the conclusion.

So when we make for participation we engage in a practice of systems. These systems provide frameworks whereby people can act or create. These could be looked at in terms of participatory or even performative spaces.

RP: Basically, you’re not interested in a one-way conversation

KD: Yes, and also that through participating we may go on an external or internal journey.
The title for the exhibition is Dualism of Order. What do you mean by dualism of order?

Duality—I don’t believe that anything is one or the other. That you... that through making the familiar unfamiliar we can move from a position of order to one of disorder and back again. This movement between order and disorder provides spaces of engagement or re-engagement with the world around.

What do you mean by order?

Order defines our world, it provides us with patterns and images that we use to inform and direct our lives. Order gives things description, it locates them in relation to others. Order makes our world seem familiar, it enables direction and passage. Through the rules and structures of order routes are described and constructed. An example of an established order is the layout of the city and the way in which people tend to move through it.

But in order we also find the potential for complacency. Through familiarity we gradually become less aware of our surrounds. Our journeys within these familiar surrounds become tedious and repetitive. Through this tedium our desires for adventure may grow, but they do so through desires for other places. Maybe places that are unknown where our journeys will provoke intrigue and thought. Places where we can once again see and feel beauty.

Is disorder when the audience gets involved?

Yes, in a way. Disorder then becomes a place where two worlds collide, things become unfamiliar. Where two or more perspectives come together. And that through this collision we find amongst others, new beauty.

When two things come together with some resemblance of force—a principle of making things unfamiliar—we do not escape without being touched. We should add here that ‘we’ means all people, places and, objects that are part of the collision. Through collision fabrics form, tapestries of interwoven threads. This lattice is ephemeral as it lives within the time-space of the collision. Through the passing of time the fabric unravels. Holes, threads, tears and rips mark individual sections. These marks are evidence that this tapestry was once formed.

That reminds me of a passage of text you wrote to describe the walk you and Neal took through Brisbane. Let’s see…

The two people that we see drifting through the city create an ephemeral stream of image reflection behind them. As they notice new avenues and signs, these images are fed back into the consciousness through a generative loop of reflection and interpretation, creating a reading of the situation in relation to the themes that have developed with each step. This image trail forms the fabric of the walk, an artefact that is both personal and collective, alternate threads belong to the singular whilst the interwoven structure gives itself to the plural.

This fabric is a process of continual weaving, as one pattern forms or a section of the fabric is deemed to be complete, it is re-woven. This process of re-weaving is not done from scratch, instead its a generative process of working in, through, over and around the threads that are already in place. That is not to say that threads will not dissolve and be lost, move or even meld with others.
The Dualism of Disorder

That’s interesting you picked up on that passage. For me it shows how you can describe an ephemeral artefact. One thing that I am interested in is how you can design for these forms of outcomes.

If the works here were not yours, but invited works by other artists, and you were the curator, what would be the brief you would give to artists to participate in the exhibition?

[AFTER SOME THOUGHT] The brief would read something like this: In a forthcoming exhibition entitled ‘the dualism of order’, we are interested in works that explore positions of familiarity that become—through disorder—unfamiliar. Through this…we leave open the opportunity to re-explore the familiar and find new poetics and beauties within it. Bachelard in The Poetics of Space comments that ‘by leaving the space of one’s usual sensibilities one enters into communication with a space that is physically innovating... For we do not change place, we change our nature’.

Both of these maps were systems for instigating movement, they acted as “instrumentalized images”. The images placed restrictions around the reading. They produced a field of potential; narrative. These maps denote the properties of these fields and, in your words ‘offer places of departure’.

Yes, exactly. We used the situationists to inspire some of the work in fashion city. Principally in the writing of walks to act in the same manor as their maps. This aspect of fashion city was interested in poetic interventions that could break down the known or the established pathways of the city. Through this breaking down of established, or dominant pathways we hoped people would participate in describing the fashionable nature of Melbourne.

Dualism of order is a recognition of the place of disorder in design, whereby order and disorder are equals; two approaches that are appropriate in different circumstances. You are exploring the role of disorder and its potential to become an accepted order—therein lies the contradiction and dualism. The idea that we can design disorder. Why disorder? What do I think you mean by disorder? Here you are interested in the removal of the accepted order of events or order of communication—one way communication...designed disorder creates dialogue, interaction, collision, involves participation. It requires that the designer relinquish control, and forgo any foreseeable outcome or finished product. ... What do you think?
KD: Listening to that … if I was to criticise my work (or your interpretation of it) my main criticism would be, there is no way that you can say that you relinquish control because it’s a highly designed process.

RP: No, you only relinquish control of the outcomes, but you design the process. You accept the possibility of failure.

KD: Hmmm…designers are actually very afraid of failure.

RP: I suppose what you’re saying is that you are relinquishing control of the interpretation. So you allow your design to be interpreted by the person experiencing it.

KD: Yes, that’s very true. But at a personal level, in terms of the practice of design, for me it’s also about breaking down the ideas of what an established design practice could be. Through this work and research I wanted to reinterpret my own design practice to create a new practice or a new way of practising.

One of the things that I’ve engaged in as a designer is the introduction of poetics as a way of designing and a way of presenting design outcomes. And we can look at poetics… poetics come from poesis which means ‘to make’.

RP: It’s interesting that you mention poetics because I think a lot of your work is very poetic. What I see, and what I think is integral to your work, is that you seem to employ this theme of dualism of order—that is based on the idea of a design practice—to produce what essentially are works of art. That means, interestingly, that one of the potential outcomes, or risks, of pursuing disorder as means of design, is that you wander off into the world of art. That in itself is very poetic.

RP: Yeah, so the research around dualism of order has informed your artwork, which is also included in this collection of works, as well as both the design work and design questions that you had.

KD: You’re right, and I have used art and design as representing two ends of a spectrum within which the work curated here can be categorised. Through this I have positioned or described art as being focused on the representation and visualisation of ideas, whereas design is far more concerned with systems and processes of functionality. An example of designing systems includes the walks FASHION FITTY [sec4:74], BIKE TRAIN, BRICK [sec4:66], and GETTING LOST [sec4:68]. Where as BLACK INK [sec4:56] is an example of the representation and visualisation of ideas.

But I also have used two other axes which position the work. These are ‘artefact’ and ‘engagement’. For example, in regard to engagement, the work is either something that is looked at or interacted with. With regard to artefact, the work is either based in a formal visual outcome (THE NOBLE ROT EXHIBITION GRAPHICS [sec4:78]) or is based around internal understandings or perceptions (the personal, ephemeral outcome of one of the walks, or the act of completing the walk itself).

These axes could probably also be described as ‘dualities of disorder’.
**THE DUALISM OF DISORDER**

RP: But actually, isn’t it through Merleau Ponty that we learn that there is perhaps less difference than we imagine between a physical artefact or object and an intangible artefact?

KD: Yes, tangibility can come from our perception. What we see as tangible is also made up of intangible characteristics, because the tangible object is perceived differently by different people (audiences or participators).

KD: That’s interesting also because he seems to break down the perceived difference between audience and participator, because we all participate differently as members of an audience because of the different perceptions and experiences we bring to an object or a performance.

KD: That’s the crux of the research.

RP: What would Ponty have to say about disorder?

KD: I believe he would find it akin to the creation of “possibilities”.

RP: Tell me a bit more about those defining examples you just gave.

KD: In creating a form of sign-age for the exhibition ‘Noble Rot’ within Como house, an historical house in Melbourne, something we had to overcome was the built behaviour and established pathways through the house. Meaning that each time people moved through the house it had to be in a certain order as they were led by a guide. Because the exhibition was interested in looking at clothing collections and the idea of looking at garments from a position of decay, tattered, inside outside, the unmade the unfinished, this differs from traditional historical fashion exhibitions that are perfect and finished. In line with this we wanted to change the accepted behaviour and the way in which people moved through the house. So we had to allow people to understand they could find their own passage through the exhibition.

RP: And in Black Ink?

KD: In Black Ink, the familiar structure of the newspaper is broken down, it’s made unfamiliar. Through this process the beauty and poetics of the newspaper system where revealed... in breaking down the order of each page I used a familiar form—censorship—which means we have a known convention being used to break down an understood structure of communication. This created something people were fascinated with, as it was abstract but also meaningful within the context of media critique. One is art and one is design. A comment on the Black Ink exhibition was ‘From a distance it was art, and when one moved up close it was design’.

The collision of readable and censored words develop new spaces of readership. Through the works we can see and feel the hardships of media broadcasting, the voice of the editor. The lost words become voids that give poetic space to all the untold stories of the world. But in this space not one story is written.

RP: Poetic and political!

KD: When talking about the political we can actually reference an earlier work of mine. In the project N.E.S.W I created maps that were derived from the streets of Melbourne’s CBD. I pulled these apart to explore the different ways in which people engage with the city and the inherent power structures held within the streets. I attributed different layers to this map. One layer represented the position of the individual, the places...
and streets that they moved through, and the things that they encountered. Another layer looked at the place of institution and authority, such as political institutions, religious institutions and places of mass movement in a political sense; marches and protests. 

Through this abstraction of the city’s streets it became apparent that there was a lot less room for deviation at the global level where positions of power were located. At the local level, the individual level, there was a lot more potential for variance, more disorder in the way people move through various spaces.

RP: What did you find?

KD: The places of power had greater functionality, but the personal maps were smaller, windy and spindly. The movement was more variable and poetic. In terms of participation and audience, the wider avenues were more geared towards an audience as part of a directed flow. The smaller, more variable realm lent itself more to participation within the city.

RP: So through this you acknowledge the political and social role that design has, the consequences of design outcomes.

KD: Yes, in design we are working within a political space. Design that creates physical spaces, or represents space and spatial relationships (such as mapping) is a process of cementing cultural and political ideologies of a time. Wouldn’t you agree?

RP: Well yes, and its actually said really well by Janin Hadlaw in an essay about the original London Underground Map: The production of space is a dialectical process, one that is mediated by social imaginary, the rhythms of daily routine, and perhaps most notably, by the conceptions or representations of space that underpins social life.²

KD: And a space that is disorderly, is operating from a position of weakness. I think Andrea Phillips put it best in relating local and global to weakness and power. To quote her: ‘Weakness … privileges a concern for the small scale over the large and for the local over the global…Weakness has been imagined as a mode in which small and local gestures would take precedence over large and imposed value systems.’… ‘Weakness is useful as it positions the designer, the maker, in closer relationship to those bodies that use the building (or artefact); it draws two important bodies together, in occupancy, in space.’²

RP: Just like you talk about disorder being the meeting of two bodies, ie the audience and the designed space?

KD: Yes, designing for disorder is about creating a position of weakness for the designer. But one which is concerned with social engagement. It demotes the designer to the role of participant.

RP: So the designer puts himself in the position of dialogue and discussion?

KD: Yes, rather than the position of imposing a global order, message, or one way conversation etc., as we were saying before. While this position might be useful for certain outcomes I think there is still a lot of room to explore the role of disorder for designing other outcomes.

RP: Ok, so what about designing for poetics?

KD: FASHION CITY | SEC:4:74 | allowed people to write their own poetic sequences to compose image sequences. The images were poetic interpretations of the city as we see it. They were meant to describe the images we compose as we traverse the city streets. FASHION CITY placed these images within folders. Through the organisation and categorisation of these images data sets were
formed. These collections formed fields from where the system could draw images and composite them in real time. Each folder was given a label or tag such as ‘shiny’ or ‘voyeur’ which described the thematic of the images held within. This process of categorisation enabled through computational methods compositions by layering and mixing the various categories.

RP: This form of relooking through a poetic structure has been used by many people to explore ideas that otherwise might be hard to define.

KD: Yes, well, the idea was that these fields would be composited together to create poetic interpretations that explored the idea of the fashionable nature of a city beyond that of clothing. So the images were of… patterns, textures of buildings, of places such as stairwells and lifts, and types of signage and murals, light reflections, etc. Everything and anything to do with texture and fabric that excluded people and clothing.

RP: That’s interesting, earlier when describing ‘The Naked City’, I introduced the concept of fields. That systems and artefacts are methods of placing or creating fields and topographies. In Transmitting Architecture: The Transphysical City, Marcus Novak talks about seeing the world as fields as being distinctly different from seeing the world as solids and voids. In a world of fields, the distinction between what is and what is not is one of degree. There can be as many sampling points where something is not as there are where something is.

KD: That’s right, he goes on to describe fields as consisting of “latent information”. In latency we find the passive and the stable. Through acts such as sampling (as in Fashion City {sec4:74}) stability is moved to a place that is unstable. ‘Under-
Yes, however, in order to be able to create architectures of disorder, it is important, first to understand the importance of order.

Okay... do go on.

Michel de Certeau defines place as being an ‘order’. That order is a way of placing things in a singular location, a location described in terms of a coexistence with other items: the elements taken into consideration are beside one another each situated in its own proper and distinct location, a location it defines.²

In this he says that when an item is placed into a location, the object defines that location but it does so in relation to the things that sit beside it. These objects are then “distributed”, meaning no two items can sit within the same place. Through this he declares place as being “stable”.

In the creation of collections we find stability, a defined organisation of objects. These collections define an object’s position in the world. This worldly description is built through each object describing itself in relation to the items it sits near.

An example is a collection of objects, say the garments in the noble rot exhibition. Each garment describes itself, but it’s description is also based upon the things next to it. It co-exists. And that’s why he talks, also, about fields. The field is the overall description of a collection.

So what is the learning for the designer of disorder?

That through an order we locate the items of concern. Through this we make or define a field. This field creates what could be termed a platform. It is from this platform that we draw from to create our disorder, a new or alternate order.
{ FOOTNOTES }


APPENDIX OF WORKS
The 100 images collection served as a visual handshake at the start of this candidature. This collection provided a way to explore and discuss the concerns and questions that led me to enrol in the program. The concerns and questions were first explored during the curation, collection, and editing of the images. They were further developed during the process of presenting the images for others to view and discuss.

This was the first time I had actively made a collection. At the time I did not see the relevance of them, nor the relevance of curation that underpinned the set of images. The process of collection and curation allowed us to trace, place, and map interests inside and outside of our then, design practices. Through this process of mapping I was able to find relationships of interest that lay inside and outside of my practice.

Looking through all the projects I can clearly see the relevance of collections to my work. They have all involved interaction with, and the development of a collection. In BLACK INK (sec4:60) I collected Newspapers for three months leading up to the Federal Election in 2004. In contrast the NOBLE ROT EXHIBITION (sec4:78) worked with the pre-existing National Trust Clothing Collection.

My practice is now principally concerned with the designing of interfaces to collections, the development of systems for creating collections, and methods of visualising them.
The re-composition of the 100 hundred images culminated in a process whereby each image was mapped against the others. The device used for this process was a list of tags, or labels. Through this plotting I created an abstract topography of the concerns that lay within the images.

Sections of this topography were then used to create a small book of maps, titled N.E.S.W. The hand made book consists of three maps that each explore a different layers of interaction and communication within the streets of Melbourne; power, politics, and protest; marketing, commercialism, and shopping; and finally, the individual—my engagement with the streets.

Through these maps I reconfigured the city by removing different streets from each map. The main roads where removed from the individual map, and lane ways and footpaths taken away from the politic and power map. Each map also had its axis altered. This required the viewer to adjust their position of reading. This repositioning of the axis was an attempt to destabilise the maps.

Through this process I started to explore the social and political nature of space and place. Which also enabled me to engage and understand further that the marking, mapping and describing of space and place is a highly political activity. That this activity defines how people and things can move and behave in relation to the space that they are in.
In Black Ink, pages from daily newspapers are made unfamiliar through the application of ink. These works reveal to us the structures of mainstream media that we interact with on a daily basis. Through this new or alternate order we see the rules of design that help frame our understanding of local and world events. But this new order is also familiar.

Black ink on text has an understood and established role within society. Are these works political, it seems so, but only through our association of blank ink and censorship. Is the aesthetic of these works just a comment on the form or clarity of messages transmitted through mainstream media? In contrast the disturbance of this familiar structure provides space to ask our own questions. Questions that may ask us to examine how we read and interpret the world around.

In Black Ink the collision of readable and censored words develop a new space of readership. Here we can see and feel the hardships of media broadcasting, the voice of the editor. The lost words become voids that give poetic space to all the untold stories of the world. But in this space not one story is written.
Wandering with empty stomachs, myself and Neal talk slowly as we traverse a foreign city. As we walk we arrive at a roundabout housing an ancient and magnificent fig tree. It stands within the artificial mass of the city, popping itself up by its many tentacles like a mirror opposite 1 of a woodland clearing—a referential space, an incision into the other wise dense surrounds. It reminds us of the glorious splendour of the land before my unrelated relatives came and started to build. A process through which great ideologies have been placed upon this terra firma.

The buildings within our field of sight—are there any others?—slowly reveal a politics and a texture within their placement and construction. Across the roundabout between two roads leading to and from this spot, sits, in cocky fluoro, a pub that we do not enter. Not that the pub is of dubious character, but the signals it sends tells us that this is a place for a different slice of society. Further round, maybe minus twenty degrees, lies the meshed hole of a building site entrance, within stands another monolith of the corporate sector, a place where many gather beneath the illuminated logo that signifies all that sits within. The fig, in contrast to these two spaces, stands tall and proud, aware of its and its ancestors place within the laws and pathways of the indigenous people of these lands.

Within these streets we see a variation of time and period, from the new and un-contracted, to the past terraces and the lattice work that adorns them, giving face to the old colonies intentions. Offered in nearby windows are the future miniatures that will soon become giants, with their promise of lifestyle and place, these future buildings define the form of the new colonisation, and their argument for a better life. Dark sidewalks disappear between the buildings, creating dank voids where that enter do so with risk and intrigue.

Moving forward in a state of self loss, they attune to unseen pathways and the ambient unintended of the city, the two men ‘let themselves be drawn by the attractions of the terrain and the encounters they find there’ (Debord, G 1956, Theory of the Dérive, View 20 July 2005, http://www.bopsecrets.org/SI/2.derive.htm). Its from these attractions to the terrain that routes open for the walk, this stroll turned into a dérive. This process has seen them remove the constraints and contracts that the dominant pathways labour them with, turning their actions and movements away from strategy and into tactic (de Certeau, M 1984, The Practice of Everyday Life, University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles). This shift sees them detour from the dominant and constructed pathways of the city, to poetic trajectories born through their engagement with the streets.

From here the city is theirs for the purpose that they have proposed, a proposal that has been born through a quiet and whispered conversation with the city. On reference this conversation started out with the silent pause that the fig tree created upon our meeting. It, as a reference point, become central to the shaping of the city and the changes of us, and the subsequent conversations that formed thereafter.

Being open to ‘reference points’ sees the walker able to alter their agenda to reshape their work based on the things that they notice.

The Brisbane Walk was a turning point of this study. It was through reflection on this walk that a direction of enquiry was set. This enquiry related to finding the unfamiliar within the familiar.

The walk itself seemed so innocent at the time. It was a gentle conversational stroll through Brisbane with Neal Haslem, a fellow student and now long term collaborator. The stroll was initially a search for food on our first ever night in the capital of Queensland.

As we strolled we encountered a narrative that became a discussion between us and the streets of the city. This discussion was about old, new and proposed buildings and places in the city. During this process we photographed and walked, talked and turned. We were guided by the conversation that developed. Through these discussions ideas formed in relation to the installation that we were to create the next day.

Because of this walk, walking became a central focus of my studies. In doing so I started reading about walking. This lead me to The Situationist International. Of particular interest was the Theory of the Dérive, and the maps they made of Paris in the 50’s. Through this they attempted to create unfamiliar spaces through familiar territories.

The walk and subsequent reading has developed my understanding of the nature of temporal and transitional space. I also developed an understanding of the politics of space and place. This changed how I viewed previous works, in particular the N.E.S.W { sec4:58 } and black ink { sec4:60 }.

S E C 4 : 5 2

P R I N T E R S I N K O N N E WSP A P E R S, 2 0 0 4

Brisbane Walk

PROJECT TEAM: Keith Devereul, Neal Haslem
The installation consisted of seven posters made from seven of the images taken during the Brisbane Walk. The location of the installation was a back stairwell in the Festival Club for Straight Out Of Brisbane. This stairwell led from one conference space to another. During the day the conference rooms was used for critical discussion, at night the rooms were used for audio visual performances.

Our intention with the installation was to give space for people to converse and discuss the issues of the conference. This was done through white spaces that broke up the images. Within these white spaces we set ad hoc punctuation. In hindsight, these white spaces did not provide much space for critical writing. Next to each poster was hung a pencil and a pencil sharpener to invite participation with the work.

We wondered if anyone would actually respond to the posters, a fear we did need to worry about. We were surprised not by the lack of response but by the nature of response. The style of comment that was left was like toilet text, slut graffiti, and tags. Initially we where both perplexed and a little disgruntled by the form of conversation that prevailed.

What I now understand through reflection is that a social space evolved that responded to the time and nature of the event—night time socialising—and the innate properties of the place, the stairwell.

Through this we can see that an artefact’s outcome can, or is, driven by the time-space of encounter and the place that it is located.
In Bike.Train.Brick a person is traced moving through three disparate places. His movements and the impermanence of his form on screen elude to past and present encounters. He brings to our attention the marks that have been left on the surfaces of the places he has encountered. They are marks of time, made through the wear and tear of people using each place.

Bike.Train.Brick was produced as an audio visual performance to be constructed from a collection of video clips and audio samples that differ each time it’s played. These collections give the project a form that enables it to be reconstructed depending upon the needs of the next performance.

This means each performance of Brick.Train.Brick is unrestrained by the format of the performance space. It can be remade in any number of ways, meaning that it is not constrained by its own form.

To create this collection of images Cory Sands, Derren Box, and I went out for a day’s recording. I had devised before we met how I wanted the video to be shot. It was set that Derren would walk within each scene exploring the space that was framed by the lens of the camera.

This was a fairly rigid structure. However, it was left to Derren to decide how he moved and what he would engage with. This meant the outcome of the day was left open for interpretation by Derren. Through this, he became a key figure in ‘writing’ the narrative of the collection.
In searching for something we often find something else. This was the intention when Damian McGrath and I set out on a number of journeys. We were looking for edges of the city, with the intention of getting lost. We hoped through getting lost we would find something else. We wanted and desired to be displaced from our everyday surrounds. Being designers and artists we felt that a controlled experiment would bring inspiration and new materials for us to work with back in our studios.

These ‘walks’ were created with reference to the walk that Neal and I had taken in Brisbane. In Brisbane we were already in unfamiliar territory, which meant that we were displaced. Here in Melbourne it was different. Melbourne is the place where we live and at the time we were too ingrained in our local streets to find new ways of looking.

We used Damian’s childhood memories of the journeys he took as a lad between the big city and rural Victoria as a trigger to set a destination. Through this trigger and the stories that he told, we became obsessed with the division of land that marks the city and the country.

With each journey we constructed a different narrative to follow. In one we searched for powerlines, whilst another we looked for roads that just dead-ended. We used these narratives as navigational devices. They were the design that lead to us finding inspirations.
In this series of video stills, of which numbers 5, 6, and 7 are presented, a space of interpretation is opened through the abstractly familiar soundtrack. This soundtrack, more active than the video, draws us further into the scene(s) in front. The sound, created through data analysis of the video, provides an audio representation of the image in front. Through this audio we find spaces for audiences that are participatory. They ask us to look in, and to hear what we see and see what we hear. They imply that we can see more than what is apparently there.

The video was captured whilst lost on the outer edges of Melbourne. Each video is a 10 minute film of a carefully selected location. They are 4:3 windows of a still world.

The sound track for each video was created through sampling the image data within them (contrast, brightness and movement). This data was converted into midi notes which were fed into various audio sequencing systems. These works express the current climate whereby through sampling we can continually make and remake, in offering alternate visions of our surrounds.
To read a book requires a period of time and space where one is not disturbed. I am, by admission, not the most avid reader. I get distracted easily by the desire to be active in making things. To read, or at least to make a start in reading, Merleau Ponty’s book, *The Phenomenology of Perception*, I devised a period of time that would leave me with little else to do, but read.

The space I created was a period of twelve hours that sat between Melbourne and Adelaide on board the Overland Train. Reading on trains is not a foreign activity. The design did not contravene with established behaviours of train journey. This meant that instead of trying to reconfigure space, I used an established space to configure my behaviour.

During this period I performed to an audience of one on a poetic stage. My journey’s end was not the destinations that marked the beginning and end of each period of travel. For my journey the actual destinations (Melbourne and Adelaide) provided a structure that marked out when the activity of reading would start and stop. It afforded me time and space that I otherwise would not have had.
The Fashion City Image Stream was first hosted on the screens at Federation Square in February 2006. The image stream was a continual flow of visual interpretations of the fashionable nature of Melbourne.

We were interested in representations that did not involve people and clothes. Through this we wanted to explore the effect of layering and texture that fashion has with fabric and our bodies.

The basic design was a three level image sequencer that used musical concepts of step sequencing to composite a continual flow of images. These images were submitted by the Fashion City collective and other public participants.

The images were curated through a folksonomy that placed them into various folders that best described the image. The folksonomy included labels such as voyeur, reveal, grand, fantastic and vulgar. In all there were twenty three parts to this section of the database. The images from this database make up the central layer of the composition, the mid. The other two layers, the base and the high, draw from image sets submitted by the Fashion City Collective. Through this we create a sense of order, or pattern.

In terms of space and politics this work was not a totally open system. Not everyone was able to affect the behaviour of the code, which made the images. Through this we can see that the compositions held a rhetoric and a desire that was set by us. Other people were invited to participate, but their roles were limited. They could not alter the end results, meaning that they could not be truly part of the process.
The Fashion City Walks were a series of designs to provide routes for people to move through the city of Melbourne. These walks were poetic interventions that broke down established pathways of the city. Through this breaking down of established, or dominant pathways people participated in describing the fashionable nature of Melbourne.

These walks were designs that structured movement and engagement within the streets of the city. Some were based on personal memories, others were systems for movements akin to John Long’s text walks. Each walk is a poetic structure with the potential for poetic outcomes. The narrative of these walks where written through the participant and the experience they created. The order within these structures gave the opportunity for people to find the unfamiliar within a place that is all too familiar.

A person from another city and in Melbourne for the first time could have used these walks—poetic as they are—to give form and description to their very first encounter with the city. The walks, in contrast to formal tourist maps, placed the walker in a position to find for themselves what it is that they wanted to find. Or in contrast what the city wanted them to see.

PROJECT TEAM: Laurene Vaughen, Neal Haslem, Yoko Akama, Stuart Geddes, Josie Ryan, Keith Deverell, Tania Ivanka
Noble Rot was an exhibition of garments not normally considered by Fashion Exhibitors and Curators. Through the removal of perfect garments and giving space to the hidden, the unmade, and the damaged, the audience explored the inner workings of garments and the effect of life upon them. My role on this project was the design of formal information and navigational devices for the exhibition.

The texts, charts, and maps I placed within Noble Rot were designed to become part of its weaving and poetic narrative. Their design and placement did not direct and force pathways onto the public. Instead they allowed free passage within Como House. The Noble Rot index (a map of the house given to visitors) was created to locate the threads of the exhibition (tatters, inside out outside in, stain, fripperies, unfinished and relic) within the rooms of the house.

The main issue that people had with the design, was that it required people to decode the system for them to find the information. This required a certain level of visual literacy from the visitors. The problems that were encountered involved the diversity of audience that the exhibition targeted, and their levels of visual literacy.

On one hand we had regular visitors to National Trust properties and on the other we had students of fashion and people interested in more experimental forms of art. This caused a conflict with the navigation and information system. In reflection and self-critique, the navigation system (the index and charts placed in the house) directed towards the second target audience—the audience more used to decoding experimental works of art and systems of navigation. The result was that my work ostracised a number of visitors and excluded people from the formal text of the exhibition.

Project Team: Robyn Healy, Curator; Lizzie Anysa-Petrivna, Assistant Curator; Katie Symons, Assistant Curator; SIX, Denise Sprynskij, Peter Boyd, Fashion Label; Keith Dower, Communication Designer; Carolyn Leach-Pahoolki, Poet
This book was intended to capture stories and information from people visiting the noble rot exhibition. It aimed to extend the text of the exhibition through this process. In doing this, the book attempted to offer a space whereby each person could become a participant of the exhibition.

To a small degree this happened, a few people offered the form of response that I had hoped for. However, the rest of the comments were the style of comment that you get in guest books. Whilst I felt this did not detract from the book, I was interested in looking for possible reasons why more was not written.

A principle failing of the book was that it felt precious, it was obviously hand made. It was also quite decorative and probably seemed quite personal. When the book was placed in the house it was completely unmarked. The curatorial team had commented that we would all write and add images into the book early on in the exhibition. Unfortunately this did not happen.

This meant there was no activity in the book by the people that understood how the book was meant to operate. I would like to say that I was one of these people that didn’t make entries into the book. I feel that if we had, the book may well have had more response from people that visited the exhibition.

The learning here is that within environments that seek a particular interaction there needs to be some form of activity. In the book, had this happened the pages that seemed precious or austere would have taken on a life somewhere between a scrap book and a journal. I believe that this would have taken the preciousness away from the book and in doing so would have made the statement that it was a book not owned by the artist, but by the book’s participants.

PROJECT TEAM: Keith Deverell
Morning Mist
DIGITAL VIDEO, DURATION 25 MINUTES, 2006

Morning Mist is a passage of video captured on location at Bonnie Doon. Its are played back in silence, with its soundtrack removed. The time-space of this video replicates the time-space of its capture. It require us as an audience to take a moment, or fifteen minutes, to view it. It requires participation. A participation that places the audience within the same activity of the artist.

Whilst we watch we become familiar with the scene in front and do not see the gradual movements of nature. Markers that signify moments where we notice change emerge through periods of personal illumination; points that denote our becoming aware of time and movement. These moments of awareness create a poetry spoken within the silence of the encounter. The poem, unique to each encounter, is formed through a performative space of being aware and unaware.

This participatory role of the audience draws comparison to the role of the camera in the act of recording. The camera becomes aware of change. This awareness of the camera is governed by its format—Pal 25 fps. The poetic of recording a period that you witness lies in the playback of the period. It frames a period of time and provides the opportunity for insights and representations beyond the moment(s) of capture.
In 2006 eight students went on a design retreat on a property just outside of Bonnie Doon in Victoria. During the four days we each produced two works within the landscape that explored two questions: What is design? What is design research?

In answer to the first question I created an installation in a pine forest that involved the marking out of a scene in the forest. The topic was a chair placed on a barbed wire fence. These markings indicated places to stand, and routes that you could take to enter or leave the space I created. What I wanted to demonstrate was that design for me is a process of making and defining space, that through design we locate discussion and topics of interest.

I suppose this work was intended as a conclusion to my studies. Because I was also trying to say that I believe design should not dictate the topic that it’s defining. That was why I created a number of places where people could stand, and why the trails of blue that acted as pathways slowly disappeared. In my explanation I also said that the these pathways and places to stand were only suggestions and that it was up to each person encountering the space to decide exactly how they wanted to be within it.

In answering the second question I revisited the work the next day. I felt that it was important to acknowledge a going back and re-looking, an act of reflection and critique. Once there I created many frames out of branches. These frames varied in size and location to the work. They were windows whereby I could direct a focus onto the previous day’s work.
What I am saying through this process was that design research is process of researching design practice. Why and how we do the things that we do when we design. This is not the only form of design research, but is the research model that I have been involved with. Through understanding these actions we can then view how the outcomes were affected by the process of design.

A key concern with these frames was that I did not want them to disturb the design of the previous day. I believe that design research should not interfere with a design that it's reflecting on. Instead design research should act as a way to direct and position critique and reflection on a process.

On the first day I had taken materials with me into the woods, through which I made and constructed my scene. The contrast with the second day was that I used only the materials that were found in the location of the previous day’s work.

This meant that my answer to the question of ‘what is design research?’ was focused on the materials at hand; the things that lay around the design I was reflecting on. Had I brought in other materials the influence of design research would have been more pronounced. This would have potentially changed the initial work.
Throughout the Masters I did numerous Vjing gigs. These events where different audio and video art artists would come together and play, became important spaces for reflection upon the nature of design outcomes, and forms of interaction.

During these events I would effectively ‘jam’ with different DJ’s in creating a space for dance, and social interaction. The output of these nights where numerous hours of unrecorded video that was composited in real-time. The process of generating these video streams included the use of digital data captured from the audio generated by the DJ.

This data, was converted into numerical data and used to drive various parts of the video system. Anything from effects, to cuts between different video clips, down to the tempo of oscillators, and other mathematical data sources.

Through this use of data I came to question my own ideas of authorship and ownership within design outcomes. It also became quite clear within such a reative space, that the audience, whilst not physically changing the music and video, where extremly active in the overal design and emotion of the night. It also become clear that they where pivotal in the archiving and documentation of the experience.
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