JUXTAPOSE: AN EXPLORATION OF GAY MASULINE IDENTITY AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO THE CLOSET.

A project submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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July 2014
DECLARATION

I certify that except where due acknowledgement has been made, the work is that of the author alone; the work has not been submitted previously, in whole or in part, to qualify for any other academic award; the content of the exegesis is the result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research program; any editorial work, paid or unpaid, carried out by a third party is acknowledged; and ethics procedures and guidelines have been followed.

Richard Harding
July 2014
Juxtapose: an exploration of gay masculine identity and its relationship to the closet
I would like to thank my supervisors, Dr Phil Edwards and Associate Professor Keely Macarow for their encouragement and support throughout the project.

I would like to gratefully acknowledge the support and assistance in this project of my work colleagues and fellow candidates from the School of Art, the Print Imaging Practice studio and Lygon Street Studios.

I would like to especially acknowledge the assistance I received from the following people:

Rob Dott, Sebastian Fransz, Stephen Gallagher, Don Gore, Andrew Gunnell, Mateusz Gwóźdź, Dr Shane Hulbert, Dr Ruth Johnstone, Neal Kenny, Rebecca Mayo, Cat and Nada Poljski, Andrew Tetzlaff, Andrew Weatherill, Deb Williams and Katie Van Heest.

I would like to sincerely thank fellow PhD candidate and colleague Clare Humphries for her contribution to my project, through conversations, suggestions and encouragement.

Finally, I would like to thank my amazing family, my partner Tadeusz Tkaczyk and son Simon Tkaczyk for their continued and ongoing support.
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Juxtapose: an exploration of Gay Masculine Identity and its relationship to the closet
ABSTRACT

*Juxtapose: An Exploration of Gay Masculine Identity and Its Relationship to the Closet* is a visual investigation based in studio practice and informed by theoretical exploration. The notion of visibility for gay men has changed dramatically since the advent of the Internet. Online platforms have spawned terms such as ‘straight-acting’ that privilege heteronormative masculinity above other forms of masculinity based in a hierarchy of masculine performance and identification. My proposition has been that the more a gay male performs, simulates, or copies a ‘straight’ mode of masculine performance, the more his otherness is rendered invisible. Consequently he builds a closet around himself.

The research undertaken for this project employed various methodologies that focus on printmedia’s inherent qualities of sameness and difference through collected found images and text. Incorporating questions of authenticity and the real, the print-based artworks interrogated heteronormative masculinity through mass media. My project combined the discourses and practice of printmedia with cultural and queer theory, to interrogate connections between heteronormative masculine performances by gay men and how this could closet otherness. The aim of this research strategy was to locate a psychological or actual space that was free of the homosexual closet.

The outcome of my project has been a series of print-based explorations and exhibitions that informed and culminated into a final exhibition. The examination exhibition presents my project’s findings through a repetition of image making and installation of artworks within the architecturally altered gallery space of the School of Art Gallery at RMIT University.
INTRODUCTION

My PhD project *Juxtapose: An Exploration of Gay Masculine Identity and its Relationship to the Closet* is a personally activated investigation informed by gender and queer theory. This project has attempted to interrogate contemporary gay masculine identity through an analysis and use of found and print generated images and text. It has utilised the inherent qualities of sameness and difference within printmedia as an analogy for gender and sexual orientation.

I will use printmedia as an inclusive term incorporating traditional analogue processes with photographic and digital technologies in this exegesis. By collecting, archiving, and recycling images to create new artworks my intention has been to investigate how the projection of masculine identities through mainstream print media may relate to identification traits which enforce or obscure sexual orientations. For ease of naming I will refer to my PhD research as the project from this point onward.

My project was built on a print-based art practice with a conceptual foundation informed by French theorist Gilles Deleuze’s *Difference and Repetition* where he discusses representation as a site of transcendental illusion which come in four interrelated forms: thought, sensibility, the idea and being. My interest has been his claim that, thought is covered over by an ‘image’ made up of postulates, which distort both its operation and its genesis. These postulates culminate in the position of an identical thinking subject, which functions as a principle of identity for concepts in general (1968, p. 265).

This Deleuzian position has been combined (through studio practice) with Honoré Balzac’s code system of self-representation invented in 1835 which included four main signifying elements: posture, gesture, speech and costume. According to American academic Domma Stanton, ‘Balzac claimed that he could tell anyone exactly who (and what) they were, based upon a belief in a direct correlation between interior essence and exterior signification’ (1980, cited Myer 1994, p. 155). This system of coding and decoding became known as ‘the dandy code’, and has been identified by Australian academic Moe Myer as the precursor to the construction of an identifiable homosexual social identity.

My project acknowledges the personal and cultural influence of American theorist Eve Kosofsky Segdwick’s seminal work *Epistemology of the Closet*. Segdwick introduced her queer treatise with the axiom, ‘People are different from each other’ (1990, p. 22) which aligns with my project’s concepts of sameness and difference. Segdwick interrogated the limitations
of binary systems established by Western culture with respect to sexual identity, exploring connections with the homosexual closet and the act of coming out. Within my project the focus is with the visibility and invisibility of sexual identity that enables or dissipates the homosexual closet.

My project was initiated by my discovery of the term *straight-acting* on the Internet dating platforms¹ which I engaged intermittently between 2000 and 2009. This research has been driven by the paradox that is created when the terms gay and masculine are positioned together. For instance within Western patriarchal society heteronormative masculinity is positioned as alpha and male with all other forms of masculinity and performance subordinate to it. The term heteronormative² first entered western cultural consciousness in the 1990s and is attributed to American theorist Michael Werner as early as 1991. It was through feminist and queer anthologies such as *Fear of a Queer Planet* (1993) edited by Werner that the term was positioned in queer Western cultural dialogues. The term heteronormative signals the view that promotes heterosexuality as the normal or preferred sexual orientation of mainstream culture. Within this context so-called straight-acting operates as a way of describing a gay man as masculine. For example a straight-acting gay man models his behaviour, clothing and speech on culturally accepted heterosexual masculine types such as a tradesman or family man. Through this assertion, a gay male uses heteronormative masculine performance as the guide to his masculinity. By following this definition, my proposition has been that the more a gay male performs, simulates, or copies this mode of masculine performance, the more his otherness is rendered invisible and builds a closet around himself.

The research undertaken for this project combines my art practice with my professional and social identities and oscillates between the discourses of printmedia and queer theory to address the political imperatives of the project. As a gay man, I continue to experience the tensions between private and public disclosure of sexual identity that help produce the problematic psychological space of the closet. Embedded in the project is this tension of disclosure that maintains my interest artistically, personally and politically. My project has examined the complex formation of gay masculinities through a framework of masculine representations and text in an endeavour to locate and identify a psychological space where a gay masculine identity may be free of the closet.

Printmaking and photography have played fundamental and interrogative roles within the project due to their facility tautology of reproducibility and thus facility to produce multiples. The term *straight-acting* motivated my print-based preoccupation with the real and unreal, the authentic and replica, the original and the copy. These binary tensions became central to the project. My choice of print-based processes to research these multifaceted concepts is purposeful or as Walter Benjamin deliberated, its being reproducible by technological means frees the work of art from its existence as a parasite upon ritual. The reproduced work of art

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is to an ever-increasing extent the reproduction of art designed for reproducibility… rather than being underpinned by ritual, it came to be underpinned by a different practice: politics (Benjamin 1936, p. 12).

It is with Benjamin’s statement that I connect my research in gender and sexual orientation through the making of print-based art works to the politics of Other. The tension between sameness and difference in reproductive processes, methods and materials have been employed throughout the project to examine gay masculine identities that emulate heteronormative masculine performance and the architectural metaphor of the homosexual closet.

Throughout this project I have maintained focus on practice-led artistic research through making, printing, assembling, installing and reflecting on trial presentations of artworks. The multifaceted methodology I employed has allowed my research to embrace chance and serendipitous discoveries that have expanded the project beyond the print studio and presented in the mainstream art community.

Informed by the Deleuzian, illusion that ‘given the manner in which it is distributed in representation, resemblance need no longer be just that, between the copy and model’ (1968, p. 266) my project had two primary research questions: In what ways can printmedia’s intrinsically multiple nature be employed to facilitate an analysis of sameness and difference in the construction and deconstruction of gender and sexuality? And, how can the performative codes of posture, gesture, speech and costume be re-applied in a print based practice to explore proposed links between a gay masculine identity and the closet?

In an effort to address the research questions my project has operated through studio experiments and trial exhibitions that were designed to explore sameness and difference using print-based installations in parallel yet nuanced ways. With each installation a variety of contextual dialectics were employed, such as architectural space in Scope³ (2007), and costume in The Invisible Man (2011). I applied my print practice as a primary mode of investigation combining concepts of space, codes and masculinity. These three concepts intersected and overlapped throughout the project to revisit, reread and reassess differing applications as a means of establishing a deeper understanding of these complex combinations.

My project has been located in inner-urban Melbourne, Australia, and has been positioned temporally through the ongoing collection and archiving of found images and text from local newspapers between 2006 and 2012. The Age (Fairfax Media Limited), Herald Sun and mX (News Corporation Australia) were used as reference and source material for the construction of print works. As societal mores have morphed and changed so have the visual depictions of men in mainstream and gay print media. I have endeavoured to capture examples of these changes through my collection of heteronormative images from print media such as Good Weekend Magazine from Melbourne’s The Age newspaper, together with homonormative images from gay publications like the Star Observer Melbourne.
Juxtapose: an exploration of Gay Masculine identity and its relationship to the closet. This was highlighted recently on SBS Television’s Insight episode on gay marriage (13 August 2103). When questioned about coming out on television one respondent, Nam, noted it was a significant struggle:

NAM: There’s a lot, it’s very difficult because there’s a lot of stigma, there’s a lot of homophobia, there’s a lot of - it’s not easy to be gay. It’s easier, sometimes it can be easier to just let things slide and try and blend into the background (Insight: gay marriage 2013).

The importance of my investigation of heteronormative masculine performance by gay men is tied with ongoing gay anxieties encircling the homosexual closet. This is acknowledged and evidenced through the growth of discussions on connections between the closet, depression and suicide rates in print media, websites, blogs and talk-back on radio stations such as The Age’s Good Weekend magazine, Markscomplex.com and local gay and lesbian radio station JOY FM. The concerns around bullying, homophobic attacks, and discrimination against gay men has given rise to the expansion of what could be referred to as a Western pandemic of anxiety and depression3 among gay men and the wider male demographic. Within the timeframe of my project the rate of attitudinal and political social change within Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Queer (GLBTIQ) communities and parts of mainstream culture has fluctuated between increased public acceptance of difference and an anonymous subterranean homophobic persistence against same-sex couples. This was highlighted recently on SBS Television’s Insight episode on gay marriage (13 August 2103). When questioned about coming out on television one respondent, Nam, noted it was a significant struggle:

NAM: There’s a lot, it’s very difficult because there’s a lot of stigma, there’s a lot of homophobia, there’s a lot of - it’s not easy to be gay. It’s easier, sometimes it can be easier to just let things slide and try and blend into the background (Insight: gay marriage 2013).

The project, Appropriate Durable Record (ADR) and exegesis have been combined into one document with the ADR of the trial exhibitions positioned at the beginning of each chapter. The exegetical writing has been divided into five chapters with an introduction and conclusion and discussion of the methodology with four of the main trial exhibitions addressed in chronological order. The artistic, literary, philosophical and theoretical influences informing the project are referenced throughout the exegesis. I will contextualise my project locally and globally by mapping the four trial exhibitions against other artists with a directed focus on the Australian art worlds I operate within.

Chapter 1 The Ubiquitous Print: We Are Everywhere! addresses my methodology linking the initial trigger of straight-acting with the processes of printmedia and its inherent quality of reproducibility using sameness and difference as the praxis basis of the project.

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3. When compared with heterosexual people, homosexual and bisexual people are twice as likely experience anxiety (31.5 per cent compared with 14.1 per cent) and three times as likely to experience depression and related disorders (19 per cent compared with 6 per cent). (Beyondblue.com.au 2104, para. 3).
have endeavoured to unpack the use of reproductive methods, processes and technologies within my art practice by examining the cultural preoccupation with the art original to align social concepts of otherness with art print practices. Hierarchies of making and naming have been considered to highlight connections between photography and printmaking as two related yet different modes of practice used within my project. As such, I used these two methods of making to align reproducibility and the found image and to open the project’s technical vehicle to an integral and central conceptual element: the copy.

Chapter 2 investigates connections between historical and contemporary notions of the closet and discusses the installation Scope³ (2007) presented at Red Gallery Contemporary Art Space, Melbourne. It is with the artwork Scope³ that my art practice initiated a renewed mode of investigating the complicated space of the closet by focusing on the homosexual beat. Through making, material exploration and testing presentation styles, Scope³ responded to the complexities of the closet while attempting to demonstrate the movement between virtual (cyber) and material (real) worlds that operated in gay culture at the time of production: 2006 – 2007. Scope³ utilised concepts of public and private, together with architectural metaphors, to connect notions of the inside and outside. I consider various art works and focus on the artwork of Australian artists Neil Emmerson and Nikos Pantazopulos who have also explored connections between representation and the closet and deliberates on writings such as Elizabeth Grosz’s Architecture from the Outside (2001) and Richard Sennett’s The Craftsman (2008).

Chapter 3 moves the project into an examination of straight-acting by gay men. My analysis revolves primarily around performance and costume through posing for the camera. Visibility and Honoré Balzac’s codes of identification (posture, gesture, speech and costume) are examined through archetype, stereotype and the everyday. I analyse how the selected original image(s) are re-read outside their original commercial imperative and intended demographic within the context of my project. Australian artists Tony Garifalakis’ Duchess (2009) and Bindi Cole’s Not Aboriginal Enough (2009) are discussed due to the political nature of their artworks and practice that combine production methods and concepts.

Chapter 4 addresses a bridging work that evolved from The Invisible Man (2009) and the this is not a drill (2013) projects (the latter is discussed in chapter five). The WOOF (2011-12) series endeavoured to extend understandings of the closet’s presence through heteronormative masculinity based in types projected via mass media. The works asked how interpretations of straight-acting could be explored through representations of performance and costume. The series posed the question: is the label of straight-acting camouflage for gay men who want to pass as straight, or is it a problematic alternative term for masculine gay men that inadvertently produces a version of the closet?

Chapter 5 discusses how Magritte’s famous text ‘this is not a pipe’ (1928 – 1929) informed my art exhibition this is not a drill (2013) and uses reproduction and the
copy in an attempt to re-navigate the notion of straight-acting. As a result of this I use Magritte’s painting ‘The Treachery of Images’ (1928-1929) as a benchmark for discussions on male representation and language. I discuss this component of my project by examining other artworks such as Australian artist Christian Thomson’s Black Gum triptych (2010) and reference French theorist Jean Baudrillard’s philosophical treatise Simulacra and Simulation (1981) and Michel Foucault’s essay this is not a pipe (1983) to explore the construction and performance of gender and sexual orientation in my project’s collection of image and text.

My conclusion addresses my project’s findings through the answers to my research questions. I navigate how the project has endeavoured to communicate a deeper understanding of questions on the cultural use of the multiple and copy; questions that have arisen from the studio research tackling the political and social imperatives of gay visibility, embedded within the project. The conclusion examines the premise for the examination exhibition presented in the School of Art Gallery at RMIT University in 2014. This conclusion employs the examination work titled Patterns of Behaviour as the finale of the project in order to muse over current positions of gay masculinity, visibility and the coming out right of passage with art production and future directions, and to ask, where to from here?
CHAPTER 1: THE UBQUITOUS PRINT: WE ARE EVERYWHERE!

‘The Question is not whether we all have identities, but whether we are prepared to recognise them’ (Younge, 2010, p. 40).

METHODOLOGIES

My project commenced by using a central conceptual premise of aligning the inherent printmaking qualities of sameness and difference (embedded in the processes of reproducibility) with gender and sexual orientation. Over the course of my candidature it became increasingly evident that the project also incorporated essential photographic elements, not as a separate fine-art medium but as an integral component of an expanded print-based practice. Being print-based the project included multiple mediums with reproductive capabilities, hand stencilling, object-based works, photocopying and high-end inkjet printing. The project has interwoven and embedded photography within the traditions of a print-based practice through the use of found image and analogue photographic processes such as photographic silkscreen printing.

The characteristic features of reproducibility within printmaking are echoed and entrenched in photography. The links between these two artistic modes are based in the reproductive matrix’s inherent qualities of production that lead to the technical and philosophical concepts of sameness and difference. It has been these qualities that were used as a base for investigating gender with sexual orientation and identity. Since the genesis of my project I have drawn from the history of printmaking’s marginalisation through the multiple as an analogy for social and cultural otherness combined with photography’s practitioners ongoing anxiety about its position within contemporary art worlds. It is because of this that I refer to my medium base as printmedia and when needed, discern the nuances of, and between printmaking and photography.

COLLECTION AND ARCHIVE

From 2006 to 2012 the studio research for this project involved collecting primary source material from the daily and weekly local Melbourne newspapers THE AGE, Herald Sun, mX and MCV (Melbourne Community Voice). These were selected as being relative to the project due to their readership numbers and positions within
the general and gay communities in my local area. The collection of these images resulted in a studio archive of male images that projected masculine identity in various styles to the local community. The four ‘everyday’ newspapers were selected as a type of litmus test for masculine representation presented in local Melbourne printmedia. The archive was then surveyed, edited and used as empirical base of images that could be readily scanned, altered, printed and re-inserted into a queer context through printmedia. The studio process continually examined, analysed, and reappraised the found images and text to connect heteronormativity and homonormativity through established and alternative readings of masculine representation. It was this process that drew attention to the project’s preoccupation with the found photographic image. As American art theorist Hal Foster deliberates,

these sources are familiar, drawn from the archives of mass culture, to ensure a legibility that can then be disturbed or detourné; but they can also be obscure, retrieved in a gesture of alternative knowledge or counter-memory (Foster 2004, p. 4).

My project’s collection of images focused on everyday print media’s projected masculine representations to create new artworks that questioned how gay men identify as masculine.

GENDER AND ORIENTATION

As such, I have employed an understanding and reading of masculinity embedded in modern contemporary Western culture to this project. According to Australian sociologist R.W. Connell,

All societies have cultural accounts of gender, but not all have the concept of ‘masculinity’. In its modern usage the term assumes that ones behaviour results from the type of person one is. That is to say, an unmasculine person would behave differently… This conception presupposes a belief in individual difference and personal agency. In that sense it is built on the conception of individuality that developed in early modern Europe with the growth of colonial empires and capitalist economic relations. But the concept is also relational. ‘Masculinity’ does not exist except in contrast to ‘femininity’ (Connell 1995, p. 67).
I positioned my exploration of gay masculinity with this problematic duality in definitions of types using the multiple from reproducible processes as a principal form of otherness. Through my project I have situated printmedia within in the realm of the feminine - my direct gendered Other. I have come to recognise that the many methods of print practice and systems of reproduction carry an inherently feminine quality. It is through the reproductive matrix of block, plate, screen or digital file that printmedia begins its alignment with notions of otherness.

By using the idiom ‘red herring’ as the subtitle to her essay *Authenticity in Printmaking*, artist and theorist Ruth Pelzer-Montada (2001) signalled how perceptions of secrets or false clues through distracting or misleading information may detract from the important issue of determination of the role played by authenticity and the original. As Pelzer-Montada states,

> The concept of the ‘matrix’ as the womb - its literal Latin meaning - is where another is formed. This term has lately become popular, especially in printmaking. The gender aspect of the term (‘matrix’ is also linked to ‘mother’) is especially relevant in the light of printmaking’s marginal status as masculine high art’s ‘feminine’ ‘other’. That the matrix with its potential for reproduction was hidden for so long (or even destroyed, as we know) is therefore not surprising as it is the visible evidence of authenticity’s dreaded ‘other’, the source, the space of the multiple or the copy (2001, p. 5).

Pelzer-Montada’s declaration of the ‘mother’ matrix helps position print-media in a feminist dialogue while the ‘other’ suggests alternative identity relations within the tradition of printmaking and repeated image making. Gilles Delueze writes of the ‘paradox’ that repetition creates by ‘the fact that one can speak of repetition only by virtue of the change or difference that it introduces into the mind that contemplates it’ (1993, p. 70), when he discussed David Hume’s 1738 *Treatise of Human Nature*. By following this connection, ‘sameness’ interrupts the binary systems of gender identification while the repetitive nature of print production contributes to this discussion through the multiple or copy. The action of making repeated images for my project ensures that sameness is embedded in the inevitable differences that occur. It could be argued that through process, printmedia is connected to the identity politics of gay, lesbian and queer sameness by positing difference as analogous to the ongoing and repetitive act of ‘coming out’. In my project the concepts of authenticity and original are fundamental to the term of ‘straight acting’ and the dichotomy of gay masculinity and the closet with printmedia.

**PRINT AS OTHER**

The basis of all print mediums is the facility to reproduce from an original matrix. During the printing process the artist aims to produce an edition or set of prints that are the same. These are usually based on a *bon à tirer*, or artist proof against which all the other prints are measured. Generally, an edition of prints is made to be the same and with the production of multiples differences inevitably occur. The artist-printer is discerning towards any difference that is not predetermined: variations within the traditional edition are usually rejected or used for another purpose. It is this search for sameness that can be aligned with
gender and the scrutiny of difference with sexual orientation/identity.4

In *Difference and Repetition* (1968) Delueze outlined a possible path of exploration of found images through notions of Kant’s production of objects that incorporated variety and multiplicity which have assisted in my project’s exploration. He writes,

‘The reciprocal synthesis of differential relations as the source of the production of real objects – this is the substance of ideas in so far as they bathe in the thought-element of qualitability5. A triple genesis follows from this: that of qualities, produced in the form of differences between real objects of knowledge; that of space and time in the form of conditions for the knowledge of differences; that of concepts in the form of conditions for the difference or the distinction between knowledges them selves’ (Deleuze, 1968, p. 173).

In the context of my project this triple genesis follows the form of real and virtual performative codes, masculine performance and the architectural metaphor of the closet.

It could be argued that print as other is an outmoded view, as the printed image is ubiquitous in global culture, especially if we are operating within a post-medium/painting art world (Krauss 2001). Through the project’s praxis, I question this. Embedded in the art community and art education systems is a historical hierarchy that attempts to maintain the status quo of painting as alpha or the norm. According to Swedish artist Lars Olsson,

‘art research always originates in a social context that has a normative system… there is fear amongst artists of formulating oneself in terms of research methods. But for me the methods are important. It could be about the completely invisible normative system that is inherent in the research group’ (West 2012, p. 8).

It is from this perspective that I position printmedia within a local and global ‘painting-normative’ art community. The ‘painting-normative’ art world operates in the realm of the art ‘original’ that is authenticated via uniqueness, cultural significance and commercial value—or, as Walter Benjamin states, ‘the genuineness of a thing is the quintessence of everything about it since its creation that can be handed down, from its material duration to the historical witness it bears’ (1936, p. 7). Printmedia challenges this via its reproductive technology by producing copies or impressions from a matrix. Benjamin predicted printmedia’s position in otherness by stating, ‘it substitutes for its unique incidence a multiplicity of incidences’ (1936, p. 7). It is by aligning with the otherness of print that I generate a queer space for further investigation and dialogue.

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4. The rejected print and its relationship to the final edition could also metaphorically exemplify historic notions of homophobia, but that is another discussion.

5. According to Daniella Voss (2013, p. 193) in *Transendential Conditions of Thought*, qualitability pertains to differential genetic elements insofar as they are related to one another and even give rise to higher orders of differential relations.
THE ANXIETY OF REPRODUCIBILITY

It is through Benjamin’s (1936) notion of ‘multiplicity of incidences’ that printmaking and photography link beneath the banner of printmedia and in the realm of Other through a history of what writer and curator Geoffrey Batchen refers to as a ‘compliant ubiquity’ (1999, p. 5) or an ‘effacing ubiquity’ (1999, p. 76). Batchen claims that, ‘photography has no coherent or unified history of its own other than a selective documentation of its various uses and effects’ (1999, p. 5). He associates this lack of historic continuity to identity based on institutional power structures. Citing the English critic John Tagg from the Currency of Photography (published in 1979), Batchen writes:

Photography as such has no identity. Its status as a technology varies with the power relations which invest it. Its nature as a practice depends on the institutions and agents which define it and set it to work. Its function as a mode of cultural production is tied to definite conditions of existence, and its products are meaningful and legible only within the particular currencies they have (1979, p. 165).

Within the framework of my project, printmaking and photography act as painting’s queer cousins through their reproductive, ubiquitous and repetitive natures producing an anxiety within the work that is yet to be resolved. Tagg’s claim that photography has ‘no identity’ is further problematised through photography’s ubiquity, multiple uses and genres, as evident in both art photography, photographic documentation and commercial photographic realms. As art historian Eric Rosenberg points out the medium’s ‘documentary status has always been its bread and butter’ (1999, cited in Batchen, p. 190). Combined with the ongoing campaign of distinguishing fine art print practices from the commercial print realm, a joint scenario emerges that could activate an identity crisis within printmedia.

Within this state of medium anxiety the modes of making, naming and classification in printmedia are forever at the fore. As British curator Gill Saunders points out,

the print historian Carl Zigrosser coined the neologism “serigraphy” to differentiate fine art applications of screenprinting from their commercial equivalents. The term “Giclée” has likewise been invented to distinguish fine art digital prints (2009, p. 38).

This manner of naming was introduced to discern differences between modes of production. However, it is this very tension that has prompted my investigation of an expanding dialogue around the paradoxical nature of the print original through the nature of reproducibility, the copy and multiplicity and my use of found images.
DEPLOYING THE FOUND IMAGE

My project employed the repetition of found photographic images and text in an attempt to create a reflective space for the viewer. I also applied various modes of installation practices that strived to construct an alternate reality or imagined future space. By appropriating found images as the basis of new artworks my project revisited ongoing concerns of authorship and ownership by posing questions such as: Who is the true author of the work? How does the initial image impact on the re-authored intention?

With these questions my project differentiated its methodology from those of other artists that have appropriated images and operated in the realm of reproducibility. American artists Richard Prince and Andy Warhol are key examples of artists who have employed this mode of practice. In the mid 1970s Prince’s appropriation of photographing advertisements from magazines and packaging to create new works became known as ‘rephotography’. This mode of production can also be aligned with American photographer Mark Klett, leader of the Rephotographic Survey Project from 1977 to 1982. American writer Karen Breuer’s interview with Klett revealed that whilst he may have been credited with coining the term ‘rephotography’ Klett himself, referenced scientists as the originators of the practice stating:

Geologists had laid the best groundwork for accurate “repeat photography”, as they called it. The basic idea was to find the locations from which historical photographs had been taken and then make new photos from exactly the same vantage points. The goal was to do the work with as much accuracy as possible. So, in addition to reproducing the camera position, accurate rephotography tried to duplicate the time of day, time of year, weather conditions, and so on in which the original photograph was taken (Breuer 2006, p. 4).

Prince and Klett’s approaches offer an insight into my project’s methodology with two disparate modes of visual practice that herald the use of established practices. This is distinguished from my and other artists’ strategy of rephotography through the use of repeated images and multiple productions. For example Australian artist Lesley Duxbury combines digital photography and analogue printmaking practices to produce images based on atmospheric phenomena, weather patterns, and cloud formations which are at times merged with text or pose text as image. The diptych work, Then & Now (2004) highlights Duxbury’s use of printmedia’s inherent qualities of sameness and difference. In an article titled Death of digital printmaking? Australian art historian Sasha Grishin quotes Duxbury as saying,

I used a photograph that I had taken of the sky of Hampstead Heath in London on the same day of the year and time that John Constable had 180 years previously. Curiously I found the cloud formations to be extraordinarily similar (Grishin 2010, p.17).

Duxbury’s intermixing of ‘repeat photography’ and printmedia process moves the work through memory as well as temporal and natural phenomenon in a romantic yet scientific manner. The queerness of this work is suggested by difference yet what is sought is
sameness. It is this subversion of sameness through difference that aligns Duxbury and other artists’ print practices with notions of queerness. Queer being whatever is at odds with the normal, the legitimate, the dominant.

American artist Andy Warhol’s utilisation of repeated imagery is worth noting here. His exploitation of serial production and repetition offers a historical mode of practice that was built on throughout my project. Hal Foster refers to Warhol’s silkscreen works as traumatic realism through ‘shocked subjectivity and compulsive repetition’ (1996, p. 130). He quotes Warhol from Gene Swenson’s, *Art News* interview saying, ‘I want to be a machine’ (Foster 1996, p. 130) yet the complete answer Warhol gave to Swenson’s question is as follows: ‘No. The reason I’m painting this way is that I want to be a machine, and I feel that whatever I do and do machine-like is what I want to do’ (Swenson 1963, p. 2).

Warhol’s mechanical desire manifests through printed reproductive concepts of sameness with difference revealed through the repetition that is embedded in print production. But where Warhol created a unique new work printed on the same substrate or glued together my project’s emphasis was on repeated image making and installing works together by utilising components or individual prints that then become one.

**DESIRE AND PUNCTUM**

In *Camera Lucida* (1980) Roland Barthes developed the studium and the punctum. He defined these terms through the process of looking and seeing particular images that are categorised as cultural or historical (studium) and individual or familial (punctum), a
relationship that is established between the ‘Operator and Spectator’, ‘Creator and Consumer’, or, for my purposes the Artist and Viewer. According to English writer Brian Dillon in his article, ‘Rereading: Camera Lucida by Roland Barthes,’ ‘few of Barthes’ heirs have ever reproduced or fully accounted for the strange air of searching and susceptibility that permeates his brief “note”’ (2011, para. 9). Applied to the core enquiry of my project Dillon’s ‘strange air of searching and susceptibility’ activates a sense of looking to verify authenticity which could be applied in relation to straight-acting and the closet. While Barthes’ self-proclamation as a ‘spectator’ and his ‘interest in photography only being for purely sentimental reasons; not as a question (a theme) but as a wound’ (1980, p. 21), suggests an intuitive mode of looking and seeing that relates to the traditional notions of ‘gaydar’. At this juncture Barthes’ ‘wound’ would be the ongoing performance of heteronormative masculinities or straight-acting by gay men that assist in producing the homosexual closet. Barthes’ explanation of his search for meaning past the studium and the punctum has an appeal that resonates with the practice of reproductive art making and is matched by the act of reading image multiples dependent on a particular context and viewer.

User profiles are designed to advertise the user, to attract the critical eye of the browser and capture his attention, though this may rarely be achieved. As with most forms of advertising the profile is rather obvious in its intensions – it seeks out the browser in ways that are consciously foregrounded (2010, p. 107).

In my experience of browsing the site the type of images could be divided into two versions naked or clothed, identifiable or hidden yet both types of images in these profiles were advertising some form of desire. According to Mowlabocus (2010, p. 108) what usually acts as the punctum in these images are the incidental details or unintentional elements that ‘appear by accident within the frame’. He cross-references this with Barthes through ‘partial objects’ (p. 43) such as a cup on a table or coat over a chair that trigger interest to highlight that the ‘act of browsing gaydar is an intensely personal and solitary form of active looking’ (p. 108).

The intriguing interpretation of Barthes punctum raised by Mowlabocus returns me to the origin of my project, also based on Gaydar.com: however, I did not respond to the images on the Gaydar website in a way that Mowlabocus has pointed out. My initial response was to the text or label of straight-acting when browsing the website. It was not until I began mining my archive of male images that I initiated Barthes’ notions of the studium and punctum in my methodology.

6. Barthes’ French version La Chambre claire (translated as Camera Lucida) has the subtitle of “note on photography”.
7. Gaydar comes from a portmanteau of gay and radar. Gaydar is based on an intuitive sense of a person’s homosexual orientation gleaned through observation.
Through my project’s parameters the studium became the collection of male images from everyday print media to be archived, referenced and reused repeatedly. While the punctum was the selection of specific images based on my personal desire of body type, pose and clothes that resonated with Balzac’s codes of identification (gesture, posture, speech and costume).

This analysis of Barthes’ text combined with collage processes and methods that signal the literary cut-up technique used by American writer William S. Burrows in his novels of the 1950s and 1960s, and UK musician David Bowie in his song writing during the 1970s, forming the studio methodology of my project. According to Tim Head author of The Art of William S. Burrows: Cut-Ups, Cut-Ins, Cut-Outs:

The cut-up method was a continuation of the ideas of Tristan Tzara, which he described in How to Make a Dadaist Poem (Pour faire un poème dadaïste, 1920). Burroughs acquainted Brion Gysin with this method, who accidentally discovered or re-invented it in Paris in October 1959, when cutting out passe-partouts for watercolours with a Stanley knife (2012, para. 4).

The selected and reproduced images or found ‘readymade photographs’ therefore determined my medium and technical choices for print production. These choices were considered and purposeful to align with the conceptual and political imperatives of my project.

**PRACTICE: THE ART OF BEING GAY**

By employing a research practice based in reproductive technologies my project engaged with questions of gay male identity. Here I deploy American philosopher and gender theorist Judith Butler’s *On the Being of Gayness as Necessary Drag* (1991) to highlight the analogy of identity performance and the practical and theoretical underpinnings of my project. As the words gay and masculine together produce a paradox for many, straight-acting was spawned as a means of identifying a type of masculinity that was readily understood and accepted in certain facets of the gay and mainstream heterosexual communities.

The ongoing discourse surrounding straight-acting has diminished over the evolution of this project, as have the notions of ‘self-loathing’ and ‘gay homophobia’ associated with it. Yet as gay men have moved away from the use of this term, the alignment of gay masculinity appears to have adhered strongly to heteronormative representation, presentation and performance. When Butler wrote of,’Compulsory Heterosexuality’ setting itself up as the original, the true, the authentic; the norm that determines the real implies that ‘being’ a lesbian [or gay man] is always a kind of miming, a vain effort to participate’ (1990, p. 312). She thus enabled my practice-led project to move into a space (a studio space), that allowed for further questioning through the performance of image making, an analysis of found images and the
representation and repetition of gender; an ongoing queer performance. Butler goes on: ‘entire framework of copy and origin proves radically unstable as each position inverts into the other and confounds the possibility of any stable way to locate the temporal or logical priority of either term’ (1990, p. 313). She highlights the ebb and flow of gender and sexual identity. This is certainly affected by constant change in ones personal, social and political identity over time and experience.

It is through the practice of making artworks that the performance of gender is aligned with my project. According to Australian sociologist R.W. Connell ‘Masculinity is a configuration of practice within a system of gender relations’ (1995, p. 84). It is with Connell’s view of masculine practice (1995) and Butler’s ‘drag copy’ (1990) that my project engages with the practice of masculinity. As Connell declared,

Practice never occurs in a vacuum. It always responds to a situation, and situations are structured in ways that admit certain possibilities and not others. Practice does not proceed into a vacuum either. Practice makes a world. In acting, we convert initial situations into new situations. Practice constitutes and re-constitutes structures. Human practice is, in the evocative if awkward term of the Czech philosopher Karel Kosik, onto-formative. It makes the reality we live in (1995, p. 65).

My project’s reproductive methods and practice are a direct response to the use of the term straight acting by gay men within the realm of the cyber world and how it could effect gay visibility in the actual world.

QUEERING THE TRADITION

According to printmakers Donald Saff and Deli Sacilo in Printmaking: History and Process (1978) the numbering and signing of editioned prints has been ‘standard practice’ since the 1930s. This standard print numbering system uses fractions of the print number over the edition run to designate value for the discerning collector. This system works in two ways: firstly, it authenticates the print as an original that is limited in number, an oxymoron. Secondly, it sets up a form of pricing via the number of the prints in the edition and the number available: the basic economics of supply and demand.

Melbourne based Joel Gailer is a printmedia artist who takes this ‘standard practice’ very seriously and uses it within the work itself. Moving back and forth from the limited edition and the multiple, Gailer caused a sensation within the Australian printmaking community by winning the prestigious Fremantle Print Award with his work, hot process (2008).

Published in the August 2008 edition of the Australian Art Almanac, Gailer’s hot process used mass production

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8. According to Australian curator and art critic Ted Snell, the selection of Gailer for the Fremantle Print Award in 2008 was ‘An audacious choice by the judges, it will undoubtedly raise the ire of many practitioners while encouraging others to continue Gailer’s rethinking of the medium. If you wanted to turn a competition on its head, then this is just the way to do it, and perhaps after 30 years that’s what the Fremantle Print Award needs’ (Snell 2008, para 4).
as a form of fine art printmaking by inserting a page of white text on a black background announcing that, ‘printmaking is so hot right now’. In an artist statement released with the work Gailer declared,

I produce my own version of printmaking as mass produced unlimited print editions available at the cost of a magazine. The aesthetic is text and basic forms, commenting on print and popular culture simultaneously… I work outside the traditional concepts of unique object exclusivity, limited edition and gallery. My work is an attempt to democratize, inform, play, quote, humour and revitalise printmaking’ (Gailer 2008, p. 1).

Gailer’s use of standard print hierarchies and historical image production spans diverse genres of social and art positioning within mainstream culture. While Gailer’s use of ubiquitous everyday print processes also positions his practice in the sub-cultural realm of the print other through his use of reproducible technologies. This work questions printmaking’s fine art practice of the rarefied original print and the art market by disturbing the conventions of the limited edition.

Much like Gailer’s, my interest relates to the first component of so-called ‘standard practice’: authentication or, more precisely, the notion of the authentic or real. Throughout my project the choice of print-based processes to deliver ideas in multiples and
through a series is purposeful and political. As German philosopher and social critic Walter Benjamin deliberates, its being reproducible by technological means frees the work of art from its existence as a parasite upon ritual. The reproduced work of art is to an ever-increasing extent the reproduction of art designed for reproducibility… rather than being underpinned by ritual, it became to be underpinned by a different practice: politics (1936, p. 12).

PRACTICE AND REPETITION

According to educator and activist Robert J Hill, ‘queer is “living out” the notion that we can never adequately identify or codify identity; rather, it is about contingent knowledge whose meanings we must constantly re-evaluate and reinterpret’ (2004, p. 87). Queer is many things that cannot be defined in any single realm, real or virtual. The inclusive and nondelineated notion of queer always avoids definition. It is an ongoing construct that morphs into something else just when you think you have the answer. This transformative essence of queer is aligned with the essence of printmedia. This constant reinterpretting and re-evaluating to which Hill refers to, is an ongoing phenomenon within my experience of printmedia due to the paradox of the reproduced original and the ever-growing modes of technology.

Through both my project and my personal identity I have activated a sense of otherness by aligning my art production to the assertion of queer marginalised groups and for my purposes, the gay male component of the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transsexual, Intersex, Queer (GLBTQ) community. This large, diverse group operates with the notion of inclusivity while continuing to struggle with individual and group questions of belonging and acceptance. Like the GLBTQ community, the print community (local and global) is inclusive and multi faceted in its approaches and intentions. The multiple approaches, mediums and demographics that operate within its sphere trigger ongoing debates surrounding questions such as ‘What is a print?’ and ‘What is not a print?’. Those questions are similar to ‘What is masculine?’ and ‘What is not?’ As British columnist and author Gary Younge asks, Who are We and does it really matter in the 21st Century?

No identity is homogeneous. But for a social identity (as opposed to a personal identity) to be viable it cannot be so porous that large numbers of those whom it should include fail to recognise it as meaningful while large numbers whom it should not include believe they are part of it (2010, p. 78).

In 2007 Australian artist Neil Emmerson exhibited a multi-media work at Blue Oyster Gallery, Dunedin NZ, titled, Are we there yet…? In relation to printmedia and identity politics this is still the question many ask of the concepts relating to freedom of expression and gay liberation. Emmerson’s artwork Are we there yet…? is played on a monitor, set into the gallery wall with a looped colour segment from the musical fantasy film The Wizard of Oz (1939). Over the monitor is an opaque sheet of perspex distorting the image into moving swatches of colour. In front of these morphing colours is a plinth with a single cast brogue shoe painted red representing a masculine version of Dorothy’s red shoes from the Hollywood film.
The repetitive loop of *Are we there yet...?* brings to mind Deleuze’s *Difference and Repetition* quotation of Hume: ‘Repetition changes nothing in the object repeated, but does change something in the mind which contemplates it’ (1978, p. 70). Emmerson’s work indicates a strong awareness of being ‘print informed’ within a practice that can move between disciplines and mediums that utilise the inherent qualities of reproducibility. Film offers the perfect antidote to sameness because it morphs into something different frame by frame. Through the repeated and looped image, Emmerson plays two parts, while he indicates with his opening question that the journey is not over yet, he is also the frustrated parent responding with ‘nearly there’, using a silent yet blurred portrayal of Judy Garland travelling down the yellow brick road, over and over again. While the red brogue shoe masculinizes Dorothy, it also suggests a reframing of Cinderella into ‘Cinderfella’. In his exhibition response, *Act Natural*, Emmerson continued to ask questions, ‘Can we, do we, construct ourselves through our practices or can we construct our practice through ourselves?’ (2007, p. 26). It is from the position of artist that my print practice and self-identity are intertwined. They inform each other to construct a creative space for production that is distinctly queer and thus transformative in the process of making.

**MOVING ON**

Embedded within the production of prints and reproductive based works will always be the notion of the Other, constructed against the matrix ‘mother’. Through the production methods the offspring of the matrix can be transformative or transformed allowing the printed form to move easily between copy and

Figure 3 | Neil Emmerson, *Are we there yet...?* 2007, Looped moving image on television with acrylic perspex cover with bronze cast painted red, dimensions variable. Image courtesy of the artist.
original, double and unique—all dependent on the artist’s intention. In *Simulations* French philosopher Jean Baudrillard muses, ‘Being and appearance are melted into a common substance of production and work’ (1983, p. 94). It is the coming together of production and work or, in this context, image through print production that continues to fascinate print-based artists. As Baudrillard states, it is through the reversal of production and reproduction that, ‘we leave behind the counterfeit to enter (re)production’ (1983, p. 96). Like definitions of queer, reproducible art forms are constantly moving through unknown territories and revisiting old ones that have or have not changed. Therefore I position my project within the contemporary art world making a space for the Other through difference.
CHAPTER 2: SCOPE³

Figure 4 | Richard Harding. Scope: wall 2007. Digital photograph, dimensions variable.
Figure 5 | Richard Harding, Scope: condom 2007, Screenprinted acrylic on rag paper with acrylic mirror, 200cm x 500cm.
Figure 6 | Richard Harding, Scope: wall 2007, Plan printed photograph pinned sections, dimensions variable.
Figure 7 | Richard Harding, Scope: wall 2007, Detail plan printed photograph pinned sections.
Figure 8 | Richard Harding, Scope: wall 2007, Detail screenprinted acrylic on rag paper and acrylic mirror with plan printed photograph.
Figure 9 | Richard Harding, *Scope*: installation East View 2007, Plan printed photograph pinned sections with acrylic mirror, dimensions variable.
Figure 10 | Richard Harding, *Scope*: installation East View 2007, Detail screenprinted acrylic on rag paper and acrylic mirror with plan printed photograph.
Figure 11 | Richard Harding, Scope’s installation East View 2007, Detail plan printed photograph pinned sections with acrylic mirror, dimensions variable.
Figure 12 | Richard Harding, Scope: installation East View 2007, Plan printed photograph pinned sections with acrylic mirror, dimensions variable.
The artwork Scope³ (2007) transitioned my research into a realm of investigation that allowed the exploration of the dual spatial domains of the virtual and material to address the performance of gender with public and private space. My print based installation Scope¹ explored my initial research into masculine representation, gay identity, the closet, and engagement of the local beat. As the title of this work and chapter suggests, the word scope implies the possibility of numerous interpretations and perceptions. To scope is to look, search for something, check for possibilities or see what range something has. The semantics of the word therefore imply multiple subtexts.

Unlike the cyber world, where identities and performances can be constructed and manipulated rapidly with relative safety, the local beat operates in real time with actual and immediate consequences. Whilst a certain degree of invisibility is required due to the threat of arrest or identification, there also needs to be some form of display or visual recognition to result in a connection with another man. The challenge with Scope³ was to explore a representation of virtual and material space through an installation work, while positioning anybody who entered the gallery within a spatial arrangement that could be read in multiple ways. Within the framework of my project, the action of scoping was activated in the making, reflection, installing and potential reading of the work.

The presentation of Scope³ at Red Gallery Contemporary Art Space in North Fitzroy Melbourne was stimulated by my ongoing fascination with the concepts of the inside/outside (interior/exterior) through the architectural metaphor of the closet and the anxieties surrounding the performance of heteronormative masculinities by gay men. The initial objective for Scope³ was to explore multiple readings of the closet in the actual or real world and concepts of the virtual through the cyber world where the project’s initial trigger of straight-acting comes from. In his book Closet Space (2000) American cultural geographer Michael P. Brown states that, ‘closets are spatial strategies that help one arrange and manage an increasingly complicated life’ (2000, p. 7). In my project, the reader and the viewer are one, so what Brown states here applies to both:

‘the reader must sort out the similarities and differences being carried by any metaphor, according to interactionists. This implies a complex and invested model of reading, since readers must work both to recognise and decode the truth and meaning of the metaphor’. (Brown 2000, p. 9)
In the context of my project Brown’s notion of a ‘complicated life’ inhabited the material and cyber worlds that gave rise to the dilemma of positioning the ‘closet’ within any one particular situation or location.

This would have been a futile engagement given the ever-morphing attitudes that face not only gays and lesbians but anyone who, for whatever reason, positions themselves or aspects of themselves in a psychological closet. Brown’s reading of the closet metaphor is based in geographic and literary discussions that proved poignant to my project. He acknowledges that, ‘the slip and sway of meaning in a spatial metaphor does not necessarily imply rejecting any considerations of the spatiality of the process it signifies’ (Brown 2000, p. 15). It is the ‘spatiality of the process’ (p. 15) of closeting paired with locations, virtual and material, that correlate to Scope²’s genesis. The spatial production within Scope² was established to experiment with the virtual and material notions of the closet and masculinity while the process of installing or presenting artwork suggests the act of ‘coming out’.

The investigative questions imperative to creating Scope² centred on how straight-acting is perceived by onlookers and activated by gay men in different social spaces other than the internet. Was straight-acting a convenient cover up for those leading double lives, those unsure of their sexual orientation? Or is it a simulation of a particular method of representing their male selves based on heteronormative models at particular times and locations? In the virtual world of websites such as gaydar.com.au the usual presumption is that most users are homosexual or bisexual. This is mirrored in the assumption that most men in a gay bar would be gay, bisexual or at least gay friendly. English academic Sharif Mowlabocus (2010) positions this as normalising the space through its title and dominant clientele or demographic. He writes,

In opposition to ‘mainstream’ space being seen in a gay venue confers a queer status upon the subject without further non-verbal queues. The space itself acts as a form of ‘outing’. Thus being seen in a queer-coded space, serves to render homosexuality visible, making the subject ‘part of the scene’ as it were—a member of the club (Mowlabocus 2010, p. 93).

He expands this into the virtual realm by stating:

non-physical space can also be seen to operate in similar ways and while websites are often coded as heterosexual by default being ‘seen’ on Gaydar can offer a sense of place while also operating as a marker of queerness. If, on Gaydar, everyone is assumed to be gay, then identifying as gay within online interactions is to identify as ‘normal’ (Mowlabocus 2010, p. 93).

Considering this, how does this play out in actual spaces like a local homosexual beat where historically the performance of stereotyped masculinities were constructed and enacted to attract other men and camouflage against danger? Originally the location of a homosexual beat was based in secrecy and concealment due to fears of persecution and prosecution. As Australian artist Neil Emmerson warns in his dissertation, surrender, penance, IWYS, ‘beat sex is illegal and men can be persecuted under the legal definition of ‘criminal public nuisance” (2000, p. 37).
Scope was concerned predominately with the performance of masculinity in public spaces, and positioned the beat as an eroticised closet set in open view to the local community. In Closet Space, Michael P. Brown analyses a selection of publications such as Between the Acts (Porter and Weeks 1991) from the UK and USA, Friends and Lovers: Gay Men Talk about the Families they Create (Preston 1995), (easily representative of Australian gay culture, given Western ‘sameness’) on gay men's oral history to discuss how, urban space can enable and constrain men's sexuality and desires. Typically the men discuss sites such as early gay bars, cruising areas, tearooms (American) and cottages (English). These [public toilets] are closets where the gay body can act on its desire, where male bodies can sexually interact – but only so long as the site remains hidden or concealed (Brown 2000, p. 45).

According to Brown 'the closet can be thought of as a space that is contextually important for the performance of sexuality—and the sex it drives' (2000, p. 47). I would add that the prelude to this is the style or type of masculinity performed that initiates these encounters. Brown continues by highlighting the importance of the site of the beat and how this manifests different modes of performance where 'people [men] are negotiating the possibilities of these geographies of desire and modifying their behaviour accordingly’ (p. 47). Scope attempted to address and explore the dichotomy of straight-acting with gay masculinity that was based on seeing, being seen yet not seen through the action of performance.

CONSTRUCTION

The collection of newspapers and magazines as the base resource for my research assisted in referencing the local, mainstream and LGBTIQ print media. By 2007 when Scope was presented at Red Gallery Contemporary Art Space the hundreds of male images and newspaper headlines within my studio collection had been archived into discerning piles to be scanned and manipulated through digital software. My studio walls became a constantly evolving ‘wonder-wall’ of men and descriptive text. The preliminary works shifted in scale from posters to handbills and pamphlets then back again until the work acquired a frenetic and confused appearance.

Through ongoing reflection and trial collage installations of image and text, the multiple readings of the layered constructed pictures began to become streamlined while the combination of text and image began to separate. As the newspaper headlines became dominant the studio investigation took on a more collage-based method referencing the literary cut-ups of writer William Burroughs and musician David Bowie through the methods discussed in the previous chapter. By constructing scenarios using newspaper headlines from the news of the day the descriptive texts manoeuvred the preliminary works into an ‘imagined’ space. Each viewer had the possibility of reading the men and scenarios differently. This activated a concept of virtuality or as Elizabeth Grosz claims, ‘The text we read may be in real space, but to the extent that it is comprehensible to us, it also exists in a state of virtuality’ (Grosz 2001, p. 79).
The use of ‘text as image’ was actuated in an oversized barcode constructed of mirror and paper, enabling Scope to give the impression the work was absent of male representation. During an interview with English art theorist Karen Raney American artist Bill Viola expands on this concept:

when the word C-A-R evokes an image in your mind, it is very personal and the more literally and specifically that a writer describes the car, the more his or her specific image becomes defined in your mind. However it is never absolutely the same image that is in the mind of the writer (Raney, 2003, p. 72).

Within my Scope installation text as image operated as analogy for straight-acting and only revealed representations of men when read by the viewer. Thus Scope offered an individualised image in the mind of the reader/viewer.

Enhancing this graphic pun on visibility was the final rendition of the text for installation that was screen-printed in high sheen black ink on matt black rag paper. The viewer’s progression through the space activated a play of light and movement designed to entice the viewer to ‘notice’ and read the camouflaged text that was present in the barcode. This underlined the notions of visible/invisible and seen/unseen, indicating the driving concern of the closet. As British conceptual artist Victor Burgin discusses in Photographic Practice and Art Theory,

Material production and language production both stem from the same need to order the environment. The human labourer must learn how to differentiate and compose his materials. He must learn to form what is natural (the stone, he cries) into what is cultural (the axe, the word). Language is an artefact amongst other surfaces, an instrument amongst other instruments by which man organises his environment (2001, p. 67).

This combination of material production and language or text assemblage was constructed within Scope through the materiality of mirror, paper and ink using photography and printed text. The organised open secret of the beat space is simulated and transplanted into the refined gallery space producing an eroticised, closeted conundrum that is embedded in our culture.

LOCATION AND SPACE

Languages or naming systems are utilised in the cyber world to mimic architectural terminology such as pop up windows, chat rooms and web sites. Scope attempted to navigate through the cyber world and into the real world of the gallery space to highlight the transitional space of the homosexual beat where codes of masculine representation and construction are manoeuvred to attract prospective sexual partners and camouflage from unwanted attention. This fine balance of visible/invisible highlights the grey area between the inside and the outside binary. By positioning the mirror work and a photographic referent of a beat toilet block (situated in the park opposite the gallery) Scope created a space that attempted to suggest connections between the virtual space of the web with the material and metaphoric space of architecture.
When Irish art critic and writer Brian O’Doherty answered the knock at the front door from Inside the White Cube he found Marcel Duchamp there,

inside before we know it, and after his visit – he never stays too long – the house is never the same. He first visited the house’s “white cube” in 1938 and invented the ceiling – if invention is making us conscious of what we agree not to see (1976, p. 66).

Here O’Doherty aligns the house and the white cube (gallery space) through knowledge of the ceiling that has always been there yet thanks to Duchamp we were made aware. In Scope¹ the metaphor of ‘the house as self’ was aligned to the psychological space of the closet through the architecture of the gallery space. These metaphoric architectural alignments of knowing and seeing were suggested in both the virtual and material spaces created by Scope².

RED GALLERY

As the work Scope¹ progressed, it became essential to explore how to interweave the virtual and the material within artworks created for my research. This led to the two focal points of the installation; the constructed barcode and the photograph of the public toilet block in Edinburgh Gardens North Fitzroy.

Located diagonally across the road from Red Gallery Contemporary Art Space the brick structure of the Edinburgh Garden’s toilet became a symbol of masculinity through its use as a male toilet and the honourable work ethic of manual labour that built it.
As one of the few images photographed on location the Wall (2007) image was then presented in re-constructed components within the gallery. By means of pinning the plan-printed sections this single image becomes a subtle cross-reference to the multiple through the installation method and depiction of the repetitive generic brick surface of the toilet block.†

Although not a direct preparatory reference, Andy Warhol’s rarely seen or discussed Brick Wall (1976) also indicates an affiliation between practice and construction. Composed of six gelatin silver prints and stitched together to create a single image, the ‘joining’ of prints is what American academic William Ganis identifies as Warhol’s ‘compositional strategy’ (2001, p. 148). Scope’s reference to the image of the brick wall was pieced together with pins (to focus the viewer on the simulation of the outside, captured and presented) inside the gallery. The knowing viewer is potentially ‘dislocated’ by the closeness of the actual to the simulacrum of the wall and door depicted in the photograph. Ganis also notes of Warhol’s Brick Wall (1976),

The unitary bricks themselves, already repeating in a pattern nearly yield a singular composition. In this work, only a slightly aberrated angle in the otherwise perpendicular lines prevents one from seeing a continuous pattern. Upon closer examination, a spot (probably ill placed gum) marks a central brick in each of the prints and acts as the only signpost that cedes repetition (2001, p. 148).

9. The Edinburgh Gardens Beat photograph was taken due to a lack of visual documentation available on the architectural structures within the gardens.
Red Gallery Contemporary Art Space houses three distinct presentation spaces. Purposefully installed on opposite walls of the central gallery (2) Scope\(^3\) employed and activated this thoroughfare space to highlight the space ‘between’ as viewers walked through the work to enter the end point of the gallery space. This thoroughfare space offered a physical movement akin to scanning (or being scanned) that cross-referenced barcode scanning with the act of looking or scoping for others. Inadvertently activated through their presence, the digital photographic image and viewer were embedded into the mirrored barcode and virtually transported to the outside, in the park opposite the gallery.

Scope\(^3\)’s barcode used screenprinted text strips embedded in black paper to construct stories that offered a humorous look at the diversity of gay men and the subcultures in which they operate. Through word play, associations, double entendre, and symbols, text and numbers formed a visual charade to be de-coded or deciphered. The generic nature of these symbols, position the artwork in the everyday use of the computer and printmedia and underlined the notion of sameness. The picture codes or mirrored calligram could be deciphered over time or purely enjoyed for their minimal aesthetic. These modes of coding were constructed to speak of gay otherness from the mainstream’s own print media dialogue while questioning the commodification of desire.

Scope\(^3\)’s barcode referenced digital technologies which use binary code to function: on/off, yes/no, one/zero.
Yet within software programs these absolutes are also used to activate the variables of if/then/else to produce options beyond one and zero. In the context of Scope⁴ the binary offers a necessary beginning, a naming of sorts, to offer discussion on what is in between. This is the grey area that most people fall into. In Architecture from the Outside, Elizabeth Grosz declares, ‘the in-between is what fosters and enables the other’s transition from being the other—to one of its own becoming, to reconstituting another relation in different terms’ (2001, p. 94).

The mirror combines the two works, condom (2007) with Wall (2007) and inverts the viewer as the mounted strips of silkscreen-printed paper fracture them into the work. As the viewer enters the material virtual space of the mirror they see multiples of themselves at various angles and positions within the space. This allows for a questioning of how we view ourselves and others, while showing us what we present to the world as our external self, and maybe what we do not reveal. As Grosz states, ‘the mirror contains behind its surface an object of inverted identity with the real object, existing in virtual space, the space behind the plane of the mirror’ (2001, p. 80).

SITUATING SCOPE³

Australian artists Neil Emmerson and Nikos Pantazopoulos have both produced works that comment and critique the homosexual beat. The works IWYS (Emmerson, 1999) and How to make a monument (Pantazopoulos, 2013) both involve depictions of architectural structures built predominately with bricks set in public spaces that are void of human representation. Similar to Scope⁴ the mediums employed by these artists were based in reproductive technologies that move between photography, printmaking and sculpture each are known for their ability to make multiples.

Emmerson’s IWYS (1999) resulted in a suite of 13 unique state photo-lithographic and wood-block relief prints based on a found image from the Sydney Morning Herald newspaper. The image featured a photograph of the toilet block in Will Rogers Park, Beverly Hills, Los Angeles. This now infamous public convenience was where UK singer George Michael was arrested in April 1998 for ‘lewd act’ (Cornwell 1998, para. 4). Emmerson’s deployment of reproductive technologies through analogue and digital methodologies aligns with Scope⁵’s through the use of mainstream media. The connection to text is within the work’s title IWYS, an abbreviation for George Michael’s hit song ‘I Want Your Sex’ (1987). It is through the otherness of the reproduced image that Emmerson plays with his viewer’s understanding of what they are looking at, promoting ambiguity for the uninitiated. Emmerson camouflages his images of a local beat through what he refers to as a ‘technical pose’ (2000, p. 41) that references pointillism and impressionism but could also be a gesture to the pastel décor prints of the 1980s. These works fluctuate between the desire to tell and the desire to keep silent—to keep the secret going. Emmerson freely states he is personally at odds with the disclosure of the open secret of the beat stating: ‘Already I’ve given enough of the game away’, by discussing the acronym of IWYS (2000, p. 44).

In The Craftsman (2008), Richard Sennett examines ‘material consciousness’ and a sense of the maker’s ‘presence’ through a chapter titled ‘The Brickmaker’s
Sennett’s deliberations resonate with IWYS, Scope³ and How to make a Monument through notions of the ‘honest brick’. According to Sennett,

Honest brick describes brickwork in which all the bricks are laid, say, in a Flemish bond course come from the same kiln, and even more, “honest” brick evokes a building surface in which the brick-work is exposed rather than covered over: no cosmetics, no “pots of whore's rouge” have been applied to its face (2008, p. 138).

Emmerson’s and Pantazopoulos’ visual research of beat culture is firmly based within the cultural and architectural symbol of the ‘public convenience’. This connection can be followed through Emmerson’s image making and writing when he identifies the beat’s ‘most common and notorious manifestation [as] a toilet block in a public space’ (2000, p. 37). While Pantazopoulos (2013) is less direct, his work holds within it a pamphlet containing a ‘how-to’ or ‘do-it-yourself’ model plans for constructing one’s own model of the beat toilet block with the bricks being depicted on the front and back cover. This ‘cover(ing)’ is of interest more in the overall context of the wider project than Scope³ specifically so I will return to the notion of ‘the cover’ or ‘covering’ in Chapter Four. My focus here is the wall and its materiality of bricks and the process of bricklaying.

Within the framework of Scope³ the nature of the brick wall also brings to mind practitioners such as Australian artist Bianca Hester and her installation,
Please Leave These Windows Open Overnight to Enable the Fans to Draw In Cool Air during the Early Hours of the Morning (2009) at the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art (ACCA) Melbourne. For this work, Hester constructed a brick wall within the gallery space to combine the practice of relational aesthetics with scheduled performances of improvised exercises with guest appearances by volunteer participants and a horse. Operating in a similar genre Australian art duo Jen Berean & Pat Foster’s Monument to Progress (2010) was two brick walls erected facing each other that mediated spatial considerations with the architecture of the Shepperton Art Gallery for ART#1 (2010)10. Although the practice focus of these artists diverges from the aims of my project, the work connects through the materiality and use of bricks and brick walls which are used as a metaphor for practice, construction and power. In, It’s all wall: a recent history of the wall in contemporary art practice published in Un magazine Australian artist and writer Spiros Panigirakis affirms:

Both Bianca Hester and Jen Berean & Pat Foster have used the Besser blocks to stage a jail-yard production, only played in and out in two distinct performative registers. By making the brick a central actor, Hester and Berean & Foster appropriate embedded conventions of power that connote an everyday context. Perhaps these works replace one institutional code for another — a space of modernist display displaces designed spaces of regulation (municipal sports yards, disciplinary and education precincts) (2012, p. 8).

Scope1 is not attempting to make the brick a central character or as Panigirakis puts it an, ‘actor’. Instead, the brick is but a component symbol of construction that stacks or layers notions of masculine labour and repetitious work. The Scope1 photographic image of the brick wall operates as documentation of an actual place or site of performance and as a metaphor for a constructed identity.

Nikos Pantazopoulos’ How to make a monument (2013) contains three distinct yet related research projects: ‘A Spartan Monument’ (2010 – 2013), ‘Ongoing Monument to Indecent Activities ’399BC-’ (OMIA399BC-) (2012) and ‘A Monument to Toilets: An Exhibition and Procession’ (MTEP) (2010 - 2012). Like Emmerson and myself, Pantazopoulos uses his personal experiences and identity to inform projects created through reproductive processes, found objects and images and installation. According to Pantazopoulos, These projects respond to my own experience growing up as the son of Greek immigrants, and specifically to what this meant for the way that I ‘came out’ as a gay man, the way I encountered the city as a space (2013, para. 3).

Pantazopoulos’ How to make a monument (2013) articulates the ongoing anxieties that gay men face in the metropolis when they have limited or no

10. ART#1 Regional Tour was a series of exhibitions that were exhibited concurrently at three regional Victorian galleries from April 2010. ART#1 was an initiative to bring the latest new works from Melbourne’s leading contemporary art space ACCA to regional Victoria.
information regarding meeting places. Although with the advent of the web and mobile technologies this is proving less likely today. How to make a monument highlights recent gay local history through a personal perspective. This work underscores the ongoing desire from the dominant heteronormative culture to rewrite queer histories though demolishing the local gay culture’s significant sites.\textsuperscript{11}

Pantazopoulos’ ‘Monument’ is, in his own words an ‘anti-monument’ activated through participatory processes, archives, and documentation of the patriarchal city which, ‘become a means to avoid both assimilation and the stereotypical image of homosexuality’ (2013, para. 4). The masculine structure of the Fitzroy Gardens toilet block (demolished in 2006) connects Pantazopoulos’ project to Scope\textsuperscript{2} through the materiality of brick, infamy and the realm of the closet gallery. Clifton-Taylor observes that brick-work imposes ‘a certain restraint… brick is anti-monumental… the smallness of the brick unit was not in tune with the grander… aspiration of the classicists’ (Clifton-Taylor 1972, cited in Sennett 2008).

It is through Pantazopoulos’ model of the brick and decorative slate entrance that this work stages a dual metaphoric symbol of gay masculinity and heteronormative performance. The construction of the model’s entrance is stylised into a geometric pattern not meant as deception but nonetheless operating as a simulation. The model’s brickwork is exposed to the viewer and resembles bricks named ‘old reds’ of the now-defunct local brick manufacturer, the Northcote Brick Company; although in the final rendition of the model they are rendered in white.

The Pantazopoulos model is not a replica, it is something more. It is homogenised through the working-class modelling of what seem to be ‘old reds’ yet individualised by its hand made construction that signal and present hints of the process and the artist himself. The craft of the construction processes are evident in the model, yet they are also distanced through the staged photographic production to become a print. Richard Sennett discusses a similar approach to simulation through the analogy of the stucco technique,

The sharp eyed reader will have spotted that although honest brick is an anthropomorphic construction, the stuccoed column simulation cut stone doesn’t make this animate claim. It’s just an artificial column. Few clients for a back yard grotto imagined their guests would be taken in; the pleasure would be in the self-conscious artifice of it all. Naturalness could be, in the hands of the craftsman, a more deceiving experience, as an artful construction that hid its art (2008, p. 140).

When Pantazopoulos exhibited How to make a Monument at Monash University Art Design & Architecture (MADA) Gallery Melbourne, the model and the photograph of the model were presented together,

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{11} For an expansive understanding of how and why dominant heteronormative cultures have attempted to rewrite queer histories ranging from the ancient world to the post-WWII era see Hidden from History: Reclaiming the Gay and Lesbian Past, Duberman, Vicinus, Chauncey (eds.) 1989.
\end{flushright}
allowing the viewer access to a constructed reality and an imagined representation (based on the real or actual) that reference each other. Although he does not propose the mirrored simulacrum found in Scope, we both pose questions on simulation and authenticity in relation to recent queer history and architectural metaphors of the self and the closet.

Pantazopoulos’ process-driven conceptual artworks feature modes of operation analogous to Emmerson’s depictions of the beat toilet block presented in IWYS. These appropriated photographic images were rendered into an abstraction of the closet metaphor through colour and the layering of various print methods. He uses these technical methods as a subtext for his conceptual and political advocacy of coming out through the act of making artworks. Emmerson explains,

In a number of these pieces [prints] the building is critically and formally reduced to a more sculptural form. The toilet block undergoes a metamorphosis into an abstract hard-edged, minimal, public sculpture. Any monument to homosexuality is as well by default a monument to modernism itself, the Homosexual being one of Modernism’s favourite demons (2000, p. 42).

Like IWYS and How to make a Monument, Scope suggests a monumental yet hidden presence through the motif of a public toilet block that interrogated concepts of public and private, inside and outside with modes of identification that led to the second trial exhibition of my project, The Invisible Man.
CHAPTER 3: THE INVISIBLE MAN

Figure 20 | Richard Harding Barcode Invisible Man 2009. Photocopy and lead pencil, 42cm x 29.7cm.
Figure 21 | Richard Harding *Barcode He is so Gay* 2009, Photocopy and lead pencil, 42cm x 29.7cm.
Figure 22 | Richard Harding *Barcode It was just a Bromance* 2009, Photocopy and lead pencil, 42cm x 29.7cm.
Figure 23 | Richard Harding *Barcode He is such a Girl* 2009, Photocopy and lead pencil, 42cm x 29.7cm.
Figure 24 | Richard Harding *Barcode Walk like a Man* 2009, Photocopy and lead pencil, 42cm x 29.7cm.
Figure 25 | Richard Harding *Barcode Talk like a Man* 2009, Photocopy and lead pencil, 42cm x 29.7cm.
Figure 26 | Richard Harding *Barcode Gay is Macho* 2009, Photocopy and lead pencil, 42cm x 29.7cm.
Figure 27 | Richard Harding *Barcode He’s so straight* 2009, Photocopy and lead pencil, 42cm x 29.7cm.
Figure 28 | Richard Harding *Barcode Everybody Knows* 2009. Photocopy and lead pencil, 42cm x 29.7cm.
Figure 29 | Richard Harding The Invisible Man 2009, Inkjet print and screenprinted gouache, installation view North.
Figure 30 | Richard Harding *The Invisible Man* 2009, Inkjet print and screenprinted gouache, installation view North.

Figure 31 | Richard Harding *The Invisible Man* 2009, Inkjet print and screenprinted gouache, detail (pair).
Take a ride on the Ridge...
THE INVISIBLE MAN

In this chapter I will discuss the artwork titled *The Invisible Man* (2009) which included preparatory works and an exhibition that investigated the question of visibility as the result of straight-acting by gay men. This chapter revolves around masculine performance and repetition along side reproducibility to analyse how found images can be re-contextualised outside their intended commercial imperatives. My studio exploration worked through two practice-led research questions: How could using a found image contribute to discussions of masculinity and sexual orientation? And, how could different repeated images or a single image repeated be utilised to discuss gender performance through the print multiple?

My preliminary research for *The Invisible Man* focused on images of working-class men that revealed the ongoing tendency of gay men to dress in culturally identified working-class attire. Clothing such as the classic miller shirt is worn as a way of accentuating masculine appearance. This attire underscores an archetype but also has the ability to fall into cliché or a stereotypical clone-like interpretation of masculinity. According to American academic Jay Robert Clarkson straight-acting gay men,

continue to model their version of masculinity on images of the working class man. This image may distance them from any equation with gayness that they perceive in the larger gay community and in changing definition of upper class masculinity, but it relegates them to a lower tier of masculinity in the overall hierarchy (2006, p. 131).

Using a queer perspective the studio research for *The Invisible Man* began examining the concepts of authenticity employing aspects of Balzac’s codes of identification to explore gay visibility.

SCIENCE FICTION AND PRACTICE

Not to be confused with Ralph Ellison’s novel *Invisible Man* (1954) this work’s title conjures direct references to HG Wells’ 1897 science fiction novel of the same name. In Wells’ novel, Griffin, the invisible man, discusses his transformation from visible to invisible with his friend Dr Kemp,

Oil white paper, fill up the interstices between the particles with oil so that there is no longer refraction or reflection except at the surfaces, and it becomes as transparent as glass. And not only paper, but cotton fibre, linen fibre, wool
fibre, woody fibre, and bone, Kemp, flesh Kemp, hair Kemp, nails and nerves, Kemp, in fact the whole fabric of a man except the red of his blood and the black of his hair, are all made up of transparent, colourless tissue. So little suffices to make us visible one to the other. For the most part the fibers of a living creature are no more opaque than water (Wells 2005, p. 91).

Within this passage the interior (self) and exterior (body) are declared through how ‘little suffices to make us visible one to the other’ (Wells 2005, p. 91). Here Griffin highlights our similarities as humans and unnerves us through not seeing or perceiving difference. Even though Wells’ character Griffin is referring to the physical transformation of his body, the example of oiling white paper to make it ‘as transparent as glass’ connects the science-fiction concepts of the invisible man to the rudimentary art process of oiling paper to create makeshift positives or negatives for exposure within printmedia’s photographic field. This print process operates on the same basis as black and white analogue photography: where black blocks light and white allows light to pass through paper to create an image on a matrix screen or plate for printing multiples onto various substrates.

Griffin’s repetitive statements on ‘fibre’ in this passage emphasise the body while underlining facets of materiality within the process of the silkscreen preparation. This is achieved through the ‘fibre’ or thread count12 of the screen matrix with the proposed substrate onto which the image will be printed. It is through these unseen and serendipitous connections that the artwork’s meaning is enhanced through its technical mode of delivery. Not all viewers of the final images would make these connections but this is not a problematic issue. These associations allow further layers of meaning and nuance to be present through the processes of formulating, preparing, testing, and producing of the final printed works for The Invisible Man. Just as Griffin, the scientist, applied his concept through experimentation and practice to work back from visible to invisible in his physical transformation, the processes of making print based art works can be unpacked through their technical delivery. This could also be referred to as, technical vehicles of digital and analogue reproductive technologies that assist in driving the project’s concepts of difference and sameness to connect the seen and the unseen.

WARHOL AND FOSTER

A prime example of this conceptual and technical combination is Hal Foster’s reading of Andy Warhol’s photographic silkscreen prints of the early 1960s. In Return of the Real (1996) Foster declares Warhol’s silkscreen prints as ‘shocking’ in both concept and process. He cites two ‘orders’ or modes of operation to be considered through the notion of Roland Barthes’s (1980) ‘punctum’. Foster writes,

12. Silkscreen mesh has a thread count that governs the amount of detail printed and the type of ink used. Images with fine detail require a high mesh count to allow the transferred information to sit on the cross threads of the mesh. Due to the size of its pigment particles gouache based ink can only be used with a low thread count. This gives the print a matte finish.
Foster reads these works by Warhol as ‘traumatic realism’ by means of ‘technology and the accident’ (1996, p. 134). He critiques the ‘accident’ through ‘referents and simulacra’ yet it is the procedural fault caused by not flooding the silkscreen properly that creates Foster’s version of punctum: ‘not from the slumped woman in the top image in Ambulance Disaster (1963) but from the obscene tear that effaces her head in the bottom image’ (1996, p. 134). The technical error that produced the ‘obscene tear’ was serendipitous rather than predetermined reinforcing Foster’s notions of the traumatic accident while questioning Warhol’s (or an assistant’s) technical prowess.

Research for The Invisible Man employed digital and analogue processes and technique to investigate how the found and repeated image can question projected identity. In Gender Trouble Judith Butler proposed,

> It should be possible to offer a schematic of the ways in which a constellation of identifications conforms or fails to conform to culturally imposed standards of gender integrity (1990, p. 85).

My studio investigations for The Invisible Man put in place critical strategies through the act of collecting and printing to explore possible schemas and installation configurations that could assist in questioning ‘culturally imposed standards’ of masculinity. Even with the expanding number of gay and lesbian characters and celebrities on mainstream television and in the print media there are still limited variants of standard historic gay stereotypes such as the ‘nancy boy’ or the ‘closet queen’ and contemporary gay representation in the mainstream.

In, The precarious visibility politics of self-stigmatisation Dan Brouwer outlines a considered overview of what he calls the politics of visibility:

> Visibility is defined as presenting oneself, in mediated or unmediated form, in public forums. Visibility politics then might be defined as theory and practice which assume that “being seen” and “being heard” are beneficial and often crucial for individuals or a group to gain greater social, political, cultural or economic legitimacy, power, authority or access to resources. With this understanding, individuals and collectives which call for their greater visibility might create or demand more (or different) fictive or non-fictive texts about themselves, more (or better) visual images of themselves in public media, or more (and better) physical presence in public spaces. Visibility politics move individuals and collectives out and away from the shadows and margins (whether they have been forced there, or have been ignored) into the light of public spaces (1998, p. 118).

Straight-acting gay men who render themselves invisible through the performance of heteronormative masculinities further problematise this by not offering a view of gay masculinity that operates in contrast to their straight counterparts. This results in a paradoxical situation leading to a distorted view of gay communities.

13. It was Warhol’s decision to allow the technical mistake to remain; positioning the error as purposeful therefore adding to the artist’s intended concept.
Within my project the act of scanning and searching my collected archive realigned *The Invisible Man* works with English academic Sharif Mowlabocus’ exploration of online users searching web profiles as discussed in Chapter One. The artworks also have affinities with the materiality that *Scope* explored and conveyed by use of paper, ink and applied processes of reproduction. My conceptual strategies of researching coded male referents was combined with the process of manually and mechanically scanning images for storage, reproduction and final production of artworks. This practice-based strategy reiterates the unification of technical and conceptual practices that resonates with and supports Foster’s reading of Warhol in which he observes that Warhol’s use of technique to deliver and add to his concept (Foster 1996, p. 134).

**REMODELLING GAY REPRESENTATION**

In Western countries, the simulation of heteronormative male bodies and performance took on a new momentum from the 1970s. Like their American counterparts, Australian gay men followed the fashion and style of the times with the modelling of the interior selves and external bodies. This has been aptly described by American cultural theorist Frank Browning in *The Culture of Desire: through the realization of ‘self-improvement’ and body augmentation of the gay body,*Every night was Prom Night and fashion meant finding the Levis, Lacostes, and Leather that would best display all that meat that ex-sissy boys had pumped up all over their bones. No longer salivating in solitary locker-room guilt over the half-back’s perfect and apparently untouchable buns, pecs, lats, and abs. The body whose forbidden desires and responses had for so many years been the source of shame itself provided the raw material for psychic transformation. With a few hours a week in a gym, every gay man could become the couturier of his own flesh, stitching and tucking himself into movie-star beauty (1994, p. 69).

This newly fashioned masculine physique ultimately became a caricature of itself through extreme exercise regimes and posturing that was ridiculed from within gay communities of the time. Sayings such as, ‘looks like Tarzan sounds like Jane’, abounded. It did not take long for this body augmentation to be referred to as Muscle Drag or alternatively for an individual to be labelled as a Muscle Mary. As American academic Jay R. Clarkson explains,

all gender performances are so taken for granted that we only stop to notice them when they appear on the wrong bodies, they wrongly appear on bodies, or they are performed badly enough to draw attention (2006, p. 100).
For a gay man to perform as straight-acting he must assume heteronormative systems of masculinity that incorporate dress codes and language that are read as ‘real’. It was these countering and confirming elements that were my focus in the production of new artworks.

ON THE COVER OF A MAGAZINE: ADVERTISING IMAGES

In *Return of the Real*, Hal Foster highlighted two basic models of representation:

> that images are attached to referents, to iconic themes or real things in the world or alternatively, that all images can do is represent other images, that all forms of representation (including realism) are auto referential codes (1996, p. 128).

As my studio research investigated my project’s collected archive, the selection narrowed to focus on a single image that could address *The Invisible Man’s* conceptual requirements of a ‘coded referent’. The cowboy image used by the Cockatoo Ridge Winery became the focus of this series of artworks due to its portrait-like format. In the image of the cowboy, we see him gesturing a welcoming tipping of the hat that gave emphasis to his costume of miller shirt and akubra hat and performative gesture. Within gay

Figure 33 | Cockatoo Ridge Winery Advertisement MCV magazine 2007-2008.

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14. The Miller shirt first produced in USA in 1946 as farm and cowboy attire. The Akubra hat company is an iconic Australian brand that has been in production since 1874 making styles such as bronco or Rough Rider.

male culture the cowboy has nostalgic and iconic status based on notions of ‘the man on the land’ and ‘working class hero’. The Invisible Man artworks accessed references of the classic ‘Western’ such as Red River\textsuperscript{16} (1948), the cigarette-advertising image of the Marlboro Man and 1970s gay clone\textsuperscript{17}. Cockatoo Ridge Winery presented a male and a female version of their advertising campaign in 2008. The cowboy image had a female counterpart who activated a controversial public discussion on gender at the time of release and publication. The advertisement targeting women displayed on billboards around Australia employed Neighbours\textsuperscript{18} star Erin McNaught. Wearing a miller shirt unbuttoned to reveal her cleavage and staring seductively at the viewer with a white cockatoo on her shoulder the copy line read, ‘She loves a cockatoo’ (2008). The advertisement caused outrage amongst readers and viewers of the billboard commented on in online forums such as auswine.com. McNaught responded to the public outcry by attempting to distance herself from the campaign claiming, ‘I wasn’t thrilled with what that line was implying’ (Daily Mail, para. 1). In comparison the cowboy rendition of the advertising campaign did not elicit such an adverse reaction, with a more nuanced text line of ‘Take a ride on the ridge’ (2008). In addition, the advertisement was carefully positioned on the back of the Melbourne MVC magazine (2008) where it went virtually unnoticed by the wider public.

16. Many cinematic Westerns have gay subtexts embedded within them. A prime example is Red River (1948) directed by Howard Hawkes. In scene 10 characters Matt and Cherry use their guns to compare each other’s manhood. Cherry comments, ‘that’s a good-looking gun, can I see it? You can see mine’. After checking each other’s guns they enjoy a shooting contest. The scene finishes with both men satisfied the other is okay, knowing looks pass between the men as they exit the scene checking their guns.

17. The gay clone originated from the Castro area of San Francisco in the 1970s and was typified by their ‘mustaches, muscles and lumberjack shirts’ (Browning 1994, p. 70).

18. Created in 1985 by Reg Watson, Neighbours is currently the longest running soap opera in Australian television history.
Despite the two Cockatoo Ridge advertisements’ differences in scale and public saturation both the male and female models in the Cockatoo Ridge advertisements wore versions of the classic ‘Miller’ shirt unbuttoned to mid-torso. The implications of the costume were, of course, vastly different. The ‘country girl’ (McNaught) has a pet bird on her right shoulder, tussled hair and adopts an overall ‘come hither’ manner, while the cowboy tilted his hat in recognition or a friendly ‘howdy’. A bottle of wine positioned to the right-hand side of each image provided a phallic reference. The text on the country girl’s version is a blatant in your face double-entendre about how ‘she loves a cockatoo’ (a cock or two) and the other ‘Take a ride on the Ridge’ has sexual connotations (passive/bottom ride/fuck ridge/cock). The woman is rendered promiscuous or ‘easy’ through the advertisement’s text, while the man is feminised through the passive action of ‘taking’ it. The tropes of wordplay usually depend on a level of ambiguity, yet in these two instances there was no second-guessing their meanings.

In, Mirrors of Masculinity, American academics Jonathan E. Schroeder and Detlev Zwick discuss how ‘consumption and desire play a major role in the construction and representation of male bodies’ (2004, p. 1). They position their analysis through the stereotyped iconography of masculinity and femininity and note that this is based on a ‘symmetrical pendant to femininity developed within feminist theory’ (Schroeder & Zwick 2004, p. 48). The cowboy image stands out through its simulation of the working-man of the land and the rural historic gay icon utilising what Judith Butler refers to as ‘incorporation as the manner by which identification is accomplished’ (1990, p. 87). This was borne through the hero cowboy such as the Australian drover also known as a stockman that according to Clarkson operates through the modelling of gay masculinity on working class masculinity’ (2006, p. 129). When cross-referenced with other advertisements published or presented on billboard during this period the Cockatoo Ridge Winery cowboy image becomes questionable through the male model’s manicured nails, and his new hat and clothes that lacked a certain authenticity due to no evidence of use. The implication is that ‘real’ cowboys do not look that perfectly arranged and groomed, suggest that the Cockatoo Ridge cowboy lacked the true aura of authenticity. It is through this lack of an authentic aura that The Invisible Man initiates aspects of Walter Benjamin’s discussion of the original and copy. According to German art critic and philosopher Boris Groys, ‘Benjamin shared high modernist art’s belief in a unique, normative context for art. Under this presumption, to lose its unique, original context means for an artwork to lose its aura forever-to become a copy of it self’ (2009, p. 8). The essence of both the original and the copy are obscured within the individual and repetitive nature of The Invisible Man printed works depicting the Cockatoo Ridge cowboy.
For comparison, the *RM Williams: ('The Bush Outfitter')* advertisements and catalogues of the same time contained models in clothes designed for 'the man on the land'19, their reading of masculinity was adequately heteronormative. The *RM Williams* clothing range was 'obviously' new and fresh, and the company used several male models from various age groups (20s, 30s and 40s) to indicate fashionable conservative masculinity. For these models there were no questions of difference depicted through an overly positioned model posing with obvious ablution regimes of plucked eyebrows or lip-gloss thus heteronormative masculinity could be assumed. According to American academic J.R. Clarkson,

> The concept of straight-acting gay men is problematic because significations of homosexuality are not fixed and must be constantly reinscribed. Following [Judith] Butler, the association of femininity with the gay body requires that gay men must repetitiously perform their gayness to be understood as gay. The cultural meaning of gayness has come to signify a unified homosexual identity because it is only those who are seen as differing from normative standard of maleness whose bodies signify homosexuality (2006, p. 100).

My selection of the *Cockatoo Ridge Winery* advertisement to inform the works of *The Invisible Man* highlight this ‘problematic reinscribing’ mentioned by Clarkson (2006, p. 100). Through this found image the project intertwines archetype and stereotype in one. Not representative of how current urban gay men dress it attempts to access the desire of the action macho male in practical attire (or Balzac’s costume) and as such the iconic cowboy. Unfortunately the *Cockatoo Winery* cowboy fails in his presentation of a heteronormative model. His overt grooming prompts the viewer to scan the image for further signals of difference that indicated otherness and specifically gayness20. It was this curious quality within the image that created my perception of the *punctum* for *The Invisible Man*. For the cowboy to be read as straight he had to mask his otherness by performing a heteronormative masculinity. This could eventually create a closet through his non-visibility as a gay man. As Michael P. Brown explains,

> At times the closet seems to shrink to become the space of the body itself. Through deeply ingrained homophobia [gay] men [are] constantly disciplining their bodies, actions, speech and affectations in order to pass for straight (2000, p. 45).

The model in the Cockatoo Ridge cowboy image could be straight or gay. However, his true orientation ceases to be important because the work he is undertaking is about acting (the model’s and the advertising message). Yet he appears to have projected...
a metrosexual\(^{21}\) cowboy, rather than the gay or straight man. Unfortunately (or fortunately) for the Cockatoo Ridge cowboy metrosexuals are usually aligned with gayness within a heterosexual orientation or tagged as a gay-acting straight man.

**APPROPRIATION AND THE INVISIBLE MAN**

As explored in Chapter 1, *The Invisible Man* has utilised the act of appropriating images from a specific collection of magazines that brings into question the integrity of authorship and ownership through artistic practices. American curator and writer Ana Alvarez discusses ethical issues regarding the practice of appropriating others images in *Runaway Prince: Richard Prince and the ethics of Appropriating Art*. She states, ‘Appropriation art questions “the truth function” of photography and draws attention to power relations and consumer tendencies that saturate the images that constantly surround us’ (2011, para. 2).

Post-modernism appropriation art (attributed as a descendant of cubism and Dada) has been a fundamental practice of many contemporary artists. Within *The Invisible Man* the act of appropriation within art practice was positioned to align with gay men appropriating the costume and performance of heteronormative masculinities. By ‘appropriating’ heteronormative modes of gesture, posture, costume and speech the project returned to Balzac’s codes of representation through the use of found images and repetition. The Cockatoo Ridge cowboy image became the ‘prototype’ base matrix that the new work grew from. *The Invisible Man* was embedded with past archetypical histories of the hero cowboy and carried the original photographer’s and graphic artist’s intentions of marketing wine through desire.

In addition to questioning otherness, the Cockatoo Ridge advertisement could be viewed as an ironic nod to the notion of the 1970s clone discussed by American academic Tim Edwards. In, *Erotics and Politics: gay male sexuality masculinity, and feminism* Edwards claims, gay men are told they are not men but are expected to behave like men. In gay clone culture of the 1970s gays adopted traditional images of masculinity from cowboy to construction worker… in an over-the-top, conformist form that was, on occasions, self-conscious and effectively slightly silly (1994, p. 49).

Although the *Cockatoo Ridge* cowboy does not look silly or over-the-top he does activate aspects of this reading. However, the Cockatoo Ridge cowboy could be seen to be combined with current gay ‘clone’ stereotypes such as the leather cowboy, tradesman or biker, that can

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\(^{21}\) Metrosexual is a neologism of metropolitan and heterosexual coined by English author and journalist Mark Simpson’s article titled ‘Here come the Mirror Men’ published in the UK *Independent* newspaper (15 November 1994).
Juxtapose: an exploration of Gay Masculine identity and its relationship to the closet

lampoon masculine performance. Straight-acting gay men are attempting a ‘real’ rendition of heteronormative masculinity that could be understood as camouflage while the gay clone is advertising his gayness through what could be read to as a hypermasculine style of performance that brands him as gay.

In Return of the Real Hal Foster refers to Richard Prince’s art works as having an ‘ambivalence that refers to the real; that is, as appropriation art works to expose the illusion of representation’ (1996, p. 146). It is this ‘illusion’ attempted through the performance of straight-acting and the masking of gayness that was expounded within the works of The Invisible Man of my research project. Preparatory works for this artwork utilised rudimentary photocopying to produce multiple images rapidly that could be collaged and drawn onto without the psychological preciousness that comes with experimenting on high-end prints. The ability to produce large amounts of images supported the project’s investigation of the repeated image with the act of repetition aligned with performing the self. According to Deleuze,

If it is true that representation has identity as its element and similarity as its measure, the pure presence such as it appears in simulacrum has a ‘disparate’ as its unit of measure – in other words, always a difference of difference as its immediate element (1968, p. 69).

ONE IMAGE REPEATED

I used simple grid configurations to experiment with sameness in trial installations of The Invisible Man that questioned what Walter Benjamin referred to as a ‘multiplicity of incidences’ (1936, p. 7). This questioning was achieved by juxtaposing images and text that experimented with print multiples of the same cowboy image. Any difference no matter how slight became apparent. This was harnessed and exploited by repetition within print protocols and processes.

The single image or the same representational image was positioned in contradiction to itself through drawing and text. The cowboy became his own measure of masculinity. In addition to the issue of visibility the viewer was confronted with a software symbol of a thermometer or temperature gauge used to insert into documents or signage. The gauge measures a half value asking the viewer is The Invisible Man hot or not? Is the measure of a man dependent on personal aesthetic and desire? Enhancing this is the substitution of the Cockatoo Ridge Winery Logo in the cowboy advertisement with a simulated authentication date stamp stating ‘regular homo straight guy’ running around the parameter of the date and branding of ‘20 raph 09’.

Trial installations of the barcoded cowboy explored horizontal and vertical linear modes of presentation that resulted in applying a grid pattern to the installed works. The grid formation allowed for the singular repeated images to connect yet remain individual. An intriguing element of the research was reached when I was confronted with Deleuze’s claim in the introduction of Difference and Repetition (1968) that states,

It is a question of knowing why repetition cannot be explained by the form of identity in concepts or representations… This enquiry must embrace all the concepts of nature and freedom. Consider, on the border between
these two cases, the repetition of a decorative motif: a figure is reproduced, while the concept remains absolutely identical… However, this is not how artists proceed in reality. They do not juxtapose instances of the figure, but rather each time combine an element of one instance. They introduce a disequilibrium into the dynamic process of construction, an instability, dissymmetry or gap of some kind which disappears only in the overall effect (1968, p. 19).

By installing individual images in a grid pattern that incorporated gaps in the image The Invisible Man constructed a space that referenced a Deleuzian ‘disequilibrium’. I digitally printed multiple copies of the cowboy image that represent ‘instances’ of the cowboy figure while processes of drawing and printing onto the image surface produced another ‘element’ of difference. Repetition was central to the research at this point. I also explored concepts of performance using the Cockatoo Winery cowboy image in varying contexts through subtitles of found text from my archived newspapers.

Simultaneously, these preparatory works considered the commodification of desire embedded in the found image and barcode. The notion of ‘honorable work’ of the labourer examined in Richard Sennett’s The Craftsman (2008) was an influence of repetitious and protracted work of creating the barcodes by drawing them by hand. The pencilled barcodes partially revealed or concealed the cowboy within my artworks and changed with each title: Walk like a Man, He’s so straight, Talk like a Man, Gay is Macho, He is so Gay, It was just a Bromance, Everybody Knows, Invisible Man, He is such a Girl.

Figure 35 | Richard Harding experimental installation
Lygon Street Studios.
The nine barcodes in *The Invisible Man* series were attributed a newspaper headline from my archive which altered the reading of each rendition or instance. The viewer’s reading of each image could not stay static but was forced to evolve as each headline or piece of text was read. The multiple interpretations this granted moved the cowboy image in and out of various modes of masculine identities. In *Gender Trouble* Judith Butler writes of a, ‘heterosexual matrix, identity as, multiple and coexisting from a Lacanian and psychoanalytical perspective that produces conflicts, convergences and innovative dissonances within gender configurations which contest the fixity of masculine and feminine (1990, p. 85).

Within the barcoded works of *The Invisible Man* multiplicity and conflict were constructed and investigated through the grid-style installation. This works to also explore the masculine-feminine polemic dialogues that continue to operate within discussions on gay masculinity. 

The use of a 3 prints x 3 prints ‘grid’ for *The Invisible Man* trial installations incorporate characteristics of the ongoing or continuous. This work also aligns the gay coming-out process with the notion of ‘play’ through the children’s game of tic-tac-toe. The purposeful sameness in scale and composition of *The Invisible Man* reaffirms the projects, alignment with the male gender while the additions of newspaper text and drawing barcodes question desire and orientation.

Within the final works this numeric performance was repeated through the analogue overprinting of white masks on the cowboy’s face and other parts of the body that signal the senses: eyes (sight), ears (hearing) and mouth (speech). With each rendition or Deleuzian-like ‘instance’ of the Cockatoo Ridge Cowboy the printed mask suggested the act of disappearing. As each work was double and then triple-printed the cowboy’s face disappeared into an opaque silhouette. The single image installed to the left of the grid finalizes the process of masking, with the face beneath being completely covered. This rendered the cowboy unrecognizable, anonymous and thus invisible.

**CONTEXTUALISING **

**THE INVISIBLE MAN**

Appropriating and utilising found images and text to make new artworks are not new practices. Since appropriation art come into mainstream practice during the 1970s, many artists have deployed the method to comment on cultural and political issues. When discussing the genre of appropriation art (not to mention the use of cowboys in artworks) it is difficult to overlook American artist Richard Prince. Arguably Prince’s most famous images come from the *Untitled (Cowboy)* series of the 1980s appropriated from Marlboro cigarette advertisements and packets that have come to be referred to as re-photographs. Discussions of the original and copy are inherent with Prince’s practice and specifically the *Untitled (Cowboy)* series. Along side these questions of authorship, is the now famous copyright lawsuit involving the ‘Canal Zone’ series of paintings (2008), which incorporated
photographs by French photographer Patrick Cariou from his 2000 book *Yes, Rasta* (Boucher para. 2). Even though copyright debates are an ongoing concern for artists whose methodologies operate within appropriation practice my focus here is based in collecting collaging and production to highlight the authentic and copy.

What seemed to have been a simple appropriation method has become a benchmark that many artists and theorists reference, including American art curator and writer Rosetta Brooks in her essay *Spiritual America: No Holds Barred* published in the retrospective exhibition catalogue. Brooks observes:

Prince both acknowledges and likes to emphasize the "criminal" element of his activity. And, in this respect his attitude bears a close resemblance to that of the nineteenth-century French flâneur – a raconteur who appropriated his material from the flow of urban circulation. The aesthetics of the flâneur incorporated an air of criminality too. There was a distinct echo of thievery and transgression surrounding it; a sense of the “closest thing to the real thing” (1992, p. 85).

My project has also continuously flirited with the question of authorship as ownership. *The Invisible Man* works of 2008 and 2009 access and pose questions of legality and authorship as a subtext to the queering of the Cockatoo Winery cowboy. Through the history and contemporary use of appropriation in art making, *The Invisible Man* purposefully maintains a similarity

to the ‘prototype’ or original matrix image in order to accentuate difference in gender sameness, and sameness in different sexual orientations.

Australian Melbourne based artist Tony Garifalakis also deploys appropriation modes of operation within his art practice. The series *Poster Works* (2009) and *Declassified Document* (2011) are evidence of Garifalakis’ ongoing use of found images from popular media to create new art works that explore and critique political and social positions within contemporary Australian culture. Poster and handbill-style dimension connects Garifalakis’ found image based works within a history of political commentary that has utilised print media as its vehicle of production and distribution into the public arena. His selection of found portrait-style images as a basis for works such as *Cover ups* (2008) are in the same community of practice as my work *The Invisible Man*; reinforced through stencilling, covering and the body.

Like Garifalakis, Australian artist Bindi Cole also utilises masking to discuss political and social concerns using reproductive technologies. The photographic series *Not Really Aboriginal* (2008) by Cole, also based in Melbourne, embed a sinister history of Australian cultural and racial stereotypes with misconceptions and perceptions of people based on skin colour. Cole’s photographic works give voice to ongoing issues of visibility and identification within indigenous and non-indigenous communities through her employment of skin colour, language and attire. In *Minstrel legacy*:
The underlying intention was for light-skinned Aboriginals to assimilate and disappear because the government assumed that the darker skinned population would die out.’ She continues, ‘We have white skin, we can speak white languages, we even wear clothes designed for white people. This must be terrifying for those who still feel the need to differentiate themselves from the Black Other (2008, p. 3).

Although the works within *The Invisible Man* did not intend a racial focus per se the use of white gouache as a masking device does suggest a focus on a particular racial group, white gay males. According to American academic Sally Robinson, white masculinity has historically remained ‘opaque to analysis because what is invisible escapes surveillance and regulation’ (2000, p. 1). Whereas Cole’s *Not Really Aboriginal* works employ human sameness to accentuate and celebrate racial and cultural difference, the works within *The Invisible Man* series apply print and male sameness to focus on gender and orientation. Cole’s *Not Really Aboriginal* series and *The Invisible Man* connect through concepts of visibility and notions of authenticity to warn of the dangers of assimilation and the loss of difference through homogenisation of identity.

*The Invisible Man* endeavoured to address the consequences of straight-acting through the historical codes of representation (speech, gesture, posture, and costume) with notions of the psychological space and visibility. H.G. Wells’ *The Invisible Man* concludes with Griffin becoming a hunted fugitive and accidentally killed by the men of the village changing to visible in death, everyone saw, faint and transparent as though it was made of glass, so that veins and arteries and bones and nerves could be distinguished, the outline of a hand, a hand limp and prone. It grew clouded and opaque even as they stared (1897, p. 148).

There is a bizarrely familiar connection that can be made through the killing of Griffin. He is finally made visible through death that could be suggestive of homophobic assaults that only seem to enter the mainstream’s consciousness through the reporting of violent attacks that result in loss of life. This heralds a basic reasoning of why gay men render themselves invisible to avoid notice with public spaces.

*The Invisible Man* of my project became opaque through the layering of ink, yet in the process of art production this rendered the cowboy invisible

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23. The artworks within my project utilised images of white males to focus on gay masculinity and the closet. These concerns are not exclusive to white males and can be experienced or projected upon other genders, racial, religious and ethnic groups.

24. According to the Editor’s notes for the final chapter of *The Invisible Man*, “There seems no reason why Griffin should return to visibility after death, but his doing so is intensely dramatic” (Sawyer 2005, p. 150).
suggesting an ongoing disconnection between the state of the visible and invisible. Wells’ epilogue also suggests this cycle of the visible/invisible will continue with the innkeeper becoming increasingly clandestine as he reads Griffin’s three manuscripts to learn how he too can discover the ‘subtle secret of invisibility’ (1897, p. 150). Thus returning to the ongoing cycle of gay men closeting or coming out through visual codes or a performative speech act of denial or announcement.
CHAPTER 4: WOOF

Figure 38 | Richard Harding, WOOF: Coach 2012, Digital inkjet print and screenprinted gouache with glitter, 42cm x 29.7cm.
Figure 39 | Richard Harding, WOOF: Pup 2012, Digital inkjet print and screenprinted gouache with glitter, 42cm x 29.7cm.
Figure 40 | Richard Harding, *WOOF: College Guy* 2012, Digital inkjet print and screenprinted gouache with glitter, 42cm x 29.7cm.
Juxtapose: an exploration of Gay Masculine identity and its relationship to the closet

Figure 41 | Richard Harding, *WOOF: Pool Boy* 2012, Digital inkjet print and screenprinted gouache with glitter, 42cm x 29.7cm.
Figure 42 | Richard Harding, WOOF: Racing Driver 2012. Digital inkjet print and screenprinted gouache with glitter, 42cm x 29.7cm.
Figure 43 | Richard Harding, *WOOF: Str8 m8* 2012, Digital inkjet print and screenprinted gouache with glitter, 42cm x 29.7cm.
Figure 44 | Richard Harding, WOOF: Bike Dude 2012. Digital inkjet print and screenprinted gouache with glitter, 42cm x 29.7cm.

Figure 45 | Richard Harding, **WOOF**: Installation View 2012, Digital inkjet print and screenprinted gouache with glitter, dimensions variable.
Figure 46 | Richard Harding, *WOOF: Player, Dude* 2012, Digital inkjet print and screenprinted gouache with glitter, 42cm x 29.7cm.
This chapter will address WOOF (2011-12) series of works created to draw attention to the presence of the closet and heteronormative masculinity based on male types projected by the mass media. These works were informed by *The Invisible Man* (2009) series and built upon the multiple renditions and depictions of masculinity I collected as preparatory research for the *this is not a drill* (2012) installation. WOOF attempted to enquire how straight-acting could be explored through images of performance and costume. As a result the series examined the following questions: Is the label of straight-acting camouflage for gay men who want to pass as straight? Does this in fact produce a version of the closet or a problematic alternative for masculine gay men?

As of March 2014 The Urban Dictionary’s (urbandictionary.com) first listed definition for the term ‘woof’ was, ‘an adjective used to describe a sexy guy, but not the feminine kind of guy, but a more masculine guy; one who you wouldn’t identify as being gay if you saw him on the street’ (2014, para 1). It is through this definition that the WOOF series links with the term *straight-acting*. Once again these terms activate a conundrum of visibility. As feminist film theorist Peggy Phelan asserts, ‘it is easy to pass as heterosexual because heterosexuality is assumed. In other words, what is made visible is the unmarked nature of heterosexual identity’ (1993, cited in Clarkson 2006, p. 183). Although the term ‘woof’ can be applied to any so-called ‘sexy’ man, my own experience suggests that it tends to be utilised by gay men. It follows that the mere use of this term in a particular social context could result in being ‘outed’ or not passing as heteronormative.

The works within the WOOF series expanded the project’s research into a more inclusive position whereby men’s performance of their own form of masculinity are enacted through the dominant model of heteronormativity. To investigate this, the WOOF series focused on and appropriated the covers of *The Age’s Good Weekend* magazine from the project’s collected archive. A magazine cover is designed to promote the contents and entice the reader through the desire to know or the desire to have. I attempted to exploit the notion of the cover by combining found
digital generated images and generic symbols with historic illustrations from Albert M Bacon’s 1873 *Manual of Gestures*. This Nineteenth Century text was devised as a manual for orators to be more engaging to their audience. It contains illustrations of gestures and postures to encourage the audience to maintain their attention to the orator.

In *Media Matrix: sexing the new reality* Australian theorist Barbara Creed discusses the emergence of the term masculinity. She notes how notions of masculinity from the 1990s to the early 2000s were discussed and depicted in academic publications and Men’s Magazines and claims that while film, lifestyle magazines and popular culture are prepared to examine masculinity, they are not prepared to question male power itself’... the mainstream press and television news programs rarely (if ever) articulate awareness of the existence of a range of masculinities; they promote masculinity as a unitary category’ (Creed 2003, p. 85).

Creed identified *The Age Good Weekend* magazine as one of the magazines that periodically focused on ‘the problems of being male’ (2003, p. 85) subtitling certain volumes, for example, as ‘The Men’s Issue’. My reinvention of the covers of similar publications within the WOOF series used this subtitling to enable the reader/viewer to imagine their own versions of the issues.

WOOF employed analogue and digital processes to assemble images and text to challenge the extremities of the hetero/homo binary. By appropriating front covers from the magazine, the series actuated the maxim of ‘judging a book by its cover’. The works also attempted to create possibilities for a deeper understanding and projection of masculine identities based on depicted attire (costume) with posture and gesture staged within a found photographic image. As American academics Jonathan E. Schroeder and Detliv Zwick contend, ‘to interpret advertising images is to acknowledge their ‘representational power’ both as cultural artefacts and as bearers of meaning, reflecting broad societal, cultural and ideological codes’ (2004, p. 45). The WOOF series was informed by this ‘representational power’ of magazine covers which incorporate a photographic image with text to offer the viewer multi-layered meanings. For example the football player became the straight mate or movie star became the pool guy both of which are roles acted out in gay pornography.

The espionage-like subtext of using ‘covers’ from the *Good Weekend* magazine enacted a subversive strategy by dispatching the found image into a domain of coding, recoding and deciphering that are ever present in the varied forms of the closet. In addition, the notion of ‘covers’ brings to mind the musical genre known as ‘cover versions’ and referencing someone else’s song or musical composition or covering another’s work. American performance critic and academic Philip Auslander addresses this in *Liveness: Performance*. 
and the anxiety of simulation when he ‘differentiates “performing” from conventional acting’ (1996, cited in Diamond 1996, p. 202), based in mass media and film acting through what is described by Auslander as a non-matrix performance such as those presented in theatre or alternatively the music concert. The link with the WOOF series was founded on Auslander’s assertion that ‘it depends on mediation of its significance’ (1996, p. 202). He explains, ‘if the mediatized image can be recreated in a live setting, it must be “real” to begin with’ (Auslander 1996, p. 202). The initial images of high profile men such as celebrity chef Jamie Oliver or Formula One driver Mark Webber from the Good Weekend covers verified and endorsed depictions of culturally predetermined masculine representations that promoted accepted categories of ‘real’ masculinity.

STRAIGHT AND GAY, BLACK AND WHITE: MEDIA MANOEUVRING

Situated outside the project, yet relevant with reference to the current work, my Little Boy Blue Come Blow Your Horn (Little Boy Blue) series produced in 1997 deployed a similar methodology of collection, collage and installation. Although motivated by different concepts the printed works created for this artwork are aligned with the WOOF series and to some extent The Invisible Man. All these works used photographic images found on covers of magazines as the basis for societal critique constructed through the lens of gay, and then queer,

Figure 47 | Richard Harding, Little Boy Blue Come Blow Your Horn 1999. Collaged laser print and relief wood grain printed in acrylic, 21cm x 14.8cm.

26. The difference in methodology was based on available technology of the time and the use of traditional collage in Little Boy Blue as opposed to electronic collage and screenprinting used in WOOF.
politics within art practice. In, *The Photograph* Graham Clarke asserts, the photograph both mirrors and creates a discourse with the world, and is never, despite its often passive way with things, a neutral representation (Schroeder & Zwick 2004, p. 45). My appropriation of found male images used within these works employ collage and various analogue and digital printing techniques to become actively subversive of the normative representations of the men in the images.

Interestingly, my *Little Boy Blue* (1997) series appropriated a telephone sex advert from the back of a gay magazine from the Chicago *Nightlines Weekly: Quintessentially Queer* (1996). Collected weekly over a year, the white male model from the back cover of this publication would get darker each week of the month then return to his original whiteness at the start of the following month. At the time I produced these works I lived in Boystown, a neighbourhood in northern Chicago, USA that was multicultural, multiracial and known as a gay area. Although the reading of the white model whom darkened over the month (through what could be attributed to inadequate printing protocols and processes) the publication of the same white telephone sex boy raised questions of cultural and racial dominance within a community displaying and espousing diversity. The image became the conceptual base and matrix of the series. This operated through whiteness or perceived whiteness to question the power of the press with notions of individual desire that promoted and projected desire.

In 1994 during the double murder trial of O. J. Simpson *Time* and *Newsweek* magazines produced front covers based on Simpson’s original police mug shot. These front covers generated debates on racism, documentary photography and artistic license. According to writer and news reporter Deirdre Carmody in the *New York Times*,

> ‘The cover portrait of a blurry, darkened and unshaven Mr. Simpson is actually a doctored version of a photograph made by the Los Angeles Police Department. Mr. Gaines's (Managing Editor of TIME) said that the police photo had been given to an artist who was asked to interpret it. The credit line, printed at the bottom of page 3 of the magazine, said, ‘Photo-Illustration for Time by Matt Mahurin’ (1994, para. 2).

These images highlight the combination of conceptual and technical processes used to construct new images with varying intent. As American writer and curator Fred Ritchin noted in *After Photography*,

> the ability to revise a key historical document almost simultaneously with its creation was an

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27. The movement from gay to queer politics signaled the evolution of identity solidarity to a politics of difference that became more inclusive and thus questioned the binary nature of hetero/homo. For an expanded understanding of this see Steven Seidman’s essay, *Identity and Politics in a “Postmodern” Gay Culture: Some Historical and Conceptual Notes*, Warner, M (ed) 1993, *Fear of a Queer Planet*, University of Minnesota Press Minneapolis.

28. These adverts predate the Internet cyber chat rooms that eventually over took this style of sexual connection. The telephone advertisements were eventually replaced by advertising for Internet dating sites that incorporated chat rooms.

exercise that the magazine editors, at that time, would have undoubtedly criticized anybody else for undertaking (2008, p. 29).

It is through intent that the Little Boy Blue series departs from the *Time* and *Newsweek* covers. *Little Boy Blue* is an advertisement for white homosexual pleasure, located on a back cover. The O. J. Simpson images are on the front cover, which advertises the inside of the magazine, similar to the WOOF series: however it was arguably intended to promote fear and judgement. Ritchin critiques this method of digital manipulation of photographic images writing,

> While placing facts and their own raison d'être as authoritative sources into question, these corporate entities were also unconsciously playing the role of an avant-garde, pioneering new forms of imagining considerably ahead of most artists and documentarians. Their unintentional playfulness, while destructive, can also be seen as inspiring new, as of yet unrealized, potential (2009, p. 30).

Although Ritchin references other photographic practitioners in his book the premise that these manipulations are ‘inspiring’ is questionable even with the disclaimer of ‘while destructive’.
The OJ Simpson cover and the *Little Boy Blue* works operated on the darkening of the initial image. While the Simpson cover became ‘sinister according to some critics’ whom Carmody did not name, the telephone sex boy portrayed in *Little Boy Blue* was depicted as tanned or slightly Other. The darkening in the Simpson image was a considered creative choice, in ‘an attempt to lift a common police mug shot to the level of art, with no sacrifice to truth’ (1994, para. 3), according to the editor, that ultimately failed. There was no such technical manipulation of the process for the initial image of *Little Boy Blue*; the faulty printing process darkening the image inspired my appropriation of the depicted male model. This combination of technical manipulation with conceptual imperatives was re-examined and trialled through the WOOF series.

**MATERIALITY AND METHODOLOGY AS ANALOGY**

The WOOF series used various methods to explore how masculine identity can be represented, re-constructed and re-presented in a print based practice. Combining the *Little Boy Blue* approach with updated methods (software and refined printing processes) used in The Invisible Man works, WOOF continued to apply seen and unseen elements of production as an analogy for gender performance and sexual orientation.

Through renewed processes and updated software, the WOOF series operated on a level of ambiguity that evoked Judith Butler’s (1990, ch. 3) notion of incorporation, which lends itself to the assumption of heteronormative masculinity through what she calls melancholic identification. Butler proclaims this is ‘far from natural or a given, like gender, sex is a process, something one assumes through identification and incorporation’ (Butler 1990, p. 91). My studio research deliberated on Good Weekend covers that depicted portraits of men and captured gesture and posture: six works used images in which a model looks at the viewer, and two used images of a man in profile where the model appears to be gazing at the other men in the series. When installed and read left to right, the reinvented magazine covers depict a combination of contemporary and historical portrayals of masculine performance posed in what could be described as a mixed coded timeline.

By assimilating into (through software) or printing over (using silkscreen printing) the initial magazine covers, the WOOF series endeavoured to challenge standard cultural codes by providing alternative contexts, whilst adding and subtracting symbols and text to create a queer reading. This manoeuvring of processes reiterates the project’s ongoing alignment to systems of meaning embedded in print-practice and materiality. The surface of the print is a coveted and maligned element within print based communities especially when combined with photographic images and digital techniques. As Ruth Pelzer-Montada outlines in *Print in the ages of Digital Reproduction – Notes on the surface of the Art Print*,

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Prints based on photographs may exemplify today the surface-in-excess quality of the printed image or its haptics more obviously than its ‘straight’ photographic counterpart, but the changing status of other types of artistic prints is similarly aligned with the changing cultural acceptance of the enervated surfaces of modernity and postmodernity. In contrast to inkjet prints, the ‘traditional’ screen print demonstrates a ‘surface in excess’ or the relational haptics although the gap between traditional modes of and digital output is constantly closing (2009, p. 60).

The WOOF series accessed this surface ‘gap’ that offered a way of questioning what is promoted by and projected out from mass media. These artworks question what is sanctioned and replicated, which by default are taken into the performance and representation of heteronormative masculinity. Thus the surface of the print offered an important analogy for layered meaning through the materiality of process and application.

**POSE AND TEXT**

In *Manual of Gestures; Embracing a Complete System of Notation, together with the Principles of Interpretation and Selections for Practice* Professor of Elocution, Albert M Bacon writes,

> Gesture embraces the various postures and motions of the body; as the head, shoulders and trunk; the arms, hand and fingers; the lower limbs and feet. It is the language of nature; and hence, like the expression of the countenance is a universal language (1872, p. 25).

The universal language Bacon refers to combines gesture and posture from the four codes of representation named by Balzac in 1830. These codes have appeared in multiple guises throughout my project to discuss expressive modes of performance and oration. The WOOF series uses depictions of these codes through images to converge performance with the pose and speech by the use of text. The pose has various meanings in the context of my project such as to model, impersonate and question—which intend to activate the history of homosexual identity through the trials of the English writer Oscar Wilde in 1895. In *Under the Sign of Wilde* Australian academic Moe Myer scrutinizes the concepts of posing ‘deployed’ by the defence during Wilde’s first trial and the libel suit against the Marquess of Queensberry which led to Wilde being tried and convicted for gross indecency:

Lacking the discourse with which to render a homosexual identity, the defence tried to retrieve one from Wilde by tricking him into admitting that his homoerotic presentation of self actually signified a sexual practice. This was attempted by blurring the distinctions between the two uses of the term “posing” in the hopes of catching him, rhetorically

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30. Pelzer Montada’s emphasis.

31. According to Myer, the term ‘posing’ had two circulating meanings: the first, as used in the phrase ‘posing sodomite’, referred to the ‘passive partner in a sodomitical act’; the second, as used in the phrase ‘posing as a sodomite’, referred to significations of the homoerotic. (Myer 1994, p. 77)
speaking, with his pants down. The wordplay, the innuendoes, and the rhetorical trickery of this juridical repartee suggest that there was no connection, other than through suspicion, between Wilde’s signifying practices and his sexual activities. This explains the strategy engaged by the defence, that is, a line of questioning regarding the moral virtues of texts, speech acts, gestural displacements, and visual coding’ (1994, p. 92).

The irony of Wilde’s litigation history is one example of a narrative which counters the efforts of straight-acting gay men to pass as straight because the codes of identification that are used to pass as straight are the very codes used to establish a homosexual identity through notions of camp. The WOOF series embeds and satirizes the essence of camp through the material use of glitter as a counterpoint to notions of straight or normative masculinity. The essence of glitter participates with the theatricality within the works that is accentuated through the use of text.

**WORDPLAY: TEXT AS SPEECH**

My project, and specifically WOOF, sourced the history of text and image through collage from its Cubist beginnings. As affirmed by writer Aimee Selby in *Art and Text,*

artists have employed text to analytical effect, not only in the investigation of the function of art but with broader perspectives upon notions of representation—whether the complexities and antagonisms of the social, the political or the autobiographical (2009, p. 91).

One of the objectives within the WOOF series was to signify speech and identity through collage text and the printing of text. According to Australian artist Alex Selenitsch,

the word’ (and possibly ‘the letter’) is language which is some way from being a communication or record. On its own, a word is short of the sentence, well short of a functional context for its linguistic finality. It points to both the sentence that it might end up in, and also to the thought that precedes it. When a word is used singly, either as a solo item or in patterns of repetition, this double ended ambiguity can be sustained: this zone between thought and convention allows artists to foreground qualities that are normally ignored in linguistic acts (2007, p. 50).

Text within these works was erased or added in two forms: as single words to indicate a type and queer reading, and as labels, referencing fashion logos with print protocols of authentication. My use of labels and symbols were designed for easy identification of type and meaning to offer multiple readings of the one artwork. As British feminist film theorist Laura Mulvey has explained:

an image constitutes the matrix of the imaginary, of recognition/ misrecognition and identification, and hence of the first articulation of the ‘I’ of subjectivity. This is a moment when [a]... fascination with looking... collides with the initial inklings of self-awareness (1984, p. 365).

It was this self-awareness that the works within the WOOF series were attempting to prompt within the viewer, through depicting sameness but also difference.
This provocation is amplified in my work through the use of glitter on the letters OOOF. Adding a campness that was hitherto avoided due to the central conceptual concerns of the general project.

**COSTUME: PROPS AND MASKS**

Balzac’s final code of identification—costume—adds an important element to performance that manifests readily within most demographics in Western culture as it assists in the demarcation of identity. As discussed in chapter three, costume offers not only a way of projecting who an individual is but it also positions them within a class structure and at times cultural background. By appropriating costume or attire from the working class, straight-acting gay men attempt to negate the feminine to pass as straight. This is also carried into what can be referred to as props or symbols of masculinity. The WOOF series utilised appropriated images that could predominately be read as middle class due to the readership demographic of the Good Weekend and its alignment with heteronormative masculinity. Working class depictions of men in the Good Weekend tended towards advertising services such as insurance, credit or house renovation. In the context of my project these images favoured a gay clone reading of hypermasculinity through work wear and masculine props, such power tools and trucks. These images were archived for future applications.

In The Politics and Poetics of Camp Moe Myer discusses Oscar Wilde’s use of costume through Balzacian dandyism. According to Myer, Wilde added the Balzacian element of costume ‘simultaneously advertising the attempts [of exteriority] by publicly
signifying his progress [of a constructed social identity] through costume display. He attributed this to Wilde’s opportunistic mode of ‘notorious self-promotion’ (Myer 1994, p. 81). Thus, the use of costume and masculine props such as a cape and cane became synonymous with Oscar Wilde. In turn they have become synonymous with straight-acting or heteronormative masculine performance such as the football or the work ute. Within the context of the WOOF series the use of masks and blindfolds in the images are literal red herrings that emphasise a vocation or promote alternative meanings that offered a return to notions of a secret cover. Yet it is the clothing that the men wear that tells the actual story. Similar in style and generic in nature most of the men depicted could have purchased their attire at the same store. The sameness of this series is constantly sublimated through the masculine prop of a mask underlining difference within homogenized middle-class masculine images. As Hal Foster has observed,

Different but not quite other, the subcultural nevertheless attracts the sociological gaze. Indeed, it is often dismissed as a spectacle of subjection, but this is precisely its tactic: to provoke the major culture to name it and in doing so name itself (1985, p. 170).

I trialled two installation configurations for the WOOF Series, as a two by four grid structure and a single spaced linear arrangement to review presentation styles between and grid formats and museum standard hangs. Exploring how different installation designs could manoeuvre the reading of my artworks. This investigation moved my project into the next and final trial exhibition, this is not a drill.
CHAPTER 5: THIS IS NOT A DRILL

Figure 52 | Richard Harding, this is not a drill: for life bro 2013, Photographic screenprinted acrylic on cartridge paper, paste-up with oil based spray paint, Installation view West.
Figure 53 | Richard Harding, this is not a drill: for life bro 2013, Photographic screenprinted acrylic on cartridge, paste-up with oil based spray paint, detail.
Figure 54 | Richard Harding, this is not a drill: UR SO GAY 2013, acrylic mirror and Wardrobe: Act I Hoodie 2013, Photographic Screenprint – gouache on rag paper with flocked glitter, Installation view East.
Figure 55 | Richard Harding, *this is not a drill: Wardrobe: Act I Hoodie* 2013, Photographic Screenprint – gouache on rag paper with flocked glitter, Installation view South.
CHAPTER 5: THIS IS NOT A DRILL
Figure 56 | Richard Harding, *this is not a drill: Wardrobe Act I Hoodie – Man of Steel Lays Down the Law* 2013. Photographic Screenprint – gouache on rag paper with flocked glitter, 105cm x 75cm.
Figure 57 | Richard Harding, *this is not a drill: Wardrobe: Act I Hoodie – Man of Steel Lays Down the Law* 2013, Detail - Photographic Screenprint – gouache on rag paper with flocked glitter.
Figure 58 | Richard Harding, *this is not a drill: Wardrobe: Act 1 Hoodie – Bear Goes on the Prowl* 2013, Photographic Screenprint – gouache on rag paper with flocked glitter, 105cm x 75cm.
Figure 59 | Richard Harding, *this is not a drill: Wardrobe: Act I Hoodie – Bear Goes on the Prowl* 2013, Detail - Photographic Screenprint – gouache on rag paper with flocked glitter.
Figure 60 | Richard Harding, *this is not a drill: Wardrobe: Act I Hoodie – Base Warrior in Waiting*, 2013 Photographic Screenprint – gouache on rag paper with flocked glitter, 105cm x 75cm.
Figure 61 | Richard Harding, *this is not a drill: Wardrobe: Act I Hoodie – Base Warrior in Waiting*, 2013 Detail - Photographic Screenprint – gouache on rag paper with flocked glitter.
Figure 62 | Richard Harding, *this is not a drill: Wardrobe: Act I Hoodie – The Not so Secret Service* 2013, Photographic Screenprint – gouache on rag paper with flocked glitter, 105cm x 75cm.
Figure 63 | Richard Harding, *this is not a drill: Wardrobe: Act I Hoodie – The Not so Secret Service* 2013, Detail - Photographic Screenprint – gouache on rag paper with flocked glitter.
Figure 64 | Richard Harding, *this is not a drill: Wardrobe: Act I Hoodie – Wild Colonial Boy* Wild As 2013, Photographic Screenprint – gouache on rag paper with flocked glitter, 105cm x 75cm.
Figure 65 | Richard Harding, *this is not a drill: Wardrobe: Act I Hoodie – Wild Colonial Boy Wild As* 2013, Detail - Photographic Screenprint – gouache on rag paper with flocked glitter.
Figure 66 | Richard Harding, *this is not a drill: Wardrobe. Act I Hoodie – Goth Master Holds Court* 2013, Photographic Screenprint – gouache on rag paper with flocked glitter, 105cm x 75cm.
Figure 67 | Richard Harding, *this is not a drill: Wardrobe: Act I Hoodie – Goth Master Holds Court* 2013, Detail - Photographic Screenprint – gouache on rag paper with flocked glitter.
Figure 68 | Richard Harding, *this is not a drill: Wardrobe: Act I Hoodie – Operatic and Over the Top* 2013, Photographic Screenprint – gouache on rag paper with flocked glitter, 105cm x 75cm.
Figure 69 | Richard Harding, *this is not a drill: Wardrobe: Act I Hoodie – Operatic and Over the Top* 2013, Detail - Photographic Screenprint – gouache on rag paper with flocked glitter.
Figure 70 | Richard Harding, this is not a drill: Wardrobe: Act I Hoodie – Persecuted or Paranoid 2013, Photographic Screenprint – gouache on rag paper with flocked glitter, 105cm x 75cm.
Figure 71 | Richard Harding, *this is not a drill: Wardrobe: Act I Hoodie – Persecuted or Paranoid* 2013, Detail - Photographic Screenprint – gouache on rag paper with flocked glitter.
Figure 72 | Richard Harding, *this is not a drill: Wardrobe: Act I Hoodie – Strangers in the Night* 2013, Photographic Screenprint – gouache on rag paper with flocked glitter, 105cm x 75cm.
Figure 73 | Richard Harding, *this is not a drill: Wardrobe: Act I Hoodie – Strangers in the Night* 2013, Detail · Photographic Screenprint – gouache on rag paper with flocked glitter.
Figure 74 | Richard Harding, *this is not a drill: Wardrobe: Act I Hoodie Hounds Back on the Hunt* 2013, Photographic Screenprint – gouache on rag paper with flocked glitter, 105cm x 75cm.
Figure 75 | Richard Harding, *this is not a drill:* Wardrobe: Act I Hoodie Hounds Back on the Hunt 2013, Detail - Photographic Screenprint – gouache on rag paper with flocked glitter.
Figure 76 | Richard Harding, *this is not a drill: for life bro* 2013 Photographic screenprinted acrylic on cartridge paper, paste-up with oil based spray paint and *UR SO GAY* 2013, acrylic mirror, Installation view West.
Figure 77 | Richard Harding, *this is not a drill: UR SO GAY* 2013, acrylic mirror and *Wardrobe: Act I Hoodie* 2013, Photographic Screenprint – gouache on rag paper with flocked glitter, Installation view North, detail.
Figure 78 | Richard Harding, *this is not a drill: UR SO GAY* 2013, acrylic mirror and *Wardrobe: Act I Hoodie* 2013, Photographic Screenprint – gouache on rag paper with flocked glitter, Installation view North.
Figure 79 | Richard Harding, *this is not a drill: UR SO GAY* 2013, acrylic mirror and *Wardrobe: Act I Hoodie* 2013, Photographic Screenprint – gouache on rag paper with flocked glitter, Installation view East.
Within this chapter I will use René Magritte’s painting *The Treachery of Images* (1928-29) commonly referred to as ‘this is not a pipe’ as a framework to analyse the representation of masculinity and gender focused language. I will discuss this component of my project by employing concepts of reproduction and the copy as analogies of sameness and simulation to investigate the notion of ‘straight acting’ and connections to the closet. This chapter will reference Michel Foucault’s essay *this is not a drill* (1983) and Jean Baudrillard’s philosophical treatise of *Simulacra and Simulation* (1981) to explore the construction and performance of gender and sexual orientation through collected image and text.

The artworks presented for *this is not a drill* (2013) transformed the questions of representation posed by Magritte’s *this is not a pipe* into a queer position by examining gay masculinity and the closet. Presented as an installation, the three individual works making up *this is not a drill* (2013) as distinct to Foucault’s essay operated separately and in unison to direct and question the viewer’s perceptions of masculine representation. The installation interrogated various aspects of gay masculine identification by questioning, when is masculine performance genetic, when is it nurtured behaviour, and when is it role-play? The project also asks, how do the images and text help us to rethink reproduction as a mode of representing, presenting, and re-presenting?

**MAGRITTE AND FOUCALUT**

Between 1928 and 1929 René Magritte produced his seminal painting *The Treachery of Images*. The work depicts a standard pipe of the era floating in space with the text *Ceci n’est pas une pipe* (This is not a pipe) written in cursive style beneath. The uncertainty and consequent discourse this work produced has resulted in a plethora of writings about its intent and meaning, one of which was Michel Foucault’s essay of same name,
with illustrations and letters by Magritte. In his essay Foucault agrees with Magritte’s short sentence writing, ‘the statement is perfectly true, since the drawing representing the pipe is not the pipe itself’ (1983, p. 19). And yet there is a convention of language: What is this drawing? Within the essay’s first page, Foucault asks that question, the question that *The Treachery of Images* activates and taps into a certain anxiety around sameness and difference, a disconnect or confusion between the painted pipe and the disclaimer of text to the contrary. In my work *this is not a drill*, the same type of question is asked: What is this installation? If this is not a drill, what is it? Foucault declares the anxiety this creates through the calligram’s triple role: ‘to augment the alphabet, to repeat something without the aid of rhetoric, to trap things in a double cipher’ (1983, p. 20).

It is by way of the calligram created with ‘*text and shape*’ that Foucault claims the work takes its tautological position. He states,

> the calligram aspires playfully to efface the oldest oppositions of our alphabetical civilization: to show and to name; to shape and to say; to re-produce and to articulate; to imitate and to signify; to look and to read (1983, p. 21).

In the context of *this is not a drill* Magritte’s and Foucault’s tautological positions are re-presented

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32. It is important to note that I am following Foucault’s use of the term calligram. Like him, I am using the word differently from the dictionary definition: ‘A word or piece of text in which the design and layout of the letters creates a visual image related to the meaning of the words themselves.’ Instead I use the word calligram to unite the individual works into one artwork through the materiality of mirror and the positioning of the artworks within the gallery space. See <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/calligram>, accessed 8 June 2014.
through my artwork by the inference that the drill is not an actual drill but something else, something other. This otherness was implied through my artwork’s transformed scale and position of repeated appropriated images and text to suggest alternative renditions of what the viewer encounters within the installation. This was enhanced by the double entendre of a drill being a repetitious training exercise, or the practice of a skill or procedure. Yet in the framework of the sentence the work’s title heralds an announcement of emergency, that this is real and no longer a practice exercise. As Foucault points out, the calligram sets the perfect trap. By its double function it guarantees capture, as neither discourse alone nor a pure drawing could do. It banishes the invincible absence that defeats words, imposing upon them, by ruses of a writing at play in space, the visible form of their referent (1983, p. 22).

Through this is not drill I proposed that the ‘perfect trap’ of the calligram suggests the closet and the visible referent—of straight-acting or gay men’s performance of heteronormative masculinity—are not what they seem. The works endeavoured to navigate how masculine gay identity could be addressed through materiality and construction of a renewed calligram through printmedia practice.

RECONSIDERING AN ARCHITECTURAL METAPHOR

My use of the language associated with the public notification of an emergency as inferred in this is not a drill (2013) revisited the architectural metaphor of the closet through the positioning of the artworks throughout the exhibition space, First Site Gallery, RMIT University Melbourne (2013). First Site Gallery is a subterranean space containing three galleries of various dimensions. Gallery two was selected for its position and layout within the building. It has one entry/exit point that offered a long passage like space running east with a smaller section, leading west.

The works for this is not a drill (2013) were installed to activate movement from the smaller west facing section into the longer eastern part of the gallery. There are no architectural interruptions such as windows or doors in the passage like space. While the gallery layout signalled movement into one space from another, the corridor design offered a dead end therefore metaphorically reiterating Foucault’s claim of a trap and for my ends: a closet.

In the Politics of installation German art critic and theorist Boris Groys states,
the installation operates by means of a symbolic privatization of the public space of an exhibition... the installation transforms the empty, neutral, public space into an individual artwork—and it invites the visitor to experience this space in a holistic, totalising space of an artwork (2009, p. 3).

My installation this is not a drill transformed the gallery’s architectural dead-end into a Foucauldian trap yet with a way out indicated by the emergency exit sign and metaphor for leaving as coming out.

A WONDER WALL OF MEN

The first of the works encountered in this exhibition was a wonder wall titled for life bro (2013). The wonder wall is usually associated with teenage or adolescent infatuation. It represents a symbol of hero worship or an obsession with a pop or movie star usually constructed of multiple images of the same celebrity or sport hero. My for life bro wonder wall combines this reference in the artwork. For the installation of the work I engaged in the repetitious and obsessive nature of installing the screenprinted male images as paste-ups and then spray painted the expletive gaycunt over the top. Semi permanent and carefully positioned in a grid format the black and white images of men reiterated a standard brick pattern referenced in Scope (2007) while the graffiti alerted the viewer to ongoing homophobic slander gay men too often endure on the street if they are identified as different from an accepted cultural portrayal of heteronormative masculinity.

The term gaycunt can also stand for a gay man’s anus similarly referred at times as pussy aligning a gay male’s anus with a woman’s vagina. During my research project the word cunt became popular as a substitute for mate amongst working class white youth in and around parts of Melbourne. For further discussions on the sexist expletive cunt see <http://clementineford.tumblr.com/post/80863981324/can-we-stop-being-delicate-about-cunts>. 

33. The term gaycunt can also stand for a gay man’s anus similarly referred at times as pussy aligning a gay male’s anus with a woman’s vagina. During my research project the word cunt became popular as a substitute for mate amongst working class white youth in and around parts of Melbourne. For further discussions on the sexist expletive cunt see <http://clementineford.tumblr.com/post/80863981324/can-we-stop-being-delicate-about-cunts>.
Constructed with images from my collected archive, the repetition of assorted male depictions highlighted masculine difference within male sameness. Using men in various actions and attire, the wonder wall questioned our identification with types of masculine authenticity such as the man on the land or surfer dude. The images were scaled at A3 paper size in portrait and landscape formats. All the text was removed and the images converted to greyscale overlaid with a consistent dot screen and then screenprinted in flat acrylic black. By unifying the males this way and installing them in a brick-like grid pattern, the wall of images offered a standardisation or ‘normalised’ effect. American academic Hannah B Higgins writes of this when she declared,

The grid character of the brick… is revealed in its use. Bricks are lined up end-to-end in rows staggered one on top of another, with mortar in between. The builder holds the brick in one hand and a mortaring tool in the other, producing a grid that is equal parts mortar and brick (2009, p. 13).

American artist Carl Andre whose minimal brick-work based in artworks such as Equivalent VIII offered another reference point for the brick patterning in my installation. British journalist Emma Brockes quoted Andre in the Guardian newspaper proclaiming,

I was always fighting the rise of conceptual art... There was Joseph Kosuth’s statement, ‘Art as idea as idea.’ And I said an idea in the head is not a work of art. A work of art is out in the world, is a tangible reality… My work doesn’t come from ideas – my work comes from desires (1996, para. 8).

For life bro embedded within its images of men and pattern of construction an awareness of people through the brick-like pattern. The wall portrayed men that accentuated differences within sameness that became increasingly harder to detect due to repetition and improved production techniques. Thus returning to Richard Sennett’s The Craftsman where he observed the difficulty in distinguishing differences in brick types as, ‘industrialized advances in brickmaking have made the differences even harder to detect’ (2008, p. 143). This analogy of construction assisted this is not a drill in a way that made notions of difference difficult to detect, which is the conundrum of ‘straight acting’ gay men.

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In *Art that fills blank walls* Kate Walsh states,

Though street art is revered in many cities, even the best artists face roadblocks when it comes to working on a concrete canvas. By its very nature street art is transient - even efforts by the Melbourne City Council to protect a small Banksy\(^{34}\) piece by covering it with perspex were thwarted when people poured acrylic paint behind the barrier - so it’s best not to become too attached (2014, para. 7).

This transient nature of street art and graffiti was utilised within the wonder wall through the repeated paste-ups of men and the use of an expletive. These strategies reclaimed negative terminology and endeavoured to establish a sense of unease within the space.

The expletive *gaycunt* used in *for life bro* was appropriated from graffiti discovered on the now defunct website *thisisvandalism.com* in 2010. Spray-painted in giant letters across the wall of a car park this expletive was then re-graffitied by someone else with the addition of “for life bro” repositioning the derogatory expletive with humour and recognition of identity. On the gallery wonder wall, only *gaycunt* appears, the “for life bro” adage becoming the title of the whole work. Here the expletive cunt feminizes the word gay while implying a violent threat. The expletive’s true purpose and meaning is usually punctuated by tone and volume. Within the gallery space its impact is delivered through large-scale letters and the colours red and black. The expletive becomes a see-through calligram questioning the orientation of the men depicted beneath it. This sexist and homophobic phrase is re-claimed pushing the viewer psychologically and physically into the passage-like section of the gallery\(^{35}\). Turning their backs on the profanity the viewer encountered two more works.

**COSTUME AS IDENTITY**

As viewers faced the eastern aspect of the installation they were met with two works: one on paper the other a purely mirror based work. The work on paper, *Wardrobe Act I* (2013) presented a unique edition\(^{36}\) of ten prints of the same hooded male figure each with a different composed glitter logo on the chest.

Commonly referred to as a ‘hoodie’ this generic apparel has a long history with diverse and universal purpose, although its meaning and status is in constant flux. At times it is culturally misinterpreted and misunderstood. In her article, *Hoodie’s evolution from fashion mainstay to symbol of injustice* CNN reporter Emanuella Grinberg (2012, para. 17) claims, that the hoodie has roots in medieval European attire.

According to Grinberg’s source Mark-Evan Blackman, Assistant Professor of Apparel Design at New York’s Fashion Institute of Technology the hooded garment was not always ‘shrouded in nefarious intent’ and was worn as ‘regular clothing for monks and scholars’ while hooded capes were commonly worn by outdoor workers’ (2012, para. 17). Grinberg goes on to trace the

\(^{34}\) Banksy is the pseudonym of a globally recognised UK street artist who is renowned for preserving his anonymity through wearing hoodies. Banksy was also one of the first street artists to move into the fine art and state sanctioned public art realms.

\(^{35}\) I witnessed this at the opening of the exhibition and at different times during the exhibition while invigilating the gallery.

\(^{36}\) A unique edition operates on the basis of a standard limited edition with a common base that has added individual distinguishing elements or components added to it such as drawing or chine collé.
athletic-wear company Champion’s popularization of the hoodie as working-class apparel as hooded sweatshirts are currently worn by individuals across the socioeconomic spectrum.

Costume plays numerous roles in identity performance. The hoodie for example, can be ‘protector’ or ‘deceptor’ because as a generic garment it offers the privilege of anonymity or can be stylish couture depending on the designer and wearer’s intent. In The History of the Hoodie (2012) Denis Wilson motivated by the shooting and death of American youth Trayvon Martin37 outlines how the humble hooded sweatshirt evolved into the symbol of the outlaw. Wilson summarizes the garments movement, ‘from athletes giving their girlfriends their track gear to ‘stick-up’ (muggers) kids and hip hop DJs hanging in parks during impromptu spin sets to the graffiti artists’ of the 1970s and 1980s (2012, para. 8). According to graffiti writer Zephyr these artists, were also engaging in illicit activities by marking up train cars and subway stations and trying to maintain anonymity. The hoodie was popular among them, but it wasn’t just used to duck the police. They were inexpensive, wash-and-wear, and had a convenient built in head-warming aspect. With the stealth nature of graffiti, I suppose we liked having our faces cloaked or hidden (2012, cited in Grinberg 2012, para. 9).

By utilizing a found image of a hooded man the new work Wardrobe: Act 1 (2013) embedded and set in motion aspects of the image’s original perceived meaning within the context and meaning of my project’s enquiry. The ambiguous and generic nature of a hoodie renders the wearer to some degree anonymous. The depicted male enters the realm of ‘camouflage’ through the nature of sameness. All wearer’s of hoodies are often aligned with deviant or criminal intentions whether intended or not. As Cynthia Jasper Professor of Consumer Science at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, points out,

When people interpret your way of dressing, hoodie or whatever, people interpret that as something you control. You can’t control how tall you’re going to be or your hair and eyes, but you can control what you put on your body, and your clothing is interpreted as representing who you are (2012, cited in Grinberg 2012, para. 14).

The hoodie has the potential to express identity or hide it. Within the installation the ten hooded figures were presented in a linear fashion at a standard gallery height so that they resembled a police lineup, awaiting the viewer’s interpretation. The apprehension from the viewer when met with the shielded gaze of the hooded men allies with Baudrillard’s second order of simulacrum and the, ‘absorption of appearances or the liquidation of the real’ (1983, p. 95). Yet in this simulated lineup the reproduction of sameness was undermined by differences in printing production and the addition of an individual logo of text flocked with glitter on the chest. The anonymity constructed by the hoodie’s

37. Denis Wilson writes, ‘When 17-year-old Trayvon Martin was shot and killed in Sanford, Florida on February 26th [2012] the result of an apparent confrontation with George Zimmerman, a neighborhood watch volunteer – he was wearing a hooded sweatshirt. Zimmerman told police that he shot the teenager in self-defense, evoking Florida’s Stand Your Ground law, and has not been charged or arrested. But in the weeks since Martin’s tragic death, the hoodie has emerged as a symbol of support for those who believe justice has not been served’ (2012, para. 1).
homogenized sameness unravelled exposing the group
of men as individuals and creating what Baudrillard
referred to as, ‘an anguish, a disquieting foreign-ness:
the uneasiness before the photograph, considered a
witches trick – and more generally before an apparatus,
which is always the apparatus of reproduction’ (1983,
p. 153). Baudrillard relates this anguish to Walter
Benjamin and the unease before the mirror image
(p. 153). This sense of foreignness was aligned to the
reproduced print original and the queering of the
multiple printed image returning to otherness.

SERIALITY AND SIMULATION

In *this is not a drill* the hoodie activates a quandary of
appearance and numerous meanings through the
production of multiples. The homogenized hooded
garment functions as a sign for a generic masculine
original and produced from a reproductive matrix
that suggests sameness but offers through the act
of printing using body weight and multiple inking
passes: difference. This combination raises questions of
authenticity through the unique edition that allows for
slight differences to be added or subtracted from the
base printed image.

With the unique print edition of the screenprinted
hooded men *this is not a drill* deliberated on notions of
the printed copy as imitation or simulacrum in relation
to straight-acting gay men. According to Deleuze in
*Difference and Repetition*,

> Everything has become simulacrum, for by
simulacrum we should not understand a simple
imitation but rather the act by which the

very idea of a model or privileged position is
challenged and overturned… The simulacrum is
the instance which includes a difference within
itself, such as (selection, repetition, etc.). It is here
we find the lived reality of a sub-representative
domain (1968, p. 69).

This domain suggests the reality of subcultures,
specifically the model of heteronormative
masculinity imitated by gay men as camouflage,
subversion or closeting.

During production of the hooded men I used a large
screen printing vacuum table with a swing-arm
squeegee, the action of printing was manoeuvred
to produce each print in a slightly different manner,
accentuating the combination of sameness and
difference. In this respect, I operated on a level similar
to the production of Warhol’s serial prints of the 1960s
from the same silkscreen matrix. The outcome of
the individual prints changed in tone and detail yet
retained their likeness, signifying the proliferation of
‘instances’ through repetition. This printing production
became a repetitious performance I aligned with
Butler’s theory of gender performativity which is
not a singular act but a repetition and a
ritual which achieves its effects through its
naturalization in the context of the body,
understood, in part, as a culturally sustained

As the individual prints in *this is not a drill* evolved into
a series difference was reinforced by the printing of
a unique glitter logo on the chest of the hoodie, a
marking reminiscent of fashion branding. The one-off logos reused text from past work featured in Scope (2007) in a circular labelling style that countered the uniformity sameness of the individual prints. These shared and discerning print elements were exploited as gender sameness. The ten hooded men were branded with difference which simultaneously incorporated and dispelled heteronormative authentication through production and protocols of printmedia practice.

Australian artist Christian Bumbarra Thompson has employed the motif of the hoodie in several works drawing attention to issues of identity, cultural hybridity and multiple histories. Thompson’s hoodies operate to conceal the individual while highlighting cultural and racial difference. In the Australian Graffiti series (2007) Thompson produced a triptych titled Black Gum: 1, 2 & 3 that operate as separate and related works. In these works he depicts a figure dressed in a black hoodie presented in left, head on and right profile which are reminiscent of police mug shots. The figure’s gender is rendered indistinguishable by an abundance of red flowering gum (Corymbia ficifolia) protruding from the hood. These photographic works activate a binary confusion between masculine and feminine as the viewer attempts to identify who and what this human-like figure could be. The depiction of a figure in a black homogenous hoodie with a flowering eucalyptus arrangement covering the face deploys the costume element of Balzac’s code of identification with the prop of indigenous flora. The flower locates the work within an Australian context and suggests multiple readings of indigenous and non-indigenous identity yet retaining the domain of anonymity through the covering of the face.

Figure 82 | Christian Bumbarra Thompson, Black Gum 1 2007, type C photograph, 100cm x 100cm. Image courtesy of the artist.

Figure 83 | Christian Bumbarra Thompson, Black Gum 2 2007, type C photograph, 100cm x 100cm. Image courtesy of the artist.

Figure 84 | Christian Bumbarra Thompson, Black Gum 3 2007, type C photograph, 100cm x 100cm. Image courtesy of the artist.
Writing in the catalogue for *Australian Graffiti* Australian art curator and writer Hetti Perkins states,

Thompson's fascination with masquerade as a performance technique is an ever present theme in his work… ‘the symbiosis of mankind and nature; [the subject] is not masculine or feminine – genderless’… for the artist, the combination of ‘retro glam’ and ‘native chic’ in these works is a reflection on being ‘truthful to your era’ (2007, p. 2).

This supposedly temporal positioning of being truthful to your era is questionable because the garment and floral arrangement have robust histories (although spring is indicated by way of the flowering eucalyptus and is a symbol of renewal and beginnings). It was with the titling of the series *Australian Graffiti* that situated the photographic images within a contemporary epoch. The literal connections of graffiti (the word and the work) the hoodie and Thompson's hooded figures links with the hooded men of *Wardrobe: Act 1* within my artwork, *this is not a drill*.

Whilst in residence at Blast Theory Collective in Brighton UK, Thompson produced the *King Billy* series (2010) that moved into what could be perceived as an opulent and psychedelic phase of reworking the homogenous hoodie. However, I propose that this work also offers the essence of camp. In Untitled 1, Untitled 2 & Untitled 3 of the King Billy series the face of the hooded figure can just be made out: the artist models the costume. The performative elements of this work and the *Black Gum* triptych suggest protest and defiance of racial profiling and racial assumption. Once again, Thompson has used the mug shot-like positioning and posture. These almost passive images of protest evoke a strength of conviction and determination. As Hetti Perkins points out,

Debates over identity and its definition by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people continue to the present day… the conundrum of identity, how it is defined and by whom is central to Christian’s work… Like Christian himself, while the Bidjara references may not be visible they are intrinsically part of the picture (2010, p. 2).

These artworks combine notions of cultural difference, subcultures and consumerism with otherness. These works also feature simple symbols of costume to construct a hybrid space that is open to mixed and wide-ranging interpretations of complex issues of contemporary identity.

**UR SO GAY: MIRROR AND REPRESENTATION**

Installed opposite *Wardrobe: Act I* (2013) in *First Site Gallery* a mirrored barcode stated *UR SO GAY* (2013) while reflecting a line of hooded men with glitter on their chests. The binary construction of the calligram barcode in this work was informed by Baudrillard’s orders of simulacra where he states,

the mystic elegance of the binary system, of the zero and the one, from which all being proceeds.
such is the status of the sign that is also the end of signification: DNA or operational simulation (1983, p. 106).

Surrounded by hooded men the viewer was presented with the binary interplay that constructs a barcode: one and zero, true and false or in the context of the mirror, virtual or real. UR SO GAY (2013) incorporates man and machine to reflect both the relationship between the printed work and the viewer, enveloping all who encounter the installation. According to Foucault the mirror is a “heterotopia” an unreal or virtual space where the viewer sees themself where they are not. Foucault declares the heterotopic space of the mirror as other, explaining,

it makes this place that I occupy at the moment I look at myself in the glass at once absolutely real, connected with all space that surrounds it, and absolutely unreal, since in order to be perceived it has to pass through this virtual point which is over there (1967, p. 8).

Within the context of this is not a drill Foucault’s concept of the mirrored heterotopia signals a crisis of identity based in the real and the unreal or the original and copy reactivating the conundrum of gay masculinity and heteronormative masculinity.

As the mirror barcode absorbs and reflects the viewer with the hooded men portrayed in Wardrobe: Act 1 the installation simulates an alternative space in what German art critic and philosopher Boris Groys refers to as an open space of anonymous circulation and places it—if only temporarily—within a fixed, stable closed context of the topographically well-defined “here and now” (2009, p. 8). The merged artworks in the installation questions how this heterotopic ‘open space’ might assist in navigating the uncertainty of gay masculine identity. Through the materiality of the mirror this is not a drill re-positions the printed copy into a virtual space. This space is fractured by the strips of mirror that make up the barcode multiplying the image into yet more renditions or copies of itself. According to Groys:

we are unable to stabilize a copy as a copy, we are unable to stabilize an original as an original. There are no eternal originals. Reproduction is as much infected by originality as originality is infected by reproduction. In circulating through various contexts, a copy (2009, p. 6).

As the viewers moved through my this is no a drill installation, they and the hooded men opposite distort and splinter, which offered multiple perspectives of themselves and the hooded men. In the Eye and the Gaze French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan claims,

in relation to things, in so far as this relation is constituted by the way of vision, an order in the figures of representation, something slips, passes, is transmitted, from stage to stage, and is always to some degree eluded in it—this is what we call the gaze (1973, p. 73).

Similar to a carnival hall of mirrors, the barcode transformed the printed image and the viewer into

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38. According to Foucault heterotopia spaces are neither here nor there, they are simultaneously physical and mental, such as a phone call or travelling in a train carriage (Foucault 1967).
multiples of themselves, implying a shift in how the work could be perceived as it announced UR SO GAY. The visual movement from print to mirror and back again allowed the work to enquire how the concepts of the copy and resemblance may be interpreted through the lens of gay masculinity.

Many artists have utilised the depiction and materiality of the mirror as a device to expand concepts of representation and spatial understanding. This was demonstrated in the 2009 exhibition titled Mirror Mirror: Then and Now curated by Ann Stephen at the Institute of Modern Art in Brisbane, Australia. In Stephen’s catalogue essay she begins by quoting Australian conceptual artist Ian Burn’s ‘revelation’ from Glimpses: Peripheral Vision, where he discovered his mirror works were part of a larger genre of materiality: ‘I recall my surprise when I realised how many other artists were using materials like mirrors, glass and clear plastic’ (2009, p. 5). This exhibition presented a historical and contemporary survey of artworks examining the materiality of mirror.

As part of the group of contemporary artists featured in this exhibition Australian artist Christian Capurro contributed mirror-work White Breath (Passenger)39 (2009) share similarities with this is not a drill through its exploration of materiality. Capurro employed a pair of generic mirrored wardrobe doors that were then painstakingly painted with correction fluid or ‘white-out’, leaving only a thin strip of mirror which exposed, captured and projected light and images of viewers back into the gallery space. The reflected light propelled a minimal composition of lines across the

39. Capurro’s White Breath mirror-correction works have taken various forms. White Breath (Passenger) is the latest adaptation from the series that began with White Breath (bond) exhibited at West Space Inc. in 2000.
gallery floor and walls, a pattern only interrupted by a viewer entering and leaving the installation. According to Stephen this ‘covering’ suggested a process of ‘concealment’ that she aligned with, ‘the claustrophobic interior at the heart’ of Vladimir Nabokov’s novel *Lolita* (1955). Stephen’s notes:

there was a double bed, a mirror, a double bed in the mirror, a closet door with a mirror, a bathroom door ditto, a blue-dark window, a reflected bed there, the same in the closet mirror, two chairs, a glass topped table, two bed tables, a double-bed: a big panel bed, to be exact, with a Tuscan rose chenille spread, and two frilled, pink-shaded night lamps, left and right. The very act of covering, if nothing else, flirts with the possibility of concealment. Like all of Capurro’s work, *White Breath* (Passenger) hovers between psycho-drama and phenomenological readings (2009, p. 12).

In the context of *UR SO GAY* the psycho-drama Stephen’s claims is based within the literal closet of Capurro’s wardrobe doors covered with ‘a congealed welter’ of brush strokes hiding the mirror from view and its intended purpose of looking and grooming. Yet leaving a thin band of mirror to see into and out of suggesting a dichotomy between seeing and being seen within the virtual space of the mirror. In Capurro’s *White Breath* (Passenger) the thin band of light could be perceived as the result of a ‘peek’ into or out of the psychological closet. In *UR SO GAY* the psycho-drama of the closet is exposed to the viewer who can not escape being captured and reflected by the mirrored barcode with the hooded men of *Wardrobe: Act 1*.

By almost covering actual wardrobe doors Capurro’s could also be read as suggesting an opening or closing of the closet door?

According to Australian theorist Elizabeth Grosz in *Architecture from the outside*, ‘The mirror surface creates a virtual field that reflects the real, duplicating its spatiality and the object’s visual characteristics’ (2001, p. 80). Within *UR SO GAY* the mirror barcode offered a combination of imagined space and duplicity of identity that fractured the exhibition space and viewer through what could be described as a slippage effect between the material world and the virtual world of the mirror. This Lacanian ‘slippage’ or gap between the real and the unreal, material and virtual provides a window to suggest alternative readings of what the viewer is looking at while being absorbed into another similar yet different space. Grosz expands on this notion by stating,

The space in between things is the space in which things are undone, the space to the side and around, which is the space of subversion and fraying, the edges of any identity’s limits. In short it is the space of the bounding and undoing of the identities which constitute it (2001, p. 93).

The historic paradox of gay masculinity is thus positioned on the edge of, and beneath heteronormative masculinity while straight-acting gay men attempt to align with and perform a sense of straightness. The in between space which Grosz
speaks presents possibilities of expanding gay identity beyond the edges of the hetero-homo binary.

American artist Daniel Kukla’s *Edge Effect* (2012) series references and depicts the ecological juxtaposition of distinctly different ecosystems. Also known as the ‘Edged Effect’ that defines, ‘the influence that two ecological communities have on each other along the boundary (called the ecotone) that separates them’ (Kukla 2014, para. 2). Kukla’s use of mirroring is located in the landscape, which offered an alternative positioning of materials and concepts of interior and exterior that contrasted and resonated with the *this is not a drill* installation within the gallery space. In his artist statement Kukla explains the process he undertook, to document this unique confluence of terrains, I hiked out a large mirror and painter’s easel into the wilderness and captured opposing elements within the environment. Using a single visual plane, this series of images unifies the play of temporal phenomena, contrasts of color and texture, and natural interactions of the environment itself (Kukla 2014, para 1).

Kukla’s *Edge Effect* offered a “unique confluence of terrains” through the landscape opposite being absorbed into the mirror relocating the reflected landscape into an unknown domain. This relocating or transferring suggests a re-terrorization that affords an in between space provided by the mirror. According to Elizabeth Grosz,
In a certain sense, it is nature that falls into the space “between” or before the juxtaposition and coincidence of the urban, the architectural, and the cultural. Nature is the other of these terms, the space between them and the condition of their possibility and the impetus for their self overcoming (Grosz 2001, p. 96).

Kukla’s mirror works from the Edge Effect series could also be informed by Magritte’s The Human Condition (1933). A painting that itself depicts a landscape painting on an easel before a window that portrays the landscape beyond. The work is thus positioned in a lineage of surrealism that resonates with my project’s conceptual concern with imagined and metaphoric spaces. In the framework of the mirrored UR SO GAY barcode the space ‘between’ operated through connecting the viewer to the surface of the mirror and the embedded heterotopic space through the action of looking. This suggested an alternative understanding of the in-between connecting the mirrored and multiplied images and evokes what Elizabeth Grosz refers to as, ‘realignments or new arrangements…[that] facilitate transformations in the identities that constitute it’ (2001, p. 94).

In the 2011 exhibition Looking at Looking held at the National Gallery of Victoria, Australian Artist David Thomas presented a work titled Amid History 2 (Large Version) (2008) that also utilised the concepts and materially of a mirror. Although not actual glass or acrylic mirror Thomas’ reflective surface was constructed with a combination of a photograph (as a
employing high sheen enamel paint to generate a mirrored surface. In the exhibition catalogue curator Maggie Finch quotes curator and historian Max Delany who wrote, ‘Thomas’ photopaintings convene the past, present and future and simultaneously bring together divergent pictorial codes’ (2011, p. 8). These ‘divergent pictorial codes’ are what links Thomas’ mirrored photopaintings to the this is not a drill installation: the ‘covering’ of the image and the rearrangement of space through the enamel mirror surface, where the viewer looks to see the image yet sees themselves.

DEPARTING THOUGHTS

In this is not a drill the artworks operated as referents of masculine types with reflections of the self, announcing that this is no longer a practice drill but real existence. Within ‘this is not a drill’ the single calligram was presented as separate works only to be merged through the materiality of the mirror. Just as Magritte’s quintessential painting is designed to trap the viewer in the reading and representation of this is not a pipe, so too this is not drill intended to trap the viewer, conscripting them into the paradox of gay masculinity through reproduced images, texts and mirror.
CONCLUSION: PATTERNS OF BEHAVIOUR

Figure 89 | Richard Harding, *Patterns of Behaviour* 2014, Installation View North East, dimensions variable.
Figure 90 | Richard Harding, *Patterns of Behaviour* 2014, Installation View North Detail, dimensions variable.
Figure 91 | Richard Harding, *Patterns of Behaviour* 2014, Installation View East Detail, dimensions variable.
Figure 92 | Richard Harding, *Patterns of Behaviour* 2014, Installation View North East Detail, dimensions variable.
Figure 93 | Richard Harding, *Patterns of Behaviour* 2014, Installation View East Detail, dimensions variable.
Figure 94 | Richard Harding, *Patterns of Behaviour* 2014, Installation View South Detail, dimensions variable.

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Figure 95 | Richard Harding, *Patterns of Behaviour* 2014, Installation View South Detail, dimensions variable.
Figure 96 | Richard Harding, *Patterns of Behaviour* 2014, Installation View South West, dimensions variable.
Figure 97 | Richard Harding, *Patterns of Behaviour* 2014, Installation View East Detail, dimensions variable.
Juxtapose: An Exploration of Gay Masculinity and its Relationship to the Closet, was a practice-led research project which was activated by my discovery of the term *straight-acting*, a term used by gay men on dating websites as a way to identify as masculine. The research outcome of my project was a series of print based explorations and exhibitions that informed and culminated into an examination exhibition in the School of Art Gallery at RMIT University.

My research project began with my enquiry into how printmedia could examine, investigate and comment on gay masculinity and its relationship to the closet. My project considered and responded to two principle research questions:

1. In what ways can printmaking’s intrinsic nature of the multiple be employed to facilitate an analysis of sameness and difference in the construction and deconstruction of gender and sexuality?

2. How can the performative codes of posture, gesture, speech and costume be re-applied in a print based practice to explore proposed links between a gay masculine identity and the closet?

Question one was designed to utilise printmaking’s ability to produce multiples as an analogy for notions of sameness and difference in the construction of gender identity and sexual orientation. This led to my collection and archiving of found images that became the basis for analysis, deconstruction and production of new artworks which were created through printmaking mediums. Over the course of the research my project came to acknowledge and include digital and analogue photographic processes and terminology. I aligned printmaking and photography through reproducibility, and charted connections between the disciplines throughout my project. These connections allowed me to examine art production through a queer lens. The use of printmaking and photography enriched and
deepened the project’s exploration of reproductive technologies, which in turn advanced my conceptual concerns of the copy and authenticity.

Question two deployed the repetitive nature of reproductive technologies to explore the performative codes of posture, gesture, speech and costume. My project experimented with employing the printed image and materiality to discuss heteronormative masculine performance and the binary of visible/invisible within the gallery space. This exploration enabled the project to examine how the closet metaphor could be actualised through installation and how found images that depicted these performative codes could be installed in various architectural sites.

Within the time frame of my project the research questions expanded my practice to consider multiple pathways for questioning visibility and the homosexual closet based on heteronormative masculine performance. In effect, my project endeavoured to locate and identify a psychological space where a gay masculine identity may be free of the closet.

WRESTLING WITH A PARADOX AND OTHERNESS

Although my intention has been to become more cognisant of the complexities and politics of self identification in relation to sexual orientation, my research at times has led me to points of concern where aspects of the artworks produced could be seen as complicit with a white patriarchal system. Even though the project’s parameters had not intended to enter the realm of race, this aspect of identity emerged at several points during my research. This was especially evident when investigating artists and writers whose practices were also based around some form of otherness. Even though racial identity did not become a major research element of this project the combination of gender and orientation with race was acknowledged through the nature of invisibility that ‘whiteness’ allowed some gay men to utilise to blend in or pass as straight. This aspect of gay identity has been recognized as an area of possible further research.

As I have discussed throughout my exegesis the ostensive nature of identifying as straight-acting for gay men can be linked with the paradox of the print original. My project utilised multiples of the same found images repeatedly to embrace the copy as an analogy for heteronormative masculine performance by gay men. Incorporating questions of authenticity and the real, the print-based artworks interrogated heteronormative masculinity through mass media using collected images from The Age’s Good Weekend, the Herald Sun, mX and MCV magazines.

Throughout my project the architectural characteristics of the exhibition space were considered an integral metaphoric and material element of the artwork. Specific metaphors included the thoroughfare space of Scope (2007) and the calligraphic trap of this is not a drill (2013). Also operating in the virtual space of reflection and heterotopian space of the mirror, my project explored and deliberated on how spatial zones in gallery spaces could examine notions of the real and the virtual. My project developed an epistemological connection between identity politics, architectural metaphors and materiality. Applying the actual and metaphorical my project sought to purposefully disrupt established mainstream readings of existing images.
of men, text and space to encourage viewers who encountered the artworks to question their perceptions of how they see gay men and, in turn, themselves.

EXAMINATION EXHIBITION: PATTERNS OF BEHAVIOUR

The final exhibition Patterns of Behaviour combines the previous modes of studio investigation and installation within the literal white cube of the RMIT School of Art Gallery space. For my PhD examination my project has taken a further step incorporating architectural intervention as a way of enhancing my findings and highlighting the contribution of my project to contemporary practice. Informed by identity politics and philosophies of ‘being’, Patterns of Behaviour (2014) revisits the proposed connections of the closet to heteronormative gay masculinity. To do this I constructed a mirrored barcode titled Patterns of Behaviour (2014) with new and modified printed works which use past artworks from my project and images from my studio collection.

The installation Patterns of Behaviour was designed to transform the RMIT School of Art Gallery from a square cube into a circular walkway as a response to my project’s inability to locate an actual or psychological space free of the homosexual closet. Based in the notion of straight-acting, or heteronormative masculine performance, I have found a closet space that is constructed through the sameness of gesture, posture, speech and costume and whereby internal difference or ‘being’ is sublimated. Utilising the materials and concepts that have aided and informed my research to this point the final exhibition for my project suggests the project’s findings through a repetition of image making, installation and the viewers encounter with the artworks within an architecturally altered gallery space.

According to Deleuze,

To repeat is to behave in a certain manner, but in relation to something unique or singular which has no equal or equivalent. And perhaps this repetition at the level of external conduct echoes, for its own part, a more secret vibration which animates it, a more profound, internal repetition within the singular (1968, p. 1).

In Patterns of Behaviour repetition is actualized through a circular structure which supports a mirrored barcode at the center of the gallery with the printed images accentuating repeated depictions of performance that work to conceal or reveal the individual.

The Patterns of Behaviour installation moved my project from accommodating itself within existing architectural spaces such as in Red Gallery Contemporary Art Space (North Fitzroy) or First Site Gallery (RMIT University, Melbourne), to intervening in a space to grant greater artistic sovereignty. The circular structure allowed the mirrored barcode to be delivered in a continuous manner to symbolize the ongoing acts of performance within the process of coming out or staying in the closet. As the viewer enters the space they activate the work through their inverted reflection, ontologically morphing themself into a mirrored barcode that never ends. The viewer is confronted with the option to participate or to turn and leave; there is only one way in and one way out. If the viewer opts to stay and participate they encounter the installation’s circular mode of looking that suggests an ongoing or
continuous situation emulating the act of coming out that signals the abandonment of the closet.

The combination of masculine appearance and the gay self seem continually deceptive and elusive. This combination nearly always produces some form of the closet or action of closeting. For viewers that have experienced the act of coming out this final work attempts to activate a sense of memory or knowing of the experience through an immersive and highly coded setting. As viewers encounter the mirror, the visual contiguity of a reflected self with the repeated printed imagery they are faced with the act of navigating through a narrow, directional space which suggests a rite of passage that loops or repeats. For those unfamiliar with this process the installation is designed to encourage empathy and understanding through encountering and participating with the work.

FINAL THOUGHTS:

Baudrillard mused over notions of resemblance between robot and automation, associating resemblance to appearance and being in *Simulations*, ‘only the counterfeit men allow these problems to be posed’ (1983, p. 93). It is through Baudrillard’s first problem of automation of being ‘ceaselessly compared to living man’ that my project positions the ‘counterfeit men’ as straight-acting gay men aligning the dominant heteronormative demographic as non-counterfeit. By identifying these gay men as ‘counterfeit’ my project reactivates its practical and theoretical base as analogy to the copy and authenticity. It similarly implies a Western cultural history of gay men being positioned beneath straight men. In this sense counterfeit implicates gay men, like myself, who question how we fit within the larger gay community who are not closeted and not read as camp. However, by identifying as a counterfeit, I also identify as different, which reproduces its own problematic in my personal and professional life at times.

These notions of counterfeit also reveal other questions such as whether counterfeit is a public or private identification and the implications this has to the closet. If the sense of being a counterfeit is private, it does not necessarily imply a closet. Yet it is also present silently constructing itself unless vigilant of the consequences. If it is public, it defers strongly to the heteronormative status as being the non-counterfeit, therefore rendering the gay man invisible. The implications of these questions suggest there is a constant state of being both in and out of the closet at once. This implies a constant oscillation between these states when a person does not identify with the dominant paradigm. It also elicits the need to come out over and over again: coming out is not a fixed, singular event.

These thoughts and questions alerts me to the struggles of others who may have not yet found their voice or the strength of voice they need to feel safe to do so. My project placed my questions of identity, masculinity and the closet in the public arena for others to see and reflect upon and to participate in the visual dialogue and questions it postulated.

At the beginning of my project I proposed to use the paradox of the print original as a vehicle to explore and hopefully locate a psychological space that was free of the confines of the closet. Interestingly, the term *straight-acting* has lost its leverage and popularity as a mode of identifying as masculine by gay men. So what will happen next? What happens to these men and men like them that seem straight yet are gay? Maybe this is the next phase of self-acceptance that is
yet to come? Presently, there appears to be a growing disconnect between generations of gay men and what they identify as and why they do so. Gay men from my generation (50s) used the coming out process as a right of passage yet now talk of ‘coming out’ fatigue. This seems to be matched with our move into an age bracket that is de-sexualised by mainstream youth culture. On the other hand, some young gay men seem to believe that they can bypass coming out and just ‘be’ who they are. Could coming out be an outmoded process? I continue to question these positions and acknowledge the need for further research into cross generational attitudes on gay male identity and the processes of coming out in different circumstances; within the gay and mainstream communities.

Through my project I have discovered the ongoing and constant element of coming out through language as the unifying factor that aligns performance, printmedia and identity politics. It is the act of coming out that dispels the closet but only as long as you are in a known social arena. When Gay Lesbian Bisexual Transgender Intersex Queer people move into a new social space they must start the process of coming out again and again. My aim is that my project will play a role in an expanded understanding of gender sameness and different sexual orientations and contribute to contemporary debates and knowledge about gay men, masculinity and the homosexual closet.
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CATALOGUES AND ARTIST STATEMENTS


