Declaration

I hereby declare that the appropriate visual record for the work entitled *The Drawn Subject: Meaning and the Moving Drawing* as submitted on the 14/02/07 for the qualification of Master of Art (Fine Art) by project represents the work of myself except where due acknowledgement has been made in the documentation.

The work entitled *The Drawn Subject: Meaning and the Moving Drawing* has not been submitted, either in whole or part for any other academic award. The appropriate Durable Visual Record represents the work undertaken during the period of candidature from 01/03/04 to 14/02/07 being full time by research.
The Drawn Subject: 
Meaning and the Moving Drawing

Master of Art (Fine Art) by Project 
School of Art 
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The Drawn Subject:  
Meaning and the Moving Drawing  

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Project Proposal

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Using the process of animation, I will produce several series of moving drawings that hover between still moments in time and linear narratives. The subject of these series will be people and objects involved in simple, repetitive activities. Most of the moving images will depict a single action as a looped image giving the impression that the subject/object is perpetually repeating the same action. The continual nature of these small movements recalls the Sisyphus myth, which addresses the idea of unending ineffectual labour. This repetition forces the subject into a different realm where we in turn view these actions as never ending scenarios. I am testing the boundary between the immobility of conventional drawing and the movement of animated imagery. This boundary itself could be seen as a metaphor; the drawing is trapped between immobility and mobility. It is my objective to reflect a sense of how we, the subject behave in an ostensibly unobserved manner. There is evidence of this type of repetitive movement in India in the work and prayer culture, which occurs in the street as an evident part of their everyday life i.e. it is not unusual to see an Indian worker shovelling dirt on the side of the street for 10 hours at a time. As I have an opportunity to observe examples of repetition in Indian culture first hand, I will be examining these actions as well as evidence of these types of repetitive activities in Australian culture. Relatively unexplored in this format/kind of work, this conception is informed by a general knowledge of Australian contemporary art practice in this area as outlined in the rationale. Each drawing is seen as an element that contributes to a narrative whole. In most cases, I will display several animations that contain similar subject matter on different screens at once or together on one screen. I aim to test this in four stages; 1) Several stories in which I experiment with the nature of short, shorter and minimal narrative in the moving drawing; 2) A series of moving drawings that focus on simple movement; 3) A series of singular movements involving a main character and an object; 4) A series of drawings, the subject yet to be chosen. By juxtaposing different animated drawings, an overall pictorial narrative will develop that conveys the unbroken solitariness of the subject and object in their cyclical lives. The process I will use involves line drawings translated to digital images using a scanner. I will employ the computer program "Director" to produce the animations from these images. The animations have a home made look which is in keeping with the quality of drawing by hand on paper rather than executing the drawing on screen with a computer aided tool.

AIMS

To represent a perfunctory aspect of human behaviour in a series of drawn episodes as outlined above
To create drawings which appear to frame a depiction of daily life without engaging conventional narrative devices.

OBJECTIVES

To extend this type of line drawing using a scan-to-program type of animation
To examine banal aspects of human behaviour within the drawing mode
To present the moving drawings together as functioning elements to a whole narrative
RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1) In what way does the presentation of drawings in a repetitious form i.e. as an animation of a single action looped, change their narrative?
2) How can the positioning of different animations together extend the narrative reading of the group of drawings?
3) Will conveying these subjects/objects in this manner allude to a greater sense of the concepts being addressed in the Sisyphus myth?

RATIONALE

After undertaking a general survey of work in this area, it is evident that there are few Australian artists within the field of contemporary fine art who are producing work of this description. The work fits into the genre of computer-based animation, however in this case the computer is used as a tool to rediscover/explore the drawing process. I will prioritise the language of drawing over the language of new media. Artists such as William Kentridge and David Shrigley use animation as a tool to convey explorations into the human condition through representational means. Bringing movement to drawing can change our perception of the subject and in turn, can suggest meaning that may not exist in the still drawing. It is this opening which allows me to explore concepts of movement and time.

Each subject/object will be performing their perfunctory task in isolation on the page/screen. The character will be portrayed in a trapped circumstance as suggested by the repetition. The character may or may not appear to be aware of their circumstance. I draw from Albert Camus’ interpretation of the Myth of Sisyphus where he scrutinizes the cycle of daily gestures. By viewing the same action repeatedly, it is possible to examine what is on the page/screen; in other words an examination of a moment of ordinariness.

The moving image allows me to capture moments in time and isolate them. By looping the animation, actions can repeat themselves without end, allowing observation of how we behave through the function of repetitive movement.

Unlike the live action film, which aims to copy reality as it is understood, animation does not conceal its construction and therefore by its nature resists the need for realism. Instead of trying to imitate reality, it is about reality. Therefore, the depiction of real (banal, perfunctory movement) moments in animation becomes a self-conscious representation.

METHODOLOGY

The method I will employ is one of producing art work and examining that work. This practice in process presents itself in two parts; 1. The research: the production of work. This is a process of visual exploration, questioning and an attempt to find possible answers. The art itself is evidence of research; 2. The intellectual analysis of the work. I will draw from written theory and philosophical concerns as well as other artists’ work to help me clarify and reflect on any concept/questions that may arise from my research. This analytical process of evaluation leads to conclusions that inform the basis of future work. Due to the nature of this practice, the momentum and specific content in the methodology outlined below will likely vary.
Artists I will investigate will include:
William Kentridge for his technique and process of constructing narrative. His work relies heavily on the gesture of his marks to convey meaning. Don Hertzfeldt for the unique structure of his animations. He also uses simple line in a naive form in a very effective way. Using a similar approach, David Shrigley’s work is simplified in both form and narrative. He also uses the technology I hope to be investigating. I will use the work of Don Hertzfeldt and David Shrigley as a springboard to lead me to other artists producing similar work. Richard Serra takes a rigorous approach to the importance of ‘the line’ and its meaning in relation to the human spatial experience. Adherence to concepts/values associated with drawing is important in this project. I intend to maintain focus on the quality of line. Sol le Wit also expanded the concept of drawing and spatial theory. The scale and presentation of these drawings is integral to their reading. Kevin Appel employs formal techniques that I admire, as does Toba Khedoori. Another contemporary artist, Barry Mc Gee uses cartoon like forms to represent real life situations. He experiments with new technology and presentation from which I will extract inspiration.

Topics to investigate will include:
• Narrative and its forms.
• Contemporary drawing practices
• Metaphor and how it operates pictorially.
• Animation aesthetics.
• Albert Camus and other existentialists.

These topics are headings intended to lead me to other concerns. They have been chosen as the beginnings of an exploration with the specific intention of dealing with the questions outlined earlier in this proposal.

The following is a timeline I intend to follow as a guide only:

March 2004-June 2004
• Construct bibliography
Explore:
• Narrative types and narrative development, conduct an overview of the language of animation and an overview of screen based media and metaphors in art.
• Write proposal.
July 2004-October 2004
Explore:
• Animation techniques and the historical background of the moving drawing.

**Studio Plan Series 1:**
• Begin the process of constructing the first animation. This animation will take the form of a linear story.
• Use this as a body of work to experiment with the process using the computer programs “Director” and Photoshop. Allow this to lead to the use of any other programs as the situation necessitates.
• Test narrative; create a linear narrative to see how it functions. Attempt to convey stories in the drawings.
• Analyse the narrative content.
  How do we know it’s a story?
  When does it cease to operate as a story?
  Test the structure, try looping the story, how does it change?
• Compare this process with the one used by other artists.

November 2004-December 2004
Explore:
• Existentialism, Albert Camus and other theorists.
• Start with David Shrigley and extend research of other artists who are making work in the area of animation/cartoon/moving image.

**Studio Plan Series 2/3:**
• Test movement and minimalisation of movement.
  How much movement is needed to convey a single activity?
• Link with theoretical research; focus on activities that when looped are sufficiently ceaseless.
• Investigate the practice of displaying several moving drawings at once
• Experiment with placement and in the display in order to compare different media and ways of drawing and how it translates to a moving image.
• Test forms of display i.e. projected television, plasma etc.

February 2005-May 2005
**Trip to India for 3 month residency at Global Arts Village, New Delhi**
• Conduct experience based field research; note repetitive movement including prayer and work cultures.
• View traditional Indian miniatures in order to extend experimentation with scale.
• Experiment with Indian home made paper.
• Build a body of sketches for use as source material

**Studio Plan Series 3/4:**
• Review the Myth Of Sisyphus.
• Evaluate the work against the aims, objectives and questions.
• Focus on work that highlights the suggestion of everyday continuous, ordinary function
• Experiment with placement, projection of drawings.

June 2005-September 2005
• Edit/complete DVR
• Plan work for presentation

Final presentation of work

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The Myth of Sisyphus

The Myth of Sisyphus

‘The Gods had condemned Sisyphus to ceaselessly rolling a rock to the top of a mountain, whence the stone would fall back on its own weight. They had thought with some reason that there was no more dreadful punishment than futile and hopeless labour.’

Albert Camus - The Myth of Sisyphus

By observing and illustrating assiduous daily gestures and events our absurd hero is revealed: this protagonist, be it object or human consciously and often unconsciously lives within a relentless finite experience. As the same moment is duplicated, the “dreadful punishment” is uncovered as is a seemingly universal need to attach meaning to this experience, defying our punishment leading only to the discovery that this defiance renders us ridiculous. We recognise the metaphysical honour in enduring this absurdity. And not without humour.

This is an ongoing reflection of instances that repeat themselves to a point beyond the humorous and back.

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In 2002 The Museum of Modern Art held a show entitled *Drawing Now 8 Propositions*. It presented current drawing practices and a contemporary aesthetic. It highlighted a new emphasis on drawing as a highly regarded contemporary practice. A different drawing aesthetic has become recognised and there are several notable artists who epitomise this new approach. Among them are the members of The Royal Art Lodge, a group from Canada; Glaswegian artist David Shrigley; Barry Mc Gee, an artist from the ‘Mission District’ in San Francisco with an emphasis on street culture; William Kentridge, the well-known South African artist using traditional charcoal drawing techniques; Phil Mulloy from the UK using heavy brush and ink; Seth Scriver, an American artist using new technologies in combination with traditional drawing techniques, and several others. All of these artists have explored animation in their drawing practices. Much of their work can be viewed in it’s entirety as downloadable animations and some of it only exists on the internet. Although not all artists are only found on the internet, this project references many artists whose work can only be viewed via world wide web. This has allowed me to stay abreast of what is being produced now, by whom, and where. This type of animation is evidently not being produced in the field of contemporary art in Australia.

Line quality is one of the stylistic consistencies typical to the work of the above mentioned artists. The line is kept simple with a strong focus on a hand made appearance. I have drawn parallels between my work and the work of these artists in this respect. The work presented throughout this project has an obviously home made, aesthetic. The animations are visibly hand produced without the use of any ‘tweening’; a computer aid to ‘make up’ the frames between one image to another to ensure a smooth transition (this results in an even type of movement present in any blockbuster animated movie). Instead every frame is hand drawn, a laborious process that produces a jittery line and flip book type of aesthetic. In conjunction with this quality, the characteristics of each piece of paper is noticeable. Each page declares its uniqueness by its own creases blotches and other irregularities. The visible paper informs the narrative reading contributing as a metaphor providing a kind of atmosphere for the activity of line.

For years, animation has taken its place in the arts in the form of computer generated moving imagery. New media arts practice has become predominant as a main area of exploration in contemporary Australian art. With an importance placed on new technology, traditional animation and drawing techniques have ceased to be an area of investigation in the fine arts. It is important to note however that traditional styles of animation have continued to thrive in the commercial sector. Although some of this work is interesting and has artistic merit, it is driven by commercial values. The work of the artists mentioned above and referenced throughout this document is concerned with concepts that are theoretical and/or philosophical in nature.

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I have aligned this project with Albert Camus’ *The Myth of Sisyphus*. In *The Myth of Sisyphus* Camus set forth his personal philosophy of Absurdism. Whereas existentialism holds that one’s actions may make sense of one’s life, according to Absurdism, just about every thing; every action; is meaningless. Camus believed that in recognising the absurdity of existence, a person may be able to rail against it to make life more meaningful to themselves. It is in this struggle that we establish our identity. He reasons that all of one’s life is made up of the drudgery of tedious cyclical tasks; our absurd existence. It is this notion I have attempted to illustrate in the mode of animated drawing. These works are largely made up of animated objects and people performing simple tasks repeatedly. Even the animation process brings the element of time and repetition to the work. Camus also prompts us to accept the human condition on its proper terms; revolt, liberty and passion. Not only do we find the absurd in our existence but in these hot-blooded attempts at uprising. These works place us as the protagonist in our own narrative as we examine a moment of ordinariness and sense that our awkward attempt at independence lies in the periphery.

The protagonists in these works are representations of ‘everyman’. A common experience is displayed by portraying more than one of these characters at a time. Each small character places us in the world as we recognise Camus’ representation of ourselves. Knowing that these moments are the sum of our lives, this work tells us that the human story is told in every day of every life. We tend to organise our past and present time in a linear fashion. We organise our memories by narrativising them. We are the authors of our own story and our perception of our lives is in the form of a story.

One of the driving concerns in this project is the structure of narrative. Linear narratives, singular narratives, how we narrativise our lives and how the picture operates in the narrative structure. Camus presents the life of Sisyphus to us as a story. Here is a man whose story is every person’s story. His story is the story of existence. His chronicle continues to infinity as we imagine him rolling his rock up the mountain at this very moment. We must imagine he is aware of his fate but choses to come to terms with it. Only then is he free. The process of constructing these works may at first appear to realises Camus’ Sisyphus by its repetitive nature but the drawing process is in fact existential in its character. The subject matter is fully discovered through the means of drawing and the articulation of the work relies on the discrepancies of the mark for its expression.

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List of works for examination

*The Secret Activity of Chairs*  
Chairperson  
* Totem Tennis  
* Seagull  
* A Car Drives Through a Hole and Other (Very) Short Stories
The Secret Activity of Chairs

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The Secret Activity of Chairs

Camus proposes that any meaning assigned to the purpose of our lives is an absurd heroic attempt to reach beyond the truth that our lives consist of a mundane cycle of repetitive worthless behaviour until we die. Other animals or objects however present a different case. Because Camus believes he can only comment on the human condition, or that which is known to him; “If I were a tree among trees, a cat among animals, this life would have a meaning or rather this problem would not arise, for I should belong to this world. I should be this world...” Belonging to one’s own world is a notion that Heidegger cultivates: his ‘fundamental being’ is a being whose essence is absorbed in its own existence. In other words, in this case the chair is fulfilling its role as itself and therefore validates its existence. The chair is in accord with its context and does not feel the need to question or justify its purpose. First, the chair ‘is’ and then it describes itself through its actions. The chairs’ actions are its functionality; its identity, or as Heidegger puts it, its essence.

To avoid overcomplicating the project in the beginning, using a simple chair as a starting point for examination seemed a good mechanism to instigate deeper understanding. The chair as a thing that exists and describes itself by its function became a better example (after trial and error) than people I had drawn who were ‘existing’. These people were not performing an action but were only physically present in the drawings (see Seated man, Ruth and Johnathan in Appendix). However, every slight expression became symbolic. In the case of The Secret Activities of Chairs I humanise the chair by seeing it as being Sisyphean in character. It is the endless nature of its task (its essence) that reminds us of Sisyphus. In fact, we could apply Camus’ interpretation of existence to any person place or thing in order to examine it, and if every thing declares its essence through its function, is every thing’s essence Sisyphean? This declaration in itself becomes an absurd task (is every thing on earth suffering from a drudgery worse than purgatory?). The chair became a more powerful argument for existing through function/action. During this time, metaphor and how it operates pictorially became an underpinning concern in the research.

“I am testing the boundary between the immobility of conventional drawing and the movement of animated imagery. This boundary itself could be seen as a metaphor; the drawing is trapped between immobility and mobility”

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see Project Proposal page 5.
Through constructing this work, I was able to test minimalism of movement. Animating a still object by relying on discrepancies between each individual drawing brings a sharp focus on the mark. Given that mark making is an expressive act belying meaning, I was able to distinguish between a 'moving drawing' and conventional animation practice. Carolina Melis\textsuperscript{v} is a contemporary artist who produces animations of moving lines and shapes. In a similar vein, William Kentridge\textsuperscript{vi} relies heavily on the mark; it's memory and gesture to convey ideas in his work. The nature of the process of mark making also brings a connection with the subject both for the maker and the viewer. Repetition of line work and repetitive mark making solidifies our understanding of the thing being drawn. Drawing itself could be seen as a process of inquiry; the artist is discovering what the subject is by examining it in reproduction. Indeed, inquiring into what something is decides if it is.

"Bringing movement to drawing can change our perception of the subject and in turn, can suggest meaning that may not exist in the still drawing. It is this opening which allows me to explore concepts of movement and time."\textsuperscript{vii}


\textsuperscript{vi} Cameron, D 1999, \textit{William Kentridge}, Phaidon, London, UK.

\textsuperscript{vii} see Project Proposal page 6.
The Secret Activity of Chairs: source material
The Secret Activity of Chairs: display
The Secret Activity of Chairs: display
Chairperson

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In *Chairperson*, a protagonist is introduced. Featuring in this series of animations are women and a man interacting with a chair. These two are representations of 'everyperson' to illustrate that we are all the protagonist of our self-fictionalised lives. The need to declare a human presence in these animated drawings comes from the need to declare consciousness. That is, demonstrating the ability to self observe; "If this myth is tragic, that is because the hero is conscious. Where would his torture be, indeed, if at every step the hope of succeeding upheld him?" Reproducing small versions of ourselves is indicative of the 'observer' and 'observed'. Indian miniature drawings and paintings give a sense of the smallness of humans in comparison with omnipotent beings. This brings to mind such typical existential philosophy such as contingency and finiteness of our existence. Observing ourselves as a character reminds us of our place in the world. The use of a protagonist is a powerful tool for many contemporary artists using animation. David Shrigley's *Who I Am and What I Want* features a crudely drawn man declaring his presence in the world by proclaiming his fantasies and desires, which are brought to life in the animation. Similarly, Phil Mulloy uses the same protagonist in all of his work. In his *Intolerance* series we observe the protagonist dealing with life’s complexities through the narrative framework of short stories which operate like fables.

Although the source for *Chairperson* (as shown in source material) was observed first hand, the significance of the repetitive activity of producing many drawings of the same object was a part of the greater overall process. I had made hundreds of drawings of the chair. Working in this fashion relieved an overwhelming anxiety, an anxiety that came about from being in a foreign developing country. The mark making was repetitive and attention to the subject was obsessive. This way of working and the fact that it had a calming effect is noteworthy.

The need for order is similar to that found in the work of Agnes Martin, who uses a self imposed rigour to 'transcend'. If there is a connection between Agnes Martin's experience with drawing as a tool to transcend and Camus' liberation from ceaseless labour it is through acceptance of the true human condition. It is key here to recognise the absurd amidst this acceptance. Our illogical existence causes us to retaliate. This sense of the absurdity in everyday existence is found frequently in contemporary art today as observed in Mulloy and Shrigleys work.

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2 www.whoiamandwhatiwant.com retrieved 07/06
3 www.philmulloy.com retrieved 10/04
"By juxtaposing different animated drawings, an overall pictorial narrative will develop that conveys the unbroken solitariness of the subject and object in their cyclical lives."

Rather than telling an individual’s story, a common experience may be observed by viewing separate stories which are similar to one another at the same time. In the case of Chairperson, similar people are using the same chair. Shown small scale on miniature televisions, the viewer is prompted to be an observer of a common human experience.

*see Project Proposal page 5*
Indian correspondence no. 6.

These people are very kind and have simple lives. The women workers are beautiful and I want to learn to say thank you in Hindi. There is a 3 1/4 year old running around with a double cowlick in his hair and I want to pick him up and toss him around. I have heard this can be a sign of affection but he is terrified of me and I don't want to offend his mother who regularly beats the shit out of him with a thick tree branch. I am doing a lot of drawing. I am drawing the same chair over and over again. I'm like Kafka now. I have moved on to groups of 3 chairs. Maybe it's a comfort thing so every time I see another degenerate guy using his bike it's all okay. I have to mention the geniuses in these contraptions. They use a handle like a jack in the box handle and cruise around winding themselves forward...
Chairperson: source material
Chairperson: stills from source movie
Chairperson: Chairman01 stills
Chairperson: Chairwoman01 stills
Chairperson: Chairman02 still
Chairperson: Chairwoman02 stills
Chairperson: examples of electricity use in India
Totem Tennis

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Totem Tennis

*Totem Tennis* predominantly explores the concept of a single moment narrative. That is; when does a moment become a story? For a moment to become a story, the single moment must contain other meanings that may indicate a previous moment and/or a future moment. These meanings are derived from what is signified by the images and actions conveyed. "Metaphors are not merely peripheral decorations or even useful models, they are fundamental forms of our awareness of our condition"*. Metaphor becomes a powerful tool to test the notion of a single moment narrative.

The game of Totem Tennis is a metaphor for Sisyphus and his boulder. To play Totem Tennis one enthusiastically hits a tennis ball, which is fastened to a pole with string with a racquet only for it to swing around in the same manner prompting another whack. In *Totem Tennis* an unfashionably dressed woman appears uninspired as she performs the action of hitting her ball. She is average, not flashy, excited or even particularly unhappy. Speaking of forlorn-ness or vacancy the ball perpetually revisits another uninterested smack with the racquet. Like Sisyphus, she appears doomed to repeat the same action as if it were her fate. Unaccompanied by other Totem Tennis participants, this woman’s activity underscores a strangeness that speaks of a queer or dark side to this type of solitariness. An isolation accompanied by ennui, which carries a feeling of unease similar to viewing a zoo animal pacing back and forth. The animal is distressed, perhaps psychologically damaged. We are mesmerised by the unnerving monotony of it. There is an uncomfortable-ness associated with these types of moments, a type of anxiety.

Hoogerbrugge’s*ii* work exploits this anxiety. Predominantly producing web based interactive work, his protagonist performs the same agonising gesture such as bending and straightening his knees with a box on his head until viewer commands a stop (by clicking their mouse). These gestures are distressing because they seem loaded with fretfulness; perhaps even fear. The movements of the lines within the drawings themselves also bring a frenetic activity. These lines appear anxious.

"Unlike the live action film, which aims to copy reality as we understand it, animation does not conceal its construction and therefore by its nature resists the need for realism. Instead of trying to imitate reality, it is about reality. Therefore, the depiction of "real" (banal, perfunctory movement) moments in animation becomes a self-conscious representation."*iii*

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* www.hoogerbrugge.com viewed 06/05

* see Project Proposal page 6
Viewing animation is different from viewing film in the way that the drawn element is always apparent. In live action film the process of making is hidden. We are aware of the artist’s intentions when we are viewing animated work (although computer generated feature length films endeavour to remove this element). The nature of the line therefore is another character or an element in the work, much like sound and lighting. Phil Mulloyiv uses a brush and ink in his animated work. These scratches and strokes contain considerable expression as the line work is rough looking and very black which indicates crude, dark treatment of the subject matter. The line in Totem Tennis is rudimentary in it’s manufacture maintaining a doodle like appearance. The naivety of line implies a childishness which is indicative of concepts that may be connected to youth or the presence of something which lingers throughout one’s life. This belies the fact that the work appears simplistic but in fact explores complex concepts of the human condition.

Totem Tennis: image association
Totem Tennis: image association
Totem Tennis: display
Seagull

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Seagull

In *Seagull*, we return to the question of when a moment becomes a story. When did Sisyphus’ rock and mountain become his eternity? At the 2006 *Adelaide Writers Week* author Michael Cunningham stated that “The human story is told in every day of every life”. When does an everyday moment become the story of life? Camus argues that these everyday moments, banal and perfunctory are the only things that make up our existence. Picking one’s nose, cleaning the dishes or catching the train to work are not only the fabric of our lives but the sum of them. In *Seagull*, we are locked in the everyday moment for eternity. Unable to transcend his own monotony the protagonist experiences the same moment as if it happened for the first time. The narrator articulates the protagonist’s internal dialogue. We feel we are experiencing this moment through his eyes. The absurdity of this recurring situation forces us to evaluate our identity.

In an ungainly way, we sporadically attempt to overcome this drudgery of existence. With fervour, we endeavour to conquer through revolt. This can often be awkward and our own comedy can be revealed in these projections of ourselves. There is a comic element in both the banality and the rebellion. Absurd humour derives from pointlessness.

"By viewing the same action repeatedly, we begin to examine what is on the page/screen, in other words we begin to examine a moment of ordinariness."

Like the hypnotist’s swinging pendulum, viewing repetitive consistent lines has a meditative affect. By observing ordinary moments repeatedly, the viewer participates in a Sisyphean occurrence whilst observing a replication of a Sisyphean incidence. Even the process of making these animations recalls Camus’ Sisyphus. Contrary to a linear narrative, we are trapped in a time warp whilst still participating in linear time. Narrative is the principal way in which humans organise time. One event follows another in a time-based sequence. In this way, we fictionalise our lives. As soon as the moment has passed it is fictionalised in memory. Given subjective experience, every person’s story is different from the other. In this way, our lives are in fact made up of many stories. “There are one million moments in your neighbourhood; each has a fragile presence which fades as it forms” is the opening to Jane Campion’s *Passionless Moments*, a series of short films based on everyday banal moments. One such moment is a woman’s hand washing her jeans in the bathtub. In this moment, she realises that she has been singing the wrong song lyrics for years. Campion has framed each of these moments as a short story. We enter the protagonist’s realm, share this event and leave again. The overall feeling is one of partaking in the time of someone who could be anyone; disclosing what it is to be human.

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2 See Project proposal page 06.
3 Campion, J *Passionless Moments*, 1983, DVD, Ronin Films, Australia. viewed 03/06.
Seagull: credits

Written by Naomi Williamson
Animation by Naomi Williamson
Sound by Duann Scott
Voice: Duann Scott
A person, an average Joe, slowly wanders in a small area. Mildly perplexed, he feels a sense of being in this same moment before. Noting a stain on the ground he observes that it is a seagull dropping. Looking closer, he sees that the dropping is in the shape of a seagull. Feeling a strangeness, he takes a step back and wanders the same area slowly aware that he has experienced this moment before. He observes a stain on the ground.

This is a man who is unconsciously trapped to repeat the same scenario. The moment is signified by his assessment of an unusual shaped seagull dropping.
Seagull: still from source video: stranger choosing an item in a store
Seagull: studio Melbourne, Australia
Seagull: still
One Wheeled Car Drives Into a Hole and Other (Very) Short Stories

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One Wheeled Car Drives Into a Hole and Other (Very) Short Stories

In an endeavour to preserve a loose style, each of the drawings that make up One Wheeled car Drives Through a Hole and Other (Very) Short Stories does not exceed thirty seconds in its making. There are two important factors in this: it allowed me to retain the style of the original subject- the drawing derived from a Pictionary game and it ensured that a rigour was maintained concerning what can be achieved and what can be communicated in a very short time frame. Time plays an integral part to illustrate the extent of drudgery in the animation process and in The Myth of Sisyphus. Time is also the singular ingredient that allows individual drawings to appear as one cohesive movement. Experimenting with a narrative framework involves scrutiny of time. Again, the emphasis is on the very short story. Can overarching themes be addressed by combining many short stories or moments? Each story or component in One Wheeled car Drives Through a Hole and Other (Very) Short Stories is ten seconds in length. Much like Campion’s Passionless Moments, there are dozens of samples of life. In the same way, every moment in this series contributes to the whole.

Playing with the notion of fictionalised memory, each Pictionary drawing was originally drawn with a very specific aim in mind; to convey a particular concept. However, the record of this event most often conveys something different, providing an excellent opportunity to invent a new story. The Process of playing Pictionary and the resulting drawings provide an example of short moments being packed with meaning. In the real moment of the game, many associations with the word that is being drawn are at play in the drawers mind. When the same drawing is observed months later, the viewer (who is not privy to the original intent of the drawing) makes their own associations. Given the time frame (some drawings have been executed in less than 5 seconds) most of these drawings appear indecipherable or appear to be of something completely different to the intended subject. Observing these drawings months later, I developed these possible associations further and pieced them together in an animated sequence, preserving the quality of the very first drawing and being certain not to stray too far from links that may have been made with the original drawing. Of course, the quality of line and associated meanings go in hand. The urgency to communicate is potent in these drawings; this is reflected in their nature. The type of paper is also significant. Formerly, the Pictionary drawings are executed on recycled paper much like newsprint and are square in size. This has been retained as a feature. Cheap notepaper has been used to support the doodle quality.

The quick execution of the drawings, inclined by their origin in Pictionary creates a certain naive aesthetic. There is a current trend in contemporary drawing both in America and the UK toward a naive or simplified drawing aesthetic. Members of the Royal Art Lodge in Passionless Moments

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1 Pictionary is a word guessing board game. The game is played in teams with players trying to identify specific words from their teammates’ drawings, much in the manner of Charades. It can be played by four or more players.

2 Campion, J 1983, Passionless Moments, DVD, Ronin Films, Australia. viewed 03/06.

3 www.royalartlodge.com retrieved 02/05.
Canada, David Shrigley⁴ from Scotland, Phil Mulloy⁵ from Great Britain, Michael Dzarma⁶ and Neil Farber⁷ from North America produce drawings using a type of line that encapsulates a simplicity and childishness. In all cases their work is dealing with concepts that due to the mode appear unsophisticated but are in fact much more eloquent. Shrigley for example grew up in a depressed economically deprived neighbourhood. He photographed examples of revolt in his community; petty crime such as Vandalism and graffiti. This type of imagery is the basis for his work. In his case, the simplification of line is in keeping with the nature of his subject; an underprivileged undereducated class. This new breed of drawing aesthetic represents something closely examined. That is the absurdity of the struggle; the ludicrousness of the uprising. There is a great deal of humour to be found in the aforementioned work. This humour holds darker elements also, which makes it even more discerning.

⁶ www.richardhellergallery.com/dynamic/artist.asp?ArtistID=3 retrieved 06/06.
One Wheeled Car Drives Into a Hole and Other (Very) Short Stories: source material: graffiti, New Delhi, India
One Wheeled car Drives Through a Hole and Other (Very) Short Stories: stills
Process

The following is depictive of important parts of the process that informed the work and a step by step guide of the construction of the animations using the computer program “Director”.

Setting the frame rate at seven frames per second allows each drawing to be sufficiently perceived. At this rate the works are viewed in the same manner that we would view a flipbook. Each drawings individuality is noticeable in the paper’s creases, its registration number and the quality of line including error, stains and in one instance, notes. By ascertaining a cursory glance at each drawing, we establish the individual amongst the masses.

“The animations have a home made look which is in keeping with the quality of drawing by hand on paper rather than executing the drawing on screen with a computer aided tool.”

Rejecting any goals to create perfectly sequenced animations and to polish particular computer skills, the purpose of using drawings and a scanner is to retain the effort of the hand, or to reveal the labour in drawing and therefore marking a human presence in the work. Viewing Indian miniature drawings gave me a sense of observing tiny people from a distance. The drawings for these works are all considerably small (normally A5 or smaller). In scaling the drawings to this size, there is an awareness of the diminutive nature of the human and our desire to examine it through the act of drawing. The size of the drawings are evident even when projected on a large scale by the quality of line. The act of examining the self and becoming conscious of one’s labour is integral to this work.

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i see Project Proposal page 5.
Registration points: time based characteristics
Construction in 'Director' steps 1-6
Construction in 'Director' steps 7-12
Construction in 'Director' steps 13-18
ONE WHEELED CAR DRIVES THROUGH A HOLE AND OTHER (VERY) SHORT STORIES

NAOMI WILLIAMSON

THE PROJECT SPACE
CONTEMPORARY ART CENTRE OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA

28th APRIL - JUNE 4th 2006
Exhibition invitation 07/06 (Chapter 1) *The Sausage That Jumps From The Frying Pan and Other (Very) Short Stories: from the series One Wheeled car Drives Into a Hole and Other (Very) Short Stories*
P-Person, Place, Animal
The title of Naomi Williamson’s latest exhibition is One Wheeled Car Drives Into a Hole and Other (Very) Short Stories. As a title for a show, this seems rather long. As a story in itself, however it is extremely short. The fact that it operates so happily in both worlds is very telling and points us in the direction of the artists concerns. Her interest in the very short story recalls other diminutive narrative modes: haiku, limericks, fortune cookie fortunes and communiqués for carrier pigeons. All of these forms demand that the author pack maximum meaning, humour or insight into minimum space. Similarly, in the series of animations that compromise the main body of the exhibition, Williamson teases out the narrative potential from the slightest and most trivial incidents, entities or objects. In doing so she poses fundamental queries concerning the very nature of storytelling.

D-Difficult
The difficult proposition that One Wheeled Car…tangles with is essentially, “when does a moment become a story?” The work presents us with thirty odd visual anecdotes, each of which is no longer than ten seconds. However, for all their brevity, these tiny tales want for nothing in terms of their drama, humour and wit. They have un-equivocally entered the category of ‘stories.’ This shift in state is central to the artists concerns. Williamson subscribes to the notion that once a moment has past, it steals away into the realm of fiction, prone to embellishment and the slippage of memory. In turn, it is through the process of recalling, reliving and retelling these moments that they re enter the world as stories. Given her long standing concern with narrative, one is given to wonder how a literary version of Williamson’s work might manifest itself. It strikes me that it could simply be a table of contents: the titles of each chapter would in fact contribute to the chapter itself. It might read like this:
Chapter 1: The Sausage that Jumps Out of the Pan
Chapter 2: The Man Who Swallowed a Shoe
Chapter 3: Really Fast Skiing on a Mountain With Many Peaks…..and so forth

A-Action
In elevating ‘moments’ to the status of ‘stories’, it is not surprising that Williamson also elevates ‘doodles’ to the status of ‘drawings’. Each of the animations is characterised by swift and vital scribing that seems perfectly pitched at the conciseness of the stories it depicts. The artist has knowingly used a rather nifty device to generate this very particular quality of line and gesture. Each of her very short stories has its origin in a drawing yielded by Pictionary, that perennially favourite “game of quick draw”. While the game itself has little bearing on the work per se, the urgency and economy of the drawing it generates is crucial. The mechanics and metabolism of Pictionary can afford Williamson the opportunity to unburden herself of her formidable skills in the craft of drawing. Thus, somewhat paradoxically, the game provides a rigorous framework that ensures an important lack of rigour in the drawings.

O-Objects
An important adjunct to the projections is the sequence of animations depicting the twelve animals of junishi the Japanese form of zodiac. Marking time like a metronome, the cycle plays on a customised portable television. This odd little screen bespeaks a far more specialised purpose than merely watching The Price is Right or catching reruns of The Simpsons. One gets the distinct feeling that this is a highly specific and purposeful piece of equipment. Perhaps what Greenwich Mean Time is to our world, Williamson’s animal clock is to her world of drawings. This fixed and immovable reference point prompts us to consider the potential simultaneity of the various goings-on of One Wheeled Car…Somewhere, somehow, all of these moments are being acted out, yet to be immortalised as stories.

AP-All Play
In Williamson’s world, small things reign supreme. The deceptive simplicity of her work sneaks up on us and points us to moments we might otherwise have missed: moments of re-looking and re-thinking, of delight and reflection. Some are bawdy and some are banal: all share an unmistakable pithiness and poignancy. Having charmed us with dozens of such moments, Williamson suggests we seek out some of our own.

Roy Ananda

One Wheeled Car Drives Into a Hole and Other (Very) Short Stories: exhibition essay by Roy Ananda 2006
One Wheeled Car Drives Into A Hole And Other Very Short Stories
Naomi Williamson
The Project Space, CACSA.

On the surface Naomi Williamson’s exhibition of short animations with the long title ‘One Wheeled Car Drives Into A Hole And Other Very Short Stories’ is a quirky and light hearted show. Indeed, because of the low-fi style of the animation, small monitor, rolling and warbling soundtrack and sketchy drawings, one gets the feeling that this is art that (refreshingly) doesn’t take itself too seriously. Yet beyond this humble exterior that creates a sense of gentle comfort in the viewer is a very intriguing and well executed exhibition which would have involved many layers of making, much time, and is tinged with sincere intent.

As the title describes, the main projection in this space shows a series of very short stories; one of them being about a one wheeled car that drives into a Hole. There are others showing a skier on some extreme slopes, a cooking sausage jumping out of a pan, a series of hairstyles, a plane crash with a happy ending and even a reference to Magritte’s This Is Not A Pipe. On the small monitor, from which emanates what effectively becomes this exhibition’s soundtrack, a series of animals appear. These sketched animals, which refer to the Chinese or Japanese horoscope, loop over and over within their stylised white monitor that almost resembles an astronaut’s helmet.

Roy Ananda in his catalogue essay that accompanies this exhibition cleverly equates the quick sketchy qualities of Williamson’s stories with rapidly-made drawings required for Pictionary. The animations are constructed from linear sketches on scraps of paper (pink, lined, or creased and crinkled) which create movement much like simple flip books. More than anything else, it is the non-precious quality to Williamson’s drawings that evoke a contrasted mix of spontaneity, yet depth and validity that result in an interesting and touching exhibition.
**TRIAGE**

John Abbate - Naomi Williamson - Andrew Frost

Triage was a group show that encompassed the work of three artists working in Melbourne: John Abbate, Andrew Frost and Naomi Williamson.

John Abbate’s work comprised four detailed, photocopy-like drawings of office paraphernalia on a table. In one corner of the space were strewn the semi-packed forms of another installation composed of grey office bins, photocopies, a glass of water and black shelving elements.

Andrew Frost’s intimate collection of drawings, photographs and soft sculptures marked a contrast to the ironically “frosty” aesthetic deployed throughout John Abbate’s installation opposite it. With the aid (or distractions) of some detours through autobiography, Andrew reconstructed the stories surrounding people he knows only through the chance finding, in Germany, of discarded or lost personal belongings.

Somewhat reminiscent of the Romanticism of Casper David Friedrich, Naomi Williamson draws images of large trees that often include a solitary figure standing dwarfed by the scale of the natural structure. For Triage, Naomi made a wall drawing in graphite that depicted a silhouette of a tree.

JA 2004
What’s happening in gallery²...

A pleasurable evening was had by all when Roy Ananda, Renate Nisi and Naomi Williamson’s exhibition *Lost Plot* opened on **Friday 20 August**. Three Sculptors explore the relationship between their discipline and drawing. All Adelaide Central School of Art Graduates - Roy Ananda provides us with a witty and cheeky parody of the traditional gallery hangings of drawing, Renate Nisi’s work arises from the universal experience of having a body, her stroke-like flowing use of marble solidifies gravity, and Naomi Williamson’s site specific drawing of *Joseph’s tree* with animation brings the natural environment into the gallery.

The show concludes on **Sunday 12 September** and if you can’t get into the gallery - you can view these works on the gallery page/exhibition program on our website [www.acsa.sa.edu.au](http://www.acsa.sa.edu.au).

Our next exhibition features **new works** from the oldest artists studio in South Australia - **Central Studios**. This *not-to-be-missed* exhibition will be opened by Studio Member, Associate Professor Christopher Orchard, on **Friday 17 September @ 6pm**.

Established in 1982, Central Studios held its first exhibition that same year in the premises that it shared with Adelaide Central School of Art at Bloor Court (just off Currie Street, Adelaide). Since then, the Studio has become renowned for its ability to produce high quality exhibitions.

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**STOCKROOM UPDATE:**

Stockroom featured artists are Bettina Andrews, Di Barrett, James Cochran, Mervyn Coles, Areti Devetzidis, Keith Giles, Rob Gutteridge, Kathy Holmes, Rimona Kadem, Chelsea Lehmann, Dianne Longley, James Martin, Monica Majzoub, Julia Moretti, Arthur Phillips, Toby Richardson, Tai Spruyt, Rod Taylor, Liz Williams, Lisa Young and Christopher Orchard (courtesy of BMGArt), many more as well as ACSA Students and Graduates works (including Christopher, Areti, Liz, Lisa, Rod, Rachel, Samantha).
Appendix

Work not included for assessment

Joe....Tree 83
Big A 85

Miscellaneous including
Lifting Devices 87
Shaking Hands
Cat
Ruth
Kettle
Hospital Lifting Device
Lantern
Stretch
John
Escalator
Seated Man
Leaves Outside
CV 89

List of work on DVD 91
**Joe...Tree**

An experiment in story structure and image simplification to achieve narrative goals. *Joe...Tree* is based on an excerpt from John Steinbeck's novel *To an God Unknown*. The image was informed by a photograph taken in 1920 from *An Old Look At Trees* by Robert Powell and Jane Emberson. The emphasis

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Joe....Tree: stills
Big A was created with the intention of experimenting further with short story structure. Telling a story from childhood, this animation is made up with text and image overlays. Rather than movement of the characters, this work focuses on movement of line to convey the nature of the story.
When Aaron was little,

he had a big head

That's the real reason why we called him Big A.
Miscellaneous: Lifting Devices, Shaking Hands, Cat, Ruth, Kettle, Hospital Lifting Device: stills
Miscellaneous: Lantern, Stretch, John, Escalator, Seated Man, Leaves Outside: stills
Curriculum Vitae

Naomi Williamson

Born Australia 1976

Biography
2004- currently MA (Fine Art), RMIT University
2005 Fellowship/Residency, Global Arts Village, New Delhi India
2002-2004 Lecturer, Adelaide Central School of Art
1999 Honours, Adelaide Central School of Art
   Founded Double Elephant Drawing Projects
1998 Bachelor Fine Art, Adelaide Central School of Art
   New York Drawing School Marathon, Adelaide Central School of Art

Individual Exhibitions
2006 One Wheeled Car Drives Into a Hole and Other (very) Short Stories Project Space, Contemporary Art Centre South Australia
   The Sausage That Jumps From the Frying Pan and Other (Very) Short Stories Inflight, Hobart, Tasmania
2003 the sea, the sea. Upstart gallery, South Australia
   I Know You Are but What Am I Christopher Thomas Art and Design, South Australia
   Paper Sue Tweddel Gallery, Adelaide Central Gallery, South Australia

Selected Group Exhibitions
2006 One Drill Hall, South Australia
2004 Lost Plot Adelaide Central Gallery, South Australia
   Triage Ocular Lab, Victoria
   Hummings Red Gallery Victoria
   Zoo Art Walk Adelaide Zoo South Australia
2003 Further Doings Downtown Art Space South Australia
2001 Goat Square Project Tanunda Town Centre
   EmmaNortheyNaomiWilliamsonKateBenda Project Space, Contemporary Art Centre South Australia
Selected Collaborative Performances/Installations
1999 *Double Elephant Drawing Project* South Australia
1998 *Open Space* Space Theatre, South Australia
   *The Drawing Sound Experiment* weekly, Cargo Club, South Australia

Awards
2005 Fellowship, Global Arts Village, New Delhi, India
2004 Scholarship, RMIT award
2003 Project Assistance Grant, ArtsSA
2001 Project Development Grant, South Australian Youth Arts Board

Bibliography
2006 Sera Waters *One Wheeled Car Drives Into a Hole and Other Very Short Stories* issue 387 June DB
   Sera Waters *lost plot* Volume 24 issue 4 Artlink
2004 Hamish Barrett *True Conversions* issue 36 Houses
2003 Wendy Walker *Lingering Images* 10.08.03 The Advertiser
2001 Chris Reid *New Adelaide Grooves* issue 43 Real Time
   Wendy Walker *Intriguing in So Many Senses* 28.05.01 The Advertiser
DVD 01
01. The Secret Activity of Chairs
02. Chairperson
03. Totem Tennis
04. Seagull
05. A Car Drives Through a Hole and Other (Very) Short Stories

DVD 02
01. Joe....Tree
02. Big A
03. Miscellaneous including; Lifting Devices, Shaking Hands, Cat, Ruth, Kettle, Hospital Lifting Device, Lantern, Stretch, John, Escalator, Seated Man, Leaves Outside

Please note; media is designed to be viewed with a DVD player only. Results may vary if viewed with a computer.
The Drawn Subject: Meaning and the Moving Drawing

Naomi Williamson