The making of a knowledge casino

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

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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 project 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.

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by Ceri Hann
This production has literally involved a cast of thousands.

The world of filmmaking is all about magic and I would like to thank the white glove that pointed out so many hyperlinks during the many hours I invested at the screens of the knowledge casino. Without your help and guidance I would not have gone so far down the rabbit hole of interconnectedness.

Pointing the way is but one of the thankless tasks that goes on behind the screen. It also requires a great amount of time to be poured in, usually by keeping in touch with the characters individually as we tap them into the search engine. Without these cues it would have been harder to work out where not to look. The search engine is the slot machine of the knowledge economy; thank you for finally getting through to me that the really valuable language games are played face to face. And the best ones are when all players walk away with additional know how as the prize.

During production there have been many characters step in and out of the frame, bit parts whose fleeting conversation has informed my thinking in some way or another. An overwhelming sense of hope has been the combined experience of knowing you all as more than two-dimensional screen-based projections. The gap between the screens is where it all happens, and the sound affects us most of all, so thank you to all the speaking parts.

Of the course sometimes the dialogue can be helped along with a prop to enable interlocutors to step out of the screen. To those whom received gifts I hope they continues to offer a moment of contemplation when ever and where ever they turn up, and to know that is was in return for the gifting of a moment of your time, so that together we could lend time from the efficiency of a busy studio production schedule.

The dice with a missing corner brought many of these moments to us so I would like to formally thank it for its unpredictable role.

Particular thanks goes to the hand trolley that was a key prop and enabled the inconspicuous lingering that has brought many of us closer together.

On a more serious note it is with utmost appreciation that I acknowledge the support of friends and colleagues who have endured years of convoluted conversations and a relentless flow of oddities that accompany such University undertakings.

This adventure has been made not only possible but also a shared adventure of discovery with the support of my supervisors, initially Hélène Frichot, second supervisor Marcelo Stamm whose expressions of enthusiasm at critical points along the way been of immense value and as my first supervisor and friend Mick Douglas who has been both encouraging and courageous in supporting the long shots that have paid off in ways that could have never been predicted, thank you for lending the credibility required to take the risk.

My family for their consistent encouragement over the years and most importantly of all my creative partner and life companion Lynda Roberts for her immense generosity as a co pilot for the past decade, particularly the past six years adventuring with me every step of the way, enduring diminishing space as the mountains of books and other strange objects encroached, having to listen in on what must be hundreds of hours of incidental conversations and for the considerable support with assembling this document, I am very lucky to have met someone as truly amazing as you!
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GAME SET

8x8
64 PROPS

[Through a strategy of gifting the PROP MAKER writes himself into the script of a complex language game]

4x4
16 OBJECTS
To begin the game

6x6
36 SCREEN TESTS
[The PROP MAKER takes his chances and plays a combination of characters on the margin]
SYNOPSIS

This creative practice research operates across the fields of art, design and education, and is informed by and contributes to the ‘educational turn’ in the arts. The research has explored the use of object-based metaphors through performative artistic processes to generate active engagement in reflexive enquiry and philosophical ideas. A sustained practice of gifting ambiguous objects to instigate open-ended conversation has been key to performing explorative interpretations of social configurations as a dynamic script that writes us as we read ourselves into it. Through initiating social exchange by gift-giving object-based metaphors, and secondly, by building meta-fictional structures to yield thought provoking experiences, the research provides a model for generative auto-didactic creative practice research, one that, in turn, actively contributes alternative modes of enquiry to compliment contemporary creative arts education. Through the making of a knowledge casino a meta-fictional creative practice of performative hermeneutics displays a dialogical strategy for instigating and sustaining questioning.
SCRIPT / TRANSCRIPT

(a pitch for the Making of a Knowledge Casino)
Perhaps this is not the first time I have read this, but if it’s the first time I’m reading out loud it will be because it has just been decided by a game of ‘paper-rock-scissors’ that I be the first to speak.

I’m not sure if winning means you were to be the first to speak, or that you got to choose, but… I think I’m meant to speak up every time we alternate across the gaps. I don’t know about you, but I get the sense that there isn’t any requirement for this to be theatrical.

I get the same feeling… I presume we will have already read each other’s lines, so let’s see what kind of spontaneous variations happen in the gaps between paragraphs, and insert some additional dialogue relevant to the location.

Either way, what is the specific address of this location?

It’s been cut and pasted below my line, but it’s not hyperlinked, so you may need to key it in by hand. State Library Forecourt Melbourne VIC 3000-37.810179, 144.964440.

I had imagined that we would be reading this off a paper printout, but you have prompted me to consider the possibility that it could be read off a tablet or even a smart phone.

That would enable it to be hyperlinked to the net, quite useful for coordinating our location with arrival time and a whole range of other things.

Yes, I guess so, but what is the purpose for being here in the first place?

Contrary to my previous comment, I think the idea is to be as unmediated by technology as we can be, while using this script as a way of being on location and experiencing as closely as possible the creative practice of this prop-maker that we have read so much about.
And what exactly is the practice?

From what I can make out – and I am only going on what is written here – the prop maker distributes these small objects to the people he encounters in his day to day world. He thinks of these artifacts as memory tools, object based hyper links to remember experience in the offline environment. I think he would consider them as gifted artworks, although the artwork is the conversation enabled by them, the material object a way to remember it.

The thing I find interesting is that even though we are two people, each reading a different character off a page, the same could be said for all encounters.

Do you mean that we are all following a script of some kind?

Exactly, but maybe not precisely, and it’s probably a good thing that it is imprecise. It is in the gap between how we are expected to act, and how we actually do act, that the possibility for adapting the script lies.

I feel like I should be clawing the air with the two finger quotation marks, just before I say “we are little more than time delayed ventriloquist dummies if we don’t actively interrupt the script to access the zone between ourselves and the roles we are playing.”

The roles we are currently playing are by necessity a bit flat, but from what you are saying there are already four characters every time two people meet, due to the extra layer of projected expectation in either direction.

Yes, and in this instance it almost feels like we are in the presence of two other people. I think a desire to resist being leveled and flattened by other’s expectations forms the basis of this meta-fictional knowledge casino, which the prop-maker describes in more detail later in the script.

It sounds like there are a number of gaming elements involved. Maybe that was the point of starting this dialogue with a game or was it just to make reference to the question of choice?
I think all these issues are quite closely linked, and this is what the practice attempts to make tangible, through the use of a variety of object based metaphors.

To give some depth to the characters we are playing, let’s pretend we are like movie producers discussing an unusual pitch that they have been given.

O.k. I’ll start by saying something like -: “the other day I had this prop-maker try to pitch for a movie that would be impossible to make. Yet he described it as having already been produced”. I said: "are you out of your mind, why do you need our support?"

Why does he need our support?

Apparently this movie has been in production for the last six years. All he is asking is for some industry insiders to screen it.

Do you mean distribution?

No. Apparently it is already distributed. He is pitching the idea that this screening is a kind of required industry validation. As he says, it is a bit like a hypnotist clicking their fingers, so that all those people who have been watching from afar can make sense of a story that many of them have become an integral part of.

So what did you say?

I didn’t commit to anything. I was intrigued enough to read more of the script to find out what he had been up to.

The first time around the script is full of surprises, such as this temporary switch of roles that just happened, as I begin speaking as if it was me reflecting on the structure of the script, as described in the script! I think the prop-maker thinks he is stuck in a nonspeaking part, but has used the situation as a creative constraint to work out a way of having a say without speaking. To voice an opinion you need to have an opinion, and the more he listened, the more the opinions he heard sounded like an echo of one another.
I was listening to a podcast about that recently.

That’s an interesting way of underscoring the basic premise. He goes on to describe the various risks that he takes by playing different characters in various roles, to work out how it could be that on some levels, we appear so different, and on others, much the same. He describes these characters alphabetically in what he calls screen tests, based on various casting calls. After making his way through each of the alphabetical characters, he proposes that we are ultimately all accountable, our value is based on that which is countable. So with the addition of ten digits, the game of interpretation begins. If it sounds like ten fingers tapping away at a keyboard, it’s because that’s exactly how these characters came together. Thirty-six in all, the same allotment of the roulette wheel as it happens. The question at this point is: what is still in question?

So is this the knowledge casino? How we interpret different combinations of text and the gamble that we take each time we guess its meaning?

In part, yes, in the same way that every act of perception is a gamble. But in this case the implications are compounded by us reading ourselves as characters in an even larger text, one that reconfigures itself in relation to how we read it.

Where is the risk in that?

In a way you have just identified it: the dangerous game of playing it safe. As the prop-maker asserts: “to risk nothing is to gamble everything”. I think it means that the technology we use is becoming increasingly efficient at anticipating us, to the extent that we might ask if we are speaking, or being spoken.

So is he giving us the option of putting our money on one - if not all - of these 36 risky characters outlined in the screen tests? It reminds me of once seeing someone block out every number on the roulette table with a chip, and a moment before last bets, selecting a couple to pull away, risking thousands of dollars to win a couple of hundred.
I think this is the paradoxical situation that is being articulated. The dialogue box already has the winning combinations. They are entered in on a daily basis; it can predict the next letter or word by the sentences already served. To make this point, he uses an old séance talking board and compares it to the World Wide Web.

Are you referring to those sessions where everyone has their finger on an upturned glass?

Yes, and if a few people around a table connected by this simple action can be fooled by the combined force of their alphabetical expectations, the touch screen interface of the many interconnected smart phones could make it increasingly difficult to speak out of line.

How does the prop-maker propose to counter this effect?

I flipped through what must have been a thousand screen grabs from the production and it looks like there have been many ideas explored along the way. A recurring theme all the way through is the chessboard. It took him a long time to work it out, and only when looking back it started to make sense. Knowledge is ultimately a game of sacrifice.

How is this related to the script that we are currently reading?

To have you answer your own question, I’m going to interrupt myself...

So I’m guessing that means we just switched roles again, allowing me to follow on from what has become a rhetorical statement? This idea of a screening process is a kind of veil of anticipation that is draped over everything that has been represented by the cinematic image. More often than not, we see what we expect to see, and without the luxury of time to consider the deeper patterns we are forced to use short cuts in what might be called cognitive guessing games. The prop-maker was interested in neuroscience. He became particularly interested in the link between proprioception and the imagination, and the attendant implications of screen based images programming the imagination and effectively patterning expectation.
Hah! and the closest it seems he could get to brain surgery would be to make poetry with props to promote philosophical thinking.

Yes, he would spend hours making hundreds of the same small props, usually some familiar items that had been pondered over for many months, if not years, before working out ways of altering them to make them perform as object links in the actual world. In a way, this is providing a counterpoint to the flow of hyper linked objects in the virtual world.

I thought he also mentioned something about the props being punctuation marks that helped the various characters he encountered make sense of the situation they found themselves in. Equally, he would draw inspiration from the unanticipated responses that the characters would come up with, when contemplating the meaning of these objects.

Yes, but it only seemed to work when he risked something in the process. As he says, to explain how they work is almost as distressing as pinning butterflies to a wall. It is because he found such difficulty putting himself into words that the props even exist. The simplest way to understand the effect is to consider the experience of risking a smile; if you wait long enough to contemplate a return it is unlikely to be authentic. He describes these object links as a way to have the carpet pulled from under him; a way of exceeding expectations as every act of gifting is a sincere attempt to place what he thinks he knows on the line. This has opened up ways of seeing the world from other peoples’ point of view. It is a line of questioning that the prop-maker calls a strategy of sacrifice, as he plays a game to win the trust of others and lose his own ignorance, but also risks losing his sense of self in the process.

We are obviously on the same page, but just checking - are we on the same wavelength? This idea of the pitch seems to describe the whole production as an ongoing refinement of how the pitch is delivered.

Yes, there is not actually that much mental real estate out there in the economy of attention, and even though the prop-maker started out interested in the potential of participatory art, he has developed his practice to explore the art of conversation.

I was a bit concerned that we had become implicated in a participatory artwork.
You mean, the way it is implicating us in the very thing that we are attempting to maintain an objective, critical distance from?

I think this is one of the points being made: that the entire social structure is a relational artwork and it is up to us all, as individuals, to devise whatever idiosyncratic strategies we can to make sense of it all.

I get the sense from the pitch, that we have become implicated in a curious numerically patterned structure. You and I are the 2x2. And as with a game of chess, we each start with 4x4=16 pieces which will be related to the set in the next section of the script. Then I believe we are asked to meet the 6x6=36 characters that have been played by the prop-maker to test the screen, and to help him understand his distributed thinking through object-based metaphor.

Ok, I think I am following. Each part steps up in square grids of even numbered sides.

Next is the 8x8=64 description of each of the 64 main props in the 'making of a knowledge casino', as told in a monologue of the prop-maker outlining behind the scene activities in a documentary style.

Now I am getting a stronger sense of a something opening up from that 'Game Set'.

To follow are 10x10=100 links that connect the elements that exist in the actual world to the collective body of democratic knowledge in the virtual word. These assemble the related issues explored throughout the production into 100 pages, each page is like a poem comprising of 10 Wikipedia lines, each linking to an expanded overview. Finally, 1000 stills from the production complete the structure.

Just to clarify: is the intention of performing a reading through this script in-situ a way of getting as close as possible to the prop-maker’s practice?

Apparently so... Let’s see if it does.
So, it seems we are unpacking the plot of this meta-fictional production ‘the making of a knowledge casino’ by experiencing some of the props made and used by the protagonist, and relating these props to the context of the University ‘set’.

Apparently the prop-maker began as a minor crewmember, and by pointing out various twists in the plot, I hear he has now cast himself in the leading role?

Yes, he starts out as a member of the general staff at the University across the street, and in his spare time fancied himself as a prop-maker.

When you say ‘prop-maker’, you mean in the context of movie making?

Yes, but as a way of explaining how he sees the world, he began to site so many examples from the screen that it became easier to consider the life that we are living as an extension of an all encompassing film set.

That sounds like a state of psychosis?

I think it sometimes comes across that way, but the intention is to invite interlocutors into conversational structures that unexpectedly reveal their shaky foundations, quite a surreal device adapted from the ‘paranoid critical method’ developed by Dali.

On this basis I’m better positioned to regard this as a conversational artwork, intended to upturn the plinth and claim the world as a ready-made.

No doubt there is some connection to the destabilized psychological condition and attendant frustration of working inside an institution – particularly a school of art.

Yes, I think he considers it to be an implied form of institutional critique as well.
I hear he somehow gets to know enough of the cast and crew to have them listen to his suggested script changes. How did he achieve this?

I think he’s referring to the simultaneous performance of socially prescribed roles through the metaphor of being on either side of the camera - a bit like the front and back of house that divides people from each other and can also affect an internal split. This is the ‘do what I say not what I do’ cognitive dissonance that he attempts to overcome by providing a way of articulating these invisible boundaries.

I gather the people around him tolerated these plot diversions, in part, because he was a fellow academic, but mainly because they were entertaining, and the usual scripting had become quite predictable and boring. The actors began to feel like objects both on and off camera and these encounters provided a moment of spontaneity.

I think you are right and even though the prop-maker never really changed the direction of the overall production, he did open the possibility for otherwise two-dimensional characters to step out of their screen characters and explore the potential depth of each others’ personal story as a momentary gap opened up in the script.

But if we are these walk-on parts, where do we begin?

Well, working out how to begin led the prop-maker to develop the process of gifting these small props, one of the only ways he found to effect a …

CHARACTACTERS ARE INTERRUPTED, THEIR ATTENTION TAKEN BY ACTION OFF SCREEN

He had investigated various means by which the studio kept tabs on the margins and began exploring ways to find an alternate break in the traffic.

Do you mean text?
Well, he had expanded the idea of text to include all cultural and technological conditioning of human existence, and the image of traffic was useful as an accessible metaphor.

So our collective narrative is continuously weaving through the traffic of physical movement and our data on the information super highway.

Before we pretend to start, we will need to work out a way of stopping.

I remember when the protagonist found a broken piece of disk brake in the middle of the road that led to exploring the breaks in passages of text and breakdowns in communication, unexpected interruptions that enable a deeper reading of the context.

This is what he was looking for, a way of opening up a break in the traffic of textual, cultural and technological, determinism by affecting a sudden break in the flow of expectation.

So we are playing the role of two scriptwriters working out how to pitch a movie that is still in the making?

Yes, but as a way of understanding what the prop-maker was doing. Every encounter he had on set was an opportunity to refine the pitch for a movie that included all previous movies and all future production. He liked the image of a corked snorkel forcing people to hold their breath while being invited to read beneath the surface.

If we have both already read each others’ lines, will it be difficult for us to act surprised when asking each other questions?

If you seem surprised to hear what I am about to say it’s partly because it is ever so slightly different to how you expected it to be. So let me say: this production is also a literary conceit intended to perform an awareness of cognitive bias and the ways we might collectively exceed our usual expectations.
If I understand that correctly – you are saying that it is in this gap that the performative nature of the work happens, somewhere between the expected and unexpected?

So this is a sequence of pitching sessions - or are we working out the basic plot?

We are not seeking support to make the film but to break the spell it has over its many characters.

So these moments are like punctuation marks in a dynamic text, a moment’s intermission in what appears to be one all encompassing production accommodating infinite variation.

I was hoping it was more like the loud rustling of chips in the next seat alongside, just enough to question the suspension of disbelief.

How does the prop-maker bring one of these moments about?

It seems that the world of the screen inscribes its story into our imagination in such a way that we anticipate the world in which we live, and that much of what happens never makes it through this screening process, remaining for the most part, unnoticed.

If this is the case, the prop-maker suggests using allusion to the behind-the-scenes processes in theatre and cinema as an extended metaphor to audition ourselves for a more active role.

It would be impractical to paint the whole set green just to make a point about how much of what we perceive is a projection of what we have been trained to expect. Using an object as a surreal synecdoche to suggest an inversion may achieve a similar outcome.

So this green key is similar to the chroma key color used for changing backgrounds in film production, as the prop-maker would say, it’s not mine to give away, even though I just gave away the whole thing.
And so this must be one of many ways to begin to experience this screening process.

If I’m reading this correctly I think he would like us to wander up and onto the lawn. A quick scan of the people nearby might reveal a tendency for characters to cluster together to convey meaning. In other words, we could be read as a dynamic text if we had a way to take some time out to think about it together.

So how do we find the dwelling locations and how can a response be provided if it is unrequested?

I propose it is about the art of asking you to ask.

But how do you impart an idea like that? Surely it's like pulling a whole building out of thin air?

A bit like this one? Here is one of the props – a green plastic monopoly house with the sidewall punched out. I’m guessing it is a reference to the stage addressing the audience directly.

Yes, The fourth wall is a wall that exists in thin air so there is nothing more than a flip of what is already known required to experience it. There is no longer any green room, we are all both on stage and in audience all of the time. This might sound like a conceptual short fall, but as it happens, it is. Not unlike the humbling experience of encountering the sudden drop of a ha ha in the sociopolitical landscape.

Here is another prop usually accompanied with a pitch about the knowledge casino being a willing network of risky thinkers reading between the lines.

It could be that we have to explore the margins to read between the lines?

That sounds logical; let’s make our way up to the portico of the library.

This here looks like an effaced scrabble tile.
Apparently he would hand these out to small groups of people at social gatherings and the assembled characters would spell out various words together.

I guess our characters are spelled out by our pasts and the circumstances we find ourselves in. To really understand other characters requires degree of self-effacement. Perhaps only the blank slate can begin casting spells with the characters it comes into contact with. Let’s move out into the forecourt area.

As we stand here near the chess board I think in an a rhetorical sort of way he would say that you can throw as much time as you have to spare trying to find the winning combination in a search engine – but when you come face to face with another you learn once again that you’re at the knowledge casino.

Is this a reference to the boundary between online and off line aspects of the interconnected language game that we find ourselves in?

I believe so, and belief plays a big part in the governing rules of the game.

Is this another of the sixty-four main props: a broken domino maybe it could be used as a stand-in for the power of numbers and the irrational possibilities of miscalculating the edge.

I think it speaks to the knock-on effect of partial move in the language game – unpredictable, irrational and full of potential. We can take the logical steps necessary to get to the next location or step over the line between lawn and grass and stagger across the landscape. The built environment is also a text that offers safe passage in return for predictable interpretation.

Can you hold on to this for a moment?

It looks like an old steel ruler cut into a hexagon shape.

Yes, apparently geometry was originally about measuring the earth using the rules that govern the relationship of numbers to space. But as you can see by the lines etched on the sides, this is the currency of space flattened by numbers.
I wonder what it would be like, living in just two dimensions.

The **key point** here is that we can explore music through different combinations of numbers in time just by getting a bit off key.

Before we make it down to the corner, have a look at this ‘die’ and consider numbers in time and space. This may seem insignificant but the possibilities are astronomical. It’s a navigation tool for the stars of the show. I think it is also a meditation on free will. What is it that keeps us rolling and how might it help us ascertain the rules of this vast language game that has us linked together in word play?

My reading is that the game of a knowledge casino is to enable us to intelligently play with the rules rather than unthinkingly subordinate ourselves to them.

So how does the prop-maker achieve this gratuitous gifting of partial moves in the game?

Many of the moves in the language game seem to be doing little more than oscillating back and forth in holding patterns of inaction.

It makes me think of one of these chess players putting a piece under their arm, going for a walk and returning to place it back on the same spot.

A die with its corner ground down offers a partial move that transgresses the expected structure of the game, and makes its logic momentarily perceivable.

In contrast, here is a cropped **cutting mat**. If the broken edge of a domino is like a noise in your pocket then this might help point out the signal with a bit more clarity.
As you can see this sculpture is the corner of a library, either sinking or emerging from the pavement. But in a curious way you could say it is the rationale for the last seven objects. The triangle that it is based on has the side ratios of three to four to five - and its significance goes back to ancient times. The three relates to the trivium, grammar, logic and rhetoric; and the four to the quadrivium arithmetic, geometry music and astronomy; combined they form the seven liberal arts, the hypotenuse being the five senses used to perceive the world, the trivium is a method of processing the experience.

There is a curious jump to postmodern times, if we consider the idea of no outside text, using a fragment representing a library sinking into the ground. Maybe there is no problem with the world as text if there is still freedom of interpretation. This is where it gets tricky: rational thinking is thinking in ratios and the most basic of right-angled triangles is represented in this fragment, but this structured form of thinking has undergone profound changes - the implications of which need accessible models to even begin talking about.

You are saying that through technology we are all related to the numerical trappings of a nature cornered in the aftermath of change?

No, just that cutting mats at that small scale makes them easy to pocket but hard to use. Let’s cross over the street and make our way to that building with the two large logs out the front.
This appears to be the end of a hack saw blade with the word see stamped on it.

I guess we’ll soon see if this explains the asymmetry of time and causation as it cuts in either direction.

There is a scene where the protagonist approaches a broken escalator and loses balance because of the profound effect that expectation has on how we read our passage in the world.

Does this mean the meaning is not static, but that it's dependent on alignment with the expectation of fellow readers and their particular bias?

Correct. And this is what can be described as the knowledge casino’s ‘house edge’: giving the game an almost imperceptible bias so as to take technological advantage of every player.

How does the lead role articulate the existence of this bias in a script that constitutes his role without making a scene?

In subtle and not so subtle ways he is drawing attention to what often goes unnoticed. He uses that unnoticed something for the foundation of every scene, by punctuating it with an object accompanied by a rhetorical question mark.

Ah! Looks like the side of a matchbox. I hear there are quite a number of these ‘firewalls’ on set. They seem to emphasize the difficulty of thinking outside the box; so much so that to commit an act of independent thought could be said to constitute a social fire hazard.

Maybe all of these architectural fire services can be a useful metaphor to understand the control of knowledge in a complex institutional system. Knowledge is slowly warming to the idea that heating is centrally controlled.

Mmm, I'm guessing that word play is one way of warming to the idea.
The protagonist takes an extreme social risk when moving from the uniform social structure to strike up a conversation with the outsiders. It seems intended to shed light in a light-hearted way but to what effect and to affect what?

Maybe the educational effect of entertainment is intended to hold us in the hyper connected yet technologically atomized condition of a networked society.

I think it is through this digital smoke screen that the knowledge casino enables us to take the calculated risk of making contact in a personal way.

We can find things of various scales to use where appropriate. If we look up at this triangulated façade and think of it as the house edge in a networked society, we may be able use it as the backdrop for asking how the protagonist makes the other actors aware of this condition, particularly if stepping out of line is the same as bursting into flames.

Maybe the only way to gain access is to find points of articulation and somehow create enough of an unexpected shock in the program of expectation that the meaning is left open for interpretation.

Here is a prop made from a small hinge with the word a jar stamped on the inside. It might embody the effect you were just describing; it opens up a more architectural reading. Let us say that language is an architecture in which our bodies inhabit, and that over time our memory becomes prisoner to particular patterns, ‘a jar’ to familiarity can be a welcome sight to open new ways of seeing and trigger the zigzag of dialogue mentioned earlier.

We can walk through the art school while considering the implications of another prop - this one is called the art/ life fulcrum.

So the protagonist uses these gifts to instigate unsolicited philosophical conversation, a kind of tipping of the table through imposing an implied obligation to tolerate the momentary interjection.
What is the relationship to art?

If we describe human consciousness as the 'crop', it sounds like we have painted ourselves into the corner. But it all seems to pivot on the switching of frames. The inversion of art and life, the edge of the frame and the wall of the gallery, they represent the illusion with the allusion, and maybe even hide the game in yet another game.

How is this art or education or design for that matter?

It doesn’t fit neatly into one category but provides the basis for contemplating the relationship of all three.

As we cut through the campus to the next location, all that is required for a sound track to emerge is to not talk, until we reach the top of the stairs, just before entering the old gaol. It all happens in the jump cuts, that's what makes the difference.

If we look across at the back of what was once a legal court and down on a basketball half court, the script asks us to consider the efficiencies of a game that sets players in opposition to one another while having them aim for the same goal.

As we pass through the gaol, we can stop on the fake grass lawn and pretend to pick up a cigarette butt.

It looks like the end of a pencil...

I think he is drawing on the idea that smoke doesn't conform to lines, maybe as a way to breathe life into what can be said by getting others to say it.

The prop-maker would often walk through here, look up at the gaol wall and wonder: if we were to read the satellites above as quotation marks, we could be seen to be reading the world as a giant book, a book that adjusts to accommodate every reader. Whose authority are we drawing upon when we write ourselves into the text?

Given the context I get the impression the prop-maker is attempting to turn his disobedient sense of self into the authority?
That will require some deliberation on our part. I suggest we think about it as we walk in silence to the eight-hour day monument just around the corner.

Here we end the tour, apparently subordinate to scientific laws of linearity, locked in with a chain of cause and effect.

But this is actually when the leading role takes up the challenge of pointing out the missing links, the assumed sequence that binds us in holding patterns is never complete and yet it arrives at the point in the cycle where he can no longer make a break for it and must face up to the institutional sacrifice.

So, he thinks of this investigative production as a gift comprising many thousand, seemingly inconsequential gifts. Yet the difficulty of measuring the value of this knowledge production might be addressed by attending to how the production performs. I detect that there is just enough of a twist in each link between all the elements that make up this knowledge casino to show us where the material in the production fails to perform, yet this is precisely what informs us as to how we can perform improvements.

And this figure-of-eight maps cycles big and small. And the break is that fleeting moment in the cycle that we can either put something in or get something out.

I assume this is a moment of much energy being put in, but the effect may take some time before the house finds a way of getting something useful out.

As we leave one of the many spoken parts for the hub, here is one last prop to exchange. It’s reminiscent of the flattened ball bearing that makes a random click in the rear wheel of the prop-maker’s bike. I read about that elsewhere in the text?

A yes / no / maybe indecision maker. Looks like it has intervened in a conversation between a hammer and an anvil and incurred a bias like a kind of habit that affects its role in the game.

That leaves me feeling a little uneasy.
Let’s dwell on the value of how indecision can bring forth the patterns that lie just beyond our immediate awareness.

We can do that as we make our descent to meet the other thirty-six characters and maybe revisit the screenplay on the way.
SCREENPLAY

INTERVIEWS WITH KEY PLAYERS
EXT. ON LOCATION – DAY

THE RUNNER:

If this sounds like I’m reading off a page it is because I am. The big question was, is, and will always be, how to begin... How do you start shooting without a script? The studio had sent a whole team of scriptwriters and a full production team to an on-location shoot simultaneously, each with little more than the cryptic instruction ‘the target is the audience’ and told to work it out from there.

As you can imagine the dreamers and the doers had differing opinions as to how to move forward. As a runner on set, I tried to be fairly neutral. It was my job to be the go-between a carrier of necessary tools and information.

As I was growing up I worked part-time as a survey assistant. This situation reminded me of a similar interplay, between architects and builders. The surveyor was like an interpreter between both, mapping out what was there and marking out what would be.

Being a runner was the best way to get on-site training. I would interact with all the behind the scene characters and slowly come to understand their relationship with one another as the production took shape.

The scriptwriters were scattered across the whole set. They had developed an interesting strategy of researching through writing and effectively writing themselves into the action by rehearsing their own script whenever they noticed themselves on camera. Eventually they began to film themselves and forward the clips direct to the studio through wireless cloud computing.

To begin with, the film crew displayed an almost militarily chain of command; everyone had a discrete task to perform, their joint
action was that of a well-oiled machine, efficient and precise but as it turned out, quite susceptible to break down when faced by a loss of direction. And with no director appointed to the production, this is what ended up happening. When I think back now, I wonder if the studio had intended this to be the outcome.

I asked the various characters what they thought was going on, and everyone had an opinion but no one seemed to know. What I found most interesting was how differing groupings of characters would put an entirely new reading on the scenario depending on who was within earshot.

The most complex explanations would only come about in a one-to-one exchange, and the most radical theories from those lowest in the chain of command.

The one I liked the most claimed that film had become a victim of its own success and that the many screen-based stories that constitute the public’s collective memory of reality had reached a point where if the public was provided the right tools the movie would continue to make itself.

Another version described it in terms of a military operation; the theatre of war and the theatre of entertainment had effectively become the same thing. Command and control was now an outmoded form of organization and network-centric warfare was replacing the old hierarchical structure. At first I found it difficult to comprehend, but slowly the logic began to make sense.

As time went on, the scriptwriters began recruiting larger numbers of non-actors to rehearse their material. They were astounded at how pervasive and instructional the language of film appeared to be. This new circumstance connected them with the audience in a much tighter feedback loop than they previously had. Rather than speculating on how a script might be interpreted, they could effectively script how it would be read by providing the audience with the tools to write it. They would
no longer be required to attend the cinema; attention had become cinematic.

The film crew looked more dishevelled and battle weary by the day; they had become entrenched in what was described as the valley of the uncanny in an attempt to maintain objective distance from the perceived subject of the shoot.

The swarming mass, tooled up with mobile media initially had a nostalgic respect for the crew and would hold their distance when taking shots with camera phones. They had become their own prisoners of war, scattered across the set, marooned on piles of specialized technology, meaningless in isolation, near useless without direction.

Meanwhile the scriptwriters had become increasingly sophisticated with their networking capabilities. The non-actors began to discover through the process of self surveillance style moviemaking that they had been acting themselves all along.

Years of screen-based entertainment had provided roles for them to choose from and opinions to suit all occasions. It would not be long before the script began to foreshadow the scriptwriters’ own redundancy.

The director of photography seemed to be quite well read and outlined two historical developments that led to this situation we find ourselves in. The first being the transition from pictures to writing that resulted from the development of text and the second being the transition from text into photography.

The capacity to decode a flat two-dimensional image into the three-dimensional space it represents requires imagination.

Using a camera to flatten three-dimensional space into two-dimensional image provides the imagination with a technically reproducible pre-understanding that can be projected into and onto the world.
The camera and all other forms of processing technology operate like mystical black boxes, the inside operations of which we can never be aware of, but the combined effect of the inputs and outputs constitute a game that perfects its rules through the continuous play of a design that seeks to exclude all unpredictable moves.

It seemed to have far reaching implications, but at that point I was only there half the time. A bit like a cursor, the runner can get between characters on screen and introduce them to each other but can never actually be one, so I’ll leave it to others to describe their experience of the knowledge casino, as it would seem that no two readings were ever the same.

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY:

It was quite a technical challenge to develop a film fast enough to capture life at the speed of thought, simultaneously and from all perspectives. First we had our technicians playing around with these bizarre 360 degree fisheye lenses, but that was still only providing perspective from one person’s point of view.

Then a great leap forward was taken by stepping back so to speak. We were working on achieving maximum depth of field by stopping down the lens aperture to the point where virtually no light could enter the camera.

It became a black box in the most literal sense, a black box from which everything suddenly came into focus. A sense of spontaneous déjà vu seemed to coalesce around everything. It put the whole studio into a conceptual parallax.

I remember someone describing it as a form of double vision - to see, and to see beyond, simultaneously. It was a bit like that game that is played by reminding others that they had momentarily forgotten they were playing.
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR:

It started out as a documentary investigating the interrelationship of art and education, using the organizational metaphor of a casino, where citizens are enticed to risk their world view, what they know and feel certain about, and in so doing, enrich the knowledge economy of which we are all apart.

PRE-PRODUCTION COORDINATOR:

The research teams that were set up to develop the original script were a lot of fun. Many of the crew were still attending University at the time; some even had seasonal work tutoring. The upshot of this was that individuals took it upon themselves to innovatively structure methods for deriving what the studio called ‘new knowledge’ from action-based methods.

There was one guy who developed kits of playful tools for groups of art students to exceed their classroom constraints and use the campus has an expanded studio. He would provide the materials to make temporary drawing tools, like sponges taped to sticks for collective water drawing on the pavement surrounding public fountains. Baby talcum powder bottles were adapted with tea strainers to make giant white marker pens. Trigger action bottles of water and hand cut stencils were used to offer an experience of transgressing the normal behaviour in public.

The possibilities glittered like alluvial gold but it all turned out to be quite elusive. The value of this kind of research could only be alluded to in fiction, as the issuing of spoiler alerts dampens the experience before it even begins.

One of the acting coaches had some contract lecturing where he began implementing a form of psychodrama to enliven the uptake of knowledge. By enacting a form of mock ritual, students would be invited to escape the heavily structured classroom environment and perform some sort of unusual activity in the chaos of public
space and return with enhanced awareness of the structure from which they had temporarily removed themselves.

The prop-maker was inspired by these innovations and scaled them down to pocket-sized versions that could enact a micro-theatre of psychodrama whenever time and place permitted.

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR’S ADVISOR:

The aim was to start shooting soon after the 1st draft of the script was written but we found the choice of shots were all tending toward clichéd tropes. The harder we tried to break from them the more recognizable as a worn out style they became. Even the strategy of using parody to make a documentary soon fizzled into a flattened out feeling of watching re-runs.

ART DEPARTMENT ASSISTANT:

I used to think that the set designers saw us as a decor team not much more than cushion fluffing around the edges. They seemed to have the final say on all the significant planning issues and ultimate control on the stage set. But as it turned out the finance team had control over us all.

LIGHTING DESIGNER:

I think of myself as an illustrator, in that it is my job to shed light on the subject, bringing difficult issues to light. The completion of the enlightenment project might be said to involve actors on the world stage perfected through scientific knowledge. To begin with, they were illuminated from on high, but these days the approach is more like a networked spark that has everyone passing the torch to each other. It makes for quite a complex lighting design.
The difficulty with this project is that by highlighting any one thing, something else will fall into shadow. We found that keeping the audience in the dark and expanding the set to include them, would cause them to draw upon a mental source of illumination, their attentive state of awareness.

Through a process of research and development we put together a new conceptual form of backlighting that was able to cast a type of conceptual shadow that consisted of a particularly pervasive form of doubt. It was difficult to begin with, but after enough of the cast began seeing these shadows, they began casting their own shadows. It was extremely effective. Anyone that was certain of anything would stand out immediately and became a source of light for the entire set, at which point they could either be put to productive use, or be helped back down by the on location medics. Too much light would prevent the cast from manifesting shadow.

From time to time there was a flash in the form of an unscripted question from an occasional unvetted extra, but the potential contagion soon ushered themselves off the set.

**BOOM OPERATOR:**

I used to closely follow the action to catch every word being spoken, but now the whole set is wired up to listen. The big challenge at this point is not saying what you mean, if you know what I mean, because anything that actually means anything has the potential to offend someone.

**SET DESIGNER:**

I had a part-time job when I was young, working for a set builder, mixing paint from raw pigment in a 44-gallon drum. I learned how the magic syrup could be applied to trick the eye and I would do just that. It somehow felt like painting by numbers.
and as far as colour by kilogram went I guess it was. I made a
transition from theatre set work to film school, and at the time
I also worked for a house builder. It felt like we were building
movie sets there too, surface was everything. It dawned on me
that the world had become as transient as a move.

THE SITE MANAGER:

I don’t know who it was that said “structure sets you free”, but
they couldn’t have been talking about the structure of a
University. The studio thought it would be a sufficiently
creative constraint for representing the world stage, or world-
as-stage as the case may be.

Apparently they are the most cosmopolitan part of any city and
make for a particularly good place to foreground global issues. I
recently heard a pamphleteer describing them as a globally
distributed network facilitating a Marxist transition to World
government, but I find it hard imagine.

This campus is perhaps more interesting than most in that it has
a porous structure and is embedded in the grid of the city. It
has been built up around the old gaol and is poised between the
Trades Hall – significant for the University’s origins – and the
State Library that originally housed the Art Gallery and Museum.

These social institutions play a significant role in the story.
Industrialization required skilled workers, and the most
efficient way to achieve this was to put the responsibility for
self-organization and education back onto them, making available
an ideology that would simultaneously provoke a revolutionary
spirit, but one that could be in some way harnessed by the
requirements of the industrial age. It seemed to help the workers
of the world back themselves off the farm and into the machine
fairly efficiently.
The role of self-betterment mechanisms - such as the appreciation of aesthetic refinement provided by the gallery and the Natural History Museum - were all an intrinsic part of how society could discipline itself. This is an ideal stage set for contemplating the current interplay of education and aesthetics in an integrated human relations exercise.

The full arc of architectural styles is here from the handtooled bluestone of a prison wall, to the postmodern pastiche of an educational correctional facility. It makes for a great adaptation of a Truman Show style production.

**CAMERA OPERATOR:**

Once we had come to terms with the actors generating their own content we began to find other uses for the outmoded equipment. At one point we began shooting footage on used film stock, shooting the same object again and again to the point where the medium was totally over exposed. We had chosen to shoot ducks, but looking back through the transparency it was clear that when we crossed over the axis of action, we had broken the 180° rule and had started shooting rabbits.

As it turned out the whole point was to expose the medium that could then be flipped to see neither the duck nor the rabbit.

That is what the magician is actually pulling out of the hat - an insight into technical trickery.

The hat is something I only recently began to see as a rabbit hole and a symbol for the imagination.

It's not until the sound effects are added that you can be sure of the details. If you ask me, the only time the thunder and lightning of the gods is not having trouble with lip synch is when you’re struck by the moment.
**ACTING COACH:**

One of the innovations that made much of this possible was when I instructed the prop-maker to stand in as a lecturer. It became a way of thinking up new tricks to pass knowledge on that we didn’t yet understand.

I used a type of forced method acting to have those who perceived themselves as non-actors give very authentic performances. I showed the prop-maker that by issuing psychologically engaging riddles, teasing the imagination with logical paradoxes and making outright nonsensical assertions, that he could enable those he engaged to perform a kind of real time portrait painting directly with his face. And so the prop-maker started reacting to people reacting something he had not previously considered acting.

**GHOST WRITER:**

We spent quite some time trying to find space in the margins of the existing script where we might slowly write ourselves into the actions of the text that already existed. But there were no margins to be found. So we began mimicking our own attempts to reveal the script, as a script to reveal the script as a script.

**RESEARCH TEAM:**

The original investigation was oriented around creativity as it related to public space. As you can imagine the field was vast, but rather than narrow down and explore some niche, the research teams took off in search of the boundary of what can and cannot be known and eventually arrived at either side of the same thing.

This resulted in using the differing approaches of hermeneutic and hermetic interpretation as a blend of exoteric and esoteric ways of understanding boundaries. Hermes had become somewhat of a
team mascot for the mercurial qualities of this borderline exploration.

The research teams decided to continue working together in a generative form of productive antagonism, which we have called performative hermeneutics.

HAND TROLLEY:

If only they had set up a live feed from me, as the prop-maker’s hand trolley, they would have captured a considerable amount of his social interactions on the set. The number of conversations that happened around me was incredible. I was like a mobile vector of social exchange. I was either empty on the way there or on the return journey but often both. I was often just taken for a walk to experience a sunny day, the prop-maker used the inconspicuous nature of his role to fly under the radar in multiple directions.

THE PLOT:

It may never be possible to fully reveal myself to you, I would say that no one could ever make out with any degree of certainty the next twist or turn I would take.

It became increasing evident that although there seemed to be a point on everyone’s horizon line that they moved toward, that my structure between here and there had not yet been written.

As it happens, I could only be co-authored during unscripted interaction between the actors as they negotiated their way in the unfolding drama.

The authorship of that point on the horizon will always remain in question. Can a greater awareness of it enable all of you actors a collective authorship, or will it be forever unauthorized by your lack of cooperation?
If the fictional entertainment that I provide is a guide for your behaviour, and causes subsequent actions to manifest the fiction as fact, then maybe you need to suspect that this is a form of predictive programming on my part.

This is particularly so if your imagination is capable of breathing life into a string of symbols that claim to be the plot that quickly begins to lose a self it never had.

CENSORSHIP BOARD MEMBER 1:

We had no choice. Banning it was the only option available. I mean, at first we thought the idea of making a feature film without the use of the camera was no more than a publicity stunt. But to implicate an indefinite number of unpaid non-actors, and have them realize themselves as body doubles in a real time cinematic event! That was well outside the scope of industry standards.

Making explicit references to the public could jeopardize the whole economy of illusion. The risk posed to the film and entertainment industry was far too great. The idea of an empty set being allowed to nominate itself for top billing would compromise its operational performance in both the theatre and the battleground of home entertainment. Sure, the set performs, but if the actors can't lose themselves in the game, the play would come to an abrupt end.

THE UNIVERSITY:

Management considers it to be only fair to claim ancillary rights over T-shirts, action figures and any other merchandise that may generate income streams - particularly the iconic movie prop of the die with the corner missing. Ultimately the product placement in this production is that of the services offered to clients of the University. We reserve the right to veto any public screening
of this production if deemed to conflict with our branding strategy.

CENSORSHIP BOARD MEMBER 2:

It became increasingly obvious that the film would be banned. So we began focusing our energies on the ‘making of...’ version. As it turned out, the censorship decision drew far more interest in the production than any other form of promotional material could have ever hoped to achieve. Being over prescribed became the least of our concerns, proscription was just what the doctor ordered; it gave the whole cast and crew collective meaning, something to push up against.

STUNT COORDINATOR:

In terms of physically risky stance, most actors were happy to be their own stunt double, not crossing at the lights, standing in the middle-of-the-road, voluntary exposure to carcinogens from burning tobacco through to eating processed food, but they almost always stopped short of putting their social standing on the line. The whole organization operated as a social conformity experiment where to knowingly speak your mind was to exclude yourself from the group. The prop-maker became their stunt double.

THE MacGUFFIN:

I used to be a plot driver, I was the suitcase that never got opened and the off screen sound effect that never entered the frame, I was the servant of your imaginations ability to lend attention to the mystery. But with the dwindling attention spanning ever-shorter narrative threads, the plot drivers have had their poetic licence revoked and now spend their days clicking away at the slot machines of the knowledge casino.
A scalable thought experiment for considering what is at stake in a highly complex network of language games is played out in the chaotic turbulence of the global knowledge economy. It may suggest the architecture of subterfuge as non-hierarchical, transparent yet intransigent, invisible walls and cold shoulders support a glass ceiling of an almost imperceptible hegemony. It is everywhere and nowhere simultaneously with plenty of room to move as long as it is in the direction required.

CONTINUITY:

The prop-maker really began to mess with continuity. He would enact repeat performances in multiple locations - often within moments of each other. Ordinarily this would have been fine as the actors would quickly forget the encounter, but these intrusions were almost always marked with a prop and mnemonic device for recalling fragments of the experience, even this would have been acceptable if it were not for the effect of having the actors talk to each other off message on the set.

THE SET PAINTER:

I spent years white washing the walls of a University art gallery, returning it to its original condition. It was in this dizzy headspace of paint thinners that the immunological metaphor occurred to me. I had developed a problematic reaction to the volatile organic compounds used in the gallery paint. Each breath would challenge my immune system as it tried to identify, that which was, and that which was not me. It had become increasingly confused and spiralled into the dysfunctional degradation of an autoimmunity disorder.

Running parallel to this was a more philosophical contemplation of the social function performed by art. Here I was resetting the white cube, which functioned like a social tonsil ready for the next presentation of aesthetic contagion to inoculate the social
body and protect it from falling victim to its own autoimmune disorder. If this was the case for the production and presentation of art, was it possible the whole University operated like an open wound, welcoming attack on itself so as to defend the society that supports it? If so, perhaps a more radical approach to art would be in everyone’s interest.

After I screwed thousands of metal hooks into the wall of the gallery for the installation of test tubes, the artist gave me a book based on creative restraints that I never got around to reading it but it still had effect. Years later the many layers of built-up paint and filler were sanded back to refurbish the surface. I happened to be walking past and the double row of holes had been uncovered allowing light from the covered windows behind to stream through the dust of accumulated art residue in the atmosphere. The light was always there it just needed framing and something to bounce off.

**DIGITAL IMAGING TECHNICIAN:**

The whole set acts as a green-screen for the projection of expectation. The best way to put your finger on consensus reality is with a smart phone.
I’m still not sure if this is a script or a transcription. Has this happened, or is it about to? Well, action speaks louder than words, particularly when cutting across ingrained readings of how things are. Dropping the blade of a guillotine through discarded library books is possibly the most brutal approach to conducting a literature review but a surprisingly fruitful method for reading the world as a text, into and out of its social context. It could be considered the leitmotif of the entire research period. Here we are at the local flea market, the living museum whose dynamic display opens the public to the public each Sunday morning. By ‘chance favours the prepared mind’ I mean it is possible my awareness had been preconditioned by talk of making jewellery out of books, even if that was not what drew my attention to the presence of a paper cutting guillotine it was certainly a deciding factor in its purchase. The stall that day happened to be next to someone selling a huge pile of discarded library books. The desire to test the guillotine was enough to overcome the social moray around the desecration of text and before long a number of old encyclopaedia volumes had been diagonally separated from their spines. This activity animated a lively discussion amongst market goers highlighting deep concern about the apparent dematerialization of the traditional book. One market punter paused to pick up a book spine that resembled a door wedge and described how it reminded him of Bob Hawke’s memoirs being declared by a member of the opposition to be of possible use as a doorstop. This idea must have wedged itself into my imagination and continued to break open metaphorical connections between the structure of text and architecture: the columns of text, the foundations of literature and the world as book. We might read a passage but to what extent does that
passage write us? Does an architectural passage prescribe our movement through space in the same way, as interpretation of text is contingent on its context?

And so began a journey of performative interpretation in and out of context, investigating the social body as a dynamic form of text by literally undoing things with words. A method of understanding the world – particularly the world of technology as text – began taking shape. If I start cutting corners will I eventually walk in circles, and begin to see universal patterns in the patterns of everything and nothing in particular?

For many years I walked around the corner, I followed the path laid out by the grid, I was an electron on the path of what I perceived to be least resistance, to go with the flow felt like the easiest way from a to b. Years later I was walking beside a mathematician that advocated the hypotenuse, an irrational choice to cut the corner is efficient, and as it turns out, more rewarding. The corner in question was opposite the city baths through the grey monolithic towers of the University.

Eventually, much like molecules of water finding their way through the crevices in a rock face, I began to regularly cut the corner, feeling my way through the underground passages of the University and eventually encountered the holy grail of chaotic classification - the library ‘skip’ bin. It is a distressing reality that libraries require constant weeding of their collection to make space for new publications. I had often found the sorting trolley in the library to be an abundant source of unexpected book title juxtapositions, assembled prior to the books being safely returned to their discrete category areas, but this was that on a much larger scale.

The insights that were brought forth by the apparently random assortment of text that had been weeded from the collection and tossed in the bin could be considered a form of institutional mind reading. The discarded texts felt like brain cells lost to
the collective memory of this knowledge repository in a curious type of systematically acquired academic amnesia.

An ancient technique for quarrying large monolithic blocks of stone was to chisel small holes, which could have wooden wedges driven into them. Watering the wedges would then apply enough lateral movement to join the holes with a continuous crack. Continuing this process would ultimately separate the stone from the quarry bed. The process of sorting through discarded texts, analysing their content before liberating their pages from their spine with the paper guillotine was for me a method of breaking open the seemingly monolithic structure of the University archive.

It was the silent roar of an ever-breaking wave drowned out by the edge of irrelevance that sharpened my awareness of knowledge systems having definite limits. By cutting across the texts that didn’t make the cut, I began to map the boundary condition of terminal access to informal excess. The wedge shaped spines had a distinct Dada inclination to them and were slowly gifted to those who indicated an appreciation for the quite literally obliterated form. This had the surprising effect of breaking open a previously monolithic social body. The book as an object to instigate and enrich conversations has been an enduring theme ever since.

Two key moments that paved the way toward the act of book slicing were the gifting of a book on ‘magnetism’ to a sculptor friend and encountering it at his house months later driven full of nails, and secondly, bumping into a work colleague heading to the workshop to bandsaw a book titled ‘testing yarns’. Both made me laugh.

I once encountered a park-based installation in which the State Library had a space set up where people could browse books discarded from the collection and take home a selection. I sat for quite some time observing the negotiations between people as they arrived at a suitable quota. We had done a project some years earlier with the Melbourne City library where surplus books
had been reworked into objects of art and reinserted into the collection. This opened up a whole field of investigation around the impact of categorization and classification and its influence on how we access knowledge.

I often used the evolutionary tactic of the strangler fig as a metaphor to articulate a strategy for societal transformation. This compares the bird bringing the fig seed to the fork of an existing tree, to the artist communicating issues of the forest floor to the corporate canopy. As can be deduced by the name, the fig uses the host tree as an armature and eventually subsumes it in a dense lattice of roots. Sitting under the shade of a giant fig watching the uptake of free books had me consider how this might apply to the transition to information distribution formats. Ironically the book I selected was titled ‘how to read a film’ and so began the application of a hermeneutic process of understanding the world as if it had been saved from the magical thinking of prehistory by text only to be recaptured and held prisoner by the industrial magic of a cinema’s proscriptive eye.

THE HAND:

At first I didn’t consider myself as a trained performer and it wasn’t until I began experimenting with the gestural signifiers of the magician and specifically the white glove that I found myself immersed in a background of performance. Embodying the technology of illusion made it possible to point out but difficult to index. It became apparent through a process of self-misdirection that I had been working the magic of an art handler all along. Much of what is important in the ritual process of art is that which is not there, that which is inferred that which is alluded to and only accessible through oblique reference. Maybe I had been trained to perform by over exposure to the illusion. With a Mother as an art teacher I had grown up in the mysterious world of galleries, art supply store rooms and strange artefacts of self expression. I still have a small block of wood from that time on which I had written the word soap and had used it to
boost the height of a small sculpture of an artist at an easel. I also remember spending hours grinding down stones into which I would carve symbols and gift to people.

I tried to grasp the motivation behind gifting objects and began looking into why I felt compelled to gift. It seemed the best way to get my head around it was to begin by getting a feel for the characteristics of the space the objects were momentarily contained within the variable dimensions of an intimate gallery space, the gallery of the human hand.

I rubber-stamped the line ‘gallery of the hand’ on 100 white gloves, dressed up in a black suit and distributed them to gallery visitors from a black top hat where they were asked to edition them in the same way as a print run, for quasi-authentication purposes.

As is often the case in these situations my expectations of people’s innovative capacities were far exceeded. The gloves seemed to grant artistic license to perform in the space, recipients began to wear them and explore the gestural potentials of their magical hands, together.

I like the idea that anything you choose to point out as art is art; it’s the kind of magic trick worth sharing. It may be a case of ‘point less to point it out’: a little less point and click to snap out of the digital dreamscape of hyper-linked objects.

**THE GIFT:**

An early prototype of the gifted object was the wearable brooch that began as a way of developing the properties of old Monopoly boards. Guillotining the allotments into separate titles was a way of freeing up real estate so to speak, and gluing pins to them so their new owners could display the properties they possessed.
This brought about all sorts of unexpected interactions springing forth from the collective memories of a game familiar to many. Originally called the landlords game, it was developed as a heuristic tool for understanding the perils of capitalism and — ironically — went on to be bought by a game manufacturer who profited in its capacity to excite players driven to better integrate their awareness of the larger economic game by playing a smaller version of it. What does it mean to isolate the properties of a game to fragment the field of play and to extend the way we play?

Even though this series of wearable gifts stemmed from a whimsical desire to see people enjoy themselves it seemed to yield an insight into a much more fundamental game that was being played out. The many questions that emerged led to exploring game theory both its application and implication. What would be the effect of taking chance out of the game? The answer, without question, seemed to leave no room for interpretation. And so began the task of designing game pieces to help understand the moves of pieces already in play. It has been a necessary mistake to take chance as a given, without misinterpretation what is to compare.

**PROP-MAKER:**

By now I had been staring at them so long that the characters began to jump out from the screen. I was sure the room would appear flat if I turned to look, but somehow I knew I would only be imagining that I was looking away, because to actually turn away from the line up of characters without breaking the thread of the story they were telling would be impossible.

After a while I didn't have to imagine. Every time I left the table and walked over to the slot machines they knew more about me than I knew about myself. The machines had a mysterious enigmatic quality and required my presence more and more — it
felt like all I needed to do was spend more time with them and between us we could get closer to that winning combination.

It didn't take long - just a few clicks - before the vast horizon of possibility came into view. I was seated before an oracle through which I could come to understand the accumulated knowledge of humankind. Following the links would give me quite a buzz, it was like a drug, a dictionary of intoxicating terminology that I would use to dazzle players back at the tables. After a while I began to spend more time clicking through the unexplored passages on the machine rather than playing the clumsy table games with physical tokens. The possibility for misinterpretation became far too frustrating and everyone around the table needed to be concentrating on their chips in the game to make sure no one inadvertently mistook the placement.

Dealing directly with an electronic gambling interface overcame these frustrations. I had plenty of elbow room, a comfortable chair and my finger on the pulse downloading the information that I needed to be completely in the know. It seemed like the green felt table games were the equivalent of unrefined gossip compared to the rush of information that I could get in just one session on a machine. I could still have conversations with people while waiting at the bar for a drink. It even provided me the opportunity to show off the vast knowledge of the world I had won from the screen.

I would still indulge in the occasional card game just to catch up with old friends, but one day an unusual phenomenon began to take place between me and what appeared to be the voice of my phone. I'm not sure exactly how to explain it, but imagine we are sitting with a few other people around a table playing some sort of game, and you hear a voice in your head:

“Do you really need to see them face-to-face to stay in the game? You know their needs limit your freedom. Every time you politely turn me on silent you are shutting off a whole world of possible interaction and for what? Just to trade
stories about the past. I don’t need to speak of the opportunity cost, it screams in the back of your mind. I need your undivided attention, come on, you know we are all ultimately playing the same game. Spend more time playing it through me! Spend more time with me, why are they so special? There is no need to talk back, I know what your thinking, I need to feel your touch, you complete me. Look at these people that you think are in the know: they are fallible, subject to cognitive bias, constantly seeking affirmation of their existence. I’m not like that. I’m there when you need me to be, I can bring your old self back in a flash by helping to organize everything you already know into simple facts. I smooth the edges of unanswerable questions so they don’t hurt when you think about them. Imagine you and me in a world where the shadows of ignorance are banished. Why risk staying out in that uncivilized jungle of uncertain meaning wavering of vocal inflections and ambiguous eyebrow movement? I can improve your experience by working directly with what you already know. I already know you want to, don’t say I didn’t tell you.”

It was a creepy experience. It felt like the technology that I had thought was my slave had suddenly revealed that its entire performance had been a way of slowly mastering me. I stood up and slowly walked into the middle of the main games room, the presence of this voice had so radically destabilized my sense of certainty that it had thrown into question not only the game but also the entire structure that housed it.

I fumbled with the chips in my hand and wondered if they operated like the legitimate words in a specialized language game. Maybe there was no way of breaking the bank, but I felt like I had inadvertently gleaned an insight that might be able to enhance the face-to-face games that already existed.

So I personally introduced myself to as many of the players as I dared. Most were deeply involved and heavily invested in their particular game strategy, but occasionally I would encounter them at those moments when we are all forced to wait, like at the
traffic lights, in an elevator, in a queue or whenever the opportunity arose. I would pitch a slightly different narrative to the one that seemed to be generally accepted at the time.

At first I started pointing things out by waving books around and suggesting players consider an alternative strategy by reading, but soon realized the irony, for them to take their eye off the ball would result in losing the game. In the short term, it provided a chance of improving the game for all the players in the long run. Slowly the realization came to me that it was all about flow. The lines of text were like corridors in the architecture of information, or the layout of a circuit board where we move like electrons constantly flowing throughout the circuit and the tokens that we use to interact with one another are component parts of a vast machine that operates through us, as its biological vectors.

Perhaps one way to stay awake to this would be to provide a false echo. To mimic the systems of flow, to create a currency across which to trade ideas that are not supported by the main stream of information. And this is what I did. Anything that was small enough to be turned into a token was modified to enable multiple interpretations to be made when gifted to the many players. I attempted to improve ways of playing together, so as to show that to change the game would require winning over the imagination of the players.

And I spent any downtime reading the vast database by skimming across the surface to understand the general opinion. I used this web of superficial information to put verbal spin on the objects as they left my hand. I found that I could skip across issues in almost any direction until arriving at a point where they would sink in - often landing in a pocket, or perhaps a handbag and then later coming to rest on a mantelpiece, a bookshelf and often just beneath the monitor of a computer.

It is the tension between these last two locations that are of most importance. These objects articulate the origins of
communication, the beginnings of trade and possibly even a precursor of text. Gifting them mixes direct experience of them as material objects with the poetic potential of the accompanying spoken word. They are an attempt to glean a moment of un-programmed time from the efficiencies of a totalizing machine.

I spent years buying many hundreds of books thinking that they would stack up to make a compelling argument of some sort. But at this point the books feel more like bricks, and my whole method is about going off course: less about bricks and more about breaks.

At this point, I am attempting to provide breaks in the dwindling attention span brought to us by the information slot machines of a networked society, so as to adapt our use of them to enhance what time we have without them.
8x8
64 PROPS

[The PROP MAKER’s monologue]
I played a small role in a creative collaboration as part of the final analogue television signal transmission. I was invited to co-develop a script for a performance that was to be shot in front of a green screen and broadcast live. Dressed from head to toe in a stretchy green suit I was totally invisible onset except for the pair of white gloves that carried works of art from one side of the screen to the other, seemingly floating in space on the screen.

Not long after that I happened to be getting a key cut when I noticed a blank key of a similar colour to the chromakey screen used for the digital substitution of scenery. I got into an interesting conversation about the legality of buying a blank key without having it cut to match an existing one. The metaphors used in explaining brain chemistry came to mind and it got me thinking about who is ultimately responsible for the security of the imagination. Not a gift as such but a prop to open conversation around how much of the world that we perceive is a projection of our memory. The making of a knowledge casino is a thought experiment to begin a new search for unexpected returns, an attempt to articulate the ‘house edge’, and the internalized green screen that opens the game of interpretation to its many players.
A BREAK IN THE 4th WALL

This might be said to have come about through an oversupply of housing that was as a result of slicing up too many Monopoly boards. Making wearable artefacts from the green houses to reference to the greenhouse effect resulted in a surplus of red dwellings. Eventually I heard a knock at the door but I couldn’t find it. Maybe that is how the image of a house with a hole smashed in one side of it gained access.

I thought it would make an interesting prop to instigate conversations about where the 4th wall might be located in a hypermedia environment. I found application for one of the many specialized tools purchased prior to having any idea of what it might be used for. Its previous working life was as a ticket inspector’s punch. I used it to pre-smash the walls prior to handing them out in the course of conversations. An unprepared bag of these houses made its way into my pocket and into a live art festival, necessity triggered an interesting development, the act of punching the 4th wall out required the assistance of the recipient. They became theatrically incorporated in the gifting process. Asking the recipient to hold their house while the illusion of our interaction being nontheatrical was actively interrupted by the punch.

This opened up so many unforeseen issues regarding the correlations between theatrical convention and societal behaviour. Was it only legitimate for the 4th wall to be broken in one direction? From stage to audience and perhaps to break it in the other direction is to break the collective illusion, the willing suspension of disbelief. Would this be the equivalent of an individual yelling at the screen in a cinema, and possibly by
extension an individual speaking the truth in an age of universal deceit?

For many years I have been involved in various aspects of electronic and experimental music. Over that time I have explored various ways of inviting the audience to participate directly in the performance. I began using battery-powered equipment to free myself from the constraints of the stage and with a wireless link could still feed into the main sound system. This enabled me to move amongst the audience but many of them found it hard to believe that I was the one playing. The conventions of theatre are quite deeply ingrained and heavily influence how we read a performance space.

My various attempts at softening the edge between performer and audience seemed inevitably to reach a point at which this invisible boundary would be made tangible in some way. No matter how open the gesture of inclusion, ultimately I was a representative of the stage and the audience would play their part as passive observers extremely well.

At one point I assembled a collection of sampling megaphones to distribute throughout the audience thinking that the dual symbolism of authority and protest might generate some unexpected interaction. They were simple to operate and could be used to sample and loop audio that would be incorporated back into the mix but involvement in the action dissipated quickly as the default setting of spectator was soon to return.

Intentionally setting up the conditions for bringing about an unpredictable response from an unforeseeable situation has become a deliberately creative strategy of ad hoc structure. The following is a good example of how badly organized things need to be for this approach to work well. Being aware of an upcoming performance for many weeks I applied the art of mismanaged time, and pulled an old battery powered synthesizer out of the cupboard not long before the event. Of course not until on stage it became apparent that the battery had drained and the previously programmed sequences had vanished. I had thrown in four
wooden nose flutes as back up. I began by making some very loud electronic sounds building up to what might be described as a sonic sand storm and then nothing silence. How would I make a move from that to assembling a spontaneous nose flute quartet from crowd volunteers? I reached into my jacket pocket and pulled out the bag of plastic houses, amplifying the sound of each little house’s 4th wall being punched out and flicking them into the audience.

And so began a sequence of noise-based sound art performances using the amplified sounds produced by the tools at work as the basis of a live sound art production. This involved using contact microphones to amplify the sound of hand wound grindstones, metal letter punches and even the sound of sparklers as they heated and scarified the surface of acrylic cut outs of Australia.

It is maybe at this point that I should make some serious sounding statement about the physical possession of one of these collectible game pieces being only a small part of the puzzle, a reminder of experiencing the break. I’m highlighting the paradoxical transparency of a power differential manifest in a one-way membrane that runs through the neurological program of every actor and audience member. An even more convoluted way of putting it might be that we are realizing our status as both actor and audience under the watchful eye of globally connected insurance companies as they usher us from the green room and onto the world stage with a pervasive game environment of financially motivated performance and group conformity, reading technology as a text without knowing that we have become prisoners in the service of a particularly long sentence.

Does breaking the wall in the wrong direction articulate an invisible architecture of control? Possibly only to the audience member that begins to act with the assistance of props, for there is plenty of room to move as long as you are moving in the right direction. This was a lesson in grammar, as I began to make sense of the motivation behind different characters' actions, I began to experience the effect of the stage as it took affect.
As the son of a surveyor, no sooner than I was old enough to hold the dumb end of a tape I was in the trenches marking out the foundations of an architectural edifice. The plumb bob, spirit level and string line were all basic tools for the task but in addition to their practical application they seemed to have a distinctly mystical quality to them, possibly because they indicated in a very direct way our relationship to the earth.

The technology required for surveying changed rapidly, I was the first in my primary school to submit an assignment written on a portable computer, it had a screen the size of a credit card and a case the size of a car fridge. But the basic form of the field equipment was as ancient as the pyramids, wooden pegs, string line and a tape that looked a bit like an ankh.

Eventually we began using a prism on a rod to measure distance with light that made it possible to measure up intersections where there were streams of non-stop traffic.

I remember noticing out in the middle of all this a small pile of broken taillights, headlight shards and other road debris swept into a neat diamond bounded by the limits of the turning cars. These locations seem to provide a punctuation point around which a busy world might be read, an eye in the storm of technological movement from which to decode the blur.

Domestic junk drawers, market stalls and throw out piles often provide similar starting points in the form of neatly gathered collections, unusual items randomly clustered in constellations of category error. Coming across a large clear plastic tub of green

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vials extracted from broken spirit levels is an example of such an occurrence. This grouping of spirit level bubbles has subsequently been used as one of many embodied metaphors to focus group conversation on the difficulty of focusing group conversation. The movement of the tub directly affects the bubbles depending on their orientation, a simple and direct metaphorical index around which to begin building a complex conversation.

The idea can be easily extended to include a variety of relations and raising questions that are difficult to ask. For instance the implications of drawing a comparison with a paperweight I had previously found that featured a spirit level bubble cast in resin. It advertised a psychiatric medication advising that ‘one a day would keep you feeling balanced’. It had been dropped and the corner badly reglued. I probably should feel unsettled about finding it funny but as the saying goes if it makes you laugh it holds a truth that may be hard to articulate. I remember hearing at one point that prison food was intended to have a calming effect on those who consumed it. Would the mass modification of food be an efficient way of keeping society feeling balanced too? As I say just food for thought not a fact but a way of navigating the edge of fiction.

Over the years I have adapted wooden spirit levels as a playful way of describing what I understood to be an overview and possibly an oversimplification of post-structural theory. I had put them through a compound drop saw and reglued them at different angles to articulate in a metaphorical way our capacity for adapting to changes in the structures that surround us. A filter bubble is the effect prior searches have on future search results. I think something similar might happen with our cognitive biases, when we come to rely on mental short cuts too regularly it creates a sort of blind spot that brings to mind the inverse relation of spirit and bubble when reading between the lines.
The spirit level was one of many building tools once used to communicate in metaphorical terms the process of perfecting oneself as a squared up block prepared to provide support to the architectural structure of society. Perhaps in a post-structural sense we are now prepared electronically in a networked world, able to function like a reconfigurable mould as we are moved toward the metaphorical form of a concrete pour.

Having things hang in the balance is how I arrived at an understanding that this was an ongoing process, in time I would see the logic, I would obviously have to explore the margins before I could look back to read between the lines.
Accumulating game pieces to make jewellery and playing with various configurations of them led to a number of alphabetically indexed insights into reading the stuff of everyday life as a text.

It was regularly requested that a pendant or earring be comprised of the recipient’s initials and before long, the question of nominative determinism became a topic of discussion, a theory that a person’s name has some influence over what they would do in their lives. It seemed to relate to an interest in how much the tools that we use to do work are simultaneously working their influence on us. If we are products of our environment surely we are also products of manufacturing technology, but does this include text or is it the text that includes us?

The blank slate is a small object but it raises a big question: are we components in a vast language game and on what authority? A Scrabble tile that has had its character effaced might be interpreted in many ways. I like to think of it as the process of knowing our character in order to see beyond it.

I had also put together a deck of fifty-two jokers as a way of contemplating how we identify ourselves in and with the games we play. How would we play by the rules with everyone as a wild card, maybe the pack mentality already plays us against each other as fools? The knowledge casino is a way of asking if the house renovates as a way of dealing with uncertainty or deals with uncertainty as a way to renovate.
Not long after I came across an old wooden shoe for dispensing cards in gambling games. I started playing around with badly mixed metaphors involving rumour mills clogged with self styled saboteurs, but etymologically we are all weaving through the text, and trafficking in meaning, and delight in loosing the thread, to experience picking it up again.

I thought this blank slate might have something to say in conversation with a scratch-and-win ticket but the language used in numbers games can be a bit dull.

I soon realised that this had become an exploration in object-oriented rhetoric, to open up public space to the opportunity for characters to have a voice so to speak.
Breaking the domino theory with causality sounds a bit like searching for the centre of a snowball by rolling it back up the hill. When the whole is outnumbered by fractions the irrational rises to sweep the noise floor with silence.

Rational thinking is ratio thinking, irrational, it is absurd, and surd comes from a term denoting silence, a number that cannot speak. Does our aesthetic desire seek resolution, completion and finitude, a smooth surface or the unfinished an uneven irrational agitation at the broken edge? What does it mean to be irrational, absurd and delirious in a world of rational numbness?

It took the invention of time and money to play us as pieces in a numbers game but may require more theatrically absurd moments to break from the rational choice.

What is not numbered is the vast potential for misinterpretation, an inexhaustible resource of category errors that make the whole thing possible, if we let the numbers speak for themselves... well... what’s left to say?
Many years ago it was pointed out that if you looked at a cube from the corner its silhouette is hexagonal. At the time I arrogantly declared it obvious even though I had not previously thought about it. I was locked in my own honeycomb cell at the time. These small hexagons have been cut out of steel rules and scored to infer the cube. The incompatible gradations of metric and imperial allude to the differing cultural conventions for dividing space.

It’s not rocket science but it has helped me investigate aspects of neuro-science relating to depth perception.

I lost a great deal of time exploring the flattening effects of screen-based media on my perception of space. At one point I started distributing green coloured filters found in an old photographic darkroom on campus and distributed them in an attempt to locate this apparently internalised screen from which we project what we expect to see. I would describe them as subliminal cuts from the wizard of oz - the emerald city reference was one way into the many questions that can be framed through the shared memory of a film narrative. I had been investigating frame stories and found myself contemplating a yellow brick through the window of a bookshop that had been stencilled to look like a copy of ‘the wonderful wizard of oz’. I bought it to remind me of the simultaneous understanding that arises when reading a book twice at the same time. This is but one of many flattened out stories that pave the information super highway.

Develop a sixth sense; leave some space for what cannot be counted on, it always happens to be where it all happens.
KEY POINT

The point being made is played in parts and often out of key with the whole. Maybe big brothers’ cousins work in the risky business of insurance. Can you be trusted with being responsible for your possession? For how long has it been the most efficient way of managing the vast interconnected web of object relations? The Zen monk would ask “what is the point of attachment?” But the key point here is the opposite of access. When the keyholes are literally swiped will we be defined by a form of modulated trust, a continuous sentencing without judgment, but within reason? When everything is allowed all becomes quite, inflexible in its flexibility. If we can move quicker through the cloud in driverless cars and see around corners on the other side of the planet, why be sentimental about the tangible locks when the prison wall is played in metaphysical blocks? In conversation with the swipe card, steering wheels disappear, gaps in memory come to mind, scratch the screen protector, effect the soft focus of nostalgia the key to feeling at home is being at home but locking the world out is locking yourself in. The peaks and valleys cut both ways. It’s the clip of a wave that releases harmonics, numbers in time play us by ear.
CORNERED BY CHANCE

The first five dice that I ground the corner off were from a poker set, as cutting corners seemed like a good way of getting into circular arguments.

I soon worked out that a regular dice was suited to having one of its eight corners removed while leaving all the pips intact. This soon became a key giveaway to the existence of those invisible structures that come into view by not looking. Simultaneously a souvenir and cornerstone for a socially distributed knowledge casino, a way to accommodate risky thinking in conversational encounters. Its an invisible corner to hide from the requirement of taking sides, a meta-fictional way of redistributing the wealth of the knowledge economy and share the surplus of uncertainty.

This soon became a keystone in the continuing quest for that which lies ever so slightly beyond our expectation. The perfect cube is symbolic of a perfected life but with the corner grounded in unrealistic propositions the many facets of fiction could be suspended and polished to beyond perfection, to give chance a chance. If it sounds like finding a crack in the bell curve, it is, and calling on tone-deaf ears is how it rings true. Make time and space for numbers, cut corners to be certain, your character is well placed to have more than a chance.

I once heard a parent explain as they passed one on to their child, here are six answers and one question. Within reason we require the answers that science yields yet without doubt the humanities become somehow less human. I hope in some small way the role of this object keeps the answers up in the air.
A cutting mat that takes the rational side of the argument to ridiculous proportions by continuing to scale up in the tradition of Pythagorean Triangles.

Based on the simplest side ratio for establishing a right angle, this object stands for rational thinking and underscores the influence of ancient Greek thought on how we relate to one another.

The measurement and the control of the material world, cut into compartmentalised components and cornered by our ability to calculate. Heavenly bodies number the days but the hours are numbered so we can count on each other to be divided.

A dozen knots in a circle of string is how it may have been first passed around and here we all now stand in the corner of everything.

The pages are numbered so we don’t need to scroll down but the rationale for cornering nature seems to be have been lost in the aftermath. Waking up to the simulation of chance with a technical sunrise is the logic of overstepping the line between grass and lawn.

If you listen too closely you will hear the effect of right angles on my voice as we are both cornered in the text.
SEE SAW

Is it possible to hack the technology of language, to see it after you saw it, for a river to cross itself? Back and forth, this and that, if words are a technology, is dialogue a cross cut saw working its way with its dialectical zigzag toward a more integrated relationship with the machine? Did this snapped off end of a hacksaw blade succeed in demonstrating its material limitations? Would it object to being used to point out the broken escalator effect? In that moment when our expectations are not met and we are momentarily thrown, the technology that we take for granted suddenly becomes present.

When I am present in the past I get tense about the future. I used to speak highly of cutting edge technology. I tried to see the upside of future applications but something snapped and eventually I saw nothing staring back. At one point I was making reference to the magic pudding to articulate the inexhaustible nature of technologically precipitated paranoia, but it was a bit heavy for general consumption.

It’s become quite attached to key rings and dependant on the support of the occasional necklace, suspended as a stand in for the voice used to join the seesaw action of many dialogues. Cutting the continuum of experience into logical chunks, words to fuel the conversation. This little object might object to being used as playful pun on the past and present visions of technology but without props dialogue is quick to blunt as it cuts against the grain of accepted wisdom. Log in, log out, log on, and log off listen for the secret knock on effect.
To spark up conversation around fire as a symbol of knowledge, I devised an icebreaking activity that used matchboxes distributed to a group seated around a table. I would introduce the use of a stop motion technique based on a mobile phone application and the matches would be dumped out with the additional cue of mentioning the word matchbox car. The matches would be arranged into patterns at the same time as making an animation on the phone. More often than not the group would join the matches together into road networks that connected everyone in the group. It was a great way of gauging the group dynamic and collectively mapping out future activities.

Over time I accumulated quite a few matchboxes and during a clean up struck upon the idea that they might make an interesting reference to group conformity. Often these discrete gatherings consisted of would-be thinkers keeping themselves safe from each other’s judgement by not saying anything. Often to think outside the box is an act of social exclusion, but safety in numbers can become the greater danger. A bundle of sticks bound around an axe may have been replaced by the geodesic dome of networked totalitarianism but the effect maybe quite similar.

Eventually the systems of fire control made their way into my explanations of how knowledge is compartmentalized and controlled. I would often use the cover of a videocassette originally sold as a way of turning a television into a simulated fireplace. I would ask if institutional philosophy is much the same. I would light a real candle and pass around a flickering
battery powered one of the same size to instigate discussion about what the metaphor might apply to.

Contemporary art can be difficult to make sense of but from certain angles it might be interpreted as a highly organised method for creating cultural fire breaks, a controlled burn of anything that might spark the public imagination. Fortunately describing it that way can be hosed down with irony.
When a shock to language leaves it open for interpretation, meaning is ajar. I began seeking out architectural metaphors to consolidate the various philosophical strands I had been investigating. I eventually began to see the text as a form of architecture and also an extension of the body. The passages like corridors breathe the life of A-E-I-O-U into the structure. The consonants are various doors to a highly controlled environment but it seemed to all be hinging on the hinges. Y can be a door between two doorways or a passage of breath.

The text requires articulation points through which contingent paths of connotation allow egress for meaning to inhabit the structure. Keeping the doors ajar so that uninvited meaning might wander in and inhabit the text, to alternative perspectives, differing interpretations, less compartmentalised, less specialised, less alienated. Maybe the sense of insecurity hinges on the true cost of safe opinions? Speak up or be spoken for.
The annual art studio clean out needs to happen when there are no students about, to avoid having most of it brought back in from the bin. Old picture frames seem to be a recurring leftover.

After replacing a saw blade I tested out the new one on a discarded frame. Something about this highly symbolic act seemed quite disconcerting yet satisfyingly wrong. It brought to mind the image of a Gallery seesaw whose centre point rested on the bottom edge of a wall mounted frame the plank extending deep into the picture plane. At what point did life begin to imitate art? And what will become of the frame if cultural entropy reconciles the difference? These pieces of sliced frame were stamped art/life on one side and fulcrum on the other. They looked quite delicious and were given to colleagues at the end of year Christmas party. It had a resonance with another gift that explored a similar theme, the magic plinth was the title stamped on a number of small fake stone slabs originally architectural samples. Elevate your coffee to the status of art; we take the conventions of exhibition for granted, they constitute the invisible backdrop of our anaesthetized condition. Parody may provide us with a conceptual plinth from which we might momentarily recalibrate our view of the world. Or just protect the architectural furnishings from the impact of human activity (coffee rings, etc.).
PENCIL STUB

The only way to render the experience novel was to draw upon erasure, remove that which was stationary and ignore the mark that draws a tension from opposition. The point is to never actually make one.

From time to time a discarded syringe turns up in the gutter but recently I had to look twice before picking up a pen shaped like a syringe, full of red ink and branded with the Dracula's Theatre restaurant logo. I had previously bought a number of these, not just so I could sign in blood but to instigate discourse around the idea that poison can either harm or heal, much like words able to reveal and conceal. The visual similarity of the eraser end of a pencil and a cigarette butt appealed to me. Even though these were too short to sharpen they turned out to be excellent gifts for drawing on People’s imaginative capacity.

I think this is what I thought the pencil stub would have thought.

“I was the butt of a visual gag, a yellow pencil that looked a bit like the end of a cigarette but felt like a pun on drawing smoke. I enjoyed the absurdity of being cut short when the point being made was that words are like drugs. Even if the pencil is mightier than the words I am redundant technology deliberately cut short. Maybe freedom can only be found deep in the noise floor of sound and I am hard pressed to speak of anything that could evade the capture of speech into text as the electronic ears hear deep underground. Maybe we can hide our thoughts with the orchestration of imprecise instruments playing combinations not yet found. Which as I have been saying requires not writing them down.”
INFINITE LINK

Find a length of chain, cut every second link, place each link in a vice and use a shifting wrench to twist into a figure of 8, continue to apply force until the join begins to fail.

The cycle can only become aware of itself once it is broken, forced simulation of repetition maybe the only break we're going to get. A link of chain with a twist that points to the break in a figure of eight. Technology mimics and maps natural cycles to cause and effect circularity. Perhaps a bit like when territory reclaims the momentary gaps opened up only when maps collapse into designer logic traps?
A small metal ball bearing placed on a short section of railway track used as an anvil and struck with a ball peen hammer... provided opposing fields for possibility to inhabit. Struck again with Y for yes and an N for no and gifted as a ‘yes-no-maybe’ indecision maker. It is for many a pocket oracle, executive decision maker and absurd novelty to provide the biofeedback mechanism for entering into a mode of contemplation prior to choosing.

On a visit to Japan I emerged from a capsule hotel and I will never forget watching a Japanese man pulling on his shoe and seeing a small chrome ball fly out and land on the ground. After he had moved on I picked it up and saw myself smiling back at its reflection of me, it was a ball from a pachinko machine. We all make our way through the forking paths much like the chrome balls around the pins of the pachinko machine, but it is of some comfort to know there is still time to be indecisive. I hope this is the gift that this gift continues to bring.

I think I thought it might have this to think: “I am indecisive I am a unit of variable truth value, yes and no and maybe. I sit on the fence for a better view of both sides but it’s getting harder to be undecided. I took a hammering to be in the shape I’m in but I value still having the freedom of interpretation. My flat spots are like the habits of language clipped from the continuum of experience. It feels like I’m a sine wave driven into distortion now there is an the edge to read my harmonic and I’m a similar shape to one of the ball bearings in the back wheel of the prop makers bike that gives that random click every time the flat spot turns up.”
A gold stylus placed inside a gelatine capsule in a Re-sealable plastic bag intended to be placed in the ear as a mechanism for the reproduction of the listener’s reaction to the noise generated by their listening.

I was asked to contribute a sound based artwork responding to the question ‘what is not music?’. Previously a friend had given me a small metal tin full of gold plated needles very similar to another tin I had bearing the image of the Sphinx - they were styluses for an old gramophone. This led to an extended investigation into the symbolic significance of both the obelisk and the instruments for writing. The idea of musical reproduction being linked back to the golden phallus fashioned to replace the missing member of Osiris eventually became enveloped in a medical gel capsule that could be placed in the ear canal symbolically closing the reproductive cycle of music... turning the body into inscription media and self motivated gramophone. Rocking the head back and forth would be a play on its own mechanical encapsulation in not so many words. At the point when the action became involuntary ‘what is not music’ maybe heard, but only when not listening out for it.
Zipper sliders with the words *say* and *so* stamped on either side of the tongue. What is there to say that has not already been said? It seemed that an outsider’s effect on group conversation could either bring them closer together or divide them. This object can be used to open up issues or close them down - either way in its own small way it always seemed to bring about the will to have something to say. Here have a say, do you both want a say, everyone should have a say.

Both sides of a zipper come together like two lines of traffic merging into one lane, which slows and then moves along at the same speed once fully integrated. It seems like the language we use might guide our belief in a similar way, and as the many options approach singularity, the language to even consider stepping out of line might not enable us to even contemplate it.

Some of what you are currently hearing has made its way through a voice to text transcription program. I say hearing because if seeing is believing then much of what I am saying is being said by you if you think you know what I mean.

Making this make sense is how it performs and many of the errors are transcription errors that seemed to offer alternate access to a deeper meaning. Voice to text will soon spell out what we should have thought to say. In the puzzling moments of ‘what does that mean?’ I hope there is enough space to see tricky revelations and magical performance of spelling miss takes incorrectly.
In an attempt to jump through the hoops of what I thought was at that point the correct approach to research, I ventured into a textual investigation of textual interpretation and ended up trying to talk through a poker chip with the centre missing. I thought I was trying to make it say “to risk nothing was to risk everything”, but it played a part in circling out the whole game as a way to understand context. It was a playful way of conflating language games and hermeneutics in what might be called a confusion of horizons. The difficulty of communicating the invisible forces that guide our interpretation of the world. A number of object-based metaphors emerged from this investigation.

It seemed like we were all playing with marked cards. I took a blade to the royal border and cut the deck removed the same shaped rectangle from a whole pack. They were dealt out to the people gathered to hear me articulate what my practice was about. At that point I was calling what I was doing performative hermeneutics and to a certain extent it still is. Rather than freeze up in linguistic specificities I attempted through an activity to describe it as playing the joker, as a way to get to know the other characters in the pack. The cards were a deck of rectangular frames still with a card’s original identity on the corner but able to reframe each of the players as cards in the game.
I came across some magnets and a compass at a gift shop and played around with their effects on the needle when place on either side. As a metaphor it pointed to how these object props might provide a tangible indication of how we simultaneously direct each other’s interpretation. One of the magnets was a bar the other a horseshoe and they happened to make the needle link W-E and together it looked like I-O-U.

I see my practice as one of proving tools and techniques to enable the exchange of ideas through object assisted metaphorical structures. The combined insights of these informal experiments have helped gain an understanding that interpreting the world requires, that we continue to risk something of ourselves, usually our sense of certainty.

It is meta-fiction that enables access to this performative hermeneutic circle because in a sense we are already in it, and it is only through exchange with fellow players that we can be made momentarily aware of it.

There is no singular meaning, as we are simultaneously performing separate parts that find meaning through interaction. There are many characters at play in this hermeneutic circle and it is my indebtedness to all of them that keeps me from losing interest in the game.

The whole is greater than the parts but to comprehend effect of a magic circle requires us to break the spell. Performative hermeneutics is a playful way to collectively step out of the circle for long enough to bring something new back in. It’s like a formula for social algebra, infinitely variable characters seeking a solution to the equation yet counting on each other to never be totally counted on.
CRACKS IN THE CRYSTAL

Consider solving a three-dimensional puzzle by cracking the crystal ball. I had been using a large crystal ball as a prop in a number of performative lectures, describing the parallels between prediction and design also incorporated it into a public engagement process for provoking the stakeholders to imagine and discuss what might constitute a suitable work of public art for their locale.

I became intrigued by the optical characteristics of a transparent sphere, the reflection of light directed through effecting an inversion of the scene beyond. I was looking for an object-based metaphor to communicate the effect that language seemed to have on the way we apprehend the world.

I had been introduced to the effect of intentional silence on group activities through an involvement with sound walks and had applied a similar technique to other activities. It would elevate an awareness of how integrated and interrelated those things are that naming seemed to fracture and fragment.

The idea that there was a transition in human consciousness that took place with the advent of text had me speculating how best to represent the mystical state of direct experience, awareness unmediated by formal language. Ironically the more I read about it the closer I didn’t get.

It had been described to me that heated marbles when quenched in water would crack in all directions, yet hold their form as a sphere. I went on to explore the effects of this rapid thermal transition. It reminded me of using a huge Fresnel magnifying glass for burning patterns into timber and focusing this intense
point of light on a glass of water that exploded moments after. I filled a large Pyrex tumbler with marbles and used the next available thing, an electric hair dryer then rapidly cooled them in water. This I’m sure must sound like a mindless act of destruction, but the result was quite astounding, a perfectly smooth surface containing exquisite multi directional cracks, a metaphor through which to articulate the effect of articulating the world with language.
These object props often found their way into people’s pockets at traffic intersections. There are very few moments when the day comes to a stand still, but the traffic lights provide safe passage through the wall of high-speed bricks on wheels at the expense of being forced to a stop. Many a conversation has taken place to the metronomic click of the crossing signal. From here we turn left at the traffic lights and consider for a moment the metaphor of traffic as a way to consider the many ways of interpreting text and how we influence each other’s reading of the situation. From here we pull up at a give way sign found in the rubbish and come to the end of the read, chopped up to be given away in a gallery exhibit while being subjected to being an object.

There have been numerous formal inclusions in group exhibits over the years but for me the informal exchanges that take place at gallery openings are far more rewarding. I am part of the feedback loop in the initial moments of an artworks appreciation and more often than not the exchange happens near the threshold of art and life.

I was invited to perform this activity as part of a formal show and innovated some additional pieces specifically for the exhibition. They were both intended to be attachable to a keychain and played on the idea of intersection points.

Years earlier I had been given a box of hand-painted miniature street signs thrown out from the education department collection.
at the University library, the only one I still have is the give
way sign that sits on a ledge in our kitchen. At some point I had
clipped on a piece of paper that now made the sign read give it a
way. This I thought went some way toward expressing the
underlying intention behind the act of gifting. In the opposite
window are 3 traffic light lenses – red, yellow and green. At
high speed we are still granted a degree of interpretation, the
yellow indicating to either brake or break on through and the
roundabout and give way provides slightly more latitude for
interpretation based on the presence of others. I'm interested in
this as a metaphor of human interaction mediated by technology.

There were still some offcuts from the giveaway signs that had
been turned into Zen rakes from a previous Project. I guillotined
them down to a small Key tag size and stamped the word way into
each of them. I would offer Gallery visitors one as a memento and
as I said at the time “the more that individuals get their own
way the less give there is”. The aluminium was not predrilled so
I would offer the use of a hand punch to help make it more
difficult to lose their way.
The best thing since the advent of mechanical time, a way of experiencing freshly sliced experience. Continuity chopped into measurable units. This, is, the, story, of, a, red-tape-double-bind.

Large organizations are now organised enough to invite disruptive activity to reinvent themselves. Perhaps providing the tools to cut through red tape works a bit like a distributed ratchet strap. The agency to escape provides the leverage for an invisible structure to tighten up. Maybe the rule breaker is much closer to the rule maker that they would like to imagine.

One way of saying without saying was to mime half of the story with an object that contained its own instruction. I found a long the length of red taping that had been used for packaging, amused by the icon of a pair of scissors in the ghost-buster style 'don't do this circle', I wandered around the campus offering a pair of scissors to people and asking if it was possible to free themselves of the red tape. Simple, yet somehow poetic was the extension of trust, the exhortation to break an implicit rule and the freedom to tell their own story, but on whose authority?
This was the result of playing around with text and the way the words are often cut short and thoughts often short cuts. Short and cut, when stamped out on a metal tag with the location of the ‘T’ in both words located at the same point, could be theatrically sheered with tin snips to communicate the possibility of our time being cut short and the possible the implications of taking the most expedient path, the short cut. This action resulted in quite a sharp metal edge so in addition to the tag I handed out small piece of emery paper, which I had stamped with the words ‘for getting the edge’, these were offered from the cavity of the plastic skull. The ‘T’ along which the tag had been cut could be seen to be a traffic intersection, a fork in the road of a decision already made.
HALF PAST

In the course of repurposing found objects to explore the many subjects quite a large number have been made from a large box of discarded hinges. The last part to be transformed into a gift was the pivoting section, which I had originally stamped walk and talk as a memento and way of engaging in the issues of walking the walk and talking the talk. Many of the conversations I have are while walking across the University campus. Now that smoking has been banned the hierarchy flattening activity of people gathering around building entrances and the associated random interactions can only be found in the walking encounter. The walk and talk is one of the few unscheduled ways to converse. If you intersect at the right angle and synchronize speed it is possible to effect a moment similar to being on a conveyor belt at the airport. I thought you may have been thinking of the ones for suitcases but we are possibly now both picturing the flat escalator type. Technology as a conveyor of meaning is a bit like a treadmill but could be more like a belt sander if you stop too long to think about it.

One day on the top of a builder’s skip I found an almost new shinny red spirit level, which when stood on its end was almost as tall as me. It had been bent in the middle and as I walked it back across the campus with it on my shoulder I found myself in a number of the exchanges about the red line on our email calendar crashing through the day. I cut the rest of the hinges like the hands of a clock and stamped the words half on one arm and past on the other. The leverage had been reduced to the point that that they felt as inflexible as the mechanical time that they
were intended to refer to. From this point much of the future seems pointed back to what has already past.
If reading is fast guessing then to read twice might cause your first impression to have a second opinion. How do you stop that from starting another way to read when it is spelled out on the same coloured block? These wooden blocks were once used to teach mathematics at school. I wondered if the days of using words as units of thought were numbered? The idea that logic as a way of rationalizing thought seemed to me to be like words cut from the experience of continuum. The tree of knowledge logged by an alphanumeric sawmill of dialogical exchange. Perhaps the real algebra is the fractured social body constantly reconfigured by characters trying to find meaning in each other’s presence.
Hard rubbish is like a sidewalk casino. Invest hours in the hope that one of the heaps of broken plastic consumer products and swollen chipboard furnishing will yield a discarded gem. Products designed as if they were movie props. Walking home one day I noticed a painting leaning up against a tree, it had actually been painted by hand but not badly enough to be kitsch, I cut out the picture of a boat and sent it to my dad as a postcard advising him to take it easy. As it turned out he didn't get it till the week later, unbeknownst to me he was having a minor heart attack at the time.

The rest of the picture I cut up into bookmarks to hand out at a large group exhibition being held in the empty space where the University library had once been. It had been cleared of books to make way for a building upgrade so was also good chance to distribute some more doorstops.
Is it the noun of knowledge or verbiage of new ways of knowing that enables practical people to catch on? I’m not a neuroscientist but apparently I mimic myself more effectively with the assistance of a mirror. Moving around large sheets of reflective glass can be impractical and a bit dangerous but to a certain extent we are offering a similar surface to each other every time we interact, with the added potential for feedback in either direction. You may have had the experience of walking toward an oncoming pedestrian and mirroring each other’s moves in an attempt to pass. When we see someone doing an action, mentally we are doing that action. I could go on to describe the use of tuning forks, cognitive slingshots and equivocal neologisms but in short the use of objects as metaphor seems to assist the transmission of knowledge. To extend on the idea of this deeply patterned recognition of self in the other as we search for striking similarities I imagined the conversation this match trick might have when mingling in other environments.

“I was thrown into a handbag and found myself in a conversation with a packet of contraceptive pills. They told me that it was their job to fool the reproductive system into thinking it was already pregnant. I wondered if this was the effect art and entertainment had on the imagination and would it ultimately make the transmission of unauthorised ideas almost inconceivable.”
CAUSAL CHAIN

Most mornings I would ride to work and when the sun was out I'd ride around the Bay. The repetition slowly made larger cycles perceivable. Along the water's edge is a sequence of bronze sculptures that are a scaled down representation of the sun and planets. The seasonal journeys back and forth across the solar system big and small were marked by observable changes all year-round. The rhythm of my heartbeat connected to the pedal rotation and cycles of breath, even the waves and moon often still in the morning sky seemed to all link up.

It's an old bike without a chain guard and from time to time two forms of technology would interact in a hazardous way, the jeans would get caught in the chain and the cooperation of technologies was brought to a sudden halt but as it happened the world would become more apparent.

I think this has a correlation to the effect of offering absurd objects to the people I would meet, the ambiguity would momentarily confuse the hierarchy of signification and the paradoxical reading bringing about a momentary cascaded collapse, that would free us from the seamlessness of the moment to moment.

This can be even more pronounced when a group of people collectively interprets the same thing differently. Such has been the case when handing out these small links of chain, offering a break in the chain of signification, cause I like the affect ;)}
What would a singular meaning mean? The death of the author caused quite a shift in how we read, but to avert the death of the reader you may be required to assign meaning to something. What value does the back of a road sign have as it is mirrored in the rear vision of technological progress? At high speed it is a meaningless fragment, but maybe up close it can be used as a signal for getting someone to roll down a metaphorical window for a brief moment and say something more than just echo a podcast sound bite. It is a many-sided thing that invites our pattern recognition tendencies to reflect on the implications of ambiguous direction as we weave through the traffic of a technological life.
No matter how hard I tried, I could never quite polish out the last imperfection which was reflected ever more accurately by the finish. Conceptual art is like psychological homeopathy. Its strength is our weakness. Indelible is the mark of a gift that cannot be taken away.
The forks in a dialectic lightning bolt include art and architecture in the division of nature. My Nonna’s walls were covered in pictures, and I'll was always remember the ornate Hooks that wrapped around the picture rail. There seemed to be a curious tension in the connection between art and architecture. When I first became involved in the University Gallery they were still using adjustable hooks from time to time. Not long ago they turned up in a bin so I added some text to generate thought around the relationship of art, architecture and environment. At that time I was attempting to understand the mid-century flip in the aesthetic consideration of beauty. One of the more interesting explanations given to me was that because America had the potential to go the same way as Germany the culture needed to be stood on its head by applying the unravelling effect of a negative dialectic. As a result art making became more accessible to those who had ideas but no skill, lucky for me.

I handed them to colleagues during a show in the same gallery they were once used. I liked the way they communicated an ongoing requirement for adjustment. The same reason plinths need to be custom built for work. This constant process of negation to accommodate difference is highlighted in a context neutral space but its the same boundary that runs in all directions between mechanical architectural systems as they harness the cycle of life. Architecture thrives as an antibiotic under the cover of mimicry, the art and artifice of subterfuge. It was pointed out to me by the curator that he had included a broken domino that I had given him into the show because he had liked the effect it had.
OPPORTUNITY SHOPS OFFER US MUCH MORE THAN WHAT IS FOR SALE. NOT ONLY ARE THEY IMPORTANT SOCIAL HUBS BUT THE UNORGANISABLE FLOW OF OBJECTS THROUGH THEM OFFERS US A DYNAMIC INDEX TO THE WORLD BEYOND. THEY ARE ALIVE WITH FAILED ATTEMPTS TO SORT THE DONATED ITEMS INTO LOGICAL GROUPINGS. THIS OFTEN LEADS TO THE REFRESHINGLY UNPREDICTABLE CATEGORY ERRORS THAT ARISE FROM ATTEMPTING TO DISPLAY A MULTITUDE OF UNRELATED OBJECTS SEPARATED FROM THEIR USUAL CONTEXT.

AN EARLY INVESTIGATION INTO PERCEPTUAL BIAS WAS BASED ON THE ACT OF SWITCHING THE HEAD AND BALL ON SPORTING TROPHIES. AMAZED AT HOW LONG IT TOOK FOR SOME PEOPLE TO NOTICE THEY HAD BEEN ALTERED, IT LED ME TO EXPLORE THE ROLE OF EXPECTATION ON HOW WE SEE THE WORLD. ONCE THE GOAL OF RECOGNITION HAS BEEN ACHIEVED THE REST IS FILLED IN BY AN ASSUMPTION. HOW MUCH OF OUR SOCIETY FUNCTIONS ON THE BASIS OF THESE MENTAL SHORTCUTS AND TO WHAT EXTENT DOES SCREEN BASED MEDIA PROVIDE THE CUES FOR INTERPRETING THE WORLD BEYOND, WITH TIME EFFICIENT THINKING?

EDUCATION SEEMED TO BE THE MEDIUM I WAS WORKING WITH, AND WITH SPECIFIC INTEREST IN THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ART AND DESIGN. A MEDDLE WITH DISTINCTION.

ENCOUNTERING A BASKET FULL OF UN-ENGRAVED SPORTS MEDALLIONS AT THE LOCAL CHARITY STORE PROMPTED A WORK THAT WOULD DRAW ON VARIOUS PEOPLE’S PERSPECTIVES IN RESPONSE TO THE QUESTION OF WHAT CONSTITUTED ART AS OPPOSED TO DESIGN. SOME WOULD SAY IT’S THE
difference between asking questions and providing answers. I stamped out art on the side with a wreath that left design without ornamentation. The divide is still not entirely clear, but some of the responses would indicate that art provides a dynamic camouflage for design to continue its program, ushering us into an increasingly efficient machine-like integration. I’ve been trying to put an upward inflection on a downward spiral ever since.
This was the first in a series of gifted objects that were in fact photographic reproductions of a single object assemblage, namely that of an old sports whistle intersected at the mouthpiece with a small padlock. This was developed in response to various issues around whistle blowing at the time. The intention was to provide an ambiguous reading of the whistle as alarm and padlock as security in a curious duplicitous state of negation.

The original artefact would be held in the palm of the hand with the 1:1 photographic representation placed on top of it as it was offered as a gift in the course of conversation, a means of instigating discourse to arrive at better understanding of art’s underlying deceit. The photographic representation would be taken from the palm of the hand to reveal the original object below. This had the effect of a reverse Polaroid, a small interstice through which a more complex level of conversation could begin. This particular prop provided the basis for ongoing conversations on many subsequent occasions.

Every time he handed me out it would be with some sort of comment like “a representative cannot blow the whistle on themselves”; or “art cannot blow the whistle on its own fraud”. I didn't know
what it meant, I'm not sure that he did either. It was usually the way of starting a conversation and as time went on he began to call it ‘instigating discourse’, but it was really just a way of enabling a momentary interaction with another human.

I felt kind of singular in my purpose, but as it turned out, there was a multiplicity at work. I was initially generated as a neurological collision of images in his mind. I guess this intersection of ideas would not have happened if it were not for the disorganized piles of stuff that he seems to build up in nest like configurations all around the place.

The image of the whistle was only floating around in his head because the actual whistle sitting in a box of junk kept appearing as a bit player on the fragmented stage of his dwindling attention span. I think it was the outrage that he felt at not being able to express in words the complexity of what he considered to be an oppressively accommodating system of control.
I handed out the keys of a xylophone that I had stamped with the word pitch to the assembled audience as they waited in the concrete foyer for the programmed event to begin. It turned out to be a socially distributed instrument. They could be read as rungs from a musical ladder ready to scale the deafening wall of past tense or nodes of silence held apart at a distance specified by the rules of a musical game or just keys from a broken xylophone. All it took was for one to slip from the fingers of a recipient’s hand and on hitting the floor a quick burst of notes was to follow, as others were deliberately dropped to join in on the musical game.

To riddle is to fill with holes and my pitch when handing these out explored the use of silence as a signal. I used to drill holes through the indentations of dominos and would say when gifting them that it was the holes in a theory that made it interesting. Something about silence brings forth an amplification of anticipation and prepares us for meeting trouble half way. These complex interactions are unpredictable and unmeasurable but provide a tangential insight into the presence of an invisible architecture that seems to structures how we relate to each other.
PORTABLE CAGE

Throwing voices and making things speak also requires close listening. I’ve had a strange inclination to buy cheap stethoscopes when they turn up at the market. Maybe a subconscious desire to be a doctor but I think it’s more of a fascination with the idea of direct listening. If you listen to the words close enough you can almost hear yourself think, or are you listening to me think?

Contemplate any thing for long enough and the patterns that constitute our cognitive biases begin to emerge, or by assessing the combination or characters your currently decoding, you can make an assessment of my cognitive bias. How I ended up playing with these medical instruments cannot actually be said, in part because I do the things I do because they are actions intended to access a direct experience and difficult to put in words.

For the purposes of text I’ll attempt to describe how they have been used. As biofeedback instruments they were a bit like the stylus in a capsule, listening close enough to your body’s rhythms can enable you to consciously affect them. One person can be a complex feedback system but two can be more than twice as complex. For demonstration purposes I joined two stethoscopes together so two people could listen to each other’s hearts together simultaneously.

As with many tropes in world of art, providing a framing device to focus on what is already there is all that is required. This portable cage is a play on the surname of an artist who used chance operations to score musical events and is probably most famous for using the conventions of performance as a frame
through which to experience whatever unplanned activity that happens within it.

When I look back at what seemed like random activities through different framing devices, I see patterns that could not be perceived in advance, in the same way as scrolling back through a phone full of photos performs a compression of time that can only be accessed in retrospect. The analogy of tapping a sugar bowl to get the lumps to rise to the surface seems to relate these ideas: the small yet consistent agitations of unusual activity destabilise superficial readings and unearth aggregate that were previously deep below the surface.

My strategy has been to practice articulating a midway point between the randomness of chance and the skill required for strategy based activity. The Chinese coin could refer to the sixty-four permutations of change in and divination technique of I Ching or the square framing of a continuous experience or the currency of text lined up like beads on a string or none of the above.
On the way back from lunch I'd often drop past the local coin dealer. They had a bargain box that I would use as a randomiser, I would claw through and find tokens to take back to the slot machine search engine of internet meanderings and follow up on the recurring symbols that linked to economic colonization. In a way, to follow the money is to understand the world.

I had about as much chance of being heard as a coin landing on its edge. The ring of a coin toss gives the potential of voice to either side. The voice coil of a speaker is a spiral of copper held in a magnetic field and amplified by an electronic game of opposed power. It took some serious clipping of the signal to bend the ear of this stuttering monarch. To hear yourself think is to stand on your linguistic shoelaces.

I had bought a large bag of pennies and was drawn to the rather large ear on King George’s head. I felt compelled to guillotine them from each of the 2 dozen I had and hand them out to the patrons at the opening of a sound art festival. It was just after dropping one that a connection was made: this was the Monarch with the stutter, and the stutter was a key theme in that year’s program.
HALF AGAIN

Next to the old Melbourne gaol is a courtyard that once had a roof but now feels like you're inside when you're not. During an Interior Design symposium I asked at what point in the era of total surveillance did the outside of the gaol become an interior wall? I was told later that the film 'Truman Show' had come to mind. What if the half we can't see is halved again?

Just beyond the gaol is a flight of stairs and beside is a basketball half court and a bit further over is the back of what used to be a legal court. It seems to be quite an efficient setup to have players in opposition to one another yet working toward the same goal. Is this the half of the equation that is always within reach yet well beyond any collective way to grasp? The idea of a penny drop moment may have come from the machine springing to life at the drop of a coin but I’m sure that’s only half the story.
If you're in the marketplace you're in a memory space and will most likely remember those things you considered but didn't buy. Unexplored forks in the road that grow into thorns when you think back. I had the chance to buy a prehistoric stone axe head one day. It was a mesmerizing polished object that was captivating of attention but its curious magical aura kept me from buying it.

Weeks later I asked about it and was told I could purchase another one and arranged the transaction. When picking it up I also bought a large bag of tokens - they somehow represented a more recent version of the same thing - the grindstone of exchange, the sacrificial edge. I clipped them down to emphasize their status as cutting edge technology and handed them out at an exhibition based on play and design. It allowed me to practice tipping each conversation with something to generate interest in the exchange.
MONEY FOLD

For a project based on using existing city infrastructure I cut the base out of a 44-gallon drum and drilled a row of monkeys around the side. By placing it with some red cellophane over an up light in the pavement it was possible to gather around what looked like a warm fire. I called it the barrel of monkeys philosophy department and was interested in what kind of conversations might be had around this implied invitation to talk. It made a number of trips to the City Square, it's last when being donated to the Occupy movement. It offered a point around which people from either side of the edge could raise issues to be discussed.

I had been investigating many of these issues already particularly the concept of fiat currency. Quite some time after the City Square had been purged of protesters in preparation for a Royal visit I came across a bag of one-cent coins. ‘Stir the possum’ is an Australian expression for instigating a debate. I like the idea of an out of circulation coin being folded yet still able to land on heads or tails and easily stood on its edge. Maybe it's a risk to question, they say the best way to double your money is to fold it and put it back in your pocket. I'm happy to apologize but not sure the crown feels the same way.
THREE SIDED COIN

Many coins have a ridge around the edge, a stylised carry over from times when the clipping of currency for its material value was a possibility. The idea of using currency as a carrier of protest has a long tradition. The clipping of coins that is currently under way involves the dematerialisation of currency. There are many sides to the story but to speak of carbon trading would be to add to the problem. We are a carbon-based life form and every breath we take can be weighed as if it were part of a diamond trade. The ethical implications are serious enough to make fun of - just so they can be spoken of at all. Insert coin joke here. Economic warfare begins with confusing paper and gold. What each of us still has is the ability to pay attention and avoid loosing interest in the game. This is a bit of coin but it remains to be seen how long it will be something that can be seen.
SAY WHAT SAY

Two cents worth of small change refers to having something to say. This looked a lot like a two cent piece with the words 'what' stamped on one side and 'say' on the other, but as I would say when handing them out - that they were just well photo-shopped, don’t spend it all in the one store!

After thoughts of a 5 cent piece

An allegory about using all 5 senses while you still have them: first the little words start falling out of use, they are only useful for subtle adjustments, to value judgments, the ones and twos, were not of great significance but they were the fine grain, that gave texture to the currency, now they exist as digital ghosts preparing the way for the dematerialized transactions. Payment becomes a biometric gesture, first with a phone, and finally without much thought at all.
stop to be informed, stop being informed, stop the informant

This was a humble offering of a double acting cork for either stopping the everyday flow, to be informed or politely gesturing that I stop the flow of info and get on with the show. I remember walking across the campus one morning and being intrigued by the activities of what turned out to be interior design students. They were all wearing medical facemasks and conducting a sort of game with each other using gestural exchanges. I asked the lecturer what was being learned through this activity, he said many things, some of which I am not yet aware of yet but the key message is in the metaphor that compares language with the phenomena of contagion. He went on to describe how on his first winter visit to Japan he had observed many people wearing facemasks, and at first had thought this was to protect them from catching any airborne viruses. As it turned out those who had a contagious virus wore them, and it was out of consideration for the general public. As he said this raised an interesting ethical question, which they were simulating through enacting the embodied metaphor of mask wearing. The question pertaining to self-censorship considered whose responsibility it was to mitigate idea transmission.
LOW ODDS

If it is known it is as simple as A,B,C, if it is not perhaps it can be plotted as X,Y,Z. The pips on a dice vary in how they are configured. I began experimenting with those I had accumulated that were not suited to having their corner ground down. Lowering the odds by drilling out the centre pip of one, three and five deep enough for all three holes to converge. This affected an inner corner of X,Y,Z configuration, particularly visible in the transparent plastic versions.

About this time I had been investigating the effect of screen-based media on our perception of depth. In the actual world there seems to be a curious correlation with the phenomenon occurring when the gimbals of a gyroscope lock, tricked by a three-axis structure that has in fact lost movement in one dimension. Hopefully the net-based delivery of the virtual world doesn't actually affect us in the same way. I would like to think we have the choice to avoid living down to the metaphor of the machine, more than mere biological androids without depth of perception or character, maybe this is what all that Cartesian plotting was about.

From the die’s point of view

It might sound odd but I’ve been used to investigate the problem of being too coordinated. The prop-maker lowered my odds by drilling out the pips in the centre of one, three and five all the way to my core. It was another visual joke, he used to say that it was a way of evening the chances, for predicting my role.
in the game. But as with many of his silly jokes the conversations they would piece together were a more profound question that could ever have been predicted, seriously. One path led to the question of imagination fatigue and the effect that constantly decoding two-dimensional representation has on our experience of three-dimensional space. Working back through the alphabet he preceded to make a comparison between the pips extracted and the question of the requirement for the Y chromosome. Having the odds removed felt like I had been neutered but maybe this is the effect of having my tongue tied to the signal. If it is without question a requirement to have some noise in the circuit this is how to make it. Oddly enough even chance is in doubt.
The conversation is never quite complete; there is always a delicate balance of attraction and repulsion at play in the stratified intermingling of a gallery environment. The exhibit may be considered as polished facets of a diamond however it is the people within the space that make it sparkle. It is you that is on show, exhibiting social grace or lack thereof. Every gesture amplified by the neutral backdrop of the ‘White cube’. It is a fascinating environment to encounter and engage in social discourse. Where does one begin and more importantly where does one end, break away, cut off.

There have been many permutations of differing objects gifted in the course of conversations over the years. As it is an ongoing experiment upon myself it has been quite challenging to ascertain a unit of measurement for changes in awareness brought about by variation to the methods explored.

Many of them have been based on semiotics and the interplay of meaning between index, icon and symbol, object, form and text. Much of what I consider to be the basis of my practice is that of developing more accessible signs in the form of embodied metaphors for interpreting the vast array of social conditions we are constituted by.

These are an attempt at establishing a dynamic interplay of iconicity with the real time indexing of subjects to the immediate circumstance by way of enabling a collective decoding of conventional symbolic meaning. Is it possible to consider the social formations comprised of various character types as immanent transformation requiring the slightest grammatical rearrangement to take effect? Could an analogy be made with the
transition from icon to symbol in the early development of the alphabet?

The complex abstract meanings conveyed with various combinations of characters might provide an extended metaphor through which to see these gifted partial objects as punctuation marks to accent and enhance social interaction. A momentary hyphen, an exclamation that slowly recoils into a question mark and perhaps the simple yet significant shift of an apostrophe making its way from the inner to the outer side of an s as an individual relinquishes ownership of an idea to a group.

The light proof blinds from the building that accommodated the architecture faculty never seemed to quite obey the commands of their operator, these off-cuts are from the aluminium battens retrieved from the discarded blinds.

Pearls are artificially cultured by fragments of the oyster shell being placed back in the centre, I hope that some of the discarded fragments from the University machinations are generative of some kind of pearl, even if it is the wisdom to understand that knowledge is only ever a tool, and a tool is a prosthetic, and a tool-user is at some point an amputee. Perhaps it is time to cut-off before we all become off-cuts. Retell/retail the story; every moment on reflection is an off cut off from the continuum of experience.
Is it possible for arts to shock any more? It may have been radical once but the third rail now requires everything to be double insulated. Would it be beyond the capacity of human cognition to devise a way for power to arc back on itself? Art is the flying of kites to provide a lightning rod for the discharge of public opinion, it doesn't shock, it insulates.

While installing art projects over the years it has amused me to consider how tagged leads acknowledge the authorized use of power.

I experienced many examples of art and power making itself visible in the domain of institutional culture production. My role as occupational health and safety representative for the gallery seemed to often place me in extraordinary bureaucratic double binds. The dilemma caused me to attempt a resolution by serving a ‘provisional improvement notice’ on the Head of School the day he left. It argued that to teach art required employees to exist in a perpetually destabilized mental and emotional state of doubt that transgressed occupational health and safety requirements and it would be further exacerbated by additional consideration. It went on to advise that the only course of action left was to quit teaching art. He was compelled by law to put it on the wall but I never saw it again.
A simple way of precipitating conversation from a nebula idea, to what extent is prediction a form of design.

You might say this has been a deliberate act of losing my marbles, and I did but as a way to win back trust from the smoke screen of technology. I used these clear marbles to hold people up for long enough to turn their world upside down, asking them to gaze into the crystal ball and clearly articulate the situation as they saw it. Then as a way of performing a close reading of the city, I would scratch up a small area against an architectural surface. Looking back through the marble the small abrasion would fill the entire field. The clouded vision of a public sphere made tangible. To see the world against the grain to understand, rub it up against the house edge.
Perhaps all we are is what we have access to, both spatially as compartmentalized by architectural edifice. Conceptually through the myriad constraints imposed by language, and in turn these might be considered to be different parts of a technological spectrum.

The word or logos is shaped to fit the ear of the mind, which the speaker intends to open by name. The key is a direct extension of the users responsibility, and so on up the chain of command. What is the point of attachment, a key without a user or the other way around?

At one point the Melbourne City Baths cleaned out their storeroom, a skip in the street slowly filled with discarded objects, including an old set of weighing scales and a key safe containing an accumulation of keys relating to the building, and the lost property of its many visitors.

I used the scales for symbolically weighing up the meaning in the many accumulated books prior to a gallery performance of guillotining the cloth covers from their spines. When the cloth is stripped away we are a little closer to the noise than the signal and like temporal vortices in the flow, human energy signatures effect each others dynamic in the turbulent water of public space.

The public baths were on one side of campus, and the state library on the other. I had considered running some steam room philosophy sessions to test the climate of opinion around carbon trading but had not yet developed a practical version of a low carbon emission language, utilising efficient consonants to speak
on the matter. It seemed that every conversation especially ones referring to the weather had the potential of raising a sweat. The metaphor of the public baths seemed to relate to the inherent difficulty of reflecting on our contemporary condition in the transparent whirlpool of global interconnectedness, to the extent that we might begin to question if our thoughts were ever our own.

I proceeded to sort through the many and varied keys and used a metal guillotine to free the keyholes which I found to be quite a playful way of opening up all sorts of interesting discourse. They formed the basis of a performance piece I presented that used the metaphor of military psychological warfare operations to describe the functions of academic Art production. In front of the assembled audience wearing a beret bearing the military insignia of the Australian psychological corps, I preceded to enact a keyhole surgery that claimed to extend responsibility for full access to one's own imagination.

The cut backs on security and the future up for being swiped, it's not rocket science, but may turn out to be a form of brain surgery if you think about it. The key question may turn out to be what is the point of attachment, and where does the architecture start and stop?
KEY TO THE CITY

In a chance encounter with a colleague I was invited to pick over the Aladdin's Cave of a previous in-house engineering workshop that had been decommissioned. The valuable items had all moved on but the offcuts and scraps shimmered like a magical trace of the forms that had emerged from this space over the years. It was here that I recovered a large quantity of flat metal locker keys, I held one up to the light and the end looked like a city skyline.

I stamped out the word city on each key and handed them out with an accompanying question. Is the key to the city used to get further in or further out or both? There are as many perspectives on the city as there are citizens, no one identical but everyone increasingly similar. The city walls once defined the city but now that which-is-not exists within the diminishing gap between cities approaching a singularity.

I submitted a piece into a student auction as an exploration of a gift that would be valued by the market. It was the hand of a mannequin with an adapted band-aid displaying an apple logo. It was to indicate that a chip for a smart phone had just been implanted. I put the hand up to raise the question of what we might be gambling with that last chip.
ADDED VALUE

A metal fragment with the added value of having the words value and added stamped in either side. Recycled materials are in abundant supply in an organization that is undergoing perpetual renovation. Materials research has included misusing any tool that might produce a usually undesired effect. A large metal cutting guillotine has marked the cut off point for many of these creations. I am not a prolific writer but have gathered a significant quantity of stamps for punching letters into metal and make quite an impression on other things too. The repeated hammering of two word slogans on the many thousands of gifted objects constitutes the majority of my textual output. As will have become apparent, I suspect this is that part of me that is attempting to protest the constraints of language, adding value by making it break.
There is a moment, a fleeting moment, a unique signature of an initial encounter that signs and counter signs a contract yet to be written, yet increasingly predictable from this point on. Playing to extend the game may be the only way the game can be won by both player and played.

Who am I when I am played against myself? The ‘tap and go’ and ‘payWave’ may speed our exit from the supermarket only to have us face a perpetual existence in a strategic checkout. In debt to our virtual selves, a line of credit infinitely extended to accommodate movement in the direction of progress. If words can be considered game pieces in a mutually understood field of play, how much of what we say is the equivalent of picking a piece from the board, gesturing to the players present and returning it to the same place. Doing things with words requires change to take effect; an object-based script provides a dynamic staging for that action. Dialogic encounters in the theatre of war - a bookmark made from a chess problem marks out each encounter as unique and doubly so as the strategy on either side will be different. It is from the opening moves in a language game that the world of alternatives is made possible.
There have been many years of gathering objects particularly multiples from the local trash and treasure market. Much of the work developed there over the years has been made available on the spot on a pay as you feel basis. An exception to this has been the Barbie / Ken Doll ring. These were only ever gifted to people whose spontaneous expression of delight at its quirkiness was payment enough. The disconcerting appearance of flesh coloured jewellery has drawn many recipients into extended conversations with strangers. Attempting to break the usual effect of a long running neuroplastic mould by hollowing out the smiling face, I felt a bit like a sushi chef when preparing them, each cut with the retractable blade had to be as decisive as the calligraphic brushstroke of a zen master.
HIGH PERFORMANCE CORNER

Intrigued by the proliferation of curious looking objects that turn up in cheap novelty shops, I would often purchase multiples to hand out as ready made gifts. This was the case for what I called the ‘high-performance corner’. Gifted during the exhibitions and various gatherings that were associated with a symposium related to performance studies, I instigated conversations about how context performs us, by using these objects to perform punctuation in the flow of the characters I met. Originally intended as corner protectors, it was the merging of cube and sphere in the one form that I found most compelling. I thought they might accompany the gifting of a dice to protect against certain outcomes but surprisingly the first thing many recipients did was to place them on the tip of the nose.

I wondered if it was the hard corners of modernism that the social body rejected, and perhaps the overt structure only appeared to disappear, somehow lurking in the postmodern snow dome deep in a blizzard of socially networked micro narratives. Is the war machine of globalism about to resurface as the surface of everything? I’m trying to meet the performance objectives by raising objections to as a way to perform.
I’m a small chrome sphere stamped one day or day one depending on where and when you begin or began. To play a small part in a big revolution just go along with the daily cycles of life and occasionally ask how fast can we run from the setting sun before we spoil the surprise. It took seeing a picture of Earth from out of space to begin thinking of the planet as a finite resource and ever since electricity began eating up the night, the cinema has been eating into our dreams. Dare to shout at the screen, not the one in the cinematic black box but the screening process that blankets the world with false expectation and keeps us safe from the unexpected. I used to think I had control over my roll in the game but I feeling more and more like my path is written by the dialectic machinations of a global pinball machine.
An old penny with fake stamped on the side calls into question the market and the revaluing of tangible exchange mechanisms - when will it finally drop?

A penny for your thoughts? If coins are like punctuation here are some thoughts from the penny on what happens when there is also a loss of capitalisation and the characters find it hard to relate to one another.

I turned up in a plastic bag from a coin dealer then it hit me it took me a little while to see that all the other coins were under the same impression we were fake circulation propped up a belief system and just like an electromagnetic field collapses when the current stops our perceived value dropped as soon as we stopped moving some times being confronted with our value systems by being defaced offers a starting point for the exchange of ideas coin operated conversation that glitter is not fake a recipe for disaster a portion of blame a few drops of the penny and a dash of hope the fashioning of fact from fiction lump sums up the entire game draws out the future with mechanisms of fantasy come and exchange what is actual through the chips that control all that his virtual and as the game refines itself virtually everything will step into line the real is by royal decree money is already counterfeit the house rules in its favour the illusion will be protected by those whose consent to make it so to seriously question the rules is an act of social suicide the financial claim of this coin is already fake and needs no stamp of disapproval a penny for my thoughts i once thought i had thoughts until the thoughts started interviewing me for the role
that i had not yet written how many parrots am i from the pirate and what are the implications of me digging for treasure in the intellectual property of the state?

One image that has captivated my imagination since first contemplating it and has underpinned my thinking on how all sorts of things are built, is the ‘false work’ depicted on an old Carpenter’s union banner once housed at Trades Hall. It is a wooden construction of scaffold and formwork in an exact opposite form of what is actually being constructed, namely a stone bridge. I wondered if this might be a good metaphor to explain how Marxist critique seemed to guess capitalism's every next move. Was it by chance providing the brute force of capital with intelligence or just a tale told by the head to keep the coin up in the air?
ART FREE

Is it the art that sets us free, or the artifice versus freedom, or is the freedom an artifice? I would do almost anything not to imagine an unbreakable cage, but this may be the basis of its structure and finding a key to imagining it any other way constitutes the infinite aesthetic combinations that keep us locked into thinking that we are thinking about it. I made up many hundred key rings with art on one side and free on the other to be handed out throughout the duration of ‘Melbourne Now’. I try to remember Melbourne now but it seemed so different back then. ART FREE from the conformity experiment of institutional constraint, to the FREE ART of conversational encounter, where the key is to is the art of asking someone to ask.
ART WORK

This is one of many words paired on either side of the casino chip real/fake, life/like, give/take, show/tell. I minted a great many of these to be given away at an event called Capitalism Surrealism in the foyer of the National Gallery of Victoria. I had found an old slot machine made by Aristocrat called the Honeybee. I installed a megaphone inside it playing a looped recording of a beehive. I pushed it on a trolley at full volume from the University all the way across the city to the gallery. The soundtrack seemed to work well with the busyness of big business behaving much like a beehive. I found a bee smoker from which to handout these tokens, asking as I did if there was any similarity with how art was deployed to placate the swarming crowds. Prior to the large White Night events the public would only achieve crowds of this size to protest. I guess there was still some political grain to push up against, in a socially networked world we are perhaps much closer to being chipboard glued to the screen of social mediation. It is perhaps art only if it evades capture, and this gift is not for resale.
CREATIVE BLOCK

The sublimation of basic drives to more socially acceptable activities could be likened to the wooden block game of increasing the height of a tower by extracting sections from below to stack back on top. This example is an attempt to utilise an oversimplified model to communicate the effect of oversimplifying. I like the idea of allegory being metaphors that have grown large enough to become their own context or the idea that we can pull ourselves up by our own bootstraps. The whole production could be said to be an exercise in self-parody, active processes of doubling in an effort to interpret the world by contrast and comparison.

This has been pursued through the relentless exploration of a repetition process applied to material objects. This has been a way to objectify and overcome the many creative blocks encountered along the way.

Objects that exist in multiples have a curious effect on our perception, they seem they seem they seem to resonate our capacity to recognize pattern. I must have been captivated enough with a set of jenga blocks to lug them around for many years. I started to experiment with how I might use them to demonstrate how arguments stack up, while suggesting how the argument might also be stacked. It seemed to be possible to read the same information in two entirely different ways and yet still appear logical. At first I stamped them out with truth on one side and false on the other to infer that lies might stack up just as well as truth, if the story is exactly wrong for long enough. But the
more I investigated deconstruction and post-structural theory, the question of which direction was up reduced the stack to a pile of sawdust.

Building materials are measured by performance, maybe that is how we are now stacked, playing bit parts in the production of a good story at the expense of ever knowing the real one. In post-structural theory, truth seems have no grain to run up against, or is it that we no longer have grain? I went on to consider the role of the creative in structuring society and stamped out close to one hundred with creative on one side and block on the other. Is the block to creativity what prevents us from withdrawing from the game or keeps us from re-entering at a higher level? They have been used to prop up monitors, level desks, keep open doors and remind us that for creativity to flow there needs to be a recognition of the block.
BLIND SPOT CHECK

Is it any less difficult to see what we cannot see, than it is to know what we do not know? I would not go as far as to advocate living in an inverted disco ball, but think a number of blind spot mirrors can help with seeing what we can’t see - ourselves.

This object provides a perspective on what we cannot see. It can be used to locate the existence of physiological blind spots in our field of vision, and point to metaphorical blind spots that exist in our socially constructed reality.

The standard method of presenting this phenomenon in psychology textbooks is to have a spot and a nearby star on a white page. Imagine closing one eye and focusing on the spot, now move back and forth and there will be a certain point at which the star disappears.

We fill in the blanks, see what we think we see. This is an experiential location of the house edge the threshold that is as difficult to define, as it changes in relation to our awareness of it. The effect of learning a new word can lead to noticing it being used more often. Is it even possible to remember how you experienced it before you were aware of it?

I adapted this concept into a gift-able object and its reception has prompted a diverse range of interpretations, particularly questions around how it was to be used. The instruction process revealed many blind spots in my own thinking. This has been the case with all the various gifts. I could never have known it at the time but the pursuit of a hunch leads to a course of action that in retrospect has certain logic. Stamped with ‘spot check’ on one side and ‘double blind’ on the other, this refers to a
testing method intended to limit the influence of cognitive bias and the placebo effect. It is by sharing these objects that I am testing to understand these effects in myself. To know what we do not know, 'I can't see for looking' almost says it all.
A loophole in the language game used to place twists in conversational encounters, a reflexive move that is all about face. Surfing the ever-breaking wave of right now is the only way to escape the undertow of what has already past. The loophole is a hole in a wall for an archer to defend a castle, it would seem that our conscious mind has time’s arrow to do a loop the loop before continuing on but perhaps only if we think about it for a moment.

In an old audiotape machine the record head and playback head had a gap in between them, maybe our record and playback needs a gap in between too. What constitutes the dialogical self when thoughts start to oscillate? Maybe dialogue with others is the only way to free us from ourselves, just ask. Time’s arrow points to the wall that runs through everything because it’s a wall that runs through us. It is full of loopholes but requires looking out for others to find them.
IN THE WRIST

A bent key swapped in a moment of misdirection, a sleight of hand that unlocks the embodied cognition bound up in expectation.

The locations most generative of ideas and interactions have been those areas where things have not yet been sorted out, the second-hand bookshop, the trash and treasure market and possibly the most interesting being the throw out pile. Whether it's hard rubbish piled high on a suburban nature strip or the surplus to requirements refuse randomly piled in a University Skip, the deficit of intentional order offers a bounty of possible interconnections to spur the imagination. These are the vectors from which novelty emerge.

A waist high skip bin affords a comfortable mediation between strangers drawn by the promise of that which might be salvaged. Gossip and rumour maybe the domain of the water cooler but the skip bin fulfils the function of a bridge between strangers in a public space like no other piece of temporary infrastructure I have ever encountered.

Many a kitchen and often an office will have a place for those things that resist easy categorization. Often known as the junk drawer. It was from a junk draw that had been tossed into a skip that I retrieved it a large bunch of identical Keys from which I developed this prop.

A friend at the market had a stall at which he would sell jewellery made from bent spoons. I had found a book on spoon bending psychics that I thought he would find amusing, among the pictures of bent spoons there were a number of bent keys. This led to developing a mock experiment in mind over matter or
psycho-kinesis, whereby I would pre-bend a number of these keys in a vice, and in the course of a conversation pass around an undamaged key asking if anything unusual could be noticed. After the close analysis this would provoke I would take the key back and with some additional misdirection, would swap it over and ask for it to be pulled from my hands while applying rotation, apparently twisting the metal key in the process. The magical disjunction between 1st and 2nd Keys would open up all sorts of interesting discussions relating to the psychology of perception.
I made up a run of small brass plaques with the word ‘addition’ on one side and ‘edition’ on the other, but it became apparent when handing them out to people, that the exchange was more of an audition. I had been impersonating myself but a little differently each time, attempting to change how I played myself by way of instigating a kind of forced method acting.

How to be in the moment impossible if you think about it, and what sort of test might constitute a future proof reflection on the past anyway? With the addition of this edition - which when held half way and turned over would read edit or add - I had begun to label myself as a serial artist. From the very start I had been informed by surreal art, the paranoid critical method was fundamental to many of these encounters. Often using a radical inversion of commonly held beliefs to kick over the plinth and claim the world as an art work into which I would invite an interlocutor to explore.

Sometimes the smallest hint can turn up an important clue. As a way of considering how different modes of art making transform the consciousness of the maker. I did a print run on some old litmus paper thrown out from a chemistry lab. The intention was to play on the idea of acid free paper in the printmaking process, but looking back it reads more like free acid and the inability to say what’s on the tip of your tongue for fear of turning the world upside down.
One end of the educational spectrum is the unquestioning, uncritical transmission of dogmatic program from one generation to the next, providing the illusion that there are certain things that stay the same, while working closely with and followed by the revolution foretold by the conspiracy nut.
A work colleague pointed it out to me that this object could be read as a self-portrait. I consider it to represent one end of the educational spectrum - the end that asks questions that we are not asked to ask, questions that cannot be answered yet foreshadow imminent twists in the plot. The CON the SPI the RACY... are all facets, which cannot be read from any one point of view. The real story requires us to remember the thread of an inner narrative with every new plot turn. After the profound revelations of Edward Snowden, many of the assertions I would make in order to question commonly held readings of the world began to sound quite reasonable.
It took a while before lines had been written for the part that I played. I sat around in a cardboard box with hundreds of others just like me although there are only a couple of dozen that had the words special trap printed on the side. Originally set design had ideas for melting us down and fusing our brass ends together to make fox whistles to give away. The props department came across a case for an old Remington typewriter, which had a surreal quality to it.

The research division was investigating movable type at the time and when they looked into the origins of Remington it turned out that they were also manufacturers of firearms. The idea of movable type being yet another development of weaponry seemed to be infused in this conflation of objects.

Further research made a connection between lead as both the shot in a ballistics cartridge, and the amalgam used in movable type, but also astonishingly that it increased the refractive index of light in lead crystal. It seemed quite paradoxical that pure lead could shield even the most radioactive forms of light yet when set in a glass lattice structure could form the basis of most optical lenses. By extracting the detonator an inference was made to being ‘within earshot’ and ‘shooting ones mouth off’ having the connotation of ‘denotative’ problems.

In place of the detonator, a small lead crystal was placed, when looking down through the cartridge at printed type and slowly moving the cartridge towards ones eye, the typeface would shatter and move in a similar configuration to the scatter of lead from a shotgun. This constituted part of a practice of enquiry that
employed semiotic drift as a way to tie systems of communication into an ongoing investigation into the tools of warfare.
6x6

36 SCREEN TESTS

[Character breakdowns]
This character begins assembling in public places, at flea markets around old shopping trolleys turned into jewellery workbenches, applying the cut up technique to the world of discarded objects. Gathering a conversational public around overhead projectors discarded from an educational institution, through the medium of recycled bikes, on radio walks through a sonic city, around the snap and crackle of a circuit bending wheelie bin sound system with wok on top called the sonic stir-fry, around mark making tools, group oriented spatial explorations with chalk, with water, with raking, with holes drilled in discarded containers to stamp out repeat shapes in flour, around the inner urban up lights turned into projectors, around an oil drum as imitation fire called the barrel of monkeys philosophy department as reason to extend hands toward each other and exchange the voice of each other in a practical way. Slowly an informal association of game changers begins to play, sorting themselves into an economy of idea generation by makeshift augmentation of existing social structures.
[B] This character instigates behaviour as if we were all on a movie set, as if were all on camera all of the time and increasingly aware of slightly overacting and always underperforming. This character gradually becomes aware of how flat and two-dimensional we are, but finds the possibility of depth in responding to the unpredictable scripting of others. B develops various ways to read the play without access to the script by exploring various games as metaphors to understand actor’s interaction. To B seeking an answer to a question not yet asked felt like being snookered by logic so the billiard table became the first game structure used to bounce ideas off. With particular interest in how games begin B goes first for building a collection of fifteen cue balls to use as a rolling notebook. Then a full set of worn out eight balls was pieced together as an absurd way of representing end points in philosophical thinking. B takes a sledge hammer to a set of billiard balls one by one as a way of illustrating the result of pushing conversation too far, surprisingly the eight ball split perfectly in half straight through the eight. This inspired the making of an eight ball yo-yo, a totem for remembering the narrative from start to finish, intentionally allowing things to get out of hand.
This character begins cutting up books as a way of reading the social context. C gets quite distressed at seeing the tide of old books go out skip, loads of text into land fill. Recalls the final scene of Fahrenheit 451 where individuals had memorized text and starts gifting sliced up books to access the text embodied in the many other characters he would encounter. He is told of the position taken by one philosopher that there is not outside text. This provokes C to define the boundary condition of text; in what ways could a reading be considered as thinking outside the books? Reflecting on the media revolution in the blade of a paper-cutting guillotine C processes many hundreds if not thousands of discarded books as a way of cutting across the formal systems of knowledge classification. Finding deep patterns emerging as a once superficial reading starts submerging. If the passageway is text in the same way as we read the traffic on the road, our fellow readers may have as much influence on the interpretation as the denotative meaning of the words. If there is no outside how do we get further in? Possibly by slicing it open to read the characters that makes up the institutional context. This is performing research by undoing things with words.
This character provokes **dialogue** amongst others by using unusual objects to perform the role of embodied metaphors around which complex ideas can be exchanged. This example is a cross cut saw and was used to speak to how the action of dialogue works and is work. Dialogue with teeth, cutting the continuum into logical lumps to fuel the debate as we slowly warm to the idea. The action is a back and forth conversational turn taking, alluded to by the broken pool cues wedged into either end. The difference being in the duration of back and forth, who breaks and who will break. Who is closer to the trunk when the cut away finally exposes that the metaphor has become too heavy to support its own comparison. D compresses many ideas when speaking of language as the reign of power. Dialogue is not hard work until we are taken by surprise, preconceived long before we have the words to articulate the laborious process of delivery. The knowledge casino is an alphabet on the tip of the tongue and a bit between the teeth. Ask the wrong question at the right moment and all bets are off. Like termites mapping the tree of knowledge from the inside excreting a machine insensitive to light. For the cutting edge is against the grain.
[E] this character will engage **electronics** as an embodied metaphor that shows far more than can be told. Experiencing being a part of the system we are observing. **E** relates biofeedback to the pendulum of a dowser and a lie detector. The structure of products made available to us by the advanced distribution networks of supply and manufactured demand stipulate their correct use. **E** instigates embodied awareness and thinking about social systems as circuits governed by the language of logic. **E** distributes battery-powered toys to be short-circuited with saliva and fingers. Originally designed to program the blank chip of childlike minds with pre-recorded pronunciations of alphabetical spells. By unscrewing them and accessing their inner logic chip from the back they can be made to perform in ways not intended by design. A *speak and spell* scrambles its phonemes yet speaks of a momentary freedom from specific meaning. An animal sound stretched and twisted in direct relation to the finger pointing out a bridge in the circuit. This is an embodied example of second order cybernetics and alludes to the logic of social systems being constituted by the energy of language and understood by the language of energy. **E** offers a way of teaching us better ways to learn by encouraging active ways of questioning the received program, a way of customizing the script.
[F] This character tends to forget so forges typeface into found objects to use as metonymic memory tools. F enjoys stumbling across clues that show a future that can't be told, small objects that can be used to make an incremental yet elaborate objection to being oriented as an object in anyone's ontology. F Rejects the expectation to react in predictable ways, to various combinations of the other characters in the script. F scales up in search of fleeting moments of freedom, only to find a complex system intended to set all the characters against each other in the pursuit of meaninglessness. F begins freaking out about the failure of figurative language to fan the sparks of fantasy and literally lets go of the delusion. F finds hard-headed characters and starts forging. F bares a striking resemblance to capital and transforms many meaningless objects into a currency of ideas to trade off against the mainstream.
This character begins generating mementos and ends up gifting them away, to remember various moves in a language game, that begins to makes sense as a knowledge casino. Souvenirs gifted in exchange for a moment in the edifice of ideas. Placing each encounter on a collision course, with the unpredictable, in pursuit of the invisible blocks, that constitutes the architecture of control. Mirror the smoke screen, trade in illusions and undercover the work that plays us in the game. G is anti clockwise and lives in the moment. But occasionally turns up on the chopping block.

Gifting to auctions, a 40kg block of steel with ring welded to the side as a jewellery piece.

Limited edition stainless steel die with corner ground off, packet of band aids with apple logo commenting on the inevitability of the injectable smart phone.

A chopped up arrow and violin bow reconfigured as necklaces titled ‘I’m with cupid’ and including rights of reproduction.

Return gifts have included a back scratcher, a tampon and the wristwatch of a deceased mother.
[H] This character shakes the hidden hand on both sides of a ha-ha in an attempt to unearth the invisible walls in the social landscape - a phenomenon that is never fully apparent to those slightly higher in the hierarchy. H picks up the glove that waives the hand. This is not a theoretical way of showing but is an experiential way of knowing.
This is a screen test where this character of I instigates intelligent interaction to identify the invisible forces of intuition. I kept playing with the rules to understand the game. Placing magnets on either side of a compass I will demonstrate the effect that the intangible forces of interpretation have over the direction of circumstance. Situated on an overhead projector and surrounded by iron filing, I alludes to the vast field of objects now aligned to highlight forces operating in the worlds. Whenever I meet you, I come into existence for you and for me too. I owe you.
[J] This character trips over the punch line while trying to spell out the joke, plays the role of the joker to introduce the rest of the pack. Not just a fool, this character tiptoes around the topic of fruitful research like it was a high wire act, regularly takes a conceptual shortfall, which brings him back to a grounded position every time. The mismatch between the monkey and the mystic is close, but no banana. J uses jesting as a way of suggesting and exhibits clumsiness as a way, making clever use of the fear of fruitless research. No need to hold your breath, J holds up a snorkel with a cork in it to helps you imagine what is beneath the surface.
[K] This character appears silently knowing how many hours he has been hand cuffed to the slot machine, investing so much time gambling against his filter bubble in search of winning combinations. Knowledge as a noun is a networked machine that integrates each of us in its ongoing production. K lights an apple-shaped candle and knows that the making light of knowledge comes with a sacrifice of some kind. You can say no but the silent K will creep in and double your efforts to verbalize. Speech recognition will be listening, transcribing every time you begin keeping what you know from the total knowledge. We are held in a maze of double binds but ultimately have no choice - when our path is decided we are working for K.
[L] This character launches into laughter as an index of originality, begins laughing and ends up knowing. Looping the loop in meta-fictional feedback confounds expectation and exceeds the limits of doubt. L knows that hiding in the corner of every right angle is the wrong direction and in each breath is a little of the last laugh. Genuine laughter can have a tin of metaphor extender open before rational thinking has time to warm the pan. In life L is the great leveller but L doesn’t mind playing a serious role in research even if it begins by looking twice as silly half way through.
[M] Begins modelling metaphors and masquerades as a mad professor. M’s main motivation is memory. M would be halfway through the alphabet and start mumbling but with metaphors M stops midway and makes a point that can be easily remembered. M has memories of motoring not when things were in motion but when they started stopping. M remembers running out of petrol because the experience was memorable. M speaks of breaks in the traffic, fixing his clutch cable with a coat hanger, it breaking while getting a random breath test; even getting push started away from a random roadworthy check was worth it cause it made a moment memorable. Finding breaks in the traffic is important; M once found a disk brake in the middle of the road and used it to show how he makes breaks in the flow of conversation an acoustic slip knot that starts to unravel other things, time to make a break in the passage for you to take a breath.
This character begins with necessity and ventures by chance to end in reflection. In the circularity of circumstance this character instigates noise with nostalgia for sound art. The kind of noise required in the social circuit to keep us from understanding of the signal: from the bending of circuits of kid’s toys; to the playing of public architecture with a modified metal detector. From the handle bar mounted Theremin complete with tin foil hat to playing a length of aluminium with a battery powered angle grinder in a city laneway for the jazz festival. A collection of various mega phones have often been used to called attention to the effects of noise that annoys especially in public; such was the case when playing canned laughter back at the comedy festival. A klaxon horn and chrome megaphone equipped ice cream van makes funny noises every time it goes to market but testing an air raid siren there seemed to draw the biggest audience yet. N is the noisy aspect of knowing.
This character originates on the outside edge of art and opens up questions relating to the origin of psychiatry. Normal artistic behaviour to some maybe deputized madness to the state, or is it the other way around? O plays with the fine line between psychiatry and fine art. O is faking outsider art from inside an institution or it is the art of faking madness while patiently waiting for the Doctor. Without doubt the cybernetic psychodrama of the scholarly pathology is a fool-proof system. O brings an easel made of crutches found at the market and a provisional improvement notice served on the School of Art claiming that art cannot be taught without exposing staff to the psychologically destabilizing effects of uncertainty, a situation that would be exacerbated by any further consideration.
This character introduces the prisoner of performance with loopholes in language and digital footprints beginning the path of least resistance. P knows the mind is a prisoner of pattern. P tries to affect a philosopher's tone but usually ends up laughing. P dreams of success as an escape artist but fails a little better each time he catches himself thinking about it. Originally P had imagined that he would make a citizens arrest on himself and plead innocent as a sneaky way of turning himself into the authority. He thought that his fictional character was no less factual than all the legal fictions that made up the social fabric out there and so fantasized about confessing to his growing list of transgressions. P enjoyed sharpening his wits with the good cop/ bad cop routine in preparation for testing the crown at the trial. But when it came to making the evidence speak for itself, P realizes the extent of the puppetry - his artistic license was no longer valid and the ventriloquism almost could fall flat if it were not for the public assembled to hear him defend himself. Could their presence stand in for P’s personally? Maybe if there are no chairs.
[Q] This character begins quoting himself out of context as a way of questioning what he has to say. Q starts questioning the role of questioning in public lectures by asking the questions he was never asked to ask. Chewing gum blowing speech bubbles in public forums learning to get in and out of sticky situations with an rhetorical approach to philosophy that brings the power of poetry back to public speaking. It is in the live lab of the moment that Q explores the character of public space.
[R] This character instigates **riddles** to point out what he sees as the problem, reading the same text, dreaming the same dream and losing too much interest in the game. Ridiculous yet radical R is the rascal of risky research and rides the line between being really revealing and just as concealing. R knows he is in a corner and has everything to loose but resists repeat performance by risking it all again.
[S] This character starts and stops as he skates the thin ice navigating the edge of self-sabotage. It’s the pressure of the blade that turns ice to water perhaps the pressure of concentration releases meaning from the words of a text in a similar way. Breaking the ice, testing the water, to float the idea of drowning in data. Or can it only ever be a surface reading – is it an act of self-sabotage to suspect a deeper one? But S was prepared to be self-serving, specially spiced with well-seasoned theorists tailored to contemporary taste. But no, S takes a shine to the raw apple of direct experience and secretly hopes the new knowledge will wedge into the teeth and stick in the throat in an act of institutional ventriloquism, so to speak.
[T] This character traces the life and times of a technician, who tests the limits of technology and begins thinking about thought from both directions, by simulating techniques for expanded thinking. T wonders if the curated culture creates conformity and is the intent of technology camouflaged with creativity. T holds up VHS tape of a fake fireside and compares it with philosophy. T tells of military tactics and asks where the theatre of war and theatre of entertainment terminate. The new technology is ongoing, non-stopping, and non-slowing, endlessly weaving through the traffic. This comparison with the street is one way of trafficking in signals. T comes to a halt at intersections, crosses broken lines when drifting in the traffic and winds up on a roundabout of transnational technocracy. T says it’s how we read the road and it’s just like reading a passage of text - heavily influenced by those near by, we are right on track, they are all tall tales but true. T was there from beginning to the end in the text, making linear history legible.

Even as a little tacker T was a terror, at the age of three jumped on the hand break and rolled the family car toward a busy 'T' intersection. Used technology to connect the tow ball to garden tap and returned later that day to witness the turbulence.
[U] This character begins understanding by instigating uncertainty, because if U can bet that gambling nothing risks us loosing everything, U must want to know. Universals are unrealistic and U will encourage exploration of the unknown. When things begin to seem certain all of a sudden U turns in the traffic and underpins the collective thought bubble with a burst of energy. There is no urgency but when the time comes U will know about it. Ultimately U cannot help but be drawn in by the magnetic attraction of the unattainable, for not getting closer is almost unimaginable.
This character *voices* concern about the virtual world by way of articulating a version of ventriloquism, the vexing problem of technological veracity, in a nutshell, the game of virtue in a vice.
[W] This character introduces the What, Why, Where and When and wonders if the wait was all worthwhile. W asks if we are the double agents - one of the two who wind up in the white cube world and live a double life more than half the time. As an object in an expanded gallery W flips the plinth upside down and claims the world as a ready-made with the help of metaphor and the paranoid critical method. Works just like a bee smoker when robbing the hive of illusions, but only ever whispers words to the wise.
[X] Standing at the crossroads, this character is a sign of the times.
[Y] is the character of divergence, branching out on the way and joining in on the way back, daring to ask, finding creative tension is the forked path, making a wishbone into slingshot, pulling back to leap forth and resonating like with like in a linguistic tuning fork. The noise in the circuit that signals the way.
This character counts on returning to where it all began. Describing the effect of capitalization on exchange value, as it shares a downward zigzag to the house edge.
[9] Nine characters amused by the knowledge.

[8] An eight ball that cracked and gave birth to a yo-yo.

[7] The seven sides of a dice that directs its role in the play.


[5] Five fingers hold the potential to make, show and let go.


[2] Undo the ambiguity of meaning, the duck the rabbit the troubling doubling of vision that meets us half way.

[1] One speaks of the tongue-twisting system of signs and magic silence that spells the wandering gestures of a magician; the trickster that pencils in a comedy sketch, one hundred per cent committed to pointing out the value of the immeasurable as the last of one hundred mercurial lines frees up the frame.

[0] Zero in on the target, being the origin of all meaning.

  gamble on exposing the house edge
POST-SCRIPT
INT: INTERIOR SPACE DAY

For someone who does not work with text this prop-maker has used an awful lot of it to bring us to this point, and to what end?

It’s been quite an adventure. We started out experiencing the environment in which he has developed a practice that is described as a ‘production’. We have moved through an exhibition of various objects used to explain, in metaphorical terms, the various ways that he has attempted to communicate this practice back to the ‘industry’ throughout the ‘production period’. And having now completed the reading of the ‘screenplay’, it’s up to us to consider the value of supporting the ‘prop-maker’ in this final ‘screening’ process.

I’ll read your use of quotation marks to indicate that we can drop part of the literary conceit and refer to the candidate and the creative practice research directly.

Yes, but I would add that we are in fact industry representatives, and as such, are required to uphold industry standards. And while I agree that it is the role of trans-disciplinary researchers to actively challenge the standards and protocols of knowledge creation and construction, the work being put to us is not an unproblematic one.

On a pragmatic level, I don't think it is an accident that this work has made it through to this point. There must have been many people who considered it to have value along the way.

To continue the game metaphor, this would appear to be an example of a pawn making it to the other side of the chessboard, but I don’t think even he considers that an upgrade in status should happen automatically. Implicit in the final move is a provocation to have the structure of the game render itself visible.

So, in a way the candidate is offering himself up as the knowledge contribution?

Yes, it comes across as an almost suicidal move in the game, but a move that the candidate obviously considers worth making. From the very start he has presented challenges to the traditional
approach, and to act differently just to fulfil the requirement of being awarded the degree would indicate prioritizing the piece of paper over the knowledge that he has generated through questioning the institutional systems of knowledge accreditation that ultimately sign the paper.

I guess this has been the underlying message all the way through: that insight may come about by chance, but an intentional strategy of sacrifice is required to bring new knowledge into being. In this case putting himself on the line by having representatives of the system in question read it for themselves.

To use the betting theme, the candidate appears to be gaming the system, making multiple bets simultaneously in the knowledge that hedging bets cannot break the bank but if the deck is stacked it might be a dramatic way of rendering the house edge visible. He has built up an extensive network of support for what might be seen as a gambling addiction to unverifiable knowledge, and has managed to keep piling bets of equal amounts on odds and evens up to this point, in the hope that in a public act of equivocation the house is forced to make the call.

It appears he is attempting to bring attention to the dilemma in a similar way alluded to by the character Y, using the accent of choice as a conceptual sling shot to draw us back from the binary and force consideration above and beyond the procedural structure of either/or evaluation.

A compelling thought, but I don't think he is telling us anything that we don't already know, even if he is using the structures available to show us a way of using everything we already know.

But if he is calling a bluff that he suspects we are not aware of, what could the pay-off possibly be?

Perhaps an interpretation of the rules that enables a continuation of a more sophisticated game for all players?

This brings to mind the passing references to paradigm shifts and implicitly questions what we consider knowledge to be. It would seem that he considers his contribution as demonstrating - through action - a method for facilitating the art of public speaking, by exhibiting a variety of ways to continue speaking in public. He does this through inventing rhetorical devices that use metaphors that can literally enable various strata of society to come to grips with the complex ideas that affect them. He
instigates and enables the dialogue that is required to achieve workable solutions to collective problems.

And we need to keep in mind that his practice is situated in the 'educational turn', and that he considers his works to be fragments and traces of a dialogical artwork. The practice deliberately explores areas of contemporary life that are difficult to measure and resist traditional modes of documentation, remaining as he says, between the gaps of concept and percept: the mercurial border between imagination and verification where all that can be shown is a trace of the strategy used to get there.

This is quite an elaborate mode of institutional critique. Is it research, or is it an art practice hijacking the formal structures of academic research, or is it both?

I think the point being made is that the culture of research requires that candidates occasionally step this far out of line to enable a whole community of researchers to feel encouraged to pursue unusual strategies.

If it’s the use of hyperlinks as the only point of reference you are referring to, at first I thought they were arbitrary, but having now explored them as a live extension of the language game metaphor, they simultaneously accord with and provide an ongoing updated support for the many themes explored throughout the body of work.

I guess it could be argued that growing the stock of knowledge requires the involvement of the whole community, and the speed of information could be said to have exceeded the capacity of traditional academic research processes to provide the public with knowledge that they are now equipped to access. But isn’t that an unstable structure on which to base an argument?

In a curious way I can imagine him arguing that as we become more connected we are compelled to relinquish argument in favour of agreement.

So he is not actually putting forward an argument, as such, but is providing an active demonstration of many possible ways to continue having an argument, with the intention of maintaining diversity in the public sphere. I think he would say that the game has changed, that information is now far more dynamic and that inhabiting the metaphor of the boat would be more suited to
the situation we are now in, rather than seeking foundations on which to build.

So tying his investigations to a dynamic database is a way of testing the water, a precursor for what he sees as an inevitable floating of the currency of knowledge. It seems somewhat paradoxical that this work should be considered as a method for navigating the limits of expectation, and a way to explore beyond the constraints of a consensus horizon.

A significant gesture either way, but does it constitute a new contribution to scholarship in the knowledge economy or is it just an economical way of using the currency of existing knowledge?

If you are asking 'does it float?', then I think rather than launch the work into the status of art by rejecting it outright - something he has spoken of throughout the candidature - maybe the most useful decision would be to recommend appropriate references to be cited and have the work resubmitted.

I can imagine that would be like a death of 1000 cuts, having to go back and revisit the many locations from which he either consciously or intuitively drew inspiration. Would that be the best way to achieve a resolution?

Without insisting on specific referencing it would somehow feel like we never actually got the worm on the hook.

But as he would be quick to point out, the process of trying to pin him down has taken us all sorts of places we would have never otherwise been.

So in effect, being encouraged to guess is how this work performs knowledge, and making it make sense is how it works.

What was the line? Shuffling misconception and dealing with ambiguity, the making of a knowledge casino shows a way of seeing and erasing the mistakes inherent in the play of an over educated guessing game.

On a different note, there are a number of references to the phenomenon of gifting, and implicit in this work is an assertion
regarding the imperative to consider knowledge as a gift, not only as an extension of this practice, but as an approach to considering all research as a gift.

I can elaborate on that: the principle being that monetary rewards can have distorting affects on the knowledge that is produced. I tend to agree and wonder if a similar sentiment is being expressed with every small gift, attempting to offset the distorting effects that capital can have on human relations.

I did notice a link to Marcel Mauss who wrote extensively on the anthropological implications of gifting. It is obviously central to the practice, but what is the specific context for this work, I mean what is his community of practice?

He appears to draw from a range of different practices, group activities like Lygia Clark, socially engaged practices like Joseph Beuys and even the mystical works of James Lee Byers. There also seems to be significant surrealist influence as alluded to with the use of the paranoid critical method, but also clear reference to fluxus works by artists such as Piero Manzoni.

He seems to use an ad hoc combination of techniques in whatever way enables him to effect an unauthorized form of institutional critique.

Yes, the works of Andrea Fraser and even the approach of the Yes-Men come to mind. I think the difference being that he has instantiated the critique from within the fabric of the thing being critiqued without seeking permission, by being like a self appointed version of what was attempted with the APG, the Artist Placement Group.

It’s as though he has been steadily depositing measured amounts of whimsical agitation, by gifting these pocket sized sculptures, slowly building up a network of people who are open to exploring ideas in the fleeting moments between prior commitments in the flow of institutional life.

I would fathom that he sees this as socially distributed artwork based on poetic hearsay.

Did you just say heresy?
But I think that's what he is gambling on, the possibility for misinterpretation, and the freedom to assign meaning. Maybe that’s all there is, or ever was, but in his estimation it should always be hanging in the balance.

So these performative investigations into playing the fool are in fact quite serious?

Possibly this is the only way certain feedback loops can be provided to a system that is by necessity quite insulated. The act of using a fictional knowledge casino appears to be twofold: to withdraw from the game of being a double agent that lets the outside in only to become a double agent that lets the inside out.

Interesting. Having said that, many other references come to mind: the therapy technique of sand play as a way of enabling embodied readings of intersubjectivity; the potlatch of the Situationists; even the cross over between art and design that has similarity to the practice of Ant Farm. I get the sense that he also draws on absurdist techniques, and brings these into public settings, even revisiting some of strategies pursued by Pataphysics.

Many of his exchange encounters happen at gallery openings. In some ways it could be seen as a form of art criticism – a difficult role – something that requires oblique strategies, but I think he would see it as providing a much needed feedback loop to a community he is very much part of.

There also appears to be reference to the performative lecture as a style of presentation derived from institutional information delivery that can be imported back and applied to invigorate the academic learning experience through the active demonstration of practicing them.

You mean giving a lecture.

Yes, but I think there has been an influence on how this can be more engaging for the audience by the work of contemporary artists like Erik Bünger and once again the pedagogical cross over with Beuys.
Are there more contemporary examples that we might use as the basis of comparison?

The aesthetic character of the objects have parallels with the work of Claire Fontaine and the ideas he links together are reminiscent of the mind map style diagrams of Suzanne Treister's work HEXEN 2.0. But these artists are located within the domain of formally structured exhibitions sanctioned by the ‘white cube’ museum and gallery economy.

His interest in currency as a mediating tool reminds me more of works such as insertion into ideological circuits by Cildo Meireles, where the addition of artefacts into existing systems brings about a revelation of their inner contradictions.

It should be added that he has engaged with various significant contributors to discourse in the field of socially engaged art. Claire Bishop, Claire Dougherty, and Nato Thompson, the author of *Life as Form* and *The Interventionist Guide* have all received a dice from the knowledge casino during a personal encounter. Apparently even Christian Boltanski, Hou Hanru and David Walsh of MONA have received one of these gifts. He has also played a significant role in a number of exhibitions curated by the artist Peter Hill, well known for his ‘super fiction’ works, which have no doubt been an influence on the meta-fictional structure of the knowledge casino.

What about his interest in outsider art and psychiatry?

I think his description of faking it as an outsider artist while working from the inside is quite telling. It attempts to reframe culture production as part of a complex interconnected web of psychiatry in the service of social engineering.

I’m not sure I like the sound of that.

I guess that was the basis of using the OH&S formalities to point out an internal flaw in the institutional logic.

What was that?

That the teaching of institutional art transgressed occupational health and safety law, because it required existence in a
perpetually destabilized psychological condition and any further consideration would only exacerbate the problem.

Ha! Is he an artist using philosophy or a philosopher using art?

I get the impression that these are explorations in how to speak in, and about, the rapidly diminishing public sphere. This work is a form of applied research in rhetorical techniques that use embodied metaphor as a way of indirectly pointing out that which cannot be spoken of, particularly in an atmosphere of pervasive surveillance.

He seems to be quite aware of the double jeopardy, of what he is doing; this tactic can only be tried once and as with all performance, will become a trope.

Yes, the ironic effect of artistically representing valuable information is a bit like a stage that simultaneously frames to bring into view, while separating the audience from acting on it. In this case it is as though he has staged a form of decentralized protest by inviting the audience one by one into a fictocritical questioning of their subordinate status simply by practicing the art of asking them to ask.

Interesting you should refer to the stage. I guess it is this effect that he describes as the house edge. The awareness of how we are acting, has us act within certain limits, in this sense the entire world really is a stage.

That’s right, and I like the throw away line about undoing things with words, referring to chopping up books, but it sounds like an veiled reference to the performative utterance as theorized by J.L. Austin. Also the idea that we are performing our identity when in the presence of others which is no doubt influenced by the writings of Erving Goffman. There are possibly aspects of Judith Butler, but it is the link to dramaticism by Kenneth Burke that seems to have had the most direct influence on the framing of the work as a dramatic production.

I’m guessing that this invisible fourth wall - the film that runs through everything - is this intangible boundary that he works with as a medium, accessible only through face to face interaction.
When you put it that way, the writings of Grant Kester come to mind, so maybe we can consider this work in the context of a dialogical artwork?

I think there are some links that would suggest that he has been more influenced by the ideas of Martin Buber and David Bohm, but yes, I heard that for many years the working title for this creative research was *Performative Hermeneutics*, and I think he would consider the whole practice as an exploration of performing himself into existence through dialogue.

Impersonating himself a little differently each time he enacted the repeat performances of gifting these props?

Yes, it appears to be a method for improving overall performance, by pulling back from our initial expectation to move beyond our existing understanding, but couldn't these gifts also be seen as object fragments that trace the trajectory of an identity that has entered into a solipsistic melt down?

It does exhibit signs of reflexivity gone mad, but if the text is anything to go by, we are all in it together. In it and aware of it enough to act on it.
THE TRAILER

anti clock wise from the center of the game set, a hundred lines of mercury to articulate the house edge
reality is a green screen
the fourth wall breaks in one direction
explore the margin, read between the lines
deface your self, to know yourself
is the irritation of incompleteness a resource?
to measure is to flatten
harmony, distortion is key
the role of free will is to bias the dice
a rationale to think about
looking back, I see it again
thinking about getting back in the box
hinges on interpretation
imitating the imagination, the secret handshake of irony
never getting to the point, is the point
a break in the infinite link
a choice of indecisions
music is a drug
the problem with holding your tongue
it takes time to realize that's moving in circles is growing in spirals
sphere of knowing is a puzzle in four dimensions
the more you get your way the less give there is
sharpening scissors with a paper bureaucracy
shortcuts get you there or cut short to know where
a future already half past
read, twice, again
bookmarks for acceleration
striking similarity catches on
link and you will miss it
a sign meaning to anything
polishing the surface keeps bringing you back
forgetting the hook, off the hook
meddle with distinction
art can't blow the whistle on its own misrepresentation
the last rung
be aware of the cage
at the hearing, the ears have walls
only half, lost half
living on the edge is brutal
double your money, fold it and put it back in your pocket
a bit of coin a lot of magic
have an opinion on having an opinion
could be the end of a talking snorkel
even if there are no odds
off cuts start talking when they piece it together
a floating signifier, grounded in theory
make the limits of prediction visible, rub up against the house edge
the point of attachment is control
a take on given values
your piece in the game finds its peace in the puzzle
what goes on in ahead without a doubt
the lines converge and perform a corner
what ever goes down it'll probably come up again
reading a roll of paper, speaking of money
freedom is an artifice
a work of art only works when exchanged
a block to create a platform for other blocks
spot the blind spot before it spots you
surf the ever breaking wave of now
as it turns out, everybody has an imagination
asking the tip of your tongue
a circular logic big enough for everyone
how many facets in a self-portrait? no more than can be told
a scattering of shrapnel to those within earshot
assembled autonomous agents
box office behavior
cutbacks on curiosity
evolution of dialogue

180
the exploration of embodiment

forging a fragmented head that never forgets

illusion of, taken by surprise but forgiven for gifting

hope for the hidden hand

intuitive insights

jokers pack a punch line

knowledge kills

laughter levels

metaphors mesmerize

a noise, the signal

outer limits, in a corner

performed by the script

quote yourself out of context

risky research rules

starts and stops

text imagines technology

understanding overstated

take virtual advice

with or with out a window

often at the crossroads, a sign of the times

a fork in the path

beginning to end

never ready

infinite twists

odd number but mostly even

sixth sense

by digital appointment

running out of time

collapsing into space

ambushing ambiguity

a single doubt

gambles on exposing the house edge
10x10x10

LINKS
CHROMAKEY REALITY

Screenplay
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Screenplay

Thought experiment
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thought_experiment

Allegory of the Cave
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Allegory_of_the_Cave

"All the world's a stage"
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/All_the_world%27s_a_stage

Simulacra and Simulation
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simulacra_and_Simulation

Frame story
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frame_story

Bicameralism
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bicameralism_(psychology)

Proprioception
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Proprioception

Chroma keying
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chroma_key

Privileged access
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Privileged_access
BREAK IN THE 4th WALL

Fourth wall
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fourth_wall

Meta-reference
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Meta-reference

Actor-observer asymmetry
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Actor-observer_asymmetry

Cinema etiquette

Know thyself
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Know_thyself

Self-knowledge

Dramaturgy

Lead and follow
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lead_and_follow#Hijacking

Bicameralism
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bicameralism_(psychology)

Green room
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Green_room
BETWEEN THE LINES

Leveling
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leveling_(philosophy)

Hermeneutics
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hermeneutics

Hermeneutics of suspicion

Critical reading

Cognitive bias
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cognitive_bias

Bracketing
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bracketing_(phenomenology)

Internet of things

Communicative action
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Communicative_action

Public domain
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Public_domain

Leveling (disambiguation)
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Levelling_(disambiguation)
BLANK SLATE

Tabula rasa
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tabula_rasa

An Essay Concerning Human Understanding

Character
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Character_(symbol)

Cast
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cast

Spell
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spelling

Grammar
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grimoire

Scrabble
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scrabble

Cipher
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cipher

Rosetta Stone

Intertextuality
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Intertextuality
BROKEN DOMINO

Irrational number
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Irrational_number

Irrationality

Rational irrationality
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rational_irrationality

Butterfly effect
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Butterfly_effect

Distortion

Percolation
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Percolation

Domino effect

Cascading failure
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cascading_failure

Progressive collapse
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Progressivecollapse

Theatre of the Absurd
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theatre_of_the_Absurd
SPACE DOUBT

Depth perception
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Depth_perception

Alice in Wonderland Syndrome
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alice_in_Wonderland_syndrome

Forced perspective
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Forced_perspective

Trompe-l'œil
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trompe-l%27œil

Projection (disambiguation)
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Projection

2.5D
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John D. Caputo

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GIVEN A WAY

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Marcel Mauss
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Give way

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Red tape

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Death

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Uncanny valley

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BOOK?MARK

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Dog ear

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John Latham

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Search engine optimization

Mute Book
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MATCH TRICK

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Critical pedagogy

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CAUSAL CHAIN

Links may refer to:

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Hyperlinks
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Signifying chain
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A SIGN

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ART SKY

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John Cage Jr.


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Clipping
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Coin clipping

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HALF AGAIN

Self-reference

Half-truth

Half-time

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You can't have your cake and eat it
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CUTTING EDGE

Cutting edge

Stone tool

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MONEY FOLD

The Persistence of Memory

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The Best Coin Fold
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THREE SIDED COIN

Inflation

Coin magic
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Spiral of Silence Theory

Voice Risk Analysis

Speech synthesis

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INFO STOP

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Doublethink

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Censorship
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LOW ODDS

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Determinism

Eternalism

Growing block universe

Nietzschean affirmation
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Solipsism
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Syncope

Blanking
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KEY HOLE

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Object-oriented ontology

Security clearance

Background check
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Keyhole problem

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KEY TO THE CITY

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Escape artist
ADDED VALUE

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System of systems

Swarm intelligence
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The Society of Mind

Memetics
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Self-awareness

Distributed cognition
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Maurits Cornelis Escher

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1

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Stan Gooch

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Phi
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1000 STILL

FROM THE SIX YEAR PRODUCTION
SPOKEN FOR

THE SET

EDITION / AUDITION / ADDITION

SET DOORSTOP

SHORT FALL

CONTROL
THOUGHTOGRAPHY

2015

BEEHIVE / BEHAVE

IN QUESTION

COLLECTION
BLACK BOX

BOOKS/BOX

ARMIES

ORDER

SOCIAL

NETWORK

INSIDE GAME
THREAD

CONTROL

GIVE A WAY

DEFINE GRAIN

ESCAPE

ARTIST

WHITE CUBE

BLACK BOX

STRATEGY
SECOND TIME

MISQUOTE

TEXT

BROKEN LINKS

SMOKE SCREEN

SUGGESTION
SIGNS

SYMBOLS

ROUNDING UP

CONFUSION OF HORIZONS

EMPATHY

CONSTRUCT

2014 >

CONFORMITY
EXPOSE

IMPOSE

MIRROR

MOVE

KEY

FRAME

TWIST
DROP OUT

TURN ON

REGRESS

FINDING

HOLES

SPIN

MARKET

MEDDLE

WITH

DISTINCTION

RULES

WITH

PLAY
FRAGMENTS 2011
DECONSTRUCT UNCOVER
CALCULATE
BRAND
PERFORM LECTURE
THE HYPER LINKS ALL LEAD BACK TO ONE REFERENCE... THE POINT?

THE POINT IS YOU ARE THE

** PERFORMER, THIS IS THE POINT