



A PROJECT BY LISA RADFORD

with Blair Trethowan, Geoff Newton, Art Workers' Coalition, Jon Campbell, Howard Arkley, Amanda Marburg, Linda Marrinon, Ry Haskings, Andree Korpys and Markus Löffler, Sharon Goodwin, Ronnie Van Hout, Sam George, Francis Alÿs, Michelle Ussher, Jenny Watson, Matthew Greaves, Matthias Wermke & Mischa Leinkauf, Colleen Ahern, Tony Garifalakis, Lane Cormick, Guy Benfield, Liang Luscombe, Juan Davila, Nicholas Mangan, Guillermo Faivovich and Nicolás Goldberg, James Lynch, Mathew Jones, Nikos Pantazopoulos, John Meade, DAMP, Ron Robertson-Swann, Matthew Griffin, A Constructed World, Kati Rule.

March 7 - April 5, 2014

Margaret Lawrence Gallery
Victorian College of the Arts, The University of Melbourne
40 Dodds Street, Southbank VIC 3006
www.vca.unimelb.edu.au/gallery

Catalogue Design by Narelle Desmond
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Texts by Kate Daw, Nic Tammens, Jarrod Rawlins and Patrice Sharkey

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Cover Image: Lisa Radford Furniture Painting (Blankets & Bureacracy), 2014

DEAR MASATO, ALL AT ONCE

WHO IS LISA RADFORD?

BY KATE DAW

My phone chirps three times in quick succession, indicating three text messages have arrived almost simultaneously, tumbling in on top of one another, into my inbox. “That will be Lisa Radford”, my daughter announces, without bothering to actually check the phone. She is confident in her prediction. And she is right. No one else sends texts quite like Lisa Radford.

Then comes a reflective pause, “Mum, who is Lisa Radford?” Good question. Lisa Radford flies somewhat under the national art radar and yet is one of the most ‘connected’ persons I think I have ever met. Vikki McInnes and I figured almost a year ago that Lisa was someone whose work deserves far more attention and focus than it has garnered thus far. While she has a long-standing and impressive body of work behind her, with so many varying strands and pathways to venture down, her external status remains somewhat elusive.

This is not a simple case of a reclusive and retiring personality shying from the public eye. Lisa is, quite simply, out there. In fact, she is at everything, knows everyone, is in continual conversation with a variety of folk around the world, not to mention Facebook and Twitter. And the ABC newsfeed/response hotline, and those are just the things I know about her and her social media proclivities. She is working all the time, either writing and/or making art. And she helps runs an artist-run space (TCB). And she teaches at VCA (is completely devoted to her students) and she is doing her MFA. Did I mention too that she is a prolific sender of texts? According to artist and friend Colleen Ahern, Lisa thinks with her phone.

When you start working, everybody is in your studio—the past, your friends, enemies, the art world, and above all, your own ideas—all are there. But as you continue painting, they start leaving, one by one, and you are left completely alone. Then, if you're lucky, even you leave.¹

Another interesting fact about Lisa Radford's practice is that while she is engaged in all manner of art activities, she continues, doggedly, to work painstakingly (one could say obsessively) as a painter. Her paintings detail many things in extreme close-up and suggest knowledge-through-process and questions of control. There is an inevitable sense of being grounded, anchored to a dialogue with yourself that painting still affords, as well as a warping, a stretching and shrinking, of conventional measures of time.²

It is the spanning of these two parts of Lisa's practice that are of interest here and the ways in which they influence and affect one another in a continuous sense of work and action; active, curious and passionately dynamic.

1 John Cage to Philip Guston

2 For a really incisive, beautifully written analysis of Lisa's painting practice, I would point readers to Rosemary Forde's essay 'Long live painting!!! In friendship', from *c. At Sea, Before Dinner* (exhibition catalogue), Westspace, Melbourne, 2013

VROUWENVRAGEN

(WOMEN'S QUESTIONS?, 1960—ONGOING), JEF GEYS

BY NICHOLAS TAMMENS

Beginning as a list of socio-political questions, the first iteration of *Women's Questions?* was written in Jef Geys' all girls' secondary school classroom in Balen, Belgium, and was purportedly added to with contributions from his students. It was made initially as a pedagogical device, not unlike a list one would write on a blackboard to stage a call-and-response with students. This particular list was written in black marker on a long roll of brown construction paper with each 'question' written on its own line and rendered in Geys' distinctly capitalised and legible handwriting. The list hung at the back of Geys' classroom and was slowly added to, eventually amassing over 170 questions. This particular list was written in Flemish, the regional dialect of a Dutch native to Belgium and South Western Holland, but later iterations would be translated into a range of languages foreign to Geys himself.

In 1970 Geys was asked to show some artwork by the women of the local socialist society club at their annual exposition in his hometown of Balen—they had expressed pleasure in seeing his 'seed packet' paintings and Geys agreed, on the condition that *Women's Questions* would be exhibited as well. This was to be the first exhibition of *Women's Questions* outside of the classroom.

Although I describe the manifestation of the original 'work', *Women's Questions* can be better understood as a text with multiple material imprints; there are more iterations of this work than perhaps even Geys is aware of. Iterations are often made anew for an exhibition, translated for the linguistic context of their exhibition, rendered on different papers (wallpapers, varying colours, varying sizes), but always in Geys' distinctly

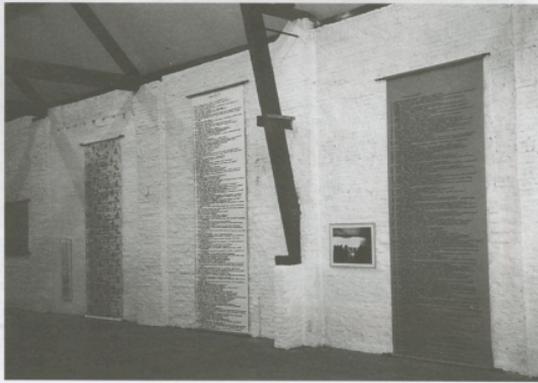


image: from Kempens Informatieblad
(Special Edition New York), 2007

nondescript handwriting (a critic described it as mechanic, like a typeface or a layman's script)—these lists are either large (1.40 x 7m approximately) and scroll-like, or closer to a regular paper size and composed on multiple pages.

In researching Geys' art practice, one discovers there is a lack of information that may elucidate the specifics of a work (here I speak with and beyond the site of the artwork; including Geys' methodologies, narratives, ideas, etc.) and in a sense this is typical of the lore surrounding Geys—he is prolific in the distribution of content relating to his practice. Facing this as a researcher can be disorienting with the possibility being the effect of making facts appear as rumour. Geys' tabloid *Kempens Informatieblad* serves to feed more information into this seemingly impossible task.

After Geys purchased the community newspaper (*Kempens* began as a free paper, the type slipped under front doors and crammed into mailboxes), *Kempens* has been published as a series of Special Editions alongside every major exhibition of Geys' since 1968. On numerous occasions, the editions have been unrelated to the specifics of the exhibition (notably, an issue was dedicated to Wikileaks, another was edited by his daughter). It would be false to assume that *Kempens* adopts the informative role of a catalogue, in much more abstract terms it serves as an organ to Geys' production—distributing corollary content: photographs, fragments, essays, fiction; all ambiguous in relationship. In the spirit of this circulation, *Women's Questions?* has been addressed numerous times in *Kempens* and has had multiple issues dedicated to it; Geys has used the newspaper as a means to republish segments of the 'questions', which further favours a reading of the work as a text to be distributed, rather than a series of discrete singular material objects.

NEPOTISM OR EASY MONEY

BY JARROD RAWLINS

Latour's Actor–Network–Theory is summarised as a theory which "... maps relations that are simultaneously material (between things) and semiotic (between concepts). It assumes that many relations are both material and semiotic".

Cool. That's funny.

I have an idea for a work in your show which is called *24 Hour Mall Rats* where we get the film *Mall Rats* and slow it down so it takes 24 hours to cycle through. The idea for this slowing down will also be the basis for my text on nepotism.

You made me laugh out loud in the Officeworks queue.

Why do you want me to write about nepotism?

You don't have to. Hang on I'm going to copy paste some information...

I was interested in that quote of yours I sent. Because of the way I organised the show

I just ordered this book by Todd May on how friendship subverts neoliberalism. Because I was asked to do a show about 'networks' and although I know what I do I'm also cynical of it.

I liked what you wrote for Damp. When we made the cake.

I can tell you every artwork in the show and you can write about that but that's too hard and I'm not sure it's that interesting.

Great. Thanks

In *We Have Never Been Modern* Latour rejects the notion that “nature is one, but that humans have numerous diverse perspectives on it.” Or as Harman suggests on the same page, any consideration that humans and ‘the world’ live in mutual isolation is nothing more than shamanism.

Taussig wrote about shamanism, myths, magic, etc. “Wildness challenges the unity of the symbol, the transcendent totalization binding the image to that which it represents. Wildness pries open this unity and in its place creates slippage...Wildness is the death space of signification”.

The actants in Latour’s theory, the ones between things and concepts, may be the same actants which appear in my dream for more nepotism in state owned institutions and less in the private sector. This is an actual dream, not a metaphor to describe my wishes. In this dream (I am of course naked most of the time) I am running an art gallery in which I am mostly showing the work of my friends and their friends, nothing much else really. Sometimes, the dream’s actants pass me messages which are symbols for nepotism. Things like bras which are on fire, which are not as subtle in their symbolical message as things like budgerigar nests which sometimes also appear in the dreams.

The problem with this dream I have for a more transparent nepotistic truth in the art world (aside from being naked most of the time), is that it is less simultaneously material and semiotic and more just semiotic. Nepotism is a simple truth, not worthy of the complexities of being of being naked and exposed.

Is that correct? (say hi to Moo for me).

ON LOVE

BY PATRICE SHARKEY

When attempting to understand the motivations and concerns that underpin an artist's practice, personal biography is often a good place to start. Sure, in a post-modern age where ironic self-awareness is the norm, singular expressions of one's true self don't carry much weight. Yet on some unconscious or inadvertent level, there remains no escaping your own past; our place in the present is continually informed and defined by our histories.

The enduring significance of autobiography is made explicit by Blair Trethowan in *Love 2005*, a suite of six collages that bring together a loose collection of moments and in-jokes drawn from the artist's life. Each work in the series incorporates distinct symbols, texts and local myths as way to look at culture as it is lived from a personal perspective:

1. *Love* — a handcrafted string-patterned text that reads 'Love' referenced from a book on craft published in 1974, the year of Trethowan's birth.

2. *Fuck in the back seat* — a vandalised 1980s Road Transport Authority sticker that once read 'Buckle up in the back seat' but has been defaced with black marker so that the original message of safety is transformed into a insolent statement against prescribed ways of being in the world.¹

3. *Sweat Skulls and Love Hearts* (p14)— photographs of Trethowan's torso, where sweat marks on his t-shirt produced while skateboarding have formed an uncanny set of emblems: the skull and the heart.

4. *The Queen's Teeth* — a \$5 Australian note folded in such a way to create a Rorschachian version of fellatio.

5. *Led Zeppelin Mutlu* — a photograph of a Zeppelin airship painted on the wall of his parent's house in homage to the artist Mutlu Cerkez, who as a child apparently painted Pink Floyd's Dark Side of the Moon album cover on the wall of his parent's kitchen.

6. *Skate Sequence* — a photograph of Trethowan performing a skateboard trick, wearing artist Jon Campbell's *YEAH* flag as a patch (which had recently been proposed as the new Australian flag by the local arts community).

For Trethowan, the six-part work was conceived as an exercise in better understanding the places he inhabited and the cultural context in which he existed. Such self-reflection is important since — in the words of *A Constructed World* — 'culture is not something that is delivered to you. It builds up from what you didn't know you were doing'.²

While Trethowan asserts the centrality of the artist's identity, *Love* should not be read as a purely introspective conceit. Rather, each personal narrative is an acknowledgment of our implicit and intricate relationship with images, materials, places and people, and looks decidedly outward towards much broader concerns around love, death, family, friendship, power, freedom, action and resistance.

There exists a recurring desire to reconcile one's subjectivity with the political and social writ large. This is, however, complicated by the fact that each of Trethowan's personally significant referents is presented on large sections of bark sourced

from the Injalak Art Centre in the Northern Territory. In adopting a medium regularly used by Indigenous Australians in the making of sacred objects, Trethowan's use of bark can be seen as a potentially naïve form of cultural appropriation that gives rise to 'a sense of arrogance to a suburban-white-boy artist making claim to Indigenous practices'.³

In 'Whitefella Jump Up', (published in Quarterly Essay two years prior to Trethowan making *Love*), Germaine Greer argues for the need for Australia to own up to its Aboriginality:

There is only one way to purge the taint, uncover the secret, and ease the otherwise eternal regret, and that is – not to give the country back to the Aborigines because it isn't ours to give – to admit that it has been an Aboriginal country all along.⁴

Another way to think about Trethowan's use of bark is to position it as a critical unravelling of an individual's relationship to place and history that stretches back much further than our own generation.⁵ *Love* is not simply a diaristic account but an attempt to understand where one comes from in a much broader sense, unlatched from recent time, and to reveal what has been left 'undealt' with in our collective past. (Here it is relevant to know that *Love* was made during a time when the then Prime Minister John Howard staunchly refused to apologise to the Stolen Generations.)

Still, a sense of inadequacy persists: does the sincerity of Trethowan's appropriation justify the borrowing of another's culture for his own ends? I'm less interested in an answer to this



proposition than what the provocation may open up. When culture can be a passive space to inhabit, a gesture that pushes us to start a conversation around under-addressed political issues is both refreshing and valuable. Again, invoking the words of *A Constructed World*, '[Blair] didn't only ask what culture could do for him but rather what he could do for culture. He was kind of threateningly open for that place'.⁶

There are things that are difficult and complicated to talk about, which is why they are worth talking about — with sensitivity and care. If we want to shift the status quo, then getting used to speaking about them is important.

1 Danae Mossman, *Love who you are. Who are you?*, Love, exhibition catalogue, Gertrude Contemporary Art Spaces, Melbourne, 2005, unpaginated.

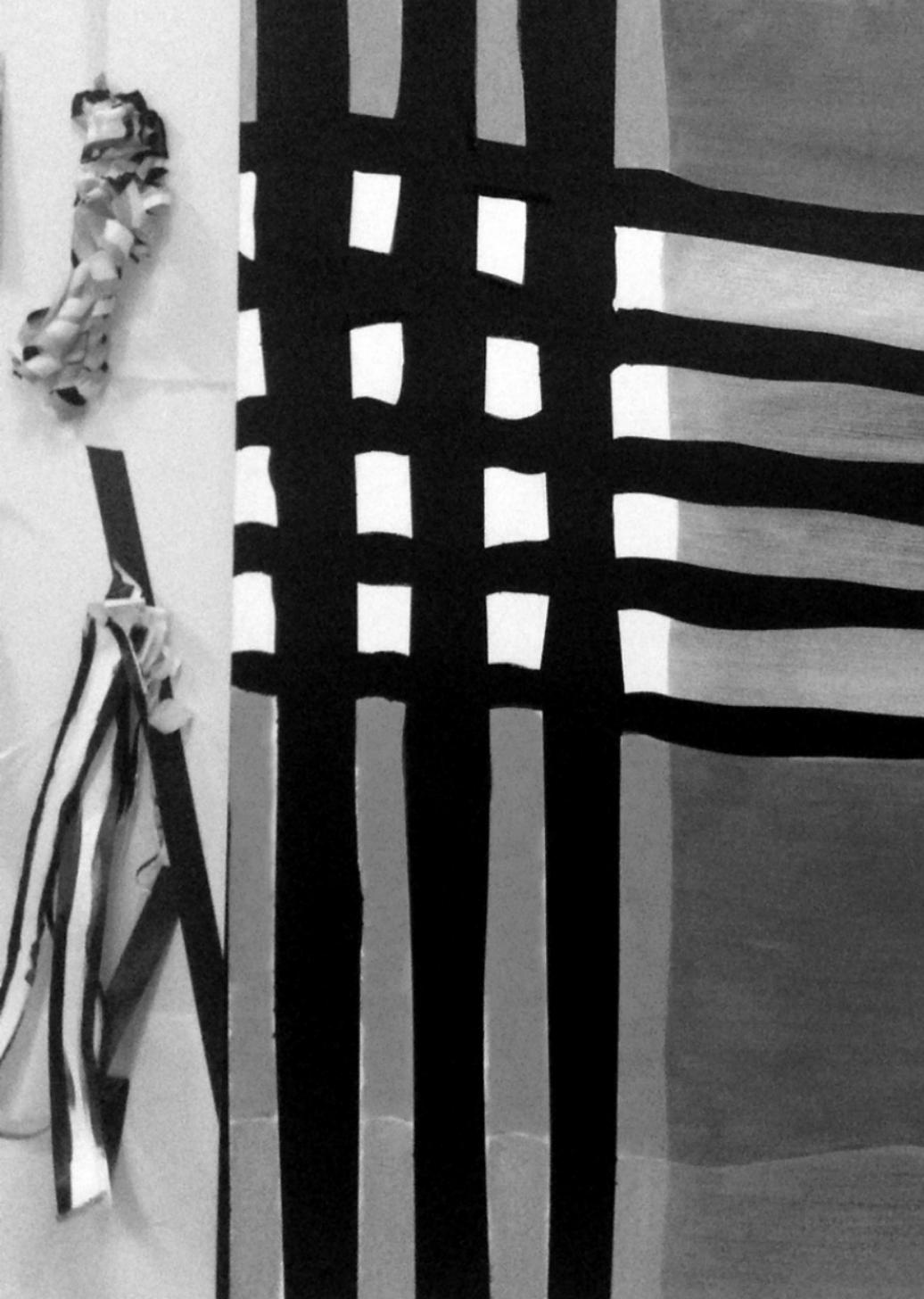
2 *A Constructed World*, *Not knowing is a shared space*, as part of *Posture ... Again*, Uplands Gallery, Melbourne, 2005.

3 Geoff Newton, quoted in, Lisa Radford, *Geoff Newton: Fan Tribute History Parallel Bootleg Paintings (or: Career paths are not the same as songlines)*, Discipline, Winter 2013, p.98.

4 Germaine Greer, *Whitefella Jump Up: The Shortest Way to Nationhood*, Quarterly Essay, no.11, August 2003, p.13.

5 Danae Mossman, *Love who you are. Who are you?*, 2005, unpaginated.

6 *A Constructed World*, *Don't Steal Music*, 24 March 2006: <http://blairethowan.blogspot.com.au/> [accessed 2 March 2014].



RON ROBERTSON-SWANN

Vault, 1978
prefabricated steel

Images courtesy of Geoff Wallis



DAMP

Cesello Freddo, 2013
carrara marble

Photo credit: Matthew Stanton



GUILLERMO FAIVOVICH AND NICOLÁS GOLDBERG

Vol.I: El Taco: Meteorite “El Taco” (Smithsonian side view), 2010
Meteorite

Image courtesy of the artists and Nusser & Baumgart, Germany



NICHOLAS MANGAN

untitled (core sample), 2009

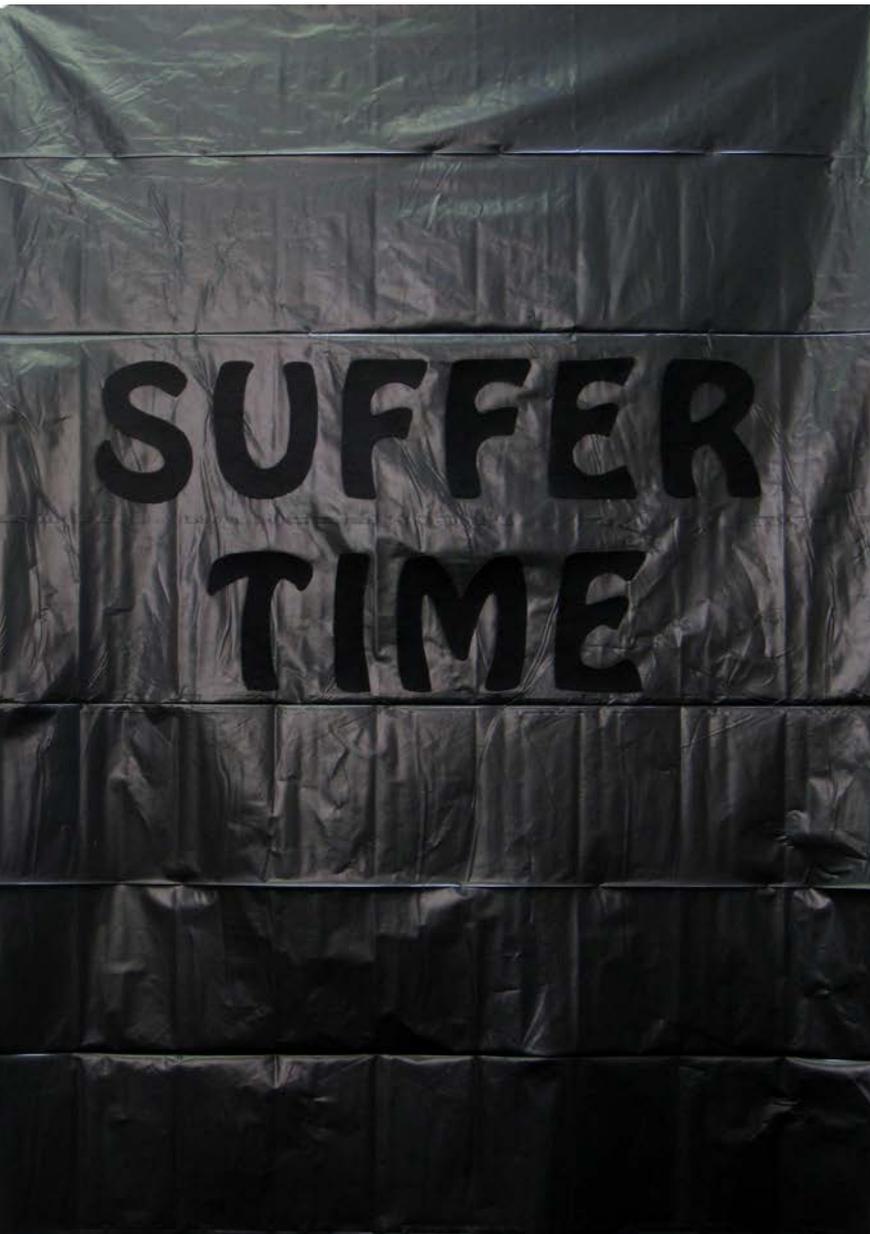
Image courtesy of the artist and Sutton Gallery, Melbourne



TONY GARIFALAKIS

Veiled Threat #2, 2011
felt and plastic

Image courtesy of the artist and Hugo Michell Gallery, Adelaide



COLLEEN AHERN

Gene, 2007
oil on board

Image courtesy the artist and Neon Parc, Melbourne



MATHEW JONES

tattoo on unidentified man as part of 'Adelaide Tattoos'
a public art project for the 1994 Adelaide Festival



JAMES LYNCH

Untitled Spray Cans and Newsprint, 2000
acrylic and pencil on paper, plaster, spray enamel and adhesive

Image courtesy of the artist
Collection of Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre



GUY BENFIELD

Untitled, 2000
video stills

Image courtesy of La La Hi Prism VideoLabel



LANE CORMICK

Calypso Felimo Fiato, 1999
video stills

Image courtesy of La La Hi Prism VideoLabel and Daine Singer Gallery, Melbourne



SAM GEORGE

Untitled, 2013
digital image



FRANCIS ALÿS

Postcards, 2010
The Museum of Modern Art, New York.



LIANG LUSCOMBE

After Jonas Bohlin (from Spring Street, the office and the vending machine), 2013
mixed media

Photo credit: Christo Crocker



JUAN DAVILA

Yes, 2013
Silkscreen on paper
Edition 30

Courtesy of Larry Rawling Fine Art Prints
© Juan Davila, Courtesy Kalli Rolfe Contemporary Art



KATI RULE

Untitled, 2013
oil on linen



BLAIR TRETHOWAN

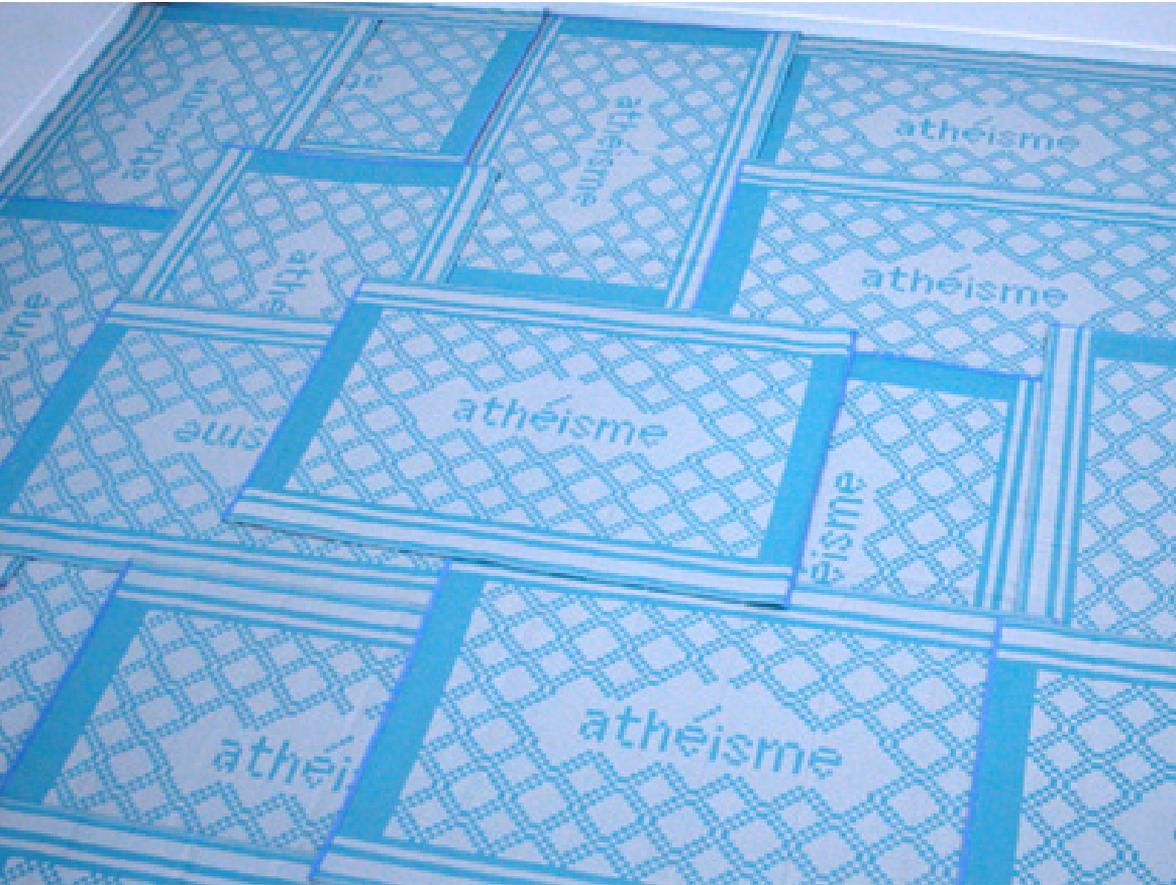
Love 2005, 2005
installation view



A CONSTRUCTED WORLD

Aphasia Mat, 2008
synthetic materials
edition 100

Produced by ACW and Cneai= Paris, 2008



MATTHEW GRIFFIN

Construction, 2006
video still



MATTHEW GREAVES

Freunde, 2012

Single channel video of Dr. Philip Nitschke reading aloud
from Friedrich Nietzsche's 'Twilight of the Idols'



MATTHIAS WERMKE & MISCHA LEINKAUF

Trotzdem Danke (Thanks Anyway), 2006
video stills

© Matthias Wermke/ Mischa Leinkauf



AMANDA MARBURG

Veronica, 2012
oil on linen

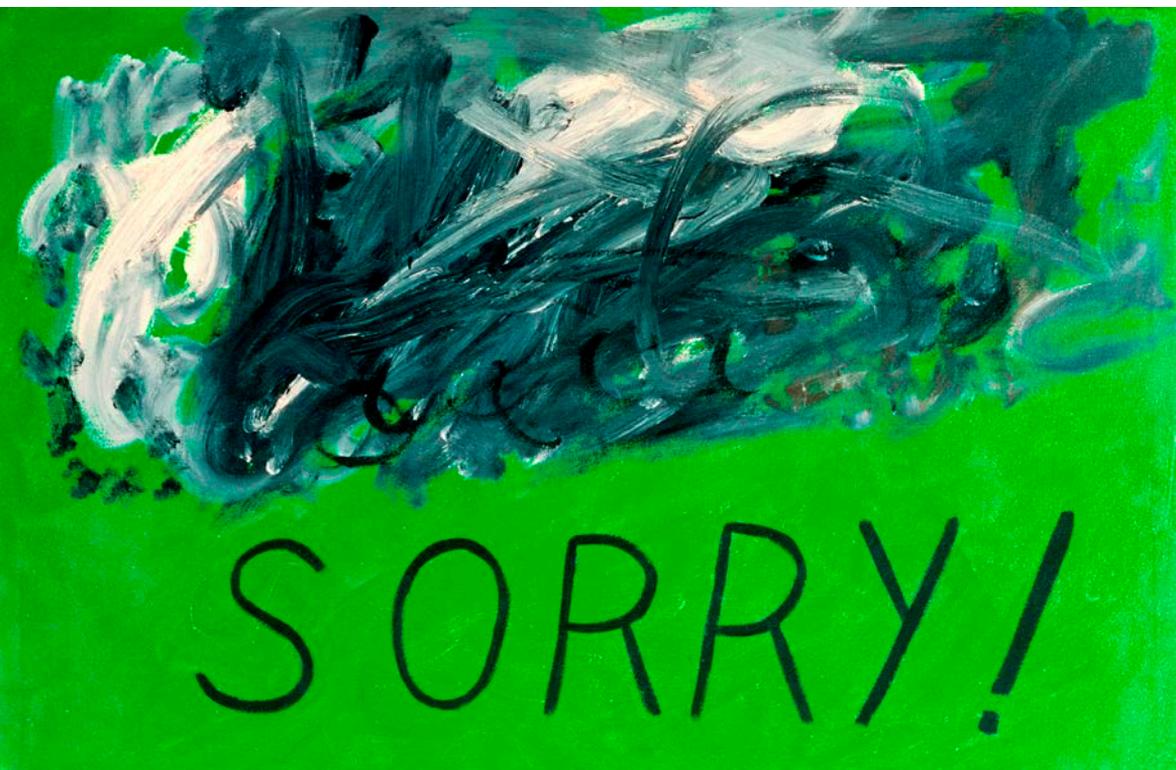
Image courtesy of the artist and Oslen Irwin Gallery, Sydney



LINDA MARRINON

Sorry, 1982
synthetic polymer paint on canvas

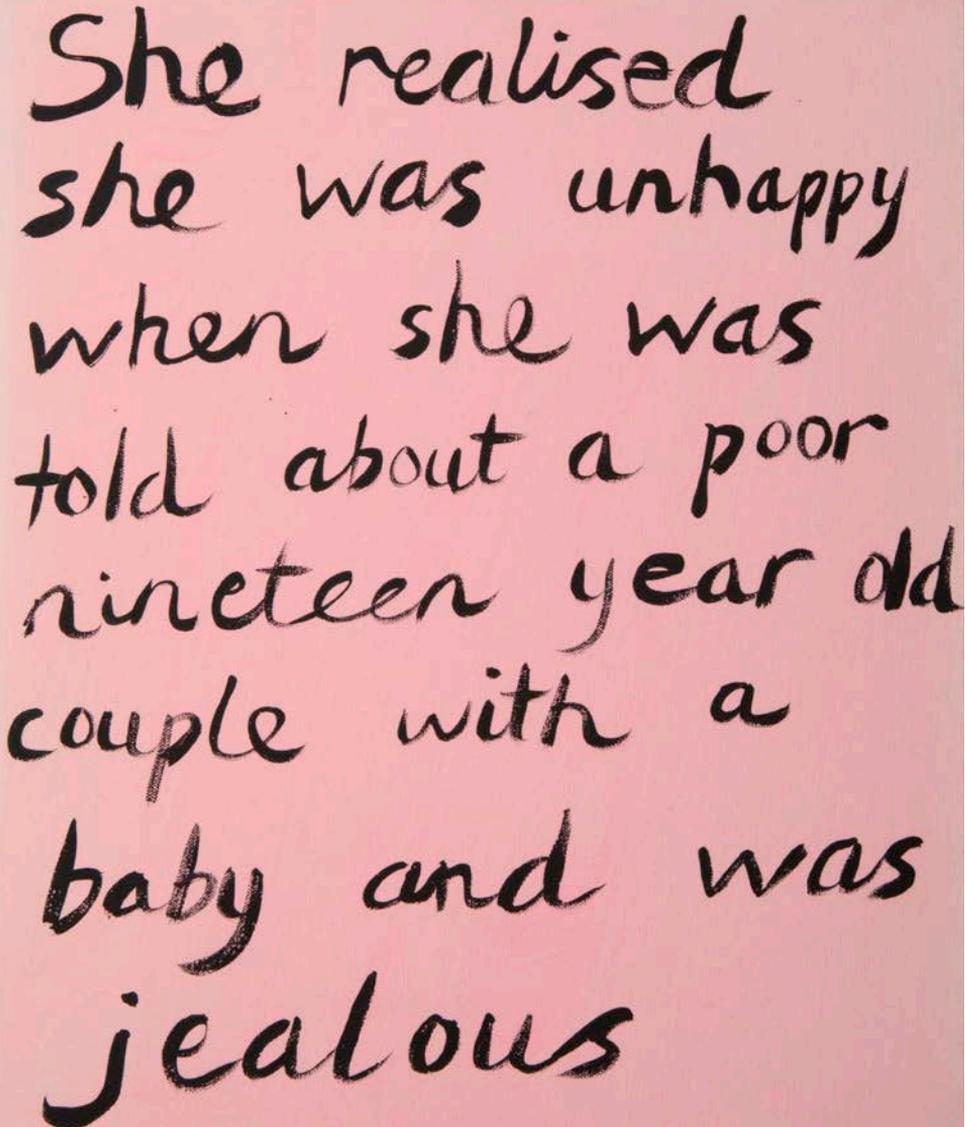
Museum of Contemporary Art, purchased 1990
Image courtesy of the artist and Museum of Contemporary Art Australia © the artist



JENNY WATSON

Boy With A Blue Guitar (detail), 1992
oil on taffeta with netting and sequins
plus synthetic polymer paint on stretcher

Image courtesy of the artist and Roslyn Oxley 9 Gallery, Sydney



She realised
she was unhappy
when she was
told about a poor
nineteen year old
couple with a
baby and was
jealous

MICHELLE USSHER

oil on paper

Image courtesy of the artist and Station, Melbourne



SHARON GOODWIN

Afterworld, 2006
acrylic and gouache on foamcore



RONNIE VAN HOUT

House Ruin, 1997

acrylic on plastic and resin

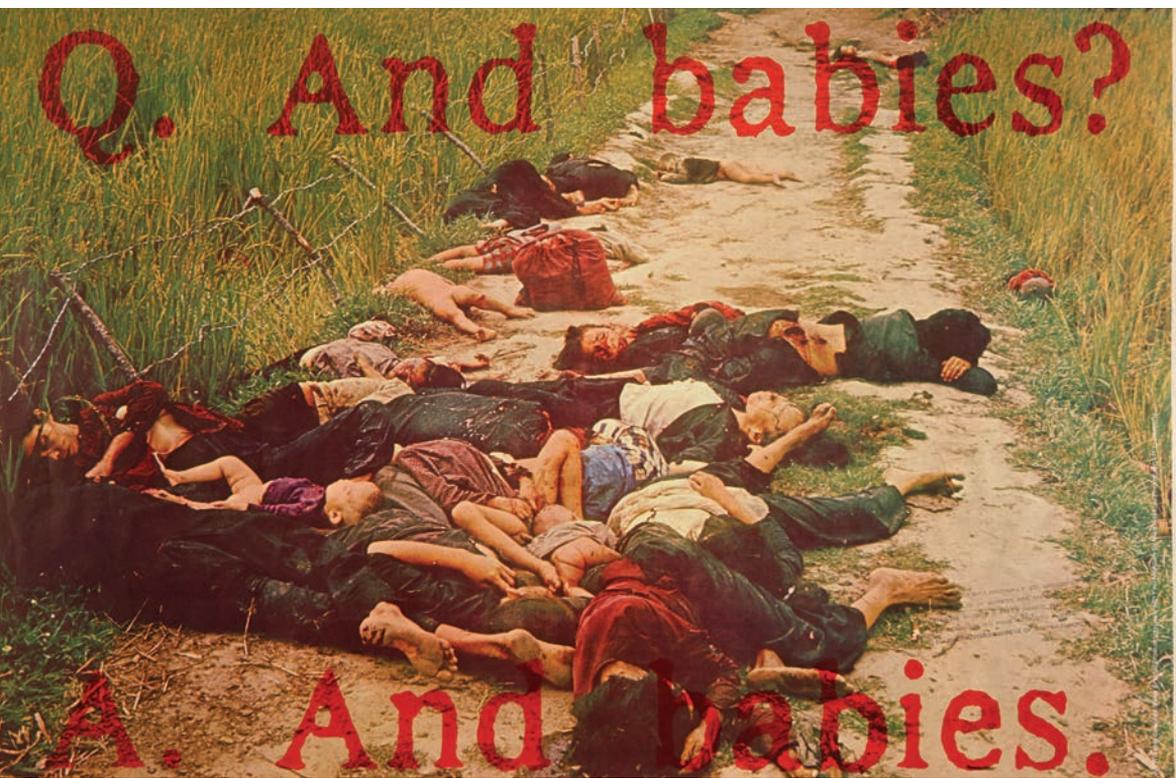
Image courtesy of the artist and Darren Knight Gallery, Sydney



ART WORKERS COALITION

Q: And babies? A: And babies, 1969
offset lithograph

Collection: Geoff and Nola Wallis



GEOFF NEWTON

Untitled (After Blair), 2012
acrylic on polycotton



NIKOS PANTAZOPOULOS

is blue and self reflective, 2010



JOHN MEADE

Mean Yellow, 1997
industrial plastic bristle

Image courtesy of the artist and Sutton Gallery, Melbourne
Photo credit: Christopher Snee



HOWARD ARKLEY

Zappo Head, ca. early 1990s
hand coloured screen print

© The Estate of Howard Arkley, courtesy of Kalli Rolfe Contemporary Art, Melbourne



JON CAMPBELL

Weak as Piss, 2009
screen printed and hand stitched banner

Image courtesy of the artist, Darren Knight Gallery, Sydney and Station, Melbourne



ANDREE KORPYS AND MARKUS LÖFFLER

The Nuclear Football, 2002
video stills

Images courtesy of the artists



RY HASKINGS

The Thirty Cases of Major Zeman 3, 2012
screenprint

