



Image: Bec Stevens And Amanda Shone. Proposal for Plimsoll garden entry

THE PLIMSOLL INQUIRY

A REPORT

Curatorium:
Mary Scott, John Vella, Paul Zika, Jonathan Holmes, Nikos Papastergiadis, Fiona Lee, Maria Kunda, Ross Gibson, Lucy Bleach

[Plimsoll Inquiry Bulletin](#)

OVERVIEW

The Plimsoll Inquiry (The PI) was a multi-event project held in two-phases; the first a seven-week ‘exhibition as inquiry’ in the Plimsoll Gallery in 2013 at the Tasmanian College of the Arts (TCotA). The second phase was a series of artist residencies by artist-educators, Sean Lowry, Spiros Panigriakis and Alex Gawronski throughout 2014-15, and the implimentation of an e-platform for dissemination of ideas, documentation and processes produced during and for *The PI* and beyond.

As with any good ‘inquiry’ a report is formed, and this publication makes public its findings. These findings are fresh and undigsted—that is they have not been mulled over in order to culminate in a final conclusion, nor are they critical analysis of the project, rather is is a communal documentation of a process unfolding; it is a platform for broadcasting moments and ideas captured as they are forming. The contents are entirely co-productive, demonstrating the potential for communal modes of engagement between participants and an art school gallery program.

Likewise this e-booklet is in a pilot format; it aims to contribute to a proposed e-publishing arm of the Plimsoll Gallery. The decision to mount an e-publishing program for the Plimsoll Gallery was a committment born out of the numerous *PI* curatorium meetings negotiated over 2012-13.

Rather than the regular hard print catalogues that are usually a culmination of an exhibition, this publication is an example that demonstates dialogue and process in action—something that can be added to or subtracted as needed. Amidst a background of environment of economic and environmental restraint, its trial is a proposed alternative to the more static printed format formerly produced each month.

Following on from this publication it is proposed that at some stage the Plimsoll Gallery will develop a more rigorous peer-reviewed program for disseminating critical thinking that eminated from TCotA .

THE ARTIST FACIITATOR’S STATEMENT

The Tasmanian College of the Arts (TCotA), in consenting to *The Plimsoll Inquiry*, has engaged in the perfect conversation—the two-way process of agreement and disagreement, played out in hermeneutic style between the interlocutors; in this case it was the banter between TCotA and participants who took part in *The PI*.

Good conversation is not easy, its simple everyday format makes it an often overlooked exchange, but there are some significant unspoken rules, in a genuine hermeneutic conversation the interlocutors must accept a degree of vulnerabilitiy: an acceptance that *perhaps* the other might be right; an honest consideration of the other, and the willingness to keep the conversation alive. Questioning in this way sustains good coversation.

In their acceptance of this project and its many foibles TCotA, its professional and academic staff and students, participated in a genuine conversation; a project where they allowed the exposure of failures and stood to lose a deal of credibility. TCotA were not only gracious and encouraging in motivating *The PI*, but in doing so also colluded with my PhD, and for that I am very grateful. In an era of accountability, not many institutions would take such a risk.

Fiona Lee
PhD Candidate
Tasmanian College of the Arts
Hobart
July 2015



MEDIA RELEASE

The Plimsoll Inquiry

13th September – 3rd November 2013

Open weekdays 12 – 5

(includes the Wednesday Night Fiasco Wednesday 6-9pm during Oct in the Hunter St area)

<http://pibulletin.blogspot.com.au/>

The Plimsoll Inquiry (PI) is a new initiative connecting the Plimsoll Gallery, Tasmanian College of the Arts, Hunter St, with contemporary artists, its port environment and its community, towards developing innovative and experimental public interactions. With the expansion of contemporary arts practice, artists are creating new opportunities for exchange with diverse audiences, seeking participation as an integral component of the artwork. From socially engaged works to digital art, artists are increasingly looking to people and the spaces around them as partners in an ongoing creative collaboration. *The Plimsoll Inquiry* initiative aims to foster these types of exchanges, situating the Plimsoll Gallery as a hub for generating wide-ranging public activation; bringing art out into the street in collaboration with others, opening up opportunities for all players involved.

The Plimsoll Gallery will be open to the public from 12 – 5pm week days, with additional programmed events announced throughout the seven weeks. On Wednesday nights during October 2013, *The Plimsoll Inquiry* will host Wednesday Night Fiasco, an event that spills out from the Centre for the Arts onto the Hunter St dock, creating a zone of organised events mingled with the regular activities of the area. Wednesday Night Fiasco aims to generate a micro festival atmosphere, with music and food vans, to encourage diverse participation from artists and performers in combination with engagement from the businesses and community of the local port area.

We would like to invite all members of our community to be part of *The Plimsoll Inquiry*

Curatorium:

Lucy Bleach // Prof Ross Gibson // Emeritus Prof Jonathan Holmes //

Dr Maria Kunda // Fiona Lee // Prof Nikos Papastergiadis // Dr Mary Scott //

John Vella // Paul Zika //

Artists, writers and participants include:

Juliet Beale // Lucy Bleach // Dr Eliza Burke // Steven Carson // Scot Cotterell // Annie Geard // Prof Ross Gibson // Tom Hall // Andrew Harper //

Dr Lucy Hawthorne // Melanie Herbert // Laura Hindmarsh //

Hobart Improv Collective // Leigh Hobba // Dr Jan Hogan //

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Rae Marr // Ros Meeker // Milan Milojevic // Dr Anne Mestitz // Wendy Morrow //

Dr Llewellyn Negrin // Nuclei // Dr Brigita Ozolins // Prof Nikos Papastergiadis //

Sally Rees // Mikaela Revell // Jack Robbins // Cath Robinson // Dr Raef Sawford // Christine Scott // Dr

Mary Scott // Amanda Shone // Bec Stevens //

Dr Lucia Usmiani // John Vella // Dr Martin Walch // Meg Walch // Tricky Walsh //

Dr Matt Warren // Dr Yvette Watt // Julien Williams // Paul Zika //

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<http://www.utas.edu.au/plimsoll>



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Over a seven-week period a series of one-off events will take place within the Gallery, at the Centre for the Arts and its Hunter St precinct. You will be able to eat vegetarian food among live farm animals, listen to interviews, and panel discussions, and participate in drawing workshops and public debates. You might dance with a performance artist, leave your problems with the PI's resident 'agony aunt', make dumplings, print money to shop with, shout from a speaker's box and experience new and experimental works by national and local sound artists and musicians.

You will witness and participate in a rich, moving feast of dynamic art projects.

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FACT SHEET

THE MASTER CLASSES



Ross Gibson Master Class PART 1 (morning session)

Participants:

Ross Gibson, John Vella, Mary Scott, Johnathan Holmes,
Sarah Pieris, Nikos Papastergiadis, Jane Stewart, Brigita
Ozolins, Fiona Lee, Eliza Burke, Gus McKay, Meg Walsh,
Tanya Maxwell, Paula Silva, Rebecca Stevens, Steven Carson,
Amanda Shone, Lucy Bleach

Ross: Nikos and I will slip-stream off each other, throughout the day. I'll be at the front of the boat for the first half of the proceedings, and then Nikos will take over. We'll uphold a contract in the room. It has two parts. First, there's no such thing as a foolish comment or question at any moment. Second, within the bounds of courtesy, you're encouraged to interrupt one another at any moment. These are the two basic clauses in our contract,. We can agree on them? I like this phrase, 'within the bounds of courtesy'. It introduces a nice little rider to the contract:. there are issues around on how you make something generative when you do an intervention, when you interrupt. It's good to wonder an worry about this a little: what is the function of courtesy, how does it work, how is it useful for some great purpose other than just manners instilled when you're a child?

SO --- no such thing as a foolish comment or question and interrupt at any moment. That's the contract.

We'll do a little exercise in about five minutes whereby Nikos and I will understand who's in the room. You all know each other, so it's a bit tedious for you introduce yourselves just to Nikos and I like that. Instead we'll do this exercise which will also help bring into the room a whole lot of the aspirations, questions, and modes of thinking that are already at play around *The Plimsoll Inquiry*. I think it's a very simple exercise. It could actually provide the gist for the first hour or so of conversation.

However, before we do all of that (and I'm reminding you to interrupt at any moment), I want to put a headline on the session with, this quote attributed to Mallarme, attributed by the Japanese poet Seishi. Seishi the great Haiku poet of the 20th century said, that Mallarme said - it 's very hard to find this Mallarme quote - Seishi said that, Mallarme said, "Because objects already exist in the world, there is no need for us to invent any new ones. All we have to do is devise good ways to put the existing objects in relation to each other."

So this idea of the creativity implicit to working with extant things is the headline under which I want us to start talking and thinking today. There's creative work that can be done with extant things; and such work may not be typically original work, given that it's done with these extant things; but the relationships of course can be original; the relationships can be new each time they're put together. The crucial thing is this play between the extant and the possibilities for innovation within that which already exists.

That's one of the ways to think of curation, I would contend, and it's one of the ways to think of what an

archive is. It's a collection of extant things craving for fresh relationships amongst the extant things. Let's hold on to that idea, that headline from the Mallarme quote. And can I also propose that we're involved in a research enterprise here? We're in an Art school involved in the research enterprise, so there's that constant interplay -- tension, play, set of opportunities, set of frustrations -- existing amongst your desire to simply keep on doing creative work as an artist. Y(u feel this desire; but there's also the obligation not only to continue to do creative work as an artist, but also to explicitly generate and communicate knowledge. This is where the research aspect of it comes in. Those definitions of research that are decreed to us from Canberra to say that research is this generation of new knowledge or understandings. That clumsy phrasing that is used in the Canberra bureaucratic prose! But in there we have the important idea: that we must generate knowledge and understanding. We can generate knowledge through the process of making art. We can generate it for the processes of making art, and we could generate knowledge and understanding about how art exists and how it is made.

So we're in a research enterprise of some kind in this *Plimsoll Inquiry*. How are all of the creative moves that people have already being stimulated into enacting in this little burgeoning venture ... how are all of those creative moves also potentially research, how might they produce knowledge?

Another way of defining research is it's the report of what was learned from a purposeful investigation. What might we learn from these processes of being involved in *The Plimsoll Inquiry*? It's another headline -- this obligation to be engaged in research -- that I think applies to the process that we're in this morning and maybe this afternoon depending on where Nikos, wants to take it at the time.

So, we have a definition of research, and we understand ourselves to be involved and obliged in a research enterprise at the same time as it's a creative enterprise. We have the rules of our engagement. We have our contract, and we have this idea from Mallarme and Seishi that the crucial thing is to find the generative relationships amongst the extant things. One last idea that I can just throw in before we do our little introductory exercise is an idea that comes from a professor of Performance Studies Tim Fitzpatrick, often expounded also by his colleague Ian Maxwell at University of Sydney. Tim's done a lot of study of renaissance performance techniques, particularly, Shakespearean troupe performance and also commedia dell'arte. As Ian explains it, Tim has come up with this beautifully, elegant little model for what seems to happen in successful

improvisational performance. (And I would contend that some aspects of good research are improvisational.) In improvisation, you have a set of experience that is your own; you match your own experience and your own capabilities to what is going on in the events or the objects that you're investigating, and you improvise 'what if' possibilities: what if this were a way to explain from my own experience what's going on in this thing that's under investigation.

This idea of improvisation I think is crucial to good research technique. Tim Fitzpatrick has this beautiful model for what any good improvisational collaboration involves and it's a triangle. The first point is that there is a goal always agreed amongst the collaborators. For example: Abbott and Costello doing 'Who's on First', if you think of that? That's utterly improvised. There's no script for 'Who's on First'. It works with this triangle that Tim Fitzpatrick talks about. There's a goal and in Abbot and Costello's case it's 'find as many gags as possible until we finish while we cohere around this one idea of exasperating disagree-men't. That's the goal. The first point of a triangle made by Goal, Role and Resources. This is Tim's triad - Goal, Role, Resources. In 'Who's on First', we've got the goal understood already. What about the roles? Answer: Costello is the boggler and Abbot will try to bring reason to the boggling conversation. See: they each have a role and they don't slip from that role. That role gives them a discipline in which to work on the goal and it allows them to collaborate because the roles are well-matched. They don't overlap. They actually contend productively with each other. Goal, Role, Resources : in improvisation, what you're doing is an adventure with what you're capable of doing. What skills, what knowledge, what vocabulary, what technique do you already have? These comprise your resources.

Part of the fascination of watching good improvisation is watching people whose resources are not ... They're complimentary, but not exactly the same. Watching or listening to really good improvisation is to watch people extend each other to the limits of their resources. Everyone ends at a goal. Everyone with a role, I'm the drummer and you're the bass player. He's the guitarist, she's the guitarist; Goal, Role, Resources. We have a band. And we can make a sound. Not just a noise.

With that idea of the Goal, Role, and Resources we don't have to apply this rigidly to the exercise that I'm about to give to you, but it's quite an interesting thing when you can think of yourself this way: "Oh, do I have a particular role? Have I already accrued a set of resources which I'm always interested in refining and extending and with that role and that resource in a group or a team

situation, do we have a shared goal? Does the Plimsoll have a shared goal? Are we a team of people with various roles, ill-defined or well-defined as yet? What are our particular and combined resources? It's actually quite an interesting way of thinking about possibilities in a team and in an individual sort of psychic sense, focusing on what can be done.

So the exercise starts with everyone pairing off. (I think that it can be as easy as pairing with the person you are alongside.) Each of you gets three minutes: a three-minute monologue where you report to the other. The other listens. You can take notes if you're the listener, or you can just sort of get the gist. So, three minutes. You'll report to the other then switch roles, report back to each other, so by the end of six minutes, each of you will have something to recap: "I heard you say this,' right?" Clear? I'll say it agin, more succinctly: What I'd like us to do is spend up to three minutes, it doesn't have to be three minutes. If you nail it in 15 seconds, that's okay I guess, and it's three minutes answering a simple question backgrounded by this idea: "Do I have a goal shared with anyone else? Do I have resources and what will my role be?" But here's the simple question: 'How can I bring benefit to *The Plimsoll Inquiry*?'"

Asking this question already calls for all sorts of definitions necessarily. Fior example: what do you mean by benefit? And actually, what is *The Plimsoll Inquiry*? Fine, all of that can roll out in the three minutes where you try to answer this question or tell your interlocutor how you might bring benefit, how you can bring benefit to *The Plimsoll Inquiry*.

So it's an exercise in listening at several levels, clearly, because you know what's going to happen. You spend six minutes doing this and then we reconvene and we all listen in to each couple reporting to each other what they told each other, so that we as a group get to hear these individual opinions or individual assertions. We also get to sort of listen to the right of reply that will happen after each little report. So if Brigita says, "This is blah, blah, blah, blah, blah," and then you get reported back and you might say, "Well, actually I don't think that's what I said or certainly not what I meant."

So it's that chance to hear what gets heard and how people interpret, but also it's our chance to know the group, by the time we bounced around and done this exercise ... to understand a little about what's going on for the group in relation to *The Plimsoll Inquiry* at the moment. Does this sound bearable? (Laughs) Doable?

(General agreement)

Ross: It's also a chance to hear from people you think you know really well, to hear them in a different way potentially. Questions? Those of you who want to run from the room right now can do so. (Laughs)

Nikos: It will get worse. (Laughs)

Ross: Wait 'til the Greek guy takes over. (Laughs)

Nikos: Just to warn you, (laughs) I'll interrupt first. I think it's a great structure. Normally when you do master classes like this, with one class following the other, the second time round it feels like 'reinventing the wheel'. We're doing it together so that's one wheel for the whole of day rather than having to then reintroduce yourselves to me again at the second half of ... Hopefully I will be in the slipstream by then. So that's an efficiency gain through which Ross will hopefully grasp what you really meant, not just what you said, and then be able to then intervene at that deeper level.

Just as a sort of little footnote to Ross' request about the introductions and declarations you make about yourselves, I'm going to ask that you not only present to us your general philosophy, but also your particular problem that you've got today, what issue you want to resolve now, or what do you think needs to be done at this point in time.

Let me explain what I mean by that. I used to do a lot of studio visits in the UK when I was associated with a number of art schools. One of things I found most fascinating, but also exhausting, was every time I went to a studio and spent time with a student, I walked out an hour later exhausted because I had to immerse myself in an enormous world view that was constructed by that particular person. Getting my head around all the corners of their territory, seeing the way the land flowed and everything was really quite amazing and the student nevertheless wanted to tell me their whole philosophy.

One day I saw a completely different mode of doing this task. Jochen Gerz, this French-German artist, would only do studio visits in the afternoon. I said 'Why?', He said 'because my task was to ask them to talk about the problem they had since 9 am that morning and that his job was to help them fix that particular problem. To put it crudely if you're doing a painting and you're struggling to get that hand right between 9am and 12pm, his suggestion was like, "Why don't you go this way rather than that way or use this color rather than that one." That was the benefit that he was offering but he asked for a very, very specific problem that needed to be solved and that that problem asserted itself in the three or four hours that the student was at work in the studio in the course of

that day.

Now, I'm not going to ask us to be that precise, but I think it's important that we define our philosophical terrain and our broad visions and the incredibly complex trajectories that we've all developed, but also try and specify the particular condition we're situated in right now, the potholes that we're in, the banana skins that are in front of us, the obstacles that are before us, et cetera, et cetera, and how as a collective we may seek to overcome or release ourselves or bypass from any of these tension points or at least examine them in a different way. Just a sort of little parenthesis here. I let that example go a little bit further so you have a bit of time to process and capture something that is otherwise urgent but not necessarily articulate in your mind.

Ross: Which means we've got a sort of double-barreled question for your three minutes. 1) How can I bring benefit to *The Plimsoll Inquiry* and 2) what particular need do I have in relation to today's exercise? Is that a fair way to summarize it?

Nikos: Perfect.

Ross: Questions? I have a timer. (Laughs) Three minutes each. Moving on, happy to pair off?

[Crosstalk -- lasting ten minutes or so]

Ross: Okay, we're good? So, it's report time and there's the close circle of the two people reporting to each other and we're eavesdropping in. So when you are reporting in the close circle, please project to the room. Each person gets a quick right of reply once the little report is done and then we will keep moving and we'll watch the group knowledge grow: "this is who we are in the room and this is what we are working on". Could I ask -- for my and Nikos' benefit -- that you say your name as you start your report? Can we start there? (points to Mary Scott and Fiona Lee)

Mary: All right, there you go. [Crosstalk] Oh, Mary Scott.

Ross: Thank you, Mary.

Mary: For Fiona *The Plimsoll Inquiry* was about bringing people together in the spirit of openness, towards breaking down constraints and stepping outside the usual functions and expectations of the art-world, and the frameworks that constrain activity and performance. Fiona has a sense of the art-world losing its freedoms and connectedness - the frameworks of connectedness she perceives as occurring in previous urgencies such

as the Dada and Fluxus movements. Fiona is also very concerned about the commodification of art and how artists and art-workers can redress this. What she needs is to bring people together to find the kernel or the core of something that can, initially spread through the PI and then more broadly within the art community and beyond. I think that is a reasonable summary.

Fiona: That is pretty good actually,. TThe inquiry is about investigating an idea. There are no conclusions right at this point but it's about a process of inquiring and thinking, re-thinking how things might be under different circumstances. By putting everyone into a place where they're little bit uncertain, a little bit uneven, not familiar, then it hopefully opens some up other kind of understanding.

Ross: Thank you. Yeah. Remember, anyone jump in at any time, but off you go. Report in.

Fiona: So I am Fiona Lee. Mary was really interested in the use of dialogue in *The Plimsoll Inquiry*, and how that could be of benefit. She felt that more discussion about things tends to bring a connectedness between people. There is a lot of silence. She felt there was a lot of silence between artists in the community and you never get feedback and never get any other kind of conversation around your work. She felt that regular discussions amongst us would be a fantastic opportunity to reinvigorate the space, the Plimsoll gallery, and the Art school but also to re-engage community. She feels that we close people out in the art world. We are very isolating in some ways. And just another point that Mary said— she is just installing a show at CAST at the moment. [Crosstalk]

Mary: CAT, Contemporary Art Tasmania.

Fiona: Oh, CAT it's called. [Crosstalk] But she said this is the first time that she feels like an artist. That is a really interesting point for somebody who is actually been practicing for a long, long time. She feels like other artists are artists and she's never felt like an artist until now. So, someone might want to take that up as a conversation later on.

Brigita: What was the thing that instigated that... Sorry, I missed it.

Fiona: The fact that she is working up at CAT to install her exhibition - I presume that is working with people at CAT?

Mary: Yes, a core part of the Shotgun program is the involvement of guests with the studio making processes.

Various writers, curators, practitioners and gallerists have been flown in from interstate to visit my studio and talk through the issues underlying my art practice. The of this process is the input that arose through the lead up to the exhibition. We discussed a lot of things - not just the idiosyncrasies of my practice but about being an artist, what is means to make art and the contemporary art world in general. These were very valuable discussions.

Jonathan: Anna Philips came back from our studio in Paris saying, "This is the first time I've ever felt that I am an artist." It was to do with the fact that it was this place where the practice of art was respected.

Mary: So, it is something to do with the communications that occurred in the process of talking and making that that actually made me feel like I could work as an artist.

Ross: Thank you.

Fiona: Her second part of the inquiry was about what particular needs does she have in relation to today's exercise. She would like to think that other people too have a commitment or an investment... in dialogue. She's really interested in the idea of opening up possibilities for this to happen.

Ross: Thank you. Do you have a reply to her?

Mary: No, Fiona did well.

Ross: I'll keep this moving along just so we get the report going even though there is lots to talk about. If we need to throw in a quick 'chipped in' comment like Jonathan's just then, that's fine. We will keep going. We'll just keep bouncing around. This couple? (points to Sarah Pieris and Lucy Bleach)

Sarah: My name is Sarah Pieris. So, Lucy's answer to the first part – how she brings benefit, was that through her role as a teacher she wants to instigate activity through reflection, to snowball response after an initial prompt. As a researcher and a practitioner, she is interested in abstract notions of impact and lag and in setting up a catalyst for lag to happen. She is interested in ways to siphon things from one space in time to infect things and to make things actively contagious. To give people a new situation and to allow them to respond in their own way though their own understanding. Did you want to add to any of that?

Lucy: I think that is very good. I guess lag is so abstract,...I'm interested in it within my own research but also in teaching - creating situations where something happens, and then providing opportunity for lag in lots

of different ways; which is about people taking on that activity, but also the opportunity to think - lag implies a kind of ‘thinking action’. So, I am interested in that.

Sarah: In relation to what you particularly need, you wanted to create a stillness to understand the layers of activity in operation and practice.

Mary: So is that contemplation? Is it contemplation/ reflection?

Lucy: It is, but I guess I feel there are so many layers of activity going on that I would like to establish the opportunity for stillness in tandem with the activity, so that there is an awareness of not only what is going on, but the different ways the activity can connect in meaningful ways - for all sorts of people to be involved. I guess that for me, the main problem that I have is hyper-activity and I need a bit more stillness.

(General laughter)

Jonathan: That’s really good Lucy

Mary: Yeah, it is. It’s a chronic problem.

Jane: Has that got something to do too with the roles of the people here as academics and the expectations that come as artists and academics and the time that is required of you? ...I just see one of the issues here being the time and the demands on people as academics who are also striving for a career as an artist. I imagine that that space, that stillness, is difficult to come by.

Lucy: Mmmm...I think so. I think what I have become increasingly conscious of, even in the last year, is how to set up teaching situations that will affect and infect the way that I work. They are constantly feeding in to each other.

John: It is interesting - just to cut in on that - I think this is a broader social issue that’s not just specific to academics. For example I often come across students dealing with similar issues in terms of pressures to multi task, access information, not having time to absorb and reflect, within and outside of the art school /university context. I see this as a kind of contemporary disease – dis-ease.

Brigita: Yeah, just to comment on that further. I’ve just come back from six months overseas and I thought, “Oh, wow, how fantastic, three months in a residency to really reflect and spend a lot of time on a single project.” But in fact I was just going at the same hell-for-leather pace that I always go at, going out and absorbing as much as

possible and taking in as much as possible, through fear that I was going to miss out - you know “Why be here in New York?” just staying in the studio and reflecting and being calm, I can do that at home. You have to take in what’s there. So there’s this sort of constant expectation that you’re going to be absorbing and taking in new things. So it’s like a pattern of behavior.

Eliza: It says something about residencies as well, that there is that expectation. You know it’s almost a contradiction to be given this time and yet you’re in a completely different space and you have to respond differently. It’s not the same reflection that you would do at home, you know so it’s a kind of paradox.

Ross: It’s not actually reflection, this is the lag thing as well.

Lucy: I would like to say that I do actually enjoy being hyper-active as well. (laughs) I’m not negative about that. But it’s more about understanding that there needs to be a counter to it, and that that counter can happen simultaneously. Maybe there’s time for different engagement.

Ross: To the extent that we’re talking/thinking about curation, generally how do you set up those conditions for activity or stillness? Can we keep moving?

Lucy: Yes. Ok, so I’m Lucy Bleach - I was about to say I’m Sarah [crosstalk and laughter] So Sarah is a student and she feels she’s exploring the terrain of what it could be to be an artist and be operating within an arts community. So she feels that she’s coming to this inquiry, but also maybe to a broader engagement, as a newbie. She’s also getting a sense of the dynamic of being within this kind of a group as a whole new thing. So she’s approaching that with fresh eyes and equally as a student, so she feels that there are those layers of engagement. She’s understanding how this works in terms of this inquiry, but also the arts school and the arts community, and her place within that. She also sees herself as someone exploring and trying to find ways to connect with the community, to try to figure out how to extend on her own practice and also what her role is within this. She feels like she stepped into a party that’s already started (laughter) and this combines with her own process of discovery. She is understanding a discovery that’s already in process, in tandem with her own process of discovery; this is important to her. I think that’s it.

Sarah: Yeah, the two questions kind of wrapped into each other for me.

Lucy: The final one was she is finding that she’s trying

to respond to the freedom to make things happen. So the things that have been set up for her, she’s finding ways to respond to that.

Ross: Okay, anything to add?

Sarah: Not really. I think she did a good job.

Ross: Or adjust?

Sarah: I’m also a very nervous person...

Ross: But then that’s part of... how does one set up sort of convivial situations as well.

Sarah: Yeah, absolutely, and I guess that’s part of the challenge for me, like the party analogy, I kind of feel like I’ve stepped into a party and I’m wondering, “What are we celebrating here?” Who are these people and how do I say hello? And also how do I set up situations where I can share my art making in a way that I’m comfortable... which is easy in a school situation, because you have teachers, you have set up appointments and all that sort of stuff. But beyond that I’m trying to figure out how to take my practice outside, I suppose.

Ross: And just talking with Fiona about how the gallery has been operating in the last couple of weeks, with outsiders coming in. There’s a similar sense for newcomers: “What have I stepped into?”

Fiona: Yeah, exactly. We’re finding we’re having to actually explain a lot more. So there is this dialogue that’s automatically happening simply because people are walking in. They’re completely confused because there’s nothing on the wall and there’s somebody doing something very strange in one part of the room or something like that. So we have to explain...

Ross: And when we’re inside the art world, we tend to forget that it’s actually a very intimidating world for other people to step into.... that the “edges of the convivial” are really important. Moving on? Who talked to whom? [Pointing to Steven Carson and Eliza Burke]

Eliza: Steven and I.

Steven: Oh so my name is Steven Carson. I’m Eliza Burke. (laughs). Both of us actually felt that the second part of the question, Nikos’s question, was probably a good place for us to start. But I think overall Eliza’s ideas were kind of questioning about how to create a resource. One of the things that she would like to solve for herself would be to find a way to move beyond the gallery structure which might include online sites for exhibiting

products and practice...the products of practice maybe and establish discussion. And the thing that I linked onto which I don’t probably need to read my notes about, Eliza said that she’s the executor of a small collection that I think she’s attempted to present in a more conventional way, but she’s also interested in how you might make the collection a resource for other people, that can actually be presented in another kind of way beyond exhibiting it in a gallery context. That was the thing that I kind of fixated on and felt was a unique and specific thing to think about. I guess that what she brings as a benefit to the group’s inquiry I think is to open up the question of how you make something valuable, to convert something into a resource for other people to access.

Ross: How’d he go?

Steven: Not entirely sure that I encapsulated a lot. [laughter and crosstalk]

Eliza: Yeah, I began by talking about location and wanting to investigate ways of moving beyond locating both the products of art and the meaning of art within gallery settings - so where do we go and how do we do that? I mean my immediate concern now is with my mother’s collection, which I’m executor of and the question of what to do with it because I have exhibited it in a traditional sense but I’m now sort of considering other things, because it crosses materials and a fantastic range of literary references. It seems to me that it could be turned into some sort of resource, so therefore how to do that. So I guess just throwing around these ideas of how to translate meaning from the object to other forms and spaces.

Ross: And how to take care of the value of the thing, too. Traditionally, curators are caretakers.

Eliza: Yeah, as a conservator that is obviously a question that I have to face as well. But I think also extending the value of it. I guess not just reading the artwork but also to a writer’s world, I’m interested with the space of the writer and how art can be used as a kind of object to embody ideas and how writing can engage with that object. What is the space that we provide to do that beyond publication, beyond essays, beyond other forms of writing? What kind of writing does that then create? And spaces for thinking within that. So I’m interested in writing as a practice.

Ross: I expect the writing stuff is something we will talk about after lunch.

Eliza: Yeah, yeah.

Ross: Thank you. And Steven said?

Eliza: So Steven said that he was really interested in how to represent process or for starters the relationship between process as making and how it can be presented as more important, how to frame process not just as in the final product of that process. He talked about the difference between studio practice and the gallery, and working in the two spaces, - so Steven's been based here for the last few days and really querying the studio as, what he talked about as a selfish place or defining process as a very selfish thing and finding ways to shift that boundary I guess around the studio and making process useful for others. I don't know whether that involved allowing other people to witness it? – he may be able to elaborate on that. Also, just putting himself in the structure, so he sees *The Plimsoll Inquiry* as a structure that he can kind of insert himself in and then I guess operate on that boundary as well. Connect with people beyond the studio and yet sort of, whilst its a structure seeing it as an unconstrained space and a place of exploration. Yeah, it was interesting as well because he talked about the studio as a control around process that then once you transport that into a gallery space he was able to let go of. He used the words to dissipate and drizzle away that control. I like that idea because I guess in some ways we see the studio as a free space and yet when we start finding other spaces to represent that process – you know what happens then in terms of control and process?

Steven: Yeah, process for me is a process of making. When I say that I am talking about making, And I've become very aware that, apart from the first time that I ever exhibited work in a real art gallery, I am not that interested in the presentation of objects because I have this sense that the work is done and the value for me is not important so much anymore. I guess I'm starting to clarify that. In the last 18 months when I've really had to think about that, I've become more aware and more conscious of that. So to bring things to the gallery and to allow myself to just continue to make, but actually maybe make the making be more visible, has been quite useful. I don't think it is necessarily the edge of what it is I'm talking about, but it's something that I would like to understand more. So, how we might consider the making and articulate that carefully and clearly so that there is value in that for other people as well. One of the big challenges I think for me touches on Lucy's idea of the lag – the lag for me might be a 25 year lag. I am very slow. The other thing is that often I find excitement in other people's achievements and this is also the constraint and the conflict of working within educational environments.

Jonathan: There is also the re-reading. It is not just the stillness, the contemplation but thinking again. Representation, re-thinking.

Fiona: But there was also something else that Steven has had to contend with while he was there. This has been open to the public. This inquiry has been open to the public from 12 to 5 every day. He has been dealing with the public. They come in, they sit with him and they talk with him. He is actually having to articulate in all sorts of languages about his process and it has been amazing. People come away. They are so excited to be able to speak with an artist actually working in a gallery. They've never seen it before. I thought that was kind of interesting. Also, I just wanted to quickly touch on something that Steven was talking about – about the process being the end of the enjoyment - would you say that - the actual display of the artwork is not really that important. I've had a couple of discussions with some amazing artists here in Hobart. They both said to me “I actually don't want to see the artwork again after it has been shown. Once it leaves my studio I am actually not interested in it at all.” I find that just amazing. You put so much energy in to the process and the making. It walks out the door and you never want see it again. I think that's incredible. I think that is a really interesting discussion. Steven is now another one that can confirm that.

Steven: Who suffers the same affliction....

Mary: Me too Steven.

Fiona: Yeah, it is sort of sad in a way. It is almost like the death of something.

[Crosstalk]

Eliza: I was just thinking it was interesting because it relates to what Brigita was saying about residencies as well - you know once you put that making process in any different site beyond that studio. I mean you could have residency in the gallery and it would potentially create a different product to a residency down at New Norfolk or whatever. It is interesting to think about that contained space in the studio. Exactly what is that? Is it actually a mental space?

Steven: I think it is actually a physical space. I've shared studio spaces and Jane was one person a long time ago (who I shared one with) I used to go to the studio to socialize and to connect with the community. That is another part of this project that I am very interested in. I was never very productive. I like the quiet, the solitude, and privacy of the studio as well.

Eliza: But then does that create different work to what you would create here, to what you would create in the city, to what you would create somewhere else?

Steven: Yeah, sometimes that's time constraint.

Eliza: And, is that all within your capacity as an artist? To create all of that work and what does that do? Or how do you define that making?

Ross: Lucy?

Lucy: I guess counter to that, and I think it was in the reading that you provided us, is the notion of synthesis. The opportunity for that process, the artifact of that process, the experience, and the context to allow the work to become something else, that notion of synthesis, which is beyond your intention possibly. It can be guided by other people, that may be in a curatorial position. Or it's also what people bring to the work for the first time in relation to whatever else is going on. It could be just in their head, what happened to them before they came and saw whatever the work is. Obviously, works lend themselves to different kinds of engagement and relationships. I guess that would be the counter to that thing of not wanting to see your work beyond the process of the sealed studio environment, just like a vacuum seal in a way, to open it up to become contaminated positively.

Ross: Thank you. We'll keep moving. We'll go to here. (Pointing to Bec Stevens and Paula Silva)

Rebecca: Okay, I am Bec Stevens, This is Paula Silva. Paula is a curator and an artist, I think?

Paula: Just call me a curator.

Rebecca: A curator. Her research interests focus on curatorial practice, specifically the moment of communication and mediation of the relationships created between artworks. She is talking about the curator's job being about the relationships between artworks and that the narrative between artists' works, specifically artworks that take the function of communication or mediation. Sorry, I've muddled it all up. (laughs)

Paula: That is okay.

Rebecca: She is talking about a switch in that function of curator to be more about the function of mediator in participatory works. She feels that she can bring value to the inquiry in terms of thinking about the exhibition space and the moment of display in regards to this

mediation of communication. So, a lot of those things I guess we were talking about beyond the moment of bringing process into the exhibition in the gallery context rather than being separate from the gallery context. Would you like to add to that?

Paula: Just to clarify a couple of points there. There is definitely a move towards what now is called, some people call it, the para-curatorial, which is curating the communication around the works, not only the presentation of the works. Then of course, the clearest example would be public programs that are generated around exhibitions. This is one point. Another point that I thought wasn't very clear, maybe the way I told you, is that artists already moved into the mediation space. That is how I understand participatory art. They already took charge of that moment because they brought the audience to be part of their creative process. They are doing that mediation directly. As a curator I am interested in how to represent this process. Not reverting it back to a display of documentation in the gallery, but how the moment of communication can work within the artist's initial intention, which was to have the audience in that process of authorship.

I am interested in wanting to understand - I already started researching this - but I am interested in understanding further how the position of the curator can move from a 'presentation post-process' to a 'communication during process. There are these two moments: the studio process and then the presentation of the outcome. The curator has been working traditionally in that moment of the post process, of the presentation of the outcome. I am interested in how to move the curator to the moment of the process with the artist and with the audience because that is where the work is happening at the moment. I think that is what I would like to contribute to the Inquiry's grand tabula rasa at the moment. It seems that what I have been hearing, everyone is interested in going beyond the display. I am interested in understanding what is the role of the curator within that question.

Eliza: It is a multiple practice that curators can take up a number of positions in relation to artist's process. It is not just singular.

Paula: No it isn't. The curator work is in research, cataloging, and interpreting. There are different functions to the curator role but I'm particularly interested in the role of the curator in the specific moment of communication. There are other curators who are interested in other areas of the profession. I am interested in that point of nexus between the work, the artist process, the work and the audience. What is there in the

middle that brings this together? That is my particular focus.

Brigita: I'll briefly make a comment. That is interesting. I've just come from the Istanbul Biennial and I think there are a lot of works that really reflected a particular focus on a relational experience for the viewer- an attempt at it anyway. But I was asking these questions, “What am I seeing? Am I seeing art? Am I seeing a documentary or documentation of an art work? What am I actually experiencing?” I think there is a lot to ask about what expectations we place on the viewer as well. Site number five at the Istanbul Biennial provides a specific example. It was difficult to find the space and the work didn't look like recognizable art. It was a series of A4 images printed out and pinned to the wall in a row, and someone had to explain the whole process to me which I didn't really understand very clearly. But I ended up sitting at a table, drinking Turkish tea and having a good conversation with interesting people. But as far as the art itself goes, I felt a sense of disappointment.

Ross: It had already happened?

Brigita: Well, it was in the process of happening, they were doing things elsewhere and this shop site was where they explained the project. I felt disappointment (I think this is just personal for me), because I wasn't seeing anything visually aesthetic. I had to work really hard at understanding the project. Someone had to stand there and explain to me what was happening. I had to read a lot. I had to take in a lot. I do that every day. I guess I expect something a little bit more from art. I want it to mediate for me so that it will give me an experience where I don't have to do that hard, everyday work.

[Crosstalk and laughter]

Paula: It is really interesting. I think it is right on the point. I probably would suggest a concept that we could think through, I don't know, instead of expectation of the audience I would swap this with the idea of ‘the mode of address’, the mode in which you address an audience. It is not so much the expectation of the audience towards what is put in front of them, but instead it is how do you address this audience to engage them with what's there? The mode of address instead of expectation of the audience, - it's just something I would propose to think about.

Brigita: Yeah. I was thinking about this as I was walking across here this morning. “Am I perhaps old fashioned and stuck in my ways? Am I actually like modernists in the 1960's when they first saw conceptual art,? In the 60s a bureaucratic conceptual art aesthetic emerged and

people asked, “Oh is this art?” Am I in that camp because I'm wanting something more from my encounter with art?

Jonathan: It is confronting me too.

Brigita: I want something more from art. I want something else. I want the artist to have mediated their ideas and materials to a point where they have crystallized something for me rather than showing me all their ramblings.

Jonathan: Yeah, that is me too. I really think that is important.

Ross: We'll come back to that ... expectation and mode of address. What did Bec say? (Pointing back to Paula)

Paula: Bec came to this project through an invitation as an Alumni. She and a colleague, Amanda Shone, took the opportunity to crystallize collaboration between them that was going for quite a while. So, they know each other's practices very well. They've been having conversations between them about their practices and the invitation was an opportunity to crystallize those ideas. The way they are thinking of doing that is actually take that idea as the main concept of their work and explore the space of the gallery as a space for relationships and how the gallery in itself, although it is a display space, it is also a space that envelops relationships. That is what they are contributing to *The Plimsoll inquiry*. How gallery space can be a space that envelops, contains, extrapolates relationships.

Rebecca: We came to the project quite late so we're using the time as development, which after all is something that Fiona proposed. We're trying to get multiple perspectives of the architecture of the space and how people work within it. I am really interested in thinking about the space architecturally as a fluid space and not a fixed space. One of the things we have been doing is thinking about the flows of movement through the space and thinking about how the space can, maybe somehow physically change, or propose some sort of image of change, within this fixed gallery space that facilitates different processes. Proposing that the architectural space be flexible to facilitate new relationships.

Ross: Talking about the flows and talking about the space for relationships, it occurs to me that, for all of the talk about conviviality, you also want a place that can be tough. You want a place that can have real rigor and sharpness to it as well and the balance of that – you want a clarifying place as well as just a welcoming place.

Rebecca: Yeah, and I think that also applies and along with that it is perhaps what I feel like I need out of this is session today. While we are involved this process of development and we have a tentative idea of something for the fiasco - today is about thinking through what our outcome might be... perhaps not the outcome but what is the end point to this process we are involved in. What that will contribute to *The Plimsoll Inquiry*? what is needed?

Ross: Thank you. Now, morning tea?].

Fiona: It doesn't matter.

Ross: How many more couples have we got to go?

John: There are three I think...

Ross: Can I beg your indulgence we stay applied to this so that everyone finishes?

(Group agreement)

Ross: You know how you get privately nervous while you wait to say - so those of you who have already done it, stay engaged with these poor saps who still haven't done this. (laughter) Thank you.

Nikos: Don't think you'd get away from it. You have to do it to me - I'm doing it to you.

Ross: You're being tough, tough and clarifying. We'll go over here. (Points to Gus McKay and Jane Stewart)

Gus: I'm Gus McKay, and this is Jane. She's a head curator at TMAG?

Jane: Yeah

Gus: It sounds pretty cool. She feels like she's come here to be - that she's unequipped with the knowledge of what this program's about and wants to really nut out what this program's for, and how she can bring that back to her job at TMAG. I've explained that we've been trying to use this as a way of re-invigorating a semi-stagnant place and she feels that's very similar to where she's at at TMAG in terms of wanting to elevate what it can be for. She believes it can be more collaborative and that she wants to bring an outside perspective from where she's come from and bring it back into this space as well, and see whether there's a link between both programs and a way of extending further in collaboration with *The Plimsoll Inquiry*. I suppose, in a way, she was talking about the fact of underfunding. That was an interesting conversation we just had about that whether there's a

need for ... funding, do we need it? That was a nice thing that brought up in the earlier setting space. Are there other modes of being creative and being collaborative that don't involve money, that don't involve backing? Can that become more popular than constantly chasing funding? I think that's something that we can bring up in this conversation as well. How's that sound?

Jane: That's right.

Gus: I think you might have already got quite a bit about what this is all about just from the conversation.

Jane: I knew what it was about, but I wanted to have it presented to me in a succinct sentence.

Gus: That's almost impossible.

Jane: I think it is!

Ross: Yours was a dialogue rather than a monologue, in the way it sounds?

Jane: Yeah, it was a dialogue. Yeah, it was. Maybe before I discuss Gus, I had a little moment of worry when Ross presented the first question which is, ‘what can I bring to this conversation?’ I thought, “Oh no...” (laughs) Maybe not much but I can say I'll take an enormous amount away from this conversation. But then I thought about it and there are certain things I can bring to the conversation. But I guess my real interest in this inquiry was an acute awareness of the challenges my role faces at the Tasmanian Museum & Art Gallery which is a fairly stodgy institution. As a curator – and as Paula's already articulated - we're facing cultural, social, financial and bureaucratic challenges like everybody here....

Gus comes to this inquiry as a second year sculpture student. He began by talking about his work both as a sculptor but also as a technician in this space. He felt that he could bring an interest in this space from quite a physical perspective, as someone who moves walls in the space, but also bring his role as an artist to the space. Interestingly, I thought, Gus also mentioned his role almost as a custodian, as a younger artist coming to this forum, he felt that he was able to ...it's this word ‘infect’ that I've heard quite a lot today, but bring the conversations that we might have today back to his colleagues and the younger group of artists coming through the art school, as someone who would come through and hopefully remain involved with this space for years to come. He felt that he could carry what was discussed today and over the next year through when we're all ... gone. [Crosstalk and laughter] or retired, or you know...! I thought that transitional role that you

thought you might play was important.

In terms of what you need from today, you spoke about being amongst ... I'm going to say it...being amongst 'elders' or masters.

Gus: I didn't say that.

Jane: You said masters. You did say masters.

Gus: Yeah. I did say that.

Jane: And the importance of that for Gus - I thought that was interesting, too, to consider us all in that way was interesting.

Ross: And is that about learning language, or learning confidence?

Gus: No, I don't see it as a problem as such where, and I think Sarah and I maybe feel the same way - I'd like it to be seen as more of an inter-generational relationship. I mentioned that if this conversation was seen as a meshing of two different age groups or whatever, then I think we'll get a broader perspective of where we need to be heading. I really appreciate that everyone here has got so much more knowledge than I do, and I can tap into that. But I also think there's opportunities for everyone here to tap into where, Sarah and I as a representative group, and Tanya too, are coming from. Yeah, I think there's links that we can be making there, and that shouldn't be ignored, or maybe subconsciously they're not being addressed as much and I'd like to see it addressed more. It's not a criticism but it's something that I'd like to see happening more in the school. I think that comes back to Lucy and to John maybe talking about student to teacher roles and how much, for me and Sarah especially, how much Lucy and John have influenced us as artists; I definitely feel more I'm an artist. I feel more like an artist at the moment just because of that relationship that we've managed to develop, and I don't feel like I'm a student anymore.

Sarah: It's about having that open dialogue and being able to talk on a normal person level rather it being instructional all the time, I suppose, that's an extension of that relationship.

Gus: I think it's becoming more and more apparent to me and my peers in the school. It's different to any other degree where you go to school to become a lawyer, and you're learning, learning, learning and you get the ticket and then you're a lawyer. We came here knowing that we want to be artists. We have the inkling that we're there already, and we need those few kicks in the butt to get

there. But I think there can be a different way of learning rather than teaching- 'this is how you do this, this is how you do that'. We can be feeding off each other in a really interesting way.

Sarah: Linking back into that idea of the process being important in terms of display, it strongly applies to us when it comes to assessment. We've both been mucking around with and discussing the idea of process in our current assessment. We're using this forum to do our work – and to play. I don't know what my final work will be and it's due in two weeks. But the idea here is that the process and the inquiry is facilitating that, which is great.

[Crosstalk]

Ross: Thank you. Two more pairs to go. We're staying with it. John (Pointing to Jonathan Holmes and John Vella)

Jonathan: I'm Jonathan - (points to John Vella) John Vella. John, I'll do you first. I want to preface what I want to say by just making an observation about John. Not only a visual artist of note but also a curator of note and in two areas that I think are really interesting. One, in terms of process: that's been discussed before; the fact that he's curated a number of exhibitions in which process has been the focus. I think that's a really interesting idea. The second thing is that his role has not just been as a curator within this space, but also someone who has taken viewers to other environments in which one can develop exhibitions but which are related to here. I'm thinking particularly of the student work, where the works he's done with high school and primary school students over the years, which I think have been a really important way of introducing a whole new generation of people into what goes on in an art school. Having said that, John's new role as the head of the art school program here gives him this privileged opportunity to be the conduit to others within the university and he mentions specifically the fact that he has that capacity to be the voice of not just the Plimsoll Gallery, but of the art school in a number of fora elsewhere in the university. That was one thing I thought was really important - that idea of the conduit.

Then also he mentioned the fact that he has another significant role to bring as a visual artist and what that means in terms of his understanding of the way this space works and - a number of you will be well aware of this,- his ability to pass on the message, if you like. Not just to the hierarchy, but also as a lecturer. This is something he sees as really important. So really it is very much about the communication he has there. For instance, he took that up to a next level at a meeting he went to yesterday,

which was with the member of the culture committee of the Hobart City Council, where he talked about developing links with the city in a way that we may not done in the past. I think that was really important. The final thing was that, in terms of what he wants to get out of it, in particular after mucking around for a minute or two, the particular thing that he did identify was to understand how galleries work. What he wants out of this today is to understand how galleries work.

John: Thanks Jonathan.

Ross: It's true what he says?

John: Well, in terms of how he encapsulated what I said, yes, alot of the early stuff was very nice to hear and I didn't talk explicitly about that, but yes, many thanks Jonathan. To go back a little bit, I think what's interesting about us being here today, is that we're actually articulating the gallery - it's been characterized as a tabula rasa and as being at this point of crisis, et cetera – however what I think is really interesting is that due to the sustained and very generous efforts of people such as Jonathan, we've actually come to a point where not only do we realize there is a crisis of sorts, but also that we care enough about it to be together in the space to drive it forward. Actually, I think this needs serious acknowledgement especially as so much of the work that has occurred to date took place on the back of people who didn't have to do it. This is something very precious and increasingly, back to the point about stillness, something I think is crucial (and this isn't what Jonathan talked about and it's a little bit of a preach) that we maintain the energy around that generosity, despite the extra pressures that we're under, so that's something I wanted to acknowledge.

So Jonathan's responses were very much built on this extensive knowledge and experience of this site and in particular this space. Over thirty five years of contribution across the board, from curatorial activities, and board memberships, from bluntly setting up shows, talks and so forth, and also lots of liaising with the art world locally, nationally and internationally. So what he's bringing, or how he can be of benefit, is this awareness and engagement with the past across supervision, interaction and curation, pedagogically and in the gallery context. So finding ways to see connections between what has happened and what could happen... how we might frame the historical experience in a way that affects the contemporary relationship. That's something very particular that Jonathan can bring (So fantastic that you're here). In terms of the need, he didn't waffle for a minute, he went straight to the core of it and nailed it. Basically, and I'll quote 'to find a reinvigorated

methodology for the curation of exhibitions'. And in addition, 'to reflect on the development, or the renewal perhaps, of the artist's studio as a laboratory'. Jonathan: Well said.

Ross: Great. We'll keep on moving. (Pointing to Amanda Shone and Brigita Ozolins).

Amanda: Ok, I'm Amanda Shone and this is Brigita Ozolins. Brigita - I think your view was about what you'd like to see the Plimsoll become and you spoke about it being a very vibrant place, full of life and there being excitement and it drawing people in, from both within the art school and outside of our community. You thought about what the Plimsoll could be attached to as far as playing off other things happening outside in the broader art world in Tasmania. Also, that the Plimsoll could highlight the research that's happening in the Uni and perhaps there being more involvement through the graduates – the research that's being done. And I think you were talking about the Istanbul Biennial and talking about other schools exhibiting there and this extension beyond, I guess the place where the work, the school where it originates. The problems that need to be solved was that you'd like to see there being more money and more time and someone in the role... that there needs to be at least one person in the role of dealing with being in control of the gallery. I think that's it.

Mary: I was just going to say that we don't actually have anyone (in the gallery). Maria Kunda has been allocated a half a day (three hours) a week for to a role which was essentially done by Pat Brassington for many years...so that's a real issue for the Plimsoll's future – the resourcing of a coordinator.

[Crosstalk]

Fiona: Yeah, we don't have any administrative support either.

Brigita: Yes, in replying to what Amanda is saying, I think that's just a problem for us all. The key people for *The Plimsoll Inquiry* are squeezing this in amongst all of their other teaching and academic and art obligations and so on, and we've got one person for three hours. I really feel the position needs a reasonable amount of time.

[Crosstalk].

Jonathan: Yes, the important thing to really underpin is that, for the last 30 years we had a very active gallery committee and it's a working gallery committee and the responsibility of those committee members was that they were generating and curating and preparing the

exhibitions.

Mary: Yes, the committee membership is made up of academic staff, students and some external representatives – the increasing demands on academic time is making commitment difficult as is the feat that many students work to support themselves and hence have less time to commit to extra-curricula activities. It's very different time, Jonathan.

Jonathan: I know that. I'm just saying that if you're looking at a new methodology, then just keep in the back of mind that but if that's the way it worked....,

Mary and **Ross:** Or used to work.

Jonathan: ...if it isn't going to work that way, then you've got to find a different way, but one that doesn't involve massive amounts of money, given that the money's not (there).

Ross: Can I just remind us of our little triangle, 'Goal, Role, Resources' -- each of those has been radically redefined or it's potentially up to the participants to take charge of the redefinition of each of those because they're being redefined anyway, because of resources.

Mary: The school doesn't even have control of its financial resources anymore, all funding is centralized.

Ross: So what are other resources?

Mary: So everything that's needed, requires submission of a comprehensive argument. In this climate, those arguments are probably not going to be listened to, much, in terms of art.

Ross: Which might mean that you actually, that this is just working the *comedia dell'arte* thing – if you get blocked on your resources often the participants agree tacitly to change the roles or to redefine the roles or to shift the goal because the previously-defined goal is not attainable. So you work that triangle constantly.

John: Just a quick response, I'll firstly acknowledge Maria Kunda who is not here not because she doesn't care, but because she's unwell, so she sends her apologies [Crosstalk]. And another thing,, noting that I'm not here to preach on behalf of the university, to be aware that the university is pouring literally millions of dollar into this precinct for creatively affiliated activities. For example there's a one hundred million dollar building (The Academy for Creative Industries and Performing Arts – ACIPA) being built up the road, et cetera. So there's this issue of a challenging resources context and

how we get money, but then there might be another issue to consider regarding how we communicate our activities in relation to what's already going on. There is a desire out there, and an awareness, - especially as we're not yet in the post MONA stage, we're in the midst of it – that this stuff matters, and it needs money to drive it and there is support out there for it. So I think it's about how we speak about what we do and not just about saying, "give us more money!" This is something to think about in the background.

Mary: I think that's really true. You know with Detached buying the Mercury building and CAT moving in there.

John: There are incredible things going on.

Mary: So there's all sorts of possibilities in terms of reconnections.

[Crosstalk]

Jonathan: Ross, can I just come back to something Eliza said earlier on... And that is, we've got \$6,000 allocated for the next exhibition catalogue, right? I've just done my first publication as an iTunes publication which cost me nothing. I edited it, it's not in the area of visual arts, as such, it's about music actually and it's a series of papers. But it cost me nothing to do. It could be potentially, profusely illustrated, it could have recordings, all that sort of thing. So we have to also rethink - which is one of the reasons why I stop what I was doing - we have to rethink the whole thing that Paula was mentioning which is how you actually rethink how you communicate these things that we do in the space in new ways.

Ross: Over to the department of youth. There are people who been born into this stuff, whereas there other people who having the shift their heads into this stuff.

[Crosstalk].

Eliza: It's something that takes time you know, to sit and not only to do the writing.

Jonathan: Oh I know, tell me about it!

Eliza: So, yeah, it's a difficult challenge to just finding time and then finding frameworks that are communicable to the public and making that value translate.

Ross: Pushing through? Almost there?

Brigita: Yes. I think too that the most important things is to make this place really lively and vital for our own students, so that they want to be coming down here to

the gallery. If it's fantastic for the students, then it will be fantastic for other people as well. But how many of them actually know what the Plimsoll Gallery is? Have been down those stairs? I've taught students who have said to me 'Plimsoll Gallery – what's that?' and they're in second or third year! It's about starting at home and then spreading out. But how you create that and do everything else you have to do - they're all the challenges ahead.

So this is Amanda who's an artist and a graduate of the school. Really, I think I'll be extending on what Paula was talking about when she was describing Bec's ideas because these two have been working together with a Feng Shui master who I happen to know from the past – Vicky Sauvage. [Crosstalk] They've been looking at the way people engage with this space - Feng Shui's interesting - I think there are really interesting aspects to it. So they've been looking at how people are moving about in this gallery, in the gallery space, the outdoors, the history of that outdoor area and what's happened there and how the space might be able to be utilized in better ways.... It's a collaborative investigation – but I understood from what you've said, that you're not really sure what the outcome is going to be, whether it would actually develop into an artwork - or whether it might evolve into something really quite practical as well for the gallery. That's fairly brief, Amanda.

Amanda: No, that was fine.

Brigita: I think that was sort of the problem, wasn't it?

Amanda: I sort of started at the end - sorry about that. We've just been looking at different ways of experiencing the (gallery) spatially. So one of the things that we've done is work with Vicky Sauvage. But it's interesting coming back here as a graduate because your experience is – you're at the school for four years, you have your Honors exhibition in this space, and it's all very stressful and there's a lot of pressure and frightening and then you leave and then you rarely comeback or you might comeback for the occasion of a visit to the school or see an exhibition or an opening. So it's been interesting to comeback and work again in here. We've been spending a lot of time just being in the space and thinking about it and hearing stories and wondering why it's quite hard to walk through... and about why it can be quite intimidating or unpleasant to kind of come in off the street and coming to this gallery, so thinking about it architecturally as well. Also, it's been a really interesting experience because I've been questioning being a solo practitioner and you make a work and have an exhibition and you pull it down and you put in your garage and then you're like, "What did I do that for?" So I'm kind of

questioning that process and that role of an artist and that role of the gallery and to just be investigating that with a friend and collaborator is really interesting and exciting. Yeah. That's it.

Ross: That's it? (Laughs)

Amanda: That's it.

Mary: Ross, there's you and Nikos.

Nikos: So it's not it... Ross hasn't said anything directly to me on this occasion. So I will try through telepathy get what he might have said to me. So here it goes.

Ross: Go, please.

Nikos: There's three titles or roles you could quickly give to Ross - poet, historian, curator. It would be wrong to impose one in succession, or over the other, because he is simultaneously poet, creator, historian. The thing that seems to be, that recurs throughout these roles is an attention to the vibration of place, how the self relates to all the elements and its environment, and how place is both an open and a closed container. Through these concepts or themes, headings, one gets a sense that what Ross is exploring is a sense, is, what I would call a form of cosmic belonging. That's what he offers – what he brings to the Plimsoll. What I think he's trying to find in this relationship here, the solution that he's trying to get is the way in which we constantly create a new home in different environments. Each gallery exhibition, each book that one writes is a reinstatement of a home, and you will already have seen his enthusiasm for being here in this gallery, in this art school, in this city, in this state. He is radiant when he is here, (group laughter) and I wonder why.

Mary: Isn't he radiant in Sydney?

Nikos: Of course.

Ross: It's 40 degrees in Sydney today.

Nikos: He is radiant to be out of the jungle of Sydney and there are two places that I think - not that I've seen him in both - that make him this enthusiastic. One is Kyoto and the other one is Hobart because I suspect that Sydney is a jungle for all its effects and capacities. But these are clearance.

Ross: Stillness. Yes, thank you. Yes, that's uncannily true, all of that. Nikos brings a really thorough-going long-term understanding of what can be done with the places that he calls 'para-sites' - sites that are ready to

become something else, or that have in them a whole lot of other possibilities or unrealized uses. This is something he’s analyzed for a long, long time from several different disciplinary perspectives, starting from urban theory and sociology but more and more coming through curatorial practice and aesthetic practice. So that’s what he brings to the project, amongst other things. He has a need -- I suspect this hasn’t been said out loud - but watching Nikos work over the last ten years or so, I get the sense that for him every new situation for expression presents this challenge and opportunity to find the mode of writing. I think that that’s one of the needs that’s being addressed today; that’s why he got on the plane. He’s always very interested in finding out about how you write about a particular set of quandaries and opportunities, which means that writing is one of those para-sites as well, one of those sites where use can be made from what’s already available in the place or what could be brought to the place for its readiness. Is that true?

Nikos: Spooky. (general laughter)

Ross: We’ve earned a break. Can I just say, firstly, what an interesting bunch of people we are. I’m interested to hear, when we come back, I’m interested to hear a few things. I’m interested to hear anything surprising, where you just go: “I had not thought of that issue in that way, or I had not thought of you working in that way.” I’m interested in all of that. Can I also give the opportunity to the two people who didn’t get to pair off to say anything, to offer a little bit of commentary, to start off if you like, commenting on what you heard? That would be how we get back into it. Then there’s a couple of structural things I can apply to the discussion after we come back.

Morning Tea



Ross Gibson
Master Class
PART 2

Ross: Okay. Now to do some synthesizing. Are there some threads of things what we’ve heard? Not just the same old stuff that we hear all the time, but threads of things that we’ve heard that were something like revelation; or something like a surprise if not as big as a revelation. And something like a connected set of insights that we heard from each other? What have we got amongst ourselves? I’m interested to hear that. And that will come from a group discussion, and if it needs a push-along, it’s part of my job to provide some initial catalysts of ideas, and I’ve got some if necessary, but I don’t need to throw them in straight away. And first, as negotiated, could I invite the two folks who didn’t get to tell their story to start off ... what did you hear that struck you as either surprising or worth pursuing. So Tanya and then Meg? Is that alright?? (Pointing to Tanya Maxwell and Meg Walsh)

Tanya: Okay. I’m Tanya Maxwell. I’m a student here at the Arts School in second year furniture. I’ve come from a performing background, so the things that I just caught were, improvising with our goals. I think that’s a really good way to go about things, and that’s a way that I’m really comfortable with working as well. My background is in clowning, so it’s very much about getting what you want in any way that you can get it. So, I think in the arts it’s probably not a bad way to be if you’re not too fixed in your process. Then, your outcome can often be more than you wanted it to be.

So, process was coming up a lot as I’ve popped in. And the ability for this space perhaps to be a way of getting away from the studio for the artist to extend themselves outside of the studio, and connect with the broader audience and other artists. That struck me as a good thing to pursue - so making the making more visible I think that was you Steven.

Collaborating, seeking to collaborate rather than constantly seeking funding, which can be such a drain on resources to be constantly after money. Bill Harvey’s been coming along to the Wednesday night fiascos, so he’s one of the aldermen on the council. So that’s a good sign of the possibilities for us to be collaborating with our local council as well in ways of being assisted in kind even, to move things off the ground.

The vibrancy element that Brigita was mentioning, I think that really struck me as part of this process of bringing new space alive, and the intimidation that Bec and Amanda were talking about as well. I think that’s really interesting to look at how intimidating it is for people coming from outside the school. It’s really important to try to dissolve those boundaries for people, to make people feel welcome and that’s another thing that

I’ve noticed through these processes. I feel much more engaged in the college and with my peers.
Jonathan: Can I just ask a question? Is MONA intimidating to walk into?

Mary: No, I don’t think so.

Brigita: No, the people that you see who line up for MONA are people from all suburbs, all age groups, all socio-economic backgrounds. You see mothers with pushers and strollers that you’d see out in the Glenorchy Shopping Center. You see elderly pensioners with their grey hair. You see every sort of person, people covered in tats, etc. Everyone goes there because they’re just happy to be there, they don’t feel intimidated.

Fiona: But MONA make it their specialty to actually draw people in and make them feel comfortable and make them have that experience.

Jane: But MONA is a spectacle which I don’t think this place can be...

Jonathan They get into the courtyard and they stop.

Brigita: There are those stairs. The gallery door is like a little barrier...Do I know what am I going to find when I open that door?

Rebecca: It’s actually a need, it’s beyond regulation that gallery door – our Feng Shui lady picked that up immediately. It’s tiny and it’s little, and these entrances into the gallery are really skinny doors. When you think about MONA, I remember hearing David Walsh talk about not wanting that architecturally - that kind of hierarchy, of going upstairs into a museum, that kind of ascending - and rather that you go down into the museum, subverting that hierarchy of the institution architecturally as well as ...
Meg (or Tanya?): Unless you come off the ferry, in which case you feel like James Bond, coming up there, don’t you? It just makes everybody ordinary feel so extraordinary being there.

Mary: In terms of MONA all the other activities and performances on the lawns and at the markets that make people feel comfortable in going there – the spaces are very people friendly.

Brigita: Because there is so much happening there.

Mary: They have regular concerts throughout the year. And a lot of events are free.

Fiona: There are multiple levels of engagement, and

there is always something to suit somebody.

Nikos: And there is one other level. All of which is true, the architecture, the space, the activities. It’s also the staff, in my experience at MONA. Have you ever seen the Isaac Julian video film about the security staff that operate in museums? They were always wearing a dark blue uniform, and he makes this film where they all look like they are just about to fall into coma. And when you get to be received by someone it’s like what?

Speaker 3: The coma.

Speaker 1: Whereas my experience and it’s a very strong first experience when I arrived at MONA. “Hi”, like this incredible, youthful, exuberant enthusiasm, and welcoming. I’m not sure how much that was just good. That kid was really thrilled or whether it was totally drummed into them this is how they have to be and it was forced out of her or him, but there was ... I’ve noticed it ever since that the staff have an incredibly, dynamic presence. They encourage this behavior versus that behavior. It’s not just prohibitive, it’s inviting.

Jonathan: Sorry, I interrupted.

Nikos: No, it’s a very good point because it’s saying, “What’s our first point of contact?”

Steven: Can I add something to that? And this probably does come back to some of the comment about the Feng Shui of this place, and why people stall there. I think, as an outsider coming back to Hobart after a long time, where now that it’s MONA city, is that MONA actually... or there is a great ownership of MONA across the state and across the city. And that’s perpetuated through the cab drivers as it is in every city. It’s perpetuated through people who go out there and sit on a bean bag and just drink a beer and who might not necessarily go down the rabbit hole every time, but the ownership of it, I think is an incredibly powerful, dynamic to push people through the place, or draw people through.

John: If you think about university, it’s somehow perfected the art of this distancing through intellectualism. MONA has perfected the art of kind of couching that in the form of entertainment or accessibility. The ‘artwank’ thing is a perfect example, where people wank on about art, but it’s actually intellectualized thinking in disguise. But because its called ‘artwank’, people approach it and they’re warming to it and it’s on this device. Whereas we’re still distanced, perceived as part of the university, so people are still thinking, “Well, that’s not for me because it’s all about tertiary thinking, and professors and all that kind of

stuff.”

Sarah: Gus and I were discussing Brigita’s comment about bringing students down here and ‘why don’t they descend the stairs?’ , and it’s got a lot to do with that, I think. A lot of the students come from high school or wherever and they don’t yet have an artistic vocabulary, and it’s intimidating to come in here and see a Masters show that you don’t quite understand. And then, if you come to an opening, and my god, what if someone asks you? And you’re just like... “I didn’t get it.” What helps is breaking down those barriers through learning, where the class does come down and you can have an informal conversation about the show.

Fiona: We had a funny experience with these two guys, Sarah and Gus the other day. There was an English couple who walked in off the street and the guy has his leather jacket on up to his neck like this and all these cameras around his neck—a typical tourist.. And they were both looking for art. And they walked in, walked around and said ““Where’s the Art? Where’s the art?” And this sort of thing. And so I said; “Oh look, here’s Gus in this room... He’s playing with the plinths and setting them up and he’s just done this beautiful installation.” “It’s just a bunch of boxes in a heap” And his wife said....

Gus: “I could do that.”

Fiona: Yes and his wife said; “Well, I don’t like things all messed up like that. I like them in rows.” (General laughter)

Fiona: And so these two guys spent, what was it? Three quarters of an hour literally talking, engaging this couple. They didn’t actually agree on contemporary art at the end but they had a mutual admiration for each other.

Sarah: We tried to let them know that it affected them in some way... but this lady also said that she would only buy a Picasso as an investment because it would just unnerve her, it all being messed up. I said, “Well that’s great.”

Fiona: Gus had this gorgeous video of a work that he was trying out in the Tall Gallery where he had a sail and he was running across and making it fill up with air, and letting it sort of die down and this old guy was looking at it and he was saying; “That looks like a pastie... What’s he going to do with that now? What’s he going to...?” And he was absolutely captivated by this video that had only been shot about 10 minutes before. And then Gus and Sarah were kind of saying; “Well, that’s contemporary art, it makes you think.” And they go; “What!” They couldn’t really understand it but he said...

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Gus: “I don’t like it... I don’t like it’

Fiona: Right, but you’re talking about it and that’s important.

Gus: Because you’re engaged with it. Yeah.

Fiona: And so they go; “Oh, right. So that’s what contemporary art’s about.”

Gus: it’s something we hate...(laughter)

Fiona: So that engagement with those guys on-site was such a valuable thing for those two vistor. They walked out with a completely new experience that they hadn’t expected when they came in— they wanted art on walls.

Jonathan: And they’ll talk about it.

Gus: It will spark a conversation.

Lucy: And I think along those lines of the first point of contact are also stages of contact too. And that thing of accumulation or the texture of contact, which isn’t always necessarily primary contact. It’s indirect often.

Paula: And before that, I would say it’s how you announce the contact - that’s what I meant before by mode of address. And if we look at the example of MONA, before the museum opened they had MONA FOMA festival, I think two editions before the opening of the museum. The media had all over “million dollars museum”, “sex”, “transgression”, so that’s how they announced themselves.

Amanda: Prepare to be shocked.

Paula: Prepare to be shocked. Exactly. And then people go there and some of the people said; “No, I actually wasn’t very shocked.” But that doesn’t matter. That’s how they addressed the audience. And in my opinion they tapped into a vocabulary; they talk to people using the spectacle vocabulary. How can you compete against Hollywood? With million dollars museum. So I think it’s important to think about the mode of contact. It is important to have the face, to have the extended contact but also to think how do you announce yourself?

Brigita: I was just thinking of a comparative experience, of going into New York into one of the commercial galleries in Chelsea (and the name’s have all escaped me) Hauser and Wirth and so on. And you go in there and the area where the people who were working in the gallery is

behind a big white reception wall or they’re all sitting in a room all typing away on their Macs and nobody looks at you, nobody speaks to you, nobody says anything. The works aren’t labeled so you’re going thinking; “Is this Elizabeth Peyton or isn’t it, I’m not really sure.” And then in Istanbul when I walked into a little private gallery and immediately the curator of the show or whoever was working there came up and said; “Oh, hi, how are you?” And; “Look, this is the show that we’ve got here,” and started engaging me, telling me about the ideas and explaining the works and what the artist did.

Eliza: Do you prefer that? That kind of engagement?

Brigita: It was fantastic because we were looking at the work wondering what was going on. And this woman came and engaged with us and explained the ideas behind the work. It was great!

Eliza: It’s interesting because I had a similar experience at Constance when I went to see their last show. And Polly came up to me and I hadn’t been there before and as soon as I was in the door, she was on me. And I was kind of; “Whoa! I haven’t even seen the work yet.” [laughing] And I backed up. I didn’t want that engagement immediately. I wanted to explore it and then possibly have a discussion.

Brigita: Oh, I think we’d been walking around a little bit when this woman approached us. And it happened in another gallery as well, another private gallery where a woman came in as we were looking at the work, and said hi. Obviously I think they’d take the cue as to whether you wanted to engage or not. But it was fantastic and we found out things about the show that I would never have found out otherwise.-

Eliza: Yeah, I’ve had that experience at MONA too, just engaging with the staff on that work and learning stuff that you wouldn’t learn, just because that staff member knows

Amanda: I think there’s a problem with comparing them because I think they’re so incredibly different in what their function is, what their aim is, and I think - I mean, if you’re talking about that first point of contact the myth of MONA is so widespread and so - everyone knows about it everyone’s coming to the gallery with... They’re comfortable with it because they feel like they’ve heard so much about it, they know what they’re coming into, and they might be hesitant in being a bit scared about being in a gallery but it’s also set-up to make you feel comfortable. But it’s interesting because if you’re - I work installing there - so sometimes if you’re in the gallery and it’s fenced off and you’re installing it, people

are gathered around and they’re fascinated and they’re taking photos and ...

Ross: It’s the process thing again.

Amanda: Yeah, and you know, they’re watching and they think it’s the most interesting thing in the gallery. But it’s doing kind of what you were doing...

Nikos: So it’s not closed for installation.

Amanda: Sometimes there’s just an area fenced off and you’re, working....

Nikos: That’s the point. It’s still on display.

Amanda: Yeah. But it’s that whole - I mean, they’re already there thinking that they’re experiencing something wonderful and intriguing [Crosstalk] and it’s a completely different head space.

Jonathan: How interesting. So one thing to actually take from this today is possibly that we keep the gallery open specifically as we set-up an exhibition.

Nikos: Donald Bates tells this amazing. Donald Bates is one of the architects that Ross has worked with in the conception and development of Federation Square in Melbourne. There was a lot of controversy around their initial design.

This is important to recall – because now the reception of Federation Square is totally different. Everyone claims it as if: ‘It’s ours. It’s magnificent.’ Everybody loves it. Everyone’s forgotten the bucket loads of crap that was poured onto it, even before it opened. And Bates claims that the beginning of the turning point – of its embrace - the city embracing the Square was, one day when they took the hoardings down and that enabled the public on weekends to come through the site and literally walk amongst the construction zone. He says that weekend was the turning point in terms of the city’s attitude towards its own Square - when they started to feel like they - it was theirs, they could physically be in amongst it, and it wasn’t just this to be contemptuous.

Ross: And they could see how it was coming together, it wasn’t just dumped on them. It’s this whole process thing. The most popular form in popular culture for the last ten years has been -

Nikos: Assemblage.

Ross: And the Forensic. People have been fascinated with every mode whereby they can get behind the scene

to scrutinize how things happen. These forensic modes become popular forms because of a hunger and there’s just some hunger for process, for understanding and appreciating process. So I mean, Jonathon’s idea is not a shabby idea. It’s actually - it’s on the pulse.

Nikos: Write it down! It’ll turn out to be a classic. (laughter)

Eliza: Can I just add to that - it’s interesting with what Brigita was saying before...at some point, with art, not wanting to see that rambling, that process and wanting the artist to have achieved a level of mediation. I mean, there is an element of demystification that goes on once you do start seeing that process, it’s like anyone can do it... I don’t know, I mean, I think there’s a case for the magic.

Brigita: Yeah, yeah.

Ross: Certainly - you don’t want only that process, you still want it to be art, some transformative thing has to happen.

Eliza: Yeah, but what is, really, that we expect?

Fiona: But can’t we have both? I mean why can’t it be in both forms in the art world? [Crosstalk] I don’t think it needs to be one thing or the other. I think that this is possible.

[Crosstalk].

Paula: I actually don’t think it demystifies. It transfers mystification from one thing to another.

Nikos: Exactly.

Paula: And in my view, that transference is very advantageous, because by mystifying the process instead of the object, you stop mystifying something, which is complete, something that does not have flexibility. And okay, now, it is probably moving into institutional critique theory, which is relevant for this; then we talk in terms of hierarchy and power. It is easier to use a non-flexible thing that has been mystified, or better - it is easier for power to appropriate the mystique of a non-flexible thing, than to appropriate the mystique of something that is always possible to change. The advantage is that the agents that are part of the process are the ones who hold the power of the mystique. Do you understand what I mean?

Eliza: ah, just... yes...

Ross: And I think that is related to that threshold issue as well that -- are there any Dutch speakers in the room? I can get away with this next point then! The Dutch have this great expression which means ‘fear of the threshold’ and it is apparently a Dutch characteristic; it’s a fearful action, either to leave your house or to go into someone else’s house. But it is the sense that, that edge is actually a big challenge and you need a reason or an energy or an invitation to cross that edge, and that’s one of the things that the art world has, that’s a big problem, I think: the threshold that is so -- like ta classic New York gallery, it has such a snooty threshold. I just know that my mom and dad never went to the art galleries because it made them feel stupid, and they were not stupid people. Exactly the opposite. So, that sense of where the threshold is blurred and it ceases to be a threshold but there’s an invitation zone of some kind is really crucial. That is another version of what you are talking about.

Steven: A couple of things have come up out of this. One, I think that it is really important to know or to note, is that because there might be a three year success with a great strategy or fascination for something that people are becoming accustomed to, shouldn’t override or shouldn’t derail the potential for something new and distinct to take place. And that might be building on that and you know, so much of what we are talking about is building a community and there’s a range of communities that are a part of all the structure or fabric of the gallery. But I also think that if some of the stuff that makes things dynamic and interesting and popular and engaging is the way that people actually do work and are trained to work with the public with viewers, with the artist, and the fact, the experience of walking into a gallery, we have all had that, where people actually treat us like we don’t belong there because we are not going -- if it is a commercial gallery and we are not going to buy that thirty thousand dollar work, or we’re not intellectual enough to engage with the true meaning of it which is often withheld from the viewers of the work, anyway. But within this institution, there is an untapped resource which I think we’re getting to -- and that’s actually the student here who could be -- instead of actually being paid to sit at the front desk, which I think has been the practice where they actually write their exegesis or where they actually do use the free wifi, you know, to do their own catch up research.

They could actually be interning here, they could actually be guiding people and they could actually be seen as more the hosts of someone’s experience at his place and sometimes that is actually just by taking their eyes away from the screen and acknowledging someone as they walk in the door, which is one of those basic things that I learned pretty early on when I was trying to start an art practice, just by working in a dumb restaurant.

Ross: Yes, that is one of the ways the threshold gets big or small.

Steven: Yes.

Ross: What is the human factor as well as the Feng Shui, as well as how things flow.

Steven: But to put that back into your triangular thing, as a resource but as a role, I think some of these things could be defined and in a way they may overcome some of those things which are profoundly in their limitations, and that have implications that need lots of money to address. In the short term, we all -- one of the things that I’ve written down - is that we all can bring something to *The Plimsoll Inquiry* by taking stuff out of here and inserting it into various communities just through conversation. Because the word of mouth campaign people’s conversations are the things which will generate interest, and I think that is a very powerful resource.

Gus: ...that English couple would have told three, four, people, who in turn may have told a few more ...

Steven: And the conversations grow, the actual mythology of it, the point of contact is what’s important, it’s not what the story is. It’s actually the experience and whether or not you were wearing a purple shirt or your hair was purple that day, might very well not be important -- it is this engagement, the experience and that someone has connected with someone who walked through the door.

Fiona: You know these two guys were actually artists in training and that they could actually articulate about this process, and the process of contemporary art was interesting. And that amazed the visitors, was that they actually had that first hand experience.

Sarah: And then they asked what else we do (laughter)

Fiona: Yeah, that’s right!

[Crosstalk]

Sarah: But that process is sort of happening, it’s starting to happen. Noel Frankham started a course called Gallery Practices, it’s an experiential learning course where we all help set up shows. I think that’s gone a long way to demystifying gallery space for a lot of students, especially for first year students who then interact with second and third years you know, in moving plinths and things like that, which I think has helped me connect with this space a lot more, which then facilitated the

conversations we’ve been having.

Ross: That’s made a resource of people by changing their role...
(General agreement)

Ross: I mean the role is you can do actual course work...
Sarah: Yes. I mean, it’s in its early stages, and I think everybody is sort of nutting out what it can be but it is a really interesting program to me.

Tanya: I agree. I’m in the program as well and there is this demystification that we are talking about, but what comes with the demystification is also an investment.

Sarah: A connection, yes.

Gus: An excitement, an opportunity.

Tanya: So those people that came in here, they invested in you guys and this gallery for nearly an hour so they will always remember that, and they’ll go home to the other side of the world and take that with them. So, I think having students in here actively working as artists and as, you know, just being here, helping people through is potentially really a great thing for the gallery too.

Sarah: Quite honestly I took up the course – and this is a bit about myself – but openings intimidated me and so I thought that if I can get involved in actually setting up a show I’d then have a reason to be here or just have some background information to be able to feel purposeful or something – I don’t know, but I was seeking a connection somehow.

Gus: I was just about to say a similar thing. I did it because I thought it would be an easy course. It ran all year, and your contact was once a month and I thought that’s easy. But then the opportunities that came out of that for me was initially an involvement in an arts community that was slightly external from uni, but then get a job here and then this opportunity here. So, three, four or maybe five opportunities that I wouldn’t have gotten any other way and I think not even just a Gallery Practices course but other ways of getting to, you know, academic ways to then engage with external elements, just kick starts and snowballs a huge range of a lot of opportunities so that once you leave, you know, you don’t get that thing, or that that moment of, “What the hell do I do now and where do I go from here?” You’ve got leads and feeds into other environments. I think that is really important and there’s hardly anything like that here apart from Gallery Practices.

Ross: Can I grab the mic and hand it to Meg, who we

promised a chance at the microphone if she wanted it?

Meg: I will be just brief as possible, but to start with synthesis first. I think what I have heard from the group and it might be a superficial reading but, its filtered through my own experience, is that I feel there’s a collapse of hierarchies, that they’ve become brittle, and a lot of hierarchies across the board are collapsing. And my problem is I have one foot in the old world, and one foot in the new. And I suppose the contribution I was making, or have made so far was to bring Wayne Hudson here to blow a lot of things up. You know, he kind of goes maybe too far in that direction but, it is involved with the way that things seem to be collapsing and there’s a new way perhaps to do things. So that’s sort of what I’m getting from hearing about different peoples’ stories, is that there’s got to be a new way to do things and that was process that really is the salient way out. Which I guess and the way that it’s communicated as John said. I always find it such a contradiction that we’re in one of the most incredible, open, public access pieces of real estate in Tasmania and yet its so uninviting for people to come in and see what goes on, that’s a little bit of a segueway....But my problem is, that as a painter, you know, involved with sort of Jurassic technology and visual thinking. I’m the same as you Brigita, I like to go to a Biennale or something, and I like something visual as well. So my problem is, how do I fit in? I’m a maker and I have a deep relationship with making and materialism. And how do I fit into this new culture which is, I mean, I guess the conversation seems to be really happening and productive, but I guess what I’m getting out of it is the process, maybe I can change my role, and open up to showing the process as well in the making. Because I’m extremely frustrated with end products in commercial galleries. It’s just not working for me anymore after quite a few years. So I’m frustrated and what I guess the problem is here is how can painting engage in the conversation.

And just one closing thing I guess, part of my research is around plasticity, and fluidity and flexibility, so I guess that’s where my medium and my way of thinking and the process, that’s sort of where I’m thinking it can go. That’s where it’s making sense to me so - metaphors and structures that are not the same as the old hierarchies.

Gus: You’re so right, there’s so many people that have so many stakes in what they think art should be and what should be shown to the public, and how you interact with it. But there needs to be platforms and appreciations so there is a three sixty degree, global view of what you can, or can be seen as art and therefore letting everything, don’t put a rule on it and say okay this gallery’s for paintings that go on a wall, and this gallery’s

for experimental stuff. There just needs to be a meshing of just open slather. And- each show is not going to say, people come are not going to go, “Oh, I get it” or “Oh I really enjoyed it”, and stuff and there’s going to be people that don’t like things, and that’s just how it is. You’re just going to go ahead and say, you can do whatever you want.

Ross: Thank you. Just too quickly summarizing, vulgarly summarizing what Tanya and Meg have said: we’ve got a highlight on process obviously, a highlight on collaboration, this idea of vibrancy, to which I would also add by saying that vibrancy is something also about the threshold. How attractive or repulsive is the edge, where the vibrancy is or is not happening. So process, collaboration, vibrancy, hierarchy, and this idea of plasticity. And you know what I hear in there too is one of the things that’s in plasticity: this idea of constant emergence, things constantly in process. So they’re all big ideas that I think were in so many peoples’ stories this morning.

But other things that really strike people? One way of winking ideas out is to say anything that surprised you, about the project, the inquiry, or about people’s schtick, where you think you knew someone and that was a whole other thing that they were saying. Over here. (Pointing to Fiona Lee)

Fiona: I was just going to say that, you talk about collaboration, and I think collaboration – we kind of have a fairly good definition of what that’s about. But I’ve actually noticed that people talk this new term of co-production. And I think that’s really an interesting thing because it’s more than just a collaboration. It seems that we are actually generating things from the energy between each other and that’s the exciting thing, well that’s one of the main things that I’ve noticed from just being here in the last two weeks, and I’m hoping that’s going to continue on.

Lucy: So maybe another word; vibrational was a word that came up, when Nikos was describing something that is important within your research. And something that seems to be very important within this conversation about contact or staged contact, or communication; that it’s vibrational. Each vibration affects another and can feed on to something else in different ways.

Fiona: Yeah, like an echo or something.

Lucy: Or resonance.

Mary: There seems to be, there seems to be a sort of separation happening here between what is seen as the

traditional art based in objects and the now, what could be termed, perhaps, ‘post object’ art practice. I’m concerned with that because I think there’s still a very valid role for objects within contemporary making. But I think again it also comes down to how the vibration occurs in that practice, and it’s not just the ‘isolated in the studio’ thing, there is all those other discourses and things that occur in relation to that making, and that might tie in to do with Steven’s comments about process. And I’ve been thinking about this through the recent interactions I’ve had with other people, throughout the process of making recent work. I felt that these interactions, though not a full a co-production, but, it was certainly a vibration of production. So I think we’ve got to be careful that we don’t sort of say the old is objects, and the new is not.

Meg: That’s our role, that’s where we have to step up and play a different role as makers.

Eliza: Well I was just going to say I think there are a number of objects now, it’s not just the art object. I mean to go back to the Mallarme quote from the beginning you know - yes we’re given all these objects but I think it’s about identifying what those objects are, and it may be that it’s the art object but, its also the discourse around that object. And it’s also about the curatorial processes, so that maybe its not, I don’t know if the object is the right word but, it’s object, process practice, - you know we have a multiple framework now which perhaps under those more hierarchical models was more dichotomous you know, opposites you know, so its a different sort of structure that we’re dealing with. What I’m getting from everyone this morning is this sort of relational framework. And that if it can be clearer I guess, about what those main objects are that we’re trying to bring together. And give ourselves time really to perform those improvisational practices, and think them through, and put them together and see what happens.

Jane: I guess it’s a fairly simple observation but, we spoke about MONA before and although that’s an extreme example it’s an object-based institution But I guess as Eliza also pointed out, curating is also such an outcome-driven pursuit. I suppose, and yeah I guess the role of a curator can also be considered in the creation of the object.. I mean that’s where the responsibility of curating lies.

Paula: I wouldn’t say that the object is the past and the dematerialized artwork is the future... Someone said this, that the pendulum before it stabilizes, flicks strongly towards one side and then comes back and asserts the movement. And I think that’s what’s happening at the moment. There are questions happening towards, or away from the object. It doesn’t mean that a middle space

is not going to be found. And because this is a gallery space, what is in question here is not the object, but how to communicate all those things. I think that’s what the question is – how to communicate; and most definitely questioning the process of communication, which is curating. It’s a recent artistic strategy, you know, maybe started in the ‘60s and developed later in the ‘90s, when the artists really challenged the space of mediation, of communication. So, it’s really recent, this course. Probably the pendulum is too much towards one side at the moment. And, yes, I think improvisation towards the same goals, people working together, the discourse will keep going. And then I think the pendulum is going to come back.

Eliza: Well, maybe it’s about developing a vocabulary to be able to identify the different categories that we are now trying to bring together and that takes time. To learn that language and to come to grips with how just one category works let alone when you put it with another.

Mary: So, there’s an issue there, for object makers, on the one hand there’s the commercial gallery where art products are for sale but to step out side this commercial sphere and make objects within an open experimental discourse is more difficult today, in terms of how art is placed and received. There’s a new space there that relates to conventions of making and discourses of making, that it actually needs a new format in terms of how that exists. I’m with Meg, in regards the commercial sector - I’m not there at all, really making is much more than output for me.

John: In terms of making, there’s something about the way we value and have in the past privileged output. Once again getting back to that whole stillness issue. Is it stillness as a mode of survival? If we’re not still, we self-destruct... is it a viable antidote, or is it actually a valid and independent way to operate? To actually not output things, whether it’s performances, installations, or artifacts?

And what’s interesting is that in relation to the idea of extant things in the world, I immediately thought, “Well, we’re objects in the world” and you alluded to that. And then I thought of the institutions, and this sort of neurosis around output that is also occurring in galleries. Just yesterday I had a conversation with someone involved with a local ARI that highlights the point. The ARI in question had three spaces instead of one, which meant they were held to account for thirty exhibitions a year, instead of ten; quantity related output issues that seem to occur across the board. So the institutions are in effect paralleling our experience as individuals, as collectives, artists, researchers et cetera, which raises the questions:

are we creating institutions? Are we the institutions? Or are the institutions creating us?

Steven: Can I bring this back to your question about -what are some of the things that maybe surprised us about this morning? It surprises me, two things. One is that we’re all talking more freely at this stage about things that we’re very passionate about, and there might seem to be a little bit of a dis-ease about replacing one thing with another. And, in fact, it surprises me that we aren’t speaking more about finding ways to kind of more strongly connect things, because individually we have agendas; but collectively we have, you know, a potential for an enormous dynamism. So, I think that that’s one thing that we probably would like to kind of put out there. But the other thing is it really surprises me -- and I took this up with, I think it was Nikos and it came out of the last roundtable that I attended, and I’d really only recently come back to Hobart at that point. And I felt like people were really relying on MONA to just tag themselves to and lead the new frontier. And I don’t believe that that’s sustainable. But what I think is more appropriate, rather than seeing what MONA does, and emulating that is actually see what MONA doesn’t do. MONA’s dynamic. MONA is vital to this place. I’m not denying that, but I also think it’s important to say, “What isn’t MONA doing that we can do better?” MONA -- I absolutely know, has no education or public programs.

Mary: And intentionally so. I’ve asked that question.

Steven: I tried to get a job there. I tried...

(**Mary:** Yeah, I did, too)

Steven: ...to make a job for myself --when I had nothing else, to actually... ‘You need an education officer. Let me develop something’. And they

Eliza: What did they say?

Steven: They said, “We’re not interested.”

Mary: It’s David Walsh’s philosophy, - he doesn’t want an education department.

Brigita: No guided tours.

Nikos: Everybody’s doing education – is that his way of saying it?

Mary: Maybe, but then again it’s possibly to do with his aversion, of pinning the work down as per his position against labeling artworks at MONA. So there’s no interpretation as such.....

Lucy: And even more broadly, with the festivals, the Dark MOFO, trying to set up units around that in parallel with MONA, has been impossible as well.

Brigita: Well, no, I had a unit absolutely aporoved by MONA, but then we had all these cuts, and I couldn't do it. Oh no - students just didn't follow through with enrolment, that's what happened, and the unit was cut.

Gus: What was that called?

Brigita: 'Confronting MONA'. And I worked with MONA. They were really happy for me to do it. I discussed the whole unit with them.

Mary: Yes, but MONA also got something out of the unit. They gained trained front-of-house staff.

Ross: Yeah, your point about complementarity is there - it doesn't have to be chummy complementarity. It could be in contest. It could be a dialogue.

Steven: But is that exploiting that the resources of this place. And also, you know, one of those resources that I spoke to Bec about at one of the Wednesday Night Fiasco roundtable was that there's this kind of great spirit to crack the institution open and to just disband everything that the Plimsoll has done and the school's done. But also, my comment in that was - Well, the other thing is that you have to at least acknowledge that the institution does support our practices, and that's something that --

Ross: That's a resource.

Steven: Yes, and that's an important thing. So, rather than kind of cracking it open and ripping it to shreds, I kind of think we need to maybe establish those relationships between the long history; but also make room for new people, new ideas and to kind of leverage from that and connect with that and build strength upon that. And I know that these are some of the threads that are coming up through the way people are accessing the archive, but one of the incredible resources -- and John touched on this -- are people like , and Paul Zika and Pat Brassington and all the people who actually have a deep understanding and have a demonstrated commitment to this place. They don't need to just be replaced.

Ross: Just before throwing to Jonathan, let's consider all the stuff about the status of the object that we've been discussing and then your point about there's all of this history that is potentially a resource rather than a provocation to trash. I've been thinking a lot as we've been talking about remix cultures as well. That's one of the ways the object is always in plasticity as well. It's

always being moved along. There's every opportunity to remix the critical mass of stuff from the history and the critical mass of what's in the heads of people who are still available to give over what they know as well. And that's a resource also inasmuch as remixes -- as long as you don't end up doing only remixes -- remixes are very efficient. You know: you've already got the thing, and then here's a new thing, that is related to the other thing. So this remix idea, I think, is available to the point somehow or the other. But, Jonathan, you again?

Jonathan: Well, this idea will vibrate with Fiona, I'm sure, because when we first started talking about this whole project, it was my thing. But what stopped me in my tracks today was Lucy's stillness. Reflecting on doing thirty or so exhibitions, a lot of them in this space, both as a curator and also as a writer... The moment I really always loved was the moment before the preparator came in and this place was just a blank space... just a blank space. I could come in here on my own, sit on the floor and just think. Think about how, you know, this next exhibition, which I had in my head, was going to actually go into this space. What you said today was really interesting from my perspective because I know with my writing for instance... if I'm on a writing project, I just have to get rid of everything else out of the study to start writing. It has to be, you know, like this clean space. It's not just clean head, but spatially it has to be clean... So, when we started talking about this, you know, my idea was actually to create an object out of nothing. In a way, what's really interesting for me today is that the object is actually, in this mess that we have got here which is what happens in an exhibition as you're setting it up. The 'messes' actually start to gel into something which one can start to see, to visualize. That is exciting for me.

Fiona: There's also an interesting point when Jonathan and I were first asked to put an exhibition together, Pat asked us to present something for Arts Tasmania to put into the program. And Pat said to me - and you guys probably remember this story - 'But Jonathan will want a handsome exhibition' (laughs). So, I said, 'I don't really do handsome, Pat,' and she goes 'grunt' and she said 'you're not going to give me that relational rubbish, are you?' (laughter) Then Jonathan and I caught up a little bit later and we started talking together about it, and about the idea of actually thinking of what a handsome exhibition is, and you know just exploring that idea. The whole idea of the inquiry stemmed from that kind of terminology...

Jonathan: It's about -- it's horrible word to use - but 'a nice idea', or whatever, which you then bring into form; it becomes visual in a sense.

Fiona: But this was never really meant to be totally disruptive. It was just meant to ask a few questions, you know.

Jonathan: Well, you have got to stop and think, you know. And that needs stillness. It just needs that time to reflect. Okay. This may sound like a mess today, but it is a mess with an object.

Ross: This has been a really applied session.

Ross: I will thank you all for being so applied and refined in it, we've earned a good break. Before I put the microphone down, well, in putting the microphone down I'll hand it over to Nikos in case there is anything you want to say that sets of the rest of the afternoon?

Nikos: The last point about mess becoming handsome is very important. I'm going to repeat the format that you've constructed, but with the efficiency gained that we are already familiar with each other and we're going to try to push it towards an outcome. I won't say anything more now. So, we can enjoy our lunch.

Ross: Thank you very much.

Lunch Break



Nikos Papastergiadis Master Class (afternoon session)

Participants:

Ross Gibson, John Vella, Mary Scott, Johnathan Holmes,
Sarah Pieris, Nikos Papastergiadis, Jane Stewart, Brigita
Ozolins, Fiona Lee, Eliza Burke, Gus McKay, Meg Walsh,
Tanya Maxwell, Paula Silva, Rebecca Stevens, Steven Carson,
Amanda Shone, Lucy Bleach

Nikos: I had a plan to focus the session around the idea of writing. To think about the dynamics of collaboration in writing and to have a slightly more discursive approach to the one we just had. I think to not follow on from the conversation that’s already started would be a real travesty, and be cutting across the energy that’s already forming. I’m going to leave my plan to the side and maybe it will re-surface anyway. What I’m going to do is, in the first instance, pull up or push up some of the topics and headings I’ve seen that already formed in the conversation in the last half and in a way to do a brief response and anecdotal extension on them. Then I’m going to do similar task that Ross did, which is to ask you to pair up again, maybe find another person to pair up with this time.

I’m going to give you very simple questions, questions which I hope you can give some very direct and concrete examples in response to. First, let me say that what I was hoping to do was talk about how we get in to art, and writing is one way of getting into it. Or, alternatively what happens when you go there and you don’t get it? You guys gave some very powerful examples of that anxiety of, “I don’t get it.” Is it an individual shortcoming or a failing, or lack of education? I still don’t get what everybody else in the world seems to get about Bruce Nauman - I just don’t get it.

Nikos: I’ve heard nice stories about him, but I still don’t get it. The point is, how much of a culture do you need to share before you actually can play in it, respond to it, extend from it, extrapolate in it, and so on and so forth. What I was hoping to do was to see how writing is a way of getting into a space and making yourself comfortable in a space by acquiring a vocabulary, picking up a sense of history, developing a familiarity. Through that, one is not only gaining more textured understanding of it, but developing a confidence to play. I was going to give examples of how that is done through friendship. In my case, through friendship with many different artists from all over the world, some of whom I’ve met, some of whom I’ve never met. But through my telepathic means which you’ve already seen in action, I’ve created imaginary friendships every time I’ve written about someone.

Jonathan: Yeah, yeah.

Nikos: So, we’ll put this thematic on hold. However, Ross’s quote from Mallarmé distracted me. I immediately thought of an author who I often felt was very boring, stolid, descriptive, and tedious. Yet, I’ve never stopped thinking about him, even if I don’t go back and read him over and over again, that’s Joseph Conrad. He actually said, “What’s the point of science fiction?” I agree with

him. I don’t get that either. “Because there’s already so much mystery and strangeness in the world, we don’t have to go out and invent more of it?” That’s, I think, the flip side of Mallarmé. Conrad sees the task of an author not as an inventor of alternative realities, but as a worker with the strangeness that’s already in our midst. That’s, I suppose, another way of phrasing the role of the artist / curator as sculpting a space of communication.

The artist makes something, the curator’s job is no longer to transfer it but also to shape the context in which communication occurs. That is dialogic a space. That space is a space of hospitality; coming in, feeling at home, making it a little bit your own, and working it into something else. It’s plastic space that becomes modified through your footprints, through your bum sitting on the chair; developing an imprint that becomes your history, your pattern, and your habit.

Hospitality has of course another flip to it. It’s not just a space of openness, an invitation to come in, but it’s also a responsibility to learn the rules of the game. It’s to learn to respect how things are done in Rome, how they’re done in Hobart, how they’re done in this gallery. Hopefully, what happens in that learning process and in that invitation to come inside to learn, is that the rules also change through the presence and participation of all the people who come and go, the hither and thither of interaction.

In a sense, hospitality is both openness and control, but the two must occur at the same time. Because one is the negotiation with the other rather than determine the other; the control does not foreclose the openness, and the openness doesn’t mean there’s no control. There is, in that negotiation, a constant reinvention of a space of reception. Again, let’s rethink the word “reception space.” Let’s put those spaces and roles, resources and roles, in a moment of what Lucy called a lag. I like this phrase because of its paradoxical elements. On the one hand, it’s full of activity. On the other hand, it’s suspension. What it’s suggesting is a stretching, an elastication of something, an opportunity for something else to emerge, something that might be contagious or contaminating, or it might be expansive and enhancing. Nevertheless, it’s taking us towards the “else” of something. That production of the “else” in something can be both an extension, and a reconstitution, a reconfiguration which produces a sense of alienation.

The alienation effect is always double because alienations make you feel that you are being turned into a thing, or that you’ve disappeared. Alienation tends to mean that the spirit of “you” is gone and you’ve just been reduced to an object that is handled by someone else for their purposes

and means rather than your own., or that’s at least That is how Marx defined it. I also think that this is what happens is that we all also do that to our own things. We’ve already had this conversation in the break when we talked about that thing. I think that to our own products. Steven mentioned about the alienating effect of seeing his their work and that as it goes away from you. It leaves the studio. It either has its own life, or it’s lost the life that you thought you’d put into it.

Daniel Buren, in his famous essay, “The Function of the Museum”, noted that this is the plight of all contemporary art. And if that’s the condition in which contemporary art comes into the world, let’s face it and accept it as a constitutive force, rather than lament it as an unfortunate outcome that you can somehow magically overcome or bypass. When he says, “Let’s face this as a constitutive force,” it means accept it as part of the condition. To deny this force is like saying, “If only this paint didn’t have to dry.” Of course it’s going to dry. So we work with the fact that this is what it’s going to look like when it dries and anticipate its form. Buren’s solution was to only make site- specific work. It was not made in his studio and then taken to a foreign site. In a way, he thinks it’s never alienated because it’s always in its context.

I’m not here to debate the success or failure of that strategy, but note that it is a strategy that acknowledges rather than tries to deny or refute a constitutive force of our condition. This takes me to another constitutive force which is the discursive field. Brigita reminded me of the sense of “disappointment” and the tiring effect of the discursive turn in contemporary art. Not tiresome but tiring. I found that response very interesting because I often go to big Biennales with my wife who’s a curator and I find it very interesting to see at what point she gets exhausted and I don’t, when I get tired and she doesn’t. She gets tired about day seven and I get tired after about three and a half hours. Literally tired. I’m exhausted and my mind can’t just look anymore because I find it so hard to do all that looking. Whereas if we’re in the library it’s the other way round because I’ve got that muscle really, really worked out – I’ve pumped books day and night. She pumps art. So she can go to the Venice Biennale and go, “(grunt) I can do more of this,” and I’m going (mimes exhaustion) ‘puff, puff’ (laughter). It’s the question of what we’re trained for on the one hand. So I don’t think it’s an indication of good or bad. It’s a question of preparedness. So I want us to think about that in terms of again our levels of expectations that we put on to the stranger. How much can they cope with? And what is a coping device and what’s the space for X or Y?

In fact well let me give you an anecdote here. Daniel Buren and Sarkis are two artists, who set up an art

school in Paris in the early 1990s and they had this really beautiful idea that the art school would have 30 students; 15 from France and 15 from the rest of the world. It was all funded by the socialists, and it was free. The students would come there and the only thing they had to do is once a week each student in turns had to cook a meal for everyone and the visitor.

During that day of the week they had a seminar and a discussion and rest of the time they were in the studios. Daniel and Sarkis would go and visit them. The reason why I’m thinking of this is because Sarkis actually did in the first Istanbul Biennale one of the earliest relational works. He made rice for everyone because he thought, “Gosh all these people are coming to Istanbul to see the foreign place, all these artists. None of them have probably ever been here before. Let’s make a place of gathering, a place of calm reception.” He made it first for the artists, but of course then it was for the public because he didn’t expect people from the other parts of the world to come. But he made meals everyday for all the others who just gathered and find some repose and he invited me also to his art school with Daniel Buren. I prepared in the typical British manner - because I was teaching in a British university at that time – 50 minutes presentation, 15 minutes of questions, go to pub. I then discovered that they expected me to lead discussion for the whole of the day! Daniel Buren had to translate so that took up a bit of time. (Laughs) But the point is the kind of slowness – one person, the whole day, allows one to really get in to it, open it up, take it down, pull it this way, take it that way and so on and so forth. That was a parenthesis.

Jonathan: No, it’s actually really spot on.

Nikos: I was going to move on to the ecology of ruins. Jane suggested that we stop worrying about underfunding. Let’s look for other modes of collaboration and let’s not look at ruins as a sign of being defeated, exhausted and absolutely destroyed, but as a place where rebirth, revitalization, renewal comes about. Ross mentioned the term ‘para-site’ which came from my experience of living in Manchester. I lived there for a total seven or eight years. I really think of it as one of my spiritual homes, for some strange reason. At one stage I had this American girlfriend who I was trying to convince this is really cool place to live, she wasn’t convinced. We were coming out of an event where some friends of mine were playing, who were artists in a band and it was pretty grim, you know the usual, ‘the rain-rained-in-Manchester’ kind of scene. That’s the opening line from Get Carter by the way....

And she goes, “Oh, I can’t stand this place. It’s so damn dysfunctional,” And I suddenly felt patriotic about

Manchester. Manchester is my place. I said, “It’s not dysfunctional,” and then I got stuck because I thought, “Where do I go with the argument now?” because I couldn’t even turn around and say it’s really functional because it isn’t. But I knew I wasn’t dysfunctional because there were things happening. We’d just been to a place that had been taken over by artist so I said, “It’s para-functional.” That word now exists. I’ve seen at least five other people use it. To prove my point I wrote this piece about para-functional spaces which is about how spaces get an alternative life. I think this is what artists have been doing throughout the whole of the modern period. Also not just with spaces but with the material. The found object is a para-functional object. I want to now move from ruins to the idea of the event. In some sense we have to think about events not just as a moment where the culture represents itself back to itself. That’s the classic definition of a culture by Lévi-Strauss, right? That cultures represent themselves back to themselves. But as events in which a culture snatches time out of the multiplicity of things and flows that are occurring in its space, and creates a window for you to see the culture in a different kind of light and form.

The event is no longer just a mirror to see yourself in, but a new frame to snatch the time and place you’re in. The event is an opportunity for culture to reinvent itself. Not as a tabula rasa, however, in the event, “What matters is the energy and the cunning.” This is a word that no one used, but I think it’s absolutely necessary in the context in which we are in.

I remember someone saying once ‘the problem with left wing people, academics that’s all of us, artists is that we’re opposed to everything until a little petty robber comes into our house, steals something from us, a pen or something. Then, we cry to the police like some pathetic nun.’ We’re not very robust figures are we? So we can decry the state, the police force, and every other kind of repressive apparatus that’s out there, but we’re not very good at either defending ourselves?

Right now every arts organization in the world, not just in Hobart, is under attack from barbarians and thieves. I haven’t seen very much evidence of cunning, or even a defensive strategy..

I’ve got two really simple questions. ‘What worked or did not work at all for you in this space in the last six months?

Second question: ‘What new things could be brought into this place? What do we want to welcome here in the future?’

Jonathan: Okay: Brigita - I’m her voice. She’s been away for six months so that makes it difficult. The first thing that she went straight to was last night’s Fiasco, and what worked. She was part of that Fiasco, offering a service through her Bibliomancy readings. She made the observation that the readings were quite successful until the moment when Lucy (Hawthorne) arrived here, next to the Bibliomancy readings over there (in the far corner of the Plimsoll gallery)..

Lucy with her ‘Soapbox’ suddenly disrupted everything that Brigita was doing. Of course, she was annoyed. But what Brigita said really worked was the fact that it made her think: “Hang on a second. I’m just going to put up a sign saying ‘back later’ and I’m going to go with the flow, and walk through the rest of the space.” She said that that was as productive as the actual ‘action’ that she had created there. That’s a quick summary. Brigita, you can add your little bit if you want to in just a second. But the second thing was the question of what to do about this space- the Plimsoll Gallery. One of the things to be added is a very simple word to be written on the Gallery Open sign out in the courtyard. It’s the word “Welcome.” We have to find ways in which to make this place far more accessible and far more welcome. Is that alright?

Brigita: Yes. That’s a pretty good summary. Just to add to that first bit, there was a moment when Soapbox was set up that night that I thought, “Oh, I can’t do my readings. I can’t focus or channel properly.” But going with the flow is a really good thing. When you go with the flow, other things open up and it was a fantastic thing. It gave me the opportunity to engage with all the other great things that were happening in the space; sitting there eating your wonderful dumplings, Meg with you and your family and chatting away, going out the back and seeing Llewellyn and Don playing in the back of the truck.

Meg: Llewellyn and Don playing in the back of the truck- it was sensational!

John: Playing recorders.

Brigita: It was the sociability. It was a really great little social event in the space and a really nice introduction to being back here.

Nikos: Okay. Now you can be Jonathan.

Brigita: Okay. Jonathan just went straight for what didn’t work. He said that he felt that his approach didn’t work - and I think he was actually reflecting on a whole thirty years [Interjection: “What? A whole thirty years of something that didn’t work?”]/ It’s the whole idea of

using printed matter to disseminate what happens in this gallery, to disseminate information about the exhibitions that have been here. I guess he’s principally talking about the catalogues that were produced for all the shows. I said, “What! Over the entire thirty years?” He said, “Well, in a sense-”

Nikos: Except for the ones he just gave me. (laughs)

Brigita: I don’t believe it completely. But he said that they’re a failure. He feels that they’ve failed to really interact or disseminate what he wants to disseminate to the public. I disagreed with him. The only time he felt that he really hit a mark was with the Imants Tillers show, Life of

Jonathan: Life of Blank

Brigita: Jonathan only felt his writing had achieved something when Robert Rooney wrote him a letter to tell him how much he enjoyed the essay that he’d written about Tillers in that particular catalogue. Jonathan has been recently rethinking this whole thing of catalogues and how they’re produced, and so on; how information is disseminated, and that we have to find new ways of doing that. I think it’s an extreme reaction, actually.

Mary: I think it is, too, Jonathan. I use them in my teaching all the time. I get them out.

Crosstalk

Nikos: Hang on. Everybody is allowed to say everything on anything, but no one’s allowed to judge what is being said.

Mary: Well, I use them in my teaching, Jonathan.

Nikos: All right. We want to have an atmosphere of complete frankness. Anybody can say anything they want as a counter, but they can’t come back and say, “Oh hey, you got that wrong.”

Brigita: I wasn’t saying that he got it wrong but I disagree with Jonathan’s view.

Nikos: Oh yeah. You can come up with an alternative.

Brigita: Because I think that those catalogs are an extraordinary record of what’s actually happened in this gallery. The archive, I assume, goes back to Mt Nelson and to the gallery that was at the main campus for a while as well. But things have changed now. We’ve got new ways of disseminating information and a lot of other options, as well as printed matter.

Jane: Back in 1989 when the Imants Tillers exhibition was shown, the exhibition catalogue was one of the only ways to present academic thought apart from a lecture or floortalk, which were ephemeral anyway. I think it’s important today to reconsider the value of catalogues, but they had a vital place in the pre-internet world.

Jonathan: Look, it’s a devil’s advocate position to state what I’ve said to Brigita. I’m making the point that there’s this argument that often occurs that people spend so many seconds in front of an artwork, and then they’re on to the next, and it’s like that, then that, then that. The one time in my career of writing when I’ve had that kind of unsolicited direct response from somebody who didn’t see the show and just simply wrote on the basis of the catalog, was that one time in thirty years of doing it. Now, I’m not saying that they’re not useful for handing to people like Nikos today because I want them to read something that I wrote ten years ago. In terms of the impact, if you like, you do have to ask the question as to whether this is the best or only way in which to communicate with others as an art historian and critic, whatever it might be. That’s all – that’s what I’ve been trying to throw out there for people.

Mary: At least they’ve got pictures.

Lucy: So in terms of them being extraordinary documents, what’s extraordinary is they’re consistent and they evidence a thorough account. But in terms of the scope of what they could be capturing, maybe that’s what is being brought into question.

Jonathan: I think that’s what I’m trying to feel for because they’ve had an impact here, but in terms of an Australia-wide practice, it’s almost negligible. And that’s where I put all my research in those years.

Brigita: It’s not the content, it’s the form.

Jonathan: No. It’s the form.

Brigita: It’s the form. Now out the back, as I’ve seen there, there’s that extraordinary archival process that’s happening, where we’ve got someone from the library coming down and scanning everything. It is going to become public and maybe it’s going to have a...

Jonathan: A second life.

Brigita: A second life, a new life that may result... there may be an impact that’s really quite different, and that material be used in a different way.

Jonathan: I know, we have to move on...

Nikos: No, we don't...

Jonathan: I'm asking the question though, if that's the case, aren't we looking for a different way of doing it, something that is going to set us up for the next two, or three ... Well, it's two generations for us. It's the second generation we're all dealing with now. All I'm asking is that you confront that one at some stage today.

Nikos: Is that what you want to see that's new? That's what you want to welcome into the space?

Jonathan: Oh, absolutely, a new way of communicating. Communicating the outcome, if you like, of these exhibitions.

Brigita: I don't think that's terribly difficult. We've got all of the models of social media and digital media.

[Crosstalk]

Jonathan: Yes, it is... Eliza just pointed it out this morning how difficult it is. It is difficult. Really, really difficult to do. I don't care what you say. It's all to do with attention.

Eliza: I think it's to do with the forms of writing as well - whether you stick to that essay model, or whether it becomes a less formal style and more of an interactive space. These are things we can consider. If you want that response immediately from your viewer, then how do you set up your space to do that?

[Crosstalk]

Brigita: Maybe there's a space for both of those things to happen... a combination.

Nikos: What I want to achieve in this is not just an idiosyncratic outcome, which is obviously what it will be in the first instance, a response or speculation, or comment, but also a list at the end of this, of tasks maybe. I think to extend the methodology that's been put forward by Ross, we got a sense of what we thought was important about here and what we've learned from each other, what this place can offer for us, and what we can bring to it. Now it might be useful to walk out at the end of this day and say, "Got a sense of the dynamics, also got a sense of the top ten urgent things."

One of them is to acknowledge, in the first instance, if we are going to use new media as the format for dissemination, it's not a simple matter of transferring

what we've already got onto that format. The new medium generates its own aesthetic consciousness as well. Some of the Plimsoll catalogues, especially the early ones have beautiful type face; really carefully chosen type face in relation to the page. Similarly, there is a net aesthetic. The two are not equivalent or easily transferred.

John: Jonathan, just now, is prompting me to think about relevance and resonance in relation to the Plimsoll Gallery. We have been thinking about this locally, however it's never really occurred to me to think of the impact of the Plimsoll nationally, or beyond.

Nikos: Globally.

John: Yes globally also. You are talking about the fact that no one's really connected with what we've done here nationally, let alone globally. I think that's a really interesting question: Is part of the role of this space to make those connections globally, and how could that occur with a view to activating our local activity?

Nikos: Right on.

Jane: Is it true to say no-one's ever really connected with this space nationally?

John : Hang on, are you judging what I'm saying? (laughs) I think there's been exchange and, filtration through artists coming in, etcetera, etcetera. I think, maybe, another way to phrase what I've said ... is that perhaps there could have been greater impact or relationships built nationally or beyond through what we have already done - which is about increased impact. I don't think there has been negligible national impact. There is no doubt we're nationally respected however in terms of the potential for a deeper resonance there is lots more we could do.

Jane: When I was studying here during the nineties, this gallery impacted strongly on the students. But what was the intended role of the gallery then? Was it to disseminate research nationally? Or was it an educational tool?

Steven: I think there were examples of the gallery being the catalyst for an educational resource or a tool, to put it bluntly. In my time here during the late 1990s, many of the artists who exhibited here, conducted crits with post-grad students after speaking at the Art Forum. Jonathan, as one of your earlier projects, I think you compiled a list of Art Forum speakers. The gallery was very carefully integrated into the school (as were the Art Forum lectures), in a way which maybe some of us identify

might be a bit of a lack in its most recent history. But I think it has been important.

[Crosstalk]

Mary: We used to have post-grad crits down here too.

Brigita: They were the great days!

Jane: It was fantastic. I feel defensive!

John: When I first came here in '96 and was a student, I came here to do Honours - the Plimsoll was one of the primary galleries that was bringing in work from the outside, and now I'm thinking, "What's different?" Well, what's different is MONA. There are now regularly ...big blockbuster shows and artists coming in from 'the outside' so the amount and quality of filtration is very different. I don't think we've thought this through as our cultural landscape has changed so rapidly. I think we (the Plimsoll Gallery) did have a privileged place. The TMAG would bring the odd exhibition in however the primary venue bringing work in from interstate was this gallery. Now we've got MONA/Jean-Hubert Martin bringing in 'Theatre of the World', and everything such as Wim Delvoye or the 'The Red Queen', and so forth, are here.

Nikos: Before we go into general discussion based on this specific provocation...because it is a provocation, a very fertile one and pertinent one. Let's hear some more and then we'll see if these things develop into a kind of a pattern. John?

John: So I'm Mary?

Nikos: You're Mary.

John: I'm Mary. Hi. The main thing - we didn't get through all of it.... Mary was discussing architectural shifts that would have the potential to affect access via creating spaces of hospitality or conviviality within the gallery, separate to the traditional art experience. She was contemplating access and interaction... Interestingly enough, the same word 'access' came up regarding the content of a Plimsoll exhibition, that she found difficult to 'access' conceptually. We went on to talk about the value of alienation, the impact of what perhaps didn't work. That's probably it, is it Mary?

Mary: Yes, it is.

Nikos: Okay. What didn't work for her?

Mary: Oh, it was a postgraduate exhibition that was alienating and that I found very difficult to access.

Nikos: Okay.

John: Yes. The show in question did not contain the normal range of cues ...

Mary found it quite alienating. So it was a very particular experience...

Nikos: For the future?

John: Well, the new things - this idea of shifting the architectural relationship and perhaps broadening the function to include this convivial space or hospitality. So, making it more of a place where people want to be, not just a place where they only come to look at art.

Brigita: In a sense, it's exactly the same thing that libraries are going through. They're having to ask the same sort of questions about books.

Mary: And there was something in one of our literary magazines asking the same questions that you're asking, Jonathan. What's the relevance of a literary magazine? Anyway, to keep on track. It's John, I'm speaking for. For John, what worked was the extended time for submissions for HDR candidates, that allowed for wider audience engagement and involvement from undergraduate students. Usually the examination periods are very short and are timed between exhibitions that occur within the formal gallery program; and that for most of that time are inaccessible because of examination procedures. John also said the Wednesday Night Fiascos run as part of PI were great. What didn't work for him in the last six months? John didn't provide a specific example but he expressed disappointment in the predictability of normal trajectory of month-to-month exhibitions which he felt didn't excite or engage him. He spoke about the potential of new approaches to stretch the capacity we want, and what we think of as being art. We discussed how the art school could become a place of 'cosmology', an idea that came up in one of Wayne Hudson's talks, that could broaden the place art in the world.

John: Yes, but not privileged by artists..., maybe I should wait.

Mary: John was also interested in expanding the gallery to include other disciplines that could form connections with and overlap with the activities of artists. He envisaged these as not necessarily artists initiated, but that the space could be made available to others so that other people may come in and use this space in interesting and creative ways. We talked about

the exhibition, ‘On a role’, in which John facilitated architects, jewelry, designers and artists to work together.

Jonathan: And writers.

Mary: And writers.

John: Yes, that’s it.

Nikos: Maybe we’ll take a few of them and then we can get back to this general discussion process.

Fiona: Steven suggests that the first part of the program is often taken up with RHD examination presentations, which have been extended recently from two days - just over the weekend open to the public - to two weeks, or thereabouts, so that they now represent a large part of the Plimsoll’s program. But Steven’s particular concern about the RHD presentations, in particular, was the fact that they were boxed in spatially and this is a physical thing. He said that what it did instead of making it open and generous, was to close down and shut things in. It interrupted the passageway and interrupted the art, in a sense, and compromised to a point where the art ended up competing with the architecture— so that was a particular concern.

Brigita: Can you just explain that? I don’t know what you mean by ‘boxed in’.

Steven: There were a number of exhibitions where people built box-like spaces for their installations

[Crosstalk].

Brigita: Oh, like walling themselves in.

Steven: Yeah, and these people weren’t very clever designers of this space. They weren’t architects. They didn’t have those skills. So it meant that what I’m enjoying today - the openness of the space which has a generosity to it, actually became overly didactic, in a way, as a structure for people to experience an artwork. I think that that made for fairly dull experience of an artwork.

Jonathan: Could I say something on this?

Nikos: Yes.

Jonathan: It comes back to something that Brigita said right at the beginning of our discussion, which was that she decided to move with the flow. One of the things that I do like about this gallery is if you take the TMAG, and Jane, I’m sure will back me up on this, the lead time for everything that they do is months upon months upon

months of preparation. We do have that capacity in this place to respond, if we want to, very, very quickly to things that are happening around this place. I don’t think we should forget the benefit of flexibility that we have in this space; it’s the same with CAST (CAT). It’s actually a really important quality that we could exploit. I’m sure that you would back me up on that. (pointing to Jane)

Jane: I totally back you up.

John: It’s two or three years with of lead time for a lot of the stuff that you do.

Brigita: So how would you prevent that? I was just thinking that it’s because there wasn’t anyone to say, “Look, that’s not going to work very well in the entire space. We’ve got three people showing here”. I imagine when there’s an examination, there would be two or three people showing and then people get all defensive about their work and they’re saying things like “I don’t want so and so’s black things encroaching in on my lovely white things,” or whatever it is. That’s where you really need someone who can go in who has an overview of the whole space and who can curate those shows.

Steven: If you are asking me to respond to that - I don’t know how you overcome that. That was my first response to something that I really thought was a problem. For me, site-specificity, which I think some of those works were driving at - was actually compromised because it wasn’t actually site-specific. What was created was a spatial awkwardness that I didn’t find engaging.

I don’t mean that’s it was simply about moving the walls, and I don’t mean that the space needs to be fixed into a singular configuration. But there were some problems in the way people used the gallery. I think it points to the consequence of people not having had experiences to work with the gallery space thoroughly enough for their work to succeed within the space. That might be about the lead-in time, but it might be about the lack of active engagement with the space throughout their study to gain a better understanding of the space in which their work will be exhibited finally.

Jane: I think it’s a prudent point because in terms of the future of this gallery, it’s something that has to be addressed. This gallery is where research higher degrees will be exhibited But often the purity of these research projects is what creates very isolated spaces. I don’t know that these are the most accessible exhibitions. They’re not not created as exhibitions but examinations. I think that’s probably the very basic problem.

Gus: I think one of things that came out this morning is

that maybe this space isn’t really that suited to that sort of exhibition...I know it’s tricky but you have to really think about what a space is for and what works in a space. If those things aren’t working, then maybe that’s just the way things are.

Nikos: Or maybe all spaces aren’t suited for that because I think what we’ve got is a visualization of the problems of hospitality.

Mary: Expectation plays a role in this, too, because strictly speaking HDR exhibitions are examinations not formal exhibitions per se. Opening them up as exhibitions can create mis-perception around the work, because they’re not really public events in the traditional form of an exhibition. For example, work may not be hung or displayed in a traditional sense so the expectations of the public that this is an exhibition in its formal or traditional sense, may effect their understanding of that work. Work is often displayed chronologically to demonstrate the progress of the research, which again is at variance with the public perception of an exhibition as focusing resolved ‘bodies of work’.

A research exhibition is a different type of exhibition. So I think we’re bringing expectations in of what a public show should look like into these examinations, which strictly speaking, are a dialogue between examiners and the candidate.

Nikos: Is there one student who’s not aware that at the end of their candidateship they have to put on a work in this space?

Mary: Although most do place the work in the gallery there is not a requirement that they do so.

Paula: My examination didn’t happen in this space.

Fiona: I’m not putting one in either for my PhD – this project, *The Plimsoll Inquiry* as a case study, is it!

Mary: We see the exhibition as a revealing of the research process.

Jonathan: A research outcome

Mary: It’s a research outcome yes.

Steven: But that research could reasonably be presented in a studio. It could be reasonably presented in another space that’s more suitable within the school. In fact, the gallery and its relationship to the school might be extended in that regard.

Nikos: But every research outcome, whether it’s text or visual, is intending to be exposed to the life of public encounters.

Mary: Yes. But the broader communication of it within a research community occurs through the extended life of the exegesis.

Nikos: Yeah, but whatever the form, it is expecting to be released into the full life of public encounters. In that context, everyone has to think about the fullness of that work’s reception whether it’s a chronological documentation of A step led to B step, or even a very discrete and distilled, single thing which is the epitome of everything that was pursued in a myriad of previous practices. Nevertheless, it’s the problem of hospitality again. Now, if you know that your work will be received in a cacophony of other voices, in the traffic of other objects, how does your organization of that work have to stand for itself? It seems to me that one of the responses was that, “Oh, my God. There’s going to be traffic. Let’s put the barricades around us. Let’s build a pretend wall, which is not even integral to my object, or my work, or even my practice. But let’s build up some screening to filter the rest of the world so that I have some space that’s mine, so that’s not contaminated.” I think this is an action of defeat. Another form of resignation is: “Oh, anything goes. We’ll just drop it in there.” None of them is an intervention or a negotiation with the context.

What is interesting and so crucial about hospitality isn’t just that it is either control or openness. It isn’t just that there’s sovereignty that you have your space and it’s only yours; but that it’s a constant negotiation. How do you negotiate? Well, “How do you collaborate?” That’s the challenge. That’s part of what needs to be brought in perhaps. I take from that that what is to be welcomed in the future is tactical forms of collaboration.

Fiona: Steven thought that a volunteer program could be established as a way of building community. He thinks that would be a terrific way to kind of re-engage the space—a public program that might include education events; a social, cultural program with interns, guides and hosts.

[Crosstalk]

Steven: This idea is partly about idea of hospitality, but it’s also partly about building connections and relationships and strengthening them by maintaining them with communities. I think that’s actually one of the things which this gallery will benefit from. OK , Fiona’s is a long list.... She felt that the space was unloved, it had no social or educational function, or if there was it was very limited or was inaccessible to some of the

students, particularly undergraduates. There was virtually no community engagement, no clearly defined research that could be accounted for, and in recent times, no one to mother it, nurture it or maintain it. This seems to have opened up a wound that she feels we can all contribute to the healing of. There's an opportunity within this state of flux. In this state, there is permission to help it heal through our engagement, energy, and actively doing things together.

Nikos: What didn't work? I think the wound was the part that didn't work.

Steven: No, the wound is an okay point for us to be at, but I think this is the point that Fiona is making.... The wound that Fiona mentions is good to identify, because we can all contribute to its healing. She sees that hosting, hospitality, and being adversarial but without making harm, or being harmful can contribute

Nikos: You mean like in the more robust sense of putting things forward rather than in an aggressive way?

Fiona: Yeah, I think you can work with people, but still be adversarial so you can actually disagree. I think with hosting, you can actually disagree, but you can also come to some arrangement where things grow from that as well. So, rather than everybody just agreeing and all being consensual, "Yes, yes, yes, let's do that." I think a little bit of antagonism is quite good because it actually helps grow something in probably a more fruitful and rich way because there is some sort of adversarial positioning...or critique.

Nikos: There's these political philosophers who used the difference between agonism and antagonism.

Fiona: Chantale Mouffe?

Nikos: So the agonistic is the one who, like, is wrestling where you're in opposition with each other, but you're not trying to kill each other. Whereas antagonism is trying to eliminate the other.

Fiona: I think Mouffe talks about antagonism as being more like "them and us."

Nikos: Yeah, so they actually work with the energy of their oppositional force.

Jonathan: Well, yes, except that the most withering critique of my writing occurred in 1985. It happened in 1985. It was an epiphanous moment for me. Somebody really hammered the way in which I was writing at that time, and it stopped me. I just was struck dumb by it. I

completely changed the way in which I was writing. And also teaching, as a result.

Nikos: That was agonism, you didn't stop writing.

Jonathan: No, true. You're probably right

Nikos: Antagonism would mean that you lost your arms and legs.

Fiona: So I think I see this Inquiry as a sort of agonistic form or event. Even my research kind of looks to change things from within using the people, but in a kind of slightly irritating way.

Nikos: Yeah.

Fiona: But not causing grief, but trying to generate something that's a bit fruitful and a bit more rich than I would if I'd just gone out and said, "I'm going to do this, and I'm going to change the world and I'm going to knock you all over.", Beautiful things are coming out in this Inquiry.

[Crosstalk]

Jonathan: It just sounds a bit safe for me.

Fiona: Sorry? The agonism?

Jonathan: The way you were phrasing it. That's all.

Nikos: This is your chance to hit him back. (Laughs) He's challenging you.

Fiona: In what way, Jonathan? In what way is it safe?

Jonathan: No, I shouldn't say. It's not a criticism, really.

Nikos: Yes, it is.

Jonathan: No, what you've done is you've opened up something for me to think about. It really is about whether there are moments in what's occurred in this place over the last 20 or so years have actually been truly confronting for me. Yes, I can think of a number of occasions when exhibitions went on here that I felt I was really challenged. It was, I think, probably more than adversarial. It challenged my way of seeing things, and I really admired the people that did that, on reflection, but it took me a long time to get to that point. I think that the way that it was phrased, whether this is the way you think it. It seems a little bit safe for what this place can be. That's all.

Fiona: You mean the Inquiry is a little bit safe? Is that what you're saying?

Jonathan: The Inquiry itself.

Fiona: The idea of the inquiry is safe? Is that what you're saying?

Jonathan: It's still safe, yes.

Fiona: It's still safe? Well, yes I think there's an element of safety. I mean Sarah and Gus will probably say, "This has opened up a space that I'm safe to work in." But it's also attempting to challenge the system a little bit in that we've always operated on a monthly exhibition base so we've kind of challenged the idea by having a seven-week program. We're talking about inviting people in off the street to a virtually empty gallery at times with people doing very odd things like sewing and ripping off bits of sticky tape and doing all sorts of strange things, which means that we're challenging not only the program itself and how it's always been, but also challenging the people who walk through the door and presenting them with an inquisitive event rather than a finished piece of art.

Gus: I think that's extremely unsafe, in a good way. It's the most exciting thing I've ever seen in this space because it is so scary and helps to push artist and viewers into new understandings of creativity.

Nikos: I can't help but notice the paradox here because when you describe that early scene with you and Pat, and Pat said to you, "Oh, he'll do handsome," and you said "I don't do handsome," he's now accusing you of being safe and he's putting forward a hell of a lot of messy stuff. So it sounds like to me, and also if I pick up what is genuinely being fed back to you, that what you've done in content is not necessarily handsome and safe, but perhaps your discourse can be a little bit more robust. You can take a little bit more risk in the ways in which you thrust it out there. Shall we move on?

Fiona: Yes, please do (Laughs)

Meg: It's Eliza's turn. What worked for Eliza, was the Investigations Exhibition that happened last month, the partnership with her colleagues was really beneficial. I think you said there was also some intimacy in that space?

Eliza: Yes, because not many people turned up. (Laughs)

Meg: And a it was playful area, it was not too serious but it was engaged, and it was rigorous in its own way. This is probably what had not worked previously, the space

felt dark and dismal to you and dysfunctional, and when you were hanging some students' work you had a lot of problems?

Eliza: Well, I think it touches on that problem we were talking about before. In an examination show, there are expectations that come with the space. In that particular case, it didn't feel conducive to her work, that was all. As a student, you're kind of forced to work with this gallery space and put your work here when it doesn't necessarily show its full potential. It's that question of whether you always have the gallery in your mind and therefore make for that space, or whether there's compromises along the way.

Meg: And what worked for you? To bring in community engagement...

Nikos: This is what's to be welcomed?

Meg: Yeah, to be welcomed, multiple exhibitions, shows of different practices.

Eliza: Yeah, well, perhaps multiple points of engagement, so it's not just exhibitions but some more artists talks, or writers talks - other points of engagement.

Meg: Not just the big open plan with one show. Yeah.

Eliza: But I think that does already happen in some ways. And that taps into what Meg was talking about as well. I might start with the second question where Meg talked about wanting to bring the public into the space. She liked the idea of a couch discussion area, a little bit like this where there is some form of activity you can engage with when you come in. Perhaps that goes against the model of the still, contemplative gallery, but it's something she enjoyed. What worked in the space for Meg was Wayne's talks and the conversational configuration of the couches, a bit like this, where she said, "It just worked because it felt like an informal process, a discussion and sharing of ideas."

What did and didn't work for her, again goes back to the Investigations show, which was a show where students were asked to show their work in progress. It was structured around a series of talks and feedback from colleagues and peers and she said she got some feedback on four of her paintings which was really great. It's great to be able to test work in progress like that. I feel that too - it's a really nice intervention into the idea of a fixed show or a finished show, but it's also a format that encourages student presence in the gallery.

Nikos: What didn't work?

Eliza: She didn't really say, she just said that she felt...

Nikos: ...So nobody hated anything?

Eliza: excluded from the space prior to that exhibition.

Nikos: So you only hated the past. The near past has all been fine?

Meg: Yeah, the last six weeks has been a revival for me of a space that didn't work in the past. I felt excluded from the gallery until then. That exclusion is what didn't work for me.

Nikos: Okay, just to make sure that we're being frank and open here.

Eliza: I haven't had much to do with the space in terms of using it for my own work. It was nice to forge a connection with it through writing. It's not often that writers get 'exhibited' in a space, or encouraged to be active in an exhibition space and to talk about their work. So that was a really nice aspect to the show and I think that's what I mean about multiple points of engagement. If you have a show you might bring a writer in to talk about it or a related topic. They may not necessarily respond directly to the work, but talk about something that relates to it and expand the field of engagement. I relate this to my experience of reading and to what Jonathan was saying earlier about reading essays. I remember one particular essay I read about Ricky Swallow's work, and going from not really knowing how to grapple with his work, then reading this essay and thinking "Wow, that's fantastic," and then going back to Ricky's work and going "Wow, that's amazing." That essay was really illuminating and able to bring in broad perspectives and it made the work come alive for me. I think there's potential for that to occur within the setting of an exhibition, or within the time frame of an exhibition.

Jonathan: So the accessibility issue is not just about the way into here, but it's also about the way into...writing?

Eliza: Yes, I think its' about building up the pool of ideas in which the exhibition exists and in which it is suspended during the time it is on. It could be a matter of having a number of people - poets, writers, artists, other artists - coming in and contributing to the vibration of meanings and ideas in the space and with the work, if the artist is okay with that.

Steven: So you don't just mean ideas though, but you mean forms within the space. [Crosstalk] Forms of

writing ...as compared to forms in artworks.

Eliza: I think I mean practices. Yeah, I mean practices of engagement, response and reception.

Nikos: Very interesting.

John: Can I also make a quick comment? It strikes me that what was rich about the Investigations show is the fact that a bunch of postgraduates went and did it on their own. There was no committee, there was no staff member...you guys chose to make something happen of your own accord. Then when you (Nikos) said, "Oh, what? Nothing's been cracked in the past six months" - what's actually happened in the past six months, ironically due to the loss of funding and Pat Brassington's retirement, is that the rug's been pulled out of this place. This has forced a situation to occur where we actually have to respond in a different way... I don't think it's a bad thing, however we've perhaps lost our capacity to judge what goes on in here. It's such a different place we've now generated a different way to judge and respond to it. In the past six months to ten months or so, the Plimsoll has been a very different place to what it was prior. So it's interesting to me that we're sitting here now asking "What didn't work?," when in the end we kind of 'fluffed' around as it was so hard to pin 'the gallery' down. I just thought it was worth mentioning...

Nikos: No, it's a huge point that you just raised about evaluation. The traditional methods of visual evaluation presumes an object and a frame. Even if it's a moving image, you're still evaluating it by some visual techniques that are directing attention to the relationship between form and content, frame and object. But if it's an investigative, ephemeral, a different kind of social practice, then, what is the category, tool, methodology that you're going to utilize for evaluating it to say, "It's successful," or "unsuccessful," "I like it," "I dislike it"? In a way, "like" and "dislike" is irrelevant. But the question of good and bad will never be irrelevant. What is the criterion that makes something good or bad. I think one of the big challenges that this kind of space is now going to prompt - if it hasn't already prompted - is the discourse of evaluation. That's going to be a challenge not only to the art world, but to everybody else who comes in here and says, "But that's not art," or, "I could've done that."

But, that's not the point. The point is not the sovereignty of the author but the dynamics of hospitality. From here there is a different level of conversation: "Yes, you can do that, but that's not where it stops." It's not the fact that it's made; it's what then happens.

Let's move on. Have we got any more points coming from that one? Yeah. You two? (pointing to Sarah Pieris and Jane Stewart)

Jane: I'm speaking on behalf of Sarah who says that what worked for her was the Gallery Practices course, which was based in this space...

Jane: ...and her involvement with this inquiry. But also the way in which that course and this inquiry has allowed Sarah to build a relationship with and a sense of comfort in the space. You also spoke about your friendship with Gus and the way sharing a studio had somehow ...

Sarah: ...solidified a relationship with the Plimsoll. We kind of collaborated, or responded to each other's experience of the space as a result of the Inquiry.

Sarah: On behalf of Jane, apart from the Investigations exhibition, her recent experiences have been a bit cold and austere. There's just been a general 'lack' in the space, it has felt a bit sluggish and not overly welcoming.

We came up with a combined list of what things we felt can be brought into the space. We enjoy coming to the art school, there's an energy upstairs that we both enjoy, we need to find a way to transfer that energy down here. Also, on the idea of the welcome, leading from conversations that we've had so far, and looking at it from a commercial point of view, it feels like the Plimsoll needs to have an aesthetic brand overhaul – where the philosophy or the personality of the gallery is examined in terms of what is marketed or expressed to the public. I mean there was talk about just adding the word "welcome" to the sign. But is it more than that?

Saying that, of course money's an issue, but there's a Vis Com faculty upstairs. Perhaps we can engage students, allowing them an opportunity to form connections with the space via a real re-branding process.

Also, based off, I think John's comments about MONA kind stealing our thunder in a way - I guess the point of difference here is the fact that we are an educational institution. We talked about MONA not being particularly interested in education. So again, we should be providing opportunities for education regarding the exhibitions that are happening. I think it would build connections and act as that friend who allows the public to feel that they can cross the threshold.

Jane: We both felt that this has been a shadowy space over the last six months.

Nikos: A what space?

Jane: Shadowy.

Nikos: "Shadowy space"? Is that a good or bad thing?

Jane: Probably good and bad, but it has felt a bit lackluster. I have felt let down when I walked in here but the Investigations exhibition was an exception. Maybe as a student led show it successfully reflected what's upstairs here.

Fiona: Interestingly, it was about process too.

Jane: Exactly. That brings me to one other point, which I know we touched on when we spoke about the higher degree examinations which are shown here. It's a bit of a conundrum, isn't it? For they're not about process, but in terms of bringing students into this space, which seems to be something everybody in this room feels is important, opening the audience to process could play a vital role. I'm not convinced yet that the examinations are the best way to do that.

Eliza: I wonder whether there can be things brought in and built around that and whether that's a curatorial question of overseeing the exhibition program in conjunction with other things or other events. So that if you have students exhibiting their work you ensure that there's another show or some other event that supports that work. Perhaps this is the role of a curator to ensure that these things can come together so that that the examination isn't too isolated - can we try to build a context around the examination show – I don't know if that's a possibility?

Jane: I think the communication of those shows is also what's let them down in the past to the public. I mean we know that they're examinations, but I don't think there are many people from the general public who are aware of that- they are expecting a vibrant exhibition.

Amanda: I have been a bit confused by the objective of gallery. Recently there were examination shows, then the next time I came in, I think it was an Indonesian fabric collection exhibition, and I thought "this feels like a museum."

Mary: I think that was just Noel's thing, he offered the Plimsoll to the Asian language academics because the Plimsoll Gallery's program disintegrated with the lack of funding.

Amanda: Oh, right.

[Crosstalk]

Mary: We were confused too – it just appeared one day! (laughs)

Lucy: But maybe confusion is a good thing too.. that things happen and they don’t make sense. But I think it comes back to the framing. It came up with the framing for the RHD students in understanding that they will be submitting an exhibition at the end, and it’s an examination exhibition, but it is open to the public. So there is that expectation. But I think it’s also about redefining, and this is what Jane was talking about. So the public’s expectation of coming into the space is that it’s an examination exhibition. So that information is then conveyed to the student, who knows that the public’s coming to the exhibition within the framework of an examination. So then it’s great if other things happen, and they don’t necessarily make sense or they start to make sense, but they are framed at the point of contact. That point of contact can be defined within five minutes because suddenly there’s an opportunity to show something, and maybe it sits outside what normally happens, but could be great.

Nikos: I doubt whether you’re going to get ambient traffic coming in here. People aren’t going to be coming here on their way to something else, I imagine. Is that true?

Lucy: Well, actually we get cruise ships in summer.

[Crosstalk]

Meg: There’s nothing on in Hobart. People wander up here and there’s nothing here. If there’s a sign,... people looking for stuff to do might come here.

[Crosstalk]

Sarah: Because of the hotels down this street...

Nikos: Oh yes, the hotels – so you do have a captive audience then – I reverse out of what I just said!

John: But it’s still not on the way to anywhere. No, it’s not far but people don’t come through on the way to anywhere. They have to choose to come in. To do that, or to see a sandwich board or be coming in because they know a particular show is here. If they see the sandwich board and manage to find the door, then they might come in, and that’s not a large percentage of who walks past on the street.

Mary: It depends on what happens to the railroads, too. The vast area behind the School is earmarked for cultural

industry deveopment – although what this actually is very vague. Anyway with that development there could be access to the gallery from Evan’s St. There is an existing doorway but it is locked off.

Gus: Somebody mentioned before the rabbit-hole feeling of MONA. It’s a similar feeling here in terms of having to really search to find the gallery – I mean MONA’s a huge entity and you know where you’re going and you go there because you know what to expect, a kind of chaos. There might be something (in that) ...But there is a feeling that if you came here as the general public you have to search your way through the maze to find this little alcove of solitude, like an oasis in the desert. Can we take advantage of this peculiarity?

Nikos: I’m coming back to the idea of expectations. In Melbourne, if it’s a really good restaurant it has to be hard to find. It has to be hidden almost behind five dumpsters. Whereas in Sydney, it has to be like Harbour views and ...

Lucy: There’s also the queue in Melbourne as well...

Nikos: Yeah, the queue and the politeness and all that, et cetera. It’s not instant gratification as you know.

John: We’ll make people queue to get in. [laughs]

Mary: We’ll tell the students to queue! (laughs)

Nikos: In the artworld, you’re attuned to surprise. Are you expecting the general public to have that willingness to experiment with surprise?

Lucy: I don’t know. I think it’s something that is definitely worth encouraging.

Gus: Is that a rebranding option?

Jane: Why not?

Lucy: Why not what? Encouraging surprise?

Jane: Yeah, encouraging surprise. I mean, in terms of creating a pointof difference to other art spaces.

Nikos: So if it is difficult to get to, why not make a virtue of that? To make it part of the unfolding of it.

John: In fact, the only reason you look for the restaurant in Melbourne is because you knew that it was great because someone said “You’ve got to go.” Because there’s a buzz

[Crosstalk]

Fiona: Part of the fun is actually looking for it.

Nikos: Part of the problem, part of the joy is actually the fact that you have to park your car, not exactly in a dodgy area, but nearby and then go around.

[Crosstalk]

Eliza: Is it part of the joy of the restaurant or is it part of the joy of Melbourne?

Nikos: The night!

Eliza: Oh, the night. [Crosstalk and laughter]

Nikos: As it is here - we’re talking about an event. The event has everything from the moment you leave home.

Lucy: The encounter.

Ross: Can I offer my thing to bring in? I haven’t seen this for the last six months, so I have no opinion on the first question. But my thing to bring in would be a weekly ‘must-attend’ event. No matter what it is, it’s just cool. You know how Hobart’s the seventh-coolest city in the world?.... [Crosstalk]. So you could have the seventh coolest person every week. There must a whole lot of opportunities for coolness!

[Crosstalk]

Ross: And one of them might be a different kind of, more readily managed, less exhausting version of the Wednesday-night fiasco. I think last time when I was here I harped on about this: the Beta Lounge in San Francisco, which is one of these cool, recurrent events Anyone who’s visiting the west coast from overseas who plays electronic music -- they want to be playing at the Beta Lounge. If they’re heading to San Francisco or Los Angeles, they get in touch three months before and say “I’m going to be in town. Please can I play the Beta Lounge?”

Nikos: People queue up for it, including the performers. Now, all the curators in Melbourne are saying they’re really pissed off because whenever there’s an international visitor, who would normally have three days to spend in Melbourne, now their schedule has changed, one and a half of the days is now WASTED going to Hobart. That’s the complaint that’s happening all over the city. I’m reporting to you as a native.

Mary: The we will aim to lure them for the three days. They can use Melbourne as a brief stopover.

Nikos: That would be even more successful! My point is following on from

Ross: If all this traffic is coming through the city, use one tenth of it and make the other nine feel like “I missed out. I didn’t get invited to do a night at the ‘really difficult to find place where no one knows about it but, God, there were 500 people there.’ ”

Steven: You’re talking about the cunning.

Mary: That’s what MONA FOMA’s doing...

Jane: One thing you can do here, which MONA can’t do and we (TMAG) can’t do is to have food and drink in the gallery, which is great in terms of ambience and discussion.

Fiona: Yes and we had a cooking class in here last night.

Jane: We could never do that because we’ve got conservators who say absolutely no way.

Nikos: You’ve got invigilators whose job it is to say no. My point is, sack all the invigilators and never let them back. I’ll tell you a great story. When I went to the Czech Republic just after the so-called Velvet Revolution, the border guards were told to do two things: burn their uniforms and lose their stamps. They were so confused and so stressed about the fact that they couldn’t just rock up in their uniform - they had to wear casual clothes because Václav Havel says you’re going to work in casual clothes, you’re not going to have stamps and you’re going to smile. They were really freaked out, and they were really uncomfortable. Instead of getting a stamp in my Australian passport I actually almost got a Czech passport because that was the easier of the options. The problem is that we’ve handed off so much of our framing of our experiences to health and safety regimes which are only one inch above Nazism. Anyway, I’m raving again.

Eliza: I think that’s a benefit for this space. That’s what Jane is saying.

Nikos: Let’s hang onto that. Let’s hold that moment. You don’t know how precious it is.

Lucy: Well, that’s also what you were saying at the beginning of the session which was the problem of the paint dries, and so you actually embrace that problem.

Nikos: Yeah, it’s the reality. That’s gravity. Panamarenko still defying it, but it’s beautiful that he’s failing every

time. (pointing to Gus McKay and Bec Stevens)

Gus: All right, Bec most of the stuff has already been said?.

Nikos: No need to repeat?

Rebecca: But there is one thing I want to add to it, though. It's the point about being able to see the Master's and the PhD shows over the last six months and the discussion also about the quality of them. I was really happy to be able to actually have the time to come and see those outputs of research here, usually the short time frame reduces my access to them. Regardless of what I thought of each exhibition I was excited by the opportunity, as a practitioner outside of the school environment, to actually come and to see this research outcome. From the position of being a practitioner outside this institution you're wanting to see what the school is producing and to feel like there's fresh blood coming through to the arts community. To see what is being produced and to feel that the school is showcasing this. I think that it's important to have accessibility to the examination exhibitions and that trying to find some way of showing them to the public where the framing is clear is important. As a viewer outside of the institution you don't necessarily have that frame of knowing that these exhibition are not necessarily doing what an exhibition should be doing, and you have that frustration of thinking this person has just spent all this time studying to be an artist, and shouldn't they be coming through showing an exhibition that reads as an exhibition as well as presenting research. I understand there's a difference there, but I think it's a really strong point to think about accessing practitioners outside of the school as well and engaging them.

Jonathan: Bec, my conundrum, and you sort of mention it in the last couple of sentences. My conundrum is something that we set out to do from 1985 when the gallery here got going: it was to see works of art from artists working in Tasmania in the context of what was going on nationally. So, for instance, a very large number of the exhibitions that we had over that period of time were of work from outside Tasmania that was being brought in. I realize the conundrum is that – or two or three conundrums. The first one is the cost of doing that. But nevertheless, I think it's something that we need to hold to, which is context, and the context is not just the writing. It's also about what's happening in the critical engagements going on between artists and elsewhere. That's the first thing.

The second thing is, and I've just asked the question for everybody, really, is – is it the role of this gallery to focus

on that kind of exhibition that you've been emphasizing there? Is that the role for this place to be the place where you show research higher-degree manifestations, if you like? I question that. I question that as being ... I mean that was the reason why in the past it's been limited to relatively short periods of time because there are other priorities that were seen to be significant at the time. If those priorities now are open and out of the door, then that's fine. But I think it's something that we do need to analyze and be critical about.

Jane: Can I just make one other point? In terms of critical needs and, it's probably obvious to everyone else, but there's no other institution in Hobart that is really providing means of critically engaging with artwork. That is maybe a point of difference that this place can continue.

Fiona: This is actually meant to be a critique space. This is why we're recording.

Jane: I know you're doing it now.

Fiona: And critical engagement is one of the outcomes that we were hoping for.

Nikos: How many spaces are there like that in Sydney, Ross?

Ross: None, just about none. But it comes down to how there's just about none because there's no business model to allow it to happen. I imagine one of the business models for this place remaining inside the faculty is that it's needed for postgraduate examinations.

Jonathan: Well, I question that

Ross: If it's questionable enough to get around it ...

Nikos: But it's not a business model because of your triangle: role – goal -- resources. No one has defined the role, the resources and the goal.

Ross: Correct.

[Crosstalk]

Nikos: Nick Tsoutas aimed for this when he was Director at Artspace. He believed in a strong integration between the discursive, the imaginative, the visual and the political.

Jonathan: We've got to be cunning.

Mary: I mean I think the discussion's hit on the

postgraduate examination because that's really what we've been doing this year to use the space in the last six months. I think from discussions we've had today, it's clear that we need a range of spaces. We need project spaces. We need discursive spaces. We need exhibition spaces. We need all sorts of spaces.

Nikos: But let's not be un-confident about the masters.

Mary: Oh, no. They are in the mix too.

Nikos: We have the Masters of French Painting. Why don't you have the Tasmanian Masters? And treat the master degree, as Leon Van Schaik at RMIT treats it, as a process that demands responsibility and seriousness. And say, "This is where we bring practitioners to demonstrate their mastery of their practice,"]

Mary: Oh, that's all taken on board Nikos -

Nikos: That's all familiar?

Mary: No, no. It's taken on board in a sense that there's been a lot of discussion over recent years about how the process of research and making are visualised and communicated through the final exhibition, It is something that will be looked at as part of the process of moving forward.

Nikos: But it is a space for enacting that.

Amanda: As a separate space from another program?

Mary: Oh, well, that's open for discussion. But, yes, I would think so, somehow.

Ross: When Nikos said are there other spaces like that in Sydney. I thought about the physical space o Sydney College of Arts, where I'm working. That space is a glorious secret, really, in Sydney. Fabulous architecture, gardens, PARKING and so on. One of the things that we're starting to do is: just take a deep breath and do something bold. For example what if we were to invite some kind of celebrity chef into the place to have a big portion of the empty space as "Celebrity Chef World" so that people drive their Range Rovers from all over Sydney. What's interesting to these potential operators is, "Oh, so we'd be in an environment that's got these other attractors as well. All this art, all these fascinating people doing odd but compelling things."

Nikos: Exactly. The synergies and the equalities.

Ross: We display the smarts of these young graduates putting on their shows so that our Range Rover-driving

folks can actually see the edge of art before it turns up elsewhere. So we're trying to work out a business model in that regard. But the point of the story is that it's the same thing that you were just saying. Don't apologize for this postgraduate-standard work. Say, "Here's the cool graduate-standard work that you folks who're buying your Volvos can look at first." So, yeah, it's not shrinking from the value of the messiness; it's the best, most distinctive thing that we've got.

Fiona: At the other end of the scale, there's a little group here called the Arts Factory , they are a bunch of students, just Honors students I think. But they're a very energetic group. They're trying to set up some nice spaces around the art school. One of the problems I've heard, , is that all the catering here's done by a dedicated company, which looks after the entire university, so they aren't even allowed to sell a cup of coffee without getting the university contractor on their back.

Nikos: We need to go in other ways. I remember at Goldsmiths before the whole YBA thing really blew up, one of the teachers at Goldsmiths was called Nick de Ville who was the guy who did the album covers for Roxy Music. As a consequence, his friend was Bryan Ferry. Every year, Bryan Ferry would come along and buy some art. As a consequence, everybody looked at what Bryan bought and thought, "That's not going to work." Of course, it did. But it made other people want to come along and buy art from the art school. So in a sense, we, as teachers we've got to be quite smart about this as well and say, "Who is cool out of my already fabulous circle of friends?" and get them into that patronage model. This is not just to make a commercial kind of network, but to create an atmosphere that this is important and worthy of attention. Ross's example goes back to what I was trying to say about the notion of event. That is, that we have to think about events not as a culture speaking to its own homogenous or little molecular worlds. On the contrary, these events are attractive because we know that we're going to rub shoulders with someone who's not from my normal circle of friends. You know that great film "The Dinner Party" where the woman is fascinated and sexually attracted to someone outside of her class and says to her husband, "Imagine one day, darling, you might have a dinner party, and people might be there who we didn't know." And he said, "Incomprehensible." But the point is imagine, if part of the attraction is the fact that there are lots of people from different backgrounds.

Rebecca: I'm going to talk about Gus ...Gus thought that the most positive thing about the last six months was this particular program, *The Plimsoll Inquiry* and the moments that have really worked within it, and

particularly that it allowed for failure as well. And that he thought in terms of past shows, he feels that he hasn't engaged with them in the same capacity because of the kind of high level of finish of them - is that right Gus?

Rebecca: For the future, he thinks in terms of what we can bring to it, is expanding on the moments of *The Plimsoll Inquiry* that have worked and building on those

Gus: Yes, especially the Wednesday nights - maybe that can continue weekly. It's already doing something new, its built up over only two weeks, from nothing to something. You can see these nights progressing to something bigger and better, that could go on forever and become a permanent iconic TCOTA experience.

Nikos: My friend Pavel Buchler made this artwork called "Tonight." He referenced all those bill posters from the '70s and '80 such as: "Tonight at the Palais," "Tonight at ...". He just had the word "tonight" to announce his work. He put posters all over the city, because in Manchester that's what you just did. All it had is the word "Tonight," and it was such a beautiful image. For my generation, the moment you put the word "tonight," the mind fills in the "Dot, dot, dot," with fantasy of a new start.

(next pair Lucy Bleach and Paula Silva)

Lucy: OK, so this is Paula. So in response to the things that don't work for Paula, prior to the last six weeks, it just normally doesn't work. The sense of there's a little club that has a conversation with a small group of people, so that in viewing any exhibitions it's about the output of that small group. Paula then discussed the things that would be good to bring to the space; the connection of this space to the rest of the school; to not be afraid of the mess; the discussion before lunchtime, the importance of opposition to the handsomeness of an exhibition. It is significant that this is not a commercial exhibition space, and that it can be about progress and process; that MONA delivers resolved spectacles from artists who have a place in history. What the Plimsoll can really amplify and embrace is a space to question. It's important that that questioning and process is visible, and not to be afraid of failure.

Paula: So Lucy, she didn't actually say anything that didn't work, but she was actually quite specific, very descriptive of the feeling as to why did it work for her. So, I'm just going to read, because she was really specific. She said, so last Wednesday night, Wednesday Fiasco, she was standing in the loading dock, watching Llewellyn and Don standing at the back of the ute. They were backlit and they were playing handmade recorders.

Lucy liked this because it was an unlikely situation. It was spontaneous, and above all, this spontaneous situation resulted from other unplanned sequence of unexpected opportunities. I really like what Lucy said because I think it's really important to not be afraid of less planed situations as they allow certain spontaneity. Unplanned opportunities happen because there is something generative happening, and if we're not afraid of following that fluidity, then we arrive at something. The poetic is in that.) Then, what Lucy would like to see coming in the future are more opportunities for things to form in situ spontaneously and within this accumulative process.

I think this links quite well with our previous conversation. I think this "to not be afraid of failure" is very important in letting this fluidity and this spontaneous process happen because if we are afraid of failing, then we're blocking lots of opportunities from happening. For me, this is very important for a space that is connected with a university because it's a process of questioning all the time.

Lucy: I guess I'd just like to add to that that there's only been two Wednesday Night Fiascos, and they're humble as well, but I guess what the magic is that understanding - and I think everyone is on the same page - understanding that it's about setting something up. It's not only setting up for a sequence of opportunities that may or may not happen, but that it's open for anybody to, at any point, be engaged and to contribute to the rolling of it. It is a multiple engagement at different times that keeps growing. It's modest. The irony is the modesty of it is what's so significant.

Eliza: I think that's interesting and it relates to what Erin Sickler talked about in her recent Art Forum. Our role, I guess, as an organization, or artists as organizers, is to set up the conditions for something to happen or for something to generate value in those conditions. I'm not sure what kind of framework that requires but Fiona's been able to do that, or to get the ball rolling here, and generate that kind of perspective in terms of the event. Her role has been about organizing just the bones of it and then letting it happen.

Paula: I also think that links very well with what Nikos was saying in terms of university owning their research. As a post-graduate student here, I do feel that we come here and we do our research project, and we go. I don't feel that we have - I don't know what's the word, but a culture... in the sense of there being worms, eating something and transforming it into something else, and things grow out of that culture. I don't feel that exists here because the research is not owned by the institution.

It's pump in, pump out.

Nikos: I think part of the problem is paradoxical again - if there were less students, there'd be more ownership. At my university, there was a lot of pressure for us to take more and more graduate students, and I certainly fell into that trap at the beginning. Now I've come to the view that I need to reduce my intake right-down. I'm really paring it down, and I'm trying to make my work and their work be closer. So that composting, the fecundity that let the worms come forth from both sides.

Fiona: But is that satisfying though?

Nikos: I'm trying to be cunning as well as being narcissistic about it. (laughs) I'm saying I need to fulfill X amount of points for my workload. If I reduce my students, I'll reduce my X-factor. Therefore I have to expand in other ways.

Jonathan: The other thing that you've raised - here's a light bulb moment for me -is, that there is actually another way to think about the collaboration that comes through supervision. There's nothing to stop u,s for instance, co-publishing or co-exhibiting work by supervisor/researchers and post-grads.

Nikos: That's my point.

Jonathan: And that can set up, because of the similar interests, that can set up a whole discourse that we've never actually had within this place. The discourse emerges out that kind of relationship which happens in the offices or whatever. It's an actually really interesting idea that we should try and workshop.

Jonathan: I'm thinking about it in terms of exhibitions. That's what I'm saying. That's what the light bulb is to me because we've done it terms of co-writing papers and things like that, but not, not to my knowledge...

Paula: James Newitt and Justy Phillips collaborated on a work.

Jonathan: Yes, that's true. That's a very good example. To workshop that one as a model would be really interesting to do.

Meg: The first project that I wanted to do with the PI was with Meg Keating. As two Megs, we're constantly being confused. I wanted to head right for the difficulty in that and to make it into a positive rather than a negative.

Jonathan: We've done it with staff of UPSI in

Malaysia at UPSI, but not between the supervisor and the post-grad. Good point.

Nikos: Ross and I have been part of a couple of Centre of Excellence bids, which I suppose, is the highest point of the research pyramid. And for all the merits of our bid with Dennis Del Favero at COFA, and all the other people that were involved, it was at the end of the day, a rather artificial congregation. We found roles, and we developed complementarities. We talked about benefits and we saw how we could all add to the story, and so on and so forth. To a certain extent, we all took ownership of bits of the branded project. It was something that was being assembled within a period of about six to twelve months, depending on how long you'd known the team.

That was that scenario. Now listen to this other one. I'm not inventing this. This is the norm in the sciences. I'm doing my PhD with my supervisor. In the course of my PhD, I'll do four publications with him. He then encourages me to do my post doc in Geneva. I'm meeting with people, who then enliven and develop my career in Geneva. I get my first job at Berkeley as a junior lecturer working on this big machinery with other PhD students who also start to publish with me. My previous supervisor and I are still in contact. My team in Geneva is still part of the gang. We see each other on a regular conference basis; we're starting to see how our work is more relevant to each other, and how I can contribute to this person's and the other person's research. We're drawing on each other's research on a constant basis. There's a track record that has been developed ever fifteen to twenty years. Wouldn't it be helpful if we had a Center of Excellence?

Ross: to continue the growing history of fifty-plus publications that we've already developed.

Nikos: Over fifteen to twenty years. That's an evolution, it's not an imposition. We've got to evolve to the point where we need a Center of Excellence, not because it would be helpful and tick a lot of boxes. To evolve to that point we have to start from ground zero which means working with each other, and as we grow and move on, we maintain connection. We criticise the scientists for being too narrow-minded, but they think we're reinventing the wheel, not just on our own, but at every point in our career.

Jonathan: Paul Zika's son is a classic case here, where as a Southern Ocean oceanographer, he got his PhD on the basis of four co-written A-1 articles in journals - articles that he drove - but nevertheless, they were co-written with his supervisor. Because they're all

peer-reviewed, the writing up of the PhD was pretty well a fait accompli - out there in the world, this kid of twenty-two, twenty-three, had already had four A-1 publications in world-class journals. There's nothing to stop similar things actually happening within this place where you start to rethink the way in which the reporting of research and the manifestation of the research actually operates. That comes through to Steven's comments early this morning about some of the inaccessible manifestations that you see in postgraduate research here. The possibility of actually training students to exhibit in that kind of high research environment is potentially hugely rewarding. I know I'm just sort of thinking on my feet here, but knowing what they do in the sciences, which is what Nikos has raised. We've just simply ignored that as one possibility of the way that we conduct research in this place. It might be that this could be a very interesting experimental laboratory from that point of view.

Nikos: Sure. Okay, now we've got the last pair. (pointing to Amanda Shone and Tanya Maxwell)

Tanya: I was speaking for Amanda. Amanda shared her experienced of coming and working here during *The Plimsoll Inquiry* and just spending time here in the gallery, going out into the garden and having these doors open...She heard from the security guard the story of the fishpond outside. Amanda: I think the most interesting thing was that through talking about the fish, I learnt that there was history (nine years) of people being invested in and connected to this garden. They all knew the fish by name and Leon explained who bought each fish, who looked after them and who feeds them every day. Leon built a cage because there's this water rat.....anyway, it's a long story...there's a water rat that's involved and there's all these-

Rebecca: ...it ate all the fish, the initial lot of fish.

Amanda: The water rat ate them so then Leon built this safety cage to protect the new fish and it's just really lovely story...

Nikos: So what the fish swim into the cage when they see the rat.

Rebecca: Well, that's the hope.

[Laughter and crosstalk]

Nikos: But this is a whole culture that other people don't know anything about.

Amanda: That's right.

Nikos: There's a movie here... [laughs]

Amanda: Yeah, after being at the Art School for four years and having a very different relationship with the Plimsoll, now, suddenly I've been introduced to a very intimate story and knowledge and involvement with it and new way of thinking about the space. That's made me think about this space in a new way.

Tanya: *The Plimsoll Inquiry* allowed that intimacy with the space to occur, whereas being a student here for four years hadn't given that same experience in the space. So, it's been positive...

Amanda: Yeah, you don't much spend time here.

Tanya: One of the things that Amanda thought could happen in the future is to bring the garden into the space, maintain it, give it some love and a new entrance. She raises the question as well, is there a mailing list for the gallery?

John: There is.

Amanda: I should get on it then! .

John: Yeah, you should. We should put alumni on it automatically. You left us not long ago... I don't know the details but the thing is, you finished Honours here only five years or so ago - there should be a system that automatically keeps you in touch with us... But there is a mailing list.

Amanda: So Tanya, what hasn't worked for you, you came to an opening and felt very alienated. There was strong scene and a social hierarchy that you felt excluded from. What has worked for you is doing, the course that you're doing, the Gallery Studies course. You've been part of the installation of shows, seeing shows come together and that's been a really positive experience. The Wednesday Night Fiasco and *Plimsoll Inquiry* have been in that same vein. A new thing that you'd like to see is events or finding ways of accessing more programs like the Wednesday Night Fiasco.

Nikos: Great. Now, if I was really hardcore about this exercise, I would have asked everyone to put their notebooks down before the conversations, and then we would need to make each exchange really memorable, or at least everyone would need to listen very carefully.

This exercise was valuable in that it focused on impressions, how they are formed, and how they're

retained. It was an exercise on working with the capacity for an impression to form something in the mind that is worthy of communication. That's after all what a gallery should be doing is transmitting an impression. A visual impression, an experiential, a bodily impression, a sensual impression into a form that can be communicated to another person. Now I'm going to ask Ross to see if he's got any overview of what has happened in this hour and a half, nearly two hours of responding to each other's commentaries and before we open it up for further discussion.

Fiona: Yeah. That's absolutely fine.

Nikos: Take it away Ross.

Ross: I'll choose to be brief and draw on three points, addressed in the order of their arising. We spoke just recently over here about setting the conditions for emergence. Setting conditions for something to happen, and that's exactly the definition of cybernetics. That's exactly the definition of code writing and code management. It's not surprising that it's now a notion that is comprehensible to us. I mean I know for a fact that 15 years ago, if I had tried to speak about this idea in the room, it would taken me a good 40 minutes to kind of break the idea down and take everyone towards the idea. And I know this because I was trained in Gregory Bateson and deep ecology kind a stuff, so back in those days I had two or three years of learning the stuff and then I would try to carry these ideas over to people. It used to so difficultat, before these ideas became a meme, before they became just in the culture. Now, people know it inherently.

So, take this idea that a curator can establish some very elegant, three-part set of rules from which complexity, designed complexity can really emerge, rich but surprising complexity. It's a strong idea and it's an idea that's not alien to ordinary folks now. Nor is it alien necessarily to institutions as well: saying something like "these are the three principles that we will adhere to for the following experiment or for the following business model and we'll see what happens".

That's almost enough for a couple of years of gallery activity, potentially. The elegance is in the code. For example, consider the work of really great performance artists. In my mind, one of the great ones in Australia is Barbara Campbell. I know this for a fact because I've been working alongside her a bit. She usually takes about 18 months to get the rules for her pieces and they seem like such simple rules, but they have been

hammered out and refined till they usually have just three components. Simple, generative, rigorous.

Consider this idea of some sort of code that's very carefully composed and that allows something to emerge. I think it's an idea that has been bubbling through a lot of what we've been talking about. It aligns to another 'bubble-up idea' Something that's been going all through today is this other meme that is now pretty well understood in culture: this idea that somewhere along the spectrum between didactics and heuristics is where we operate.

Didactics of course is the 'shut-up-and-listen' mode of pedagogy, the sage on the stage. Heuristics is discovery-based learning, learning that proceeds from asking 'how do you set the conditions in which people go and discover some things, through trial and error'. , not too much error because there is time involved and you need efficiencies. The guide alongside rather than the sage on the stage And somewhere in there now -- along that spectrum between didactics and heuristics -- is where our cultural institutions need to find their operations. Certainly, we can't operate down the didactic end anymore because there are now three generations of people who have been trained heuristically. Why would you talk to them didactically? At the same time, most of cultural institutions such as universities, galleries and museums, still trade on the trustworthiness of their authority. That's not trivial. That's crucial. But they have to trade on their trustworthiness and authority, but not didactically anymore. Somewhere in there is the same opportunities for the Plimsoll project as well, I think.

Now -- the last point: Mary reported Fiona saying this, and I just about dropped off the chair because last night, I re-read some notes from one of my favorite books, Robert Richardson's Henry Thoreau: a life of the mind. In the last chapter he goes through Thoreau's career as a writer and as an activist and he says, "The thing about Thoreau is that he spent the first half of his adult life vehemently seeking freedom and he spent the second half of his adult life vehemently seeking connectedness." In fact, that's a big challenge now to just about every individual at every organization . You've got to empower people to be freedom-seeking activists -- to know their own selves -- while also knowing how to foster the necessary connectedness of everything and every action in their domain.

Thoreau's whole life was an extended process of discovering relationships between freedom and connectedness. That seems to be what a lot of important

artistic activity is about, the ability for example to speak truth to power but also to be extremely sensitive to how everything one does is implicit in its connection to a whole lot of other people's possibilities and responsibilities. That idea of freedom and connectedness: I think it's a really key idea that came out of the discussion today - freedom aligned to connectedness. So those are my three points.

Jonathan: I 've had my light bulb moment.

Ross: Yeah, can you speak it out loud?

Jonathan: It has to do with just one particular strategy. It's to do with the three points and a triangulation for that. I just got that in mind. It's having resisted the idea of the postgrad being a focus of this place. Suddenly, I can see that actually that might be a really, really rich field for not just individual investigation but for a whole load of stuff that could go on in this place. I'm conscious of Gus and Sarah in there and the role that we have to have with the undergraduate, the engagement with the undergraduate culture in the art school. But at the same time, if you're looking at new modes of high performance, visual arts research coming out, you tend to gravitate towards those that are working at the senior level with the place. But for me, the two connections have been something which I think are really important. And I couldn't agree more about the shift from a didactic, or a teacher base - and I think that this gallery has been teacher based - to a learning base. I think that's something else for me that is really important.

Eliza: I just want to comment on your point, Ross, about the carefully constructed code - and this comes back to the point that Nikos asked Lucy when he said 'do you trust your public to take that plunge?' - in order to construct that code, trust needs to be developed so it can be carefully managed. We need to be able to trust those connections and trust that they're solid so that there is an understanding that the risk is worth taking. I think what has come out today is that the Plimsoll is in this kind of state of uncertainty or dysfunction and that what we need is to start trusting these connections that we can now bring to it.

Ross: And if it goes bung, no one dies. It's worth giving it a shot.

Eliza: Yeah, yeah. And developing that trust at a very local level, between students and staff perhaps is the first way to start thinking about developing a strong internal framework that can then grow externally.

Ross: It may well be part of the story, the

communication that every now and then this will not work.

Eliza: Yes absolutely. And that's part of that improvisational mode within an arts culture and the willingness of that culture to identify itself as a place to do that and say, "Yes, we're critical and yes we know that that might fail, but we trust each other enough to do that." Or that we trust the ideas enough to do it. Or we trust ART enough to do it.

Paula: And failure is also an outcome because failure doesn't mean it's going to end there. What comes next reflects on the outcome we had before.

Ross: We endorse enough the discovery-based process. [Crosstalk]

Eliza: And that's to do with research culture as well, and perhaps it's more recognized in the sciences. You know it is much more accepted that you can do a PhD. based on what didn't work - 'Oh well, we know that now. We know that is not the answer.' And so you move on.

Nikos: And somebody says thank you for it, because they don't have to repeat your errors.

Eliza: Yes you get a PhD for it!

[Crosstalk]

Nikos: But it's not just because you get a PhD. It's because now nobody else needs to go down that dead-end.

Eliza: Yeah, I think there's more collegiality within that knowledge structure that informs the way knowledge is produced and developed. Collegiality between researchers (staff and students) in the sciences is perhaps more respected as part of the process, and maybe we can learn something from that.

Fiona: But as the student putting this show together with a group of people (we've got about seven people, and nine counting you two on this kind of curatorial committee) - so in other words, using a kind of curatorial strategy, - it's really interesting how it's being massaged through the university and gallery system. A few years, we would never have been able to have an exhibition like this, because it just would not be accepted in this space. It wasn't part of what went on here. It was a very formal, programmed space and it was a very high academic space. It had beautiful curated exhibitions and touring exhibitions and all the post-graduate exhibitions which are all of a certain standard. I think it's actually testament to the staff of the university that are around here at the moment to

have allowed this freedom. Even opening those windows was controversial, and we had so many of those sorts of scenarios, but the windows being opened is sort of symbolic, I mean it didn't really work because the wind kind of came through here and ruins everything, but the idea is that it did open up a lot of stuff. The minute we opened those windows, it sort of said ok then, what are the boundaries now, what can we do in the space? It just changed everything from something that always was, to something that could be something else.

It also not only changed the space, but it changed the people and the way that they thought about the space. So they actually changed under those conditions—those altered conditions. They actually changed their thought processes and the way that they produce things so they actually came up with things that were completely outside their ordinary remit or practice, but this attitude also tended to feed into somebody else's motivation and affect it as well. So then it became infective in a way. I think that's been really amazing, and I don't think it would have happened in any other time—it was opportune that you two, Nikos and Ross, just happen to be free to come down and help us sort this out!. So, that was also good.

Steven: Timing I think is a really crucial factor. I think being aware of timeframes and certain other factors that allow planning and timing of things to take place is worth keeping in mind too. All afternoon, I've been looking into the, imagining what that space could be. In my imagination there has been a whole range of possibilities. Lucy first made me aware that actually what we're talking about here are seasons, there are definitely seasonal opportunities. There's a seasonal opportunity in terms the academic calendar. But there's also the tourist calendar.

So some of these things made me think that the planning and programming of activities here could be seasonal. It could be the Winter season of events. There are particular events, hospitalities, opportunities, actions and activities that could be scheduled within and derived from this season. But in the Summer season for example the scheduling could be very different with a much altered tone too. It could be a balanced program which might also respond to the business of the gallery, the artschool - those other imperatives that will inevitably affect what it is that can be done here. But for a moment I was allowing myself to imagine that that could be a fantastic bar in the courtyard – like the one in the middle of the Arsenale at the Venice Biennale. To use an empty space as a space for hosting/hospitality/events and when it's not being used as that fantastic bar, it might be used for another purpose.

Ross: Well, yeah, I could imagine. It's not for me to

program it really. But imagine spring in September, spring through to summer ... this is the stage, that's the audience. There's 80 people. That's it. That's what it holds.. But what a completely cool event. The stage determines the size and shape of the event. The audience is determined. Something happens from that generative code already and you wouldn't try to do it in winter time, it wouldn't work. So it's another thing that you provoke in winter time.

Jonathan: You just made me think about some of the discussion about hospitality and here's a 'what if'. What if you did have a sequence of post- graduate examination exhibitions that occurred over a period of four weeks? You have - or a series of collaborations between staff and post-grads. You go down to Jones and Co, to the hotel and you say, "Okay, we're going to have a happy hour, on these days where the artists are going to speak about their work". And just get them in, offer it for free or get sponsorship to make it a free event. But just 5:30 to 6:30 and then they go off to dinner or, whatever. That's it. But nevertheless, you've just made a mark with a whole lot of other people who are going to be getting out there - as Nikos was saying, these people come down to MONA. But they go back and there are ten people that they're telling about their experiences, it's not just their individual experience. So there strategies like that which we've not really exploited at all, and yet we've got this constant flow of people, a changing flow of people coming through this street now, that we really aren't working with, if you like, in this place.

Sarah: Has this space carried out any marketing or any form of external communications? It's interesting because that's a marketing strategy.

Jonathan: No

Ross: Wrong answer, Jonathan. (laughs)

Jonathan: My immediate thought before. I've got that written down here too.

[Crosstalk]

We go to the Department of Tourism and we just say, "Look, okay, we got this idea to multiply by ten the number of people that are coming through the Jones Hotel. And what you do is, you help us with the sponsorship of this thing,

Nikos: Yeah, right answer.

Jonathan: Then you invite them in for free, but they

can go back and they pull in the next generation.

Fiona: We’ve already got Christine Scott as a collaborator.

Jonathan: I know we have with post-grads

[Crosstalk]

Steven: However, it’s really important that these activities are driven and initiated from within. And then we can manage the way that the relationship with our guests provides mutual benefit

Jonathan: What about if you would host...

John: Exactly, that’s what I mean. We should initiate and drive it.

Ross: Yeah. The sovereign determines the conditions.

John: Yes.

(***Jane:*** I’m sorry, I have to go

Jonathan: Okay.

Nikos: Well, maybe we’ll use this as a chance to wrap because obviously this conversation could be going for some time.

Jane: I’d just like to say thank you.

Nikos: My pleasure. Thank you for your participation.

Jane: Thanks everybody.)

Nikos: I just want to pick up two little threads. One is the one about timing and what we can see over the horizon. I recently read an interview with Noam Chomsky and amongst one of his observations based on his reading of the 2007 federal banks forecast of the economy. You know, this is written by the leading economists of the United States of America. It’s 2007 and it’s a rosy picture, not one of them is anticipating what happens the next year, not one of them. So we don’t know, even with all the expertise in this room, what’s going to happen. But one thing we can all be pretty sure won’t happen is that the government is going to step and say, “Hey, here’s a whole lot of money.” (laughs) Right?

So let’s not think the situation we’re now is temporary. I’m not saying it’s permanent. What I’m saying is that it can get even worse. I thought John Howard was the

bottom of the political barrel of this country, wrong! So who knows what the future will hold? But we have to think about what we can do with the future we want and the present we’ve got. In that sense, I also think that one of the ways in which we often talk about our strategies is in relationship to other art historical moments and so on and so forth. And it’s clear that what we’re talking about right now is something to do with this whole relational, socially engaged kind of aesthetics, right? All that mess and rubbish as Pat called it.

Now, that book where the title comes from by Nicolas Bourriaud has some interesting art historical references. But for me, what makes the book enormously fascinating is two things. One is about his ability to talk about his relationship with various artists and how he learns from them, from their practice. It’s really fascinating because obviously they’re his friends, they’re his gang, these are the people he hangs out with. He’s like an old fashioned anthropologist who writes up what happens in conversations. He distills it and organizes it in a very clear and persuasive manner. That’s quite an achievement in and of itself. But over and above that little achievement is something else – is that he makes observations about what’s happening in the society, which, in turn is probably prompted from the conversations that the artists have initiated with him. I don’t know. I can’t pinpoint that. I don’t have any footnotes that demonstrate what the origin is.

Nevertheless, he makes a very astute point, which is very simple. At the time when artists were making works that had no other form other than conversation, no other form than other people’s participation, no other material other than the everyday stuff that was already in their hands and were seeking to transform our engagement with and relationship with the public, all this was happening at the precise time when the State was selling off public assets and public space. Sound familiar? That’s our predicament. How do we now respond to it as artists, critics, curators, citizens? That’s our challenge, but I think that predicament is not going to get much better soon and what we need to do is to be even more cunning.

Ross: One thing I learned from growing up in Joh Bjelke’s Queensland is that they hate it when you don’t stop. They really hate it. (laughs)

Jonathan: Yes, yes. You’re right.

Ross: And so you can just keep doing stuff. Drive them crazy.

Jonathan: That’s why they keep going on about the

humanities – it’s the same thing because we just don’t stop.

Ross: Yes. So persistence is another one of those virtues.

Nikos: That’s James Joyce isn’t it?

Ross: Silence, exile and cunning? Joyce or Beckett? There’s a debate!

Reading List:

Gibson, Ross
Review Essay
‘All things are in contact’
Rethinking History Vol. 14, No 4, 2010, 587-595
Routledge

Papastergiadis, Nikos
Ambient Perspectives
Lyon Museum, Kew, Victoria 2013

Aristotle
Nicomachean Ethics
Translated by W.D.Ross
The Internet Classics Archive by
Daniel C. Stevenson, Web Automics.
1994-2000

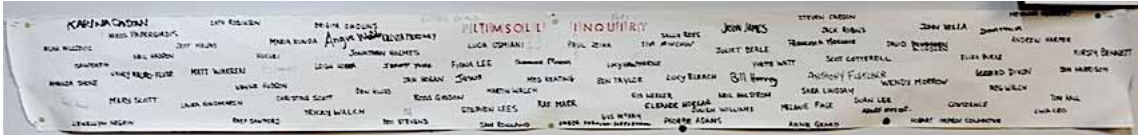
The End

IMAGE BANK RESPONSES

Participants:
Rae Marr, Jan Hogan, Lucy Bleach, Sean Lowry, Ross Gibson, Annie Geard, David Blühdorn, Nikki Bourke, Sally Rees, Felix Wilson, Rosemary Darragh, Sara Wright Claire Krouzecky Ros Meeker, Mia Donnet-Jones, Eliza Burke, Josh Foley, Pat Brassington, Fiona Lee, Samara McIlroy, Anna Phillips, Bec Stevens

From: Fiona Lee <Fiona.Lee@utas.edu.au>
To:
Sent: Wednesday, 26 February 2014 4:08 PM
Subject: Expressions of interest; Plimsoll Inquiry image bank

The Plimsoll Inquiry: image bank response



Pick an Image ...any image.

Your contribution and interest in *The Plimsoll Inquiry (PI)* last year added to the spirit of the PI project as a collective enterprise, and demonstrated that the Plimsoll Gallery is a wonderful asset and a fantastic space, not only to the University, but to the wider arts ecology in Tasmania. The energy and enthusiasm which formed around this shared project proved just that.

By way of thanks, and to conclude *The PI's* first stage, we would like to invite you to submit a small piece of writing in response to an image of your choice from our enormous image bank. Your collective responses will contribute to an e-publication to be published later this year. Acknowledging your co-contribution to *The PI* has been an important part of the process and we sincerely hope you will be part of this exciting production.

Your response to an image does not have to be complex, and can be as simple as a word, a sentence, a statement, an opinion, a question or a short paragraph. However, it would be preferable if it was no more than 100 - 200 words long. It does not even have to relate to *The PI* as such, rather it may be something that a certain image has reminded you of.

To make this work in a timely fashion, we will supply you with access to a large bank of images from the PI proceedings, then ask that you name the image and simply respond in some way. We will conduct it as a modified form of Chinese Whispers, where you will see what the last person has written, then pass it on to the next person within 24 hours. We would like to publish your name, however, if you wish to be anonymous then that is also fine.

If you are interested, could let us know by return email by **Friday 7th MARCH**, and you will be provided with a link to the image file.

All the very best

Fiona Lee
(for *The PI* curatorium)

Please note: The Plimsoll Inquiry is the subject of ethics application **No H0012017**. Many of the images in the files contain images of groups and individuals who participated in the various events. Please contact us as soon as possible if you do not wish your image published.

The Plimsoll Inquiry
13th September 30th November 2014
University of Tasmania
College of the Arts
Hunter St
Hobart

<http://pibulletin.blogspot.com.au/>
Twitter and Instagram: @plimsoll_inquiry #WednesdayNightFiasco
www.facebook.com/plimsollinquiry
<https://www.facebook.com/events/672393856118990/>

The Plimsoll Gallery is assisted through Arts Tasmania by the Minister for the Arts



The Plimsoll Inquiry

PI image bank: participant contributions for e-publication

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1. Identify the image number and type into the first box (Box no 1)
2. Type your name in second box at the top (Box no 2).
3. Your text goes in the large box below. (Box no 3)
4. Please return your contribution to Fiona.lee@utas.edu.au within 24 hours and it will be sent to the next person.

Thank you for participating

The PI team

1. IMAGE NO:	2. NAME:
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Pieces arranged accordingly,	
For another time	

Art student Olivia Moroney is participating in my wall drawing by adding fingerprints. Later though she added shadows around the utilities that were embedded in the wall such as fire hydrants, switches and light boxes. I found this challenging. I was interested in bringing in to the visible world the constant contact we have with this utilities wall which is overlooked in the context of viewing artworks in an exhibition. By emphasising fingerprints that would have touched this wall I aimed to evoke the memory of shows past but also the unacknowledged helpers, the cleaners, assistants, security staff, who funnily enough were most resistant to having the utility instructions overdrawn. The title 'The Plimsoll Line' also hints at the weight of humanity that passes through these spaces. However, I was ultimately the one most challenged as the visual 'language' of fingerprints that I had started was overwritten with figurative works, graffiti and what I considered very unsympathetic marks. I am still struggling with the ramifications, especially in doing similar works in the future, will I assert more control or allow a new language to emerge?

Dr Jan Hogan
Studio Coordinator Printmaking
Tasmanian College of the Arts | Hunter St





I'll see you in my dreams (because it would be so neat to hang out together) this ended up with me dreaming about Gus, Romans and his friend Stan who I had never met or even knew about before that point, as in during the course of the dream, talking about the sorts of films that have lots of swordplay, sandals and short gladiator outfits. Very much like the guys who dress up and shmooze the tourists outside the Colosseum. This was really quite prosaic, sitting (in the dream) on awful white plastic chairs under what looked suspiciously like a blanket sort of teepee, not a pretty blue one or one with horses racing along it, just a muddy blanket-coloured tent-like structure. Anyway Gus had a bit of a sleep when we were talking and here again he is seeking to dream and hang out. Looking beautiful, a muse dreaming, sleeping gypsy and not a single lion in sight unless you count Sir James who might just conceivably wear a lion skin for effect and especially for the inquiry.

by Annie Geard



I looked at the inquiry – enquired, as it were – and I heard echoes: printed echoes, echoes of dreams and doings; of the latency of muses and the actuality of dust (a history lesson).

With camera shoved between my knees, I photographed the echoes permeating empty couches in an empty gallery, to set before an empty cushion in that same echoing galleric emptiness.

Never once did I think of looking for echoes in the delineated, two-dimensionality of conformist carpetry.

How odd.

by Sally Rees



We've only just begun
to live...
White lace and promises,
a kiss for luck and we're on our way,
and yes, we've just begun.

Paul Williams



LATEST NEWS: Snowdrift on Volcanic Beach Casts Climate Denial into Doubt.

by Ross Gibson

Privileged poetic people partake por prominent plimsoll party,
producing publications, project proposals.

Largely local life, looking legitimately.

Interesting intelligent initiative, inspiration invites invigorating
instructions.

Multi-family, multi-faceted, multi-farious. Measuring moralising
mediators, mentoring many, musicians, movement, mucho memories,
many memoirs.

Special situation, superlative states surrounding scenes, silence,
speeches, stillness, students savouring soup, someone speaking
spectacularly.

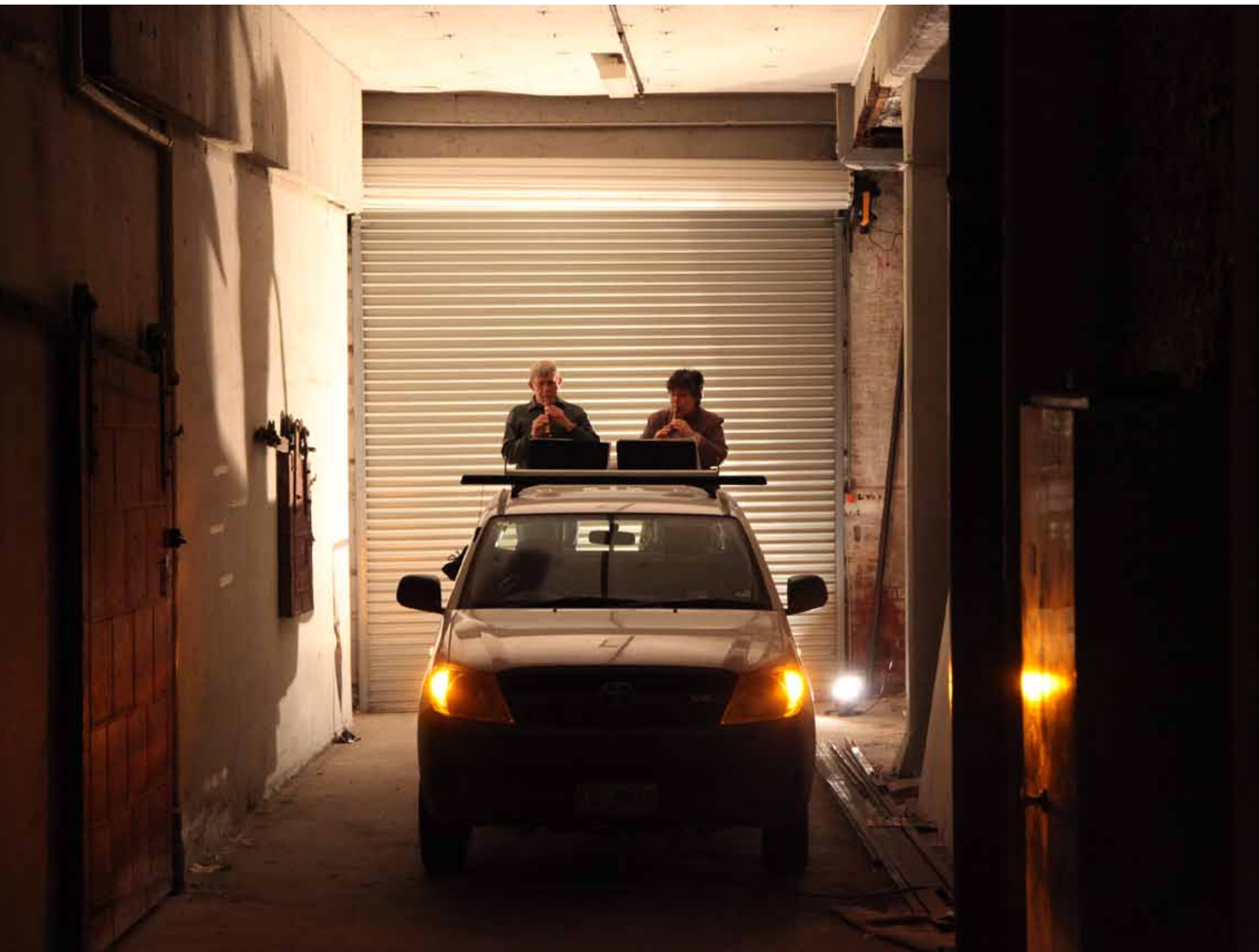
Only obvious one (or others?) openly occupies outlooking organisation.

Lively large, lengthy, linguistics, likable lectures.





I numbered a new card for each item left in the gallery. I wrote that number on the sealed envelope from each artist. The envelope was exhibited with the work. My card system recorded what happened to each work to make it 'happy.' I mostly had no idea who the artists were and neither did the visitors to the gallery. I think selecting the work to take home was still an important decision for people. In the end a few interesting things happened when a person adopted a work and I opened the envelope in front of them. I photographed the work's information card, the envelope's contents and gave all the provenance to the person adopting the work. The unveiling of the work's message was a bit like Christmas, some sort of unknown gift revealed. When you discover the artist remains unidentified but has left a note, or a department head has selected a work by a first year from another department, or more mundanely what the artist thought the work was about. I have been told the project should be reiterated but I believe there is only so much enjoyment to be had cuddling a BBQ grill of melted Barbie dolls.



Duelling recorders in the tray of a Dual cab...The serendipitous gesture of an impromptu location married hand-honed instruments and virtuosic style with the grit and ambiguity of an exciting non-space... the chasm of the loading dock offered the musicians acoustic quality better than any hall...

by Lucy Bleach



A few years ago, I bumped into the fire hydrant at the entrance to the Plimsoll Gallery. It left a lovely bruise and a reminder that I should not live life on the edge (of the gallery). I didn't see it, and nor was I programmed to, even though it's bright red and has the head of a duck. Instead, I had my eyes on a scrunched ball of paper sitting on a central plinth.* Assuming the aim of the finger prints (pictured) was to draw attention to the Plimsoll's rather central 'functional wall' with its ridiculous bank of light switches. It takes skill to flip them all quickly, as any of the postgraduate students who have invigilated the gallery will confirm. Leon, the art school's dedicated security guard is an expert at it - I've watched him swipe away at the bank with not a single switch left behind. Of course, at MONA they use iPads to control the lighting. A gentle tap on the remote fondle slab will dim, colour or switch off the lights. I've still learned to 'unsee' the museum's fire hydrants though.

*Okay, maybe the paper is a slight exaggeration. I don't think the Plimsoll can afford a Martin Creed.

Dare to lift those folded wings
More shapely, sun-compelled,
To soar aloft the polyester precipice.



by Rosemary Darragh



“I used to be able to get them to fall asleep in my arms,” an art student said as she held a silky copper hen to her breast, the tip of her finger moving quietly, sweetly across its belly tracing gentle rivulets through its feathers. I held my breath to witness this kind of witchery.


“There she goes!” I whispered, “Oh my god that’s incredible.”

Sylvia, my 7 month old baby strapped to my chest, was not taking notes. She was wriggling to see a Pig named Henry eat some kind of collard green off of the drawing studio floor, alongside a Hen named Henrietta, alongside a turkey named Frank, alongside a sheep named Charlie.

Charlie was a jolly munching fellow. His joyful fur-filled countenance we so deftly captured in 30 seconds was miles from the original animal-shaped cartoons I scrawled from memory outside the studio.

Outside students were packing up the last remnants of a vegan potluck afternoon tea. “It was like a form of bake-ti-vism!” I heard one of them say. I wondered which day in the future it would be that Sylvia will come home and announce she is now a vegetarian. It’s only a matter of time.

“Look! Henrietta laid an egg in the studio! She must have been feeling pretty relaxed.”

A person is sitting inside a large, illuminated, translucent tent-like structure. The interior is lit with a warm, golden light, and the walls of the structure are covered in a pattern of light and shadow, resembling a sail or a membrane. The person is wearing dark clothing and is sitting on the floor of the structure, with their legs bent and arms resting on their knees. The overall atmosphere is one of quiet contemplation and artistic expression.

In/out: Air, held inside a sail. A membrane between two spaces. I am off the island, overseas (but I didn't sail). But there is a sort of wind in my sails. Gus is on the island, but he appears to have a sort of wind in his sails too.

Momentum/movement: The last time I was in the Plimsoll, Gus helped me move some walls for my exhibition. Now Gus sends me a Facebook message showing me some interventions he made in the gallery. He says he's just doing what Mikaela told him to, apologises for "offloading". I see gestures that are light, sparse, and poignant; within a context (the Plimsoll) that is entirely familiar. My heart stirs for a distant, potentially lost home.

Offloading/uplifting: Untethered, I follow the Plimsoll Inquiry online. My self-imposed distance has been weighing on me... Meanwhile Gus tells me it's been liberating to work in the gallery, that there are exciting arty things happening in Hobart. The tether has its own freedom, too. I ask Gus if he might write about the work he made. He said he finds it hard to put down what's in his head but he will get onto it. I say that even a few words might help to pin down big ideas, and also carry the work into new space.

by Claire Krouzecky



The simple and meaningless action of pushing a pin through a cotton ball and placing it beside another in the ground. Each one added to the growing superfluous mass, like fungi, disrupting the space and displacing the people who 'own' it. Each clean and fragile in material and arrangement, thereby prohibiting any person, ignorantly or disobediently, from crossing the acceptable boundary line between artwork and viewer.

During and directly after I performed this work I felt disappointed. However, when coming to terms with what had happened, I realized that in a way it was the most direct experimentation through which many of its qualities and indeed downfalls became evident to me. It was interesting to see a breakdown in viewer and artists, usually distanced and defined roles. After only a short time people were beginning to participate, copying the action after me and the mass grew faster, but with different people came different directions and interpretations. It wasn't long until I felt I didn't even belong there anymore, the work had been taken away from me. This was a very important lesson for a young artist; that in inviting public participation you surrender control, lose the objective as well as the tone in which it unfolds.

I would like to re-perform this work with a number of alterations. I realized that the full significance of the work was perhaps in the mind of the artist. To be performed in solitude, silence, over a long period of time, the work becomes a kind of mindless meditation in which you barely think of anything other than the immediate breath, posture and the action. This is something that was quite profound to me and I would like to pursue it further.



this is the first mark / a simple gesture of press
and release / two surfaces bound / each to the
other / forging an index of touch / blind cells
/ bump and shuffle in blank space / each one
deliberate and incidental / building a multitude
/ a delicate human code

‘turning a blind eye’ it seems!



by Pat Brassington



Although I am now privy to wholly different backstory, this image immediately appealed to me as an illustration of the potential for reverse gentrification as an artistic strategy. Artists that are uncritically complicit with forces of development and gentrification can sometimes find that they are inadvertently priced out of communities to which they add value.

I would like to share the following verse as a response to this image:

████████████████████
████████████████████
████████████████████
████████████████████
████████████████████
████████████████████
████████████████████

by Sean Lowry

CALLING ALL ACTORS, ARTISTS AND DRESS UP ENTHUSIASTS



THIS FRIDAY THERE IS AN OPENING AT THE NEW AMANDA JAMES GALLERY AS PART OF THE PLIMSOL INQUIRY PART 2 AND TO CELEBRATE WE ARE ASKING FOR AS MANY PEOPLE TO COME AND BE AMANDA JAMES! ABOVE IS A PHOTO OF ONE INCARNATION OF HER BUT FEEL FREE TO BE THE AMANDA JAMES THAT YOU WANT TO BE!

MEET AT THE ACADEMY GALLERY, INVERESK, TO OPEN YOUR NEW ART GALLERY BETWEEN 5:30 AND 7PM, FRIDAY 28 MARCH

She came trudging in like some whispering pixie with circles on her back
and the wrong shoes that were just loud enough to disturb the opening
speech from a conservative politician. Others came to copy her, they wanted
to be her, and they actually were. I only wish she hung around for a while, rather
than de-materialising in the passenger seat of my car before I went out. There
just happened to be an old friend from school at the pub I would have loved to
introduce her to him.

Josh Foley, 26/6/2014.



Ladder, , ladder.

tripod

laddertripod.

Elevation gives us superior powers.

From base - we strive to hang from the sky, gazing down from the stars, endlessly-forever.

But here again, the ceiling thwarts us. Who built that ceiling? Why is it so low?

by Samara McIlroy



The Catpig

John the cat
is almost my brother
almost pig

even though he
leaps among branches,
climbs to high shelves,
is silky.

Black and white catpig,
I outgrew you,
but once we matched.

She-human gave us
our milk from
our pitcher.

Quiet we sat
under the sumacs of Vermont
and watched

The birds leave,
the first snow
pepper each other's
somber faces.

Denise Levertov

From Candles in Babylon

Henry was the first pig I encountered where we were on the same side of the fence. He seemed enormously strong but his movements were gentle and although his size was intimidating he was cooperative when we asked him to move into the back of the van to go to the art school. He settled amongst the straw with the chickens and everyone else with no complaints. Emma told us that Henry was rescued from a factory farm in Victoria and brought to Brightside when he was very young.

I bought a copy of Denise Levertov's collected poems recently. I love her gentle reasoning, compassionate sensibility, and her long commitment to tracing the threads that make up the mystery of being. I think she will be a thought-companion for a while. The river of her mind runs very deep.ww

by Felix Wilson

Attention

Dr. Anna Phillips the newly joined ---- is acting strange and she may harm Bahrain community. We have reasons to believe that she is acting against Bahrain national security. She has recently moved to a Shieaa's neighborhood at Elguffer area. She is talking to people and to her colloques about how the Sheaa in Bahrain abused and torched and she is supporting them and standing beside them.

Please pay attention to her and her strange behavior and stop her from harm our country.





“...It’s a doorway that’s not a door,
that’s a window that’s not a window,
that’s usually a wall”*

*Vicki Sauvage

Feng Shui Consultant



Pieces arranged accordingly,
For another time

ON THE COUCH

Lucia Usmiani

Commonly the analyst, aware of the power of the gaze, averts their eyes. We are situated askew, askance, in the sunlit gallery. In fact 'we' as in the not quite royal 'we' are merely a conduit. The native connection to whatever it is that wires a conversation. I am not here as much as here. Is this the matrixial gaze? With-in/with-out? Across a fluid border neither subject nor subjected. A conversation might be offered up or not offered. Silence is dialogue.

A sunlit childhood with two remembered gardens large enough for small children to think they are vast, full of secrets, child sized spaces. Special. A secret olive hedge windowed into the next world, just enough for a child to sit and speak the language of trees, inner space. Mum made everything, clothes, chair coverings, bedding, furnishings, mountains of knitting, making do with whatever presented itself for re-birthing and refurbishment. Not necessarily new material that makes the most beautiful thing, especially when love is there within the fabric and purl one, knit two of the weave.

Today's matchstick art, growing up out of burnings segue from that creative make-do spirit, palm trees uneven gardens and tropical fantasy. Working her way through 50 things to knit, one at a time and half way there, a project without a home but coming from home, from a mother's voice. Knitting from nanna to now.

Where would you go to play given your druthers? Italy, a modernist skin, stylish fashionable, movie stars, football teams, extreme furniture, covering old monsters and saints. Dad sat on a bomb and mum gave us gory stories about martyrdom and flaying. Yet the movie star saints look so unphased by the depredations of the flesh, euphoric, untouched, perfect, even with their eyes torn out and arrows in their ribs.

And the art that makes you swoon? Michelangelo and Da Vinci. The Madonna on the Rocks. Breath-taking, gutting with the beauty of the mark. A piece of fluff pinned ephemera on a plinth, Spectra humming and moaning on a few cold winter nights on the Domain. Winded by the painting, surprised.

All these colours and skeins have such an impact on what she is now, the preciousness of love, safety, absolute and sure of the cocoon of heart. Now she can fix anything. These safe houses and gardens, these monsters and surprising motes mesh into our heart and make us, transform us.



by Annie Geard



Ross Gibson ...

As Marcel Duchamp said to
Max Ernst,

“Any day you have chickens
in your gallery is a good
day”

email to Fiona Lee, Nikos
Papastergiadis Maria Kunda and
Mary Scott 25th October 2013

by Fiona Lee



THE PLIMSOLL INQUIRY IN NEW YORK

By Maria Kunda and Fiona Lee

Paper given at Parsons School of Art, Media, and Technology Parsons The School for Design in New York for the *Project Anywhere* conference on November 13 and 14, 2014.

[Project Anywhere Conference](#)

Shared horizons – beyond the outermost limits of an art school gallery

The Plimsoll Inquiry (The PI) was held in and around the Plimsoll Gallery, at the Tasmanian College of the Arts in Hobart, Tasmania’s capital. The first seven-week phase took place from September to November 2013; the second phase is still underway at the time of writing, and will conclude with an e-publication planned for the end of 2015.

The Inquiry comprises two seasons of multi-artform activities. For Phase One, around forty national and local artists and thinkers staged a seven-week succession of activated events using the gallery as a laboratory. It elicited a mix of invited contributions and pop-up happenings, some of which had an exhibition component, while others were purely dialogical or performative.

Jean-Paul Martinon makes a distinction between “the curated” – what we understand as directed, outcome-driven projects, and “the curatorial” – devised, organic developments that are allowed to take form, according to principles of shared responsibility for improvisation.¹ As it developed, *The PI* conformed to the speculative, informe, and ludic modalities of Martinon’s latter designation of “the curatorial”. By dubbing it an inquiry, we signaled our inquisitorial and communal “curatorial” approach, as distinct from a categorical “curated” project.

We launched *The PI* to mark the withering of the Plimsoll Gallery program. At that point the Plimsoll had operated for 27 years and for decades it had been vital, occupying a firm place as an experimental force within the local arts community and nationally. Once we opened the Inquiry we found that even long-term stalwarts readily conceded the diminished vitality, and recognized that it could only be partly attributed to financial contraction. Whilst a ceasure of public funding had befallen the Plimsoll, along with other local arts organizations, a deeper loss of confidence and agency was broadly recognized. We saw this waning as emblematic of broader concerns and crises. Collectively, we acknowledged a crisis of relevance, direction and will. While this perpetuated a sense of urgency, *The PI* signalled an interregnum in policy and programming for the Gallery. There was a mood to change the ground, to test formerly prescribed limits, and to destabilize the assumptions adhering to the Gallery, but not to preempt the future with a fixed set of strategic goals. We wanted to listen and learn something.

The PI necessarily means different things to different participants. Speaking as the co-authors of this paper rather than on behalf of the community of inquiry that formed *The PI*, from our respective research interests we each had particular lines of curiosity or agendas. Our personal reasons for mounting the experiment were aligned, but not identical.

For Fiona Lee’s PhD research, *The PI* was an experiment in promoting dialogical art within a teaching institution that she viewed as formulaic and outmoded in its adherence to studio-bound, materially-based practices.² As a case study for her PhD, *The PI* was an opportunity to insert dialogical and social practice into a school that did not include them in its teaching program, and a bid to provoke institutional change.

Maria Kunda’s motivation was pedagogical and instrumental. She had recently taken on the directorship of the Gallery under very straitened circumstances. Within a diminished funding framework and a reconfigured University faculty structure, it was clear that a new case had to be made for the Gallery’s viability. Rather than applying a managerial template for change management and policy development as a first step, we set out as artists, enlist artistic means in order to elicit imagined possible futures through creative practices. The impetus to envisage a future for our gallery, it seemed to us, could not be imposed by edict. Rather,

there needed to be revitalization of creative purpose at ground level. From a sociological perspective, our reasoning was that such energy cannot be invoked by the top-down imposition of power; rather, it needs to be brokered through influential leadership that might disclose hitherto unprofessed norms and values and galvanize loyalties, desires and creative ideals.

A motivation for many participants was to break with the tradition of the white cube; several took the challenge of testing the limits of what could be undertaken in the institutional setting; many stepped out of their established practices to engage in different working methods. Notwithstanding these excursions, *The PI* became neither strictly anti-formalist nor strictly anti-managerial. Our aim was not simply to cause disciplinary breeches for the sake of it, nor to force a break with the Gallery’s history and declare a new structure of governance. Rather, as reflexive practitioners, we sought to understand and evaluate past accomplishments and respond to them through artistic means and by facilitating orderly communication. At times however, compliance issues were dealt with as a game, and not all communication was orderly, however much of was structured by way of regular bulletins.³

To address Gallery’s history and to evaluate how it had contributed to a learning, teaching and research culture in a university art school, we set out to collate the annals in the hope that those participants who were invested in its glory days would involve themselves in the systemization of an archive. Initial progress was made on this front.

To examine the Gallery’s niche within the ecology of the arts scene in a small capital city, a participant, Lucy Hawthorne sent an open invitation to peers and stakeholders to attend a public meeting in the Gallery. We were intent on creating the stage upon which different perspectives could be thrashed out in muscular discussion and with impunity. This event drew a large crowd and precipitated much online discussion.

By taking academic and institutional frictions as an aspect of content of the Inquiry our exploits approximated what Charles Esche has referred to as a ‘forum of empathy’.⁴ Esche writes of “understanding the difficulties that social transitions generate” and the need to respond by “creating a place where antagonistic positions can struggle with each other over the right to determine the shape of a shared symbolic field.” We were successful to an extent, though some parties were conspicuous by their absence.

The PI addressed unrecognized potentiality. In the aftermath of the first phase of *The PI* it was recently remarked that when it comes to succession or generational change, art schools commonly exhibit an Oedipal “killing-of-the-father” dynamic. Our conscious aim was neither to exclude the old guard nor to reject the Gallery’s past, but to restage past history. We sought to elicit the views and energy of an incoming generation of younger academics and artists, including alumni, whose insights into contemporary practice and theory have yet to be incorporated into the pedagogy and institutional vision of our school.

The Gallery and its auxiliary spaces framed a fluid mise-en-scène that accommodated a broader and looser range of activities than the Plimsoll had hitherto supported. Participants’ involvement was promissory, the unpredictability, at times provoked anxiety for us as organizers, but we counselled each other that tension was what we sought out. Participants organized their own events, which included performances, art works, symposia, round table discussions, barbeques, potluck dinners, debates, and also some out of the ordinary classes. Dr. Yvette Watt, a colleague and artist who is an animal rights activist conducted a life drawing class: the models were a pig, some sheep, two hens, two turkeys and a calf.

The quality and engagement of contributions varied remarkably. Some activities and ideas failed to eventuate, yet there were some wondrous moments that could easily have been transported to major contemporary art spaces. All the space was utilised: the Gallery proper, and, for the very first time, the auxiliary spaces – the store room, goods lift, and loading bay – were exploited. Matt Warren first colonised the goods lift and loading bay with a one-hour live sound performance, set to the silent film, *The Student Of Prague* (1913). Others followed suit in using this as a venue. The loading bay offered a ‘stage’ area and we discovered it had good acoustics; it also made a reasonable barnyard!

Spontaneous evening events took place weekly at the ‘Wednesday Night Fiascos’. Our colleague Lucy Bleach sparked and facilitated these. She put out an open invitation to artists, academic staff, students and members of the public to enact or produce works, or explore the presentation of art, and participants took up the opportunity with alacrity, to produce bursts of creative expression.

Alumni Rebecca Stevens and Amanda Shone took the physical deficiencies of the Gallery as the cornerstones of a set of sculptural interventions. They brought in the architect responsible for the design of the building, Garry Forward, and a Feng Shui practitioner, Vicki Sauvage. Together, the four engaged in a review of the original design and the entrenched habitus and problems that had accrued over nearly three decades. Theirs was a playfully concrete, conceptual and dialogical approach, in which sculptural tactics addressed architecture via Feng Shui.

Painter and PhD candidate Meg Walch invited Philosopher Professor Wayne Hudson to engage in a public dialogue with her. Playing the compere role, the painter was articulate in her interrogation of the philosopher: her curiosity was authentic, as she sought answers to problems arising from her own painting practice. Relating philosophical ideas about plasticity to the para-surrealist idea of the informe, painter and philosopher accommodated and indulged each other in a sustained moment of mutual interrogation, and people flocked in response to their energy that built over two days.

Phase One included two master classes and a symposium convened by two esteemed guest academics, professors Ross Gibson and Nikos Papastergiadis. Members of the wider community were invited to join and extend the Inquiry’s participant base. The second phase, a reflective and analytic stage, is ongoing. We are engaged in a collaborative writing project, drawing on the large bank of images we generated as documentation of phase one. About thirty participants are describing and interpreting these. As Phase Two of *The PI*, we have enlisted more creative practitioners to join this reflective phase. We invited three artists to undertake week-long residences, to play in the Gallery space and to team up with us in ongoing speculative conversations about expanded possibilities for exhibition, publication, learning, teaching, research and audience engagement.

The evaluation being done in Phase Two is intended to construct an ongoing discourse, towards formulating a mode of critique and expanded aesthetic judgement.

While initially we conceived *The PI* as a series of dialogical, conceptual and ephemeral events, along the way it was abundantly clear that material thinking and an extended formal aestheticism were potent in the participants’ reimagining and re-conception of the space as a site with expanded real and virtual limits. We surmise that activities such as *The PI* may be judged for aesthetic integrity through a broadened (still emergent) conception of aesthetics; one that posits a range of cognitive capacities not confined to visual perception, expression of emotion, or normative judgements of formal integrity. At the very least, such an aesthetic register would include interpretive practices attendant to the nuances of complex experiences, situations and challenges. At most, it would also be able to articulate difference.

The Plimsoll Inquiry so far has operated at the outermost limits of formalism and bureaucratic authority. It has been inquisitorial and therapeutic. It has gone some way towards creating a narrative of a collective past, and demonstrated that this sort of inquiry can make a discernable shift in an ideological space. We have observed the way that open, iterative processes have productively lead to more tightly driven curated projects with definable aims. Although it is too soon to say, it also seems as though the Inquiry will be significant for determining the agenda for future planning and programming for the Plimsoll. It remains to be seen the extent to which the Inquiry ultimately contributes to the physical shaping of new architectural and virtual spaces, and pedagogical horizons, for the Plimsoll Gallery and the Tasmanian College of the Arts.

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NOTES

1. Jean-Paul Martinion, “Introduction”, in Jean-Paul Martinion and Irit Rogoff (eds) *The Curatorial: The Philosophy of Curating* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 4.

2. Fiona Lee, *Rogue Academy: Conversational Art Events As A Means Of Institutional Critique*, PhD exegesis University of Tasmania, forthcoming.

3. *The Plimsoll Inquiry* Bulletin can be found at <http://pibulletin.blogspot.com.au/>

4. Charles Esche, “Thinking Users, Thoughtless Institutions: A Prelude About the Present.” https://www.academia.edu/10150943/Thinking_Users_Thoughtless_Institution, accessed January 14, 2015.



Image: Christine Scott and Jan Hogan - at the Wednesday Night Fiasco bartering printed currency in exchange for art works

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Night Fiasco. So Tanya, what hasn't worked for you was or you came to an opening, you felt very alienated. That there d a social hierarchy that you felt excluded from. What has ing, the course that you're doing, the gallery course. That the installation of shows and seeing shows come together ally positive experience. The Wednesday Night Fiasco has in, I imagine. A new thing that you'd like to see is events or ssing more programs like the Wednesday Night Fiasco.

f I was really hardcore about this exercise, I would have asked r notebooks down before the conversations, and then we each exchange make you speak to each other and then we'd ithout looking at any notes. That would have really meant mbered as positive or negative or desirable would've had to morable, or at least everyone would need to that you listen t not get distracted by everything else. But that's another ory and consciousness. But it would have been perhaps also municated as significant, and it would've been sharper.

as a very valuable in that it focused on, first exercise, you s in another period or another visit whereby we start to talk ow they are formed, and how they're retained. It was an ly if you build up a history. Therefore working with the ssion to form something in the mind that is worthy of t's after all what a gallery should be doing is transmitting an mpression, an experiential, a bodily impression, a sensual m that can be communicated to another person.

k Ross to see if he's got any overview of what has happened in nearly two hours of responding to each other's hen we'll try and before we open it up for another 20 minutes wn here.

in that kind of high I'm just sort of thi what they do in th ignored that as or might be that this point of view.

Nikos: Sure. Okay

or career. We could have truth (2) to both

a classic case here, where as a : apher, and whatever, weathe hD on the basis of four co-writ ove, - but nevertheless, they 're all peer-reviewed, the writi there a fait accompli. But - out iree, had already had four A-1 ere's nothing to stop that simi is place where you start to rethink the way in which -researching and the manifestation of the research

ent with this inquiry. But also the way in which that nquiry has allowed Sarah to build a relationship with and space. You also spoke about your friendship with Gus a studio with Gus and the way that that had somehow ... wn here.

Jane Sarah 2: ...solidified a relationship with the Plimsoll. We kind of collaborated, or responded to each other's experience of what we bring in to the space as a result of the Inquiry...

Sarah: our issues were On behalf of Jane, apart from the Investigations exhibition sort of event, the her recent experiences have been a bit cold and austere. There's just been a general 'lack' in the space, and it's it has felt a bit sluggish and not overly welcoming.

Based on that conversation, we We came up with a combined list of what new things we felt can be brought into the space. It's based around the idea that we We enjoy coming to the art school, and there's an energy upstairs that we both enjoy, we need to find a way to and somehow transferring that energy down here. Also, on the idea of the welcome, and just in leading from conversations that we've had so far, and looking at it - from a purely commercial point of view, it almost feels like the it feels like the Plimsoll also needs to have like an aesthetic brand overhaul - where the sort of philosophy or the personality of the gallery is re-looked examined at in terms of what is marketed or expressed to the public. I mean there was talk about just adding the word "welcome" to the sign. But is it more than that?

In Saving that, of course money's an issue, but then I was just thinking there's a

story of the fishpond if you have time to hear that. Can you tell the story of the fishpond?

Amanda: I think the most interesting thing was that through talking about the fish, I learnt the fact that there was this sort of nine-year history (nine years) of people being invested in and connected to in this garden. They and they all knew these fish by name and Leon explained then this whole story of who bought each fish, and then who looked after them and who feeds them every day. Leon built this a cage because there's this water rat....anyway, it's a long story...and there's a water rat that's involved and there's all these-

Bec: ...it ate all the fish, the initial lot of fish.

Amanda: The water rat ate them so then Leon built this safety cage to protect the new fish and it's this is just really lovely story...

Fiona: They've all got names - the fish.

(cross talk) -

Nikos: So what the fish swim into the cage when they see the rat.

Bec: Well, that's the hope.

(Laughter and crosstalk)

Nikos: But this is a whole culture that other people don't know anything about.

Amanda: That's right. So it was sort of this whole-

Nikos: There's a movie here... (laughs)

Amanda: Yeah, after being here at the Art School for probably four years and having a very different relationship with the Plimsoll, now, suddenly suddenly I've got this sort of been introduced to a very intimate story and knowledge and involvement with it and new way of thinking about the space. That's been a real... yeah, that's worked for me made me think about this space in a new way.

ough to Steven's comments manifestations that you see in

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other event that supports that work, which Perhaps this is the rol to ensure that that these things can sort of come together so that t examination isn't too isolated - d... can if we could try to build a c the examination show it - I don't know

Jane: I think the communication of those down in the past to the public. I mean v don't think there are many other people of that- they are expecting a vibrant ext most successful way.

Amanda: I think I've have been a bit con Recently there were with the examination I think it was an Indonesian fabric collec thought "Oh, this feels like a museum."

Mary: I think that was just Noel's thing. Asian language academics because the with the lack of funding's empty, go an people.

Amanda: Oh, right. [Crosstalk]

Mary: We were confused too - it just appeared one day! (laughs)

friends of mine were playing, who were artists in a band and it was p you know the usual, 'the rain-rained-in-Manchester' kind of scene. T opening line from Get Carter by the way....

And she goes, "Oh, I can't stand this place. It's so damn dysfunctional suddenly felt patriotic about Manchester. Manchester is my place. I dysfunctional," and then I got stuck because I thought, "Where do I argument now?" because I couldn't even turn around and say it's re because it isn't. But I knew I wasn't dysfunctional because there wer happening. We'd just been to a place that had been taken over by a "It's para-functional," I and that word now exists. I've seen at least people use it. It's spread. So then To prove my point I wrote this piec functional spaces which is about how spaces get an alternative life-d one that they were made for and become re-rooted into another form is what artists have been doing throughout the whole of the modern not just with spaces but with the material. Every The found object da functional object. Well, you want to find that in art history, but anyw this approach to materials or spaces is so crucial to what you've alre I'm just applauding and underlining your momentum and in awe of i little 'well done' but I want to now move from ruins that to the idea

The other day a student came to see me saying she wants to do som politics and event and I go, "What do you mean?" She goes, "Well, n anymore believes in the party as a whole thing." I said, "Explain," Sh you don't believe in everything the Labor party stands for and why s you'd have to be, you'd be a mug... But you might want to believe in on some occasions. I'm interested to see', she says, 'about how ever forms of belonging politically' and I thought aesthetically, culturally, in every other way. In some sense we have to think about events no moment where the culture represents itself back to itself. That's the definition of a culture by Lévi-Strauss, right? That cultures represent back to themselves. But as events in which a culture snatches time o

consequ thoroughly enough for their work to succeed within the space. That might be about the lead-in time, but it - it might be about the lack of active engagement with the space throughout three, four, five, six their study to gain a better understanding of the space in which their work will be exhibited finally. -years that underpins the qualification where this research is exhibited in their work. I don't know.

Jane: I think that's what it is and I think it's a prudent point because in terms of the future of this gallery, I think it's something that has to be addressed... (because). This gallery is the gallery where research higher degree will be exhibited. But often the sort of purity of these these research projects i



Plimsoll Gallery
Tasmanian College of the Arts
University of Tasmania
Hunter St, Hobart.

