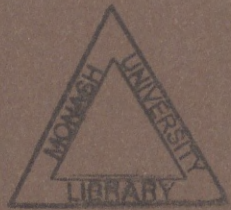




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CA REQ

DON'T TRUST THE ARTIST





DON'T TRUST THE ARTIST
WORKS BY RECENT STUDIO ARTISTS,
GERTRUDE CONTEMPORARY ART
SPACES, MELBOURNE

PAT FOSTER & JEN BEREAN

RICHARD LEWER

ROB McLEISH

GEOFF NEWTON

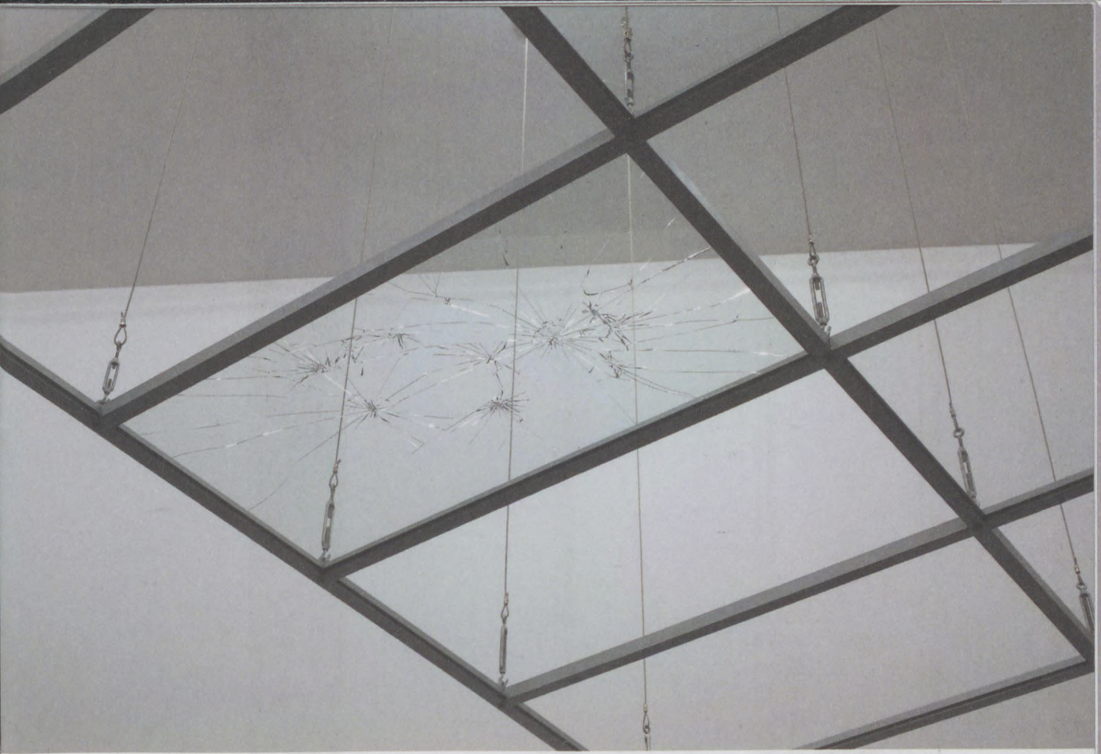
SIMON PERICICH

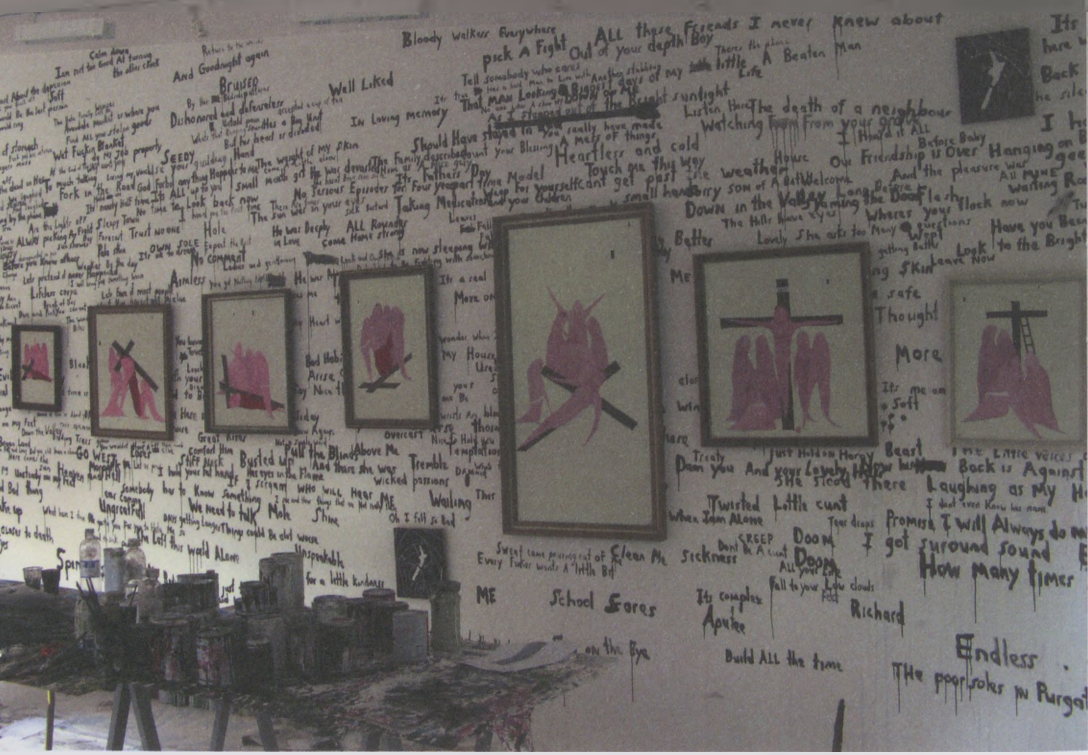
JACKSON SLATTERY

CURATOR: ALEXIE GLASS-KANTOR

29 OCTOBER – 28 NOVEMBER 2009









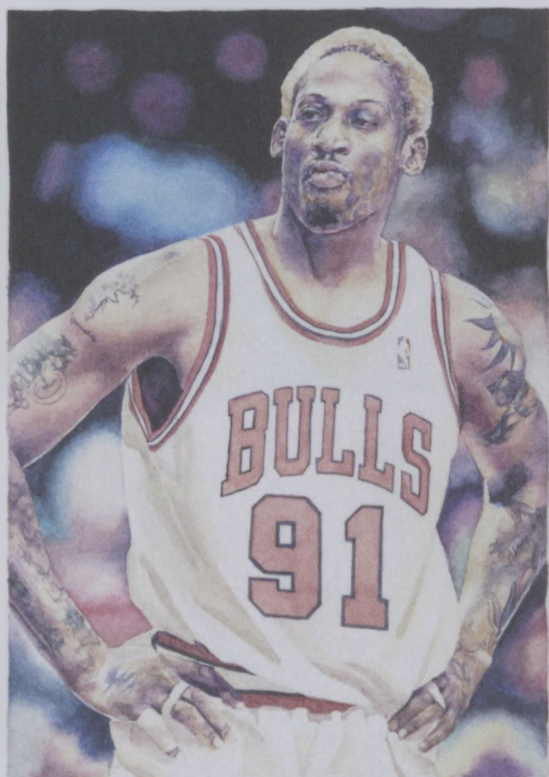
6













List of works

Simon Pericich

Progress In An Age of Decadence, 2008

Disco balls, dining room candles, sporting equipment, toys, feather duster, knick knacks, brand-name clothes and shoes, stereo and dj equipment, phones, furniture, magazines, tv

Courtesy of the artist

Jackson Slattery

My Plastic Everything (series), 2008

Watercolour on paper, MDF, clips, blanket

Courtesy of the artist, Song Ling, Jon Broome, George Kourounis and Sutton Gallery, Melbourne

Geoff Newton

Untitled (series), 2009

Acrylic on paper

Courtesy of the artist, Penny Modra, Olivia Raddonich and Blockprojects, Melbourne

Rob McLeish

Nailing Honey to the Bee (Philanthropic Tinnitus), 2009

mixed media

Courtesy of the artist

Step Into The Light, 2007

mixed media

Courtesy of the artist

Pat Foster & Jen Berean

On Public (series), 2009

mixed media

Courtesy of the artists and Murray White Room, Melbourne

Richard Lewer

Stations of the Cross (series), 2008,

enamel on found canvas

Courtesy Monash University Collection, Monash University Museum of Art

DON'T TRUST THE ARTIST

Alexie Glass-Kantor

An artist is usually a damned liar, but his art, if it be art, will tell you the truth of his day.¹

Dwelling in the realms of artifice, suspicion, the sacrilegious and conspiracy, *Don't Trust The Artist* is a provocative assertion. Deliberately discursive and established upon an often tongue-in-cheek polemic, the objective of this project is not to present a single-hypothesis, but rather to engage the porous and labyrinthine, evoking a sense of shifting perspectives and contradictions.

Don't Trust The Artist is not a literal quotation, rather it is a bastardised and vernacular interpretation of a literary text sampled from DH Lawrence, which reads: "Never trust the artist. Trust the tale. The proper function of a critic is to save the tale from the artist who created it."² Trust is a turbulent notion and this statement articulates the complex ecology that exists between the modes of intention, production, presentation and encounter. The life of the work is beyond the artist, becoming mutable in contact with the audience, and in this space of contamination the critic is not defined by the attribution of authority, but instead becomes a pseudonym for the viewer.

The six practices included in *Don't Trust The Artist* draw from the covert and subterranean, with each work in the exhibition applying direct pressure on points of resistance between the audience and the work of art. The artists themselves have dedicated studio-based practices, with each of them either currently participating or having recently participated in the two-year residency program at Gertrude Contemporary Art Spaces, Melbourne.

Simon Pericich's occult pyre and DIY arsenal of homemade weaponry are hyperbolic and urgent. Poised for an elusive Armageddon sure to arrive at some inopportune moment, the artist is alert and alarmed with barricades fabricated from means that are decidedly analogue. Suggesting less overt zones of contact, Geoff Newton's paintings of commercial gallerists abducted from the pages of art magazines presents an imprint of the body as enemy and antagonist, enacting the borderline states of corporeal affect. Eviscerated and bleeding, Newton's refined understanding of anti-aesthetics results in a deliberate obliteration of the subject, bringing forth a desecrated representation that suggests a more intuitive impression. Meanwhile Jackson Slattery commits the perfect crime for our times. Appropriating images uploaded onto public networking sites, the artist through his meticulous rendering absorbs another's fragmented and decontextualised memories as his own. In the process Slattery constructs juxtapositions within narratives that masquerade as fact but that are

actually embedded in fiction. As Lawrence wrote, "truly art is a sort of subterfuge."³

The interstitial spaces, aluminium benches and fluorescent anteroom fabricated by Pat Foster and Jen Berean amplify the transience of our passages through urban spheres with a malingering sense of menace by directly embedding spatial interruptions into a re-articulation of the gallery space. The discreet space of autonomy between works is eroded and, ever mindful of the single gaze, the motion of the viewer is implicitly guided, so that the audience is led into the final chamber of the exhibition, a dense cul de sac that contains the works of Richard Lewer and Rob McLeish. Drawing from subjectivities that are loaded with tensions and vulnerability, neither McLeish nor Lewer shy away from the taboo, with religion, hypnotic states and corporeality all fecund territory. In Lewer's reinterpretation of the Stations of the Cross, Christ is a flaccid, fleshy, polymorphous and distended abstraction in which the sacrosanct is debased into an oily palpitation and the resurrection is rendered decidedly impotent. Central to the room and suspended from the ceiling, the wax and latex bell fabricated by McLeish is choking on a peculiar bile, a toxic excrement that suggests abject decay and unadulterated violence.

Walls have been constructed for this exhibition that create corridors, dead-ends and obstacles; spaces are painted a sickly lavender and black; materiality is given precedence; and the aesthetic is unapologetically hi-octane. That this exhibition is the final at the Ivan Dougherty Gallery in its Selwyn Street premises is apposite. For thirty-two years the gallery has facilitated interventions, critical practice, risk-taking and reverie, and the only certainty in art is that history is a narrative that is constantly repeating, reviewed in such a way that fact and fiction often converge. This is the space to test those parameters. And for the relatively early career artists included in this exhibition, all of whom are working in a constantly evolving landscape, and as the gallery itself moves towards a different sphere, it is tantalising to raise the stakes and present an altered terrain.

Trust is key. It is there to be both aspired for and tested with corollary concepts such as enigma, the uncanny and the place of intuition remaining essential to the artistic process, and alluring to the audience or critic. When Lawrence wrote "never trust the artist" he was telling us to place our faith in fiction and privilege the space of uncertainty, and in this heightened state of transformation we become more highly attuned to the entanglements of the immaterial and the seductive vertigo of the unknown. In other words, trust no-one.

1 DH Lawrence, 'Studies in Classic American Literature' first published in the USA by Thomas Seltzer Inc, 1923. This edition Penguin Books 1971, quotation from Chapter 1 *The Spirit of Place*.

2 *ibid*.

3 *ibid*.

Pat Foster & Jen Berean

page 2

The Doing and Undoing of it All, 2009

Installation view

page 3

The Doing and Undoing of it All, 2009

aluminum, safety glass and enamel

Pat Foster and Jen Berean are concerned with dismantling and re-articulating hidden systems that comprise the infrastructural components—both architectural and cultural—of what surrounds us. Where existing objects and images are employed, they seek to explore the original signification of the object or image, pointing to the endless possibilities for the subjective appropriation of found or discarded materials.

Pat Foster and Jen Berean have been working collaboratively since 2001. Pat received a Bachelor of Fine Arts (Drawing) in 2004 and Honours in 2005, from the Victorian College of the Arts (VCA). Jen received a Bachelor of Fine Arts in 2001, and a Bachelor of Architecture in 2006, both from RMIT University. Recent shows include *NEW09*, Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne, 2009; *On Public*, Ryan Renshaw, Brisbane, 2009; *Problem Solving: Express Yourself*, Uplands Gallery, Melbourne, 2009; *Too Much of Everything*, Y3k Gallery, Melbourne, 2009; *Low Expectations*, Murray White Room, Melbourne, 2008; *SCAPE Biennial of Public Art*, Christchurch Art Gallery, 2008; *Neo Goth*, University of Queensland Art Museum, Brisbane, 2008, *Group Group Show*, Margaret Lawrence Gallery, VCA, Melbourne, 2008; *Structural Decline*, Melbourne Art Fair 2008. Foster and Berean's work has been featured in various publications, including *Artlink*, *Photofie*, *Speech*, *Art World*, *Art & Australia* and *The Age*.

Pat Foster and Jen Berean are represented by Murray White Room, Melbourne.

Richard Lewer

page 4

View of the series *Stations of the Cross*, Richard Lewer's studio, Gertrude Contemporary Art Spaces, 2009

page 5

Stations of the Cross, 2008: *Veronica wipes the face of Jesus* (framed), 2008

Enamel on found framed board

Monash University Collection

Throughout his work Richard Lewer has explored the rituals of sport, crime and religion in terms of their narratives of failure and redemption and psychologies of fear and desire. Painted during his McCahon Residency in 2008, the *Stations of the Cross* continues Lewer's exploration of his familial and religious background and

extends his investigations of evocatively oblique figuration.

Richard Lewer was born in Hamilton, New Zealand, and arrived in Australia in 1997. In 2000, Lewer completed a Master of Visual Arts at the Victorian College of the Arts. Since the late 1990s, Richard has exhibited widely in Australia and New Zealand. This year he has had a major survey show, *Richard Lewer: Nobody Likes a Show Off* at Monash University Museum of Art (MUMA), Melbourne. Selected group exhibitions include: *I Walk the Line: New Australian Drawing*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, 2009; *True Crime - Murder and Misdemeanour in Australian Art*, Geelong Gallery, 2008; *Basil Sellers Art Prize*, Ian Potter Museum of Art, Melbourne, 2008; *Better Places*, Perth Institute of Contemporary Art (PICA), Perth, 2008; *Crime Lines*, Sophie Gannon Gallery, Melbourne, 2007; *Commodity and Delight*, Sarjeant Gallery, Wanganui, NZ, 2006; *A Rear Window*, The Physics Room, Christchurch, NZ, 2004 and *Break*, Govett-Brewster Public Art Gallery, New Plymouth, NZ, 2003. Lewer has participated in several artist-in-residences: The McCahon Arts Residency, New Zealand, 2008; The Cage, VCA Drawing Department, Melbourne, 2007; St Vincents Hospital Residency, Melbourne, 2006 and Victorian Institute of Sports Residency, Melbourne, 2005. While in New Zealand, Richard won the James Wallace Premier Art Award, which will see him complete a 6-month residency at ISCP in New York in 2010. He is represented by Orex Gallery, New Zealand, and currently lives and works in Melbourne.

Rob McLeish

page 6 and 7

Untitled (page from Artist Book), 2009

collage on paper

Rob McLeish's drawings, collages and sculptures express an exuberant appetite for ridicule and squalor. Concepts of the grotesque, the abject and the violent are expressed within a framework of libidinal laughter. McLeish toys with ideas of assimilated desecration within contemporary culture, using these as a departure point for discussions about contemporary art and theory, and works in opposition to teleological ideals of cultural production.

Rob McLeish began practising as an artist in 2003, several years after receiving a Bachelor of Graphic Design from Swinburne University in 1999. Rob lives and works in Melbourne where he is currently completing a Masters of Fine Art at Monash University and a residency at Gertrude Contemporary Art Spaces. Recent shows include *Afterparty*, Westspace, Melbourne, 2008 and *Life, Death, Thereafter*, Silvershot, Melbourne, 2008.

Geoff Newton

page 9 and back cover
Untitled, 2009
acrylic on canvas

Geoff Newton's practice incorporates painting, collage, sound and performance. Exploring art-history and the ideas of authenticity, authorship and the mythology of the artist, his casual and meandering aesthetic intentionally defies the rules of artistic conventions in an ironic and informed manner. In addition, Newton's training and background in museums and galleries influences the conceptual and formal foundation of much of his work.

Geoff Newton completed a Bachelor of Fine Arts at the National Institute of the Arts, Canberra in 2000, following a student exchange at the Slade School Of Fine Art, London. Since 2000 he has presented several solo exhibitions, including *Geoff Newton*, Block Projects, Melbourne, 2009; *Studio Tan*, Gallery 9, Sydney, 2008; *Hygiene Genie*, Seventh Gallery, Melbourne, 2005; *Frozen Blood*, Bus Gallery, Melbourne, 2004, *Great Phone Calls*, MOP Projects, Sydney, 2004, and *Enter Caveman*, 24/7, Melbourne; *Today's Cavities*, TCB Arts Inc, Melbourne, 2003 and *Kids Stay Free*, Canberra Contemporary Art Spaces, 2001. Recent group shows include *Don't Worry It's Only Money*, City Art Rooms, Auckland, NZ, 2009; *Old Skool (Don't lose that feeling)* curated by Robert Cook and Hannah Matthews, Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts, -2008; *Octopus 7*, curated by Robert Cook, Gertrude Contemporary Art Spaces, Melbourne, 2007; *Shit!* (with Vivienne Binns), Canberra Contemporary Art Spaces, 2003 and *One God, No Masters*, Hamish McKay Gallery, Wellington, NZ, 2006. Newton's work is included in Artbank and private collections in Australia, New Zealand and the U.K, including those of Rupert Myer AM and KPMG. He is the co-founder and co-director of Neon Parc, Melbourne.

Simon Pericich

inside cover
The Density of Darkness, 2007
wood, fluro-lights, weeds, bling, stickers, various containers and drink bottles
page 11
Detail from the series *Progress In An Age Of Decadence (Pyre)*, 2008
Disco balls, dining room candles, sporting equipment, toys, feather duster, knick knacks, brand-name clothes and shoes, stereo and dj equipment, phones, furniture, magazines, tv

Simon Pericich's hysterical, dark brand of makeshift art production is concerned with the terrifying awareness that humanity and its current actions may be irrationally selfish and detrimental. Traversing large-scale installation, video

and image his dystopias are often nihilistically humorous, acting like an epitaph and harbinger for a future that seems out of the control of its population.

Simon Pericich completed a Master of Visual Art at the Victorian College of the Arts in 2006, a Masters in Sculpture at Slade School of Fine Art, London, in 2004, and a Bachelor of Fine Arts at Curtin University, Perth, in 2001. A recipient of the Anne and Gordon Samstag International Visual Arts Scholarship in 2003, Pericich has staged several solo projects and has had work featured in a number of group exhibitions. Pericich has been profiled in *Australian Art Collector* and on the ABC television program *Sunday Arts*. He completed his Gertrude Contemporary Art Spaces residency in 2008. He is currently curator for RMIT University's First Site Gallery.

Geoff Newton is represented by Blockprojects, Melbourne

Jackson Slattery

front cover, page 12 and 13
My Plastic Everything, 2008
watercolour on paper

Drawing from found and personal photographs, Jackson Slattery's watercolour compositions often depict uneasy or sinister scenes rendered in complex detail. A consistent area of investigation in Slattery's practice is the construction of identity, with his interest ranging from the spectacularised personas of contemporary stars and celebrities, to the more subtle and obscured nuances of banal suburban existence.

Jackson Slattery completed a Bachelor of Fine Art, majoring in drawing, from RMIT University in 2004. Since graduating, Slattery's work has been included in numerous solo and group exhibitions throughout Melbourne, with his first solo exhibition at Sutton Gallery in 2009. His work has been included in several art prizes; he was a finalist in the Siemens-RMIT Fine Arts Traveling Scholarship Award in 2003 and ABN AMRO Emerging Artists Awards in 2008; in 2005 he won the Artholes Self Portrait Prize in conjunction with Artholes Gallery, Melbourne; and in 2009 he won the Metro Art Award. Slattery has participated in a number of residencies and is currently a studio artist at Gertrude Contemporary Art Spaces, Melbourne. His work is held in both private and public collections, including Art Bank. Jackson Slattery is represented by Sutton Gallery, Melbourne, Australia.

Acknowledgements

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