

LOST
IN
A
DREAM

ROB GARRETT

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LOST IN A DREAM / ROB GARRETT

I think I've been here before, but I'm not certain: happily adrift among cuddled cats; flash-backs after a car crash; Mozart playing on a train; a date in the teacups; and hallucinations before sleep. "Lost in a dream" gathers work by fourteen artists who have a knack of positioning the viewer in a space between two seemingly separate or contradictory places. Various each work submerges the watchful viewer in a sort of fog; making them feel as if they may be lost between waking and sleeping, health and malady, certainty and confusion, maturity and childishness, rationality and obsession, truth and dream, true love and foolish cliché, or sobriety and drunkenness. Sobriety and drunkenness: not one or the other; but both at the same time; both struggling for supremacy, but neither achieving it.

Given the uncertainty of perception that these works might create, it is hoped that they will stimulate imagination in unexpected ways. Each work has a palpable sensuality; a direct seduction with the power to hold, even enthrall. This immediacy is both sustained and undercut by an awakening; creating awareness that all is not revealed or present in this moment of confronting the art work. Perhaps this will stimulate curiosity.

Our premise is that a state of uncertainty can be a productive field; that it can be a space of speculation, wondering, doubt, anticipation; and therefore of imagining what is not yet known. Uncertainty may be a state which can lead to creativity; to the generation of new thoughts; or to the emergence of unexpected or unfamiliar sensations; and perhaps the experience and expression of untrained emotions. The works in "Lost in a dream" have been chosen in the main to invite us to wonder; and to wonder as much at our own inability to make up our mind about what is going on.

L

In Olga Chernysheva's "The Train" we witness a mysterious slippage between the interior of a Moscow train and what looks like a bleak hospital corridor; and then we slip back again, without narrative explanation or apparent logic. Chernysheva's point-of-view filming and the looping movement from one *mise-en-scène* to the other and back produces a moment of befuddlement, like encountering a fold in space-time.

Chernysheva's interest in the atomisation of post-Soviet society, a social counterpoint to the inheritance of collectivism, is most powerfully conveyed by the eye of the camera in this video. In later video works the artist observes individuals in public engaged in what seem like private moments of activity at the same time as being in a public setting or action of the masses: a lone figure is seen from a distance going through an exercise routine on their own in a park; a woman steps aside from a political march through the streets, to rummage through her bag for something, before returning to the processing rally.

In all these works we find people in situations somewhere between privacy and public action; and the more public the context or action, the more inwardly focused the person seems to be. In "The Train" this dichotomy between the public body and the inward consciousness, suggested by the poetic jump from one cor-

idor to another; plays out more within the roving eye than in those observed by the camera.

The nineteen portraits in Alexander Ilin's Project "19" are powerful and mesmerising. Even without knowing their origin and the artist's conceptual impulse, they do what good portraits ought to: create a compelling humanity and authentic immediacy. But they provide another experience because they are, in a way, out of context in Auckland. The nineteen portraits were shot in Russia and arrived in Auckland along with the photographer when he immigrated here at the beginning of 2012. These works speak as much to the conditions of cultural, geographic and temporal displacement as they do to presumptions or prejudices about what healthy and unwell people look like; and it is because of these questions which infuse the project that we have chosen to show the entire body of work rather than make selections. Viewed in Auckland far from the context in which they were made, and the social context they were intended to address, Ilin's portraits are intended to interrogate the question of what differences in meaning lie in the shift from one place to another. In very simple terms, we are encouraged to approach these works with the question: what different meanings are conjured when looking at these portraits in Auckland compared with in Moscow?

The title of Anna Nordquist Andersson's "The Hypnagogic" points to the vivid visual hallucinations that can occur at the transition from wakefulness to sleep; as do the semi-transparent eyelids of the woman in the photograph. This transitional hypnagogic state produces a field of visual and cognitive uncertainty akin to the moment when Alice notices the white rabbit run past her; take out a watch from his waistcoat pocket, and disappear down a rabbit hole. Almost immediately Alice finds herself tumbling down the burrow after him without a thought for the consequences. Here and there at the same time: asleep in the field and down the hole. So too the doubled gaze of "The Hypnagogic" infers with wakeful yet closed eyes, the state of being in oneself; and with sleeping yet open eyes, the state of looking through, and of being somehow propelled forward by a vision, being drawn into an immaterial but vivid world. This is the leitmotif of "Lost in a dream."

Robbie Fraser is preoccupied with a different immateriality. His colour fields and geometry occupy conceptual space beyond the tangible bounds of the works, though occasionally they touch a canvas form, and thereby the parts of their larger wholes that touch, suddenly become visible. This is how we must approach Fraser's work if we are to appreciate the shape of space around the works that his coloured shapes want us to imagine; and perhaps in our mind's eye, to see, at the same time as we see his painted surfaces. It is as if broad, but paint-thin white, grey, orange and green planes have touched down, only in part, on his three canvases. In what directions and orientations do the invisible areas of each of these planes extend beyond the canvas: out to the sides, through and behind, or inclined towards us into the room? While our eyes rest on the surfaces of the canvases, it is as if Fraser wants our mind to map invisible geometries in space; to see the unseen

The immaterial, but deeply affecting qualities of light, and light effects, have long compelled artists to find new ways with materials and representation. Paul Hargetan's quest is to present immateriality. "Strip House – (Indigo Lane)" creates a volume of light and colour which at different times of the day and night, and at different moments in its ramping pulses, spills out more or less to occupy the surr-

ounding space with degrees of intensity and subtlety. The work invites you to stand in its glow; in its ebb and flow. This is where the uncertainty principle is most sublime because it is where the immaterial also seems palpable. Here Hartigan's choice of colour ramps up the volume because blue is the colour in the spectrum that recedes from us most. Remember the adage, never to paint your furniture blue as your eye will always misjudge its distance and you will keep banging in to it? The sublime is always out of reach.

Watching Cécile B. Evans' video "Straight Up," which first inspired the title for this exhibition, it gradually transpires that something is wonderfully off. For most, the first and most obvious disjunction will be the fact that we may not be sure what the artist is "signing" with her gestures, standing before the camera in front of a pure black backdrop. But slowly, subtly, things seem to blur: Evans's gestures become less precise and almost sluggish; and then animated light bursts, flashes, sparkles and illuminated vapour trails begin to emanate from the artist's gestures, animating the black space with an almost Pokémon *jouissance*.

We may need to read the artist's statement to discover that progressively throughout the performance, though we cannot decipher how, she is becoming more and more inebriated. She is found to be drunk-in-charge-of-a-deaf-signing-karaoke-performance. Her irresponsibly funny body refuses to keep time with the tempo of the song; and her facial expression and hand gestures casually contradict the longing and urgency of Paula Abdul's lyrics:

*I've been a fool before
Wouldn't like to get my love
Caught in the slammin' door
Are you more than hot for me
Or am I a page in your history book?
I don't mean to make demands
But the word and the deed
Go hand in hand
How about some information, please?*

How is it possible to reflect on sentimentalised experiences at the same time as being "in" them? Cécile B. Evans manages to straddle both camps. For those who might feel they are living through a moment that is aptly captured by Paula Abdul's lyrics, the fact that Evans seems increasingly "under the influence" may be an apt metaphor for the experience of being a prisoner to love.

O

I was introduced to Grant Gallagher a few years ago and learned of the treasure trove of sculptures that he had been quietly making and accumulating at his home and workshop in Auckland over the course of three decades. It is therefore very exciting to be able to present a complete series of his works. The twelve sculptures in Gallagher's series "You're only as pretty as you feel" (1999-2002) are presented in a tight cluster, forming an enchanted forest reminiscent of Max Ernst's surrealist paintings of enchanted forests, such as "Forest and Dove" (1927) and "The Forest" (1927-28), and his automatist wood-grain drawings of the same period, with their densely textured grattage and frottage surfaces. But Gallagher's works, originating in the South, differ markedly in their tone from Ernst's concep-

tion of the forests of Oceania as "savage and impenetrable, black and russet, extravagant, secular; swarming, diametrical, negligent, ferocious, fervent, and likeable, without yesterday or tomorrow." Gallagher's forest, while made of rough boxing and fencing timbers, possesses lightness.

Though the link to Ernst is curatorial licence; the artist's deliberate re-working of another modern European aesthetic is more studied. Taking a cue from the numerous and ornate illustrations of the 19th century German biologist, naturalist, philosopher and artist Ernst Haeckel (1834-1919), Gallagher creates his own shell and coral curiosity in "The Birth of Aphrodite" (2012). In Gallagher's hands the over-embellishment eschews the scientist's regularity, serried rows, symmetries and classifications by type; instead the Auckland artist embraces the decorative chaos of grotto aesthetics.

Georganne Deen's intimate painting "A Spin in the Teacups (Is a Must)" (2011) is a companion piece to the ornament of Gallagher's shell-encrusted piece and to the inebriated sensuality of Cecile B. Evans's "Straight Up." Like the former, Deen presents seductively embellished surfaces which the eye can wander across almost aimlessly: curious without necessary intent; and like the hooded eyelids and hands that mess with, and massage, Abdul's lyrics in the performance by Evans, a feral sexuality is at play within the details of Deen's work. Most notably between the two embracing figures in the teacup. Are these Ann Darrow and a diminutive Kong; a booth-sized Ape? Whether they are or not, the Blonde Beauty and Hirsute Beast are beautifully figured in their fun fair ride which swirls an unanswered fortune teller's question.

A different kind of mystery infuses the way both Emma Garrett and Anastasia Klose create a bridge between something quite private, intimate, even awkward whose vernacular is inward-looking, and the public realm of presentation and extrovert expression. These works are of interest because they have the power to conjure the thought "why am I being shown this?"

In Emma Garrett's gentle and loving treatment of gumboot dancing, we sense the artist is enthralled with the dancer's folkly obsession; and admiring of what seems like joy-without-irony. The figure-ground relationship suggests the almost trance-like aura-body relation of the dancer's experience of being lost in, subsumed by, his own movements and energy. Garrett suggests a moment where the dancer is consumed by the dance and thus moves regardless of whatever might be happening around him. The gestures and interiorised moment are those of a child lost in play, or of an adult day-dreaming. Is it naïve, childlike, fanatical or backward? Do we smile, join, gape or turn away?

"True Love" is a big feeling. Suddenly, Anastasia Klose brings the giant balloon of this thought down to earth by cuddling her cat in her sunny backyard. Klose has this ability to put something huge and full of baggage out there, and then to handle it in such a way, not that it becomes tame, but so that it becomes homely. Without her cat figuring as it does it feels impossible to ask about loving "truly, madly, deeply." Ordinarily if I love like this and say so, I may be taken as a fool; as naïve; and ignorant of simply re-using romance novelist Barbara Cartland's famous phrase. Or worse, I may be taken as miserly, as knowingly shipping my feelings in used crates. If I say I love you truly, madly, deeply, I must whisper these words with such tenderness; with such unselfconscious spontaneity that their pre-worn

attributes don't clang around the room and drown me out. Refreshingly, Klose and her cat show us how.

S

Nathan Gray's graceful and seemingly effortless video appears at the start as if it may be a seamless computer-generated riff on animated moiré patterning. But cracks soon emerge that reveal the work's more humble, almost kitchen table origins. Gray's moiré patterns are generated by layered sheets of acetate printed with stripe patterns, that he slides across each other at different angles and at times rotates as if we are watching a slow-moving mobile. They suggest a doodling playfulness on the part of the artist.

Moiré patterns are a delight for the very reason that they are not straightforward; they are never just what they seem at first glance. Three more of the artists showing here are drawn to the moiré pattern's complicating nature: Deen, with her choice of rayon moiré fabric as the surface of her painting; the hide-and-seek play of Virginie Mossé's paper cuts; and André Sampson's layers of painterly dots and stripes.

In Virginie Mossé's series "Wie Du Dir so Ich Mir" (Tit for Tat) from 2009, pop, advertisement and propaganda imagery, which is routinely presented as easy to read, is obfuscated by the artist's overlaid cut-outs. Her paper cuts run interpretive interference across our gaze. We may feel some of the images are easy to work out through the slits, while others may remain quite opaque. But we should not take the former as success and the latter as failure. Mossé would have us consider the impossibility of full and final comprehension.

On the one hand the works can be seen as a demonstration that what we see in the media is so mediated that we need to look beneath the surface to find the other side to the story, discover what has been omitted, or understand alternative points of view or significance. Nothing is as it seems; and the more something seems to be self-evident, the less it is likely to be so. Mossé believes we need to repeatedly wake ourselves up to this perspective; that we can too easily fall asleep, or be induced to drowsiness by the incessant bombardment of image and slogan. Her insistence on the need for vigilance is a call for us to be always uncertain.

André Sampson's "xxiii" (2012) is deceptively simple; elegant too. As I read it, Sampson's watercolour runs a kind of art historical interference across two generations of New Zealand artists, specifically Colin McCahon and the contemporary duo of Michael Parekowhai and Peter Robinson, both of whom teach at the University where Sampson is completing her postgraduate degree. The dark shadowy forms appearing in the spaces between the white dots that cover three quarters of the painting look like fragments of letters spelling out an abridged form of "I AM / AM I / HE / EH." On the left there is an "I" and an "A" overlapping each other; and on the right an "H" and an "E" sandwiched together. The "M" is not inscribed; though neither is it absent; nor the "S" with which Sampson could have interposed herself (but that would have played by the same rules rather than shifting them). It doesn't seem a stretch to read in these forms Sampson's allusion to the ghost of the father of New Zealand's late-arriving Modernism and the shadows cast by his sons. Namely, her partially erased texts abridge a lineage of well-known inscriptions and titles: McCahon's 'I AM' inscribed in his monumen-

tal "Victory over Death 2" (1970); and his 'AM I Scared Boy (EH)' in "Am I scared" (1976); Parekowhai's sculptural spelling of 'I AM HE' in "The Indefinite Article" (1990); and Robinson's 'BOY, AM I SCARED EH!' in "Boy Am I Scared Eh!" (1997).

Eschewing slogans, and located outside of the sorts of national and ethnic identity debates that contextualised the works of the New Zealand father and sons, Sampson's intentions with these references remain ambiguous. She writes no slogans; her title a simple Roman numeric twenty three. She nods in the direction of legacy and keeps moving.

T

Visiting Katrin Kampmann's Berlin studio in April 2012 I was immediately taken with the luminosity and mystery of "Solaris" which was pinned to the sunlit wall in amongst other portraits and nestled up to Kampmann's huge landscape paintings. Having long been a fan of Andrei Tarkovsky's films, the phantasmagorical associations of Kampmann's title, harking back to the 1972 Russian film of the same name and to Stanislaw Lem's 1961 novel from which it was drawn, added to the work's magnetism. The haunting visual power of Kampmann's "Solaris" along with its literary and filmic baggage made it one of the early keystones for "Lost in a dream" as the exhibition was taking shape.

Kampmann's painting portrays Rheya, Tarkovsky's lead female character, who is a transient simulacra of the former wife of the protagonist Dr Kris Kelvin. On earth she had committed suicide when Kelvin abandoned their marriage, but later appears as a chimera at his side in the space craft that hovers above the planet Solaris. Kelvin is plagued by longing and guilt in regards Rheya, but also in regards to his elderly and dying father who he has abandoned in order to undertake the scientific space mission. As the film unfolds, the narrative arc appears to commence with Kelvin's last days on earth reflecting on his life while wandering near a lake near his childhood home where his elderly father still lives; moving then to the Solaris space station; and finally returning to the lake and his childhood home again. But what Kelvin experiences as a return home, transpires to be another hallucination induced by the sentient planet. Thus we begin to question whether the whole narrative might in some way be a hallucinogenic Mobius loop in which the pairings of earth and planet, past and present, external forms and internal feelings, are unstable and uncertain.

As Kampmann and I talked about the "Solaris" piece and its place in the exhibition she was drawn to Paula Abdul's lyrics and offered to make two additional portraits. "Do, do you love me?" and "You are so hard to read" are the result. The two newest works are inspired by, and titled after, lines from Abdul's song; and both also tie themselves to a film narrative involving the uncertainty of longing, guilt and the unexplained within a complex and ultimately doomed romantic relationship.

"Do, do you love me?" and "You are so hard to read" show two of three leading characters from Claude Sautet's 1970 film "Les choses de la vie." The woman is H el ene played by 1960s and 70s screen idol and Sautet's muse Romy Schneider; and the man is Pierre, a successful highway engineer, played by Michel Piccoli. H el ene is Pierre's adoring and free-spirited mistress and romantic foil to the third, and here absent, leading character, his long-suffering wife.

Just as in "Solaris" Kampmann is drawn to a narrative that folds together past and present, regret and hope, reality and hallucination, in charting the complexities of love and longing. In "Les choses de la vie" Pierre's desire and regret is narrated in a series of flashbacks as he lies semi-conscious and fatally injured in the wreckage of his own car crash on a rural motorway. Based on a novel by Paul Guimard, the story is a patchwork of Pierre's memories of his entanglement with the two strikingly different women in his life, woven together with dream-like slow motion sequences of the car accident itself.

Kampmann's interest in Romy Schneider folds additional layers of sad longing into the fictional and filmic narratives that underpin the work. In Germany there is an enduring idolisation of Romy Schneider which draws breath from a complex mixture of her magnetic screen presence, the annual Christmas-time re-runs of the "Sissi" trilogy and the role that launched her career; and her poignant personal life and tragic end.

While art and life merge with compelling emotive and psychological energy here in the beautiful figure of the Austrian actress, it is a quality which the artist knows may not resonate so directly outside of Germany, Austria and France. Therefore in creating the painting initially for an Auckland audience, the artist knowingly entertains the possibility that the luminosity of the star's aura may be dulled in translation: foggy instead of bright; and in this it echoes the highway engineer's fading consciousness and fragmentary but haunting recollections. Kampmann's portrait circles around the uncertain relationships between longing and memory, love and abandonment, death and hope, distance and proximity.

OLGA CHERNYSHEVA

"The Train" 2003, B&W single-channel video, 7:30 minutes

The vast expanses of Russia make trains into more than means of transportation: instead, they become places of residence where singular forms of life unfold. In Olga Chernysheva's work, the inhabitation of trains gains its inner form from the economics of beggary and traveling trade with cheap goods and from the aesthetics of wandering musicians and rhapsodic poets.

The film's ethical mood is underlined by the "timeless" music of Mozart, which supplies the recognizable social texture of the image with an exalted well-temperedness, as if to tell the spectator: you don't have to hurry, you have already reached where you wanted to go to. For the duration of the journey, it is you who belong to this space and not it to you.

Chernysheva's train can be likened to a monad, whose movement through physical space (movement to...) runs opposite to the forces that supply it with its form. The camera moves from the tail of the train to its head wagon, while the train's inner forces (traders, beggars, rhapsodic poets) move in our direction. These forces are obviously recognizable as images of the past, coming toward us from the future. It is this sequence of image-memories from the future moving toward the spectator that construct what could be called the film's ethos, its ethical frame.

Olga Chernysheva (Moscow, Russia, 1962) is a contemporary artist who lives and works in Moscow. Her work spans film, photography, drawing and object-based mediums, where she draws on quotidian moments and marginal spaces from everyday life as a way of exploring the increasing fragmentation of master narratives in contemporary Russian culture.

Her films, photographs, paintings, drawings and object-based works lyrically investigate the fabric of individuality and self-sufficiency, and meditate upon the role of the artist in a time of flux. Chernysheva has a vital interest in the relations between object and figure, in particular in the ways that people and the spaces they inhabit seem often to co-exist uneasily. Her backgrounds with their fluctuating tonalities and psychological charge vie with her subjects for centre stage.

She holds a BA from the Moscow Cinema Academy, Moscow and an MA from the Rijksakademie Van Beeldende Kunsten, Amsterdam.

Selected exhibitions include: Deichtorhallen, Hamburg, Germany (2011-2012); Ludwig Muzeum, Budapest, Hungary; Kunstverein Nuernberg, Germany; Ostalgia, New Museum, New York; Modernikon. La Casa dei Tre Oci, Venice; Musée Du Louvre, Paris; BAK, Utrecht, The Netherlands (solo) (all 2011); Berlin Biennial; National Museum, Cardiff, Wales (both 2010); International Center of Photography Triennial, New York; Baibakov Art Projects, Moscow Biennial (solo) (all 2009);



MoMA, New York (solo screening); Lunds Konsthall, Sweden (two-person) (both 2008); Stella Art Foundation, Moscow (solo) (2006 & 2005); Biennale of Sydney; Solomon R Guggenheim Museum, New York (both 2005); and the Russian Pavilion, 49th Venice Biennale (2001).

Her work is held in major collections worldwide, including Museum of Modern Art, New York; Louis Vuitton Foundation for Creation, Paris; Russian Museum, St. Petersburg; Russian Ministry of Culture, Moscow; Nasher Museum of Art, Duke University; Ludwig Forum fur Internationale Kunst, Aachen, Germany; The National Museum of Art, Architecture and Design, Oslo; NBK, Berlin, Germany; Victoria & Albert Museum, London; Moscow Museum of Modern Art; TATE Modern, London. She is represented by Foxy Production in New York and DIEHL in Berlin.



A noisy crowd of neighbours enters the room
Breaking the silence,

GEORGANNE DEEN

"A Spin in the Teacups (is a Must)" 2011, oil and graphite on rayon moiré,
406 x 508 mm

Eckhart Tolle states that we liberate vast amounts of consciousness, previously trapped in compulsive thinking, by becoming fully present and connected to the animating presence within us. Reporting on the depths and heights of consciousness has been a constant project for Deen, one that doesn't lend itself to formulas or processes. The results can be painstaking, messy affairs but they convey experiences charged with splendor and turmoil.

Ruminating upon the animating presence led me to draw and paint animals. I found that when I placed them in special relationships with women it had a very calming effect upon me, filling me with the neurochemicals from which we derive a sense of contentment. The choice of colours, application of paint, the setting and other purely decorative decisions further enhanced this experience.

In an era where two of the most lucrative businesses in which to invest are legal and illegal drugs, the desire to find inner peace through subtle attention and observation of the natural world, within and around me, brought forth a series of paintings I called "The Love That Has No Opposite." The title of this piece "A Spin in the Teacups is a Must" is borrowed from a vintage Disneyland Brochure.

Born in Fort Worth Texas, Deen wrote poetry and prose from an early age with a Goya-esque eye for subjects deemed inviolable in polite society. At East Texas State University she belonged to a group of artists devoted to the experimental narrative, which included underground comics and their incendiary, highly nuanced documentation of human nature. In 1980 Deen moved to Los Angeles to attend the California Institute of the Arts where the rich trappings of the California lifestyle coalesced with her own distinctive visual sensibilities to form a vocabulary that is both intimate and deliberately universal.

Deen has had solo exhibitions at The Power Plant, Toronto; The MAC, Dallas; The Dunedin public Art Gallery, New Zealand; Van Horn, Duesseldorf; Smith-Stewart, New York; and Christopher Grimes, Santa Monica. Group exhibitions include LA County Museum of Art; The Drawing Center, New York; ENTWISTLE, London; The Aldrich Museum, Connecticut; Museum for Contemporary Art, New Orleans; Mary Boone, New York; and Villa Merkel, Esslingen, Germany. She lives in Joshua Tree, California.



CÉCILE B. EVANS

"Straight Up" 2011, single-channel HD video, 7 minutes

In "Straight Up" the artist performs an interpretive sign language version of Paula Abdul's 1988 number one single of the same name. It is, at first glance, an unencumbered cover of Pina Bausch's "Nelken" (1982), in which a man spells out Gershwin's "The Man I Love" in sign language as the soundtrack plays in the background, progressively picking up speed. Over the course of "Straight Up," however, choreography begins to deteriorate, becoming less precise, and more organic. As the piece progresses, a series of glittery After Effects is implemented onto the composition, mirroring – or perhaps, parodying – the artist's increasingly visibly compromised condition. This use of sign language represents a reference to a method acting technique in which a given performer is given an objective to complete in order to somehow call attention to and enhance an emotional or altered state. Here, the artist's intoxication presents an obstacle to the interpretive task at hand, and the boundaries between emotional and physical impairment are thereby blurred. Abdul's score is meanwhile replaced by an adaptation composed by singer and pop-songwriter Mati Gavriel, adding an additional, disorienting frame of removal between the visual and the aural, the mental and the physical, and the dramatic and the real. By the end, all the elements seem to hang naturally in the same frame, no single reference outweighing the other.

Cécile B. Evans is a Belgian American artist based in Berlin. Her work explores the way emotions are valued in contemporary society. Recent exhibitions have included Spencer Brownstone Gallery (New York, Solo), Bergen Art Museum (Norway), 319 Scholes (New York), and ReMap3 (Athens). Upcoming projects include the premiere of "Trilogy" at PAMI w Son Gallery (London), "How to Eclipse the Light" at Wilkinson Gallery (group, London), a performance at Palais de Tokyo (Paris), and a residency at CCA Andratx (Majorca). Evans is this year's recipient of the Emdash Award for Frieze Art Fair and is currently in residency at Gasworks in London.

www.cecilebevans.com



ROBBIE FRASER

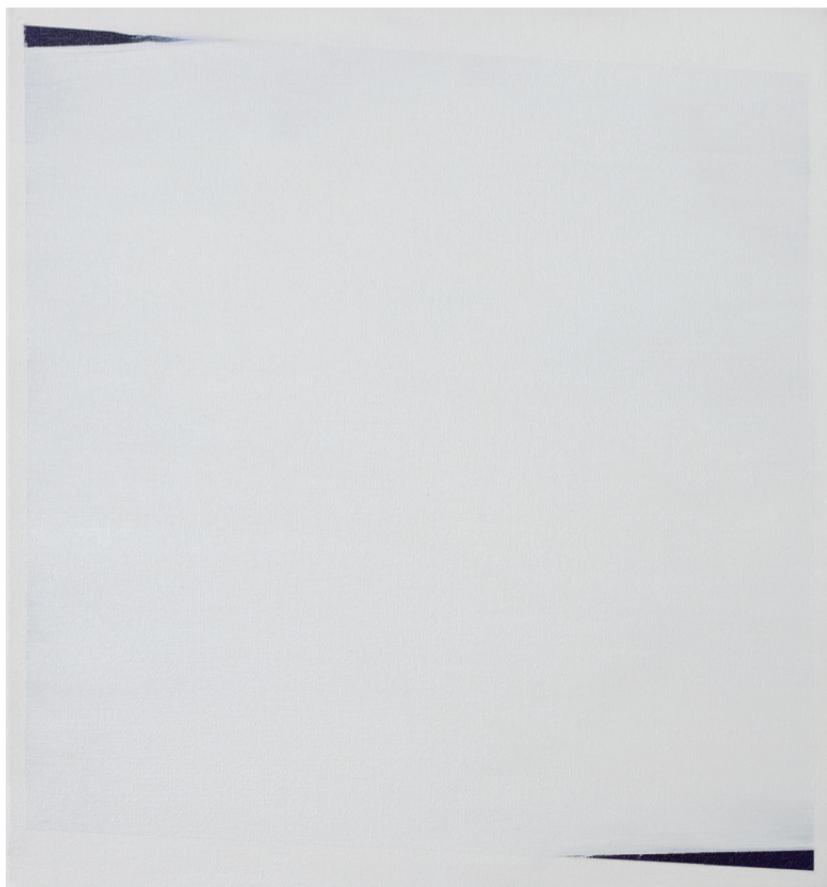
"_" 2010, oil on canvas, 352 x 375 mm

"Paralysis" 2012, oil on canvas, 1000 x 1000 mm

"Internationally International" 2012, oil on canvas, 610 x 610 mm

Robbie Fraser's practice is about colour and shape and harmony – not the articulation of untroublesome relationships, but an exploration of what happens when these relations miss the mark; get difficult. This work insists on stopping short of expectation, insists on slipping from propriety – not as a declaration of perversity that sets out to fuck things up, but more as a probing of boundaries and a critical examination of rectitude itself. It draws up close to fine-tuned beauty, but at the last moment shies away from the anesthetic affect of complacent aesthetics, and turns towards the more enlivening sensation of discomfort. What happens when things get a little disorientated, even nauseous? What happens when harmony plays with dissonance, or when purity turns – starts to curdle or cloy? What happens when colour's singing takes on a hard aspect, or when its hosting shape goes out of whack? In taking a look back, this work throws a very different perspective on its heritage.

Robbie Fraser was born in 1979, Auckland, New Zealand and is currently studying at AUT for his Master of Art and Design in Visual Arts. He has exhibited in the group exhibitions "SNO 66: Far Point" (2010) at SNO Gallery, Sydney; "Oh Brian/Serious Face" (2011) at St Paul St Gallery, Auckland; "Field Essays" (2011) an exhibition curated by Andy Gomez, Michelle Beattie and Yolunda Hickman at a pop up space in Auckland; and "Expatriate Consolation Relations" (2012), also a pop up exhibition curated by Sophie Bannan and Bridget Riggir in Melbourne in association with Window Gallery, Auckland. He is also involved with FERARI, an artist's run space in Grey Lynn, Auckland. Fraser lives and works in Auckland, New Zealand.







GRANT GALLAGHER

"The Birth of Aphrodite" 2012, found wooden side-tables, sea shells and coral, 1620 x 530 x 290 mm

"You're only as pretty as you feel" (series title) 1999-2002, wood, dimensions variable, 12 sculptures from 1500 mm to 2540 mm (height)

I've been making things for as long as I can remember. From the beginning, what has fascinated me most is the process of taking pre-formed materials and found objects and transforming them through the methods of disassembly and reassembly into something else. My goal is to create works with presence, authority and mystery.

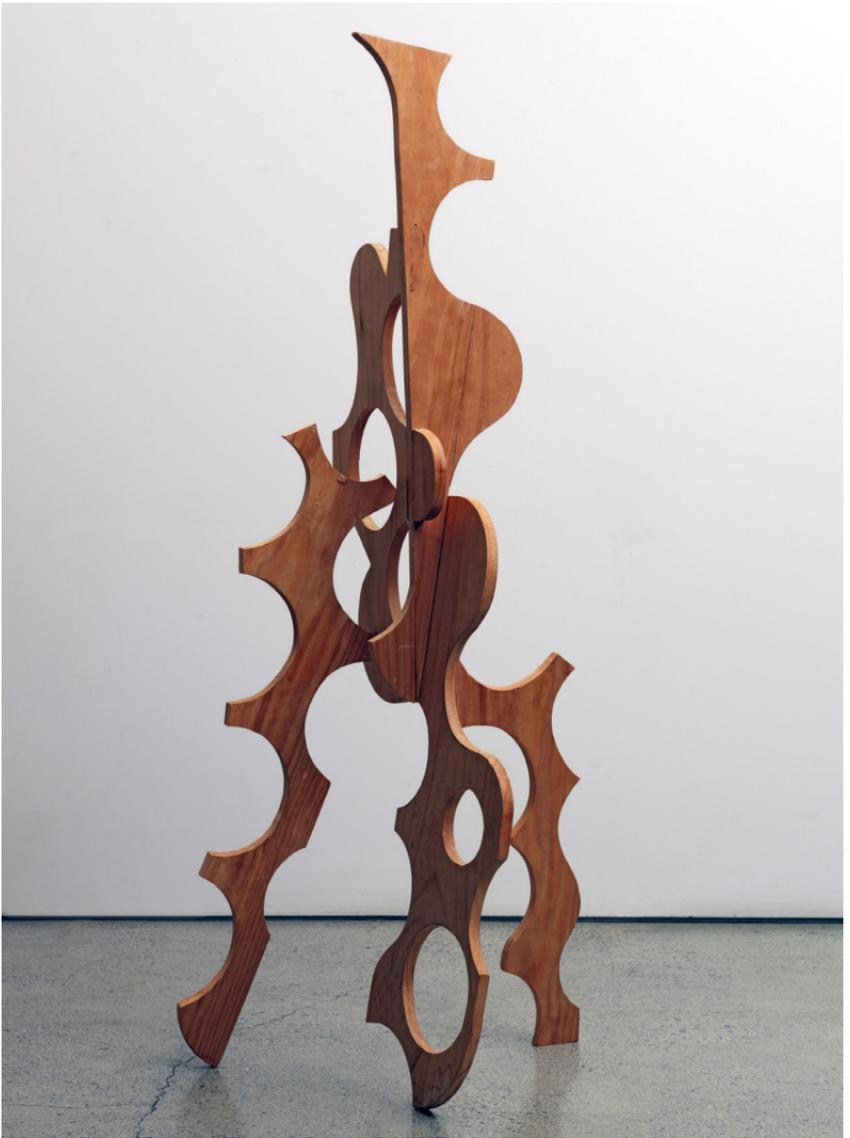
The suite of twelve wooden sculptures titled "You're only as pretty as you feel" made between 1999 and 2002 originated with a desire to transform very straightforward and rough building materials. In this case I chose fence palings and boxing timber, to create new forms with a beauty and presence not normally associated with such materials. As the series progressed, the works evolved from being quite box-like and totemic into more free-form objects, which echo the influence of Ernst Haeckel illustrations and the works of American sculptor David Smith.

"The Birth of Aphrodite" (2012) represents the more recent tenor of my work. Currently three strands of interest are informing my making: the myth of The Birth of Aphrodite; Cabinets of Curiosities; and Venetian grotto furniture. All three influences are evident in the new assemblage of readymade nesting tables and shells in "Lost in a dream." The mythic birth of Aphrodite came about when Uranus was castrated by Cronus; and the Goddess of Love, Beauty and Sexuality rose up from the roiling sea foam generated when Uranus' severed genitals were thrown into the ocean. The sculpture employs the over-embellished surface treatment of Venetian grotto furniture and suggests the ascendant birth of the Goddess by stacking the tables and topping them with a large, encrusted sea shell.

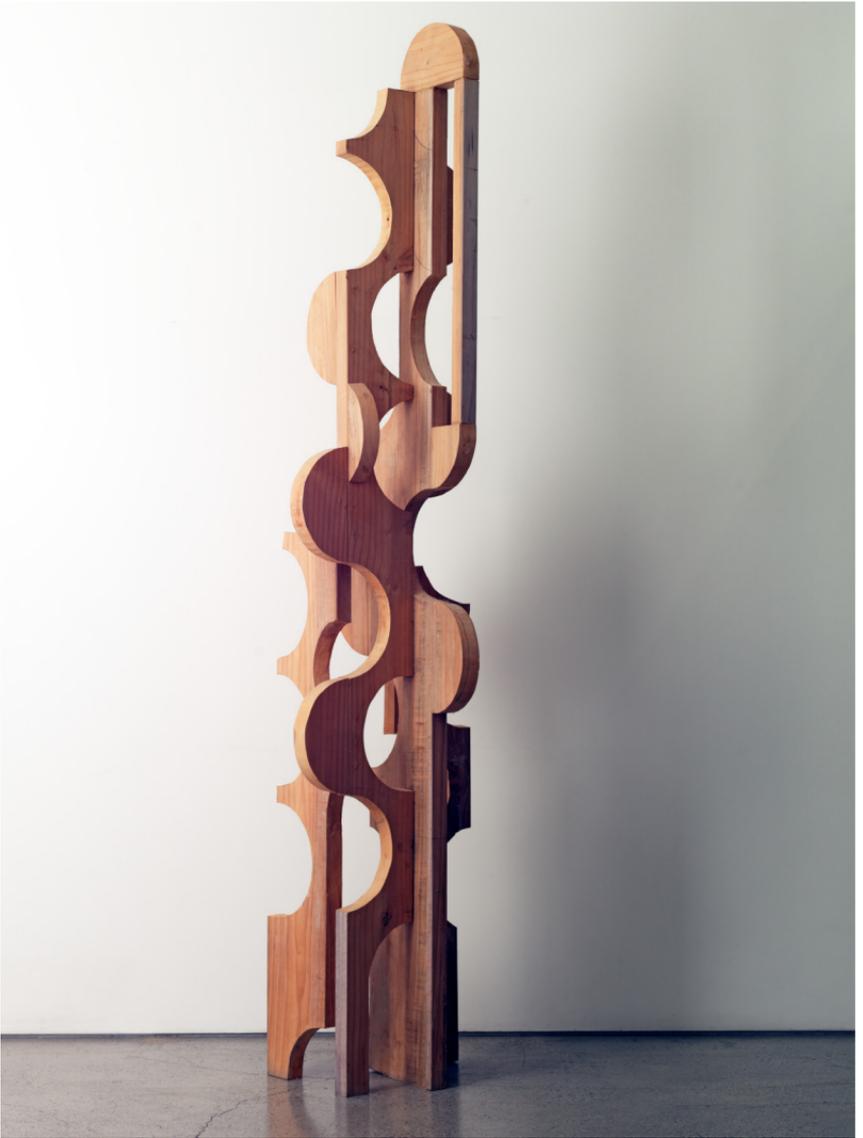
Grant Gallagher was born in Christchurch (1954) and lives and works in Auckland, New Zealand. Primarily self-taught although he did attend Ilam, School of Fine Arts at Canterbury University for one year, Gallagher has worked in the advertising and publishing industries as an art director and creative director for the past thirty years. He has maintained his art practice throughout these years but has only exhibited rarely; in 1984 at Red Metro Gallery, Dunedin; and in 2011 at ARTIS / OCULA Galleries, Auckland. His "Lost in a dream" showing marks the first curated presentation of his sculptures.











EMMA GARRETT

"Gumboot Dancer" 2012, gesso and acrylic on card, 870 x 1565 mm

Gumboot dancing draws on the tradition of miners in South Africa who wore bells on their gumboots and stomped to communicate with one another in the mines. "Gumboot Dancer" is from a series of large painted sketches in which I've been interested in working on the play between figure and ground; and in some paintings making the ground more prominent to counteract the way the figure usually seems to dominate. I'm searching for a particular stage where things are just on the verge of coming together; and I'm drawn to this state of incompleteness or ambiguity.

Emma Garrett is a Dunedin-based artist completing her undergraduate degree at the Dunedin School of Art, Otago Polytechnic, New Zealand.



NATHAN GRAY

"From the bottom of a long black tube" 2010-11, single-channel video, 4:38 minutes

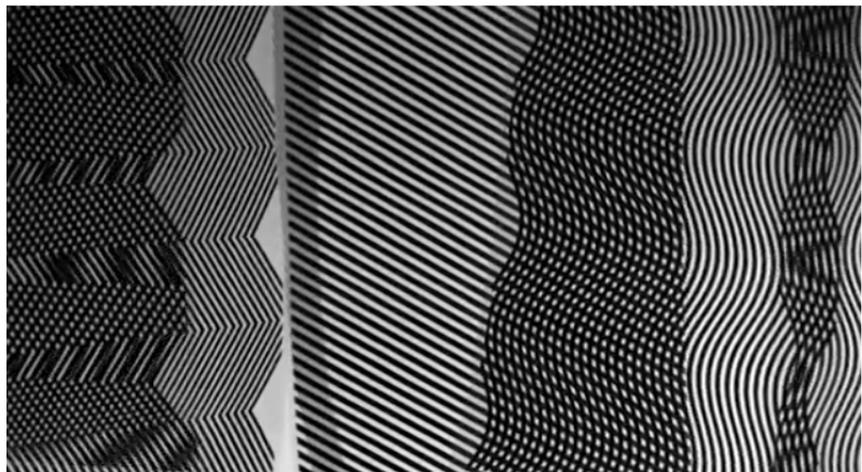
Nathan Gray's video "From the bottom of a long black tube" (2010-11) was first shown as part of his project exhibition "In the year 2525" at Utopian Slumps, Melbourne in 2011. The body of work for "In the year 2525" presented a time capsule of our mortal failings, something to take into an immortal future. In this installation, Gray explored the Moiré effect (an optical effect created by the over layering of two sets of grids at differing angles) as a strategy for foregrounding perception and its limitations, limitations set to be overcome in future decades.

"In the year 2525" was inspired by the writings and predictions of futurist/entrepreneur Ray Kurzweil and social critic/terrorist Theodore Kaczynski (the Una Bomber) both of whom predict that we are inexorably approaching a period of technological growth so rapid that it will radically alter humanity, making humans hyper intelligent, effectively immortal and indistinguishable from their technology. The two have vastly different interpretations of this event; Kurzweil is actively promoting the technological changes and life extension techniques proposed by this prediction, whilst Kaczynski is serving life in prison for his campaign of bombings against science intellectuals with similar interests to Kurzweil in an attempt to stop these predicted changes.

Nathan Gray is an artist and experimental musician whose work is often characterised by its utopian or optimistic tones, and its dynamic physical structure. His exhibitions are almost always interactive, utilising viewer participation to help shape the work.

Gray completed a Bachelor of Arts (Fine Art) at Curtin University, Perth in 1994 and a Postgraduate Diploma in Electronic Design and Interactive Media at RMIT, Melbourne in 2002. Selected solo exhibitions include "Spectral Light and Pressure Changes," Mt Kity, Melbourne, 2011; "In the year 2525," Utopian Slumps, Melbourne, 2011; "What they brought back," Ryan Renshaw Gallery, Brisbane, 2010; "Gertrude Contemporary Project Space," Melbourne Art Fair, 2010; "Attack Decay Sustain Release," Craft Victoria, Melbourne 2009; "An Infinity of Traces," studio 12, Gertrude Contemporary Art Spaces, Melbourne, 2009; "Secretion Erosion Conjunction" (with Alex Vivian), Rear View, Melbourne, 2009; "Tudo Que Acho/ Everything I Think," The Narrows, Melbourne, 2008; "Quem Ao Viu O Vento," Escola Dos Belos Artes, Salvador, Brazil; 2008; "The Fruiting Body," Black and Blue, Sydney, 2008; "Untitled Installation," Mirka @ Tolarno for ACCA, Melbourne, 2007; "Love, Purity, Accuracy," Utopian Slumps, Melbourne, 2007; "The Fold," Joint Has-sles, Melbourne, 2007; "Terrarium," Gertrude Contemporary Art Spaces, Melbourne 2006; and "New Work," Bus, Melbourne 2005.

Gray completed a studio residency at Gertrude Contemporary from 2008 to 2010 and a residency at the Sacatar Foundation in Bahia, Brazil in 2008. He is a member of the improvised electro acoustic group Snawklor and band The French.



PAUL HARTIGAN

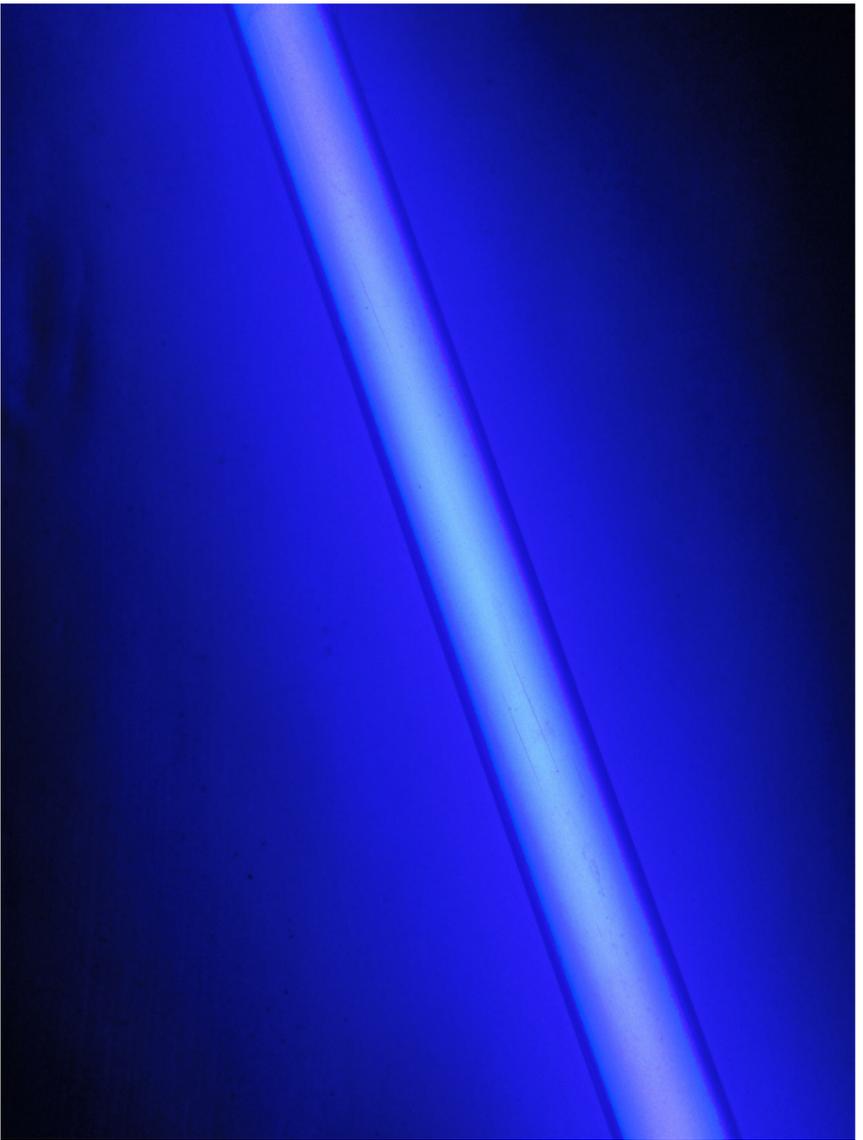
“STRIP HOUSE” – (Indigo Lane) 2012, neon, dimensions variable
(site specific installation)

For “Strip House” I have chosen recycled blue and red neon to illuminate and delineate a given space – this, formally a retail display area on High Street.

A single blood-red neon strip is juxtaposed against a larger group of dark-blue tubes inside the larger of two glass enclosures. Here the ebb and flow of static and pulsing blue elements achieve greater dimensionality and multiplicity through surface reflection aligned with ramping light.

The expected becomes skewed, perception is dislocated and the unfamiliar subsumes the anticipated. Transition, transgression and transformation of elements – these are constant preoccupations for me – this is my quest.

Auckland-based contemporary artist Paul Hartigan works predominantly in neon, although he also produces paintings, photographs and prints within his diversity of practice. With an artistic career spanning over forty years, Hartigan’s refusal to conform to popular trends, his quirky sense of humour and his mastery of an assorted range of media ensure that he continues to hold a central place in the New Zealand art scene. Hartigan’s progressive attitude can be traced back to his early days as an art student in the 1970s. At a time when regionalism reigned supreme, Hartigan’s internationalist outlook saw him choosing to align himself with the forerunners of the American and British Pop movement. Hartigan’s current work continues to push boundaries and challenge conceptions of both society and self in a visually arresting and timeless fashion.



ALEXANDER ILIN

"19" 2011, a suite of nineteen photographs; pigment ink on archival paper; foam core base, 420 x 600 mm (each / edition of 2)

Alexander Ilin has chosen to investigate the cultural legacy of the phenomena of the former Soviet Union of segregating the mentally ill from the healthy. One of the results being that many people nowadays are unsure how to relate to the mentally ill in their midst as they do others.

In project "19" Ilin presents 19 portraits where neither names nor diagnoses are presented. Nothing in the image refers to the social or health status of the individual. Who is mentally ill, and who is well? For the viewer, this question may be of no importance; but this project was created in Moscow in 2011, and in that context this absence of information creates a loaded situation for the audience because it challenges viewers to relate to each portrait as if they were standing before a person in everyday life. What would their attitude be? Ilin asks "Where is the border between mental illness and mental health? With whom to associate oneself?" He believes "that the time has come to move the equilibrium point."

The project took place in a psychoneurological nursing home located within the walls of a monastery; or conversely we could say that it took place in a monastery which was located in the territory of a psychoneurological nursing home. It is the Autumn of 2011 in Russia. In this place, clinically diagnosed mentally ill people live side by side with the brethren of the monastery. All share together in prayers, daily labours, everyday life routines, and each other's otherness. In the Russian context this constitutes an astonishing commonality; where the border line is only drawn by the diagnosis.

Project "19" shows nineteen souls; some are under the doctor's care and security control; others live on their own within the nursing home. Nineteen portraits with no names, no diagnoses or other personal data revealed. Is it a prison? A temporary asylum? No, it is their home; they will not have another one. It is a home chosen freely by some; whereas others were taken there by the power of state psychiatrists, because of their illnesses.

Alexander Ilin is further interested by the fact that photography has attracted the attention of psychiatrists since its advent as a quick and reliable method for capturing symptoms of mental illness. Portraits have been used in scientific texts, educational literature and medical files. Photography, being a research tool, has helped psychiatry to turn psychiatry into a science.

Ilin's project "19" sets out a new proposition in the Russian context. He suggests that viewers of these nineteen portraits look at the mentally ill as people with immortal souls, human dignity, their own feelings and ideas. Even if theirs may differ from the feelings and ideas of 'healthy' people. The author suggests that we see their personalities. Posing for portraits with their neighbour brethren, they face the camera together. It is for the visitor to decide who they see: a mentally ill or a sane person. Should we make this decision at all?



Whose portrait is that? Who is mentally ill, and who is sane? Who is worthy of respect, love and hope? Shall we divide these people into groups or shall we accept them all? Do we choose to be prejudiced or accepting? Who are we, and who are they?

Alexander Ilin was born in Moscow in 1977 and is a graduate of the Moscow State University of Civil Engineering and the Academy of Photography, Moscow. He is an accomplished photographer with an extensive portfolio of self-generated projects; and fashion and commercial assignments for magazines, advertisement campaigns and public organizations. He has done photography projects for Condé Nast Russia, Vogue Russia, Harper's Bazaar Russia, BBDO ME, GQ Russia, PH Commercant, Madame Figaro, Gabilo Jewellery and Carrera y Carrera. He has also exhibited in Moscow and Berlin.







KARTRIN KAMPMANN

"Solaris" 2012, watercolour and shellac on paper; 610 x 460 mm

"Do, do you love me?" 2012, watercolour, acrylic, shellac and spray-paint on paper; 610 x 460 mm

"You are so hard to read" 2012, watercolour, acrylic, shellac and spray-paint on paper; 610 x 460 mm

In Kampmann's painting, the layering of colours and forms corresponds with a multiplicity of possible meanings and a relative semantic openness, which enables the viewer to understand that nothing is one-dimensional and that we shouldn't limit our understanding of an object or experience to a singular interpretation.

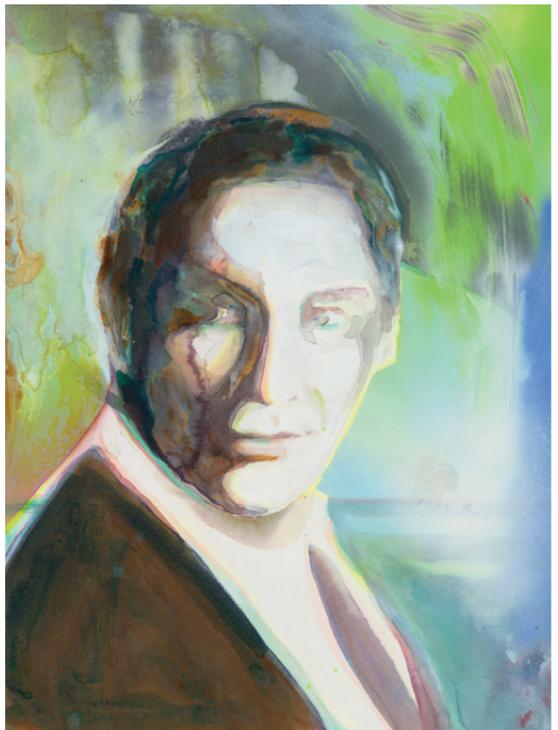
The artist's three works here deal with the idea that love depends on a willingness to believe in it, to be drawn into its moment; but ultimately also to be drawn into questions about the future. In these aspects Kampmann responds to a theme that is common to her three sources: Paula Abdul's song "Straight Up," Stanislaw Lem's novel "Solaris" and Claude Sautet's film "Les choses de la vie." In all three, a fantasizing and possessive love is accompanied by feelings of mistrust and the fear of being bound to something that won't last forever.

"Solaris" is a portrait of Rheya, the enigmatic woman from the Polish writer Stanislaw Lem's 1961 novel of the same name; which was also made into movies of the same title by Andrei Tarkovsky (1972) and Steven Soderbergh (2002). The novel's protagonist Dr Kris Kelvin arrives at a space station hovering above the ocean shrouded planet Solaris only to come under the ocean's ability, in response to the human scientist's aggressive experiments, to expose the deeper, hidden aspects of the personalities of the scientists. Kelvin finds himself confronted with a chimera from his past: Rheya, his wife who had killed herself a long time previously. At first he is suspicious and resists the chimera, neither trusting the woman nor his own mind which he believes to be playing tricks on him. But then he reaches a point where he no longer cares to resolve the psychological conflict. They begin to make plans to leave the station together and start a new life on Earth; while at the same time knowing that this dream will never come true.

The truth of love is also a theme in the portraits "Do, do you love me" and "You are so hard to read" which were created especially for the exhibition "Lost in a dream." Kampmann's titles, like the title of the exhibition, are borrowed from Paula Abdul's 1988 number one hit single "Straight Up." The portraits show characters from Claude Sautet's 1970 film "The things of life" (*Les choses de la vie*) in which the protagonists, a man and his free-spirited mistress, fight as they drive home together after a dinner party. The female character, H el ene, played by Romy Schneider; lost in her own thoughts and images about love and how the love between them could be, provokes her lover to create an argument between them because she wants him to tell her that he loves her. Meanwhile Pierre, played by Michel Piccoli, doesn't want to fight and discovers that, despite having written a letter to end the relationship, he wants to marry her after all. The portraits capture the moment and attitude of being lost in their own conflicted thoughts and desires. It is a moment of paradoxical disconnection and togetherness. The titles borrow from Abdul's lyrics the expressions that best mirrors each person's state of mind.



Katrin Kampmann lives and works in Berlin. She studied painting at the UdK (University of Arts, Berlin) in the class of Professor: K. H. Hödicke; and in 2006 she graduated with the "best student" award. Since graduating Kampmann has had solo shows Wiesbaden, München, Berlin, Dresden and Ludwigsburg (Germany); Beverly Hills (USA); Wien (Austria); Seoul (Korea); and Milan (Italy). She has also been included in group shows at the Museum of Art, Wuhan (China); in the Bienal de Cerveira (Portugal); and in various Kunsthallen and Galleries in Germany. Her work is held in various museums, public and private collections including Deichtorhallen (Hamburg); De Knecht (Amsterdam); Grothe (Duisburg); and Sperling (Mainburg).



ANASTASIA KLOSE

"True Love" 2009, DVD single channel video, 4:17 minutes; (Music: "He ain't heavy, he's my brother" written by Bobby Scott and Bob Russell and performed by The Hollies, Epic, 1969)

I was just mucking around taking footage in the backyard of myself and Bean, the cat. I found the footage very beautiful, because of the long grass, and slowing it down made it very peaceful and sweet. The music is very famous and iconic, and the lyrics were originally lifted from a prayer written for an orphaned boys' home. The sentiments expressed in the song are deeply moral (Christian) in tone, yet they seem to match how I feel about Bean, that I will always take care of him, that he will always be there for me, not a 'burden' but quite the opposite. The sweet and uncomplicated love of a pet is one of the things you can really rely on, when everything else falls apart/changes. This is valuable and important for many.

My subject matter, 'embarrassing' as it may be, is my attempt at telling the truth – my truth ... If I look stupid as a result, well that's neither here nor there. For me, the experience of giving form to the uncomfortable facts of my life in poetry, writing or video, is profound.

Born in Melbourne, Anastasia Klose came to art after studying Philosophy and English at University of Melbourne and painting and sculpture at the Victorian College of the Arts. Her exhibition debut in 2007 was in "NEW 07" at the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne; and her first solo exhibition was in 2009 at Tolarno Galleries, Melbourne. Other exhibitions include: the 2008 Biennale of Sydney (which screened her video "Rollerskating at ACCA"); "New Millennium" at Lismore Regional Gallery (2008); "Feminism Never Happened," Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane (2010); "Australian Women Contemporary," GOMA, Brisbane (2012); "AIVA Ängelholm International Video Art Festival," Sweden (2012) curator Rob Garrett; and "Primavera 2012," MCA, Sydney (October 2012).



VIRGINIE MOSSÉ

"After KDF and the other" from the series "Wie Du Dir so Ich Mir" 2009, colour reproduction and paper cut-out, 297 x 420 mm

"Netz" from the series "Wie Du Dir so Ich Mir" 2009, colour reproduction and paper cut-out, 297 x 420 mm

"Schein und Sein scheint zu Sein" from the series "Wie Du Dir so Ich Mir" 2009, colour reproduction and paper cut-out, 210 x 297 mm

"Nebulat ergo cogito" from the series "Wie Du Dir so Ich Mir" 2009, colour reproduction and paper cut-out, 297 x 420 mm

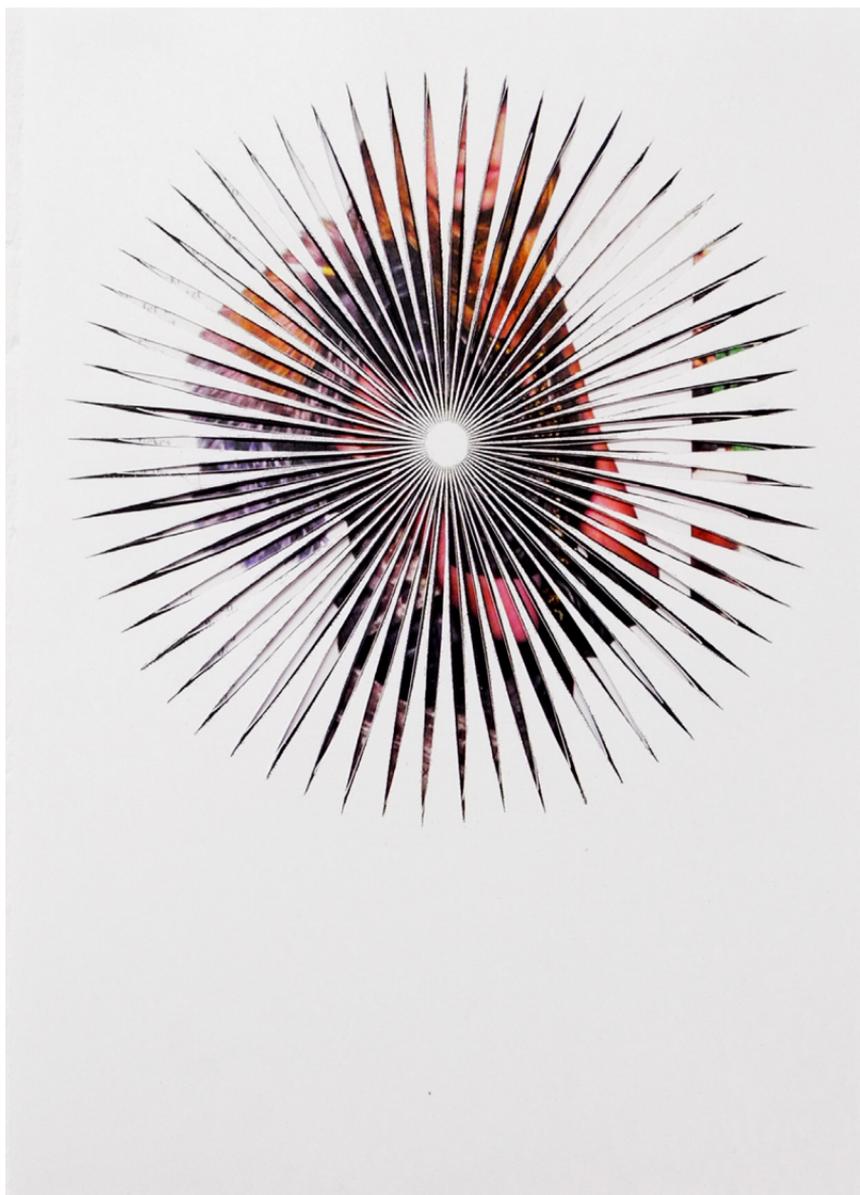
"Wie Du Dir so Ich Mir" (Tit for Tat) is conceived as a series of paintings without paint. These paper works from 2009 consist of a superposition of two sheets of paper: The first one is a colour print relating to an event from the real world (usually a found image from newspapers), such as relating to disasters, the military, poverty, fashion, the weather, politics, or old paintings. Each is chosen because it seems representative in some way of contemporary life. On top of this coloured reproduction lies a white sheet of paper with a cut-out star motive radiating from the middle that produces an optic or a disturbing effect.

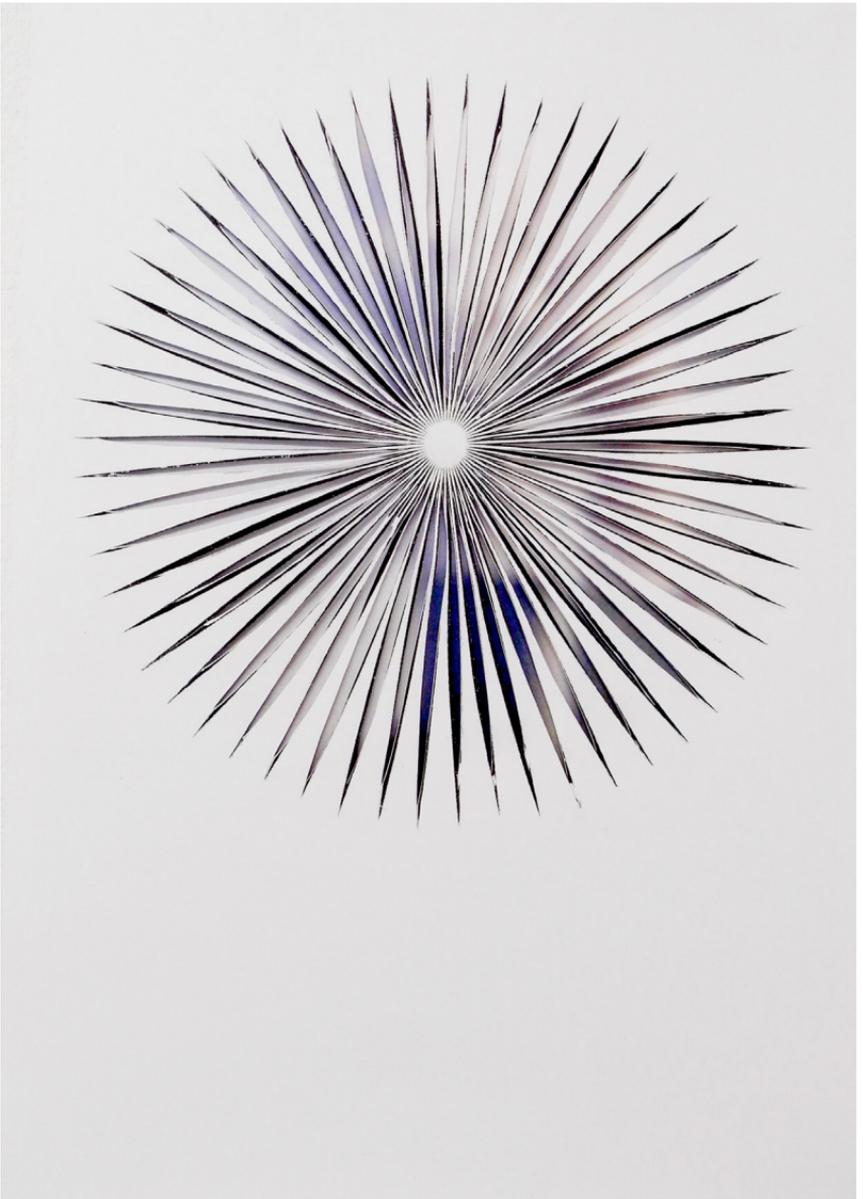
"Wie Du Dir so Ich Mir" is part of a wider interest in definitions of the truth in the media world today. This includes how messages reach us; how we come to understand what is definitive or truthful within those messages; and the ways we decipher and perceive reality relative to the apparent truthfulness of mass media forms and messages. The series also sets out to question the tradition of painting with its aesthetic that at first glance looks like drip or splash painting. But then we discover that the colour we see is under the surface; and perceiving the three-dimensional aspect we may be drawn into a conscious game of trying to decipher what lies beneath by the fragments and patterns that appear through the cut slits. Hopefully this game of deciphering also causes us to reflect on the tensions between surface and depth, superficiality and analysis, appearances and truth, in all representation and perception.

Virginie Mossé was born in France in 1977 and now lives and works in Berlin, Germany. She completed her studies in France at the école des Beaux arts de Quimper in 2002 and then undertook postgraduate studies in the Akademie der bildenden Künste Karlsruhe, Germany. Since graduating in 2004 she has exhibited in solo, curated and group shows in Germany and Switzerland: Galerie White Trash Contemporary (Hamburg), Gängeviertel (Hamburg), Kreuzberg Pavilion (Berlin), Künstlerhaus Sootbörn (Hamburg), Kunstverein Linda ev (Hamburg), Skam Ausstellungsraum (Hamburg), neuer Kunstverein Wuppertal, Galerie Tinderbox (Hamburg), Kunsthalle Basel, Gesellschaft für Kunst und Gestaltung (Bonn) and Badischer Kunstverein (Karlsruhe).









ANNA NORDQUIST ANDERSSON

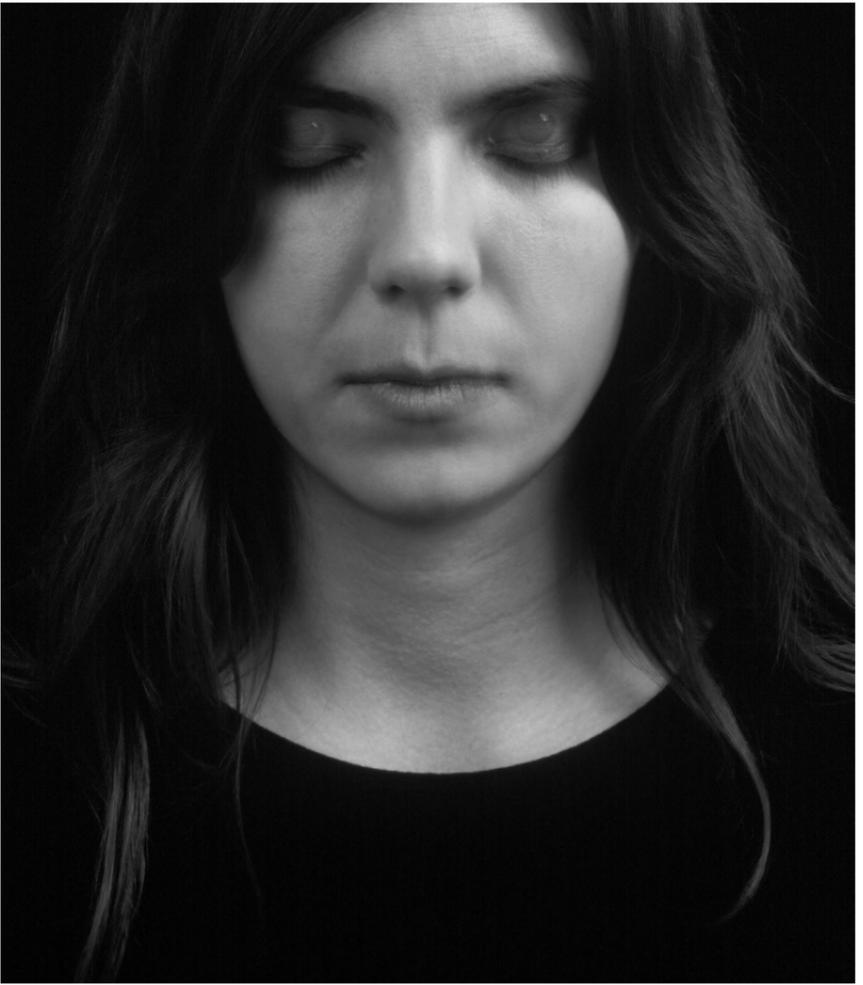
"The Hypnagogic / Den Hypnagoga" 2008, Black and White Photography / Svartvitt fotografi, 650 x 750 mm

Our modern word 'perspective' has two roots: prospicere, to look ahead, and perspicere, to see through. For Renaissance theorists these terms were, if not synonymous, then at least fundamentally connected: the forward-directed visual ray, which meets the picture plane at a right angle, also penetrates through it, entering into an imaginary space in which the painting's "(h)istoria" is located, as the first perspective theorist, Alberti, says in his "On Painting." The gaze seems to dominate the space, to take possession of it, and thus to anticipate modern thinking on the subject, but, precisely because of the possibilities inherent in the new perspective techniques, it would soon also be subjected to a variety of artistic attacks that led it to becoming lost in the visual space, as in the skewed planes of anamorphosis and the vertigo of the Baroque infinity, where we find a staging of a "Madness of Vision". [Extract from Sven-Olov Wallenstein's catalogue text "Seeing Through" on Anna Nordquist Andersson.]

Anna Nordquist Andersson, born 1976 in Malmö, lives and works in Malmö, Sweden. From 1997 to 2002 she undertook a Master of Fine Arts at Malmö Art Academy, Sweden.

Selected Solo Exhibitions: Peter Lav Gallery Copenhagen 2012; Elastic Gallery Malmö 2012, 2009 and 2005; Ystad Art Museum 2003, Sweden; and MA Show, Peep Gallery, Malmö.

Selected Group Exhibitions: DEJA VU, Åbo Art Museum, Finland 2012; "Perspectives On Black & White," Peter Lav Gallery, Copenhagen, 2011; "Objektiver; Skulpturi.dk," Copenhagen, 2011; "In Real Life," Capricious Space, Brooklyn, New York, 2009; "Facades," Krannert Art Museum, Urbana-Champaign, Illinois, 2007; LISTE, Elastic Gallery, Basel, 2007; "Diorama: skywatchers," Coleman Projects, London, 2007; and Gallery Loop, Berlin, 2005.



ANDRÉ SAMPSON

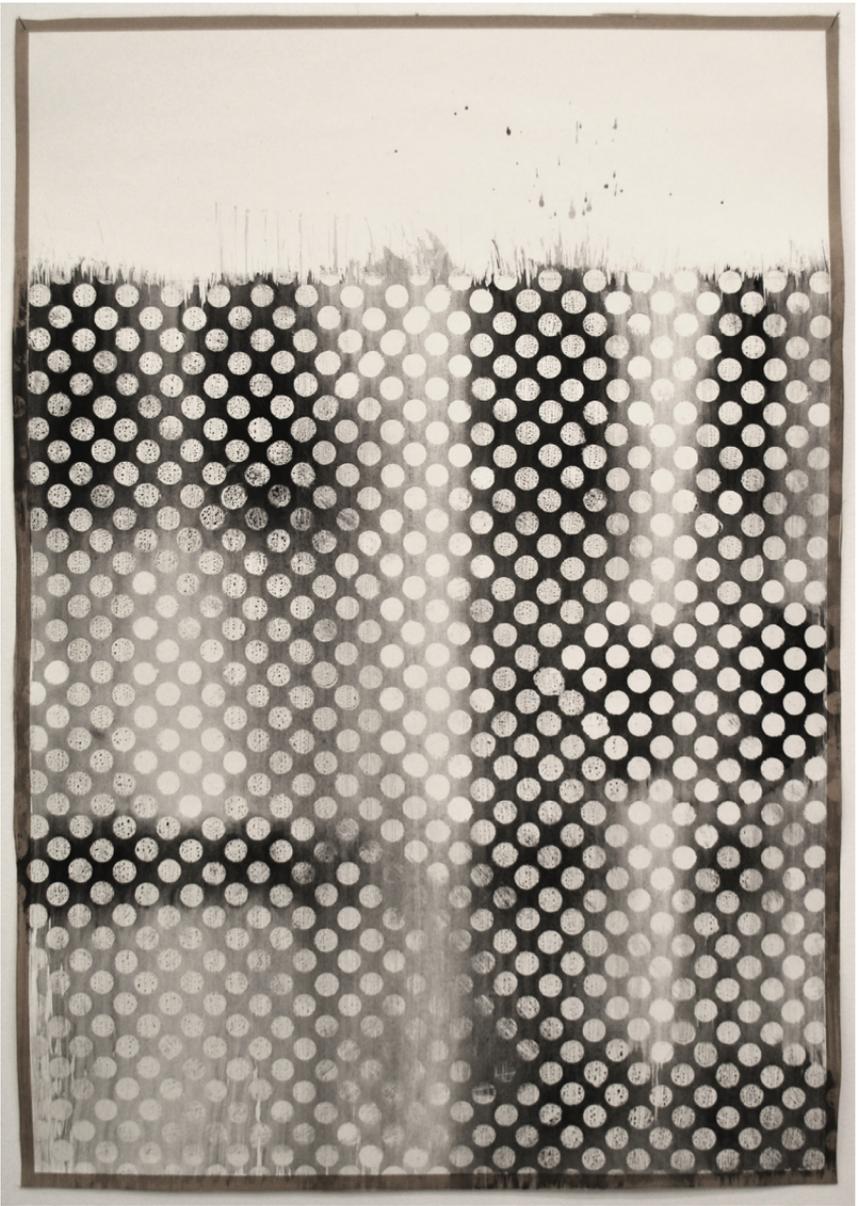
"xxiii" 2012, watercolour on Britannia 300gsm, 1000 x 700 mm

Sampson's practice investigates the roll of contemporary painting and printmaking from the point of view that it is a radical act to gain the viewer's attention, and to hold it for as long as possible in an image-saturated culture. She is interested in fracturing the viewing experience by collapsing visual patterns and rhythms that arise in the work during its construction.

By bringing together the languages of visual communication from the fields of art history, illustration and contemporary advertising media, Sampson aims to arrive at a place within each work where it becomes its own distinct fact. Works are developed separately, following an individual visual logic.

Stylistic inconsistencies are deliberately engaged in order to provide an opportunity for intense examination of the tensions that arise where varying modes of communication meet, thus extending the duration of initial impression. Development of affecting tensions arise through the interplay between spontaneity and calculated development; loose gesture and rigid form; fore-ground and back-ground; an interplay between positive and negative space, stillness and speed, and noise and silence; and planes of tone and texture jostle for attention.

André Sampson was born in Timaru, New Zealand in 1970, and raised around the South Island. She lives and works in Auckland, New Zealand. Sampson began her Fine Arts education at the University of Canterbury in 1988. In 1993 she completed a Diploma of Design at UNITEC in Auckland; and in 2011 graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Arts (Honours) from Elam School of Fine Arts, University of Auckland. In 2004 Sampson was selected for inclusion in Code NZ at Canvas International in the Netherlands; and was the winner of the 2012 Henrietta and Lola Anne Tunbridge Watercolour Scholarship award. Her work is held in the Canvas International collection and the Wallace Trust Collection, Auckland. She is currently studying towards a Masters of Fine Arts at Elam, School of Fine Arts, at the University of Auckland.



BOX / SIMON GRIGG

It was about three months after we'd bought the place.

Tom and I were skulking around one Saturday afternoon, exploring the recesses of the creaky old space we'd acquired from the former owners of what was once Club Mirage – the only high end, late night, champagne fuelled private members club in Auckland until the stock market crash of October '87 wiped it all away in a flash.

For the first few months we'd mostly just been overwhelmed by the mad rush of kids – and older – flowing down the stairs from the day we re-opened it as The Siren, and we'd not had a moment to take much else in.

It was an almost overwhelming warren: there were rooms everywhere out the back, many rammed with the debris that 20 years of club-dom leaves (the club was opened in the 1970s by Fay and Richwhite although its cloudy history went back to the war years – and that was the liquor license we'd bought too, and it gave us the right to open 365 days a year; the only such licence in Auckland).



DJ booth, Box nightclub, photo by Karl Pierard; photo courtesy of Simon Grigg

We went into the cloak-check area, behind the place where the queues paid their \$8 nightly, and one of us pulled back the grimy large, heavy, floor to ceiling drape.

There was a door. I looked at Tom, he looked at me, and he turned the handle. The door opened and we were almost floored by the rush of musty air that pushed past us.

There was natural light in the large cavern that confronted us so we wandered in.

There was a dead cat. The poor thing had been trapped in this big room whenever it was closed off and had not only died, but had been spread by bacteria across the floor as if it had exploded in slow motion – as it had.

We quickly realised the potential of this huge square space and took a few of our DJs through to show them.

"It's a Box" said Jon Davis, and the name stuck.

The next thing was tracking down the landlord. Above was a carpark but the stairs down were sealed. It was fairly easy to find out who administered the space: the receivers of the company that had once owned the space leased by the Auckland City RSA, now gone to smaller premises in Fort Street as the old soldiers passed away.

They were bemused. Why did we want the dank, greasy, old RSA dining room? We smiled and asked how much? It was month to month and \$50 a week.

Feeling blessed by our luck we signed a bit of paper - and the rent stayed the same for the next 7 years.

Over the next weeks we went to work. We stripped the floor and investigated knocking out the wall between 33 and 35 High Street (structural so that was - fortunately as it turned out - out of the question).



Billy, Box nightclub, photo by Brigid Grigg-Eyley; photo courtesy of Simon Grigg

By August 1989 we were ready and looking to open with a splash, when we were approached by WEA Records. They had a new rapper they wanted to promote in New Zealand. His fee was token and he was available for three nights.

Thus Box (still tagged as The Siren until the planned refurbishment of the whole club) opened with Ice-T and his rather fulsome then-wife, Darlene, as headliners. They sprayed champagne all over the walls each night as capacity crowds looked on at the first US hip-hop act to come to NZ.

It was a good start.

We closed the whole club in the week leading up to Easter 1990 and re-opened

as Cause Celebre, a lounge with the best cocktail bar and jazz in town on one side, and Box, a club dedicated uncompromising urban dance music on the other. Thus you had two experiences on offer as you walked down the stairs from High Street.

From day one I wanted Box (please note: it was Box, not The Box) to be all about the resident DJs. A resident owns the night and he or she owns the club. It becomes all about the person in the DJ booth taking the crowd on a journey with them.

Our first resident was Rob Salmon, an Auckland Grammar kid I'd seen doing underage gigs on Sundays. I offered him a job and then did my very best to allow him to do what he was clearly capable of. I sat in the DJ booth with him for almost two years tutoring but was quickly redundant as Rob came into his own. He was a natural and soon had a devoted, some might say fanatical, following – they'd arrive as the doors opened and stay with him all night.

In 1992 we began bringing UK and US club DJs to New Zealand, the first time this had been done. Convincing crowds that someone just 'playing records' was worth \$10 proved initially difficult.

In 1992 and 1993 we bought Andy Weatherall, Norman Jay, Justin Robertson and Gilles Peterson.

In 1995 Rob went to New York City, where he still lives and works as a DJ, and I replaced him with Greg Churchill who I'd enticed up from Christchurch. It was important to me that I replace Rob with a DJ who was not in his shadow – it was time to renew and revitalise the room.

Greg did all that and far, far more, making the room and the always large crowd absolutely his own. It was Box where Greg established himself as the preeminent DJ in New Zealand.

In 1997 I finally managed to tie the two leases together and decided to sell – 9 years had been enough – and indeed nine years to the day that Tom and I had bought Club Mirage I walked out the doors for the very last time as the owner.

In 1990 the leading UK style magazine ID Magazine had named the club as one of the world's top 10 which was a major buzz, although our own Metro Magazine referred to it as the 'hell-hole in High Street' after we'd turned away one of their dullish staff writers. Tom and I knew which description mattered the most.

Mostly though we'd just tried to create an uncompromising but stylish, music focused club that tipped its hat at the new wave of underground clubs that were helping to define interesting music in Europe and the US East coast, but to do so in a way that still Auckland.

I think we succeeded and I'm still pretty proud of that.



Box nightclub Karen Walker staff jacket (all one-off designs); photo courtesy of Simon Grigg

Simon Grigg has been around the music industry in New Zealand for many years since forming, as manager, New Zealand's first punk band The Suburban Reptiles in the late seventies. His independent label, Propeller, paved the way for the rise of the indie music scene and the kiwi music explosion of the late eighties; and his label huh, introduced the world to Nathan Haines, OMC's international smash "How Bizarre" and the Nice'n'Ulrich series. Simon also pioneered dance music in New Zealand, first introducing house music into the country at his clubs The Asylum and The Playground in the eighties; and in the nineties he owned Cause Celebre and Box. He was a radio host, with specialist shows, BPM and Extended Play on 95bfm and George FM between 1985 and 2005.

Simon is a recipient of the RIANZ Lifetime Achievement Award for Outstanding Contribution to the Industry; and is currently creating an online NZ Music and Musical Culture database in partnership with NZ on Air.

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Cover image: Cécile B. Evans, "Straight Up" 2011 (video still)

"Lost in a dream" (the exhibition)

Curator: Rob Garrett

Artists: Olga Chernysheva, Georganne Deen, Cécile B. Evans, Robbie Fraser, Grant Gallagher, Emma Garrett, Nathan Gray, Paul Hartigan, Alexander Ilin, Katrin Kampmann, Anastasia Klose, Virginie Mossé, Anna Nordquist Andersson and André Sampson.

Snake Pit is an independent, multi-floor, project space in central Auckland established by Sam Thomas and James Wylie and other art students and graduates from the Elam School of Fine Arts, University of Auckland.

The "Lost in a dream" exhibition and publication title is a citation from the lyrics of Paula Abdul's number one hit single "Straight Up" from 1998.