

PUBLIC THINKING
Documents



Public Thinking emerged out of ongoing conversations with the artists Boni Cairncross, George Egerton-Warburton and Zoe Robertson. These conversations didn't start with an exhibition in mind but occurred through a curiosity about their practices inspired by encountering public iterations of their work. The exhibition came second, upon an invitation from 55 Sydenham Road to curate an exhibition, which prompted me to cement some lurking curatorial intuition – *what was an exhibition that I had in mind?*

Having followed each of the artists' work for approximately two years, I had begun to notice synchronicities between their practices. Namely, they were artists of a similar generation; they variously engaged with text, performativity and sites; their practices were process lead and synthesised 'experience'; their works purposefully walked a line between the subjective and objective; the artist was present, or at least the idea of the artist was always explicit; and perhaps the most oblique connection - they had all used food in their work, and more specifically, root vegetables. They were also unaware of each other.

From George Egerton-Warburton's exploration of the 'good life', to Boni Cairncross' consideration of 'authenticity' through the conflation of action and documentation, to Zoe Robertson's embodied process to making work succinctly encapsulated in the title of her blog, 'The Life Art', this exhibition is quite simply an opportunity to present and think through each of the individual artists' practices, together.

The following pages are a small compilation of document from each of the artists, comprising their artist statement, an image and two other texts of their choosing.

From: Susan Gibb <[xxxxxxx]@gmail.com>
Date: Mon, Jun 17, 2013 at 11:25 PM
Subject: Potential Title
To: [xxxxxxx] <[xxxxxxx]@gmail.com>

Hi [xxxxxxx],

So I think I have a potential title for the exhibition...

Following on from our catch up in Melbourne, I had a brief detour via Ned Kelly's armour at the State Library of Victoria to dumplings and a VB or two with Mitch Cairns in Chinatown. He asked me about the exhibition and I rambled and he concluded, "so you're public thinking" and I said, "yeah, that's it, that's the name of the show".

What do you reckon:
Public Thinking

I'm saying it out loud to normalise it but you can dispute it if you like. Keep in mind it's less crazy than previous titles I've bestowed on shows, such as 'Mother'. My mind's a loose gun [sic.] when it's free-associating, so thank god [sic.] Mitch stepped in.

No rush on your thoughts but would love to hear them when you have a chance.

Susan

x



BONI CAIRNCROSS

I have an obsession with slowing time down in an attempt to render the 'now' visible. This obsession manifests itself in tasks and actions that struggle to capture and communicate all aspects of a given moment. I don't know why. It is an ongoing inquiry into the nature of experience and the relationship between the live event and its record.



Boni Cairncross, *Performing The Situated Line*,
26.04.2013-12.05.2013, photo documentation, folio 6,
performed during 'The Situated Line' at Articulate Project
Space, Leichhardt. Image credit: Julia Gove.

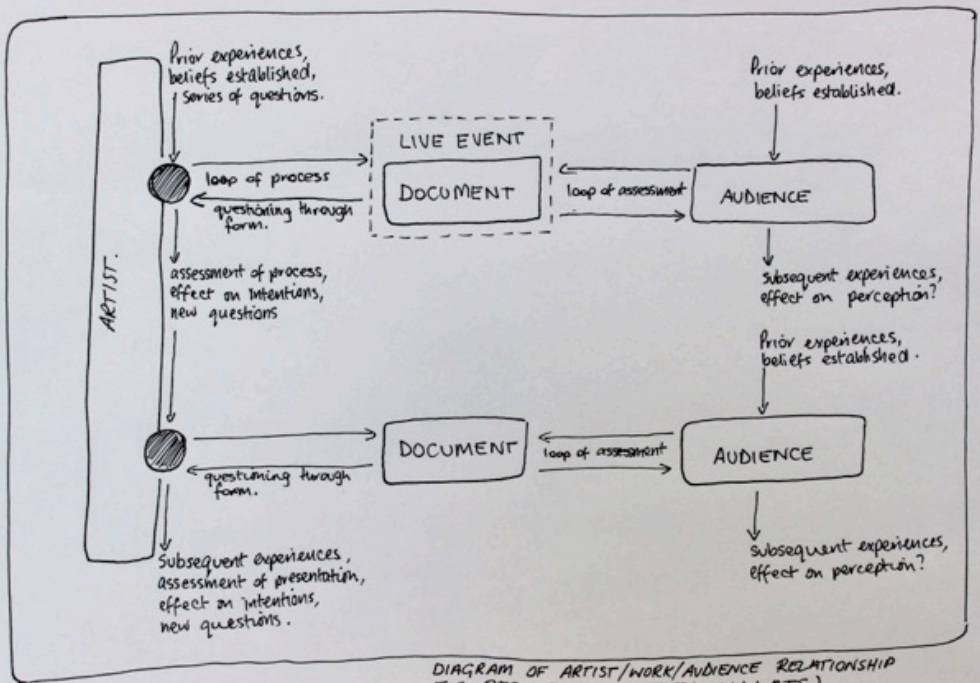


DIAGRAM OF ARTIST/WORK/AUDIENCE RELATIONSHIP
FOR PTL (AFTER STEVEN WILLATS).

It's been almost three hours of steady concentration.

Half way.

Keys rattling.
door closes.

Shuffling.

Keys again.
they back on something.

alone - 1:47.

the artist from upstairs comes around.
half way down the stairs.

pauses.

the keys rattle lots.

She puts her bag down near the stairs.

a mandarin?

sharp citrus.

I don't know where that came from.
it's gone.

The artist. Black top, orange pants.

Views the exhibition

She has sharp movements

two steps, pause, swift turn.

calculated steps.

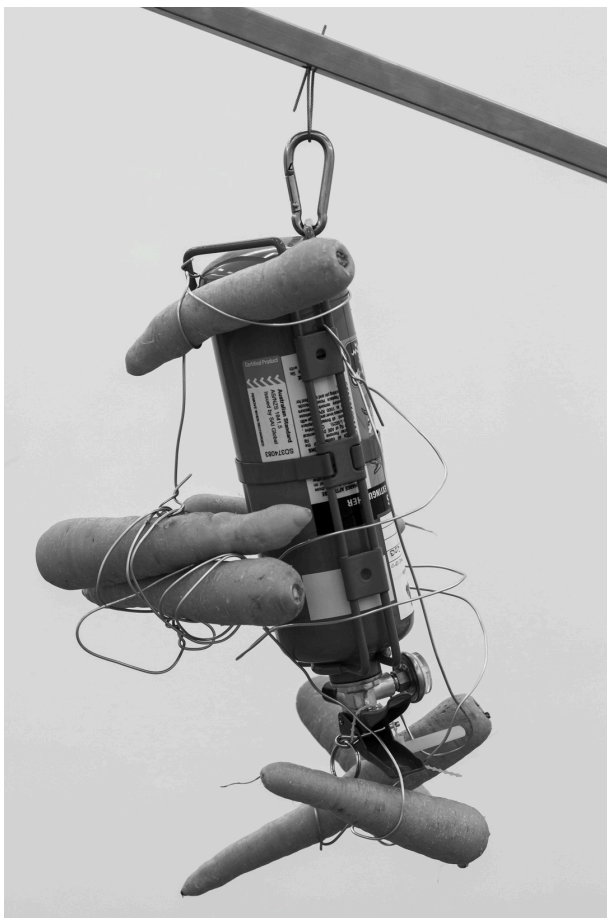
pause.

I look up she's in exactly the same position as last time I looked. Just facing the other direction and a bit away. 262.



**GEORGE
EGERTON-
WARBURTON**

George Egerton-Warburton's works often take their cue from incongruous elements and ideas, which are both personal and affective, but which the artist is notably not in control of. A moral conundrum usually lies at the basis of his works: every time their ethical and aesthetic repercussions need to be considered.



George Egerton-Warburton,
install photo of *Steaming Ties*, 2013

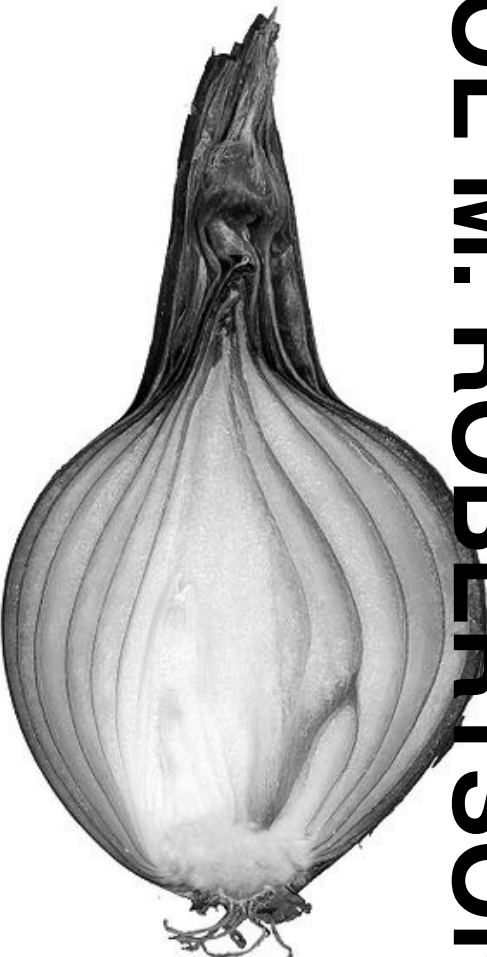
Lamps, iphones, horror at the squat next to the anarchist club.

Late one night, early on in Summer last year, as I was leaving work at the bottle-shop, a friend came by and we decided to have a few drinks and go to a party. I was working a lot and not socializing much at the time and I got quite easily drunk and stayed up much later than I had for most of the year. On the way home, which I barely knew, I was listening to something, I can't remember what, although I remember it changing my mood, although I'm not sure what to, and suddenly someone I had not noticed was walking along beside me. I removed my headphones and began talking to a man probably eight or so years older than me. He had been to a different party where he knew one person, didn't live in the area, and was looking for a squat he had heard about, next to the "anarchist club." He invited me to check it out, and I obliged. Approaching it, I recognized the building as one I had often rubber-necked at as I was riding past on the way to wherever. It was mostly corrugated iron, and as we broke in, a pronounced smell of something akin to lanolin took me back to my teenage days, and in particular, throwing rocks through a corrugated fiberglass skylight in the shearing shed at home. There were damp clothes on a clothes rack and the usual epicurean detritus laying around. We sat on some old mattresses and had some general chat. The guy was asking questions about my background and telling me about his work as an activist. He wanted me to stay and kept telling me to turn off my Iphone. I don't know why but I thought about something I could do that would annoy him, but I couldn't think of anything. Would mugging him work? I kept on smelling the lanolin, and tried to figure out where it was coming from- the mattress? Why would they have a woolen mattress in a squat? What the fuck is an anarchist club? The place was just reminding me of puberty and the farm and I was getting making frequent deposits in the rage bank. I got up to leave and the guy said "wait," I turned around, and he said, "oh nah don't worry it's too weird." Franco Berardi says that old cynicism was defined as rigorous truthfulness, individualism, ascetic behaviour and disdain of power- whereas contemporary is defined by lip service, moral unreliability, and conformist subjugation to those in power. The common thread between the old and the new is "the ambiguous nature of language, and an ability to suspend the relation between language and reality, particularly in the ethical square. "

INDIVIDUALIS



ZOE M. ROBERTSON



ARTIST BIO:

ZOE M. ROBERTSON

To begin, I have no inclination to either write this in the third person or have someone else speak for me. The artist bio belongs to the bureaucratic dissemination of the arts, via institutions and galleries linked to the machinations of corporate capital underpinning culture, which must either directly justify itself as economically rationalisable or go through the university system, which is increasingly and ultimately subject to the same checks and balances. Ultimately the discussion of this is the art, as was it ever: portraits of the wealthy. This is what I make/do.

Zoe M. Robertson, still promo image for
IN/CORPORATION: The Mythology of the Personal, 2007-2013.
Photo: Charles Dennington, 2013.



Zoe Robertson 20/09/2012

To: [REDACTED]

Picture you, I can, in your cold cabin, vigorous in your celibacy, and doubtless obstinacy, anthropomorphising innocent produce... so hilariously male... like a movie Rock Hudson never made. I think of you with your masks -rather than reverting to pugilism- to chemistry, probably gestating something more virulent than the syphilitic strains echoing around Renaissance Venice during Carnevale. But then, I have been reading too much Artaud (the only straight man whose body was enough political for the woman-identifying). I got bit by a spider. I thought maybe I could claim the medicine on tax seeing as it's quite a good image. And the word "necrotic" is fun, and likely to become part of my daily derisive repertoire. Clinically discussing the symbiosis of sex and death with the initiated. Critically interring that which was once primal and prime, my life and works. If one more person asks me about Bataille I will scream, primally, and then sing "Don't Fight It, Feel It."

I was laughing into the void again, but now I'm exhausted from spider-related illness, and probably not as funny as I should be. Though, otherwise I might worry about relative health and its relative effects to keep us from our most human, the suffering (too much Artaud). It's just my lot, really. Then there's you, and there's no less suffering in sight, grudgingly, no less humanity. It is always best to enjoy what you have to endure, but sometimes the way through it all is akin to your disgust of the repetitive dance of sterile reproduction, though somewhat more abject.

Innocent produce: I had a conversation with a strapping young home-brewer over his experiments with beetroot beer. He was visibly bemused by my enthusiasm for the potential for pink urine (surely one of life's great joys). The only drink that goes in pink piss and comes out pink piss. It's better than the transformation of waste, the utter zero-sum game of it, ashes to ashes, funk to funky (listening to too much Bowie and getting around on hot pink patent leather platforms, like an economics student in a salmon pink Ralph Lauren: we all have our aspirations). Pink is the colour of aspiration, just between you and a woman's thighs. And there you have my great beer campaign. Eat your heart out Mayakovsky, I'm putting my shoulder to the wheel. I always suspected that I too would be 'suicided by society' but that was before I discovered pink piss and its untold joys.

I saw some more dance the other night, it went for two hours, or one and a half hours too long, for being experimental enough as to be negligible in actual dance, and almost devoid of anything beautiful except for the strange 'early music' that really could have used an 'early' drum machine a la Suicide (the band). I worry that the whole world is psycho-sexually exhausted on such occasions. One too many lectures on Postmodernism. You're not so unburdened by talent that you would worry about there being nothing new, such a banal concern...

To tell you the truth, I'm wildly jealous of your exile. I'm coming up to my fifth exhibition of new work for the year and sick of cataloguing all my work and presenting it. I'm sick of talking about it. I'm sick of people kissing my arse. I'm sick of explaining myself. I really never planned for this eventuality. I really was working for my own sake. It's an odd realisation. Myself, I'm an odd realisation.



+ New Message ✖ Actions 🔍



Zoe Robertson

3:22pm

strange conversational offshoot

Hey man, don't know what this means but I think that it's partially your fault: though you shouldn't feel obligated to read it.

Give us this day our daily manifesto.

Disbelief: the measure of a person is not how much they can give but how much they can fucking take.

Would feign be soothed by soothsayers disproven, speakers of un-prose, in these times "...ergo proper hoc" with mechanics and accountants telling it like it is, you and I can still come out with something that just isn't, to universal unconcern, because both of us knew it was more important that something be beautiful than true.

It is a miracle that you and I survive our selves on a daily basis: agreed...

These few moments of solace before I go back to't...

Being raped through the eye sockets by them who confused giving with taking, I was saying to them: "you should've been feeding on my flesh, not trying to increase my volume, not trying to create something new, you should've been redistributing the wealth." They were all putting out, while I was investing more in less, in abject, metaphysical poverty: ...this was my self-consumption, I keep taking it, I just wish for a moment that they would all stop giving... it's not going to save their soul.

Maybe you knew what it was like to be raped in the eye sockets by walking, fucking quadriplegics... heads detached from their bodies, immune to touch, fascinated by thoughts excreted: ...I was doing most of my thinking from my spleen, because I believed in creating problems because

resolution is mere death.

It was no longer good to be living but good to be sustaining... as though it were a remote possibility. Achilles sounded ancient to be saying that he attributed more value to feeding and adorning when something had given its life for his privilege, and we knew that he was right: "justified and ancient". We were sitting in a courtyard watching the chaos as they replaced Jesus with utility and clashing civilizations found Buddha so that all may be the pure and non-extant, not a single one a beggar but all aspirational philanthropists, to have achieved and given everything away bar self-satisfaction. They didn't believe in any virtue beyond denial, a revolution of universal paternalism for the patriarchy in absentia: no desire but silence. I was thinking about centuries of procreation followed by centuries of virginity followed by this century of sterile eternity. I was always going to be a creature of my times, rising and falling by them...

Peroration: I submit that the above amounts only to a pleading that I may be free from the distraction of the satellite awareness of a fundamental lack of distraction on my part that I'd been calling a loneliness, so hard to distinguish is purpose, while everyone is so busy trying to limit their impact in the name of morality. Problems or outright lies remain fact if they are pretty enough that someone wants to believe them, but I'm contained and empty of my humanity and you're somewhere else... I suppose I was just hoping that we all might have something to say to one another and damn anyone who can't take it.

November 23, 2009

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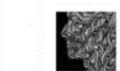
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Alexandra Garcy's Gallery

Vivian and Charlotte. This picture is somewhat referencing Sweeney Todd. Hence the razor...



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A Man In Demand Removals Truck 3



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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