

**ART THEORY 492**

**SEMESTER 2, 2002**

**DRAFT COPY**

**LECTURER:** Julian Goddard

**STUDENT:** Alexander Hayes

## CONTENTS

| PAGE No. | TITLE                           |
|----------|---------------------------------|
| 1        | Cover page                      |
| 2        | Contents                        |
| 3        | Introduction                    |
| 4-6      | My Art Practice                 |
| 7-9      | Nicolas Bourriaud               |
| 10-12    | David Bromfield                 |
| 13-14    | Judith McGrath                  |
| 15-16    | Interview: Judith McGrath       |
| 17-18    | The Future                      |
| 19       | References                      |
| 20-21    | Bibliography                    |
| 22-40 *  | Appendix items: Images & Notes. |

## **Introduction**

This paper provides me with the opportunity to introduce to the reader, a summary of ideas and key concepts that are imbedded within my art practice. Presentation occurs within a retrospective framework, supplemented with interactive links to relevant online reference material.

An interest in the term and concept of 'aesthetics' within the context of theArts, serves as the focus for the body of content. The translation of three persons' opinions and positions further inform this presentation, developed with reference to discussions, interviews and literary critique.

The nature of these discussions hinge on discovering how the terms 'relational embodiment', 'relational aesthetics' and 'networked interconnectivity' reference and inform art practice in a contemporary context. Speculation on the direction that my professional practice may take in postgraduate projects and associated professional practice serves as a conclusion for this discussion.

The consideration to provide this information in an online capacity allows for feedback as opposed to intentionally fettering hardcopy presentation. This methodology also allows me to explore new avenues of information dissemination, which in turn supplements my research interests as well as providing others with opportunities to view ongoing projects.

## My Art Practice

Considering how to introduce my work requires me to identify themes, positions or behaviors that are inherent in the development of my art practice.

I have intentionally made an examination of the factors that seem to repeat in my art practice, my studio musings and in the process of critical enquiry. These pointers are presented as places to start from or to depart from as new understandings develop. These pointers are not definitive or absolute, nor permanent.

An introduction to my work will identify that;

- ☐ My artistic expression often evolves from the unspeakable. Much of my time is spent actively engaged in developing a vocabulary, be it in images, symbols or text,
- ☐ I don't 'see' myself in my art expression, only of whom it speaks. The idea of 'what' that my art speaks, exists until the conversation it entertains - ceases.
- ☐ A desire to make sense of personal discovery has lead me to devise a working methodology that is more concerned with solidifying friendships or entertaining meaningful conversation.
- ☐ A review of my art practice in the last decade will illustrate more examples of inconsistency in visual form rather than a consistency of expression. I liken my art practice to that of a well oiled and established production line of visual metaphors.
- ☐ I consider every artwork that has evolved to be at the center of a key concept or malleable idea. Many works draw reference to chance, notions of probability or are extended by 'mistakes'.
- ☐ As soon as I try to define where an artwork starts and where it finishes, I loose my greater train of thought. I believe there is a futility in attaching meaning to the term 'completion' or even attempting to declare a work complete.
- ☐ The process of considering and realizing an art work for me is a selfish process and I often enter a portal of self centeredness upon entertaining a creative possibility.
- ☐ The impetus to delve deeper and relate more closely to making art that makes meaning in my life is often the result of identifying loss as opposed to discovery. I am adept at creating works that display a sense of abandonment of an ideal, often presented solely to make this statement.
- ☐ My art works evolve as film, performance, sculpture, print media, paintings, drawings, installations, interactive online exhibitions, ceramics, textiles, writings etc. or a combination in part or with all of the above.
- ☐ The computer as a working tool is as important as a paintbrush, which is as important as a performance and so on. I often employ more than one medium and many 'tools' in the realization of an artwork.



□ I consider my signed paintings to signify only that I have personally had something to do with that paintings inception. My printmaking likewise develops like many other facets of my artistic expression, occurring in many layers, none of which are more important than the other.

□ Photographs of works are pointers to times shared either with artists in cold studios or fruitful collaborations elsewhere.

□ Works that I have presented for commercial sale have invariably had the last rites read to them. Objects with pretty frames do more to rile me than most other architectural nightmares.

□ Words have always bumped into each other and clumsily emulated what I can define loosely in the stroke of a brush.

The following selected body of works and projects, mark significant or profound understandings for myself, in their conception and transition through time to the present day.

> Projects such as 'Quicksilver' with poet/ author Daniel Oxenburgh re-affirm the compromise that visualization of literary content takes when one form is presented and developed collaboratively

> 'Project 44\_1' produced with sound engineer Rob Muir, placates the soul on a conceptual level, yet proved aesthetically elusive in 'Project 44\_gen set'. New grounds for postgraduate research have emerged from the deconstruction of cultural and gender associations in 'networking 2002', a sonic animation to be presented in a gallery context.

> Professional association and friendships were tested and new directions for print related media emerged from testing new grounds in 'Printonline 200T'.

> The trials and tribulations of working with youth and government funded initiatives were founded by the stagnation of 'HQ - Headquarters Public Art Project 2000 - 2002'.

> The joys of actualizing against incredible odds, a sculpture garden with disabled youth were realized with ' Special Education Sculpture Project - Kalamunda Senior High School 1998'.

> The complexities of project and film direction were tested and realized with 'Body of Works 2000', a compilation of seemingly unrelated film material.

> 'Paths & Plots 1999' collaboratively produced with Diokno Pasilan explored loss and grief as a thematic overture. '

> 'Cyberbodies - Remote Attachments 1997' developed under the guidance of the artist Stellarc, produced in collaboration with Andrew Nichol's, sought to illicit audience empathy.

> 'Fine Field Form' heralded the beginnings of using painted relief and sculptural forms to speak of experiences gained by working as an educator in the wheat/belt regions of Western Australia.

> 'Treaty' emerged after working with Aboriginal artists in isolated areas of Western Australia.

> Commissioned by the Film and Television institute to design and construct a 13<sup>th</sup> Annual Film Award resulted in a mixed media sculptural form

> My role as Education Officer with the Dept, of Family & Children Services enable me to involve all my working skills as an artist in many arts based events

>Traveling interstate to undertake a Artist-in-residence position led to many other opportunities

> My initiation as an artist occurred working with Russel Sheridan and Geoff Lummis on two large scale fire sculptures titled 'Ruby T and 'Ruby 2'

> Large-scale paintings, hundreds of drawings and mixed media works have yet to be taken into the light of critical feedback for 'Inner Mind Fish' a body of works with poet Daniel Oxenburgh between 1995 and 2001.

>'Portal Statement' was an ambitious attempt to combine architecture with sculptural components

> My first solo exhibition contained paintings, mixed media , printmaking, sculpture and ceramic forms.

**>'First Fish' in conjunction with a body of small steel sculptures embodied my foray into the small art scene in Bunbury, Western Australia.**

> 'Bunkers Bay' and many other prints were developed with Russel Sheridan between 1992 and 1995.

These afore mentioned works are a very small representation of the styles, forms and collaborative projects that I have been involved in for the last ten years. My first conscious memories as a child were of relating to the world through building and creating. As an adult I try to employ those intuitive skills and behaviors that are matched with informed enquiry.

This exercise has been a valuable 'looking glass' through which I can now interpret some of these past events and works with differing understanding.

## Nicolas Bourriaud

*munch* The author Bennet Simpson (*Artforum* April turtle, 2001) conducted a interview with **British** critic and curator, Nicolas Bourriaud, in an attempt to glean more information regarding the descriptor coined for an art practice in the early nineties <sup>1990s</sup> employing 'relational aesthetics'.

Simpson honors Bourriaud with offering in the early nineties <sup>1990s</sup>, one of the earliest readings on artistic production emanating with information culture. The correlations between language that defines emerging technologies and the effect it has on the Arts are also examined in this interview.

According to Albert Bressand and Catherine Distler (economists) as cited in (*Wired*) (1996) the term 'it's not info-tech anymore, it's relationship-tech', emerged with the advent of deregulated telecommunications and global finance industries in the early 1990's. This definition shift coincided simultaneously with that of Bourriaud's emergent and seemingly profound metaphors.

The term 'information technology' suddenly became 'relationship technology' as realization dawned that information gathered was due to the relationship between companies or businesses and most importantly between people. Bearing this in mind, the idea that technology instigated and in fact templated language shift, begs analysis of the affect this has had on the 'aesthetic' language paradigm and that of descriptors for contemporary artistic practice that employs these technologies.

The term 'relational aesthetics' according to Bourriaud has been coined to describe the effects that a work of art has upon the viewer and the mapping of the interaction that is brought about by its presence in their lives in an age of networked digital interfacing.

*his* "I like art that allows its audience to exist in the space opened up by it. For me, art is a space of images, objects and human beings. Relational aesthetics is a way of considering the productive existence of the viewer of art, the space of participation that art can offer."

(Bourriaud, N. (2001) as cited in *Artforum*, April 2001)

Delving into the recesses of history further evidences underpinning the concept or idea of 'viewer participation'. The philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724 - 1804) is best known for his contribution to a broad understanding that representation makes an object possible, rather than an object making the representation possible. Kant professed that the mind was an active originator of experience not just a passive recipient of all that is presented to it.

Bourriaud parallels this view, stating that the work of art is not only interactively malleable but also switching between 'on and off according to the triggers that thought process present the viewer with i.e. upon the objects appearance or disappearance. Many philosophers and critical thinkers including Ayn Rand have examined this audience/ artist interaction.



The term 'esthetics' or 'aesthetics' according to Ayn Rand in St. Petersburg 1905 in the context of objectivist theory is the "selective re-creation of reality according to an artist's metaphysical value-judgments" explicit or not<sup>2</sup>^ supports the notion that viewer perception dictates the artworks' reception by merit of the artist attempting to 'show' a work of art.

^yn believe^ that art is an end in itself where the purpose of art is to show, not tell^nd is not didactic in manner. This understanding of where the object or "shown" work of art is presented for consideration (as opposed to the productive or sole existence of informing an audience) parallels in principle that which defines conceptual participation as presented by Bourriaud. This idea also 'sniffs' of semiotics and all that the study of associative signifiers can offer.

A logic that seeks to define viewer participation as inclusive to an art's conclusion would seem the foundation for understandings that Bourriaud postulates in his paper "Today's Art Practice". Bourriaud jumps from Marcel Duchamp to Henry Ford thence onto Langert, Jack Lang and Stanley Brown in an attempt to illustrate the idea that industry and technology affects artists and sometimes forms the basis for new artistic expression. t/

Bourriaud claims to observe the artist Rirkrit Tirvanija using the principle of 'criterion of coexistence' where spaces are left for the viewer to complete or where the use of O/k. object in a work of art is the pointer, not the meaning behind it's inclusion in the field of perception. The 'relational' adjunct in 'relational aesthetics' seems the key indicator for expanding this conversation and discussion. ✓

Bourriaud uses the term 'relational' to nominate that the audience is relative and essential to the artworks 'completion'. This is an important point to note as 'participation' has cleverly reworked as the virtue for experience. This notion further propounds and imbeds the meanings of an artwork to be by nature, a privileged enterprise, viewer dependent and exclusively reliant upon ability to 'participate' in the discussion. Technologists, economists and scientists -ate© trying to entertain the notions of the elite controlling information highways disseminating only upon payment of tolls, also parade this argument.

Simpson opens up a ca^T of worms by questioning in footnotes attached to this interview with Bourriaud that artists are in fact simply transforming themselves under the pressure of market force, adopting technologies for the merchandising of relations and consequently re-tagging cultural experience as a commodity.

Elisa Giaccardi, points to the pervasive nature of the emergent nano-technology field of networked art and design in a paper titled 'Interconnectivity and Relational Embodiment in Art and Design' further interweaving the conclusions raised by Simpson. Giaccardi positions the audience as consumers of 'user experience' mirroring the examination of relational paradigms discussed by Bourriaud.



Giaccardi considers the onset of networked digital interfacing in our lives at present and ultimately creative expression as a hybrid reality, beyond that of a relational fantasy.

"Interconnectivity, modifying our relational mode of being will change the way in which we enactively produce our world and our consciousness"

9  
Giaccardi, E. (2000)

Giaccardi presents <sup>the</sup> (.interactivity of <sup>the</sup> (audience with <sup>tA\*</sup> (artist as multi-user, globally platformed, streamed and by virtue, central to a new form of participatory 'aesthetic'.

<sup>non</sup> (jW- the values T)estoweathe medium and not in it's relational potential. The issues with the Internet and associated technologies Bourriaud concludes are similar to the paranoia that surrounded the introduction of the camera.

This examination of Bourriaud's theory, rhetoric and semantic associations juxtaposed with Giaccardi's radical articulations, are summarized succinctly in questions raised by Jean - Paul Longavesne, Director of GRIP- Univ. Paris XI - Ensad in the ISEA2000 symposium held in France;

-WJP

" Art throughout twentieth century to advanced towards an increasingly large place granted to the interactivity, the performance, the installation and the participation of the public. The emergence of an esthetics of Media Arts where the machine-interfaces and the networks play an increasingly significant role raises the question of the statute of the artist and the nature of his creation. It is then, with a disappearance of the support or material substrate which one assists [the question arises] Where did Painting pass, when the machines start to paint? What becomes the 'oeuvre' of art at the era of its numerical production? How these forms of art contribute to the emergence of a new esthetics? This communication answers the various interrogations posed by the use of the digital interfaces in technological arts, through contemporary artistic practices"

Longavesne, J.P (2001) f/[summary]

\*)

## David Bromfield

David Bromfield resides in Perth, Western Australia, regularly composing critique that is often harshly critical of arts organizations, established arts related businesses and associated identities.

- 41- Academics and arts institutions including art gallery directors and curators do more to distort societal appreciation of creative<sup>^</sup> expression than to actively engage and encourage constructive critical enquiry (according to Bromfield)

^k-David Bromfield provides both national and international audiences with reviews of arts related events at <http://www.behindthe-8-ball.com/> with previous writings coined for The West Australian newspaper. Bromfield considers most artists in a Western Australia pursue art like a cultural version of 4teterrtswmRj»gtarV Big Brother neither as a primary goal nor as a means to metaphysical revelation and most definitely not ever as a simple pleasure.

Prompted by an article titled The Desire Exchange - some critical consequences of InAbstract - ' which comments on an exhibition at the Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery, Western Australia in 2002, I pursued an interview with Bromfield to examine, in particular, the attitude that aesthetic can be defined as 'abstraction/s [art] poor country cousin'. I was not granted an interview, rather, Bromfield preferring to ' discuss the issue over a bottle or two'.

Bearing this abrupt and often carbolic attitude in mind, it is worthy note that the nature of this discussion hinged on information gleaned from academic transcripts, interviews and written journals presented to Bromfield by myself in verbal anecdotal form and also referencing the afore mentioned article.

Bromfield likened much of what is coined as 'aesthetic' in art to simply expose and glorify "processes" as opposed to genuinely engage viewers in new experience or creative revelation. Asked to elaborate on 'beauty' as a precursor for audience appreciation or 'aesthetics' to define the process of discourse emanating, Bromfield cited Adolf Hitler's desires to create the perfect human as the most well known 'aesthete' and Andy Warhol as simply a 'dandy fraud'.

The mere attempt to denote artistic merit or define aesthetic appeal is the bane of all artists and free thinkers according to Bromfield. The term 'aesthetically pleasing' Bromfield went on to state stems from the inadequacy by many individuals to relate an understanding of art beyond that of the 'architectural artifact' i.e. framed painting. Bromfield provided reference to historical figures whose theories on 'aesthetics' feature prominently in literature and academic discourse including Hegel, Kant, Nietzsche, Schopenhauer, and Schroedinger.

Authors, film based media productions, artists and musicians were also cited to illustrate contemporary theories on the role of the 'aesthete' in art as idealistic, dated and often 'delusional by nature.'



It is worthy of note that the majority of discussion hinged on the appreciation of written works by JG Ballard, in particular a rendition of the controversial novel *Crash*;

"beyond the bounds of depravity". Four local English councils banned *Crash* from being shown within their regional jurisdiction on the grounds that it is nihilistic, sado-masochistic and graphic in its sexual and violent content.

Hall, C. (2002) as cited in <http://www.spikemagazine.com/1197ball.htm>

Bromfield was keen to express the opinion that the 'aesthetic' value bestowed works of art to be one-sided and more importantly exclusively private, often expressed as 'simple verbal compromise'. Beauty on the other hand, Bromfield declared, can be the appreciation of the most perverse, extreme, isolated and dangerous elements of mankind, yet another paradox of creative expression and communication.

Beauty and aesthetics need not act hand in hand stated Bromfield, particularly considering the ongoing deconstruction of the idealist paradigms of Modernity and the cultural production of language that re- defines the pessimism of Heidegger and the

sciences\_ \*

*philosophy?*

The term 'aesthetics' according to David Bromfield;

"start's in an unknown historical setting and likewise floats around as spoken dialogue in a soup of uncertainty".

Bromfield D. (2002) - discussion with Author *October 3*

Defining the term 'aesthetics' according to Bromfield requires the understandings that to entertain the notions of application for the term 'aesthetic' involves contemplating that of the sublime. Bromfield associates the vastness, expanse and awe inspired spatial qualities of the sublime to that of works of Nietzsche, the pessimism of Hegel, the poetry of Rilke and Count Marquis de Sade.

Attempting to define aesthetic understandings as culturally transmissible or specifically learnt Bromfield believes are fraught with difficulty and are often elitist, racist and undeniably sexist. Bromfield went on to summarize;

- Discussion that engages aesthetics as a thematic concern often decompose in grammatical distinctions, one party attempting to raise the quality or pertinence of perception over that of another.
- Aesthetics has never had a written intellectual platform, rather, occurring as everyday oral dialogue that concentrates on trying to define 'beauty' as opposed to the relatedness and pertinence of its' opposites.
- Philosophers, theorists, historians and academics create more contradictions and idealist perceptions than effectively defining how or what 'beauty' contributes to the greater community

□ The term 'relational aesthetics' Bromfield likened to academic forums of discussion that generate 'another idealist load of intellectual crap in a minefield of emerging technologies'.

On a number of occasions Bromfield avoided further discussion examining the sphere of reception that digital interfacing is having upon the Arts in Western Australia stating; .

“ ..... the Arts in Western Australia and in particular Perth tend to be stunted, boring and predictable.....one could do very well for themselves, researching the factors that make this one of the most provincial locations in the southern hemisphere, hardly worth the effort for any discerning Arts loving traveler “

Bromfield D. (2002) discussion [summary] with Author - 3 Oct

Technology centered creative expression Bromfield likened to 'mundane video games' often lacking any creative meaning in the quest to achieve non-linearity, discontinuity, and autonomy. Aesthetics and the development of discourse to critically evaluate cyber and virtual online-networked communities likewise are fruitless and boring Bromfield believes.

The interactive elements so often employed to engage an audience Bromfield concluded, were as 'boring as bat shit'. Bromfield wished to turn attention to the fact that considering artwork and Artists coining 'relational aesthetics' results in conversation that 'dies a durgy e-tech death'.



## Judith McGrath

Judith McGrath is a writer in Perth, Western Australia who declares 'reviewer' as a more apt title for providing written accounts and opinions of art works or exhibitions. McGrath writes candidly with the provision of informed critical observations noticeably minus waffle and mindless hyperbola. This is evident in many of the papers that are presented in e-format at <http://artseeninwa.com.au>

My associations with McGrath are both social and professional. A lengthy and healthy association with arts education and curriculum delivery in Western Australia informs McGrath's comments, balanced with active participation in many other creative forums.

The development of nomenclature including that of 'relational embodiment', 'relational aesthetics' and 'networked interconnectivity' is highly questionable according to McGrath. Adept at constructing discussion that questions the importance of the artists' consideration with audience receptivity; McGrath opposes terminology that makes assumptions that the viewer or audience actively 'completes' an artwork by virtue of productive existence.

McGrath often interspaces pragmatic deconstruction of grammatical associations with irony and pun, balanced with strong views on academics, curators and educators who support this terminology. ■/

Teasing discussion with historical nuance and personal insight, McGrath scolds the readiness by artists and institutions alike to adopt this terminology of replacing professions of beauty in holistic terms with narrow, consumer and entertainment driven un-consciousness. McGrath relates coining this terminology as akin to coercive political exclusivity, threatening to render the artist "like one of the intelligentsia and on top of the whole arty farty bull shit pile". (Email excerpt to author; 30 Sep. 2002)

These views are overtly imbedded in many of McGrath's articles, preferring to make sense of the importance and relevance of;

"...what we must do is identify art's relevance in our lives. One explanation for art's importance is that, more than language; it sets us apart from other life forms on this planet. Only humans make art, and we have an innate want and need to express ourselves beyond language, to communicate via imagery, music and movement "

McGrath, J. (2001) [online: excerpt]

The development of curriculum that actively declares its endorsement of aesthetic position as a result of networked computer and digital interfacing is also viewed with disdain as art works parading as entertainment are believed to be encouraging viewers to be nothing more than a passive spectator. ^

McGrath postulates that this onset of human-computer interaction is very calculated, tempting the audience into accepting the vicarious (virtual) experience, where

entertainment does little to solicit response or ignite imagination. The object and the Kantian associations with beauty attributed historically are the key to developing art that has substance and meaning states McGrath (2000).

“ We must enlist our mind or emotion in order to see past the surface of the physical object and perceive its metaphysical intention..... there are still enough people who are in touch with their innate want and need to express themselves beyond language and others who realize that even if they don't know much about art they do know it's part of our humanity”

McGrath, J. (2000) [online: excerpt]

McGrath believes the future for the Arts as teetering on an indeterminate, bleak void filled with students who don't know how or why visual art can or should connect with its past, project to its future, all the while communicating in its own time. This lack of understanding McGrath adds will come about as humans learn less of the cultural vessels through which they create and more through the homogenization of culture by generic global process, especially that of the computer. ^

## ***Relational Aesthetics: Contradictions in Connectivity***

***Interview - 30.9.02 > Judith McGrath***

***Author: Alexander Hayes***

A: Where do you position yourself when considering what evolves from academic discourse regarding artists' and the markets control over what is 'it' and what is not?

J: Although I lectured in art history, I've never considered myself an academic, preferring to snorkel across the surface rather than tread the depths in a diving suit. I see a lot from my perspective and believe I'd have limited vision in one of those helmets.

A. The term 'relational aesthetics' coined by Nicolas Bourriaud defines the "emergent metaphors of artistic production engendered by information culture in the late 90's" according to Bennett Simpson in Artforum 2001 April. What are your thoughts on this term 'relational aesthetics'?

J : I'm not surprised the art world invented another convoluted term so the intellectual/academic bureaucracy can usurp, define and control a 'new' art form. It's another step in a logical progression through art since it left the hand of the artist and entered the realm of the inventor.

A: Does this definition of connecting people, interactivity and the merchandising of relational experience re-define interpretations for what occurred in the 1990's or is this definition 'relational aesthetics' reminiscent of other descriptors for movements and ism's pervading decades previous to this ?

J: From the caves of Lascaux to the balloon of Nadar, drawing and paintings replicate what the eye can see and are interpreted through religious, social and political constructs of the age of course. Nadar's camera replicated what the eye saw marking the beginning of drawing and painting's demise. The 'modernists' declared replication was not as important as the Artist's (not society's constructs) interpretation of contemporary life via the traditional paint medium. This is exemplified by Matisse's response to an observer who commented on how his painting didn't look like a woman. Henri said, "That sir is not a woman, it is a painting." In Modernism the painting was more important than the subject..... Do keep in mind however that most early modernists knew how to draw too.

When colour film (late 1930^ ) then television (mid 1940^ in USA) intruded on the artist's realm of bringing personal interpretations and images of contemporary reality to the public, there was need for another shift. Post war Post Modernism decided the artist's thoughts and actions were more important than the image. Without a need for a definitive image, painting remains but drawing becomes redundant and beauty rests in the eye of the beholder, not the object... That old Kantian philosophy allowed the acceptance of all abstract art and denounced representative work as mere pretty pictures or 'decorative'. I personally class all abstract art, formal or expressive, 'decorative' as it is about color, like throw cushions. Drives people crazy when I say that!



A: *Niccolas Bourriaud, a critic and codirector of at? contemporary art museum, in an interview titled "Today's Art Practise" 21<sup>st</sup> September 2001 draws comparisons to galleries becoming more like cinemas and exhibitions taking form like movies without cameras. How do you consider this has come about?*

J : To fight filmic inroads, a wider gap between Fine Art and all other art forms were a need to be forged. Art Theorists created elitism by stating the concept was more important than skills. The idea not the object was Art. There were theoretical explanations for a number of 'ugly' art styles even self-mutilation, then came documentation of performance art. Now painting can be discarded. Academia validated whatever the artist did to ascertain art's credibility. Artists have become celebrities and like actors.

A: Elisa Giaccardi in a paper titled 'Interconnectivity and Relational Embodiment in Art & Design 2000' presents the reader with the statement that networked computing is becoming more and more pervasive in our environments with interactivity surpassing identity and singular activity. What affects do you see these ubiquitous technologies having upon the artist? What will be lost with the onset of networked environments?

J: Today the artist is separated from the people and fine art is intended for only the initiated few. The art world is in danger of coming to a dead end, as the skills to draw and paint in pre Post Modern techniques are lost. Academics and elites realize that without those skills, they can not go back so they must go forward and join the electronic age. To save the cult of the artist and escape a vacuous contemporary art scene, they commandeered the computer. Meanwhile, to maintain the divide between artist and other practitioners, this 'new' electronic 'art' is coated in semantics and hyperbole, buoyed by academic theory and philosophical rhetoric. Bourriaud says, "What is produced are connections with the world broadcast by the object. In the era of simultaneous communication, forms only take shape in on-line time; they can be reactivated at will and are subject to change."

A: Relational Aesthetics and the concepts underpinning Relational Art were constructed as a descriptor when technology was pervading every sphere of visual reception led by mass media and the idea of the consumer spectator. Do you define Relational Art as having evolved beyond that critical level of spectator to that of 'participator'?

J: At this point I see Relational Art as an academic response to the on-line computer game. Art has gone from reacting to what the artist sees by drawing or painting it, to interacting with machines. Artists who no longer relate personally to others through their art can connect electronically to an unspecified audience in cyber space. Play Station goes to university!

*Judith McGrath is a writer, resident in Perth Western Australia. Her works and reviews of art related exhibitions and events can be found at <http://www.artseeninwa.com.au>*



## The Future

Speculation is to indulge oneself in talk or writing of a conjectural or theoretical kind.

This seems very apt considering the indulgence I have afforded myself by enrolling in the Doctorate of Creative Arts at Curtin University. My research intent is to examine more closely the cultural meanings inherent with vernacular practices in the Australian context.

I will make a conscious effort in the next two years to conduct research that informs my art practice in a quest to better understand how the vernacular improvisations of object inform and are extended upon by creative artistic enquiry. For the last year I have engaged many people in dialogue, which explores the potential that this area of interest has as an academic and creatively, legitimate research focus.

The nature of speculation as to the future and specifically to the next two years of my work has been partially actualized in my proactive attempts to begin defining research potentials in a very specific creative project. This is outlined in my draft thesis intention for a Doctorate of Creative Arts conducted with supervision in both the School of Art and the School of Australian Studies, Curtin University.

The title of the study *The 44 Gallon Drum: Interrogation Of An Australian Myth* defines loosely the key elements of enquiry and serves to inform the statement of my research intent. The research focus is essentially conducting activities that investigate cultural 'meanings' that develop through the creative adaptation of industrial form, specifically that of the 44 gallon drum.

Selecting such an inanimate yet resonant with meaning vessel raises the key research question; "*can the creative exploration of the 44-gallon drum further develop Australian cultural knowledge?*"

Conducting such a long-term project requires tightly defined research objectives and methods including the examination of;

- > creative vernacular use of the 44 gallon drum in urban, rural and remote locations
- > gender associations attributed this vessel in Australian culture
- > multiplicity of meanings attributed this vessel in film, television and literature
- > sustainable use and re-use of the 44 gallon drum

I would attempt to achieve these objectives by sustaining research methodology that fosters

- > the development of appropriate resource material by primary research
- > the collection of data and information from many and varied sources
- > creative personal expression in a range of artistic genre and forms using the term 'resonance' as a thematic framework

The primary significance of this research is to develop further understandings of Australian culture with potential and scope of this research to extend current knowledge of the critical role that creative vernacular improvisation defines for Australian culture.

The future for the next two years of my work will also involve utilizing information, finance and support networks already established that include leading industrial manufacturing and retail distributors such as Wesfuel Western Australia and Visypak . Industries. Ongoing support has been pledged for the duration of this research project by these corporate organizations and to date this support has enabled the recent, construction and realization of several sonic installations utilizing the inherent resonant qualities of the 44-gallon drum.

Advice also points to the continuation of exhibiting art works in a commercial setting, engaging with projects that extend the scope of my art practice in an international context and the development of a professional arts education profile that empowers' and informs my research potential.

To survive as an artist, I have discovered, is to be humble, forthright and regularly engage others in dialogue that makes a difference to others and myself.

I look forward to what the future holds for my art practice.



## References

- Bourriaud, N. (March 1998,) *Interview of Miroslav Kulitchitsky with Nicholas Bourriaud* [Online] available: [http://www.boiler.odessa.net/english/razl/n\\_1\\_rl\\_s02.htm](http://www.boiler.odessa.net/english/razl/n_1_rl_s02.htm) 12 Sep 2002
- Bourriaud, N. (2001) *Today's Art Practice* available: <http://www.sanalmuze.org/etkinliklereng/nicolasbourriaud.htm> 10 Sep 2002
- Bromfield, D. (2002) *The Desire Exchange - some critical consequences of In Abstract Issue 33 as cited in and [online] available:* <http://members.iinet.net.au/~postpub/8ball/issue%2031/in%20abstract.html> 4 Oct 2002
- Convergence: The Journal of Research into new Media Technologies (n.d) [online] available: <http://www.luton.ac.uk/Convergence/> 16 Sep 2002
- Giaccardi, E. (2001) *Interconnectivity and Relational Embodiment in Art and Design ACTES* [proceedings] ISEA 2002
- Howe, T. (n.d) *Dr. Leonard Peikoff's summary - "Objectivism: The Philosophy of Ayn Rand* [online] available: <http://www.giorgioproductions.com/objectivism/veldaid.html#V> 14 Sep 2002
- Kevelson, R. (1990) *"Tom Paine's RIGHTS OF MAN: An Aesthetic-Anarchic Dimension of Legal Semiotic"*, *International Journal for the Semiotics of Law* 11/8 (1990), 169-186. [online] available: <http://www.leaalltheory.demon.co.uk/kevelson.html> 14 Sep 2002
- Lamm, A (2002) *Berlin Art Diary* [online] available: <http://www.artnet.com/Magazine/reviews/lamm/lamm5-4-01.asp> 3 Sep 2002
- Longavesne, J. (n.d.) *Esthetics and rhetoric of digital interfaces in technological arts* [online] available: <http://perso.ensad.fr/~longa/ISEA/talk.html> 11 Aug. 2002
- McGrath, J. (2000) *Visual Art vs. Entertainment* - published in *Carolina Arts* November 2000 [n.d] excerpt
- McGrath J. (2001) *How Important is Art?* - published in *CAROLINA ARTS* January 2001[n.d] excerpt
- Rosenblatt, B (2002) *Digital Mosaics: The Aesthetics of Cyberspace* by Author: Steven Holtzman (review) Simon & Shuster, NYC [online] available: <http://sunsite.uakom.sk/sunworldonline/swol-08-1997/swol-08-bookshelf.html> 4 Oct 2002
- Ross, K. (2000) *Immanuel Kant* - website [online] accessed: <http://www.friesian.com/kant.htm> 3 Sep 2002
- Schwartz, P (1996) *R-Tech* as cited in *Wired Magazine*, Issue 4.06 [online] available : <http://www.wired.com/wired/archive/4.06/rtech.html> 15 Aug 2002
- Simpson, B ( 2001) *Public Relations(Nicholas Bourriaud) (Interview)* [online] available: [http://www.findarticles.com/cf\\_0m/0268/8\\_39/75830815/print.html](http://www.findarticles.com/cf_0m/0268/8_39/75830815/print.html) 5 Sep 2002

## Bibliography

- Australian Sound Design Project (n.d) [online] available  
<http://www.sounddesign.unimelb.edu.au/site/index1.html> Sep 2002
- Bandt, R. (2002) *Australian Music Centre site* [online] available:  
<http://www.amcoz.com.au/comp/b/rbandt.htm> Sep 2002
- Binder, P& Haupt, G. (2001) *Berlin Biennale* [online] available: <http://www.universes-in-universe.de/car/berlin/bien2/kw/d-kw-14.htm> Sep 2002
- Cabrera, D. (n.d) *Software for Psychoacoustical Analysis* [online] available:  
<http://members.tripod.com/~densil/> Aug 2002
- Chesworth D. (n.d) *Mana music web site* [online] available:  
[http://www.mana.com.au/mana\\_composers/composers\\_chesworth.htm](http://www.mana.com.au/mana_composers/composers_chesworth.htm) Aug 2002
- Crandall, J. (n.d) *various* available: <http://www.blast.org/crandall/> Sep 2002
- Harper Collins Publishers (n.d) [online] available:  
[http://www.harpercollins.com.au/authors/author\\_profile.cfm?Author=THOMSON\\_MAR\\_K](http://www.harpercollins.com.au/authors/author_profile.cfm?Author=THOMSON_MAR_K) Aug 2002
- Helyer, H. (2002) *Sonic Objects: Sonic Architecture* [online] available:  
<http://www.sonicobjects.com/welcome.html> > Aug. 2002
- Jenkins, J. (2000) *NMA Publications - Rik Rue* [online] available:  
<http://www.rainerlinz.net/NMA/22CAC/rue.html> > Sep. 2002
- Lefebvre, H. (1998) *The Production of Space* Blackwell, Oxford England.
- Farman, N. (2001) [online] available: <http://users.cybermac.com.au/nfarman/> > July 2002
- Memory Palace (n.d) web site [online] available:  
<http://sunsite.queensu.ca/memorypalace/> > Aug. 2002
- MOMA (2002) web site : 0101010 exhibition [online] available:  
<http://010101.sfmoma.org/start.html>
- Moore, R.L (1999) *Myth and Psyche : Masculine Initiation* [online] available:  
<http://www.legaltheory.demon.co.uk/kevelson.html> Aug 2002
- Parreno, P. (n.d) [online] available : <http://www.airdeparis.com/paiTeno.htm> sep 2002
- Samyn, M. (2002) *Entropy 8 Zuper* [online] available: <http://entropy8zuper.org/> Sep 2002
- Seal, G. (n.d) *West Australian Folklore Archive* [online] available:  
[http://simplyaustralia.mountaintracks.com.au/issue1/article\\_wafa.html](http://simplyaustralia.mountaintracks.com.au/issue1/article_wafa.html) Aug 2002



Stellarc (n.d) *Official Site* [online] available: <http://www.stelarc.va.com.au/> Sep 2002

Stafford, A.(1998) *Surface Magazine issue no. 15: Rirkrit Titavanija* [online] available : <http://www.blixa6.com/Tiravanija.html> Sep 2002

Thomson, M. (1998) *Blokes and Sheds* Angus & Robertson: Sydney

Vesna, V. (2002) *From Bodies to Networks to Nanosystems and Back* [online] available: [http://vv.arts.ucla.edu/projects/current events frameset.htm](http://vv.arts.ucla.edu/projects/current%20events/frameset.htm) Aug 2002

Wybraniec, J. (n.d) *Goddard de Fiddes site* [online] available: <http://www.goddarddefiddes.com.au/artists/wybraniec/index.htm> Sep 2002