

ACTIONS
WILL
OCCUR
INTERMITTENTLY

BIANCA HESTER

PLEASE LEAVE
THESE
WINDOWS OPEN
OVERNIGHT TO
ENABLE THE
FANS TO DRAW
IN COOL AIR
DURING THE
EARLY HOURS
OF THE
MORNING

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FOREWORD

Peter Cripps: Towards an Elegant Solution is a comprehensive survey of over 40 years of the artist's practice. It is part of ACCA's Influential Australian Artists series, a sequence of exhibitions which has been devised to engage with the past and developing history of local art practice.

Peter Cripps' work, comprised of objects, performances, sculptures and installations, is part of the trajectory of minimalist derivations in Australian art practice. Cripps refers to his minimalist approach as reductivist. His elegant forms interrogate the intersections between art, design and museum display, while his installations and 'plays' implicate the viewer in an active historical dialogue.

Towards an Elegant Solution unfolds as a sequential series of displays, twice changing during the exhibition's season at ACCA. This evolution permits a sense of development within Cripps' own practice and establishes a mimetic relationship to the exhibition behaviour of the 'gallery' which is central to Cripps' own theoretical interests.

ACCA also presents the first, full scale realisation of Peter Cripps' Public Projects works on its exterior forecourt. These sculptural towers are situated in conversation with the urban forms of architecture, industry and art that make up the built environment of ACCA. This project has been supported by Arts Victoria and assisted by the Australia Council for the Arts, through the Visual Arts and Crafts Strategy.

As part of the Influential Artist series ACCA produces a major catalogue to accompany each exhibition. This publication includes commissioned and republished essays and articles that add knowledge and interpretation about Cripps' practice, and the context in which, and from which he has developed his ideas. We thank all the authors for their participation in this important document. Special thanks also to the Gordon Darling Foundation whose assistance made the production of this catalogue possible.

This exhibition has been supported by our corporate partner King & Wilson and we extend warm thanks for their professional collaboration. Several of the works we have gathered reside in the collections of our colleague institutions and we thank the National Gallery of Australia, Canberra; the Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney and the Monash University Museum of Art, Melbourne for contributing to the depth of this survey by permitting important loans of works which have been rarely seen.

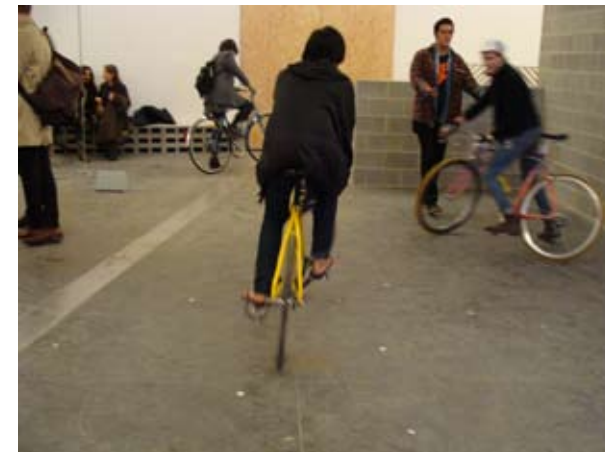
Towards an Elegant Solution has been overseen by Coordinating Curator Rebecca Coates who has worked closely with Peter Cripps over the past two and half years to realise this ambitious project. She has been assisted on team by Jane Rhodes, Liv Barrett, Matt Hinkley, Emma Sullivan and Caitlin Malcolm. We are also grateful to Anna Schwartz and Ruth Bain at the Anna Schwartz Gallery for additional assistance.

Finally our thanks to Peter Cripps and we congratulate him on the realization of this sophisticated survey which brings together a lifetime of work for the first time.

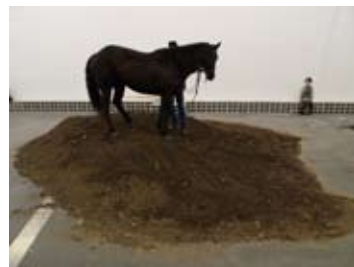
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Executive Director

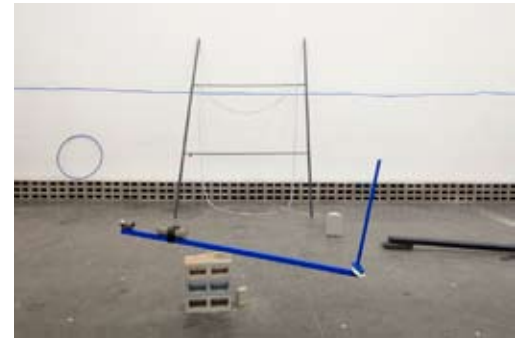










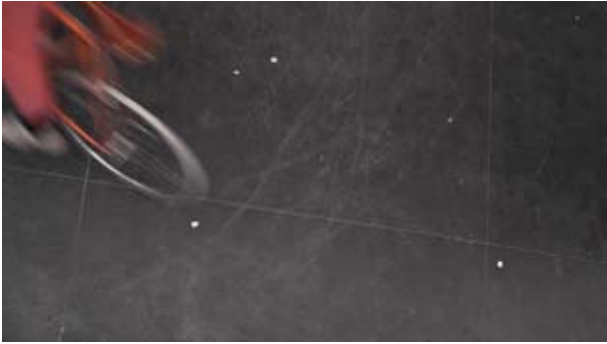
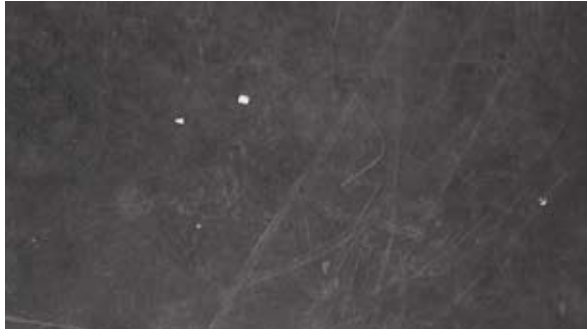




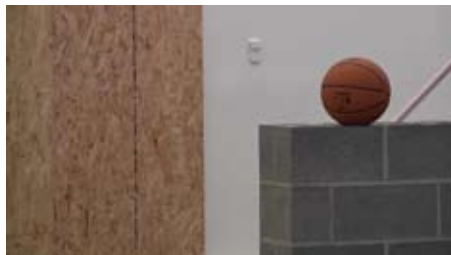


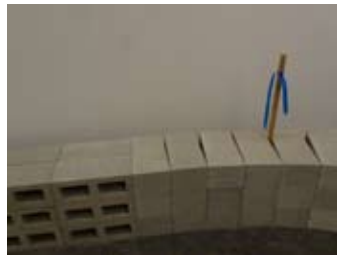
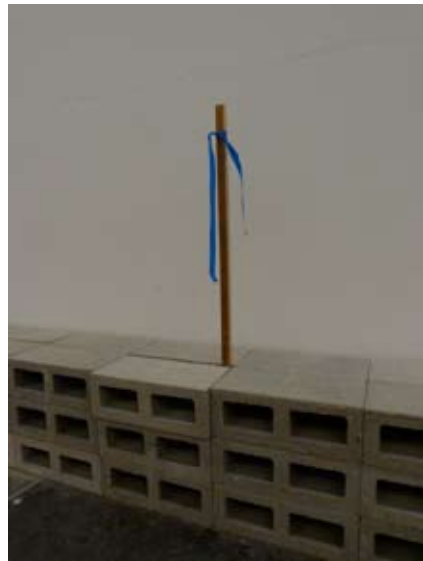


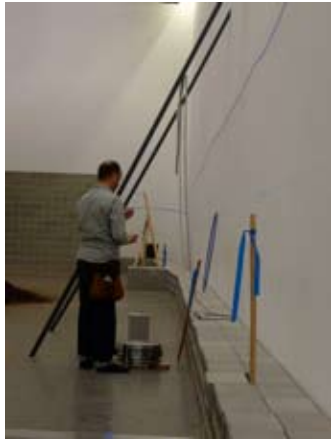










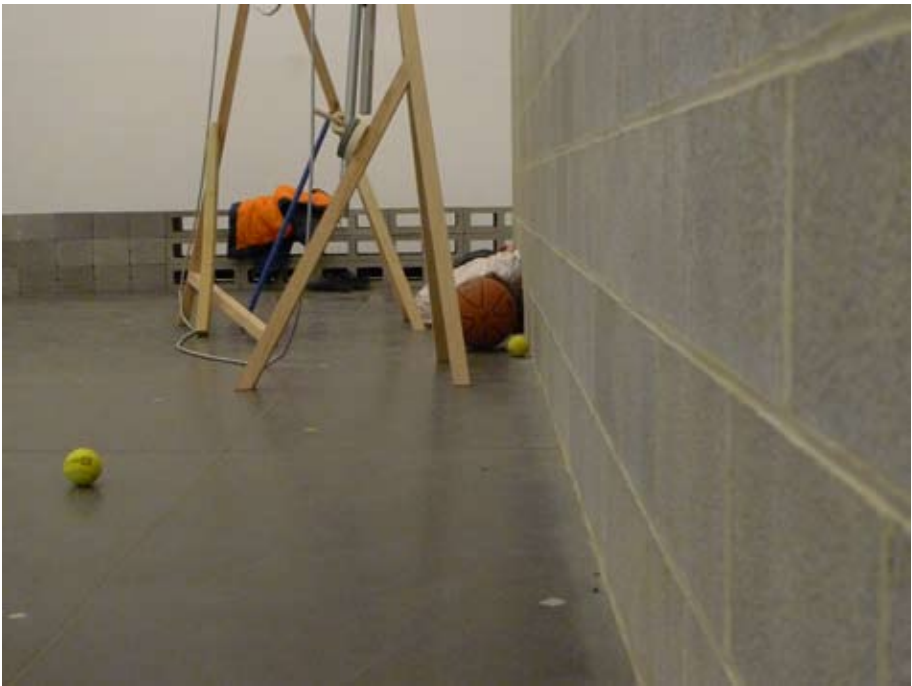


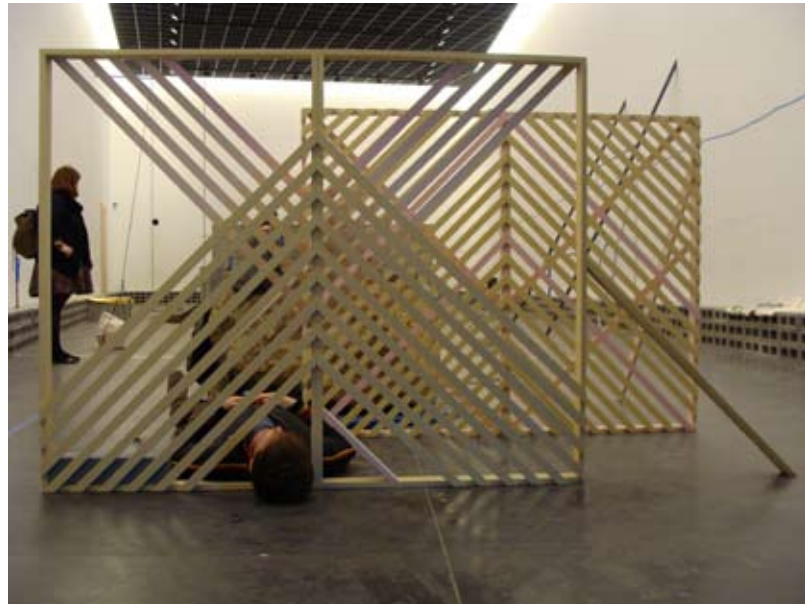


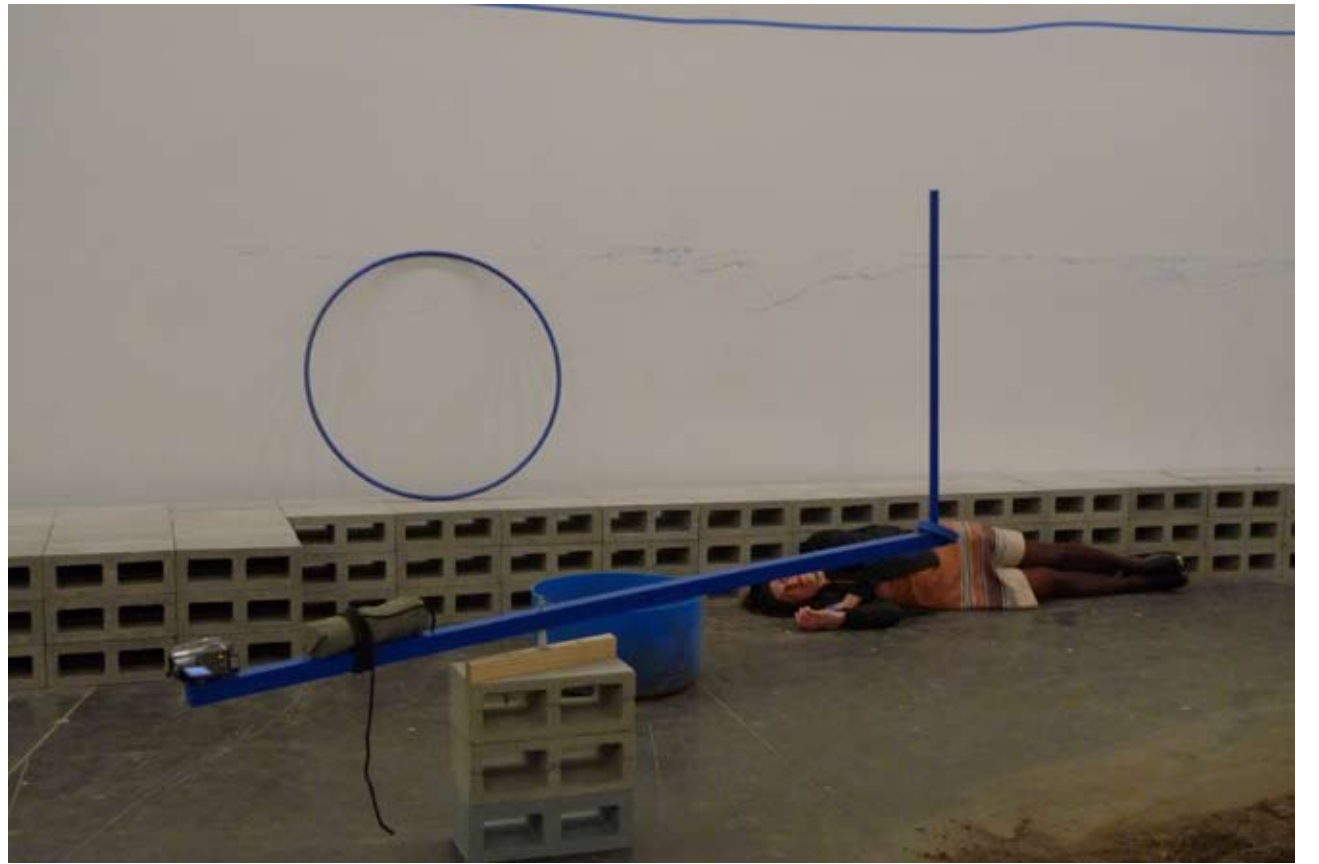




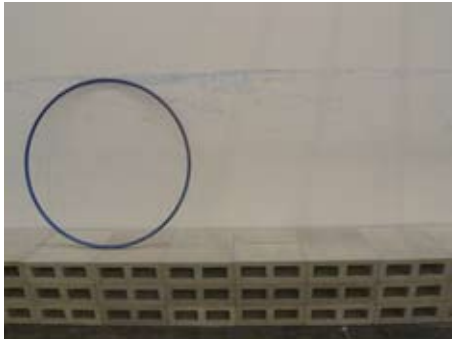


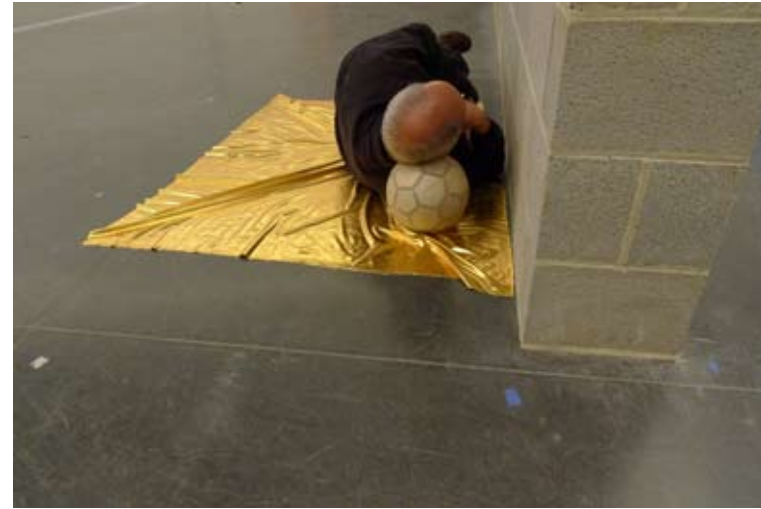


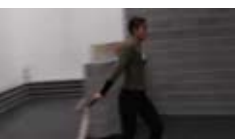


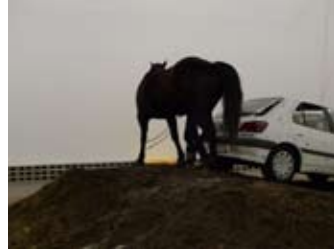
















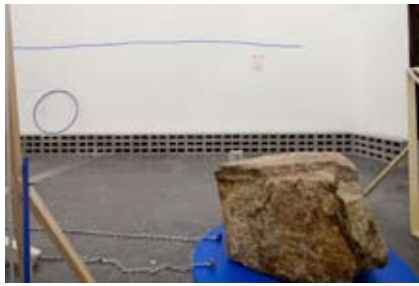












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Stalling
Notes on the Work of Bianca Hester

Andrew Benjamin

Stall.
Stalling.
And, to stall?

Not merely to install, but stalling as an event — a stall — that combines both place and activity. Delaying while acting, acting while delaying, delimiting areas of activity, housing the elements that are constitutive of the event itself. Stalling, therefore as a form of continuity. Stalling as the creating of spaces, stalls — further stalling, furthering stalling — and therefore creation as the continuity of activity. Stalling as the forestalling of ends. Stalling exists therefore as continuity, as the opening, as the disclosing that takes place within. Stalling as an interruption that does not abandon the need and possibility for direction.¹

Stalling 1
On entering, to the right of the exhibition, a sign is attached to the wall. It forms part of the exhibition without, of course, forming or determining in advance the exhibition as a whole. The sign makes a simple declaration: ACTIONS WILL OCCUR INTERMITTENTLY. The words are capitalised. There can be no sense of doubt. Within the space created by the exhibition and here at ACCA, the space, the stall, is created rather than filled; there will be other events, ‘actions’ that form part of the exhibition but which only ever occur ‘intermittently’. The content of the sign is twofold. In the first instance it announces further occurrences, which while strictly delimited — occurring only on one day or at one time during the day, for example — will nonetheless form an integral part of the exhibition. They have been scripted and participate in the exhibition’s rigorous logic. Once it is possible to attribute a logic to the exhibition, then the exhibition as a whole poses questions of relationality, including its constitution as the work of art and as an activity, rather than as the term ‘work’ designating already completed objects. The presence of a script and an ordered logic underwrites the exhibition as a whole. The challenge is the recovery, thus the continual covering, of that script. To recover a script is to insist there is an organisational logic that informs the exhibition. However, and to note the second element of the sign’s content, the script does not yield a description. To invoke a script, as has been suggested, is to evoke complex modes of relationality.

The relation between constitutive elements is one question posed by this exhibition. Equally demanding, are questions raised by the relations between the components constructing those elements. In other words, the traditional post-Duchampian question of the object, while retained, is mediated further by the question of relationality. These questions are a prerequisite to any understanding of what is taking place. Indeed, while it is impossible to forego the use of the word ‘object’, it should not be thought that these objects are simply given; what is present are sets of relations within and between what are prosaically understood as objects. Each element is a set of relations formed and informed by other sets of relations (objects). Objects exist and they are internally and externally relational. The sign containing the words ACTIONS

WILL OCCUR INTERMITTENTLY is attached to the wall. The blue tape that positions it cannot be dissociated from the ‘same’ blue occurring within other sets of relations. Complex modes of relationality endure. (A return will be made to the presence of blue; a presence that cannot be assumed to exist, thus forming and informing the work, other than in the complex of relations in which it is located.)

The sign introduces a sense of expectation. There is, within the measured time of any exhibition viewing, the possibility of actions that can only ‘occur intermittently’. In other words, within the time of viewing — tracing, noting, sensing, observing etc. — the complex interplay of elements and objects, unannounced but scripted, is the possibility of a form of interruption already incorporated. What is there becomes, as a consequence, an awaiting stall. These actions are forms of immaterial presence — actions to be realised, defined by potentiality — that become material. Another form of relation is established.

Stalling 2
The sign is read. A body will be standing before a wall in order to read the sign. Walls are a fundamental part of the exhibition, firstly announcing the presence of a space created by the building’s architecture. The intersection of the internal walls and the floor creates a line, a line that would have disclosed the place of activity. It is essential to note that this line ‘would have disclosed’ activity, as a strategy inherent to the exhibition is to defer the line while noting it. The process of noting and deferring occurs by the presence of an ordered line of grey concrete blocks, three blocks in height. Initially it runs alongside the internal wall, and then, beginning to differentiate itself, it creates another line. There is a moment of separation, introducing a line of difference. In that moment of separation the blocks establish a distance from the wall, which is integral to creating the space as the exhibition. As the line of blocks begins to separate from the wall, what had been possible, namely to sit on the blocks and lean against the wall, is no longer possible. A body that could once have lent now must perch. A different sense of sitting is introduced, the shift minor and yet fundamental. Leaning against the wall, it is transformed and takes on a double quality. In this first instance the wall is no more than a prop, holding up the body and other elements of the exhibition that also lean against it. Here art’s work works to subordinate the wall (and the building’s architecture) to its own project. As the other line emerges — as the blocks begin to part from the line created by the relationship between wall and floor — not only is the body necessarily repositioned, the wall is reintroduced. This is the second aspect, for now there is a further sense in which the wall is part of the work rather than there housing it.

Towards the end of the exhibition, an end that is equally a beginning, there is another wall. Constructed of cement blocks it cuts the space, creating further spaces or stalls. Walls recall each other. This wall has, at the very least, a doubled presence: it spaces. It cannot be dissociated from a more generalised understanding of what can be called the ‘wall-effect’ (space creation), which takes place in relation to the body. Equally, the wall cannot be differentiated from its material qualities. These become the site of relationality. The wall is concrete; equally the wall is grey, it is the site of production in terms of both the concrete blocks having been produced and the wall itself having been built. It should be added that a concern with production and eschewing the elemental are fundamental to the exhibition. Even the large pile of earth that is so central to the

work has to be understood as recontextualising that which has been produced. Earth is the result of specific and identifiable activities. Earth has its own rigorous logic of production. There is, however, another quality to the wall: abstraction. From the chains piled on the floor to the cords hanging from the ceiling, the presence of objects is insistent, their force lying in their material presence, which allows for both external and internal relations. However, force is a quality of objects. When the objects are defined by sets of relations rather than a concern with content, then the work of force is by definition abstract.

Stalling 3
With any artwork, even with the complex modes of presence that define and delimit installed spaces, it would be possible to identify its constitutive elements. Yet here the questions of constitution and what counts as a discrete object are reposed by the work’s own activity. Work is activity. Rather than being simply abandoned — as if the material presence eschewed questions of the object — such questions have to be rethought in a significantly different way. The blue of the tape that secures the sign to the wall is repeated, literally. It forms a line. Fixed to the wall, approximately 2.5 metres above the ground, it runs almost the entire length of one side of the space. Various objects contain elements of the same blue colour. A metal rod, for example, is attached at one point to the blocks; a blue plastic tub contains soil and weeds; a series of blue metal rods are joined together to construct a unit that, among other things, supports a projector casting images on the wall. This act of projection has the dual function of further incorporating the wall into the project while integrating the project’s documentation into the project itself. The wall is, in part, reworked as a stall; the wall stalling images. There is a blue metal hoop placed on the blocks and which leans on the wall. A large rock is placed on a blue mat. The blue works both to individuate and to establish relations. It is always both. Indeed, once art works beyond the retained necessity of the named object, a necessity that will always allow the object to have been retained, thus installed without stalling, through the reiteration of its being named, then identification and relationality become more complex. Artworks cannot be just described; work is an activity.

While it remains possible to establish relations by noting the presence of blue, it is possible to construct a set of connections affirming relationality within the overall work by starting with concrete, or wood or surfaces. (Other possibilities also exist.) Not only are relations between elements constructed, but elements are themselves individuated, as any one object will always be more than the reiterated presence of one quality.

Stalling 4
There exists a generalised cartographical desire, in part explicable in terms of the confluence of information and mastery. The cartographic impulse drives the desire to map as much as it does the desire to list. But it is a desire too easily satisfied. Satisfaction might occur with the production of a plan. Such a response is inherently unsatisfactory; the desire would remain. The plan does not provide an end. Within one specific understanding, the contents of a map or a list are determined in advance by the presence of delimited and named objects. But there are other modes of mapping. Mapping as a form of discovery and of charting movement in relation to the unnamed. While such a sense of mapping allows for naming and identifying discrete objects, they are only ever aftereffects produced by movement. What is of interest,

however, within this conception of mapping is the presence of a sense of movement that is potentially endless. While the list and a certain conception of the cartographical desire – a desire that will be always thwarted – takes as its end states of completion and modes of finality, what cannot be precluded from such a set up are other movements and therefore different, potentially continually different, attempts to trace relations and thus identify objects.

Mapping this exhibition would be just such an undertaking. Internal relations, external relations, the movement of the body through and within the stalls created by the exhibition, allowing the body to stall at a certain moment is to open it up to other possibilities and modes of relationality. These resist mapping while allowing for it. Mapping must remain endlessly incomplete, its possibility being the necessity of its stalling. There is, after all, a relentless logic at work here. It is not a logic completely determined; on the contrary, it is a logic in which ‘actions will occur intermittently’. All such actions will continue to allow for other stalls.

¹ I want to thank Dr Terri Bird for taking the time to discuss Bianca Hester’s exhibition with me. My own ideas remain profoundly indebted to that conversation.

This conversation started some time ago, prompted in part by the pejorative use of the term ‘formalist’ to describe artworks that seem concerned with little more than the detailing of material, colour, surface, form etc.¹

Tom Nicholson: Whenever we’re in a public forum we seem to end up talking about it. I try to resist using the word ‘formalist’ in a simple, pejorative sense. There are clearly different kinds of formalism, not just the sort that Clement Greenberg advanced. But a cranky anti-formalist lurks within...

Terri Bird: My objection to pejorative characterisations of formalism stems from observations by feminist philosophers, who draw attention to the unconsciously repressed procedures inherit in assumptions that matter is inert, simply a vehicle for form, content or ideas. Luce Irigaray, for example, emphasises the way philosophy forgets the mediums through which its representations take place. She argues there can be no change to the social order that fortifies discriminatory social practices without socialising differently our relationships to matter, and by extension the body, desire, nature and language. The same argument needs to be made for reconsidering the work of matter in relation to the work of art, which acknowledges its activity and how this activity connects to social practices. This requires an account of the conditions that produce signifying practices, which acknowledge the activity of matter, its forming potential. Greenberg’s focus on a medium’s specificity, the often-quoted flatness or non-illusionistic surface of painting, for example, is problematic because it’s predicated on an understanding of matter as merely a means to a transcendent truth; the more transparent the better. The challenge is to articulate the work of matter outside these well-worn tracks of oppositional thinking.

TN: I would start with Manet. I have been quite obsessed with his Execution of Maximilian pictures, that extraordinary set of paintings and prints, which depict Emperor Maximilian being executed by firing squad in Mexico, in 1867. Manet is also an artist with a special place in the formalist canon. For Greenberg, Manet is the painter who begins the self-reflexive historical process, which would eliminate all except what is unique and proper to painting — a process that ends with colour field painting. The frank use of paint as a material is certainly something very present in the Execution paintings. It is part of how Manet stages his struggle with the painting’s subject in successive versions of that contemporary event, the execution of a puppet leader of a failed and illegal colonial invasion, Manet’s Iraq. But it is not the formal invention of the painting in its own right that compels us in the Execution paintings, but rather the series’ relation to a whole set of problems: how we narrate through images the facts of our contemporary life; how we imagine an event that is psychologically close but physically remote; how the ‘speed’ of real time events and the ‘time’ of a painting address one another; how regarding and understanding suffering do not always coincide; how images evolve, swinging between the necessity to resolve them internally and an incessant reaching beyond, to other images, to other paintings, to chains of imaginary presences; how our rage at political injustice and the coolness of an image wrestle one another. A formalist reading of Manet cannot allow these rich (and very current) dimensions of the Execution pictures. What is ‘live’ in Manet — the very things that he could not resolve and that become the subject of the

incompleteness of those pictures — is also where Greenberg’s account no longer functions. His formalist account collapses at first base. It is autistic.

TB: The Execution of Maximilian is an interesting example, and I guess my point would be that it’s interesting not simply because of what it narrates, but how. This ‘how’ concerns the force of what appears, how it is produced through and in relationships with the materiality of painting, as an effect of the operations of various procedures or techniques. This relates to the decisions of what is detailed, or rendered clearly, and what is not — in conjunction with the considered composition of the firing squad, the detached preoccupations of the soldier preparing to deliver the coup de grâce, even the white of the belts and spats on the apparently invented uniform. In addition there is the division of the picture plane, through the positioning of the grey wall, which separates the witnesses from the site of execution. This is the work of the painting, a relationship of matter, technique and appearance, which produces its unresolved singularity, in turn inviting speculation on what it stages. It is through this materiality that it negotiates a relationship between the internal world it depicts and one beyond, where its effects engage with other events, their politics and social practices.

In a similar manner Bianca Hester’s installation stages its relationship to an exteriority, albeit through markedly different operations. For example, there is also a grey wall, constructed from cement blocks positioned towards the far end of the gallery at an odd angle, which together with the low perimeter wall, formed with the same blocks, produces an arena. This arena is activated by an array of objects, materials and animate beings — animals and people instructed to carry out actions or simply positioned in the space. Then there is the viewer, who unscripted, spontaneously engages. It is this spontaneous engagement that triggers a whole series of questions about the hospitality of the situation, in terms of the degree to which it needs to be controlled to be hosted. As host, Bianca exercises her authorship, choosing when to alter interventions or restore the work in order to allow others to engage. This ‘exercising of agency’, the scripted and unscripted participants’ agency as well as the artist’s, is a process of constant negotiation.

TN: The grey wall at the end of the space is an odd, inadvertent link between Manet’s Execution and Bianca’s work. It’s a critical form in her installation, and I found myself walking around it repeatedly. One of the acute passages in the installation is the wall’s relationship to the blue line of unbroken masking tape that runs the length of the space, continues around a corner and ends where a small hole has been punched into the end wall of the space. That blue line is very beautifully ‘of’ the body, attached to the wall at the reach of Bianca’s body (it sways and dips as it runs along the wall with the irregularity of the body’s work, and then dips down at the corner, where she clearly couldn’t stand as close to the wall as she reached up to it). That tape registers the presence of the body through its rhythm, but also draws out this presence into what must be a 40-metre unbroken line, a kind of massively extended or distilled body, a form that conflates registering the gesture of the body and charting that gesture’s duration. The grey wall breaks that line. It means that there is no place in the gallery where we can stand and see the blue line from beginning to end — which introduces the idea that we need to climb the wall and stand on top of it, as this is the only place where the blue line would be fully visible. I found myself moving around

the space, mobilised by the relationship between these two forms with such radically different material qualities: one compact and massively heavy, the other so physically light but enormously long. In art historical terms, their relationship suggests the encounter between two ways to figure the body in a sculptural form, a face-off between Carl Andre and Eva Hesse. It also makes me reflect upon the way Bianca’s installation swings between an extreme openness and changeability — spaces in which anything might occur — and definitive moments where the artist’s decisions cannot be changed but must simply be reckoned with. The grey wall is one of the work’s unchangeable forms. It is one of the few forms that has been made and which cannot easily be unmade (unlike the bricks around the perimeter of the space, which are only joined together by gravity). The grey wall breaks the blue line, but also the possibility of everything in that space being reformed endlessly. It performs a refusal. TB: I wonder what that refusal is? What it refuses, and what effects that refusal produces?

The wall does obstruct an unhindered view of the thin blue line of tape, together with an all-encompassing view of the gallery from a single vantage point. But in doing so it also enables. Like all the elements of the installation, its function is multiple; it participates in the formation of numerous assemblages. In one instance, the wall works as a surface against which to kick or throw a ball. As a wall/ball/sound assemblage it returns the energy with which it is struck, activating a different dynamic than it does as a vertical element or a built form. As a built form it combines with other constructed elements, such as the nearby OSB wall, blocking access to a neighbouring gallery; the tall, leaning, timber frame on which a stitched patchwork fabric hangs; the two timber lattice-like screens with diagonal slats painted pink and beige; and the built form of the gallery itself, revealed by the small hole you mention at the tape’s terminus, high up on the back wall. The potential of all the installation’s elements produces an operational mobility that elaborates the effects of the work, the relationships it forms, along with the sense or meaning that these provoke.

The wall also mobilises any engagement, as you note; to view the work you have to move around it, or more precisely move around in it. The way the work situates its audience, unselfconsciously as yet another element, as a part of the work, is particularly interesting. It’s one of the ways the installation creates an ambiguity between what is inside and outside the work of art. This situating of the audience also connects to what the work refuses: a privileging of an ocular-centric relationship that perpetuates a disembodied theatre of knowledge. This refusal is evident in the installation’s emphasis on corporeality and materiality, the way it re-imagines matter and bodies as other than an idea of the mind in favour of an active undecidability.

TN: I like the moments in Bianca’s installation where her decisions assert themselves in this way — like the wall — and I agree that these paradoxically enable an open-ended process of forming to occur around them, with them or against them. The possibility of the work changing during its life is constrained, and it is interesting because it is constrained, as the work invites our intervention but also resists it, or guides it. This is part of the problem of how traces of actions beget further actions (an existential problem critical to art but also beyond art, which I think is part of what the work is ultimately getting at). Traces of

Bianca’s activity create the terms for our own activity in that space. The two wrestle one another in different ways at different moments in the installation, and with different degrees of earnestness and levity.

At the risk of labouring the curious link to the Execution pictures, Manet’s grey wall is also a refusal, a refusal of illusionism. It screens the landscape behind the scene, and, through the visual rhyme between the wall and the painting’s physical surface, forces the scene of the Execution into our own space, deflecting the expectation of an illusionistic and distant space back to the viewer who stands before the painting, a kind of invasion of the work’s meaning into our own time. This is part of the complex way the work’s formal qualities articulate a characteristic internal to the work but they also continually implicate the work and its narrative in the world outside itself. I think Bianca’s wall is involved in the same questions. It is part of the way the work shifts subtly between complex relationships internal to the work and implicit links to the world outside the installation. As I spent time with the installation I found myself meditating on these shifts, and the way that the grey wall — and also the pile of dirt and the (almost) immoveable rock at the entrance — animate this shifting.

TB: This inadvertent connection of grey walls keeps returning, but I think it’s productive. As already mentioned, one of the illusions Bianca’s installation denies is the possibility of a singular, masterful comprehension of the work. This refusal operates through various procedures, like the way the installation moves you around, and by activating the potential of each element to participate in multiple assemblages within the work. For example, the blue steel gantries, which act as camera dollies, connect with other blue linear elements in the installation to form one assemblage. At the same time they link with other provisionally placed devices to form another assemblage, devices such as the timber lattice-like screens and the propped timber frame. The refusal of a singular comprehension also takes place through the shifts you mention, in and out of the frame. I’m interested in the connections this shifting stages. As Manet’s wall screens the landscape and also forms a stage, so too Bianca’s wall is part of her work’s staging one on which we are enlisted.

In one sense it’s a staging of relations, internal and external, the hinging of worlds as an effect of material operations. The mudstone rock and pile of dirt perform this function, around which the work pivots. In breaking with the world they participate in the formation of multiple assemblages within and between the elements in the installation — what you suggest could be understood in classic formalist terms as solely an internal dialogue. But this would be to miss or misunderstand the work they perform. Within the installation they have a presence as objects as well as acting as props. The mudstone sits on a blue disk to which chains are connected, indicating its potential to be repositioned. The pile of dirt is another prop on and around which actions take place. It is also in a state of flux as its contours are continually rearranged. The surface of the mudstone has been replicated through casting processes, connecting with other cast replicas of seemingly ‘natural’ objects, such as a small tree trunk and rock, and what become, by way of contrast, ‘unnatural’ objects, such as rolls of tape. But the mudstone and the pile of dirt also retain associations with the world beyond the frame of the gallery. Both have associations with building industry or urban environment, the persistent reforming of the world through construction.

The temporality of this economy contrasts, on the one hand, with the scale of geological time evident in the mudstone, and on the other, with the weeds sprouting in the pile of dirt. The hinging operation these two elements perform isn't a blurring of the boundaries between 'art and life,' but a confrontation that oscillates across this threshold.

TN: Not many of the objects in Bianca's installation display a history that precedes the show. The mudstone rock and the pile of dirt (which is distinctly non-pristine and, to me, suggests something excavated for an inner city construction) are exceptional. In the case of the mudstone rock, this exceptional status is extreme; it not only introduces to the show a time outside the space of the show, but also a massive stretch of time, a geologically-scaled process of auto-formation. Of course everything in the show has a 'history'. The masking tape was originally unformed matter, was manufactured by workers somewhere, shipped here, sold somewhere, etc. But the material in the installation — like a product we might buy at our local hardware store — mostly does not articulate this history but rather presents itself as new, as yet-to-be acted upon. The concrete blocks around the perimeter of the space don't seem recycled. They look like they have been bought new. It is the nature of masking tape that it can only be used new. You don't wind the tape up again after you have used it. This quality in the installation — material articulating itself as new — is part of the important distinction between Bianca's work and the environments of Joseph Beuys. It is also part of the installation's very consistent resistance to being read allegorically. One thing does not stand for another, for an idea. It insists upon itself, and upon our relation to it as matter. The strong sense that, for the most part, the material in the installation does not have a history before or outside the work is also important because it privileges the histories the work acquires in the gallery space. The installation has our disjointed (sometimes even solitary) accumulative collective experience of the exhibition as its history, as its duration. I think this is why the mudstone rock near the entrance is an important form. It links the whole enterprise of the installation to another time, and another time scale. It figures our relationship to this other time — and to the world we inherit and bequeath — as the form in the show which, by virtue of its weight, would most resist our intervention, our re-forming. As you say, the set-up with the disk and the chain invites us to move it, and specifically seems to invite a group of willing participants to heave it somewhere else in the space. It invites a collective sculptural activity, but its weight expresses a different invitation: to move ourselves around it, to look at it, to think.

TB: It's hard to get past this idea that at some point matter is 'unformed'; its indicative of the oppositional thinking I mentioned at the outset. My reference to the boundaries of 'art and life' fall into the same problematic of finding a language to describe the operations of matter in a way that isn't predetermined by a dualistic hierarchy. As you say, everything in the installation has a history, and I think this can be extended to an understanding of matter as never 'unformed'. It's always in some form, just not yet formed or purposefully deployed by us.

Although it's of a different register to the mudstone and pile of dirt, perhaps the other example that has the exceptional status you comment on is the horse, which has entered the installation several times as one of the scripted intermittent actions. While it has the potential to be read allegorically, it is also oddly disruptive. The unpredictability of an

animal out of its milieu has an unsettling stillness that punctures the predominate staging of the installation. It also exploits the confrontation of differing temporalities made evident through the mudstone and pile of dirt. This brings into play something similar to what you remarked on in Manet's paintings: a confrontation between the 'speed' of real time and the multiple temporalities of Bianca's installation.

TN: The duration of Manet's Execution pictures as a body of work, registered as an overt incompleteness in the first two versions, is important. It indicates that giving form to something takes place in a duration. The changes that occurred to the image's composition reflected both the flow of information from Mexico to France (the paintings evolved as the facts slowly became apparent) as well as the complicated encounter between Manet's ideas for the painting and the matter of painting itself. In the case of these paintings, this very pronounced duration is set against the violent speed of killing someone by firing squad.

In a related way, I agree that time becomes central to Bianca's installation and what it means. Her work figures facts as processes and asserts an important parallel between perceiving and forming as always being in a duration, as never finalised. This linking of perceiving and forming as ongoing processes sets up a very mobile encounter with the installation. The work triggers a constant back and forth between seeing and acting. This back and forth is sometimes funny, sometimes highly serious, but it always takes place through our faculties of imagination. This, I think, is the most profound sense in which the work activates a complex and important relationship between the world inside the work and the world outside it, that relationship which Greenberg's version of formalism cannot allow. The work suggests — or powers — the idea that we might bring to bear these faculties of imagination on the world beyond the work, an ongoing process of inventing and re-inventing the forms of our everyday living.

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"Formalist' derives its currency from the writings of Clement Greenberg, the predominant art critic and spokesman for Modernism from the 1930s through to the 1970s. Greenberg maintained, 'the unique and proper area of competence of each art form coincided with all that was unique to the nature of its medium'. [Gregory Battcock (ed.), The New Art: A Critical Anthology, New York, Dutton, 1973, p. 68] He argued the specific nature of the medium's unique character evolves over time through innovations in response, or resistance to the conventions associated with specific art forms. These conventions facilitate communication by way of shared forms that necessarily constrain any transformation to take place from within [Clement Greenberg, *Homemade Esthetics: observations on art and taste*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1999, p. 47]. Through this process Greenberg observed, 'the enterprise of self-criticism in the arts became one of self-definition' [Battcock, p. 68]. Not surprisingly, he focused on the inherited program of technical concerns in the practices he admired, arguing they offered a greater satisfaction because of the way they formalised aesthetic experience. It is this undue focus on a technical agenda and formalised approach to art making that is often referred to today when an artwork is judged to be 'formalist.'

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