



Wall of Noise, Web of Silence

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of
Philosophy

David Pledger

Masters of Arts, Monash University
Diploma of Dramatic Art, NIDA, UNSW
Bachelor of Arts, Monash University

School of Architecture and Design
College of Design and Social Context
RMIT University

August 2017

Declaration

I certify that except where due acknowledgement has been made, the work is that of the author alone; the work has not been submitted previously, in whole or in part, to qualify for any other academic award; the content of the project is the result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research program; any editorial work, paid or unpaid, carried out by a third party is acknowledged; and, ethics procedures and guidelines have been followed.

I acknowledge the support I have received for my research through the provision of an Australian Government Research Training Program Scholarship.

David Pledger
August 10, 2017

Acknowledgements

I'd like to acknowledge all the artists who have walked me out of the dark forest of artistic endeavour especially those who worked with me at my company not yet it's difficult (NYID), all the cultural operators that have provided obstacles for me to conquer, all the family members who have listened to my ideas as I assessed their worth out loud especially my wife Elise and two cheeky sons, my fellow-travellers in this, my latest adventure, including my supervisors, Lawrence Harvey and Marcelo Stamm, , Pete and James who created the interface for the website submission and my extended network of advisors, friends, colleagues and inspirations whose conversation, resistance and protest have brought my thinking and feeling to this point.

Table of Contents

Please refer to the Project website:

<http://phd.davidpledger.com/>

Summary Abstract

The Artist Formerly Known as David Pledger will release his first concept album

WALL OF NOISE WEB OF SILENCE

with

LINER NOTES

Using the moniker, **dp**, the artist takes his lead from all those brave artists who embraced the challenge of the concept album, from Brian Wilson of The Beach Boys through to Radiohead and Bjork.

“The concept album best serves my ambition to create a kind of knowledge in which aesthetics and scholarship operate in a complementary and expansive mode, so that argument may be understood simultaneously through the processes of thinking and feeling.”

dp is renowned for his exploratory and experimental artistic adventures that include The Austral/Asian Post-Cartoon: sports edition (1997), Blowback (2004), The Strangeland Triptych (2006-9), Ampersand et al (2010) and David Pledger Is Running For Office (2015).

Side 1 is **dp**'s thesis
on democracy in the age of neo-liberalism through the lens of the arts.

Side 2 is its antithesis,
an atmosphere of democracy in which artistic practice is the prevailing determinant.
Noise and silence are the aesthetic frames.
The arts, society and politics provide the windows.

“On Side 1, you’ll play ‘concept’ tracks, a mini-EP and three 12-inch 45s backgrounded by the beautiful sounds and disturbing speeches of my artistic oeuvre.

On Side 2, I take you on a journey that aspires to ‘listen’ a way towards a ‘solution’ to our deepest problem:
what to do about democracy?”

Two sides riffing off each other and a comprehensive clutch of Liner Notes that reflect on what it means for **dp**'s artistic practice.

“For thirty years,
my life as an artist has been
a procession of master shots of Western culture from different vantage points:
pop culture personality, writer, performer, director, producer, arts leader, cultural activist.
These are the band members on my new album taking the lead on some tracks,
playing back-up on others.

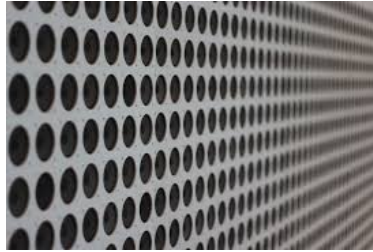
The most ambitious and comprehensive explication of my practice to date,

Wall of Noise, Web of Silence

poses the perfect question:
what next, dp, what next....?

SIDE 1 WALL OF NOISE

Sound File
Foundation Sound
K (2002-5)



please tap here

tuning in

In 1983, as MC of pop group, The Globos, I co-hosted the ABC-TV show Countdown.

The same year I had dinner with George Harrison but that's just noise.

The Globos was an homage to 1960s Australian TV pop shows such as Bandstand. We mimed songs to a clicktrack inviting (favourable) comparisons to drag shows. One of the creators, Mark Trevorrow, an encyclopedic music journalist and a frustrated pop star, introduced us to Phil Spector's Wall of Sound. The Ronettes' *Be My Baby* was one of the songs we 'covered'. It was said to embody Spector's revolutionary motif. When I first heard it, I was struck by how the singing sounded in conflict with the music; there was palpable tension between the melody and the dense forest of jangling, layered orchestral arrangement. At times, you actually could not hear the melody for the arrangement. It demanded of the listener a wholly new aesthetic challenge.

Although Spector never attempted a concept album, Brian Wilson of The Beach Boys credits rock music's first concept album *Pet Sounds* as an interpretation of Spector's Wall of Sound recording methods.¹ Notwithstanding a couple of Top-10 hits, our post-modern art-pop experiment, The Globos, did not make so profound a contribution to the cultural lexicon and I turned my attention to more serious thespian pursuits.

In 1993, as I was packing my suitcase in preparation for a tour to Japan and Korea of an Australian production of Shakespeare's *King Lear*, I had the radio on in the background and heard an interview with two sociologists arguing the deficits of something called 'managerialism'. They claimed it was going to re-shape the world. It sounded a lot like Max Weber's argument that bureaucracy was the defining agent of social change in the 20th C. I'd studied Weber in my undergraduate degree and found him a compelling thinker. Curiously the interview stayed with me throughout the tour. Even playing Edmund the Bastard, decidedly more Machiavelli than Weber, did not extinguish the persistent, prescient echo of the argument.

Within a few years, I had transmogrified from a performer into a maker of interdisciplinary artworks and the founding artistic director of a project-based arts company, not yet it's difficult (nyid). As I asserted myself as an artist in my own right,

¹ Virgil Moorefield. *The Producer as Composer: Shaping the sounds of popular music*. MIT Press. 2010. P.16

I began applying for funding from the various local, state and federal arts bodies encountering managerialism in its respective, nascent forms.

Initially you could still hear the melody of the arts above the arrangements of managerialism in the government bureaucracies. But slowly a gravitational shift occurred which drew managerialism from the fringes of arts agencies into their centre. It was like being back on-stage with The Ronettes trying to isolate the singing from the wall of sound. I am not sure at which point it tipped over and the arrangement overwhelmed the song and the whole thing transmuted into a wall of noise. But it did. Song without melody. Sound without music. Noise without signal.

And not just in the arts. This is a process that has precipitated great change in Western democratic society over the last 40 years. In trying to understand the meanings and consequences of this shift, I resolved to unpack the agency and ideology of managerialism within the material, cultural and physical impacts on the arts and artists which I hope will offer a valuable micro-study with useful macro implications.

To do so, one must first appreciate the ideological prism through which managerialism can be viewed and identify its fellow-travellers. In the first instance, the rise of managerialism coincides with the rise of neo-liberalism and the success of the one is entwined with the other.



concept #1

a neo-liberal composition

In Western democracies, neoliberalism is the ascendant ideology. Something of a shape-shifter in the early 20th C, its rise is due to the changing nature and behaviour of Capital from the mid-late 20th C.

In traditional or conventional capitalism - we are talking Adam Smith here - the cooperation of the workers is fundamental to its optimal functioning. The employer—the capitalist, the one making the profit—accepts that for capitalism to be ‘profitable’ the worker needs to be aspirationally if not concretely improving her lot.² Throughout the 20th C, Capitalism moved from this idealized, functional version through an iteration in which power was concentrated in the State towards the current version in which power is concentrated within the Corporation - a process that has essentially cannibalised the State absorbing it into a corporate superstructure.

This trajectory has been carried by the instruction of economist Frederic Hayek (1889-1992) and expanded by Milton Friedman at The Chicago School of Economics. In the 1950s, in one of its earliest and most comprehensive applications, a group of Chilean graduates of The Chicago School introduced neoliberal theory to the government of General Augusto Pinochet. Other local strains were developed in Latin America but it was in Europe and the United States that neoliberalism seeded, most prominently in the governments of Margaret Thatcher (UK) and Ronald Reagan (USA), and in Australian governments from the 1980s specifically that of Thatcher’s disciple, John

² Adam Smith. *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations, Book 1*. US: Bantam, 2003. P. 86, “A plentiful subsistence increases the bodily strength of the labourer, and the comfortable hope of bettering his condition, and of ending his days perhaps in ease and plenty, animates him to exert that strength to the utmost.”

Howard (1996-2007).

The underlying separation of values between the capitalism of neo-liberals and the capitalism of social democrats revolves around the axis of 'regard'. In Smith's analysis, human beings tend to be both 'self-regarding' and 'other-regarding'³, that is, an interest in others is as vital as an interest in oneself.

*How selfish soever man may be supposed, there are evidently some principles in his nature, which interest him in the fortunes of others, and render their happiness necessary to him, though he derives nothing from it, except the pleasure of seeing it. Of this kind is pity or compassion, the emotion we feel for the misery of others, when we either see it, or are made to conceive it in a very lively manner. That we often derive sorrow from the sorrows of others, is a matter of fact too obvious to require any instances to prove it...*⁴

Compassion's emotional sibling, empathy, is the ability to understand and share the feelings of another, and is intrinsic to our ability to have regard for others. The practice of empathy is deeply embedded in the notion of 'disinterest' as articulated by Canadian philosopher John Ralston Saul.⁵ Disinterest expresses the process for fairness, an other-regarding value that sits adjacent to equity, solidarity and sustainability, key planks of the social democracy platform.

Neo-liberals however reject the legitimacy of values that go beyond direct self-interest.⁶ Their capacity for expressing other-regarding values is either absent or deactivated. They see no place for them alongside the essential values of security, liberty and property. Self-regard is the primary behavioural trait in this value-set. Looking only in the mirror leads the neo-liberal to conclude that there is no other than the self, at least no other of value. A corollary of this practiced narcissism is an absence of empathy. This in turn leads to the valorisation of the market over the human being. Whereas social democrats believe the market is composed for people, neo-liberals advocate that people be constantly re-designed for the market.

The privileging of the market above people creates gaps that, at their worst, invite a brutalism into the interactions of human beings. Hayek himself acknowledged as much when he advised against applying this market-before-people approach to 'our more intimate groupings' such as family and voluntary associations as it "would crush them"⁷ It's a significant fault-line in a philosophy that reduces *all* things to the notation of commodity. However, Hayek's counsel has not been respected. Pity, compassion, sorrow, love, in fact any emotion is up for grabs if it can turn a profit.

The registration of emotional states as a 'trademark' is implicit in the carriage of neo-liberalism's advertorial sensibility. It is an unsustainable distortion of our humanity and one that does, as promised, threaten to crush us.

³ Vernon L. Smith. "The Two Faces of Adam Smith". *Southern Economic Journal*, 65(1). 1998. p. 3 (pp. 1-19).

⁴ Adam Smith. Chapter 1 Sympathy, Section 1 Of the Sense of Propriety. *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*. 1759

⁵ John Ralston Saul. *The Unconscious Civilisation or How Mussolini Won The War*. Penguin. Ringwood. 1997

⁶ Kevin Rudd. "Howard's Brutopia", *The Monthly*, November 2006.

⁷ Federick Hayek. *The Fatal Conceit*. Edited by William Warren Bartley. University of Chicago Press. 1988. P.18

**Sound file
Registered Trademarks
K (2002)**



please tap here

Neoliberal capitalism is a wholly unique animal. Its pathological commodification of all things leads it to break the 'social contract'. The hitherto mutual bonds of the employer and the worker are rendered null and void. Profit maximisation is its ultimate economic objective.

In this new ecology of Capital, the worker is no longer central to the equation and has been replaced by the shareholder and consumer. The shareholder's concern is: 'How much profit can I make?' The consumer's concern is: 'How much can I spend and on what?' Not only has this broken the traditional bonds on which capitalism is founded, it precipitated a chain of effects within Western democracy - and the global order - culminating in the amplification of neo-liberalism into a political project. For neoliberal capitalism to be wholly successful, democracy needs to be disabled.

Why?

In contrast to the simplicity of the market, democracy is complex. It tends to reflect the wishes of the many over the desires of the few. Democracy is time-consuming and labor-intensive. It is not economically or socially rational. It operates on a value-set of access, equity, sustainability and justice, social agenda items that reek of altruism far beyond the echo of self-interest. Democracy is anathema to neo-liberalism's economically rational, profit-maximisation mantra. It is the main obstacle to its fruition.

Throughout the late 20th C, neo-liberalism seeped into democracy's civic domain. The duality of the shareholder/consumer, an essential neo-liberal construct, displaced the worker/citizen as the primary social agent. Where previously the question 'How do we want to live?' was the basis of social interaction, the questions of profit and consumption now occup(y)ied a majority of individuals in Western democratic societies. The shift in the mental space of the individual—from that of the worker/citizen to the shareholder/consumer— has fundamentally altered the prevailing set of values that balanced social, cultural, environmental, labor and financial considerations to one dominated by the latter. With the collapse of the social-cultural contract and the rise of economic self-interest, our democratic political culture has become more vulnerable. By 2017, neo-liberalism had become a necessary and successful fusion of an economic project *and* a political project.

In the cultural sectors of Western democracy, the permeation of values underlying this compact has had devastating consequences. In the research, these consequences have been most comprehensively unpacked in the context of Britain's arts and culture scenes. It is a useful resource for the Australian condition as many of those values were imported through the British New Labour experiment (1997-2010).

In *Artificial Hells*, art historian and critic Clare Bishop disrupts the progressively political position on participatory art, the rise of which over the last decade requires attention for what it connotes in the neoliberal context. Along the way, she makes some salient

observations on the effect of British New Labour's embrace of neo-liberalism on the arts. She identifies the marriage of a 'creative industries policy', on the one hand, with an instrumentalist approach for the arts in society, on the other. It is a marriage that conflates the economic and social utility of the arts in one cultural policy, a process that displaces the intrinsic value of the arts from all cultural equations.

In the first instance, Bishop notes that subject to New Labour policy, 'the production and reception of the arts was therefore reshaped within a political logic in which audience figures and marketing statistics became essential to securing public funding.'⁸ This led to a mania of audience and market development initiatives in step with the consolidation of 'the creative industries'. Creative industries is a term created in the late 1990s by British New Labour and has its roots in the dialectical brinkmanship around the ideas of 'cultural industry' propagated by Frankfurt School members Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer and outlier, Walter Benjamin.⁹ The trajectory, from Benjamin to Blair, maps the elimination of the intrinsic value of the arts through investment in the creation of creative capital (or wealth) until such value is forsaken for price, leaving the monetisation of the arts as its sole value to society. Creative industries discourse is often criticised for its proclivity to neglect culture, concentrating exclusively on economic outcomes as the measure of success. The 'metrics virus' hits the arts hard because its funding architecture and philosophy is not supportable by mainstream economic theory.¹⁰ The value of the arts lies in emotional affect, the generation of ideas, the expression of intellectual, creative and personal freedoms, social well-being and cohesion all highly resistant to substantive measurement methodologies.

In the second instance, New Labour's cultural policy embraced an instrumentalist approach to the arts by putting the arts at the service of government as an agent of social regeneration. The pivotal artistic trope of this agency is the participation of the audience in the act of creation. Bishop argues that social participation in the arts is 'merely participation in the task of being individually responsible for what, in the past, was the collective concern of the state.'¹¹ So the artist becomes co-opted and thus complicit in the 'social contract' of neo-liberalism. The success of her art is measured by her ability to convince the participants in her project to accept its accumulating unfairness and inequality.

In *Fair Play - Art, Performance and Neoliberalism*, academic Jen Harvie locates the artist's complicity in the neo-liberal project in New Labour's urging to become entrepreneurs by transposing the artistic characteristics of risk and innovation into the business activity of the arts. She warns that the transformation of the artist into the 'artrepreneur' will lead to 'the devaluation of sociality, people, art and democracy.'¹² Harvie admirably paints an upside to every toxic agent that neoliberalism imposes upon the arts: the reduction of public funding, the reliance on philanthropic support and commercial partnerships, the creation of 'creative cities' and the cultivation of artists

⁸ Claire Bishop. *Artificial Hells: Participatory Arts and The Politics of Spectatorship*. UK. Verso. 2012. P32

⁹ Discussion of the 'cultural industry' centered around the production of cultural content in capitalist societies.

Adorno and Horkheimer framed their theory around a view of popular culture as a factory for the production of standardized cultural goods whilst Benjamin characterised popular culture as a site of left-wing resistance.

¹⁰ Ben Eltham. *When the Goalposts Move*. Platform Papers. Currency House. Sydney. 2016. P 49

¹¹ Claire Bishop. *Artificial Hells: Participatory Arts and The Politics of Spectatorship*. UK. Verso. 2012 P34

¹² Jen Harvie. *Fair Play – Art, Performance and Neoliberalism*. NY. Palgrave Macmillan. 2013. p.154

as entrepreneurs. However, she cannot help concluding that “neoliberal capitalism has ‘neoliberalized’ arts practices and damaged their potential social benefits.”¹³

Neither Bishop nor Harvie directly concern themselves with the carriage of neoliberalism through the public sector, specifically through government arts agencies. This is where my task departs from theirs. Government arts agencies at all levels tend to be regarded as recipients of, or subject to, neoliberal policy. However, in my own dealings with arts agencies, particularly in Australia, as a grant-recipient artist, producer, peer assessor, advisor and consultant, my impression has been for some time that they are often active agents in the production and proliferation of a neoliberal agenda and ambience.



concept #2 a managerialist arrangement

In his novel, *Dark Diversions*, John Ralston Saul compounds the elements of neo-liberalism’s narrative into a basic formula. Disguised as a fiction writer, he attends a lecture by noted Italian Fascist, Gianfranco Fini, of whose ruminations he observes:

*He was sewing together into one the original fascist corporatism with contemporary managerialism and the rising forces of neo-conservatism.*¹⁴

Of interest is what Ralston Saul names ‘contemporary managerialism’. The success of neo-liberalism has been in no small part a result of ‘the adoption of managerial practices that focus on issues of economic efficiency and increasing productivity in particular sectors’.¹⁵ The language here is important because of its reductive nature. Efficiency. Productivity. The umbrella term ‘managerial practices’ is a descriptor of behaviours and belief systems that equate with a way of looking at the world that has taken hold widely and aggressively within our private and public sectors.

More than a corporate social philosophy, managerialism is an ideology created by managers for managers. Its genesis lies in the thinking of organisational psychologist, Elton Mayo, an ex-patriate Australian and Harvard academic. Mayo considered democracy ‘divisive and lacking in community spirit’, a view that led him to look towards corporate managers to restore social harmony that he believed the uprooting experiences of immigration and industrialization had destroyed and that democracy was incapable of repairing.¹⁶ Within neo-liberal discourse, managerialism can be arranged just so:

*the set of knowledges and practices that inform neoliberal operations and organisational governance.*¹⁷

¹³ Jen Harvie. *Fair Play – Art, Performance and Neoliberalism*. NY. Palgrave Macmillan. 2013. P.357

¹⁴ John Ralston Saul. *Dark Diversions: A Traveler’s Tale*, Toronto: Viking Canada, 2012. P. 178

¹⁵ Nichole Georgeou and Susan Engel. “The Impact of Neoliberalism and New Managerialism on Development Volunteering: An Australian Case Study”, *Australian Journal of Political Science*. 2011. 46:2, 297-311

¹⁶ James Hoopes. *Managerialism: Its History and Dangers in Historically Speaking* 5.1. Baltimore, Maryland: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003.

¹⁷ Nichole Georgeou and Susan Engel. “The Impact of Neoliberalism and New Managerialism on Development Volunteering: An Australian Case Study”, *Australian Journal of Political Science*. 2011. 46:2, 297-311

This arrangement has significant implications for the arts and cultural sectors. For in much of Western democracy, it is through the public sector that the relationship of the arts and culture to society is mediated. The insinuation of a set of knowledges and practices that inform neoliberal operations and organisational governance in the public sector inevitably led to a radicalisation of its functions, objectives, values and behaviour. This is evident in the arts and non-arts sectors, the latter I will allude to in the final tracks of this side of my concept album.

The problem for managerialism is that art is more like a gas than a mineral; it's hard to contain, process, control and infiltrate. As soon as you think you have a handle on it, it morphs into something else. The nature of the arts' 'core business' - making art - is an alchemical process that resists concretization. Echoing neo-liberalism's relationship to democracy, managerialism sees itself as an antidote to this chaos, irrationality, disorder, and incompleteness¹⁸ - art-making's essential elements. So to inhibit the alchemical process of art-making, arts agencies mutated various versions of managerialism.

The Arts Council of England (ACE) has long been regarded one of western democracy's more instrumentalist arts agencies. Its mission to help the arts field create culture has often been disrupted by its desire to curate culture on its own behalf. In her comments about the insinuation of neoliberal values into the ACE's operation, Jen Harvie remarks on its forceful enthusiasm for the task.¹⁹ Next-door, Scotland's national arts agency, Creative Scotland, moved to apply the language of the 'investment paradigm' to funding - government grants became investment opportunities in 2011 - a move that precipitated a year-long backlash from the Scottish arts community over the cultural change within the agency that led to the resignation of CEO Andrew Dixon.²⁰

One of the more egregious local examples occurred in one of Australia's largest states, the State of Victoria. When elected to government in 2014, the Australian Labor Party adopted seemingly verbatim British New Labour's neoliberal arts playbook of a decade earlier by replacing the state arts agency, Arts Victoria, with a new super agency, Creative Victoria, a direct consequence of the replacement of the Ministry for the Arts by the Ministry for Creative Industries. Victoria is now the only Australian state which has no Ministry for the Arts. The arts has been 'disappeared' into the new acronym, MCI, like some Politburo member in a Milan Kundera novel, airbrushed from history overnight by a bureaucratic sleight-of-hand. A government's ministerial composition reflects its values to society. The erasure of the arts from the public consciousness of government business indicates its diminution in the political culture and encourages the same view in society.

These are all examples of arts agencies that are 'of the government', and whose actions and behaviours need to be read within that context.

It is my intent to use a case study of Australia's national arts agency, the Australia Council for the Arts, constituted by its own Act that enshrines its independence and

¹⁸ Patrick Fitzsimons. "Managerialism and Education". *Encyclopedia of Philosophy of Education*. 1999. P. 4

¹⁹ Jen Harvie. *Fair Play - Art, Performance and Neoliberalism*. NY. Palgrave Macmillan. 2013. pp 139-145

²⁰ <https://www.theguardian.com/culture/charlottehigginsblog/2012/dec/03/andrew-dixon-resigns-creative-scotland>

arms-length funding.²¹ This independence means that there is a space between it and government that provides us an objective, at times, panoramic view of its behaviours and allows us to draw conclusions without needing to extract them from an analysis of government. As such it represents an excellent opportunity to examine neoliberal behaviour within the public sector and identify aspects of managerialism that are most emblematic of that behaviour.

Federally, from the mid-2000's Australia's national arts agency, the Australia Council for the Arts (ACA), built an institutionalised process by which art and artists could be observed and policy developed to 'manage' it and them.

In reaction and response to this process, the ACA's situation has been in flux for some years due to a chain of events:

- the 2012 Review of the ACA
- the Review's recommendations contained in Creative Australia (the National Cultural Policy of the Labor Government adopted in 2013)
- the deletion of that policy by the incumbent (and more) conservative Coalition government in 2014
- the retraction in 2015 and partial reinstatement in 2016 of 15% of the ACA's budget by the Coalition government²²
- the Senate Inquiry into the Impact of the 2014 and 2015 Commonwealth Budget decisions on the Arts
- the transfer of the remainder of the 'retracted funds' from the Ministry for the Arts to the ACA in 2017.²³

The following case study constructs a narrative of managerialism in the ACA from the purview of the independent artist referring to these events and changes within the ACA.²⁴ By so doing I intend to highlight the *ill-(a)effects* of managerialism on the arts sector, in general, and artists in particular. I also intend that these behaviours are analysed in such a way as to make them useful when refracted through non-arts sectors. I will also highlight the implications for democracy as managerialism appropriates the democratic mode of 'consensus' – a mode of thinking that 'consults' and attempts to manage change – and entombs it in a never-ending cycle.

²¹ Changes to the Act occurred in 2012 which some may argue necessitated a closer relationship to government than previous iterations. However, key principles of independence and peer-assessment were maintained.

²² <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-11-20/overhaul-sees-budget-cuts-to-australia-council-partially-reverse/6957870>

²³ <http://www.mitchfield.com/Media/MediaReleases/tabid/70/articleType/ArticleView/articleId/1330/New-portfolio-arrangements-for-the-Arts.aspx>

²⁴ For our purposes, 'independent artist' describes a professional Australian artist working outside a major or key organisation in the Australian arts sector.



Mini EP (not) the style council

The Australia Council's mission is to:

*support the creation, presentation and appreciation of distinctive cultural works by providing assistance to Australian artists and making their works accessible to the public.*²⁵

The ACA's mission requires a balance of tasks including the provision of funding for artists and companies to make and present their work and the advocacy of those artworks, artists and the arts in general to the broader community to enable and enhance their appreciation.

In order to carry out its mission, the ACA relies on expert advice from artists and cultural operators – enshrined in the principle of peer assessment - and the tasks of management performed by bureaucrats. In the half-dozen or so years leading up to the 2012 Review of the Australia Council, the execution of its mission became distorted as managerialism slowly infected the agency.

The following are key 'indicators' or symptoms of this infection.

(1) *Transference of Knowledge* Integral to the application of managerialism is a belief in the transference of 'knowledge' or management practices across industries. This means that the skills required to run a marketing department in a telecommunications company are considered the same as those required to run a national arts organisation - the methodology is the same regardless of an organisation's core business. In the ACA, this is evidenced in the appointment of a former marketing director of a telecommunications company to the position of CEO.²⁶ Managerialism often cuts deepest in organisations where managers are professional managers as opposed to managers with relevant industry expertise.

(2) *Decrease of Staff with Professional Arts Practice Backgrounds* The ACA's recruitment policy for senior staff preferred those with minimal experience or understanding of art-making other than through the prisms of management, bureaucracy, communications and marketing (a marker also of the professionalisation of the sector). Fewer artists were employed as officers, a situation in contrast to the ACA's formative years.

(3) *The Rise of Managers* The agency of managers became inversely proportional to the agency of the artist. As the artist's agency decreased, the manager's agency increased in terms of influence, income and reach. Managerialism tends to be felt *most* profoundly where the industry's primary workers are endemically marginalized as is the case of artists in the arts. This is how managerialism is both a medium of neo-liberalism and a function of it. At the ACA, this was most explicit in the breakdown of art form board representation across artists and managers. In February 2013, during research for a commissioned essay, I invited a relevant sample of artists and curators

²⁵ <http://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/workspace/uploads/files/news/australia-council-annual-report-2014-15.pdf>

²⁶ Kathy Keele was the CEO of the ACA from 2007 – 2012 when she resigned.

to assess the proportion of artist representation on the ACA's art form boards to which they were most closely aligned. The survey produced a surprisingly varied snapshot. The Visual Arts and Music boards had six of seven members who identified as artists. The Dance Board had two of seven members who identified as artists and the Theatre Board just one. In few of these instances were the artists, independent—that is, not formally attached to an institution such as a company or a university. The high concentration of managers in the influential position of assessing the artistic merit of artists' applications was entirely problematic not to mention potentially in breach of the ACA's mission with respect to the latter two Boards aligning with its stated values as outlined in my case study.

A direct consequence of this infection of managerialism was the development of an 'organisational torsion' that privileged infrastructure over artistic creation and narrowed the public appreciation of art into the 'audience development' paradigm. A number of initiatives, strategies and directives throughout the 2000s exemplify this shift:

- the Audience Development Initiative funded (unsuccessful) efforts to increase audience sizes in the Major Performing Arts Organisations (MPAs)
- the Major Performing Arts Organisations Collaborative Projects program was established to facilitate projects between Key Organisations (representing the small-medium sector) and MPAs, with the MPAs the program's funding-recipient
- the Managing And Producing Services (MAPS) Initiatives
- the historical, tacit quarantining of funding to MPAs which was formalised by the cuts to the 2015 Arts Budget made by then Arts Minister, George Brandis, a status retained by his successor, Senator Mitch Fifield

But for the last instance, these are programs funded by the ACA's discretionary funds which is the only space of funding within the agency that accommodates the work of independent artists.

So rather than give money directly to artists for their art-making it was diverted to amplify the management architecture around them or to programs from which they were exempt. A whole generation of artists was left to scavenge. Unsurprisingly, Australia's professional artist-population decreased from 2001-2006 for the first time since 1987, and remains static,²⁷ whereas the reverse is the case in the population of arts administrators (whether manager, producer, marketer, presenter or programmer).²⁸

These actions document the insinuation and consequences of a set of 'implicit values' - sometimes called 'shadow values' - which run counter to the ACA's stated values of service, diversity, respect, collaboration, leadership, resilience and integrity.²⁹ It is in the shadow of the agency's stated values that the consequences of 'deep managerialism' are practised.

²⁷ David Throsby and Anita Zednik. *Do You Really Expect To Get Paid?*. Australia Council for the Arts. 2010. P. 7

²⁸ David Throsby and Anita Zednik, 2010. P. 14. Artist occupations' share of arts employment fell from 35% in 1996 to 27% in 2006 while arts-related occupations' share increased from 48% to 61% respectively.

²⁹ In the ACA's *Corporate Plan 2015-2019*, the value 'respect' was replaced with 'resilience'.

http://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/workspace/uploads/files/australia_council_for_the_arts-55e50dcf21a28.pdf

service market

We are reliable and engaged with our clients and communities, and pride ourselves on the pursuit of excellence in all our endeavours.

In the managerialist paradigm, public service is a governance structure geared to 'market efficiency'³⁰. It is an appellation which in a public service agency is entirely problematic as it establishes an unproductive friction between service to the public and service to the market. The bastard-child of the two service paradigms is a cacophony of competing values. This has been prosecuted to crippling effect in the small-medium and independent sector, a key source of the agency's 'clients and communities'.

At the Service of The Board To make the small-to-medium arts sector 'market efficient', the ACA imposed upon the sector's organisational avatar, Key Organisations, the governance structures of the MPAs - institutions that often privilege commercial considerations over art-making.

The value-set of these governance structures manifests deeply in the establishment and operation of their Boards.

Internally, the effects can be draconian. When, as an artist, I was involved in the presentation culture of the major Australian festivals, in three separate instances I was told by Artistic Directors that their Boards would never allow them to program particular artworks as they might be perceived as transgressive.³¹

Externally, however, Australian arts boards tend to 'roll-over' in the face of external challenges. The Sydney Theatre Company's Board is a case in point. When, in the aftermath of the Coalition Government's dramatic retraction of ACA funds in the 2015 Budget, STC Chair David Gonski was reportedly dissuaded by the Minister's advisors to put his company's name to a letter of protest.³² But it is the ACA's own Board that provides the worst example. In response to the sustained assault on the agency by Arts Minister George Brandis, the Board displayed a deafening, corporate silence that has delivered an abject lack of service to the agency, the arts sector and the public. This genre of 'board culture' is the given reference point for the small-to-medium sector.

At the Service of Knowledge Transferring knowledge from one sector to another without regard to the idiosyncratic operating contexts of either sector is a hallmark of managerialism. It is often projected internally within the recipient-sector. Once again, transferring the governance structures of major organisations onto the small-to-medium sector exemplifies this managerialist conceit.

Rather than allowing small-to medium organisations to grow in response to, and at the service of, the diverse processes of artistic creation, organisations were built (or mutated to look) like mini-MPAs and then artists poured into them like wet cement, only to harden and concretize.

³⁰ Patrick Fitzsimons. "Managerialism and Education". *Encyclopedia of Philosophy of Education*. 1999. P. 4

³¹ These conversations were undertaken in confidence in international presenting contexts in Montreal in 2005, Brussels in 2008 and Essen in 2010.

³² <https://www.crikey.com.au/2015/05/29/major-arts-companies-throw-little-guys-under-the-bus-after-brandis-shake-up/>

Governance once meant guidance, not the pathological over-regulation that the agency uses to control the independent and small-medium sector. This one-size-fits-all approach is counter-intuitive to the reality that these areas of artistic production are varied, complex and changeable, and ignorant of the rich vein of knowledge it produces.

At the Service of Business The ACA's relationship with the small-medium sector was defined by the long-term use of the 'Business Plan' as an application template for funding those small-medium companies upgraded to Key Organisations where economic and administrative criteria are privileged above artistic merit and integrity.³³ The oft-repeated mantra of philanthropist, businessman and inaugural ACA Theatre Officer, Carrillo Gantner, bears remembering here:

*The arts should be business-like but they are not a business.*³⁴

Adding ignorance to incompetence, few if any ACA staff had sufficient expertise or experience in business to provide appropriate advice in the new paradigm. Many of the agency's clients, artist-applicants like myself, felt the staff were in a constant process of upskilling due to a top-down directive which led to an internal risk-management approach that imposed further levels of compliance on applicants as staff provided advice of which they were uncertain. The internal logic of these adjustments is labyrinthine.

Unsurprisingly, the new governance values were communicated via a language and process that created further distance between the artist and the bureaucrat. The penetration of this language co-opted from the corporate sector has had bizarre manifestations.

Small-medium companies employing no permanent full-time staff and/or a handful of part-time staff are headed up by a CEO (Chief Executive Officer). Often as not that position is taken by a manager, administrator or producer, further displacing the artist from a position of influence. In some cases, where artists doggedly hold on to the company's power-spot, they retain the corporate nomenclature in which the ACA has invested. Where there is often just an artist and one or two others part-time in an office, 'The Artist as CEO' is beyond parody, a performative reality show where no-one is present or switched on to witness the joke.

Incidental Art-Making As the small arts company has become a new field in which to grow governance protocols in a perversion of the agency's value of service, art-making has been relegated to incidental activity. This process runs counter to the social agency of the arts and leaves it vulnerable to the reductive processes of economic rationalism, productivity and efficiency. Perversely, growth is obfuscated.

Sound File #1

 **Press Conference (2017)**
please tap here

³³ The Business Plan template was renamed 'Strategic Plan' in 2012.

³⁴ Carrillo Gantner and Allison Carroll. *Finding A Place On The Asian Stage*. Platform Papers. Currency House. 2012

diversity homogeneity

We respectfully embrace individual and collective differences.

Ecological diversity In 1986, The Macleay Report³⁵ recommended the establishment of a Major Organisations Unit which cleaved around 80% of the ACA Performing Arts Board's disburseable funds.

This act established a dichotomy which has characterised the Australian arts sector for three decades. In one chamber sits the major organizations and in the other, the independent arts community in which one finds individual artists and groups, small to medium in size.

Two separate ecologies, collectively different.

Few of the dynamics of the independent sector have correlatives in the mainstream of the majors; few companies across the two sectors share the same artistic values, organisational design or professional aspiration. The independent arts community fulfils a separate mission to that of the major organisations.

The two parts are not interdependent - as is often proposed - although they are related by a flow of artists and arts workers. Nor is it correct to say that the independent arts community is a feeder for the major organisations. It operates within its own parameters of organisational integrity. The independent arts community and the small-medium companies create their histories show-to-show, alter their mission to accommodate art-form evolution and social change and reinvent their artistic practices of necessity. Major organisations, to a lesser or greater degree, are defined by their history, their longstanding mission, and the performing art-form they are tasked with preserving. Issues of governance must necessarily respond to such different ways of behaving. What is true is this: whilst fundamentally different in operation, artistic practices and values, the two ecologies tend to thrive when each is doing as well as the other. In this way, the relationship is closer to a symbiosis.

In contrast to this view, in early 2012, the ACA introduced a structural reorganisation in which the MPAs and Key Organisations were brought under the one umbrella. This move added to the widespread suspicion in the field that the ACA viewed the small-to-medium sector as a feeder mechanism for the MPAs and not a separate ecology.

This perception reinforced the motivations behind Brandis' 2015 cuts to the ACA at the expense of the small-medium and independent sector and his privileging of the MPAs in the guidelines of the Ministry's newly established entity, the National Program for Excellence in the Arts (NPEA) – later rebranded Catalyst by his successor. These guidelines excluded individual artists from the application process.³⁶

In contrast to the ACA's perception of the independent and small-medium sector, evidence constituted at the 2015 Senate Inquiry into the Arts ascribes to the small-medium and independent players the very model of sectoral, art-form, ethnic and linguistic diversity, a model that has been fundamentally compromised by Brandis'

³⁵ Australia Parliament. Patronage, power and the muse: inquiry into Commonwealth assistance to the arts. House of Representatives Standing Committee on Expenditure. 1986. Canberra. Government Printer

³⁶ <http://www.limelightmagazine.com.au/news/first-details-npea-guidelines-revealed>

actions. The value of the performing arts in Australia is diversity, not an homogeneity built on monolithic cultural constructs. The collective differences the ACA 'respectfully embraces' does not include those within the arts sector it administrates.

The artist's diverse agency Further to this is the 'pogrommatic' approach to the diverse agency of individual artists. In order to communicate, reflect, engage and lead, artists require a singularity of purpose, identity and practice; an active individualism from which they express themselves artistically and with integrity.

Managerialism specifically denies that the fundamental nature of society is an aggregation of individuals.³⁷ Unsurprisingly arts agencies such as the ACA have in recent times manifest an aversion to artists and, in particular, to artists operating independently.

In order to deal with them, the ACA's solution has been to turn the artist-individual into an artist-organisation. Artists have been encouraged to 'incorporate', to turn themselves into associations, companies - mini-institutions. In this way, the artist reflects an image the arts agency can recognise and organise within its own mechanistic view of the world.

For their part, the artist is introduced to the world of normative accountability and compliance that, through sheer weight, sidelines their artistic practice and endeavour – a direct consequence and goal of managerialism, as artistic expression is idiomatic to democracy, and, as I have argued, democracy is the main obstacle to the success of the neo-liberal economic project.

Policy initiatives arose out of this need to control the artist. In Theatre, the 2008 decision to redirect presentation costs away from project funding to venues deprived artists of their agency in dictating the direction of artistic and cultural production at a grassroots level. Where once it was possible for artists to use production grants to decide *where* they wished to produce a work and with *whom*, that responsibility passed to programmers and producers.³⁸

For the independent theatre artist, this was a disaster.

For example, my practice had been uniquely defined by its capacity to pop-up artworks in unexpected sites such as a car-park, a stables, a suburban house, an army and navy club. This new regulation radically compromised my agency as an artist and the integrity of my practice. I had to go cap in hand to the new gate-keepers whose support became vital in the financing and presentation of my project. Whereas previously artists could have self-presented, now they were wholly subject to curatorial discretion. Five years later, the ACA altered the relevant clause which relaxed the compulsion of artists to secure a presenter without which their applications were ineligible. However, the new condition was modified to 'strongly recommend' they still do so.

The ACA's language and tone in the communication of this single, conditioning

³⁷ Willard F. Enteman. *Managerialism: the emergence of a new ideology*. University of Wisconsin Press. 1993. Madison, Wi. USA

³⁸ Production grants "support the premiere season of public performances of a new work and the stages leading up to it, where a presenting partner has already committed to a project."
<http://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/grants/2013/theatre-new-work>

directive manifest the agency's pathological distrust of artists and their capabilities, a distrust that in public meetings bordered on distaste and disrespect.

Sound File #2

 **Press Conference (2017)**
please tap here

respect disrespect

The introduction of prescriptive measurement tools compounds the ACA's antagonistic relationship to the artist and her work. The Artistic Vibrancy tool, is a telling example. The concept of "Artistic Vibrancy" reportedly arose from discussions with some board members of MPA organisations who complained they had no shared language with their Artistic Directors. Senior ACA management resolved to invent a new language. This was deemed to be so revelatory that it was passed on to Key Organisations³⁹ adding to the burden of KPIs required to comply with their contractual obligations. Worse, it validated the spurious role industry gossip plays in the assessment process. As an ACA staff member explained to me, a measure of one's artistic vibrancy was that you are being talked about in theatre foyers. To any artist, the idea that 'foyer chat', of which they are the subject, is one measure on which future art-making applications are assessed is insulting and disrespectful. It reflects poorly on the overall culture of measurement and the agency that initiates and legitimises it.

Aside from the sheer idiocy of this measurement, the anomalies are manifold, not the least of which is how MPA organisations have, in the first place, board members who cannot converse with their Artistic Directors and, in the second place, how artistic vibrancy can be a useful measure for a sector that behaves not at all like the MPAs.

Processes like these support the notion that managerialist values have taken hold within the agency as they reflect the concentration of decision-making in a managerial paradigm as opposed to a cultural one. They are based on ignorance, and do nothing but misrepresent the complexity of artistic practice and production, and engender disrespect for and from the artist.

Sound File #3

 **Press Conference (2017)**
please tap here

collaboration elitism

We actively work with one another and our stakeholders to realise our shared purpose.

The managerialist values of efficiency and productivity are at odds with the notion that

³⁹<http://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/strategies-and-frameworks/artistic-vibrancy/>

the arts are first and foremost a public good. It is a disruption that demands the arts compete economically as an industry with other industries. As has been argued earlier, arts funding aligns in no favourable way with mainstream economic theory. The paradigm of economic competition reduces the arts to a commodity in the marketplace, a situation which is untenable and unsustainable because its real value is non-monetary. The dynamics of this contradiction is at the heart of the argument surrounding the value of the arts. Novelist Maria Vargas Llosa locates it where 'the *price* became confused with the *value* of a work of art.'⁴⁰

In receiving and embracing the managerialist orthodoxy, the ACA failed to fulfil a crucial platform of its mission which is to advocate and by implication to defend the arts as a public good, the purpose it shares with its 'stakeholders' - artists, companies and institutions. Through its Market Development department, the ACA began 'selling' the arts as cultural product thereby leeching its intrinsic value from practice and public discourse. This approach had dramatic consequences in the values-shift of the cultural sector and within the ACA itself. Internally, competition became an institutionalised mindset as artform departments competed for the greatest share of the ACA's budget. This competitive mentality was then projected onto the professional field forcing a fundamental 'disconnect'.

Artists, companies, organisations and institutions rely on each other to cooperate in the creation, development and engagement of audiences for the kinds of work they produce and the kind of ecology they wish to inhabit. Valorising competition within the arts is destructive and counter-productive to its reach and relevance and ignores the symbiotic mechanisms on which the arts in Australia were founded and operate. It disrupts the notion of 'shared purpose'.

This is exacerbated by the fact that MPA organisations are not subject to any competitive context. On the contrary they are governed by an unspoken mandate of entitlement. Again, Brandis' quarantining of the MPAs in his 2015 extraction of funds from the ACA's budget confirmed this historical, tacit principle of governance in the Australian arts.⁴¹

An even greater perversity is found in evidence presented at the Senate Inquiry into the Arts brought about by Brandis' incursion.⁴² In the shadow of an FOI application to the ACA, Ben Eltham eventually received statistics from the ACA – vital information previously withheld from the journalist and administrators who had made similar requests - that proved the engine room of Australian arts in terms of reach, influence and productivity is *not* the MPAs – as Brandis had asserted at a 2014 Senate Estimates Hearing - but the small-medium organisations and independent artists.⁴³ In effect, Brandis was simply towing the ACA line and explains, in part, its reluctance to publicly contest Brandis' actions. This institutionalised perception, borne of cultural inbreeding,

⁴⁰ Mario Vargas Llosa. *Notes on the Death of Culture, Essays on Spectacle and Society*. London. Faber and Faber. 2015. P.28.

⁴¹ <https://www.thesaturdaypaper.com.au/news/politics/2015/08/01/senate-inquiry-george-brandis-arts-funding-plans/14383512002192>

⁴² http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Legal_and_Constitutional_Affairs/Arts_Funding


⁴³ http://www.crikey.com.au/2015/09/18/brandis-is-wrong-small-arts-orgs-deliver-much-greater-bang-for-govt-buck/?wpmp_switcher=mobile

reveals the ACA's default setting that values major organisations above the independent and small-medium sector and reinforces its elitist operating procedures.

The ACA failed not only to realise its shared purpose of advocating for the arts as a public good, it obfuscated the delivery of key sector statistics and prosecuted a hierarchy that did not accurately reflect the true nature of Australia's cultural landscape nor the real value of artists' seminal and ongoing contribution. Here, collaboration is engaged in a singular relationship and with a single purpose, to foster and protect the elite class of the Australian arts scene, the MPAs.

Sound File

#4

 Press Conference (2017)

please tap here

leadership management

We advocate our vision and inspire its achievement through our shared knowledge and sector engagement

On March 18, 2017, Minister for the Arts, Mitch Fifield, announced that the remainder of the funds that had been retracted from the ACA in 2015 by his predecessor, George Brandis, would be passed back to it. In a national newspaper, philanthropist Neil Balnaves took this opportunity to call for new leadership saying, "the Australia Council had failed its constituents and now was a good time to appoint more robust leaders".⁴⁴

Balnaves' intervention should not be underestimated. It is uncommon for a philanthropist to publicly speak so critically of the leadership of a national arts agency and exemplifies the extent to which the arts sector no longer had confidence in the Council's capacity to navigate the terrain ahead.

Six months earlier, at the conclusion of the Senate Inquiry into the Arts, politicians from across the spectrum rose in the Senate and elevated the Australia Council to the apotheosis of its moral authority and sector leadership in its 50 years of operation. Only problem, Council did not notice or understand or thank the sector which had advocated on its behalf during the Inquiry for delivering this historical moment.

Such lack of sector engagement was entirely consistent with Council's behaviour throughout a year regularly pockmarked by leadership deficit to the point where it was remarked upon to CEO Tony Grybowski in Senate Estimates in early 2016.⁴⁵ When Greens Senator, Scott Ludlum, asked the CEO for the Australia Council's response to the Senate inquiry into the budget cuts, he 'said he did not have one'.

⁴⁴ <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/arts/call-to-clear-out-australia-council-leaders-after-funding-cuts-restored/news-story/13b54e209d83c35f13abd47e5c171c7d>

⁴⁵ Michaela Boland. *Australia Council CEO Tony Grybowski accused of bowing to Libs*. The Australian, Feb 10, 2016.

*“You’re not just sitting back and taking it, is that what you’re telling me?”
Senator Ludlum said. “It concerned the operations and funding of the
Australia Council, that’s all.”⁴⁶*

In a later exchange Labor Senator, Catryna Bilyk, said:

*“I think the council’s been conspicuously silent about the Coalition’s savage
attack on it and the arts sector in general.”*

When announcing radically reduced key organisational funding to a fraught sector in May 2016, Grybowski’s insensitive comments that it was ‘history-making’ highlighted the distance between real life and bureaucratic life.⁴⁷ In stark contrast, it was revealed that Grybowski and five senior ACA staff members accepted a performance bonus in a year in which their leadership oversaw a tsunami-sized loss of the ACA’s budget resulting in significant job losses in the small-medium sector.⁴⁸ The extraordinary lack of empathy that features in the double-bind of these twin acts is wholly consistent with the narcissism of the quintessential bureaucrat in the neo-liberal age.

Certainly, the most disturbing aspect of the behaviour of the ACA’s leadership has been its failure to push back against the government on behalf of the arts sector, let alone itself. Across the independent and mainstream media spectrum, the consistent view on record is that the Australia Council failed to advocate on behalf of the arts. In early 2016, the usually circumspect Matthew Westwood wrote in *The Australian* “the response from the Australia Council was circumspect in the extreme.”⁴⁹ Surrendering to Brandis with barely a whimper in May 2015 might be put down to being ‘blindsided’ - the ACA’s excuse at the time - but failing to petition his replacement, Mitch Fifield, when in September 2016 the sector successfully lobbied the new Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull to sack Brandis, bookends an abject failure of leadership over almost a year-and-a-half of inertia.

Criticised by philanthropists, politicians and media for a fundamental failure in leadership, the ACA’s impotence is matched only by the irony in its persistent roll-out of innumerable cultural leadership programs. This litany of failings represents the institutional confusion that reigns in the Australian arts scene around leadership and management, two very different tasks requiring two very different skill-sets. In the case of the ACA, only one skill-set is displayed. Bad management thrives in the absence of leadership and can be recognised for its aversion to risk, fearfulness, operational impotence and institutionalised vanity.

⁴⁶ Michaela Boland. *Australia Council CEO Tony Grybowski accused of bowing to Libs*. *The Australian*, Feb 10 2016 <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/arts/australia-council-ceo-tony-grybowski-accused-of-bowing-to-libs/news-story/c5d1c9069645115d841c83a4bbb6ac0>

⁴⁷ Deborah Stone. *65 arts organizations lose funding from Australia Council*. *Arts Hub*. May 13 2016 <http://www.artshub.com.au/news-article/news/grants-and-funding/deborah-stone/65-arts-organisations-lose-funding-from-australia-council-251271> (

⁴⁸ Matthew Westwood. *Australia Council awards bonuses amid budget cuts*. *The Australian*. Jan 19 2016

⁴⁹ <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/arts/australia-council-determined-to-bounce-back-after-shock-cuts/news-story/2f707585d8f2be8863fa0554fd9812f7>

Sound File
#5

 Press Conference (2017)
please tap here

integrity duplicity

We are trustworthy, ethical and accountable in all situations.

The most successful resistance to Brandis' incursion on the ACA manifested in the #freethearts campaign. Its success lay in its 'distributive leadership' model which operated on the sharing of campaign tasks nationally, regionally and locally. Ad hoc, run by the seat of its pants and using a strategy of rotating leaders and spokespeople, #freethearts is an exemplar of sectoral activism in Australian culture.

One of the sustained narratives of the campaign was the intransigence of the ACA to deal directly with the concerns of the sector in this active rubric. As mentioned earlier, the ACA held statistics vital to the accurate description of the value of the independent and small to medium sector's contribution to Australian cultural activity, however, despite the efforts of various individuals and organisations making representations for that information it was not until journalist Ben Eltham submitted a Freedom of Information application that the research became suddenly available. It was then put on record in submission to the Senate Inquiry into the Arts.

I had written to this narrative in several publications and I was involved in the key strategy and organising groups of the #freethearts campaign. But it was not part of my responsibilities to engage the ACA directly. However, in one specific instance, I was directly engaged *by* the agency in relation to an essay published in the online journal, *The Conversation*.⁵⁰

In the essay, *Brandis is waging a Culture War: Artists must take Direct Action*, I took the ACA to task for its response to Brandis' cultural surgery criticising it for rationalising 'its remaining budget by cutting programs that directly support independent artists. Instead of putting on notice any funding of the Major Organisations - the Australia Council took the soft option.'

My reading was consistent with information on the ACA's website. The agency's relationship to the Major Performing Arts Sector is governed by 'the National Framework for Governments' Support of the Major Performing Arts Sector (the MPA Framework) through which the ACA administers funding to the 28 MPA companies on behalf of the Australian Government and state governments, at levels they set and agree to'. The ACA plays an important leadership role in the management of the Framework. Internally, the MPA Panel established by the ACA Board 'considers the MPA results in a broader context of support to other areas of the arts sector nationally. This overview and strategic understanding is critical to the health of each area of arts practice in Australia.'⁵¹ This observation implies the agency has the capacity to recommend adjustments to the conditions under which the MPAs operate. Further, MPAs can apply to receive funds directly from the Council through the MPA

⁵⁰ <https://theconversation.com/brandis-is-waging-a-culture-war-artists-must-take-direct-action-42615>

⁵¹ <http://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/strategies-and-frameworks/arts-infrastructure/>

Collaborative Projects program and have historically benefited directly from the Audience Development Initiative.

On the morning of the publication of The Conversation article, I received a telephone call from an ACA officer known to me during my time working for the agency as a consultant.⁵² At the outset it was a casual, informal chat about the article which eventually honed in on matters related to my suggestion that the ACA put 'on notice any funding of the Major Organisations.' The officer's view was that it did not reflect the ACA's capacity to impact on the MPAs as I had indicated and that the ACA had no control over discretionary funding to them. My reference in the essay was based on the above reading.

Some hours later I received a call from the Arts and Culture editor at The Conversation saying that his editor had been contacted by the ACA's media department complaining that I had written incorrectly about the funding to the MPAs and that I had refused to alter the article consistent with the agency's interpretation of its remit. In truth, I was never asked to correct the information in the article and so I was unable to refuse to do so. Although I received a written apology from the ACA Officer in question, I requested similar from the Media Department but none was forthcoming.⁵³

Along with the ACA's obfuscatory approach to requests for information from the sector, this is another example of the agency's integrity deficit in being 'trustworthy, ethical and accountable in all situations'.

■ resilience weakness

The 2012 Australia Council Review, instigated by then Arts Minister Simon Crean who was concerned about the agency's culture, clearly failed to task the ACA with the resilience required to fulfil its mission, a mission that was significantly challenged in the subsequent five years.

Clearly the biggest challenge was the retraction of a hundred million dollars of its funding by Arts Minister, George Brandis in May 2015. Even if one is to concede an initial paralysis brought on by the shock of Brandis's actions – one must generously exclude Brandis' publicly declared desire as Shadow Arts Minister to have more control over the Australia Council – it is difficult to read the agency's lack of resistance as anything but an absence of organisational resilience.

The ACA issued no public statement of defence or protest. Nor did it assert its independence which is enabled by legislation. Nor did it publicly advocate or act on behalf of vulnerable artists and small companies in the precise circumstances for which advocacy was written into its Charter. Nor did it petition a new Minister for the return of the funds which it was entitled to do so.⁵⁴

Like the words service, diversity, respect, collaboration, integrity and leadership, resilience is a word corrupted through its co-option by the corporate sector and ingested into the universe of the public utility. They have this in common these words

⁵² From 2009-2011, I was contracted by the ACA as a consultant to establish the ACA-IETM Collaboration Project in Brussels where I was based for almost two years.

⁵³ Personal email correspondence June 4, 2015

⁵⁴ <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/arts/call-to-clear-out-australia-council-leaders-after-funding-cuts-restored/news-story/13b54e209d83c35f13abd47e5c171c7d>

and I feel sorry for them. It is not their fault that they are captured and imprisoned by organisations that mangle them to 'mean' the opposite of their true meanings, to talk about public service when they mean service to the market, to valorise competition within the rubric of collaboration, to be disrespectful when avowing respect, to confuse management with leadership and practise duplicity whilst forsaking integrity, and to explain diversity in singular, absolute frameworks. Resilience cannot operate or survive in this labyrinthine morality, and of all the words, it is the most tragic because its intimacy with the lexicon of managerialism is in its infancy. I hope it escapes before reaching adulthood.

Language has been toxified by managerialism. The culture of the ACA is a case in point. But the arts are the rule here not the exception. Paul Keating's former speechwriter, Don Watson, has published tomes on the rise of 'weasel words' across sectors. I make mention of its effects on the artist in the following section but wish to note here that the devaluation of language, the construction of 'fake news' and 'alternative facts' ties one sector of society to the next, and as I travel from the arts outwards to democracy my choice of language is deliberately intended to argue without fear or favour, to be resilient whilst that word still holds some authenticity.



45rpm managerialism in the arts

(1) The impact of a national arts agency operating on values in opposition to its stated values is culturally tectonic. (2) Aside from creating internal confusion and uncertainty, the reverberations amplify far beyond the organisation itself. (3) Most profoundly, on the art-making and agency of artists seeking to avail themselves of public funding for their work - the primary source of income for independent artists.

Impact on making art (4) It is difficult to discern from the inside how these reverberations manifest in the artistic process and how they impact on the kind and quality of work that gets made, difficult because they are felt incrementally and are as ambient as they are actual. (5) So what is most useful for this context is an objective point of view, and I refer to discussions I had when based in Brussels as a consultant in 2009-2011 establishing the Collaboration Project between the ACA and the International Network for the Contemporary Performing Arts (IETM)⁵⁵. (6) Spending much of my time with European cultural operators, it was clear there was considerably less enthusiasm for Australian work than a generation earlier. Its idiosyncratic charm lay in its roughness and productive naivety. This had been replaced by a familiar, self-aware patina. (7) In translating the many observations, the best way to describe their main criticism is that Australian work exhibited a tendency to be 'over-managed'.

What does this mean? (8) Basically, it means that considerably more financial resources and thinking are put into managing, marketing and producing an artistic work than in making it, or at least this is how the work is read. (9) Before an idea is allowed to grow,

⁵⁵ From Sept 2009-November 2011, I was Director of the IETM-Australia Council Collaboration Project.

to see whether or not it has genuine potential, it is marketed, managed and produced within an inch of its life, and this unproductive alchemy is integrated and perceptible in the work. (10) This is directly linked to the ACA's focus on infrastructure, a focus that devolves artistic practice to a marginal activity and that privileges output, income and governance over artistic quality, process and cultural agency. (11) Australian work is considered less vital than it used to be because of the structures and strictures under which it is now made.

(12) It also places the artist in a contorted position. Generally speaking, Australian artists seem to have developed the habit of looking at what is immediately in front of them rather than what is on the horizon. This is very much a managerialist reflex. Artists have become overly careful not to fall (and fail) in case they are crushed by the weight of non-artistic tasks now resting prematurely on their shoulders. (13) Artists elsewhere, in the western and northern parts of Europe particularly, tend to focus on what is ahead of them. (14) It is the reason why so much international work presented in Australia is sourced from there.

(15) Artistic quality increases considerably when it is created in an environment that is not risk-averse and in which the artistic impulse is not overloaded with expectations before its true value can be assessed. (16) These are familiar concerns expressed by Australian artists and producers disturbed by the conditions in which they create and produce.

Impact on artists (17) It is in the daily life activities of the independent artist that the greatest effects of managerialism manifests.

(18) As a contemporary artist working within and between the performing, visual and media arts in Australia, Asia and Europe, I have been involved in hundreds of applications to local, state, national and international funding bodies.

(19) I wrote my first funding application 30 years ago and have calculated that since then I have written some 200 applications to various arts agencies and organisations. (20) Of that number I was successful, roughly, half the time. On average I estimate each application required 60 hours of work – some required less, some required months of continuous attention. In the space of 30 years I expended on average 12,000 hours writing funding applications. In each year, I worked an average 50 weeks @ 40 hours a week amounting to 2000 hours of work per year which over 30 years calculates at 60,000 hours of labour. If I take out 5 years for academic and curatorial appointments this reduces to 50,000 hours. (21) So almost one quarter of my working life as an artist has been expended in the seeking of funds to support my work.

(22) I calculate another 30% of my time has been expended on governance matters related to the running of my company, not yet it's difficult - initially a project-based small to medium sized arts company and, for 4 of 20 years, a Key Organisation supported by the ACA with annual funding. (23) All up, 54% of my working life as an artist has been devoted to non-artistic practice.

(24) As an artist-applicant I am regarded within the professional arts community as one who has achieved a very high application success rate both as an independent and as the artistic leader of a small-medium-sized arts company. (25) So, it is not through lack

of reward that I have come to the following position: The simple act of sitting down to write an arts application makes me feel physically unwell.

(26) Nor am I alone in the sufferance of this condition. Many established independent artists have confided similar visceral, professional and, in some cases, mental afflictions. "If I have to write another application I'll just give up" is a common way of expressing the condition.

(27) It is not simply the volume of applications one must write to have any chance of adequately funding a project let alone putting food on the table for one's family. (28) The most toxic of personal dystopias are brought about by the language one must use to have any success in the application process. (29) It is a language that defies the charismatic and enigmatic qualities of artistic practice, a language that does not appreciate the value of mystery and risk, a language that carves artistic ideas into non-artistic outcomes, a language that shapes an artwork before it has had a life as an idea and a dream, a language that prescribes financial benefit ahead of intrinsic value, a language that oppresses, distorts and bashes the artistic impulse into a cultural product that can be advertised to justify further funding for the same artless, soulless process.

(30) Like those used to resonate the ACA's values, words and phrases such as 'partnership', 'collaboration', 'innovation', 'creativity', 'key performance indicators', 'artistic vibrancy', 'urgency', 'risk-averse', 'cost-benefit analysis', 'integrity', 'leadership', 'service', 'governance' and 'excellence' have been voided of their original meaning and put at the service of the application and assessment culture.

(31) Compounding the assault of language has been the request of increasingly more materials and information by arts agencies. (32) In the ACA frame, these included the provision of an Artistic Vibrancy assessment, additional 'significant' budgetary information and governance and compliance conditions including (preferred) board composition and uniform operating systems. (33) The impact of these additional requirements adversely affected the operation of my company necessitating the assignation of greater value - in terms of time and consideration - to matters of governance and compliance at the expense of art-making - despite our conscious resistance to every new impost from the agency.

(34) The diminution of the artist's value to society, the occupation of - and excising of - professional spaces, hitherto her preserve, has resulted in her living and working in a toxic, caged environment. (35) The restrictions are mental, physical and social and - because managerialism operates on a process of attrition - often in(di)visible. (36) Producers spend most of their time producing, managers managing and marketers marketing; artists spend disproportionately more time writing applications for funding their work than they do on making it. (37) The process is a debilitating one and the conditions under which they work characterise their behaviours and shape this contemporary profile: today's Australian artist is a twisted, proprietorial, impotent, corporate body, self-censored and silenced.

(38) This last point is a matter of real consequence in the context of applications of this thesis outside the arts. In 2013, former head of Queensland's state arts agency, Leigh Tabrett publicly noted the surprising degree to which artists and cultural operators

were scared to speak out for fear of upsetting funding bodies.⁵⁶ (39) When promoting his 2014 Platform Papers, *Take Me To Your Leader*, in which he bemoans the lack of cultural leadership in Australia, theatre and festival director, Wesley Enoch, said he has not heard any major artist – apart from Cate Blanchett and myself “speak out about what more than \$100m in cuts to the arts announced in the federal budget means for the cultural life of the country.”⁵⁷ (40) To be fair, over the ensuing three years, more artists did step up in the media and in the Senate Inquiry into the Arts to publicly declare positions in the Coalition’s culture war led by George Brandis.

(41) However, since the matter of the ACA’s funding was resolved, a return to silence has slowly re-settled. (42) It is not unfair to talk to a cultural ambience in which the artist is still too scared to speak out for fear of losing favour with funding and curatorial gatekeepers, and of being categorised as ‘difficult’, ‘opinionated’, ‘outspoken’. (43) She shapes her work (and her work practices) to accommodate market expectations communicated by presenters, producers, bureaucrats and programmers; she seeks funds in an environment in which competition is valorised over cooperation which means her reflexes are trained accordingly; she has less agency to deploy those funds and her ‘identity’ is carved by governance structures that de-individuate and corporatise her.

(44) This characterisation of the independent artist has significant implications not just for the future of the arts in Australia but for society and democracy. (45) Because it is not just the artist that is being characterised here, but independence itself.

**Video File
THE ARTIST
Senate Inquiry (2015)**



please tap here



45rpmmanagerialism in society

(1) These ‘alterations’ in the arts are wholly consistent with the prosecution of neo-liberalism in society. (2) Of all the social sectors, science is most like the arts because it is based on non-market values and so stands in direct opposition to neo-liberalism’s economic project of profit-maximisation. Science is a good starting point from which to work outwards.

⁵⁶ Leigh Tabrett. *It’s Culture, Stupid! Reflections of an arts bureaucrat*. Platform Papers 34. Currency House. 2013. Sydney.

⁵⁷ <https://www.theguardian.com/culture/australia-culture-blog/2014/jul/29/wesley-enoch-australia-lacks-vocal-arts-leaders-it-deserves>

(3) Let's use the simple measure of funding to see how science fared in Tony Abbott's Coalition Government (2013-2015). (4) Significant cuts were made to the CSIRO, the Australian Research Council, the Commonwealth Antarctic program, the ABC and SBS. (5) The Australian Renewable Energy Agency and the Clean Energy Finance Corporation were unsuccessfully targeted. These entities have in common the production of a knowledge that is 'inconvenient' because it refuses to align with any government's policy. It is their mission: to provide evidence-based truth rather than to serve the government-of-the-day's interests or develop sustainable income streams. (6) The Coalition's chief target here is 'the ideal of the public good or the broader commons'.⁵⁸ (7) Because its value is located in the non-monetary (and the non-political), the public good is perceived as an obstacle to profit-maximisation. (8) Neo-liberalism has to root out the ideal of the public good from the operation of government for its economic project to succeed. The arts and sciences are obvious and significant targets in this process.

(9) Funding, however, operates in the space of numbers, which are finite. (10) So in reality, it is the space in which the least damage is caused. (11) The practices of managerialism are most fierce in the behaviours, attitudes and values of public servants because their nature is ambient. An atmosphere of professional permissiveness pervades the culture of the bureaucrat.

*It's not the crude chilling effect of funding cuts that's the real worry – that rumble can still happen in the media, just. Instead, it's the lockjaw creeping through a group of bureaucrats who see themselves as pseudo-businesspeople, who have turned out not to be much good at being either.*⁵⁹

(12) The creation of a managerial class, whose capacity is directed towards the lowest common denominator in the equation of human agency and economic output, manifests outside the arts and sciences and in the areas of sport, health, immigration, social services, higher education, and the media. I would like to make some anecdotal and evidence-based remarks here to support this view.

Sport (13) The kind of fractious knowledge transference that characterises managerialism was exposed in sports administration in the aftermath of the 2016 Rio Olympics. One of managerialism's calling cards – the appointment of businessmen and bankers to lead the boards of major institutions that may or may not need their expertise – was cited by John Coates, President of the Australian Olympic Commission (AOC) as a major cause of the paucity of Australian athletes' success. He declared that 'the policy of recruiting businessmen as leaders of Olympic sports had failed.'⁶⁰

Health (14) A Departmental Deputy Director at one of Australia's major hospitals recently confided that as a result of a new database their job now included sending appointment notifications to patients by text message – a job hitherto undertaken by administrative staff who had been re-assigned to the back office problem-solving the

⁵⁸ Ben Eltham. *When the Goalposts Move*. Platform Papers. Currency House. 2016. Sydney. P. 28

⁵⁹ Richard Locke. *Spending Discipline*. The Monthly. Schwarz Media. May 11, 2016

⁶⁰ Roy Masters. *What went wrong for Australia at the Rio Olympics?*. The Age, August 20, 2016
<http://www.theage.com.au/sport/olympics/rio-2016/olympics-australia/what-went-wrong-for-australia-at-the-rio-olympics-it-started-on-the-top-floor-20160818-gqw5fl>

difficulties of the new system.⁶¹ In the ancillary world of private health insurance, companies now tend to measure their success by favouring the allocation of resources over patient well-being.⁶²

Immigration (15) A former employee, an artist unable to make a sustainable living in the arts, found themselves working in the Department of Immigration and Border Protection which within a year caused them to suffer ongoing mental health issues which were brought on by departmental regulations that prevented them from engaging in a humane manner with clients (read: refugee and asylum-seekers). Mental health issues suffered by those working in close proximity to the Department such as service providers like Save The Children have been well-documented.⁶³ (16) I'll speak in more detail to the toxic ambience of this Department in the following section.

Social Services (17) In my work as artist-in-residence for philanthropic maverick, Igniting Change⁶⁴, I sometimes engage with people working at the frontier of crisis-management. In a meeting with a welfare worker operating in child protection, the following statement was made: "The only thing Child Protection (the government agency) protects is Child Protection". (18) One of the observations made by Igniting Change CEO, Jane Tewson, is that services outsourced by government grow the gaps between complementary services rather than close them. The system establishes managerialist enclaves of service providers that tend to exacerbate rather than alleviate the problems they are contracted to solve. (19) But the most telling example of managerialism out of control in the Social Services is the government's agency, Centrelink, whose ineptitude is surpassed only by its brutishness. The 2017 Centrelink Crisis continues to generate trauma for those it is charged with helping. Its automated debt recovery system is subject to a Senate Inquiry investigating the consequences for Centrelink clients for whom, according to Queensland Advocacy Incorporated, it "has had "catastrophic" effects"⁶⁵ which include intimidation and harassment from debt collectors and in one tragic case, suicide.⁶⁶ In a single year to October 2016, nearly 29 million calls to Centrelink received a busy signal with another 7 million calls "abandoned" by customers unwilling to wait any longer.⁶⁷

Higher Education (20) In the higher education system, neoliberal capitalism has utterly transformed the ideal of the university. Today the university resembles a manufacturing and retail outlet producing education as a product and selling it onsite. Any pedagogical value is contained within this business model. Research and knowledge production seem incidental. Managerialism has carried the day. Five years ago, a colleague working in a Go8 university bemoaned the fact that university administrators were now getting paid five times a Professor's salary when ten years

⁶¹ Private Conversation with departmental head at Royal Melbourne Children's Hospital

⁶² <https://www.wsj.com/articles/what-quality-measures-should-be-used-to-evaluate-health-care-providers-1427079654>

⁶³ <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-05-06/immigration-department-offers-compensation-to-save-the-children-7390674>

⁶⁴ <http://www.ignitingchange.org.au/>

⁶⁵ <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2017/may/16/centrelink-robo-debt-correspondence-incomprehensible-senate-inquiry-told>

⁶⁶ <http://www.news.com.au/finance/money/costs/centrelink-debt-drove-man-to-suicide-says-family/news-story/317208e77b3c634c16baa4224f899642>

⁶⁷ <http://www.news.com.au/finance/money/costs/screwup-nation-why-the-tech-we-count-on-keeps-letting-us-down/news-story/7c8129129fa227bdd1a2bd84f82e13e7>

ago the ratio was 1:2. (21) Another colleague recently told of being interviewed by business managers asking what it is they actually do, as if the core tasks of an academic were something other than the production, communication and pedagogy of knowledge. (22) And when provided with an answer, the inquiring business manager blinked in disbelief as if he was listening to some strange or foreign language. (23) In today's university, the student is a client, a thought is an asset, a research paper is a potential income stream, an office or studio is a space for outside hire.

(24) So extreme are the changes undergone in the culture of the university, the question begs: do these institutions still fit the definition of a university? British academic Terry Eagleton writes passionately about "the slow death of the university as a centre of humane critique".⁶⁸ He seizes on the key element that distinguishes a university from a 'technical training facility or a corporate research institute', the presence and valorisation of the humanities:

*Can there be a university in the full sense of the word when the humanities exist in isolation from other disciplines?*⁶⁹

(25) In Australia, the war of attrition on the humanities in the university sector embodies one of the key contradictions of neo-liberalism. Whilst its proponents advocate the merits of access and equity that neo-liberalism supposedly affords, the reality is that wealth and economic privilege enable the chosen to exist outside its diminishing effects. (26) My company NYID's dramaturg, Peter Eckersall, who is now based in America, worked in Australian universities for 20 years:

*Group of Eight universities such as Melbourne and Monash continue to fund and pursue liberal arts education, but universities such as La Trobe and Deakin now seem to assume that their generally poorer and diverse student base don't need or deserve to have access to studies in these fields. Such programs at these universities have been gutted in favour of studies in 'applied skills'. Arts and Humanities majors are increasingly available only at elite universities. Meanwhile, people who need public services and good affordable public education are subjected to its full regulatory and dehumanizing force.*⁷⁰

(27) The great perversity exists in the fact that recent research indicates the 'soft skills' learned in arts and humanities are increasingly sought by employers.⁷¹ The 'productivity and efficiency' mantra of neo-liberalism is sabotaged by managerialism in the education sector in much the same way as it is by the imposition of the 'compliance culture' in the arts.

Media (28) The media is one of democracy's caretakers and health-givers, and a major conduit between civil society and the political class. The quality of the media is largely measured in terms of transparency, objectivity and non-partisan reportage. The proper carriage of these elements enables important signals to be transmitted above the 'noise'. (29) However, the prosecution of the neo-liberal mission in the mainstream

⁶⁸ <https://foucaultnews.com/2015/04/17/terry-eagleton-the-slow-death-of-the-university-2015/>

⁶⁹ <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2010/dec/17/death-universities-malaise-tuition-fees>

⁷⁰ Professor Peter Eckersall in email conversation with David Pledger June 3, 2017.

⁷¹ Libby Sanders. *Employers want what arts graduates have*. Arts Hub. March 20, 2017

media has collapsed the wall separating the media from political culture compromising their respective independence. (30) This new complicity was exposed in the mainstream media's performance during the 2016 Federal Election.

(31) An enduring memory of the immediate post-election analysis was provided by ABC-TV around midnight on July 2, Election Day. In a roundtable conversation, the two major political parties were each represented by a spin-doctor and a campaign staffer. Given the election result was on a knife-edge and it would be unknown for some weeks, the consensus that LNP leader Malcolm Turnbull had run a successful campaign was astonishing given mainstream commentators had uniformly predicted a comfortable Coalition victory. (32) In the ensuing days, the tendency to characterise the result as 'chaos' bordered on hubris.

(33) Listening to seasoned commentators sheet home the blame for their inaccurate predictions to voters' lack of finesse in understanding the complexity of the voting process was like watching The Titanic's passengers waving at the wheel-house to veer left and avoid the iceberg. (34) That the commentariat could not read the result as anything other than a reflection of the ineptitude of voters, reinforces the degree to which it is hard-wired into the operating system of the major parties' political machinery. (35) Worse still, it seemed to spend much of the election reading nothing other than what it wrote itself. Its efforts seemed fixated on filling the 24-hour news cycle with unfiltered content or ill-considered opinion and applying it across multiple technological platforms. (36) The Monthly's Sean Kelly was one of few prominent journalists who repeatedly expressed his suspicion that something was going on but he just couldn't read it.⁷² His was a lone voice in trying to pick up a signal rather than contribute to the noise.

(37) In truth, the electorate is ahead of the mainstream political-media complex that, at some deep level, has lost its values and its influence. The major newspapers are like newsletters advertising the wares of whichever major party they align with. We read Fairfax and Murdoch to understand the worldview of its owners, editors and journalists but it has a diminishing currency when forming our own. The swinging part of the electorate has a more nuanced understanding of the major parties' strategies and the media messaging than the players themselves. (38) In a recent investigation of Fairfax Media, Mike Secombe reports that striking staff were of the view "that their employers no longer see the commercial side of the business as a support for the journalism but see journalism as a support for the commercial side."⁷³ It is a formula that echoes the neo-liberal mantra that people be constantly re-designed for the market.

(39) The collapse of the wall separating the media from political culture raises the noise levels many decibels. It is as if both sides, once a completion of the other, are now in a partisan contest. This is problematic for the arts and culture as its fraternal relationship with the media relies on the shared values of independence, objectivity and courageous interrogation. (40) A wholly diverse independent and mainstream media is as crucial to a healthy democracy as a wholly diverse independent and mainstream arts sector.

⁷² Sean Kelly. *Day 51: A State of Confusion*. The Monthly. Schwartz Media. May 12, 2016

⁷³ Mike Secombe. *What The Future Holds For Fairfax*. The Saturday Paper. Schwartz Media. May13-19, 2017

(41) These evocations create a noise in civil society that constitutes an oppressive ambience. (42) It is the new prevailing characteristic of our quotidian. (43) It exhausts and aggravates, distracts and diverts. It forces the citizen inwards, away from civil society towards a complacency, an ennui, a self-absorption that on a micro-level reflects the narcissism endemic to neo-liberalism. (44) Consumption is served well in this ambience as it provides sweet, short-term relief from our moral diabetes. (45) The greatest impact this condition has is on the functioning of democracy whose health is directly linked to a clear-eyed attention to and understanding of its workings. Without it, democracy is a fire sale.

Video File
THE COMPANY MAN
K (2002-5)



please tap here

Around about now, the sonic pressure that's been building through Side 1 of my concept album will begin to break the membrane of its logic and order, becoming ever more insistent and oppressive. This is noise, institutional, mediated noise, embedded in and permeating the quotidian with neo-liberal's self-regarding symphony, the air-conditioning system of society. Please bear with me through this final section as your mental processing contends with the oppression of sound.



45rpm managerialism in political democracy

(1) The political culture of any democracy is a space that neo-liberalism must control for its economic project to succeed. Democracy's demand on society's time and labour is a great obstacle to that success. (2) The presence of managerialism in our political culture contests democracy on behalf of neo-liberalism and challenges its delivery and quality.

(3) The methodology and aim of managerialism in Australia's political culture is straightforward. (4) Efficiency and productivity are privileged above the human and the social, manufacturing chains of power along which managerialism oozes with ever-increasing viscosity, and by sheer accumulation creates small fissures which become large breaks until its weight overbears, causing the political culture to crack and thereby disconnect with civil society thus disabling democracy. (5) It is a creeping and insidious fracturing of our body politic.

(6) As in other Western democracies such as America and the UK, the hegemonic control of Australia's political culture rests with one or other of two major political

parties - the Australian Labor Party (ALP) and the Liberal Party (LPA) - depending on who forms government. (7) However, 'implicit power' actually resides in the unofficial alliance between the cohorts of professional politicians *across* the two parties. Rather than the policy or values it is *this* Liberal Coalition that defines mainstream Australian political culture.

(8) Once genuine representative parties, both the ALP and the LPA are now populated by professional politicians, many of whom have never held a job outside political culture.⁷⁴ (9) The primary objective of the professional politician is different to that of the representative politician. (10) Whereas the representative politician works to represent the interests of their constituency, the professional politician seeks the maintenance of power. (11) This necessitates a menu of behaviours characterised by an aversion to risk and an obsession with efficiency, regulation and protocols. (12) This leads to excessive government which is ironic given that a key platform of neo-liberalism is small government. (13) Whether it be the regulation of meta-data, border protection, information security or small business, Australians openly describe the nation's governance culture as a Nanny State.

(14) In the Liberal mode of managerialism, politicians, like artists, find themselves in a contorted position only able to look at the ground in front of them and not ahead – a classic managerialist reflex. (15) In the arts, it is said that a manager deals with the everyday task whilst artists dream the future. (16) The risk-averse environment of politics – shaped by the adherence to the 24-hour information cycle, focus groups, spin doctors and 'advisors' – prohibits today's politicians from imagining a vision for themselves, their constituency or the nation. (17) They can't see the horizon for the next election. (18) They seem barely able to manage a straight answer to a straight question.

(19) In the context of the Ministerial cuts to the ACA, I attended a June 2015 meeting of arts leaders at Parliament House in Canberra. (20) I asked Mark Dreyfus, the Shadow Attorney-General and then Shadow Arts Minister if he would give an assurance that the ALP would restore to the ACA the \$104 million the then Arts Minister, George Brandis, had extracted from the agency. (21) It was clear from his manner that the answer was yes. Every aspect of his body language was oozing the positive. However, it took some five minutes of prevarication and two interventions from myself before he managed to eke out that perilous 3-letter word that would bind him to a course of action.⁷⁵ (22) When he finally did so, a journalist promptly tweeted as much and an election commitment was born.

(23) Prevarication is a default setting for the Australian politician. It is also one of the softer outcomes of Liberal managerialism.

(24) One of its harder outcomes is played out in the Immigration portfolio where the bi-partisan prosecution of Australia's asylum-seeker policy has led to institutionalised cruelty that transgresses international human rights laws.⁷⁶ (25) It is in this context that

⁷⁴ <http://www.smh.com.au/comment/career-politicians-arent-qualified-to-run-the-country-20170222-guj8gw.html>

⁷⁵ http://www.artshub.com.au/news-article/news/public-policy/ben-eltham/brandis-refuses-to-meet-with-arts-industry-248469?utm_source=ArtsHub+Australia&utm_campaign=52cbb1ae9b-UA-828966-1&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_2a8ea75e81-52cbb1ae9b-304021401

⁷⁶ <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-02-24/australias-immigration-policies-violating-international-law/7195432>

the physical body of the citizen and the bodypolitic find themselves on a catastrophic collision course.

(26) The current Immigration Minister Peter Dutton is the latest in a long line of Liberal Immigration Ministers. (27) During his iteration, he has out-brutalised his predecessors with his public statements. (28) Not satisfied with insulting Australia's refugee population during the 2016 Federal Election as innumerate and illiterate,⁷⁷ Dutton has characterised the self-immolation of refugees as a tactic to gain entry into Australia:

Some people have even gone to the extent of self-harming and people have self-immolated in an effort to get to Australia.⁷⁸

(29) Let us unpack this proposition. When a person decides to self-immolate, that is, to burn themselves to death, they must equip themselves with an accelerant and an ignition source. This requires some planning. They must sense the pain they are about to receive at their own hands. They know it will be unbearable. They will try to find a reason not to inflict such pain on themselves. That reason will elude them only if its logic outweighs their despair or pain or desperation caused by their circumstances. (30) The following describes a video of the self-immolation of Iranian refugee Omid Masoumali on the island of Nauru in April 2016:

It (the video) shows a man, drenched in liquid, standing alone in a clearing, pleading. No one, it seems, wants to stand near him. In the background, the white shirts and blue caps of staff from the UN high commissioner for refugees are apparent.

"This is how tired we are," the man yells desperately.

"This action will prove how exhausted we are. I cannot take it anymore."

The man makes a swift, small movement with his right arm, and suddenly, his body is alight.⁷⁹

(31) A person will deliberately do this to himself only if his situation is utterly unbearable, utterly untenable.

(32) Immigration Minister Peter Dutton's statement is delusional.

(33) In his heart, does he truly believe what he says? If he does then it suggests his psyche has suffered immeasurably from the tasks he has felt compelled to undertake as Minister for Immigration, and he is dangerously disconnected from humanity. (34) As our elected representative, his mental health is our responsibility for the work he is doing on our behalf.

(35) In a democracy, we do not elect a government and then abrogate responsibility for their actions if they do not align with our own. Our obligation as citizens is to be active in the democratic process *at all times* not just at 'election time'. (36) And I say this without reproach. I say it because I believe that a citizen's knowledge, experience

⁷⁷ <http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/federal-election-2016/peter-dutton-says-illiterate-and-innumerate-refugees-would-take-australian-jobs-20160517-goxhj1.html>

⁷⁸ Sean Kelly. *Things Peter Dutton Has Said*. The Monthly Today. August 18 2016

⁷⁹ <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2017/mar/23/death-in-detention-id-give-everything-to-have-him-back>

and responsibility of repression, control and curtailment undertaken by government on her behalf insinuates itself into the citizen's body, alters the physical sensibility of society, and re-wires the body politic as dystopic and toxic.

(37) The burning bodies of Omid Masoumali and Somali refugee Hodan Yasin who set herself on fire a day later are a direct result of the actions of our body politic. (38) As are the fates of Hamid Kehazaei, Reza Barati, Mohammad Nasim Najafi and Fazel Chegeni, "Abyan", "Golestan" and "Nazanin", all of whom have suffered or died in Australia's gulag of detention centres. The Iranian journalist and Manus Island detainee, Behrouz Boochani, completes the circle of this argument:

*"The system has humiliated me for a long time. This system threatened me and put me in a harsh place with no safety for a long time. My body has been damaged and I have lost a lot of things in my life, and the other refugees are the same as me..."*⁸⁰

(39) Australia's asylum-seeker policy condones child abuse, rape, sexual predation, corporal punishment and the deprivation of appropriate care to the acutely ill.⁸¹ (40) Its objective is to inflict upon the communal and corporeal body of its subjects as much distress as it can bear.

(41) Managerialism is not simply the handmaiden of the economic project of neo-liberalism. It connects values and behaviours in society that incrementally dehumanize us and enables us to dehumanize others. (42) The arts bureaucrat who takes a performance bonus in a year in which their inaction and complacency have directly led to massive job losses; the university business manager who sees students and academics as income streams; the banker who (mis)leads the board of a company in an industry in which they have no experience; the managed attrition in the health and social services that compel the desperate to give up; the detention centre guard who looks the other way when a child is abused or an adult self-harms. (43) These are all connected by the carriage of managerialism, a medium that has at its heart the philosophy that elevates the self-regarding value above the other-regarding value, a moral hierarchy that epitomises neo-liberalism. (44) If neo-liberalism wins the contest for our hearts and minds then the noise you are struggling to cope with as you read these words will not be an artistic metaphor. (45) It will be our life.

Video File
THE COACH
The Sports Show (1997)



please tap here

⁸⁰ <https://www.thesaturdaypaper.com.au/news/politics/2017/06/17/the-wrong-kind-settlement/14976216004800>

⁸¹ <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2016/jan/19/australias-offshore-detention-damages-asylum-seekers-because-its-supposed-to>

CODA

In music or dance, a coda is the word for a concluding passage or section, either an addition to the basic structure of the performance or its finale. In literature, it may refer to 'a concluding event, remark or section.'⁸² In this context, the coda is an addition to the structure which has the promise of altering or challenging that which comes before. The election of Donald Trump to the American Presidency, a victory perceived as fundamentally challenging the mechanics of Western democracy, requires the addition of a coda to this side of my concept album. It acknowledges the manifest changes in Western democracy since mid-2016.

As if in direct answer to The Coach's entreaty, Trump declared in his Inauguration Speech: "I will fight for you with every breath in my body and I will never let you down". Whereas The Coach incites others to be instruments of his racism, to strike down the other, Trump accepts the responsibility himself "I will." he says, "I will strike." And it's not so much the vision that is disturbing here, it's the sound of a body being beaten, the shouting of the perpetrators, the snarling of the animal-pack, the indignity of being abused to your face over and over again. This vicious, violent cannibalism is the full stop in the paragraph, *Neo-Liberalism*, in *The Ongoing History of the World*. Its new hero is The Apprentice President, Donald Trump #POTUS.

On May 6, 2017, 107 days after his Inauguration, President Trump met Australia's Prime Minister, Malcolm Turnbull, on-board the tourist attraction, USS Intrepid, a decommissioned aircraft-carrier used for the day to host celebrations of the 75th Anniversary of the Battle of the Coral Sea. Less interested in enduring symbolism, Trump has made a habit of staging photo opportunities with other nation's leaders to fill the world with visual noise bearing his individual signature. Turnbull came to the world's attention in February when Trump employed a more visceral version by reportedly shouting at him in their first telephone call. These interactions with Turnbull are mere sound particles in the Wall of Noise that Trump constructed in his first 100 Days of office.

Trump Time is measured in tweets. Trump Space is measured in real estate. Trump Place is measured in race. Trump Sound is measured in decibels. Trump is the Torturer in Iraq who has placed his nation and, by default, the world in an empty container blasting its citizens with his narcissistic songs of making America GREAT! GREAT! GREAT! Not so much a President as a brand, Trump's agency is contingent on his reshaping the American Presidency as a quadrennial long-form entertainment – a sequel to the election campaign - in which sustaining noise is the secret of electoral success. From bombs to tweets, shouts to threats, The Apprentice President is also The Noise-Machine of the Free World.

The line that once distinguished the product and the process of a reality TV show is now blurred by febrile white noise that demands attention for its alchemy of aesthetic and affective qualities. Hypnotically irresistible for its triumphalism of base human behaviour, The Apprentice President is an off-the-chart ratings success, a kaleidoscopic cacophony of vacuity. When Shakespeare wrote the Thane of Cawdor's self-realisation that his vaulting ambition had immersed, and ultimately, consumed his life, he was

⁸² <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/coda>

projecting his protagonist across time into the non-martial figure of The Donald: “It is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing.”

Donald J. Trump is THE POSTER BOY for neo-liberalism scoring perfect 10s across all KPIs: the valorisation of risk-taking, individual freedoms and personal responsibility; forceful advocacy for the impartiality of the state and the priority of the price mechanism; the almost spiritual belief that ‘society works best when the people and the institutions within it work or are shaped to work according to market principles.’⁸³

These are the first lines of his biography:

*Donald J. Trump is the very definition of the American success story, continually setting the standards of excellence... He is the archetypal businessman – a deal maker without peer.*⁸⁴

Peerless he may be but Trump is not the prize here. He is a contestant, a noisy, narcissistic contestant, pathologically fearful of being THE BIGGEST LOSER. He is a 70-year old trapped in the mind-set of a spoiled adolescent, “an agent of chaos, both by habit and inclination”. His danger to his fellow-contestants and the show’s viewing audience lies in his attraction to all things authoritarian, someone who will “cultivate chaos as a means to unsettle their opponents,”⁸⁵ and one with his finger on the button.

His choice of Steve Bannon as his Chief Strategist indicates his preparedness to be the Quintessential Disruptor in the business of American and global politics. Bannon is as famous for getting wealthy off the royalties of Seinfeld re-runs as he is for invoking Vladimir Lenin, declaring: “I want to bring everything crashing down and destroy all of today’s establishment.”⁸⁶

Such a task creates ear-splitting noise. From the mainstream media who are as mesmerised by Trump post-election as they were obsessively dismissive of him pre-election. From the professional political class whom he astutely wrong-footed because they’re still playing politics and he’s in the business of entertainment. From the citizenry who either will not accept his presidency to those who will not accept his presidency not being accepted. This kind of noise does not just disable democracy, it destroys it. And that is the intention of Trump’s Administration.

The Donald is the first authentic commodity manufactured by and for neo-liberalism. His production constitutes a metamorphosis for neo-liberalism, and as the dominant global ideology, it has pathological implications. In social and political terms, it is too early to discern its meaning. However, the questions it poses are clear. Will it constitute the structural collapse of capitalism in the West? Will it usher in a new era of fascism? Will it affect radical changes in the DNA of Western democracy? We may find elements of an answer in the election of Emmanuel Macron to the French Presidency and the mercurial rise of his nascent political party, En Marche, or in the rise of the progressive Jeremy Corbyn at the June 2017 UK Election, both of which have been read as a political antidote to Trump’s rise. In Australia, instruction will

⁸³ Lester Spence. *Knocking the Hustle: Against the Neoliberal Term in Black Politics*. Brooklyn. NY. Punctum Books. 2016. P. 3

⁸⁴ <http://www.trump.com/biography/>

⁸⁵ Prof Barbara Perry. *The Age Insight*. April 29, 2017

⁸⁶ <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/feb/06/lenin-white-house-steve-bannon>

undoubtedly come from surprising sources such as this admission from Treasurer Scott Morrison to the 2017 Federal Liberal Party Council that, ‘many Australians are turning down the volume on Canberra’s noise.’

One of the more cogent analyses of Trumpism written in the first 100 Days of his Presidency comes from psychoanalyst, Joel Whitebook, in *The New York Times*. It distinguishes itself by providing an opinion that does not add to the noise but somehow qualifies it. It is an analysis that speaks to my proposition of neoliberalism creating a sickening, toxic environment.

Whitebook proposes that “Trumpism as a social-psychological phenomenon has aspects reminiscent of psychosis, in that it entails a systematic — and it seems likely intentional — attack on our relation to reality.” This is certainly consistent with the confabulation of ‘fake news’ and ‘alternative facts’ that have developed as emblematic tropes in the Trump Administration’s vernacular. Whitebook argues that this strategy helps construct an alternate reality, a delusion that becomes ‘real’ the more content-creation the Administration engages in. The closing of this gap contributes to the confusion and anxiety surrounding Trumpism. It creates a psychosis that reverberates throughout the bodypolitic and into the hearts and minds of individuals everywhere. Whitebook then quotes the example of Vladislav Surkov, Vladimir Putin’s long-time chief ideologue, who engages in ‘a strategy of power based on keeping any opposition there may be constantly confused, a ceaseless shape-shifting that is unstoppable because it’s indefinable.’⁸⁷ Trump is an admirer of Putin and his tactics, and the unresolved allegations of Russian interference in the Presidential elections continue to dog them both.

Embodied in this analysis is a hint of how Trump may represent a departure from the neo-liberal trajectory and how managerialism may have met its match in the new Administration. There is no evidence of systematic behaviour in the Administration unless you characterise its unpredictability as systematic. This is legible in Surkov’s strategy but there are too many instances of senior Administration staff being wrong-footed by Trump for it to stand up here. It may be possible to say that Trumpism is a condition created by neo-liberalism if we frame neo-liberalism as a disciplinary regime, as in the Foucauldian sense. And although Trump’s winner-take-all message is pure neo-liberal propaganda, his demonization of race, gender and sexuality disrupts the hegemonic spaces on which neo-liberalism feeds. Neo-liberalism requires order so that the established hierarchy remains in situ. Trump is not interested in order. He craves chaos because it creates a landscape in which his narcissism can prosper. There does not yet seem to be any purpose other than vanity at play here and the marginalisation of Steve Bannon suggests the use of chaos as a strategic tool will be confined to Trump brand-building.

To provide a way forward, Whitebook reverts to standard operating procedure for dealing with Trump:

In the psychiatric setting, it only becomes possible to treat a patient in the psychotic range of the diagnostic spectrum when an analyst does not focus on the “manifest content” — on what actually happens on the surface — but finds

⁸⁷ Peter Pomerantsev. *Putin’s Rasputin*. *London Review of Books* 33 (20) 20 October 2011. pp. 3–6.

a way to address the underlying dynamics in order to work them through and establish, first in the analytic setting, and then hopefully in the patient's life, a less compromised relation to reality.

Whitebook offers sage advice.

Don't focus on the "manifest content", Shakespeare's 'sound and fury', what I call 'noise'. The experience of Trump's soundtrack, his Wall of Noise, is not unlike hearing Phil Spector's Wall of Sound for the first time. There is a palpable tension between the melody and the forest of jangling, layered orchestral arrangement, between the signal and the manifest content. It demands of the listener a wholly new aesthetic challenge.

It requires an uncommon, aural diligence to disentangle these elements, to find a way to address 'the underlying dynamics', to block out the noise and discover the techniques used to create it, and then disarm them.

In the first instance, we need to cultivate an altogether new way of listening.

In the second instance, we need to discover a silence that produces the space to transmit ideas and emotion in civil society and the political arena that acknowledges and accepts conflict without creating more.

WILL.
IT.
MAKE.
US.

GREAT.
AGAIN.

SIDE 2 WEB OF SILENCE



please tap here to breathe

Close the doors, light the lights.
We're stayin' home tonight,
Far away from the bustle
And the bright city lights.
Let them all fade away.
Just leave us alone.
And we'll live in a world of our own.
We'll build a world of our own
That no one else can share.
All our sorrows
We'll leave far behind us there.
And I know you will find
There'll be peace of mind
When we live in a world of our own.⁸⁸

sfx. (1.0)

During rehearsals for *Journey to Con-fusion* the final stage of the NYID/Kaitaisha project in 2002, Pledger took the combined company of actors through a workshop exercise called Body Listening. It required concentrated group movement in which the actors are clusters of dispersed bodies alternately stopping and walking forward. Each cluster has a unified force determined kinesthetically with the result that some groups stay together surging forward while others become fragmented and widely distributed. Pledger describes this as 'diasporic' movement, a greatly simplified image of massive population flows. What is significant however is that the image he gives them in order to remain connected to one another is that of the body as an ear. Instead of representing the human body as willed forward by its head (Western) or by its centre (Eastern), this image suggests the whole surface of the skin becomes a fleshy receptor towards others. If performance is a form of cultural rehearsal for action, this corporeality of listening may be a means of negotiating the infinite violence possible when persons of different social and political histories must co-exist. Although we struggle to justify corporeal violence in contemporary theatre it is also a place to practice and to imagine in the most limited and minute of circumstances – creative, political, social – the action of bodies needed for the continued commitment to what Arendt calls a civil society.⁸⁹

⁸⁸ Opening Stanzas, *A World of Our Own* (The Seekers), soundscape, *Journey to Con-fusion3* (2002)

⁸⁹ Rachel Fensham, "Violence, Corporeality and Intercultural Theatre." *Alternatives: Debating Theatre Culture in The Age of Con-fusion*. Edited by Peter Eckersall, Tadashi Uchino, Naota Moriyama. Bern. Peter Lang. 2004. P 103

Michael Long simply stopped. He was on the boundary line of the MCG. Four opposition players surrounded him. They were doing what they were trained to, keeping their eyes on the ball. Michael seemed oblivious to their presence. His eyes were on a horizon, not a single point but a diffuse line. He was sensing rather than seeing.

This disabled the opposition. You could see their confusion. He was inhabiting a different relationship to time which they could not process. The crowd felt it too. There was a lull, almost a hush in the stadium creating a thudding silence louder than any kick of the football.

Then Michael made a decision, re-entered the real-time of the game and played on. With an elegant handball that seemed an impossibility moments before, he mended the rupture in the silence-noise continuum.

sfx. (1.1)

Deep down.

Beneath Logic.

And Time.

Lies our facility for sensing.

We sense what we can neither smell, see nor hear.

We sense ourselves. We sense others. We sense our bodies and theirs.

Put your hand in the air.

Now put your hand in the air with an awareness of your environment.

Now put your hand in the air with an awareness of your environment that is honed to the presence of another body in that environment.

Now put your hand in the air with the intention of directing that action to the other body in the environment.

Now put your hand in the air with the intention of directing that action to the other body in the environment in such a way as to get them to put their hand in the air in exactly the same way as you do.

Try again.

Refine your action and energy.

Try again.

Now you see the body whom you are directing your attention to, raising their arm in the air. Except it's the opposite arm.

Try again.

Now they have made a deliberate movement which feels connected to yours but it is not the same movement, it is more like an echo of yours.

Try again.

Now they have made a movement that has multiple parts, all of which feel connected to yours but as a collection is more like an extrapolation of your physical action and your intention.

Try again.

Nothing.

Try again.

Nothing.

Try again.

Wait.

Wait.

Try again...

sfx. (1.2)

body listening is a process which prepares the body to register and utilise spatial and performative awareness.

At its core is the notion that the body is a discriminating organism (sometimes referred to as 'a discriminating ear') able to send and receive physical information; it explores the body's relationship to performing spaces and to other bodies and develops movement and vocal patterns in relation to refining the performer-presence in the space.

body listening locates the performing body in a spatial-aesthetic construction where bodies are not neutral and their physiological presence is explored.

body listening operates on the premise that all properly functioning bodies have a sense of physical presence (proprioception) which when amplified confers a heightened sense of awareness on itself and the external world (sometimes called exteroception).

The process of amplification through a refined set of exercises cultivates a capacity for sensing shifts in the space without seeing or hearing them.

Whilst the proposition is tested in the context of training performers – actors, dancers and musicians – it is contingent on an understanding that all bodies whether in the service of live performance or daily life have this innate capacity.

body listening arose out of a desire to understand the inner mechanics of the transmission and reception of physiological intention. Its originating contexts are team sports, contemporary performance practice, architecture, landscape, the Suzuki Acting Method, live engagements between performers and between performers and audience.

There are two main training protocols that define *body listening*. They are *Conversation* and *Web*.

Quantum theory posits that to understand ourselves and indeed all matter as individual entities is a falsity, that at a base level we are all mutually dependent and intrinsically linked. What appears as a person or an object is actually, densely packed and quickly vibrating particles of energy. Theories and experiments to support this line of thinking have crystallised in scientific realms through the last 200 years, but the 'experience of all phenomena in the world as manifestations of a basic oneness' is one of the most important characteristics of eastern world views.⁹⁰

sfx. (1.3)

Japanese theatre director Suzuki Tadashi created the Suzuki Acting Method, drawing on influences such as the martial art Kendo, traditional Japanese theatre and the Russian theatre director Meyerhold's bio-mechanics.

Suzuki talks to the importance of the body in a performing space and its potential to be an agent of design. In his theatre, however, the actor is not only an agent of design; the actor *is* the performance, *is* the space.

His approach concentrates on the development of an actor's centrifugal-physical facility in order to connect with an architecture unbound by the proscenium arch, a wholly Western invention.

As Suzuki taught me his method and how to teach it, I concluded that its best exponents have a low centre of gravity and a capacity to absorb intense vocal and physical challenges. His actors have an animalistic power; they breathe the sense and sensibility of nature into the art of performing.

In 1991 I was an accidental student at the Centre for Research into Human Movement in Moscow. These were the very last days of the Soviet Union and Moscow was a city in which there was a striking and

⁹⁰ Marina Abramovic. *In Residence*. Kaldor Public Art Projects. Sydney 2015. p 35-36

disturbing absence of colour. At first it was a relief from the visual noise booming around the cities of the West but the drabness created by the erasure of colour seeped into my bones creating depressions in the marrow. The day before the coup against Gorbachev, I flew from Moscow to Tokyo, a city for whom electronic colour is a byword for 'life'. On the Shinkansen, I almost wept at the violence of colour around me so thankful was I for its presence. My soul craved advertising.

sfx. (1.4)

In 2011, I initiated an artistic research program called AMPERS&ND, which had its third edition in Chuncheon, Korea in 2012.

As part of the program we offered an open workshop of *Body Listening* to the local artist community.

In the Q and A afterwards, one observer remarked how difficult it was for him to believe that a Western artist could develop a system that was 'essentially Asian'.

In my working life, I've tried to avoid making and accepting such broad generalizations but here was one staring me in the face and I did not know exactly what it meant.

Some years later a Chinese-Australian colleague opined that her Asian friends accepted that Anglo-European Australians simply did not understand them. It was all to do with the cultural protocols of communication.

She used the example of a 'contract signing'.

In Asia, the contractor lays the contract on the table and says, at most, "Please..."

It is an opportunity for the client to indicate if they have any issue with the contract.

If they do not sign the contract then the obligation rests with the contractor to discover the client's reservations.

My colleague describes this situation as 'you come to me a little way, I come to you a little way.'

Australians are much more direct, she says. They put the contract in front of you and simply say, "Please sign it." There is no space for 'contemplation', no space for 'culture'.

In the body listening work, the premise of tuning into each other is founded on this notion of 'you come to me a little way, I come to you a little way.' Culture is intrinsic to the practice.

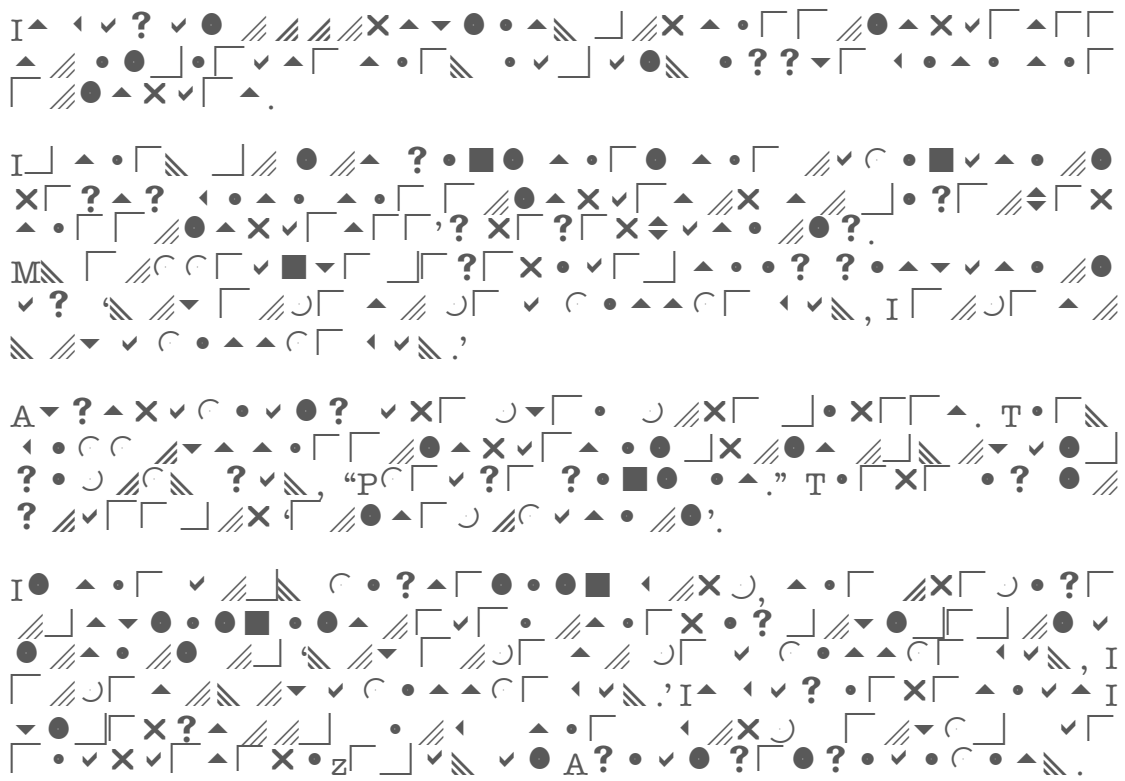
sfx. (1.5)

I ● □ _ □ □ , I ● ● ● ▲ ● √ ▲ Γ] √ ● √ X ▲ ● ? ▲ ● Γ X Γ ? Γ √ X Γ ●
// X // ■ X √ ∪ Γ √ C C Γ] AMPERS&ND, √ ● ● Γ ● √] ● ▲ ?
▲ ● ● X] Γ] ● ▲ ● // ● ● C √ ● Γ ● Γ // ● , K // X Γ √ ● ●
□ _ □ □ . A ? // √ X ▲ //] ▲ ● Γ // X // ■ X √ ∪ √ Γ //]] Γ X Γ] ▲ //
C // Γ √ C ? , √ ● // // ● √ X ∪ ? ● // // //] B // ▲
L ● ? ▲ Γ ● ● ● ■ , √ ? Γ ▲ //] ▲ X √ ● ● ● ■ // X // ▲ // // C ?
] // X // Γ X] // X ∪ ● ● ■ √ X ▲ ● ? ▲ ? ▲ ● √ ▲ I ● √] √ Γ Γ ●
] Γ √ Γ C // // ● ● ■] // X ∪ // X Γ ▲ ● √ ● ▲ √ Γ ● ▲ // // Γ √ X ? .
I ● ▲ ● Γ Q √ ●] A √] ▲ Γ X √ X] ? , // ● Γ // ? Γ X √ Γ X
X Γ ∪ √ X ∪ Γ] ● // √ ● ∪ // // ? ? √ C Γ ● ▲ √ ?] // X ● ∪
▲ // √ Γ C √ Γ √ ▲ ● √ ▲ √ // Γ ? ▲ Γ X ● √ X ▲ ● ? ▲ Γ √ √ C]
] Γ √ Γ C // // √ ? // ? ▲ Γ ∪ ▲ ● √ ▲ √ ? √ ? ? Γ ● ▲ ● √ C C //
A ? ● √ ● ' .

I ● ∪ // √ X ∪ ● ● ■ C ●] Γ I ● √] ▲ X ● Γ] ▲ // √ √ //]
∪ √ ∪ ● ● ■ √ √] √ Γ Γ Γ // ▲ ● ● ■ ? √ Γ ● √ X //]
■ Γ ● Γ X √ C ● z √ ▲ ● // ● ? √ √ ▲ ● Γ X Γ √ √ ? // ● Γ
? ▲ √ X ● ● ■ ∪ Γ ● ● ▲ ● Γ √ Γ √ ●] I] ●] ● // ▲ ∪ ● // √
Γ // √ Γ ▲ C // √ √ ▲ ● ▲ ∪ Γ √ ● ▲ . S // ∪ Γ // Γ √ X ? C √ ▲ Γ X √
C ● ● ● Γ ? Γ - A ? ? X √ C √ √ ● Γ // C C Γ √ ■ √ Γ // // ● Γ]
▲ ● √ ▲ ● Γ X A ? ● √ ●] X ● Γ ●] ? √ Γ Γ Γ // ▲ Γ] ▲ ● √ ▲
A ● ■ C // E √ X // // √ ● A ? ▲ X √ C √ √ ● ? ? ● ∪ // C //] ●]
● // ▲ √ ●] Γ X ? ▲ √ ●] ▲ ● Γ ∪ . I ▲ √ √ ? √ ● ● ? ? √ Γ //]
Γ // ∪ ∪ √ ● ● Γ √ ▲ ● // ● .

S ● Γ √ ? Γ] ▲ ● Γ Γ // √ ∪ // C Γ //] √ √ Γ // ● ▲ X √ Γ ▲
? ● ■ ● ● ■ ' .

I ● A ? ● √ , ▲ ● Γ // ● ▲ X √ Γ ▲ // X √ √ C] C √ // ▲ ● Γ
Γ // ● ▲ X √ Γ ▲ // ● ▲ ● Γ ▲ √ √ C Γ √ ●] ? √ // , √ ▲ ∪ // ? ▲ ,
"P C Γ √ ? Γ ...".



I am curious as to how less noise, or a lack of noise, not exactly an absence of noise, but perhaps the presence of silence, in a form that's porous, as in a web, can operate as an antidote to the noise-production of our present political culture.

I'm interested in the idea of 'noise' and how I have used it in the context of *body listening* and how in the political sphere the creation of 'noise' seems fundamental to the politician's objective of maintaining power. I'm thinking that creating less noise in this performative environment and the democratic process is fundamental to the success of both the artistic and the social project. This is the crux of my dissertation.

Its carriage relies on a synthesis of theory and practice - in that the acceptance of my argument is carried as much through theoretical rigour as an aesthetic endeavour. I am attempting to create a dissertation that allows these ideas to be felt as much as they are understood.

Let's take Side 1 as an example. The aesthetic tools I employ are word, sound, image and graphic text. As you make your way through Side 1, the 'noise' of the graphics, image, sound and word increases in proportion to the 'noise' of the argument. By the end, the emotional state of the individual (disabled by the aesthetic noise) aligns with the intensity of the argument that the 'noise' of neo-liberal capitalism disables democracy.

Side 2 (what you are experiencing now) begins with the presence of 'noise' generated by the four media - word, sound, image and graphic text. Over the journey, the presence of 'noise' will de-materialise into each medium's version of 'silence'.

For example, the text graphic you are currently reading is paler in colour and of a different font than at the beginning. By the end, the text will appear in a form closer to braille.

The white-canvas background, on which these words are writ, will render into a distinct visual, moving image that reveals to its landscape, the possibility of time.

The sound you are listening to has decreased in volume from when you first activated it by tapping the screen. It will be transformed by the reader into their own version of the sound of silence.

All this is to integrate the aesthetic dimension and journey with the theoretical trajectory and argument so that what I am writing has a deep consequence in emotion and logic, in feeling and understanding.

sfx.(1.6)

A: What is silence?
B: Silence is the absence of sound.

A: What does silence sound like?
B: Silence sounds like listening.

A: What is listening?
B: Listening is processing information other than what one's body produces.

A: Can you listen to your own body?
B: Yes.

A: How?
B: By processing the information of your body that sits above and below its surface, and the information within.

Shaun Gallagher has usefully distinguished between our *body image*, which involves “a system of perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs pertaining to one’s own body,” and

our *body schema*, which is “a system of sensory-motor capacities that function without awareness or the necessity of perceptual monitoring”⁹¹.
It is

our *body schema* that hides from our view, even while it is what makes possible our perception, bodily movement and kinaesthetic sensibility.

our *body schema* is “a system of sensory-motor functions that operate below the level of self-referential intentionality. It involves a set of tacit performances – pre-conscious, sub-personal processes that play a dynamic role in governing posture and movement”⁹².

⁹¹ Shaun Gallagher. 2005. *How the Body Shapes the Mind*. Oxford. Oxford University Press cited in Mark Johnson. *The Meaning of the Body: Aesthetics of Human Understanding*. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London. 2007. P.24

⁹² Shaun Gallagher. 2005. *How the Body Shapes the Mind*. Oxford. Oxford University Press cited in Mark Johnson. *The Meaning of the Body: Aesthetics of Human Understanding*. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London. 2007. P.26

Exercise One Conversation

The following steps take the participant through a process of refinement whereby they cultivate their innate ability to 'listen' with their body. This is done by concentrating on and exercising their physical centre to heighten their awareness of their body in the space, and in relation to the architecture of the space and other bodies in the space. An essential principle is that of 'carving out' the space. This is done through directional tasks within the exercises (including vocalisation). In some readings, this may be called 'spatialisation' with the qualification that the process begins with defining one's presence in the space, by connecting with all the concrete and animate elements in the space, and moving towards the concentration of one's primary energy to another body. This is a relational process refining direction, emphasis, quality and intensity of energy within the intention to (a)effect and be (a)effected by animate shifts. The key principle of Steps 1-5 is that movement is initiated by and from the participant's centre and the movement of the body follows from that, and not vice-versa. Steps 1-2 have been adapted from basic exercises of the Suzuki Acting Method to prepare the body for the later stages of Conversation by creating and focusing energy. However, they should not be considered exclusive to other modes of preparation. For example, Steps 1-2 of Web may also be used. Another possibility is a running exercise, based on the shape of a cube, created for this purpose. The mode of preparation is dependent upon the participants' experience level, their chemistry and the desired dynamic within the group.

I know there are people,
sensitive and intelligent people
for whom there is
no lack of silence.

I cannot but assume they are hard of hearing.

For in the forest of symbols
~~—which aren't any—~~
the little birds of interpretation
~~—which isn't any—~~
are never silent.⁹³

sfx. (1.7)

...just asking the question "How are body and mind one, not two?" frames our whole conception of the relation dualistically, since it presupposes that two different kinds of things must somehow come together into one.⁹⁴

⁹³ Samuel Beckett. *Disjecta: Miscellaneous Writings and a Dramatic Fragment*. New York: Grove Press. 1984 (English translation of Beckett's so-called 'German Letter' to Axel Kaun)

⁹⁴ Mark Johnson. *The Meaning of the Body: Aesthetics of Human Understanding*. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London. 2007. P.7

Research Journal Entry
February 11, 16

So today I finally sat down to read the latest issue of *Scientific American*.⁹⁵ The cover story *The Brain's GPS* caught my attention. There was a fair amount of ambient office noise – people in meetings, on the telephone, loud clicks of keyboards – so I took myself off into the corridor and sat solo at a long table. Understanding neuroscience requires a lot of concentration on my part. I needed a quiet space.

The article was written by two Nobel Prize winning professors in psychology and neuroscience, May-Britt and Edward I. Moser. They detailed their research deducing ~~tions~~ that the human brain uses a sophisticated GPS-like tracking system. I use this analogy ~~kind of language~~ when talking to the more challenging aspects of *body listening*.

Because *body listening* works towards the individual being able to sense what they can neither see nor hear, I came to my own nonscientific conclusion that the body – and my conception of the body is a body-mind, what Mark Johnson calls a 'non-conscious unity of the human person' – operates a spatial awareness and orientation system not unlike a GPS. This is also consistent with the philosophical idea that ~~that the things~~ what we create, make and produce are manifestations of the way our physiology (including the brain here) work. Our external world is a reflection of our physiological being and our existential self. I often say that the internet seems to be a representation of ~~the~~ infinity of our mental capacity our infinite mental landscape ~~and faculty~~ much of which ~~has~~ is not been used. ~~discovered yet.~~

† digress:

So here's the Moser argument. Our brain makes mental maps of our environment through the production and interaction of place cells, grid cells, head-direction, border and speed cells. Place, grid, direction, border and speed are words and concepts that live in the language and ~~activity~~ protocols of *body listening* (NB> cross refer architecture, pattern, orientation, speed, intensity, location). The place cells help form spatial maps tailored to specific environments while the grid, direction border and speed cells are universal so that they can operate in multiple environments. I think of it as superimposing a number of evolving vectors over a more stable (but ~~still living~~ active) plate.

As such, locomotion is a process of the body's calibration and re-calibration of location, distance, speed and direction ~~and recognition~~ the transposition of across multiple and evolving spatial landscapes.

Apply this definition of locomotion ~~then~~ and subtract the senses of seeing and hearing then you begin to understand the sensorial world of *body listening*.

⁹⁵ May-Britt and Edward I. Moser. "The Brain's GPS". *Scientific American*. Nature Publishing Group, January 2016

Meaning traffics in patterns,
images,
qualities,
feelings,
and eventually concepts and propositions.

The American TV actor, William Shatner, suffers from tinnitus. I heard him talk about it once on the American talk show, *Late Show with David Letterman*. I don't know if I've remembered this correctly but I'm pretty sure Letterman asked William Shatner whether his tinnitus was a result of the intrusive telepathy of Doctor Spock, the Vulcan on the Officer's Team led by Captain James T. Kirk (played by Shatner) in the TV series *Star Trek*. Fair question. Spock, with those Vulcan ears, seemed to have a distinctly alien way about him, and it would not surprise if he left behind a residue of his self in each telepathic subject.

Tinnitus is a type of noise that occurs in the ear, in the form of buzzing, whistling, chirping, an insistent ringing. In most cases, it is brought about by prolonged exposure to loud sound. The loud sound causes permanent damage to the sound-sensitive cells of the cochlea, a spiral-shaped organ in the inner ear.⁹⁶ But it can also be caused by blockages or infections of the ear, drug use, ageing and stress. In my case, the condition is not attributable to a single cause.

Tinnitus is a dis-ease of modern living, a thoroughly modern response to the noise we experience in 21st C daily life.⁹⁷ Noise is a by-product of over-consumption, the more stuff we want the more noise we create to produce it, and the louder it seems to get, not individual noises per se but a mass of noise, growing larger and louder. The noise of manufacturing, of building, of putting up and pulling down, of roadworks, air-conditioning, traffic, trams, trains, computers, i-pads and phones, the whirring and ticking of machines, and the noises we don't 'hear' - the noises that stop us hearing altogether.

In George Steiner's analysis of culture as 'post-culture', he talks about the subordination of the word to image and music. Popular music, in particular, has created a space that envelops us, he says, in which all forms of communication both public and private 'now take place in a field of strident vibrato'.⁹⁸

The noise of society causes its own form of tinnitus. This 'social tinnitus' runs neural interference for the 'social brain', disrupting, interfering, intervening, displacing, derailing, switching. It has a neurotic aspect, constantly shifts tone, location, frequency. Its cause is the stress created by desire. It's worse at night when silence is most possible, and when the desire for novelty created by the habit of consumption is at its pitch. Social tinnitus is the enemy of the silence that

⁹⁶ <http://www.webmd.com/a-to-z-guides/understanding-tinnitus-basics>

⁹⁷ In 1962, surgeon Samuel Rosen conducted a study on a Sudanese tribe called *Presbycusis Study of a Relatively Noise-Free Population in the Sudan*. It is the basis of a broader research trajectory that identifies the effects of rising noise-levels in modern society on hearing loss. The study was published in *American Otological Society, Transactions*, vol. 50, 1962

⁹⁸ George Steiner. *In Bluebeard's Castle: Some Notes Towards the Redefinition of Culture*. Yale University Press. 1974. P. 90

democracy needs to function well. It is the wall of sound that threatens to collapse the web of silence required for uninterrupted sleep, the space for processing, dreaming, reflecting, resting and reason, the space democracy requires for its citizens to restore themselves in order for them to reinvent it on a daily basis.

sfx. (1.8)

A: What is silence?

B: Silence is the absence of image.

A: What does silence look like?

B: Silence looks like the memory of sunlight flickering through trees.

A: What is a memory?

B: A memory is produced in the process of remembering.

A: Can you remember your own body?

B: Yes.

A: How?

B: By allowing it to remember itself.

a substantial body of evidence

from the cognitive sciences

supports the hypothesis that

meaning is shaped by the nature of our bodies

especially our sensorimotor capacities and

our ability to experience feelings and

emotions⁹⁹

What first impresses in this gloom is the sensation of yellow it imparts not to say of sulphur in view of the associations. Then how it throbs with constant unchanging beat and fast but not so fast that the pulse is no longer felt. And finally much later that ever and anon there comes a momentary lull. The effect of those brief and rare respites is unspeakably dramatic to put it mildly. Those who never know a moment's rest stand rooted to the spot often in extravagant postures and the stillness heightened tenfold of the sedentary and vanquished makes that which is normally theirs seems risible in comparison. The fists on their way to smite in anger or discouragement freeze in their arcs until the scare is past and the blow can be completed or volley of blows. Similarly without entering into tedious details those surprised in the act of climbing or carrying a ladder or making unmakeable love or crouched in the niches or crawling in the tunnels as the case may be. But a brief ten seconds at most and the throbbing is resumed and all is as before. Those interrupted in their coming and going start coming and going again and the motionless relax. The lovers buckle to anew and the fists carry on where they left off. The murmur cut off as though by a switch fills the cylinder again. Among all the components the sum of which it is the ear finally distinguishes a faint stridulence as of insects which is that of the light itself and the one invariable. Between the extremes that delimit(s) the vibration the

⁹⁹ Mark Johnson. *The Meaning of the Body: Aesthetics of Human Understanding*. The University of Chicago Press. Chicago and London. 2007. P.9

difference is of two or three candles at the most. So that the sensation of yellow is faintly tinged with one of red. Light in a word that not only dims but blurs into the bargain.¹⁰⁰

A: What is silence?

B: Silence is the absence of words.

A: What does silence read like?

B: Silence reads like a book with nothing written in it.

A: What is a book?

B: A book is a receptacle of ideas written down.

A: Can you write a book on your own body?

B: Yes.

A: How?

B: With textas and tattoos.

Research Journal Entry
February 18, 16

~~The problem with Rupert Sheldrake is simple: that he simply does not use the right words at the right time in the right way. So it makes him sound less authoritative, less sure of his theory and so more opene susceptible to criticism. By saying "what I'm saying is outrageous!" he attracts the thought police, the 'serious' scientists, the 'academy' and they slam him. I mean what is he saying exactly that most of us don't know intuitively telpeathy is a distant feeling we all experience to some degree, dogs that know when their owner is coming home, sure some pets have an uncanny connectioneon with their owners,~~

Mario Llosa vargas is in my head today. He has displaced Rupert Sheldrake. I'm sorry Rupert but Mario has me convinced that the role of the intellectual is a fatuous one and that knowledge, real knowledge, new knowledge can no longer be recognised because we don't have the tools for it any more because in the world of the spectacle that characterises our this version of civilisation we now live in, everything is as good as anything else. No one can determine value, there is no authority other than than the spectator. The individual is dead. The citizen is dead. The spectator is the only effective agent in culture and society and politics, and all the spectator is interested in is entertainment, sweet satisfaction, being 'in the moment created for the moment' with no morality or ethics or determination of any kind to decide whether it's good or bad other than the words 'yes it's good' or 'yes it's bad'. Like, like, like. Okay so I'm only fifty pages or so in but it's not looking good for my democracy or equity or justice. Instant Gratification 10-Past Present Future 0. That's

¹⁰⁰ excerpt from annotated work version of Samuel Beckett. *The Lost Ones*. Grove Press Inc. New York. 1972. Ps 36-38 for *Strangeland Triptych* (2006-2009) highlighted in yellow; additional notes highlighted in green for *side 2, wall of silence* (2017)

today's PhD scoreline. So I'm going home. I wonder if my dog sense ~~knows~~ I'm coming....

In 1952, John Cage composed 4'33", an aesthetic space in which the composition was created by the audience responding to the fact that no sound was produced by the artist. Cage had been curious about this space for quite some time, proposing it as an idea some years earlier. But he wanted it to be an enduring idea and so waited until he had a solid connection between the idea and his practice which he himself understood. Artist Robert Rauschenberg spurred him on with his minimalist white paintings, and Cage duly paid inspiration to him. In 1951 Cage had the visceral experience of stepping into an anechoic chamber at Harvard University. Such a chamber is constructed so as to absorb all sound through the bottom, top and side vectors. So the expectation is that one will experience silence. In 2004, Donald Stein quoted Cage's response: "I heard two sounds, one high and one low. When I described them to the engineer in charge,

he informed me that the high one was my nervous system in operation, the low one my blood in circulation." It seems that this

experience reassured Cage of the impossibility of silence and therefore the future of music.

I want to pass through this experiential space described by Cage. So I'm going to ask you to put yourself in a comfortable sitting place, rest your hands on your upper legs, keep your back upright, and your posture engaged. I'd like you to turn your attention to your body, more precisely to the inner workings of your body. I'd like you to breathe into your body. Begin with a place that is a little tight or sore. Breathe into that space and allow the body part to fill with the blood you bring to it through the oxygenation process that accompanies your breathing. Follow the path of the blood in your body as it circulates. Tune into its frequency, the sound of it circulating. Now allow the breathing to accommodate your emotional landscape. Breathe into whatever emotional state you are experiencing in the same way that you breathed into that particular part of your body. Breathe into that emotional state and tune into its frequency, the sound of your nervous system operating under and around the actions of your daily life. So the sounds you are listening to now are a combination of the high and low sounds of your nervous system and your blood circulation. I have invoked the visual inspiration of a white screen of Cage's friend, Robert Rauschenberg, to help convey this ambience of silence. But if you prefer not to look at a white screen then feel free to close your eyes. In 4minutesand33seconds the page will refresh....

Hello darkness, my old friend,
I've come to talk with you again,
Because a vision softly creeping,
Left its seeds while I was sleeping,
And the vision that was planted in my brain
Still remains
Within the sound of silence.¹⁰¹

Paul Simon and John Cage had different ideas about and uses for silence. Which begs the question: “When people talk of ‘silence’, what exactly do they mean?

**Do they mean Quiet, or do they simply mean ‘less noise’?
Does silence describe a state, as in, the state of quietude?
Does one experience silence environmentally or mentally?**

**For my purposes silence
is an active state, of diffusion,
connection, and interconnectedness,
a state in which one is mindful of one’s
surroundings, wholly receptive and wholly
responsive.**

**WE MUST UNDERSTAND IN A REALISTIC WAY THAT
DEMOCRACY
MIGHT NOT BE PRACTISED IN THE CORRECT WAY BY
ALL PEOPLE.¹⁰²**

Exercise One Conversation

Carving the Space

is concerned with
structuring and shaping
the energy the body creates
into a presence that can be
sensed by others.

It incorporates the notion of ‘leading and following’ or ‘sending and receiving information’.

This process asks the participant to remain in connection with the architecture of the room (the positive and negative space of its concrete elements) and the other bodies in the space whilst selecting one body to communicate a specific intention to.

¹⁰¹ Lyrics to *The Sound of Silence* by Paul Simon. USA. UMP Group (1964)

¹⁰² Saddam Hussein. *On Democracy*. New York: Badlands Unlimited. 2012. P.64

It is concerned with building actions that have a different 'value' and 'meaning'.

For example, if the Sender wishes to communicate with one body in a group in a space, they will need to construct a specific presence and intention for that one body whilst making their specific action clear to the other bodies (that is, that *they* are not the subject of their intention). The Sender must do this whilst remaining connected to the concrete elements in the space.

The position of the bodies and geometric arrangement. flocks, circles etc. or

in the space can vary according to These may include and be spaced at long

proximity bunches, short distances.

Degrees of difficulty may incorporate the following sending-and-receiving tasks:

Variation 1 Leader sends, Group receives

Xthe leader sends his/her specific intention to the groupXXX

Xthe leader sends his/her specific intention to a body in the group blocked by anotherX/X

Xthe leader sends his/her specific intention to a body in the group at a distance-----X

Variation 2 Dialogue within Group

Other Variations

<Change sender and receiver>

--Send multiple signals--

Experiment with ++++++----- distance

^Role of Leader (Sender) rotates within Group^

Monty Python's Terry Gilliam riffed off George Orwell's *1984* in his 1985 film, *Brazil*.

Robert de Niro plays Harry Tuttle, a lone terrorist who targets the air-conditioning infrastructure of a dystopian

city. Air-conditioning leads a double life in the meta-metaphorical world of *Brazil*.

It mirrors the malignant managerialist cancer corrupting government and it breeds a capillary network of ducts that

threatens to strangle the city's networks.

Excess and havoc are the underlying states of *Brazil*.

The irrational pushes back hard against the masquerade of reason that

the government-of-the-day attempts to project.

And no-one is safe.

Sam Lowry, the hero, succumbs to torture at the hands of another Python, Michael Palin,

whose Jack Lint is a pillar of the community.

Terrorist Tuttle meets a strange and beautiful death as he attempts to elude capture on the streets,
consumed by a willy-willy of papery litter that sticks to him, suffocating him, finally 'disappearing him' and

disappearing itself as if an illusion all along.

Gilliam is intent on telling us that dissent, resistance, heroism

will be destroyed by

the over-production of things,

air-conditioning, paper, violence –

the noisy marriage of capitalism and totalitarianism.

The 2000Watt Society is a strategy developed by scientists at the Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich (ETHZ) to assist in the reduction of energy in society. A watt is a unit of power that indicates the rate at which we are using energy. The ambition of 2000W is consistent with the need to reduce energy consumption in the world which at its current rate risks global warming of 6% by the end of the century. Current rates of Swiss energy production are 5000W per person for public transport, public infrastructure, food and consumer items, living and

office space, air travel, automobile and electricity usage. The concept aims to achieve an average use of 2000W by 2050 without compromising living standards and mobility. ¹⁰³

A: What is noise?
B: Noise is a particular presence of sound.

A: What causes noise?
B: Energy. An over-production of energy.

A: What would happen if the production of energy was in balance?
B: This would cause a hum.

A: What does a hum sound like?
B: Go to Switzerland. Listen. Maybe you can hear it coming.

Research Journal Entry
March 3, 16

Cross with myself for not making it to The Joneses a new house built on the City Square inspired by the whole idea of reducing one's consumption footprint. It's linked to the same initiative around 'not buying anything new for a month'. Weird because yesterday I went to Chadstone and bought a whole lot of clothes and shoes, something I do once every two years so I don't embarrass myself wearing the same pair of jeans for two years which is what I've been doing. This time I ~~only~~ bought one pair of jeans, a pair of chinos, a good pair of trousers I can 'wear out', two pairs of shoes, some socks, two black polos, one that I am wearing today (I am wearing the chinos today too!), a collared shirt. The problem with the shoes is that shoes really affect my back, I've got a bad back, but I don't know until after wearing the shoes for a full day whether they are going to effect my back so I just have to buy them and hope. Last night I wore one pair of shoes to dinner with Agnes who has come from France to attend the Australasian Performing Arts Market where she refused to buy any art as a form of quiet resistance. She teaches at Paris 8 now and is researching cultural rights which is something of a story in the French cultural scene at the moment - ~~at least that's what Agnes says~~. She is meeting

¹⁰³ <http://ourworld.unu.edu/en/2000-watt-society>

two of my colleagues today to ask whether one of them will be her supervisor. I know ~~at least~~ one of them buys Australian art so I wonder if that will influence ~~their~~ his decision to supervise her – ~~yet~~ ~~know~~, the fact that she didn't buy any Australian art in Brisbane. What's clear to me today is that just as we must all try to reduce our consumption footprint and our environmental footprint, it is also important to reduce our intellectual footprint which is on reflection seems very high in this journal entry. ~~Aside from the quite a while whether they~~

Web

Exercise Two

The steps of Web are:

developing individual body awareness; developing an individual performer-presence in the space; developing an individual performer-presence in relation to other bodies in the space; developing a group sensibility; developing a networked group sensibility, extending this networked group sensibility to those watching, audience, observers, witnesses.

Through the practice of walking, the following takes the participant through a process whereby they 'tune their body' to the animate and inanimate elements in the space.

Tuning The Body

Step 1 Walking

Participants are asked to walk from one end of the space to the other with attention to:

- the movement of their centre-of-gravity with respect to speed, intensity and location;
- the interaction of their feet with the floor;
- the consequences in the upper body of the lower body generating locomotion.

Tuning The Body

Step 2 Signature Walk

These instructions are designed to formulate for the participant a distilled version of their body in motion, less bound by habit, more available to input and more capable of processing information. Participants are asked to make the following four modifications:

- Drop or raise the centre or maintain the centre level with the floor;
- Go faster (to a run) or slower (to an incremental pace);
- Adjust the relative position of the feet towards 'parallel';
- Reduce the impact of the actions of the lower body in the upper body.

The core instruction to participants is that the objective of these exercises is not to neutralise or alter one's own sensibility but to distil it so that it is a readable and identifiable *signature* in the space.

The idea that the exercises reduce the 'noise' of the body whilst achieving this distillation is a recurring one.

To David Marr from Gerard Henderson:

David, the issue's not resolved by emoting on television.

From David Marr to Gerard Henderson:

I am not emoting, I am very angry but I've done a bit of work on this.

This exchange between two of Australia's best-known public intellectuals - on the treatment of 'asylum-seekers' in the Australian Government's detention centres on Manus Island and Nauru - occurred early in 2016 on *The Insiders*, a popular (but not populist) program on ABC-TV, Australia's main public broadcaster. It was quoted in an article in *The Guardian* discussing the role of emotion in public discourse, and prompted the author, Reverend Dr Michael Jensen, to ask:

Is emotion an obstacle to clear thinking about serious ethical and political issues?

In answer, he provides two key positions that are not antipathetic. The first is that "careful and logical consideration is needed to provide...a just and compassionate solution in any given debate." The second proposes that, "to eclipse emotion in our consideration of what matters most in human life, of justice, and of what is the right thing to do, is a profound mistake."

What he says next is most interesting:

Our visceral reactions, rightly considered, give to us convictions about what ought to be done.

Here, the good Reverend implies that ethics have a corporeal dimension, that our body plays a part in their generation and formulation through the interplay of instinct and intuition. This lines up with Mark Johnson's suggestion that meaning traffics in feelings before concepts and propositions. The meaning we derive from our existence, our being, the meaning that forms our beliefs and morals - our ethical systems - is located in our organs (visceral), and so is 'in and of the body'. To separate our emotions from logic is to separate our heart from our mind thus diminishing what distinguishes our species from others.

I use the words you taught me. If they don't mean anything any more, teach me others.
Or let me be silent.¹⁰⁴

listening.
Reducing
the noise
of the body
in the body
and *between* the body and another body
is a corollary for articulate processing of corporeal information.

Noise reduction
is a key element
in *body*

When undertaken in chronological
order, the protocols of *body*
listening are designed to achieve
this reduction, this distillation.

¹⁰⁴ Samuel Beckett. *Endgame*. Faber and Faber. London. 1958

The protocols are singular to this objective. They do, however, resonate with the work of other practitioners and their investigations into the potential of the body.

For example, the methods of Joseph Pilates and Moshe Feldenkrais have been used in the development of *body listening* as preparatory tools or ‘warm-up approaches’, and introduced by artists who have participated in the research.

Both methods inform the *body listening* vernacular in word and action. From Pilates, the idea of the ‘powerhouse’ – that area of the body that includes the abdomen, lower and upper back, hips, buttocks, and inner thighs – has proved useful in developing the corporeal architecture of the ‘centrifugal–physical sensibility’ of *body listening*.¹⁰⁵ From Feldenkrais, the emphasis on proprioceptive awareness has added to the experiential information derived from sports and martial arts practices.¹⁰⁶

Another influence is that of meditation practised in the form of ‘active listening’ by myself for ten continuous years. Although it predates mindfulness, ‘active listening’ aligns closely with its advice to the practitioner to remain attentive, moment by moment, to any experience without focussing on anything specific.¹⁰⁷ A second relevant genre, focussed–centred meditation, ‘aims to tame and centre the mind in the present moment while developing the capacity to remain vigilant to distractions’¹⁰⁸

In the world of contemporary performance, the artist whose practice echoes many of the concerns of the *body listening* protocols is Marina Abramovic. This relation is explicit in two exercises outlined in the Abramovic Method: Slow Walk and Platform.

To me, Slow Walk is a derivation of an exercise developed by Japanese pedagogue, Suzuki Tadashi, whose influence Abramovic readily quotes as do I: “The body establishes its relations to the ground through the feet, (that) the ground and the body are not two separate entities.”¹⁰⁹ For Abramovic, “Concentrating on walking allows us to intensely feel our bodily movement, internally and through space.”¹¹⁰ This intense feeling is deeply connected to the development of our proprioceptive awareness, a key element in the transmission of *body listening*. The exercise Platform is an expression of ‘group meditation’, the experience of communal stillness, a state which is a transitional mode in Web.

¹⁰⁵ Louise Taube worked with NYID as a performer from 1996-2001. A registered Pilates teacher, Louise contributed regular workshops to the company’s training explorations in performance preparation and body listening.

¹⁰⁶ Ingrid Weisfelt worked with NYID as a performer from 2006-2009. A registered Feldenkrais teacher, Ingrid contributed regular workshops and discourse to the company’s training explorations in performance preparation and body listening.

¹⁰⁷ Richard Matthieu, Antoine Lutz and Richard J. Davidson. “Mind of the Meditator”. *Scientific American* 311. 2014. Ps 38-45

¹⁰⁸ Richard Matthieu, Antoine Lutz and Richard J. Davidson. “Mind of the Meditator”. *Scientific American* 311. 2014. Ps 38-45

¹⁰⁹ Suzuki Tadashi. *The Way of Acting: The Theatre Writings of Tadashi Suzuki*. Theatre Communications Group. NY. 1986. p 9

¹¹⁰ Marina Abramovic: *In Residence*, Kaldor Public Art Projects, Sydney 2015. p.35

Slow Walk and Platform are like book-ends to the protocols of *body listening*. Slow walking is the starting modality of the protocols and continues throughout until perceivable movement almost ceases in Web as it does in Platform. Whilst Abramovic's concerns are broader than civil society, they do deal with the relationship of the singular to the many, the idea that 'all units were equally important to the whole',¹¹¹ an echo of the relationship of the citizen to society and the value of all individuals to a democracy.

Of additional interest to this discussion is the deeply ironic space which Abramovic currently inhabits. Having recently crossed over from the cloisters of experimental art into mainstream celebrity culture, the noise she creates as an artist in the public domain is in stark contrast to the quietude of her artistic practice.

If you are silent about your pain,
they'll kill you and say you enjoyed it.¹¹²

Whenever Russia engages in a new round of military hostilities - Chechnya, Crimea - Tchaikovsky is placed on high rotation and nationalist sentiment soars. This does no service to the music of course. Played continuously day-in day-out, week-in week-out, the 1812 Overture is reduced to background noise, audio wallpaper, sonic-prozac, a drug you no longer notice you are taking. This is the communist way.

Americans are a different breed. When it comes to music and warfare, the American style is at once managerialist and externally directed - they turn the music onto their enemy and insure against any domestic blowback by making unlawful laws. As the 'war on terror' rolled out, in 2006 the US Government set aside the provisions of the Constitution and the Bill of Rights and legislated that acts of torture and indefinite detention without trial could be carried out by its military.¹¹³

One torture tactic, called 'futility music', entails playing songs repeatedly and at high volume in a small enclosed space in which a prisoner is housed. Explaining the strategy, one former senior US military figure righteously invoked no lesser figure than God to whom he attributed the creation of 'torture by music' citing Joshua's horns at the Walls of Jericho.¹¹⁴ I am not sure God had in mind "I Love You" by Barney the Purple Dinosaur but it was the most widely used weapon in the torture-by-music arsenal.

Binyam Mohamed, a British resident held in Guantanamo Bay, claims the extreme pain he suffered under physical torture was lesser than the fear of sliding into madness brought about by such psyops methods.¹¹⁵ I often wonder how I would deal with such an assault. Would I resist, surrender or just go mad?

In my darker moments, I feel myself to be a weird concatenation of the Russian citizen and the American prisoner. I am subject to a background noise devoid of meaning that I no longer consciously hear or feel as anything other than a strange and persuasive pressure, like a cooling mask adjusting itself to my twitches of resistance, drawing all the oxygen out of my pores, my mouth, suffocating me slowly, rendering me an impotent citizen, drugged and tortured by institutional indifference, hyper-consumption, absent of empathy.

¹¹¹ Marina Abramovic: *In Residence*, Kaldor Public Art Projects, Sydney 2015. p.36

¹¹² Zora Neale Hurston cited in <https://www.thoughtco.com/g00/zora-neale-hurston-quotes-3530194?i10c.referrer=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com.au%2F>

¹¹³ WSW Editorial Board. *US Congress legalizes torture and indefinite detention*. World Socialist Website, September 29, 2006

¹¹⁴ Clive Stafford Smith. *Welcome to 'the Disco'*. *The Guardian*. June 19, 2008

¹¹⁵ Clive Stafford Smith. *Welcome to 'the Disco'*. *The Guardian*. June 19, 2008

In *Blowback* (NYID:2004), I created an antidote to this condition, a moving image simultaneously broadcast across the nation's screens, a moving image imprinted in the hearts and minds of all Australians who grew up here. The point of view is a child's, looking out from the backseat of a car driving through the countryside at dusk, the low sun flickering rays through the gum trees, a quiet hypnotic light that is so specific to time, place and landscape that it arouses a sentiment so powerful that its meaning alone overthrows the American oppressor.

Can a silent, moving image change the world, change the course of history? In art-making, the artist confers this power on the audience. As he does here...

*The eye – it cannot choose but see;
we cannot bid the ear be still;
our bodies feel,
where'er they be,
against
or
with our will.¹¹⁶*

¹¹⁶ William Wordsworth. *The Complete Poetical Works*. London: Macmillan and Co. 1888.

Web

Exercise Two

Building a Matrix Participants

are arranged in lines in two groups

X at either end of the working space. When

they walk across the space, they walk towards each

other - side-by-side in their own group and between each

other's group at the point of crossing. The key objective is to **X**

maintain connection laterally, frontally and dorsally. *Grid Formation*

These variations are then applied to a grid formation in which the participants

X are configured around the four sides of the working space. Maintaining the integrity of their lines, the participants walk to the opposite side of the space as if on a grid. Then, as the participants employ the turning options of 360, 180 and 90 degree turns, a Matrix repeatedly forms and dissipates. Ideally the exercise develops to the point where the participants stop

in precisely the same moment, and remain in this configuration, building the energy of

this state in which the desire to move and stop is held in equal measure. *Web* The

objective of this Step is to distil all the information of the space into a workable **X**

system of understanding and communication in which no piece of information

has greater value than another. The intention is to create an ecology in which

the fundamental element is an applied and visceral interconnectedness. If,

X by the end of Building a Matrix, a point has been reached whereby

it is 'productive' to move directly into Grid Formation,

the participants are asked to:

Open the stance

Close the eyes

Drop the arms

These

instructions

mark the shift from **X**

Grid Formation into Web.

X By taking these steps the participants will have

shifted the geometric shape from that of a matrix to

an open network in which the lateral, frontal and dorsal

connections are now dispersed centrifugally through the space. **X**

The participants begin processing the information created by this configuration.

If there is any discernible shift of energy in the space then they respond in proportion to the intensity of that shift. The mode of response is moving the body either by stepping, centre-shifting or weight-shifting, the latter motivated by a responsive change in a part of the body and processed through the centre. The shift of energy in the space comes from any **X**

human presence within the space and any internal or external non-human information,

for example, floorboards, traffic or building noise. Once this has been established,

X the participants are asked to concentrate the energy created between themselves

on those watching - the audience, observers or witnesses - with a view to

creating a web of human presence that is kinetically palpable. This

process is for those watching to experience, in a less **X**

adulterated form, the underlying precepts

that govern their mobility in daily life.

X

marks the bodies in the space.

THE DEMOCRATIC PRACTICE
IS THUS THE GENUINE PRINCIPLED VISION AND EXPRESSION OF THE PEOPLE'S WILL AND
CONSCIENCE WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF SOUND REVOLUTIONARY PERCEPTION, WHICH
AVOIDS IN ITS CALCULATIONS THE FALL INTO THE ILLUSIONS OF LIBERAL IDEAS, AND
DEFINES THE SPHERES OF THIS PRACTICE IN THEIR PROPER CONSCIOUS TRACKS.¹¹⁷

**We hear sounds from everywhere.
Without ever having to focus.
Sounds come from "above",
from "below",
from in "front of us",
from "behind" us,
from our "right", from our "left".
We can't shut out sound automatically.
We are simply not equipped with earlids.¹¹⁸**

Research Journal Entry
March 3, 16

As above, I've set aside Vargas for McLuhan. It was Vargas' idea. He started talking about McLuhan. I thought McLuhan, are you kidding? Who invokes McLuhan these days? But it's like that saying: 'why is a cliché a cliché? Because it's a truth!' - or something like that. McLuhan has got it all going on when it comes to the future. Take this for example:

Our electrically-configured world has forced us to move from the habit of data classification to the mode of pattern recognition. We can no longer build serially, block-by-block, step-by-step, because instant communication insures that all factors of the environment and of experience co-exist in a state of active interplay.¹¹⁹

Once again: "all factors of the environment and of experience co-exist in a state of active interplay." He could have writ that about the internet, ~~about~~ or William Gibson, ~~or~~ globalisation, ~~or~~ inter-disciplinarity, ~~or~~ ~~about~~ how I've been practising as an artist for 30 years, ~~or~~ about how I'm writing these words in 2016 ~~but~~ when he wrote those words. ~~He wrote that in 1967.~~

We hear sounds from everywhere. Across time.

¹¹⁷ Saddam Hussein. *On Democracy*. New York: Badlands Unlimited. 2012. P.69

¹¹⁸ Marshall McLuhan, Quention Fiore, Jerome Agel. *The Medium is the Massage*. Gingko Press. USA. 2001. P.111

¹¹⁹ Marshall McLuhan, Quention Fiore, Jerome Agel. *The Medium is the Massage*. Gingko Press. USA. 2001. Ps 44-63

From 1999-2003, my company NYID engaged in a 3-part collaboration with Japanese contemporary dance company Gekidan Kaitaisha called *Journey To Confusion*. Our aesthetic intersection was the body.

Kaitaisha

explore a corporeal sensibility evolved from the Japanese post-atomic, dance-form 'butoh'. Their idiosyncratic training incorporates the 'animal' into a psycho-physical regime. This is characterised by an exercise that roughly translates as 'pack of dogs'. It asks the performers to tap into the sensibility of a group of animals whose culture is defined by the participation of its members in the kinetic connection with and between each other's bodies. The world it creates is hierarchical, primitive and constantly evolving.

NYID acknowledged the potential value in the 'connective tissue' of this exercise for developing the capacity of 'social sensing' which characterises the Web exercise (formerly referred to as 'atomisation'). In research mode, my impulses were to dissolve hierarchy, absorb the primitive and maintain the open-ended nature of the exercise, creating a continuum based on exchange, adjustment, sharing, active listening, and sending and receiving information. What eventuated - Web - phrases the mind-body discourse into a unified space that reflects key mechanisms in the contemporary social formation we call democracy.

~~INSERT HERE: CHANTAL MOUFFE RE-DEMOCRACY~~

A: What other kinds of noise are there ?

B: I can't really hear you. Can you speak up?

A: I said, 'What other kinds of noise are there?'

B: Nope...Still nothing.

A: What. Other. Kinds. Of. Noise. Are. There?

B: Oh that's much better. I can hear you now. Trolls.

A: What?

B: Trolls. Another kind of noise. Trolls. (beat) Russian Trolls.

A: You don't mean Russian Dolls?

B: No. Trolls. Russian Trolls. They operate in networks set up by the Russian Government to develop mis and dis information.

A: For what purpose?

B: To unsettle the consensus of truth.

A: I wasn't aware there was one.

B: It's implicit.

A: In what?

B: Our universal values.

A: I didn't realise we had any.

B: They're implicit too. They're in the hum.

A:(silence) Oh. Ok. So how does it work?
This network of trolls?

B: It's very simple. The trolls operate in teams under the supervision of the Russian State Security Service. They manipulate online discussions to favour the Government agenda. They target and 'troll' public figures like investigative journalists who are exposing the Government and its methods, trolling for one.

A: It's an information war.

B: Yes. But it's more than that.
It's not straightforward propaganda.

A: haha, LOL

B: I am serious. It's a very new kind of noise.
It deceives the ear.
It sounds like democracy but it's the antithesis of democracy.

A: How so?

B: The trolls say they are exercising their freedom of speech by saying exactly what they like when they like however they like. To be allowed to behave freely is a longstanding principle of democracy. The problem is that what they are saying is not true, and how they are saying it intimidates others not to speak freely.

A: Go on.

B: To support the disguise of freedom of speech there is no explicit propaganda objective like "Vladimir Putin is really a good guy". The objective is to make you *disbelieve everything*. Which is not the opposite of 'believing in something'. If you can create a society that disbelieves everything it becomes rudderless and not really present.
Then it's much easier to manipulate.

A: I dis believe you.

B: Exactly

SOME OF OUR NEW PRACTICES MUST BE ACCEPTED BY US WITH A CERTAIN NUMBER OF LOSSES IN ORDER TO BRING THEM TO MATURITY, PARTICULARLY, ON AN ISSUE LIKE DEMOCRACY.

WE MUST ALSO ACCEPT A CERTAIN NUMBER OF LOSSES IN APPLYING DEMOCRACY,

BECAUSE IT IS NOT POSSIBLE TO APPLY DEMOCRACY

WITHOUT EXPECTING SOME MINOR LOSSES.

SUCH LOSSES SHOULD NOT SCARE US,

BECAUSE WHEN WE LOOK AT MATTERS IN THEIR FINAL OUTCOME DEFINED BY THE OBJECTIVE AND CENTRAL MEANS, WE WILL SEE THAT WHAT IS CERTAINLY REQUIRED FROM

US IS MARCHING THE PRACTICE OF DEMOCRACY,

TOWARD THE ACHIEVEMENT OF
SOCIALISM
AND TOWARD THE STRUGGLE FOR
ARAB UNITY.¹²⁰

Research Journal Entry
May 3-4, 16

I'm reading Saddam Hussein's writings *On Democracy*, and if you take away the whole space around him being a couple of kangas short in the top paddock if we can put aside the fact that Saddam Hussein he was a couple of kangas short in his top paddock it he Saddam Hussein is a reminder hammer that constantly pounds the idea that of democracy is not as a Western product at the end of a commodification process begun manufactured by the Greeks. it is something that needs to be re-invented on a daily basis in order to remain effective and Nor it is not it democracy Or a relic of a Judeo-Christianity legacy mummified around realations between Church and State. 35 years later, Fact is, the Arab Spring has taught us that defuse exploded the expor myth of the American export model of democracy trade approach to of exporting Democracy fails time and again because it seeks to impose one set of values on another square peg values, round hole values is as little more than an extension of the old 'sphere of influence' foreign policy approach. Is Hussein's appropriation of democracy as an implement of control just a regional version of America's entrepreneurial global approach? Whether it's in the hands of a dictator or a neo-liberal cabal, democracy can be a means to a non-democratic end. Y'see how it's so easy it is to get stuck on the instrumentalisation of democracy — as a tool of political power — rather than the ideal that inspires community, cooperation, conversation which is what I need to be talking about here. It creates panic. It enables the disablers.

Let's begin with the idea that Democracy is not a fixed thing that applies singularly to modern Western societies. Let's say it is pliable, adaptable to local conditions, an open source idea to be transposed and recalibrated for multiple cultural conditions – including religious. Democracy is as applicable can be adapted to societies governed by other religions, such as Islam. Belgian theorist Chantal Mouffe strikes a real genuine chord with her examination of how a democracy can operate in the present day. Her line is interesting fore-telling because she talks about giving up on the idea of a democracy in which there is consensus and no conflict and talks about a 'conflictual consensus', about democracy as a Adversaita adversarial (agonsitic) in a process in which opponents share some commonality but disagreed on the means by which things should be done. I'm thinking about this in terms of my dramaturgical proposition of that Body Listening and my proposition as is an operating system which reflects that of a functioning

¹²⁰ Saddam Hussein. *On Democracy*. New York: Badlands Unlimited. 2012. P.53

healthy democracy. She talks about the agonistic encounter as 'a confrontation where the aim is neither the annihilation nor the assimilation of the other, and where the tensions between the different approaches contribute to enhancing the pluralism that characterizes a multipolar world.' It is a fair way of describing in a political paradigm the experience of the initial point-of-entry state into the Atomisation Web exercise. Conflict is present but not disarming, difference is acknowledged but not prohibitive but ~~entangling~~, expansive. re-write

Saddam Hussein's *On Democracy* records three speeches to official meetings of the Arab Baath Socialist Party that took place from 1977-1978. His conflation of democracy, socialism, totalitarianism and Arab unity foretells the confusion created in the West by the Arab Spring, a series of events that should not be underestimated in amplifying the conundrum of Western society as it struggles to understand and value democracy in its current and multiple formulations.

The instruction within Saddam Hussein's speeches is his use of democracy as a pretext for acquiring political power. It is a relative of the strategy used by various neo-liberal cabals that operate the cross-party alliances which constitute many Western governments. Further, Hussein's appropriation of 'the idea of democracy' as a mechanism of control is a regional variation on America's entrepreneurial and global theme of world domination through the practice of exporting 'American democracy'. Whether in the hands of a dictator or a neo-liberal cabal, 'democracy' is invoked as a means to non-democratic ends, indeed an end to democracy itself.

In this frame, our purpose is to provide an antidote to these multiple and burgeoning forms of 'democracide'.

Let's begin with the idea that Democracy is not a fixed thing that applies singularly to modern Western societies, that Democracy can accommodate states of varying economic development, religious adherence and non-empire based nation-state formations, that Democracy is pliable, adaptable to local conditions, and an open source idea to be transposed and recalibrated for multiple cultural conditions.

Re-imagining Democracy in these elastic and adaptive terms, it is worthwhile visiting the provocations of Belgian theorist Chantal Mouffe who strikes a chord with her proposition for how Democracy might operate in the present day. She talks of relinquishing the ideal of the European democracy formation in which there is consensus and no conflict, and instead talks of a 'conflictual consensus'. Mouffe's democracy is described in adversarial (or agonistic) terms, as a process in which opponents share some commonality but disagree on the means by which things should be done, a democracy practised and evolving within adversarial parameters. Mouffe talks about the agonistic encounter as:

a confrontation where the aim is neither the annihilation nor the assimilation of the other, and where the tensions between the different approaches contribute to enhancing the pluralism that characterizes a multi-polar world.¹²¹

¹²¹ Chantal Mouffe. *Agonistics: Thinking the World Politically*. London. Verso 2013. P.41

This evokes in political language the experience of Web, the framing exercise of Body Listening. Conflict is present but not disarming, it is for processing. Difference is acknowledged but not prohibitive, it is expansive. Individuality is appreciated but not overwhelming, it is connective. In every move, the signature of each citizen is written time and again. And the act of writing inscribes in society, its values, in time and space.

24/7 In August 1998, I took my performance company, not yet 5 years old, into the Central Australian Deserts on a research undertaking called The Desert Project. It was my conviction that the training protocols we had been developing had their origins in my own travels through remote Australia as a teenager in the late 1970s-early 1980s. We drove for 3 days in 3 land-rovers from inner-city Melbourne to the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) lands in northern South Australia arriving one stormy night at a new homeland community, a fragile node on a triangle joined by Fregon and Ernabella. I had spent a month there three years previous on the invitation of an Aboriginal elder who wished to establish a garden before moving his family from Fregon.

His country typified for me a sensibility that I could not express in words but which made sense in the unified way my body and mind responded to it. It tied my teenage experiences of remote Australia to my adult self and embodied them in my search, as an established artist, for answers to questions about relations between culture, place and landscape using the body as connective tissue; a sensibility which was, for me, centrifugal to the evolution of Body Listening.

However, the journey to understanding the multiple meanings of this sensibility was, in this project, littered with failure of leadership, misreading of artistic signs, bad luck, misguided enthusiasm and ignorance.

Throughout those 15 days I dreamed, lived and re-dreamed the conditions of the making of the film *Aguirre Wrath of God* by German director, Werner Herzog, a brutal production experience of an aesthetically brutal representation of murderous colonialism and its insane consequences. I was Klaus Kinski, a mad and uncontrollable leader looking for my Herzog both on-set and off, in search of my artistic El Dorado, an Antipodean Peter Brook in Ned Kelly's ill-fitting cultural armour, a living, breathing nonsense of artistic and cultural analogies.

I fought with my lead-collaborators, demanded physical feats of the performers in the harshest conditions and drove them relentlessly to a place of not-knowing – anything. Respectfully they pushed back, compromise was reached, re-negotiated, reached again. Each evening we unpacked the day's work of the exercises - running, walking, statues - in the strange and beautiful landscape dominated by tonnes of cowpat, thousands of flies, oppressive heat and extreme isolation. At Painted Desert, 120 kilometres north-east of Coober Pedy, lead performer Paul Bongiovanni said out loud: 'This is not my country.' But it was mine, I thought.

Why? Because there was a mercurial interplay of the abstract, the ephemeral, the irrational, the illogical. I desperately wanted to make sense of this alchemy, to discover it, name it, identify it. Here was so much noise in such a quiet place. And I had brought it all. Where was the silence?

I did not find it there.

Once I 'left', which took some years of art-making, I did find a road.

I began to understand that an absence of sound was simply the first layer to be peeled away in a search for silence. Noise manifests in multiple modes, shapes and practices, and is often carried forward by those seeking to divest themselves of it.

Silence cannot be found in culture, place or landscape because its essential element is Time. Time that is not linear but simultaneous, Time that bends and refracts, Time whose dimensions are multiple, Time which is forgiving and inclusive, Time that hums, resonates and vibrates.

And so it is possible to crouch on a mountain on one side of a valley, facing another human on a mountain across the valley, and rise with the intention of communicating that physical action to the other a hundred and fifty more metres away, and for that other to receive your intention 6 and 7 Times out of 10...

It is Time that creates the Silence needed to carry intention from one person to another.

It is Time that defines Silence and allows it to occupy space, landscape and culture simultaneously and in multiple dimensions.

It is Time that accompanies Silence in its mediation of the human expression of Democracy, **24/7**.

vfx. (1.0)

A: Tick
B: Tock
A: Tick
B: Tock
A: Tick
B: Tock
A: Tick
B: Tock
A: Tick
B: Tock
A: Tick
B: Tock
A: Tick
B: Tock
A: Tick

Deep down.

Beneath Logic.

Time.

And Emotion.

Lies our facility for sensing.

We sense what we can neither smell, see nor hear.

We sense ourselves. We sense others. We sense our bodies and theirs.

INTRODUCTION TO **LINER NOTES**

(1) A concept album is a studio album where all musical and lyrical ideas contribute to a single overall theme. It is often accompanied by a set of liner notes that comprise a variety of texts including fact, anecdote, image or photograph, critical essay or comment, biography, credits, acknowledgements, details on each musical piece or artistic work, and a social or historical context to the album and its contents, or a combination of some or all of these.

(2) The Liner Notes for my concept album are just such a reflective combination arranged across a timeline of historical events and artistic projects that were made in response and in reaction to those events, and that are referenced in *Wall of Noise*, *Web of Silence*, a creation which synthesises the competing and significant aspects of my practice in terms of content, methodology, sensibility, scale and motivation.

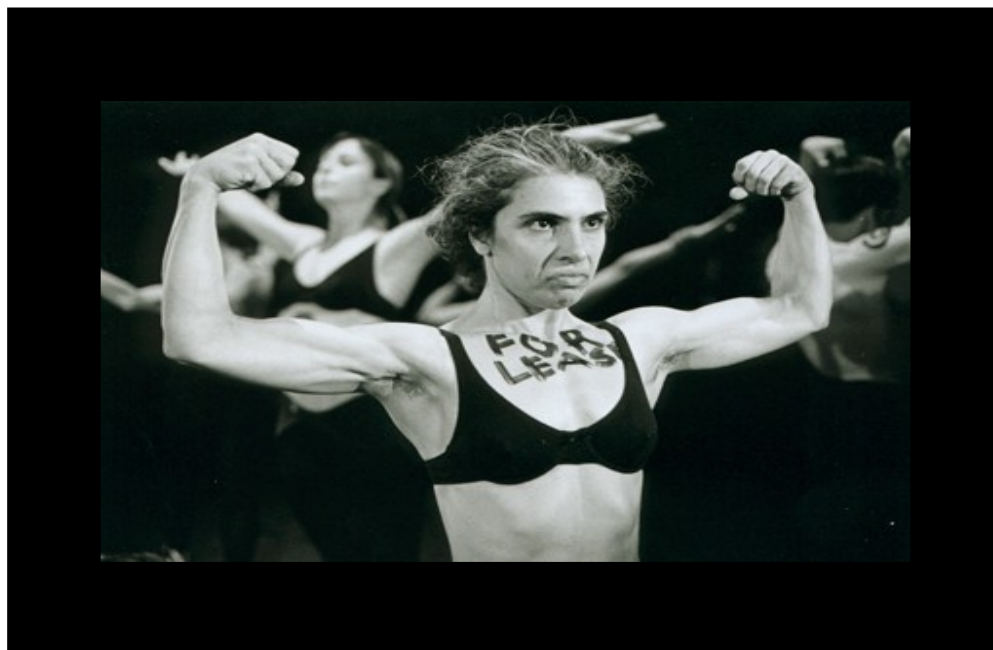
(3) The Timeline of the Liner Notes spans 20 years from 1997 – 2016. It is bookended by the rise of the One Nation Party and its second political coming at the 2016 Federal Election. In between are the Hearing of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights into the Stolen Generations (2000), the Tampa Affair (2001), the Abu Ghraib prisoner and torture scandal (2003) and the trajectory of governments led by John Howard (1996-2007), Kevin Rudd and Julia Gillard (2007-13,) Tony Abbott and Malcolm Turnbull (2013-) and the election of Donald Trump as American President in 2016.

(4) If one imagines the two sides of the concept album as thesis and anti-thesis, the Liner Notes are the base on which the two parts pivot as they turn towards and away from each other. There is vertical integration of the Liner Notes into the dialectic that is characterised by points of intersection with specific tracks from Side 1 *Wall of Noise*, specific elements of Side 2 *Web of Silence* and the artist's back catalogue. This process seeks to reflect upon the ideas and propositions of the concept album, and how these create, correlate and collude with my practice.

(5) The majority of the artworks referenced here were created and produced within the company frame of not yet it's difficult (NYID) through grants, commissions and awards from local, national and international agencies and presented by venues, arts centres, festivals, in Australia, Europe and Asia including the Sydney, Brisbane, Adelaide and Melbourne Festivals, Vienna Festwochen, Aarhus Festival, Cankarjev Dom, Expo 2000, Dublin Fringe Festival, Hellerau, the Seoul Performing Arts Festival, the Seoul International Dance Festival and Liverpool Capital of Culture. NYID was founded in 1995 by David Pledger, Peter Eckersall and Paul Jackson and is regarded as one of Australia's seminal interdisciplinary arts companies. This core artistic practice is augmented by my work as an artist, activist, advocate and curator with local, national and international governments, arts agencies, cultural institutions, artists' collectives, individual artists, and the philanthropic change-agent, Igniting Change.

LINER NOTES

the austral/asian post-cartoon: sports edition, 1997



(1) One Nation 1997 On the opening night of NYID's *The Austral/Asian Post-Cartoon: Sports Edition*, more commonly referred to as *The Sport Show* (1997), I was advised by a concerned journalist to remain in the theatre as disgruntled members of the audience intent on inflicting physical harm to my person were waiting outside The Malthouse Theatre.

The reason for their disquiet was a scene in the performance called *The Coach's Speech* – which concludes **Side 1 Wall of Noise** - in which a Vietnamese performer was savagely beaten for his 'not belonging' to Australia's National Team. Its agency as a political intervention was rooted in its crossing the line from presentation – which had characterised the performance to that point - to representation. The journey of this crossing was slow and deliberate to repercuss deeply within the psyche of the audience. Despite the fact the actor was wearing protective sports clothing, despite the fact that we were in the heightened aesthetic space of a theatrical production and despite the fact the audience were taken on the journey with humorous intent, the first 30 seconds after the beating, in which the perpetrators and the audience witnessed a human being lying prostrate, were the longest 30 seconds of my working life as an artist. I never knew whether the audience was going to go crazy, walk out or initiate some independent action. On one occasion an audience member plaintively asked: "Won't someone help that poor man?" No one did.

It all works out well in the performance. After about a minute, the actor Kha Tran Viet jumps to his feet and proceeds to instruct his perpetrators (fellow actors) on the deficits in their fighting skills in the context of Vovinam martial arts of which he is a teacher. It was a way of bringing the audience back into the performance proper and re-connecting them with a safer, discursive space.

However, this scene deeply affected many audience members because it disabled their agency, a condition which echoed their daily life experience as citizens within Australian society. The scene was inspired by Kha's own experience running away from skinheads in Melbourne's CBD at the height of Pauline Hanson's first iteration of One Nation¹²² and it viscerally reminded the audience of their complicity in Australia's racism by maintaining their silence and inaction. Hence the re-action

Of interest is the corporeality of this scene of *violence against another*. Prior to the scene, the actors' bodies were upright, muscular and available, athletic in their poise and comportment. This state slowly deteriorated into the animalistic as a pack mentality overwhelmed the perpetrators – backs bent, saliva and sweat running, arms and legs akimbo as the contagion of violence spread like a virus. This is in stark contrast to the 'victim' whose body can only absorb the punishment as it slowly bows, back arched, hands across the face, bent to one knee then both, finally collapsing slowly to one side as exhaustion overwhelms the survival instinct: defeated.

In the arc between these two physical positions - the upright and the prostrate – lies the dynamic between the embodied citizen of a democracy and the embodied citizen of a neo-liberal state, a dynamic that was consequential to John Howard's Prime Ministership and that, using the body as a map, I charted through the performances *WS:HDQ* (1996) which pre-dated *The Sport Show*, *Scenes of The Beginning from The End* (2001), *Journey To Con-fusion #3* (2002), *K* (2002), *Blowback* (2004), *apoliticaldance* (2006), *The Dispossessed* (2008) and *Strangeland* (2009).

*It is the body that manifests our fears, our neuroses, our true sensibility.
It is the body that shows us what we are when our mind deceives us.*¹²³



strangeland, 2009

This downward, dorsal trajectory of the citizen began with Howard's infantilization of Australian society, and manifested in the pathologically childish behaviour of Labor's subsequent turn in office (2007-2013) which, in turn, was punctuated by Tony Abbott's 28-second punch-drunk tantrum recorded mid-interview with a TV-journalist in 2011 and book-ended by his pugnacious, prime-ministerial threat to 'shirtfront' the visiting Russian head-of-state, Vladimir Putin in 2014.¹²⁴ This abject behaviour of Australia's

¹²² In 1997, Pauline Hanson founded the One Nation Party, a political party with a conservative and populist platform.

¹²³ Director's note: <http://www.notyet.com.au/project/apoliticaldance>

¹²⁴ <http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/tony-abbott-vows-to-shirtfront-vladimir-putin-over-mh17-tragedy-20141013-115cm3.html>

mainstream-party political leadership created an institutionalised ambience of permissiveness with regard to the body in Australian society that accommodated the physical abuse and state-sanctioned torture of those seeking asylum in the gulag of Australia's detention centres. The more subtle, on-shore and related modes of this permissiveness lie in institutional coercion and attrition, and are umbilically connected in managerialism, the most toxic of which is practised by the Department of Immigration and Border Protection which I reference in **Side 1's 45rpmanagerialism in society**.

From *The Sport Show* (1997) to *Strangeland* (2009), I expressed in corporeal terms what began as an undertow in Australian society with One Nation and which ended up as a wave of physical deprivation. **Side 1's 45rpmanagerialism in democracy Notes 23-52** outlines the extreme consequences of this wave on an actual body. I feel that this body, that of the self-immolated asylum-seeker, operates not just as a metaphor for the deprivation of Australia's policy positions but as a symbol of the condition of our morality. It was a symbol I repeatedly offered up in my artistic practice as a warning then a judgment.

(2) Stolen Generations, 2000 In 1996, 'Little Johnny Howard' - the erstwhile butt of a generation of jokes within his own party – stripped Paul Keating of the prime ministerial mantle and plotted an 11-year durational performance of resentment. Pauline Hanson was Howard's fillip in the early years and he masterfully exploited her presence using her anti-Asian, anti-Indigenous views to run interference for his mainstream version that had significant traction in marginal electorates.

Despite this, by 2000, Howard was considered a 'bit on the nose' with his awkward, parochial and unworldly lead-in performances to the Sydney Olympics completely at odds with Keating's lingering legacy of a progressive and liberal Australia. But Howard weathered the unpopularity and his influence amplified, creating an atmosphere of censorship that portended the curtailment of freedom-of-expression, more commonplace today.

In my own case I was presenting Olympic Training Squad in Hannover, Germany, at the Australian Pavilion for EXPO, a program under the remit of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

A precursor to *The Sports Show*, *Training Squad* had its genesis in 1996 as a response to the Victorian Liberal Government's appropriation of public space for urban development. A cube of 9 performers ran at pace through the streets of Melbourne's CBD stopping to occupy the City Square, Bourke Street Mall and Southbank with a gestural and spoken vocabulary drawn from sports actions and spectatorship.

In Hannover, the performance was expanded to include topical references to the Olympics which coincided with the July 2000 Hearing of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, the Stolen Generations, matters from which blew up in the face of John Howard's government. The UN's Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination took the Government to task for its failure to support a national apology

and its inadequate financial recompense for the suffering inflicted on indigenous people separated from their families.¹²⁵

In the weeks before the Sydney Games, indigenous athlete Cathy Freeman had been critical of Prime Minister Howard for refusing to apologise for the past in the context of the 'stolen generations' debate.¹²⁶



training squad, 1996-2013

In support of Freeman's position, we invited the European audience to use our bodies as a canvas to sign a petition to the Australian Government. Standing in front of the Australian Pavilion, stripped to the waist, we offered textas to the thousand audience members we drew to each performance inviting them to write a message to John Howard and his government in support of Cathy Freeman's stand. After a few of these signings I was engaged backstage by a senior DFAT bureaucrat and strenuously advised to delete the scene from the performance - a directive I refused to obey. Within a day, our on-site European agent had been contacted by a second DFAT bureaucrat drawing their attention to the political nature of the performance. In order to get some artistic breathing space for ourselves, we resolved to publicise DFAT's intervention in the Australian media. Reporting accusation-and-denial can sometimes do wonders for calling off the police.¹²⁷ We were not bothered again and the performance proceeded with the body-petitions.

Nevertheless, it presaged a growing dis-ease within the Australian bodypolitic that metastasized into the cancerous culture wars of Howard's later years, the legacy of which is evident in the Turnbull Government's adversarial engagement with the arts, in particular, its desire to bring the Australia Council closer to it in order that it might

¹²⁵ Concluding Observations by the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination: Australia. 19 April 2000.

¹²⁶ <http://en.espn.co.uk/olympic-sports/sport/story/152105.html>

¹²⁷ The Australian 20/9/2000 <https://www.mailarchive.com/recoznet2@paradigm4.com.au/msg04315.html>

reduce its independence and funding efficacy, and make it an arm of the government rather than an arm's length agency. This is the ambient discourse of **Side 1's mini EP (not the style council)**. It resonates a warning I received from an audience member on the opening night of *Blowback* (2004) to "watch out, mate." Two years later, when asked by an Australian presenter if I was concerned for myself, if not my practice, I have a clear memory of hesitating before responding. An atmosphere of censorship and self-censorship prevailed in Howard's final years and its institutionalisation is his legacy.

(3) Tampa, 2001 In August 2001, the Norwegian freighter, MV Tampa, carrying 438 refugees rescued from a cap-sized boat in international waters sought permission to enter Australian waters, a request John Howard's Australian Government denied. The Tampa Affair precipitated a generation of attrition by Australian governments against those seeking asylum via boat that persists to this day. The complicity of the Australian people in this persecution is one of the most divisive issues in contemporary Australian society. Once perceived as a compassionate and welcoming country, Australia is vilified internationally for its (mis)treatment and incarceration of the world's most vulnerable people. As an artist who has worked internationally since 1990 the constant and increasing volume of inquiry from foreigners as to the motivations behind our stance has become ever more embarrassing as our failure as a civil society has been exposed.

To house the asylum-seekers, a gulag of detention centres was created across Australia that include(d) Villawood (NSW), Maribyrnong (Vic), Baxter (SA), Woomera (SA), Curtin (WA), Perth (WA), Scherger (QLD), Yongah Hill (WA), Wickham Point (NT), and offshore facilities at Christmas Island, Manus Island and Nauru. Reports of physical and sexual abuse, mental health problems, torture, rape, child abuse, murder and self-harm have been in the public domain since early in the gulag's establishment. In response, many Australians organised support and advocacy groups to provide legal advice, visits, moral encouragement and government lobbying. This has been done by individual citizens and organisations such as the Melbourne-based Asylum Seeker Resource Centre (ASRC). Many more Australians were wilfully wedged by the two major political parties which continues to drive electoral collateral for them both.

Three of the more outstanding acts of resistance were made in the artspace by the one artist. For *Close the Concentration Camps* (2002), performance artist Mike Parr sewed his lips and face with thread echoing the acts of protest of the Woomera asylum seekers only months earlier. For '*a stitch in time*' (2003) he invited online spectators to deliver electric shocks to his body by clicking their computer mouse as an act of 'democratic torture' after he stitched his face into a caricature of shame.¹²⁸ In 2005, for *Kingdom Come and/or Punch Holes in the Body Politic* Parr, dressed in an orange uniform evoking those of the inmates of Guantanamo Bay, 'sat in a gallery connected to a low-voltage electroshock system that was triggered by audience movement...(his) spasm and facial expressions were digitally captured, manipulated, and immediately projected onto the wall of an adjacent room.'¹²⁹ In these works, the artist violates himself and is violated by an other. Through interactivity and mediation, his body

¹²⁸ <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2003/05/02/1051382091629.html>

¹²⁹ Christine Stoddart. Review of *The Infinity Machine: Mike Parr's Performance Art, 1971–2005* by Edward Scheer. *TDR: The Drama Review*, Volume 55, Number 3, Fall 2011, pp 189-191

becomes the shared space for both actions. It was the creation of this shared space that attracted me and paralleled my own timeline as an artist.

Until *The Sports Show*, my approach to the body had been to concentrate on acts of *violence against another*. This trope was expanded to a variation of the same in *Scenes of The Beginning From The End* (2001) which directed violence against a randomly selected audience member and in *K* (2002-5) where the violence was delivered remotely by the state against a detained citizen. My response to the establishment of the detention centre gulag was to create a new dramaturgical trope - *violence against oneself* - that would accompany, amplify and inextricably link with *violence against another*. It manifest most purely around a scene I created for *Journey to Confusion #3* (2002) and re-purposed for *apoliticaldance* (2006), and which was re-framed and customised for the narrative and ambient needs of *Blowback* (2004), *The Dispossessed* (2008) and *strangeland* (2009).

Violence against oneself begins with a 'character' or performer throwing themselves repeatedly at a wall. Over 7 years this strategy was employed with various motivations – torture, frustration, despair, shock, incomprehension.



apoliticaldance, 2006

In *Journey To Confusion* and *apoliticaldance*, the motivations were primarily self-harm. The format was roughly the same in both performances. Three or more couples walk arm-in-arm to and from their home, represented as a specially constructed white rectangular, upright wall. They take it in turn to throw each other forcefully at the wall, picking up their fallen partner and throwing them against the wall until they can no longer get up. If one is defeated before the other then the remaining person runs time and again into the wall, smashing themselves until they too can no longer move. All the while, 'A World Of Our Own', by Australian 1960s pop group The Seekers, is played at volume. These lyrics open **Side 2 Web of Silence** but are worth repeating here in full:

*Close the doors, light the lights.
We're stayin' home tonight,
Far away from the bustle and the bright city lights.
Let them all fade away.
Just leave us alone.
And we'll live in a world of our own.
We'll build a world of our own
That no one else can share.
All our sorrows we'll leave far behind us there.
And I know you will find
There'll be peace of mind
When we live in a world of our own.¹³⁰*

This scene is emblematic of two sides of a mirror: on the one side detainees causing self-harm and on the other ordinary Australians, for whom complicity in the self-harm is unbearable. In *Blowback*, the motivation of self-harm gives way to deep frustration which manifests like a tic in the soap-opera character, Scott, who randomly flings himself into the white walls. In the later works *The Dispossessed* and *Strangeland*, there are no motivations for this violence; running into walls simply becomes a habit, a form of expression by human beings who cannot remember its origins and whose humanity has been reduced by the attrition of the system in which they live, the aesthetics of which were informed by the actions of the bodies in Samuel Beckett's dystopian novella, *The Lost Ones*. The normalisation of this action toxifies, corrodes and 'punches holes' in the bodypolitical, damaging those whose habit it is and desensitising those who bear witness.

(4) Abu Graib, 2003

Director David Pledger's physical explorations may be thought of as an "acoustics of the body". Just as sounds bounce off hard surfaces or are deflected by softer ones, causing noises to inhabit each space in a characteristic way, so the sensorium of the body is affected by the materials about it.¹³¹

The materials about the body that critic Jonathan Marshall refers to here are social. They reverberate, creating a sonic aura which is invisible and indivisible with other elements in the sensorium. Depending on those elements the affect can be pleasant or unpleasant. In the aesthetic environment of my multi-media theatre production *K*, the primary material is the Foundation Sound which begins as a tone amplified by frequency, intensifies with volume and pushes hard against the walls of a transformed Touring Hall in Melbourne Museum until its oppression is altogether complete and surprising for the audience as they are immersed in a system of representation that compels them to consider their complicity in the Iraq War where the children's song, *I Love You*, by Barney the Purple Dinosaur, was played on a 24-hour loop to captured Iraqi soldiers in torture-containers in American military facilities. The Foundation Sound is similarly employed to under-score **Side 1 Wall of Noise**, to draw the audience, the reader, into the aesthetic dimension of my scholarship.

¹³⁰ <http://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/seekers/aworldofourown.html>

¹³¹ Jonathan Marshall. "Territories of Sound". *Umelec*. Vol. 5-6, 2001

The use of sound as torture was widespread during the Iraq War, in particular the technique of playing American pop and rock, repeatedly, and at volume. At Abu Graib, Haj Ali, the hooded man in the infamous prison photographs, was stripped, handcuffed and forced to listen to American singer-songwriter David Gray's *Babylon*, 'at a volume so high he feared that his head would burst'.¹³²

In *Blowback* (2004), Darko, a resistance fighter planning an online cultural action against the occupying American forces in a fictional Australia, inverts this torture strategy by singing KC and The Sunshine Band's *Give It Up* to block the painful, shock-therapy-like treatment his female torturer employs to invade his mind. Sound can be an offensive *and* defensive tool.



Blowback, 2004

Violence is integral to the prosecution of any war. Until the Iraq War, however, the use of torture was considered to transgress the 'rules of engagement' despite its routine use in whichever theatre it made an appearance. All that changed when the American government legislated the Military Commissions Act of 2006. Amnesty International determined the Act

Permit(s), in violation of international law, the use of evidence extracted under cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, or as a

¹³² <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2008/jun/19/usa.guantanamo>

result of “outrages upon personal dignity, particularly humiliating or degrading treatment”, as defined under international law¹³³.

When a society legislates the acceptance and normalisation of torture, it steps away from universal human rights towards barbarity. Australia’s proximity to America in the Coalition of The Willing meant it to, by proxy, politically and civically condoned the torture of prisoners-of-war. At this moment, the ambience of permissiveness in regard to the body that marked John Howard’s prime ministership concretizes into a politico-legal structure that atomises the body of the citizen - in the first instance the citizen of the other, the foreign citizen, and ultimately the citizen that is us. Our bodypolitic is re-configured around this newly negotiated citizen’s body and our values shape-shift around the idea of whose body can now be tortured – the soldier, the asylum-seeker, the refugee, the other, the us.

That the lines of civilization are now blurred is in large part a consequence of the alchemy of neo-liberalism and managerialism. One of Elton Mayo’s motivations for developing Managerialism, was his scepticism of the individual and the community to create social change. He believed *this* capacity was innate to the organisation. In the social context of the neo-liberal project, the ‘individual’ and ‘community’ are subsumed into ‘the organisation’. This elision breeds certain human behaviours – aversion to risk, susceptibility to fear, a competitive default setting.

In his novel, *Super Cannes* (2000) - a seminal reference for my performative explorations - JG Ballard unpacks the disease that festers beneath a gated community of individuals employed by an unspecified organisation.¹³⁴ The symptoms of the disease are insomnia and stress. As a cure, the community’s psychiatrist encourages aberrant sexual and physical behaviour so the residents might relate to people and things other than their jobs which tie their souls to the rules and etiquette of an oppressive and detrimental extreme. This notion of ‘otherness’ is central to the thesis of managerialism as it feeds on exclusion, isolation and exception. In the community sense, it means building a wall around homes, sealing and isolating our domestic world, ‘a world of our own that no-one else can share’.¹³⁵

Managerialism brings its own distinct accent to the pathology of an organisation and ultimately to a society. It demands caution when risk is necessary; it commands the protocols of competition when justice and compromise could be employed as humane options; it displaces common sense with institutionalised rule. When a bureaucrat in George W Bush’s administration decides that a higher quality of information needs to be solicited from prisoners-of-war, the directive oozes down the chains of power to the grunts on the ground and they implement a horror that transgresses civilised rules of engagement. The greater horror is made when the transgression is legislated by the managerialist politicians as permissible not just to mitigate the blowback but to inflict more physical pain, now state-sanctioned.

In my work, the vertical integration of managerialism is epitomised in *K* (2002-5), a conflation of Franz Kafka’s *The Trial*, George Orwell’s *1984* and Ray Bradbury’s *Fahrenheit 451*. A world is described in which an automated system of torture is

¹³³ Amnesty International. *Turning Bad Policy into Bad Law. USA Military Commissions Act of 2006*. September 28, 2006.

¹³⁴ JG Ballard. *Super Cannes*. USA. Picador 2000

¹³⁵ Tom Springfield, *A World Of Our Own*. Warner/Chappell Music. 1965

activated against a citizen randomly drafted by a mobile-surveillance dragnet. His crime is the possession of a book, Kafka's *The Trial*, for which he suffers a fatal interrogation by a militarised bureaucrat. K exposes the concentric circles of complicity in which managerialism and neo-liberalism operate. They occur not just in the life-and-death context of war but in the more prosaic and no less influential parts of our social sectors including education, the arts and culture. They are circles created by the actions of violence against an other, against oneself and, once institutionalised, constitutes a *violence against society*.

Blowback, 2004



One of the most egregious examples of this is the covert national surveillance system installed by the US Government post-9/11 which was exposed in 2013 by whistleblower, Edward Snowden. This state-sanctioned breach of privacy constituted an unheralded attack on its own by a democratically-elected government. In the future narrative of modern democracy, it is a scene that may signal the beginning of the end.

(5) Re-Calibration The triumph of Kevin Rudd over John Howard at the 2007 Election is an historical marker in terms of Australian politics, Australian society - and my work as an artist. Whilst I had enjoyed artistic success, the changes in society I had hoped my work would accompany, did not in fact materialise. My final artistic offer of this period was *apoliticaldance* which preceded Howard's defeat by a year. It was framed by the question: what does the body look like after 10 years of neo-conservative rule?¹³⁶ It was a question that persisted throughout *The Dispossessed* (2008) and *strangeland* (2009) and which seeps through **Side 1, Wall of Noise**.

¹³⁶ <http://www.racefiles.com/2012/11/27/neoliberals-and-neocons-whats-the-difference-and-why-should-i-care/>

In truth, I had begun to question deeply my role as an artist. I was very conscious that I had adopted the position of the antagonist, seeking to critique, to call out inconsistency and deception, to shout loudly when injustice was present and warn conspicuously when I had seen danger. I felt in tune with the zeitgeist. The position of the antagonist was one I adopted deliberately and which I thought was my rightful role in society.

As I analysed this position more deeply, and in conversation with those who know my work well, I concluded that whilst my impulse was antagonistic, often driven by a sense of anger at the injustice of things, my work carried inside it a world of dream, desire and imagination that did not dictate to my audiences any terms of human engagement but rather proposed a series of landscapes, meanings and possibilities that created an affective space for making a (progressive) future. In the creation of this space, I was compelled by a sense of injustice (as an antagonist) to offer up, if not solutions, then pathways to find them (as a protagonist).

On reflection, I started to question the alchemy of this configuration within my practice.

Why? Because the conditions of the artist were deteriorating along with the conditions of society. It had become clear that the managerialism which had carried neo-liberalism into the hearts and minds of business, labour and civil society had also intoxicated those within the arts and that, as a result, the artist had moved to the bottom of a very long food chain. In terms of her influence, income and agency, the artist was at nil-all. This is a persistent frequency throughout **Side 1 Wall of Noise**.

In processing this argument and refining it, I came to the view that the 21st C is a time for the artist to, if not forsake the role of antagonist and adopt the role of protagonist then certainly in my own case, re-calibrate the alchemy of their configuration in my practice and behaviour. I have had the most help in framing my thinking around this re-calibration from Belgian political theorist, Chantal Mouffe:

What is needed in the current situation is a widening of the field of artistic intervention, with artists working in a multiplicity of social spaces outside traditional institutions in order to oppose the program of the total social mobilization of capitalism.¹³⁷

I processed the meaning of Mouffe's provocation through a discursive framework in successive calls-to-arms in several publications, the latest of which, *Year Zero*, appeared in *Dancehouse Diary*, Australia's quarterly essay for dance in 2016.

Artists need to intervene in non-arts environments. We need to see our artistic practice as a dramaturgical tool for civil society. Let's be bold. We need to develop not only an artistic dramaturgy and a cultural dramaturgy but a progressive, social dramaturgy. We need to operate cross-sectorally and think transversally. We can no longer enjoy the luxury of being the antagonist. We need to drive the narrative, be a protagonist.

Unless artists define themselves by making work without consideration to the criteria of government, unless they seize control of the language in which policy is forged, unless they write the story of culture in which they are leading

¹³⁷ Chantal Mouffe. *Agonistics: Thinking the World Politically*. Verso. London. 2013. P.87

*characters, unless they understand deeply the complicity of their participation in the various contexts in which they work then our labor, our artworks, our role and agency in society will diminish – and economic modes of production will be an end without a means. Working for nothing. Zero.*¹³⁸

This re-calibration of the roles of *antagonist* and *protagonist* is one I have been undertaking for a decade and publicly prosecuting since 2013. It encapsulates providing solutions, identifying and navigating new pathways, leading advocacy and resistance. It adopts the posture of ‘the front-foot’. Of working in a ‘multiplicity of social spaces’. For me, it means that my professional activity now extends outwards from an **artistic practice** into **the curatorial** and **the advocacy**. Its forward movement is deeply embedded in **Side 2, *Web of Silence*** as an antidote to the managerialist-led, neo-liberal project analyzed in **Side 1, *Wall of Noise***.

Of course, it is one thing to know that one’s practice is altering, it is another to understand how and where it is doing so; alterations in practice are more palpable than articulate. For myself, they are produced by concomitant changes in domestic, financial, social, cultural and artistic circumstances. One gradually becomes aware of a re-configuring of one’s interests and intentions before one is aware of a move into a new, definite artistic space.

On reflection, I have developed a new way of speaking, framing, motivating and making through a process of trial-and-error, ‘sensing’ my way to understanding what kind of a protagonist I need to be and can be, and how to balance this with my agency as an antagonist. In so doing, I have become more ‘public’ in a way I had not been. As this process is still in train, it is not as defined as that which describes my earlier period of work. I do understand, however, that the interweaving of certain work streams, real-world events and practice experiments have been influential.

In terms of performance research, the international collaboration, AMPERSAND, allowed me to draw together the practices of body listening and the practice of democracy. In terms of public discourse, the thinking and writing that generated the quarterly essay, *Re-Valuing The Artist In the New World Order*, developed my capacity to actively engage core arguments about the arts and its relationship to civil society by using the language of artistic practice. In terms of advocacy, the events from the 2014 Sydney Biennale to the 2016 Federal Election helped crystallize my agency in explaining the contexts in which the artist works and her complicity within them. These three threads line the entire album, ***Wall of Noise, Web of Silence***.

(6) AMPERS&ND 2011-2014 AMPERS&ND is the most recent research stage of the Body Listening protocols, extracts of which are interpolated throughout **Side 2 *Web of Silence***. AMPERS&ND reinvigorated a trajectory that began in the mid-90s but which tailed off in the latter years of the 2000s.

Historically, Body Listening had been built with a core group of actors and dancers as principal collaborators.¹³⁹ AMPERS&ND introduced musicians into the research mix for

¹³⁸ *Year Zero*. Dancehouse Diary, Dancehouse. Melbourne. April 2016

¹³⁹ Principal Collaborators in The Body Listening Project include Todd MacDonald, Min Sung Seo, Kim Kwang-Dok, Natalie Cursio, Sara Black, Carlee Mellow and Tim Harvey

the first time, and this element created a new reaction in the process, particularly in relation to language.¹⁴⁰ For example, the meanings of 'sound' and 'listening' were completely renovated. With its ambition to create a new artistic language that could be read and performed in real time, the ensemble trained with the Body Listening protocols over 4 years in 3 countries and this constancy allowed a new dimension to emerge in the sensibility, language and application of the protocols.

During the first research stage at Hellerau Arts Centre, Dresden, in 2011, we refined a persistent, historical line of inquiry into the question: how do we sense what we can neither see nor hear? We became interested in developing a presentation form as an answer to this question using *body listening* as an inter-media training system. So we worked on refining the language and presentation structure to make it more accessible and readable. As we were dealing with complex ideas and provocations, the trend was to 'distil, refine and simplify'. We introduced usable descriptions of critical elements such as referring to our proprioceptive faculty as an internal GPS. We concentrated on the live-ness of the 'atomic exchange' between the performers, and between the performer and the audience so that the audience could gradually become immersed and complicit in the work. We came to understand that this complicity was key to them investing and losing themselves in the immediate experience, and also whatever applications we might pursue on a practical, artistic plane.¹⁴¹

By the time we concluded the main research phases in Dresden, Melbourne and Chuncheon in 2012,

*NYID's body listening (had become) a training and practice protocol that speaks to artists across the performing arts enabling the formation of a highly sensitised, connected ensemble.*¹⁴²

Consequent to this formation, we believed we had developed a new way of 'speaking' to an audience about how humans define themselves in the 'space of daily life' through their body and their senses, using sound as a primary agent of receiving and processing information. In Seoul, we aimed for the audience to sense and feel an 'atomic' connection to the performers and to each other, a connectedness at its most basic level: listening to the sound of one's body in a room with other bodies.¹⁴³

Roiling underneath this practice, and directly informing it, was a shift in Australian politics created by the New Guard, post-Howard. I deliberately shied away from critiquing the Rudd Government as an artist giving it an opportunity to establish itself. At the time, it was a curiosity - the first change of government in 11 years.

I admired Rudd declaring his first day in office Sorry Day and was moved by the speeches and the symbolism of the occasion. It seemed there was a real sense of possibility about the new government. Some months later, I was invited to attend the 2020 Summit in which 'leaders' from all streams of society came together to proffer new ideas for government policy.¹⁴⁴ There I was also moved by the speeches and symbolism of the occasion. In 2010 when I was living and working in Brussels I watched

¹⁴⁰ Principal Collaborators came from Elision Ensemble and include Richard Haynes, Judith Hamman and Tristram Williams.

¹⁴¹ AMPERS&ND Narrative 2011-2014, Grant application

¹⁴² NYID Grant Application for the presentation of Atomic @ Seoul International Dance Festival (SIDANCE) October 2013

¹⁴³ NYID Grant Acquittal to the Australia Korea Foundation for Atomic @ SIDANCE, 2014

¹⁴⁴ The 2020 Summit (19–20 April, 2008), [Canberra](#), Australia, aimed to "help shape a long term strategy for the nation's future"

transfixed as Rudd was replaced by Australia's first female Prime Minister. Once again, I was moved by the speeches and symbolism of the occasion. After 3 years, it seemed the only things at the disposal of the incumbent government were political speeches and symbolic occasions. Its next 3 years reduced the speeches to noise and the symbols to silence.

Noise and silence: a binary that distils the essence of the realpolitik of the 21st C. It is also a binary that has a deep resonance in the training protocols of Body Listening. As I watch Australia's political culture complete its neo-liberal project and, in the process, disengage society from democracy, it occurs to me that Body Listening articulates an innate, corporeal understanding of the impulses that are integral to democracy's healthy functioning. I describe these impulses in **Side 2 Web of Silence** as a continuum based on exchange, adjustment, sharing, active listening, and sending and receiving information. I feel that pursuing the Body Listening protocols along these lines might offer an antidote to the infection of neo-liberalism. That information drawn from this spatial-aesthetic paradigm can be used to inform and leverage new models of a democratic civil society, and help navigate democracy's contemporary challenges.

This inquiry inhabits my curatorial intention for the second edition of *2970° The Boiling Point*, a cultural provocation that bears the shape of a festival of ideas and art which I initiated for the City of Gold Coast in 2015. The 2017 edition is themed *Practising Democracy*¹⁴⁵ and exhibits many of the aesthetic and intellectual connections I have described in this section. The following is a Teaser to the event that will take place in September.

In 2016, Western democracy turned somersaults.

Brexit, Trump, the rise of Le Pen and populist nationalism in Europe.

Rather than fixating on the noise, 2970° goes deep into the quietude by listening to some smart people suggest provocative ideas for how we might make a future we want to live in.

I am experimenting with the degree to which I can insinuate Body Listening protocols and philosophy into the program.

(7) 2013 Revaluating The Artist in The New World Order If Kevin Rudd's prime ministership provided the preconditions for activating the idea of Body Listening as an antidote to the denigration of democracy by neo-liberalism, John Howard's preceding terms created the necessity to develop a new language with which an artist-citizen might adopt the position of 'protagonist'.

Throughout the late 1990s and early-mid 2000s, Howard skilfully re-made Australia in his own image. He did this by combining a deft use of language with the tactic of 'wedge politics' which he turned into a political art form. Howard created un-textured negative space in public debate by breaking the laws of acceptable speech and speech-making so that no one would understand what he said in order that we would all understand what he meant.

¹⁴⁵ 2970° The Boiling Point, Practising Democracy, The Arts Centre Gold Coast, September 7-9, 2017

It was a new language to maintain power, a language that heralded the beginning of the professional class of politician in a new Australia that was *'relaxed and comfortable'*. This phrase, in itself, was repeated so often that its potency now stems from its repetition, not from its evident truth. It was a seductive mantra that insinuated its values into our view of ourselves. The problem was that the more we were told how relaxed and comfortable we were, the more ill-at-ease we felt. The disconnect, between what we were *told* and how we *felt*, was palpable. It created a disabling effect within our social relations and our democratic aspirations, a strategy intrinsic to the neo-liberal political project, the ascendancy of which did not falter with Howard's political demise so profoundly had he transformed Australian culture and society.

Howard drew inspiration for his re-shaping of Australia from his American counterpart, George W. Bush, and the 'neo-con' cabal that stage-managed him. Bush compartmentalised moral values into 'good' and 'bad', and people into 'us' and 'them'. It was a simple strategy: relentlessly affirm difference until it becomes an inviolable truth. Like a bully in the playground, George W. Bush repeated ad infinitum: *'You're either with us or against us.'* Within the space of months, it evolved from a neologism to a self-perpetuating logic, to the point where Australia agreed to participate in a war and kill lots of people in a far-off country. The base logic followed that if we weren't 'with America' then we were 'against America'. Of itself, reason enough for them to come and kill *us* in *our* far-off country.

It's an approach shared by neo-liberal politicians across Western democracy. Dutch politician Geert Wilders uses it to great effect. Dramaturge Tobias Kocklemans explains the tactic as an intention to confuse and disable:

*Wilders for instance has often used the catchphrase: 'This land is not intended to be...'over and over again. Without clarifying what that intention would be, who intended it, or if there was any intention at all to begin with.*¹⁴⁶

This is a clever rhetorical strategy, an art form of modern message-making; its aim is to eradicate complex thinking from public debate. In an effort to deal with the confusion created by the use of politicians' duplicitous language, the citizen finds herself unable to maintain multiple points of engagement and settles for Bush's 'axis of evil' as an explainer for global relations. This lays the ground for the rise of the populist, nationalist politician such as Hungary's Victor Orban, France's Marine Le Pen and, most recently, America's Donald Trump for whom language is a tool for dissembling.

By the end of Howard's reign, Australians had lost their mojo in the shadow of illusory fears taken straight from the playbook of George Orwell's 1984. Our embrace of risk, individuality and independence had been supplanted by the mantra *Be Alert, Not Alarmed*¹⁴⁷, a recurring meme in Howard's lexicon. It kept the Australian people in a constant state of enervating arousal, forever on the look-out for undefined threats. The *'fair dinkum, fair go'* egalitarianism which mythically and empirically defined the Australian ethos slowly evaporated in this climate of anxiety. Our default setting switched from fun to fear: fear of difference, fear of change, fear of shadows. I map

¹⁴⁶ Tobias Kocklemans and David Pledger. "A Line in the Sand, Towards defense strategies for subsidized arts in a neoliberal era". *Theaterschrift*. Lucifer #10, 2010.

¹⁴⁷ *Be Alert Not Alarmed* was an anti-terrorism slogan adopted by the Howard Government in 2002.

out this trajectory in my 2013 Platform Papers, *Revaluing The Artist in the New World Order*.

My ambition then was to insinuate progressive ideas from artistic practice into the national conversation which Howard's culture wars had carved into rigid, discursive units. The language of *contemporary* artistic practice is of necessity a language of progress. Open, inclusive and underscored by a desire for discovering new ways of working, creating and making, it has a dexterity for dealing with change and experiment and which, if introduced into an amplified discursive space, has the potential to expand the quality and depth of civic discourse and action. I demonstrate this in Section 9 of these Liner Notes.

I was also interested in enhancing the agency of the artist in cultural discourse in terms of their authority, voice and significance. History assisted me in this endeavor when a group of artists decided to boycott the 2014 Sydney Biennale.

(8) Context and Complicity from Sydney Biennale 2014 to Federal Election 2016

On March 7, 2014, the Sydney Biennale Chair, Luca Belgiorno-Nettis, resigned in response to an artists' boycott and protest over the involvement of his company, Transfield Holdings as a sponsor of the event. Transfield Holdings was a subsidiary of Transfield Services which had recently won the contract to operate the Manus Island detention centre.

The artists' objections were manifold but can be distilled into a single motivation – to resist the context in which their work was exhibited as it implied their complicity in Transfield's business activity. Concerned that, through their participation, certain meanings would be attributed to them and their artwork – that the internment of people seeking asylum was morally and ethically agreeable to them – they resisted. In doing so, the artists exposed the often, invisible circles of context and complicity that exist around art making.

These circles brush up against each other, often overlap and, when they do, are crucial to the production of an artwork's meaning which is found in the complex agency of the aesthetic context in which it is made and the social and political contexts that govern its presentation. Such agency is determined by the artist's complicity within these contexts.

These circles of action and connection are central to our dramaturgy as artist-citizens, as is our understanding that the meaning of an artwork is not simply in and of itself - its meanings are multiple and multipliable, and wholly dependent on all the conditions of exhibition and presentation.

The many discussions inspired by the Sydney Biennale artists' actions that coursed through independent and mainstream media, and which were instigated and organised on social media, enabled the arts community to unpack in detail the ethics of complicity in the exhibition of works of art. Out of these discussions grew a purposeful language and ethical intent that was hitherto absent from cultural discourse. For many independent artists, like myself, it helped them articulate their positions during the backlash that was to come.

High-profile protests and boycotts by Australian artists are not commonplace nor are they completely unprecedented – notable actions have been previously directed against the 1973 Mildura Sculpture Biennale and Tasmania’s 2003 Ten Days On The Island. What distinguished the Sydney Biennale Boycott was the political reaction from the incumbent government.

Then Communications Minister Malcolm Turnbull theatrically described the artists’ actions as ‘the sheer, vicious ingratitude of it all’.¹⁴⁸ The Arts Minister, Senator George Brandis wrote a letter to the Australia Council asking it to develop a policy that would deny funding to events or artists that refuse private sponsorship.¹⁴⁹ Both Brandis and Turnbull (now Prime Minister) have been in an adversarial relationship with the arts since their public responses to the Sydney Biennale Boycott which precipitated a series of events culminating in Brandis’ retraction of Australia Council funding and the establishment of the National Program for Excellence in the Arts, a connection made by myself and other public arts figures.¹⁵⁰

The resistance that formed around Brandis’ actions led to a concerted and united front of independent artists and small-medium arts organisations around #freethearts which was instrumental in establishing a news-worthy Senate Inquiry in 2015 that helped the sector prosecute its cause nationally.¹⁵¹ Out of that configuration, ArtsPeak, an unincorporated and hitherto quiet federation of arts organisations, put up its hand to be a national advocacy platform for the arts. In the frame of the 2016 Federal Election, ArtsPeak successfully co-ordinated a National Arts Debate, persuading the newest Arts Minister, Senator Fifield, the shadow Minister for the Arts, Mark Dreyfus and The Greens spokesperson, Adam Bandt, to attend. Mobile and responsive groups of artists formed such as The Protagonists. Congregations around a variety of hashtags – #Ausvotesarts #artmatters #istandwiththearts #dontbreakmyart – and the Art Changes Lives petition appealed not just to artists and arts workers but audiences and citizens as well.¹⁵² The new Arts Party made a political play for votes with Senate candidates receiving a top-6 preference vote from more than 10% of all voters and a preference from more than 1.5 million Australians.¹⁵³ For the first time in over 20 years, the arts became an election issue.

During this time, I endeavoured as a commentator to shape industry and public thinking through various journals and publications; as an activist and organiser developing strategy for national sector meetings in Canberra, Sydney and in Melbourne for the National Arts Debate and as an artist in a one-off campaign launch in the middle of the Federal Election in Canberra called *David Pledger Is Running For Office*. It was a unique, multipolar context in which I found myself entirely complicit.

¹⁴⁸ <http://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/2014/03/11/turnbull-blasts-artists-boycott-threat>

¹⁴⁹ <http://www.ruthskillbeck.com/2014/03/letter-from-senator-george-brandis-to.html>

¹⁵⁰ <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/arts/coalition-punished-artists-for-biennale-boycott-by-cutting-funding/news-story/6ebf1792902f887c60fb93c1c722bc76>

¹⁵¹ The #freethearts hashtag was created by Nicole Beyer of Australian Theatre Network and media commentator, Van Badham. It was then adopted sector-wide by an alliance of artists and cultural operators that drove the grassroots campaign contesting Brandis’ actions.

¹⁵² <https://visualarts.net.au/news-opinion/2016/election-message-art-changes-lives/>

¹⁵³ http://www.artsparty.org/election_result_2016

(9) The Last Line 2017 As this concept album makes its final reverberations, I propose that I have articulated a strong case for which the arts may operate as an analytical prism through which observations can be legitimately and positively refracted to broader society. I have attempted to achieve this through a careful and productive use of language, and in so doing, by the carriage of the language of artistic practice into a broader vernacular and social application. I close now with two concrete contributions arising from this decades-long research and application.

Protagonist For the word ‘protagonist’, I prosecuted its use with a very specific end in mind - to encourage artists to see themselves as leading figures in the cultural discourse rather than objects on which the discourse is projected. In *Year Zero* (2016), I re-framed an argument that I had developed in a previous essay - *The Arts is No Place for an Artist* – which I had written off the back of a keynote that I had been invited to deliver for the 2014 Festival of Live Art Symposium, *Art and Encounter* – and to which I have previously referred.

We need to develop not only an artistic dramaturgy and a cultural dramaturgy but a progressive, social dramaturgy. We need to operate cross-sectorally and think transversally. We can no longer enjoy the luxury of being the antagonist. We need to drive the narrative, be a protagonist.

The idea that artists should shift their modus operandi (their dramaturgy, or operating system) and behave in ways that were not consistent with how they had been behaving for a generation struck a chord with a broad cross-section of Australian artists. This was particularly evident in the #freethearts campaign that set itself up in response to Brandis’ incursion on the Australia Council - discussed on **Side 1 Wall of Noise** - and even moreso in the lead-up to the 2016 Federal Election.

Inspired by *Year Zero*¹⁵⁴ which was re-published on several platforms, a group of young, established artists organised around the name *The Protagonists* two months before the 2016 Federal Election. A collective of inter-dependent artists and arts workers operating across and between disciplines, The Protagonists initiated and organized one of the major arts campaign events on June 17 - A National Day of Action.¹⁵⁵ Many other artists responded directly to my idea of the artist-citizen as protagonist and sought counsel, advice and mentorship including dancer-choreographer Matt Day, performance-maker Jamie Lewis, artistic director Alison Plevy, interdisciplinary interventionist Rebecca Conroy and the artists of the Canberra-based 2016 national platform, Strange Attractor.¹⁵⁶

Dramaturgy For the word ‘dramaturgy’ I have greater ambitions. The etymology of ‘dramaturgy’ is slated home to 18th C. German practitioner Gottold Ephraim Lessing and his book *Hamburg Dramaturgy*. Over time, dramaturgy evolved as both a practice and a concept. In contemporary arts practice, dramaturgy accommodates many positions and embraces many tasks. I like this generalist description as it highlights many of the elements central to contemporary discussions of dramaturgy:

¹⁵⁴ <https://www.facebook.com/artprotagonists> June 11 Facebook Post

¹⁵⁵ <http://www.artprotagonists.com/about/>

¹⁵⁶ <http://www.strangeattractor.com.au/>

*Dramaturgy gives the work or the performance a structure, an understructure as well as a reference to zeitgeist. Dramaturgy is a tool to scrutinize narrative strategies, cross-cultural signs and references, theater and film historic sources, genre, ideological approach, representing of gender roles etc. of a narrative-performative work.*¹⁵⁷

Dramaturgy has been effectively expanded from its source context – theatre – to apply to dance and film and new forms of artistic practice. For example, NYID's founding dramaturg, Peter Eckersall, expanded many of the protocols he collaborated on developing within NYID to the dramaturgy of new media (NMD) as 'a turn to visuality, intermediality, and dialectical moves in performance that show these expressions embodied and visualised in live performance space and time'.¹⁵⁸ Dramaturgy has also proven to be receptive to an expansion into Eastern cultural contexts. Essentially a Western concept, its malleability particularly in live performance allows it to mirror and refract its origins. These are currently being explored in a new regional configuration called Asian Dramaturgs Network¹⁵⁹ of which I am a member.

In an invited lecture to students of the Victorian College of the Arts in 2001, I publicly introduced the idea of dramaturgy as an operating system, a code that generates an artwork. At the same time, I proposed the idea of dramaturgy as having a cultural as well as an artistic frame. Since then I have pursued this notion a step further pushing the envelope to encompass a progressive social dramaturgy.

*In a broader application 'dramaturgy' is an adaptive notion that embraces the idea of an operating system whether that be of a production or culture. At its core is the element of change.*¹⁶⁰

Dramaturgy is a very powerful concept. It's flexible inasmuch as it can be transposed into different meanings depending on the artistic context and it can have meaningful value when applied outside the arts. Why? Because dramaturgy has to do with how a thing works, whether it's a work of art or the world itself.

In an artistic context, dramaturgy is the process of connecting and matting ideas into practice. Dramaturgy is rarely fixed, necessarily adaptive and due to its reliance on collective, collaborative actions inherently resistant to the concretization and commodification of other practice-related words such as 'creativity' and 'innovation' which, as argued on **Side 1's 45rmanagerialism in the arts: Impact on artists**, have been voided of their meaning in civic discourse and corrupted in their application to the arts and artistic practice.

Central to the notion of dramaturgy is the idea that an artwork is generated by an operating system driven by *random* and *non-deterministic* algorithms that are entered and extracted by human actions. Applying the concept more broadly, dramaturgy can embrace the idea of an operating system of culture or society. Because *at its core is the element of change*. In fact, dramaturgy is defined by change. Its utility as an operating

¹⁵⁷ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dramaturgy>

¹⁵⁸ <http://www.textures-platform.com/?p=3752>

¹⁵⁹ <http://www.asiandramaturgs.com/>

¹⁶⁰ *Re-valuing The Artist in The New World Order*. Currency House. Sydney. August 2013. P 27

system is determined by its capacity to be altered in a creative and evolutionary process driven by the algorithms of human behaviour.

In a 2016 essay that analysed sport, art and politics through the prism of entertainment, I ventured the following application of dramaturgy:

It's only in a highlights package that a spectator can read the dramaturgy of NFL (American football). Its operating system - the playbook - is utterly obscured by the entertainment paraphernalia attached to it.¹⁶¹

The notion of a dramaturgy can be extended further. I recently employed it when discussing the potential, degree and kind of change imagined by the introduction of a universal basic income, an exercise I was commissioned to do most recently for the publication, *Views of Universal Basic Income*.¹⁶²

If one thinks of social dramaturgy, or the operating system of a society, as a flexible, evolving series of interweaving 'human algorithms' then entering a new algorithm into the system, such as a universal basic income, requires knowledge of both the system and the new piece of code... Our code needs to have the following elements: the principles of support and social value, a clear economic benefit, flexibility in its accommodation of individual circumstances and the right-to-refuse any job outside the identified profession.

Whilst these elements are essential in supporting the life of an artist, they are just as relevant when considering universal basic income in an amplified social space. In the essay, I propose the idea of undertaking sectoral-based pilot schemes to identify elements in the code that would specifically benefit the idiosyncrasies of a single sector and other elements that might be applied more broadly across society. The essay concludes with a telescopic projection ten years into the future where the results of just such a case study on the effects of a UBI in the arts are publicly announced by the Federal Minister for the Arts, Education and Employment, Senator Adam Bandt, and his coalition partner, Deputy Prime Minister, Tanya Plibersek, standing on the steps of the Sydney Opera House. They declare the results to be so compelling that the UBI is going to be rolled out across all sectors of society.

This kind of 'future projection' - in which I mix up the past, the present and the future to propose a new trajectory - is one of my artistic tropes. I've used it in all of the artworks and many of the published essays that I've transformed into tracks on my concept album. I will close with an example that remains both prescient and progressive in an attempt to answer the question I proposed for myself in my abstract-cum-media release:

“what next, dp, what next...?”

In 1983, I had dinner with George Harrison at Kinsella's in Sydney's Taylor Square. George spoke to everyone at the table driven by his innate curiosity about human beings. Our

¹⁶¹ <https://theconversation.com/in-a-world-of-24-7-entertainment-art-sport-and-politics-are-the-poorer-70483>

¹⁶² *The Dramaturgy of Universal Basic Income* in *Views of Universal Basic Income*, The Green Institute, June 2017

conversation turned to the then nuclear crisis which prompted him to offer that, if something went awry, Australia was his preferred destination. Around that time, George purchased land on Hamilton Island and built a home there. Scroll forwards to present-day Australia, two years after Fukushima: the nuclear crisis is as real and forbidding now as it was then and Australia is still a viable escape clause for the rich and powerful should something 'go wrong'. The past tells us that we have learned nothing. We have tread water. Tadpoles in the pond.

Scroll forwards thirty years from now to 2043. If the artist is living and working under the same conditions, we will have tread water once again. And lost a great opportunity. The 21st C is our time. When what we do, what we make and how we work can have the greatest social benefit. We need to work through the ambient fear created by neo-liberalism, push back against the shadow values of managerialism and constitute ourselves as a sustained contradiction. To do this we must fight for fundamentals - industry representation, professional autonomy and financial security. From such a position, we will be visible, capable and central to the key conversations about the arts in society, and help create a society with the arts at its centre. This is our future, the future we need for ourselves, for our children, for our culture and for our society.

If we have to take direct action to make that happen, so be it. We will be following in the footsteps of nurses, teachers, miners, doctors, all who value their work and all whose work is valued. Until we appreciate the essential value of the artist in the New World Order, no-one else will.

We can no longer stay in the pond. We have to swim in the ocean. If we do, then the world will change for the better. Our capacity to shape and imagine a better future is necessary and real.

World Leaders Summit, Darwin, 2043

Prime Minister Jack Khan Shmik pondered the options. He was about to give the opening address to the World Leaders Summit and he wanted to hit the right note, to say something that would shape the proceedings of the next three days. His mind was a tumble-dryer, sorting items that needed more attention than others, all of them rolling around in a contained space. He mentally interrupted the cycle, opened the door and scrutinised the contents. A few things stood out. Colour, structure and form. Unsurprisingly, given his previous occupation as a painter – a highly collectable one as his wife reminded him whenever she tried to dissuade him from seeking another term. How could he do that? He was as much a product of Australia's incredible success story as he was one of its architects. For thirty years he had watched and participated in the appreciation of the value of the artist, a process which had made his country

the model for 'interconnectivity', the new mechanism-byword of the twenty-first century.

Artists had inserted themselves into every sticking-place of society, into the in-between spaces of the law, banking, manufacturing, environment, on the edges of everywhere and every thing. Their practices and processes, honed in the studio, the rehearsal room, in the privacy and safety of their minds, had become sought after as massive leaps in technology proposed problems that only an acute artistic sensibility could solve. Time and again, artists had developed better questions for solving difficult problems; time and again they had seen the connections between things when others could only see the 'things'; time and again artists had saved the world from seemingly imminent disaster by engaging the Artistic Mind, a new model for global progress that had been patented and exported to all corners of the world and had drawn its leaders to this city, one of its most remote. Australia was the Numbskull Nation no longer and today's opening address would mark an historical moment. He stood up still not knowing how to begin and then his mouth opened of its own volition, speaking the words that had become a mantra for a generation of global citizens: "Long Live the Artist..."¹⁶³

¹⁶³ *Re-Valuing The Artist In The New World Order*, Currency House, August 2013. P. 52

LIST OF REFERENCES

- Attali, Jacques. *Noise: the Political Economy of Music*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985
- Beckett, Samuel. *The Lost Ones*. New York: Grove Press. 1972
- Beckett, Samuel. *Endgame*. London: Faber and Faber. 1958
- Beckett, Samuel. *Disjecta: Miscellaneous Writings and a Dramatic Fragment*. New York: Grove Press. 1984
- Birdwhistell, Ray. *Kinesics and Context*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1970
- Blackburn, Manuella. *The Visual Sound-Shapes of Spectromorphology: An Illustrative Guide to Composition* in *Organised Sound*, Vol. 16, Issue 1. New York: Cambridge University Press. 2011
- Carroll, Alison and Gantner, Carrillo. *Finding A Place On The Asian Stage* in Platform Paper #31. Sydney: Currency House. 2012
- Carter, Paul. *Material Thinking: the Theory and Practice of Creative Research*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2004
- Crary, Jonathan. *24/7: Late Capitalism and The Ends of Sleep*. NY: Verso, 2013
- Deleuze, Gilles and Felix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1987
- Downtown, Peter. *Design Research*. Melbourne: RMIT Publishing, 2003
- Eckersall, Peter and Uchino, Tadashi and Moriyama, Naoto. *Alternatives: Debating Theatre Culture in the Age of Con-fusion*. Bruxelles: Peter Lang, 2004
- Enteman, Willard F. *Managerialism: The Emergence of a New Ideology*. Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1993
- Fairclough, Norman. *Critical Discourse Analysis in Reaching Language in the New Capitalism: Overdetermination, Transdisciplinarity and Textual Analysis* in *Systemic Functional Linguistics and Critical Discourse Analysis Studies in Social Change*, Lyn Young, Claire Harrison. NY: Continuum, 2004
- Fitzsimons, Patrick. *Managerialism and Education* in *Encyclopaedia of Philosophy and Theory*. New Zealand: EEPAT, 1999
- Flanagan Richard. *The Gambler* in *The Monthly February*. Melbourne: Schwartz Media 2013
- Forbat, Sophie (editor). *Marina Abramovic: In Residence*. Sydney: Kaldor Public Arts Project, 2015
- Gallagher, Shaun. *How the Body Shapes the Mind*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2005
- Gantner, Carrillo. *Building Cultural Relations*. ANU, Australian Centre on China In The World, 2013
- Gardner, Howard. *Multiple Intelligences: New Horizons*. NY: Basic Books, 2006
- Georgeou, Nichole and Susan Engel. *The Impact of Neoliberalism and New Managerialism on Development Volunteering: An Australian Case Study* in *Australian Journal of Political Science* 46:2. London: Routledge, 2011
- Hesse, Herman. *The Glass Bead Game*. London: Vintage, 2000

- Hoopes, James. *Managerialism: Its History and Dangers* in *Historically Speaking* 5.1. Baltimore, Maryland: The John Hopkins University Press, 2003
- Hussein, Saddam. *On Democracy*. NY: Badlands Unlimited/DESTE, 2012
- Johnson, Mark. *The Meaning of the Body: Aesthetics of Human Understanding*. The University of Chicago Press, 2007
- Kluszczyński, Ryszard W. (editor). *Meat Metal and Code: Contestable Chimeras*. STELARC. Poland: Łaznia Centre for Contemporary Art, 2014
- Kurzweil, Raymond. *The Singularity Is Near: When Humans Transcend Biology*. USA: Penguin Books, 2005
- Latham, Mark. *The Political Bubble*. Australia: Pan MacMillan, 2014
- Llosa, Mario Vargas. *Notes on the Death of Culture: Essays on Spectacle and Society*. New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux. 2015
- Manne, Anne. *The Life of I: The New Culture of Narcissism*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2014
- McAuliffe, Chris. *Living the Dream* in Meanjin Spring Edition. Melbourne: MUP 2012
- McLuhan, Marshall and Fiore, Quentin. *The Medium is the Massage: An Inventory of Effects*. Berkeley, USA: Gingko Press. 1967
- Ricard, Matthieu and Lutz, Antoine and Davidson, Richard J. *The Neuroscience of Meditation* in *Scientific American*, Vol. 311, Issue #5. New York: Nature Publishing Group. 2014
- Mouffe, Chantal. *Agonistics: Thinking the World Politically*. NY: Verso, 2013
- Obrist, Hans Ulrich. *Ai Wei Wei Speaks*. London: Penguin, 2011
- Saul, John Ralston. *Dark Diversions*. Toronto: Viking Canada, 2012
- Sheldrake, Rupert. *The Presence of the Past: Morphic Resonance and the Habits of Nature*. NY: Times Books, 1981
- Sheldrake, Rupert. *The Sense of Being Stared At*. UK: Arrow Books, 2004
- Shergold, Peter. *New Models, New Money: A Foundation for The Artist*. Centre for Social Impact, UNSW. 2010
- Smith, Adam. *The Wealth of Nations*. US: Bantam, 2003
- Steiner, George. *In Bluebeard's Castle: Some Notes Towards the Redefinition of Culture*. London: Faber and Faber. 1971
- Suzuki, Tadashi. *The Way of Acting: The Theatre Writings of Tadashi Suzuki*. New York: Theatre Communications Group. 1986
- Tabrett, Leigh. *It's Culture Stupid* in *Platform Papers* #34. Sydney: Currency House. 2013
- Throsby, David and Zednik, Anita. *Do you really expect to get paid? An Economic Study of Professional Artists in Australia*. Australia Council for the Arts, 2010
- Tomatis, Alfred A. *The Conscious Ear*. NY: Station Hill Press, 1991
- Van Schaik, Leon. *Spatial Intelligence: New Futures For Architecture*. Great Britain: John Wiley & Son, 2008